

4th AER Award Communicating Europe

2010



Régions d'Europe
Regionen Europas
Regiónen von Europa
Regioni d'Europa

Rhône-Alpes Région

Région Rhône-Alpes – France

Projet : « Support and information campaign for project holders in the Rhône-Alpes »



Dear Participant,

Please read the instructions below carefully before filling out the form

Objectives of the prize

The aim of the 'Communicating Europe' prize is:

- to showcase and communicate best practices in regional communication on Europe
- to demonstrate to regional governments what could be done to make Europe relevant to its citizens

Examples of innovative and creative ways of communicating Europe are showcased on the AER website.

What kind of projects can be submitted?

The 4th AER Award Communicating Europe shall be awarded to regions that contributed to clarifying European affairs to their citizens and have promoted a better understanding of Europe in their region. The theme of European integration encompasses the activities and policies of the European Union, but also the wider concept of European values and identity, which are not only limited to the EU. In 2010 the AER Award Communicating Europe will honor all the communicating activities of regions which help in:

1) Communicating the new European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)

With the Lisbon Treaty finally put in place, a new democratic instrument, the European Citizens' Initiative has been introduced into policy making allowing European citizens to bring up issues of their concern on the EU agenda. Are the citizens enough informed about it? How do regions communicate about this powerful tool?

2) Communicating received European funding

Regions benefit from various European funding schemes which help them to improve their infrastructure, health-care services or SME development. How do regions communicate this financial assistance to their citizens? What are the most effective ways of doing so?

Who can participate?

Participants should be **regional authorities** and their institutions, from any Council of Europe country.

How to participate?

Interested regions should complete the attached application form and return it to the AER Secretariat by June 30th, 2010. Regions should be selective when submitting supporting material (e.g. brochure, CD Rom, press clipping, video, DVD) with their application. Please hand in the most convincing piece of evidence and limit the number of photos to 10. Only one application per region will be accepted.

Jury Members

The Jury is composed of representatives of leading national and regional newspapers, radio and TV stations from all over Europe, and the Spokesman of the Assembly of European Regions.



Contact

The award is organized by the Standing Committee on Institutional Affairs. For additional information please contact:

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Timeline

February 2010	Best practice conference in Brussels and official launch of the award
30 June	Deadline for submitting applications
September	Jury Meeting
November	Award ceremony at the AER General Assembly
December	Showcase of best practices on AER Website
March 2011	Best practice conference in Brussels



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Application form

Please complete the following application form in English and try to be as **brief and concise** as possible when describing your project. Regions can submit **two pieces** of supporting material with their application (please do not send more). Only one application per region will be accepted.

Please note that the Jury's decision is final.

General Data

Category

(Please choose only one category)

1) Communicating the new European Citizens' Initiative

2) Communicating received European funding

Project name

Support and information campaign for project holders in the Rhône-Alpes

Name of the Region

Région Rhône-Alpes

Type of institution

Territorial authority

Number of employees in 2010

4500

Regional Population

6 000 000

Person in charge of project

Aurélie BOUGEL

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Website of project

Non



Questionnaire

1. Summary of the Project

- a) If you were to tell a journalist about your project, what would you tell her/him? How would you summarize the project for her/him?

A new generation of European programmes was introduced for the period 2007-2013. 2 years after the launch, European funds programming had failed to take off in the Rhône-Alpes. One of the identified causes of this shortfall was the lack of support and information related to the cultural change brought about by this new generation of European funds (end of zoning, new targets), thus preventing stakeholders in the territory from taking the programmes offer on board.

Based on this observation, the Rhône-Alpes Region designed a promotion and information initiative intended for the general public, including potential project holders and the media. This initiative was organised around two rounds of information meetings, the first of which took place in June 2009 and the second in late 2009/early 2010.

The aims of this initiative were manifold:

- To render the action of European funds in the Rhône-Alpes legible, accessible and tangible
- To support project holders thanks to tailor-made information and project follow-up
- To spotlight achievements and enable the exchange of best practices.

- b) Why should the journalist write about your project? Is it original? Is it innovative? (please state **three** points)

- The originality of the initiative set up by the Rhône-Alpes Region is reflected primarily in its intention to bring Europe as close as possible to the citizens of the 8 "*departments*" in the Region. This local approach was backed by 8 Rhône-Alpes Bureaus (welcome desk in each "*department*" providing information to citizens, more particularly on Europe) which hosted the information meetings.

- These discussion rounds resulted in the creation of a network of project holders which the Region is now supporting. The approach aimed to be instructive but also and above all sustainable.

- A graphic identity "Europe at the heart of our projects" was created and rolled out using various promotional objects (pens, notepads, USB keys) and factual resources (kakemonos and presentation leaflets on European funds in the Rhône-Alpes). A practical handbook for project holders was also published. Buoyed by this new identity, Internet was also one of the major links in the communication chain surrounding this initiative: a dedicated webpage was created on the Rhône-Alpes Region website, containing all available information on European funds in the Rhône-Alpes, a registration form to attend meetings and a detailed presentation of the initiative.



Please give details:

c) When was the project launched and what were the most important steps?

- 1st round of meetings, June 2009:

4 information meetings were organised in order to provide general information on European funds. The aims of this first round of meetings were simple: to promote European funds and establish links between project holders and European funds managers. A practical handbook was produced specially for the occasion.

- 2nd round, December 2009 to February 2010:

8 further meetings were organised in the Rhône-Alpes Bureaus. For this second round of meetings, the aim was more practical and operational. The idea was to offer practical information on how to set up and monitor European funds applications and to provide tailor-made assistance to project holders through individual appointments.

d) How is the project managed and who is involved in the project?

This initiative was made possible thanks to the strong political determination to communicate differently on European funds. The Vice-Presidents concerned were closely involved, attending several meetings, thus helping to consolidate the objective to be instructive and close to the public.

A dedicated "project team" (Regional European Programmes Department and Communication Department) led the initiative with the support of the Rhône-Alpes Bureaus teams. Officers from the Rhône-Alpes Region were present at the meetings to meet and inform project holders, coordinate the high points and provide tailor-made follow-up.

e) How large is the budget of your project and how is the project funded (EU, regional budget, private institutions or other)? Please give concrete numbers.

A total of 30,000€ was spent on the organisation of the meetings and the production of the various communication materials. The Rhône-Alpes Region bore the full cost of the operation.

This operation was highly cost effective and its implementation was made possible thanks to the heavy investment committed from the Region's internal resources.

f) How effective is your project? (Budget relative to the number of people reached)

E-cards were sent out by email in order to sensitize some 1800 people who consulted the webpage dedicated to this event on the Rhône-Alpes Region website. Among these web surfers, 427 enrolled for the meetings.

Furthermore, around a hundred people were assisted in parallel to these meetings through telephone discussions or the exchange of emails.



The outcome of these two rounds of meetings is positive: the programming rate for European funds in the Rhône-Alpes increased from 8% at 2008 year-end to 42% in April 2010, i.e. an increase of 34 points in just over a year.

g) Do you have means to measure the impact of the project? If yes, please state how.

- At the end of each meeting, the participants filled out a satisfaction questionnaire. The use of this questionnaire gave an almost real-time measurement of the quality of meetings and improvements to be made.

- Thanks to an internal tool used to measure the traffic on the Rhône-Alpes Region website, it was possible to track the number of visits made to the webpage dedicated to the meetings.

- A press review was also compiled after the first round of meetings, enabling the impact of the initiative to be measured.

- Further to both phases, a summary was presented to the members of the regional executive meeting in the framework of a European Collective tasked to monitor European issues. The summary highlighted the effectiveness of the initiative and provided an opportunity to study the new impetus to be given to communication on European funds for the close of 2010 (in future, communication will be more theme-based and will focus mainly on executed projects).

h) Is the communication interactive? If yes, please state how.

The interactivity of the communication was reflected in the registration form on the dedicated webpage included on the Region's website. This resource enabled participants to express their expectations before meetings. The team dedicated to organising the event was then able to provide a tailor-made response to these needs, by proposing customised appointments and gearing presentations towards the themes and problems listed.

On the website, participants could also post their opinions and comments on the available headings (presentation of European funds, programmes for information days, key figures etc.).

There is no doubt that the participation of targeted groups in the organisation of this effective initiative was facilitated by the interactivity of the Internet tool.

i) Will the project be repeated either in your region or in others?

Without modification, it would be difficult to export an initiative such as this which covers such a wide-ranging territory (8 *départements*) and places the emphasis on proximity to targeted groups. The fact that this was a "bespoke" operation, adapted to suit the Rhône-Alpes territory, was the guarantee for its success.



However, this approach can easily be transposed with a few changes according to the chosen themes and/or territories, even if few Regions boast such a well structured territory as the Rhône-Alpes with its information points in each “*département*”.

Therefore, the initiative is reproducible in terms of content and format, the experience has been promoted at national level via DATAR and disseminated to the various regional management authorities.

- j) What efforts did you make to attract the media? Has the media been actively involved in your project? Please state how (Regular briefings, press releases, media partnerships or other)

An awareness raising campaign was organised for journalists before and after the project. In each *département*, press invitations for the meetings were sent out to the local press. During the meetings, a press file was given to the journalists present. Finally, after each round of meetings, a press release assessed the meetings and mapped out the perspectives for 2010.

- k) Which target group does your project address? How are stakeholders involved (citizens, youth, young, old, academics, media)?

- The initiative was aimed at all project holders who might be concerned by European funds: businesses, consular chambers, public and private research stakeholders, elected officials, voluntary associations, etc. The local press was also a prime target to enable widespread dissemination of the information.

- After each of the meetings, the participants filled out a satisfaction questionnaire. The use of this questionnaire enabled the collection of all information required to improve the quality of presentations and discussions at future meetings.

Further to the two phases of the operation, the Rhône-Alpes Region project leaders drew up an assessment, in order to define a new action plan for 2010.

- l) What kind of media response have you had to the project? Please state concrete figures, e.g. number of articles, TV, Radio.

- The number of visitors to the webpage dedicated to the meetings on the Rhône-Alpes Region website was monitored. 1746 Internet users visited this dedicated page.

- During the first phase, press invitations were sent out. In June 2009, 8 local press media devoted an article to the theme of European funds in the Rhône-Alpes.

GOOD LUCK!

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