



A comparative analysis of Cohesion Policy communication strategies

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ABSTRACT

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. This research paper provides a comparative analysis of communication strategies and their effectiveness in 17 regions across the EU, drawing on desk research, interviews and surveys of stakeholders, as well as a representative citizen survey in each of the case study regions. Furthermore, it reviews EU-level strategies for communicating Cohesion policy and presents the key findings of a survey of policy elites in the Commission and European Parliament on Cohesion policy communication. The main conclusion is 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, effective use of both traditional and social media and local differentiation. Based on these findings, a series of policy recommendations are set out to improve the communication of Cohesion policy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction.....	4
2.	Policy context	4
3.	Comparative assessment of Cohesion policy communication in the COHESIFY cases 6	
3.1	Approach to communication	6
3.2	Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies	13
3.3	Good practice examples.....	23
4.	Citizens attitudes to EU Cohesion policy: Survey results.....	28
5.	Assessment of EU communication strategies	36
5.1	European Commission strategies	36
5.2	Views from the European Commission: survey results.....	42
5.3	Views from the European Parliament: survey results	51
6.	Conclusions.....	59
6.1	Key findings.....	59
6.2	Policy implications and recommendations	60
	Annex. List of interviews	62



1. Introduction

Public attitudes to the European Union (EU) and its policies have acquired a new salience in the post-crisis era with increased commitment by EU institutions to reconnect with citizens following growing public disaffection in many parts of the EU. In this context, the central objective of the COHESIFY project is to assess the contribution of Cohesion policy to public support for and identification with the EU. A key mechanism through which EU Cohesion policy can impact on public attitudes is through communication. EU requirements explicitly require national and regional programme authorities and beneficiaries to publicise EU funding and their achievements to raise public awareness and appreciation of the role of the EU in their daily lives and to increase the effectiveness of implementation by increasing awareness of funding opportunities.

Set against this background, this paper provides a comparative analysis of EU Cohesion policy communication strategies at EU and national levels and assesses the implications for public attitudes to the EU. The analysis draws on case studies in 17 regions (from 12 Member States) following a common methodological framework based on desk research, 215 in-depth interviews and a survey of 400 stakeholders across the regions. The analysis is further complemented with some key findings of a large-scale survey of 500 citizens in each region, which included questions about citizen awareness and perceptions of Cohesion policy effectiveness. The second part of the analysis assesses EU-level strategies for communicating Cohesion policy in the European Commission and presents the key findings of two surveys of policy elites: 30 European Commission officials and 19 Members of the European Parliament working on Cohesion policy.

The research paper is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of the policy context for Cohesion policy communication with a review of the evolving regulatory requirements. The main substantive chapter provides a comparative analysis of communication strategies and experiences in the case study regions, distinguishing the different strategic frameworks, implementation practices and results, and the role of the media. Public attitudes to EU Cohesion policy in the case study regions are then reviewed drawing on a citizen survey. The next section turns to an assessment of EU strategies for Cohesion policy communication and presents the results of a survey of European Commission officials and Members of the European Parliament. Finally, the conclusion summarises the key findings and sets out a series of policy recommendations to improve the communication of Cohesion Policy.

2. Policy context

The regulatory context for publicity and communication has evolved significantly since the reform of the Structural Funds in 1988 involving a strengthening of the obligations on Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies and beneficiaries over time.¹ In 1989-1993, the regulatory obligations were weak with minimal provision for “technical assistance or information measures, including, in particular, measures to provide information for local and regional development agents”.²

¹ This section draws on the Handbook for Cohesion Policy Communication developed as part of the COHESIFY project.

² Article 32 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88 of 19 December 1988; Article 7 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 4254/88 of 19 December 1988.

In 1994-999, EU requirements were made far more explicit and prescriptive through a Commission decision with more detailed obligations.³ Implementing bodies were required to “provide adequate publicity” so that potential beneficiaries were “aware of the opportunities offered by the Structural Funds and to raise public awareness of Community action”. Provisions included requirements for billboards, plaques, references to Community assistance in measures. Target groups differentiated between potential beneficiaries and the general public, in the latter case emphasising the importance of informing the media, information events and publications.

For the 2000-2006 period, a specific regulation on ‘information and publicity measures’ was introduced with a new requirement for a communication action plan for each programme. Again, it distinguished between information for beneficiaries on assistance offered and information for the general public about EU assistance. Among the key requirements for beneficiaries were the use of billboards and plaques for projects receiving more than €500,000. More transparency on the beneficiaries of EU funding was required, including access to funding data; and an informal network of communications officers, the Structural Funds Information Team, was established.

In 2007-2013, the requirements were strengthened with provisions setting out requirements for the communication plan as well as the roles and responsibilities of those informing beneficiaries and the public. They required the programme communication plan to be approved by the Commission, the publication of a list of funded projects/beneficiaries, a major information activity annually, as well as annual and periodic reporting on information measures, and on the results of communication at the mid-term and end of the programme period.

In the current 2014-20 period, many of the previous requirements were continued and four main changes were made. First, the communication rules were integrated in the main regulation approved by the Council and European Parliament rather than a separate implementing regulation approved by the Commission. Second, the responsibility for approving the communication strategy for each programme was devolved to the MA and Monitoring Committee of the programmes – not requiring Commission approval as before – with annual updates provided to the Monitoring Committee. Third, financial management of multi-Fund communication activities would be facilitated by allowing joint funding of information activities. Finally, more transparency would be promoted by requiring a single Cohesion policy website/portal with information on all operational programmes, and project lists to include more information about content and in harmonised formats to allow comparisons across programmes. A more clearly defined role for the national information communication officer to coordinate coordination activities was also specified.

The evolution of the EU regulatory approach and increased priority placed on publicising EU Cohesion policy in recent years means that publicity and communication has received increased salience and are now seen as strategic functions, requiring a clear set of objectives, specification of institutional responsibilities, resources and tools, as well as operational actions.⁴ Aside from the increased political priority placed on communication as a consequence of growing scepticism about the EU in some Member States, it also reflects the growing professionalisation of the communication field at EU and Member State levels, with active engagement between those responsible for Cohesion policy and the communications industry.

Having reviewed the evolving policy context, the rest of this report turns to the comparative assessment of Cohesion policy communication strategies in the COHESIFY cases studies.

³ Commission Decision No. 94/342/EC concerning information and publicity measures to be carried out by the Member States concerning assistance from the Structural Funds and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), OJEC, No.L 152 of 18 June 1994.

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), EPRC, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

3. Comparative assessment of Cohesion policy communication in the COHESIFY cases

3.1 Approach to communication

The starting point for the **review of communication strategies** is a comparison of their structure in terms of their territorial coverage and the funds covered as well as the changes that have taken place between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020.

Table 1: Communication strategy coverage and funds

Region	2007-2013	2014-2020	Key changes in the new period
CYPRUS:	A common communication plan for the two national programmes	A common communication plan for the two national programmes	Greater emphasis placed on communication multipliers (media, professional associations, local governments).
GERMANY (Thuringia):	A common communication plan for the two regional programmes (ESF and ERDF)	A single ERDF communication plan for the period 2014-2020	Change in the funds included in the Communication Plan
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	A single ERDF communication plan	A single ERDF communication plan	No change
GREECE (Central Macedonia):	Central, Western and Eastern Macedonia and Thrace had a common communication plan for the period 2007-2013 for all Cohesion Policy funds	Regional communication plan for all Cohesion Policy funds	The territorial scope of communication plans changes
HUNGARY	A communication strategy for the Hungarian National Strategic Reference Framework	National communication Strategy for Cohesion Policy	Minor changes, but interviews highlight the loss of communication responsibilities of managers
IRELAND (S&E)	A communication Plan for all the regional programme in Ireland	Communication Strategy for ERDF	More comprehensive. Measures for 2014-20 are more clearly defined than for 2007-13
ITALY (Lombardy)	A communication plan of the ERDF and one for the ESF for Lombardy	Multifund communication plans for ERDF and ESF for Lombardy	The communication plans of the ERDF and ESF are strongly integrated, focused on the same objectives, based on the same strategies and implemented with the same procedures
THE NETHERLANDS (Flevoland)	Communication plan of OP West (where Flevoland is located)	Communication Strategy for the four ERDF programmes at national level, with annual activity plans at OP level	Centralisation in strategic planning; more emphasis on assessing and integrating communication implementation lessons annually
THE NETHERLANDS (Limburg)	Communication plan of OP Zuid 2007-2013		
POLAND	Podkarpackie communication plan (within the National Communication Strategy of the	Podkarpackie communication strategy 2014-2020	Objectives were formulated in more precise and concise way and the regional dimension of

Region	2007-2013	2014-2020	Key changes in the new period
(Podkarpackie)	NSRF 2007-2013)		communication activities was underlined
POLAND (Pomorskie)	Pomorskie communication plan in 2007-2013	Pomorskie communication strategy 2014-2020	
ROMANIA	A national communication strategy that sets the guidelines for 2007-2013 ROP communication plan		
SLOVENIA	One communication for all three OPs common for the CF, ERDF and ESF	One communication strategy common for the CF, ERDF and ESF	Greater stress on the role of information and communication as an integral part of efficient and effective policy
SPAIN (Andalucía)	Common Communication Strategy for ERDF and ESF for Andalucía		Greater emphasis on the role of beneficiaries for the dissemination of the achievements
SPAIN (Castilla y León)	Common Communication Strategy for ERDF and ESF for Castilla y León		
UNITED KINGDOM (Northeast England)	Communication Strategy for the NEE ERDF OP 2007-2013	Communications strategy for both ERDF and ESF (a single England-wide ERDF OP)	Less regional capacity for communication given the abolition of RDAs and regional programmes
UNITED KINGDOM (Scotland)	Communication plan for all ERDF and ESF OPs (4)	Communication plan for all ERDF and ESF OPs (2)	Devolution of communication responsibilities to lead partners



Regional Communication Strategy



National Communication Strategy

Cohesion policy communication strategies vary in their territorial scope and integration of funds reflecting the nature of programmes and decision-making responsibilities, ranging from regional communication strategies corresponding to a single Operational Programme (ERDF or ESF) to national communication strategies covering all ESIF Funds. Around half of the strategies analysed (8 out of 17) have seen changes from 2007-in 2014-2020 in their territorial scope, in several cases due to a shift in the programme architecture from regional to national programmes or vice versa.

In most regions, communication strategies have included objectives, measures and target groups defined from the outset. In the 2007-2013 period, only one region did not initially define specific measures or actions to achieve the objectives set, while in the 2014-2020 period, three regions did not provide this information. There is therefore less clarity in the definition of actions to achieve the objectives of the communication strategies in some cases.

Table 2: Strategic approaches in the communication plans

Region	Communication strategies/plans					
	2007-2013			2014-2020		
	Main objectives	Measures	Target groups	Main objectives	Measures	Target groups
CYPRUS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GERMANY	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓

Region	Communication strategies/plans					
	2007-2013			2014-2020		
	Main objectives	Measures	Target groups	Main objectives	Measures	Target groups
(Thuringia)						
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GREECE (Central Macedonia))	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
HUNGARY	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IRELAND (S&E)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ITALY (Lombardy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	✓
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	✓	NO	✓	✓	NO	✓
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
POLAND (Pomorskie)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ROMANIA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SLOVENIA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

With regard to communication **indicators**, there are marked differences in their definition and scope. With the exception of Scotland, all the communication strategies defined performance indicators for the monitoring of objectives in the period 2007-2013. The indicators were primarily of an output nature, while outcome or impact indicators are less commonly used. Comparing the two periods, in 2014-2020 there are fewer indicators of all types defined in the strategies, implying a reduction in the comprehensiveness of monitoring system for communication strategies.

Table 3 Monitoring indicators in the Communication strategies/plans 2007-2013

Region	Types of indicator		
	Output indicators	Result indicators	Impact indicators
CYPRUS	✓	✓	✓
GERMANY (Thuringia)	✓	✓	✓
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	✓	✓	✓
GREECE (Central Macedonia))	✓	✓	✓

Region	Types of indicator		
	Output indicators	Result indicators	Impact indicators
HUNGARY	NO	NO	✓
IRELAND (S&E)	✓	NO	✓
ITALY (Lombardy)	✓	NO	✓
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	✓	NO	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	✓	NO	NO
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	✓	✓	NO
POLAND (Pomorskie)	✓	✓	NO
ROMANIA	✓	✓	✓
SLOVENIA	✓	✓	NO
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	✓	✓	✓
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	✓	✓	✓
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	✓	NO	NO
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	NO ⁵	NO	NO
<i>Monitoring indicators in the Communication strategies/plans 2014-2020</i>			
CYPRUS	✓	✓	✓
GERMANY (Thuringia)	✓	✓	NO
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	NO	NO	NO
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	✓	✓	✓
HUNGARY	NO	NO	✓
IRELAND (S&E)	✓	NO	SI
ITALY (Lombardy)	✓	✓	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	NO	NO	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	NO	NO	NO
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	NO	NO	✓
POLAND (Pomorskie)	NO	NO	✓
ROMANIA	NO	✓	NO
SLOVENIA	✓	✓	✓
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	✓	✓	✓
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	✓	✓	✓
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	NO ⁶	NO ⁷	NO ⁸
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	NO	NO	NO

Comparative analysis of the **budgets allocated** to the different communication strategies is challenging due to nature of the strategies and different methods used in providing budget data. As noted, some strategies include all ESIF Funds while others cover a single fund, and the cases include both national and regional strategies. In terms of the calculation method, some cases provided the budget data for with reference only to European funds, while in other cases they have included domestic funds within the total budget.

Taking these constraints into account, the average budget allocated by the 17 regions analysed was EUR 15.9 million for the period 2007-2013. For the period 2014-2020, 5 regions have not provided budget data for communication strategies. In any case, with the exception of Lombardy (Italy), the communication budget has declined in all regions to EUR 6.2 million for 12 regions.

⁵ Indicators are not included in the communication strategies in any of the periods, although some data such as web visits, number of press releases, etc., have been reported in the Annual Implementation Reports.

⁶ Although no indicators are defined in the Communication Strategy, quantified targets are set in the Annual Plan of Communication Activities included in the Annual Reports.

⁷ Although no indicators are defined in the Communication Strategy, quantified targets are set in the Annual Plan of Communication Activities included in the Annual Reports.

⁸ Although no indicators are defined in the Communication Strategy, quantified targets are set in the Annual Plan of Communication Activities included in the Annual Reports.

Table 4: Budget for communication in 2007-13 and 2014-20

Region	Total allocation		Unit
	Allocation [2007-2013]	Allocation [2014-2020]	
CYPRUS	4,900,000 (85% Fund EIE)	3,500,000	EUR
GERMANY (Thuringia)	1,330,000 (ERDF)	1,165 (ERDF)	EUR millions
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	200.000 (ERDF)	ND	EUR
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	22,400,444 (19,450,0000 Fondos EIE)	2,947,764 (FEDER), 603,884 (FSE)	EUR
HUNGARY	28,5	34,7	EUR millions
IRELAND (S&E)	500,000 (ERDF)	500,000 (ERDF)	EUR
ITALY (Lombardy)	2,545	8 (4 ERDF and 4 ESF)	EUR millions
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	1,6 (ERDF)	ND	EUR millions
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	1,060,862.50 (ERDF)	ND	EUROS
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	4,6	4,7	EUR millions
POLAND (Pomorskie)	4,1	1,5	EUR millions
ROMANIA	172,000,000	ND	EUR
SLOVENIA	5,000,000	3,587,027	EUR
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	2,900,000 (1,800,000 ERDF and 1,100,000 ESF)	1,896,028 (50% ERDF and 50% ESF)	EUR
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	17,700,000 (67% ERDF and 33% ESF)	11,700,000 (70.09% ERDF and 29.91% ESF)	EUR
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	1,45	ND	EUR MILLIONS
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	30,000-40,000 annually	25,000-35,000 annually	Great Britain Pound (GBP)

Turning to the [governance of the communication strategies](#), the case studies generally do not clearly define whether there are regional or national communication officers, whether they coincide with the managing authorities of the programmes, whether specific staff have been designated for this work or whether they have other additional responsibilities. Yet, one of the objectives of the regulatory framework for 2014-200 was to provide more transparency by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of communication officers.

Networking can make an important contribution to communication coordination and learning and is regarded as an important coordination tool at EU level through the work of the INFORM and INIO networks. However, in the COHESIFY cases, only 8 regions established networks in 2007-2013, several of which are not dedicated to communication but instead to the exchange of information on general management and implementation issues. In the 2014-2020 period, 3 new communication networks were set up in the case studies analysed.

Table 5: Communication networks in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020

Region	Period	
	2007-2013	2014-2020
CYPRUS	NO	NO
GERMANY (Thuringia)	NO	NO
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	NO	NO
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	NO	NO
HUNGARY	NO	NO
IRELAND (S&E)	NO	YES
ITALY (Lombardy)	NO	Yes (National Communication network of communication officers)
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	YES	YES
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	YES	YES
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	YES (Regional Network of Local Partners and Interorganizational Network of EU Fund Implementation Bodies)	YES (Communication strategy intends to create coordination platform with all authorities involved in implementation of 5 European Funds in the Podkarpackie, i.e. ERDF, ESF, CF, EARDF and EMFF)
POLAND (Pomorskie)	YES (Regional Network of Local Partners and Interorganizational Network of EU Fund Implementation Bodies)	YES (Communication strategy intends to create coordination platform with all authorities involved in implementation of 5 European Funds in the Podkarpackie, i.e. ERDF, ESF, CF, EARDF and EMFF)
ROMANIA	YES	YES
SLOVENIA	Sí (red informal de informadores)	YES
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	NO	Yes (Regional communication network of Castilla y León)
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	YES (national networks (GERIP and GRECOAGE) and at regional level (RETINA))	YES (national networks (GERIP and GRECOAGE) and at regional level (RETINA))
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	YES (One Northeast-led partnership LEP partner networks (informal role). Not dedicated specifically to communication)	Yes (new network set up at national level for the national ERDF OP)
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	NO	NO (establishment of a new network for lead partner communications staff foreseen, but not set up)

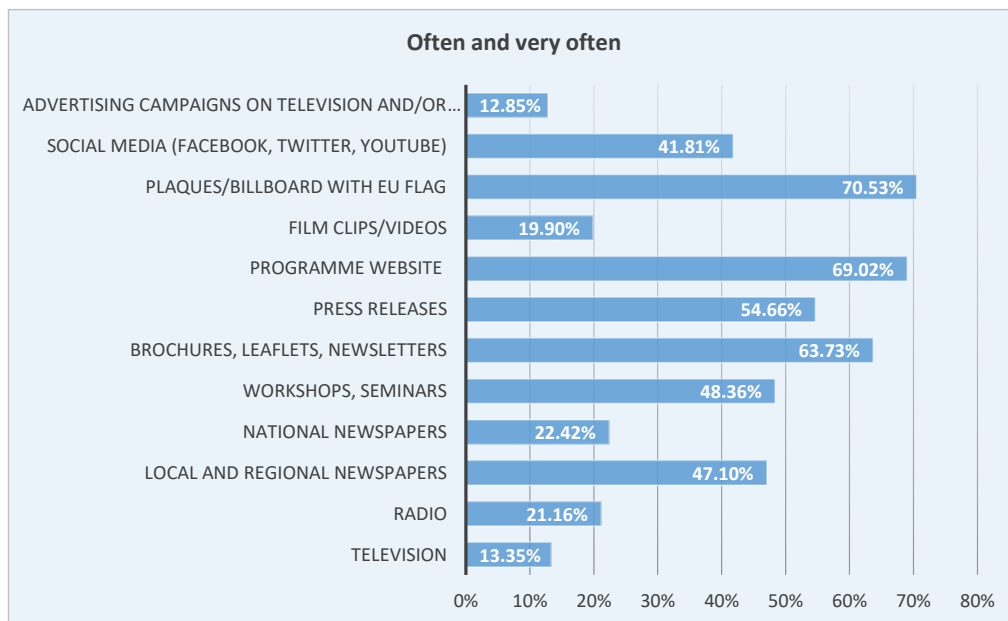
According to the [stakeholder interviews](#), a majority of interviewees across the cases agreed that publicity measures in 2007-2013 were aimed at raising awareness of the contribution and possibilities offered by EU funds to regional development. However, these measures were more geared towards potential beneficiaries and those involved in the management of the Funds than the public. In general, the effort made was considered to have been satisfactory, although it was centralised and formal in nature.

In the 2014-2020 period, there is widespread agreement on the change in the focus of communication strategies, which are more oriented towards involving beneficiaries, the media and other multipliers in the dissemination of information to the general public.

Nevertheless, communication is not a core priority relative to other management tasks and goals (such as spending, performance and compliance) in most cases. This is due to a lack of resources, time and staff to devote to communication work, especially in small programmes. The only exceptions include the Spanish and Romanian cases, which highlighted the strong priority placed on communication under the OPs.

Evidence from the [online survey of stakeholders](#) reveals that the most commonly used communication tools are plaques or billboard displaying the EU flag (70.53%), followed by the programme website (69.02%) and brochures and newsletters (63.7%). The least used communication tools are advertising campaigns on television or radio (12.85%) and the television and radio more generally (13.35%).

Figure 1: How regularly are the following communication tools used to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds?

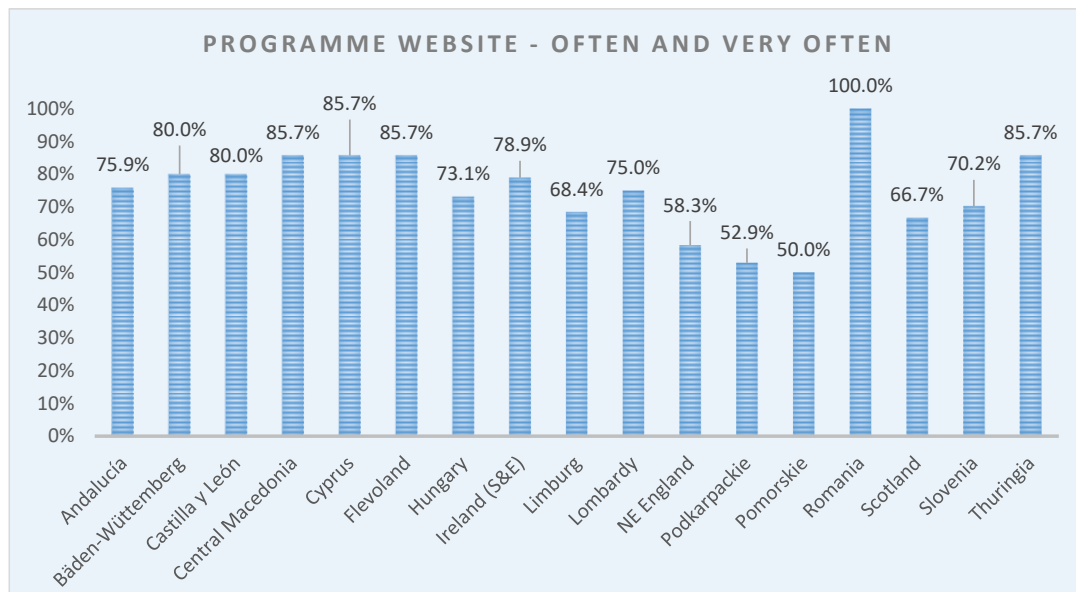


Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

As noted earlier, plaques and billboards are obligatory for projects of a certain value, while all programmes are required to set up a website to provide information on the use of the funds. As can be seen in the following graph, in the vast majority of the cases (with the exception of the Polish regions and N&E England) the stakeholders surveyed consider that the programme website is one of the most widely used tools for communicating about Cohesion policy.

This citizen survey also found that the internet is one of the main sources of information about EU funds among citizens. Polish citizens have the highest proportion of citizens that are informed about Cohesion policy through the internet. This could be interpreted as being at odds with the views of Polish stakeholders about the low usage of the programme website as a communication tool, although this is not necessarily the case given that the citizen survey did not specify an option for the programme website within the internet response category.

Figure 2: How regularly are the following communication tools used to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds – Programme website?



Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

3.2 Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies

Evaluation provides a key tool to assess the effectiveness of communication, to account for the results to policy stakeholders and the public, and to improve the management of communication. Most of the communication strategies have been subject to **evaluation exercises** in the period 2007-2013, either internally by programme staff or externally by evaluators (Table 6). Many of the evaluations carried out in 2007-2013 are general analyses incorporated in the communication chapter of the annual implementation reports – often merely listing communication activities and basic output achievements - and not necessarily carried out by external evaluators or providing rigorous assessment of results or impacts.

In general, the evaluations reviewed have found that the most effective communication actions are programme websites, advertising campaigns and events. In some regions, project-related events have achieved good results. Regions with monitoring indicators have assessed progress against the objectives set. Of particular note in the Spanish regions is the use of a computer application for monitoring the communication indicators defined by the national Managing Authority for all the communication strategies.

On the negative side, evaluations have found that there is insufficient coordination of communication activities, a lack of involvement of beneficiaries in communication and an absence of proactive engagement with the media. While the use of social media has increased, there is also widespread resistance to its use. It was also stressed that advertising campaigns are of low quality in terms of design and that the messages need to be more targeted. While communication and awareness about the EU's role in regional development among policy practitioners has improved over time, this is not the case in the media and politicians at all territorial levels.

Table 6. Assessment of effectiveness and implementation

Case	Evaluation	Positive	Negative
CYPRUS	YES	Positive result in relation to the indicators and the achievement of initial objectives. The results in the number of publications, events or development of web sites stand out by exceeding initial expectations.	Targets were not met in 2007-13 for billboards, advertising campaigns or press releases. In general, there is a general lack of improved relations with the media or a lack of targeting of dissemination actions more towards regions with a lower level of awareness.
GERMANY (Thuringia)	NO	The plaques and billboards have been considered valuable for informing the public. Annual events are also considered to have had a positive effect. The results of the advertising campaign are highlighted. The European information points also play an important role. In general, it is not considered necessary to make changes to the communication policy.	
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	YES	All indicators have achieved their objectives. The important role of the web in the dissemination of information is also noted.	On the negative side, the expected media coverage has not been achieved, and some projects have been publicised, but in many cases European funding has not been mentioned.
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	YES (in annual reports)	Increase in the number of users of the European Funds website	
HUNGARY	YES (mid-term and the ex post evaluations)	They appreciate that the communication requirements can strengthen their own strategy and institutional communication. Print press and the internet both were frequently identified as sources of information deemed to be efficient in conveying information about EU cohesion policy achievements. Beneficiaries had a good opinion of the NDA website, although they recommended changes to make searching the website easier. They were also generally satisfied with NDA customer services and NDA events. On the basis of the 2007-2013 evaluation findings, a specialized company has been set up for 2014-2020, to which beneficiaries can outsource all or some of their communication activities.	The mid-term evaluation highlighted that beneficiaries perceive the administrative burden related to project implementation as excessive. According to the mid-term evaluation, on this issue, the interests of the funders and of the beneficiaries are not fully aligned, and the communication strategy would need to better take into account the interests of the final beneficiaries. The evaluations highlighted that both potential and actual beneficiaries perceive that agencies are not applicant-friendly.
IRELAND (S&E)	No (online survey only, but no External Evaluation)	External evaluations have not been undertaken to measure the effectiveness of the communication actions carried out.	Interviews suggested that there is a lack of involvement of all those involved in the implementation and management of the funds (GA, intermediate bodies, beneficiaries, etc.).
ITALY (Lombardy)	Yes (Common evaluation for ERDF and ESF but internal)	The evaluation of communication was done in common with the evaluation of the OPs.	Lack of coordination of communication between the ERDF and the ESF. This is why in the new period the communication strategy is being implemented for all the funds.
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	Yes (External mid-term evaluation of all	Collection of published information and surveys by type of recipient. A significant percentage of the population is aware of the funds. The most significant event was the annual event (photographic exhibition of	Communication to civil society is not considered adequate. Interviewees point out that the targeting of funds to large centres and the small amount of money the country receives means that they are not visible to the population. It is

Case	Evaluation	Positive	Negative
	OPs, including analysis of the communication)	projects, open days of projects). The number of events held, the number of visits to the website is average, and the number of press releases has been low compared to other regions of the country. The information provided on the funds is satisfactory. Events with project visits are the most effective.	recommended to develop SWOTs on communication to guide the actions in the strategies, to insist on informative meetings, to use the web more, to send publications by post, to aim for more concrete information in the media.
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	Yes (External mid-term evaluation of all OPs, including analysis of the communication)	The evaluation included interviews and surveys. Knowledge of the programmes is satisfactory. Potential beneficiaries point to brochures, mailings and press articles as the most popular media outlets. For agencies, briefings. Communication is considered a key issue in the Monitoring Committees. The web is considered the central instrument of communication. The 2014-20 strategy was approached on the basis of a SWOT analysis recommending a joint strategy for all funds, which is clearer and cheaper.	Lack of participation of beneficiaries in communication. It is necessary to establish in advance the objectives of the scope of the communication actions. There is a lack of creativity in dissemination. More region-specific strategies are called for. Projects are only visible for a short period of time and communication obligations could be extended. Social media is considered the most effective tool.
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	YES	The majority of citizens perceive EU funds positively, although they are not very clear about how they work and the budget support they provide. Web pages are an important source of information, but perhaps not adapted in their characteristics and language to the general public. TV is recognised as the best channel of communication, although, like radio, there is a lack of involvement of the media in the dissemination. Inviting journalists to visit good practices has proved to be an effective tool.	The beneficiaries of funds have not been very active in disseminating their role. Communication efforts are generally seen as positive, but changes in the focus of actions are needed.
POLAND (Pomorskie)	YES	Most of the indicators achieved their objectives. The Managing Authority's website is widely used as a key source of information. In many cases, beneficiaries prefer private advice to find out about the real possibilities of the funds. The most important sources of information are panels, television, the press and the Internet.	Among the negative aspects is the incoherence of verbal and visual messages in communication actions, or outdated advertising campaign designs. Cooperation with the media is also considered limited. Another negative aspect is that people do not differentiate between programs, they do not know who is responsible for their management.
ROMANIA	YES	The evaluation of the communication measures carried out in 2014 showed that the communication policy was very successful in disseminating the EU's objectives and achievements. The population surveys carried out insist that the most appropriate means should be radio and television. However, they point to the web as the best place to publish program updates.	The main weaknesses in the dissemination of the OPs relate to the overly technical language used, the poor relationship with the media or the lack of regular evaluations of communication measures.
SLOVENIA	YES	A mid-term evaluation was carried out in 2010, which included the evaluation of actions and surveys. As a positive result, 85% of Slovenians know that the EU provides funds for the development of the regions. The best known of the funds is the ERDF. Respondents say more needs to be done to inform about opportunities and requirements for accessing funds. The most valued performance was the website. As positive aspects, innovative events with a greater presence of target public beyond officials were highlighted.	On the negative side, the lack of a link between objectives and indicators. The 2012 evaluation noted an increase in the percentage of respondents who see the role of the funds as positive, but no improvement in communication with journalists, and Strategy 14-20 shows that there is still a lack of collaboration with opinion formers, better use of existing networks, European information points... more use of ICT and other online tools and the need to disseminate more successful actions to improve fundraising.

Case	Evaluation	Positive	Negative
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	YES	Two evaluation exercises were carried out: mid-term in 2010 and final in 2013. Two evaluation exercises are also planned for the period 2014-2020. As positive points, the high level of effectiveness of the communication indicators in relation to the objectives initially set. It also highlights the existence of a computer application that facilitates the registration of indicators. Impact indicators have also been calculated on the basis of surveys to assess the public's knowledge of the European Funds.	The impact indicators did not have an initial value and therefore it has not been possible to assess their evolution. This has been resolved in the new period. In the last evaluation exercise carried out in 2013, it was recommended that social media be used, that paper publications be replaced by electronic ones, and that the dissemination of good practices be deepened.
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	YES	Two communication evaluations were carried out: mid-term in 2010 and final in 2013. Two evaluation exercises are also planned for the period 2014-2020. The performance, outcome and impact indicators have enabled annual monitoring and evaluation. The application of monitoring indicators has facilitated the recording of indicators. The performance values of the indicators have come very close to the objectives set. Especially performance indicators, such as visits to websites or attendees to events, show the attractiveness of the actions carried out. The impact indicators have been quantified on the basis of surveys in the two evaluation exercises carried out. These indicators have highlighted the knowledge acquired by those involved in the communication actions thanks to courses and technical conferences, the continuous support to this issue by the Andalusian Government.	As recommendations, it is requested to adapt the form of communication to intangible actions
UK (1) North East England	NO ⁹	Increased focus on the internet and electronic tools. Annual Implementation Reports suggest that objectives were achieved.	Limited information on the results of specific actions due to absence of evaluation. Lessons learned included the need to make greater use of social media, use interactive communication channels, reduce the number of printed materials, and emphasize the importance of the internet.
UK (2) Scotland	YES	Evaluation carried out in 2012 and separate evaluations of events. Positive and consistent messages about the role of the Structural Funds have been conveyed by the MA and partners. The goals set were achieved and the messages adapted to the target audience. More press releases than expected have been issued and the number of visits to the website has exceeded expectations. With regard to media coverage of the Funds, there is more interest in ERDF actions than in ESF.	Recommendations suggest areas for improvement: need to increase media coverage; projects should identify communication possibilities from the outset; improved training in funds; use a variety of media to deliver key messages, need for greater consistency in large-scale communication campaigns, include communication plans in projects, use social media more proactively, use of logos that are easier to reproduce, improve the exchange of good practices.

⁹ No specific communication evaluations have been made, but an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures was made in the Annual Reports and in the Interim Evaluation of the ERDF OP.

Table 7. Mechanisms established to measure the effectiveness of communication

Region	EVALUATION	Progress of the monitoring indicators of the Communication strategies/plans 2007-2013							
		Output indicators	Target 2007-2013	Achieved	Target 2014-2020	Result indicators	Target 2007-2013	Achieved	Target 2014-2020
CYPRUS	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
GERMANY (Thuringia)	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	YES (annual reports)	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
HUNGARY	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
IRELAND (S&E)	NO (online survey only, but no External Evaluation)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
ITALY (Lombardy)	YES (Common evaluation for ERDF and ESF but internal)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	YES (External mid-term evaluation of all OPs, including analysis of the communication)	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	YES (External mid-term evaluation of all OPs, including analysis of communication)	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
POLAND (Pomorskie)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
ROMANIA	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES
SLOVENIA	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
SPAIN: Castilla y León	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
SPAIN: Andalucía	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
UNITED KINGDOM North East England	NO ¹⁰	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
UNITED KINGDOM Scotland	YES	NO ¹¹	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

¹⁰ No specific communication evaluations have been made, but an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures was made in the Annual Reports and in the Interim Evaluation of the ERDF OP.

⁸ Output indicators/targets not identified in the Communication Plan but reported in AIR

A key weakness hampering the evaluation of communication strategies is the absence of indicators with objectives in many of the strategies, which makes it impossible to analyse whether the communication actions have achieved the expected results (Table 7). In this sense, the data on indicators collected show progress in the implementation of communication actions, but it is not possible to assess whether the results achieved correspond to the initial expectations.

Performance targets that have not been achieved in some regions include the number of campaigns, merchandising or events. Targets have generally been exceeded in relation to the number of publications. Achieved targets in most cases include the number of visits to websites and the number of people attending events.

Evaluations in several regions have used surveys of stakeholders and of citizens. Citizen surveys have assessed the level of public awareness of EU Funds. While this does not necessarily measure the impact of communication activities, the level of awareness is generally regarded as a satisfactory result. Aside from public awareness, commonly used impact indicators include satisfaction with websites and the number of visits as well as attendees to events.

The definition and categorisation of performance indicators in terms of results and impact indicators is not always consistent due to weak regulatory provisions and/or methodological guidance. For instance, the number of visits to websites is conceived as an impact indicator in some cases and a result indicator in others.

Table 8. Communication performance assessment

	Impact indicators	Targets 2007-2013	Achieved (2010)	Achieved (2013)	Targets 2014-2020
CYPRUS	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
GERMANY (Thuringia)	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
HUNGARY	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
IRELAND (S&E)	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
ITALY (Lombardy): Son indicadores sólo de FEDER	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
POLAND (Pomorskie)	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
ROMANIA	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
SLOVENIA	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Interviews with stakeholders on the effectiveness of communication tools found that they were generally considered to be adequate or satisfactory, although the United Kingdom case was conditioned by the divisive politics of the referendum vote on leaving the EU which hampered proactive publicity. Among the most effective actions highlighted are media-related activities (press, radio and television advertisements). Specific high-impact actions highlighted in some regions included:

- Student oriented actions (Lombardy)
- Internet and social media (Central Macedonia, Castilla y León and Northeast England).

Interviews with stakeholders found that events, seminars and meetings were viewed as particularly effective for their ability to raise awareness and provide information directly to target groups in the (Cyprus, Central Macedonia and Lombardy). The important role of websites was also highlighted in the interviews. Many stakeholders in the regions agree that press releases and radio are efficient communication actions. In some cases, large advertising campaigns were considered to be very effective measures, although their high cost prohibits widespread usage.

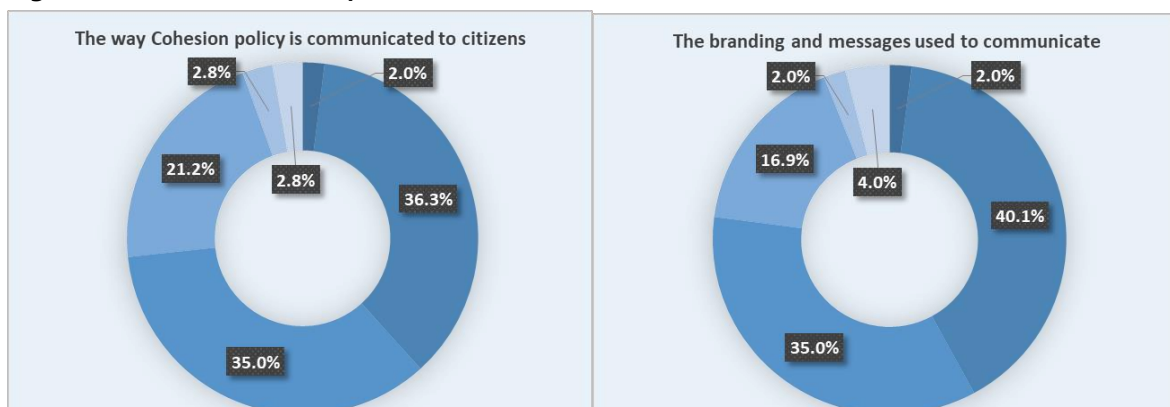
There is recognition of the need to increase social media use because of the significant societal impact. In this respect, many regions acknowledge that social media is not currently used well (e.g. Cyprus, Central Macedonia, Castilla y León, and Andalucía).

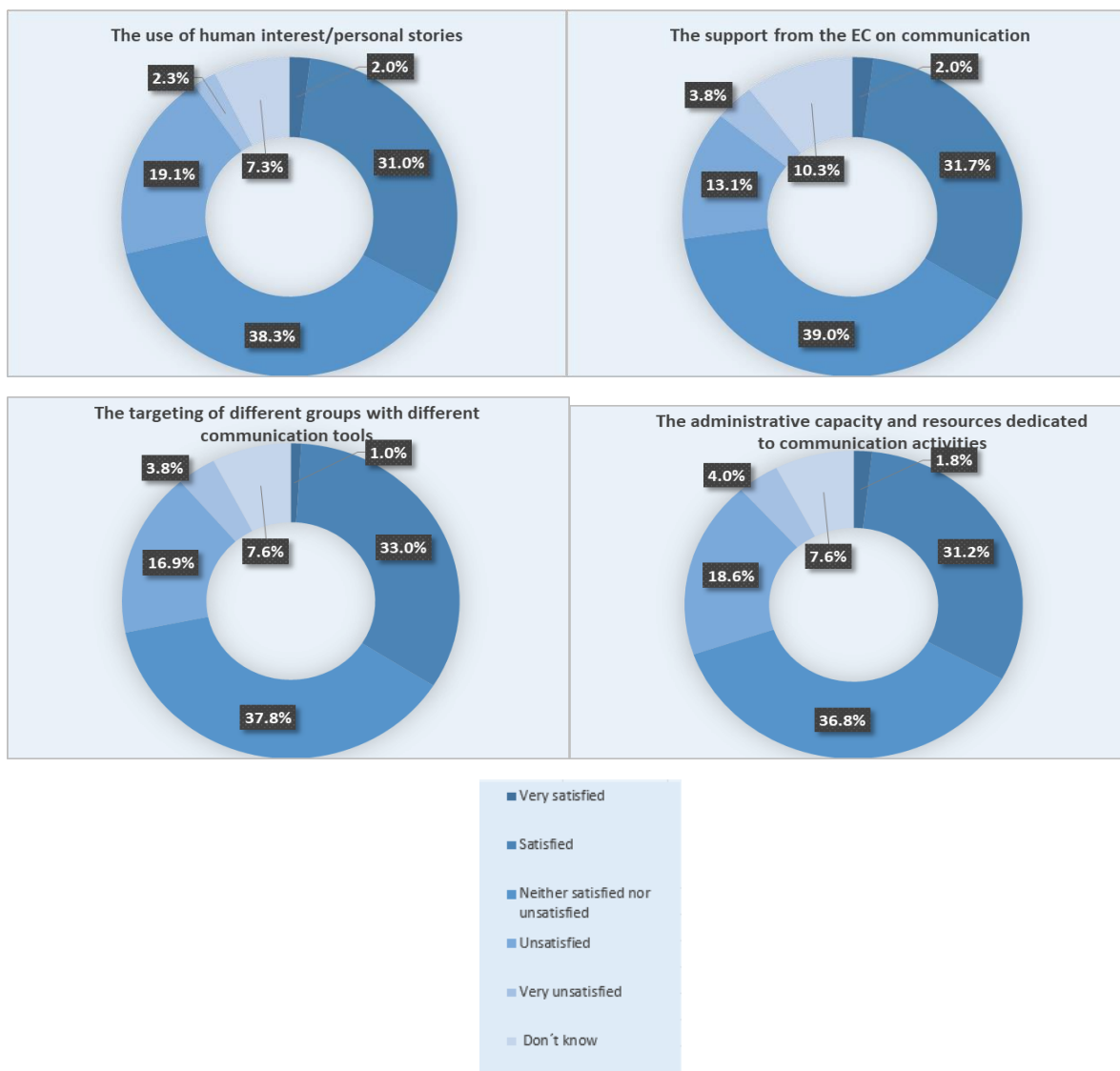
Turning to the use of traditional media, many of the stakeholders in the regions argued that the media mainly report negative news about Cohesion Policy (Cyprus, Central Macedonia, Lombardy, Slovenia). Further, little attention is paid to EU news, and when it is given, it often refers to scandals and episodes of corruption because it attracts more public attention. By contrast, in Andalusia the tone is considered generally positive, while in Castilla y León and Scotland it is said that reporting is relatively neutral.

Media relationships are not proactively developed or smooth (e.g. Cyprus, Slovenia, Castilla y León and Andalusia). In some cases, the exchange of information is managed through press offices but with a low level of frequency. Slovenia stresses in this regard that issues relating to the European Union are often very technical, bureaucratic and complicated, so the media do not see it as being of general interest.

The [online survey of stakeholders](#) found that stakeholders were generally satisfied or very satisfied with the way in which Cohesion Policy is communicated across all the key issues covered: the messages used for communication (75.01%), communication to citizens (71.03%), the use of personal stories (69.3%), the European Commission's support for communication (70.7%), how to approach the different target groups with the most appropriate communication tools (70.9%) and the administrative capacity and resources allocated to communication (68%).

Figure 3: How satisfied are you with:





Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

Turning to the effectiveness of communication in publicising achievements, 48.11% of the surveyed stakeholders considered that communication work was effective in transmitting the achievements of Cohesion Policy and the role of the EU, as well as the results of EU-funded projects (54.16%).

Lower levels of effectiveness can be seen in fostering good media relations to reach the public (40.55%) and the use of social media (35.52%). This last point is also backed up by the citizen survey, which found that social media are one of the least relevant sources of information about EU funding, as well as the interviews cited earlier.

Table 9: To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:

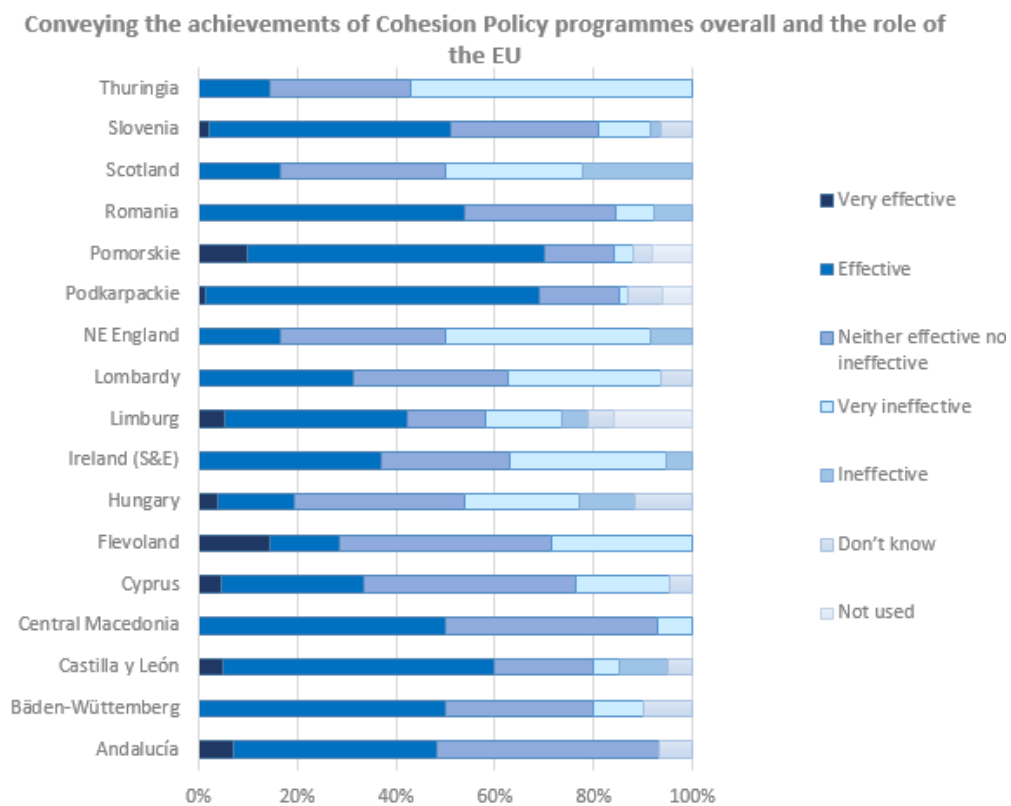
	Conveying the achievements of Cohesion Policy programmes overall and the role of the EU	Conveying the achievements of co-funded projects and the role of the EU	Using social media to promote the programme and projects (e.g. Twitter, Youtube, Facebook)	Fostering good working relations with the media and press to reach the general public
Very effective	3.53%	5.29%	5.29%	5.29%
Effective	44.58%	48.87%	30.23%	35.26%

	Conveying the achievements of Cohesion Policy programmes overall and the role of the EU	Conveying the achievements of co-funded projects and the role of the EU	Using social media to promote the programme and projects (e.g. Twitter, Youtube, Facebook)	Fostering good working relations with the media and press to reach the general public
Neither effective nor ineffective	27.46%	24.69%	30.73%	30.48%
Ineffective	13.10%	11.08%	13.35%	10.08%
Very ineffective	3.53%	3.53%	3.53%	4.28%
Don't know	5.04%	4.79%	9.32%	10.08%
Not used	2.77%	1.76%	7.56%	4.53%

Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

The publicity of the achievements of Cohesion Policy and of the role of the EU is considered most effective in the Polish regions (Pomorskie 70% and Podkarpackie 69.12%), also confirmed by the citizen survey which found that Polish citizens value the effectiveness of EU funding for regional development highly. The next highest scores were found in Castilla y León (60%), Romania (53.85%) and Slovenia (51.06%).

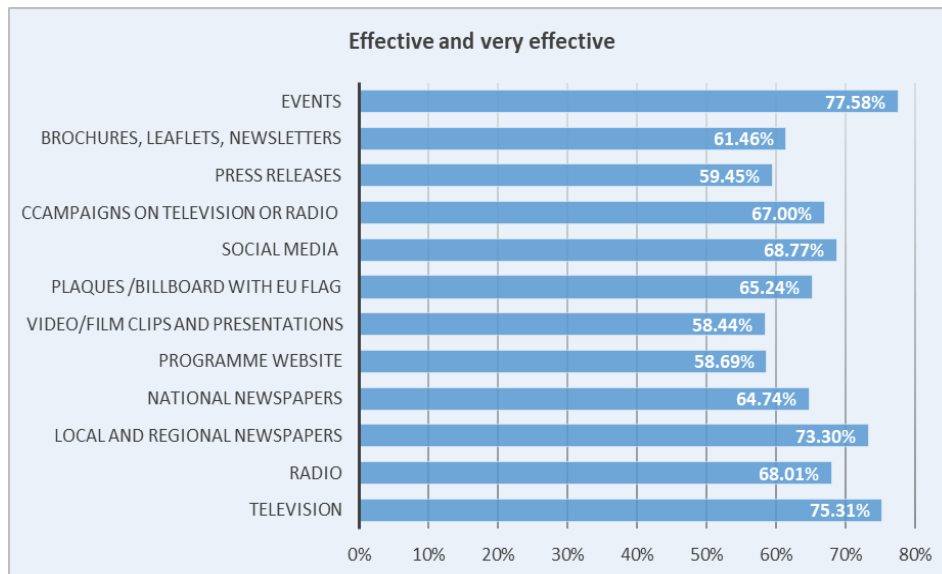
Figure 4: To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:



Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

When asked about the effectiveness of specific communication measures in increasing citizen awareness of EU Cohesion Policy, 77.6% of the stakeholders consider that public events are the best tools to make citizens aware of Cohesion policy achievements. This was closely followed by television (75.3%) and regional/local newspapers (73.3%). The important role of television contrasts with the citizen survey, which found that television is not a key source of information about EU funds. It is also striking that stakeholders consider that the programme website is one of the most widely used communication tools, it is also one of the least valued tools in terms of increasing citizens' awareness of Cohesion Policy.

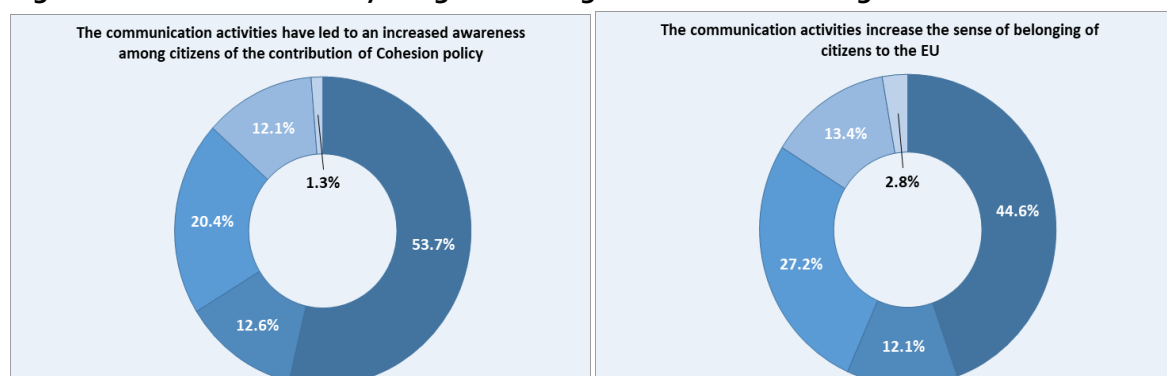
Figure 5: How effective do you think each of these communication measures are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

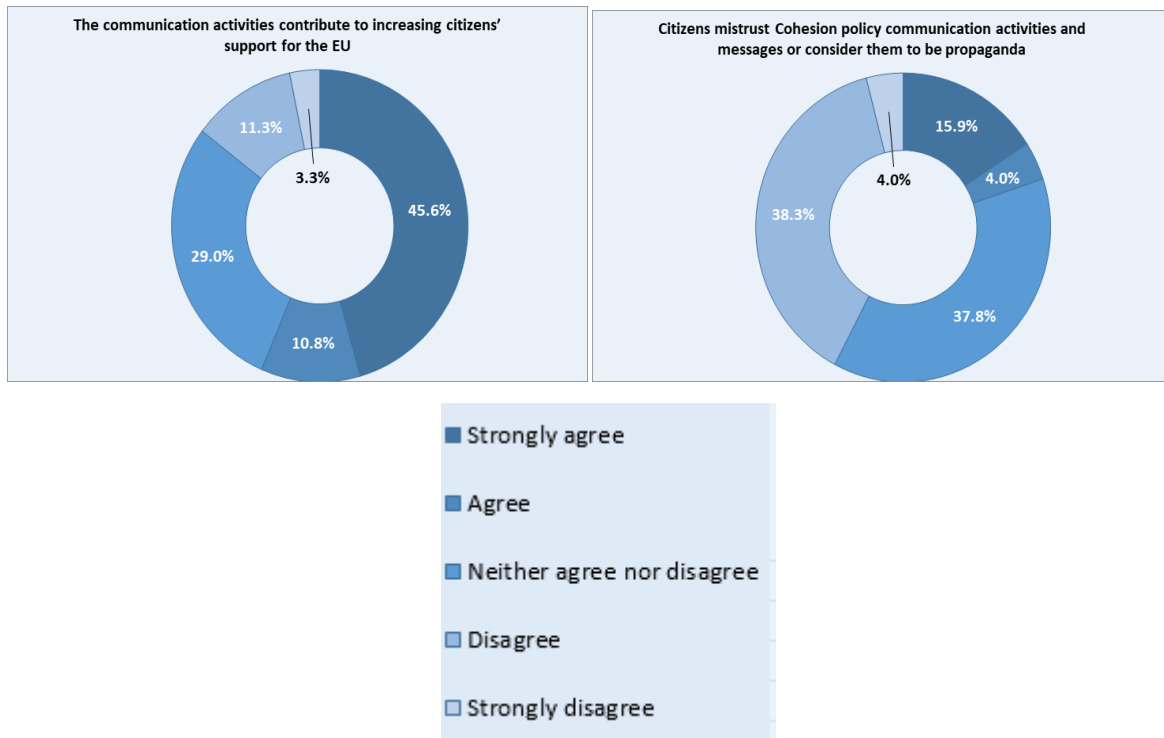


Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

Around two-thirds of stakeholders surveyed (66.3%) felt that the communication activities contributed to raising public awareness of the achievements made in the development of their regions. A significantly lower share consider that these activities contribute to the feeling of belonging to the European Union (56.7%) or increase citizen's support for the EU (56.4%). On the other hand, 42.3% do not support the claim that citizens mistrust Cohesion policy communication activities and messages or consider them to be propaganda.

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements





Source: COHESIFY stakeholder survey, 2017

Summing up the implications of the stakeholder survey for improving public awareness and appreciation of Cohesion policy, what is needed most is to more proactively promote social media use, the organisation of major information events (such as fairs), and greater use of television and press media. The latter would require a considerable increase in the funding for communication, which in many cases has declined over time. A less resource-intensive recommendation is to better adapt message to target groups. In the case of Spain, for example, there is increased emphasis on educational institutions for young people as key target group. There are also experiences with proactive engagement with journalists and encouraging beneficiaries to be more involved in communicating the achievements of the Funds.

3.3 Good practice examples

The research teams identified communication good practices in their case studies based on desk research and interviews with stakeholders. While specific selection criteria were not specified in all cases, among the most commonly used criteria are:

- The presence of innovative elements.
- The existence of synergies with other policies.
- The combination of different advertising actions for the same project.
- The integration of horizontal principles in the message.

The main actions identified as good practices include the use of social media, cinema campaigns, radio spots, experiences of beneficiaries on YouTube channels, videos, television programmes on the EU and open-air events. There are a number of actions identified by interviewees as good

practices that are questionable, such as the publication of lists of beneficiaries and the holding of an annual event, given that they are regulatory obligations and for which evidence was not provided to back up the claims.

Among the most often cited good practice examples cited in the interviews are programme websites, advertising campaigns on buses, television or newspapers (Central Macedonia, Lombardy, Slovenia, Castilla y León and Andalusia). The organisation of training days or capacity building seminars for the policy community in regions such as Castilla y León and Scotland was also highlighted. In general, the comprehensiveness and variety of information on good practices is limited.

Table 10: Good practice criteria for assessing communication measures

REGION	Criteria	Description
CYPRUS	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of annual activities • Publication of the list of beneficiaries • Raising the flag of EU in front of the offices of the Managing Authorities (9-16 may) • Wider use of the internet • Organizing meetings • Participation in Exhibitions • Publication and dissemination of the printed material, presenting the development of projects and their benefits • Informing the public about the outcome of the results of the projects' actions with the exploitation of the communication tools (information multipliers, press conferences, opinion leaders, network, etc.) • Effective use of social media (Campaigns to advertise the results) • Measurement of the effectiveness in raising visibility of the programme
GERMANY (Thuringia)	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochures • Regional and national advertisement campaigns (e.g. the location campaign "This is Thuringia"): campaign was called "This is Thuringia" and one of the main objectives was to inform the general public about the business location Thuringia. • Radio and cinema spots: The campaign "This is Thuringia" was accompanied by 300 billboards across Thuringia, 33.400 postal cards in 180 outlets, radio spots, nationwide advertisements, and one cinema spot. An additional programme "Thüringen Dynamik" has been advertised by 62 radio spots on two radio stations where it has been explicitly mentioned that this programme is funded by the ERDF.
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither AIRs nor the several evaluation reports highlight good practice examples in a very detailed manner. Therefore, we just list the few examples mentioned in the reports. • Webpage: • illustrated projects with a high quality of photos raises attention and all information has been up-to-date • the tool looks very professional and is eye-catching (in particular by showing nicely the contribution of the EU) • Exhibitions with big posters and billboards are seen as very positive due to the large-size, well-structured and coherent message of photos and content • Many media reports on a project in Pforzheim ("Kreativzentrum im Emma-Jaeger-Bad") over time raised citizens' awareness to this project, thus indicating that regional newspapers could be a valuable source to anchor EU-funded projects in the mind of citizens
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely detailed monitoring of website activity • Extensive surveys conducted to assess and improve outreach of Communication and Publicity Measures • Highlighted focus on vulnerable groups in 2014-2020 Communication Plan
HUNGARY	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift towards the use of the regional and local media, in line with the EU requirement and EU-wide communication trends • Support to TV programmes and media cooperation: messages are not sent to the target groups as advertisements, but in another form of communication (by using advertisements, communication typically becomes less effective and efficient) • Workshops and information days: these have been found to significantly increase application intensity, participants perceive that these made them well-informed, and had a similar impact on them as internet-based communication. • Website of the NDA: most important and useful tool of information provision for those who have already applied for funding. • Segmented communication by target group; workshops to support for mobilization, television and press ads for general information provision.

REGION	Criteria	Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2012 summer "Giant Numbers" campaign. The campaign had the aim to use distinctive and unusual means to demonstrate to people the magnitude of investments that have all been implemented to improve their everyday lives. the 2014-2020 partnership website www.szamitaszavam.hu, a mini-campaign using infographics tools that became popular, a brochure called 63000 steps in Hungary a brochure called Development in 172 seconds
IRELAND (S&E)	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation with other Structural Funds at the National Ploughing Championships Storytelling of individual beneficiaries' experiences (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsV7qQW5CRpooZOFbgBSTRQ)
ITALY (Lombardy)	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study 1 - "Discovering the ROP Lombardy" Case study 2 - "Lombardy towards Expo: dynamic and sustainable, thanks to the ROP ERDF"
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The open information days (Europa kijkdagen) A good practice in communication was established during the previous European programme (of the 2000-2006 period). The ERDF programme had a TV programme about EU funds in Flevoland for 30 minutes every week, broadcasted by the regional television.
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Euregio Maas-Rijn programme one of the funding lines is for so-called 'people-to-people' projects. The objective is to stimulate cross national cultural cooperation. It has a relative small budget but is very effective in raising awareness of EU funds and the EU among the general public. An example is cofounding of a Euregional football tournament or another type of cross border event.
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study tours for regional journalists and public opinion leaders – during 2007-2013 14 study tours were organized (each lasting 2 days). Each of such tours visited EU funded projects. Visits and social events were combined with information meetings and workshops aimed at raising awareness about effectiveness of EU funding in Podkarpackie. EU Knowledge Quiz/Challenge for schools - Managing Authority organized 5 editions of the knowledge contest on European Funds. EU Outdoor Events – Managing Authority organized or co-organized several outdoor events.
POLAND (Pomorskie)	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media campaigns – Managing Authority with the support of the external social media agency actively uses social media platforms. EU Outdoor Events "EU Funds Open Days" – Managing co-organized several outdoor events in cooperation with the National Coordination Unit.
ROMANIA	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2014 Media Campaign "Traveller in the Regio World" The use of webpages of IBs and MA Evaluations of the communication activities undertaken by the ROP
SLOVENIA	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and promotion campaign "1,000 courses for 1,000 drivers". Annual OP SRDP event in 2010 Information and promotion campaign 'European funds for a cleaner environment'. annual events in 2012 and 2013 Information and promotion campaign for 2013
SPAIN (1): Castilla y León	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual public event for the year 2008 in which a number companies were awarded the distinction "Best of Castilla y León" recognising them as Collaborating Entities in Equal Opportunities between Men and Women. Dissemination of co-financing by the ERDF to extend the cover of digital terrestrial television in Phase I with informative plaques in the main towns covered. Creation of a website to include all the aspects related to the ERDF in the Town Council of Palencia. Customised communication to the person working with the co-financing in their employment contract by the ESF.

REGION	Criteria	Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of the GERIP Network "Spanish group of Information and Advertising Managers". • Preparation in the GERIP network of the "General Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation of Communication Plans of the ERDF Operational Programmes, Cohesion Fund and ESF 2007-2013". • Publication on the public website of the Aena Contracting Portal of all the notices of invitation to tender for contracting files requiring concurrency, with reference to those co-financed by the ERDF. • Internal Information Seminars conducted by the ICEX, to report on the obligations in the field of communication in the current programming period (2007-2013). • In the second half of the programming period, the communication actions were the following: • Heritage website for Castilla y León. • Structural Funds course • Publication by the European Commission of Seven Lives of the History of a Researcher of Castilla y León beneficiary of the European Social Fund.
SPAIN (2): Andalucía	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Workshops for Beneficiaries of European Funds in Andalucía and Help Manuals, carried out by the Directorate General of European Funds. • The Video "travel through Andalucía with European Funds", carried out by the Directorate General of European Funds. • The Video "the 25 year Bus of European Funds in Andalucía", carried out by the Directorate General of European Funds. • The magazine "digital footprint" carried out by the Directorate General of European Funds. • The Communication Actions in Social Media: 1 st Photography Competition on European Funds in Andalucía and Help Manuals, carried out by the Directorate General of European Funds. • "Guided Walks through the Genoese Park", presented by the Town Council of Cadiz. • "Royal Page Activity of the European Union (Christmas 2011)", carried out by the Town Council of Malaga, by the Centre for Children's and Adolescent's animation of the Urban Initiative Project. • "Coexist in Malaga", carried out by the Town Council of Málaga. • The Translation of Serigraphs on computers co-financed by the ERDF, carried out by the Red.es. Organisation • An internal IT application to collect information from the port authorities, carried out by the "Ports of the State". • The first meeting of women business owners and entrepreneurs of Motril. • The Game developed in the Children's Programme "The Band", on Canal Sur.
UNITED KINGDOM (1) North East England	ND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERDF Practitioner Network came to be recognised as an important forum for discussion and demonstration of good practice in terms of mobilising stakeholder involvement, albeit not focusing specifically on communication.
UNITED KINGDOM (2) Scotland	ND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SQA's Skills for Scotland (S4S) project won an award for the best use of publicity in a European funded project. • Online booklet. The use of the main results of the previous OPs formed an important part of publicity for the 2014-20 programmes and highlighted a new approach to embracing digital technology.

Source: COHESIFY case studies

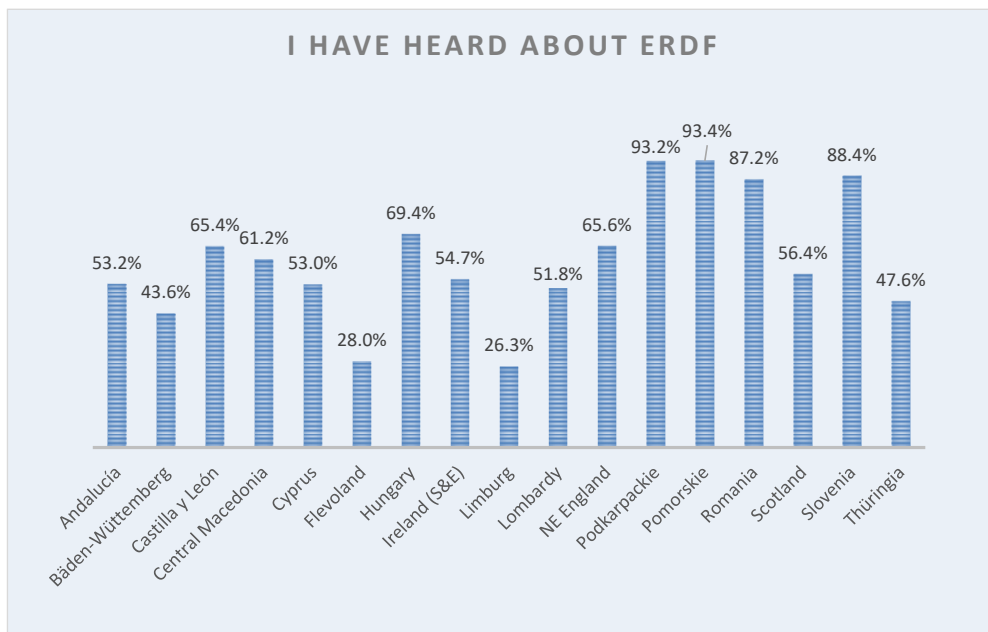
4. Citizens attitudes to EU Cohesion policy: Survey results

Further insight on the policy implications for citizens can be gained from the COHESIFY citizen survey of 8,500 citizens (500 in each region), which asked questions about citizens awareness of EU Funds and projects, sources of information and perceived effectiveness.

Awareness of EU Funds and projects

The citizen survey revealed that the most well-known fund is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which is unsurprising given that it accounts for the largest share of investment and number of projects. The greatest level of awareness can be seen in those regions with the highest allocations (in Poland, Slovenia and Romania).

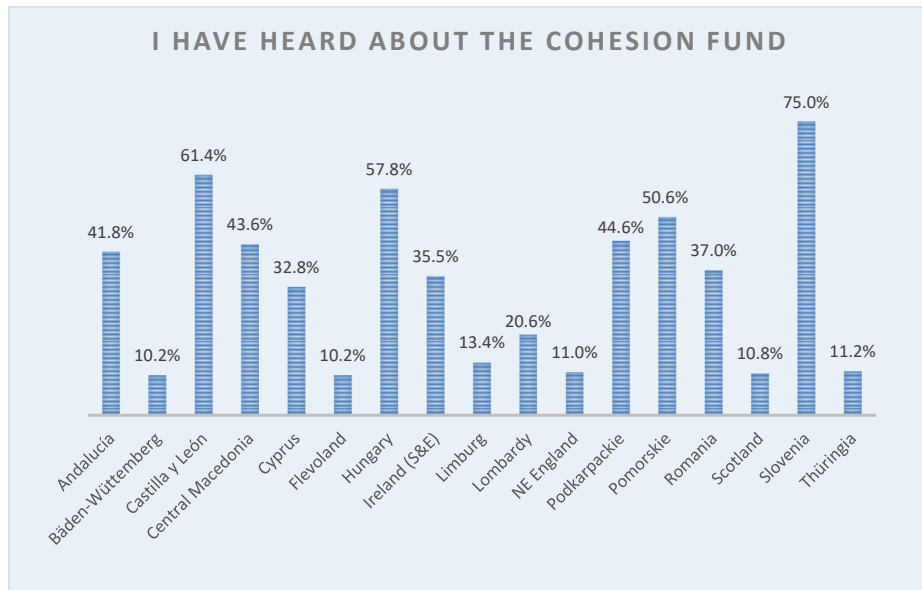
Figure 7: Have you heard about the following funds?



Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

On the other hand, the Cohesion Fund is the least known fund. It should be noted that many of the regions studied are not (and have never been) eligible for the Cohesion Fund, which may explain the low level of awareness in these cases.

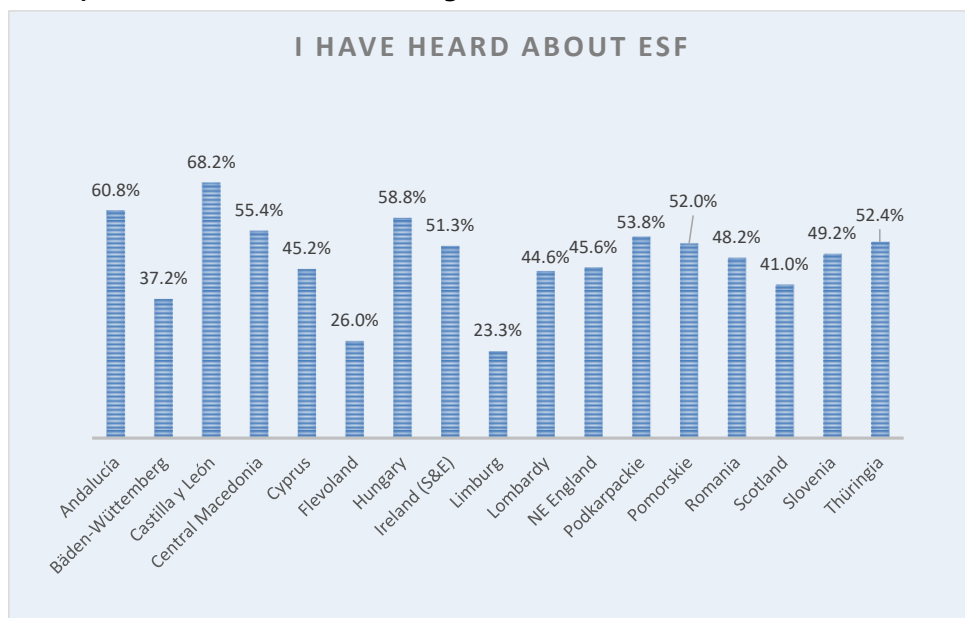
Figure 8: Have you heard about the following funds?



Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

Awareness of the European Social Fund (ESF) is particularly high in the Spanish regions, which may be related to the high level of unemployment since the crisis in Spain and the significant efforts to exploit the ESF to address this and to disseminate the results.

Figure 9: Have you heard about the following funds?

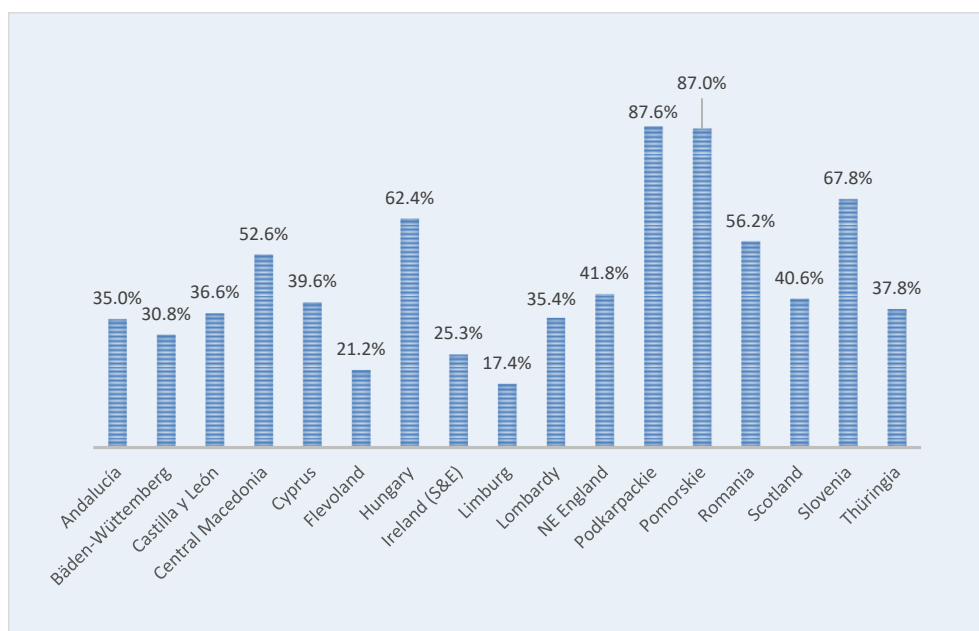


Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

It is in the Dutch regions (Limburg and Flevoland) where there is least awareness of different Cohesion Policy funds, with in some cases more than 20 percentage less awareness than the average.

Turning now to awareness of EU funded projects among citizens, the highest levels can be seen in the Polish regions (Podkarpackie and Pomorskie) where 87% of respondents had heard of EU-funded projects to improve their city or region. This was followed by Slovenia – West region (67.8%), Hungary – West region (62.4%) and Central Macedonia (52.4%). In the remaining regions, less than 50% of the surveyed population were aware of EU funded projects. Of note is the Dutch region Limburg, where only 17.4% were aware of EU funded projects to improve their region or city. The low awareness in the Dutch regions may reflect the low level of funding and low visibility of projects, but also indicates a need for greater efforts to publicise EU projects and their achievements.

Figure 10: Have you heard about any such EU funded projects to improve your own region or city?



Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

When asked where they heard about EU Cohesion policy, the citizens surveyed reported 5 main sources of knowledge about EU funded projects:

- Local newspapers: one of the most traditional sources of information in Andalucía, Baden Württemberg, Castilla y León, Flevoland, Limburg, North East England, Scotland, Slovenia and Thüringia.
- Personal experience: Andalucía, Central Macedonia, Flevoland, Limburg, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie, Romania, Scotland and Thüringia.
- National TV: Andalucía, Ireland (S&E), Lombardy, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie, Romania, Scotland and Slovenia.
- Internet: Central Macedonia, Cyprus, Podkarpackie, Pomorskie and Scotland.
- Billboard: Castilla y León, Hungary and Ireland (S&E).

On the other hand, four sources are repeated as the least used source of information about EU funded projects:

- National radio: Andalucía, Baden-Württemberg, Central Macedonia, Flevoland, Hungary, Limburg, Lombardy, NE England and Scotland.
- Local radio: Baden-Württemberg, Flevoland, Hungary, Limburg, Lombardy, NE England, Scotland and Slovenia.
- Social media: Baden-Württemberg, Castilla y León, Hungary, Ireland (S&E), Limburg, Lombardy, NE England, Slovenia and Thüringia.
- Workplace: Andalucía, Baden-Württemberg, Castilla y León, Flevoland, Limburg, Scotland and Thüringia.

The low visibility of EU Cohesion policy on social media is striking, especially because it is one of the most widely used and growing sources of information and news consumption by ordinary citizens.

Table 11: Where did you hear about it [EU funded projects to improve your region or city]?

Case study	Options	National newspapers	Local newspapers	National TV	Local TV	National radio	Local radio	Internet	Social media	Billboard	Workplace	Personal experience	Other
Andalucía	Yes	46.3%	64%	64.6%	55.4%	36%	40%	56%	40%	60%	38.9%	64.6%	14.9%
	No	52.6%	35.4%	34.9%	43.4%	60.6%	56%	42.9%	58.9%	38.3%	61.1%	35.4%	83.4%
Bäden-Württemberg	Yes	40.9%	61.7%	33.8%	27.9%	28.6%	29.2%	36.4%	18.8%	32.5%	28.6%	46.8%	26%
	No	59.1%	38.3%	65.6%	72.1	71.4%	70.8%	63.6%	79.9%	65.6%	71.4%	52.6%	72.7%
Castilla y León	Yes	51.9%	72.1%	54.1%	59%	37.2%	43.7%	48.1%	25.1%	63.4%	29%	57.4%	11.5%
	No	48.1%	27.9%	44.3%	50.4%	61.2%	53.6%	51.9%	74.3%	35%	70.5%	41.5%	85.2%
Central Macedonia	Yes	26.2%	27%	52.9%	36.5%	28.1%	33.5%	76.4%	58.2%	51.7%	35%	66.2%	11%
	No	73.8%	73%	46.4%	63.1%	71.5%	66.5%	23.%	41.8%	47.5%	64.6%	33.8%	88.2%
Cyprus	Yes	25,8%	19.2%	46%	25.8%	32.3%	22.2%	57.6%	39.9%	30.3%	27.8%	39.9%	22.2%
	No	73,7%	80.3%	53%	73.7%	67.7%	77.3%	42.4%	59.6%	69.2%	72.2%	60.1%	77.8%
Flevoland	Yes	30.2%	67.9%	41.5%	33%	21.7%	19.8%	49.1%	34.9%	44.3%	29.2%	50.9%	12.3%
	No	68.9%	31.1%	57.5%	67%	76.4%	79.2%	50.9%	64.2%	54.7%	69.8%	48.1%	85.8%
Hungary	Yes	17%	33.3%	30.4%	29.8%	11.5%	16%	25.6%	15.1%	53.3%	12.2%	38.1%	7.4%
	No	83%	66.7%	69.6%	79.2%	88.5%	84%	74.4%	84.9%	49.7%	87.8%	61.9%	87.8%
Ireland (S&E)	Yes	47.2%	40.2%	50.4%	28.3%	37%	26%	36.2%	28.3%	52%	33.1%	30.7%	6.3%
	No	52.8%	59.8%	49.6%	71.7%	62.2%	74%	63.8%	71.7%	48%	66.9%	69.3%	93.7%
Limburg	Yes	38.1%	73.2%	40.2%	41.2%	28.9%	28.9%	43.3%	28.9%	49.5%	24.7%	56.7%	14.4%
	No	59.8%	26.8%	59.8%	%.	71.1%	71.1%	56.7%	70.1%	50.5%	75.3%	43.3%	81.4%
Lombardy	Yes	45.8%	24.9%	44.6%	24.3%	19.8%	8.5%	39.5%	18.1%	18.6%	27.1%	37.9%	6.2%

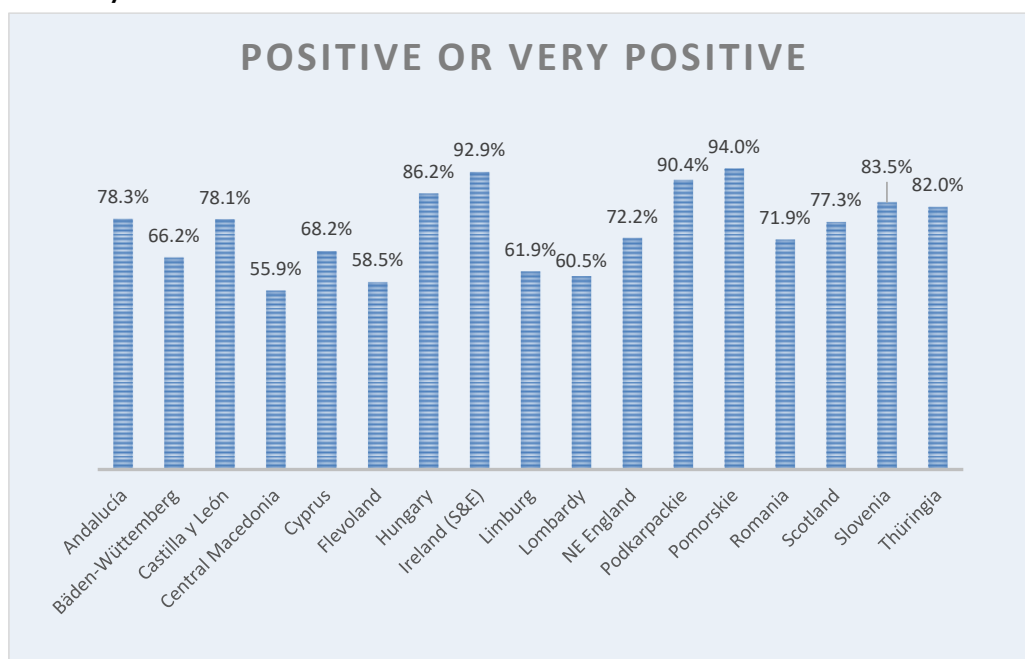
Table 11: Where did you hear about it [EU funded projects to improve your region or city]?

Case study	Options	National newspapers	Local newspapers	National TV	Local TV	National radio	Local radio	Internet	Social media	Billboard	Workplace	Personal experience	Other
	No	54.2%	75.1%	54.8%	75.1%	79.7%	91%	60.5%	81.9%	80.8%	72.9%	62.1%	93.8%
NE England	Yes	35.4%	55%	38.3%	53.1%	26.3%	26.8%	35.4%	21.1%	26.3%	33%	48.3%	23%
	No	64.1%	44.5%	61.2%	45.9%	73.2%	71.8%	64.6%	78.5%	73.2%	66.5%	51.2%	75.1%
Podkarpackie	Yes	29.2%	52.3%	61.9%	55.3%	43.8%	48.8%	76.9%	43.8%	54.8%	35.6%	78.5%	38.4%
	No	70.8%	47.5%	37.7%	44.5%	55.9%	51.4%	22.8%	56.2%	44.3%	63.5%	21.2%	61%
Pomorskie	Yes	29.7%	52%	60.2%	45.3%	43.4%	46%	76.8%	43.9%	53.6%	32.6%	74.9%	43.7%
	No	70.3%	48%	39.3%	54.39	56.3%	53.3%	23.2%	56.1%	45.3%	66.9%	23.9%	55.6%
Romania	Yes	26.7%	53.4%	61.2%	53%	36.7%	45.2%	71.5%	54.1%	50.5%	31%	69%	26.3%
	No	72.6%	45.9%	38.4%	45.2%	62.3%	54.6%	28.5%	44.5%	48.4%	68.3%	31%	70.1%
Scotland	Yes	45.8%	46.3%	44.8%	39.4%	27.1%	22.7%	49.8%	32.5%	34%	29.6%	53.2%	25.6%
	No	53.2%	53.2%	55.2%	59.6%	72.4%	76.4%	49.3%	66.5%	65.5%	69%	45.3%	70%
Slovenia	Yes	38.1%	44.2%	57.2%	31.9%	37.2%	28.9%	29.2%	14.7%	23%	10.3%	30.1%	4.4%
	No	61.9%	55.8%	42.8%	67.8%	62.8%	70.8%	70.8%	85.3%	77%	89.7%	69.9%	79.6%
Thüringia	Yes	43.9%	59.3%	30.7%	36%	28%	33.3%	33.9%	19%	49.7%	33.3%	52.9%	21.2%
	No	55%	40.2%	67.2%	63.5%	69.3%	65.1%	65.1%	79.4%	48.7%	66.1%	45.5%	75.1%

Perceived impact of EU Cohesion policy

We now turn to citizens views of the impact of EU Cohesion policy. Among those that were aware of EU projects in their region or city, the impact of EU funds is assessed positively or very positively by the vast majority of citizens. As in the previous questions, the positive perception of both Polish regions stands out (Pomorskie 94% and Podkarpackie 90.4%), followed by Ireland (92.9%) and Hungary (86.2%).

Figure 11: How positive or negative was the impact of the funding of the EU on your region or city?



Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

Among citizens that perceived the impact of EU funded projects to be positive, the main reasons justifying this positive perception are that funding was allocated to the 'right' projects (81.1%) and extensive funding (74.6%).

Table 12: Why do you think there was a positive impact?

	Yes	No	Refused	Don't Know
Extensive funding	74.6%	20.9%	0.3	4.3%
Allocation to the right projects	81.1%	12.9%	0.3%	5.7%
Good management	54.0%	32.9%	.7%	12.3%
Executed on time	54.3%	30.3%	.6%	14.7%
No corruption among government officials awarding tenders	32.6%	40.4%	1.5%	25.5%
No corruption among beneficiaries of EU funds	33.6%	40.1%	1.5%	24.7%
Other reasons	39.7%	55.2%	2.1%	3.1%

Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

Respondents that did not think EU funded projects had a positive impact cited poor management of the funds (69.8%), funding being allocated to the 'wrong' projects (61.8%) and corruption among government officials as the main reasons for the lack of a positive impact.

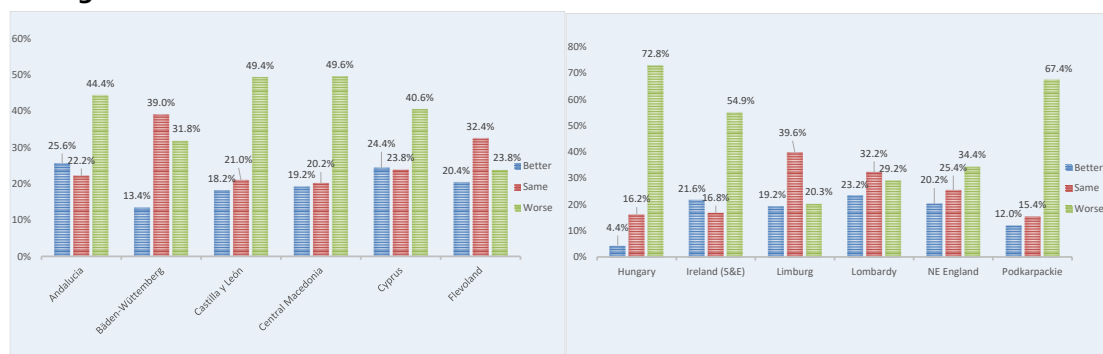
Table 13: Why do you think there was no positive impact?

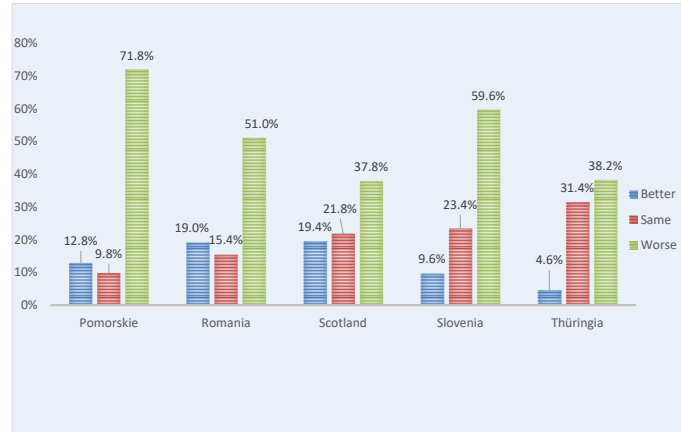
	Yes	No	Refused	Don't Know
Not enough funding	42%	50.7%	0.5%	6.8%
Allocation to the wrong projects	61.8%	31.4%	0.9%	5.9%
Bad management	69.8%	23.3%	0.9%	6.1%
Not executed on time	52.1%	35.1%	1.0%	11.8%
Corruption among government officials awarding EU tenders	61.5%	27.1%	0.7%	10.8%
Corruption among beneficiaries of EU funds	59.2%	28.5%	0.9%	11.5%
Other reasons	51.4%	46.2%	0.6%	1.8%

Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

Overall, the citizens surveyed felt that regional development would have been worse without the contribution from EU funding suggesting that EU Cohesion policy is perceived to provide added value. Hungary, Pomorskie and Podkarpackie are the regions that are most convinced of this. In a number of cases, the public think that their region or city's development would have been the same without the contribution of EU funding implying limited added value. This view stands out in the regions of Baden-Württemberg, Flevoland, Limburg, Lombardy and Thuringia.

Figure 12: How do you think your region or city would have developed without EU funding?





Source: COHESIFY citizen survey, 2017

5. Assessment of EU communication strategies

Having reviewed national and regional communication strategies in the COHESIFY cases, this section now turns to the role of the EU in communicating Cohesion policy through an assessment of European Commission communication strategies and the perceptions of EU policy elites about communication effectiveness. The next section begins with an assessment of the communication strategies of the two Commission DGs responsible for Cohesion policy, based on documentary analysis of management plans. The views of policy elites are then analysed drawing on two online surveys carried out at European level targeting Commission officials and MEPs with expertise on Cohesion policy - the first was aimed at officials of DG REGIO and DG EMPL in the European Commission; and the second targeted MEPs sitting on the REGI and EMPL committees. The surveys sought feedback about the use and effectiveness of communication tools at EU and national levels, in line with the stakeholder survey reviewed earlier.

5.1 European Commission strategies

The objective of Cohesion Policy is to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing regional disparities particularly through the European Structural and Investment Funds, of which the ERDF, CF and ESF account for the major share. In this context, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) play a key role as the DGs responsible for these funds under shared management:

- **DG REGIO** supports the achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives, notably through interventions financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF), which, together with other EU investment funds, constitute the main investment instrument of the EU. ERDF and the Cohesion Fund investments focus on key EU priority areas to meet the needs of the real economy by supporting job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development and improving the quality of life of citizens.
- For its part, **DG EMPL** is responsible for implementing the European Social Fund (ESF) to improve employment opportunities for workers in the internal market and thus contribute to improving their standard of living (Article 162 TFEU) and developing

actions leading to the strengthening of the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union (Article 174 TFEU). DG EMPL also contributes to employment and the social dimension of enlargement and globalisation.

The DGs communication goals are set out in their strategic management plans. DG REGIO plans to contribute during the period 2016-2020 to corporate communication efforts to support compliance and awareness raising on the Commission's policy priorities (in particular N° 1, but also N° 2, 3, 4 and 8).

1. A new boost for jobs, growth and investment
2. A connected digital single market
3. A resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy
4. A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base
8. Towards a new policy on Migration

These actions will build on the messages of the Communication "*Investing for jobs and growth: maximising the contribution of the European Structural and Investment Funds*", adopted by the Commission in December 2015.

As for DG EMPL, it will focus its communication strategy 2016-2020 on the three Commission policy priorities identified as most relevant for the DG:

1. A new impetus for jobs, growth and investment
2. A deeper and fairer internal market; and
3. A deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union.

In this context, the following sections compare the communication activities of DG REGIO and DG EMPL to identify differences in approaches, strengths and weaknesses and potential lessons for improving communication.

Apart from the Directorates-General responsible for Cohesion policy, the Directorate-General for Communication is the Commission department responsible for explaining EU policies to the outside world and coordinating communication activity. It keeps the Commission abreast of the political situation and developments in public opinion and the media. It also coordinates corporate communication campaigns within the Commission itself. DG Communication has a Strategic Plan for the period 2016-2020, according to which the DG will continue to carry out corporate communication actions under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020.

Approach to communication

The external communication activities of DG REGIO and DG EMPL are part of their strategic plans setting out their department's vision for the five year period 2016-2020. The communication strategy in these plans are set out in the external communication activities section of the organisational management part of the plans. Both DG EMPL and DG REGIO list the same overall communication objective which corresponds to DG Communication's overall objective introduced under President Juncker, namely that:

Citizens perceive that the EU is working to improve their lives and engage with the EU. They feel that their concerns are taken into consideration in European decision making and they know about their rights in the EU.

The DGs list different list different operational priorities and indicators as shown in Table 4. There are shortcomings in the strategic approach in both cases. Although specific objectives are defined, specific actions are not clearly defined in the multiannual plans. As regards the definition of indicators, both DGs use as impact indicators the perception of the general public of the EU. DG REGIO includes two further indicators, one on citizen perceptions of Cohesion policy and another on the number of people reached with communication actions that lacks a baseline.

The budget allocated to these external communication strategies is not included in the multiannual strategic plans. The planning of external communication in these strategies is therefore characterised by an absence of actions and monitoring indicators that make it possible to set an initial objective and to facilitate the monitoring and execution of these actions and indicators. While it is true, as specified in the following section, that annual forecasts are made of these actions, the lack of a multi-annual approach limits the analysis of the effectiveness of the strategies.

Table 14. External communication activities

Directorate General	External communication activities 2016-2020		
	Main objectives / priorities	Actions	Indicators
DG REGIO	<p>Objective: <i>Citizens perceive that the EU is working to improve their lives and engage with the EU. They feel that their concerns are taken into consideration in European decision making and they know about their rights in the EU.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperate constructively with DG COMM and other services in the development of communication actions, particularly through the Corporate Communication Steering Group and the External Communication Network. It will lead efforts to reinforce collaboration and identify joint communication opportunities with the other DGs responsible for ESIF (EMPL, AGRI and MARE). Continue to cooperate closely with our communication partners at the national and regional level, including Managing Authorities, the Commission Representations, the Committee of the Regions and its members, as well as networks such as Europe Direct. Ensure information and communication requirements set out in the Common Provisions Regulation are properly applied by Member States and beneficiaries. Continue to raise the visibility of EU regional and urban policy on the global stage by supporting cooperation with third countries and international partners. Prepare the ground for the future, by engaging stakeholders and the wider public in a debate on cohesion policy after 2021. 	<p>Not included</p> <p>[References to 1) sharing good practices, particularly via the annual RegioStars awards and the wider dissemination of project examples. 2) Further develop work on open data to boost transparency and support the implementation of programmes.]</p>	<p>Indicator 1 Percentage of EU citizens having a positive image of the EU (target 2020 >50%)</p> <p>Indicator 2. Percentage of EU citizens who are aware of EU funded projects in their region (target >34% awareness, >75% positive)</p> <p>Indicator 3. Number of people reached with communication actions directly supporting the regional policy portfolio as a result of the DG's actions (target >10 million pa)</p>
DG EMPL	<p>Objective: <i>Citizens perceive that the EU is working to improve their lives and engage with the EU. They feel that their concerns are taken into consideration in European decision making and they know about their rights in the EU.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) supporting the EC corporate communication efforts, in particular as regards activities in the area of growth, employment and social affairs; 2) embedding communication into policy making, to ensure that from their initial design, policy, legislative or funding initiatives can be clearly justified and explained to stakeholders and citizens; 3) strengthening EMPL's media presence and press impact through high quality press work and seminars for journalists; 4) enhancing digital communication by contributing to the Commission's digital transformation exercise and putting emphasis on video and social media activities; 5) mobilising Commission Representations, stakeholders and networks to enhance the valorisation and dissemination of EMPL-funded policies and projects; 6) modernising EMPL's publications strategy with emphasis on fewer but better quality publications. 	<p>Not included</p>	<p>Indicator 1: Percentage of EU citizens having a positive image of the EU (Target 2020 >50%)</p>

In addition to the external communication actions defined in the management plans, **DG REGIO has a Communication Strategy for 2017-2020**, which sets out priorities and objectives and the main target groups of the messages. A total of 5 objectives are defined, one related to internal communication (to increase the visibility of regional policy within the Commission) and 4 related to external communication (to increase its visibility among specific and broad EU audiences). However, this strategy does not provide specific quantified objectives or the definition of generic actions to enable assessment of achievements in the future.

This multi-annual approach is an improvement from the annual communication plans adopted in previous years. It is not clear whether a similar multiannual strategy exists for DG EMPL given that it has not identified any such plan in its management strategy or annual reports.

Finally, it is important to note that there has been a significant increase on the political priority by EU institutions attached to increasing the visibility of Cohesion policy in recent years. Responding to requests from the Council and European Parliament, a joint Action Plan on Communication was presented by Commissioners Corina Crețu (DG REGIO) and Marianne Thyssen (DG EMPL) on 23 May 2017 setting out seven joint communication actions for Cohesion policy at EU and national levels to be undertaken throughout 2017. Entitled "**Bringing Opportunities to Europeans: Communicating together the results of EU cohesion policy**", responsibility for the plan's actions lies with the national, regional or local authorities, with the logistical support of the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament. The document is based on two principles: that the communication on Cohesion Policy is a shared responsibility, and that most of the proposed actions should use existing tools, such as the 'EU in My Region' campaign, which is already implemented in most Member States, or the European Commission's campaign to communicate the concrete benefits of the EU for citizens. More specifically, the seven actions are:

- Launch of a Cohesion policy coalition of stakeholders, led by the Committee of the Regions and with a strong social media presence
- A video competition on the achievements of Cohesion policy organised at national level.
- Publicity campaigns on iconic projects by national, regional or local authorities
- Photo exhibitions on project achievements followed by public debates, launched by national, regional or local authorities
- National project competitions following the Commission's 'Regiostars' model
- A campaign to celebrate the 60 years anniversary of the EU by national and EU authorities
- Public debates in the regions with support from EU institutions and complementing the EU's separate citizen dialogues.

Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies

In addition to the multiannual planning strategies of DG REGIO and DG EMPL, annual management plans are published identifying external communication actions linked to more specific indicators to support the monitoring of the performance of actions.

In the case of **DG REGIO**, the annual management plans define an estimate of annual expenditure for communication activities which is divided between **communication actions** (EUR 7.7 million in 2016, EUR 6.7 million in 2017, EUR 23 million in 2018) and its **contribution to corporate communication** (EUR 6.5 million in 2016, EUR 6.7 million in 2017). The major increase in the

communication budget for 2018, along with increased human resources for communication at a time when there is administrative/staff budget restraint or cuts across the Commission, is indicative of the significantly increased priority placed on communication in the DG.

The actions defined annually, taking as a reference the management plans for the 2016, 2017 and 2018 years, refer to the holding of forums, open days, the well-known RegioStar awards, competitions and conferences in various locations throughout the European Union. For monitoring purposes, indicators are defined that refer to the number of participants or the scope of the media. In 2017, additional activities will also be incorporated, such as Euronews chapters for television broadcasts, publications and activities on social media, with a greater scope with respect to specific events.

DG REGIO's 2018 report highlights the evolution in the percentage of citizens with a positive image of the EU according to Eurobarometer survey data (from 39% in 2015 to 40% in 2017). This survey also suggests that the percentage of EU citizens that are aware of EU funded projects in their region is also increasing (35% of awareness in 2017, for 34% in 2015). In addition, 78% of those citizens who are aware about regional policy have a positive opinion about the impact of investments at regional and local level, for 75% in 2015. This shows the positive evolution of the impact indicators expected for the communication actions up to 2020.

DG EMPL also has annual plans. In this case, its communication activities defined annually relate to the implementation of communications on social rights and the dissemination of the impact of the European funds' activities in this area. To this end, press releases, social networking activities, brochures, events, audiovisuals, conferences, campaigns. The budget allocated to these actions is divided, as in the case of DG REGIO, 6 million in 2016, 7 million in 2017, 6.6 million in 2018) and oriented towards corporate communication (2.2 million in 2016, 1 million in 2017, 2.1 million in 2018).

In the 2016 report, DG EMPL defines a target for performance indicators for the actions carried out, referring to press coverage of the seminars held, number of participants in the events held, social media coverage or contributions to the consultations held. These indicators vary in 2017, providing targets for the number of participants and overall satisfaction with the event, Coverage on social media of launch of specific initiatives, or the number of awareness raising events at national level. Again in 2018 there are other indicators, such as the number of stakeholders and multipliers reached through events co-organised with EC Reps, website visits...

The budgetary effort dedicated to communication actions is similar in both DGs at around EUR 6 million per year. The exception is a tripling in DG REGIO's budget to EUR 23 million in 2018, although this is scheduled to reduce back to the trend level in the future. Further, DG REGIO has a larger budget allocated to corporate communication.

With regard to the development of actions, the lack of definition of generic actions and quantified objectives makes it impossible to compare the evolution of both communication strategies. This also applies to the definition of indicators. Although the impact of the actions carried out is measured by means of Eurobarometer data, which reflects a positive evolution in public perception of the EU, the definition of common indicators to quantify and compare the effectiveness of the actions has not been adopted at the level of achievements. Moreover, data on the evolution of public perceptions of the EU does not provide evidence of the impact of communication activities on these indicators. Impact evaluation evidence is required to assess the contribution of Cohesion policy communication to public perceptions, which is absent from the plans and strategies reviewed.

The lack of common strategic guidelines and performance indicators in the EU-level communication strategies of the Commission's Directorates-General responsible for Cohesion

policy as well as in the communication strategies at national/regional level makes it impossible to compare the results achieved at different levels.

Finally, while it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the effectiveness of the Commission's communication action plan, interviews with EU officials suggest a promising start albeit with varied take-up of measures. The Cohesion Alliance has proved to be very popular with a wide membership developing across Member States, regions and local authorities. Other actions that have been taken up quickly and effectively are the local and regional debates and the 'Did you know?' campaign. By contrast, the more resource intensive actions have been slower to take off namely the national version of the RegioStars awards and video competition.

5.2 Views from the European Commission: survey results

The survey of European Commission officials sought feedback from officials at DG REGIO and DG EMPL about the practices of Cohesion policy communication and its effectiveness at national and EU levels. Heads of units were targeted from thematic units, geographical units corresponding to the COHESIFY cases and communication unit staff. We obtained 30 complete responses. Commission officials were asked about the country where they have most experience or knowledge of Cohesion policy and answer the national questions in relation to that country. We have received 2 answers from Austria, 2 from Belgium, 1 from Czech Republic, 2 from France, 3 from Germany, 2 from Greece, 1 from Hungary, 3 from Italy, 1 from Malta, 2 from the Nederland's, 1 from Poland, 1 from Slovenia, 2 from Spain, 2 from UK and 11 in general regarding the EU.

The first set of question concern the Commission views on the frequency of use of communication tools at the national level. More than 50% of respondents felt that the tools most commonly used (often and very often) to communicate Cohesion Policy are: the programme website (73.34%), plaques/billboard with EU flag (70%), brochures, leaflets and newsletters (63.3%) and social media (53.34%).

Table 15: How regularly are the following communication tools used by national/regional authorities to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds?

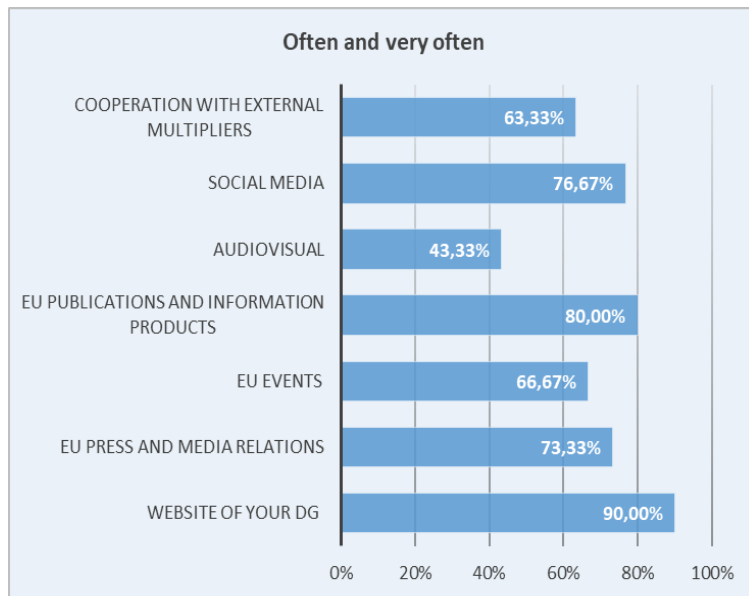
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Television	16,67%	43,33%	33,3%	3,33%	3,33%
Radio	26,67%	30%	33,3%	6,67%	3,33%
Local and regional newspapers	3,33%	20%	50%	16,67%	10%
National newspapers	6,67%	26,67%	46,67%	16,67%	3,33%
Workshops, seminars	0%	3,33%	56,67%	33,3%	6,67%
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters	0%	3,33%	33,3%	53,33%	10%
Press releases	0%	16,67%	40%	36,67%	6,67%
Programme website	6,67%	10%	10%	46,67%	26,67%
Film clips/videos	6,67%	26,67%	40%	26,67%	0%
Plaques/billboard with EU flag	6,67%	3,33%	20%	23,33%	46,67%

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)	13,33%	6,67%	26,67%	26,67%	26,67%
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio	23,33%	30%	40%	3,33%	3,33%

Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

The most widely used tool by far is the website of their DG (90%), followed by EU publications and information products (80%, e.g. panorama magazine, reports, studies, factsheets) and social media (76.57%).

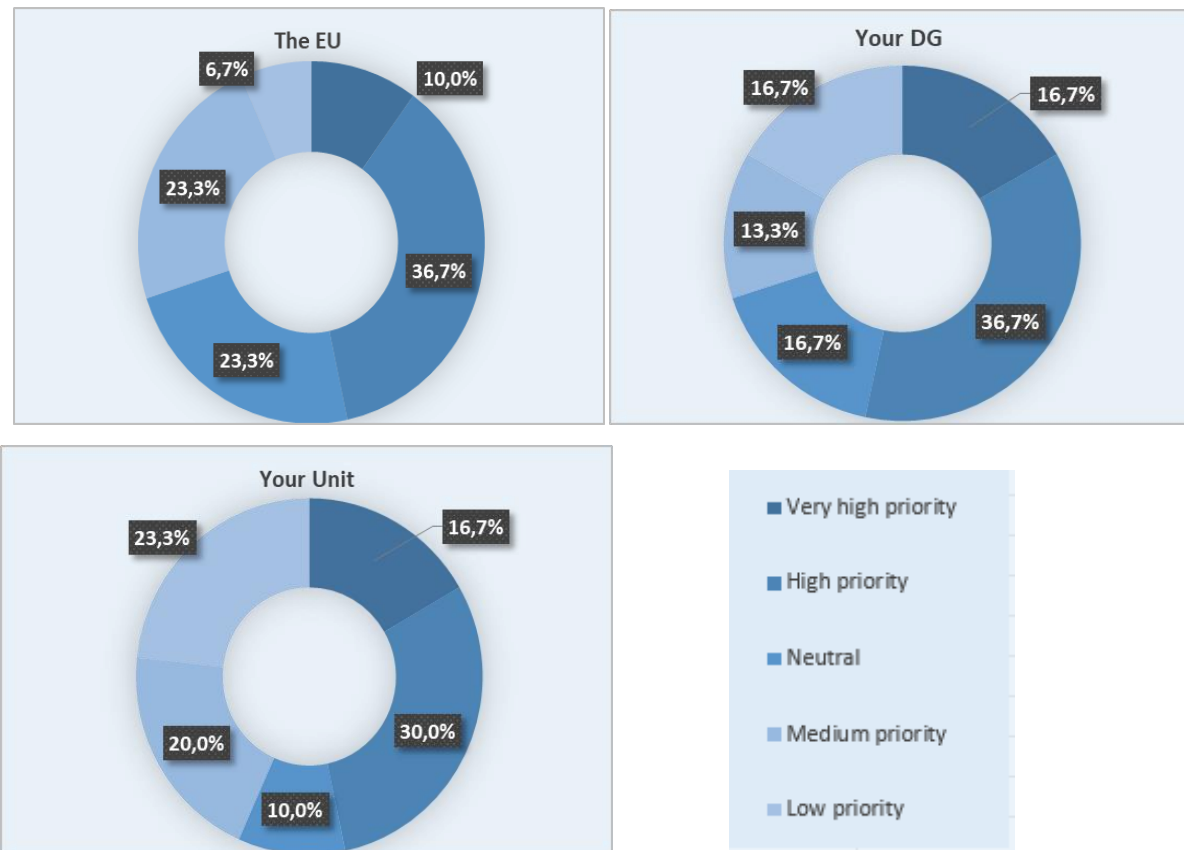
Figure 13: How regularly are the following communication tools used by the European Commission to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy Funds



Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

In terms of the prioritisation of communication across the levels of the organisational hierarchy, it is at the DG's unit level where the greatest share of respondents said that communication was given low priority (23.3%). At the DG level overall, the priority given to communication is perceived to be highest with 16.7 percent rating it as 'very high', while only 10 percent perceived communication to be a 'very high' priority at the EU level overall.

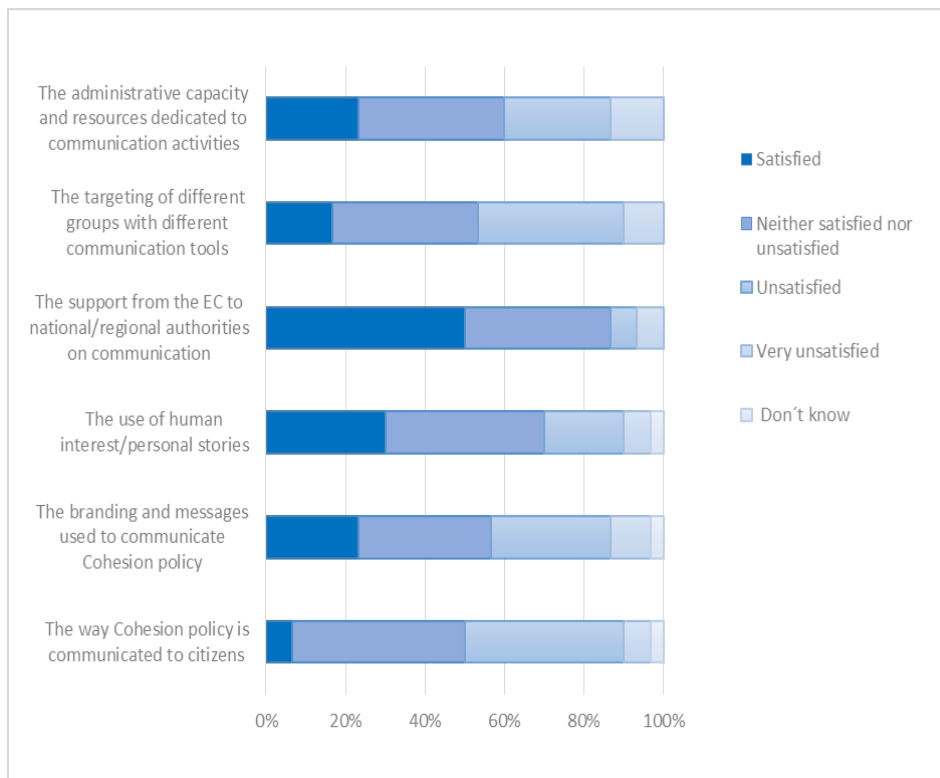
Figure 14: What is the level of priority given to communication in...? (e.g. in terms of resources, staff time,... etc.)



Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

The support from the European Commission to regional/national authorities on communication is valued most highly and the lowest satisfaction is reflected in the way Cohesion Policy is communicated to citizens. This may explain the much greater emphasis being placed on beneficiaries and citizens as target groups by the Commission recently through, for instance, the communication action plan and follow-up activities. Respondents were also very dissatisfied with the targeting of different groups with different communication tools.

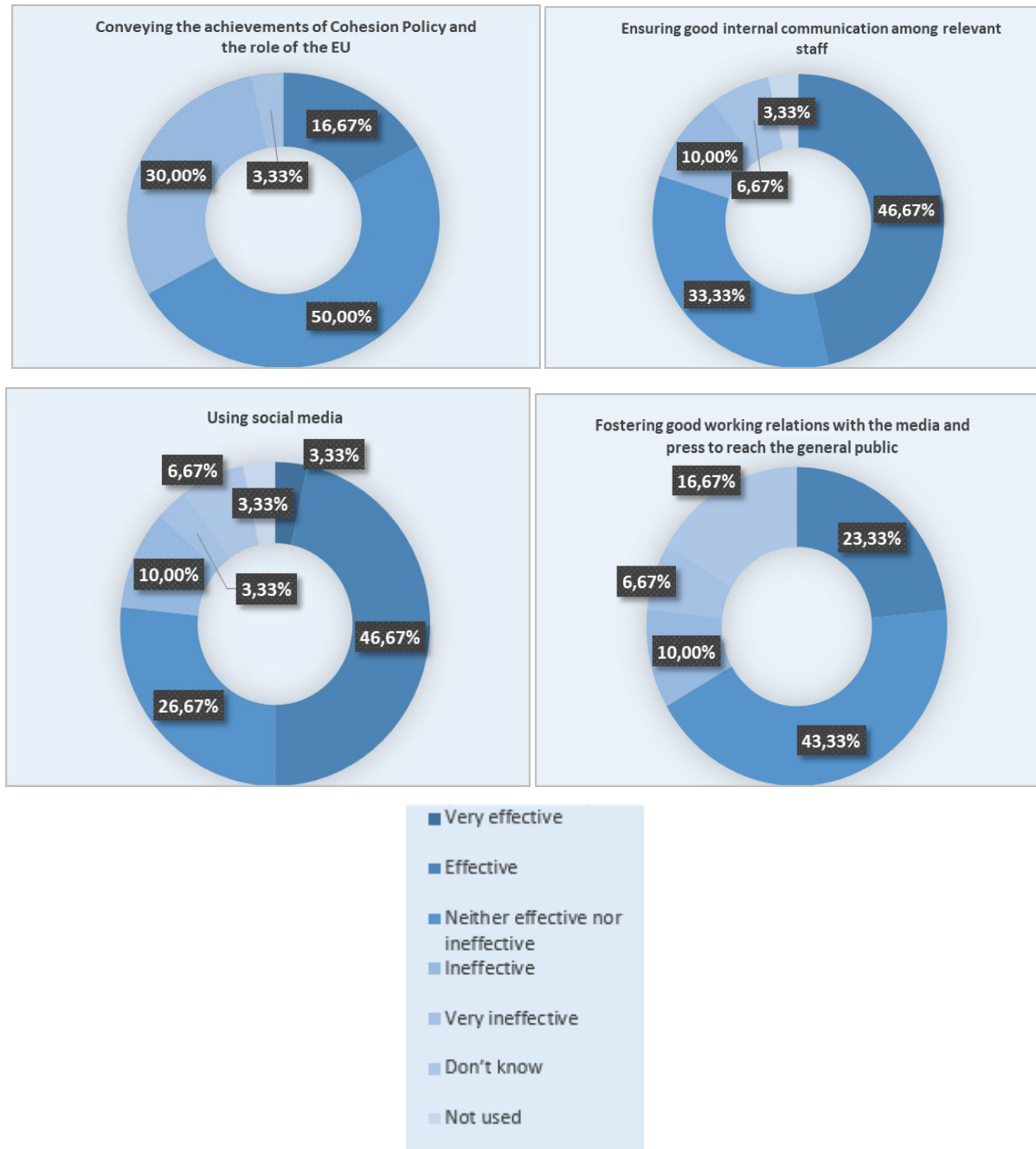
Figure 15: How satisfied are you with:



Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

According to the survey results, communication effort were considered most effective in ensuring good internal communication among relevant staff (80% were satisfied or very satisfied), fostering good working relations with the media and press (66.66%) and in conveying the achievements of Cohesion Policy and the role of the EU (66.67%). There is clearly room for improvement in the use of social media as a communication tool, as also reflected in the survey of stakeholders and citizens.

Figure 16: To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:



Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

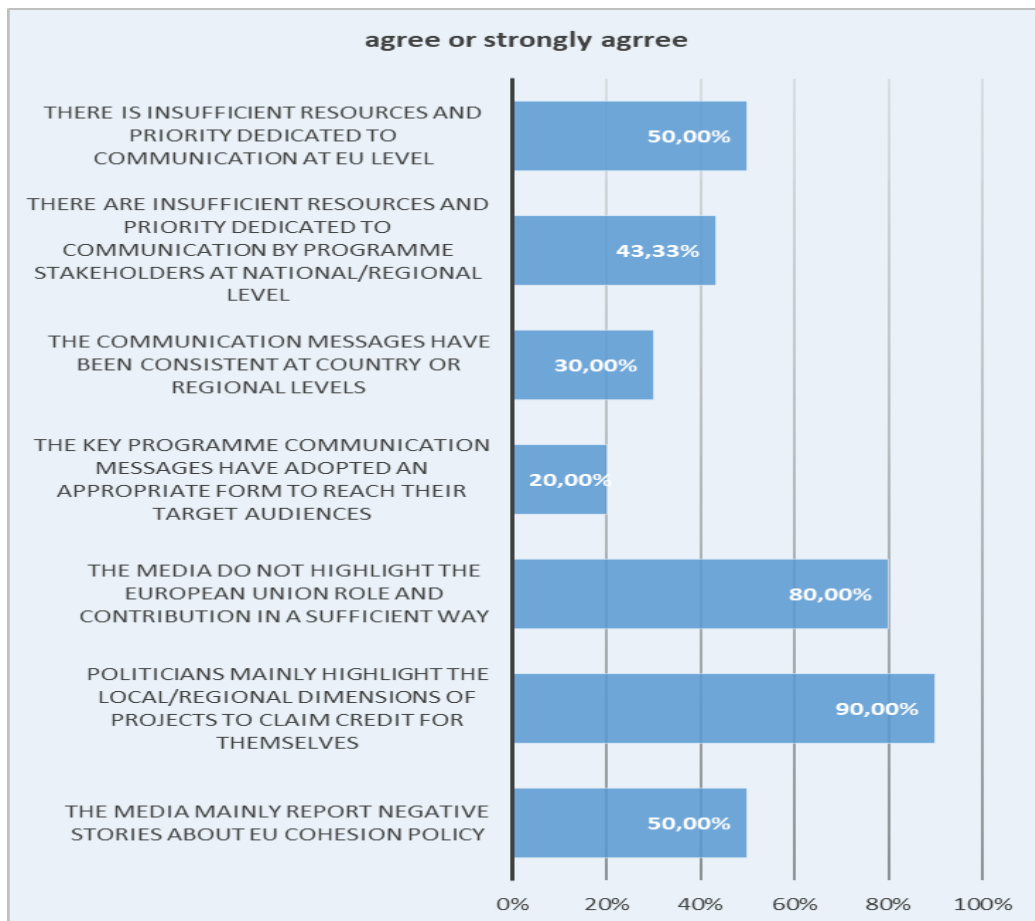
In the qualitative responses to the survey, the respondents provided additional comments about communication challenges:

- We use outdated projects, wrong language and are too euphemistic.
- The Cohesion Policy is not a name that is easy to communicate
- Regional policy is much better (but does not encompass ESF)

- The shortcoming of communication activities in the DG and the Commission as a whole is that they reach an already interested public, i.e. people who are already looking for information on Cohesion policy. It rarely reaches the 'man in the street' who is not especially looking for the information.

In assessing the effectiveness of communication, respondents were also asked to what extent they agree with a series of statements about communication prioritisation, messaging, credit claiming by politicians, and the role of the media. The highest level of agreement is undoubtedly for the statement: Politicians mainly highlight the local/regional dimensions of projects to claim credit for themselves (90%); followed by *the media do not highlight the European Union role and contribution in a sufficient way* (80%). Further, participants in the survey do not think that the key messages have adopted an appropriate form to reach their target audience.

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements



Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

In terms of specific communication tools, the local and regional newspapers (86.7%), television (70%) and the plaques/billboards (70%) are considered the most effective communication tools at the national and regional level. The most ineffective tools are press releases (30%) and brochures, leaflets, newsletters and other publication (23.4%).

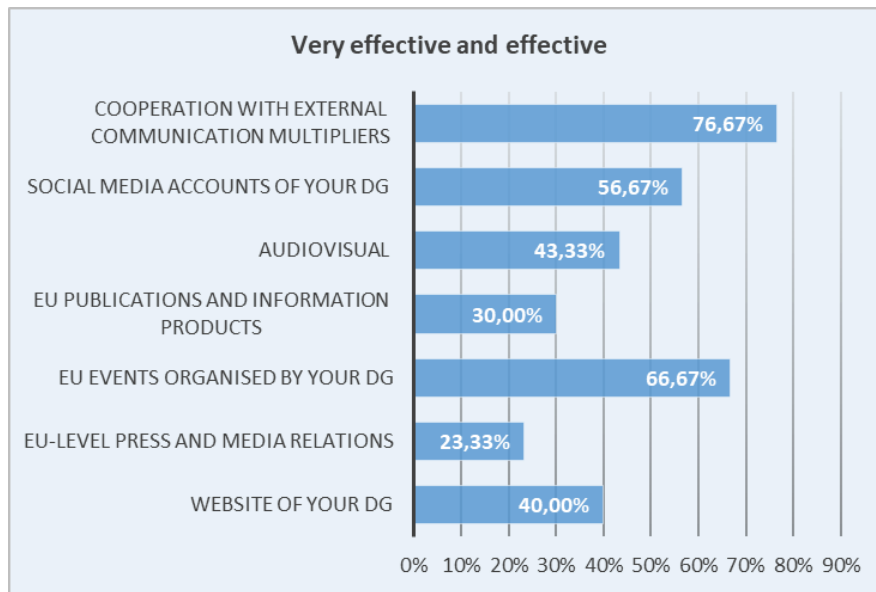
Figure 18: How effective do you think each of these communication measures implemented by national and regional authorities are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective or ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used
Television	30%	40%	3.3%	10%	3.3%	13.3%	0
Radio	10%	50%	13.3%	6.7%	10%	10%	0
Local and regional newspapers	20%	66.7%	3.3%	0	3.3%	6.7%	0
National newspapers	10%	46.7%	33.3%	0	3.3%	6.7%	0
Programme website	0	20%	43.3%	20%	6.7%	6.7%	3.3%
Film clips/videos	13.3%	23.3%	40%	16.7%	0	6.7%	0
Plaques/billboard with EU flag	20%	50%	20%	3.3%	0	6.7%	0
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)	26.7%	30%	23.3%	0	6.7%	10%	3.3%
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio	20%	46.7%	6.7%	10%	3.3%	10%	3.3%
Press releases	0	26.7%	33.3%	23.3%	6.7%	10%	0
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters, publications	0	23.3%	46.7%	6.7%	16.7%	6.7%	0
Events	3.3%	46.7%	30%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	0

Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

The most effective measure is the cooperation with external communication multipliers (networks, regional offices, Commission representations, Europe Direct), followed by EU events. The most ineffective measure is the website. In addition to the options proposed, respondents have also identified the use of Youtube and Facebook and the visit of the EU representatives as good communication measures.

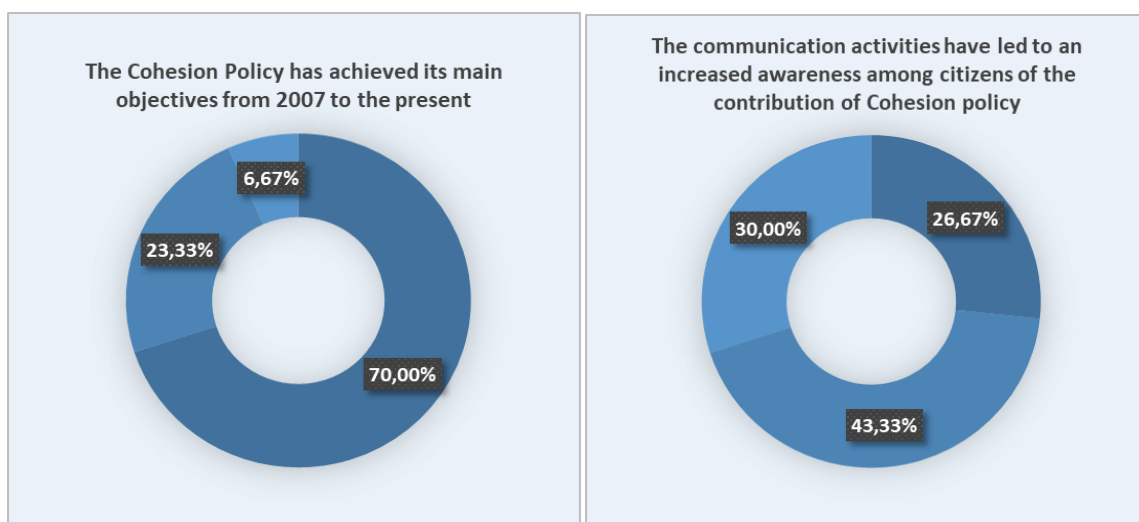
Figure 19: How effective do you think the following communication measures implemented by your DG are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

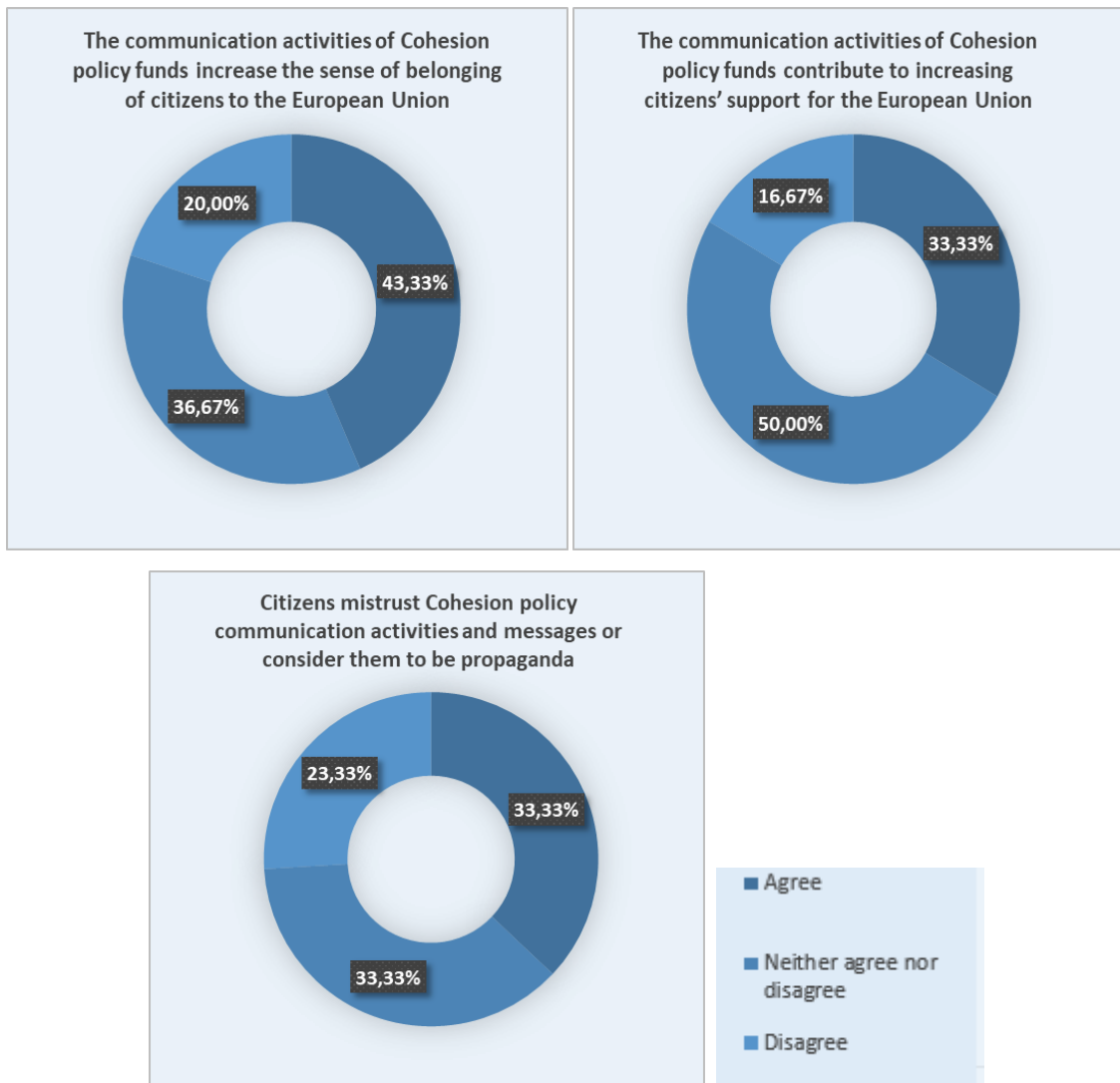


Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

A large majority of respondents (70%) agreed with the statement that Cohesion policy has achieved its main objectives from 2007 to the present. However, very few agree (30%) that the communication activities have led to an increased awareness among citizens of the contribution of Cohesion Policy. The respondents are equally split in agreeing and disagreeing with the statement: Citizens mistrust Cohesion policy communication activities and messages or consider them to be propaganda.

Figure 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements





Source: COHESIFY European Commission survey, 2018

When asked for concrete ideas for improving the communication of Cohesion policy achievements to citizens, the main suggestion by DG REGIO and DG EMPL official that responded to the survey can be summarised as follows:

- Publish more of our studies in a slimmed down version, as summaries etc.
- Use more up to date figures via open data platform, etc.
- Be concrete, focus on what matters to people.
- Use of videos
- Better resource allocation to collect project examples on the ground to better understand what is the real effect of cohesion policy on the local level. Communication should better reflect changing needs of people, especially young ones, communication tools should be updated on EU and national/regional level as well.
- To be effective a lot more should be spent in terms of using communications tools/use effective communicators at national level.

5.3 Views from the European Parliament: survey results

In parallel with the survey of members of DG REGIO and DG EMPL of the European Commission, a similar survey was launched for members of the European Parliament (MEPs) targeting MEPs sitting on the REGI and EMPL committees with responsibility for the core Cohesion policy funds (ERDF, CF and ESF). A total of 19 complete responses were received. The MEPs that responded represent the following Member States: Austria (2), Croatia (3), Cyprus (1), France (2), Germany (2), Greece (1), Italy (1), Netherlands (1), Romania (2), Slovenia (1), Spain (1) and United Kingdom (2).

According to MEPs, the tools most commonly used (rated 'often' and 'very often') to communicate Cohesion Policy at national or regional level are: workshops and seminars (52.63%), brochures, leaflets and newsletters (42.1%) and programme website (42.1%). Television and radio are the least used tools.

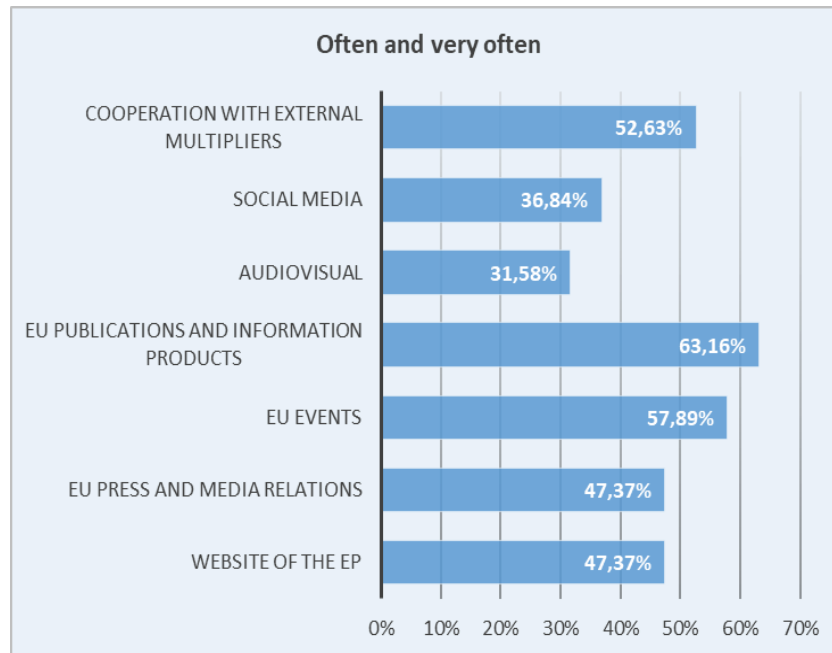
Table 16: How regularly are the following communication tools used by national/regional authorities to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds in your country?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Television	10.53%	63.16%	21.06%	5.26%	0
Radio	5.26%	57.89%	31.58%	5.26%	0
Local and regional newspapers	5.26%	15.79%	52.63%	21.05%	5.26%
National newspapers	10.53%	21.05%	52.63%	5.26%	10.53%
Workshops, seminars	0	5.26%	42.11%	47.37%	5.26%
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters	5.26%	10.53%	42.11%	36.84%	5.26%
Press releases	0	21.05%	42.11%	26.32%	10.53%
Programme website	0	15.79%	42.11%	36.84%	5.26%
Film clips/videos	10.53%	47.37%	36.84%	5.26%	0
Plaques/billboard with EU flag	0	26.32%	47.37%	15.79%	10.53%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)	0	26.32%	42.11%	26.32%	5.26%
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio	10.53%	52.63%	26.32%	10.53%	0

Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

The most widely used tool used by the European Parliament is the publications and information products (63.16%, e.g. panorama magazine, reports, studies, factsheets) followed by EU events (57.89%) and cooperation with external multipliers (52.63%). According to the MEPs, social media is one of the least used tools (36.84%).

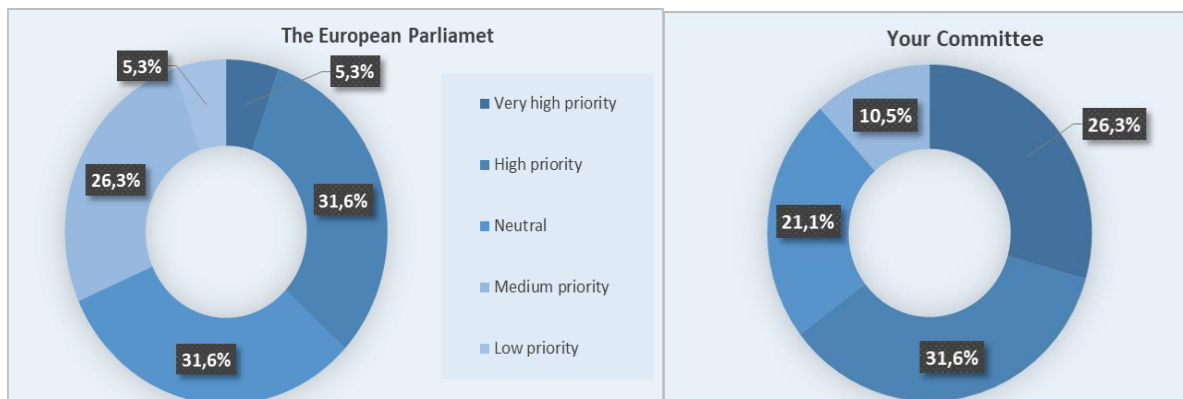
Table 17: Q2. How regularly are the following communication tools used by the European Parliament to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy Funds



Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

Communication efforts are clearly perceived to be given higher priority at Committee level (57.9%) compared to the European Parliament as an institution overall (36.9%).

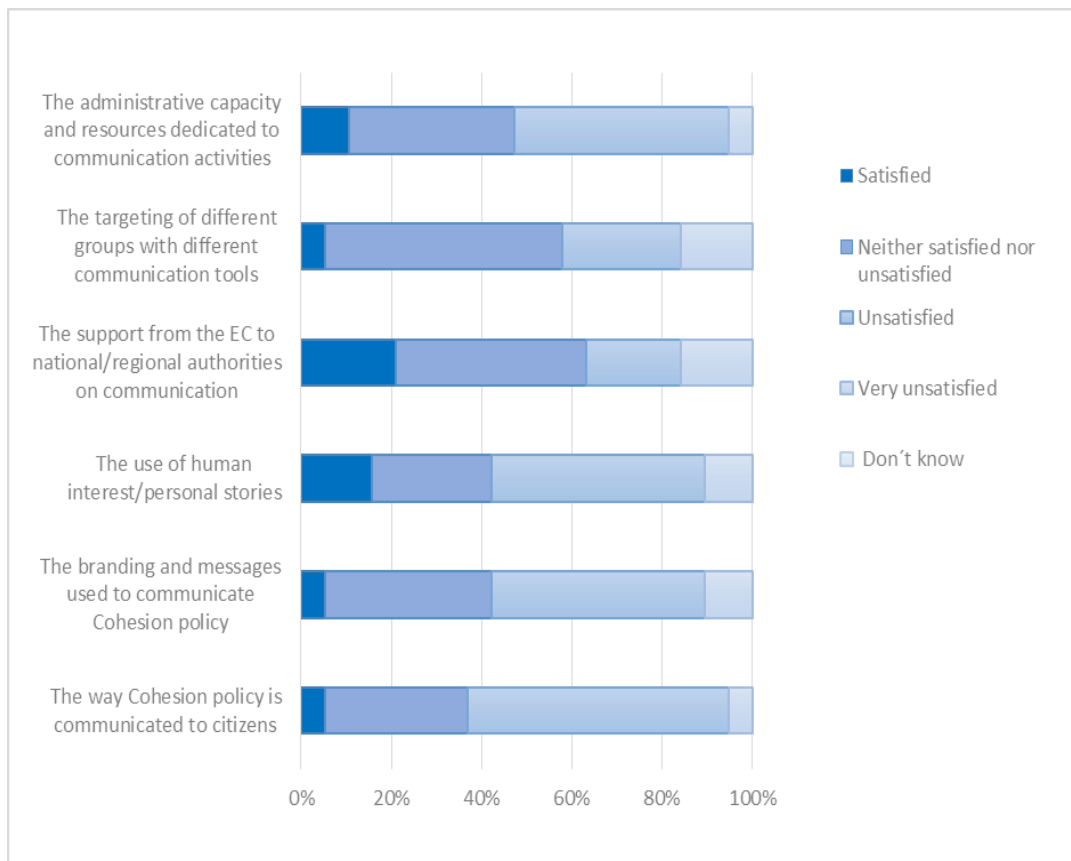
Figure 21: What is the level of priority given to communication in...? (e.g. in terms of resources, staff time,... etc.)



Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

As in the survey of members of the European Commission, MEPs are most satisfied with the support from the European Commission to regional/national authorities on communication, although the percentage of satisfied people is only 20%. On the other hand, the lowest level of satisfaction relates to the way Cohesion Policy is communicated to citizens (63.16%), the branding and messages used to communicate (57.89%) and the use of human interest/personal stories (57.89%).

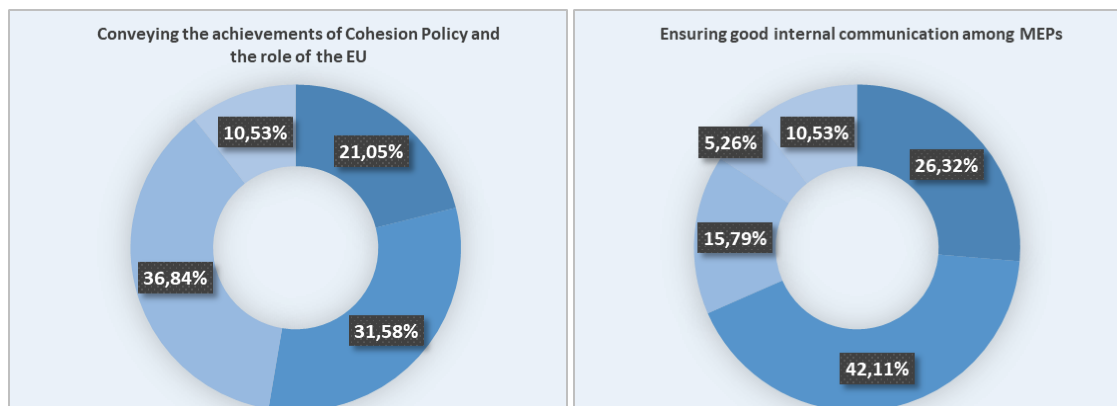
Figure 22: How satisfied are you with:

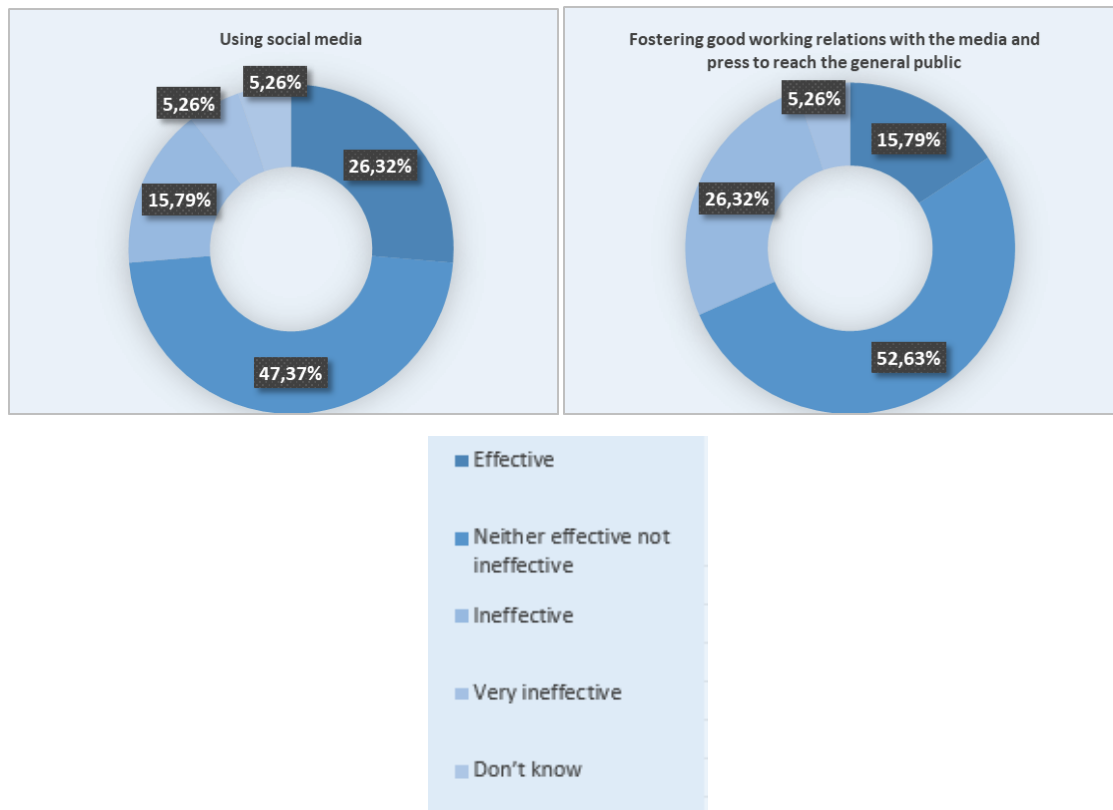


Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

No clear conclusion can be drawn from the questions about the effectiveness of communication efforts because no more than 26% of the respondents consider any of the objectives and tools to be effective. Most responses in all cases were 'neither effective, nor ineffective'. Taking the above caveat into account, a relatively high proportion of MEPs (36.84%) consider that efforts to convey the achievements of Cohesion Policy and the role of the EU are ineffective.

Figure 23: To what extent are the communication efforts effective in:



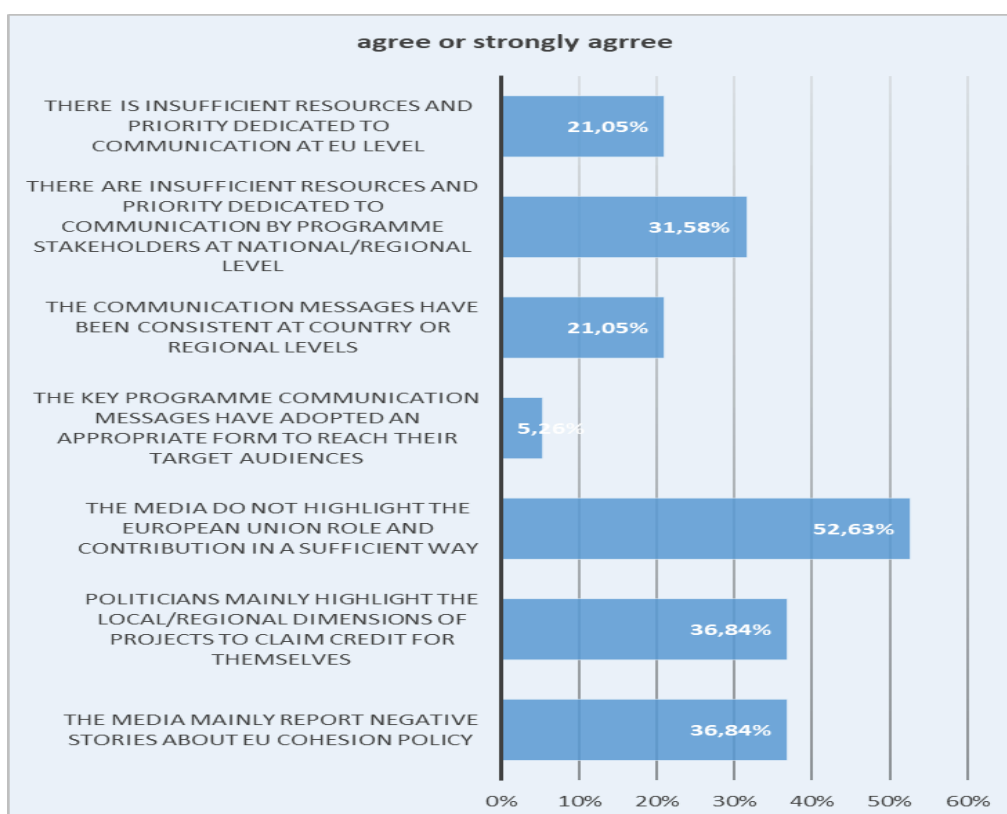


Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

In the qualitative responses, one of the MEPs highlighted that technical assistance should be made available for all relevant partners in the preparation and implementation of programmes, in particular in the field of capacity building, networking and communication on cohesion policy. Funding for technical assistance should be optimised and used to this end. In addition, the MEP considered that funding should also be focused to a greater extent on capacity building in the administration and among partners.

More than 50% of respondents agreed that the media do not highlight the EU role and contribution in a sufficient way. Other statements with a high level of agreement are that: politicians mainly highlight the local/regional dimensions of projects to claim credits for themselves (36.84%) and the media mainly report negative stories about EU Cohesion policy (36.84%). In a similar way, More than two fifths of the MEPs (42.11%) disagree with the statement that the communication messages have been consistent at country or regional levels.

Figure 24: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements



Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

The most effective communication tools at the national and regional level are considered to be social media (78.95%), local and regional newspapers (78.95%) and plaques/billboards (68.42%). It is noteworthy that social media are considered to be one of the most effective tools for increasing citizens' awareness of Cohesion policy, but at the same time one of the least used tools. The tools rated as most ineffective are press releases (26.32%) and brochures, leaflets, newsletters and other publication (26.32%).

Table 18: How effective do you think each of these communication measures implemented by national and regional authorities are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

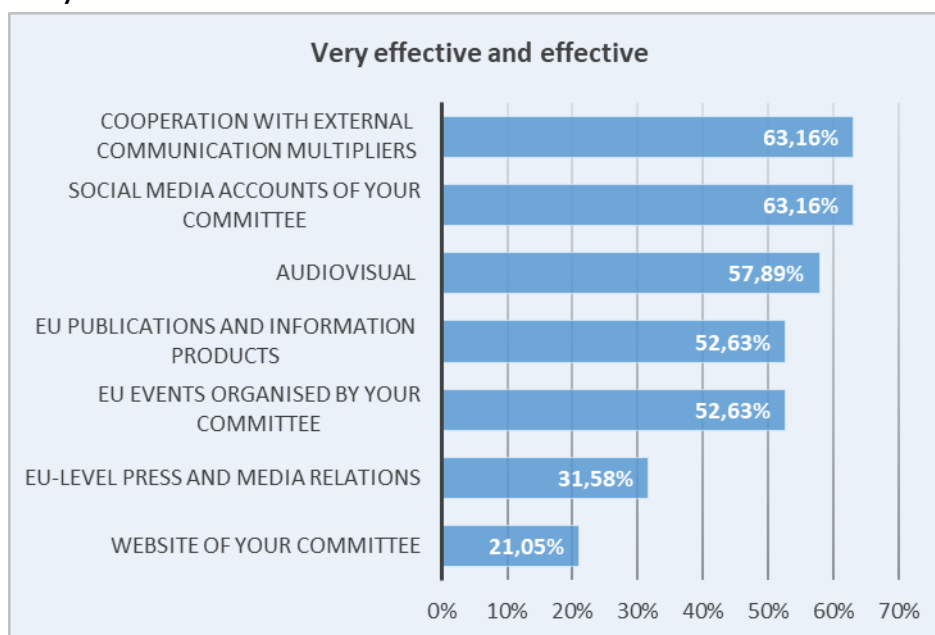
	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective or ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used
Television	26.3%	21.1%	31.6%	10.5%	0	10.5%	0
Radio	10.5%	47.4%	21.1%	10.5%	0	10.5%	0
Local and regional newspapers	36.8%	42.1%	10.5%	0	0	10.5%	0
National newspapers	26.3%	36.8%	15.8%	10.5%	0	10.5%	0
Programme website	10.5%	47.4%	0	31.6%	0	10.5%	0
Film clips/videos	15.8%	21.1%	31.6%	21.1%	0	10.5%	0
Plaques/billboard with EU flag	5.3%	63.2%	10.5%	10.5%	0	10.5%	0
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube)	31.6%	47.4%	10.5%	0	0	10.5%	0

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective or ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio	15.8%	42.1%	26.3%	5.3%	0	10.5%	0
Press releases	0	26.3%	36.8%	15.8%	10.5%	10.5%	0
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters, other publications	0	47.4%	15.8%	21.1%	5.3%	10.5%	0
Events	0	57.9%	15.8%	15.8%	0	10.5%	0

Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

At Committee level in the European Parliament, the most effective measures are the cooperation with external communication multipliers (networks, regional offices, Commission representations, Europe Direct) and the social media accounts. The most ineffective measure is the website (31.58%).

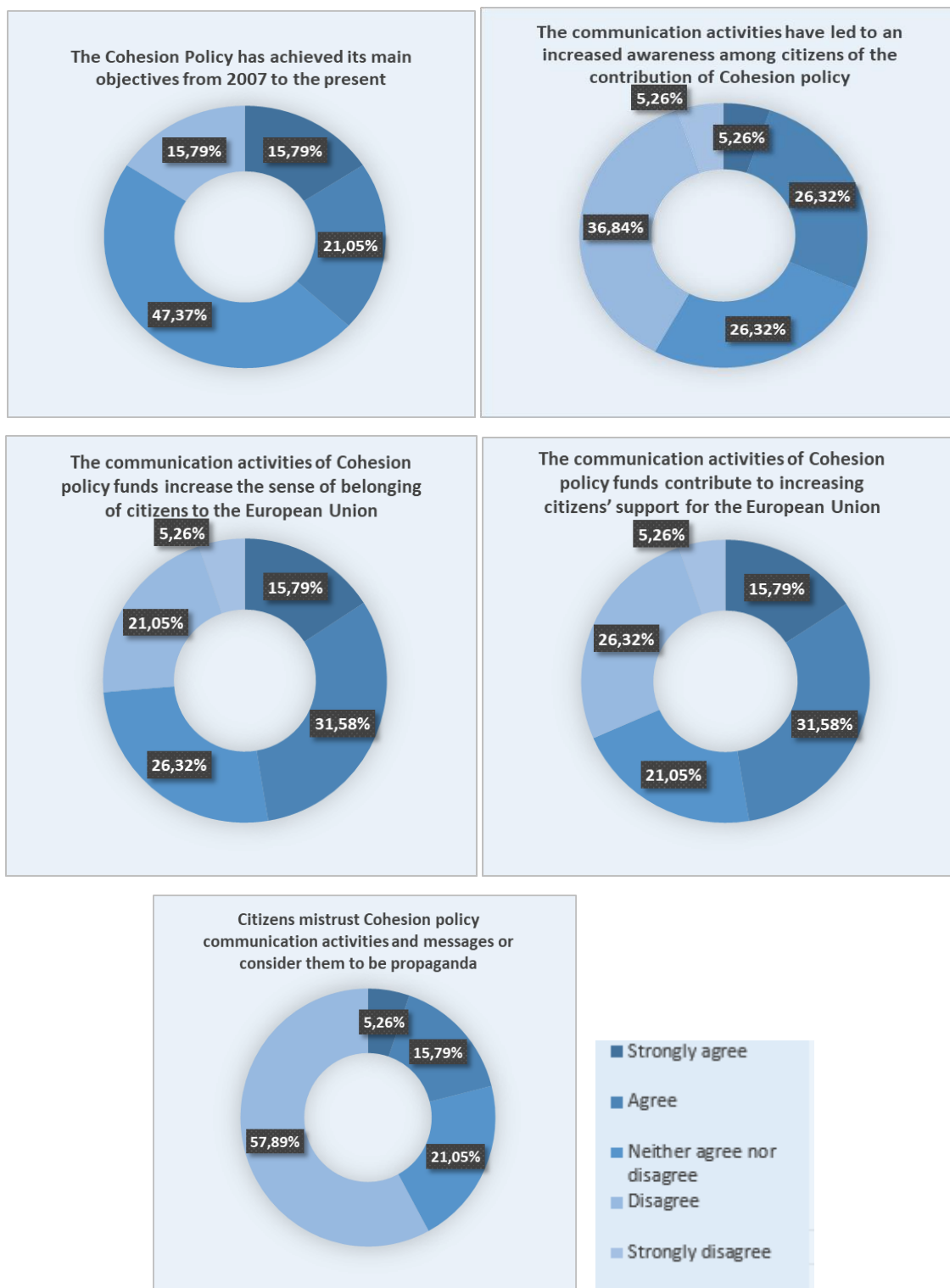
Figure 25: How effective do you think the following communication measures implemented by your Committee at the European Parliament are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?



Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

The final statements concerned the effectiveness of Cohesion policy overall and the impact of communication on citizen awareness and attitudes. A significant proportion of MEPs (47.37%) agreed with the statement that the communication activities of Cohesion Policy funds increase the sense of belonging of citizens to the EU and contribute to increasing citizen's support for the EU. The majority of MEPs (57.89%) do not think that citizens mistrust Cohesion policy communication activities and messages or consider them to be propaganda.

Figure 26: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements



Source: COHESIFY European Parliament survey, 2018

When asked for ideas about how improve the communication of Cohesion policy achievements to citizens, one MEP emphasised the importance of decentralisation and participatory governance as follows:

The effective participation of local and regional stakeholders and all relevant, representative and most concerned partners is key to better aligning ESI Funds with citizens' demands and territorial needs. Successful cohesion policy that delivers significant results is the key for a positive image of EU funding. Therefore more decentralisation, the sub-delegation of competences, participatory governance and budgetary appropriations in the management and implementation of cohesion policy are key. The participation of regional and local authorities, economic and social partners and partners representing civil society should also be ensured and reinforced in all stages of Partnership Agreements and programme implementation, including during the preparation phase.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Key findings

1. The territorial scope and breadth of funds covered by communication strategies vary (national, regional, single or multi-funded) in line with the policy architecture, political structures and policy experiences. This makes it difficult to compare communication policies in terms of budgets, the quantification of indicators, or the comparison of objectives considering proportionality criteria.
2. In general, the definition of measures and target groups appears in all communication strategies, with only the regions in the Netherlands and Germany not identifying concrete actions to be implemented. Those involved in the management of the Funds consider that the effort has been satisfactory, but agree that it is not a key priority when compared to other management and administration tasks.
3. There is great variability in the definition of indicators. While some European regions have implementation, outcome and impact indicators, others have only one type of indicator. In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, there are no indicators. In the period 2014-2020, the indicator sets in the communication plans are less comprehensive.
4. The budget lines for communication policy are difficult to aggregate and to compare, not only because the strategies have been defined at different levels with different funds involved but also because the underlying cost categories and methods are not clearly defined. In any case, the trend in the period 2014-2020 has been a reduction in EU budget allocations for publicity and dissemination.
5. At EU level, the communication strategies of the Commission's Directorates-Generals responsible for Cohesion policy, as with the communication strategies at national/regional level, lack common strategic approaches and indicators which makes it impossible to compare the results achieved. This also makes it difficult to monitor and compare achievements at European and regional level. Nevertheless, there has been increased priority placed on communication in recent years particularly through a new communication action plan and follow-up activities.
6. The existence of regional/national networks related to communication is not widespread in the regions analysed suggesting an institutional gap in learning potential on communication. Only 8 of the 17 case studies confirmed the existence of networks in the period 2007-2013, some of which are general networks that address all aspect of implementation and administration rather than communication specifically. In the period 2014-2020, 3 new networks were established.
7. 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.
8. In general, the actions that are considered to have been most effective include websites, events and advertising campaigns on television and in the press. Events have been highlighted by 77% of stakeholders, closely followed by television (75%) and regional and local newspapers (73%) by citizens.

9. On the other hand, the analysis revealed a lack of prioritisation of communication, involvement of beneficiaries in communication actions, proactive engagement with the media, and relatively low use of social media.
10. In general, awareness of the EUs contribution to regional development by stakeholders may have improved, but this is not evident in the media or among elected officials.
11. The citizens of the Polish regions have the most awareness and positive views of EU funding according to the citizen survey (87%), followed by Slovenia (62%), Hungary (62.4%) and Central Macedonia (52.4%). The most common justification for positive impacts are that funding is allocated to the right projects (81.1%) and the extensive funding available (74.6%).
12. The lack of common criteria in European regions with regard to the selection of good practices makes it impossible to compare the work carried out in this regard. In many regions, no specific criteria have even been established for the selection of good practices, so the 'high profile' of the actions disseminated may be questionable.
13. The Commission's surveys of DG REGIO and DG EMPL members, as well as of MEPs, show differences in the perception of the most commonly used communication tools in the framework of Cohesion Policy. Both surveys reveal satisfaction with the support from the European Commission to regional/national authorities on communication and dissatisfaction towards the way Cohesion Policy is communicated to citizens.
14. In general, the perception of Members of the Commission as MEPs is slightly negative about the achievements that communication actions are achieving in terms of bringing the citizen closer to the EU and its institutions.

6.2 Policy implications and recommendations

1. Define at European level the content of communication strategies through a guidance document including a detailed methodology and key performance indicators.
2. Establish a budget earmarked for communication in OPs following a common methodology for calculating full time staff costs and activity costs, along with the national/regional and EU funding contribution to enable comparison at European level.
3. Define SMART objectives and indicators (Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) for the communication plan and tools. Establish a common set of indicators, also requesting a target values at the beginning of the programming period, which will allow the degree of effectiveness achieved by the strategies to be assessed throughout the programming periods.
4. The programming of impact indicators must ensure that the scope of actions carried out can be assessed in the long term.
5. Promote the set up of national/regional communication networks in order to coordinate communication actions across management and implementation bodies and funds and to encourage learning and the spread of best practice.
6. Promote impact evaluation of communication at two levels: communication strategies, based on the effectiveness of objective, outcome and impact indicators; and impact evaluation of specific communication actions/tools. The aim is to promote learning about what works and how with a view to developing more effective strategies and to adapt the tools more closely to needs.

7. Promote the development of actions that have achieved good results such as: the development of websites, the dissemination of good practice cases, the organisation of training and information events, and the organisation of actions that have an impact on the results of specific projects, such as the organisation of annual European fund events in the locations of projects, or open days of projects reaching out to a more general public.
8. Encourage greater involvement of beneficiaries in communication actions.
9. Promote the involvement of the media and elected officials in communicating the role of the EU in regional development and policy achievements, as key information 'multipliers' and informers of public opinion. Encourage participation from the Members of the European Parliaments and the members of the Committee of the Regions in communication activities in Member States and regions.
10. Promote real engagement on social media: ask questions, open debates, feature real human stories and individuals rather than corporate information.
11. Create a single portal featuring all the EU funded projects, including communication good practices and materials/tools and evaluations of their effectiveness.

Annex. List of interviews

	MA	MA Communicati on	Social partner	Economic partner	NGO, civil society organisatio n	Local authority	Intermediar y/ implementin g partners	Local governments in municipalities/ cities	Representative s of the Ministry responsible for implementatio n of Cohesion Policy	National communicatio n officer represented in EU INFORM network	Elected officials / politicians	Others	TOTAL
CYPRUS	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	9
GERMANY (Thuringia)	1	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
GERMANY (Baden-Württemberg):	1	0	0	2	3	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	13
GREECE (Central Macedonia)	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
HUNGARY	4	0	2	1	3	2	0	3	2	2	0	1	20
IRELAND (S&E)	1	1	0	1	2	0	3	1	1	1	2	0	13
ITALY (Lombardy)	3	1	0	3	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	11
THE NETHERLAND (Flevoland)	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	6
THE NETHERLAND (Limburg)	3	1	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	10
POLAND (Podkarpackie)	1	1	1	3	2	3	4	0	1	0	0	0	16
POLAND (Pomorskie)	2	1	1	3	0	2	4	1	1	0	0	0	15
ROMANIA	3	1	1	1	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	13
SLOVENIA	3	2	1	2	2	3	5	0	0	0	0	0	18
SPAIN: Castilla y León	1	1	1	1	0	0	4	1	1	2	0	0	12
SPAIN: Andalucía	1	1	1	3	0	0	4	2	1	1	0	0	14
UNITED KINGDOM North East England	3	1	1	3	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	15
UNITED KINGDOM Scotland	1	1	1	0	1	2	2	10	0	0	0	0	18