



## Networking event for communication managers of CBC programmes

### Strategic communication and evaluation of communication in ETC

29 September 2010 | Leuven, Belgium

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## Summary

#### Expectations of participants:

- Exchange of experiences;
- Getting new ideas, especially for annual events and use of (new) media;
- How to modernise the communication strategy, how to guide projects in this direction?

#### Presentations:

- *Verner Kristiansen* from Denmark, who has a long experience in Strategic Communication and Evaluation of Communication on Regional, National and International level, engaged the participants to share their experiences and visions in a collaborative session on strategic communication. In the afternoon Verner presented some guidance on Evaluation and led a similar discussion process.
- Because a networking event builds upon your experiences as programmes, we invited 3 participants to share their communication experiences. Unfortunately they could not make it to the event in time because of the traffic conditions, therefore you can look at their contributions now!
  - *Annica Westerlund*; Sweden-Norway programme: “*Organising a match making Conference*”
  - *Ida Elsing*, Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak programme (Sweden, Norway, Denmark): “*Online project database and the use of interactive maps*”
  - *Siobhán Rudden*, Ireland-Wales programme: “*After care services for beneficiaries*”
- *Elise Blais*, INTERACT, presented basic concepts of monitoring and evaluation of communication.
- *Enrique Garcia*, European Commission, looked upon evaluation from a Commission perspective.

#### All presentations at:

[http://www.interact-eu.net/events/cbc\\_seminar\\_leuven/14/4780](http://www.interact-eu.net/events/cbc_seminar_leuven/14/4780)





# What we learned



## Communication can be... !

### EVENTS

- SI-HU: public signing of 1<sup>st</sup> subsidy contract. Event with around 60 participants and media. There was also a concert of an artist who was born in Hungary but lived all his life in Slovenia and was presenting HU and SI music: a “practical example” of cooperation. The event was very successful.
- “2 Seas”: internal communication newsletter - every 2 weeks an internal newsletter is published, people working with the programme in regions are contributing to it regularly which creates motivation and ownership feeling. One person from JTS is editing it (takes about ½ day per week). Content: updates from regional antennas, new project ideas and developments on existing project ideas.

### PUBLICATIONS

- Romania: use of an html newsletter in replacement of a PDF newsletter: html format is not so heavy, mailing is easier and quicker; html format generates traffic on the programme website (through hyperlinks).

### PR CAMPAIGN

- Bulgaria (mainstream programmes): A large information campaign was organised, 2 minibuses with logos and catchy photos (like teachers running after € notes) travelled around the country with info events. Interest was strong among local media. This resulted in 1200 applications received.
- AT-HU: Each annual event is organised on a specific theme; this year, environmental protection was the theme, as there are many natural parks in programme area, all were invited to present themselves in pavilions at the event; a natural park from another region was also invited to share their experience. This resulted in a high participation rate from a specific audience (though not from the general public). Success depends on clarifying your target group and the objective of your event. The advantage of such targeted action is to provide interested news for specialised media. <http://www.sk-at.eu/at-hu/de/news.php>
- LV-LT: The annual event was organised not to promote only programme but general relations with partner country. It was organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the framework of the Balt-day, thus getting access to a wider audience and moving from promoting the programme to promoting cooperation in general. [http://www.latlit.eu/eng/events/all\\_events/annual\\_event\\_quotfuture\\_perspe](http://www.latlit.eu/eng/events/all_events/annual_event_quotfuture_perspe).
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## Or it can be more ... !

### PR CAMPAIGN

- DE-NL: The programme prepared and launched a PR campaign with articles about 20 selected projects, during the week of the Europe Day, to present achievements of CBC projects to the general public. The PR campaign included provision of articles to the regional and local media, and a trip with journalists to the coast to visit a project working with algae's. At the same time there was an election campaign in the two countries and media were too busy to notice the PR campaign. Programme was unlucky with the timing.



## INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

A good external communication starts with a good internal communication. How to get information from the projects? Programme staff needs to be encouraged to share information, e.g. with a reward principle (for instance, those staff who share information on their projects are offered the possibility to be published in the programme newsletter). Another way to get to project information is to contact projects directly. Not all projects are eager to promote their activities but those who are, are usually very pro-active and eager to provide the JTS with all materials needed.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

- Use of social media (e.g. facebook, twitter, youtube, etc): in some institutions social media are seen as a potential danger (getting bad comments on the internet..) and associated to private life/leisure time. Hard work in doing persuasion work.

## **Media Work - Ideas For Future Successful Communication**

- Create a pool of journalists who are aware of EU topics, who can be invited to programme and project events. A training meeting could be organised, where programmes find out how the media works, and journalists to find out how programmes work. It is important to develop personal connections. In some cases it may be better to invite specialised journalists (maybe freelance journalists or journalists from specialised magazines), not news journalists. Work with bloggers to be explored as well.
- Help project partners to communicate with each other within the partnerships (often language and cultural issues lead to weak partnerships)
- Reach out information to political decision makers, to show them the added value of cooperation. At the ETC communication workshop organised in the framework of the Open Days on 6 October, Henrik Josephson from North Sea programme mentioned the fact that his programme interviewed members of the European Parliament from the region on specific issues related to projects of the North Sea programme. The MEPs were briefed on the projects in advance. One MEP liked a project a lot and has since then been promoting
- Show projects in local media, e.g. in a periodical programme -a reporting tool for general public.
- LV-LT: There tends to be a lack of identification between the projects and local issues and identity, therefore the programme has integrated the symbols of the participating countries in its PR materials, to create a stronger link to the region (beside EU logo and ERDF mention).

## **Evaluation of Communication:**

### **Main issues outlined**

- Reflection on the evaluation exercise starts too late, when you cannot longer collect back data.
- Programmes often lack the baseline from which they can make an assessment: where did we start from? It is therefore difficult to assess the progress.

### **A few recommendations based on training and discussion**

- Communication activities should be closely linked to the overall strategy of the programme.
- When starting evaluation of communication, following question to be raised: “what do we want to improve in terms of effectiveness and efficiency?”: how to target our communication efforts and budget in order to pass our message(s)?
- Communication should be systematic and planned in advance: Programmes shall assess communication results (not necessarily all results but a few ones) against a set of defined goals and in a definite timeframe. The scope of the evaluation should be limited but specific: the most specific you are in planning communication activities, the easier it will be to evaluate them.
- Define the target group(s) of your activities, focus evaluation on this/these target group(s):



- Do you reach the target group?
- How are the media reacting to your message?
- Do people (precise the exact target group(s)!) know more or less what we are doing?
- To what extent are we contributing to their perception?
- Do we use a right combination of tools and actions?
- Make sure you look at the right things:
  - Getting a headline in a general newspaper is not necessarily better than getting a detailed article in a specialised magazine.
  - Look at the results of the products rather than the products themselves
- Look at data and information which you actually can obtain: do not invest too much in looking for information and data which is difficult to obtain (e.g. focus on evaluation forms from events or newsletters, oral feedback provided by users, web statistics, type of media coverage etc). You need 3-4 sources of information to evaluate (triangulation).
- Programmes need to focus on assessing aspects from which they can learn and adapt their action in this period: there is little value in assessing the impact of the programme action:
  - 1) It is difficult and complex to organise;
  - 2) In most cases you cannot attribute a certain impact to the sole action of the programme: do people know better the role of Europe in the region because of the PR action of a given EU programme? Not necessarily, and not only, especially in large programme areas like Germany-Netherlands.
  - 3) Often you cannot assess it until quite a long time, when it is too late to change your communication strategy.

### Evaluation successes

- SI-HU: After an information workshop they collected feedback on what was actually useful and reorganised the next event based on this feedback
- LV-LT: Evaluation to be started already before the event, by asking people for their expectations (in the registration), and following with evaluation after event. google forms are useful to creates automatically basic statistics and allows checking answers during the survey.

### Evaluation exercise - the luggage and the bin

This feedback exercise was briefly mentioned during the seminar but not presented in detail.



**Objective:** Obtain detailed public feedback from your audience on the positive and negative learning aspects from an event/workshop. Provides you a useful feedback and stimulates learning effect of the audience, by memorizing the main learning points of the session.

**Participants:** Suitable for a small group of maximum 10 persons if you want feedback from each person. For larger groups, to be used with a sample of persons.

**Setting:** All participants to sit in a circle; in the center of the circle you place a bin and a piece of luggage or any bag.

The moderator asks a volunteer to tell the others: “what will I take home from this event in my luggage?”, and then (or vice-versa), “what will I leave here and put in the bin?”

The participant must focus on one element of each category. Once he is done, either he designates another person or the moderator calls another volunteer.

