

# Evaluation of information and communication activities towards the EU Member States in the area of EU Enlargement

ELARG.A2/18/2014

**FINAL REPORT**

18 December 2015



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**Client Name:**

European Commission, Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

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Evaluation of information and communication activities towards the EU Member States in the area of EU Enlargement

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Coffey International Development Ltd – Lead company

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## List of acronyms

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	the Czech Republic
DG	Directorate-General
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DK	Denmark
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IE	Ireland
IPA	Instrument of Pre-accession assistance
LU	Luxembourg
MS	Member States
NL	the Netherlands
PL	Poland
PR	Public relations
TOR	Terms of reference
UK	United Kingdom

# Abstract

The European Commission is committed to providing factual information on past and future enlargements and to cooperating with strategic partners and multipliers to communicate with the public on enlargement. Broad public support is essential in order to sustain the enlargement process. The European Commission has recognised that better communication with the public should be one of the cornerstones of the EU's enlargement policy.

This is the Final Report of the evaluation of the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR's) information and communication activities towards the EU Member States in the area of EU Enlargement.

The evaluation led by Coffey International Ltd in 2015 finds that DG NEAR has conducted an impressive number of activities with three main target groups in mind, journalists, informed professionals and interested publics. With no imminent accessions on the agenda, the main conclusion is that DG NEAR needs to segment its communication activities and focus on journalists and informed professionals with a programme of planned on-going communication activities, which lay the foundations for a more targeted campaign-type approach to reach wider publics, if and when a new country joins the European Union.

# 0 Executive Summary

This is the Executive Summary of the Final Report on the evaluation of information and communication towards the EU Member States in the area of enlargement by the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). Coffey International Development (Coffey) was contracted by DG NEAR to conduct this evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide findings and recommendations **to help DG NEAR to improve the planning and implementation of future information and communication activities**, based on past experience and lessons learned by:

- Generating knowledge about what works and what does not and under what conditions
- Facilitating evidence-based decision making
- Improving information and communication activities, from design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Since 2011, DG NEAR has organised communication activities via a series of **8 communication contracts for a total amount of EUR 10 million**. The communication contracts served different purposes. Two contracts were focussed on developing channels and tools, one was for the information campaign Welcome Croatia, and the others focussed on different target audiences. The **main goals** were to raise public awareness and exposure to the shared values and interests of EU Member States and enlargement countries, and to promote informed debate, dialogue and reporting on enlargement issues.

Communication activities were implemented in collaboration with partner organisations in enlargement critical Member States and in liaison with EU Delegations in pre-accession countries. For the most part, communication was organised by different external contractor firms. Where feasible and practical there was close monitoring of actual implementation on the ground by DG NEAR.

The evaluation combined ex-post and on-going elements. Most of the communication activities were completed prior to evaluation, but three contracts are still on-going, as follows:

- Audiovisual campaign (completed)
- On-line and social media campaign (completed)
- Welcome Croatia campaign (completed)
- Campaign on IPA visibility (1<sup>st</sup> edition completed – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition on-going)
- Awareness-raising campaign on enlargement (1<sup>st</sup> edition completed – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition on-going)
- Stakeholder campaign (on-going)

The **evaluation methodology** focussed on analysis of existing evidence of communication performance against objectives set, as described in terms of references and communication contractors' proposals and final reports. It also gathered primary research data through interviews with partners, observation and participation in press trips in Albania and Kosovo, five visibility events in Brussels, Edinburgh, London, Odense and Stuttgart, and 8 focus groups with members of public in four Member States (France, the Netherlands, Finland, and Austria). The below sections describe the evaluation key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## 0.1 Key findings

- During the timeframe of this evaluation 2011 – 2015, DG NEAR has implemented a very extensive programme of varying activities and numerous different types of materials, for a wide range of target groups across a wide range of Member States, with an emphasis on the most enlargement-sceptic Member States and pre-candidate countries.
- The communication environment is extremely challenging. Enlargement is not currently a hot topic and the general public are often hostile, and appear to be poorly informed about the benefits of enlargement. There is, nevertheless, a latent interest for information on enlargement topics among specific groups of individuals who are difficult to reach and define, and it seems likely that there are unexploited target groups.
- DG NEAR has attempted innovative approaches and is trying to keep abreast with new communication channels.

- Events for informed professionals and press trips are highly professional with quality speakers, creating opportunities for dialogue that would otherwise be unavailable. DG participation at events organised by others is less effective, as it is not possible to target materials to the very diverse audiences that attend these events.
- Among the materials developed there are some that stand out for their high quality production and formats. One of the video clips produced 'Hidden Treasures' was recognised for its high quality by the 2012 Cannes Corporate Media and TV awards<sup>1</sup> and our research also confirmed the quality of other clips, as well as print materials: the brochure, leaflets and infographics. However, questions arise with regard to how to disseminate these materials effectively and efficiently, and how to develop synergies between them and continuity in communication.
- Messages and activities (events and exhibitions, competitions, websites, press trips, cinema and airline advertising campaigns, etc.) seem to fit broadly with the main objectives set. Focus group research suggests that intended messages, such as 'So Similar, So Different, so European' to suggest similarities between EU Member States and accession countries' are broadly understood. However, our research also suggests that there is a general desire for a presentation of the pros and cons of enlargement, and a perception that the content of materials produced does not sufficiently present the 'cons'.
- Budget programming has required the use of different campaigns implemented by different communication agencies, which have implemented different levels and types of monitoring to capture evidence of the effectiveness of activities carried out. As a result, is it not possible to make direct comparisons of performance in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of different communication channels and tools, which were used across different communication contracts.

## 0.2 Conclusions

This section starts with main conclusions on communication on enlargement. This is then followed by conclusions on the specific channels and tools that were assessed as part of this evaluation.

### Main conclusions

1. **As enlargement is not currently a hot topic it is very difficult to reach wider publics**, who tend to be poorly informed and even hostile, in an effective manner. Very large budgets would be required to reach publics and measure the success of this reach. In addition, there is a significant communication challenge for the European Commission to present information on the pros and cons of enlargement, requested by the public, in a balanced and accurate way that still meets internal policy goals.
2. At this point in time, communication **activities which focus on informed professionals and relevant multipliers are more effective** because from the outset these groups are both interested and receptive to information, and they can play a role in transmitting information to interested publics, who are too difficult and would be too costly for DG NEAR to reach on an on-going basis.
3. As broad public support is essential to sustain enlargement **there is a need for a continuous dialogue and discussion within the Member States to lay the foundations for effective accession communication** campaigning, when this is needed. As DG NEAR manages the process whereby countries join the European Union, it falls to the DG to provide a reference point for information on EU enlargement topics and the policies and programmes established to support this.

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<sup>1</sup> Hidden Treasures was awarded silver in the category for Films, TV and Informational Film

4. The wide range of communication activities, channels and tools implemented by DG NEAR were **relevant to the broad objectives set** for enlargement communication. However, it is not possible to define to what extent these activities have contributed to reaching objectives as there were **no SMART objectives and indicators** set to measure performance. The lack of performance measurement system limits the extent that comparisons can be made and lessons learned. However, the evaluation provides insights, which help to understand, which types of activities have been most effective.

## Conclusions on specific channels and tools

### Communication materials

- Focus groups confirm the **high quality formats and professional presentation of communication materials**.
- DG NEAR **communication messages for wider publics are clear**, but the evaluation research confirmed **scepticism about enlargement information, and a desire to know more about the challenges**, as well as the benefits.
- **Audiovisual clips are considered to be the most effective format for communicating to the public**, although there is also a desire for more open public debate. To allow clips to be shared on-line, they need to be short; ideally less than one minute and this is not always the case. However, for each clip produced there needs to be significant budget available to support promotion. Making the clips available on-line / posting on social media, without some form of paid promotion does not ensure sufficient visibility to generate expected levels of awareness among wider publics.

### Visibility events organised by DG NEAR

- Events co-hosted by DG NEAR, and partner organisations, **targeted at informed professionals** (for example representatives of think tanks, academia and civil society) have proved to be **effective and provide good opportunities for direct interactions with target groups in different Member States**.
- There is scope to **enhance specific aspects, by:**
  - **increasing the visibility / participation to individuals who are not physically present.**
  - **better targeting / selection of co-host organisations.**

### DG NEAR participation in visibility events

- **The efficiency of DG NEAR's participation with an exhibition stand and / or showing a film at events organised by others is lower than when the DG organises its own events.** This reflects the fact that it is not viable to tailor materials for exhibition stands and clips for wider presentation to each individual event, as well as sometimes to the very diverse audiences that attend.

### Press trips

- Press trips are **DG NEAR's flagship activities**. The current format, which provides access to high level speakers, a varied programme and some time to pursue own interests works well. The trips provide high quality content and valuable opportunities to increase knowledge levels among multipliers with the power to disseminate key messages to wider publics.
- **Press trips are well organised, provide useful information, contacts, and opportunities that would not otherwise be available.** Journalists are very **satisfied**.
- There is **scope to improve the consistency of gathering journalists' feedback, for example by using a uniform feedback form for all press trips, and the monitoring** of media and social media coverage so that both quantitative and qualitative outputs are measured in the same way.



- Nonetheless, there **may be ways to encourage greater take up of DG NEAR messages** in any resulting coverage, as described in the full recommendations on page 76.

## 0.3 Recommendations

Taking into account the key findings and conclusions of the evaluation, the following actions are recommended:

- We recommend that DG NEAR redefine, simplify and focus<sup>2</sup> the scope and ambitions of future communication activities on two different approaches and two different types of target audience, depending on the immediacy of any future accessions:
  1. **An on-going communication approach focussed on interaction with informed / specialists and potential specialists. This group includes journalists, academics, think tanks, civil society, government, as well as potential specialists (students and ‘engageables’), people with potential to engage with the subject.**
  2. **Accession communication approach**, possibly similar to Welcome Croatia, with a focus on direct reach of the un / less concerned public, particularly but not necessarily limited to young people, using mass channels, for example digital and, where relevant, advertorials via other mass media.
- We recommend **re-defining the intervention logic**. In each case, there is a need for a vision statement to confirm desirable outcomes, SMART objectives and a clear feedback monitoring loop that is built into the system at the design stage to allow quantitative and qualitative measurement of a pre-defined number of indicators.

This implies a **standard approach to monitoring the different communication activities**, which must be implemented consistently by contractors across different channels and tools, with targets set to facilitate process, output and outcome improvements year-on-year. The need for a consistent process and what types of indicators to be included must be explicit in communication Terms of Reference and contractors’ proposals. Types of indicators are provided in section 5.4.

### 1. On-going communications

- **We recommend maintaining a strong focus on the media and press trips**, but suggest that consideration is given to tweaking the current approach by mapping the work of relevant journalists to identify those most likely to report on issues important to the Commission’s objectives; as well as the most relevant media outlets (in terms of readership among decision-makers).
- In periods **when accession is not imminent, preference should be given to journalists whose channels have space for long-form journalism**. This will help to ensure that the DG continues to make information available to feed the latent interest among educated publics in the EU.
- We recommend continuing the focus on stimulating and strengthening debate **between informed professionals and specialists / potential specialists** on technical accession related topics. The focus on involving high profile speakers from accession countries, senior and effective EC speakers, is to be continued.
- Consideration could also be given to **strengthening the profile and promotion of these events**, for example by developing a simple name for the series of informed discussions and to explore opportunities to significantly increase access to the discussions, among others.

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<sup>2</sup> It is understood that this decision has already been taken by DG NEAR.

- If the DG wishes to continue to take these informed debates to different Member States, then it is vital to **ensure that co-host organisations** (universities and think tanks are natural partners for these types of sessions) **will add significant value** to the session in terms of maximising visibility.
- To further professionalise the approach the DG could consider **allocating funds to support co-hosts work** / a competition / call for proposals to encourage higher levels of commitment and professionalism from co-hosts who aim to make debates as visible as possible.
- For university students, we **recommend creating targeted learning and debating opportunities**, which are much sharper in their political and intellectual focus than the Youth Conference supported under Welcome Croatia<sup>3</sup> because this will increase the level of interest of the best students.
- We recommend that consideration be given to **continuing to run an essay / short story competition**, but that sufficient resource is awarded for its promotion and to gain traction.
- On an on-going basis, we recommend **discontinuing the focus on exhibiting and participating in events** organised by **others with goals that are not directly linked** to DG NEAR communication goals, given the cost of participation and the limited and difficult-to-measure impacts that can be achieved.

## 2. Accession communications

A different approach will be required when plans are agreed for a new country to join the European Union. This requires a more **classic PR, awareness-raising campaign, with a focus on helping the wider public both in the accession country and in the Member States**, to learn about the accession process and its rigour and to learn about the new Member State.

**A multichannel approach will be required, with a focus on channels to reach mass audiences** (digital, social, print and other mass media channels). The approach will need a strategy to define the right combination of activities tailored to the circumstances and the specific audience profiles targeted, for example by age range or life style segment, who can then be reached with a range of highly targeted information products / activities, which resonate with the target groups.

- We recommend that the DG invests in **both quantitative and qualitative surveying of representative samples of target groups before, during and after mass media** initiatives to confirm reach, recall, resonance and usefulness of the information put into the public domain. In addition, we recommend that targets are set for reach and frequency of views / exposure, as critical key performance indicators.
- We recommend developing **new audiovisual products to complement those already available** that are more focussed on the relevant accession. This should follow the DG's usual approach of be supported by research to test audiovisual concepts.
- We recommend placing a focus on **identifying new opportunities for engaging and partnering with networks**, who may also be communicating on the accession, including social partners and civil society. The Europe Direct Information Centres represent an extensive network that is already available in the Member States.
- In terms of **other EC resources, consideration should also be given to ensuring visibility** on the YourEurope website, and the EC Representations, as would usually be the case for this type of campaign.
- There will also be **opportunities to partner with national organisations**, for example accession country embassies and national governments, in line with the example set by the Welcome Croatia campaign to co-host events specifically related to accession involving high profile individuals with newsworthy information to relay.

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<sup>3</sup> We do, however, recognise that this event maybe have been used as an opportunity for publicity.

# 1 Overview

This is the Draft Final Report of the Evaluation of Information and Communication activities towards the EU Member States in the areas of EU Enlargement over the period 2011 – 2014.

This report is the last of three reports to be submitted to the European Commission – Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) by Coffey International Development Limited (Coffey) and its main sub-contractor Deloitte.

This Report is structured as follows:

1. **Chapter 1: Context and scope of the campaigns:** provides an overview of the evaluation objectives and the communication activities in the area of EU enlargement, the subject of the current evaluation.
2. **Chapter 2: Evaluation objectives and methodology:** outlines the approach, activities and tasks that the evaluators have carried out as part of this evaluation as well as the overall goals.
3. **Chapter 3: Summary of findings:** presents our key findings to date based on desk research and data collection organised by tool and channel. A more detailed report has been prepared on each of the topic areas below and is available in the two Annex documents. For ease of reading and to provide a quick overview, this section repeats the summary findings that are also presented in the Annexes.
4. **Chapter 4: Evaluation questions:** provides answers to the evaluation questions set drawing on the different sources of evidence taken into account throughout the evaluation process, on the below themes
  - Effectiveness
  - Efficiency
  - Impact, sustainability and EU added value
  - Relevance and quality of the monitoring and performance framework
  - Logical framework
5. **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations:** summary conclusions and recommendations are provided in the Executive Summary of this document. These are supplemented with more detailed explanations in Chapter 5.

The following Annexes are also provided, separately to this document:

## Annex: Part 1

- Annex 1: Press trip reports
- Annex 2: Feedback from journalists
- Annex 3: Visibility events A: Film festivals
- Annex 4: Visibility events B: Information talks

## Annex: Part 2:

Individual focus group reports on the two online focus groups held with participants from France, Austria, Finland, and the Netherlands.

## 2 Description of the evaluation

### 2.1 Scope and objectives

This evaluation was contracted by the European Commission, DG NEAR to make a performance evaluation of the results and impacts of DG NEAR communication activities launched and / or implemented during the period July 2011 – December 2014, towards EU Member States, in the area of EU Enlargement. In addition, the evaluation took account of a number of events which were implemented during 2015 to allow real time feedback and evidence to be taken into account. DG NEAR's communication activities were organised via a series of eight communication campaigns or contracts, which focussed on different themes and target groups. The evaluation was launched with a kick off meeting on 21 January 2015 and is due to be completed in December of the same year. This timeframe coincided with the implementation of a number of communication activities, which provided opportunities for direct observation and feedback from target groups, for example at a range of different types of events.

Five of the communication campaigns were complete at the time of this evaluation. The other three campaigns were still on-going, which meant that contractors' final reports were not yet available. To evaluate completed activities, the evaluation team considered coherence between descriptions of communication plans and activity reports, as developed by the external contractors responsible for the delivery of activities, interviews with these contractors and members of DG NEAR staff, and the evaluation team's own assessments drawing on the professional experience of two communication professionals Marion Bywater and Mark Rogerson.

The main purpose of the evaluation, as described in the Terms of Reference, was to provide lessons learned to help DG NEAR to improve the quality of its approach to the **design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** of its information and communication campaigns in the future.

#### Three main objectives were set for this work:

1. To **assess the performance** – efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact, sustainability and EU added value, relevance and quality of the monitoring and performance framework of the 6 completed information and communication campaigns.
2. To **assess the design** and / or intervention logic (logical framework) of completed and on-going information and communication campaigns, including:
  - a. Relevance of the actions
  - b. Relevance and quality of the monitoring and performance framework
3. To **provide recommendations for the future** which draw from the lessons learned from the completed and on-going information and communication campaigns. Recommendations should be operational and focused on the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation aspects and should present proposals focussed on:
  - Objectives and actions
  - Target groups
  - Indicators at output, short and long term outcome levels
  - Monitoring, performance and evaluation frameworks.

The Terms of Reference also propose five more specific evaluation questions to be answered on the basis of the evidence collected:

1. To what extent were the communication activities effective in achieving the objectives of the campaign?
2. How efficient were the communication campaigns in order to convey the messages and achieve the expected results?
3. What is the impact of the campaigns, are these impacts sustainable and what is the EU added value in implementing these information and communication campaigns?
4. To what extent is the monitoring and performance framework of the campaigns adequate to measure and monitor the performance of the campaigns?
5. To what extent are the activities planned relevant to the needs?

## 2.2 Approach

The evaluation of DG NEAR communication activities from June 2011 to 2015 provided a methodological challenge. All evaluations require detailed evidence to allow conclusions to be drawn and recommendations to be made to support future improvements. As this was an ex-post evaluation with a focus on completed campaigns the evaluation drew from the final reports of a number of contractors to confirm past results. All reports had been checked and approved by DG NEAR in advance. The contractors' reports and monitoring data, together with earlier discussions with DG NEAR staff and staff at the communication agencies, enabled us to gain a picture of the extensive scope of activities undertaken by DG NEAR. However, evaluations are rarely based on 'perfect data'; choices need to be made because data collection incurs significant costs. It is usual in an evaluation that different data sources provide different insights; no one data source is able to paint the whole picture of campaign performance.

To enable us to bring together different sources of evidence, in the inception phase of the evaluation we developed a matrix to map out how we would use the different data sources to answer the evaluation questions. We also developed an Intervention Logic to allow us to elaborate a theoretical model of how DG NEAR communication activities were working.

With these two elements to structure our evaluation, we developed an evaluation methodology, which would allow us to focus on two key elements of DG NEAR's communication approach: visibility events and communication materials, including the audio-visual materials. Given that these elements accounted for over 60%<sup>4</sup> of the total budget for DG NEAR activities during the period under evaluation, we considered that this focus would provide us with valuable insights of relevance to the overall communication approach. In addition, this approach allowed us to gather first-hand evidence based on our own observations and feedback from partners and participants to a sample DG NEAR's events. This evidence was supplemented by testing reactions to a sample of DG NEAR materials in a series of on-line focus groups. The approach to data collection is described in more detail below.

## 2.3 Data collection

The rationale for collecting primary data was to allow the evaluation team to collect real-time evidence of a sample of communication campaigns as they were rolled out. These actions and events provided opportunities for members of the evaluation team to gather feedback from participants, as well as to make their own assessments of the effectiveness of the events attended. The selection of focal actions drew from the list of communication actions implemented during the time frame of the evaluation and was agreed with DG NEAR. The following actions were undertaken:

### **Interviews with partners and participants**

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<sup>4</sup> Based on our review of available documentation visibility events account for 20% of the total budget, audio-visual materials account for 30% and other campaign materials and content circa 10% as presented in Figure 1 in section 3.3 on communication spending.

We conducted interviews with the communication agencies responsible for on-going and completed campaigns. In the case of completed campaigns, responsible team members were not necessarily still with the firm, however, it was possible to speak to someone familiar with (aspects of) the campaign in all cases. In essence, the purpose of these interviews was to “fill gaps” in our understanding of the campaigns. In addition, interviews were conducted with partners and participants involved in the events which were visited as part of the evaluation. The different interviewees are listed in the below table.

Interview type	Overview of interviewees
Communication agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Media Consulta group:</b> responsible for IPA, Awareness Raising, Social Media and on-line.</li> <li>• <b>ESN:</b> responsible for the Welcome Croatia contract</li> <li>• <b>Mostra:</b> responsible for the Stakeholder and Audio-visual campaigns / contracts</li> </ul>
Representatives of partner organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Queen Mary University London</li> <li>• European Policy Centre</li> <li>• Young European Federalists</li> <li>• Hellenic Foundation for European &amp; Foreign Policy</li> <li>• Edinburgh International Film Festival</li> <li>• Odense Film Festival</li> </ul>
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulted via presence at visibility events in London, Stuttgart and Brussels</li> <li>• Participants to two film festivals in Edinburgh and Odense</li> </ul>
Multipliers (press trip participants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kosovo:</b> 14 x journalists</li> <li>• <b>Albania:</b> 13 x journalists</li> </ul>

### On-line focus groups

Focus groups were set up to allow us to test a sample of DG NEAR communication materials. These groups were run on-line to allow participants greater flexibility in that they could take part from their office or home space. Two focus groups were run in each of four selected countries: Austria, Finland, France and the Netherlands. Each discussion group comprised 10 -12 participants who were recruited according to a set of pre-defined criteria. The groups were conducted in the native language of each country. The focus groups were used to:

- Explore information and news habits, including the channels and tools of information used by the general public depending on the topic / context;
- Discuss awareness and perceptions on the EU enlargement policy / process;
- Better understand how different I&C materials on enlargement were received; and
- Explore overall appreciation of materials and ideas for improvements.

### Evidence on press trips

As described below, we took account of three different sources of evidence in relation to DG NEAR press trips:

- Observations at 2 press trips: the evaluation team observed two press trips one in Kosovo<sup>5</sup> and one in Albania to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach.

<sup>5</sup> The press trip to Kosovo took place between 11 and 13 June, 2015. The press trip to Albania took place between 1 and 3 July 2013.



- An on-line survey of journalist participants: aimed at gathering structured feedback from journalists who had participated in the 16 press trips that had been implemented through the IPA, Welcome Croatia, Stakeholder Campaign and Awareness-Raising Campaigns between 2011 and 2015. The survey objective was to analyse the relevance, effectiveness and usefulness of the trips, as well as to examine the sustainability of the activities. The questionnaire comprised four open-ended questions because this open format was considered to be the best way to elicit information from journalists. Respondents were asked to specify which trip(s) they went on. Eighty-seven responses were received representing a participation to 102 individual trips (of a total of 235 emails sent out i.e. a response rate of 43%) – as several participants went on two or more trips.
- Monitoring data collected by the communication agencies: we reviewed the existing feedback received from the participants on the press trips organised by the contractors. Each journalist participant had been asked to fill out an evaluation form following their participation in a press trip. As feedback forms were issued over a time span of several years by a number of different contractors, there was some variation in the format and number of questions, which meant that a direct comparison of scores across feedback forms was not possible. However, there was sufficient information to inform our analysis of this element. In some cases, we had access to the individual feedback forms returned (e.g. Welcome Croatia and IPA campaigns) together with the summary by the contractor. In the other cases, only the summary of the feedback drafted by the contractors was available in the press trips reports.

### **Evidence from visibility events**

Members of the evaluation team visited five events to observe event implementation, EC visibility, reach, messaging and discussion and debate on enlargement topics. The evaluators used the opportunity to speak with partners to understand the added-value of the Commission's involvement in organising these events, as well as to speak directly with participants to understand why they attend events and what makes them more / less successful in their eyes.

The first three events were intended to be somewhat specialist in nature, stakeholder events intended to raise the visibility of accession funding in the enlargement region: As part of the second awareness raising campaign, DG NEAR exhibited a number of short films at cultural events across the EU. Members of the team had the opportunity to visit two of these events:

1. *"Fighting organised crime and corruption in the Western Balkans; The role of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)"* Queen Mary University event in London (5 June, 2015)
2. *"Getting the fundamentals right – Public administration reform in the Western Balkans"* EPC event in Brussels (16 June, 2015)
3. *"EU Enlargement: Comparing perspectives on the integration of Roma in Germany and the Western Balkans"* Young European Federalists in Stuttgart (30 June, 2015)
4. Edinburgh International Film Festival (27 – 28 June, 2015)
5. Odense Film Festival (28 -29 August, 2015)

## **2.4 Analysis, reporting and limitations**

The data analysis process was structured from the outset of the evaluation exercise through an evaluation questions matrix which was developed to map out which sources of evidence would be required to answer each evaluation question and which judgement criteria would be used to assess the value of evidence collected. In other words the evaluation set its own indicators for analysis.

Data analysis has involved several steps including the description and analysis of individual results from different data collection tools, including interviews, a survey and focus groups as well as the review of already available documentation. For the most part different members of the evaluation team took responsibility for this process. The next step in the analytical process has been the triangulation of different sources of evidences which sometimes provide different perspectives on a situation for example assessment of the press trips took into account the journalists' survey, observations at two press trips, interviews with journalists and feedback provided by journalists in relation to previous press trips.

During the course of this evaluation three internal team workshops were held involving the experts and the evaluation team. These all day events allowed the team to consider and discuss views on the communication objectives, materials, channels and activities, as well as ideas for ways that these might be improved in the future. This type of team approach can be an effective way of developing a view on communication approaches, whilst drawing on the insights of individual team members relating to their areas of focus during the evaluation.

As required by the Terms of Reference that has been a series of reports to DG NEAR to confirm the detailed approach for the evaluation and to update the EC team on progress made. The draft final and final reports complete this series and are intended to provide DG NEAR with the evidence that it requires to guide future communication activities.

It is, however, important to recognise that the evaluation exercise has focussed on the examination of a subset of activities and that there may be aspects, included within the extensive programme of communication activities carried out, for which a sufficient or appropriate assessment has not been feasible. Nonetheless, the evaluation team has been guided by external experts with professional communication experience who have helped to ensure the pertinence of conclusions drawn and recommendations made.



## 3 Findings on DG NEAR's approach

This section provides an overview of key findings based on the review of terms and reference, objectives and reports on communication results, which allow us an understanding of the way that DG NEAR has approached communication over the last 4 years. The information is useful because it allows us to reflect on to what extent the strategy followed continues to be relevant for the next 4 – 5 years, when there are no enlargements to the European Union currently on the agenda and consequently budget allocations for communication may be more restricted.

To facilitate an understanding of DG NEAR's approach, we have described the strengths and weaknesses of the following elements:

- Objectives
- Target groups
- Budget allocation
- Monitoring

### 3.1 Objectives

The amount of budget available is the critical factor that defines what can be achieved with communication channels and tools. Unit A2, the information and communication unit in DG NEAR has managed an average budget of EUR 5 million per year for an information and communication programme on EU enlargement policy and strategy towards EU citizens in the Member States (as indicated in the TOR to this evaluation). Given the ambition to communicate to target groups across all Member States, and the fact that the communication environment is far from ideal because of low levels of basic knowledge and hostility to the notion of future environment, the amount of budget can be considered to be modest if there is a desire for information to make a significant difference in a number of different countries.

There have been **three levels of objective** in place to guide the communication activities conducted by DG NEAR. The top level objectives, as highlighted below are governed by the annual finance decisions.

PRINCE Objectives
1. <b>Raise public awareness</b> of EU citizens about the participating countries & the enlargement process
2. <b>Underline the shared values and interests</b> between the EU MS & the enlargement countries
3. Promote an <b>informed debate and dialogue</b> on enlargement
4. <b>Increase exposure</b> of EU citizens, in particular young people to enlargement issues
5. <b>Encourage reporting</b> on EU enlargement

The above objectives are relatively broad; they serve to inform the direction and the intentions that communication activities supported by PRINCE funding area expected to serve. In addition to these overarching objectives, each of the 8 communication campaign supported by DG NEAR has been designed to fulfil campaign level “general objectives”, as well as more detailed and concrete “specific objectives”. In each case, these objectives were defined in the Terms of Reference for the different communication campaigns. The below table provides an example of campaign general and specific objectives from two campaigns.

Campaign level objectives	
<p>Welcome Croatia</p>	<p><u>General objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness, improve public knowledge and increase support by stimulating an informed public debate in the EU about Croatia's accession to the EU;</li> <li>• Raise awareness, improve public knowledge and increase support by stimulating an informed public debate in the EU about the EU's general enlargement policy, using Croatia as a "flagship"</li> </ul> <p><u>Specific objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide factual and objective information on forthcoming accession of HR to EU</li> <li>• Support an informed public debate; increase understanding, sense of involvement and support for HR's accession and the EU's enlargement policy</li> <li>• Awareness-raising: present contemporary HR to EU citizens</li> <li>• Win-win narrative: what HR (and other CC or PCC) can offer the EU; info on reform undertaken; benefits for both sides</li> <li>• Positive example: "transformational power" of EU enlargement process, use HR as example to leverage further reforms and as inspiration for aspiring countries</li> </ul>
<p>Awareness-raising campaign on EU Enlargement and the countries in the process (1 and 2)</p>	<p><u>General objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide factual and objective information about the enlargement process and the countries in the process; promote an informed public debate;</li> <li>• Highlight the reforms that the (P)CC have to undergo and demonstrate the importance of the reforms already implemented; explain benefits for both sides;</li> <li>• Present the contemporary culture and natural heritage of the enlargement countries to citizens in the EU; deconstruct existing stereotypes;</li> <li>• Underline the shared values and interests between EU Member States &amp; (P)CC</li> </ul> <p><u>Specific objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase media coverage of enlargement, in particular in youth and women's, lifestyle and cultural media; ease exposure of EU citizens, in particular young people, to enlargement issues</li> <li>• Increase exposure of youth, women, older (55+) and less educated people to enlargement issues;</li> <li>• Improve dissemination of information on enlargement in selected EU MS (multiplier effect);</li> <li>• Facilitate access to information on society/culture in the ELARG countries;</li> <li>• Facilitate intercultural dialogue and people to people encounters;</li> <li>• Provide awareness raising information and material about EU enlargement process and the countries in the process.</li> </ul>

Our assessment of DG NEAR communication objectives is summarised below.

Factor	Key findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current campaign specific objectives suggest content for messages, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The realities of life in the pre candidate &amp; candidate countries</li> <li>○ De-constructed stereotypes, present contemporary culture &amp; natural heritage</li> <li>○ Reforms undertaken and their importance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Current objectives provide direction for desired results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Informed debate and dialogue</li> <li>○ Increased reporting on EU enlargement</li> <li>○ Raised public awareness and enhanced understanding</li> <li>○ Increased exposure of citizens, esp. young people</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many different objectives dissipate efforts</li> <li>• Current objectives are intentions and not SMART / measurable goals</li> <li>• The wide geographic focus fragments the impact of communication budgets</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A focus on a smaller number of SMART objectives would allow a more targeted and measurable use of funds</li> <li>• A better understanding of results achieved could be used to support decisions on where to focus and how to enhance performance.</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Target groups

In the section below we summarise the range of different target groups which have been identified through the campaign documentation, supplemented by interviews with communication agencies. The target groups that are expressed in communication documentation include citizens, the media and other multipliers, EU-focused NGOs and think tanks. The below table highlights the specific groups that were targeted by the different campaigns

Name	Key audience(s)
Audiovisual campaign in the area of future enlargement of the EU	Citizens, media, readers of newspapers or online media and TV viewers
Online and social media campaign	Enlargement community, social media audiences in EU enlargement-sceptic countries, teachers and public sector professionals
Welcome Croatia	Media, NGOs, Youth and student organisations, as well as universities and schools, cultural organisations, business organisations and TUs
Information and communication campaign for the visibility of EU pre-accession funds (IPA – first and second phase)	Business organisations, CSOs, think tanks dealing with the EU, media and relevant stakeholders. The campaign aims at reaching out to the citizens through the various partners and multipliers engaged.
Awareness-raising campaign on EU Enlargement and the countries in the process (first phase)	Media; youth and student organisations, universities and schools; cultural and sports' organisations; women's organisations, women, the over 55's, people who are less educated.
Awareness-raising campaign on EU Enlargement and the countries in the process (second phase)	Youth and teachers' associations; universities, journalism schools and other education institutions; national/regional media
Stakeholder campaign on EU Enlargement	Media, in particular national and regional media from the EU MS; think tanks with focus on European affairs; entrepreneurs and business organisations, trade unions or employees' associations; followers of DG Enlargement's website & social media

As highlighted above, DG NEAR communication activities have targeted a wide-ranging group of specific target audiences, which can be segmented into two broad groups, that we suggest could be classified as 'informed professionals' and wider 'interested, but un-or-less informed public'. The evidence described later in this report suggests that it has been easier to meet the needs of informed professionals, including journalists who act as multipliers, than it has been to meet the needs of wider publics. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach are highlighted below:

Factor	Key findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been a significant focus placed on journalists and the media, and other multiplier audiences, which implies cost efficiencies in terms of localising messages</li> </ul>

	<p>and reaching wider audiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been a focus placed on youth, and mechanisms to reach youth including schools, universities and student organisations.</li> <li>• The focus on think tanks and academics is pertinent to the discussion and debate of technical issues and aspects of enlargement.</li> <li>• The DG has been effective at targeting information to suit the needs of informed professionals.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst some activities have directly focussed on interaction with specific target groups such as the study visit of entrepreneurs, and the Youth Conference, there are other target groups where it is difficult to ascertain whether or not members of these groups have actually been reached?</li> <li>• The needs of these different target audiences do not appear to have been fully mapped. A better understanding of specific target audiences' interests and concerns would help the DG to tailor materials to improve targeting.</li> <li>• Having many different types of target groups and target countries makes it difficult for the DG to focus its resources.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an opportunity to focus on a smaller subset of target groups and to then focus on reaching these individuals more effectively.</li> <li>• The focus groups suggest that there is a latent interest in enlargement issues in some sectors of the public.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Budget

As stated above, the total budget allocation for DG NEAR's communication activities was circa 5 MEUR per year. Different contractors have taken responsibility for different communication contracts. As would be expected costs are reported and aggregated in different ways, which means that any assessment of costs cannot be made on the basis of a direct comparison across cost headings. Cost data was made available in financial proposals (and amendments) submitted by communication agencies. For the Audio-visual campaign we had access to data on actual spending, which was included in the final report. For the other campaigns financial data relates to proposals and it is likely that changes were made subsequently that were agreed but may not have been included in the proposals.

Given the fact that cost is described using a range of different types of headings, we re-categorised costs so that they could be grouped under a set of standard headings which could be used to compare costs across different campaigns. It is important to note that this re-categorisation is based on a "best" fit rather than a "perfect" fit since some aspects of the campaign are cross cutting (like the use of ambassadors in audio-visual materials and at events, to choose one example).

Nevertheless, it is useful to have an indication of how the spending on contracted communication activities has been allocated across the campaigns collectively. Again, it is worth pointing out that the budget presented here represents only part of the picture; it does not include the efforts (time or resource) spent by DG NEAR itself.

Figure 1 Proportion of contracted communication spending by activity type (July 2011 – September 2015)<sup>6</sup>,

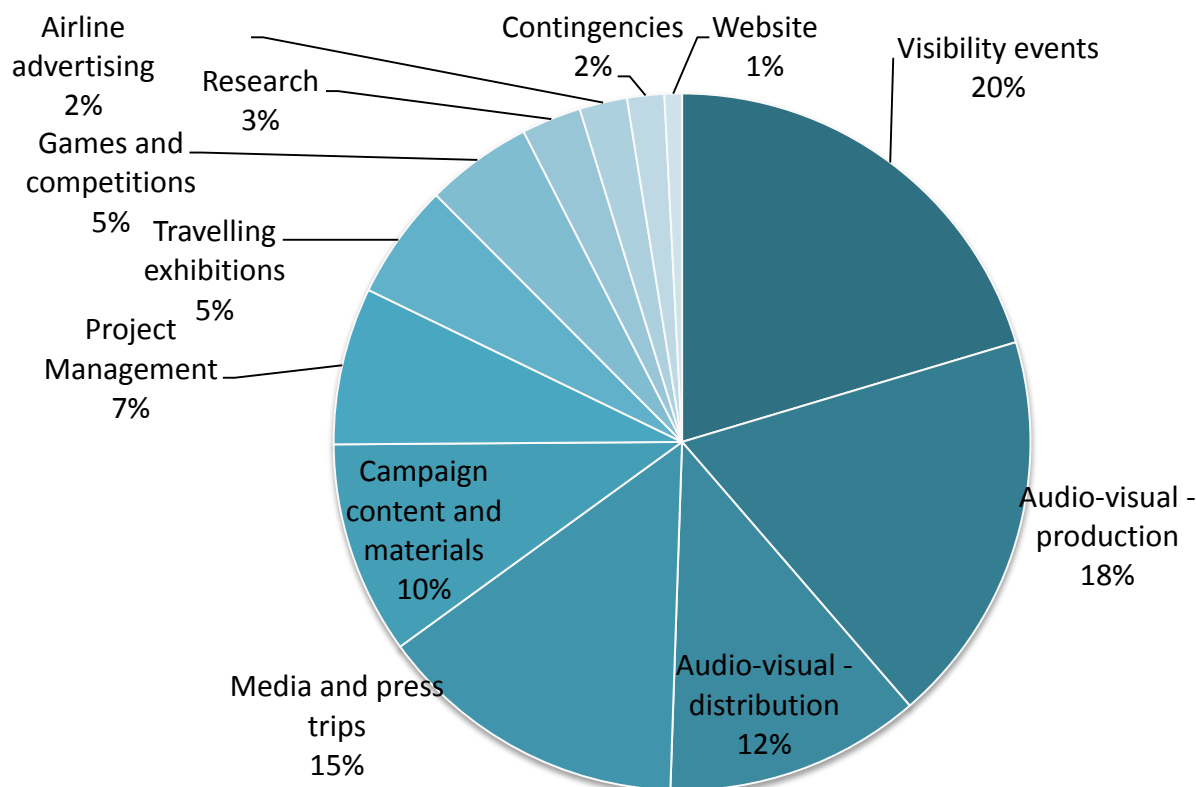


Table 1 – Composition of activity categories

Activity categories	Details
<b>Visibility events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organising new events / talks, presence at existing events / festivals, etc. In addition includes the organisation of a “youth conference” and specialised study visit for entrepreneurs for the Welcome Croatia campaign and workshops under the IPA 2 campaign.</li> </ul>
<b>Audio-visual production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities associated with the production of short films, and clips.</li> </ul>
<b>Audio-visual distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities associated with the distribution of short films, and clips. Specifically the distribution of the Hidden Treasures clip via cinemas in the AWR campaign.</li> </ul>
<b>Campaign content and material</b>	<p>A broad category including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Info materials (such as brochures, leaflets, and infographics, newsletter),</li> <li>Content research, i.e. “success stories” and testimonials, or costs associated with “campaign voices”</li> <li>Give-aways (e.g. postcards, bracelets, pens, folders, roll-ups, etc.)</li> <li>Visual identify (e.g. banners and posters etc.)</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> Note that the figures used here were compiled using the contracts and contract amendments for each campaign. The total reached is € 9,940,442.75 cf. €10,100,664.30 which is the total reached by summing the total budgets for each campaign.

<b>Website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This includes website development (for Welcome Croatia campaign) and in the case of the IPA campaign, the review of DG NEARs IPA-related website content and the development of a database of contacts.</li> </ul>
<b>Travelling exhibitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Photo exhibition(s) and related costs (e.g. production of catalogue)</li> </ul>
<b>Game / competitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costs related to the development and deploying of competitions and games (as well as their prizes). Photo competition (Welcome Croatia); Facebook game (Audio-visual); Writing competition, educational game and school competition (AWR).</li> </ul>
<b>Airline advertising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the stakeholder campaign, adverts in were placed in inflight magazines on a number of airlines.</li> </ul>
<b>Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities which are specifically geared towards journalists or media (including contracted social media activities). For example, press trips, stock photos and press kits, media relations and strategy, etc. In terms of social media activities<sup>7</sup>, what is included is only those activities contracted out to external communication agencies as part of the campaigns, i.e. including advertising on Facebook as part of the Online and Social media campaign and content specifically designed for social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research includes pre-testing and focus groups as well as funding reserved specifically for monitoring activities, where they are a specific budget line.</li> </ul>

Below we consider the strengths and weaknesses of the allocation of budget to different types of communication activities.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Key findings</b>
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget illustrates a mix of channels and tools which have been undertaken and have been necessary to generate the materials and mechanisms to reach a wide-ranging set of target groups and objectives.</li> <li>The order of priority in terms of funding is logical and appropriate. For instance, the highest spend (on audio-visual activities) is justified based on the potential (and actual) reach of these products. It is much easier to disseminate audio-visual products than, say, print products. Similarly, the spend on research reflects industry standards for communication (i.e. 3-4% of total spend).</li> <li>Our analysis of the activities and budget indicates that in broad terms the spend on distribution / dissemination activities versus material is satisfactory.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although not actually visible in the budget, we can infer (and indeed, this is recognised by DG NEAR), that the complexity of managing such a mix of activities is time-consuming for DG NEAR staff.</li> <li>The way that contractors have presented financial information makes it difficult to compare costs of different activities/between different contractors. There are aspects of the budget which could be further delineated (as specific budget lines) to make it easier for DG NEAR to take a view on, for example, whether adequate resources are spent on promotion activities or whether there should be more emphasis on existing or</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Social media includes activities focused on Twitter and Facebook. Both these may reach specialist and non-specialist audiences but while Twitter is used intensely by media professionals, Facebook is generally for a less specialist audience.

	<p>new events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget on audio-visual production was not always “matched” by budget on distribution; in certain campaigns, there is no dedicated budget for distribution of audio-visual material despite spending on production of this material<sup>8</sup>.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going forwards, a more streamlined budget with fewer, more focused activities would result in cost savings.</li> <li>Certain channels and tools could be better exploited in future (e.g. radio, TV, mass media channels) – given the right conditions (i.e. imminent accession).</li> <li>There is room for improvement in terms of the presentation of a) estimated reach figures for different activities (to enable DG NEAR to gauge value for money and efficiency of different channels) and b) clear budget lines for production and dissemination of materials (to enable DG NEAR to assess whether adequate resource is allocated to promotion activities).</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Monitoring and indicators

A detailed assessment of the kinds of monitoring activities undertaken was carried out for each of the campaigns based on the documentation available (Campaign TOR, communication agency reports and DG NEAR monitoring reports). The assessment indicates that monitoring activities have not used consistent reporting styles and that the units of measurement have varied, which reduces the usefulness, comparability and lessons that can be learned across the communication activities.

The below table provides a summary of the main features of DG NEAR monitoring activities, which is used to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach.

#### Contractor monitoring

Activity type and monitoring approach	Strengths and weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visibility event reports</li> </ul> <p>Reports detailing the programmes followed / the presence of DG NEAR at events; (sometimes) assessment of tone / dissemination of message; numbers of visitors / participants; material provided and (sometimes) quantity disseminated; number of visitors completing quiz (where applicable); and (sometimes) analysis of press coverage.</p>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data on numbers of participants is reported which gives indication of reach</li> <li>Materials disseminated are counted and reported</li> <li>Analysis of press coverage is (sometimes) included</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data on numbers of participants for small-scale focused events / interactive events not comparable to large-scale unfocused events are not presented in a way so as to distinguish them</li> <li>Furthermore data on participants are not exact (i.e. sometimes relate to total visitors to event, rather than to stand or specific talk / debate hosted by DG NEAR)</li> <li>Assessment of main messages vis-à-vis key objectives of the campaign not routinely monitored e.g. via feedback from participants or press coverage (where applicable)</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> This was the case in the Welcome Croatia campaign, the Online and social media campaign (although money was spent on Facebook advertising); and the first Awareness-raising campaign.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit reports (i.e. press trips, study visit, conference)</li> </ul> <p>Reports detailing programmes, (translated) clippings from media coverage and (summary of) feedback forms filled in by participants.</p> <p>The feedback forms used for press trips, the Youth Conference and study visit organised under the <i>Welcome Croatia</i> campaign.</p> <p>Include open and closed questions. For example, on the feedback from the study visit: <i>“How do you plan to share your experiences of this business trip when you go home?”</i></p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme of the different press trips outlined in the press trip reports , as well as participation of journalists and their media organisation</li> <li>• Qualitative feedback is gathered from participants</li> <li>• Press coverage is monitored (and a translation provided)</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of tone and success of delivering main messages vis-à-vis key objectives of the campaign not routinely monitored in press coverage nor are tweets /blogs</li> <li>• No presentation of (potential) reach of journalists invited</li> <li>• Usefulness of press pack / information hand-outs is not assessed in feedback form.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media</li> </ul> <p>For example, as part of the Welcome Croatia campaign there was a monthly report looking at online topics (overview of online conversation [trending topics, demographics] and DG Enlargement social media accounts [Twitter overview; top tweets; popular hashtags]; top stories on Facebook ) and key observations. While as part of the Online and Social Media campaign, volume of conversation on enlargement, attitudes towards enlargement / (P)CC, topics associated with enlargement, etc.</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophisticated / thorough analysis of online conversation topics for specific campaign elements i.e. under the “online and social media” campaign.</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring is focused on campaign specific aspects, but the social media presence needs to be monitored in a holistic way i.e. taking into account DG NEAR activities and the entire online presence through social media related activities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website / audio-visual material posted online</li> </ul> <p>For example, Google analytics (Welcome Croatia website<sup>9</sup>); and view to end and view-through, ratings, click-through (under the Audio-visual campaign).</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard monitoring is performed</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative information on message delivery is not routinely assessed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials (give-aways, leaflets, brochure, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>The various reports provide detail on numbers of brochures / leaflets / annual reports / give-aways etc. produced in various languages</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on what is produced is documented</li> <li>• Materials are produced for specific purpose (i.e. to dress stands and to entice visitors)</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative information on reception of materials is not available</li> <li>• Mechanism for disseminating materials are not fully described</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Showing visits to website, date, page visited, unique versus repeat views, etc.



## DG NEAR on the spot monitoring

Activity and monitoring	Strengths and weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Event reports</li> </ul> <p>DG NEAR also does ad hoc on the spot monitoring of conferences/events and has a checklist of aspects to assess and report. The checklist includes a section on the stand and material; feedback from the organiser/ host (without the contractor present); feedback from the contractor as well as more general criteria relating to a qualitative assessment of the discussions.</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive assessment of elements of event</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check-list does not ask for feedback from participants on event or materials disseminated.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press trip mission</li> </ul> <p>Where possible DG NEAR attends press trips and submits a short “mission report”. The information does not follow a template but includes some combination of a detailed description of the programme; the journalists’ participation; EU visibility, networking, and lessons learned.</p>	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EC monitoring has provided first hand insights and real understanding of what works in practice.</li> <li>Contractor monitoring has provided both quantitative and qualitative feedback using a template for each press trip.</li> <li>Feedback from press trips has been built into a feedback loop, whereby relevant findings have been helped to refine the approach.</li> <li>Reviews of press coverage provide some qualitative and quantitative insights.</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different monitoring templates have been used to gather feedback from journalists across different campaigns, which means it is not feasible to compare trips under different campaigns</li> <li>There is an opportunity for a more consistent approach to media coverage in relation to readership numbers, take up of key messages / and other qualitative aspects, as well as numbers of articles. What can be done will relate to available budgets.</li> </ul>

## Key findings on monitoring

As the above examples illustrate, monitoring **is regularly undertaken** as part of the campaigns and has been used throughout to track the activities completed and report to the Commission. This is as would be expected **for the systematic assessment of the activities**. However, it is important to stress that “indicators” have not been systematically applied to measure campaign performance. There are examples of indicators in communication agency offers and in communication agency final reports, but this is not routine practice and there was no consistency across campaigns, which is likely to have been somewhat exacerbated by the need to work with different contractors. Nonetheless, based on the campaign documentation we found limited reference to key performance indicators (or KPIs), for example:

- As part of the Awareness-raising campaign, there is analysis of KPIs from the Wildfire platform<sup>10</sup> used for the writing competition on EU enlargement for young people

<sup>10</sup> Wildfire was a service to support social marketing campaigns

- The technical offer for the Stakeholder campaign included a list of topics for KPIs ranging from assessment of the creative approach (e.g. awareness potential; understanding; emotional quality; activation potential) to media relations (number of specialist journalists identified; reach; number of participants in press trips).

Essentially, there is a lot of room for communication agencies to use their discretion in drawing up the monitoring systems. The Terms of Reference commonly call for “high quality and effective” monitoring, as well as “quantitative and qualitative reporting and evaluation”; “clear and measurable indicators” and sometimes “written feedback, polls and/or comments and reactions gathered from the target audiences”. The emphasis, sometimes explicitly, is on the contractor to “propose further measures to evaluate the impact of the specific products and actions”. In consequence we find that **monitoring and evaluation requirements are not consistently prescribed in any detail in the individual campaign Terms of Reference (TOR)**.

The advantage of having a well-structured monitoring system in place includes the ability to tackle the “**insider bias**” which happens when an organisation or group has a stake in reporting favourably. This makes it even more important to have clear, measurable, indicators. This is discussed in greater detail in the answer to the evaluation question on evaluation and monitoring in section 5.4 of this document.

## 4 Findings on specific channels & tools

This section describes our key findings from the primary research evidence that was gathered during the evaluation via the visibility events and press trips that were attended by members of the evaluation team, the interviews with project partners and the survey of journalists and focus groups with members of the general public (used to test a sample of communication materials). The evaluation key findings are presented in the Annexes to this report and are summarised below with a view to better understanding the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of the following aspects:

- Press trips
- Visibility events and trips
- Social media
- Audio-visual
- Print and other materials

We also present the **opportunities** resulting from our analysis.

### 4.1 Press trips

From our observation and quantitative and qualitative feedback from journalist participants to press trips, our assessment is that overall press trips were extremely well organised and implemented, and that every effort was made to meet journalists' needs. Close involvement of the local EU office/Delegation appears to be a success factor both before and during the trip, as is proactivity on the part of DG NEAR officials accompanying the trip.

The below table provides a summary analysis of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the press trips.

Factor	Findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very well organised and implemented to a high standard based on observations and participants' feedback</li> <li>• High level of satisfaction among journalist participants</li> <li>• High level speakers</li> <li>• Use of formal and informal setting facilitates open debate and dialogue</li> <li>• Most journalists produce articles in the short term following a trip</li> <li>• Fills a gap for fieldwork due to budget cuts at media outlets</li> <li>• Journalists assert that quality of materials was high and are very appreciative of the opportunity to participate as evidenced by our independent survey</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign coverage was not necessarily aligned with funding contract / campaign objectives (i.e. IPA – however this also raises questions as to whether objectives are right).</li> <li>• Press packs upon arrival is too late for most journalists / journalists not prepared</li> <li>• Coverage generated via Social Media, incl. via blogs and Twitter not currently monitored</li> <li>• Lack of uniformity of approach in press trip monitoring / lack of (consistent) qualitative analysis of coverage</li> <li>• Not all journalists generate coverage in the short term (although this is accepted as building for future coverage)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more strategic approach, which would require               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A better definition of the themes of press trips and the needs that they intend to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>serve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Scope for better targeting of stakeholders and selection of participants</li> <li>○ Providing stock shots' in advance and on USB sticks, this could support journalists' tweeting during the trip.</li> <li>○ Journalists are selected from approved lists of media outlets, where possible a more strategic approach to target and build rapport specific journalists could help the DG to generate greater coverage over the longer term.</li> <li>○ A more consistent approach to (qualitative and quantitative) monitoring of press trips and their outcomes</li> </ul>
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The key message that emerges is that DG NEAR's press trips are of very high quality and that the approach has been refined over the course of the different campaigns to develop a formula that works. There is scope for a more strategic and targeted approach with a view to creating better opportunities to generate more coverage. However, as the DG does not have the resources to manage relations with journalists directly the scope to develop relationships is somewhat limited.

Although it was not possible to participate in the press trips organised under Welcome Croatia, we note that four trips were organised, each with a specific focus on economics and business, culture and travel, youth and women's lifestyle. Based on campaign documentation, we understand a more targeted focus was adopted for these press trips along the lines that would be recommended.

### 4.2 Visibility events and trips

DG NEAR has organised, participated and exhibited in an extensive range of events between 2011 and 2015. Events are perceived to be an important vehicle to carry DG NEAR messages and reach different target audiences because they allow direct interaction with individuals. The below analysis draws on our observations and interviews at different types of event:

- **Informed stakeholder type events:** focussed on informed individuals with a level of specialist knowledge or fitting a specific profile (for example, policy discussion sessions at Queen Mary University of London, European Policy Centre in Brussels)
- **Stakeholder profile type events and study trips:** focussed on individuals with a specific profile, for example young federalists in Stuttgart, Germany; youth conference and business study trip organised under Welcome Croatia. Here it is important to note that the evaluation was unable to access evidence relating to the youth conference and business trip beyond the communication agency reports, in consequence it is only possible to develop generic findings.
- **Large scale events for the general public:** focussed on wider audiences receptive to culture and presentations of different countries and their populations, based on our attendance at the Odense and Edinburgh film festivals.

Factor	Findings for events to informed stakeholders
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Show the specific role of the European Commission and the work being done</li> <li>● Provide an opportunity for transparency with senior officials discussing their insights</li> <li>● Involving high profile speakers, for example Ministers, etc.</li> <li>● Unique opportunities for subject experts to discuss specialist topics</li> <li>● Well-organised and implemented</li> <li>● Opportunities for discussion and networking with high profile speakers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively low cost in that premises and promotion supported by partners</li> <li>• Much appreciated by participants (and partners)</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No documented selection criteria for the choice of partners</li> <li>• Coverage limited to individuals in the room / at the event</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mechanism to ensure continued specialist communication on enlargement issues, even when there are no imminent accessions Increase involvement / awareness of academic audiences as well as think tanks, national and local government in other locations</li> <li>• Developing an event series and / or timetable name or brand to aide promotion</li> <li>• More targeted selection of partners for events</li> <li>• Web-streaming or targeted promotion for academic audiences</li> </ul>

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Findings for youth conference</b>
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided an opportunity to target a specific profiles who might otherwise be difficult to reach</li> <li>• Potential increase in knowledge and awareness of participants given the direct interaction facilitated</li> <li>• Students are an important target group, providing an opportunity to raise awareness of enlargement processes, challenges and opportunities among groups who are likely future leaders and are potentially more open to new ideas.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively high cost with limited coverage of target groups (cost effectiveness could be increased if used as a PR vehicle)</li> <li>• Whilst participation for those involved is likely to have had some sustainable outcomes there were no channels to facilitate additional reverberations with other students</li> <li>• Content appeared too general to really add value – students could have been challenged more with more political and/or academic content.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider opportunities to bring speakers to students rather than the other way around to increase cost effectiveness, for example through : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sponsoring lectures in collaboration with relevant academic departments via MOOCs (Massive open online course), this could make lectures available to wider audiences / participants irrespective of their location.</li> <li>○ Sponsoring guest lecture and debate series at top academic institutions, which would most likely imply a mapping of relevant departments / individual academics with an interest in key enlargement topics.</li> <li>○ Exploring opportunities for greater coverage / digital reach (talking-head insights from key academics disseminated via the internet)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Content for youth can be made more academic / political if the goal is to spread awareness and knowledge</li> <li>• Use the events as PR opportunity to generate media coverage – this is relevant at specific points in time for example prior to accession, but not as an on-going activity</li> </ul>

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Findings for large scale events for the general public</b>
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Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stands were well-manned by welcoming individuals who were enthusiastic and proactive</li> <li>• Clear EC branding and branded take-away materials.</li> <li>• Can provide an opportunity for debate and airing DG material (for example, films).</li> <li>• Provide a direct opportunity to present accession topics to interested individuals outside Brussels, bringing information to publics in different Member States and showing what the DG is doing.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unless events are focussed on accession topics / countries, and / or accession is imminent it is difficult to engage publics, even those who have a latent interest and information could appear propagandistic.</li> <li>• As these events are organised by others key success factors can be outside the DG's control, for example prominence of stand position, opportunities for debate, logistics for showing films, numbers of viewers, etc.</li> <li>• There is a cost to participating at events, but no mechanisms in place to quantify or systematically qualify the added value of each event, for example count numbers of people reached / stand visitors / or to qualify the added-value of the event.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful to reach out at specific points in time, for example when an accession is imminent or recent, with a specific purpose, as highlighted through the Welcome Croatia campaign</li> <li>• Opportunities to build debate / media presence around the stand, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Becoming a festival highlight, by creating a more substantial programme for example a number of short-films showing different perspectives of a situation plus a panel discussion with high profile speakers, moderated by a journalist, etc.</li> <li>○ Combining with PR / e-PR activities to create reverberations and maximise reach beyond those present</li> <li>○ Involving personalities / high-ranking officials</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Events and trips are vehicles that can be used to support the delivery of key messages. There is no best or worst type of event or trip, but what emerges is that these **events have different pros and cons, which means that they are not always appropriate in every situation. Our assessment is that different types of audience need to be targeted at different times**, as highlighted below:

Audience type	Timing	Purpose	Type of event	Factors
Specialist /semi-specialists including academics, think tanks, government	On-going	Ensuring that enlargement / accession topics remain on the agenda with individuals who support government policy development	Specialist debates, information sessions and lectures with key note speakers	Maximise outreach Target events Penetrate academic / political / civil society community
Youth	Annual	Generating awareness among future leaders	Guest lecture events at relevant academic institutions	Develop a thorough lecture series / sponsor lecturer ship to ensure that sharp / high academic quality

Wide public or specific profile i.e. youth	Only when accession is imminent	Generating media coverage Reaching out to specific and general publics	PR events Presence at large audience events	Attempt to quantify coverage counts to stand visitors Provide opportunities for interaction Media coverage / high EC branding
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## 4.3 Social media

### Social media

The use of social media has become a 'must' in any comprehensive communication campaign and was an element in several of the campaigns reviewed in this report. We understand social media as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.; it does not include online/websites, though these clearly need to be used in combination, either with a dedicated website or DG NEAR's own.

The only campaign covered here which had a dedicated website was Welcome Croatia and that was no longer accessible. Two campaigns had strong social media components, i.e. the online and social media campaign (which also covered provision of editorial services, including support with the social media) and the audiovisual campaign. The data available was limited, but the contractor approached this professionally, with the use of a third party to provide professional monitoring and of paid advertising to successfully boost Facebook exposure.

Social media has also been used in other campaigns. DG NEAR has a clear understanding in this context that, as a rule of thumb, it is better to push rather than to pull, i.e. it is better to disseminate through existing channels than to try to build a community for a specific campaign unless there is a clear strategy for migration to another community at the end of the campaign, something that it is rarely easy to achieve.

We outline in the table below how simple measures could boost dissemination of tweets by the DG about events, and therefore of information about the events. Those same measures could be applied to journalists on press trips and a number of activities.

We recognise, however, that the DG has two types of constraint in the amount of resources it can devote to closer integration of campaign and in-house social media. On the one hand, it 'has to strike a balance between the human resources available and the intensity of its social media activities; on the other contractors are not always well attuned to the requirements of policy communication as DG NEAR found when it attempted to use contractors for this purpose in one of the campaigns.

What is important going forward is to require contractors to plan campaigns, and their associated social media strategy bearing in mind these principles and the need for good advance coordination with the DG NEAR in-house teams, so that the latter have time to plan the use of their limited resources.

We have focused here and earlier on Twitter as being the form of social media most used by academics, journalists and politicians. However, in any work with students or games for schoolchildren, clearly Facebook becomes relevant and the same principles apply.

Factor	Findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced to a high professional standard</li> <li>Professionally monitored</li> <li>Results from the use of paid Facebook advertising</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear definition of the target audiences</li> <li>Insufficient definition by contractors of campaign-related social media dissemination</li> </ul>

	<p>strategies, including to maximise dissemination by DG NEAR where appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often insufficient in-house resources and contractor expertise on DG NEAR content to optimise social media strategy</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear targeting, e.g. through identification of appropriate hashtag targets, in conjunction with a clear dissemination strategy</li> <li>• Integration of online activity and social media</li> <li>• Inclusion in Terms of Reference of specific contract a requirement for definition of social media strategy appropriate to the campaign</li> <li>• More use of DG NEAR's own social media channels to publicise news-worthy campaign activities</li> <li>• Improving outcomes through analysis of monitoring results</li> <li>• Continuing to pay for prominence on social media at key periods</li> </ul>

The issue of what is suitable for social media merits some comment, since there is not 'one size fits all'. The video clips were of a length suited to online use (websites, Vimeo, YouTube). For Twitter (or Instagram), they need to be bite-sized and very timely. Each has a different audience (see the table below for our suggestions on a differentiated approach).

A differentiated approach to social media and online tools is required. As a general principle, audiences should be used to increase the community of existing websites, rather than creating a stand-alone site or portal. If there is a stand-alone site or portal is used, then a strategy is needed on how to migrate the new community to sites of interest to them. It should also be borne in mind that Facebook and Twitter are not the only social media, and that the pundits are already asking themselves what the dominant social media will be in the post-Facebook, post-Twitter eras.

<b>Audience type</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Type of social media &amp; online tools</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Wide public	Only when accession is imminent	Providing information to the general public Generating media/social media coverage	Expand to channels used by a wider range of media Associate with bite-size clips and online use of infographics Pay for prominence	Media coverage, including social media
Academic audiences (students / staff)	On-going	Generating awareness Increasing knowledge	Targeted channels of dissemination Close integration of social media and online activity around events with academic audiences	Penetrate academic community
Interested audience	On-going	Raising awareness ensuring that enlargement / accession topics remain on the agenda with individuals interested in political/ European affairs	Selective use of DG NEAR's own social media Suitable additional channels of dissemination (Twitter,	Maximise outreach



			blogs, political websites) Use of clips suited to appropriate social media (bite-size, short form, long form) Used in conjunction with websites.	
Expert audience	On-going	Fostering knowledge by ensuring that enlargement / accession topics remain on the agenda with individuals who support government and EU policy development	DG NEAR tools which target this audience.  (Likely to mean the website in conjunction with Twitter accounts followed by the media or specialist Twitter accounts of or blogs.)	Penetrate expert community

## 4.4 Audio-visual

In the implementation of the campaigns, contractors developed, in agreement with DG NEAR, a number of video clips, with a view to presenting EU enlargement policy and process, introducing candidate and potential candidate countries and emphasise the win-win character of enlargement.

DG NEAR has used video clips to reach different target audiences through a general, online (e.g. Vimeo, Youtube, DG NEAR website and social media) dissemination strategy and / or a targeted, offline dissemination strategy (e.g. production of DVDs included in information packages distributed to stakeholders).

Campaign	Video clips produced
Online and social media <sup>11</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Five short videos</b> to accompany different thematic focuses and themes</li> </ul>
Audiovisual <sup>12</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Viral video clip “Growing together”</b> (enlargement is a win-win scenario)</li> <li>• Image building clip <b>“The hidden treasures of Europe”</b></li> <li>• Human face clip <b>“EU enlargement: what can it do for you?”</b></li> </ul>
Welcome Croatia <sup>13</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Six video clips</b> with celebrities and youth representatives sharing their views on Croatia’s EU accession</li> </ul>
Stakeholder <sup>14</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The production of <b>five short clips</b> on EU enlargement</li> <li>• <b>3 animated clips about the EU enlargement process</b></li> </ul>
IPA <sup>15</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the first phase: <b>five thematic videos</b></li> <li>• During the second phase: <b>10 thematic videos</b></li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Described in Final Report, p.9

<sup>12</sup> Described in Final Report p 15-44

<sup>13</sup> Described in Final Report, p39-42

<sup>14</sup> Data on the implementation of the contract has been provided by DG NEAR. It was initially foreseen to produce up to 10 short clips on EU enlargement and up to 20 animated clips about the EU enlargement process, information on the basis of which the financials are presented (Terms of Reference, pp.10-12, Financial offer, pp.4-7, technical offer, pp.55-79 and Audit report, pp.2-5)

<sup>15</sup> 1st phase described in Final Report p13, 2<sup>nd</sup> phase described in Technical offer p.23

Awareness-raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the first phase: <b>Ten mini docs of expert and celebrity ambassadors</b><sup>16</sup></li> <li>• During the second phase: the “Hidden treasures of Europe” clip was updated to mark Croatia as an EUMS since July 2013<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>
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The analysis below draws on our analysis of the clips (listed above) and on the feedback received from focus groups; it is based on an understanding that in general terms, there have broadly been two kinds of video clips produced:

- **Clips intended for the general public:** primarily targeted the general public, including specific segments of the general public such as youth, with a view to addressing citizens’ concerns with regard to enlargement and the accession of new countries
- **Clips intended for audiences with an interest in EU affairs:** targeted an audience already expressing a general interest in EU affairs, with a view in particular to drawing them to focus on enlargement-related matters and “create a buzz”

The key message that emerged from the focus groups is that **the video clips are produced to a very high standard, yet there is scope to project the message more effectively**, as highlighted in the summary below of current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. The below table presents feedback from the focus groups conducted within the evaluation on three specific video clips as well as feedback from two film festivals on the first clip listed:

- Hidden treasures (a viral clip)
- Jacques Rupnik (an expert view)
- Ermonela Jaho (a celebrity ambassador).

This is then complemented by an additional table of more general observations from the experts on the audio-visual materials.

Factor	Findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produced to the highest standard, visual quality (as recognised by the award to the “Hidden Treasures of Europe” clip)</li> <li>• ‘Hidden Treasures’ was engaging of a suitable length to keep people interested and conveyed a clear message.</li> <li>• The Jacques Rupnik clip presented clear messages and the fact that this clip reminded views of some of the more fundamental benefits of the EU was appreciated.</li> <li>• Jacques Rupnik’s expert status, his own personal history and made him a credible voice.</li> <li>• The audiovisual format is appreciated by the public and focus group research confirmed a view that this type of tool could be most effective to engage with target groups.</li> <li>• The DG has produced different types of clips, not a one size fits all approach, which recognises that different clips suit different audiences / purposes. Using others to talk on behalf of the DG is a credible approach, which allows a better connection with the public than for example a Commissioner.</li> <li>• Dissemination of Hidden Treasures via cinema, airline and digital promotion helped to reach more people.</li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> Described in Final report, p.15

<sup>17</sup> Described in Technical offer, p.16

Weaknesses / challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some clips were less effective. The Growing Together clip was an innovative / highly creative interpretation, but unfortunately hit the wrong tone. The E. Jaho clip highlighted the public's interest in ordinary people.</li> <li>• There has been insufficient budget to enable wide and deep dissemination of all clips in consequence some clips have not had sufficient exposure.</li> <li>• Dissemination strategies have in some cases not been sufficiently defined, which also limits visibility.</li> <li>• Interested publics have a desire for more nuanced information on the pros and cons of enlargement, including current Member States' perspectives and interests in enlargement.</li> <li>• Some clips for informed audiences are too long to be shared via social media and may not be viewed unless opportunities can be generated to channel clips to potentially interested audiences.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A presentation of the benefits and challenges of EU enlargement, for ordinary citizens, current Member States and enlargement countries and the EU in general.</li> <li>• Enhanced visibility of the video clips via a clearer dissemination strategy, which is currently foreseen for the new 2016 contract.</li> <li>• Increase focus on options for sharing clips, including ensuring visibility of essentials (URL, hash-tag), clips less than one minute long, front loaded information, silent clips, which can be good for mobile</li> <li>• Developing audiovisual clips for specialist audiences / to support tweeting from DG NEAR events would create synergies with events organised and support social media engagement.</li> </ul>

## 4.5 Print and other materials

Campaign activities also included the provision of print materials and promotional goods. These materials / products were disseminated at events, visits and via online and offline channels to key stakeholders<sup>18</sup>.

Campaign	Materials	
Welcome Croatia	Print	Leaflet, exhibition catalogue & travelling exhibition sets
	Digital dissemination	Web banners
	Give-aways / branding material	Postcard, silicon bracelet, USB card, pen, seeds pack, banners, posters, roll-ups
Stakeholder	Print	Adverts/editorials in on-board magazines of selected airlines;
	Digital dissemination	Infographics
	Give-aways	Ballpoint pens, folders, USB keys, post-it notes, notepads, notebooks,

<sup>18</sup> The information presented in the table is drawn from the following sources: Welcome Croatia – Final Report; Stakeholder – technical offer; IPA and Awareness-Raising: Final Report for first phase and the Technical Offer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase

		roll-ups
IPA	Print	Success stories, thematic leaflets, IPA annual report, IPA information packages and travelling exhibition sets.
	Digital dissemination	Success stories, IPA pages on DG Enlargement’s website
Awareness-raising	Print	Brochure on the enlargement of the EU, leaflet (updated during the second phase of the campaign)
	Digital dissemination	Educational game and accompanying material
	Give-aways	T-shirts, backdrop design, roll-ups, magnets, key chains, tote bags, coin purses & posters, postcards “So similar, so different, so European”, EU enlargement maps

The focus groups were used to discuss a selection of print materials agreed with DG NEAR<sup>19</sup>. We also gathered direct feedback on participants’ views on print and promotional goods at selected film festivals, information events and press trips<sup>20</sup>.

From the qualitative feedback received, our assessment is that **print materials** were well received, and that every effort was made to present the information clearly and in an attractive format. The focus group discussions revealed the different nationality groups shared the same general appreciation of DG NEAR’s communication materials. Nevertheless, the groups had constructive ideas for how to strengthen the materials and their dissemination. As such, the key message that emerges is that **DG NEAR’s print materials are of high quality, yet with scope to enhance the relevance of the information presented**, as highlighted in the below summary of current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

Factor	Findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General relevance and usefulness of the information materials to both the general public and stakeholders</li> <li>• Concrete examples and real stories are much appreciated by the reader</li> <li>• Presentation, images and graphical representation support the information provided / the key messages portrayed</li> <li>• Quality, layout and presentation of the brochure, as well as clarity of information was rated highly</li> <li>• Attractive presentation of the leaflet</li> <li>• Simple, modern layout and use of images and summary information making the</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> The “So similar, so different, so European” leaflet ; The DG Enlargement brochure “Enlargement of the European Union” ; Two infographics: one on fundamental rights and one on the global role of the EU”

<sup>20</sup> Specifically, the following materials: Information and promotional materials available at the Edinburgh and Odense Film Festivals(e.g. brochures, leaflets, and a “goodie bag” including a key chain and Tshirt, postcards, calendars, magnets) ; nformation and promotional materials produced as part of the IPA campaign available at the events on “Fighting organised crime in the Western Balkans” (Queen Mary University), “Public administration reform in the Balkans” (European Policy Centre) and “Comparing perspectives on the integration of Roma in Germany and the Western Balkans” (Young European Federalists of Baden-Wuerttemberg) ; Press packs distributed to participants to the trips to Kosovo (Stakeholder campaign) and to Albania (IPA campaign).

	infographics easy to grasp.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient evaluation of the recall and resonance of the information material</li> <li>• Diminished credibility of the print materials due to the perceived one-sidedness of the information provided (further information on challenges of further enlargement called for)</li> <li>• Opportunities to engage with the public when they pick up materials at an information stand could be further exploited</li> <li>• When there is no imminent or recent accession, there is no obvious target audience / channels to reach wider interested audiences.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen the impact of materials for wider publics by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Presenting a more balanced view on enlargement and its consequences in terms of benefits and challenges, including possible economic impacts for current Member States</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gather more qualitative feedback on materials from target audiences (for example, on-the-spot monitoring of materials distributed at events)</li> <li>• Target materials to specific audiences at specific points in time / events, but recognise that generic materials are likely to have limited interest / cease to</li> <li>• Increased use of infographics to explain complex issues in a simple way, for viral dissemination in support of promotion / follow up of other DG NEAR organised events / accession news.</li> </ul>

With regard to promotional goods, on the basis of the qualitative feedback received from participants at information and visibility events, as well as our own assessment based on field visits, the key message is that **promotional goods are fulfilling their purpose as mechanisms to draw people to stands. However, there is a need to ensure that the goods themselves are relevant and timely**, otherwise their added-value is questioned by audiences.

Factor	Findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May attract visitors and give the possibility to engage with them and present information materials</li> <li>• Potential to generate further interest through peer communication on the basis of the use of promotional goods.</li> <li>• DG NEAR has placed a small budgetary focus on these items, which can be considered to be appropriate given their limited impact (as recognised by DG NEAR).</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all promotional goods were relevant / well-planned (e.g. relevance of placing calendars in the goodies bags distributed in June 2015 at the Edinburgh Film Festival)</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use opportunities to engage with the public when they pick up materials at an information stand and discuss about enlargement issues / topics and gather feedback on how promotional materials are received at the information stand via a short survey. In addition pointing out urls where further information is available is good practice.</li> <li>• Tailor goods to target audiences and specific events to increase their appeal.</li> <li>• Secure locations with high footfall and / or near discussion / exhibition on enlargement for stands at any events.</li> </ul>

# 5 The evaluation questions

## 5.1 Effectiveness

### **To what extent were the communication activities effective in achieving the PRINCE objectives?**

To answer this question we considered a number of sub questions described in the Terms of Reference, as follows:

- Extent of reach of the target groups
- Relevance of messages to the objectives
- Relevance to target group needs
- Extent that activities achieved expected impacts

### **To what extent did the activities reach the target groups?**

The main issue faced when considering the reach of target groups is a lack of consistent data. As there were no key performance indicators (KPIs) or targets set for reach of target audiences by channel, tool and by country, it is not possible to assess whether level of reach was sufficient.

Whilst there is some data with regards to reach, unless this reach was direct, for example numbers of individuals who participated in a specific event (journalists, entrepreneurs, young people), it is not possible to ascertain which types of individuals were reached by the different activities, which reflects both the nature of mass channels such as cinema and airline advertising, and the fact that there were no mechanisms to define reach within specific groups of the public, for example a large scale representative survey, such as a Eurobarometer survey.

With regards to direct reach there is evidence to confirm the following with regards to the five completed campaigns:

- At least, 190 journalists participated in the 12 DG NEAR press trips organised under the five completed campaigns
- 220 young people participated in the Youth Conference
- 27 entrepreneurs (1 per Member State) participated in the study visit to Croatia
- 289 informed individuals<sup>21</sup> representing, civil society, think tanks, academia, etc. took part in the 10 visibility events organised by the DG under the IPA 1 campaign.
- 292 info packages were distributed to a targeted list of multipliers under the Welcome Croatia campaign

It is difficult to compare reach of journalists who act as multipliers with reach of specific end target groups. However, with regards to direct reach of end target groups, it must be considered that DG NEAR has focussed on a multiplier strategy and with the exception of the advertising and digital promotion there has been limited direct reach of wider publics

With regards indirect reach, there is evidence to confirm the following:

- The airline advertising had a reach of 2,474,000<sup>22</sup>
- Cinema shows of the 'So similar, so different' clip achieved a reach of 8,114,788<sup>23</sup>
- The Welcome Croatia website achieved 23,905 unique visits

<sup>21</sup> There was no aggregated analysis of the exact profile of participants, but based on our observation at several similar events we believe that this group was comprised of the listed categories of individuals.

<sup>22</sup> Described in 150114\_ICFMOSTRA\_REACH\_ADVERT\_ARILINES

<sup>23</sup> Under the Audiovisual campaign, the clip had 4,200,869 views in cinema and 1,336,717 views through hidden media buying (described in Final report, p.22). Under the first phase of the awareness raising campaign, it had 2,577,202 more views in cinema (described in Final report, p.13).

- The viral and image building clips achieved 2,019,248 video views<sup>24</sup>
- 306 articles were produced resulting from the media strategy, press trips, etc. developed under the Welcome Croatia campaign with a huge potential readership of 293 million readers<sup>25</sup>. As 12 individual press trips were conceived under the completed campaigns the potential reach generated by press trips was higher.
- Media coverage resulted in 3.43 million printed circulation pieces and the broadcasting audience reached at least 5 million under IPA 1<sup>26</sup>.
- 55,200 attendees at events where the DG stand / materials were present financed under the Welcome Croatia campaign<sup>27</sup>, 289 participants at new events and 8,500 attendees at events<sup>28</sup> supported under IPA1<sup>29</sup>, and 13,850 potential visitors to the travelling exhibition also under IPA 1.

This evidence suggests a potential significant reach using the materials developed during the campaigns, but it is not possible to ascertain the extent that this type of reach led to the exposure of all the different types of target groups identified in campaign plans, including trade unions, university associations, the less educated, women, youth, etc.

With regards to large events to which DG NEAR participates, our observation confirms that as would be expected the actual numbers who visit the DG stand or view videos are a small subset of the total number of event participants. Feedback from a small sample of attendees was that they did not consider themselves targeted by the activities and materials. Young participants interviewed at the Odense Film Festival replied that “only [their] parents [were] interested in what the Commission [was doing]”, adding that their perception was strengthened by the fact that the information stand was “not exactly presented in a way that [appealed] to young people”. Similarly, focus group participants did not consider they were targeted by the information materials and were not sure who they were intended to be for, guessing they could be used in schools, universities and to target Eurosceptic groups.

For the online and social media campaign, there was no mechanism for assessing whether the objective of reaching “persons interested in enlargement policy and the future of the EU, in particular people active on social media networks, *teachers, public sector professionals, {our italics} etc.*” were met. However, such measurement can be extremely costly.

### Summary

- Direct interaction with target groups ensures that messages and information are conveyed. DG NEAR implemented a number of activities which directly reached specific target groups, but the levels of participation of these groups were relatively low in comparison to the total potential target groups. This suggests a need to try to maximise the number of people who are able to participate in each specific activity in some way in targeted activities, for example by better targeting and use of digital channels to broaden reach. However, it should also always be borne in mind that activities should always remain highly focused and targeted because it will never be possible with the resources available to reach a wide audience.
- This also suggests a need to reduce the number specific target groups to be reached and / or a need to focus on a smaller subset of countries. The evidence confirms that DG NEAR’s direct communication activities are very well organised and appreciated, but only small numbers are able to benefit and the opportunities to reach more of those target groups, e.g. through better prior selection or digital dissemination of activities, are not maximised.
- Participation at festivals and exhibitions can be used to allow the DG to come into contact with the general public, but they have not proved particularly useful as a means of targeting specific groups, because of the variety of different types of individuals who attend these events and the fact that materials have not

<sup>24</sup> Described in Final report, pp.22-23 (1,336,717 views of the Hidden Treasures of Europe and 682,531 views of the viral clip Growing together)

<sup>25</sup> Described in Final report media coverage

<sup>26</sup> Described in Final report, p.43

<sup>27</sup> Described in the Final report - Events

<sup>28</sup> There is no data regarding participants to the DG NEAR presence at 20 plus music and film festival supported under the Awareness-raising campaign budget.

<sup>29</sup> Described in Final report, p.42



been specifically targeted to different festivals per se.

- Mass communication activities such as advertising and digital promotion are very effective mechanisms to reach large numbers of citizens, but it can be costly to build in audience profile measurement to confirm the effectiveness with different target groups. Also, unless target audiences are reached with a degree of frequency, the impacts of these channels and tools can be very momentary.

### **To what extent were the messages relevant to objectives?**

DG NEAR's content and messages were clearly branded as supported by the European Commission. This can be considered as the minimum level of relevance that should be expected. Despite this, in focus groups some individuals suggested that they would not have noticed the Commission branding if they had not known already that the institution was behind the communication materials.

The content and messages of the eight campaigns broadly fit with the objectives, although as was intended different campaigns and activities were focussed on different objectives. For example, DG NEAR participation at large public events for the most part did not generate media coverage and from our observation neither did events that were organised for specialist groups, whereas press trips were very relevant to the objective of encouraging media coverage and raising awareness.

Press trip participants confirmed the quality of the press trip programme, the format of the presentations (general and technical presentations, formal and informal sessions), the quality of the speakers and the efforts to represent a range of different perspectives on enlargement. All of this confirmed relevance to the objectives of raising awareness, encouraging reporting and debate. Only a minority recommended enhancing the targeting of the participants to enhance the relevance of the topics covered in terms of the research focus of the participants. However, follow up on reporting after two observed press trips indicated coverage is not guaranteed and part of the investment relates to the longer term goal of knowledge building among journalists. The number of journalists who had not written anything two months after the trip to Kosovo was relatively high. In addition, the resulting reporting was not always aligned with the specific objectives of the campaigns. But it did, on the whole, generate positive/informative coverage of the region/countries visited, which is one of the objectives.

An extensive range of audiovisual clips were developed and these varied in their relevance to different objectives. For example, the 'So similar, so different clip' was highly relevant to the goal of underlining shared values, whereas the viral clip was criticised for its perceived racist portrayal. Meanwhile the video clip portraying an Albanian opera singer was also less relevant to the goal of underlining shared values, because citizens felt that she was not an average person, the clip with Jacques Rupnik was considered to be more relevant also to raising awareness about enlargement.

With regard to print materials, whilst in theory these were relevant to the raising-awareness objective, it is unclear to what extent these were effectively disseminated. Focus group research confirms that intended messages were understood. However, citizens highlighted a desire to see the pros and cons of enlargement. Graphic representations such as the diagram on the enlargement process in the brochure and infographics were highlighted as having strong potential to raise awareness because of their simple visual formats and because they provided information that citizens did not usually come across, due to a lack of reporting in their countries.

Many events were specifically organised under the different communication campaigns, particularly under IPA and Awareness-Raising and it can be considered that these were very relevant to the goal of stimulating informed discussion and debate, yet there was a sense that this could have been strengthened had more people taken part and had members of the media been present. In addition, it seems likely that not all events did support debate. Debate was built into the Odense film festival concept, whereas this was not the case at the Edinburgh event.

#### **Summary**

- Audiences perceived that messages and information were relevant to objectives, with different types of channels and tools more and less relevant to different objectives. However, as would be expected within such an extensive range of activities, some materials and channels were more aligned and relevant than others.
- Exhibiting in large **events** not targeted on enlargement only provides only a superficial level of awareness-



raising, unless significant efforts are made to headline the event, generate a PR programme around participation for example, by including high profile speakers.

- The strong focus on the **media** through press trips and the volume of coverage generated shows the good fit of this emphasis with the goal of generating coverage, although there are opportunities to try to steer trips to enhance the fit between the content of articles developed by journalists who attended the trips.

### **To what extent was the information provided relevant to the target audiences' needs?**

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This question seeks to assess the relevance of the communication activities through the discussion on the existence of particular information needs and the extent to which the communication activities addressed them adequately. In this section, we will discuss the existing needs and whether and to what extent the communication activities constituted the appropriate solution to address them.

Our analysis of primary and secondary data has revealed that the information provided and the communication activities constituted an appropriate solution to address the target audiences' needs. Depending on the audiences considered, the information provided and the communication activities addressed the existing needs to some or to a large extent.

We note that, to support the design of the campaigns, contractors have aimed to map information needs per MS where the campaigns would be implemented in order to tailor-make the messages. This effort should be continued and include a need analysis per target audience as well.

Firstly, multipliers (journalists and media correspondents) were overall enthusiastic about the information provided and acknowledged that it met their specific needs. The information and activity concerned (i.e. the press trips organised in the framework of the different campaigns) were relevant in terms of:

- the quality of the information provided and accompanying materials
- the access to key informants and potential contacts for future reporting
- the networking opportunities created among multipliers, and
- the format and programme of the press trips matching the specific requirements of the media industry.

Evidence from the press trips (online survey, review of the feedback from the participants collected by the contractors and direct observation of two press trips) confirmed that participants valued the information provided as giving both a general overview of enlargement and opportunities to get a more detailed presentation on specific projects and (potential) candidate countries, therefore providing the relevant materials for good reporting. They acknowledged the quality of the information provided, covering different perspectives, and of the background materials circulated, as well as of the informants delivering the presentations. They also emphasised that the format matched their needs in terms of open discussion with the informants and contacts (including networking among themselves) established for future reporting. Overall, they were particularly appreciative of the fact that the format of the activities and of the information provided were really aligned on what their requirements were, also with respect to allowing them financially to conduct fieldwork in the countries visited which would not have otherwise been possible.

Two minor suggestions were made. The programming could further encourage the creation of synergies between the press trips and the broader political agenda (e.g. Commissioner visit scheduled in a candidate country, milestone of the enlargement process, and accession of a country). In addition, the targeting of the participants could be enhanced to further tailor the programme of the press trips to a particular group of stakeholders. It would strengthen the relevance of the press trips and would potentially have a more direct influence on the direction of the resulting media coverage.

Secondly, specific categories of stakeholders also positively assessed the relevance of the information provided. The observation of an expert seminar has revealed that the information was perceived as of high quality and contributing substantially to the debate.

Thirdly, our sample of the general public clearly agreed on the relevance of the information provided to address their information needs. DG NEAR activities were perceived as essential to address the lack of information on EU affairs in general and on enlargement in particular while redressing the misrepresentation of this policy domain

and/or of the situation of the (potential) candidate countries. However, they were convinced of the need for materials to also discuss the challenges of enlargement as well as benefits and this perceived lack of balance meant that the materials did not fully meet their needs. A more balanced presentation of the situation, covering all aspects of enlargement and the situation of current MS and candidate countries alike was requested.

Lastly, evidence has shown more diverse views on the information materials produced. Except for journalists who appreciated the background materials circulated during the press trips, other categories of stakeholders (e.g. at expert seminar) and the general public (either specific segments of it such as young as evidenced at visibility events or our representative sample of the public as a whole) have revealed the need to rethink the use of particular tools and channels. For instance, at the expert seminar, participants did not necessarily pick up the information leaflets and the brochures made available. Short leaflets tended to be more useful than longer brochures at film festivals in general, while younger people (in our relatively limited sample, both numerically and geographically) in particular expressed their preference for postcards and the URL compared to the brochure.

In the case of the online and social media campaign, good professional practice appears to have been followed throughout, and the results were good when measured against industry benchmarks. The use of paid advertising on Facebook appears to have been efficient, and if sound practice, might be particularly suited to any on-going campaigns at the time of a forthcoming accession<sup>30</sup>. Again good practice was followed in preparing the materials for the audio-visual campaign. The pre-testing of the options for viral clips was extensive. However, the viral clip ('Kill Bill'), was withdrawn immediately after release because it attracted criticism.

#### Summary

- An information gap was clearly identified by both expert and general audiences: insufficient (quality of) information on EU affairs and on enlargement, to gaps in reporting at national level, general and specific information and access to key informants.
- Better targeting is not only a question of rethinking upfront the suitability of different types of information and **materials** for different audiences, but then matching the dissemination strategy to that targeting. The fact that focus group participants found it difficult to identify the target groups for information and where they would find this type of information raises questions about the extent to which this has been achieved.
- Based on our analysis, the information provided and **activities** implemented were overall very relevant to the target audience needs. Both expert and general audiences acknowledged the quality of the information, its presentation to a large extent and the activities to provide the information.
- Suggestions were made on how further to enhance the relevance of the information provided through a more comprehensive representation of the different perspectives and better match between the types of information and the target groups.

#### **To what extent did the activities produce the expected effects in the target audience in terms of knowledge and / or perception?**

This question aims to assess the actual contribution of the communication activities to the expected effects in the target audience, which we understand as defined in the following four objectives:

- Raise awareness of EU citizens of candidate countries and potential candidate countries, and enlargement
- Promote an informed debate and dialogue on enlargement
- Underline shared values and interests between EU MS and enlargement countries

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<sup>30</sup> Assessment is complicated, however, by the absence of analysis of the factors (internal or external) contributing to the greater or lesser success of particular items, or information on how the relationship was established between the sophisticated analysis of online conversation topics and the views on enlargement and implementation of the campaign, and data in the Final Report on the link between the materials provided for DG NEAR's Twitter account and traffic on the account.

- Encourage reporting

Our analysis of the data has revealed that the contribution of the communication activities to these three objectives could be substantially enhanced.

Firstly, members of the general public as well as participants to expert-focused activities acknowledged that the activities contributed to **raise awareness on enlargement-related issues**. Evidence from the observed events and press trip, focus groups and desk-based review documents the opportunities created to discuss the topic and its implications for all parties concerned. Feedback from the focus groups in particular shows that the general public is not aware of the importance of the enlargement agenda. They value the opportunity to be informed about a relevant and topical policy domain, which it perceives as having potentially far-reaching consequences for them. Evidence from the observed expert events goes in the same direction, as they constitute an opportunity to raise the visibility of specialist topics, which might not otherwise be given airtime.

Secondly, audiences acknowledged that the communication activities contributed to **inform them on the topic**, providing a good balance of general and specific information on enlargement and on (potential) candidate countries. As mentioned above, the information provided bridged a clear information gap perceived by the sample from the general public. Similarly, the specific target group of media correspondents perceived as very informative the trips they participated in, emphasising the quality of the information provided (e.g. as evidenced by their feedback on the presentations delivered by different speakers and their emphasis on the added value for them to have a mix of general information on enlargement and concrete case studies on particular projects or countries).

Suggestions were made by focus group participants to increase the information potential of the communication materials. The balance to find between “communicating more” and “communicating better” for the general public implied a **more balanced presentation of the costs and benefits of enlargement for both current MS and (potential) candidate countries** to avoid the perceived one-sidedness of the information provided. That would strengthen the (perceived) credibility of the messages and how the information received would be used further. The potential would also be strengthened through the use of particular tools depending on the target groups. For instance, the focus groups have shown that the general public considered that video clips were the most effective tool and that radio was a relevant channel yet underexploited by the contractors.

However, the focus group participants had more diverse opinions as to the extent to which the communication activities contributed to an informed **debate on enlargement**. On one side, even if they felt more informed because they had not come across these materials before, they found out about new information and they confirmed that there was little exposure to enlargement issues in their country. On the other, there was a clear call for a presentation of the pros and cons of enlargement. Also, the sessions seemed to raise a latent interest in knowing more with some focus group participants also expressing their interest in participating in public debates on the topic rather than being more passive recipients of the information. Some participants suggested to create synergies between the production of the materials and the organisation of public meetings to engage with policy-makers on the topic, an opportunity they had not had so far, although the feasibility of this request was not taken into account by focus group participants.

Expert audiences were positive about their involvement in the public debate on enlargement. The activities organised constituted not only an opportunity for them to gain insights that might otherwise be difficult to find, but also to contribute to the general visibility of the topic (e.g. through the media coverage generated by the press trips) or to discuss directly with policy makers (e.g. during the press trips or academic conferences).

Press trips specifically **generated coverage of the topic** as participants built on the information received and contacts made. However, we found that the coverage was varied as part of our review of the reporting generated by the two press trips we participated in (in the absence of a qualitative monitoring of the media coverage generated by the other press trips). Following up on the trip to Kosovo (10-13 June 2015), the coverage mainly focused on migration, ethnic tensions and loyalties, corruption and the state of the economy – dimensions which can present a priori a negative element – while the discussion of the relations with the EU was generally dealt with as a secondary issue except in the case of an article discussing being part of the EU as a solution to Balkan political and ethnic fragmentation. In the case of the press trip to Albania (1-3 July 2015), the precise link with the campaign objectives may not be as easily drawn given that journalists ultimately decide on what to include in their stories. However, stories which challenge stereotypes and put Albania on the map can be seen as fitting under the broader objectives of DG NEAR’s communication activities. For example, stories which describe different aspects of Albania – ‘soft media topics’, for example youth, women, culture, etc. are important to subtly shift opinions which

in the long-term can prevent resistance to enlargement amongst the general public. This implies a focus on including 'long-from' journalists within press trips.

### Summary

- For most activities is not possible to quantify the exact extent that activities made any significant contribution to perceptions / knowledge, because there is no data to confirm this. This relates in part to the monitoring system that has been in place, but also relates to the difficulties in capturing impacts, many of which can be intangible.
- Events targeted as informed professionals were a useful tool to channel specific and targeted information. The evidence suggests that these events served many purposes including raising awareness of the work of the Commission on specialist topics related to accession, providing opportunities for discussion and debate with other peers and high profile experts from the Commission and pre-accession countries. Participants to the two events observed in Brussels and London were without exception highly satisfied with their involvement and with the information provided.
- Qualitative feedback from events and focus group participants suggests that certain materials have the potential to fill information gaps for people who have a latent interest, but are not particularly well informed, these include the brochure, infographics and audio-visual clips. However, overall these less informed target groups would like to see a portrayal of the implications of accession and the pros and cons from their national perspective. This type of communication can be difficult to get right.
- Large budgets are required to reach the broad interested but less informed target group, as well as to quantify the extent of reach and resonance of these groups. The evidence suggests that taking materials to events organised by others has not been very effective because this means that the DG is not able to target its materials to the diverse audiences that attend. There is scope to increase impacts with wider publics, but given the cost of reach this very broad group, it is important to focus these types of activities on specific groups when there is a need to do so, because otherwise there is a risk that there will be insufficient return on investment.
- Press trips stand out as being the most able to generate real impacts in terms of increasing knowledge through discussion and debate, and encouraging reporting. Although coverage is not always immediate, the DG is helping to ensure that the media are better informed on pre-accession and has a range of contacts that may be useful at a later date, all of which should help to enhance the quality of reporting when this occurs

## 5.2 Efficiency

### How efficient were the communication campaigns at achieving the desired results?

To assess the efficiency of the results of the communication campaigns, a measure frequently used is the **actual reach** of the activities supported. In practice, this means looking at the cost per head of the different channels. Leading from this, we can make a judgement about the distribution of the budget among activities. It is instructive to note that this question stops short of assessing the cost-effectiveness of the allocated budget; this would go beyond efficiency (reach) to look at whether the reach translated into successful reception of messages.

To answer this question we focus on the following sub-questions:

- The extent to which the outputs and results were achieved at a reasonable cost
- The efficiency of the combination of activities vis-à-vis the desired results
- To what extent the results have been achieved with less funding

To answer the question, we analysed:

- Information on costs / allocation of budget: proposals, contracts, amendments to the contract

- Information on results: campaign deliverables (final reports; monitoring reports)

### **Were the outputs and results achieved at a reasonable cost?**

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In essence, this question asks whether the scale and scope of what was achieved can be deemed reasonable given the allocated budget. For DG NEAR's communication activities, the scale of the budget and scope of activities is actually set out in the Framework Contracts<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, we judge the costs as reasonable if the outputs and results are consistent with expectations. In addition, looking at the reach of the different activities where data is available, we propose some judgements based on our reflections on cost per person for the different types of activity.

In terms of the overall budget, over the entire four-year period, 10.1 MEUR was spent on contracted communication activities<sup>32</sup>. The first important point to make is that the scale and scope of activities undertaken were defined by DG NEAR in ToR for campaigns and stuck to by contractors with flexibility/amendments only where necessary (for example when senior hierarchy changes and the design of activities is revised to match their priorities<sup>33</sup>). Where there were divergences from the planned activities, for example the decision not to produce all the animated clips for the Stakeholder campaign, the available budget was re-allocated to other activities. Discussions with DG NEAR confirmed that there have been no major issues with deliverables from the communication agencies. In the main, the contractors implement the materials as specified and required of them<sup>34</sup>.

Given that the campaigns satisfy the first condition in terms of the scale and scope of what was undertaken falling in line with DG NEAR's goals, a closer look at the reach of the campaign elements can provide further basis to assess whether the activities were cost efficient.

While the available monitoring data for the campaigns allows for assessment of certain tools under some campaigns we should highlight some limitations. These can be summed up in three points:

- It is not possible to capture the true cost of each activity because they often support one another (i.e. some materials would draw from a number of budget lines, such as the use of print materials and give-aways at events).
- It is also a somewhat incomplete assessment since the available financial data do not include the staff costs borne by the EC (or partners) in managing / supporting the activities.
- Not all activities have reported reach figures and, where reach is reported, it is not always "perfectly" comparable (for example, we cannot compare attendance at a workshop with a conference or film festival).

Notwithstanding these aspects, it is possible and useful to look where possible at the level of planned cost associated with different kinds of activities relative to their reach. Activities which have reach potential beyond the initial receiver, or where it is not possible to report actual reach figures (only potential) are presented as "potential /indirect in the table below.

*Note on sources: Data in the tables below are based on the financial proposals (and amendments) submitted by the contractors, except for the Audio-visual campaign where actual budget data was reported in the Final Report<sup>35</sup>*

In the tables below a distinction is made between actual and indirect / potential reach. Direct reach is actual numbers of participants at events, i.e. direct recipients of campaign messages / information. By contrast, indirect or

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<sup>31</sup> The exact combination is determined by the contractors themselves

<sup>32</sup> This figure does not include the time and effort from the managing unit in DG NEAR; nor activities undertaken by them in the field of communication

<sup>33</sup> We understand that it was decided to cut the animation clips under the Stakeholder campaign in favour of other activities.

<sup>34</sup> That is not to say that the process was always seamless; for example the experience of managing some of the deliverables for the online and social media campaign was troublesome leading to a change in strategy for social media and online materials. For this contract, messages posted on official social media needed to be vetted to conform with the Commission tone. The contractors struggled to get the content of the messages right which lead to some unnecessary work for DG NEAR, which essentially amounted to duplication of efforts with them reviewing and redrafting material for Facebook and Twitter. Subsequent campaigns have sought to avoid this pitfall by integrating the successful elements of the campaign, like the delivery of infographics and short clips for social media, as opposed to the messages themselves, which are now handled in-house.

<sup>35</sup> For reference, below are the file names for these documents received by the evaluators. Audio-visual: "2012-08-02final\_report\_annexes\_part\_1\_ARES 937483 8" (pp.49 – 64); Welcome Croatia: "304-283 signed ARES 2533340 Amendment 2"; IPA 1: "303 – 440 Amendment 2 complete budget"; Awareness-raising 1: "304 – 366 Amendment 1 signed 2013-07-24 ARES 274493" and Stakeholder: "331-317 signed ARES 3636173-Specific contract+annexes part I.tif"



potential reach figures are estimates of the total possible number of recipients of information, based on total visitors or readership of magazines, etc. of which an (unknown) number of recipients will actually receive the campaign information / messages.

In terms of the estimated cost per person, this is based on the following calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Cost of goods and services + Reimbursable costs (where applicable)}}{\text{Number of persons reached}}$$

**Table 2: Estimated cost per person for events in EUR**

Campaign name	Activity detail	Reach		Cost breakdown		Estimated total cost based on sum of costs	Estimated cost per person
		Direct	Potential / indirect	Goods / services costs	Reimbursable costs		
<b>Welcome Croatia</b>	52 major events in enlargement critical MS; Institutional events; EU level		54,940	230,470	146,232 <sup>36</sup>	<b>376,704</b>	6.86
	Youth Conference	220		79,250	50,284 <sup>37</sup>	<b>129,534</b>	588.79
<b>IPA 1</b>	10 existing events		5,800	94,030	15,365	<b>109,395</b>	18.86
	10 new events	289		46,780	15,365	<b>62,145</b>	215.03
	Photo exhibition	13,850		196,462	2,860	<b>199,322</b>	14.39
<b>AWR 1</b>	20 existing events	Not available <sup>38</sup>		259,700	N/A	<b>259,700</b>	Not available

The most costly “events” in terms of cost per person was the Youth Conference (which was part of the Welcome Croatia campaign). Unlike some of the other events, this conference was over a period of three days and involved bringing together the invitees from around the EU which pushed the cost up to 589 EUR per person. Whilst it is clear that participants in the Youth Conference had a memorable experience, we question whether the content of the event and the relatively limited number of participants, as a tiny percentage of the youth population, really justified the resources, although a fraction of the total campaign budget.

For other events reported in the table, it is important to reiterate that the reach figures are not necessarily comparable. Specifically, in some cases, reach includes all attendees at a large scale conference (for example) which is clearly not comparable with a close knit workshop style event, which the evidence suggests had much greater impact. This, in part explains the divergence in cost per person with the IPA campaign (existing events cost 18.86 EUR while new events cost 215.03 EUR). However, given that reach for existing events (where DG NEAR participated) actually reflects the total number of attendees rather than actual visitors to the stand / viewers of films shown, the actual cost per person is likely to be much higher than 19 EUR and may even surpass the cost of organised events.

<sup>36</sup> Total “reimbursable” costs (i.e. logistical costs, travel costs etc.) for events are not disaggregated by event type under the Welcome Croatia campaign financial planning. Therefore, this is an estimation of the proportion of the reimbursable costs which can be expected to have been spent through the visibility event. It is calculated based on the share of the personnel / management costs under visibility events, cf. other event types

<sup>37</sup> Total “reimbursable” costs (i.e. logistical costs, travel costs etc.) for events are not disaggregated by event type under the Welcome Croatia campaign financial planning. Therefore, this is an estimation of the proportion of the reimbursable costs which can be expected to have been spent through the youth conference. It is calculated based on the share of the personnel / management costs under youth conference, cf. other event types

<sup>38</sup>The annex includes variously: number of visitors to a stand / panel discussions; tickets sold to films supported; total visitors to the event, figures for give-aways, quiz respondents, etc. but these are not reported in aggregate in the report.

**Table 3: Estimated cost per person for press trips in EUR**

Campaign name	Activity detail	Direct reach	Cost breakdown		Estimated total cost based on sum of costs	Estimated cost per person
			Goods / services costs	Reimbursable costs		
<b>Welcome Croatia</b>	4 press trips	55 <sup>39</sup>	161,850 <sup>40</sup>	102,695 <sup>41</sup>	<b>264,545</b>	4,809
<b>IPA 1</b>	2 press trips	28	42,640	31,100	<b>73,740</b>	2,633.57
<b>Awareness-raising 1</b>	2 press trips	23	63,480	37,929	<b>101,409</b>	4,409.09
<b>Stakeholder</b>	4 press trips	60	92,080	40,800	<b>132,880</b>	2,214.67

As the table above illustrates, press trips would at first glance seem to be relatively high in terms of cost per person, but the high cost per person is more justifiable given that the attendees are multipliers and likely to generate coverage in the short and possible medium term as a consequence of their participation. These figures do not capture that aspect and mean that the actual reach should be far greater. For example, under the Welcome Croatia campaign the (potential) readership is 293,909,471<sup>42</sup>; although this figure is a maximum and there's no guarantee or way to know how many actually engaged with the media clip.

**Table 4: Estimated cost per person for distribution activities in EUR**

Campaign name	Activity detail	Reach		Cost breakdown		Estimated total cost based on sum of costs	Estimated cost per person
		Direct	Potential / indirect	Goods / services costs	Reimbursable costs		
<b>Stakeholder</b>	Airline advertising		2,474,000 <sup>43</sup>	22,675	200,000	<b>222,675</b>	0.09
<b>Audio-visual</b>	Hidden media buying	2,019,248		312,000	N/A	<b>312,000</b>	0.15
	Cinema	4,200,869		444,867	N/A	<b>444,867</b>	0.11

The lowest cost-per-person activities are found in the category of “distribution activities”. These activities show that the reach of online, or mass media elements, can be extremely cost efficient. In particular, the reach of the audio-visual materials is so high that despite the high cost of distribution (production is not included here) the cost per person is negligible. However, it should be taken into account that advertising works best when target audiences see messages on multiple occasions, otherwise the efficient reach that can be generated may not equate to effective reach. The figures also confirm that spending on website (in the case of the Welcome Croatia dedicated website) is cost efficient.

### Summary

- The costs are reasonable in the sense that outputs and results are consistent with what was expected (as defined in the ToR), or what was agreed with DG NEAR on an on-going basis.
- Despite limitations in the data identified (for example, the overlap between activities, the exclusion of management costs for DG NEAR, etc.), based on selected figures for the direct or potential reach of

<sup>39</sup> 293,909,471 is the (potential) readership based on 306 articles in 24 languages based on circulation figures for press coverage

<sup>40</sup> Note that this include “media relations”, as the activities are presented together in the budget and thus can be understood to inform the press trips (e.g. the selection of journalists).

<sup>41</sup> As with the study visit and events under the Welcome Croatia campaign, this is an estimate.

<sup>42</sup> based on 306 articles in 24 languages based on circulation figures for press coverage

<sup>43</sup> (expected reach)



activities we propose our judgements on the efficiency of certain elements of the campaigns,

- With regards to events, costs cannot be calculated on the basis of the actual number of people who visited stands / viewed films. Although costs associated with the DG-organised events were higher, their results were more tangible with regards to tailoring material to target groups. However, the number of people who were able to benefit from these events was limited.
- The costs associated with press trips can be considered to be reasonable, given the high quality of the approach as rated by participants and the potential for coverage / reverberations beyond the actual trips. However, there are no benchmarks, e.g. against the costs of press trips of other DGs to see if savings can be made/value-for-money be enhanced. At the same time, the available figures need to be read with the caveat that the likelihood that all the potential is translated into actual is very low (just because a newspaper has very high readership does not guarantee the readers look at a given article). Also, the DG is limited by the need to contract work via Framework Contracts with their pre-defined rates.
- In terms of distribution, the similar levels of cost for each individual reached via the digital, cinema and airline campaign initiatives is one indicator that these costs were reasonable, although the actual impact may be more limited in practice.

### **How efficient was the combination of activities at achieving the desired results?**

To answer a question on the efficiency of the combination of activities is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, there is the multiplicity of activities themselves. Even when simplified, there are still ten broad categories of activities (events; audio-visual materials; other content and material; web-based activity; travelling exhibitions; games / competitions / airline advertising; media; social media and research) and they are not mutually exclusive either. This makes any analysis difficult. In addition, and more importantly, the lack of uniform monitoring data (particularly the setting and measurement of KPIs) poses an insurmountable challenge to such an assessment. Notwithstanding this serious limitation, a systematic review of the budgetary data conducted by the evaluation team enables a basic assessment of overall spending across the different activities and campaigns.

Section 3.3 provides a breakdown of cost per activity (and a description of the groupings and assumptions made).

In terms of overall focus of content, our judgement is that spending more on **audio-visual materials** (production and distribution) compared to print products is appropriate given the relative ease of distributing audio-visual material compared to print products. Print products (and give-aways) remain important to hand attendees at events, and to dress stands. However, we note that the audio-visual material has been universally successful. While one video won an award, another had to be pulled due to the negative reaction caused in the media. The key lesson learnt in that context is that pre-testing among a wide set of audiences is crucial. It is also crucial to ensure there is an appropriate balance between production and distribution of audio-visual, we find there could be an increased emphasis on distribution to leverage the materials produced.

Similarly, the relatively high proportion of the budget spent on direct contacts, namely **visibility events** is justified by the fact that it provides the means to reach target groups in an area that is specialist.

In addition, while it is not easy to define a suitable figure for spend on the **media** (press trips, strategy, social media, etc.) it is clear that this element has been a significant focus of the campaigns and that it has engaged a range of journalists from across the EU in order to increase reporting on enlargement related topics / countries.

The low spend on the **website** may be somewhat misleading given that much of these responsibilities are managed in house by DG NEAR. At the same time, feedback from focus group participants confirmed on the one hand the importance of the Internet as an information source but on the other hand, a very low level of awareness when it came to Europa.

The budget allocated to **research** (which includes pre-testing and focus groups) plays a crucial part of the spending since it contributes to better designed campaign(s). A dedicated share of 3 – 4% is good practice for a communication campaign, meaning that this campaign has an appropriate level of spending in this regard.

Our analysis of the data show that – although it is not possible to reach a definitive answer as to whether the activities were efficient in themselves without KPIs– the headline division of spending between campaigns was suitable. Nevertheless, feedback from our focus groups shows that there may be some underexploited channels, which could be looked at going forwards (for specific, identified purposes). For instance, many of the focus group participants receive information via TV and radio. Both mediums have the advantage of the potential to stimulate debate. Two examples of audio-visual media which could be targeted or partnered with – Euronews and Euramet – are required to focus on covering EU affairs and could therefore be amenable to collaborations. Again, these should be used only when it is deemed appropriate.

### Summary

- Assessing the efficiency of the different activities is not possible in the absence of a systematic use of KPIs for the different campaign elements. However, in terms of headline shares allocated across different activities: the spending on different activity types is found to be broadly appropriate and in line with good practice.
- Going forwards, there may be potential to explore other channels and tools which are important information sources, as per our findings from focus group participants.
- In addition, there is a need to ensure that costly activities (such as the production of audio-visual materials) are leveraged with sufficient budget for distribution of materials.

### Could the same results have been achieved with less funding?

This question seeks to assess whether the same results could have been achieved with less funding. To answer this question we will look at individual activities and also the overall approach.

Based on our analysis of the budget breakdowns, the main cost drivers for contracted activities are visibility events (i.e. DG NEAR presence at existing conferences and events; new planned events / conferences with partners) and the production / distribution of audio-visual materials. Both of which are known to be more costly to undertake. Across the campaigns, these two activities make up just over half of spending (and 2million on visibility events, 1.8 million EUR on producing audio-visual materials and 1.2 of their distribution). By comparison, games and competitions makes up a relatively minor proportion of contracted spending (5%)(For a full breakdown of spending, see section 3.3).

**Less funding would essentially entail cutting back on audio-visual materials produced and associated promotional activities and events held.** Nonetheless, there are certain ways in which the approach in both cases could be re-examined to improve the impact of the spending.

Firstly, if the focus is on reaching the maximum number of people, then there could be **a shift in the balance of the budget so that for example less audiovisual clips are produced, but for those that are produced there is more budget available for their dissemination and promotion.** This would support extending the reach for the same spend. In both cases, i.e. for audio-visual and events, the more people reached from one event, or through one video, the lower the cost per person. From the events that we witnessed, academics, think tanks and those responsible for relevant policy areas in national and local government seem to be key target groups for this type of event. With this in mind, there is more potential to explore ways to reach these groups, so that discussions are not limited to those who are physically able to attend.

With regards to audio-visual material specifically, to date, the majority of videos produced have been for general audiences (for example, the Hidden Treasures clip and various mini-documentaries). There has also been some re-use of material in the different campaigns, which represents good practice. However, there were instances where there was budget allocated to production of videos / clips, but not to their dissemination (for example under the first Awareness-raising campaign). Given that this is found in just a few cases, it is probably recognised not to be good practice, but ensuring adequate resource is allocation to promotion is an opportunity going forwards.

At present the promotional aspect of events is sometimes managed by the host / partner organisation (i.e. not necessarily the contracted agency)<sup>44</sup>. Events organised or co-hosted by DG NEAR were most efficient due to the

<sup>44</sup> For example, in the visibility events attended by the evaluators, this was found to be the case since the partner / host organisations tended to have the best access to target groups.

greater ability to tailor information to the target group. However, at one of the events<sup>45</sup> observed by the evaluators, there were only 13 participants, which we considered to be too few to justify the costs of flying in an EC speaker. This raises the question as to whether there are more effective ways to select host organisations and whether more attention should be paid to organisations' promotional competence. The scope for greater promotion via the internet to allow virtual presence/views of the discussion after the event, which would certainly be relevant for specialist audiences, is also worth exploring. This could be complemented with a clear mapping of who the key stakeholders to make the actions targeted.

In terms of the overall approach, one way to manage less funding or achieve more with the existing funding would be to have more repetition, updating and reusing of material or elements of campaigns. For example, having established the purpose and design for a writing competition, this could be re-launched annually at a lower cost each time as guidelines for assessment can be re-used, and the message is easier to get out because previous entrants spread message.

### Summary

- The main cost drivers of the campaigns were through spending on the production and promotion of 47 items audio-visual material and participation in over 100 visibility events. To reduce spending in these areas would mean delivering fewer audio-visual clips and /or events.
- Nevertheless, there are ways in which the spend could be maximised via a more strategic approach to promotional activities (via the internet) in order to extend the reach of spend on events (i.e. by making use of webcasting of events rolled out in different locations, promotion via relevant academic networks and stakeholder platforms) and also to ensure adequate spend on the paid promotion, not just the production, of audio-visual material for example to support a specific campaign on the accession of a new country to the EU. At the moment, there is an absence of mapping of potential target audiences prior to launch an activity, and many activities or campaigns are 'one-offs'.
- Repeating activities (e.g. competitions) and cross-campaign sharing of material (e.g. audio-visual clips) can result in economies of scale and savings over time, meaning that less money needs to be spent on the development of materials and / or promotional aspects without any reduction in the quality of the campaigns.

## 5.3 Impact, Added-Value and Sustainability of the Campaigns

### **What is the impact of the campaigns, are these impacts sustainable and what is the EU added value in implementing these information and communication campaigns?**

To address this question and the sub-questions listed in the TOR, we will focus on:

- The extent to which outputs and results can be identified and quantified;
- The extent the outputs and results actually translated into the desired and expected impacts, and if there were any additional or unforeseen impacts;
- The extent to which outcomes/impacts are sustainable and what are the factors to consider; and
- What is the added value of the EU in implementing the campaigns compared to what could be achieved by the Member States at national or regional levels?

### **To what extent were the delivered outputs and results translated into the desired and expected impacts?**

The answer to this question is intended to complement the answer provided to sub-question above: "To what extent did the activities produce the expected effects in the target audience in terms of knowledge and/or perception?"

<sup>45</sup> For example, one of the events attended by the evaluation team (the "EU Enlargement: Comparing perspectives on the integration of Roma in Germany and the Western Balkans" in Stuttgart) had 13 participants

How to measure the impact of communication campaigns is in itself a challenge for a number of reasons, including that impact on target groups:

- **Cannot be comprehensively defined and measured.** It is not possible to identify every individual who is exposed to a campaign or to assess their individual experience;
- Tends to be **experienced at specific moments in time**, making it temporary, and therefore difficult to measure, although this may be influenced by the level of engagement of the target group in the communication activities and / or issues being communicated;
- Will be **experienced differently**<sup>46</sup> by different individuals within a given target group, in relation to individuals' own levels of **existing awareness, understanding and knowledge** of the issues being communicated, as well as a myriad of other factors that influence if and how people respond to communication stimulus.

In addition, this type of assessment typically requires consistent monitoring data to be collected by the communication agencies responsible for implementation or for evaluation teams to gather real time data as communication activities are rolled out.

For the most part, quantitative targets were not set to define the desired or expected impacts of DG NEAR communication activities. Therefore, to answer this question we considered the extent that the different activities contributed or reflected the objectives:

1. Raise public awareness of EU citizens about the participating countries & the enlargement process
2. Underline the shared values and interests between the EU MS & the enlargement countries
3. Promote an informed debate and dialogue on enlargement
4. Increase exposure of EU citizens, in particular young people to enlargement issues
5. Encourage reporting on EU enlargement

Whilst there were some gaps in the available monitoring data and it was not possible to gather evidence relating to all aspects of the campaigns, the available evidence provides useful insights to help us to understand ways that different communication activities made a contribution, even if it was not possible to quantify all outcomes, results and impacts.

**Visibility events for informed (specialist) publics:** the contribution of visibility events organised for an expert audience, such as academic conferences, are likely to positively contribute to all objectives.

**Visibility events for (generally) uninformed (general) publics** (including audio-visual activities and of the content and material produced for the campaigns): the impact on the objectives for this group is likely to be somewhat mixed. On the basis of our analysis, we conclude that neither substantially contributes to raising public awareness because of insufficient targeting of the materials, the lack of information on where to find the materials and the insufficient visibility of the publication of the materials and dissemination strategy. For instance, at the Edinburgh international film festival, young passers-by noted that they would not have stopped at the information desk of DG NEAR for they were not interested in the topic. When materials do reach their targets, it is not certain that they positively contribute to underlining shared values and interests given the perceived limitations (notably the perceived one-sidedness of the message which jeopardise its credibility and makes readers doubt the community of values and interests, as revealed by the focus groups discussion on different materials). These activities, when they reach their targets, contribute to an informed debate and dialogue, but this contribution is actually subject to many external factors – beyond the mere content of the materials. Overall, the contribution of content and material to increasing exposure is not satisfactory. They will only encourage reporting to the extent that they are visible and that the dissemination strategy reach out to the reporting audience.

**The impact of the website-related activity** is somewhat limited overall. Firstly, in terms of raised public awareness: the fact that the website of DG NEAR and of the campaigns (where relevant) is not visible enough, as confirmed by the focus groups (hardly any participants knew the Europa website, which remains a major channel of

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<sup>46</sup> Kotler and Keller describe the importance of targeting based on levels of awareness, experience and expected responses in their book *Marketing Management*; one of the leading academic references on the topic of targeting.

the communication activities) constitutes a barrier to impact. The content of the website clearly underline shared values and interests, but the resulting informed debate and dialogue is clearly limited given the low visibility already noted. Lastly, the website does not in itself increase exposure or encourage reporting as its reach is actually limited. In addition to the mention of the URL on the different communication and promotional materials, a more active communication could enhance the visibility of website-related activity and hence its impact. For instance, contractors manning stands at events could explicitly draw visitors' attention to the website when distributing the materials.

**Travelling exhibitions** constitute a more accessible channel for DG NEAR's messages and we found that it may contribute to raising public awareness, increasing exposure and promoting an informed debate and dialogue, notably through peer-to-peer communication. Indeed, the exhibitions focus on shared values and interests and emphasised the similarities between current MS and enlargement countries. The resulting reporting, however, is likely to be rather limited, unless a proper PR-strategy was in place, ensuring media coverage (that could use for instance on the exhibition catalogues produced or could make available to the journalists press packages on the model of what was done during the press trips organised by DG NEAR).

**Game and competitions** constitute an interesting category of activity, which works directly and indirectly towards the objectives. By providing the motivation to learn, reflect and exchange on enlargement-related issues they can contribute to raising public awareness, underlining shared values and interests and promoting an informed debate and dialogue. When pupils are involved, communication is also more effective and works in two-stages through the initial debates at schools and subsequent discussions at home. The impact in terms of increased exposure is dependent on a high number of participants. Again, the resulting reporting would be rather limited without a specific PR-strategy in place.

We found that **airline advertising** has an impact in terms of public awareness for an audience who has a priori an interest in travel / the region (and potentially enlargement). Its content in principle underline shared values and interests but it is uncertain how it is received by readers in the absence of evaluation. Its impact in terms of debate is also very uncertain, depending on the extent of peer-to-peer communication, as is its impact in terms of increased exposure, as the readership is limited. We consider that airline advertising does not, in the long term, encourage reporting.

**Media activities** have an impact across the five PRINCE objectives, with less certainty noted on the community of values and interests as this objective includes a strongly personal, subjective dimension (how participants perceive the information they receive).

Conclusions on **social media** are more conservative across the PRINCE objectives given the limitations of the activities implemented and the absence of complete qualitative monitoring. Overall, the major limiting factors to consider are the limited audience of social media, the insufficient visibility of DG NEAR's / campaigns' URL and social media accounts (which would allow to fully exploit they synergies between the different elements disseminated through social media) and the insufficiently strategic use made of social media (for instance, at any event, a hashtag could be given to participants to increase the visibility of the activities implemented and the organisers should pass on to participants verbally the URL of DG NEAR and details on its social media accounts to draw their attention to the information provided in the materials).

## Summary

- There are methodological limitations in determining the impacts of outputs and results by activity and some difficulties measuring the impacts of the activities. In addition, there are uncertainties around the impact due to the importance of external factors.
- Nonetheless, on the basis of information regarding the use and reception of the activities / channels and tools, it is possible to see the expected impacts are realised. In some cases, this appears to be more potential for meeting the objectives than in others. Visibility events for specialist audiences, game and competitions and media activities are among the activities with the most tangible (i.e. proven) or direct links with the objectives.
- It was more difficult to assess the links between the objectives and outputs / results for some other channels, or they were deemed to be weaker for materials for general audiences (via visibility events for



general public), website activity and social media.

**To what extent can the outputs and results be sufficiently identified and quantified and were there any additional or unforeseen impacts?**

This question asks if the outputs and results can be sufficiently identified and quantified and if there were any additional or unforeseen impacts. There are several different units of measurement that can be used to understand campaign performance. These are highlighted below.

OUTPUTS	Nr of leaflets, posters, events, TV spots, viewers, recipients, etc.	OUTTAKES	Awareness / perception / understanding the message	OUTCOMES	Quantifiable change in attitudes, behaviours, understanding
Exposure		Reaction		Response	

Outputs are the most direct level of campaign achievement. While the number of leaflets distributed or the number of events does not equate to any tangible impacts, they have a causal relationship with desired outtakes or outcomes. The achievement of outtakes is a measure of the effectiveness of campaign messages and tools; put simply whether or not people grasp the intended information. All campaigns aim to achieve some form of impact regarding outputs and outtakes; outcomes are more difficult to achieve as they relate to measurable change in the behaviours or opinions of the individuals targeted. In terms of the DG NEAR campaigns, we are able to access some partial quantitative data with regards to reach / exposure (outputs) and researched our own evidence with regards to how participants have responded to DG NEAR activities. There is very limited evidence with regards to quantifiable outcomes, which would typically need to be collected via a large-scale general public survey before and after communication activities take place. This would only be cost effective if the DG was to pursue an awareness-raising campaign to reach the general public for example in relation to an up-coming accession.

**Outputs: reach / exposure**

The assessment of outputs has been limited to the 5 completed campaigns (IPA and Awareness-Raising versions 1 and Welcome Croatia and the Audio-visual and On-line and Social Media campaigns) because data is not yet available for the three on-going campaigns (IPA and Awareness-Raising versions 2 and the Stakeholder campaigns).

It is very difficult to confirm the exact reach of the communication activities undertaken and this calculation is in itself complicated because there are different levels of reach and exposure, whereby end target groups for example young people and business people are directly reached and in others where they are reached via multipliers such as journalists.

Audio-visual activities and visibility events together account for circa 60% of the budget spent in relation to the five past campaigns. Data is limited with regards to the number of people who actually saw all of the 47 audiovisual clips produced although we do have data related to views of the viral clip and the image building clips'. With regard to events a distinction needs to be made between events organised by the DG to which a defined list of participants were invited and the DG's participation in events organised by other organisations, where there were large numbers of participants, but the actual number who visited the DG stand or viewed a film relates to a much reduced subset and / or does not appear to have been counted for example with a clicker.

However, drawing on the evidence that is available from the five campaigns under assessment we can see that 5.8 million euros was spent on these campaigns, which as a **minimum** achieved a reach of 11.3 million individuals if we consider the following data:

The Showing of DG NEAR films in cinemas	6,778,071 <sup>47</sup>
Films and print information distributed and shown on airlines	2,474,000 <sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Under the Audiovisual campaign, the clip had 4,200,869 views in cinema (Final report, p.22) and 2,577,202 more views in cinema under the first phase of awareness raising (final report, p.13).

<sup>48</sup> 150114\_ICF\_MOSTRA\_REACH\_ADVERT\_AIRLINES

Views of the viral clip and the image building clips	2,019,248 <sup>49</sup>
Unique visitors to the Welcome Croatia website	23,905 <sup>50</sup>

In addition to the above, the DG conducted some **12 press trips involving circa 190 journalists** during the timeframe of the campaigns. Based on our evidence we can confirm that for the most part journalists wrote one or more articles following their trips or planned to do so at a later date. Although the evidence is somewhat patchy with regards to numbers of articles produced and the readership of these articles, we know that for the Welcome Croatia campaign alone some 306 articles were produced with a potential readership of over 293.9 million citizens and for IPA 1 the broadcasting audience reached at least 5 million and 3.43 million printed circulation pieces.

When it comes to events, the DG participated in no less than 92 large events involving a **minimum of 80,000** people, although there is no evidence to confirm numbers of participants in relation to the 20 music and film festivals where the DG participated under the first awareness-raising campaign. The DG also ran a youth conference with some 220 young people who were directly involved and immersed in the topic area to the extent that their trip would have been memorable.

The evidence suggests that the DG has pursued a strategy which has placed a high level of importance on getting messages out and facilitating as much direct contact with target groups as possible. In terms of exposure, our assessment is that DG NEAR materials and activities have been well branded so that it has been clear that they are from the European Commission.

**Outtakes: response**

The qualitative data collected and our analysis reveal that the response is characterised as follows. Firstly, on the basis of our direct observation of different visibility and information events, the focus group discussion of several communication materials and the feedback received from the participants to press trips, the different target audiences outlined the clarity of the information provided and message conveyed. Systematically, the audiences easily identified the messages DG NEAR wants to put through and found them clearly presented noting the accessibility of the information provided. For instance, focus group participants consistently noted the clarity of the materials presented (brochure, leaflet, infographics), emphasising that the presentation of the message actually supported it and made the information easier to understand even to an uninformed public.

Secondly, the initial positive reaction on the clarity of the message does not prejudice how the audiences perceived / reacted to the messages. In the case of the press trips, messages were clearly conveyed with participants outlining that general and technical / project-based presentations were mutually reinforcing and they reacted positively to the efforts made to provide relevant and comprehensive information effectively. Conversely, the public’s reactions to messages (via the focus groups) were more varied as overall they perceived them as not sufficiently credible. Although the public appreciated being informed about the topic, and demonstrated a latent interest in the issues, the perceived one-sidedness of the messages weakened their impact. People also wanted to know about the challenges of enlargement.

Thirdly, in the focus group discussions, we found that graphical representation and summary presentation (such as in the leaflet or in the infographics, or diagrams included in the brochure) were effective in conveying the messages. Participants expressed their interest to have lots of information summarised and presented graphically to make the reading easier and quicker (e.g. the brochure was perceived as too long although participants concluded it looked interesting when asked to flick through), and ensure understanding despite the lack of previous knowledge on the topic.

On the formats used to convey the message, press trip participants declared that they clearly met their information needs, with an emphasis on the individual approach to enlargement-related topics (e.g. with evidence collected on specific projects funded through EU pre-accession assistance) as well as on the use of formal and informal sessions with guest speakers allowing for a more direct discussion of the topics.

**Outcomes**

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<sup>49</sup> Viral clip: 682,531(63% view to end rate, Final report, p.23) ; image building clip: 1,336,717 (78% view to end rate, Final report, p.22)  
<sup>50</sup> Final report audience of the Welcome Croatia campaign



Our analysis of the overall campaigns' performance was constrained by a lack of sufficient evidence. However, overall, the primary and secondary evidence suggests that when audiences were directly exposed to or participated in communication actions they felt more informed.

Participants at events targeting informed audiences, such as the events held in conjunction with the European Policy Centre and Queen Mary University, all confirmed that they had found the sessions useful because they contributed and updated their existing knowledge.

Members of the public from different Member States (AT, FR, NL, and FI) who participated in focus groups also confirmed that the materials had the potential to meet their information needs because the topics are poorly covered by national media, which tend to take a sensationalist approach. Although they felt more informed after the focus groups they concluded that it would not be enough for them to change their minds about the EU in general and enlargement in particular. The need for a more balanced portrayal of the pros and cons of enlargement was a major obstacle in that respect. At the same time, DG NEAR has always been clear that their intention was not to change mind-sets, but rather to raise awareness and stimulate debate.

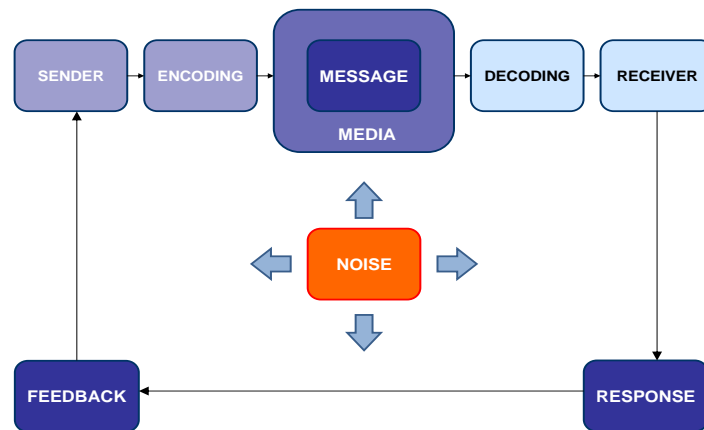
In the medium to long-term, feedback from press trip participants shows that the information received encourages reporting, one of the objectives. Numbers of articles were collated by the communication agencies responsible. Other outcomes from the press trips relate to the building of networks between journalists and high profile individuals in pre-accession countries. Synergies between the press trips organised and the broader political agenda could enhance the reporting generated by the participation to press trips. However, this remains a dimension hardly quantifiable.

### Summary

- There is some partial information available to allow a quantification of DG NEAR outputs with regards to numbers of people reached. It is not possible to quantify the response to all of the channels and tools produced although the monitoring of press trips and study visits provides some data. There is some quantification of outcomes with regards to numbers of articles produced, and the circulation of publications, but not in terms of number of people who read these articles and whether or not they have had any impact.
- This evaluation has provided qualitative data with regards to responses to channels and tools and the communication agencies also collected feedback, and there was evidence with regards to reception of the viral clip.
- It is not possible to define unintended consequences from the available data, although there have been highs and lows in the reception of the image-building clip which won awards for its craftsmanship, and promotion of the viral clip was halted because of a negative response.
- The response to the content of DG NEAR materials when tested with members of the public that their presentation was of a high quality, but lacked balance with regards to arguments put forward can be considered to have been unintended to some extent, although this evidence is limited to the individuals who took part in the focus groups.

### **To what extent were the impacts / outcomes sustainable and what are the factors that could hamper any potential sustainability?**

The purpose is here to assess the extent to which the impacts/outcomes are sustainable and discuss if there were factors that could hamper any potential sustainability. The main factor that hinders the sustainability of communication impacts and outcomes relates to the nature of communication itself. As highlighted by the below diagram, communication is a process by which a message is sent from a sender to a receiver with a view to eliciting some kind of response.



As highlighted by the above diagram, the communication process is not static. Unless there are permanent structures in place to ensure the continuous flow of the communication, the process is in itself not sustainable. In consequence, in most cases it is unrealistic to discuss the sustainable impacts of communication activities.

Therefore, when we discuss sustainability we are mainly attempting to understand whether the communication activities pursued served to generate some kind of change at least in the short term. At a basic level, the change that communication activities typically aim to achieve is to increase levels of awareness, understanding and information. The achievement of attitudinal or behaviour change is much more complicated and these goals go beyond the objectives set for DG NEAR activities which focussed on awareness raising and supporting discussion and debate (in particular through increased media reporting).

In the discussion of sustainability of DG NEAR activities, we consider the following indicators of sustainability:

**Continuity of communication flows:** essentially, this considers whether there are any communication elements that continue to pass information to end target groups. To some extent it can be considered that the press trips facilitate a degree of sustainability in that journalists indicate that they save the information, ‘stockshots’ and photographs and footage gathered for use at a later date. In addition, whilst on the trips journalists use the time to network and develop contacts for the future. This **networking potential** may also result from the information sessions organised by DG NEAR such as the event at Queen Mary University London. However, it must be considered that participating in large visibility events run by other organisations is likely to have very limited sustainable impact upon event participants, as would be expected. Making materials available via the internet is one way to create more sustainable information flows, for example the image-building clip ‘Hidden treasures’ is still available on YouTube and citizens continue to watch the clip.

**Recall:** one of the key indicators of sustainability with regards to end target groups relates to the recall of messages passed. There is no quantitative evidence to confirm the extent that numbers of individuals were able to remember messages passed or the communication materials developed and distributed, and it can be assumed that for mass audiences to be reached via large events, digital channels, and mass channels such as TV, recall is very limited once a video clip has been viewed or a brochure or leaflet briefly read through. From research into advertising, there is evidence to confirm that recall drops dramatically in a short period of time.

However, the DG put a great deal of focus on activities that facilitate direct and intense contacts, for example the 12 press trips organised under the 5 campaigns, involving circa 190 journalists and the 220 young people involved in the Welcome Croatia Youth conference and the entrepreneurs who took part in the study visit. Although there is no hard evidence to confirm this, it seems plausible that individuals who took part in these events, as well as the informed publics who were invited to the specialist information sessions, will have a strong and somewhat lasting recall of their participation. This is to some extent backed up by the high response rate of 42% to the journalist survey which, in some cases, was conducted some time after the trips had actually taken place.

**Increased awareness / understanding / information:** based on feedback received from the participants to press trips, visibility events and focus groups, we suggest that when people actively participated in DG NEAR activities they increased their levels of awareness, understanding and information about the topic. When should materials in focus groups, for example the diagram explaining the accession process, citizens confirmed that this provided them

with information that they were otherwise unaware of, also because of the lack of reporting on these topics in the media. However, some materials could be considered to be less effective with regard to generating more sustainable effects, for example leaflets and brochures because people would not necessarily take the time to read the information, or felt that the information was somewhat superficial. There is no quantitative evidence to confirm these points.

In addition to the above, our analysis has revealed that there was potential to further increase the sustainability of the outcomes / impacts that have or could have been achieved.

Feedback from the press trips outlined that the opportunity to collect news materials and establish contacts was invaluable for any future media coverage. Therefore a defining factor of the sustainability of the impact of the press trips in particular. They particularly emphasised the access provided to key, high level informants while also suggesting that a better targeting of the participants would further strengthen the relevance of the programme of the press trips and as such enhance the multiplying effect of these trips. Whilst a majority of journalists wrote articles as a result of their trips, they also indicated that the information gathered may be useful for a later date. In addition, our media experts consider that there is great potential to support 'features' type coverage of enlargement countries and accession issues via the press trips, which would also increase the sustainability of messages.

On the basis of our focus group discussion with samples of the general public, we found that several additional factors could further enhance sustainability. The importance of inter-personal communication was particularly emphasised by participants, notably through the interest they expressed for follow-up public debates to be informed of the latest developments and have the opportunity to exchange about the policy in a more sustainable manner than the current ad hoc approach. Evidence also revealed that the impact of the messages and activities would be significantly strengthened for the general public if they provided a more balanced information with a clearer focus on the concrete economic and financial impacts that enlargement and the accession of new Member States would have for the citizens of current Member States) e.g. information on the pros and cons of enlargement, for all parties potentially impacted by enlargement, general impact on sectors of the economy and cost per person of enlargement. However, consideration needs to be given here to the extent that the timing is right for public debates, particularly given the migrant crisis, which may influence perceptions of enlargement at the present time, as well as Eurobarometer data, which suggests that, broadly, publics are not in favour of future enlargements.

### Summary

- It is not possible to quantify the sustainability of DG communication activities and many activities are unlikely to have led to any sustainable outcomes because of the intangible nature of the communication itself. However, by engaging in a direct and intense manner with a smaller group of multipliers and informed individuals the DG has ensured that it has embedded information with individuals who may be able to make wider reverberations from their increased knowledge and information.
- There may be scope for improving the sustainability of communication messages and information through better targeting of participants to specific activities, more balanced messages and the provision of information of direct interest to the general public.

### **What is the added value resulting from the campaigns compared to what could be achieved by the Member States at national or regional levels?**

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It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to determine what Member States were doing with regard to communication on enlargement during the timeframe under investigation, although it seems unlikely that Member States would communicate on this topic given the lack of direct relevance to national policies. Therefore the basic assumption that provides a starting point for this answer is that the activities undertaken by DG NEAR add value because they are responsible for enlargement policies.

Nonetheless, during the evaluation we identified evidence which helps to confirm the added value of the campaigns implemented by the EU from the viewpoint of journalists and representatives of the target groups and partners.

**Feedback from the public** collected via focus groups and interviews was straightforward in identifying the added value of the EU in the provision of information about enlargement and the candidate countries. DG NEAR activities addressed the information gap clearly identified at national level, due to:

- The insufficient coverage of EU affairs in general and of enlargement in particular,
- The scoop approach of generic media,
- The political and media-driven rhetoric of some Member States on the topic, and
- A latent interest to know about this topic area as clearly highlighted in the discussions with the public.

**Feedback from journalists** collected during press trips and via our evaluation survey was that the trips provided them with the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in the context of financial constraints faced by their outlets. In other words without DG NEAR support they would most likely be unable to cover the target countries. They also emphasised the particular relevance of the activities to their needs and valued the efforts of DG NEAR and its contractors to meet their requirements. In addition, press trip participants emphasised that particular activities such as press trips provided opportunities for journalists covering EU affairs to create a sustainable network, which would not have been achieved without the EU's action.

**Feedback from partners** for example at the IPA campaign events confirmed the added-value of the Commission's "branding and blessing" for the events, which made it possible and more credible. In addition, the funding for the event meant that the most appropriate speakers could be flown in to present at the event, including the relevant experts from the European Commission. Since this campaign in particular covers a highly specialised topic (pre-accession assistance), the EU added value was particularly high, since it is very unlikely that the subjects discussed and debated would receive much attention otherwise. Our visits to two film festivals confirmed that, again, the Commission support was critical in bringing together the right people and generating debate when they are done well.

## Summary

- It is not possible, nor within the scope of the study, to determine which actions were implemented by Member States. However, it is unlikely that enlargement is covered given the lack of direct relevance to national policies. Therefore the basic assumption is that the activities undertaken by DG NEAR add value because they are responsible for enlargement policies. Nonetheless, during the evaluation we identified evidence which helps to confirm the added value of the campaigns implemented by the EU from the viewpoint of journalists and representatives of the target groups and partners.
- Different target groups and stakeholders confirmed the EU added value, in addressing / circumventing:
  - The information gap in Member State media coverage and the tendency to focus on the national angle (Focus group participants);
  - The absence of funding within media organisations and barriers to gaining access to high level officials (press trip participants);
  - The difficulty in raising the profile of niche topics and the need for financial support to bring together the right individuals (event partners)

## 5.4 Relevance and quality of the monitoring and performance framework of the campaigns

**To what extent is the monitoring and performance framework of the campaigns adequate to measure and monitor the performance of the campaigns and to identify the drawbacks in the existing one and how they could be overcome?**

The question seeks to assess the monitoring and performance framework for DG NEAR communication activities and the extent to which they were adequate, which we define as fit for purpose. Ultimately, the purpose of a monitoring and performance framework is to allow for an assessment of which activities work best in terms of reaching the objectives and target groups at what cost.

Since monitoring is organised at the campaign level and a complete reporting of monitoring activities only occurs at the end of the campaign; the evaluators have not had access to the complete / final monitoring information / reports for three of the eight on-going communication campaigns. As such, the evaluators could not review the reporting of monitoring activities in their entirety. Nevertheless, the sample of five campaigns is sufficient to assess the approach taken across the campaigns.

To answer this question we first assess the adequacy of the different monitoring and performance frameworks and their drawbacks and then go on to consider how drawbacks could best be overcome. Our analysis is based on desk review of the campaign documentation (i.e. from the Terms of Reference, proposals, to the final reports and deliverables including various monitoring reports).

### **Adequacy and drawbacks of monitoring and performance frameworks**

Monitoring is a process by which data relating to the performance of communication activities is collected as an integral part of the communication process. It is usually not possible to collect monitoring data once a communication activity has already taken place unless this is harvested by a third party, for example data on readership figures is typically collected via media outlets. This means that the units of measurement to be monitored need to be defined up-front in advance of the communication activity.

Monitoring data helps us to understand the results of investment in the communication activities. As well as facilitating accountability and transparency, monitoring data can be used to tweak on-going campaigns and to define lessons for future activities. However, effective monitoring requires **consistent and accurate processes for data collection** otherwise it is not possible to make comparisons across different units of measurement, for example by types of communication channel and tool in different countries. In addition, effective monitoring needs a **clear and consistent presentation** of the results achieved.

Our assessment of the monitoring activities undertaken by DG NEAR, as described earlier in this document, is that whilst significant efforts have been made to gather monitoring data, for example in relation to numbers of participants in events, numbers of video views and click-throughs, numbers of articles produced following press trips, numbers of leaflets and brochures produced this type of quantitative data on communication outputs has not been consistently collected for all communication activities. In addition we found that data with regards to the distribution of all communication materials was not always reported in contractors' final reports. It maybe that this type of data was collected and shared with DG NEAR in another format, but we would have expected these aspects to have been more consistently explicit also in the planning phase.

With some exceptions, there has been no setting of targets to be achieved with regards to the reach and exposure of DG NEAR communication activities, in advance of their roll out. This means that it is difficult to judge whether the communication activities have met or surpassed their objectives in terms of reach because these specific objectives were not set in the first place.

It is to be commended that DG NEAR has combined a focus on gathering both quantitative and qualitative monitoring data. It has been understood that counting the numbers of individuals who attended a conference has little meaning if those individuals could not understand the messages conveyed or found the information provided to be insufficiently informative. In addition to counting the number of outputs achieved, communication agencies have also collected feedback from participants in specific communication activities, for example feedback has been consistently collected from individuals involved in press trips and study visits and this has been used to refine approaches over many years. This feedback process demonstrates the usefulness of this type of data to help the DG to improve its communication to better suit target group needs. However, for the purposes of an evaluation

which is intended to consider a range of different communication activities implemented by DG NEAR over a 4-year period, the monitoring exercise has provided limited understanding of overall progress. This is because the types of questions posed for quantitative and qualitative feedback have varied over time, according to the contractor responsible for implementation and the specific communication campaign.

In addition to qualitative and quantitative monitoring by the contractors, the DG has also made significant efforts to get a feel for how the communication activities have been performing on the ground. DG communication staff members have been frequently involved in the roll-out of activities, which has allowed them inside knowledge with regards to how activities have evolved. A systematic approach has been taken to drafting on-the-spot monitoring reports to allow lessons learned to be shared with colleagues.

Standard performance indicators have not been set for the whole timeframe or set of activities under review, which seems likely to reflect that fact that most activities were conceived under different campaigns. As a result, there is a lack of comparability in the monitoring undertaken when considering the whole range of communication actions covered. For example, in terms of media monitoring, the number of articles (and clippings) resulting from press trips is reported. However, the tone of the coverage and the extent to which it meets the campaign objectives is not consistency monitored. The exception is the Welcome Croatia campaign, in which the tone and the extent to which the campaign messages are conveyed are assessed in detail.

However, the absence of specific guidelines or requirements can also be found within individual campaigns, where there **are issues with the comparability of data reported for reach**. For example, in reporting the number of participants at events, there is sometimes a tendency to report the total number of event participants, when if the DG has a stand at an event or gives a short presentation the number of people exposed to these activities may in reality be few, a much reduced subset of the total event population<sup>51</sup>. This assertion is backed up by our observations at the Edinburgh and Odense film festivals where thousands of people attended the festivals, but very small numbers actually watched the films provided by DG NEAR. In addition, in the reporting on events by communication agencies, we found a tendency to compare different types of events with different target audiences and goals – i.e. small-scale specialist information talks which are designed for specialist audiences cannot be compared to large public exhibitions, because the former afford much more in-depth and meaningful interaction with individuals who may have an important role to play in the topic area, in contrast to the much more superficial interaction of an individual who visits a DG NEAR stand within a larger event.

Our assessment is that the issues identified: inconsistencies in relation to the monitoring of activities within the individual campaigns and in relation to the communication activities as a whole really stem from three specific factors:

1. There has been a tremendously wide range of communication activities implemented, some of which have been individual actions, rather than repeated over a number of years;
2. There have been no SMART objectives and indicators set to cover the different campaigns
3. There has been an attempt to reach many different target groups (journalists, business people, school children, students, NGOs, think tanks, etc.) with a range of different tools.

The number of number of different objectives set and the fact that these have been defined as broad statements of intent rather than SMART: specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals, has meant that the task of monitoring performance in relation to the objectives set and the wide array of activities is simply too complex to be achieved within the confines of a reasonable monitoring budget.

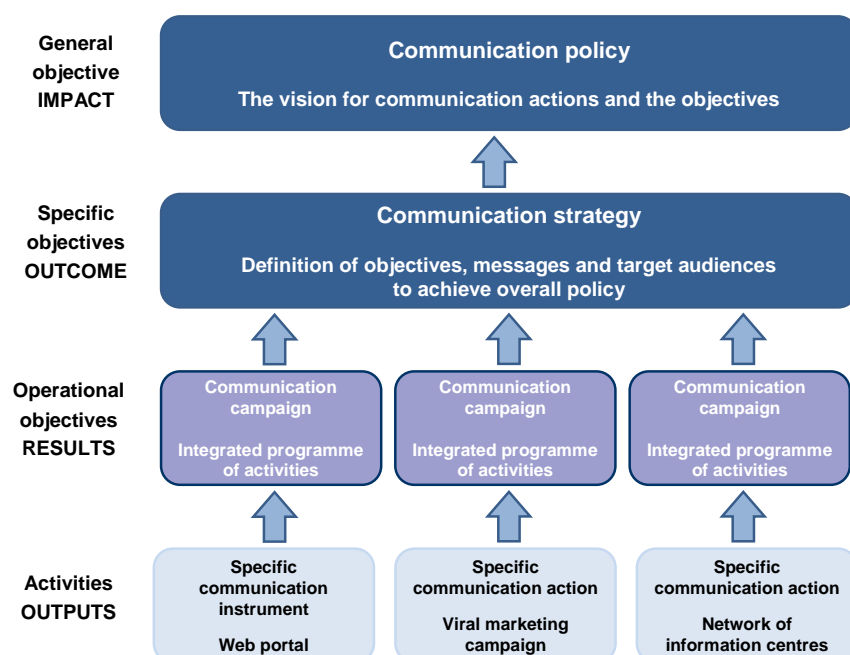
### **How could existing drawbacks be overcome?**

As highlighted above, the starting point for defining a monitoring system is the setting of objectives. The below intervention logic diagram shows how the activities themselves feed into the objectives and how they, in turn, feed into the outcome and finally into the overall goals of the campaign.

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<sup>51</sup> DG NEAR is aware of this point and consistently tries to address the issue with contractors.

Figure 2 Example intervention logic



As such, the linkages between the objectives and the monitoring systems need to be clear. For the present campaigns, a more refined set of (SMART) objectives are needed so that the linkages with the monitoring system is better aligned to assess the extent to which these have been met.

The monitoring system should answer three key questions:

- How many people have been reached (and how) with the message?
- Do the audience understand the message?
- Did the audience get the information they needed?

In the table below, we set out the kind of evidence, which would be required to answer these three questions.

Table 5: Examples of indicators

QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED	INDICATOR TYPE	EVIDENCE SOUGHT
How many people have been reached (and how) with the message?	Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of individuals reached by channel / country</li> <li>• # of materials produced / disseminated</li> <li>• # of events organised, etc.</li> </ul>
Do the audience understand the message?	Outtake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # articles produced / % inclusion of key messages</li> <li>• # of individuals that can recall the message</li> <li>• Favourability / feelings evoked, value perceptions / resonance / targeting</li> </ul>
Did the audience get the information they needed?	Outcome (short-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # and perceptions of usefulness</li> <li>• # and perceptions of increased awareness, understanding</li> </ul>



To enhance the current approach to monitoring we suggest consideration of the following guiding principles to ensure a uniform approach. This are explained in turn below.

- **Build monitoring into the design of campaigns:** the monitoring requirements need to be established in the Terms of Reference and built in at the very start of the campaigns. Whilst some aspects can be monitored retrospectively (e.g. media coverage), most aspects require simultaneous monitoring and need to be agreed and designed at the outset.
- **Coherence of monitoring with overall goals:** as explained above, the monitoring system should directly feed into and fit with a measurement of the campaign goals.
- **Uniform approach to monitoring for repeated channels and tools:** there will be certain tools and channels that are repeated across campaigns, such as press trips, events, etc., in order to be able to draw comparisons over time and between campaigns, a uniform approach to monitoring should be ensured.
- **Differentiated approach for different target groups / channels and tools:** the target groups and different goals as a result
  - General public: for this group, mass media channels will be deployed meaning communication agencies should set out target numbers for reach based on known industry standards
  - (Potential) specialist / informed public: a series of channels will be used (events, visits, etc.) for this group and setting targets is less appropriate. Rather, the objective will be to increase the reach over time and this should be monitored.
- **Measuring measurable outcomes:** the indicators which are used for assessing the outcomes of the campaigns should be restricted to measurable aspects only. Hypothetical, long-term scenarios are impractical and less useful than the short-term, measurable outcomes.
- **Collect information on outputs, outtakes and (short term) outcomes:** Data collected should cover outputs, outtakes and (short-term) outcomes.

In terms of the indicators developed, again there are principles that should be followed, namely they should be relevant (i.e. closely linked to the objectives to be reached), accepted (i.e. by staff, stakeholders and other users), credible (i.e. accessible to non-experts, unambiguous and easy to interpret), easy (i.e. feasible to monitor and collect data at reasonable cost) and robust (i.e. not easily manipulated) (RACER). The table below shows how RACER indicators might look in practice.

**Table 6: Example quantitative and qualitative indicators by activity type**

Activity type	Quantitative	Qualitative
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # attendees :               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Entire event</li> <li>○ Stand</li> <li>○ Debate / panel</li> </ul> </li> <li>• # materials distributed</li> <li>• # quizzes completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on events, visits, etc. (understanding of message; usefulness of message and information) / as well as what could be improved.</li> </ul>
Print materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # materials (brochures, leaflets) produced</li> <li>• # materials (brochures, leaflets) distributed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on understanding and usefulness message / information / what could be improved</li> </ul>

Press trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # participants</li> <li>• # media outlets by type</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from participants: standardised evaluation form for all press trips</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which trip did you participate in? Which trip(s) have you already participated in?</li> <li>2. Do you think this press trip was a good opportunity for you and the media outlet you work for? If yes, why? If not, why?</li> <li>3. What do you remember as being the strengths and weaknesses of this press trip – e.g. in terms of access to the right people, access to information and logistics?</li> <li>4. How did the content and organisation of this press trip compare with similar trips you have been on (e.g. in terms of level of interviewees, opportunities to pursue particular interests, access to information and logistics)?</li> <li>5. To what extent have you been covering (more) the country / countries you visited, or reporting (more) on EU enlargement in general after this trip?</li> <li>6. What recommendations would you have to enhance the added value of the press trips organised by DG NEAR?</li> </ol>
Media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # articles / broadcasts generated</li> <li>• Circulation figures of media</li> <li>• # tweets / re-tweets of article</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journalist profile and #twitter followers)</li> <li>• Audience profile of newspaper, magazine, radio, etc.</li> <li>• Content of reporting (mention of EC, key message)</li> <li>• Assessment of placement of article / broadcast time</li> <li>• Feedback from journalists on visit (meeting needs to secure reporting of key message)</li> </ul>
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # followers / likes (over time)</li> <li>• # of tweets and re-tweets</li> <li>• # Facebook posts and shares</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of comments / discussion generated (presence of key message)</li> </ul>
Audio-visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of clips (conformance to industry standards)</li> <li>• # views</li> <li>• View-to-end rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from audience (recall and understanding of key message)</li> </ul>
Give-aways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # produced</li> <li>• # distributed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from recipients (likelihood of follow-up)</li> </ul>

Advertisement (airline / radio other)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected # of views</li> <li>• # of placements</li> <li>• # frequency of views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected profile of viewers (e.g. country of residence)</li> <li>• Feedback from viewers (including recall of message, understanding of message)</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # unique visitors</li> <li>• # downloads of key materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction survey for example (5 key questions (on clarity of material available, meeting needs, etc.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you learn about this website?</li> <li>2. Did you find what you were looking for easily?</li> <li>3. Does the website give you the information you need?</li> <li>4. If you want to get more information, do you know where to look?</li> <li>5. How likely are you to recommend this website?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

### Summary

- Monitoring is routinely carried out but there is no overarching framework, nor is there any consistency in the requirements in Terms of Reference, on indicators for reporting by contractors. This is particularly important in circumstances where DG NEAR may be using different contractors for very similar types of activity.
- Monitoring is determined by communication agencies, which leaves it open to insider bias and reduces comparability between and within campaigns.
- The absence of a framework for monitoring system could be addressed with common guidelines / menu of indicators to be adapted to campaign depending on activities supported
- The combination of these factors results in insufficient monitoring of outcomes and qualitative elements (e.g. tone of articles; feedback from all target groups for any activity, re-use of the materials)
- (Industry) best practice not always followed (e.g. need for media monitoring to cover quality cf. quantity and benchmarks with regards to expected levels of outcomes)

## 5.5 Adequacy of the design of the logical framework

**What is the relevance of the activities planned and to what extent is the monitoring and performance framework adequate to measure and monitor the campaign? To what extent are the activities planned relevant to meet the needs?**

This question aims to explore the adequacy of the logical framework from the perspective of the capacity of the campaigns to reach their objectives and the extent that tools have been selected to meet target audience needs. We also touch on monitoring and performance in this question, although this has been described in the previous section.

A logic framework is a tool which can be used to set out the goals for communication activities and show which mechanisms and outputs will be used to achieve these goals. The framework can help communication managers to check that the likely results and outcomes of their activity are aligned with and contribute and / or meet the objectives that have been set.

We have constructed a logical framework to show the design of the communication activities conducted by DG NEAR over the period 2011 – 2015. It is difficult to show the full complexity of 8 different communication contracts within one diagram, however the below is based on our analysis of the available data, information and feedback that we have reviewed and gathered as part of the evaluation. This is shown overleaf and this then followed by our analysis of the current design of the framework.

PRINCE objectives	Budg	Campaign general objectives (summary)	Sample activities	MS	Outputs	Outtakes ( <i>Audience reaction</i> )	Short term outcomes
<p>Raise public awareness of EU citizens about the participating countries &amp; enlargement process</p> <p>Underline the shared values and interests between EU MS &amp; the enlargement countries</p> <p>Promote an informed debate and dialogue on enlargement</p> <p>Increase exposure of EU citizens, in particular</p>	5 MEUR/year	<u>Audiovisual</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide basic info on enlargement - focus on HR</li> <li>Show enlargement as win-win process &amp; build positive image of SE Europe</li> <li>Stimulate dialogue in society</li> </ul>	Audiovisual clips and promotion	Focus on enlargement sceptical countries (AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, FR, FI, IE, LU, NL, UK)	# clips produced Limited information on # clips viewed for all clips. # video views	No quantitative evidence of recall Image building clip appreciated - message understood Negative response to viral clip Different reactions to different clips Request for info on pros & cons	Award for image building clip No quantitative evidence to confirm further outcomes
		<u>On-line &amp; social media</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilise interested audience</li> <li>Stimulate debate</li> </ul>	Social media		Quantitative monitoring	No evidence of use / discussion	No qualitative evidence to confirm further outcomes
		<u>Welcome Croatia</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness &amp; improve public knowledge</li> <li>Increase support with informed debate &amp; show positive impact of HR support</li> <li>Use HR as flagship to highlight enlargement</li> </ul>	DG organised visibility events		# events organised # of participants Debate & discussion	Information clear EC branding clear Positive response Info is useful / adds value.	Increased participants' knowledge No data to quantify recall, but probable due to direct contact
		<u>Awareness-raising</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factual objective</li> <li>Provide info &amp; materials</li> <li>Stimulate debate</li> <li>Increase exposure of youth,</li> </ul>	DG participation in events		# events organised # films shown # giveaways distributed	Messages may not be picked up as other conflicting messages Messages not necessarily relevant as not targeted Desire for pros and cons of enlargement	Limited numbers of visitors to stand / viewers of films Possible raised awareness, but uncertain to what extent. Recall unlikely
			Travelling exhibition		Partial evidence on # locations visited (26+), but not no's of visitors	No evidence of audience response	No evidence of recall / other difficult to determine
			Press trips		# trips # journalists # interviews # press packs	Messages understood Positive reaction to materials & opportunity Increased awareness / knowledge base of increased # of journalists	# Articles produced # number of readers Take-up of DG messages Enhanced networks and connections Foundations for improved coverage

young people to enlargement issues	Encourage reporting on EU enlargement	women, 55+ and less educated	Advertising via airline and cinema	# adverts shown # viewers & # readers # of times seen individuals	Audiences like the clip and understand the main message  Comments on Social Media, # of likes, re-tweets, etc.	People have reflected on similarities of accession countries  Possible sharing / discussion of clips
		<u>IPA</u>	Print materials (brochure, leaflets, infographics)	# materials produced # materials distributed	Limited evidence of audience response  Messages understood & info found useful.	Increased understanding / knowledge of IPA among target groups
			Welcome HR website	# unique visitors # downloads of documents	No evidence of audience response	No evidence to confirm outcomes
		<u>Stakeholder</u>	Games and competitions	# games # players / participants # competitors	No data on response to game as not yet launched.  Engagement of youth in enlargement topics	Evidence on game not currently available  Somewhat lasting knowledge / raised awareness due to participation in essay competition.
		Focus on trade unions, entrepreneurs,	Promotional materials	# materials produced # materials distributed & interaction (limited data)	Limited evidence of audience response  Initial interest raised to visit stand  Mixed response if give-aways are not targeted to specific profiles	Longer term outcomes unlikely, but not foreseen.

Impact : contribution to objectives				
<u>Public awareness raised</u>	<u>Shared values and interests</u>	<u>Informed debate and dialogue promoted</u>	<u>Increased exposure of EU citizens, in particular young people</u>	<u>Strengthened reporting</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main messages understood</li> <li>Contribution to information gap at national level</li> <li>Insufficient evidence on the reach and recall of the activity, but reach of limited by budgets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informed professionals understand information, find it useful and helps to increase their knowledge base</li> <li>Awareness of shared value raised to a limited extent (few participants to visibility events)More info on pros and cons to confirm shared values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities for journalists to participate in informed debates</li> <li>Multiplication of information / debate to wider audiences</li> <li>Possible discussion of clips by viewers – not possible to confirm extent with current data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient identification of audiences &amp; targeting</li> <li>Anecdotal evidence of increased exposure</li> <li>Engagement of young people through games and competitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative and qualitative evidence of reporting in the short, medium and longer term</li> <li>Unexploited potential for synergies</li> </ul>

Based on the above representation of the design of the DG NEAR communication activities, our analysis is as follows:

**The PRINCE objectives are:**

- Raise awareness of the enlargement process
- Underline shared values and interests between the EU Ms and enlargement countries
- Promote informed debate and dialogue on enlargement
- Increase exposure of EU citizens, in particular young people to enlargement issues
- Encourage reporting on EU enlargement

These objectives are not true objectives because they do not fit the requirements for objectives (to be achievable, quantified and measurable). At the same time, they are not vision statements, because they do not describe **one or a set of desired outcomes**. Vision statements provide direction to communication objectives and activities. To consider what an appropriate vision could be, it is useful to define what DG NEAR is trying to do. Current thinking on public communication<sup>52</sup> is that it commonly serves two main purposes, as highlighted below. DG NEAR communication can be clearly situated as communication related to **public will and political change**.

Individual behaviour change	Public will and political change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence beliefs and knowledge about a behaviour and its consequences</li> <li>• Affect attitudes in support of behaviour &amp; persuade</li> <li>• Affect perceived social norms about the acceptability of a behaviour among one's peers</li> <li>• Affect intentions to perform the behaviour</li> <li>• Produce behaviour change (if accompanied by supportive program components)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase visibility of an issue and its importance</li> <li>• Affect perceptions of social issues and who is seen as responsible</li> <li>• Increase knowledge about solutions based on who is seen as responsible</li> <li>• Affect criteria used to judge policies and policymakers</li> <li>• Help determine what is possible for service introduction and public funding</li> <li>• Engage and mobilize constituencies to action</li> </ul>

It is not possible for the evaluation team to define which of the above elements would be desirable for DG NEAR communication, but it seems likely that communication is at least intended to support the first bullet point under public will and political change. The current objectives have focus on messages, mechanisms and tactics such as shared understanding, raising awareness and encouraging coverage, but do not make the link to the rationale for the EC to communicate in the first place, which is to support the achievement of policy goal, sufficiently explicit.

**Campaign objectives:** in the campaign terms of reference, objectives are defined as being general and specific. However none of the objectives set are SMART and this means that it is not possible to define whether or not they have been met. A well-formulated objective should be:

- **Specific:** objectives should be precise and concrete enough not to be open to varying interpretations;
- **Measurable:** objectives should refer to a desired future state (as compared to the baseline situation), so that it is possible later to observe whether the objective has been achieved or not;
- **Agreed:** given that they are to influence behaviour, objectives must be agreed, understood and interpreted similarly by all of those who are expected to take responsibility for achieving them;

<sup>52</sup> Table adapted from 'Public Communication Campaign Evaluation', by Julia Coffman, Harvard Family Research Project.

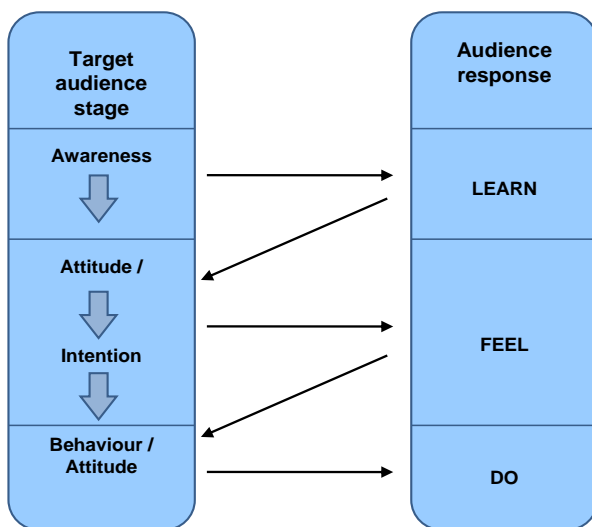


- **Realistic:** objectives and target levels should be ambitious – setting an objective that only reflects the current level of achievement is not useful – but they should also be realistic so that those responsible see them as meaningful;
- **Time-dependent:** achievable within a specific timeframe.

The main issue here is that if objectives cannot be measured in some way then they are statements of intent rather than objectives. The rationale for SMART objectives is that these allow us to measure whether or not we have achieved what we set out to achieve. The number of objectives set also raises questions. It is understood that this situation evolved due to administrative constraints requiring limited and focussed budgets, when a more significant push may have been more effective. Developing effective communication is costly and difficult. Having too many objectives dissipates the available resources, efforts, outputs and outcomes. A more effective approach is likely to be one where a toolbox of channels and tools point in the same direction to contribute to meeting a small number of objectives, which in turn focus on meeting target groups' needs.

**Target groups:** desk research on the DG NEAR communication campaigns indicates that communication campaigns have had a wide geographic focus on a subset of 12-13 enlargement critical Member States. Within the focal countries, there have been a wide range of target groups have been identified, but these have not always been effectively targeted. Effective communication is costly and this provides a strong argument for reducing the focus of activities to target less groups.

Once target groups are decided upon the next step is define what they need. Some communication specialists<sup>53</sup> suggest a need to define target groups' levels of favourability and familiarity with the issues to be communicated, others recommend identifying audiences level of interaction with the issues in terms of (awareness, understanding, opinion) and to plan communication activities which correspond to their most likely sequence of response<sup>54</sup>.



**Campaign activities (channels and tools):** serve different purposes and incur different levels of cost and can be more or less effective in relation to their timing, relevance and / or targeting to reach specific groups because, for example different age groups use different information channels. DG NEAR has developed a very extensive range of activities over the period under assessment, for example 47 video clips have been produced, circa 20 press trips have been run involving more than 300 journalists, there have been two advertising campaigns via cinemas and airlines, leaflets, infographics, a brochure, participation in and organisation of numerous events, the design and roll-out of games and competitions.

Focus groups and consultations with target audience were organised in some cases, for example as part of the audio-visual campaign. In addition, a survey of “attitudes towards EU enlargement: results of focus groups in selected Member States” was commissioned by DG NEAR. In addition, a learning approach has been taken with constant evolution of activities taking into account feedback from participants at events and on press trips.

<sup>53</sup> Kotler and Keller (2006) Marketing Management 12<sup>th</sup> edition

<sup>54</sup> Vakratsas and Ambler)

There has been less targeting of specific audiences such as women and those aged 55+ or visitors to particular types of events in terms of understanding needs. The need for a balanced view for wider audiences has not been picked up in any research undertaken.

The range of activities undertaken support the objectives to varying degrees seem to be more directly effective than others. For example press trips (media activities), information sessions with specialists and competitions / games seem to be more aligned with the objectives set compared to generic events for the wider public, and social media activities, for example, which are less easy to pin down against the objectives.

**Outputs and outtakes:** as highlighted above there is a need for a more consistent approach to monitoring outputs in terms of numbers of people reached by an activity and number of units of activity or material that are distributed. Consistent measurement will allow the DG better understanding of what can be achieved and will allow benchmarks and targets to be set which feed into measureable objectives. Depending on the type of campaign, the goal is for target audience outtakes (reactions to messages and information) to support communication objectives. The available evidence suggests that this has been the case for specialist audiences, for example the participants in targeted visibility events organised by DG NEAR, but that this has been much less the case for non-specialist audiences whose responses have not necessarily contributed to DG NEAR's campaign objectives.

**Short and long term outcomes:** outcomes are essentially the achievement of objectives, with no SMART objectives set it has not been possible to define whether these have been met. At the same time there have been no mechanisms in place to define which outcomes have been achieved.

## Summary

- The current intervention logic provides a rationale and general direction, but is not sufficiently focussed to allow the DG to define where to prioritise resources and which activities to support. There are generally also no mechanisms in place on making a strategic selection of activities, based on mapping, for example.
- The DG has enjoyed greatest success with the targeting of useful information to informed professionals and journalists. This follows the logic that targeted information tends to resonate better than information that is not tailored to suit recipients. When it comes to wider publics, budget constraints have limited the amount of targeting possible, although there is evidence to confirm that main messages, for example 'So similar, so different, so European' are understood, interested publics also want to find out a fuller picture of pros and cons of enlargement.
- A focus has been placed on mechanisms to convey – often very generic - messages, for example, a strong focus on events and promotional elements: cinema, airline and digital, and this has its merits in the right circumstances. However, number of activities undertaken to reach a large list of target groups across the EU Member States, and often on a one-off basis, means that efforts do not necessarily mutually reinforce each other to the extent that would be desirable and that impacts are likely to be fragmented.
- The feedback loop which is supported by the monitoring of activities, has allowed the DG a degree of constant improvement, for example, the approach to press trips has been refined and feedback on alternatives explored and considered. However, as monitoring has not been consistently and uniformly applied and no benchmarks were set for performance the feedback loop is not functioning as effectively as it could.
- DG NEAR effectively has two modes of communication: one relates to campaigning around the accession of a specific country and the other relates to ensuring a flow of information via interaction with interested, informed and specialist audiences when accessions are not imminent. It seems appropriate, therefore, to conceive of two different intervention logics to guide the choices that need to be made in both of these situations.

# 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This section starts with main conclusions on communication on enlargement. This is then followed by conclusions on the specific channels and tools that were assessed as part of this evaluation.

## 6.1 Conclusions

### Main conclusions

1. **As enlargement is not currently a hot topic it is very difficult to reach wider publics**, who tend to be poorly informed and even hostile, in an effective manner. Very large budgets are required to reach publics and measure the success of this reach. In addition, there is a significant communication challenge for the European Commission to present information on the pros and cons of enlargement, requested by the public, in a balanced and accurate way and still meets internal policy goals.
2. At this point in time, communication **activities which focus on informed professionals and relevant multipliers are more effective** because from the outset these groups are both interested and receptive to information, and they can play a role in transmitting information to interested publics, who are too difficult and would be too costly for DG NEAR to reach on an on-going basis.
3. As broad public support is essential to sustain enlargement **there is a need for a continuous dialogue and discussion within the Member States to lay the foundations for effective accession communication** campaigning, when this is needed. As DG NEAR manages the process whereby countries join the European Union, it falls to the DG to provide a reference point for information on EU enlargement topics and the policies and programmes established to support this.
4. The wide range of communication activities, channels and tools implemented by DG NEAR were **relevant to the broad objectives set** for enlargement communication. However, it is not possible to define to what extent these activities have contributed reaching objectives as there were **no SMART objectives and indicators** set to measure performance and there is a need for a more consistent approach to monitoring and performance measurement. The lack of performance measurement system limits the extent that comparisons can be made and lessons learned. However, the evaluation provides insights which help to understand which types of activities have been most effective.

### Conclusions on specific channels and tools

#### Communication materials

- Focus groups confirm the **high quality formats and professional presentation of communication materials**, brochures, leaflets, infographics and audiovisual clips. The brochure and its diagram of the enlargement process were considered to convey information clearly. There is less enthusiasm for the leaflets, also confirmed when DG NEAR participated in events, which appeared to provide a somewhat superficial view of enlargement issues. Infographics come out best because they provide a view that is quick and easy to grasp and they offer potential for digital dissemination.
- DG NEAR **communication messages for wider publics are clear**. When tested, people are able to confirm their understanding of the main message as communicated by audiovisual clips, but the evaluation research confirmed **scepticism about enlargement and a desire to know more about the challenges** as well as the benefits, without which it seems that the credibility of information passed by the Commission is likely to be questioned.
- **Audiovisual is considered to be the most effective format for communicating to the public**, although there is also a desire for more open debate. Our research confirms the positive reaction to the Hidden Treasures clip, even if this does not serve information needs. The public also seem to be happy with expert ambassadors and expressed an interest in real life stories or ordinary people. It is likely that the DG will need

to continue to focus on audiovisual in the future as a key mechanism to reach the public, but this will require significant promotional budgets to be available, as without paid promotion clips will not be seen.

### **Visibility events organised by DG NEAR**

- Events co-hosted by DG NEAR and a partner organisations **targeted at informed professionals** for example representatives of think tanks, academia and civil society have proved to be very **effective**. Feedback suggests that the events are pitched at the right level to suit participants' needs. Participants find the information presented to be interesting and useful and the debate format provides transparency and rare opportunities for questions direct to specialists working in the field. The involvement of both high profile speakers from pre-accession countries and Commission representatives provides an attractive session for speakers with opportunities for informal discussions and networking outside the formal session.
- There is scope to **enhance specific aspects, by:**
  - **increasing the visibility / participation to individuals who are not physically present.** The topics discussed and the speakers have a wider relevance to individuals working in relevant fields, who are not aware or unable to participate in events.
  - **better targeting / selection of co-host organisations** to ensure that all co-hosts are able to support the event through promotion which generates awareness and sufficient levels of participation.

### **DG NEAR participation in visibility events**

- **The efficiency of DG participation in events organised by others is lower than in events organised by the DG** this reflects the fact that it is not possible to tailor materials to each individual event and the sometimes very diverse audiences that attend. In consequence some participants have questioned the added value of the materials presented and who they are really intended for. With better targeting, efficiency could be increased for example with strong communication messages, which can stimulate high levels of interest, for example because the accession of a particular country is imminent.

### **Press trips**

- Press trips are **DG NEAR's flagship activities. The format provides high** quality content and valuable opportunities to increase knowledge levels among multipliers with the power to disseminate key messages to wider publics.
- **Press trips were well organised, provided** useful information, contacts, **and opportunities that would not have otherwise been available.** Journalists are very **satisfied** with regards to the programme of activities and information materials, which were reported to be of useful and of high quality. The level of satisfaction is reflected by former participants' willingness to provide feedback to the evaluation survey<sup>55</sup>, when this group is typically very hard to engage in evaluation research.
- The opportunity to further improve the press trip formula is limited by DG NEAR's need to rely on communication agencies to manage relationships with journalists. But the continuous gathering of feedback has allowed the trips to be refined over time. There is no benchmark for the costs involved in running a trip, but costs do not appear to be unreasonable, relate to the location of trips and framework contract rates. There is **scope to improve the consistency of gathering journalists' feedback and the monitoring** of media and social media coverage.
- Nonetheless, there **may be ways to encourage greater take up of DG NEAR messages** in any resulting coverage. These could include requiring contractors to justify their selection of journalists on the basis not just of the outlet, but also of past coverage of the interests of the EU in the country concerned, taking fewer

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<sup>55</sup> The survey of journalists achieved a completion rate of 43%

journalists on a press trip rather than allowing last-minute substitution by the outlets, and – where appropriate – using the journalists who have been or are likely to be invited to go on press trips to moderate events, thus cultivating long-term relationships. While recognising that journalists often focus on such trips at the last minute, greater efforts to brief them about the trip and identify their personal interests could be worth piloting, with the objective of increasing the likelihood that they might focus on the EU perspective on issues without feeling that they are being told what to write

## 6.2 Recommendations

Taking into account the key findings and conclusions of the evaluation, the following actions are recommended:

- We recommend that DG NEAR redefine, simplify and focus<sup>56</sup> the scope and ambitions of future communication activities on two different approaches and two different types of target audience, depending on the immediacy of any future accessions:
  1. **An on-going communication approach** focussed on **interaction with informed / specialists and potential specialists**. This group includes journalists, academics, think tanks, civil society, government, as well as potential specialists (students and ‘engageables’) people with potential to engage with the subject, etc.
  2. **Accession communication approach**, possibly similar to Welcome Croatia, with a focus on direct reach of the un / less concerned public, particularly but not necessarily limited to those in the 18 – 35 age range to allow alignment with PRINCE, using mass channels, for example digital and where relevant advertorials via other mass media.
- We recommend redefining the intervention logic. There is a need for a vision statement to confirm desirable outcomes, SMART objectives and a clear feedback monitoring loop that is built into the system at the design stage to allow quantitative and qualitative measurement of a pre-defined number of indicators.

This implies a standard approach to monitoring the different communication activities, which must be implemented consistently across different channels and tools, with targets set to facilitate process, output and outcome improvements year-on-year. The need for a consistent process and what types of indicators to be included must be explicit in communication Terms of Reference and contractors’ proposals. Draft indicators are provided in Section 5.4.

### 1. On-going communications

- **We recommend maintaining a strong focus on the media and press trips**, but suggest that consideration is given to tweaking the current approach by mapping the work of relevant journalists to identify those most likely to report on issues important to the Commission’s objectives (without dictating topics to them), that outlets be chosen during any phase when accession is not imminent on the basis of their audience among policymakers and that journalists be invited on a personal basis, that last-minute replacements by the outlet not be accepted and this be made clear to the outlet’s management from the outset. Journalists should be identified not just on the basis of the outlet’s main channel, but also their following on social media (on a qualitative rather than quantitative basis).
- In periods **when accession is not imminent, preference should be given to journalists whose channels have space for long-form journalism**. This will help to ensure that the DG continues to make information available to feed the latent interest among educated publics in the EU. Specific recommendations in this area include:
  - Providing materials including ‘stockshots’ and information provided to journalists in advance of trips

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<sup>56</sup> It is understood that this decision has already been taken by DG NEAR.

- Monitoring of social media, as well as media coverage (quantitative and qualitative)
  - Standardised on-line templates for feedback from journalists – to allow more efficient collation & analysis of feedback
  - Building closer relationships with relevant journalists by using them as moderators at events debates
- We recommend continuing the focus on stimulating and strengthening debate **between informed professionals and specialists / potential specialists** on technical accession related topics. The focus on involving high profile speakers from accession countries, senior and effective EC speakers, is to be continued. Consideration could also be given to **making participation more targeted** by:
    1. Defining a series of questions for discussion as a way to frame debate
    2. Reserving seats and inviting university students, who are invited to submit questions to the speakers
    3. Including relevant academics in the panel and / or inviting number if academics to take part
    4. Targeting participation by relevant civil society organisations from accession countries and the MS.
    5. Involving journalists / professional presenters to chair the debates and for discussions to be written up as a series of thought papers, for wider targeted distribution;
  - Consideration could also be given to **strengthening the profile and promotion of these events** by
    1. Developing a simple name for the series of informed discussions and to explore opportunities to significantly increase access to the discussions,
    2. Developing a publicised programme of less frequent for example quarterly, but more substantial debates
    3. Advance targeted promotion of the events and live web-streaming and recording/videoing wholes sessions, sound-bites and short visual clips.
    4. Tweeting, social media amplification by contractors / co-hosts / EC when in Brussels
    5. Hosting some events at the Commission and some on the premises of organisations who effectively co-host events.
    6. Requiring moderators to ask speakers and remind audiences to include the hashtags of the Commissioner and the Director-General<sup>57</sup>.
    7. Systematic systems for alerting the social media team in the DG in good time that events are coming up.
  - If the DG wishes to continue to take these informed debates to different Member States, then it is vital to **ensure that co-host organisations** (universities and think tanks are natural partners for these types of sessions) **will add significant value** to the session in terms of maximising visibility. To do this we recommend setting a number of criteria, including:
    - Expertise on the topic area;
    - Similar debating and discussion goals;
    - Access to significant networks, web-streaming and facilities for promotion to target groups;
    - A venue for a sizeable audience.
  - To further professionalise the approach the DG could consider **allocating funds to support co-hosts work** / a competition / call for proposals to encourage higher levels of commitment and professionalism from co-hosts who aim to make debates as visible as possible.

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<sup>57</sup> If the Commissioner or the Director-General then retweet the information, this paves the way for the DG to retweet it, since the decision as to whether it is appropriate to retweet has ipso facto been taken at a political level. Twitter walls at events are relatively straightforward and inexpensive to implement and act as an incentive to participant to tweet.

- For university students, we **recommend creating targeted learning and debating opportunities**, which are much sharper in their political and intellectual focus than the Youth Conference supported under Welcome Croatia<sup>58</sup> because this will increase the level of interest of the best students. This implies a need to map relevant university departments to allow debates to be hosted in different universities and student unions and to work with partners to consider most effective approaches including lectures and debates, which could for example be organised in a similar vein to the model UN discussions. It should explore the scope for focussing on universities hosting European Documentation Centres (EDCs).
- We recommend that consideration be given to **continuing to run an essay / short story competition**, which may be inspiring for young people both in accession countries and in EU Member States, encourages their research and thought on enlargement topics. To allow this process to generate some traction efforts need to be made to ensure the correction selection of topics, a significant PR programme to promote the initiative and its results, including, but not limited to via a dedicated award ceremony, social, national and local media, to celebrate successes.
- On an on-going basis, we recommend **discontinuing the focus on participating in events** organised by **others with goals that are not directly linked** to DG NEAR communication goals, given the cost of participation and the limited and difficult to measure impacts that can be achieved.

## 2. Accession communications

A different approach will be required when plans are agreed for a new country to join the European Union. This requires a more classic PR, awareness-raising campaign with a focus on helping the wider public, both in the accession country and in the Member States, to learn about the accession process and its rigour and to learn about the new country.

A multichannel approach will be required, with a focus on channels to reach mass audiences (digital, social, print and other mass media channels, with a strategic approach to the right combination for the right circumstances), which need to be more specifically defined with regards to specific profiles, for example one or two specific age ranges, who can then be reached with a range of highly targeted information products / activities, which resonate with the target groups.

- We recommend that the DG invests in **both quantitative and qualitative surveying of representative samples of target groups before, during and after mass media** initiatives to confirm reach, recall, resonance and usefulness of the information put into the public domain. Given the cost of effective campaigning, it may be necessary to select a sample of Member States which are then targeted using the full tool box of communication activities, to increase the effectiveness of campaign outcomes. In addition, we recommend that targets are set for reach and frequency of views / exposure, as critical key performance indicators because unless audiences have opportunities to view messages on multiple occasions their effectiveness can be much reduced.
- We recommend developing **new audiovisual products to complement those already available** that are much more focussed on the relevant accession. To support this process, a significant focus needs to continue to be placed on qualitative research to test concepts (not finished products) to ensure their resonance with target groups and effectiveness at passing messages and engaging people.
- Placing a focus on **identifying new opportunities for engaging and partnering with networks** who may also be communicating on the development including social partners and civil society. The Europe Direct Information Centres are an obvious choice given that they represent an extensive network that is already available in the Member States, they are intended to facilitate the passing of information to the public and many centres have shop windows directly visible to passers-by in town and city centres. This represents a win-win situation, in that EDICs require timely and targeted information from the institutions and DG NEAR needs support to get its messages and information to the public.

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<sup>58</sup> We do, however, recognise that this event maybe have been used as an opportunity for publicity.

- In terms of **other EC resources, consideration could also be given to ensuring visibility** on the YourEurope website, although evidence from focus groups still suggests that Europa continues to be a resource known by a small, EC-centric public. The EC Representations are another EC network that needs to be targeted to support any campaign efforts, which would be more likely to support communication given the increased level of priority placed on accession communication.
- There will also be **opportunities to partner with national organisations**, for example accession country embassies and national governments, in line with the example set by the Welcome Croatia campaign to co-host events specifically related to accession involving high profile individuals with newsworthy information to relay. These should be used as opportunities to court the media, particularly short-form journalists. In addition, the DG may wish to target other events which could provide platforms for presentation of accession relevant material / messages.