

DOs & DON'Ts Catalogue

COHESION POLICY
RESPONSIBILITIES



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Introduction

This catalogue aims to provide Cohesion Policy's responsible bodies at all levels throughout the European Union with guidelines in organising and presenting the valuable information citizens and companies need in order to implement meaningful projects in their communities and promote change. It responds to the need of streamlining and accelerating the absorption of non-refundable grants from the Cohesion Policy with the purpose of supporting job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improving citizens' quality of life, as it was observed throughout the Consortium countries. Another premise substantiating the Catalogue is that correct communication about Cohesion Policy and the structural and investment EU funds can have an impact on the reputation of the institutions involved in the process, which amplifies its importance in the context of good governance and open government partnership between the state and citizens.



In its current form, the catalogue describes successful and unsuccessful practices already carried out by authorities in the Consortium countries throughout the 2014-2020 programming period, measured by their actual and potential beneficiaries. Its content as well as its results will improve transparency in the EU funds management process, by generating more public attention and increasing expectations from the administration, thus it can indirectly contribute to improving the latter's action in managing resources. The DOs and DON'Ts catalogue targets European institutions and their regional/national agencies and networks, policy makers and public institutions at a local and EU level.

Methodology

The data used in the making of the present catalogue was collected in a three-phase methodology, designed to provide a 360 view on the topic of communication related to the Cohesion Policy. The steps followed in this direction referred to:

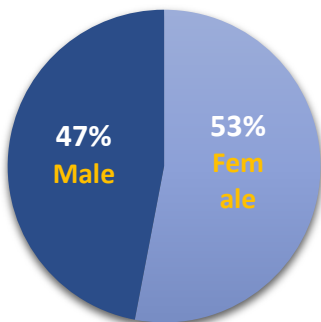
1

Assessment of the state-of-the-art by the four partners, through an analysis of actions and measures previously implemented. This step produced a region-level inventory of strategies, tools and channels used in the communication of the Cohesion Policy in the 2014-2020 programming period.

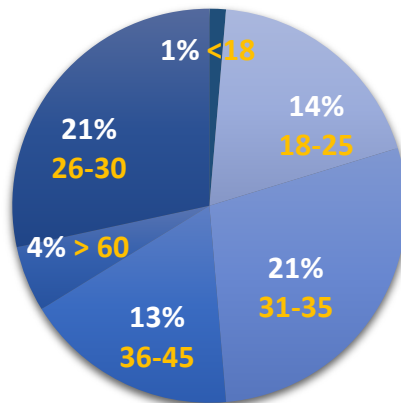
2

Qualitative analysis of the perception citizens (beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries) have with regards to the common strategies, tools and channels used in the communication of the Cohesion Policy in the Consortium countries. This was carried out through a 23-question survey translated and disseminated by the partners, which was answered by 226 citizens of the four Consortium countries.

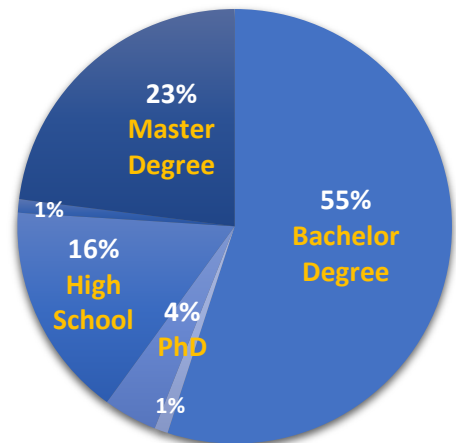
GENDER



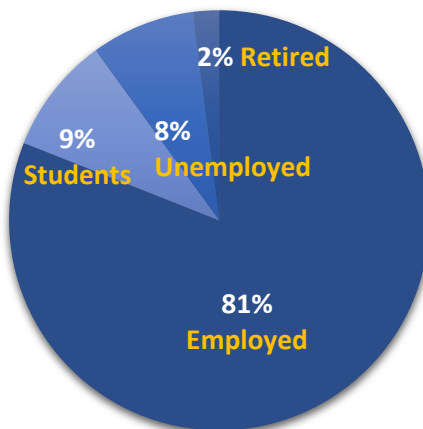
AGE



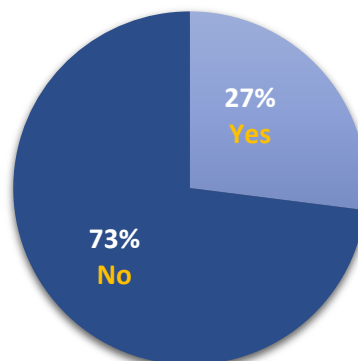
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



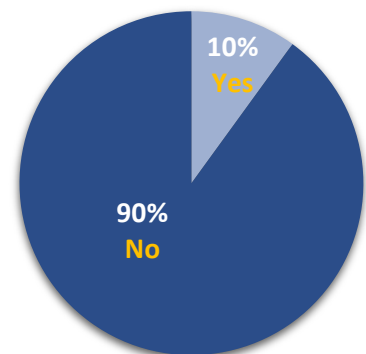
PROFESSIONAL STATUS



EU FUNDS EXPERIENCE



EU PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION



3

Planning and taking part in a learning session between partners for knowledge sharing and exchange of and unsuccessful practices by regions, in order to analyze which of the implemented actions have reached successful the expected impact and which have not.

Limitations

The Catalogue, while being a beneficial contribution to improving the management of the Cohesion Policy in the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, presents some limitations, which may need to be factored in by responsible authorities when implementing the recommendations and suggestions below:

- 1 Limited number of EU member states (data comes from Italy, Greece, Romania, and Lithuania as partners' countries).
- 2 The information contained are directly transmitted by public institutions through various channels, without aiming to assess the effectiveness of the information processed and shared by other stakeholders in the ecosystem, such as consultancy companies and portals.
- 3 The catalogue focuses on the real needs of the direct beneficiaries of Cohesion policy (citizens, businesses, consortia, etc.) and does not aim to offer a comprehensive report on all the actions that a public institution, in charge of managing EU funds, should undertake to increase the visibility and impact of cohesion policy in its country. For example, communication between managing authorities and national or regional governments, intermediate bodies, fund managers, or financial intermediaries are not covered in this catalogue.

To sum up, the "DOs and DON'Ts" catalogue will describe the most frequent success and failure practices related to communicating the opportunities offered by Cohesion policy and promotes a better understanding of its funds and concrete offerings to citizens.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION



DOs

Publish news weekly or monthly

A third of our respondents declared they would be interested in receiving information about the Cohesion Policy on a weekly basis, while another third opted for a once-a-month communication. This presents itself as a balanced time schedule for sending out relevant information. You don't want your audience to be neither bored, nor overwhelmed.

Engage your audience with online/offline events on a regular basis

Ensure that events are well distributed during the year. However, keep in mind that public holidays (for instance the Christmas-New Year's Eve period) or informal holiday's periods (months of July-August) may not attract as many participants as other dates.

Contingency

Think about communicating in accordance with funding timelines or other relevant opportunities. The period before launching calls for proposals should be the most communication intensive.



DON'Ts

Avoid posting news every day or twice a week

Communicating daily or twice a week was viewed less favorably, with only 4-8% of the answers registered towards these answers. Currently, numerous people suffer from a short attention span, due to the numerous stimuli around them and numerous information sources, some of which are less trustworthy than others. While communicating more frequently can be seen as increasing the chances of getting your message across, despite the competition for the citizen's attention, our research indicates that it may have the undesirable effect of being perceived as a nuisance.

TIPS



- Create an easily navigable **Calendar** with the date of publication and expiration of the call along with particular events or specific news
- Send **weekly or monthly newsletters** with the latest news and calls

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Cohesion Magazine

[Magazine dedicated to cohesion policies](#) launched by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion with the intention of ensuring original sources from which to draw information and data.

Weekly Newsletter

[Weekly Newsletters](#) published on the web portal of the Sicily Region on the latest news about the cohesion funds.

GR



Blog News

A separate [news section](#) regarding programme news presents the novelties launched in Cohesion Policy funding.

RO



Bi-monthly newsletter

[Bi-monthly newsletter](#) launched by the Managing Authority for Regional Operational Programme – Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds.

LT



Blog News

[News section](#) about all calls of proposals for all EU funding including RPE and Just Transition funds.

Calendar

[List of published calls](#) with closing dates for applications.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

THE USE OF LANGUAGE



DOs

Simplify vocabulary and syntax

Work on language simplification and on ensuring the necessary clarity of the phrases. Any communication product intended for an external audience must be designed with the clear objective of simplifying vocabulary and syntax to be usable by non-technical citizens. Create your message starting from the most condensed version of the message you are trying to send (example: An event is happening / A call for proposals is launched) and then add all the other information (deadlines, means of applying, location, speakers, agenda and so on).

Use short sentences

Don't let your reader lose the point of what you are saying. Help him/her memorise and understand information. You can also use keywords.

Be specific

While it may seem that the specific jargon related to EU funds and the Cohesion Policy may deter potential beneficiaries from applying for and implementing projects, our research shows that most people think a fair amount of specific language is helpful in getting used to the norms and rules of engagement in this sector. As long as the terms are explained in a friendly, straightforward manner (e.g., not in a legal manner), your audience can navigate easily through specialised terms.



DON'Ts

Don't use long sentences

Long sentences often discourage reading because they avoid focusing on the main points.

Don't be too fussy with topic categories

Using a parsimonious amount of categories to regroup data can be confusing and complicated for the user. Make the category names/labels as general and generous as possible in order to group as many topics as feasible.

TIPS!



- Publish a Cohesion Policy Dictionary, glossary
- Ensure each message answers the basic questions of "Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?" the event is happening
- Use keywords or emphasise certain points in bold type

Communicating Cohesion Policy

THE USE OF LANGUAGE



DOs

Combining verbal and visual

Use visual material to explain your points. 94% of our respondents find the use of photos, videos, or audio material to be helpful in understanding information about the Cohesion Policy. First hand material that you collect is preferable, as it creates a direct link between you and your audience. If such a material is not available, ensure

Outline most important information

Make it easy for the reader to understand which is the relevant information in your sentence, use bullet list and spaces to help categorization. Use titles that match the content of your article.



DON'Ts

DON'T focus on delivering content in your mother tongue only!

More than half (52%) of our respondents consider it is important to translate the information about the Cohesion Policy to English. Such a response is understandable through the context of undertaking these activities in the EU and needing to find communication means for linguistically diverse communities living in your country or outside of it.

TIPS!



- Use FAQ to provide extra information on questions or concerns; they often represent a useful means of organising information
- Use information pills to deepen some aspects
- Automate your multi-language communication by employing an automatic translation engine such as Google Translate. Even though the resulting translation may not be 100% accurate, it will still provide important information with minimum human effort involved.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Cohesion Policy Brochure

The initiative “A scuola di Open Coesione” makes a good review of [best practices regarding EU funds](#), where information are easily understandable and shared with images and text.

News section

The [news section of the region Emilia Romagna](#) web portal promotes the news monthly using clear titles, small paragraphs with words in bold and infographics. A useful calendar on the right side of the website helps scouting for specific news.

RO



Press Releases

[Press Releases](#) launched by the Managing Authority for Regional Operational Programme – Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds. Uses informative language, with a number releases up to twice a week, disclosing information and sharing relevant data.

GR



Website section

[A separate section in the website](#), where the most frequent questions were included in order for all users to be provided with explanations in easy language regarding the aims and objectives of the Cohesion Policy.

Informative video

[A short-easy to understand-](#) informative video with Greek subtitles regarding the Cohesion Policy.

LT



Business agency

[A business agency](#) that provides funding to businesses to implement programs under the Structural Funds. Text and information are very simple, attractive presented, lots of training information to apply for funding and later to implement projects.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

CONTENTS/TOPICS TO COMMUNICATE



DOs

Explain what is the purpose of the Cohesion Policy and which are the opportunities linked to it

39% of our respondents are unfamiliar with EU funds and don't know what the Cohesion Policy is. Raising awareness and creating familiarity with the topic will encourage potential applicants to read more about your communication topics or the calls for proposals you promote. In turn, a fraction of these citizens may feel empowered to try and write their first applications.

Communicate funding opportunities in your Region

73% of our respondents have never applied for EU funds. Explain in simple terms what are the benefits and the steps of the process. Chatbots with predefined messages can substitute the human factor if the current team is not large enough to handle a big volume of inquiries.

Success stories on funded projects

Usually, good practices and successful projects are promoted to prove the positive impact EU funds have in a country or region. On top of that, sharing data on them with the public can inspire a new wave of meaningful and impactful initiatives financed from the Cohesion Policy. More than half our respondents think that the promotion of such examples is useful or very useful when searching information about the Cohesion Policy.



DON'Ts

Avoid hiding the on-going processes and steps of a solution for crisis response

Citizens wish to be reassured also about intermediate measures and the steps that are being taken to arrive at an optimal solution for all. Even though it may seem like current social, economic, environmental, political, or geopolitical events are happening outside of the already agreed-upon framework for Cohesion Policy, they are likely to affect the implementation of the Cohesion Policy for both the policymakers and the beneficiaries. Avoiding communication about such issues may give the impression of a rupture between you and your audience, who is definitely pressured and concerned about them.

TIPS!



- Make a selection of content
- Use links to deepen knowledge, in order to give users, the possibility to expand the variety of topics released
- Summarise relevant information as: region, eligibility, how to participate, amount funded, deadlines and links to the call

Communicating Cohesion Policy

CONTENTS/TOPICS TO COMMUNICATE



DOs

Communicate Covid related measures

More than half of our respondents declared COVID-19 related content in the context of a policy response to the pandemic as interesting or very interesting to them. Do communicate about the funds that the EU and national governments commit to helping our communities overcome the pandemic. Moreover, raise awareness and interest about the funds that regular citizens or enterprises are eligible for.

Data on fund expenditure

On a scale of 1-5, where 1 means “not interested at all” and 5 means “very interested”, our respondents voted a 3.8 degree of interest in the transparent reporting of Cohesion Policy budgets and spending.

Progresses in public funded project development

Make the audience engaged on what has been done and what is to be achieved. This will increase transparency and trust in the EU funds absorption process.

Events and initiatives

People value direct interaction and will be interested to participate when it comes to becoming informed about the Cohesion Policy. Practical learning and understanding are preferable to the information sent via traditional media.

TIPS!



- Provide a FAQ list with straightforward answers
- Adapt the content to the specific platform or social media channel you use
- Use pictures, videos and infographics
- Only display verified or verifiable information, the sooner the better
- Categorise topics in an easy and coherent way
- Be sure to have a backup policy for your social media contents
- Translate COVID related measures content as much as possible into colloquial language that showcases how the (potential) beneficiaries can be impacted
- Provide step to step guides (How to.../Demo)
- Tell stories about real professionals that had access to funds to forward their ideas / dreams

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Webportal

The Abruzzo region dedicates within its [webportal](#) a section dedicated to the communication of structural funds where, within a single page, are provided information on calls, events, videos, promotional campaigns, alternating written and visual language.

FAQ Section

Invitalia, the Italian Development Agency, owned by the Ministry of Economy, promotes various calls for proposals financed by structural funds and dedicates a [FAQ](#) section to most of these (for example, questions and answers for the Resto al Sud call).

RO



Catalogue of funding opportunities

The North-East Regional Development Agency provides [a catalogue of funding opportunities](#), regularly updated. The information presented is grouped according to the categories of potential beneficiaries: public administrations, NGOs, companies, and clusters.

FAQ Section

Within the website of the Ministry of European Funds there is a section dedicated to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#), having an Information Centre for European Investments, which provides telephone number for the ones interested in European Funds.

GR



Website section

The official website of the Ministry offers [a special section regarding Cohesion Policy](#) with explanations on the aims, objectives and budget of the action.

FAQ Section

In this [FAQ](#) section all users will have the opportunity to find answers at the most frequent questions regarding Cohesion Policy.

LT



Webpage

Since Lithuania has one page for EU funding, all projects must upload the created products [on this website](#).

FAQ Section

Lithuania's website dedicated to European funds also provides a section dedicated to Frequently Asked Questions - [FAQ](#).

Communicating Cohesion Policy

DESIGN



DOs

Keep in mind that “Simpler is always better”

Remember three simple rules in choosing communication instruments: attractiveness, captivation, user friendliness. Together, these three principles ensure that the tools you use and the content you develop are attractive, eye-catching, and easy to use. This will grant your communication and reliable characteristics that the audience will seek repeatedly. Your audience will thus be engaged and will associate you with the first choice when data is needed.

Make use of audio-visual materials

Produce short promotional videos and spots to convey the often-complex realities of regional politics in a way that audiences can quickly and easily grasp.



DON'Ts

Avoid using overly modern and conceptual graphics that do not communicate content

Keep in mind the topic you are communicating. Cohesion Policy communications does not often refer to art and design content. The content usually communicated can be reliably transmitted through clean-cut, easy-to-read graphics that are not overly coloured, complex, or tiring for your audience.

Don't neglect design

Design is important to catch the attention of your user, to communicate your values and information. Keep it sleek, neatly organised, and intuitive to use.

Avoid using too many subcategories and buttons

Too many subcategories and buttons are confusing, so avoid complex structures, overlapping categories and unnecessary action buttons.

TIPS!

- Use metrics to monitor and validate the attractiveness and effectiveness of the tools you use (Google Analytics, heat maps etc.)
- Employ a User Experience professional in designing your website and online presence
- Test the effectiveness of your design choices with your colleagues, friends, or families. If they have trouble finding the right content or buttons, so will your audience
- Produce and broadcast documentaries or 'ideas' and in different channels (TV, CINEMA, YouTube, Online program)

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Website

The Ministry of Economic Development (MISE) uses the [Invitalia's website](#) to share and promote structural funds. The website presents a very clear and intuitive design: the homepage has three main sections WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO and HOW THE INCENTIVES WORK that branch off into sub-sections relating respectively to managing authorization, European programs and structural funds, and practical information to use the incentives (communicated through information pills, videos, FAQ, etc.)

Webpage

The [webpage](#) dedicated to Resto al Sud program has a very colourful design since it is aimed at young people, with several subsections that explain the program including Hackathon, promotional videos and SPOT of success stories of people who have implemented projects funded by the "Resto al Sud".

LT



Communication campaigns

[Communication campaigns](#) during 2014-2020 period funding.

RO



Magazine

The [ROHU Magazine](#) is a trilingual magazine that provides information on a wide range of funding opportunities, provided directly to cross-border projects, in order to facilitate the harmonious, coordinated, co-operative development of the border region, transforming such a place into a more competitive and attractive area for everyday life, business and tourism. The design is attractive, using visuals and qualitative content.

GR



Website

[Reader friendly content](#) with hyperlinks to the most significant aspects of the Cohesion Policy action.

Website

[The official website of the Ministry](#) includes the basic information regarding Cohesion Policy

Communicating Cohesion Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB COMMUNICATION



DOs

Be present on the most important social media platforms

To communicate to as many potential beneficiaries as possible be sure to maximise your presence on diverse social media platforms. In this manner, you can ensure not only the complementarity of the platforms, but also that you reach demographics as diverse as possible.

Adapt your content to the specific of the platform

Not all platforms are built the same. For instance, accentuate images for Instagram or videos for Tik Tok and YouTube, short texts on Twitter. Not doing so can attract penalties from the platform's algorithm of displaying content.

Encourage interactions

Use call to actions formulas, quiz, surveys, or open questions to stimulate interaction and engage your audience. This will boost your profile in the platform's algorithm and give your message better visibility. Analyse your audience and the impact of your posts with social media data tools.

Use storytelling

The best way to engage an audience is telling stories. Use storytelling when sharing, for example, a successful case and inspire the next projects submitted for financing.



DON'Ts

Don't neglect your official social media presence

Social media is gaining more and more ground, especially in interaction with the younger audience.

According to our research, official online sources, such as websites of ministries, agencies, or regional government institutions, are followed by social media in terms of public preferences.

Don't use second-hand influencers' news or messages

Let influencers speak directly to the public. Writing via newsletter or e-mail about what influencers have been saying is seen as less efficient, being supported by less than 6% of the responses we collected.

Don't avoid using multimedia

Use visual material to explain your points. 94% of our respondents find the use of photos, videos, or audio material to be helpful in understanding information about the Cohesion Policy.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB COMMUNICATION



DOs

Define social media campaigns

Promote a topic using the same hashtags; choose catchy names and coherent hashtags, define your target audience, the objectives, and the main contents of your campaign. Outline a communication strategy for different social media channels (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and so on). Use dedicated tools (example Hootsuite) to manage your cross-platform campaigns more easily.

Harmonize website and social media content

Match news and events on your different communication channels. Find a spot for social media posts on your website. Communicate an event when feasible via Social media events tools and ensure that it is uploaded on your website.

Livestream your events to larger audiences

Many social media platforms offer free, easy to use tools to remotely interact with your audiences. Organise streaming sessions for your live events in order to maximise your audience. Make use of the possibility to host events on Facebook Live or IGTV, which already have built-in SEO tools.

Secure your access for editing

Treat the access rights for the editors of these platforms as though you treat the access rights to the official website to ensure their security and judicious management

TIPS!



- As with websites and other online tools, cybersecurity is of special importance. Train your staff to spot phishing attempts and employ professional tools to limit the access from questionable non-EU locations.
- Establish your social media accounts as reliable sources of information by getting them certified with “blue ticks” from the administrators of the platform
- You can launch catchy newsletters and web magazines to get the attention of your public and keep it engaged
- Provide downloadable kits for communication (with guidelines)

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES



Podcast

The National Agency for Economic Development hosts a podcast, [“un idea, a startup”](#), about entrepreneurship, innovation and start-ups available on YouTube and Spotify. It presents a time limited content, covering many fields and hosting specialists in the above-mentioned fields, being accessible to anyone who wants to get inspired by entrepreneurs' stories.

Social media section

The Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion has a dedicated social media section within its website with all the posts published on the different channels.

Moreover, another interesting sections is [“The stories”](#) highlighting Italian success stories filterable by region, year and key words.

Finally, an initiative entitled [“We are Europe”](#) is promoted by the Autonomous Province of Trento investigates the actions of the European Union and a variety of topics including the opportunities of the cohesion policy.



Social-media accounts

[LinkedIn account](#) and [Twitter account](#) of the Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds.



Web TV

A free [TV blog](#) provides information on activities which were funded by the SF, actively disseminating information about funding opportunities as well.

Video

[ESF agency video](#) about social funds, social advertising presents success stories that have strongly influenced people's lives



Press release

[Press release](#) by the Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments.

Article

[An article about Cohesion Policy](#) in Greek including interview of Members of Regional Greek Policy/ Post on Twitter about Cohesion Policy.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

EVENTS



DOs

Organise live events with direct implication from the potential beneficiaries

Face-to-face, direct interaction is as valued as TV and printed media when it comes to becoming informed about the Cohesion Policy, according to our respondents. Use this opportunity to answer all questions and draw attention to the focus-points of your message.

Live events on streaming

Combine face-to-face events with online events. Use tips to maximise the reach of your live streamed event.

Engage stakeholders

Engage your stakeholders when organising an event and ensure that the type of event is effective to target your audience. Use non-formal methods to catch and maintain their attention. Evaluate their engagement and improve your next events based on the results of this assessment.



DON'Ts

Don't take for granted event participation

Even though your public of reference is interested, events need to be promoted in order to ensure participation. Start your promotion at least a week before the event, so everyone has time to clear their calendars for your event.

Don't make it complicate to participate

Make sure that relevant information is clear (Time, Target audience, Place, Length, Fee, How to get there). Adapt your time to your desired audience. For instance, most executives will probably not be available in the morning. Try to choose locations easily accessible by public transportation or which offer plenty of parking spaces.

Consider that events with no entrance fees will attract numerous, but diverse participants, while those who charge a fee are more likely to be attended by experienced professionals in the area.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

EVENTS



DOs

Provide materials during your event

Prepare leaflets, agenda, papers, and pencil. Take the time to brand them according to EU rules. Remember to make your contact info largely visible and to link to the other platforms you are present on (website, social media etc.)

Think green

Choose an easily accessible location (via public transport), recycled material when possible and local, seasonal food if you provide catering. This will help promote the EU's principles for sustainable development.

Spread the voice

Promote your event through social media channels and websites. Make it easier to participate by providing information about events in a clear way.

TIPS!



- Keep your events on a working-level. High-level conferences should be few a far in-between, according to our research. Instead, focus on organising workshops, seminars, congresses, networking events, exhibitions, fairs, and live demonstrations.
- Take advantage of the live events you plan to go into detail in regard to the good practices and successful projects, which should be regarded as examples.
- Plan in advance to be able to answer all questions, and also deliver a more convincing statement on why the presented examples, good practices and recommendations should be emulated.
- Insert a form for the evaluation of the proposed activities and suggestions for improvement.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Festival

To celebrate Europe Day, every year in May, the Information Centres of the European Commission and the Autonomous Province of Trento organize the [WE ARE EUROPE FESTIVAL](#). A week of dialogue is organized, among ideas, suggestions, and words, in the footprint of a Europe that is changing course.

Hackathon Tour

[Hackathon Tour](#): A roadshow of 4 stages in 4 Italian universities: the challenge is to generate change in the territories of Southern Italy, bringing innovation, value and social impact through businesses. The best business ideas of young university students between 18 and 35 years of age are sought to be developed through an acceleration hackathon and to be financed with the Resto al Sud incentives.

RO



Events

[PRESRO 2019 Events](#) dedicated to the evaluation of the Cohesion Policy.

LT



Competitions

[Competition](#) which takes place every year and selects participants whose lives have changed as a result of participating in or receiving funding for EU-funded activities.

[The European Sails 2021 awards](#) are intended for those who create a more beautiful and better Lithuania with their works. This competition has not lost its relevance for 13 years.

GR



Debates

[Debating and Communicating](#) European Cohesion to Citizens – The case of Southern Europe.

Course

[A course](#) which included a general presentation of the Cohesion Policy and a brief presentation on the relation between the EU Cohesion Policy and Greece.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

WEBSITE



DOs

Use effective search criteria on your website

Use easily selectable tags and categories on your posts. Make sure they are very visible on the website and that their selection can be done without hassle.

Among the most useful criteria to be employed in the search of a funding opportunity, as seen by our responders, we can recommend the selection of funding by:

- Region (preferred by 59% of our responders)
- Eligibility of the applicant (preferred by 58% of our responders)
- Deadline for application (preferred by 53% of our responders)
- Amount of funding available (preferred by 51% of our responders)
- Type/subject of intervention (preferred by 42% of our responders)

Maximise your presence in your official channels

As per the results of our research, official sources of information are up to three times more likely to be accessed in comparison to online newspapers, consultancy companies' websites or social media.



DON'Ts

Avoid overload your web pages with too much information

Too much information can confuse the reader; he/she can feel overwhelmed by the quantity of data and too much cognitive effort can be required to site navigation

Don't neglect the visual aspect of your website

Remember that communication passes through verbal and nonverbal aspects. If your website seems graphically old or not catchy your message can be less effective. Avoid using unprofessional graphics when communicating European policies.

TIPS!



- Encourage partnerships with news portals and specialized websites by reinforcing your messages and providing them with a wider audience.
- Remember that the website is (still) regarded as the main online point of contact between an entity and its public. Pay it the proper attention!
- Use prompts as automatic suggestions in your search bar

Communicating Cohesion Policy

WEBSITE



DOs

Make it user friendly

Think about the user experience when you manage your website. Pay attention to select appropriate colour combinations, contrasts, gallery formats, tools to transform text into audio messages and others. Make navigation intuitive and make important sections and information immediately visible.

Harmonise headbar, side bars, downbar of your website

Make sure users can easily find the same relevant information on the top and on the bottom page of your website. Link relevant sources and institutions so your audience can be redirected to relevant, reliable sources of information. Promote your social media channels and highlights of your activity.

Harmonise website and social media

Find a spot for social media posts on your website. Make sure users can easily access your social media pages from your website and vice versa. All important posts on social media should contain a link to your website, where more information on the same topic.



DON'Ts

Avoid too many refining criteria when searching for funding opportunities

Other refining criteria, such as the eligibility of the target group or the compatibility with EU or national priorities were seen as secondary in terms of usefulness, being voted by only 13-34% of our respondents.

Don't forget to update your contents

Remember to update your news with the suggested frequency

TIPS!



- In order to employ search criteria on your website, install a search engine or use easily selectable tags and categories on your posts.
- Don't forget to make your website (including its photo, video and audio content) friendly to the elderly or to disabled persons.
- There are numerous guides available to make your site user friendly, but you can also employ an experienced UX professional to guide you
- Think about a translation tool; add-ons for translation are available for most website platforms.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Dedicated portal on EU Social Funds

The [section "funding opportunities"](#) contained in the web portal of the Sicilian region is very clear, intuitive, with several subsections that describe the objective of the call, purposes, beneficiaries, budget, etc..The structure facilitates and guides the research of the final users.

Webportal

[Valle d'Aosta web portal](#) organised by thematic areas and programs, within which it is possible to scout the calls through various filters that guide your search.

LT



Guide for EU instruments

[The guide for EU instruments](#) supports the user in order to receive results/links to the funding instruments available according to the criteria selected. According to the company's activities and planned activities, this link will direct the user to the EU instruments administered by the Ministry of Economy and Innovation.

Website

[Official website of ESF Agency](#), which works with social inclusion, lifelong learning, employment and other issues.

RO



Websites

All of the 8 Regional Development Agencies in Romania have websites.

- [ADR North East](#)
- [ADR 2 South East](#)
- [ADR 3 South-Muntenia](#)
- [ADR 4 South-West Oltenia](#)
- [ADR 5 West](#)
- [ADR 6 North-West](#)
- [ADR 7 Centru](#)
- [ADR 8 București-Ilfov](#)

The North-East, Centro and North-West Regional Development Agencies provide on their websites up-to-date information regarding various funding opportunities.

[Official website](#) of the Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds

GR



Websites

[The official website](#) of the Ministry includes the basic information regarding Cohesion Policy

[The main website](#) of the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy.



Communicating Cohesion Policy

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS



DOs

Encourage your public to debate and share their opinions

The principles of a modern and efficient government are based on the involvement of citizens and civil society and in the case of Cohesion Policy and their direct involvement on how to design future calls based on their enriched knowledge. Extract the most relevant questions for your activity, promote them to your stakeholders and collect feedback and ideas.

Set clear engagement rules

Make it clear and simple for people to participate. Who can participate, which are the steps to take, which are the deadlines, how can they ask for support. Don't forget to add a contact e-mail address to each communication so interested stakeholders can ask for additional details or clarifications.

Provide real case examples of participation

Showing a real case example makes people better understand which activities they might be doing, and which kind of participation is required.



DON'Ts

Avoid the use of long-winded and overly technical descriptions

Avoid overly bureaucratic and technical language and try to convey the essence of regional policy in clear and simple terms, with the help of infographics since a visual format facilitates engagement and understanding.

TIPS!



- Organise "data labs" or training sessions to help citizens analyse and understand data
- Facilitate engagement providing pre-filled letters or documents when needed

Communicating Cohesion Policy

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS



DOs

Empower people

Make clear how citizens' engagement can have an impact on Cohesion Policy. Remind them to what purpose their feedback is going to be used. Paint a picture of how their realities will be positively changed through their involvement.

Choose appropriate rewards

People are more willing to engage if they are rewarded. Rewards should be consistent with their interests. Think of promoting them and their ideas or inviting them into your close professional networks.



DON'Ts

Don't quote laws, regulations, and standards, but instead try to explain them and the specific terms they introduce. Avoid long texts and replace as much of it as possible with pictures, charts, graphs, and other similar material.

TIPS!

- Provide a contact person who can answer and clarify doubts
- Use visual materials
- Create contests with highly educational and cultural rewards (es. meeting significant journalists, travel to Bruxelles, Institutional visits)



Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES

IT



Websites

MONITHON is a website of structured public policy observation and reporting, created to promote civic monitoring of public spending. It allows Italians to monitor EU-funded projects and its tools are used all over Italy by local communities, trained to be on-the-ground auditors, visiting project sites, asking questions of local authorities, and providing concrete suggestions.

Messages are clear, reports are easily accessible and news feeds are incorporated.

Navigation is flexible and consistent with information prominently displayed in the menu bar.

Portal

A SCUOLA DI OPEN COESIONE

At School for Open Cohesion is an innovative educational path aimed at promoting and developing in Italian schools' principles of active and aware citizenship, through research activities and civic monitoring of European and national public funding.

RO



Caravan

"ROP 2014-2020 Caravan" Initiative organized by the Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds. Information sessions on operational programs were organized in several cities in Romania and attended by potential beneficiaries and representatives of the local and regional media.

GR



Debates

Debating & Communicating EU Cohesion to Citizens. The case of Southern Europe.

Course

A course which included a general presentation of cohesion policy and the relationship between EU cohesion policy and Greece.

LT



YouTube channel

YouTube channel of European Commission representative in Lithuania.

Trainings

Lithuanian **business support agency's** trainings to apply for fundings.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

DIGITAL TOOLS



DOs

Seize digital tools potential to ease information access

Think about tools like apps, web apps, podcasts and other digital solutions to share information. Nowadays, building apps or creating podcasts can be completed with minimal training. An app can be a dedicated mobile version of (parts of) your website, for instance. A podcast can be easily uploaded with basic tools such as a smartphone. However small the initial investments, the return can be hundred-fold if they succeed in easing access to EU funded projects and programmes.



DON'Ts

Don't forget to update your contents

Remember to update contents with the suggested frequency

TIPS!



- Create a user-friendly APP to help citizens gather information.
- Partner with your local/regional/national CERT centre or telecom authority to safely host or protect your website or app with no cost/minimal costs
- Maximise skills and the tech-savviness of young interns, who can more easily create and maintain a strong use of digital use



Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES



Applications

Application dedicated to the consultation of all the Public announcement, competition and Calls for Proposals of the Veneto Region.

The app Resto Al Sud allows users to follow the phases of the project directly from their smartphone! It gives the possibility to search for the nearest affiliated banks, public bodies, universities and third sector organisations that give concrete help to build the project. By activating push notifications users receive news, promotional events and workshops in their regions. Resto al Sud is Invitalia's incentive for young people under 46 who want to start a business in the 8 regions of Southern Italy and in the municipalities of the Italian Seismic Crater.



Social media accounts

LinkedIn account of the Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds.

Twitter account of the of the Ministry of Regional development, Public Administration and European Funds.



Business Support Agency

Lithuanian Business Support Agency (LVPA), which implements national strategies and programs assisting Lithuanian business development and increasing its international competitiveness, helping with investments, applied scientific research and experimental development, implementation of modern technologies, digitalization, eco innovations, renewable energy, tourism, it administers financing from EU structural funds and state budget, disseminates information requirements and distribution of EU assistance YouTube channel.

Mobile app

The National Paying Agency launched the NMA **agro mobile app**.



Websites

The official website of the Ministry includes the basic information regarding Cohesion Policy.

The main website of the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy.



Communicating Cohesion Policy

INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY



DOs

Report and publish budgets and expenditures regarding cohesion policy in a transparent manner!

Making data available with regards to the available budgets and types of expenditures engaged from the Cohesion Policy can help stakeholders verify and convince themselves of the efficiency and usefulness of these disbursements. Interest in the transparent reporting of Cohesion Policy budgets and spending was voted a 3.8/5.

Geolocalize projects

Help citizens gather information on their territory geolocalizing the projects in their area. Try embedding basemaps such as Google Maps or open GIS software's in your website, so every citizen can search for Cohesion Policy-funded investments in their zip code.



DON'Ts

Avoid the use of long-winded and overly technical descriptions

Avoid overly bureaucratic and technical language and try to convey the essence of data in clear and simple terms, with the help of infographics since a visual format facilitates engagement and understanding. Reporting budgets and expenditures under the terms, standards, abbreviations, or codes used in the legal framework, in accountancy or in financial audit missions is not transparent, as it prevents citizens who lack technical training in this field. Try to group and explain sources of income and expenditures in colloquial terms instead.

TIPS!



- Use your national Open Government Partnership data portal to share this data and link the publication to your own website. These portals are among the first sources of information watch-dog NGOs use when researching public institutions and their budgets
- Use data cards, data pills, infographics
- Invest in a BI system or a resource management software to track and report more easily large quantities of data

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES



Online platform

[OpenCoesione platform](#)

Italy's online platform "OpenCoesione" publishes both budgets and expenditures of EU Cohesion Funds and Italian National Funds for territorial development to make public spending more transparent for its citizens. This searchable database is a powerful tool for identifying the misuse of public money, and it represents a serious step forward for transparency and accountability of public spending. Information is complete and data is presented in graphics.

Reports

[Monithon Report](#)

Reports on public spending contained in the Monithon website are easily accessible and can be investigated by geographical area. Information is aggregated for intuitive understanding, with simple language balanced with infographics and images. Steps to monitoring and methodology are well defined for each report.



Website

[The official website](#) of the Ministry includes the basic information regarding Cohesion Policy 2014-2020.

[The official website](#) of the Ministry includes the basic information regarding Cohesion Policy 2021-2027.



Special website section

On the website of the Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds can be found a [special section dedicated to decision-making transparency](#).

In order to offer to the citizens the opportunity to take an active part in drafting the regulations, the General Directorate for Legal Affairs organises events in order to inform and consult citizens and civil society on issues of public interest to be debated and on normative acts drafts.

There is also a section that provides information of public interest, providing balance sheets, budgets and information on public acquisitions.



Special website section

All information about the received and distributed funding from the Structural Funds can be found [on this section](#).

Video

Educational video on ["Why is it important and useful to publicise European Union projects and how"](#).

Communicating Cohesion Policy

TRADITIONAL MEDIA



DOs

Be present in traditional media

Our research shows that, while online sources remain prominent as a primary information source, people still rely on TV, radio, and print (newspapers, magazines, journals) for keeping up with the news. Be present where they look for news, despite the perceived advantages online media may have!

Even though it comes with a cost bigger than online communication and, at the same time, it may seem outdated and not suitable for modern initiatives proposed through EU funds and the Cohesion Policy, printed media is seen as more trustworthy than online sources. Moreover, they are preferred by a category of senior-level experts who are valuable potential beneficiaries or intermediaries for EU funds and should be integrated in the ecosystem.



DON'Ts

Don't avoid printed media

Our research shows that almost half of potential beneficiaries (49%) prefer to get their information about the CP from newspapers, magazines, brochures, flyers, leaflets, or outdoor advertisements. This exceeds the proportion of respondents preferring TV (38%) or radio (32%).

TIPS!



- Adapt your choice of printed media to the type of public or communication action event you are targeting to achieve. For instance, a call for proposals can be advertised through brochures and leaflets, while outdoor advertisements are more suitable for big achievements or extremely important news.
- Conduct a further analysis to find out which medium is best suited for each type of public. For instance, our analysis suggests that most young professionals (ages 26 to 30) prefer TV as their traditional media source of information.

Communicating Cohesion Policy

BEST PRACTICES



TV

Spot of local TV to communicate EU funds

The Region of Trentino Alto Adige communicates the European structural funds, providing answers to citizens and the community through three spots on local TV and social media.

Communication campaign

Institutional communication campaign

The Ministry of Economic Development launched an institutional communication campaign about EU Funds entitled "European Funds. Toward a change in Southern Italy" through a TV spot, 4 radio spots dedicated to the results achieved in the school, research, culture and air transport sectors, 5 press ads, a banner for spreading the message on the internet and a brochure.



TV

Moderation by Eleni MARIANO, Secretary general of the CPMR

- Isabelle THOMAS, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the SEARICA Intergroup
- Theodoros GALIATSATOS, Regional Governor, Ionia Nisia

Newspaper publication

Publication on a newspaper called "To Vima tis Kiriakis".



Magazine

The REGIO magazine was developed to promote and facilitate the understanding of the Regional Operational Program. The Regio Magazine is published by the Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Program 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, within the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration.

TV

TV appearance of the Minister of European Funds.



TV Shows

During the implementation of the communication campaign "Let's create a business in Lithuania", a series of TV shows "Tandem of Success" were created and broadcast on LNK. The "Tandem of Success" is a reality show project of business financing, which describes the cooperation between investors and businesses, in which the state also participates, investing its own and EU structural funds.

Publication

Publication on the ESF agency activities (2014-2020 year implementation of the ESF, the European Program for Aid to the Most Deprived and the Fund for Asylum, Migration and Integration).



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DOs & DON'Ts Catalogue

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