

**MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE WORK
CARRIED OUT BY THE EUROPEAN
COMMISSION TO COMMUNICATE ON THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND DURING THE
PROGRAMMING PERIOD 2007-2013**

ANNEXES TO THE FINAL REPORT

European Commission
Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

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5 ANNEXES

5.1 Annex 1: Evaluation question matrix

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
Relevance	1. What are the main needs, problems and issues facing multipliers with a view to effectively communicating the ESF to the general public?		Needs, problems and issues facing Managing Authorities	Identification of "needs" from 1st evaluation report	Desk research - 1st TEP evaluation
				Feedback from MAs	Online survey with MAs 10 interviews with INIO members
			Needs, problems and issues facing potential EC multipliers	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations (in a sample of MS)
			Needs, problems and issues facing journalists	Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			2. To what extent do the EC's ESF I&C (operational) objectives address / mitigate these needs, problems and issues?		Extent to which needs, problems and issues of multipliers (Q1) are addressed by activities to foster a joint EC-MS communication policy, exchange of good practice and peer learning
	Online survey with MAs				
	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers			
		10 interviews with INIO members			
	Feedback from MAs	Online survey with MAs			

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
			addressed by more ESF communication tools produced by the EC	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			Extent to which needs, problems and issues of multipliers (Q1) are addressed by intensified relations of the EC with the media	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			Extent to which needs, problems and issues of multipliers (Q1) are addressed by audiovisual material produced by the EC	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			Extent to which needs, problems and issues of multipliers (Q1) are addressed by an improved EC ESF website (incl. a project database)	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Feedback from Website users	Online survey with Web users
Effectiveness	<i>Because of the close conceptual and practical linkages between them, we propose to use common judgment criteria for the following two evaluation questions:</i>	To what extent does the INIO network help / enable multipliers to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?	Usefulness: Extent to which the tool fulfils a need of the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from MAs	Online survey with MAs
					10 interviews with INIO members
				Case study – INIO	
			Observation of the proceedings at an INIO meeting	Case study – INIO	
			Accessibility: Extent to which the multipliers (and the general public where possible) are aware of and able to access the tool	Feedback from MAs	Online survey with MAs
				Attendance statistics from INIO meetings	10 interviews with INIO members
					Desk-based analysis of attendance lists

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
	3. To what extent do the different I&C activities and tools (e.g. website, audiovisual material, written material, media relations) help / enable multipliers to raise the overall visibility of the ESF among the general public?		Content: Extent to which the tool conveys appropriate information and messages	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members Case study – INIO
			Presentation: Extent to which the tool's design and presentation are found attractive	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members Case study – INIO
			Exploitation: Extent to which the tool is used to its full effect by the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from MAs	Online survey with MAs 10 interviews with INIO members Case study INIO
				Observation of the proceedings at an INIO meeting	Case study INIO
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
				4. To what extent do the different I&C activities and tools (e.g. website, audiovisual material, written material, media relations) help / enable multipliers to	To what extent do the EC's communication tools (brochures, leaflets, info stands...) help / enable multipliers to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF among
	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers 10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations			
	Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists			

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources	
	raise the general public's understanding of: the possibilities offered by the ESF? the role of the ESF in promoting employment and growth? how the EU is making a positive difference in people's lives through the ESF?	the general public?		Info stand only: Feedback from visitors Or Feedback from the EC or event organisers	Case study – stands	
			Accessibility: Extent to which the multipliers (and the general public where possible) are aware of and able to access the tool	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members Online survey with MAs	
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers 10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations	
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists	
				Stands only: Feedback from visitors Or Feedback from the EC or event organisers	Case study – stands	
				Content: Extent to which the tool conveys appropriate information	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members Online survey with MAs

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
			and messages	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Stands only: Feedback from visitors Or Feedback from the EC or event organisers	Case study – stands
			Presentation: Extent to which the tool's design and presentation are found attractive	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
				Stands only: Feedback from visitors Or Feedback from the EC or event organisers	Case study – stands
			Exploitation: Extent to which the tool is used to its full effect by the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers 10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Stands only: Observation Or Feedback from the EC or organisers	Case study – stands
				Data on communication tools' distribution to multipliers	Data to be provided by DG EMPL / ESN
		To what extent do the EC's media		Usefulness: Extent to which the tool fulfils a need of the	Feedback from MAs

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
		relations activities help / enable multipliers to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?	multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			Accessibility: Extent to which the multipliers (and the general public where possible) are aware of and able to access the tool	Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
					Case study – media relations
			Content: Extent to which the tool conveys appropriate information and messages	Content analysis of a sample of articles on OP launch	Case study – media relations
					Feedback from EC multipliers
			Presentation: Extent to which the tool's design and presentation are found attractive	Feedback from journalists	10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
		20 telephone interviews with journalists			
		Exploitation: Extent to which the tool is used to its full effect by the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from journalists	Case study – media relations	
				20 telephone interviews with journalists	
		To what extent do	Usefulness: Extent to which the	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
		the EC's audiovisual materials help / enable multipliers to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?	tool fulfils a need of the multipliers (and the general public where possible)		Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			Accessibility: Extent to which the multipliers (and the general public where possible) are aware of and able to access the tool	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
			Content: Extent to which the tool conveys appropriate information and messages	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
			Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists	

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
				Feedback from stakeholders that requested Videos	Case study – Videos
			Presentation: Extent to which the tool's design and presentation are found attractive	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Feedback from stakeholders that requested videos	Case study – videos
			Exploitation: Extent to which the tool is used to its full effect by the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources	
				Feedback from stakeholders that requested videos	Case study – videos	
				Distribution data of videos	Data to be provided by DG EMPL / DG COMM	
					Website analytics	
		To what extent does the EC's ESF website help / enable multipliers to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?	Usefulness: Extent to which the tool fulfils a need of the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members	
						Online survey with MAs
					Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
						10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
					Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
					Feedback from national Website administrators	Case study – Website
				Feedback from the Web users	Online survey with Web users	
					Desk research – analysis of Web statistics	
			Accessibility: Extent to which the multipliers (and the general	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members	
					Online survey with MAs	

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
			public where possible) are aware of and able to access the tool	Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Feedback from the Web users	Online survey with Web users
					Desk research – analysis of Web statistics
			Content: Extent to which the tool conveys appropriate information and messages	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Content analysis and comparison of the ESF and national Websites	Case study – Website
				Feedback from the Web users	Online survey with Web users
					Desk research – analysis of Web statistics
				Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
			Presentation: Extent to which the tool's design and presentation are found attractive		Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Content analysis and comparison of the ESF and national Websites	Case study – Website
				Feedback from the Web users	Online survey with Web users
			Desk research – analysis of Web statistics		
			Exploitation: Extent to which the tool is used to its full effect by the multipliers (and the general public where possible)	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
					Online survey with MAs
				Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
				Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
				Feedback from the Web users	Online survey with Web users

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources			
					Desk research – analysis of Web statistics			
	5. Is there a need for additional / new / different I&C activities or tools to achieve these objectives?		Existence of gaps or areas of need for multipliers that are not or not sufficiently covered by the I&C activities and tools developed to date	See EQs 1&2	See EQs 1&2			
				See EQs 3 & 4	See EQs 3 & 4			
Impact	6. Taken as a whole, have the I&C activities enhanced the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?		Number of EU citizens reached by the different I&C activities (where possible)	Distribution data of I&C tools	Data to be provided by DG EMPL, DG COMM			
				Statistics on number of website users	Website analytics			
				Number of people reached by certain tools (stands, media relations, videos)	Case studies			
						Extent to which differences between MS in evolution of ESF visibility can be traced to the EC's I&C activities, and/or to other factors	Eurobarometer results	Desk research
						Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members	
							Online survey with MAs	
						Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers	
				10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations				

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources	
				Geographical coverage of EC activities	Desk research	
				Any evidence of other factors	Desk research	
			Extent to which the EC's ESF website enhances users' understanding of the ESF	Feedback from website users	User survey	
			Indications of the impact of specific EC ESF I&C activities	Any evidence provided by stakeholders or existing documentation	All tools	
		Case studies				
	7. Did the I&C activities and tools have any other (positive or negative) effects?			Occurrence of any effects other than enhancing visibility and/or understanding of the ESF	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
						Online survey with MAs
					Feedback from EC multipliers	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
						10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
					Feedback from journalists	20 telephone interviews with journalists
Any other evidence (i.e. case studies, existing documentation)					Case studies/desk research?	
Efficiency	8. To what extent are the costs of the		Financial cost of I&C activities in each of the 5 main task areas	Breakdown of budget spent under the framework contract	Data provided by DG EMPL / ESN	

Evaluation issue	Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgment criteria	Evidence base	Data sources
	different types of I&C activities (e.g. website, audiovisual material, written material, media relations) proportionate to their overall effectiveness?		compared to each other	Any other relevant costs (e.g. of INIO meetings)	Case studies
Effectiveness of I&C activities in each of the 5 main task areas			(see EQs 3 & 4)	(see EQs 3 & 4)	
Impact of I&C activities (EQs 6 & 7)			(see EQs 6 & 7)	(see EQs 6 & 7)	
Sustainability	9. Are the different types of I&C activities produced to date (e.g. website, audiovisual material, written material, media relations) likely to continue to be used by multipliers in the coming years (i.e. until 2013)?		Managing Authorities' views of the future usefulness of the different I&C activities	Feedback from MAs	10 interviews with INIO members
			EC multipliers' views of the future usefulness of the different I&C activities	Feedback from EC multipliers	Online survey with MAs
			Journalists' views of the future usefulness of the different I&C activities	Feedback from journalists	10 interviews with DG Empl geo desks officers
					10 interviews with press officers in the EC Representations
					20 telephone interviews with journalists

5.2 Annex 2: Complete inventory of I&C tools

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks								Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website	7 Translations		
70 100	2007	Country profiles & graphic identity			57,940.59					8,766.68	5,383.24	72,090.50
70 300	2007	Website homepage, news & news content								42,131.50	11,850.00	53,981.50
70 400	2007	Evaluation	127,033.58									127,033.58
70 500	2007	Poster zones eligible			10,518.00							10,518.00
70 600	2007	Video Spidla							24,750.29		19,661.16	44,411.45
70 700	2007	27 Press releases						61,313.23			4,765.07	66,078.30
70 800	2007	DE Regional profile			31,501.49						4,149.51	35,651.00
70 900	2007	Projects in national websites		10,975.00								10,975.00
71 000	2007	Filming ESF in action							29,888.98		3,269.29	33,158.27

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks								Amount billed
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website	7 Translations	
71 100	2007	Stand & German exhibition				18,084.94					18,084.94
71 200	2007	National articles					19,775.00			740.00	20,515.00
71 300	2007	CP Translations			24,994.59					20,035.91	45,030.50
71 400	2007	ESF Folder			2,444.00						2,444.00
71 500	2007	ESF generic speech			2,302.00						2,302.00
71 600	2007	Potsdam stand				36,757.88					36,757.88
71 700	2007	Regional profiles B-FR-UK-IT-CZ			41,605.66					3,713.84	45,319.50
71 800	2007	Potsdam communication tools			44,982.33				54,405.79		99,388.12
71 900	2007	Printing country & regional profiles			65,880.00						65,880.00
72 000	2007	Burgenland profile			3,521.00						3,521.00

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
72 100	2007	Social Agenda			17,850.00						17,850.00
72 200	Nov-07	ESF website update							39,211.00	11,800.00	51,011.00
72 300	2007	Photo book Postdam			30,477.84						32,680.00
72 400	2007	Graphic design promotional tools			4,608.00						4,608.00
72 500	2007	Shared platform pre analysis		31,800.00							31,800.00
72 600	2007	Exhibition in Lisbon				20,424.14					20,424.14
72 700	Apr-08	Filming Portugal ESF in action						37,052.22			37,052.22
72 800	Apr-08	Filming Cornwall - UK ESF in action						34,253.95			34,253.95
72 900	Dec-08	Estonia - Filming ESF in action						41,640.02			41,640.02
73 100	Oct-08	Human stories			2,608.00			17,756.56			21,864.56

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
73200	Apr-08	Sweden Filming ESF in action							38,615.36		38,615.36
73300	Jan-08	Inclusion translation								20,072.60	20,072.60
73400	Dec-07	ESF posters 19 languages			4,845.00				1,062.50		6,507.50
73500	Jan-08	Bavarian poster stand				6,881.41					6,881.41
73600	Oct-07	Employment seminar in Bordeaux				10,156.41					10,156.41
73700	Apr-08	Support to consultation			10,759.91				9,819.69	3,620.00	24,199.60
73800	Dec-08	Social Agenda 16			4,750.00					195.00	6,814.60
73 900	Dec-08	ESF projects search engine		149,862.50						8,444.47	158,306.97
08-001	Oct-08	Dissemination of ESF products - printing		4,330.99	131,868.15						136,199.14
08-002	Mar-08	Czech Republic - filming ESF in action							41,004.24		41,004.24

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
08-003	Mar-09	Priorities of 117 ESF OPs							25,034.70	280,098.86	305,133.56
08-004	Oct-08	Investing in people - 2008A						165,081.06		34,905.12	199,986.18
08-005	Oct-08	EQUAL seminar stand				7,643.10					7,643.10
08-006	Oct-08	Compilation of ESF com material from MS		25,168.73							25,168.73
08-007	Oct-08	3700 projects in the platform		152,885.85						18,592.50	178,191.10
08-008	Oct-08	ESF website update 2008A							29,112.70	12,060.00	50,326.45
08-009		National article 2008									0.00
08-010	Jul-08	Social agenda magazine 17			5,511.23						5,511.23
08-011	Nov-08	Slovenia and France stands				41,336.78		5,984.65			47,321.43
08-012	Nov-08	Lithuania Filming ESF in action						46,619.98			46,619.98

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
08-013	Oct-09	Greece Filming ESF in action						52,150.61			52,150.61
08-014	Nov-08	France filming ESF in action						39,710.93			39,710.93
08-015	Nov-08	ESF programmes stats			26,894.80				26,647.53	2,026.75	55,569.08
08-016	Oct-08	Framed maps			1,485.13						1,485.13
08-017	Aug-08	Berlin Poster Stand									0.00
08-018	Nov-08	Finland Filming ESF in action						44,489.15			44,489.15
08-019	Aug-08	ESF maps in all languages			13,371.01					641.75	14,012.76
08-020	Feb-09	ESF film in Malta						44,255.22			44,255.22
08-021	Aug-08	Darmstadt Poster Stand				6,102.76					6,102.76
08-022	Jan-08	Hannover Poster Stand				9,114.76					9,114.76

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
08-023	Dec-08	Portable stand				5,657.44					5,657.44
08-024	Nov-08	ESF thematic sheet translations			33,715.57					15,583.89	49,299.46
08-025	Not approved	Dissemination video									0.00
08-026	Jul-09	Web site development & wikipedia							16,331.17	6,562.63	22,893.80
08-027	Nov-08	ESF social partners thematic sheet - translations all EU languages			20,913.94					44,668.56	65,582.50
08-028	Jan-09	Investing in people 2008B						153,375.11		34,905.12	188,280.23
08-029	Feb-09	News + charts upload							43,939.29	10,232.72	54,172.01
08-030	Sep-09	ESF navigation improvements + token							7,488.26		7,488.26
08-032	Dec-08	Stand French presidency				41,675.08					41,675.08

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
08-033	2008	Framed poster - investing in people			1,485.13						1,485.13
08-034	Mar-09	Investing in people C						160,497.13		34,905.12	195,402.25
08-035	Apr-09	Beneficiary projects from Member States		4,303.35							4,303.35
08-036	May-09	ESF website reorg & translation							78,923.50	47,933.80	126,857.30
08-037	Nov-08	Stand OCDE Paris				6,736.45					6,736.45
08-038	Feb-09	Subtitling ESF in action						14,535.41		107,570.09	122,105.50
08-039	Feb-09	Equal conference Lisbon				25,586.66					25,586.66
08-040	Apr-09	Advanced search 117 OPs							5,187.11		5,187.11
08-041	Jun-09	Investing in people D						198,402.38		40,722.64	239,125.02
08-042	Jul-09	ESF web news update							38,343.11	5,661.21	44,004.32

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
08-043	Jul-09	1200 MS projects in projects database		52,878.98						5,224.92	58,103.90
08-044	Nov-09	ESF thematic sheet response to financial crisis			11,773.97					1,713.15	13,487.12
08-045	Apr-09	CZ conference				19,579.15					19,579.15
08-046	Apr-09	CZ conference - 26-27/02/2009				22,924.28					22,924.28
09-001	May-09	National contribution database							6,644.49		6,644.49
09-002	Aug-09	Reprinting ESF posters & thematic sheets			42,917.66						42,917.66
09-003	Dec-09	Transfer 8000 ESF projects in projects database		368,078.09						58,290.20	426,368.29
EMP-09-004	Apr-09	Translation thematic sheet ESF response to crisis								14,144.75	14,144.75
EMP-09-005	May-09	Book Making a difference in Life			163,759.22						163,759.22
EMP-09-006	Jun-09	Investing in people E						56,310.81		12,161.52	68,472.33

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
EMP-09-007	Aug-09	Update graphic design promotional items			3,610.33						3,610.33
EMP-09-008	Dec 2009	Bilan EMP-05-09									0.00
EMP-09-009	May-09	Web compressions ESF in action							45,558.40	35,850.42	81,408.82
EMP-09-010	Jun-09	Web compressions Investing in people							57,562.55	39,867.02	97,429.57
EMP09-011	Jul-09	Poster Stand Leuven				7,393.88					7,393.88
EMP-09-012	May-10	ESF website maintenance & updates									0.00
EMP-09-013	Jul-09	ESF poster stand OECD Stockholm				10,207.02					10,207.02
EMP-09-015	Jan-10	ESF update country & regional profiles									0.00
EMP-09-016	N/A	ESF Film Branding									0.00
EMP-09-014	Jul-09	ESF poster Stand Seville				14,026.65					14,026.65

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communica- tion tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
EMP-09-018	Aug-10	Mid term evaluation									0.00
EMP-09-019	Aug-10	ESF navigation improvements & token									0.00
EMP-09-020	Mar-10	Photo exhibition stand			22,973.08	29,380.81					52,353.89
EMP-09-021	Feb-10	Stand Budapest				85,230.92					85,230.92
EMP-09-022	Apr-10	News website updates									0.00
EMP-09-023	Apr-09	ESF graphic work									0.00
EMP-09-024	N/A	Dissemination Audio-visual									0.00
EMP-09-025	Sep-10	ESF lay-out and graphic design									0.00
EMP-09-026	Jan-10	ESF stand Maastricht			2,382.66	8,804.15					11,186.81
EMP-09-027	Feb-10	ESF stand SE presidency				33,670.08					33,670.08

Code ESN	Contract end (year)	Subject	Tasks							Amount billed	
			1 Evaluation	2 Promotion & Coordination	3.a Communication tools	3.b Stands	4 Media relations	5 Audiovisual material	6 Website		7 Translations
EMP-09-028	Jan-10	Posters in PDF format of making a difference in life portraits			53,976.05					33,242.40	87,218.45
EMP-09-029	May-10	Translations of contents for the web (Roma section, etc.)								25,908.43	25,908.43
sum			127,033.58	800,283.49	898,226.35	467,374.75	81,088.23	1,300,779.85	481,764.17	1,041,173.66	5,193,853.90
share of total			2.45%	15.41%	17.29%	9.00%	1.56%	25.04%	9.28%	20.05%	

5.3 Annex 3: Detailed results of the evaluation by data collection tools

5.3.1 Results from the interviews with INIO members

1. Introduction and key findings

This report outlines the results of 10 telephone interviews conducted with the selected members of the Informal Network of national communication coordinators for the ESF (INIO)¹.

The interview partners work as communication officers at the national level and are responsible for coordinating the ESF communication in their respective countries. In the interviews TEP sought direct and qualitative feedback on the activities and tools developed by the European Commission (EC) since 2007. Some key findings of the interviews with the INIO members are briefly summarised below:

- Information needs differ among individual EU countries: the emphasis is placed on different priorities and / or communication is focused on the “EU funding” or “Programmes” rather than on the ESF; therefore I&C tools should either be worked out in a closer cooperation with the Member States or leave a room for filling them with country-specific information;
- INIO members fully agreed with the EC’s objective to consolidate a joint communication policy on the ESF;
- Positive feedback was received regarding the INIO meetings, however very few of the good practice examples shared at the meetings were adopted by other Member States;
- Media relations were considered as a potentially good way to communicate about the ESF to the general public, but INIO members were not familiar with the EC’s work in this area;
- The vast majority of the ESF communication co-ordinators also appreciated the EC’s approach to develop more tools and activities to communicate on the ESF;
- INIO members thought that the quality of tools provided by the EC has improved over the last years and many positive comments were directed to the ESF website and videos illustrating a shift towards more modern ways of communication; the majority of the INIO members felt that these tools are the most attractive in form and contain relevant information and messages;
- According to INIO members, there is no consistent method of passing on information about the tools developed by the EC, nor is there a clear message how this material should be disseminated – the ESF website is the most accessible (and exploited) of the tools and it provides an entry point for other I&C material;
- INIO members felt there is a much higher potential for future dissemination of almost all I&C tools produced by the EC, in particular the videos, website and some of the written material;
- The Circus Campaign was commonly perceived as a good practice example for ESF communication tools.

¹ Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

2. Challenges for communicating about the ESF

Most INIO members were of the opinion that “*the ESF does not mean much for the common people*” and that the Member States face a number of challenges when communicating about the ESF, such as:

- lack of interest among the general public unless information is related to funding opportunities;
- negative attitude of the journalists;
- very broad scope of target groups and programmes;
- lack of visibility of the results of ESF funding (in comparison to the investments in the infrastructure);
- costs and organisational issues: large-scale campaigns are expensive and need to be approved by the hierarchy;
- low budget for I&C and limited ESF resources;
- the results of I&C activities are difficult to measure.

“People are interested mainly in specific information on how to obtain funding or how to benefit from the ESF.”

To overcome these difficulties the Member States communicated the ESF through projects and human stories. Further barriers to communicate the ESF are being investigated by a number of Managing Authorities to find out the ways to overcome those.

In general, two different approaches were adopted by the Member States:

- 1) some Member States communicate specifically about the ESF (DK);
- 2) others communicate primarily on employment policies, operational programmes and individual measures rather than on the fund itself (HU, PL, FI, FR).

Member States adopt the latter approach mainly because they feel that “*there is a low awareness level of the EU*” in general and it is important to inform about the EU in the first place. According to one interviewee, the fact that the EU is funding certain projects is more likely to stay in people’s minds than any label of the Structural Funds, be it the ESF or ERDF. However, this approach may result in lower levels of ESF awareness among the general public (see more on impact in section 4).

3. Relevance of the EC’s Strategy

The following sections discuss the relevance of the EC’s objectives regarding ESF I&C, i.e. the extent to which the EC’s approach is seen as appropriate by INIO members. The actual implementation of this approach, i.e. the quality, usefulness etc. of the different tools and initiatives, is discussed in section 4.

3.1. Joint EC-MS communication policy

The obligation to communicate on the ESF lies first and foremost with the Member States, as the national and regional levels are best equipped to adapt the message to the specific national and regional needs. However, since 2007 the EC has been more pro-active in communicating on the ESF and has undertaken a number of initiatives in conjunction with

the Member States, such as developing the shared platform of ESF projects or the Circus Campaign², to name a few.

Such a joint EC-MS communication policy was considered by the interview partners to be the appropriate approach to communicate on the ESF to the general public. Member States noted an improvement in the scope and quality of the EC's interactions with the Member States, as the EC's role underwent a significant change from a merely advisory role to a more active involvement. Some of the interview partners would like to see an even more active approach from the EC in the future. The INIO members welcomed the joint efforts initiated by the EC, and they listed a number of benefits that it brought about, such as pooling the resources or harmonising messages across the EU.

"This is definitely the way to go."

"We both have common goals: we both want to promote the ESF."

"This approach is important because it facilitates the necessary coordination between the Member States."

Despite this enhanced involvement, there were still very few examples of joint I&C initiatives between the EC and one or more Member States. During the interviews the evaluators identified a limited use of the joint project database developed on the ESF website. The joint policy was best illustrated by the work of the INIO network, which provides the only effective platform for the co-operation. The Circus Campaign was mentioned as a good example of how to turn this co-operation into practice.

3.2. Developing more tools and activities

The EC's approach to develop more I&C tools to communicate on the ESF was considered to be appropriate by the vast majority of the interview partners. All communication tools were regarded as vital to communicate on the ESF to the general public. The interviewed INIO members emphasised that different tools form a package that can be used at any event: brochures can be distributed, videos displayed, etc. The improved quality of the tools was also acknowledged by the interviewees.

"The efforts of the Commission are substantial."

"The tools have improved a lot [...], [they] try to convey simple ideas, [are] more colloquial."

The theme *"Investing in people"* was believed to be very appropriate in order to communicate about the ESF and it has been used by some Member States. It was noted that the content of the tools should continue to be diverse. Ideally, the information should be more tailored to the different target audiences, such as entrepreneurs, the disabled, young offenders, etc.

It was noted however, that the material developed by the EC cannot always be used directly by the Member States. The written material, videos and information from the ESF website were considered by many as too general and as needing adjustments to the specific needs of the target audience in a country.

² It should be noted that the Circus Campaign promotes the concept of Social Europe, which is a broader idea than the ESF.

“People are not interested in the general information, or how the ESF works in other Member States. They are looking for examples from and information on the ESF in their own country.”

According to the interviewees, there is no consistent method of passing on from the EC to the Member States information on the tools developed by the EC, nor is there a clear message how this material should be disseminated. In general, the INIO members realised many ideas and potential for dissemination / distribution of EC’s I&C tools in the course of the evaluation.

“There is no consistency in passing the information on those products by the EC.”

A more detailed feedback on the EC’s approach to develop different types of tools is presented below.

3.2.1. Producing more written material

Most interviewed INIO members agreed that the EC should produce more written material. For some of the interviewees this was necessary, and the fact that the EC developed this material in the national languages was particularly appreciated. For those who were familiar with the EC’s publications it was also important that the material was accessible online and could be easily downloaded from the ESF website. This helped the national authorities to distribute it directly to the potential users. In particular, the electronic delivery was appreciated by the interviewees concerned about environmental problems.

However, it was pointed out that this material contained very general information and it needed to be adjusted or tailored to the specific needs in some countries before it was distributed to the general public. It was also noted by several interviewees that a large number of publications are already available, produced either by the EC or the Member States, therefore producing more written material by the EC might be no longer necessary.

3.2.2. Developing more audiovisual material

INIO members also felt that it is important for the EC to develop more audiovisual material. The cultural shift towards a more modern approach to communication was acknowledged by the INIO members who emphasised that *“it is easier to reach people with the videos”*. However, the interviewees noted that the dissemination of the videos was a key to success but it has not been very effective so far.

3.2.3. Intensifying relations with the media

The interviewed INIO members had difficulties to assess the EC’s approach aiming to intensify its relations with the media because they had no or very limited information on this subject. Some interviewees admitted that this approach might be good, as the media can reach a lot of people. On the other hand, media relations were considered to be rather difficult to manage. According to the interviewees, one should not expect journalists to make use of the publications produced by the EC spontaneously. Therefore, a number of the interviewed INIO members supported the idea of coaching and providing training for journalists.

3.2.4. Improving the ESF website

The recent development and improvement of the ESF website was universally appreciated by the INIO members. The website was considered to be user friendly and attractive. It was

also recognised that internet access is spreading fast and this source of information should continue to be promoted in the future. The website, along with the videos, was believed to be the most important and well developed I&C tool.

3.2.5. Additional actions expected from the EC

Even though the approach adopted by the EC to better communicate on the ESF was generally in line with the expectations of the INIO members, some ideas for additional actions were expressed, including:

- developing guidelines on how to communicate on the ESF efficiently;
- organising more joint projects or campaigns (such as the Circus Campaign);
- using economies of scale when organising big campaigns which would have the same design and convey the same message – these should be planned jointly by all 27 Member States and the EC, and then adapted and implemented by the Member States;
- EC officials could be more often present at the high-level national events.

4. Effectiveness of tools

4.1. INIO

4.1.1. Accessibility

Representatives from the selected Member States claimed they almost always attended INIO meetings. Some interviewees admitted that in the past they frequently missed meetings either because I&C activities were overlooked in the past³ or due to other commitments. Among other barriers to participate in the INIO meetings the interviewees reported a limited number of staff, as well as inconvenient travel connections to some of the locations. However, the fact that some of the meetings take place outside Brussels was greatly appreciated among the members.

4.1.2. Usefulness

According to the interviewees, “*the INIO network does help*” and it contributes to a better understanding between the EC and the Member States. The learning experience from other countries was particularly valued by the interviewees, as well as the opportunity to interact informally.

“There is good understanding between the members.”

“It is useful and important to know what the EC views on communicating the ESF are.”

“During the meetings we learn different practices from other countries, on how to organise events, what tools to use.”

“There are two parts of the INIO meetings: formal and informal, when the exchange of different views is very useful.”

4.1.3. Content

³ There was a lack of the ownership of I&C activities in the former institutional set up in one of the Member States.

The majority of the interview partners reported that they receive the relevant information and message to communicate the ESF to the general public through participating in the INIO meetings. However, the interviewees had difficulties to identify a single message that would be conveyed by the EC via the Network other than “*Investing in People*”. A more transparent message was passed on by the EC to the general public in the Circus Campaign (“*Do you know what social Europe can do for you?*”). Some of the INIO members felt that they did not always receive the clear message on what should be communicated on the ESF and this could be improved in the future. “*The EC could be more explicit about its priorities and expectations.*”

The INIO members appreciated the variety of ideas shared at the meetings that resulted from differences among the Member States (differences in ESF funding available, different policy priorities, etc.). On the other hand, these differences very often prevented the best practice examples from abroad from being adopted by other Member States (see more on the exploitation aspect below).

4.1.4. Presentation

The interviewees emphasised the good networking opportunities that the INIO meetings provided and a “*very good cooperation between the Member States and the EC*”. The round table element of the meetings was particularly favoured by some interviewees, as well as the possibility to visit ESF projects.

4.1.5. Exploitation

Information shared at the INIO meetings was generally considered by its members as interesting also for other stakeholders in their countries. INIO members maintained close working relations with the ESF Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies (depending on an implementation structure in a given country) and passed on to them the information from the INIO meetings. The following forms of sharing the information were identified:

- forwarding the minutes and presentations;
- organising meetings for the communication officers at the national / regional level;
- joint National Strategic Reference Framework observatory meetings.

It should be noted that the message that was passed on to other stakeholders was usually adjusted to the specific needs of those institutions.

The interviewees unanimously praised the INIO Network for the opportunity to “*see the good practice examples and bring the best ideas back home*”. However, it was rather difficult for them to point out any concrete example when they were able to use any of those ideas in their own countries. The few examples cited that have already been implemented include:

- use of eco-friendly material to produce promotional material (however, it was emphasised that this was just another incentive and it cannot be entirely attributed to the INIO knowledge share);
- adoption of an ESF logo in one of the Member States;
- design of the ESF project database.

Many ideas were recalled by the INIO members as potentially interesting and likely to be implemented in their own countries in the future, e.g.:

- Spanish approach to the evaluation of communication activities;
- biking trips around a region organised by one Member State;

- 2 French TV campaigns;
- concert event organised by Cyprus;
- ESF info stands.

The low level of take up was justified mainly by the differences in the ESF communication in the Member States (different budgets available, different approaches and priorities). Another obstacle that prevented the Member States from adopting ideas from elsewhere was the small budget that they could allocate to I&C activities. Nevertheless, the fact that sharing best practices at the INIO meetings provides inspiration for the ESF communication officers in the Member States was seen as important, and could lead to more replication of good practices over the long term.

“Sometimes the differences are so significant that it makes it difficult to use the good practice examples from elsewhere.”

“Other Member States launch impressive campaigns but we have no budget for it.”

4.1.6. INIO Network – suggestions for the future

The interviewed INIO members noted the improvement of the quality of the Network’s meetings over the last few years. However, some further advancement was possible and expected by the INIO members. The INFORM⁴ Network was given as an example, where the EC (DG REGIO) took a more proactive approach by providing more advice and organising workshops to solve specific problems. DG REGIO also indicates the communication priorities to be adopted by the Member States.

The interviewed INIO members suggested some ideas on how the meetings could be improved further:

- The EC could provide a clear message for the MS about the communication priorities on an annual basis;
- A practical guide for planning and evaluating I&C activities could be developed;
- The agenda of the meetings could focus on a particular issue (e.g. social media, TV campaigns, etc.);
- More interactions could be introduced between the meetings, e.g. by gathering and circulating information on current I&C activities in the MS;
- Professional I&C experts from the public or private sector could be invited to give presentations. e.g. on how to transform one-way communication into social media dialogues;
- In addition to the plenary meetings, seminars and workshops could be organised to work on joint projects, or to compare the usefulness of different tools used to communicate about the ESF.

4.2. Written material

4.2.1. Accessibility

The interview partners felt there is a problem with the accessibility of the written material. The interviewees complained about the lack of information on new releases, and in general

⁴ INFORM is the INIO equivalent for the ERDF.

they considered the written material was not actively promoted nor disseminated by the EC. They suspected that very few of the publications reached national authorities, probably even fewer reached the regional authorities. According to one interviewee “*the EC does not inform sufficiently about what is available.*” It would be helpful if the INIO members were automatically informed about new publications.

The majority of the INIO members informed themselves about different tools developed by the EC from the EC’s ESF website. Only several of them reported to be informed about new releases at the INIO meetings. A few members of the INIO network reported that they found this material on the stands in Brussels and took it home or that they ordered them through the EC Representations in their countries.

4.2.2. Usefulness

Most interviewed INIO members were not particularly impressed by the written material produced by the EC, because it represented an “outdated” way of communication. It was also admitted that some of the written material needed to be up-dated and made more attractive. The interviewees emphasised that they knew their target audiences and information needs better than the EC. Therefore, they were better able to tailor written material and complement it with more country specific information.

In addition, for those Member States that have developed their own visual identity of the ESF, the written material produced by the EC was not entirely consistent with that promoted by the national authorities (as it did not include the ESF logo of a given country). Thus the need for the EC to involve INIO members in developing ESF communication tools at the earliest stage was stressed by some of the interviewees.

The following publications produced by the EC were mentioned as particularly useful:

- “*ESF leaflet*” (at the beginning of the programming period, it is less useful at the later stages of the programmes’ implementation);
- Book “*Making a Difference in Life*” (although not available in the national languages yet);
- posters of the Circus Campaign.

4.2.3. Content

The majority of the interviewees noted that the written material include the relevant information and messages but they noted some difficulties in identifying the most appropriate target audience for the written material developed by the EC. According to the interviewed INIO members, the information should be tailored to more specific target groups, such as entrepreneurs, students, employees, etc. “*In general the written material is relevant to the public opinion. The problem is that no one is interested. People are interested to know what there is for them.*”

4.2.4. Presentation

According to the vast majority of the INIO members, the main advantage of the written material was that it was produced in the national languages (this applies to all tools developed by the EC). The INIO members appreciated the “*Making a Difference in Life*” book because it used simple language and had an attractive design.

Some of the INIO members went as far as to suggest that the layout and presentation of the written material “*should be more ‘aggressive’ in order to reach more people.*”

4.2.5. Exploitation

The majority of the interviewees noted that the use of the written material developed by the EC for the general public was not overwhelming. The main reason behind this was that people in the Member States were mainly interested to find out how to apply for the ESF funding or how to participate in the ESF projects. This information was communicated by national authorities rather than the EC.

Several of the interviewed INIO members found it difficult to disseminate material developed by the EC. Some of the interviewees reported that they made use of it by adjusting it and tailoring the content to the specific needs of different target audiences in their countries and printing their own brochure (as mentioned briefly above).

If the EC's written material was actually disseminated, usually it was distributed during conferences or it was displayed at the stands in Managing Authorities offices or in the ESF / EU information centres in the Member States. In a few cases, electronic versions of the written material were distributed via emails.

The following publications produced by the EC were most frequently disseminated by the INIO members:

- Social Agenda magazine;
- "ESF leaflet";
- ESF posters (although they were printed in a smaller format);
- "Statistics Factsheet";
- postcards of the Circus Campaign.

4.3. Media relations

The interview partners were not familiar with any examples of press releases and they could not comment on their usefulness, content, presentation and exploitation. A number of the interviewed INIO members agreed that the EU press releases might be helpful in their work.

4.4. Videos

4.4.1. Accessibility

Almost all INIO members were familiar with the videos produced by the EC, although the "Making a Difference in Life" series was much more recognised than the "ESF in Action" series. Usually, the information about the videos was passed on to the INIO members during the Network's meetings. A vast majority of the interviewed INIO members had not yet received any DVD with the videos produced by the EC to be further disseminated in their countries.

4.4.2. Usefulness

The "Making a Difference in Life" videos were generally considered to be helpful for the Managing Authorities.

"ESF in Action" was reported to be useful for people working in the institutions implementing the ESF rather than the general public. The main reason behind it was that the clips "ESF in Action" were available only in a limited number of languages. It was suggested that the EC should translate this series of clips into other languages.

4.4.3. Content

The videos produced by the EU were appreciated by the majority of the interviewed INIO members. The “*Making a Difference in Life*” series was considered to be particularly relevant and to convey a simple and relevant message to the general public.

4.4.4. Presentation

The interviewed INIO members found the videos developed by the EC as attractive: they used a simple language, included the same introduction and structure. Similarly to the written material, one of the most important advantages of “*Making a Difference in Life*” videos was the fact that they were produced in the national languages. The videos were deemed to be professional, and very well done.

4.4.5. Exploitation

The majority of the interviewed INIO members managed to further disseminate the videos produced by the EC (or were about to use them shortly), usually at different conferences. Other forms of disseminating these videos included:

- including links to the videos in electronic newsletter;
- uploading links to the videos on the national ESF website;
- uploading links to the videos on the ESF national page on Facebook.

In most of the cases the disseminated clips belonged to the “*Making a Difference in Life*” series and presented the stories of the respective Member States’ nationals who benefited from the ESF.

In the course of the interviews it occurred to some of the interviewees that they could use the stories of other Member States. Some of the interviewed INIO members admitted that the videos were not actively disseminated and more should be done to do so.

4.5. Website

4.5.1. Accessibility

According to the majority of interviewees, the ESF website was the most accessible tool for the INIO members and other people who worked with the ESF. The accessibility of the website was strengthened by the fact that it was developed and updated in all the EU languages. This feature was particularly valued by virtually all interviewed INIO members. According to the majority of interviewees, the website served them as a gateway to (almost) all of the other tools developed by the EC to communicate about the ESF and a way to order / request various tools from the EC.

4.5.2. Usefulness

Different opinions were expressed by the interviewed INIO members on whether the ESF website was in line with the needs of the targeted audiences. A number of the interviewed INIO members praised the ESF website and it was clearly in line with their needs. For example, an interviewed communication officer noted that “*links on the ESF website to the MAs in other countries are very useful*”.

However, when it came to the usefulness of the website for the general public, some of the INIO members were of the opinion that people were mostly interested in country specific

information. Although the EC's ESF website makes an effort to provide such information, the majority of the interviewed INIO members reported that the level of details is much more general in comparison to national websites. Thus, ESF national websites were considered by the INIO members to be the better source of information for the general public.

4.5.3. Content

The vast majority of the interviewed INIO members believed that the ESF website was a very good instrument *“to convey information to Managing Authorities and partner institutions”*. Several interviewees believed that the website includes relevant information for specific target audiences, such as the researchers and students. *“The website has quantitative as well as qualitative elements [...] which make it very interesting and a key communication tool for the future.”*

However, more than a few interview partners doubted if the website is dedicated to the general public.

4.5.4. Presentation

Virtually all interview partners welcomed the improvements made to the ESF website. The majority of the interviewees were clearly impressed with the layout and the design of the website: *“it is brilliant, impressive”*. Only a few of the INIO members could still suggest some improvements: *“the website is slightly old-fashioned. It could be more interactive by designing some graphics or animations to draw the attention of the website users.”*

4.5.5. Exploitation

Without a doubt, the website is the I&C tool most frequently used by the INIO members. All interviewed INIO members made use of the ESF website in the following ways:

- in their everyday work to be informed about new tools developed by the EC;
- by uploading the link on their national (and or regional) websites;
- by promoting it among those interested in the ESF interventions in other Member States or at the EU level.

However, some of the interviewees felt that the website *“is still not promoted well enough to other users and to the general public in particular.”* In fact, many of the national ESF websites did not provide a link to the EC's ESF website.

5. Impact

Some of the interviewed INIO members questioned the idea that the ESF should be communicated to the general public before improving their understanding about the EU in the first place. It was also noted that *“the ESF projects are the best instrument for communicating this message.”*

According to the recent Eurobarometer results the 10 countries selected for the interviews presented a wide variety of change in levels of ESF awareness. In some the awareness increased during the last 3 years, in others it decreased, and in yet others it remained relatively stable. As reported by the interviewed INIO members, many factors could contribute to this situation and different explanations are briefly outlined below.

Decrease in the ESF awareness level could be explained by:

- the fact that the ESF was not promoted as such in the countries which have the policy to inform about the EU and their policies instead of particular funds: *“The ESF image has been lost in the joint approach to communicate the Structural Funds”*;
- the fact that people got used to the ESF funding: *“It is not a new thing anymore, and it is kind of expected. It’s always been there”*;
- less funding available in this programming period;
- lower number of those who benefited from the ESF;
- limited scale of the I&C activities.

Increase in the ESF awareness level might have been achieved thanks to:

- efforts of the national and regional authorities;
- special actions that were taken against the crisis, that generated many articles in the press, accompanied by huge advertising campaigns in some countries;
- the fact that ESF programmes are in the full speed by now;
- the fact that the ESF funding is popular and it is perceived by people to have a direct effect on their lives;
- holding the EU Presidency,
- increased funding available in this programming period;
- increased number of those who benefited from the ESF;
- increased number of multipliers within a country to inform about the ESF.

The data on the impact of the EC’s activities collected via the telephone interviews presented a wide range of opinions from very favourable to more negative ones⁵:

“EC’s activities did have an impact because the EU presence is important.”

“People don’t see activities and tools from the Commission’s level. The message is too general. Moreover, it is difficult to attribute the impact to the Commission’s activities.”

There was an additional impact of the EC’s activities identified, namely making the general public aware of the use of the ESF money: it improved transparency and accountability of the Fund.

6. Sustainability

The interviewed INIO members planned to disseminate information about the ESF by using the tools developed by the EC. In fact, a much higher potential for future dissemination of most of the I&C tools produced by the EC was identified in the course of the interviews. Some of the interview partners were convinced that they may use all of the tools, but most likely not directly but only after adjusting them to the specific information needs in their countries.

All tools developed by the EC were mentioned as likely to be used in the future.

⁵ A confusion as to the ECs impact on the awareness level can be illustrated by the following example: one Member State did not have technical information to support a statement that the EC’s tools have played a role; and at the same time the EC was believed to have an important contribution to increase the knowledge about the ESF in all Member States.

7. Suggestions and recommendations for the future

The ideas on how the I&C activities and tools could be improved included:

- 1) More communication campaigns should be planned jointly with the Member States, e.g.: on the European Year theme (or other major priorities of the EU). A series of campaigns could be organised in the Member States with the support and guidance from the EC (in terms of the concept, structure, and content).
- 2) A stronger EC presence was expected at the major national communication events, which are "*more credible if someone from the EC attends an event. It is important that the EC is present as a speaker*". It would also help to make the national authorities aware of the fact that I&C activities are important for the EC.
- 3) EC Representations should play a more important role in communicating the ESF. They should represent a crucial link with the EC (unfortunately according to the INIO members this was not always the case).
- 4) An email alert for the Member States (Managing Authorities) could be introduced about new press releases or material published on the ESF website.
- 5) Thematic workshops could be organised in different Member States (similar to the one organised by France) to review all types of I&C activities in the country, to see what worked and what didn't in order to improve communication.
- 6) The EC should take up initiatives to enhance European journalists' knowledge about the EU and its institutions, policies and instruments, including the ESF.

5.3.2 Results from online survey with Managing Authorities

1. Summary findings

The online survey with ESF Managing Authorities provided comprehensive feedback on the ESF communication objectives and tools developed by the EC. The key findings are briefly outlined below:

- ESF communication officers in the Member States strongly support the EC in playing an active role in raising the visibility of the ESF among the general public in the EU;
- the ESF communication officers face several challenges in communicating the ESF to their target audiences (the most frequently mentioned included: lack of interest among the multipliers, lack of news-worthy material, low profile of I&C activities, etc.);
- out of all I&C activities undertaken by the EC, producing more written material was the least popular (with only one third of respondents supporting the idea);
- the ESF website is the most well known ESF I&C tool among the respondents and it received the most positive feedback in terms of all examined criteria (relevance, usefulness and exploitation);
- the book “Making a Difference in Life” received the most positive feedback of the selected written material in terms of its relevance, usefulness and attractiveness;
- the respondents thought that the “Investing in people” videos are slightly more attractive and useful with a view to the general public than the “ESF in action” videos, which were believed to be useful for a somewhat different target audience (i.e. ESF implementing bodies and project providers). Many comments left by the respondents suggest that they thought all videos were produced only in English;
- the selected ESF I&C tools were distributed by the Managing Authorities among their target audiences only to a very limited extent, but this may change as about half of the respondents have plans to disseminate the selected tools in the future;
- most respondents thought that the I&C tools developed by the EC have had a moderate impact in raising the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public.

2. Survey approach

An online survey with INIO members and ESF communication officers in the Managing Authorities of all the Operational Programmes was launched on 2nd March 2010 and remained online for the duration of five weeks until 8th April 2010. The survey was made available in English.

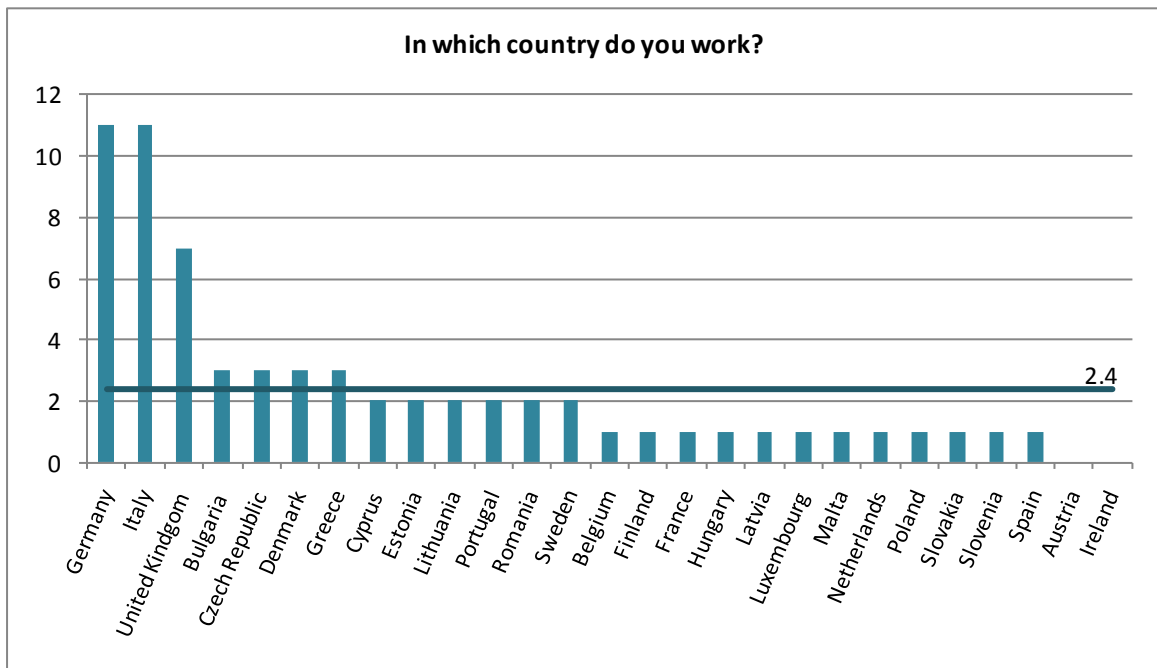
The purpose of the online survey was to obtain comprehensive feedback on the ESF communication objectives and to collect evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of all types of I&C activities and tools developed by the EC to make the ESF and the EU's contribution at the national and regional levels more visible and understandable.

This survey was accessible via an email invitation to 69 INIO members, who were asked to forward the link to the survey to ESF communication officers of Managing Authorities in their respective countries. In total, 77 respondents took part in the consultation and 70 (approximately 91%) of these completed the entire survey.

3. Survey findings

3.1 Respondents profile

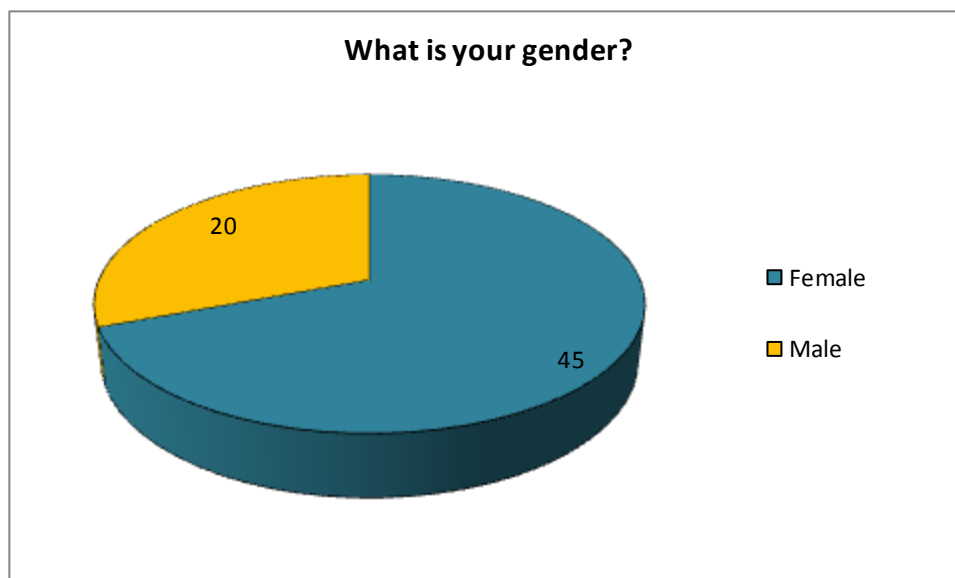
Figure 1 – Respondents' country of origin



n=65

On average, the survey received 2-3 responses per country with the majority of the respondents working in Germany and Italy (11 for each country). No responses were obtained from Austria and Ireland.

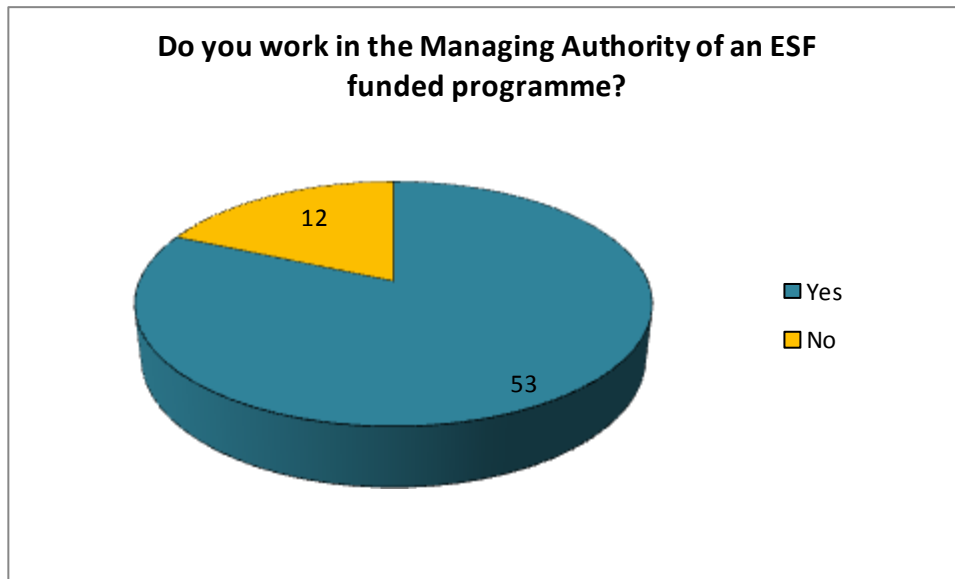
Figure 2 – Respondents' gender



n=65

Almost three quarters of the survey respondents were female (45).

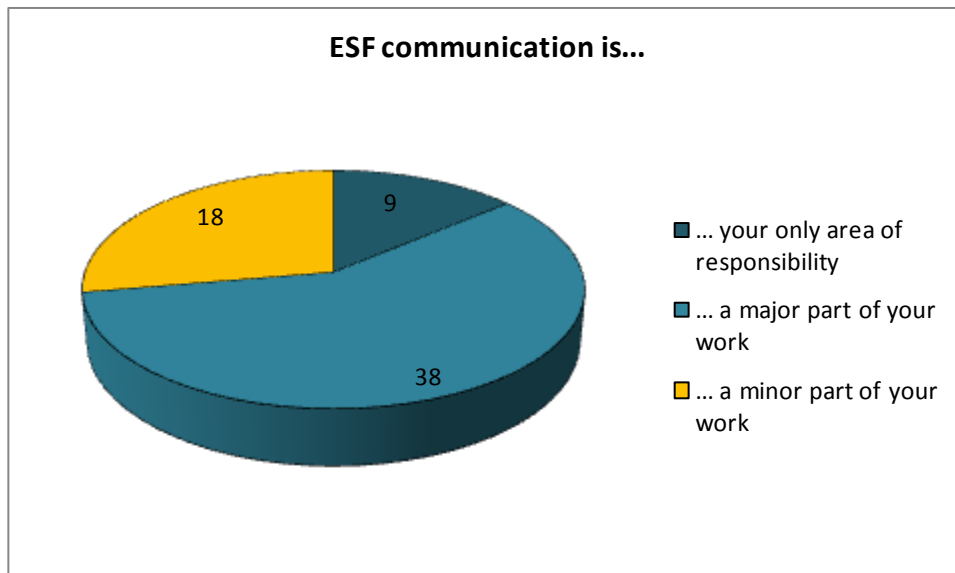
Figure 3 – Respondents' employer



n=65

More than three quarters of the respondents (53) work in the Managing Authority of an ESF funded programme. From those who work in other institutions, most of the respondents work in the ministries (5), central coordinating bodies (4), and regional authorities (2) in charge of the ESF implementation.

Figure 4 – Importance of ESF communication in respondents' work



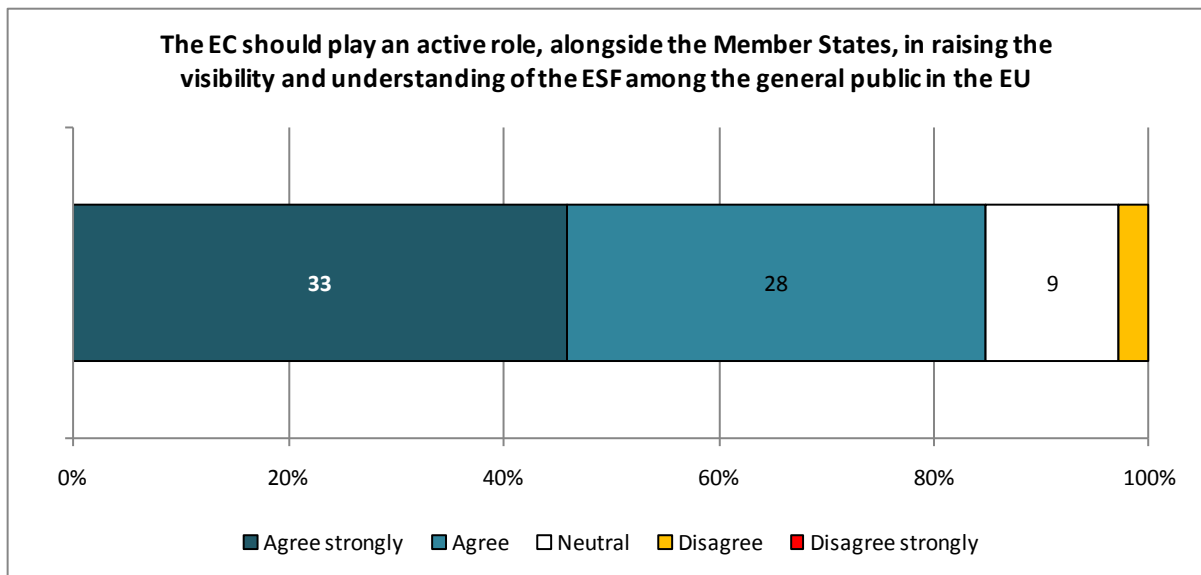
n=65

For the vast majority of respondents ESF communication is the only or the major part of their work (9 and 38 responses, respectively). ESF communication is a minor part of work only for approximately one third of the respondents (18).

3.2 Relevance

This section presents respondents' feedback on the EC's role in raising ESF awareness among the general public and challenges that Member States face in communicating on the ESF. Also it highlights respondents' opinions on the EC's ESF communication objectives and other areas in which the EC could be more active in order to communicate the ESF and/or to help the Managing Authorities to do so more effectively.

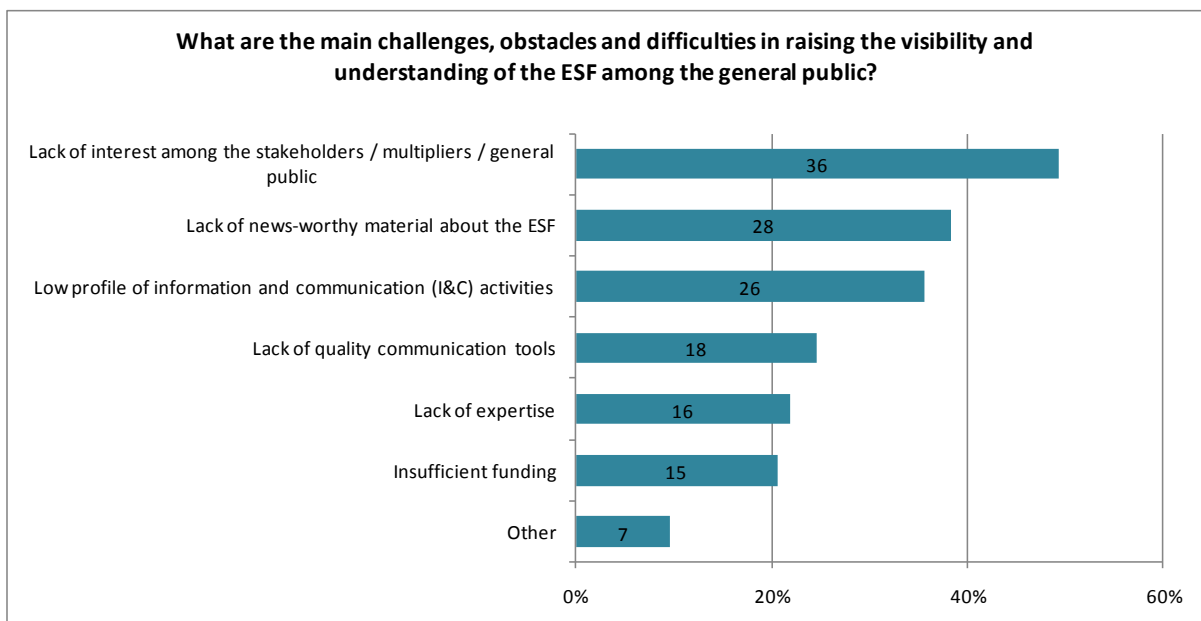
Figure 5 – Respondents' assessment of the role of the EC



n=72

Nearly all respondents (61 in total) agree or agree strongly that the EC should play an active role, alongside the Member States, in raising the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public in the EU.

Figure 6 – Main challenges, obstacles and difficulties in raising the visibility and understanding of the ESF



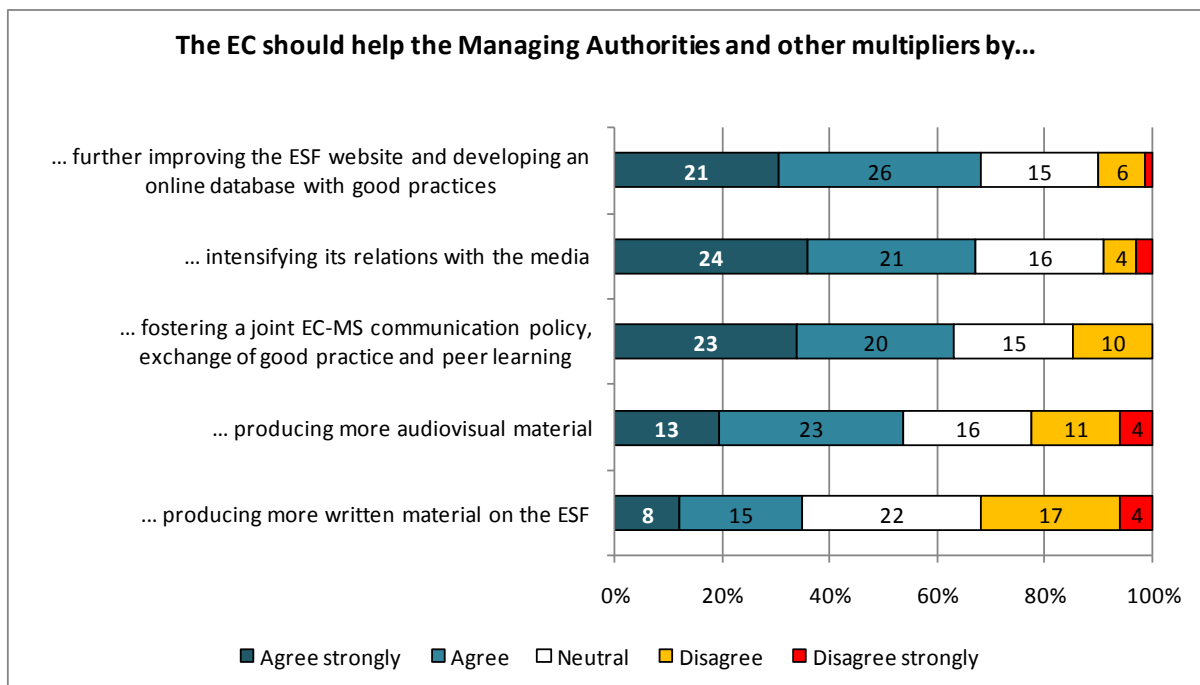
n=73

When asked to indicate the challenges and difficulties in raising the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public, approximately half of the respondents pointed out the lack of interest among the stakeholders, multipliers and the general public (36). More than two thirds of the respondents noted the lack of news-worthy material about the ESF (28) and the low profile of information and communication (I&C) activities (26). The lack of quality communication tools, expertise and funding also posed problems for approximately one fifth of the respondents.

Other factors that hamper the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public include:

- complexity of the ESF (2);
- unclear system of the EU funds and programmes (2);
- bureaucracy (2); and
- data protection issues (1).

Figure 7 – Priorities for EC’s I&C work



n(1)=69, n(2)=67, n(3)=68, n(4)=67, n(5)=66

According to the majority of the respondents, the EC should help the Managing Authorities and other multipliers by further improving the ESF website (47), intensifying its relations with the media (45) and fostering a joint communication policy and exchange of good practice (43). Approximately half of the respondents (36 in total) agree or agree strongly that the EC should produce more audiovisual material. However, asked if the EC should produce more written material the respondents were almost evenly split among those who agree (23), are neutral (22) and disagree with the statement (21). The perceived lack of usefulness of written material is well illustrated by the comment below:

“There are too many documents, books, leaflets to read, and it’s more and more difficult to focus the attention of people. In the Computer Age there is a demand for shorter texts communicated through the internet, social media etc.”

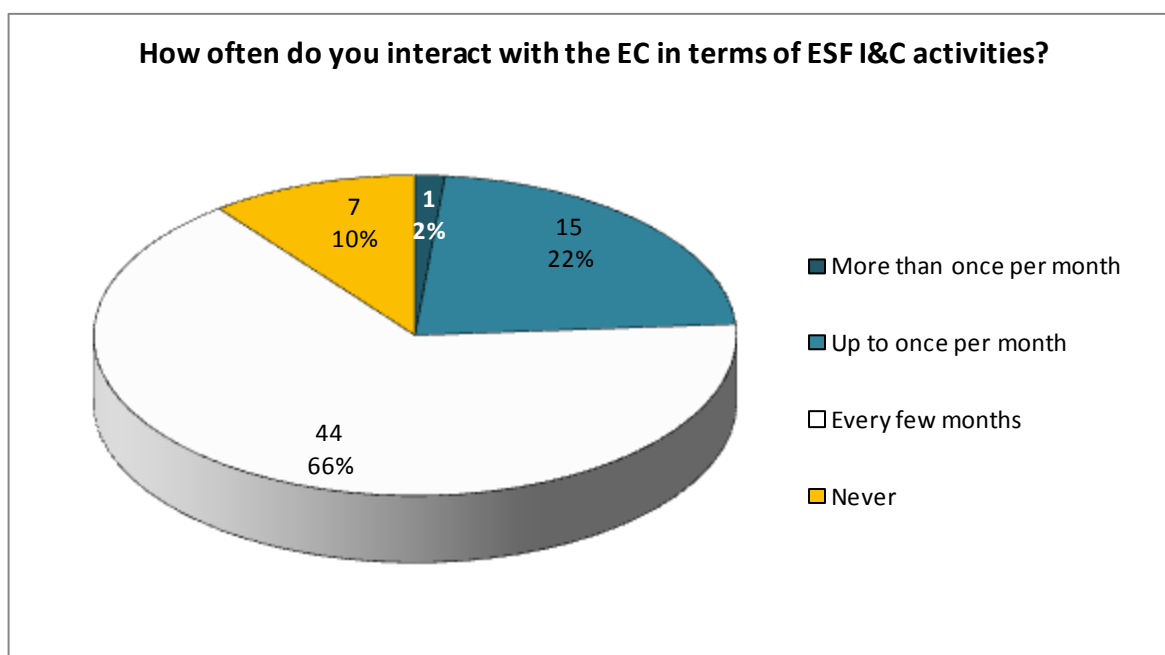
According to a few respondents, there are other areas in which the EC should be more active in order to help the Managing Authorities to communicate more effectively. Respondents would like to see more ESF campaigns produced by the EC (3), more translations (2), and a toolkit developed jointly with the EC to be used by the Member States (2). The respondents would expect this tool to include:

- common visual guidelines or the common ESF logo;
- minimum guidelines on I&C activities;
- key statistics about achievements across the MS.

One of the respondents proposed that “*the EC could organize more seminars for media on how to write about the ESF.*” Some other isolated voices requested the EC to be more often present during national / regional events and asked for more regular updates on I&C activities between INIO meetings.

3.3 EC and MS Communication Policy

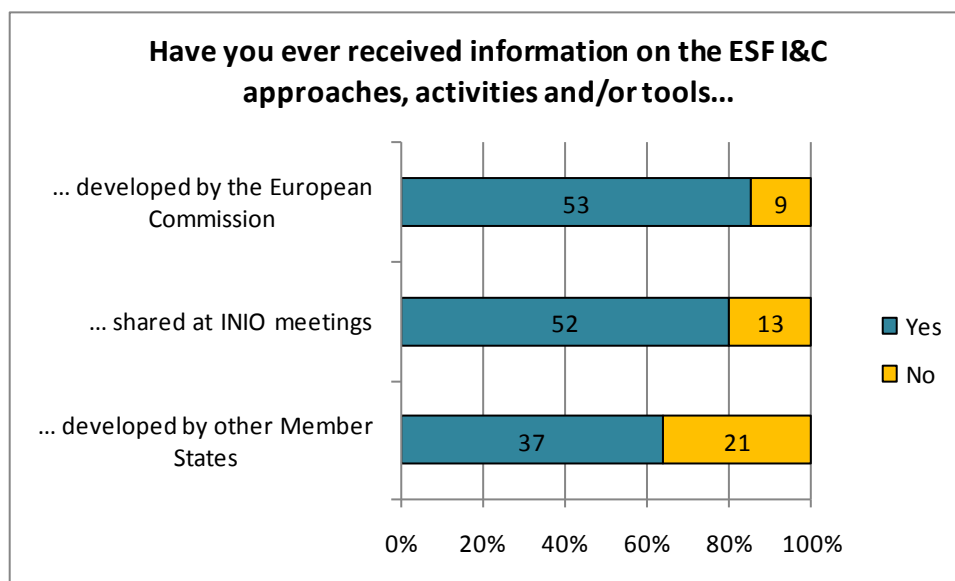
Figure 8 – Frequency of interaction between MAs and EC



n=67

Most of the respondents (44) interact with the EC in terms of ESF I&C activities once every few months, while only approximately a quarter of the ESF communication officers (16) do so more often (at least once per month). A few respondents (7) have never interacted with the EC in this area.

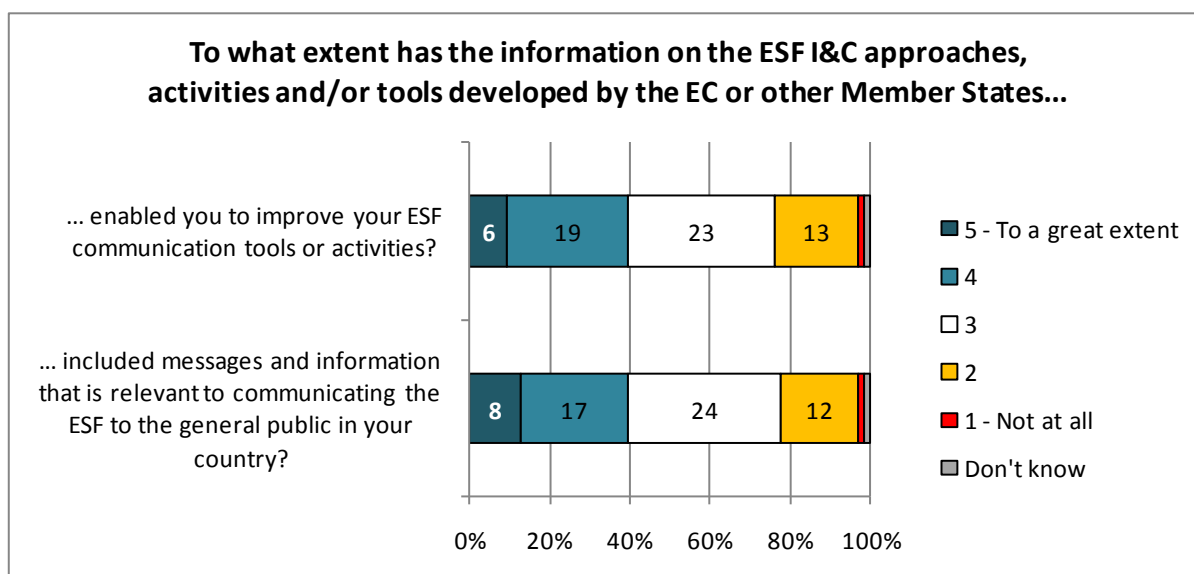
Figure 9 – Information on the ESF I&C approaches, activities and/or tools received by ESF communication officers



n(1)=62, n(2)=65, n(3)=58

The vast majority of ESF communication officers confirmed having received information on the ESF I&C approaches, activities and/or tools developed by the EC (53 responses) and shared at INIO meetings (52 responses). It seems that the ESF I&C approaches, activities and/or tools developed by other Member States are relatively less well known among the respondents – approximately two thirds of the communication officers (37) confirmed that they have ever received information on these.

Figure 10 – Usefulness of the information on the ESF I&C approaches, activities and/or tools developed by the EC or other Member States



n(1-2)=63

Out of those respondents who have received information on the ESF I&C tools developed elsewhere, more than one third reported that it was relevant to communicating the ESF to the general public in their countries and it helped them to improve their own communication tools.

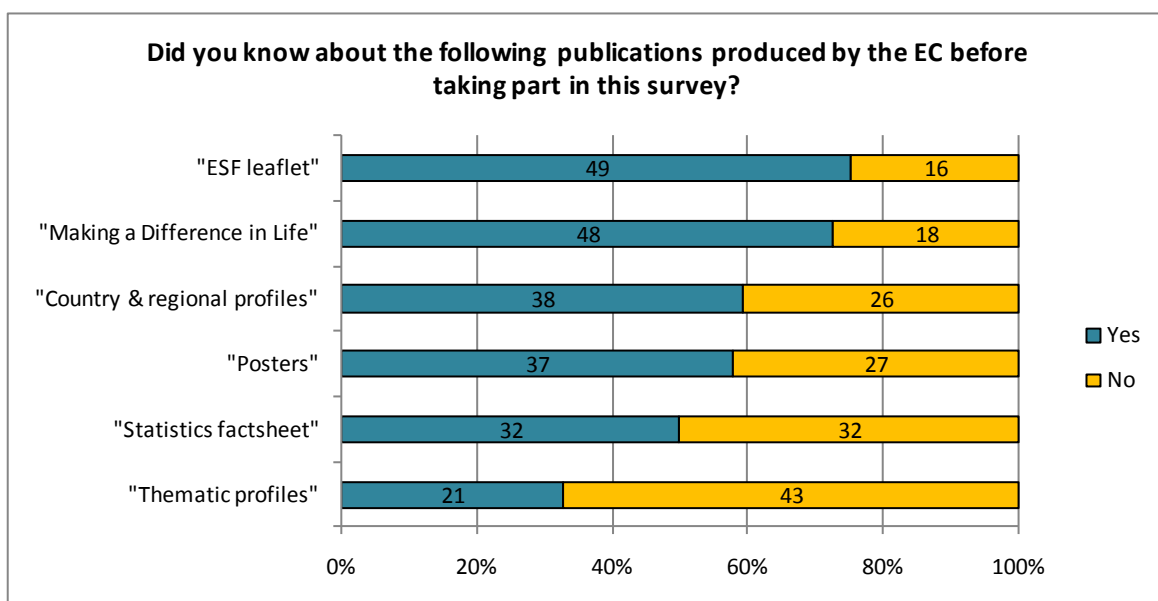
3.4 Written material produced by the EC

The survey examined if respondents were familiar with the selected publications produced by the EC.

Figure 11 – Selected publications



Figure 12 – Familiarity with publications produced by the EC



n(1)=65, n(2)=66, n(3-6)=64

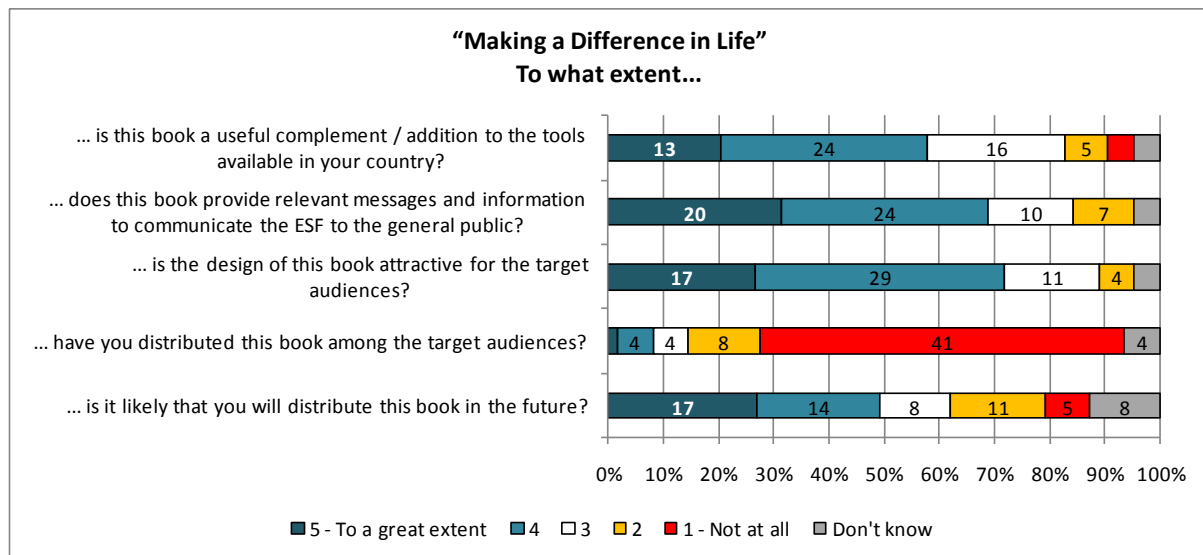
Nearly three quarters of the respondents were familiar with the “ESF leaflet” (49) and the “Making a Difference in Life” book (48), whereas approximately half of the ESF communicators were acquainted with the “Country and regional profiles”, “ESF posters”, and the “Statistics factsheet”. However, the “Thematic profiles” were much less known among the communication officers – only a third of them (21) were familiar with these publications.

The survey asked respondents for more detailed feedback on three of the publications (“Making a Difference in Life”, “ESF leaflet” and “Country and regional profiles”). The link to the “Library” section of the ESF website was provided for those who wished to familiarise themselves with the written material before answering the questions. The key findings are briefly listed below:

- according to the majority of respondents, the selected written material provide relevant messages and information to communicate on the ESF to the general public (the answers varied from half to over two thirds of the respondents depending on the title);
- approximately half of the respondents believed that the selected written material is a useful addition to the tools available in their countries;
- the extent to which the design of the selected written material was considered by the respondents to be attractive varied significantly, with “Making a Difference in Life” receiving the most positive feedback (almost three quarters of the respondents);
- overall, the dissemination of the selected written material was very low, with the newest publication (“Making a Difference in Life”) distributed only by a few respondents; however, according to the respondents this book was also the most likely to be disseminated in the future.

More detailed feedback on the selected written material is presented below.

Figure 13 – Feedback on “Making a Difference in Life”

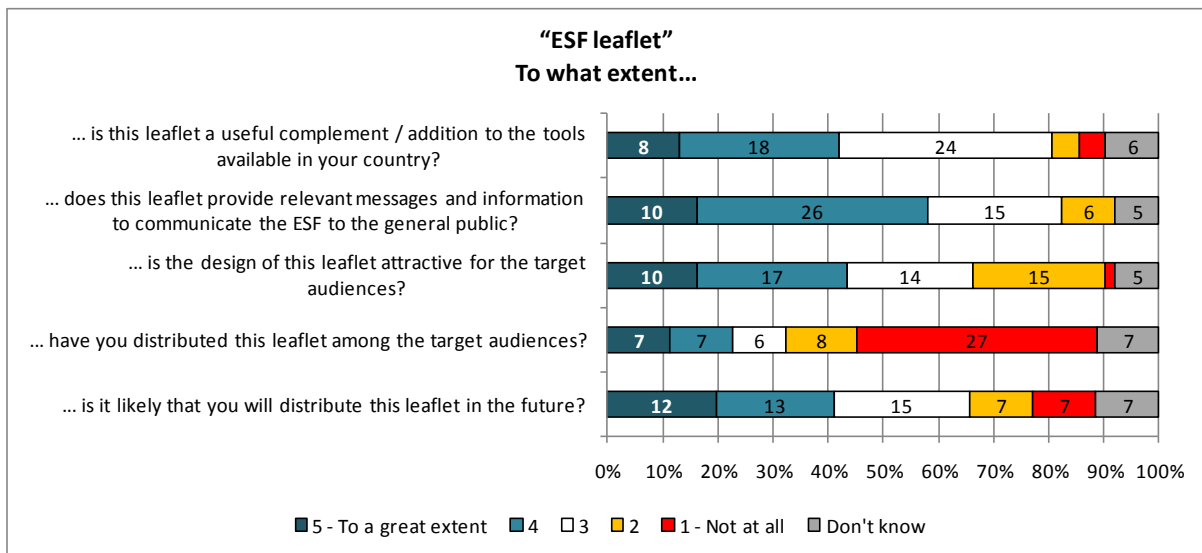


n(1-4)=62, n(5)=61

“Making a Difference in Life” received a very positive feedback from the majority of the respondents in terms of the usefulness (37), relevance (44) and attractiveness (46). Published early in 2010, to date the book has been disseminated only by five of the respondents, but nearly half of the ESF communication officers were willing to distribute this publication in future.

The majority of open comments received on this publication were positive: *“I really like the look and feel of this book - it looks modern and eye-catching.”* Several respondents noted that the publication can be too long for the general public to be interesting, and a few respondents had doubts whether the stories from one country can be interesting for the general public elsewhere. A few ESF communicators reported difficulties in ordering this item through the EU Bookshop: *“I have only been able to order one copy.”*

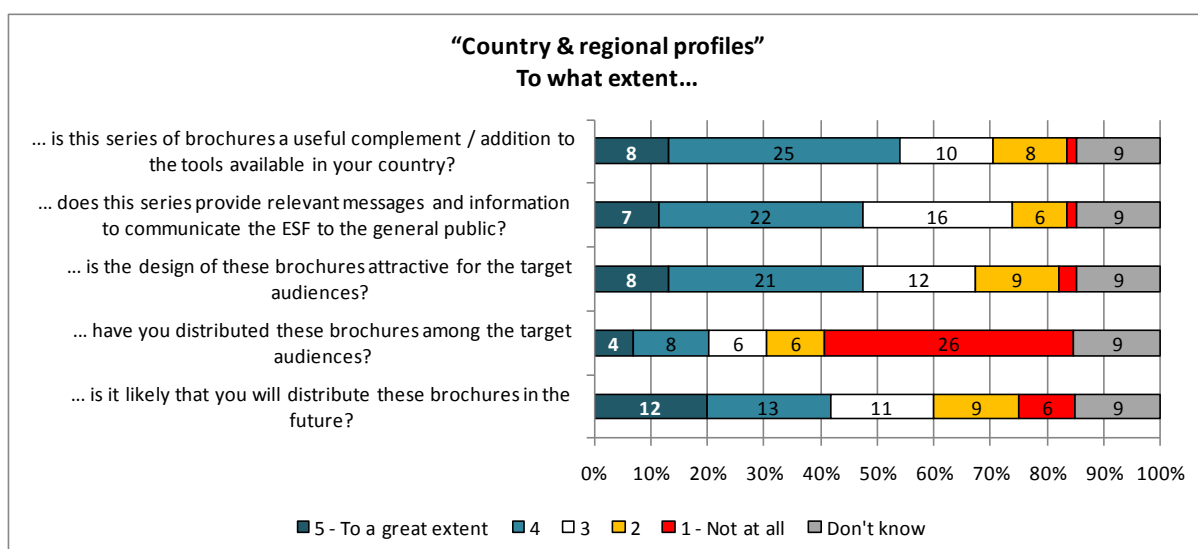
Figure 14 – Feedback on the “ESF leaflet”



n(1-4)=62, n(5)=61

Overall feedback on the “ESF leaflet” was noticeably less positive in comparison with “Making a Difference in Life”. The differences are most clear in terms of the usefulness (26), relevance (36) and attractiveness (27). The majority of respondents noted in the open comments that the design and layout of this publication is not very attractive and that the text is ‘too heavy’ for the general audience.

Figure 15 – Feedback on the “Country and regional profiles”



n(1-3)=62, n(4)=59, n(5)=60

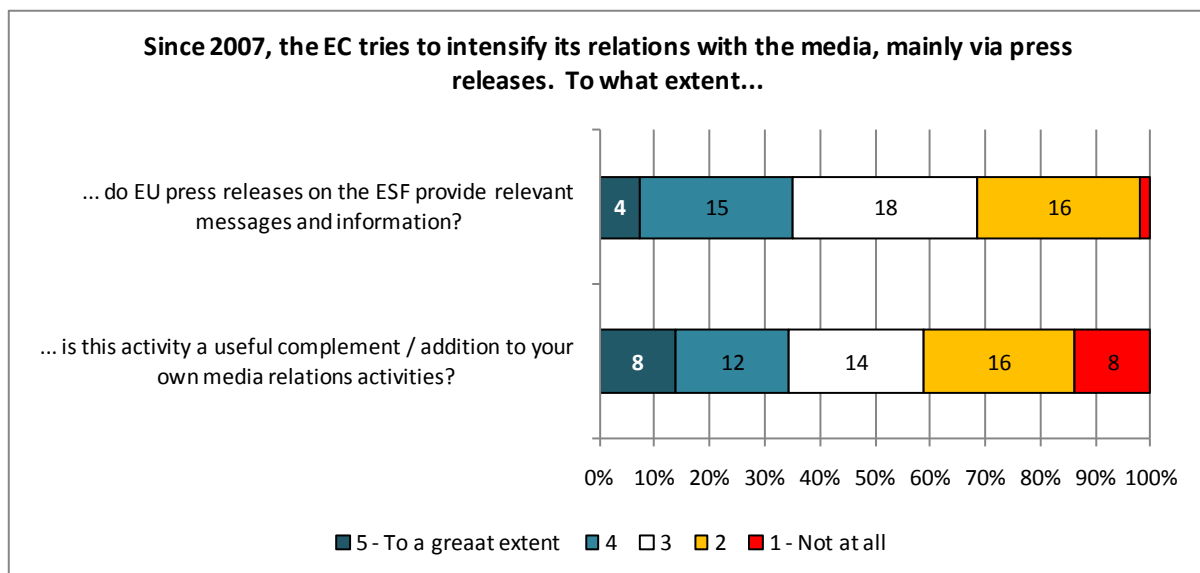
The “Country and regional profiles” were deemed useful by half of the respondents (similar to “Making a Difference in Life”). However, the respondents considered these brochures less relevant and attractive (only 29 respondents believed so).

Several of the respondents noted the need to update information in the country and regional profiles. They also reported that these brochures are more relevant for project providers or implementation partners than for the general public.

3.5 Media relations

The survey results do not provide a clear picture on to what extent the EU press releases on the ESF provide relevant messages and information. Respondents were almost evenly split among those who agree (19), are neutral (18), and disagree with this statement (17). An even bigger number of ESF communicators (24) disagree that this tool is a useful complement to their own media relations activities.

Figure 16 – Media relations



n(1)=54, n(2)=58

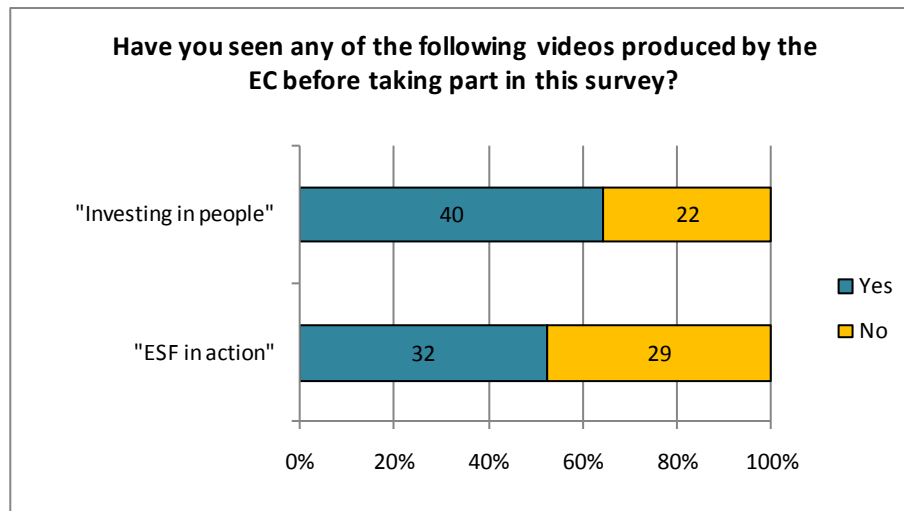
According to the majority of respondents commenting on the EC’s media relations, this area needs further development. Many of the respondents have not seen the EU press releases on the ESF, and consequently they have not identified any press articles based on this source of information: “*we monitor the paper press across the country and there are regularly articles about ESF projects which have been supplied by our partners but nothing from the EC.*” According to one ESF communication officer the reasons behind why the EC’s efforts are moderate in this area is the fact that “*for the regional media only local ESF information is attractive.*”

Those few who were familiar with the EU press releases suggested informing INIO members about planned or recently published press releases because “*sometimes they come as a surprise. It would be helpful if in the future we could have an 'early warning' in order to prepare for possible questions of journalists etc.*”

3.6 Audiovisual material

The survey result show that about two thirds of the respondents has seen the “Investing in people” videos and just over half of the respondents were familiar with the “ESF in action” clips.

Figure 17 – Familiarity with videos produced by the EC



n(1)=62, n(2)=61

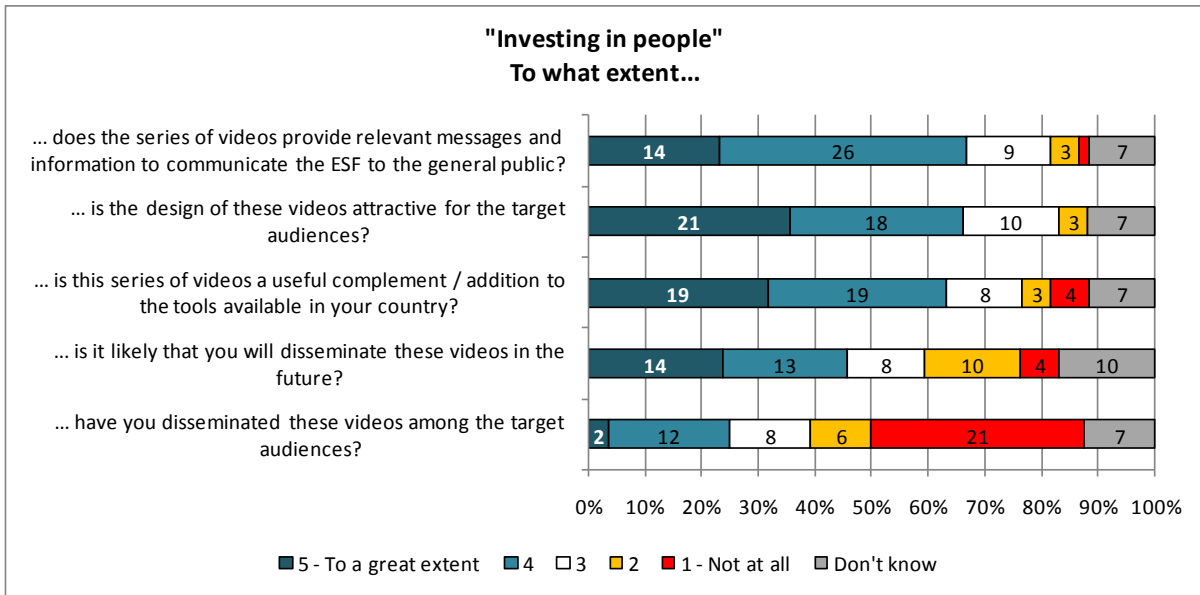
The survey asked respondents for more detailed feedback on the two series of clips (“Investing in people” and “ESF in action”). The link to the “Video” section of the ESF website was provided for those who wished to familiarise themselves with the films before answering the questions. The key findings are briefly listed below:

- according to the majority of respondents the selected videos provide relevant messages and information to communicate on the ESF to the general public; the respondents believed that these videos are attractive and useful addition to the tools available in their countries;
- the videos were disseminated only by less than a quarter of ESF communication officers, but almost half of the respondents reported that it is likely that they will distribute the videos in the future;
- many respondents were not aware of the fact that the videos are available in all EU languages: “*Should the videos be translated or even just subtitled, they'd be easily disseminated in our country*”⁶.

More detailed feedback on the videos is presented below.

⁶ It should be noted that the survey provided the link to the English version of the ESF website. Had the respondents changed their language preferences, the videos (and other I&C tools) would have been available in the language of their choice.

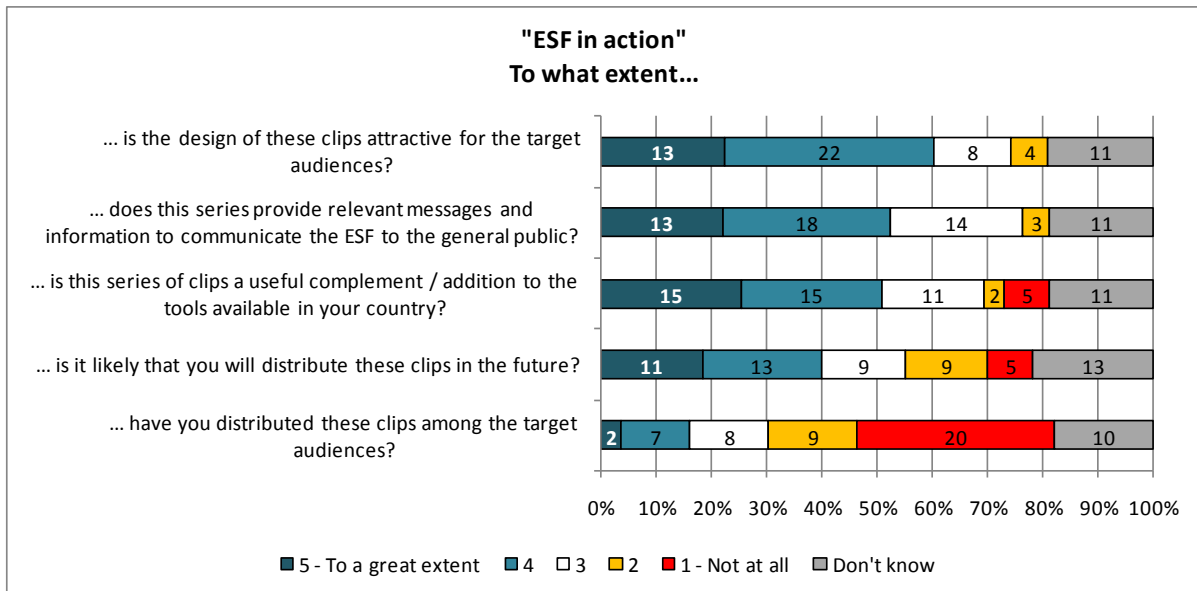
Figure 18 – Investing in people



n(1)=60, n(2)=59, n(3)=60, n(4)=59, n(5)=56

Approximately two thirds of the respondents agree or agree strongly that the “Investing in people” videos provide relevant messages (40), are attractive (39) and a useful complement to their own tools (38). The majority of the comments on the “Investing in people” videos were very positive (*“I think the videos are very interesting, this is the way to go”*). Only one of the respondents commented that *“the EU and ESF logos should be more visible”*.

Figure 19 – ESF in action



n(1)=58, n(2)=59, n(3)=59, n(4)=60, n(5)=56

In comparison to “Investing in people” the clips “ESF in action” received slightly less positive feedback, in particular in terms of its relevance and usefulness (respectively 31 and 30 of the responses). A few respondents noted that *“the videos are too long, contain too much information and focus at expert audience”*. Some isolated suggestions included:

- covering all Member States;

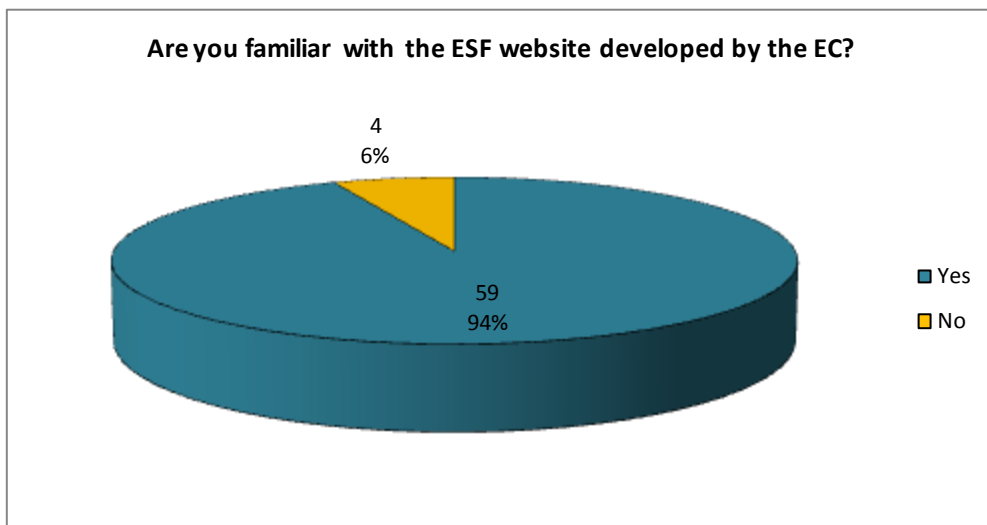
- covering more aspects of ESF interventions in each Member State;
- making the EU and ESF logos more visible.

In spite of these minor shortcomings, several respondents requested the EC to subtitle the clips.

3.7 ESF website

The ESF website is a gateway for almost all ESF I&C tools and, as a consequence, it is the most well known tool from all of them. Only a few respondents (4) were not familiar with the ESF website before they took part in the survey.

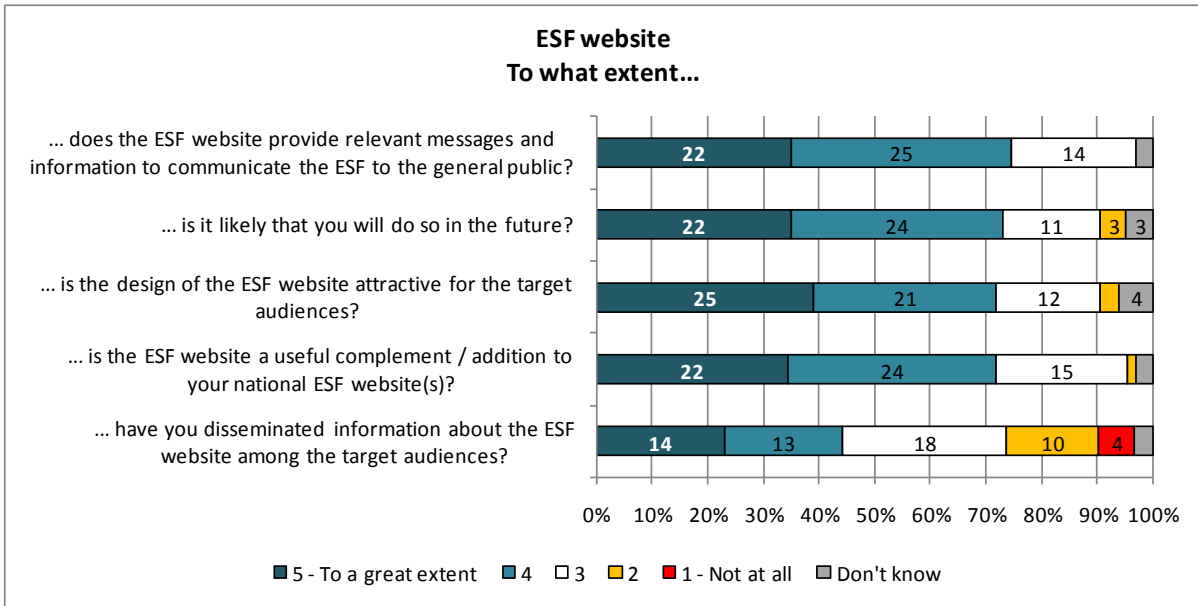
Figure 20 – Familiarity with the ESF website developed by the EC



n=63

Also, the ESF website received the most positive feedback of all the tools in terms of all examined criteria. Almost three quarters of the respondents said that the ESF website provides relevant messages, its design and layout is attractive and, overall, it is a useful complement to their national ESF websites. Approximately half of the ESF communication officers have disseminated information about the ESF website among the general public, three quarters are likely to do so in the future.

Figure 21 – ESF website



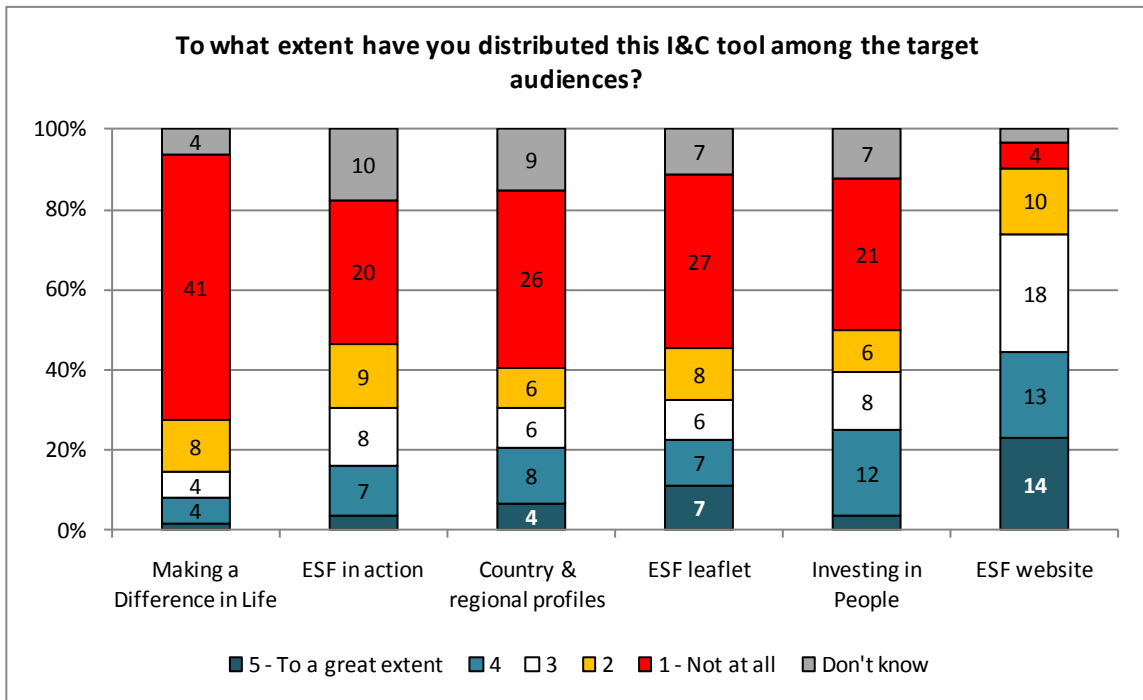
n(1-2)=63, n(3-4)=64, n(5)=61

Only a few respondents suggested minor improvements to the website, such as adding “*more concrete information about the ESF framework and the ESF activities*” and “*direct links to the national websites once you click the corresponding country on the interactive map*”. It was noted by one of the respondents that still more should be done (both by the EC and the Member States) to make the ESF website more well known among the general public.

3.8 Impact and suggestions for the future

In general, the dissemination of the selected ESF I&C tools by national authorities to their target audiences was very limited (information about the ESF website was distributed by only 27 respondents; “Investing in people” videos, “ESF leaflet” and “Country and regional profiles” were distributed merely by a dozen of ESF communication officers).

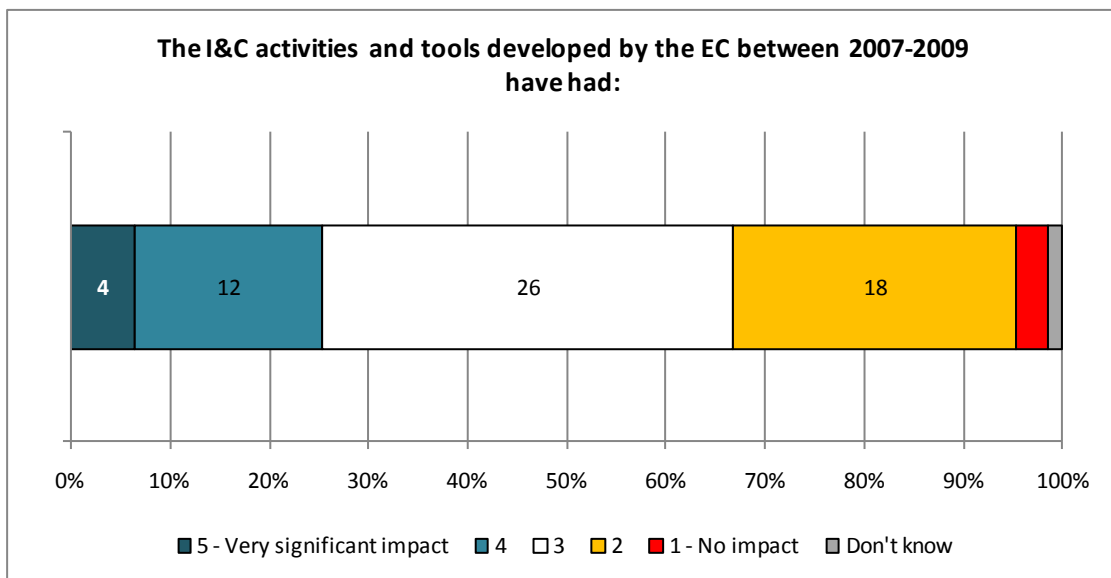
Figure 22 – Dissemination of the selected ESF I&C tools



n(1)= 62, n(2)=56 n(3)=59, n(4)=62, n(5)=56, n(6)=61

Overall, the survey shows a mixed feedback on the impact that the EC's I&C activities and tools have had on the awareness and understanding of the ESF in the Member States.

Figure 23 – Impact of the I&C activities and tools developed by the EC between 2007-2009



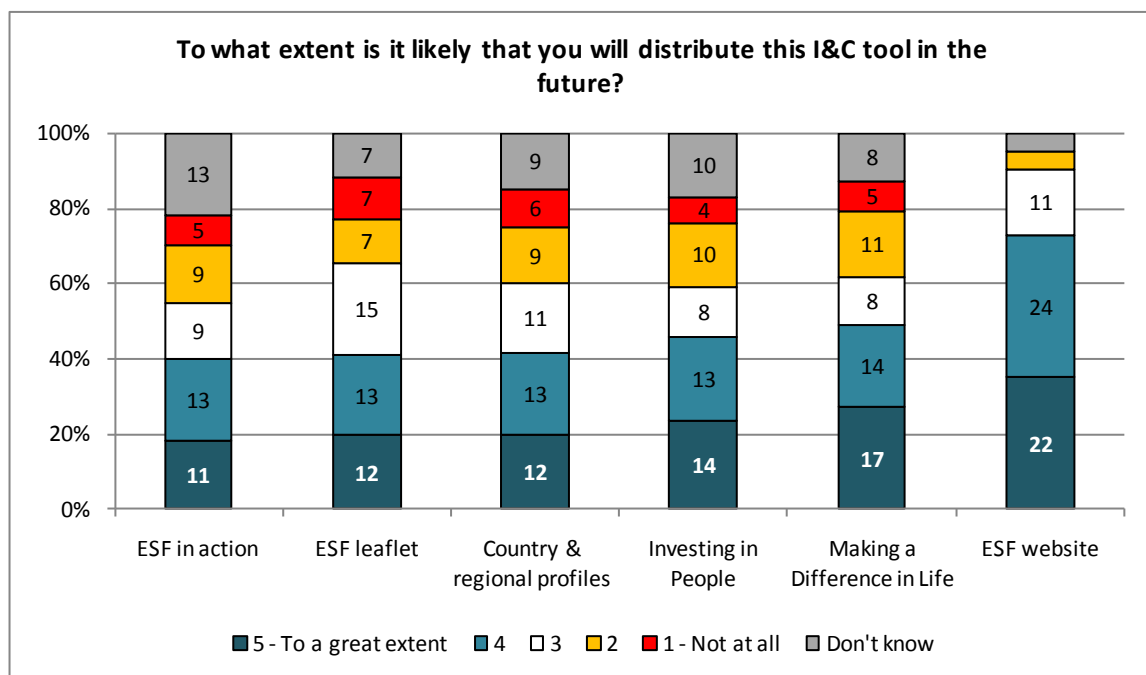
n= 63

Most respondents thought that the I&C tools developed by the EC have had a moderate impact (26). Almost the same number of ESF communication officers believed that there

was a very limited or no impact (20 responses in total) and that the impact was rather significant (16 responses in total). The results have also been segmented into different respondent groups (those from Member States with 1) a higher / lower ESF spend per capita, 2) higher / lower levels of ESF awareness among the general public, and 3) increase / decrease of ESF awareness between 2006 and 2009). However, no significant differences or trends as to the assessment of the impact of the EC's I&C activities was found.

Had the tools developed by the EC been distributed on a wider scale, the impact on peoples' awareness and understanding of the ESF in the Member States might have been bigger. Taking into account the willingness of the respondents to disseminate EC's I&C tools in future this situation is likely to change.

Figure 24 – Likelihood of disseminating the selected ESF I&C tools



n(1)= 60, n(2)=61 n(3)=60, n(4)=59, n(5)=63, n(6)=63

Among additional actions that the EC could adopt to effectively communicate the ESF to the general public the respondents of the survey suggested TV spots, programmes on Euronews, clips on Youtube, radio ads, and “*more targeted ESF campaigns, such as the current Circus Campaign, in order to attract all types of audiences.*”

5.3.3 Results from interviews with journalists

1. Introduction and key findings

This report outlines the results of telephone interviews conducted with journalists who wrote about the ESF in the past. The sample of interviewees was compiled from the following sources:

- 1) all clipping reports from the OP launch in MS in 2007,
- 2) articles sent by ESN to DG EMPL in 2009 for possible publication on the ESF Website,
- 3) articles available on the NewsBrief Website⁷.

The decision on a sampling method and the most appropriate tool was based on practical considerations (such as the lack of an alternative database of journalists dealing with the ESF), as well as the need to engage a sample as representative as possible.

It should be noted that the evaluation team encountered a number of difficulties in indentifying and contacting the journalists. Firstly, the number of articles in the sources mentioned above that were signed by name was limited (76). Secondly, it was not possible to find contact details of all authors of the articles. Thirdly, even the journalists for whom TEP identified contact details often did not respond to numerous requests for an interview.

Overall, the evaluation team contacted 66 journalists from 11 Member States and conducted 17 interviews with journalists working in 7 different countries⁸.

The objective of the interviews was to understand when, how, and why journalists report on the ESF, and how they can be encouraged and better enabled to do so more often. The interviews also collected information on the extent to which journalists use and take advantage of the EC's ESF communication activities and tools, how useful they are and how they could be improved.

The key findings from the interviews are briefly outlined below:

- although the majority of the journalists felt that the ESF is not a very difficult topic, they felt that a number of barriers prevent them from writing about the Fund more often (e.g. perceived lack of access to information on successful ESF projects, experts in the field, etc.);
- the majority of journalists were not familiar with the EU press releases about the ESF;
- those journalists who were familiar with the press releases found them useful but very often a little too general for their readers. Thus, the journalists complemented

⁷ NewsBrief is the Website set up by the EC and it contains links to articles on various topics. The selection and placement of stories are determined automatically by a computer program. The search for the ESF related articles was narrowed down to the funding programme sub-section of this Website (<http://emm.newsbrief.eu/NewsBrief/alertedition/en/EmplFundingProgrammes.html>)

⁸ France, Germany, Malta, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

- the information from the press releases with data obtained through other sources, such as Internet and direct contacts with national / regional / local authorities;
- the majority of journalists sought more region specific information and they wished there were more human stories they could report on;
 - only a few journalists knew the ESF website, while other I&C tools were unknown to all journalists.

2. Characteristics of the interviewed journalists

All interviewed journalists worked for the written press, mostly for the online edition of a print publication or online only news outlets. The vast majority of interviewees worked at the regional and local level and only a few interviewed journalists were employed by national newspapers.

In most cases the interviewed journalists dealt with general news and only some of them specialised in a particular issue or topic, such as legislation, social issues, education or business. Only a few journalists wrote specifically about ESF funded programmes.

For the majority of journalists, reporting on the ESF was a minor part of their time. However, there was a broad spectrum of different answers including journalists who covered the subject only incidentally, as well as those who focused entirely on the ESF.

Most of the journalists reported that they use personal contacts with national / regional / local authorities in order to learn more about the ESF. The Internet, conferences and local or regional events also provide opportunities to find more information about the Fund and they are considered by the interviewed journalists as good sources of information.

3. Relevance of the EC's Strategy

The following section explains how journalists perceive communicating on the ESF and discusses the relevance of the EC's objectives regarding ESF I&C, i.e. the extent to which the EC's approach is seen as appropriate by journalists. The actual implementation of this approach, i.e. the quality, usefulness etc. of the different tools, is discussed in section 4.

The majority of the interviewed journalists felt that the ESF is not a very difficult topic to communicate to the general public. However, most of them indicated some problems that they face in communicating on this subject:

- most journalists felt that they do not have enough information on successful ESF projects;
- the ESF provided limited news-worthy material for a number of the interviewed journalists;
- the ESF was often perceived as a complex instrument, too often explained in EU jargon and difficult to understand;
- journalists felt there is insufficient information on what the EU does at local and regional levels;
- individual journalists found it challenging to find people willing to speak to them about the ESF and give details how it works.

Since 2007 the EC attempted to intensify its relations with the media in order to communicate the ESF to the general public more effectively. The vast majority of the interviewed journalists agreed that this was the right thing to do. Given that the ESF is an instrument of the EU, the interviewed journalists felt it is appropriate for the EC to actively inform the general public about what it does. Perhaps not surprisingly, the interviewed journalists perceived the media as the best means to communicate this information to the general public.

“Media is the key to communicate effectively to people”.

Although the EC has produced more written material and developed more videos, none of the interviewed journalists were familiar with these I&C tools produced by the EC. Some of them expressed interest in watching the “Investing in People” videos, especially if they showed examples from their countries.

Only a few journalists were familiar with the ESF website improved by the EC over the last three years. Nonetheless, it was the developing of online resources related to the ESF that was considered by the majority of the journalists as the most appropriate approach for the EC, after intensifying relations with media.

4. Effectiveness of tools

4.1. Press releases

The majority of the interviewed journalists were not familiar with the EU press releases about the ESF and they did not know where to look for them.

Only a few interviewed journalists could recall the EU press releases and they admitted that the quality of them has improved over the last few years:

“The PR was important and good, it contained a lot of information and it was rather long but not too long.”

However, a number of the journalists thought that the style of writing still remains a little bit too formal. There might be a mismatch between what journalists find interesting and important for their readers and what is communicated to them through the press releases. This is well illustrated by the opinion below:

“The officials [responsible for the ESF] requested that we include all information, long names of programmes, priorities and measures. They did not understand that an article has a limited number of words and if they insist on including everything or irrelevant details, the article won’t be published or some important elements won’t be passed on to the general public.”

According to several interviewed journalists the best way to explain the ESF to the general public is to present what the ESF can do and how it can help, ideally by illustrating it with success stories of people or projects. These stories help people to relate the ESF to their lives.

Those journalists who were familiar with the press releases found them useful and based their articles at least partly on this source of information.

However, most of the journalists felt that the EU press releases about the ESF might be too general for their readers and for that reason they very often complemented the information from the EU press releases with information from national/regional authorities. The journalists who specialised in ESF related issues sought more detailed information, usually

through direct contact with people responsible for the ESF implementation. Only one (Brussels-based) journalist relied solely on the contacts and information from the EC.

“We are interested in what is happening on the local level. We are searching for information that would be interesting for the people who live and work here.”

However, individual journalists suggested that even the general information might inspire them to write about the ESF and it is good to keep in mind. Sometimes such information is used at the later stage.

4.2. ESF website

Only a few interviewed journalists were familiar with the ESF website developed by the EC and they felt that information available there was useful. Some of the journalists who did not know about the website before were interested to familiarise themselves with it and see the project database, especially the examples from their respective countries.

5. Impact

No evidence was found on the impact of the EC's activities and tools through the interviews with the journalists. The sample was too small, and the sources used by the journalists too varied, to draw any conclusions regarding the impact specifically of the EC's press releases, website etc.

6. Sustainability

Most of the journalists reported that they plan to make use of the ESF website in the future (in some cases they only became aware of the website through the evaluation). In terms of other tools developed by the EC, the interviewed journalists would have to familiarise themselves first with what is available. Several of them declared to be interested to see the project database and “Investing in People” videos with the human stories.

7. Suggestion for the future

Press releases

In general, the journalists would welcome more press releases which would include specific information about ESF projects from a given region: *“Local media would be more likely to cover this type of news if they were communicated from a local perspective and with local data.”*

In order to encourage journalists to write more frequently about the ESF *“the EC would have to change the language and speak more about real-life examples. It would have to leave out most of the general information and give more details.”*

According to individual journalists, the press releases should be concise: *“the shorter the better, with succinct headlines and a direct link to our region. This shows us that a press release might deal with something interesting for our readers. There should also be links where more information can be found if we have time, and any local sources / partners should be pointed out.”*

Other I&C tools and activities

Most journalists were not sure if additional I&C activities and tools should be developed at the EC level. However, some isolated suggestions for the EC on different I&C activities included training for journalists to write about the ESF and more press conferences on ESF related issues.

Moreover, individual journalists suggested that the EC should find different and innovative ways to communicate about the ESF to the general public. For example, annual events and topics, such as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, could form vehicles to communicate on (and explain) the ESF to the general public. Also, the use of new media and new communication platforms was mentioned by one interviewee.

EC Representations

Individual journalists believed that there is a role for the EC Representations to be more active in informing about the ESF. For example, the journalists felt that officials from the EC Representations (and/or the EC) should be more present at the regional level in order to make the EU (and the ESF) more visible for local people.

5.3.4 Results from interviews with geo-desks

1. Introduction and key findings

Between February and April 2010, the evaluation team carried out eight face-to-face and two telephone interviews with ten of DG EMPL's geo desk officers responsible for different countries⁹.

The aim of these interviews was to get an understanding of the needs for as well as use and usefulness of the different ESF I&C activities and tools (i.e. press releases, brochures, audiovisual materials etc.) in those Member States that geo desk officers are responsible for.

The key findings of the interviews with geo-desk officers can be summarised as follows:

- ESF communication is not really part of geo-desk officers' job description and takes up only a small part of their work;
- Only half of the interviewees were aware of the joint EC-MS communication policy, but all geo-desk officers perceived this approach as being a good idea to effectively communicate the ESF;
- Majority of geo-desk officers perceived DG EMPL's operational objectives as an appropriate approach to better communicate the ESF to the general public;
- Geo-desk officers were aware of the different tools to varying degrees, but the vast majority had not heard of the INIO meetings before;
- Majority of interviewees thought that the EC's tools only make a limited contribution to raising the visibility of the ESF in the Member States;
- Geo-desk officers were likely to continue using those I&C tools in the future which they are aware of at the moment.

Current responsibilities

With regard to the ESF, DG EMPL's desk officers are responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Fund in individual EU Member States, and have to report back on the progress to the EC. They also have to participate in events and conferences related to the ESF or visit ESF projects. In addition, geo-desk officers are in direct and regular contact with the Managing Authorities in the Member States they are responsible for.

All interviewees reported that communicating the ESF takes up only a small part of their work and is mainly the responsibility of the Managing Authorities. One of the main duties in terms of ESF communication for geo-desk officers is to put together or update the ESF brochure on individual Member States. In addition, geo-desk officers are involved in discussing the ESF communication plan for the Operational Programmes with the Managing Authorities, and reviewing its implementation. A few interviewees also stated that they

⁹ Interviews were carried out with geo-desk officers responsible for the following countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

sometimes take part in meetings with DG EMPL's communication unit about I&C activities related to the ESF.

Moreover, as part of their responsibilities, geo-desk officers participate in meetings organised for stakeholder groups from different Member States in Brussels. These meetings provide a good opportunity to inform these stakeholders about the ESF. In this context, one interviewee reported to occasionally meet groups of journalists and to inform them about the ESF, pass on relevant material and make them aware of ESF-related topics in their Member States.

2. Relevance

2.1. Challenges for communicating effectively about the ESF

During the interviews, geo desk officers reported that they face the following challenges and obstacles when communicating about the ESF:

- Difficulty to attract the attention and interest of the general public to the ESF;
- Difficulty to explain in clear words what exactly the ESF is and what it does;
- Perceived lack of events related to the ESF to which journalists in the individual Member States could be invited in order to report about the ESF;
- A "one fits all" approach for communicating the ESF and enhancing its visibility does not always work, given that every Member State has a specific way of working and specific communication needs; the level of ESF communication seems to be related to the level of ESF financing in a country.

2.2. Joint EC-MS communication policy

Half of the interviewees were aware of the existing joint EC-MS communication policy, and even those officers who had not heard of this approach before thought that it is useful in order to effectively communicate the ESF.

While interviewees acknowledged that the Managing Authorities are mainly responsible for ESF communication, they found that the EC should be involved to a higher degree than currently the case. One interviewee stated that "*it is very important that the communication is centrally coordinated at the EC level*". Individual interviewees also found that a better communication is needed between the EC and the regions in the Member States, in order to effectively communicate the ESF.

2.3. DG EMPL operational objectives

While geo-desk officers were aware of the individual ESF communication tools and activities available, the majority of interviewees generally perceived DG EMPL's operational objectives as an appropriate approach to better communicate the ESF to the general public.

A few interviewees nevertheless found that especially the written material is a bit of an outdated communication approach and expected that it will further lose importance in the next years. In this context, two geo-desk officers suggested that DG EMPL should invest looking into new ways of communicating and make more use of internet sources, such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. Another interviewee stated that the videos produced by the EC to inform about the ESF are somewhat "inactive" tools, meaning that users have to take the initiative and actively search for them, for example online.

3. Effectiveness

3.1. INIO meetings

Apart from one interviewee, none of the geo-desk officers were aware of the INIO meetings or knew what the purpose of these meetings is. Even though geo-desk officers deal with the ESF programme itself, rather than its communication, all interviewees were very interested to learn more about these meetings and would like to be informed about their development and programme.

3.2. Written material

All interviewees were aware of most of the written material, given that they are responsible for updating and handing out some of the brochures and leaflets at events or to visitor groups coming to Brussels.

In general, geo-desk officers perceived the layout and presentation of the written material positively and saw the publications as being presented in an attractive form. It was felt that most publications are kept succinct and do not overload readers with too much or too specialised information.

However, and as stated above, the written material was perceived by some geo-desk officers as a somewhat outdated communication tool. A few geo-desk officers argued that people looking for information on the ESF would rather search on the ESF website than ordering a publication from the European Commission.

The majority of interviewees felt that the best written material produced were the “Country and regional profiles”, which focus on the ESF in individual Member States. Especially the geo-desk officers responsible for Sweden, Hungary and Ireland stated that these brochures were well perceived by the general public, given that they provide basic information about the ESF in one Member State or region, which is easy to understand.

A few geo-desk officers commented on the leaflet “The European Social Fund: supporting economic recovery”, which was produced in reaction to the financial crisis. They perceived the leaflet as being published “too early”, given that it talked about ESF actions that had not been implemented yet. Interviewees felt that the leaflet should rather have included information about EU achievements or good practices of actions undertaken by the EC or the Member States to boost the economy.

3.3. Media relations

Geo-desk officers had different perceptions regarding the EC’s media relations with a view to ESF communication. Several officers reported that they were not aware of/familiar with any media relations or had not yet come across any press releases on the ESF.

Out of those interviewees that were aware of press releases about the ESF, the majority had a very positive opinion of them. A few geo-desk officers could even recall concrete press releases which they thought were well written and fulfilled their objective, i.e. the press release for the OP launch in 2007 in Finland, as well as a press release for a conference on Roma issues in Hungary. Both press releases were reported to be written in a neutral way and, even though not being very attractive in terms of layout, included appropriate information for journalists.

One interviewee stated that the Managing Authorities should increase their efforts towards the media on a more regular basis in order to communicate the ESF more widely and effectively.

3.4. Videos

A few geo-desk officers interviewed were not aware of any of the ESF videos produced. Those who had seen the videos before, however, thought that they were an effective tool to raise the overall visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public.

More than half of the interviewees agreed that the videos were displaying the right messages and content by introducing real people and a “human face” to the ESF. They argued that the general public is able to identify with these people who have benefitted from being engaged in ESF-funded projects.

Several interviewees found that the format and length of the individual videos were appropriate. They thought that the videos were short and concrete enough to keep viewers interested to watch the whole film.

One interview partner explicitly mentioned that the Managing Authority in the country the officer is responsible for is regularly showing videos during public events. He also specifically pointed out the video on the “50th anniversary of the ESF”, which he reported was well received by the general public.

3.5. ESF website

Almost half of the geo-desk officers interviewed revealed that they are not familiar with the ESF website and do not make use of it. The remaining interview partners generally had a very positive perception of the website.

Those geo-desk officers who were aware of the website found that the different sections are very user-friendly, logically structured and easy to navigate. Interviewees praised the difference in quality since the revamp of the website and thought that the layout is very professional.

Individual interviewees, however, thought that if project providers want to find more information about the ESF, they would probably search on the websites of the national authorities in a country, rather than on the EC’s ESF website. It was argued that the national websites provide more tailored and specific information and data on grants and calls for proposals.

In this context, a few interview partners questioned the use of the EC’s ESF website by the general public. They thought that some of the information provided on the EC’s website might not be interesting to more general visitors. Therefore, they suggested developing more animated games and interactive foray in order to attract users who might not be fully aware of what the ESF is and what it does.

4. Impact

More than half of the geo-desk officers interviewed perceived the level of awareness of the ESF in the countries they are responsible for as generally very low, and found that the EC’s tools only make a limited contribution to raising the visibility of the ESF and the financial input made by the EC. Several reasons for this were stated, and can be summarised as follows:

- Activities and events organised by the Managing Authorities are much more relevant and tailored to the needs of a country, and therefore raise more awareness than those I&C tools produced by DG EMPL;
- While the general public might be aware of the ESF as a name, it seems unlikely that people are actually aware of what the ESF is and what it stands for; generally, it is

difficult to link the financial contributions made through the ESF with concrete actions.

One interviewee suggested that the Managing Authorities should initiate national ESF communication campaigns in order to inform the general public what the ESF does in their countries.

5. Sustainability

The majority of geo-desk officers confirmed that they would continue using those I&C tools in the future which they are aware of at the moment, unless DG EMPL will introduce other tools.

Even though several geo-desk officers perceived the written material in particular as being somewhat obsolete as a means of communication, it still appears to be the tool that is most used by geo-desk officers to communicate the ESF, and interviewees confirmed that they are likely to continue using the written material in the future.

6. Suggestions/recommendations

Interviewees had a number of suggestions for future ESF communication work, as summarised below:

Even though communicating the ESF is not a top priority of geo-desk officers, a few interviewees found that a better communication between the geo-desks and DG EMPL's communication unit should be established in order to exchange information on ESF communication issues and best practice examples;

In terms of tools to be used, it was suggested to invest more time to explore new media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

One geo-desk officer pointed out that it is important for ESF communication to "go local", for example in the regions, and to reach people living in deprived areas, which might be in need of ESF funding; he therefore suggested to tailor communication strategies to this purpose;

When asked about their own contribution to better communicate the ESF, a few interviewees suggested that geo-desk officers should receive communication training. It was argued that they have no expertise in dealing with the media, but that it would be beneficial for their work to receive some guidance on effective communication methods.

5.3.5 Results from interviews with EC Representations

1. Introduction and key findings

Between January and March 2010, the evaluation team carried out eight telephone interviews with press and communication officers in different EC Representations¹⁰.

The objective of these interviews was to gain a better understanding of press and communication officers' perceptions and views of the use and usefulness of the ESF communication tools produced by the European Commission (i.e. press releases, brochures, audiovisual materials etc.) in relation to the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of these tools.

The key findings from the interviews are briefly outlined below:

- ESF communication only plays a minor part in the daily work of press officers working at EC Representations;
- The ESF is usually not regarded as a communication priority by EC Representations;
- The majority of interviewees was not aware of the existence of a joint EC-Member States communication policy;
- The majority of press and communication officers at the EC Representations were not well aware of the individual ESF communication tools;
- Out of all ESF I&C tools, the ESF videos were the tool that most interviewees were aware of and were perceived as useful to communicate the "human face" of the ESF;
- Press releases on the ESF from DG EMPL are not received on a regular basis and are too general to be used directly;
- All press officers are likely to continue using the available tools they were already aware of when communicating the ESF in the future; a few of them showed an interest in using other communication tools, such as the EC's ESF website.

Current responsibilities

Press and communication officers working in the EC Representations are part of the Directorate General for Communication (DG COMM). They have a range of responsibilities, such as passing on EC press releases to national media; they are responsible for networking with national and/or local authorities or NGOs; in some cases, they deal with the general public to inform about a specific topic. One officer summarised their role as "spokespeople for the European Commission in the Member States".

With regard to the ESF, press and communication officers in the EC Representations reported that communication about the Fund only plays a minor part in their daily work, e.g. when the EC publishes a press release on the ESF which then needs to be disseminated by the EC Representations to the media. In addition, all EC Representations have ESF publications on display for the general public. A few Representations even actively

¹⁰ The evaluation team spoke to press officers in EC Representations in Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Poland.

disseminate them externally, for example at events, but this seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

All officers pointed out that they didn't perceive themselves as multipliers of ESF communication tools.

2. Relevance

2.1. Challenges for communicating about the ESF

The work of the EC Representations' press and communication officers is based on communication priorities, which are defined by the EC. However, the ESF is usually not regarded as a communication priority. One interviewee pointed out that the ESF interventions are so specific and tailored to the conditions prevalent in a Member State that it is difficult for the EC to provide relevant content that is not too general.

Almost all interview partners pointed out that the most effective ESF communication work can only be done by the national authorities, because they have the most relevant and useful information (i.e. about ESF-funded projects) that might be of interest for the media.

Press and communication officers also mentioned a number of specific challenges that they face when communicating about the ESF, which can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of knowledge about the ESF among the general public;
- Lack of information on what kind of projects are funded by the ESF;
- ESF is seen as less important than for example the ERDF (in terms of financial contributions);
- EC Representations do not get press releases from the EC on a regular basis;
- Press releases cannot be used directly, but need to be rewritten, which takes time.

2.2. Joint EC-MS communication policy

Only half of the interviewees were aware of the existence of a joint EC-Member States communication policy, though such an effort was generally perceived as useful. It was argued that some of the national authorities seem to have problems to mobilise the media to report on the ESF, and it was felt that the involvement of the European Commission could raise the profile of the ESF among the media. A few of interview partners stated that they personally do not have much contact with DG EMPL, and found that they only interact with them if events, for example related to the "Circus Campaign", have to be organised in a Member State.

2.3. DG EMPL operational objectives

While the majority of press and communication officers at the EC Representations were not well aware of the individual ESF communication tools, the objectives of producing more written material, developing media relations, developing more audiovisual material and improving the EC's ESF website were overall perceived as very positive.

Out of all ESF I&C tools, the videos were the tool mentioned the most by interview partners. They were perceived as being well produced, focusing on the "human face" of the ESF by introducing real stories, and explain in detail what the ESF does and what it stands for.

3. Effectiveness

3.1. Media Relations

All press and information officers reported that they receive press releases on the ESF from DG EMPL, but not on a regular basis. ESF press releases are usually related to an event or a newsworthy story, such as the launch of an Operational Programme.

Press officers explained that they are responsible for disseminating the press releases to journalists / the media in their country for the story to get published. The difficulty described by the majority of press officers was that DG EMPL's press releases on the ESF (other than those on the OP launch) are usually of a very general nature and need re-writing in order to make them attractive for the media. Moreover, they are often sent to them in English only and need to be translated into the national language of the country. Both actions take time and resources, which poses a burden on press officers who are already very busy.

Press officers also reported that it is generally difficult to get an ESF-related story published. Media at different levels have different needs and interviewees agreed that it depends on the nature of a story or topic whether it attracts the interest of the media to report on the ESF.

TV stations were seen to be the type of media most difficult to reach or to interest in a story related to the ESF. TV stations seem to be keen to pick up the story only if a topic is interesting for a large number of citizens in a country, for example if a financial fraud happens. If the topic is more regionally orientated, then the regional news, usually print media, are most likely to report on it.

The majority of press officers suggested that local media, such as newspapers and local radio stations, should be the primary target when communicating the ESF. However, it was argued that information provided by DG EMPL on the ESF is not tailored to the right degree. The press releases were perceived to have a "one size fits all" format and need to be tailored further to the local market in the different Member States. Concrete ESF examples, e.g. on projects or personal success stories of people who benefitted from ESF funding, should be provided so that the information is easy to understand by the general public.

3.2. Written material

The majority of press officers in the EC Representations were generally aware that written material on the ESF exists, but were not able to name individual publications. Only a few press officers knew the publication "Making a difference in life".

Those multipliers who were familiar with the EC's publications valued them for being available in all 23 EU languages and accessible through the ESF website. However, the information presented in the publications was perceived as often being out of date.

Almost all officers interviewed stated that their respective EC Representations have some written material on the ESF in their documentation departments, but did not know how these are distributed and stated that they had not received any feedback on these publications.

3.3. Videos

Not all press and information officers at EC Representations were aware of the ESF videos and able to comment on their usefulness. One press officer explained that the EC Representations do not receive the ESF videos from DG EMPL directly, but get audiovisual

updates from DG COMM, in which clips are grouped together according to topic. However, due to lack of time, most press officers do not seem to look at these updates.

Those interviewees aware of the videos thought that they were very useful in explaining what the ESF is and how individuals can benefit from it. However, it was not obvious for press officers how to use the videos. Only one interviewee reported that his EC Representation has a contract with local service providers to place news on the EU in local and regional media, and argued that if he had been aware of the videos before, they could have been broadcast under that contract.

3.4. ESF website

More than half of the press officers of EC Representation interviewed were not aware of the ESF website. The remaining press officers interviewed perceived the ESF website as being well developed and as including all relevant information.

However, the use of the website by the general public was questioned, given that most information presented there is quite general. It was argued that people interested in the ESF, for example by taking part in ESF-funded projects, would rather consult the websites of the Managing Authorities in their countries than the EC's ESF website in order to find the information they are looking for.

4. Impact

The press officers in the EC Representations had different perceptions on the general public's level of awareness of the ESF in the countries they were working in. Overall, half of the press officers pointed out that, if an ESF-funded project is running well, national authorities often do not mention the financial contributions made by the ESF / the European Commission, but rather highlight the importance of the contributions made by their own government. They argued that this is the main reason why the general public is not aware of the link between the ESF and positive changes on national labour markets.

The other half of interviewees, however, were convinced that a significant share of the general public in the countries they were working in is aware of the ESF and its financial contributions, but argued that people just do not care enough where the money is coming from and that they cannot differentiate between the different European Funds.¹¹ For them, the ESF is just a name they cannot really identify with.

5. Sustainability

Unless DG EMPL will introduce new ESF I&C communication tools, all press officers stated that they would continue making use of the already existing ESF communication approach and communication tools they are aware of. A few press officers stated that they are interested in consulting the ESF website more often in order to find relevant and up-to-date

¹¹ The 2009 Eurobarometer results show that in two of the countries mentioned by interviewees there was an increase of the general public's overall ESF awareness, while the awareness of the general public in one country remained the same, and decreased in another of the Member States. In comparison, the ESF awareness in these four countries is not significantly higher than in the other four countries where interviewees stated that national authorities would claim the improvement of the national job situation as a result of the policies of their own governments.

information about the ESF. In addition, one interview partner suggested introducing a rapid news alert, which would notify officers at the Representations each time a decision has been taken that a project is eligible for ESF funding. This alert should also inform them about the amount of ESF funding the project receives, the people involved, the topic of the project and its objectives.

6. Suggestions/recommendations

Interviewees had a number of suggestions for future ESF communication work:

Half of the interviewees found that the Managing Authorities should become more active in terms of their ESF communication work. While it was recognised that the Managing Authorities are the main responsible body for ESF communication, there is still perceived to be room for improvement in the cooperation between the EC and the Managing Authorities in the individual Member States on this matter.

One interviewee felt that the press officers in the EC Representations might need more guidance from DG EMPL on what ESF I&C tools are available and how best to disseminate them to reach the different target groups.

Another interview partner stated that the visits of the Commissioner to a country are very important and generate a lot of media attention. He suggested that these visits could be linked to attract more attention to the ESF, for example by the Commissioner visiting an ESF-funded project in a Member State. However, the interviewee recognised that this approach will be difficult to execute given the limited time that Commissioners generally have.

5.3.6 Results from online survey with users of the ESF website

1. Summary findings

The online survey with users of the ESF website provided comprehensive feedback on the usage of the website and the profile of users in order to better understand its effectiveness. The key findings are briefly outlined below:

- Survey respondents represented a good mix of professional profiles from nearly all EU MS ;
- the majority of website users seem to fall into the categories of teaching / training / studying / research, and national / regional / local authorities;
- Information on examples of projects financed by the ESF as well as general information about what the ESF is, were the kinds of information that most visitors looked for;
- feedback on the user-friendliness and navigation of the ESF website was very positive;
- the ESF website is perceived as a very useful source of information mainly by those directly working in relation to the ESF (Managing Authorities; EU Institutions);
- it is questionable if the website provides the right level of information in order to successfully target the general public.

2. Survey approach

The online survey with ESF website users was launched on 29th January 2010 and remained online for the duration of 4 months (16 weeks) until 21st May 2010. A pilot survey had been conducted previously to test the questionnaire. The survey was made available in six languages: English, French, German, Polish, Italian and Spanish.

The purpose of the online survey was to collect information on the usage of the website and the profile of users in order to understand its effectiveness, i.e. who is using the website, why and to what extent, which information on the website is needed, what could be improved etc.

Just like the pilot survey with ESF website users, this survey was accessible via a banner link on the Commission's ESF website. In addition, an invitation to participate in the survey was sent to 5,940 subscribers of DG EMPL's Social Agenda magazine..

In total, 510 respondents took part in the consultation, of which 394 (ca. 77%) completed the entire survey (i.e. answered all questions). This gives a confidence interval of 4.3 at a confidence level of 95%. In other words, if 50% of all respondents chose a certain answer, we can be 95% sure that 50% +/- 4.3% of all website visitors would have responded in the same way.

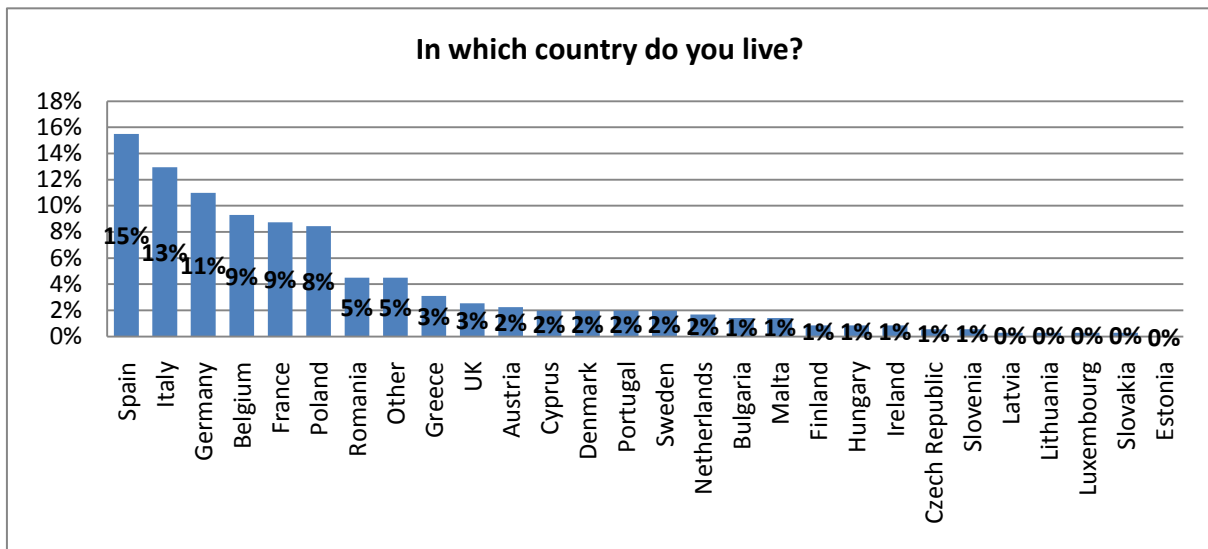
Table 1 – Number of survey responses

Language	Total respondents	Via website	Via email invitation	Completed survey
English	215	49	166	171
German	81	34	47	57
French	72	18	54	56

Polish	41	16	25	28
Italian	37	10	27	33
Spanish	64	35	29	49
Total	510	162	348	394

3. Respondents profile

Figure 1 – Country of residence of survey respondents

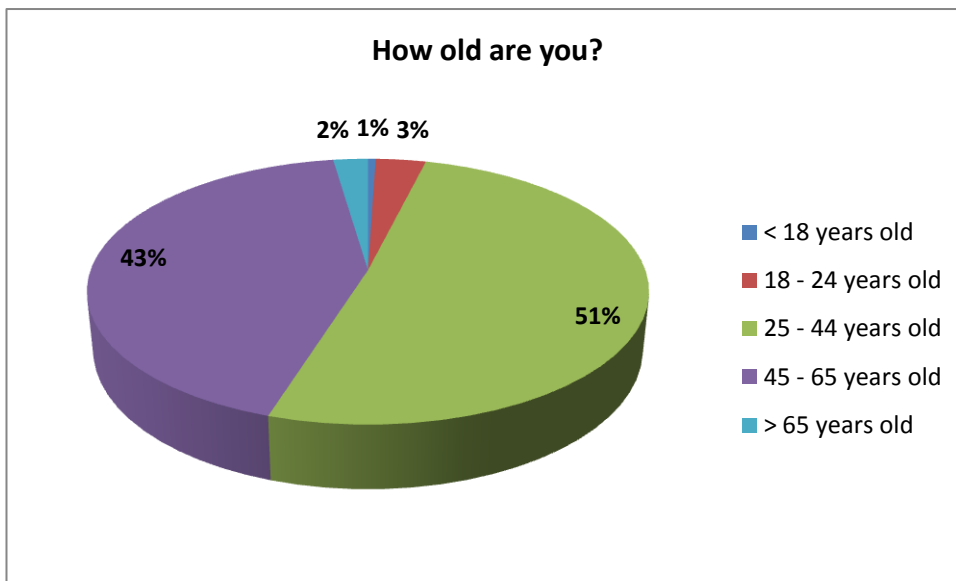


n=355

Most respondents to the online survey currently live in Spain (15%), Italy (13%) and Germany (11%). No responses could be collected from residents of Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Estonia.

The gender of respondents was fairly balanced – 51% of respondents were male, and 49% of respondents were female. Nearly 95% of the respondents were between 25 and 65 years old.

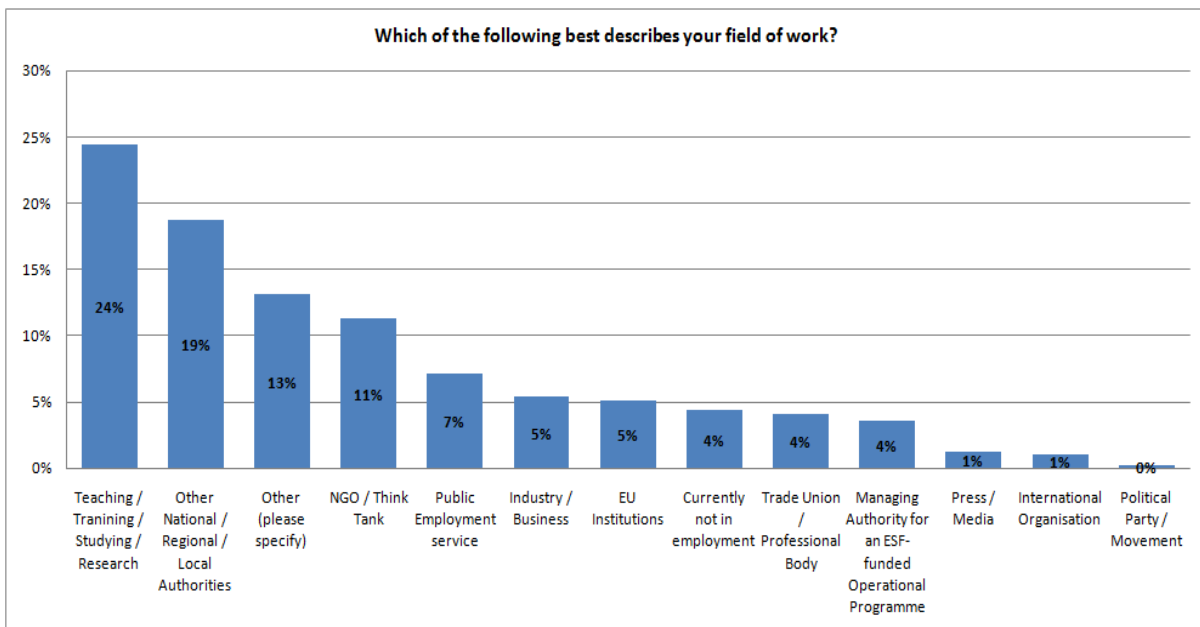
Figure 2 – Age of respondents



n=386

Respondents were coming from a wide spread of work fields. The table below shows that almost one quarter of respondents were engaged in teaching / training / studying or research, followed by 19% working for national / regional or local authorities. 5% of respondents worked for EU institutions, and a further 4% for the Managing Authority of an ESF-funded OP.

Figure 3 – Field of work of respondents



n=389

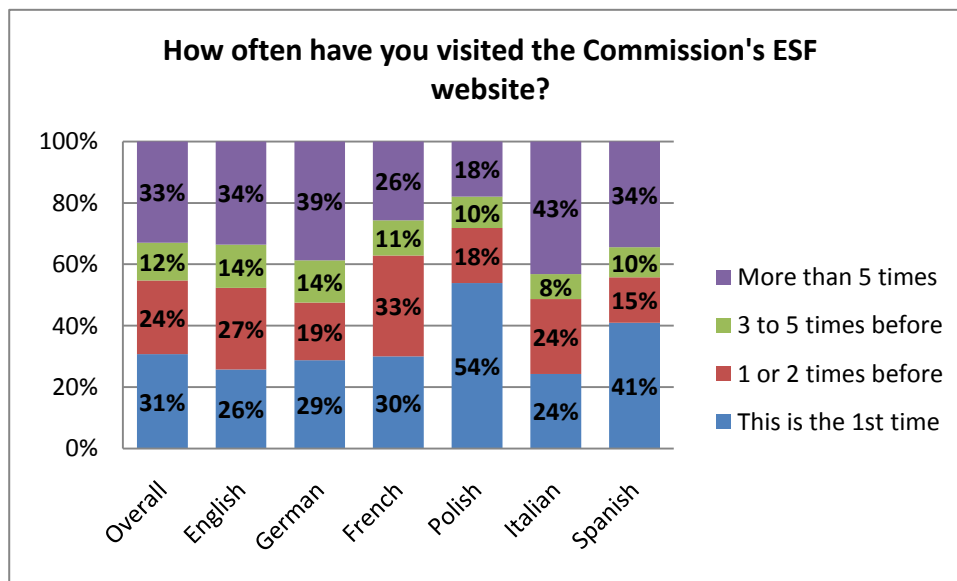
When excluding all those respondents directly working in relation to the ESF (i.e. Managing Authorities; European Institutions), the graph above actually shows that the vast majority of

respondents (91%) can be regarded as belonging to the “general public”. Thus, the ESF website serves as an effective tool to inform about the ESF and raise its visibility.

4. Frequency and purpose of website visit

Overall, there is a split in the frequency of respondents’ website visits. One third of respondents were familiar with the EC’s ESF website and had visited it more than 5 times in the past, while another third of respondents were visiting the website for the first time when completing the online survey (31%).

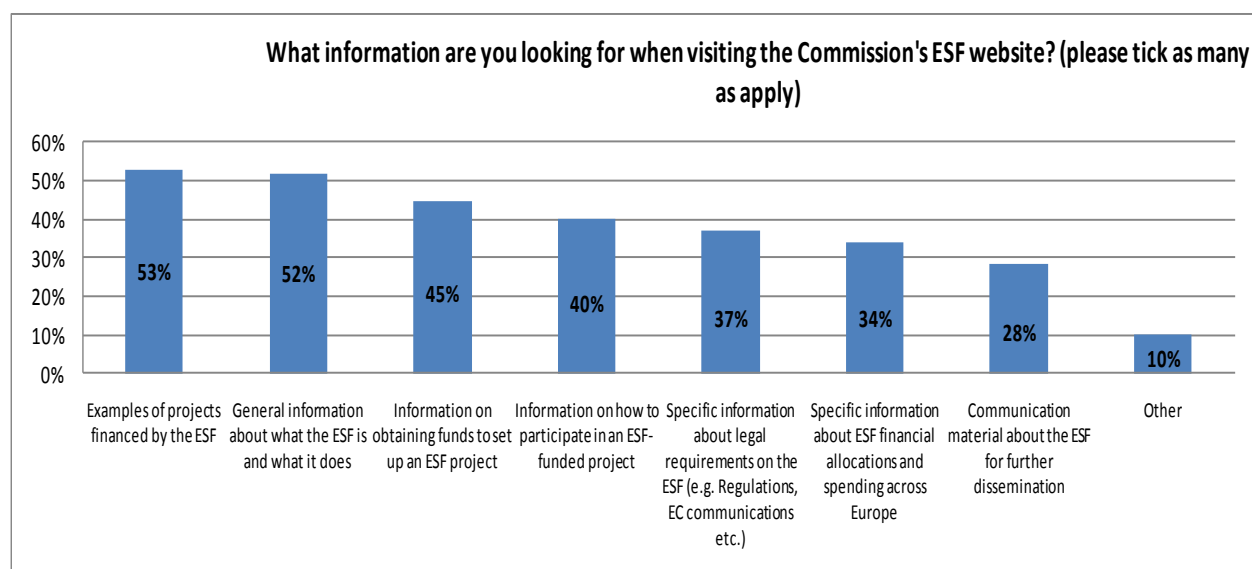
Figure 4 – Frequency of visits to the Commission’s ESF website?



n (overall)=501; n (English)=214; n (German)=80; n (French)=70; n (Polish)=39;
n (Italian)=37; n (Spanish)=61

Broken down by languages the survey was available in, there seems to be a similar split in the frequency of ESF website visits between respondents to the English, German, French and Spanish survey. In contrast, the majority of respondents to the Polish survey visited the EC’s ESF website for the first time when completing the survey. Only 18% of respondents to the Polish survey had visited the EC’s ESF website 1 or 2 times before, 10% had visited the website 3 to 5 times before, and 18% of respondents had used the website more than 5 times before. In contrast, almost half of all respondents to the Italian version of the survey indicated that they have visited the EC’s ESF website more than 5 times, compared to 24% of respondents who visited the websites for the first time and 24% of respondents who had visited the website once or twice before.

Figure 5 – Information needs of visitors to the Commission’s ESF website



Most survey respondents indicated that they were looking for examples of projects financed by the ESF (53%) and general information about what the ESF is and what it does (52%).

Information on obtaining funds to set up an ESF project, or on how to participate in ESF funded projects, were among the reasons for 45% and 40% of respondents respectively to visit the EC’s ESF website. Only one third of respondents indicated that they were looking for communication material about the ESF for further dissemination. Examples of other information that respondents were looking for included:

- Comparative studies among European regions;
- Information about ESF events, seminars and conferences undertaken across the EU;
- the implementation of ESF projects on specific topics;
- information on private financing;
- training opportunities.

When broken down by work field, the three most important fields of information that respondents were looking for were as follows¹²:

Table 2 – Top 3 information needs broken down by respondents’ field of work

Field of work	Most important information	2 nd most important information	3 rd most important information
EU institutions	General information about what the ESF is and what it does	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	Specific information about legal requirements / financial allocations and spending

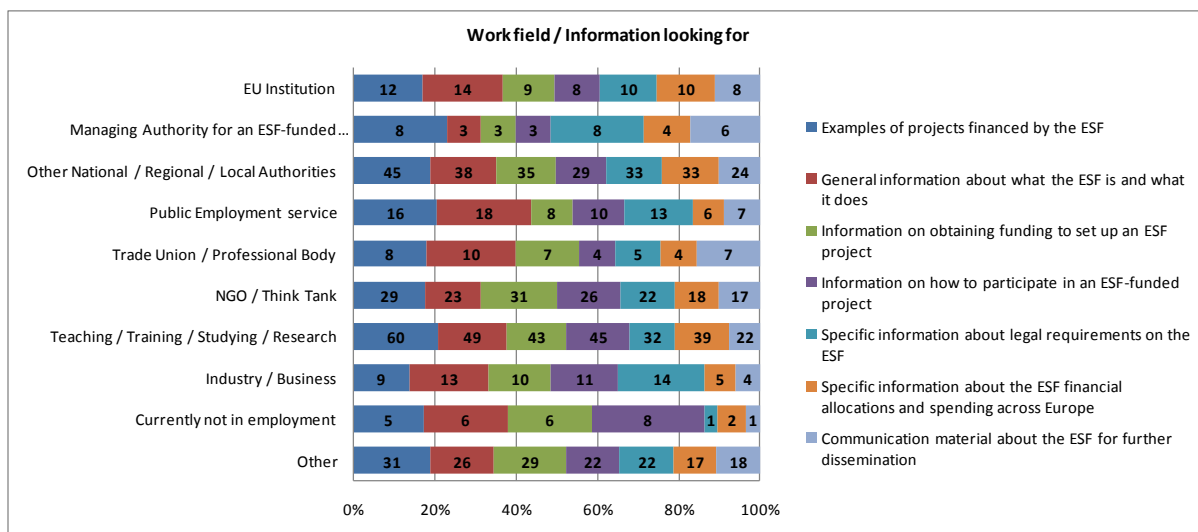
¹² Please note that only those fields of work with more than 10 responses were considered in this table.

Managing Authorities for an ESF-funded project	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF	Communication material on the ESF for further dissemination
Other National / Regional / Local Authorities	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	General information about what the ESF is and what it does	Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project
Public Employment Service	General information about what the ESF is and what it does	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF
Trade Union / Professional Body	General information about what the ESF is and what it does	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project
NGO / Think Tank	Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	Information on how to participate in an ESF-funded project
Teaching / Training / Studying / Research	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	General information about what the ESF is and what it does	Information on how to participate in an ESF-funded project
Industry / Business	Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF	General information about what the ESF is and what it does	Information on how to participate in an ESF-funded project
Currently not in employment	Information on how to participate in an ESF-funded project	Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project	General information about what the ESF is and what it does
Other	Examples of projects financed by the ESF	Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project	General information about what the ESF is and what it does

According to the table above, general information about what the ESF is and what it does was the most sought after type of information for website visitors from EU institutions, public employment services, and trade unions / professional bodies. Examples of projects financed by the ESF were deemed particularly interesting by Managing Authorities and other national / regional / local authorities, and by those in teaching / training / studying or research. NGOs / think tanks were mostly looking for information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project, whereas those currently not in employment wanted information on how to participate in such a project. Finally, industry / business respondents expressed a particular interest in specific information about legal requirements on the ESF (likely because this group includes many who currently receive or consider applying for ESF funding).

The graph below shows in more detail what information respondents in different work fields were looking for.

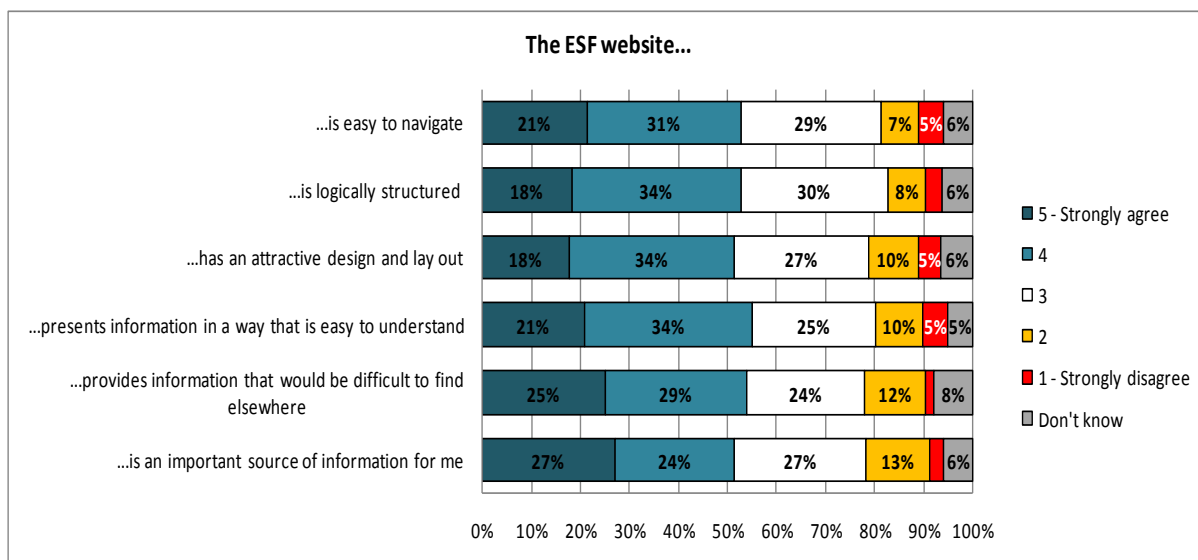
Figure 6 – Requested information broken down by respondents’ field of work



5. Usefulness of the website

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a number of statements regarding the ESF website on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 5 means “strongly agree”.

Figure 7 –Level of agreement with statements relating to the usefulness of the ESF website



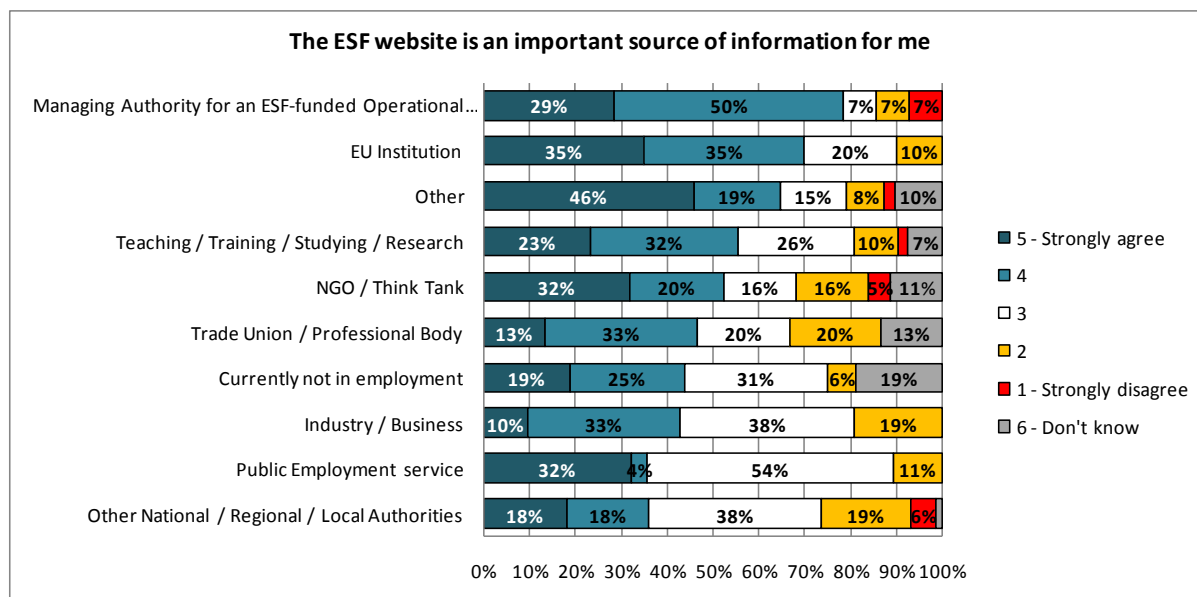
n (1)=392; n (2)=387; n (3)=388; n (4)=387; n (5)=387; n (6)=387

The majority of respondents had a very positive perception of the ESF website. More than half of all respondents found it easy to navigate, logically structured, and having an attractive design and layout. In addition, 55% of respondents also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the ESF website presents information in a way that is easy to understand,

and almost the same number found that the ESF website provides information that would be difficult to find elsewhere. Finally, the ESF website was perceived as an important source of information by more than half of all respondents to the survey.

The graph below shows respondents' level of agreement with the statement "The ESF website is an important source of information for me", broken down by respondents' field of work.

Figure 8 – Importance of the ESF website as a source of information (by respondent group)

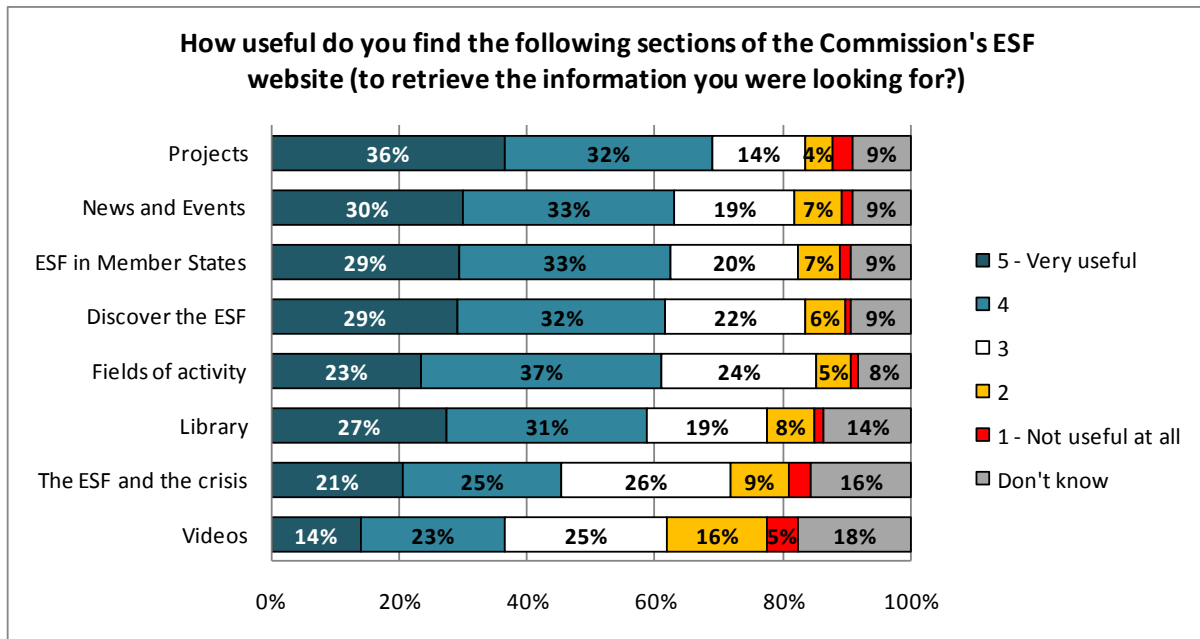


n (overall)=392; Please note: Only those fields of work of respondents were included in the graph that had 10 or more responses.

The vast majority of respondents working for a Managing Authority for an ESF-funded Operational Programme perceived the ESF website as being an important source of information (79% of respondents working in this field strongly agreed or agreed with the statement). This group was followed by respondents working for an EU Institution (70% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement). Those work fields that were less likely to perceive the ESF website as an important source of information were the industry and business sector, public employment services, as well as other national, regional and local authorities. It appears that the ESF website is most useful for those users that are working with the ESF, rather than for those users not that familiar with the topic, who might be looking for further information.

Respondents were also asked to rate the usefulness of the different sections of the EC's ESF website to retrieve the information they were looking for.

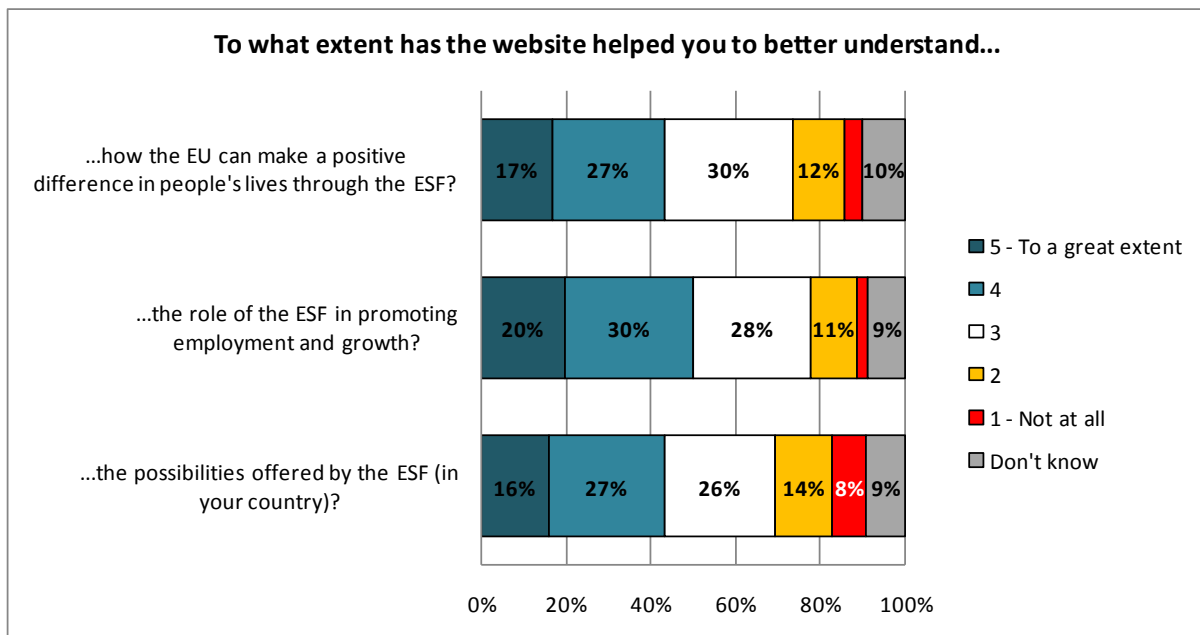
Figure 9 – Usefulness of the different sections of the Commission’s ESF website



n (1)=373; n (2)=368; n (3)=366; n (4)=366; n (5)=374; n (6)=373; n (7)=370; n (8)=364

Most of the individual sections on the EC’s ESF website were perceived as being useful by survey respondents. “Projects” was the most popular section, with almost two thirds of respondents finding this section very useful or useful. The “News and events” section was perceived by respondents as the second most useful section (63% of respondents perceived it as very useful or useful, followed by the section on “ESF in the Member States” (62%). It should be noted that the “video” section appears to be the least useful (only 37% of respondents perceived this section as very useful or useful).

Figure 10 – Usefulness of the website to understand different aspects of the ESF

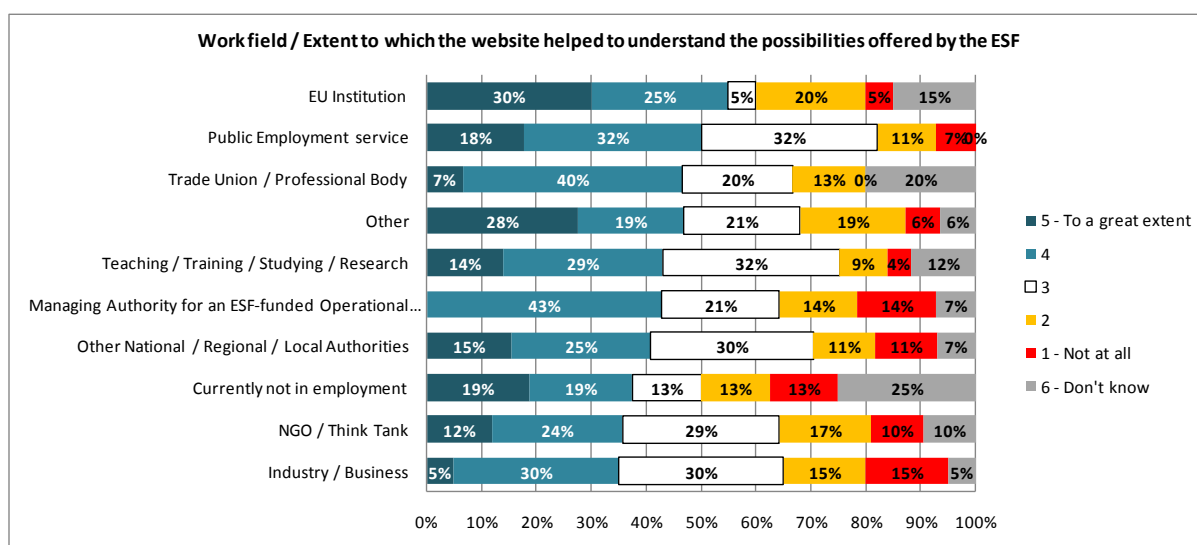


n (1)=380; n (2)=372; n (3)=366

About 40% of respondents agreed to a great extent or to some extent with the statement that the ESF website helped to better understand how the EU can make a positive difference in people's lives through the ESF. Half of the respondents to the survey (50%) thought that the website helped them to a great or to some extent to better understand the role of the ESF in promoting employment and growth, while 43% of respondents thought that the ESF website helped them to a great extent or to some extent to better understand the possibilities offered by the ESF in their countries.

Broken down by work field and the respondents perception of the extent to which the ESF website has helped them to better understand the possibilities offered by the ESF (in your country), some interesting findings can be reported.

Figure 11 –Extent to which the website helped to better understand the possibilities offered by the ESF (by work field)

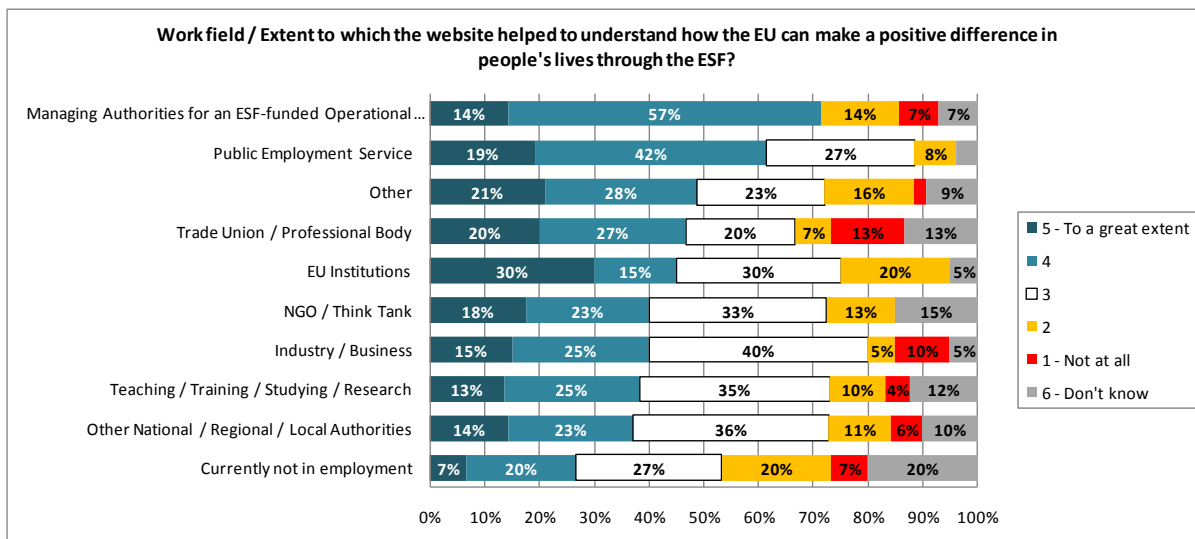


n (overall)=366; Please note: Only those fields of work of respondents were included in the graph that had 10 or more responses.

The graph shows that those respondents who felt the most that the ESF website has helped them to better understand the possibilities offered by the ESF were working for EU Institutions. In sharp contrast, those respondents currently not in employment, working for NGOs / Think Tanks, and those related to the industry and business perceived that the ESF website helped them to better understand the possibilities that the ESF offers in their country to a much lesser extent. These findings raise some concern on the usefulness of the ESF website in providing information to the general public, rather than to users working for the EU Institutions.

Similar to the graph above, the following graph shows that the respondents who feel strongly that the website helped them to understand how the EU can make a positive difference in people's lives through the ESF are those working closely related to the ESF (i.e. Managing Authorities).

Figure 12 –Work field / Extent to which the website helped to understand how the EU can make a positive difference in people’s lives through the ESF



n (overall)=352; Please note: Only those fields of work of respondents were included in the graph that had 10 or more responses.

In contrast, respondents with the need for information on how to set up or to participate in an ESF-funded project, such as people currently not in employment, do not perceive the website as helping them to understand how the ESF can positively influence their lives.

These findings indicate that even though the ESF website seems to predominantly attract visitors that can be regarded as the “general public”, i.e. not working in direct relation to the ESF, it does not seem to always provide the right level of information to them, given that these users do not perceive the website to be an important source of information for them, and often do not feel it helps them understand key aspects of the ESF . This suggests that the information provided on the ESF website and the messages conveyed might not be appropriate in order to reach the general public and meet their information needs.

5.3.7 Case studies

REPORT FROM THE INIO CASE STUDY

1. Introduction and summary findings

This report outlines the results of the case study on the assessment of one meeting of the Informal Network of national communication coordinators for the ESF (INIO). The aim of this case study was to examine the circumstances and conditions that determine or affect the INIO network's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

The evaluation team took part in the INIO meeting held in Liège on 3-4 February 2010. The two-day event consisted of two components: the plenary meeting (day 1) and a visit to an ESF funded project (day 2)¹³.

The main findings of the INIO case study are presented below:

- there was a very high participation rate at the meeting (26 Member States were present);
- at the meeting translation was available into FR, EN, DE, but the presentations and interventions were mainly delivered in French;
- the participants were not obliged to follow any formal rules to take the floor and several opportunities for informal interactions were provided for the Member States;
- the organisation of the meeting was appreciated by virtually all participants;
- there were clear efforts to stimulate the level of activity and direct the group's discussions, but the character of these remained rather superficial;
- the most active Member States included: France, Belgium, and Romania;
- the ESF project visit generated a strong interest among participants but it was only remotely linked to the ESF I&C activities; therefore its usefulness for participants was more limited in comparison with the plenary meeting;
- both the plenary meeting and the ESF project visit received a very positive feedback from participants but the level of exploitation of the information and best practice examples shared at the meeting is still very low;
- the main reason behind the low level of actual application of information and good practice examples was that insufficient time had passed since the meeting took place.

2. Context of the INIO Network

The INIO Network was established in 1995 and since then the format and character of the meetings underwent a significant change. The meetings used to be held 2-3 times a year and only in Brussels. At the time various circumstances did not allow for informal interactions

¹³ The methods applied in the case study included: 1) a thorough desk research of the minutes and attendance lists from the past meetings, and other related documents; 2) 4 face-to-face and telephone interviews with selected INIO members and the EC representative just before the meeting; 3) an observation (according to a number of criteria set beforehand); 4) survey of participants' feedback gathered via paper questionnaires; 5) brief telephone interviews with participants of the meeting.

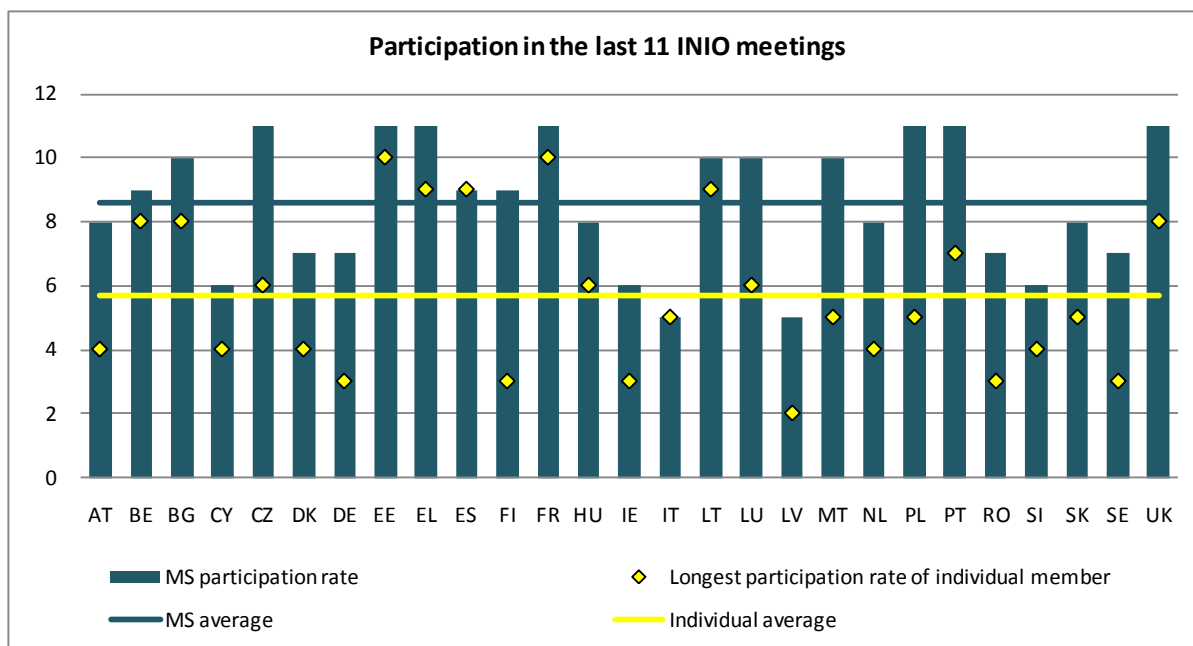
among the participants and information was mainly passed on by the EC to the Member States (one-way communication).

Since 2007 the meetings have been organised more frequently – up to 3-4 times a year and more often they took place outside Brussels¹⁴ enabling more informal interactions between the EC and the Member States. This was noted by the majority of participants, who found the meeting in Liège more interesting than the meetings they participated in in the past. A lot of preparatory work and methods used during the meetings in the last three years gave them a new impetus and developed a network feeling and a positive atmosphere for co-operation.

3. Participation in the meetings

On average a representative of each Member State participated in almost 9 out of the last 11 INIO meetings. There is a high turnover on the individual members' level – an average INIO member participated in only half of the last 11 INIO meetings. According to a representative from the EC, the constant rotation of the INIO members poses a problem to the effectiveness of the Network. The participation rate of the Member States and the high turnover of individual members in the INIO network are presented in the figure below¹⁵.

Figure 1. Participation in the last 11 INIO meetings



The meeting in Liège was exceptional in terms of the participation rate – there were 26 Member States present at the meeting (while on average 21 Member States participate in a meeting), with 8 participants attending the meeting for the first time.

¹⁴ Until February 2010 there were 11 meetings in total and 4 of them took place in 4 Member States (France, Luxembourg, Bulgaria and Belgium). The meetings outside Brussels are organised for an invitation from a Member State.

¹⁵ However, it should be noted that the policy of the Member States to rotate its delegates results from the high turnover of their staff, or illustrates a policy to build up the capacity across their I&C teams (as opposite to be dependent on individuals).

4. Aim and content of the meetings

The primary aim of the INIO meetings is to promote peer learning and exchange of good practice among the Member States and the EC. The INIO meetings also provide opportunities to inform the Member States about the requirement to promote the ESF and remind them about their obligations, although this is not always explicitly stated in the agenda.

The content of any meeting usually consists of well established components, including:

- update from the EC on:
 - o the legal requirements, or changes in the legislation;
 - o the ESF I&C tools developed by the EC, etc.

(in Liège this point included: the shared projects platform; the ESF Comic Book, the EC's database, the Mid-term evaluation of ESF communication work, The Circus Campaign)

- a round table discussion on selected topics, e.g.:
 - o state of preparation of Communication Plans in the Member States and plans to launch OPs;
 - o contacts with ESF Committee members, etc.;

(in Liège this point included: debate on the lack of information for beneficiaries on how to obtain funding)

- a review of EU Presidency conferences on the ESF (past, current and the planned ones);
 - o *(in Liège this point included presentations by Sweden, Spain and Belgium)*
- a presentation of 2-3 good practice examples¹⁶;
 - o *(in Liège this point included presentations by 4 Member States: Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Greece, and the EC Representation in The Hague).*

A draft agenda is always sent to the INIO members in advance. The members are invited to comment on it and make their contributions. The inputs usually comes from 3-4 Member States (e.g. before the meeting in Liège Greece volunteered to give a presentation on good practice examples). The minutes of the previous meeting are produced by the EC and consulted with the INIO members. However, the EC does not often receive feedback on these.

Usually neither additional material nor the presentations are circulated among the INIO members before the meeting. However, presentations from the last two meetings are available on the electronic platform. The interviewed INIO members had different opinions on whether they would like to receive any material in advance. One of the interview partners noted that material received beforehand might be misinterpreted by the Member States. According to another participant, it would be helpful to receive material in advance.

¹⁶ Since 2007 in total there were 22 good practice examples shown from 18 Member States (DE, PL, IE, LT, LX, MT, BEx3, SK, HU, UKx2, FRx2, RO, AT, BG, ES, DK, IT, EL). The information on the best practice examples is included in the minutes from each meeting. However, it is usually presented in 2-3 sentences which do not allow a reader to find out more information about it, unless a presentation is attached.

5. Expectations before the meeting

At the meeting in Liege, the EC mainly looked forward to involving the Member States in discussions and receiving feedback on the activities and tools to be presented at the meeting. It was also important for the EC that the information on the ESF I&C activities should be geographically balanced, i.e. it should cover the eastern, western, and Nordic countries, as well as the southern part of Europe.

From the EC's perspective the most important points of the agenda in Liège included:

- presentations on the best practice examples by the Member States;
- the update from the EC on the shared projects platform, Comic Book and EC's database;
- the review of the EU Presidency conferences.

During the interviews with selected participants of the meeting the evaluators found that the Member States considered this meeting to be important and interesting. In particular, they shared the EC's interest in the first two points mentioned above, namely best practice examples and the update from the EC.

Some of the interviewed participants were particularly interested in best practice examples presented by comparable countries, e.g. the Member States with a small allocation of the ESF. *"Other countries have higher budgets for their communication work. Therefore, the exchange of best practice is not always that useful."* On the other hand it was also pointed out that *"hearing someone else's [ideas] can shed a different light"* and give an inspiration for the future.

Some of the interviewed INIO members emphasised the importance of the informal interactions that take place during the breaks and during the ESF project visit: *"[F]or me, the meeting is about the informal contacts, about everything that happens outside the agenda."* Indeed, informal interactions took place on numerous occasions, including:

- welcome buffet dinner on the evening before the plenary meeting;
- coffee break, lunch and dinner on the day of the plenary meeting;
- ESF project visit on the following day.

During the interview with one of the participants the evaluators learnt that an informal co-operation took place among some of the INIO members. It took the form of an exchange of information and material among the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Germany and Austria. A similar form of bottom-up cooperation among the INIO members was identified between The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. This enhanced cooperation is the indirect result of the INIO Network. More information about informal interactions is presented in the sections below.

6. The plenary meeting and feedback from participants

6.1. Organisation

The venue of the plenary meeting and the sitting arrangements were organised in such a way as to facilitate good communication: there was a U-shaped table, with almost no blind

corners. However, the evaluators identified a number of challenges for communication during the meeting, namely:

- the list of participants, agenda of the meeting and Annex XXIII to the EC Implementing Regulation no 1828/2006¹⁷ were distributed in the middle of the morning session, which distracted the attention of the participants from the presentations;
- slow Internet connection and technical problems with a number of presentations prevented the participants from familiarising themselves with the Comic Book;
- during the afternoon session some of the participants were contacted by a secretary of the Network for some organisational issues (possibly related to participants' details or reimbursement) which also caused some disruptions.

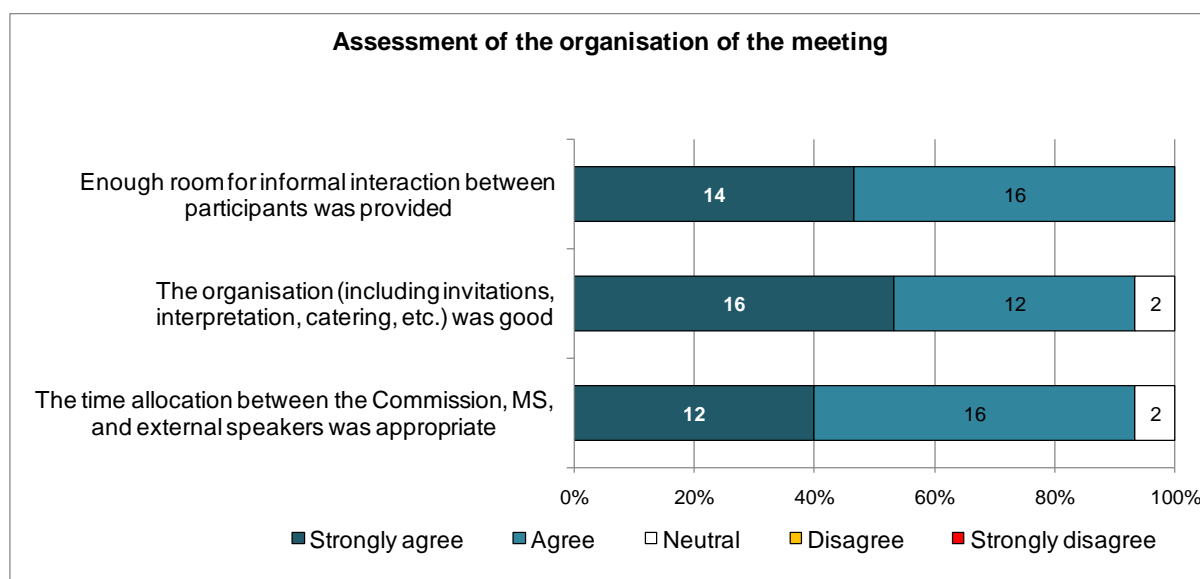
Language issues

Interpretation into English, French and German was provided during the plenary meeting. However, most of the presentations and contributions from the Member States were delivered in French, even though participants were generally able to communicate in English. In addition, some of the participants complained about the quality of interpretation in English and requested Power Point presentations to be available in English:

"It is much easier to follow when a presentation is in English."

Despite these minor shortcomings, there was an overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants about the organisation of the meeting. Their more detailed views are presented in the figure below¹⁸.

Figure 2. Assessment of the organisation of the plenary meeting.



¹⁷ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund, Annex XXIII: Data on the participants of ESF operations

¹⁸ Please mind that the total number of responses varies between the questions.

The plenary meeting was chaired by the EC. However, the participants were not obliged to follow any formal rules to take the floor and presenters often swap places with the EC officials at the top of the table. Participants were able to engage in conversations with the closest neighbours during the sessions and occasionally they were leaving and coming back to the venue during the sessions. In general, the character of the meeting was semi-formal.

6.2. Roles in the group

The EC officials played various roles at the plenary meeting. They generated new ideas and asked for information about I&C activities in the Member States. The EC also sought input from the participants on the Lack of information for beneficiaries on how to obtain funding. There were clear efforts by the EC to stimulate the level of activity and direct the group's discussions. However, the character of these discussions was rather superficial and most often limited to inquiring how many of the Member States:

- plan to conduct a participants survey;
- carried out a Website audit;
- organised seminars for project providers and reached 70% of the operators etc.

On the other hand, some of the Member States were generating new ideas and giving their opinions. In addition to those countries presenting their best practice examples¹⁹, the most active participants included: France, Belgium and Romania.

6.3. Dynamics of the group

In the beginning everybody was quite curious, looking forward to the meeting and other participants. However, participants' level of interest and motivation seemed to fall sharply during the first presentation (which took approx. 40 minutes and was delivered in French).

As mentioned above, the participants were able to carry on internal discussions during the sessions. However, only the coffee break offered more opportunities for informal interactions. The participants were able to mingle and exchange first impressions among themselves and the representatives from the EC.

The lunch break offered some further opportunities for informal interactions, however, the sitting lunch provided limited room to mingle. No serious discussions about ESF communication were witnessed by the evaluators.

The afternoon session resembled the morning one, except that participants appeared to get more tired towards the end of the meeting, mostly because of the high temperature in the venue and the lack of fresh air. While the evaluators did not participate in the dinner in the evening, they were informed that this provided more opportunities for networking; however, ESF information and communication activities did not dominate the evening debates.

6.4. Types of communication involved

Verbal communication dominated the meeting in Liège and it was supported by the IT tools, such as the power point and Internet. In addition, after the meeting all presentations were uploaded on an electronic platform and access to the platform was granted to all participants.

¹⁹ Belgium, Greece, Denmark, Italy.

In addition, the EC made use of different types of communication by showing a video on the Circus Campaign and providing the participants with written material, including:

- minutes from the previous meeting in Sophia;
- the agenda of the meeting in Liège;
- Annex XXIII to the EC Implementing Regulation no 1828/2006²⁰;
- the updated list of the INIO members;
- EC's promotion material (playing cards with the themes from the Circus Campaign on them).

Also some of the Member States took the opportunity to disseminate their own I&C material on the ESF, including:

- a book with the human stories from Greece;
- an evaluation report from Belgium (distributed on the second day).

In terms of the communication techniques used by the EC, it varied greatly depending on the speaker. Some of the presenters were purely informing the participants on some issues and not asking for their feedback. Others were animating the discussion by making jokes, asking for feedback and picking out some of the Member States to answer their questions.

6.5. Feedback from participants

There was an overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants about the plenary meeting. Aspects that were liked most included:

- good practice examples presented by the Member States;
- exchange of ideas, information, and experience;
- *“the fact that we can learn from example and simply adapt to our own [needs]”*;
- networking.

Among the very few aspects of the meeting that the participants liked least was the review of the EU Presidency conferences. It seems that the INIO members do not believe this is relevant for them, unless their rota of the EU Presidency is approaching. More detailed opinions of the participants are presented in the figures below²¹.

²⁰ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund, **Annex XXIII: Data on the participants of ESF operations**

²¹ Please mind that the total number of responses varies between the questions.

Figure 3. Assessment of the Comic Book

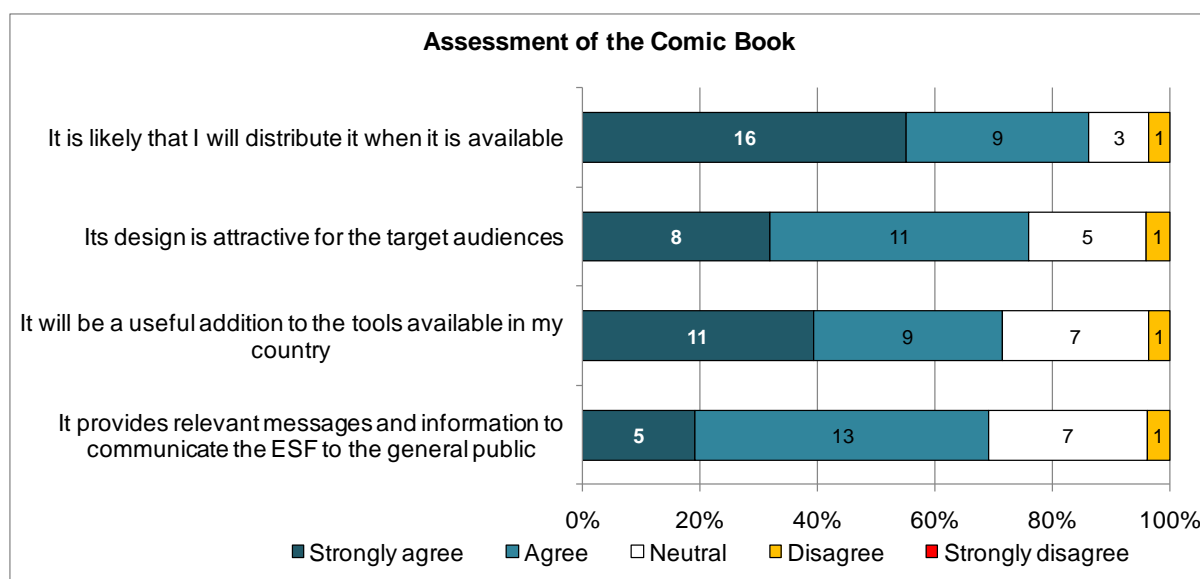
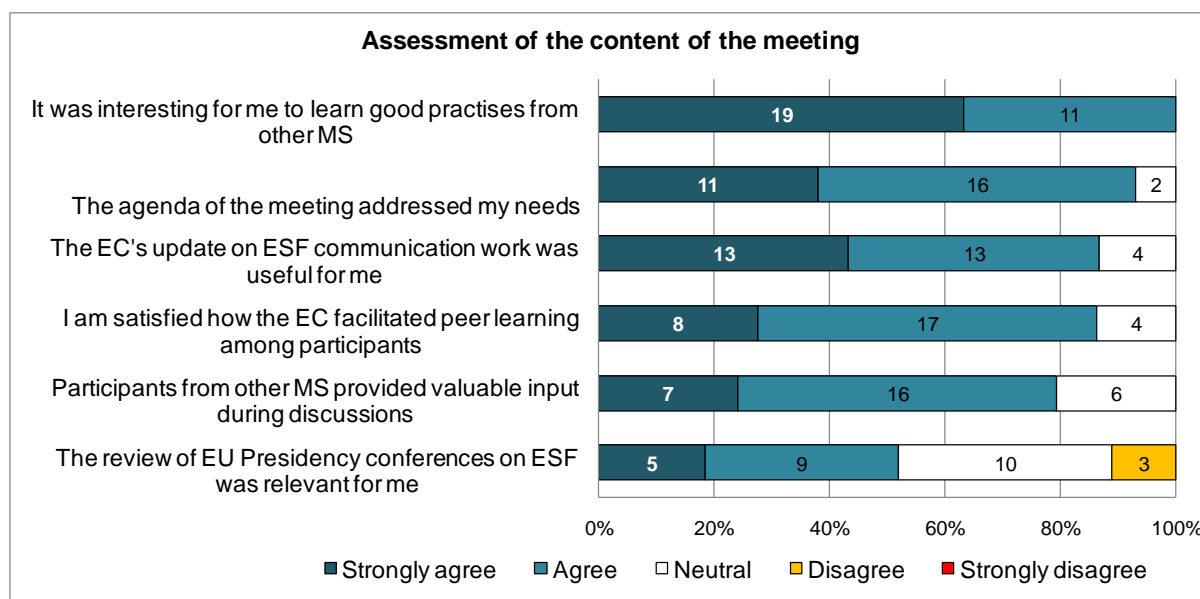


Figure 4. Assessment of the content of the plenary meeting



7. The ESF project visit and feedback from participants

On the second day of the meeting, a visit to the ESF-funded project was organised jointly by the Belgian authorities and the EC. In the beginning, the visitors were given three presentations about the project²² but there was no time for asking questions to the presenters (project managers). Then, the INIO members were split into two groups and they visited the venues of the project, each group accompanied by a guide. The project generated a strong interest among participants and they had an opportunity to mingle and exchange their impressions during the lunch break. In general there was very positive

²² The project Centres de Compétences AutoFORM aims at upgrading the skills in the car service industry.

feedback from the participants about the project visit: “*Very professional organisation of the visit on the spot and particularly interesting choice of project. Merci beaucoup!*”

The aspects that were liked most included:

- the visit to the technical laboratories and the possibility to see the work in practice;
- the concept of "techno-trips" for pupils;
- the enthusiasm of the presenters speaking of the activities co-financed by the ESF and ERDF;
- informal meetings, exchanges of concrete ideas.

Figure 5. Assessment of the content of the ESF project visit

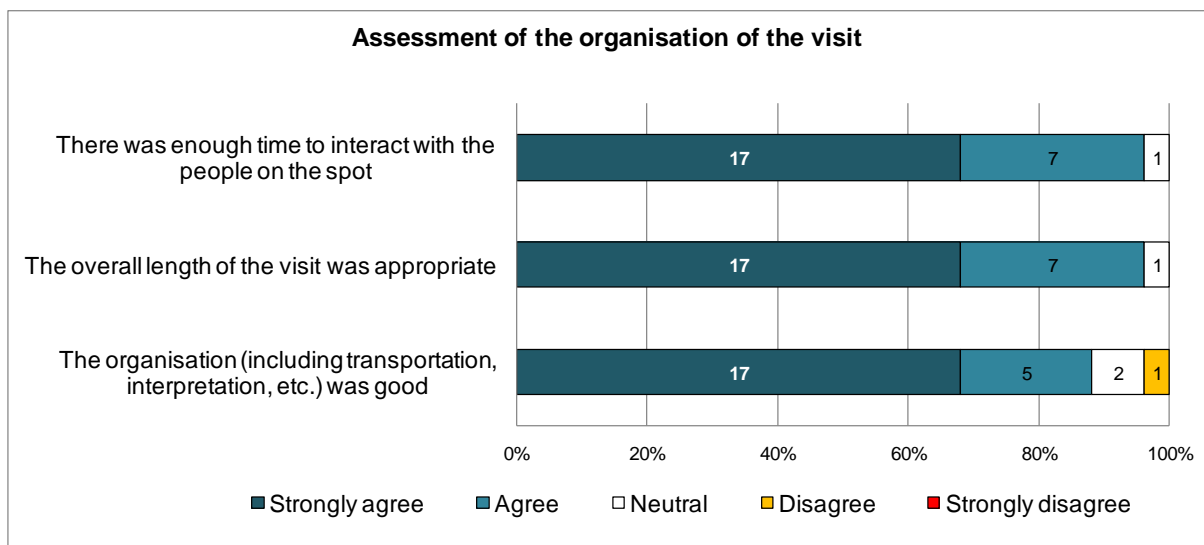
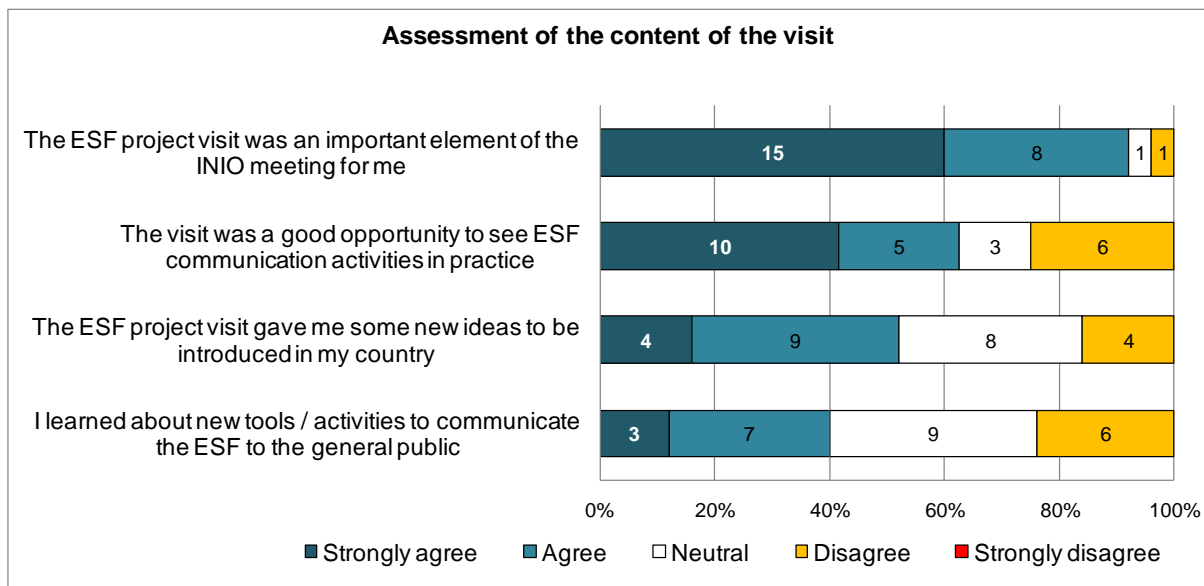


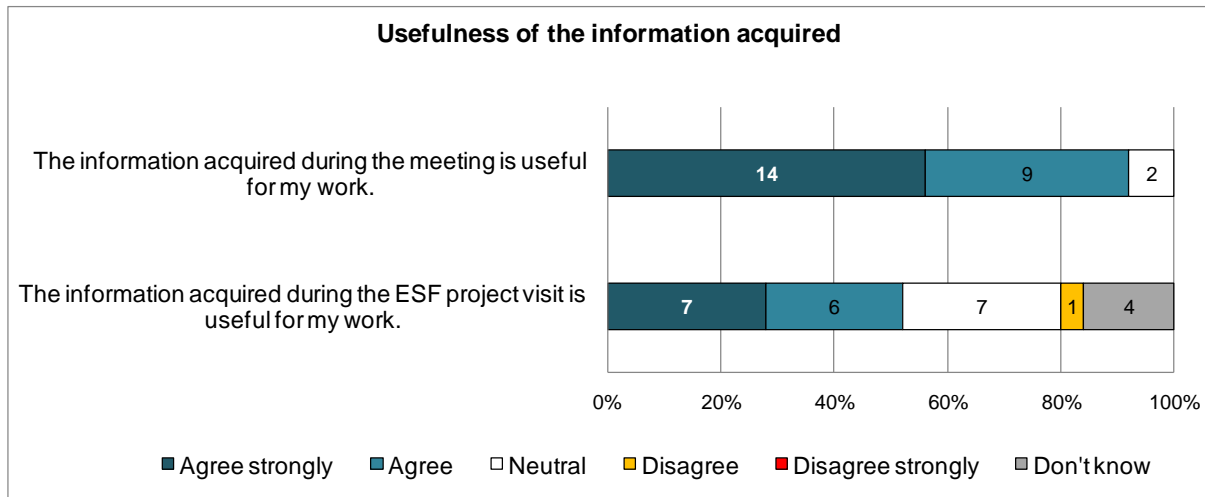
Figure 6. Assessment of the organisation of the ESF project visit.



However, the remote link with ESF I&C activities was noted by the participants, as less than half of them agreed that they learned about new ways of communicating the ESF during the visit. Some of them wished the selection of projects to visit was based on their outstanding performance in communication activities (rather than the interest of the project as such). This

shortcoming is clear when the feedback on the ESF project visit is compared with the plenary meeting (see Figure 7 below): while nearly all participants agreed that the meeting was useful for their work, only half of them thought the project visit was actually useful for their work.

Figure 7. Usefulness of the information acquired during the plenary meeting and the ESF project visit.



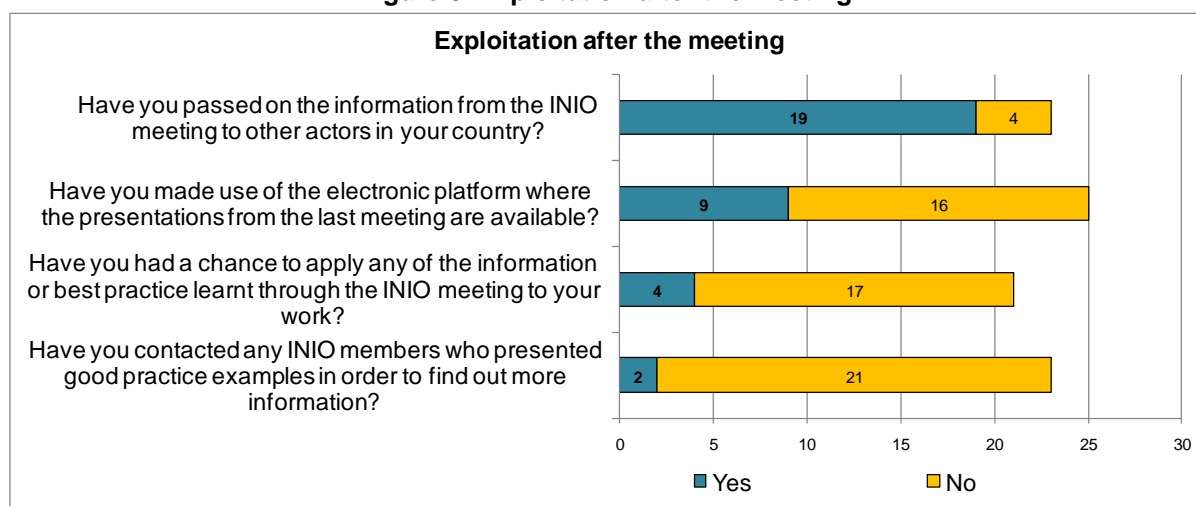
Aspects of the project visit that were liked least included:

- ESF [communication] wasn't really mentioned: “do the trainees know that the training is financed by the EU?”
- insufficient details on how training centres benefited from the ESF;
- lack of applicability of many of the presentations to the I&C work;
- the delay of the bus.

8. Overall utilisation of the information and best practice after the meeting

In general, the interviewed INIO members considered the information shared at the INIO meeting to be relevant to other stakeholders in their respective countries. The brief follow-up telephone interviews with the participants that were conducted approximately one month after the meeting confirmed that the majority has passed on information to other actors in their countries. However, other forms of exploitation of the meeting seem to be less advanced.

Figure 8. Exploitation after the meeting.



The most popular ways of using the **electronic platform** included:

- having a look at the presentations afterwards;
- downloading the presentations (and uploading them on the national database / intranet);
- copying the link to the electronic platform in their reports from the mission;
- circulating the link to the platform among the colleagues and/or other institutions.

Those who have not made use of this platform mainly did not have time to do it or did not see any need for it.

According to INIO members, the main reason behind the low level of actual **take-up (application)** of information and good practice examples was that insufficient time had passed since the meeting took place: *“It’s too early. You keep the memories in your head and you remember about it in the future.”* Some of the interviewed members noted that many good practices are not applicable (e.g. too expensive or time-consuming). There were some, however, who managed to apply some of the ideas already: *“We are currently drawing up the terms of reference for a Cohort Study to assess the impact of the ESF on a sample of participants of the programme [...]”*²³. Furthermore, a number of ideas which were presented during the meeting have served as inspiration for our annual event”.

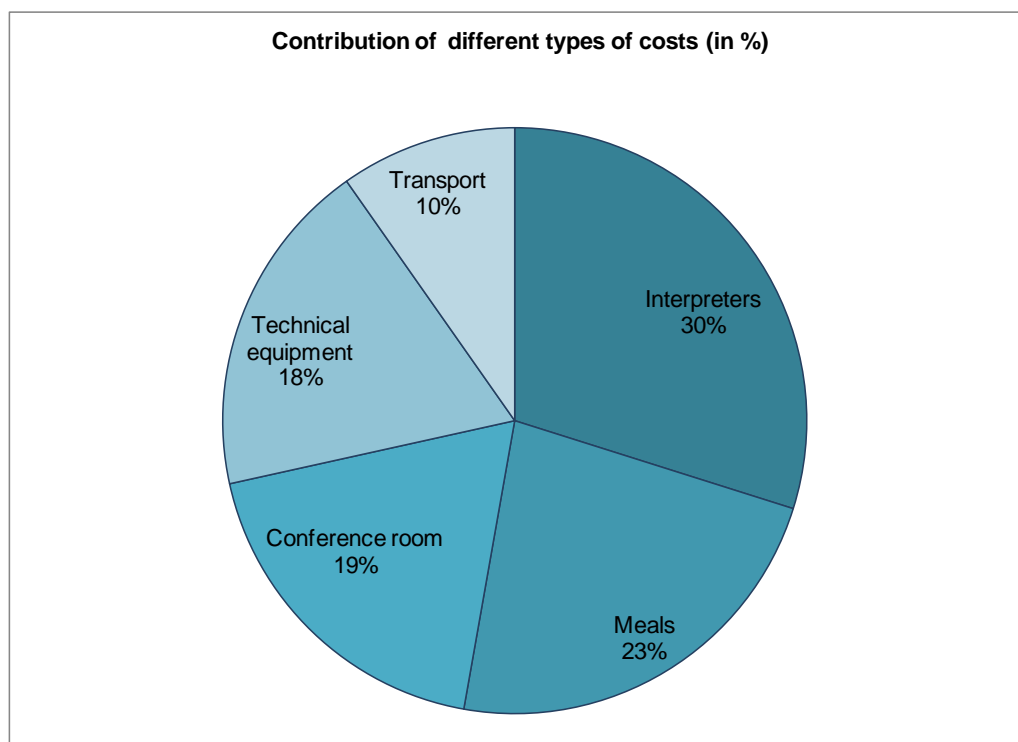
The interviewed participants usually did not see a need to **contact the speakers** of the INIO meeting afterwards. The presentations were quite thorough, and extra material was available at the meeting, thus the information was satisfactory. The participants claimed that they interacted with the speakers during the meeting. For some others, the examples presented at the meeting were not relevant for their countries or they lacked time to contact the speakers. The evaluators also identified that other INIO members were contacted but not the speakers. This resulted from the informal interactions among the participants outside the meeting agenda.

²³ The use of Cohort Studies to measure ESF awareness of the ESF participants was discussed at the meeting.

9. Cost of the meeting

The preparatory work for the meeting was estimated at approximately 10 man-days and the direct costs of its organisation amounted to just under 12,000 EUR. The breakdown of the expenditures is presented in the figure below. It is important to keep in mind that these figures do not include travel costs, which are reimbursed separately by the EC.

Figure 9. Contribution of different organisational costs of the meeting in Liège.



10. Suggestions for the future

The interviewed INIO members provided several suggestions on how the INIO meetings could be improved in future. The ideas were validated with the participants of the meeting. There was near unanimous agreement that external I&C experts would help improve the work of the INIO network. The participants felt that there is a need for an external expertise: *“we are all civil servants - we should listen to [experts in the field]”. “Professionals come from the real world [...], therefore it is important to have a view from outside”.*

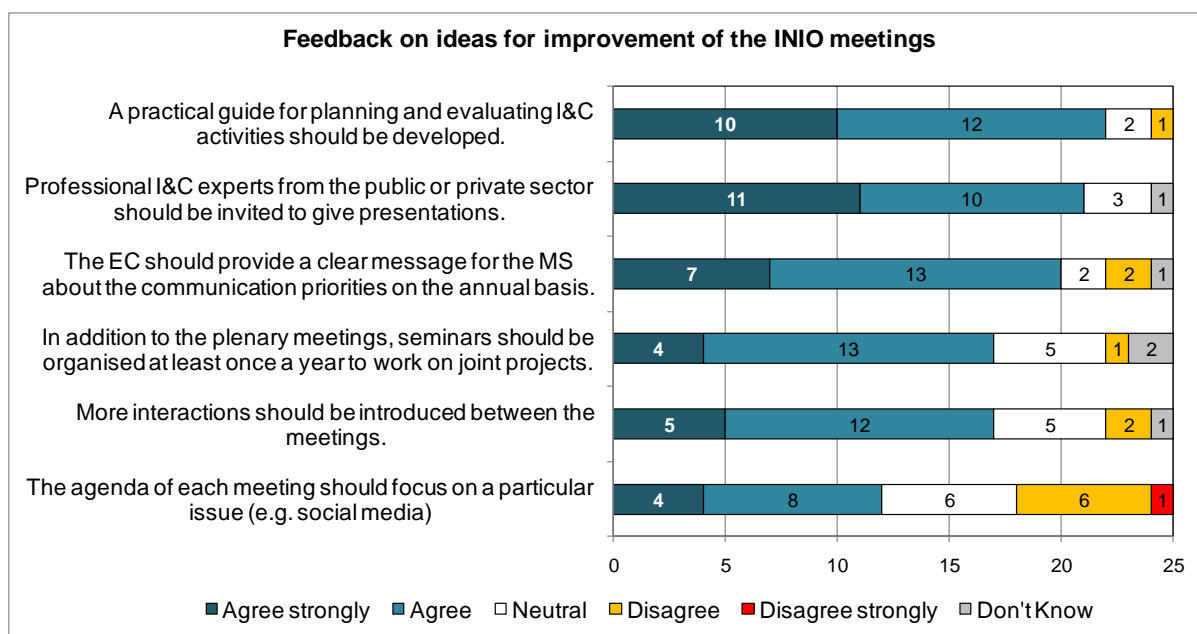
While it was generally agreed that the evaluation of I&C activities is underdeveloped and there is a need for a guide in this area, it was also noted that it is too late now to develop one. However, it should be discussed how to evaluate I&C activities in the Member States and also at the EU level, because the Member States understand it in a different way: *“the requirements of the Regulation no 1838/2006 are not very clear”.*

The feedback on organising additional seminars was also rather positive but the Member States were unsure whether their current human resources would allow them to take a full benefit of such an initiative, if seminars were organised too often. An alternative solution would be to set up a regular meeting and include a *“workshops, where information officers use their knowledge and experience to analyse and discuss case studies, come up with fictitious campaigns, and resolve common problems in groups and then share their findings with the network.”*

Participants were less certain that the agenda of each meeting focused entirely on a particular issue would be a good idea. The majority of participants believed that only certain

part of the agenda should focus on a particular issue, while the remaining part should maintain its broad character.

Figure 10. Possible further improvements of the INIO Network



In addition, some further suggestions were made to change the format and content of the future INIO meetings, including:

- projects with outstanding ESF communication activities should be selected for the ESF project visits;
- an INIO meeting could be organised jointly with one of the events of the Circus Campaign;
- the Member States could be encouraged to bring more examples of their promotional material and present them to other participants.

Presentations

According to one well-established INIO member, the meetings used to be more interesting, when more information on the new legislation was presented by the EC and when the participants had their input to the draft regulations.

At the moment, the presentations by the Member States differ in quality, either because of the language barrier or their content. The scope of the presentations is sometimes too broad and not comparable, and subsequently they fail to maintain the attention of the participants. Also the presentations by the Member States holding the EU presidency conferences are often only indirectly related to the ESF. They are interesting for a limited number of participants who are holding the EU Presidency at the moment or are preparing to do so in future.

According to several interview partners, DG EMPL should try to better coordinate the presentations and speakers. According to one of the interviewed INIO members, “*it would be good to discuss any topic and review it by different Member States to have a broader perspective of possible approaches to it.*” For example, the EC could contact a Member State and encourage it to present on a specific good practice that the EC is aware of. Other Member States would be expected to provide their input to the discussion on the same topic.

One of the participants concluded: *“the meeting should be more interactive. The EC does its best but there is still room for improvement”*.

The participants of the meeting would like to discuss the following themes in the future:

- several participants mentioned media relations: *“how to involve the press, how to explain what we are doing”*;
- use of specific communication tools, especially social media would be interesting for several participants, but also Website, campaigns, etc.;
- monitoring and evaluation of I&C activities remained the interesting topic for several participants;
- EU-wide and national communication plans for the future would generate the interest among a few participants, as well as possible types of annual ESF events.

Some isolated suggestions included different forms of co-operation between Managing Authorities and EC Representations, value-for-money approach in I&C activities; obligations related to I&C activities and corrective measures against the beneficiaries who did not take publicity action.

REPORT FROM THE INFO STAND CASE STUDY

1. Introduction and summary findings

TEP's original proposal of this case study aimed to identify the circumstances and conditions that determine or affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the ESF info stand at one specific event. However, the ESF info stand was not displayed at any events during the first half of 2010.

Therefore TEP developed an alternative approach for this case study and proposed to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the dissemination of written material during the Europe Day celebration in a selected Member State. It was expected that such an event would provide an opportunity for an EC Representation and ESF Managing Authority in a selected country to disseminate the EC's written material (including material on the ESF) to the general public.

The case study looked into the potential and actual ways of distribution of the EC's written material on the ESF by the EC multipliers and identified the conditions that affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the dissemination process²⁴.

The main findings of the info stand case study are presented below:

- none of the EC's written material on the ESF was distributed during the event²⁵;
- the EC Representation in Portugal did not distribute any written material on the ESF;
- the only written material on the ESF disseminated during the event included:
 - o leaflets on the ESF (at the Portuguese ESF Institute's stand);
 - o leaflets and brochures on the ESF funded programme at the stand of the ESF Managing Authority of the Human Potential Operational Programme (*Portuguese: PO PH*);
 - o poster on the ESF (at the EC's stand);
- the national authorities either believed that the EC's written material about the ESF is unsuitable for the audience of the event (ESF Institute), or they were not familiar with it (ESF Managing Authority);
- there was no coordination or guidance from the EC's / EC Representation's side on whether any of the EC's written material about the ESF was supposed to be distributed at the event, and if so, by who;
- the overall number of visitors at the event was estimated at ca. 15,000 of people, including groups of different sub-communities (such as the disabled, children, pupils, workless, retired, people in the working age);
- the event was open for the general public; however most of the stands were passive and only pointed at which material could be collected, while many visitors were keen to fill their free bags with everything on offer but not very much interested in the message that was communicated to them;

²⁴ The methods applied in the case study included: 1) an observation (according to a number of criteria set beforehand); 2) four interviews with officials from EC Representations and the ESF Institute and Managing Authority, 3) survey of participants' feedback on the stands; 4) twelve short face-to-face interviews with visitors; 5) desk research.

²⁵ "EC's written material on the ESF" means here any publication produced by ESN and available in the "Library" section of the ESF website (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/library/library_en.htm)

- the majority of the visitors declared that they are familiar with the EU and ESF, however, after more in-depth inquiry their knowledge seemed to be superficial and fragmented.

2. Character of the event

In agreement with DG EMPL the event in Matosinhos (Portugal) was selected for this case study. This 3-day event (7-9 May) was organised by the EC Representation in Portugal with the support from the ESF Institute and Managing Authorities in Portugal. In addition, DG EMPL was present at the event with the Circus Campaign at the same time.

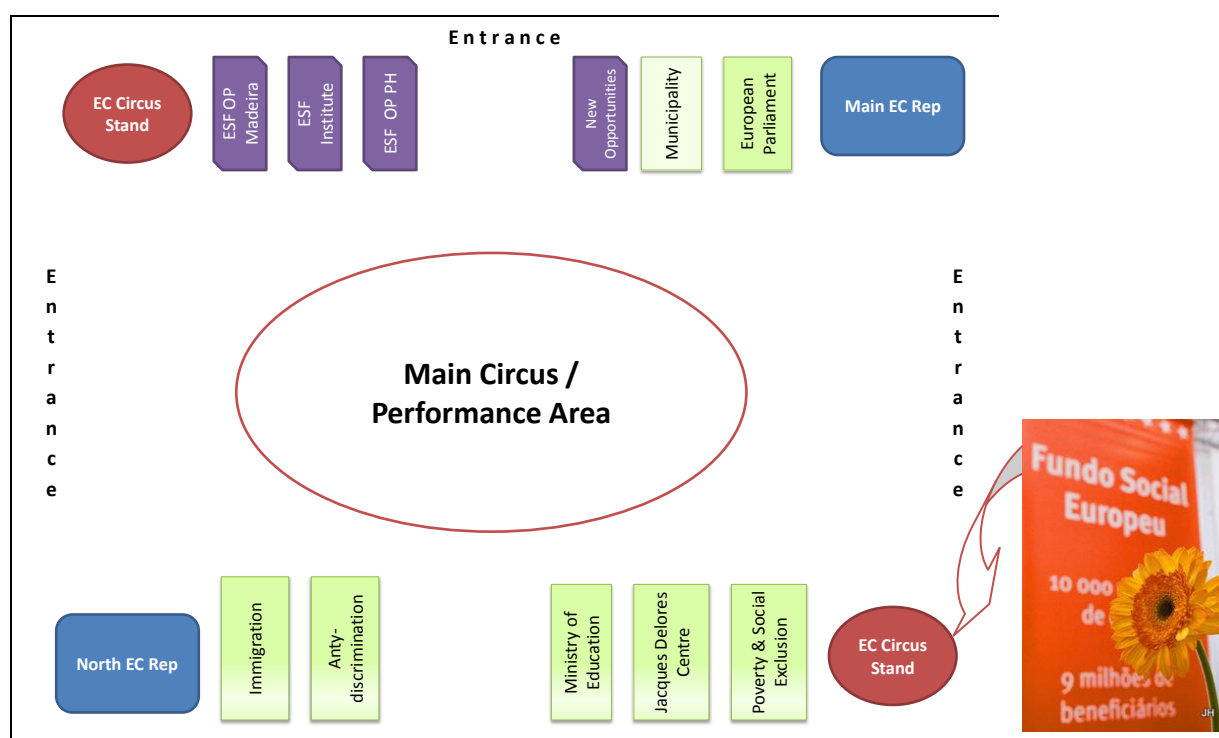
The event took place in and outside the City Hall in Matosinhos and included:

- a permanent display of EU-related institutions and partners in a Circus tent (including: European Parliament, DG Employment, EC Representation, Managing Authorities and the ESF Institute in Portugal, Ministry of Education, NGOs and local authorities dealing with social inclusion, migration, education and employment, etc.);
- a number of shows and performances by jugglers and clowns;
- a number of in- and out-door activities of art school pupils, the homeless, people with mental disorders;
- in-door public debates on social and political issues;
- out-door activities, such as: photo exhibition, concert, film festival, etc.

A casual visitor would be drawn to the events in the centre of the tent (see the figure below), first the jugglers, then the dancing of the people with disabilities, then the homeless musicians in the afternoon. While these events were going on there was very little activity at the stands.



Figure 1. Circus tent.



The ESF was visible (see the poster above), but the general impression was of a lot of agencies, placed on the sides of the tent, mainly passive, handing out pieces of literature and “freebies”. Very few questions were asked, and therefore very few opportunities to gauge why people were there and how the ESF could help them.

Most of the staff at the stands were rather passive and just pointed out the material to be collected by the visitors. The staff at one or two stands made the visitors do something before handing out anything (e.g. the ESF stand on replies to a question, the EP stand where you had to vote first, etc.)

3. Character of the audience

The event was open for the general public and offered it a unique opportunity to get first-hand information about services offered by the partner institutions. On the other hand, this occasion provided a chance for the officials from public institutions to interact with the extremely varied audience.

The Europe Day celebration in Matosinhos was a community event, although more groups of different sub-communities were present (see below). The event generated interest among people of different age and social background. The character of the audience differed slightly depending on a time and day of the week.

Friday morning

The official opening was planned at 3pm; however the Circus tent and the stands were open for the public from the very morning. Because of the rain, the public started to gather in the tent and it included (in descending order):

- pupils from the art schools;
- workless people, mainly men in their retirement age, most likely homeless;
- some organised groups of people with disabilities;

- a number of parents with kids;
- a few journalists.

Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday

At the official opening one could clearly notice different types of visitors, including the officials from the EU Institutions (including the Commissioner László Andor, national and local governments, etc.). There was much bigger media coverage and a higher number of journalists were present (including at least 4 TV stations).

After the opening ceremony, the officials and journalists left, leaving more space for common people. The general public on Saturday and Sunday incorporated more people of working age. Other major groups of visitors included:

- pupils from the art school;
- the disabled;
- the homeless;
- children with their parent / grandparent.

It should be noted that as people were moving from one stand to the other, most of them were keen to fill their free bags with everything on offer from each stand. However, they did not seem very interested in the message that was communicated through the promotional material and gadgets.

Number of participants at the event (estimates)

The number of visitors varied depending on the time and day, as well as on the weather conditions. On Friday (working day and rainy weather) and Saturday (rainy weather) the number of visitors was limited. The nice weather on Sunday attracted much more visitors, especially in the early morning and in the afternoon. The EC Representation estimates that “approximately 15,000 visitors and 2,000 directly involved in the animation activities” were present at the event.

Reasons for attending the event

During the ad hoc interviews with participants and after analysing the results of the questionnaires, the evaluators identified a number of reasons for attending the event. The most popular motives are listed below in descending order:

- 1) curiosity and search for more information;
- 2) personal or professional interest in a particular issue (be it environment, continuous education or social exclusion);
- 3) personal involvement in the organisation (working or performing at the event);
- 4) a friend / family member was involved in the organisation;
- 5) attractiveness of such initiatives for the visitors;
- 6) accidentally;
- 7) looking for funding opportunities.

In the words of one visitor, “*I feel that what is here is relevant to me as a citizen*”.

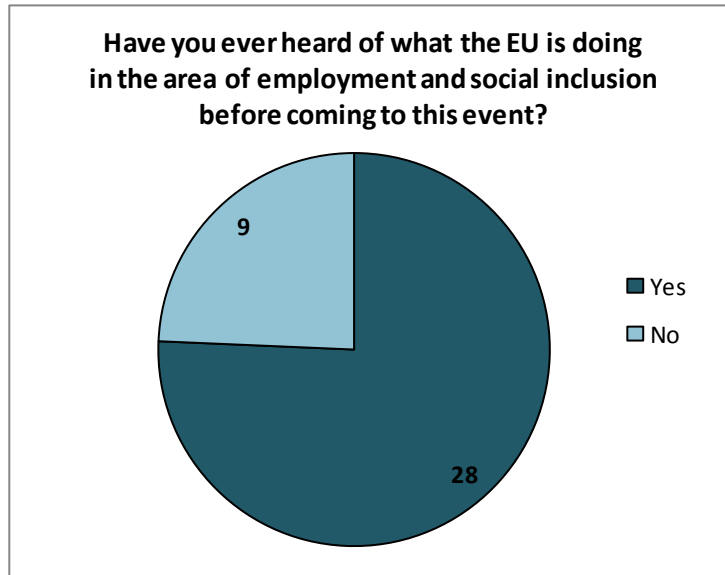
Interest in the EU

The evaluators attempted to find out what the visitors were most interested in. The team discovered a wide variety of areas that attracted the participants: from employment and social issues to climate change, electrification and robotics, mainly due to their personal or professional interests. However, most of the visitors claimed to be interested in general information about the EU. A number of visitors were particularly interested in the EU funding opportunities and services, such as EURES. However, the evaluators noted that the programmes co-financed by the ESF and presented at the event (such as the PO PH, New Opportunities) were not spontaneously linked with the EU funding by most non-specialist visitors.

Knowledge on what the EU is doing in the area of employment and social inclusion

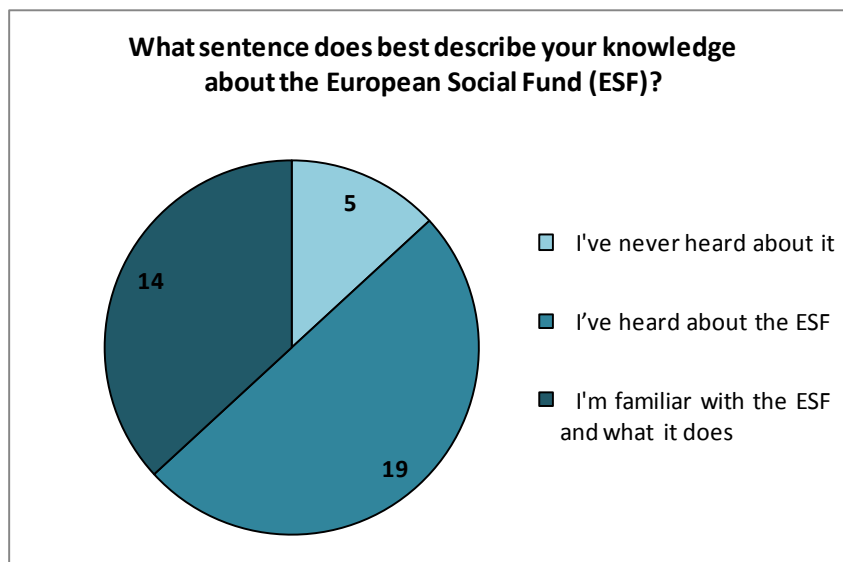
Interestingly, the interview results showed a significantly different level of knowledge on what the EU is doing in the area of employment and social inclusion and the ESF than the questionnaire results. While the majority of visitors who filled in the paper questionnaires declared that they were familiar with the topic and the Fund (see Figures 2 and 3), the face-to-face interviews showed that the knowledge of most was very limited.

Figure 2. Familiarity with the EU activities



Source: Paper questionnaires (n=37)

Figure 3. Familiarity with the ESF



Source: Paper questionnaires (n=38)

The interview partners provided answers that were far from proving an in-depth understanding of the EU role and ESF possibilities²⁶. Usually people knew that the EU is active in the area of employment and social inclusion but their knowledge was fragmented and they found it difficult to explain what exactly the EU is doing. Some of the answers are presented below:

“I do not really know.”

“It is a balance: social care and the work place.”

“[It provides] support for automobile / electromechanical industry.”

Some of the respondents were aware of the EU funding and the ESF programmes but most of the responses (such as training courses to upskill workers and the unemployed or create jobs) were prompted by the evaluators. Only those interviewed visitors who happened to be working in the area provided answers showing an in-depth understanding of the EU and the ESF role in the area:

“I know it promotes growth and employment. I am not sure what it does on the labour market. I presume it is active, as this is linked to life-long learning. One of the projects we work on aims to keep people occupied, to upgrade their qualifications and thus to help them to find better jobs.”

When asked about their familiarity with the ESF, the visitors usually had heard very little about it or not at all, unless professionally linked to the ESF.

“We’ve heard about it, probably on TV. We think it helps people.”

“Yes, of course I heard about it because we are funded by it. But I probably do not know all the policy areas where the ESF is active.”

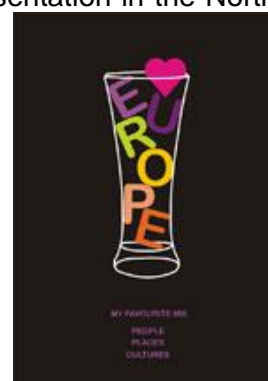
It seems that the people are more familiar with the regional or local programmes than with the EU role. Several spontaneously named the programmes such as the PO PH or New Opportunities; however the link with the ESF funding is indirect for them and takes time to realise it.

4. EC Representations’ stands

As illustrated above (see Figure 1), there were two stands of the EC Representation in Portugal: the main EC Representation from Lisbon and the EC Representation in the North of Portugal, located in opposite corners of the tent. Both stands were displayed during all three days of the event but none of them presented any information about the ESF (neither the videos, nor the written material).

The material presented at the EC Representations’ stands related only to general information about the EU including:

- posters of Europe Day (right);
- posters of EU map;
- comic books for small children and teenagers;
- brochures about ERDF programme in the North of Portugal;



²⁶ They were not familiar with the possibilities offered by the ESF; the role of the ESF in promoting employment and growth; how the EU is adding the value by making a positive difference in people’s lives through the ESF (objectives of the ESF communication strategy).

- promotion gadgets: pens, pencils, tote bags, etc.



The representatives from the EC Representations reported to be “*not involved in ESF communication more than [...] in any other policies*”. However, one of the interview partners explained that when there is an ESF debate, the examples of the projects funded by the ESF are often used by the EC Representation to explain why and how the EU is active in this area.

The lack of the EC’s written material about the ESF at the EC Representation stands were explained either by the lack of knowledge that such material exists, or by the fact that the EC Representation’s role is to inform about the EU in general. One of the interview partners suggested that because of the character of the event and the presence of the Circus Campaign it was more appropriate for either DG EMPL or the authorities responsible for the European Year Against Poverty and Social Exclusion to provide this material.

5. Placement of the MA’s stands

There were three stands of the national authorities in charge of the ESF in Portugal (ESF Institute which is a Certifying Authority and coordinates the ESF Programmes in PT; Managing Authority of Human Potential programme (PO PH) and the regional MA in charge of a programme in Madeira). All stands were displayed during the three-day event.

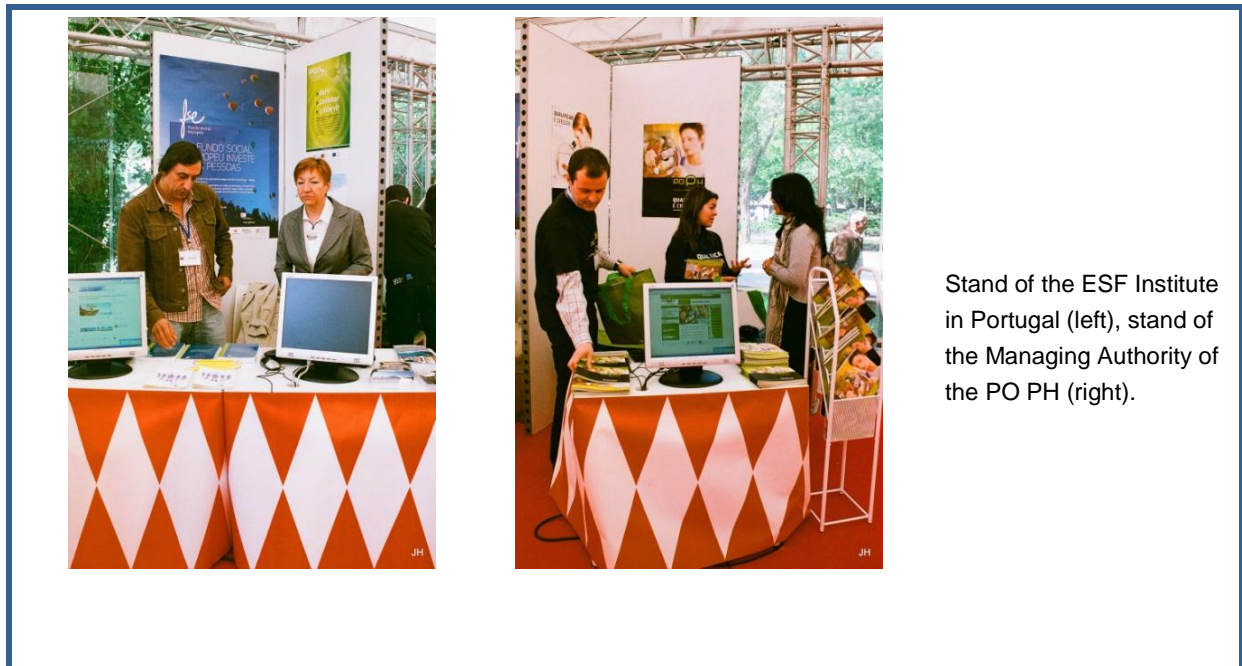
No EC’s written material was displayed until the last day when the ESF Institute displayed about 20 copies of the ESF brochure “Investing in People” in Portuguese. However, there were not many copies available only on request²⁷ and their presence was triggered mainly by the evaluators’ presence.

The national stands provided their own written material about the ESF, including:

- general postcards on the EU interventions;
- posters of the ESF programmes;

²⁷ They were literary available from “under the table”.

- a brochure on ESF good practice;
- INFO-FSE Magazines (No24);
- generic leaflets about the PO PH and more detailed brochures about the programme²⁸;
- promotional gadgets: pens, pencils, tote bags, etc.²⁹



Stand of the ESF Institute in Portugal (left), stand of the Managing Authority of the PO PH (right).

According to the national authorities in charge of the ESF, getting the message to the wider public about what the ESF is all about is a big challenge. The general public does not know much about, nor understands the ESF. Other methods than written material were perceived as more effective (e.g. the mass media; national TV). This event was given as a good example of how to reach a wider public. The national authorities organise two or three similar events each year, and some of them are focused on specific topics.

Some representatives of the national authorities in charge of the ESF in Portugal were familiar with the EC's written material about the ESF. However, this material was seen to be more appropriate for more specific audiences (e.g. teachers and trainers) than for a wider public. They did not think that these brochures would be interesting for the general public and for this reason the EC's written material was not presented at the stand³⁰. They also believed that the Managing Authority preferred to display its own promotional materials, which were branded with their own agency logo as well as showing the EU emblem.

However, not all representatives of the Managing Authorities were familiar with the EC's written material about the ESF, nor would they know where to look for them. One of the

²⁸ About 1,000 copies disseminated during the event.

²⁹ All of them included the EU emblem.

³⁰ However, there were about 1,000 copies of the general EC produced brochure distributed at a conference in 2009. Fewer of the other 3 brochures were requested and fewer have been distributed. About 1,000 copies of the "50 years of the ESF" brochure were printed and distributed last year.

interview partners reported that they receive no material directly from the EC and they receive very little via the ESF Institute.

All the interviewees agreed that the written material creates a part of the package: *“At an event, such as this one, we create links, we have direct contact with people and I think this is most important to make a difference. We pass on the message through different channels. And we cannot use only one channel, all of them are important.”*

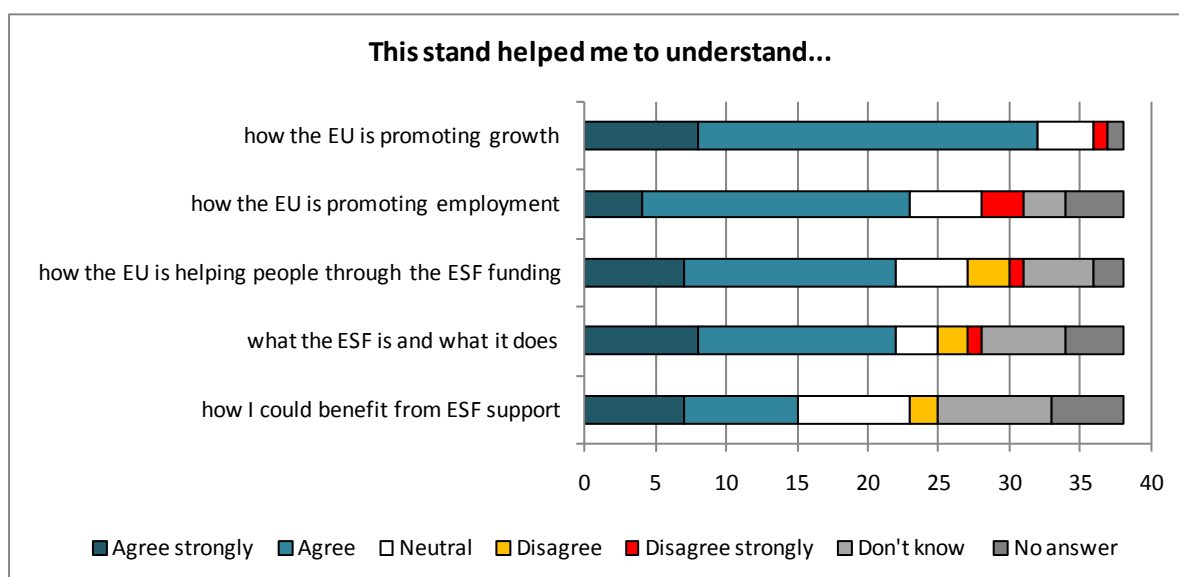
6. Assessment of the stands and written material about the ESF displayed at the stands

It was difficult to get a sense of what the whole event was about, apart from being an enjoyable happening to visit, with a lot of different agencies, all with their different acronyms, displaying material on tables which you could pick up if you wanted to. Visitors might well come away with a ‘warm feeling’ about the ESF in general, but not know much more about how you could engage with any of it. This observation of the evaluation team is best illustrated by one of the interview partners:

“I know about the ESF because I work with it. I'd say a small share of the visitors here is interested in this event. Mostly, they came here for goodie bags, not for information. People at the stands should be more interactive, there should be more involvement. They should inform people because [the visitors] really do not know what they take home (and what it means). It should be more like a workshop, information desk that explains it all.”

The feedback from the visitors gathered via paper questionnaires suggests a positive impact of the EC’s and MA’s stands on the peoples’ understanding of the EU and the ESF³¹.

Figure 4. Impact of the stands



Source: Paper questionnaires (n=38)

However, very different results were gathered through face-to-face interviews. The interviewed visitors could not assess the written material displayed at the stands, because most of them hadn’t seen any; if they had, they had no time to look at it in any detail. It was

³¹ As the visitors were moving from one stand to the other it was difficult to separate their feedback on a particular stand. The answers related most often to the Circus tend and the event as a whole.

also difficult for them to assess to what extent the stands helped them to understand how the EU is helping people through the ESF funding and how people can benefit from the ESF.

For people that might have been interested in specific concrete information about the ESF (e.g. someone interested in setting up a micro-enterprise or in training to get back into employment), there was no obvious place to visit and ask any questions. In fact, such visitors might have gotten a sense that this was all too complicated and involved public services of various kinds. Stands were staffed by those who probably had very little direct personal experience of the kind of exclusion challenges the ESF sets out to address. Those individuals who had experience of exclusion and what the ESF might have done about it were only involved in the activities on the central stage.

It would be good to see a more visual presentation at such an event which links what is being presented to the policies and activities of the ESF. The obvious place would be on a large TV screen. There was a small TV monitor there, but it was not sending any such messages and seemed peripheral to what was going on to the casual observer.

7. Need for additional information about the ESF

Asked what other information about the ESF they would be interested in, majority of the visitors were satisfied with the information that was provided. Others answered that they would be interested in more information about the ESF, because they believed this is an important instrument: *“it helps people, gives them social jobs”*. However, the visitors rarely specified what exactly they would like to know.

The age was a significant factor that determined the form in which the visitors preferred the information about the ESF to be presented. The younger generation had a strong preference for Internet and social media, such as Facebook. The middle-aged group preferred to learn more about the ESF via media (such as TV), or events (such as this one). There were some, however, who valued written material above any other form.

“I like paper because you can take [it], have a look, read it and come back to it when you need it. You may find an interesting website but you close the window and forget the address.”

Senior visitors were less interested in internet and written publications as sources of information. They general chose TV, radio, press and public events.

8. Assessment of the EC’s written material about the ESF

The evaluators brought with them a sample of the EC’s written material about the ESF to present it in case it was not available at the event. The sample included:

- ESF Investing in People (general leaflet);
- The ESF in Portugal, 2007-2013;
- The ESF in Madeira, 2007-2013;
- The ESF in Azores, 2007-2013;
- Making a Difference in Life³².

Some of the interviewed visitors were presented the sample and for their opinion about these publications. They seemed to be more interested in the Making a Difference in Life

³² All publications were presented in Portuguese, except “Making a Difference in Life” which was available only in English.

publication and the Portugal brochure than the general ESF leaflet. Some of their feedback is presented below:

“I really like the one with the faces on the cover. It would be interesting to read their stories. That helps to understand how it works and what it is about.”

“I like these brochures.”

It was welcome that the publication [Making a Difference in Life] gives so many examples of people coming from different groups (such as youth, disabled, entrepreneurs, etc.). However, one of the respondents noted that the information could be tailored to the needs of different groups. It would be better if in addition to this comprehensive book there were some more specific publications: one for companies, one for homeless, etc. *“It seemed unlikely that the entrepreneurs would be interested in the support received by the socially excluded.”*

It was particularly appreciated that the Making a Difference in Life publication provides real-life examples of people from all around Europe. *“Their stories have nice titles. This is appealing.”*

According to the interviewees, it would be useful if these brochures and publications were available at the event. All of them were considered to be useful; however, it was also pointed out that before such publications are shown to the visitors, one has to provide very basic information and explain what the ESF is about.

9. Circus Campaign

The Circus Campaign is a good practice example for ESF communication tools as it provides an opportunity to convey the information and messages via different channels. The campaign employs a number of I&C tools, such as:

- the circus video shown on a TV screen in a loop;
- written material, including Circus posters and postcards;
- promotional gadgets, such as bags, pens, etc.

More importantly the campaign makes use of an interactive quiz for which information needed to answer the questions is available in various forms and places around the tent. Visitors are moving from one stand to the other, and collect pieces of information on their way. Then, the visitors answer the quiz, sometimes assisted by a person in charge of a stand or fellow visitors. This is an interesting attempt to make people apply new information in practice. It is therefore more likely that the information once used will stay in people's minds.

Moreover, the Circus Campaign brings officials from the EC to a local community and allows for direct interactions with local, regional and national stakeholders. This event attracts the attention of media, and subsequently it has a multiplier effect when the information from journalists is passed on further to the general public.

However, it should be noted that the Circus Campaign promotes the concept of Social Europe, which is a broader idea than the ESF. For a common visitor it might not be entirely clear how the ESF fits in the whole picture and what role it is playing to make the Social Europe reality. In terms of communicating on the ESF, the campaign is missing the opportunity to disseminate ESF I&C material, in particular the videos and written publications.

REPORT FROM THE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE OP ADOPTION IN A SAMPLE OF MEMBER STATES CASE STUDY

1. Introduction and summary findings

The case study looked at how effective the EC's media relations activities in the context of the launch of the Operational Programmes (OPs) were in disseminating information on the ESF among the general public in four selected Member States (Ireland, Poland, Spain, and Sweden). The case study also aimed to estimate the number of people reached and the quality of the message that was conveyed to the general public, where appropriate. The case study employed the following methods:

- 1) three telephone interviews with press officers from EC Representations from the selected countries³³;
- 2) four telephone interviews with journalists who reported on the ESF and whose articles were available in media clipping reports of the OP launch in the Member States³⁴;
- 3) content analysis of the articles included in the media clipping reports for the selected Member States.

The main findings of the press coverage case study can be summed up as follows:

- In general the EU press releases received positive feedback from the EC Representation and they were widely disseminated among national media;
- The majority of the interviewed journalists were not familiar with the EU press releases and they relied on national / regional / local sources of information instead;
- The press officers appreciated the content and style of the press releases but the majority suggested keeping them shorter in the future;
- Virtually all interviewed journalists sought more country-specific information with a strong focus on their own region or policy area that they specialise in;
- The majority of the examined articles lack background information on the ESF (included in the EU press releases) and they focused on "EU funding" or "Operational Programmes" rather than "the ESF";
- Almost all articles presented a positive attitude towards the EU/ESF, with the Polish articles being the most positive and the Irish ones most neutral;
- According to the circulation of the sources, the articles that were examined can be estimated to have reached almost 4 million people. On average about a third of the analysed articles is likely to have been based on the EU press release.

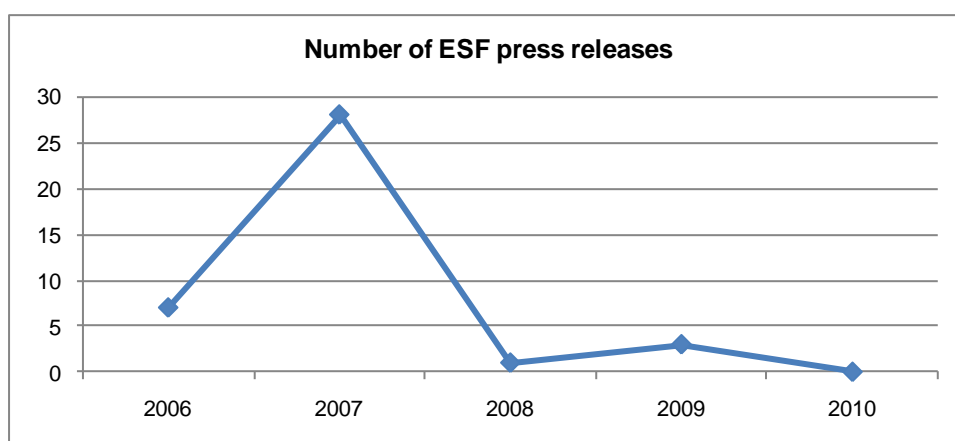
³³ The press officer from the EC Representation in one of the selected Member States declined the interview request. Instead, the evaluation team conducted additional desk research and compared the EU press release with the information on the OP launch passed on to the general public by the ESF Managing Authority and available on the national ESF website.

³⁴ The sample of journalists was based on the media clipping reports on the OP launch in the selected Member States. Because there were only a few articles for Ireland and Sweden, and even fewer signed with journalists' names (none of the Spanish articles on the OP launch), the original sample was changed and included: two Polish journalists, one Swedish and one German.

2. Context

Since 2007, DG EMPL has attempted to intensify its relations with the media and to ensure maximum media coverage of the launch of the new 2007-2013 programming period in order to raise the overall visibility and understanding of the ESF. To this end, a series of press releases to publicise the ESF were issued. 2007 marked the first year of the new programming period and the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the ESF. Both events provided a unique opportunity for the EU and the Member States to communicate on the ESF to the general public. Figure 1 below illustrates the peak of this activity in 2007, when the EC published 28 press releases related to the ESF (27 of them were informing about the OP launch in the Member States).

Figure 1 – Number of press releases related to the ESF published by the EC (2006-2010)



The process of adopting OPs by the EC was long and dependant on the progress in the negotiations between the EC and the Member States, with the first country launching its OP in April and the last one in December 2007. The OP launch was organised by the Member States in close cooperation with the EC. The EC produced the press releases on the OP adoption in each Member State and then events such as (press) conferences were organised in the Member States.

For the countries selected for this case study, press releases were published on the following dates: in Poland on 27th September, in Sweden on 17th October, in Ireland on 9th November, and in Spain on 19th December.

The following sections of this report attempt to reconstruct these events and assess their effectiveness and efficiency.

3. EU press releases on the OP launch

3.1 Length, content and style of the EU press releases

The press releases on the OP launch were produced by an external contractor within the scope of the Framework Contract for services in support for communication activities on the ESF and related policies (the contract awarded to the European Service Network). They were produced in the national languages and made reference to the specific national context of each OP, but they followed the same layout and structure. On average, every press release was two pages long and included the following information:

- details on the OP adoption, such as the date and the amount of ESF funding received by the Member State;
- the overall and specific goals of the programme;

- a generic quote of the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on the 50th anniversary of the EFS and the joint effort of the EU (through the ESF) and the national authorities to promote growth and employment;
- the total ESF share in the EU budget and general principles of the ESF implementation;
- background information on the ESF's five key areas of intervention;
- tailored links and contact data to seek for more information (including the link to the EU project database with best practice examples).

Generally, the interviewed press officers from the EC Representations provided positive feedback on the press releases. According to all of them, the content of the press releases was comprehensive and in principle the language used was simple and avoided excessive EU jargon. However, all interview partners noted that *“the press release was too long - one page would be enough.”*

The majority of the press officers said that they would welcome more country or region-specific information. As a consequence, they reported that they made some minor changes to the text and/or layout of the press release, such as adding logos and contact details. However, in one case the changes introduced were more significant and included:

- shortening the text to fit on one page and rearranging the structure of the text;
- toning down the favourability of the message;
- further simplification of the language (e.g. instead of saying “help workers and businesses to adapt to a changing economy” the press release said “upskill workers”);
- more country-specific information.

“We usually rewrite press releases that the EU sends us in order to tailor them a bit more to the style of the regional press here so it is more likely to be picked up and published in the newspapers.”

3.2 Consistency of messages from the EU and national authorities

The interviewed press officers could not recall any inconsistencies between the messages passed on through the press releases to the general public (and the journalists) by the EC and the national authorities. In Sweden, the EC Representation worked in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour to avoid producing two different press releases, which should be considered as a good practice example.

Taking into account difficulties in conducting all planned interviews with the press officers from the selected Member States, the evaluation team conducted additional desk research and compared the EU press release with the information on the OP launch passed on to the general public by the ESF Managing Authority and available on the national ESF website³⁵.

The evaluators discovered some differences in the content of the messages. The differences included:

- the focus of the information on the national ESF website was placed on the programme rather than the ESF:
 - o the amount of money available referred to the total allocation for the programme (including national co-financing, and the split into different policy priorities);

³⁵ Although it is not clear if the information available on the national ESF website was used as the press release, it is assumed it played a similar role.

- there was more detailed information on the objectives and expected results of the programme (such as the target number of employees, start ups and the unemployed);
- there was no background information on the ESF five key areas of intervention, nor the mention of its 50th anniversary;
- the national press release included technical information on the negotiation process with the EC and details on the programme functioning (e.g. information on the technical assistance, implementing institutions, etc.);
- there was neither contact data for those interested in more information, nor a link to the best practice examples.

3.3 Dissemination of the EU press releases

EC Representations received the press releases from DG EMPL in order to pass on the message to the national media. All interviewed press officers reported that the (modified) press release was disseminated further, including by:

- uploading it on the EC Representation's website and including information in their Newsletter;
- circulating it among national journalists and civil society organisations;
- forwarding it to Europe Direct Centres.

Some additional efforts to disseminate the EU press releases were made by national PR agencies and institutions subcontracted by DG EMPL in the selected Member States.

The interviewed officials from the EC Representations believed that the EU press releases were used by the journalists and the press coverage ranged from moderate (in Ireland) to high (in Spain). According to the majority of the interviewed press officers, the regional written press was most interested in the OP launch, but this interest was mainly determined by the amount of money available and the current economic situation of each country. For example, in Ireland, where the economy was still booming in 2007 and the ESF support was much less significant, the interest of journalists was moderate, while for Spain the ESF money could still make a significant difference at that time. Another factor that determined the media coverage was the presence (or absence) of the Commissioner in the country during the OP launch event: *"Had the Commissioner been there, the media would have been much more interested."*

Press officers reported that the national journalists who contacted them were predominantly interested in the following issues:

- how much money will be available and how it will be split among the regions;
- from when the money will be available;
- contact details to receive more information on how the money will be spent.

3.4 Evidence collected from the journalists

The evaluation team conducted four interviews with a sample of journalists who reported on the OP launch in 2007 and whose articles were included in the media clipping reports for the selected countries. Only one of the four interviewed journalists reported to be familiar with the EU press release covering this event. The majority of journalists did not know where such press releases are published or can be accessed.

For all interviewed journalists, national and/or regional authorities were the primary source of information for their articles. The majority of the journalists used their personal contacts in

the institutions implementing the OP or searched for additional information online (mainly using the national and regional ESF websites). Only one interviewed journalist reported contacting the EC Representation in order to obtain more information.

“In general my colleagues and I are much more dependent on local sources and don’t make use of information directly provided by the EC.”

One of the interviewed journalists reported that local authorities provide the journalists with ESF related information by sending them regular updates on recent developments in the area.

Besides the fact that the EU press releases seemed not to be very well known among the journalists and more difficult to access than local sources of information, the reason why journalists chose to contact national authorities is that the information available there is more detailed and focused on issues falling within the scope of the journalists’ interest.

“My article was about the reform of vocational schools in my region. This is very specific. The regional authorities could tell me more about the issues that they deal with on a daily basis. The level of details and focus is different.”

It seems that the majority of the journalists specialise in a particular policy and/or geographical area. The general information from press releases was considered by the majority of the interviewed journalists as important and “good to keep in mind”. According to one of the journalists information from press releases is ‘the starting point’ and as such it is sometimes used – the interviewed journalist reported to make use of the EU press release in a few of her other articles. However, *“if a journalist specialises in this area, the general information is not sufficient. More detailed information is needed and such cannot be learnt from the press releases.”*

According to the majority of the interviewed journalists, more detailed information includes:

- how exactly the money will be spent;
- which institutions will be in charge of it;
- what the money will be spent on;
- who is going to benefit (how many institutions/individuals will be supported);
- what are the conditions to apply for the money;
- what are the problems and challenges ahead, etc.

It was confirmed by a number of the interviewed journalists that the more specific and detailed the article was, the higher interest it generated among the general public. *“People like to read about how the money was spent; they like real-life examples of companies or individuals who benefited from the ESF. Only then they can identify themselves and relate these stories to their lives.”*

More information on the extent to which the articles in the national (and regional) press were based on the EU press releases is presented in Section 4 below.

4. Message content analysis

4.1 Methodology

To measure the degree of success in making the general public more aware of the ESF in terms of media coverage, a sample of 74 articles were examined and analysed using TEP’s Message Evaluation Tool. For each article the tool used the following characteristics:

- the title of each article, its length and date of publication;
- media title, area and circulation;

- the degree to which each article is positive and negative towards the EU/ESF;
- messages being conveyed;
- the degree to which each article is comparable with the EU press release.

4.2 General information

The vast majority of the examined media titles reported on general matters (58), while the profile of the remaining press was more focused on business and finance. Most of the assessed articles were published in the online editions of the media but it is uncertain whether all articles were also published in their printed editions³⁶. It is also unlikely that the circulation of the newspapers accurately reflects the number of those who actually read the article concerned. Therefore, the number of audience exposed to the articles might be slightly overestimated. Table 1 below presents TEP's estimates on the share of the general public reached through the examined articles in the selected Member States.

Table 1 – Estimates on the share of the general public reached through the sample of the articles available in the media clipping reports

	Number of articles	Circulation of the sources	Population of the MS	Share of population reached
Ireland	6	209,000	4,425,675	5%
Poland	31	3,092,200	38,125,759	8%
Spain	31	258,000	45,555,716	1%
Sweden	6	300,000	9,219,637	3%
Total	74	3,859,200	97,326,787	4%

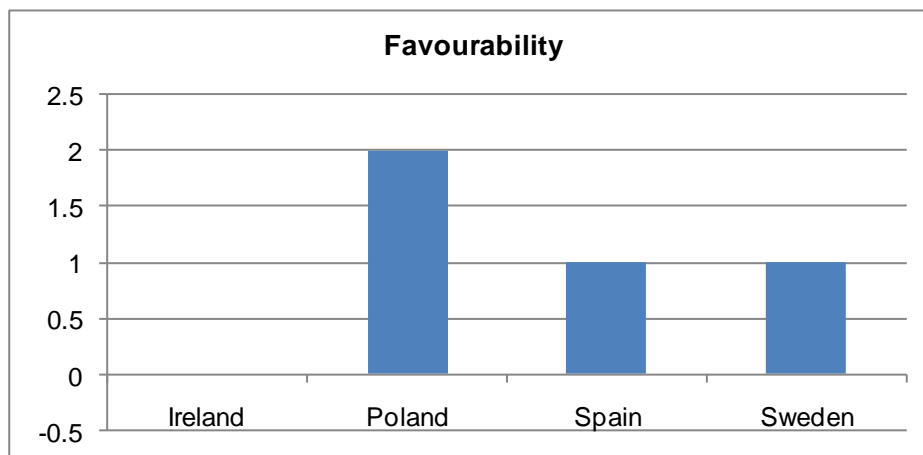
4.3 Favourability

While it is important to measure the number of people reached by the media, one has to bear in mind that the media are powerful opinion makers. Therefore, it is also essential to explore whether the balance of coverage is becoming more favourable towards the EU and the ESF.

The attitude towards the EU/ESF has been rated on a scale ranging from the most positive (+5) to most negative comments (-5). Figure 2 below illustrates the average scores for the articles in each of the selected Member States. While there were virtually no negative articles, the most positive media coverage was observed in Poland (with an average of +2 out of possible +5 points) whereas in Ireland the media were all neutral.

³⁶ It should be also noted that some titles were available online only. In such cases the number of visitors remained unknown.

Figure 2 – Favourability towards the EU/ESF



4.4 Messages

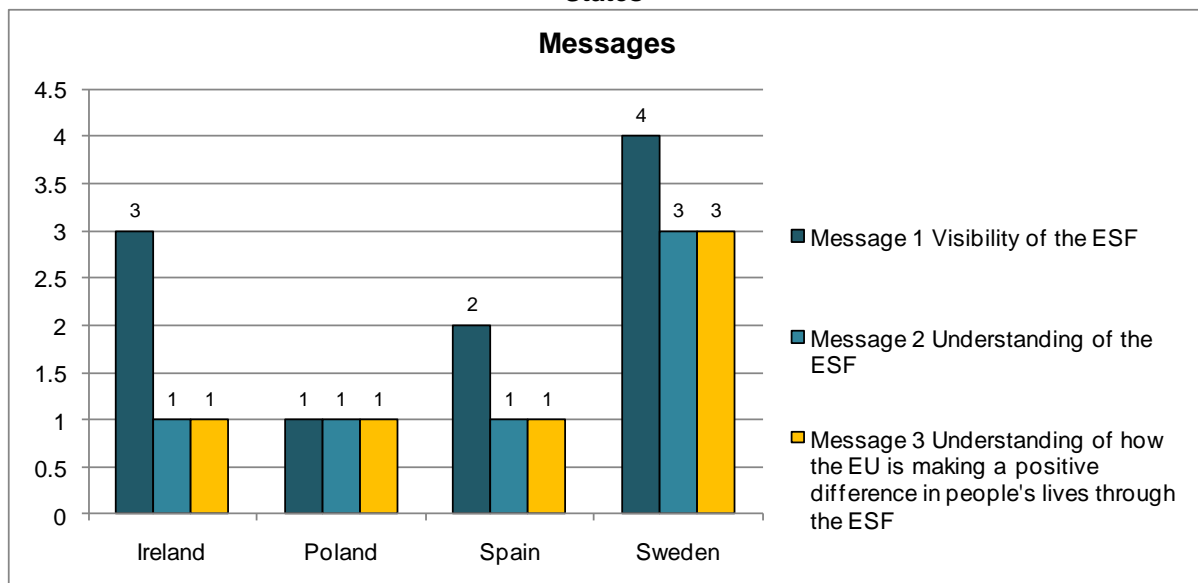
The evaluation team assessed the articles according to the following messages:

- Message 1 Visibility of the ESF: the evaluation team examined if the ESF was mentioned in each article at all, and if so, how important this message was in relation to the whole article. The articles have been rated on a scale ranging from 0 (if there was no mention of the ESF) to +4 (if the ESF was one of the main messages of the article);
- Message 2 Understanding of the ESF: the articles were examined in terms of how well they explained what the ESF is about. The evaluation team compared the information on the ESF included in the EU press release for each country with each national article. The articles have been rated on a scale ranging from 0 (if the ESF was not explained at all) to +4 (if the article informed fully on what the role of the ESF is and what it does);
- Message 3 Understanding of how the EU is making a positive difference in people's lives through the ESF: the evaluators assessed to what extent each article explained how the EU is helping people through the ESF, ideally by giving examples of individuals who benefited from ESF support. It is important to note that both elements of the message (namely the EU and the ESF) were looked at, as only such a message can create a link between the two in people's minds. The articles have been rated on a scale ranging from 0 (if the EU role was not explained through the ESF at all) to +4 (if such an explanation existed and directly referred to the ESF).

The articles were found in media clipping reports from the OP launch in selected Member States in 2007. It must be noted that the evaluation team does not have information on the criteria used for selecting the articles in each clipping report. Therefore, it cannot be guaranteed that the selection is representative for media coverage of the OP launch in the four Member States.

A total of 74 articles were examined (6 for Ireland and Sweden, and 31 for Poland and Spain). The messages were most truly passed on to the general public in Sweden (which on average scored 10 out of 12 points), while articles in the remaining countries were more often missing the messages that help to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF and the EU. Figure 3 below illustrates the average scores of the articles against three key messages in the selected Member States.

Figure 3 – Average scores of the articles against three key messages in the selected Member States



4.5 Comparability

The evaluation team compared each article with the EU press release used³⁷. Virtually all articles were at most half the length of the EU press release. A brief summary of findings per country is presented below.

Ireland

- most of the articles lacked the background information about the ESF;
- the majority of the articles lacked the human dimension of the ESF;
- all of the articles included more specific information about the regions where the money will be spent;

Poland

- most of the articles lacked the background information about the ESF;
- the majority of the articles focused on the programme rather than the ESF;
- the majority of articles included more specific information on issues related to the programme's results and implementation (which institutions are in charge of the money, what is the state of preparations, when the first projects will start etc.);
- the majority of the articles focused on specific policy areas, such as social exclusion, reform of educational system, employee training etc.

Spain

- the vast majority of the articles lacked the background information about the ESF;

³⁷ In case of the Member State where the press release was significantly changed, the evaluation team kept the same methodology and compared each article with the original press release produced by DG EMPL. If compared with the modified press release, the total score for this criterion would be slightly higher.

- the majority of the articles focused on the EU funds and/or Operational Programmes rather than the ESF;
- a number of the articles included information on the national co-financing;
- about half of the articles focused on the ESF support for workers and women, whereas the other half of the articles lacked the human dimension of the ESF;
- several articles included reference to the Commissioner Danuta Hübner;

Sweden

- virtually all articles summarised information from the EU press release;
- several articles included more country-specific information, such as reference to national authorities or more focus on the programme rather than the ESF.

Table 2 below estimates the comparability of the articles with the EU press releases in the selected countries. On average, half of the articles in Spain were clearly based on the EU press release (55%), while the information in Polish articles differed strongly from that in the press release (3%).

Table 2 – Assessment of the comparability of the articles with EU press releases

	Comparability with EU press release
Ireland	21%
Poland	3%
Spain	55%
Sweden	31%
Total	28%

In sum, the articles tended to be truest to the press release in Spain and least true in Poland, whereas the Polish ones tended to be most positive towards the EU/ESF, and the Irish ones most neutral towards the EU and the ESF.

5. Costs

The total cost of producing the 27 press releases amounted to 66,078.30 EUR. It cost 2,447 EUR per country. Based on the limited information available, the combined readership of the media in which the identified articles were contained was 3,859,200. This would give a cost of 0.0025 EUR per reader.

However, caveats are that there were probably more articles; not all were actually based on the press releases; and not all readers will have read these articles. Therefore, it is impossible to calculate an accurate cost of media coverage of the OP launch in the selected Member States.

Nonetheless, the estimated costs of the EU press releases on the OP adoption in the selected Member States seem to be low in relation to the multiplier effect they might have had.

6. Suggestions for the future

- 1) A press release should be kept short and must not tell all information at once. Its aim is to “tease” the journalists and attract their attention so they attend the press conference that follows it.

- 2) EU press releases should be more country-specific, possibly including case-studies and life-stories. The EC could join efforts with the EC Representations and use their expertise and knowledge of local media to communicate on the ESF to the general public in the Member States.

“The EC would have to change the language and speak more about the real-life examples, leave out most of the general information and give more details.”

- 3) In order to generate more media coverage on the ESF, high ranking officials would need to be more often present in the Member States, visiting ESF projects or interacting with ESF participants.
- 4) Developing a manual (in close co-operation with the national authorities) on contact data for further information and practical advice on how to apply for/benefit from the ESF money would be useful and more likely to be disseminated further by the journalists.

REPORT FROM THE CASE STUDY ON VIDEOS

1. Introduction and summary findings

The evaluation team undertook a case study on the audiovisual material, in particular an assessment of the video series “ESF in action”. The aim of this case study was to understand the effectiveness and efficiency of this series of videos and how they helped to make the ESF more visible and understandable for the target audience.

The main findings of the video case study can be summed up as follows:

- “ESF in action” videos were mainly produced for journalists/TV stations;
- The purpose was to explain what the ESF is / what it does through personalised stories of people involved in ESF-funded projects;
- all 11 films follow the same editorial structure;
- different production costs for individual videos; can be explained by the different lengths of the films;
- all broadcasters interviewed were made aware of the “ESF in action” videos by MOSTRA by email; this form of contacting broadcasters is a standard procedure by MOSTRA, not only for videos related to the ESF;
- broadcasters received videos in their original language version and used own translators/narrators where necessary;
- quality of the videos perceived by broadcasters as being “very good”, given that they are presenting personalised stories and timely issues relevant to the general public;
- for the three “ESF in action” videos distributed by MOSTRA the production cost per viewer can be estimated to be € 0.03; this provides relatively little costs in terms of the number of viewers potentially reached.

2. Methodology

In total there are 11 “ESF in action” videos, all of which have been produced by ESN in 2007 and 2008. These videos have been distributed and made available by DG COMM and MOSTRA to different audiences, such as journalists, project beneficiaries and the general public.

The evaluation team had originally proposed to base the assessment on all 11 “ESF in action” videos produced by ESN. This included a desk-based analysis as well as the identification of contacts who had requested the “ESF in action” videos by DG COMM.

However, DG COMM was not able to provide those contacts to the evaluation team. Instead, DG EMPL provided contact details of 9 broadcasters who had broadcast up to three “ESF in action” films, such as on the restructuring of a Czech Railway company (“ESF in action” video in the Czech Republic), on economic change (“ESF in action” video in France) and on new skills (“ESF in action” video in Portugal), which had been distributed by MOSTRA. Thus, the evaluation team agreed with DG EMPL to slightly change the methodology of the case study in the sense that a desk-based analysis would be undertaken for all 11 “ESF in action” films produced, based on the written proposals for the videos by ESN, but that the evaluation team would only try to engage those 9 broadcasters who had requested and broadcast the three “ESF in action” videos distributed by MOSTRA in 2009.

The evaluation team carried out a total of six interviews with broadcasters from five different countries. The remaining three broadcasters were contacted several times (by email and telephone), but were not available for this evaluation due to lack of time or other commitments.

In addition, the evaluation team interviewed ESN's Art Director for TV productions who was responsible for the production of the 11 "ESF in action" videos. This interview provided an overview of the productions' rationale as well as the actual filming.

3. Purpose and Background

According to the interview with ESN's Art Director for TV productions, the videos were mainly produced in order to be broadcast by journalists/TV stations to the general public. The idea behind the production of the 11 "ESF in action" videos was to explain what the ESF is and what it does through personalised stories of people involved in ESF-funded projects in a selection of EU Member States. In that way, the videos convey the message that the ESF is a key factor to improve people's lives, their job prospects and their role in society in general. The films also seek to show that the European Union works in partnership with the Member States and to explain what the European added value is.

According to the interviewee, the EC decided on the countries and the projects that were covered in the videos. ESN then wrote a production proposal for the countries/projects chosen by the EC, which was agreed on with the EC.

ESN was responsible for the entire production cycle, including the pre-and post-production (incl. the translation). However, ESN was not responsible for the distribution of the videos, which was undertaken by DG COMM and MOSTRA. In addition, all videos are available on the DG EMPL as well as the EC's ESF website.

3.1 Production style

According to the information stated in ESN's written proposals for the outline of the individual videos, all 11 "ESF in action" films follow the same editorial structure. The films have a standard introduction, which was agreed on between ESN and DG EMPL / DG COMM, explaining in a maximum of four sentences the following:

- Where the project is located (including challenges that the project location/region is facing etc.);
- Which ESF project will be introduced;
- Content of the ESF project.

After the introduction, all films focus on the story of "protagonists". Usually, every film introduces one or more project participants that benefit from the ESF project introduced. In addition, a (local) ESF project representative is featured who can explain why projects were selected and what results the ESF programme has achieved so far.

Through in-situ interviews, the videos tell the viewer what the situation of ESF project participants is, why they joined the (training) programme and how it is changing their lives and work prospects. The videos also contain images and "beauty shots" of the featured region to help the viewer get an idea of the country presented and to explain the challenges that the society of the country is facing.

The editing style of the "ESF in action" videos was set out to be very dynamic, using "split screens" when necessary to reinforce the connection between individual stories, and using

music to support the voice-over parts. All interviews were carried out in the mother tongue of the person being interviewed. The videos also show the ESF logo.

Given that the films present very human stories, few image effects are used, but graphics are presented during the story to explain the location of the project, the total ESF funds committed to the project, and who the main subjects of the story are.

3.2 Time and Human Resources

All films were produced in the timeframe between November 2007 and October 2008. The actual filming of the individual “ESF in action” videos took between 3 to 5 days, and was in all cases undertaken by three people (plus equipment). However, the entire production cycle (pre-production, shooting, post-production and delivery) took between 2 and 3 months in all cases. The production cycle usually included:

- Outline of the video clip;
- Video shooting;
- Editing of the video clip;
- First presentation + corrections;
- Second presentation + final corrections;
- Mastering;
- Delivery to DG EMPL and DG COMM.

3.3 Languages and sound

While the interviews with the “protagonists” of the videos were done in the native language, the final video products were delivered in the native language as well as English.

Original music was created for all of the clips. Royalties for the use of the music covered the dissemination of the videos on the web or a DVD and for TV.

3.4 Technical production

All videos were produced as

- DVDs,
- master beta digit versions to be delivered to DG COMM and DG EMPL,
- compressed files for the website, as well as
- stock shots for DG COMM.

In terms of duration, most videos (7) were produced as +/- 7 minute clips, while 2 videos were produced as +/- 9 minute clips. Only one video was produced as a +/- 5 minute clip. The “ESF in action” production in Greece was the only one which was produced as a +/- 7 minute clip as well as a +/- 1,30 minute video clip. However, the proposal outline of the Greek video does not give any explanation for the production of these two different clip formats.

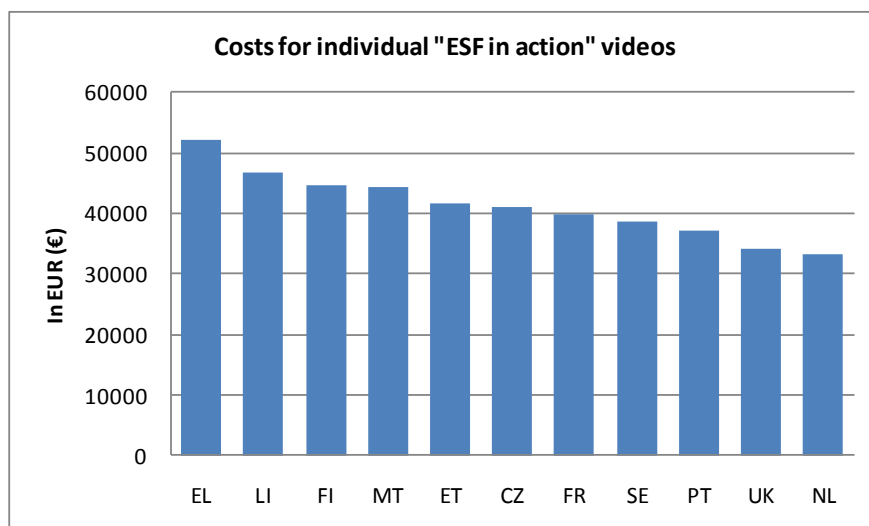
3.5 Costs

The total cost for the production of all “ESF in action” videos was € 452,949.95, or an average of just over € 40,000 per video. The costs for the production of the individual “ESF in action” videos ranged from € 33,158.27 (NL) to € 52,150.61 (EL). The different production costs for the individual videos can be explained by the different lengths of the films. The “ESF in Action” video filmed in the Netherlands was produced as a +/- 5 minutes film and

therefore has the lowest production costs, while the costs for the Greek “ESF in action” video were the highest because two different clip formats were produced (see above).

The following graph shows the production costs for the individual “ESF in action” videos.

Figure 1 – Costs for individual “ESF in action” videos



Source: Data provided by ESN

3.6 Downloads

DG COMM provided the evaluation team with the downloading figures of the 11 “ESF in action” videos from the DG COMM website in 2008 and 2009. The figures are shown for two different production methods: the MPG format (Moving Pictures Expert Group), which is the most popular format on the Internet for compressing digital audio and video data, and the RM (RealVideo) format, which allows streaming of video (on-line video, Internet TV) with low bandwidths.

Table 1 – DG COMM downloading figures (2008-2009)

Reference	Title	Format	Downloads
I-060211	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Malta	MPG	23
		RM	6
I-060213	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Greece (long version)	MPG	38
		RM	11
I-060536	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Greece (Short version)	MPG	27
		RM	10
I-059722	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - France	MPG	79
		RM	20
I-059724	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Lithuania	MPG	32
		RM	4
I-059726	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Czech Republic	MPG	49
		RM	11
I-059728	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Finland	MPG	35
		RM	4
I-057092	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Estonia	MPG	59
		RM	25
I-056209	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Portugal	MPG	80
		RM	31
I-056211	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - Sweden	MPG	34
		RM	17
I-056213	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - UK	MPG	84
		RM	36
I-054899	European Social Fund (ESF) in action - The Netherlands	MPG	51
		RM	25
		Total MPG	591
		Total RM	200

Source: Downloading figures provided by DG COMM for 2008 and 2009

The table shows that the MPG formats of the “ESF in action” videos in the UK, Portugal and France had received the most downloads, and the RM format of the videos had the most downloading figures in the UK, Portugal, Estonia and the Netherlands.

In addition, data were available on the “ESF in action downloads” from the DG EMPL website by June 2010.

Figure 2 – Downloading figures of “ESF in action” videos from the DG EMPL website

Country covered	Views on DG EMPL website	Video online since	Languages video is available in
CZ	510	Oct-08	22
ES	461	Mar-08	22
FI	N/A	N/A	N/A
FR	470	Jun-08	22
EL	792	Jan-09	22
LI	482	Jun-08	22
MT	594	Jan-09	22
NL	520	May-07	22
PT	514	Oct-08	22
SE	943	Oct-08	22
UK	790	Oct-07	22
Total	6076		

Source: Downloading figures available on the DG EMPL website

The graph above shows that all “ESF in action” videos available on the DG EMPL website have been downloaded 6,076 times in total, from the time they were uploaded until June 2010. These figures have to be interpreted with some caution though, as videos were made available on the DG EMPL website at different points in time. Thus, higher downloading figures of some of the videos do not necessarily mean that these videos are more popular than others.

4. Interviews with broadcasters

As described above, MOSTRA distributed three “ESF in action” films to 10 TV stations in eight countries, as well as to Euronews, which is a pan-European TV station. Out of these 11 TV stations, nine have broadcast at least one of these three ESF videos in 2009.

The table below gives an overview of the individual TV stations as well the number of ESF videos they broadcast (out of those three videos that had been disseminated to them by MOSTRA).

TV station	Country	No. of “ESF in action” videos broadcast	Available for interview?
One TV	Malta	3	No
Net TV	Malta	3	No
Euronews	Pan EU	2	No

TV station	Country	No. of “ESF in action” videos broadcast	Available for interview?
HRT	Croatia	2	Yes
NVTV	UK	2	Yes
RTS1	Serbia	2	Yes
Télé Bruxelles	Belgium	1	Yes
The Money Channel	Romania	1	Yes
TVR 3	Romania	1	Yes
Ceska Televize	Czech Republic	0	No
Rai International	Italy	0	No

Source: Data provided by MOSTRA

As shown in the table above, TEP carried out a total of 6 interviews with broadcasters who had made use of one or two of the “ESF in action” videos offered to them by MOSTRA.

4.1. Cooperation with MOSTRA

All interviewees stated that they have been cooperating with MOSTRA for a number of years. In general, MOSTRA pro-actively contacts broadcasters by email and offers them a number of videos on different topics. It has to be noted that, apart from Euronews, most of the TV stations in the table above are rather small and usually do not produce enough material on their own in order to fill their programmes. Therefore, they highly appreciate MOSTRA’s video offers.

In the case of the “ESF in action” videos, after receiving an email notification about the availability of the individual videos, broadcasters issued a video request and MOSTRA sent them the videos requested on tape (DVD) as well as a transcript of the video. Three interviewees perceived this as a very good approach. They argued that if MOSTRA had just sent them the link to a website, it would have been much easier to forget about the video.

Most interviewees were not aware of the possibility to access the “ESF in action” videos online on the EC’s ESF website. Broadcasters explained that they generally do not have time to search for video material online. Only two interviewees had visited the EC’s ESF website before and had a look at the videos available there.

Even though most interviewees seemed interested when informed about the possibility to download videos from the ESF website, two interviewees pointed out that they do not have the right equipment to download videos and make necessary adaptations to the electronic material. Thus, being made aware of the videos and receiving copies from MOSTRA was perceived by them as a good way to disseminate the videos to broadcasters. However, three interview partners were in favour of the opportunity to just download the videos online. They found the process of ordering video tapes from MOSTRA too time consuming and “out of date”.

4.2 Use of the “ESF in action” videos broadcast

All six broadcasters interviewed stated that they used the “ESF in action” videos for programmes related to the European Union, i.e. on EU current affairs, EU integration, European economic policies, news on the European Union etc. The “ESF in action” videos

were interesting for broadcasters because they were described as dealing with very detailed and timely issues relevant to the general public. For example, one interviewee working for a Romanian TV station explained: *“In the context of the financial crisis it is very interesting to show that companies or individuals can reorient themselves with the help of the ESF.”*

Broadcasters had different approaches to making use of the ESF videos. While some used the ESF videos as a whole, for example for magazines on the European Union, others only used short sequences, for example for their news programmes related to the EU. The videos distributed by MOSTRA were broadcast by the different TV stations in early 2009 (with one additional showing in late 2009). The following table provides an overview of the different TV stations that were showing the “ESF in action” videos (including those not covered in the interviews), the programmes they used the ESF videos for, as well as their estimated audience figures.

Table 2 – “ESF in action” broadcasts in 2009

Country	Media	Date of first broadcast	Magazine	News	Additional broadcasts*	Total audience
"ESF in action" - CZ						
Malta	One TV	12/02/2009		1		130,000
Malta	Net TV	02/02/2009		1		50,000
Pan EU	Euronews	19/02/2009	1		18	1,000,000
Croatia	HRT	07/03/2009	1			200,000
TOTAL			2	2	18	1,380,000
"ESF in action" - FR						
Malta	One TV	14/02/2009		1		130,000
Malta	Net TV	04/02/2009		1		50,000
UK	NVTV	16/02/2009	1		5	50,000
Croatia	HRT	14/03/2009	1			200,000
Serbia	RTS1	20/02/2009	1		1	600,000
TOTAL			3	2	6	1,030,000
"ESF in action" - PT						
Belgium	Télé Bruxelles	25/02/09	1		14	140,000
Malta	One TV	18/02/2009		1		130,000
Malta	Net TV	03/02/09		1		50,000
Romania	TVR 3	15/11/09	1			50,000
Romania	The Money Channel	13/02/09	1			50,000
UK	NVTV	20/02/09	1		5	50,000
Pan EU	Euronews	19/02/09	1		18	1,000,000
Serbia	RTS1	13/02/2009	1		1	600,000
TOTAL			6	2	38	2,070,000

Source: Figures made available by DG EMPL

* Additional broadcasts stand for re-runs of programmes

The table shows that, taken together, the 3 videos have been viewed by nearly 4.5 million viewers. The “ESF in action” video filmed in Portugal has been broadcast the most in 2009 and is estimated to have reached the highest number of viewers, compared to the other two “ESF in action” videos. Most interviewees could not remember why they chose this video compared to others, but suggested that it must have been chosen because the content of the video was more in line with the challenges faced by their national target audience.

4.3 Production cost per viewer

In terms of the audience figures presented above, it is important to note that these viewing figures only refer to those instances where MOSTRA distributed the three “ESF in action” videos and followed up on their use. There is no way of knowing what use may have been made of videos requested or downloaded from DG COMM or DG EMPL. Therefore, these figures are an absolute minimum, and the real number of viewers is likely to be higher.

However, the audience figures available for the three “ESF in action” videos distributed by MOSTRA³⁸ allow for the calculation of the production cost per viewer for these three videos.

Table 3 – Calculation of the production cost per viewer

Country	Production cost (in EUR)	Audience figure (estm.)	Production cost per viewer (in EUR Cents)
CZ	41,004.24	1,380,000	0.0297
FR	39,710.93	1,030,000	0.0386
PL	37,052.22	2,070,000	0.0179
Total	117,767.39	4,480,000	0.0263

According to the table above, for the three “ESF in action” videos distributed by MOSTRA the production cost per viewer can be estimated to be € 0.03. Again, keeping in mind that the actual viewership figures are likely to have been higher (although it is unclear by how much), the actual cost per viewer was almost certainly lower.

4.4 Language and quality

All broadcasters interviewed stated that they received the videos in the national language version they were produced in. However, the transcripts of the videos were disseminated as well (in English), which enabled broadcasters to understand the interview as well as the narrator sequences. Most broadcasters then used their own translators and narrators either for the entire video, or for those sequences they intended to broadcast. Two journalists explained that, instead of translating the video, they used subtitles in their national language, due to the high costs of using a professional translator. If videos are not available in all language versions, receiving them in their original version was the preferred option for all interviewees (rather than in English). This approach makes it is easier for broadcasters to edit the videos in the way needed.

³⁸ As stated before, the three “ESF in action” videos are also available for downloading on the DG COMM, DG EMPL and the EC’s ESF website. Given the relatively small numbers of downloads or online views, these were not included in the cost calculations.

All interviewees perceived the quality of the videos as being “very good”. One journalist stated that the narrators give the videos an “informational touch”, almost like a documentary. The language used in the videos was seen as easy to understand even by those viewers who are not familiar with the topic. This was perceived as important in order to generate interest and better reach the general public. Only one interviewee stated that the style of the videos was a bit like “European propaganda”, given that only positive aspects related to the ESF were mentioned in the videos, but agreed that this format was necessary to inform the European general public about the ESF.

5. Suggestions for the future

Three journalists thought that the “ESF in action” videos could be improved by featuring more interviews with the Commissioner of DG EMPL and with other high level EC officials. They suggested to carry out an interview with the Commissioner about “timely topics”, which would be of interest to the general public. A mix of “real life examples” with people benefitting from the ESF and interviews with EC officials was seen as a good combination for future videos.

In contrast, ESN’s Art Director for TV productions argued that interviews with the Commissioner could be easily perceived as “EU propaganda” by other journalists. He argued that ESN had received negative comments on this form of reporting in the past. Instead, he recommended sticking to personalised stories to report about the ESF.

In terms of disseminating the videos and making TV stations more aware of their existence, broadcasters thought that the easiest and only way for the EC to inform TV stations about their audiovisual material is to send them information about new videos available by email. It was suggested to avoid sending information on new videos in hard-copy format, i.e. catalogues and flyers, due to the fact that journalists usually only have limited time to look at these forms of advertisement. In this context, the cooperation with MOSTRA worked very well for all broadcasters interviewed and should be maintained in the future.

REPORT FROM THE CASE STUDY ON (NATIONAL) ESF WEBSITES

1. Introduction and key findings

A comparative analysis of the EC's ESF website and a sample of national ESF websites has been carried out by the evaluation team as part of the website case study. The aim was to understand the added value, effectiveness and efficiency of the EC's website to communicate the ESF and provide information needed by the target audience by comparing it to three national ESF websites (the ESF websites for France, Spain and Poland).

The key findings of this case study can be summarised as follows:

- The EC's ESF website provides a comprehensive overview of the ESF and its role in the European Union as a whole as well as basic information on the ESF in the Member States;
- It functions as a provider of information for the general public about the ESF across the EU;
- The national websites are more tailored towards the needs of specific national users (i.e. project beneficiaries);
- The analysis of the national ESF websites revealed significant differences in the amount of information as well as their presentation and user-friendliness;
- EC's ESF website adds significant value to the existing national ESF websites as a provider of both general and more specific information on the ESF to the interested public, as well as a provider of specific information/tools to Managing Authorities and other (potential) multipliers

2. Methodology

The methodology for the case study comprises a desk-based analysis of the structure and content of the EC's ESF and the three national ESF websites (with a particular emphasis on similarities and overlaps on the one hand, and differences and complementarities on the other hand), as well as a series of interviews with a member of staff responsible for the design and content of each of the websites (4 interviews in total).

The national ESF websites in France³⁹, Spain⁴⁰ and Poland⁴¹ were selected for this case study. All three websites are designed, maintained and updated by departments belonging to the Managing Authorities in the respective countries: in the case of Spain the Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund (UAFSE), which is attached to the Secretariat General for Employment in the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; in Poland the Department for Information, Promotion and Training (DIP); in France the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Employment.

For the desk-based analysis, the evaluation team developed a matrix with a number of criteria against which the national ESF websites in France, Spain and Poland were assessed. These criteria included a summary of:

³⁹ see: <http://www.fse.gouv.fr>

⁴⁰ see: www.mtas.es/uafse

⁴¹ see: www.efs.gov.pl

Information:

- General information about the ESF and what it does;
- Thematic fields of ESF activity;
- Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF;
- Specific information about ESF financial allocations and spending in the country;
- Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project;
- Information on how to participate in an ESF project;
- Project database (regular updates?)
- Regular newsletters (hyperlink; how regular? How disseminated?)
- Use of good practice examples?
- Information on Operational Programme(s)?
- Links to regional websites;
- Information about the ESF in other Member States;
- News and Events;
- Links to the EC's ESF website

Material:

- Offer of audio-visual material;
- Offer of brochures and leaflets;
- Offer of posters.

These criteria were then assessed according to the website level where the information was found (i.e. main homepage; 1st subpage; 2nd subpage etc.) as well as a scoring of the level of detail the information was available (i.e. 1 - very rudimentary; 2 - somewhat rudimentary; 3 - basic information available; 4 – somewhat detailed; 5 – very detailed). In a next step, the user-friendliness of the national ESF websites was assessed, including:

- the design and layout;
- logical structure;
- easy navigation; as well as
- any other features perceived as useful for ESF communication.

The evaluation team also interviewed the web administrators of the three national ESF websites, as well as the web administrator of the EC's ESF website. The aim was to gather their opinions and views on the information needs of the target groups visiting their ESF websites, the design and content of the respective websites, as well as specific questions about peculiarities of the respective national websites to explore the rationale and perceived success of the chosen approach. Moreover, the interviews aimed at determining the level of interaction between the web administrators of the national websites with their EC counterpart, and to see if there are any lessons learnt from each other.

3. Provision of information

The website analysis of the EC's as well as the national ESF websites can be summarised as follows:

3.1. General information about the ESF and what it does

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
General information about the ESF and what it does	4	2	4	3.3	5

National websites

The Spanish website provides information on the general objectives, scope and functioning of the ESF, and also features some graphical information (statistics and a map). In contrast, the information available on the Polish website mainly relates to the Operational Programme financed by the ESF, rather than the ESF itself. The French ESF website provides a detailed overview of the ESF, its history and objectives, and features link to further information about the Operational Programmes as well as individual projects.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website has a very detailed section on the European Social Fund, including a historical overview. It provides some useful facts, as well as information on who is able to be funded, who can participate etc. The section does not link directly to any of the national websites of Managing Authorities though, which would be advisable, as most visitors will most likely look for specific information in an EU Member State.

3.2. Thematic fields of ESF activity

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Thematic fields of ESF activity	3	4	4	3.7	4

National websites

All three websites provide information on the thematic fields of ESF activity. The information on the Polish and Spanish website are somewhat detailed on nearly all the fields of activity of the ESF, while the French website only provides basic information on some ESF fields of activity.

EC's ESF website

On its main homepage, the EC's ESF website provides links to all ESF thematic fields. The individual pages provide an overview of ESF activities in a given field, and offer related links to more information, videos as well as success stories. These links are sorted by theme though, while users will most likely be interested in finding information specifically on one EU country, rather than the ESF in general.

3.3. Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF	5	5	4	4.5	5

National websites

The Spanish ESF website contains a documentation page that provides links to the relevant regulations, and there is detailed information on the Operational Programmes available. However, the documentation could be better organised through a clearer categorisation than the current one, which would make the navigation easier.

The Polish website provides very detailed specific information about legal requirements on the ESF on the 1st subpage, and, similar to the Spanish website, features a documentation page that provides links to the relevant EU regulations and Polish requirements.

In comparison, the French website provides very detailed information on legal requirements, though on the 2nd subpage, and features a list of a few eligibility requirements for a project to benefit from the ESF, as well as a link to the legal documents setting requirements for the Structural Funds over the period 2007-2013.

Thus, all three websites seem to provide detailed information on legal requirements and offer more or less the same level of detail.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website provides an overview of all EU Regulations related to the Structural Funds in general, and the ESF in particular. All documents are available as a PDF document in all EU official languages. There is also a section on EC Implementing Regulations with documents available in all 23 EU languages. The website with these documents is easy to find from the main homepage. The information provided might be mainly useful for the implementing bodies in the individual Member States.

3.4. Specific information about ESF financial allocations and spending in the country

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Specific information about ESF financial allocations and spending in the country	5	5	3	4.3	2.5

National websites

The French and Polish ESF websites both have very detailed specific information about ESF financial allocations and spending in the country available. The French website features the number of beneficiary projects as well as the amounts spent per project. It also displays a link to an interactive beneficiary projects map by region and a beneficiary database. The Polish website provides information about ESF financial allocations in the 16 Polish regions. The information is broken down by numbers per thematic fields. Another subpage presents detailed monthly information on current spending broken down by priorities and regions.

The Spanish ESF website, in contrast, only provides basic information about ESF financial allocations and spending on a documentation page. The information is presented at an aggregated level in some documents, and split into thematic fields in other documents. The documentations could be better organised through a clearer categorisation than the current one, which would also make the navigation easier.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website provides a detailed overview of the ESF financial situation in all EU Member states and offers useful and straightforward information, such as figures, graphs, a financial historical overview, information on eligible regions etc. However, these figures do not show the spending in the individual EU Member States, but only provide information on the ESF allocations per Member State.

Moreover, the information is not available in all official EU languages, but usually in English, French and German, as well as the national language of the country concerned. The website also provides the contact details of all Managing Authorities responsible for the ESF at the national level, as well as a link to the national ESF websites of every EU Member States.

3.5. Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project	4	5	2	3.7	4

National websites

The Spanish website only contains rudimentary information on how to obtain funding to set up an ESF project. This information is not easily accessible, as it is included as part of a larger document that is linked to the website (3rd subpage). Moreover, clear guidelines for obtaining funding are to be obtained through other means (i.e. email, telephone, personal contact etc.).

In comparison, the Polish website contains very detailed information on how to obtain funding to set up an ESF project, which is easy to access. It includes links to institutions providing grants, a timetable of calls for proposals, general information on who can apply,

documents and templates, a description of the application process and an explanation of the eligible costs. Moreover, the website also includes an external link to an online guide that helps finding different funds and programmes.

The information provided on the French website about obtaining funding are somewhat detailed and include a list of actors involved in sponsoring ESF projects at different geographical and operational levels, key application deadlines, as well as links to relevant web pages.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website provides an informative overview of the eligibility criteria for ESF applications as well as management details on the ESF. It also offers explanations of official terms (e.g. what is a "beneficiary" etc.). Most importantly, a link to the "ESF in the Member States" section it is clearly stated on the website, including the information that people interested in setting up an ESF project need to contact the Managing Authorities at national level.

3.6. Information on how to participate in an ESF project

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Information on how to participate in an ESF project	4	1	1	2.0	1

National websites

Similar to the information on obtaining funding, the Spanish ESF website only provides a very general overview on how to participate in an ESF project. Again, this information is not easily accessible, but is included in a larger document which is linked to the site. Clear guidelines for participating in an ESF project are to be obtained through other means (e.g. email, telephone, personal contact etc.).

The Polish website also contains very general information on how to participate in an ESF project, while guidelines for participating are to be obtained through contacting other institutions.

In contrast, the French website describes quite detailed the eligibility requirements for participation, provides links to the legal documents outlining who can participate in an ESF project and how, and also features applicant guidelines.

EC's ESF website

Information on how to participate in an ESF project is available on the same website as the information on setting up an ESF project. There is no link provided for people interested in participating though, and not clearly stated where people can apply to take part in an ESF funded project.

3.7. Project database

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Project database	5	5	4	4.3	3

National websites

A project database is available on the Spanish website via an advanced search function featuring project searches per region, beneficiary group and thematic field. The platform does not appear to be fully updated to reflect ongoing projects though. Detailed information is provided on each project listed in the platform (including total budget, amount of ESF funding, and contains details of the project).

The Polish website provides a project database in Excel format, which is updated on a monthly basis. Basic information is available on each project listed in the database (including total budget, amount of ESF funding and the title of the projects). Currently, the database includes about 15,000 projects. There is also an external link to a number of search engines to find an ESF-funded project, though these do not appear to be comprehensive.

The French ESF website provides a very detailed project database, though on an external web page. The information is sorted by region, and appears to be updated on a regular basis.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website features a detailed project database for all EU Member States, broken down by country, region, target group and then linking to the project database on the DG EMPL website. The aim of the EC project database is somewhat different from the national ones described above. While the Member States have an obligation to publish a list of projects which were granted ESF funding at national level for transparency reasons, the EC's database aims to share good practice examples. Therefore, this database does not include all ESF projects but only those that are successful.

It would be advisable though that the project database would feature a direct link to the website either of the Managing Authority of the country a project is searched in, or to the website of the project directly (if existent). By doing so, the users would be able to directly ask for the information they are looking for.

3.8. Regular newsletters

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Regular newsletters (hyperlink; how regular? How disseminated?)	4	2	0	2.0	5

National websites

While no newsletter is available on the Spanish ESF website, the Polish website provides a number of outdated newsletters from 2007 and 2008 on the main homepage. There is newer material dedicated to the Monitoring Committee of the programme, though it presents more technical information on the programme implementation. However, the main Ministry's portal for the Structural Funds allows visitors to subscribe to a newsletter and select individual areas of interest, such news on the ESF funded Programme.

The French website contains newsletters on the main homepage which are published twice a month. They differ in format though – from one paragraph to eight pages.

EC's ESF website

It is possible to subscribe to an e-newsletter on the EC's ESF website, and to tailor the information provided in the newsletter to the individual needs by selection topics one wants to receive information about. It is also possible to choose how often one would like to receive information on the ESF, the options being either monthly, or twice a month.

3.9. Use of good practice examples

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Use of good practice examples	2	3	0	1.7	4

National websites

The Spanish ESF website does not have a specifically developed section on good practice examples, but features a link to one good practice communication example on a graphic campaign on equal opportunities between men and women.

In contrast, the Polish website contains a section on good practice examples which presents a list of awarded projects from past years and information on how to apply for this

competition. It also presents a publication on best practices, which is 70 pages long, includes pictures, and is available in English and Polish.

The French ESF website does not have a designated section on good practice, but contains a section with videos and testimonies of ESF beneficiaries.

EC's ESF website

The project database on the EC's ESF website provides numerous "success stories" of projects that have been particularly successful. Moreover, the EC's ESF website features some additional "success stories", though these are not easily to be found. They are located in the "library" section and summarised in a publication called "ESF success stories", presenting over 70 success stories showing how ESF projects helped improve peoples' working lives across Europe. This publication is only available in English though. Overall, it would be advisable to make these success stories more visible, perhaps tailor them to the individual country profiles.

3.10. Information on Operational Programmes

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Information on Operational Programmes	2	5	5	4.0	1

National websites

The Operational Programmes for the different Spanish regions and cross-cutting thematic fields are downloadable on the Spanish ESF-website as PDF documents. The documents are complete, but there is no clear introductory information outlining what these programmes are for. In comparison, the Polish ESF website focuses very detailed on the Operational Programme in Poland.

In principle, the French website provides information about the OP, but without mentioning the term "OP" and explaining what this actually is. Rather, it rather provides an historical overview of the ESF funding periods in France.

EC's ESF website

Some general information on the Operational Programmes in the individual Member States can be found in the national country profiles, though there are no direct links provided to the legal documents. In order to access detailed information on the individual OPs, it is necessary to visit the websites of the national Managing Authorities and look for the information there.

3.11. Links to regional websites

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
(Links to regional websites)	5	5	0	3.3	0

National websites

On the Spanish ESF website there appear to be no directly available links to regional websites. There are a number of sub-pages that should lead to regional cooperation networks through clicking on different regions on a map, but the link does not appear to work.

The Polish ESF website provides links to regional websites, namely to the institutions implementing the programme at a regional level (Intermediate bodies), while fewer regions have websites dedicated to a programme or to the ESF directly. Similar to Poland, the French ESF website provides links to all 26 regional website.

EC's ESF website

There are no links on the EC's ESF website to regional websites in a Member State.

3.12. Information about the ESF in other EU Member States

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Information about the ESF in other EU Member States	3	0	3	2.0	5

National websites

Under a "useful link" tag, the Spanish ESF website provides links to other national ESF websites (i.e. France, Czech Republic, Malta, Sweden, Hungary, UK, Ireland, Finland, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia and Poland).

Neither the Polish nor the French ESF websites provided similar links, though the French ESF has a link to the website featuring European ESF projects.

EC's ESF website

There is extensive and very detailed information available on the ESF in all EU Member States, as well as information on the preparation for the ESF in candidate countries.

3.13. News and events

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
News and events	3	4	3	3.3	3

National websites

The Spanish website has specific subsections for news and events, which are available on the left and right hand sides of the main homepage. However, these sections do not feature up to date information, but stem back from 2008 and 2009.

The Polish ESF website has a specific section for news on the main homepage. There is also a calendar with events available, with the dates of ESF-related events clearly marked. The section is well up to date and features several news items per day.

Similar to this, the French ESF website provides basic information on the main homepage on news and events, which are updated on a regular basis.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website features a "news and events" as well as a "highlights" section, which are both regularly updated. They only provide general information on news and event though, rather than on what is happening in the individual Member States, as this would be too much information to monitor and provide. For more details on news and events in a EU country, users will have to consult the national ESF websites.

3.14. Links to EC's ESF website

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Links to EC's ESF website	3	0	3	2.0	N/A

National websites

Both, the Spanish and the French ESF websites provide a link to the EC's ESF website under a "useful link" tag, whereas the Polish website does not link to the Commission's ESF website.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website provides links to all national ESF websites.

4. Material

4.1. Offer of audio-visual material

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Offer of audiovisual material (hyperlink and short description)	4	0	1	1.7	5

National websites

The Spanish ESF website features a promotional video in Spanish, which promoted the ESF. However, the video does not have a title. The video is unique on the Spanish website and is not available on the EC's ESF website.

In contrast, the Polish website does not have any videos on display.

The French ESF website contains a section called "video testimonies", which includes dozens of videos with testimonies of ESF beneficiaries, analysts and policy makers. These videos are not available on the EC's ESF website.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website features a large audio-visual database, which is accessible via direct links, as well as from various sub-pages, i.e. the country profiles. Most of the audio-visual material is available in all EU languages, and it is possible to search for videos by country or by theme, and it is possible to view the videos via life stream, or to download them from the EC's Audiovisual Services website. No information on the number of downloads could be obtained though.

4.2. Offer of brochures and leaflets

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Offer of brochures and leaflets (hyperlink and short description)	3	4	0	2.3	5

National websites

There are no brochures and leaflets available on the Spanish ESF website.

Similar to the Spanish website, the French website does not offer any brochures or leaflets. However, it provides links to download and order them on the EC's ESF website.

In contrast, the Polish ESF website provides brochures, leaflets, albums and publications, some of them being tailored to specific target groups (e.g. children, enterprises etc.). However, there are no titles of the publications available, and no pictures of the covers displayed, which makes searching for the right publication difficult.

EC's ESF website

The EC's ESF website provides an extensive library with publications accessible in PDF format. There are publications on the ESF in general, as well as ESF country profiles, publications on thematic topics relevant to the ESF, research studies etc.

The library is broken down into different sections, and publications can be searched by countries and regions, success stories, studies, visual identity, as well as recent updates. Moreover, most publications are accessible in all EU languages.

4.3. Offer of posters

Criteria / Country	France	Poland	Spain	Avg. national	EC
Offer of posters (hyperlink and short description)	3	0	2	1.7	5

National websites

The Spanish ESF website presents a poster campaign under the heading "Communicating / Best practices on equal opportunities between men and women." The title is "Juggler in time", and 6 different versions of the poster are available on the subject of equal opportunities. This poster series is not available on the ESF website.

The Polish ESF website does not provide any posters. In comparison, the French website does not offer any posters itself, but provides links to download and order them on the EC's ESF website.

EC's ESF website

Posters on the main fields of activity of the ESF are available for download in all EU languages in the library section of the EC's ESF website. There is also a link to order the poster series by email from the European Commission.

5. User-friendliness

No scoring of the websites has been undertaken for the user-friendliness of the individual websites. While the user-friendliness of the EC's ESF website was tested in the online survey with website users, no studies or evaluations have been carried with users of the three national ESF websites on the attractiveness and layout. Therefore, the evaluation team did a desk-based comparison of the three websites. Please note that this comparison is rather subjective, based on individual's taste and perceptions.

5.1. Attractive design and layout

National websites

The design and layout of the Spanish ESF website does not appear to be very attractive, given that the website seems quite static and not very colourful. While it is relatively in line with the EC's ESF website, it could be much more aligned to maintain a similar visual identity. There is proportionately much text, but relatively few visual or audiovisual elements. Given that the website features large, heavy documents containing lots of jargon, the website does not appear to be designed for the wider audience, but rather for a more specialised target audience.

Similar to the Spanish website, the design and layout of the Polish website does not appear to be very attractive. The website is designed in three main colours (orange, blue and white), and looks very different compared to the EC's ESF website. While the website contains a lot of text, it only features a limited amount of visual material and contains no videos at all. In general, it appears to be designed for a specialised target audience that is already aware and informed of the ESF, rather than for the general public.

The French website appears to have an attractive design and layout, and provides a balanced offer of textual as well as audio-visual material. It appears to be quite informative, not only for a specialised audience, but also for visitors who are looking for more general information.

5.2. Logic structure

National websites

The Spanish ESF website follows a logic structure, introducing the administrative ESF unit in Spain (UAFSE) and its different components (programming, management, supervision, evaluation, strategic follow-up and communication) as well as the ESF as a whole. In addition, there are news/events sections, as well as a section featuring relevant documentation and useful links.

Similar to the Spanish website, the Polish ESF website follows a logic structure, introducing relevant documents, legal provisions, guides and institutions implementing the ESF in Poland. However, the publications could be arranged in a more organised and transparent way.

Like the other two websites described above, the French ESF website is logically structured and provides information for visitors to get a good overview of what the ESF is and what it does. It is easy for visitors of the website to find necessary information.

5.3. Easy navigation

National websites

Even through the Spanish ESF website follows a logic structure, navigation on the website is not easy, as there is a lack of guidance for specific users, such as “information for candidates” or “information for beneficiaries”. In addition, the relevant information is usually available in third level sub-pages and as part of larger documents, without any clear introduction to their content. As a consequence, users have to spend some time organising their search when visiting the website.

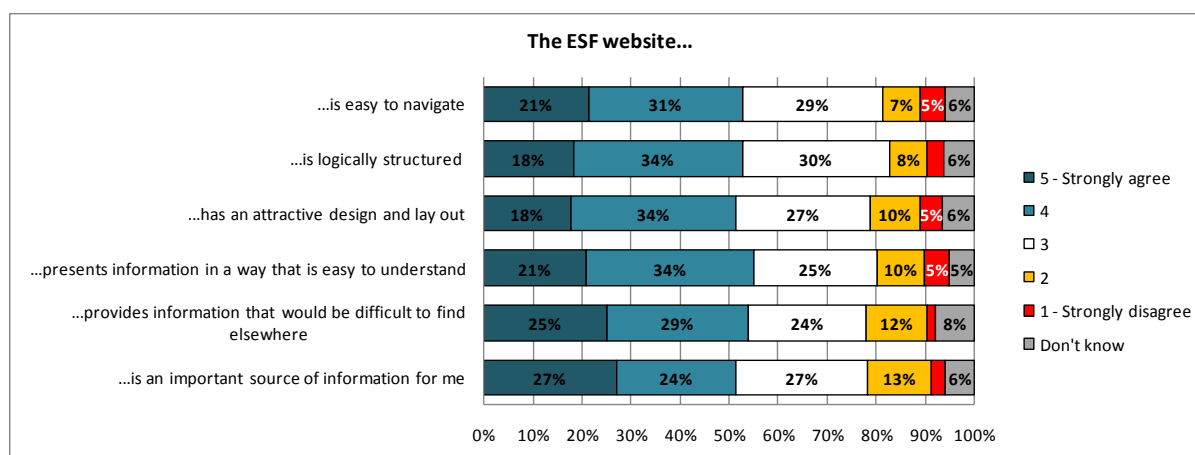
In case of the Polish website, navigation is easy for those users who are looking for funding and those who have implemented a project already. The relevant information is usually available on the first or second sub-level of the website.

The French ESF website appears to be easy to navigate and to provide useful information which is easy to find and access, even for those visitors not necessarily familiar with the subject matter.

EC's ESF website

According to the online survey with website users, the EC's ESF website is very positively perceived by users. The graph below shows that more than half of all survey respondents found the website easy to navigate, logically structured and having an attractive design and layout. In addition, 55% of respondents also strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the ESF website presents information in a way that is easy to understand. Most interesting, more than half of all respondents found that the ESF website provides information that would be difficult to find elsewhere. Thus, the ESF website is an important source of information, and was rated as such by 51% of the respondents to the survey.

Figure 1 – level of importance of information provided



n (1)=392; n (2)=387; n (3)=388; n (4)=387; n (5)=387; n (6)=387

5.4. Other features perceived as useful for ESF communication

National websites

The Spanish ESF website is available in a number of languages (apart from Spanish), including English, French, Basque, Catalan and Galician.

The Polish ESF website is adjusted for people with sight disorders. It also provides a link to the step by step guide on how to obtain ESF funding and how to implement an ESF project. In addition, the website provides a link to the Polish ESF page on Facebook.

EC's ESF website

The main pages of the EC's ESF website are available in all 23 EU languages. However, some of the sub-levels of the website are only available in a select number of languages, usually English, French and German. This might pose a risk to those users who are not familiar or very fluent in either of these languages.

6. Interviews with website administrators

6.1. Websites' objectives and outreach

EC's ESF website

During the interview, the EC's ESF website administrator explained that the EC's ESF website functions as a provider of information for the general public about the ESF across the EU. In addition, the website also aims to provide a general overview of the ESF in each Member State, including basic facts, statistics, information on projects and contact details of the Managing Authorities.

The interviewee pointed out that the website has changed a lot over the past two years in order to become more user-friendly, structured and easy to navigate. This was a reaction to a number of comments and feedback received by DG EMPL in the past. These comments included many general questions from users of the ESF website on the ESF provisions and funding opportunities, which were really targeted at the Member States rather than the European Commission. As a consequence, the contact details of the Managing Authorities as well as the links to the national ESF websites were included on the EC's ESF website, in order to direct users towards the appropriate contacts in the EU Member States.

Apart from information on what the ESF is and what it does, the EC's website administrator explained that the website now provides several interactive features as well as different databases, which are of key importance. In order to update the databases, input from all 27 Member States is needed on a constant basis. This is, however, a lot of information to manage. Moreover, most information and data collected need to be translated, which implies significant additional work for DG EMPL.

While the EC's ESF website targets the general public as a whole, the interviewee assumed that most users of the website would be somehow related to the European Social Fund, for example officials working either for the European Institutions or the Managing Authorities.

National ESF websites

The evaluation team also carried out three telephone interviews with the web administrators of the national ESF websites in France, Poland and Spain.

The web administrators of the Spanish and Polish ESF websites agreed that the main target audiences of their websites were intermediary organisations (such as project providers and intermediate bodies) implementing the programmes funded by the ESF in their countries, as well as the general public. The French web administrators stated that their website was designed for three target audiences:

- Project implementers and potential participants;
- Researchers and students;
- General public.

While there is no information available on the users of the ESF websites in Spain and Poland, the French web administrators assumed that (potential) beneficiaries make the most use of the website in France. In contrast, the interviewee perceived that general public as using the website only marginally, despite administrators' efforts to make information about the ESF available in a way that is easy to understand (by avoiding EU jargon). It has to be noted that these were perceptions of the interviewee rather than facts based on any evidence provided. In general, the aim of the site is to be the first point of call for those looking for information on the ESF in France. The website was reported to therefore provide basic information on projects, co-financing etc. to those visitors who do not know much about the ESF. Visitors searching for more detailed information are re-directed to more specific (project) sites. In addition, the French web administrators pointed out that the website also features information geared towards the media, such as press releases, briefing on particular topics etc.

No comprehensive study has so far been carried out on the needs of the website users in any of the three countries assessed. However, the Spanish interviewee stated that intermediary organisations visiting the website usually search for documentation needed to implement the programmes, such as annual reports, legislation, regulations, guides, calls for proposals etc. The Spanish ESF website therefore tries to address their needs by providing this documentation. In case of the Polish ESF website, the information requested the most was stated as being calls for proposals, documents and contact details of the national Managing Authorities.

All national ESF websites also provide a database of ESF projects in their country. While the project database on the Spanish websites appears to be rather outdated, the databases on the Polish website is updated on a monthly or sometimes weekly basis. Similarly, the web administrators in France explained in the interview that the database was designed following the EC's instructions on how to develop such a platform, and is frequently updated.

In addition, the French website also offers videos, which were described to have been produced for specific events either at national or regional level, and were then posted on the French ESF website.

The Polish website, in contrast to those in Spain and France, does not provide any general information about the ESF in particular. This was perceived as being a problem by the web administrator, who explained that this issue was discussed in details with DIP. The Department did not want to promote individual EU funds, but rather "European Funds" as a general idea, as well as national programmes co-financed by the ESF (i.e. the Human Capital Operational Programme – PO KL).

Neither the EC's ESF website administrator nor the three national ESF web administrators interviewed seem to receive feedback of users on their websites or its content on a regular basis. In all cases, the websites provide generic email addresses which users can write to. The web administrators then reply to these questions or direct them to colleagues who might be in a better position to answer them.

6.2. Interaction / exchange between website administrators

The EC's ESF web administrator explained that interaction between DG EMPL and the national web administrators is quite rare and happens perhaps twice or three times per year. The reason for this is that the EC's ESF website administrator is not allowed to pass on any information to be published on the national ESF websites. The dissemination of information is done by the cabinet of DG EMPL.

These findings were partly confirmed by the national ESF web administrators. The Polish web administrator explained that they receive notifications from DG EMPL's communication union new publications available, but they are usually not uploading these publications on the Polish ESF website. In contrast to this, the French administrator pointed out that they do receive information from DG EMPL for the website, but not on a regular basis. Their contact is more on an ad hoc basis and related to specific issues.

The Spanish web administrator stated that they receive quite a lot of information on documentation from DG EMPL to be uploaded on their website. The INIO meeting was also mentioned as the main channel of communication with DG EMPL related to the website.

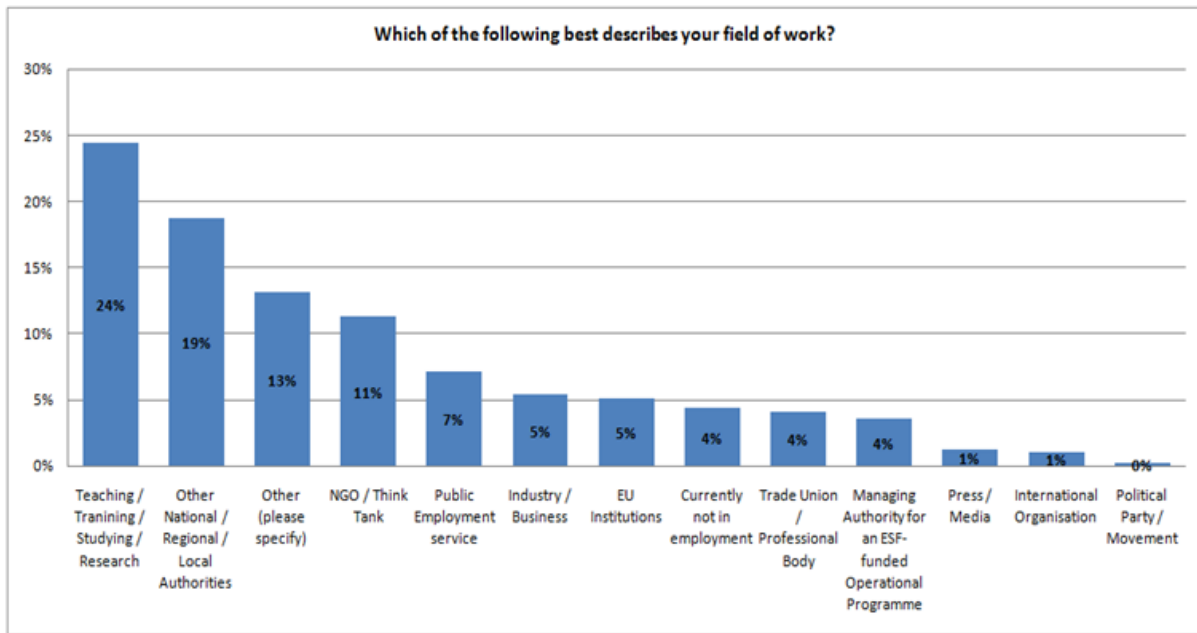
In terms of exchange of best practice examples, all three national ESF website administrators stated that they are mostly in touch with the administrators of the EC's ESF website to exchange information to be uploaded on the national websites, but that there is no exchange of best practice between them. This was confirmed by the ESF web administrator of DG EMPL, who stated that best practice exchange happens in terms of concrete material rather than on information uploaded on the website.

All ESF national website administrators agreed that the EC's ESF website has improved considerably in recent years. However, concerns were raised how well the website is known among the general public, and how visible it is. Interviewees assumed that people looking for specific information on the ESF in a given EU Member State would rather consult the national ESF websites.

7. Added value of the EC's ESF website

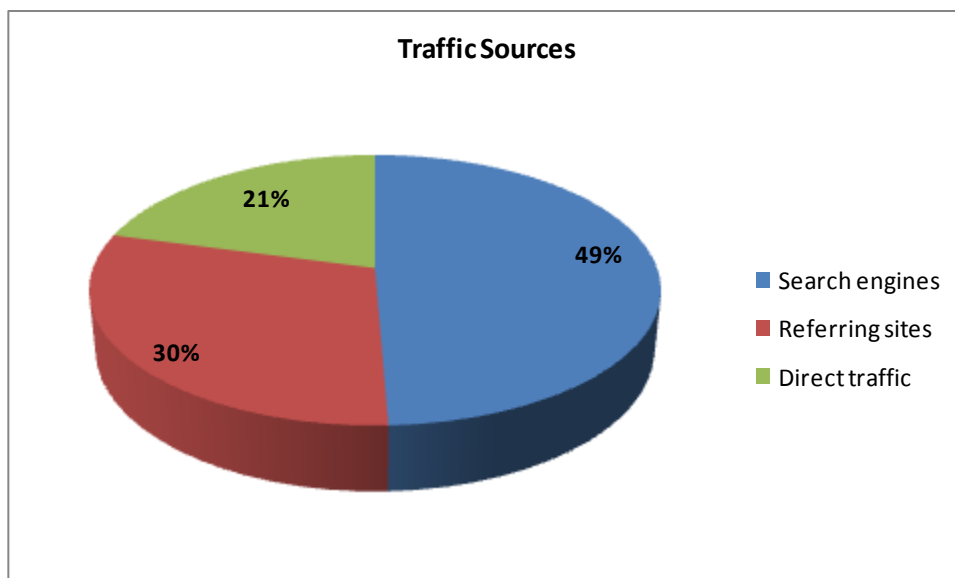
While the EC assumed that the ESF website would mainly attract users that are working in relation to the ESF directly, but wanted to have a broader attraction of the website to the general public, the results of the online survey with ESF website users show that only 9% of respondents were actually working for one of the Managing Authorities or EU Institutions. The majority of website users (91%) can therefore be regarded as belonging to the "general public" (although it is important to note that several respondent categories are likely to contain a significant number of actual or potential ESF beneficiaries, either as project implementers or as participants).

Figure 2 – Survey respondents' field of work



These findings are supported by the assessment of “Google Analytics” for the year 2009, which shows that almost half of all users were referred to the EC’s ESF website via a search engine, such as Google or Yahoo. Thus, these users must be unaware of the existence of specialised ESF websites and were probably looking for general information about the ESF on the internet. One third of website users were referred to the ESF website from other sites, such as the European Commission’s Europa-Website, but also from the national ESF websites. Only 21% came to the website via direct traffic, assuming that they knew the URL and had used the website before.

Figure 3 – “Google Analytics” traffic sources



In addition, according to “Google Analytics”, 66% of the EC’s ESF website visitors between January and December 2009 were new users of the website. These findings suggest that the website is mainly used by people who are looking for general information on the ESF and might not be aware of the existence of the national ESF websites.

The desk-based comparison of the national ESF websites and the ESF website has shown that the EC's ESF website first and foremost provides a more comprehensive overview of the ESF and its role in the European Union as a whole. Secondly, it serves as a source of information for the ESF in the Member States. The national websites, in contrast, are more tailored towards the needs of specific national users, such as project beneficiaries, rather than providing an overview of the value added by the European Social Fund.

Thus, the EC's ESF website does add value to the existing national ESF websites. It attracts those people who are looking for information on the ESF in search engines. These website users can then consult the EC's ESF website, search for the basic information needed, and consult the links to the national ESF websites in case more specific details are necessary.

The analysis of the content of the national ESF websites suggests that the three examples analysed tended to provide detailed information on the following aspects:

- General information about the ESF and what it does (with the exception of Poland)
- Thematic fields of ESF activity
- Specific information about ESF financial allocations and spending in the country
- Specific information about legal requirements on the ESF
- Information on obtaining funding to set up an ESF project
- Project database

However, areas that were less comprehensively covered by the national websites, and where the EC website could therefore provide significant added value, were:

- Information on how to participate in an ESF project
- Regular newsletters
- Use of good practice examples
- News and Events
- Information about the ESF in other EU Member States

These are areas where the EC's ESF website can add significant value. At the same time, it should also be noted that the analysis of the three national websites revealed significant differences, not only in the amount of information, but also how this is presented, and how user-friendly the websites are. It is likely that a full analysis of the websites of all 27 Member States would have revealed further differences and information gaps. Until all Member States have attractive and user-friendly websites that cover all of the key information, there remains a place for the EC's website as a provider of both general and more specific information on the ESF vis-a-vis the interested public, as well as a widely accessible tool for the dissemination of specific information and tools to Managing Authorities and other (potential) multipliers.