

# SYNTHETIC REPORT

**3RD STAGE – THE EVALUATION OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE  
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION MEASURES  
PERFORMED AMONG POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES**

NOVEMBER 2019



*POR 2014-2020 – The journey continues!*



***Contract: Services for performing the sociological studies through which the needs of information and the efficiency of the action of information and communication will be assessed according to the Communication Plan for POR 2014-2020;***

***3rd stage – The evaluation of the efficiency of the measures performed among potential beneficiaries***

***Synthetic report***

**Contracting authority: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration**

**Project manager: Maria-Ionela Caprian**

***Provider: Association SMART Integration & AB European Research GROUP***

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....                                | 3  |
| Context.....  | 3  |
| Used methods.....                                       | 3  |
| <b>DATA ANALYSIS</b> .....                              | 6  |
| Public Administration.....                              | 6  |
| Beneficiaries other than the public administration..... | 9  |
| Mass media representatives.....                         | 11 |
| <b>Recommendations</b> .....                            | 13 |
| Communication with the local administration .....       | 13 |
| Communication with other potential beneficiaries.....   | 13 |
| Communication with mass media.....                      | 14 |

## METHODOLOGY

### Context

The study was carried out within the 183/2017 contract, that had as aim the assessment of the actions of information and publicity achieved according to the Communication plan for POR 2014-2020 and the proposal of a set of recommendations which orients the information and communication measures for the 2020-2023 interval, until the end of the programme. The study presents the result of the third stage of research and analysis. The goal of the study was to assess the efficiency of information and communication measures performed among potential beneficiaries.

### Used methods

The study looked after three target groups: local public administration, potential beneficiaries, others than the local public administration. The tools used to select the target groups, sampling the respondents and collecting data followed to compare the results between the two moments of social research: 2017-2019

| Target group                     | Collection tools  |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Central and local administration | Quantitative investigation, based on a questionnaire applied to the representatives of city, town and municipal public authorities from all over the country. Volume of 502 respondents.  |
| Other potential beneficiaries    | Qualitative investigation, based on a structured interview applied for the categories of eligible beneficiaries: accredited social services providers, state higher education institutions, small and medium companies from urban areas and small and medium companies from rural areas, micro companies from urban areas, cult units, innovation and technologic transfer infrastructures, scientific and technological parks, business incubators and accelerators, non-governmental organization. 201 respondents nationally, from all counties. |
| Mass media representatives       | Qualitative investigation, based on a structured interview applied for the mass media representatives. 80 respondents, 10 for each developing region.   |

| Target group                     | Theme  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Local and central administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment of the experience in the projects funded from REGIO between 2014-2019;</li> <li>- Identification of the general attitude towards REGIO and the arguments that claim this attitude;</li> <li>- Assessment of the present state of information and identification of the needs of information on the public administration level;</li> </ul> |

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
|                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment of the inter-institutional communication relationship;</li> <li>- Identification of optimum methods of information and communication tools used.</li> </ul>   |
| Other potential beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The evaluation of REGIO's high profile;</li> <li>- The evaluation of experience and communication relationship in the projects funded by REGIO;</li> <li>- Identification of general appreciation in relation to REGIO;</li> <li>- Identification of the information needs amongst potential beneficiaries;</li> <li>- Identification of optimum methods of information;</li> <li>- The evaluation of communication tools;</li> <li>- Identification of models of good practice proposed by potential beneficiaries</li> </ul>   |
| Mass media representatives    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The evaluation of REGIO's high profile;</li> <li>- The appreciation of the communication relationship with the representatives of Regional Development Agencies, Regional Development Ministry, Public Administration and European Funds and Management Authority of The regional Operational Programme;</li> <li>- Identification of the expectation that the media partners have regarding the information given by the POR communicators;</li> <li>- Identification of the optimum methods of networking with mass media, from the interviewed journalists' point of view;</li> <li>- Identification of the mass media representatives' expectations regarding the unfolding of the communication process in present programming period.</li> </ul> |

Figure 1- Sample public administration 2017

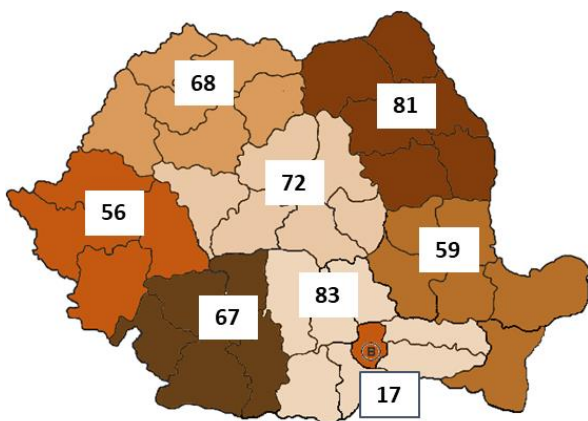


Figure 2- Sample public administration 2019

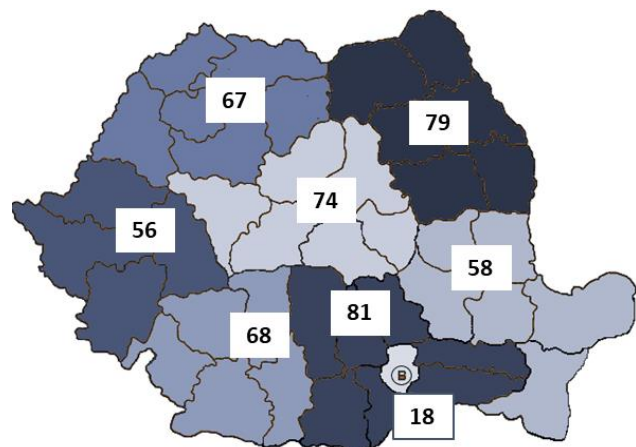


Figure 3- Sample of other beneficiaries. Comparison.

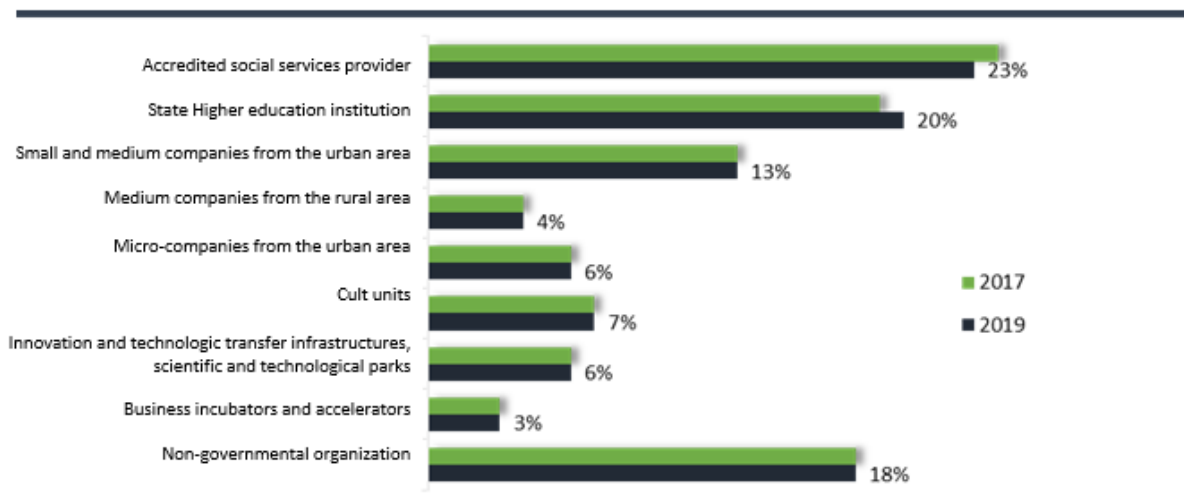
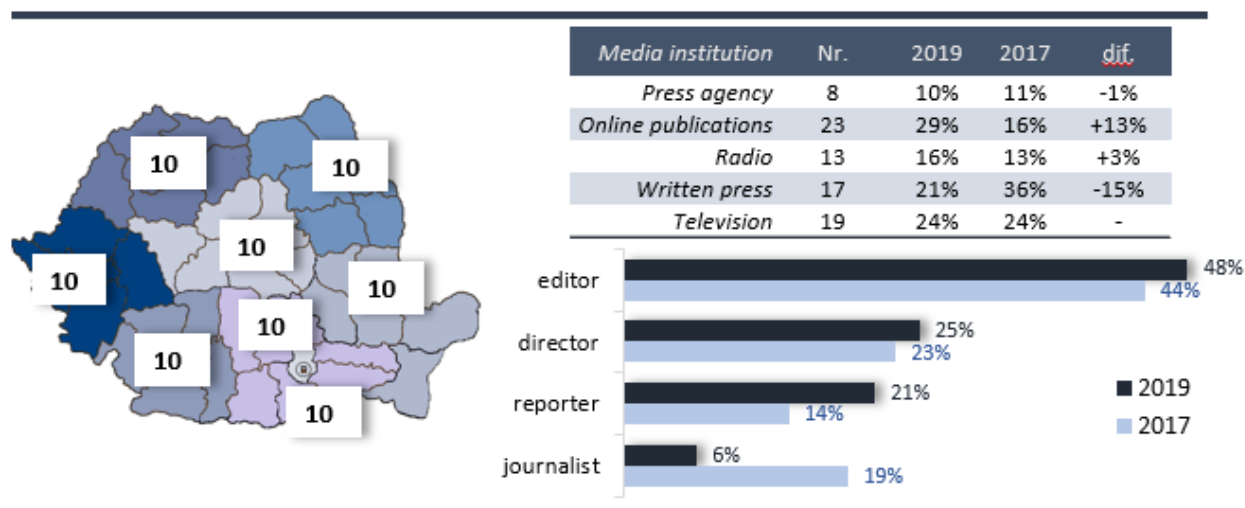


Figure 4- Sample mass media representatives



## DATA ANALYSIS

### Public administration

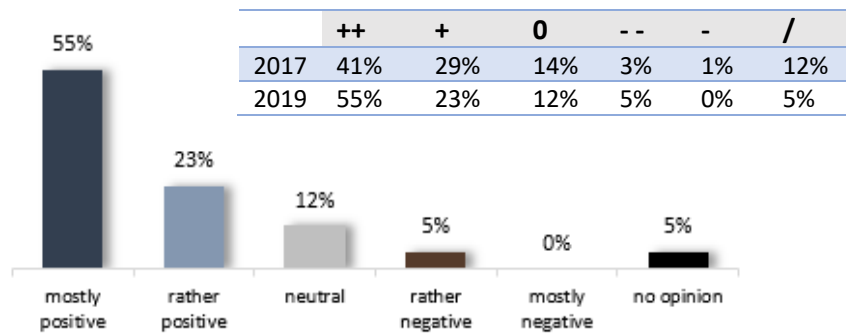
Over half 54% of urban administrations, others than the city ones, have accessed REGIO funds in the previous programming period, and also in the present one, 27% of these local administrations having accessed funds either in this financial exercise or the previous one.

The level of appreciation of the REGIO usage for urban development overpasses the accessing level by 7%.

6

Figure 5-The general opinion dynamic regarding REGIO

What's your thought when you hear REGIO- Regional Operational Programme? Please express your opinion according to the following scale!



One out of five local administrations would like to access REGIO for developing the community that they represent. From this point of view, the identification of the synergies regarding the growth of the integrated character of PNDR and POR is set up as an interest point for the following programming period.

On an attitudinal level, the period between 2017 and 2019 has marked a significant positive image of REGIO, with a growth of 14% of the predominantly positive opinion and an average growth of 8% of a general positive opinion. This favourable growth took place both in the urban area (+13%) and the rural area (+8%). Additionally, the weight of the visibility of the achievements in growing in relation to 2017 from 14% to 22%.

47% of the positive image of the Regional Operational Programme at the local administration level has as main argument the significant contribution of the programme to the real development of the localities and to their modernization.

The main arguments of the negative opinion take into consideration, just like in 2017, the heavy documentation and the excessive bureaucracy that come along with the projects funded through ROP.

Figure 6 –Arguments for the positive opinion towards ROP

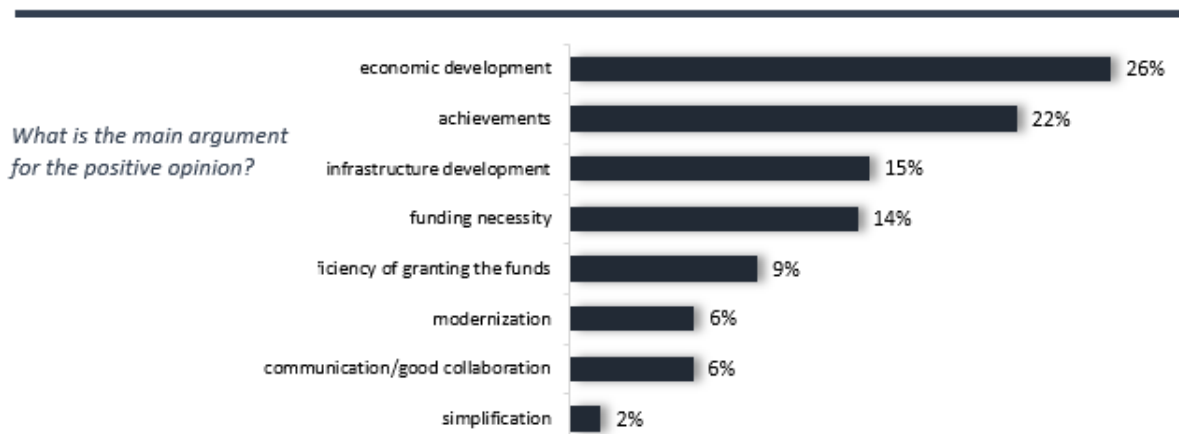
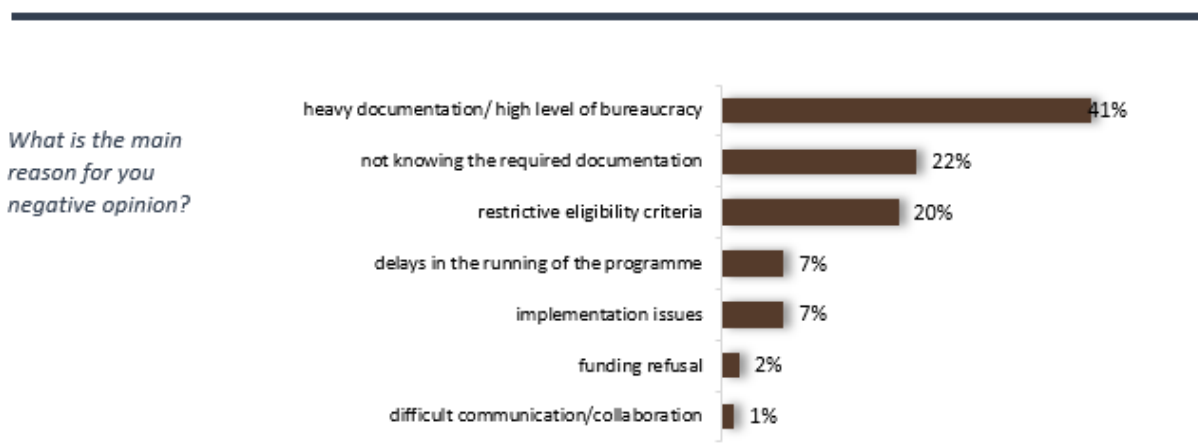


Figure 7- Arguments for the negative opinion on ROP



On the local public administration level in Romania, the average of the perceived level of information regarding the financing opportunities through the Regional Operational Programme increased by 10% from a value of 6.6 points out of 10 in 2017 to 7.2 points out of 10 in 2019.

Compared with the study carried out at the level of 2017, the dynamics of information needs at the level of public administration is characterized generally by an increase in the interest for news of general character regarding the way the Regional Operational Programme is carried out, by increasing the interest for specific answers on how the reallocations between the priority axes are made, the timing of different axes, how the integration with other operational programmes works and by increasing the interest for examples of projects/activities/ interventions that are financed through the Regional Operational Programme as well as examples of good practice.

The relations of inter-institutional communication at the level of all the institutional actors involved in the development of the Regional Operational Programme have improved significantly compared to 2017. The highest level of appreciation is registered by the County Councils (72%). The most important increase in the appreciation rate is registered by the Regional Development Agencies (+19%). About a quarter of the public administrations at the local level are in moderate or acute deficit of inter-institutional communication necessary for development.



The hierarchy of the information resources is led by the three main websites: the one for the European funds, in general, that of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration and the website of the Regional Operational Programme (inforegio.ro).

Figure 8-Raising the quality of inter-institutional communication relations

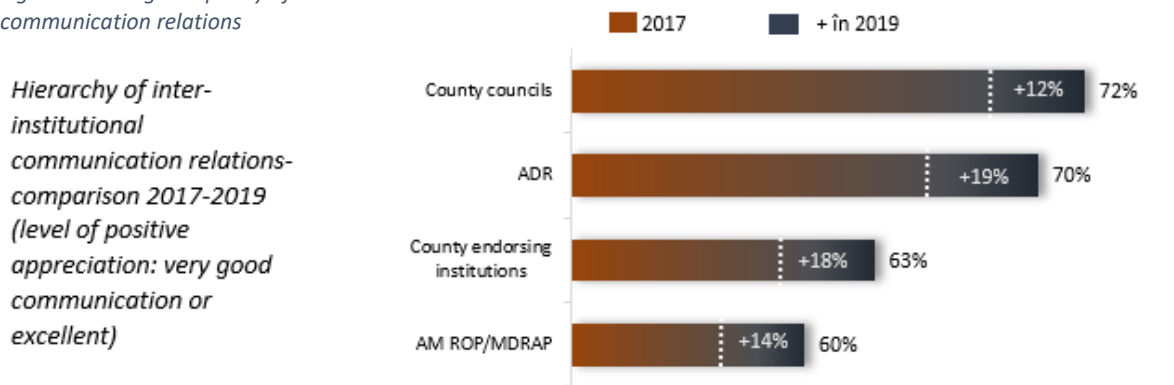
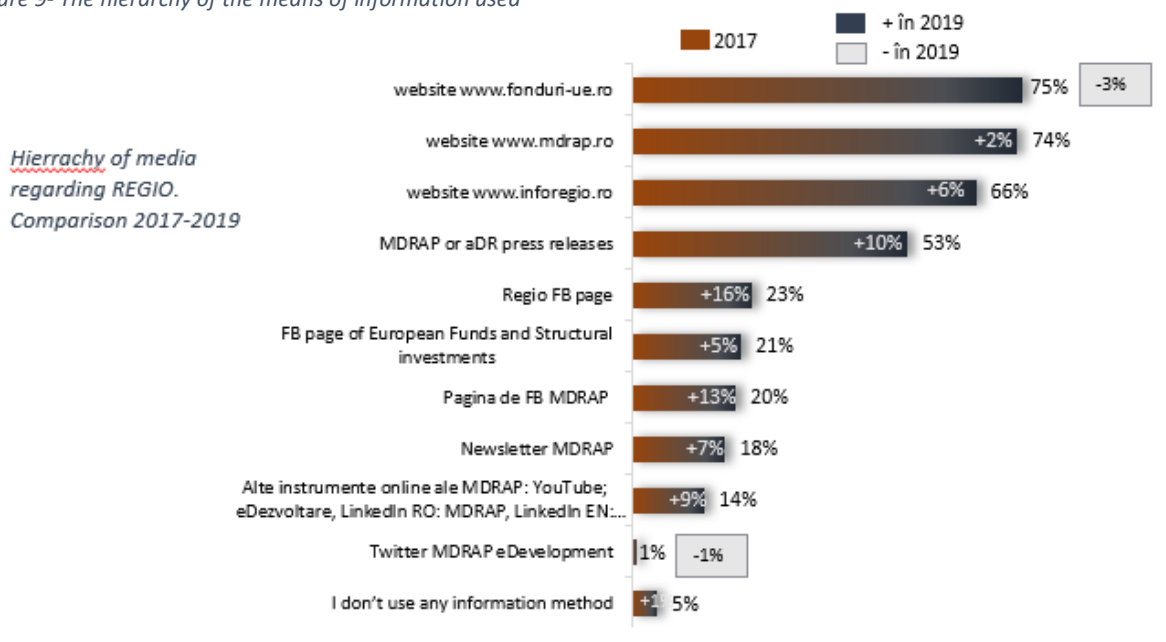


Figure 9- The hierarchy of the means of information used



As in 2017, the REGIO website places itself in the hierarchy as the main means of information, with an increase of 0.7 points in comparison with the previous survey wave. A similar appreciation was registered as an important tool, respectively the direct information received through the REGIO communicators' network.

The comparative analysis by residence areas for each communication tool tested shows a significantly higher increase in utility in the urban space for: REGIO website (+0.7 points in urban compared to rural area), direct information received through the REGIO communicators' network (+0.6 points) and for events organized locally and regionally.

The communication campaign “Tomorrow is being built now” (radio spots, audio, written press, online and outdoor signage) has been similarly appreciated in urban and rural areas. The campaign “Tomorrow is being built now”, carried out in the first part of 2019 received an average coefficient of appreciation with 0.4 points higher in comparison with the way in which in 2017 the previous campaign was evaluated “From dawn to evening... The journey continues”. From a qualitative point of view, for more than a third of the local administrations (35%) this campaign was perceived as very useful in terms of information (grades 9 and 10), with a 12% increase over the general level of appreciation of its utility, measured in 2017.

The website [www.inforegio.ro](http://www.inforegio.ro) is one of the most useful information tools for the local public administration. Compared with 2017 the level of appreciation of its utility increased, as shown before, both as an average value and as a weight of those who value the website as being a very useful tool (+10%, from 40% grades of 9 and 10 in 2017 up to 50% the highest grades in 2019).

Compared with 2017 [www.inforegio.ro](http://www.inforegio.ro) website maintained its first position in the hierarchy of informative websites regarding the Regional Operational Programme, with a small increase of +3%, considering an increase of the online information market dedicated to this topic by over 30%.

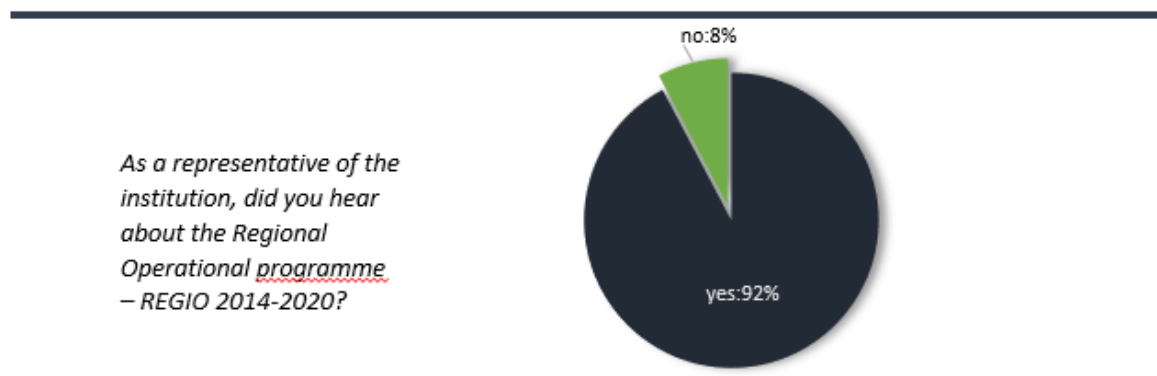
REGIO.ro stands out as the best online communicator in terms of the Regional Operational Programme and a successful model in communication for the local public administration.

The REGIO communicators’ network remains a tool of major importance in the communication strategy of the Regional operational Programme. 44% of local administrations consider that the information received through this network is very useful or extremely useful (maximum marks/grades).

### Beneficiaries other than the public administration

The high profile rank of the Regional Operational programme has remained very high at the potential beneficiaries’ level, the share of knowledge of the programme being over 92%, stagnating in relation to the results obtained in 2017.

Figure 10-REGIO’s high profile at the potential beneficiaries’ level

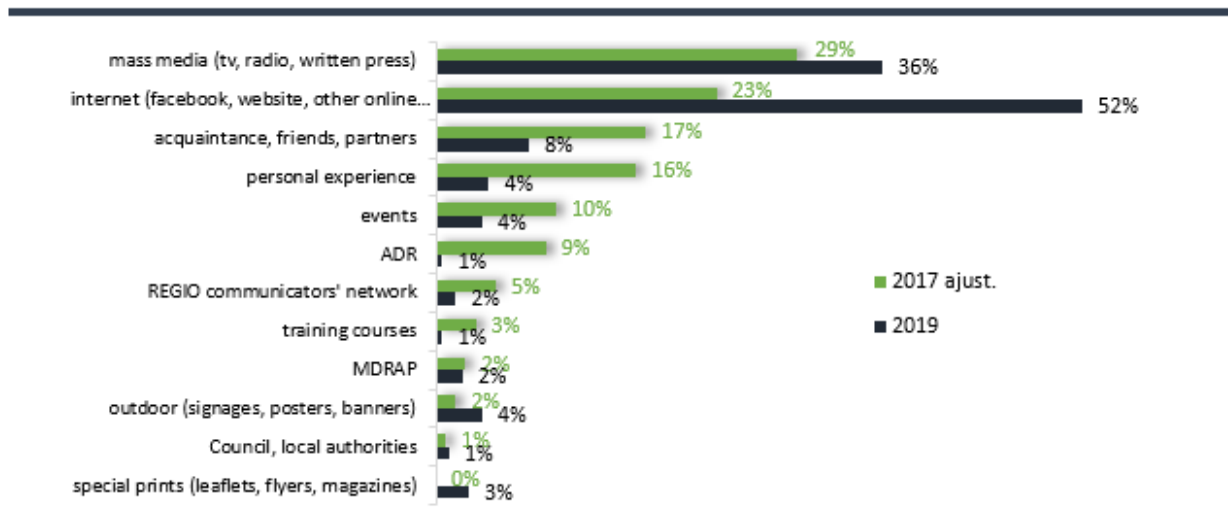


Regarding the categories of beneficiaries, we note the fact that on the level of 7 out of 9 categories covered by the communication effort, the threshold of 90% notoriety has been reached or exceeded.

The analysis on the methods of information shows that in 2019 the main method of information is the internet, the majority of respondents (52%) stating that this is the main method by which the information about REGIO reaches them.

The comparison between the data obtained in 2017 and those of the current year shows a significant increase of online communication (+30%) and through mass media (7%) and a decrease in the prevalence of other means of communication. The dynamics of these data show that the incidence of the internet and online communication is increasing and the following communication campaigns will have to use the techniques specific to this type of environment, including in terms of persuading, monitoring the most searched words or phrases, use of pop-up images and messages.

Figure 11- Means de information regarding REGIO. Comparison



On a sampling level, the share of institutions that carried out at least one programme financed by REGIO was 47%, slightly increasing compared to the value registered at the level of year 2017 (+5%).

The rising trend in the general sample line shows that participation in the Regional Operation Programme produces administrative capacity development, carrying out a project through POR creating competences to continue accessing REGIO funds.

Figure 12- The incidence of the REGIO experience. Comparison



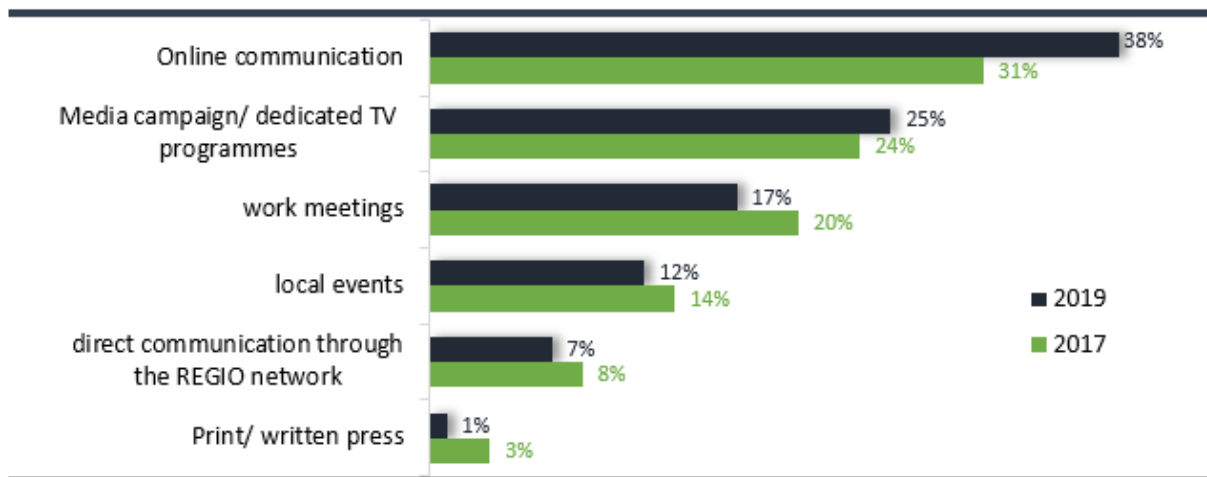
Compared to the data obtained at the level of year 2017, in the study carried out in 2019, there is a 7% increase in positive evaluations compared to REGIO, linked to the increase in the number of potential beneficiaries who applied for funding through the Regional Operational Programme.

The positive opinion regarding the Regional Operational Programme is generated by the results, the achievements that the Programme has recorded over time and the correlation between ROP and Development, REGIO being perceived publicly as the main development generator. The negative opinion regarding ROP is generated mainly by the perception of the high level bureaucracy within the Programme and by the expectations regarding the coverage of more needs at a national level.

Measuring the level of information of the potential beneficiaries on the basis of the informational items that cover all the relevant aspects of the knowledge regarding the Regional Operational Programme, highlights the fact that most of the potential beneficiaries know all the relevant aspects of the programme.

Online communication is the main requested mode of information. Compared to 2017, this type of communication has a significant positive dynamic, with an increase of 7%. A similar interest with that of online communication is represented by direct communication through working meetings, local events or information sessions organized through the REGIO communicators' network.

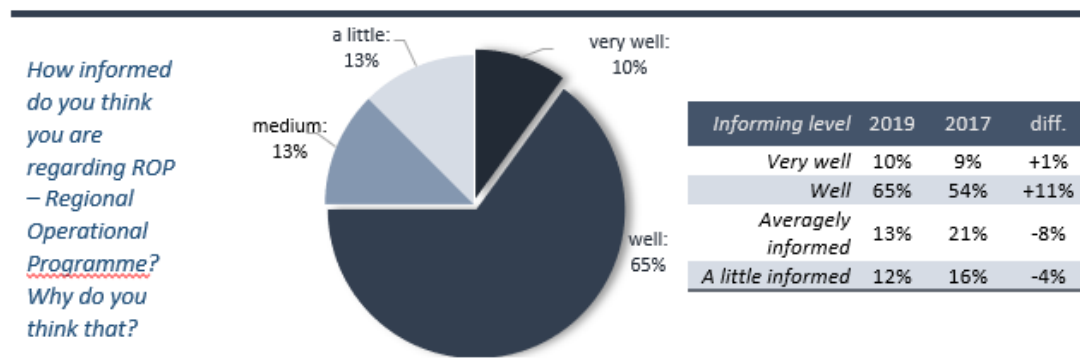
Figure 13- Optimum means of information. Comparison



### Mass media representatives

The general level of information of the media representatives increased by 12% between 2017 and 2019, reaching an average of 75% good and very good information.

Figure 14- The general level of mass media information



The communication relationship with ADR has improved by approximately 8% between 2017 and 2019. Also, the communication relationship with AM ROP shows a rising trend of appreciation.

Maintaining the press interest for the Regional Operational Programme was achieved through three categories of methods: direct communication with ADR, the REGIO and MDRAP websites and the media communication campaign;

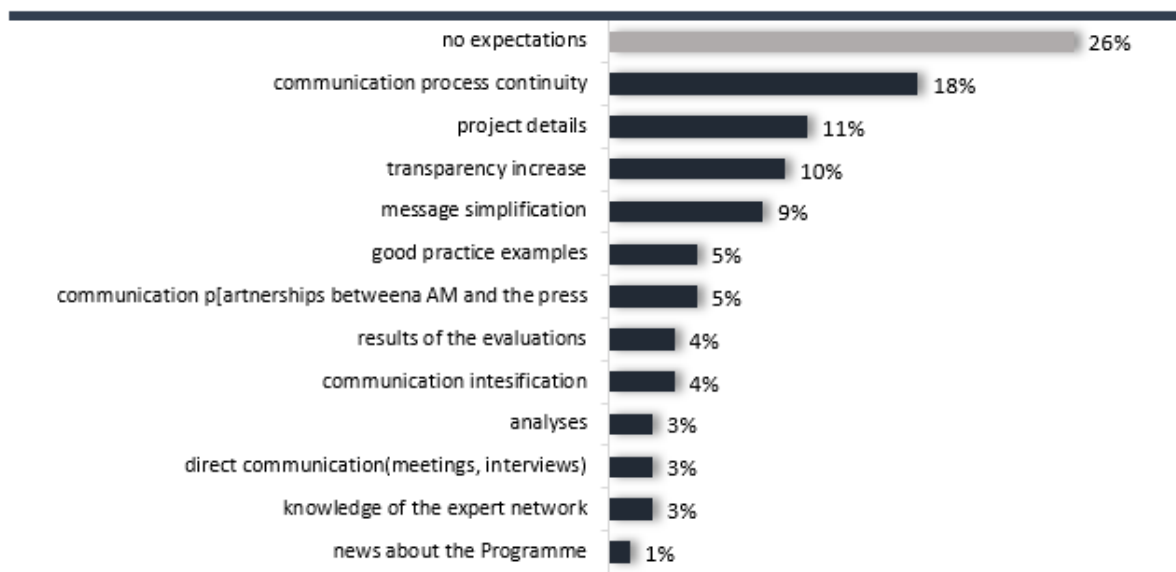
The mass media communication relationship with ADR has improved by approximately 8% in the period 2017-2019 due to the increase of the quality of information transmitted and due to the professionalism of the communication staff of ADR. The communication relationship with the AM ROP shows a rising trend due to the improvement of the REGIO website and the communication campaign carried out;

The main expectations regarding the information within the Regional operational Programme are aimed at pointing out the characteristic elements of the Programme and simplifying the language;

A constant relative need, compared to 2017, is that of statistical analyses, infographics, interactive maps that offer informative support for debates, press analyses, comments on different themes;

The expectations of media communication of the vectors considering the communication process evolution in the next period of time centres itself especially on continuity. The interviewees mentioned that in comparison with other ROP Programmes/ ministries they have a network of communicators with high expertise and a high level of professionalization, with consolidated media links through which the message is transmitted nationally. In addition, ROP communicated in 2019 through media much more intense and concentrated, in comparison with other types of financing focused on communication on specific projects. Therefore, the continuity of the communication strategy used so far is the main expectation. In addition, details about projects and increased decision-making transparency are expected, a topic that raises the interest of the media regardless of the channel.

Figure 25- Expectations regarding the communication relationship in the following period



The simplification of the message, the examples of good practice and the results of the assessments are also part of the journalists' expectations in the next period of time. One of the most interesting

topics that showed up significantly during interviews was the development of partnerships (agreements, contracts) with the media at the area/regional level in order to constantly communicate the developments at the Programme level, the follow-up and the media construction of the successful projects. Tangentially to this aspect were also highlighted the expectations regarding the analysis of the performance of the ROP at the territorial level, the acknowledgement of the network of experts and evaluators at the regional level and the information regarding the news published in the Programme.

## Recommendations

### Communication with the local administration

- Maintaining as a main communication line the achievements established through the Regional Operational Programme. Encourage local public administrations to participate with testimonies regarding the results, effects and impact of the ROP at the level of communities they represent in order to bring these achievements closer to the citizen and to increase the visibility of the role of financing on improving the quality of life of citizens;
- Maintaining the intensity of communication activities at the level of local public administrations and transforming them into communication partners at local level, towards the population. Establishing a gala to award “the best local communicator”.
- Making special informative materials, of “literacy” with REGIO dedicated to local urban administrations that have not accessed the Regional Operational Programme so far.
- Establishing or re-editing a communication tool of “news alert”. This tool increases not only visibility, but also the perception of decision-making transparency and trust in the Programme. REGIO news alert can become a landmark of institutional communication and of the development of administrative capacity at a local level.
- Awarding each region for the most successful communication activity carried out each year. It is a way to strengthen the Network of Communicators, exchange good practices, but also an opportunity to increase visibility at regional level of AM ROP.
- Identifying in each region the local communities with relational deficits and design special activities dedicated to them in accordance with the existing needs and capacities.
- Permanent assurance of the information matching the three major information websites: MDRAP, inforegio, EU funds.
- Permanent upgrading of the [www.inforegio.ro](http://www.inforegio.ro) website, monitoring it and using the website to collect periodically opinions, evaluations, and territorial dynamics (quizzes, small surveys, association games etc.)
- Resumption of activities aimed at strengthening and promoting the REGIO Communicators Network: Awarding, organizing galas, organizing experience exchanges. Strengthening on a public level the idea that the success of REGIO is due to the people involved not only in the implementation of projects, but also in the management of the Programme centrally and regionally.
- Running until the end of 2020 of at least one more “reminder” session through the “Tomorrow is being built now” campaign (resumption of spots, street signage, distributed prints)

### Communication with other potential beneficiaries

- The Programme’s reputation is at the maximum threshold level. The communication effort must be oriented towards maintaining a high level through regular “reminder” actions;

- Prioritizing the communication efforts towards the categories of beneficiaries that will be re-targeted in the next programming line, for example the research-development institutes, the companies with innovation research departments and the retention of beneficiaries whose contribution is diminished: NGO, worship institutions, rural enterprises;
- Orienting, regarding the language (commonly used words) and its shape (animations, GIFs, pop-ups etc.) towards the online communication of network type. Creating online events, questionnaires addressed to the potential beneficiaries, communication sessions, multi-centre debates etc.
- Communicating the positive dynamics registered by the Regional Operational Programme. Sending statistics, data, results. Creating a public framework of decisional transparency and maintaining it in the public agenda of ROP.
- The use of the testimonials online campaigns, of the individual experiences, of the individual biographies. The personification of The Regional Operational Programme. Creating the communication framework such as “Me and REGIO- how did we meet, how we built a relationship, what problems we overcame, what are our results etc.”
- A better communication of the projects. Eg.: selfie contests with a panel/ objective REGIO for youth; creative contests for younger people in order to promote an objective funded through REGIO.

#### Communication with mass media

- Maintaining the communication strategy for the next years at the same level as the previous period (2019) in order to maintain on the public agenda of achievements of ROP nationally;
- Orienting towards the offer of materials that can be obtained online: short articles, images, videos, video games, micro-surveys, mini-contests;
- Designing and creating informative materials that highlight the main characteristic elements ROP, in a simplified language that will include data, statistics, results, analyses. Creating a periodic informative bulletin where there will be highlighted the evolution of the programme;
- Holding exclusive interviews following interesting themes for ROP with deciders from the management structure of the Programme. Building a “humanized” image, promoting the “specialist team” that build the Regional Operational Programme and to whom the success of the programme is due.