

FINLAND

Communication

Location
Finland

Programming period
2007 - 2013

Funding (EUR)
400 000 RDP

Duration
2015 – 2015

Implemented by
Finnish Network Support
Unit

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Website
www.paivitamaaseutus.fi

A dedicated communications campaign to promote the launch of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) in Finland.

The challenge

During the previous programming period, the Communications Officers of three key RDP bodies in Finland came together to form an informal communications 'Group of Four': Four representatives of the Managing Authority, the Paying Agency and Network Support Unit. The Managing Authority takes the lead but the group plans everything together as a team



The Finnish RDP was one of the first to be approved – in December 2014. The Group of Four had anticipated this moment and already had in place a clear Communications Plan – developed with the network of communicators - to support its launch.

In addition, the Group of Four works in close collaboration with a broader 'network of communicators' across the country. This network brings together communications professionals - including representatives of regional authorities – as well as people working in the field with an interest in communications. The network is supported by additional RDP funding for regional communications projects. The group has discussion sessions around five times a year - around twice in person and the other times via video link-up.

Main steps and features

The launch campaign of the Finnish RDP aimed to raise awareness of rural development stakeholders about the opportunities provided by the RDP to support new and diverse activities in rural areas. Moreover, to contribute to changing attitudes to rural areas as modern, diverse locations for innovation, entrepreneurship and growth.

The group of four used external communications expertise to guide them in the process of designing the specific details of the RDP launch campaign. To achieve this, they put out a call to advertising agencies to come up with a campaign idea. The budget foreseen was substantial – pooling resources from the different agencies - €400 000 for a campaign covering the launch period until the end of 2015.

The process was not entirely straightforward because the initial proposals were not adventurous enough for the aims of the Group of Four. They had to push the agencies to be more creative and risk-taking in their approach. The result was a campaign using visually arresting visual elements based on the concept 'Update your Countryside'.

The campaign started in June 2015 and run until the end of 2015. A series of visual elements were designed to support the central message. These elements were then used on a number of campaign materials including posters and videos.

The central visual element of the 'update your countryside' slogan is a circular white arrow in a pink circle. The circular arrow represents the idea of 'updating', as one might usually associate with a web page. The background is pink, which is unusual, because rural aspects are almost always presented in green.

The campaign launched its own dedicated website, which was promoted through the other campaign materials. This profiled over 400 suggestions for rural activities to

support local development. This website provided links to the 'formal' pages of the main RDP bodies and formal RDP information for those interested in this level of information.

Other activities included television adverts - which were also posted on YouTube and Facebook – a photo competition and presence at rural fairs and other events.

Results

The Group of Four were delighted with stakeholder engagement achieved through the campaign. It is now hoped that this engagement translates into long-term benefits for RDP implementation and the achievement of rural development objectives in Finland.

Challenges and lessons

- ❑ The group were impressed with the outreach of their videos on Facebook, with much lower costs than TV advertising.
- ❑ One idea that proved to be more successful than the group of four even hoped for, was a photo booth where people could get a free photo of themselves so long as they went to the campaign website to download it.