

**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**

FINAL REPORT

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0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation examined the ESF I&C activities/tools undertaken and produced by the EC 2007-2009 and indicated if and how activities/tools were used, found to be appropriate and useful by respective target audiences. Thus, the evaluation aimed to help the EC to decide on the most appropriate strategy, methods and tools for its ESF communication work for the 2nd half of the ESF funding period 2007-2013.

The evaluation employed a number of data collection tools in order to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform this report. The evaluation team conducted a number of telephone and face-to-face interviews with:

- members of Informal network of national communication coordinators for the ESF;
- geo-desks officers at the EC;
- press officers in the EC Representations;
- journalists who wrote on the ESF in the past.

In the course of the evaluation two online surveys carried out (one survey of website users and another with ESF Managing Authorities). In addition, TEP conducted five case studies (one for each of the main types of I&C activities and tools developed by the EC) and desk-based research to gauge the progress made by the EC to communicate on the ESF.

Relevance

The evaluation has confirmed that the EC's ESF I&C approaches and objectives are clearly relevant in view of the needs of the multipliers. At the same time, the evaluation found that the EC actors that were engaged for this evaluation do not always perceive themselves as ESF multipliers and could potentially be more active in communicating the ESF.

Although the EC's ESF I&C objectives and approaches generally do address the needs of national actors involved in ESF communication, there are also some significant challenges to effective ESF communication that the EC's activities and tools have only addressed to a limited extent to date. Most importantly, the prevalent lack of interest among the stakeholders and the general public in the ESF, and the lack of news-worthy material for the media to report on, has not been targeted directly.

Effectiveness

In judging the effectiveness, one needs to differentiate between the different types of tools and activities.

- The **INIO network** was highly valued by its members, who believed it provides a unique opportunity for communication officers from different Member States to network and exchange examples of best practice. However, the extent to which the lessons learned are actually applied in the Member States appeared relatively limited.
- **Written material** was valued for being available in all 23 EU languages and accessible through the ESF website. However, there was a general feeling that it is a little outdated form of communication. Most of the EC's publications are more useful for dissemination through its own multipliers; however, these often didn't even know they exist.

- **Media relations:** The EC has done very little to intensify its relations with the media. The EC's interactions with the media were almost entirely related to the OP adoption and the 50th anniversary of the ESF (all events took place in 2007).
- The **videos** were judged very positively in terms of their content, length, and narrative style. However, the audiovisual material was not exploited fully and the potential for their further distribution is much higher.
- The **ESF website** is the most accessible and well known tool among the multipliers who perceived it as very useful. However, the level of information provided appears more appropriate for those linked with the ESF in professional terms than for the general public at large.

All I&C *tools* (written and audiovisual materials, ESF website) have the potential to be effective in that they are generally well designed and convey the right messages in an appropriate way (although some improvements still appear possible for certain tools). However, their ultimate effectiveness depends on their use by multipliers to better inform the general public, which in turn depends on multipliers' awareness of the existence of the tools, and their willingness and ability to actually use them. In this sense, more could be done in terms of systematic dissemination and engagement strategies.

As regards the *activities*, the INIO network is effective in terms of information sharing, but appears to be less so with regard to the extent to which this information leads to concrete action. As for media relations, the level of activity has been low, and therefore the effectiveness limited.

Impact

According to a recent Eurobarometer study (2009), the overall awareness of the ESF has remained constant at 33% of EU citizens, although there are significant differences between Member States. With the available means, the evaluation was not able to establish any causal links between the overall awareness levels and the EC's I&C activities and tools. Interviews with Managing Authorities confirmed that any change in the level of ESF awareness cannot be directly and solely attributed to the I&C activities developed by the EC, and that there are a number of other factors that are likely to have a much greater effect.

Therefore, the evaluation focused on *results* (i.e. numbers of citizens reached). However, the lack of comprehensive, reliable and comparable data made it impossible to estimate the total number of EU citizens reached by the individual ESF I&C tools and activities. This is partly due to a rather fragmented dissemination system of the different tools, which means that complete records of distribution / use have not been collected. Based on the partial statistics that are available, one can only provide an absolute minimum of the number of citizens reached through specific tools:

- **Written publications:** At least 184,700 printed copies of different materials were distributed by DG EMPL itself. At least another 65,000 publications in electronic format were downloaded from the DG EMPL website only during the last 5 months of 2009.
- **Videos:** The three "ESF in action" videos distributed by MOSTRA were viewed on television by approximately 4.5 million people across Europe. It needs to be emphasised that this is for three videos only, and does not include broadcasts of these videos by media who were not contacted by MOSTRA. By comparison, the number of times *all videos* were viewed online is much smaller (less than 200,000).

- Website: The EC's ESF website has an average of approximately 220,000 unique visitors per year.

These figures give an indication of the fact that the potential impact of videos is far greater than that of the other tools – provided they are broadcast on television, and not only made available online.

Efficiency

The total spent under the ESF I&C framework contract between 2007 and 2009 amounted to EUR 5.2 million. Given the incomplete and often incomparable data and information available on the number of people reached through the individual I&C tools and activities, a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is not feasible. Nonetheless, considering that the budget has led to the production of 67 videos, approximately 80 different written publications, info stands that were used at 23 events, and not least a comprehensive and user-friendly website containing inter alia an extensive project database, one can conclude that the relation between the cost of the EC's ESF communication activities and the outputs produced has been favourable – especially considering that many of the materials are available in several if not all EU languages. However, the efficiency in terms of outcomes or impacts depends on the effective use and dissemination of these tools. As noted above, it is in this area of dissemination that the evaluation has found shortcomings.

Sustainability

All tools developed by the EC so far are likely to be used in the future (i.e. until the end of the current programming period in 2013), although to different extents, depending on the awareness of the multipliers of their availability.

In this context, the ESF website was the tool mainly highlighted by the interviewed stakeholders. However, the sustainability of this tool depends on the EC keeping it up-to-date and adopting to the changing needs of its target audiences. As long as the information on the ESF website is relevant and useful for multipliers and / or the general public, this tool will be in use.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions briefly outlined above, a number of recommendations can be made. The first set of recommendations relates to the EC's ESF I&C activities as a whole, including priorities for the future, an emphasis on more effective dissemination, and the need for better monitoring to measure the impact. The second part relates to the different types of I&C activities, and makes concrete recommendations on how their effectiveness could be improved.

Future priorities

1. Given the wealth of high quality, relevant and (potentially) effective communication material that has been developed to date, the main focus for the remainder of the programming period should shift to **disseminating the existing materials better**, and filling gaps that have been identified.
2. In terms of the Managing Authorities, the EC should emphasise the importance of ESF I&C activities more to the communication officers and their superiors in various existing EC meetings (meetings of special committees) in order to **raise the profile of these activities**. The EC should especially target officials in those Member States

where decreasing or low awareness levels of the ESF were detected by the latest Eurobarometer study in 2009.

3. The EC could also address the lack of news-worthy material about the ESF by **identifying / generating more “stories”** at the national level in order to attract an interest for the ESF among the general public. The EC’s Framework Contract with ESN originally envisaged a number of activities that have not been implemented yet, such as the compilation and management of mailing lists of European journalists, the organisation of press conferences and media events on specific subjects/projects, as well as the support of national campaigns for journalists. Following up and further developing these activities would make an important contribution to improving the visibility of the ESF in the individual Member States.

Dissemination strategies

1. Firstly, the existing *tools* (written and audiovisual materials, website) should be **presented to all multipliers** in a more systematic way in many different forums / meetings that exists within the EC.
2. In a second step, the EC should focus on **developing better strategies** for disseminating its already existing material in order to make full use and improve the overall efficiency of these tools (in particular the videos). This is specifically important when taking into account that the relevance of the topics of these tools might soon expire.

Monitoring

In order to measure the impact of the different ESF I&C tools and activities, it is highly recommended that the EC develops a **standardised system to keep record on the dissemination** of their tools as well as statistics of viewing and downloading figures. This would allow the EC to get a better overview of the number and profile of those reached by the tools (audiovisual and printed material) as well as enable DG EMPL to identify better ways of reaching the different target groups. The findings of the evaluation also show that especially the audiovisual material bears a high potential of reaching a wide mass of viewers when broadcast on TV. This should be taken into account by the EC, and a better media monitoring system for the audiovisual material should be introduced in order to get a better overview of actual viewing figures for the ESF videos.

1 INTRODUCTION

This draft final report is the third of four key deliverables submitted by The Evaluation Partnership in the context of the Mid-term evaluation of the work carried out by the European Commission to communicate on the European Social Fund (ESF) during the programming period 2007-2013.

The purpose of this report is to present the draft results of the evaluation, including answers to all evaluation questions, and recommendations for the Commission's ESF communication work for the remainder of the current programming period.

The draft final report consists of the following main sections:

- Section 2 describes the subject and purpose of the evaluation, as well as the approach and methods that were employed;
- Section 3 presents the main results of the evaluation, structured around the specific evaluation questions that were formulated at the outset of the project;
- Section 4 summarises the key conclusions, and presents recommendations to enhance the Commission's ESF communication activities going forward.

A number of additional materials are contained in the Annexes (submitted as a separate document):

- Annex 1 contains a summary of the evaluation questions, indicators and sources of evidence;
- Annex 2 contains a list of all activities and tools produced under the ESF communications framework contract and their related costs;
- Annex 3 contains detailed reports on the results of each of the main data collection methods (including interviews and surveys with different audiences, and case studies).

2 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Evaluation background

2.1.1 The ESF I&C objectives

Communicating the ESF is in line with the European Commission's overall strategic priority to communicate more effectively about the European Union and its policies to European citizens. Strategic plans and principles to identify concrete measures to ensure more effective communication about Europe have been set up by the Commission in recent years.¹

The overall communication objective of the European Commission in the context of the ESF programming period 2007-2013 has been and continues to be to raise the visibility of the European Social Fund and to ensure that the European public has a clear understanding of what the ESF is and what it does. In particular, it is important to DG EMPL that the public understands that the ESF promotes employment and growth and is complementary to the activities of the Member States. Moreover, by extension, improving the visibility of the ESF should ideally also strengthen the visibility of the European Union as a whole.

Thus, the *overall objectives* for the ESF communication work 2007-2013 can be summarised as follows:

- To raise the overall visibility of the ESF among the general public;
- To 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 adding value by making a positive difference in people's lives through the ESF.

In order to achieve these goals, the following *operational objectives* were set out by the European Commission to communicate the ESF:

- Evaluate communication activities 2000-2006;
- Evaluate communication plans;
- Improve internet site on Europa; develop online database with good practices;
- Consolidate joint communication policy on ESF and promote exchange of good practices and "peer learning" (INIO);
- Produce more ESF communication tools such as press releases, brochures, leaflets (to attract public's attention to ESF and convince it of its value and impact);
- Intensify relations with the media and ensure maximum media coverage of 50th anniversary and coverage of launch of new 2007-2013 programming period;
- Develop audiovisual material.

¹ Communication to the Commission SEC(2005) 985, entitled "Action Plan to improve communicating Europe by the Commission" – 20/07/2005; Communication COM(2005) 494, entitled "The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate" – 13/10/2005; White Paper on a European Communication Policy COM(2006) 35

2.1.2 The Framework contract with ESN

In order to better be able to achieve these objectives, the European Commission decided to conclude a framework contract for services in support for communication activities on the ESF and related policies. The contract was awarded to the European Service Network (ESN) in December 2006, and runs for a period of four years.

The framework contract defines and specifies the areas in which ESN supports the European Commission in its communication of the European Social Fund and related EU policies. The following six main tasks are outlined in the framework contract:

- Task 1: Survey and evaluation of communication activities;
- Task 2: Support to the Commission in promoting and coordinating ESF communication
- Task 3: Development of ESF communication tools
- Task 4: Support to media relations on ESF related issues
- Task 5: Development of audiovisual material
- Task 6: Support to the development of web-sites

By end 2009, approximately € 5.2 million had been spent on over 100 separate projects under this framework contract (for the full list, please refer to Annex 3).

2.1.3 Main ESF communication activities and tools 2007-2009

A large number of ESF communication tools and activities have been produced and implemented in 2007, 2008 and 2009. The framework contract with ESN was used for most, but not all of these. The following is an overview of key activities and tools, structured by the six task areas outlined above:

In the area of surveys and evaluation (task 1), a baseline study concerning the ESF communication activities during the 2000-2006 ESF programming period was carried out by The Evaluation Partnership in 2006/07. This was followed in 2009/2010 by the present mid-term evaluation of the EC's ESF communication activities for the period 2007-2013 currently taking place. Member States themselves are responsible for comprehensively evaluating their own ESF communication activities; the results are expected for 2010/11.

The main tool in the area of promoting and coordinating ESF communication (task 2) is the "Informal Network of national communication coordinators for the European Social Fund" (INIO). The European Commission organises approximately three to four meetings of the INIO network per year; its member include national communication coordinators from each Member State. Between 2007 and 2009, nine INIO meetings took place. ESN is not directly involved in the organisation of these meetings, and they are not paid out of the Framework Contract. However, some specific projects that can be considered to fall under "task 2" have been undertaken under the Framework Contract, e.g.:

- A database of ESF-funded projects across European Member States, which can be accessed online.² As of mid 2010, the database contained information on more than 20,000 projects.

² URL: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/projects/projects_en.htm

- ESN gathered information about the 117 ESF Operational Programmes across the EU Member States, including the socio-economic and employment situation in the different EU countries, ESF priorities, eligible regions, financial plans, figures and contact details. This information is also available from the ESF website.

Under task 3 (development of ESF communication tools), a considerable number of written materials were developed, ranging from glossy information brochures and books (such as “Making a difference in life”, or the “ESF 50th anniversary book”) to leaflets and factsheets that provide key information in a very concise way, as well as other materials such as posters and maps. These materials are produced in numerous languages and are generally available as hard copies as well as on the website. Moreover, ESF information stands³ were produced; these were used at a total of 23 conferences, meetings or public events between 2007 and 2009.

Regarding media relations (task 4), two main activities took place in 2007, namely a series of press releases on the occasion of the adoption of the Operational Programmes and the ESF’s 50th anniversary, and a project to attempt to place articles signed by Commissioner Spidla in a series of newspapers in selected Member States. However, since 2008 no new activities have been launched specifically in the area of media relations.⁴ ESN does undertake a weekly media monitoring with a view to selecting articles to be published on the ESF website.

ESN has also been responsible for the development of a series of audiovisual material (task 5). Two videos were produced for the 50th anniversary of the ESF, as well as 11 videos on the “ESF in action”. More recently, the Commission decided to use “human stories” for the films, as it was perceived that individual examples of the usefulness of the ESF would be more likely to catch the attention of the general public. This idea is reflected in the series of 54 short films “Investing in people”. Each of these films tells the true story of an individual (two from each Member State) who have improved their lives thanks to ESF support.

Finally, ESN is responsible for the development and updating of the ESF website,⁵ which falls under “task 6” of the Framework Contract. The previous ESF website was completely overhauled in 2007 in order to make the ESF more visible to the public. The objective of the new website is to provide a wealth of information, and to offer material that is easy to understand in terms of style and language. The website offers information on how the ESF affects people’s lives, and also shows how the ESF is implemented locally through the project database. The ESF website is updated regularly; it is available in the languages of all 27 EU Member States.

2.2 Evaluation purpose and main objectives

As the halfway point of the current ESF funding period is approaching, and in view of the fact that the framework contract for communications support services is due to expire in 2010, it is important for the European Commission to establish whether the Commission’s strategy to

³ ESN has sub-contracted the company Premo Group, which is responsible for the stands.

⁴ One of the reasons for this may be that ESN had initially subcontracted media relations to an external company. However, this relationship did not work as effectively as intended and resulted in the termination of this specific consortium.

⁵ URL http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/index_en.htm

improve the visibility of the ESF has been successfully implemented in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and whether it has had any impact.

Thus, the ultimate aim of this mid-term evaluation is to help the European Commission to decide on the most appropriate strategy, methods and tools for its ESF communication work for the second half of the ESF funding period 2007-2013. To provide the necessary evidence base for this, the evaluation was to examine the ESF I&C activities and tools undertaken and produced by the European Commission between 2007 and 2009, with a view to understanding if and how these activities and tools are used, found to be appropriate and useful by their respective target audiences.

While communication with ESF beneficiaries and project participants is primarily the responsibility of national actors, the European Commission's ESF I&C activities and tools are ultimately aimed at raising the awareness and understanding of the ESF among the general public. However, the Commission generally does not communicate with the general public directly, but seeks to use the following multipliers to disseminate information and reach the public at large:

- Media (national / regional / local);
- ESF Managing Authorities in the Member States;
- Commission actors (ESF geo desks in DG EMPL, Commission representations in the Member States and the EC's spokesperson).

Therefore, engaging and collecting feedback from these multipliers was crucial for this interim evaluation.

To the extent possible, the evaluation covered five generic evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The table below gives an overview of these generic evaluation issues to be covered and (in parentheses) their definition as per the EC's evaluation guidelines. The column on the right contains the concrete evaluation questions under each issue. These illustrate how the generic evaluation issues were interpreted and addressed within the context of this evaluation.

Table 1 – Evaluation issues and questions

Evaluation issues	Evaluation questions
<p><u>RELEVANCE</u> (The extent to which an intervention's objectives are pertinent to needs, problems and issues to be addressed)</p>	1. What are the main needs, problems and issues facing multipliers with a view to effectively communicating the ESF to the general public?
	2. To what extent do the EC's ESF I&C (operational) objectives address / mitigate these needs, problems and issues?
<p><u>EFFECTIVENESS</u> (The extent to which objectives set are achieved)</p>	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 <i>visibility</i> of the ESF among the general public?
	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 raise the general public's <i>understanding</i> of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

Evaluation issues	Evaluation questions
	lives through the ESF?
IMPACT (The effects of an intervention in society)	5. Is there a need for additional / new / different I&C activities or tools to achieve these objectives? 6. Taken as a whole, have the I&C activities enhanced the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?
EFFICIENCY (The extent to which the desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost)	7. Did the I&C activities and tools have any other (positive or negative) effects? 8. To what extent are the costs of the different types of I&C activities (e.g. website, audiovisual material, written material, media relations) proportionate to their overall effectiveness
SUSTAINABILITY (The extent to which positive effects are likely to last after an intervention has terminated)	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)?

2.3 Evaluation approach and methodology

The following chapter briefly presents the tools and methods that were used to collect data for the evaluation, as well as the approach and methods for the data analysis.

2.3.1 Data collection from Managing Authorities

Two different tools were used to collect data from the Managing Authorities of ESF-funded Operational Programmes across the EU:

Interview with INIO members: Ten telephone interviews were conducted with selected members of the INIO network. These interviews aimed to gather their feedback on the cooperation between the EC and the INIO Network, as well as on other activities and tools developed by the EC. The evaluation team focused on the Member States where the awareness of the ESF has increased or decreased the most (according to the recent Eurobarometer results⁶), while also ensuring there was a balance between Member States from different regions, of different sizes and with different levels of ESF funding per capita and overall levels of ESF awareness. Based on these criteria, INIO members from the following Member States were selected for interviews: Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

Online survey with Managing Authorities: An online survey with INIO members and ESF communication officers in the Managing Authorities of all the Operational Programmes (OPs) was conducted in order to collect 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. Email invitations were sent to the

⁶ European Commission: Special Eurobarometer 316: European Employment and Social Policy. July 2009. URL: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_316_sum_en.pdf

INIO members with a request to forward the link to the survey to ESF communication officers of Managing Authorities in their respective countries. A total of 77 respondents took part; 70 of these completed the entire survey.

2.3.2 Data collection from EC multipliers

The data collection from EC's multipliers was divided into two sets of ten interviews. In order to add to the comparability of results across different EU countries, the evaluation team selected both the geo desks and the EC Representations to cover the same Member States as the selected INIO members.⁷

Interviews with geo desk officers: The main objective of the interviews with officials working for the ESF "geo-desks" within DG EMPL was to get an understanding of the needs for, use of and usefulness of the different ESF I&C activities and tools in those Member States they are responsible for. The interviews also focused on the role of geo desks themselves in ESF communication and information dissemination. The evaluation team carried out 10 interviews with geo-desk officers.

Interviews with EC Representations: The aim of the interviews with the press / communication officers in EC Representations in different Member States was to collect their perceptions and views of the use and usefulness of the ESF communication tools produced by the EC, how these tools were disseminated (both, to Representations and by them) and if they were appropriate in reaching the target audiences. Also, the interviews helped to gain a better understanding of how the information officers approach national and/or regional/local media.

2.3.3 Data collection from journalists

The objective of the interviews with journalist was to understand when, how, and why journalists from across a number of Member States report on the ESF, and how they can be encouraged and better enabled to do so more often. The interviews also aimed to collect 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 evaluation team developed a database with contact details of journalists who have written about the ESF in the past. The database was compiled from different sources (clipping reports, articles sent by ESN to DG EMPL to be published on the ESF Website, and articles available on the NewsBrief Website). The data base consists of 76 entries, and includes journalists from 14 different Member States.

TEP aimed to undertake 20 telephone interviews with journalists. However, due to the low success rate, the number of interviews conducted (17) was slightly lower than originally planned⁸.

⁷ The evaluation team was only able to undertake 8 out of the 10 planned telephone interviews with EC Representations. No interviews could be conducted with press officers in the EC Representations in Finland and Portugal, due to the fact that both of them felt they would not be able to make a meaningful contribution to this evaluation.

⁸ The evaluation team has contacted 66 journalists but most of them did not respond to the study teams' numerous requests for an interview.

2.3.4 Survey of website users

An online survey of users of the Commission's ESF website was launched on 29 January 2010 and remained online until mid May. 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 ESF 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 most useful, what could be improved etc. The 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 approximately 6,600 subscribers of DG EMPL's Social Agenda magazine.

A total of 510 respondents have taken part in the consultation; approximately 77% of these completed the entire survey.

2.3.5 Case studies

TEP conducted five case studies (one for each of the main types of I&C activities and tools developed by the EC) in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness, impact etc. of specific examples of I&C activities. The subjects of the case studies were as follows:

- Assessment of one INIO meeting
 - 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 methodology employed in this case study included desk-based research, direct observation, interviews with the participants from the Member States and the EC representative, and paper questionnaires filled in by participants after the meeting.
- Assessment of the use of the EC's written material at one specific event
 - TEP assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the dissemination of the EC's written material on the ESF by the EC multipliers during the Europe Day celebration in Portugal (Matosinhos, 7-9 May 2010).
 - The methods applied in the case study included: an observation of the event, interviews with officials from EC Representation, ESF Managing Authority, and the visitors of the event, paper questionnaires to collect the visitors' feedback on the stands, and desk research.
- Analysis of the press coverage of the OP adoption in a sample of MS
 - TEP analysed the press coverage of the OP adoption in Ireland, Poland, Spain and Sweden.
 - The methodology included an analysis of articles on this topic and interviews with the press officers at the EC Representations responsible for those countries and authors of a selection of articles in the national press.

- 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 help to make the ESF more visible and understandable for the target audience.
 - The methodology employed a desk-based analysis of all 11 “ESF in action” films produced, and interviews with broadcasters who had requested and broadcast the 3 “ESF in action” videos distributed by an external contractor in 2009.
- Comparative analysis of the EC and a sample of national ESF websites
 - The aim of the case study 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 methodology for the case study comprised desk-based analysis, an analysis of the structure and content of the national and the EC’s ESF website, and interviews with members of staff responsible for the design and content of each of the websites.

2.3.6 Desk-based research

The evaluation team conducted desk-based research in order to further its understanding of the progress made so far on the Commission’s work to communicate on the ESF. Desk-based research included the following data sources:

- Strategy, background and context documents;
- Inventory of ESF I&C tools and activities;
- Statistics on use and dissemination of ESF I&C tools;
- Statistics on website usage including the number of downloads of different materials
- Other sources, such as Eurobarometer results, INIO documents, sample of national ESF communication plans.

As a central point of the desk-based research, a complete inventory of activities and tools was developed. The inventory is presented in Annex 3 and covers all the projects billed under the framework contract until 31 December 2009. The Inventory gives an overview of activities and tools developed for the EC by ESN, as well as the distribution of costs according to the six tasks specified in the framework contract.

Moreover, desk research was undertaken to compile and process available statistics and data on the distribution of the various I&C tools, including printed materials and videos. However, a complete record of the dissemination of all written material as well as videos disseminated since 2007 did not exist, and the amount of information that was available varied depending on the transmission channel. This posed some challenges to the evaluation (especially in terms of measuring *impact*), which are described in more detail in the following chapter.

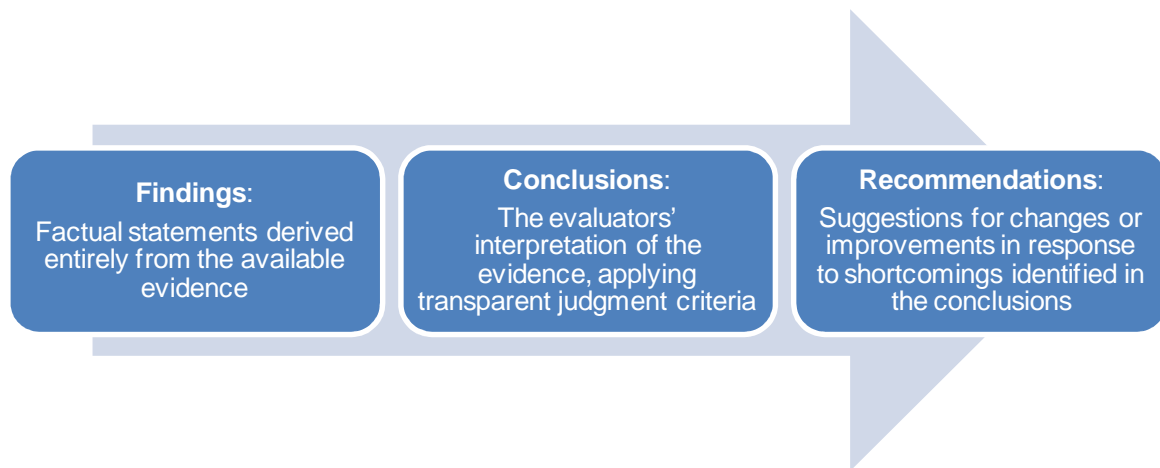
2.3.7 Analytical approach and methods

The analytical framework for the evaluation is provided by the matrix of evaluation questions, judgment criteria and corresponding evidence base contained in Annex 2 to this report. This framework shows:

- The criteria according to which each question was answered (judgment criteria)
- The evidence that was used to sustain the judgments (evidence base)
- The tools and techniques that were used to collect the evidence (data sources)

The evaluation questions matrix ensured that the evaluation approach was transparent and systematic; it provided the evaluators with a framework for reference during both the data collection and the ensuing analysis, when the data was mapped to the individual judgment criteria and questions. Using this framework, the evaluators triangulated the relevant data from the different sources to develop findings, conclusions and (where appropriate) recommendations for each evaluation question.

Figure 1 – Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations



Due to the nature of the evaluation and the available evidence base, the types of findings and conclusions drawn under the different evaluation issues varied somewhat. Where relevant and appropriate, this is explained in the following chapter of this report.

3 EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The following sections contain the main results of the evaluation, structured around the main evaluation issues (relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability) and the specific evaluation questions that were defined under each. As appropriate, the findings are presented by type of I&C activities / tools, multiplier group, and/or data collection method. More details on the information collected via the different methods can be found in Annex 4 to this report.

3.1 Relevance

3.1.1 What are the main needs, problems and issues facing multipliers with a view to effectively communicating the ESF to the general public?

This section discusses the main needs, problems and issues of multipliers in order to effectively communicate on the ESF. The extent to which the EC's ESF I&C objectives are in line with these needs is explored under the following evaluation question (section 3.1.2).

3.1.1.1 Findings

Managing Authorities

According to the online survey with the Managing Authorities, the **ESF communication officers** face several challenges, obstacles and difficulties in communicating the ESF to the general public:

- nearly half of the respondents cite a lack of interest in the ESF among the stakeholders, multipliers, and the general public;
- approximately one third of the respondents complained about the lack of newsworthy material about the ESF and the low profile that the ESF information and communication activities have in the eyes of some of the ESF decision makers compared to other issues, such as the economic crisis, unemployment rates, expenditures, etc.;
- about one fifth of the respondents felt that a lack of quality communication tools, expertise and funding are significant challenges to effectively communicate on the ESF to the general public.

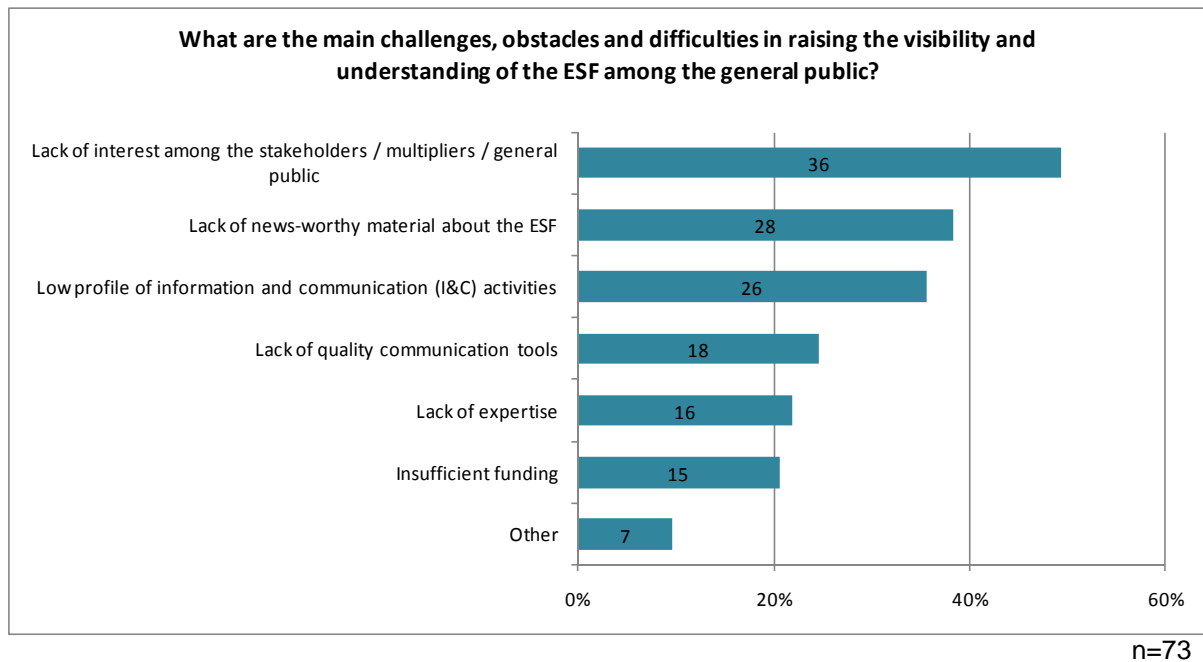
The interviewed **INIO members** confirmed that the major problem is lack of interest among the general public, unless information is related to concrete funding opportunities. The **INIO members** also reported:

- 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).

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

INIO member

Figure 2 – Main challenges, obstacles and difficulties in raising the visibility and understanding of the ESF according to Managing Authorities



EC multipliers

According to the interviews **with EC representations**, the main challenges that press officers face when communicating about the ESF are:

- the EC Representations do not get press releases from the EC on a regular basis;
- press releases are not provided in a format that can be directly used, but need to be rewritten; this takes time and resources;
- lack of information what kind of projects are funded by the ESF at the national level;
- general difficulty to mobilise the media to report about the ESF;
- the ESF is seen as being less important than other funds, for example the ERDF (in terms of financial contributions).

Geo desk officers reported in the interviews that they face the following challenges and obstacles when communicating about the ESF:

- in general, it is difficult to attract the attention and interest of the general public to the ESF;
- it is difficult to explain in clear words what exactly the ESF is and what it does; there are not many events related to the ESF to which one could invite journalists to report;
- every Member State has a specific way of working and a specific need when it comes to communication; therefore, a “one fits all” approach for communicating the ESF and enhancing its visibility does not always work.

Journalists

The evaluation team identified a number of problems that prevent the interviewed **journalists** from writing more often about the ESF. Journalists perceived:

- a lack of or insufficient:
 - access to information on successful ESF projects;
 - news-worthy material on the ESF;
 - information on what the EU does at local and regional levels received by the journalists;
 - a lack of EU/ESF experts willing to speak to the media and explain what the ESF is about;
 - an excessive EU jargon;
 - a complexity of the ESF and procedures to obtain the funds (e.g. eligible costs, private and in-kind contributions etc.).
- “It is not easy to find people who will be willing to give an interview about the ESF.”*
- Journalist

3.1.1.2 Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation show that the key problem for communicating on the ESF is the lack of interest among the general public, stakeholders, and multipliers (including journalists). The Managing Authorities are the main and the most interested group of the multipliers communicating on the ESF, mainly because they have an obligation to do so. The evaluation identified a number of “basic” needs that the Managing Authorities have when communicating on the ESF.

In order to be effective in their work and overcome the challenges outlined previously, ESF communication officers in the Managing Authorities perceive their primary needs to be:

- news-worthy material to pass on to journalists in their countries and motivate them to report on the ESF;
- quality communication tools, especially when their own budgets are limited. The material should be timely, up to date and easily accessible for the different target audiences;
- access to expertise and information sharing in order to improve their ESF communication work and learn from best practices. Networking was perceived as inspiring and opening up new forms of ESF communication;
- a sufficiently high profile for ESF communication: ESF communication officers need to be supported in their work by their superiors who should understand the importance of I&C activities and allocate adequate resources for this task.

For journalists and EC’s multipliers the main problem seems to be that they do not perceive themselves as playing an active role in communicating on the ESF. Therefore it is difficult to identify their generic needs with respect to ESF communication.

Some of these multipliers have a great potential to pass on the information and messages from the EC directly to the general public. However, journalists need concrete stories that their audiences are interested in; where such stories exist, they also need to better understand what the ESF is about and why informing about the Funds is important. Geo-

desk officers as well as press officers in the EC Representations need to be made aware on a regular basis of the ESF I&C material that exists, but would also need guidance on how to make use of the available ESF communication tools.

3.1.2 To what extent do the EC's ESF I&C (operational) objectives address / mitigate these needs, problems and issues?

3.1.2.1 Findings

The EC's ESF I&C (operational) objectives, as stated by DG EMPL in the internal strategy to raise the visibility of the ESF⁹, are:

- improve the ESF website, develop online database with good practices;
- consolidate joint communication policy on ESF and promote exchange of good practices and "peer learning" (INIO);
- produce more ESF communication tools (e.g. press releases, brochures, videos) to attract public's attention to ESF and convince it of its value and impact;
- intensify relations with the media.

Managing Authorities

According to the findings of the online survey, virtually all **ESF communication officers** felt 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.

Approximately two third of **survey respondents** found that the EC meets the needs of the Managing Authorities by:

- improving the website;
- intensifying relations with the media;
- consolidating joint communication policy on ESF and promoting exchange of good practices and "peer learning" (INIO).

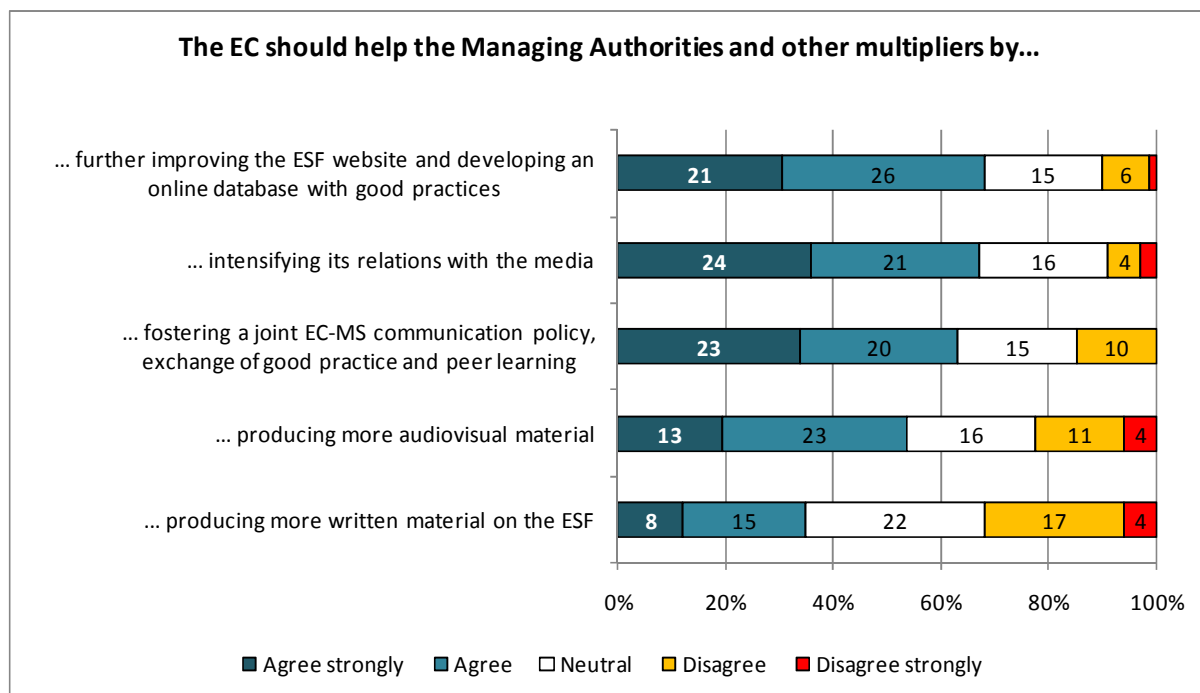
About half of the **survey respondents** believed that their problems could be addressed by producing audiovisual material. However, it is less certain that producing more written material (brochures, leaflets, etc.) would meet the needs of the Managing Authorities, as survey respondents were almost evenly split among those who agreed, were neutral and disagreed with the statement. The perceived lack of usefulness of more written material is well illustrated by the comment below.

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

ESF communication officer

⁹ Stratégie pour améliorer la visibilité du FSE 2007-2013, EMPL/NVDP D(2006) 24760

Figure 3 – 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 interviewed **INIO members**, a joint communication policy on the ESF best addresses their needs with a view to effectively communicate the ESF to the general public. They also believed that by improving relations with the media, the EC might mitigate journalists’, sometimes, negative attitude towards the ESF. However, interviewed INIO members were not familiar with the EC’s work in this area.

The vast majority of the interviewed **INIO members** also thought that the EC will support the Managing Authorities by developing more tools and activities to communicate on the ESF. According to the INIO members, 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. However, the interviewed INIO members thought there is no consistent method of passing on from the EC to the Member States information about the tools developed by the EC, nor is there a clear message in how this material should be disseminated.

EC multipliers

Press officers at **EC Representations** were not well aware of the individual ESF communication tools.

- The videos were the tool mentioned the most by interview partners. They were perceived as being well produced and focusing on the “human face” of the ESF.
- One interviewee suggested the introduction of a “rapid news alert” for each newly funded project in a Member State. He suggested that these news alerts could provide details on the amount of funding a project gets, who is involved, what the project is about and what it tries to achieve.

Geo-desk officers were generally not very aware of the different communication tools and only had a very rudimentary knowledge of their content and dissemination. Geo-desk officers are involved in publishing the brochures though, for example by proof-reading/updating/translating the texts. Overall, there were mixed perceptions of the individual communication tools:

- While more than half of the interviewees thought that all communication tools (written material, media relations, audiovisual material, and ESF website) are contributing well to communicating the ESF, one third of the geo-desk officers interviewed pointed out that especially the written material is no longer an appropriate means for communication. They argued that written material is outdated, and that the Commission should look into developing and enhancing new ways of communicating, i.e. by making use of “new media”, such as the internet.
- A few interviewees stated that DG EMPL should be more pro-active to reach their target audiences, for example by looking into using “Facebook” and “Twitter”, especially in order to reach young people.

Journalists

The majority of the interviewed **journalists** agreed that the EC should intensify its relations with the media and they perceived the media as the best mean to communicate information to the general public.

3.1.2.2 Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation show that the EC’s overall approach to communicate on the ESF generally meets the needs of the main multipliers and the variety of ESF communication tools and activities seem to be relevant for them:

- The work on consolidating a joint communication policy and promote exchange of good practices and “peer learning” through INIO addresses a clear need of Managing Authorities.
- The ESF website, including the project database, is an appropriate tool to meet the need for easy access to a wealth of information and materials on the ESF, including project examples that have the potential to “bring to life” the otherwise rather abstract reality of the ESF.
- The fact that the EC produces communication materials (especially more costly tools such as audiovisual materials) meets a need in that it helps to complement the often limited communication budgets of Member States, but there are questions as to the usefulness of written materials.
- The idea of intensifying media relations is also welcomed by all multipliers.

However, it appears that the most important problems that multipliers face are not directly addressed by the EC. This is partly due to the fact that these are largely external factors, and the EC has little influence on changing them. For example, the lack of interest among the stakeholders and the general public on the ESF perceived is an “external” problem, and it will be very difficult for the European Commission to change this. However, it could potentially take this challenge more into account, and attempt to more proactively generate and disseminate news-worthy materials related to the ESF.

Nonetheless, the EC’s ESF I&C approaches and objectives that have been implemented so far are clearly relevant in view of the needs of the multipliers. However, these multipliers are

not always fully aware of what the EC is doing to address their needs, and there appears to be a general lack of awareness of the different ESF I&C tools available. Especially some of the geo-desk officers, press officers working for the EC Representations and the journalists have an insufficient knowledge of the ESF videos produced, the INIO meetings, the press releases available as well as the publications.

3.2 Effectiveness

3.2.1 To what extent do the different I&C activities and tools help / enable multipliers to raise the overall visibility (and understanding) of the ESF among the general public?

To what extent do the different I&C activities and tools help / enable multipliers to 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?

3.2.1.1 Findings

The findings regarding the effectiveness of each of the main kinds of I&C activities or tools are presented separately. Within each tool / activity, the findings also distinguish between the results of the interviews / surveys with different multipliers, and of the case studies.

A) INIO network

Managing Authorities

The interviews with **INIO members** confirmed that INIO meetings generate a strong interest among the participants of the meetings, especially when they take place outside of Brussels (for example, there were 26 Member States present in Liège while the average attendance is 21 Member States).

"It is very useful to see the good practice examples and bring the best ideas back home"

INIO member

All interviewed **INIO members** agree that "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.

The majority of the interviewed **INIO members** reported that they receive relevant information and messages to communicate the ESF to the general public through participating in the INIO meetings. Also, INIO members passed the information from the INIO meetings on to the national and regional stakeholders.

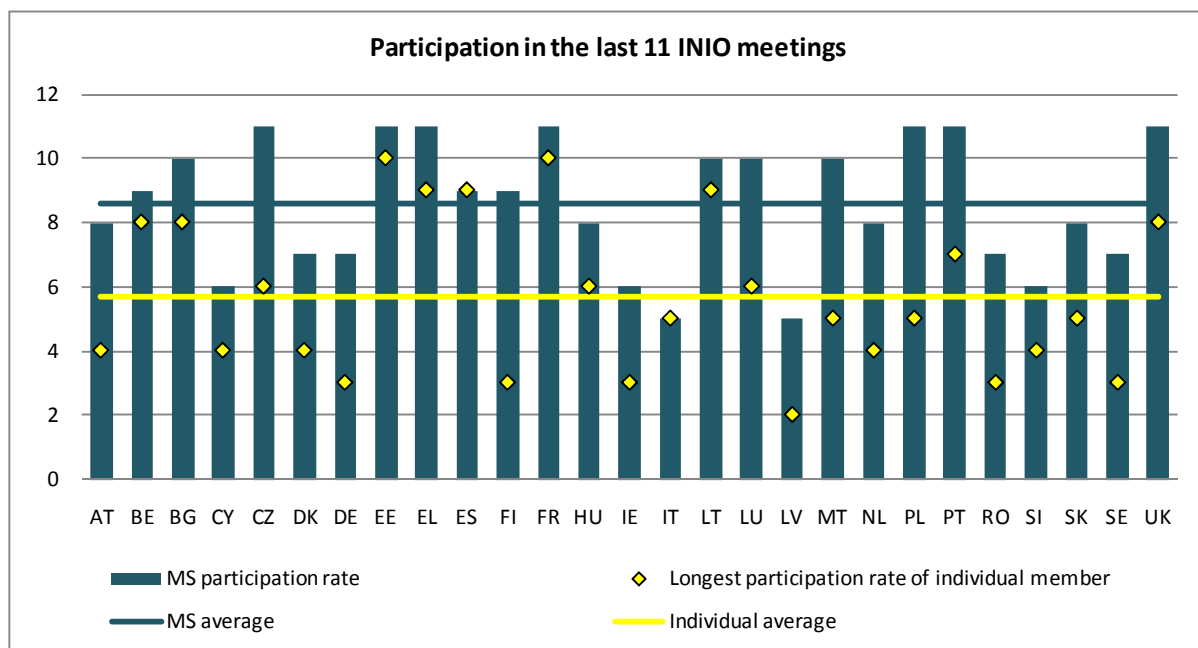
However, it was rather difficult for most of the interviewed **INIO members** to point out any concrete example when they were able to use any of the ideas shared at the INIO meetings in their own countries. The low level of take up was justified mainly by the differences in the ESF communication priorities between the Member States (different budgets available, different approaches and priorities). 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.

These findings are supported by the results of the online survey, where the vast majority of **ESF communication officers** (including non-INIO members) confirmed having received information on the ESF I&C approaches, activities and/or tools developed by the EC and shared at INIO meetings. Out of those respondents who have received information on the ESF I&C tools developed elsewhere, approximately 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.

Case study

Desk based research conducted as a part of the case study of the INIO meeting in Liège shows that on average, a representative of each Member State participated in almost 9 out of the last 11 INIO meetings. However, there was a high turnover at the level of the individuals – an average INIO member participated in only half of the last 11 INIO meetings. This constant rotation of the INIO members can pose a problem to the effectiveness of the Network, as the lack of continuity weakens ‘institutional memory; and the personal relationships that the network is meant to strengthen. The participation rate of the Member States and the high turnover of individual members in the INIO network are presented in the figure below¹⁰.

Figure 4 – Participation in the last 11 INIO meetings



The case study of the INIO meeting in Liège also provided very positive feedback from **participants** about the plenary meeting (virtually all participants felt it was useful for their work) but the interviews conducted with the participants one month after the meeting provided little evidence on the actual application of information and good practice examples shared at the meeting. According to the interviewed participants of the INIO meeting, the

¹⁰ 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).

main reason behind this situation was that insufficient time had passed since the meeting took place.

The evaluation team found that the ESF project visit that formed part of the meeting in Liège generated a strong interest among **participants**, but it was only remotely linked to the ESF I&C activities. As a consequence, only half of the respondents thought that this element of the INIO meeting in Liège was useful for their work.

EC multipliers

None of the **geo-desk officers** interviewed were aware of the existence of the INIO meetings. Even though the geo-desk officers pointed out that they deal with the ESF programme, 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.

B) Written material

Managing Authorities

The interviewed **INIO members** felt there is a problem with the accessibility of the written material. They complained about the lack of information about new releases, and in general INIO members considered the written material was not actively promoted nor disseminated by the EC. They suspected that very few of the EC's publications reached national authorities, and probably even fewer reached the regional authorities.

Some of the written material produced by the EC was perceived by several interviewed **INIO members** as not particularly attractive in terms of its content

"The EC does not inform sufficiently about what is available."

INIO member

or layout. They noted, that the individual publications needed to be up-dated and made more attractive. However, it was highly valued by the majority of the interviewees that the material was produced in all EU languages.

The majority of the interviewed **INIO members** noted that the written material includes 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.

Most of the interviewed **INIO members** noted that they know their target audiences and information needs better than the EC and were better able to tailor written material and complement it with more specific information.

The majority of the interviewed **INIO members** admitted that their use of the written material developed by the EC for the general public was limited. According to the interviewed INIO members, 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.

The **online survey** asked the ESF communication officers in the Member States for feedback on three specific types of written material (a small leaflet with basic information on the ESF, the book "Making a Difference in Life", and the series of national and regional profiles). The key findings included:

- the majority of respondents were familiar with virtually all selected written material produced by the EC. The “ESF leaflet” and the “Making a Difference in Life” book were known by nearly three quarters of the respondents;
- the majority of respondents thought that the selected written material provides relevant messages and information to communicate on the ESF to the general public, with “Making a Difference in Life” receiving the most positive feedback (over two thirds of the respondents);
- 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 by national authorities to their target audiences 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.

Case study

The case study on the EC’s written material on the ESF provided very little evidence on the dissemination of the material to the general public during the Europe Day celebrations in Matosinhos (Portugal):

- the national authorities either believed that the EC’s written material about the ESF is unsuitable for the audience of the event, or they were not familiar with it;
- 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;
- although the ESF info stand, which was designed to inform the general public about the ESF and to pass on the message via multiple communication channels (including written material), was used at more than 20 events during 2007, 2008 and 2009, it was not actively used by the EC for this event (or any other event during the first half of 2010).

EC multipliers

The majority of **press officers** in the EC Representations were not aware of any written material on the ESF.

- Almost all officers interviewed stated that their respective EC Representations do 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.

Geo-desk officers are aware of some of the written material, and they are responsible for handing out some of the brochures and leaflets at events or to visitor groups coming to Brussels.

- In general, the layout and presentation of the written material was rated positively and seen as being presented in an attractive form. Most publications are kept succinct and do not overload readers with too much or too specialised information.
- As stated above, compared to the “new media”, the written material was perceived as somewhat outdated. Few geo-desk officers argued that people looking for information on the ESF would rather search on the website than ordering a

publication from the European Commission. Moreover, the website was perceived as being more user-friendly and generally easier to access.

- All interviewees felt that the best written material produced were the “Country and regional profiles” focussing 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 which is easy to understand.
- Few geo-desk officers commented on the leaflet produced in reaction to the financial crisis, called “The European Social Fund: supporting economic recovery”. They perceived the leaflet as being “prematurely published”, given that it talked about ESF actions that had not been implemented yet. Rather, the leaflet should have included information about EU achievements or good practices of actions undertaken by the EC or the Member States to boost the economy.

Journalists

None of the interviewed **journalists** was familiar with any of the EC’s written material about the ESF.

C) Media relations

This evaluation looked at the effectiveness of EC’s relations with media mainly through the press releases on the ESF produced by DG EMPL. Multipliers were not aware of any other form of EC activity in this area.

Managing Authorities

The interviewed **INIO members** were not familiar with any examples of the EU press releases, and as a consequence they could not comment on their usefulness, content, presentation, or exploitation.

According to the results of the online survey, **survey respondents** were almost evenly split among those who agreed, were neutral, and disagreed that the EU press releases on the ESF provide relevant messages and 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.”

ESF communication officer

Most of the **survey respondents** doubted that this tool is a useful complement to their own media relations activities. According to one ESF communication officer, the reason 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.

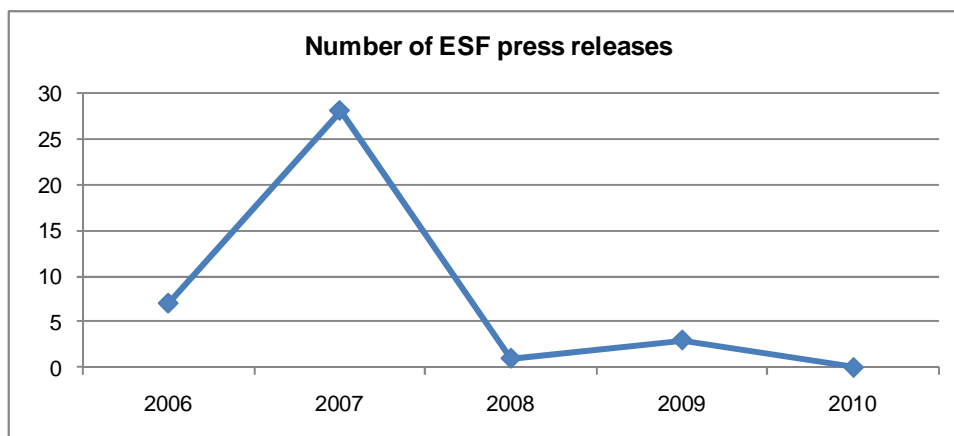
Case study

The results of the case study on the press coverage of the OP adoption in a sample of Member States show that:

- the peak of DG EMPL’s attempts to intensify its relations with the media was 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);

- the press officers from the EC Representations appreciated the content and style of the EU press releases on the OP launch in their countries and they widely disseminated the press releases among national media;
- three out of four interviewed journalists who reported on the OP launch in the national press were not familiar with the EU press releases; they relied on national / regional / local sources of information instead;
- 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 on the OP launch in the selected Member States lacked background information on the ESF and they focused on “EU funding” or “Operational Programmes” rather than “the ESF”;
- almost all examined articles presented a positive attitude towards the EU/ESF;
- according to the circulation of the sources in which the examined articles were published, the articles 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.

Figure 5 – Number of press releases related to the ESF published by the EC (2006-2010)



EC multipliers

Press officers from the **EC Representations** gave an overview of the different media interested in reporting on the ESF in the individual Member States assessed. All interviewees agreed that it is rather difficult to get media attention for ESF-related news.

- Press officers explained that the media at different levels have different needs. It was suggested that local media, such as newspapers and local radio stations, should be the primary target when communicating the ESF. Concrete ESF examples, for example on projects, should be provided so that the news are easy to understand by the general public.
- Most press officers found that they do not receive press releases on the ESF very often. Those press releases they receive on the ESF often lack useful content. They have a “one size fits all” format, and need to be tailored further to the local market in the different Member States. In addition, press releases are often received in English only and need to be translated into the native language of the country. As this takes time, it would be better if the press releases could be translated into all EU languages by the EC directly before sending them out to the Representations.

- Several press officers suggested that the best way of targeting the media and enhancing the media relations would be to provide project examples and personal success stories of people who benefitted from ESF funding.

Geo-desk officers had mixed perceptions regarding the EC’s media relations with a view to the ESF:

- Several officers reported that they are not aware of/familiar with any media relations and have not come across any press releases.
- Out of those interviewees that were aware of the press releases, the majority had a very positive opinion of them. A few 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 Roma conference in Hungary. Both press releases were written in a neutral way and, even though not the most attractive in terms of layout, included appropriate information for journalists.
- One interviewee pointed out that ESF communication very much depends on the Managing Authorities in the individual Member States. It was argued that the Managing Authorities should increase their efforts towards the media on a more regular basis in order to communicate the ESF widely and effectively.

Journalists

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. Most of them felt that such press releases would be too general for their readers who were interested in local issues.

Only a few interviewed **journalists** could recall the EU press release and those journalists found the press releases useful and based their articles at least partly on this source of information.

“Readers are much more interested in the issues that affect them in their day to day lives than about being informed about what the EU does at a supranational level.”

Journalist

However, the journalists complemented the information from the EU press releases with information from national/regional authorities. Only one (Brussels-based) journalist relied solely on the contacts and information from the EC.

D) Videos

Case study

The findings of the **video case study** show that the ESF videos have a great potential to raise the general public’s understanding of the possibilities offered by the ESF. Taking the example of three “ESF in action” videos produced by ESN for journalists and TV stations, broadcasters interviewed who were aware of and had broadcast these videos valued their quality and pointed out that they report about timely issues that are relevant to the general public.

By explaining 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, the videos were perceived as conveying the message that the ESF is a key factor to improve people’s lives, their job prospects and their role in society in general.

Broadcasters also found that the language used in the “ESF in action” videos was easy to understand even by those viewers who are not familiar with the topic. This was seen as important in order to generate interest and to better reach the general public. The films were also seen as explaining well that the European Union works in partnership with the Member States and what the European added value is.

The format of the “ESF in action films” seemed to meet journalists’ needs when 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.

However, all broadcasters interviewed as part of the case study were only made aware of the existence of individual “ESF in action” videos by the distributor MOSTRA, and were not familiar with any other ways of receiving/downloading the films.

Managing Authorities

Almost all of the interviewed **INIO members** were familiar with the videos produced by the EC, although the more recent “Making a Difference in Life” series was much more widely recognised than the “ESF in action” series.

According to the interviewed **INIO members**, the “Making a Difference in Life” videos were slightly more relevant and helpful for the Managing Authorities in raising the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public. The interviewees felt that the main reason behind this was that the clips “ESF in action” were available only in a limited number of languages (which is somewhat surprising, given that all videos are actually available with subtitles in all 23 official EU languages). The majority of the interviewees reported that the videos were attractive, included the same introduction and structure, and used a simple language to convey their message.

Although a vast majority of the **INIO members** had not yet received any DVD with the videos to be further distributed in their countries, most of the interviewed INIO members had managed to disseminate the videos (or were about to use them shortly). Usually, the videos were shown during public events or conferences. The interviewed INIO members also included links to the videos in their national electronic newsletters, uploaded the links on their national ESF websites or ESF pages on Facebook. However, the majority of INIO members felt that there is a much higher potential for further dissemination of the films produced by the EC.

The results of the **online survey** show that:

- about two thirds of the responding ESF communication officers had seen the “Investing in people” videos, while just over half of the respondents were familiar with the “ESF in action” clips;
- according to the majority of respondents the selected videos provided relevant messages and information to communicate on the ESF to the general public; the respondents believed that these videos were an attractive and useful addition to the tools available in their countries;
- the videos were disseminated to other target audiences only by less than a quarter of ESF communication officers, but almost half of the respondents reported that they plan to do so in the future;

- many respondents were not aware of the fact that the videos were available in more than one EU language.

“If the videos were translated or even just subtitled, they'd be easily disseminated in our country.”

ESF communication officer

EC multipliers

Only very few **press officers** at EC Representations were aware of the ESF videos and able to comment on their usefulness.

- One press officer reported that he had received an update on the ESF videos by DG COMM, in which clips were grouped together according to topic.
- 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.

Almost one third of all **geo-desk officers** interviewed were not aware of any 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.

- Almost two-third 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 he is responsible for is regularly showing videos during public events. He pointed out the video on the “50th anniversary of the ESF”, which seemed to have been well received by the general public.

Journalists

None of the interviewed **journalists** were familiar with the videos produced by the EC. Some of them expressed their interest in watching these films, especially, if they showed examples from their countries.

E) Website

Managing Authorities

According to the majority of the interviewed **INIO members**, the ESF website was the most accessible, and therefore the most exploited I&C tool. The website provided an entry point for the INIO members to other ESF I&C tools produced by the EC.

The majority of the interviewed **INIO members** praised the ESF website for responding to their needs. However, some of the interviewees felt that the ESF website is less useful for the general public because people are more interested in country specific information. Although the EC’s website makes an effort to provide such information, most of the interviewed INIO members noted that the level of detail is much lower in comparison to national websites, which form a better source of information for the general public as far as the reality of the ESF in a given country is concerned.

The majority of the **INIO members** were impressed by the design and layout of the website, but even more so by the fact that it is available in all 23 EU languages. A number of the interviewees felt that this tool was still insufficiently promoted to other users and the general public in particular.

“The existence of the ESF website is not communicated well enough.”

INIO member

The results of the **online survey** confirm the findings from the interviews with the INIO members:

- nearly all respondents were familiar with the ESF website;
- almost three quarters of the respondents thought that the ESF website provided relevant information, its design and layout was attractive and, overall, it was a useful complement to their national ESF websites;
- approximately half of the ESF communication officers disseminated information about the ESF website among the general public, and three quarters plan to do so in the future.

EC multipliers

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.

- The use of the website by the general public was questioned though, given that most information is rather general. It was argued that people interested in taking part in projects would rather consult the websites in their countries than the EC's ESF website.

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

- The different parts on the website were perceived as being 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, which provide tailored and specific information and data on grants and calls for proposals.
- A few interview partners questioned the use of the website by the general public. They thought that some of the information provided on the website might not be interesting to more general visitors. Instead, they suggested developing more animated games and interactive foray.

Journalists

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.

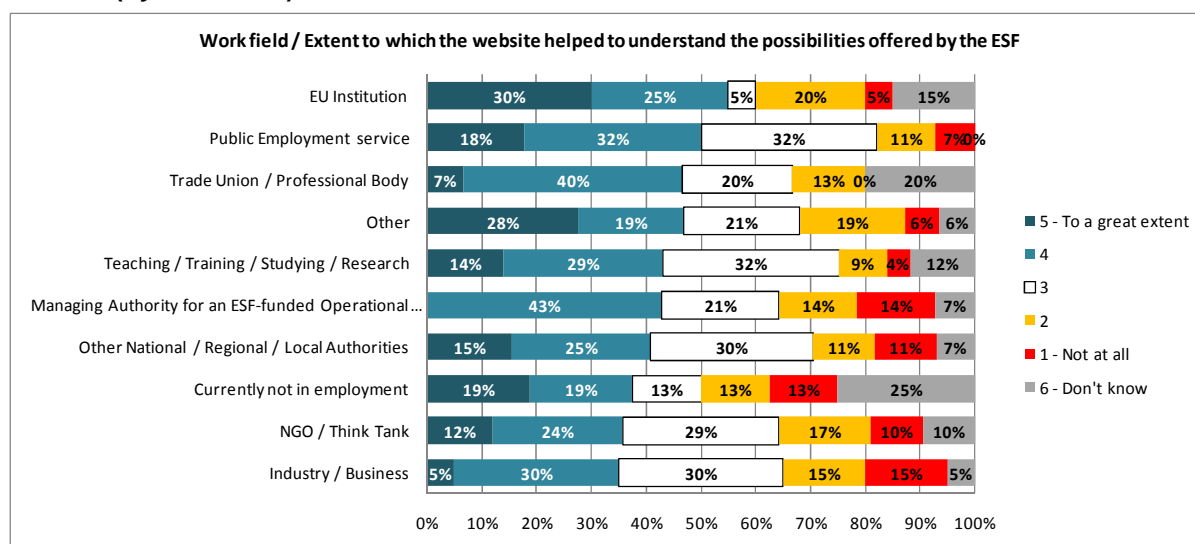
Survey with ESF website users

The findings of the online survey with **website users** have shown that there is still room for improvement for the ESF website in terms of its usefulness to make users aware of what the ESF is and what it does.

The findings of the survey can be summarised as follows:

- The majority of website users seem to fall into the categories of teaching / training / studying / research, and national / regional / local authorities;
- Most website visitors looked for information on examples of projects financed by the ESF as well as general information about what the ESF is;
- Almost half of the respondents found that the ESF website helped them to better understand how the EU can make a positive difference in people's lives through the ESF (40%) and to better understand the possibilities offered by the ESF in their countries (43%);
- However, 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;
- Especially 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, did not perceive the website as helping them to understand how the ESF can positively influence their lives to a great extent;
- It is questionable if the website provides the right level of information in order to successfully target the general public.

Figure 6 – 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.

3.2.1.2 Conclusions

A) INIO network (accessibility, usefulness, content, presentation, exploitation)

Those participating in the network highly value its work and perceive it as being very useful. However, the high turnover of individual participants in each meeting hampers the effectiveness of the network in terms of its continuity.

While participants of the INIO meetings perceived the information and messages shared as being relevant for their communication work, the case study proved that some elements of the meetings seem to be less applicable. For example, the ESF project chosen for the project visit did not provide much expertise in terms of ESF communication work.

The meetings have a well established format and provide a unique opportunity for communication officers from different Member States to network and exchange examples of best practice.

The findings of this evaluation show that information from the INIO meetings is shared among the stakeholders in the Member States. However, the opportunities provided by the network are not fully exploited. For example, there is a low level of application of the best practice examples introduced at the meetings due to differences among the Member States and insufficient time for implementation. Moreover, it can be assumed that the participation of other multipliers such as geo-desks officers would have been beneficial for their communication work and more incentives could make the ESF I&C activities more of a priority for them.

The findings of this evaluation show that some of the key EC's multipliers are not aware of the existence and work of the INIO network and therefore they cannot make use of the expertise and knowledge that it creates.

B) Written material (accessibility, usefulness, content, presentation, exploitation)

The EC does not actively distribute the written material on the ESF and a significant number of multipliers (in particular among the consulted journalists and press officers in the EC Representations) did not know that it exists. 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.

There is a general feeling that the written material is a little outdated form of communication and it does not keep up with the modern ways of communicating and expectations of the multipliers. However, individual publications were perceived as very useful because they conveyed simple and relevant messages or included country specific information. The "Making a difference in Life" book was found especially attractive and well presented but it should be kept in mind that this is the newest publication and the "novelty effect" might have added to the positive feedback it received.

The Managing Authorities generally prefer to use their own written materials, but can sometimes find EC material useful if it is particularly well-written or designed (e.g. "Making a difference in Life"). The EC's multipliers could use the ESF publications, but they mostly don't know they exist. None of the multipliers receive any guidance on how to disseminate the EC's written material and they do not always realise their role in distributing it.

C) Media relations (accessibility, usefulness, content, presentation, exploitation)

The EC has done very little to intensify its relations with the media and multipliers are not informed about developments in this area. The EC's interactions with the media were almost entirely related to the OP adoption and the 50th anniversary of the ESF (all events took place in 2007).

In general, EU press releases on the ESF are not published on a regular basis (except in the context of the launch of the OPs) and therefore not widely recognised by the multipliers as a useful tool. Those multipliers who were familiar with the press releases perceived them to be too general and usually had to change them and complement with more specific information. Moreover, multipliers often had to translate them into national languages.

Although some of the multipliers, such as EC Representations, widely distribute press releases, whether such information will be picked up by journalists depends on how well the press releases are tailored to the needs of the media. Local and regional media outlets were believed to be most likely to take up the message and pass it on to the general public.

D) Videos (accessibility, usefulness, content, presentation, exploitation)

Except the Managing Authorities, most of the remaining multipliers were not aware of the existence of the ESF audiovisual material produced by the EC, nor were they aware of where these videos can be found. However, those multipliers familiar with the material perceived it as being useful in order to raise the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public. Especially the fact that the videos can be downloaded in all 23 EU languages (for example from the DG EMPL website) makes them widely accessible and understandable across the European Union.

In terms of content, the videos were perceived as being very useful to introduce the ESF and raise its visibility and understanding among the general public. The "human faces" displayed in the videos were well perceived and seen as adding a personal note to the content. Viewers can better identify with the protagonists introduced in the films, which keeps them interested in the story line.

The presentation of the videos in terms of their length was seen as being appropriate in order to keep viewers interested in watching. Especially the "Investing in people" videos seemed to have the right length to make them attractive and interesting for viewers to watch.

However, it appears that the audiovisual material is not used to its full extent. No coherent way of distributing the ESF videos to multipliers seems to exist. The videos could potentially be very useful if they were picked up by more TV broadcasters and thus were made available to a larger audience. The case study has shown that broadcasters are generally interested in reporting about the ESF using the audiovisual material produced. However, the videos are of limited use if they are simply uploaded on the ESF as well as other websites (DG EMPL, DG COMM), as very few people have an interest in watching videos when visiting these websites.

E) Website (accessibility, usefulness, content, presentation, exploitation)

According to the findings of this evaluation, the ESF website appears to be the most accessible and well known tool among the multipliers, though its visibility can still be improved. Multipliers perceived the website as being a useful tool to help raising the overall

visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public. It was reported to display appropriate information, to be logically structures and easy to navigate.

These perceptions are underlined by the findings of the website case study. In comparison with three national ESF websites, the EC's ESF website appears to add significant value to the existing national ESF websites in terms of providing both general and more specific information on the ESF to the interested public, as well as providing specific information/tools to Managing Authorities and other (potential) multipliers.

However, while the analysis of the website statistics in the case study have shown that the ESF website functions as a first "port of call" for general users who want to obtain some information about the European Social Fund in the EU, the results of the online survey with website users suggest that the level of information provided by the EC's ESF website might not be appropriate to successfully target the general public, but rather those linked to the ESF in professional terms.

3.2.2 Is there a need for additional / new / different I&C activities or tools to achieve these objectives?

3.2.2.1 Findings

Managing Authorities

The interviewed **INIO members**, as well as the **respondents of the survey**, believed that the EC might think of some additional actions to address the problems and challenges of the Managing Authorities in communicating the ESF to the general public. Those initiatives could include:

- developing guidelines for ESF communication officers in the Member States on how to communicate on the ESF effectively and efficiently;
- using economies of scale when organising big campaigns which would have the same design and convey the same message;
- organising seminars for journalists on how to write about the ESF;
- EC officials could be more often present at the national and regional events¹¹;
- emails / newsletters including different types of I&C tools (written material, multimedia, etc.) to be sent out to journalists.

EC multipliers

Press officers at EC Representation and **geo-desk officers** did not see any need for additional / new / different I&C activities or tools that should be developed.

¹¹ It should be taken into account that the scope of the ESF intervention is very large: there are 117 Operational Programmes implemented across the EU. Therefore, it might be difficult for EC officials to attend every event related to all OPs.

Journalists

Most **journalists** were not sure if additional I&C activities and tools should be developed at the EC level.

Some isolated suggestions for the EC on different I&C activities included:

- training for journalists to write about the ESF; it seems that journalists working at the regional or local level, rather than those working media at the national level, would be most interested in participating in such seminars;
- organising more press conferences on ESF related issues;
- more involvement from the EC Representations to disseminate information about the ESF;
- EC officials should be more present at local / regional events.

3.2.2.2 Conclusions

The types of the ESF I&C activities and tools produced by the EC in 2007-2009 were perceived by the majority of multipliers as largely appropriate. The EC should now focus its efforts on their wider dissemination.

However, the media relations need to be better developed and intensified by the EC. The press releases can no longer be the main tool exploited in this area and the EC should be more proactive about generating interest from journalists (e.g. by feeding them stories / suggesting success stories, etc.).

3.3 Impact

3.3.1 Taken as a whole, have the I&C activities enhanced the visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public?

3.3.1.1 Findings

As noted in the Inception Report, measuring the impact of the EC's ESF communication tools (i.e. determining the degree to which they have enhanced visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public) was not possible within the scope of this evaluation. Although Eurobarometer data on the visibility in all EU Member States was available (showing that the overall level of ESF awareness across the EU has remained stable at 33%, although significant differences exist between Member States), the methods of this evaluation did not allow determining whether a causal relationship exists between these awareness levels and the EC's activities.

Instead, the evaluators focused on trying to measure the results (rather than ultimate impacts), in terms of the number of EU citizens reached through the various tools and activities (to the extent that the data obtained made this possible). The available evidence is complemented by perceptions of multipliers from different EU Member States on the factors likely to have contributed to the changes in overall awareness.

Written material

The EC uses various ways of disseminating the ESF publications; the distribution data is fragmented and collected in different formats. Therefore, the evaluation team encountered difficulties in calculating the accurate number of ESF publications distributed between 2007 and 2009.

The table below presents the various ways of distribution of written material used by the EC and outlines the limitations of the available statistics.

Table 2 – Distribution of written material by the EC

	Print	Electronic	Publications available	Limitations
OPOCE	√	√	all titles	no data received by TEP
EMPL infoCentre	√	√	recently printed publications only	record on some publications only
DG EMPL's direct distribution	√	√	individual titles	record on some publications only
ESF Info stand	√		brochures (various titles)	estimates
ESF website		√	all titles	limited data provided
DG EMPL's website		√	limited number of titles	limited data provided

Source: TEP based on information provided by DG EMPL

The available evidence on selected publications directly distributed by DG EMPL is presented below.

Table 3 – Direct distribution by DG EMPL

Publication	2007	2008	2009 -	
			Feb 2010	Total
Making a Difference in Life	n.a.	n.a.	323	323
ESF success stories	n.a.	n.a.	1	1
50th Anniversary book	1,115	5,000	2,308	8,423
ESF leaflet	8,330	11,336	4,180	23,846
Map	n.a.	1,826	54	1,880
Statistics factsheet	n.a.	2,092	3,666	5,758
Country profiles	n.a.	18,563	1,898	20,461
Regional profiles	n.a.	2,299	50	2,349
Thematic profiles	2,925	12,480	7,089	22,494
ESF Posters	n.a.	1,434	370	1,804
Social agenda (ISSUE N°15/09/2007)	n.a.	35	n.a.	35
Total	12,370	55,065	19,939	87,374

Source: DG EMPL, Unit A1

Data on the direct distribution of the individual titles by Unit A1 is inconsistent when compared with statistics provided by Unit H3 (see the table below).

Table 4 – Direct distribution of selected publications by DG EMPL

Publication	Distribution of printed copies 2007-2009
ESF leaflet	9,385
50th Anniversary book	50,644
Social agenda (ISSUE N° 15/09/2007)	53,102
Making a Difference in Life	2,360

Source: DG EMPL, Unit H3

It is also estimated that approximately 4,500 copies of EC's written material were distributed via the ESF information stands during 23 events.

It was difficult for the evaluation team to determine whether the figures presented above complement or overlap each other. No total figure can be calculated for the disseminated publication material and as a consequence, it was not possible to determine the number of EU citizens reached by written material. However, as a conservative estimate (assuming that the figures for the four publications that appear in both tables are in fact duplicates), at least 184,700 print copies of the different publications were distributed by DG EMPL.

In terms of the dissemination of publications in electronic format, the evaluation team was provided with additional data on the number of downloads from DG EMPL's website. During the last five months of 2009 there were over **65,000** downloads of the different ESF publications.

The number of views for the selected publications is presented in the table below.

Table 5 – Views of selected publications available on DG EMPL website

Publication	Publications website: number of views for the page	Publications website: number of downloads
ESF leaflet	7,256	1,901
50th Anniversary book	893	1,110
Social agenda (ISSUE N° 15/09/2007)	5,071	495
Making a Difference in Life	2,414	1,018

Source: DG EMPL, Unit H3

The case study on the EC's **written material** on the ESF provided practically no evidence on impact of the EC's written material on the ESF as none of the publications was distributed during the event.

Media relations

The results of the case study on the **press coverage** of the OP adoption in a sample of Member States show that:

- the EC Representations in the selected countries widely disseminated the EU press releases on the OP launch among the national media;
- according to the circulation of the sources, the selected articles on the OP launch 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.

Video

Similar to the written material, no comprehensive data for the downloading and dissemination statistics of the ESF videos could be collected during the course of this evaluation. This was due to the fact that data was often not existent or only available in parts.

Given that there are numerous dissemination channels of the ESF videos, for example by way of DG COMM or MOSTRA, and the scarce information on dissemination numbers and actual viewing figures, it is not possible to estimate the total number of viewers reached across the EU by the ESF videos. However, the case study on the "ESF in action" videos

provided some estimates of viewing figures of three videos disseminated by MOSTRA in 2009, which amounted to just under 4.5 million viewers.

The evaluation team was also able to collect some downloading figures for the “ESF in action” as well as “Investing in people” videos from the DG EMPL website as well as the EC’s ESF website. It has to be noted though that the videos were uploaded to the website successively over a time-frame of three years. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn as to why certain videos were downloaded more often than others.

The two tables below show the figures for the total number of video downloads from the date they were made available on the DG EMPL website, up to June 2010.

Table 6 – “ESF in action” downloads from 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: TEP based on statistics provided by DG EMPL

Table 7 - "The EU investing in people" downloads from DG EMPL website

Country covered	Views on DG EMPL website	Video online since	Language video is available in		Country covered	Views on DG EMPL website	Video online since	Language video is available in
SE	538	Jan-10	22		continues			
SE	550	Jan-10	22		UK	270	Apr-09	22
SL	462	Dec-09	22		FI	347	Apr-09	22
SL	301	Dec-09	22		MT	416	Apr-09	22
SI	562	Nov-09	22		EL	330	Mar-09	22
RO	209	Nov-09	22		SI	777	Mar-09	22
RO	229	Nov-09	22		DK	2022	Mar-09	22
PL	414	Nov-09	22		IT	5147	Mar-09	22
PL	297	Oct-09	22		LUX	5523	Feb-09	22
NL	206	Oct-09	22		NL	6736	Feb-09	22
MT	389	Oct-09	22		UK	7145	Feb-09	22
LI	155	Oct-09	22		FR	7702	Feb-09	22
LI	222	Oct-09	22		FR	8237	Jan-09	22
EL	394	Sep-09	22		CY	7721	Jan-09	22
DK	118	Sep-09	22		PT	7808	Jan-09	22
BG	474	Sep-09	22		CY	7917	Jan-09	22
BG	246	Sep-09	22		PT	7822	Dec-08	22
IT	614	Jul-09	22		IE	7745	Nov-08	22
DE	257	Jul-09	22		LT	7771	Nov-08	22
AT	297	Jun-09	22		IE	7608	Dec-08	22
AT	260	Jun-09	22		LT	7384	Nov-08	22
DE	316	Jun-09	22		ES	7574	Oct-08	22
HU	237	Jun-09	22		ES	7698	Oct-08	22
LUX	435	May-09	22		ET	7614	Oct-08	22
CZ	279	May-09	22		ET	7520	Oct-08	22
CZ	1209	May-09	22		BE	7710	Oct-08	22
FI	354	May-09	22		BE	7692	Oct-08	22
HU	201	May-09	22		Total	162461		

Source: TEP based on data available on the DG EMPL website

As the two tables show, by June 2010, the ESF videos ("ESF in action" and "EU investing in people", both produced by ESN) available on DG EMPL's website were downloaded **162,461** times. It has to be noted that this figure only includes the overall number of downloads. Those viewers who watched the video more than one time cannot be excluded.

In addition, DG EMPL provided the study team with the total number of video downloads from the ESF website for the months January – November 2009, which came up to **3,236** downloads.

Moreover, 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, and the RM (RealVideo) format, which allows streaming of video (on-line video, Internet TV) with low bandwidths. In total, the “ESF in action” videos were downloaded in their different format **791** times from the DG COMM website.

Table 8 – 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

Website

The evaluation team undertook an analysis of Google Analytics, which provided data on the use of the EC’s ESF website. In the timeframe of November 2008 (when the first data on the EC’s ESF website were made available by Google Analytics) and June 2010, the EC’s ESF website had 561,947 visits, of which **365,684** were absolute unique visitors¹².

In sum, it is not possible for the evaluation team to present a complete picture of the number of EU citizens reached by the different ESF I&C activities and tools. Therefore, the evaluation made use of qualitative feedback collected by the different multipliers on the impact of the EC’s communication tools. The summary of these findings is presented below.

¹² “Absolute unique visitors” shows the number of actual visitors, including those who have visited the website more than one time.

Managing Authorities

The majority of interviewed **INIO members** felt that the rise (or decrease) of the levels of ESF awareness in their countries could be attributed to more than one factor. The most frequently suggested factors included:

- efforts of the national and regional authorities;
- lower / increased number of ESF participants;
- less / increased funding available in this programming period;
- available budget for I&C activities.

The interviews with the **INIO members** do not give a clear picture on the impact of the EC's I&C activities and tools on the levels of ESF awareness in their countries.

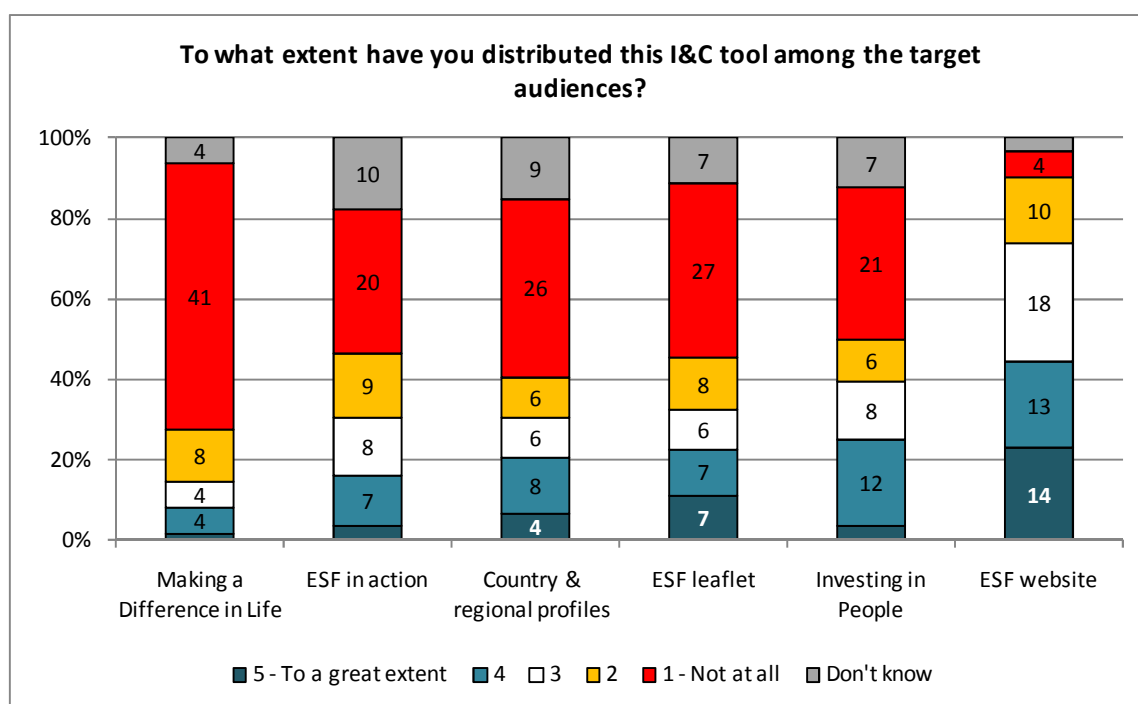
"It is difficult to attribute the impact to the Commission's activities."

INIO member

The results of the **online survey** show that:

- 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 respondents);

Figure 7 – 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

- most respondents thought that the I&C tools developed by the EC have had a moderate impact on the awareness and understanding of the ESF in their countries (26 responses in total). 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).

EC multipliers

Press officers of 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 a 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. Therefore, the general public is not aware of the link between the ESF and positive changes in the employment field in the Member States.

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 were convinced that people just do not care enough where the money is coming from, and cannot differentiate between the different European Funds. For them, the ESF is just a name they cannot really identify with.

Geo-desk officers 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 make a limited contribution to raising the visibility of the ESF and the EC's contribution. Several reasons for this were stated:

- 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;
- The Structural Funds in general are not easy to communicate; the general public might be aware of the names of individual funds, but not what they stand for or what they finance; generally it is difficult to link these financial contributions with concrete actions;
- National ESF communication campaigns should be initiated in order to inform the general public what the ESF does in their countries;

Journalists

No evidence was found on the impact of the EC's activities and tools through the interviews with the **journalists**.

3.3.1.2 Conclusions

As stated above, it is not possible to estimate the total number of EU citizens reached by the individual ESF I&C tools and activities. This is due to a rather fragmented dissemination system of the different tools as well as the lack of sufficient and reliable dissemination data. Based on the partial statistics that are available, one can only provide an absolute minimum:

- **Written publications:** At least 184,700 printed copies of different materials were distributed by DG EMPL itself. At least another 65,000 publications in electronic format were downloaded from the DG EMPL website only during the last 5 months of 2009.
- **Videos:** The three "ESF in action" videos distributed by MOSTRA were viewed on television by approximately 4.5 million people across Europe. It needs to be emphasised that this is for three videos only, and does not include broadcasts of these videos by media who were not contacted by MOSTRA. By comparison, the number of times *all videos* were viewed online is much smaller (less than 200,000).
- **Website:** The EC's ESF website has an average of approximately 220,000 unique visitors per year.

These figures represent the absolute confirmed minimum numbers of individuals reached by the different tools; they are incomplete and not directly comparable. Nonetheless, these figures give an indication of the fact that the potential impact of videos is far greater than that of the other tools – provided they are broadcast on television, and not only made available online.

The evaluation also found that the change of the level of ESF awareness in the EU Member States cannot be directly and solely attributed to the I&C activities developed by the EC. There are a number of other factors (see the findings above) that are likely to have a much greater effect on the awareness and perceptions of the ESF by the general public than the EC's activities to date.

3.3.2 Did the I&C activities and tools have any other (positive or negative) effects?

3.3.2.1 Findings

Only one of the interviewed **INIO members** identified an additional and positive impact of the EC's communication activities. It was felt that the I&C tools developed by the EC helped to explain how the ESF money is spent, and thus improved the transparency and accountability of the Fund.

As noted by individual INIO members, some EU countries developed their own visual identity of the ESF with which the EC's tools were not always consistent. These discrepancies might have slightly weakened the impact of communication work, but this was not perceived as a major problem.

The evaluation found no evidence of any other potential negative impacts, such as replacing national expenditures in the area of I&C activities by the funding available through the EC's Framework Contract with ESN.

3.3.2.2 Conclusions

The evaluation could not identify any significant positive or negative impacts of the EC's ESF activities and tools, other than those noted under the previous evaluation question.

3.4 Efficiency

3.4.1 To what extent are the costs of the different types of I&C activities proportionate to their overall effectiveness?

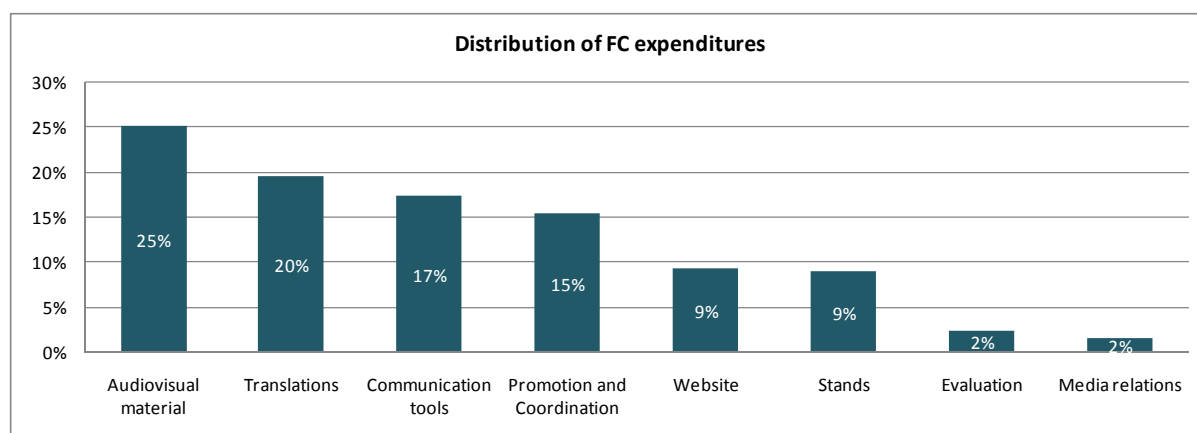
3.4.1.1 Findings

In order to judge the efficiency of I&C activities, the assessment of the effectiveness and outcomes / impact of the different tools and activities have been put in relation to their cost. It was not possible to provide a fully quantified cost-benefit analysis due to the lack of comprehensive data. The evaluation team used qualitative analysis to complement and support the quantitative findings.

The following figure provides an overview of all costs related to the I&C activities and tools covered by the Framework Contract with ESN. In total, just over € 5 million was spent within

the Framework Contract to communicate on the ESF¹³. The figures are presented in descending order, starting with the audiovisual material.

Figure 8 – Distribution of expenditures



Source: TEP based on data provided by ESN

The evaluation team felt it necessary to present the translation costs separately in order to help to understand the implications of this task for different activities and tools listed in the Framework Contract (e.g. translation of videos, publications, updates of the website, etc.).

In addition, the costs of written material were split into communication tools (such as brochures, leaflets etc.) and the ESF info stands. The main reason behind it was that the info stands communicate on the ESF through different channels, not only printed material but also videos and IT tools.

The section below introduces the different I&C tools and discusses their costs in relation to their perceived impact:

- In total, DG EMPL spent € 1.3 million on the development of the **audiovisual material** (including the 54 videos “Investing in people”, the 11 “ESF in action” videos and the two films on the 50th anniversary of the ESF). This sum accounts for 25% of the total FC budget. As discussed above, it is not possible to present accurate figures on the total number of people reached by the videos. However, those numbers available on the ESF videos’ downloads as well as the viewings suggest that they have a great potential to reach a large number of people. The findings of the video case study show that the estimated cost of the three “ESF in action” videos per viewer amounted to € 0.03. Thus, it can be assumed that in general the videos imply relatively low costs compared to the potential outreach they have.
- As mentioned above, the **translation costs** formed an important element of all ESF I&C activities and tools. In total, the costs amounted to € 1 million (20% of the FC budget). All multipliers emphasised the importance of the tools being available in a multitude of EU languages, which is a precondition for their usefulness and impact. Due to the lack of data, no further analysis of the translations costs can be carried out broken down by the individual tools.

¹³ For the purpose of this analysis, the cost of the evaluation component included in the Framework contract was taken out of this calculation.

- Between 2007 and 2009 the EC developed approximately 80 different **publications** (leaflet, brochures, fact sheets, etc.) available in a range of EU languages. The costs of designing and producing this written material amounted to nearly € 900,000 (17% of the total FC budget). The fragmented data on the dissemination of the ESF publications do not allow estimating the number of people reached, as explained earlier. The availability of the material on the ESF website allows for its further distribution.
- The EC spent € 800,000 on **promoting and coordinating** ESF communication between 2007 and 2009 (15% of the total FC budget). This task included the development of a description of the ESF in all EU Members States and the development of the ESF project database and its search engine, all of them being accessible via the ESF website.

It should be noted that the compilation of the database is done in cooperation with the Member States to get the appropriate data and information, which involves a lot of effort from the EC. The database is a key element of the website and makes it more attractive for many users. According to the findings of the online survey with the website users, this section was perceived as most useful by two thirds of the respondents. The evaluation team cannot conduct further analysis of the promotion and coordination costs because the number of those directly exposed to this task cannot be estimated.

The spending figure presented above does not include the costs that the EC dedicated to organise the INIO meetings. The findings of the case study on the INIO meeting in Liège provide partial figures of this activity¹⁴. If costs of this meeting are used as a proxy (€ 12,000), one can estimate that DG EMPL spent at least an additional € 132,000 on the INIO network over the last three years. It should be noted that these are very rudimentary calculations and do not take into account various factors (such as inflation, different price levels in the Member States where the meetings were held, travel costs of the participants, etc.).

However, the very positive feedback received from INIO participants suggests that the money spent on promoting and coordinating ESF communication, and the INIO network in particular, was well invested.

- For the time frame 2007-2009, DG EMPL spent over € 480,000 on the development and updating of the **ESF website**. This accounts for 9% of the total FC budget. The website received a total of 365,684 unique visitors during the period November 2008 - June 2010. With these data available, it is possible to calculate the costs of the ESF website per unique visitor:

Table 9 – Cost of the ESF website per visitor

Tool	Total costs (2007-2009)	Total number of unique visitors (2008 – 2010)	Cost per unique visitor
ESF website	€ 481,764.00	365,684	€ 1.32

Source: TEP based on data provided by ESN and Google Analytics

The findings of the evaluation suggest that the ESF website is the most accessible and well known tool among the multipliers. While the estimated cost of € 1.32 per

¹⁴ These figures do not include travel costs, which were reimbursed separately by the EC.

unique visitor may appear high, it needs to be kept in mind that the website continues to attract visitors at no extra cost (except that for periodic updates), and that it is also an important vehicle to promote and disseminate other tools. It can therefore be argued that the costs of the ESF website are proportionate to its overall effectiveness.

- Between 2007 and 2009 the EC spent over € 460,000 on the design, development and the use of the **ESF information stands**. This accounts for 9% of the total FC budget. During that time the stands were used at a total of 23 conferences, meetings or public events but there is no data on the number of people reached with these tools. The stands were used approximately 1-2 times per month until 2009 and the average cost per event amounted to approximately € 20,000. It should be kept in mind that once the stand is developed, it still generates costs when in use. For example, the stand has to be filled with publications. Moreover, additional audiovisual material used for such occasions often needs to be subtitled. Taking into account that the stand attracts between 200-500 visitors at each event, the average cost per visitor can be estimated to be between € 40 and € 100. These costs seem to be relatively high, but it should be noted that they include all material displayed at the stand as well as a computer set, access to the Internet, video equipment, etc. While further costs will be incurred each time the info stand is used, the average cost of the info stand will go down the more it is used.
- As mentioned earlier, **media relations** were not fully exploited by the EC. Therefore their overall costs are relatively low when compared to other activities under the FC. For the time frame 2007-2009, the EC spent € 81,000 in total on this task (2% of the total FC budget). This money was allocated to two main activities: an attempt to place articles signed by Commissioner Spidla in a series of newspapers in selected Member States and a series of EU press releases on the OP adoption in all 27 Member States.

The findings of the case study on the press coverage of the OP launch in selected Member States did not allow calculating an accurate cost of media coverage of the OP launch in the selected Member States. However, the estimated costs of the EU press releases per reader (€ 0.0001)¹⁵ seemed to be low in relation to the multiplier effect they might have had.

3.4.1.2 Conclusions

As stated above, the incomplete and often incomparable data and information available on the number of people reached through the individual I&C tools and activities as well as their costs do not allow for a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis. Nonetheless, considering that the budget of just over € 5 million has led to the production of 67 videos, approximately 80 different written publications, info stands that were used at 23 events, and not least a comprehensive and user-friendly website containing inter alia an extensive project database, one can conclude that the relation between the cost of the EC's ESF communication activities and the outputs produced has been favourable. This is even more true considering that many of the materials are available in several if not all EU languages. However, the relation between the costs and outcomes or impacts depends on the effective use and

¹⁵ The estimates were based only a sample of articles written about the event in the selected Member States and it was assumed that all readers read these articles.

dissemination of these tools. It is in this area that the evaluation has found room for improvement. Dissemination has not yet been planned, executed and monitored as systematically, proactively and strategically as seems possible.

The lack of relevant data makes it very difficult to arrive at solid conclusions as to the efficiency of the different types of ESF I&C material. Nonetheless, based on the (sometimes anecdotal) evidence that is available, it seems reasonable to state that:

- While the cost of developing the website appears relatively high in relation to the number of visits generated since this data is being collected (end 2008), it needs to be taken into account that this initial investment will continue to bear fruit. Although further updates will continue to be necessary, the most significant investment is in the past, and the website's efficiency will only continue to rise. Given the wide outreach and multiplier effect of the ESF website, the costs of its development and updating seems to be proportionate to its overall effectiveness;
- The audiovisual material was by far the most costly element of all ESF I&C activities developed by the EC; however, the (potential) outreach of the videos outperforms this expenditure; the costs per viewer reached appear to be relatively low already, and could be further lowered if the videos were broadcast more often;
- Taking into account the multiplier effect and the cooperation of the INIO network, the costs of this activity seem to be proportionate to the effects it achieved;
- The costs of the written material appear rather high, given the overall perception that it is not well known among multipliers; with the exception of a few individual publications (e.g. "Making a difference in life"), the findings of this evaluation did not provide any proof of the written material's high effectiveness;
- While the costs of the ESF information stands almost equal the expenditures on the ESF website, their use and outreach was much more limited. Moreover, the EC did not make any use of the stand in the first half of 2010. It can nevertheless be assumed that the stands could present a very effective form of communication, due to the fact that they are designed to pass on information and messages on the ESF to the general public via different communication channels, such as written material, videos, computer equipment;
- While the media relations have a great potential for ESF communication, they have not yet been fully exploited by the EC; therefore, the minor costs spent on these activities to date stand in direct relation to their overall low effectiveness.

It should be noted that the costs of promoting and coordinating ESF communication contain a significant element of costs directly related to the ESF website. The ESF project database and the search engine available on the ESF website could also be added to the costs of the website, which would increase its overall costs and have a negative impact on its efficiency. However, it was agreed with DG EMPL to consider these costs as related to coordination and promotion, as stated in the Framework Contract.

In addition, it is not possible to directly link the translation costs to the outreach of individual I&C activities or tools.

3.5 Sustainability

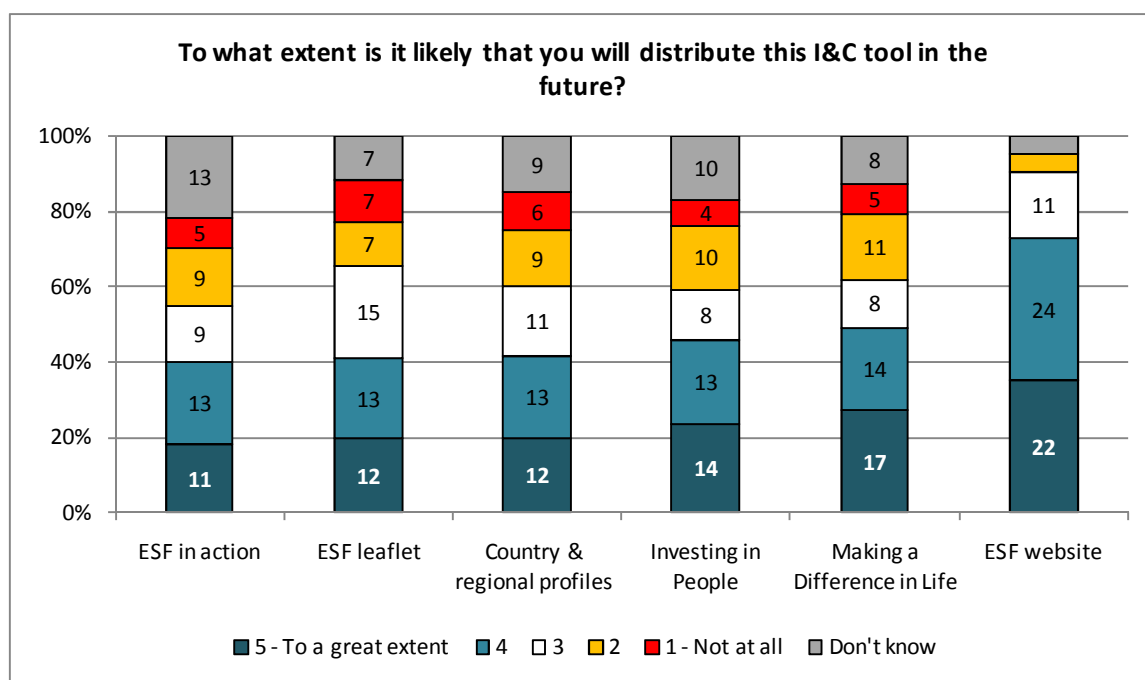
3.5.1 Are the different types of I&C activities produced to date likely to continue to be used by multipliers in the coming years (i.e. until 2013)?

3.5.1.1 Findings

The majority of the stakeholders consulted in the course of this evaluation confirmed that they will continue using those ESF I&C tools that they are familiar with and that are relevant to their work. According to the results of the **online survey** of communication officers in the Member States:

- the vast majority of the respondents planned to disseminate information on the ESF website;
- nearly half of the respondents were willing to continue distributing the “Making a Difference in Life” book and the “Investing in people” videos;
- approximately two fifths of the respondents planned to continue distributing the “Country and regional profiles” and the “ESF leaflet” and disseminate the “ESF in action” clips.

Figure 9 – 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

EC multipliers

Geo-desk officers claimed they will make use of the written material in the future. Individual **press officers** in the EC Representations stated that they are likely to consult the ESF website more often.

Journalists

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 clips with the human stories.

3.5.1.2 Conclusions

All tools developed by the EC so far are likely to be used in the future (i.e. until the end of the current programming period in 2013), though to different extents, depending on the awareness of the multipliers of their availability. In this context, the ESF website was the tool mainly highlighted by the Managing Authorities, press officers in the EC Representations and journalists.

It should be noted that the ESF I&C tools were developed at different points in time. While circumstances change, some of the tools might prove to have a shorter lifespan than others. Once outdated, the tools are not likely to be used anymore. The judgement of their sustainability has to take this into account.

From the range of ESF I&C tools developed by the EC, press releases are the ones with the shortest lifespan.

Given that the usefulness of written material was contested by some multipliers, only some specific publications might still generate significant interest among the target audiences and can potentially be disseminated further (e.g. "Country and regional profiles", "Making a difference in Life"). Only the latter has some potential to be still in use after 2013, when the new programming period starts.

Likewise, the "Investing in people" videos are more 'sustainable' than the "ESF in action" clips because information on the ESF interventions in the Member States becomes outdated more quickly than the universal message that the ESF can make a difference in peoples' lives.

In terms of the ESF website, the life of this tool depends on the EC keeping it up-to-date and adopting to the changing needs of its target audiences. As long as the information on the ESF website is relevant and useful for multipliers and / or the general public, this tool will be in use.

On the other hand, one should also keep in mind that apart from being directly used in the future, the I&C tools developed by the EC (such as written material or videos) might provide an inspiration for the Member States to produce similar tools. A few examples of such an effect have already been noted for individual EC publications on the ESF.

4 KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter brings together and summarises the key conclusions drawn in the answers to the various evaluation questions, and makes recommendations to maximise the effectiveness and impact of the EC's ESF communication activities during the remainder of the current programming period, and address the main shortcomings that were identified.

Relevance

The evaluation has confirmed that the EC's ESF I&C approaches and objectives are clearly relevant in view of the needs of the multipliers. All of the main activities (consolidating a joint communication policy and promoting exchange of good practices, improving the ESF website and developing a project database, developing more communication tools, and intensifying relations with the media) are in line with the needs of multipliers, in particular Managing Authorities and other relevant actors in the Member States. At the same time, it is clear that the EC actors that were engaged for this evaluation (geo-desks officers in DG EMPL, press officers in the EC Representations in the Member States) do not always perceive themselves as ESF multipliers, and therefore feel that, although they could potentially be more active in communicating the ESF, they do not have any clear "needs" that DG EMPL should meet.

Although the EC's ESF I&C objectives and approaches generally do address needs of national actors involved in ESF communication, there are also some significant challenges to effective ESF communication that the EC's activities and tools have only addressed to a limited extent to date. Most importantly, the prevalent lack of interest among the stakeholders and the general public in the ESF, and the lack of news-worthy material for the media to report on, has not been targeted directly. This challenge is due to the very nature of the ESF and will continue to be difficult to overcome completely; some of the tools and activities (in particular those emphasising the "human face" of the ESF and providing concrete information on projects and/or individuals) could go some way towards generating interest. Nonetheless, in order to tackle the challenge of the lack of interest in the ESF to a greater extent, the EC would need to enhance its work in the area of media relations, and find more effective / innovative ways of providing news-worthy material.

Effectiveness

In judging the effectiveness, one needs to differentiate between the different types of tools and activities.

- **INIO network:** The network is highly valued by its members, who see it as a unique opportunity for communication officers from different Member States to network and exchange examples of best practice. However, while the network is clearly very effective at enhancing the flow of information between the EC and Member States and facilitating peer learning between its members, the extent to which the lessons learned are actually applied in the Member States appears relatively limited. Although members do disseminate relevant information among other actors in their respective countries, it is often found that because of the significant differences that exist (in terms of needs of the target audiences, resources, and approaches), limited use is made of the information. It would enhance the effectiveness of the network if more emphasis were placed on aspects that are more directly applicable to ESF communication in the Member States.

- **Written material:** Managing Authorities were quite familiar with the written material, and tended to value them for being available in all 23 EU languages and accessible through the ESF website. However, there is a general feeling that written material is a little outdated form of communication, and generally speaking, the Managing Authorities prefer to use their own written materials because they are more tailored to the needs of their target audiences. Nonetheless, they can sometimes find EC material useful if it is particularly well-written or designed, or provides different information from that in the national publications (e.g. the “Making a difference in Life” was rated very positively). Still, most of the EC’s publications are more useful for dissemination through its own multipliers (including the EC Representations); however, these often don’t even know they exist. More could be done to maximise the use of the written material by the EC and its Representations.
- **Media relations:** The EC has done very little to intensify its relations with the media. The EC’s interactions with the media were almost entirely related to the OP adoption and the 50th anniversary of the ESF (all events took place in 2007). Those multipliers who were familiar with the press releases perceived them to be too general and usually had to change them and complement with more specific information. Nevertheless, the EU press releases on the ESF might have triggered or generated interest among the journalists and functioned as a catalyst to communicate about the ESF.
- **Videos:** The videos were judged very positively in terms of their content, length, and narrative style. Especially the “Investing in people” videos are attractive and interesting for viewers to watch. However, the audiovisual material is not exploited fully. While the case study has confirmed the very significant potential of the videos when they are broadcast on TV, at present most videos are simply uploaded to the EC’s various websites, and/or shown by Managing Authorities during events or conferences, where they are viewed by relatively few people. Especially smaller TV stations with limited own resources are promising multipliers for these kinds of videos, although it is also clear that active dissemination to such broadcasters and systematic follow-up can be resource and time-intensive.
- **ESF Website:** The website is the most accessible and well known tool among the multipliers. Multipliers perceived the website as being a useful tool to help raising the overall visibility and understanding of the ESF among the general public. It contains appropriate information, is logically structured and easy to navigate. In comparison with national ESF websites, the EC’s ESF website adds significant value in terms of providing both general and more specific information on the ESF to the interested public, as well as providing specific information / tools to Managing Authorities and other (potential) multipliers. However, the level of information provided appears more appropriate for those linked with the ESF in professional terms than for the general public at large.

The above shows that all I&C *tools* (written and audiovisual materials, website) have the potential to be effective in that they are generally well designed and convey appropriate messages in an appropriate way (although some improvements still appear possible with certain tools). However, their ultimate effectiveness depends on their use by multipliers to better inform the general public, which in turn depends on multipliers’ awareness of the existence of the tools, and their willingness and ability to actually use them. In this sense, more could be done in terms of systematic dissemination and engagement strategies.

As regards the *activities*, the INIO network is effective in terms of information sharing, but appears to be less so in terms of the extent to which this information leads to concrete action. As for media relations, the level of activity has been low, and therefore the effectiveness limited.

Impact

According to a recent Eurobarometer, the overall awareness of the ESF has remained constant at 33% of EU citizens, although there are significant differences between Member States. With the available means, the evaluation was not able to establish any causal links between the overall awareness levels and the EC's I&C activities and tools. Interviews with Managing Authorities confirmed that any change in the level of ESF awareness cannot be directly and solely attributed to the I&C activities developed by the EC, and that there are a number of other factors that are likely to have a much greater effect.

Therefore, the evaluation focused on *results* (i.e. numbers of citizens reached). However, the lack of comprehensive, reliable and comparable data made it impossible to estimate the total number of EU citizens reached by the individual ESF I&C tools and activities. This is partly due to a rather fragmented dissemination system of the different tools, which means that complete records of distribution / use have not been collected. Based on the partial statistics that are available, one can only provide an absolute minimum of the number of citizens reached through specific tools:

- Written publications: At least 184,700 printed copies of different materials were distributed by DG EMPL itself. At least another 65,000 publications in electronic format were downloaded from the DG EMPL website only during the last 5 months of 2009.
- Videos: The three "ESF in action" videos distributed by MOSTRA were viewed on television by approximately 4.5 million people across Europe. It needs to be emphasised that this is for three videos only, and does not include broadcasts of these videos by media who were not contacted by MOSTRA. By comparison, the number of times *all videos* were viewed online is much smaller (less than 200,000).
- Website: The EC's ESF website has an average of approximately 220,000 unique visitors per year.

These figures give an indication of the fact that the potential impact of videos is far greater than that of the other tools – provided they are broadcast on television, and not only made available online.

Efficiency

The total spent under the ESF I&C framework contract between 2007 and 2009 amounted to EUR 5.2 million. Given the incomplete and often incomparable data and information available on the number of people reached through the individual I&C tools and activities, a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis is not feasible. Nonetheless, considering that the budget has led to the production of 67 videos, approximately 80 different written publications, info stands that were used at 23 events, and not least a comprehensive and user-friendly website containing inter alia an extensive project database, one can conclude that the relation between the cost of the EC's ESF communication activities and the outputs produced has been favourable – especially considering that many of the materials are available in several if not all EU languages. However, the efficiency in terms of outcomes or

impacts depends on the effective use and dissemination of these tools. As noted above, it is in this area (dissemination) that the evaluation has found room for improvement.

Sustainability

All tools developed by the EC so far are likely to be used in the future (i.e. until the end of the current programming period in 2013), although to different extents, depending on the awareness of the multipliers of their availability. In this context, the ESF website was the tool mainly highlighted by the Managing Authorities, press officers in the EC Representations and journalists. The sustainability of this tool depends on the EC keeping it up-to-date and adopting to the changing needs of its target audiences. As long as the information on the ESF website is relevant and useful for multipliers and / or the general public, this tool will be in use.

Given that the usefulness of written material was contested by some multipliers, only some specific publications might still generate significant interest among the target audiences and can potentially be disseminated further (e.g. “Country and regional profiles”, “Making a difference in Life”). Only the latter has some potential to be still in use after 2013, when the new programming period starts.

Likewise, the “Investing in people” videos are more ‘sustainable’ than the “ESF in action” clips because information on the ESF interventions in the Member States becomes outdated more quickly than the universal message that the ESF can make a difference in peoples’ lives.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions presented in chapter 3 of this report and summarised above, a number of recommendations can be made. The first set of recommendations relates to the EC’s ESF I&C activities as a whole, including priorities for the future, an emphasis on more effective dissemination, and the need for better monitoring to measure the impact. The second part relates to the different types of I&C activities, and makes concrete recommendations on how their effectiveness could be improved.

Future priorities

1. Given the wealth of high quality, relevant and (potentially) effective communication material that has been developed to date, the main focus for the remainder of the programming period should shift to **disseminating the existing materials better**, and filling gaps that have been identified.
2. In terms of the Managing Authorities, the EC should emphasise the importance of ESF I&C activities more to the communication officers and their superiors in various existing EC forums (meetings of special committees) in order to **raise the profile of these activities**. The EC should especially target officials in those Member States where decreasing or low awareness levels of the ESF were detected by the latest Eurobarometer study in 2009.
3. The EC could also address the lack of news-worthy material about the ESF by identifying / **generating more “stories”** at the national level in order to attract an interest for the ESF among the general public. The EC’s Framework Contract with ESN originally envisaged a number of activities that have not been implemented yet, such as the compilation and management of mailing lists of European journalists, the

organisation of press conferences and media events on specific subjects/projects, as well as the support of national campaigns for journalists. Following up and further developing these activities, budget permitting, would make an important contribution to improving the visibility of the ESF in the individual Member States.

Dissemination strategies

1. In the first place, the existing *tools* (written and audiovisual materials, website) should be presented to all multipliers in a more systematic way in the many different forums / meetings that exists within the EC. In particular, officers working for the geo-desks and the EC Representations, as well as journalists, should be **updated more regularly** on the different ESF I&C tools available. In addition, the multipliers should be encouraged to subscribe to the newsletter¹⁶ available on the ESF website and guided on the ways in which the tools available there can be ordered.
2. In the second step, the EC should focus on **developing better strategies** for disseminating its already existing material through in order to make full use and improve the overall efficiency of these tools (in particular the videos). This is particularly important taking into account that the relevance of the topics of these tools might soon expire.
 - a. The dissemination potential of multipliers, especially the Managing Authorities and EC Representations, must be more fully exploited.
 - b. It is recommended that the EC develops written guidelines or a catalogue of ideas for different types of multipliers on how to handle and disseminate various I&C tools produced so far. This could be done by listing the existing tools and explaining in bullet points what the possible ways of use and dissemination could be for different types of multipliers. This would help them to understand their role in distributing the material and the EC would be able to better coordinate their efforts. Such a guidance document / catalogue would have to be quite concise and to the point, as multipliers would be unlikely to take the time to read a lengthy document.
 - c. In order to pass on the message about the ESF across the EU, the EC should also be more pro-active in identifying events for using the info stands, intermediate distribution companies and more innovative ways of disseminating the existing tools via new media, such as Twitter and Facebook.

Monitoring

In order to measure the impact of the different ESF I&C tools and activities, it is highly recommended that the EC develops a **standardised system to keep record on the dissemination** of their tools as well as statistics of viewing and downloading figures. This would allow the EC to get a better overview of the number and profile of those reached by the tools (audiovisual and printed material) as well as enable DG EMPL to identify better ways of reaching the different target groups. The findings of the evaluation also show that especially the audiovisual material bears a high potential of reaching a wide mass of viewers when broadcast on TV. This should be taken into account by the EC, and a better media monitoring system for the audiovisual material should be introduced in order to get a better overview of actual viewing figures for the ESF videos.

¹⁶ DG EMPL Newsletter, URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=371>

The INIO network

The INIO network should be given a new impetus by introducing some changes to the existing format of the meetings. The participants of the network would benefit from external expertise if I&C professionals were invited to give presentations on selected communication topics. The agenda of each meeting could be split into two parts, with one maintaining its broad character and the other focused on a particular issue, e.g. developing media relations, making the use of the new media, monitoring and evaluation of I&C activities, EU-wide and national communication plans for the future.

The EC and the Member States could endeavour to identify projects with outstanding ESF communication activities, or that are particularly well suited for generating interest from the media, which could be selected for future ESF project visits.

Moreover, it seems possible to more actively engage some of the EC's multipliers, such as geo-desks officers, in the work of the network in order to foster a joint communication policy. The geo-desks officers could participate in workshops and work with their counterparts from the INIO network on joint ESF communication projects / actions in a given country. The EC could consider targeting the geo-desk officers from those countries where the ESF awareness is decreasing.

To improve the efficiency of the INIO network, the EC should try to ensure that there is a higher take-up and implementation of the information and best practices presented at the meetings. The EC needs to make sure that the network has a true multiplier effect so that the information shared at the meetings is more applicable for members in their work, and more effectively passed on to other ESF communication officers in the MS. For example, the EC could initiate an exchange of good practice on selected issues and focus the plenary discussion on possible ways to adapt / implement similar activities in other Member States. In addition, the EC could improve the way in which it keeps record of the INIO meetings on the electronic platform¹⁷ by grouping presentations by different themes to make them easier to identify for the users. Also, the electronic platform could be further promoted among the Managing Authorities.

Written material

The EC should focus on those publications which are most valued by multipliers for containing simple, relevant and country specific information. A number of publications can be further disseminated without changing their content or design (e.g. "Making a Difference in Life", "Country and regional profiles"). Others could be updated or only slightly changed. For example, the EC could produce new brochures based on "Making a Difference in Life" but make it shorter and focused on particular themes (such as entrepreneurship, healthcare, or childcare). Alternatively these brochures could be targeted at groups more likely to pick up written material (e.g. elderly people). Some more significant changes could include filling the "Thematic studies" with country specific content.

The written material, although a little outdated as a form of communication, is still useful at local and regional events, where it complements other forms of communication. Therefore, the EC should identify more events to make use of the ESF info stand (and the written material) more often to actively disseminate information on the ESF. The EC could choose to

¹⁷ URL: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/news/NJsd9jn93Kijz_rTy0tZyOaa/0htosErokf.cfm

be more selective in dissemination written material to those Member States where the ESF awareness decreases or which have small budget for I&C activities.

Media relations

The EC should extend the scope and explore new ways of enhancing its interactions with the media. The EC might make use of news generation agencies, budget permitting, to seek their expert knowledge on how to engage with the media and keep up their interest in the ESF related issues through developing and cultivating relations with journalists, raising a news agenda with pre-planned and thought-provoking campaign initiatives, etc.

The EC might want to organise tailored seminars for regional or local journalists (or strengthen the ESF component in existing seminars) in order to explain what the ESF is about and to train them in writing about the Fund. These seminars could also include visits to ESF projects in those Member States that journalists originate from and should be organised in cooperation with the Managing Authorities. In order to generate more interest among the national/regional media, EC officials could more frequently attend press conferences / events organised by the national authorities.

In terms of existing tools, press releases should be published more frequently, so that multipliers are provided with information and tools on a more regular basis. The press releases would also have a stronger impact if they were followed by events attended by EC officials.

It is recommended to the EC to work closely with the Member States to better target the media. The EC could produce press releases as a joint effort between DG EMPL and the Managing Authorities in individual Member States. In this way, press releases could be more tailored to the needs and interests of national media and information and the message from the EC and national authorities would be coherent. In addition, press releases should be written in the language of the country concerned with this press release as well as English, French and German.

It can be assumed that if the EC truly intensified their media relations, their effectiveness as well as efficiency could be improved.

Videos

It is recommended that the EC provides the press officers in the EC Representations and the Managing Authorities with hard-copy DVDs of the videos for further distribution. Moreover, the EC should make more use of intermediate distribution companies, which could assist the EC to further distribute the videos to TV broadcasters across the EU. These companies might already have existing contacts at broadcasting stations which the EC could use for the dissemination of their ESF audiovisual material.

Website

The EC should further promote the ESF website among the multipliers, and highlight the fact that it is a gateway to all ESF I&C tools. The EC should also ensure that all pages of the

website are accessible in all 23 EU languages and the language option is more visible for the users, taking into account IPG compliance rules¹⁸.

The EC should decide on the main target group for the website and focus on updating information useful for this group. If the general public is the main target group, the EC should make sure that the information on the website is more specifically targeted at their needs, i.e. by providing more concrete information and examples what differences the ESF can make in their lives or by updating the information on how people can participate in an ESF project. The website could display more interactive tools that enable users learning about the added value of the Fund in a “playful” way. If the main target group are the beneficiaries, then the ESF website could provide more detailed information on implementation requirements in the individual Member States, and the section on news and events should be extended and updated for individual countries. The EC should then also intensify their interactions and exchanges with the web administrators of the national ESF websites in order to better coordinate their work and avoid duplications.

In addition, the EC should reemphasise the fact that national ESF websites should provide a link to the EC’s ESF website.

The high efficiency of the ESF website can only be further improved on the condition that the EC ensures that the information available is up to date and the website itself is further promoted among different target audiences.

¹⁸ **The Information Providers Guide (IPG)** is compulsory in order to ensure a coherent and user-friendly service to the users of EU websites. The guidelines cover all aspects of publishing on the EUROPA website, describing the relevant editorial, technical and presentation standards in force.

- 5 ANNEXES**
- 5.1 Annex 1: Evaluation question matrix**
- 5.2 Annex 2: Complete inventory of I&C tools**
- 5.3 Annex 3: Detailed results of the evaluation by data collection tools**
 - 5.3.1 Results from the interviews with INIO members**
 - 5.3.2 Results from online survey with Managing Authorities**
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 - 5.3.4 Results from interviews with geo-desks**
 - 5.3.5 Results from interviews with EC Representations**
 - 5.3.6 Results from online survey with users of the ESF website**
 - 5.3.7 Case studies**