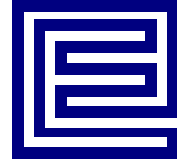

The European Evaluation Consortium



Lot 3: Provision of External Evaluation Studies of an Interim and Ex-Post Nature

Evaluation of DG ECFIN's information and communication activities on Economic and Monetary Union, including the Euro (PRINCE Programme)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO THE FINAL REPORT

February 2007

Evaluation of DG ECFIN's information and communication activities on Economic and Monetary Union, including the Euro (PRINCE Programme)

Request for services (ECFIN/R/4/2007/002)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007 The European Evaluation Consortium was commissioned by the European Commission to undertake an evaluation of DG ECFIN's Information and Communication activities on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), including the Euro (PRINCE Programme).

The purpose of this evaluation was to conduct an analysis of the impact and effectiveness of the actions undertaken by the Commission between 2004 and 2006 and beyond in the framework of the Programme d'Information du Citoyen Européen (PRINCE) programme.

EVALUATION SCOPE

The scope of the evaluation was to examine the extent to which the European Commission's communication activities between 2004 and 2006 facilitated the introduction of the Euro.

The focus of the evaluation was the information actions directly or indirectly implemented between 2004 and 2006. Particular emphasis was given to the activities carried out in the new Member States (MS), in particular focusing on the Slovenian changeover.

The evaluation took the previous study undertaken in 2003 into account. However, there was an emphasis on learning from recent experiences.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was based on a three phase approach: Inception, Data Gathering and Analysis; and a Judgement and Reporting Phase.

The key methodological elements included:

- Face to face meetings with 10 stakeholders from DG ECFIN in order to collect relevant information and to validate conclusions.
- Telephone interviews with 16 members of the Directors of Communications Network (DirCom) and other Information & Communication (I&C) stakeholders in MSs.
- Telephone interviews with 10 economic journalists.
- A case study of the situation in Slovenia, which included 13 interviews with representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Government, the Central Bank, and the EC Representation.
- Focus groups in three new MSs (Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus).
- Interviews with consumer organisations.

The evaluation commenced in May 2007 and was completed in January 2008. The following is a very brief summary of the detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in the main part of the final report.

NO-COST RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

No-direct costs interventions are carried out directly by DG ECFIN staff. They include networking activities with existing relays, direct assistance to new MSs in their preparation of developing an I&C strategy for their individual changeovers, as well as, the preparation of guidelines, recommendations, and practical advice to support national administrations in their changeover efforts.

Conclusions:

- The evaluation of 'generic' guidelines and recommendations developed and issued by DG ECFIN is positive. In particular, Euro Team members found the guidelines developed by the Commission for the establishment of the network very helpful.
- Results from the Slovenian case study showed that direct 'tailored' no-cost assistance from DG ECFIN to key national institutional stakeholders is very much appreciated and have a practical impact towards ensuring a smooth changeover campaign.

Recommendations:

- **Short/Medium Term:** Important lessons can be drawn from the recent Slovenian changeover to the Euro and the processes in Malta and Cyprus. It would be particularly useful to take stock of these experiences and update accordingly the existing guidelines for the preparation of national I&C strategies.
- **Longer Term:** The extent of the need for 'focused' no-cost assistance may vary greatly depending on two factors: (i) the 'readiness' of the institutional infrastructure in the MS; (ii) the presence of parallel changeover processes. In the case of Slovenia, the assistance provided was adequate, but it is likely that in certain circumstances the provision of the same level of assistance to other MSs could be impossible. No-cost activities entail an intense use of internal human resources that appear today already overstretched. It would be important then to devise ways to adjust the extent of the provision of focused no-cost assistance to the actual resources available, and identify agreed criteria to ensure that these resources are available to the MSs according to their specific features and needs.

MEMBER STATES GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES AND MEDIA ACTIVITIES

Funding for Member States government programmes and media activities is provided via Partnership and Twinning Agreements. Strategic Partnerships are a vehicle by which the Commission and MSs jointly work on I&C strategies whereas Ad-Hoc Partnerships allow MSs to receive EC funding for specific activities. Partnership Agreements finance such activities as: information products and websites, events, information and co-ordination activities and opinion polling. Twinning Agreements support activities such as: training sessions, bilateral meetings, exchanges of specific expertise etc. More detailed conclusions and recommendation will be presented under the following sections of this summary.

Conclusions:

- Partnership Agreements are key tools in achieving DG ECFIN's objectives of creating public awareness, providing neutral and actual information, contributing to a smooth changeover and providing third parties with information.
- The success of activities conducted under Partnership Agreements is determined by the type of agreement. Although all add-value, in Slovenia the evaluation found that Strategic Partnership Agreements tend to have a greater impact on 'multipliers' and 'intermediaries', while Ad-Hoc Partnership Agreements were more effective for general public and specific target groups.
- Although the above could not be extrapolated to apply across the board, MSs' representatives indicated that the usefulness of Strategic Partnerships (and their broad EU dimension) is magnified in cases where national information and communication issues need to be benchmarked (i.e. through polling for example) or can benefit from a clearer EU dimension. Ad Hoc agreements on the other hand are, by definition, activities which are specifically designed to be implemented at the local level. Stakeholders from the case study explained that this was most useful in

customising their national Ad campaign; this was further echoed by stakeholders from the MS interview programme.

- The added value of Twinning's is the incorporation of experience from other countries that have already undergone the process and in establishing I&C campaigns within a greater European context.

Recommendations:

- **Short/Medium Term:** Twinning's are greatly appreciated and achieve their goal of exchanging information among administrations. It is important to continue to ensure that Twinning's are undertaken in such a manner that appropriate participants are selected to assure the greatest added value (i.e. most similar fit concept). This could be done through more rigorous screening and preparation. Part of this should also include strategic dissemination of Twinning's results.
- **Short/Medium Term:** Trilateral Twinning's proved somewhat more difficult and should be re-evaluated as to their merit.
- **Longer Term:** Partnership Agreements are a key vehicle in supporting MSs in their I&C Activities. Resources permitting, Partnership Agreements should be made available to countries with medium to long term Euro entry horizons.

INFORMATION PRODUCTS AND WEBSITES

To communicate on EMU and the Euro, a range of tools have been developed to provide MSs with support in their changeover activities. These have included: publications (such as booklets, leaflets, posters, etc), promotional materials used at conferences (such as mouse pads, pens key rings etc.), the DG ECFIN website, including 'The Euro Our Currency' site; and "European Economy News", a DG ECFIN newsletter.

Conclusions:

- The major recipients of DG ECFIN publications were national publics who received copies via the EU Representations, their national administrations and other institutions such as banks and schools.
- Major users of DG ECFIN information products and web sites were individuals and organisations responsible for communicating within national contexts. The evaluation's survey of Euro Team, Euro Direct and Information Relays including the EU Representations resulted in a positive assessment of the promotional tools, publications and The Euro: Our Currency web site.
- National stakeholders responsible for aspects of the euro changeover in their country perceive the products produced by DG ECFIN as providing key support to their own activities.
- The content of some publications corresponded to general information needs within MSs, particularly where documents were short, concise and clear. Collaboration between MSs and DG ECFIN is crucial in finding the right balance between general and more specific communication materials.
- Print runs were established on the basis of request from MSs and EU institutions which means that DG ECFIN avoided stockpiling unused brochures.
- The DG ECFIN website was recently re-launched and it is assumed to have addressed a number of issues identified early in the evaluation (e.g. navigation, presentation etc.). However, the link between national and DG ECFIN's website could be strengthened.

Recommendations:

- **Short/Medium Term:** DG ECFIN is providing an important information service to information facilitators and administrators at national level and should continue to provide general documents for these audiences as well as those who proactively seek information on DG ECFIN web sites.
- **Short/Medium Term:** It is recommended that DG ECFIN encourages/requires MSs, to link their national web sites to appropriate electronic DG ECFIN publications.
- **Short/Medium Term:** The Commission should continue to provide information that is suitable for informed groups but should work together with the MSs to allow further targeted approaches to be developed.
- **Longer Term:** Given the acknowledged increased effectiveness of tailoring information materials to specific audiences, it is suggested that DG ECFIN focus on guiding, coordinating and co-financing information and communication campaigns and tools. DG ECFIN should retain its 'information' role, but the communication role, which requires integrated targeted campaigns, is primarily implemented by the MSs.

EVENTS, INFORMATION AND CO-ORDINATION ACTIVITIES

Events, information and co-ordination (EIC) activities encompass a series of public events supported and implemented by DG ECFIN. These initiatives are different in nature, target and scope, but are commonly referred to as a single macro-area of DG ECFIN operations. The activities that fall under this category can be divided into the following groups: international conferences and workshops organised at the EU level or in third-countries; seminars for economic journalists; co-ordination meetings of the Directors of Communication network; meetings of and support to the Euro Team network; and the Euro Coins Genesis Exhibition.

Conclusions:

- Overall, the EIC activities adequately responded to recipients' needs and to a large extent the original objectives were achieved as well.
- Conferences are seen, especially by institutional representatives of pre-in MSs, as very successful initiatives.
- Although appreciated by participants, seminars for economic journalists were difficult to assess. It is not clear what the quantitative impact on journalists' work has been and the level of networking among participants seems low.
- The DirCom Network meetings have broadly facilitated the networking with Member State institutions and helped the exchange of information on general and practical aspects of changeover.
- Euro Team was launched recently and tangible results are still outstanding. Preliminary findings from Slovenia suggest that the performance of the network is positive.
- The Euro Coins Genesis exhibitions are viewed positively, more as a promotional event, rather than an informational one.

Recommendations:

- **Longer Term:** Conferences are generally viewed positively. In order to enhance the cost-effectiveness of conferences, it is recommended to maintain or increase the present level of effort on events for pre-in MSs which on average are better received.

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- **Short/Medium Term:** Although seminars for journalists are appreciated, adjustments could be made to improve them further: (i) devise ways to deal with the different backgrounds of participants, including systematic ways to monitor beneficiaries' interests and adjust the programmes accordingly; (ii) propose less demanding schedules. In addition to that, it would appear necessary to gain more insights on the comparatively lower appreciation for regional seminars and to re-consider this formula accordingly.
 - **Short/Medium Term:** DirCom Meetings are a successful component of the programme; however, there is a challenge to raise the interests of DirCom members from countries that have stopped communicating on the Euro. To concentrate especially on networking events restricted to new MSs could prove particularly efficient.
 - **Short/Medium Term:** In regard to the Euro Team (ET) segment of the programme, it would be beneficial to have more 'tailored' trainings, e.g. segmenting the network in sub-groups with similar level of competences (SME Associations, Consumer Groups etc.). In addition to that, it is advisable to clarify the mechanisms for the involvement of ET members at national level, and to have the ET members contacts details published on the internet.

OPINION POLLING

Part of the implementation of DG ECFIN's I&C strategy on the Euro and EMU includes the use of monitoring and feedback tools to assess the impact of campaigns so as to eventually reorient resources so as to fill in possible information gaps and other communication needs. The instruments adopted in this case include quantitative surveys, and to a lesser extent, qualitative surveys and studies.

Conclusions:

- The approach and methodology chosen for the Eurobarometer survey programmes entail several advantages, such as the comparability of results across countries and over time.
- Opinion polling results are found to be particularly relevant in pre-in MSs, as they provide practical insights for the planning and fine-tuning of the Euro campaigns.
- Evidence indicates that there are some difficulties with the Eurobarometer polls programmes. For example, the methodology adopted does not always ensure that the results are consistent and/or statistically significant; sometimes there are problems with the translations/adaptations of questionnaires to the local context. Although the above are minor aspects and relate to only specific items, they are worth noting for future improvements.
- The questionnaire used by Eurobarometer in Euro Area was recently revised to improve the information collected.

Recommendations:

- **Short/Medium Term:** Opinion polls are considered extremely valuable in planning, customising and adjusting I&C activities. However, in working against the risks of inconsistencies due to either the use of unfamiliar and complex terminology and concepts, or inadequate translation/localisation of questionnaires, it is suggested that the future revision of the questionnaire, include some pre-testing of critical questions prior to the fully-fledged implementation of the survey. This would support the aim of ensuring the maximum comparability of results across countries.
- **Short/Medium Term:** As regards country-specific surveys it could prove extremely practical to insert in the questionnaire specific queries on the effectiveness of the (main) Information and Communication actions carried out by the European Commission and MS institutions. This would represent a helpful source of information for subsequent evaluations.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

It is worth noting that in order for DG ECFIN to maintain a comparable level of effort over the coming 2007-2013 period, the yearly budgetary amounts allocated to the PRINCE Programme may prove insufficient.

The value of Partnership Agreements and other support programmes should be proportional to the size of the country in terms of population, and as such will require significantly higher amounts of resources than for Slovenia, Malta or Cyprus. Depending on the timing of future changeovers the financial requirements could easily scale up to a level which would not allow DG ECFIN to provide