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The EU Campaign on Biodiversity – overview of awareness raising activities for general public in the frame of the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 by the Directorate General for Environment.

1. BACKGROUND:

In 2001, the EU committed itself to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, while in 2006 it adopted Communication "Halting the Loss of Biodiversity loss by 2010 - and Beyond: Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being". The communication included supportive measure 4, calling for 'Building public education, awareness and participation'. To execute this measure, DG Environment decided to launch an EU-wide awareness raising campaign. Preparations started in 2008, with implementation launched in 2010, the UN's International Year of Biodiversity.

2. CAMPAIGN STRATEGY:

Preparatory work indicated that the concept of 'Biodiversity' is either unfamiliar, or associated with distant wild life. It was therefore decided that the campaign must focus on showing the relevance of biodiversity and the implications it has for our daily lives. To act, people must first realize that human society is a part of a larger system, and that our survival depends on the state of this system. Messages should highlight the fact that investment in biodiversity conservation will help safeguard the continued provision of nature's benefits (food, medicines, fresh water, pollination) on which we all depend. So that people start seeing nature as part of their future – not of a nostalgic past.

To express that idea, the campaign uses visual and verbal means of communicating interconnectivity and mutual dependence between human society and biodiversity. This symbolism returns repeatedly in all campaign materials, to give few examples:

- **Logo:** At first glance this logo appears to be a man. But upon closer examination you see that it is made up of many species and ecosystems. This reflects the truth that we want people to comprehend, that our lives depend on many other species and ecosystems.
- **Slogan** '*We are all in this together*'. This statement underlines that everything is interrelated and that we that we humans are a very small part of something much

bigger, called biodiversity. On the other hand, it suggests that there is an issue at hand; that humans share responsibility for causing biodiversity loss and therefore it is up to them to propose a solution.

- **Perpetual movement of a connecting line at the website** (*"We are connected to the bee is connected to the flower is connected to the ant is connected to the tree is connected to the beetle is connected to the sparrow is connected to the... you"*).
- Seemingly **unending sentences** in advertisements, aiming to give concrete examples on how human society and biodiversity are connected and of the disastrous consequences that damaging of just one element of the chain can cause (*"...so the old oak trees were cut down to make room for the shopping center, and the rain once absorbed by the trees and the soil began to flood the nearby town, and..."*).
- **Profiles on Facebook for selection of species** so people can symbolically connect with biodiversity - and learn about biodiversity cause listening to personal stories from their 'friends'.

The ambition was to reach out to audiences that are normally not interested in environmental issues, in particular to:

- Families (in the broad sense), as they are more sensitive to environmental issues because of the future well-being of their children or grandchildren.
- Young urban adults (20-35), who are interested in this topic because it will have an increasing impact on their lives as adults in the near future

It was decided that, due to complexity of the issue, the communication will be divided into two complementary layers:

- An alarming wake up call, to alert to the issue. Powerful analogy between biodiversity loss and a chalk outline that police uses to mark the dead body at a crime scene was used for this purpose. PR activities, viral clip and traditional advertisements were main tools used to communicate this message.
- Making people aware how they can contribute to solving the issue via education and inspiration to act. Main tools used for this purpose were an interconnected website-facebook platform, travelling exhibition. Knowledge quiz, or updates from campaign's 'friends' on Facebook. Even gadgets were chosen as to motivate individual engagement (cube with compressed soil and seeds where a plant could be grown, birdhouses, postcards with tips).

3. CAMPAIGN IMPLEMENTATION

The campaign is centered on an integrated on-line platform (website-Facebook), which remained the backbone of all activities throughout the year. It offers regular news and innovative ways to get engaged, so that users remain connected with the campaign.

Right after the launch (March 1st, 2010), when the focus was mostly on raising awareness of the biodiversity loss, 'crime scene' art happening were organized throughout the EU. PR activities were supplemented by traditional advertising (outdoor,

print) and a provocative viral clip. They proved very effective in attracting media attention.

As of May 22nd the attention shifted towards motivating concrete actions – numerous participative events for general public, exhibitions and social media activities aimed at involving users were organized. A selection of specific tips on how to protect biodiversity was made available at the campaign website (courtesy of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences).

In the second half of the year, the campaign was reinforced through a media partnership with the National Geographic channel. It not only added credibility to the message, but also brought the topic closer to families with children through poetically inspired short clips (vignettes) which were placed on-air as well as online.

See Annex 1 for overview of main campaign elements. To note, due to budget constrains, while on-line activities were promoted throughout the EU-27, PR and events for general public were concentrated in fewer 'target countries', chosen for their particular importance for biodiversity in the EU (such as e.g. Spain, Italy, Poland or Romania).

4. CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES

The campaign can be considered as a success, reaching with its messages millions of the EU citizens in 2010. It can be evidenced by the below outlined selection of statistics for main campaign elements:

4.1. Website (www.weareallinthis.together.eu):

- More than 3.6 million visits in total; large portion of visitors returned several times to the site.

4.2. Facebook:

- More than 68 000 active users of the biodiversity application on Facebook and over 85 000 interactions with the page in total. Users came from over 130 countries, including all EU Member States. Assuming average number of 100 Facebook connections per person, information about the campaign reached therefore minimum of 8 500 000 people across the world.
- Nearly 475 000 people viewed the News Feeds from 'friends'.
- 107 959 daily active users were registered over the course of the 'Missing Link' knowledge competition.

4.3. Viral video 'we are all in this together':

- over 1.6 million traceable views, excellent 'click-through' rate to the website;
- 4.42 Among 18 -24 years old, that was our main target age group for this activity (and an average 3.9 of among all 18+ populations).
- generated countless social media actions (comments, forwards to friends, etc)

4.4. Paid advertising:

- Online campaign (including promotion at National Geographic website) has delivered over 2, 1 milliard of advertisement impressions, generating over 1 Million of active involvement from people (e.g. visits to the website).
- Printed advertising is estimated to reach over 11.2 Million people
- Outdoor advertising is estimated to reach over 58.8 Million people

4.5. Events for general public

- Total of more than 2.2 Million people had a chance to interact with the campaign content through participation in animations, visits of the exhibition, and witnessing 'crime scene' events. 10 days event at the National Geographic store in London (UK) involved some 39 000 people, while 25 000 visitors had a chance to visit 'biodiversity village' to the Europe's Open Doors Day on May 8th in Brussels (BE).

4.6. PR, media/other partnerships.

- More than 100 journalists participated in PR events and other activities in various countries, generating large editorial content including news / interviews on national TV (e.g. in Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Portugal or in Slovenia); articles in respectable newspapers (e.g. in Poland, Netherlands Romania or in Spain). A radio stations in Bulgaria produced series of 5min emissions dedicated to biodiversity, while many other stations included topical interviews into their programmes,
- The EU representations in all the EU-27 countries received promotional material with campaign messages for use in activities promoting environment protection. It is worth noting, that in addition to 'standard' activities that are part of the annual work programme, in several Member States biodiversity was one of the focus areas (e.g. in Portugal, or in Germany – where the campaign materials were used to create an exhibition that will travel through main cities).
- Links were exchanged with numerous public and NGO partners.

The success of the campaign can be considered not only in terms of its extensive reach, but importantly also in terms of efficiency of its messages. A quantitative survey (conducted in June 2010) showed that on average, among respondents that recalled the EU campaign:

- 59% agreed that the EU campaign has raised their awareness about biodiversity issue. (This was complemented by high level of replies 'no, I was already aware before')
- 48% of all respondents agreed that the EU campaign caused them to change their habits to preserve biodiversity (57% in target countries). This was complemented by very high level of replies 'no, because my habits already respect biodiversity).
- Main messages perceived from the campaign materials were in line with chosen strategy: 'biodiversity is endangered' (41%), 'negative impact on humans' (37%), 'humans have to change their habits' (32%),

It is worth noting, that merits of the EU biodiversity campaign were recognised by the community of Communication professionals in Europe - it was awarded **the 2010 “European Excellence Award”** in the Environment and Ecology category.

5. CLOSING REMARKS

While 2010 marked the high point of the EU communication activities on biodiversity towards general public, the campaign activities did not end with the end of the International Biodiversity Year. The campaign continues to live in the social media – new application where users can biodiversify their friends was launched for May 22nd, while 'friends' continue sharing personal stories. Also, biodiversity issues will be integrated in the upcoming campaign on Resource Efficiency (launch expected in October 2012).

6. ANNEXES

1. Overview of main campaign elements
2. Campaign visual identity
3. Illustration: advertisements and promotional material
4. Illustration: PR activities
5. Illustration: Website
6. Illustration: Facebook
7. Illustration: Viral clips
8. Illustration: Participatory events for general public

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