



Evaluation study on DG ECFIN's communication strategy and activities in view of the evolving role of the DG

European Commission
Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs

Final Report

7 June 2015

ICF International

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Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report provides the results of the evaluation of DG ECFIN's communication strategy and activities. The assignment was undertaken between November 2014 and May 2015 by ICF in collaboration with Henningsen Consulting.

Objectives and Scope

The purpose of the assignment was to evaluate DG ECFIN's communication efforts and provide guidance and recommendations towards refining and further developing DG ECFIN's Draft Communication Strategy¹. The evaluation had three main objectives:

- To evaluate DG ECFIN's communication efforts in relation to its communication objectives and to recommend options to further develop and tailor communication efforts
- To identify and assess current collaboration and coherence between DG ECFIN's and other EC and EU actors involved in communicating economic policy.
- To provide guidance on how to measure the effects of DG ECFIN's communication activities.

The study covered DG ECFIN's external communication activities, focusing on efforts in the last years. Euro related communication and internal communication were not covered by the assignment.

Approach and method

The methodology for the study was developed in light of the objectives of the study. The report relies upon data collected through the following methods and tools: stakeholder survey, analysis of monitoring data as well as other sources and interviews with various stakeholder groups, DG ECFIN officials, officials from a sample of other DGs; EC Representations and media professionals.

Relevance and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication

Suitability of the audiences targeted

DG ECFIN's Draft communication strategy identifies seven groups of stakeholders to be targeted by its communication efforts². Some are "new" audiences; others have been priority audiences in the recent years. They reflect the need to generate an environment which supports and encourages Member States to choose and to undertake the reforms in the framework of the European Semester Process.

The defined groups are suitable to the mission of DG ECFIN. The strategy does not omit any key stakeholders. However, some target groups are potentially very large and some lack specification. The strategy does not consider if priority should be given to some Member States and there is no evidence that content (narrative) is shaped to address divergence among different stakeholder groups. While targeting in practice may take place, lack of specification implies a number of risks – including the risk not to focus and to engage primarily already engaged/supportive audiences.

The Draft Strategy in addition considers the public as an audience. The public, however, is expected to be reached primarily through the stakeholders and the media. This approach is judged appropriate by most stakeholders consulted and is suitable given the objectives of the Draft Strategy.

Stakeholder focused communication

Cumulatively, DG ECFIN's activities enjoy significant exposure among most of its stakeholder groups. Most of the direct exposure is generated by DG ECFIN's continuing information tools: its website; its publications; its newsletter; and its Twitter account, as well as through the EC's Spokespersons service's (SPP) press releases. Comparatively, events offer more depth but generate more modest reach.

Some groups are better reached than others. Economic opinion-formers, national finance and economic ministries and financial institutions and other EU institutions are the main audiences reached by the activities. In contrast, the direct reach of sector ministries, trade unions, NGOs and national parliaments

¹ *Making Communication and Integral Part of Policy Delivery*, internal document, dated February 2015

² Policy-makers, Media, Economic opinion-formers, trade unions, financial institutions, business and NGOs

reach is more limited and in several cases modest. Reach is fairly evenly distributed across Member States, albeit higher reach is observed in Euro countries. Also, a significant share of reach is concentrated in Brussels. Modest reach among certain groups is in part mitigated by multiplication of EU level representative organisations.

Awareness of DG ECFIN's communication tools and instruments among engaged stakeholders is high, as is their level of use. Stakeholders tend to follow several tools. Tools most used are press releases and publications, across all stakeholder groups. Publications, especially the forecasts, stand out as the single most useful and followed activity. Stakeholders are appreciative of the seminars and events organised by the EC. This is especially true for the different seminars which have been organised in the last year for different stakeholder groups. Importantly also, stakeholders consulted are highly appreciative of the enhanced engagement with DG ECFIN.

Across stakeholders and across tools, DG ECFIN content is perceived of very good quality overall. There is no substantive content missing and all the main areas which should be covered are covered. Many praise the content as comprehensive without unnecessary detail and generally rate it positively for clarity, organisation and timeliness. The change in the EC political discourse and the focus on "a growth agenda" is noted by all stakeholders and is generally welcomed.

The different target audiences, however, unavoidably have different needs and expectations for content - requiring different messages; higher levels of political sensitivity; more focus on rationale for policy choices; analysis that accounts for wider societal implications of the proposals/recommendations and more evidence. These issues become all the more important with more diverse groups of target audiences – and with target audiences which are less inclined to support DG ECFIN's conclusions.

Overall, there is evidence to suggest that DG ECFIN's communication supports a well-informed public policy debate. The quality of DG ECFIN's analysis is good, which reinforces ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic analysis. Positively, also, content is multiplied by stakeholders. There is abundant evidence that engaged stakeholders draw extensively on DG ECFIN's economic and financial analysis and on wider policy documents issued by the EC, using it to support economic analysis by their organisations; to inform policy analysis; to inform position papers and in dialogue with policy-makers. The policy influence of DG ECFIN content, however, is primarily taking place through its use in third party analysis, which does not necessarily support the EC's conclusions.

The tools used to engage stakeholders are generally the right ones, are properly used and are generally effective. There is nothing to suggest that any of the tools per se being used to reach the targeted stakeholders should not be maintained, with the possible exception of the BEF. As regards the tools used, the following limitations, however, should be noted:

- While publications – primarily the forecasts – are reported as the single most useful tool, some stakeholders raise questions regarding bias. This should be an area of concern as DG ECFIN's influence model, which underpins the Draft Strategy, is built on the assumption that the analytical work provides the basis for reputation building. Other areas of concern relate to the very limited use of several publication types, raising in turn questions of effective resource spend.
- The "new" seminars organised for trade unions and civil society groups have the potential to impact positively on these groups' perceptions of DG ECFIN, and to lead to greater dialogue. Seminars are seen as good practice examples of engagement and many of the stakeholders consulted called for further seminars and exchange. Events, however, also imply reputational risks. There will be an expectation to be "heard" during events – especially among stakeholders less inclined to support DG ECFIN's conclusions and recommendations. Unless DG ECFIN can cater for such a demand, there is an inherent risk of creating an expectation mismatch.
- Data suggest an issue with quality, reach, effective engagement and multiplication of DG ECFIN's flagship event, the Brussels Economic Forum (BEF). As this event takes up 8% of the total available communication budget of DG ECFIN, its continuation in its current form should be examined.

Media channelled communication

DG ECFIN's media relations activities have been designed to support the SPP, with DG ECFIN providing background information and content to ensure **quality** improvement in 'earned' media coverage. The activities implemented relate to support to the SPP and the cabinet; background/off the record seminars for national journalists and other background briefings; and finally other activities which

may be used by the media (the DG ECFIN website, publications, the DG ECFIN twitter account). In addition, DG ECFIN supports the European Semester Officers (ESOs) who at national level may inform and engage with national media “off the record”.

Overall activities specifically targeted at journalists are relevant and contribute to the objectives stated in the Draft Strategy. It does not appear that there are obvious information gaps, which could be covered by new/additional activities.

There is currently no data available which provides a comprehensive overview of the journalistic ‘reach of/exposure to’ DG ECFIN’s activities. The evidence collected nevertheless, suggests that DG ECFIN’s press related activities enjoy a significant potential exposure to journalists. Nearly all of the journalists consulted follow the EC’s press releases and other press material, as well as DG ECFIN’s Forecasts. DG ECFIN’s Twitter account is likewise extensively followed by journalists. Journalist seminars engage relatively fewer participants – yet they expose those journalists to more in-depth content.

Data on usefulness reflect usage patterns. Press releases and DG ECFIN’s publications provide the useful content for coverage. The added value of the Twitter account appears to be more modest for journalists.

In terms of content quality, overall journalists consulted rate the technical content as satisfactory and easy to access. The content, including that of press releases, is hardly ever used directly. Instead press releases give inspiration to stories. As for stakeholders, insufficient presentation of societal implications of policy proposals/recommendations is the single most frequently mentioned “major” shortcoming.

Data collected suggest that the journalist seminars are relevant. Most appreciated elements relate to interaction with the speakers and opportunities to participate in (important) press conferences. With the change of from “EJC organisation” to “Visitors Centre organisation” the use of external speakers seems to have been discontinued. The feedback collected does not suggest that this change has substantially deteriorated programme content. However, external speakers do have certain benefits (associated to newsworthiness).

Journalist seminars have a positive impact on the quality of coverage (accuracy and detail) as well as on journalists following new/additional EC sources. Higher levels of quality in terms of accuracy and detail do not often, however, translate into a change of tone of the coverage.

As it could be expected, DG ECFIN’s activities are complementary to those of the SPP. There is likewise nothing to suggest that the media related activities are overlapping with those of the European Semester Officers (ESOs). However, without questioning the quality and added value of the Brussels’ based journalist seminars, enhanced ESO involvement with the media nevertheless raises the issue of the continued need for Brussels based events in the medium term. Other areas of potential improvement relate especially to:

- Enhanced support to the SPP – with more focus on content with a greater political sensitivity and with correspondingly less technical detail.
- More attention to stories covering matters beyond the structural reforms and by linking EU economic and fiscal policy to wider policy areas of interest to the public.

Communicating directly to the wider public

As outlined, DG ECFIN’s draft communication Strategy aims at reaching out to the public mainly via stakeholders and the media with modest attention placed on reaching the public directly. Nevertheless, DG ECFIN currently works with a selected number of tools, which are explicitly targeted at the public. These tools are: The sub-site European Economy explained; Audio-visual clips; the Euronews “Real Economy” magazine; and publications.

There is little data available which can assess the extent to which the tools have contributed to better understanding of EU economic and fiscal policy; the needs for reform; and, a more positive perception of EU economic policies among the public. However, if one considers only the reach of these activities, it would be reasonable to conclude that it is unlikely that they have generated any substantial impact.

The logic of DG ECFIN’s different activities, and how reach is expected to be generated, differs across the activities. The Euronews funding generates ‘bought’ reach. Audio-visual clips, the sub-site

“European Economy explained” and publications are largely dependent on ‘earned’ reach via multipliers³.

There is some evidence that the stakeholders reached operate as multipliers for content targeting the wider public. However, multiplication largely happens towards a professional audience and/or among students. In turn this suggests that, beyond students, current stakeholders are not likely to operate as effective multipliers towards the wider public. Thus, if the tools targeting the public are to generate the desired reach, it requires a strategy for multiplication, which should consider: which specific audience; within the public and associated multipliers; how the tools are expected to be used by multipliers; and how to ensure that these tools are helpful to these. Currently these aspects are not considered in the strategy or elsewhere. In turn, this implies that multiplication and uptake is likely to be sub-optimal.

Collaboration and generating an impact nationally – opportunities and limitations

Working with the ESOs

The issue of complexity of DG ECFIN's policies is recognised by the vast majority of interviewees as a key communication challenge. Across the stakeholders consulted, there is consensus that, for effective communication to happen at Member State level, the specific Member State's context matters. Accordingly a tailored message is needed. The introduction of European Semester Officers (ESOs) has been welcomed as an excellent move in this regard.

ESOs engage, depending on Member State, with all or many of DG ECFIN's intended target audience, including the media. While it was out of scope to collect data on the effectiveness of the ESOs, the feedback collected suggests that till date they have been highly successful – addressing communication challenges and adapting the EC's core content to national messages. Therefore, ESOs are likely to constitute the biggest potential for DG ECFIN in terms of “increasing its impact directly in the Member States”.

Working with other EU level institutions and the Euro group MS SPPs

In general, cooperation with other EU institutions and Member States, in the area of communication is found to be good – with only very limited options identified which could enhance collaboration. Overall there appear to be more opportunities to enhance collaboration within the EC. The potential scope and concrete options for collaboration, however, are not possible to identify at this stage, given the activities which are currently initiated by DG COMM to support corporate communication and the uncertainty as regards future roles and responsibilities for communication within the EC.

Opportunities related to tools and services managed by DG COMM are already largely exploited by DG ECFIN with cross sub- delegation arrangements in place with different services.

How to measure the reach and effects of DG ECFIN's communication activities

DG ECFIN has put in place different systems to monitor and evaluate its communication efforts. For most of its activities some form of measurement is already in place. A review of the data available, however, suggests that there are a number of opportunities to improve measurement and evaluation. These opportunities are presented in section 4 together with suggested indicators and associated data collection tools for all the activities underpinning the Draft Communication strategy.

Recommendations

In view of the study findings it is recommended that DG ECFIN takes the following aspects into account when further developing the Draft Strategy of February 2015:

- While DG ECFIN's communication objectives and target audiences are relevant, they are broadly defined. In order to ensure that the strategy focuses on areas most in need, some set of annual priorities and values (KPIs) would help ensure that the effort focuses on areas most in need. Associated hereto, there would be benefits in more granularity in the targeting of audiences, considering exactly who needs to be engaged and how engagement will be ensured.

³ Assuming that most citizens are unlikely to visit DG ECFIN's website and see the videos, read content on the sub-site or download a publication, DG ECFIN is dependent on third party actors to multiply content.

- The strategy aims explicitly at ensuring that all groups perceive ECFIN as transparent and open to dialogue. Concentrating on disseminating information, the strategy lacks a complementary focus on listening, engaging and addressing concerns, issues and variant opinions through open dialogue.
- The strategy's objective of enhancing "reputation as an authoritative and credible source..." appears in practice to be left largely to the performance of 'business as usual'. A quiet but consistent PR programme to stimulate enhancing DG ECFIN's reputation should be considered
- The themes/content covered by the strategy mostly match the target audiences' needs. However, the tone of some of the content/messages might be reviewed. There are apparent opportunities to work with other DGs around the theme of structural reform. However, the heavy focus on fiscal consolidation and structural reform, and less focus on the growth agenda, may be seen as not complimentary to the communication priorities of other DGs.
- The tools targeting stakeholders presented in the strategy are suitable and have the potential to contribute significantly to the objectives set. However, relying extensively on already existing tools (without clear presentation of avenues to enhance reach) does mean that the overall reach is restricted to primarily those already in sight. There is a need to consider whether different tools (or the modification of existing ones) are required in order to reach out to stakeholders who form part of the priority targets but who are not yet engaged by any of DG ECFIN's existing tools – or if these are best catered for by the ESOs.
- Among the new tools, the stakeholder events are receiving extremely positive feedback and there would appear to be benefit in further developing these. However, consideration needs to be given to the listening and responding part otherwise there is a real risk of generating resentment.
- Given the cost and effect of the BEF, there is a need to consider whether it should be continued.
- Without questioning the content of journalist seminars, there is a valid question of their continued relevance in being provided centrally – especially in the medium term. Other areas of short term development relate to the possible use of external speakers
- From a resource input perspective the large number of publications published, combined with limited viewership of many of these raises the question of the need for "official publication" and additional monitoring of use. Other areas of publication development to be considered include notably better segmentation of mailing lists based on the user's background and possible preferences regarding the content. This in turn would require that user data is collected while subscribing.
- The tools being used to address the public sit within the objectives of the strategy, although without a clear rationale, definition and without specific objectives. If these tools are to be continued there is a need to consider: the objectives these are intended to serve specifically, with targets and indicators; and how to maximise their benefits. Encouraging others to use/multiply these tools demands a strategy that covers: a) how these can be used by the other parties and how it fits in with their needs and imperatives; b) who are expected to use them, in what circumstances and with what provisos; c) ensuring that there are adequate support structures; d) how to ensure that these tools are actually usable by and helpful to multipliers.
- The Euronews productions appear to be somewhat isolated from the balance of the objectives and their priorities as described in the strategy. In addition there are issues with some of the reach data. There is justification in suggesting its discontinuation or alternatively how to develop this tool in a more cost efficient manner collaborating with other DGs.
- The Draft Strategy would benefit from further specification on ESO activities in the MS and DG ECFIN's activities work together in practice;
- In that DG ECFIN's areas of interest are an important, if not pivotal, component of the 'corporate' reputation of the Commission, there should be opportunities to work with DG COMM supporting its addressing of the wider public. Likewise there is a need to actively consider how DG ECFIN can better work with other DGs on communicating the 'growth' agenda as this is likely to be a main priority for the coming years
- DG ECFIN has systems in place for monitoring most of its communication efforts. However, there still are areas for improvement of data collection and of analysis of data and use of data to refine efforts.

1 Introduction

This is the Final Report for the *Evaluation study on DG ECFIN's communication strategy and activities in the view of the evolving role of the DG*. The evaluation was commissioned by DG ECFIN in November 2014. The work was undertaken by ICF in association with Henningsen Consulting.

1.1 Organisation of the report

The report is organised as follows:

- The remainder of Section 1 presents the purpose, objectives and the scope of this evaluation.
- Section 2 presents the findings of the study covering DG ECFIN's communication activities (evaluative part of the assignment)
- Section 3 presents the findings of the study, covering opportunities to improve communication at a national level and collaboration with other actors
- Section 4 presents the suggested indicators for the Draft Communication Strategy
- Section 5 presents the conclusions of the study and the recommendations for DG ECFIN's Draft communication strategy

The following annexes are attached to the report:

- Annex 1 - Methodological approach to the study and work carried out
- Annex 2 – Analytical Framework
- Annex 3 – List of documentation reviewed
- Annex 4 – List of interviewees
- Annex 5 – Full survey results
- Annex 6 – Survey outline

1.2 Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

1.2.1 Objectives of the study

The purpose of this evaluation is to evaluate DG ECFIN's communication efforts and, on this basis, provide guidance and recommendations to inform and support the refinement and further development of DG ECFIN's draft Communication Strategy (*"Making Communication and Integral Part of Policy Delivery"*, internal document, dated February 2015).

The Draft Strategy foresees a change in DG ECFIN's approach to communication, taking on board the lessons learned from policy communication during the crisis and reflecting the evolving role of the DG. Key strands of the draft strategy cover the rationale for communication; objectives and themes to be covered; target audiences; timing and key communication actions; as well as financial and human constraints.

The specific objectives of this assignment were as follows:

- To evaluate DG ECFIN's communication efforts – in view of their suitability and contribution to the communication objectives - and on this basis to provide recommendations on options to further develop and tailor communication efforts - including at national level, working in cooperation with the EC Representations and the European Semester Officers (ESOs) and other national and local actors, including Europe Direct.
- To identify and assess current collaboration and coherence between DGs communication efforts and on this basis to identify gaps and unexploited synergies across other

Commission services involved in communicating economic policy. These actors have included a sample of relevant Sector DGs, DG COMM and the Spokesperson's Service (SPP).

- To identify options for enhancing synergy, coherence and effectiveness of communication with actors external to the EU institutions involved in communication of economic policy notably the Euro area Member States Spokesperson's network and other major EU institutions including the ECB, EP/ECON Committee, the EIB and the ECOFIN Council.
- To provide guidance on how to measure the reach and effects of DG ECFIN's communication activities.

1.2.2 Scope of the study

The study covers DG ECFIN's external communication activities within the EU Member States. Euro related communication, as well as internal communication is out of scope of the study

The study focuses on communication efforts in the last few years (2014 and, when data is available, 2013), so as to ensure the highest level of relevance of study results. DG ECFIN's communication efforts have a strong and explicit focus on selected stakeholder groups, with correspondingly less attention on the wider public. This study takes into account this approach and does only to a moderate extent consider the activities developed for the wider public.

The study was originally anticipated to have a strong forward looking component, with less attention given to assessment of past activities. However, in view of the ongoing activities of DG ECFIN to develop and refine its communication strategy, it was agreed during the Kick Off meeting that the study would evaluate DG ECFIN's past and current communication efforts in order to further inform and refine the Draft Strategy - considering "what works" and "what does not work".

Data collection was initiated in November 2014 and was completed end of March 2015⁴. To the extent possible most recent data has been used for the report.

1.2.3 Changes made to the study approach and issues encountered

As outlined, the study was originally anticipated to have a strong forward looking component. With the requirements for a stronger backward looking evaluation, certain amendments were made to the study approach. These changes included notably more data collection on recent and current activities so as to inform assessment and evaluation; the inclusion of an online survey; stakeholder consultations to focus more clearly on current communication efforts; and non-implementation of more prospective activities.

In line with the proposal, the study has relied extensively on stakeholder consultation with a variety of EU and national levels and actors. Most of the planned interviews have been undertaken. However, despite numerous contacts with potential interviewees and the extension of the study deadlines so as to accommodate potential interviewees' agendas, interviews have not always been possible. Furthermore, several of the foreseen informants have declined study participation. In some cases it has been possible to replace prospective informants. In other cases, however, this has not proved possible.

1.3 Object of the evaluation: DG ECFIN's communication activities

1.3.1 Background, policy changes and communication focus

DG ECFIN's communication activities form an integrated part of DG ECFIN's policy efforts; aiming to support and strengthen its policies and their delivery. This is to be achieved by

⁴ With selected interviews undertaken in April 2015

advocating for, and evidencing the suitability of, the policies that the Commission proposes and implements, thereby reinforcing support for the policies.

While the aims to support policy implementation reflect both past and present efforts, the focus and objectives of communication has changed profoundly over the last decade.

Prior to 2008, DG ECFIN was focused on the adoption of the Euro enlargement and the plethora of tasks related to economic convergence of new Member States⁵. After the onset of the economic and financial crisis, DG ECFIN took on a central role in the European Commission's effort to respond to the crisis. It required immediate action (and reaction) and often new, and specifically tailored, policies. This meant that gradual reforms had to be replaced by far broader and swifter ones in order to secure stability within the EMU and restore confidence; greater coordination was needed with Member States and other institutional counterparts (the ECB in particular), resulting among other things in a "modified and extended" policy role for DG ECFIN, reinforced by treaty and legislative changes.

In matching the evolution of its role and the heightened need for engagement with stakeholders, DG ECFIN's communication has been transformed. Communication has adjusted from a focus on public awareness regarding the Euro and EMU to communication on the crisis response, economic adjustment programme surveillance and EMU economic governance. With the crisis came a greater need to:

- Prioritise target audiences, in relation to their stake in, and potential impact on, policy development and the associated need to tailor messages to various stakeholders;
- Demonstrate the existence of a coherent overall strategy for recovery and that the EU is making full use of crisis support instruments. It has been important to convey messages about the adequacy of resources to the crisis response;
- Provide clear information regarding the package of measures intended to strengthen economic governance in the EMU

1.3.2 Communication objectives and target audiences

The Draft Communication strategy (February 2015) set out three main objectives for DG ECFIN's communication efforts:

- Enhance DG ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic policy proposals based on high-quality research and analysis by means of the efficient dissemination, clear explanation and open discussion of its work;
- Shape the economic policy debate at the EU level and influence policy-making at the EU and national level in line with policies developed by the DG, in particular by means of active engagement with key stakeholders;
- Ensure that the public policy debate is well-informed through the provision of clear, objective and accurate information to DG ECFIN's stakeholders and, where relevant, to the general public

The DG ECFIN influence model underpins these objectives. This model highlights that the backbone of the DG's communication efforts is its economic research and analysis activities, which are expected to impact policy makers and economic actors at two levels:

- By informing policy making, and policy recommendations made by the EC (policy element)
- Through the communication of the research results to stakeholders – building reputation and enhancing support to/endorsement of policy by stakeholder communities (communication element)

⁵ European Commission. 2007. Evaluation of DG ECFIN's information and communication activities on Economic and Monetary Union, including the Euro. Final Report. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/economy_finance/evaluation/pdf/final_report_prince_en.pdf

The Draft Strategy set out seven priority target audiences to be addressed by communication activities, some of which are relatively new audiences, and others which have been a priority in previous years. The groups are:

- Policy-makers
- Media
- Economic opinion-formers
- Trade unions
- Financial institutions
- Business
- Civil society/NGOs

Recognising the importance of the public, in terms of their impact on government, the Draft Strategy in addition considers the public as an audience. However, the public is expected to be reached primarily through the stakeholders and the media, rather than directly by DG ECFIN. In addition, DG ECFIN collaborate with DG COMM on a number of initiatives targeted at the public.

1.3.3 Communication activities

In line with the objectives set, the essence of DG ECFIN's communication efforts is targeted at a specialised professional audience. Outside the introduction of the Euro, DG ECFIN undertakes few activities directly aimed at the broader public. It is considered that such audiences are best served by DG COMM as part of its broader 'corporate' communication role. The main types of communication activities undertaken and led by DG ECFIN are: publications; media related activities and audio visual production; stakeholder outreach activities; and online activities (website and social media).

In addition, DG ECFIN's activities include a Euro change-over programme, which is deployed in Euro change-over countries; internal communication (both not covered by the study); and involvement in the European Semester Officer communication. Other activities include annual waves of Eurobarometer surveys in non-euro area countries and in euro area countries.

Publications

A main information and communication activity/service delivered by DG ECFIN is the development and dissemination of publications. Publications aim to support policy development, to establish the credibility of the EC's policy initiatives and (country specific) recommendations, building on appropriate economic analysis and models and to underpin the EC's policy reputation. In total, some 140 DG ECFIN publications were issued in 2014. The vast majority of these publications are technical and targeted at a specialised professional and academic audience. The content of all specialised publications is prepared by the policy units, whereas unit R1 is involved throughout the full process (planning, management, promotion and dissemination).

Five publications are in addition available for the broader public.

Media related activities

DG ECFIN support the SPP by undertaking a number of activities to support factual and objective media coverage of DG ECFIN's policy positions and initiatives by the print and broadcast media. These activities involve:

- Activities supporting directly the efforts of the SPP and the Cabinet (Drafting of press releases, memos, lines-to-take and background material – and media training for the Brussels based correspondents in relation to flagship events⁶)

⁶ supported by "stock" briefing and audio-visual materials targeted at journalists

- The organisation of regular journalist seminars for Member States-based specialised journalists – implemented in collaboration with the Visitors Centre

Other media related activities regard the funding and coordination of the Euronews “Real Economy”, developed under DG COMM’s Euronews contract.

Stakeholder outreach

DG ECFIN supports and/or organises a range of events. Main events include international conferences (The Brussels Economic Forum and the ECFIN Annual Research Conference and workshops/seminars for selected groups of priority target audiences, targeted trade unions, NGOs, and public finance economists/policy officers in national administrations.

The DG also organises a number of events annually, depending on the DG priorities⁷; coordinates meetings and events with specific stakeholders⁸; and DG ECFIN staff participate as speakers in externally managed events.

Beyond the (mostly) Brussels based events, DG ECFIN provides funding to annual/ biannual seminars organised in the Member States by ESOs, as well as speakers to these events. Other outreach activities include the DG ECFIN Newsletter.

DG ECFIN website

The DG ECFIN website is the main content provider supporting DG ECFIN communication. The website mainly aims at presenting the high level of economic intelligence emanating from within DG ECFIN and to position ECFIN as one of the key actors shaping the debate by it providing expert level information on European economy. All ECFIN publications are available online. In addition, the website provides a set of databases that allow for economic research (AMECO). Following concerns expressed by the European Parliament that the website was not providing enough information tailored to the European citizens, DG ECFIN developed the “European Economy explained” sub-site.

The web strategy is framed by the EC’s Digital Transformation Strategy. DG ECFIN’s main focus is on ensuring that the web pages are up to date and easy to access.

Social media activities

The DG ECFIN social media activities are concentrated around the DG ECFIN Twitter account which started operating in April 2009. DG ECFIN primarily uses Twitter as a dissemination tool, promoting further dissemination of press releases, publications, news and events. A more strategic approach was developed in summer 2014 and entails an increased use of visual content, such as pictures and infographics.

Audio-visual clips are used also by DG ECFIN as a way to reach and inform a wider audience. ECFIN audio-visuals are published on the website, uploaded on EUTube and promoted on Twitter. Three videos have been developed recently⁹.

Activities undertaken by the ESOs

European Semester Officers (ESOs) is a relatively new resource for communication. Based in the Representations of each of the Member States, ESOs have responsibilities for stakeholder communication and for building relations with key stakeholders. This work takes

⁷ Events organised in 2014 and 2013 regard: ECFIN Taxation Workshop; Policy Communication in EMU Conference; Country Workshop on the Czech Republic – Drivers of Growth; Workshop on government wage bill: determinants, interactions and effects (2013); Workshop: The use of tax expenditures in times of fiscal consolidation (2013); Country Seminar on Belgium: Medium-term challenges for the Belgian economy (2013); The joint/co-organised events were: Annual joint EC-EPEC Private Sector Forum on public procurement related issues (2013 and 2014); Conference on Current Account Imbalances and International Financial Integration (2013); Transatlantic Economic Interdependence and Policy Challenges (2013)

⁸ Such as high level dinners by DG ECFIN senior management in Brussels, Frankfurt and London

⁹ European economy audio-visual series: “ *The European economy: Stronger together*”

place in close coordination with country teams, the Secretariat General and DG COMM – under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the SEC GEN, DG ECFIN and DG COMM.

ESOs work under the EU Representation. While formally under DG COMM, they report also to the SEC GEN and ECFIN.

DG ECFIN supports their activities by sharing communication material and by providing financial resources for events and for ESO missions and travel in the Member States.

Other activities

Beyond the main activities listed above, DG ECFIN is involved in selected other activities targeting the public. This include participation in the “Open Days”; presentations given for groups at the DG COMM's Visitors' Centre; and the “Euro traveling exhibition”, which aims to support and complement national or local information campaigns about the single currency. The latter activity is expected to be discontinued in 2015. Another important activity, providing insight, is the annual waves of Eurobarometer surveys in non-euro area countries and in euro area countries.

None of these activities are covered by the scope of the study¹⁰.

1.3.4 Resources and budget

A definitive budget cannot be presented as the scope of the activities vary year by year, with some activities being funded annually and other undertaken only occasionally (e.g. video clips) or unevenly across years and with some activities being new. The annual budget allocated to DG ECFIN communication is in the range of 2.25 million Euros. Some 20 officials work within DG ECFIN on communication. A budget for the different communication activities in 2014 (actual budget) is presented in table 1.1.

¹⁰ Eurobarometer data however was analysed as part of the inception stage, and the results were presented in Annex 4 of the Inception report.

Table 1.1 Budgetary overview – DG ECFIN communication, 2014

Activity	Specification	Budget (euro)	% of total	DG ECFIN HR	Comments
Publications programme (7% of total allocated budget)	Publications targeted a stakeholder audience (online)	NA	NA	6 FTE (According to the Draft Strategy)	Interviews suggest HR resources allocated to publications might be higher
	General-interest publications	164,926	7%	1 FTE (According to the Strategy)	Printing, reprinting, shipping and updating of general interest
Media programme (13% of total allocated budget)	Support to CAB and SPP for media activities	NA	NA	2.65 FTE (According to the Draft Strategy)	
	Journalist seminar series	150,000	7%	0.5 FTE (estimated based on past EJC events)	Cross sub delegation to DG COMM Not clear if travel and subsistence is covered (questionable)
	Euronews - Real Economy	150,000	7%	Not known	
Stakeholder outreach programme (24% of total allocated budget)	Seminars for stakeholders 2nd part 2014 and 2015	100,000	4%	Not known	Cross sub delegation to DG COMM. Not clear if travel and subsistence is covered.
	Training for national officials 2015	57,297	3%	Not known	
	Travel accommodation for national adm.	68450	3%	Not known	
	BEF	188,558	8%	Not known	
	E-newsletter	117,434	5%	0,4 AD; 0,2 AST	
On the ground communication (9% of total allocated budget)	ESO events	200,000	9%	NA	Cross sub-delegation to DG COMM for ECFIN-related events organised by ESOs in MS
Website (14% of total allocated budget)	Maintenance and development of the external website.	230,597	10%	Not known	Excluding audio-visual enhancement
	3 videos - Online interactive and info graphic	84,812	4%	Not known	
	Purchase of audio-visual material & iStock Photo	6,040.50	0%	Not known	
Social media (8% of total allocated budget)	Consultancy services	175,027	8%	2.5 FTE	
Euro changeover programme (5% of total allocated budget)	Eurofestivities, banners, events and special LT EBB	105,122	5%	Not known	
Evaluation and monitoring (5% of total allocated budget)	EBB	338,361	15%	NA	
	Evaluation	96,825	4%	NA	
Other (1% of total allocated budget)	Open days and banner	23,635	1%	NA	
Total		2,257,088			

Source: Draft Strategy and expenditure 2014, DG ECFIN

2 Findings: Evaluation of DG ECFINs communication activities

This section covers the retrospective evaluation of DG ECFINs communication activities. Building on the assessment of the current activities, the section furthermore draws lessons for the Draft Strategy.

In line with the ToR and the discussions with the Steering Committee, this section covers the outreach activities to stakeholders, media and the public. The section is structured as follows:

- Sub-section 2.1 covers the communication activities targeting the 6 stakeholder groups defined by the Draft Communication Strategy
- Sub-section 2.2 covers the evaluation of the efforts targeting the media
- Subsection 2.3 covers the evaluation of the efforts targeting the public.

Focus is placed on the evaluation of the activities targeting the different stakeholder groups, with modest attention given to the efforts targeting the public, as agreed with the Steering Committee.

Accepting that in communication evaluation output (reach) is a key measurement, as it precedes any potential outtakes¹¹ and effects, this section considers in detail the nature and size of reach generated by the communication tools. The section furthermore considers the use and usefulness of the specific communication tools and their contribution to the defined results and outcomes overall; and considers avenues for improvement and development of specific activities.

2.1 Relevance and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication efforts - stakeholders

This subsection addresses the question of relevance and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication activities targeting stakeholders. In line with the ToR and the discussions during the inception stage, the section considers:

- **The suitability and the reach of the target audiences** – addressing the questions:
 - *Is DG ECFIN reaching out to the right stakeholders in its drive to get information across to facilitate the necessary economic reform processes in MS for jobs and growth?*
 - *Beyond stakeholders already addressed, which multiplier categories should ECFIN reach out to and how? How will the new strategy improve the targeting of DG ECFIN's communication efforts?*
- **Awareness, use and impact** of the communication tools and instruments - addressing the evaluation questions:
 - *To what extent does the reach translate into awareness and use of information?*
 - *To what extent have the activities generated outtakes and outcomes - what is the relative value/contribution of these activities to the expected outputs and outcomes?*
 - *With a forward-looking angle, which communication actions/means/channels are likely to yield the greatest value-added in terms of audiences reached and communication impact?*
- **Suitability of content**

¹¹ For a definition of outtakes see section 4. For more discussion of communication evaluation terminology see Measuring EC communication, ICF for DG COMM 2015

In line with the discussions during the inception phase, this section has both backward and forward looking aspects; building on the assessment of the current activities to draw lessons for the new strategy.

Section 2.1.1 cover target audiences, reach, awareness, use and overall impact. Section 2.1.2 reach and exposure of DG ECFIN communication activities and 2.1.3 covers in more depth the individual tools used by DG ECFIN.

2.1.1 Target audiences

2.1.1.1 Suitability of the target audiences

The definition of specific stakeholder groups on which to concentrate DG ECFIN's communication efforts is relatively new. With the crisis, the need for communication changed profoundly, making the previous 2004 strategy including some of the past activities and methods of targeting some audiences less adequate. Yet, while the objectives for post-2009 communication remained apparent, communication in practice became reactive rather than pro-active raising immediate concerns.

DG ECFIN's Draft communication strategy identifies six groups of stakeholders, in addition to the media, which are to be targeted by DG ECFIN communication efforts. Some of them are "new" audiences. Others have been priority audiences in the last years, (even if these priorities often have been implicit rather than explicit). The seven stakeholder groups defined are:

Table 2.1 Target audiences

Group	Specification (Draft Strategy)	"new"
Policy-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ministers, senior officials and other officials working on EU issues in finance/economics ministries and related institutions ■ Members of the ECON Committee of the European Parliament and their main advisors ■ Members of budget/economic committees of national parliaments and their staff ■ EU 28 	No
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Major economics-focused journalists among the Brussels press corps; ■ Economic and financial journalists of the major 'serious' press in the Member States; ■ Journalists from the specialised economic and financial press (national) ■ EU-28 	No
Economic opinion-formers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Academia ■ Think tanks ■ EU and US 	No
Trade unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EU 28 	Yes
Financial institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Market traders: chief economists and their research teams ■ Financial institutions in both, private and public sector (e.g. EIB, EBRD, national promotional banks, large banks etc.) ■ EU 28 	No
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Influential business federations rather than individual enterprises ■ EU 28 	Yes
Civil society/N GOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Limited but representative range of civil society and non-governmental organisations with an important stake in economic issues ■ EU 28 	Yes

The choice of target audience should be seen in the light of DG ECFIN's mission to “promote policies that ensure sustainable economic growth, a high level of employment, stable public finances and financial stability”.

They reflect primarily the need to generate an environment which supports and encourages Member States' governments and parliaments to choose and to undertake the reforms in the framework of the European Semester Process. In this respect, some of the target audiences may be considered as ‘enablers’, who may encourage or oppose policy choices taken by Member States governments and parliaments (e.g. think-tanks, academia, NGOs), with policy makers being the final target audience - as well as a direct target audience.

Recognising the importance of the public, in terms of their impact on government, the Draft Strategy does not explicitly exclude the public as an audience. However, it notes that the public is expected to be reached primarily through the abovementioned stakeholders – even if some activities are directed at reaching the public directly’.

Considering the mission of DG ECFIN, the defined groups are suitable. The evidence collected in the framework of this assignment clearly indicates that each of these groups has a stake and interest in the policy processes and consequently they engage, at EU and national level, in activities which directly or indirectly may have an impact on the content and implementation of reforms. This could be expected for policy-makers, media, economic opinion-formers and financial institutions, but it is equally apparent for the “new” target audiences.

2.1.1.2 Suitability of “new” target audiences – and their interest

For the companies represented by the business organisations, understanding the economic framework within which they operate is important. Economic and financial policy is, therefore, a major area of attention in the communication efforts of business organisations with their members. Similarly, it is key for trade unions to focus on economic and financial policy as this is a policy which can often drive employment-related goals. Hence, even for organisations which have a narrower scope (e.g. representatives of the liberal professions or education trade unions), and which therefore naturally focus less on economic and financial policy, some particular economic and financial issues are of interest (e.g. the national reform programme). The focus on economic and financial policy has increased since the crisis and the activities of the EU in this area are more closely followed as they determine to a large extent the context in which national policy makers are operating and the constraints which have to be taken into account.

In this respect, all issues around economic and financial policies are of interest. Business organisations follow the European Semester; the stability and growth pact; developments around the banking union; and discussions around structural reforms, including, where relevant, privatisation plans. Another key topic of interest at present is the Commission's investment plan (often referred to as the Juncker Plan'). Similarly to business organisations, trade unions closely follow the discussions around structural reforms; the economic situation and unemployment rates in other Member States in the Euro area; and initiatives to stimulate growth - mainly the Commission's investment package but also the ECB government bond-buying initiative.

The announcement of the Commission's investment package has been welcomed by trade unions which represents a long awaited shift from the strong focus on fiscal responsibility towards growth policies. One trade union participating in this study highlighted how, in the national debate, there is a concomitant move from fiscal consolidation topics to growth related issues.

The role of the “new” target audiences in their national settings highlights the importance of adequate engagement. In their respective countries, business organisations, employers and trade unions are engaged in the debate with policy makers in the context of the social dialogue. As social partners, employers' organisations and trade unions are consulted via various committees; they formulate suggestions for improvement and wish to influence policy making.

Researchers at business organisations and trade unions elaborate documents which analyse economic and financial topics (e.g. analysis of the National Reform Plans, analysis of Country Specific Recommendations) and then they issue position papers. Trade unions sometimes publish these analyses of the Country Specific Recommendations in collaboration with other organisations from civil society, as is the case in Ireland. Primarily addressing a national audience, business organisations and trade unions strive for a good presence in the media and reach among policy makers, their members, academia and other groups, for instance through the organisation of conferences and events and the release of publications.

Similar observations may be noted for civil society organisations (CSOs). The evaluation confirms that there is a strong interest among civil society organisations to be more engaged. Macroeconomic policies are at the centre of interest of many of them as these policies have direct effects on issues at the centre of CSOs' interest (poverty issues, social exclusion, unemployment issues, environmental issues, etc.). As with trade unions and business organisations, CSOs engage heavily in the public debate. Importantly, with trust in politicians and Government at a low level, CSOs are globally - and in many European countries (e.g. UK, Italy, Spain, Germany and France) the single - most trusted type of institution among the public¹².

The high level of interest in the European Semester among CSOs is exemplified by the recent efforts of EU level and national NGOs to form coalitions to be more involved in the design of macroeconomic policies and the European Semester process.

In this respect it can be also observed that "new" target audience (trade unions, employers and business organisations, and NGOs) have much welcomed the recent initiatives by DG ECFIN to better engage with these groups. However, scepticism as regards engagement, especially among NGOs should also be noted. Specific outreach efforts will be required to build trust among this stakeholder group.

2.1.1.3 Sufficiency of target audience – and their definition

Recognising the suitability of the selected groups, stakeholder consultations suggest that the strategy does not omit any key groups. None of the stakeholders interviewed suggested that the communication should focus on stakeholder groups other than those defined, but rather suggested more engagement or different way of communicating with the defined groups.

Some interviewees called for more focus on the public, citing, for instance, transparency reasons or simply to ensure the minimum level of understanding which is a pre-requisite for the support of some policies. However, most of the external stakeholders highlight the need to "stay clear of the public". Interviewees held that communicating with the public was unlikely to generate neither efficiency nor the expected change, and that the public would be best served via the media and stakeholder multiplication/communication efforts.

In this respect, data collected suggest that the stakeholder groups in the Draft Strategy are both suitable and sufficient. In contrast, it can be observed that some of the groups are relatively widely defined (and potentially large). Furthermore, in several cases there is only limited or no specification of the target audiences within a given group. Likewise, the strategy does not consider whether priority should be given to some Member States. Nor is there evidence that content (i.e. the narrative that is used) is targeted to address divergence of influence, power, interest, knowledge, and opinion among different stakeholder groups or Member States (e.g. opinions on the single currency in non-Euro countries; countries where opinion is that the common currency hampers the recovery process; divergent views between 'debtor' and 'creditor' countries).

In practice this sort of targeting may take place – possibly informed by Eurobarometer data and ESOs. However, without clear specification it is more challenging from an evaluation point of view to assess whether in practice those of primary importance have been effectively

¹² See Edelman 2015 Trust barometer, Global Results and results from the UK, Italy, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands. Accessible at <http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2015-edelman-trust-barometer/trust-around-world/>

engaged. Likewise, lack of specification implies an inherent risk of not concentrating on those within a group who are most in need of being engaged. It also increases the likelihood of not going beyond those already engaged and those already supportive of policy reform. In this respect, it may also be noted that study results indicate that for several groups, DG ECFIN already has a broad reach, suggesting a need to concentrate some of its resources on selected key interlocutors.

Since the strategy covers several years, and hence there is a need for some flexibility, providing additional detail on priority audiences may prove counterproductive. However, for steering day to day communication and for monitoring and evaluation purposes, there would be benefits in an annual plan to set out in more detail those that need to be engaged – allowing for prioritisation and efficiency of effort depending on the evolving context. The Annual Communication Strategy (which form part of DG ECFIN's Annual Management Plan) could possibly serve this purpose, subject to being formulated with this purpose in mind.

Such a development ideally could be done in consultation with the ESOs, in view of their experience on the ground, in light of the areas where they encounter most communication challenges and in order to ensure the highest level of consistency and effectiveness of the aggregated communication efforts. Stakeholders' mapping (as conducted for this evaluation - see Inception Report Table 4.2) along the axes of 'interest', 'power' and 'influence', needs regular up-dating in the light of changing relationships and levels of engagement. ESOs, it is suggested, could be well placed to contribute to the value of the updating process. Additionally, the stakeholder map becomes a record of the changing nature of relationships and acts as a reminder of the different needs (in terms of method of approach and content) of different stakeholders at any given stage. Generally, those who are identified as 'High on Interest' but 'Low on Influence' require to be kept informed efficiently but are less of a priority for concentrated communication effort.

2.1.2 Reach and exposure of DG ECFIN communication activities among the target audience

Accepting that the stakeholders defined in the Draft Strategy are – in broad terms – suitable given the set objectives of the strategy, this section considers the extent to which these groups are being reached by DG ECFIN's activities and tools – and the scale of reach.

2.1.2.1 Quantitative reach among the target audiences

Judging by the monitoring data and stakeholder feedback, *cumulatively* DG ECFIN's activities (including publications and other non-communication activities) enjoy significant exposure among most of the defined stakeholder groups.

As could be expected, most **direct** exposure is generated by DG ECFIN's continued information tools: the ECFIN website; its publications; its newsletter; DG ECFIN's Twitter account, as well as through the SPP's press releases. Comparatively, events generate a modest reach, but one of more depth.

Due to lack of data and persisting issues with comparability, it is not possible to assess in a robust way the direct reach of the communication tools. However, the data suggest that cumulatively DG ECFIN has up to 30 thousands "contacts" via Twitter and the E-news, allowing DG ECFIN to reach out to them on a regular basis. The different events organised by ECFIN (on which there is available data) have generated a reach (2014 and 2015) of some 1000 people – with most of this reach stemming from the 2014 BEF.

Furthermore, the website (including its embedded publications) has generated some 4.2 million visits in 2014. An overview of the available reach data is presented in table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 Reach data on DG ECFIN's different communication tools – 2014 (where data is available)

Tool	Reach data	Comments
Twitter	23,4K followers	

Tool	Reach data	Comments
DG ECFIN newsletter	6,9K subscribers	
Visits		
DG ECFIN's Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2014 visits: 4,05 million ■ Unique visitors: 1,98 million ■ Total pages viewed: 10.21 million 	Unique visitors are counted on a daily basis. This implies that a unique visitor can be counted as multiple times when summing up unique visitors. This explain the modest difference between the unique visitors and total visits
Publication downloads	2014: Total downloads all publications: 1,03 million	Downloads are counted in the website statistics (hence disregarded in total visits).
Press releases	2014: Total views of 20 press releases and 15 speeches (most viewed): 134,0 thousands	Full data on press releases is not available – data only available for the 20 most viewed press releases and the 15 most viewed speeches
Accumulated visits	4,188 thousands	Estimated – included only most viewed press material.
BEF - 2014	643 participants	Including EC participants
7 seminars - stakeholders	246 participants	
Total events	889 participants	

Source: DG ECFIN, monitoring data (for the different tools)

Website statistics, as other reach data, however needs to be read with considerable caution. This is among other due to:

- **Interlinks between the different communication tools.** Many of the tools are in practice linked together, which means that a user seeing a piece of information may generate traffic on several tools. Illustratively, a user opening a press release on a forecast and who wishes to explore the forecast will, in terms of monitoring registration, generate a visit to the press release data base, a visit to DG ECFIN's website - at least two page views on DG ECFIN's web-pages - and eventually additional page views if summaries or country reports are opened. The viewing of the publication will also be registered as part of publication views. Furthermore, should the user follow the same path the following day, he/she will artificially inflate reach data while no higher reach (in terms of individual users) is actually generated.
- **Contact/followers do not ensure effective reach.** In practice, many subscribers are not likely to read the content to which they are exposed. A key indicator for effective reach is usually that of "open rate" and "click rate". However such data is not available for e-news and the Twitter account.
- **Unique contacts do not mean individuals.** In practice, many of the users registered are likely to follow several rather than one source/tool. This is illustrated by the survey undertaken in the framework of this study. On average, survey respondents indicate that they follow/use 3.8 sources (out of 5 possible) on a regular or occasional basis. In addition hereto, a large share of the respondents has in the past participated in one or more events organised by DG ECFIN.

While the extent of exposure overall can be evaluated positively, as an indicator of interest, this obviously also implies that the reach is more modest than suggested by accumulated reach data.

2.1.2.2 Who are being reached?

Stakeholder types reached

Data collected in the framework of this assignment, and available monitoring data, suggest that DG ECFIN activities in essence reach out to those stakeholder groups which have been defined by the Draft Strategy as the intended audiences.

However, data also suggest that some groups are better reached than others. Data on the nature of those reached has been collected through the survey undertaken. Furthermore, to complement this data, a mapping of a sample of the subscribers to the e-newsletter has been undertaken¹³ together with analysis of BEF participant data.

Even if the data should be taken as indications rather than complete results¹⁴, all data sources suggest similar reach: Economic opinion-formers (academia¹⁵ and think tanks), national ministries (Brussels based diplomatic staff, Ministries of finance and/or economy and other relevant ministries) and financial institutions (private banks, national banks, investors and insurance companies), together with staff from the EC and other EU institutions, are, in quantitative terms, the main audiences reached by the activities. Furthermore, data would suggest that the activities enjoy high levels of exposure among the officials working on EU issues in finance/economics ministries and directly related institutions. The reach of sector ministries is (substantially) more limited.

These results are consistent with interviews results: Academia and think tanks (especially the leading national and European ones) are considered to be well informed as are banks, ministries of economy and finance and business organisations.

In contrast, there is little to suggest that members of budget/economic committees of national parliaments and their staff are directly exposed to DG ECFIN tools in any substantial fashion. Similarly, the reach within trade unions, NGOs and national parliaments (and their staff) is modest. The modest reach within business organisations, trade unions and NGOs outside of Brussels, may also be noted. Staff from trade unions, NGOs and business organisations represent a combined 10% of total survey respondents (45 respondents). 40% of these represent EU level organisations.

While the Draft Strategy and DG ECFIN's newer activities explicitly aim at some of these groups, this is less so for others - in particular sector ministries and national parliaments. This is notable in that these last mentioned groups were identified in the study workshops as being "High on Power, Medium on Interest" – a marker towards activities that increase interest through engagement, resulting in greater (positive) use of their power.

Figure 2.1 below provides an overview of the quantitative data collected on audiences reached. Certain variations may be noted, such as the relatively strong participation of the representatives of the EU Regions in Brussels at the BEF annual event (6%) and the large

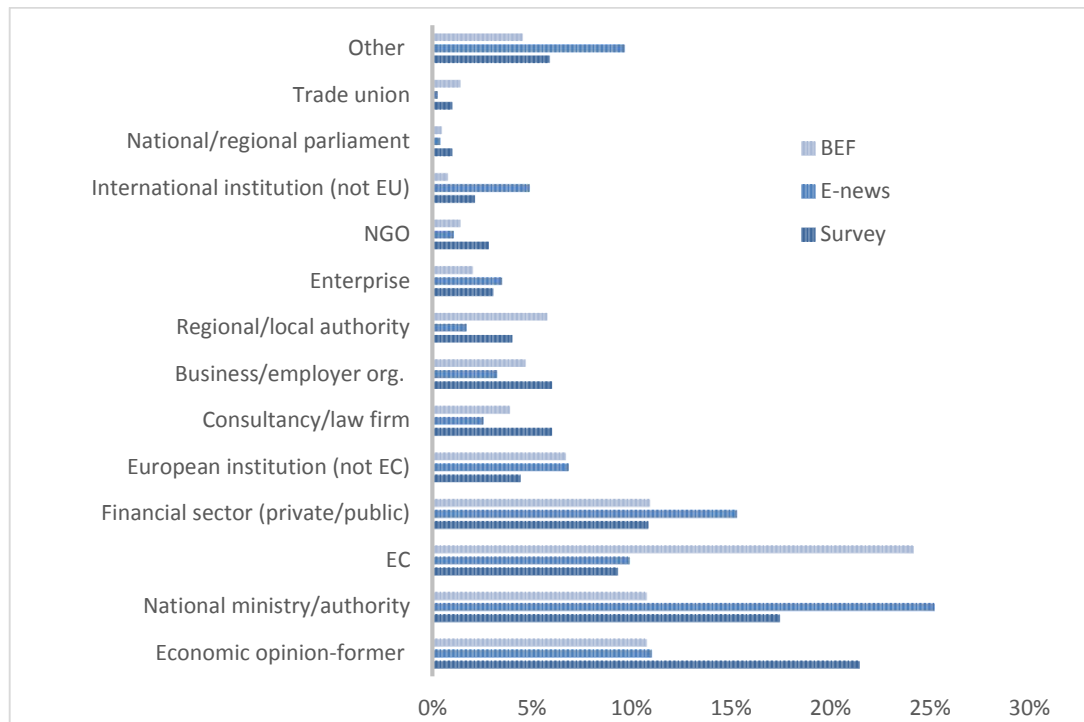
¹³ Data on the nature of subscribers to the e-newsletter is not being required. Only email addresses are available. Likewise mapping of followers to the twitter account is not available. Only limited data on the type of discussions followed is available.

¹⁴ Survey data is based on prospective participant's willingness to participate in the survey, rather than a representative sample. Email subscription data in this respect appear more reliable – especially considering its reported use (82% of survey respondents indicate that they at least consult it occasionally – suggesting that those with an interest are likely to be subscribed. Email subscription data, however, is not fully reliable. A specific issue is that a large number of subscribers have used a private account (Hotmail, Gmail or similar) for subscription. The share of subscribers having used such accounts represent a total of 22% of all the subscribers. This may potentially explain the lower than expected number of academics identified.

¹⁵ Academia covers in practice professionals. Judged by the survey results, only few students follow DG ECFIN (4% of all having chosen academia in the survey)

share of staff from national ministries and agencies subscribed to the newsletter (25% of those mapped).

Figure 2.1 Reach among the target audiences



Source: ICF survey, N= 408, BEF= 566, E-news subscription data, N=2339 (sample) – media disregarded¹⁶.

Judging by the survey results, a majority of those reached are heavily engaged in economic and economic and/or financial policy issues. The biggest group of respondents (27%) indicate that their work is centred on EU economic and/or financial policy issues. An additional 26% indicate that their work is focused on national economic and/or financial policy issues.

Furthermore, nearly half of them work specifically on EU affairs. Beyond the 27% working on EU economic and/or financial policy issues, 17% indicate that their work is centred on EU policy issues in general.

The share of users working on thematic policy issues (e.g. employment, regional development, education etc.) is relatively lower (12%) - as is the share of those concentrating on private sector issues.

Those having indicated “other” mostly fall within the abovementioned categories; work in banks, think tanks or academia on financial and economic issues; or are retired (usually having previously worked on EU economic and financial issues).

The close involvement in EU economic and fiscal policy is also illustrated by the extent to which audiences follow the policy area. Nearly half of the survey respondents (48%) indicate that they follow EU economic and/or financial policy issues “every day” and an additional 39% indicate that they follow these issues regularly.

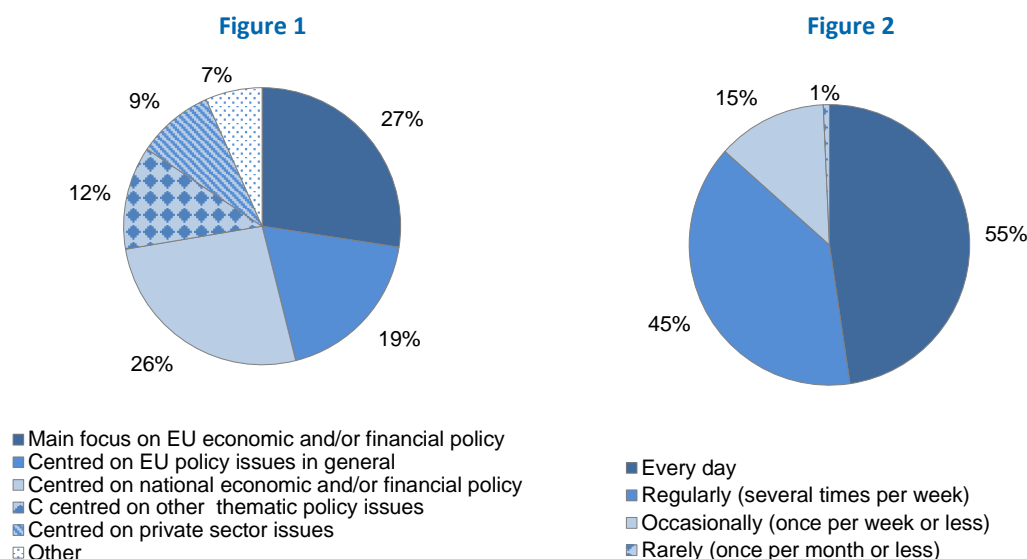
While survey data is likely to more strongly represent those interested¹⁷, it is nevertheless remarkable that only 14% indicate that they follow EU economic and/or financial policy issues occasionally – specified as once per week or less. In turn this data is consistent with the reach

¹⁶ As media is not included the results do not sum up to 100% (media represent in the range of 12% (BEF) to 4% (survey respondents))

¹⁷ Due to self-selection in survey participation

data – suggesting that the reach is more modest among those who do not consider EU economic and economic and/or financial policy issues their core professional occupation.

Figure 2.2 Figure 1: Professional involvement in EU policy affairs, Figure 2 Frequency of following EU economic and/or financial policy



Source: ICF survey, N= 423

Geographical distribution of reach

Data collected through the survey suggest that reach, as to some extent could be expected, is concentrated in Brussels. In total, some 26% of all respondents are located in Belgium. In part, this is due to the inclusion EU institutions staff – which represent 9% of the respondents. The single largest group, however, (17%) is Belgium based and outside the EU institutions.

Beyond Belgium, survey data would suggest that reach is relatively evenly distributed across Member States. Spain and Germany, however, stand out with relatively higher numbers of respondents (10% and 8% respectively). Moreover, it is observed that the reach within the Euro countries overall represent 68% of total reach – versus a reach of 14% among the non-Euro Member States. The remaining reach relates to third countries and EU institutions’ staff. Given the limited survey sample, country distribution of e-newsletters’ subscribers has furthermore been mapped to the extent possible¹⁸. This data confirm the main trends in the subscription data – with subscribers working for organisations in the Euro countries in a clear majority (64%); with an over representation of email addresses ending on .be or on .eu (outside EU institutions); with a large number of subscribers working within the EU institutions; and with a correspondingly lower representation of respondents from non-Euro Member States. Some differences may however, also be noted - such as the stronger representation of Germany and the weaker representation of Spain - compared to the survey data.

Judging from the data collected, there is some limited evidence to suggest that US academia, at least to some extent, follows DG ECFIN sources. Of the seven US respondents, three were from academia. A number of academia references were also identified in the mailing lists. However, the data is too limited to consider the scale of reach.

2.1.2.3 Direct and indirect reach of the target audiences – working with key multipliers

As outlined above, data suggest that the **direct** reach of some groups is modest, whereas others appear to enjoy higher levels of exposure. Low direct exposure is particularly true for the “new target audiences”.

¹⁸ For a discussion of data availability see footnote 7 and 8

However, how reach is generated varies depending on the group. A key characteristic of the “new” stakeholder audiences is the nature of the organisation. National policy-makers, economic opinion-formers and financial institutions are, if engaged, more likely to be reached directly by DG ECFIN, through its varied activities.

Trade unions and national business organisations are federated into EU level organisations – as well as at national level. Similarly, NGOs enjoy high levels of federation albeit often less formal, and usually with much less resources. The EU level organisations federating business, employers, NGOs and trade unions, which have been consulted in the framework of this study, all are familiar with the different communication tools of DG ECFIN – and follow its content.

While these organisations are not a sole source of content, they do play an important role, both multiplying relevant information to their national members and engaging their members in a debate, discussion and analysis of EU economic and fiscal policy. At national level, federating organisations play a similar multiplication role. Typically, business organisations and trade unions disseminate the information among their members who, depending on their configuration, can be the final targets or can be intermediaries in charge of disseminating further. A tool to disseminate the information can be the gathering of committees having a general purpose or being dedicated to European Affairs.

Federating organisations draw on the economic and financial analysis of policy documents emanating from the European Commission. In a first phase, organisations absorb the content coming from DG ECFIN and in a second phase they comment on those documents. The contexts in which DG ECFIN sources are used reflect the role of the social partners / civil society: they incorporate relevant information in the analyses they publish, the position papers they issue and in dialogue.

Put differently, while the direct reach may be low, indirect reach may be high(er) as each organisation also uses this content to communicate and engage with their members. Hence the actual reach among these groups is higher than the above data would suggest.

Higher levels of organisation may be seen as an opportunity which in principle should facilitate communication with the new target audiences. This is especially true, considering that the NGO's, trade unions and employer organisations consulted have much welcomed DG ECFIN efforts to engage with them on more substantive matters.

However, judged by the data collected, this is an area which is in need for further development. DG ECFIN has, within the last six months, organised two events for Trade Unions and two for employers and business organisations, including SMEs. One event for NGOs was planned at the time of data collection.

The organisation of the trade union seminars has been building in the “journalist seminar” approach – where ESOs get involved in the appointment of prospective participants. EU organisations (ETUC in particular) have been invited to collaborate, but were not involved in the selection of the participants. As ETUC is the key EU level collaborator for national trade unions, this highlights the need for better collaboration. In this context, there would also be benefit in working closer with DG EMPL, Unit B1 *Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations* so as to ensure efficient implementation and a consistent policy message.

As regards the organisation of the NGO seminar, it is noted that DG ECFIN has been working with the European Poverty Network. While data is not available on the outcome of this event, it is noted that DG ECFIN, by the time data was collected, was not engaged with the *EU Semester Alliance*, which seemingly federates suitable partners to contribute towards ECFIN's desire to engage more regularly and substantively with the NGO community – in line with the Draft Strategy.

Launched in April 2014, this alliance, representing major European NGOs (including the European Poverty Network) as well as trade unions, aims to “strengthen civil dialogue engagement in the European Semester at national and EU levels” ensuring that the European

Semester is becoming more supportive of the Europe 2020 strategy¹⁹. The EU Semester Alliance plans to carry out capacity building activities towards its national members to increase their understanding of the EU semester process. Beyond its members, coalitions at the national level presently exist in three countries: Bulgaria, Ireland and Denmark.

2.1.3 Awareness, use and impact of DG ECFIN's communication tools

2.1.3.1 Awareness and use of tools

Stakeholder consultations and survey results suggest that generally the stakeholders engaged are aware of DG ECFIN's communication tools and instruments that are targeted towards stakeholders.

The awareness level is high, as is the level of use. Judging by the survey results, a very clear majority (+95%) are aware of DG ECFIN publications; EC press releases on economic and financial affairs; the EC ECFIN newsletter; and DG ECFIN's website. And, not less than 84% of the survey respondents indicate that they use these tools regularly or occasionally - with higher shares for selected tool. As presented in figure 2.1 tools used most regularly are press releases and publications – across all stakeholder groups.

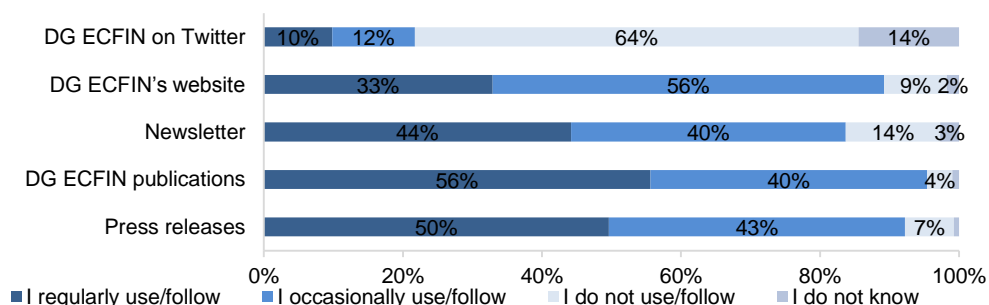
Awareness and use of DG ECFIN's Twitter account is lower. Only 22% of the survey respondents indicate that they follow the Twitter account regularly or occasionally. In many cases interviews suggest that low use is explained by lack of use of Twitter in general or because many stakeholders follow the Commissioners themselves. The fact that many core users do not use the Twitter account could suggest that those following this account in part are complementary to “core users”.

On average, survey respondents indicate that they use/follow 3.8 of the five mentioned tools regularly or occasionally. Judging by participation rates to events, awareness of events is much lower but nevertheless significant (37% of respondents having indicated that they have participated in the BEF and 22% have indicated that they have participated in other events). There are some difference in awareness and use across the different target groups but these are relatively small (in the range of 5%).

Similar results are observed from the stakeholder interviews. Nearly all stakeholders interviewed indicate that they are aware of and follow the DG ECFIN publications, the press releases and DG ECFIN's website, with somewhat lower awareness of the newsletter (especially among trade unions) and generally very limited use of the Twitter account.

The awareness of tools targeting the wider public is likewise lower (see section 2.3).

Figure 2.1 Use of DG ECFIN's communication tools



Source: ICF survey, N= 423

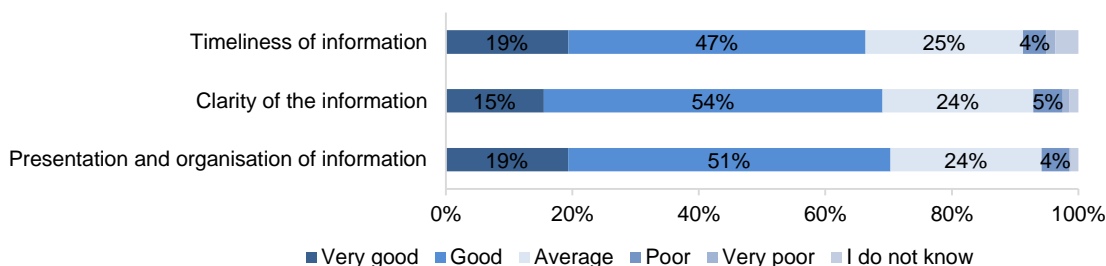
2.1.3.2 Quality and usefulness

Across stakeholders and across tools, DG ECFIN content is perceived of very good quality overall. While there is scope for improvement of some specific activities, stakeholders are generally highly appreciative of quality. Few perceive that there is “too much unnecessary

¹⁹ See <http://semesteralliance.net>

detail” and many praise the comprehensiveness of content²⁰. Similarly, content is generally rated positively in terms of clarity, organisation and timeliness.

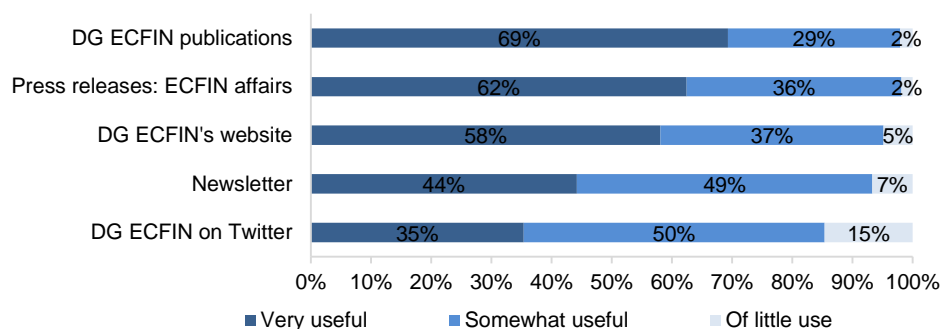
Figure 2.2 Clarity, presentation and timeliness



Source: ICF survey, N=414

Both survey results and interviews show that publications is not only the single most used but also the most useful tool across all stakeholder categories. The second most useful – and used – tool by stakeholders (other than the media) is press releases, followed by the DG ECFIN website. The newsletter and, especially, the Twitter account are less useful to those using it.

Figure 2.3 Usefulness of DG ECFIN’s communication tools



Source: ICF survey, N, vary between 391 and 81 (covers only users who indicated that they used the tool)

Stakeholders are generally equally appreciative of the seminars and events organised by the EC. This is especially true for the different seminars which have been organised in the last year for different stakeholder groups. Importantly also, stakeholders consulted are highly appreciative of the enhanced engagement with DG ECFIN. Seminars are seen as good practice examples of engagement and many of the stakeholders consulted – including those who had not been participating but had heard about the seminars - called for further seminars and exchange. This is also true for those stakeholders who have provided more mixed feedback on the actual quality of relevance of these.

In contrast, feedback is more mixed for the BEF, with many stakeholders commenting that the event is too focused on one way communication and does not encourage a policy debate. Considering the importance of this flagship event, there is a need to reconsider its focus, approach and audience engaged or, alternatively, in view of the costs associated with the event, consider its discontinuation.

2.1.3.3 Scope of content and suitability

In terms of communication efforts required, interviewees generally agreed that there is no substantive content missing, and that all the main areas which should be covered are covered. Furthermore, beyond very occasional mentions of austerity, there was no single issue or

²⁰ The comprehensiveness has been highlighted by many of the stakeholders interviewed as well as by survey results – with 56% indicating “comprehensiveness” as the one of the key attributes of DG ECFIN’s content.

policy on which DG ECFIN/EC's communication should be reduced/ avoided entirely. In this respect, it appears that that the themes defined in the Draft Strategy are suitable.

Overall, DG ECFIN is perceived as communicating relatively well on the defined topic areas.

However, the different target audiences as defined unavoidably have different needs and expectations for content. This is apparent in both the interviews and the survey results - with some stakeholders calling for more substantive technical evidence underpinning analysis and conclusions (many in academia); others calling for less and more 'digestible' content (e.g. Business organisations); and others again calling for analysis that accounts for wider societal implications of the recommendations (in particular trade unions and NGOs).

This issue becomes all the more important with more diverse groups of target audiences – and with target audiences which are less inclined to support DG ECFIN's conclusions.

Among the target audiences consulted, trade unions and CSOs in particular called for analysis to take into account better and more comprehensively the social (and ecological) dimensions. There is also a call for better explanation and for evidence supporting the necessity of the EC's recommendations. Content in this respect is felt to be too technical; lacking policy arguments; lacking consideration of alternative policy options; and lacking connection to the Europe 2020 agenda.

The call for better and more substantive arguments for reform is, however, not limited to trade unions and CSOs. Among the stakeholders surveyed, the most frequent shortcoming of DG ECFIN's communication mentioned is that of insufficient presentation of societal implications of policy proposals/recommendations. No less than 34% of those surveyed indicated this as a key shortcoming.

Further, 27% indicated that analysis is lacking a clear presentation of policy implications. Along the same lines, 23% noted that benefits of policy suggestions are not clear, suggesting a need to make the material more understandable and to improve the way it is delivered – especially for non-academia and Ministries of Finance and Economy.

Finally, several stakeholders have pointed out the need for more focus on the European Semester process itself and on economic governance issues. The European Semester process is felt, by some stakeholders, to be very complex and lacking transparency. Communication is not felt to be used adequately to address these issues.

Communication on the investment plan

The change in the EC political discourse and the focus on “a growth agenda” is noted by all stakeholders consulted. And this shift has been generally very welcomed.

However, some stakeholders and other DGs also noted during their interviews undertaken between November 2014 and end of March 2015 that DG ECFIN's communication gives too little attention to the investment plan and to the growth agenda; and correspondingly too much attention on the “commitment to fiscal responsibility” and “structural reform”.

This is in part echoed by the survey results, with 22% of respondents indicating that DG ECFIN's efforts to provide comprehensive information on the plan has been poor, and only 36% stating that communication in this regard have been good or very good.

The relatively modest focus on the investment plan may also be observed in reviewing the Draft Strategy. While the communication strategy highlights “Providing a boost to investment” as one of its priorities, all of the expected results of the strategy (as defined in the annexes) relate rather to the priorities of “fiscal responsibility”, “commitment to structural reforms” and “Reinforcing the architecture of a genuine economic and monetary union”. Similarly, it is not clear how this priority is integrated into DG ECFIN's influence model.

2.1.3.4 Delivery of the expected outcomes

The draft communication strategy identifies a number of expected outcomes that the strategy is to deliver or to contribute to. As regards **effect on** stakeholders, the strategy defines the following expected outcomes:

- *Enhancing DG ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic policy proposals based on high-quality research and analysis*
- *A public policy debate well-informed through the provision of clear, objective and accurate information to DG ECFIN's stakeholders*
- *Broader reach of the findings of DG ECFIN's work and greater impact on policy-makers and opinion formers by means of wider dissemination of published works to new readers. In turn it is expected that deeper understanding of EC policies among policy makers and how they are made and will result in the adoption and implementation of the policies that are advocated by the EC*
- *Greater use of DG ECFIN analysis and research by academics and think-tanks in their work giving favourable mention to DG ECFIN's research and endorsing DG ECFIN's policies*
- *Deeper understanding of DG ECFIN's work among trade unions and civil society groups, leading to engagement with DG ECFIN in more areas of agreement, a perception of DG ECFIN being transparent and open to dialogue and as a result will represent DG ECFIN's work more positively to their own constituencies*

This section considers the contribution of the current activities to these outcomes. The section focuses on three aspects: reach of content via use and multiplication of the content; reputation; and engagement and impact on policy support. The section does not consider the extent to which communication results in the adoption and implementation of the policies that are advocated by the EC, as realistically this outcome will be impacted by a range of factors - of which EC communication is only one. Furthermore it does not consider citation of DG ECFIN work by academia, as this is not monitored.

Overall, it may be concluded that there is evidence to suggest that DG ECFIN's communication efforts support a well-informed public policy debate. Content is used and multiplied by stakeholders. The quality of the publications is perceived as good, which reinforces ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic analysis. The policy influence of DG ECFIN content, however, is primarily taking place through the use of content in third party economic and policy analysis, which may or may not support the EC's policy conclusions.

The "new" seminars organised for trade unions and civil society groups have the potential to impact positively on these groups perception of DG ECFIN, and to lead to greater dialogue. Events, however, also imply reputational risks. There is at this stage nothing to suggest that such events led to higher levels of endorsement of DG ECFIN's work.

Use and multiplication and of content

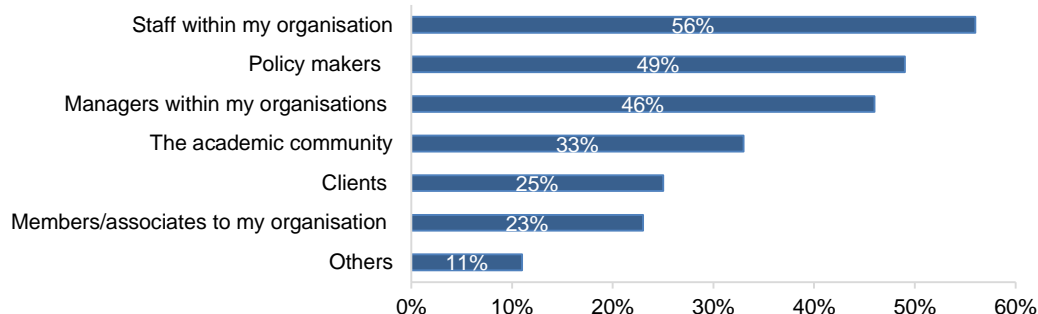
Stakeholders reached by DG ECFIN communication efforts are heavily engaged in communicating to others, and hence have the potential to operate as multipliers. No less than 68% of the survey respondents indicate that they are communicating/informing/reporting to others on economic/financial policy issues or on the policies' implications. The share is higher among many of those in the target groups (academia, think tanks, business organisations, trade unions and national ministries). That the target audiences play an important role as multipliers is also confirmed by the stakeholder interviews, with virtually all indicating that they play this role. Institutional multiplication as a role for EU level and national federating organisations is particularly important. Business organisations and trade unions disseminate information among their members who, depending on their configuration, can be the final targets or can be intermediaries in charge of disseminating further.

Furthermore, those engaged tend to engage with several groups. On average, those surveyed indicate that they engage with 2.5 different types of audiences²¹. Importantly also, nearly half indicate that they communicate to policy makers (49%), suggesting a potential exposure to the main ultimate target audience of DG ECFIN's communication efforts. Similarly, a wide

²¹ With others often containing several groups.

number communicate to member organisations, also groups defined as priority audiences. The share engaging with media or otherwise communicating with the public is lower (6%). More frequent engagement is, however, noted from the interviews especially among academia, think tanks and NGOs.

Figure 2.4 Audiences targeted by those reached by DG ECFIN’s communication efforts



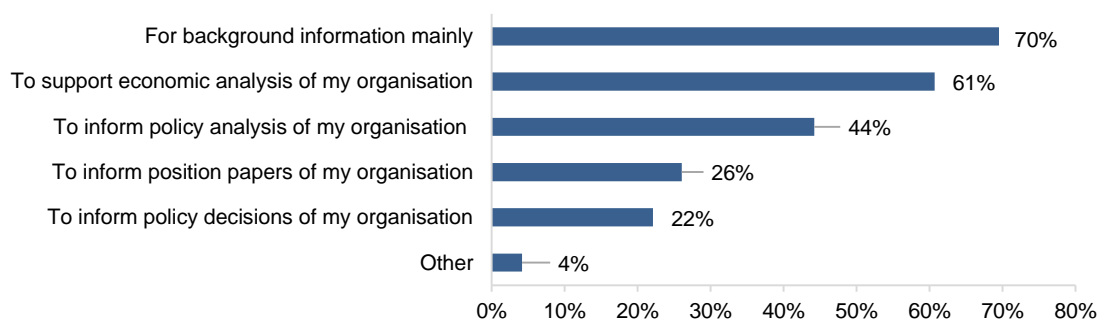
Source: ICF survey, N= 269

There is, furthermore, abundant evidence that those engaged draw extensively on DG ECFIN’s economic and financial analysis and on wider policy documents issued by the European Commission.

61% of survey respondents (media excluded) indicate that EC information relating to EU economic and financial affairs is used to support economic analysis of the organisations in which the respondents work, 44% use it to inform policy analysis and 26% use it to inform position papers. In contrast, the extent to which it is used to inform policy decisions appears smaller - with 22% indicating that content is used to inform policy decisions of their organisations. While there are differences across categories, these figures are relatively similar for the main categories which took part of in the survey. Academia, business/employer organisations, the financial sector and national ministries/public authorities primarily use content for economic analysis and secondarily for policy analysis. The share of those indicating that they use content to inform policy decisions represents 30% of respondents from business organisations and from the financial sector – and 22% from national ministries and other public national authorities.

In turn this suggest the policy influence of DG ECFIN content is - when occurring – primarily taking place through analysis undertaken by the organisations – or via analysis and research undertaken by third parties (e.g. academia). Illustratively, business organisations and trade unions consulted indicate that they absorb all the material coming out from DG ECFIN and in a second phase they comment on those documents. The extent to which they agree with the recommendations made by DG ECFIN will vary from organisation to organisation but can be quite high for business organisations. However, the contexts in which DG ECFIN sources are used reflect the role of the social partners: they incorporate relevant information in the analyses they publish, the position papers they issue and in the dialogue with policy-makers.

Figure 2.5 Use of DG ECFIN content – what is it used for



Source: ICF survey, N= 407(media excluded)

Finally, it may be observed that DG ECFIN is only one of many sources – with most stakeholders interviewed pointing to a large variety of national, EU level sources²² and international sources²³ being used, in addition to those of DG ECFIN.

Reputation building

ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic policy proposals is in essence expected to be generated by its publications – which are expected to provide the underpinning evidence for policy making.

As further discussed in section 2.1.4, the publications' quality is seen as good, and they are rated as the most used and useful of DG ECFIN's tools. Particular strengths relate to high confidence in the quality of data used; cross country coverage; the publications' 'official character' of the Economic Forecasts that adds to the credibility and weight of the publications. In these respects, it is unquestionable that publications add to the EC's reputation building.

However, the data also suggest that there are options for improvement. Those who have compared DG ECFIN's publications to those of the IMF and the ECB, consider the latter to be of better quality. Furthermore, while recognising the quality of the DG ECFIN publications, some stakeholders raised concerns about the objectivity of the policy conclusions which are drawn from the analysis undertaken. These stakeholders represent a minority of those consulted, both through interviews and surveys. Nevertheless, if some publications are perceived as biased by some stakeholders, it may carry some reputational risks.

Engagement and impact on policy support

The organisation of events for trade unions and civil society groups is a new activity. Therefore, drawing conclusions as to their effectiveness may be premature.

This said, judging by the feedback collected from the two seminars for trade unions, the organisation of such events has a significant potential to contribute to the stated objectives of enhanced engagement and an improved perception of transparency of DG ECFIN. Indeed, all participants interviewed perceived the events as a unique opportunity for gaining insight into the thinking of the EC. Moreover, the events were understood as a first step towards the recognition, by the New Commission, of the importance of social dialogue. In this respect, some participants' highlighted the events as "good practice examples" of engagement.

There is also evidence that the events generate an enhanced interest and a multiplication effect. All the trade union participants indicated that they had disseminated the outcomes of the event within their organisation and to their members through brief summaries and/or at conferences and seminars (their members often being trade unions which are expected to disseminate the information further). They likewise indicated that, as a result of the event, they followed more extensively EU economic/financial policy issues.

However, as could be expected, the interviews also indicated that engagement and knowledge does not imply automatic support for DG ECFIN policies. Indeed, while all participants interviewed indicated that they had improved their knowledge, none reported that it had implied a change in views. This is in line with research findings showing that better knowledge does not systematically drive positive attitudes²⁴.

Furthermore, the interviews indicated that careful consideration needs to be given to the purpose and aims of these events. Being representative organisations, there is an expectation of dialogue, and ultimately policy influence. Otherwise there is a risk of the events "back-firing".

²² EP-ECON, the ECB, the Council, Eurostat and EU level federations and consultancies and EU level think tanks

²³ IMF notably, as well as specialised media, notably the FT

²⁴ See for example Bauer, Martin W. (2009) The evolution of public understanding of science - discourse and comparative evidence. *Science, technology and society*, 14 (2). pp. 221-240

In this respect, one past participant got the impression that DG ECFIN was there to communicate its policy but not to gather inputs. That participant underlined how DG ECFIN should hold meetings in the semester process at an early stage, before recommendations are drafted, to make sure comments from social partners can be taken on board. This would avoid creating an impression that DG ECFIN is engaging with social partners only to legitimise their policy. In order to show that the views of the social partners have at least been considered, their standpoint should be recognised as having been considered, even (or especially) if not being agreed with.

2.1.4 How do the communication tools work? Specific observations on the different communication tools

In introducing this assessment of the communication tools currently being used, it should first be noted that the study found that they are generally the right ones, properly used and are generally effective. There is, therefore, nothing in the findings of this study to suggest that any of the tools *per se* being used to reach the targeted shareholders should not be maintained (the possible exception being the BEF) – although, there is a room for improvement in terms of effectiveness.

2.1.4.1 Publications programme

DG ECFIN publications constitute the backbone of the DG ECFIN's influence model as presented in the Draft Communication strategy. As presented, the analytical work is not only intended to underpin policy formulation but is also expected to contribute to DG ECFIN's, and the Commission's, reputation in research, so that the policy message will be effectively heard by the policy-makers. To this end DG ECFIN issues five main types of publications²⁵:

- *Institutional Papers*: High importance publications that include main reports and communications from the European Commission to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament on the economy and economic developments i.e. Economic Forecast, Programme Country Reviews, periodical contributions which aim to achieve a better understanding of economic developments in the euro area. They include: *European Economy (Main Series)*, *European Economy - Occasional Papers*, *QREA*.
- *Economic Briefs*: Short papers providing commentary or steer on a specific and current policy issue, country specific studies and concise analyses. They include: *Economic Briefs*, *Country Focus*
- *Discussion Papers*: Economic studies, models and analyses published under the names of authors, generally seeking experts' comments and suggestions. They include: *European Economy - Economic Papers*
- *Technical Papers*: EU Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries' Economic Quarterly. They include: *CCEQ*
- *Off-series*: Compendia of EMU legislation.

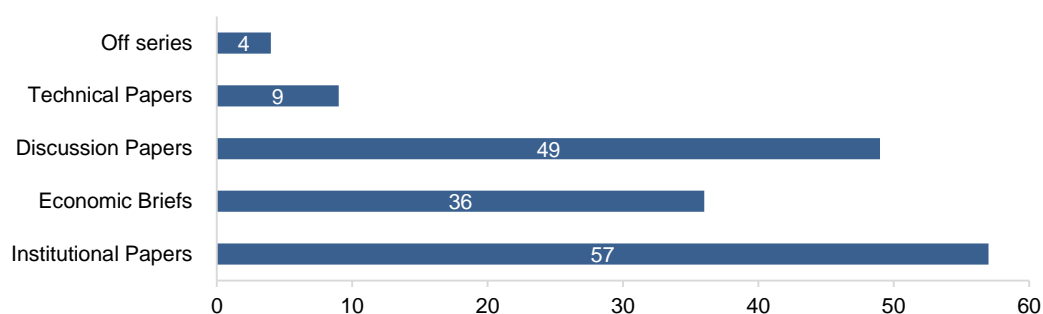
Publications are made available online, promoted via emailing²⁶, social media, DG ECFIN's newsletter and via press releases.

In total some 155 publications were planned to be issued in 2014, with the following breakdown per category which, however, uses already the 2015 denomination.

²⁵ Main types as defined in the Draft Communication Strategy 2015. The new series will be operational in the second half of 2015. The publications underpinning them are listed in the main text.

²⁶ the publication mailing list contains some 6,200 contacts

Figure 2.6 DG ECFIN publications in 2014



Source: 'Publications 2014/2015'

96% of stakeholders surveyed indicated that they regularly or occasionally consult DG ECFIN's publications. Publications are, therefore, the single most used and accessed resource of DG ECFIN, in total and across all stakeholder categories. The only other type of resource which has a similar level of popularity is the EC's press releases on economic and financial affairs. However, as the data below illustrates, the actual use of publications is in most cases limited to a few key publications, notably the economic forecasts.

Scale of access to publications

In total, all available publications (produced up until January 2015²⁷) have been opened about one million times in 2014²⁷. Half of all the publication views in this year relate to publications issued in 2012 or earlier. More recently, 2014 publications were viewed 293,707 times, while 2013 publications were viewed 213,595 times.

As could be expected, the DG ECFIN flagship publication, Economic Forecast, is attracting by far the most viewers. The importance of Forecast is particularly clear if one considers all 2014 publications: the three Forecasts issued in 2014 were the three most viewed publications and represented 41% of total page views of all publications during that year (120,639). The total number of views of the Forecasts and their share are very similar in 2013 and 2014²⁸

A further review of the remaining 2014 publications highlights how skewed is the readership towards the Economic Forecasts. Beyond the Economic Forecasts only one 2014 publication was viewed more than 10,000 times: *Energy Economic Developments in Europe*, and only five 2014 publications (including the forecasts and *Energy Economic Developments in Europe*) were viewed more than 5,000 times. In total, 22 publications issued in 2014 were viewed more than 2000 times each. On the other hand, 77 publications issued in 2014 were viewed less than 1,000 times. And among those, 33 were viewed less than 500 times. As illustrated in figure 2.7, only the European Economy labelled publications – main series – had an average level of views above 2000. These survey results are very much in line with the findings from the interviews. Irrespective of the category of stakeholder, whether it is academic, representative of the national authorities or think tank, Economic Forecast overwhelmingly attracts the highest interest and is the most-awaited of DG ECFIN's publications.

In terms of summaries for non-specialists, up until 2015 they were issued as separate documents accompanying the main publications. Since then they have been discontinued²⁹. Discontinuation can be justified by very limited viewership³⁰ and, although some interviewees appreciated the DG's effort to make publications more approachable to less-technical audiences, they refer to the summaries very rarely, if at all.

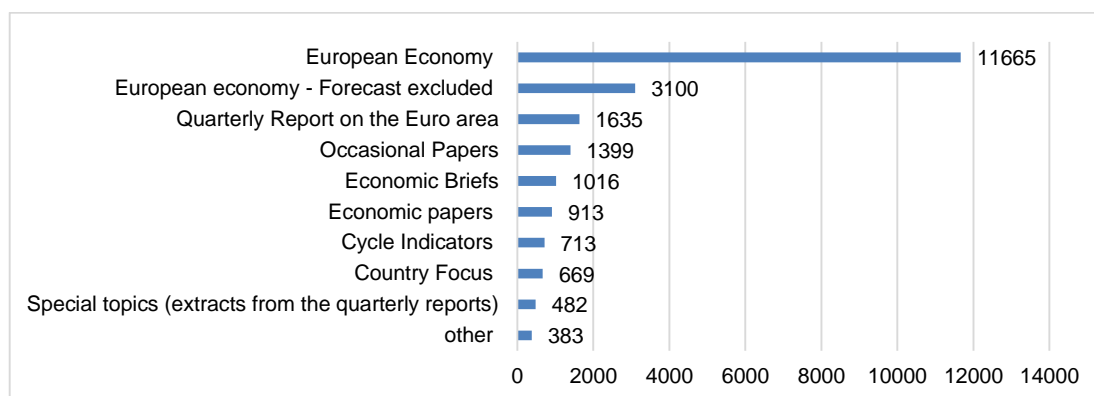
²⁷ 1,033,804 page views registered in 2014 (source: web statistics on publications in 2014)

²⁸ 1,022,641 page views registered in 2013, with the three forecast representing 12% of total views (source: web statistics on publications in 2013)

²⁹ See 2015 ECFIN publication programme: proposed improvement and input sought, Ref: ARES(2014)223054.

³⁰ average view of 246 for the 63 summaries issues in 2014, with only 2 having been viewed more than 600 times (source: web statistics on publications in 2014).

Figure 2.7 Average views of DG ECFIN's publications



Source: DG ECFIN, publication views extract 2014

Considering their potential importance for policy formulation, and where relevant the EC institutional obligations³¹, it is out of the scope of this exercise to consider the adequacy of the number of analyses and associated papers issued. However, considering uniquely that web-page views of a given publication do not correspond to the number of individuals who viewed/downloaded a given publication, and that the number of individuals who viewed/downloaded a given publication will be smaller because one person may access any given publication several times, the limited popularity of some publications may raise the question of whether the allocation of resources is optimal. Importantly, because there is no systematic monitoring of what type of readers access/download the publications, it is not possible to gauge how many views are generated by non-EC users. And it is plausible to assume that the DG ECFIN staff almost certainly account for a very substantial number of the counted views.

Thus, as publications that are rarely viewed require significant resources in terms of editing, layout, summaries, promotion etc., there is a need to consider whether all publications should be officially published, at least from the frequency of consultations' perspective. There may also be a benefit to testing who actually views these publications and how useful they perceive them to be – as a limited but influential audience actually using these may justify eventual resources spent on publication³². Such testing would need to be reasonably sophisticated as 'readers' are generally reluctant to advocate the stopping of a publication – even when they find it of little or no use.

In this respect, it is noted that publications take up more than 25% of total HR available to the communication unit.

Quality, usefulness and areas of improvement

Overall, the stakeholders' consultation showed that publications' quality is seen as good.

Among the surveyed respondents, 69% found the publications to be "very useful", while 29% considered them to be "somewhat useful". Only 2% did not consider them to be of any use. Again, as outlined above, this data should be interpreted in the light of figures related to the frequency of consultation a given type of publication.

In terms of interviewed stakeholders, most found the publications as good/very good. For instance, they claimed high confidence in the quality of data used by the DG ECFIN (as the DG has a unique ability to scrutinise the data provided by the Member States); geographical coverage of publications (allowing comparison between Member States); of their 'official

³¹ It is estimated that some 50 publications/year are published because institutional duty. The rest is more subject to need and opportunity.

³² This could easily be done by asking the prospective users to provide their mails as a requirement to access/receive the publication (which in turn could be mapped for user groups), and then subsequently undertake a short follow up online survey automatically within a few days.

character' (remark regarding Economic Forecast specifically) that adds to the credibility and weight of the publication.

Nevertheless, recognising the quality of the publications, stakeholders pointed at the same time to areas of improvement. When comparing DG ECFIN publications to those of the IMF and the ECB, some survey respondents indicated that the latter are better quality, particularly publications that are more technical. In this respect, some stakeholders called for better referencing to other sources of analysis, such as the working paper style work from the ECB, IMF and other central banks which are of direct relevance to the EU/Euro area. Similarly, in a few instances, interviewed stakeholders also stressed that DG ECFIN publications lag behind the IMF and ECB. Yet, this was the case in only a few cases and relates to the stakeholders who are most technically advanced and whose work involves economic modelling. In these few instances, interviewees pointed to insufficient numbers of microeconomic analysis and excessive usage of the QUEST model, along with insufficient discussion about the pros and cons of alternative models that could have been applied.

In addition, several stakeholders raised concerns about the objectivity of the content. The issue of objectivity, and related reliability, was the single most frequent substantive issue mentioned in the open comments in the survey, with many indicating that they find DG ECFIN's analysis biased; only/mainly presenting a single point of view (neo-liberal) rather than presenting "pro and cons"; that political considerations undermine/pollute the quality of analysis; or that conclusions drawn from analysis are polluted by political considerations and/or not backed by the evidence provided. In this respect, one informant suggested clearly separating technical analysis from political decision-making as combining the two carries reputational risks. In terms of interviewed stakeholders, in two specific cases interviewees argued that some of DG ECFIN's publications have been biased as they focused too much on austerity measures and not enough on policies that could foster the demand side during the economic recovery.

In the same vein, many survey respondents highlighted the need for better/more evidence on the rationale and integration of social aspects in analysis (e.g. impact on different social groups) and better evidencing of the key assumptions of forecasts. Other areas of possible improvement related to increases in country specific analysis.

There are, as could be expected, variations in terms of the perceived usefulness of the publications between types of stakeholders. Overall, academia, ministries and other national institutions find these more useful than the average of respondents (78% and 79% respectively find these "very useful"). High satisfaction among these groups is reflected in the stakeholder interviews, and resembles the results from the PWC study *Instrumental study to support the development of output quality indicators based on stakeholder satisfaction survey*³³, which showed a high level of appreciation of the quality and usefulness of DG ECFIN's analytical inputs among the Members of the Economic Policy Committee and the Economic and Financial Committees.

The perceived usefulness among the financial sector and business/employers is lower (63% and 54% respectively find the publications 'very useful').

The fact that some 80% of the academia, ministries and other national institutions report that the publication is very useful for them is a positive finding indeed. In practice, these are also likely to be the main user groups. Furthermore, it is plausible to assume that the expected impact of "Enhancing DG ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic policy proposals based on high-quality research and analysis" is most likely to materialise precisely among these groups. In addition, some interviewees raised a more general point. They argued that usefulness (and quality) of the publications may be viewed differently by different stakeholders. Therefore, thorough assessment would benefit from a clear distinction in ECFIN's strategy regarding the types of stakeholders that it wishes to target with its specific types of publications.

³³ Instrumental study to support the development of output quality indicators based on stakeholder satisfaction survey, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2012, undertaken for DG ECFIN

At a more operational level, a number – especially outside the academia and public authority categories - called for more visuals/charts and more accessible, easier to read publications. Developments in these areas would be in line with proposed improvements for the publications and better use of data, including the use of infographics³⁴.

Other areas of development to consider include better segmentation of the mailing list based on the user's background and possible preferences regarding the content – ideally in conjunction with a segmentation of the Newsletter list (one segmented list). Better segmentation of users and the tailoring of the disseminated content would decrease noise, and hence increase the likeliness that mails are being opened and ultimately that publications are read. This would require that user data is collected while signing up – which is currently not the case.

The current approach to printing (technical reports are only available online with some exceptions where hard copies may be provided on specific request) is suitable given the public audiences.

2.1.4.2 Stakeholder outreach programme – events

Engaging via events and conferences has formed an integrated part of DG ECFIN activities over the years. However, within the last year, events, and in particular seminars, have gained prominence as a means to engage with DG ECFIN's stakeholders.

Through face to face engagement DG ECFIN aims to “*identify, sustain, nurture and expand communities of stakeholders who are important to the achievement of ECFIN's operational objectives because of their direct or indirect influence over the framing and implementation of economic policy at the European or Member States' level and their influence over public perceptions of EU policy*”³⁵.

To this end, DG ECFIN organises (or funds) the following activities (2014 and recent 2015):

Table 2.3 Event overview

Type and Description	Events/activities
<p>Stakeholder seminars</p> <p>Relatively new activity each engaging one group of stakeholders (Trade Unions, businesses, civil society organisations or administrators from national ministries).</p> <p>Certain events organised with the Visitors Centre</p>	<p>2014/2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Meeting of the Network of public finance economists in public administration (annual recurrent meeting) ■ Two seminars for national policy officers. Seminars organised with the Visitors Centre ■ Two seminars for trade unions in 2014 ■ Two seminars for employers' federations and business representatives (Inc. SMEs) in 2015 ■ Seminar for Civil Society representatives in 2015 ■ Financial market events (4 in 2014 – not seminars)
<p>Multi-stakeholder conferences and seminars</p> <p>Since 2000, DG ECFIN organises two main conferences that aim to gather prestigious speakers as to contribute to the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Brussels Economic Forum (BEF). DG ECFIN flagship event promoting high-level discussion on the current economic issues ■ The ECFIN Annual Research Conference, likewise an annual event. It is organised by DG ECFIN Macroeconomic impact of structural reforms Unit (B1) and attended on personal invitation only

³⁴ 2015 ECFIN publication programme: proposed improvement and input sought, Ref: ARES(2014)223054

³⁵ Draft Communication Strategy p 35

Type and Description	Events/activities
<p>on-going debates related to the European economy</p> <p>In addition to these events DG ECFIN organises a number of events annually, depending on the DG priorities</p>	<p>Other 2014 events³⁶:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECFIN Taxation Workshop ■ Policy Communication in EMU Conference ■ Country Workshop on the Czech Republic – Drivers of Growth ■ Annual joint EC-EPEC Private Sector Forum on public procurement related issues (2013 and 2014)
<p>In-country events in the EU</p> <p>Funded by DG ECFIN and organised by the ESOs</p>	<p>Actual number of events not known³⁷</p>
<p>In-country events (third countries)</p>	<p>Organised occasionally</p>
<p>Speakers' pool</p>	<p>Participation by ECFIN speakers in externally managed events</p>

Not all activities have been covered by the evaluation. Due to lack of data the evaluation concentrated on stakeholder seminars and the BEF while recognising the existence of other activities. "In country" events have been covered in section 3.1.

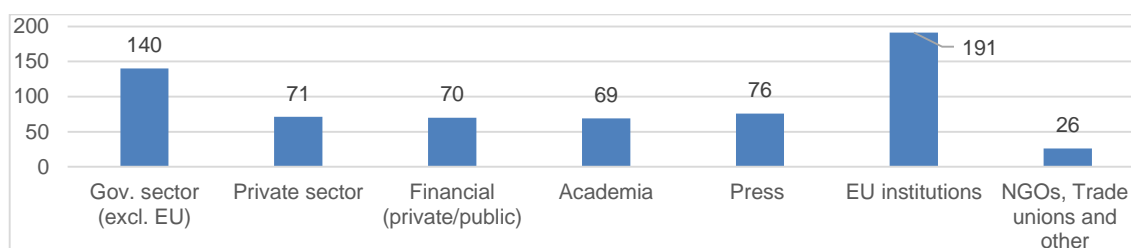
BEF – Participation, audiences, quality, usefulness and areas of improvement

Participation

Given the very nature of events, it is unsurprising, that the conferences and seminars engage a limited number of stakeholders. The BEF engages annually some 600 to 650 participants. The 2014 event engaged 643 participants of which 379 were participants from the different stakeholder groups - 76 were media professionals. Officials from the public sector (non EU) are, in quantitative terms, the most engaged stakeholder group. Many of these are from the regional offices in Brussels.

The BEF furthermore attracts a large number of officials working in the EU institutions (191 or 30% of all participants). 135 of those were from the European Commission (21% of all participants).

Figure 2.8 Number of participants – BEF



Source: DG ECFIN, Participant data BEF (2014)

³⁶ 2013 events regarded: Workshop on government wage bill: determinants, interactions and effects; Workshop: The use of tax expenditures in times of fiscal consolidation; Country Seminar on Belgium: Medium-term challenges for the Belgian economy; The joint/co-organised events were: Conference on Current Account Imbalances and International Financial Integration and Transatlantic Economic Interdependence and Policy Challenges (2013)

³⁷ Only incomplete list with many events not approved provided

While the BEF generates participation from Member States, notably from national central and private banks, nearly two third of participants (63%), excluding press and EU institution staff, are located in Belgium. Many have participated in past BEF conferences (66% in 2014).

The high number of participants from the European institutions, as well as a high rate of “returning participation”, raises the question of the actual effective outreach of this flagship event.

Quality, usefulness and areas of improvement

Judging by the survey undertaken by DG ECFIN³⁸, a majority of participants are satisfied with the BEF and perceive it useful for their work. A clear majority find the sessions and organisation of good quality. The BEF was, in 2014, rated "excellent" or "good" by 77% for the panel debates, 95% for the website and 95% for the organisation.

However, data also suggest that a significant minority of participants question the overall usefulness of the event. 41% of those surveyed by DG ECFIN at the 2014 event indicated that the information was only “somewhat useful for their work” and 33% indicated that the event had met their expectations only in part. These results are mirrored by the survey results from this study. Of those having indicated that they had participated in the BEF in the past (150 respondents), 37% indicated that the event only in part had been useful and an additional 13% indicated that the BEF was of little use.

Commenting on the BEF, some stakeholders note that the event currently is too information driven, and not sufficiently focused on debate or discussion of policy issues. This is illustrated by the relative lack of satisfaction with Q/A time, which was the aspect of the conference which was least appreciated in both 2013 and 2014. The need, in order to remain attractive, for more lively debates and more thought provoking content is recognised by DG ECFIN³⁹.

Multiplication effects

Past BEF events have focused on media coverage as the main multiplier. A large number of journalists participated in the 2014 BEF. In part, this participation was ensured by attendance from participants of a journalists’ seminar organised in conjunction with the BEF.

While a lot of attention appears to be given to the press, the BEF generates only modest coverage. Most of this coverage is generated by news agencies (Reuters, Bloomberg), online media and newspapers. There is, judging by the 2014 event, hardly any TV or Radio coverage⁴⁰. Bringing journalists to the event via seminars appears unsuccessful in terms of outcomes. Those participating in the journalists’ seminar did not cover the event or the event topics.

Seminars – Participation, audiences, quality, usefulness and areas of improvement

Seminars and training events for selected stakeholder audiences (in addition to the media) is a relatively new activity, and till date only few events have been undertaken.

Seminars have in total engaged some 246 persons⁴¹. The largest seminars/trainings are those having engaged national officials.

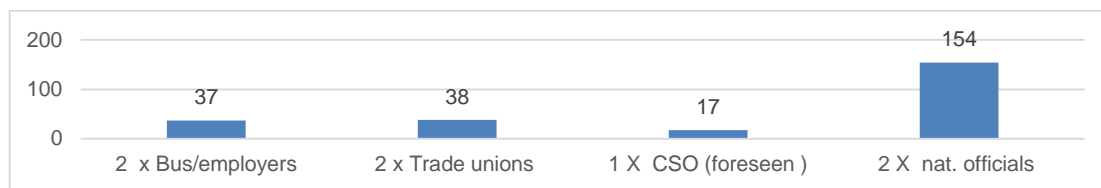
³⁸ As provided by DG ECFIN

³⁹ See DG ECFIN note Assessment of the 2014 Brussels Economic Forum and outlook to the 2015 edition

⁴⁰ DG ECFIN note Assessment of the 2014 Brussels Economic Forum and outlook to the 2015 edition

⁴¹ Included the 17 expected NGO participants

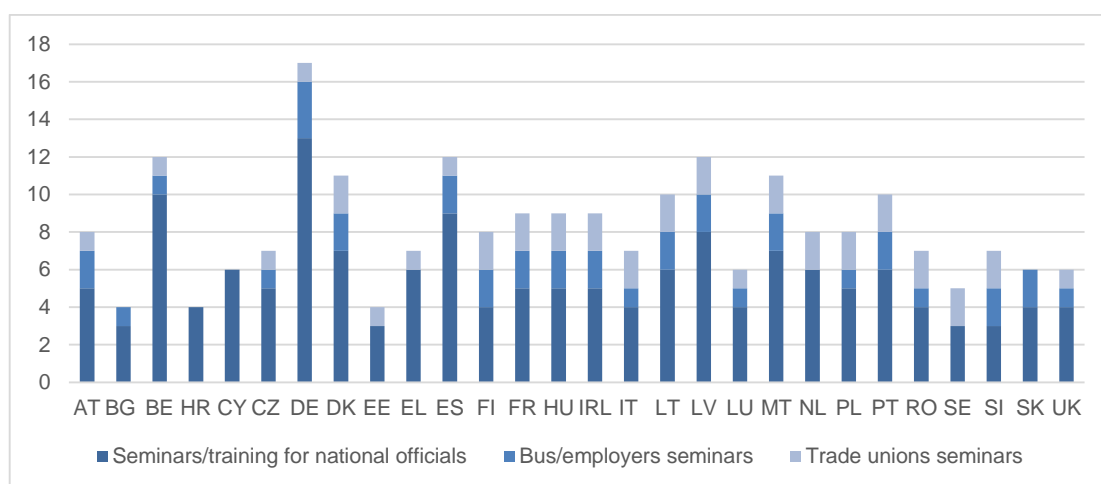
Figure 2.9 Participants trainings



Source: DG ECFIN Participant data seminars (7 seminars)

While both resource and cost intensive⁴², a key benefit of the seminars and trainings are their ability to attract officials from the national level – as opposed to Brussels based staff. In this respect, seminars are complementary to the BEF, not just in terms of content and approach, but also in terms of reach. In addition, seminars attract participation from nearly all Member States, as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 2.10 Number of participants to seminars: trade unions, business/employers seminars and to seminars/trainings for national officials



Source: DG ECFIN, participants data, N= 230

Quality, usefulness and areas of improvement

Across events, data suggest that seminars are of quality and of relevance to the stakeholders participating. Importantly also, stakeholders consulted are highly appreciative of the enhanced engagement with DG ECFIN. Seminars are seen as good practice examples of engagement and many of the stakeholders consulted – including those who had not been participating but had heard about the seminars - called for further seminars and exchange. This is also true for those stakeholders who have provided more mixed feedback on the actual quality or relevance of the events.

The main shortcoming across events appears to be that of the scale of content which is covered. Across events, the areas which are evaluated least positively are timing and time for Q/A. Whereas content and speakers/presentation are usually positively evaluated, many participants rate the time allocated to topics as insufficient, suggesting a need to cover less and thereby allowing time for depth and discussion.

Related to this is the issue of event purpose – especially in relation to business and employer organisations, NGOs and Trade Unions. While representative organisations show a high level of motivation to participate in events, it is also apparent from the interviews that there is an expectation to be “heard” during events, and that events cannot operate as a (DG ECFIN) “one way” communication channel. Unless DG ECFIN can cater for such a demand, there is an inherent risk of creating an expectation mismatch.

⁴² In part because travel and substance is covered

Post event survey data was not systematically available for this evaluation⁴³. However, the following event specific observations may be noted:

- Seminars organised for officials from **national finance and economic ministries** have been particularly helpful to those participating. Almost two third (65% and 63%) of participants to the 2014 and 2015 seminars found the trainings "very useful" for their work and sessions are rated very positively both as to their presentational and their topical aspects⁴⁴.
- Participants in the seminar for employers' federations and business representatives perceived the recent seminars very positively, perceiving them as helpful and informative. As with other groups, they encouraged the organisation of additional events.
- Trade unions events also received positive feedback – albeit the feedback from the first seminar is somewhat more mixed. While participants are overall positive, a clear majority of those surveyed complained about the breadth of coverage/too many topics, and several complained about the organisational process. Interviewees from the second event were very positive – suggesting improvement in organisation and content. Positive feedback related both to content and structure, with participants highlighting as key strengths of the seminar the informative character; short presentations followed by an open dialogue with opportunities to make comments; the informal atmosphere; and the limited number of participants.

Access events Q/A time, time for debate and time for depth are the most criticised aspects – suggesting a need for more depth and less topics to be covered. There is, furthermore, a need to consider carefully the background and expected knowledge levels of those participating.

Logistics and organisation appear to receive good feedback. However, some logistical feedback around specific events indicate that more work is needed with the visitors centre.

2.1.4.3 Website and newsletter

DG ECFIN's website plays a key role in its communication strategy. All content is available on the site and in most cases exclusively available here.

DG ECFIN's web strategy is framed by the EC's Digital Transformation Strategy. DG ECFIN's main focus is on ensuring that the web pages are up to date, easy to access and user-friendly.

DG ECFIN's website mainly aims at presenting the high level of economic intelligence emanating from within DG ECFIN and to position ECFIN as one of the key actors shaping the debate, providing expert level information on European economy.

All ECFIN publications are available online. In addition, the website provides a set of databases that allow for economic research (AMECO). The news and events sections allows for updates on all ECFIN topics and access, among others, to press releases and newsletters.

Following concerns expressed by the European Parliament that the website was not providing enough information tailored to the European citizens, DG ECFIN developed the "European Economy explained" sub-site. This sub-site aims to provide information about the financial and economic crisis and information on European economies in a clear and pedagogical way. It is available in 23 languages. Currently, work is being undertaken to support the development of additional multimedia and interactive elements for "European Economy explained" - with the aim of supporting multipliers' communication efforts towards the public.

Supporting its varied activities, DG ECFIN also issues the newsletter "ECFIN E-News".

⁴³ Survey data available only for the two seminars for national civil servants and for the first seminar for trade unions

⁴⁴ 80% of the participants to the 2014 event rated the sessions as good or excellent in terms of choice of topics and in terms of presentation (average rating of individual seminars). 90% of the participants to the 2015 event rated the topics and the speakers as good or excellent (average rating). Note that the surveys were not

Use and users of DG ECFIN's website

Monitoring data suggest that DG ECFIN's website is extensively used. On average 5,419 unique users visits the website daily. In total some 4.06 million visits, 10.27 million pages views and 1.97 million unique users were registered in 2014. These figures are relatively stable over recent years⁴⁵. Viewer figures furthermore suggest that the large variety of content available on the website is used by the different users.

There are, however, a number of weaknesses with the available monitoring data. Most notably:

- The generation of unique users is done on a daily basis. Therefore, if a user comes back the following day, s/he is registered as a new unique user. Accepting that there is likely to be a large number of returning users, unique user data is likely to be significantly inflated, and hence not a reliable source of estimation of reach. Repeat or return visitor data is not available.
- The data does not appear to account for "internal" use, that is the share of usage generated by the EC's own staff, and which should be discounted from analysis. The more frequent the use by DG ECFIN and other DG's staff, the smaller the external use. Illustratively, If 1000 EC staff from the different Directorates Generals would use the website once daily (5 days/week) they would generate 13% of all the unique users registered.
- Page view data is limited to the 100 most visited pages. This implies that detailed analysis cannot be undertaken on sub-sites such as that of "European Economy explained".
- There little data on the origin of traffic.

While DG ECFIN started revamping the website in 2013, the impact of the revamping on overall user figures is not clear. It does not seem, however, to have impacted (positively) on main user data (visits, unique users and page viewed), as these (as outlined above) have remained stable since 2012.

With these limitations, the following observations on the use of DG ECFIN's website may be noted:

- A significant share of the traffic on the website is a result of publication views. Publications have been viewed more than one million times online – representing a total of 10% of all page views in 2014. However, publications will in practice have generated more of the traffic. To access a publication from press releases or the e-newsletter implies a minimum viewing of two pages on DG ECFIN's website. To access a publication from DG ECFIN's entry page implies viewing at least four pages. While some users may have registered past publications and hence access these directly using the url, it would be reasonable to assume that this is usually not the case. Hence, in practice, publications and accessing these are likely to generate 20% or more of the recorded page views. In addition, Ameco account for at least 7% of total page views⁴⁶.
- The 100 most frequently viewed pages represent only some 28% of all pages viewed, suggesting that users appear to interact with the multiple layers of content provided, rather than limiting themselves to a few selected pages.
- All of the main areas of content provided by the website (the Euro, policy and surveillance, database and indicators, publications and news and events) generate interest. The entry pages to most of these sections feature among the top 15 most viewed pages – as does DG ECFIN's entry page. However, only two of these pages feature in top 5: DG ECFIN's entry page and the entry page on the Euro. The most viewed page is "Business and

⁴⁵ Source: DG ECFIN yearly dashboard.

⁴⁶ Pages viewed Ameco Index page and zipped files: total of 112,272 views, Ameco: number of access to SelectSeries: 180,501.00 – source 100 most viewed pages and Ameco On Line Statistic at http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/ameco/adm/selectStat.cfm

Consumer Surveys”. The top five further include the page on forecast and the 2014 Winter Forecast publication, followed by the Ameco entry page.

- Judged by the most popular pages, a clear majority of users are likely to be stakeholders working on, or in relation to, DG ECFIN policy areas. Relatively few users appear to exploit the pages “the European Economy Explained” (see section 2.3).

Judging by the survey results, stakeholders engaged with DG ECFIN are familiar with the website, and most report using it at least occasionally (89%). According to the survey, national authorities (and the media) appear to use it more than other groups – but there are small differences overall.

However, compared to other tools, the website is less frequently used. Whereas publications are reported being used regularly by 56%, press releases by 50%, and the newsletter by 44%, “only” one in three (33%) report that they used the website on a regular basis. Higher frequency in use is noted among public authorities (46% report to use it regularly) and among the financial sector (42%). Lower frequency in use is reported among academics and think tanks (27%).

The fact that publications are reported as more frequently used than the website is inconsistent, as publications are accessed via the site. However, it may be an expression of usage which often is limited to the publications and other core content which users are made aware of through other sources (press releases, Twitter, emails). This observation could be supported by the web statistics, and may illustratively explain why “Business and Consumer Surveys” is more frequently visited than DG ECFIN’s entry page. This also is supported by DG ECFIN’s own data showing interlinks between Tweeting and web-page access⁴⁷.

In this respect data would suggest that the different communication instruments (significantly) drive usage of the website.

Use and usefulness of the newsletter

DG ECFIN e-newsletter is currently sent to some 6450 contacts. It is also sent to all ECFIN staff, the Euro Team group, to the Directors of Communications Network, as well as to the media contacts established via the DG ECFIN press seminars and the SPP press activities⁴⁸. Finally, it is published on the ECFIN website and shared on the DG ECFIN Twitter account.

Judging by the survey results, the newsletter is, along with the press releases, an important source of “up to date” information. 88% of those surveyed report that they consult the newsletter, at least occasionally, with 44% indicating that they consult it regularly. Only 3% indicate that they were not aware of its existence. There are only small differences between the different stakeholder groups as regards usage.

The mapping of subscribers to the e-newsletter is presented above and is not repeated here.

Quality, usefulness and areas of improvement

Overall, the stakeholders’ consultation indicates that the website and newsletters are of satisfactory quality. Few stakeholders commented specifically on issues which could be improved. Those commenting suggested that the tools could be optimised by operational improvement – notably as regards:

- Easier more intuitive structure of content with several commenting that the website was difficult to navigate in and less information spread. A few also commented on updating of bookmarks and more frequent updates of thematic subpages;
- Shorter more snappy newsletters, with less content allowing for a quicker browse of content; and
- Newsworthiness, with some stakeholders indicating that they felt that the newsletter added limited value to press releases, and a few indicating that they found outdated

⁴⁷ Source DG ECFIN - mail provided on interlinks between tweets and web-pages opened on 13/3/15

⁴⁸ representing some 600 additional contacts

information in the newsletter. (in discontinued sections for past tenders and events)

2.1.4.4 Social media programme

DG ECFIN's social media programme is concentrated around the use of the DG ECFIN Twitter account. The account started operating in April 2009. It is intended to engage multipliers (notably the media), economic stakeholders at EU and national level and “non-specialist” users of social media - with the aim of exerting more influence on existing stakeholders who are active on social media, and to acquire new endorsers and multipliers

DG ECFIN primarily uses Twitter as a dissemination tool, promoting further dissemination of press releases, publications, news and events. Since the start of operation the account has issued some 2,100 tweets.

A more strategic approach was developed in summer 2014 and entails an increased use of visual content, such as pictures and infographics. The “graph of the week” is published every Monday and has proved to be one of the most retweeted items.

Beyond the Twitter account, DG ECFIN uses the EC's corporate account to issue content for the European public. Collaboration with the EC Representations is furthermore being developed, providing Representations with translated materials and trying to encourage engagement in native languages through them. Data collected suggest that the latter development may impact on the DG ECFIN Twitter account, resulting in fewer tweets.

Followers of the account

The DG ECFIN Twitter account currently has about 22,300 followers. The number of followers is increasing quickly, with monthly increases in the range of 1 to 2.5% in the last six months.

There is no comprehensive data available on the followers of the account. However, DG ECFIN reports that the interests of those following generally include current events, economics and finance, governance and European affairs. The most frequently used language of those following is English, followed by German, Greek, French, Dutch and Italian. The data collected in the framework of the assignment suggest that:

- About 10% of followers are journalists, which should be assessed positively given the set objectives and target audiences (see also section 2.2).
- There is at least a partial overlap between followers and users of other tools. All of those surveyed indicated that if they follow the DG ECFIN account (regularly or occasionally) they also follow several other tools too. However, this data may not be representative, as promotion of the survey via Twitter appeared to generate only very limited response⁴⁹. Most of those surveyed and most of those interviewed do not follow the DG ECFIN Twitter account⁵⁰.

Multiplication and usefulness of content

Key indicators usefulness of content on Twitter are associated with measurement of re-tweets, favourites and click generated via tweets. Core multiplication measurement relate to earned reach.

Only limited data however was available for this report. The data available show that the DG ECFIN account from mid-February to mid-March has engaged in the range of 1,500 to 2,200 followers on a daily basis. However, there is no breakdown data on the extent to which this engagement had been generated by @Replies, Retweets, Mentions, or Favourites. In the

⁴⁹ Responses peaked in relation to email promotion to subscribers on DG ECFIN's mailing list, but a similar effect was not noted when the survey was promoted on twitter.

⁵⁰ Only 9% of those surveyed followed the twitter account it regularly (an additional 9% followed it occasionally).

period, however (mid-February to mid-March), DG ECFIN earned over 500,000 impressions⁵¹ or an average of 18,000 per day⁵².

More recent data⁵³ however, also highlight that DG ECFIN's Twitter efforts have a much higher reach in relation to the forecasts. On the day of the publication, the 2015 Spring Forecast was on subject to 1,300 unique tweets mentioning the hashtag #ecforecast. @ecfin, #ecforecast, @pierre-moscovici all trended in Belgium. DG ECFIN's own account directly received 479 retweets and 145 favourites. The potential reach came to 8.95 million – an increase of 2.15 million from last year's release

Beyond highlighting the importance of the forecast, this data also reflects the enhanced social media efforts of DG ECFIN in recent times, with more comprehensive and integrated planning of communication working across the EC's different platforms. The results of these efforts are also evidenced by the Spring Forecast podcast, which in within one day of its release generated around 19,000 views - 19 times as many views as the Winter Forecast podcast has got in 3 months. DG ECFIN's most regular multipliers are other European accounts (DGs, Representations, officials) and government institutions from Member States⁵⁴. Beyond the specific example of the Spring Forecast 2015 the scale of multiplication (re-tweeting) by different followers is not known.

As outlined most stakeholders consulted did not follow the twitter account. Among those surveyed it is as outlined the perceived least useful tool.

2.2 Effectiveness and added value of DG ECFIN's communication efforts – media

This subsection addresses the question of the relevance and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication activities that are targeted at the media. In line with the ToR and the discussions during the inception stage, this section considers:

- **Added value of DG ECFIN's communication activities** – addressing the questions:
 - To what extent does DG ECFIN's current media related activities add value to activities undertaken by the SPP?
 - How can DG ECFIN best work with the mass media on a more medium-term footing than the SPP's day-to-day press work? Is there added value in such an exercise?
- **Reach and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication actions targeting media**
- **Relevance of the communication content** – addressing the question: To what extent is the current communication “content” of DG ECFIN relevant and of interest to journalists – what are the aspects which hamper coverage (quantitatively or qualitatively)?

2.2.1 Added value of DG ECFIN's communication actions targeted to the media

2.2.1.1 Scope of DG ECFIN's media relations activities

DG ECFIN media related activities need to be seen in the context of the SPP service which, together with the Commissioners, holds the explicit prerogative to interact “officially” and “on the record” with the media. With the SPP being responsible for all media relations, DG ECFIN plays a supporting role only. This support relates to:

- Activities directly supporting the efforts of the SPP and the cabinet;

⁵¹ Impression: the total number of times a Tweet from the account or mentioning the account that could appear in users' Twitter feeds during the report period. It includes DG ECFIN's own Tweets, Tweets that mention DG ECFIN's brand handle, and retweets of DG ECFIN's content.

⁵² Some data is in addition available on the potential reach. However, potential reach refer to the sum of all users mentioning the DG ECFIN brand and the sum of their followers, and hence is not a very useful figure for the type of engagement sought by DG ECFIN.

⁵³ Collected after the closure of the data collection period, end March 2015.

⁵⁴ As reported by DG ECFIN.

- Background/off the record seminars and background briefings;
- Information/activities which may be used by the media – but are not explicitly tailored to them.

In addition, DG ECFIN supports the European Semester Officers (ESOs) who at national level may inform and engage with national media “off the record” (usually in collaboration with the press officers of the Representations).

As defined by the Draft Communication Strategy, these activities are aimed primarily at improving the **quality** of coverage (as opposed to the quantity of coverage), facilitating “accurate and objective coverage of DG ECFIN’s policy positions and initiatives by the print and broadcast media, within a meaningful context”. It is expected that these media related activities will contribute ultimately to citizen’s better understanding of the EC’s economic policy related work.

Other media related activities involve the funding and coordination of the Euronews “Real Economy” magazine, covering economic issues and targeted at the public. As this relates to ‘bought’ media coverage, rather than earned media coverage, it is covered in the section 3.3.

Table 2.4 Media relations: DG ECFIN’s activities

Activity	Specification (Draft Strategy)	Comments
Support to the SPP and their activities	<p>Coordination, drafting, editing and clearance of materials for the press and for media events (speeches, press releases, background notes, etc.).</p> <hr/> <p>Provision of targeted training and briefing for the Brussels press corps; preparation of “stock” briefing and audio-visual materials targeted at journalists.</p>	<p>The 2015 Strategy foresees, as a new activity, the organisation of media training for the Brussels based correspondents in relation to flagship events – supported by “stock” briefing and audio-visual materials targeted at journalists.</p> <p>It is understood that only one briefing has been organised till now. There is no evaluative data to inform the assessment and the briefing has hence not been considered.</p>
Background/off the record activities targeting the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Seminar held in Brussels for economic journalists based in Member States; ■ Seminars are anticipated to be monthly; ■ 4 seminars in the period: December 2014 – February 2015; ■ Collaboration with the Visitors Centre;⁵⁵ ■ Participants identified by the ESOs; 	
Information which may be used by the media – but not explicitly targeting them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Publications; ■ Twitter account (and related content); ■ Website; ■ Newsletter. 	

Source: Draft Communication strategy, interviews with DG ECFIN, DG ECFIN monitoring data

2.2.1.2 Complementarity with the SPP and other actors

DG ECFIN’s media relations activities have been designed to support the SPP, and it is thus not surprising that activities are complementary, with DG ECFIN providing the background information and content to ensure earned media coverage.

⁵⁵ before July 2014 with the EJC

Beyond DG ECFIN, however, ESOs (working with the Representations' press officers) are increasingly engaged with media and provide, as does DG ECFIN, background briefings to journalists – off the record. There is no data on the scale of these activities. Judging by the interviews with the seven ESOs interviewed in the framework, approaches differ from Member State to Member State and the intensity of activities vary – as illustrated in table 2.4.

While there is no data available on these events, ESOs reported that these activities have been contributing to improvement of the quality of coverage in national media including also better understanding of rationale for DG ECFIN's economic policies among media representatives (i.e. regarding European Semester).

Table 2.5 Media relations: ESO activity

MS	Examples of activities
FR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Technical briefings for economic journalists (in preparation for the publication of significant publications, such as the forecasts) ■ Press conferences – on the day of publication.
ES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One-to-one sessions for journalists (occasional) ■ Drafting background notes for journalists ■ Off the record press briefing of journalists – including for regional media
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Close collaboration with journalists (one to one contracts and provision of information) ■ Educational sessions organised with the journalist association in Italy at the Representation. 2 day events explaining how the EU works (with more than 100 journalists participating – and higher demand). A few hours allocated to the ESO. ■ Mainly with written press
NL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Presentations for journalists – mainly written press
FI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No media activities currently. Journalists considered a potential audience for future activities
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No media activities – perceived as “too risky”

Source: interviews with ESOs

Judging by the interviews with the ESOs, there is nothing to suggest that the ESOs' media relation activities overlap with the activities of DG ECFIN. Indeed, none of the press briefings organised by the ESOs appear to have the depth of the DG ECFIN journalist events. ESO briefings are more likely to be similar to the targeted training and briefing for the Brussels press corps. However, in this case, the targeted audience is clearly distinct.

Also, with more ESO staff, it may be anticipated that ESOs are more likely (and frequently) to engage with the media – for instance through organisation of background briefings and off the record press conferences. Without questioning the quality and added value of the Brussels' based seminars, enhanced ESO involvement with the media nevertheless raises the issue of the continued need for Brussels based events in the *medium term* – especially considering that:

- Quality of print media coverage of EU economic and financial affairs is reported by ESOs and by external stakeholders to have improved over the last years. Factually incorrect reporting by written press is no longer perceived as a significant issue. Judging by participants lists, the journalist seminars in Brussels are largely involving print media and news agencies.
- Journalist's seminars tend to attract “repeat participants”. Of the seven journalists interviewed who had participated in recent seminars, six had participated in events in the past. Significant “repeat participation” was also noted for the DG ECFIN seminars organised in the past with the EJC⁵⁶. In other words, total journalistic reach is relatively low.

⁵⁶ Evaluation of journalist events organised by the EJC, 2014, ICF for DG COMM

- Some ESOs reported challenges to achieve effective participation in the Brussels based seminars⁵⁷. In contrast, all ESOs (besides the UK) report a strong interest in seminars organised at the national level.
- Cost of seminars – even if these have decreased with the organisation of centralised Visitor Centre's events – they are still significant. This is because travel and subsistence costs are covered.

As outlined, the full scale of press briefings and other media support undertaken by the ESOs is not known at this stage. Nevertheless, to assess the potential duplication of efforts, (especially in the medium term), there would be a benefit to consult all the ESOs on their expected media briefings and other media engagement activities.

There also appears to be some opportunities to consider how DG ECFIN can better support ESOs in their efforts to engage, off the record, with media – including, where relevant, DG ECFIN's participation in nationally organised press briefings. ESOs generally note that the quality of ESO organised events and participation is higher when Brussels based staff attends the event. Yet, some ESOs note that ensuring such participation is challenging. In this context there appear to be unexploited potential for DG ECFIN's communication unit to ensure the best possible level of support to the ESOs activities.

Working more closely with the ESOs could possibly also generate higher levels of efficiency, ensuring harmony between the journalists targeted by ESO briefings and Brussels based briefings – especially in the short term where journalists' events in any case are likely to continue.

In this respect, there also appears to be an increasing need for feedback from DG ECFIN to the ESOs. Interviews with ESOs suggest that these are not adequately kept abreast about the national journalists who are the final participants in the seminars. Likewise, feedback on the seminars is not shared. As this data may add value to ESOs – such as in designating new participants to seminars, promoting seminars to non-participating journalists and engaging with journalists nationally – lack of feedback appears sub-optimal.

2.2.1.3 Supporting the SPP

As the evaluation scope focuses on DG ECFIN's relationship with mass media on a more medium-term level beyond the SPP's work, this section does not consider in any detail the relevance and usefulness of DG ECFIN's support to the SPP on the preparation of press materials.

Interviews with the SPP suggest that there is a need for content with a greater political sensitivity and with correspondingly less technical detail.

As it has not proven possible to undertake most of the planned interviews with journalists from European agenda-setting media, including Brussels based journalists, there is only anecdotal feedback available on the background briefings organised prior to major press conference events. The feedback collected (from one journalist) nevertheless highlights the usefulness of the briefings in terms of exploring technical issues.

To the extent that these would be regularly organised (it is understood that there have not been any in recent months), data also suggest that granting video conference access to these could add value to the quality of coverage produced by non-Brussels based journalists.

2.2.2 Reach and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication actions targeting media

2.2.2.1 Context: media coverage of ECFIN related policy

There is no consolidated data available which would provide a comprehensive overview of the extent to which media cover ECFIN related policies. However, the extent of media

⁵⁷ Partially due to the existence of Brussels Based correspondents

coverage can be illustrated by data from an ongoing study from the Reuters Institute⁵⁸ which is measuring how the Euro Crisis has been portrayed in the media in nine Member States⁵⁹ covering 11 major developmental periods (24 weeks) between February 2010 and July 2012⁶⁰.

While covering only 36 newspapers (four newspapers per country, three national agenda setting newspapers and a tabloid), the study identified more than 10,000 relevant articles for the 24 weeks. While such data cannot be extrapolated, it nevertheless highlights the very substantial media coverage of DG ECFIN's related policies in recent years.

Commenting on current coverage, journalists, ESOs, academia, journalists, Member States Spokespersons, and other stakeholders consulted note that DG ECFIN's related policies remain high on the national media agenda, resulting in significant coverage. In countries that are most hit by the crisis, EU economic policy has been covered extensively and on a daily basis. All interviewees furthermore note that EC Country reports and forecasts receive a lot of attention from TV, radio and press – in all countries.

Unquestionably, a lot of the coverage is generated or informed by the public relations' efforts of EU institutions. Again, this is illustrated by the Reuters study results. While Angela Merkel is the personality most quoted in the analysed articles, quotes from (political) representatives of EU institutions⁶¹ form a large share of total quotes – varying depending on the country, such as 12% (Germany) and 37% (Belgium). Quotes from Commissioners (Barroso and Rehn) represent, depending on a country between 6% and 13% of the identified quotes.

However, as the quote data illustrate, the essence of the coverage cannot realistically be attributed to DG ECFIN communication efforts. While DG ECFIN supports the SPP, the SPP (and the Commissioners) is responsible for media relations. Furthermore, as evidenced by the interviews with journalists using DG ECFIN's service, much of DG ECFIN's communication efforts provides background information – which, while useful, does not generate coverage of itself. Similar observations are made for the ESOs' activities.

Consequently, this section only considers how DG ECFIN's communication efforts contribute to **improving the quality of coverage** among those engaged. This approach is consistent with the stated objectives of ECFIN's communication activities targeted at the media⁶².

However, for this effect to be generated, it is essential that journalists are aware of newsworthy content. Effectiveness, therefore, is also related to the question of reach to journalists.

2.2.2.2 Reach of the activities targeting media professionals

Reach of main activities

There is currently no data available which provides a comprehensive overview of the journalistic 'reach of/exposure to' DG ECFIN's activities. Likewise, there is no data available on the nature of subscribers to press releases and other press material relevant to DG ECFIN's areas⁶³.

Data from the Rapid database covering the year 2013⁶⁴ indicate that the most read press documents amongst DG ECFIN press material are the press releases accompanying the

⁵⁸ See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/euro-crisis-media-coverage-and-perceptions-europe-within-eu> data collected from the national reports which are available at this page

⁵⁹ UK, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands and France

⁶⁰ one week before and after

⁶¹ Commissioners (Rehn and Barroso);

⁶² The activities are to *facilitate accurate and objective coverage of DG ECFIN's policy positions and initiatives within a meaningful context* with the final aim to contribute to a better understanding of the EC's work by citizens. The expected results are thus related to improved knowledge is thus mainly that of quality improvement of coverage

⁶³ As this data is not collected as part of the registration process to the press release database

⁶⁴ As provided by DG ECFIN

publication of economic forecasts⁶⁵. The press materials on the Excessive Deficit Procedure are in the second group of the most consulted press materials produced by DG ECFIN⁶⁶.

However, this data relate exclusively to number of opened press releases which, given the lack of knowledge of the nature of the users, is likely to be a poor indicator of journalistic reach. This is illustrated by the survey undertaken which indicates that the vast majority of the respondents follow the press releases (92%), whereas in fact only a tiny fraction of all respondents work for the media (3.8%).

The most reliable data relate to the organised journalist's events, but this is valid only for a small share of total exposure. The evidence collected in the framework of this assignment, nevertheless, suggests that DG ECFIN's press related activities enjoy a significant potential exposure to journalists.

As could be expected, nearly all of the journalists consulted follow the EC's press releases and other press material. Furthermore, judging by the extent of coverage relative to DG ECFIN's policy areas (as reported by all interviewees) the press material appears to be widely followed.

All interviewed and surveyed journalists – except one – further report that they are aware of and use, at least occasionally, DG ECFIN's publications and website. Publications (and in particular the forecasts) are, together with the press releases, the most followed and used tools.

Moreover, DG ECFIN's Twitter account is extensively followed by journalists. Based on a review of the followers of the DG ECFIN Twitter account, it may be estimated that at least 1050 journalists – or at least 4.5% of all followers – are journalists/reporters or editors working for media or for news agencies⁶⁷. This high number of media professionals should be evaluated positively, especially considering that that interviews with journalists and the study results suggest that journalists' use of Twitter is uneven with many not following it⁶⁸.

A sample review of the Twitter followers, furthermore suggests that this groups of journalists stem from most of the significant European news agencies as well as agenda-setting media (in particular written press but also significant national public AV media). As the Twitter account provides access to more detail and regular content than the SPP press releases, it thus appears to have the potential to add value in terms of raising awareness among journalists of DG ECFIN content – subject to being effectively monitored and used.

Journalist seminars organised by DG ECFIN engage relatively fewer participants – yet they expose those journalists to the more in-depth content. With the current frequency of event organisation for journalist (on average 1 event per month) and the participation data from a recent event⁶⁹, it may be estimated that there are some 180 participants annually – mostly economic journalists. The actual number of individual journalists participating in these events, however, is likely to be lower. As outlined in section 3.1, this is due to the fact that a significant share of participants are 'regulars' across various events.

Finally, the ICF survey of users also suggests that journalists following DG ECFIN sources on a regular basis also seem to be quite extensively engaged via events. While the data is not likely to be to be representative (as journalists being more engaged are more likely to reply to a survey, and that N is small), it is nevertheless noticeable that a very clear majority have been engaged in events covering economic and financial issues specifically organised for journalists by the EC. Either in Brussels or in those organised by the Representations.

⁶⁵ Winter forecasts press release of 2013 had 10,416 page views

⁶⁶ close to 9,000 page views

⁶⁷ Including an estimated 830 journalists (including correspondents) and some 200 editors.

⁶⁸ Of the 7 journalists interviewed 4 did not follow tweets from DG ECFIN, two followed occasionally and only one interviewee indicated that he followed the account regularly. Interviewees indicate use of Twitter may be linked to cultural/generation habits. Illustratively two interviewees noted that Twitter is not used/much used by journalists in their countries.

⁶⁹ DG ECFIN Seminar for Economic Journalists – 26-27 February 2015

2.2.2.3 Usefulness: Press releases, Twitter, e-news and publications

Data on usefulness largely reflect usage patterns. Press releases and other documentation provided via the press release database, as well as selected DG ECFIN's publications, also provide the useful content.

The added value of the Twitter account appears to be much more modest. Few journalists consider DG ECFIN's Twitter account of real added value, suggesting that the current content may not be fully adapted to the journalists' needs. Considering that the account is promoted to journalists as a source continued information from DG ECFIN, this should be regarded an issue of concern.

In terms of content quality, journalists consulted overall rate the technical content as satisfactory and easy to access. The content, including that of press releases, is hardly ever used directly. Instead press releases give inspiration to stories, and the links provided to additional content are followed up upon. In this respect, data suggest that content improvement can be made, providing additional information and evidence. Journalists generally note that forecasts, but also other publications relative to their country, are extremely important. While reports are generally considered good, more than half of the journalists surveyed nevertheless considered the analytical evidence underpinning the economic European Semester reform process to be "average" or "poor". Some journalists have in this respect called for references to other sources of analysis (references to analysis undertaken by the ECB, IMF or other central banks of relevance to the EU area); more comprehensive country specific analysis; and better presentation of key conclusions and implications for specific countries.

Overall, as for other stakeholders, insufficient presentation of societal implications of policy proposals/recommendations is the single most frequently mentioned "major" shortcoming of content, mentioned by journalists.

The investment package appears another area where more data could be needed. Half of those consulted have indicated that information on the investment plan has been average – suggesting a call for more detailed and comprehensive information. Explanatory issues (rationale for structural reforms and for country specific recommendations; explanation of their implications and of the reform process) are overall better rated even if data and interviews also suggest scope for improvement.

2.2.2.4 Usefulness of trainings and background seminars - and impact on coverage

Journalist's trainings organised in Brussels by DG ECFIN aim at improving the quality and accuracy of coverage, thereby ensuring an improved picture of the Commission's work in the field of economic and financial affairs in Member States.

The events have been organised regularly for several years. However, since the second semester of 2014, events are undertaken in collaboration with the Visitors Centre.

Interviews with a sample of recent participants suggest that the seminars are relevant for national journalists, with half of those interviewed indicating that they are "useful" and half indicating that they are "very useful". The usefulness of the seminars mainly relate to improvement of the background and knowledge of those participating. Beyond the press conferences, the content is of low value for direct coverage.

Most appreciated elements relate to interaction with the speakers (Q/A time) and opportunities to participate in (important) press conferences (e.g the Eurogroup press conference in which interviewees participated). Interaction with other journalists – for future contacts to aid stories/background – is likewise valued and often considered as one of the key benefits of the seminars.

With the change of from "EJC organisation" to "Visitors Centre organisation" a difference in content/speakers may be observed. The EJC aimed at having several external speakers at events and regularly included panels with different speakers as part of the programme. This

practice seems to have been discontinued. Of the four events reviewed⁷⁰, only one event included a speaker from outside the EU institutions. Instead for the time being, DG ECFIN aims at having speaker participation from other DGs.

The feedback collected, does not suggest that this change has substantially deteriorated programme content⁷¹. However, external speakers do have certain benefits:

- As a difference from EC officials, they can, and usually do, speak “on the record”. They may therefore ensure a more newsworthy event overall and an event from which reporting is easier. As production of stories is increasingly required from journalists as justification for participating in such events⁷², it may improve attractiveness of events – and hence participation.
- By inviting external speakers, seminars may be perceived as more objective - showing different views of the policy and addressing the concern raised by some interviewees that these events only represented the EC’s point of view and that not all speakers are “frank”.
- Participants’ feedback from past EJC events suggests that external speakers have often been appreciated. They provide a source for subsequent commentary for articles at a later stage, adding value to participants in the longer run. In this respect the research undertaken by Reuters Institute⁷³ indicates that economists, think tanks and civil society organisations are frequently quoted sources in articles related to the economic crises.

Impact on the coverage

Judging by the feedback collected, journalist seminars have positive impact on quality of coverage. A clear majority of journalists participating in recent DG ECFIN organised seminars indicate a positive impact on their journalistic production in terms of accuracy. Likewise, seminars generate more attention to DG ECFIN’s content (reports and databases), with about half of the journalists interviewed indicating that they follow new sources as a result of participating in the seminar. This in turn may be expected to have a positive impact on (quality) coverage also in the longer term, as may contacts to journalists in other countries. It may thus be concluded that journalist seminars and background briefings are likely to have contributed to the stated objectives of improving the quality and accuracy of coverage – adding value to the SPP’s activities.

These results are consistent with the results from past DG ECFIN journalist seminars which show a positive impact on accuracy and on journalists following new/additional EC sources as a result of their participation⁷⁴.

Journalist seminars likewise impact coverage quantitatively, encouraging participants to produce additional coverage. Of the seven participants who had participated in the recent events, six indicated that they had produced content which otherwise would not have been produced. Essentially this content stemmed from the Eurogroup press conference. However, given the total magnitude of media coverage of EU economic and fiscal policy, the quantitative contribution to total aggregated media coverage is small. Thus, the main contribution of the seminars should be seen as that of improving quality of coverage by participating journalists – in the short and longer runs.

Higher levels of quality in terms of accuracy and detail do not often, however, translate into a change of tone of the coverage. Most journalists interviewed – and past evaluation results⁷⁵ - indicate seminars have little impact on their views and the tone of their stories. Instead the

⁷⁰ Organised in December 2014, 26-27 January 2015, 4–5 February 2015, and 26-27 February 2015

⁷¹ Only one interviewee noted explicitly that he preferred the EJC organised events because of the participation of external speakers

⁷² Evaluation of Journalist events organised by the EJC, 2014 ICF for DG COMM

⁷³ See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/euro-crisis-media-coverage-and-perceptions-europe-within-eu> data collected from the national reports which are available at this page

⁷⁴ See Evaluation of Journalist events organised by the EJC, 2014 ICF for DG COMM

⁷⁵ Evaluation of Journalist events organised by the EJC, 2014 ICF for DG COMM

tone of coverage is generally set by the editorial line of the individual media outlet. In this respect, seminars are unlikely of themselves to generate more positive coverage of the EC policies.

2.2.3 Relevance of the communication content: Avenues to improve work with mass media

As outlined above, the activities specifically targeted at journalists are relevant and contribute to the stated objectives. Furthermore, it does not appear that there are obvious information gaps, which could be covered by new/additional activities.

Study results, however, suggest that support to journalists could be improved by development of existing activities. Beyond ensuring higher degrees of country relevance by working with the ESOs, such improvements relate notably to ensuring better policy links.

Policy links

Across Member States and across professions (journalists, ESOs, national SPP and think tanks) interviewees note that the European Semester process and associated country specific recommendations; the forecast; and specific policy initiatives are extensively covered in national agenda-setting media.

However, journalists interviewed also note that EU economic and financial policy issues, while key to their societies, are of limited interest to the broader public. In turn, lack of public interest implies that coverage is more likely to happen in specialised media; in print media rather than in AV and tabloids; and in specialised business/economic sections rather than in the general news sections. Good quality coverage for the wider public is challenging. Explaining the rationale of policy choices does not generate prominent coverage.

To the extent that the ultimate audiences targeted are the other stakeholder groups mentioned in the Draft Strategy, DG ECFIN's approach to the media by focusing on technical content appears suitable. While coverage generated in more specialised media, and economic sections of print media, may not reach the wider public, is it more likely to reach the target audiences defined by the strategy.

However, should DG ECFIN aim at reaching out beyond the informed public, there will be a need to consider the content which is provided to the media – by paying more attention to stories covering matters beyond the structural reforms and by linking EU economic and fiscal policy to wider policy areas of interest to the public as well as to stories which show the tangible advantages/benefits of the EU policies at national and local level – as such information is more likely to generate more AV coverage and more prominent coverage in print media. It is however, questionable whether DG ECFIN can address this issue itself.

2.2.4 Working of the SPP: other observations

While it is out of scope of this evaluation to consider the SPP communication efforts, several interviewees nevertheless commented on specific areas of improvement. These relate largely to access to information, and specifically to:

- Access to content under embargo. Under the previous Commission journalists were given early access to speeches. Journalists encourage a return to previous practices and more generally encourage content and data under embargo. It is noted that a speech has little impact if the text is released afterwards as the media is unable to cover it real time or develop a story around it. [However, the Commission no doubt will see opposing benefits to not using an embargo system.]
- Access to support on paper. Some Brussels based correspondents note that the Commission refuses to give anything on paper at the background briefings. It is perceived as unhelpful as it takes away the credibility of the event. Furthermore, numbers and details, they say, can easily be reported wrongly if not provided on paper.

Beyond these specific issues, journalists note the importance, more generally, of early access to information and advance notification of any broadcasts/ interviews to the media.

Other, more operational issues relate to access and organisation of the new SPP, regarding which journalists have been reportedly raising issues about its accessibility.

2.3 Relevance and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication efforts – the public

This sub-section addresses the question of the relevance and effectiveness of DG ECFIN's communication activities targeting the wider public. No specific evaluation questions are related to this sub-section. However, as with the previous sub-sections, this section covers the issues of reach and effect – to the extent that data is available.

2.3.1 Scope of the activities and rationale

Recognising the importance of the wider public, in terms of their impact on government, the Draft Strategy in addition considers the public as an audience. However, it notes that the public is expected to be reached primarily through the stakeholders, rather than directly by DG ECFIN. As a result, DG ECFIN places modest attention on reaching the public directly, an approach which is considered appropriate by most stakeholders consulted, as outlined in section 3.1.1.

Nevertheless, DG ECFIN currently works with a selected number of tools, which are explicitly targeted at the public. These tools are:

- The sub-site **European Economy explained**, hosted on DG ECFIN's website. This sub-site aims to provide information on European economies, the financial and economic crisis and on EU policy responses in a clear and pedagogical way. It is available in 23 languages. Currently, work is being undertaken to support the development of additional multimedia and interactive elements for European Economy explained - with the aim of supporting the communication efforts of multipliers towards the public.
- **Audio-visual clips.** Audio-visual productions are used by DG ECFIN as a way to reach and inform a wider audience. ECFIN audio-visuals are published on the website, uploaded on the EU Tube and promoted on Twitter. Audio-visual clips have not been developed in the previous years, but three videos have been developed recently⁷⁶. The most recent production ("European Economy explained" - Climbing higher together) was launched in December 2014 and is available in 23 languages. It consists of animated clips explaining, in a simple manner, what the EU is doing to avert future crises, why it needs reforms to ensure sustainable growth and how it is managing its economies to compete on the global stage. More videos are planned for 2015.
- Funding and coordination of the **Euronews "Real Economy" magazine** covering economic issues. The programme is developed under DG COMM's contract with Euronews and funding is provided to DG COMM under cross sub delegation. Some examples of ECFIN topics covered in "Real Economy" since July 2013 include the economic reforms in Greece; the role of the ECB; as well as Latvia and Estonia joining the Eurozone. The programme is coordinated with DG EMPL and DG REGIO who both contribute to ideas for production and comment on quality. However, funding stems only from DG ECFIN⁷⁷.
- **Publications.** Five publications are available for the broader public.

It is understood that DG ECFIN's communication efforts regarding the public are in part a response to a call by the European Parliament to provide more information tailored to the European citizens. The tools developed have aimed at catering for this need and more attention is expected to be placed on the website and the videos in 2015

⁷⁶ European economy audio-visual series: " *The European economy: Stronger together*" - Promotion plan

⁷⁷ DG EMPL indicated during interviews that co-funding had been considered but that no decision was taken to that end yet.

2.3.2 Reach and exposure of DG ECFIN communication activities among the wider public

2.3.2.1 Approach to generating reach

The logic of the different activities targeting explicitly the wider public, and how reach is expected to be generated, differ across the activities. The Euronews funding generates 'bought' reach. Through its funding, DG ECFIN themes are ensured an audience, specifically the audience watching Euronews.

Audio-visual clips, the sub-site "European Economy explained" and publications are largely dependent on 'earned' reach. Assuming that most citizens are unlikely to visit DG ECFIN's website and hence to see the videos, read content on the sub-site and download the publication, DG ECFIN is dependent on third party actors to multiply content. For this to effectively and efficiently happen require a strategy for multiplication – which should consider:

- Which audiences within the public these tools are expected to engage – and consequently who the most suited multipliers would be
- How the tools are expected to be used by multipliers - in what context/circumstances - and the extent to which these are likely to fit their needs and imperatives
- How to ensure that these tools are actually usable by and helpful to the multipliers – in particular are they delivered in a form convenient, not just perceived as suitable, for them.
- How to support use – e.g. people who can train potential users/multipliers, answer enquiries, etc.

Currently these aspects are not considered in the strategy, nor did the evaluation find evidence that such aspects were considered systematically, outside the scope of the strategy. In turn, this implies that multiplication and uptake is likely to be sub-optimal.

2.3.2.2 Reach among the target audiences

Judging by the data that is available, no comprehensive data is available on the actual reach of the different activities targeting the public. Partial data, however, is available. This data suggest that reach is generated. However, if compared to the size of the European public, this reach is, at best, modest:

- Judging by the most recent data⁷⁸ available, the **Euronews** productions has an *estimated*⁷⁹ audience of 500,000 to 600,000 adults per episode (total contacts per episode). The average contacts per broadcast and per episode is relatively constant over time⁸⁰. Average contacts per broadcast being in the range of 35,000 to 40,000 adults. Total contacts per semester vary very significantly, reflecting the production patterns (total contacts being the sum of the estimated audience per episode). Digital usage adds 20% additional coverage. The extent to which this data only covers EU countries is not clear from the reports as Eureka data refers to "Europe" rather than the EU.
- The extent to which Euronews viewers can be seen as representative of the European public may be questioned. Judging from Euronews research⁸¹, viewers are predominantly male, late forties, well-educated managers and frequent travellers. A large share (+30%) is reported to have lived or studied abroad). In total some 44% of viewers are "upmarket Europeans".
- Website statistics on most popular pages on DG ECFIN's website suggest that relatively few users exploit the pages "**the European Economy Explained**". Total page views of all pages are not available. However, the entry page of this sub site generated 12,578 page views in 2014. However, the bounce rate on this page is very significant (62%),

⁷⁸ September 2014, Euronews Euronews Rapport intermédiaire d'exécution technique, July-September 2014

⁷⁹ Statistics of viewers is based on Eureka, which estimate contacts based on people meters and distribution. Actual data is extrapolated and hence have relatively low levels of reliability

⁸⁰ See Real Economy report – Q1 2014 TV and digital, July 2014

⁸¹ Euronews Rapport intermédiaire d'exécution technique, October December 2013, Real Economy,

especially considering that this entry page does not contain any content. In this respect, DG ECFIN's website (in respect of its sub-site at least) appears to fall somewhat short of its objective "to provide the general public with a reliable and accessible source of information about the Commission's priorities in the fields for which DG ECFIN is responsible"

- The data available on viewership of audio-visual clips is limited to one video "Climbing higher together". Data on the "Climbing higher together" indicate that, in the period from its publication (2/12/2014) until early January (9/1/2015), the video was viewed 12,163 times⁸². However, there is no data on unique cookies nor estimated minutes watched.
- Data on publications relate to print and online views. Judging by this data, publications have a higher likely reach in print. In total some 435,460 publications were disseminated in 2014, nearly all (97%) on demand (assumably to a large extent by EDICs). In view of the target audience of these publications, it may be assumed that a large share reached children. 31% of all publications disseminated were the *United in Diversity* publication and poster, widely distributed across most member States. Beyond *United in Diversity*, *A short guide to the Euro*, *One currency for Europe* and *the Euro Area* were the most disseminated publications (representing + 31% of publications). However, in these cases dissemination is highly uneven, with 74% disseminated in three countries only: France, Poland and Latvia. Overall, 59% of all publications were disseminated in four countries: Poland (19%), Belgium (15%), Latvia (12%) and France (12%). An additional 12% was disseminated in third countries. On the other extreme 11 Member States received 7% of all the publications⁸³ - or some 27,000 publications.
- Online reach is modest. Publications on DG ECFIN's website designed for the broader public were viewed cumulatively 12,464 times in 2014. The most viewed publication is *The road to the Euro*, which accumulatively generated in all languages 3515 views (publication and poster). The single most viewed publication is *The road to the Euro* in Dutch which generated 756 views. Again, this data does not take into account the eventual views by the European Commission itself.

2.3.2.3 Awareness and multiplication by stakeholders

As outlined in section 3.1, the awareness of stakeholder targeted tools is, judging by the stakeholder survey, high. The awareness of tools targeting the wider public is comparatively lower.

In total, 37% of those who responded indicate that they know the Euronews "Real Economy" magazine; the European Economy Explained; and/or DG ECFIN's video clips.

By far the most known source is the European Economy Explained sub-site, which is known by 35% of the respondents. 13% of the respondents report that they are aware of the Euronews programme and 17% report that they are aware of the clips. Those being aware of the clips and/or of the Euronews programme are mostly also aware of the sub-site. Many of those are from academia or from a national ministry. Survey results are largely confirmed by interviews with external stakeholders, which confirm some awareness.

Among those aware, there is evidence that they in practice operate as multipliers. 45% of those being aware indicated that they had promoted these tools to others. 55% had not. Positively, only a small share (3%) finds that these are not useful.

However, multiplication largely happens toward a professional audience and/or among students. In turn this suggests that, beyond students, current stakeholders are not likely to operate as effective multipliers towards the general public.

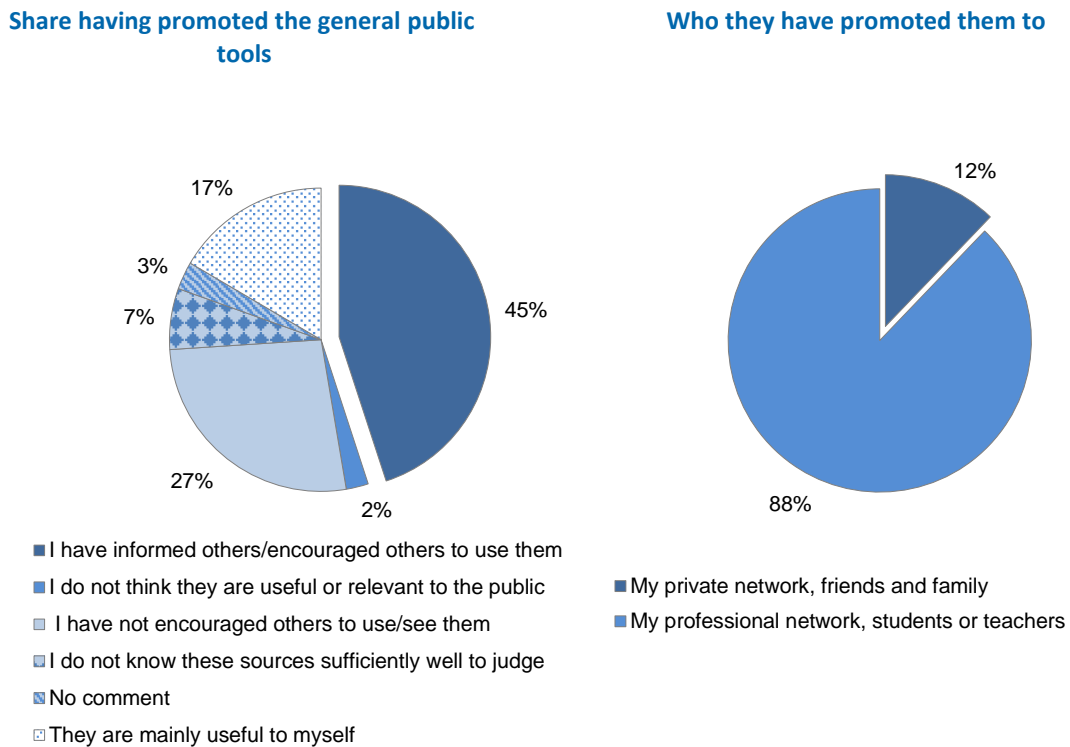
This would also be supported by the limited data available on the nature of those promoting the video clips. Among those identified as having promoted "Climbing higher together" most

⁸² Source: Media Impact, Audiovisual Services, DG COMM

⁸³ Source: Liste des articles diffusés et commandés, DG ECFIN

are EU institutions (66%). A share, however, is journalists (16%) of which half are news agencies⁸⁴.

Figure 2.11 Figure 1: share of survey respondents aware of the tools targeted the public having promoted them to others, and those they have been promoted to



Source: ICF survey, N= 169 and 74

2.3.2.4 Potential effects

The Draft Communication Strategy does not identify any expected results and outcomes of the tools targeting the wider public. However, it would be reasonable to assume that the main results would be related to better understanding of EU economic and fiscal policy; the interdependencies of economies; the needs for reform; and, ultimately, a more positive perception of EU economic and fiscal policies.

There is no data available to support any analysis of the extent to which these tools have contributed hereto and collecting such data beyond reach (output) was out of scope of this assignment. If one considers only the actual reach of these activities it would be reasonable to conclude that it is unlikely that they have generated any substantial impact among the European public.

⁸⁴ Source: Media Impact, Audiovisual Services, DG COMM

3 Findings: Collaboration, opportunities and limitations

This section covers the question of opportunities for improvement of collaboration with different actors involved in communication on DG ECFIN policy areas or related topics.

In line with the ToR, the section focuses on opportunities for collaboration with the ESOs, with other DGs, with other EU institutions and the Euro SPP network.

- Sub-section 3.1 covers collaboration with the ESOs. This section also addresses the issue of complexity and how DG ECFIN can improve its impact in the Member States
- Sub-section 3.2 covers collaboration opportunities with other DGs
- Subsection 2.3 covers collaboration with other EU institutions and the Member State SPP network

3.1 Complexity, content and collaboration - increasing the impact in the Member States

Having considered the reach and effect of DG ECFIN's communication, this subsection addresses the questions related to the complexity of the communication content, the extent to which a single content can be transportable, and if and how DG ECFIN can increase the impact of its communication efforts in the Member States. As these issues are related to the working of the ESOs, this section addresses the following set of questions:

- **Complexity** – addressing the questions:
 - How can the complexity of the new economic governance architecture and the number of 28 Member States economies best be fitted into coherent, understandable and transportable communication messages and activities?
 - What are the main perceived challenges to current communication efforts?
- **Generating impact in the Member States** – addressing the questions:
 - How can DG ECFIN increase its impact directly in the Member States?
 - How effective are the activities implemented by the ESOs, – and how can DG ECFIN collaborate?

3.1.1 Complexity of content and the national contexts

3.1.1.1 Complexity of content and challenges to communication

The issue of complexity of DG ECFIN's policies is recognised by the vast majority of interviewees as a key communication challenge.

There is consensus that some of DG ECFIN's policies are very complex *per se* making them difficult to grasp - even for experts. The issue of complexity seems particularly true for policies related to the new EU economic governance structure, with emblematic examples of the Stability and Growth Pact and the European Semester, making practical communication activities challenging to implement.

The representatives of the Ministries of Finance see procedures related to these policy areas as complex and difficult to interpret, even among themselves. They perceive this complexity as a constraint, not only for EC communication but also for their own communication efforts towards relevant stakeholders at the Member States level. Adding additional layers of complexity, there are the perceived lack of transparency and the clarity of rules.

Considering that the implemented policies, of which many - including most complex ones - have been well advanced and backed up by huge institutional effort in recent years, it is not realistic to assume that this complexity will be substantially reduced.

3.1.1.2 *The national context – and a single message*

Across the stakeholders consulted, there is consensus that, for effective communication to happen at Member State level, the specific Member State's context matters, and it matters a lot.

Interviews with selected ESOs illustrate this point. In the UK an openly pro-European approach among main political parties are rare and the media's attitude varies from neutral to openly hostile – calling for a prudent approach to stakeholder and media mediated communication in a “high risk context”. This is strikingly different in Poland where trust in the European Commission is high and where the European Commission is positively associated with high technical expertise is also the case among media representatives and the Polish public.

In general, the magnitude of the crisis and the scope of fiscal consolidation undertaken seem to be inversely correlated with the margin for error in communication efforts. However, country specific issues depend on a large variety of factors, including the point in the political cycle where a Member State's specific challenges may get reinforced⁸⁵.

Interviewees note that in diverse national contexts, with the policy content being of high complexity and with different implications in Member States, content cannot realistically be fitted into an “easy to digest”, coherent, understandable and transportable communication message and to a single set of activities. While there are no large mismatches between DG ECFIN's general content and what is perceived as ‘good fit’ for the specific Member State, there is a need for tailored/adapted messages that strike the right balance and for targeted activities – depending in their detail on the Member State.

The introduction of European Semester Officers (ESOs) has in this regard been welcomed as an excellent move. Across stakeholders, there is recognition that it is at this level that tailored content can best be communicated if the EC desires to enhance its impact directly in the Member States. Even if the primary communication coming from Brussels may be relatively generic, ESOs have some flexibility in further refinement of the communication through follow-up contacts with the media or discussion with stakeholders. Examples of content tailoring were identified across ESOs interviewed. For instance, the ESO in Italy highlighted the need to balance the existing communication on austerity by more intense communication on growth policies due to general tiredness of public opinion towards austerity. In the case of Finland, the ESO highlighted the need for explaining the rationale for CSRs in a Nordic context, as they are largely perceived there as a tool suitable for Southern European countries.

The fact that nationally “adapted” content explained at national level is likely to generate more impact at Member State level than a single common institutional message has been highlighted by most of the Member State level study participants, with many praising the efforts of the ESOs. As stated by the representative of the Ministry of Finance in Poland: *‘...this was the most meaningful change in terms of ECFIN's communication activities since I remember’*.

3.1.2 **Generating an impact in the Member States**

3.1.2.1 *ESOs activities and effectiveness*

Established in 2013, European Semester Officers (ESOs) is a relatively new resource for communication.

Based in the Representations of each of the Member States, co-managed DG COMM, the SEC GEN and DG ECFIN⁸⁶ and working under the responsibility of the Head of the EU

⁸⁵ E.g. currently fairly low support/ attractiveness of the topic of Poland's accession to Euro in the context of upcoming presidential election in Poland in May 2015 or generally high sensitivity of some EU policies prior to the UK general election in May 2015

⁸⁶ Under the Memorandum of understanding between SG, DG ECFIN and DG COMM concerning the practical arrangements on working with the “Economy Analysts Europe 2020 and European Semester Officers (ESOs) in Representations, February 2013, and updated in December 2014

Representation, ESOs have responsibilities for external communication and for building relations with key stakeholders – in addition to other activities⁸⁷. There are currently more than 40 ESOs, with at least two ESOs being planned for each Member State.

ESOs undertake a variety of communication efforts working in close collaboration with other staff of the EC Representations (most frequently with press officers). Interviews with 7 ESOs suggest that the scope, focus and target audiences differ depending on the national context and the focus and approach taken by the ESOs. Nevertheless, across ESOs a significant part of the communication efforts involve meetings and speaking engagements – in addition to activities targeting the media.

Reach and audiences engaged

In line with the discussions with the Steering Group for this assignment, it is out of scope to evaluate the reach and the effectiveness of the ESOs and there is no data available to inform a mapping of their activities or those engaged/reached⁸⁸.

Nevertheless, in view of the enlargement of the ESO staff and the potential role that they may play by multiplying DG ECFIN content at national level, any recommendations related to DG ECFIN's activities and its strategy must consider the role played by the ESOs, the weight given to their communication efforts and their potential effectiveness.

While ESOs have different roles, interviews with ESOs suggest that communication and stakeholder engagement constitute key activities undertaken.

ESOs engage, depending on Member State, with all or many of DG ECFIN's intended target audiences through varied activities. Beyond media engagement, this includes a very large number of meetings; presentations; larger panel discussions/larger events; and small scale background talks/closed-room discussions for a limited amount of stakeholders. The frequency of meetings is intensive, with some ESOs reporting that they organise two meetings a week with different stakeholder groups (FR).

Furthermore, ESOs take selected stakeholder groups and media to Brussels.

Table 3.1 Examples of audiences which have been engaged by ESOs

	FI	FR	NL	DE	UK
National Parliament	Yes	Slowly developing	Yes	Yes (and regional)	Yes (and regional)
Press	No (organised a visit to Brussels)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Generally not (on a selected basis yes)
Ministry: Economy/Finance	Yes (but perceived limited, other channels to Brussels)	limited, other channels to Brussels	Limited	Yes	Yes
Sector Ministries	Yes				To a limited extent due to low receptiveness to EU policies
Think tanks/academia		In development	Yes	Yes	Yes
NGOs	Yes		Could be developed	Yes	Yes

⁸⁷ Monitoring and reporting to the EC HQ regarding the implementation of the European Semester; providing intelligence to country teams - including on the challenges that a Member State is facing (and thereby help ensuring the relevance of the country-specific recommendations; and feedback on key stakeholders/audiences and their reception of EU policies

⁸⁸ DG Communication, European Commission, is currently working on the metrics that will allow more systematic measurement but the study team does not have access to these materials.

	FI	FR	NL	DE	UK
Trade Unions	Yes – sector unions still to be engaged	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employers federations/businesses	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Financial institutions			Yes	Yes	Yes
Other groups	Municipalities				
Comments	Expected broader engagement with NGOs, media, regional administration				

Source: interviews with ESOs

Effectiveness of the ESOs

Evidence gathered from interviews with ESOs, representatives of the Ministries of Finance, academics, think tanks and social partners suggest that, despite the relatively short time since their introduction, there is already solid and growing awareness of the work delivered by ESOs. Illustratively, business organisations and trade unions consulted indicated how they had established close contacts with the ESOs and have participated in events and meetings organised by them.

Furthermore, among the external stakeholders interviewed the perception of the introduction of the ESOs has been overwhelmingly positive. The ESOs are seen not only as an excellent way of tackling the problem of perception of the European Commission as a ‘*distant decision making centre*’. It is also perceived as a logical and effective way of dealing with the issue of the high complexity of the European Semester’s procedures and the insufficient understanding among a vast majority of stakeholders at the Member States’ level.

Other benefits appear to be related to the *sustained* relationships created with stakeholder groups, making stakeholders more inclined to trust the information provided, and the associated dialogue and opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and ultimately influence the CSRs.

Put differently, if supported effectively, ESOs are likely to constitute the biggest potential for DG ECFIN in terms of “increasing its impact directly in the Member States” on its target audiences.

3.1.2.2 Supporting the ESOs

DG ECFIN supports the ESOs work in a number of ways, including notably:

- Weekly mailings – providing summaries of the lines to take, relevant PowerPoints., speeches from relevant Commissioners, important reports, Eurostat data and other content of relevance
- Content and exchange with relevant country teams
- Budgetary support – with Euros 200,000 allocated for the organisation of events.

Other more “one off” activities have included the identification of questions that could be possibly asked on a topic and the drafting of answers that were approved by the Cabinet. The package was sent to the ESOs for them to be ready in case they would be challenged⁸⁹.

The collaboration between ESOs and ECFIN has been found as good/ very good by all interviewed ESOs. The level of support provided by DG ECFIN is perceived as adequate and many note that DG ECFIN staff are available and ready to help. Those who have organised

⁸⁹ This document was also used as part of the Book of Defensives used by the Commissioner at the hearing with the Parliament

DG ECFIN funded events did not report – with one exception – any challenges with the requirement that these had to cover several countries. The exception was the UK, and in this case challenges were related to the UK context (with EC's experts being less keen to participate in the events organised in the UK due to more pronounced EU scepticism in the country). In contrast interviews with DG COMM, suggest that ESOs have encountered challenges to organise these specific events – given the more limited scope requirements of DG ECFIN (focus on economic and financial issues, as opposed to coverage also of wider structural reform/transversal issues).

Some operational aspects however could improve collaboration:

- In two cases (out of seven), more frequent visits by DG ECFIN's experts and hierarchy was indicated as an area of improvement. Furthermore, it could be envisaged that the reinforcement of the ESOs (and thus more activities) would generate more of such demand
- Updating/development of the list of questions/ most fervent critics and defensive points/ specific responses
- Better stories, and content, and more exchange about how to adapt the main content/message in a national context
- More timely delivery of content on major decisions in order to allow for the organisation of press briefings

In addition, two ESOs stressed the need for higher transparency of the European Semester related work handled by the Commission. More information about the nature of discussions related to country specific recommendations and earlier heads-ups regarding the conclusions were specifically listed as aspects that could be improved.

Other areas of improvement were related to empowerment of the ESOs - i.e. that what could and could not be said was too strict. Furthermore, some ESOs commented that their lack of ability to speak "on the record" in turn impacts negatively on media interest in the organised press briefings. In the current context however, it is questionable if these issues can be addressed.

3.2 Collaboration opportunities with other DGs

This subsection addresses the questions related to opportunities for closer collaboration with other areas of the Commission – covering the questions:

- What are the potential future options to extend communication collaboration at the corporate level
- Which stakeholders of relevance to ECFIN's work do the other relevant DGs address? How can one achieve the greatest synergies?
- Which horizontal tools and platforms of other relevant DGs could be used?

3.2.1 Options to enhance collaboration at the corporate level

The Commission's call for a more coherent corporate communication effort – reflected also by the new structure of the Commission with Vice-Presidents for priority areas - is acknowledged by all of the Communication Units interviewed in the framework of this assignment. All interviewees from DGs working on complementary areas (DG EMPL, CONNECT, FISMA; COMM; TAXUD and GROW) express an interest in better collaboration that links communication on related and/or complementary policy areas, and welcome in this respect DG ECFIN's interest in exploring collaboration opportunities.

Organisationally, communication collaboration at the corporate level is supported by DG COMM. Recent efforts include the organisation of the clusters of DGs working on similar topics; the peer reviews of communication plans organised in 2015; and the implementation of the EC's recent corporate campaign, co-funded by a number of DGs and steered by DG COMM.

Interviewees across the DGs, however, highlight that most of initiatives to reinforce corporate communication are new. Future developments are, as yet, not clarified. Likewise the expected role/authority of DG COMM in terms of steering communication appear to be not yet defined, with some DGs noting that the cluster work is still in its initial stages. Several DGs note that this development will unavoidably impact potential future options for communication collaboration – although in what form and to what extent is not clear. With the current level of uncertainty, DGs interviewed felt that exploring options was challenging, despite the goodwill that exists.

Judging from the interviews undertaken, there are overall only few examples of recent/current communication collaboration. DG ECFIN is already heavily engaged with other DGs – having established collaboration with different DG COMM services (cross sub-delegation) as well as collaborating with DG EMPL and DG REGIO on Euronews.

This said, the follow aspects should be noted.

- Those who have been involved with DG ECFIN on the Euronews collaboration note that collaboration has worked effectively and that also, the collaboration has allowed the production of something that otherwise would not have been possible. However, interviewees who have been engaged in this and other collaborative efforts note that, for any substantial coordinated communication to be effective, some sort of responsibility which ensures continued commitment and engagement of all of the relevant actors is needed. Without such support and clarity, continued engagement from all relevant actors is perceived as unlikely. Such a role is best taken on by a DG without a specific policy portfolio as leadership by a sector DG is considered sub optimal because there is a risk of bringing forward that DG's agenda – leading in turn to disengagement by others.
- Past experience with cross-DG collaboration not involving leadership or coordination from DG COMM in practice has not engaged a pooling of resources. Instead, resources have been provided by one DG. Alternatively, resources have been deployed by using different contractors of the different DGs involved, leading to sub-optimal use of resources⁹⁰
- While in practice there are only few examples of cross DG pooling of resources, there is nothing to suggest that this cannot be done using co-delegations – the most prominent example being the corporate communication campaign. A limitation on pooling of resources, however, resides in the nature of the funding streams which support communication efforts within the EC. Some DGs note that the financial resources available to undertake communication by the DG are limited by the set objectives and priorities of the policy/funding programmes/mechanisms under which budget is allocated to communication to individual DGs. This provides limitations for the potential nature and scale of co-delegations for corporate communication actions, unless the objectives are designed to match the different funding programmes (implying in turn a risk of unfocused implementation). A second issue which hampers communication collaboration, especially in the short term, is a lack of flexibility because communication strategies have already been approved and communication activities planned for the coming year.

3.2.2 Target audiences addressed by other DGs

Communication units of the sector DGs interviewed have, to some extent, a focus on target audiences which are similar or related to those of DG ECFIN. There are, however, also important differences. Compared to DG ECFIN:

- Several of the communication units consulted have a stronger focus on communicating with the public, especially as regards “campaign type” communication efforts, which goes beyond continued communication activities and/or on business organisations. Only DG CONNECT (and possibly FISMA⁹¹) has a similar exclusive focus on stakeholder communities (as opposed to the public).

⁹⁰ See Evaluation of Youth of the Move Campaign 2013, ICF for DG EMPL

⁹¹ scope of communication was yet to be defined when the interview was undertaken

- There is partial overlap between DG ECFIN targets audiences and those of other DGs. Such overlap includes employers' organisations and trade unions (DG EMPL); banks and other private financial institutions (FISMA); business organisations (DG GROW); and policy makers. However, it is also apparent that the composition of these groups will, in many cases, vary from those of DG ECFIN - with several DGs having a wider diversity in target audiences - depending on the different policy areas covered. Illustratively, business is not a single homogeneous group for communication for DG GROW – but multiple groups.
- An additional challenge for collaboration on target audiences is that of communication organisation. The large number and variety of specific groups leads, in many cases, to more decentralised approaches to communication - where significant parts of communication is undertaken by the different policy units covering specific areas (e.g. DG GROW). In these cases, the communication unit ensures coordination and consistency, but most of the resources are used by the different directorates responsible.
- Furthermore, communication with groups of interest may not be being undertaken under the heading of communication. Illustratively, stakeholder engagement with social partners within DG EMPL is managed by a specific unit (unit B1 responsible for the social dialogue). Thus, if DG ECFIN is to enhance collaboration there is a need to consider not only communication units, but also other relevant units.

3.2.3 Tools and content

3.2.3.1 Tools for stakeholders

Most of the sector DGs consulted have a set of continued information tools targeting their various stakeholder constituencies. While variations occur, these “continued” tools are similar across DGs. All sector DGs, for example, organise various events for stakeholders, or engage with stakeholders in various fora and working groups. In addition, some DGs organise campaign type actions.

Due to the decentralisation of communication with stakeholders in many DGs, it is not possible within the framework of this assignment to identify the tools of potential relevance for DG ECFIN. Nevertheless, it is the evaluators' assessment that, while collaboration could be envisaged – and lessons learned from good practice - the direct “use” of sector DGs' tools by DG ECFIN is questionable. This needs to be seen in the context of other DGs' stakeholder communication being directed at achieving different outcomes. Thus, even if the broad target audiences are similar, content expectations from the audiences will differ. Similar observations may be made for campaign type activities implemented by sector DGs that target the public.

In contrast, closer thematic collaboration could be envisaged, especially on two topics: structural reform; and the investment package. However, this is likely to require a more “balanced” message, as communication units consulted indicate that they aim at communicating a more “positive message” that shows how the EU's policies in practice support Member States (the **concrete** added value of EU initiatives), as opposed to a narrative highlighting the “necessity for reform”.

As regards the investment package, it was felt that there were options to enhance synergy and working cross DGs, building on a common communication strategy. However, again this would require focus on concrete benefits and the expected effects on growth.

3.2.3.2 Tools for the public

Judged by the data collected, use of existing tools could best be envisaged in relation to communication for secondary audiences for DG ECFIN - i.e. the European public and, possibly, enterprises – and in relation to tools which are made available in the form of “services”. This would largely relate to DG COMM's tools, as well as the tools which were transferred from DG COMM to DG CONNECT in relation to the new Commission.

DG ECFIN already collaborates with a number of these services. Beyond the collaboration with DG COMM on the ESOs, DG ECFIN collaborates with the Visitors' Centre on stakeholder and journalist seminars; holds an agreement for Q/A service with services delivered by the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC); and uses DG COMM's (and the Representations') social media accounts (including EUTube) to promote videos and other DG ECFIN content. Other DG COMM tools which potentially could be (better) used relate primarily to the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs).

While DG ECFIN is engaged already with the EDICs (e.g. training for EDICs), there are a number of "low hanging fruits" to enhance collaboration. These opportunities relate notably to:

- Simplified training for the EDICs⁹².
- Products of relevance to EDIC, ensuring that some publications for the public are available for ordering of print in all of the EU official languages – including possibly folders/and linking to additional information online.
- Promotion of new products ensuring that DG COMM is systematically alerted
- Providing speakers to EDIC events
- Development of nationally tailored content on the European Semester in simple (one page) documents explaining the process.

There are further options to enhance collaboration with EDICs which could even include collaborative projects – involving co-funding by DG ECFIN. However, DG COMM notes that for more enhanced collaboration to be possible there would be a need to focus the type of content developed and delivered on not just national, but regional and local stories that show real life benefits of relevance and salience to the public.

3.3 Collaboration with other EU institutions and the Member State SPP network

This subsection addresses the questions relating to opportunities for closer collaboration with other institutions –more specifically:

- How to further enhance cooperation on communication with the EP and the euro area MS spokespersons' with a view to achieving coherence of message and to exploit synergies, given the division of tasks and institutional constraints?

3.3.1 Collaboration with the EIB; the ECB; the EIF; the EP; the ESM and the Eurogroup Secretariat

In general, based on the feedback provided by the interviewees from the European Investment Bank (EIB), European Central bank (ECB), European Investment Fund (EIF), European Parliament (EP), European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and Eurogroup Secretariat, the cooperation in the area of communication has been found to be good. Only a limited number of opportunities to further enhance collaboration were identified

However, considering obvious limitations stemming from the scope of the study and hence the fact that conducted interviews involved mainly high level staff and MEPs⁹³, these findings are only indicative.

Interviews with the ECB and the European Parliament suggest that there are few opportunities to enhance collaboration. The ECB representatives noted that existing collaboration was largely informal and worked effectively. As for the European Parliament, no real options for collaboration were identified⁹⁴.

⁹² DG ECFIN staff has previously been involved in training provision to EDICs. However, training could be simplified to ensure better understanding and use.

⁹³ i.e. no interviews with members of the communication departments implementing the communication activities

⁹⁴ Here the interviews covered only one MEP, which rather felt that it was up to DG ECFIN to improve its communication, independently of the EP

Interviews with the representatives of the EIB and the EIF indicated that collaboration concerning communication policies, albeit good, is fairly limited. As opposed to other DGs, such as DG RTD or DG GROW with whom EIF signed a mandate document which specifies the collaboration in the area of communication, there is no such arrangement between EIF and DG ECFIN. Publications is the area where collaboration between EIF and DG ECFIN has had a somewhat more regular character.

As for the EIB, its interviewee indicated that the collaboration takes place largely on an ad hoc basis, typically through discussions at different levels depending on the specific project. A recent exception where the exchange of views has been more regular is the Commission's Investment Plan - where EIB plays a vital role. In general, lack of intense and regular cooperation in terms of communication activities stems from the fact that both DG ECFIN and EIB have different audiences; with the EIB having a much narrower audience predominantly targeting investors, specialised NGOs and think tanks. Both also have considerably different focus: policy conceptualisation at the macro level versus specific projects' implementation. EIB, with its much narrower mandate, focuses largely on transactions and relies primarily on its website as a key tool for communication. Exchange of information between EIB and ECFIN is somewhat fostered by the fact that DG ECFIN has a representative on the EIB Board.

3.3.2 Collaboration opportunities with the Eurogroup spokesperson's network

The Eurogroup spokespersons' network is a fairly recent development (established in December 2013). As such, it is still not fully set up and its functioning and underlying procedures are still subject to changes/ refinements. Network members meet prior to the Eurogroup via teleconference. The network is composed of representatives from Member States, the Council, EC and ESM. The network benefits its members through, *inter alia*, sharing of resources (i.e. campaign materials, factsheet) and by providing a forum where participants can validate their information; can seek clarifications about the EC's official communication; or can establish the correct interpretation of sensitive issues⁹⁵.

Assessing the extent to which this network is used and identifying avenues for enhanced collaboration has proved challenging. Only a few Member States' Spokespersons agreed to participate in this study. And of those who did participate, only one was actually aware of the network's existence. Furthermore, other than this interviewee, none of the Member States' Spokespersons interviewed were able to comment on the need for alignment of messages, on further collaboration needs or on avenues in which collaboration could be enhanced.

The interviewee who was aware of the network noted that it was helpful in checking the accuracy of information stemming from the media. He also noted that the current organisation of meetings prior to the Eurogroup was very effective – but that the content of these meetings were often very specific. In this respect the interviewee suggested enhancing collaboration in organising meetings prior to most critical dates (i.e. main stages of the European Semester).

The extent to which this suggestion would be supported by other Member States' Spokespersons is not known, but possibly there would be benefit in investigating this further.

⁹⁵ Source interview with DG ECFIN

4 Measurement and evaluation of DG ECFIN’s communication activities

The ToR requires that the assignment provides guidance on indicators and measurement for the future communication strategy. More specifically, it is stipulated that the assignment is to provide suggestions for targets and indicators for measuring the communication impact as well as guidance on systems of measurement of uptake of messages and analysis developed by DG ECFIN.

The ToR furthermore specifies that the guidance to be provided is to go beyond the numerical data (e.g. on website hits, participants in DG ECFIN events, citizens' enquiries, print runs, etc.) to define realistic qualitative benchmarks and indicators in order to assess the effectiveness of DG ECFIN's outreach. This section addresses each of these issues. It takes into account and builds on the expected outcomes of the communication efforts as defined in DG ECFIN's Draft Communication Strategy of February 2015. It also builds on:

- Good practice standards for measurement and evaluation of public sector communication efforts
- A review and assessment of current measurement systems and practices within DG ECFIN

4.1 Standards for measurement and evaluation

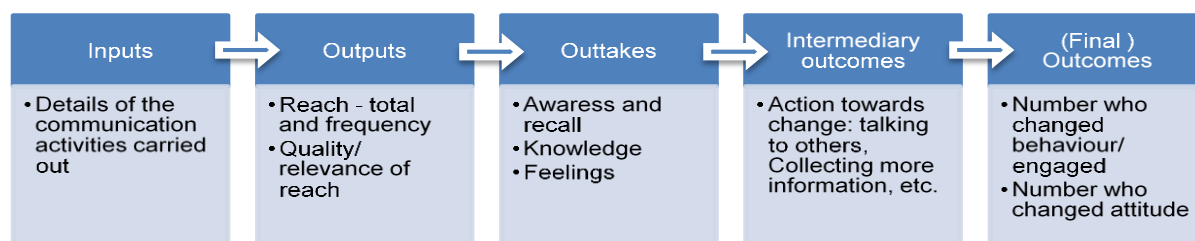
Measurement and evaluation forms an integral part of effective communication efforts. What could technically be measured and what realistically can be measured is usually the crucial decision in designing indicators for communication.

A baseline for good practice communication measurement is the existence of outcome based objectives which are not only achievable by the intervention but also sufficiently specific to be measurable (SMART principles).

Effects should be assessed by reference to the communication intervention’s original purpose and indicators set accordingly. Furthermore, measurement at different levels is necessary.

Inputs, Outputs, Outtakes, Intermediate Outcomes and Final Outcomes are the stages of effects that “connect the dots” between communication-based activities and the impact they have on the desired end result. Without adequate intermediary measurement, attribution in communication measurement becomes impossible. Furthermore, intermediary measurement informs needs for adaptation of communication efforts. Inputs, Outputs, Outtakes, Intermediate Outcomes and Final Outcomes are illustrated in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Outputs, Outtakes, Intermediate Outcomes and Final Outcomes



Ideally, objectives would be set at these different levels – with associated measurable Key Performance Indicators. However, recognising the complex environment and multiple factors likely to impact on the expected outcomes of DG ECFIN communication strategy, practical, workable indicators would be set best with intermediary outcomes as the highest achievable level.

4.1.2 What should be measured

For much of DG ECFIN's communication, clear pre- and post- measurement is not possible as many activities are continued over time. This calls for continued measurement (“tracking”), so as to ensure the continued relevance and utility of activities, in the light of the stated communication objectives.

Evaluation theory generally distinguishes between formative and summative evaluation. The former involves measurement of outputs and outtakes, consideration of relevance and delivery mechanisms – informing assessment of **progress** towards objectives and to provide recommendations for improved delivery of communication efforts. Summative evaluation aims at providing final judgement on the effectiveness of the intervention.

When considering appropriate indicators for DG ECFIN's communication efforts, it will be important to consider also formative aspects – beyond the pure level of activities (inputs) and their delivery. Of importance will be questions of “quality” reach (i.e. Are the seven target audiences defined in the Draft Strategy actually being reached by the communication efforts? Who are being reached and who are not?). Likewise, outtake measurement will be important.

Such measurement will inform considerations of tailoring, targeting and developing communication efforts, in order to ensure highest relevance is achieved in relation to the stated communication objectives.

4.1.3 Using results and choosing indicators

For measurement to be an integral part of daily communication work, clarity is needed on how results will be used and how follow up will be ensured. Without such considerations, there is a clear risk that measurement will become of secondary importance and that data, while collected, might not be adequately used or analysed. In turn, the measurement system must be designed with usability in mind. Measurement needs to be as comprehensive as possible, while keeping it pragmatic.

With communication delivery increasingly gravitating to online channels, there is a wealth of possible indicators which could be used as yard sticks. The standard is “measure what matters”. This requires consideration of the desired response, and how this best can be measured. Illustratively, if the main expected intermediary outcome of a journalist event is that journalists follow more closely and use more extensively EC sources – then this aspect should be monitored. Likewise, baseline data on the extent to which prospective journalists follow the existing sources already may be used as a baseline to consider which participants to invite to upcoming events – and who not to invite (as they are already using EC sources).

In turn this requires consideration of the potential usage of different monitoring sources – for a single activity. It also requires consideration be given to the logic of intervention – for each of the communication programmes which underpin the strategy as presented in Annex II to VI and annex IX of the Draft Strategy⁹⁶.

4.2 Current systems for measurement: strengths, weakness and opportunities

DG ECFIN has put in place different systems to monitor and evaluate its communication efforts. For most of its activities some form of measurement is already in place. Having reviewed the different systems for monitoring the different programmes and activities underpinning the communication strategy, the following main strengths and weaknesses of the current monitoring system may be noted – as well as opportunities for measurement (selected).

⁹⁶ the assignment does not consider internal communication nor the communication programme related to the Euro change over



Programme	Strengths of current measurement	Weaknesses of current measurement	Opportunities
Publications programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All publications only at the website –allows for tracking of the number of publications opened. ■ Systematic monitoring of publication and summary document downloads (output indicator) ■ Input indicators in place (% adherence to plan; % of publications corresponding to DG ECFIN operational priorities) ■ Existing data appear to be used to organise the publications on the website (in order of most popular) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Web statistics do not differentiate between internal (EC) and external views ■ No data on the origin of users ■ No tracking of unique usage ■ No evidence of analysis of data ■ Judging by download data, a number of publications enjoy very limited readerships. Web statistics are inadequately used ■ Not clear if data from the publication office is used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tracking of reference to publications in scientific journals (e.g. Google scholar) ■ Tracking of references in the media ■ Tracking of use of publications via the publication mailing list: views, click through rate, forward rate ■ Surveys among subscribers to the publication list – which should focus on publications actually downloaded by a significant share so as to avoid error in data ■ Analysis of those subscribing to the publications/Quality of reach(subject to amendments to the subscription system – as the current system does not collect information on the background of the subscribers) ■ Tracking data from Twitter – how effective is this approach to promotion (click through rate). ■ Design of systems to collect data on “least used” publications ■ For horizontal evaluation: horizontal surveys
Media programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Satisfaction surveys among participants to journalist seminars ■ Data on audience for Euronews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No analysis of repeat participation of participants to j. seminars ■ No mapping of the importance of the media /participants to j. seminars ■ No collection of subscription information from those receiving press releases ■ Euronews data lacking granularity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Media analysis of uptake of media activities (scope of coverage, tone, SOV, quality of coverage, location of coverage) ■ Tracking of output of journalists participating in events (subsequent coverage: quantitative and qualitative coverage) ■ Tracking of extent to which participants to journalist seminars follow DG ECFIN's tools more
Stakeholder outreach programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Satisfaction surveys among participants to journalist seminars and BEF ■ Survey data analysed and used for subsequent improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No tracking of past participation ■ Satisfaction surveys are ad hoc and do not contain the same questions – challenging for analysis over time ■ No evidence of analysis of some of the seminar satisfaction data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tracking of extent to which participants to seminars follow (more) DG ECFIN's tools ■ Measurement of enhanced understanding/uptake of desired content ■ Measurement of engagement of past participants to additional DG ECFIN activity ■ Tracking data from newsletter (open rate & click through rate) ■ Data collection on subscribers to newsletters



<p>Website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Web statistics available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Web statistics do not differentiate between internal (EC) and external views ■ Most pages viewed only – limited data on some sites ■ Unique users poorly defined ■ No origin of users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use of more advanced systems for web monitoring (e.g. Pikwik) and real time monitoring ■ User surveys ■ Monitoring of “desired results” ■ Online user satisfaction ■
<p>Social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use of Twitter analytics ■ Data on videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engagement rate not a helpful indicator – better to use re-tweet as KPI ■ No monitoring of followers (including new followers) ■ No comprehensive data on clips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better use of listening function of “Twitter” – so as to respond ■ Better collection of data on who retweet ■ Click-through
<p>On ground communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ NA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data requirements not known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Guidance for data collection to ESOs (in collaboration with DG COMM) -Overall multiple opportunities: but depends on the system developed by DG COMM ■ Monitoring of contacts made: type, frequency

4.3 Suggestions for indicators for the Draft Communication Strategy

The draft strategy defines the objectives and associated results for each of the programmes underpinning the strategy. These objectives – together with the current systems for monitoring - have formed the baseline for the suggested indicators.

For each programme is provided in a table format:

- Suggested key performance indicators – linked to inputs outputs and results and where suitable intermediary outcomes are defined
- Suggested data collection tools

The suggestions for indicators reflect the evaluators' view that monitoring is not simply about reporting to management, but primarily has the purpose of monitoring progress, for continued learning and improvement.

Indicators have not been included for the on-the-ground communication through European Semester Officers – as any indicator should take into account the data which is collected by DG COMM before developing separate indicators which would need to be fed.

The nature of this content is not known. However, it is noted that ESOs send reports on what kind of communication activities they have organised. These reports used to be monthly, but now they are based on ad hoc requests. Furthermore, ESOs' report to their country teams, but their frequency and their nature appear to vary. A specific template is also available for DG ECFIN funded events. The extent to which the reporting covers only inputs (activities) or also outtake and outcome data is not known.



Publications programme

Defined objectives (Draft strategy)	Defined expected results (Draft strategy)	Type	Suggested indicators	Source and comments
(1) To manage the publication of works included in DG ECFIN's annual publications programme in a way that ensures the timely publication of high-quality and policy-relevant work corresponding to the DG's operational objectives	Improved planning and implementation of the annual publications programme. Higher degree of alignment of the annual publications programme with the operational objectives of DG ECFIN and improved timeliness	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ % adherence to plan ■ % of publications corresponding to DG ECFIN operational priorities 	Internal monitoring
(2) To deliver high-quality editorial and layout services so that all publications meet high standards of clarity, readability and comprehensibility suited to their intended audience, as well as summary materials that help conveying the main findings of research to a broader audience	Publications that are attractive, clear, readable, and who's findings are clearly expressed and summarised	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ % publication users finding that the publications explain clearly the implications of the economic reforms and their potential benefits; the economic reform process within the ESP - and the needs/rationale for structural reform; rationale for the country specific recommendations; and economic governance issues. ■ % publication users expressing satisfaction as regards: Presentation and organisation of information; Clarity of the information; Reliability/soundness of the analysis and timeliness 	Online survey : publication subscribers & possibly pop up survey (occasional frequency as to avoid survey fatigue e.g. once every second year) Survey questions as for formatted in ICF survey could be used, this way the ICF survey could operate a the benchmark for progress
(3) To achieve greater impact of the DG's publications on policy-makers and opinion formers by means of wider dissemination of published works to new readers and clearer interpretation of their main findings for policy-makers and opinion-formers	Deeper impact of our publications especially on policy-makers and opinion formers (and ...). broader reach of the findings of our work	Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reach: Number of visits to the ECFIN website (PDF views/downloads) - internal (EC) discounted ■ Share of engagement among regular users: via the publication mailing list: views, click through rate, forward rate (per publication type). Should be monitored by publication type. ■ Number of new subscribers to publication list – and share of new subscribers within target audience (viewer types) ■ Publication coverage in the media 	Web statistics and statistics from the newsletter tool. There would be benefit in reviewing the system for subscription as to collect data on the background of those following
		Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ (Intermediary) Outcome: & users within target groups finding the content very useful for their work 	Online survey : publication subscribers (see description above)
Not defined explicitly as part of the publication programme but core to the Draft strategy: <i>Reputation as an authoritative and credible source</i>		outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of citations of DG ECFIN papers in academic research 	Tracking of reference to publications in scientific journals (Google scholar)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ % regular users finding publications/content objective 	Online survey : publication subscribers (see description above)



Media programme

Defined objectives (Draft strategy)	Defined expected results (Draft strategy)	Type	Suggested indicators	Source and comments
(4) Accurate and objective coverage of DG ECFIN's policy positions and initiatives by the print and broadcast media, within a meaningful context	Implicit in the strategy: Production of newsworthy content	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of press releases, background notes, LTTs, speeches and other materials aimed at media produced by DG ECFIN Share of press releases, background notes, LTTs, speeches and other materials produced by DG ECFIN not being subject to substantial redrafting by the SPP Number of Real Economy focused on DG ECFIN issues Number and nature of SPP requests to DG ECFIN for assistance 	Internal monitoring
	Journalists using the materials prepared for them (press releases, background notes etc.) will produce well-informed and accurate coverage of EU economic policy issues	Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of journalists following DG ECFIN sources (subscribers and followers (press releases and twitter) – and % development 	Require chances to the ECs subscription system for press releases Manual monitoring of Twitter required It is recommended that the following indicator in the draft strategy are not considered – as they do not capture actual media interest: online views of press material
		Outtakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of articles/features with explicit reference DG ECIN content (quotes, reference to forecasts/forecast data etc.) generated from press releases Audience figures from the media having covered Share of articles having a neutral or positive tone 	DG COMM media monitoring/analysis tool
		Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share of participants to journalists seminars subscribing to DG ECFIN sources following the event 	Manual monitoring of subscription (pre-and post)
	Contribute to a better understanding of our work by citizens.	Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of the public opinion in the Eurozone Member States agreeing that the common currency is a good thing for the EU Proportion of the public opinion in the Eurozone Member States agreeing that reforms would be more effective if they were carried out at the EU level Change in the proportion of the public opinion in selected Eurozone Member States agreeing that the common currency is a good thing for the EU 	Eurobarometer <i>These indicators should be seen as Context indicators – as realistically DG ECFIN's communication will only have a modest impact</i>
		Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viewing figures Euronews Share of viewers from Euro countries Share of viewers from EU non Euro countries 	Euronews (viewers figures need improvement – as scope it not clear)
	Implicit in the strategy: improvement of	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of seminars, briefings and training courses for journalists 	Internal monitoring
		Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of participants being repeat participants % from significant national media (agenda setting or reach) 	Internal monitoring

	journalistic knowledge	Outtake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ % of participants to journalist seminars having acquired a lot of new knowledge ■ Share of participants finding the seminars newsworthy 	<p>Post event surveys (as to facilitate Responses and generate better response rate use of an online tool can be considered. There is furthermore a need for consistency of surveys so that tracking of outtake can be monitored over time</p> <p>Newsworthiness should be considered as impacting on participation</p>
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Stakeholder outreach programme

Defined objectives (Draft strategy)	Defined expected results (Draft strategy)	Type	Suggested indicators	Source and comments
(5) to identify, sustain, nurture and expand communities of stakeholders who are important to the achievement of ECFIN's operational objectives because of their direct or indirect influence over the framing and implementation of economic policy at the European or Member States' level and their influence over public perceptions of EU policy	Implicit in the strategy: organisation of events	Input	Number of events organised	Internal monitoring
	Policy-makers that have participated in the activities will emerge with a deeper understanding both of our policies and how they are made and that his will	Output Outtake Intermediary outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of policy makers participating ■ % of return participation (individuals) ■ % indicating that they have acquired a better knowledge and understanding of DG ECFIN policies ■ % of satisfaction with the event ■ % of participants indicating that they feel better equipped to use DG ECFIN content ■ Number subscribing to DG ECFIN's information sources (newsletter, twitter account or publication subscription) 	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Post event surveys (as to facilitate Responses and generate better response rate use of an online tool can be considered. There is furthermore a need for consistency of surveys so that tracking of outtake can be monitored over time.</p> <p>Interaction with existing DG ECFIN sources could be included in the survey (as likely to be significant already before participation) – and the online survey could prompt people to subscribe</p>
	Academics and think-tankers that have participated in the activities will make greater use of our analysis and research in their own work and....	Output Outtake Intermediary outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of academia participating ■ % of return participation ■ % indicating that they have acquired a better knowledge and understanding of DG ECFIN policies ■ % of satisfaction with the event ■ % satisfaction with the engagement at the event (opportunity to discuss/interact) ■ Number subscribing to DG ECFIN's information sources (newsletter, twitter account or publication subscription) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Could be monitored – but should rather be monitored as part of a general indicator for citations of DG ECFIN papers in academic research 	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Post event surveys (as above)</p> <p>NB Expected effects to be generated by conferences</p>
	will, when writing commentary, give favourable mention to our research and endorsement of our policies	Output Outtake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of TU/CSO participating ■ % of return participation ■ % indicating that they have acquired a better knowledge and understanding of DG ECFIN policies 	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Post event surveys (as above)</p>
Trade unions and civil society groups that have participated in our activities will gain a deeper understanding of our work,	Output Outtake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of TU/CSO participating ■ % of return participation ■ % indicating that they have acquired a better knowledge and understanding of DG ECFIN policies 	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Post event surveys (as above)</p>	



<p>engage with us more in areas of agreement, perceive ECFIN as transparent and open to dialogue and</p> <p>will represent our work to their own constituencies more positively</p>	<p>Intermediary outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ % of satisfaction with the event ■ % satisfaction with the engagement at the event (opportunity to discuss/interact) ■ ■ Share of participants to seminars participating subsequently to flagship events ■ Share of participants engaging more extensively with the ESOs ■ Number subscribing to DG ECFIN's information sources (newsletter, twitter account or publication subscription) 	<p>Internal monitoring ESO feedback</p>
<p>Business groups and financial institutions that have participated in our activities will better understand ECFIN's role in policy areas of interest to them</p> <p>and endorse our work</p>	<p>Outtake</p> <p>Outtake</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of TU/CSO participating ■ % of return participation ■ % indicating that they have acquired a better knowledge and understanding of DG ECFIN policies ■ % of satisfaction with the event ■ % satisfaction with the engagement at the event (opportunity to discuss/interact) 	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Post event surveys (as above)</p>

Web development programme

Defined objectives (Draft strategy)	Defined expected results (Draft strategy)	Type	Suggested indicators	Source and comments
<p>(6) a reliable and accessible source of information about the Commission's priorities in the fields for which DG ECFIN is responsible, putting activities in a policy context and presenting them appealingly whilst at the same time providing a research resource for more specialised audiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Find content that is accurate and up-to-date and presented in a clear and accessible language, and, for most users, in their own language or main second language ■ Find pages that provide a clear context for the key information being provided ■ search and navigate easily to find the information that they need 	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of page cuts (outdated information) ■ % users able to find the information they are looking for ■ Bounce rate 	<p>Internal monitoring</p> <p>Online or "pop up" survey: publication subscribers & possibly pop up survey (occasional frequency as to avoid survey fatigue e.g. once every second year). Survey questions as for formatted in ICF survey could be used, this way the ICF survey could operate a the benchmark for progress</p>
		Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of unique users (year and monthly), number of visits and number of page views - internal (EC) discounted – total web ■ Number of unique users (year), number of visits and number of page views - internal (EC) discounted – main sub-sites (per sub-site) 	<p>Web statistics</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clearly understand the key messages that we need them to understand on each page ■ Clearly perceive what our policy priorities are ■ Enjoy using our site 	Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ % Satisfaction with the quality and comprehensiveness of information ■ % Satisfaction with updating 	<p>Online/pop up surveys (as above)</p>

Social media programme

Defined objectives (Draft strategy)	Defined expected results (Draft strategy)	Type	Suggested indicators	Source and comments
(7) Set agenda and tone for debates on our policy area which are taking place on (other) social media platforms, including defensives & rebuttal	By establishing a lively presence on social media, where content can be shared and commented on	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of tweets that provides more than links to content on the web 	Twitter Statistics
	By monitoring the key opinion-makers and influencers, ECFIN can keep abreast of the policy debate and be better prepared to react	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of monitoring reports/feedback to DG ECFIN providing insight into key opinion-makers and influencers 	Internal monitoring
	(judiciously) participating the conversation where it takes place ECFIN can add value to the debate and point users to objective and factually accurate information	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of interventions % of interventions rebutting factually incorrect information 	Internal monitoring
(8) Exerting more influence on existing stakeholders who are active on social media	By endorsing third party content which supports ECFIN policy messages (e.g. by 'sharing', 'liking' or 'retweeting' ECFIN can build, nurture and expand its own social media community.	Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of endorsements 	Internal monitoring
		Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of followers (and increase over time) Type of followers 	Twitter Statistics and manual monitoring
(9) Acquiring new endorsers and multipliers to amplify our message		Outtakes and intermediary outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of retweets per DG ECFIN tweet (own content) – if possible broken down by retweet by EC accounts and other accounts Number of favourites (own content) Exposure generated by retweeting of DG ECFIN tweet (own content) 	Retweeting and favourites measured separately is a better source of engagement to content than engagement rate (as measures the brand rather than content)
(10) Channel for people to access more detailed information and a deeper understanding that can be obtained by using our website		Intermediary outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of click through on Twitter (per tweet linking to Type generating most click through 	Twitter Statistics

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Relevance and suitability of the target audiences

Considering the mission of DG ECFIN, the seven target audiences defined in the Draft Strategy are suitable. Each of these groups has a stake in, interest in and aim to influence policy processes and outcomes of direct relevance to DG ECFIN policy. Consequently they engage – and are interested in engaging - at EU and national level, in activities which directly or indirectly may have an impact on the content and implementation of reforms.

The Draft Strategy, however, defines only broadly some of the groups intended to be targeted. Some groups are potentially very large and some lack specification. There is furthermore no evidence that content/narrative is targeted to address divergence of influence, power, interest, knowledge, and opinion among different stakeholder groups. In practice targeting may take place. However, lack of clear specification implies a number of risks – including most notably the risk not to focus and to engage primarily already engaged/supportive audiences.

The Draft Strategy in addition considers the wider public as an audience. However, the public is expected to be reached primarily through the stakeholders and the media. As a result, too little attention is given to this audience. This approach appears suitable, not only given the mission of DG ECFIN, but also because the public is being best served via the media and stakeholder communication efforts. Effectiveness of DG ECFIN communication efforts

Stakeholders: Reach, awareness and use, content and impact

Judging by the data collected, DG ECFIN's activities enjoy cumulatively significant exposure among most of the defined stakeholder groups. Most direct exposure is generated by DG ECFIN's continuing information tools.

However, some groups are better reached than others. Economic opinion-formers, national finance and economic ministries and financial institutions and other EU institutions are, in quantitative terms, the main audiences reached by the activities. In contrast, the direct reach of sector ministries, trade unions, NGOs and national parliaments (and their staff) is more limited and in several cases modest. Some of these groups were mapped as "high on power" during the workshop organised in December with DG ECFIN. Modest reach among interest groups is in part mitigated by multiplication of EU level representative organisations.

Stakeholders consulted are generally aware of most of DG ECFIN's communication tools and most do engage with several tools. Across stakeholders and across tools, DG ECFIN content is perceived of very good quality overall. There is no substantive content missing and all the main areas which should be covered are covered.

Overall, DG ECFIN is perceived as communicating relatively well on the defined topic areas. However, the different target audiences unavoidably have different needs and expectations for content - requiring different messages and higher levels of political sensitivity and more focus on rationale for policy choices. This issue becomes all the more important with more diverse groups of target audiences – and with target audiences which are less inclined to support DG ECFIN's conclusions.

Overall, there is evidence to suggest that DG ECFIN's communication supports a well-informed public policy debate. Content is used and multiplied by stakeholders. The quality DG ECFIN analysis is good, which reinforces ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic analysis. The policy influence of DG ECFIN content, however, is primarily taking place through the use of content in third party economic and policy analysis, which may or may not support the EC's policy conclusions.

There is at this stage nothing to suggest that such events led to higher levels of endorsement of DG ECFIN's work.

Media: Reach, awareness and use of DG ECFIN's communication, content and impact

With the SPP being responsible for all media relations, DG ECFIN plays only a supporting role. As DG ECFIN's media relations activities have been designed to support the SPP, it is not surprising that activities are complementary. The extent of complementarity with ESOs media relation activities is less obvious, with many ESOs also engaged in background briefings for journalists at national level.

Overall, judging by the data collected, it may be concluded that DG ECFIN's activities to support media coverage are suitable to work with the media on a more medium-term footing. There are no obvious information gaps, which could be covered by new/additional activities⁹⁷.

The data collected, however, would suggest that there is scope for content improvement, especially if the activities are to generate interest among non-specialised journalists and support and encourage coverage beyond the financial sections of print media and specialised financial media.

Journalists engaged by DG ECFIN's activities follow the EC's press releases and other press material, as it could be expected. They also follow publications and many use the website. Moreover, DG ECFIN's Twitter account is extensively followed by journalists.

Data on usefulness largely reflect usage patterns. Press releases, as well as selected DG ECFIN publications (forecasts), provide the most useful content. Overall, as for other stakeholders, insufficient presentation of societal implications of policy proposals/recommendations and better explanation of policy rationales are the most frequently mentioned "major" shortcoming of content.

Judging by the feedback collected, journalist seminars have a positive impact on the quality of coverage. However, the reach of these events is modest, participants are largely specialised journalists – and a significant share of those participating have also participated in past events.

While support to the SPP has not been central to this study, data collected suggest that there are options to improve the support provided to the SPP.

Tools for stakeholders and the media

Overall, the tools used to engage stakeholders are generally the right ones, properly used and are generally effective. There is nothing to suggest that any of the tools *per se* being used to reach the targeted shareholders should not be maintained, with the possible exception of the BEF.

Publications – which primarily relate to the forecasts – are the single most used tool and the one considered most useful. Some stakeholders however raise questions regarding bias. This should be an area of concern as DG ECFIN's influence model, which underpins the Draft Strategy, is built on the assumption that the analytical work provides the basis for reputation building.

Stakeholders and journalists are generally appreciative of the seminars. A key benefit is their ability to attract participants from the national level – as opposed to Brussels based staff. The new seminars organised for trade unions and civil society groups have the potential to impact positively on these groups' perceptions of DG ECFIN, and to lead to greater dialogue. Events, however, also imply reputational risks – especially if these groups do not feel that DG ECFIN is effectively listening.

As regards the BEF, data suggest quality issues, issue with reach, effective engagement and multiplication. As this event takes up at least 8% of the total available communication budget of DG ECFIN, its continuation in its current form should be carefully considered.

Overall, the stakeholders' consultation indicates that the website and newsletters are of satisfactory quality. Many stakeholders consulted did not follow the Twitter account and among those surveyed, it is perceived as the least useful tool. Of concern is the fact that journalists

⁹⁷ i.e. activities additional to the activities of DG ECFIN, the activities of the ESOs and REPs media related activities and those of DG ECFIN

have only a limited use of the Twitter account - as it is extensively followed and promoted by DG ECFIN as a key source for journalists⁹⁸.

Communicating to the public

There is little data available which can assess the extent to which the tools have contributed to better understanding of EU economic and fiscal policy; the interdependencies of economies; the needs for reform; and, ultimately, a more positive perception of EU economic and fiscal policies among the public. However, if one considers only the actual reach of these activities, it would be reasonable to conclude that it is unlikely that they have generated any substantial impact.

Collaboration and generating an impact nationally – opportunities and limitations

Working with the ESOs

The issue of complexity of DG ECFIN's policies is recognised by the vast majority of interviewees as a key communication challenge. Across the stakeholders consulted, there is consensus that, for effective communication to happen at Member State level, the specific Member State's context matters. Accordingly a tailored message is needed - rather than single common transportable message. The introduction of European Semester Officers (ESOs) has been welcomed as an excellent move in this regard.

ESOs engage, depending on Member State, with all or many of DG ECFIN's intended target audience, including the media. While it was out of scope to collect data on the effectiveness of the ESOs, the feedback collected suggest that till date they have been highly successful – addressing communication challenges and adapting the EC's core content to nationally tailored messages. Therefore, ESOs are likely to constitute the biggest potential for DG ECFIN in terms of “increasing its impact directly in the Member States”.

Globally speaking, DG ECFIN's support to the ESOs has been found to be good. Some operational aspects, however, could improve collaboration.

Working with other EU level institutions and the Euro group MS SPPs

In general, based on the feedback provided by the interviewees from the EIB; the ECB; the EIF; the EP; the ESM; the Eurogroup Secretariat and the Eurogroup Member States SPPs, the cooperation in the area of communication has been found as good – with only very limited options identified which could enhance collaboration.

Overall there appear to be more opportunities to enhance collaboration within the EC working across different DGs. The potential scope and concrete options for collaboration, however, are not possible to identify at this stage, given the activities which are currently initiated by DG COMM to support corporate communication and the uncertainty as regards future roles and responsibility for communication within the EC.

Opportunities related to tools and services managed by DG COMM are already largely exploited by DG ECFIN with cross sub- delegation arrangements in place with different services. Nevertheless, there are some opportunities to improve collaboration with the EDICs.

5.2 Recommendations

In view of the study findings it is recommended that DG ECFIN takes the following aspects into account when further developing the Draft Strategy of February 2015.

Strategy and targeting

- A) DG ECFIN's three stated communication objectives relate to influencing reputation; to shaping economic policy; and to contributing to a well-informed public policy debate⁹⁹. The

⁹⁸ It is noted however, that DG ECFIN social media approach has been enhanced in recent times, which therefore may address this issue.

⁹⁹ With the defined objectives being: 1) *Enhance DG ECFIN's reputation as an authoritative and credible source of economic policy proposals based on high-quality research and analysis by means of the efficient dissemination,*

objectives are relevant. However, the objectives, the target audiences and the strategy to achieve the objectives are broadly defined. Accepting that the strategy is expected to cover several years, it needs nevertheless to be sufficiently flexible to cater for the different contexts in which DG ECFIN is, or may be, operating. However, in order to ensure that the strategy focuses on areas most in need, some set of annual priorities and values¹⁰⁰ would help to focus effort.

- B) While current activities (including newer activities covered by strategy) ensure reach among many within the target groups, some groups are not well reached. If the strategy is expected to generate effective reach it would need to elaborate on how. Associated hereto, there would be benefits in more granularity in the targeting of audiences, considering exactly who needs to be engaged and how engagement will be ensured. Elaborating on “who” should also consider the specific sub-groups which may not be well reached within larger groups already well reached (e.g. specific Think tanks). So as to ensure some flexibility within the strategy, such aspects could be considered in an annual plan that operationalises the strategy.
- C) The strategy aims explicitly at engaging with groups less likely to support DG ECFIN's policy conclusions and sets, as one of its expected outcomes, to ensure that such groups perceive ECFIN as transparent and open to dialogue. While concentrating on the important and necessary tasks of disseminating information, the strategy lacks a complementary focus on listening, engaging and addressing concerns, issues and variant opinions through open dialogue¹⁰¹. The latter is more a strategic emphasis than it is a planning of activities but it should inform their nature. Furthermore, at the planning level the strategy will need to consider how to ensure engagement beyond seminars, since following up is needed if DG ECFIN is to be perceived as open to dialogue.
- D) The strategy's objective of enhancing “*reputation as an authoritative and credible source...*”, appears in practice to be left largely to the performance of ‘business as usual’, rather than being the subject of a reputation enhancing programme. Being exemplar in your field and being seen as exemplar are two different states¹⁰². A quiet but consistent PR programme to stimulate enhancing DG ECFIN's reputation could include, inter alia: the encouragement of academic papers and articles in journals by staff; the proactive seeking and management of speaking platforms on technical aspects of research and analysis; the engagement with awards for technical and professional excellence, etc.

Themes/content covered

- E) The themes/content covered by the strategy are suitable given the target audience's needs. However the tone of some of the content/messages might be questioned. There are apparent opportunities to work with other DGs around the theme of structural reform. However, as pertains to communication at least, the heavy focus on fiscal consolidation, structural reform (as defined in the strategy), and correspondingly less focus on the growth agenda may be seen as not complimentary to the communication priorities of other DGs with their “more positive agenda” on structural reform and more focus on a “growth agenda” (e.g. DG CONNECT and DG GROW).
- F) Another area which needs consideration, especially in view of the trade unions and CSO being new target audiences, is analysis that accounts for wider societal implications of the proposals/recommendations, more evidence supporting the necessity of the ECs recommendations in the area of fiscal consolidation and better policy justification.

clear explanation and open discussion of its work 2) Shape the economic policy debate at the EU level and influence policy-making at the EU and national level in line with policies developed by the DG, in particular by means of active engagement with key stakeholders and 3) Ensure that the public policy debate is well-informed through the provision of clear, objective and accurate information to DG ECFIN's stakeholders and, where relevant, to the general public.

¹⁰⁰ how much by, by when, why and what is the value attributed to change

¹⁰¹ Overall, the strategy's influence model appear to be built on a premise that can be paraphrased as: ‘Since we are authoritative and hold the truth, once people hear and understand our truth they will support our policies’.

¹⁰² reputation being made up of three elements – what you do, what you say about yourself (to some effect) and what others say about you

Tools targeting stakeholders

- G) The tools targeting stakeholders which are presented in the strategy are suitable and have the potential to contribute significantly to the objectives set in the strategy. However, relying extensively on already existing tools – without clear presentation of avenues to enhance reach - does mean that the overall reach is restricted to primarily those already in sight and only modest new reach to groups not explicitly targeted by new tools can be expected. There is in this respect a need to consider whether different tools (or the modification of existing ones) are required in order to reach out to stakeholders who form part of the priority targets but who are not yet engaged by any of DG ECFIN's existing tools – or if these are best to be catered by the ESOs.
- H) Among the new tools contained in the strategy, the stakeholder events are receiving extremely positive feedback. From this study's analysis there would appear to be benefit in further developing these. Although the numbers reached directly are small per event, they are resonating with important elements of DG ECFIN's stakeholder groups and offer the prospect of 'third party endorsement' and the multiplier effect. However, consideration needs to be given to interaction – the listening and responding part – otherwise, there is a real risk of generating resentment.
- I) There is a question mark over the BEF as it does not appear to generate efficient outreach to and engagement from targeted stakeholders. Considering the cost of this 'flagship' event, there is a need to consider whether it should be continued in the future. If it is continued, it needs to address its current weaknesses¹⁰³.
- J) Without questioning the content of journalist seminars, there is a valid question of their continued relevance in being provided centrally. While perhaps a medium term issue, there is justification in the findings for taking into account the ESOs work with journalist briefings; the high share of returning users; and the generally improving quality of coverage of DG ECFIN's work. It is suggested that, while the events are continued in the short-term, there is a need to explore how DG ECFIN can better provide for this audience. One approach may be increased support to the ESOs (who have the benefit of proximity and local knowledge), which is quite possibly more effective and more cost efficient. Other areas of short term development relate to programme content, where there would be benefit in considering use of external speakers, in addition to internal speakers, in view of their potential added value (speaking "on the record" implying a more newsworthy event; opportunities for subsequent commentary and more "objective" events).
- K) Considering publications potential importance for policy formulation, it is out of the scope of this exercise to consider the adequacy of the number of analyses and associated papers issued. However, from a resource input perspective the large number of publications published, combined with limited viewership of many of these, raises the question of the need of "official publication". In this respect there would be benefit to testing who actually views publications with low viewership and how useful they perceive them to be. This could be done by asking the prospective users to provide their mails as a requirement to access/receive the publication¹⁰⁴, and then subsequently undertake a short follow up online survey automatically within a few days. As to address issues with perceived bias there would be benefit in considering opportunities for better separation of analysis from policy conclusions as well as opportunities to link to publications of other actors, such as the IMF and the ECB.
- L) Other areas of publication development to be considered include notably better segmentation of the mailing list based on the user's background and possible preferences regarding the content – ideally in conjunction with a segmentation of the Newsletter list (one segmented list). Better segmentation of users and the tailoring of the disseminated content would decrease noise, and hence increase the likeliness that mails are being opened and ultimately that publications are read. This would require that user data is collected while signing up – which is currently not the case.

¹⁰³ targeting, ensuring effective participation; event format/engagement and multiplication.

¹⁰⁴ which in turn could be mapped for user groups.

Tools targeting the wider public

The tools being used to address **directly** the public include broadcast content, publications and the sub-site. Broadly, they sit within the objectives of the strategy, although without a clear rationale, definition and without specific objectives. If these tools are to be continued there is a need to consider:

- M) The objectives these tools are intended to serve specifically, with targets and indicators;
- N) How to maximise their benefits - encouraging others to use/multiply these tools. also implies having a strategy for this that covers: a) how these can be used by the other parties and how it fits in with their needs and imperatives; b) who are expected to use them, in what circumstances and with what provisos; c) ensuring that there are adequate support structures - d) how to ensure that these tools are actually usable by and helpful to the multipliers. Such work would ideally be organised on close collaboration with DG COMM and other and other institutions having a better public outreach¹⁰⁵.
- O) The Euronews productions appear to be somewhat isolated from the balance of the objectives and their priorities as described in the strategy. It is not clear which criteria the Euronews productions meet and there are issues with some of the reach data. There is justification, therefore, in suggesting that its discontinuation is considered. Other ways of developing this tool in a more cost efficient manner may include collaboration with other DGs funding Euronews programmes, such as DG GROW.

Observations on collaboration

- P) From the strategy, it is not made clear how the ESO activities in the Member States and DG ECFIN's activities work together in practice; how they complement (or not) each other; and how they can be enhanced with respect in particular to:
 - Working with journalists
 - Working with stakeholders
 - Establishing stakeholders interests and credentials
 - Adding to (and subtracting from) a DG ECFIN stakeholder database

It would seem of obvious advantage that when DG ECFIN does something in Brussels, the ESO's should follow up on these audiences – but this does not appear to be the case. There would be three benefits to this being ensured: first, that any participant wanting some follow up or to participate in other activities can be satisfied without becoming a burden to DG ECFIN; second, that ESOs can provide nationally related perspectives; third that the ESOs can establish a relationship with the stakeholder, thereby facilitating future listening and engagement.
- Q) In that DG ECFINs areas of interest are an important, if not pivotal, component of the 'corporate' reputation of the Commission, there should be opportunities to work with DG COMM and supporting its addressing the broad public. Closer collaboration would be mutually beneficial in that DG ECFIN could achieve its 'share of voice' in corporate communication activities, while making the content of these activities more effective through its contribution.
- R) There is a need to actively consider how DG ECFIN can better work with other DGs on communicating the 'growth' agenda as this is likely to be a main priority for the coming years – and also on the structural reform agenda. Other areas of collaboration could relate to dissemination of research papers of other DGs on areas of common interest via DG ECFIN dissemination tools (e.g. on structural reforms).

¹⁰⁵ More strategically, the creation of partnerships with civil society, or those suitably in touch with the public would offer a 'route to market'. However, these may be regarded as perhaps a long-term aspiration rather than a short- or medium-term possibility. This is because they require considerable effort and resources to set up and sustain and because they demand a collaborative, negotiated stance.

Monitoring and generating insight

- S) DG ECFIN has systems in place for monitoring most of its communication. However, there still are areas for improvement of data collection and especially of analysis of data and use of data to refine efforts and inform priority setting. New data collection efforts, such as online surveys and other feedback mechanisms from stakeholders could furthermore be used to identify research areas/topics to be developed further ensuring the highest level of relevance of content.

Other observations on the strategy

- T) In Annex I, the release of specific Eurobarometer reports is described as a “flagship publication”. However, there is no justification given as to why it is credited as such. Perhaps the strategy could better define “flagship” in terms of those activities that can measurably achieve the strategy’s objectives?