European Commission

Evaluation of performance of EU Info Centres in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions (2011-2017)

Final Synthesis Report

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Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

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Evaluation of performance of EU Info Centres in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions (2011-2017)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAP	Annual Action Programme
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis
CRIS	Common External Relations Information Systems
DG COMM	Directorate-General for Communication
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
EDC	European Documentation Centre
EEAS	European External Action Service
EISAD	Aegean Industrialists and Businessmen Association (Turkey)
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD(s)	European Union Delegation(s)
EUIC(s)	European Union Information Centre(s)
EUICC(s)	European Information and Cultural Centre(s)
EUINFONET	Collective name for the Information Centres and Information Points in Serbia
EUIP	European Union Information Points
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FSI	Fragile State Index
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IFI(s)	International Financial Institution(s)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IKV	Economic Development Foundation (Turkey)
IL(s)	Intervention Logic(s)
IO(s)	International Organisation(s)
ISG	Inter-service Steering Group
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPARD	Instrument for pre-accession assistance for rural development
JC	Judgement Criterion
MCA	Multi-Criteria Analysis
MFF	Multiannual Financial Frameworks

MS(s)	Member State(s)
NAO	National Audit Office
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
OPEN	Opportunities, Participation, Engagement and Networking
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PRAG	Procedures and Practical Guide
SEE	South-East Europe
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
S.M.A.R.T.	Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology
SSF	Single Support Framework
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolutions

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Evaluation of the performance of EU Info Centres in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions (2011–2017) was contracted by the European Commission (EC) Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). The evaluation was launched on 28 February 2018 and implemented by Coffey International Development Ltd, the lead partner for this assignment on behalf of the consortium led by Economisti Associati.

The context of the evaluation is its timing as a new Commission takes office and preparations are underway to support revisions to the current approach in both regions for the new Multi-annual Financial Framework. Conclusions and recommendations are intended to support EU Info Centre communication performance improvements in the enlargement region and to assess the potential for the introduction of similar structures in the neighbourhood region.

The evaluation methodology involved the reconstruction, testing and analysis of the Intervention Logics for EU communication in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions, as well as for each of the 10 case studies[1]. The analysis drew on insights from interviews with members of the Inter-Service Steering Group (ISG) and a sample of other DG NEAR and European External Action Service (EEAS) staff, a mapping of EUICs and Info Points in the enlargement region, and communication activities in the neighbourhood region, three on-line survey tools covering all countries in both regions and 10 field missions.

Main key findings, conclusions and recommendations are provided below. Detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations are provided in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Whilst the focus of the evaluation was 2011-2017, at the time of drafting this report, the situation had moved on to some extent. It is understood that DG NEAR now intends to focus on Europe Houses as a model in the Western Balkans.

1.1. Key findings

Subject to some nuances, EU Delegations in the Western Balkans and Turkey are pleased with the support they receive from the EU Info Centres and believe they **contribute to improving awareness of EU policies**, projects and values, and of the accession process. EU Delegation communication in Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine (where there are no EU Info Centres similar to those in the Western Balkans) is characterised by the use of communication agencies running multi-channel campaigns. In these neighbourhood partner countries, stakeholders report that EU Delegation communication is also making a **good contribution** to awareness and some examples of behaviour change can be identified.

In the IPA beneficiaries, there are different models for "EU Info Centre" provision. In some beneficiaries, there are several centres or info points; in others, there is just one in the capital. All provide **two core services** to varying extents, i.e. (a) information via a walk-in centre (in the capital at least) and digitally (via a website and social media), and (b) the organisation of events. This includes set pieces, such as Europe Day celebrations. They generally also support media relations and run communication campaigns or support Delegation communication campaigns. They also serve as event hubs available for use by civil society and Member State embassies and cultural institutes on EU-related topics, a service that affects the capacity of their manpower to focus on communication activities.

There are or have been **Info-Centre-type experiences** in the neighbourhood region. These include the former Info Centre in Armenia and structures known as EU Info Centres in universities in Ukraine and info points in libraries, as well as several other networks providing information about the EU to different publics (schools, businesses, students looking for careers in Europe or with European companies).

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[1] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine.

Numbers **using the walk-in service are low**, but DG NEAR and EU Delegations consider that there are advantages to having a dedicated event space and increased EU presence on the ground in addition to that of the EU Delegations.

In the neighbourhood region, the need for more **human resources to manage** communication as the factor likely to have the greatest impact on communication (in the evaluation survey 16 EU Delegations agreed) and this is in-line with evaluator observations on the uneven approach to communication resourcing. A multiannual communication contract for longer term communication campaigns was considered as next most impactful (15 EU Delegations agreed), followed by an EU Centre in the capital to provide logistical support to EU Delegations, including for translations (11 EU Delegations agreed). Meanwhile eight EU Delegations agreed that a Europe/EU House in the capital to host other EU information providers' events would be impactful, the same number also agreed that a locally contracted communication coordinator in the capital with a network of info points across the country would help to add impact.

In both regions, the evaluators could not find evidence to demonstrate that the communication objectives were set drawing on a theory-of-change model or **intervention logic** starting from a **problem/needs' assessment**, definition of planned or desired outputs and outcomes. This had an impact on the establishment of indicators with baselines and targets, the extent and frequency of data collection and monitoring, the comparability of data at country and regional level.

There is no single **process** for identifying and **prioritising target groups**, or to confirm the need / approach to structured target group research. However, more emphasis is now being placed on research into target group needs and characteristics, establishing baselines and targets in levels of awareness, knowledge, understanding and behavior changes to be measured. Several good practice examples, including of pre- and post-campaign measurement can be identified in Ukraine.

However, overall, the assessment of performance in both regions tends to focus on **reach data and observations**. Opportunities for analysis and learning of lessons are not harnessed from the available data, for example e.g. reasons for peaks in web traffic or success of particular social media posts and data does not tend to relate to targets or baselines. There is also limited systematic collection or analysis of **qualitative feedback**, which could provide insights into why messages and activities resonate and why not.

The evaluators found good examples in both Armenia and Ukraine of successful communication campaigns / activities, which have made a demonstrable impact on peoples' **knowledge** and actions, for example the campaign against domestic violence in Armenia and the visa-free campaign in Ukraine. Both campaigns were highly strategic and targeted in their approach, engaged with relevant multipliers and target groups and used a range of different communication channels and tools. In addition, they managed to resonate with target groups' and multipliers own self-interests. The Delegation is Tunisia has had fewer communication resources and managed a reduced portfolio of communication activities.

1.2. General conclusions

It is difficult to make evidence-based judgements on the effectiveness and efficiency of the majority of EU Info Centre activities, due to the lack of available evidence; this represents a significant weakness in the info-centre approach. Despite this, it is concluded that contractors have performed well in terms of meeting EU Delegation expectations for communication support, including in generating additional visibility of the EU in particular in relation to Europe Days and the other events that they manage. The appreciation of Info Centre contractors' work among key stakeholders (EU Member State embassies, civil society organisations, universities and schools) suggests that contractors are professional in the way that they manage these relationships and add value to existing communication on EU themes. However, Info Centres have not performed well as walk-in info centres, and this relates to the low relevance of this type of service to public needs. It reinforces the need for in-depth research into what the public need and want from the EU to support their engagement in and appreciation of the benefits of the accession process.

1.3. Main conclusions

1 There is a need to review the amount of **human and financial resources** allocated to communication in each EU Delegation. Currently there does not appear to be a coherent rationale for the amount of human resources that is required to manage an amount of financial resources allocated to communication.

2 Budgets, **contracts duration** and staff expertise have affected the consistency, quality and quantity of communication results. Contracts under two years are not efficient due to the time required for contractors to get up to speed and the level of administrative burden associated with contract procurement processes. In addition, communication theory suggests that communication outcomes can be strengthened over longer timeframes.

3 There is a need to define and implement a consistent approach to identifying and prioritising communication **target groups**. This needs to be supplemented with instructions to EU Delegations to carry out qualitative research, for example through focus groups, into the needs/interests of priority target group segments, using a defined frequency.

4 There has been an increased focus on communication **campaigning** in recent years in both regions. However, there is a need to ensure consistency in the approach to planning and setting objectives and to establish consistent expectations for performance measurement and lesson learning.

5 There is a need to revise the approach to **communication planning** in both regions, so that it is developed based on detailed needs assessment and a theory of change approach. These should draw on best practice, which is setting S.M.A.R.T. objectives, establishing baselines and targets for outputs, outcomes and impacts, and defining standard qualitative and quantitative indicators (per channel and tool / campaign) and appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

6 There is a need to ensure that the more structured approach that is required to set objectives and indicators with baselines and targets for communication is reflected in key **strategic planning documents** and terms of reference, and in contractors' inception reports.

7 To support the more **detailed analysis** and understanding of communication performance, which is required, **monitoring data** needs to be collected on a much more systematic and comprehensive basis. Data needs to be reported to EU Delegations and Headquarters in formats that allow progress to be easily reviewed and compared by channel, tool and budgetary allocation. This will support EU Delegations' management of communication performance.

8 A more systematic approach to monitoring will facilitate **comparative analysis** of communication performance, which could support lessons learning and strategic decision-making, including in relation to resource allocation. However, processes and tools will need to be in place to support the management of this data.

9 There is scope for more **lessons learning and good practice sharing** between EU Delegations in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions to ensure that good practice is mainstreamed in the EU communication approach.

1.4. Main recommendations

The following recommendations are relevant to support Delegation communication in both the enlargement and the neighbourhood regions, unless otherwise stated. It is recommended that:

1. DG NEAR reviews the amount of human and financial resources allocated to communication in each Delegation. A coherent rationale should be developed for the amount of human resources that are required to manage an amount of financial resources allocated to communication, linked to clear conceptual strategies for the approach in each region.

2. EU Delegations analyse the possibility to group their different communication activities (events, campaigns, social media, etc.) under one contract or several contracts, which should be for a minimum of three years to increase contractor and Delegation efficiency.

3. DG NEAR defines, in collaboration with the EU Delegations, a process for identifying and prioritising target-group segments, as well as expectations for research into target-group needs, for example through focus groups. As part of this approach, EU Delegations should develop a systematic approach to harnessing target group feedback and tracking the profiles of individuals who engage in EU communication to support increased tailoring of communication messages, channels and tools. The requirement to conduct target-group needs assessments should be included in instructions to EU Delegations and their key findings should be documented in annual reports. This might involve bringing in an expert to support process development.

4. DG NEAR mainstreams a focus on EU multi-channel campaigns, achieving outcomes, such as increased awareness, changes in target group attitudes or behaviour. EU Delegations should include the requirement for pre and post quantitative and qualitative measurement in contractor terms of reference, to facilitate the measurement of campaign performance. It is further recommended that DG NEAR require EU Delegations to report on how lessons learned are applied in future campaigns.

5. DG NEAR requires Intervention Logics, drawn up on the basis of a theory of change, to become a standard part of communication planning at all levels (Headquarters, Delegation and external contractor). As part of this process, there should be a focus on setting specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T) objectives. DG NEAR and EU Delegations should make changes to standard programming documents, by:

   - including Intervention Logics in the next versions of the DG NEAR communication strategy and EU Delegations' annual reports and forward plans, as well as requiring the use of Intervention Logics in contractors' inception reports.

   - adjusting Delegation communication forward plans so that planning tables describe targets for outputs, outcomes and impacts in line with DG COMM network indicators guidance and, include specific information on monitoring results;

   - adapting headings used in terms of reference for contractors and contractors' report templates for reporting on common/standard quantitative and qualitative indicators, which will have been defined for use across all countries;

6. DG NEAR defines standard quantitative and qualitative indicators to be used across all EU Delegations in both regions, based on DG COMM's indicator matrix. EU Delegations should be required to provide an aggregated view of year-on-year of progress against targets. EU Delegations in their turn, should require in the ToRs that contractors are explicit in their offers and reports about their monitoring systems and the frequency of the data collection.

   DG NEAR should:
   - support the strengthening of results-based management by providing guidance and training to EU Delegations and their contractors for the transition to OPSYS, and

   - provide an annual analysis of communication performance, which can be used to support EU Delegations' and Headquarters' decision-making.

7. DG NEAR supports the transfer of lesson-learning on communication among EU Delegations and between the enlargement and neighbourhood regions by organising bi-annual EU Delegation seminars, which bring together EU Delegation staff from both the enlargement and neighbourhood regions. EU Delegations should present their best practice, providing tangible examples to support discussion on mainstreaming options.

2. INTRODUCTION

This Final Synthesis Report is submitted to the European Commission (EC) Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), on the **Evaluation of the performance of EU Info Centres in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions (2011–2017)**. This Report is submitted by Coffey International Development Ltd, the lead partner for this evaluation.

The evaluation was formally launched at a kick-off meeting on 22 February 2018 in Brussels. The evaluation was intended to assess the activities carried out by the EU Info Centres (EUICs) in the enlargement region and to analyse the performance of communication activities implemented in the neighbourhood region during the period 2011–2017. Furthermore, it was intended to provide conclusions and recommendations to inform improvements in the performance of the EUICs in the enlargement region and to enhance the implementation of communication activities in the neighbourhood partner countries.

The evaluation work was implemented via four distinct phases: (1) inception phase; (2) desk phase; (3) field phase with visits to seven IPA beneficiaries and three neighbourhood countries; and (4) a synthesis and reporting phase. This Synthesis Report is the output of the final phase and presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, as well as answers to the judgement criteria and evaluation questions on the EU Info Centres in the Western Balkans and Turkey and EU Delegation communication in three sample countries in the neighbourhood region: Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine.

The **outline of the report** is as follows:

1. Chapter 1: Executive Summary

2. Chapter 2: Introduction

3. Chapter 3: Analysis of the political institutional and technical cooperation framework of EU pre-accession assistance

4. Chapter 4: Synthesis of methodological steps

   • Objectives and scope

   • Limitations and constraints

5. Chapter 5: Findings relating to evaluation questions 1 – 6

6. Chapter 6: Findings relating to evaluation questions 7 – 11

7. Chapter 7: Overall assessment

8. Chapter 8: Conclusions

   • Clustered by theme IPA beneficiaries

   • Clustered by theme selected neighbourhood partner countries

9. Chapter 8: Recommendations

   • Clustered by theme IPA beneficiaries

   • Clustered by theme selected neighbourhood partner countries

The main report is complemented by three Annexes. Each Annex is a separate document as follows:

10. Annex 1:
    • Evaluation matrix on findings per judgement criteria and indicator on the EU Info Centres in the IPA beneficiaries; and

- Evaluation matrix on findings per judgement criteria and indicator on EU Delegation communication activities in three neighbourhood countries: Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine.

11. Annex 2:
- Mapping of information and communication structures

- Survey report of EU Delegations in IPA beneficiaries; and

- Survey report of EUIC/EUICC / EU Info Point / Europe/EU House Team Leaders.

- Survey report of EU Delegation communication staff in the neighbourhood region

- List of documents consulted

- List of persons consulted

12. Annex 3:
- Case study notes from the field missions to the IPA beneficiaries and three selected neighbourhood case study partner countries

3. OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION

3.1. Background and context

This section provides the context to the set-up of EU Info Centres (EUICs) in the enlargement region, which are funded under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), and provides some context for EU communication in the neighbourhood region, which is funded under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

Enlargement region: information and communication under IPA

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the main financing instrument in the enlargement region. Under IPA I (2007-2013), there were annual **IPA communication programmes** for the period and for 2014. Under IPA II, there have been three Support Measures: the IPA 2015 and 2016 Information and Communication Programme,[2] the Support Measure for Communication on Enlargement for the years 2017-2018,[3] and the Support Measure for Communication on Enlargement for the years 2019-2020.[4]

The EU Information Centres (**EUICs**) have been set up for the implementation of the above communication programmes managed directly by the EU Delegations. In the 2015-2016 communication programme, the EUICs supported the objective to increase the understanding of the **integration process and the long-term benefits** it brings to citizens, as well as to stimulate public debate. In the 2017-2018 communication programme, EUICs help to provide information on **EU values**, **policies and programmes** and their impact on people's everyday lives, increase the understanding and support for the enlargement process, and ensure visibility of EU funding. For both the 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 programmes, the number of visitors to EUICs is given as a key indicator for measuring the performance of the EU Info Centres. In addition, the EU Delegations in each IPA beneficiary have defined specific indicators to measure the performance of the EUICs.

Based on the mapping analysis of Terms of Reference, Contracts and Reports conducted as part of the evaluation, the evaluation team observed that there are **seven different types/denominations of structures** in place in IPA beneficiaries to support EU Delegations' information and communication activities, as follows[5]:

Table 1: Types of information and communication structures

Type of structure	Description of structure / activities	Physical locations of structures	Presence in IPA beneficiaries
1. **EU Information Centres** 2. **EU Information and Cultural Centres** 3. **EU /Europe House**	Public spaces where people can visit. Usually involved in: welcoming walk-in visitors, organising and hosting events, handling questions, disseminating materials, establishing contacts with stakeholders as well as their overarching goals of informing about and promoting the EU. Play either a national or at least regional (in the case of Albania and Turkey)	Usually either hosted in EU Delegations or standalone offices in the capital / large regional cities (*except* Turkey, where they are hosted in Chambers of	1. All IPA beneficiaries (*except* Kosovo and, from 2017, Albania – see below) 2. Only in Kosovo[*] 3. Only in Albania

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[2] https://www.gtai.de/GTAI/Content/DE/Trade/Fachdaten/PRO/2016/02/Anlagen/PRO201602295004.pdf?v=1

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm?do=search.documentdetail&Dos_ID=14980&DS_ID=52809&Version=1

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm?do=search.documentdetail&Dos_ID=17869&DS_ID=63167&Version=1

[5] The sources for these categorisations and ensuing information in this section includes: a mapping of all available Terms of Reference of information and communication structures in IPA beneficiaries from 2011 – 2017; and the Survey of EUIC Team Leaders in IPA Beneficiaries (see Annex 2).

[*] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Type of structure	Description of structure / activities	Physical locations of structures	Presence in IPA beneficiaries
	coordination role.	Commerce)[6].	
4. **EU Information Networks**	Coordinate the activities of all information and communication structures in the relevant IPA beneficiary.	Physically the same structure as the EU Info Centre in the capital city in the cases of Albania and Serbia.	Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey
5. **EU Information Points**	Often run the same activities as the EU Info Centres but located in other cities and with smaller office space. No coordination function and they are subject to the coordination of the (main) EU Info Centre located in the capital.	Standalone offices in cities other than the capital (except for North Macedonia, which has both an EUIP and EUIC in Skopje from 2017 onwards).	Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia
6. **EU Information Corners**	Focus predominantly on dissemination of information materials on the EU and publication of materials.	Usually hosted in universities[7] (*except* Turkey, where they are hosted in Chambers of Commerce[8]).	Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia (2011-2016) and Turkey
7. **EU Documentation (and Information) Centres [9]**	Help universities, research institutes and civil society organisations to promote and develop education and research on European integration, encourage them to take part in the debate on Europe and help ordinary citizens to learn about the Union's policies	Hosted in universities.	North Macedonia and Turkey

There are differences in the **number of information and communication sub-structures** in each IPA beneficiary. However, there does not appear to be a definite relationship between the size of the beneficiary (in terms of surface area or population) and the number of structures[10]. Generally, EU Info Centres coordinate EU Info Points and Info Corners, unless there is a Network which coordinates all structures. Most structures collaborate on activities, except in Turkey where the structures collaborate less.

All EU-type Centres and Info Points provide **walk-in information services** between 9 or 9.30am and 5.30 or 6pm from Monday to Friday. In North Macedonia and Serbia, Saturday opening hours are also

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[6] The EU Info Centre in Istanbul is located at an economic foundation and the EU Info Centre in Izmir is located in a business association. The remainder are all located in chambers of commerce.

[7] In North Macedonia, the Info Corner is specifically located in the national university library. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 3 EU Info Corners are in public universities (Interviews with EU Info Centre Contractors).

[8] The EU Info Corners in Turkey exist for people to ask for a particular publication or for logistical support. For example, if there is an EU Mission in a particular city, the EU Info Corner provides logistical support in terms of venues, e.g. meeting room (Interviews with EU Info Centre Communication Coordinators).

[9] This type of structure is sometimes referred to as EDC and sometimes EUI.

[10] There have been some changes to the number and type of structures during 2011 – 2017 within IPA beneficiaries, but these changes have not been significant.

available. In addition, EU Info Centres, Europe Houses and EU Information and Cultural Centres (and to some extent Info Points) conduct other types of communication activities (events, websites, social media, media monitoring, support to campaigns), depending on EU Delegation needs. In Turkey, the EU Delegation needs less support from EUICs because there is another contract with a professional communication agency.

The most common **target groups** for EUIC activities across all IPA beneficiaries are: the media, youth/university and school students, followed closely by government/public institutions employees, civil society and the business community. The groups that are least targeted are: women, rural communities/farmers and older people.

The EU Delegations provide **funding for all EU Info Centres** (including Europe Houses and EU Info and Cultural Centres), but the provision of funding for EU Info Points and EU Info Corners varies, for example with local partners such as municipalities providing in-kind support. When EU Info Points and Info Corners are funded, their allocation is less than for the Info Centre/s. EU Documentation and Information Centres do not receive funding from the EU Delegations but receive documents from Delegations for dissemination. EU Info Centre contracts support a very wide range of communication events and activities including Europe Days, thematic communication campaigns, research nights, film festivals and other cultural events.

EUICs are set up based on **service contracts**, although in some IPA beneficiaries service contracts are supplemented by a separate lease and supply contract. For the contracts concluded within the timeframe of the evaluation, the standard contract duration was 12 months. Currently, it is 24 months with the option to extend the contract for one year up to two times. EUICs provide reports on their work to EU Delegations, but the level of detail in these reports is variable, which makes it difficult to compare communication results and provide a coherent picture of EUIC performance across the IPA beneficiaries, beyond the extent to which activities have been implemented.

EUIC staff profiles are broadly divided into two categories: key experts and non-key experts. In most cases, **key experts** require **university degrees**. This is the case particularly in Albania, whereas structures in other IPA beneficiaries accept (additional) proven experience as a substitute for this. In general, there are fewer requirements for non-key expert positions in terms of years or project experiences. In most cases, non-key experts only require a minimum of three years of general professional experience and do not as frequently require university degrees as the key experts. EU Delegations tailor the requirements for experts to their individual needs.

In addition to EUIC-implemented communication activities in the IPA beneficiaries and the neighbourhood, cooperation assistance projects also communicate messages about the EU, which include a visibility element and / or have a communication focus. These projects are managed by the cooperation section of each EU Delegation. The communication elements of these projects are typically delivered by the organisations responsible for project delivery.

Neighbourhood region: information and communication under the ENI

In the neighbourhood region, EU Delegation communication is not supported through Info Centres as they are understood in the Western Balkans and Turkey.[11] Therefore, this evaluation focused on assessing the activities that are delivered on behalf of and directly **managed by the EU Delegations** to implement their communication plans and the extent that the Info Centre model could enhance communication outreach in the neighbourhood.

EU Delegations' communication activities are outsourced to professional communication agencies which implement activities to reach specific target groups, as described in EU Delegations' forward communication plans. Communication agencies develop the communication content from the cooperation assistance projects supported by the EU and develop other materials to communicate about public and cultural diplomacy goals described in Delegations' communication strategies.

The communication landscape has been characterised by the OPEN Programme, which is managed directly by Headquarters and structured around three complementary projects:

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[11] Whilst there have been examples in Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, they were not based on the same model.

- CSP East and CSP South which communicate about the results of EU support in the East and South of the neighbourhood; and
- one project for the whole of the Neighbourhood focussing on the training of journalists and media specialists.

The two CSP projects complement the EU Delegations' bilateral communication activities through tailored support at country level and by communicating to citizens about the benefits of EU partnership in the region. Both projects also provide support to the EU Delegations by assessing the perception of EU and its support through opinion polling.

Based on desk research on contracts, terms of reference and reports, EU Delegations in the neighbourhood region implement similar types of communication activities to those implemented in the Western Balkans and Turkey, such as Europe Day events, supporting cultural activities (e.g. strengthening the film sector, literature events and other events promoting cultural dialogue) and campaigns. Other activities include organising press field visits and producing, designing and printing publications to enhance the visibility of the EU's assistance programmes. Overall, there has been significant diversity in the range of activities implemented in the three case study countries.

According to the Delegations' Communication Forward Plans, the most frequent target groups mentioned are youth and students, media and journalists, academics, government officials, think tanks and civil society. This resonates with responses to the EU Delegations' survey[12] for which these groups were 'very high' or 'quite high' priority across the neighbourhood region.

The types of contracts most frequently used for implementing communication activities in the neighbourhood region are service contracts. Over the 2011-2017 timeframe, there have been many variations in the duration and scope of the service contracts managed by the EU Delegations ranging from 3 months to 26 months. Specific contracts were established for each type of activity, for example organising press field visits or printing publications with different terms of reference.

However, in the last couple of years there was a shift to work with longer term contracts (for example three-year contracts), which cluster a range of communication activities (for example in a Framework Contract) that can be observed rather than developing contracts for each specific activity. This change reduces EU Delegation staff's administrative burden relating to procurement and contract management.

3.2. Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation was intended to: improve the **performance** and **management** of info centres in the enlargement region; identify lessons learned and options for info centres in the neighbourhood region; and **improve coordination and streamlining of communication** activities with partners in both the enlargement and neighbourhood regions.

The evaluation had five specific **objectives**, which focused on assessments of performance across both regions and ways to improve this performance.

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[12] The full survey report is provided in Annex 2, a separate document.

1. **Assess the performance** (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and EU value added) of EU Info Centres activities in the enlargement region during 2011-2017;

2. Assess the **coherence, complementarity and coordination** of the activities carried out by the EU Info Centres with those carried out via **other EU programmes and by other partners** active in communicating about EU policies and programmes in the regions[13];

3. Provide conclusions and recommendations to **improve the performance of the EU Info Centres** activities in the enlargement region in line with commitments in the Joint Action Plan on Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans and Turkey;

4. Assess the **performance of communication activities** implemented in the neighbourhood region during 2011-2017 (in up to three partner countries);

5. Identify **options** for the potential establishment of EU Info Centres in the neighbourhood region and provide recommendations **for improving the performance** of communication activities in the neighbourhood partner countries.

The evaluation scope covers the communication activities carried out the by EU Info Centres in the seven IPA beneficiaries and communication activities carried out in three neighbourhood countries. The three neighbourhood countries were selected during the inception phase based on specific criteria (Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine). The temporal scope of the evaluation is the period 2011 – 2017.

3.3. Approach to the evaluation

The evaluation approach involved reconstructing the Intervention Logic of the communication strategy in the concerned regions, to provide a framework to understand the performance of communication activities in terms of their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. A mixed-methods approach was followed to gather and assess a range of primary and secondary data. Data was gathered and assessed via an in-depth review of a wide range of documentary and data sources, semi-structured interviews with staff, contractors and a range of communication stakeholders, including government representatives, NGOs and other EU communication programmes. Additionally, focus groups were carried out with students, and surveys of EU Delegation staff in both regions and EUIC Team Leaders in the Western Balkans and Turkey, with two different surveys of Delegation communication staff to allow tailoring to regional specificities. The evaluation approach and understanding of the evaluation team was strengthened through field missions to ten case study countries, which were selected as the focus for this evaluation.

The evaluation comprised four distinct but sequential phases, which are highlighted in **Figure 1 below.**

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[13] In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, this will involve assessing outreach activities carried out by the EU Special Representative Office.

Figure 1: Approach to the evaluation
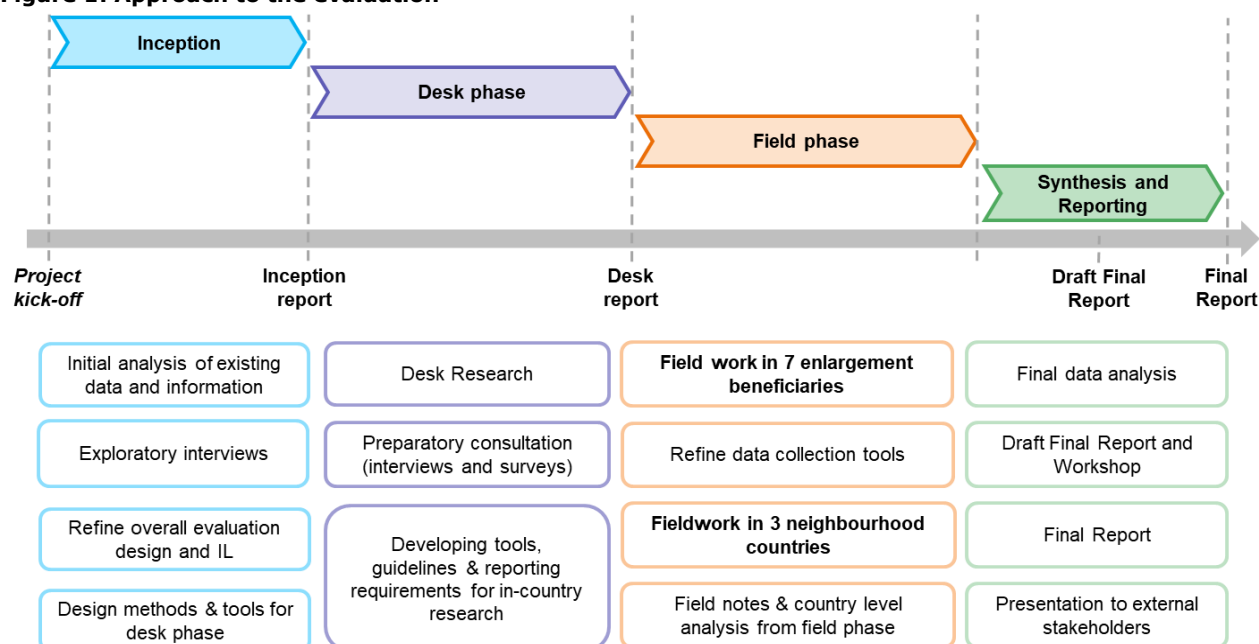
Inception phase: the purpose of the inception phase was to deepen the knowledge of the evaluation team to allow a more detailed preparation and structuring of the evaluation, through the following preparatory activities:

1. Exploratory interviews with members of the ISG and a sample of staff at DG NEAR and in EEAS.

2. Analysis of data and information to map EUIC-type structures and their activities and tools in the beneficiaries and selected neighbourhood countries.

3. Revision of the analytical approach to the evaluation, including the:

    i.   review of the evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators;
    ii. reconstruction of Intervention Logics for EU communication in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions, which are presented at the end of this chapter;
    iii. design of survey tools, and discussion guides for the desk phase; and

4. Analysis and design of the rationale for the selection of the three case study partner countries in the neighbourhood region, taking into account high-level political agreements between the partner country and the EU, the amount of the EU cooperation budget, levels of public awareness[14] and public perceptions of the EU, levels of stability, the inclusion of East and South regions, and the potential for replicability of lessons learned.

Desk phase: the purpose of the desk phase was to initiate the data collection and to conduct preliminary analysis on the indicators, judgement criteria and evaluation questions. The desk phase resulted in the preparation of two Desk Reports, which were discussed with the Interservice Steering Group for this evaluation. The desk phase comprised the following tasks:

1. In-depth desk research on documentation relating to the EU Info Centres and other structures in the IPA beneficiaries and communication contracts in the three selected neighbourhood countries.

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[14] The level of public awareness was suggested as a criterion by ISG. However, this criterion was revised to take account of the available polling data, which relates to image of the EU and the quality of relations with the EU, not public awareness.

2. Initial stakeholder consultation strategy comprising of:

   a. three on-line surveys and

   b. telephone interviews;

3. Analysis of the evidence to date and preparation of the detailed approach to the field missions, including discussion guides for the different categories of interviewee and focus groups, as well as the preparation of instructions for the field mission teams.

Field phase: the field phase was implemented in two steps. First, fieldwork was conducted in the Western Balkans and Turkey between November and early December 2018. A second field work phase was then conducted in the three neighbourhood countries (Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine) in April 2019. This resulted in the preparation of country case study notes, which were reviewed by each Delegation and are now presented in Annex 3.

Synthesis and reporting: this report presents the work conducted during the synthesis phase of the evaluation. The focus of this phase has been the synthesis and triangulation of different sources of evidence collected and analysed throughout the whole of the evaluation period. This process allowed the evaluation team to develop key findings clustered by theme and region, and conclusions and recommendations.

3.4. Limitations and constraints

The evaluation of the performance of the EU Info Centres in the IPA beneficiaries and of the communication activities managed by the Delegations in the three selected neighbourhood partner countries was an extensive exercise, which needed to cover a wide range of different types of data sources from different stakeholders in ten countries. This type of research exercise typically encounters a range of challenges, which hinge around the availability, consistency and comparability of data and the need to draw valid conclusions and practical and relevant recommendations using robust evidence.

The table below highlights the main challenges and limitations of this exercise, as required by the Terms of Reference and discussed with the evaluation unit throughout the course of the evaluation exercise. Despite these limitations, there was a wealth of evidence collected to allow the evaluation team to develop a detailed overview of current communication practice, even if in some cases detailed evidence relating to very specific communication activities was not available.

Table 2: Main Limitations

Type of limitation	Main limitations
Scope of the evaluation	• The ToR require a focus on three countries in the neighbourhood region, although the recommendations need to be relevant for the whole region. However, the sample of countries selected allowed for different perspectives on communication. Also, the evaluation survey was addressed to all EU Delegations in the neighbourhood region. • The temporal scope of the evaluation (2011 – 2017) proved to be limiting as Delegation and Headquarters' approach to communication had evolved, meaning that lessons learned from this earlier period were less useful. To address this issue the team also took account of the current communication landscape, particularly in the neighbourhood region.
Access to documentation and data	During the desk phase, it was not possible to gain a detailed overview of all of the communication activities implemented during the timeframe of the evaluation due to: • Documents being stored in different databases, some of which could not be accessed by the evaluation team • Some documents not being available in the databases; there were very few interim and final reports uploaded; • Documents saved with file names, which did not correspond to their content; • Access to monitoring data was not consistent during the field missions.

	An overall lack of documentary evidence relating to the neighbourhood region.[15] Limitations on access to data also related to qualitative insights. Potential interviewees / focus group participants were not always available to contribute to the evaluation process. To address this situation the team supplemented insights through interviews with staff and external stakeholders, who were available.
Human resource capacity within the Delegations	One of the key findings of this evaluation relates to the significant human resource limitations of staff responsible for managing communication contracts, particularly in the neighbourhood region. This impacted on staff's availability to provide documents requested by DG NEAR's evaluation unit.
Institutional and stakeholder memory	The evaluation team needed to assess the efficiency of the communication activities of the EUICs. This implied that systems and procedures had been written down, that the staff (including the staff of contractors) available to provide explanations were involved in the relevant activities at the time and the activities were recent enough for good recall. In practice, there were staff changes over the 2011-2017 timeframe at the EU Delegations. It was not possible to conduct interviews with stakeholders or staff able to provide detailed feedback on the performance of past communication activities covering the full 2011 – 2017 period. As highlighted above, the team addressed this limitation by taking into account more recent activities.
Specific challenges in assessing communication performance	Communication activities were intended to support improved levels of EU awareness and understanding by the target groups. However, without baseline information it was not possible to measure the exact extent of change achieved. Different terminology was used to describe different stages of the intervention logic, which made its reconstruction more challenging (and Delegations had not used intervention logics to design their activities). The limitations in availability of monitoring data prevented the evaluation team from triangulating this type of evidence with qualitative data provided via interviews and surveys. This also highlighted deficiencies in the collection and management of monitoring data.

3.5. *Reconstruction of the Intervention Logics for the enlargement and neighbourhood regions.*

A key step in the design of the evaluation methodology to assess the performance of EU Delegation communication activities was the reconstruction of the logic of communication at regional level, in other words how the communication was intended to work. This process provided a basis to structure the collection of evidence on confirming the extent that communication had generated the intended effects, whether any assumptions held true and whether there were other explanatory factors. These elements were required in order to answer several evaluation questions, including:

- o Evaluation Questions 2 and 8: on the extent that communication activities met the communication objectives set; and
- o Evaluation Questions 5 and 10 on the extent that EU communication activities were coherent with those undertaken by the Member States and other communication partners in each country.

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[15] It was possible to identify 38 contracts from the CRIS database. Of these there were gaps in the years 2011 – 2017, with few contracts relating to country-level communication in the period 2013 – 2015 and few regional-level projects covering the period 2013 – 2014. There were very few final reports and interim progress reports relating to these contracts. It was also not possible to access all the Delegations' information and communication annual reports and forward plans covering the 2011- 2017 period.

The reconstruction of the Intervention Logics (IL) was based on the principles set out in DG NEAR's Guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation[16]. According to the Guidelines, an IL "articulates the hierarchy of effects that an intervention is expected to produce: from outputs (under direct control) to outcomes (subject to direct influence) and impact (subject to indirect influence)"[17], as follows:

- An **input** covers the political, technical, financial, human and material resources put in place to generate activities.

- An **output** is composed of the direct product or services delivered by an activity, directly influencing the achievement of outcomes. The types of outputs achieved in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions were broadly similar.

- An **outcome** is the likely or achieved **short-term** or **medium-term** effect of an intervention's output. In communication activities, an outcome could be the "the (expected) direct effect on the intended target audience. It may refer to awareness, learning or knowledge"[18].

- An **impact** relates to the changes that are expected to happen due among other things to the implementation of an intervention and may cover different timescales and affect different actors. Impacts can be positive and negative, direct and indirect, intended or unintended, and on any dimension (e.g. social, economic, environmental, political, etc.).

The ILs overleaf describe the intended outputs, outcomes and impacts for communication activities in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions.

In practice, communication objectives differed from country-to-country and in a later step an intervention logic was also developed for each of the IPA beneficiaries and the three neighbourhood partner countries. These were discussed with EU Delegations during the field missions.

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[16]https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2016/20160831-dg-near-guidelines-on-linking-planning-progrming-vol-1-v-0.4.pdf
[17] Ibid., p.29
[18] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-evaluation-toolkit_en.pdf, p.18

Figure 2: Intervention Logic for the enlargement region

EQ3 Inputs

IPA II, including Support Measure for Communication on Enlargement, of which, establishment and management of EU Info Centres and Info Points, activities of Delegations (Press & Information / Public Diplomacy)

Project visibility budgets
Ad hoc budgets
Corporate Communication

EQ4 Outputs

EUIC and Info Point communication activities targeting multipliers and individual citizens

- Outreach and networking
- Cultural diplomacy
- Media relations/media rebuttal
- Competitions on EU related themes
- Thematic campaigns
- Social media activities
- Events for specific target groups
- Communication about EU projects, linking project funding with policy goals

Corporate & Delegation communication and public diplomacy activities targeting political stakeholders, multipliers and individual citizens;

Project visibility activities

EQ2 Short-term outcomes

A 'local' face for the EU

Increased dissemination of factual information

Better informed public debate

Raised awareness in targeted groups of rationale and value of enlargement

Stronger networks acting as multipliers

Raised awareness of benefit to citizens of EU assistance

Greater visibility through coherence of effort with MS/other partners

More/positive media and social media coverage of enlargement and projects

EQ2 Medium-term outcomes

Communicate via appropriate narratives (human interest, themes)

Consolidate existing relationships and extend outreach to new target groups

Strengthen co-operation with Member States (including cultural institutes/partners)

Communicate on values (human rights, rules of law, democracy, good neighbourly relations)

Combat disinformation

Manage expectations of enlargement

Engage with beneficiaries as multipliers/implement visibility guidelines

EQ1. Short-term impacts

Increase understanding of the economic benefits and challenges of enlargement

Increase understanding of the benefits of enlargement for peace and security

Increase understanding of EU policies (including global and bilateral issues)

Increase visibility of results of EU assistance/contribution to jobs, growth and competitiveness

Support political good governance, economic and social development, and stability

Improve the quality of dialogue, debate and engagement through public diplomacy

EQ1. Longer-term impacts

Contribute to:

Greater ownership of enlargement in economy and society

Political and social consensus on the opportunities and challenges of future membership (Western Balkans/the strategic partnership (Turkey)

PROBLEMS EQ3/5/6

- Communication has not been sufficiently targeted and focused
- The communication strategies of the Commission, Member States and other partners have lacked coherence
- Public support for enlargement is not a given
- The EU is in competition for visibility with other well-funded players
- Deliberate/Uninformed dis/mis-information is common

ASSUMPTIONS EQ2, 4, 5 and 6

- The Commission and the Member States have shared communication and public diplomacy objectives
- The EU and its partners in the region have shared communication and public diplomacy objectives for relevant activities
- Face-to-face contact with a wide range of citizens is needed to achieve the objectives
- The future OPEN Enlargement Programme will be effective as a stand-alone activity which is nevertheless complementary
- Specific indicators are set based on SMART objectives and there is a monitoring system in place to track outcomes
- It is necessary to prioritise some target groups
- Messages and content reach and resonate with target groups

Figure 3: Intervention Logic for the neighbourhood region

EQ9 Inputs	EQ9 Outputs	EQ8/11 Short-term outcomes	EQ8 Medium-term outcomes	EQ7 Short-term impacts	EQ7 Longer-term impacts
Information and communication activities with ENI Global allocation (component 2)	Communication and public diplomacy activities targeting political stakeholders, multipliers and individual citizens	Increased dissemination of factual information	Take a 'One Voice' approach	Increase understanding of the value and durability of the Partnership	Contribute to:
Delegation press and information budgets	• Press releases, press trips and events	Better informed public debate	Communicate via appropriate narratives (human interest, themes, cultural diplomacy)	Increase understanding of EU policies (including global and bilateral issues)	Deepening the partnership with the EU
EEAS public diplomacy budgets	• Social media posts and videos • Delegation and dedicated websites	More/positive media and social media coverage on Partnership and Projects	Communicate on values (human rights, rule of law, democracy)	Increase visibility of results of EU aid ('hard' and 'soft')	
OPEN Neighbourhood Programme & Regional programme budgets (where applicable)	• TV and radio programmes • Own campaigns • Awards and prizes • Public diplomacy events • Events for general public or specific target audiences	Raised awareness in targeted groups of rationale and value of Partnership	Engage with beneficiaries as multipliers		
		Stronger networks acting as multipliers	Combat disinformation	Support political good governance, economic and social development, and stability	
Other budgets (Communication contracts, ad hoc, e.g. EU@60)	• Publications • Give-aways • Exhibitions • Exchange of best practice across Delegations	Raised awareness of benefit to citizens of EU aid	Extend outreach to new target groups		More positive image of EU in economy and society
Project visibility budgets within ENI (component 1)	• Team Europe, EU Bus, Young Ambassadors • Cooperation with host government	Greater visibility through coherence of effort with MS/international institutions	Manage expectations of what relations can achieve	Encourage debate, dialogue and engagement through public diplomacy	

PROBLEMS EQ10/11

- Communication has not been sufficiently targeted and focused
- The communication strategies of the Commission, MS and other institutions have lacked coherence
- The position of the EU as a partner is under threat to some (variable) extent
- The visibility of the EU relative to other players is not proportionate to its actual importance
- Deliberate/Uninformed dis/mis-information is common

ASSUMPTIONS EQ10, 11

- The Commission and the Member States have shared communication and public diplomacy objectives
- The EU and its partners in the region have shared communication and public diplomacy objectives for relevant activities
- The EU is often seen as remote and needs to address this through more face-to-face contact with a wide range of citizens
- The OPEN Neighbourhood Programme is effective as a stand-alone activity which is nevertheless complementary
- Specific indicators are set based on SMART objectives and there is a monitoring system in place to track outcomes
- It is necessary to prioritise some target groups
- Messages and content reach and resonate with target groups

4. FINDINGS RELATING TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS 1 – 6

This section presents the answers to the six evaluation questions, their judgement and indicators defined for the assessment of the performance of EUICs in the IPA Beneficiaries in the period 2011 – 2017. The evidence which supports these findings is presented in Annex 1. Under each judgement criteria, the relevant indicators are listed for which an aggregate analysis of the sources of evidence is provided.

4.1. EQ1: To what extent have the objectives of the EUICs been defined considering the specific needs of the target audience in the IPA beneficiaries and contribute to the objectives set in the EU framework on strategic communication in the enlargement region?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

EU Delegations set the objectives and target groups for the communication activities to be carried out by the EU Info Centres[19] in specific Terms of Reference (ToR). These have been broadly defined with little indication of priorities and often an imperfect correlation with the objectives specified in the Annual Communication Plan. A few examples of objectives and target groups stated in the ToR are presented below:

Albania

Objective: to increase the level of information and public awareness of the Albanian population about the European Union, its policies and programmes, about their impact on citizens' daily lives, and about the accession process and EU membership.

Target groups: general public; national and local media; opinion makers, public figures; governmental and local municipal institutions and organisations; urban and rural communities, municipalities; civil society organisations and non-state actors; academic circles and think tanks; youth, university and high school students; elderly; vulnerable groups; SMEs and business community.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Objective: to manage the EU Info Centre (EUIC) in Sarajevo and the EU Info Points (EUIP) in Banja Luka, Mostar and Brčko District to increase the knowledge among the citizens of BiH of the Country's accession process and the general understanding of the EU, its policies and programmes.

Target groups: youth, high school and university students and professors; media; business community; civil society organisations; opinion makers, think tanks, researchers, rural communities and farmers.

Kosovo

Objective: the day-to-day running of the EU Information and Cultural Centres in Pristina and North Mitrovica. The EU Information and Cultural Centres will promote EU agenda in Kosovo, opportunities for its inhabitants and the role of the EU Office in this process, particularly through outreach and media campaigns, in order to make the European agenda as tangible as possible to the people.

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[19] EU Info Centre is used as a generic term to cover the different models across the region.

Target groups: general public in the broad sense, particularly the youth, university and school students; Government and public institutions – policy and decision makers; business community; journalists and media; cultural operators; academic circles, researchers and think tanks; civil society; women; minority groups; people with disabilities; older people and pensioners; other stakeholders such as Project Managers of EU funded projects in Kosovo.

North Macedonia

Objective: to raise public awareness about the EU, its values and policies and assist EU Delegation's public diplomacy activities.

Target groups: general public; youth, university and high school students; children and kindergartens; national and local media; opinion makers, public figures; governmental and local municipal institutions and organisations; civil society organisations; academic circles and think tanks; elderly and pensioners; rural communities and farmers; SMEs.

It was often recognised by Delegations' Information and Communication staff, but also by other EUD staff, and by EU Info Centre staff during the field phase that more specificity would in fact be desirable in establishing the target groups because:

- these have been too broadly defined (in extreme cases as "the public");

- are too many to be realistic;

- more segmentation and prioritisation are needed.

The evidence gathered (Annex 1, p. 7) shows that the specific needs of the target audience in IPA beneficiaries are not used as a starting point in setting the EUICs' objectives. There is polling data, which is used by EUDs and EUICs to give some pointers to target group needs,[20] but overall the EU Info Centres largely rely on their own local knowledge and on (frequently unrecorded) qualitative feedback, which they receive or collect rather than conduct systematic and structured needs assessments.

EU Delegations are ultimately responsible for decisions on the selection of activities conducted by EUICs. Delegations have an understanding of EU political priorities at regional level and for the IPA beneficiary, and they ensure that EU Info Centre content is in-line with strategic communication. EUICs tend to focus on communication towards the public and sectoral stakeholders. Delegations have responsibility for public diplomacy and political communication given the level of political sensitivity that is required. Coherence between EUIC work and EU Delegation plans is supported through effective communication between the Delegations and the EU Info Centres during implementation of communication activities. This was confirmed in discussions during the field phase by both the Delegations and the EU Info Centres.

However, the assessment of the contribution that the EU Info Centres make to the achievement of the strategic communication objectives[21] in the enlargement region is hampered by the lack of consistent use of quantitative and qualitative indicators, with limited collection of monitoring data at the level of outputs (for example number of participants at events or centre visitors or Twitter

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[20] Communication campaign topics in Kosovo, for example, have been based on the results of polling, notably a campaign on EU assistance to education. The polling in 2017 showed a high, and significantly increased, level of importance attached to education.

[21] These are presented in the previous chapter in the Intervention Logic for the enlargement region as: greater ownership of enlargement in the economy and society and Political and social consensus on opportunities and challenges of future membership (Western Balkans) /the strategic partnership (Turkey).

followers). There is an almost total absence of monitoring of outcomes and effects. There is a significant incidence of output indicators required to be monitored by Terms of Reference, but the data is not being collected and reported on a systematic basis. The evidence that EU Info Centre activities reach the appropriate target groups and fulfil their objectives is based on the perceptions of contractors, Delegations and stakeholders.

- **JC 1.1: There is alignment between the EUICs' objectives set by EU Delegations and EU strategic communication objectives, and the needs addressed by this framework**

Indicator 1.1.1: Evidence shows that there is a strong correlation between EUICs' objectives and the objectives of strategic communication for the enlargement region.

A multi-layered approach is taken to the definition of EU strategic communication objectives for the enlargement region. These are described in a range of documents, for example: the Communication Strategy for the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, the Commission/EEAS Action Plan for Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans and Turkey, the 2018 Communication from the Commission on 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans', and the EU Delegation Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Plans.

EU Delegation Annual Communication Plans describe the Delegations' objectives, confirm that they are intended to contribute to strategic communication objectives, and describe the communication activities to be implemented. However, they do not always make clear which activities will be implemented by the Delegation and which will be implemented by the Info Centre.

The reviewed EUIC ToRs for the period 2011-2017 demonstrate an explicit link between the EUIC objectives and the objectives set for the beneficiary, for example in terms of seeking to increase the understanding of the economic benefits of enlargement and increasing the understanding of EU policies (which was the objective most consistently cited).

There is some variability in the focus of EUICs' specific objectives, for example some objectives are referenced explicitly and consistently, and others are not mentioned or mentioned infrequently. This is in line with the Commission/EEAS Action Plan for Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans and Turkey, which highlights the need for different Delegations to focus on different aspects.

- **JC 1.2: Specific target group communication needs have been well defined and the EUICs' objectives clearly focus on these needs.**

EU Delegations set the target groups for communication and these are then specified in the ToR for the EUIC. It was not possible to confirm that the EUIC objectives are defined using research into specific target groups' needs. Indeed, target groups' specific needs are not mentioned in the documentation explicitly but, rather, stem from the political priorities for a given beneficiary.

EUIC Team Leaders confirmed they do (or plan to do) research into target groups' needs. The EUIC Team Leaders in North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia reported that they had recently conducted research into target group needs, whereas Team Leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated that this had been done in the past. EUICs in Albania and Kosovo planned to carry out research. In Turkey, there was a mixed picture with some EUICs indicating that they had conducted research and some indicating that they had not. However, during the field missions the team noted that EUICs' research is mainly based on feedback from the events which they organise. Commissioned research (polls, surveys and focus groups) was limited, but EUICs generally acted as agents on behalf of the EUD as this facilitates contracting.[22] Although baselines from which to work were not established and target data

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[22] This mainly refers to polls and surveys. However, the EU Office in Kosovo confirmed that focus groups have been used.

were not set, EUICs gathered output data in particular on social media followers and likes, as well as number of events and participants.

Target groups are typically broadly defined, and the communication campaigns conducted by the EU Info Centres focus on the public. Specific tailoring to individual groups is limited. Nevertheless, this did not prevent certain groups from being prioritised or profiles targeted through different channels and tools. Sometimes prioritisation was done using research (e.g. polling data on topics of interest or attitudes to values), but the level of resources available was a major barrier to developing more tailored approaches to target groups according to staff of Delegations and EUICs.

The documentary evidence available constitutes an insufficient basis for assessing the extent of EUICs' contribution to the strategic communication objectives. However, it confirmed the variability of the EUIC concept in each IPA beneficiary. In some cases, EUICs have a strong focus on facilitating and supporting events (for example Turkey), including in some cases events for other EU stakeholders (for example Montenegro). In others, the EUICs are responsible for implementing most of the Delegations' communication activities (for example Albania).

Monitoring data is of inconsistent quality. Tracing the contribution of each channel and tool and activity to the strategic communication objectives is made difficult by the fact that indicators are not defined at output, outcome or impact level. They are typically set at activity level and are not specific or measurable or tailored to target groups. Again, the field missions showed that, while there is some (limited) quantitative and qualitative data being collected, it is variable and somewhat superficial. EUICs' own reports suggest that activities are in line with the EU strategic communication objectives, but the extent to which this is the case cannot be ascertained.

4.2.   EQ2: To what extent have the objectives of the EUICs been achieved?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

It is difficult to determine whether EU Info Centres have achieved their objectives, even if the feedback from EU Delegation staff confirms satisfaction with their work in several areas, including when it comes to raising awareness. There is an inherent difficulty in measuring the contribution of activities undertaken by EU Info Centres against any quantifiable level of outcomes, for example, raised awareness or increased knowledge of the EU within a target group or population. This relates in part to the intangible nature of communication and in part to the way that the objectives and "results to be achieved" are formulated in the ToR.

In the EU Delegations, there is consensus that activities have generally produced the expected outputs, but the monitoring data to confirm this is fragmented, because there are not enough output indicators to show the degree of achievement of activities. Due to the limited data available, it is difficult to confirm the extent that outputs and outcomes have been achieved, and this is linked to the fact that the ToR have not been developed based on an intervention logic. Only a limited number of output indicators and few targets are in the ToR. Even relative to these, there are gaps in the reporting and little availability of comparisons over time.

A range of factors influence the ability of the EU Info Centres to communicate effectively and therefore meet their objectives. Those which stand out include: the duration of contracts and handover from one contract to the next, appropriate budget for achieving the objectives and attracting quality staff, target setting and segmentation of target groups, flexible and clear ToR, the physical infrastructure and visibility of the centre, an appropriate balance between own and hosted events – and between events and other activities, the degree of enlargement fatigue in audiences and the extent of media freedom.

EU Info Centres are using a range of communication tools to reach their objectives. Segmentation is weak beyond the understanding that social media is best suited for use with younger audiences. Unjustified emphasis is being placed on being available to answer face-to-face questions from the general public (as demand for this service is low everywhere). The mix otherwise appears to be broadly appropriate, subject to the provisos that there may be too much focus on events or

publications in some cases, and that available resources generally preclude them from using TV or radio, which are still widely used in many beneficiaries. However, there is a widespread absence of measurement, both quantitative and qualitative (e.g. satisfaction surveys) that makes it impossible to substantiate the extent to which the mix is appropriate and therefore whether the tools are appropriate to the target groups.

Social media is widely used. This is appropriate as there is sound data in the public domain that shows that the social media use is high in most beneficiaries and rising. However, the indicators in use across EU Info Centres vary. There is also considerable variability in the consistency of reporting on indicators, in the availability of data on all four key channels (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube), and little on growth and engagement, as opposed to followers. Thus, there is no basis for comparisons with other stakeholders or for assessing the extent to which the current use made of social media is effective in generating communication outcomes, whether more could be done to enhance this engagement, and whether boosts through paid posting would increase effectiveness.

- **JC 2.1: Extent that EUICs' communication activities have produced the expected outcomes, which contributed to the achievement of the set objectives**

Indicator 2.1.1: EU Delegations / EUICs monitoring data confirms that the communication activities achieved the outputs defined in the ToR.

There is variable use of results chain terminology in EUIC Terms of Reference and EU Delegation communication plans. Neither clearly define specific outputs and outcomes, which will result from the implementation of different activities, nor the way the data will be collected to confirm that expected results have been generated. The EUICs' ToR used the term "Results to be achieved" in a variable way to sometimes refer to "activities" and sometimes refer to "outputs". The way that EUIC communication efforts are described means that it is not easy for DG NEAR or the EU Delegation to have a detailed view of EUIC performance. However, according to discussions with the Interservice Steering Group, EUIC Terms of Reference are designed to provide a broad framework for EUICs' work, which allows the Delegations and EUICs to adjust to emerging communication needs. It was explained that setting very specific targets might have a limiting effect.

In the timeframe under investigation, EUIC ToR did not set indicators at output or outcome level and no baselines were set. Instead indicators in ToR tended to relate to the activity level, but nonetheless there was little quantification of targets set. EUICs collected some output level data but did not consistently collect outcome data to confirm the achievement of objectives.

Output data collected relates to the number of visitors to EU Info Centres, number of participants at events, number of followers and likes on social media, and number of website visits. In some cases, retweet data and comments are collected on social media, which can be considered as a form of result. However, the field mission confirmed that output data is not collected in the same way by all EUICs. Also, the EUIC Final Reports over the timeframe have not consistently reported on the outputs and outcomes of the different activities carried out.

Feedback from EU Delegations confirms that there is limited measurement of communication results achieved. However, the EU Delegations' expectations for EUIC performance are being met. EU Delegations and other EUIC users, including representatives from EU Member State embassies, NGOs, EU programmes interviewed[23] during the field missions suggest that EUIC activities are contributing to raising awareness, even if there is a lack of hard evidence to confirm that this is the case. The survey of Delegations also confirmed that there is a need to place more focus on the setting of targets and monitoring to improve the measurement of EUIC performance.

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[23] The 10 country notes presented in Annex 3 provide lists of individuals interviewed during the field visits.

- **JC 2.2: Extent to which the quantitative and qualitative effects of the outputs and outcomes of EUICs' activities can be deemed to have contributed to the achievement of the set objectives.**

Indicator 2.2.1: Evidence collected by EU Delegations / EUICs confirms that outputs have contributed to an increase in the volume and quality of:

- Information about the EU, its policies, values and funding;
- Debate with target groups;
- Networks with partners and multipliers;
- Enhanced media coverage;
- Increased awareness of the benefits of enlargement and EU support.

EUIC activities contribute to the achievement of EU Delegation communication objectives, but there is a lack of consistent evidence to confirm the extent of any quantitative and qualitative effects generated. This was confirmed by the survey of EUIC team leaders, which highlighted that in most cases data on the effects on the target groups are not assessed.

EUICs' Final Reports (2011–2017) confirm that Info Centres generate media coverage, facilitate debates with target groups and dissemination of information on the EU. Overall, some of these aspects (for example increases in networks) are not captured in the EU Info Centres' monitoring framework; others, such as numbers of debates, are. Yet, it is not possible to determine whether there have been any significant increases in volume and quality.[24]

The Final Reports do not report on (measurable) increases in knowledge and/or awareness among target groups. Few Team Leaders of EU Info Centres responded to the survey indicating that they collect data on whether target groups have increased awareness of the EU (8 respondents out of the 20 surveyed), changed their views on the EU (7 respondents out of the 20 surveyed) or have improved understanding of the EU (6 respondents out of the 20 surveyed). Where collected, press clippings collected by contractors show that promoted activities generate a good amount of media coverage. It is, however, difficult to assess whether there is an increase in volume or quality– in the absence of baseline data.

- **JC 2.3: Extent to which other factors influenced the achievement of the communication effects**

Indicator 2.3.1: EUIC Final Reports, EU Delegation staff, EUIC Team Leaders and representatives of multipliers and target groups suggest factors that limited or enhanced outcomes.

The main factors influencing (limiting or enhancing) the achievement of results are summarised below and reported in detail in Annex 3:

- Availability of resources: a higher budget would enhance outcomes. Six out of seven EU Delegations surveyed 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that higher budgets would enhance outcomes, and this was confirmed during interviews with Delegations and EU Info Centre staff. The budgets have implications for the expected reach of target groups through communication activities, which are implemented outside the bigger/capital cities..

- Degree of professionalism and pro-activity of EUIC contractors, which currently varies. Good practice examples included effective networking by contractors. In interviews Delegation staff and EUIC users[25] praised EUICs for their networking, which supports the involvement of target groups and multipliers in EUIC activities and can facilitate contacts being established between

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[24] The evidence is based on 20 Final Reports that were available.

[25] These were individual visitors to EUICs who visited when the evaluation team conducted the field missions.

different groups when they meet (e.g. universities, schools, EU Member States and EU programmes such as Erasmus+). Interviewees also highlighted EUIC teams' capacity to reach target groups outside the capital.

- Uneven level of competence of EUIC staff, with Delegations not being involved in the selection of non-Key experts and the low budgets affecting the ability of contractors to attract experienced staff according to interviews with Delegations. It is difficult to find experts who have a good command of English in remote areas.

- Visibility / location of the information and communication structures: of 20 EU Info Centre Team Leaders surveyed, 15 answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the location impacts their ability to engage with target groups; 13 out of 20 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the lack of visibility of the structures impacts their ability to engage target groups. The interviews with EU Info Centre contractors and some EU Delegations, as well as the analysis of EUICs' Final Reports highlighted issues in relation to the physical location of the information and communication structures, which affect access and visibility, and, ultimately, their ability to reach audiences.

- Focusing on the organisation/hosting of events. The hosting of external events is foreseen in the Terms of Reference of the EUICs. This brings benefits as stakeholders see the EUICs as a hub of EU-related activities. EUICs also provide a space for networking for civil society involved in EU projects and facilitate building synergies with multipliers. Whilst supporting other organisations' events can enhance messaging on the EU, the logistics and promotion associated with hosting other organisations' events are time-consuming and reduce key experts' availability for EUICs' own activities.

- The monitoring system in place: in the survey of EU Delegations, six of the seven respondents agreed or agreed strongly that setting targets for EU Info Centres' reach and outcomes would enhance what EU Info Centres are able to achieve; five of seven 'agreed or agreed strongly that increasing the focus on monitoring of the communication outcomes would be beneficial. This would mean improving the monitoring system.

- Prevailing citizens' attitudes: the risk of rising euro-scepticism among target audiences, including multipliers and the media, due to uncertainty about the timing of accession (or opening of negotiations), citizens' unrealistic expectations and general enlargement fatigue in the IPA beneficiaries. This was reported as a key challenge in interviews with EU Delegations, EU Info Centre staff, media and civil society.

- Duration of service contracts and continuity: around half of the EU Info Centre Team Leaders surveyed mentioned the duration of contracts and administrative and reporting procedures as factors affecting their ability to engage more with target groups. When Team Leaders devote a lot of time to managing these processes, they have less time to focus on communication activities. EU Delegations and EUIC contractors noted that ensuring continuity of service can be an issue because of frequent changes of contractor and the need for improvement of the handover process from one contractor to another.

- The EU Info Centre contractors and staff pointed to cases of:
    - (1) inadequate handover arrangements when a new contract starts, meaning that the knowledge and contacts developed by one contractor are not handed over to the next contractor;
    - (2) lack of clarity over which target groups to prioritise, which results in a fragmentation of effort. The list of target groups is long, but the amount of available resources is limited, which means that human and financial resources are spread thinly. A focus on a smaller number of target groups could increase the frequency and quality of contact with these groups and lead to gaining a better understanding on how to engage them;
    - (3) insufficient coordination across EU Info Centres and EU Info Points within an IPA beneficiary: in some cases, strengthening coordination between Info Points and Info

Centres, with Info Centres providing more guidance to Info Points would help these to maximise their contribution to achieving the EU communication goals;

- o (4) overall administrative burden linked with reporting, which the contractors fear will increase further.

- **JC 2.4: Extent that the communication tools used by the EUICs were appropriate for each target audience**

Indicator 2.4.1: EUICs' tools reach desired target groups, and improvements cannot be made without increasing costs.

Overall, the provision of information by EUICs (i.e. as a walk-in information service) is not meeting any specific target group need. EUIC Team leaders suggest that a physical Info Centre is appropriate for retirees, but there is no evidence to confirm that this would be meeting a strong demand.

Significant focus and resources are placed on the organisation of events, but there is a lack of systematic measurement of satisfaction or understanding on how to increase their usefulness. Traditional media, in particular TV, are recognised as offering important opportunities to reach target audiences, particularly older audiences, but their cost is mainly prohibitive. EUICs and Delegations view social media as useful to reach young people. Websites are used to reach all audiences. There is a demand for publications, which provides specific information sought by specific target groups (for example funding opportunities under Erasmus+, or information about the EU in formats suitable for children). However, there is a lack of rigorous assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each tool in each beneficiary and whether funds saved by cutting back on certain tools could be used to enhance other tools. It is not possible to make a generic assessment of a channel because its value relates to the way that it is managed and the extent that it fits within a planned and measurable approach. EUIC staff understand which tools suit different target groups (for example, debates are suitable for an academic audience, and plays and stories work well with children). However, there is lack of systematic evidence to confirm the actual effectiveness of these channels and tools, and if improvements could be made.

There is a lack of qualitative data to confirm different target audiences' perceptions of their interactions with the EU Info Centres although other EU programmes and EU Member State embassy staff indicated that they appreciate EUIC support.

- **JC 2.5: Extent that the EU Delegations' use of other communication tools (e.g. social media) has or could have a higher outreach to different categories of the target audience**

Indicator 2.5.1: There is reliable and accurate evidence in the public domain to confirm that different target groups use social media extensively, and that other stakeholders achieve a wider reach than EUICs or the EU Delegations, which confirms the need to use or improve the use of social media.

Given the low levels of spontaneous visitors to EU Info Centres, it can be considered appropriate to use other means, which are able to have higher outreach.

Based on desk research including on documents from beneficiaries' national statistical offices, there are extensive but variable levels of social media use across the IPA beneficiaries. There are high levels of use in Albania[26], Montenegro[27] and Turkey[28] (96.1%, 81.9% and 60%), but much lower levels in Serbia for example (38.5%)[29]. In beneficiaries for which there is no social media data, i.e. Kosovo and

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[26] Internet in Albania - August 2017: https://ose.al/lajmet-e-fundit/interneti-ne-shqiperi-gusht-2017/
[27] Montenegro statistical office 2017 report on the use of Internet in households:
https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ICT/2017/Upotreba%20IKT%20u%20domacinstvima%202017.pdf
[28] www.turkeyhomes.com/blog/post/technology-social-media-in-turkey
[29] https://adcombo-blog.com/internet-usage-serbia.com

Montenegro, the Internet and mobile phone use data can serve as proxies for the likelihood of social media use and these show a high use. Correspondingly, social media is used extensively by the EU Info Centres, particularly Facebook and Twitter, and to a lesser extent (depending on the EU Info Centre) YouTube and Instagram. The EUICCs in Kosovo are unusual in not having their own social media accounts and feeding their material through the accounts of the EU Office. The EUD believes that it is better for the EU to speak with a single voice, and also believes that the target groups are essentially the same.

Of the 24 EUIC Final Reports reviewed, 18 reported on social media indicators, but do not consistently use the same indicators or report on all channels used. This makes comparisons of social media use inherently difficult and suggests a need to improve social media monitoring and reporting. The level of detail in the reporting of Facebook followers, likes, website views, and tweets varies significantly. On the data available, Facebook and Twitter are generating the most following and outreach.

The interviews with EU Delegation staff confirmed the need to use or improve the use of social media and that social media is a tool that is becoming paramount in creating visibility of the EU Info Centres and EU Delegations' activities. Most of the interviewees noted that social media is better than traditional media tools (newspapers, TV, radio), especially for reaching young people, giving its growing prevalence and the move to more online platforms.

The field phase findings confirmed that social media is the best mechanism to increase the reach of the EU Info Centres cost-effectively, though not to the exclusion of other channels. This includes findings from discussion groups with stakeholders (including students). Different communication channels have their strengths and weaknesses and should be used in line with the objectives set. This implies the need for a planned approach so that effective choices can be made about which channels and tools to use at what time and to what desired effect. In this context, the use of social media is clearly appropriate. However, the use of social media requires specific skills within EU Info Centre and Delegation teams, which are not always present. It also needs to be used more-or-less in real time, implying that processes for approving EU Info Centre posts must be fluid, which is not always the case.

Social media, like any channel, has its limitations. Even if social media allows wider reach of target groups, reach is not a very meaningful indicator to measure communication performance. Best practice in communication is about generating target group engagement. On social media, this means shares, comments and click-throughs/downloads, in addition to likes, but this data is not consistently monitored by EUICs. Consistent measurement of the performance and effectiveness of social media is an area where there is scope for improvement to allow comparisons with other stakeholders' performance. Engagement with target groups on social media is, nonetheless, less impactful than direct contacts, via for example a face-to-face meeting. Therefore, for high profile / important contacts (particularly with individuals who may amplify EU messages), social media is unlikely to be the best channel although it may support promotion and awareness raising efforts.

Another issue to consider is the limitations of "earned" as opposed to "paid" promotion. Even where EUIC Final Reports confirm that the numbers of followers have grown (for example, following a communication campaign), after a certain point it can be difficult to increase the number of followers organically. Therefore, the expansion of a social media community at this point comes at a cost. The capacity of any channel and tool to reach different target groups inevitably relates to the amount of available human and financial resources to support this outreach, the effectiveness of messages and content, as well as other factors, including target group resonance, topicality, timing, etc.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

The use of service contracts has been appropriate for the implementation of communication activities in most IPA beneficiaries. Fee-based contracts in particular have proved to be easier to administer than global price contracts for communication activities.

Continuity of service has largely been assured, generally by seamless renewal or relatively seamless handover to a new contractor. Gaps in service provision or short-term rollovers to avoid gaps are very much the exception. Induction or staffing issues arise, but these do not appear to be related to the type of contract used.

The recent trend to conclude longer-term contracts is beneficial in mitigating the administrative burden of launching procurement procedures. However, contract management remains burdensome and takes resource away from the implementation of communication activities both for the EUDs and the EUICs. Lengthy approval processes for changes to staff is one example.

In Albania and Kosovo, separate works, supply and lease contracts have also been concluded. However, this separation of contracts for specific purposes does not appear to be a barrier to effective and efficient management of communication activities.

Where the EUIC has a "street-front" location, it enjoys visibility, but this does not necessarily translate into more visitors even though there is a perception of correlation between these aspects. If the goal is to provide a public walk-in centre, then several locations fail that test (for example the EUIC in Sarajevo is in a diplomatic building with security-controlled access, the EUIC in Istanbul is in a tower block, which is invisible to the outside). However, there is no data to determine to what extent a street-front location affects awareness of the existence of an EU Info Centre and/or translates into more or fewer participants, or the extent to which a given factor affects this. Such factors include being inside a Delegation and having to pass security checks (e.g. Sarajevo), or at the top of a tall building (e.g. in Istanbul), or inside a shopping centre without street-front signage (e.g. the EUIP in Mostar).

The different information and communication structures in the Western Balkans (EUICs and Info Points/Info Corners) often collaborate on developing and sharing communication products, carrying out joint events or coordinating on event planning, and sharing ideas. In Turkey, the EU Info Centres collaborate more rarely because they are based in different regions and focus exclusively on their local communities (and also because they receive low levels of funding).

Coordination among Info Points/Info Corners is patchy. It is limited by the voluntary nature of their cooperation and the low budgets they receive from EU Delegations.

Current resources are too limited to reach some target groups in remote areas unless efficiency gains can be found elsewhere.

- **JC 3.1: The management of EUICs through service contracts is conducive to an efficient, effective and sustainable implementation of communication activities**

Indicator 3.1.1: Appropriate contractors were selected with the appropriate level of expertise to manage communication activities effectively and efficiently.
Indicator 3.1.2: Degree of continuity in the use of service contracts.
Indicator 3.1.3: Frequency of extensions to the service contracts due to delays in implementation.
Indicator 3.1.4: Level of administrative burden when changes were required to personnel, to service increases or budget; e.g. the number of addenda to contracts was limited / there are no addenda.

> **Indicator 3.1.5:** Evidence that service contracts facilitated intended communication activities, including the purchase of specific equipment, tools or services, renting of space to enhance the reach of communication.

International tendering is used to identify potential contractors. The procedure is used because the amounts of money involved are above the amount that can be tendered locally. As a result, contracts are mainly won by international consulting firms or communication agencies. These do not post staff to the region but draw on local expertise.

EU Delegations confirmed that appropriate contractors were selected with the required level of expertise to manage communication activities effectively and efficiently. They also consider that the staff members proposed by the contractors had the appropriate level of expertise. Occasional problems were reported with individual contractors, experts or delays in finding non-key experts.

The firms which are winning these contracts generally have experience in bidding on European Union contracts. This can make it difficult for local firms that lack this experience to compete and could thus be limiting the development of local expertise. Staff of several EUDs expressed a preference to see more local firms win these contracts in their own right, rather than being subcontractors, because it would help develop local communication expertise. The main disadvantage identified in the field phase, however, is the need to work remotely with the contract project manager when a firm from outside the beneficiary is contracted. Email, conference calls and willingness to travel to the region for meetings were not seen as totally comparable.

Thus, while appropriate contractors with the appropriate level of expertise are being selected, the use of international contractors can add to the administrative burden for the EUD, with some loss of effectiveness and efficiency in the management of the EUICs.

The administrative burden involved in the actual contracting is seen by EUDs as a greater challenge, in particular the time that is needed to draft Terms of Reference. EUDs admit (and our review of ToRs confirms) that this leads to copy-pasting from earlier ToRs without there being adequate time to consider whether changes are needed. The time taken to contract can lead to gaps between contracts and short-term extensions. The EUDs noted in response to the survey that constraints linked to the limited timeframe of contracts are the most significant internal challenge faced by EU Delegations. This has become less common now that longer contracts and more renewals are being used, a move universally regarded as positive by EUDs.

The main recent examples of such issues were a short-term extension in Kosovo at the end of 2017/beginning of 2018, although this was not felt by the EUD or the contractor to have led to major losses of effectiveness and efficiency, and a gap between contracts in Serbia. The move to longer contracting and a smoother process in moving from one contract to another has also mitigated the impact on effectiveness and efficiency of the learning curve and the delays that occur as a new contractor takes over, finalises negotiation of contracts with key experts, hires non-key experts and sets up.

Overall, the level of administrative burden when addenda were required for changes to personnel, for service increases or budget, has been high, but without it having been possible to quantify this, e.g. in number of days. In any event, the ability to use administrative orders has led to a sharp reduction in the number of addenda.

Desk research showed that the service contract covering management of EU Info Centres or similar structures is usually one in which the EUD approves the premises, but the cost of the rent is included under the incidentals of the service contract or is subject to a separate lease contract with the contractor. This approach relieves the EUD of the administrative burden of facilities management. Continuity of service from an existing location is assured by making it a condition of the ToR that the new contractor takes over existing premises. The contractual landscape is tailored to the needs of each beneficiary, for example in relation to the availability of rent-free accommodation to host EU Info Centres or EU Info Points. This approach enables the EUD to work more efficiently.

Contract management is, therefore, overall burdensome. Lengthy administrative processes affect the time the Delegation Communication Coordinators and EU Info Centre Team Leader have left for

communication work and is particularly acute if the Team Leader is part-time (e.g. Kosovo). The type of service contract used with a specific EUIC may depend on the resources available within the EUD to manage the contract closely. However, the use of service contracts per se was not an issue for EUD staff or EUIC contractors. On the contrary, they felt they were well suited in principle to managing EUICs effectively and efficiently, and therefore were working satisfactorily for the type of communication EUICs carry out. However, EUD staff and still less EUIC staff were not generally aware of, or had ever given any thought to, possible alternatives. EUD staff generally wished for a reduction in the burden on them personally of managing these contracts in order to have more time to devote to communication and working more proactively with EUICs.

- **JC 3.2: The different EUICs and Info Points / Corners set up in an IPA beneficiary have worked together in an efficient and effective manner to reach the target audience and achieve the set objectives in that particular beneficiary**

Indicator 3.2.1: Evidence that collaboration between EUICs and Info Points was planned and generated synergies, which enhanced communication effects.

In the Western Balkans, the different EUICs within each IPA beneficiary often collaborate on developing and sharing communication activities, in particular, events. In Turkey, the EU Info Centres' activities are focused on the implementation of a defined number of events in their region of location. There is no apparent need to collaborate with other Info Centres located in other regions which are geographically far.

Where Info Points/Info Corners exist in addition to EUICs (i.e. everywhere except Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, considering that the EUICs in Turkey are akin to Info Points), the level of collaboration between EUICs, Info Points and Info Corners is variable, and constrained by budgetary limitations and the voluntary nature of the cooperation with municipalities[30]. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there has been strong collaboration between the EUIC and Info Points, whereas in North Macedonia collaboration between the EUIC contractor and EUIPs has not worked as smoothly, with EUIPs feeling a sense of isolation. The amount of annual budget allocated to Info Points of EUR 800 and their position as municipal employees limits what can be achieved, because their employers may have priorities which differ to EU Delegation priorities. Interviews with Info Point staff in Serbia also pointed to insufficient communication with the EUIC.

Overall, there is little evidence of planned collaboration. Even when EUICs and Info Points work together well, they do not focus on generating unforeseen synergies. Synergies may occur but there are currently no processes in place to capture this information.

- **JC 3.3: The system setup for monitoring the EUICs' activities functioned at regular intervals and was capable of collecting data and detecting problems (indicators were appropriately designed to measure the progress in relation to the baseline situation and the effectiveness of the targets, and extent that targets were set realistically)**

Indicator 3.3.1: Aggregated quantitative and qualitative monitoring data is available to confirm the performance of activities / if targets were met in relation to outputs, outcomes and impacts, and demonstrate quality and appropriateness.

The prerequisite for assessing the data is to have an articulated monitoring framework based on SMART objectives and indicators.

Monitoring of EUIC information and communication work is characterised by a focus on the collection of evidence to confirm that activities have taken place and the number and/or reach of target groups. There is no systematic definition of baselines and/or targets (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro) nor gathering of qualitative feedback and insights from target groups. Data collection focused to a large extent on use of Info Centre services (visitors and enquiries), events,

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[30] If municipalities are the host organisation for an EUIC or EUIP.

social media and website use, which reflect the main EUIC activities. However, where there is data, it does not cover all activities, and the same type of data is not available consistently across the EU Info Centres per communication activity, or year-on-year.

In addition, there appear to be problems with the way that data has been collected, with some double counting (for example, of numbers of visitors and numbers of attendees at events); conflating inquiries about the availability of event space with requests for information about the EU; lack of rigor in the collection of data with not all EUICs following the same approach (for example, with regards to the collection of satisfaction data and/or the approach to collecting qualitative data); and some data of questionable plausibility. There are some examples of focus groups being used to gather pre- and post-campaign feedback, e.g. Kosovo, but this approach has not been systematically applied during the timeframe under consideration, for example, not in Montenegro or by EUICs in Turkey.

The monitoring approach has essentially been a set of data collection activities rather than a monitoring 'system' as such. It has not been possible to identify evidence to confirm that monitoring activities have allowed EU Delegations to detect problems and take corrective action. It is likely that the frequency of interactions (at least weekly and sometimes daily) supports reporting of this type of information, but evidence is not documented in a systematic way which would allow a detailed view on performance in country and/or at Headquarters level.

The weaknesses related to monitoring appears to be a structural issue driven by the templates of the main reporting e.g. EU Delegations' Annual Communication Plans place limited emphasis on monitoring requirements and data collection tools. In addition, the EUICs' ToR analysed over the 2011-2017 period have not described either the requirements for monitoring or the processes for data collection. Under the heading "indicators", the ToR have instead provided a list of expected activities to be carried out. However, a comparison between this list and the activities listed in the "results to be achieved" section of these ToR confirmed that not all the expected "results to be achieved" were listed.

Overall, there has been little or no focus on setting indicators for outputs, outcomes and impacts. As a consequence, the monitoring data in the Final Reports only enable an assessment of whether activities were undertaken, and outputs achieved. Accordingly, a monitoring system, which defines standardised indicators per channel and tool, protocols for data collection (including mechanisms by channel and tool at output, result and outcome level and frequencies) and for analysis and reporting (including analytical frameworks, reporting templates and dashboards to support quick overviews of the state of play at EUIC, IPA beneficiary and regional level) is missing. This would help to provide a more detailed understanding of the implementation of communication across the region, which could support decision-making on budget allocation going forward.

- **JC 3.4: Extent that the use of financing and management mechanisms could have provided better cost-effectiveness**

Indicator 3.4.1: Quality of evidence of ways to increase the levels of target group reach and engagement without increasing cost

EU Delegations consider that longer-term contracts, which reduce "dead time" during start-up and winding down, and concentration of funding on priorities rather than spreading it across a range of small activities are the most cost-effective ways of enabling both Delegations and Info Centres to improve the quality of their outreach at no additional cost. This could free time/resources for target groups in geographic areas that cannot be reached at present. Based on evaluator observations inside EUICs, it can be observed that there are some deficiencies in the current approach. These include: a lack of interactive, on-line tools, including games, to increase the attractiveness of EU information; the provision of 'thick' publications (which provide hard-to-digest information and are not always in the relevant local language); the presentation of information inside Info Centres and on websites, which sometimes lack appeal and does not appear to be targeted to any specific target audience; and the lack of visibility of Info Centres from the road. These elements all imply additional costs.

From an EUIC contractor and Delegation perspective, a reduction in levels of administrative burden would free up time to concentrate on communication activities. However, there is a recognition that a degree of administrative burden is inevitable for an entity such as the European Commission. Evidence from the field suggests that if deliverables are well identified, it makes sense to conclude a global price contract because it gives the Delegations more insight into and say over the EU Info Centre activities, according to staff responsible for financial matters in the Delegations. However, it would be almost impossible to define all EUIC deliverables in advance. Even if similar types of channels and tools are

used, volume, content and formats are variable. In most cases, EUICs require a flexible approach, which is responsive to EU Delegations' and the target groups' on-going needs. Even where activities are annual, e.g. Europe Day or film festivals, a fresh approach is needed each time. The fee-based type of contract meets these requirements and they are the usual option.

EU Info Centres could often work more closely with other EU programmes and projects than they do, and vice-versa, in order to increase target group reach, but the gains are likely to be in improved communication services to target groups. It is not certain that the level of coordination required could be achieved without increasing costs.

- **JC 3.5: The physical location of the EUICs in the IPA beneficiaries has facilitated the implementation of planned communication activities and the achievement of planned effects on the target audience**

Indicator 3.5.1: Visitor numbers confirm the space is well used, and the location of the EUICs is clearly visible

There are issues relating to the accuracy of data on the number of visitors to EU Info Centres. The data available in the Final Reports provide some insights; however, frequently there is no distinction made between the number of visitors and event participants, and there may be double-counting. The approach followed by the EUIC contractors (and successive contractors in a beneficiary) is not homogenous. Responses by EUIC Team Leaders in the evaluation survey suggest some over-estimation[31] of the number of spontaneous visitors to Info Centres in contrast to the low levels of visitors observed at each Info Centre visited during the field visit.

The field visit showed that a common problem among beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Turkey) was the physical location of the EUIC/EUIPs, which are not clearly visible and cannot be identified from the street. There is therefore a mismatch between the chosen location and the goal of establishing a public walk-in centre. In the case of North Macedonia, public perception research run by the EU Info Centre together with local Think Thanks in 2017 found that the general public are put off visiting the EUIC because it is in the same building as the EU Delegation. However, a good physical location, as is the case in Kosovo and Montenegro, does not guarantee a larger number of walk-in visitors. In those Centres, numbers are also low.

Whist Info Centre staff support EU Delegations with a range of communication activities, the Information Centre does not serve its intended purpose, which is confirmed by the lack of visitors. It is not possible to assess the extent that this relates to a lack of promotion or lack of visibility.

However, the Centres' premises also provide an event space, which is welcomed by EU Delegation staff and by other communication partners such as EU MS Embassies. A visible and easily accessible location is important for attendance at events and use of the Centre by EU MS and partners.

- **JC 3.6: Extent that the set-up of a regional communication programme for the enlargement region could enhance the outreach of communication activities both at regional and bilateral level**

Indicator 3.6.1: There is consensus among EU Delegations of the added value of the neighbourhood regional communication programme / its transferability to the enlargement region

It is not possible to assess the extent that a regional communication programme would enhance communication outreach as it is not possible to quantify or qualify the extent of outreach. However, feedback from EU Delegations in the Western Balkans and Turkey suggests that communication contracts with specialist communication agencies, which are provided with a larger financial envelope can have a positive impact on target group reach.

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[31] Question 3 of the survey of EUIC Team Leaders asked how many people visit the centre each month. EUICs in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated 1677 per month; Albania indicated more than 600 per month and Serbia between 850 and 900 per month. The plausible explanation for the difference between the reported figures and what the evaluation team observed during field missions was that these figures related to the number of attendees at events.

EU Delegations in the neighbourhood region which choose to work with the regional communication programme (the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme), find that it adds value to their work.

The Young Ambassadors' scheme is valued as an important student network in the neighbourhood regions. The Ambassadors' scheme is a voluntary scheme, whereby one or two students are selected via a competition to organise communication about the EU to other students. Peer to peer communication is particularly effective because those communicating know how to put messages in appropriate language and formats that will appeal to their peer group. EU Young Ambassadors also participated in EU Delegation organised events such as Europe Day. There is no direct cost to the EU Delegation for this support.

4.4. EQ4: To what extent the EUICs have contributed to raising public awareness about the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and on the enlargement process in the IPA beneficiaries?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

The Delegations consider that the EU Info Centres are performing well at raising awareness in their IPA beneficiary and a review of EU Info Centres' on-line presence and Final Reports confirms that they have contributed to the dissemination of messages about the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and on the enlargement process.

The EU Info Centres supported raising public awareness by providing information online, through social media, publications (in print and online) and face-to-face activities including events (at and outside their premises) over the 2011–2017 period. During the field phase, members of the team reviewed the systems in place to monitor participation at awareness events including the questionnaires used to gather feedback. This revealed that there is no systematic collection of feedback from target groups at events even if event organisers ascertain participant satisfaction on an informal basis. EUIC reports confirm the number of events and the number of participants at each event. EUICs do not report on the number of publications that they disseminate at each event, for example. Monitoring data is mainly quantitative, which limits the possibility to fine tune activities and learn lessons. It is therefore only intuitively possible to confirm the extent to which EU Info Centres' communication activities have contributed to raising public awareness in each IPA beneficiary, especially since there is no baseline data on public awareness.

It is unrealistic to expect that Info Centres alone can raise the general level of public awareness about the EU given the amount of resources allocated. However, there is scope and a need to better define the indicators used to measure increases in audience awareness as a result of Info Centres' activities (physical and online). Simple tools exist to do this.
EU Delegations also support the view that there may be a need for better monitoring of outcomes. There is scope to review the EU Info Centres' ToRs to ensure a more consistent and comparable monitoring of measurable quantitative and qualitative results across EU Info Centres year on year and across IPA beneficiaries.

Overall, stakeholders value the work of the EU Info Centres and see it as contributing to greater awareness about the EU. The EU Delegations and EU Info Centres have reached new audiences with their campaigns and there are likely to have been spin-off benefits, but there is no evidence that the EU Info Centres have so far proactively sought to build on those new audiences. There is a risk of moving from one campaign to the next without building sustainability on the results of the campaign that has ended and this is an area where indicators could be more developed.

Clearer objectives, more precise indicators and monitoring are needed to measure the extent to which EUICs have contributed to raising public awareness about the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and the enlargement process in the IPA beneficiaries. The evidence gathered based on stakeholders' perceptions is that there is a strong contribution. There is a need to improve outreach to new audiences and to maintain this engagement.

- **JC 4.1: Extent that target groups of EUIC communication activities in the IPA beneficiaries are more aware of the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and the enlargement process.**

Indicator 4.1.1: Qualitative and quantitative monitoring data, which confirms that target groups exposed to EUIC activities and materials are more aware of the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and on the enlargement process.

Indicator 4.1.2: EUIC communication materials and tools convey information on EU policies and values, EU funding and the enlargement process.

Indicator 4.1.3: Strength of consensus among EU Delegation staff and representatives of target groups in each IPA beneficiary of the contribution made by EUICs/Info Points to raising public awareness.

It is not possible to assess with any accuracy the extent to which EUIC target groups are more aware of the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and the enlargement process, because EUICs do not systematically collect or report on this data. This was not required specifically in EUIC Terms of Reference. Data relating to the number of visitors to the EU Info Centre, participants in events, website visits and social media followers confirms the reach of EUIC activities. However, it is not possible to define the extent that individuals found new information and were, therefore, more informed or more aware or if the EU communication activities/products reinforced existing awareness and knowledge.

Satisfaction surveys, website analytics and social media metrics provide measures of engagement. However, this data was not systematically collected with a consistent frequency by all EUICs. Thus, there is no qualitative and quantitative monitoring data to confirm the extent to which the awareness-raising objective was achieved.

In their Final Reports, some EU Info Centres provided assessments on the effectiveness of their awareness-raising efforts, but these assessments were reported using broad qualitative statements. EUICs established some tools for collecting participant feedback, such as questionnaires at events and pre and post activity focus groups, but this type of feedback is not gathered consistently and there is a tendency to rely on informal feedback from participants, which does not facilitate structured analysis. Website, online and social media surveys, which are easy to put in place and could be completed using a mobile phone, are not used.

EU Info Centres across all IPA beneficiaries make information available on EU policies and values, EU funding and the enlargement process in different ways in several different formats, through different publications (brochures, articles, infographics, video clips, etc.). However, these publications are not always clearly visible on each EUIC's website homepage. Moreover, some of the print materials currently available at the EU Info Centres are out-of-date. Some are user-unfriendly, e.g. publications that are heavy on text and in the number of pages. Distribution data is needed on who has received publications (rather than numbers distributed) and downloaded materials from the website. Information is also provided via social media, but there is little consistency in the availability of data on followers, and information on engagement is not recorded. As noted elsewhere, EUIC Final Reports do not necessarily report on all the social media channels used.

The large size and the diverse profile of the target universe in IPA beneficiaries, coupled with the limited amount of funding available, is a challenge to establishing mechanisms to measure the influence achieved by EU Info Centres in the medium and longer term. However, there are simple tools, which can be used as pointers, such as event satisfaction surveys (paper and online), website and social media surveys, or simple text or sentiment analysis software.

The other challenge is the lack of baseline data against which the extent of raised awareness can be measured. Whilst nationwide surveys were carried out in the beneficiaries over the 2011-2017 timeframe, it is not possible to correlate the measurement of opinions and awareness of the EU or of the Centres with the EU Info Centres' activities and messages, or to confirm any causal link - because EU Info Centres are not the only source of EU information in each beneficiary.

- **JC 4.2: Extent that EUICs reach new audiences with EU messages about EU policies and values, EU funding and on the enlargement process that would not be reached by EU Delegations, or EU-funded projects**

> **Indicator 4.2.4:** Quality and quantity of monitoring data on EUICs' reach / engagement with messages about the EU, its policies and values, EU funding and on the enlargement process.

It is challenging to find consistent evidence to confirm the quality and quantity of monitoring data on EU Info Centres' reach with messages about policies, values, funding and enlargement. This relates again to the fact that EU Info Centres' ToR do not require EU Info Centres to monitor the extent to which these messages are conveyed.

A review of EU Info Centres' online and social media reach figures covering the period 2011-2017 in a sample of EU Info Centres' Final Reports (21 out of a total of 56) confirmed that there is a lack of consistency in the availability and presentation of data, both within each beneficiary and across beneficiaries in the period assessed. Thus, the performance across the region cannot be compared. However, there were inconsistencies in the high number of visitors reported by EUICS in their final reports and in the evaluation survey, and evaluation-team observations that EUICs are rarely used as walk-in information centres.

The field phase found that there is no systematic collection of feedback from target groups. EUICs tend to ascertain participant satisfaction based on their own observations and via an informal word-of-mouth basis. Also, EUICs are not required to collect data, which would provide insights into the types of target audiences which use the website or engage via social media. This makes it difficult to ascertain the extent to which the EU Info Centres reached new – or different - audiences. An increase in the number of followers can only be considered as a partial proxy in the case of social media because it does not mean that all followers are active followers. A person may like a page once and never return to it or not have it prioritised in their feed. Nor is there any assessment of whether new audiences are reached.

The survey of EU Delegations showed that the majority were satisfied with the monitoring and reporting, but a minority were not. In interviews, Delegation staff confirmed that their workload makes it difficult to pay close attention to the monitoring data that is reported.

4.5.	*EQ5 (i): To what extent the activities carried out by the EU Info Centres have been coherent, complementary and coordinated with those carried out via other EU programmes and by other partners (e.g. Member States, IFIs, international organisations) active in communicating re. EU policies & values, EU funding and the enlargement process in the enlargement region*

> **Summary answer to the evaluation question**
>
> The EU Info Centres are fulfilling the requirement to coordinate with other EU programmes and other organisations via EU Delegations' regular meetings with EU MS Embassies, and occasional liaison to organise or promote joint activities with other EU programmes sharing the same target groups. Young people targeted by EUICs tend to be most interested in Erasmus+, researchers/civil society have an interest in programmes such as Creative Europe or Horizon 2020. However, collaboration tends to be ad hoc and feedback suggests that there is frequently insufficient forward planning or strategising.
>
> There are examples of strong complementarity and coherence of activities between EUICs and local partners. EUICs act as facilitators in the organisation of large-scale annual events, such as Europe Day and International Human Rights Day (for example as specifically cited by partners in North Macedonia and Montenegro). Partners are the EU MS Embassies[32], implementing partners, and/or stakeholders of the government of the beneficiary.

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[32] For example, in Serbia, Member State embassy staff from Croatia, Austria and Belgium confirmed collaboration on film festivals.

There are also examples of EUICs providing logistics and content support for partners' events and working with partners on stand-alone communication campaigns. This type of collaboration occurs less systematically in Turkey, as EUICs are staffed by one individual and do not have sufficient resources to provide support to partners.

Another source of evidence is the degree of cross-referencing online and in social media of the EUIC on partner websites and vice-versa. The desk review of 26 websites and Facebook pages revealed the EUIC was very seldom cited on relevant partner websites[33]. By contrast, the EUICs routinely cited on their websites a (varied) range of other sources of EU information and EU funding programmes, although the list is not comprehensive, and the selection criteria was unclear.

In terms of opportunities to improve coordination, there appears to be appetite among EU MS Embassies for even more coordination and collaboration, and therefore some latent potential exists. However, interviews with EU Member State embassy staff revealed that governments do not expect their Embassies to prioritise collaboration with EUICs. Thus, it remains a nice-to-have, which is dependent on Delegations (or EUICs) taking the initiative. Where this happens, Embassies work with EUICs.

Regular meetings with EU MS Embassies, initiated by the Delegation, in which EUICs are often involved, ensure coherence and complementarity in a range of activities, e.g. Europe Day or cultural events. This is complemented by coordination with the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) clusters, where these clusters exist (i.e. Turkey and all beneficiaries in the Western Balkans except Montenegro). EUICs' regular contact with the local structures promoting EU funding programmes works, because topics easily link to the target groups prioritised by EU Info Centres, notably students, researchers and, businesses. This contact also ensures coherence and complementarity in event planning and sharing of promotional materials. Implementing partners are involved in communication campaigns relevant to them. There is scope for a more planned strategic approach to this collaboration to enhance synergies and secure coherence and complementarity.

- **JC 5i.1: EUICs and Info Points liaise in a regular and planned way (either directly or via the EU Delegation) to share intelligence, identify synergies and opportunities to work together with other EU policy / programme communicators in the region**

Indicator 5i.1.1: Volume and quality of joint actions with other EU policy/programme communicators in the region, which include coordination on target groups, messages and objectives.

Indicator 5i.1.2: EUIC Team Leaders and managers of other EU programmes, Member State embassies, IFIs and IOs confirm coherence, complementarity and coordination and provide examples thereof.

Indicator 5i.1.3: Consistency with which other EU programmes and partners link to EUICs on their websites and social accounts and via their literature.

EUICs are formally required to coordinate with other programmes and organisations, as specified in the ToR covering the period 2011-2017. The interviews with EU MS embassies and partners, notably those implementing EU projects with similar target groups and a significant communication component, confirmed that regular meetings are organised by the Delegations and attended by the EUICs. UNDP is an example of one such partner. The purpose of these meetings is to share intelligence and ensure synergies in EU MS Embassy and EUD (including EUIC) messaging. In beneficiaries where an EUNIC cluster exists, there are also regular meetings with the EUNIC cluster.

Some interviewees from EU MS embassies and partner organisations, both implementing partners and grant recipients, confirmed collaboration and complementarities with EUIC on the following type of activities:

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[33] Specifically, we reviewed 26 websites and Facebook pages related to the IPA programme; the Enterprise Europe Network; Erasmus+ (general and individual national websites); Horizon2020; Interreg Europe; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; World Bank; UNDP; and IPARD and found no references to the EU Info Centres.

- Large-scale events such as Europe Day, and other "days", "weeks" and "years" around language, the environment, climate diplomacy, human rights etc. The EUIC can facilitate / act as "hub" / lead organiser linking other actors with common communication goals, as identified in several beneficiaries;
- Support outreach beyond the capital (where the EU MS generally lack capacity for outreach);
- Logistic and content support for event organisation (e.g. provision of guest speaker, development of programme, supply of venue) e.g. in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia;
- Specific stand-alone communication campaigns were also cited as creating opportunities for complementarity, e.g. in Kosovo.

Six out of seven Delegations surveyed confirmed more coordination would enhance performance. This sentiment was echoed by EU MS Embassies and EU programmes. Suggestions were made for more networking events between Delegations and Embassies to establish key priorities, activities and messages. The initiative for this is likely to have to come from the Delegation because the Embassies have their own agendas, limited communication capability and budgets. This means they do not regard joint initiatives as a priority, while recognising the principle of partnership between the Member States and the EU. Several Embassies interviewed pointed out that their own governments do not appear to regard this as a priority.

According to the EUIC Team Leaders' survey, the EUICs' engagement with EU MS cultural institutes, EU MS Embassies, the European Documentation Centres, and Enterprise Europe Network occurs "sometimes". However, interaction between EUICs and Erasmus+ was indicated to be more frequent. Delegations were most satisfied with the level of EUIC engagement with Erasmus+ and EU Embassies.

The evidence gathered from the field phase shows a mix of experiences[34] but the recurring finding is that collaboration, whilst positively viewed, lacks a strategic approach. This was the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, where reportedly there is no systematic approach to the development and implementation of joint actions with other EU policy / programme coordinators in the region, despite good relations and engagement on an ad-hoc basis. In Kosovo, similarly, the approach to developing synergies was found to be more opportunistic than planned. And, in Montenegro, cooperation between the EUIC, Erasmus+, Creative Europe and other implementing partners, was described as good, but is not systematic or sufficiently planned.

A review of implementing partner websites[35] and Facebook pages, and those of the EUICs, showed there would be value in a more consistent and strategic approach to ensuring cross links.

- **JC 5i.2: Extent that it is possible to identify other relevant opportunities to improve coordination to develop a more joined-up approach**

Indicator 5i.2.1: EUIC Team Leaders and the managers of other EU programmes, EU MS embassies, IFIs and IOs confirm ways to improve collaboration.

The evidence gathered on other relevant opportunities to improve coordination points towards more barriers than real opportunities. The findings from the field phase show that while there may be some (limited) latent potential, there are also real barriers to exploiting this potential. These can be summarised as: limited resources and distinct (even if sometimes convergent) communication objectives. Coordination requires EUICs to be proactive and manage the processes. Therefore, EUICs sometimes viewed coordination with other organisations as a drain on resources, which did not always generate significant benefits. The potential communication gains were acknowledged, but it was not felt possible to achieve these gains within current budgets.

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[34] For example, the collaboration between EU programmes communicators and the EUIC in Serbia was found to be positive but not quantifiable, while in Turkey, there was no evidence to confirm that EUICs work together in a regular and planned way with other EU programme communicators.

[35] Specifically, the review took account of 26 websites and Facebook pages related to the IPA programme; the Enterprise Europe Network; Erasmus+ (general and individual national websites); Horizon2020; Interreg Europe; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; World Bank; UNDP; and IPARD and found no references to the EU Info Centres.

The example of Turkey is illuminating in this respect. The results from the survey of the EUIC Team Leaders showed that Turkey stood out compared to all other beneficiaries. Turkey reported that the EUICs generally collaborate less frequently with other organisations / institutions. Taken at face value, this would suggest scope to improve collaboration. However, the field phase[36] research uncovered the limitations of human and financial resources and remit of EUICs, which means it would likely be difficult for EUICs to increase their level of collaboration with Erasmus+, Enterprise Europe Network and IFIs such as the EBRD. Further, there is no evidence that increased collaboration with EUICs would be of added value to these organisations, who have more resources available and a more extensive communication programme than EUICs.

The situation in Serbia was similar in that further (or additional) collaboration was not considered a priority given the existing resource constraints for EUICs and EU MS embassies, EU programmes (Creative Europe, EURAXESS, Horizon 2020) and programme beneficiaries. More importantly, during focus group discussions, these organisations were not able to identify other ways to improve collaboration, yet they were nonetheless satisfied with the quality of the support provided by EUINFONET[37].

The findings from the field visit in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggested the barrier to further collaboration was that other organisations (EU MS Embassies, IFIs) need to pursue their own specific communication objectives.

In Kosovo, there was only one EU programme (Horizon 2020) where potential was identified for more liaison than currently exists, but it was also recognised that this would always be limited given that Horizon 2020 is targeted at researchers, which is not a main target group for the EU Office. EU Member State Embassies recognise the desirability of closer cooperation, but have their own priorities, limited budgets and limited communication capabilities. They look to Delegations and EUICS to lead any cooperation initiatives.

In Albania, the field phase uncovered the possibility of greater complementarity through systematic engagement with the EU-funded Municipalities for Europe[38] project. The 'Municipalities for Europe' project is intended to strengthen the governing capacities of municipalities on EU themes. It has a specific objective to enhance coordination between municipalities and the EU Information Offices[39]. The project has established EU corners in each municipality, which have EU information available. However, feedback from the project suggested a desire for increased collaboration with Europe House to allow the Delegations / Europe House to make more use of the information structure available across Albania. Limitations and obstacles were cited, for instance, the specificity of agendas, lack of budgets and absence of a strong engine to coordinate and organise activities and keep all parties on the same page.

4.6. EQ5 (ii): To what extent the EU Info Centres can contribute to the development and implementation of a joined-up Public Diplomacy (cf. EU Global Strategy) and act as hubs for EU-related initiatives taking place at the local level (i.e. both EU and non-EU funded)?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

The EUICs are contributing to the development and implementation of public diplomacy through the dissemination of content (in various forms) that align with public diplomacy objectives (messaging on EU policies and values etc.), although this is not always carried out systematically or recorded. EUICs do not necessarily consider public diplomacy to be part of their core remit, despite their ability to contribute to public diplomacy goals. This contribution largely takes the form of logistics and

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[36] The country notes which describe the findings from the field phase of the evaluation are presented in Annex 3, a separate document.

[37] EUINFONET is the name of the EU Information Network in Serbia, see: https://www.eptisasee.com/eu-in-serbia-communication-network-euinfonet/

[38] Information on the Municipalities for Europe project (Contract No. 2017/385-831) is available at: http://www.bpe.al/en

[39] There is currently one Europe House, the two Info Centres in Vlora and Shkoda have been closed.

networking support (including providing input on content). EU Delegations do not involve EU Info Centres in communication on politically sensitive public diplomacy issues.

There is evidence of strong collaboration between EUIC and EU Delegation information and communication staff at every level (in terms of joint initiatives and coordinated activities) on public diplomacy objectives (as part of overall collaboration). EU Delegations reported regular communication underpinning collaboration, the frequency of which (daily, weekly or monthly) would depend on the subject under discussion.

Initial interviews with NIPACs suggested that the EUICs are viewed as public diplomacy hubs, as EUICs are often the location of choice for EU-related activities and initiate many EU-related activities. However, governments tend not to use EU Info Centres to coordinate or support their own communication about the EU, preferring an independent identity, but representatives may occasionally attend events hosted in or organised by EU Info Centres.

There is evidence to suggest that some EU Member State embassies and other stakeholders (for example from civil society) view some EU Info Centres as "hubs" for the EU's public diplomacy outreach activities. They are considered among target groups as the location of choice for many EU-related activities and a networking effect is generated among target groups. Moreover, a hub does not necessarily need to relate to a fixed physical structure; the essence of the hub concept can relate instead to the coordination and integration of communication efforts by different EU communicators and partners. By this definition, the EUIC already acts as a hub for events like Europe Week and others, and there is scope for the EUIC to expand this role to promote joined-up communication in support of the Delegation.

JC 5ii.1: There is alignment and collaboration between EUIC/Info Point and EU Delegation on communication activities and messages and public diplomacy activities and messaging in each IPA beneficiary

Indicator 5ii.1: Samples of EUIC materials convey EU Delegation public diplomacy messaging.

A review of the EU Info Centres' websites shows that they contain information relating to public diplomacy messaging (meaning they carry information relating to EU policies and values, EU funding and enlargement and the accession process). The materials on display in the EU Info Centres, such as publications and brochures, carry public diplomacy messaging.

The way the issues are presented on the websites and in hard copy show, however, some limitations in the approach and / or content:

- Information is made available online in a range of different formats, through different types of publications, brochures, articles, video clips, etc. However, key communication messages are typically embedded in these documents and not displayed on the website landing page.
- Online information is not provided in a systematic format. Some EU Info Centre websites include a reference to EU assistance in their navigation toolbars, but this information is not always up to date. At the time of review, issues related to enlargement processes were explained only on two EU Info Centres' websites (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) in more detail and through separate, dedicated webpages. The hard copy documents are, in most cases, in English and not local languages.

- In the case of Turkey, the evaluation team found various posts on the social media accounts of EU Info Centres that carry messages or information, although somewhat sporadically, on EU values or policies (for instance posts related to activities or important dates related to human rights, women's rights, climate change, refugees in Turkey, etc.). However, there is very little information about EU-Turkey relations, progress in the accession agenda, EU funding opportunities, and the major themes of the contemporary EU agenda.

JC 5ii.2: Extent that EUICs, Info Points and staff of EU Delegations responsible for public diplomacy collaborate on joint initiatives or coordinate their initiatives

Indicator 5ii.2.1: EU Delegation confirms EUIC support is sought and used for public diplomacy

activities and there is a **structured collaboration process** in place.

Public diplomacy means dealing with politically sensitive issues. Delegations have procedures in place to validate messages, which deal with politically sensitive issues. Delegations have not reported any issues with EUICs not understanding the limits of their remit in this respect.

In line with the clear demarcation of responsibility commonly observed during the field phase in the beneficiaries, the evidence from the survey of EU Delegations and EUIC Team Leaders points to strong (and structured) collaboration on public diplomacy activities. More specifically, the evaluation team found that all Delegations agree that EU Info Centres make a significant contribution to the EU Delegations' communication and public diplomacy efforts and five out of seven Delegations agreed strongly on this point.

Illustrative examples[40] of the contribution of the EUIC to public diplomacy were identified during the field phase. In North Macedonia, the EUIC supported EUD public diplomacy communication with campaigning around the name change. Other beneficiaries (such as Kosovo and Montenegro) provided examples of the logistical support the EUIC provides to EUD in events with public diplomacy objectives, including presentations by EU Ambassadors. In general, it is the role of EUICs to provide logistics and promotional support to public diplomacy events organised by the Delegation.

Coordination with the Delegations on support for public diplomacy is covered in monthly communication plans and fine-tuned at the regular meetings between the EU Delegations and EUIC Team Leaders. This was a finding from the initial surveys and corroborated during the field phase. The frequency / type of collaboration was structured according to the type of activity, as follows:

- Daily communication occurs in relation to monitoring communication activities, sharing good communication practices, providing communication messages and content, and setting communication goals with teams of experts.

- Weekly face-to-face coordination meetings are held;

- The Delegation participates in events organised by EU Info Centres/Info Points / Europe/EU Houses;

- The EUIC and Delegations develop monthly plans for communication activities.

JC 5ii.3: Extent to which EUICs and Info Points support and are a focal point of activities (EU and non-EU funded) to reach public diplomacy target groups

Indicator 5ii.3.1: Strength of consensus among EUICs' visitors and representatives of target groups that EUICs are hubs for the EU's public diplomacy outreach activities.

The notion of a hub is not clearly defined in the documentation reviewed. However, it can be understood as the effective centre of an activity, region or network[41]. There is evidence from interviews to confirm a consensus view among users and representatives of target groups that EUICs act as hubs, as they coordinate and support the EU's public diplomacy outreach activities. However, they are not the only source of EU messages or EU activities, which are conveyed and implemented by other EU programmes, EU cooperation assistance projects and the IPA beneficiaries themselves.

In Turkey, for instance, the EUICs provide the Delegation with a communication network across the country, but do not provide extensive support for public diplomacy actions, which are covered through a contract with a communication agency. In the Western Balkans, EUICs fulfil a significant hub function

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[40] During the field phase the evaluation team visited the six beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Detailed country notes present the findings from these missions in Annex 3, which is a separate document.

[41] Hub definition

https://www.bing.com/search?q=what+is+a+hub&form=PRGBEN&httpsmsn=1&msnews=1&refig=8018b516a1bb4b54bfdff2e6352126a4&sp=2&qs=AS&pq=what+is+a+hub&sc=8-13&cvid=8018b516a1bb4b54bfdff2e6352126a4

as they are the location of choice for project events, presentation of EU programmes and policies. This gives them a de facto networking role among stakeholders. However, in North Macedonia, the EUIC is in the same building as the Delegation, hence the hub function is somewhat less distinct.

Our assessment is that a hub can have a physical or virtual/on-line location. The concept of EUICs being EU hubs is that EUICs support coordination on EU-related activities, i.e. their role goes beyond organising events or hosting others' events, they also act as coordinators for the activities of several organisations in connection with a specific event or other activity about the EU. Most EUICs do not fulfil that role consistently at present, though many EUICs do play that role for Europe Day or for specific events, such as Climate Diplomacy Week or the European Day of Languages.

The information gathered during the field visit indicates there is no evidence of an explicit clear, agreed concept of Europe House as a hub / focal point of activity. However, the organisation of Europe-week activities shows the capacity to organise hub-type activities, which group together a wide range of communication actors.

4.7. EQ6 (reformulated): Do EUICs add value to communication on the EU carried out by IPA beneficiaries themselves?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

IPA beneficiaries provide a wealth of information about the EU, in particular in relation to EU funding programmes (COSME, Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+) and their related policy areas. Headquarters develops the source materials, messages and formats for these programmes, which are then tailored to suit national audiences in each country. National agencies receive training from HQ on how to communicate about their programme. Consequently, information and communication by EU programme agencies is of a high professional standard. EUICs do not add significant value to what is already on offer about EU funding programmes beyond sign-posting to the programmes via their websites and amplifying opportunities, for example by grouping EU programmes and results together under a Europe-day umbrella.

IPA beneficiaries and Delegations also support communication in relation to pre-accession assistance under the IPA II programme. For the most part, communication on specific projects is implemented by international organisations and other implementing partners. However, IPA beneficiaries and Delegations lend their support, in particular, to communication on large projects, which may have a substantial impact. EUICs sometimes add value to communication about specific project results, in particular when results are relevant for inclusion in a thematic communication campaign. EUICs also add value to communication on EU values in the IPA beneficiaries, including through communication campaigns as well as through debates, seminars and cultural events. This communication is intended to convey societal norms in the EU so that citizens within IPA beneficiaries find it easier to integrate into the EU. Based on the available evidence, IPA beneficiary governments do not appear to focus communication on EU values.

IPA beneficiaries also provide communication about the status of political relations with the EU, in particular in relation to accession. The evaluation team identified that whilst EUICs may provide standard information about accession, there were only few cases where this type of information could be found on EUIC websites. EUICs are not required to engage in political communication with IPA beneficiary governments as this is the work of Delegations.

- **JC 6.1 (reformulated): Extent that it is possible to compare communication activities on the EU carried out by EUICs and those carried out by IPA beneficiaries**

Indicator 6.1.1: EUIC monitoring data confirms reach and engagement of target groups.

Indicator 6.1.2: EUIC monitoring data confirms regular communication of messages relating to EU

policies and values, EU funding and the enlargement process.

Indicator 6.1.3: IPA beneficiary communicators confirm their activities to communicate about the EU, which include on values, policies, accession and EU funding.

Indicator 6.1.4: EU Delegations, MS Embassies, NIPACs and other partners confirm additional value resulting from communication activities carried out by EUICs.

Evidence relating to Indicators 6.1.1 and 6.1.2. is reported under EQ2, which concerns the extent that EUIC objectives have been met. In particular, judgement criteria 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, reported earlier in this document, confirm the extent that outputs produced the intended outcomes, the quantitative and qualitative effects of these, and the factors that influenced their achievement. These sections confirm that EUICs reach and engage their main target groups, although there is more that could be done to reach target groups who are located away from the cities where Info Centres and Points are located. These previous sections also confirm that EUICs communicate regularly on the types of topics mentioned although gaps were identified, in particular with regards to information conveyed on EUIC websites and where information was not available in national languages.

Evidence relating to Indictor 6.1.4 is also reported elsewhere in this report in relation to Evaluation Question 5i., which concerns the coherence and complementarity of EUIC communication with communication carried out by other stakeholders (including EU Member States).

Therefore, this judgement criterion is focused on Indicators 6.1.3, which concerns EU communication implemented by IPA beneficiary governments. IPA beneficiary government communication activities about the EU relate to three main communication strands, as follows:

- Communication on EU funding programmes, such as Horizon 2020, COSME and Erasmus+. This communication is the responsibility of national funding programme agencies. Typically, these agencies are located in a relevant thematic government ministry (or university in the case of Horizon 2020). National agencies relay and amplify EU programming information, materials and messages about funding and policies. Key messages, the look and feel of communication tools and standard information (including factsheets, leaflets, guidelines, application forms, etc.) are developed by the relevant Directorates General at Headquarters[42]. Specific communication content is tailored to the national level with relevant national examples in the national language, for dissemination via social media, on-line and at events, including videoclips.

- Communication on pre-accession support through the IPA II programme, by units responsible for coordination and technical implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession in IPA government Ministries for EU Integration / Foreign Affairs. This communication relates to the launch and achievements of specific projects and programmes, with a focus on communication supported through events and a range of actors, including international organisations, which are responsible for the implementation of projects. Project guidelines describe communication requirements.

- Political communication relating to the beneficiaries' relations with the EU and EU accession, which typically fell under the responsibility of government communication departments; political communication about the IPA beneficiary's relationship with the EU, including in relation to accession negotiations. A mix of information and communication can be identified, including formal statements and press releases, including those from the EU and those from the beneficiary government. This communication may draw upon examples of IPA support to support governments' political messaging. During the field missions, it was not always possible to discuss political communication with IPA beneficiaries in any depth, given the sensitive nature of such discussions. However, in interviews Delegations highlighted that national governments have their own agendas and messages.

Overall, IPA beneficiaries conduct extensive activities to communicate about the EU, with a focus on EU funding and policies, and accession. They have obligations to communicate about EU funding and this is relatively easy to communicate because it conveys the EU's added-value to the beneficiary. During the field mission the team was not able to identify government communication on EU values, which

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[42] For example, DG Education and Culture and DG Research and Innovation.

suggests less emphasis than on other communication topics where communication is a requirement of funding.

5. FINDINGS RELATING TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS 7 – 11

This section presents answers to the five evaluation questions, the judgement criteria pertaining to each question related to the assessment of the performance of EUICs in the three selected neighbourhood partner countries in the period 2011 – 2017.

<table>
<tr><td>5.1.</td><td>EQ7: To what extent the objectives of the EU Delegation's annual information and communication forward plans in the selected neighbourhood partner countries have been defined considering the needs of the target audience and are conducive to the achievement of the objectives set in the EU framework for strategic communication in neighbourhood region?</td></tr>
</table>

Summary answer to the evaluation question

Political objectives provide the backdrop for communication activities managed through the EU Delegations. Different sources confirmed that resource constraints impact on the Delegations' ability to contract research and manage research contracts. In consequence, EU Delegation communication objectives in the three researched countries (Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine) were not developed drawing on in-depth research into target group needs. While top-down political goals more commonly contribute to the setting of communication objectives (rather than target groups' needs), insights into target group information habits are used to inform communication activity choices.

There was no evidence to confirm whether an intervention logic for the annual forward communication plans for the three selected neighbourhood partner countries had been soundly defined such that they may contribute to the objectives described in the EU framework for strategic communication in the neighbourhood region for the period under review. This tallied with feedback from EU Delegations. There is reason to think this may gradually improve, with training delivered in 2019 on the DG COMM Communication Network Indicators Matrix helping to establish clarity in the approach to communication planning and introduce more clarity in expectations.

It is not possible to say to what extent the needs of target audiences have been considered in the annual forward planning in the three selected neighbourhood partner countries, as the planning is not based consistently on structured research or an intervention logic.

- **JC 7.1: Extent that EU Delegations commission research into target group needs and set their communication objectives taking into account these needs**

Indicator 7.1.1: EU Delegations and the communication contractors that implement the communication activities described in EUD information and communication forward plans confirm that they research target group needs and these are addressed by the communication objectives (results chain) described in annual forward communication plans, the ToR for communication contracts and their inception reports.

There is a top-down institutional focus in the definition of general communication objectives to serve the EU's needs in the region. This is reflected by the fact that general communication objectives are set centrally and apply to all EU Delegations in the neighbourhood region. Specific objectives in EU Delegation Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Plans confirm the focus of activities and thematic campaigns to be undertaken, but not all of the reviewed plans described that choices had drawn on target group needs, which implies a lack of consistency in the approach. For example, the Ukraine Delegation's 2017 Annual Report and 2018 Forward Plan confirms that communication campaigns were developed following a detailed situational analysis and qualitative and quantitative assessments. A review of the EUD Plan for Tunisia and current communication contracts does not describe the need to collect target group data. EU Delegation Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Planning in Armenia does not refer to the commissioning of research into target group needs. However, communication activities via Euroclubs and cultural festivals in Marzes were viewed as opportunities to pass messages but also to '*get useful information for political consideration and/or tailoring cooperation activities'.*

Feedback from EU Delegations and evidence in planning documents confirm that a major factor in limiting the commissioning of research relates to levels of resourcing available to contract research and manage research contracts. In addition, in the survey of Delegations at least half of the Delegations in the neighbourhood region did not consider that lack of research into target group needs is a problem that needs to be addressed[43]. EU Delegations gather unstructured qualitative feedback from participants in activities, which is used to improve specific communication channels and tools. At communication activity level, the use of professional PR companies by the EU Delegations in Ukraine and Armenia helps to ensure that activities are tailored to increase their suitability to target audiences[44].

- **JC 7.2: Extent that the intervention logic of the annual forward communication plans has been soundly defined and is conducive to meeting the objectives described in the EU framework for strategic communication in the neighbourhood region**

Indicator 7.2.1: There is a sound link (theory of change) between the communication activities, the planned outputs, the outcomes and the impacts in the annual forward communication plans and subsequently in the ToR for contracts on specific communication activities and their inception reports and they contribute to the achievement of strategic communication goals in the neighbourhood region.

EU Delegation communication activities appear to be in-line with and supportive of strategic communication objectives for the neighbourhood region, but it is difficult to understand the extent of the contribution of the full range of different activities implemented to the overarching goals.

EU Delegations were not required to use intervention logics to develop their annual forward communication plans in Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine. Consequently, intervention logic structures, which show how inputs and activities lead to outputs, outcomes and impacts are not reflected in the standard templates that are used for EU Delegation annual reports and forward plans or the Terms of Reference for communication contracts. Furthermore, the terminology used in these documents tended not to reflect DG COMM definitions for communication indicators. [45]

Intervention logic planning will support the definition of indicators to allow measurement and understanding of the extent that communications have met these indicators (activity, output, outcome, etc.).

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[43] The evaluation team considered that this survey result reflects recognition that there are resource implications to additional research and therefore this element may not be considered to be a priority. It was unfortunately not possible to test this hypothesis.
[44] Synthesis Report: Annex 3 – Country notes (page 181 for Armenia and page 227 for Ukraine)
[45] For example, DG COMM's communication network indicators define impacts as relating to opinion change and behavioural shifts, whereas some EUD plans describe the number of visits and participants in events as impacts.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

Existing data indicates that the communication objectives are met to a certain extent. The insufficient alignment between the communication objectives set in the strategic documents on the one hand and individual activities and the work done by communication contractors on the other hand, as well as the absence of a systematic approach to target setting constitute important limitations.

In the absence of intervention logic planning, it is challenging to confirm the extent that individual communication activities contributed to the different objectives. This challenge is exacerbated by variation in the approach to monitoring and reporting. Also, there is a lack of clarity on which outputs, outcomes (results) and impacts will be achieved in the Annual Report and Forward Plan documents. When the data is collected, its interpretation is challenging because it is often partial (the focus is put on quantitative variables where qualitative data is needed to evaluate a change of behaviour / perception). Lastly, the lack of a systematic approach to target setting and a lack of baseline data limits the evaluation of the achievements.

- **JC 8.1: Evidence that the communication activities implemented by the EU Delegation (directly and/or with support from external contractors) are delivering the intended outputs and outcomes, which contribute to the achievement of the objectives set in the annual forward communication plans**

Indicator 8.1.1: EU Delegation monitoring data and the regional communication programme reports confirm which outputs and outcomes were achieved and to what extent.

Indicator 8.1.2: Extent that the indicators are appropriately designed to measure the progress in relation to the baseline situation and the targets set at each level of the results chain.

EU Delegation Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Plans confirm that Delegations gather different types of data to confirm the performance of their activities. However, indicators are not systematically defined at each level of the results chain (outputs, outcomes, impacts). Therefore, it is not possible to assess the extent of achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts against pre-defined targets using a coherent set of indicators.

Data confirms achievements in terms of the execution of planned activities. The EUD documents contain a description of activities delivered and planned, and the details are notably reflected in the ToR when communication is outsourced. The description of the activities typically includes the list of events and other activities which are planned on a yearly basis (some events have been repeated every year). Contractors' and EUD reports confirm that the activities are implemented. However, there remain limitations in the analysis of the reporting as some contractors' reports were not available (e.g. the team did not have access to any of the contractors' reports in Tunisia).

Data also confirms that outputs are achieved to a large extent. EUDs use a range of standard output indicators in relation to events, traditional and social media. Output data is collected in relation to:

- Event participation;
- Website and social media metrics (fans, followers, video views, impressions, clicks);
- Readership numbers;
- Media monitoring; and

- Informal feedback from target audiences (which is not collected in a structured way).

However, output data does not seem to be collected systematically (e.g. participation is not reported on for all events/activities organised). The data could also be strengthened as there is a greater focus on reporting on the reach of activities rather than on their effect or appreciation by target groups. A focus on quantitative variables does not make it possible to take into consideration qualitative aspects such as (evolution of) perceptions, awareness, level of information. The field visits and reports reviewed indicate that the EUDs and their contractors receive informal feedback on the communication activities implemented. However, this feedback is not structured and not systematically analysed. The assessment of communication on social media suffers from the same limitation in terms of an emphasis on quantitative metrics at the expense of a qualitative analysis of the engagement with the content published.

In terms of outcomes, monitoring data is disparate. If the field visits and stakeholder interviews revealed that overall, the stakeholders perceived that the communication activities were strengthening the public's awareness and knowledge about the EU as an important partner for the ENI countries, data is not systematically available to support that claim.

There is a lack of clarity around the logical framework, what the expected outcomes are, what outcomes are directly influenced by the outputs, as well as how to measure outcomes. This is exacerbated by the fact that Communication Plans set broad not SMART communication objectives. There are sometimes monitoring systems in place to facilitate the capture of outcome data (e.g. the monitoring of the campaigns in Ukraine). Nevertheless, this is often not the case.

Some Delegations point to the general public opinion polls carried out by the OPEN Neighbourhood programme as evidence of outcomes. The polls indeed provide data on the evolution of public opinion on the EU and related topics but depending on the questions asked and the use of pre and post campaign polling, it is not always possible to establish a direct link between the evolution of opinions and the communication activities implemented. It is, therefore, difficult to assess whether the communication activities triggered the desired changes of opinion.

- **JC 8.2: Extent that the channels and tools used to implement communication activities are appropriate to meet the target group needs and contribute to the attainment of the forward communication plan objectives**

Indicator 8.2.1: Representatives of target group associations (interviewed during the field phase) agree that channels and tools used are good ways to reach target groups and that materials would 'speak' to target groups through tailored narratives.

Overall, there is evidence to suggest that the EU Delegations and their contractors are using appropriate communication channels and tools. Stakeholders interviewed during the field visits indicate that it is important to keep a balanced mix of channels and tools to reach out to different targets. These include traditional media (as this still plays a key role in the consumption habits of certain segments of the population), events (despite a risk of competition between different events, when many different partners/donors in-country implement their own communication activities without coordination and therefore compete for the audience's attention), online and social media. The general perception is that social media are the norm in the communication toolbox when young people are targeted.

There has been little research into communication preferences, which would support the selection of channels and tools. However, certain choices are based on opinion polling (e.g. in Armenia, with the inclusion of TV as one of the channels because it remains predominant) and there are signs that this aspect will be strengthened in the future (e.g. the EUD in Tunisia has contracted a communication expert to look into social media communication, and what its potential is in relation to the audience's use of social media and how to make this channel more effective). Extensive research was carried out using pre and post focus groups and targeted polling in Ukraine as part of the visa-free and Moving Forward Together campaigns. This allowed the tracking of behavioral change among target populations. Both of these are dedicated communication contracts being handled by dedicated

communication/advertising agencies for whom this type of research is inherent in this type of campaign.

There is some feedback which suggests that adaptations could be made to the way that channels and tools are used. Stakeholders, including young people, indicate that more "relatable" content (including story-telling and a focus on concrete issues) would enhance the attractiveness of the communication. It also appears to be a critical condition for the targets' engagement with the content of the communication.

Social media metrics indicate that there is an increase in the reach of this channel but the absence of qualitative data on the actual engagement with the content is a constraint for the evaluation. Insufficient data for other channels is currently a severe constraint.

1.3 EQ9 (i): To what extent the available resources, the organisation, production, validation and the management of communication activities by the EU Delegation are conducive to an efficient, effective and sustainable implementation of the communication activities in the selected neighbourhood countries?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

Understaffing in Delegations is the biggest challenge for the organisation and management of communication activities. Human resources have consistently remained limited or been reduced over the evaluation timeframe, despite evidence of increased budget for communication in all three countries reviewed[46]. This has made managing lots of individual communication contracts a challenge. However, a new approach to communication contracts is being rolled out in the three countries visited, which is the design of larger contracts, clustering several different communication activities rather than one specific communication activity. This approach is expected to generate efficiency gains as they will be less resource-intensive[47] than a multitude of smaller contracts in terms of tender selection and contracting.

Communication activities implemented by the regional OPEN Neighbourhood Programme complement activities implemented by the EUDs, which focus on themes and activities to meet their specific national communication objectives. OPEN Programme contractors reinforce messages and information about the EU through communication of regional messages, and specific regional channels, including an on-line hub and Young Ambassadors initiative – without putting an additional strain on the EUDs' resources because the programme is managed by DG NEAR HQ.

The Delegations are taking a consistent approach to the collection of output data in relation to reach via social media and events. Evidence about target groups is bolstered through polling carried out through the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme and polling and focus group evidence in relation to major campaigns. Overall though, there is less focus placed on a systematic approach to gathering qualitative evidence.

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[46] In Tunisia the total amount allocated to communication through the P&I and Global Allocation increased from €286,000 in 2017 to €463,500 in 2018, whilst the number of full-time equivalents working on communication has decreased from 2 FTEs and 80% in 2016 to 2 FTEs and 10% in 2018. In Ukraine, 3 FTEs (excluding HoS) manage all communication and procurement which was reported to be 14 P&I contracts at a value of 844,000 and a new larger type of contract - the Communicating Europe in Ukraine worth €3.750,00, which will be used to support a range of communication activities. In Armenia a new 3-year Framework Contract was foreseen with circa €1m per year allocated.

[47] The 2018 Annual Report and Forward Plan of the Armenian Delegation reports that a lesson learned is that due to the lack of human resources and complicated procurement procedures FPI 2018 budget will be contracted as one contract. The 2018 Annual Report and Forward Communication Plan for the Ukraine Delegation confirms that the lack of human resources represents a bottleneck. In Armenia and Tunisia there are no communication coordinators.

- **JC 9i.1: The EUD human resources working on communication have the capacity and appropriate procedures to design and manage / implement in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner the communication activities / contracts**

> **Indicator 9i.1.1:** There have been no delays to contacting or managing communication activities and communication activities meet EUD experience in terms of quality and quantity.
>
> **Indicator 9i.1.2**: EU Delegation staff and contractors confirm that the current procedures allow efficient management of communication activities and that no improvements could be foreseen.

Evidence gathered in the field suggests that insufficient human resourcing of EUDs is a challenge in the design and management / implementation of the communication activities / contracts. Moreover, Delegations are managing this challenge in different ways.

In Tunisia, there is no Communication Coordinator and the level of human resources has been reduced each year over the timeframe 2016 – 2018[48], whereas the amount of financial resources allocated to contracts has increased[49]. When compared to resourcing in the Western Balkans, the level of financial and human resources in Ukraine also does not appear to be well matched. The need to ensure enough human resources to manage outsourced communication was also raised by staff in DG NEAR. Furthermore, the EUD in Armenia also does not have a Communication Coordinator. The EUD staff reports that the administrative burden is disproportionate to the level of financial resourcing and the human resources available to administer these financial resources. Despite this, EUD staff reported satisfaction with the quality and quantity of communication activities and with current contractors. Yet it is recognised that there could be improvements made to monitoring to provide more evidence to confirm communication performance.

Despite staffing constraints, no delays in the design and contracting of the communication activities were identified, although there was anecdotal evidence from contractors of capacity constraints, which might slow down the roll out of activities. The evaluation team observed a high level of EUD staff commitment among those working on communication. On the implementation side, contractors described good working relationships with their contracting authority, and an appropriate level of engagement of EUD staff.

In addition to the EUD staff working on communication, the support / engagement provided by other EUD staff (e.g. cooperation section, Heads of section, Head of Delegation) constitutes an enhancing factor: it creates a favorable environment for the implementation of communication activities, engaging staff from different parts of each EUD in creating opportunities for communication and visibility. This helps to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of communication efforts. However, the high level of personal commitment of staff to supporting communication may put the sustainability of the communication results at risk over the longer term, if results are intrinsically linked to individuals.

The three EUDs are pursuing new options for the design and management of the communication activities / contracts to improve effectiveness and efficiency. There is a move to a more consolidated approach to contracting for communication with larger single, comprehensive communication contracts (implemented already in Ukraine – with more to come as a series of other contracts rolled into one Framework Contract, in Tunisia and Armenia). These are expected to improve effectiveness by streamlining communication (including a more systematic and comprehensive approach to monitoring and reporting) and creating synergies between activities (for instance, research into the needs of target audiences and communication preferences could support the whole range of communication activities implemented under the new contracts).

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[48] This timeframe is provided as an example and relates to the information that was made available for consultation by the evaluation team.

[49] In 2017, €286,000 was allocated to communication, in 2018 this was increased to €483,500.

The impact on the administrative burden for the EUDs remains to be determined as larger contracts might nevertheless require more resources dedicated to contract management. It might also make the question of the allocation of different financial and contract management responsibilities between EEAS and DG NEAR staff within Delegations a more pressing issue, given that staff may only authorise payments from their own institution, but may be required to manage communication activities from another institution (i.e. EEAS staff manage communication activities, which are resourced from DG NEAR budgets). Aside from this element, there was no other evidence that current procedures are a limiting factor.

- **JC 9i.2: Current monitoring arrangements for communication function at regular intervals and are capable of collecting data, detecting problems and issues to inform decision-making**

Indicator 9i.2.1: Contractual arrangements resulted in communication activities/results being met and continuity of EU communication / presence in the country / region over the timeframe of the evaluation.

Contractual arrangements over the timeframe of the evaluation have ensured continuity in the communication about the EU in the three selected neighbourhood partner countries.

A wealth of data[50] is collected to measure EU Delegation communication through different channels and tools. This allows the Delegations to monitor the number of people who **will participate or be reached** by events, TV series or on-line campaigns.

However, there is limited focus on gathering target group **feedback**. Contractors gather some feedback at events, and general public polling provides evidence relating to communication campaigns, but there is a need to complement this evidence with a systematic approach to gathering qualitative data, linked to a set of pre-defined qualitative indicators. This would allow comparative analysis across events and would also allow the Delegation to set clearer expectations from contractors.

The monitoring arrangements provide limited insight into the outcomes of communication activities and whether these have been met. However, the communication agencies contracted in Ukraine and Armenia measure the outcomes by testing target audience knowledge of EU support before a campaign and comparing this with target audience awareness following a campaign. Targets were not set to allow assessment of the results of these activities.

- **JC 9i.3: The type, number and budget of communication contracts managed by the EUD communication officers allow for efficient, effective and sustainable implementation of communication activities**

Indicator 9i.3.1: EU Delegation, HQ staff and OPEN programme contractors confirm that the current procedures allow efficient management of communication activities and that no improvements could be foreseen.

The situation in the three partner countries considered differs to some extent, as described below.

In Armenia, the EUD identified that consolidating communication activities via larger contracts would be a way to increase efficiency due to what is described as the 'complicated procedure' for contracting.

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[50] Data includes numbers of unique website visitors, TV viewers, followers and likes on Facebook, tweets and retweets on Twitter, etc.

A further pooling contract was also considered to reinforce media outreach on EU-funded projects given the high levels of fragmentation of the visibility activities. One specific issue highlighted in relation to procurement was the lack of quality control of contractors' reports by someone with communication expertise before the files were reviewed and signed by the hierarchy; this was indicated to be linked to resourcing.

In Tunisia, communication is a shared responsibility among staff in the political and operations sections. Human resourcing is considered to limit what can be achieved but there is strong collaboration and goodwill to support communication within the Delegation. The Delegation works closely with the OPEN Neighbourhood South Project on a range of outreach initiatives in the south of the partner country, including a campus tour under the #EUforYouth campaign.

The Delegation has taken a number of initiatives to try to increase effectiveness and efficiency, including hiring an external communication expert to help to develop the communication strategy and with the day-to-day management of communication activities; and combining existing visibility budgets into one larger contract to increase the visibility of EU support. In addition, the Delegation's decision to focus on one target group: youth, reduces fragmentation of efforts and resources and allows time efficient approaches with the use of social media as the key channel to reach this group. It appears, therefore, that despite limitations, the Delegation is maximising opportunities for collaboration and focus, which help to underpin its efforts. An increase in social media followers in recent years is taken as one of the indicators of the success of this approach. External stakeholders consider that the Delegation is more visible than in the last few years. However, there was consensus that current levels of visibility and public awareness of the EU were lower than stakeholders expected and did not reflect the level of importance that the EU placed on the EU-Tunisia relationship.

In Ukraine the Delegation has also pooled a significant number of different communication budgets to create a large strategic communication pot. Many communication contracts co-exist alongside the overarching framework contract. Many of these deal with network-type activities, e.g. information centres in universities and Euroclubs in schools. A first step towards more efficient management has been taken with the establishment of an overarching contract to co-ordinate these networks' activities and promote the exchange of learning. A second step will be the conclusion of a Framework Contract to cover the activities currently covered by separate contracts and to provide additional flexibility in contracting specific activities within the framework contract, by contracting more easily for one-off activities and contracting for ongoing activities for longer than a year.

Support to the EUDs for the implementation of the communication strategy is also provided by the OPEN neighbourhood programme. In both the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood, the programme delivers additional communication activities, which strengthen reach and engagement (including outside of capital cities). These activities are mainly targeted at young people. As this is a contract managed by DG NEAR HQ, it does not require additional managing resourcing from EUDs. However, political steer and good coordination would harness the full potential of the programme in countries where the EUD works less with the OPEN neighbourhood programme.

1.4 EQ9 (ii): To what extent the set-up of EUICs physically located in the selected partner countries could enhance the outreach of the different target audience by the EUDs and the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

Walk-in EU Info Centres have been a feature of the EU communication for many years. However, the available evidence in the Western Balkans suggests that there is a lack of demand for this type of service. In the Member States, the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) run by DG COMM no longer provide services to spontaneous passers-by. Face-to-face information provision via the EDICs is now only available on a pre-arranged appointment basis.

Evidence from the Western Balkans also points to limited public use of walk-in information centres to the extent that having a physical space for this purpose cannot be justified. However, Info Centres in the Western Balkans serve primarily as external communication support for EU Delegations with a focus on running events for the EU Delegation and other EU communicators. Some EUD staff in the Delegations value EUICs because they believe that they help to raise the visibility of the EU. The EU House model is currently favoured by Headquarters, which brings together EU communication events and activities under one roof.

Evidence relating to the EU Info Centre that functioned in Armenia during 2012-2014 delivered tangible results, including an IT project-communication database tool[51], which is still used by the Delegation today. It provided significant support for EU education in schools and universities through the development of school and university curricula, lesson plans and a university textbook to support education on the EU. There was mixed feedback on levels of use of the walk-in info centre and on communication support, although a wide range of events was held. Feedback from a range of former users and other stakeholders, including journalists, also suggested that the presence of the centre may have led to a confusion that the it was the EU Delegation. The need to re-establish such a centre in Armenia is unclear. The EU Delegation considered that a centre would not add significant value and that it would be difficult to maintain high levels of use over the long term. There were also concerns about the additional management responsibilities and resource implications if a new centre were to be set up. Overall, the EU Delegation was more satisfied with the communication performance of the communication agencies, than with the performance of the previous EU Info Centre.

The results of the survey of EU Delegation Press Officers shows that Delegations in the neighbourhood region would welcome additional human resource support for communication. More specifically, 11 out of 15 Delegations would welcome an event space with logistical support to help organise events; five agreed that establishing a communication coordinator in the capital with a network of info points across the country would be useful. Fifteen Delegations were in favour of funding to be channelled through a multi-annual communication contract to support long-term communication campaigns.

Feedback from government sources and communication contractors suggests that EU Delegations may sometimes need a neutral partner to deliver EU communication on sensitive topics. This is because when topics relate to changing cultural norms or beliefs, the public has a higher level of trust in organisations that are considered to be neutral. The EU Delegation is a political organisation with its own agenda. Both government and communication contractors were of the view that there is a need for face-to-face contact to support EU communication towards the public, but not necessarily a permanent structure. However, these findings do not support the setting up of Info Centres. As highlighted by the domestic violence campaign in Armenia, locally based communication agencies, which may be the local face of an international consortium, can provide a non-political face for EU communication when this is required.

In the case of Ukraine, there is already a wide range of existing networks, but there is no evidence regarding the cost-effectiveness of these or of whether this range of activities (EU Info Centres in universities, EU Careers Days, EU Study Days, Euroclubs, information points in public libraries, a network forum, Business Information Centres, the Europe House project with outreach across the country, the plans under the Communicating Europe contract for an event centre for media in particular, but not limited to media) leaves a gap in provision. It is not therefore possible to form a

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[51] The project communication database is an on-line repository, which facilitates the availability of online information about EU-funded projects

clear judgement as to whether this does leave a gap in service provision and whether it would not be better to use existing networks to plug any such gaps, but doubts were expressed to the team during the field phase as to whether the need had been clearly established.

- **JC 9ii.1: A physical space/ presence for communication purposes in the Capital and/or other locations would make it possible to significantly enhance the reach and engagement by the EU Delegation of new and hard to reach publics**

Indicator 9ii.1.1: Extent that existing contracts and resources do not/ cannot include provisions for on-going face-to-face contact and direct target group outreach relating to EU communication goals.

Indicator 9ii.1.2: Extent that there is evidence from existing or past similar EU structures with physical space in the selected neighbourhood case study partner countries demonstrating that these have significantly enhanced or enhance target group penetration.

Indicator 9ii.1.3: Feedback from the HQ, EU Delegations, contractors, national government and other stakeholders and representatives of target groups confirms that direct, continuous, face-to-face contact and/ or via a 'neutral partner' is the best way for the EU to engage with target groups.

Indicator 9ii.1.4: Consulted EU MS, IOs/ donors confirm the importance of direct, continuous, face-to-face contact as critical to achieving their outreach objectives.

The survey of EU Delegation Press Officers highlights that most Delegations (12 out of 19 Delegation respondents) aim to target people with little or no awareness of the EU. There was a consensus among staff interviewed in EU Delegations in Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine that it would be desirable to do more outreach beyond the capital. In addition to the challenge of reaching citizens outside the capital, the Delegation in Ukraine particularly emphasised the difficulties in building relations with local and regional decision makers. The decentralisation process currently under way in Ukraine has arguably made this even more important.

Stakeholders, including journalists, suggest that citizens outside the capital have lower awareness about the EU. However, according to the EU Delegation Press Officer survey, the main challenge is the lack of understanding of what the EU does (15 out of 19 respondents) rather than the awareness of what the EU is (9 out of 19 respondents).

A significant step in achieving greater outreach in Ukraine was made through a contract with a specialist agency to conclude partnerships with regional media, focusing on providing training on business opportunities to generate articles with information for businesses.

According to the survey of EU Delegation press officers, the Delegations report that they are successful at reaching their main target groups (e.g. young people, students, academics, business people, community leaders, cultural organisations). From a pre-defined list of target groups, in the survey, Delegations indicated that they find it most difficult to reach older people. There is no evidence from the neighbourhood region that this target group would be significantly easier to reach through an Info Centre in the capital or other regions.

The three Delegations considered in this study support their communication activities via direct, physical interaction with target groups via a wide range of different types of outdoor and indoor events, including festivals and concerts, workshops, training and conferences. Some of these events are 'hub-type activities', which bring together a range of other EU information providers, including EU MS embassies, coordinators of technical assistance projects and EU programmes. The types of events organised are similar to those organised with the support of EU Info Centres in the Western Balkans.

There is already a network of Info Centres in universities in Ukraine, but with no direct funding they make a limited contribution to the Delegation's overall EU communication effort. These information centres in universities are also open to the general public (though there is no data on how many members of the public use them). Ukraine has an extensive network of libraries across the country, and the EUD in Ukraine is taking advantage of this network to provide libraries with EU publications. Under the Moving Forward Together campaign in Ukraine[52], i.e. the strategic communication contract, there is a plan for a centre for press conferences and events, while the House of Europe project with cultural institutes to provide information and organise events outside the capital is likely to have a coordinating presence in Kyiv. In addition, Delegation human resources are already stretched, and this would have to be considered if an additional contract was set up.

4.5 EQ10: To what extent the communication activities carried out in the selected partner countries have been coherent, complementary and coordinated with those carried out via EU regional communication programmes (e.g. OPEN Neighbourhood programmes), HQ initiatives and other partners (e.g.; Member States, IFIs, international organisations) active in communicating about EU policies and programmes in the partner country

Summary answer to the evaluation question

EU Delegation external contractors draw on the topics and results of EU-funded projects for their thematic campaigns and range of communication materials that they develop. The East and South projects of the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme also liaise with cooperation assistance projects to support content development. Delegations consider that the activities carried out by the OPEN programme add value to their communication efforts. The OPEN Programme is managed by DG NEAR Headquarters. OPEN Programme contractors liaise with Delegations to share their communication in each country and identify the potential for synergies with Delegation-managed activities, where these exist.

EUD direct collaboration with IFIs and IOs is driven by communication on specific policy themes and the evolution of the political agenda and EU-country relations. EU Delegations do not have a regular programme of meetings with these organisations. The Delegations have closer collaboration with EU Member State embassies, and meetings are scheduled several times a year. The survey of EU Delegation Press Officers pointed to the cultural institutes of the Member States as being particularly interesting communication partners and this is likely to relate to their higher visibility, as they provide services such as language courses and regular activities for citizens. Europe Days are a feature of collaboration with Member State embassies, and other EU programmes. However, EU Member State embassies are also required to serve their own national interests[53] and this impacts on the level and type of engagement with Delegations.

EU Programmes do not share the same objectives and target groups[54] and, thus, do not tend to collaborate with each other / work in silos. EU programmes are coordinated from a range of different offices in the capital, as well as the relevant DGs in Brussels. There is some collaboration between

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[52] https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/41139/eu-delegation-launches-all-ukrainian-%E2%80%9Cmoving-forward-together%E2%80%9D-communication-campaign_en

[53] This was highlighted in Ukraine where the Delegation would like greater collaboration, and Tunisia where, for example, certain Member States have strong bilateral relationships with the country for historical reasons.

[54] For example, the target group for Horizon 2020 is researchers, whereas the target group for Erasmus+ included teachers and young people.

these programmes and EU Delegation communication staff, when there is a link with a specific communication priority, but the degree of collaboration[55] appears to be relatively limited. However, the OPEN projects and EUDs' communication contractors are in contact with the programmes to develop communication content. Overall each partner has well defined roles and they consider that there is enough regular contact to ensure that the communication activities carried out in the selected neighbourhood partner countries have been coherent, complementary and coordinated with those carried out via EU regional communication programmes (e.g. OPEN Neighbourhood programmes), HQ initiatives and other partners (e.g. Member States, IFIs, international organisations). Collaboration with Member States on EU topics (other than major events, such as Europe Day) is weak, and this appears to reflect the way in which the Member States see their role in the neighbourhood region.

- • **JC 10.1: Extent that HQ and EU Delegations coordinate their communication activities in the partner countries to ensure coherence and synergies with other EU programmes/ projects, Member States, IFIs and IOs**

Indicator 10.1.1: EU Delegation, OPEN Programme contractors and staff of other EU programmes, IFIs, international organisations and Member States embassies and cultural institutes confirm regular exchanges on communication activities for coordination/ joint planning purposes.

Indicator 10.1.2: HQ, EU Delegations, EU programmes, Member State Embassies, IFIs, IOs and other partners confirm and provide examples of joint communication activities resulting from a joined-up approach.

The OPEN Neighbourhood programme is a regional communication programme, managed directly by DG NEAR HQ, which implements communication activities in the partner countries of the eastern and southern neighbourhood. The OPEN South and East Projects also liaise with organisations responsible for the implementation of EU funding, as the results and topics of these projects provide communication themes for the OPEN Neighbourhood projects.

The extent that the Delegations in the neighbourhood regions engage with the East and South Projects relates to Delegations' needs and interests. With regards to the three focal countries of this evaluation, the Delegations in Tunisia and Armenia confirmed the added value of inputs from OPEN South and OPEN East, in particular to support communication targeted at young people. In the Delegation survey, these Delegations also confirmed that they use the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme to support their work and confirmed that they considered that they had sufficient overview of OPEN Neighbourhood results through reports. In interviews, the Delegation in the Ukraine reported not involving the OPEN East project in its communication planning to any great extent and this was also confirmed in the Delegation's response to the survey, which confirmed that it did not use the OPEN Programme to support its work.

EU Delegations set up regular collaboration with the cultural institutes of the Member States both individually and through local 'clusters' of their umbrella organisation, EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture), and with other EU programmes. This collaboration tends to focus on specific initiatives such as Europe Days, film festivals and other outreach events, such as concerts and cultural exhibitions. The level of interest and capacity of the Member State embassies and other communication partners influences the amount and level of collaboration with the EU Delegation.

EU Delegation Annual Reports and Forward Plans appear to place less emphasis on structured planning with IFIs and IOs than with Member State embassies. However, there is evidence to confirm specific collaboration in line with major communication themes, with UNESCO and the International Organisation for Migration in Tunisia, and with the UN in Armenia around the annual Human Rights Prize. However, there is regular structured collaboration in relation to visibility and communication around cooperation projects. In line with their contractual requirements, projects share their

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[55] Common branding for example "EU4.(country/sector)" brings communication by the different programmes under one umbrella.

communication plans with Delegations, including details of specific opening events. Delegation communication contractors also liaise with projects to source content for thematic campaigns and other communication pieces...

According to the EU Delegation survey, EU Delegations attach greater importance to working with local stakeholder organisations than working with international organisations. The survey confirms that civil society organisations are viewed as the most critical partners followed by cultural organisations. The Delegations also rated collaborating with Member State cultural institutes highly, more so than with MS embassies. This result reflects the fact that embassies are Member States' official, political representation in a country, and as such are viewed as formal institutions, whereas cultural institutes are typically more accessible to the public as they offer a programme of events, including, for example, language courses.

- **JC 10.2: Extent that the establishment of EU Info Centres (acting as hubs) would enhance coordination, increase coherence and outreach of communication activities implemented by the EUD, the OPEN Programme, other EU programmes, EU MS, the national government and other donors (communicating on EU policies and values) in the ENI partner countries**

Indicator 10.2.1: Strength of consensus among EU Delegation staff that more focus on coordination would have been desirable / necessary and there is a consistent rationale for this.

Indicator 10.2.2: Consensus among EU Delegation staff and partners that EU Info Centres are a desirable and feasible mechanism to increase coherence between the Delegation, the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme and other regional programmes if there were an EUIC.

Interviews with EU Delegation staff working on communication, and responses to the survey of EU Delegations, confirmed that lack of human resources to manage external resources and the administrative burden of managing communication contracts were key limitations. Whilst the Delegation in Tunisia was positive about the possible contribution that could be made by an EU Info Centre, given the additional manpower that would be made available, the Delegations in Armenia and Ukraine were not convinced that this would represent an improvement on what is being achieved via existing communication contracts. EU Delegations are satisfied that the recent focus on communication campaigning and pooling communication funds via longer and higher budget contracts have made necessary improvements to communication in recent years. In addition, the Armenian Delegation's experience of running an Info Centre also led to their additional concerns. The Delegation pointed to the additional administrative burden that setting up and managing an Info Centre would entail and reported that this would not be compensated through any clear added value beyond what current contractors are able to achieve.

A review of reports, Terms of Reference, findings from surveys and interviews did not produce any evidence to suggest that there is a lack of coherence between the communication activities implemented by the Delegations and those implemented by the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme projects. The evidence instead points to the OPEN Programme being highly complementary and valued by the EU Delegations.

In consequence, there is a lack of consensus among EU Delegation staff and partners that EU Info Centres would be a desirable mechanism to increase the level of coherence between EU Delegations and the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme and other regional programmes. There is regular liaison between staff responsible for communication in the Delegations, staff working on communication at DG NEAR HQ (who manage the OPEN Programme) and the contractors responsible for implementing the programme in the eastern and southern neighbourhood. In addition, OPEN Neighbourhood contractors collaborate with other EU programmes and projects to source content for their thematic campaigns.

4.6 EQ11: To what extent the communication activities implemented by HQ and the EU Delegations have contributed / are contributing to raising public awareness about the EU, its policies and values in the selected neighbourhood partner countries?

Summary answer to the evaluation question

A wide range of communication activities contribute to the achievement of the priorities set in the Delegations' Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Plans, and in OPEN South and East Projects' ToR and reports.

Data is collected systematically to confirm the reach and levels of participation in communication activities, channels and tools that are used to communicate, for example, events, online, and social and traditional media. Some of the reach figures can be impressive particularly when mass media are used. Communication contractors' data confirm that repetitive exposure increases the likelihood of target groups seeing a communication material. A comparison with data collected by other EU communication campaigns run for example by DG COMM confirms that few social media metrics[56] are used. There is a tendency to track the number of followers and fans rather than metrics which confirm engagement, such as metrics for shares, retweets and analysis of comments.

Whilst engagement levels provide greater insights into communication effectiveness than increased awareness, this question concerns the extent of raised awareness. The annual polling exercises, which are implemented in each country, ask citizens to answer structured questions on lists of pre-defined topics on, for example, perceptions of the EU, the benefits of EU support, EU values and how these reflect their own values. The collection of annual polling data is interesting, but because it is not generally tailored to report back on specific communication campaigns (for example by testing unprompted and prompted recall of messages / materials), it cannot provide an accurate picture of communication success. There were some examples of tailored pre and post campaign polling in both Armenia and Ukraine, but this is not used systematically given the budgetary implications.

Given that polling typically gathers data from cohorts of 500, 1,000 and 2,000 citizens, it cannot be used as a form of measurement for communication activities which are targeted to small, specific target group segments. When small target group segments are targeted through specific activities such as events, attendance figures and participation rates provide an indication of the perceived level of interest of target audiences as well as the level of effectiveness of event promotion. However, to understand the value of each event, there is a need to ask participants how they found the event and what they got out of it. Delegations collect informal feedback by talking to event participants and via email feedback, and contractors monitor participants' event experiences. However, there is limited structured qualitative data collection, for example via focus groups, to better understand what works and what does not and why, and to understand participants' expectations. The Communicating Europe Together campaign in Ukraine is paving the way for change with more advanced forms of measurement, e.g. the upfront market research for the visa-free campaign, which enabled the campaign to segment audiences by traveller type.[57]

The gap in qualitative research is also relevant to the use of polling data. Good practice in the evaluation and monitoring of communication activities combines quantitative data with insights from target audiences. Feedback from users of EU communication, including journalists, other EU programmes, NGOs, government representatives and focus groups with young people suggest that EU communication is making a positive contribution, although all point to a need to improve reach and engagement of target groups outside the capital cities. Data in recent years points to increases in terms of numbers of followers on social media accounts, and there are some improvements in general public opinion on the EU, particularly in Armenia which has seen a significant uplift in positive views of the EU from 48% to 62%, whilst the number of people who feel positive about the EU is 56% in Ukraine and 50% in Tunisia.

There are also several internal constraints which impact upon Delegations' management of communication, including levels of human resources, the administrative burden of managing contracts and the delegation of responsibilities between staff from EEAS and DG NEAR. The OPEN South and East Projects add value because they complement the work of EU Delegation contractors, without adding to administrative burden as they are managed by DG NEAR HQ. However, overall most Delegations are concerned about the level of human resources allocated to manage

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[56] Social media metrics are described in DG COMM's communication network matrix.
[57] More information is provided in the country note on Ukraine in Annex 3.

communication contracts.

Levels of support for the EU in these countries are relatively high[58], but this cannot be directly attributed to the communication activities implemented by the EU Delegations given the range of factors that influence public opinion. However, there are examples of formal measurement of the contribution to public awareness as communication professionals understand this – few, but they do exist and show a clear causal link. At an empirical level, moreover, it is reasonable to assume from the evidence collected that there is a contribution to public awareness of the policies, programmes and values of the EU, and that this is significant among key target groups.

- **JC 11.1: Extent that HQ, EU Delegation contractors can quantify and/or qualify increases in target audience awareness of the EU, its policies and values because of the communication activities**

Indicator 11.1.1 EU Delegation monitoring data confirms that their target audiences have enhanced awareness resulting from their participation in EU Delegation communication activities.

Indicator 11.1.2: Perceptions of representatives of target groups, multipliers, Member States embassies, IFIs, IOs and other stakeholders and partners confirm that EU Delegation activities and the regional communication programme are contributing to increasing target audience awareness.

The majority of EU Delegation monitoring data relates to target group reach, some of this is estimated, for example in relation to TV viewing figures and readership numbers. Different types of reach data are collected in addition to media circulation and viewership figures, including event participation, website and social media metrics. However, reach data does not confirm enhanced awareness. It is not possible to know whether this communication results in an increase in target groups' levels of awareness, without testing pre-message-exposure awareness. Therefore, increased awareness can only be assumed, unless specific research is carried out (for which the evaluation identified some evidence in Ukraine and Armenia) to find out from target groups exposed to the campaign if the information that they have received has increased their level of awareness on a topic. It may be plausible to assume that levels of awareness on a very specific topic are low and that putting information into the public domain on the topic leads to an increase of awareness, but this does not necessarily mean that exposure to a topic results in target groups understanding what the topic is about or what its relevance is to their lives.

The main sources of evidence available to EU Delegations to confirm that their communication activities enhanced target audience awareness of the EU are:

- **Social media: the main evidence collected relates to followers, fans, likes and shares.** However, unless social media users leave comments on Delegation social media feeds it is not possible to ascertain that levels of awareness have been raised.

- Structured and unstructured feedback from event participants or target groups exposed to communication campaigns: interviews with contractors and EU Delegations and Delegation Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Planning confirmed that events have led to increased information, in particular where new information that was not in the public domain is conveyed or when event participants have not interacted with the EU before. However, the evaluation team did not gain access to any reports or monitoring data to confirm

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[58] Levels of public opinion in EU partner countries in the eastern and southern neighbourhood are highlighted in the reports of public opinion polls carried out under the auspices of the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme and published online on the EUNeighbours portal (https://www.euneighbours.eu/en)

the scale or scope of this raised awareness, if it occurred, which reflects the fact that reports of raised awareness were anecdotal rather than reported using structured formats. However, stakeholders, including journalists, highlighted the positive contribution made by EU Delegation communication to raising awareness of the EU although there was a general call for more communication and for this communication to also reach target audiences outside the capitals.

- Opinion polling: the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme contractors run public opinion polls, which confirms citizens' perceptions of the EU. Polling is useful because it gives a year-on-year view of sentiment in each country. However, if the collection of data for these annual polls[59] is not specific to test the recall and understanding of messages from specific communication activities, it is not possible to link the results of polls directly to EU communication. Despite the limitations in attributing increases in public opinion of the EU to EU Delegation activities, it is reasonable to assume that Delegation activities made a contribution to increasing public awareness of the EU by ensuring that information about the EU was in the public domain and that this was targeted to a range of different target groups.

- Focus groups: the evaluation team observed limited use of in-depth qualitative research to confirm communication campaign results. However, in-depth pre and post campaign research was used to support analysis of several campaigns, in Ukraine[60]. The Communicating Europe in Ukraine campaign and the smaller visa-free campaign are examples of good practice. The campaigns were designed using research to identify the reasons for the perception of the EU and the influences which formed that perception. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were organised with Ukrainians who were positive or neutral about relations with the EU. The campaign is also measuring recall and increases in awareness of components of the campaign. This is, however, only a first step as it is necessary to go beyond to understand whether this led to raised awareness and changed behaviours. In Armenia, stakeholders confirmed the positive impact of the Delegation in particular in highlighting issues relating to domestic violence and it was confirmed that EU communication had supported the passing into law of a new legislation.

There was a very limited focus on the use of qualitative research (for example use of focus groups to better understand target group perceptions and to allow better tailoring of messages to inform EU Delegation's information on communication performance), even if on occasion there is some message testing by communication agencies. However, based on the evidence that is available, which is backed up by stakeholder feedback, it can be assumed that EU Delegation communication did contribute to raising awareness in the three neighbourhood partner countries.

- **JC 11.2: There are factors that have had a positive or negative effect on raising awareness**

Indicator 11.2.1: Perceptions of the Delegation or regional communication project contractors of target group segments who have been harder or easier to reach/ influence and the reason for this.
Indicator 11.2.2: Level of awareness that the citizens of the selected case study countries have about the European Union and the EU cooperation with their country.

The research evidence to answer this judgement criterion draws on the results of the EU Delegation survey, documentary evidence relating to existing public opinion levels, and interviews with Delegation communication staff, communication contractors and stakeholders, who participated in or were aware of EU communication in each country. A range of internal and external factors influence raising public awareness about the EU.

Internal factors include:

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[59] For example, For example, the Spring 2019, (wave 4) opinion poll that was run in the Ukraine, included questions related to the following topics: general perceptions of the EU; EU values; EU relations with Ukraine; EU financial support and its effectiveness.

[60] More information is provided in the partner country note on Ukraine in Annex 3.

- the personality and focus of the Head of Delegation, which can have a significant impact on awareness-raising. The public finds it easier to associate messages and ideas with real people rather than with institutions or organisations. There is consistent evidence to confirm that a positive push on communication from the Ambassador makes a difference to public perceptions of the EU.

- for the Tunisian Delegation (as reported in the survey) the main internal issue was reported to be the lack of human resources to manage external contractors. Constraints around the pooling of resources from communication contracts and a lack of clarity from HQ on the communication strategy for the region and general guidance on communication expectations, were highlighted as other limiting factors.

- for the Ukraine and Armenian Delegations lack of human resources to manage external contractors and administrative burden related to communication contracts were indicated to be the main limiting factors. Armenia also indicated that level of communication expertise of communication contractors was a contributing limiting factor and the Ukraine Delegation pointed to constraints relating to the duration of contracts.

- Limitations relating to the fact that within a Delegation, the responsibilities for communication and the management of contracts and financial sign-off is sometimes split between EEAS and DG NEAR, as is the case in Tunisia.

However, from interviews with EU Delegation staff, there was no suggestion that there is insufficient funding available for communication contracts/the amount of money allocated to communication.

There are constraints in the external communication environment, which were confirmed in the survey of EU Delegations and during the field missions, including:

- As reported by the Tunisian and Ukrainian Delegations in the survey: difficulties in engaging target groups via digital means, i.e. online; insufficient research into target group needs and difficulties in defining appropriate messages for target groups as well as confusion due to messaging from international organisations, and in Ukraine specifically the challenging of establishing public trust in the EU Delegation was highlighted. In the same survey, the Armenian Delegation was neutral or disagreed that the listed external factors were constraints to communication.
- Existing levels of positive opinion about the EU, which range between circa 50% and 60% in the three countries investigated, according to the 2019 and 2018 public opinion polling published on the Open Neighbours portal[61].
- The current state of political affairs and the level of media freedom, which is important given that the media are the main target group for Delegations.
- Propaganda from Russia is noted as a problem in the eastern neighbourhood countries and radicalisation of youth as a problem in the southern neighbourhood, as described in the EU Delegation's Information and Communication Annual Report and Forward Planning.
- The geographic area to be covered and the size and number of target groups in relation to the availability of human and financial resources. There is a tendency to place greater focus on target groups in the capital and to focus on those who already have some awareness and interest in the EU, for example students and academics. There is less focus on people who may have limited awareness of the EU and may be hard to reach. However, this targeting appears to be changing and examples are the increased focus on older people in Armenia, and in Ukraine through the visa-free and Communicating Europe campaigns, the regional media campaign and the future "Europe House" project with its plans for events moving around the country, and general acceptance across all three Delegations of the importance of reaching target groups outside the capital.

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[61] Polling reports are published on the EUNeighbours portal, see: https://www.euneighbours.eu/

6. OVERALL FINDINGS

Here, we recall the focus of the evaluation in the IPA beneficiaries and the three selected neighbourhood countries. In the IPA beneficiaries the evaluation assessed the performance of the Info Centres and their fit with EU Delegation communication planning but did not extend to a review of other communication contracts managed by EU Delegations. In the neighbourhood region, the focus of the evaluation was the implementation of the EU Delegation's communication plan in three countries by external communication contractors, hence the scope was much smaller.

6.1. Key findings for the IPA beneficiaries

Looked at empirically, EU Info Centres in the Western Balkans and Turkey are doing valuable work. Subject to some nuances, EU Delegations are pleased with the support they receive from Info Centres and believe they contribute to improving awareness of EU policies, projects and values, and of the accession process.

1. EU Info Centre Concept

The evaluation shows that there is no shared concept for an "EU information centre"
As a result, different types of structures have been set up in each IPA beneficiary, taking into account the experience and lessons learnt of other Delegations but not based on a pre-defined analysis of which model to use in which beneficiary and why. Examples of the different models[62] found include:

- An Info Centre in the capital with a walk-in centre for visits and an event space (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro);
- An Info Centre in the capital and Info Centres or equivalent (e.g. called Info Points) in other cities (Bosnia and Herzegovina), i.e. providing a walk-in service and event space;
- An Info Centre Coordinator and network of Info Centres staffed by one person in Chambers of Commerce (Turkey), providing a walk-in service and responsible for running events;
- An Info Centre in the capital and Info Points in municipalities (North Macedonia) staffed with one individual at the expense of the municipality, providing a walk-in service but supported with materials and budget for Europe Day events.
- Info Corners in university libraries (North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey) which make information available on the EU.

EUICs coordinate Info Points/Info Corners to some extent, but coordination is limited where the funding of the latter is low and/or they do not receive EU funding. In the Western Balkans, EU Info Centres, Info Points and Info Corners collaborate on developing and sharing communication products, carrying out joint events or coordinating on event planning, and sharing ideas. In Turkey, the EU Info Centres collaborate more rarely with each other but instead collaborate with the communication contractor responsible for implementing the Delegation's communication activities. However, overall collaboration does not extend to developing synergies, and this is a shortcoming in the implementation.

The two core services that the EU Info Centres provide are information and organisation of events. To support these activities, the centres have developed their own dedicated websites and social media accounts (in most cases), and they support communication to the media and

Delegation websites and social media (in most cases). In addition, some Info Centres either run communication campaigns directly or support the Delegations to run communication campaigns.

Events are one of the most important tools, which EU Info Centres use to engage directly with target audiences. However, the evaluation identified a lack of formal process for gathering target group feedback, understanding outcomes of these events and identifying areas for improvement.

EU Delegations, EU Member State embassies and EU programmes view EU Info Centres as hubs for the EU's public diplomacy outreach activities among target groups. The centres are often the location of choice for EU-related activities of the EU Delegation and project partners and are responsible for the initiation of many EU-related activities. However, the hub or networking effect seems to come from these meetings rather than from the cumulative effect of activities on EU topics in their premises.

EU Delegations ensure that **EU Info Centres remain independent of politically-sensitive public diplomacy issues but the centres do contribute to the development and implementation of public diplomacy** through dissemination of content (in various forms) aligned with public diplomacy objectives (messaging on EU policies and values etc.). However, this is not always carried out systematically or systematically recorded. EUICs do not necessarily consider public diplomacy to be part of their core remit and their contribution largely takes the form of logistics and networking support (but in some cases they provide advice on content).

2. Info Centre target audiences

EU Delegations set EU Info Centre objectives in line with EU institutional objectives for the region as well as EU objectives for each beneficiary, **rather than based on the interests of the target groups**. The EU Info Centre staff have strong local knowledge of target groups, but the top-down approach to objective setting does not reflect current good practice, which is to conduct research into target group needs and then tailor institutional objectives so that they reflect the messages that the institution wants to achieve in a format that resonates with target groups.

There is no common/standard process for identifying and prioritising the target groups by Info Centres in and across the IPA beneficiaries, even if the importance and role of this prioritisation is understood in Delegations. Consequently, Info Centres aim to reach a very wide range of target group segments, and often address only very broad segments, e.g. 'young people', or 'business'. In practice, Info Centres tend to focus on a smaller number of receptive target groups, such as children, students and academics, but in some cases, targeting these groups may not support the achievement of all the objectives described in Delegations' communication plans.

There is limited structured research into target group needs. This is recognised by Delegations and many EU Info Centre staff, who consider that greater specificity is desirable in establishing target groups' needs because:

- o   target groups have been too broadly defined (in extreme cases as "the public");
- o   target groups are too many to be realistic;
- o   more segmentation and prioritisation are needed.

3. Physical office

EU Info Centres provide information online and also maintain a walk-in service, despite very low numbers of walk-in visitors. It cannot be ruled out that more active outreach activities would generate more walk-in visits, but this seems unlikely, as it does not appear that existing outreach activities stimulate walk-in visits at present. The lack of walk-in visitors, therefore, raises questions about the need to have staff and facilities permanently available to

provide this form of information service. Digital services (including website and social media accounts, email/messaging, and potentially a chat function) and face-to-face meetings by appointment can meet information needs, as evidenced by EDICs in the Member States, which provide meetings by appointment.

Some EU Info Centres and Info Point premises are not well suited for public access. In some cases, this is due to the internal layout of premises and / or insufficient prominence and visibility from the street level. However, it is unlikely that this alone is responsible for the low number of walk-in visitors, which appears to be a function of low demand overall for a walk-in service, particularly now that Internet access is essentially as ubiquitous in these countries as in the EU.

Some EU Info Centre spaces are used for a wide range of events for EU Delegations and other entities which are organised:
- as part of the EU Info Centre's mission;
- by EU-funded projects;
- by civil society (which is often also EU-funded) for events in line with EU objectives;
- by Member State embassies and cultural institutes;
- for Delegation invitation-only meetings.

EU Delegations and HQ aim to maximise the use of EUIC premises for EU-related events. They see this as having beneficial spillover effects for their image and awareness of what the EU is doing in the beneficiary. This support is appreciated by EU project implementing partners and civil society who are able to use EUIC premises and their logistical support free of charge, and it contributes to them having a positive view of the EU. However**, when EUICs provide logistical support to other organisations, this can reduce EUIC staff's capacity to support EU Delegations' communication** if this is not properly recognised in the staffing requirements in the ToR.

There is a lack of evidence to confirm the efficiency of maintaining permanent EU event spaces in contrast to renting appropriate spaces on a case-by-case basis. At the same time, there are concerns about the potential implications for human resources if Info Centre contractors were required to rent space for each individual event.
Some events take place outside the centres, for example in universities or schools. Having a permanent space appears to pressure staff to focus on ensuring that meeting rooms are well-used rather than focussing on other activities, which might be more impactful. Also, there are pros and cons to retaining the current info centre spaces and re-purposing them as event centres, particularly as some centres are located within multi-purpose buildings and **cannot be seen** from the street.

4. <u>EUIC Performance</u>

Across all IPA beneficiaries, EU Delegations are satisfied with the contribution made by EU Info Centres in raising awareness.
Most stakeholders interviewed, whether in Delegations, civil society, working for EU-funded projects or EU programmes, confirmed that EU Info Centres contribute to raising awareness (though they cannot back this up with robust evidence). Not all EU Info Centres are performing equally well, but in all cases, they are nevertheless regarded as adding value by supplementing the EU Delegation 'presence' above all in the capital or in their location, where there is a fully funded centre in another city.

The EU Delegations and EU Info Centres reached new audiences with their campaigns.
This is likely to have produced spin-off benefits, but this cannot be proven, and there is little evidence that the EU Info Centres have so far proactively sought to build on those new audiences.

EUICs have added value to EU communication by other partners / communicators in numerous ways, for example:

- o **EUICs support implicit and sometimes explicit messages on EU values,** which do not appear to be communicated to any great extent by other EU programmes and/or beneficiary governments, even if EU Member State embassy communication may implicitly support communication of these messages. EUIC and Delegation staff frequently explicitly recognise that conveying the importance of the values is a priority, albeit not always one recognised in formal HQ and Delegation communication planning. They communicate on them because that brings insights into the need for the policies the path to accession requires the beneficiary to adopt and that the accession process, therefore, does not stop with formal transposition of the 'acquis communautaire', but implies actual implementation of the legislation.

EUICs fulfilled the requirement in their ToR to coordinate with other programmes and organisations through regular meetings with EU MS Embassies, in particular, and generally via meetings organised by the Delegation. There are also some initiatives, such as "Meet the Ambassadors" programmes, which, from participant numbers, appear to be effective. EUICs also collaborate with Member State cultural institutes, either directly or through EUNIC clusters. However, there is insufficient forward planning or strategising, meaning that the collaborative efforts tend to be more ad-hoc.

There were limits to the collaboration and coordination between EUICs and other partners. Even if there is an appetite for this in Delegations or at DG NEAR HQ, this potential cannot be easily realised. The evidence, particularly from the field phase, is that there are barriers to more collaboration. The partners, in particular, Member State Embassies, have limited resources and limited communication capabilities. They recognise the theory of partnership in the EU and in many areas have convergent objectives and messages but are not able to make the expansion of collaboration a priority – nor are their governments indicating to them that they see it as a priority.

5. <u>Performance measurement</u>

As EUICs' communication objectives were not set drawing on a theory-of-change model or intervention logic starting from a problem/needs assessment, their outputs and outcomes and the specific indicators to measure their achievements have not been properly defined. This has had an impact on the establishment of baselines and targets, the extent and frequency of data collection and monitoring, the comparability of data within and across IPA beneficiaries, and the assessment of the Info Centres' performance at Delegation and Headquarters level.

EUIC Terms of Reference were intended to provide a broad and flexible framework to support Delegations' planned and ad hoc activities, but **the lack of specificity in ToR and EU Delegation Information and Communication Forward Plans, including the role of EUICs in the Delegations' Forward Plan Template, was a constraint on performance management.** This resulted in a lack of specificity in the reporting of results in Info Centre Final Reports and insufficient information to support lesson learning.

It is difficult to determine whether EU Info Centres have achieved their objectives or any causal link between their activities and the achievement of outcomes, for example raised awareness or increased knowledge of the EU within a target group or population. This relates to two main issues: inconsistencies in the collection and reporting of monitoring data, and the lack of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound objectives.

The assessment of performance is based only on reach data and observations. Monitoring/reporting focuses on the reach of target groups, including numbers of visitors in person and on-line, numbers of participants in events, and numbers of followers on social media. The evaluation team observed some inconsistencies in the data collected, including in relation to the double counting of event participants and visitors to centres. **There is no systematic collection of feedback from target groups** even if event organisers ascertain participant satisfaction on an

informal basis. There is no systematic learning of lessons from digital data, e.g. reasons for peaks in web traffic or success of particular social media posts. Furthermore, there is no systematic analysis of visitor profiles or the reasons for the visit (or of the very limited number of email inquiries). **The data collected is often not related to targets or baselines.** Data is reported annually without measuring this performance against earlier years, even over the three years of a single contract. EU Delegations struggle to have a detailed overview at national level. The EU Delegations see the need for a more systematic approach to monitoring. There are efficiency gains to be made from monitoring once it is in place but setting it up is currently regarded as being too time-consuming (with current workloads) for this to be prioritised.

6. <u>Finance and Contracting</u>

Service contracts have been appropriate in supporting Info Centres and their communication activities in most IPA beneficiaries. The problems that have arisen have come from the administrative burden relating to repeated contracting, and sometimes from frequent changes of contractor as a result, rather than from them being service contracts. Longer-term contracts are beneficial as they free time for Delegation staff to spend more time on communication and working proactively with Info Centres and for Info Centres to develop their expertise and track record in service delivery. Fee-based contracts generally proved to be more practical than global price contracts.

Contract management remains burdensome and takes resources away from communication. The low level of resource in the EUD and the lengthy approval processes in some cases contribute to the impact of the administrative burden. Shorter processes put in place for the approval of incidentals in some Delegations are a step forward.

The amount of funding received by each information structure has an impact on what it can achieve. Higher value contracts with greater focus on communication professionalism would increase the volume and quality of communication activities and EU Delegation access to mass media, particularly TV, which is still an important channel in the beneficiaries.

The real added value of some information structures (e.g. Info Points) to support information provision and EU Delegation communication is questionable. This is linked to the limited budgets received and, sometimes, the voluntary nature of their involvement.

There are barriers to outreach because current resources are too limited to reach some target groups and/or EU Info Centres often cover a wide territory, including remote areas with poor communication networks (i.e. road and rail), making access more time-consuming that the distances might sometimes suggest.

Based on the available financial data, it is not possible to assess whether greater communication effects could be achieved through different choices of communication channels and tools because it is not possible to relate current outcomes clearly to specific levels of spending. First, budgets do not appear to have been established using any consistent criteria. Second, they are not presented in a way, which makes it possible to identify clearly the services provided to the Delegation, ranging from media monitoring to polling. Not every Info Centre provides the same services to the Delegation. Moreover, thematic campaigns may be funded by the Delegation and supported by the Info Centre, or vice-versa. Greater transparency on this would assist Headquarters in obtaining an overview.

6.2. Key findings clustered by neighbourhood partner countries

Examined empirically, and subject to the proviso that this evaluation looked at only three partner countries in the neighbourhood region in any depth, communication by the three EU Delegations is

making a positive contribution to awareness and understanding of EU policies, projects and values in the region.

There are many challenges in reaching evidence-based conclusions, including the lack of documentary evidence when compared with documents relating to the Info Centres in the Western Balkans and Turkey. However, the evidence suffices to justify broad-based conclusions and recommendations, including on whether there is a place in the countries of the region for Info Centre networks.

EU Delegation approach

EU Delegation communication is characterised by an increasing focus **integrated multi-channel campaigns** implemented by communication agencies**.** A wide range of communication activities are implemented in Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine on different communication topics, which target different groups in line with EU priorities in each country. These are described in the Delegations' Information and Communication Annual Reports and Forward Plans, and in OPEN South and East Project reports.

Communication objectives have not been set drawing on a theory-of-change or **intervention logic model** starting from a problem/needs assessment. Their outputs and outcomes, and the specific indicators to measure their achievements in particular at outcome level, have not been systematically defined. This has had an impact on the establishment of processes to set baselines and targets (including collection of relevant data, the extent and frequency of data collection and monitoring, the comparability of data within and across partner countries, and understanding of Delegation and contractor performance)

There is no single **process for identifying target groups and their needs.** The evaluation identified some examples of good practice in terms of prior audience research, establishment of baselines, interim and ex-post measurement, but these have yet to be fully mainstreamed into EU Delegations' communication approaches.

Thus, there has been a **top-down approach** on the part of Headquarters to setting overall objectives for the neighbourhood region. Within this framework, Delegations have considerable discretion in implementation because it is recognised that local circumstances differ.

Recently, however, the approach to EU Delegation communication has been increasingly characterised by outsourcing to professional communication agencies. At the level of specific campaigns run by these agencies, **more** emphasis is being placed on research into target group needs and characteristics, establishing baselines to be set and changes in awareness, knowledge, understanding and behaviour to be measured.

Communication performance

Feedback from users of EU communication, including journalists, other EU programmes, NGOs and government representatives suggests that EU Delegation communication in Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine is making a **positive contribution** to raising awareness and changing views.

In each country, data is collected to confirm the **reach** and levels of participation in the key activities, channels and tools used to communicate, for example, events, on-line, and social and traditional media. Reach figures can be impressive, particularly when mass media are used, but can be misleading as they measure opportunities to see a campaign message, but are no guarantee that it was actually seen, still less appropriated.

However, the evidence from the case study partner countries indicates there are missed opportunities for collating and **analysing the data,** which often stem from under-resourcing in Delegations. This has resulted in a limited focus on systematic qualitative data collection to

understand more about what works and what does not, why, and what participants' expectations are. This is an important gap, which hampers understanding of the effectiveness of communication activities and was raised by stakeholders as a specific problem in Tunisia. The Communicating Europe campaign in Ukraine is paving the way for change with more advanced forms of measurement.

There is monitoring data in recent years which points to increases in terms **of numbers of followers on social media accounts** in all three partner countries. In Armenia and Ukraine, there are also some improvements in general public opinion on the EU, though these cannot be directly attributed to EU Delegation communication, even if it is likely that Delegation communication made a contribution[63], as general polling data does ask citizens if they recall to specific EU Delegation communication elements. However, polling is included as part of some EU Delegation campaigns.

The annual polling exercises provide a useful benchmark of citizens' perceptions of the EU (for example, the benefits of EU support, and EU values) **but do not suffice** as a tool to understand EU Delegation communication outcomes. There are some examples of polling relating to specific communication campaigns, but these are exceptions.

The Communicating Europe campaign in Ukraine provides an **example of good practice** in understanding the characteristics of the target group upfront, setting baselines, measuring progress during the campaign and creating a tag line (Moving Forward Together) that is being adopted by other EU-funded campaigns in order to create a single brand across many forms of EU communication.

There are examples in both Armenia and Ukraine of **successful communication campaigns/activities** which have made a demonstrable impact on people's knowledge and actions, for example the campaign against domestic violence in Armenia and the visa-free campaign in Ukraine. Both campaigns were highly strategic and targeted in their approach, engaged with relevant multipliers and target groups, and used a range of different communication channels and tools. In addition, they managed to resonate with target groups' and multipliers' own self-interests, for example, engaging with the church in Armenia helped to sway target audiences' appreciation of the topic.

Delegations in all three case study partner countries recognise that more needs to be done to reach and engage with **target audiences outside the capital.** Civil society organisations and cultural institutes are the preferred partners to support the amplification of EU messages and content. The institutes achieve a good level of visibility and participation because they already provide a range of services at grass-roots level, either directly or through cultural networks. However, this cannot fully substitute for direct Delegation involvement, either through better resourcing of the Delegation itself or through properly targeted communication agency-led campaigns.

Managing communication

A new approach to communication contracts is being rolled out in the three countries visited, namely the design of one or more larger contracts that cover most aspects of communication. This is expected to **generate efficiency gains** as the contracts will be less resource-intensive than a

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[63] In Armenia, there was a significant uplift in positive views on the EU from 48% in 2018 to 62% in 2019[63], and in Ukraine from 49% in 2018 to 56% in 2019. In Tunisia, the number of people who felt positive about the EU declined slightly from 50% in 2018 to 48% in 2019, which reflected the slight decline in opinion across the Maghreb

multitude of smaller contracts in terms of tender selection and contracting, monitoring and evaluation, and effectiveness.

Despite this, **understaffing** is identified by the Delegations as the **biggest challenge** for the organisation and management of communication activities. Resources have consistently remained limited over the evaluation timeframe and are particularly acute in Tunisia, where there is no Communication Coordinator. This understaffing was manifest to the evaluation team during the field missions, despite the high level of commitment and strong collaboration among EU Delegation staff which supports the effectiveness and efficiency of communication efforts. The administrative burden of managing contracts is felt acutely in Tunisia and Armenia, in particular.

The OPEN Neighbourhood Programme (OPEN South and East Projects) adds value because it **complements** the work of the EU Delegation, is directly managed by HQ, and Delegations may decide to work with the Programme at their discretion and depending on their needs.

Collaboration

There are processes in place in each Delegation to ensure a **degree of collaboration** between EU funded projects and EU Delegation communication contractors, as these contractors draw on the content of EU-funded projects for the thematic campaigns and communication materials they develop. The OPEN Neighbourhood Programme contractors also liaise with projects for the same purpose.

EUD collaboration with IFIs and International Organisations (IOs) on communication is **limited** to communication on specific projects. This is in-line with EU Delegation Annual Reports and Forward Plans, which place limited emphasis on structured planning with IFIs and IOs.

EU Delegations view EU Member State embassies and their cultural institutes as important communication **partners**. Despite regular meetings, collaboration does not always go as far as Delegations would like. Moreover, Member State embassies tend to have national agendas that take priority, and cooperation is rarely close except when there is a compelling political need for common messaging, or around events such as Europe Day.

Options for setting up an Info Centre

The EU Delegation and stakeholders have mixed views on the level of **visibility** that the former Info Centre pilot project in Armenia achieved, and its **added value**. Yet, the EU Info Centre in Armenia achieved several tangible outputs. For example, the information content management tool is still used by the Delegation and there was significant support for EU education[64] in schools and universities (used in 12 schools and Yerevan State University and recommended by the Ministry of Education at the time).

In Ukraine, several structures are already providing **face-to-face information** services to individuals or to groups via events and networks of various kinds. These include EU Career Days and EU Study Days, EU Information Centres in universities, Euroclubs, information points in public libraries and Business Information Centres. In addition, there are plans for a media/event centre in Kyiv as part of the Communicating Europe campaign contract, and the Europe House project funded by the Delegation and operated by several Member State cultural institutes is likely to have

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[64] These included a school curriculum on EU policies, programmes and institutions, lesson plans for teachers, and an academic textbook, which was adapted for online learning.

a coordinating structure in Kyiv for its activities around the country targeting broad segments of the public.

Some of the **structures** in Ukraine may be working imperfectly (in part because they and the Delegation are under-resourced) but there are plans for **improvements**. Moreover, there is already work on networking among them and there are plans for more streamlining of communication activities.

In Tunisia, there is a **disparity** between staffing and resources (as reflected by the level of EU funding), and communication objectives. The preparation of a larger contract to **pool funds available for communication and information work** is an important step to reduce administrative burden and take a more strategic approach, including to increase coordination with other EU programmes and the Member States.

EU Delegations would like **more support for communications.** Whilst the main focus in the neighbourhood was the sample of three partner countries (Armenia, Tunisia and Ukraine), the survey of all Delegations in the neighbourhood confirmed interest for additional support on the types of services which are similar to those currently offered in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The results from Delegations across the neighbourhood region were as follows:[65]

- o Overall, the most popular option was **additional human resources in EU Delegations** (16 agreed strongly or agreed, one was neutral, and two disagreed or disagreed strongly – weighted average **3.26**);
- o The next most popular option was **a multiannual communication contract** to allow longer term communication campaigns (15 agreed strongly or agreed, 1 was neutral and three disagreed- weighted average **3.05**);
- o **An EU Centre in the capital to provide logistical support** to Delegations, e.g. event organisation, translation (11 agreed strongly or agreed, 4 neutral, 4 disagreed or disagreed strongly – weighted average **2.53**);
- o **Europe/EU House in the capital** to host other EU information providers' events (8 agreed strongly or agreed, 4 neutral, 5 disagreed, weighted average: **2.41**);
- o **A locally contracted communication coordinator in the capital with a network of info points across the country** (8 agreed strongly or agreed, 5 neutral, 5 disagreed or disagreed strongly, weighted average: **2.39**).

7. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions relating to both the enlargement and neighbourhood regions.

Finance and contracting

1. There is a need to review the amount of human and financial **resources** allocated to communication in each Delegation. Currently there does not appear to be a coherent rationale for the amount of human resources that is required to manage an amount of financial resources allocated to communication.

2. Budgets, contract durations and staff expertise have impacted on the consistency, quality and quantity of communication results and outcomes and had implications for resourcing within Delegations. Contracts under two years are not efficient due to the time required for contractors to get up to speed and the level of administrative burden associated with contract procurement processes. In addition, communication theory suggests that communication outcomes can be strengthened over longer timeframes.

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[65] Weighted average scores are from 0 – 5. A score over 3 indicates a stronger opinion / interest.

Target groups

3. There is a need to define and implement a consistent approach to identifying and prioritising communication **target groups**. This needs to be supplemented with instructions to Delegations to carry out qualitative research, for example through focus groups, into the needs/interests of priority target group segments, using a defined frequency.

Communication campaigns

4. There has been an increased focus on communication campaigning in recent years in both regions. However, there is a need to ensure consistency in the approach to planning and setting objectives and to establish consistent expectations for performance measurement and lesson learning.

Communication planning

5. There is a need to revise the approach to **communication planning** in both regions, so that this is developed based on a detailed needs assessment and theory of change approach. These should draw on best practice, which is setting S.M.A.R.T. objectives, establishing indicators with baselines and targets for outputs, results (outcomes) and impacts, and defining standard qualitative and quantitative indicators (per channel and tool / campaign) and appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

6. There is a need to ensure that the more structured approach that is required to set objectives, baselines and targets for communication is reflected in key **strategic planning documents** and terms of reference, and in contractors' inception reports.

Monitoring and analysis

7. To support the more **detailed analysis** and understanding of communication performance, which is required, **monitoring data** needs to be collected on a much more systematic and comprehensive basis. Data needs to be reported to Delegations and Headquarters in formats that allow progress to be easily reviewed and compared by channel, tool, and budgetary allocation. This will support EU Delegations' management of communication performance.

8. A more systematic approach to monitoring will facilitate **comparative analysis** of communication performance, which could support lessons learning and strategic decision-making, including in relation to resource allocation. However, there will need to be processes and tools in place to support the management of this data.

Lesson learning

9. There is scope for more **lessons learning and good practice sharing** between EU Delegations in the enlargement and neighbourhood regions to ensure that good practice is mainstreamed in the EU communication approach.

Conclusions relating to EU Delegation communication in the **IPA beneficiaries**:

1. Whilst Delegations have had discretion to define the structure, number and types of info centres and info points in each beneficiary the lack of shared underlying concept to define each structure limits the comparability of performance and is an issue to be addressed to support the more systematic and standardised approach to defining objectives and measuring outputs, outcomes and impacts that this evaluation highlights is currently lacking.

2. EU support for walk-in EU Info Centres with a focus on answering basic EU information requests and providing publications and internet access is no longer required. The very low rates of use that can be observed means that they are not cost effective. There is also limited demand for general EU information by telephone / email. There is an interest in funding, but EU funding

programmes have their own information and communication channels in each country and a simple internet search makes their information easy to find.

3. Whilst there is a perception that having numerous communication points or centres in one country is desirable, what each of these can achieve relates to available budgets and communication expertise, which the evidence suggests do not always suffice. Info Points do not and cannot make the same contribution to communication as Info Centres, are not always suitable for events and suffer from low numbers of spontaneous visitors. Furthermore, the evaluation could not find any evidence of synergies resulting from coordination between Info Centres and Info Points beyond sharing of approaches and this appeared to reflect the limited funds available to Info Points.

4. In the period 2011-2017, the focus of external communication support for EU Delegations was information provision and events. Based on the current low demand for general EU information (aside from when this concerns EU funding opportunities) and considering the current status of accession negotiations, it appears that there is a need to increase the focus on communication campaigns and this shift is now already reflected by Delegations' increasing use of communication campaigns.[66]

5. EU Info Centres spend a lot of time and resources organising and running events. The focus on events can be justified to some extent as they provide important opportunities for direct communication with a range of different target groups. However, there is a lack of target group feedback on the usefulness of each event, including whether participants consider that they learned something new or are more aware as a result of the event.

6. Given the lack of evidence to confirm the efficiency of maintaining permanent EU event spaces in contrast to renting appropriate spaces on a case-by-case basis, DG NEAR's strong concerns about renting space need to be considered. However, it is important to confirm the objectives for this space and whether staff are obliged to ensure that it is fully utilised including by supporting events run by other organisations, and or whether it is to be expected that sometimes staff will focus on other forms of communication to reach their objectives.

7. Given the issues relating to the lack of on-street visibility of some centres, consideration needs to be given to the extent that the current premises are optimal / there are better premises available within budget to host EU events.

8. Whilst communication partners appreciate collaboration with EUICs, there is scope to enhance the current approach with more forward planning and strategizing to capitalise on potential synergies and increase the possibilities for joint initiatives.

Conclusions relating to EU Delegation communication in the selected **neighbourhood** partner countries:

1. The move to a more consolidated approach to contracting for communication with larger comprehensive communication contracts for example three-year contracts[67], appears to improve effectiveness and efficiency by:

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[66] The recommendation for this conclusion is covered by a recommendation for both regions (number 4 on communication campaigns)

[67] The recommendation for this conclusion is covered by a recommendation for both regions (number 2 on finance and contracts).

- streamlining communication and reducing budget fragmentation (including a more systematic and comprehensive approach to monitoring and reporting);
- creating synergies between activities (for instance, research into the needs of target audiences and communication preferences could support the whole range of communication activities implemented under the new contracts);
- facilitating progress to be made on raising awareness and behaviour change over a three-year period, which allows for repetition of messages and greater sustainability of approaches.

2. Reaching target audiences outside the capital particularly those with little understanding of the EU remains a significant challenge in the three countries considered in this evaluation. If the Commission wants to increase the focus on reaching target groups outside capital cities, it needs a properly resourced outreach strategy.

3. There is no case for walk-in information centres (like those operating in the Western Balkans and Turkey) to be established in the neighbourhood region.
   - the evidence from a previous experience in Armenia is a source of doubt about this approach, although some of the tools (project database, school and university curricula and text books) developed were good practice, communication aspects were weaker than those currently offered by the professional communication agencies in place and there is mixed feedback about how many visitors came to the centre;

   - there is a wide range of activities (particularly in Ukraine and Armenia), which achieve face-to-face contact with target groups (individually or in groups, via events) and provide a wealth of information on-line, and more are planned.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are relevant for both regions.

It is recommended that:

Financing and contracts

8. DG NEAR reviews the amount of human and financial resources allocated to communication in each Delegation. This should be used to develop a coherent rationale for the amount of human resources that is required to manage an amount of financial resources allocated to communication, linked to clear conceptual strategies for the approach in each region.

9. EU Delegations analyse the possibility to group their different communication elements (events, campaigns, social media, etc.) under one contract or several contracts, which should be for a minimum of three years to increase contractor and Delegation efficiency.

Target groups

10. DG NEAR defines in collaboration with the EU Delegations a process for identifying and prioritising target-group segments, as well as expectations for research into target-group needs, for example through focus groups. As part of this approach, the harnessing of target group feedback should be done systematically; the profiles of individuals who engage in EU communication should be tracked, to support increased tailoring of communication messages, channels and tools. Target-group needs assessments should be conducted by EU Delegations and the key findings should be documented in the annual reports. This might involve bringing in an expert to support process development.

Communication campaigns

11. DG NEAR mainstreams a focus on EU multi-channel campaigns, achieving outcomes, such as increased awareness, changes in target group attitudes or behaviour. EU Delegations should include the requirement for pre and post quantitative and qualitative measurement in contractor terms of reference, to facilitate understanding of campaign performance. It is further recommended that DG NEAR requires EU Delegations to report on how lessons learned have been applied in future campaigns.

Communication planning

12. DG NEAR requires Intervention Logics, drawn up on the basis of a theory of change, to become a standard part of communication planning at all levels (Headquarters, Delegation and external contractor). As part of this process, there should be a focus on setting specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T) objectives.

13. DG NEAR takes a more systematic approach to communication planning and monitoring. DG NEAR should define standard quantitative and qualitative indicators to be used across all countries in both regions, based on DG COMM's indicator matrix. EU Delegations should provide an aggregated view of year-on-year progress against targets. In their turn, the EU Delegations should require in the ToRs that contractors are explicit in their offers and subsequent contract reports about their monitoring systems and the frequency of data collection.

14. DG NEAR and EU Delegations improve the communication programming documents, by:

    a.   including Intervention Logics in the next versions of the DG NEAR communication strategy and EU Delegations' annual reports and forward plans, as well as requiring the use of Intervention Logics in contractors' inception reports.

    b.   adjusting Delegation communication forward plans so that planning tables describe targets for activities, outputs, results and impacts in line with DG COMM network indicators and, include specific information on monitoring results;

    c.   adapting headings used in terms of reference for contractors and contractors' report templates for reporting on targets to be grouped by outputs, results and impacts using the standard terms, which will have been defined for use across all countries, as recommended above;

Monitoring and analysis

15. DG NEAR should:
- support the strengthening of results-based management by providing guidance and training to EU Delegations and their contractors for the transition to OPSYS, and

- provide an annual analysis of communication performance, which can be used to support Delegations' and Headquarters' understanding and decision-making.

Lesson learning

16. DG NEAR supports the transfer of lesson-learning on communication among Delegations and between the enlargement and neighbourhood regions by organising bi-annual EU Delegation seminars, which bring together EU Delegation staff from both the enlargement and neighbourhood regions. EU Delegations should present their best practice, providing tangible examples to support discussion on mainstreaming options.

The following recommendations are made for communication in the **IPA beneficiaries**.

It is recommended that:

17. EU Delegations define a concept for communication using a theory-of-change approach, setting clear objectives to maximise the impact of the multi-channel campaigns (recommended above) and EU event spaces, which should replace the "walk-in info centres", which are no longer required. This implies allocating appropriate resources and ensuring constant assessment of their performance. At the same time:

- EU Delegations should review the appropriateness of maintaining the current event spaces in terms of their visibility from the roadside, and accessibility including for the elderly and disabled. Consideration should be given to relocating to other more appropriate spaces, where these requirements fall short.

- EU Delegations should reflect about how to create an EU-hub effect around their event spaces for example by defining the hub benefits for different users, as well as a specific action plan to raise awareness of the hub's existence, its purpose and activities and who uses the hub.

18. EU Delegations reflect on the real added value of individual Info Points and regional Info Centres with current funding levels to support events and communication campaigns. If they are 'nice to have', but there is no evidence that they are well used or achieve strong communication results, they should be discontinued. The exceptions to this recommendation would relate to:

- DG NEAR or EU Delegations' taking the decision to increase resources and expertise within Info Points and justifying these increases drawing on the Intervention Logic and S.M.A.R.T. objectives set, which could be scaled appropriated for the budget and size of the Info Point;

- a change in the accession status of a particular IPA beneficiary.

19. DG NEAR provides clear guidelines to EU Delegations and contractors on expectations for use of leased event space, including the proportion of resources and / or time that should be allocated to communication campaigns and the amount to be allocated to events. Guidance should also be provided on the extent that event spaces should be used by other EU communicators, considering the cost implications when staff are required to manage room bookings and other logistical aspects.

20. DG NEAR and EU Delegations develop a systematic approach to evaluating the effects of different types of events and for the dissemination and monitoring of publications and communication products, including via events. This should include the use of standard questions to facilitate qualitative and quantitative assessment, as well as specific questions relating to the type of event and its specific objectives, for example participants' rating of their raised awareness, reinforced understanding on specific event elements, relationship building, improved perceptions of membership the EU. The assessment should include pre and post event assessment with pre-event assessments being part of the event registration process.

21. EU Delegations and their contractors place more emphasis on forward planning and strategizing on a systematic basis with other EU communication partners, including EU Member State embassies and cultural institutes as well as EU programmes to identify ways to enhance communication about the EU.

The following recommendations are made for communication in the **neighbourhood region**.

It is recommended that:

22. EU Delegations review the relative importance of outreach in each partner country and develop a focused outreach strategy, which includes:

- dedicated budget allocations and targets for outreach activities, which takes account of geography and target groups;
- targets and frequencies for their achievement;
- adequate human resourcing either within Delegations or within contractors; and
- consideration of the extent that the strengthened focus on outreach should be channelled through the OPEN Neighbourhood programme.

23. Based on previous experiences in the neighbourhood region, evidence of very low usage in the Western Balkans and feedback from the EU Delegations, it is not recommended to introduce walk-in style EU Info Centres as a standard communication concept in the neighbourhood region. Decisions relating to addressing countries specific communication needs should be

based on a transparent rationale linked to the size of the country, the type/s of agreements it has with the EU, and the amount of communication budget that is allocated taking into account the available human resources to implement this budget.