

Annexes B to the Final Report

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

Supporting data collection evidence

25 October 2013

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INTRODUCTION

This document contains annexes to the 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 (1 to 9) contain the following information and tools:
 - Annex 1 – The results of the questionnaire for Managing Authorities carried out as part of Task 1
 - Annex 2 – Results of the online survey with users of the INFOREGIO website carried out as part of Task 2
 - Annex 3 – Results of the online survey on DG REGIO's communication tools (Task 2)
 - Annex 4 – Results of the in-depth interviews with stakeholders, including interviews carried out as part of the country case studies and interviews conducted as part of Task 2
 - Annex 5 – SWOT analysis of DG REGIO's communication (Task 2)
 - Annex 6 – Stakeholder analysis (Task 2)
 - Annex 7 – The benchmarking report developed for the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (Task 2)
 - Annex 8 – The benchmarking report developed for the World Bank (Task 2)
 - Annex 9 – The benchmarking report developed for DG Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission (Task 2)

1 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGING AUTHORITIES

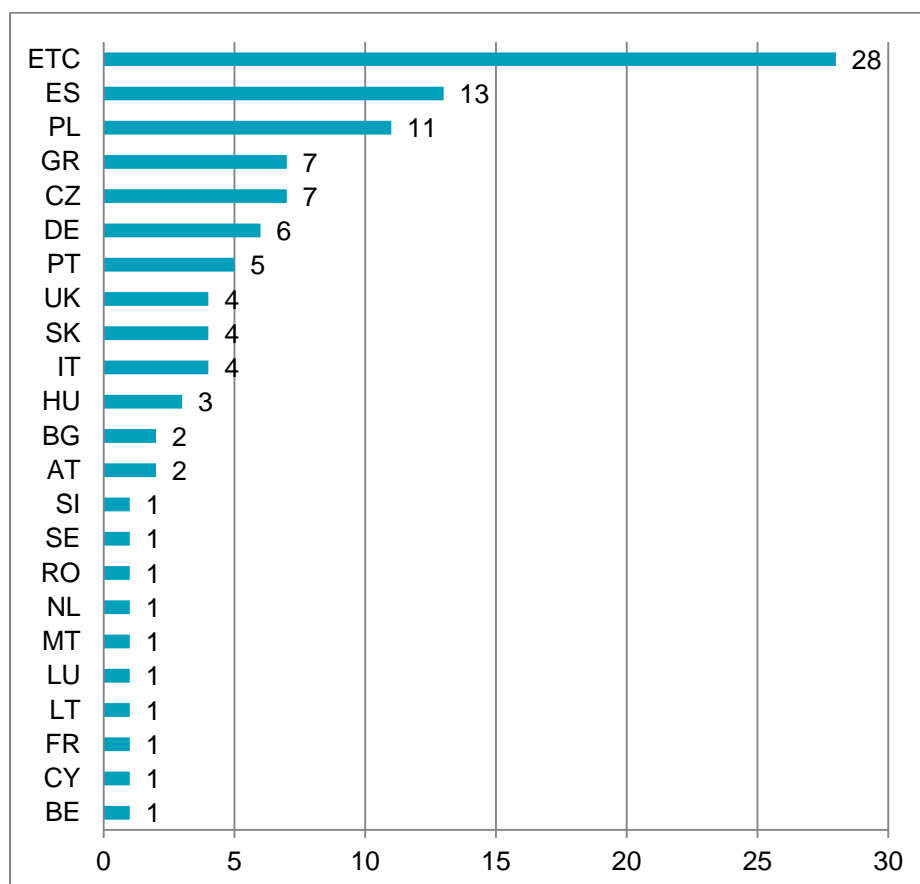
1.1 Introduction

The following section presents the results from the analysis of questionnaires sent to the Managing Authorities (MA) representatives in April 2013.

In total, questionnaires were sent to 373 information & communication officers, covering 402 operational programmes (OPs). 107 responses were received. With regard to Member States (MS), the highest numbers came from Spain (13), Poland (11), the Czech Republic and Greece (7 each). There were no responses from Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Latvia. 28 responses came from representatives of the European Territorial Co-operation programmes. From all the questionnaires, 43% were from regional authorities, 27% from cross-border or international authorities, 25% from national and only 5% from multi-regional bodies.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses across the countries. Representation of the countries was never expected to be balanced as a result of the different number of OPs and questionnaires sent: e.g. there were 30 questionnaires sent to France, and only 1 each to Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta and Sweden.

Figure 1: Distribution of responses across the countries



1.2 Human resources for communication activities under the OP

On average, there are 3 persons in every MA for whom matters around communication are their main responsibilities. They are normally supported by 5 other people. However, those numbers are a subject to a significant variation. Table 1 presents differences in average number of staff dealing mainly with regional policy communication in OPs in different Member States. The differences are likely to be related to the scale of the OPs and the complexity of their implementation process. 26% of all respondents admitted that insufficient human resources in MA constitute a very important challenge for communication practices. However, the average number of I&P staff is not necessarily correlated with the statement that it is insufficient. The questionnaire responses suggest that the situation is especially difficult in the following countries (where significant number of MS representatives claim that insufficient HR is a very important challenge: Belgium (1 out of 1 OP¹), France (1/1), Romania (1/1), Sweden (1/1), Slovenia (1/1), United Kingdom (2/4), Austria (1/2), Italy (2/4) and GR (3/7), ES (4/13) and ETC (5/28)².

Table 1: Average number of staff for whom communication is their main responsibility in the countries that have submitted questionnaires

Number of staff	Member states
7	PL, HU
5	BG
4	CZ
3	LT, RO, SE, PT
2	ES, GR, SK, LU, MT, DE, IT
1	UK, ETC, AT, BE, CY, FR, NL, SI

Source: questionnaires, Q3. *Human resources for communication activities under the OP (in the last three years)*

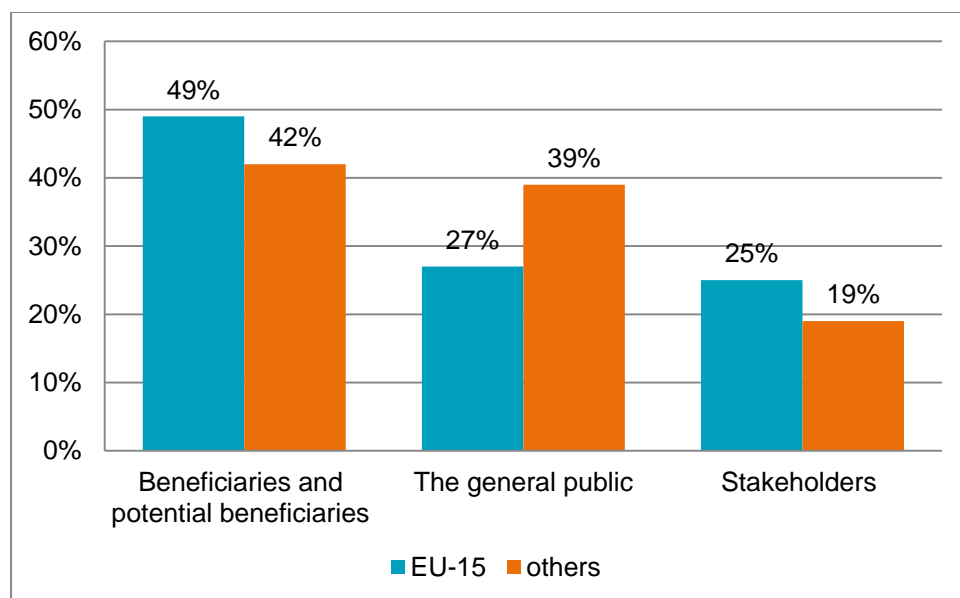
1.3 Target groups of the communications

Based on the MAs' responses, in communication processes regarding the regional policy, most weight has been given to the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. On average, the level of priority that has been afforded to the three main target groups is as follows: 46% to beneficiaries, 31% to the general public and 23% to stakeholders³. The distribution does not differ significantly between old and new EU members, though it can be observed that the EU-15 are generally less focused on the general public than new Member States (see Figure 2).

¹ In reference to the number of questionnaires received.

² It must be noted that the number of responses from each country differs significantly.

³ There were 3 mistakes in the responses, which has been proportionally calculated so that they sum up to 100%.

Figure 2: Importance of target groups in communication about the OP and regional policy in old and new EU countries (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.*

As presented in Table 2, the importance of each of the target groups differs with regard to the geographical outreach of the programme. MAs from multi-regional programmes give the highest priority to the general public (47%), while the transnational, national and regional ones are focusing primarily on the (potential) beneficiaries. On the basis of questionnaires submitted by the MAs of cross-border / transnational or international programmes, it can be said that they give twice as much attention to the beneficiaries than to the general public and stakeholders.

Table 2: Importance of target groups in communication about the OP and regional policy with regard to programme geographical scope (average of %)

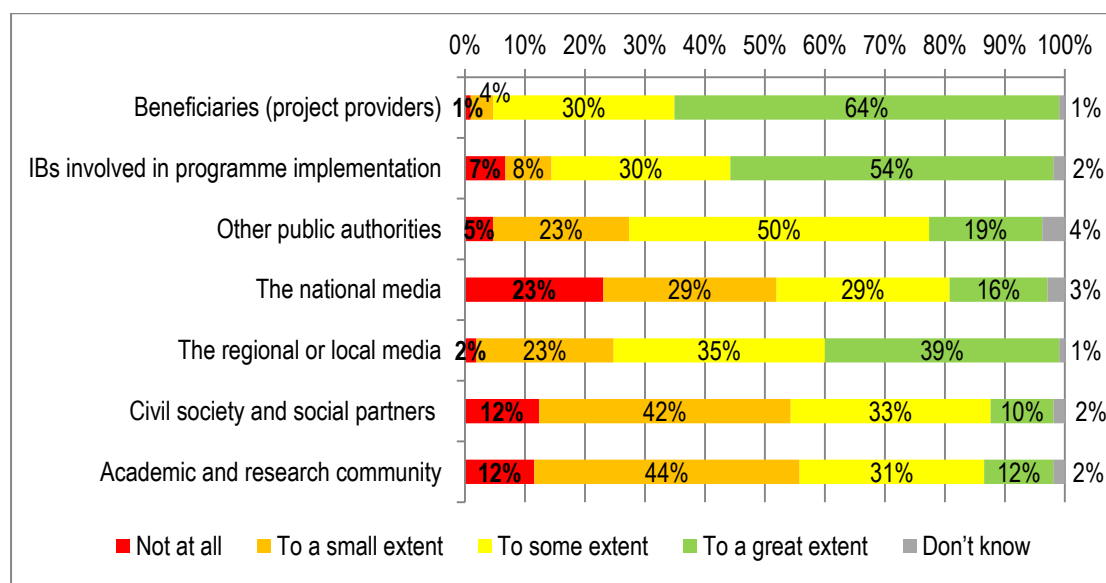
Geographical scope of the programmes (number of responses)	Beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries	The general public	Stakeholders
Cross-border / transnational or international (n=29)	52%	25%	24%
Multi-regional (n=5)	35%	47%	17%
National (n=26)	42%	32%	33%
Regional (n=46)	45%	35%	27%

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.*

When it comes to communication mechanisms, beneficiaries and intermediate bodies involved in the programme implementation are most frequently used as multipliers of the communication activities (64% and 54% of OPs, respectively, reported using these groups as multipliers). Other groups are regarded as less attractive for communication

dissemination, in particular the national media, civil society and social partners, and the academic and research community.

Figure 3: Extent to which different following groups are used as multipliers



Source: questionnaires, Q6. *To what extent do you use any or all of the following as multipliers for your regional policy communication (i.e. actively engage them so that they pass on relevant information and messages to a wider audience)?*

1.4 Tools and activities - popularity of the use and their effectiveness

In terms of tools and activities that have been used in the last three years to communicate the OP and regional policy, **websites, short brochures and leaflets and conferences/seminars proved to be most popular** (see Table 3). Blogs are hardly used, special activities for journalists, outdoor advertising campaigns (due to their little effectiveness) and TV programmes (high costs) – infrequent. Less than a half of the respondents mentioned events, such as project tours or open days and festivals as part of their communication practices.

Table 3: Popularity of different tools and activities in communicating with different target audiences about the OP and regional policy (% of the questionnaires)

Communication tools	Target audiences			Average
	Beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (project providers)	General public	Stakeholders	
Conferences and/or seminars	95%	53%	88%	79%
Open days and/or festivals	42%	56%	37%	45%
Project tours	25%	20%	47%	31%
Websites	97%	96%	92%	95%

Communication tools	Target audiences			Average
	Beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries (project providers)	General public	Stakeholders	
Electronic newsletters	64%	48%	60%	58%
Blogs	6%	6%	4%	5%
Social media tools and campaigns	45%	62%	42%	50%
Videos	58%	67%	54%	59%
TV programmes	28%	40%	23%	30%
Radio	40%	60%	30%	43%
Outdoor advertising (billboards etc.)	31%	44%	25%	34%
Short brochures or leaflets	91%	83%	77%	84%
Extensive booklets or other publications	69%	45%	57%	57%
Print periodicals (magazines or newsletters)	47%	36%	46%	43%
Regular contact with media (press releases, briefings, conferences)	58%	74%	56%	63%
Special activities for journalists, competitions, tours, etc.	19%	32%	21%	24%

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?* n = 106

When targeting beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, the most popular tools are websites, publications, conferences/seminars, as well as electronic newsletters, which prevail over mass communication tools. Communication to stakeholders use quite a similar range of tools, though used on smaller scale and more focused on activities like project tours (probably tailored for journalists).

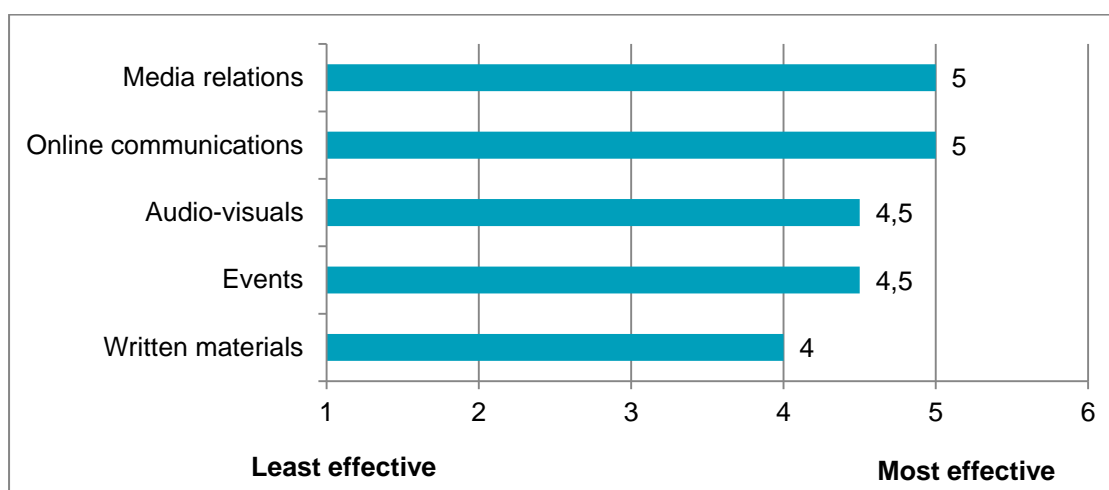
Communication with the general audience differs significantly, with more focus on social media, audio-visual tools, radio, short publications and media relations. When communicating to the general public, the MAs use mostly websites, short brochures/leaflets and regular contact with media.

The respondents were also asked which of the tools and activities used to raise the awareness of regional policy among the general public in their country or region were the most effective. The median of ranking (1 – least effective, 6 – most effective) shows that **online communication and media relations are the most effective tools**, though the rankings do not differ significantly. This might be attributed to the overall positive self-evaluation of the communication practices among the officers. At the same time, it is clear to the respondents that those tools also have drawbacks, e.g. the results of the media relations

might be regarded as not authentic, the interest of journalists *very much depends on the topic and reference to actuality*, as one of the respondents justified.

Nevertheless, **written materials are regarded as the least effective tools for targeting the general audience**, mainly because of the increase in using online information sources and low attractiveness of long and complex texts. As one of the respondents noted: *Only people who are already interested or already know how the Programme works are willing to read written material (especially long and technical texts)*.

Figure 4: Ranking of tools / activities with regard to their effectiveness (the median of ranking 1 – least effective, 6 - most effective)



Source: questionnaires, Q10. *In your experience, what are the most effective types of tools and activities to raise the awareness of regional policy among the general public in your country or region?*

1.5 Challenges

With regard to challenges that are encountered in informing the general public about regional policy effectively, 3 problems seem to be most common:

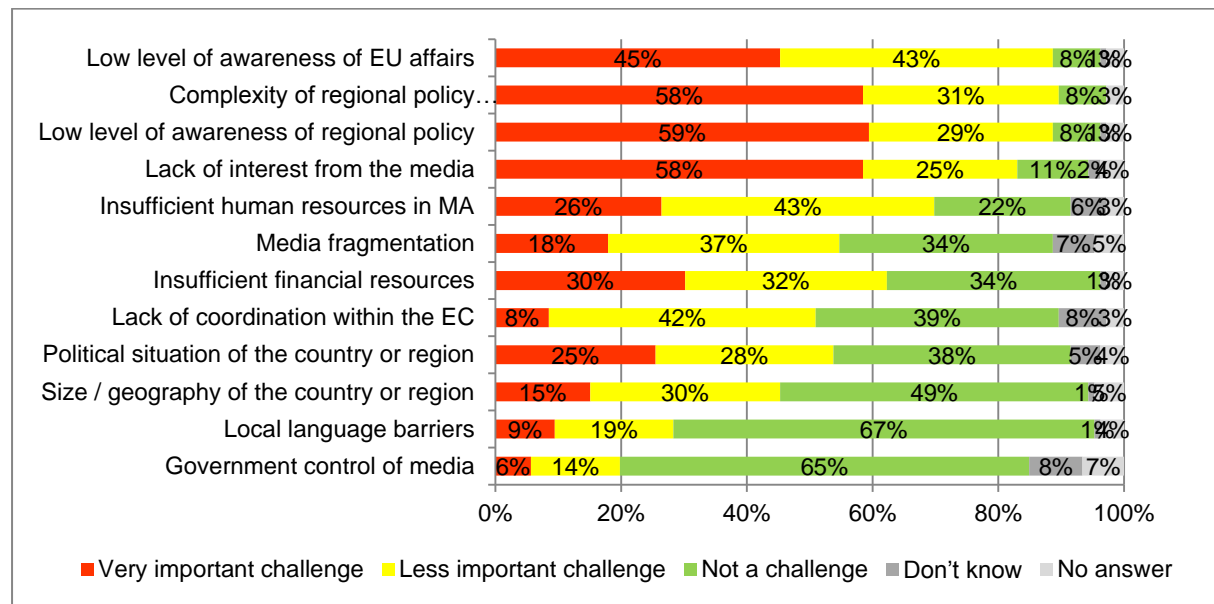
- low level of awareness of regional policy (regarded as the most important one),
- complexity of regional policy instruments and interventions,
- lack of interest from the media.

MAs must deal with a lack of knowledge which is the result of low levels of interest. This may constitute a significant barrier for the effectiveness of communication programmes. Some respondents mentioned also challenges not included in the questionnaire:

- bad reputation of the EU (mentioned 3 times)
- the current crises and socioeconomic situation and disparities (mentioned 3 times)
- bureaucracy, including long and difficult procedures for implementation of the EU funds (mentioned twice)
- overload of information regarding the existing programme, their complicated names and number of logos (mentioned twice)
- using public procurements for commissioning I&C activities (mentioned twice).

Insufficient human and financial resources seem not to be a big-scale problem except from the MS indicated in the sub-section 2.2.

Figure 5: Main communication challenges according to MA questionnaire respondents



Source: MA questionnaire, Q13: *In your opinion, what are the challenges to effectively informing the general public in your country or region about regional policy?* n = 106

2 INFOREGIO WEBSITE SURVEY

2.1 Introduction

An online survey to gather feedback from current users of and visitors to the INFOREGIO website was launched in early April 2013 and remained open for more than five weeks, until mid-May. The survey provided an opportunity to identify profile and characteristics of INFOREGIO users, understand the purpose and frequency of their visit to/use of the website; gather feedback on their preferences, level of satisfaction with and quality of the website and its individual elements; and seek inspiration and areas for improvements.

The survey was made available in three main EU languages: English (chosen by 77% of respondents), French (chosen by 15%), and German (chosen by 8%). The average time to complete the questionnaire was estimated at approximately 10 minutes.

Promotion of the survey was carried out via the following means:

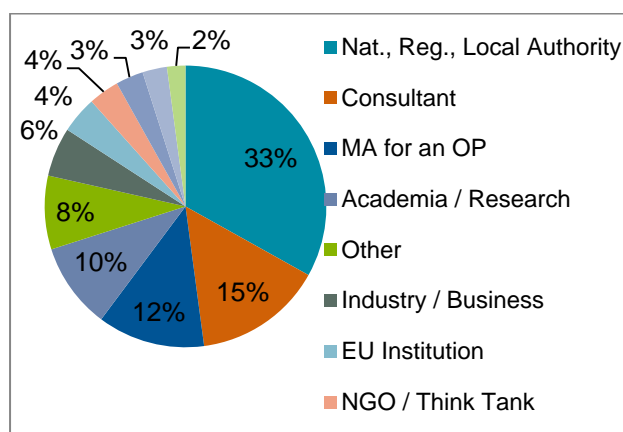
- Link on the INFOREGIO website;
- Links on RegioFlash newsletter editions; and
- Social media used by DG REGIO, i.e. Twitter feeds, Regionetwork on Yammer.

A total of **358 respondents started the survey but only 284 answered the last question**; therefore the percentage of answers has been calculated based on the number of valid responses for each question separately. The composition of the sample is described below.

2.2 Profile of respondents to the survey

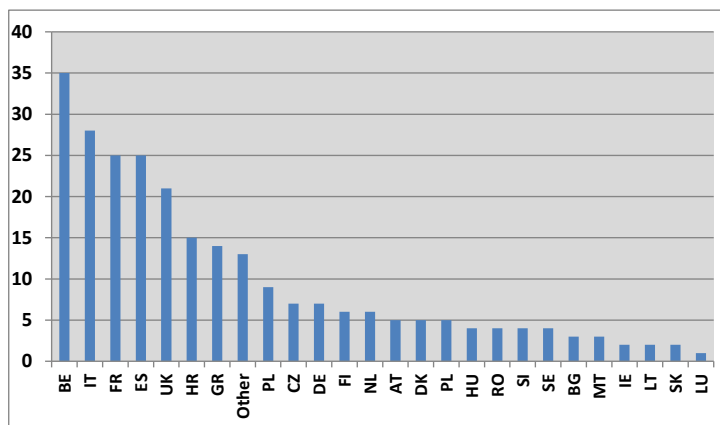
In terms of **field of work**, national, regional and local authorities represent the largest group of respondents (33%), followed by consultants (15%), Managing Authorities (12%), and academia and research stakeholders (10%). The sample is completed with industry and business stakeholders (6%), and respondents from EU Institutions (4%), NGOs / Think Tanks (4%), press and media (3%), project promoters (3%), people currently unemployed (2%) and others (8%).

Figure 6: Composition of the sample in terms of field of work



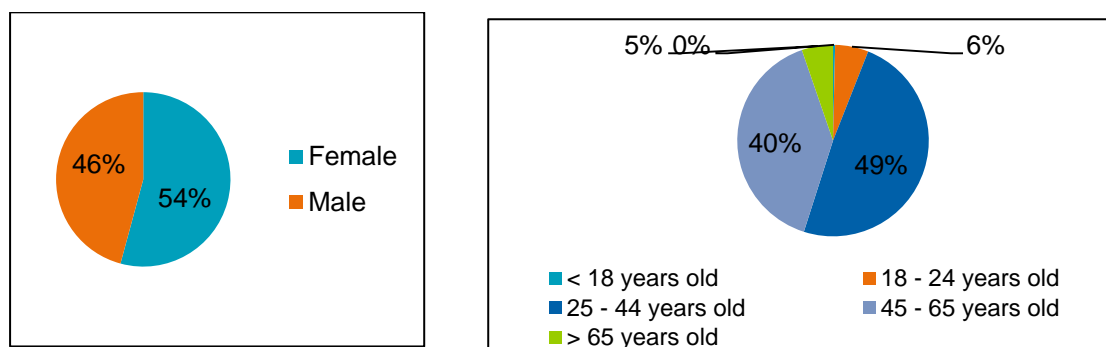
In terms of **nationality of respondents**, the sample was composed of respondents from 24 EU Member States (there were no answers from Estonia, Cyprus and Latvia), 1 acceding country (Croatia) and 12 other countries (Reunion, Turkey, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Turkey, Australia, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Peru, Serbia). The largest number of responses came from Belgians (35), Italians (28), the French (25), Spaniards and the British (21). Only a minority of Belgians declared to be working on EU Institutions. Most of them identified themselves as national, regional and local authority officials.

Figure 7: Composition of the sample in terms of nationality



The figure below presents the composition of the sample in terms of **gender and age groups**. As can be seen, female respondents (54%) slightly outnumber male respondents (46%). The two largest age groups represented in the sample are people aged between 25 and 44 years old (49%) and those aged between 45 and 65 years old (40%).

Figure 8: Composition of the sample in terms of gender and age groups

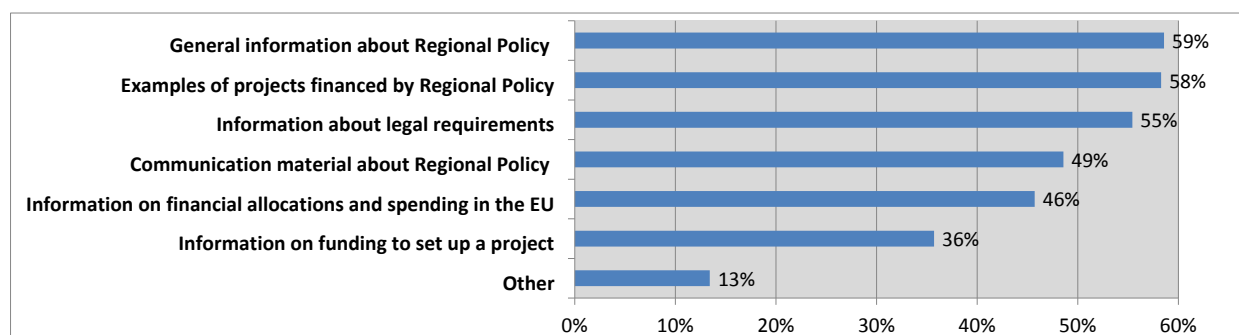


2.3 Frequency and purpose of INFOREGIO website users

- **The majority of respondents to the survey are frequent INFOREGIO users.** Slightly more than seven out of every ten respondents (71%) have visited the website more than 5 times, and there is only a small group of respondents that was visiting the website for the first time when answering the survey (9%).

- **Users are most interested in looking for information on regional policy (59%) and examples of projects financed with DG REGIO funds (58%).** Information about legal requirements (55%) is another highly popular topic among respondents to the survey, followed closely by communication material on EU regional policy (49%) and information on financial allocations and spending in the EU (46%). Slightly more than one out of every three respondents consults the website to find out information on funding to set up a project (36%).
- Frequent users are more likely than others to visit INFOREGIO to obtain specific information about legal requirements (e.g. regulations, EC communications etc.), and specific documents and communication material about regional policy for further dissemination. First time visitors are looking more often for information on obtaining funding to set up a project.

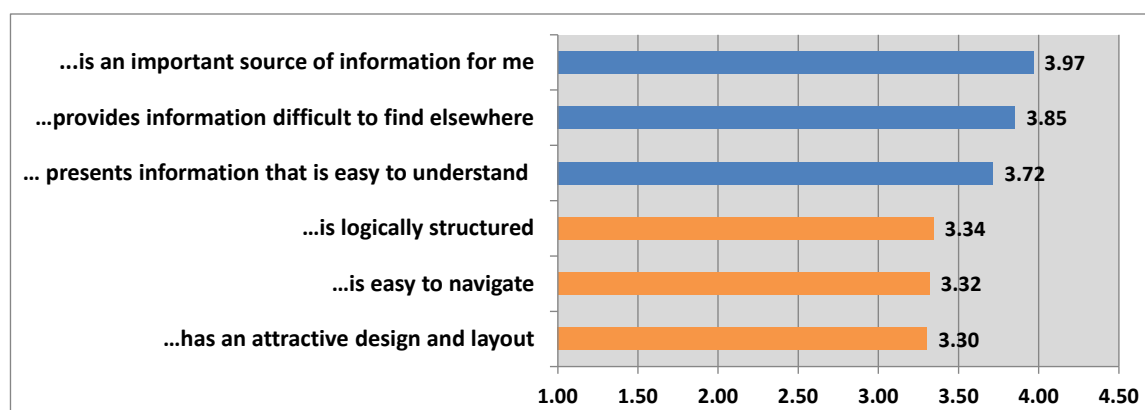
Figure 9: Information consulted by users when visiting the INFOREGIO website (n=350)



2.4 Usefulness of the website

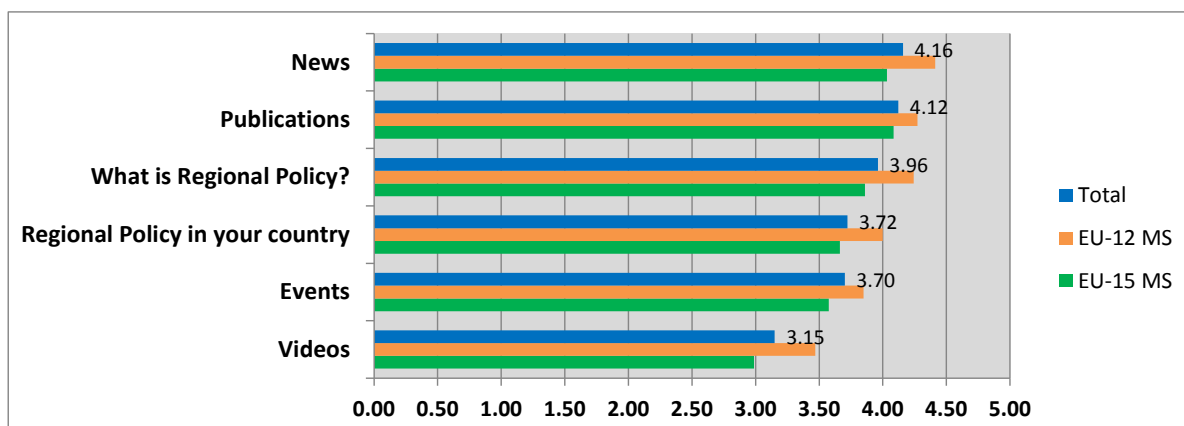
- **The INFOREGIO website is above all an important source of information for its users.** Other strong points of the website highlighted by respondents are that it provides information that would be difficult to find elsewhere and that it presents the information in a way and language that is easy to understand. The weaker elements of the website are considered to be its design and layout, its navigation and search functions, and its logical structure.

Figure 10: Average rating of statements on usefulness of the website



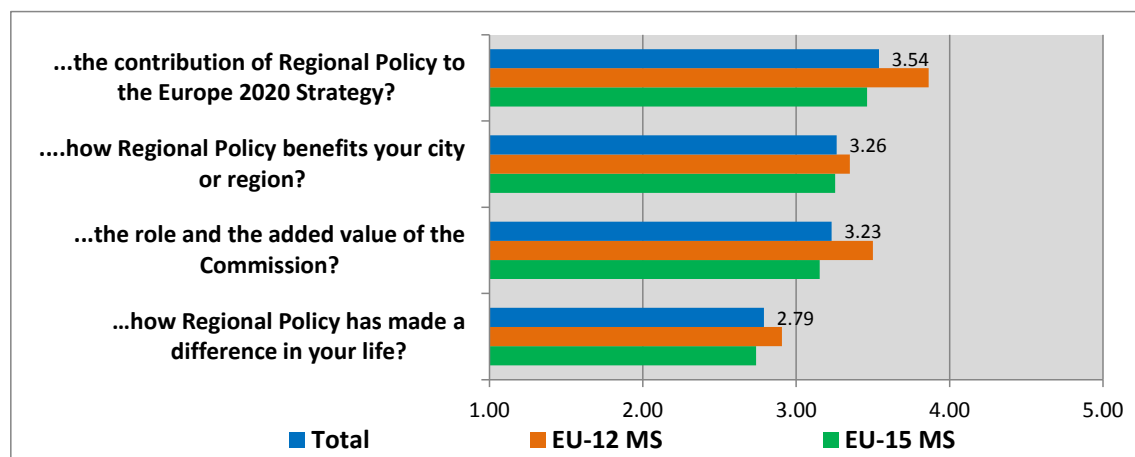
- **Overall, respondents are satisfied with the different sections of the website.** The section on 'News' is considered to be the most useful, followed closely by the section on 'Publications'. The section on 'What is regional policy' is rated in the third place, followed by 'Regional policy in your country' and 'Events'. 'What is regional policy' and 'Regional policy in your country'. The section on 'Videos' receives the lowest average in terms of usefulness. As can be seen in the graph below, users from new Member States tend to judge the usefulness of the different sections of the website in a more positive note than respondents from the EU-15 MS.

Figure 11: Average rating of statements on usefulness of the different website sections



- **Respondents are less positive about the impact that the website has on their understanding of regional policy.** There is wider agreement that INFOREGIO has helped respondents to better understand the contribution of regional policy to the wider goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and to a lesser extent the benefits on respondents' cities or regions, than the idea that the website has allowed users to better grasp the role and the added value of the Commission. Respondents are most pessimistic about the extent to which the website helps them to understand how regional policy has made a difference in their lives. Respondents from new Member States are in average more positive than respondents from the EU-15 MS.

Figure 12: Average rating of statements on website's impact on understanding of Reg. Policy



- **Respondents tend to most like of the website its possibility to provide comprehensive and comparative information across the EU.** When asked to reflect openly on the aspects that they find most interesting of the INFOREGIO website, respondents point out to the facts and figures at Member State level (the maps, the statistics provided and other illustrated figures are considered to be useful features), the news, information on funding opportunities, the information on projects and best practices provided, and in general they like the panoramic view that the website provides of regional policy:

- *"The website provides a continental, aggregated perspective of regional policy."*
- *"It is remarkable the synthesis capacity of gathering so much information around Europe in such a quick comprehensive way."*
- *"Good overview - useful starting point for my searches."*

2.5 Scope for improvement of the website

- **The elements of the INFOREGIO website where there is room for more improvement are the layout, structure and design and the content.** With regard to the layout, structure and design, respondents claim that it is not easy to search for information –in particular when people have specific searches –and that the search engine could be improved:

- *"There are too many layers for finding the information you need."*
- *"How can highlights be at the bottom of the page? It ceases to be a highlight then."*
- *"The information should be classified according to relevance and date. It's difficult to find whether a specific piece of information posted on the website continues to be relevant or is out-dated."*

- With regard to the content, respondents argue that there should be more information on interregional cooperation, regional networking, and on the new financial period lying ahead. Better linkages to other DGs that cooperate with DG REGIO, including DGs EMPL, AGRI, MARE, should be provided. Users are also expecting a broader number of local stories and examples to complement the general approach to regional policy provided in the website. An approach more focussed on the story-telling dimension (how EU funded projects have improved people's lives) is also considered to be missing:

- *"More information on best practices and on how Member States have addressed the difficulties in implementation."*
- *"Opinions of experts and citizens on implementation EU funded projects in the regions."*
- *"It would be nice to have even more information about the projects carried out, their impact to the region concerning growth, employment."*

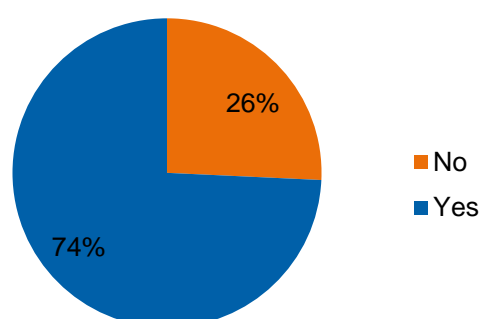
- Another concern highlighted by respondents is that INFOREGIO provides general information and that the website is not tailored for different target groups. Users would value content that could be tailored for professional audiences and for the wider public.

- Lack of translation of specific documents to all EU languages is also judged to be a problem for some respondents.

2.6 The RegioFlash newsletter

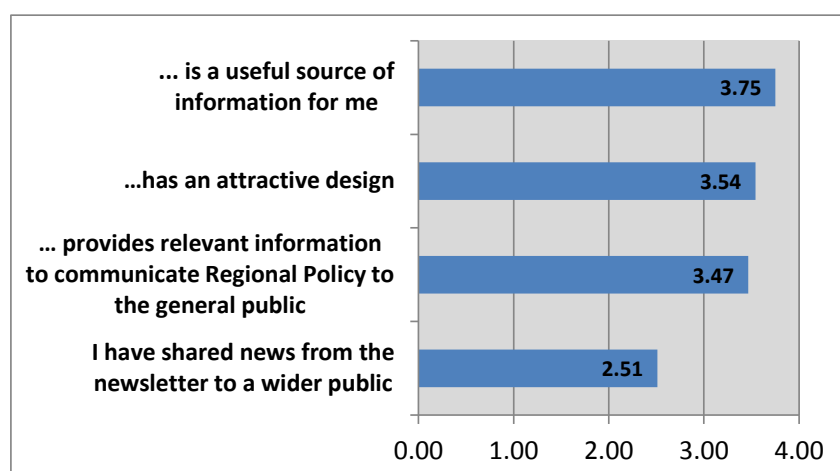
- **The RegioFlash newsletter is very popular among website users**, with nearly three out of every four survey respondents (74%) confirming that they are subscribed. The newsletter is most commonly received by NGOs / Think Tanks, consultants and Managing Authorities. NGOs are more likely than others to share the newsletter with colleagues.

Figure 13: Proportion of respondents who are subscribed to the RegioFlash newsletter (n=303)



- **Subscribers to the RegioFlash newsletter are generally satisfied with its features.** The newsletter is considered to be a useful source of information for respondents and to have an attractive design. A lower proportion of respondents consider that the newsletter provides relevant information to communicate regional policy to the general public. News from the newsletter is rarely shared by subscribers with a wider public.

Figure 14: Average rating of statements on the RegioFlash newsletter

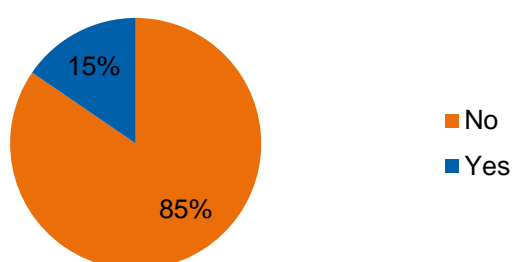


- Recommendations for improving the newsletter include featuring more specific and detailed information and news, more appealing headlines (ideally referring to stories), information of the content of the newsletter on the email title (to encourage people to open the newsletter and to glance through it), more information on best practices, more interactive elements (inviting comments from regions), and providing information on upcoming events long before the dates.

2.7 @EU_Regional on Twitter

- **@EU_Regional on Twitter is followed by 15% of respondents to the survey.** This channel is more popular among younger subscribers and respondents from the EU-15 MS, and also among consultants, stakeholders working in EU institutions and Managing Authorities.

Figure 15: Proportion of respondents who follow @EU_Regional on Twitter (n=298)

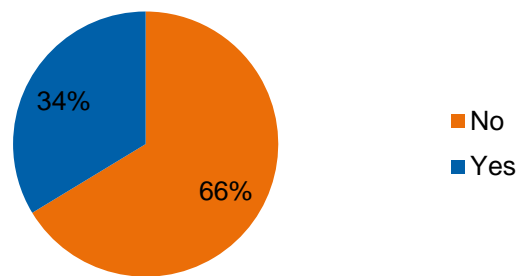


- Effective use of @EU_Regional on Twitter is low among the reduced group of followers of the Twitter account. Even though this channel is judged to provide up-to-date information on important messages, events and issues, tweets are rarely re-tweeted. Followers are scarcely encouraged to seek for more information related to the tweets they receive.
- It has been recommended to divide the Twitter profile into two: one for cohesion policy practitioners and the second –for a wider audience– with information on policy results. Respondents also feel that the content is too focused on the activity of the Commissioner and that its use should be more active. There was one suggestions in particular to use the Twitter account to reflect more broadly on issues that touch Europe from a regional perspective, and which are not necessarily linked to regional policy.

2.8 Facebook photo competition

- **Circa one out of every three respondents (34%) is familiar with the “Europe in my region” photo competition on Facebook.** Awareness levels are higher among younger respondents and among people from the new MS. Stakeholders working in EU institutions, Managing Authorities, but also journalists to a lesser extent, are more familiar of the competition than other respondents.

Figure 16: Proportion of respondents who are familiar with the "Europe in My Region" competition (n=297)



- The photo competition is regarded as a relevant form of communicating about projects funded by EU regional policy and as a good way of increasing public awareness of the values of regional policy. However, a lower proportion of respondents believe that the competition educated them on how the funding has been used in their region or country or what difference it made to local communities.
- Respondents in the new Member States tend to assess the informational and educational dimensions of the competition on a more positive note.
- Suggestions for improvement of the competition focus on stronger promotional actions in the MS.

3 SURVEY ON DG REGIO COMMUNICATION TOOLS

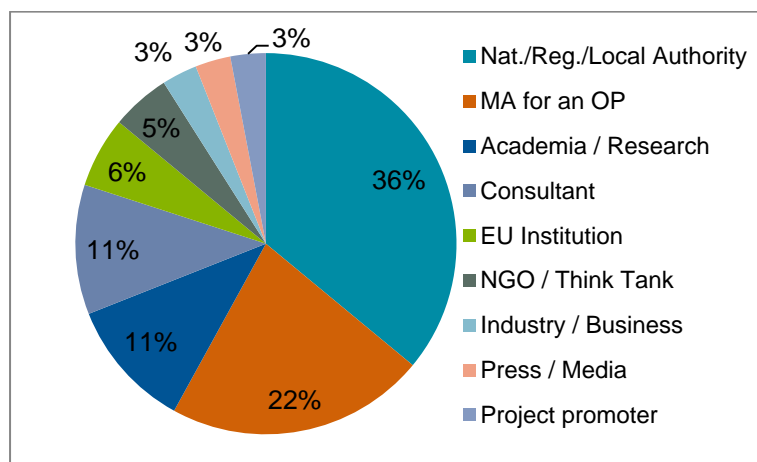
3.1 Introduction

An online survey to gather feedback on communication tools and activities developed by DG REGIO was launched in end May. The survey was disseminated by DG REGIO among public and non-public mailing lists, including: European institutions, MS administrations, Information providers and other institutions and organisations (think tanks, academics, NGOs, media, etc.). The survey, available in English, remained open until end June. A total of **213 responses were collected**. The composition of the sample is described below.

3.2 Profile of respondents to the survey

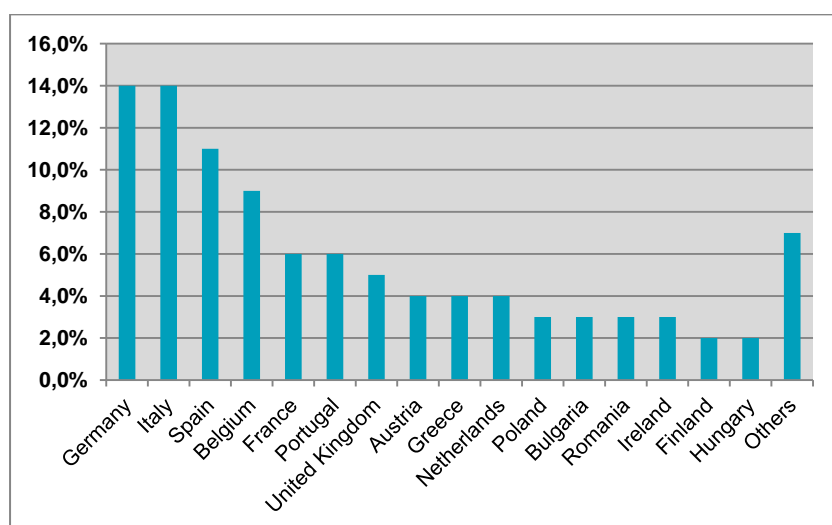
In terms of **field of work**, the largest group of respondents is that of national, regional and local authorities (36%). MAs for Operational Programmes represent the second largest group (22%). The sample is completed with academia and research stakeholders and consultants (11% each), EU Institutions (6%), NGOs and Think Tanks (5%), industry and business stakeholders, press and media actors and project promoters (3 each%).

Figure 17: Field of work of survey respondents



In terms of gender, there are more female (54%) than male respondents (46%) in the sample.

In terms of **countries where respondents work**, Germany and Italy come first (14% of respondents each), followed by Spain (11%), Belgium (9%), France and Portugal (6% each). Respondents working in the UK represent 5% of the sample, followed by people working in the Austria, Greece and The Netherlands (4% each). Respondents working in other countries include Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Ireland (3% each), and Finland and Hungary (2% each).

Figure 18: Country of work of survey respondents

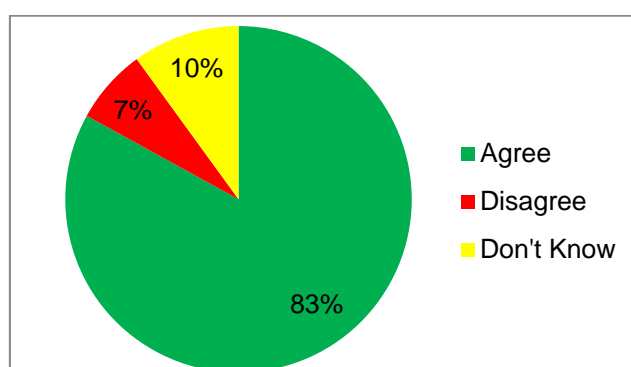
In terms of **degree of involvement in regional policy communication**, the sample is evenly divided between those respondents for whom communication is a minor part of their work (43%) and those for whom communication is a major part of their work (41%). The third group is composed of people for whom communication is their only area of responsibility (9%). There's only a reduced group (7%) for whom communication is not part of their work.

3.3 DG REGIO's communication approach and priorities

- **The Commission is expected to play an active role in communicating regional policy among citizens across the EU.** Eighty-three of respondents are supportive of the statement that the EC should play an active role, alongside the Member States and other stakeholders, in raising the visibility and understanding of regional policy among the general public in the EU. The remaining responses are divided between those who do not have a firm position on the issue (10%) and those who disagree (7%).

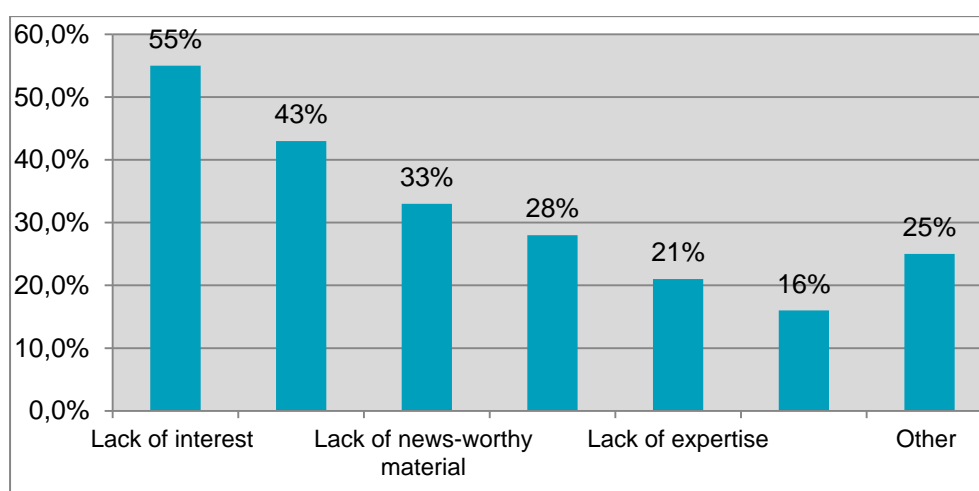
Figure 19: Level of agreement of survey respondents on DG REGIO's communication role

"The EC should play an active role, alongside the Member States and other stakeholders, in raising the visibility and understanding of regional policy among the general public in the EU."



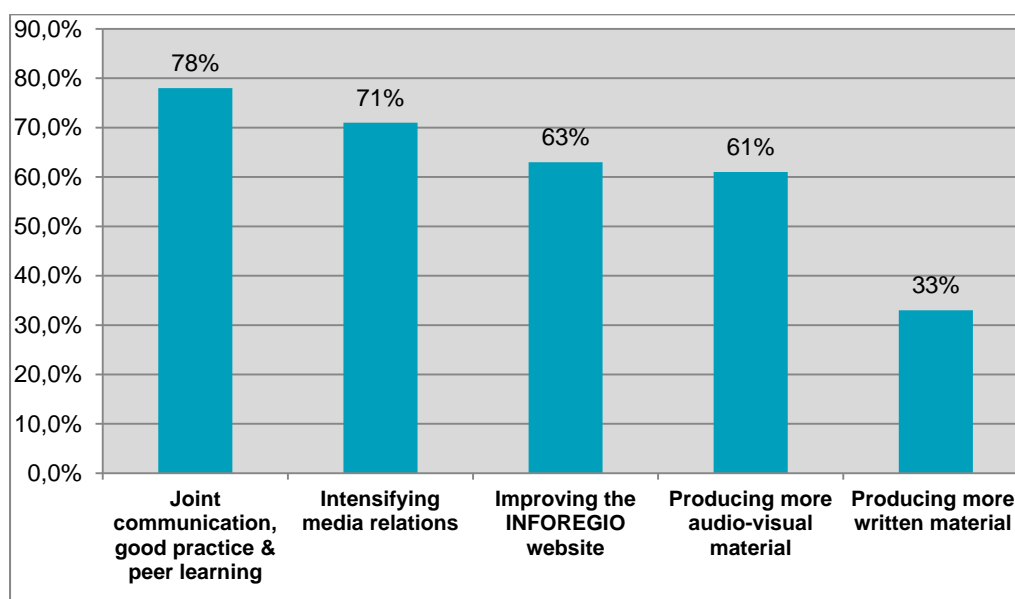
- ***There is a shared perception that the generalised lack of interest on regional policy is the key challenge for communicating on this topic.*** The lack of interest among stakeholders, multipliers and the general public, selected by 55% of respondents, stands out as the main challenge in raising the visibility and understanding of regional policy among the general public. Other important challenges for communicating regional policy are the low profile of information and communication activities (43%), the lack of news-worthy material about regional policy (33%) and the lack of quality communication tools (28%). Lack of expertise (21%) and insufficient funding (16%) are less of a priority when it comes to communication obstacles and challenges. Other challenges highlighted by respondents include lack of understanding among the broader audiences of what regional policy means, lack of willingness from national and local authorities to raise the visibility of EU support, and an adverse economic and social context which has resulted in the growth of Euro scepticism around the continent.

Figure 20: Key challenges for communicating regional policy (multiple response question)



- ***The Commission can enhance communication of regional policy by working in partnership with national authorities and stakeholders in the MS.*** According to 78% of respondents, fostering a joint communication policy, exchange of good practice and peer learning should be the Commission's key priority in supporting the work of Managing Authorities (MAs) and other stakeholders. There are also many respondents (71%) who consider that the Commission could support Managing Authorities by intensifying its relations with the media. Further improving the INFOREGIO website (63%) and producing more audio-visual material (61%) are highlighted as Commission priorities by slightly more than six out of every ten respondents. Producing more written material is only highlighted as a priority for 33% of respondents.

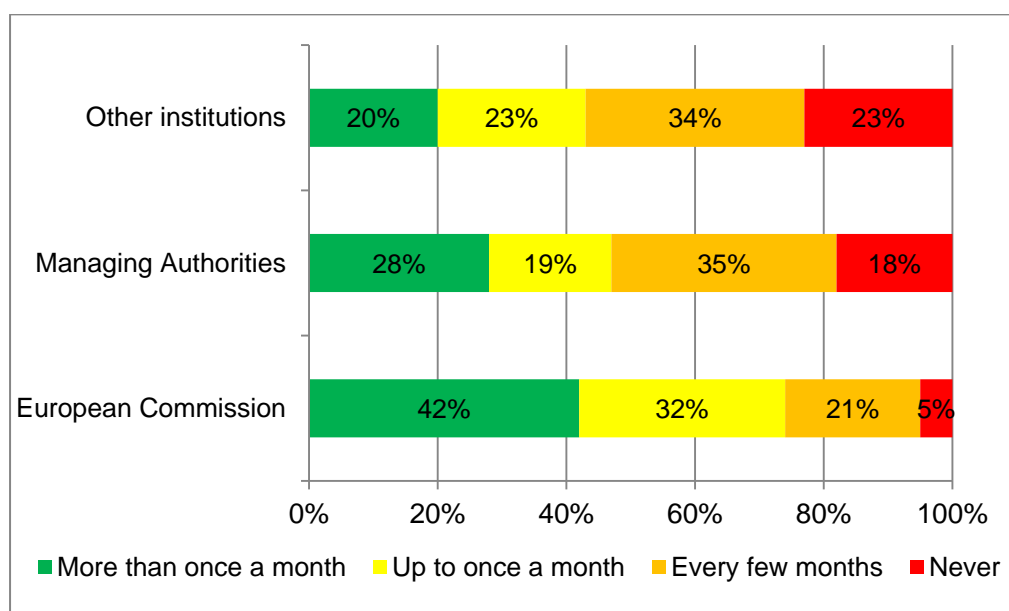
Figure 21: How can the Commission enhance communication of regional policy?



NOTE: Percentages of those who strongly agree or agree with the statements

- Other ways in which the Commission should more actively communicate about regional policy, and help MAs in the MS with this task, include working more closely with schools and universities in communicating to the younger generations, improving the collection and dissemination of best practices across the MS, intensifying the DG's presence on social networks and organising more events in the regions.
- **The EC is clearly a communication referent among survey respondents**, with nearly all respondents confirming that they receive information on regional policy from the Commission. A larger group (42%) receives information from the Commission more than once a month, followed by those who receive information up to once a month (32%) or every few months (21%).
- **Communication from MAs in the MS and regions is less frequent**, with the larger group (35%) confirming that they receive information more sporadically every few months, and 18% stating that they have never received any information from MAs.
- **Even less frequent for survey respondents is to receive information on regional policy from other institutions**. More than half of respondents have either never received information from other institutions (23%) or receive it on a sporadic basis every few months (34%).

Figure 22: How often do you receive information from the Commission, MAs and other institutions?



3.4 DG REGIO's communication tools and activities

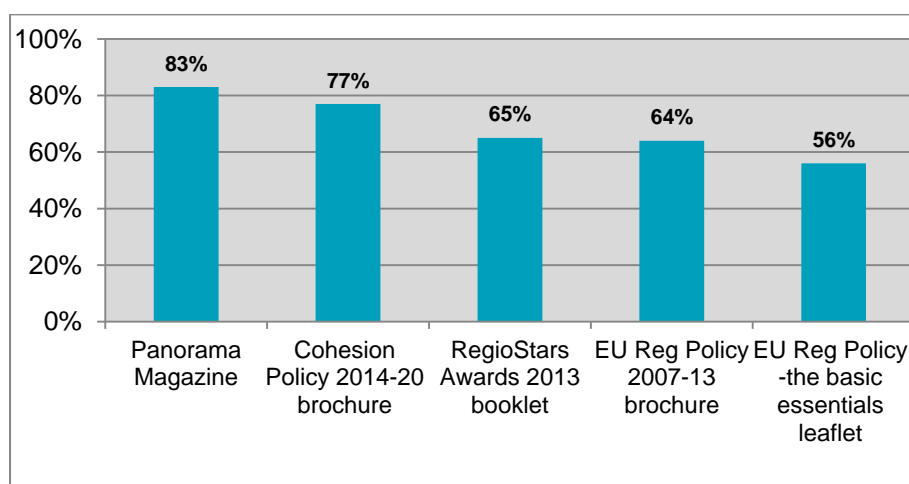
RegioNetwork on Yammer

- **The RegioNetwork group on Yammer is not yet consolidated.** Slightly more than one out of every four respondents (26%) confirms being a member of the network. Less than half of respondents within this reduced group have a positive stance on the usefulness of the network, in particular that it provides them with relevant information (38%), with an opportunity to share knowledge with others (40%) and to learn about innovative best practices on EU regional policy (34%). Comments raised by respondents who are members of the network is that they find it time consuming to review the debates on a regular basis, that there could be discussion groups per topics of interest, and that there are only very few people (DG REGIO and CoR members of staff mainly) who are actively taking part in the Yammer debates.

Publications

- **Respondents are highly familiar with the print material produced by DG REGIO.** The Panorama magazine is the most popular tool, known by 83% of respondents, followed by the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 brochure (77%), the RegioStars Awards 2013 booklet (65%), and the EU Regional Policy 2007-2013 and basic essentials leaflets (64% and 56% of awareness respectively).

Figure 23: Respondents' levels of awareness of DG REGIO selected publications



- Views on the Panorama magazine are generally positive among those who are familiar with the publication.** The majority (65%) agree that the magazine is easy to acquire, and there are many respondents (59%) who consider that the design is modern and attractive. Slightly more than half of respondents (52%) consider that the magazine presents information clearly and avoids jargon. A similar proportion agrees that Panorama is an important source of information on EU regional policy (49%). Fewer respondents consider that the magazine provides information that is of interest for the general public (44%), or that it offers a balanced perspective of EU regional policy (35%). Almost half of survey respondents in this group (44%) have distributed the magazine among colleagues.
- Suggestions to improve the magazine include featuring more provocative, critical and less propagandistic or institutional articles, producing special issues covering specific topics or regions, providing more facts and hard data, and exploring electronic distribution of the magazine for wider audiences.
- Nearly half of respondents (49%) who are familiar with the **brochure on Cohesion Policy** for the next programming period consider that it offers a complete coverage of the new proposals that will frame Cohesion Policy in the coming years. Many respondents are also in agreement that the brochure is easy to acquire and that it has a modern and attractive design (48% each). Fewer respondents in this group consider that the brochure presents information clearly and avoids jargon (43%), that it provides information of interest to the general public (37%), or that the information in the brochure is difficult to find elsewhere (33%). Circa three out of every ten survey respondents in this group (30%) have distributed the brochure among colleagues.
- With regard to improvements to the brochure, respondents highlight that it is important that the content (which will change) be updated on a regular basis on the Inforegio website and that the messages remains simple and clear, avoiding jargon.

Videos

- **Awareness of audiovisual tools is far lower than print flagship publications** among respondents. Slightly less than one third of survey respondents (30%) is familiar with the RegioStars Awards series of short films, and only 24% are knowledgeable of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 3 minute film.
- Survey respondents were asked to watch the videos and to provide their views on them. Nearly half of those respondents who answered the specific questions on the **RegioStars Awards series** (49%) consider that the stories are presented in a simple and clear way. Circa four out of every ten respondents in this group agree that the RegioStars Awards videos provide them with useful messages on innovative projects across Europe (41%), that the images are attractive and eye-catching (41%) and that these messages can be of interest to the general public (40%). A small minority within this group (13%) has distributed the videos among colleagues, and an even more reduced number (10%) has read or heard about the projects showcased in these videos in the media.
- Of those who provided their views on the **EU Cohesion Policy clip**, 49% state that the story is presented in a simple and clear way, followed closely by 46% who consider that the clip is eye-catching and attractive. 41% of respondents in this group agree that the clip can be of interest to the general public, and a lower percentage (34%) claim that the video offers a detailed coverage of proposals that will frame the next programming period. In comparison to the RegioStars Awards series, there is a larger number of respondents who have heard or read about this clip in the media (24%) or who have shared it with colleagues (18%).
- Suggestions for improvement of these videos include stronger promotional actions (e.g. Euronews, EU YouTube channel, social networks, links to MAs and local authorities' websites, etc.), improved online access to the videos, shorter duration and availability in a wider option of EU languages.

Events

- **Only a small minority of respondents (10%) participated in the recent RegioStars Awards Ceremony 2013** organised by the EC. Views on the event are generally positive among those who took part in it. Slightly more than two out of every three respondents who participated (67%) acted as multipliers, disseminating information of the event to colleagues. The majority in this reduced group were satisfied with the organisation of the event, and highlighted that it provided them with the opportunity to become familiar with innovative good practices in EU regional policy (58% each). A lower percentage considered that the event made available to them useful messages and information on EU regional policy (50%). A smaller proportion (24%) confirmed having read or heard about the event in the media.

- Suggestions for improving the RegioStars Awards event include organising the ceremony outside Brussels and inviting a broader number of people apart from officials and nominees.

3.5 Suggestions and recommendations for the future

- ***There are shared views that use of traditional and new media should be enhanced to more effectively reach the general public.*** When consulted about additional actions that the Commission could take to effectively communicate regional policy to the general public, respondents highlight that a more effective use of traditional media should be made, including: more participation of EC officials in popular TV and radio shows in the MS, organising broadcasting events with regional and local governments, implementing media partnerships, connecting local information centres to local media, producing audiovisual material for national and regional media, and focusing on topics that are local and specific. Better and more active use of social media is also mentioned by a number of respondents.
- Other suggestions highlighted by respondents to more effectively target citizens include: broadening the menu of languages, working in closer partnership with national, regional and local authorities, promoting partnerships with other local stakeholders such as universities, industry, giving voice to critical views and promoting discussion of regional policy and projects, stronger local on the ground presence of EC officials.
- ***An online and social media strategy, a focus on events, a stronger presence in the MS and a less institutional approach are judged to be important for survey respondents.*** When asked to provide recommendations for the Commission to more effectively target people like themselves, respondents emphasise four elements: a regularly updated website and an active social media strategy (including Twitter and Facebook), specific events and expert meetings featuring debates for researchers and practitioners with advanced knowledge on regional policy, a stronger presence of the Commission at national, regional and local levels, and a less institutional and propagandistic approach to regional policy communications, featuring more critical views.

4 INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Introduction

The main objective of the stakeholder interviews carried out by the evaluation team was to develop an in-depth understanding of the need for, use of and usefulness of the different communication activities and tools produced by DG REGIO; if and how these tools are disseminated (both, *to* the stakeholders and *by* them); and whether they are appropriate for reaching the target audiences.

Table 4 below presents the total number of interviews conducted. Many of the interviews (approximately 135) were carried out with European Commission officers, Managing Authorities, Implementing Bodies, beneficiaries and informed observers as part of the Member State case studies, and included a limited scope of questions related to information and communication tools developed by DG REGIO.

An additional 22 semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with current and potential multipliers of DG REGIO, including European level organisations and institutions, information providers, and journalists.⁴ The list of organisations interviewed is provided at the end of this section.

Table 4 – Total number of interviews conducted (Tasks 1 and 2)

Stakeholder group	Interviewees / institutions	Form	No of interviews
Interviews conducted as part of MS case studies			ca. 135
European Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geo-desk officers at DG REGIO Press officers from EC representations 	Telephone	ca. 14
MAs - primary communicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication officers at Managing Authorities/intermediate bodies 	Face-to-face (f2f)	34 orgs (52 ind)
Secondary communicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officials from implementing organisations Co-ordinators/managers of EU co-funded projects 	Mainly f2f	38 orgs (48 ind)
Informed observers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National or regional journalists, evaluators, social partners, NGOs, etc. 	Mainly f2f	20 orgs (21 ind)
Additional interviews conducted solely for the purpose of Task 2			22
European institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EC reps (DG REGIO, DG COMM), CoR, EESC, CEMR, Business Europe, Eurocities, EACI, Euclid 	Telephone	9
Information providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Europe Direct information centres and expert speakers (Team Europe) 	Telephone	4
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media at the EU level Journalists working at national and regional level 	Telephone	8
Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Studies Association 	Telephone	1

⁴ Academics were contacted by the evaluation team but only one interview was carried out with a representative of this group. The majority of the stakeholders contacted were unresponsive or unfamiliar with the topic.

The findings below are presented by stakeholder group, including EU Institutions, information providers, and journalists, and Managing Authorities (MAs) and other (regional) stakeholders in MS (via Task 1 – MS case studies), and are structured around the following topics:

- Communication models: how do stakeholders consulted communicate with their target audiences and about regional policy in particular;
- Views on the main challenges and obstacles to communicating about regional policy;
- Awareness and views on DG REGIO's communication tools;
- Awareness and views on DG REGIO's media relations;
- Discussion around ways in which DG REGIO can improve its communications.

4.2 Communication models

EU Institutions

Most of the EU institutions interviewed play a role as umbrella organisations, with members and partners in one or more Member State(s). Due to resource limitations or to the nature of their structures, the majority of these organisations **rely heavily on multipliers to spread their key messages across the EU**:

"We cannot produce precise news for every corner in Europe. We find it quite challenging to cover this continent with the different national structures and the different languages there exist." (Committee of the Regions)

"We are a small institution with a very limited budget, so our premise is to communicate Europe in partnership." (European Economic and Social Committee)

Key multipliers tend to be members of those organisations that are recipients of the communication tools and activities implemented (websites, newsletters, events, publications, social media, etc.). These include local authorities and politicians mainly, but also non-elected technical officials, business players, civil society stakeholders, academics and other stakeholders in the regional community. Citizens are also targeted by the majority of EU institutions, though to a lesser extent, as their communication budgets and activities are more adequate for specific target groups.

The box below provides a brief overview of the communication model of the Committee of the Regions.

The Committee of the Regions (CoR)

The CoR is a small young and political institution with a communication budget of 1.8 million EUR per year (just around a quarter of DG REGIO's budget for communication). The members of the CoR (an advisory body made up of 350 local politicians - regional presidents, mayors or elected representatives of regions and cities) are the key target group

of the organisation and the main multipliers of the messages. On a second level, the CoR (together with its members) communicates to regional stakeholders all over Europe. Citizens comprise the third and last target group. There is a strong overlap in the audiences addressed by DG REGIO and the CoR. In terms of communication tools, the CoR has its website (available in all EU languages) with information at both national and regional levels. E-newsletters are also issued in all EU languages, with each issue featuring two to three key institutional messages and a selection of regional and local news. CoR members are encouraged to organise local events with citizens in their hometowns. Events can take different shapes (debates, forums, etc.) and target different profiles of citizens (pensioners, young people, the elderly, etc.).

Information providers

EU regional policy is part of a broader menu of topics that Europe Direct Centres (EDICs) and Team Europe Experts in the Member States communicate about. In this framework, there is not a particular approach to communicating about regional policy issues that differs from how other EU topics are communicated. **Information requests (on any EU topic of interest) are handled on a case-by-case basis and information is also disseminated more proactively via multiple channels** (online, emails, newsletters, events) as the centres and the experts see fit and in line with available possibilities and resources.

The **focus of the work of Europe Direct Centres and Team Europe Experts is on citizens**, but there are also consolidated networks of connections and fluid contacts with national and local authorities in the different countries, and with Universities and with EC representations, who often act as multipliers vis-à-vis the general public. The type of information disseminated is usually of a general (not technical) nature. Activities targeted at school children or at elderly citizens are popular tools in some centres.

Journalists

In general, journalists who report about EU regional policy cover EU affairs from a broader perspective, so they are looking for different areas and angles that are related to the EU and complain about the compartmentalised approach to communication followed by the different Commission DGs. The majority of interviewees agree that **their work would be simplified if communication stemmed from one source rather than from so many referents**.

Journalists tend to feed from national sources and they also value personal contacts at EU level. They **prefer a more personalised approach** (including phone calls and meetings) rather than official statements or press releases that they find difficult to digest and that are sent to many other colleagues. Journalists are out there in the search for news that will differentiate them from their colleagues, so they are more likely to be attracted by an off-the-record declaration than by more formal communication channels and tools.

4.3 Challenges to regional policy communication

EU Institutions

Representatives in EU institutions highlight two main challenges to communicating about regional policy. The first difficulty is the **widespread lack of interest from the media to report on positive news** (“good news is no news”) which makes reaching the press very difficult. The second challenge is related to the fact that the **topic of structural funds is highly technical**, so there is a need to make it more accessible to the target audiences.

Interviews with EU representatives also provided an insiders’ perspective, shedding light on some of the **internal challenges** that DG REGIO is faced with, namely related to the information that the DG makes available to external audiences; the lack of a broader guiding thread to contextualise the information about projects; and a lack of confidence of those who communicate on behalf of the DG.

In terms of the information that is made available to communicate externally, it was argued that **access to information in DG REGIO is very difficult**. Commission officials only feel comfortable with providing information after it has been checked and double checked and when it is legally certain. The main problem is that such a degree of veracity in the information is only feasible to communicate on an ex post basis, so it is hard to find information that is true and that can be communicated in real time.

The second internal challenge, related to the **lack of umbrella messages**, points to the need to work harder on the ground to explain how particular projects fit within the bigger picture. There seems to be an absence of threading arguments to integrate and contextualise the information on projects. This opens the path for authorities and beneficiaries at local level to take ownership of the results when they should be sharing them with the EU.

“Why did the EU provide funds to modernise a factory in a given region? To create a number of jobs in that region, but also because the EU is actively promoting the creation of jobs as part of its broader policy goals.”

The **lack of confidence among those communicating on behalf of DG REGIO** has been traditionally linked to adverse press coverage, focused on the mismanagement of funds, things that went wrong, money not being well-spent, etc. Understandably, there was little to gain from seeking attention and the DG developed a defensive mind-set in terms of communication.

The current reform process introduced by the Commissioner situates DG REGIO in a transition phase, which is expected to lead people to think differently and to have an impact on the way that regional policy is communicated. Communication in the past was centred on sound financial management, i.e. how much money was being spent, and where/within how much time it was spent. The focus was rather conservative as it was based on outputs but did not go a step further to make claims on the actual results of work done. The reform is expected to line up all programmes and projects against a set of strategic priorities, so it will

be easier to situate what has been done within a broader policy perspective and to make claims on what has been achieved (as reporting will be more oriented towards results).

Information providers

The main challenge as highlighted by information providers is the generalised lack of interest in EU affairs and in EU regional policy per se, which is evident at different levels, including at the level of citizens and at the level of the actual beneficiaries of the funding. The mythical idea of Europe that was valid in the past is now questioned by a growing number of citizens in the different Member States

On the one hand, citizens want to know if their regions will receive funding and they are positive when they see concrete achievements that are related to them. However, they are not really interested in meta-messages about the policy in itself. In a similar vein, beneficiaries have strictly functional information needs: they want to know about the funds available, about submission deadlines, and about specific details about the calls. Information on regional policy is not a priority for them if it is not strictly related to their work.

Another related challenge to communicating about regional policy concerns the current diminished resources available to many national and local governments across Europe, which impacts negatively on the communication budgets.

Journalists

With very few exceptions, the majority of journalists interviewed (including those reporting from Brussels and from the Member States) do not cover EU regional policy extensively. There are a number of factors that contribute to this **low degree of coverage**, which, in summary, are linked to the excessive, complex and depersonalised information coming from the Commission. The consequence is that covering EU regional policy turns into a time-consuming task, discouraging people to report on it:

“Trying to get some answers from the European Commission takes time, and generally we (journalists) are running against time to publish a story.”

The key challenges highlighted by journalists are explained in more detail below.

The current **information overburden** from Commission sources that journalists are exposed to (multiplicity of press releases, newsletters, websites), and the fact that it is not organised in a way that is user-friendly and easy to browse through, is said to be frustrating and even counter-productive:

“The information available is so vast that paradoxically it ends up misinforming.”

Coupled with the information overload that journalists are exposed to, there is also the shared view that **EU regional policy is a highly complex topic** that requires journalists to get their head around it:

“Reporting about regional policy is not for beginners: familiarity with the rules and implementation mechanisms is essential to cover the issue of regional funds.”

A third obstacle to communicating about EU regional policy is the fact that **the Commission in general is seen to be too bureaucratic** – an institution with many different heads – and detached from the national contexts and local realities. With the exception of a reduced number of country visits from high level Commission officials, journalists working in the Member States do not have fluent or direct contact with Brussels representatives, so the information is usually received through the filter of national and/or local authorities who also want to tell their own side of the story.

Linked to the above, some journalists argue that one of the major problems of the Commission is the **difficulty involved in identifying the newsworthy elements of the stories they tell**. The fact that there are too many scattered stories that are not linked to a broader narration contributes to generating confusion among the media and the general public.

In line with the above argument, DG REGIO's approach is criticised by some as being too **inward looking**. One interviewee highlighted that Commissioner Hahn does not have a very high media profile and that DG REGIO seems to lack a strategy to ensure it is in the mainstream media. It is believed that a more strategic and regular use of social media by the Commissioner and the DG could improve their public profile:

“There's a strong potential in social media as a multiplier. More and more journalists follow and turn to social media nowadays, so traditional media can feed from messages in social media.”

One journalist who had participated in the latest editions of the Open Days argued that the promotion of this flagship event did not seem to be very efficient, as there were many journalists covering regional policy (and even majors in cities) that were not aware of the existence of such an event:

“I see the same regions, cities and majors in every edition of the Open Days.”

Low coverage of EU regional policy topics is further exacerbated by a tendency to report about negative stories involving corruption. Journalists interviewed admit that the media has a certain inclination to cover a story if it is linked to fraud or a financial scandal. The result is that stories about projects that have been successfully and correctly implemented are very often not covered, whilst stories that feature negative elements are more likely to gain prominence on the news. Even if the scandals reported are originated at local level, the Commission usually remains linked to the stories as the funds are of EU origin.

In addition to the challenges discussed above, the journalists consulted agreed that the current situation in many EU countries –with major and more immediate problems occupying the agenda– contributes to a leaner coverage of regional policy issues. The challenge for DG REGIO is communicate results that are visible to citizens and link them to their current preoccupations, but at the same time highlight that it takes time for changes to be observable:

“The challenge is to communicate to people in poorer rural regions who are looking for a job that they first need a road to find the job.”

MAs and stakeholders in the MS

The interviews carried out with the MAs and other (regional) stakeholders in eight MS as part of the case studies allowed for the identification of a number of challenges to communicating on EU regional policy. These challenges have been grouped under the following sub-themes for ease of reference: content, language, target audiences, multipliers, and legal and technical requirements.

The content – its complexity and making it relevant

- The **complexity of the EU and its component parts** with different funds, regional policy instruments and interventions, and different OPs for ETCs in particular that “*are doing similar things in slightly different ways in territories that overlap in some cases*” (France, Germany, Poland)
- 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) (France)
- **Making what is being done in terms of regional policy relevant, tangible and interesting for the general public**, for example by helping them understand the impact of regional policy on their everyday lives. (Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Estonia, Spain)

As one communicator put it:

“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”. (Estonia)

The language – jargon, not adapted to all

- Finding alternatives to the ‘**EU jargon**’ when trying to explain to the public how regional policy benefits Estonia. (Estonia)
- The **inappropriateness of the use of the term regional policy in smaller MS** where they do not operate within the confines of recognised sub-national territories, such as in the case of the German Länder. This was seen to lead to some confusion by an observer. (Estonia)

The target audiences – negative, uninterested, disparate

- The **negative attitudes towards the EU**, in particular in the current economic climate. (France, Spain)
- People were **not always interested in EU policies** or simply took the fact that their region received regional support for granted. (Hungary)
- It is easier / more straightforward to communicate to (potential) beneficiaries as they are “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. (Italy)
- In-country geographical, cultural and language differences. (Estonia, Spain)

The multipliers – uninterested

- **The interest from the media (especially national media) in regional policy funding tends to be very limited** (notably in terms of publicising the results) – unless there is a scandal or some other negative story to report – or gets overshadowed by political disputes. (Germany, France, Hungary, Poland)

The legal and technical requirements – too precise, complex

- **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. Communicators suggested removing these tags, perhaps replacing them with a simple ‘Paid for by the EU’ slogan to get the most important message across. (Estonia)
- 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 (France)
- 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. (France)
- The large number of projects funded in Estonia makes it unrealistic and undesirable to expect all beneficiaries, regardless of their size, to communicate with the public. (Estonia)
- **Overregulation of the communication requirements for beneficiaries**, which hinders the implementation of innovative approaches due to doubts on compliance with the regulations. (Poland)
- Budget cuts and **lack of resources**. (Spain)

4.4 Awareness of and views on communication tools

EU Institutions

Awareness and use of DG REGIO’s communication tools is high among representatives of EU institutions. Interviewees provided clear views on the INFOREGIO website and its online presence more generally, on flagship events and on publications.

INFOREGIO

With regard to the **INFOREGIO website**, interviewees agree that it suffers from a similar problem to most EU websites in that navigation can be a complex and time-consuming experience:

“It is quicker to Google something than to try to navigate on Commission websites.”

“It is not a matter of information being available, but rather easily available.”

The website is also considered to be somewhat out of date and a bit too general. Interviewees agree that there is scope to improve the way that the information is brought together and to provide more detailed information on what is going on in the regions, though they realise that this can only materialise if it is conceived as a shared task with the Member States and MAs:

“Even when it is a serious and justifiable aspiration, there are a number of factors that make it very difficult for DG REGIO to regionalise the content of its website. Within the current shared management model, much of the information is with the Member States and Management Authorities. Greater commitment from MSs and MAs could help to make relevant changes to the website.”

Other suggestions to improve the website include featuring interviews and making it more journal oriented –not too scientific, but reflective enough so that people can take it seriously. Also crucial to report on the website is the policy cycle. The negotiation process with regard to the next programming period is seen to have taken place behind closed doors, without any updates announced. The fact that people could not find updated versions of the text was a big frustration, and led people to search for information via alternative channels:

“I wouldn’t go to the DG REGIO website to find information on what is currently happening. We cover much of the structural funds negotiation and rely heavily on informal contacts, but the website is not a source of information.”

Interviewees believe that the website should better reflect the policy cycle by for example featuring pop-ups with news on the negotiation cycle.

Events

When it comes to events, there is a shared view among stakeholders in EU institutions that the success of the events organised by DG REGIO (in particular the Open Days, but also the RegioStars Awards) shows that there is the potential to do more in this field. However, there are a few interviewees who acknowledge that a stronger focus on events would demand a permanent team in charge observing the ‘market’, identifying needs and responding to these during concrete events.

Overall, DG REGIO events are considered to be predominantly effective at targeting diverse audiences:

“DG REGIO events are very professional, especially when considering how many audiences are being targeted: general public, project promoters, local and national politicians, opinion formers among others. The key seems to be that DG REGIO is very conscious of the diversity of its audiences so it targets its communications accordingly.”

The Open Days are seen as a bottom-up democratic event where the regions are listened to and are provided with the opportunity to exchange experiences and learn from each other year after year. The event is also seen to have succeeded in attracting a respectable amount of attention from the media and in gathering relevant regional stakeholders together. On the downside, the Open Days are perceived as having grown out of proportion. People seem to prefer the smaller editions of previous years, in that they allowed for more effective learning and long-lasting networking. There are a few interviewees who argue that the Open Days

are confined to the Brussels bubble whereas a stronger, real impact could be achieved if the event went local.

The RegioStars Awards was also considered by a few respondents as a good opportunity to disseminate good practice. The Cohesion Policy Forum, on the other hand, was seen to be static, and was defined as *“the usual Brussels event where the Commission meets with Member States”*. Ideas proposed for new events include an annual summit on capacity building for Managing Authorities in the Member States and local (smaller) editions of the Open Days.

Publications

In terms of publications, DG REGIO was defined by a few respondents in this group as a “publications-oriented” DG in a context where everybody is moving away from print tools and demanding less paper. The Panorama magazine is considered to be a good and reliable source of information with an attractive design, but it is perceived to demand a lot of work and financial resources, as it is now completely outsourced.

Information providers

Awareness of DG REGIO’s communication tools is said to be low among stakeholder groups, and even lower among ordinary citizens who consult the Europe Direct Information Centres. As argued above, information providers consulted agree that there is not a demand for information on EU regional policy; hence this lack of awareness is partly linked to a lack of interest from the public. Specific information is mainly sought by those interested in applying for funding or in participating in the RegioStars Awards, for example.

Awareness and use of the DG’s communication tools is also low among those information providers interviewed, with only one interviewee (out of the four people consulted) clearly showing familiarity with (and acceptance of) the different tools. Key comments on some of DG REGIO’s tools include:

- The new website shows substantial improvement relative to the previous one, with very basic information on the first level pages, and more in-depth information when exploring subsequent levels. The website structure is considered to be good, facilitating navigation (*“every document and legislation is easy to find on the website”*).
- PowerPoint presentations and studies available on the website are found to be useful sources for further dissemination of information to local audiences.
- Panorama is considered to be a very good magazine, at the top of EU regional policy information sources, featuring relevant information.
- Prizes are a good strategy to capture the attention of the media and of the general public. The communication of prize awards raises awareness of concrete results achieved locally with EU funds.

Journalists

Except for a couple of interviewees who declared to be unaware of the DG's communication tools, **the majority of journalists consulted are familiar with the DG's main tools**, including the website, the RegioFlash newsletter and the Open Days. The shared view, however, is that the information available is too abundant and that it is full of technicalities, which makes it complex and unattractive to many of them.

"It took me some time before I really got to know about how EU regional policy works. It is all quite complicated to understand, it should be much easier and about helping people to understand the basics."

Importance of direct contact

Journalists tend to prefer more personalised and direct access to the spokesperson and key officials at DG REGIO, as well as to technical experts in the field. Some people agree that direct contact with the DG has improved with the new spokesperson. However, a few journalists (in particular in new Member States) complain that their contact with the Commission is mainly through the Representation in their countries, but not through Brussels officials. Interviewees also express their frustration with the fact that Commission officials who are not authorised spokespersons are not allowed to give interviews:

"What's the point of listening to a presentation from a Commission official if I (as a journalist) can't ask my own questions? It's useless for journalists."

The Open Days

Many of the journalists interviewed have attended the Open Days and praise this event because of the networking opportunities it provides:

"The Open Days offers a very useful personal access to key people that can help you in your work, in particular experts with relevant technical information and regional authorities."

There are some interviewees who argue that the event has grown significantly in recent years, and that people who currently attend without a pre-defined agenda tend to get lost. It is very important for the networking to know who is participating and to plan any meetings in advance.

One interviewee expressed doubts about the amount of media coverage that the Open Days had received in the past, and highlighted that there was scope for the event to receive more attention from the media. The same interviewee confirmed having moderated a high level panel in a recent edition of the Open Days, and that surprisingly there had been no questions from the audience, which forced panellists to trigger questions among themselves:

"I don't know if it was lack of understanding or lack of interest from the public, but in any case there should be a task force for each panel to allow for a vivid debate after the presentations."

MAAs and stakeholders in the MS

In general terms, the level of awareness and use of DG REGIO's activities and tools varies across those countries which formed part of the case studies (with Estonia, for example, showing more awareness than France or Spain) and awareness is greater among national and regional authorities or central coordinators, and tends to decrease among intermediaries and observers, such as local authorities and implementing bodies.

The compiled findings from these interviews are presented by tool below.

INFORM network meetings

Overall, **views on the INFORM network meetings are positive**, with interviewees who have attended them from across the case study countries seeing them as an opportunity / means to:

- Listen to the ideas and opinions of other communicators on regional policy and to share best practices, both during the meetings and informally on their margins (Estonia, France, Hungary, Poland);
- Seek inspiration (Germany, Hungary);
- Learn about something new (France);
- Meet relevant people and develop a more personal relationship with them (France);
- Self-evaluate one's own communication activities against those of others (Germany);
- Give communicators the feeling that they are part of a larger community, and that what they do matters (Germany)

In fact, a Hungarian interviewee made specific reference to the fact that some MS had replicated a couple of their best practice activities presented at the meetings, and that they were intending to do the same.

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. (Germany)

Moreover, the profile of meeting attendees is considered disparate, with many people working in communication, but not knowledgeable of the structural funds. This is seen as a hindrance to the discussions, as the focus moves 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. Finally, the decision to discontinue simultaneous translation of the meeting's sessions to other languages represents a huge obstacle for Spanish representatives. (Spain)

Interviewees made a number of **recommendations** on how to better these meetings, namely:

- Use the meetings 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 or creating common communication guidance documents across OPs. (ETC - France)

- 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. (Poland)
- Ensuring that the distribution lists for the meetings are regularly updated, potentially including a wider target audience such as intermediaries (regional delegations, authorities). (France, Poland)

The DG REGIO website

Those that commented on DG REGIO's website tend to be of the opinion that it **contains too much information, is too "institutional", "complex", not sufficiently systematised**, leading to long complex searches that are not always successful (France, Spain). As a result, it is felt that it is not aimed at the general public (France). It was also stated that it is difficult for users to discriminate between updated information and information that is no longer valid (Spain). While other interviewees found it relatively user-friendly, it is not seen to play a significant role in the communication efforts at the regional level (Germany).

Recommendations for improving the website include having:

- A more organised search functionality, as well as a clear prioritisation of valid and most updated documentation. (Spain)
- A special section (or website) on comparative best practices across, with common criteria and useful recommendations and advice for emulating successful examples elsewhere. (Spain)

Events, campaigns and competitions

A couple of interviewees found that the RegioStars competition is an effective means of sharing best practices from across the Member States (Estonia, Hungary), but in Italy and Spain, interviewees are more sceptical as to the transparency of the selection process, as the OPs that took part did not receive feedback on how the projects had been evaluated.

One communication activity which was considered particularly effective by a couple of interviewees is the **circus** which toured the EU's Member States in 2011 to promote the European Social Fund⁵. It contained a simple, clear message about a social, equal Europe that was relevant to the general public (France). However, this same campaign was seen as unsuitable for Estonia, given the stigma carried by circuses as a form of entertainment associated with the country's Soviet past. (Estonia)

DG REGIO's Open Days are positively viewed by those interviewed in Spain and who have attended them, but it was acknowledged that the Open Days have grown into a massive

⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=370&featuresId=127&furtherFeatures=yes&langId=en>

event and that the networking of the initial editions has been replaced by a more impersonal type of event. (Spain)

Publications and newsletter

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 (Germany).

DG REGIO's **Panorama magazine** is considered a high quality publication and an example of best practice (Spain, Hungary). However, it was felt that it is mainly read in Brussels and would benefit from a more effective outreach strategy at national and regional levels (Spain). Elsewhere it was seen of limited use and interest for stakeholders in the regions (Germany).

As regards the **RegioFlash newsletter**, interviews conducted in Spain suggest that 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 (Spain).

Regio Network on Yammer

Overall, few case study interviewees are aware of and use the Regio Network on Yammer. In Estonia, those interviewees that are aware of and have used it, consider it to be a useful tool for exchanging information (Estonia). In France, 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, are much more profitable to be members of than those that only involve sharing experiences (France). Language represents 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 (Spain).

Gadgets

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

4.5 Media relations

EU Institutions

Interviewees representing EU institutions tend to be sceptical about the degree to which DG REGIO can effectively improve its relations with the media, as many argue that **institutional communication coming from Brussels is generally seen by the media as propaganda**.

In addition to this, in a context where the media in Brussels and elsewhere are overloaded with information, respondents agree that **the positive stories that revolve around the Commission's funding of projects are not as easily published by the media as the stories involving corruption scandals with EU funds.**

Notwithstanding the cynicism within this group about the DG's scope to influence its relations with the media, there is agreement amongst interviewees that the **relations with the media in Brussels have improved recently** with the arrival of the new spokeswoman – an argument which is confirmed by journalists interviewed (see below). In addition, there are some within DG REGIO who argue that the current reform process in the DG is a good opportunity to embed regional policy as an integral part of the EU's response to the economic crisis. In this context, successful media coverage of regional policy should be no longer be seen as the number of citations that appear in the media, but how integrated the broader narration is with current events.

Respondents in this group agree that the designated **Managing Authorities are best placed to manage relations with the media at Member State level, though many also highlight that the Commission should have a stronger local presence by visiting projects and organising events in the regions.**

Information providers

According to information providers interviewed in Austria and Portugal, there is not a marked interest from the media in reporting about EU regional policy.

In Portugal, discussion of **EU affairs is not a high priority on the agenda of the national media.** The main newspapers in Portugal (Expresso, Público, Diário de Notícias) publish on average one or two pages on EU affairs once every couple of days, and interviewees add that there are only three or four journalists that are specialised in EU topics. In this context of low coverage of EU affairs in general, information on regional policy is difficult to find in Portuguese national news outlets.

A phenomenon observed in different countries is **whilst regional papers are more likely to cover regional policy, they only have an interest in reporting about issues that have a connection with a local reality.** On top of this, regional media do not look at EU regional policy as a phenomenon with a European dimension but the focus tends to be on local governments and authorities. This is probably linked to the fact that it is local governments that interact with the media and put the news on the agenda, so they tend to highlight their role.

Things that DG REGIO could do to strengthen relations with the media, according to this respondent group, include:

- Reinforcing direct contacts with newspapers and journalists;
- Offering special training courses to the media on EU affairs and on regional policy;
- Tailoring the information disseminated, so that it is connected to the country and the region being covered.

Journalists

The shared view of journalists interviewed who follow DG REGIO's news on a regular basis is that **media relations have improved in the last year, with a more active spokesperson, better press releases and more accessible news updates**. On the downside, interviewees agree that it's not sufficient to rely on a new spokesperson to generate changes in the DG's communication approach, but that more substantive modifications need to be made, including:

- A more prominent public profile for the Commissioner. Regional policy is a horizontal policy area and a very important portfolio that touches upon many aspects of development, and should have a stronger say in other related policy areas.
- Simpler press releases. Journalists not working in regional policy have to learn to understand the press releases issued by the Commission. It is believed that there is too much information that is not relevant, with the consequence that the information that is relevant gets lost.
- More information on the website on strategic priorities. Many interviewees highlight that there has been no information provided the Commission on the negotiations for the next programming period, and that this has limited public discussions on what funding will look like in the coming years.

There are also external factors that influence the degree to which EU regional policy is covered in the media. A Portuguese journalist mentioned that the current government hardly ever speaks about regional development, which makes it very difficult for the media to make it a topic in the public agenda:

"If regional policy is not in the government's agenda, it is quite complicated to install it as a topic."

In terms of the type of media that is most interested in reporting about regional policy, journalists agree that there are big differences between commercial and public media on the one hand, and between national and regional media on the other hand. **Commercial media is seen to be more interested in reporting about scandals and negative news pieces, whereas public media has an interest in showcasing the EU from a positive perspective**. Regional media is also considered to be more focused on regional policy issues than national media.

4.6 How could DG REGIO communicate better?

EU Institutions

From the point of view of the majority of EU institutions interviewed, DG REGIO has a number of comparative advantages that should support its communications.

The main advantage is that Managing Authorities receiving money from DG REGIO have an obligation to communicate about the funds. They are acting as *de facto* European officials,

and this is considered to be a strong plus. No other Commission DG has as many multipliers in the Member States as DG REGIO does. The challenge seems to be the lack of ownership of EU messages in the Member States:

“Politicians have to learn to take responsibility for the EU. If something goes well, they attribute the achievement to themselves. If something goes wrong, they blame it on Brussels. There’s a need to encourage national politicians to move away from this posture where all the bad stories are left with Brussels.”

Some interviewees argue that **more structured and less ad-hoc cooperation between the Commission and national authorities** (and other stakeholders at Member State level, including EU Representations in the Member States, Implementing Bodies and others) should guarantee a more disciplined and regular message based on formal agreements.

Another advantage is that, unlike other EU institutions, DG REGIO has the potential to deliver a positive, Robin Hood-type message:

“Whereas the Committee of the Regions speaks about law-making, DG REGIO can say that they strongly believe that Europe should be more equal. They can argue that they take from the rich and give to the poor. It’s a very nice, powerful and sensitive message.”

Besides the potential to rely on MAs as more disciplined and effective multipliers of its messages and the benefits of its Robin Hood-type message, there are other areas that the DG could focus on to enhance its communications, namely:

Some interviewees argue that **more structured and less ad-hoc cooperation between the Commission and national authorities** (and other stakeholders at Member State level, including EU Representations in the Member States, Implementing Bodies and others) should guarantee a more disciplined and regular message based on formal agreements.

Another advantage is that, unlike other EU institutions, DG REGIO has the potential to deliver a positive, Robin Hood-type message:

“Whereas the Committee of the Regions speaks about law-making, DG REGIO can say that they strongly believe that Europe should be more equal. They can argue that they take from the rich and give to the poor. It’s a very nice, powerful and sensitive message.”

- **Guaranteeing easier and more timely access to information:** some people within DG REGIO’s management argue that there seems to be a reluctance across the DG to provide facts and figures unless the numbers have been double checked and people are absolutely certain about their veracity. Establishing specific codes of practice to communicate about things that are on-going, where people can say: *“we are doing this, and the state of play at the time of publication is xx”* can be a good method to communicate with a lower level of certainty but with a stronger degree of actuality.
- **Cooperation with other Commission DGs:** regional policy is about innovation, energy, transport, research, etc. In almost all cases, there is a counterpart DG in the Commission responsible for the topics being discussed and funded. Interviewees believe that a more joined up approach should be followed, where DG REGIO communicates in tandem with other Commission DGs, as opposed to communicating from an individual perspective.

- **Generating interest:** one of the big challenges for regional policy is that it does not come across as an interesting topic for the media or for the general public, in line with the saying that “good news is no news”. One key question is how to make people interested in the topic and keep it in the headlines. Stakeholders representing EU institutions agree that events have shown some success in the recent past in attracting the attention of the public. The problem with many of these events is that they are one-off annual gatherings that attract the public attention at a given point in time, but they do not make up for the rest of the year. An agenda of regular events organised at regular intervals over the course of the year could be a good strategy to generate systematic attention from the media.
- **Importance of communication as an integral part of DG REGIO’s staff’s role:** there is a view among several consulted within the Commission that many DG REGIO officials would not consider communication to be part of their role. Many organisations (including other DGs) take the view that good external communication starts internally and place significant importance on ensuring staff recognise that communication does form part of their role, whatever this might be.
- **Looking at communication elsewhere (within and outside the Commission):** interviewees in EU institutions think that DG REGIO should maintain an outward looking approach, focused on what other Commission DGs or similar organisations are doing, to learn from best practice examples elsewhere. One DG REGIO official interviewed spoke highly of DG ENER’s campaign-focused communication approach and described DG DEVCO as another interesting case, in that its focus of work is analogous to DG REGIO’s in terms of the context in which they operate. DG CONNECT’s online strategy and its active use of social media were also highlighted as good examples to refer to.

“DG ENER has an innovative way of communicating with stakeholders, based on the creation of a dynamic discussion, a brand for their initiatives, and excitement around what they are doing. Probably aided by the fact that energy policy is fashionable, everybody seems to know what they are up to.”

Information providers

In general, information providers have a **positive opinion of DG REGIO’s tools and activities and of their relevance**. There is however a shared view that the DG would be more effective at communicating if it focussed more efforts on going local. The current opinion is that DG REGIO is **too Brussels-based**, both in terms of insufficient travel of high level Commission officials to the regions, but also in terms of the promotional material not being strictly adapted to the local context or accessible.

Strategies that DG REGIO could use to come closer to the regions include:

- More visits from Commission officials and (as part of these visits) more direct contact with citizens and other stakeholder groups.
- User-friendly written and audiovisual material available in local languages.
- Toolkits for school children or information tailored for the elderly (two groups that are commonly targeted).

- PowerPoint presentations that can be tailored/ adapted for use with local audiences.
- More preparation and training from DG REGIO to local information providers in terms of how to communicate key priorities and messages for the next programming period.
- Stronger coverage of local and regional information on the RegioFlash newsletter.

Journalists

Overall, journalists tend to see the Commission as one entity, and as such would value **a more uniform and integrated approach from different Commission DGs, as opposed to the current more fragmented model** where they receive lots of different communications from various Commission sources that they do not have time to go through:

“The way in which Commission policies and communication are segmented makes it difficult to shed light on the bigger picture.”

“An overarching approach is needed where issues are intertwined. It’s not just about regional policy, employment, education or industry, but about how all of these policies interact together.”

If communication from the Commission succeeded in being more fully integrated, it would most likely become less complicated and more focused on helping people to understand the key messages. Key recommendations from journalists to **simplify the messages** include:

- Explain at a very high level how the different Member States are influenced by EU funding;
- Use concrete examples to communicate how EU funding makes a difference in people’s lives;
- Communicate about practical issues that are of concern to everyone, not just to intellectuals or politicians;
- Use jargon-free concepts and simple messages to communicate;
- Localise the stories so that people feel identified with what is being communicated;
- Communicate about stories relating to cooperation between regions in the different countries, with a focus on what can be learned from more developed regions or countries.

In terms of specific actions for journalists, one interviewee argued that much of the Commission’s communication is developed for print journalists and that there is **a shortage of tools for radio and TV journalists**:

“We (journalists working on TV and radio) need sound bites, not just press releases. Short audio clips on the website would be very helpful.”

Journalists interviewed support the idea that the Commission should strengthen its links with potential multipliers to get the DG’s messages across, as opposed to an approach where the DG runs its own communication campaigns. With euroscepticism high in many EU countries, and with the Commission’s messages perceived as institutional or propagandistic, interviewees argue that there is **scope for closer cooperation with managing authorities**

and beneficiaries who are recipients of EU funding, but also with the media (in particular public media outlets), to communicate key messages.

MAs and stakeholders in the MS

The findings from the interviews carried out with the MAs and other (regional) stakeholders have been compiled below and suggest that the EC / DG REGIO should play a:

- Strategic, harmonising role
- Facilitating role
- Supporting role
- Representative role

Each of these roles is described in more detail below.

A strategic, harmonising role

DG REGIO is seen as **key to working towards a harmonised approach** to regional policy communication across the EU. It should provide strategic guidance and oversight, and put in place common rules, to ensure that Europe's regions are communicating harmoniously, in a clear and simple way that is understandable to the general public, about something that is complex, atomised, dispersed and cross-border (France).

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 (France).

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, 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.) (France).

Some other recommendations for the future include:

- Simplifying 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 - France).

- Ensuring further consistency of the logos across the many different OPs and among different programming periods to maximise brand awareness, in particular for programmes that coexist in the same territory (Italy).
- Simplifying the names of the programmes; sometimes they are long and contain complicated acronyms, making them difficult to memorise for the public and difficult to reproduce effectively on the logos (Italy).

A supporting role

Interviewees across a number of case study countries tend to be **appreciative of the fact that MAs are given significant leeway to develop and implement communication approaches that suit their respective audiences** (Estonia, Germany, Italy, France).

In France, it is generally felt that DG REGIO should continue using regional hubs to help it communicate about regional policy, rather than try to engage in activities of its own at national level. Certain interviewees do not consider DG REGIO well placed to communicate on regional policy, feeling that it is unlikely to appreciate the needs and subtleties of the regional audiences (Estonia). In Germany in particular, interviewees are mostly wary of any stricter regulations or requirements, or of any obligations to use centrally produced materials.

Some **recommendations** made in relation to this supporting role include:

- Journalists stress 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 twice a year and information on some important events should be released in advance (Poland).
- The EC, as a primary source of information, should make aggregate data for a wider use available (Poland).
- The EC should communicate mainly with Coordination Units in order to explain the problem / queries/ interpretation to ensure a more direct and quick response to the queries from the Member States (Poland).
- 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 (Spain). At present, only the managing authority in Spain maintains regular communication with the EC and notifies the regions and implementing bodies of any developments at GERIP and GRECO-AGE meetings (Spain).
- The EC should make it easier to fund cross-fund communication activities (France).

A facilitating role

It was widely opined that **one of the most beneficial and appreciated roles of DG REGIO is its facilitation and promotion of dialogue, networking and exchange of best practices across EU MS**, for example through the INFORM network meetings.

Within this context, 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 (France).

A representative role

The **participation of (high level) EU representatives** in local events and initiatives is seen as paramount to contribute to the responsiveness of the public to the European programmes by interviewees in a number of case study countries (Estonia, Italy, Germany, Spain) and it is felt that a greater, more frequent presence of EU officials in the regions would be beneficial. Reportedly, such a presence can add significant ‘clout’ to events or press conferences, give the EU a more human face, and encourage broader coverage (Germany, Spain).

In a similar vein, a few communication officials also note that a closer cooperation / joint communication activities with the EC Representation could be useful (Germany).

4.7 List of additional organisations interviewed

Table 5 below presents details of the 22 additional organisations interviewed. Details of the interviews conducted as part of the case studies in the MS are provided in the relevant annex.

Table 5 – List of additional organisations interviewed (Task 2)

Stakeholder group	Interviewees / institutions
Additional interviews conducted solely for the purpose of Task 2	
European institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DG REGIO • DG COMM • Committee of the Regions • European Economic and Social Committee • Business Europe • Eurocities • European Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation • Council of European Municipalities and Regions • Euclid Network
Information providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centro de Informacao Europe Direct do Porto (Portugal) • Europa Information des Landes Tirol (Austria) • Team Europe Experts (Portugal and Austria)
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Euractiv (EU, Brussels-based) • Jornal de Noticias (Portugal) • ERT SA/ ERA PYRGOY (Greece) • Aktualne.cz and Czech Public Radio (Czech Republic) • Vecer (Slovenia) • Radio Slovakia International and Pravda (Slovakia)
Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Studies Association

5 SWOT ANALYSIS OF DG REGIO'S COMMUNICATION

5.1 Introduction

A SWOT analysis was conducted to assess the strengths, weaknesses/limitations, opportunities, and threats related to DG REGIO's current communication model, and to support the identification of an appropriate strategy to achieve the overall communication objectives. The main findings are presented in the figure below and are developed in more detailed in the following sub-sections.

Figure 24: SWOT analysis of DG REGIO's communication model

	Helpful to achieving objectives	Harmful to achieving objectives
Internal attributes	Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic importance of regional policy in the EU context • Significant aggregated regional policy communication spending by all OPs • MAs receiving money from DG REGIO have an obligation to communicate • Strong, positive, Robin-hood type message to deliver • Media relations have been enhanced with the arrival of the new spokesperson • DG REGIO Open Days and other events in general are assessed positively by stakeholders consulted 	Weaknesses (or Limitations): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucratic, depersonalised communication • Fragmented information and messages • Conservative and risk averse communication approach (too much focused on process and outputs) • Communication not sufficiently embedded in DG REGIO's staff roles • Low awareness and use of DG REGIO's communication tools and activities • Lack of a fully-fledged, integrated digital strategy (strong reliance on publications)
External attributes	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new ESIF brand can bring reinforce a more integrated message • The upcoming period is an opportunity for more strategic communication • Scope to share and to communicate the many communication practices across the EU • Scope to communicate about stories of successful cooperation between regions • Story-telling can bring the Commission closer to the media and the general public • Opportunities to look at (and learn from) communication elsewhere 	Threats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low media coverage of EU regional policy • Media tendency to report about negative stories involving corruption • Media scepticism towards information coming from Brussels • Regional media don't look at EU regional policy as a phenomenon with a European dimension • Growing euroscepticism and more immediate concerns in many EU countries • Diminished financial and human resources at national level

5.2 Strengths of DG REGIO's communication

Characteristics of the current situation that are helpful to achieving the objectives

- Strategic importance of DG REGIO. Regional policy is a horizontal policy area and a very important portfolio that touches upon many aspects of development, and should have a stronger say on other related policy areas.

- Significant regional policy communication spending by all OPs. Even though communication represents a small fraction of OP budgets in the Member States, when seen across the EU, it amounts to a lot. In total, the spending on regional policy communication by all OPs is likely to be somewhere in the region of €1 billion for the 2007-2013 programming period.
- Managing Authorities in the Member States are acting as de facto European officials. MAs receiving money from DG REGIO have an obligation to communicate about the EU funds. No other Commission DG is seen to have as many multipliers in the Member States as DG REGIO does.
- Strong, positive, Robin Hood-type message to deliver. Unlike other EU institutions, DG REGIO can say that they strongly believe that Europe should be more equal. They can argue that they take from the rich and give to the poor. It's a very nice, powerful and sensitive message.
- Media relations have been enhanced with the new DG spokesperson. The shared view of journalists interviewed who follow DG REGIO's news on a regular basis is that media relations have improved in the last year, with a more active spokesperson, better press releases and more accessible news updates.
- DG REGIO Open Days (and other events like the Regio Stars Awards) are viewed positively by the majority of stakeholders consulted. The Open Days in particular, but other flagship events as well, are considered as a great networking opportunity for regional stakeholders across Europe to engage with their counterparts from different Member States. The Open Days are effective at attracting a broad range of stakeholders every year.

5.3 Weakness of DG REGIO's communication

Attributes that are harmful to achieving the objectives

- Bureaucratic, depersonalised and complex communication. DG REGIO's messages can be rather impersonal and pitched at a level that is detached from the practical day-to-day issues that are of concern to most people. Stakeholders consulted agree that there is a need to simplify the main messages as the information is too technical and difficult to understand. Focusing on concrete local examples to communicate how EU funding makes a difference in people's lives could be a way of getting closer to citizens.
- Fragmented information. There is also a lack of a broader guiding thread or an umbrella narrative to contextualise the information and to communicate from an integrated EU perspective (in coordination with other key players at EU and MS level). What's the story that the Commission wants to tell behind all the projects funded, is there a common denominator that can bring the different pieces together in a coherent message?

- DG REGIO's communication approach perceived to be conservative, risk averse and too focused on process and outputs. This is attributed partly to hostile press coverage in the past and wanting to avoid such situations in the future. Another point raised is that the focus is on process and outputs but there is not enough emphasis on reporting on the actual results of regional policy funding, and how these make a difference in people's lives.
- Communication not sufficiently embedded in DG REGIO staff's role: there is a view among several consulted within the Commission that many DG REGIO officials would not consider communication to be part of their role. Many organisations (including other DGs) take the view that good external communication starts internally and place significant importance on ensuring staff recognise that communication does form part of their role whatever it might be.
- Low awareness and use of DG REGIO's communication tools and activities. Communicators in MS & regions feel removed from Brussels and the Commission as evidenced by the low awareness and use of DG REGIO communication tools. This reduces the chances of more effectively communicating through multipliers (MAs, beneficiaries, EU information providers, etc.)
- INFOREGIO website suffers from a number of problems that impact negatively on users' experience. Main problems highlighted include complex structure that hinders navigation, outdated news, lack of information on strategic and policy priorities (negotiations for the next programming period were not reflected on the website), information too general (not sufficiently tailored to the national and regional contexts), and detached from day-to-day concerns of citizens.
- DG REGIO seen to rely too much on publications. In the framework of an overall trend towards paper-less communications, DG REGIO is still considered to be essentially a publications oriented DG.
- Even though better than in the past, media relations can be further improved. Commissioner Hahn's media profile could be strengthened, social media could be given a more strategic and regular use, scope to simplify press releases, more DG REGIO officials aside from authorised spokespersons should be given the opportunity (and trained) to communicate with journalists and other stakeholders.
- Significant growth of the Open Days in recent years. The Open Days are considered to have grown out of proportions in recent years. Many attendees argue that people who currently attend without a pre-defined agenda tend to get lost, and that the current dimensions of the event play against the quality of its sessions.

5.4 Opportunities to DG REGIO's communication

External conditions that improve the chances of achieving the objectives

- The new "European Structural and Investment Funds". The introduction of the new ESIF brand provides an opportunity to work together with other Commission DGs following a more coordinated approach and communicating common messages.
- Communicating the next programming period. The upcoming programming period provides an opportunity to communicate more broadly about the strategic priorities of DG REGIO.
- Good communication practices are many and varied across the EU. There are many examples of effective communication to the general public in the Member States, including events, campaigns, installations, competitions, school projects, audio-visual materials, websites, effective use of social media, written materials, media relations activities, and internal tools and activities.
- Stories of cooperation between regions. Stories of successful cross-border projects could also be communicated, with a focus on what can be learned from the experience of others.
- Story-telling could bring the Commission closer to the media and to the general public. A focus on story-telling, highlighting human success stories from the point of view of results and impacts of EU funding, could capture the interest of the general public. If narrated from a more honest perspective, without ignoring challenges and problems and how these were overcome, it could also increase the credibility of the messages and dissipate the idea of institutional propaganda.
- Opportunities to look at (and learn from) communication elsewhere, both within and outside the Commission. There is consensus amongst those interviewed by the evaluation that DG REGIO should maintain an outward looking approach, focused on what other Commission DGs or similar organisations are doing, to learn from best practice examples elsewhere.

5.5 Threats to DG REGIO's communication

External elements in the environment that could jeopardise the success and damage the chances of achieving the objectives

- Low coverage of EU regional policy: The low coverage/interest of the media on EU regional policy makes it extremely challenging to reach the general public with uniform, consolidated messages across the EU.
- Media tendency to report about negative stories involving corruption. Journalists interviewed admit that the media has a certain inclination to cover a story if it is linked to fraud or financial scandal. The result is that the positive stories that pivot around

Commission's funding for projects are not as easily published by the media as the stories involving corruption scandals with EU funds.

- Media scepticism towards information coming from Brussels. Many argue that institutional communication coming from Brussels is generally received by the media as propaganda. In a context where the Commission as a communicator is questioned, the degree to which its messages can effectively reach the broader public is limited.
- Regional media don't look at EU regional policy as a phenomenon with a European dimension. The focus of regional media news tends to be on local governments and authorities. This is probably linked to the fact that it is local governments that interact with the media and install the news on the agenda, so they tend to highlight their role.
- Growing euroscepticism and more immediate concerns in many EU countries. The socio-economic environment is such that 'Europhiles' are finding it harder to get support for their messages throughout most of the EU, even in places that were previously favourable. In addition, the current situation in many EU countries –with major and more immediate problems occupying the agenda– contributes to a leaner coverage of regional policy issues.
- Diminished financial and human resources at national level: The economic crisis in Europe which is heavily affecting national and local administrations in many Member States results in diminished resources available. Managing Authorities confirm that, faced with budgetary restrictions, communication funds are among the first to be cut.

6 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the stakeholder analysis is to indicate whose interests, views and opinions need to be considered, as well as why and how those interests should be taken into account. Given that the stakeholders involved in communication activities might bring to the table specific expertise, resources or inputs, it is necessary to understand what incentives they have to become involved (if any), whether they were likely to benefit (or not) from getting involved, what role they may play and what their perceptions are about DG REGIO's communication activities.

Given the multiple and diverse target audiences of DG REGIO, the stakeholder analysis is restricted to those actors that are (or potentially can be) critical to DG REGIO's communication model, namely:

- European institutions, organisations and associations;
- Implementers at national and regional level;
- (Potential) beneficiaries;
- European information providers;
- Independent media;
- International organisations and academia;
- Senior politicians and government advisers.

For each of the seven key stakeholder groups, the evaluation team has conducted the following tasks, the results of which are condensed in the table below):

- Identify key characteristics of each group of stakeholders.
- Identify their interests in, attitudes and expectations towards DG REGIO and regional policy communication.
- Consider their current and potential roles in a new communication model and implications for key groups of stakeholders.

6.2 Stakeholder analysis matrix

Table 6 overleaf presents the characteristics of each stakeholder group, their interests and expectations, their role in terms of DG REGIO's' communication and the implications of becoming more involved as multipliers of the DG's messages.

Table 6 – Stakeholder analysis matrix

Stakeholder group	Characteristics	Interests and expectations	Role in communication	Implications
European institutions, organisations and associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mix of institutions and umbrella organisations operating at EU level. • The majority of them based in Brussels. • Each has their own political agenda and priorities, which can complement or differ from DG REGIO's agenda/priorities. • Financed with Commission grants, members' fees • Many address the regional stakeholders' community across Europe. • Many have members and/or delegates representing geographical areas or sectors. • Generally, all face similar communication challenges – how to reach audiences across the EU – and rely on multipliers to get the messages out. • Familiar with DG REGIO's activities and tools, though in many cases scope for narrower collaboration. • Organisations in this group include: other Commission DGs, CoR, EP, AER, ETUC, UEAPME, Business Europe, EESC, Eurocities, CEMR, EBRD, EIB, REVES, LUDEN, Euclid Network, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing EU regions, cities, municipalities and/or sectors (i.e. industry and business, trade unions, organised civil society) • Focused on different themes that are relevant to regional policy (i.e. transport, energy, water, waste, research, innovation, employment, etc.) • Seek to shape or influence European policy and decision making (strong political agendas). • Narrow communication with members and delegates, via working groups, newsletters, events, Intranets, 	Recipients / Partners / Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty to reconcile different political agendas / priorities • Potential to use economies of scale and expertise (i.e. shared events) • Potential to address the same audiences
Implementers at national and regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A great variety of public and private institutions in the Member States acting as MAs, intermediate bodies, etc. • Key audiences addressed by MAs and implementing bodies are beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. The general public and stakeholder groups are also targeted (though to a lesser extent). • MAs work closely with intermediate bodies and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europhiles versus Euro sceptics – which impacts on the visibility of the EU in the communication of MAs and IBs. • Adverse socio-economic context impacts negatively on EU image, which complicates communication. • Many demand a more local EC 	Recipients / Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty to adapt/ tailor messages and material to local audiences • Potential to act as an effective nexus with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries • Potential to more effectively address the media and stakeholder groups

Stakeholder group	Characteristics	Interests and expectations	Role in communication	Implications
	<p>beneficiaries, but generally meet with difficulties to engage with civil society stakeholders, media and the academic community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general they face the same challenges that DG REGIO faces at EU level: lack of awareness of regional policy, complexity of regional policy instruments and themes, lack of interest from the media. Communication represents a small fraction of OP budgets, and some complain about insufficient HR to communicate. 	<p>presence in their countries, which give the EU a more human face and generate more media interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAAs and IBs have to follow the political agendas of their governments. 		
(Potential) beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of public and private institutions, businesses, NGOs, etc. receiving funding from the Commission. A very heterogeneous group, both in terms of geography, type and size of organisation, amount of funding received, etc. They don't have direct links with DG REGIO, as communication with (potential) beneficiaries is conducted by MAAs and IBs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many would value a stronger presence of DG REGIO in their countries / regions, and the possibility of a more direct interaction with DG REGIO officials. Communication of EU funds is subject to guidelines from MAAs and IBs (and dependent on size and resources of beneficiaries). 	Recipients / Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The heterogeneity and size of this group makes it difficult to devise a one size fits all approach (and to approach (potential) beneficiaries more directly). If general common sets of guidelines were to be implemented, potential to communicate a more disciplined message to broader audiences via beneficiaries. Potential to communicate more effectively about results and impacts, closer to the interests of the media and the general public.
European information providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of general information providers communicating at EU and at national levels (i.e. EC Representations, Europe Direct Information Centres, Team Europe experts, Euronews). They communicate about many different topics related to the EU (including regional policy) but are not specialists in the subject of structural funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many in this group acknowledge a lack of demand of information on regional policy (people who approach the ED Info Centres or the EC Representations are not interested in regional policy). There is consensus in this group that more effective communication would be 	Recipients / Partners / Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to establish more formal collaboration schemes with information providers Potential to make more use of established networks of information providers (i.e. information sent through mailing lists, etc.)

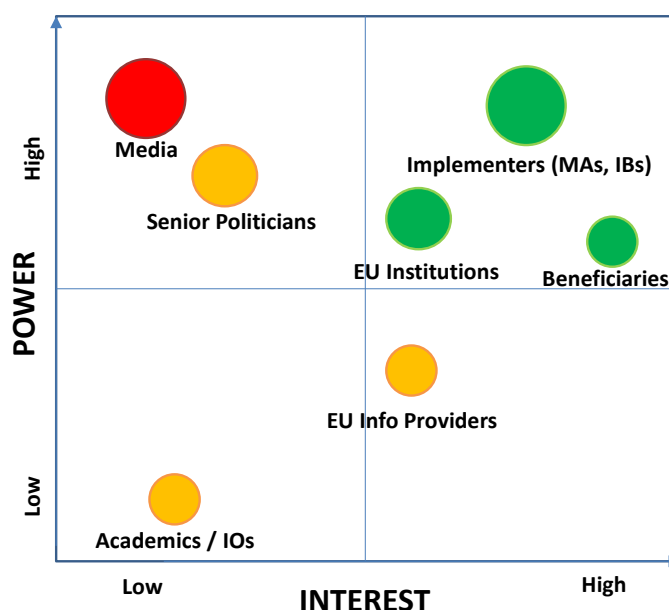
Stakeholder group	Characteristics	Interests and expectations	Role in communication	Implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness and use of DG REGIO tools is low among this group. They act on a case-by-case basis (upon requests) or more proactively disseminating information to their networks. They have links to national and local media, universities and academic communities in the Member States, and are consulted by citizens. They have the potential to disseminate tools and information, but limited resources and time to follow up closely on specific (or technical) issues. 	possible if materials were adapted to the local context and if DG REGIO officials organised more regular visits to the Member States and regions.		
Independent media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent journalists and media outlets operating at EU, national and regional levels. The shared view is that EU regional policy information is complex, excessive and depersonalised. Tendency to report negative stories involving corruption. Public media and regional media are seen to be more interested than commercial and national media in reporting about EU regional policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brussels correspondents cover EU affairs from a broader perspective, so they value integrated / broader EU messages (as opposed to compartmentalised perspectives). Journalists reporting at national and local levels are interested in the country / local perspective, so they value tailored messages. Personalised approach (informal face-to-face and/or telephone contacts) preferred over formal official statements or press releases. 	Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to help DG REGIO and MAs to communicate with the general public. Need to develop more informal and personalised links with the media. Potential for MAs to play a more active role at national and local levels – challenge relies in guaranteeing a uniform message across the EU. Need to develop simpler, timely and more tailored messages that communicate stories and report on results (not just numbers)
International organisations and academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Bank, OECD, RSA, individual researchers and experts. Lack of strong formal links with DG REGIO. International organisations interesting for identifying best communication practices that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were no particular interests or demands collected from this group towards DG REGIO. In fact, academics contacted to be interviewed declined on the grounds of lack 	Recipients / Partners / Multipliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to look at international organisations on a more regular basis to identify best communication practices. Potential to generate greater interest from the academic

Stakeholder group	Characteristics	Interests and expectations	Role in communication	Implications
	<p>can be tested in the REGIO context (e.g. World Bank and their approach to the general public / DG AGRI and multipliers, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of awareness of DG REGIO communication tools and activities among academia. 	<p>of awareness of the topics.</p>		<p>community and to explore grounds for collaboration.</p>
Senior politicians and government advisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected or senior politicians at EU, national and local levels. Lack of strong formal links with DG REGIO. MAs act as a nexus between DG REGIO and politicians at national and local levels. They receive media attention, and according to journalists interviewed, if regional policy is not on their agendas there is little that can be done at EU level to position the topic publicly in the media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They have their own strong political agendas not always aligned with EU priorities. In some cases, it was reported that they take ownership of EU funded projects (they are interested in highlighting their role in a project). 	<p>Recipients / Partners / Multipliers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to reach the media and the general public. EU senior politicians: potential to act as ambassadors of regional policy messages. Difficulty to reconcile different political agendas / priorities Need to develop messages that are appealing to this group so that they can communicate to broader audiences.

6.3 Existing and potential stakeholder maps

As illustrated below, these stakeholders show varying levels of *interest* towards EU regional policy. They also vary in terms of the amount of influence (or '*power*') and attitudes when it comes to their potential to shape regional policy communication and contribute to its success.

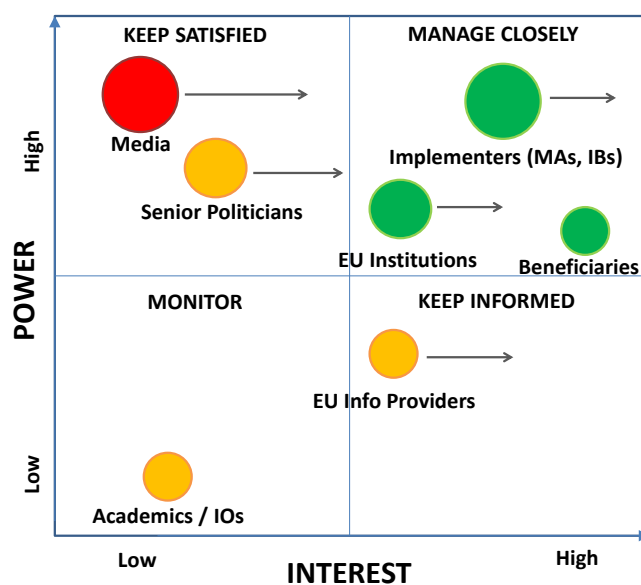
Figure 25 – Existing stakeholder map



Please note: the size of each circle symbolises the scope (in terms of coverage and/or penetration) or simply the size of each stakeholder group; the colour indicates attitude of each stakeholder towards the initiative (red: negative, amber: neutral, and green: positive); and arrows show potential for movement towards a desired position of each stakeholder in terms of their interest in the initiative.

This analysis can help DG REGIO to design appropriate strategies to engage, interact with and manage the various stakeholders involved in EU regional policy communication. There is very little that the EC can do to change the '**power**' that various stakeholders exert. However, it is possible (and advisable) to focus the EC's efforts on identifying ways to modify the '**interest**' (and commitment) of key stakeholders towards EU regional policy. This is represented below by arrows that indicate a desired position of each group in terms of their commitment.

Figure 26 – Potential stakeholder map



7 RDA BENCHMARKING REPORT

1. Introduction

Rationale for the case study selection



Finding a geographical comparator for communications in the specific context of regional policy is not straightforward. DG REGIO is communicating on regional policy not in one single country, but in 27. So it would seem that national-level examples are ruled out. In fact, the United States does face an equally wide range of economic and geographical environments in which to operate, but regional policy in the US tends to be handled at state, rather than federal level, so the parallel is not so strong. The Indian sub-continent is at a very different stage of economic development, making comparisons difficult. However, looking further afield, TEP believes that Australia offers a relevant benchmarking case-study in the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, as is presented below.

Australia is an island continent and the world's sixth largest country (7.6 million sq km, compared with 10 million for Europe). The population is roughly 23 million, concentrated along the coastal region of Australia from Adelaide to Cairns, with a small concentration around Perth, Western Australia. The centre is sparsely populated.

The Australian constitution created a federal system of government, with power divided between the central government and the six state governments. The states retain the power to make their own laws over matters not controlled by the Commonwealth. State governments also have their own constitutions, as well as a structure of legislature, executive and judiciary. So a useful parallel can be drawn with the relationship between Brussels and the Member States of the EU.

Within the Australian Government, the equivalent of DG REGIO is the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (hereafter referred to as The Department).

The Department of Regional Australia

The Department is responsible for Australian regional policy and co-ordination; the delivery of regional and rural specific services; regional development; matters relating to local government; and the administration of the Australian territories⁶.

It is worth noting that regional policy is a contentious topic in Australia. As in the regions of many EU countries, there is a feeling that the central government ignores the needs of the more remote areas. Extracts from two recent press articles featured below illustrate the point. The first reports how Kevin Rudd, who recently won a hard-fought contest to take over the leadership of the ruling Labour party, immediately made it a priority to stress his commitment to the regions:




Kevin Rudd's second coming as Prime Minister included strong pitch to regional Australia.

Fronting question time as leader of the Labor Party for the first time in three years, Mr Rudd attempted to stress his Government's regional credentials. "Regional Australia is etched deep into my heart," he told the house in response to a question from independent MP Rob Oakeshott. "I grew up in a region, I grew up in a country town. I understand what it was like not to have a local doctor," Mr Rudd said. "That is because working people live right across Australia. Not just in big cities, not just in regional cities, but in small towns as well," he said.


⁶ Territories are areas within Australia's borders that are not claimed by one of the six states. Territories can be administered by the Australian Government, or they can be granted a right of self-government. Local governments are established by state and territory governments to take responsibility for a number of community services. Local government have a legislature and an executive but no judiciary.

Mr Rudd's words were clearly meant to counter criticisms such as those contained in the article below from a regional newspaper, along with a typical example of a comment from a reader:



27 June 2013. Round four of the Regional Development Australia fund, a program that “supports the infrastructure needs of regional Australia” was announced with plenty of cash being splashed in large cities and suburbs.

Considering this fund is for “regional Australia”, it was alarming to see money being given to areas like Penrith, a suburb in Western Sydney, while other areas miss out. The Port Pirie Regional Council applied for funding through the program to upgrade the city centre, only to have their request rejected while some of the funding has gone to the ‘burbs. How many other country towns have missed out on much-needed cash, while large cities and suburbs have benefitted from this “regional” funding program?



Elsie • 11 minutes ago

So true! Country areas are neglected by the govt. If you don't live on the east coast, you don't matter!

The initiative for the Department's creation actually came from the regions themselves. It commenced operations in 2010 after the federal election in that year. Three independent members who were elected to parliament were from regional Australia and, in return for supporting the government, one of their conditions was that there should be a regional authority.

Within the Department, it is the Strategic Communications Branch which takes responsibility for developing and implementing government communications for regional Australia. The Branch may be likened to the Information and Communications Unit at DG REGIO. The Branch's operations cover event management, internal communications, graphic design, brand management, publishing, media liaison and speech writing, internet and intranet. It provides strategic communications and media support services across the portfolio and to the portfolio Minister. Communication officers in the Branch liaise directly with the media, the Minister's office and the public, as well as representing the Branch at meetings or forums.

A small sub-team has specific responsibility for the development and implementation of the communications strategy, as well as internal and online communications and publishing.

The Department is reluctant to discuss exact staff numbers in light of persistent media attention. An article in The Australian newspaper in August 2012 claimed that the federal government had “an army of spin doctors” to sell government policies to voters.” The newspaper alleged that about 1,600 staff were employed by government departments in media, communications, marketing and public affairs. The Department of Defence was said to employ more communications staff than the number of troops on active service in remote

areas of Australia. The Infrastructure Department was the only department which refused to reveal how many communications staff it employed.

The methodology

The methodology employed to develop this case study involved desk research, i.e. a review of available documentation and data, including the organisation's website, newsletters, press releases, speeches, reports and promotional material; and an in-depth telephone interview with a senior communication officer at the Department of Regional Australia.

The sections below present the Department's:

- Communication strategy, objectives and messages;
- Target groups and communication tools;
- Stakeholders and multipliers;
- Key success factors and possible best practice transfer; and
- Conclusions on each of these areas.

2. Communication strategy, objectives and messages

Australian regional development policy more generally

The Australian Government's stated approach to regional development is to work in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions.

The principal policy tools are the Regional Development Australia Fund, a national programme to support Australia's regions and enhance the economic development and liveability of their communities and the Community Infrastructure Grants Program, which funds the construction and upgrade of local sport, recreation and community infrastructure identified by communities as priority investments for their regions. There are also specific programmes for Transport and Research & Development (R&D) expenditure.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is an Australian Government initiative that brings together all levels of government to enhance the development of Australia's regions. A national network of 55 RDA committees represents all of Australia – and includes remote, rural, regional and metropolitan regions. RDA has a broad set of objectives aimed at enhancing the economic, social and sustainable development of Australia.

Each Committee is comprised of Members who are local leaders with broad experience, as well as proven networks of contacts within their region. The Committees are renewed and refreshed on a regular cyclical basis. The RDA Committees have five core functions:

- Consult and engage with the community;
- Support informed regional planning – oversight of the development of a strategic regional plan;

- Promote whole-of-governments activities;
- Promote government programs; and
- Facilitate community and economic development.

The federal government provides funding to support the operation of the RDA Committees. The roles of the Committee members are set out in more detail in Annex 1 at the end of this report.

Communications strategy

Partly because of the great distances involved and the remoteness of some locations, the Australian economy can currently be characterised as running at two speeds. Some regions are doing very well on the back of the mining boom, fuelled by demand for raw materials, but others which are more reliant on traditional industries such as agriculture, are exposed to global issues such as the downturn in prices. Both positive and negative factors, of course, are exogenous to Australia.

Against this background, **regional policy and its supporting structures are designed to maximise not only the current performance of the regions but also their economic potential for the future.** From a communications perspective, this entails developing a narrative and communicating it as much as possible to stakeholders on the ground at grass-roots level. The Department sees it as essential that audiences within a particular region know what the plan of action for the region is, where their particular region fits in the scale of priorities, and what the opportunities and areas of interest that they can exploit to maximise the potential for their region are.

To maintain its grass-roots focus, **the Department works primarily through local government institutions**, rather than those at state level. The departmental portfolio also includes arts and sport, which on the face of it seems to create something of an odd assortment. But the rationale is that arts and sport can play an important role in creating a common sense of community and that there are synergies to be exploited.

All this has to be managed alongside the requirement to provide external communications support to the federal government through promoting the departmental ministers.

Communications objectives and key principles

The primary communications objective is therefore to maximise the impact of the programmes and the policies which the government have in place, and to ensure that they are communicated to regional stakeholder audiences, which are classically divided into political, business and general public.

At the heart of the strategy is **grass-roots public relations**. An announcement will be made via a media release which will be supported by talking points that the communications team develop for the relevant minister. There will also be a “shell” media release containing the main points, but also allowing for the insertion of local quotes, facts and figures, which will

be sent to local members of parliament in the region concerned. They will then speak on behalf of the particular policy within their particular region.

The emphasis is on **proactive rather than reactive media relations** and most of the operational PR functions are devolved as a matter of routine. Depending on where a particular programme is being implemented, the Department will work with local media to maximise the benefit of the announcement. This provides opportunities from a media perspective to roll out further announcements to do with the particular programme - more information about the individual projects being funded and the benefits that will accrue to the local region and the local economy.

It is very much standard procedure to **make use of individual stakeholders who have benefited from a programme**. They will do much of the promotional work on the ground, liaising with the local media and talking with them about the local issues.

Key messages

The Department sees it as important to **balance top-line political messages (which they describe as “overarching” messages) with specific local messages**. There is a suite of these overarching messages - which have been bedded in for several years - about key structures, sustainability of the regions and promoting economic development and prosperity. These are to be included wherever possible in all announcements.

At the same time, the Department undertakes an analysis of the particular programme and the target audiences and develops a **specific communications plan for the individual programme to be promoted**. The communications team has to bear in mind that they may be addressing more than one audience and draft media materials to take this into account.

So, if the intention is to promote investment in the agricultural sector, the primary focus will be stakeholders among the farming community. But there will also be references to local benefits to the economy and the community, ‘X number of jobs will be created and this will lead to the community developing in such-and-such a way.’

This extract from a recent RDA release about the Regional Development Australia Fund illustrates the principle being put into practice:

Federal Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon, today announced the Tennant Creek community would benefit from an upgrade to the town's sporting facilities, thanks to a \$3.6 million infrastructure grant under round four of the Federal Government's Regional Development Australia Fund.

Mr Snowdon said the project was an excellent example of infrastructure that would deliver immediate benefits to the regional community and support its future development.

Thus it is the local Member of Parliament, Mr Snowden, and not the federal minister, who makes the announcement in the local media⁷. He mentions the local project and the contribution from the federal fund in the opening paragraph – this is the “local message”. The phrasing in the second paragraph about “immediate benefits... and future development” is taken from the suite of overarching messages.

3. Target groups and communication tools

Target groups

The **principal audience** for the Department’s communications activity is **the community that resides in regional Australia** (effectively, most of the country outside the capital) and the principal intention is to promote what the federal government is doing to improve the lives of the people who live in regional Australia.

A key role in both communications and policy implementation is played by the 55 RDA Committees spread across the continent. In principle, all regions are accorded equal importance whether in Sydney, Perth or Broken Hill. So while some regions only have very small populations and others very large, no distinction is drawn. In the same way, what may be seen as “traditional” regional locations are accorded equal footing with urban areas.

However, Australia is an immense country and the Department has to accept that it will never have the resources to cover every single location as it might wish to. The federal government has its own priority areas on which to focus and it quite often happens that one location might attract less attention and therefore feel left behind, or might feel that it has not been looked after as well as another.

So while the over-riding mission is to help all the regions to make the best of themselves and to provide the necessary support tools for them to be able to do that, the reality is that **most of the funding provided does actually go into the remote rural locations and they are *de facto* the main focus of the Department.**

To take a specific example, the Department has been working with the State of Tasmania on a range of different projects, one of which is centred around reducing the number of native forests which are cut down, and building up an alternative industry base, with a greater emphasis on sustainability. This has involved communications activities aimed at several audiences: the general public in the region, stakeholders such as the logging industry, and other industry associations and environmental organisations. A particular effort has been directed towards key stakeholders in industries with a high public profile and towards developing those industries. Tasmania is marketed as being a “clean, green state” that has much potential in minerals extraction, but also in agriculture. The quality food and

⁷ It has to be acknowledged, however, that federal ministers are the political masters of the Department, not local officials. The federal ministers have to be satisfied with any communications product. The point was made informally to TEP that the ministers’ office is the primary target audience, with communications destined to go out to the general public and stakeholders in second place.

other produce from the State has a high reputation and communications play on these advantages.

Audience groups are differentiated – particularly between the general public and industry stakeholders. The Department is careful to remain aware of the distinction at a tactical level. Some communications will focus only on stakeholders and some on the public. Dedicated media materials are developed to focus on these audience groups.

Communication tools

The **RDA Committees act as key multipliers**. They are tasked to consider local issues from social and economic development through to community facilities and to stay aware of public opinion in their region and neighbouring regions. Their remit is to deliver economic prosperity and an environment where people can live and work in comfort. The Department works closely with the RDA Committees and makes particular use of them “on the ground” to relay information about its policies and programmes. Much use is made of so-called “shell” press releases, which are in effect templates produced at the centre for use in the various regions. The line-to-take and the point to make in the headline will be specified within the “shell”, along with any key facts and figures about the overall programme. It is left to the local team to include quote(s) from local personalities and details of local impact.

a) Awareness raising events

One of the Department’s particular success stories has been the Regional Development and Trade Fund, which has so far given over 500 million Australian dollars (EUR 350 million) to projects around the continent. Funding was distributed via the RDA Committees, which held awareness raising events and also ensured that applications coming in were appropriate for the region.

From a communications perspective, the Department used the Committees all along the funding process: to promote the programme itself, give a clear purpose and identity to projects which were being put forward, and to promote the individual projects once they had been successful in obtaining funding. **Public relations are choreographed to drive support as near as possible to ground level** for individual projects and the impact they are having so that local people clearly understand why a particular project is important to their particular region.

b) No TV or radio advertising

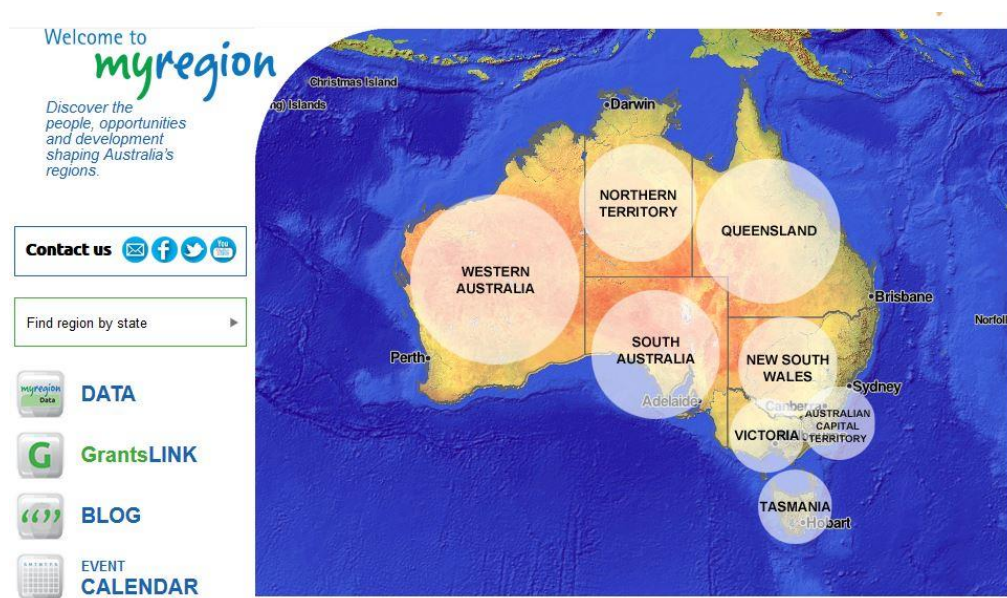
The Department does not have any budget to spend on advertising; there are no TV commercials produced or any radio advertisements made. The firm belief is that it would not in any case have been useful given the way that they go about doing their communications. Media and public relations on the ground - designed around providing background materials well in advance and supporting the programme with an information flow all the way through - are seen as getting their messages more credibly to their target audiences than TV and radio advertising.

c) Social media

Social media also plays an important role. Twitter is being used with success to engage with industry and environmental stakeholders and also with the broader community around Australia. The Twitter account is linked to a website called myregion (www.myregion.gov.au) which was launched by the new Labour Government in 2010 and is particularly aimed at stakeholders.

The myregion website is managed by the Department and aims to support the Australian Government's Commitment to Regional Australia and the Department's vision and commitment to empower each of Australia's regions and local communities to be their best. It has been developed as a central site for Australian citizens to understand, discuss and influence the future of their regions. It features government data about individual regions and supports conversations between people in their communities and their local and national governments.

Figure 27: The Department of Regional Australia's myregion website (www.myregion.gov.au)



Communications regarding key programmes and policies are regularly delivered through the Twitter account, which is seen as a good way of engaging with stakeholders in a “short, sharp kind of way”. Interestingly, one factor cited in the success of the Twitter account is the inclusion of communications about art and culture in the regional context.

In June 2013, a new website was launched to highlight the achievements of the RDA network. “*Local people, Local solutions*” features 53 case studies showcasing some of the outcomes that RDA Committees have delivered to their regions.

Figure 28: Regional Development Australia's "Local people, Local solutions" website



4. Stakeholders and multipliers

The relationship between the Department and RDA Committees

As mentioned above, the RDA Committees act as key multipliers. From a communications policy perspective, **managing the relationship between the Department and the RDA Committees and their members is very important indeed**. Usually, members sitting on a Committee are not full-time. They are frequently community leaders such as local councillors or the local mayor; they may also be business leaders or other interested stakeholders. The Department has to work with the members as much as they can to influence the way that they communicate about what is happening in their region. The Committees also provide feedback. There is a regular dialogue between the Department and Committees about policies and strategic direction.

At a tactical level, the Department will often supply the Committees with "shell" media releases which allow them to talk about federal government programmes which are going to benefit their region. One standard procedure is to find people within the community (either through the Committee or among the Committee members themselves) who can act as **local champions** with regard to a federal government programme or policy that will benefit people in their region. The close involvement of the local champions in the messaging gives them a greater degree of understanding and allows them to talk to their local communities on the ground with greater conviction and credibility.

In the Department's experience, **having people such as community leaders on the ground who are trusted and who know how to provide information is absolutely essential**. They see no point having a bureaucrat from Canberra going out to a regional

location and saying, “This is what’s happening and you should get behind it.” The element of trust in a community leader who can comment on their behalf is seen as being far greater.

This does however leave open the question of whether those acting as such relays will ever want to run with their own messages, rather than those coming from Canberra. The fact is that they are independent; they can and will say whatever they want. The department takes a very pragmatic view on this issue. The most important thing is to work with the Committees both on policy and on strategic direction to ensure consistency of purpose and message. Dissent, sometimes vocal, does occur. But if the Department and the Committee are “on the same page” about a particular project which will benefit a community, then they are completely confident that it will happen within that region.

Key performance indicators

The Department does not currently have any formal Key Performance Indicators in place.

In the two and a half years since its founding, staff have had to build up procedures from scratch both in terms of policy and also from a communications perspective. The success of a particular announcement or communication about a programme is measured by press coverage, engagement on Twitter and hits on the website. There is no budget for formal research.

As an RDA Department official put it: “We don’t have any money for advertising and we don’t have any money for fancy, fancy type comms on the ground. We do media releases, we do below-the-line type communication activities, and most of the time it’s pretty successful. We basically make do with what we have and work and as best we can.”

5. Key success factors and possible best practice transfer

When asked what they regard as the key success factor in their communications, the Department have no doubt: it is **being able to have individuals on the ground who are able and willing to relay their messages**. This approach paves the way for federal ministers when they go out to regional locations and promote the programmes and policies, as someone at a local level has already talked through the issues.

This **“two-level” approach** is seen as being very important and the integration between the two levels has to be managed carefully. Good on-the-ground communications involves local people as communicators, speaking about federal programmes and policies and their local impact, but that has to be integrated with federal ministers going to those same locations and holding a real two-way dialogue with stakeholders in the regions.

6. Conclusions

Communication strategy, objectives and messages

When asked whether they had a written communications strategy, the Department confirmed that they did indeed have one, but said they were unable to locate it. Their approach to communications might best be described as “informal”, but it is nonetheless effective. The overwhelming majority of press and media stories under the headings of “regional +Australia” are positive. They are usually about the local impact of spending programmes and they include federal level messages as well as local ones. The strategy can be summarised in a few words – decentralise and make maximum use of relays. The objectives tend to be discussed in hard cash terms for industry, but in more emotional terms for the general public – there is an emphasis on making people “feel good” about the region in which they live. Messaging is also kept simple. There are no more than four or five overarching messages and they are repeated as often as possible.

It may be objected that this approach is too simplistic for a much more complex communications environment such as the EU. But at a time when the Commission is frequently being criticised for “over-communicating” – putting out too many and too complex messages too often – it is at least worth asking whether DG REGIO should consider doing less rather than more. The new regulations for the upcoming spending period have led to a focus on process rather than outcome. It may be argued that the lesson from Australia is that people want to feel good about what is happening in their region rather than about how it is being made to happen.

An interesting difference between RDA and DG REGIO is that RDA also has responsibility for culture and sport. Both these areas of activity engender strong local emotions (local football team, local theatre, local festivals...). DG REGIO cannot start sponsoring concert performances. But it may be worth considering how the European dimension can be brought into messaging at regional level in domains other than the economic.

Target groups and communication tools

As with the strategy and objectives, analysis of target groups and use of tools is managed at a very straightforward level. A broad distinction is made between stakeholders and the general public but there is not a deep degree of segmentation beyond that. The tools employed are basically press releases, Twitter and the website(s). But this is more sophisticated than it may first appear. There is a strong concentration on local rather than national media. The use of “shell” press releases ensures consistency of overarching message but avoids any feeling of the story being dictated from the centre. The net result of all this is that, when federal ministers go on visits to the regions, the ground has been well-prepared for them. There seems to be a higher level of awareness at grass-roots level in Australia of what contribution has actually been delivered from the centre than there is in EU Member in relation to EU level programmes.

Stakeholders and multipliers

It is clear that the RDA Committees play an important role in all this. It is hard to think of a parallel in European terms. The EC Representations are very much extensions of Brussels and not perceived as being rooted in their local communities. The Committee of the Regions generally engages in dialogue with Brussels-based representatives of the regions rather than at grass-roots level. Many regions in the MS have their own Regional Development Authorities of one sort or another, but these are not often perceived as being linked closely with a federal-level administration (i.e. Brussels).

TEP would certainly not want the conclusion to be drawn from this that the solution is to set up another layer of Committees. But it may be worth examining the ways in which local business and political figures in the regions can be brought onside more visibly. If they could gain credit for “bringing their region’s issues to the attention of Brussels”, and DG REGIO could gain increased standing and credibility at ground-level from the association with them, then the outcome would be a win-win.

Challenges

The main challenges for the Department seem to be from the inside rather than from the outside. Australian politics are notoriously rumbustious and changes of ministers bring changes of messaging and changes of priority. It does appear that simplicity brings with it a degree of flexibility and the Department has been able to adapt to two changes of minister in the relatively short time since its inception.

In the case of DG REGIO, a change of approach has been imposed by financial imperatives. But if the DG wishes to reposition itself during the transition, the lesson from Australia would seem to be that messaging on the ground carries more weight than messaging from the centre.

ANNEX I

Extract from the Regional Development Australia handbook: “expression of interest for committee appointment 2012 -13”.⁸

1. Role of Regional Development Australia Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs

Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs are leading members of the community committed to the development of their region. They:

- are knowledgeable about the economic, social, cultural and environmental opportunities and challenges facing their region;
- provide strong leadership to promote the work of the committee and are strong advocates for their region;
- build networks within the community, business and government to facilitate wide consultation, articulate priorities, develop solutions and provide input to government; and
- are skilled in financial management and organisational governance.

The key roles for the Chair of an RDA committee are to provide strategic direction and leadership to the committee and develop and maintain adherence to sound governance arrangements. Chairs oversee financial management, direct work plan priorities and monitor progress in implementing the regional priorities.

The Deputy Chair plays an important role in supporting the Chair and assumes the role and duties of the Chair when the Chair is not available.

2. Role of Regional Development Australia Committee members

Committee members play an equally important role and are expected to have a strong understanding of their region's strengths and challenges and of the key issues facing local communities. They provide information and evidence to the committee and actively contribute to committee debates. They are effective communicators and have interpersonal skills which enable them to create linkages within the community and to support local community organisations, small businesses, and other relevant stakeholders. Committee members may also have experience in regional planning or development and delivery of whole-of-government or other local initiatives.

Committee members support the Chair and Deputy Chair by respecting the confidentiality of committee discussions, debates and decision making processes and by valuing the contributions and views of fellow committee members.

Committee members are expected to adopt a whole of region perspective in their activities with and on-behalf of their committee. They will also have a keen awareness of good governance principles and the legislative framework in which they work e.g. the RDA Constitution and the RDA Funding Agreement which outline the legal, financial and employer obligations.

⁸ <http://rda.gov.au/expressions-interest-committee-appointment-2012-13-handbook>

8 WORLD BANK BENCHMARKING REPORT

1. Introduction

Rationale for the case study selection



The World Bank shares a number of key communications features with DG REGIO. It is a high-profile international organisation which has to communicate complex information to both specialised and general audiences. Its members (in other words, its audiences) are countries with diverse interests and agendas. Policies which may be appropriate or highly desirable in the eyes of some Member States may be regarded as paternalistic or unwelcome by others.

There exists a further parallel between the World Bank and DG REGIO in terms of the need to develop messages which work both for contributor countries and net beneficiaries. The Bank also has to deal with a large media following made up of some very well-informed journalists and others who are coming completely fresh to the story. Its Annual Meeting (along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)) in Washington DC is an essential calendar date for the world's economic, financial and development press. Its public relations effort is professional and effective and can at times be quite robust.

The World Bank⁹

Established in 1944 along with the IMF at the Bretton Woods Conference, the World Bank Group now has over 10,000 employees in more than 120 offices worldwide and an aid portfolio of \$57 billion (2011). The Bank sees itself as a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries. It is not actually a bank in the usual sense of being a deposit taker, but a partnership between a group of international institutions and individual countries to reduce poverty and support development.

a) Its structure

The World Bank itself comprises two institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) which lends to governments of middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries. and the International Development Association (IDA) which provides interest-free loans—called credits— and grants to governments of the poorest countries..

The broader World Bank Group consists of these two organisations, plus three more, namely the:

- International Finance Corporation (IFC), which is the largest global development institution focused exclusively on the private sector.

⁹ This section draws throughout on: <http://www.bicusa.org/institutions/worldbank/>

- Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), which was created in 1988 to promote foreign direct investment into developing countries.
- International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, which provides international facilities for conciliation and arbitration of investment disputes.

The World Bank Group has set two goals to achieve by 2030:

- End extreme poverty by decreasing the percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day to no more than 3 per cent.
- Promote shared prosperity by fostering the income growth of the bottom 40 per cent for every country.

In operational terms, the World Bank (hereafter also referred to as “the Bank”) provides low-interest loans, interest-free credits, and grants to developing countries. These support investments in such areas as education, health, public administration, infrastructure, financial and private sector development, agriculture, and environmental and natural resource management. Some projects are co-financed with governments, other multilateral institutions, commercial banks, export credit agencies, and private sector investors. The Bank also provides or facilitates financing through trust fund partnerships with bilateral and multilateral donors.

Separate from finance, the Bank offers support to developing countries through policy advice, research and analysis, and technical assistance. In-house analytical work usually underpins World Bank financing and helps inform developing countries’ own investments. In addition, the Bank supports capacity development in the countries served. It sponsors, hosts, or participates in conferences and forums on issues of development, often in collaboration with partners.

b) Reputational issues

The Bank is not without its reputational issues. For example, an article published in Forbes Magazine in December 2012 described it as “one of the world’s most powerful institutions... but also one of its most dysfunctional”.

According to the article, which was strongly disputed by the Bank at the time, there was insufficient oversight by the governments that provided funding and no articulated vision for what the World Bank’s role should be in the 21st century. Bank sources were said to claim that up to USD2 billion (EUR 1.5 billion) that may have gone unaccounted for as a result of computer problems, while the organisation itself was portrayed as being so concerned with reputational risk that it covered up problems which could appear negative, rather than addressing them.

The methodology

The methodology employed to develop this case study involved desk research: a review of available documentation and data, including the organisation's website, newsletters, press releases, speeches, reports and promotional material; and an in-depth telephone interview with a senior communication officer at the World Bank.

The sections below present the World Bank's:

- Communication strategy, objectives and messages;
- Target groups and communication tools;
- Stakeholders and multipliers;
- Key success factors and possible best practice transfer; and
- Conclusions on each of these areas.

2. Communication strategy, objectives and messages

The concept of development communication

No discussion of the World Bank's communications strategy would be complete without reference to the concept of "Development Communication"¹⁰. In the same way that those involved in development economics regard the traditional demand and supply macroeconomic models as inapplicable in developing economies, communicators in the development domain have serious reservations about standard communications models.

About five years ago, what was described as the "media-centric" concept of communications (i.e. with a reliance on press and media as the principal channels) was challenged for not making a significant difference in people's lives. On this analysis, the important missing element in development programs was genuine two-way communication between the decision makers and the experts on the one hand, and beneficiaries on the other. Furthermore, the very word "beneficiaries" itself was challenged as being patronising.

Development support is results focused, and media coverage, no matter how technologically advanced or skilfully packaged, was not seen as being sufficient to bring about meaningful and sustainable results. Such results could only be achieved if all the stakeholders involved are part of the process leading to change. This shifted the focus from media to people, and from products to process.

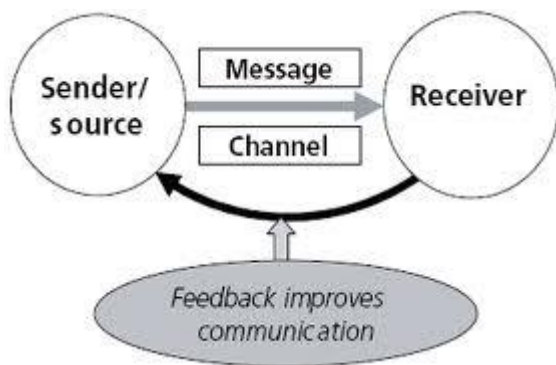
The basic Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver model had envisioned a sender transmitting a message through the appropriate channel to a receiver (or group of receivers). If done properly, the dissemination of information was viewed as capable of achieving the intended behaviour change. This model was revised a number of times in attempts to strengthen the active role of the "receivers" by including their feedback in the communication model. But the overall effectiveness of this model was seen as limited.

¹⁰ This section draws on the *IBRD/World Bank Development Communication Sourcebook*

Its linear flow has therefore been replaced with a more complex perspective in which communication is envisioned as a horizontal process aimed, first of all, at building trust, then at assessing risks, exploring opportunities, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and perceptions among stakeholders. At the heart of the idea is “two-way communication”. Two-way communication is used to understand and facilitate decision-making related to change.

An example of the classical, linear model is shown below. Even with the feedback loop, it is still basically a send-receive process.

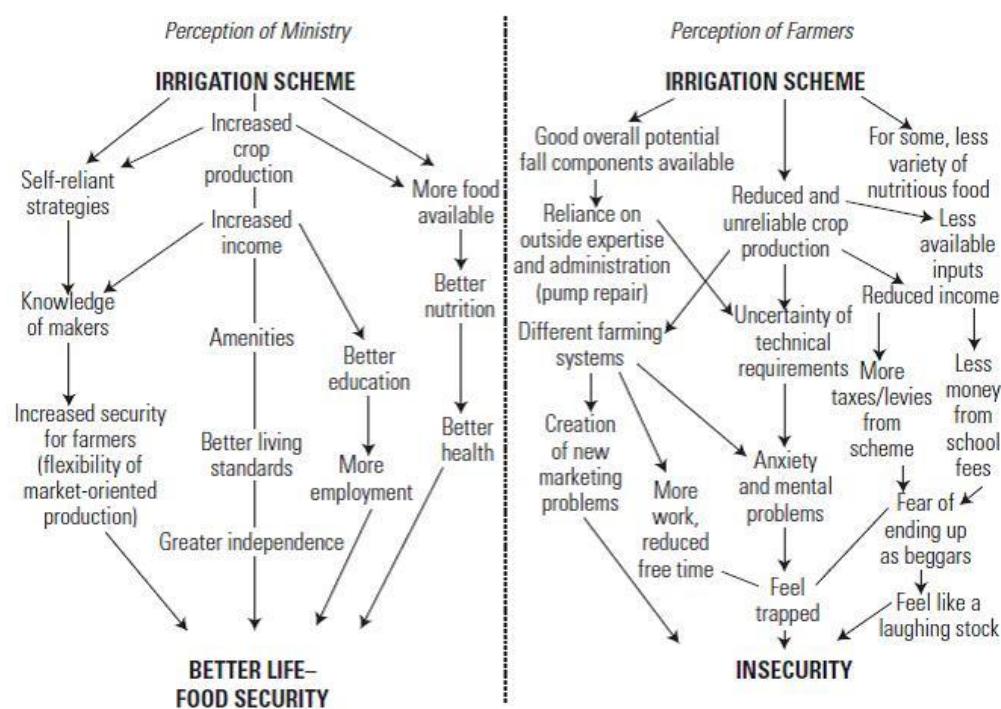
Figure 29: The Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver communications model



The Bank's own development communications models tend to involve much more subtle interactions. This example below comes from the Development Communication Sourcebook.

Figure 30: Example of a development communications model at the World Bank

Figure 1.1 Windows of Perception in an Agricultural Project



Source: Anyaegbunam et al. 2004.

Communications strategy

The Bank operates under the leadership and direction of its President, with organisational units responsible for regions, sectors, and general management. External communications is one of three general management units, along with Concessional Finance & Global Partnerships and Development Economics.

In the thirteen months since his appointment, the new President, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, has been driving a process of change and a refocusing of the bank's overall strategy. This is already impacting to some degree on communications strategy. The previous President, Robert Zoellick, was seen as preferring to manage through the use of strategic themes rather than a formalised strategy document. President Zoellick felt that strategies became committee-driven written products that were outdated by the time they were finished.

President Kim has a very different view; he has a strong strategic focus. For him, the main strategic objectives for communications at the Bank are **to tell the story to multiple audiences across multiple languages and to promote a conversation and dialogue among stakeholders that contributes to improved development outcomes**. It will be

apparent that this is very much in line with the development communications approach outlined above.

Communications is managed across what is called a ‘decentralised matrix’ structure.

The Director of Corporate Communications handles communications from the centre, but there are other communications units in the regions and in some of the Bank’s networks. The initial aim is to communicate the Bank’s story from the centre - that means, from the President. Communications focus around his initiatives along with major announcements, rollouts of products and their eventual outcomes. Following on from that, the various offices coordinate and facilitate across the regions and networks. **The basic aim is simply put: to tell the story well, to have it be accurate, and to have it contribute to a positive view of the Bank.** But that is only part of the picture. **Equal importance is placed on promoting real two-way conversation and dialogue to improve the development outcomes.**

Key messages

Under President Zoellick, one of the main communications strands, which tended to infuse much of the work, was crisis response. There was also an openness agenda in which the Bank promoted open access to its data and its information; this was supported by an open publishing model and a common approach to licensing. Within that framework there was an emphasis placed on country ownership of their own narratives and their own development trajectory. The Bank used its convening ability to help distribute knowledge about best practices around the development space. This approach is being changed steadily under the influence of President Kim.

At the Bank’s spring meeting in 2013, President Kim formally announced the two major goals referred to above in respect of ending extreme poverty and sharing prosperity (see Introduction). These goals are now being worked into the communications mix and translated into language around practical and realistic goals. For example, ending extreme poverty by 2030 essentially means getting it down to a figure of around 3% of the world’s population. This figure is seen as the baseline because events such as disasters and conflict are always going to generate frictional poverty in specific populations, and that contributes to the intractability of getting below 3%.

Figure 31: The World Bank emphasises dialogue in its web-blog



In the Bank's web-blog above, the emphasis is on dialogue about what can be done in practical terms

Thus, as a **first key message**, the Bank stresses that it is not trying to convey that it could bring about a situation where there are no extremely poor people in the world. Instead, it points to the fact that 21% of the world's population currently live in extreme poverty - relative to 40% 20 years ago - and that it would be a historic achievement to cut poverty to the 3% level.

The **second key message** is that the Bank is promoting shared prosperity to help the bottom 40% of the world's population, who live in the developing countries. At the time of writing, the communications effort is being restructured around these two goals.

3. Target groups and communication channels

Target groups

The World Bank needs to communicate with an **array of overlapping audiences**.

Outreach is directed first to the stakeholders who are the actual shareholders and owners of the Bank. That means the relevant **departments of government in the countries concerned**, known as the 'authorising environments'. The Bank's board represents 188 countries which means that stakeholders are to be found in the authorising environments of 188 capital cities and in the wider political environments within those countries. Along with the executive functions of governments, parliamentarians are also regarded as important targets.

Then there is also the **general public** within the receiving countries, which is seen as the main audience. The Banks' Corporate Communications department is at pains to stress the importance of the general public as an audience. They take the view that **if they are communicating well to the general public, then they are probably communicating well overall**. That high level of engagement will cascade trickle down to the more targeted audiences. By contrast, in their view, if an organisation is communicating well to its targeted audiences, it does not automatically follow that it will communicate well in general.

To take the example of communicating with parliamentarians: let us imagine that an organisation is using social media and knows that videos will help with the traction of the particular communication. The organisation could decide that since it really wishes to impact on parliamentarians at a particular time and on a particular issue, they will create a specific video for parliamentarians. They will write it assuming a certain level of knowledge and expertise and they will produce it a given way because they know the only audience is those parliamentarians.

The Bank's Corporate Communications staff would regard that approach as limiting. They argue that **even the most specialised audiences appreciate simple, clear and evocative communications**. On this analysis, when politicians or permanent officials or parliamentarians think that the organisation is succeeding in talking to the public, it reminds them that the 'general' public is their public too. This is a common audience and it becomes much easier to leverage the messaging and generate support in the authorising environment.

In one sense, this approach is a little like advertising, although not in a paid manner. If communications activity can help make the general public either positively inclined towards the Bank, or at least less negatively inclined to the Bank, that is going to help considerably within the overall authorising environment and promote the Bank's narrative. **Sharing positive results from programmes is seen as a powerful way to maintain the enthusiasm and energy levels behind the development agenda.**

Adapting the messages to the target group

Messages may sometimes be tailored for different audiences, although in general **communications materials are produced in the centre and distributed through channels which allow the bank to speak directly to the general public** rather than have to go through the filtering process of the media. That means by definition that they are not able to be tailored to various audiences. But it is understood that there may be a need to deal with specific audiences in specific countries and there are no blocks on re-sequencing or fine-tuning in such circumstances.

One final dimension to messaging is the language issue. The working assumption within the Bank is that if effort is put into targeted audiences such as parliamentarians there will be too great a temptation to work only in English, and communications in English are not talking to the people who are actually receiving the development support. For this reason, a key priority for the Bank has been to **increase the vernacular conversation levels in developing countries** because the countries are seen as holding the keys to their own solutions.

Communication channels

The ultimate choice of communications channel will depend on the circumstances and the objectives of the particular activity. But, as a rule, **the World Bank aims for a robust and active presence across all channels.**

In fact, extensive use is made of media, both traditional and new. Within Corporate Communications, the general public is the main audience. That means communicating via traditional media, using such tools and channels as issuing news releases, broadcasting video stories and responding to interview requests. But the internet and social media are also used to a considerable degree. New media is covered in seven languages, from the centre in Washington D.C. - English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and, to a lesser extent – Japanese.

Figure 32: The World Bank's use of seven languages in new media



Above, a World Bank announcement in Arabic.

Beyond that, each country office will implement more tailored language outreach depending on the local language and the various country activities would be coordinated at regional level.

There is no great enthusiasm for recalibrating on a day-by-day basis. Efforts will be directed towards all channels allowing for the fact that the relative traction may shift or move from day to day. This means that when there is a proactive announcement to be made, such as the roll-out of a new project, they will ensure that traditional media complement social media. The Banks' experience is that **the most impactful communications campaigns at their core continue to have a strong traditional media component.** Traditional media are seen as providing the best amplification for pro-active messaging and the strength of the World Bank brand provides even more volume.

The **interaction between traditional media and social media is important** here. If the Bank is successful with a roll-out and they achieve traditional media cover, it will migrate to

social media almost automatically, because all of the traditional media now have online presences as well. When a story appears in a traditional media outlet it does not stop there. It will also feature on their website and will be promoted to that audience. This is a virtuous circle in which the originator of the message is not only leveraging their own volume level, but also advancing the messaging through the volume level of others, and as the story is relayed back and forth between traditional and new media it continues to build. In the Bank's view, it is harder to achieve this effect without traditional media. It may not be impossible, but it will be much more difficult to create the additional momentum.

They do, however, take a narrower view when they are dealing with a defensive situation. They acknowledge that they are often handed the tool that they have to deal with and they just have to make the best of it. If a negative story breaks via traditional media they will work through that traditional media outlet, whereas if the critique or the problem comes from social media, they will just deal with it on the social media side.

4. Stakeholders and multipliers

Multipliers and relays

The World Bank does not make as much use of external multipliers and relays (in the sense of other organisations or institutions) as does DG REGIO. The main reason for this seems to be that they have in place a comprehensive network of 150 local offices around the world. Direct communications between the centre and the local offices is managed from Washington by a Regional Vice-President, with local Communications Officers based on the ground. For media placements in the regions, they make use of the local offices, while the website and social media are managed from the centre.

For example, where an op-ed¹¹ is to be placed in a particular newspaper, it will first be pushed out by the relevant local office. Once the exclusivity element has declined, it will then be redistributed in other territories by other local offices in traditional media and through the use of social media and the Bank's own online space managed from Washington DC.

The genesis for op-eds often comes from the local offices, so they will have been involved in the process from the outset.

The relationship between the Centre and the regional offices

The Bank's communications staff admit that tensions between the communications objectives of the centre and those of the regional offices can be a challenge at times. There is more usually agreement than disagreement on strategic objectives, but inevitably the views expressed will be based on local perspectives and that will differ from region to region and between regions and the centre. Washington staff generally take pains to view the local or regional perspective as important to communication. Typically, they will seek to go with

¹¹ An op-ed is a signed article by a Bank official on a particular issue or topic.

the line coming from the people on the ground on the basis that they are closer to the real story.

Key performance indicators

a) Quantitative indicators

Measurement of success will depend on the specifics of the exercise. In some cases, the measurement metrics will already be available externally. For example, if an op-ed is placed in a particular newspaper the communications team will already know what that newspaper's average traffic is because that will have impacted the decision to put the op-ed there in the first place. They will accept the **readership figure** from the newspaper as a credible and usable metric.

When it comes to online media, the Bank measures **traffic**, growth in number of channels and, in particular, developing countries' access. They are both pleased and proud that 50% of their online traffic now originates from the developing world, which was the target when the current expansion of online operations began. It can, however, be difficult to pin down sources.

b) Qualitative indicators

Assessment is qualitative as well as quantitative. The degree of positive response can be obtained from the comments in the online spaces and by the number of views of videos. Attention is also paid to feedback from national parliamentarians and from the local offices. The communications department has a planning cycle that runs every three years and they were able to set records for online penetration in both 2007 and 2010. They are certain that the overall authorising environment is influenced by their communications activities.

c) Use of benchmarks

The key performance indicators for communications have changed to quite a large extent and are continuing to be modified as the impact of President Kim's change agenda is felt. **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)** with management have been established to **indicate what the benchmarks should be.**

The MOUs are very specific. For example, communications would set themselves a target within the traditional media domain of 100% responses to reporters within their deadlines. Or where a unit approves new website requests, they would set a target to provide feedback to a new site launch request within five business days. In practice, it is sometimes hard to provide ratings, but the aim is to generate meaningful figures which are sufficiently accurate for the assessment of performance and for senior management to review the work done.

d) Balancing the evidence

One pitfall the Bank are keen to avoid derives from the fact that it is often easier to obtain measurements from web-based activities than it is from other forms of communication. This can generate greater expectations from some forms of measurement than from others, attached to other communications activities.

For example, measurements on the web can give the impression of being much more precise than the measurements for how well a speech was received. Some traditional communications channels are difficult to measure and therefore have not developed a culture of measurement, but the activities are still undertaken. When it comes to allocation of resources, the department therefore has to choose between activities which are generating a considerable amount of measurement data and others which are generating much less. This can, and does, produce difficulties.

5. Key success factors and possible best practice transfer

Viewed from the perspective of the communications department, the single most important development of recent years has been **the increase in delegated authority by World Bank management**. There is less micro-management. Lines of management control are kept short as long as procedures are seen to be working well. Communications staff are expected to have good judgement and to do their jobs well. If they do not, they will hear about it. But senior management acknowledge that communications staff have to operate in a difficult and high speed environment. This change has improved the quality of communications and, it is felt, has improved how external audiences perceive the Bank. In the words of a senior official at the Bank:

“I think the way people think about the World Bank is different from five or six years ago. I wouldn’t put all of that on our newer communications style, but I think we’ve contributed to it. I don’t think the Bank of five or six years ago would have been so comfortable having 300 plus bloggers in-house. I don’t think the Bank of five or six years ago would have been so comfortable with the kinds of campaigns that we put on, whether it’s “What Will it Take?” or “Think Equal” or “Put Food First”.

Within communications, **the increased reliance on new media has brought with it a much more youthful workforce**. There are now relatively young members of staff performing tasks that in any other unit would have required a great deal more clearance. Other desk staff are provided with training to enable them to talk effectively about the Bank in their own environments, but the social web and media team has much less complex lines of clearance for its communications, even though the audience is measured in millions.

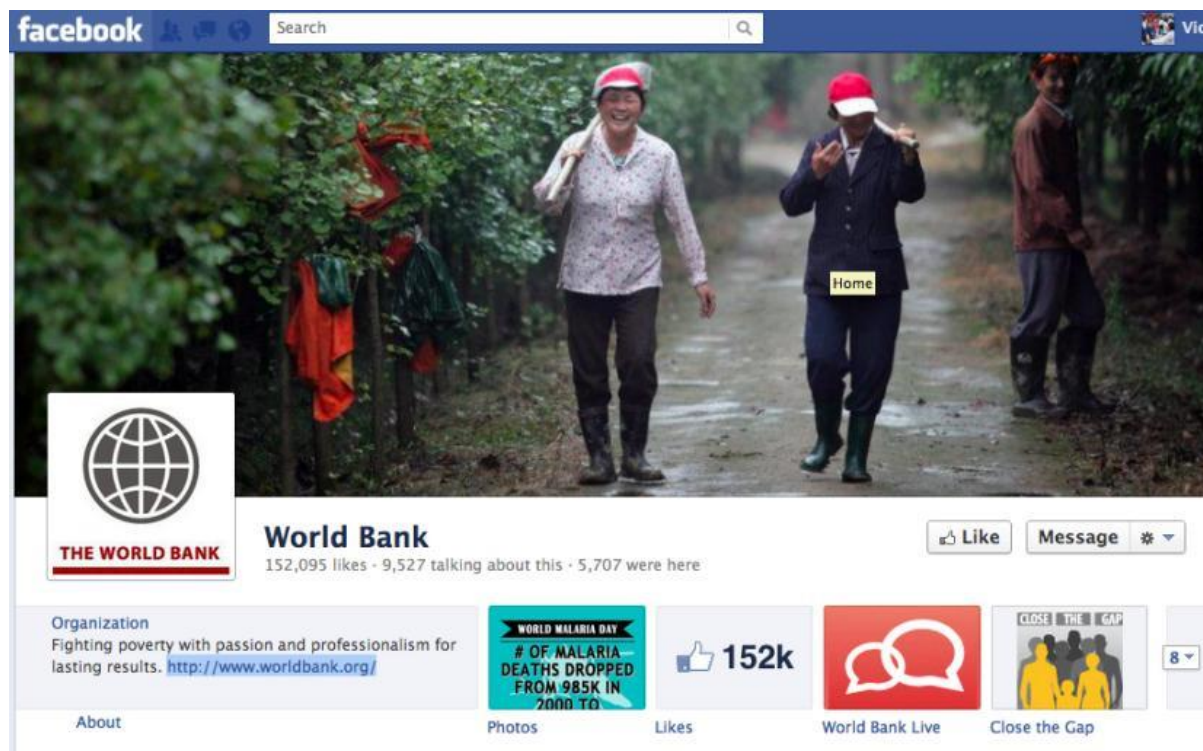
Figure 33: The World Bank's communications by and for younger people



Communications by and for young people: the Bank uses its own young staff to connect with a young audience.

The Bank has accepted that young staff with direct access to its Twitter and Facebook accounts can potentially reach a very great number of people. But that is clearly seen as the new reality.

Figure 34: The World Bank's Facebook page



If control was centralised to the extent that every online communication had to be individually approved, it would simply not be possible to support the online effort currently being produced. Even if it could be supported, it would not be as effective as they feel it has now become.

Figure 35: The World Bank's staff as potential bloggers



At the World Bank, every member of staff is a potential blogger

6. Conclusions

Communication strategy, objectives and messages

Perhaps the most striking feature of the World Bank's external communications is the way that they are so intimately connected with the objective of **making a difference on the ground**. Most professional communicators these days routinely draw the distinction between information and communication. Information is relatively neutral while communication has a more specific purpose and should be more two-way. But for the World Bank, this seems to be the starting point rather than the end point. Real two-way communication is the norm and the intention of the conversation is not just to make audiences favourably aware of the Bank's messages but to change behaviour in ways which will produce measurable results on the ground.

The stated communications aims remain to tell the story well, to ensure that it is accurate, and to have it contribute to a positive view of the Bank. But beyond that, there is **a real desire to avoid one-way communications**. In the Bank's view, conversation and dialogue can actually help improve development outcomes in the countries concerned.

It would be an interesting exercise for DG REGIO to take some of the texts from the Bank's development communications handbook and replace the word "development" with the phrase "EU regional development". On the face of it, there seems to be no immediately obvious reason why a technique which has worked so well in the rest of the world could not be applied within the European Union as well.

Target groups (including stakeholders) and communication tools

Like DG REGIO, the World Bank has to balance its communications efforts between two large groupings – stakeholders and the general public. Both can be segmented and subdivided, but the Bank is in no doubt that the general public audience comes before the stakeholders in terms of communications priority. It may be argued that their stakeholders – since they sit on the board of the Bank itself – are much closer already than Member State stakeholders are to DG REGIO. But it seems intuitively attractive to win first in the court of public opinion and then use that to success to leverage approval from stakeholders. Certainly, this seems to make sense when it comes to political audiences as the most influential group in the mind of any politician is their electorate.

It follows from the concentration on the wider audience that mass communication tools are the most appropriate, and the Bank makes particularly good use of the **interplay between traditional and new media**. They are not perceived as separate channels, they are very much interlinked

Multipliers

Here, there is rather less to say since the Bank makes relatively little use of external multipliers in the sense that the term is normally used within the Commission. If a parallel is drawn between the Bank's local office and the EU representations, the big difference is that the World Bank's local offices are servicing only one client – the central office in Washington DC. They do not have 28 competing clients to deal with as the Permanent Representations do. This might tend to swing the argument in terms of greater use of the Managing Authorities, but they have their own agendas which may be very different from those of DG REGIO.

Challenges

In the relatively short time since his appointment, President Kim has done a good job of refocusing media attention away from the perceived shortcomings of the institution and back towards its objectives. The communications team have little doubt that direct, two-way communication with their key audiences has played an important role in this process. They are only operating in seven languages, as against the 23 which need to concern the

Commission, but they do have directly interested audiences in 188 countries. On the basis of the World Bank's experience, the key question would seem not to be whether to empower staff to engage more with external audiences, but *how* to do so.

9 DG AGRICULTURE BENCHMARKING REPORT

1. Introduction

Rationale for the case study selection



It may be argued that the European Commission is a unique organisation. It is a supra-national administration faced

with the need to communicate with stakeholders at supra-national, national, regional and local levels. It has a “domestic” audience of 500 million citizens. The only exact parallel is with other European institutions. It is therefore worth asking which other Directorates within the institution face a similar communications landscape and similar challenges to DG REGIO, and how they manage their own communications.

The two obvious contenders in terms of policy overlap are DG EMPL and DG AGRI. DG REGIO has already been communicating jointly with DG EMPL on issues around structural funds in the new financing period. All three DGs need to communicate with stakeholders at a local level where there may be conflicting political priorities with those of the national administrations. TEP have selected DG AGRI because they are making use of one particular communications technique which is not developed to anything like the same extent elsewhere in the Commission – an online network of European journalists (see Section 3 below).

Under the first pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy, concerning so-called direct payments, there is no legal provision obliging Member States to communicate. DG AGRI has to fill this gap. In this case, it is not direct beneficiaries they need to target, because farmers who receive direct payments already know how to apply and already lobby the Commission on a regular basis. So the DG concentrates on raising awareness of the CAP among the general public. Indeed, they have a legal obligation to do so. The "External communication strategy for the CAP for the period 2010 – 2015" was adopted under Council regulation 814/2000 in 2010. Its main objective is:

“To inform public opinion (including key opinion leaders, decision makers and agricultural stakeholders) on the CAP post 2013 reform process and its contribution to the "Europe 2020" strategy.”

The DG's communications budget over the last five years has been 8 million euros a year. Between 3 and 3.5 million is spent on indirect actions and the rest on direct actions. Direct actions include the DG paying for participation at a fair, organising a conference or running a communication campaign in the press. Indirect actions are co-financed. Here DG AGRI issues a call for proposals. Eligible projects could be seminars or TV programmes. There is felt to be a good value-for-resource equation from these projects because they take place at national level without any involvement by the DG.

DG Agriculture

a) Its structure

The responsible unit for communications within DG AGRI is Internal and External Communication. Out of a total of 35 staff, three to five handle internal communications via an intranet and a magazine. The majority deal with external communication. **The external communication part of the unit is arranged according to target groups:** media, general public, and stakeholders (including participation and organisation of conferences and networking). The stakeholder team also manage the annual CAP Communication Award, which has been set up to stimulate co-financed communication projects around the CAP.

The communication team emphasise that it is their communications strategy which has led to the structuring of the unit, in order to be responsive to their action plans (see Section 2 below). It is not the case that the organisational structure drives their planning. Cooperation between the teams takes place as and when needed. For example, the media team will work with other colleagues on projects for the general public or for a stakeholder conference where there is also a media aspect. Wherever possible, joint activities are diarised in advance.

Methodology

The methodology employed to develop this case study involved desk research: a review of available documentation and data, including the organisation's website, newsletters, press releases, speeches, reports and promotional material; and face-to-face interviews with Ulrika Holmstrom and Costa Golfidis of the DG AGRI Communication Unit.

The sections below present DG AGRI's:

- Communication strategy, objectives and messages;
- Target groups and communication tools;
- Stakeholders and multipliers;
- Key success factors and possible best practice transfer; and
- Conclusions on each of these areas.

2. Communication strategy and messages

Communication strategy

The DG operates a 5-year rolling communication strategy, which they match with the term of the Commissioner. The current strategy was decided together with the Cabinet in 2010 and is planned to run until 2015. In 2014, they will start thinking about the next strategy and as soon as the new Commissioner is in place, they will establish objectives, targets and messages for the five years to come. Implementation is managed through annual action plans.

The current strategy has been deployed in two stages. The first stage took place before the decision was taken on the reform of the CAP. The reform started with public consultation, followed by a communication with legal proposals. The initial idea was to target decision makers during the period from the public debate until the end of the legislative process. Now that the new policy has been decided, the target audience is the general public.

A campaign has been launched with a website, a commercial is planned to be in cinemas next year, and packs for teachers will be made available in September 2014 with a wide range of other tools. There will also be a section of the website for industry stakeholders where more technical information on the content of the CAP will be available.

To help define the scope of the strategy, the DG runs a survey via DG COMM every three years. One of the repeat questions, in order to have a trend, is “Do you think agriculture and rural areas are important for you”? The answer is normally 80 to 90 per cent positive that agriculture is important now and important for the future. The second question is whether respondents know what the CAP is about. Here, more than 80 per cent are usually “don’t know” or “never heard about”.¹²

Key messages

Communication efforts during 2013 were initially centred on three strategic messages:

- The CAP has provided services to European citizens for over 50 years, going beyond food production into public goods delivery.
- The CAP is a living policy conceived as a fundamental component of the construction of Europe, constantly adapting to EU citizens' needs.
- The CAP is an evolving policy, meeting the challenges of food security, climate change, the sustainable use of natural resources and balanced regional development.

However, qualitative information from focus groups suggested the need for a different approach. When respondents were asked whether they thought Europe was dealing well with agriculture they said “yes”.

The connection between Europe and farming was understood. But there was much less interest in the CAP as such. So the objective for the new campaign is to strike a balance. The messaging will concentrate on farming and why farming is important for citizens, for their food and for the countryside. Only after that will come the message that because farming is important there is an agricultural policy conducted at EU level.

¹² When Commissioner Ciolos took office in March 2010, the first thing he saw were these results. His immediate reaction was that they had to change!

3. Target groups and communication channels

Target groups

The precise target for 2013 has been more specific than the whole of the general public. The campaign targets adult urban dwellers, who are perceived as far from understanding what actually happens on a farm. **The specific objective for this urban audience is not to mention the CAP too much as a policy, but to talk about and promote European agriculture.** This is thus not a campaign about the CAP itself, it is a campaign about what is behind the policy.

Communication channels

a) Advisory Groups

DG AGRI has a well-established process for two-way communication with stakeholders in real time. This is managed via **Advisory Groups, which listen to the Commission's ideas and proposals and collect stakeholder input** from farmer's representatives, co-operatives, consumer groups and industry. Groups exist for specific products such as beef, cereals and milk and also for horizontal issues such as rural development and the environment. There is usually no need to run specific information campaigns for the members of these groups because they will have access to key documents even before they reach the press. The DG also maintains relationships with lobby groups, but a separate unit deals with inter-institutional relations and relations with NGOs. The formal stakeholder interface is through the Advisory Groups.

When a policy area the DG wants to address is not covered by the regular advisory group structure, the usual procedure is to add value by holding a stakeholder conference. Conferences tend to be held on horizontal topics; for example in November 2013 there will be an event to prepare for the 2014 International Year for Family Farming. There will also be a conference on organic agriculture to address the topic of how European legislation should be further developed. The DG routinely participates in major national fairs in centres such as Paris and Berlin and holds discussions and workshops there as a side activity.

b) Journalists' network

In 2011, DG AGRI started The **European Network for Agricultural Journalists** (ENAJ), a network for European journalists interested in agriculture and rural development. It stemmed from demand from European editors since there was an existing international network, but it was dominated by southern hemisphere countries in South America and New Zealand. The European media felt it would be helpful if they had a complimentary network because they were all reporting on the CAP. Since they were all fully occupied with their own projects, they asked if DG AGRI could help launch the new network.

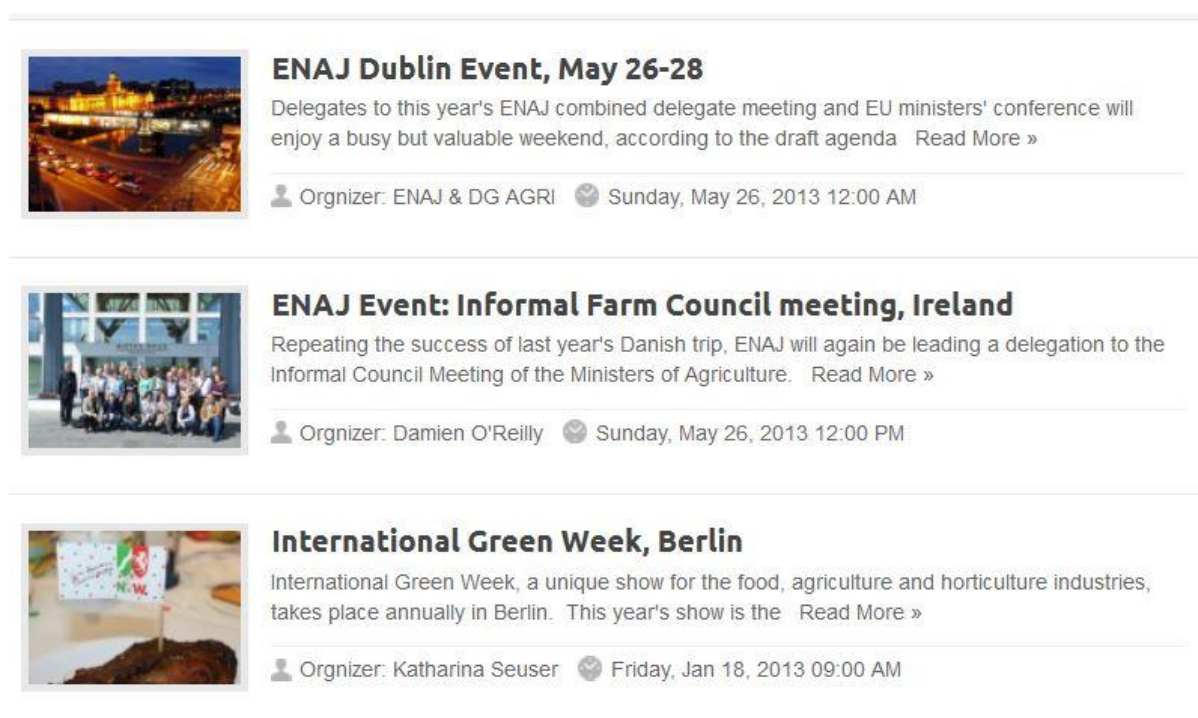
Figure 36: ENAJ home page banner



The key tool is the ENAJ website. It is not hosted on Europa, nor does it say that it is a European Commission website, but for the moment DG AGRI manages it. Its mainstay is up-to-date information, news and statistics along with sections where members can upload their own stories.

From zero at the outset, the site now has 867 registered journalists drawn from the 28 Member States. DG AGRI does not actively promote it nor put in any money on promotion. Journalists simply need to register and registration is only accepted from journalists. News of the existence of the site has spread largely by word of mouth. The Communication Unit started by contacting the Representations in the Member States and asking them to inform journalists they were frequently in contact with. The site seems to have filled a need. Once a week an electronic mail is sent to all registered members highlighting the latest material.

Figure 37: Examples of news and information posted for member journalists on the ENAJ site



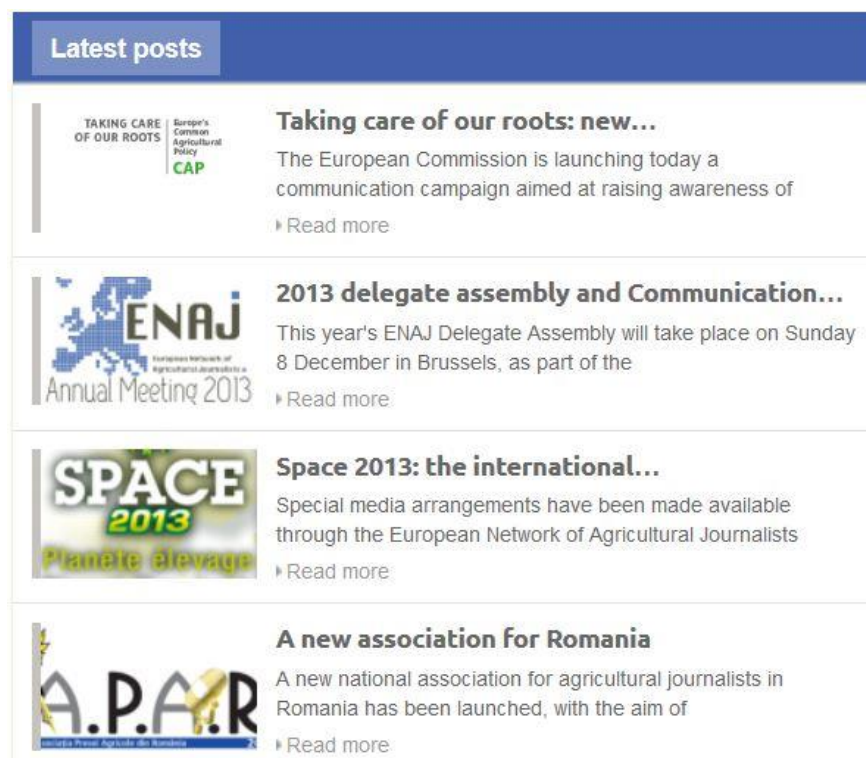
There is real world activity as well as online. **During the year the DG organises five or six press trips** together with the spokesperson when journalists go to a Member State to see

the CAP in action. All aspects of organisation are in the hands of the DG apart from bookings and paying bills, which are handled by a contractor with a framework contract. The last visit was to Slovakia in September 2103 and the next will be to La Mancha in Spain. There is usually a spokesperson and a group of 12 to 15 journalists (ENAJ members) from different countries. They are selected from different media; it could be specialised farming press or general press or radio or TV. The programme usually involves visits to five or six farms. Leading figures in the sector join for the lunch or for the visit so that the journalists can interview them and get quotes.

There is no time to visit all the sites in advance, so the DG works through contacts within the national Ministries of Agriculture to ensure that the visits are properly representative; they are not looking for the best farms in the country, they want to show typical young farmers, for example, or a typical co-operative. The journalists have the opportunity to get a story but also to meet each other and to have informal contact with a spokesperson who is also on the bus. It does not involve more than two days away from the office. DG AGRI pay for the visits and in general they are very much appreciated.

Each trip generates two to four articles per journalist. These are journalists who already have the credibility of being read regularly, so it is not seen as “propaganda from Brussels”. The DG does not try to steer what they write but they do provide as much information as possible. In this way, the journalists become more at ease writing about European policy and they understand it much better. The idea is that when a story such as the horsemeat scandal breaks, a journalist from Spain might have met an Irish journalist on the press trip to Slovakia and because they feel they are in the same network they can contact each other and check out the facts together.

Figure 38: Posts on the ENAJ website – the Commission is visible as a participant but does not dominate



Each December, the Communications Unit organises a network event for all those who have travelled with them in the last year or so. The aim is to have about 150 journalists attending, on the basis that they run six trips a year and have between 12 and 15 on each trip. In addition, a study trip to Brussels is organised for young journalists two or three times a year. At the start, it was restricted to Eastern and Central Europe. They went to visit cooperatives because Belgium and Holland have a good record of accomplishment when it comes to cooperatives and the word co-operative does not normally have a positive connotation for journalists from Eastern Europe.

The agenda usually involves starting with a day in Brussels where they hear from in-house speakers. There is a visit to the press services of the Commission, the Council and the Parliament to clarify the respective roles of the three institutions. On the following day, there is a field trip in Flanders to one or two farms. The DG is finding that the younger generation of journalists are spontaneously starting Facebook groups based around the groups on the study trips.

“Journalist press and study trips are very much appreciated. They allow journalists to put a face (or several) on the policy; meet real farmers in different countries and talk to them about the need for a reform of the policy; have privileged time with the Commissioner's spokesperson; get a tangible picture of the diversity of EU agriculture and last, but not least, to network and exchange experience and ideas amongst each other.” DG AGRI 2013 Action Plan.

Communication tools

a) Press materials

For day-to-day information and replies to questions, journalists contact the spokesperson's service. The Communication Unit will stand in for the spokesperson when he is not available and also pull together background information from desk officers in the DG to respond to questions from the press. This is a significant part of their daily workload.

The Unit also monitors and manages media coverage online via the ENAJ network website. The network has a role to play in shaping coverage as well. Journalists from Member States who are active in the network have a known point of contact in Brussels and will usually make contact and seek to straighten out the facts before writing something that may be contentious. The spokesperson may also be brought into that process since he will speak on the record.

b) Social media

Social media is seen as important in the communications mix. The Commissioner has his own Facebook account, through which there is a lot of stakeholder contact and also contact with the Romanian general public. For their part, the DG currently use social media on only quite a small scale, but they firmly believe they would not be taken seriously if they had no presence at all. This is driven by the media. Journalists are no longer prepared to hunt through a website looking for information, or to wait for written translations of documents or press releases in their own languages.

Despite the relatively small size of the team, the Unit therefore puts a lot of time and resource on keeping up with Facebook and Twitter. The Facebook account is called EU Agri. It is deliberately not too technical. A lot of use is made of visuals and although they try to cover every item of news, considerable effort is put into using a combination of less complicated language and hyperlinks for those who want to find out more.

In addition, there is a Twitter account in the name of the spokesperson. He now has 3,400 followers and journalists in the ENAJ network say they can post a story based on one of his tweets within half an hour. As soon as an official announcement is made, it is easy for the spokesperson to reach the whole network just by tweeting a link. Those who know him as a reliable source will make immediate use of the information. Tweets do take some time to compose since they have to be redrafted from the source material, but they are an excellent way of staying up to date with the story. **Those drafting communications documents therefore bear the need for tweets in mind from the outset.**

c) Communication Awards

Last year, the DG launched the annual CAP Communication Award with an award to act as **a platform where they can bring together all the communication projects around agriculture** which have been developed locally, at regional, national and European level. Projects do not have to relate directly to the CAP as long as there is some sort of connection with agriculture policy. The DG know that there are many communication activities going on across the EU of which they are unaware –such as open days at farms, city farm events and TV programmes devoted to agricultural issues. The aim is to make sure that these projects are as widely known as possible and provide inspiration. The awards are being repeated this year.

Figure 39: Communication awards landing page



4. Multipliers and relays

a) Relays in MS administrations

While the journalists' network is now working well, other relays and multipliers present greater challenges. Institutional relays such as the Representations in the Member States and the Europe Direct network suffer from the fact that there are only varying degrees of interest in the CAP. DG AGRI also try to establish contact with colleagues in the National Ministries of Agriculture who deal with communication. There is a nascent network of communicators and they are trying to develop synergies, but it is a slow process.

The reality is that many colleagues in the National Ministries of Agriculture face difficulties if not complete blocks at a political level to communicating on the CAP. They are happy to come to Brussels and attend meetings. They listen to what others are planning to do in their own countries and to what DG AGRI is planning at the European level, but they make it clear that they will not be able to communicate on the CAP in their own countries because of the domestic political agenda.

Denmark and the UK are quite clear on this point, although it is made informally rather than in writing. On the other hand, the DG has particularly good working relations with colleagues from the Irish, French, Belgian, Italian, Spanish and German ministries. In those countries, communications around the CAP are often undertaken without the need for a request from Brussels because the officials concerned understand the logic of an EU level policy and know how important it is for their country and for the agricultural community.

"You can have a group of people meeting and cooperating trying to exploit synergies. But if you cannot involve all 28 countries and if the political will is not there, you cannot really develop a network." DG AGRI official consulted

When it comes to Rural Development, on the other hand, there is a European network. In each Member State there are national rural development networks, involved in development activities, communication and exchange of best practice. One of the tasks of this network is to deal with communication and the DG regularly looks for ways to work together and to exchange best practices at an EU level.

b) Relays among social partners

The other area where DG AGRI networks is through the farmers' unions. The problem there is that although they already have a European organisation to which all the national members belong (COPA-COGECA), it does not deal with communication to the general public about the CAP. Its objective is to lobby the Commission and the European Parliament and to influence the legislation.

Usually COPA-COGECA's first priority is not actually to communicate on the CAP, it is to try and influence the process and change the policy. However some national members are very active in communicating on the CAP: France and Ireland, for example. The CAP is important for their country, important for their farming community and also for consumers in the country.

Figure 40: Agricultural lobbying techniques in action



About five years ago, the National Farmers Union (NFU) in the UK launched a very successful campaign called Farming Matters. It was in fact the inspiration for DG AGRI's own Farming Matters campaign, playing on the word "matters" - farming matters for you, farming matters for your food, for your countryside, or for your heritage. The NFU made a qualitative study before launching the campaign to see whether they should communicate on the CAP or not. The result was very negative. They found that they should not talk about the CAP, and not talk about Europe at all, but just concentrate on farming for the UK. So they developed the campaign on that basis.

Liaison with the farmers' unions is still very much work in progress. Some are already involved in communicating on the CAP, but **the problem in creating a real network - even with those who are ready to join - is that there is resistance to the idea from the others.** For their part, the DG want to do more. They have ambitious plans to work with the unions in talking about the importance of the CAP not only for the farming community but also for citizens as taxpayers and as consumers. This would allow them to move away from the current top-down approach. But it is a challenge which has not yet been met.

5. Measurement and evaluation

The Communication Unit uses a fairly basic approach to evaluation. There is a grid, which they describe as simple but effective, for each flagship project – media and stakeholders. The grid contains information on the actions to be developed, the time-line for implementation, the tools to be used and the success indicators.

For the journalists' network, the indicator is that a certain percentage of those invited should join the network. There should also be a measure of how positive or neutral the articles written after the visit are. The aim is to pick up whether the article is only about the farm visited but also mentions something about EU agricultural policy. But the problem lies in

picking up and analysing all the articles, particularly broadcast. In any case, the profile of the articles will be influenced by the choice of journalists invited.

That said, the primary aim of the media network is seen as interaction rather than the level of coverage. If the journalists who go on a visit write about the CAP, that is a useful by-product. At this early stage, it is not the quantitative output that is most important, the real concern would be if people were not joining the network and not using the online facilities. That can be monitored using Google analytics and social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

For the “50 years of the CAP” campaign, the grid explained the actions and the measures, and how they were to be organised. There was a summary with more details in the narrative. Indicators of success were number of articles in the press and numbers of visitors. For media networking activities such as the study trips, the measures were numbers of different trips, where and when they took place. The indicators of success were number of articles, percentage of articles which were either neutral or positive and percentage of journalists who were members of the Agri-press.

DG AGRI is obliged to make a detailed report to the Council and the Parliament every second year to explain their communication activities. In addition, an external evaluation of their communication activities is undertaken every five years. The call for tenders for the next external evaluation will be made at the end of 2013. The timing is designed to allow for input of the findings into the preparation of the new strategy and discussion with the new Commissioner.

6. Key success factors and possible best practice transfer

Perhaps surprisingly, when asked what they themselves regard as the most important aspect of their communications activity, DG AGRI point not to their network of journalists but to their internal organisation. Under the Council Regulation, they are required to concentrate all their communication activities in the same Unit. They point to other DGs such as Health and Consumers, where every Directorate has its own communication department and liaison is much more difficult. There is no centralisation of communication activities and communication budget.

The other key factor is that during the period while the action plans for the year are being prepared, the Communication Unit consults widely with all the other services to identify upcoming needs, what challenges are anticipated, what are the likely developments in the sector and what is the legislative programme. This forms the basis for their communications planning.

7. Conclusions

Communication strategy, objectives and messages

The synchronisation of the communication strategy with the term of the Commission at DG AGRI and their annual action plans combine to make for good discipline: objectives and messages are not only set out but shared with other stakeholders (in this case the EP). It is also to the DG's credit that **they re-engineered their key messages in the light of focus group findings. For a large DG with a complex message to communicate this shows quite a degree of flexibility.** There is a saying among military commanders that "no plan ever survives contact with the enemy". The same could be applied to communications and audiences.

Target groups (including stakeholders)

The image of DG AGRI itself, as distinct from its policies, has changed substantially over recent years. In the past, the DG was frequently criticised for being "too close" to its agricultural constituency:

"....DG VI as it once was had a reputation of being particularly close to farmers. Its head official was always drawn from France and was usually close to large-scale French grain interests. Many of the officials were French and [others] who worked there were usually Francophiles." www.capreform.eu

The irony of this criticism will not be lost on officials who have looked out of their windows to see farmers protesting about the CAP in Rue de la Loi. But the legacy of the old, long-standing image of the DG and its policies was that it was concerned with the interests of one group of Europe's citizens to the detriment of the rest. The DG has sought with some success to counter this by emphasising how many people depend directly and indirectly on the land (not just farmers, but inhabitants of rural areas, those involved in food production and distribution, the retail sector etc). This is still essentially a defensive position to take, but it is preparing the ground for a more positive narrative. It has also switched the focus from the policy (=the CAP) to the contribution made by the sector (=the land, the farmers). **At the moment, DG REGIO positions itself as supporting the regions, but not as a "champion" of those who live and work in the regions.** There may be scope for repositioning here.

Multipliers

DG AGRI's attitude to relays is nothing if not pragmatic. They accept that there are some partners (in MS administrations for example) who cannot share their approach, but at least they maintain contact. The interface with stakeholders via the Advisory Groups is particularly well rooted and ensures that the DG has plenty of advocates on the ground in the countries concerned.

The journalists' network is an undoubted success. Perhaps the problem for DG REGIO in transferring the idea is that there is less of a common sense of belonging among journalists

who might write on regional policy than there is among agriculture journalists. Less active but nonetheless useful networks have been developed among transport journalists by DG MOVE and among consumer affairs journalists by DG Health and Consumers. But here again there are recognised specialist correspondents. **One solution might be to start with Editors of regional publications. They would share a pride in their own regions and a dislike of their national metropolitan media.**

10 DG REGIO PERFORMANCE / KPI FRAMEWORK

In order to assess the performance of DG REGIO's communication strategy, activities and tools over the next programming period the evaluation was asked to propose a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against which progress can be measured. At this stage, with the overarching communication strategy still to be finalised, it would be difficult to develop a specific set of KPIs. However, it has been possible to provide a generic assessment framework that DG REGIO can utilise as soon as the communication strategy, activities and tools are determined.

Assessment criteria of DG REGIO Communication Strategy (and Annual Plans)
<p>Assessing the extent to which the communication strategy (and annual plans) are being implemented successfully will involve <u>triangulating evidence</u> from a variety of sources including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-assessment of DG REGIO communication interventions (drawing on the assessments of different communication activities / tools) • Independent evaluation (Including primary research on DG REGIO stakeholders) • Evidence from Member States (Evaluations, surveys, studies etc.) • Eurobarometer surveys (Levels of awareness and perceptions across the EU)

Communication activities / tools	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) / Assessment criteria
Events (Conferences, Seminars, Open Days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and profile of participants • Monitoring and evaluation (Participant satisfaction rates/ independent evaluation/ benchmarking) • Total cost per participant ratio / perceived value for money • Effectiveness and efficiency of promotion channels • Analysis of sponsors / funding mechanisms • Traditional / social media coverage (Media content analysis - quantity and quality of coverage)
Social media: Twitter, Facebook, Yammer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media analytics (Retweets, forwards, social media sharing, likes/ rates, page views, unique visitors, traffic from social networking sites, time spent on site, response time) • Number of Facebook updates, blog posts, Yammer posts • Numbers of followers, fans, mentions, links, social bookmarks • Profile of current and potential audiences • Monitoring and evaluation (User satisfaction surveys/ evaluations/ benchmarking) • Promotion (visibility/ share of voice/ buzz/ comments) <p>There are numerous Twitter evaluation tools available and new ones come out on a regular basis. @TweetSmarter provides regular updates on many of these. Examples of Twitter evaluation tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - www.twazzup.com: A search engine which shows you Twitter comments on a particular keyword at that point in time. Presented as a dashboard with information on who the most influential users are, the current hashtags being used and the messages themselves. Constantly updating so you can only

Communication activities / tools	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) / Assessment criteria
	<p>use it to assess current sentiment. Good in a crisis or when a lively debate about something is happening.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - http://hashtags.org: Helps identify trends in use of particular hashtags. - http://tweetreach.com: Helps identify how many users have seen your tweets. - http://bufferapp.com: Recently released and enables you to study your users behaviour and time your tweets accordingly. It is worth searching online for tools like this – there are plenty of free and paid ones which should meet your needs. - www.klout.com: Useful for helping to identify the style of your tweets and also who else you might want to follow. The Klout score is popular, but whether it adds real value is debatable <p>Other useful social media evaluation tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - www.blogpulse.com - www.samepoint.com - www.addictomatic.com - www.socialmention.com
Networks (e.g. INFORM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and profile of network participants • Level of involvement in the network (e.g. Participation in exchanges, events etc) • Monitoring and evaluation (Participant satisfaction rates/ evaluations/ benchmarking) • Promotion (visibility/ comments)
Magazines, newsletters, brochures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution and readership numbers and channels • (For print materials) Numbers produced vs distributed • Monitoring and evaluation (readers' satisfaction rates/ evaluations/ benchmarking) • Profile of current and potential readers • Effectiveness and efficiency of promotion channels • Traditional / social media coverage (Media content analysis - quantity and quality of coverage)
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution and viewership numbers and channels • Monitoring and evaluation (Viewer satisfaction rates/ evaluations/ benchmarking) • Profile of current and potential viewers • Effectiveness and efficiency of promotion channels • Traditional / social media up-take and coverage of videos (Media content analysis - quantity and quality of coverage)
Traditional media relations and coverage (TV, radio, newspapers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of press releases submitted • Number of contacts made in the press • Number of media appearances (Press releases published, officials interviewed/ quoted) • Traditional media coverage (Media content analysis - quantity and quality of coverage) • Media placement (Positioning and size of story) • Message penetration (Average reach) • Journalists and media outlets covering regional policy