



# **FINAL EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE COMUNITAT VALENCIANA ERDF AND ESF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES 2014-2020**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
JUNE 2023

This report summarizes the main results of the Final Evaluation of the Communication Strategy for the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes 2014-2020 performed by Grupo Considera, S.L. for the Directorate General of European Funds of the Conselleria de Hacienda y Modelo Económico of the Generalitat Valenciana.

The content of this report meets all requirements established in the contract's Terms of Reference for the final evaluation services of the Communication Strategy for the Comunitat Valenciana Operational Programmes of the European Regional Development Fund and the Fund European Social 2014-2020.

CONSIDERA 

## Methodology

The final evaluation of the Communication Strategy for the Comunitat Valenciana Operational Programmes of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020 includes information, communication and visibility measures executed between 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, although the full period of validity of the Communication Strategy is considered.

The scope and content of this evaluation have been defined according to the *Methodological Guide for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Communication Strategies for the EDRF and ESF Operational Programmes 2014-2020*. It also follows the orientations of the Spanish Group of Information and Publicity Officers (GERIP).

The evaluation process has followed a mixed and participatory approach based on methodological triangulation through quantitative and qualitative research techniques. All relevant stakeholders participating in the design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Strategy have been involved in the evaluation.

Regarding the methods and techniques of investigation, the use of standard tools designed to be implemented in all regions, following the common methodology, leads to a certain loss of flexibility that hinders the adaptation of these tools to the specifics of each region and to the characteristics of each kind of agent involved (for instance, private beneficiaries). Complementary techniques have been used to solve this limitation.

## Analysis of the Communication Strategy programming

The assessment of the level of implementation of the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation of the communication strategy for the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes 2014-2020 is relatively satisfactory, especially those that could be addressed in the current programming period.

The Communication Strategy is considered relevant, as the communication approach in this period has been fully coherent with the relevant implementation guidelines. The identified needs have been adequately addressed.

The articulation of the Communication Strategy is considered adequate, precisely defining an intervention approach where all components are logically related: objectives, targets and measures.

There are certain inequalities in allocating human resources to implement the Communication Strategy depending on the different profiles of actors involved. It is appropriate in the case of the Intermediate Body, but it has certain weaknesses for the ERDF and ESF Managing Authorities and beneficiaries. This is one of the elements that has most hindered the development of the Strategy.

The provision of material and technical resources for the implementation of the Communication Strategy is considered adequate and consists of all the means provided by the agents involved in the implementation of the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes. There have been improvements with regard to the mid-term evaluation, especially regarding the structures of the beneficiaries' websites.

The financial allocation of the Communication Strategy is considered insufficient, based on the proportionality criterion, especially since it is maintained even though the Operational Programmes have notably increased their budgetary allocation after the reprogramming of the years 2020 (ESF) and 2022 (ERDF and ESF).

The integration of the principle of equal opportunities in the design phase could be improved, as it is limited to equal treatment, and the gender perspective is not addressed on a cross-cutting basis in the Communication Strategy.

### Analysis of the implementation of information, communication and visibility measures

As of March 31st, almost all types of information, communication and visibility measures provided for in the Communication Strategy (37 out of 39) have been implemented, and the achievement level of the targets set in the indicators system of the Communication Strategy has been medium-high in general terms.

The achievement of results of the indicators of the implemented information, communication and visibility measures reaches a medium level in general terms, aligned with the achieved level in the implementation, and with significant differences between indicators.

There is a coherent relationship between the implemented budget and the estimated budget in the Communication Strategy at its final phase of implementation, according to the available data in INFOCO2014, showing a significant improvement from the mid-term evaluation moment.

However, there is a significant inconsistency in the distribution of expenditure corresponding to communication activities carried out by the actors participating in the ERDF OP and the ESF OP, which does not correspond to the estimate established in the Communication Strategy, and that it is not proportional to the total budget that both Operational Programmes have.

Despite improvements since the mid-term evaluation of the Communication Strategy, there is still an area of opportunity to raise the quality of the information registered in INFOCO2014.

The integration of information, communication and visibility in the annual implementation reports is appropriate in the case of the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF Operational Programme but can be improved in the Comunitat Valenciana ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020.

Instructions and guidelines are available, known and used, addressing the various agents responsible for managing and implementing management, monitoring, control, evaluation and information and communication activities. These instructions support compliance with information, communication and visibility obligations and improve transparency. The important role that these instructions have played in the proper development of the Communication Strategy must be highlighted.

The availability and organization of ICT applications are assessed positively with the INFOCO2014 tool (made available to the Intermediate Body at the beginning of the programming period by the ERDF Managing Authority) and, since 2021, with the ARIC-EU application, developed by the Intermediate Body for the recording and monitoring of data on communication indicators. However, the lack of interconnection between them is a weakness, and many areas of improvement in terms of functionality have been identified.

The existing networks of communication managers (GERIP, GRECOM-GV, INFORM and INIO) maintain their role as one of the main instruments facilitating coordination and standardization between the different levels of actors involved in the development of the Communication Strategy. In general, both the frequency of the networks' meetings and the

addressed contents are considered adequate, although participation in the networks can be improved in some cases.

Communication and coordination with other relevant bodies, such as the Monitoring Committees of the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF and ESF OPs 2014-2020 and the national Evaluation Committees of the ERDF and ESF are fluid.

### **Verification of the inclusion of information, communication and visibility in the verification and control actions of the Funds and incidents assessment**

The analysis carried out at the procedural level shows that adequate provision is made for checking compliance with information, communication and visibility obligations in the preparation of calls, in recruitment, etc., as specific questions are included in the checklists used by the Verification Services in the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF OP and ESF OP 2014-2020.

It is positively assessed that the verification system of compliance with the information, communication and visibility requirements is fully integrated into the verification process.

With regard to the degree of integration of the information, communication and visibility requirements obligations in the verification processes, the evaluation reveals some weaknesses in the ESF OP, as well as some incidents in the field of information, communication and visibility in the administrative verification processes in the case of the ERDF OP.

### **Evaluation of the integration of the principle of equal opportunities in information, communication and visibility measures**

Despite the progress made in equal opportunities and the fact that the awareness of the importance of this aspect at all levels responsible for the application of structural funds is high, difficulties persist in materializing the commitments set out in the design of the Strategy and carrying out a communication in a more general way aimed at publicizing and making visible the contribution of the ERDF and the ESF in the Valencian region to the reduction of inequalities.

### **Impact analysis: achievements and challenges of information, communication and visibility activities**

The impact of the measures developed on the bodies implementing the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes has been positive in terms of satisfaction and usefulness of the actions, but discreet in terms of knowledge of the communication obligations.

The impact of the Communication Strategy on citizenship must be highlighted, showing a positive evolution in the last ten years all the analyzed indicators, and exceeding the knowledge levels set as a target for the end of the 2014-2020 programming period.

### **Good Practices**

Good practice commitments have been partially met.

The significant increase in the number of Good Practices validated during the time frame comprising this evaluation must be highlighted, compared to the mid-term evaluation of the Communication Strategy, but the requirements for the end of the period have not been met.

It is necessary to highlight the Good Practices presented with companies and technological institutes that have been beneficiaries in the Comunitat Valenciana ERDF OP 2014-2020 framework.

The quality of the Good Practices of operations co-financed with ERDF and ESF funds is valued positively, but a greater simplicity in the contents of the reports and the use of friendlier formats is needed in order to facilitate and motivate the reading for people that is not necessarily familiar with the Operational Programmes and the European funds in general terms.

## Recommendations

The recommendations from the evaluation process are intended to contribute to the development of communication tasks in the 2021-2027 programming period.

- Recommendations addressed to the ERDF and ESF+ Managing Authorities:
  - R1. Strengthen the role of the GERIP network as a forum for the transmission of information from the European Commission and Managing Authorities to Intermediate Bodies.
  - R2. Improve coordination between Managing Authorities in the field of communication.
  - R3. Greater agility in the definition of common criteria to be applied by the managing bodies at the regional level.
  - R4. Implement ICT systems to support the monitoring of indicators on a common access and management basis for all agents involved in the communication of the ERDF and ESF+ Programmes.
- Recommendations addressed to the Intermediate Body:
  - R5. Promote the development of a common training program targeting managing bodies, preferably online.
  - R6. Develop additional communication support tools.
  - R7. Promote the development of specific measures aimed at private beneficiaries, increasing their role and contribution in achieving communication objectives.
- Recommendations addressed to the managing bodies and/or beneficiaries:
  - R8. Maintain teams of trained and specialized communication staff with continuity over time.
  - R9. Promote the development of specific communication actions and the use of communication channels targeting priority groups and those with lower knowledge of the structural funds and the Programmes.