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European Network of Public Employment Services

Tools and techniques for developing the PES brand through effective communication: learning from each other

A Practice Casebook

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, a PES Network Working Group (the Working Group or WG) was established to discuss good practice examples of how PES can enhance their visibility and branding and demonstrate the added value they bring to clients, stakeholders and the general public. The Working Group, chaired by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, included PES representatives from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Lithuania and Spain. This practice casebook brings together their experiences and what was learned from the Working Group's knowledge-exchange sessions, held during 2020/21. It also draws on theoretical good practice to highlight what the PES could do to improve their communications in future.

The Working Group discussions revealed that since 2016 many PES have launched new image, branding or social media initiatives. While few had assessed the impact of the campaigns, when they did so surveys and social media analytics were considered useful. Cooperation with the media and consistency were found to be important to success. Key areas of improvement identified were online presence and the development of a marketing strategy.

Whilst there were clearly many indications that positive work is being done, there are also emerging areas in need of development and further consideration to ensure successful visibility for PES, in particular:

- maximising **all communication channels** (with a special focus on social media usage);
- understanding how to use **internal communications** to ensure all employees have up-to-date information and are able to achieve consistency in communication campaigns;
- improving the **measurement and evaluation** of programmes; and
- increasing **knowledge exchange** among PES.

This document therefore also provides some recommendations and examples of how PES could look to improve in these areas.

As well as covering Working Group discussions, this practice casebook captures and reflects on the experiences cited during the fieldwork phase (a survey of WG members).

The report begins with **(1)** a review of communication channels in a changing media landscape, focusing on **social media** as a key area of growth for the PES, and provides examples of current PES' activities and **good practice from other fields.** The discussions on **(2) measurement and evaluation** are then captured with experiences and examples from the PES Working Group, alongside principles and practice for guidance on effective programme evaluation, particularly through the Integrated Evaluation Framework (AMEC, Figure 2). The document then explores other insights and observations from the WG to identify examples of **(3)** positive **peer learning**. Specifically, the casebook looks at how **action learning** – whereby peer-to-peer discussions facilitate knowledge sharing – has been used in the PES Working Group, and how this form of learning can, and should, continue to form the basis of knowledge exchange. The document concludes by identifying methods for continued development and group working and draws out some top tips based on the Working Group's discussions.

Throughout the casebook a number of techniques are used to highlight good practice and effective tools and techniques. This includes **mini case studies** (vignettes) to highlight, and enhance understanding of, effective campaigns from the Working Group members, as well as examples of practice to avoid. These are provided as **'call out' boxes** with positive and negative techniques highlighted. An example is provided below:

Examples of good practice are provided in these call out boxes

Examples of practice to avoid are provided in these call out boxes

The casebook summarises the insights and experiences of the PES Working Group and draws out not only the value of the communications programmes developed by the PES but also the impact and usefulness for the target audiences and stakeholders. These elements are captured in the final graphic (Figure 6), featuring the takeaway top tips for successful PES brand communication.

1. MAXIMISING ALL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

1.1 Increased role of technology in communication

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an acceleration of the **digital transformation of work** (Nagel, 2020). For most people this has meant a significant upswing in remote interactivity, telecommuting, and working from home (Bloom et al. 2020). Specifically, these digital forms of work are widely mediated by tools for live-streaming and videoconferencing (VC), such as Zoom, Teams, or Skype (Serhan, 2020), which are now widely used in support of internal organisational processes as well as in interactions with customers and stakeholders. For PES, this highlights how important it is to consider digital technologies when interacting and building communication programmes with end user/stakeholder groups.

Any use of technology for stakeholder engagement will involve considerations by communicators about stakeholders' communicative experiences, expectations and preferences. This means that it is important to consider the following points when determining which communication channel is most appropriate for the audience with which the PES is seeking to engage:

1) ***Technology-level influence**:* internal beliefs about the usefulness as well as the ease of use of a technology are the main drivers of an individual's intention to use, and their actual use, of a technology (Davis et al., 1989). These are referred to as *perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU).*

2) ***Personal-level influence**: anxiety* – an emotional aspect of technology usage – can prevent individuals from forming a positive perception of a system (Venkatesh, 2000). Anxiety has been shown to have a negative effect on perceived ease of use (Venkatesh, 2000; Abdullah & Ward, 2016) and perceived usefulness (McFarland & Hamilton, 2006).

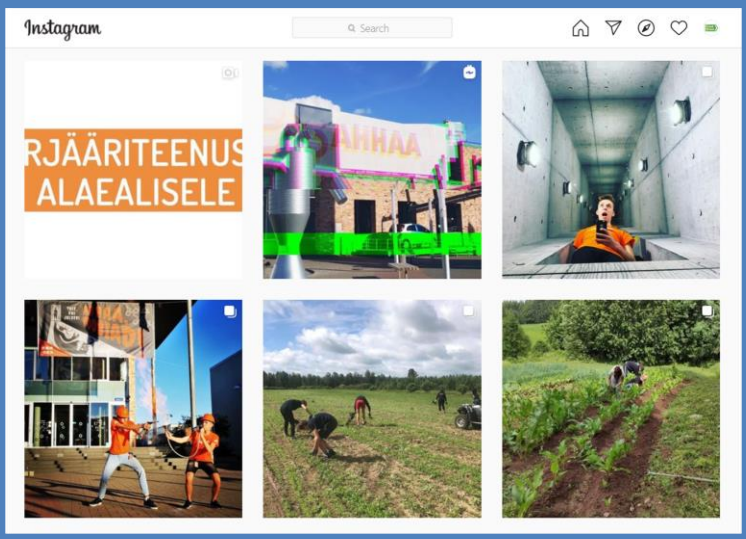
Identify the preferred communication platform(s) of the target audience and their familiarity with using that platform for communication.

Utilise the same communication platform(s) for all communication activities, regardless of audience preferences.

1.2 Social media usage: insights for changing behaviour

As learned in the autumn 2020 Working Group meeting, PES use social media to meet the needs of their community, sharing useful content that speaks to their users. This has been demonstrated in the case study examples by PES working with target groups and using innovative outside-the-box thinking. This includes permitting, promoting and encouraging the target stakeholder to become content creators and develop clear and relevant messages that are in tune with the group. PES also use social media to influence or persuade. For instance, encouraging users to consider a new job possibility or to click through to a website for more information about training. The **Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund** provides a good example of this in practice. They created an Instagram campaign, *'Work in Summer'*, whereby young people could post short stories to give others an idea of what it looks like to work.

Instagram is very popular among Estonian youngsters (more so than Facebook). This is the reason the PES created its own Instagram page, where the main target group is youth. For two summers in a row the PES has had a project called 'Work in Summer', where it has given its Instagram account to multiple youngsters who then create their own content there (an Instagram takeover). Youngsters are usually given guidelines, but in general terms they operate freely on the PES's account. For example, they talk about why they are working in the summer, which skills they have acquired, what they have learned etc. This way the general target group is better met, since they can personally identify with the content creators. An example of this content is provided below:



Results are measured by click-through rates and landing page views, focus groups and sales results. Some 33% of post viewers were non-followers, which is a good result compared with an average rate of about 6%. The lessons taken from it are to find the right channels and involve young people interactively. You must be creative to reach young people. An awareness study in 2019 showed that 82% of students knew that PES provides career services, and the aim is to increase this number.

1.2.1 Behaviour change communication

To better persuade users through social media, it is important to understand why some people are influenced to carry out an action or change their perspective, while others are not. To do so, it is helpful to look at existing evidence and supporting theories of effective communication strategies using social media. We have provided insights from the process of **behaviour change communication (BCC)** and the **Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model (TTM).**

Mini case study 1 – challenging stereotypes with multimedia (Austria)

This unusual and provocative campaign focusing on older people ('A matter of attitude: 50+') took place in 2015. It aimed to draw attention to the prejudices affecting the over-50s, prompt a rethink, and counter old-age unemployment. It targeted a wide range of people, including employers and human resource decision-makers, opinion leaders and journalists, the broad Austrian population and the over-50s themselves.

The challenges involved giving advance notice of the campaign to employees and stakeholders and preparing responses to potentially critical customer reactions. There was some negative feedback from people who saw only the TV advert outside the context of the whole online video, so one lesson learned was not to lose sight of the different way items can be used online and to consider how extracts may appear to others.

Evaluation: the online video got 295,000 clicks and the campaign website 10,000 unique clients. There were 46 reports in leading Austrian media. A social media debate was launched by 21 well-known Austrian entrepreneurs and journalists, with the hash tag #schwervermittelbar (hard to place), and 19 employers offered testimonials on the benefits of employing the over-50s. The campaign raised questions concerning the choice of a provocative rather than traditional campaign. In the end there was little criticism, so preparing reactions was easier than expected. The target group reacted positively, especially to the humour, and even younger people tended to view older people in a new light. Older people are often perceived as traditional and out-of-date. The campaign aimed to break down these prejudices and show they can be funny, active and powerful. The PES is not planning to target this group again or reuse the campaign but may employ the 'provocative' approach once more to reach younger people. NGOs and stakeholders were not involved in the campaign, but this was seen as a good idea for future initiatives.

BCC is a participatory process for encouraging positive health behaviour change through the strategic application of targeted messages, and the provision of a supportive environment. Although this is typically used for health behaviour change, the principles for behaviour change in other domains remain the same and are therefore also useful to consider for the PES.

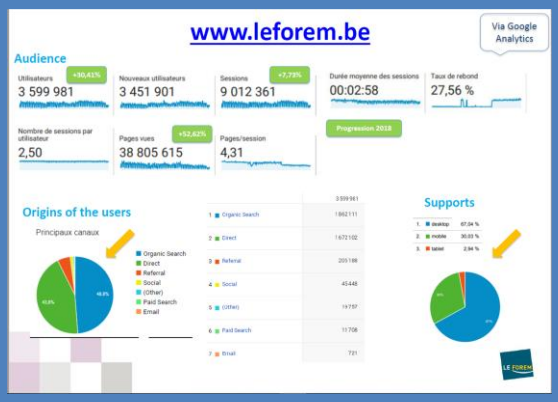
BCC involves three cyclical stages – listening, dialogue and actioning:

- **Listening** allows the organisation to better understand the target audience.
  - This listening can be done through social media, surveys or via experience of what the target audience is struggling with.

The Employment Agency in Bulgaria undertakes a biannual longitudinal online survey to assess what professions, competencies, knowledge and skills employers look for in the present, and those that they are expecting to need in the longer term (3-5 years). The findings are shared with PES stakeholders. Findings can be used to inform communication strategies for the PES in the following year.

  - When undertaking listening activities, it is also important to consider the most appropriate communication platform to use. There are media specific differences which must be understood. These will vary between country contexts and so each PES should look to assess which demographic groups are engaging with their platforms. Social media analytics can inform these decisions.

Le Forem, the Walloon PES in Belgium, assesses social media and website traffic via Google Analytics, looking at video views, website visits, clicks, opening rates, likes, posts shared and press articles published.



Since 2018, figures show a 30% increase in website users. AgoraPulse, a web analytics platform, has been used to show that Le Forem has 40,245 Facebook fans, while fans on LinkedIn and Instagram, although fewer, have increased by 82% and 136% respectively.

Carry out regular listening activities to understand the target audience. Online surveys can be supplemented with social media analytics.

Not checking which demographic groups are engaging with each communication platform can reduce engagement, follower numbers and behaviour change outcomes.

- **Dialogue** enables the development of culturally-appropriate and easy-to-understand messages.
  - This can involve looking at previous research but is often most successfully done in conjunction with the audience, for instance through **direct engagement** and **piloting of campaigns**.
  - **Dialogue** enables campaign messages to take a segmented approach whereby communication interventions can be shaped in future to take into consideration the unique cultures, behaviours and beliefs across different online communities.
  - The importance of dialogue emerged from the PES Working Group meetings in which PES members suggested that feedback from users on social media, and those who received communications such as newsletters, helped to **inform the development of future campaigns**.
  - Insights from dialogue should **feed into internal communications** to ensure that PES employees can answer questions from jobseekers and employers, and can activate audiences that have seen the campaign. This way they could effectively contribute to social media campaigns with their personal social profiles.

Aim to gather feedback from users when developing and sharing communication campaigns, to ensure the messages are being received as planned.

Not speaking with audiences, or ignoring the outcomes of previous campaign dialogues, will result in PES campaigns falling flat.

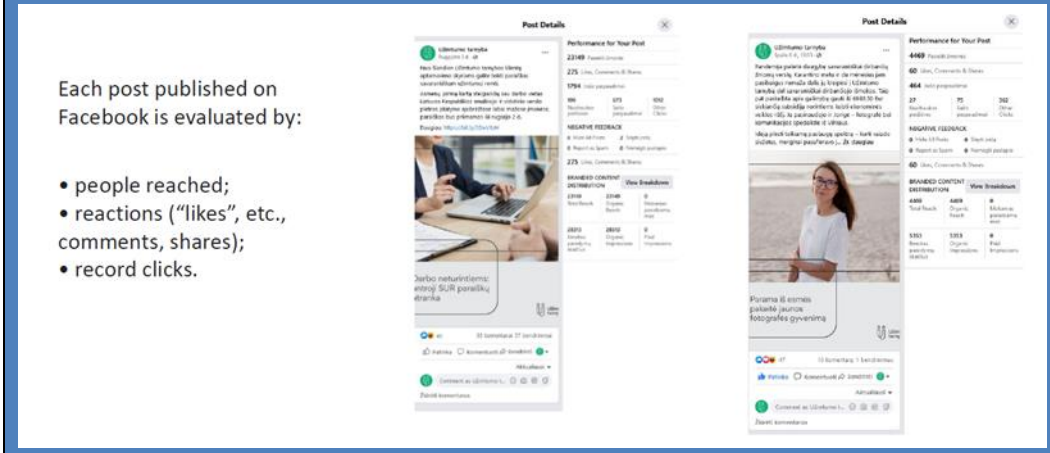
Mini case study 2 - using Facebook to present success stories from young people (Lithuania)

The Lithuanian Employment Service has three Facebook accounts. The first targets **jobseekers**, promoting services and giving information on cooperation and social partners, and has more than **12,000 followers**. The second is the Youth Job Centre, which addresses young people **under 29** with notifications of events and up-to-date data on tools and services, and has 5,510 followers. The third is EURES, for jobseekers wishing to **work abroad**, with 562 followers.

All three present examples of success stories. The agency found that people tend to skip general data, so the stories illustrate measures and services in a more user-friendly way, show their benefits and raise awareness of options.

The main challenge in using personal examples is people's unwillingness to 'go public', especially in small towns, for fear of neighbours' reactions. Written consent is required, in case individuals change their minds, and this involves a lot of work. The services cannot guarantee that there will be no negative reactions.

Facebook posts are **evaluated** by people *reached*, *reactions* (likes etc.) and numbers of *clicks*.



Success stories are a great way to motivate employers and jobseekers in a user-friendly way, and staff are also inspired by positive feedback. For example, a recent story about a young woman who was unable to pursue her career as a photographer because of COVID-19, but got support to start work as a taxi driver, was also picked up by the media.

Reflections on the campaign

In future, the Lithuania PES is considering cutting down to one Facebook account and reaching young people through Instagram. The EURES page is too 'niche' and has too few followers. Young people often find general information boring, and success stories could in future be divided into categories (youth, disabled people etc.). Posts and comments are managed internally by one full-time member of staff but sharing the work would help to mitigate the burden of negative reactions.

- **Actioning** involves implementing and maintaining behaviour changes.
  - To support audiences to implement behaviour change, PES communications should highlight that the behaviour is positive and share examples of how other members of the target audience are benefitting from having successfully changed their behaviour.

The Bulgarian Employment Agency provided a good example of how to encourage actioning through their graffiti contest. The event, which had the motto 'European Youth Guarantee', encouraged young people to paint the façade fence of the Vazrazhdane Labour Office in Sofia. The event promoted measures and actions to encourage young people to get a job or continue their education.

Show target audiences that the behaviour is positive and that others are changing their behaviour for the better. Share stories on social media to show the behaviour is widespread.

If positive messages about the behaviour are not shared, in a tailored way, with the target audience, behaviour change is unlikely to occur.

1.3 Reinforcing behaviour change communication (BCC) with theories

Assessing the influence of social media activities on behaviour change offline is challenging but evaluations of engagement with campaigns such as the number of likes, shares and comments on posts can help to assess success. It is also important to keep assessing what changes are taking place offline. PES could add to social media campaigns with those on other platforms, such as radio, to reinforce messages and increase the likelihood of behaviour change taking place. To ensure that PES campaign activities are most effective, BCC should be implemented and reinforced by using other behaviour change models, such as the **Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model (TTM)**.

The TTM involves six stages:

1. **Pre-contemplation** – no intention to act within the next 6 months, with a lack of awareness that the behaviour is problematic or produces negative consequences.
2. **Contemplation** – intention to change behaviour within the next 6 months. However, some ambivalence about change is still present.
3. **Preparation** – ready to act within the next 30 days, with some small steps toward behaviour change already in motion.
4. **Action** – behaviour has changed within the last 6 months and the individual intends to continue with the change.
5. **Maintenance** – behaviour change has been sustained for more than 6 months, with the main focus on preventing relapse to earlier stages.
6. **Termination** – no desire to return to old behaviours and therefore sure to avoid relapse.

The six stages of the TTM, and possible methods of guiding people through them, are summarised in Figure 1. In terms of the behavioural changes that the PES are aiming to achieve, the TTM could be used to better understand where people are on their journey from unemployment towards permanent employment. The TTM states that individuals move through the **six stages of behaviour change**. At each stage, communications can be used to help people move through. The PES can use campaigns on social media for this purpose.

Figure 1: The 6 stages of change within the TTM

1. Pre-contemplation – People do not intend to act in the foreseeable future (within the next 6 months). People are often unaware that their behaviour is problematic or produces negative consequences. People in this stage often underestimate the pros of changing behaviour and place too much emphasis on the cons of changing behaviour.

Increase awareness	Increase awareness about the positive behaviour (consciousness raising); share frequent reminders and cues that support and encourage the behaviour (stimulus control). E.g. **Frequently sharing posts about the benefits of having a job.**

2. Contemplation – People are intending to start the behaviour in the foreseeable future (within the next 6 months). People recognise that their behaviour may be problematic, and a more thoughtful and practical consideration of the pros and cons of changing the behaviour takes place, with equal emphasis placed on both. People may still feel ambivalent toward changing their behaviour.

Increase awareness and encourage goal-setting	Continue to increase awareness about the positive behaviour, with frequent cues. Help people to see that the behaviour is part of who they want to be (self re-evaluation). E.g. **Share posts to raise aspirations and encourage people to see themselves in a new job.**

3. Preparation – People are ready to take action within the next 30 days. People start to take small steps toward the behaviour change, and they believe changing their behaviour can lead to positive outcomes.

Highlight opportunities and show support	Identify opportunities to show society is supportive of the behaviour (social liberation) and that the behaviour is achievable. E.g**. Encourage people within the target audience to share posts about job-seeking.**

4. Action – People have recently changed their behaviour (within the last 6 months) and intend to keep moving forward with that behaviour change. People may exhibit this by modifying their problem behaviour or acquiring new positive behaviours.

Encourage networking	Find supportive relationships that encourage the desired change (helping relationships). E.g. **Encourage peer to peer support through social media.**

5. Maintenance – People have sustained their behaviour change for a while (more than 6 months) and intend to maintain the behaviour change. People in this stage work to prevent relapse to earlier stages.

Reward the behaviour	Reward the positive behaviour and reduce the rewards that come from negative behaviour (reinforcement management). E.g. **Reshare posts when people show that they have a new job**.

6. Termination – People have no desire to return to their old behaviours and are sure they will not relapse. Since this is rarely reached, and people tend to stay in the maintenance stage, this stage is often not considered.

Continued rewards, networking and support. Encourage those who have altered their behaviour to support others who are struggling.
E.g. Consider developing ambassador programmes to share good news stories about behaviour change.

Mini case study 3 – re-structuring one PES's communication function (Estonia)

How to turn a big ship and do it quickly

The Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (Estonian PES) was founded in 2001. In 2018, a special unit – the Communications Department – was created in order to deal more consciously with the PES's communication, marketing and reputation activities. Now it is more proactive in increasing its visibility and publicising its services. The department is centralised, with an annual budget and action plan, complemented by regional spokespersons. To 'turn the ship' it is important to understand resources, partners and interest groups, and the main tasks. Four were identified to make the required changes:

Task 1: Increase the usage of unemployment prevention measures

Clients tend to be unaware of these services. The PES has created a 'Work and Study' section with its own logo, encouraging people (different solutions/visuals were created for different target groups) to obtain new skills and be open to taking up new occupations. Much discussion took place before the launch of the first marketing campaign, to avoid offending anyone. The second campaign was more ambitious and targeted middle-aged clients with the slogan *'Everything is in your own hands'*, using platforms such as **radio** and **digital advert screens**, and offering gadgets. A third campaign, 'Don't be late for school', was postponed due to the coronavirus in 2020 but was launched in March 2021. All campaigns have been in both Estonian and Russian. An example of one of the videos shared by the agency is shown below (and can be accessed here: youtu.be/Ht9TYDd4NPI):

Measuring results is vital and is carried out through a range of means of evaluation including **social media insights**, **media coverage**, and **numbers on training** courses. One lesson learned from the team was that involving too many decision-makers makes finding a compromise an unreasonably long process and weakens messages. Attracting some negative reactions to a campaign does not mean it is unsuccessful. It is important, to achieve an increase in client numbers and to get good measurable results.

Task 2: Change the image of the Estonian PES

In the past, the PES tended to attract public attention only in response to problems, and therefore had a somewhat negative image. To turn this around, it is necessary to recognise and map the existing situation, plan the budget (change can be expensive), and be ready for extra work, including events outside working hours.

The PES recommended three communication principles:

1. **be simple and human and avoid official jargon;**
2. **add more fun and entertainment; and**
3. **surprise your audience.**

Channels for communication in the Estonian PES's experience have ranged from TV (more expensive) and newspapers to social media. It pays to build relationships with individual journalists and be available at all times for comment, and to provide good data and personal stories.

Means of **evaluation** include numbers of **media contacts and reports**, and Estonia's **quarterly trust survey** which extends to all public bodies. One lesson was the need for patience. The stakeholders wanted to change the PES's name in 2018, by dropping the word 'unemployment' (from the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund). The reaction from the public was negative, since it became apparent that it did not only mean changing one word in the name, but changing the name in the IT systems, processes, documents etc. This meant a huge investment and the PES was blamed by the public for wanting to waste money. A good image takes time to build but can be destroyed 'in a second'.

Task 3: Introducing Estonian PES and its opportunities to youth

In 2019, the Estonian PES started offering career services to students. The challenge was to reach young people and raise awareness. The PES used the online **e-School platform**. Two recommendations can be brought out from the experience.

First – find the right channel. The Estonian PES has used several channels where the primary target group has been youth. This way the PES can reach them directly. The channels used have been: 1) the **e-School platform** that students use daily via computers/mobile devices in order to get information regarding schoolwork; 2) **specialised formula-notebooks** that are especially created for students (information, rules etc. about a concrete subject can be found in these notebooks, and around 112,500 copies of 15 different notebooks were sold in 2019); 3) **Instagram**, which is popular among Estonian young people.

Second – involve the youth into the process of creating your content. In the Estonian PES's experience, content that is created in its channel by young people often has a larger reach, specifically among other youngsters. So far, projects in which young people have been involved have proved to be quite successful. For example, the most popular posts on the PES's Instagram page last summer reached 33% of users that were not the PES's followers (the average percentage is usually 5–6% on the PES's Instagram page).

Task 4: Encourage older people to learn and work

Estonia benefits from a comparatively high employment rate among older people. However, they often do simple jobs, have outdated skills, and around 10 years before retirement lose interest in learning new ones.

Older people tend to be portrayed either as very old or very youthful. The campaign tries to find an appropriate medium. Older people prefer traditional platforms such as TV and radio, even though these are more expensive. Real stories are more effective than adverts. A **six-part reality show** talks to older people about the jobs they do. Results were measured through TV ratings and, most importantly, the number of people contacting the PES and taking up training, since the target group is very hard to reach (they take the information, but do not want to react to it).

2. Measurement and Evaluation of Programmes

2.1 Principles of measurement and evaluation

2.1.1 Measurement

Measurement involves the collection and analysis of data in relation to objects, processes, conditions, or people. Without various measurements we are like pilots 'flying blind'. But *metrics* on their own tell us little or nothing; they need interpretation and contextualisation. For instance, is driving at 100 km per hour fast or slow, safe or dangerous? The answers to these questions are gained through evaluation.

Le Forem, the Walloon PES in Belgium, uses social media analytics to show which posts are most successful (e.g. achieve the most likes, are shared most frequently). Such information can be useful when deciding where, when and what to post.

Mini case study 4 - evaluating a campaign (Belgium)

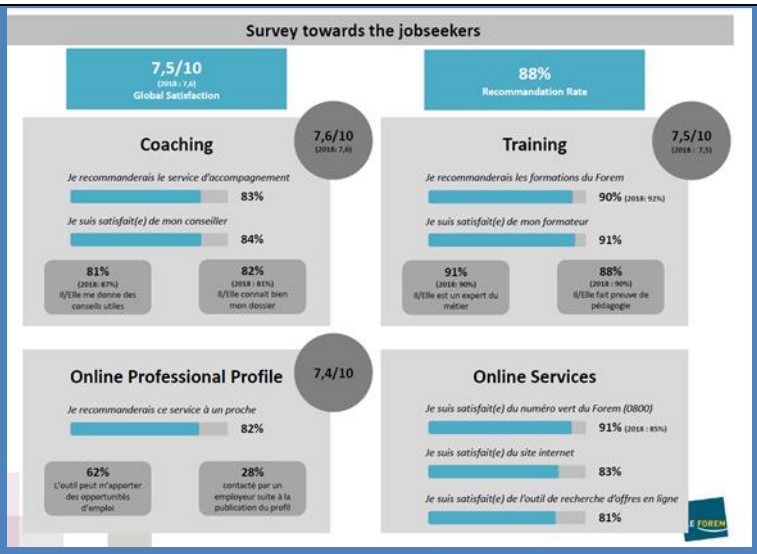
Online surveys to assess the impact of branding and marketing (Le Forem)

Belgium is covered by four regional employment offices. Le Forem operates in French-speaking Wallonia. The communications team evaluates online activities on quantity and quality, using a variety of tools.

Quantity: 50% of Google users do not see the website home page, so a strategy of contents page optimisation allows for search by specific words. Furthermore, a growing number of people now use their mobile phones (30%), so the PES is going towards a **'mobile first' design** approach.

Assessment via **Google Analytics** and **Impact** covers video views, website visits, clicks, opening rates, likes, posts shared, and press articles published. Last year the PES reviewed its target groups on different social media platforms and found audiences growing on LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube. Since 2018, figures show a 30% increase in website users, with 2.5 sessions per user. Almost half come through organic searches. More than 1,000 web articles were published and 912 printed items. Approaching journalists with news has proved a successful strategy. **AgoraPulse** (an online social media reporting tool) shows Le Forem has **40,245 Facebook** fans, while fans on LinkedIn and Instagram, although fewer, have **increased by 82% and 136%** respectively.

Quality: assessed through an annual satisfaction survey, ad hoc specific surveys, online forms or calls and pre-tests of new web services. Jobseekers' global satisfaction rate is 7.5/10, with an 88% recommendation rate. The visual web **heatmap** (shown below) is a new tool brought in this year from Hotjar to assess surfer behaviour.



The challenges are: to ensure Le Forem appears in the **top three** items of jobseekers' **Google searches**; to set clear objectives and target groups (Le Forem uses the 'advocacy funnel' to guide this process); and above all to listen to customers' needs. Decision-makers need to trust PES staff to know how to reach groups like young people. It is difficult to find a balance.

Lessons: dare to say *stop* if a campaign is not working; do not hesitate to check messages with users; make full use of available tools (such as social media); and ask clients if they would be willing to share their stories – one quarter of companies and one-tenth of jobseekers agreed. Le Forem now has a cache of several hundred stories to call on.

Monitor social media analytics (e.g. Instagram insights, Twitter Analytics and Google Analytics) frequently to identify which posts perform best.

Not considering the data that social media analytic platforms provide means that you develop content without knowing how your audience will respond to it.

2.1.2 Evaluation

Evaluation is the act of making a judgement about the significance or value of something. It involves the interpretation of information and data to determine what it means within particular circumstances. To provide rigour and relevance to the interpretation of information, **criteria** against which judgements can be made are needed. These are usually established by setting objectives and targets. Developing clear, measurable objectives is vital if PES' strategic and brand communication campaigns are to deliver a strong return on the time and other resources invested in them. Clear measurable objectives are SMART, meaning they are *specific*, *measurable*, *achievable*, *realistic* and *time-specific*.

To identify patterns in the data, various **analysis** methods and techniques can be used. And when interpreting the metrics, interpretation is informed by **context**. Driving at 100 km per hour would be considered acceptable on a highway, and even slow on a motorway or autobahn, but it would be dangerous and irresponsible in a narrow urban street.

Measurement and evaluation go together. Evaluation is subjective and potentially biased without data collected through various measures. But measurement is of limited or no use on its own – it produces numbers that can be meaningless, or even misleading, without

context. Because the ultimate purpose of measurement is usually evaluation, the single term 'evaluation' is often used, and is meant to incorporate the measurement that informs that evaluation.

2.2. Three types of evaluation: when and why?

2.2.1 Formative evaluation

Formative evaluation is undertaken **before (*ex-ante*) a communication project** or public relations (PR) campaign is developed. It should be part of planning, because the findings will inform the design of PR and communication management. Formative evaluation provides ongoing feedback that can help the PES to identify strengths and weaknesses in their communication campaigns and target areas that need work.

There are several key reasons why formative evaluation is important.

1) Establishes **baseline** data, which become **benchmarks** for later comparison. For example, if you are planning a campaign to increase the number of women aged 50+ who are following a social media account, you need to know the current number of people following. For instance, when the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (STAR) share their newsletter each month, they know exactly how many subscribers they have in order to assess how many more subscribers they achieve each time the newsletter is sent.

Without formative evaluation, you will have no basis on which to show your campaign was successful.

2) Allows you to **understand stakeholders** and/or members of the public with whom you wish to communicate. If the number of women aged 50+ following the social media account is low, why? What is holding them back from following – is it lack of relevant information, lack of confidence in their skills, or something else?

Understanding your audience is essential to ensure communication addresses the most important issues, that it contains the most relevant messages, and that it uses an appropriate voice and tone.

3) Enables the identification of the media or other channels of communication that are most used and relevant for the audience, often referred to as **channel preference**. This involves gaining insights into both the volume and frequency of use of media and other channels, as well as identifying those with the highest credibility and influence. Simple audience statistics and circulation data are not enough. What sources and channels do your audience rely on and trust for information?

To understand your audience, you could consider hosting focus groups or undertaking surveys.

4) Provides an opportunity for audience understanding, also referred to as **audience insights**. Formative evaluation identifies: existing awareness, attitudes and behaviours; challenges to address, such as lack of trust, misinformation or fear; the media and other sources of information that the audience uses and finds most credible; and even potential partners.

Gather data at the start of a campaign to provide a baseline, understand audience preferences and gain insights into existing behaviours.

If formative evaluations are not undertaken, the success or failure of campaigns cannot be assessed, and no specific improvements can be made.

2.2.2 Process evaluation

Process evaluation refers to the tracking of communication activities **as they are implemented**. The best-known forms of process evaluation are **media monitoring** and **media analysis** (officially known as *media content analysis*). Traditional metrics used in relation to media publicity and social media, such as 'clip counts'[1], follows, and video views, do not provide evidence that the target audience is changing their attitudes or behaviour in line with the objectives of a project or campaign. Similarly, process evaluation such as counting the number of social media likes does not indicate that individuals will take away the messages that the campaign was designed to convey. However, process evaluation does indicate whether the **campaign is on track**. For example, positive feedback and data such as high numbers of web page and video views, likes, shares or retweets provide data to show that a campaign is at least engaging the intended audience.

The Bulgarian Employment Agency developed an online platform, in conjunction with the European Job Day 2019, which offered jobseekers from across Europe the opportunity to explore jobs and connect with employers. The engagement with the network was assessed and the reach was captured. It was highlighted that the site received 10,000 online visits and 442 messages in the public chat. If the Bulgarian PES's process evaluation had shown that audiences were not responding to this communication, they would have been able to adapt their strategy.

Capture insights from media platforms during campaigns to assess how audiences perceive posts. Likes, clicks and shares can all be used to monitor success of campaigns.

If no metrics are captured during campaigns, it will be not be possible to adjust based on how audiences respond – limiting the success of campaigns.

[1] The term 'clip counts' comes from days when media monitoring involved the physical clippings of press articles.

2.2.3 Summative evaluation

Summative evaluation is the type that most PR and communication management professionals refer to when they use the term evaluation. It is **evaluation done after (ex-post) a campaign** to identify the extent to which the objectives were achieved. Summative evaluation is essential to recognise that formative and process evaluation substantially improve the chances that the objectives will be achieved. Too many practitioners skip formative evaluation, only to find later that important insights could have been gained at the beginning that would have substantially increased the prospects of success. During summative evaluation, data collected after a communication campaign are compared with baseline data, which indicates the degree of change. For example, if 100 women aged 50+ were following a social media account before a communication campaign and ex-post data showed that 250 women 50+ were following, then there is clear evidence of success – albeit note that *causality* needs to be shown, that is, did the communication cause the increase, or could it have been caused by something else?

In the case of The Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment (STAR) newsletter, by assessing the click-through rates, number of people who unsubscribed and the number of new subscribers each month, the project team could help to shape the content of the newsletter and make it more useful for the target audience.

Gather data at the start, during and at the end of communication campaigns so that insights can be captured and future campaigns adapted accordingly. PES should also share their lessons learned.

If campaigns are not assessed after they have been run, it will not be possible to ascertain if they had the impact that was planned.

2.2.4 The AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework

There are tools that can help the PES in their efforts to carry out evaluations. In 2016, AMEC (International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication) launched what it called its Integrated Evaluation Framework (IEF) and, after a period of international consultation, this was upgraded to the **AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework 2.0** in 2017 (AMEC, 2017). The AMEC IEF represents a significant breakthrough in the evaluation of PR and communication management in several respects. The first noteworthy feature is that the IEF is an **online application**, not a static model that simply illustrates processes. Users can enter data such as their communication

objectives and then progressively add data on audience response at each stage of a communication or campaign.

Data entry is aided by 'pop-up' information tabs at each stage, which provide users with tips on what types of data are relevant to that stage. Multiple evaluation reports can be created, saved and produced as PDF files, and printed if required. The framework (application) is also supported by a **taxonomy** of evaluation that provides a table with definitions of each stage, examples of what can be expected to occur at each stage, and a list of relevant metrics and appropriate methods for generating those metrics. This is available at amecorg.com/amecframework/home/supporting-material/taxonomy.

The main interface screen of the AMEC IEF is shown in Figure 2, and examples of the pop-up information tabs are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2: The AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework 2.0 (AMEC, 2017)

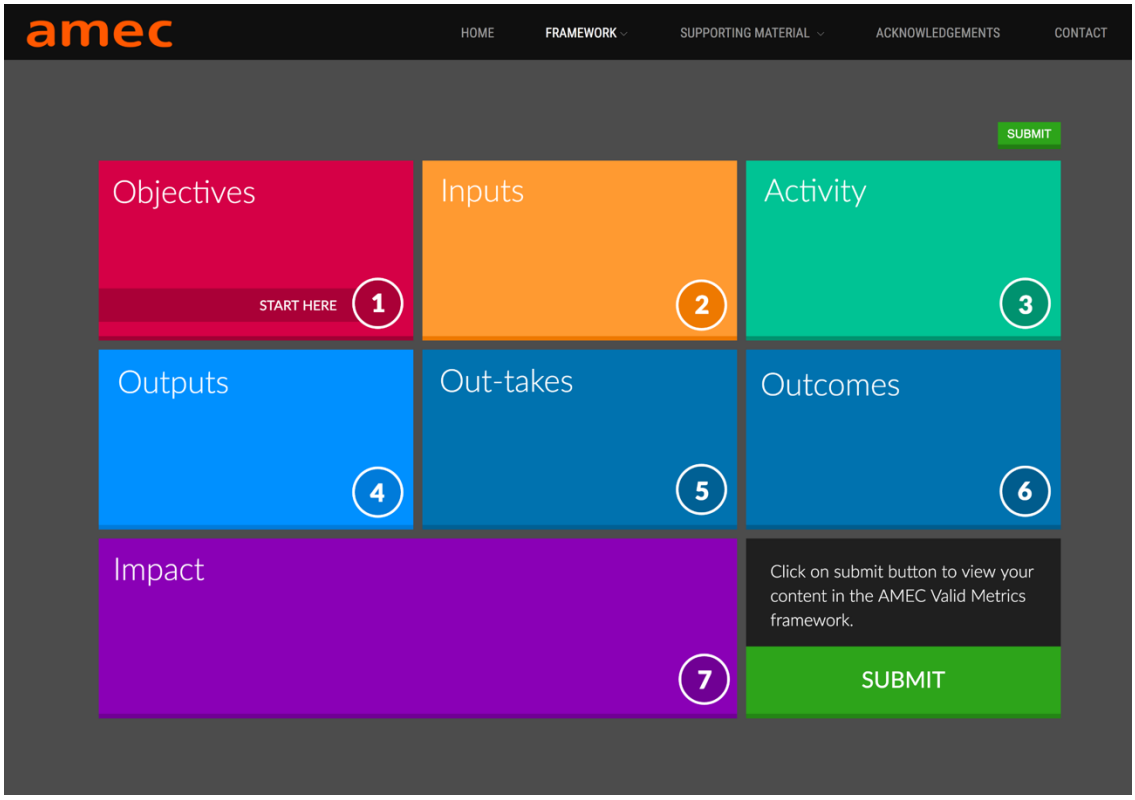
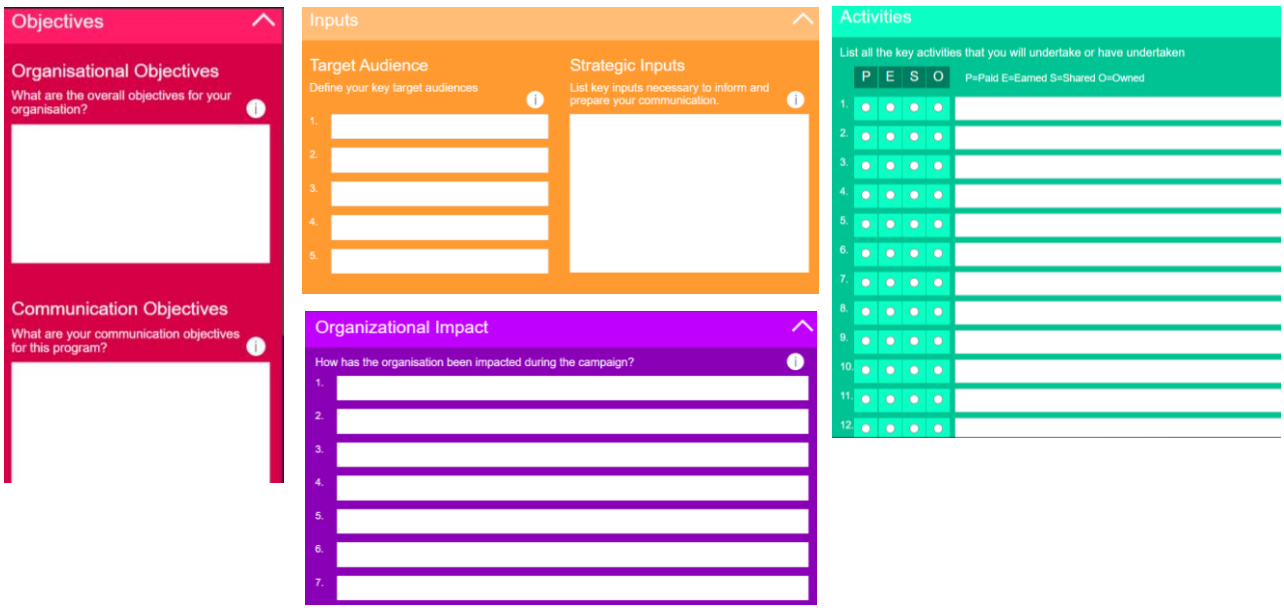


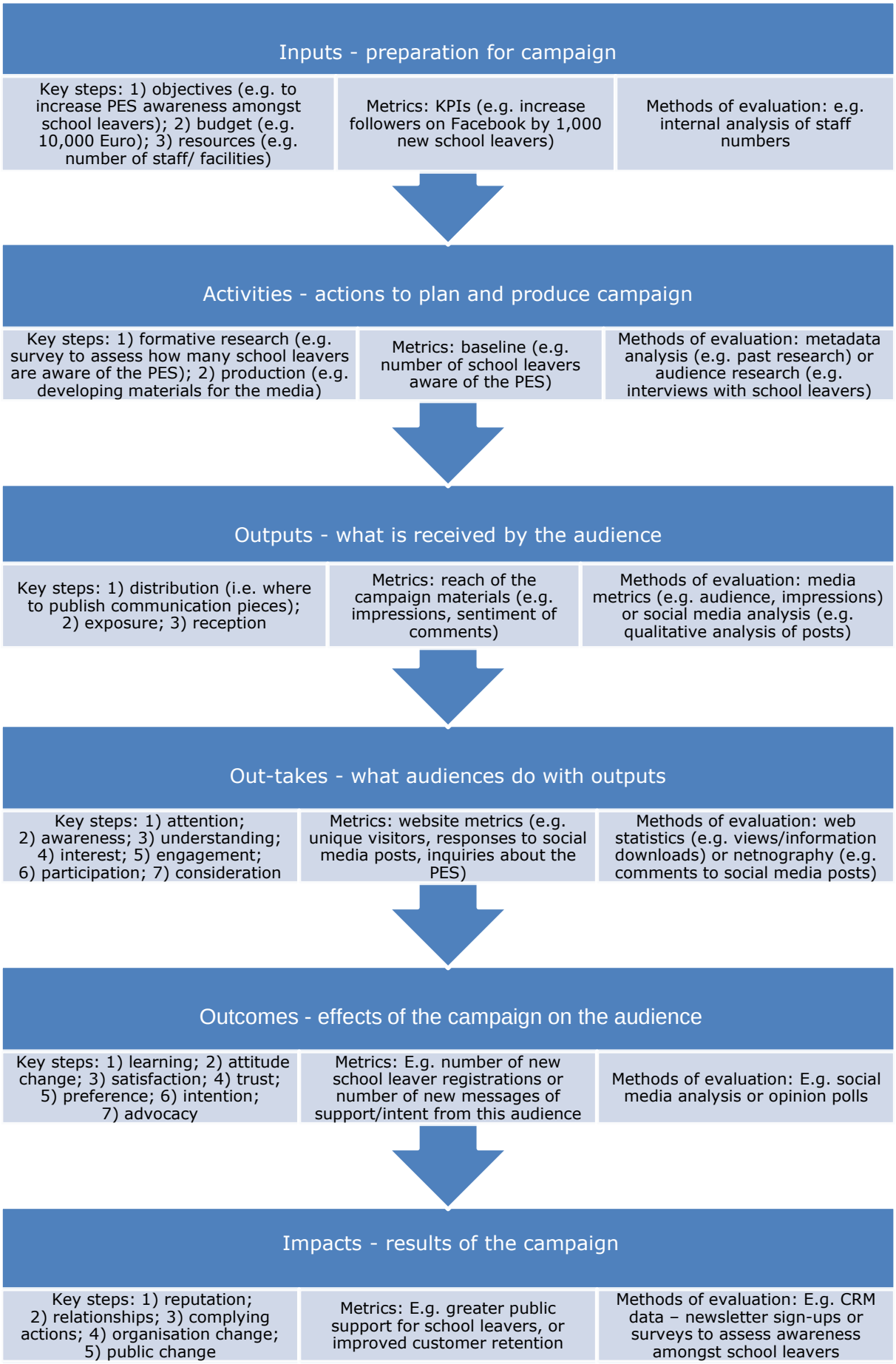
Figure 3: The AMEC Integrated Evaluation Framework 2.0 – pop-up tabs (AMEC, 2017)



As shown in Figure 4 below, the AMEC IEF incorporates **six stages** of evaluation after setting objectives by retaining outtakes as a stage from early PR evaluation literature, as well as inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Impact is considered broadly, assessing the campaign: (a) in terms of the specific programme (such as did it achieve its objectives); (b) on how it affected the function (i.e. the effectiveness of the department or unit); (c) from an organisational perspective; and (d) from a broader societal perspective, which includes stakeholders and communities (Grunig et al., 2002, pp. 91–2).

This varied approach to assessing impact prevents an organisation-centric view which does not consider impact on stakeholders and society other than in terms of the impact desired by the organisation (Macnamara and Gregory, 2018). This is important because there can be unintended as well as intended impact. An example of how the AMEC can be used to support evaluation of a campaign to increase awareness of a PES amongst school leavers is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4: An example of how the AMEC can be used to support evaluation



3. Increased knowledge exchange among PES

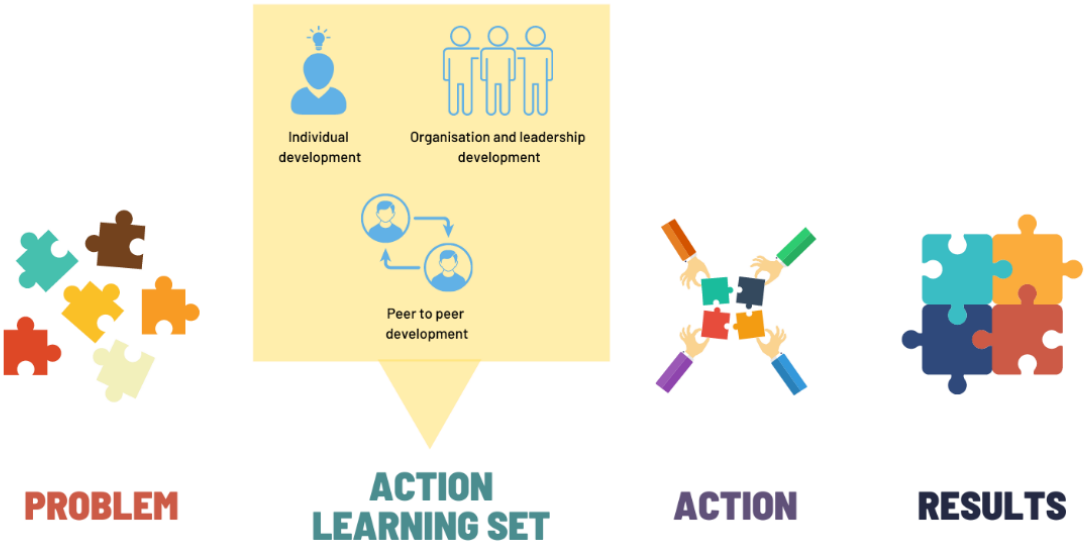
Each PES has specific skills and knowledge that it can share with others. For instance, some PES have experience in monitoring and evaluating social media campaigns that would be useful for other PES. There are some methods that can facilitate the sharing of knowledge such as 'action learning' and mentoring.

This practice casebook highlights that through a process of action learning, PES can share and exchange knowledge to ensure that good practice is spread throughout the network.

3.1 Action learning

Action learning enables small groups, such as the PES Working Group, to **address challenging and complex issues** by meeting on a regular basis and working together to explore and resolve the issue. In this context, learning is a continuous process that is best achieved with an open, probing mind, and an ability to listen, question and explore ideas. Action learning helps organisations develop creative, flexible and successful strategies to address pressing problems. For the most effective outcomes, action learning sessions should be guided by a facilitator who will oversee the process, helping to keep the session on track, providing feedback and asking for clarification on points when needed. In an action learning session, members will discuss the problem, then the 'action learning set' will occur through individual, peer-to-peer, and organisation and leadership development. The next step is taking action, whereby the discussions and developments that occurred in the action learning set are put into play. The final step is achieving results. The PES Working Group applied aspects of action learning during the workshops and discussions, thus enabling the sharing and development of new concepts and ideas. The process of action learning is summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The process of action learning



3.2 Collaborative mentoring

The PES Working Group on PES visibility and branding highlighted that there are examples of good practice amongst PES, for instance in terms of gathering data to make changes to campaigns in the future and speaking with audiences to capture their needs and wants. However, in order to continue developing as a network, it is important that the exchange of knowledge does not stop – a fruitful method of enabling such exchanges is through **collaborative mentoring**, which we recommend the PES Network considers.

Mentoring allows the **sharing of information, skills and expertise**. Mentoring is most effective if it follows a recognised process, or model. A useful model to use is **'GROW'** which is a simple yet powerful framework for structuring mentoring sessions that stands for **Goal**, **current Reality**, **Options (or Obstacles)** and **Will (or Way forward)**. Put simply, the model suggests that mentoring sessions should be seen as a journey, whereby the mentor and mentee work together to decide where the mentee is going (the goal), and establish where the mentee currently sits (current reality). They then explore various routes (the options) to the destination. In the final step, establishing the will, the mentor and mentee identify and assess obstacles that could be met on the way. Following this framework, mentoring sessions could be organised between PES groups or between individuals in each PES to share skills relating to communication campaigns.

Furthermore, and building on this philosophy and framework, projects that have mutual interest and potential could be engaged in to develop collective learning and deeper understanding (see mini case study 5, below).

Mini case study 5 - learning from each other: photo competition (Bulgaria)

The 'Labour through the lens' photography competition was part of a series of activities to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Bulgarian PES (2020). It was conceived as an original 'out-of-the box' idea, designed to offer an insight into the world of working people and celebrate the dignity of labour. It was organised via the online platform VOUBS.bg, with a jury of **professional photographers**. The top three entrants received a camera and equipment vouchers, and the best 30 were selected for an outdoor exhibition.

The coronavirus restrictions meant that deadlines had to be extended and the official award ceremony cancelled. The PES was not able to use the jury members as ambassadors as fully as planned. The health crisis also led to some negative **criticism** of the competition, with some Facebook posts claiming the PES should be finding jobs for redundant workers instead of 'having fun'.

Despite these unforeseen circumstances, the competition attracted more than **100 participants from 10 countries**, with 1,700 public votes, 2,400 visits and a 9.4/10 rating on the VOUBS.bg page. The PES received 15 media inquiries on the first day, and more than 90 published reports. The average reach of Facebook posts was 3,100, average clicks 266 and engagement 109. The successful project showed the value of innovative campaigns, but also the need for a 'plan B' to deal with the unexpected. An exhibition of photographs from the project is planned to be held in Sofia in 2021.

This project is simple yet effective and reflects an example of an initiative or idea that could be repeated by other PES across Europe, potentially also as a joint project of several PES.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this document was to bring together experiences and insights from the PES Working Group members, draw on theoretical good practice and highlight existing good practice in order to aid PES in their efforts to improve their communications. The document includes examples of how communication campaigns have been applied by different PES, and identifies possible ways to enhance these campaigns in the future. As such, the document acts as a useful learning and development tool for all PES.

Some of the key lessons learned that can be taken forward include, firstly, **maximising communication channels**. This involves matching messages to the audience and then to the most appropriate channels in order to reach them. The starting point is knowing your stakeholder group, what media they are most receptive to and, if relevant, creating messages with your target audience group. Testing also enables the development of an understanding of the most relevant and appropriate channels to match the message with the demographic and profile of the audience. This then relates to the value benefit and **usefulness of services** from the client's point of view. The casebook examples emphasise that visibility is not an end in itself but that the usefulness for the clients is the most important thing i.e. answering questions such as *'what does the client need to know?' or 'is the information that is being provided helpful or useful?'* and so on.

A second area of focus, identified by all WG members, was the need to consider **internal communications as an area of future discussion**. Internal communications are important in the sharing of information about the PES and its campaigns so that all employees are aware of what is happening and can perform their jobs well. Internal communication keeps people informed, ensures consistency in messaging, can be used to ensure all stakeholders are aware of upcoming campaigns and can answer questions from jobseekers and employers. It can also help to contribute to social media campaigns by ensuring that employees are on message when sharing information on their personal social profiles.

A third key area emerging from the WG discussions was the importance of appropriate **measurement and evaluation of programmes**. This includes setting objectives clearly and then measuring outcomes against those objectives. In this vein, it is important to remember that not all campaigns will be aiming to achieve the same outcomes – i.e. not all campaigns will be looking to achieve a high volume of likes or shares; some will be more about providing information to key audiences who can then use that information to engage with the PES. As discussed earlier, this will involve different forms of evaluation to build clarity on the outcomes and therefore allow effective evaluation of the identified objectives.

This casebook has reflected on the activities of the PES Working Group over the year and has brought together a combination of theoretical and practical thoughts and experiences from the meetings and data collected. An important message from these discussions is that successful strategic and brand communication programmes are those that have a clear understanding of the organisation's working environment. They capitalise on the PES's strengths, minimise weaknesses and systematically reflect upon organisational stakeholders and the issues that affect them. The case studies discussed have provided insight into the potential each PES has to engage and interact with its stakeholders. Each example is presented and critiqued, with evidence of good practice and missteps identified, to aid future communication initiatives by the PES.

What is clear from the Working Group is the value of a network of practice for communication specialists. By coming together at the WG meetings clear benefits have been achieved with increased knowledge among the PES of each other's work. These advances in networked learning should not be lost and could be built upon with physical meetings between the PES teams, when feasible. The importance of knowledge-sharing can contribute to the profile-raising, visibility and importance of communication activities inside each PES and within its country context, as well as across the wider network.

Some key messages stemming from the Working Group are detailed in Figure 6, below.

In summary, the casebook has reflected on some positive areas of practice for the PES Working Group members with key insights from the case studies and examples under discussion.

The next steps for the group include the possibility of further discussion and debate on a range of emerging areas including, but not restricted to: exploring the importance and value of internal communication; building on networks and collaborations with the possibility of joint initiatives and projects across the network; advance measurement and evaluation in social media; and continuing to learn from each other.

Figure 6: Takeaway top tips from the Working Group

Communication principles

- Know your stakeholders and target audience for communication
- Be simple and human and avoid jargon
- Test your ideas with the target group
- Add more fun and entertainment
- Surprise your audience

Maximise communication channels

- Match messages to audiences and to the most appropriate channels for the demographic
- Test ideas with the target group
- Keep up to date with innovations (particularly technology and preferred channels of communication)
- Observe campaigns used by other PES and those in other fields

Measure and showcase good results

- Utilise infographics as pictures and visuals to translate messages well
- Receiving negative reactions to a campaign does not mean it is unsuccessful
- Look for the positive – people tend to skip general data, so highlight information that shows benefits and raise awareness of options

Evaluate programmes

- Measure outcomes against objectives
- Consider the usefulness of the campaign for the audience being targeted
- Use formative, process and summative evaluation for a clear picture of impact

Media relations

- Media relations management - be available for comments with good data and personal stories
- A good image takes time to build but can be destroyed 'in a second'
- It is important for the communications team to have the trust of management and the freedom to act. This enables the team to be 'one step ahead', preparing its own messages and setting the agenda
- Know when a campaign is going wrong and don't be afraid to say stop

Be creative

- Make full use of available tools (social media increasingly used by all demographics)
- Sense-check messages with end users if you can
- Ask clients if they would be willing to share their stories (realia is impactful, but you need consent)
- Taking risks and using a provocative or creative approach can be one way to reach younger people

Benefits and usefulness

- Know why you are engaging with your audience
- Define the communicative purpose
- Utilise internal communications to ensure all staff are on board with the campaign
- Will the intervention help and bring empowerment, understanding or benefits?

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