

Request for services to The Evaluation Partnership

The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) request The Evaluation Partnership to prepare a study consisting of two main parts:

- 1. Identifying good practices in EU Regional policy communication 2007-2013**
- 2. Re-focussing DG REGIO's Communication activities**

1. Identifying good practices in EU Regional policy communication 2007-2013

Shared management is a core principle for the implementation of EU Regional policy. The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) relies on the communication officers of the operational programmes in the Managing Authorities in all 27 EU Member States to inform its policy stakeholders of funding opportunities and the wider public about the achievements of EU Regional policy.¹

Through the [INFORM network](#) of EU Regional policy communication officers, which is animated and co-ordinated by DG REGIO's communication unit, and through reports (Annual Implementation Reports, Mid-Term Assessment on Communication) it has a reasonable overview about the main Regional policy related communication activities in the Member States and regions. However, many communication activities are not properly evaluated as regards their reach and impact, notably in relation to the "wider public". The review by the Evaluation Partnership should assess inter alia, **if the Managing Authorities reach the general public (or other more clearly defined target groups) with their communication activities**, or mostly focus on and reach potential beneficiaries. Moreover, it should be analysed which activities have proven to be most effective (for both target groups – potential beneficiaries and the general public).

When evaluating the impact of communication activities and before making good practice recommendations, cost-effectiveness and the specific national contexts should also be taken into account (media use, budget available and/or used for communications; economic and political climate, etc.).

The results of the external review, which shall **identify good practices and issue recommendations for the next funding period 2014-2020**, should feed into a conference for the programmes' communication officers, managing authorities, and regional politicians towards the end of 2013. At this conference these good practices and recommendations should be presented (by the identified programme's communication officers), and help to lay the ground for reinforcing communication during the 2014-2020 funding period. It is therefore necessary to identify good practices as soon as possible in order to prepare a detailed conference programme. This part of the study should be sent to DG REGIO by 15 June 2013.

You are expected to carry out desk research (using available evaluation reports, the implementation reports from the member states, good practice examples from INFORM etc.) and also send out a questionnaire covering all Member States. The field work would then cover a smaller number of around 8 Member States (with a balance between smaller vs. larger, centrally managed communication vs. decentralised, north vs. south, east vs.

¹ The legal basis for information and publicity in EU Regional policy can be found on:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/informing/legislation/index_en.cfm

west, new vs. old MS, net contributors vs. net beneficiaries). A preliminary list of countries would include: France, Hungary, Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Spain, Italy and Poland.

2. Re-focussing DG REGIO's Communication activities

The **second part of the study** consists of an assessment of how communication by DG REGIO can reinforce and build on communication by our partners at the national and regional level, including an identification of strengths and weaknesses of DG REGIO's communication strategy.

The study should evaluate, if DG REGIO communicates effectively its key messages (and the positive results of its policy) to its main target audiences and make clear recommendations how DG REGIO could improve its communication activities.

The objectives and key messages, target audiences and tools for communication of REGIO are formulated in a yearly Communication Plan. The findings of the Evaluation Partnership would feed into the preparations for the Communication Plan 2014.

The main outcomes of the research should be:

- To identify strengths and weaknesses of the current model of communication of our key messages, relying on sharing the task of communication among REGIO and our partners in the regions and the Member States, and **make recommendations on how to improve the impact and effectiveness of DG REGIO's communication.**

The research should advise on what is the likely impact of the communication via the tools that we are currently using on the different target groups set in the Communication plan. The tools include the printed publications and other promotional material, the website and electronic publications, social media and events we organise. The research should also reveal if DG REGIO communication tools use the appropriate content for communicating the key messages.

The aim is to **maximise the impact of the communication of key REGIO messages by using the multipliers in the regions and Member States the most efficient way.** The identification of the appropriate multipliers and recommendations on the ways of working with them would also be part of the outcome of the study.

Moreover, the study should include a limited benchmarking exercise that would allow us to learn from the communication policies used by other comparable institutions / in comparable policy areas: e.g. EU agricultural policy, communication policies of big international donor organisations such as the World Bank or possibly also big national lotteries).

- To define SMART objectives and key performance indicators for REGIO communication activities from 2014 onwards.

This identification of the baseline situation for the key performance indicators should be part of the outcome, as well as proposals for setting up a monitoring system for REGIO communication activities (preference is given to a system that would not require substantial additional costs and would be easy to implement).

Timing: research should begin in December 2012; information with good practices in EU Regional policy communication in the Member States should be sent to DG REGIO by 15 June 2013; the final report is due on 17 September 2013.