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INTRASOFT INTERNATIONAL

HENNINGSEN CONSULTING

Synthesis study on DG REGIO communication actions

Final report – Main report

My Region, My Europe, Our Future

Regional and Urban Policy

Synthesis study on DG REGIO communication actions

Final report – Main report

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Bea Mahieu (Technopolis)

Hywel Jones (Technopolis)

Tonia Damvakeraki (Intrasoft)

Marika De Scalzi (Technopolis)

Astrid Henningsen (Henningsen Consulting)

Alex Lotito (Technopolis)

Jacek Walendowski (Technopolis)

Executive summary

This is the final report of the Synthesis study on DG REGIO communication activities. The study was conducted by Technopolis Group and its partners Henningsen Consulting and Intrasoft between April 2019 and January 2020 (included). The objective was to provide a horizontal assessment of communication activities of DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) in the period 2017-2018. The ultimate aim was to provide advice on the communication of cohesion policy results to the European citizens, and guidelines on how to improve the way DG REGIO communicates towards external audiences.

The study did **not** evaluate every single activity. Instead, the focus was on *overall coherence and consistency* among DG REGIO's communication actions to citizens – and between these actions and the actions of Member State authorities and other Commission Services, especially the corporate campaigns.

In this study we applied the theory-based model for evaluations, in line with the EC Better Regulations. The objectives hierarchy of DG REGIO's communication strategy therefore constituted the overarching framework for our analyses. The analysis was conducted according to six evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU-added value and sustainability, responding to a set of evaluation questions.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were deployed, allowing for triangulation of the findings. Our methods included a survey, statistical analysis of secondary monitoring data, social media and web analytics, desk research, 32 interviews, and five case studies.

Context and background

The EU Cohesion Policy, its implementation and communication, sets the overarching background to this study. There are three main funding instruments available at the EU level to implement the EU Cohesion Policy: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), and the Cohesion Fund (CF). ERDF and CF are competence of DG REGIO.

Cohesion Policy is implemented under the so-called shared-management mode, Managing Authorities and beneficiaries in the Member States have the task (and legal obligation) to provide information and communicate on the aims, funding opportunities and results of the co-funded actions. Communication to the general public is part of this responsibility.

The Communication on corporate communication under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, adopted in 2013, was a fundamental milestone in this development of a framework, rules and means for "a more effective communication of institution-level messages, including reputation and image management." Corporate communication involves combining and maximising EC resources to improve and better communicate the EU's positive and tangible impact on the lives of Europeans and citizens of partner countries. It is measured by the Eurobarometer survey on the image of the European Union.

In the period of interest for this study (2017-19), corporate communication was articulated around three main strands that constituted a strategic communication framework and were mutually reinforcing. They included three corporate communication campaigns managed centrally by DG COMM (InvestEU, EUandMe and EU Protects) and the complementary communication activities carried out by the EC Representations (REPs) in the Member States and the Citizens' Dialogues and Europe Direct Information Centres (EDIC) structures.

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DG REGIO communication strategy and activities

DG REGIO's communication activities are to be set in the context of DG REGIO's competences for the implementation of the Cohesion Policy and specifically the ERDF and CF (including the Interreg programmes).

A key policy objective for the communication activities in DG REGIO is to support the positioning of cohesion policy as central to the attainment of the European project and its priorities, among EU policy makers and the general public. The Eurobarometer survey on the Awareness of EU regional support and the perception of a positive impact on the development of city or region are key parameters.

In 2017, DG REGIO stepped up its efforts to reach out to European citizens, scaling up its efforts to increase the visibility of cohesion policy. In 2018, 'external' communication activities targeting stakeholders and the general public accounted for 84% of DG REGIO's communication budget. DG REGIO's communication budget also more than doubled (from €6.7m to about €16m).

The term 'communication activities' stands for three categories of activities implemented by DG REGIO's communication unit: 'external' communication activities in the form of structured campaigns and specific information and communication actions; internal and external collaboration and communication structures and processes; and tools for regular communication, encompassing DG REGIO's 'owned' media tools and publications.

DG REGIO's communication activities targeting stakeholders and citizens can be categorised in two groupings:

- *'Country-specific' communication actions* that operate in a specific number of Member States and regions. These include EU Delivers in the Regions, the Cohesion Dialogues, the Road Trip Project and the Support for Information Measures action. They *jointly* account for 81% of the budget and together, resulted in a strong concentration on seven countries: Austria, Italy, France, Greece, Sweden – and to a lesser extent, Belgium and Germany

- *EU-wide campaigns* covering all or almost all EU28 MS, i.e. the EU in My Region campaigns and the Euronews projects, jointly accounting for 3% of DG REGIO's communication budget

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Relevance of DG REGIO communication activities

For relevance we considered the alignment of DG REGIO's communication activities with the needs for EC corporate communication and the needs of the Member States (MS)/Managing Authorities (MA).

Relevance for the EC corporate communication

DG REGIO's communication strategy, objectives and implementation supports the EC corporate communication objectives and complements the corporate campaigns thanks to a strong alignment of its communication strategies and objectives and its emphasis on communication to the citizen. The two DGs share a strong result orientation in their messages, combined with a prominent human element in their narratives, which is aimed at creating emotional connections. In both DGs, the focus is on storytelling, showcasing tangible results and benefits for the individual European citizen. Both DGs also dedicate high attention to ensuring the relevance of the message to the citizens by means of localisation, even though the approach taken is different.

The scope of DG REGIO's communication actions implemented in a specific set of regions and countries was in strong alignment with the need for communication from an EU policy perspective - both in terms of geographical coverage and targeted audiences.

Surveys that were conducted in the context of DG REGIO's two campaigns, the EU Delivers and Road Trip, indicate scope for improving awareness and perception among the target audiences: for the Road Trip, around three-quarters said their knowledge of the EU was only weak (39% or quite strong (35%); for EU Delivers, between 70% and 85% judged the campaign would be effective in raising awareness about EU participation at the regional level to a local and regional audience. The campaigns also seem well aligned with information needs of the target audiences, who show a high interest in knowing more about EU-supported actions in their region, while social media is a relevant channel for younger audiences but has some limitations in addressing older audiences.

Relevance versus the MS/MA communication campaigns

The communication strategies in the MS/MA show a growing alignment with the communication strategies in DG REGIO and DG COMM. While the communication function in MS/MA keeps its primary role of ensuring programme performance with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, communication to the general public is overall recognised to be critical for the success of the programme – with the exception of some 'net contributor' countries. Localisation of the message, with an emphasis on the human element and concrete results while communicating reality and recognising the remaining challenges (in order not to confuse communication with publicity and advertising) are considered to be of major importance.

A major challenge for communication to the citizens that national and regional Information and Communication Officers (ICO) face, is the availability of resources – financial and human. Another important challenge is the difficulty to communicate cohesion policy to the citizens, due to its complexity. One in three (31%) survey respondents indicated the lack of coordination across Funds within the EU to be a complicating factor.

Notoriously challenging for the communication on EU matters to the general public in general is the lack of interest in EU policy in the media, at regional but especially national level. Equally important is the lack of awareness in the general public of regional policy and its funds, and of EU affairs in general.

Seeing the focus and characteristics of the communication strategies in the MS/MA and the challenges they face in their communication to the citizens, a broad range of areas can be identified where DG REGIO's communication activities could be of relevance, based on their objectives. These ranged from communication actions to citizens that would compensate for resources problems to the fostering of a change in culture among the MA hierarchies in terms of importance attributed to communication to citizens on EU policy.

Effectiveness of DG REGIO communication activities

We assessed the effectiveness of the communication activities in terms of their performance against objectives, as well as in terms of their 'internal coherence', i.e. the extent to which they constituted a coherent portfolio of mutually reinforcing actions.

Effectiveness of campaigns, communication actions and regular communication channels

DG REGIO's campaigns and communication actions can be said to have largely met their output objectives.

EU Delivers performed at a similar level to the corporate campaigns in terms of aggregate potential reach. The Road Trip reported potential reach that was lower than corporate campaigns, but in this case the target audience was very specific (young people 18-30). The Support for Information Measures action, implemented through call for proposals, resulted in a potential reach similar to the two main campaigns (based on available and comparable data).

EU Delivers in the Regions

- Reported aggregate potential reach is almost 270 million across the 32 regions in five countries (AT, EL, FR, IT and SE), averaging 9 million per region, but with around 60% of this in France alone. This is equivalent to 170% the available audience, in terms of the population of the five campaign countries

- The *deduplicated* potential reach achieved by EU Delivers in France and Austria is roughly equivalent to the countries' total population, in Greece and Sweden it is calculated to be equivalent to around 80-90% of their populations, while in Italy is just below 70%

- In France and Austria, the biggest contributor of this potential reach was via the outdoor displays in public spaces. In France, these were reported to have exposed the campaign almost 90 million times. Sweden and Greece were the only countries where the highest potential reach was reported via social media, but this was still only a fraction of the potential reach reported for social media in France

- Analysis of the topics highlighted by social media posts using the local campaign hashtags indicates that a somewhat different audience was successfully engaged by the EU Delivers campaign than is normally engaged with DG REGIO social media content and themes

- Most of the engagement with EU Delivers outside the campaign countries was in Belgium, probably attributable to Brussels stakeholders. Among the campaign countries, Italy and France showed the highest engagement levels but Sweden, Greece and Austria are also in the top 10 EU Member States, confirming that audiences in these countries were engaged with the campaign

- Estimating the audience interest in the EU Delivers interactive billboards per region, this provides some evidence that audiences were more engaged in France and Greece than Austria and Italy, and Sweden least of all

Road Trip 2018

- According to the final report, the potential reach of the Road Trip campaign in 2018 was 23 million, which equates to over half the young Europeans aged 18 to 24 who have a Facebook or Instagram account. The average frequency of exposure was around 6 times per person. In terms of engagement, the Road Trip campaign achieved close to 30 million video views, more than 120 000 interactions and 400 000 unique web visitors. In terms of community building: on Instagram, the campaign built a community of more than 10 000 followers and on Facebook, the existing community grew by 47% to over 42 000 fans

- Taking into account the countries' populations, Greece, Portugal, Lithuania, Ireland and Hungary make up the Top 5 in terms of total aggregate reach

- Assessing engagement, use of the hashtag in relation to the total number of social media users per country shows the highest rates of engagement in Belgium and smaller countries, where a greater share of the population is easier to reach. However, of the larger countries, France also ranks highly, while Spain is the highest ranked of the rest – Poland, Italy and Germany all rank in the bottom half in terms of share of audience actively engaged in using the hashtag

- The actual channels used for the Road Trip were well chosen and aligned. Campaign survey results showed almost half the target Road Trip audience preferring either Facebook, YouTube or Instagram as their first-choice social media. Engagement data provides some evidence that the audiences engaged on Twitter and Instagram were different

- Overall, the campaign reported an average interaction rate of 0.12%. In general, audiences in Eastern European countries tended to interact more than the rest of Europe, possibly because most of the road trips crossed that part of Europe. Latvia and Estonia had the highest interaction rates of the EU Member States.

Support for Information Measures action

- The capacity to obtain a view on the effectiveness of this action, implemented through open calls, is hampered by the fact that even though some of the 'Information Measures' funded under the 2017

call reported relatively detailed data on potential reach, it is not measured consistently across the measures even when addressing similar KPIs. Estimated aggregate reach varies widely, for example Portugal has a total potential reach (OTS) equivalent to just under half the population (partly due to significant viewing figures for television channels supported by the campaign) while in Italy this rises to three-quarters of the population, boosted by print newspaper readership. The assessment of the relative success of these actions would be facilitated if a set of common core indicators were defined in the call guidelines and/or included as selection criteria and/or in the reporting template .

- Looking at different channels, the highest potential reach is generally reported for digital (i.e. web) and social media channels. Given the older age profiles of audiences who consume television and print news, the overlap with the Road Trip project (chiefly using social media and targeting younger audiences) would be expected to be low

Other communication actions

- Six episodes of the Smart Regions Euronews series, supported under the Cohesion@30 campaign, were estimated to have reached a total of 8 million people, with a repeat frequency of about 3

- For the EU in my Region campaign, some limited outputs and results data are included in the final report: more than 2,500 events were held in 27 countries, with 450,000 participants overall. Some country-level figures again indicate a high level of activity in France, even relative to its population

A coherent and integrated portfolio of communication activities

DG REGIO's various communication actions take place in a range of EU Member States, with an emphasis on some more than others. High reach levels were attained in France, Italy, Austria, Greece, Portugal and Sweden throughout the campaigns. With the exception of Portugal, these are all countries upon which the 'selective' campaigns concentrated their efforts. In the case of Portugal, this coincides with the high reach figures in all of DG REGIO's owned media channels. For Greece there is a high usage of the Facebook page, and in the case of Italy, the high interaction with the #EUinmyRegion hashtag.

However, in most cases, the 'regular' communication channels (i.e. DG REGIO's digital and social media channels) seem to complement the campaigns, with e.g. Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Malta, and Slovenia as major user countries in specific channels.

In general, the highest potential reach is reported for digital and social media channels, and the Member States with the highest aggregate social media reach relative to the total audience size (country population) are where one would expect the largest 'overlaps' between campaigns and/or communication actions to occur (in terms of the same population reached twice or more times). It should be noted that this is not forcefully negative; if duly planned with coordination of the message, it may also result in a 'consolidation' of the message

- In the case of Portugal, social media reach via the Road Trip (1 million, equivalent to over 10% of the population) and the Support for Information Measures (39%) both account for a large share of the country's population – so overlap would also be expected to be higher

- Equally, in Italy, the reach via social media of the EU Delivers campaign (30%) and the Support for Information Measures (60%) would be expected to produce a significant amount of overlap – reaching the same audience members multiple times

- France also rated highly for the social media reach reported for the Road Trip campaign, fourth highest overall (with potential reach of 1.75 million), suggesting a potential overlap with EU Delivers (with aggregate reach via social media equivalent to 40% of the target audience)

Effectiveness of the regular communication channels

DG REGIO social media account in general

- Looking at the follower base for a selection of EU institutional accounts, it is clear that DG REGIO is roughly comparable to DGs AGRI and EMPL in the number of followers of its accounts. It is different from the other two DGs mainly in that it has more Twitter followers than Facebook

followers (and more Twitter followers than either of the other two DGs, while having fewer Facebook followers than they do)

- Distribution of *'EU In My Region'* Facebook followers and users of the *#EUinmyRegion* hashtag could indicate some inefficiencies/redundancies in distribution of communication effort, as larger countries such as Germany, Romania and Poland are not being actively engaged through these EU channels

Facebook page 'Europe in my Region'

- Facebook followers grew relatively steadily from 10 000 to 50 000 during the course of the last 3 years

- Taking the population using social media in the country into account, the follower base represents a much larger share of the available audience in Greece, Portugal and Bulgaria than it does in France, Italy or Spain. These countries mainly represent important beneficiaries of Cohesion Funds. Germany and Poland are both missing from the top 10 countries of Facebook followers.

- The Facebook page appears to attract more interactions per post (taking into account the size of the follower base) than the EC corporate accounts, and has shown a higher follower growth rate, indicating that the posts on this account are found relevant by its audience

Twitter

- Taking the population using social media into account, some of the smaller countries show a high level of use of the hashtag (Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland and Portugal), but Italy, Spain and France also rank highly. The lower ranks include Germany and Poland, but also Romania

- Analysis of the DG REGIO family of Twitter accounts indicates the national reach (as a share of the population) of some geographical accounts (e.g. Poland) is comparable with the @EUinmyRegion account EU-wide. Those with the lowest reach include Denmark, UK & Ireland, Portugal & Spain and the thematic accounts for Interreg and Administrative Capacity

- Comparison of the mentions of the #EUinmyRegion, #roadtriproject and #InvestEU hashtags indicates very little cross-over in terms of posts referencing more than one campaign

InfoRegio website

- The distribution of visitors to the DG REGIO website (taking population into account) could represent some inefficiencies/redundancies in the distribution of the communication effort, in particular for Romania, Germany and Poland that are among the low ranks

Efficiency of DG REGIO communication activities

For efficiency, we looked into the budgeting and cost-effectiveness of the activities as well as the efficiency in implementation.

Budgeting and cost-effectiveness

In terms of the aggregate potential reach of the campaigns against the estimated budget spend, EU Delivers appears to be relatively cost effective with €28 spent per 1000 OTS generated (€28 CPM); for the Road Trip, the potential OTS reported resulted in €87 CPM. For the sake of completeness, we have calculated also the CPM of the Support for Information Measures (a CPM of €28.) and the EU in my Region action (€29), even though in both cases, data available was limited.

It should be noted that while this data gives an indication of cost-effectiveness, the cost of a campaign or communication action highly depends on the channels used as well as country of implementation. Detailed data on costs and potential OTS per channel was not available, which hampered our capacity to conduct a proper comparative analysis for these four communication actions.

Overall, budget spend was highest in France and Italy, which seems appropriate to their population size to be reached, but this assessment could be made with more certainty if reach data was more directly comparable among EU Delivers and various Information Measures supported, and if there was more consistent monitoring and reporting of result metrics such as engagement and recall or awareness change.

Per channel cost/spending breakdowns for the campaigns are not available, but the Road Trip social media campaigns do provide a CPM measure for their social media advertising. The reported average CPM compares well with the benchmarks set by the EC's corporate campaigns.

The estimated budget spend per country for EU Delivers is the most significant in all relevant countries apart from Italy, where several beneficiaries of the Support for Information Measures action received significant grants. Based on assumptions of roughly equal spend per country covered, the Road Trip budget was the smallest, but the reported reach was also much smaller, leading to a higher CPM overall. This is also associated with its very specific target audience, though: the more specific the audience targeted, generally, the higher the costs

In comparison to the overall CPMs for the corporate campaigns, the overall CPMs for DG REGIO campaigns are rather high. Reflecting our note above, this is dependent on the method used to calculate this indicator, the mix of channels used, and on the country. On the whole, EU Delivers was implemented in countries where media buying could be expected to be higher than average so, for example, the cost-efficiency of EU Delivers in France compares rather well to InvestEU even if the overall CPM is higher.

Efficiency in implementation

Internal communication coordination processes and structures

Overall, the internal coordination and communication structures and processes seem to be well functioning, even though they have shown some teething problems and there is room for improvement. The structure and network of Single Entry Points, Country correspondents and Senior Specialists facilitate a smoothening of the informational process on communication within DG REGIO, thus enhancing efficiency.

The Communication Matrix (CM) is at the core of the cross-unit collaboration structure on communication. Interviewees highlighted its usefulness and especially, relevance as a platform enabling the flow of thematic knowledge between the A2 unit and the more operational units such as the geographical ones. The CM makes communication processes more visible and interactive.

Interviewees also emphasised that the relevance of the CM goes well beyond the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of DG REGIO's work by improving internal communication and collaborative working methods. A key function of this platform is also to mainstream communication in the work of all units. From this perspective, they considered the limited involvement of the horizontal units and competence centres, combined with the current approach by the A2 unit of a unidirectional information transfer rather than bi-directional knowledge exchange as an opportunity lost.

Communication portfolio management

We see room for a more integrated management and strategic planning of the communication activities portfolio. We noted a limited availability of information on how the different communication activities are expected jointly to contribute to the attainment of the objectives set out in the communication strategy and how synergies and complementarities between the different communication actions are planned for. In addition, we noted the lack of a consistent monitoring and evaluation structure and processes across all communication activities.

Monitoring data is currently available for communication actions that together account for only about 60% of DG REGIO's budget. In addition, DG REGIO is not currently using the full possibilities of the EC's social media monitoring tools for the monitoring of engagement. For recall and awareness change, post-test surveys were not available for Road Trip and for EU Delivers changes cannot be attributed to the campaign as the pre- and post-test surveys were carried out in different regions.

Involvement of the MS/MA in the communication activities

Feedback from the MAs in the surveys and case studies on the quality of the campaigns' planning and implementation was quite positive, even though everything was not always running smoothly. While the national/regional ICOs overall considered the briefings to be clear and timely, the timeliness of the campaigns themselves was more of an issue - and closely connected to it, planning. Another area where there's room for improvement is the coordination between all levels of actors involved.

There are two broad categories of DG REGIO's campaigns and communication actions targeting citizens, depending on the involvement of the MS/MA in the design or implementation of the actions.

Communication activities taking a **co-creation approach**, in terms of a close cooperation between DG REGIO, the Managing Authorities and the beneficiaries (EU that Delivers in the Regions, EU in my Region and the Road Trip Project). These communication actions are seen as strongly aligned with the MS/MA national communication strategies and create positive effects in the local environment.

The communication actions taking a **'communication through intermediaries' approach,** where collaboration with the MAs was less intense, were highly criticised by the MS/MA and REPs whenever collaboration or even just information on these actions had been inexistent, hampering integration of these activities within the overall portfolio of communication on EU policy at the national or regional level.

Coherence of DG REGIO communication activities

The assessment of 'external' coherence assessed the alignment and synergies/complementarities created with other EC communication actions, in particular the EC corporate ones, and the communication actions in the MS/MA.

Coherence and alignment with other EC communication actions

DG REGIO has set up close collaboration with DG COMM for both the EU Delivers and the Road Trip campaigns, which according to all relevant interviewees worked very well.

The EU Delivers campaign has explicitly been designed to "complement" the #InvestEU campaign (2nd phase), taking the campaign from the national to the regional and local level. There are strong similarities between the two campaigns in strategy and approach, and the EU Delivers campaign was implemented in 40 regions in six countries, all of them covered also by the #InvesteU campaign.

The collaboration between the two DGs was even more pronounced for the Road Trip project, especially as of 2019. The Road Trip and EUandME campaigns are intended to be mutually reinforcing in terms of visibility and engagement, with systematic cross-referencing on all platforms. The two campaigns will also combine their young video/film makers.

Nevertheless, there was little evidence of an 'overlap' between any of these campaigns. Very few survey respondents (about 10%) had been involved in one of these campaigns. Comparison of the mentions of the campaign hashtags indicates that just 3% of posts mentioning #EUinmyRegion also mention #InvestEU. In the case of the #roadtriproject hashtag, the overlap is 4% of social media posts.

Coherence and alignment with MS/MA communication actions

Functionality of the communication activities

DG REGIO's approach is generally praised for its result focus – and its objective to show the salience and relevance of EU funding locally. EU led communication, especially the EU Delivers campaign, is also praised for the local twist on content and messages. DG REGIO's approach is seen to have undergone a positive development, with a communication approach that is more in line with national efforts and more responsive to feedback from national MAs.

Interviewees indicated positive effects of DG REGIO's communication activities in terms of a streamlining of the messages conveyed in the DG REGIO and local communication efforts, and a professionalisation of the communication practice on cohesion policy in the MS/MA. They also indicated sustainability of the materials for re-use by the national and regional authorities – even though the lack of multilingualism was criticised in this context, mentioning also the limits this poses on the reach of the message, especially in social media but not only.

A specific complementarity of the DG REGIO communication actions consists in the scale and reach of its activities which often is not feasible within the limits of the MA's communication budget. When comparing ERDF/CF funding data (adjusted for population) with the data on campaigns and especially reach, we can consider that the extensive coverage by the DG REGIO communication activities of Austria, France, and Sweden – and to a lesser extent, Greece and Italy, compensated for the limited communication ERDF budget available in these countries.

Functionality of the co-ordination and co-operation structures and measures

The overall feedback received indicate a high level of functionality of the INFORM network, even though there is room for improvement. interviewees indicated a significant structuring effect of the network. Directionality is a commonly described effect and most importantly, the exchange of knowledge and experience in the context of the network's events constitutes a driver for a shift in approach to communication in the MS/MAs. Timeliness and planning are an issue also in this context.

A final note needs to be made in relation to the Interreg Programme. Interviewees indicated the somewhat isolated position ICOs covering Interreg programmes have in the national system as well as within the DG REGIO communication structures. Their specific problems and communication issues typically are not covered in DG REGIO's communication activities, with the exception of the Road Trip, which however targeted a very specific audience (young Europeans).

Added value and sustainability of DG REGIO communication activities

For added value we looked into the extent to which DG REGIO's activities created effects that could not have been reached otherwise (additionality), to the benefit of the EC corporate communication and/or the MS/MA. For sustainability we assessed the extent to which the created effects and/or tools will be of lasting value.

Additional value for the EC corporate communication

A key factor that allows DG REGIO's communication activities to create added value is the strong alignment of its communication strategy and approach to communication targeting the general public with the EC corporate communication strategy and approach. A key asset of DG REGIO's communication activities is the close relationship with the MAs. It allows for localisation of the messages and especially, a direct access to information on needs in the local environments as well as to relevant networks and multipliers. The INFORM network as well as the network of Country Correspondents and their involvement in the DG REGIO Communication Matrix are precious sources for information – even though they do not seem yet to be used at their full potential.

The performance of DG REGIO's communication activities suggest an added value in terms of scale and financing of communication activities with a high level of complementarity with the corporate campaigns and similar scope.

Additional value for the communication actions in MS/MA

A key factor that allows DG REGIO's communication activities to create added value for the MS/MA is the growing alignment of its communication strategy and approach with the communication strategy and approach in the MS/MA – and vice-versa, combined with the significant attention to the needs in the local environment.

We see an added value of the DG REGIO communication activities in terms of scale, financial additionality, capacity building and behavioural additionality, fostering a shift in approach to communication.

Sustainability of DG REGIO campaigns

Interviewees as well as survey respondents indicate the longer-term value especially of the approach adopted by DG REGIO in its campaigns, from a professional and conceptual perspective.

The high appreciation also of the tools developed in the campaigns confirms the quality of the message development and overall campaign implementation. From the case studies we have learned that this constitutes a key value especially of the EU in my Region campaign.

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1 Introduction

This document is the draft final report of the Synthesis study on DG REGIO communication actions. The study was conducted by Technopolis Group and its partners Henningsen Consulting and Intrasoft between April 2019 and January 2020 (included).

The aim of the study is to provide a horizontal assessment of communication activities of DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) in the period 2017-2018, with a specific focus on: a) consistency/coherence across these activities; b) synergies with existing communication campaigns carried out by Member States/Managing Authorities and other services of the Commission (in particular at corporate level). The ultimate aim is to provide

- Advice on the communication of cohesion policy results to the European citizens

- Guidelines on how to improve the way DG REGIO communicates towards external audiences

Major lines for investigation for which recommendations are expected are:

- How further to integrate DG REGIO communication campaigns

- How to align them with communication actions by Member States and Managing Authorities

- How to build more synergies with communication campaigns carried out by other Commission services & ESIF-implementing authorities

As outlined in the ToR, the study did **not** evaluate every single activity. Instead, the focus was on *overall coherence and consistency* among DG REGIO activities – and between these activities and the actions of Member State authorities and those of other Commission Services, especially the corporate campaigns.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 briefly describes our methodological approach for this study

- Chapter 3 sets the background and context

- Chapter 4 has a brief description of DG REGIO's communication strategy and activities

- Chapter 5 contains our findings related to relevance

- Chapter 6 focuses on effectiveness

- Chapter 7 covers efficiency

- Chapter 8 is dedicated to the questions on coherence

- Chapter 9 covers the added value and sustainability criteria

- In Chapter 10 we draw our conclusions and formulate recommendations

Annex A – Data Report (separate report) contains some more detailed statistical data, the list of interviewees, the survey questionnaire and results, and the five case studies.

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2 Methodological approach

2.1 Objectives and evaluation criteria

In this study we applied the theory-based model for evaluations, in line with the EC Better Regulations. The theory-based model is based on the idea that there is a **linked chain of logic** that shows how an intervention can be expected to produce immediate effects and connect these to the longer-term effects and eventually the realisation of the objectives.

A generic intervention logic is made up of the following steps:

- An analysis of **problems, needs or issues** that need intervention (e.g. the low level of EU perception among citizens)
- This analysis implies a set of **objectives** – essentially to fix the problems, such as the specific objectives of the DG REGIO communication strategy
- An intervention therefore provides **inputs** – financial and human resources, enabling activities (i.e. campaigns and communication actions)
- These activities are expected to lead to **outputs** – i.e. direct results of the work (e.g. number of events organised or reach of citizens)
- The outputs enable **results** (e.g. awareness, engagement)
- That are expected to lead to **impacts** (e.g. change in perception)

Central in this evaluation are the **objectives and inputs** defined by DG REGIO and their alignment with on the one hand, the needs for communication that DG REGIO intended to address (relevance), and on the other hand, the other communication activities implemented at EU and national/regional levels (coherence).

The objectives hierarchy of DG REGIO's communication strategy therefore constitutes the overarching framework for our analyses.

The analysis was conducted according to **six evaluation criteria**: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, EU-added value and sustainability, responding to a set of evaluation questions (Table 1).

Table 1 Evaluation questions for the study

Criterion	Evaluation questions
Relevance	Relevance DG REGIO specific communication activities versus EC corporate campaigns and MS/MA communication actions
Effectiveness	Alignment & integration of DG REGIO communication activities & effectiveness of this integration
	Overlaps among the different activities/actions
Efficiency	Efficiency from the alignment and/or integration of DG REGIO campaigns/activities
Coherence	Complementarities and synergies between DG REGIO communication activities
	Complementarities DG REGIO vs other EC & MS/MA communication actions
EU Added Value	Additional value DG REGIO communication activities compared to what could be achieved by the EU corporate campaigns
	Additional value from DG REGIO communication activities at EU level versus what could be achieved by Member States at national/regional levels
Sustainability	Sustainable elements built into the design of DG REGIO campaigns

The first and primary focus is on the coherence and consistency of DG REGIOs different campaigns (and other major activities) which are running in the reference period 2017-2018 (internal coherence). A second focus area relates to the identification and assessment of synergies between the REGIOs campaigns and other existing communication campaigns and major actions - by the EC (especially at corporate level but also major campaigns of other related DGs such as DG EMPL and DG AGRI), and Member State level. In both these focus areas, the assessment of processes and modalities for coordination and collaboration constituted a key line of investigation.

2.2 Scope of the study

The scope for the analysis of the **internal coherence** of DG REGIO's activities encompassed **all communication activities** launched by DG REGIO in 2017-2018, i.e. external and internal, targeting stakeholders and/or citizens. They also included DG REGIO's 'regular' communication activities/channels, i.e. the social media presence, the InfoRegio website (Regional and Urban development section on DG COMM info site), the media relations and events organised. Our analyses focused in particular on the *effective functioning of tools and structures for collaboration* as well as procedures defined. A key evaluation question was the extent to which the specific objectives "Mainstream communication in decision-making (planning, making and implementation of decisions)" and "Make communication everyone's business" was achieved in DG REGIO.

The assessment of the **external coherence** with the communication activities implemented in the Member States had a specific focus on **communication actions to the citizens.** These included on the one hand, the four **main** communication actions implemented by DG REGIO (i.e. EU Delivers in the regions, the Road Trip, the Media Partnerships, and the Local Dialogues) and on the other hand, main communication actions implemented in the five case study countries, as an illustration of campaigns conducted in the MS. Tools and procedures to enhance co-operation remained of particular interest, in this case the INFORM network facilitating DG REGIO-MS collaboration. A specific focus was also on the involvement of the Managing Authorities, EC Representations and other local actors such as the EDICs in the design and/or implementation of the communication campaigns.

We also looked into the practice for cooperation and collaboration for communication with other **EU institutions**. This regarded in a first instance the other EC DGs, i.e. DG COMM and the three other ESIF DGs (DG EMPL, DG AGRI and DG MARE),. Other EU institutions that are key partners for DG REGIO in its communication activities are the Committee of the Regions, responsible a.o. for the organisation of the EU week in the regions, and the ESIF committee in the European Parliament. Also in this case, the focus was predominantly be on communication to the citizens.

2.3 Methodological framework

The main strength of our methodology was the balanced selection of recognised evaluation methods, combining both qualitative (desk research, case studies, interview programme) and quantitative approaches (statistical analysis of secondary monitoring data and additional social/online media analysis). For every single evaluation question, we collected evidence from various sources of information. This allowed for a **triangulation of the findings,** whereby information collected through one method is used to complement and validate the information provided by another method. It ensured the robustness of our findings and conclusions, mitigating the effects of eventual bias inherent to the specific evaluation methods.

Table 2 gives an overview of the methods that will be used to address the evaluation criteria and questions.

Table 2 Overview of methods used to address the evaluation criteria

	Evaluation questions	Desk research	Interviews	Case studies	Survey	Secondary data analysis	Social/online media analysis
Relevance	How relevant were DG REGIO specific communication activities vis-á-vis the EC corporate campaigns?	■	■			▨	
	How relevant were DG REGIO specific communication activities vis-á-vis MS/MA communication actions?	■		■	▨		
Coherence	Did the various communication activities work well with other EC communication actions?	■					▨
	Did they work well with other MS/MA communication actions?	■	■	■	▨		▨
Effectiveness	To what extent are the current communication activities of DG REGIO aligned and integrated? What are the overlaps, if any, among the different activities/actions?	■	■	■			▨
	How effective is the current level of integration?	■				▨	▨
Efficiency	How efficient were the alignment or integration among different campaigns/activities carried out by DG REGIO?	■			▨	▨	
Added value	What is the additional value resulting from DG REGIO communication activities compared to what could be achieved by the corporate campaigns of the EU?	■	■	■	▨		
	Compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national/regional levels?			■	▨		
Sustainability	To what extent do the DG REGIO campaigns have in-build sustainable elements in their design?			■	▨		

Desk research was a key method for this evaluation, focused in a first instance on a detailed mapping of DG REGIO's communication activities and the other campaigns at the EU level which set the basis for subsequent analyses looking into their coherence – both internally and externally. The review considered all relevant documentation related to the management of the communication function. We also synthesised recent studies looking into the implementation of Cohesion Policy communication and took the findings of the synthesis study of the corporate communication actions into account. The data collected provided the input for a range of qualitative analyses, including logframe analyses, comparative analyses, and assessments of functionality. Also to collect evidence and background on approaches and trends in national/regional structures

The **interview programme** aimed predominantly at deepening our understanding of the relevance and functionality (effectiveness) of the co-operation procedures, tools and networks – within DG REGIO and with other EU-level actors, as well as with the Member States. We conducted **33 interviews**, excluding the ones conducted in the context of the case studies.

This data was complemented and validated through the conduct of **five case studies**, one per country, covering the work of three Managing Authorities and the national information and coordination officers in each country, with a specific focus on two regions and 1 national communication campaign to citizens.

A **survey** was conducted with the national information and communication officers, members of the INFORM network. to reach an understanding of the communication practice in the MS and their internal collaboration as well as the effectiveness of their collaboration with DG REGIO, facilitators and barriers. The survey was sent out to 493 national/regional Information and Communication Officers (ICO) ICOs and 86 valid (complete) responses were received, i.e. a response rate of 17%.

The **secondary data collection and analysis** allowed for a structured analysis of the quantitative monitoring and evaluation data of the DG REGIO actions and activities. The analysis focused on the major communication actions implemented by DG REGIO, i.e. the RoadTrip project, EU delivers in the regions, the Support for Information Measures (implemented through calls for proposals)s, Cohesion@30, and the RegioStars Awards.

Finally, the **social media and web analytics** focused on assessing, amongst other whether the target audiences of paid social media campaigns corresponded to desired target audiences or overlapped with the audiences of other campaigns. We also compared reported qualitative data on campaign messages and materials to similar qualitative feedback on other campaigns' messages and materials to assess whether they are well conceived for their target audiences. We analysed data on the pre-test of campaign materials for the Road Trip (2017) and EU delivers in the Regions, campaign reporting included also the Support for Information Measures.

3   Context and background

3.1   Cohesion Policy – its implementation and communication

3.1.1   Cohesion Funds – an overview

Through its Cohesion Policy, the EU aims to reduce disparities in terms of income, living standards, social inclusion and employment opportunities across the EU by supporting job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development and quality of life.

Figure 1 The European Structural and Investment Funds
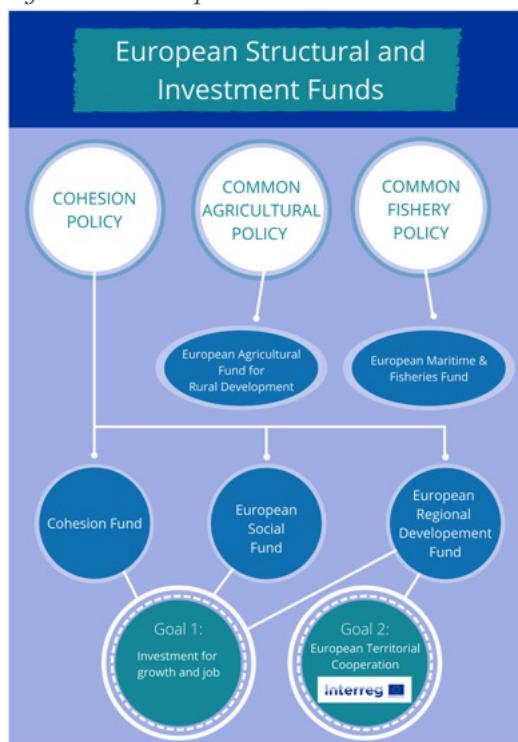
There are three main funding instruments available at the EU level to implement the EU Cohesion Policy: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), and the Cohesion Fund (CF).

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the Cohesion policy funds form the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), together with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) (Figure 1). ERDF and CF are competence of DG Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), the ESF is competence of DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL). DG AGRI and DG MARE manage the EAFRD and EMFF.

Prior to the start of the current programming period (2014 – 2020), the European Commission worked with the Member States and the regions to draw up Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes outlining investment priorities and development needs. The Operational Programmes are managed, and individual projects selected, by Managing Authorities (MAs) in the Member States.

Under the MFF 2014-2020, the **budget available** for the ERDF and CF amounts at in total €351.8 bn, of which the ERDF accounts for €288.4bn (82%) and the Cohesion Fund for a total of €63.4bn. The level of support provided by the Cohesion Policy funds depends on each region's position in relation to the average GDP per capita of the EU-27.

For ERDF and ESF, there are three categories of regions (in brackets, €m):

- *Less developed regions*: those whose GDP per capita is less than 75% of the average GDP of the EU-27 (2014 – 2020 funding: €182.2m)

- *Transition regions*: those whose GDP per capita is between 75% and 90% of the average GDP of the EU-27 (2014 – 2020 funding: €35.4m)

- *More developed regions*: those whose GDP per capita is above 90 % of the average GDP of the EU-27 (2014 – 2020 funding:€54.4m)

The majority of ERDF and ESF funding available for the ERDF is directed towards 'less developed regions'and 'transition regions' (Figure 2).

The Cohesion Fund, instead, is aimed at Member States whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90 % of the EU average. For the 2014-2020 period, it concerns Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Figure 2 ERDF and ESF eligibility 2014 to 2020
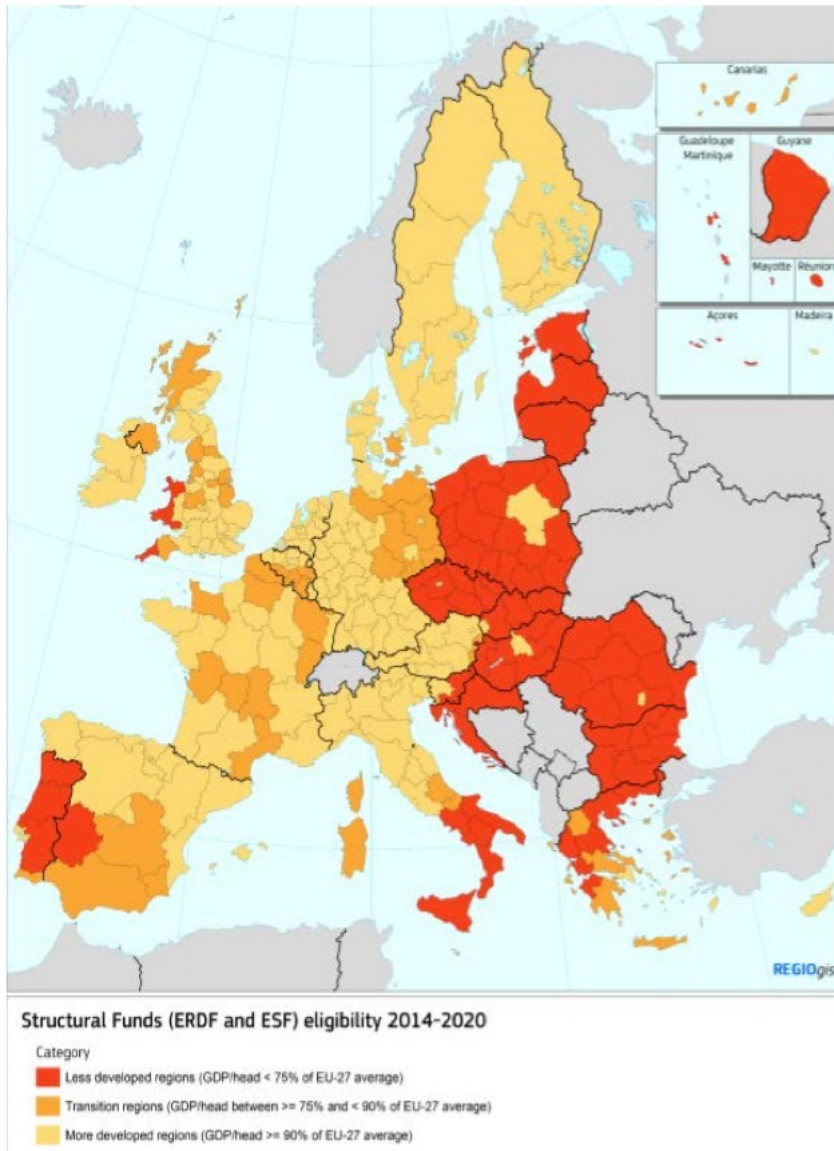
Source: European Commission, 2018.

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3.1.2   Cohesion policy communication in the Member States - regulatory context

As Cohesion Policy is implemented under the so-called **shared-management mode**, Managing Authorities (MAs) and beneficiaries in the Member States (MS) have an important role to play. They have the task (and legal obligation) to provide information and communicate on the aims, funding opportunities and results of the co-funded actions.[1] For the current programming period (2014-2020), Member States and MAs are required to ensure information and communication about the support delivered by Cohesion Policy funds. Notably, obligations of MAs and Member States include[2]:

- To draw up a multiannual communication strategy

- To establish a single website or portal providing information on, and access to, all Operational Programmes in that Member State

- To inform potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities, and

- To publicise the role and achievements of Cohesion Policy and of the Funds through information and communication actions on the results and impact of Partnership Agreements, operational programmes and operations

These activities are intended to contribute not only to the implementation of Cohesion Policy, but also to create awareness on positive impacts of EU policies and, ultimately, to "strengthen public support for the EU as a whole".[3]

The intention is to increase ownership of the communication strategy, allocating full responsibility to the Managing Authority and the programmes' Monitoring Committees. While there is no longer an obligation to report on information and communication activities in the Annual Implementation Report (apart from 2017 and 2019), systematic reporting and review of the communication activities is foreseen on an annual basis in the **Monitoring Committee** meeting. At the same meeting, a communication activity plan for the following year shall be adopted. In case a common communication strategy is drawn up for several operational programmes and concerns several monitoring committees, the Member State may designate one monitoring committee to be responsible, in consultation with the other relevant monitoring committees, for the approval of the common communication strategy and for the approval of any subsequent amendments of that strategy.

In addition, the regulation clearly recognised and defined the role of the **national information and communication officer** who is expected to act as co-ordinator of the communication activities of one or more Funds and of the national communication network(s) and is responsible for the maintenance of the national cohesion policy website/portal and for providing an overview of communication measures taken at national level.

3.1.3   The communication practice in the Member States

The ERDF/CF funds foresee a budget for communication activities that amounts at 0.35% of the total programme budget.

A 2016 EPRC study[4] provided first evidence related to the implementation of Cohesion Policy communication in the Member States during the programming period 2014-2020. It showed that there has been a shift towards a **more strategic approach** in the MS, "with a stronger integration of communication as a core component of programming and greater coordination across Funds and activities".

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[1] European Commission, Ensuring the visibility of Cohesion Policy: information and communication rules 2014-2020, March 2014.

[2] Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, Art. 115-117 and Annex XII.

[3] European Commission, Ensuring the visibility of Cohesion Policy: information and communication rules 2014-2020, March 2014.

[4] Mendez C, Dozhdeva V and Bachtler J (2016) *The implementation of ESIF Communication Strategies in 2014-20: Are they achieving expectations?*, IQ-Net Thematic Paper 39(3), European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

There is also a stronger focus on **communicating results**, especially at project level, and an increasing use of project case studies and the MA's website to communicate on programme activities as well as social media (although not fully exploited). The study noted that the shift in emphasis in many programmes away from infrastructure in 2014-20 made public awareness increasingly difficult to maintain as co-funded projects become less visible. It found that to address this challenge, increasing use was being made at the national/regional levels of project case studies and the MA's website to communicate on programme activities. It also noted that the **branding of programmes** played an important role in raising visibility and awareness among target groups (e.g. 'ESPA' in Greece and 'Portugal 2020') and that a **single visual identity** rather than individual logos for different programmes can reinforce visibility. This has been a key objective in the Croatia, Czech Republic and Greece for 2014-20, contrasting with the practice in the previous period.

A research paper in the context of the H2020 Cohesify project[5], based upon a comparative analysis of communication strategies and their effectiveness in 17 regions across the EU, had a slightly less positive view. The main conclusion was that Cohesion policy communication strategies are improving but are failing to rise to the challenge in terms of a focus on citizens and their daily lives, results-oriented planning and sophistication of methods, and effective use of both traditional and social media and local differentiation.

In 2017, the Council invited the Commission and Member States and their managing authorities, a.o., to **enhance cooperation** on their communication strategies on Cohesion Policy in order to increase the visibility of the Cohesion Policy, "both towards EU citizens and political decision-makers".[6] The European Parliament endorsed this position of the Council and considered in a non-legislative resolution that "a better coordination among public authorities, social and economic partners and civil society is needed in order better to communicate the goals of the EU and increase the interest of citizens in the European project."[7]

3.2 EC Corporate Communication

3.2.1 Policy context

Since 2014, the European Commission has started to roll out its 'corporate communication', developing the framework and establishing the rules and means for "a more effective communication of institution-level messages, including reputation and image management".[8] The need was felt to communicate the overarching political priorities of the European Commission with greater clarity and strength. The need to bring the European Union closer to citizens was re-confirmed in the Bratislava Declaration and the Rome Declaration adopted by the 27 Member States on 16 September 2016 and on 25 March 2017 respectively. The Sibiu Declaration of the EU 27 leaders in May 2019 reinforced the concept that EU communication to the citizens is a shared responsibility.

The Communication on corporate communication under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, adopted in 2013, was a fundamental milestone in this development. It set out the basic rules and made operational the corporate communication clauses in sector-specific regulations under the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020 MFF). The objective was also to ensure that all communication activities of the Commission would be optimally aligned with the political priorities, agenda and narrative of the College.

Corporate communication was firmly set in the context of the Union's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EU2020) and the Lisbon Agenda. A key feature of the new approach was the focus

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[5] Corchado, L., Fernández, N., Martín, F., Méndez, C. (2017) *A comparative analysis of Cohesion Policy communication strategies*, Cohesify Research Paper 11

[6] Conclusions of the General Affairs Council (GAC) meeting on "Making Cohesion Policy more effective, relevant and visible to our citizens", 25 April 2017

[7] European Parliament resolution on increasing engagement of partners and visibility in the performance of European Structural and Investment Funds, P8_TA(2017)0245, 13 June 2017

[8] SEC(2013) 486/2, Corporate communication under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020

on non-specialist audiences for the communication about the EU's political priorities, next to the enhancement of coherence of the Commission messages.

In 2014, DG COMM became a Presidential Service under the Juncker Commission and took up a pivotal role in steering the process of streamlining and defining one sole Commission-wide objective for external communication, aligned with the new political agenda and the increased expectations. This cross-cutting objective for the Commission's communication domain can be summed up as "information to and engagement with European Union citizens". It is measured by the Eurobarometer survey on the image of the European Union.

The Synergies and Efficiencies Review in 2016 enforced the consensus among the DGs that there was a need for "more alignment of sectoral communication to the political priorities as well as better governance, with a lean and service oriented central steer from DG COMM." [9]

3.2.2 The communication strategy 2016-2020 and its implementation

DG COMM's Strategic Plan 2016-2020[10], reflects the Juncker Commission vision: "The European Union should be bigger and more ambitious on big things, and smaller and more modest on small things." The mission for DG COMM is to **raise public awareness about the EU as a whole, its values and its work** to address current issues, in line with the 10 Commission political priorities set out in the Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change.

The Juncker Commission emphasised the need for an improved communication to the European citizens. Corporate communication was to focus "on the big things where citizens expect Europe to make a difference"[11]. This includes creating quality jobs, stimulating investment, working to modernise the economy and collectively providing more safety and security for citizens. In 2016, it was considered crucial that corporate communication would focus on "what Europe does for people: a Europe that protects, empowers, defends and preserves the European way of life."[12]

Corporate communication involves **combining and maximising EC resources** to improve and better communicate the EU's positive and tangible impact on the lives of Europeans and citizens of partner countries. It also allows the Commission to **listen and engage with citizens** and prepare to respond effectively to current challenges and unforeseen developments in a rapidly changing world.

DG COMM provides the tools and services to **inform and exchange directly with European citizens**. Next to the implementation of corporate communication actions, DG COMM also has the mission to work on **aligning communication action** across the Commission to the 10 political priorities, focusing on:

- *Prioritising* through more efficient governance of the communication domain under the steer of DG COMM, notably through the Corporate Communication Steering Committee (meeting at senior management level)
- *Professionalising* the communication function, including the establishment of communities of expertise/competence in key areas such as online communication, audio visual and media monitoring and analysis
- *Performance measuring*, so as to show a communication budget focused on results, which is also an essential element of accountability

DG COMM is taking a **multimedia digital approach** for its corporate communication including Citizens' Dialogues or the road shows and tours of the Vice-Presidents multimedia services, always

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[9] Ref. Ares(2016)1853065 - 19/04/2016

[10] DG COMM Strategic Plan 2016-2020, Ref. Ares(2016)1853065 - 19/04/2016

[11] Commission Work Programme 2016 COM(2015) 610

[12] Towards a better Europe – A Europe that protects, empowers and defends, State of the Union 2016 by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, 14 September 2016

supported with a strong involvement on the ground via the Commission's Representations in the Member States. It also leads the ***digital transformation programme*** building a new user-centred web presence organised along themes and not following the organisation structure of the Commission departments. The aim is to provide high quality online services meeting the expectations of European citizens and strengthen their trust in the EU.

To achieve the above objectives, the following range of **specific actions** are used:

- *Production of content*, including photos, audio-visual, graphic and written material; provision of other corporate technical services which benefit the institution as a whole such as online services, including the institutional web presence and social media activity

- *Dissemination of information* through integrated communication actions including on multi-media platforms

- *Acquisition of media space*, including TV and radio airtime, outdoor and indoor advertising, web adverts and other online promotion techniques and print media space

- *Organisation of and participation in events*, including exhibitions, forums, dialogues and other activities aimed at citizens

- Studies and evaluations, where relevant

3.2.3   *EC corporate campaigns in 2017-2019*

The approach to corporate communication, adopted in 2013[13], was tested with 'EU Working for You', a pilot campaign in six Member States that, between 2014 and 2015, reached 115 million people[14]. In the following years, corporate communication has been progressively aligned with the Commission's ten political priorities and has increasingly focused on demonstrating the benefits and tangible results of EU policies, their contribution to jobs and growth, the EU's work to address current issues.[15] In addition, corporate campaigns promote efficiency by combining and maximising EU resources. They are managed centrally by DG COMM with support from other DGs, which also contribute financially.

In the period of specific interest for this study (2017-19), corporate communication was articulated around three main strands that constituted a strategic communication framework and were mutually reinforcing. They included three corporate communication campaigns managed centrally by DG COMM (InvestEU, EUandMe and EU Protects) and the complementary communication activities carried out by the EC representations in the Member States and the Citizens' Dialogues and Europe Direct Information Centres (EDIC) structures.

By addressing citizens directly, the campaigns aimed at impacting how European citizen feel about the European Union and how they feel their voice is heard in the EU, factors which in turn should help enhancing the image of the EU among its citizens. Features common to all corporate communication campaigns were:

- Targeting citizens to reconnect with EU

- Focus on neutral or ambivalent individuals and especially the young

- Presenting real people, real projects and showcasing real impact

- Evoking emotions and focusing on tangible results

- Based on third party endorsement

- Strong use of social media to reach a large audience

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[13] Communication from Vice-President Reding and Commissioner Lewandowski in agreement with President Barroso, Corporate communication under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, SEC(2013)486.

[14] Evaluation of the European Commission corporate communication campaign COMM-A1/20/2014-LOT1, Final Report.

[15] SEC(2013) 486/2, Corporate communication under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020.

- Co-designed with the relevant DGs and with the Commission's Representations in Member States, under the direct steer of DG Communication as a presidential service

In Table 3, below, we provide a summary of the key features of the three campaigns, and underneath, a more detailed description of the two corporate campaigns that are of particular relevance for this study, i.e. #InvestEU and #EuandMe..

Table 3 Key characteristics of the corporate communication campaigns

	#investEU	**#EUandMe**	**EU that Protects**
Timing	Phase 1: 2017-18 Pahse 2: 2018-19	2018-19	
Content	EU funding for projects that generate jobs, growth and investment Real local stories and beneficiaries of EU-funded projects	Life changing opportunities that the EU offers its citizen The five main 'empowerments' (opportunities) available for young people thanks to the EU: mobility, rights, skills for jobs & business, sustainability, digital	Collective EU solutions to tackle global challenges People in action working on the ground for the protection of EU citizen and broader stability in the world
Objective	To demonstrate local relevance and impact of EU funding and investment	To inspire a sense of belonging and an appreciation of core EU values shared between different cultures on a continental scale	To reassure people the EU is taking action to address their concerns
Message	The European Union responds to key socio-economic challenges and acts as a catalyst boosting the local economy (jobs, new business prospects, improved services, modernised infrastructure...). European Union funding has a tangible impact on people's lives.	Video-based showcasing European Union values in action and celebrating the European way of life, which makes the European Union a place like no other.	Showcasing European Union action to address people's safety and security concerns. This action is anchored in the European Union values of peace, security, rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights. Challenges are migration, defence, security, social protection, financial stability, environment, climate change, civil protection, health and food safety
Target audience	Europeans who are positive or ambivalent about the EU and economic prospects, no specific age range	Neutral Europeans aged 17 to 35	Europeans aged 35 – 55 Ambivalent about the EU and in need of reassurance
Key Performance Indicators	Reach & Recall	Reach & Recall	Reach, recall and change of perception
Budget	2017-18; €20.7m 2018-19: €5.1m	€12.2m	E10.3m

Source: Synthesis study of the Corporate communication Campaigns, 2019; own desk research

#InvestEU campaign (2017-19)

The #InvestEU campaign targeted citizens as of 2017. The overarching objective was to improve public awareness and knowledge of the EU funding and how it contributes to the creation of jobs and growth. As such the campaign had two main expected impacts:

- An enhanced awareness and knowledge of the positive contribution to job creation, growth and investment made by EU funding - in the EU overall, nationally and locally

- A restored positive perception of the EU as a central part of the solutions to the challenges Europe faces today

In our evaluation of the InvestEU campaign[16], we considered it was designed as an **integrated campaign** that would take place at two levels: a centrally overseen pan-European campaign, integrated with campaigns at the national level that would constitute the core of the campaign. The campaign took a novel **'semi-decentralised'** approach, with the EC Representations (REPs) ensuring relevance and credibility, and DG COMM taking up a coordinating role to ensure consistency. The campaign therefore substantially built upon the knowledge of the local environment among the national EC Representations. They were "in the driving seats" for the design and implementation of the campaign in their countries, supported by the contractor's local network.

As mentioned in the table above, the #InvestEU campaign defined its target audience in terms of "Europeans who are neutral about the EU and economic prospects". This global targeting strategy served as the framework for the development of the targeting strategies at the national level in the zoom-in countries, identifying key population segments.

In order to avoid fragmentation of the relatively limited campaign budget, the integrated #InvestEU campaign covered all 28 EU Member States but focused its efforts on a defined set of 'zoom-in' countries. A first selection of the zoom-in countries was based on the targeting criteria of attitude and perception of the EU, based on the campaign's background study. Seeing the important role of the national EC Representations (REPs) in these nationally organised campaigns, however, the primary criterion was the REPs' interest and willingness for participation.

Figure 3 Geographical coverage of the #InvestEU campaign, 2017-18

The 14 'zoom-in' EU Member States that joined the campaign at its inception phase in 2016 were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland and Portugal (highlighted in dark red).

Romania and Sweden joined the #InvestEU campaign as zoom-in countries in September 2017 (highlighted in medium red).

Luxembourg and Cyprus officially joined for the continuation phase of the campaign in 2018, while the Netherlands decided to opt out.

The #InvestEU campaign took a **multi-channel** approach. It adopted the PESO media mix model, combining Paid, Earned, Social/Shared and Owned channels and managing these channels in an overall coherent manner. The approach was to build upon the existing owned channels at the EC central level and among the REPs, along with the already available resources and local knowledge in the REPs to implement 'owned' communication and PR activities. Owned channels include the campaign website, the EC social media channels (Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, YouTube channels and Instagram and LinkedIn accounts – whether central or from EC REPs). The events organised by the REPs or the EU

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[16] Mahieu, B. et al (2018) Monitoring/evaluation of the #InvestEU campaign, Technopolis Group, a study for the European Commision, DG COMM

services (for the latter, in particular the Citizens' Dialogues focusing on the Investment Plan for Europe) and the EDICs were intended to reinforce these communication tools. This was to be combined with the services of a contractor (WPP), who was to take care of the 'bought' and 'earned' media coverage (including paid advertising and journalist-targeted actions) - at the central level and at the national level in the 'zoom-in' countries.

A key principle in the first phase of the campaign (2017-18) was that the communication mix would be **country-specific**, adapted and tailored to local circumstances and audiences, in order to optimise both the impact and the cost-efficiency of the campaign communication activities. In each country, the local market plans included for example indication on which social media would be more efficient (e.g., in countries where Twitter was not such a large platform, communication activities were to focus on Facebook). In their campaign design, the REPs were supported by the local offices of the contractor providing strategic advice on the content and media strategy and developing creative communication support activities (devising the communication toolkit).

In the second phase of the campaign (2018-19), the campaign had the same objectives and used the same model and tools. However, the campaign was **theme- rather than project-driven**. In terms of channels, the focus was close-to-exclusively on social media.

#EUandME campaign

The primary objective of the campaign was to trigger interest and generate a better-informed opinion about the EU by showing what it allows Europeans, especially the youth, to experience, gain or enjoy at all stages of life, wherever they are. The campaign was meant to communicate over-arching messages through human-centred stories made possible through the different building blocks.

This was a video-based campaign, with social media as the key channel (paid and earned) but making use also of media partnerships for the promotion at EU level. Part of the campaign was also a Young Directors' competition.

Countries selected for the production of seven short films were Croatia, Finland, Greece, Poland and Germany (2018); Belgium, France (2019). The campaign movies were produced locally, in the local language and reflecting local context, in close collaboration with the REPs.

3.3   Citizens' awareness and perceptions of the EU and EU regional policy

The citizen's image of the European Union and their awareness and appreciation of EU regional policy constitute the key rationale for the EC corporate communication and DG REGIO communication actions to citizens, respectively. Sources for this information are the Eurobarometer survey.

In the sections below, we gi9ve a view on the outcomes of the Eurobarometer surveys that are relevant for this study.

In the context of this study, we consider the **2017 Eurobarometer surveys** to be the most relevant as these have set the basis and/or context for the campaigns object of this study. For the sake of completeness, we mention also the main outcomes of the most recent surveys in 2019.

3.3.1   Image of the European Union

In the Autumn 2017, the European Union conjured up a positive image for 40% of Europeans, while 21% thought that its image was negative and 37% saw it as neutral.

The perception was highly country-dependent:

- *Bulgaria, Ireland, Luxembourg and Portugal* were the countries where more than half of respondents had a positive image

- *Greece, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Austria, Latvia and the UK* were the countries with the lowest proportions of respondents with a positive image. Only in Greece did the share of respondents with a negative image prevail over the positive or neutral ones

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Figure 4 Image of the European Union (2017)

QA9 In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?

	IE	BG	LU	PT	PL	RO	LT	MT	DE	HU	DK	FI	SE	EU28	BE	EE	ES	NL	SK	FR	IT	SI	UK	CY	LV	AT	HR	CZ	EL
Don't know	2	4	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	4	1	4	1	2	1	1	1	1
Total 'Negative'	9	14	17	12	13	14	7	8	16	15	18	17	19	21	24	11	13	22	17	25	23	18	33	25	13	28	18	30	43
Neutral	30	25	25	32	36	38	46	45	38	41	39	42	40	37	36	49	47	39	43	36	36	44	39	28	52	39	50	39	33
Total 'Positive'	59	57	57	53	50	47	46	45	45	43	41	41	41	40	40	39	39	39	38	37	37	37	35	35	33	32	31	30	23

■ Total 'Positive'   ■ Neutral   ■ Total 'Negative'   ■ Don't know

Source; Standard Eurobarometer 88, Autumn 2017

The 2017 Standard Eurobarometer indicated a correlation between the following **socio-demographic characteristics** of citizens and the positive image of the EU in terms of age, education, profession, and gender:

- Young people have more often a positive image than older ones (50% among 15-24 year- olds versus 36% among those aged 55+)

- Those who studied the longest (50% among those who studied up to the age of 20 and beyond versus 29% among those who left school at the age of 15 or earlier)

- From a gender perspective, 42% of male citizens had a positive image and 22% had a negative one, compared to 38% and 20% of the women.

The 2019 Spring Eurobarometer report indicated a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who have a positive image of the EU in 23 Member States – compared to autumn 2018 (+2%) and especially, spring 2014 (+10%), hereby reaching the highest level ever for the past 10 years. The proportion of respondents with a neutral image of the EU increased with 1% since autumn 2018 (37%) while those with a negative image decreased with 3% (17%), the lowest score in 10 years. The increase in positive image was highest in *Cyprus, Hungary, Greece, Romania and Portugal.*

3.3.2 *Awareness and perceived impact of EU regional support*

A 2017 Eurobarometer survey focusing on Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy[17] (ERDF and CF) showed that around half of the respondents had heard of the ERDF or Cohesion Fund, but only about a third of respondents were aware of local EU-funded projects in their region or city.

Awareness of and support for EU regional funding for **cross-border cooperation** was low: in 2017, just over one in five respondents (22%) were aware of cooperation between regions in different countries thanks to EU regional funding.

Awareness of EU regional support varied considerably in the countries and regions (Figure 5, below). Awareness was as high as 80% in *Poland,* between 65% and 70% in the *Czech Republic and Lithuania* but fell to under 20% in *Belgium, Austria and Denmark.* Amongst the citizens that were aware of EU co-funded projects, in all but one Member State (Italy), at least two-thirds of respondents

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[17] Flash Eurobarometer 452, June 2017, Citizens' awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy, TNS Political & Social, at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and coordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication

(67%) think these co-funded projects have had a **positive impact** on the development of their city or region.

- *Portugal, France, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark* and especially *Italy* were the countries with the lowest proportion of citizens indicating a positive impact

- *France, Belgium, Romania, Spain, Greece* and especially *Italy,* had the highest proportions of those who indicated even a *negative* impact (between 8% and 10%, but in Italy 20%)

Figure 5 Eurobarometer survey results: awareness of EU co-financed projects (left) and perception of positive impact (right)
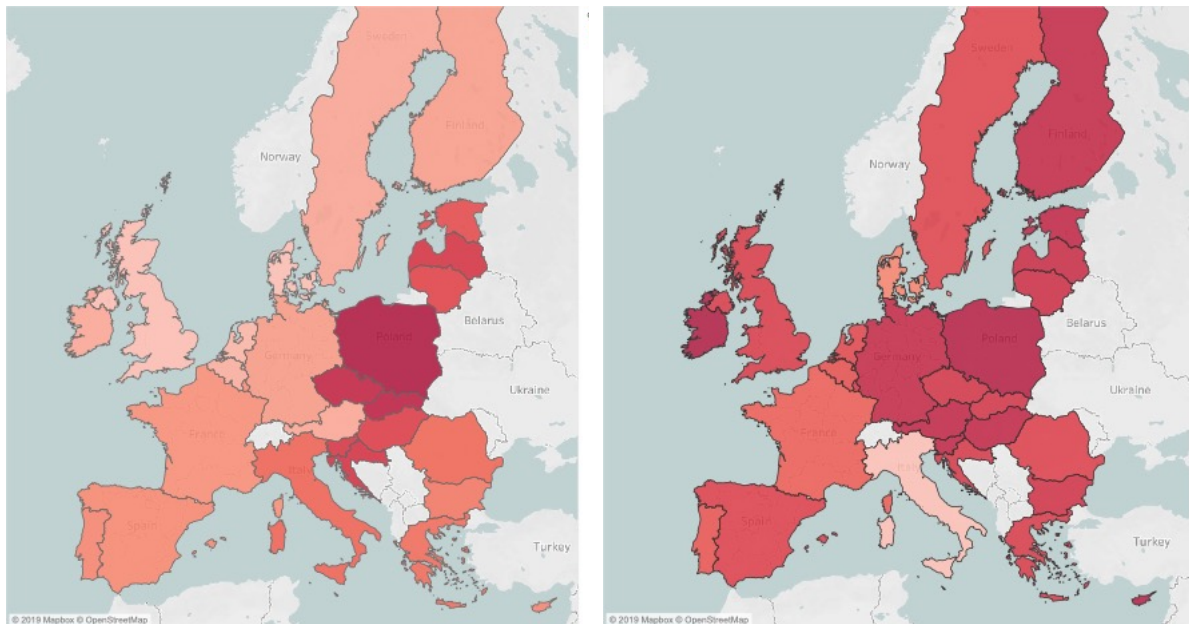
Source: Eurobarometer 2019

The 2017 Eurobarometer survey showed some significant socio-demographic differences related to the awareness of EU co-financed projects:

- *Gender:* Men (38%) are more likely than women (32%) to be aware of EU co-financed projects to improve regions and cities

- *Age groups:* awareness was highest among respondents aged 40 to 54 (38%), but a positive perception of impact was highest among the youngest respondents (those aged between 15 and 24)

- *Education levels*: awareness is higher among respondents who completed their education aged 20 or over (42%), compared with those who left school at or before the age of 15 (24%)

- *Professional occupation*: white-collar workers are the most likely to think that co-financed projects had a positive impact on the development of their city or region (85%)

The survey of 2019 showed a slight improvement, i.e. four in ten respondents indicating that they had heard about EU co-financed projects in their local area. The 2019 Eurobarometer survey showed that the level of awareness remained stable or improved in all but one EU Member State, Lithuania

Perceived direct benefits of ERDF or Cohesion funds in the daily lives of respondents were highest Poland, Estonia, Czechia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Ireland) (Figure 6).

Similar to the situation in 2017, the proportion of citizens indicating such positive impact was lowest in *France, Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark and Italy.*

Figure 6 Perceived direct benefits of ERDF/CF in respondents' daily lives

Q3 Have you benefited in your daily life from a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the Cohesion Fund?
(IF HAVE HEARD OF AT LEAST ONE OF THE TWO FUNDS (CODE 1,2 OR 3 IN Q2)) (%)
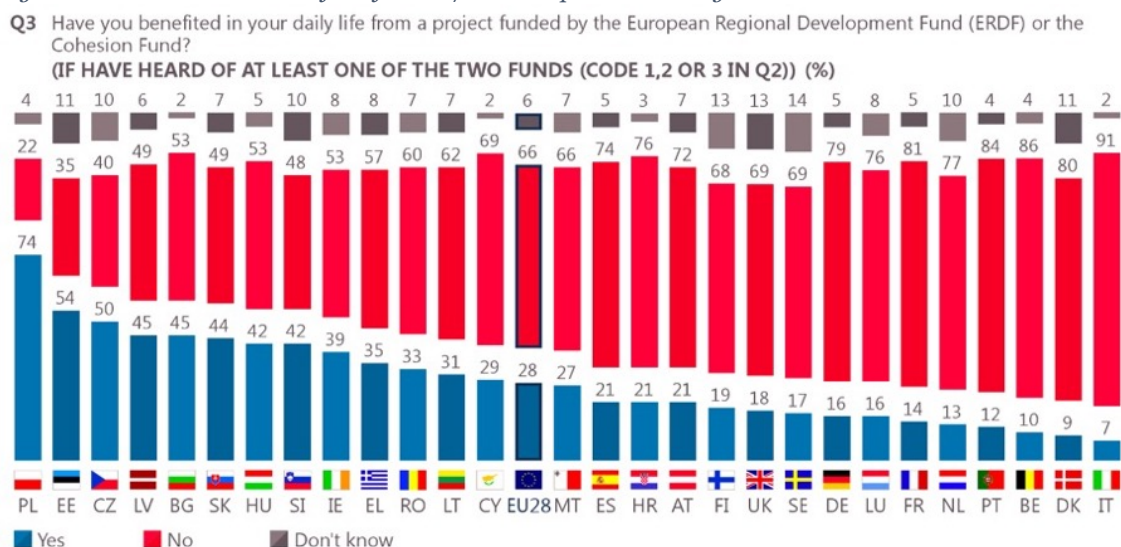
Source: Eurobarometer 2019

3.3.3 Information sources about EU regional policy

The 2017 Eurobarometer survey also informed that **television** remained the most common source of information about EU co-financed projects, with close to four in ten respondents (37%) saying that they get their information from this source. The second most common source was local or regional newspapers, mentioned by a third (33%) of respondents, while a fifth (20%) also mentioned national newspapers. The Internet was mentioned by three in ten respondents (30%). Other sources of information were less usual. Online social networks continue to be the least common source of information about EU co-financed projects: less than one in ten (9%) respondents say that they heard about the project from this source.

The socio-demographic analysis showed the **importance of age, education levels and location** for these preferences in sources of information:

- Compared with respondents aged 55+, respondents aged 15-24 were the most likely to mention the Internet (51% versus 19%), online social networks (21% vs. 5%) or billboards (26% vs. 14%); those aged 55+ are the most likely to indicate national TV (45%), local or regional newspapers (37%) or the national radio (15%)

- Respondents who spent longest in education are more likely to mention the Internet than those who left school aged 15 or less (32% vs. 14%)

- Compared with respondents who live in rural areas, respondents who live in large towns are most likely to mention national newspapers (23% versus 16%) or billboards (23% vs. 17%). They are also more likely to get this information from the Internet (34%) than respondents who live in rural villages and respondents who live in small or mid-size towns (both 28%)

4 DG REGIO communication strategy and activities

4.1 Management structure and resources

DG REGIO's communication activities are to be set in the context of DG REGIO's competences for the implementation of the Cohesion Policy and specifically the ERDF and CF (including the Interreg programmes); in 2019 DG REGIO is also taking over management of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) from DG NEAR (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations).

The communication function in DG REGIO is responsibility of the A2 unit under Directorate A – Budget, Communication and General Affairs. In 2019, the A2 unit employed a staff of 37 (compared to 31 in 2017), including ten Intramuros. The unit is structured in 8 'sectors':

- Communication Campaigns Coordination
- Event organisation
- Internal communication
- Media relations and social media
- Web (Europa & InfoRegio, ESIF open Data Platform)
- Communication with Member States (including INFORM and Matrix)
- Publications
- Knowledge management (Wiki)

An additional (central) "Promotion and Dissemination Strategy and Coordination" sector is foreseen.

In terms of **budget** dedicated to the communication function, the available budget for the communication activities is decided upon annually. Based on currently available data, the amount allocated increased from €12m in 2017 to a total of €23m in 2018 and €19m in 2019. The share allocated to DG REGIO communications more than doubled over these years.

Table 4 Estimated budget commitments 2017-19

Estimated commitments (2017)	Estimated commitments (2018)	Estimated commitments (2019)
Total amount: €12m	**Total amount: €23m**	**Total amount: €19m**
REGIO communication actions: €6.7m	REGIO communication actions: +/- €16m*	REGIO communication actions: €13.2m
Contribution to corporate communication: €6.7m	Contribution to corporate communication: +/- €7m*	Contribution to corporate communication: €5.8m

* Own estimates

4.2 DG REGIO communication strategy 2017-2020

4.2.1 Strategic and specific objectives for the communication activities

The Communication Strategy 2017-2020[18] sets the priorities and objectives and identifies target audiences and main messages for DG REGIO's communication actions for the period 2017-2020.

It is intended to be complementary to the Commission's corporate communication campaigns and is implemented alongside and in coherence with the 'Action Plan on communicating the benefits of cohesion policy' that Commissioner Crețu presented to Council and Parliament in April 2017.

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[18] Communication Strategy 2017-2020, DG REGIO, Ref. Ares(2017)1629899, 27/03/2017

A key policy objective for the communication activities in DG REGIO is to support the **positioning of cohesion policy as central to the attainment of the European project and its priorities**, among EU policy makers and the general public. The strategy therefore states that a major communication effort is required to raise the profile and visibility of cohesion policy, its funds, results and benefits among both policy makers and 'specific and broad audiences', i.e. stakeholders and the European citizens at large (Figure 7).

The 'specific' objectives can be grouped into two broad categories, based upon the target audiences: objectives mainly related to activities targeting or implemented by **policy-makers or programme managers** – at EU and national/regional levels (left column), and those regarding the 'external' communication to **stakeholders and the general public** (right column).

Figure 7 Strategic and specific objectives for the DG REGIO communication activities

High-level objectives	Position cohesion policy as key to preserving the European way of life	Preserve an adequate level of funding for cohesion policy post-2020
Strategic objectives	Raise the profile of the regional development and cohesion funds among **policy makers**	Increase visibility among **specific and broad audiences** within the EU
Specific objectives	Ensure that the contribution of cohesion policy is **better known and acknowledged** in the Commission	Raise awareness of the **results** of regional development and cohesion funds and their impacts on people's lives
	Raise awareness of the **win-win impact** of structural funds and the cohesion policy potential of inducing **political cohesion** in the EU	Increase **take up** of funds and the quality of project proposals presented
	Mainstream communication in decision-making (planning, making & implementing decisions)	Increase **participation** to setting priorities and funding under the next MFF
	Make communication **everyone's** business in DG REGIO	

Source: DG REGIO Communication Strategy 2017-2020

4.2.2 *Key concepts guiding the communication activities*

Overall, a **strong narrative** was seen as needed, positioning cohesion policy as key to preserving the European way of life. It should portray cohesion policy as the economic backbone of the EU. It should highlight how it brings opportunities and delivers concrete goods for citizens - jobs, access to internet, safe roads, childcare facilities, hospitals - and depict it as a win-win investment rather than a redistribution policy.

The concept of '**proximity communication**' is at the core of DG REGIO's approach to communication, The local and regional authorities in the EU are the natural partners for DG REGIO in the implementation of its communication strategy, ensuring the tailoring of the message to make it resonate better with the audience and deliver it close to the target audience. Reflecting the concept of 'proximity communication', DG REGIO takes a pronounced **targeted approach** to its communication,

delivering messages that are consistent and targeted to the audience, irrespective of the channel used, and building upon the power of story-telling to create an emotional connection with the audience and facilitate its identification with the message.

The intention is also to use an appropriate **mix of media channels and tools** to reach out to specific audiences, even though digital communication is privileged, and to engage in **two-ways communication**: listening to people and selecting topics of discussion and messages that are relevant for them.

The strategy recognises the importance of **partnerships** with a wide range of actors to deliver impactful and cost-efficient communications. People benefiting from the goods or services delivered by cohesion policy as well as entities such as the Committee of the Regions, associations of local authorities, the European Parliament, and business associations are considered key vectors for the delivery of the messages. DG REGIO also indicates the enrolment of trusted ambassadors (local and regional politicians, mayors, MEPs, role figures relevant for regional identity - artists, sportspeople, TV celebrities – universities, opinion leaders, business) to spread the message and deliver **third-party endorsement** and testimonials. **'Interreg reporters'**, i.e. young people aged 18-30 enrolled under the Interreg Volunteers Initiative, are expected to provide precious support in promoting the concrete results of Interreg projects. The strategy also considers that **other Directorates-General**, especially those from the ESI Funds family, should be associated to DG REGIO's communication activities, where relevant, to align messages and achieve complementarities.

Finally, DG REGIO considered that in terms of target countries and regions, in a first stage priority needed to be set on the **'net contributor'** Member States and those **countries that suffered from the economic crisis.**[19] Communication actions should be implemented across the EU over the next four years.

4.3 DG REGIO communication activities – an overview

The term 'communication activities' stands for three categories of activities implemented by DG REGIO's communication unit:

- 'External' communication activities in the form of structured campaigns and specific communication actions
- Internal and external collaboration and communication structures and processes
- Tools for regular communication, encompassing DG REGIO's 'owned' media tools and publications

4.3.1 DG REGIO 'external' communication activities

Supported by the conclusions of the GAC meeting[20] in 2017, urging Member States and the Commission to scale up their efforts to increase the visibility of cohesion policy, DG REGIO stepped up its efforts to **reach out to European citizens**.

Table 5, below, illustrates the boost in 2018 of 'external' communication actions and campaigns, targeting stakeholders and the general public, listing the communication activities that DG REGIO implemented in 2017 and 2018.

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[19] In 2019, net contributor countries to the (overall) EU budget were Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden. Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and Romania are indicated as countries for which the EU's regional policy has helped mitigate the impact of the financial crisis that began in 2008

[20] Council conclusions on "Making Cohesion Policy more effective, relevant and visible to our citizens" April 2017 http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/newsroom/pdf/gac_25042017_conclusions.pdf

Table 5 DG REGIO communication activities in 2017/18

Target audience	Type of activity	Specific activities
Stakeholders & general public	Campaigns	◦ EU Delivers in the Regions (2018) ◦ Road Trips (2018) ◦ Europe in my Region (2017 & 2018)
	Communication actions	◦ Support for Information Measures (the so-called 'Media Calls') (2018) ◦ Local Cohesion Dialogues (2018) ◦ Euronews actions (Real Economy, Smart Regions) (2017 & 2018)
EU, national & regional policymakers	Campaign	◦ 'Cohesion@30' campaign
	Events	◦ European Week of Regions and Cities (2017 & 2018) ◦ RegioStars Awards (2017 & 2018) ◦ Cohesion@30 (2018) ◦ RUP Forum, smart Specialisation Forum, Cohesion Forum, Cities Forum (2017)

Source: AAR 2017, Management Plan 2018

The emphasis on 'external' communication activities targeting stakeholders and the general public is visible also from the budget distribution in 2018: actions targeting stakeholders and the general public accounted for 84% of DG REGIO's communication budget.

As mentioned above, the budget for DG REGIO communication activities amounted in 2018 at €16m. Figure 8, below, shows the distribution of this budget, based on the data available (detailed budget data was limited to the budgets for the different communication actions targeting stakeholders and general public). The costs for the activities targeting EC and national/regional policymakers and any other additional costs are grouped in the heading 'Other'.

Figure 8 Distribution of the DG REGIO communication budget over the activities, 2018
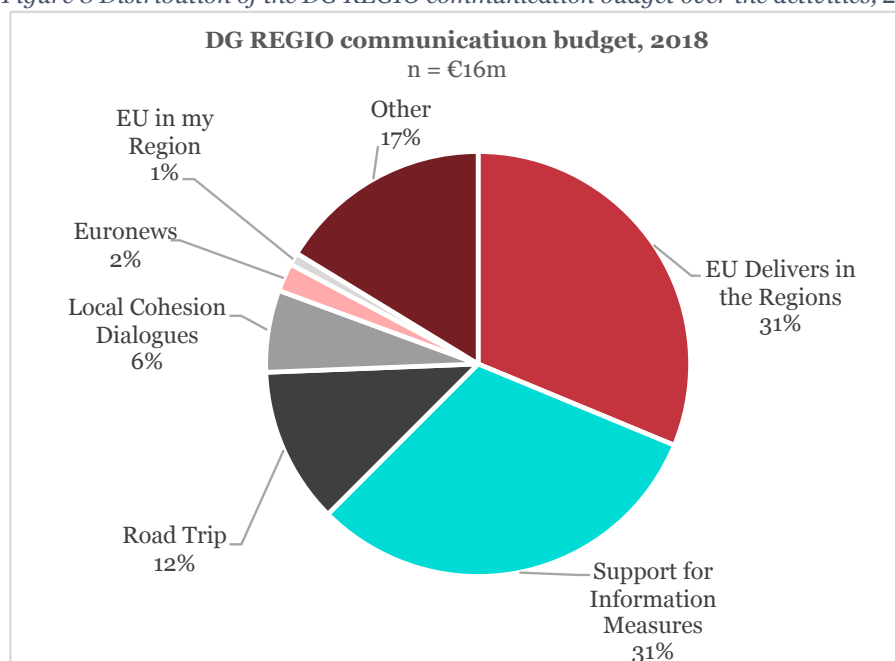
Source: Technopolis Group

Key characteristics

'External' communication activities are the subject for this study. A mapping of their key features (scope, timing, geographical coverage, target audiences, narrative, channels, etc.) allowed us to identify **different patterns** in the communication activities – see Table 6, below.

When looking at the **narrative** of the communication activities, the overview table confirms the orientation towards project-based storytelling. Close to all communication actions based their strategy on either demonstrating projects' impact on people's lives, or success stories of projects embodying the effect of the Cohesion Policy at the local and regional level for the different types of target audiences. The two exceptions are the Support for Information Measures and the Local Cohesion Dialogues where the topic covered was cohesion policy in general (even though at times, project stories may have been covered as well).

One of the most important dimensions highlighted by the mapping of communication activities lies in the different mechanisms and effects expected from the **use of the communication mix**. Multiplication of the message and engagement of the target audience are the two main orientations. Third-party endorsement and Paid Media are key channels, the latter often including TV and social media. Social media and websites are at the core of the Owned Media.

Table 6 key characteristics of the main communication activities - 2018

External communication activity	Narrative	Key effect expected	Channels	Main purpose for the use of the channel	Specific audience	Budget 2018
EU Delivers in the Regions	Projects' impact on people's lives	Awareness (reach & recall)	Paid & Owned Media 3rd party endorsement	Multiplication of the message	Citizens	€5m
The Road Trip Project	Projects' impact on people's lives	Awareness and engagement (reach, recall, engagement)	Paid social media, Owned media 3rd party endorsement	Multiplication of the message, engagement	Broad 18-24 in EU with Travel interests	€1.9m
EU in My Region	Project stories	Spotlight and attract	Paid & Owned Media 3rd party endorsement	Enhancing the use of the hashtag as a common brand	Citizens Beneficiaries MAs	€150k
Support for Information Measures	Cohesion policy	Awareness (reach)	Paid media, Events, etc	Multiplication through media partnerships and intermediaries	Beneficiaries Citizens MAs	€5m
Local Cohesion Dialogues	Cohesion policy	Co-creation	Events at local level (local debates)	Engaging the audience in a two-way dialogue during events	Citizens Beneficiaries MAs	€1m
Euronews actions (Smart Regions, Real Economy)	Project stories	Awareness (reach)	Paid media	Multiplication through media partnerships and intermediaries	Citizens	€345k

Source: Technopolis Group

Geographical focus

From a geographical coverage perspective, we can distinguish two main types of communication actions:

- *EU-wide communication actions* that have a broad coverage, encompassing all or almost all of the 28 EU MS. These include the EU in My Region campaigns and the Euronews projects, jointly accounting for 3% of DG REGIO's communication budget

- *'Country-specific' communication actions* that operate in a specific number of Member States and regions. These include EU Delivers in the Regions, the Cohesion Dialogues, the Road Trip Project and the Support for Information Measures action. They jointly accounted for 81% of the budget

Figure 9, below, maps out the geographical coverage of the 'selective' campaigns, indicating the extent to which their focus for implementation coincided.

The left-hand graph shows the specific regions that were selected for the implementation of the EU Delivers in the Regions campaign and the Cohesion Dialogues. The right-hand graph gives a view on the intensity by which the four 'selective' campaigns covered specific EU Member States. In both graphs, the shading of the colours (from light to dark red) indicates the number of specific actions in the regions (from few to many).

Figure 9 Geographical coverage of the 'country-specific' communication actions between 2017 and 2019 – at regional level (left) and national level (right)
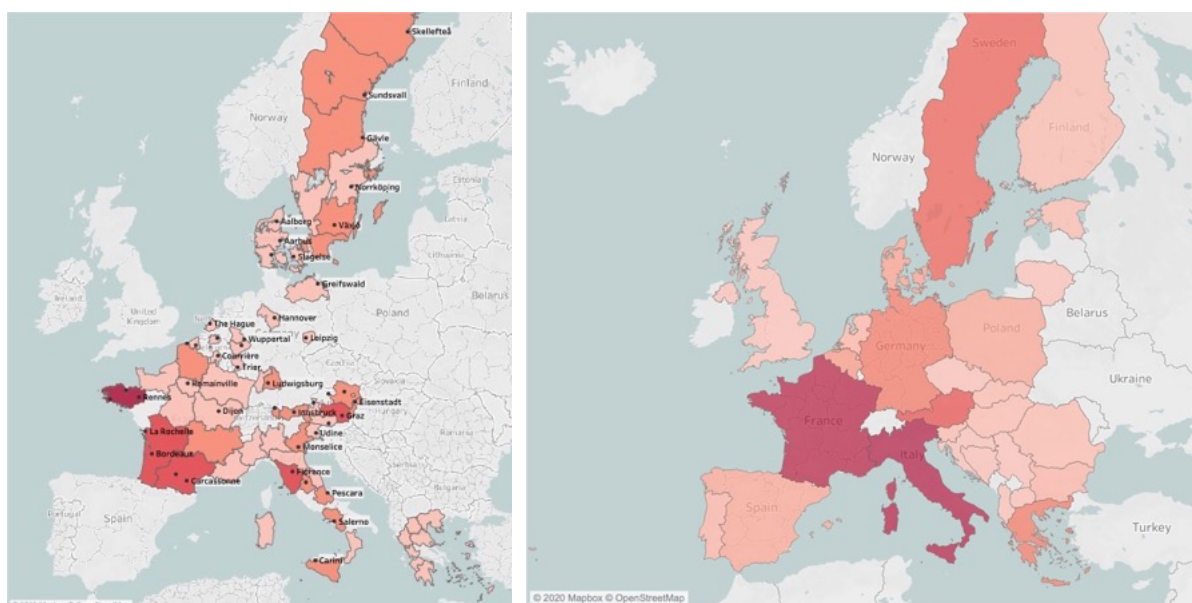
Notes: Cross-country actions in the Support for Information Measures and Road Trips have been accounted for each country; Source: Technopolis Group

The mapping shows

- A strong concentration of the 'country-specific' communication actions' efforts on Italy and France, covering close to all of the regions

- Austria, Sweden and Greece were ranked second, covered in close to all of the regions

- Belgium and Germany were covered by the Citizens Dialogues and Support for Information Measures, in specific regions only

- Finland, Portugal and Spain as well as Czechia, Poland, the Baltic states, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were covered only by Support for Information Measures – in some specific

regions and in Poland at the national level. Denmark was covered only by the Cohesion Dialogues and the Netherlands and Balkan countries only by the Road Trip

4.3.2 DG REGIO communication structures and processes

The 2017 Communication Strategy also dedicated considerable attention to the importance of an improved integration of the communication practice within all policy and programme management activities in DG REGIO.

The specific objective 'to mainstream communication in decision-making' is based on the reflection that communication can only be effective and achieve the desired impact if it is mainstreamed in the policy and programme planning and decision-making. As well as being integrated in the DG's decision-making, communication should be mainstreamed in everyone's work in the DG. DG REGIO staff from geographical and horizontal units or competence centres are well-placed to communicate about the subjects that they know better than anyone else. Therefore, staff from DG REGIO geographical and horizontal units as well as competence centres are strongly encouraged to contribute to the DG's communication function.

To support them in this task, DG REGIO developed a specific Vademecum on the involvement of DG REGIO staff in communication activities and it agreed with the Commission's spokesperson's office a more pragmatic workflow on handling contacts with the press, to provide clarity and support to the staff engaging in communication activities. Staff willing to engage in communication is provided targeted training and guidance.

Most important, DG REGIO set up and/or intensified the activities of an **interconnected set of information and knowledge exchange structures and processes** in order to facilitate the sharing of information, knowledge and experience between the A2 unit responsible for communication and the geographical units, horizontal units and competence centres. These encompass:

- **Single Entry Points (SEP):** structure for an easier interaction between the horizontal and geographical units on the one hand, and the A2 communication unit on the other hand. Each unit has a single-entry point for communication and in the A2 unit, each A2 official represents a SEP. When a unit wants to reach out or needs support for communication, it has a direct contact person to turn to in A2

- **Senior Specialists:** Four officials active in horizontal or geographical units (or competence centres) are assigned this role in order actively to support the activities of A2 for 10/20% of their time. Their roles differ and are flexible over time in order to respond to new needs arising in A2

- **Country communication correspondent**: Each geographical unit (supervising the implementation of the programme) has a country communication correspondent, a.o. in charge of the communication activities implemented/deployed in the Member States (MS). DG REGIO staff have to follow closely the implementation of communication activities by programme authorities. The aim is to ensure that the legal obligations regarding communication and transparency are being complied with by the authorities as well as by beneficiaries of EU funds, and to encourage them to enhance the outreach and impact of their communications. This EC official also participates in the INFORM network (see below)

- **Communication Matrix**: a platform to enable a smoother cooperation and flow of information between A2 and the other REGIO units, including as regards the support to the communication activities in Member States. The matrix was launched in 2018 and consisted in its first year of functioning of roughly 40 REGIO officials (excluding A2 staff), covering one or more of the roles mentioned above.[21] With the exception of Directorate C, all REGIO units have at least one representative participating in the matrix

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[21] EC, Assessing the First Year of the Regio Communication Matrix, 2019

Structures to facilitate information and knowledge exchange beyond DG REGIO are

- **Country teams**: a cooperation platform structured by Member State that involves DG REGIO's communication unit and geographical units, DG COMM central member state experts, Commission Representations in Members States (including Europe Direct Information Centres), relevant contact points in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions, and the national and regional Information and Communication Officers (ICOs)

- **INFORM network**: platform for the exchange of knowledge and good practices between and among National & regional Information & Communication Officers (incl. Interreg) and DG REGIO A2 unit and country communication correspondents, A close collaboration is established with the **INIO** network of national communication coordinators for the European Social Fund (ESF).This network is managed by DG EMPL but is frequently involved together with the INFORM network in DG REGIO network activities

4.3.3 Tools for regular communication

As mentioned above, the tools for regular communication include a set of 'owned' media channels, specifically:

- INFOREGIO website[22]: providing comprehensive information on regional policy, including available budgets, programmes, beneficiaries, results, as well as studies, reports, etc

- Social media, such as EUinmyRegion (previously EU_Regional) account on Twitter, RegioNetwork group on Yammer

- Publications, such as Panorama magazine, the RegioFlash newsletter and brochures on various topics related to regional policy

- Media relations

5 Relevance of the DG REGIO communication activities

In the context of communication evaluations, the assessment of relevance generally refers to the extent to which objectives respond to the needs of the target audience, their problems or issues identified. In this study, we set DG REGIO's communication activities in the context of its institutional role and consider the relevance of its activities related to the needs of EC corporate and the MS/MA authorities.

This chapter is therefore structured as follows;

- In Section 5.1 we consider the extent to which DG REGIO's communication strategy and objectives corresponded to the EC corporate communication strategy and were aligned with the needs at EU policy level. This includes the alignment with the needs of the EU citizens

- In Section 5.2 we focus on the communication function in the MS/MA and the extent to which DG REGIO's communication objectives and activities responded to the needs in the context of their programme implementation

We assess the extent to which the DG REGIO's communication activities succeeded in effectively implementing this strategy and achieving the objectives in Section 5.2, below.

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[22] Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/.

5.1 Relevance of the DG REGIO communication activities for the EC corporate communication

5.1.1 Alignment of the communication strategies and objectives

It is inevitable that the function of a DG within the European Commission would influence the focus and objectives of its communication actions. Such is the case also for DG COMM and DG REGIO. While DG COMM has and always had a corporate function, DG REGIO is the line DG responsible for a specific area of European policy, i.e. cohesion policy, with its programmes and funds. It bears therefore no surprise that while the corporate campaigns implemented by DG COMM focus on communicating the work and benefits of the EU in all its policy areas, DG REGIO focuses on the work and effects of cohesion policy. Policy objectives and expected impacts are formulated accordingly (see Table 7, below).

What the two DGs do have in common, though, is the **emphasis on communication to the citizen** (accounting for 70% of DG REGIO's budget in 2018 – see Section 4.3.1, above) and the strategic objective to impact how European citizen feel about the EU. They also share the approach to several of the other key components of their communication strategies. Most important, both DGs show a strong result orientation in their messages, combined with a **prominent human element** in their narratives, aimed at creating **emotional connections**. In both DGs, the focus is on storytelling, showcasing **tangible results and benefits f**or the individual European citizen.

Both DGs also dedicate high attention to ensuring the relevance of the message to the citizens by means of **localisation**, even though the approach taken is different.

In DG COMM, the focus is on co-design and co-production with the local Commission Representations (REPs) or EDICs, under coordination of DG COMM officials. All material is translated into the local languages. Third-party endorsement and engagement in two-ways communication is part of the approach.

DG REGIO, instead, has a long-standing tradition of 'proximity communication', facilitated by its close relationship with the Managing Authorities and their communication officials. The strong local embeddedness of these organisations allows for a pronounced localisation of the messages and the involvement of their networks of media partners and key players at regional and local level to convey customised messages. One can consider that in the overall portfolio, the significant share of budget (40%, see Figure 8, above) that is dedicated to communication activities directly implemented by 'local' organisations, through local intermediaries such as newspapers, television channels and other actors, and EDICs (the Support for Information Measures and Local Cohesion Dialogues, respectively) balances out the lack in translation of the campaign materials into the local languages.

Table 7 Key components of the communication strategies

	Corporate communication	DG REGIO communication
Policy focus	• The European Union	• European Cohesion Policy
Policy objectives	• To raise public awareness about the EU as a whole, its role, values, aims, priorities and work	• To raise the profile and visibility of cohesion policy, its funds, results and benefits
Expected impacts	• Increase in positive perception of the European Union	• Increase in awareness of EU regional support and its positive impact
Message	• Benefits and tangible results of EU policies, their contribution to jobs and growth, the EU's work to address current issues	• Cohesion policy as key to preserving the European way of life, brings opportunities and delivers concrete goods for citizens
Narrative	• Real people, real projects and showcasing real impact • Evoking emotions and focusing on tangible result	• Real people, real projects and showcasing real impact • Evoking emotions and focusing on tangible results

	Corporate communication	DG REGIO communication
Localisation	• Co-design and co-production with REPs and EDICs, coordinated/steered by DG COMM • Campaign material translated in all EU languages	• Proximity communication through close collaboration with the national/regional MAs and ICO network, involvement of REPs and EDICs • Media partnerships and third-party endorsement
Geographical focus	• National, all EU Member States • Focus on neutral or ambivalent individuals and especially the young	• Regional, all EU Member States • Mixed criteria
Channels	• Mix of channels, with strong reliance on social media	• Mix of channels, both traditional and social media

Closely related to the principle of localisation, the difference in scope and focus also determines the **geographical focus** of the communication activities. For DG COMM the coverage is national, including all EU Member States, but with a specific focus on countries and target audiences within those countries, depending on their image of the EU (see Section 3.2, above).

In DG REGIO, instead, the coverage is at a regional level, with a selection based on a mix of criteria depending on the action/campaign. The EU Delivers in the Regions campaign, for example, targets countries with a low level of awareness of cohesion policy – in general and/or compared to the intensity of funding, and a low level of positive perception of its benefits, while in grant-based actions such as the Support for Information Measures and the Cohesion Dialogues, the selection is based on the quality of the proposals. In other cases, such as the EU in My Region campaign, the region of implementation depends on the interest of the regional or national Managing Authorities. For the Euronews reportages, one of the selection criteria for the specific projects to cover (in specific countries) was the positioning of the country as 'net contributor'.

Finally, the two DGs show a similar approach in their use of a **mix of channels**, even though the traditional media play a more prominent role in the DG REGIO communication portfolio.

5.1.2   Adequacy of the choice of target audiences

In the context of this study, the term 'adequacy' stands for the extent to which DG REGIO communication activities target those segments of EU citizen that need to be reached in order to fulfil the corporate communication strategy objectives. Reflecting the key criterion for the selection of target audiences in the corporate campaigns, the question is *the extent to which the DG REGIO communication activities targets citizens with a low level of positive image of the European Union at large.*

We see two dimensions to this question: one is related to the geographical coverage of DG REGIO's communication actions, the second regards the specific targeting of the audiences in terms of population segments.

Geographical coverage

As mentioned above, in DG REGIO the regional or national focus of the communication actions and campaigns depend on a variety of factors. While no common selection criteria can therefore be identified, we reported in Section 4.3.1, above, the combined effect of DG REGIO's **'country-specific' communication actions in terms of a concentration of their efforts on seven countries**.

These countries are listed in Table 8, below. The intensity of the colour shading illustrates the intensity of coverage by the specific 'selective' communication actions.

The table also shows the share in the country's population that showed a positive or negative image of the EU, compared to the EU average. Shares above or below the EU average are written in red. As mentioned in Section 3.3, above, we considered the 2017 Eurobarometer survey results to be most

relevant for our study as these have set the basis and/or context for the communication actions that we are assessing.

This analysis shows that the focus of DG REGIO's 'selective' communication actions, which accounted for about 80% of DG REGIO's communication budget, was in **strong alignment with the need for communication from an EU policy perspective**.

Five out of the seven 'focus' countries had a lower-than-average proportion of their population with a positive image of the European Union. The exceptions are Sweden and German, two 'net contributor' countries.

Table 8 Image of the EU in countries most covered by DG REGIO 'country-specific' communication actions

	Positive image of the EU	**Negative image of the EU**
Italy	37%	23%
France	37%	25%
Austria	32%	28%
Sweden	41%	19%
Greece	23%	43%
Belgium	40%	24%
Germany	45%	16%
EU average	**40%**	**21%**

Source: Based on the 2017 Eurobarometer survey

Profile of the target audience

DG REGIO gave a specific identification of target audiences and/or analysed their profile in terms of awareness and perception of EU policy only in the context of two campaigns: EU Delivers in the Regions and the Road Trip. These two campaigns were designed in close collaboration with DG COMM and were intended to complement the #InvestEU and #EUandME corporate campaigns thanks to their strong focus on the regional contexts. Our analysis of how the DG REGIO communication target audiences align with the need for communication from an EU policy perspective therefore focused on these two campaigns.

We focused our analysis on the pre-test survey samples and profile data and considered the extent to which they reflected the socio-demographic categories where the 2017 Eurobarometer survey noted lower levels in positive image of the EU, i.e. older citizens, lower education levels, and women - see Section 3.3.1, above.

The outcomes of our analysis show a high alignment between the campaigns and the need for communication on the European Union. Target audiences for the EU Delivers in the Regions and Road Trip campaigns reflected the profiles of citizens that based upon the Eurobarometer surveys, tend to have a lower level of positive image of the EU. For the EU Delivery campaign specifically, the alignment was also in terms of the age group of citizens targeted.

The primary target audience for the **EU Delivers** campaign was given as local population segments

- with low awareness of the EU regional policy and action in their region
- non-voters, neutrals and those ambivalent towards the EU
- living in medium or small-sized towns, rural areas and deprived districts of capital cities

- less-educated segments of the public

Figure 10 shows the profile of respondents for the pre-test of this campaign. The respondents were gender balanced approximately 50/50 in all countries (biggest imbalances are 48% male in France, Greece and Italy).

Figure 10 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for EU Delivers in your Region campaign
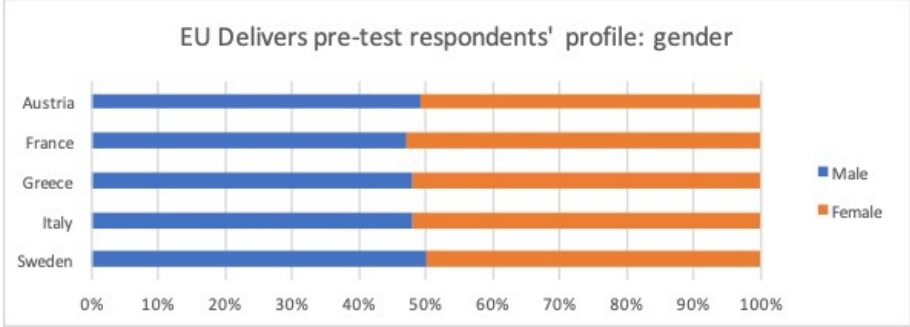
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

In terms of age, the profile was just over 20% aged 18-34 (approximately comparable to the Road Trip audience and survey). The share that were aged 35-49 was roughly similar in all countries (from 20% in Sweden to 25% in Italy). Over 40% of respondents were aged over 50 in all countries, but there was a large variation in the share of respondents that were over 65, from less than 10% in Greece to over 25% in Sweden.

Figure 11 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for EU Delivers in your Region campaign, age groups

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

In all countries, over 30% said they had a positive view of the EU (45% in Sweden). Less than 30% of respondents in Austria and Sweden had a negative view, but this was over 30% in the other three countries. Italy had one of the lowest ratings for positive perception and one of the highest for demand for more information.

Figure 12 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for EU Delivers in your Region campaign

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data
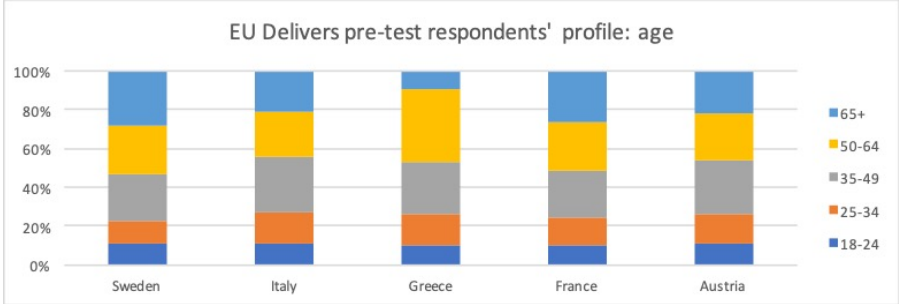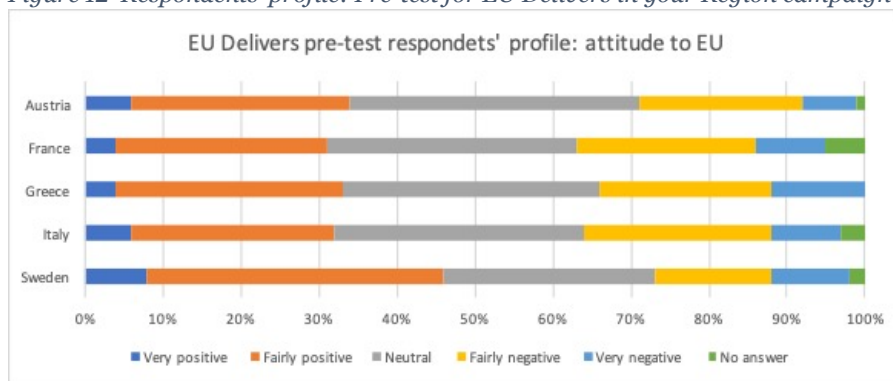
The primary target audience of the **Road Trip** was defined as:

- Europeans aged 18-30, with a specific focus on age group 18-24. Their level of awareness about the EU varies, and even when they are aware of EU opportunities, they do not necessarily consider that there is something in there for them

- In this non-homogenous population, the priority segments targeted are neutral/ambivalent groups with low awareness of the EU and its action in their region ("don't know/don't care") and young people living in medium or small-sized towns, in peri-urban and rural areas, and in deprived districts of capital cities, in connection with the Road Trip's itinerary

For the Road Trip pre-test survey, we only know that the sample was "Weighted equally among age groups", which we understand to mean balanced between "Young Millennials" (18-23 years old) and "Mature Millennials" (24-30 years old), since these are representative of the target audiences.

In terms of perception of the EU, just over half of respondents to the Road Trip pre-test survey rate the EU's relevance, and their own image of it, as only 6/10 or lower. The ratings for relevance and image are similar, and the most common ratings are 5/10 and 7/10. This suggests significant scope for improvement through communication.

Figure 13 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for Road Trip project
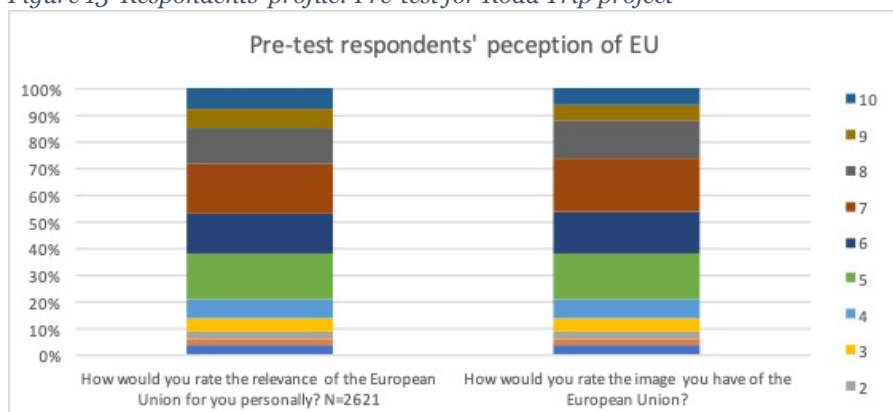
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

Given these ratings for relevance and image, it is striking that a high proportion, 65%, say they understand the EU: 7% say they have a very strong understanding and 19% say strong. On the other hand, with 39% saying they're understanding is only "quite strong" and a further 35% saying it is weak

or rather weak, there seems to be a larger share, around 75%, where communication could make a significant improvement.

Figure 14 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for Road Trip project

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

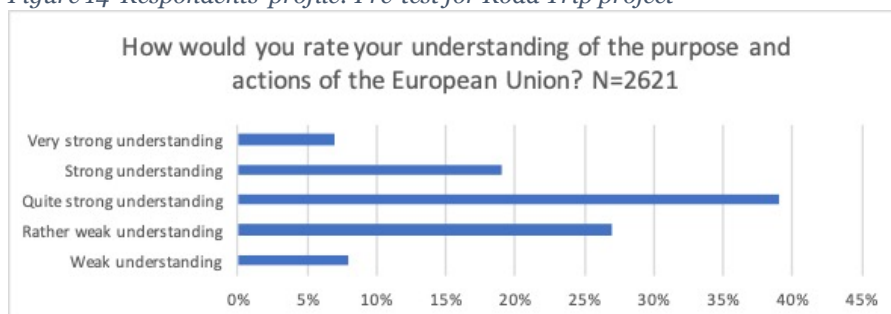### 5.1.3   *Alignment with the needs of the target audiences*

In this section we look into the adequacy of DG REGIO communication approach (tools, channels and messages) in terms of their alignment with the characteristics and needs of their target audiences. We focus on three communication actions: the Road Trip project, the EU Delivers in the Regions campaign and the Support for Information Measures.

Surveys for the EU Delivers and Road Trip campaigns indicate scope for improving awareness and perception among the target audiences. Unfortunately, given the size of the communication budget, no pre-test polling is available for Media Call beneficiary countries apart from France and Italy (covered by EU Delivers polls).

The campaigns seem well aligned with information needs of the target audiences, who show a high interest in knowing more about EU-supported actions in their region, while social media is a relevant channel for younger audiences but has some limitations in addressing older audiences. In terms of understanding the campaign message, just under half understood correctly that the EU Delivers campaign aimed to inform local people that the EU is helping financially. Focus groups suggested that people partially misread the purpose of the campaign, associating it with increasing the attractiveness of the regional project (increasing visitors or users). Also, there is a big variation in how many consider the EU and local institutions to be behind the campaign. Qualitative feedback emphasised the need to state clearly the role of the EU and the local improvements.

Alignment with information needs

Polls carried out before the launch of the **Road Trip** campaign indicate that 85% of poll respondents like the concept of the Road Trip project. The percentage of the Road Trip survey respondents who like the project concept varies a little by region: up to 87% in Southern and Eastern Europe, down to 81% in Northern Europe. Qualitative feedback indicates that those who liked the concept felt most positive about it being an "authentic" and "life-changing experience", as well as the idea of a "European road trip" meeting locals and visiting landscapes. Those who disliked it felt most negative about the role of the participants as "mobile journalists" broadcasting as they travelled. These results indicate an appetite for such information campaigns among the target audiences.

Figure 15 Pre-test: Likes/dislikes for Road Trip project concept
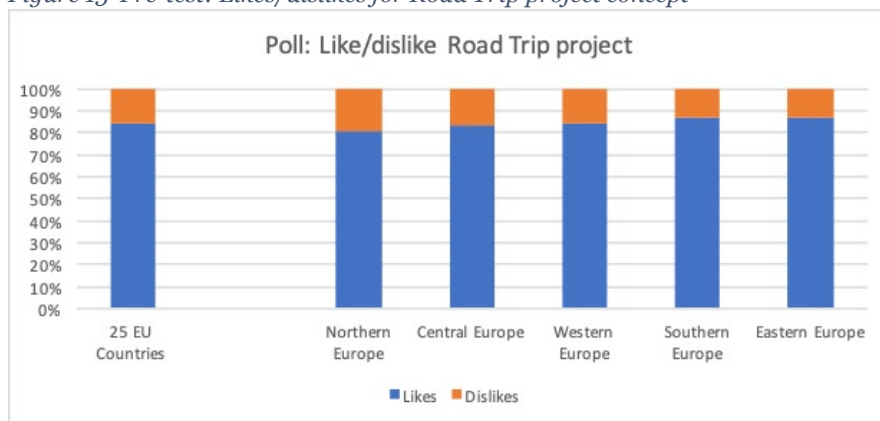
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

For the **EU Delivers** campaign, instead, the polls indicated a slightly lower level of interest: around 75% of those polled would like more information on what the EU is doing in their region.

The EU Delivers pre-test methodology also allows for comparison between countries: the lowest demand for information on regional EU activities was in Sweden (below 65%) and France (below 70%), while it was highest in Italy (over 85%) and Greece (over 80%).

Furthermore, the methodology reported levels of interest among "Eurosceptic" audiences, where demand was significantly lower (around 60%): with the lowest demand again in Sweden (around 45%) and France (below 50%), and highest in Italy (around 75%) and Greece (over 65%).

Figure 16 EU Delivers campaign pre-test
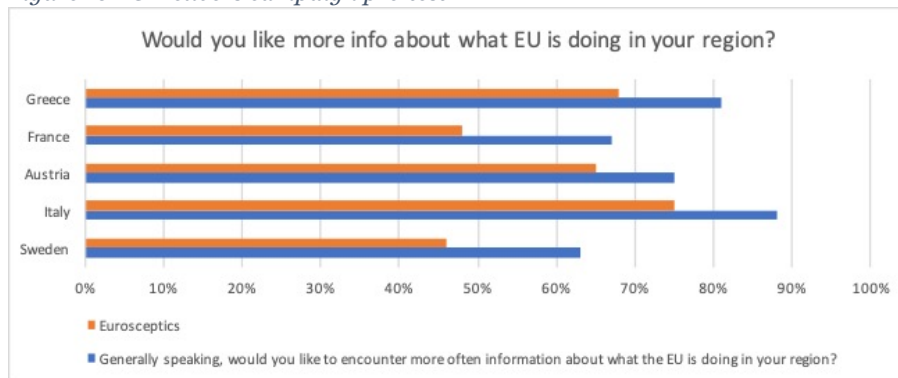
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Channel suitability and audience engagement

The **Road Trip project** was designed to work primarily through social media. While the pre-test survey shows positive perceptions of the campaign – around 75% said they fully understood the campaign and that it would be fun and engaging – less than 60% said they would follow it on social media and less than 50% said they would share campaign content. Qualitative feedback suggests that the young audience would only share content with a "wow factor" – they are already overloaded and tend to share only personal experiences – and tend to prefer to share via messages than via their social media feeds.

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Figure 17 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for Road Trip project
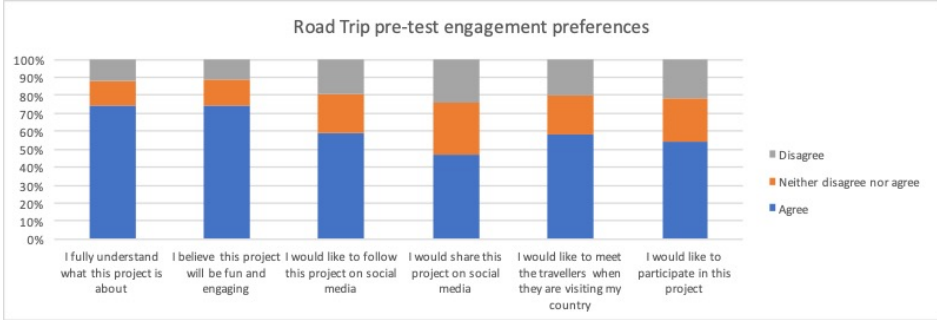
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

In addition, the Road Trip survey indicates that most of the audience (more than 70%) would expect social media updates several times a week, while almost half would look for such content daily.

Figure 18 Respondents' profile: Pre-test for Road Trip project
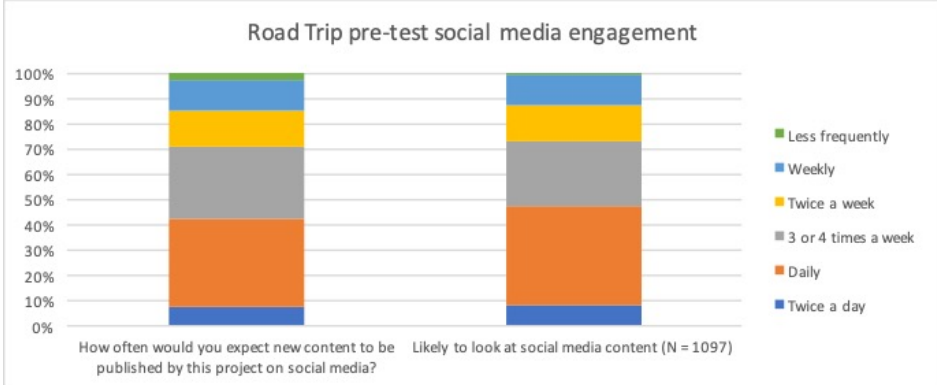
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

Qualitative feedback from focus groups indicated that the younger target groups (18-24) were more inclined to engage, expressing spontaneous enthusiasm for fun and energetic adventure that can be shared and communicated, while the more mature millennials (24-30) were more sceptical about its feasibility and implementation. Overall, there was feedback that there was "a bit too much nature" and no reference to cities, art or food so "the urban vibe is missing". Drivers for engagement were identified as it being seen as "fun", "surprising" and featuring "variety", while barriers to engagement would be "predictability" and visiting "well-known places".

Meanwhile, the **EU Delivers survey** indicated that engagement with the campaign's content would be highest in Italy, more than half indicating they would seek more information, discuss it or even visit the region featured. Around 40% said they would share content on social media – only slightly lower than the result for the Road Trip.

However, attitudes to engagement in other countries were much less positive. In fact, responses by the target audience in the other campaign countries were less positive than the attitudes of "eurosceptic" respondents in Italy.

Figure 19 EU Delivers campaign pre-test: audience likelihood and willingness to engage in different ways

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

For comparison, polls carried out in 14 EU Member States for the **InvestEU evaluation** found that of those members of the public who recalled seeing the campaign, 16% talked about with other people, 14% visited a website for more information, and 8% would share or mention it on social media. In other words, the expected likelihood to engage by the EU Delivers survey respondents was in every case higher than the actual likelihood to engage reported by the InvestEU campaign.

In addition, these polls found that social media was not among the top 3 sources of information favoured by the public (apart from in Bulgaria and Greece). Rather, the top sources in most countries were print, web and television. This suggests that the Support for Information Measures campaign may have a more relevant approach to reaching very large audiences.

Figure 20 InvestEU campaign polling: audience preferences for information sources / communication channels
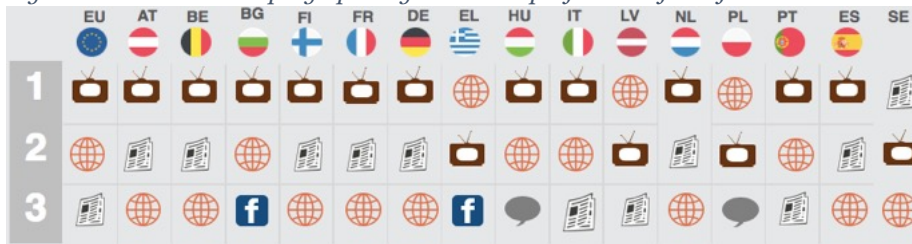
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of InvestEU data

Response to communication materials

How do the target audiences respond to the communication materials used? For which we need to consult the pre-test survey data.

Overall, the **Road Trip** survey found that under half (44%) rated highly the appeal of the campaign (8/10 or higher), and a further 30% rated it as 6/10 or 7/10. Perceptions of the campaign were much more positive in Southern (59% rating it 8/10 or better) and Eastern (51%) Europe, and more negative in Northern (just 35%) and Central (40%). In addition, more urban respondents (45%) rated it highly than rural ones (less than 40%), and the appeal of the campaign correlated with education: almost 50% of higher education levels rated the campaign highly while only 30% of lower education levels did.

Qualitative feedback indicated the title and logo were appreciated, fitting the concept for the young audience, while the campaign visuals still somewhat missed an urban aspect and the initial minibus design attracted some negative comments as not fitting the young/hip campaign design.

Figure 21 Pre-test[23]: Rating the appeal of Road Trip project concept
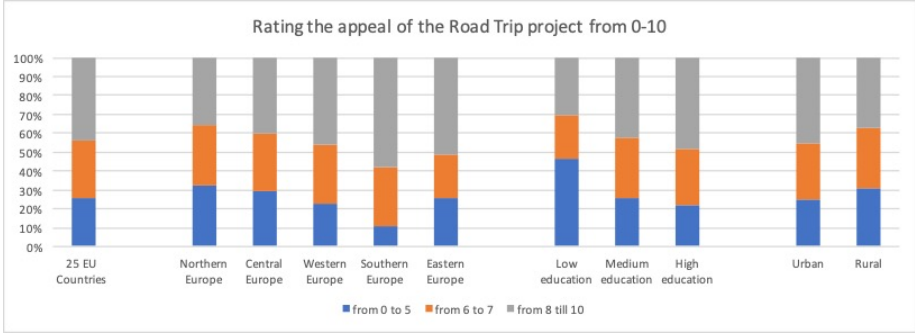
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

In comparison, the **EU Delivers** campaign visuals were found very appealing by more than half in Austria and more than 4/10 in Sweden. In the other countries they were liked far less, with the worst reception in Greece (less than 2/10).

Qualitative feedback from focus groups indicates that the "right choice of background pictures" fostering both pride and familiarity, showing best side of community life, surroundings and local tradition would contribute to more participants feeling that the campaign makes an effort to reflect the best side of their region and therefore the more they feel it's a campaign close to them. The qualitative feedback from Greece emphasised the importance of the choice of background pictures: "Aerial or bright pictures, as well as showing the best side of an area are deemed to increase the feeling of pride".

Figure 22 EU Delivers campaign pre-test
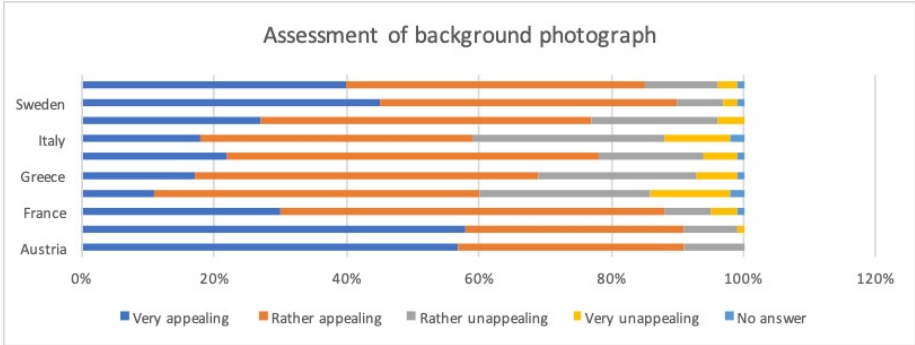
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Responses to the campaign caption were more consistent, nearly all varying between 25% (Sweden, Italy and Greece) and around 40% (Austria). Overall, therefore by far the most positive reception for the EU Delivers campaign posters, in terms of both image and text was in Austria, and the worst was in Greece.

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[23] n=2500: Pre-test survey of 100 respondents per country across 25 EU countries (excluding Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus).

Figure 23 EU Delivers campaign pre-test
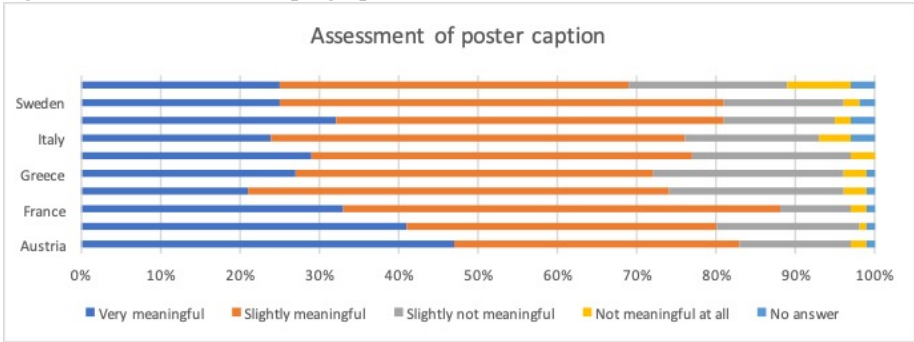
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

In terms of understanding what the campaign was about, between 40% (in Italy) and 50% (in Sweden) understood correctly that the campaign aims to inform local people that the EU is helping financially. Qualitative feedback from the focus groups suggested that people tended to partially misread the purpose and the aim of the campaign, associating it with the will to increase attractiveness of the regional project (increasing visitors or users – both regional or foreign). In particular, in Sweden: "Because the projects tested are also part of the tourism landscape in those regions, citizens downplay the informational value of the campaign, while giving priority to a tourist interpretation of the material tested."

Figure 24 EU Delivers campaign pre-test
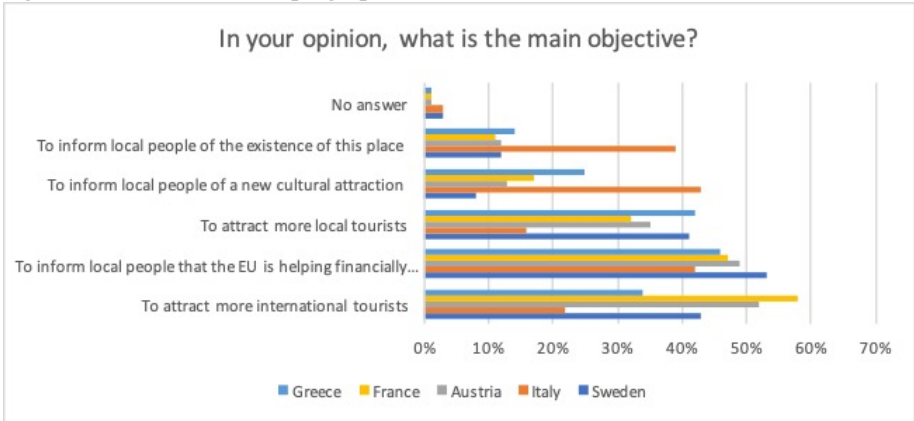
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Very high shares of Italian respondents (around 40%) perceived the campaign as aiming to promote local attractions or locations. This perception was much lower in other countries. On the other hand, Italian respondents did not see the campaign as aiming to attract tourists (whether local or international), whereas other countries did (in France more than 50% thought it was trying to attract international tourists).

Figure 25 EU Delivers campaign pre-test
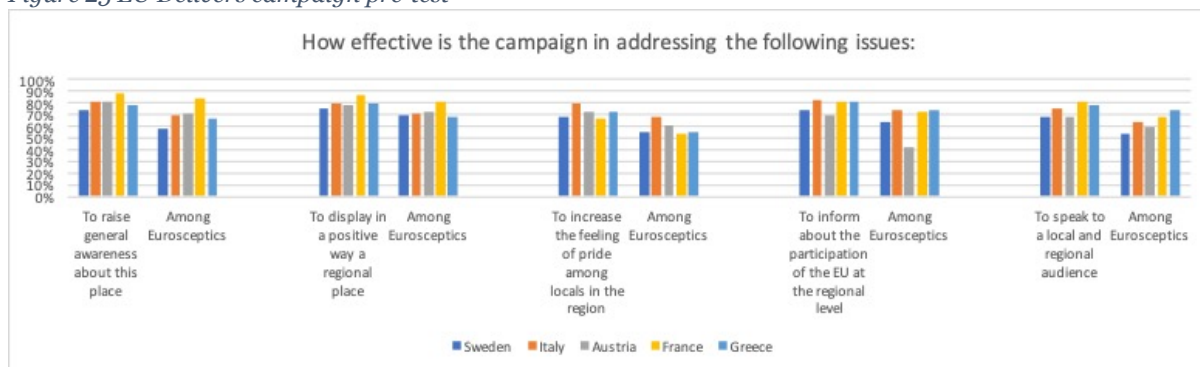
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Meanwhile, in all countries between 70% and 85% judged the EU Delivers campaign to be effective in raising awareness and informing about EU participation at the regional level to a local and regional audience. Austrian Eurosceptics were the most sceptical about the campaign's effectiveness in informing about the EU's local participation (just 40%), which contrasts with the high Austrian rating for its visuals and caption.

Figure 26 EU Delivers campaign pre-test
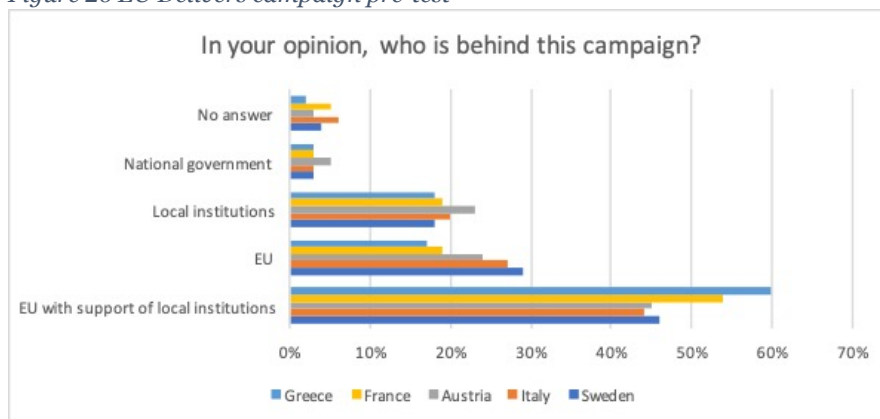
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Around 7/10 of the respondents recognised that the campaign was backed by the EU (up to 75% in Greece), and approximately 7/10 thought it was supported by local institutions. There is a high variation in how many consider both the EU and local institutions to be behind the campaign, from 45% in Italy to 60% in Greece. Very few (less than 5%) think the campaign is backed by their national governments.

Qualitative feedback from Greece emphasised the need for accurate content stating clearly the role of the EU and the exact novelty or improvement in the area to avoid potential misunderstandings.

5.2   Relevance of the DG REGIO communication activities for the MS/MAs

A core objective of Cohesion policy is to ensure that the policy's objectives, funding opportunities and achievements are visible and communicated effectively to applicants, stakeholders and the wider public.

As mentioned in Section 3.1.2, Managing Authorities and beneficiaries in the Member States have an important role to play in this context. They have the task (and legal obligation) to provide information and communicate on the aims, funding opportunities and results of the co-funded actions. The intention is to increase their ownership of the communication strategy, allocating full responsibility to the Managing Authority and the programmes' Monitoring Committees.

In this section we first describe the Member States and Managing Authorities' approach to fulfilling this enhanced information and communication function, their strategies and challenges they face. Subsequently, we investigate the extent to which and how DG REGIO's activities can support the MA/MS in this endeavour.

5.2.1 The communication strategy and function in the MS/MA

The picture emerging from our analysis, reported below and confirmed also in our case studies and interviews, is one of a growing alignment of the communication strategies in the Member States/Managing Authorities with the communication strategies in DG REGIO and DG COMM. While the communication function in MS/MA keeps its primary role of ensuring programme performance with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, communication to the general public is overall recognised to be critical for the success of the programme – with the exception of some 'net contributor' countries.

Localisation of the message, with an emphasis on the human element and concrete results while communicating reality and recognising the remaining challenges are principles that are considered of major importance in order not to confuse communication with publicity and advertising.

As mentioned in Section 3.1.2, above, Cohesion Policy is implemented under the so-called shared-management mode, attributing an important role to the Managing Authorities for the information and communication on the aims, funding opportunities and results of the co-funded programmes and projects. These activities are intended to contribute not only to the implementation of Cohesion Policy, but also to create awareness on positive impacts of EU policies and, ultimately, to "strengthen public support for the EU as a whole". In line with these indications, a 2016 EPRC study identified four main objectives in the MS/MAs' programme communication strategies: *effectiveness and efficiency, transparency, public awareness, and regulatory compliance.*[24]

Respondents to our survey indicated the primary importance of the **transparency** objective, combined with the **delivery of the programme**. More than 80% of the respondents indicated the 'actual implementation' of this objective (Figure 27, below).

Public awareness is the second most important objective in terms of actual implementation. Slightly more respondents indicated the objective of increasing the appreciation for the role of the EU than the enhancement of awareness on the positive impacts of the funds (77% and 71%, respectively).

Figure 27 Strategic objectives for information and communication activities
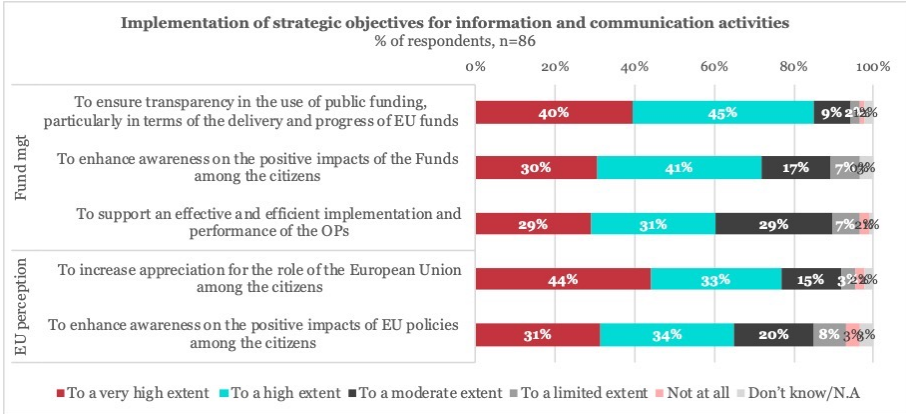
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

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24 Mendez C, Dozhdeva V and Bachtler J (2016) 'Implementing ESIF Communication Strategies in 2014-20: Are they achieving expectations' IQ-Net Thematic Paper 39(3), European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

The 2016 EPRC study mentioned above identified four main types of **target groups** in the communication strategies: beneficiaries; multipliers and opinion builders, programme management bodies, partners and stakeholders; and the general public.

Seeing the primary objective of ensuring programme implementation, it bears no surprise that more than half of our survey respondents (55%) indicated that they dedicated most of their time (75-100%) to interacting with **beneficiaries and/or potential beneficiaries**. The key focus is on the transfer of information to potential beneficiaries on funding opportunities, obligations and funding conditions, indicated by about 85% of respondents (Figure 28).

Figure 28 Implementation of operational objectives for information transfer activities

Implementation of operational objectives for information transfer activities
% of respondents, n=86

	To a very high extent	To a high extent	To a high extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know/N.A
To inform potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities	42%	47%	8%	2%		0%
To inform potential beneficiaries and beneficiaries about their obligations and funding conditions	37%	42%	14%	2%	2%	
To guide prospective beneficiaries through the funding application process	27%	40%	22%	5%	5%	
To assist project beneficiaries in communicating achievements	26%	36%	27%	9%	1%	

Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

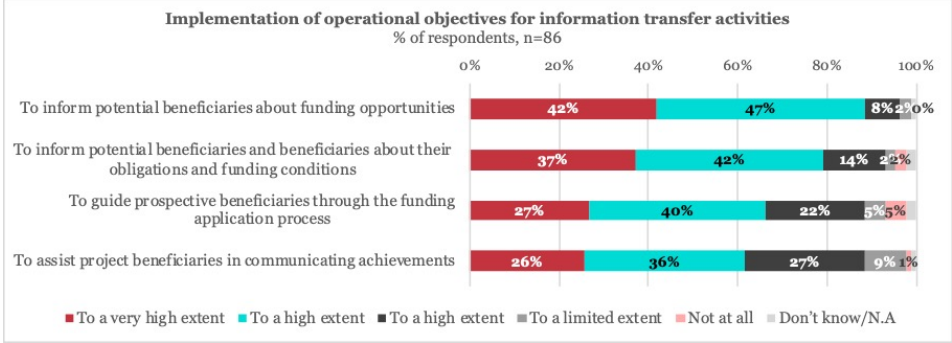Close to half of the respondents also indicated a significant dedication of their time to communicating to the **general public**. According to 70% of the respondents, this regarded mainly the implementation of activities aimed at raising awareness on the positive impacts of the Funds among the citizens (Figure 29).

Figure 29 Implementation of operational objectives for information transfer activities

Implementation of operational objectives communication activities
% of respondents, n=86

	To a very high extent	To a high extent	To a high extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know/N.A
To raise awareness on the positive impacts of the Funds among the citizens	34%	36%	21%	7%	1%	
To raise awareness on the achievements of the Funds to potential multipliers (media, civil society organisations, professional associations etc)	29%	30%	31%	7%	1%	
To raise awareness on the role of cohesion policy in your country and/or region among the citizens	21%	37%	37%	19%		3%

Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

This is in line with the findings from our interviews and case studies, confirming that communication on the programme results to the broader public is considered to be an integral part of the programme management cycle, typically coming in at the later stages of the programme.

Possibly more surprising is therefore the more general importance attributed to the communication to citizens: about 70% of respondents confirmed that in their MA communication strategy, communication to the general public is considered **crucial** for the programme achievements (Figure 30).

Interesting is also the significant difference in responses from the Information and Communication Officers (ICO) based in countries that are 'beneficiaries' of the EU budget compared to those based in **'net contributor'** countries: 86% of respondents based in 'beneficiary' countries indicated such critical

importance of communication to citizens compared to 57% of those based in 'net contributor' 9to the EU budget) countries.

It suggests a limit posed on the potential for investment in communication activities that are not strictly related to programme implementation in **net-contributor countries**, due to a low programme funding and resources available. This reflection has been confirmed in our interviews.

Figure 30 Importance of communication to the general public
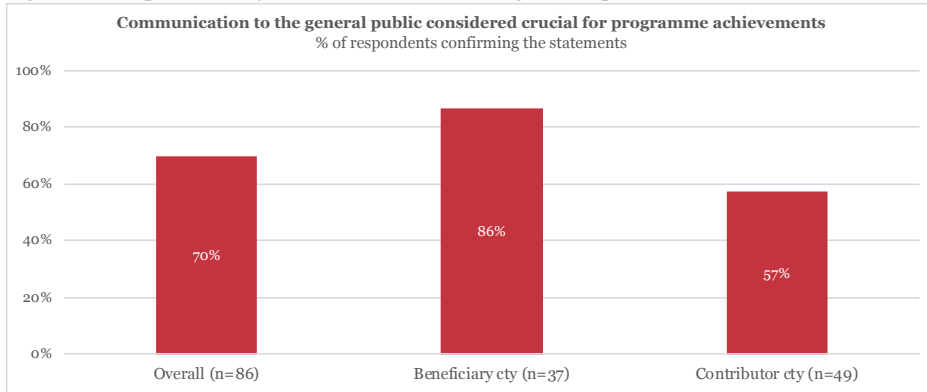
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

In terms of operational implementation of the communication to citizens in terms of messages and tools, the overall majority of respondents (85%) highlight the importance of **storytelling**, showing the concrete effects of the funding from a human perspective and using a narrative and tonality that is close to the local culture. Visual communication should be at the core (Figure 32).

A factor that was mentioned also during the interviews and case studies was the need to be 'realistic' in the messages **not to confuse communication with publicity and advertising**. Remaining challenges and obstacles to overcome should therefore be part of the message.

These essential features for a successful communication of Cohesion Policy to citizens are fully reflect the communication strategy of both DG REGIO and DG COMM – see Section 5.1, above.

Figure 31 Importance of communication to the general public
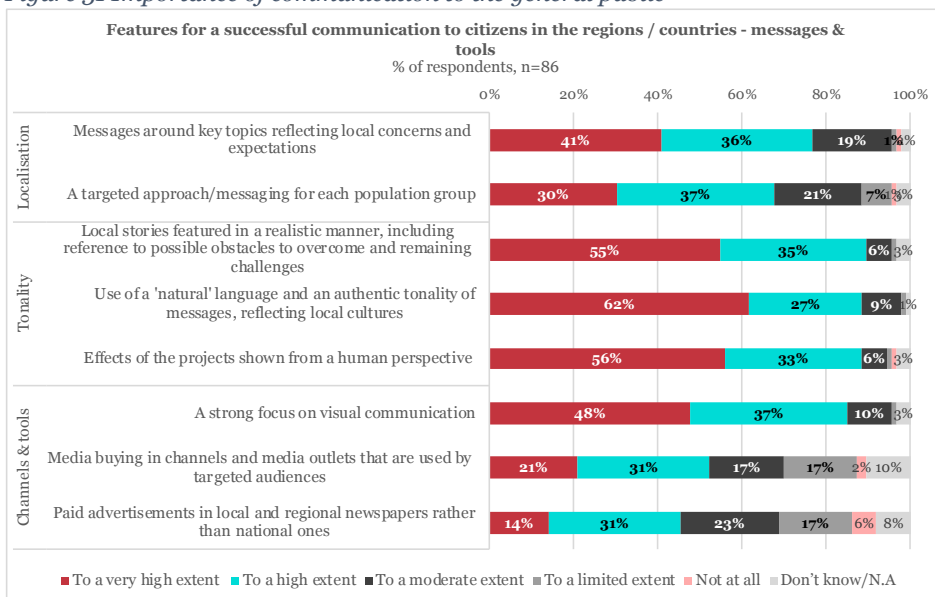
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

5.2.2 Challenges in communication faced by the Member States/Managing authorities

The challenges faced by the national and regional Information and Communication Officers in their communication to the citizens are to be set in the context of the diverging management structures and availability of communication budgets in the MS/MA. Most important is the degree of centralisation of the programme management and communication function across regions and/or funds. A second important factor is the size of programme funding, determining the level of budget available.

A major challenge emerging is the availability of resources – in particular human resources, determining the time available to the ICO for their communication to the citizens. Another important challenge is the difficulty to communicate cohesion policy to the citizens, due to its complexity because of the multiple funds, instruments and actors involved, and closely related, the lack of coordination across Funds within the EU. Notoriously challenging for the communication on EU matters to the general public is the lack of interest in EU policy in the media, at regional but especially national level. Equally important is the lack of awareness in the general public of regional policy and its funds, and of EU affairs in general.

In order fully to grasp the challenges information and communication officers face in the implementation of their function, it is important to set the communication practice in the MS/MA within the context of the diverging governance structures and programme architectures that have been set up in the different countries and regions.

Depending on the programme architecture, the territorial and thematic scope of the communication strategies and activities in the MS/MA ranges from regional communication strategies for a single Operational Programme (ERDF or ESF) to national communication strategies covering all ESIF Funds. A 2016 EPRC study found that the diverging **degree of centralisation of the programme management and/or communication functions** across regions and/or funds is reflected in the different implementation and resource allocation arrangements, as well as in the differences in emphasis placed on communication to the general public.[25]

A second element that plays an important role, closely linked to the 'degree of centralisation' mentioned above, is the size of programme funding in the region or country, which determines the **budget available** for information and communication efforts.

These factors set the context for one of the major challenges for communication to citizens in the MS/MA: the **availability of dedicated staff**, indicated by 55% of the respondents (Figure 32, below).

The input provided by the survey respondents, representing 22 out of the 27 EU Member States, sheds some more light on the specific consequences of this limited availability of dedicated staff in terms of work distribution. In most cases, the communication officers take up also other tasks beyond information and communication responsibilities. The picture emerging is especially worrying in relation to the national networks that in less than half the countries is used as a platform for knowledge and experience sharing on communication.

The survey responses were:

- In slightly more than half of these countries (13), the national information and communication coordinator is full-time dedicated only to information and communication tasks
- In all of the 22 countries, there is a network of information and communication officers at the national level, but in more than half of them (13), the national network is focused on exchanging information on general management and implementation issues rather than on sharing experience in communication

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[25] Corchado, L. et al (2017/18) A comparative analysis of Cohesion Policy communication strategies, REGIO PLUS CONSULTING, Madrid, Spain, UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE, EPRC, Glasgow, UK, Cohesify Research Paper 11

In relation to the communication function in the Managing Authorities,

- The availability of dedicated communication staff of more than 2 FTE was indicated only by about 20% of the respondents that represented 12 countries, most of them EU-13 Member States
- About 30% of respondents, representing 15 countries, indicated that there is no dedicated programme communication officer in the Managing Authority working full time on communication tasks

Figure 32 Challenges for the communication to the general public – resources and skills
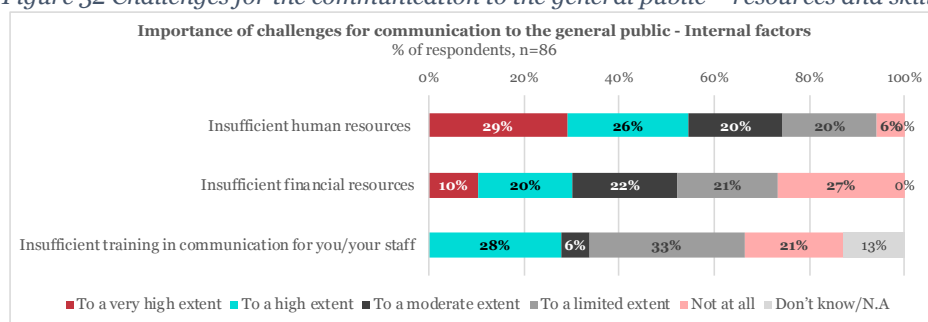
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

Another important challenge emerging is the **complexity of cohesion policy,** indicated by close to half of the respondents (45%) (Figure 33).

The national/regional ICOs hereby point at a **'brand' issue**, created by the use of EU policy term that is little known to the general public. In addition, as the EPRC IQ-Net observed, cohesion policy is "one of most ambitious, complex and misunderstood areas of EU decision-making."[26] The authors attributed this difficulty to the combination of "multiple funds and many instruments managed at different territorial levels underpinned by a dense regulatory framework with technical terms, obscure language and jargon. Survey respondents seem to agree at least to some extent.

One in three (31%) indicated, the lack of coordination across Funds within the EU as a challenge in their communication to the citizens (Figure 33).

Figure 33 Challenges for the communication to the general public – coordination & policy
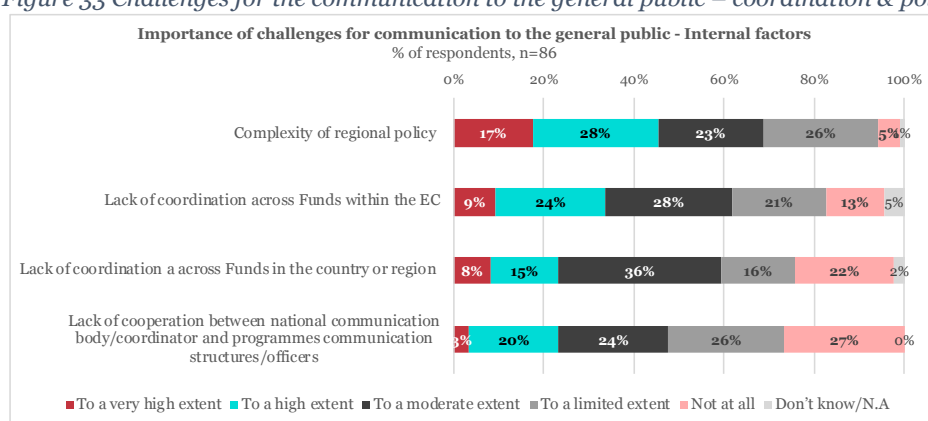
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

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[26] Mendez C, Dozhdeva V and Bachtler J (2016) 'Implementing ESIF Communication Strategies in 2014-20: Are they achieving expectations' *IQ-Net Thematic Paper 39(3)*, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Finally, the survey respondents indicated also a range of **external factors** that are notoriously challenging for communication on EU matters to the general public. First amongst all ranks the **lack of interest in EU policy in the media**, at regional but especially national level (indicated by 50% of respondents – see Figure 34), followed by the **lack of awareness** in the general public of regional policy and the funds (which is closely related to the complexity of regional policy) and of EU affairs in general.

Figure 34 Challenges for the communication to the general public – external factors

Importance of challenges for communication to the general public - External factors
% of respondents, n=86

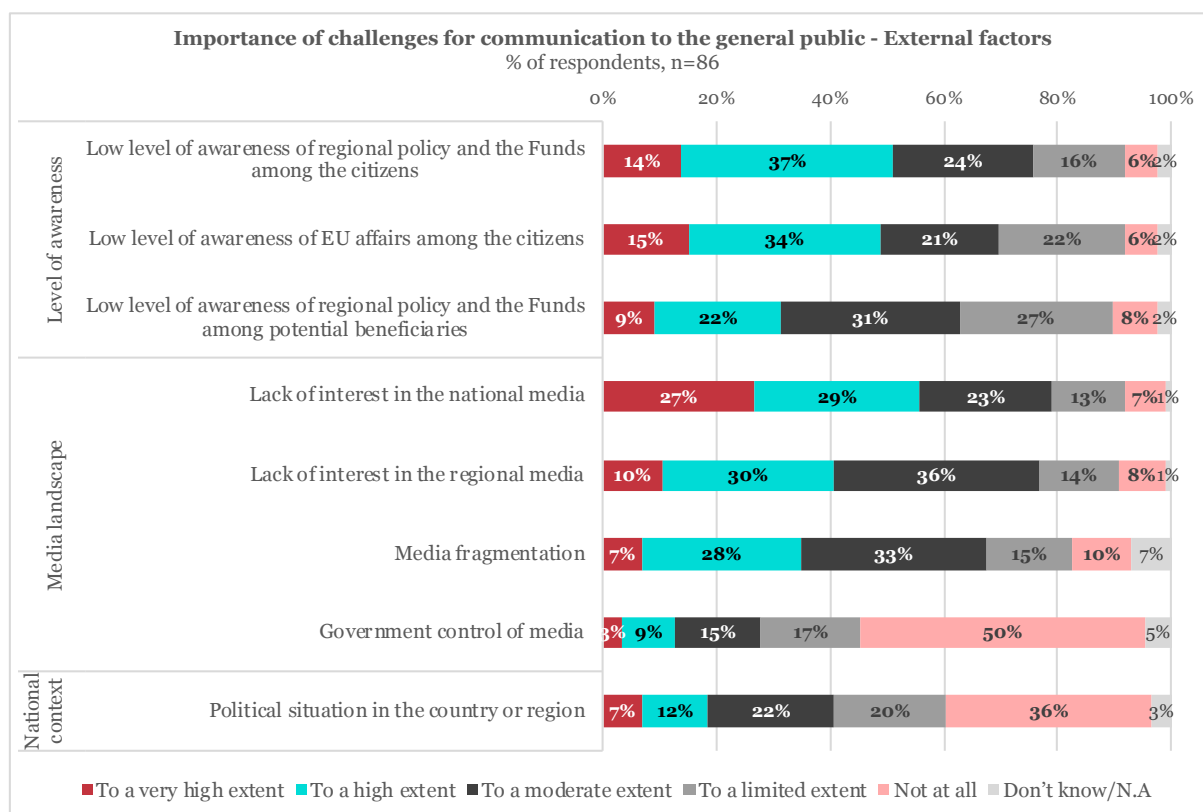|	To a very high extent	To a high extent	To a moderate extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	Don't know/N.A
Level of awareness						
Low level of awareness of regional policy and the Funds among the citizens	14%	37%	24%	16%	6%	2%
Low level of awareness of EU affairs among the citizens	15%	34%	21%	22%	6%	2%
Low level of awareness of regional policy and the Funds among potential beneficiaries	9%	22%	31%	27%	8%	2%
Media landscape						
Lack of interest in the national media	27%	29%	23%	13%	7%	1%
Lack of interest in the regional media	10%	30%	36%	14%	8%	1%
Media fragmentation	7%	28%	33%	15%	10%	7%
Government control of media	3%	9%	15%	17%	50%	5%
National context						
Political situation in the country or region	7%	12%	22%	20%	36%	3%

Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

5.2.3 DG REGIO communication activities responding to the needs

Seeing the focus and characteristics of the communication strategies in the MS/MA and the challenges they face in their communication to the citizens, a broad range of areas can be identified where DG REGIO's communication activities could be of relevance, based on their objectives.

Their capacity and success in effectively doing so is covered in the chapter on coherence, Section 8.2.1.

Key is the **successful delivery of the programme**, where information transfer to the beneficiaries on funding opportunities, obligations and funding conditions as well as communication to the citizens play a critical role. Important objectives in this context relate to the **policy objectives of the communication to the citizens**, i.e. to increase the citizens' appreciation for the role of the EU policy and the enhancement of their awareness on the positive impacts of the funds. This constitutes a challenge for the national/regional ICO, in a first instance in terms of resources – especially in the 'net contributor' countries. Communication on cohesion policy to the citizens as such is found to be challenging. It is even more so when considering the high level of professionalism needed for the design of messages and narratives that would have the needed features in order to ensure a successful communication to citizens.

The characteristics and features of DG REGIO's communication activities, as described in the section above and Chapter 4, above, indicate a **high capacity of DG REGIO's activities to be a relevant source for support in relation to these challenges.** This regards not only the campaigns and specific communication actions but also the internal processes and structures that have been set up to facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange, as well as its 'tools for regular communication'. Interviewees and survey respondents gave similar indications.

In Table 9, below, we give an overview of the needs and challenges that could be addressed through DG REGIO communication activities.

Table 9 MS/MA communication challenges versus relevant DG REGIO communication activities

Challenge area	Challenges	Relevant DG REGIO communication activity
Delivery of the programme	Information transfer to (potential) beneficiaries	• Tools for regular communication • Country Correspondents
Communication to the citizens	Resources availability	• Tools for regular communication • Communication campaigns and actions to citizens and stakeholders • Communication to policy makers
	Complexity of cohesion policy and how to communicate it	• Communication to policy makers • Cohesion Dialogues • Communication Matrix • INFORM network
	Design of the communication activities	• Tools for regular communication • Communication campaigns and actions to citizens and stakeholders • INFORM network

DG REGIO's **'tools for regular communication'** include the INFOREGIO website, social media accounts and hashtags, publications and media relations. These tools have an important role to play in providing *information to beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries* related to the overall policy context and thematic areas of interest, examples of past projects and their results and benefits. In the context of the communication to citizen, they can compensate the *lack in resources availability* in the MS/MA by providing material (media toolkits, information sets), information, press maps etc.

Interviewees and survey respondents indicated an important limit to the relevance of these tools, though, due to its use of the English language only. The same reflection was made in relation to the tools provided by the EC in the context of its campaigns.

DG REGIO's **Country Correspondents** have an important role to play in supporting the MS/MA with the delivery of their programmes. This includes responsibility for the monitoring and support to the communication strategy and function. An important process set up by dG REGIO is the inclusion of

DG REGIO's **communication campaigns and actions to stakeholders and citizens** equally have a two-fold area of relevance. On the one hand, they can compensate for a limited level of communication to citizens in the MA/MS because of human or financial reasons, for example in 'net contributor' MS. On the other hand, interviewees indicated the high relevance of these actions as a source of inspiration for the adoption of innovative communication techniques or use of novel channels. Their focus on their daily lives and benefits for the citizen, effective use of both traditional and social media and local differentiation is fully in line with the MS/MAs' needs.

The **communication actions to policymakers** have the potential to support the change in culture towards a stronger investment in communication to citizens among national and regional policymakers, in line with the regulation. Policymakers, both European and national/regional, are important

stakeholders with whom to discuss cohesion policy, its values and especially, the issues that hinder an effective communication such as its complexity – in the light of "communication, everyone's business'.

Cohesion Dialogues could have a similar function, acting as a platform for discussion with stakeholders and opinion makers in the national and regional environment.

The **Communication Matrix** is an important tool in the context of support to national/regional MS/MA in its function of communication and collaboration platform for EC officials across the units in DG REGIO. It would be the place by excellence to launch a broad discussion on how to communicate Cohesion Policy, encompassing the three cornerstones of policy, programme management and communication.

The **INFORM Network** is the second key platform for such a discussion, bringing together the key actors in the field of Cohesion Policy communication at European and national/regional level. Networking can also make an important contribution to communication coordination and learning and the INFORM network, together with the INIO, is an important coordination tool at EU level.

6 Effectiveness of DG REGIO's communication activities

We assessed the 'effectiveness' of the communication activities in terms of their performance, as well as in in terms of their **'internal coherence'**, i.e. the extent to which they constituted a coherent portfolio of mutually reinforcing actions.

Key questions are the extent to which each campaign has distinct but aligned and mutually reinforcing objectives (and achieved these objectives) and the extent to which DG REGIO regular communication activities support and enforce the campaign messages.

We first describe our main findings in relation to the effectiveness of the campaigns and regular communication channels in terms of the achievement of their objectives (Section 6.1) and then focus on the extent to which the communication activities constitute a coherent and integrated portfolio (Section 6.2).

Note on methodology

Although evaluations have been carried out, in some cases these exercises are simply incorporated as short analyses in the annual implementation reports, and not all of them are carried out by external evaluators. In many cases, the indicators did not include baselines and targets making it impossible to assess the effectiveness of the actions carried out.

Limited data is available for outcome/results of the campaigns (e.g. recall of the campaign or raised awareness), with the exception of post-test surveys carried out in five countries for the EU Delivers campaign. However, the surveys in the post-tests were carried out in different regions from the pre-tests so direct comparison of the performance in terms of recall or changed awareness/perception is impossible. Engagement with the campaign can be used as a proxy measure.

In the analysis below we present the data that can be used as evidence in answering the evaluation questions – even if this cannot be complete.

To arrive at an estimate of the level of visibility of such actions in each target country, we can compare the aggregate reach across all channels (applying a "deduplication" methodology to account for multiple opportunities to see the content via different channels) in each case to the country's total population.

The analysis of owned social media accounts was possible from the data available through SocialBakers and other EC digital communication monitoring tools (Brandwatch and Piwik/Matomo). The follower bases for DG REGIO's social media accounts were measured as follows in mid-2019: Facebook 46 500; Twitter 74 500; Instagram 9000.

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6.1 Effectiveness of campaigns and communication actions

In this section we assess the extent to which the campaigns delivered on their set objectives, covering all campaigns and communication actions for which data was available. We conclude the section by setting the campaign results in comparison to results of other campaigns and giving a view on the extent DG REGIO's portfolio of campaigns and communication actions portfolio showed internal coherence.

We start this section with a summary overview of the campaigns' achievement of their KPIs. Table 10, below, key findings of our analyses against the KPIs that were defined in the annual management plan for 2018. The outputs and outcomes indicated relate to the achievements in 2018 and/or 2019 (where campaign activities were focused in the latter year).

It should be noted that in general, reach figures alone (as outputs) are insufficient to assess the effectiveness of communication campaigns and actions, they need to be complimented by result metrics such as recall, engagement and awareness/perception change.

Having said this, DG REGIO's campaigns and actions can be said to have largely met their output objectives.

Table 10 KPIs for DG REGIO communication campaigns and actions 2018

Output	Indicator	*Target*	Achieved outputs and outcomes
Open call for media	Audience reach	*To be disclosed after completion of the selection procedure*	Estimate of OTS*: • Portugal potential reach: 40% population • Italy potential reach: three-quarters of the population
EU Delivers in the Regions	Sum of audiences reached (primary audiences: local population segments with low awareness of the EU and EU action in their region)	*10 million* *Additional details about target audience to be made available after completion of the selection procedure*	Aggregate OTS*: 270 million (70% available audience in terms of campaign countries population) Deduplicated aggregate reach: • France & Austria: ~ total population • Greece & Sweden: ~ 80-90% of the population • Italy: ~ 70% of total population
Many Think – Youth Campaign – Roadtrips through four circuits of projects supported by the EU	• Number of people reached • Number of impressions (like/dislike, etc) • Messages pick up and spread	*To be disclosed after completion of the selection procedure*	• Aggregate Reach reported: 23 million (=about 50% of Europeans aged 18 to 24 with Facebook or Instagram account ◦ Average frequency rate of six ◦ Close to 30 million video views, ◦ more than 120 000 interactions ◦ 400 000 unique web visitors. • Overall average interaction rate: 0.12% - varied from 0.06% to 0.27% (interactions are likes, shares, comments., etc.) • Spread of messages in 2018: 2887 (measured by use of hashtag):
Europe in My Region "campaign" (Europe-wide, May)	• N° countries • N° projects open to visits • N° visitors of the projects • N° members of the College visiting projects • Media reach	• >20 • >2,500 • >400,000 • >5 • • >3 million	• 27 countries • more than 2,500 events • 450,000 participants overall. • 8 200 000 Facebook impressions, with a reach of 3 200 000, leading to 44 000 link clicks and 83 000 interactions with posts

Output	Indicator	*Target*	Achieved outputs and outcomes
EuroNews – Real Economy (13 Episodes) (DG ECFIN, EMPL, REGIO)	• Reached Audience • Social media reach	*>5 million* *6,5 million*	Euronews estimates: • Reach (OTS)*; 8 million people, likely to have been highest in France and Germany, followed by Spain and Italy. • Online consumption follows a similar pattern, with the highest reach recorded in France, Germany and Italy (but Spain ranking much lower). • There was significant consumption of the Smart Regions videos on YouTube, totalling around 50 000 views.

Notes: * The basis for the Reach measure is "potential reach", i.e. how many people had the *opportunity to see* (OTS) the content, not how many actually read the article or listened to the broadcast. This is clearly a maximal estimate – i.e. this is how many people *could* have been exposed to the message. An aggregate figure also does not take into account the potential that people were reached more than once via different channels. It should not be interpreted literally. Source: Technopolis Group analysis of annual management plan and campaign contractor / report data

Overall, the more specific a target audience, the more difficult it is to reach them, given limited resources, and the regional focus of DG REGIO campaigns defines an audience that is more specific than national campaigns. On the whole, EU Delivers and the Support for Information Measures, according to the reported data, performed at a similar level to the corporate campaigns in terms of aggregate potential reach. The Road Trip reported potential reach that was lower than corporate campaigns, but in this case the target audience was even more specific (young people 18-30).

Even though some of the Support for Information Measures awarded from the 2017 call have reported relatively detailed data on potential reach, it is not measured consistently.

6.1.1 EU Delivers in the Regions

The EU Delivers campaign aimed to target people with low awareness of the EU and its action in their region, including neutrals and ambivalents, people living in medium or small-sized towns, rural areas and deprived districts of capital cities. Additional criteria ere: non-voters and less-educated segments of the public, as well as political decision-makers and influencers (business, national and local politicians, civil society).

Looking at demographics of engaged audiences, monitoring tools that scrape social media data, such as Brandwatch, can provide demographic data for those audience members who engaged by using the campaign hashtags. The demographics for active engagement with the EU Delivers campaign shows there is a different gender split, with the EU Delivers audience being much more heavily male.

Figure 35 Demographics of users of the #EUinmyRegion hashtag, during the EU Delivers campaign
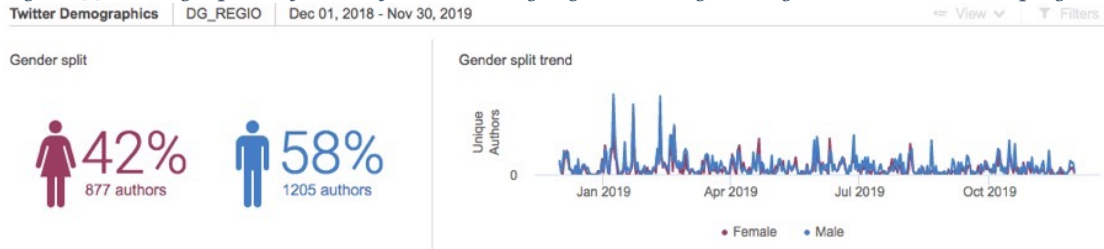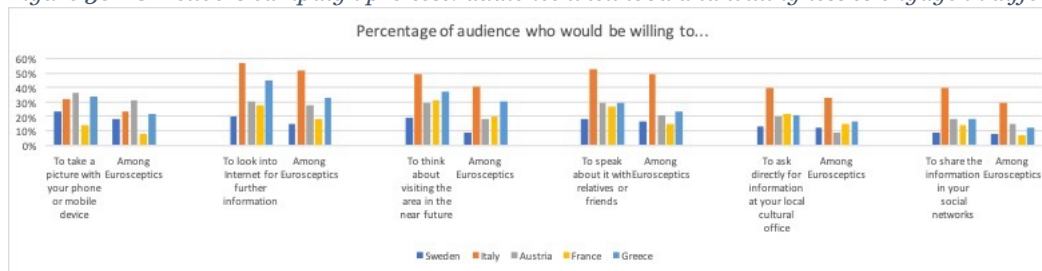

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Channel suitability and audience engagement

The EU Delivers survey indicated that engagement with the campaign's content would be highest in Italy, more than half indicating they would seek more information, discuss it or even visit the region featured. Around 40% said they would share content on social media – only slightly lower than the result for the Road Trip.

However, attitudes to engagement in other countries were much less positive. In fact, responses by the target audience in the other campaign countries were less positive than the attitudes of "Eurosceptic" respondents in Italy.

Figure 36 EU Delivers campaign pre-test: audience likelihood and willingness to engage in different ways

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

For comparison, polls carried out in 14 EU Member States for the InvestEU evaluation found that of those members of the public who recalled seeing the campaign, 16% talked about with other people, 14% visited a website for more information, and 8% would share or mention it on social media. In other words, the **expected likelihood to engage by the EU Delivers survey respondents was in every case higher than the actual likelihood to engage reported by the InvestEU campaign**.

In addition, these polls found that social media was not among the top 3 sources of information favoured by the public (apart from in Bulgaria and Greece). Rather, the top sources in most countries were print, web and television. This suggests that the **Support for Information Measures campaign** may have a channel mix more suited to reaching large audiences.

Suitability of messages and materials

Qualitative feedback from EU Delivery focus groups indicates that the "right choice of background pictures" fostering both pride and familiarity, showing best side of community life, surroundings and local tradition would contribute to more participants feeling that the campaign makes an effort to reflect the best side of their region and therefore the more they feel it's a campaign close to them. The qualitative feedback from Greece emphasised the importance of the choice of background pictures: "Aerial or bright pictures, as well as showing the best side of an area are deemed to increase the feeling of pride".

Responses to the campaign caption were more consistent, nearly all varying between 25% (Sweden, Italy and Greece) and around 40% (Austria). Overall, therefore by far the **most positive reception for the EU Delivers campaign posters, in terms of both image and text was in Austria, and the worst was in Greece.**

In terms of understanding what the campaign was about, between 40% (in Italy) and 50% (in Sweden) understood correctly that the campaign aimed to inform local people that the EU is helping financially. Qualitative feedback from the focus groups suggested that people tended to partially misread the purpose and the aim of the campaign, associating it with the will to increase attractiveness of the regional project (increasing visitors or users – both regional and foreign). In particular, in Sweden: "Because the projects tested are also part of the tourism landscape in those regions, citizens downplay the informational value of the campaign, while giving priority to a tourist interpretation of the material tested."

Meanwhile, in all countries between 70% and 85% judged the EU Delivers campaign to be effective in raising awareness and informing about EU participation at the regional level to a local and regional audience. Austrian Eurosceptics were the most sceptical about the campaign's effectiveness in informing about the EU's local participation (just 40%), which contrasts with the high Austrian rating for its visuals and caption.

Around 7/10 of the respondents recognised that the campaign was backed by the EU (up to 75% in Greece), and approximately 7/10 thought it was supported by local institutions. There is a high variation in how many consider both the EU and local institutions to be behind the campaign, from 45% in Italy to 60% in Greece. Very few (less than 5%) think the campaign is backed by their national governments.

Qualitative feedback from Greece emphasised the need for accurate content stating clearly the role of the EU and the exact novelty or improvement in the area to avoid potential misunderstandings.

Potential reach

For the EU Delivers in the Regions campaign, final reporting covers 32 regions in the five countries included in the campaign. The estimated potential reach is far and away the highest in France, where aggregated opportunities to see (OTS) the campaign are estimated at over 150 million.[27]

Looking at the overall aggregate reach reported and breaking it down per channel (see Figure 37), France reports 60% of the total reach of the campaign (160 million OTS out of 270 million). This is largely due to the reported reach of the outdoor displays in France (73% of the total). The OTS via social media and digital displays are more equitably distributed, but France still accounts for around half.

The campaign in Italy reports reach levels significantly below this, at around 50 million (equivalent to around 80% of the population). Austria and Greece perform similarly at around 20 million, while the lowest estimated potential reach is in Sweden at around 10 million.

Figure 37 Reported aggregate reach of EU Delivers campaign
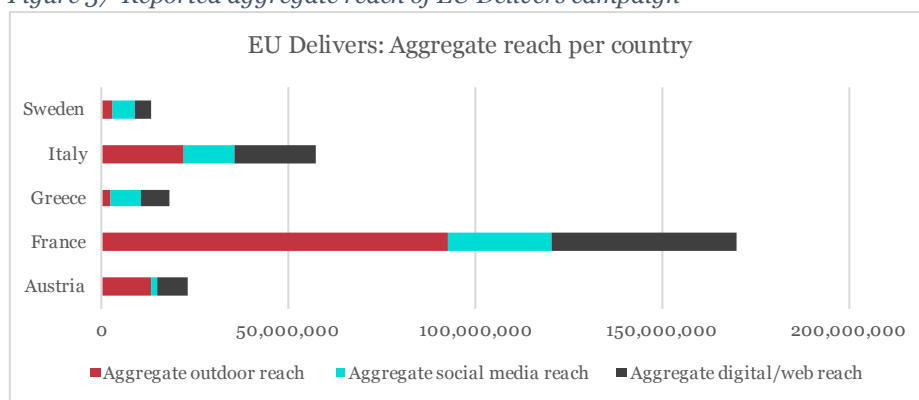
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Even taking into account the differences in population (and thus available audience) in each country, the French campaign outperformed the other countries (Figure 38). In France and Austria, the biggest contributor of this potential reach was via the **outdoor displays in public spaces**. In France, these were reported to have exposed the campaign almost 90 million times. Sweden and Greece were the only countries where the highest potential reach was reported via social media, but this was still only a fraction of the potential reach reported for social media in France.

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[27] Note: OTS data indicate "potential reach", i.e. how many people had the *opportunity to see* (OTS) the content. This is a maximal estimate and should therefore not be interpreted literally. Nevertheless, potential reach as a percentage of total target audience is still a useful measure of the relative visibility of a campaign.

In more detail, as seen in Figure 38, below, as a share of the total population, France and Austria performed best, reporting aggregate reach equivalent to around two-and-a-half times the population. Greece reported reach equivalent to around 170% of its population, Sweden 120%, and Italy only 85% (the only country with aggregate OTS below total population size).

Figure 38 Reported aggregate reach of EU Delivers campaign, as percentage of countries' total populations
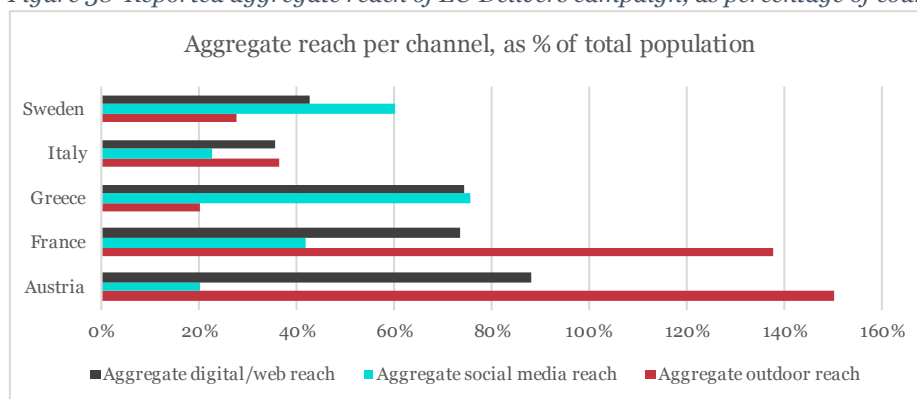
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

France has reported on 9 regional campaigns in which the campaign was active in in each country and Greece 8, while Italy and Sweden have reported on 5 and Austria only 4. Even taking this into account, France is far and away the most effective in its reported reach (over 25 million OTS) per regional campaign. However, this metric elevates Italy to second place, with 10 million OTS per region (around the average for all 32 regional campaigns reported at the time of writing). Austria is third (5 million) and Sweden and Greece approximately equal fourth (just over 2 million OTS reported per regional campaign).

Overall, the EU Delivers campaign reported aggregate OTS equivalent to 170% the available audience, in terms of the population of the five campaign countries. An attempt has been made to deduplicate this reach data, taking into account that OTS generated by one channel could be duplicating OTS (i.e. reaching the same people) as other channels.

The **deduplicated potential reach** achieved in France and Austria is roughly equivalent to the countries' total population. Potential reach in Greece and Sweden is calculated to be OTS equivalent to around 80-90% of their populations, while in Italy is just below 70%.

Generally, we would expect these figures to represent the relative visibility of the campaign in each country – i.e. most visible in France and Austria, and least visible in Italy.

Recall

From the EU Delivers post-test surveys, a marked increase can be seen in the numbers of respondents who had heard of the site featured in the campaign in Italy and Greece: Greek awareness in the post-test is 40 percentage points higher (70%) than the pre-test (30%), while Italian awareness is 10 percentage points higher (from 35% to 45%). On the other hand, in Austria the proportion of respondents who had heard of or visited the site is dramatically lower. **But these differences cannot be attributed to the campaign as the pre- and post-test surveys were carried out in different regions.**

However, survey questions relating to the audiences' response to the campaign can offer some guidance on expected outcomes. These found some differences between those who are more negative in their perception of the EU and the audience in general, of the same order as some of the differences between countries. Overall, assessments of the campaign contents were positive but, for example, on the question of whether the campaign adequately addressed the audience using a local tone and local references, the difference between Eurosceptics only and the general audience in all three countries is much greater than the differences between those countries within those groups (Figure 39).

On the other hand, Figure 40 shows that on the questions relating to how well audiences feel they would respond to various aspects of the campaign, such as local pride or increased interest in the site featured, the **differences are often much greater between countries than between those who consider the EU negatively or not**. For example, in terms of those whose interest in the site has increased, Italian "Eurosceptics" are much closer to the rest of the Italian audience in their responses than they are to Eurosceptics in Austria or Greece.

Figure 39 Audience assessment of the campaign in post-test survey
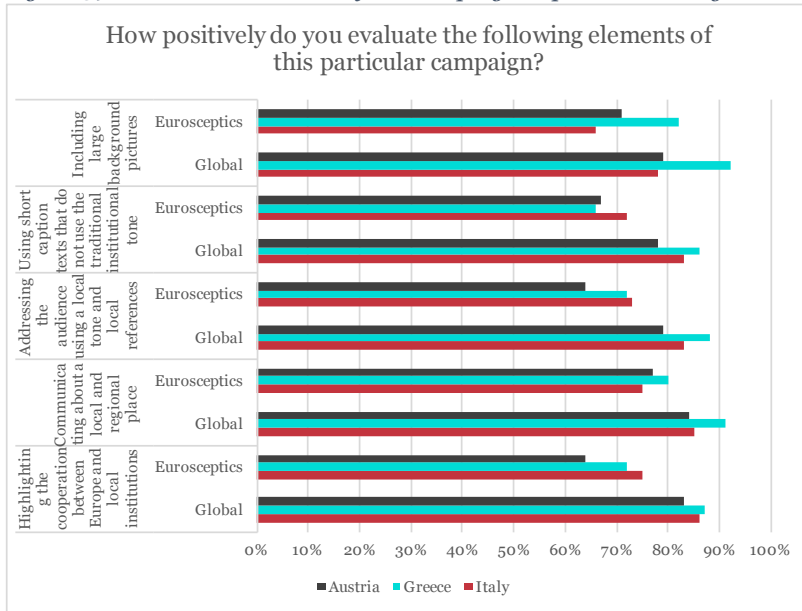
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

Figure 40 Audience response to the campaign in post-test surveys in three countries
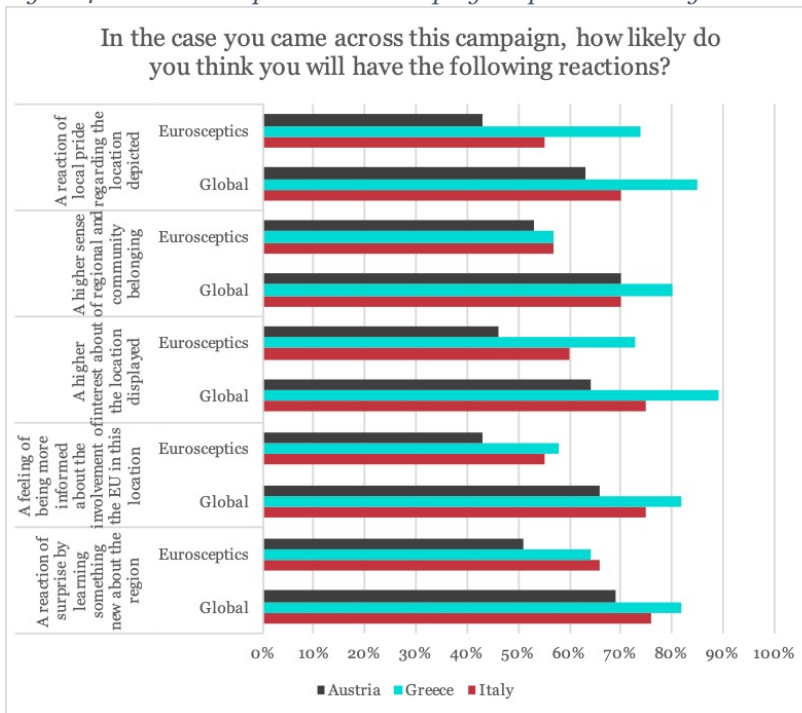
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

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Engagement

To an extent, engagement with the campaign can be used as a proxy measure for 'recall', in that audiences that have engaged more actively with the campaign may be expected to recall it much better.

Hashtags used in local campaigns provide a measure of engagement that is more attributable to the campaign than the generic #EUinmyRegion hashtag. The EU Delivers campaign reports also report the hashtags used in each local campaign and it is possible to use Brandwatch to search for mentions of these hashtags.

The following charts compare their use in the five EU Delivers campaign countries with the rest of the EU, taking account of the potential audience (i.e. total population of social media users in each country).

It indicates that most of the engagement outside the campaign countries was in Belgium, probably attributable to Brussels stakeholders. Sweden, Greece and Austria are also in the top 10 EU Member States, confirming that audiences in these countries were engaged with the campaign.

Figure 41 Mentions of the EU Delivers local hashtags by country relative to population using social media 2019
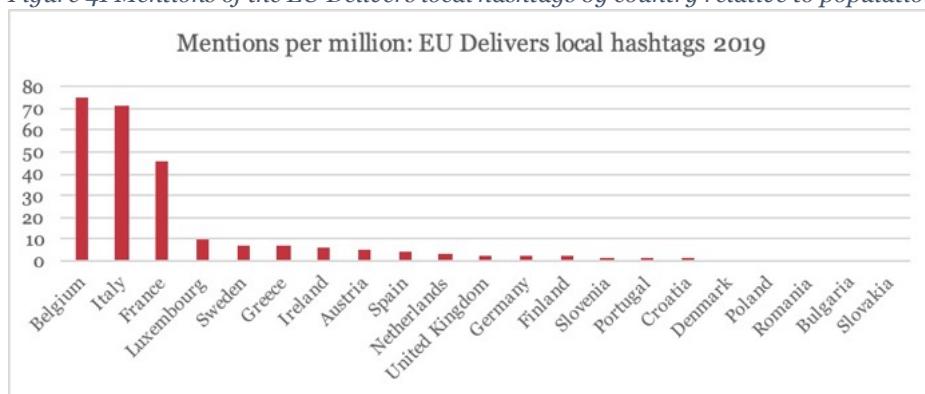
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Overall, the active engagement with these hashtags can be seen to be at its highest **during the first half of 2019.** Among the campaign countries, Italy and France perform well even in relation to their size. In fact, use of these hashtags in each of the campaign countries France and Italy is at a similar level to usage in the rest of the EU combined. Use of the hashtags is much lower in Austria, Greece and Sweden but this is to be expected since these are smaller countries with a smaller potential audience on social media.
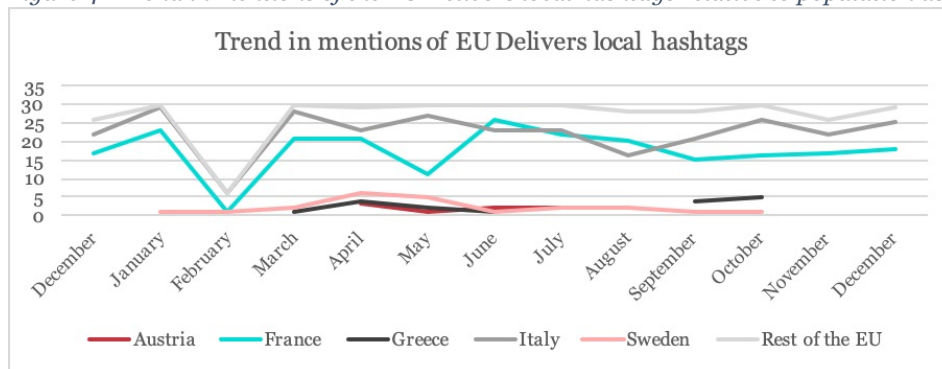
Figure 42 Trend in mentions of the EU Delivers local hashtags relative to population using social media, 2019
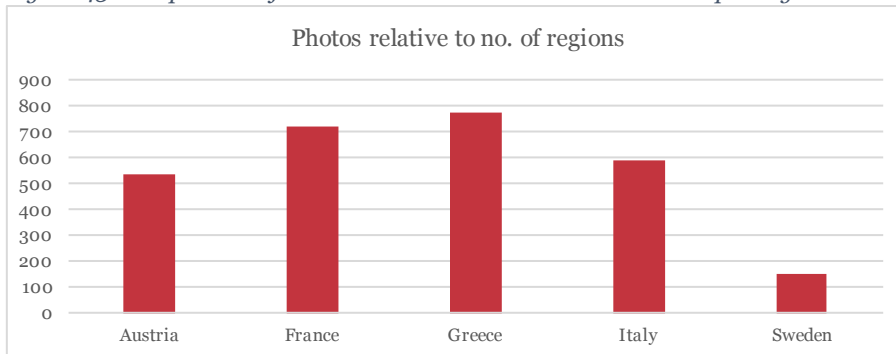

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Very little in the way of other engagement data was reported for the EU Delivers campaign, some is available for the local media partners' actions. However, one measure that was available for comparison among countries was the audience interest in the **interactive billboard**, where the numbers of photos taken by members of the public can be compared. In total this varied from just 762 photos reported for Sweden to 6489 reported in France. But of course, this somewhat depends on how many regions the campaign was active in in each country.

Estimating the audience interest in the interactive billboards per region, this provides some evidence that audiences were more engaged in France and Greece than Austria and Italy, and Sweden least of all.

Figure 43 Comparison of the interest in the interactive billboards per region

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers contractor data

6.1.2   Road Trip campaign

Similar to the EU Delivers campaign, the Road Trip campaign aimed to target people with low awareness of the EU and its action in their region, including neutrals and ambivalents, people living in medium or small-sized towns, rural areas and deprived districts of capital cities. In addition, the Road Trip defined the following criteria: Europeans aged 18-30, with a specific focus on ages 18-24; their level of awareness about the EU varies, as does their awareness of the relevance of EU opportunities.

The Road Trip pre-test surveyed "Young Millennials" (18-23 years old) and "Mature Millennials" (24-30 years old), showing almost half the target audience preferring either Facebook, YouTube or Instagram as their first choice. Comparing use of the Road Trip hashtag on Instagram and Twitter (see below), provides some evidence that the audiences engaged on Twitter and Instagram were different, and that the **campaign succeeded in targeting different audiences with these channels.**

Figure 44 Demographics of users of the #RoadTriProject hashtag, 2018

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Channel suitability and audience engagement

The Road Trip project was designed to work primarily through social media. While the pre-test survey shows positive perceptions of the campaign – around 75% said they fully understood the campaign and that it would be fun and engaging – less than 60% said they would follow it on social media and less

than 50% said they would share campaign content. Qualitative feedback suggests that the young audience would only share content with a "wow factor" – they are already overloaded and tend to share only personal experiences – and tend to prefer to share via messages than via their social media feeds.

Qualitative feedback from focus groups indicated that the younger target groups (18-24) were more inclined to engage, expressing spontaneous enthusiasm for fun and energetic adventure that can be shared and communicated, while the more mature millennials (24-30) were more sceptical about its feasibility and implementation. Overall, there was feedback that there was "a bit too much nature" and no reference to cities, art or food so "the urban vibe is missing". Drivers for engagement were identified as it being seen as "fun", "surprising" and featuring "variety", while barriers to engagement would be "predictability" and visiting "well-known places".

Suitability of messages and materials

Overall, the Road Trip survey found that under half (44%) rated highly the appeal of the campaign (8/10 or higher), and a further 30% rated it as 6/10 or 7/10. Perceptions of the campaign were much more positive in Southern (59% rating it 8/10 or better) and Eastern (51%) Europe, and more negative in Northern (just 35%) and Central (40%). In addition, more urban respondents (45%) rated it highly than rural ones (less than 40%), and the appeal of the campaign correlated with education: almost 50% of higher education levels rated the campaign highly while only 30% of lower education levels did.

Qualitative feedback indicated the title and logo were appreciated, fitting the concept for the young audience, while the campaign visuals still somewhat missed an urban aspect and the initial minibus design attracted some negative comments as not fitting the young/hip campaign design.

Potential reach

Based on the contractors' benchmarks, the Road Trip campaign estimated it could reach around 4 million unique users per road trip. According to the reports, the campaign finished by reaching more than 7 million users per road trip, with a total cumulative reach of 22 million unique users, exposed to the campaign an average of 5,96 times each.

The main results of the Road Trip campaign in terms of awareness is that 22 million unique users were potentially reached, which equates to 53% of the young Europeans aged 18 to 24 who have a Facebook or Instagram account. The average frequency of exposure was 5,96 times per person. In terms of community building: on Instagram, the campaign built a community of more than 10 000 followers and on Facebook, the existing community grew by 47% to over 42 000 fans.

France rated highly for the social media reach reported for the Road Trip campaign, fourth highest overall (with potential reach of 1.75 million), suggesting a significant overlap between the two campaigns in this country.

Figure 45 Reach of Road Trip social media by country
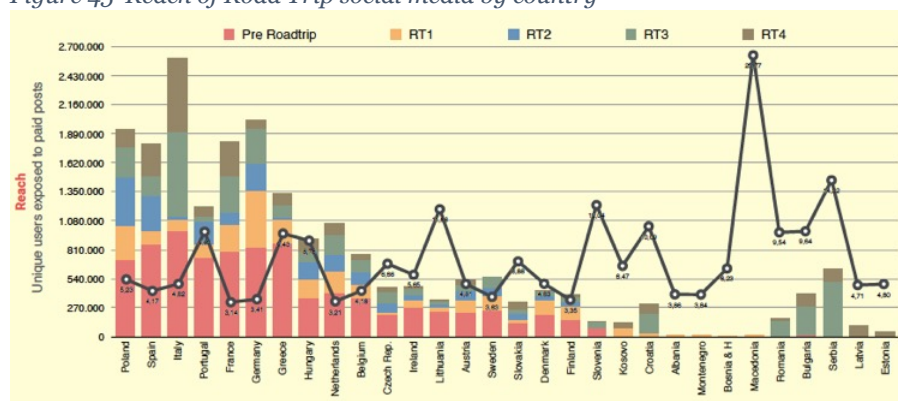
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

As expected, larger countries generated the most reach for the Road Trip campaign, with Italy, Germany, Poland, France and Spain making up the top 5. Figure 46, below, takes account of this by expressing the total aggregate reach as a percentage of the countries' populations. By this measure, **Greece, Portugal, Lithuania, Ireland and Hungary make up the Top 5.**

Overall, for EU countries the frequency ranges between around 3.5 and 12, but the average is around 6.

The contractors reported that "On every road trip we increase frequency and followers but it gets harder and harder to find/reach new people" suggesting that overlaps in terms of people reached tend to accumulate as the campaign progresses (and in some cases as different Road Trips cross the same country repeatedly).

Figure 46 Aggregate reported reach of Road Trip social media posts, as shares of countries' populations
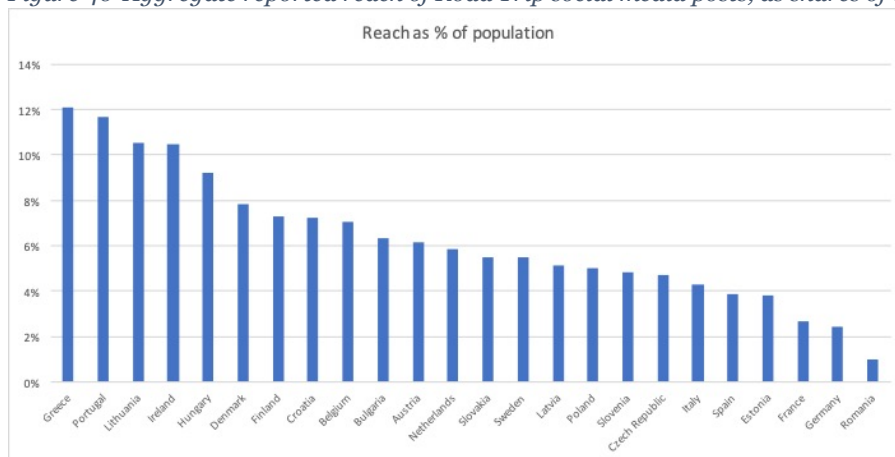
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

Engagement

Assessing engagement with the Road Trip campaign, **use of the hashtag** in relation to the total number of social media users per country again shows the highest rates of engagement in Belgium and smaller countries, where a greater share of the population is easier to reach. However, of the larger countries, France also ranks highly, while Spain is the highest ranked of the rest – Poland, Italy and Germany all rank in the bottom half in terms of share of audience actively engaged in using the hashtag.

Figure 47 Mentions of the #roadtriproject hashtag relative to population using social media, 2017-19
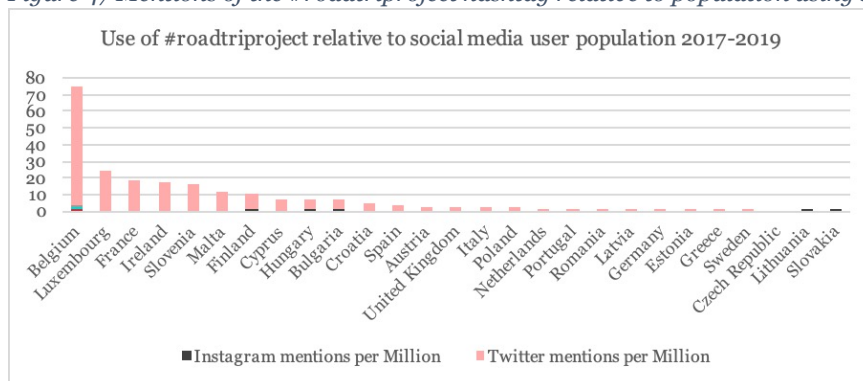
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Since the Road Trip campaign was using **Instagram** to a significant extent, in order to reach younger audiences, the chart below compares use of the hashtag on Instagram and Twitter, in terms of the percentage of engagement on each platform that took place per country. The countries with most active use of the hashtag (in terms of their size) were Ireland, Bulgaria, Belgium and Hungary, followed by Slovakia and Lithuania. On **Twitter** by contrast, while Belgium was top, the other top-ranked countries were quite different: Luxembourg, Slovenia, France, Malta and Cyprus. **This provides some evidence that the audiences engaged on Twitter and Instagram were different** (Figure 48).

In terms of engagement with the Road Trip campaign, **video views** were highest in large countries such as Italy and Poland, but Portugal and Hungary also performed well in this indicator (Figure 49).

Figure 48 Normalised comparison of the #roadtrip hashtags on Twitter and Instagram, 2017-19
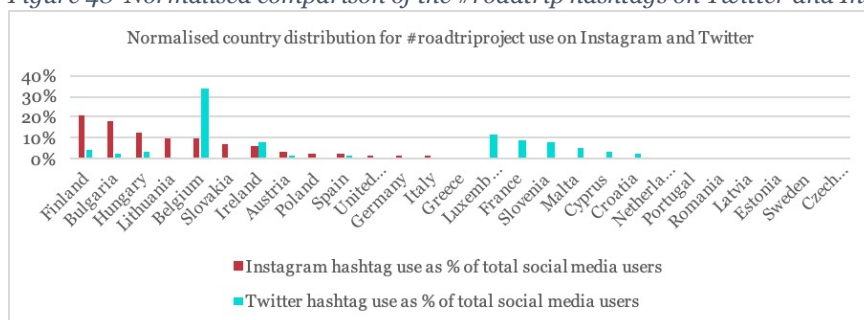
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Figure 49 Engagement of Road Trip social media by country: video views per million population
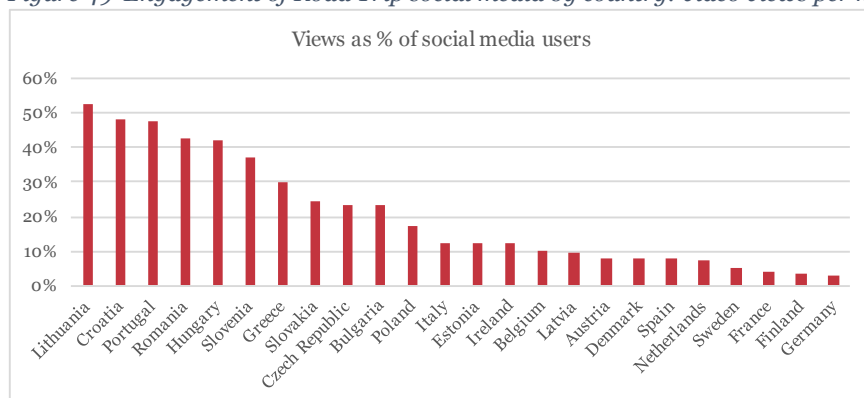
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

Overall, the campaign reported an average interaction rate of 0.12%.

In general, audiences in Eastern European countries tended to interact more than the rest of Europe, possibly because most of the road trips crossed that part of Europe. **Latvia and Estonia** had the highest interaction rates of the EU Member States. At a second level, **Greece, Spain, Croatia, the Netherlands and Finland** all had relatively high interaction rates compared to other Member State (Figure 50).

Figure 50 Engagement of Road Trip social media by country: interaction rates
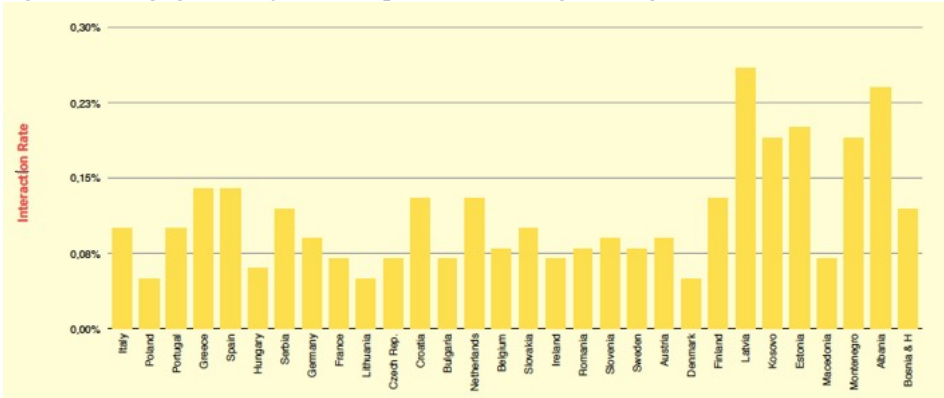
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

Clicks through to the campaign website seemed to be highest in Central Europe. Austria had the highest click-through rate followed by Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Slovenia. The second level was represented by Belgium, Spain, Denmark and the Netherlands (Figure 51).

Figure 51 Clicks of Road Trip social media by country: click-through rate
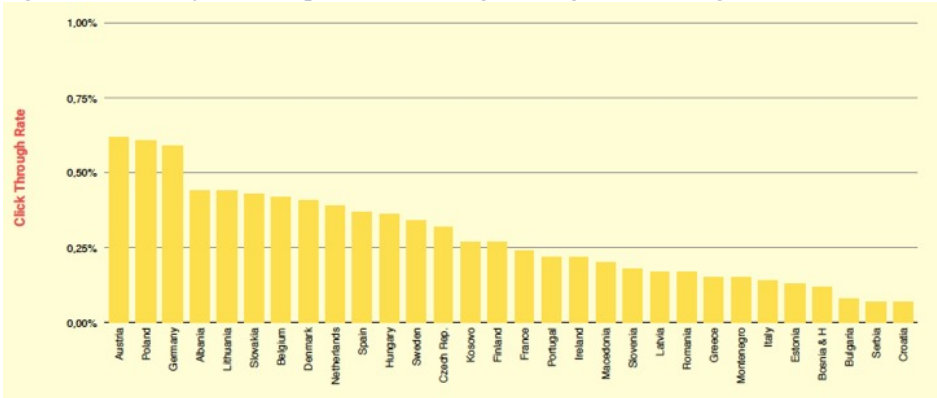
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Road Trip contractor data

6.1.3   Support for Information Measures

The vast majority of Support for Information Measures beneficiaries did not provide demographic data, though several did target younger audiences (Zavod Radio Student: "Speaking Cohesion", for example). The only data on gender split provided was from Il Sole 24 Ore, which states that its readership is 68% male. The newspaper also provided some data on education level and on age groups, with the European Institute of Romania's ""Informing and improving communication on EU Cohesion policy in Romania" project also providing age-related data, being much younger (25% being under 34 and 34% aged 35-44) than the newspaper (only 9% under 34 and 19% aged 35-44).

Such demographic data can be collected from social media monitoring – and should be available for media audiences – and **would be useful to provide in future Media Call reports** (and proposals).

Potential reach

The Support for Information Measures awarded from the 2017 call have submitted final reports for their activities in 2018-2019, and while some have reported relatively detailed data on potential reach, it is not measured consistently. In these terms, the RTP action in Portugal has a *total potential reach* (OTS) equivalent to just under half the population (39%). The equivalent measure for Il Sole 24 Ore action in Italy is around 15%, but in conjunction with other actions in the country this rises to three-quarters of

the population – largely due to campaigns involving media organisations at national level: ANSA and Il Sole 24 Ore.

Figure 52 Estimated reach as share of population from reporting of Support for Information Measures beneficiaries, 2017 call
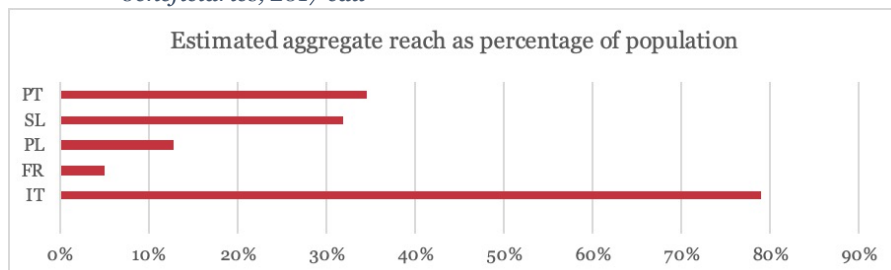
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Support for Information Measures beneficiaries' data

Looking at different channels, the highest potential reach is generally reported for **digital (i.e. web) and social media channels**. Given the older age profiles of audiences who consume television and print news, the overlap with the Road Trip project (chiefly using social media and targeting younger audiences) would be expected to be low via these channels.

Portugal also reports significant reach in terms of the viewing figures for **television channels** that showed programmes supported by the campaign, while in Italy, the potential reach is boosted by **print readership** of the Il Sole 24 Ore newspaper. The reporting from Il Sole 24 Ore includes some demographic data for the newspaper's readership: 2/3 male, 4/10 educated to degree level, 1/3 located in Northwest Italy (the rest evenly distributed between Northeast, Centre and South) and almost 2/3 aged over 45 (more than 8/10 aged over 35).

Figure 53 Estimated reach per channel from reporting of Support for Information Measures beneficiaries, 2017 call
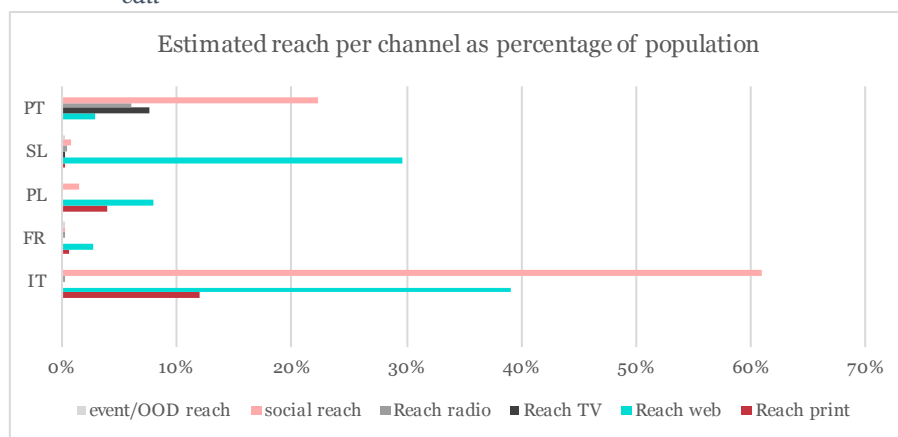
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Support for Information Measures beneficiaries' data

6.1.4   Other communication activities

EuroNews series

Six episodes of the **Smart Regions Euronews series**, supported under the Cohesion@30 campaign, were broadcast almost 360 times during Q2 2018. They were estimated to have reached a total of **8 million people**, with a repeat frequency of about 3. According to Euronews reporting, the audience figures for this series are likely to have been highest in France and Germany, followed by Spain and Italy.

Figure 54 Euronews reporting: total audience reach figures for all Euronews programmes

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Euronews data

Online consumption of these programmes follows a similar pattern, with the highest reach recorded in France, Germany and Italy (but Spain ranking much lower). There was also significant consumption of the Smart Regions videos on YouTube, totalling around 50 000 views.

Figure 55 Euronews reporting: online audience page view figures for the Smart Regions programme series

Country	Page views	Country	Page views
France	18,771	Czech Republic	988
Italy	15,730	Ireland	926
Germany	11,785	Poland	919
United Kingdom	6,785	Sweden	901
Belgium	6,257	Luxembourg	877
Portugal	6,241	Finland	781
Greece	5,641	Bulgaria	508
Netherlands	5,494	Denmark	436
Spain	4,875	Estonia	383
Hungary	3,896	Latvia	366
Romania	2,573	Malta	341
Slovenia	2,197	Lithuania	289
Austria	1,532	Croatia	252
Cyprus	1,408	Slovakia	170

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Euronews data

EU in my Region

For the EU in my Region campaign, some limited outputs and results data are included in the final report: more than 2,500 events were held in 27 countries, with 450,000 participants overall. Some country-level figures again indicate a high level of activity in France, even relative to its population:

- France: 1,348 events
- Poland: 558 events, 132,000 participants
- Croatia: 200 events, 15,000 participants
- Sweden: 113 events with 5,000 participants

- Portugal, 35 events with 1,500 participants

The report also includes some social media data that appears to meet the campaign targets but is difficult to analyse further: 8 200 000 Facebook impressions, with a **reach of 3 200 000**, leading to 44 000 link clicks and 83 000 interactions with posts.

6.1.5 *Reach achieved by campaigns compared to other campaigns*

For the **EU Delivers campaign**, reported aggregate potential reach is almost 270 million across the 32 regions in five countries (AT, EL, FR, IT and SE), averaging 9 million per region, but with around 60% of this in France alone.

According to the final report, the potential reach of the **Road Trip** campaign was 23 million, which equates to over half the young Europeans aged 18 to 24 who have a Facebook or Instagram account. The average frequency of exposure was around 6 times per person. In terms of engagement, the Road Trip campaign achieved close to 30 million video views, more than 120 000 interactions and 400 000 unique web visitors.

Only three projects from the **Support for Information Measures** campaign have reported detailed data on potential reach: around 6 million in Portugal, almost 3 million in Italy, and over 1 million in Slovakia.

Suitable benchmarks, especially for the Road Trip, include the corporate campaign **#EUandME**, a communication campaign reaching out to young Europeans (age 17-34) to inform them on how the EU contributes to their daily lives. Total reach data is not yet available, but some comparisons should be possible via the social media analysis.

According to the report, "*Synthesis Study of the Corporate Communication Campaigns*", by the end of July 2019, EUandME had an estimated reach of 89.6 million, representing 78% of the total audience. **EU Delivers** reached a lower share of the audience in Italy (68%) and exceeded this in all other countries. The **Support for Information Measures in Italy** reached a similar share to EUandME (almost 80%) but much lower shares in other countries.

Another benchmark is the **InvestEU** campaign. This was a larger-scale campaign covering all EU Member States for over a year and prioritising 16 countries in particular. Across those 16 Member States the campaign's total potential reach was calculated to be around 240 million (deduplicated from an aggregate potential reach of 400 million) via paid, owned and earned channels. In most cases, this equated to around 50% of the population of the targeted countries – averaging 15 million per country. The paid channels proved the most effective for generating reach (around 80% of the total reach). The countries where earned media channels were particularly effective included Spain, Italy and Poland, which could be relevant to the results of the Support for Information Measures in those countries.

Country and channel breakdowns of the Invest EU potential reach data reveal:

InvestEU	DG REGIO campaigns
Aggregate potential reach in France (via public displays and social media) was around 50 million.	Clearly, the levels reported for **EU Delivers** are much higher, but in both cases, we can only depend on the estimates provided by the contractors for the number of people who had an opportunity to see the posters or billboards.
Total potential reach via paid social media (Facebook and Instagram) was 220 million, but with much a lower frequency of exposure.	**Road Trip** reported a much lower figure of 20 million but with a frequency rate of six.
Aggregate potential reach via earned media in Italy and Portugal was around 16 million in each country.	The **Media Call** beneficiaries in Italy reported a much greater overall reach of nearly 50 million (probably due to mass media organisations such as Il Sole 24 Ore and ANSA), while the beneficiaries in Portugal reported less, around 3.5 million.

InvestEU	DG REGIO campaigns
Potential reach via television was 60 million.	The **EuroNews** Smart Regions Euronews series were estimated to have reached a total of 8 million people.

Meanwhile, for **EUProtect**s, Wave 1 achieved an estimated 41 million (around 41% of the target audience) via the main campaign channels digital, earned and owned. Support for Information Measures' beneficiaries in Portugal and Slovenia reported similar levels (over 30%).

6.1.6   A coherent and integrated portfolio of communication activities

In this section we aggregate evidence reported above, providing a view on the campaigns' 'internal' coherence of the campaigns.

Differentiation of the campaigns' and channels' target audiences

Unfortunately, pre-test data for the Road Trip project and EU Delivers campaigns used different methodologies and questions, making direct comparisons impossible. And no pre-test polls were carried out for other actions, campaigns or Support for Information Measures. Despite this, the polls do show some evidence for differences between the target audiences of EU Delivers and the Road Trip campaign. In both cases, three-quarters or more respondents show a demand for more information on EU activities, but the younger road trip audience appears to be more positive in its perception of the EU.

If we look at the demographics for active engagement with the two campaigns (i.e. use of hashtags), there is a different gender split, with the EU Delivers audience being much more heavily male than the Road Trip. This would seem to indicate that somewhat different audiences were successfully engaged by the two campaigns.

The survey showed almost half the target Road Trip audience preferring either Facebook, YouTube or Instagram as their first-choice social media. This suggests that the actual channels used for the Road Trip were well chosen and aligned. However, top sources in most countries are print, web and television. This suggests that some of the Support for Information Measures campaign may have a channel mix more suited to reaching very large audiences, especially of older audiences

Analysis of the topics highlighted by social media posts using campaign hashtags indicates that a somewhat different audience was successfully engaged by the EU Delivers campaign – at least as reflected in their use of the local hashtags – than is normally engaged with DG REGIO social media content and themes.

DG REGIO's Facebook account appears to attract more interactions per post (when taking into account the size of the follower base, i.e. per 1000 followers) than the corporate accounts, and has shown a higher follower growth rate, indicating that the posts on this account are relatively well aligned with its audience.

Synergies, overlaps and complementarities of the campaigns at country level

DG REGIO's various communication actions take place in a range of EU Member States, with an emphasis on some more than others.

Figure 56 gives an overview. It shows the intensity of communication actions implemented in the countries (green shading - see also Section 4.3.1, above) and the level of reach they obtained in the different countries (from highest to lowest, dark to light red, respectively), in proportion to their population.

Figure 56 Reach of communication actions and owned media channels per country, per country's population, 2017-2019

	Communication actions	EU Delivers	Road Trip	Information Measures	FB followers	#EUinmyRegion	InfoRegio
Austria							
Belgium							
Bulgaria							
Croatia							
Cyprus							
Czechia							
Denmark							
Estonia							
Finland							
France							
Germany							
Greece							
Hungary							
Ireland							
Italy							
Latvia							
Lithuania							
Luxembourg							
Malta							
Netherlands							
Poland							
Portugal							
Romania							
Slovakia							
Slovenia							
Spain							
Sweden							

Notes: Number of communication actions (green) and level of reach obtained (red) in terms of share of population – from highest (darkest shading) to lowest (lightest shading),

Figure 56, above, shows the high reach levels attained in France, Italy, Austria, Greece, Portugal and Sweden throughout the campaigns. In the case of Portugal, this coincides with the high reach figures in all of DG REGIO's owned media channels, for Greece the high usage of the Facebook page, and in the case of Italy, the high interaction with the #EUinmyRegion hashtag. However, in most cases, the regular communication channels seem to complement the campaigns, with e.g. Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Maltha, and Slovenia as major user countries in specific channels.

The Member States with the **highest aggregate social media reach across campaigns** – relative to the total audience size (country population) – are where the largest overlaps would be expected.

Our analysis investigating the cross-over between different EU Delivers in the Regions geographical campaign hashtags showed that the potential reach achieved by EU Delivers in **France** and Austria is roughly equivalent to the countries' total population. France also rated highly for the social media reach reported for the Road Trip campaign, fourth highest overall (with potential reach of 1.75 million), suggesting a potential overlap between the two campaigns in this country (at least when considering the younger generations).

In **Italy** the potential reach achieved by EU Delivers is just below 70%. In addition, while estimated aggregate reach for the Support for Information Measures beneficiaries varies widely (also in the way it is measured), in Italy it rises to three-quarters of the population, which suggests potential overlap with EU Delivers. But given this potential reach is boosted by print newspaper readership, and the older age

profiles of audiences who consume print news, the overlap with the Road Trip project (chiefly using social media and targeting younger audiences) would be expected to be lower via these channels.

In addition, the contribution via social media of the EU Delivers campaign (30%) and Support for Information Measures actions (60%) would be expected to produce a significant amount of overlap in terms of reaching the same audience members multiple times with different messages.

In the case of **Portugal,** social media reach via the Road Trip (1 million, equivalent to over 10% of the population) and the Support for Information Measures action(39%) jointly account for a proportion larger than the country's population – so overlap would also be expected to be higher in this country.

6.2   Effectiveness of the 'regular' communication channels

In this section we give a view on the usage of DG REGIO's regular communication channels and the extent to which they support and enforce the campaign messages.

6.2.1   DG REGIO Social media accounts – an overview

Looking at the follower base for a selection of EU institutional accounts, it is clear that DG REGIO is roughly comparable to DGs AGRI and EMPL in the number of followers of its accounts. It is different from the other two DGs mainly in that it has more Twitter followers than Facebook followers (and more Twitter followers than either of the other two DGs, while having fewer Facebook followers than they do).

Figure 57 Comparison of the social media follower base of a selection of EU institutions
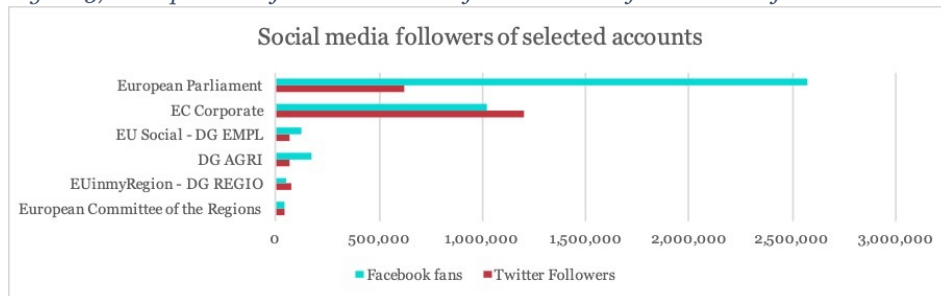
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Socialbakers data

While its follower base is much smaller than the EC or European Parliament corporate accounts, DG REGIO's followers are roughly comparable in number to those of the Commissioner for Cohesion Policy. The growth of the follower base over the past three years is also somewhat comparable, in that the number of new fans is much smaller than that of the EC or EP, but relative to the size of the follower base, the growth rate is much higher. This could be an indication that the audience for DG REGIO's social media accounts finds the content more of interest – this should be expected, given the greater thematic focus of a policy-related account compared to the corporate accounts.

Table 11 Comparison of Facebook fan growth for selected EU institutional accounts

Accounts	Year	New fans	Relative change
Corina Cretu	2017	2,241	10%
	2018	18,312	42%
	2019	18,403	73%
Europe in my region	**2017**	**19,402**	**208%**
	2018	**8,594**	**20%**

Accounts	Year	New fans	Relative change
	2019	**14,396**	**50%**
European Commission	2017	145,125	23%
	2018	131,350	15%
	2019	104,144	13%
European Parliament	2017	153,398	7%
	2018	63,769	3%
	2019	197,143	9%

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Socialbakers data

6.2.2 Facebook page 'Europe in my Region'

Facebook followers grew relatively steadily from 10 000 to 50 000 during the course of the last 3 years (Figure 58).

Figure 58 DG REGIO "Europe in my Region" Facebook page followers 2017-2019
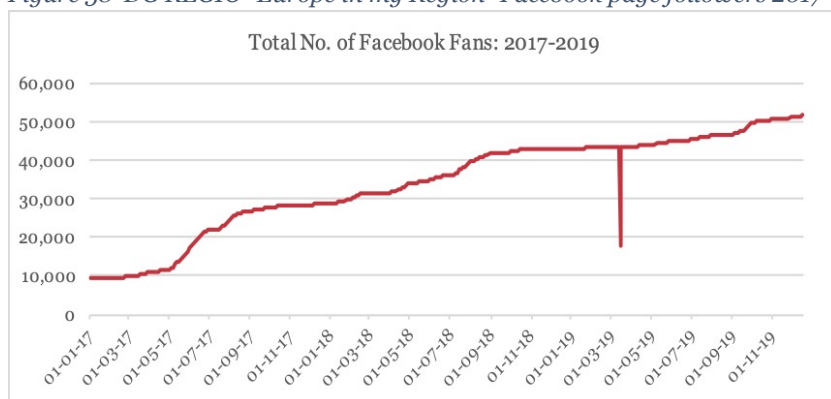
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Socialbakers data

There were some periods of higher follower growth, however, with peaks in follower growth rate, i.e. during May/June 2017, July/August 2018 (smaller peaks in January/February and April), and September 2019 (Figure 59).

Figure 59 Growth rate for DG REGIO "Europe in my Region" Facebook page 2017-2019
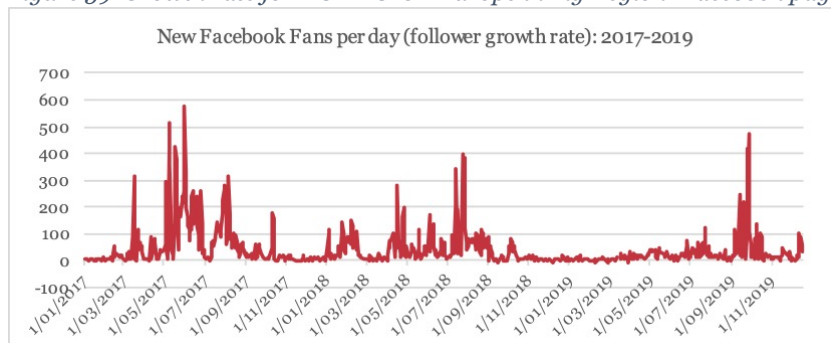
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Socialbakers data

The **top 10 countries of origin** for the DG REGIO Facebook followers who have stated this information on their profiles altogether account for around half the follower base of the DG REGIO "Europe in my Region" Facebook account.

Of course, they mostly represent the largest Member States of the EU – although Germany and Poland are both missing from the top countries in terms of Facebook followers (Poland is served by a dedicated 'EU REGIO Poland' Facebook account with 10 800 followers).

They are from Italy (4836 followers), followed by Greece (4314), Portugal (3568) and Romania (3142), then Albania and Belgium (between 3000 and 2000), and finally Bulgaria, Spain, Kosovo and France (between 2000 and 1600 followers). Some of them might have been acquired from specific paid campaigns that targeted these specific countries (e.g. Albania and Kosovo were both targeted as part of the Road Trip campaign).

Taking population into account (and more specifically, the population using social media in the country), then this follower base represents a much larger share of the available audience in Greece, Portugal and Bulgaria than it does in France, Italy or Spain. Germany and Poland are both missing from the top 10 countries of Facebook followers.

With the exception of Poland (which is missing from the Top 10 but is served by a dedicated Facebook account with 10 800 followers) and Belgium (which is in the top 10, probably due to the many stakeholders with a presence in Brussels), the Top 10 countries mainly represent important beneficiaries of Cohesion Funds.

Figure 60 Country breakdown of the DG REGIO Facebook follower base, taking online population into account
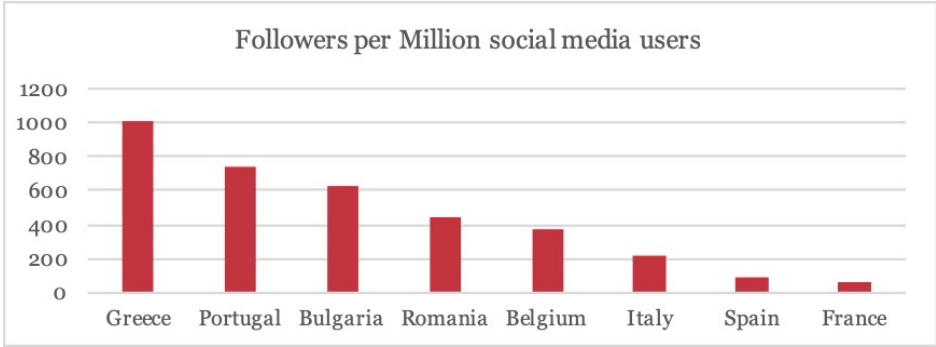
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Facebook data

For the Support for Information Measures, some beneficiaries have reported follower growth for their social media accounts – whether for their accounts as organisations or for accounts set up specifically for their funded activities – but the data is too incomplete to be useful for analysis. In addition, for EU Delivers, no follower data has been reported.

Adequacy of the audience targeting

The adequacy of the social media accounts' targeting of their audiences can to some extent be judged from their **engagement metrics**: i.e. how successfully have they attracted new followers, and how much interaction with their content do they receive from those followers.

An indicator of how interesting the audience finds the content is the **interaction rate** for the different accounts. Here again, DG REGIO's Facebook account appears to attract more interactions per post (when taking into account the size of the follower base, i.e. per 1000 followers) than the corporate accounts.

Table 12 Comparison of Facebook fan growth for selected EU institutional accounts

	Row Labels	Interactions per 1000 Fans	Interactions per Post	Interactions per 1000 Fans per Post
Corina Cretu	2017	2,609	84	3.5
	2018	6,825	519	9.2
	2019	7,121	349	10.5
Europe in my region	2017	7,791	322	19.6
	2018	731	120	2.6
	2019	1,534	202	5.8
European Commission	2017	1,740	1,700	2.4
	2018	965	1,147	1.2
	2019	863	966	1.2
European Parliament	2017	675	2,220	1.0
	2018	978	3,291	1.3
	2019	666	2,415	1.0

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Socialbakers data

6.2.3 Twitter

Looking at engaged audiences per country, use of the **#EUinmyRegion hashtag** varies greatly among Member States.

Taking the population using social media into account, some of the smaller countries show a high level of use of the hashtag (Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland and Portugal), but Italy, Spain and France also rank highly. The lower ranks include Germany but also Poland and Romania (in contrast to their high rankings for Facebook followers) (Figure 61).

Figure 61 Mentions of the #EUinmyRegion hashtag relative to population using social media, 2017-19
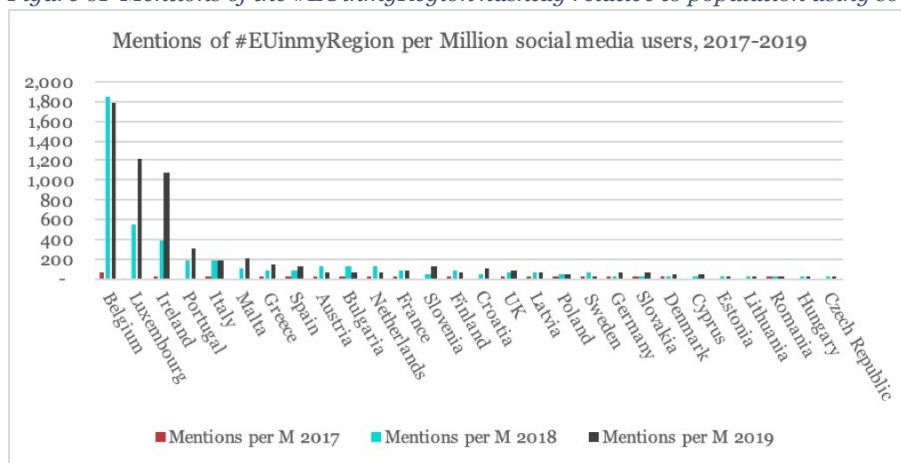
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

In Figure 62 we set the numbers of followers of the geographical accounts, used to communicate to specific countries in their national languages, within their geographical scope (i.e. the number of social media users in the country targeted, or in the EU for the thematic accounts). The graph indicates that **especially for Poland, Baltics, and Finland, their relative reach within their target audience is comparable with the DG REGIO policy-related account**.

Those that perform worst include Denmark, UK & Ireland, Portugal & Spain and the thematic accounts covering Interreg and Administrative Capacity.

Figure 62 Comparison of the DG REGIO Twitter accounts' follower bases
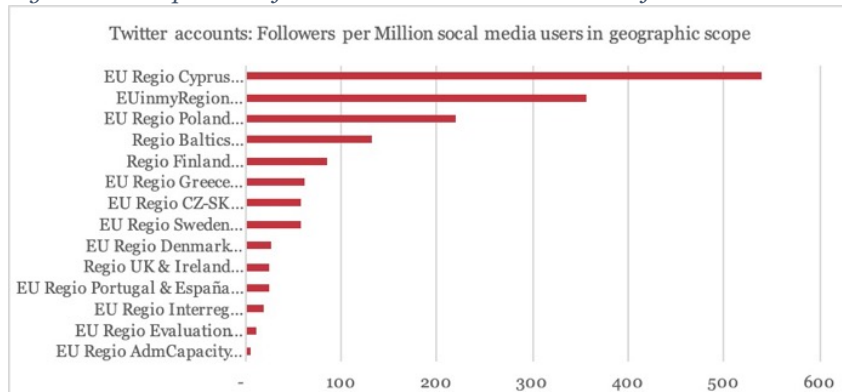
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Twitter data

Topics mentioned

We compared data on the frequency that audiences mentioned **specific topics** (i.e. keywords and hashtags) in their posts using #EUinmyRegion hashtag with the most frequent topics used in conjunction with the local hashtags promoted by each of the EU Delivers regional campaigns. Below is an overview of the most-frequent words and hashtags used with #EUinmyRegion over the last three years.

Both data sets show #EUinmyRegion as the most mentioned word or hashtag, but it is far less dominant among the local hash tagged posts, closely followed by the French language equivalent (which doesn't appear in the top 20 topics in conjunction with the main hashtag). "Culture" also has a high rank among the local hashtag posts, as do several references in French and Italian, whereas English keywords predominate in topics mentioned in conjunction with the general #EUinmyRegion hashtag.

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Figure 63 Top topics used by social media accounts in conjunction with the #RoadTriProject hashtag, 2018

Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Time periods of third-party social media accounts mentioning #EUinmyRegion

Analysis of mentions of the EUinmyRegion hashtag by third-party social media accounts shows peaks in use of the hashtag during **approximately the same periods**: May/June 2017, April and July/August 2018, and September 2019.This indicates that the audiences for DG REGIO's communication, at least on social media, were particularly engaged during these periods: using the hashtag and choosing to follow the Facebook account.

For **Twitter**, analysis indicates that most followers were gained through the first 4 months of 2018 with a pick also in June 2018 while the number of new followers was somewhat lower around the end of 2018 and the first months of 2019. On **Instagram**, the biggest growth in new followers occurred in July/August 2018.

Figure 64 Use of the #EUinmyRegion hashtag 2017-2019
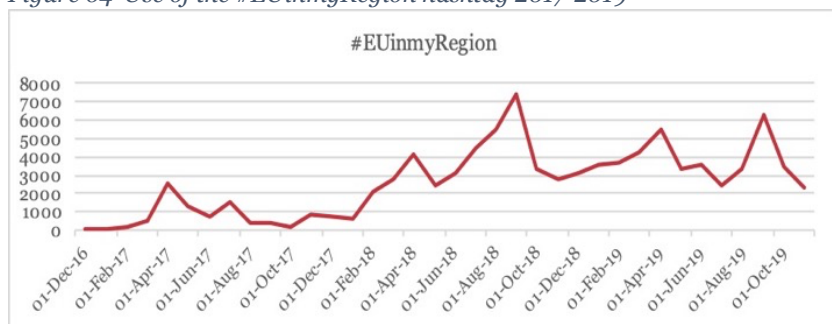
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

A comparison of this trend with the **timeline of the EU Delivers campaign** suggests that the growth in use of the EUinmyRegion hashtag during Spring and Autumn 2019 may have been related to the visibility of the campaign (Figure 65).

Figure 65 Timeline for the different regional campaigns of "EU Delivers in my Region"
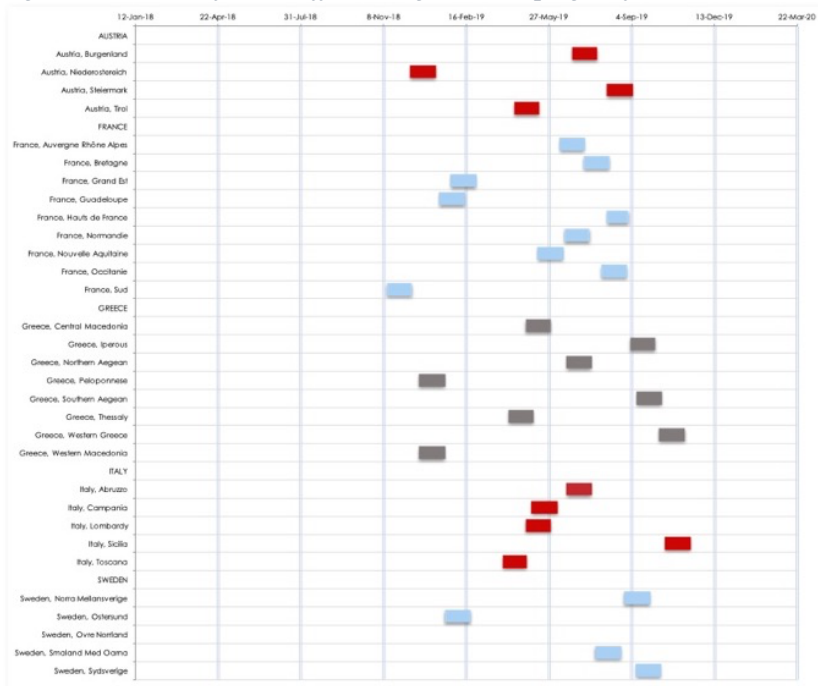
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of EU Delivers final reports data

Equally, a comparison of this trend with the timeline of the various **Support for Information Measures** suggests that the growth in use of the EUinmyRegion hashtag during Spring and Autumn 2018 may also have been related to the visibility of the campaign (Figure 66).

Finally, also use of the #roadtriproject hashtag can be seen to be at its highest during specific periods: mainly the first half of 2018. Comparison with the outreach activities of the **#roadtriproject**, such as the promotion videos on Facebook, seem to correlate well with both the use of the hashtag on Twitter and Instagram, and the growth in followers of the DG REGIO Instagram account (Figure 67).

Figure 66 Timeline for the different communication actions carried out under the Support for Information Measures awarded in 2017
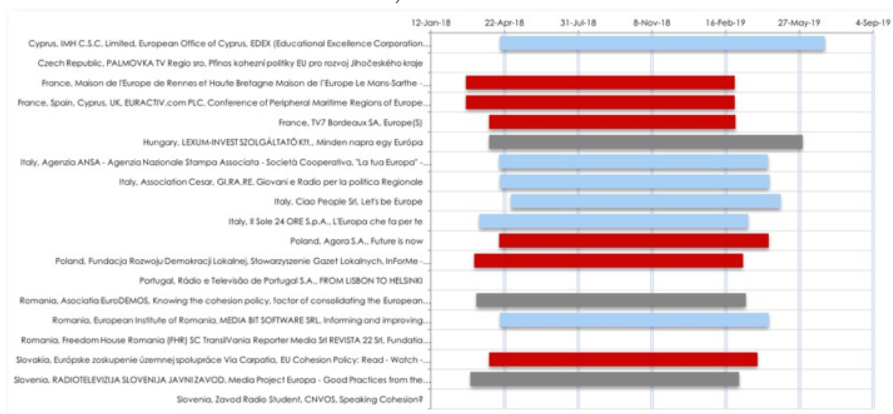
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Support for Information Measures 2017 final report data

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Figure 67 Road Trip timeline for video promotion 2018

Source: Road Trip final report data

Overlaps in audiences mentioning campaign hashtags

Using Brandwatch, we have been able to conduct searches for social media mentions of the various campaign hashtags, in order to measure and analyse the extent to which social media users engaged actively with the campaigns, by making social media posts using the campaign hashtags. The results per campaign are presented above, but the extent to which campaigns overlapped can be analysed as follows.

Regarding the overlap in usage of the #EUinmyRegion and #roadtriproject hashtags, we found that 4% of social media posts using #EUinmyRegion also used #roadtriproject. The vast majority of mentions using both hashtags are predominantly in Belgium, indicating this was largely engagement by stakeholders in the "Brussels Bubble" (Figure 68).

Figure 68 Overlap in mentions of #RoadTriProject and EUinmyRegion hashtags, 2018-2019
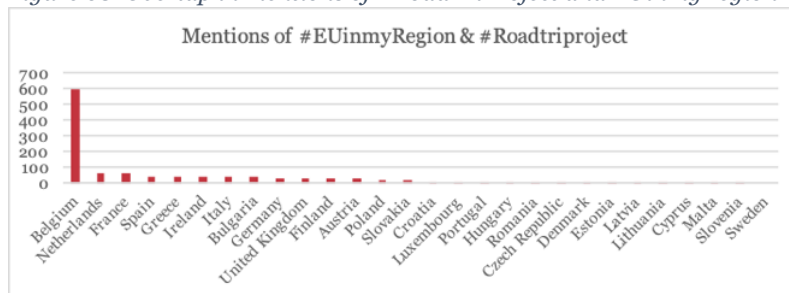
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

The overall average overlap of 4% varies among countries: in Slovakia, 12% of social media posts mentioning #EUinmyRegion (though these were again few in total) also mentioned #roadtriproject. This overlap was around 8% in Estonia, 6% in Bulgaria and Finland, and 4% in Croatia, Greece, Lithuania all Cyprus. All other Member States were below the average (Figure 69).

Figure 69 Share of EUinmyRegion hashtags that overlap with #Roadtriproject, 2018-2019
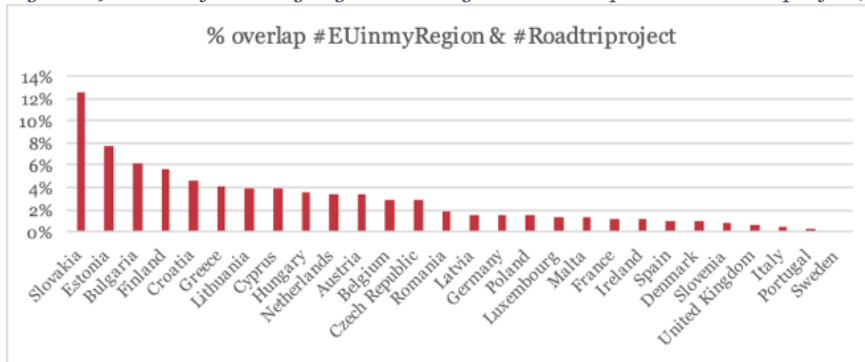
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

6.2.4   InfoRegio website

When measuring visitors to the DG REGIO website (taking population into account), smaller countries tend to rank higher as it is easier to reach larger proportion of the available audience in smaller countries. Of the larger countries, Italy, France and Spain rank around the middle for EU Member States. Romania, Germany and Poland are among the low ranks. This distribution could represent some inefficiencies/redundancies in distribution of communication effort, if Romania and Poland are not being actively engaged.

The pattern of **engagement via weblink clicks vs other types of interaction** (retweets, likes, etc.) is quite different, with only Spain and the Netherlands ranking highly in both types. For example, Latvia and Estonia rank highly for interaction rate but low for click-through rate (Figure 70).

Figure 70 Unique Visitors to the DG REGIO website, per country's population, 2017-2019
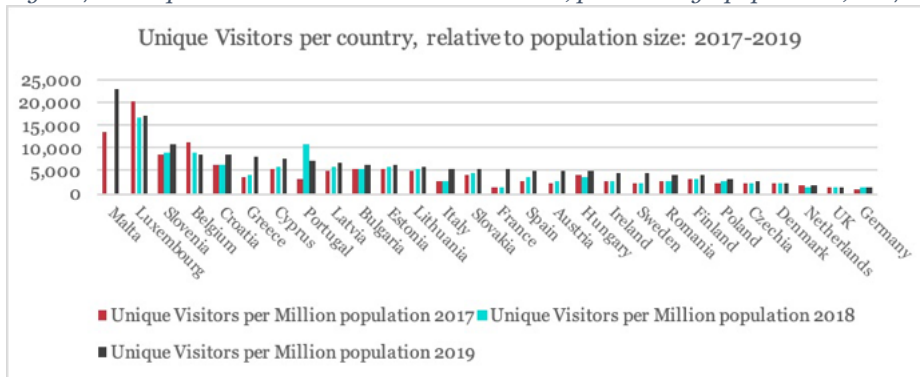
7 Efficiency

In this chapter we concentrate on the issues of organisational and cost efficiency, i.e.:

- The extent to which the costs associated with the campaigns are globally cost-efficient and detection of obstacles to cost-efficiency
- The extent to which the processes in place ensure implementation in an effective and efficient manner

The issue of cost-effectiveness is assessed in Section 7.1 considering delivery against the KPIs versus costs. Section 7.2 focuses on the "DG REGIO" processes that allow for an effective and efficient implementation of the communication activities. This includes both the internal processes and the processes for the involvement of multipliers.

7.1 Budgeting and cost-effectiveness

We first cover the cost-effectiveness of the campaigns and then consider the extent to which the communication activities were adequately budgeted.

7.1.1 Cost-effectiveness of the campaigns

To address this question, we have analysed data provided by the contractors for three DG REGIO communication actions: EU Delivers, Support for Information Measures and Road Trip. The measurable achievements (chiefly estimates of reported potential reach) have been compared against the budget data available, and in turn compared with the cost-efficiency estimates for the corporate campaigns in order to arrive at a calculation for the reported average cost per thousand opportunities to see (CPM).

While the campaigns analysed appear to be relatively expensive compared to EC corporate campaigns, this may be somewhat related to more specific target audiences (located in specific regions and/or in specific age groups) and in media mix (some Support for Information Measures beneficiaries depend on print/broadcast media that is more expensive even if it is more effective in reaching older age groups). This assessment could be made with more certainty if more consistent output and result data was available.

Overall Road Trip CPM is rather expensive compared to the other campaigns, while the campaign's social media CPM performs very well. This suggests that there was spending under the Road Trip campaign, not related to social media buying, that could be further optimised.

Unit costs per reach though different channels (CPM) and in different countries

Table 13, below, indicates the budget allocated to each communication activity carried out by DG REGIO in 2018, the budget breakdown when available, and the number of staff involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the measure.

Table 13 Budget distribution along the external communication activities of DG REGIO in 2018

Communication activities	Budget 2018	Budget breakdown	Number of staff involved in planning, implementation and monitoring
EU that delivers in the Regions	€5m	Budget distributed first by regions, then by channels	1 FTE EC Staff + 1 FTE Intramuros
Support for Information Measures	€5m	Grant range 70k – 300k	N/A
Road Trip project	€1.9m	Paid social media – circa 250k	2 FTEs EC staff + 1,5 FTEs Intramuros
Cohesion dialogues	€1m	N/A	N/A

Communication activities	Budget 2018	Budget breakdown	Number of staff involved in planning, implementation and monitoring
EU in my Region	€150k	Campaign: 109k Photo competition: 14k	0.5 FtE
Cohesion@30 - Euronews Real Economy	€164k	6 video clips: €135k Digital promotion: €29k	N/A
European Week of Regions and Cities	N/A	N/A	N/A
RegioStar Awards	N/A	N/A	N/A
Macro Regional Strategy	N/A	N/A	N/A
Publications (Panorama)	N/A	N/A	N/A
RegioFlash	N/A	N/A	N/A
Social Media activities	N/A	N/A	N/A

An estimate of **country breakdown** for EU Delivers and the Support for Information Measures is possible by attributing the data on the information Measures per country (for countries where we can estimate reach figures), the EU Delivers data per region (assuming a roughly equivalent spend in each region) and compared with the overall average spend per country for the Road Trip.

As the chart below shows, the <u>estimated budget spend per country</u> for EU Delivers is the most significant in all relevant countries apart from Italy, where there were several Support for Information Measures beneficiaries receiving significant budgets. Based on these assumptions of roughly equal spend, the Road Trip budget was the smallest for all relevant countries.

Figure 71 Budget spend estimates per country for EU Delivers, Support for Information Measures (so-called 'Media Calls') and Road Trip 2017-2019
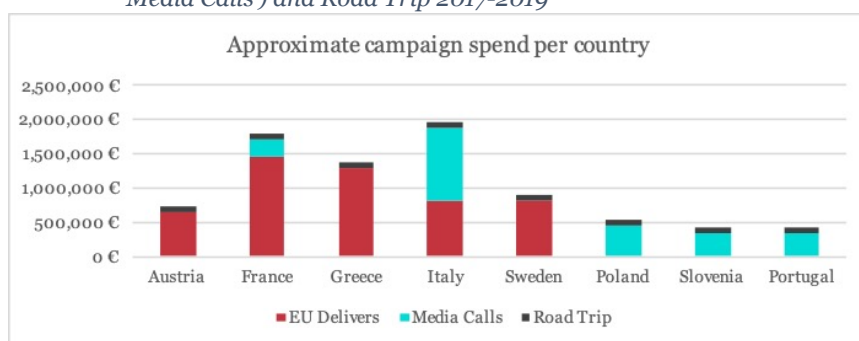
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of campaign contractors' reported data

In terms of the cost-effectiveness of the campaigns, we only have reach figures for EU Delivers, Road Trip and some of the countries included in the Support for Information Measures[28].

Comparing the aggregate potential reach against the estimated budget spend for the relevant activities, EU Delivers appears to be the most cost effective in terms of budget spent per 1000 OTS generated (€28

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[28] To calculate cost per reach, we have calculated the budget spend only for those Media Call beneficiaries for whom approximate and significant reach data was reported.

CPM), while potential OTS reported by the Road Trip cost the most (€87 – see Table 14). The Support for Information Measures for which reach data is available have a CPM of €28. For the sake of completeness, we calculated also the CPM for the EU in my Region campaign based on the reported aggregated reach on Facebook. Further detailed analysis for this campaign is not possible because of lack of detailed data.

Table 14 Budget distribution along the external communication activities of DG REGIO in 2018

Communication activities	Budget 2018	Estimated aggregate reach (in terms of reported OTS)	CPM (cost per 1000 OTS achieved)
EU that delivers in the Regions	€5 000 000	281 284 000	€18
Support for Information Measures (for which reach data is available)	€2.500 000*	91 200 000	€28
Road Trip project	€1 900 000	21 900 000	€87
EU in my Region campaign	€109 000	3 2000 000**	€29

Notes: * Based on the budgets of only the Support for Information Measures for which an aggregate reach figure per country can be estimated; ** Facebook reach. Source: Technopolis Group analysis of campaign contractors' and budget data

While we do not have breakdowns of budget spend per country (except in the case of Media Call beneficiaries largely focused on a specific country), based on the assumptions given above, of roughly equal spend per region for EU delivers and per country for the Road Trip, an estimate of CPM per country per campaign can be calculated. As the chart below shows, this estimated overall CPM varies greatly from country to country[29].

Figure 72   Reported overall CPM per country for EU Delivers, Support for Information Measures (so-called 'Media Calls') and for other communication actions
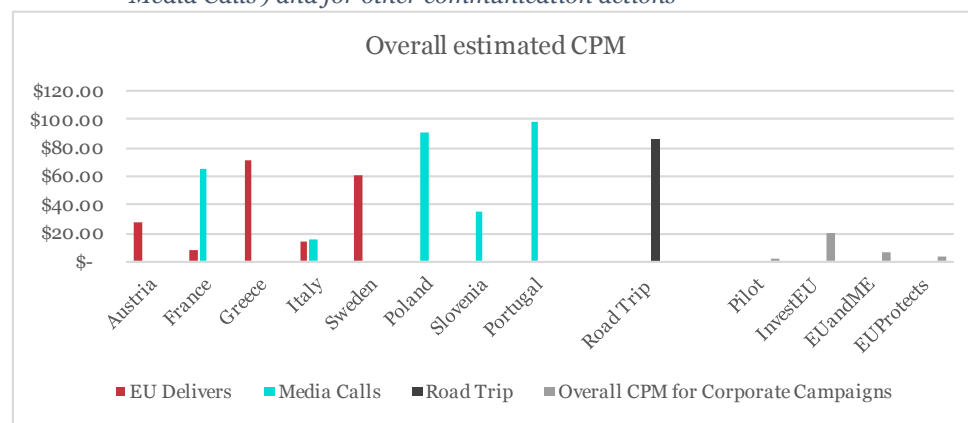
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of contractors' and budget data

In comparison to the overall CPMs for the corporate campaigns, as presented in the report, "*Synthesis Study of the Corporate Communication Campaigns*", the overall CPMs are rather high.

However, this is somewhat dependent on the method used to calculate this indicator (especially on the available reach data), and the performance depends both on the mix of channels used, as some channels

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[29] If a roughly equal budget per country is compared with the reported reach of the Road Trip per country, the variation is even greater: from around €30 in Italy up to over €700 in Slovenia. But the data is insufficient to make this a reliable measure.

(e.g. print) are significantly more expensive than others (social media) and on the country, as there are significant differences in media buying costs per EU Member State.

On the whole, EU Delivers was implemented in countries where media buying could be expected to be higher than average. For example, #InvestEU reported an overall cumulative CPM of €19.80, which varied between €10.95 in Hungary and €38.67 in France. Based on this, the cost-efficiency of EU Delivers in France compares rather well to InvestEU even if the overall CPM is higher.

The Support for Information Measures, based on the available reach data reported, appear to be more expensive in all countries except Italy, where beneficiaries such as Il Sole 24 Ore and ANSA ensured very high reach. The Road Trip, overall, can be seen to be more expensive in terms of cost per reach, but this is also associated with its very specific target audience – the more specific the audience targeted, generally, the higher the costs.

7.1.2 Adequacy of budget allocations

BUDGET (€/%) ALLOCATED TO EACH OF THE ACTIVITIES, PER CHANNEL

While we do not have channel cost/spending breakdowns for the campaigns, social media campaigns do provide a CPM measure for their social media advertising. For the Road Trip, the reported average CPM was €1.74, which compares well with the benchmark of €3.19 given to the campaign contractors[30].

For comparison, CPM is also available for total social media performance of corporate campaigns, varying between €2.40 for the Pilot and €6.32 for EUandME, however this indicator is heavily influenced by the social media mix used per campaign. Facebook CPMs for the corporate campaigns vary from €2.06 for EUProtects to 3.76 for InvestEU.

Figure 73 Reported social media CPM per campaign phase for the Road Trip 2017-2019
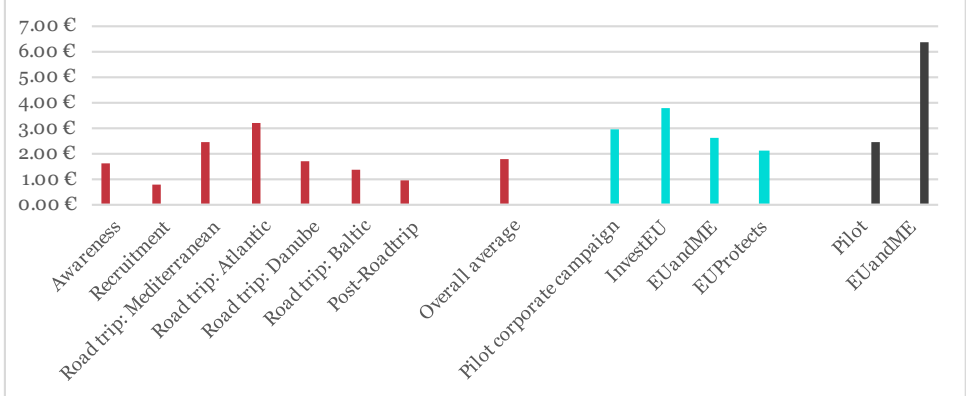
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Against these benchmarks, the various phases of the Road Trip campaign compare rather well. Only the Atlantic road trip had a social media CPM of over €3, again probably due to generally higher media buying costs in Western Europe. However, the total reported social media buying costs are only 10% of the overall campaign cost, so this offers an explanation of why the overall Road Trip CPM is rather expensive compared to the other campaigns, while the social media CPM performs very well. **This suggests that there was spending under the Road Trip campaign, not related to social media buying, that could be further optimised.**

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[30] In terms of another of the campaign KPIs, the Road Trip generated 23 million views at a cost of €0.03 per view.

Figure 74 Reported social media spend per campaign phase for the Road Trip 2017-2019
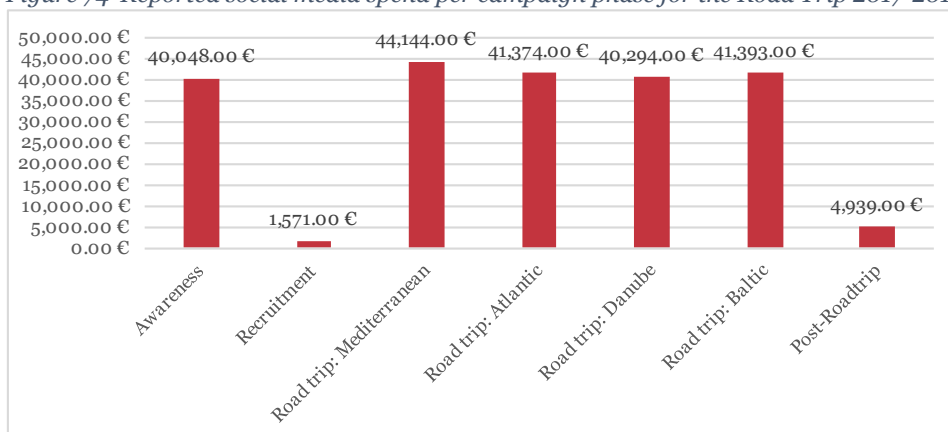
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

7.2 Efficiency in implementation

In this section we first consider first the effectiveness and efficiency of the internal coordination processes. The description of our findings related to the internal communication portfolio management processes, including involvement of multipliers and

7.2.1 Internal communication coordination processes and structures

As mentioned in Section 4.3.2, above, DG REGIO has set up a number of internal coordination and communication structures and processes in order to ensure an improved flow of information and exchange of knowledge among its staff in the various units as well as with and among the key actors in the national and regional environments.

DG REGIO hereby directly addressed the specific objective in its communication strategy '*to make communication everyone's business in DG REGIO*' as well as indirectly, the strategic objective to increase visibility of the cohesion policy among specific and broad audiences within the EU.

Our findings are that overall, these structures and processes seem to be well functioning, even though they have shown some teething problems and there is room for improvement. They facilitate a smoothening of the informational process on communication within DG REGIO, thus enhancing efficiency.

The structure of '**Single Entry Points'**, aimed at smoothening collaboration for communication between the communication unit A2 and the other units (as well as internally in those units) is a well-functioning structure. It effectively facilitates the transfer of information

Senior Specialists considered their contribution to the functioning of the A2 communication unit to be valuable and useful. They act as reference points also for the other units.

The network of **Country Correspondents** is an important tool for an improved implementation of the DG's responsibility of overseeing the countries' ERDF and CF programme management, including their communication strategy. Our interviews showed that this structure faces some difficulties in its implementation, related especially to a lack in continuance of the EC officials appointed and a limited awareness among Heads of Units of the potential benefits for their functioning. More training workshops on communication would also be useful for these EC officials. Despite these negative comments, interviewees highlighted the importance of this structure and the promise for the future it carries.

The **Communication Matrix (CM)** is at the core of the cross-unit collaboration structure on communication. Interviewees highlighted the usefulness of the CM and especially, its relevance as a platform enabling the flow of thematic knowledge between the A2 unit and the more operational units such as the geographical ones. In the case of the geographical units, it allows for better information and

understanding of the EC communication policies and actions, setting the basis for their follow-up and support to the programme implementation in the MS.

Acting as a platform for the internal exchange of experience, inputs and points of view, the CM makes communication processes more visible and interactive. It provides an opportunity for the A2 unit directly to tap on country- or theme-specific information and knowledge embedded in the other units which can be of use for the A2 unit to adapt its communication messages and act more strategically. It also creates more visibility to the activities related to communication in each unit and facilitates personal recognition, empowering individual EC officials (for communication and creating more engagement for communication.

Interviewees emphasised that the (potential) relevance of the CM goes well beyond the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of DG REGIO's work by improving internal communication and collaborative working methods. A key function of this platform is also to mainstream communication in the work of all units. From this perspective, the limited active involvement of the horizontal units and competence centres was noted.

Interviewees considered the limited involvement of the horizontal units and competence centres, combined with the current approach of unidirectional information transfer rather than knowledge exchange as an opportunity lost.

They noted that in the official communication on the meetings (e.g. the agenda set), the focus is largely set on operational issues and consists in a unidirectional transfer of information on communication actions and campaigns from the A2 unit to the other units. While the meetings do provide time and space for discussions and the exchange of knowledge and experience, thus fulfilling the more strategic function of the CM, these discussions are not noted down in the minutes of the meetings and therefore not shared with other EC officials. In sum, they called for more openness in the setting of the agenda and especially, the use of the CM as a platform for a collective cross-DG reasoning and discussion on communication. They suggested this should include more conceptual policy-related issues such as 'how to communicate Cohesion Policy', which may be of more direct interest to all units in the DG.

7.2.2 Communication portfolio management

We see room for a more integrated management and strategic planning of the communication activities portfolio. We noted a limited availability of information on how the different communication activities are expected jointly to contribute to the attainment of the objectives set out in the communication strategy and how synergies and complementarities between the different communication actions are planned for.

Critical for such an endeavour is the implementation of a consistent monitoring and evaluation structure and process. We see this as a major flaw in the current practice.

Table 15, below, gives a view on the availability of monitoring data for the communication actions listed in the activity report 2018. It shows that the capacity of reaching an overall view on the outcomes of the communication activities is limited.

Monitoring data is currently available for communication actions that together account for only about 60% of DG REGIO's budget – scattered over various reports. For the Support for Information Measures, no structure has been defined that would allow for a consistent approach to the data collection and reporting by the various project managers.

Table 15 Monitoring data availability for the communication activities

Output	Data available & sources
Open call for media	• Partial and inconsistent, depending on the project manager • Scattered over reports of the individual projects
EU Delivers in the Regions	• Reports on Outputs, Results; Recall

Output	Data available & sources
	• Reports on Pre-tests & Post-tests in different countries
Many Think – Youth Campaign – Roadtrips	• Reports on Outputs, Results, Outcomes
Europe in My Region "campaign"	• Reports on Outputs, Results
Europe in My Region photo competition (May-July)	N/A
Euronews – Real Economy (13 Episodes)	• Reach
Local cohesion dialogues/debates	N/A
Event "Cohesion at 30"(21 March):	N/A
Macro Regional Strategies	N/A
European Week of Regions and Cities (Brussels, 8-12 October)	N/A
RegioStars Awards (Brussels, October)	N/A
Publications (incl. 4 issues of Panorama magazine)	N/A
Regio Flash	N/A

In addition, DG REGIO is not currently using the full possibilities of the EC's social media monitoring tools.

For example, while the DG REGIO Facebook account (Europe in my Region) is registered on the EC's SocialBakers tool for basic metrics, it is not linked to Facebook Insights, so some additional metrics are missing (full geographical breakdown of followers, for example). In addition, neither the DG's EUinmyRegion Twitter account nor the Roadtriproject Instagram account are registered on the monitoring tool, and none of the geographical or thematic Twitter accounts belonging to the DG REGIO family (e.g. the accounts dedicated to Poland or Denmark) are registered on the tool.

Adding these accounts to SocialBakers and linking them to FacebookInsights and/or Twitter analytics would provide valuable additional information and help improve monitoring the performance of the social media posts and accounts.

7.2.3   *The involvement of multipliers in the communication activities*

The MS/MA authorities and EC Representations (REPs) are key partners for the implementation of DG REGIO's communication activities. The REPs were involved in particular in the EU Delivers campaign.

This section focuses especially on the involvement of the MS/MA in the design and implementation of DG REGIO's communication activities. We consider two aspects: the quality in the planning and implementation of the campaigns, allowing for an optimal mobilisation of the MSD/MA, and the adequacy of MS/MA involvement in the campaigns as a whole.

QUALITY IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Feedback from the MAs in the surveys and case studies on the quality of the campaigns' planning and implementation was quite positive, even though everything was not always running smoothly.

As is shown in Figure 75, below, the national/regional iCOs overall considered the briefings to be clear and timely. The **timeliness of the campaigns** themselves was more of an issue - and closely connected to it, **planning**. Several interviewees indicated the need for the MAs to have a longer-term view on the activities planned in order to be able to schedule them into their own actions' timetable and

avoid overlaps and/or conflicts in resources. The lack of such a long-term planning implies that currently, MAs just add the DG REGIO-initiated activities to their own portfolio rather than integrating them. The feedback from the REPs interviewed was very much along the same lines.

Another area where there's room for improvement is the coordination between all levels of actors involved. Interviewees highlighted that considering the capacity in terms of resources (human resources, etc.) of ICOs, the '**burden of coordination**' might really affect their activity. Two main points were raised, based on their experience with the campaign EU Delivers; the high number of stakeholders involved in the campaign which entails confusion for the implementation, and the lack of the definition of proper communication channels / flows between the different stakeholders that are involved in the implementation.

Figure 75 Quality of the campaigns' implementation

Quality of the campaign implementation
% of respondents, n=68
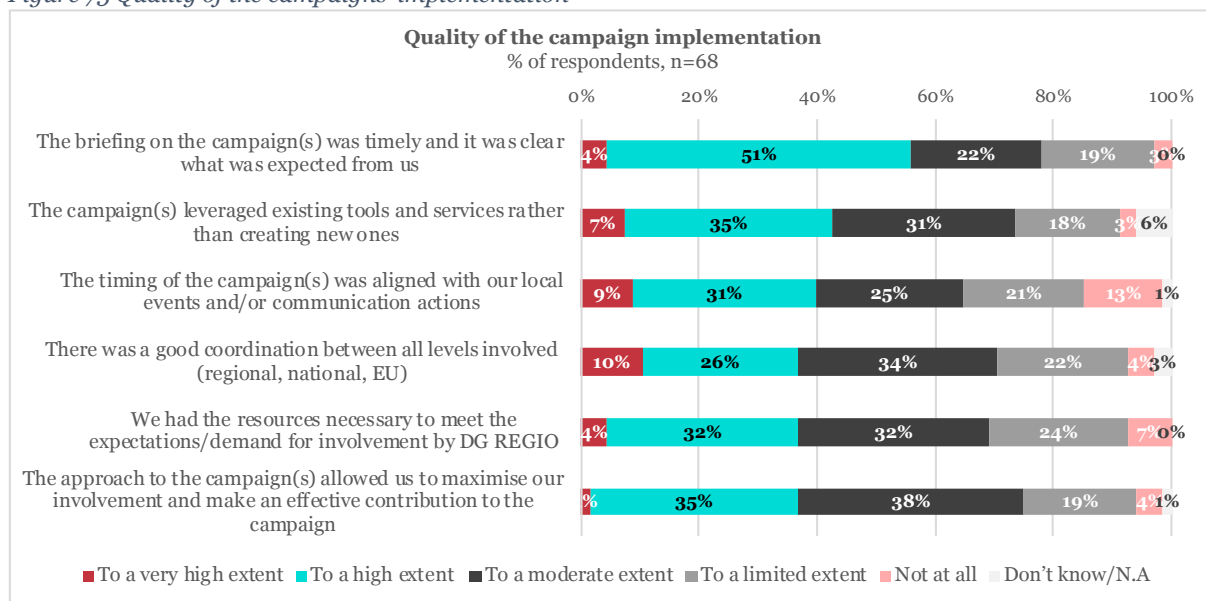
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

ADEQUACY OF MA INVOLVEMENT

Figure 75, above, points at another key issue in the implementation of the campaigns: the involvement of the Managing Authorities. Several interviewees indicated a rather limited involvement of the MAs in the campaigns, often limited to the indication of projects to showcase. Some considered that a more intense involvement, already in the design phase of the campaign materials, would be more appropriate.

When considering the **approach to design and implementation**, one can identify two broad categories of DG REGIO's campaigns and communication actions – see Table 16, below:

- Communication activities taking a **co-creation** approach, in terms of a close cooperation between DG REGIO, the Managing Authorities and the beneficiaries. This feature is shared by EU that Delivers in the Regions, EU in my Region and the Road Trip Project. These three campaigns are closely interlinked with the local environment which allows them to leverage existing resources and amplify their message. EU Delivers and the Road Trip campaigns take a more centralised approach, while the EUinmyRegion takes a fully decentralised one

- Those taking a '**communication through intermediaries**' **approach** where the activities are implemented by means of grants or direct procurement for intermediaries such as media organisations and EDICs. This approach concerns activities such as the Support for Information Measures and the Cohesion Dialogues. These activities consist mainly in the production of locally tailored content with an important informative dimension to their target audience about Cohesion

Policy. In most cases, however, there was little to no involvement of the communication teams within the MAs

The budget distribution between these two types of main communication activities is rather even: the co-created activities accounted for €7 million of the DG REGIO communication budget in 2018, while the 'communication through intermediaries' ones accounted for €6 million.

The design process has an influence on the **target audience**. While the co-created campaigns clearly define their audience in terms of segments of citizens, the communication through intermediaries actions do not target specific targets and they typically address a mix of audiences, including citizens but also intermediaries, beneficiaries and policy decision-makers. The EUinmyRegio campaign is the odd one out: implementation is decided upon by the MAs themselves, making use of the framework, concepts and tools provided by DG REGIO.

There is also a clear distinction in level of oversight by DG REGIO on the campaigns' implementation, limited to the two major co-created campaigns.

Table 16 Involvement of the MAs in the campaigns, and EC level of steering

		Level of MS/MA involvement in implementation	Level of MS/MA involvement in design	Level of oversight
Co-creation	EU Delivers in the Regions	+++	+++	+++
	Road Trip	++	++	++
	EU in my Region	+++++	+++++	+
Top-down	Support for Information Measures	+	+	o
	Local Cohesion Dialogues	+	o	o

The general feedback from interviewees active in the regions was that the **'co-creation' actions** are strongly aligned with their national communication strategy and approach and create positive effects in their environment. More than 40% of our survey respondents considers that these campaigns complemented their local actions rather than duplicating them, even though they leveraged existing tools and services rather than creating new ones.

Quite a different picture is emerging in relation to the '**communication through intermediaries' communication actions**. Interviewees indicated that often, the lack of collaboration and coordination with the national or regional MAs implied that the content produced might not be used to the best extent possible.

The REPs equally criticised contractors in the Support for Information Measures that did not collaborate with the MAs and REPs, and sometimes did not even inform them of their activities. The REPs also pointed out that DG AGRI took a different approach to their 'media partnership' projects, defining a common theme in order to create some coherence in the focus of the messages, and especially, requesting at least information to the local actors such as the REPs on activities taking place.

Below we illustrate these points further with some concrete input from our case studies.

Case study Sweden

As regards implementation of **EU Delivers,** campaigns have been implemented in collaboration with the counties. The MA has rather been playing a contributing role, facilitating contacts to the county level. This collaboration has worked reasonably effectively, albeit there have been some operational issues,

where demands from the national contractor (facilitation of contacts at local levels for out of home billboards) at times have been difficult to manage.

Of the co-creation campaigns, **EU in my Region**, is the campaign which has seen most involvement and buy in from the MA/communication team. In terms of resource spent, it is the single biggest project of the MA's communication officer/coordinator and is reported to take up a considerable amount of time.

EU in my Region is seen as the campaign which is best designed from a co-creation point of view, in so far that the campaign does not deliver outreach, but rather a framework and concept, a time for action and a set of supporting tools to be used – as deemed relevant and useful – in a local context. As such it allows tailoring of the campaign approach/freedom to adapt to the Swedish context.

There was little involvement of the MAs in Sweden in the local **Cohesion Dialogues** and **EuroNews'** Smart Regions campaign. Involvement was limited to project identification.

Case study Italy

Feedback of Managing Authorities and Communication Officers on the **Support for Information Measures** is mixed: on the one hand, this can be an opportunity, on the other hand there have been past negative experiences of inaccuracy and incompetence which have tainted the way some Managing Authorities view the media publishers who win the DG REGIO call.

Support for Information Measures projects work well when the Managing Authority and its communication staff can coordinate their actions and create a concerted activity, as was the case in Controradio in Tuscany where the contractor already had a long-term relationship with the MA.

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8 Coherence of DG REGIO communication activities

In this chapter we look into the 'external' coherence of the DG REGIO communication activities. This entails on the one hand, the alignment and synergies/complementarities created with other EC communication actions, in particular the EC corporate ones (Section 8.1).

On the other hand, it relates to the alignment with the communication actions in the MS/MA in terms of the functionality of the communication activities and the co-operation structures and measures - in response to the MS/MAs' need (Section 8.2).

8.1 Coherence and alignment with other EC communication actions

8.1.1 Coherence and alignment with the EC corporate campaigns

As mentioned in Section 5.1, there is a strong alignment between the approach to communication in DG REGIO, especially in most recent years, and the one in DG COMM for its corporate communications.

Close collaboration has been set up with DG COMM for both the EU Delivers and the Road Trip campaigns, which according to all relevant interviewees worked very well.

EU Delivers in the Regions

The EU Delivers campaign has explicitly been designed to "complement" the #InvestEU campaign (2nd phase), taking the campaign from the national to the regional and local level.

Launched in November 2018, it followed up on the first wave of 2nd phase InvestEU campaigns (the 2nd wave had a more pronounced social media focus). In total 40 regions were covered in 6 countries; all of these countries had been involved also in the InvestEU campaign (as 'zoom-in' countries).

As such there are important similarities between the EU Delivers and the #InvestEU campaign (e.g. target audiences, project-based storytelling, impact not EU focus, communication mix to be defined at the local/regional level, but with a federating narrative, engagement of REPs and EDICs in design and implementation and resource concentration on selected MS/Regions). There are also considerable differences between the two campaigns, e.g. the fact that EU Delivers focuses on picturing the relation between people and places and its intention to "go beyond pure economics and focus on human impact, showing EU values in action, notably solidarity and social justice", as stated in the ToR for the project in 2017. It also worded the criteria for the target audience in terms of awareness and positive perception of cohesion policy (at national/regional level), and prioritised a.o. people living in semi-rural areas and less-educated segments of the public.

While there was a close cooperation between the two DGs, we could find little evidence on an 'overlap' between the campaigns. Very few of our survey respondents (about 10%) had been involved in the campaigns. Comparison of the mentions of the #EUinmyRegion and #InvestEU hashtags indicates that just 3% of posts mentioning #EUinmyRegion also mention #InvestEU.

Mentions of both hashtags are predominantly in Belgium, indicating that the accounts making posts using both are likely to be EU institutions or stakeholders in the "Brussels Bubble" (Figure 76).

While the overall overlap is just 3%, there are several countries where this was much higher: in Latvia, almost a quarter of social media posts mentioning #EUinmyRegion (though these were rather few in total) also mentioned #InvestEU. This overlap was around 10% in Cyprus, Slovenia and Greece, and around 5% in Hungary, Romania, France and Sweden. (Figure 77).

Figure 76 Posts mentioning bot #InvestEU and #EUinmyRegion hashtags, 2018-2019
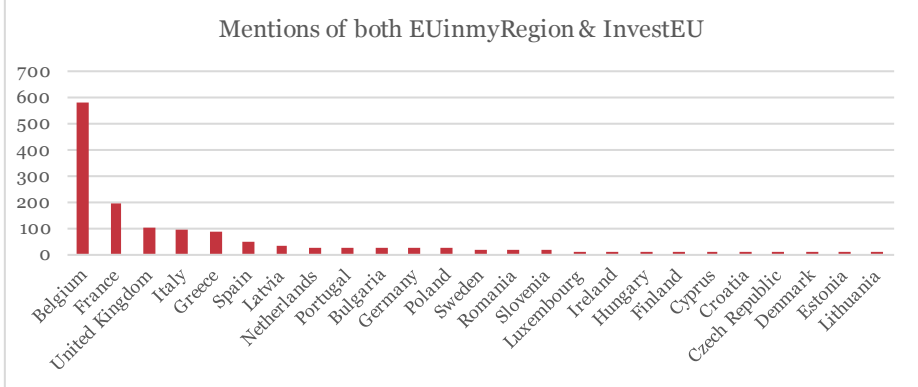
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Figure 77 Share of EUinmyRegion hashtags that overlap with #InvestEU, 2018-2019
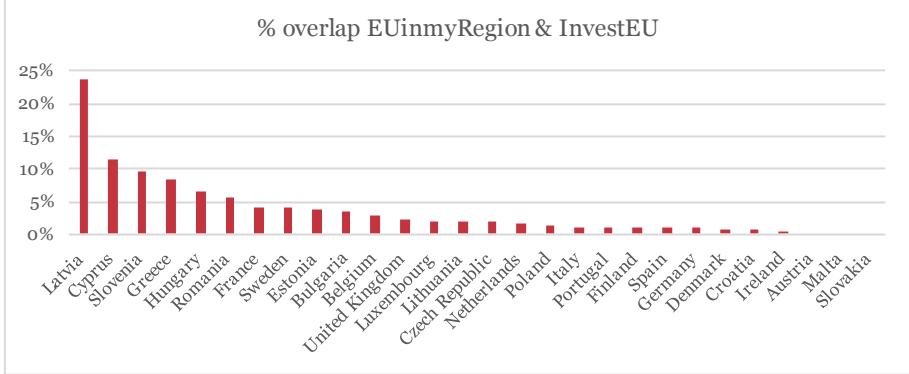
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Road Trip campaign

The collaboration between the two DGs was even more pronounced for the Road Trip project, especially as of 2019. The Synthesis report of the corporate communications states, "The two campaigns are intended to be mutually reinforcing in terms of visibility and engagement, with systematic cross-referencing on all platforms." It also mentions that the two campaigns will be together the 'travellers' and the young filmmakers used in their previous phases.

Table 17 maps out the similarities and (slight) differences between the two campaigns in the first phase of the Road Trip.

Table 17 Road Trip versus EUandME

	DG REGIO Road trip project	EUandMe
Similarities		
Target audience	By youth for youth (18-30 years)	Neutral Europeans aged 17 to 35
Communication strategy	Social media, interactive stand for exhibitions, an on-line alternative travel book and 4 short documentary videos	Video-based; focus on social media channels and key events with high youth presence
Differences		
Message	what the EU is about and what's in it for them – project-based	Showcasing European Union values in action
Geographical coverage	4 European routes: Baltic: Baltic countries, Poland, Germany Danube: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania Mediterranean: Greece, Western Balkan, Italy (North), France Atlantic: Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands	EU-level campaign

Also in the case of this campaign, though, little overlap could be found between the campaigns:: only 10% of our survey respondents indicated to have been involved in the EUandME campaign and we found that 4% of social media posts using #EUinmyRegion also used #roadtriproject.

Again, the vast majority of mentions using both hashtags are predominantly in Belgium, indicating this was largely engagement by stakeholders in the "Brussels Bubble". The overall average overlap of 4% varies among countries but less than the overlap with InvestEU: in Slovakia, 12% of social media posts mentioning #EUinmyRegion (though these were again few in total) also mentioned #roadtriproject. This overlap was around 8% in Estonia, 6% in Bulgaria and Finland, and 4% in Croatia, Greece, Lithuania all Cyprus. All other Member States were below the average.

Figure 78 Overlap in mentions of #RoadTriProject and EUinmyRegion hashtags, 2018-2019
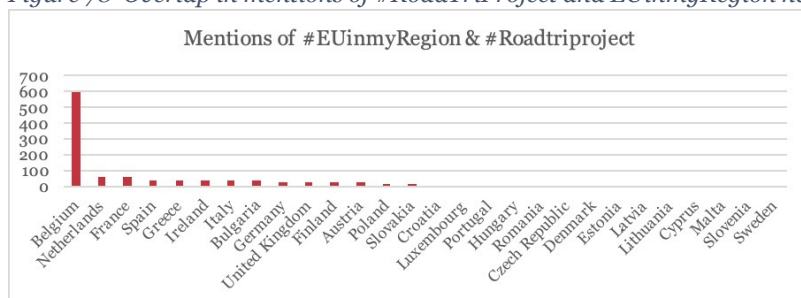
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

Figure 79 Share of EUinmyRegion hashtags that overlap with #Roadtriproject, 2018-2019
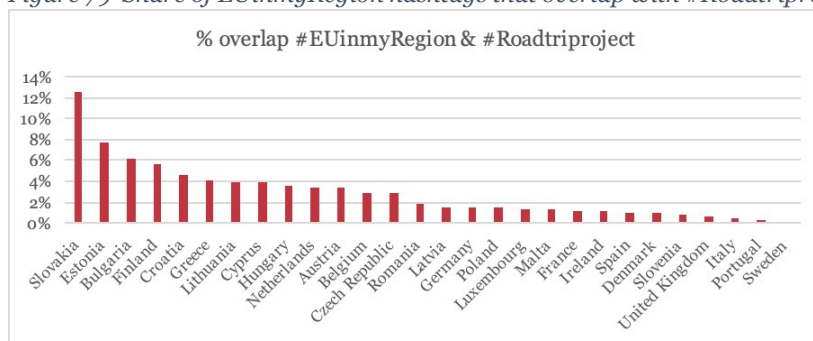
Source: Technopolis Group analysis of Brandwatch data

8.1.2   Coherence and alignment with communication actions in other EU institutions

There is no structured data available related to the cooperation among the EU institutions that is relevant for this study. Below we therefore summarise the findings from our interviews, even though these have may be of a somewhat anecdotal character.

A frequent comment received from the MS/MA as well as the REPs was the **lack in coordination between the DGs** in their communication efforts, creating fragmentation of the efforts and confusion 'on the ground'. Concrete cooperation between the ESIF DGs is little and only on an ad-hoc basis (e.g. the Rural campaign involving DG COMM, DG AGRI and DG REGIO).

As mentioned already in Section 5.2, above, interviewees called for a **more strategic approach to communication** by the DGs responsible for the ESIF. They considered that the multitude of funds makes it difficult effectively to communicate on EU regional policy to citizen Reducing and simplifying the message through a **single brand** is seen as the most effective way to communicate to citizens through the different campaigns at EU and national and regional level. ICOs mentioned a need to highlight how the campaigns are connected between each other and enhance the efforts of coherence between them and their interlinkages. Designing communication frameworks that would link the communication strategies to the policies would allow to communicate more effectively the EU goals and objectives.

An improved coherence and rationalisation of the campaigns launched by the EC is also seen as a way to prevent the **dilution of the communication efforts**, thus taking into account the shortage in communication staff in the MS/MA (see Section 5.2). As Information and Communication officers are also setting up their own communication activities, the number of EC campaigns might appear sometimes as a bit overwhelming and mismatching national activities. Further strategic planning should mitigate the risk of bottlenecks at the national level, allowing also to capitalise on what is done and has been done. It would also reinforce the sense of ownership of the campaigns, through a better integration to the planned activities at the national and regional level.

The EC officials interviewed in the various DGs often agreed with the need for a closer collaboration. Most important, they agreed with the need to step away from the use of ESIF fund names or symbols when communicating to citizens, which was mentioned by various interviewees.

On the one hand, these comments seem to indicate, the need to intensify the work done in the governance mechanisms that are currently in place such as the Corporate Communications Steering Committee and the Communication Network. On the other hand, it may indicate the need for an 'extension' of this network to the level of senior officials in the units, rendering the collaboration more operational while ensuring the strategic dimension.

The picture emerging from our interviews with the officials responsible for communication at the European Parliament and in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) is one of a clear distinction being made between the EC and the political dimension of the EU and the regions, possibly in the mind of all concerned. While the CoR is actively involved in the organisation of the European Week, supporting it with its human resources from an organisational perspective, there is no further collaboration between the two institutions.

8.2   Coherence and alignment with MS/MA communication actions

In this section we look into the functionality (in terms of alignment with the needs) of the DG REGIO communication activities and cooperation networks and structures from the perspective of the MS/MA.

8.2.1   *Functionality of the communication activities*

Campaign design and regular communication tools

DG REGIO's approach is generally praised for its result focus – and its objective to show the salience and relevance of EU funding locally. EU led communication, especially the EU Delivers campaign, is also praised for the local twist on content and messages. DG REGIO's approach is seen to have undergone a positive development, with a communication approach that is more in line with national efforts and more responsive to feedback from national MAs.

The survey results show overall a good rate of satisfaction with the quality of the campaign design and the 'regular communication tools' in relation to the MS/MA needs. The responses to our survey are overall in line with these comments and confirmed during our interviews in the case studies.

Close to half of the respondents indicating that the campaigns complemented their local actions. One in four confirmed that the messages were sufficiently tailored to the local environment and considered that the material was sufficiently flexible for them to use in their own campaigns (Figure 80).

Figure 80 Quality of the campaign design
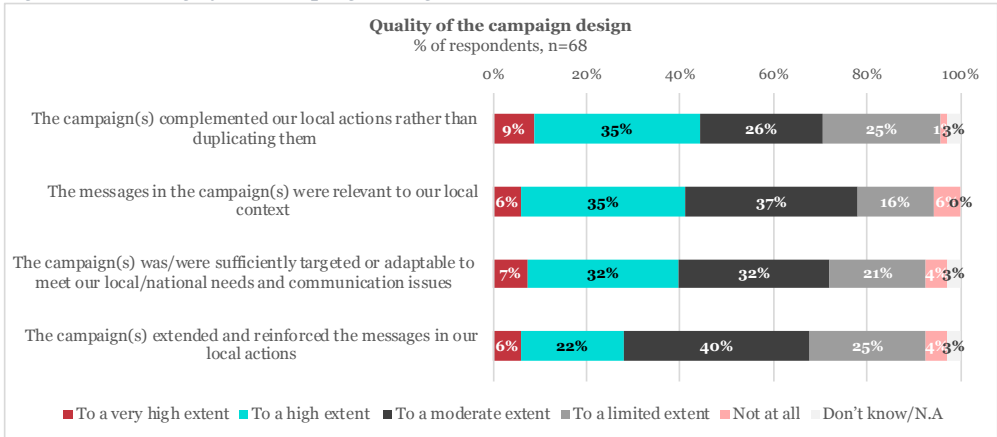
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

Survey respondents indicated a similar rate of satisfaction with the content of the InfoRegio website and the value of the European Week of Regions as an opportunity to receive information on cohesion policy and to network. The content of the Panorama magazine was appreciated by only few respondents (20% to a (very) high extent) – see Figure 81)

Figure 81 Functionality of the regular communication tools

Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

Interviewees indicated positive effects of DG REGIO's communication activities in terms of a streamlining of the messages conveyed in the DG REGIO and local communication efforts, and a professional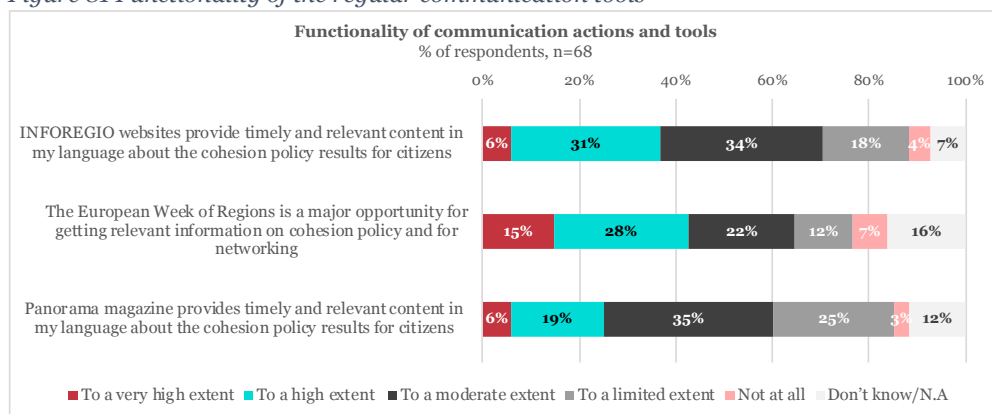isation of the communication practice on cohesion policy in the MS/MA. They also indicated sustainability of the materials for re-use by the national and regional authorities – even though the lack of multilingualism was criticised in this context, mentioning also the limits this poses on the reach of the message, especially in social media but not only.

Other more critical remarks took the form of reminding that a 'one size fits all' approach cannot be efficient, and the risk of duplications and overlaps in the communication efforts by different DGs. And last but not least, the risk of what is perceived as a "self-promotion effort" of the European Commission constitutes a risk in terms of reception of the message in certain countries, in particular the countries where the audience might be more sceptical. The boxes with extracts from our case studies below give some concrete illustrations on these topics.

Case study Greece

"EU in my Region" is considered by all stakeholders as one of the most successful ones, especially, due to its continuation over many consecutive years with significant interest for participation on behalf of the regions. The flexible approach of DG Regio with regards to the campaign has allowed the regions to maximise their involvement and make an effective contribution to the campaign.

Apart from the overall support provided by DG Regio at all stages of the campaign roll-out, the communication toolkit provided online has been used by all MAs involved. The campaign also has provided both **extra motivation and inspiration** for MAs and beneficiaries to include more communication activities in their schedule, within the timeframe of the campaign.

Case study Sweden

The focus on communicating concrete (project) results and achievements, in their local context, showcasing their (local) benefits and relevance to local needs, is consistent with the communication approach of the MAs in Sweden. Likewise, the objective to reach out to, and generate awareness among the wider public, is shared – with the MAs consulted also giving considerable weight to awareness raising among the wider population.

Differences in term of overarching priorities are thus small – although, as indicated above, the MAs also place weight on stakeholder and (potential) beneficiary communication, reflecting the need to support programme implementation.

Other perceived differences – or variants - in communication approach, objectives and narratives relate to:

- **Weighting of the EU**. Both REGIO and MAs place project results and achievement at the centre of the communication narrative with the aim to showcase benefits at a local level for the wider public. The EU/EU funding is placed at a second level. However, it is felt that EC led communication place relatively more weight on EU/EU funding. The EU/origin of funding is mentioned less prominently in national communication. EU is not seen as a selling point. **Additionally, it is important in a Swedish context to pay attention to EU scepticism and the risk of being criticised "EU propaganda".** The message therefore needs to be introduced as a secondary non prominent piece of information. . This approach is for example illustrated by the Interreg Oresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak "Brexit campaign", which flag the importance of transnational collaboration between the Nordic countries, but where direct reference to the EU is limited to the use of the EU flag.

- **Showcasing benefits**. While the result/benefit focus is shared, some interviewees consider that national/local communication aims to go a step further in terms of localisation and in terms of showcasing the concrete benefits for the citizens on the ground ("what is in it for you").

Complementarity of DG REGIO's communication actions

A specific complementarity of the DG REGIO communication actions consists in the scale and reach of its activities which often is not feasible within the limits of the MA's communication budget.

Based on the planned budget of CF/ERDF for the programming period 2014-2020 in the different Member States, it is possible to draw an estimate of the communication budget of the different Managing Authorities, as shown in Figure 82, below.

The shading of the grey (from light to dark) indicates the level of budget available (from small to large and taking the population into account). The column 'campaigns' indicates the number of campaigns that were run in the country by DG REGIO. The columns with the campaigns indicate the level of reach achieved (equally per population).

The data show that Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, and Sweden, are the countries where MAs are likely to have more difficulty in leveraging funding for their communication activities, directly followed by Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, and Portugal.

Especially MAs in Estonia and Slovakia, but also countries like Poland, Italy, Spain, Czechia, Romania, Slovakia, are likely to have access to a more significant budget to carry out communication activities.

When comparing these data with the data on campaigns and especially reach, we can consider that the extensive coverage of **Austria, France, and Sweden – and to a lesser extent, Greece and Italy** compensated for the limited communication ERDF budget available in these countries.

Figure 82 Overview of budget, campaigns and reach achieved

	ERDF/CF	Communication actions	EU Delivers	Road Trip	Information Measures
Austria					
Belgium					
Bulgaria					
Croatia					
Cyprus					
Czechia					
Denmark					
Estonia					
Finland					
France					
Germany					
Greece					
Hungary					
Ireland					
Italy					
Latvia					
Lithuania					
Luxembourg					
Malta					
Netherlands					
Poland					
Portugal					
Romania					
Slovakia					
Slovenia					
Spain					
Sweden					

Source: Technopolis Group

8.2.2 Functionality of the co-ordination and co-operation structures and measures

The overall feedback received from interviewees indicate also a **high level of functionality of the INFORM network,** even though there is room for improvement. In their shared praise of the initiative, interviewees point at a significant structuring effect of the network. Directionality is a commonly described effect and most importantly, the exchange of knowledge and experience in the context of the network's events constitutes a driver for a shift in approach to communication in the MS/MAs.

The INFORM network acts as a platform in direct support to DG REGIO's implementation of the '**proximity communication'** concept. It brings together national and regional information and communication officers (ICO) responsible for the coordination and implementation of the local communication strategies on the ERDF and CF as well as Interreg programmes. Close collaboration is set up also with the INIO network of communication officers for the ESF, managed by DG EMPL

The network adequately responds to its objective of supporting the **professionalisation of the communication function** in the MS and regions. Interviewees unanimously highlighted the value of the INFORM network as a source of information, inspiration and training. Support by the EU in terms of strategic direction and sharing of practice is seen as crucial to the local communication.

The INFORM network allows for the creation of a **community** across countries of communication officers with a similar mission, providing an opportunity to capitalise on each other's experiences. Interviewees considered these exchanges to be essential for their work. INFORM meetings are seen to bring a feeling of belonging to a wider European effort to communicate on the EU Regional policy.

Timeliness and planning is an issue also in this context, though. The lack of early planning sometimes makes it impossible for the MAs to participate in these activities/ meetings. The MAs also would like to see more and better training/ capacity building opportunities to help them improve their knowledge and skills.

A final note needs to be made in relation to the **Interreg Programme**. Interviewees indicated the somewhat isolated position ICOs covering Interreg programmes have in the national system as well as within the DG REGIO communication structures. Their specific problems and communication issues

typically are not covered in DG REGIO's communication activities, with the exception of the Road Trip, which however targeted a very specific audience (young Europeans).

The extracts below of two or our case studies shed more light on both the positive effects of the INFORM network in the national environment and the perceived room for improvement.

Case study - Poland

There is a general positive opinion among the consulted representatives of managing authorities about the INFORM network. It was noted that the network offers opportunities of mutual learning and exchanges with the representatives of managing authorities from other EU Member States and the Commission services. It appears that managing authorities were not always aware about the possibility of participating in the meeting of the INFORM network but this has been clarified and is no any longer an issue. The interviewees also indicated to a general need of **raising the profile** of the network and further developing its activities in the future.

DG REGIO communication activities have some added value to the activities undertaken at the national and regional level. Particularly, the activities of the INFORM network offer opportunities of mutual learning and exchanges with the representatives of managing authorities from other EU Member States and the Commission services. The provided support has a **structuring effect** on communication activities undertaken in the country.

Case study Sweden

Support provided by the EU – in terms of **strategic direction and sharing of practice** - to the local communication is seen as crucial. Support overall is assessed positively. INFORM networking meetings are seen as a key support to the everyday work of the Communication coordinator. INFORM meetings are seen to bring:

- A feeling of belonging to a wider European effort to communicate on the EU Regional policy
- Exchange of practices and learning from other countries
- Guidance and steer of the communication efforts

With regards to the latter point, Inform network meetings has also helped creating **understanding of the scale and nature of work** to be undertaken, among senior communication management (the current communication officer/coordinator, invited the head of Tillväxtverket communication department, to the Inform network meeting as a mean of showcasing requirement, resulting in turn in awareness of the expected amount of work, and hence the need for additional resources).

Participation from the EU to national network meetings, along with regular exchange and guidance from DG REGIO is likewise seen as key, providing steer to national efforts.

Feedback from the MAs of Interreg confirms the positive assessment of the EC's support. MA's of Interreg however, also appear somewhat less engaged in supporting actions. As such, it is rather the availability which is positively assessed.

Interreg MAs however, also note the need for DG REGIO to consider **how to better support communication of transnational projects**. There is also a need to consider how DG REGIO works with InterAct, as to ensure that the EU speak with one voice.

9 Added value and sustainability of DG REGIO communication activities

In this chapter we consider the added value of DG REGIO's communication activities compared to the EC corporate communication campaigns (Section 9.1) and their added value for the communication activities in the MS/MA – and the extent to which created effects and/or tools will be of lasting value for them (Section 9.2).

9.1 Added value for the EC corporate communication

The assessment of added value looks into the extent to which effect were reached that could not have been reached otherwise (additionality). In relation to the EC corporate communications, a key factor that allows DG REGIO's communication activities to create added value is the strong alignment of its communication strategy and approach to communication targeting the general public with the EC corporate communication strategy and approach (Section 5.1).
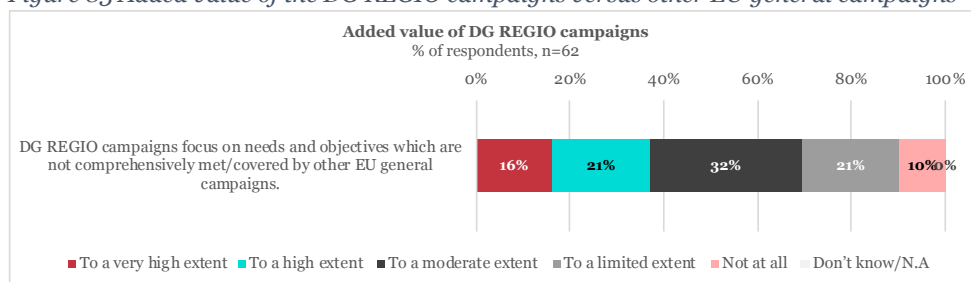
A key asset of DG REGIO's communication activities is the close relationship with the MAs. It allows for localisation of the messages and especially, a **direct access to information** on needs in the local environments as well as to relevant networks and multipliers. The INFORM network as well as the network of Country Correspondents and their involvement in the DG REGIO Communication Matrix are precious sources for information – even though they do not seem yet to be used at their full potential.

The specific elements in the performance of DG REGIO's communication activities reported in the previous section suggest an **additionality of scale and financial additionality** i.e scale and financing of communication activities with a high level of complementarity with the corporate campaigns and similar scope. This is reached thanks to a close collaboration with DG COMM, ensuring that the EU Delivers and Road Trip campaigns would complement the corporate campaigns in the regions, essentially adding scale onto the made at the corporate level (Section 8.1.1)

In any case, it constitutes the background for the positive indication of the added value of DG REGIO's communication activities in comparison to other EC general campaigns (Figure 83).

It also sets the context and background for the recommendation made by the authors of the Synthesis study for the corporate communication actions to strengthen cooperation with national authorities, seeing the potential of such collaboration to improve the reach and enhance the scale of the campaigns. The concept is similar to what DG REGIO is achieving in the field of regional policy: MA as a source of information as well as multipliers.

Figure 83 Added value of the DG REGIO campaigns versus other EU general campaigns

Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

9.2 Added value for the communication activities in MS/MA

Also in relation to the communication activities in the MS/MAs, a key factor that allows DG REGIO's communication activities to create added value is the growing alignment of its communication strategy and approach with the communication strategy and approach in the MS/MA – and vice-versa, combined with the significant attention to the needs in the local environment (Section 5.2 and Section 8.2.1).

Throughout the previous sections, we have reported on specific elements in the performance of DG REGIO's communication activities that suggest the following forms of additionality has been reached:

- **Additionality of scale and financial additionality**, i.e. the attainment of more reach (overall) and funding of activities that would not take place otherwise

- **Capacity additionality**, i.e. capacity building, thanks to the support for the enhancement of the communication capacities and skills, allowing for a growing professionalisation of the practice in the local environment thanks to INFORM network (Section 8.2.2)

- **Behavioural additionality**, i.e. fostering in shift in approach to communication, thanks to the transfer of information and knowledge, as well as showcasing of good examples for the communication to citizens, acting as a driver for a shift in attention to the general public as an important target audience (Section 8.2.2)

The responses in our survey, shown in Figure 84, below, broadly confirmed our considerations above, in particular in relation to the additionality in terms of scale and financial efforts. The lower attributions for the added value in terms of response to unmet needs and non-targeted audiences confirm the importance that communication to citizens has gained in the national/local context. The extract from our case study in Sweden sheds some light on the concrete context for these achievements.

Figure 84 Added value of the DG REGIO campaigns for the MS/MA authorities
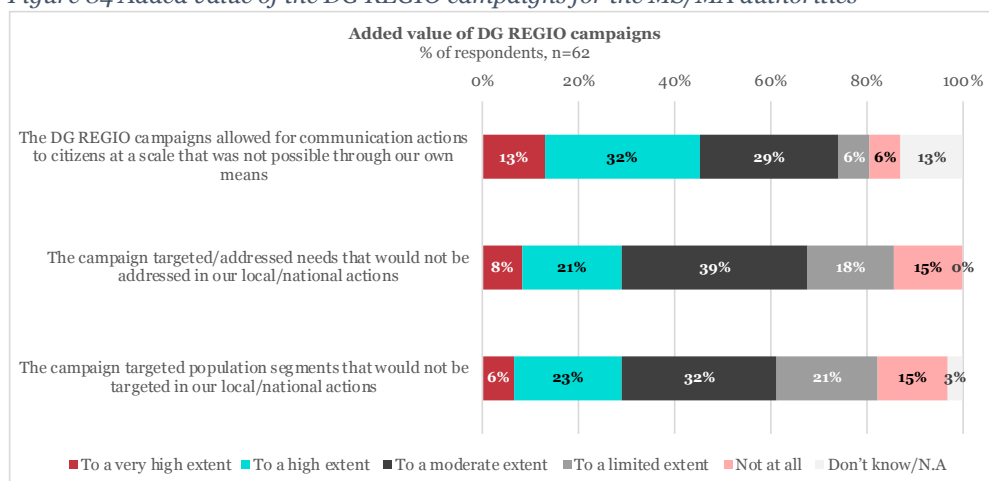
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

Case study Sweden

As outlined in the previous section, the EC's approach and priorities for communication has significantly shaped the communication approach of the MAs in Sweden – both as regards the choice of audiences and the communication approach.

Swedish MAs have a strong communication focus on the wider public, and a strong result focus aiming to showcase and raise awareness on the benefits of EU funding. However, when looking at actions which have shaped the MAs approaches and priorities, it is principally the structural funds legislation; guidance and priority setting by DG REGIO, and exchange of practices, rather than the campaign implementation and campaign tools per se.

Some campaign practices, however, have had a direct or indirect impact on the communication operation – Specifically:

- EU in my Region has shaped the work of the communication coordinator and has become the single most important communication activity of the MA/communication officer.

- A system for collection of data on projects which are worthwhile to communicate has been developed nationally, as to support better the communication officers work.

Some interviewees suggest that DG REGIO going forward needs to place more attention on strategic steering and guidance and on exchange of good practice as such approaches have a more structural impact. This would go in pair with less communication implementation on the ground, and communication using rather Europe in My Region approaches, than implementation of separate EC led campaigns.

There is, however, mixed views on this latter aspect, with other interviewees considering that DG REGIO needs to conFinallytinue its campaigns, due to the added value these bring.

9.3 Sustainability of the DG REGIO campaigns

In relation to the sustainability of the results from DG REGIO's communication activities, interviewees as well as survey respondents indicate the longer-term value especially of the approach adopted by DG REGIO in its campaigns, from a professional and conceptual perspective.

The indication of a longer-term effect also for the local/national collaboration in communication is interesting and points a structural effect of the campaigns and communication actions.

The high appreciation also of the tools developed in the campaigns confirms the quality of the message development and overall campaign implementation. From the case studies we have learned that this constitutes a key value especially of the EU in my Region campaign (see the case study extract above).

Finally, the scorings attributed to the InfoRegio website and the Panorama magazine reflect the indications of their effectiveness, Reported in Section 8.2.1, above.

Figure 85 Added value of the DG REGIO campaigns for the MS/MA authorities
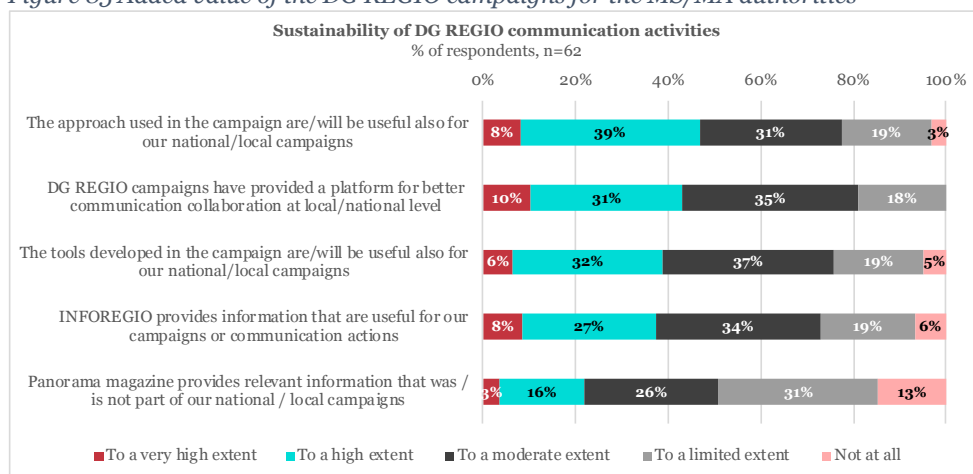
Source: Technopolis Group, survey data

10 Conclusions and recommendations

The expectations are that the study would provide recommendations

- As regards the orientation of the allocation of resources for DG REGIO communication activities – and recommendations on how to deliver closer integration of DG REGIO communication actions.
- On how to further integrate DG REGIO communication campaigns and align them with communication actions by Member States and Managing Authorities
- On how REGIO could improve its contribution and build more synergies with other communication campaigns carried out by other services of the Commission and ESI funds implementing authorities

In order to facilitate the formulation of these recommendations, we structure the summary of our main findings along the lines for investigation identified rather than the evaluation criteria.

The term 'communication activities' stands for three categories of activities implemented by DG REGIO's communication unit:

- 'External' communication activities in the form of structured campaigns and specific communication actions
- Internal and external collaboration and communication structures and processes
- Tools for regular communication, encompassing DG REGIO's 'owned' media tools and publications

10.1 A coherent and integrated portfolio of communication activities

Conclusions

DG REGIO's communication actions implemented in 2017-19 show a high level of diversity.

A first distinction regards the **target audience**:

- Communication actions targeting stakeholders and general public, accounting for about 84% of the budget, and
- Those addressing EU, national and regional policymakers which consists mainly in events.

The actions targeting stakeholders and citizens can be subdivided in two groups, depending on their **geographical scope**:

- *'Country-specific' communication actions* that operate in a select number of Member States and regions: EU Delivers in the Regions, the Road Trip Project, the Cohesion Dialogues, and the Support for Information Measures action. They account jointly for about 80% of the budget and together, show a strong concentration on seven countries: Austria, Italy, France, Greece, Sweden – and to a lesser extent, Belgium and Germany (in the years 2017 and 2018)
- *EU-wide campaigns* that have a broad coverage, encompassing all or almost all of the 28 EU MS: EU in my Region and the Euronews projects, jointly accounting for 3% of DG REGIO's communication budget

A distinction can be made also depending upon the approach to the **involvement of the local authorities.** The two categories account for a similar share in the budget.

- Communication activities taking a **co-creation approach**, in terms of a close cooperation between DG REGIO, the Managing Authorities and the beneficiaries: EU that Delivers in the Regions, the Road Trip Project, and EU in my Region (44% of the budget).

EU Delivers and the Road Trip campaigns take a *semi-decentralised* approach (even though at different levels of intensity) and target audiences are defined in terms of *segments of citizens*, while the EUinmyRegion takes a *fully decentralised* one

- Communication activities taking a **'communication through intermediaries'** approach where the activities are implemented by means of grants**:** the Support for Information Measures and Cohesion Dialogues (38% of the budget). There is no direct involvement of the MS/MA, *no overall definition of specific target audience,s* and they typically address a *mix of audiences*, including citizens but also intermediaries, beneficiaries and policy decision-makers. There is also close to no oversight by DG REGIO

There is evidence of overlaps between the campaigns and an unbalanced geographical scope

Available data allows us to state that overall, DG REGIO's campaigns and communication actions have largely met their output objectives. DG REGIO's social media accounts equally seem to perform well and have a follower base that is roughly comparable to the one in DGs AGRI and EMPL institutional social media accounts.

Overall, data on effectiveness shows that the five 'top' countries of focus for the 'selective' campaigns are also the countries with the highest figures for reach. However, the regular communication channels (Facebook, Twitter, InfoRegio) seem to complement the campaigns with high reach figures for other MS.

The 'co-created' campaigns show a high level of complementarity, successfully targeting different audiences. Overlaps were visible between the co-created and the top-down campaigns, instead. The largest overlaps are in the Member States with the highest aggregate social media reach relative to the total audience size (country population), i.e. Italy, France and Portugal.

There is evidence that some countries (Germany and Poland) receive relatively little communication from the EU, while others (France, Portugal and Italy) receive a lot, creating overlap. The distribution of 'EU In My Region' Facebook followers and users of the #EUinmyRegion hashtag indicates some inefficiencies/redundancies in distribution of the communication effort, as larger countries such as Germany, Romania and Poland are not being actively engaged through these EU channels.

Budgeting and cost-effectiveness seem appropriate taking targeted channels and audiences into account

While the campaigns analysed appear to be relatively expensive compared to EC corporate campaigns, this may be somewhat related to more specific target audiences (located in specific regions and/or in specific age groups) and in media mix (some Support for Information Measures beneficiaries depend on print/broadcast media that is more expensive even if it is more effective in reaching older age groups). This assessment could be made with more certainty if more consistent output and result data was available.

Overall Road Trip CPM is rather expensive compared to the other campaigns, while the campaign's social media CPM performs very well. This suggests that there was spending under the Road Trip campaign, not related to social media buying, that could be further optimised.

The Support for Information Measures, based on the available reach data reported, appear to be more expensive in all countries except Italy, where big media beneficiaries ensured very high reach.

EU Delivers is most cost-effective (€18CPM) and the Road Trip project least (€87CPM). The Support for Information Measures reach €28CPM, but data is partial. An estimate for the EU in my Region indicates a similar CPM as for the Support for Information Measures.

The positive effects of the highly relevant internal coordination processes and structures could be further maximised

The internal communication and coordination processes in DG REGIO are in general perceived as highly relevant from an effectiveness and efficiency perspective. The Single Entry Points system provides an important element of clarity on who to contact in the system for communication issues; the Country

Correspondents structure sets an important basis for an improved communication between DG REGIO and the national/regional Managing Authorities.

The Communication Matrix acts as an important platform to enhance the visibility of the communication function throughout the DG as well as the enhancement of interactivity in the shaping of the communication strategy and activities. The relevance of the CM goes well beyond the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of DG REGIO's work by improving internal communication and collaborative working methods. A key function of this platform is also to mainstream communication in the work of all units.

Teething problems illustrate that also within DG REGIO, the shift in culture towards a full appreciation of the importance of communication and a full exploitation of the relevant knowledge spread over all units is not yet an accomplished fact. There is a limit to commitments especially in the horizontal units and competence centres.

Communication Matrix meetings are not sufficiently interactive, too often focused on a unilateral transfer of information from the A2 unit to the other units and centred around operational topics, even though there were many instances of 'informal' knowledge and experience sharing. A topic for discussion that was considered of interest to all is how to communicate on cohesion policy, how to 'sell' it.

Action is needed for an improved integrated management of the communication actions portfolio

A more integrated management and strategic planning of the communication activities portfolio would be beneficial. This implies the availability of structured information at the overall portfolio level on how the different communication activities are expected jointly to contribute to the attainment of the communication strategy objectives and the expected synergies and complementarities. A consistent monitoring and evaluation structure and processes across all communication activities would facilitate the attainment of lessons learned for the planning of future actions.

In terms of data availability, we estimate that monitoring data is currently available only for communication actions accounting for about half of the budget dedicated to communication to citizens. There is a lack in consistency in the approach to the reporting of the monitoring data – among the different actions and for the media partnerships, among the different actions funded.

In addition, communication strategies for the specific actions are typically described only in the Terms of Reference and eventually, final reports.

As a result, there are important limits to the capacity of reaching an overarching view on the approach to communication as well as effects of the communication portfolio, hindering the creation of an overarching strategic framework and planning of the communication activities - as a portfolio rather than alone-standing activities.

Recommendations

We recommend DG REGIO:

- To take a more integrated approach to strategic management of the communication actions in order to enhance effectiveness and internal efficiency, as well as creating a stronger alignment with the needs for EC corporate communication and the needs of the MS/MA

- To overcome the current level of fragmentation by focusing budget spending on a more restricted number of actions and one campaign only, thus allowing for the enhancement of scale

- To develop an overarching strategic framework for the communication actions portfolio, considering the appropriate balance between the actions in terms of target audience and approach to MS/MA involvement, and including the owned social and digital media channels

- To develop and implement a consistent monitoring and evaluation structure and processes

- More consistent monitoring and reporting of country and channel breakdowns of budget spend and campaign outputs and (especially) results.

- Demographic data for engaged audiences (i.e. those that use the hashtag) can be collected from social media monitoring and would be useful to provide in future campaign and communication action reports. Media organisations (newspaper and TV/radio stations) also have demographic data on audiences – and this would be useful to provide in future whenever these media channels are involved

- Given the potential for overlap with other campaigns, it is important to enable a coordination of actions funded under the Support for Information Measures action at the national or regional level, with at least information on the timetable and messages to the MS/MA and REPs

- Monitor engagement by adding all DG REGIO social media accounts to SocialBakers and linking them to Facebook Insights and/or Twitter analytics, which would provide valuable additional information and help improve monitoring the performance of the social media posts and accounts.

- Ensure that recall and awareness/perception are measured before and after in a way that allows for comparison to assess the results of the campaign: for EU Delivers, polls should be carried out in the same region before and after; for Road Trip, a post-test survey would be informative. An indication along those lines in terms of 'Ex-post evaluation methodology' seems to be provided for in calls for the Support for Information Measures actions

- To maximise the value of the Communication Matrix by enhancing the interactive nature of the CM reaching an improved balance between information transfer on operational issues and the exchange of knowledge and experiences

- To further enhance the value of the Communication Matrix by acting as a platform for a collective cross-DG knowledge exchange on communication and more conceptual policy-related issues such as 'how to communicate Cohesion Policy', which may be of more direct interest to all units in the DG

10.2 Coherence with communication actions in the MS/MA

Conclusions

DG REGIO has a major role to play in addressing current shortcomings and failures in the national and regional environments

The communication strategies in the Member States/Managing Authorities show a growing alignment with the communication strategies in DG REGIO and DG COMM. While the communication function in MS/MA keeps its primary role of ensuring programme performance with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries, communication to the general public is overall recognised to be critical for the success of the programme – with the exception of some 'net contributor' countries.

The challenges faced by the national and regional Information and Communication Officers in their communication to the citizens are to be set in the context of the diverging management structures and availability of communication budgets in the MS/MA. A major challenge is the availability of resources – in particular human resources, determining the time available to the ICO for their communication to the citizens. Another important challenge is the difficulty to communicate cohesion policy to the citizens, due to its complexity.

The needs range from supporting and fostering a shift in culture related to communication among the Managing Authorities (which not always finds its implementation in practice yet) to providing support to the communication officers in tackling the challenges posed by the local environment and the complexity of the Cohesion Policy itself. Communication to the citizens on regional policies – and

cohesion policy in general– is a major challenge for all. Interviewees highlighted the importance that MAs attribute to indications and suggestions coming from DG REGIO for the priority-setting in their own activities.

There are considerable differences in the creation of synergies and complementarities with the actions at the national/regional level

DG REGIO's campaigns and communication actions taking a **co-creation approach** are seen as strongly aligned with the MS/MA national communication strategies and create positive effects in the local environment. Within this group of actions, EU in my Region – taking a **decentralised approach -** is seen as the communication action that is best designed from a co-creation point of view, in so far that it does not deliver outreach, but rather a framework and concept, a time for action and a set of supporting tools to be used – as deemed relevant and useful – in a local context. As such it allows tailoring of the approach/freedom to adapt to the context.

The communication actions taking a **'communication through intermediaries' approach,** where collaboration with the MAs was less intense, were highly criticised by the MS/MA and REPs whenever collaboration or even just information on these actions had been inexistent, hampering integration of these activities within the overall portfolio of communication on EU policy at the national or regional level.

The functionality of DG REGIO's support to the MS/MA through the campaigns is high in all aspects, but with some flaws in timeliness and planning

DG REGIO's approach is seen to have undergone a highly positive development over the last years, with a communication approach that is more in line with national efforts and more responsive to feedback from national MAs.

The support provided by DG REGIO is of critical importance, in terms of the creation of the INFORM network for the sharing of knowledge and experiences, the transfer of skills and tools for communication through the website and close links and contacts between DG REGIO and national officials, the showcasing on the ground of communication to citizens campaigns, in close collaboration with the local communication officers, and last but not least, the concrete support provided in the context of the EU in My Region actions.

Feedback on the quality of the campaigns' planning and implementation was quite positive, even though there were issues with timeliness and planning. Another area with room for improvement is the coordination between all levels of actors involved.

Positive effects are in terms of a streamlining of the messages conveyed and a professionalisation of the communication practice on cohesion policy in the MS/MA. Materials and tools produced are sustainable and useful for use in the local environments – even though the lack of multilingualism was criticised in this context, mentioning also the limits this poses on the reach of the message, especially in social media but not only.

A specific complementarity of the DG REGIO communication actions is in the scale and reach of its activities which often is not feasible within the limits of the MA's communication budget. The concentration of the communication activities compensated for the limited communication ERDF budget available in some of the countries, especially for Austria, France, and Sweden.

The INFORM network is crucial for the MS/MA knowledge and capacity building

The INFORM network has a high level of functionality and is considered to have a significant structuring effect. Directionality is a commonly described effect. Most importantly, it acts as a driver for a shift in approach to communication in the MS/MAs. Timeliness and planning are issues also in this context.

The only more critical note regards the inclusions of the Interreg Programme ICOs and the need for more attention to their specific needs for support.

We recommend DG REGIO

- To set the conditions for a full integration of communication actions in the MS implemented by the EC and/or intermediaries with the overall portfolio of communication actions on EU policy at the national/regional level

- To consider the potential for a strengthened integration of the Support for Information Measures in the overarching strategic planning of DG REGIO's communication activities, taking inspiration from similar initiatives in other DGs

- To enhance the support delivered to the MS/MA in the form of toolboxes and training

- To consider the importance of compensating the limited activity in certain Member States due to budget constraints

- To consider the adequacy of the balance in terms of budget between the communication actions taking a co-created, top-down, and decentralised approach

- To address and involve also policymakers in the MS/MA in order to foster a change in culture related to the importance of communication to citizens

10.3 Coherence with communication actions by other Commission services

Conclusions

IN RELATION TO THE EC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

The alignment in strategies is strong but overall, less so in terms of actual implementation of the campaigns and communication actions

Overall, the DG REGIO's communication strategy is in strong alignment with the communication strategy and approach in the corporate communications.

In terms of concrete implementation of this strategy, the strong alignment regards especially the **co-creation actions,** and in particular the EU Delivers and Road Trip**.** For these campaigns (accounting for 43% of the budget), there was a strong alignment with the need for communication from an EU policy perspective - both in terms of geographical coverage and targeted audiences. A key difference with the corporate campaigns is the focus on EU cohesion policy and its benefits versus the EU project in general.

The 'communication through intermediaries' actions showed a considerably less intense alignment.

The added value is mixed but overall positive

EU Delivers and the Road Trip both complement the related corporate campaigns (InvestEU and EUandME). Using a similar approach as the corporate campaigns (even though with differently defined target audience specifics) and at least for EU Delivers, covering the same countries, the risk for overlaps between the DG REGIO and DG COMM campaigns is high. Evidence of such overlaps is very little, though. In terms of outputs, both campaigns seem to have performed at a similar level to the corporate campaigns in terms of aggregate potential reach.

There are some concrete differences in the concrete implementation of the campaigns, linked to the available budgets, that may influence the capacity for creating the desired effects:

- *The lack in multilingualism*: criticised by the MAs who set question marks behind the potential to reach the local audiences and the targeted population segments

- *The limited involvement of the local authorities in the design of the materials* – especially for the Road Trip. Interviewees considered that MAs should be involved (also) in the beginning of the design process. It may be a factor behind the insistence from some interviews against the 'one-size-fits-all' approach, which seems not to be in line with the typical "Go local" approach in DG REGIO

Overall, however, a key asset of DG REGIO's communication activities is the close relationship with the MAs. It allows for localisation of the messages and especially, a direct access to information on needs in the local environments as well as to relevant networks and multipliers. The INFORM network as well as the network of Country Correspondents and their involvement in the DG REGIO Communication Matrix are precious enabling factors for DG REGIO's added value.

In relation to the other EC communication actions

The limited coordination between the ESIF-managing DGs is in contrast to the needs in the regions

A frequent comment received from the MS/MA as well as the REPs was the lack in coordination between the DGs in their communication efforts, creating fragmentation of the efforts and confusion 'on the ground'. Concrete cooperation between the ESIF DGs is little and only on an ad-hoc basis (e.g. the Rural campaign involving DG COMM, DG AGRI and DG REGIO).

This limited collaboration constitutes a burden for their communication management in terms of dilution of the communication efforts and hinders an effective communication on the EU project goals and objectives to the citizens.

Recommendations

We recommend DG REGIO:

- To consider the adequacy of the balance in terms of budget between the communication actions taking a co-created, decentralised and 'communication through intermediaries' approach

- To ensure the full alignment of the campaigns implemented with the needs of the MS/MA

- To enhance the efforts for coherence with the communication actions in other ESIF DGs, for example by designing common communication frameworks that link communication strategies and actions to policies and highlight how the campaigns are connected between each other and between them and their interlinkages