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| Event | Brussels Voices from the Regions: Rethinking the communication of Cohesion Policy |
| Organisation | European Committee of the Regions |
| Date | 26.04.2018, 14:00 – 17:30 |
| Participants | Veronika Grohe |

On the 26th of April the conference “Voices from the Regions: Rethinking the communication of Cohesion Policy” took place at the European Committee of the Regions. At the event the research findings of the COHESIFY project were presented, which focused:

- on the citizens’ perceptions of the cohesion policy;
- on how the cohesion policy is portrayed in the media;
- on the improvement of the communication of the cohesion policy.

Prof. John Bachtler opened the conference with the statement that good communication of the cohesion policy is necessary in order that citizens also identify with the EU.

Dana Spinant from the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission declared that only a third of European citizens do know about the cohesion policy.

Dr. Andreja Pegan from the Trinity College Dublin declared that most participants of the study were aware of cohesion projects which involved infrastructure. She explained also that most of them find out about the cohesion policy through signs. Citizens get informed also through traditional media but rarely through social media.

Dr. Heinz Brandenburg from the University of Strathclyde presented the citizens’ survey. He declared that among the EU funding, the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) was the most known. He explained that according to the participants the cohesion fund is the one who contributes the most to the creation of an EU identity. Furthermore, he explained that people from net beneficiary countries were more aware of the cohesion policy than people from net payer countries.

Dr. Vasiliki Triga from the Cyprus University of Technology presented the results of the study on how the media frames the cohesion policy. He explained that there are basically eight different ways on how journalists report about the cohesion policy:

- in terms of economic consequences (for ex. jobs, costs)
- in terms of quality of life (for ex. raising of equality)
- in terms of culture
- in terms of incompetence of local governments (for ex. misuse of funding)
this happens especially often in Romania

- in terms of power (for ex. which member State gets more funding)
- in terms of national interests (for ex. improvement of better relationships with neighbours)
- in terms of basic principles of the cohesion policy
- in terms of misuse of the funds (for ex. corruption)

According to the research most journalist report about the cohesion policy in terms of economic aspects. Dr. Triga declared also that the regional media reports more positive and the national media more negative about the cohesion policy. He came to the conclusion that the media does frame the cohesion policy and that in overall, they speak positively about the cohesion policy.

Dr. Carlos Mendez from the University of Strathclyde gave the following recommendations in order to improve the communication of the cohesion policy and to connect the European citizens better:

- EU funding projects need to be seen by citizens
- improvement on communication of the cohesion policy is needed
- the cohesion policy should be more reported in the social media
- to democratise the cohesion policy: citizens should be involved in decision-making process
more engagement of the citizens in programming would lead to an increase in communication
- to bring the projects more alive by creating a one central platform with audio-visuals

Dana Spinant from the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission concluded the conference with the following declarations for the post 2020 cohesion policy, which:

- would try to avoid burden on national authorities
- would use more emotional communication to which citizens can more relate to it
- to target more the regional and local audience (for ex. to use the local language)
- taking account of people view on the programming
- to prioritise more on social media

The Agenda of the conference can be seen [here](#).

The PowerPoint Presentation of Prof. John Bachtler can be seen [here](#).

The PowerPoint Presentation of Dr. Andreja Pegan can be seen [here](#).

The PowerPoint Presentation of Dr. Heinz Brandenburg can be seen [here](#).

The PowerPoint Presentation of Dr. Vasiliki Triga can be seen [here](#).

The PowerPoint Presentation of Dr. Carlos Mendez can be seen [here](#).