

FINAL REPORT Project FOCAM – Friends of Complementary Medicine

Objective

The FOCAM project was initiated in order to identify politically reliable contact persons in the European Institutions, in this case the European Parliament. The aim was to attract those MEPs who could support ECHAMP activities in the upcoming years via the marketing instrument of a questionnaire. To avoid the reproach that it was only a project controlled and initiated by the industry it was decided to do a 'selected' distribution of letters with a questionnaire on behalf of the complete CAM Community; in this case the subscribers of the Common Resolution, 11 European Associations representing 165 national associations, representing ten thousands of practitioners and more than 100 Million patients in the 27 Member States of the EU. The objective was to expand and especially to intensify the network of political players supporting complementary medicine.

Target groups

To start the FOCAM project several target groups needed to be selected. The questionnaire was directed especially to political multipliers playing on the EU stage, in particular to MEPs in the first planned phase of the project. A proportional repartition over the political families and the 27 Members States was envisaged. The following target groups have been identified:

- all 41 MEPs with a medical background
- all 106 ITRE members
- all 136 ENVI members
- some other selected MEPs we know from the past

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Later on the same approach was planned for other multipliers within the decision making circles in the EU. These were: the health attachés of the Permanent Representations and the Regional Offices in Brussels. Finally, the approach was planned to be applied in order to identify our 'friends' in the EU-Commission (DG Industry, DG Health, DG Consumer Affairs and DG Research).

Method

With the method of a questionnaire several requirements needed to be taken into consideration. The questionnaire needed to be short, easy to understand, quickly to complete and distributed by a serious address. As to approach the MEPs in the most effective way a short questionnaire was developed containing five basic questions on complementary medicine. Furthermore it was decided to distribute the questionnaire personalized and directly to the MEPs via Email. It was planned to request answers within two weeks from the ones who didn't answer until then – they should receive a personal letter sent by ordinary mail. The third step should have been a follow up by telephone acquisition. A compilation of the answers was to be prepared in a clear systematic overview identifying as well the MEPs (by country, party, sex, age...). It was taken into consideration that one minor disadvantage might be, that nobody would know who would be answering the questionnaire (MEP or assistant).

The 11 European Associations who were to support the FOCAM project needed to be informed. Therefore a project description was developed to briefly inform about the background, the objectives and the target groups and furthermore, to give recommendation about the realization of this action. The draft letter introduces the "why" and "how" concerning the questionnaire about CAM.

During the project preparation it was decided that the distribution of the letters should be organised in the name of the Berlin-Brandenburg Business Representation. To get closer to the topic there was reserved the Email: friendsofcam@gmail.com

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Timeframe:

The action should have been started on a Monday during a Committee Week. The second step should have been started on a Monday three weeks later. After one week the follow-up calls to the ones who did not answer so far should have been performed. Expected was a feedback (return) of minimum 10%. and maximum 50%.

Realisation:

In April the documents for the FOCAM project have been checked by the PR Group. The next step was to distribute letter as well as questionnaire to the 12 associated partners to let them check the content. For the feedback there was developed a summary list where all remarks have been listed. In a further step the documents were finalized. For the date of distribution it was decided to wait the voting of the 2nd reading of ENVI Committee for the Health- Programme (see Health Programme). The start of distribution was Wednesday, 9th of May.

May: Letter and questionnaire have been distributed to the selected MEPs out of the ENVI and the ITRE committees via Email. In this first phase the feedback was rather limited - only two direct responses. In the second phase all the MEPs have been addressed again via an Email including the personalized letter, the questionnaire and the reply form. The feedback: 6 MEPs in total have replied directly and completed the questionnaire. For the third phase it was foreseen to contact selected MEPs via telephone, to inform them about this project combined with the need to complete the questionnaire.

June: After sending out Emails in the first phase in the second phase personalized letters have been distributed to more than 200 MEPs. In the third phase in June the follow-up action has started via telephone. Approximately 50 MEPs have been contacted via telephone action. But it has shown that the interest in filling out a questionnaire is not very high, even if the questionnaire is really short and easy to understand.

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Evaluation:

After a lot of effort put into the FOCAM project the results were rather limited: Only 6 MEPs have completed the questionnaire and sent it back. Two main reasons have been identified for these results. On the one hand: The foreseen personalized contact in the first phase of acquisition failed; the Emails have been distributed without the names on the letters due to a personal mistake. But even more evident is the fact that the approach via questionnaire has failed. It has proved that a mainstream marketing instrument is maybe not the adequate measure for the purpose aimed to achieve: to build up an individual network for the support of CM activities. Experiences in the past have shown that tailor-made measures like the healthy breakfast or the DVD on CM causes more sustainable effects. Nevertheless the reached MEPs out of this project could be seen as *new members* in the network. Never before we had contact to them - together with the *well-known* MEPs who are supporting CM activities FOCAM has supported to expand the network of MEPs not in the range expected but at least a little bit. Thus, all the new MEPs have been invited to CM activities taking place in Brussels like the Dialogue Forum on Pluralism on Oct. 18th. Due to the fact that the marketing instrument of a questionnaire does not work, FOCAM needs to be restructured to reach its aims. It should be emphasized that it is worth to go on with individual taylor-made marketing instruments.