**The European Union's IPA Programme
for the Western Balkans and Turkey**

Evaluation of IPA
Information &
Communication Programmes

Evaluation Report

Volume I

June 2016

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DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
Unit A2 Inter-Institutional Relations and Communication

Western Balkans and Turkey

Evaluation of IPA Information & Communication Programmes

Contract N°: 2014/350-805/1

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<u>Volume I - Evaluation Report</u>

June 2016

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Table of acronyms and abbreviations

AKAP	Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude & Practice
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIS	Decentralised Implementation System
DG ELARG	Directorate General for Enlargement
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the EU
EUICs	European Union Information Centres
EUIP	EU InfoPoints
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EUMS	European Union Member States
EUOK	EU Office in Kosovo*
EUPK	EU Perspective in Kosovo
EUR	Euro
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
HoD	Head of Delegation
IC	Information & Communication
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development
IR	Inception Report
JE	Junior Expert
MIFF	Multi-Annual Indicative Financial Framework
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIO	Press & Information Officers
SE	Senior Expert
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time-bound
TA	Technical Assistance
TBD	To be determined
ToR	Terms of Reference
WBT	Western Balkans and Turkey

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Abstract

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The assignment's global objective is to assist the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and the concerned Delegations of the European Union (EUDs) and the European Union Office in Kosovo (EUOK) in improving the programming and implementation of information and communication (IC) Programmes funded by Instrument for pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II, through developing a Performance and Monitoring Framework for measuring IPA 2015-2020 assistance, taking into consideration the lessons learned and the performance of past IPA information and communication actions.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

IC programmes have been relevant in view of existing and emerging political priorities linked to the stage of the integration process in each target country and the need to increase the level of public support for the enlargement process. However, a strengthening of the strategic approach to information and communication would be desirable. Information and communication programmes use available resources efficiently, yet weaknesses can be found in internal horizontal and vertical communication processes. Prospects for effective information and communication are good in general, but vary from case to case. Particularly strong contributions were noted in relation to mobilising citizens on issues pertaining to awareness raising on EU policies, culture and values. Somewhat limited effects were recorded in reaching out to the broader public. There are some positive cases related to impact and sustainability.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The report provides the following recommendations: 1) Elaborate a strong results framework for the IC programmes with clear and measurable indicators, fewer instruments, more clearly targeted interventions for selected target audiences and with longer time-horizons; 2) Simplify complex EU information and communication messages; 3) Use social media more proactively; 4) Ensure better coordination and targeted communication of EU IPA projects and horizontal communication activities; 5) Continue cooperating and providing capacity building of government partners in terms of communication and information regarding the EU; 6) Conduct an evaluation of EUICs, and 7) Establish baselines, where relevant and realistic, for the Performance Monitoring Framework.

Executive Summary

<div style="background:green">BACKGROUND</div>

Information and communication efforts funded under the IPA constitute a key element of the EU's enlargement strategy and aim to provide objective information on the enlargement process, raise public awareness of the EU, encourage broad public debate about the EU integration process and emphasise the EU's status as the countries' main economic partner. The country level information and communication programmes are defined according to the specific priorities linked to the stage that the integration process each country has already reached and the level of public support for the enlargement process. Approximately EUR 50 million was distributed to EUDs and the EUOK for tailored IC programmes in the period 2008-2013. Additional budgetary resources were made available for multi-beneficiary and regional communication activities implemented by Unit A2, *Information & Communication* of the Directorate General for Enlargement (DG ELARG).[2] Unit A2 also provides backstopping and advice in relation to information activities carried out by EUDs and the EUOK in line with their specific communication needs in the pre-accession process, the political priorities emanating from the *Multi-Annual Indicative Financial Framework* (MIFF) and their respective IC capacities.

The present assignment concerns an Evaluation of IPA-funded IC programmes carried out in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo,[3] Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey in the period 2011- 2014.

<div style="background:green">PURPOSE AND SCOPE</div>

The global objective of the assignment is to assist DG NEAR and the concerned EUDs and EUOK in improving the programming and implementation of information & communication programmes funded under IPA II.

The purpose of the assignment is to improve the measurement of information and communication activities in the target countries through the following specific objectives: 1) judge the **performance** of IPA information and communication activities from 2011-2014 and distil lessons learned; 2) Assess the **relevance** of those activities; 3) Review **performance** monitoring and measurement practices; 4) Deliver **recommendations** for better programming, monitoring and evaluation; 5) **Develop a foundation for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the performance** of the information and communication programmes**;** and 6) Provide **technical assistance and training** for EUDs, the EUOK and DG NEAR.

<div style="background:green">KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS</div>

Section 4 of the report examines the overall performance of EU IPA information and communication programmes. The assessment is based on responses to a number of evaluation questions (EQ). These findings are summarised below - per evaluation question - under the headings of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability.

Relevance

Regarding "Relevance", the responses to the evaluation questions indicate that information and communication programme has been able to **respond to the need for delivery of objective information on EU accession and reforms**. However, it should be kept in mind that without a strategic framework with elaborated strategic objectives and linked indicators, it is difficult to assess

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[2] With the establishment of the new European Commission in November 2014, Unit A2 was renamed the *Inter-Institutional Relations & Communication Unit* within the new *Directorate General for Neighbourhood & Enlargement Negotiations* (DG NEAR).
[3] *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

the actual achievements of the information and communication programmes overall and in respective countries individually.

Effectiveness

Information and communication programmes are on the way to achieving - albeit to varying degrees - all of their envisaged outputs. However, the level to which they have made contributions to planned outcomes is more difficult to assess. This is primarily due to weaknesses in the programmes' strategic framework which results in weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation systems. There is no cause-effect causality between achieved outputs and targeted objectives, due to the fact that the Programme collects information on activities and immediate outputs, but there is no opportunity for reflection on how these translate into higher-level results. Evaluation findings point to particularly strong contributions in relation to mobilising citizens on issues pertaining to awareness raising on EU policies, culture and values. Somewhat limited effects have been achieved in reaching out to the broader public. The effectiveness of tools used by the IC programmes varies as well. EU websites are generally a first source of information, but their accessibility is at times assessed as low. EU Info Centres (EUIC) are generally effective, with some exceptions. Cultural events, as well as promotional activities engaging children and youths bring positive results, but the effectiveness of publications produced by IC programmes is hard to measure. Evaluation findings also show that social media tools are not utilised to their greatest potential.

Efficiency

For "Efficiency", information and communication programmes' use of resources is quite well regarded, with an important *caveat*: internal procedures and communication are at times slow, and a certain level of 'stove-piping' in IC programmes both horizontally (within EUD/EUOK) or vertically (between EUD/EUOK and DG NEAR) takes place - directly influencing both the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programmes. Not having an elaborated Performance Monitoring Framework and system to retain institutional memory affects the programmes' ability to reflect on the way in which activities and their outputs contribute to the desired change.

Impact

There are positive indications related to impact and sustainability; however, they are rather inconsistent. IC programmes contributed to awareness on EU integration and its policies, though awareness on EU policies and programmes in Western Balkans and Turkey among the general public varies and is highly susceptible to other political and socio-economic factors. These external factors are too complex to foresee and it is complex to manage mitigation measures. IC programmes contributed to informed public debates on EU integration, its benefits and challenges in terms of reforms and EU support in reinforced cooperation with the Member States. Additionally, there are positive indicators relating to the mobilisation of citizens and civil society. However, the impact of IC programmes highly depends on coherence in communication between different EU structures and within the IC programmes themselves.

Sustainability

The sustainability of results correlates with a degree of ownership from national and local partners. While governments have EU integration communication strategies, these are often not implemented properly. In cases where local governments take on to communicate their commitment to EU values, the effects are much higher, directly contributing to a higher level of support towards EU integration.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions to the evaluation are made in the report. They can be listed as follows:

Overall, IC programmes have been relevant in view of existing and emerging political priorities linked to the stage of the integration process in each country and the need to increase the level of public support for the enlargement process.

Prospects for the effective delivery of information and communication are good in general, but vary from case to case. Particularly strong contributions were noted in relation to building the capacities of media and journalists and mobilising citizens on issues pertaining to awareness raising on EU policies, culture and values. Outreach to the broader public has been less effective.

Efficiency in terms of resource allocation was very good; however, monitoring, internal organisation and processes as well as horizontal (within EUDs) and vertical (with EUDs and DG NEAR) co-ordination are areas for improvement.

There are some positive signs related to impact and sustainability. Although they provide justification that the IC programmes contribute to raised awareness on EU policies, they do not provide strong evidence that the IC programmes are impacting positively on informed public debates on the EU in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations can be made as is listed below:

Recommendation 1. Elaborate a strong results framework for IC programmes with clear and measurable indicators, fewer instruments, more clearly targeted interventions for select target audiences and with longer time-horizons.

Recommendation 2. Simplify EU IC messages (limit the number of key messages).

Recommendation 3. Use social media more proactively.

Recommendation 4. Ensure better coordination and targeted communication of EU IPA projects and horizontal communication activities.

Recommendation 5. Continue cooperating and providing capacity building of government partners in terms of communication and information regarding the EU.

Recommendation 6. Conduct an evaluation of EUICs.

Recommendation 7. Establish baselines, where relevant and reaslistic, for the Performance Monitoring Framework.

Project synopsis

Assignment Title:	Evaluation of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance Information & Communication Programmes
Type of Evaluation:	Programme Evaluation
Contract Number:	2014/350805/1
Region/Countries:	Western Balkans and Turkey (WBT): IPA – Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
Global Objective:	To assist DG NEAR and the concerned Delegations of the European Union and the European Union Office in Kosovo in improving the programming and implementation of information and communication programmes funded by IPA II.
Specific Objectives:	• Providing a judgement on the performance of implemented IPA-funded information and communication programmes and activities, as well as lessons learned from the activities completed in the period 2011-14; • Assessing the relevance of information and communication activities included in the information and communication programmes; • Reviewing the existing practices in relevant IPA information and communication programmes to assess the monitoring and measuring the performance; • Delivering findings and conclusions regarding the current system and drafting operational recommendations for improving programming, monitoring and evaluation system in IPA Information and communication programmes; • Developing a foundation for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the performance of the information and communication activities (by means of defined, clear, transparent and measurable indicators) and more globally the performance of the information and communication programmes implemented by the EUDs concerned, the EUOK and DG NEAR's Unit A2; • Providing TA and learning-by-doing, through training workshops organised on the spot in each EUD, the EUOK and DG NEAR, in developing and integrating the proposed performance framework system in the IPA II programming cycle.
Evaluation Assignment Outputs:	• Inception Report, setting out the assignment's scope and indicative methodology, including evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators, a work plan for all phases and an indicative Final Report structure; • Draft Final Report and Final Report covering: (i) a judgement on the performance of IPA-funded information and communication activities completed in the period 2011-2014; (ii) assessment of the IPA intervention logic for the period 2012-14; (iii) lessons learned and recommendations; and (iv) training workshops plan to support the implementation of the measuring, monitoring and evaluation performance framework;

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	• Final Report Abstracts and Executive Summaries (English and French); • Training through workshops in the EU Delegations, EU Office and DG NEAR A2 Unit to implement the measuring, monitoring and evaluation performance framework; • Activity Report (assignment implementation against planning, resources use, problems encountered, lessons learned & recommendations).
Evaluation Assignment Activities:	**Inception & Desk Phase** (early-January – mid-Sep 2015): • Kick-off meeting with DG NEAR A2 and Reference Group in Brussels; • Collection of the relevant documentation (financing decisions, planning documents and mid-year and annual reporting) for IPA information and communication activities in the target countries; • Initial documentation review; • Preparation of data analysis in the form of (re-) framing evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators; • Drawing up a questionnaire for semi-structured interviews. **Fieldwork Phase** (early-September – January 2016): ▪ Complementation of the documentation provided by DG NEAR A2 and collection of relevant documentation in the EU Delegations (contracts, reports of activities, evaluation activities, etc.); • Completion of data collection through an initial round of interviews and focus groups in the 8 target countries; • A round of triangulation interviews with key EUD/EUOK representatives by the Senior Experts (SE), with a focus on the programming, monitoring and evaluation practice of EUDs/EUOK and based on the reporting on the initial round of interviews and focus groups carried out by the Junior Experts (JE); • Presentation of the evaluation's provisional findings, conclusions and recommendations to DG NEAR in Brussels. **Synthesis Phase** (March 2016 – May 2016): • Preparation of the evaluation findings and presentation to DG NEAR Unit A2 and the Reference Group; • Preparation of the draft final report and Integration of DG NEAR Unit A2 and Reference Group comments; • Submission of the draft final report to DG NEAR Unit A2 and the Reference Group. **Training Phase** (first half of June 2016) • Eight training workshops to support the implementation of the developed foundation for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the performance of the information and communication programmes and activities, for relevant staff of the EUDs, the EUOK and DG NEAR A2, who are directly involved in information and communication activities. **Synthesis phase (continued)** June 2016] • Submission of the definitive version of the Final Evaluation Report; • Preparation and submission of Abstract and Executive Summary (in English and French); • Preparation and submission of the Activity Report.
Contract Duration	**19 months (including a no-cost extension of 7 months).**
Assignment Start Date	**05 January 2015.**
End of contract	**30 June 2016 (after a no-cost extension).**

1. Introduction

1.1 Report purpose

This report presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Evaluation of IPA IC programmes funded by the European Union (EU) and carried out in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

1.2 Background

IC efforts funded under the *IPA* constitute a key element of the EU's enlargement strategy for the benefit of *inter alia* the Western Balkans countries and Turkey as prospective Member States. The EU deems the communication activities of the highest importance for obtaining public and political support for reforms geared towards meeting the conditions for EU Membership and enhancing the credibility of the enlargement process in the candidate countries.

The EU's IC activities in the candidate countries in particular aim to provide objective information on the enlargement process, raise public awareness of the EU, encourage broad public debate about the EU integration process and emphasise the EU's status as the countries' main economic partner.

The IC activities are also designed to enhance the visibility of EU-funded IPA assistance in the Western Balkans' countries and Turkey. The relevant EUDs and the EUOK received some EUR 50 million for tailored Information and Communication Programmes in the countries concerned in the period 2008-2013. Additional budgetary resources were made available for multi-beneficiary and regional communication activities implemented by Unit A2, *Information & Communication* of the Directorate General for Enlargement (DG ELARG). Unit A2 also provides backstopping and advice in relation to information activities carried out by EUDs and the EUOK in line with their specific communication needs in the pre-accession process, the political priorities emanating from the *Multi-Annual Indicative Financial Framework* (MIFF) and their respective IC capacities.

The present assignment concerns an evaluation of IPA-funded IC programmes carried out in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey during the period 2011- 2014.

1.3 Evaluation objectives & scope

The assignment's *global objective* is to assist [DG NEAR] and the concerned EUDs and the EUOK in improving the programming and the implementation of IC programmes funded by IPA II, through developing a monitoring & performance framework for measuring IPA [2015-2020] assistance, taking into consideration the lessons learned and the performance of past IPA IC actions.

The underpinning **purpose of the assignment is to improve the measurement of IC activities in the target countries** through the following specific objectives as mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR) (section 2.2):

(i) Providing a judgement on the performance of implemented IPA-funded IC activities, as well as lessons learned from the activities completed in the period 2011-14;

(ii) Assessing the relevance of IC activities included in the IC programmes;

(iii) Reviewing the existing practices in relevant IPA IC programmes for monitoring and measuring performance;

(iv) Delivering findings and conclusions regarding the current system and drafting operational recommendations for improving programming and the monitoring & evaluation system in IPA IC programmes;

(v) Developing a foundation for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the performance of the IC activities (by means of defined, clear, transparent and measurable indicators) and more globally the performance of the IC programmes implemented by the relevant EUDs, the EUOK and DG NEAR's Unit A2; and

(vi) Providing technical assistance (TA) and learning-by-doing, through training workshops organised on the spot for each EUD, the EUOK and DG NEAR, by developing and integrating the proposed performance framework system in the IPA II programming cycle.

Together, the above specific objectives define the **scope** of the evaluation assignment, which encompasses:

Element (a): Performance appraisal on the basis of the seven evaluation criteria[5] of IC activities funded by IPA that are completed during the period 2011-2014;

Element (b): Assessment of the relevant IPA 2012-14 intervention logic and its efficiency in setting up objectives, indicators at output and outcome impact level, milestones and targets and the assessment of the concerned EUDs and the EUOK's monitoring and reporting systems to review the progress made towards delivering expected results;

Element (c): Formulation of recommendations for the programming of the future IC activities, including specific performance measurement methods to measure the performance of the IC programmes implemented by EUDs and the EUOK and the progress realised; and

Element (d): Provision of TA through training workshops to support the implementation of the developed performance framework system in the future IC programmes to be developed by EU Delegations and EU Office in Kosovo.

The specific objectives and scope of the assignment have been translated into evaluation questions (Annex 2, ToR, section 2.5), the treatment of which will be executed according to the Evaluation Matrix provided in Annex 2 to this Report.

This assignment also required development of the Performance Monitoring Framework for IC Programmes. This was duly developed and is presented in Annex 6 of this Report.

The assignment also encompassed eight training workshops – one in each of the seven target countries and one in Brussels – that intended to provide EUD/EUOK staff, DG NEAR A2 and the Reference Group with clear recommendations on how to plan, monitor and evaluate their IC activities.

The evaluation assignment took into account the fact that DG NEAR Unit A2 is seeking to obtain better insight into the actual achievement of IC activities in the target countries in terms of output, outcome, effect and impact. This relates to the fact that EUDs/EUOK currently evaluate their IC activities and programmes predominantly or even exclusively on the basis of output indicators, and not on outcome, effect and impact (*inter alia* because of deficient indicators at these levels). There is a need to improve the visibility of EU actions in the region and evaluate the EU added value of IPA funded information & communication activities to the beneficiaries in the relevant EUD/EUOK IC programmes. However, it is understood that DG NEAR A2 attaches relative importance to the assessment of the intervention logic [**evaluation scope**, **element (b)**] and the formulation of a framework to improve programming, monitoring and evaluation of IC activities, including the formulation of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant & Time-bound (SMART) indicators, which will facilitate the measuring of results for future IPA-funded IC programmes not only from a qualitative perspective, but also - where possible - form a quantitative perspective.

The nature of the evaluation was qualitative; it judged the extent to which selected IC activities had contributed to results or impact in terms of *Awareness*, *Knowledge, Attitude & Performance* (AKAP),[6] taking into account specifically targeted messages and their related target audiences. The judgement of these is based on interviews and focus groups with representatives of concerned target groups, due to the fact that IC programmes do not contain indicators at the levels of overall and specific objectives and outcomes (results) that would allow for a benchmarked judgement of performance at these levels. The IC programmes do not define indicators in terms of specific AKAP changes in specific target groups.

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[5] The six standard criteria are: 'relevance', 'efficiency', 'effectiveness', 'coherence', 'impact' and 'sustainability', with 'EU-added value' as a seventh, additional criterion.
[6] Awareness, Knowledge (or 'understanding'), Attitude (or 'opinion', 'perception') & Practice (or 'behavior', 'performance'). 'Awareness' is often included as a refining element of 'Knowledge'. Communication objectives are usually formulated in relation to these three (or four) concepts.

The judgement of the performance of IC activities followed the lines of the seven evaluation criteria, within the scope and methods presented in Annex 2 (pages 13 – 21) of this evaluation report. It should be noted that a cost-effectiveness analysis of all the IC activities in 8 countries over 4 years was not feasible within the scope of this assignment. The answer to this question is therefore a qualitative judgement based on interviews with a limited number of implementing parties and the consultation of relevant documents.

1.4   Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders[7] of this evaluation include DG NEAR, in particular Units A2 (*Inter-Institutional Relations and Communication*), A3 (*Thematic Support, Monitoring and Evaluation*) and A5 (*Turkey*), the relevant Units in Directorate D (*Western Balkans*), the relevant EUDs, the EUOK, as well as IPA beneficiaries. Secondary stakeholders include 'strategic multipliers' in the target countries, such as civil society organisations (CSO), the media and other specific audiences.

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[7] The list of stakeholders takes into account the organisational changes brought about by the establishment of the new Commission in November 2014.

2.   Methodology

2.1   Key features

The methodology applied for the purpose of this evaluation was characterised by the following features, in line with the ToR. These features include:

- Linkage to EU methodological guidelines, including the Secretariat General's *Public Consultation on Commission Guidelines for Evaluation* (2013) and the former DG ELARG's *Evaluation Guide* (2008);
- A thorough review of the *evaluation questions* mooted in the ToR, with alternative questions provided for 15 of them (Annex 2, pages 13 - 21);
- Formulation of more than 50 *judgement criteria* to benchmark the answers to the evaluation questions (Annexes 2 (pages 12 – 20) and 3 (pages 22 - 41);
- Drafting a similar number of SMART *indicators* for the judgement criteria (Annexes 2 (pages 13 – 21) and 3 (pages 22 – 41)); and
- Consultations with representatives of the stakeholders in the main target groups of the communication activities that were subject of the evaluation (Section 1.4).

2.2   Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions in the ToR comprised the following three sets of questions:

Set A relates to the six 'standard' evaluation criteria including: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact and sustainability, as well as the additional criterion 'EU-added value of IC activities funded by IPA';

Set B concerns the intervention logic assessment; and

Set C refers to lessons learned and recommendations.

Annex 2 (pages 13 – 21) lists the evaluation questions under these three headings, with judgement criteria and indicators. Some questions have been slightly reordered. For instance, the second evaluation question[8] in the ToR related to 'intervention logic assessment' has been moved to set A, since this question concerns the achievement of the objectives of the IC programmes and not the soundness of the intervention logic. The Team also divided some of the more complex evaluation questions into sub-questions. In a number of cases, the team proposed an alternative formulation of the evaluation question concerned, for the purpose of clarifying the team's understanding of the evaluation questions and making them more explicit, as well as ensuring a unified use of logframe terminology.

2.3   Assignment phases

The evaluation was implemented in four phases: (i) the inception phase and desk phase; (ii) the fieldwork phase; (iii) the synthesis phase; and (iv) the training phase. The training workshops were organised after receipt of DG NEAR's comments on the draft Final Report and the Performance Monitoring Framework (see Annex 6). In this way, the workshops were based upon an approved Performance Monitoring Framework.

2.4   Inception & desk phase

The service contract was signed on 24th November 2014 for a period of 12 months (until 23rd November 2015). On 9th January 2015, a kick-off meeting was held in the premises of the DG NEAR in Brussels. Work on the project then began with initial desk work; a first draft was submitted in March 2015 which required substantial revision. A meeting between DG NEAR and the entire

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[8] To what extent ongoing IPA financial assistance has contributed to achieving the strategic objectives and priorities linked to achieving the objectives of the communication strategy.

team took place in May 2015 in order to clarify the evaluation assignment's objectives, tools and methodologies. The Inception Report was finally approved on 30th July 2015.

The larger part of the inception period and desk phase was dedicated to:

- Collection of the relevant documentation (financing decisions, planning documents and mid-year and annual reporting) for IPA IC activities in the target countries (list of documents consulted included in Annex 5 of this report);
- Initial documentation review;
- Preparation of data analysis in the form of (re-)framing evaluation, judgement criteria and indicators;
- Drawing up the questionnaire for semi-structured interviews;
- Requesting and obtaining additional information and documentation from EUDs/EUOK;
- Defining the approach to the sampling of target groups, activity categories, as well as the assessment tools to be deployed for each.

2.5 Fieldwork phase

The evaluation fieldwork phase started in September 2015 subsequent to the approval of the Inception Report in July 2015. The fieldwork phase focused on the gathering of information and feedback from stakeholders in order to complement findings from the documentary review phase. It was expected that this phase would comprise the completion of data collection through interviews with primary stakeholder representatives, as well as interviews and/or focus groups with secondary stakeholder representatives. The fieldwork phase (intially scheduled between September 2015 – November 2015) took place between September 2015 and January 2016.

A round of triangulation interviews with key EUDs/EUOK representatives by the Senior Experts (SE) then took place (later than scheduled due to the changes in the senior experts) with a focus on the programming, monitoring and evaluation practice of EUDs/EUOK. By the end of January 2016, all countries with the exception of Kosovo and Croatia had been visited.

Online survey

Within the scope of the evaluation, two online surveys were conducted: one for media and journalists and one for CSOs cooperating and participating in activities implemented by IC programme in respective countries (with the exception of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where it was decided not to conduct the survey due to political events at the time when the survey was initiated). The two surveys were administered through the online survey tool, *SurveyMonkey*, to facilitate access, confidentiality but also to facilitate data analysis. The surveys were conducted in April-May 2016 and the link to the online questionnaire was distributed by the EUDs/EUOK to the CSO and media partners respectively. Participation in the survey was recorded in all countries, except Kosovo and Croatia. For example, none of the respondents from Kosovo participated in the survey despite the fact that the survey was distributed among 60 media and 284 CSOs.

The response rate from Serbia and Turkey was extremely low for both surveys, while response rate in other countries was relatively high with the highest being in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was a difficulty to establish the exact figures for distribution lists for Croatia and Turkey respectively.

Further analysis of respondent demographics shows that, over 50% of media survey respondents emanate from national newspapers and online media (combined), while only 3.3% of participants come from regional newspapers or radio (8.3%). Out of the total respondent rate, 6.7% are freelance journalists. With regards to the CSO survey, 43% respondents come from service delivery CSOs and 24.3% from CSOs dealing with human rights - the remaining respondents come from education-related CSOs or other thematic areas (**see master data tables for the two surveys in Annex 11 of this report**).

Generally, the response rate was rather low per country and overall. Therefore, online survey results were used in this Evaluation report as complementary to other data sets collected in the field and have been understood as data used to highlight trends and not as a sole indication of IC programme performance.

2.6 Analysis of field data

The fieldwork phase encompassed two analysis periods. The first of these analyses was carried out by the JEs in the two weeks after the initial series of field visits. This analysis focused on the 'performance judgement', in line with specific objectives of the contract. The second analysis period came as a follow-up to the field visits by the SEs as well as an internal team workshop that took place in March 2016. This workshop was a space for team reflection and discussion of the field data, preliminary findings and discussion on the evidence, drawing-up of conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation. The workshop was also an opportunity for the team to discuss and elaborate the foundations for the Performance Monitoring Framework. Data gathered through the online survey was analysed and presented in the report as a complement to the evaluation findings.

2.7 Development of the Performance Monitoring Framework

The Performance Monitoring Framework (see Annex 6) was elaborated in accordance with the Evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations and prepared on the basis of refined, clear (unambiguous), transparent and measurable indicators at impact, outcome and output levels. The Framework represents a proposed foundation for measuring, monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Information and Communication Programmes and activities in respective EUDs and EUOK.

2.8 Elaboration of training approach and methodology

Based on the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as proposed performance monitoring framework, the Evaluation team developed and conducted eight training sessions in EUDs/EUOK, and one at DG NEAR A2. As envisaged in the ToR and confirmed during the inception phase, training workshops were organised to support the implementation of the measuring, monitoring and evaluation Performance Monitoring Framework. The workshops concentrated on two main aspects that can help improve the IC programming, monitoring and evaluation considerably: (1) increasing capacities of IC Teams in EUDs/EUOK and DG NEAR on performance monitoring, and (2) adequate drawing up of a focused intervention logic of IC projects (reflecting the priorities set), including the formulation of useful, 'SMART' indicators and the identification and gathering of the necessary baseline and benchmarking data (sources of verification). The training methodology and materials were shared with DG NEAR for comments and approval prior to implementation.

2.9 Synthesis of main findings, conclusions and recommendations

The synthesis phase was marked by two key points of interaction:

1. Meeting with DG NEAR Reference Group and presentation of preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations (April 2016). Following the desk review and the internal workshop, a presentation of preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations was organised with DG NEAR.
2. Submission of the Draft Final Report to DG NEAR Unit A2 and the Reference Group for comments (May 2016). The Report presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations generated by the Evaluation Team. Most of the comments received were incorporated into the Final Report, which was submitted together with Abstracts and an Executive Summary in both English and French (June 2016).

2.10 Quality control & backstopping

Overall quality control – focusing on data reliability and soundness of analysis, as well as realistic recommendations – and team oversight was the responsibility of Ms Ana Vilar, Project Director at AETS. Team backstopping – including meeting information needs and coordinating data gathering – was the responsibility of Mr Pascal Jones, Project Manager at AETS's headquarters.

2.11 Reference Group

The work of the Evaluation Team and the quality control provided by AETS benefited greatly from the active involvement of the Reference Group established for this evaluation.

The Reference Group's responsibilities as identified in the ToR include: (i) guidance of the evaluation team in planning and implementing the assignment, (ii) assisting the management of the evaluation contract (DG NEAR Unit A2), (iii) quality control of the team's reporting, the questionnaire for semi-structured interviews, as well as other evaluation tools, and (iv) follow-up upon completion of the evaluation.

The Reference Group consisted of representatives of the evaluation's primary stakeholders, i.e. DG NEAR's Units A2 (*Inter-Institutional Relations and Communication*), A3 (*Thematic Support, Monitoring and Evaluation*), D1 (*Montenegro*), D2 (*Serbia*), D3 (*former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*), D4 (*Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina).*

2.12 Evaluation limitations

Table 1: Evaluation limitations

Limitations/Constraints	Mitigation approaches
Unavailability of key stakeholders (staff changes, high ranking officials mainly remained unavailable during field missions).	The evaluation team mapped the key informants and organised, in close cooperation with EUD/EUOK, interviews with representatives of key institutions. In cases where information obtained from the available interlocutors was insufficient, the evaluation team undertook additional desk reviews and reviews of secondary sources.
Inability of the team to reach out to all target groups for assessment.	The proposed methodology included the use of a representative sample of various target groups in each country as per agreed matrix of targeted communication tools and audiences. The sample was constructed on the basis of several sampling criteria; however, this was very ambitious and not realistic given the overall timeframe. Due to an inability to reach out to all audiences (e.g. remote villages in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), the Evalution team conducted an online survey with CSOs and media targeted by IC programme activities. The survey offered insight into the performance and impacts of IC programmes relating to these groups.
Lack of indicators, baselines and targets,	The evaluation reconstructed - to the greatest extent possible - the relevant areas of performance of the programme, however lack of

Limitations/Constraints	Mitigation approaches
which raised difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of the programme.	consistent indicators and baselines made it difficult to understand the real scope and achievements of the programme.
Due to logistical issues, the Evaluation team was not always in a position to meet with some stakeholders, particularly for focus groups and discussion groups.	The methodology included a large number of focus groups and discussion groups from the very beginning. Even if some of these did not take place, a sufficient number was organised to allow the evaluation team to collect representative opinions, facts and perspectives to inform the analysis.
Internal changes in the Evaluation team, particularly on the side of Team Leader (TL) - two changed in the course of the evaluation - and one SE, as well as the resignation of JE in the analytical phase of the evaluation were a serious impediment to the process.	DG NEAR and the contractor (AETS) found a way to overcome the potential threat to the quality of evaluation by engaging a third Team Leader to lead the process of synthesising the field work inputs and further desk review that facilitated the drafting of the report.
Lack of participation of media/CSO partners/participants in IC programme activities from Kosovo, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the online survey.	DG NEAR sent reminders to country IC teams regarding the survey participation. The response rate in other countries increased after these reminders. However, Croatia and Kosovo did not record any changes in response rate. The situation with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was different as the survey was not distributed due to a complex political situation at the time of the survey launch.

3. Context of the EU IPA IC Programme

The recent global financial crisis and its conseqeuences in the Western Balkan countries (Turkey as an exception) has had a dramatic impact on the media sector – a sector that has suffered acutely in comparison with other industries. Circulation levels of the mainstream print media have all but halved – along with the overall volume of the advertising market. In light of a reduced advertising market, the position and influence of the largest players in this sector is stronger than ever, leading to a favourable environment for the exertion of direct pressures or influence on editorial policy. Many industry owners have close relationships with politicians and this only compels the matter that media outlets in most of the region are becoming less and less independent - a trend that is reflected in various media freedom indexes.

Political interference with the work of journalists in the WBT region is a key problem. Due to issues with government reactions to the work of the independent media, a culture of self-censorship among journalists and editors is on the rise. Smear campaigns against independent media, journalists and other public figures conducted by government-friendly media additionally contribute to the sharp, ongoing decline in media freedoms. An analysis of the World Press Freedom Index (2010-2015) for countries in the region shows stagnation or a worsening of the situation since 2009, especially in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: World Press Freedom Index 2010 - 2015

Country	2009	2010	2011-2012	2013	2014	2015
Albania	88	80	96	102	85	82
Bosnia and Herzegovina	39	47	58	68	66	66
Croatia	78	62	68	64	65	58
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	34	68	94	116	123	117
Kosovo	75	92	86	85	80	n/a
Montenegro	77	104	107	113	114	114
Serbia	62	85	80	63	54	67
Turkey	122	138	148	154	154	149

Source: Reporters without borders

Public opinion in the Western Balkans and Turkey is currently increasingly targeted by Russia, especially when it comes to forming opinion related to foreign affairs. Russia is looking to strengthen its influence, not only in its neighboring countries but also in regions located further afield. This is achieved not only by financing of some regional media outlets, but also by Russian influence on media as well as politicians or the political and business elite in the region.

The European Union has yet to find an answer to these emerging efforts of Russia and therefore an increased effort in managing EU public relations is desirable. The IPA Information and Communication programme seen in this framework remains of utmost importance.

At the same time, media news output is more and more dominated by issues of limited importance – a phenomenon that is seriously narrowing the space for open and meaningful public discourse. An increasing number of readers, particularly from the younger generations, are migrating to Internet-based sources, relying increasingly on social media and other online sources and thus neglecting traditional media. The trivialisation of content has brought about a sharp decline in public trust in the media, especially with the more demanding sections of audiences.

In this environment, it will become increasingly difficult for EUDs in the region to spread their messages objectively through traditional media channels. On the one hand, due to the trivialisation of the media, there is less and less space for an open, objective and informed debate and on the other hand, public trust in media discourse has been diminished severely.

Outreach to citizens and civil society is at the core of the EU's communication strategy, as an effort to strengthen the awareness of citizens of EU values, accession requirements and agenda, and generally bringing EU institutions and governance structures closer to citizens. The importance of working with citizens and civil society in particular comes from the recognition of a 'gap' between political elites and ordinary citizens, which creates difficulties in relation to the continuation and consolidation of EU integration values. The role of civil society in this process is critical, as it can play a linkage role between citizens and the state and further the EU integration process - helping to bring them closer together. In doing so, the democratic legitimacy of governance structures linked to the EU accession process is enhanced. In practice, EUDs work with CSOs which work with and mobilise citizens for different developmental processes, including EU accession in IPA countries. However, organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey do not always have the capacity - or even willingness - to engage in communication activities that would help to bridge the gap between citizens and the EU accession process.

4.   Evaluation Findings

This section presents a synthesis of findings of the Evaluation of Instrument for IPA IC Programmes. These findings are the result of an extensive desk review of available documentation submitted by DG NEAR and respective EUDs/EUOK as well as the fieldwork interviews and group discussions that have been conducted in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The presentation of findings is organised as per the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria and related evaluation questions.

4.1   Relevance

EQ 1. To what extent have the IC activities reached their target groups?

The EU IPA Information and Communication Programmes' main objective has been **to raise public awareness about the EU, its policies, its values, where necessary dispelling myths and misconceptions.** Groups included in the EUD/EUOK outreach activities may be broadly divided into three groups: 1) 'informed professionals' (media and journalists), 2) (informed) stakeholders (mostly civil society and public authorities); and 3) un – or less-informed public (others).

EUDs/EUOK carefully approach the selection of target groups when selecting IC activities. A desk review of available EUD programmes and reports, as well as Communication Strategies shows that each EUD carefully approaches the definition of target groups and ways in which these groups may be approached. In most cases, media come to the forefront of the target groups as a group that has a strong message multiplier capacity. Other important groups are students and CSOs - as groups which can multiple the key messages among their peers. In addition, EUD strategic documents and reports also mention a range of other groups, including - but not limited to - the business community, civil society, academia, think tanks, analysts, TV audiences, radio listeners, women, the general public, citizens in the 35 – 65 age group and citizens in the 18 – 35 age group, political actors, public servants, youths, high school pupils (12 - 18 year olds), parents, teachers and local communities.

Different tools are used in targeting varous groups, based on an assessment of information needs. A review of planning documentation and reports shows an elaborated analysis of types of activities that can be implemented to reach different target groups. For example, media are usually targeted by press releases and newsletters, websites, Facebook, Twitter, traditional press instruments, such as interviews, releases, conferences and briefings. Furthermore, some EUDs (Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey), organise study trips within country or to the European Union Member States (EUMS) for members of the media corps. EUDs have introduced new tools for strengthening their relationships with media such as informal social events (i.e. "breakfast with editors" and other briefings in an informal atmosphere). The main means used for reaching out to students and the youth are social media tools, particularly Facebook and Twitter, but also Europe Day events, EU Cultural Events (film, photo exhibitions, concerts), and other thematic days and weeks, such as EU mobility week, Enlargement Week events, EU Green week, European day of Languages, comprising different activities, such as social media activities, publications, roundtables and conferences.

IC activities reach their targets when these targets are well informed professionals. The evaluation desk review and field work reveal that the EUDs/EUOK generally feel more comfortable and able to address the needs of - and work with - well informed professionals from CSOs, the media, public administrations and community stakeholders. This is mainly due to the fact that these groups are already familiar with the way in which EUDs/EUOK work. They are familiar with information and communication tools, and therefore, the dissemination of messages is more straightforward. EUDs generally resonate challenges that media in the region face in terms of vested interests of media owners, a lack of capacity and familiarity of journalists with EU policies, values and messages which (in many cases) cause messages to be inadequately or not at all spread. The familiarity of IC programme teams in countries with the needs of media and journalists - and how to address these - stems from years of cooperation. There are also examples of Opinion

polls[9] for these target groups, which facilitated the understanding of the ways in which different target groups may be best approached. Similarly, EUDs/EUOK regularly have communication and exchanges with CSO representatives; they also work with them closely (through grants, cooperation and partnership in organising IC activities, and through the implementation of other IPA projects) and view them as credible multipliers of EUD messages to the general public.

The success of IC activities in reaching the general public varies between communication tools that are used. Evidence from the field shows weaknesses in EUD/EUOK approach to reaching the less-informed public, especially those populations located in rural areas. There is a lack of consistent information on these target groups in EUD/EUOK, as specific opinion research studies have been carried out only periodically and on ad-hoc basis. In addition, there was limited evidence of a follow up from EUDs/EUOK on the effects of the selected communication tools to the target groups in rural areas.[10] Communication with less informed members of the public, especially with ones living in rural areas, usually relies on the repetition of tools traditionally used by EUD/EUOK (such as TV/radio/newspaper messages or direct communication with public, etc.)

For example, EUD/EUOK opinion polls suggest that the vast majority of the general public uses TV as its primary source of information on the EU. However, during the fieldwork, it transpired that TV is losing popularity among certain target groups, especially among students and youths. According to a survey conducted in Turkey in 2013,[11] a high number of respondents indicate that they have information needs but feel that the EU related information provided by the media is insufficient. For instance, 32% of the respondents find it fairly or very difficult to obtain information. It should be noted that even though media is an important channel to inform the public according to the periodic Euro Barometer surveys, the overall level of trust in media institutions (i.e. TV, printed press, radio) is fairly low in the WBT.

Another important outreach tool, - the Head of Delegation's (HoD) presence at local level - is repeatedly referred to as being instrumental to EUDs' communication strategies by EUDs in the region. An important activity targeting rural populations is the *EU Traveling Bus* (for example in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[12] and to some extent in Montenegro[13]), which is repeatedly mentioned as one of the strengths of the EUD's communication activities. HoD activities at the local level are especially successful when they are organised with local authorities (municipalities) and local CSOs, as they have very good mobilising capacity at the local level - especially in rural areas.

To conclude, **IC activities are satisfactory in terms of reaching the informed professionals and informed stakeholders**, as many of the information activities are specially designed for them. **Communication outreach with the un-informed public**, especially from rural areas, **remains varied**.

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[9] For example, Opinion Polls have been conducted for target groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013 and 2014; they had a section on Media and EU integration process issues.

[10] with the exception of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

[11] The survey fieldwork was conducted between 16th August and 29th September 2013. The sample selected (N=2067) is representative of the voting age in urban and rural populations of Turkey. For sampling, 167 primary sampling units (addresses) were randomly selected by the Turkish Statistical Institute and the fieldwork was completed with a response rate of 62%. The fieldwork was conducted by Frekans Research.

[12] EU Travelling bus in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was organised in 2012, 2013 and 2014. The concept includes renting and branding a bus, which is used by the EUD and government officials (Ambassadors of EU Member States, journalists, NGOs, etc.) to visit rural areas of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (mainly villages). Every year, the EU Travel Bus visits 10 villages (in the last three years, 30 villages have been visited). During the visit (one-day event), villagers have the opportunity to directly discuss with EUD officials and EU Member State Ambassadors about issues related to EU integration. As of 2013, there are public lectures in local schools, which makes a very strong contribution to a regular course on civic education. The EU travel bus is very popular in rural areas - it creates a sense of belonging to a wider EU community among villagers. The project is implemented in cooperation with the Secretariat for EU Affairs, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development (IPARD) office and local governments.

[13] In former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, EU Travelling Bus is a regular communication outreach tool of EUIC, in Montenegro it was organised in 2013 as a part of the project "EU Info Bus", implemented by the Center for Civic Education and the NGO Natura. EUD Montenegro coverage on the EU day event organised through the project "EU Info Bus" is available at: bit.ly/1PRrMVB.

4.2 Efficiency

EQ 3. Were the outputs and effects achieved at a reasonable cost? Why was this possible? Could the same results have been achieved with less funding? Could the use of other types of financing or mechanisms have provided better cost-effectiveness?

Most of the Information and Communication programme allocations have been distributed to EUDs/EUOK. The global budget allocated through the Information and Communication Programmes, adopted annually by the European Commission (EC), for the six years from 2008 to 2013, amounts to EUR 57.3 million. From this amount, almost 90% was allocated to EUDs in the WBT and the EUOK, for information and communication activities in the respective countries. The remaining funds were allocated to DG ELARG (DG ELARG which is now DG NEAR) for information and communication activities with a regional scope.

Table 3. Allocated Budget for IC Programmes[14]

Evaluation Period (2011-2014)							
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Average (2011-14)	Percentage (2011-14)
Albania	400 000	450 000	479 000	700 000	700 000	582 250	5,74
Bosnia and Herzegovina	565 000	600 000	692 000	700 000	700 000	673 000	6,64
Croatia	1 800 000	2 000 000	550 000	-	-	637 500	6,30
Kosovo	250 000	450 000	479 000	550 000	550 000	507 250	5,00
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	700 000	700 000	700 000	800 000	800 000	750 000	7,40
Montenegro	250 000	350 000	672 500	550 000	550 000	530 625	5,23
Serbia	1 000 000	1 200 000	1 277 500	1 500 000	1 750 000	1 431 875	14,12
Turkey	3 800 000	4 000 000	3 950 000	4 000 000	4 000 000	3 987 500	39,33
Regional Events	535 000	550 000	500 000	500 000	500 000	512 500	5,06
Iceland	700 000	700 000	700 000	700 000	-	525 000	5,18
Total	10 000 000	11 000 000	10 000 000	10 000 000	9 550 000	10 137 500	100

Criteria for budget allocation includes an assessment of communication needs for individual countries related to their individual progress in the accession process; the political priorities as reflected in the allocations of funds between the countries as stated in the Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework (MIFF); as well as capacity of the relevant EUDs/EUOK to manage and implement the information budget. The A2 Unit for Information and Communication of DG NEAR also has a share of the budget for activities that have a multi-beneficiary or regional scope.

IC programmes are cost efficient. Information and communication activities seem usually expensive, while IC budgets remain relatively moderate for the scope of the programmes and their objectives. Moreover, IC teams are relatively small in almost all observed countries, whereas the number of activities financed by IC programmes is quite substantial.

Good European Union Information Centre locations and performance contributes to the efficiency of the IC programmes. Work through EUICs is proven to have positive cost-efficiency, particularly in cases when an EUIC is located in the same building as an EUD (i.e. in Skopje). In such cases, it is easier to have a HoD participating in events and it opens the EUD to a wider public. In Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the EUIC is located in the same building as the EUD; it is not easily accessible as the EUD and EUIC share the same entrance and all visitors/participants of EUIC activities are required to undergo security checks. In Serbia, until recently, the City of Belgrade provided the EUIC premises that were to be found in the hallway of a

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[14] Note: These figures are based on the allocated budget in the programming documents - not on actual expenditure. In some cases, implementation periods are extended to the following years. The 'Average 2011-14' column represents the total amount divided over the corresponding number of years. The 'Percentage 2011-14' column is the respective country percentage as per the overall IC allocated budget for the relevant period.

multi-purpose public building that is located in the downtown area of the city. In some respects, these premises were not always fully adapted to the proper functioning of an EUIC.

In the Western Balkans and Turkey, communications expertise tends to be limited on the labour market; therefore, the changing of an EUIC service provider often does not result in a change of EUIC communication experts, since the new contractors generally hire staff from the previous contractor. In that regard, the change of service providers for EUICs often does not substantially change the efficiency aspects of an IC programme. For instance, the EUIC in Skopje has contracted the same consortium for the past eight years. This might perhaps be considered as unusual in contractual terms, but at the same time, it brings added value in terms of efficiency (and effectiveness), as having the continuity of the same team working is a strong asset in many respects. This includes familiarity with EU communication procedures and trust with EUD IC staff in that they have strong relationships with target groups and beneficiaries etc.

Experience from Turkey shows that **cooperation with the Chambers of Commerce may weaken information and communication activities to some extent**. In Turkey, the EUD has partnered with Chambers of Commerce, resulting in the establishment of 21 EUICs across the country. Under the cooperation agreement, the EUD covers 70% of the staff costs and costs of events and the Chambers of Commerce cover the office and other related costs (until 2016). In an attempt to improve the results, the EUD introduced new contracting conditions in 2016, which resulted in a change from a cooperation agreement to an official contract where the EUD has agreed to provide two full-time members of staff with better qualifications and has also agreed to continue covering the costs of events. Field research found that EUICs are not reaching their targets in an effective manner due to issues with visibility of/and access to EU communication interventions within Chambers of Commerce. This is also due to the fact that Chambers of Commerce have their own agendas and activities which sometimes undermine EU communication activities.

A network of EU InfoPoints (EUIP) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia contributes to the cost efficiency of communication activities in the country. The EUIP is made up of a desk with a computer that is available for public use along with shelves dedicated to EU official publications. There are 15 EUIP: 12 of them are located in municipalities and 3 at university faculties. Their sturucture and funding differ to some extent. Those located at universities have a special status and are partly funded by EU, which also provides them with Information Technology (IT) equipment. The EUIPs are funded entirely or partially by the EUD. Some of them have existed for quite some time, such as the EUIP at the Faculty of Economics in Skopje which has been operational for 20 years. The greatest assets are EUIP contact persons, since they provide *pro bono* support to the EUD/EUIC in organising campaigns, events, info days for EU calls, dissemination of publications, etc. EUIP contact points are also very active in organising EU Days, mobilising and coordinating activities with local schools, non-governmental organisations, local authorities and others. EUIP presents a best practice model of how local volunteers can support the EU.

Changes in partnership agreements towards contracts with EUICs have some benefits in terms of better management and oversight, though they do have some weaknesses. Feedback from Albania shows that the EUIC service contract is very short term to be able to see tangible results. One year can be sufficiently considered as an adjustment phase and ideally, the contract runs for at least three years.

Partnering with local actors contributes to efficiency of the IC programme. The Evaluation shows that the most efficient (and effective) are those IC activites in which there is a partnership with local actors - either local authorities or CSOs. There are numerous examples of successful partnerships with public entities, including municipalities, CSOs and voluntary groups. For instance, there is a strong ownership of municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the celebration of EU Day, which has become a popular event with the local population. Namely, every year, many municipalities prepare the celebration of an EU Day regardless of the support that is provided by the EUD. A good example is the City of Bitola, which on a yearly basis, mobilises schools, CSOs, different associations and voluntary groups to jointly prepare activities for the EU Day that represents EUMS through their cuisine, geography, art, music, etc. The EUD contributes to this celebration with a small budget (several hundred euros) for covering miscellaneous expenses related to the pupils' preparation of decorations and costumes for the event. The celebration of EU Day in Bitola represents a best practice example of how a local community can be involved in EU communication activities.

Use of various innovative tools contribute to cost-efficiency of communication. EUDs/EUOK are using innovative approaches by using different tools when communicating with the target groups, which often contributes to efficiency. For example, in 2013, the EUD in Serbia organised a campaign on gender equality that was part of the International Women's Day celebrations on 8th March. In that regard, the EUD launched a competition with a hashtag *#superzena* (in English: super woman), where the Twitter community was invited to give contributions to the term 'super women'. The most creative answers were rewarded with symbolic prizes during the public debate that was organised on the same day. The competition was quite popular on Twitter – with the participation of both men and women. This campaign was cost-efficient and required limited resources to achieve successful implementation. Combining activities on social media (Twitter) with public debates and using symbolic awards from existing EU promotional material represents a best practice example in modern communication.

Another example of innovative communication arises from Montenegro, where the EUD established a public title 'Honorary EU Ambassador' that was awarded to three prominent public figures[15] who were supporting the EUD in communication and public diplomacy. The engagement of these Honorary Ambassadors is free of charge. The concept is very good and was well accepted among the general public.[16] However, this concept needs to be further developed in many aspects. For instance, the Honorary Ambassadors should receive a certificate or some recognition for their honorary title. Moreover, to date, they have mainly been involved in EU Day celebrations and small scale events. Their role might contribute to achieving better communication results if careful planning takes place and if their activities are supported with small communication budgets.

Stove-piping might occur in IC programmes both horizontally (within EUD/EUOK) or vertically (between EUD/EUOK and DG NEAR). The complex and diverse needs of communication activities make it easy to fall into a trap of stove-piping, where sections, EUDs and teams become overwhelmed with their day-to-day activities and in coordinating between different levels/dimensions of communication. This is a limiting factor to the efficiency of IC programme implementation. It also entails that insufficient attention is paid to developing a long-term vision and planning of activities, as much time and efforts are going into ad-hoc communication responses to day-to-day (political) events. This contributes to the fact that IC staff in the EUDs/EUOK devote little time to reflect upon and build up a long-term strategy in the field of communication.

A lack of institutional memory is visible in IC programmes. Apart from standard reporting formats for IC programmes internally and in relation to contractors, there is not much institutional memory at EUD/EUOK level in terms of a performance monitoring framework which would contain an account of activities, results and changes achieved, but also lessons learned and best practices. This makes it difficult for new IC staff to learn lessons from previous implementation periods.

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[15] Honorary EU Ambassadors are Sanja Popović (an actress), Dragan Adžić (national women's handball team coach of Montenegro) and Dragoljub Đuričić (a drummer).
[16] Honorary Ambassadors were not only well accepted by the general public yet by other actors as well. For instance, at the event organised by the US Embassy in Podgorica, Dragan Adžić was presented as a national coach of Montenegro and a EU Honorary Ambassador.

4.3   Effectiveness

EQ 2. To what extent have the outputs and results corresponded to the objectives? To what extent have the objectives been met? Where expectations have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement?

The extent to which outputs and results correspond to the objectives

There is no cause-effect casuality between achieved results and targeted objectives. A review of strategic documentation for IC Programmes at overall level and at EUD/EUOK level shows that the overall objective is defined broadly, while specific objectives[17] are also not entirely SMART. A review of documentation shows that expected results[18] are not very detailed. Strategic documents outline a wealth of activities in different spheres and for different target groups.[19] Desk review and field research confirms that corresponding activities are adequate to achieve expected results. The link between activities, target groups and outputs is more evident, as these levels in the hierarchy of results are more defined. However, due to IC Programme documents being output-based, there is no clear causal link to upper levels, outcomes and impact.
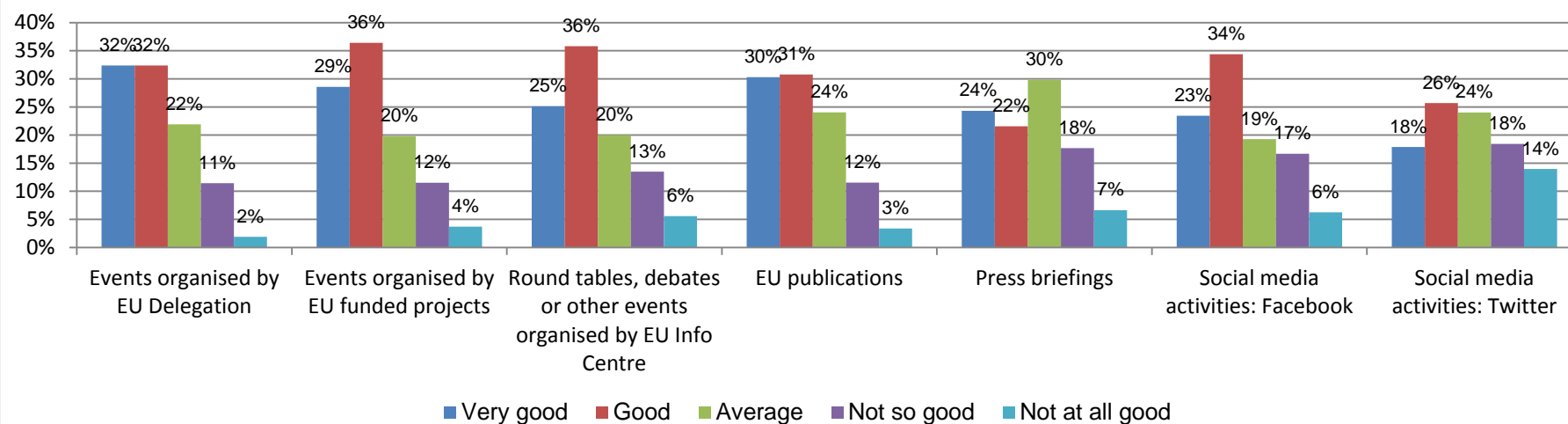
IC programmes have been producing a large number of outputs. EUD IC teams produce a vast number of outputs, be they press material, social media inputs, publications, events, etc. The evaluation shows a high efficiency of rather under-resourced IC teams. However, in many cases, there is an 'inflation' of outputs (events, publications, press releases, etc.), and because of the high number of outputs, some outputs seem to be 'swallowed up' quickly by other events or communication activities. For example, the IC teams organise a big conference to launch a publication, but the following week there is another event, creating an absorption issue for the public or target group, as there is too much information. This is particularly problematic as such a high turnover of events/products includes a small group of 'informed professionals' who are regularly invited to all these events, creating a sort of 'fatigue' among them due to over-exposure to various events. On a more general level, it makes it more difficult for these types of outputs to really contribute to the objective. The survey conducted within the framework of this evaluation among CSOs shows that 86.6% of respondents across the region are aware of the IC activities of their EUDs; the awareness among media respondents is slightly higher at 88.5%, with 90% of them using information provided by IC programme for their work (See aggregated data from CSO and media surveys in Annex 11). Interestingly, as presented in Graph 1 below, CSOs rate events organised by EUDs or EU-funded projects better than social media activities - particularly Twitter. The vast majority of CSO respondents confirm that EUD information & communication activities helped them increase knowledge and/or understanding on the EU, EU integration process and EU-country relations and EU related issues (e.g. EU policies, accession process, *acquis communautaire*). Nevertheless, over half of the respondents claim that these activities did not change attitudes or views on the EU and related issues. A survey conducted within the framework of this Evaluation shows that over half of the total CSO respondents use information from the EU for planning new projects. They also use it for advocacy and campaigns, research and the mobilisation of citizens (see Annex 11 for an aggregated set of survey responses).

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[17] Specific objectives are: To inform different target groups about the EU, its policies and programmes and their impact on citizens' everyday life; To increase frequency and quality of media coverage and public debate on EU related issues; To raise awareness about the EU among university students; To increase the information level at municipal level across the country.

[18] The main results expected are the dissemination of more accurate information, the increase of information about EU policies and values, an increased number of students informed about EU issues and an increased number of citizens informed across the regions.

[19] Activities include: Opinion polls and surveys, media monitoring, qualitative and quantitative studies; Organisation of seminars and trips for journalists where concrete results of EU policies can be observed, i.e. in the newer EU Member States; Multiplication of opening of various EU information relays throughout the country where citizens can find information about the EU and reply to their questions; Organisation of events including cultural and thematic aspects, such as EU week, European film week, literary reading, exhibitions, cultural and heritage events; Organisation of thematic campaigns (i.e. on energy efficiency, environment; discrimination, minorities, human rights); Organisation of events with focus on development of business; Dissemination of information through dedicated web sites, magazines and publications, promotional items, social networks, mobile apps; Support, for EUIPs (EU information point hosted generally by a University) where students can find general and specialised information about the EU and help for further research; Organisation of student visits to Information Centres established by EU Delegations and the EU Office in Kosovo; Support to audio-visual production on EU policies - Production of audio-visual material.
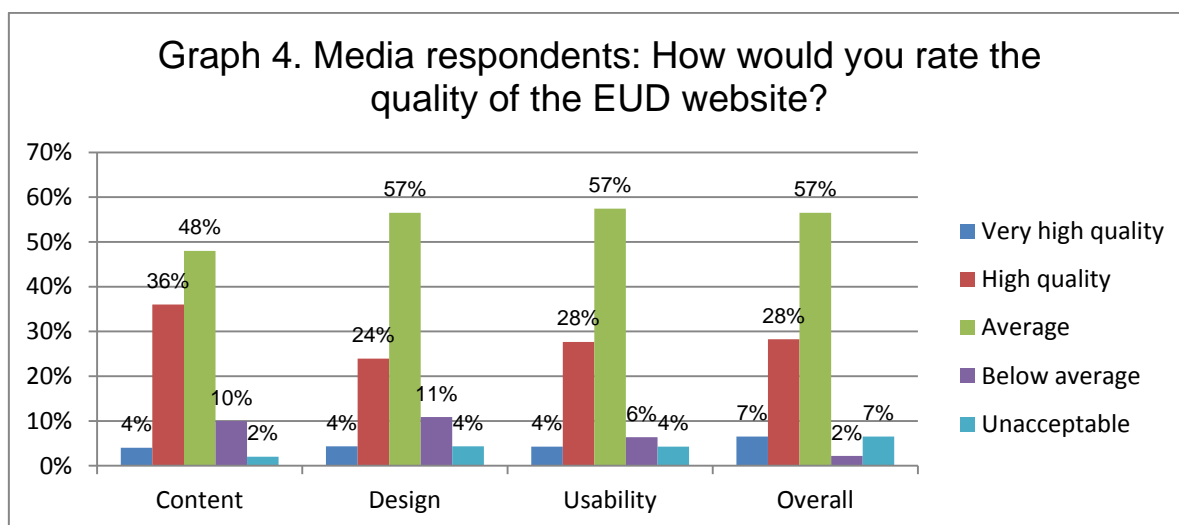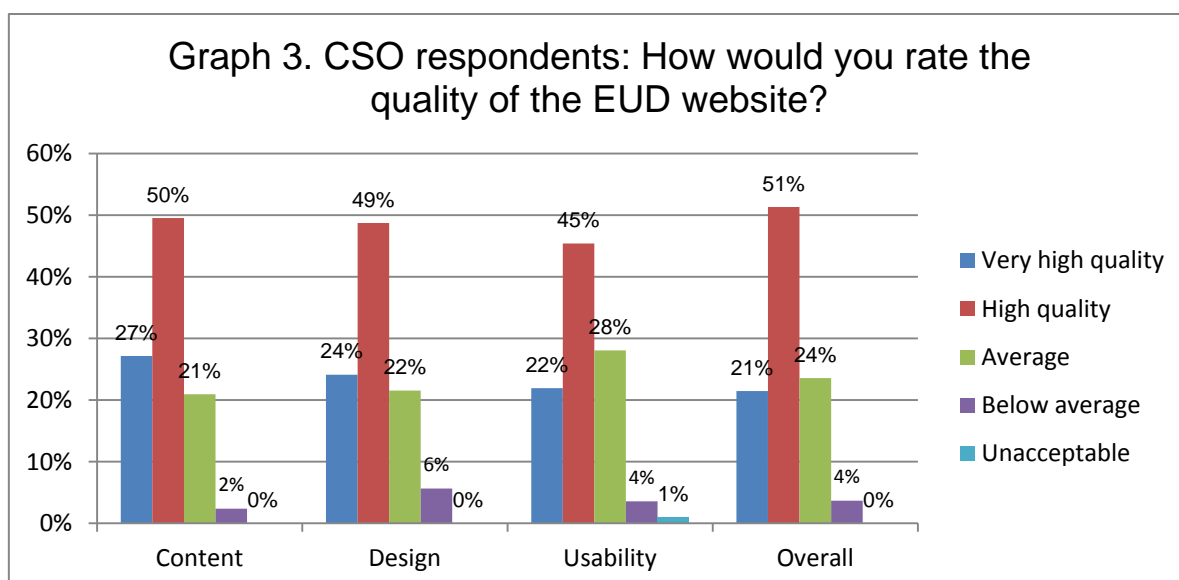
Graph 1.CSO Respondents: Quality and usefulness rating of information or communication activities that respondents participated in or came across

	Very good	Good	Average	Not so good	Not at all good
Events organised by EU Delegation	32%	32%	22%	11%	2%
Events organised by EU funded projects	29%	36%	20%	12%	4%
Round tables, debates or other events organised by EU Info Centre	25%	36%	20%	13%	6%
EU publications	30%	31%	24%	12%	3%
Press briefings	24%	22%	30%	18%	7%
Social media activities: Facebook	23%	34%	19%	17%	6%
Social media activities: Twitter	18%	26%	24%	18%	14%

At the same time, media respondents rate events organised by EUDs and press briefings best, while social media and EU publications slightly lag behind (see Graph 2). The majority of media respondents confirm that EUD information and communication activities helped them increase knowledge and/or understanding on the EU, the EU integration process and EU-country relations and EU-related issues (e.g. EU policies, accession process, *acquis communautaire*). Nevertheless, these activities did not change attitudes or the views of almost 70% of media respondents.

Graph 2. Media Respondents: Quality and usefulness rating of information or communication activities that respondents participated in or came across
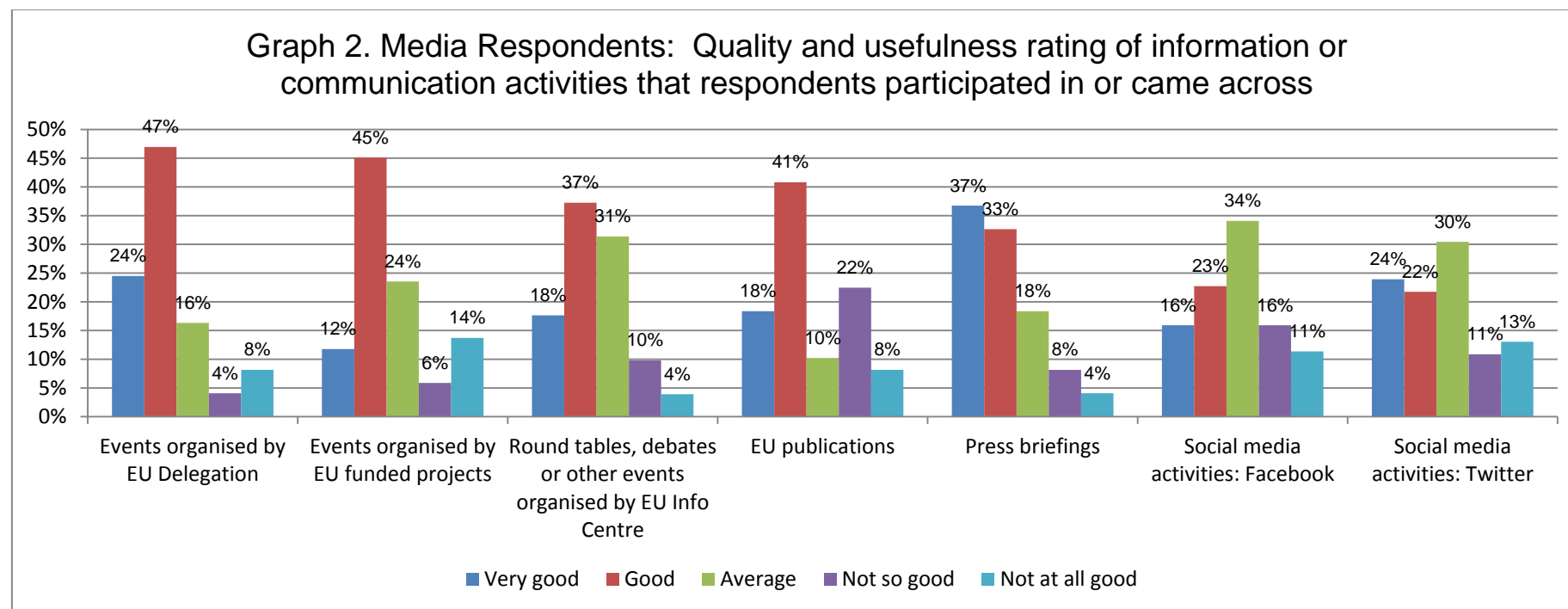
EU websites are generally a first source of information, but their accessibility varies. Interviews and also surveys conducted under this evaluation confirm that EUD websites are generally used by interested parties; it is interesting to note that 24% of media responents to the survey conducted within the framework of this evaluation do not use them (for example, in Albania, 50% of media respondents do not use the website, 30% in Montenegro and 25% in Turkey). In Serbia, on the contrary, all media respondents claim to use the EUD website. As for CSOs, just over 15% of CSOs in countries like Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina do not use the website. Feedback from the field highlights some weaknesses with the websites, mainly relating to the fact that most information is in English (with 9% of survey respondents from CSOs and 8% of media respondents confirming that they are not able to follow the contents in English, while 30% of CSOs and 20% of media respondents manage to follow with some difficulty). Other highlighted weaknesses are that websites are - by and large - difficult to navigate and search which discourages users to use them as a source of information. These weaknesses affect the effectiveness of this tool. Nevertheless, surveys conducted within the scope of this evaluation show that CSOs and the media rate the overall quality of the EUD websites differently – respectively reflected in Graphs 3 and 4 below. While CSOs rate them rather well, the media generally rate them as average or even below average in some cases.

Graph 3. CSO respondents: How would you rate the quality of the EUD website?

Graph 4. Media respondents: How would you rate the quality of the EUD website?

EUICs are generally effective, albeit variably. Field data shows that EUICs are generally effective and offer a good service to clients. As mentioned in the Efficiency section above, some EUICs are proactive in diversifying their services or in fulfiling their planned outputs. For example, feedback from the Albanian community of Flora indicates that the EUIC in this community is very functional. It gives information on how the EU functions, progress of Albania's integration into the EU as well as actively involving the general public and media.

On the other hand, as already mentioned in the Efficiency section, cooperation with national partners may not always be so effective as evidenced by the EUIC context in Turkey. Locating EUICs within Chambers of Commerce has brought about some good results over several years of cooperation. Having institutional partners helps IC programmes navigate their way much easier around the authorities in the 20 cities where programme activities are implemented (apart from the contractual activities, the EUD can spontaneously and regularly call on the EUICs for help with any other activities in their cities (e.g. European Parliament/European Commission visits, etc.)). In addition, with an open tender, EUIC costs would never be affordable, because it would imply renting spaces that are now used free of charge in the Chambers of Commerce. Nevertheless, such cooperation has its weeknessses: Chambers of Commerce do not invest much support and energy in terms of promotional activities within the EUICs; their premises are often located marginally in cities. Therefore, having an office in their premises is also not necessarily advantageous (despite being free of charge) due to low accessibility. Finally, management differences and approaches to work between the Chambers of Commerce and the EUD significantly affect the effectiveness of the EUICs in Turkey.

Similarly, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, challenges lie in the selection and delivery of outputs by contractors for IC related activities (e.g. translation services, newsletters, etc.). The issue pertained to the type of contract (global price), which resulted in contracting being largely based upon the best price offer, which in turn had a direct effect on the quality of deliverables. As for the EUIC, the fact that the Center is located within the EUD building requiring all visitors to go through security checks is an important discouraging factor for potential visitors. Very few people are ready to go through security checks for simple questions like scholarships. The EUIC tries to compensate here through the events they organise - inviting people through social media. When special events are organised, they manage to gather larger visitor groups.

A survey conducted within the scope of this Evaluation among CSOs and media shows interesting trends regarding EUICs. For example, the lack of effectiveness of EUICs in Turkey is somehow confirmed by the survey findings, which point out that 75% of CSOs participating in the survey rarely use EUICs as a source of information. On the other side, half of the respondents from the media use EUICs regularly as a source of information, with one quarter rarely ever using them. Across the sample, 50% of either media or CSOs rarely use EUICs as a source of information; the remaining half is divided between those who use them regularly (28% for both CSOs and media) and those from time to time.

Cultural events, as well as promotional activities engaging children and youths bring positive results. Evaluation findings point to the fact that cultural events, campaigns, promotional activities, workshops, competitions and other related events with children and youths are effective in terms of engaging these groups, raising their awareness and knowledge but also empowering them to take a proactive role. Experiences from Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia show that competitions for childen and students that were organised in a creative and interactive way garnered a high level of interest and engagement among these groups. Such activities resulted in better knowledge of EU integration issues among such groups but also opened up the EUICs and EUDs more generally to them. The weakness of such measures is that they often tend to be one-off interventions with few follow-up measures. There is no opportunity through follow-up activities for children and youths to be able to upgrade their acquired knowledge that would generate a critical mass of children and youths as multipliers of knowledge.

Effectiveness of publications produced by IC programmes is hard to measure. IC programmes produce a variety of publications on a number of thematic fields. The main purpose of publications is to ensure easily accessible and comprehensive information to be available for targeted audience (primarily students, media, CSOs, academia and other interested parties). While survey results indicate that media partners and CSOs see benefits from such products in general, interviews show that there is not much wide interest in publications. Exceptions are students who

approach EUICs, EU info points and EUDs for publications. The availability of publications in electronic format on websites certainly facilitates access to such documents.

Social media tools are not utilised to their best potential. Social media tools are increasingly used and are popular among all target audiences of IC programmes, particularly young people and CSOs. While EUD IC teams and EUICs do increasingly use these tools (Twitter, Facebook, Flickr), their full potential is not utilised yet due to complex approval processes of messages to be disseminated through social media. Evaluation findings point to the fact that the effectiveness of these tools is relatively low still due to the fact that the messages posted are often already 'old news' by the time they are approved and posted or not presented in interesting way (particularly for young people). For example, a random analysis of some Facebook and Twitter pages shows that political messages get a much lower amount of 'likes' than messages relating to cultural and other events or news.

The extent to which objectives have been met

There is no clear link between IC results and public support to EU integration, which has been established as one of objectives to IC programmes. A desk review of available DG NEAR, EUD/EUOK documentation and external sources shows that in the Western Balkans and Turkey, support towards EU integration is high, with visible variations in Serbia and Turkey (28.15%)[20] particularly. Concretely, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the figure is 76%[21], Albania 76.41% and Croatia 52.40%[22]. However, the link between the level of support of EU integration and IC programme activities is not clearly visible, even though their contribution is most likely to be positive. This particularly applies to the areas of work with journalists and students, but also in work with local communities. Interviewed journalists and CSO representatives who were involved in IC related activities across the region agree that IC activities were instrumental in improving their knowledge and familiarity with EU related values, policies and programmes, albeit that they did not affect the change in their attitudes as also confirmed by the surveys conducted within the scope of this evaluation. Similarly, students confirm that their level of knowledge of EU has improved thanks to outreach activities of IC programmes, particularly through social media and publications. Another positive example is the work with local communities.

Factors hindering the achievement of objectives

Measuring the status of objectives was a difficult excercise due to a lack of indicators and baseline values. IC programmes do not have established baselines, clear targets and SMART indicators. This makes it difficult to clearly establish the level of attribution of IC activities and outputs to the objectives over the years. The level of elaboration of programme documents is weak, including general quantitative output indicators which cannot measure any level of change desired.

Another important issue is that the **level of achievement of IC objectives is highly dependent on a number of external factors, be they political, social or economic**. Most importantly, the effectiveness of EU messages is directly controlled and limited by the political circumstances in a country, and also dependent on political statements from domestic governments/the United States/Russia or other players, which influence the receptiveness of the target groups of EU IC messages. Another challenge is the difficult socio-economic situation in countries which affects the countries' EU accession path.

With few exeptions, IC staff have been mainly conservative in using innovative communication tools. While the use of social media as an effective and relatively cheap communication tool, EUD/EUOK and IC programme approaches are most often conservative in the selection of activities and tools, usually selecting activities within a 'comfort zone' (where business is done following established methods and activities throughout the years). So far, evidence of the innovative use of tools and activities is limited. The best example of such a conservative approach of EUDs pertained to social networks - primarily Facebook. Although Facebook is recognised as a tool that is mainly used to approach younger population groups (youths and students), the contents

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[20] Eurobarometer Nov 2014; the question was: 'Generally speaking, do you think that (our country)'s membership of the EU would be...?'
[21] IPSOS Public Affairs, EUSR Public Opinion Polling & Evaluation in Bosnia and Herzegovina - June 2014.
[22] Eurobarometer May 2013; the question was: ' Generally speaking, do you think that (our country)'s membership of the EU would be...?'

of Facebook posts often focused on the dissemination of EUD political activities that were less attractive to the target groups. An example of this finding is demonstrated in the number of likes and shares of EUD Facebook posts, where politically-related posts are much less interesting (for younger population groups) than those that focus on education, culture, activism, or so called 'EU values'.

Internal rules for the approval of communication activities may slow down or affect the effectiveness of IC messages. Internal rules for approval of (political) communication have been evidenced to at times prevent ICPs from being more proactive in their outreach activities. For example, the approval process for Facebook or Twitter messages can take a lot of time, making some messages outdated or redundant by the time they are eventually posted. This is a strong factor that hinders the effectiveness of social media tools due to the fact that social media requires swift reactions and inputs.

4.4   Coherence

EQ 7. To what extent ongoing IPA financial assistance has contributed to achieving the strategic objectives and priorities linked to achieving the objectives of the communication strategy?

Results of IPA financial assistance have not been fully utilised in achieving communication objectives. EU financial assistance to the WBT is far bigger than that of other countries/agencies and IPA projects present a great communication potential. Nevertheless, this potential has not been properly utilised due to many factors. The main weakness lies in the fact that individual projects have their communication and visibility activities that at times coincide or even conflict with regular IC activities. The evidence gathered in the process of this evaluation shows that there is a need for a paradigm change in communicating EU projects. Due to the lack of a coordinated strategy between the IC programme and IPA projects' communication activities, there is a lack of consistent key messages, hampering effective EU communication efforts. The primary reason for this is the lack of (possibility to develop) a comprehensive communication strategy and guidelines for all EU IPA projects that can be in line with IC programme principles. Furthermore, EUD/EUOK IC staff have limited resources and limited responsibility for communication on IPA projects. Another factor is that there is little coordination between IPA projects and EUD/EUOK IC staff. Projects are usually communicated through press conferences (at the beginning and at the end of the project), and sometimes when significant results are achieved. In addition, EUD/EUOK communicates on projects usually through the HoD or HoC. However, the number of projects is so considerable that high-ranking EUD/EUOK officials cannot manage to visit all the projects, neither participate in their events.

There is a need to engage more people from EUD/EUOK in the communication and visibility of project results. Communication efforts of EU-funded projects need to be part of the tasks of all EUD/EUOK Task Managers and not only be limited to EUD/EUOK IC staff.

Overall communication of IPA financial assistance has been a difficult exercise that should be further developed. This Evaluation shows that, although IPA projects are more or less communicated with success, the overall communication of IPA financial assistance should be further developed. In each Western Balkans country and in Turkey, there are many ongoing projects (for example in there are over 700 projects Serbia, over 500 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, over 400 in Montenegro and over 400 in Kosovo, etc.) and they communicate their results according to IPA visibility rules. There should nevertheless be more efforts to communicate results and lessons learned at the aggregate level of the IPA programme. There are examples of presentations of success stories within a sector or territory, usually used during HoD public diplomacy events. Effective mechanisms for the collection of results and lessons learned produced by IPA projects would lead to a better use of the communication potential of IPA projects results. There are good examples of intentions to effectively communicate on IPA financial assistance, such as in Montenegro, where the EUD has been producing infographics on the volume and scope of IPA interventions per sector or per the EU *acquis communautaire.*

IC projects funded through IPA national envelope do make a difference in achieving communication objectives, as well as in mobilising national authorities. There is a difference in communication outreach between countries that had communication related projects financed

from IPA national envelopes and those that were financed from communication programmes that were the subject of this evaluation. For instance, in 2010-2014, there was a large cross-media communication project 'EU Perspective in Kosovo' (EUPK) that presented a key communication instrument. The project was implemented in two phases, with a total value of EUR 5.6 million (first phase was EUR 2.6 million and second EUR 3 million). This project covered all aspects of communications, from producing audio/video material (films, soap operas (8 episodes), documentary movies, a TV Quiz, raw audio/video material etc.) to publications, public opinion polls, communication and media trainings, study visits and other outreach activities. The project provided technical assistance in designing the Government's EU Communication Strategy. The project published books for an EU-related TV Quiz, which was later included in school curricula for civic education courses. Another positive effect of the project was increased ownership of the Kosovo government, especially the Ministry of European Integration, over EU communication activities. For instance, the Ministry officials participate in all EU communication activities except ones that are related to CSO and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) projects. There has been a visible decrease of communication activities in Kosovo following the closure of this project.

The second example of a similar kind comes from Montenegro, where the British Council implements a direct grant for the project 'Communicating EU Accession and IPA assistance in Montenegro'. The project is implemented (and co-financed) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and supports the implementation of the Montenegrin Government's Strategy for Informing the Public about the European Union and Membership Preparations 2014-2018. This project has been producing excellent results in many segments, from creating the Government's ownership in EU communication affairs through tangible and measurable progress in the implementation of the Government's Strategy on EU Communication[23] and communication outreach to different target groups. This project is a best practice example of how the EUD and the Government should work together in achieving communication goals. Bearing in mind that there is a deadlock in the implementation of national strategies in many of the Western Balkans' countries and Turkey, the Montenegrin example could be easily replicated to other settings.

4.5 Impact

> **EQ 4. Are the outputs and immediate results delivered by IPA translated into the desired and expected impacts, namely in terms of achieving the strategic objectives and priorities linked to information and communication? Are impacts sufficiently identified and quantified? Are there any additional impacts, both positive and negative?**

In order to respond to this question and in the absence of a reflection on the higher level objectives in IC programme reports, the Evaluation Team applied a contribution analysis from secondary sources and from fieldwork interviews and group discussions in order to establish plausible links between IC engagement and the changes and results seen. The Team sought to ascertain the extent to which changes at impact level are systemic, while carefully considering contributory factors and other likely effects of contextual factors. This section presents findings from this process.

IC programmes contributed to awareness on EU integration and its policies. The evidence collected shows that the level of contribution of IC programmes on *raising public awareness about the EU and its policies* has been positive, which translates into a generally increasing public awareness of the EU. An analysis conducted using secondary sources for different countries shows that the level of awareness of the general public for the EU varies among countries in the region. Asked about how well informed about the EU they are (Eurobarometer[24]), Turkey is listed first with 58% of those interviewed expressing that they are very or fairly well informed. The other

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[23] With the support of this project, 90% of the 2014 Action Plan and 92% of the 2015 Action Plan of the Government's EU Communication Strategy were implemented.
[24] National survey on perceptions & expectations towards a potential EU membership of Albania, Open Society Foundation For Albania, Soros – Tirana 2014, European Commission, Brussels (2014): Eurobarometer 80.1 (2013). TNS Opinion, Brussels, IPSOS Public Affairs, EUSR Public Opinion Polling & Evaluation in Bosnia and Herzegovina - June 2014.

countries whose people think they are very or fairly well informed are Albania 57%, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 39%, Montenegro 34% and Serbia 33%. Approximately 57% of Croatian citizens feel averagely informed and well informed (IPSOS study, 2013). A similar survey for Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that 40% of citizens believe there is a solid level of information.

Media interventions (particularly TV and radio broadcasting of messages) reach a wider public, but their real impacts are difficult to measure. TV/radio broadcasting messages are easier to control in terms of contents and airing times when they are paid for (e.g. short advertisments), but their effect is difficult to measure due to the influence of other media messages from other sources that may influence wider audiences, particulary at times of complex political crises. Media interventions that target journalists in order to convey EU messages are hard to control; nevertheless, efforts of the EUD IC teams to improve media relations and consequently to have a better impact content-wise are often successful. In Montenegro for example, the fact that the EUD has good relations with journalists and having a HoD that speaks the local language gives them a great deal of positive media exposure.

IC programmes contributed to the informed public debate on EU integration, its benefits and challenges in terms of reforms and EU support in reinforced cooperation with the Member States. The evaluation identified elements of change in how public debates are taking place, albeit at an *anecdotal level.* Therefore, IC's direct contribution to these cannot be strongly evidenced by this Evaluation. As discussed in earlier sections of this document, IC programmes work well with informed professionals, which are most often their main target audiences. Work with CSOs has primarily resulted in raising knowledge and understanding on EU accession requirements and the benefits of EU support, which directly affected their ability to stir-up discussions and public debates on these topics. However, these circles are rather closed, with an 'elite group' of people who gain access and benefit from IC activities; the general public tends to be left behind and the multiplication potential is therefore limited.

IC activities have produced good results on the mobilisation of citizens, especially ones that are active within CSOs, particularly those coming from small communities. IC activities, especially those organised by local government and community CSOs bring positive experiences to local populations and help stir-up new information and more informed debate on the benefits of EU support. Evidence from the field shows that local ownership of such events and activities is an important positive factor for mobilising citizens and informing larger groups of people on a number of subjects pertaining to EU values and the EU reform agenda.

The identification and quantification of impacts is difficult to provide due to a lack of impact measurement mechanisms set by the programme. As discussed in the previous section, IC programmes do not have clearly defined results and performance monitoring framework which could include (SMART) indicators, baselines, targets and sources of information for gathering and analysis of results. An analysis of programme documents - and more importantly reports - shows a lack of IC programmes' practice of reflection on results and their contribution to desired changes. Overall objectives are set up quite broadly and this evaluation could not establish strong evidence that outputs and immediate results were translated into impact. There is no clear cause-effect causality of IC plans, which in the cases where there are no baselines and targets, makes it more difficult to monitor and adequately attribute the extent to which results delivered by the IPA are translated into the desired and expected impacts (e.g. in reporting on the IC programmes, teams indicate improved knowledge on EU affairs, but reports do not offer tangible evidence of this, against established baselines). Furthermore, it is difficult to link many IC activities to any higher level objectives, as IC programmes only measure how many people participated in an event, without at the same time measuring the outcome of such an event. Due to a lack of proper impact measurement, impacts of IPA information and communication activities are not sufficiently identified and quantified, which makes it practically impossible to conduct internal or external evidenced assessments of the impacts and contribution of IC programmes to the overall objective established in the strategic document. In most cases, impacts are difficult to verify.

Impacts of IC programmes highly depends on coherence in communication between different EU structures and within IC programmes themselves. Communicating EU affairs is a multidimensional and complex exercise; it is very sensitive with respect to political circumstances, external factors and global trends. The EU communicates at different levels: EUD Communication on political domestic issues; Communication on EU financial assistance/projects; Communication on human/cultural values that the EU represents; Communications from the European Commission

and the European Parliament; and Communications from other EU bodies (i.e. European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) in Kosovo). Given the myriad issues and levels of communication, it is very difficult to send a clear, coherent and comprehensive message to target groups. In some cases, some of the communication needs take priority over others, rendering some communication fields marginalised.

As mentioned in the Efficiency section above, there is an issue with 'stove-piping' within IC programmes but also between IC programmes and other EUD/EUOK sections in particular. At times, competing or conflicting priorities between sections make it difficult to send the right message to the right audience at the right time (for example, using Facebook or Twitter), which results in missed opportunities. These 'missed opportunities' further result in a difficulty to achieve the required changes in perceptions and attitudes towards EU reform support.

4.6   Sustainability

EQ 5. Are the identified impacts sustainable or likely to be sustainable?

Citizens' support to EU integration is relatively high and stable. The very complex and ever-evolving nature of EU related issues requires continuous IC activities in the WBT. In all WBT countries, there is relatively high and stable public support towards EU integration. Although this evaluation mission was not able to accurately measure to what extent EUD/EUOK communication activities contributed to this support, the contribution is irrefutable. In Croatia, upon EU accession, IC activities were placed under the supervision of relevant government bodies. In Turkey, the Ministry of EU Accession has sufficient resources to support the media and CSOs on EU-related matters and inform the general public under its own budget. For example, Turkish authorities have similar training programmes for the media professionals and information programmes, as well as various competitions for students. However, in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the financial and technical resources of the relevant government institutions are quite limited when it comes to sustaining their activities without EU assistance.

The sustainability of results correlates with a degree of ownership from national and local partners. On a national level, the level of involvement of national structures in EU communication (except in Turkey), is decisive for the sustainability and impact of IC interventions which in many cases is actually low or non-existent, or if existent – often driven by political considerations. Lack of ownership by national structures hampers the sustainability of impacts. In cases where local governments take on to communicate their commitment to EU values, the effects are much higher as evidenced by the case of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia where local authorities organise (by themselves) EU related communication activities. Another positive example comes from Montenegro, where the municipality of Pljevlja publishes a local newsletter with information related to EU integration and EU projects. As a result, support to EU integration is the highest in Pljevlja among all Montenegrin municipalities. However, such cases are an exception rather than a rule. Although all national governments declare their commitment to EU integration, their involvement in IC activities has not been sufficient and proactive. All governments have EU integration communication strategies, yet their implementation can be questioned. There is a good example from Montenegro, where the EUD supported the implementation of the Government's EU communication strategy through the national IPA envelope. Such model can be replicated to other countries. This is especially important since the national governments are or will be in charge of the implementation of IPA projects through a Decentralised Implementation System (DIS). Once a DIS is implemented, the national government will have more responsibilities in EU communications, including the communication of projects. At present, a majority of countries that were the subject of this evaluation do not have sufficient capacity (both in human and financial terms) to successfully communicate EU projects. The Croatian example shows that the commitment and ownership of a communication strategy by the government is a good prerequisite for stronger visibility of EU integration-related issues and topics. For example, two years prior to accession, both the EUD and government's information activities increased, particularly focusing on smaller cities and schools. These measures contributed to stronger visibility but also to more support, even though direct contribution could not be evidenced strongly by this evaluation.

Sustainability depends on political factors. The sustainability of public support towards the EU integration processes highly depends on country-specific political factors, primarily those linked to

government support to EU integration; the lack of negative messages by other actors, as well as by overall stability of the region. Many of them have already been discussed within the framework of EQ 2. An external factor, not mentioned in the EQ 2 discussion, is the overall perceived slow/lack of progress in the EU integration process, which influences the impact of communication elements. While the general awareness of EU policies is increasing, there are still many misconceptions, myths and negative messages resulting from the perceived lack of progress in EU integration that consequently diminishes the possibility of holding informed public debates - particularly outside of the capitals.

This is accompanied by the volatility of political circumstances in the IPA region. Communication efforts can be quickly overtaken or even become redundant by a change of political circumstances, as evidenced by recent events in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia or in Turkey, where political influence on media and civil society brings many negative consequences to the reform agenda and overall road to EU integration in these countries. In addition, the IPA region was very much affected by the 'migrant crisis' where international and EU attention and support shifted to supporting these countries to deal with the migrant crisis. Another factor that has been identified by a number of interviewed persons and in the desk review is the communication of other EU entities (EC, European Parliament, EULEX), which have the potential to hamper sustainability and impact of IC activities. This is mainly due to the fact that the coordination of communication activities between different EU entities is not strong enough and sometimes there can be contradictory messages. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) office also has its own IC team. Good cooperation between the EUSR and the EUD in the field of communication contributes to the enhancement of EU messages.

Critical relevance for sustainability and impacts of IC intervention is the context of media in the region. The media scene is complex and often polarised and trivialisation of the media is high. Most countries are still at early stages of the EU integration process, so it is very difficult to produce and sell news on EU affairs. Moreover, the privatisation of the media has decreased the number of journalists at agencies and many of them now cover multiple topics. Media are focused on topics that can be sold to the general population and as such, media reporting directly corresponds to the attractiveness of EU-related issues at a given time. Therefore, the specialisation of journalists to cover EU related topics, such as content reporting on the EU *acquis communautaire* has been a challenge in all observed countries. A good solution to this problem was found in the collaboration of media with CSOs that are specialised in EU affairs or in the training projects funded by the EU that were provided to local journalists. Positive examples of such cooperation can be found in all observed countries.[25]

External factors are too complex to foresee and it is complicated to manage mitigation measures. Although exposed to numerous external factors, EUD/EUOK do not have a strategy for communication in crisis situations.

4.7   EU Value-Added

EQ 6. What is the additional value resulting from the IPA interventions, compared to what could be achieved by the beneficiary countries at national or regional levels?

IC programmes fill the information gap on EU-related public awareness. As aforementioned, governments of respective countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey have their EU integration communication strategies, but often these strategies are not accompanied by a financial framework for implementation, which leaves a gap in information on the status, measures and updates on the overall EU integration process. The IC programmes fill this gap by extensive communication on EU policies, programmes as well as on EU values which contributes to an increase of the public's awareness. EUDs remain a driving force communicating about the EU process in the countries, even though governments should be in the driver's seat. Surveys conducted within the scope of the

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[25] For example, "Growing Together 3" call for communication projects in Montenegro required collaboration between media agencies and CSOs. Two projects were selected for implementation, first one is collaboration between pro-government media agency Portal Analitica and the European Movement in Montenegro for establishing portal that is available at http://portalanalitika.me/kategorija/eu, and second one is collaboration between pro-opposition media agency Vijesti and NGO Centre Civic Education for establishing portal that is available at http://www.vijesti.me/eu-vijesti/

evaluation show that over 60% of media respondents are aware of government communication activities on EU and EU integration, with one quarter of respondents being aware to some extent. Awareness of CSOs is somewhat different; while half of CSO respondents are to some degree aware of such government activities, 16% are not at all aware of such activities.

IC programmes have a good mobilisation potential. The way in which the EUD/EUOK involves civil society in the programming of EU IPA assistance, the modalities by which IC programmes partner with CSOs in the organisation of various events as well as grants to civil society constitute good support and empowers actors from this sector to take the lead and become credible multipliers of messages to the general public. Furthermore, the active engagement with media/journalists and investment in their capacities and knowledge is a good measure for their overall professionalisation.

IC programmes contribute to coordination and visibility of EUMS activities in Western Balkans and Turkey (e.g. cultural events, etc.). Even EUMS that have cultural centres in the countries in the region[26] often coordinate with EUD/EUOK on their communication activities or use EUIC premises for their events. This has been indicated as an important value added both boosting the visibility of individual EUMS, but also overall EU values and policies.

4.8 IPA intervention logic assessment

EQ 8. To what extent are global and specific objectives included in the IC programmes clear, measurable, achievable and realistic?

The level of clarity and SMART-ness of IC objectives varies from level to level. In previous sections, the issues pertaining to the results framework for the IC programme have been discussed. The overall objective is fairly well defined and presents the desired change that the programme wants to achieve. Specific objectives are too broadly defined; they lack clear descriptions and are generally difficult to measure. They do not present a good basis to measure performance at this level. The most elaborated are activities, showing that the IC programmes at DG NEAR and in EUDs/EUOK have a clear picture on what they want to do. However, this does not reflect enough on what new values or changes these activities are expected to achieve. This is confirmed by the level of the definition of indicators. Output indicators, while still general, are clearer and present some means for measurement at activity and output level. However, the lack of indicators at higher levels reflects an inherent weakness of IC programmes. Further analysis shows that objectives are similar from one year to another, and does not seem to reflect an assessment of their status. The strategy of achieving these is not clear; the baselines are missing and there is no clear vision of cause-effect links between levels in the hierarchy of results.

The evaluation identifies some arguments and reasons for this. The positioning of the IC programmes - particularly at country level - is planned one year in advance, which limits the potential for a proactive strategising of their work (mid-term) depending on circumstances. Some initiatives then occur on an ad-hoc basis and as a reaction to arising needs.

EQ 9. To what extent is the selection mechanism of IC activities appropriate in the sense of selecting the most relevant, efficient and effective projects to achieve the strategic communication objectives?

Selection mechanisms of IC activities are not systematic enough, though IC activities, once implemented, are mostly appropriate. By their very nature and variety, activities respond to the needs of diverse audiences as confirmed by the field work and online surveys (e.g. press releases target journalists or media and as reported by interviewed journalists, their quality was high; etc.). However, evidence gathered within the scope of this evaluation shows that selection mechanisms of IC activities are not systematic enough and are sometimes ad-hoc; the selection of tools and activities is not based on proper impact measurement. Assessments conducted for a sample of activities in countries shows that some activities are selected without informed decision making on how/why these activities would work and how they can contribute to overall objectives of the IC programmes. Evidence indicates that the selection of activities often occurs without a reflection on

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[26] Such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and to some extent Italy and Spain.

the links to long-term objectives. For example, some activities are one-offs and do not have a clear justification in terms of their contribution (e.g. Women's day campaign, supporting marathons, etc.) Interviews confirm that selection mechanisms are based on experience from previous years; however, there is a consensus that selection is conservative and has not evolved greatly. A clear example of this is the limited increase in the use of social media. As social media is becoming a mainstream and relatively cheap communication channel with high impact particularly among youths - but increasingly so among governments, media, etc. - EUDs/EUOK should increase their use of such tools. Many IC teams prefer the use of other tools, which may be less effective for some of the desired target audiences. A good exception to this is the EUSR in Bosnia and Herzegovina where (also due to a larger communication budget) there is a specific team member dedicated to social media. Some events, campaigns, selection mechanisms lead to a more focused activity. For example, thematic months in Kosovo included interesting activities. A reflection about what the effects were would be useful.

The selection of IC activities depends on budget constraints. Another important factor in the selection of IC activities is the budget. Media buying for the TV, printed press and the internet are a relatively costly business in the Western Balkans and Turkey. As EUDs/EUOK are not able to use these tools extensively, they rely more on PR activities and media relations between the EUD and media organisations in the various countries. In Montenegro for example, the HoD plays an important role in bringing across EU related messages to the various media organisations in the country which is a relatively cheap but - in this case - also an effective tool.

EQ 10. To what extent are the results of the evaluation of the IC activities taken into account in the preparation of the following IC programme?

Based on previous evaluations, the annual planning and reporting requirements have already been substantially improved but the evaluation shows that the programming of IC activities could further benefit from lessons learned. The fact that the EUDs usually monitor their IC activities at the output level and not at any higher level, makes it difficult for teams to reflect and self-evaluate their work. The evaluation also reveals that major changes in which IC planning is happening or decisions on activities are made comes with the change of people that lead IC units. New managers bring with them experience from other places and they introduce new approaches that worked within their previous deployments. Although replicating best practices from other contexts might be beneficial, there is a need for the creation of institutional mechanisms that will record best practices and lessons learned that were achieved in a host country. The regular information and communication seminars are already good steps in this direction. Further planning of communication activities should also be based on the experience from the achieved results. The EUD/EUOK communication staff across the Western Balkans and Turkey should further work on creating effective mechanisms for systematic learning from past experience.

EQ 11. To what extent do programming and monitoring mechanisms include clear (unambiguous), transparent, measurable indicators at impact, outcome and output levels to measure progress towards achievement of objectives?

IC programme documents present indicators at activity level. These indicators are not really SMART. The lack of baselines hampers the efforts to effectively measure the progress made. IPA programming documents did not see enough change in this, as indicators are mostly output based (e.g. numberof events, number of participants) and not impact based. The impact of the events is not really measured. Such an approach does not enable the measurement of qualitative progress in the areas of reflection, such as the level of awareness or newly acquired knowledge or familiarity of the intended target groups in a given subject.

EQ 12. To what extent are the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms correctly functioning to ensure measuring the performance of IPA IC programmes? What are the main gaps and weaknesses of the current programming framework?

The current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms focus more on activities than on emerging results and impacts. IC programme teams at country and DG NEAR levels conduct extensive monitoring activities at the activity/output level, especially if these are the subject of a service contact (i.e. a contract for an EUIC). Information on different activities, attendance at events, etc. are readily available and can tell a story about the outreach of an IC programme. However, monitoring and evaluations on how these outputs translate into outcomes and how they

affect change - together with a reflection on external factors - affecting IC interventions are not done systematically. Existing planning and reporting templates are found useful by the EUD/EUOK staff to present their work, but a review of reports does not offer much insight into changes made as a result of the work. Once submitted, reports are not subject to extensive feedback either. There is no two-way communication on reports or how these could be improved. Some interviewed EUD/EUOK staff members mentioned that they do not receive enough feedback on their planning or reporting documents. On the one hand, they are happy with their ability to decide on their own activities, but on the other hand, they think that some more guidance would be useful.

This is a consequence of many inter-related challenges. First of all, interviews reveal that IC staff are not properly trained in monitoring/evaluation, especially not on the results-based monitoring approach. Furthermore, IC teams are under-resourced, which limits resources for the proper monitoring of IC activities. Another factor revealed through interviews is that there is a common assumption among IC staff that the effects of IC activities cannot be measured, or that they are very difficult to measure. The reasoning for this may lie in the fact that IC programmes have a rather unsystematic approach to monitoring and evaluation, due to a lack of devised performance monitoring framework and related skills. This results in a lack of systematic institutional memory in the EUDs/EUOK on what was supported, what was achieved through these, etc., which hinders the understanding of long-term effects.

Nevertheless, some EUDs/EUOK show examples of best practice in measuring their performance. Most country offices conduct some sort of perception surveys or opinion polls either annually or periodically. For example, in Turkey, such opinion polls are conducted on questions of perception of Europe and EU membership. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the EUIC contracted the company – GfK - to carry out several research assignments that contributed to an evaluation of IC activities in this country. The service contract included the undertaking of an Impact Evaluation of EUIC events, EU publications' user satisfaction surveys and a public opinion poll. In Albania, the EUD tries to orient its communication strategies using the results of the public survey. Those evaluations and surveys showed very positive results of activities implemented by the EUIC, which can be ascribed to a sound methodological approach towards target groups. For instance, EUICs distribute publications based on the preferences of target groups; therefore, the survey showed an exceptionally high rate of satisfaction among their users.

5.   Conclusions

IC Programmes have been **relevant** in view of existing and emerging political priorities linked to the stage of the integration process in each country and the need to increase the level of public support for the enlargement process. The relevance of IC activities for the so-called informed professionals (media, journalists, civil society) is high, and IC activities were an adequate tool to fill in existing gaps in awareness and skills of these relevant actors. The relevance of IC activities for the so-called less and uninformed public, especially from rural areas, varies between communication tools used. An elaborated SMART results framework would allow to prioritise the interventions and to select sufficiently tailored activities to the needs.

IC programmes made successful efforts to use available resources efficiently. Staff and resources are efficient in transforming resources into outputs (they do a lot of things with very limited resources). Partnerships with other national and international players are drivers of efficiency. Another driver is work with and through EUICs, whereby Centre location and performance contributes to the efficiency of the IC programme. There is a variation in efficiency in some cases. The use of innovative tools - particularly social media - contributes to the cost-efficiency of communication, though the area of social media use needs to be further strengthened.

The main weaknesses in efficiency relate to internal organisation and processes.To increase their efficiency, the IC programmes should include better systems to monitor and report on performance in terms of achievements of objectives; currently, emphasis is placed more on recording activities but not so much on emerging results.   There is potential for stove-piping in IC programmes both horizontally (within EUD/EUOK sections) or vertically (between EUD/EUOK and DG NEAR). This might result in activities planned and implemented in isolation in different sections/levels, and in a duplication of efforts or the sending of confusing messages. The EUD/EUOK should also further profit of lessons learned, experiences from the implementation of previous years for the planning of new interventions. The IC programme has not yet fully used the opportunity to draw upon lessons and insights deriving from its past interventions..

The IC programme is on the road to achieving, albeit to varying degrees, all of its envisaged outputs. However, the level to which it has made contributions to planned outcomes is more difficult to assess. Particularly strong contributions were noted in relation to building the capacities of media and journalists and mobilising citizens on issues pertaining to awareness raising on EU policies, culture and values. IC activities filled identified gaps in existing knowledge and awareness on EU integration issues and helped draw broad attention to the previously overlooked concerns of the EU accession process. Effectiveness in terms of reaching out to the broader public is less visible due to a lack of systematic measurement of the effectiveness of activities targeting this audience. The effectiveness of IC programmes is also highly dependent on external political factors and IC programmes are vulnerable to these.

There are positive indications related to impact and sustainability. However, these indications are relatively few. Although they provide justification that the IC programmes contribute to raised awareness on EU policies, they do not provide strong evidence that the IC programmes are impacting positively on informed public debates on the EU in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The sustainability of these efforts depends highly on external factors that are outside the control of IC programmes, but which can diminish IC efforts quickly.

6. Recommendations

This evaluation has generated a long list of findings, conclusions and recommendations. From this, the evaluation Team has drawn-up a more concise number of strategic recommendations for IC programmes as is presented below.

Recommendation 1. Elaborate a strong results framework for IC programmes with clear and measurable indicators, fewer instruments, more clearly targeted interventions for selected target audiences and with longer time-horizons.

IC programmes are good at implementing a wide range of information and communication activities. However, these apprear somewhat inconsistent, with too little strategic positioning and reflection on longer-term effects. Impact measurement can only be done by setting up relevant indicators and their corresponding means of verification. IC programmes should therefore strategise their interventions within a more defined programme results framework, that includes strategic decisions on what is to be achieved (objectives), why (needs assessment), how (interventions), against what current situation (baselines) and to what aim (targets). The results framework should include SMART indicators to facilitate the measurement of results. This is extremely important also from the perspective of ensuring that most effective measures and interventions are implemented within budgetary constraints.

Recommendation 2. Simplify complex EU IC messages.

EUDs/EUOK need to simplify the often complicated messages relating to the EU reform agenda - in particular the *acquis* - so they can be both used by the media and be understood by the public. Concurrently, EU values need to remain at the forefront of communicating the EU. The development of a limited number of short key messages (per country) that are repeated and used in all communication activities will also be useful to effectively bringing across the information.

Recommendation 3. Use social media more proactively.

Evaluation findings show that the use of social media tools is taking root, but too slowly, which does not follow the new spirit of information sharing. EUDs/EUOK have difficulty to keep pace with social media developments. Procedures for the approval of social media messages should be shortened to enable social media tools to be used in a timely fashion in order to achieve better results faster. Social media should become an integral part of a more strategic approach to IC activities.

Recommendation 4. Ensure better coordination and targeted communication of EU IPA projects and horizontal communication activities.

The evaluation gathered evidence that stove-piping occurs both horizontally (within EUDs/EUOK sections and also EU IPA projects) and vertically (between EUDs/EUOK/DG NEAR). All involved teams should explore ways on how to strategically tackle inter-departmental cooperation to ensure that no mixed messages or duplication of events and efforts occur. A sectoral orientation of IPA II provides a good foundation to organise communication strategies and teams thematically. This approach would significantly increase the efficiency and effectiveness of IC work.

Recommendation 5. Continue cooperating and providing capacity building of government partners in terms of communication and information regarding the EU.

This evaluation found that despite countries having their comunication strategies, they are not applied consistently. There should be continuous support for the capacity building of press officers in Ministries for communication on IPA in light of the implementation of Decentralised Implementation Systems. This type of support would be beneficial to respond to arising needs due to new demands for governments to communicate about EU topics and related projects funded through the IPA.

Recommendation 6. Conduct an evaluation of EUICs.

This evaluation identified many good practices - but also weaknesses - in how EUICs function and relate to EUDs/EUOK. A focused evaluation on EUICs would be helpful to take stock of performance and efficiency, value added and impact of EUICs in all countries. In particular, this evaluation would be beneficial for Turkey.

Recommendation 7. Establish baselines, where relevant and realistic, for the Performance Monitoring Framework.

Baselines need to be established for indicators **where relevant and realistic in** the Performance Monitoring Framework in order to allow proper monitoring of progress made and results achieved by the IPA Information and Communication Programmes. To establish the baselines, a baseline study can be commissioned to an external contractor in order to develop respective baselines.