

AIReF PUBLISHES THE EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL PUBLICITY AT REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF CASTILE AND LEON

- **The evaluation by the Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility (AIReF) highlights the importance of institutional publicity on the media system**
- **AIReF makes 19 proposals to improve governance, procurement criteria, evaluation, transparency and the distribution of funds**
- **AIReF proposes a revision of the model of jurisdictional distribution differentiated by medium, greater professionalism in the creative design of institutional publicity and the drawing up of a more detailed advertising plan**
- **It proposes clarifying the relative importance of the objectives in each campaign in order to design a suitable media plan in each case, establish the appropriate metrics and evaluate compliance therewith**
- **It proposes to strengthen the application of the audience criterion in the allocation of funding for campaigns between mediums and the media, taking into account the territorial and socio-demographic dimensions and the thematic affinity needed according to the target population of each campaign**
- **It suggests developing a framework for the evaluation of institutional communication and publishing an annual report on the investment made in institutional publicity**

The Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility (AIReF) today published on its website the evaluation of the management of the institutional publicity of the Regional Government of Castile and Leon between 2014 and 2019, a period in which it invested between 10 and 12 million euros a year on this public policy. Based on this evaluation, the institution makes 19 proposals to improve the management of institutional publicity in the Autonomous Region.

AIReF's evaluation highlights the importance of institutional publicity on the media system. Firstly, it is an important instrument for any public authority due to its potential to contribute to improving the efficacy of public policies. Furthermore, although the expense is a modest part of the total of each regional government (this does not even account for 0.01% in Castile and Leon), in many countries the General Government as a whole is the main investor in this activity each year. In addition, public spending on publicity is frequently the subject of discussion due to its effects on the media system and because it can compromise the plurality of information. Finally, the management of institutional publicity has become more complicated in recent decades due to the

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changes experienced in the media system, the development of technology, the change in citizen preferences and what experts call the mediatisation of the public administration.

In this study, AIReF analyses the institutional publicity of Castile and Leon regarding five pillars: the governance and planning of needs; the criteria and mechanisms of procurement; the procedures for evaluating its efficacy; transparency and accountability, and the recipients of the funds. The first four pillars are also analysed in the cases of the Central State Administration (CSA) and in the Autonomous Regions (ARs) that have legislated on institutional publicity and, based on the analysis as a whole, proposals for each of the pillars are extracted to strengthen this public policy in the Autonomous Region.

The evaluation by AIReF highlights that the importance of institutional publicity has been the main factor that has determined the regulatory reforms of this public policy instrument in Castile and Leon over recent years. The efficacy of publicity as a public policy instrument was another of the elements taken into account in these reforms. The analysis of the regulatory changes from 2009 to 2021 shows the interest in improving the efficacy and effectiveness of institutional publicity. It also shows how the Regional Government has sought to balance these requirements with other types of criteria, although the combination of both from time to time has made it difficult to clearly see the extent to which other purposes have been guaranteed, such as reaching citizens in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

To improve the effectiveness of this public policy, AIReF proposes a revision of the jurisdictional distribution differentiated by medium, more professionalism in the management of institutional publicity, particularly creative design and its evaluation. It is also necessary to draw up a more detailed advertising plan that includes a more accurate description of the scope of the problem that is sought to be addressed or corrected, of the target population and of the most suitable mediums and media to convey the message to the target population.

In addition, AIReF proposes to reform the Institutional Publicity Act, with a view to incorporating clear and common criteria on the distribution of expenditure among the media for the different regional departments, along with specific measures, such as the publication of an annual report subject to parliamentary scrutiny, which helps guarantee efficiency and transparency in the management of spending on publicity.

Furthermore, in each campaign AIReF proposes to clarify the relative importance of the objectives so as to design a suitable media plan in each case, establish the appropriate metrics and evaluate compliance therewith. In addition, it suggests reinforcing the application of the criterion of audience in the allocation of the campaign funds between the mediums and the media, taking into account territorial and socio-demographic dimensions and the thematic affinity needed according to the target population of each campaign.

In the analysis of the governance and planning of the institutional publicity needs, AIReF observes that only in Castile and Leon are the campaigns included in digital media predominantly managed through the Regional Department for the Presidency, even when dealing with sector campaigns of other regional departments, but it does not take on the management of the rest of the mediums except for the specific campaigns of this department. In addition, in most cases, the justification of the need for the campaigns is

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fairly generic, without establishing clear or quantifiable objectives. These deficiencies frustrate the subsequent phases of campaign planning, the measuring of the impact and even the assessment of whether the campaign is being adequately implemented.

As regards the procurement procedures, unlike what happens in other Autonomous Regions, where greater homogeneity exists, there is extensive heterogeneity in terms of the legal instrument through which the purchasing of the media space is undertaken to disseminate the institutional publicity, since this is decided on in each of the different regional departments and, in some cases, even at the level of the management centre. In addition, the procurement criteria of institutional publicity in Castile and Leon have evolved over time, particularly under the recent legislation of 2020, and they have been clarified in terms of audience and territorial balance while introducing new objectives and criteria for institutional publicity that acknowledge its importance for the media but which, on occasions, may limit the efficacy and effectiveness of the institutional message conveyed.

As regards the evaluation mechanisms, AIReF observes that, in the case of this Regional Government, as also happens with other Autonomous Regions, the vast majority of campaigns are not evaluated due to a wide range of reasons, such as the limited economic availability to perform an evaluation or the existence of a scant margin of design of different media plans to those normally used. The Regional Government of Castile and Leon evaluates some of its more costly campaigns, but without publishing these evaluations. Furthermore, the lack of professionals experienced in the evaluation of institutional publicity in regional departments has not helped to set evaluation initiatives in motion.

As regards transparency, Castile and Leon maintains the publication of annual institutional publicity planning on the Open Data Portal of Castile and Leon, including the 2022 report. In terms of what has been actually implemented by the Regional Government on the matter of publicity, this portal has a section that includes the amounts allocated to each media outlet for each regional department from 2014 to 2021. The data are available in a treatable format, even though they are heterogenous as they are codified by each regional department in a different fashion and are not recorded with sufficient disaggregation to precisely see how the expense made is distributed between the different media.

In the last section on the institutional publicity of Castile and Leon, AIReF analyses the information provided by the Regional Government on institutional publicity to try and determine how the investment in publicity among the different media is distributed. The data set has been refined and homogenised prior to analysis.

Based on the information available, a high use of the written press has been observed, with little justification based on audience criteria. Expenditure on this medium has remained stable over time, accounting for some 60% of total spending, despite being the medium that has lost the greatest audience in recent years in all age segments and in all press columns. A large part of the spending on the press is concentrated in the written press with the largest readerships and a lower amount distributed in a fairly general fashion between the other media outlets. In digital media and the radio, the positive relationship between dissemination and spending is also weak while spending on television is low due to the limited number of advertising campaigns. Accordingly, AIReF

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proposes to reinforce the application of the criterion of audience in the allocation of campaign funds according to the target population of each campaign.

In addition to the case of Castille and Leon, AIReF has analysed the characteristics of the management of institutional publicity at the Central State Administration and in 12 Autonomous Regions that have collaborated in this study with a view to performing a comparative analysis and identifying best practices. In addition, the scientific literature has been examined and the literature produced by public authorities and international organisations on the characteristics, management and general debates on institutional publicity.