



INFORM Group Meeting

15 and 16 June 2010 | Brussels, Belgium

Participants

100 national representatives of objective 1 and 2 OPs, 20 communication managers of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, INTERACT, European Commission

Summary and main learning points

Ton van Lierop, Spokesman for Regional Policy

He used to work as spokesperson for DG Enterprise and Industry from 2006 - 2010 before becoming the new spokesman for regional policy under Commissioner Hahn. Mr van Lierop shared some of his first experiences in this new position with the audience, for example he is often asked by journalists about the budget, also fraud and corruption and often he has to explain them that the projects are not directly selected by Brussels. Many of them do not understand the structure of Structural Funds programmes (MA, CA....).

Often **journalists want to cover good projects examples from their respective regions and want to know how much money is invested in their region or Member State**. Communication officers should always have this kind of data available. Press visits to selected projects also work well, in particular when programmes/projects ask the Commission to contact the media they are more likely to come.

There is a significant difference between Brussels-based media (more critical) and regional media.

Currently, there is already a high interest in the future of Regional Policy among journalists.

EURactiv Partnership - Annabelle Maupas, DG Regio

DG Regio established a special one-year partnership with the website EURactiv, dedicating a section on regional policy (<http://www.euractiv.com/en/regional-policy>). The portal also runs 10 different country/language portals, including the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Spain, Hungary, Poland and Turkey and reaches a very broad audience across Europe. In particular journalists use the site as a source of information.

There is also a news map with selected news structured per country and a new section dealing with the project of the month will be created. The national/regional pages have to submit at least four news items per month.

The contents are not defined by DG Regio, but independently by the EURactiv journalists.

Survey in Saxony: “2009 Survey on Structural Funds in Saxony - Approach, Results and Impact”, Matthias Vorhauer, Communication Officer for ERDF and ESF in Saxony, Germany

The German land of Saxony uses a joint ESF/ERDF communication plan and wanted to assess the EU-related communication in their region through a special survey designed for 1000 private households and 500 companies. The objective was to optimise and control publicity and to measure views on Europe including awareness of ERDF/ESF funds and the sources of information the citizens are using.

The first results show that the general view is positive; the funds are well known and seen as positive. 40 % of private households know ERDF and 44% ESF, among the companies 50% know ERDF and 66% ESF. 51% of private households would like to receive more general information, 40% of them more specific information, the same is true for 64% of the companies (wish more general information), and 72% wish more specific information. **Some members of the INFORM network were surprised about the high level of knowledge of ERDF/ESF funds in the region.**

A follow-up survey will be conducted at the end of the funding period.



The costs of the survey amounted up to 65.000 Euro, but this included four surveys altogether, the two surveys for private households and the two surveys for business representatives.

Multimedia campaign to promote regional policy funding opportunities and results, Judit Szücs, Communication Officer, Hungarian National Development Agency

Judit Szücs presented their multimedia campaign “Go local!” which used primarily local media in order to reach local people. The idea was developed since there was a strong regionalisation in Hungarian media consumption. The main messages of the campaign were “We got there! We arrived somewhere, our environment has been developing, successful projects are around us.” The campaign was running from September 2009 - May 2010 and used billboards, spots on local TV and radio stations, infotainment/programme magazines, as well as advertisements in newspapers and online media.

The overall cost of the campaign amounted to 2.5 million Euro.

Workshop on European Territorial Cooperation Programmes

Chair: Alke Elisabeth Voss, Communication Officer, Baltic Sea Region Programme

This session started with a collection of “bad” communication practices, e.g. introducing too many internal communication tools which are not used correctly or the problem of giving communication services to project officers who sometimes have very different levels of experience.

It is also not easy to find skilled communication experts for communication trainings and seminars. The one company that most programmes are using is Pinnacle, but often their services are not well adapted to the ETC world. **It was suggested to also make use of our internal network of communication officers across Europe for these types of services.**

In a second part, Rasma Rozenberga from the Estonia - Latvia CBC Programme presented a feedback and awareness study they conducted. The aim was to obtain useful feedback on the obstacles and participation in the programme. They realised that currently the level of awareness is quite low, in particular in the private sector, and that the biggest source of information is the internet. The survey was only conducted among potential applicants and not among a general public.

Morning Session, 16 June

Presentation of video clips from the RegioStars Awards 2009

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

RegioStars Awards 2011

The deadline to apply for next year’s RegioStars Awards is **July 16th**. There are five categories:

- **I. Economic competitiveness**
 - 1) Networking and cluster initiatives supporting regional growth and SMEs access to global markets
 - 2) Anticipating economic change
- **II. Low carbon economy**
 - 3) Promoting sustainable energy in cities (“CityStar” category)
 - 4) Integrated, clean urban transport projects (“CityStar” category)
- **III. Information and communication**
 - 5) Promotional photo of a co-funded project

With respect to category 5, one photo per programme can be sent. INFORM members may be involved in the pre-selection phase which will be followed by an online voting system. DG Regio is also looking for professional photographers or photojournalists for the jury. Suggestions can be sent to Peter Fischer, DG Regio.



Akville Zirguleviciute, Coordinator of the EU Structural Funds in Lithuania

Akville presented the website www.esparama.lt, which won the RegioStars Award 2010 for the best website. It is a special tool developed for four operational programmes, 15 managing institutions, 180 measures, 600 calls for proposals, managing 6165 applications and 2894 projects. More than 20.000 unique viewers access the website every month and it is also available in English.

Available etools and information include real-time Structural Funds implementation data/statistics; evaluation process online and information on projects and maps.

The costs of the tool were 100.000 Euro for a three-year maintenance contract.

Report of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development: Transparency in EU regional policy, Peter Fischer, DG Regio

The Report recalls that the European Transparency Initiative ([ETI](#)) was adopted with the aim of improving the transparency, openness and accountability of EU governance. However, the level to which such information is made public differs substantially from Member State to Member State, making an EU-wide comparison difficult.

Main recommendations:

- the usefulness of the data provided on beneficiaries needs to be improved in terms of both content and presentation
 - make these Member State databases **fully searchable and compatible**, so as to facilitate an EU-wide overview of the data presented
 - there is an urgent need for **dual-language versions** (local language(s)- one of the Commission working languages)
 - the Commission is to define a more detailed and prescriptive format specifying the structure, form and content of the information to be provided, including a **criterion-based search function**.
 - additional information to be provided:
 - location
 - summaries of approved projects
 - types of support (grant loan, etc.) and
 - description of project partners
- > All this without giving rise to additional expenditure

Peter Fischer indicated that in particular for ETC programmes data is missing: for 29 ETC programmes the lists of beneficiaries have either not been published and/or not been sent to the European Commission for publication on the DG Regio database

(http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/commu/beneficiaries/eu/crossborder/index_en.htm). **Please check whether your programme is missing on the map and contact Peter Fischer (peter.fischer@ec.europa.eu).**

Lelia Rotaru, Communication Officer, South East Europe Programme

Lelia Rotaru gave an overview of the trans-national South East Europe Programme and their beneficiaries. They cover 16 countries altogether and have four programme priorities: Innovation, Environment, Accessibility, Sustainable Growth Areas. The funding comes from four different financial instruments, namely ERDF, IPA, national contributions and potentially ENPI. The overall budget amounts up to approximately 245 million Euro.

So far two calls were launched, the first one from May 2008 - March 2009 which selected 40 projects with an amount of 76.628.855 Euro. More than 500 partners from the 16 countries are involved and the projects range from 1 to 5 million Euro, covering all four priorities. The second call is currently ongoing (application phase). The second step will be launched soon - 60 projects invited out of 600 - the list is already available on the website.



The programme is using its website for project presentations and in the future this will also include videos and photos, key data of project results and link to the information and management system in order to make use of existing reports and analytics.

Workshop “European Territorial Cooperation - exploring effective communication approaches”

Chair Bernhard Köhle, Managing Authority, Austria - Czech Republic

Presentation Nuala Morgan, INTERREG IVC

Nuala Morgan gave a presentation on the effective communication of ETC programmes, dealing with the challenges that ETC programmes have to show tangible results and to communicate to our beneficiaries. She showed an example of good project communication from ERIK action (www.eriknetwork.net/erikaction). **It is sometimes difficult to obtain quantitative results, although qualitative results based on the impact of the projects on people’s life is very valuable, too.** A representative from DG Regio reminded of the fact that although it is very difficult to compare different ETC programmes and to measure their result as a whole because of different indicator systems etc, there has been quite a good result achieved for the ex-post INTERREG III evaluation which has just been published. One and a half pages only list the concrete outputs across Europe.

The CBC Central Baltic Programme is currently setting up a library of stories which can be helpful for future communication tools, e.g. when you need a certain story on a certain topic. Their annual event will take place on September 29th, a date which coincides with the INTERACT’s seminar for CBC communication officers in Leuven.

The results of a project often become apparent a long time after the official end of a project when there is no funding left to follow-up on it. This is a real challenge! INTERREG IVC will therefore suggest during its upcoming Monitoring Committee to make money available to track projects from IIIC to measure samples from innovation and environmental projects and to see if there has been any transfer realised. They are also currently working on a booklet with the achievements of their current projects.

Workshop Taking stock of social media: Facebook, Twitter et al: When to use it and how? Is it worthwhile? For what sort of communications? Additional staff requirements?

Chair Dominique Jeremiasz, Head of the Communications unit at the DGEFP in France

Dominique first asked in the audience who uses social media as a communication instrument in their daily work: about 10-15% of the participants only raised their hands. This introduction showed that **the social media “revolution” has not yet reached out widely to Structural Funds programmes.**

Presentation Elise Blais, INTERACT

Elise presented the pilot action launched by INTERACT Point Vienna in March 2010 with the launch of a Facebook Group open to all stakeholders interested in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Elise presented the reason for selecting Facebook over other types of social media (easy to create, free of charge, most used social media worldwide). Such platform offers many communication means (sharing of photos, videos, chatting, discussion forums etc) in one single place. It should also **generate increased traffic to the website.** The negative aspects: privacy issues, the need to ensure regular update of information, to stimulate discussion on the forum and the human resources needed for this.

The Facebook group already counts 130 members - To join us, search for “Danube Strategy - Territorial Cooperation” on Facebook.

Presentation Laura Caldironi, Urbact

Laura presented the use of different types of social media experienced so far within the Urbact programme, in particular a web blog and a Facebook page. The web blog, though still not widely used, enables beneficiaries or other interested stakeholders to provide comments and opinions on matters of interest. The Facebook page has many friends and fans already, but like for INTERACT, a main challenge is to get new members to register and to provide interesting content that can generate more traffic on the programme website. They have already noticed that when an interesting feature is posted on the Facebook page, programme website visits increase. They have also



managed to **attract new stakeholders**, like journalists or politicians interested in urban development, who were originally not targeted by the programme communication activities.

Regio Network 2020

DG Regio is currently setting up a networking platform which functions similar to existing social media tools like Facebook. With the help of this new tool, it will be much easier for European regions to share information and find partners. It will be possible to create your own profile either as an individual or an organisation. Discussion forums and groups can be created, for example for the INFORM group. For privacy issues the tool will be completely hosted by the Europa-server.

The network will be launched during the Open Days on 6 October 2010. Peter Fischer is currently looking for volunteers to take part in the test phase.

Final Session

Open Days 4 - 7 October 2010

120 workshops and 260 local events ("Europe in my region") will be organised, including the INTERACT conference "20 Years of Territorial Cooperation" to take place in Tournai (Belgium) on 30 September and 1 October 2010.

Registration for the Open Days started on 5 July.

Conference Communicating in Europe - communicating on Europe, 12-14 October 2010, Brussels

<http://www.cor.europa.eu/pages/EventTemplate.aspx?view=folder&id=a7e1d46a-2034-42cf-a600-809474ed7ef3&sm=a7e1d46a-2034-42cf-a600-809474ed7ef3>

A joint project of the Committee of the Regions, the Flemish and Walloon regions, and several other Belgian institutional players, the conference seeks to bring communication professionals and experts together for exchanges of best practices and an open debate on current and future challenges in public communication.

The conference will take place at the CoR's headquarters in Brussels during the Belgian Presidency of the EU.

This aim is to attract up to 400 professionals, such as communication directors and spokespersons of local, regional and national authorities, as well as "communicators" from the European institutions, Member States and various associations.

Participants will have the opportunity to present examples of their best communication campaigns linked to the themes of the conference. A web-based community for professionals in the field of public communication will also be launched during the event.

The conference's main objective is to take stock of the ways in which communication professionals who work for public authorities at EU, national, regional and local level, can communicate better with the public. Five possible themes have been identified for the 12 workshops and discussion rounds:

- A multilevel, Europe-wide communication that is close to the citizens;
- A professional approach to public communication;
- A communication based on citizens' participation;
- A sustainable approach to communication, which respects the environment and resources;
- Public communication involving the media.

**Next INFORM Meeting: 18 and 19 November 2010 in Madeira**

The Portuguese authorities invited all INFORM members to hold their next meeting on the island of Madeira in November. Visits to projects will be organised and suggestions for changes in the regulations will be discussed. It was suggested to have the event in English only.

The French delegates invited to host the next meeting in 2011 in France.

July 2010

Elise Blais, INTERACT Point Vienna and Dorothee Fischer, INTERACT Point Valencia