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Mid-term evaluation of Europe Direct Information Centres (2009-2012)

Final report

To the European Commission
Directorate-General for Communication

27 January 2012

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To the European Commission

Directorate-General for Communication

A report submitted by GHK
in association with

Technopolis

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Executive summary

This report provides the results of the Mid-term evaluation of Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) aimed at assessing to what extent the network complies with its mission and how effectively and efficiently it is implemented.

The evaluation was undertaken by GHK Consulting in consortium with Technopolis. The evaluation was commissioned by DG Communication.

The EDIC network

The Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) is a European Commission co-funded and managed network. EDICs form a part of the EC public information and communication policy, as implemented by DG COMM.

The network is intended to provide information, raise awareness and promote debate among the general public on issues related to the European Union. Through information and awareness raising activities the network aims to contribute to the wider EU communication objective of promoting "an informed and active European citizenship". In addition to its outreach function the network is expected to provide feedback to the EU Institutions on citizens' concerns and thereby contribute to the EU's "listening to citizens" function.

In order to fulfil its mission the EDICs are expected to deliver on the following main tasks:

- Ensuring a physical presence locally; provision of information services (Q/A) on any issue related to the EU; dissemination of publications and signposting to more specialised services informing on specific EU issues (reactive mandatory services);

- Organisation of/contributions to events on EU-related issues and presentations to groups; media activities; production of publications, website set up and editing of newsletters (proactive facultative/additional services); and,

- Providing feedback on citizens' concerns to the EC.

The network has been operating since 2005, following the merger of EU networks – the Info Points and the Carrefours. With the second generation of the network (2009-2012), increased attention has been placed on:

- Proactive information activities and promoting dialogue with and among citizens;

- EDICs as partners of the EU Institutions, communicating the EU political priorities at the local level;

- Multiplication of effects via cooperation with stakeholders and outreach via the media;

- A localised communication approach with specific activities and targeted audiences defined at local level to best meet local needs; and,

- Simplification and optimisation of the EC's management of the network.

The EDIC network currently consists of over 460 local information centres spread across the 27 EU Member States – selected through calls for proposals.

The EC provides a maximum of 50% co-funding to the EDICs up to a maximum of €25,000 annually per centre. The budget for the implementation of the second generation of the EDIC network is a maximum of €11,400,000 per year for the EDIC grants. In addition, a specific budget for support and coordination activities for the network is available. This budget has varied from some €2,5M to €3,5M in the years 2009-2012.

Objectives of this evaluation

This evaluation had two principal objectives:

- To assess the extent to which the EDICs of the second generation (2009-2012) comply with their mission to promote an informed and active European citizenship; and,

- To assess the extent to which the amended management system – as implemented since 2009 – contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations.

Approach and method

The methodology for this evaluation was developed in light of its objectives as set out in the ToR.

The report relies upon data collected through the following methods and tools: desk research and analysis of monitoring data; interviews with EU level stakeholders (DG COMM staff, contractors, representatives of other EC line DGs, other EU Institutions and EC Representations); survey of EDICs; survey of the users of the EDIC services; case studies and focus groups (with users and non-users of the network) in seven Member States and benchmarking with other networks.

It should be noted that the evaluation faced issues with the quality of the EDIC network monitoring data collected by the EC. Also, bias in the user satisfaction results should be noted, as EDICs were asked to promote the user satisfaction survey to their own users.

Key findings

Overall compliance with the mission

The EC network mission is broadly defined and overall there is a lack of specific measurable objectives and specific target audiences, towards which actual outputs and results can be measured. For this reason it is not possible to assess with certainty the extent to which EDICs have complied with their overall mission and if the delivered outputs have met the expected ones.

However, judged by the compliance with key requirements for information services and awareness raising activities; the changes in activities and outreach from the first to the second generation of the network; the scale of services; the relevance of the activities undertaken for users and potential users; user satisfaction and increased knowledge among users, it may be concluded that the network overall complies with its mission of promoting an informed and active citizenship. Overall compliance should be understood as "average compliance" – as there are very significant differences between EDICs.

Promoting discussion and debate and undertaking proactive information activities have gained in importance in the current generation – with EDICs organising more events, developing more information material and engaging more actively with local stakeholders and media. Themes covered by the EDICs' activities are mostly relevant to a broader mission of informing about the EU. Furthermore, a significant share of EDICs activities are linked to the EU political priorities for communication defined each year.

Overall reach of the EDIC network is modest if compared to its potential target audience – currently defined as the European Public at large. For most EDICs, events are the activities that have the most substantial outreach.

The evaluation results suggest that satisfaction with EDIC services and activities is very high. Where data can be compared with other EU information, guidance and advisory networks, user satisfaction is higher than other EC services and networks (e.g. EDCC, EURES and ECC-Net). Results also show that the services provided and activities undertaken are relevant to actual and potential users – with proactive activities (events in particular) perceived as very relevant to potential user groups.

While EDICs overall comply with their mission, the network remains very heterogeneous. This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that the network has broad objectives and a very broad definition of target audience allowing various types of organisations – with very different objectives – to fit the EDIC framework. The heterogeneity also needs to be seen in a context where the co-funding

from the organisations hosting EDICs often exceeds 50% of actual costs as well as a limited number of quality proposals put forward from potential host structures in some countries. Finally, competence of EDIC Managers and local context factors contribute to creating a great variety of centres.

The inclusive approach – where the network includes many "types" of EDICs – has key benefits for the EC. It ensures geographical coverage and it gives a level of activity and leverage that overall could not be expected without EU support – and this at a very low total cost to the EU. At a local level it allows the EDIC to adapt activities to local needs – and host organisations to adapt their EDICs' activities to fit/support the objectives and priorities of the organisations. On the down-side, the current co-funding approach entails medium to low levels of control by the EC on the EDIC activities and hence, no assurance that the same services are not duplicated across the EU or across regions in individual Member States.

Delivery of reactive information services: Q/A, physical presence and access to EC publications

As a network the EDICs comply with their baseline mission – that is to provide reactive information services (Q/A), a physical presence and access to EC publications. The actual reach of these information services varies significantly among EDICs, with 33% of EDICs receiving fewer than five telephone and e-mail enquiries and 56% of EDICs receiving fewer than 10 enquiries per week. The low usage is largely explained by a lack of awareness of the EDICs combined with the fact that most citizens do not actually have specific questions about the EU that they would proactively seek to have answered.

In contrast, user satisfaction survey results suggest that satisfaction with the Q/A services is very high among actual network users.

Delivery of proactive information services: web presence, newsletters, publications and AV material

Almost all of the EDICs (96%) have a web presence, around half produce newsletters, and around 20% produce audio-visual material. Content and quality of the websites, newsletters and audio-visual material vary significantly among EDICs. In particular, the web presence of individual EDICs is often limited to promotional information and static information about the centre itself. In contrast, where EDICs sites are national, they are typically of significantly higher quality. Where EDICs report print material, this is very often promotional in nature (as opposed to content).

User satisfaction survey results suggest that satisfaction with these services is relatively high – but lower than for Q/A and events. Users are generally the least satisfied with the EDIC websites.

Awareness raising and contributing to debate: EDIC events

For a clear majority of EDICs events are the key activity to proactively raise awareness, engage and interact with citizens on EU related issues. Events contribute to increasing understanding of the EU, allow expression of participant views, and hence promote debate locally. Nearly all EDICs (92%) organise or participate in events. In 2010, the majority of EDICs (three in five) organised or participated in at least one event a month. 10% undertook or participated in at least four events per month.

EDICs are mostly involved in four main types of events: events at schools (lectures about the EU and EU opportunities for youth); conferences and debates; Europe days; and participation in large fairs. The EDICs' events cover a multitude of EU related topics – but 'education and training' is by far the most common topic. Where cultural events are undertaken (which is the case for most EDICs) they typically cover much broader aspects such as European culture, information about other EU countries, European diversity and living in other Member States.

User satisfaction with EDICs' events is very high. Events are also seen both by EDICs and other national stakeholders as the key added value of the network – where localisation of the centres plays an important role. Similarly, potential users consulted also perceived this type of activity as the most attractive and interesting for them.

Contributing to debate: EDIC media activities

EDICs' media activities have at least to some extent contributed to promoting an informed debate.

The evaluation results show that EDICs overall have worked more with media that in the previous generation. However, there are significant variations of EDIC involvement in media work across the network and Member States. Whereas some 64% of centres interact "regularly" with traditional media, some 36% do so only occasionally, rarely or never. The EDICs' willingness and ability to work with traditional media are influenced by a number of factors including presence of skills and capacity, host structures' support, openness of media to cooperation, euro-scepticism of society and media, as well as EC Representations' involvement.

Four main types of EDICs' activities targeted at traditional media may be identified: advertising, PR, media support and media training, and structured cooperation. Structured cooperation (i.e. regular/formalised contributions to audio-visual and print media) was found to contribute substantially to an informed debate. However the bulk of EDICs' media interaction was related to promoting or reporting on events and hence only indirectly supported public debate.

Social media is gaining importance as a tool to communicate to users and potential users of EDICs. As for traditional media, social media is first and foremost used to raise awareness and promote the activities of the EDICs. Few individual EDICs work more proactively with social media than their peers – tweeting, or blogging on EU related issues. The key factor that influences the effectiveness of use of social media is skills – with most managers having limited knowledge of social media tools.

Who are the users?

The largest group of EDIC users are pupils, their teachers and students (estimated to be 35%-50% of the total user group). Most pupils and students are reached through events and presentations. Teachers are reached through all the EDICs' activities and represent a significant part of the EDICs' "returning" users. Other significant groups reached by EDICs are public servants and NGOs/civil society organisations – as well as retired citizens.

Most EDICs have an outreach function to the general public. However, reaching the group aged 30 to 65 years remains difficult – an estimated 30% of the EDICs returning users are "general public" (i.e. using the service for private rather than professional reasons, and excluding pupils, students, other youth and their teachers), and one third of these are retired. Beyond pupils and youth – EDICs reach a very highly educated group – with two thirds of the returning users holding university degrees.

Working on the political priorities

EDICs are generally well informed about EU political priorities and their importance. However, they tend to use and interpret political priorities broadly.

Almost half of EDICs report that 50% or more of their activities are focused on communicating political priorities. Information dissemination and communication on political priorities takes place principally through events. The evaluation found that political priorities are useful to provide direction and inspiration for EDIC activities. However, the adaptation of these priorities to local contexts is reported to be crucial to ensure relevance to local target audiences.

There are a number of barriers to communication of political priorities. Lack of interest among the public, lack of timely communication from the EC, lack of clarification on what is expected when communicating, lack of expertise on topics, variety of EC Representations' requirements on communication of priorities, coverage of only a minor aspect of the priorities, lack of host structure interest and planning issues all contribute to limiting the extent and effectiveness of the EDICs communication of the priorities.

EDICs working as a 'first-stop shop' for information sources on the EU

There is abundant evidence of EDICs signposting users to other relevant information sources and contacts to other services. However, such referrals are limited to a few selected services (e.g. Europa

website and Your Europe portal) and in most cases regular signposting to EURES, Enterprise Europe Network, Eurodesk and the national agencies for the Youth and the Lifelong Learning programmes.

While awareness and knowledge of other networks has increased within the EDIC network, more specialised EU information services and EC networks are often less well known among EDICs and therefore cannot be appropriately signposted to. In a number of cases EDICs have low awareness of the EC networks and services targeting the general public or target audiences close to those of EDICs (e.g. Your Europe Advice, ECC-Net, Europass and Euroguidance). EC Representations play an important role in promoting awareness, cooperation and signposting. However, cooperation and awareness raising is to a wide extent driven by individuals or by individual EC Representations rather than following a structured approach.

Where signposting and referrals are used they largely meet users' expectations and allow access to the information citizens were looking for.

Visibility

EDICs are generally known to local stakeholders in most countries – and to those involved in informing about EU-related issues in general. Among the general public, either at the national or local level, EDICs are not well known. While EDICs place importance on promotion and awareness raising about their services, these activities seem to have had low impact.

New users in the main come into contact with EDICs through word of mouth, host structures, events and results of Web searches (mostly Google). In contrast the physical presence and presence in audio-visual media and social media do not appear to significantly contribute to the EDICs' visibility or to promoting their services among potential users.

The number of EDICs per country – and per number of inhabitants – not surprisingly has an impact on their visibility and reach. However, many EDICs have a limited geographical coverage (related to that of the host organisation mandate) and the coverage of many EDICs is limited to the city in which they are located.

Some EDICs have undertaken specific initiatives to ensure comprehensive geographical coverage.

Feedback function

EDICs provide very little feedback in the form of "channelling citizens' opinions and suggestions to EU Institutions" as formally required. The purpose of the EDIC feedback function is largely misunderstood and misinterpreted by EDICs and Representations (e.g. as feedback for reporting and planning or on EDICs' performance and activities per se).

Although ad hoc, one-off examples of feedback for the purpose of informing policy making have been identified, the feedback function is generally not working effectively. This is mostly due to the lack of guidance on how and for what purpose such feedback should be gathered and through which means it should be relayed to the EU Institutions. Also a lack of "feedback on the feedback" (i.e. indications of whether the feedback provided by the EDICs actually has been used and useful to the Institutions) is contributing to an ineffective feedback function.

Where content feedback appears to be most used and most useful is through consultations with the EDICs on the development of Representations' national communication strategies.

Cooperation with EU Institutions and actors – and opportunities to expand cooperation

Cooperation with other EU institutions and actors exists – mainly with the European Parliament and the EP Information Offices. However, cooperation currently remains limited and ad hoc.

There is potential to enhance EDIC cooperation with other EU Institutions and actors. An interest in enhanced cooperation was expressed by the EDICs as well as by the European Parliament (EP), the Committee of Regions (CoR) and the Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Currently there is no formal framework establishing guidelines for EDICs' cooperation with line DGs and other EU Institutions.

EDICs would generally welcome EP, CoR and EESC members participating as speakers in their events, provided that the right language skills and cultural fit are considered. Also, there is an interest among some EDICs to work closer with some DGs – which potentially could be arranged around specific campaigns. However, adequate support to EDICs needs to be ensured to assist the other Institutions in their communication efforts, as EDICs may not have sufficient capacity to take up additional tasks. For this reason, a more strategic cooperation among EDICs and other Institutions needs to be planned well in advance.

Considering the difference in capacity and interest in specific topics, cooperation with other DGs and EU institutions should be optional for EDICs.

Organisation and management

Overall efficiency and effectiveness

The organisation and management of the EDIC network, as implemented since 2009, has contributed to a more efficient and effective implementation of the network. The evaluation found the overall organisation of the network to be adequate – the guidance and assistance within the network are provided at appropriate levels, while the management of the network is decentralised to a sufficient degree.

Most management structures (i.e. the grant scheme, the module system and the reporting system) demonstrate improvements compared to the previous generation. The direct management by Representations was confirmed to be more efficient than the intermediary bodies' system implemented in some Member States during the previous generation.

Formal requirements

Requirements as defined in the Guidelines for the EDICs Management, Framework and Specific Agreements are adequate and useful in guiding the implementation of the EDIC network. The Model Action Plan requirements are perceived as clear and useful. However, they need to relate more clearly and explicitly to EDIC activities, political priorities and local information needs. Reporting requirements, including monthly reporting, are perceived to be reasonable by more than 70% of EDICs. One in five EDICs, however, considers reporting requirements to be excessive.

Data suggest that the Guidelines for Monitoring Visits to the EDICs are little known, although when these are known and used the Representations have found them to be very useful.

Grant scheme and modules system

The grant scheme based on lump sum contracts, as implemented since 2009, has increased the overall efficiency of the network. It has significantly reduced the administrative burden relating to reporting and control, and hence increased efficiency. The grant scheme is also reported to have increased financial transparency.

Despite some limitations, the module system is perceived as superior to the previous system of global budgets for the implementation of activities. The modules system has shifted the management focus from administration of costs to implementation of activities. It also encourages forward planning of activities, proactive activities, provides better structured implementation and allows better financial planning and predictability.

However, there are a number of issues with the specifications and requirements for different modules which create issues for their implementation. The effectiveness of the module system is further hampered by different levels of stringency in interpretations by the EC Representations.

Monitoring

The monitoring framework is generally adequate. Nevertheless the monitoring activities are taking place less frequently and less systematically across Member States in the current generation than in the previous implementation period. No financial checks and audits implemented by DG COMM centrally were identified through the fieldwork.

While a majority of Representations undertake monitoring visits, their opinions are divided regarding the necessity of formal monitoring – some Representations argued for more monitoring visits and centrally implemented financial control, while others are of the opinion that informal monitoring would suffice.

Resources allocated by Representations for monitoring are perceived as inadequate. If on the ground monitoring is to be undertaken, stricter enforcement of monitoring practices "from above" is felt to be necessary in order to justify the allocation and use of resources for monitoring visits.

Monitoring visits and reporting by Representations, when undertaken, have followed the Guidelines for Monitoring Visits requirements and are of adequate quality.

Support to EDICs

The EC undertakes various activities to support the EDICs and the implementation of their activities (publications, information products, seminars and events, etc.) are considered reasonably useful. However, there are a number of issues to be addressed in order to optimise support.

While the ordering of publications has greatly improved since the last evaluation, the dissemination of publications could be optimised though the dissemination of samples in electronic format only. The support services provided by ESN are little used, due to ineffective dissemination and in some cases low relevance to EDICs. As for training, there is a need to further develop activities focused on the exchange of experience, "hands on" training and practical experiences. Finally, the intranet is currently not user-friendly and technical issues are recurrent. If the intranet is to operate as intended there is a need for a radical overhaul of the site and its functionalities.

EC and host organisation co-funding

Data suggests mixed views regarding the adequacy of the EC co-funding. 24% of EDICs find the EC co-funding 'globally adequate' and a further 34% 'somewhat adequate'. In contrast 42% find it inadequate – of which 17% indicated that it was 'totally inadequate'. There is a clear difference in terms of perception of adequacy of co-funding between EDICs in newer and older Member States. The EC co-funding is perceived as globally adequate or somewhat adequate by most EDICs in the EU-12 countries and inadequate or totally inadequate by EDICs in the EU-15.

In exploring the potential to increase EC co-funding, 26% of EDICs indicate that they feel certain their host structures would match additional EC funding, 48% indicate this is a possibility, while 22% suggest that their host organisations would not match additional EC funding. A further 4% of EDICs indicate they would have no capacity to absorb such additional funding. The highest percentages of EDICs indicating that their host structures would not be in a position to match an increased EC funding, or that their centre would not have the capacity to absorb such funds, are located in Latvia (75%), the Netherlands (67%) and Finland (56%).

EDICs are also largely divided in their outlook on the availability and sustainability of their host organisations' co-funding. 54% of EDICs feel relatively certain that they will receive adequate co-funding from their host structure in the next few years, while 27% are not sure but this uncertainty is a recurrent problem. In contrast 17% reported this as a new problem and 2% of EDICs are confident they will not receive host structure co-funding within the next few years. Serious concerns with host structure co-funding were identified in four Member States (Finland, Austria, Belgium and the UK).

EDICs that reported expecting difficulties in obtaining funding from their host structures also generally felt less satisfied with the current level of the EC co-funding.

Recommendations

It is recommended that DG COMM takes action in the following areas.

Mission, scope, activities and coverage

Rationalisation of objectives. The EC network is currently governed by broad objectives and is heterogeneous in nature. The inclusive approach has important strengths. Therefore it cannot be

recommended that SMART objectives be fixed centrally for the entire EDIC network. In contrast there would be benefits in a reflection process to reconsider the vision and objectives of the network, and the scope and potential limits of the network to limit the heterogeneity of the network and hence ensure greater consistency in the results achieved across the network and the EU territory. Reformulation of objectives of the network should also:

▪ Ensure a clearer link between what is expected in terms of results and actual achievements (proportionality) – and thereby a better basis for future selection of EDICs and for the guidance and management of the network; and,

▪ Ensure complementarities with other EC networks and services, effective resource allocation and avoid overlapping services.

The vision and objectives should furthermore give considerations to aspects such as potential priority target audiences; specific themes that need to be covered[1]; and cooperation with other EU institutions. It is recommended that rationalisation of objectives is implemented in conjunction with SMART objectives to be set out by the EDICs (in their Action Plans) – and to be defined "bottom up" within the framework of the revised objectives.

Optimisation of resources. EDICs overall have quite limited financial and human resources available for the implementation of activities. In order to optimise the use of resources and to allow EDICs to concentrate on activities with the most benefits to potential users it is recommended that module 1 is revised – allowing EDICs to choose between a centre with a physical presence (as currently) and one with no physical presence, open to the public and without opening hours (with a lower lump-sum provided to the EDICs that choose not to provide the walk-in service). In the latter case "first-stop shop" user enquiries could be addressed by the EDCC. The EDIC could still operate as a "back office" to the EDCC, addressing specific enquires.

Concentration of activities. There would be benefits in considering a more centralised approach to EDIC websites – i.e. developing one EDIC website per country[2]. A centralised approach would allow resource allocation not just to the basic information – but would allow the development of more informative websites at a national level. A similar approach could be envisaged for other activities where a localised approach is not needed.

Media skills development. Several EU stakeholders consulted have called for enhanced media activities – actively engaging the EDICs at a local level in the local public debate about the EU. Due to a lack of skills and competences – but also given the role of EDICs as neutral information providers – it cannot be recommended that media activities become a core EDIC activity. Nevertheless, if media interaction – including social media – is to gain importance, further training will be necessary as most Managers of EDICs do not have adequate skills to develop and undertake media communication.

Clarification of the feedback function. If the citizens' feedback function is to continue, it will be necessary to specify what feedback is needed by the EU institutions – and how and by whom it is to be used. Considerations should also be given to how to integrate and interlink formally the EDICs feedback in the formulation of national communication strategies. If clarification is not provided there would be benefit in discontinuing the citizens' feedback service requirement.

Promotion of the EDICs as first stop. In order to promote the EDICs' work as "first-stop shops" there would be a benefit in a coordinated and Representation-led approach to enhance awareness and cooperation among EC networks. Central guidance would be needed as not all Representations consider the promotion of network cooperation to be a priority.

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[1] And whether the communication of political priorities or other themes should be to some extent mandatory for EDICs

[2] Or where needed for linguistic reasons at regional level

Opportunities for expanding the EDIC network mission. There is potential to enhance cooperation with other EU institutions and actors and benefits in developing such cooperation in terms of effectiveness. However, it is recommended that DG COMM investigates the kind of resources and support that these institutions could provide to EDICs– as such cooperation will not be effective without support. In this investigation phase, DG COMM should focus on exploring opportunities for planned communication projects to be organised well in advance. Cooperation cannot be ad hoc and mandatory for EDICs.

Organisation and management

Revising the Module system. In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the current EDIC network organisation and management there would be benefits in revising the Modules system in consultation with EDICs and EC Representations. The revision should be comprehensive and cover all modules[3].

It is also recommended that the revised Module system is adequately explained to both EDICs and Representations in order to ensure that the interpretation and application of the modules' requirements and requirements for the modification of EDIC Action Plans is understood by Representations across Member States.

Ensuring added value. In order to ensure that the EC co-funding represents true added value and to avoid the risk of deadweight, it is recommended that DG COMM requires potential host structures to clearly demonstrate the complementarities of implementing an EDIC with their existing services and activities.

Ensuring adequate implementation of the monitoring and audit requirements. In order to ensure more effective monitoring of the network it is recommended that DG COMM promotes the monitoring guidelines among the Representations – and ensures that the foreseen monitoring visits and financial checks and audits are undertaken.

With regards to the monitoring data, it is also recommended that the EDIC reporting requirements relate more directly to the Representations' needs in evaluating EDICs' final reports and the needs of external evaluators.

Revamping of the EDIC intranet. In order to improve the usability and effectiveness of the website it is recommended that the intranet is revamped. Revamping should cover the reporting system and simplification of reporting requirements. Revamping should also cover search functionalities and the information services provided through the intranet.

Preservation of the current levels of co-funding. In order to maximise geographical coverage it is recommended that the current levels of EC co-funding for the EDIC network are preserved in the next funding round (such that the total budget remains the same). However, DG COMM should explore options for increased funding – including alternative host structure funding approaches – as current funding levels are likely to imply that some EDICs will leave the network. DG COMM should furthermore explore opportunities for "add on" funding from other DGs for specific communication activities undertaken on their behalf by the EDIC network.

Monitoring of available host structures. In order to ensure the continuation of the EDIC network it is recommended that the availability of host structures' is monitored, including engagement in a process to find new EDIC hosts, where appropriate and before the next call.

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[3] Details on how the new module system should look are set out in the conclusions and recommendations

1 Introduction

This project provides Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) of the European Commission (EC) with the Mid-term evaluation of Europe Direct Information Centres (2009-2012).

The evaluation was carried out under the Framework Contract between GHK Consulting and DG EAC for evaluation, evaluation related services and support for impact assessment (EAC/50/2009).

The evaluation was led by GHK Consulting in consortium with Technopolis.

This final report is structured as follows:

- The remaining part of this section presents the objectives and scope of the study and provides an overview of the EDIC network;

- Section 2 presents a summary of the methodological approach and key challenges encountered in the process of this evaluation;

- Section 3 provides an analysis of the implementation of the EDIC mission and assesses the extent to which the EDIC network complies with its mission of promoting an informed and active European citizenship;

- Section 4 provides an analysis and assessment of the organisation and management of the EDIC network;

- Section 5 provides conclusions and recommendations.

The following annexes are attached to the report:

- Annex 1: Analytical framework of the evaluation;

- Annex 2: Analysis of the EDIC survey results;

- Annex 3: Analysis of the User survey results;

- Annex 4: Write up of case studies;

- Annex 5: Write up of focus groups;

- Annex 6: List of literature reviewed;

- Annex 7: List of interviews carried out in the case study countries;

- Annex 8: Review of ECC-Net, Enterprise Europe Network and Eurodesk;

- Annex 9: List of interviews undertaken with EU level stakeholders and EC Representations external to the case study countries; and

- Annex 10: The intervention logic of the EDIC network.

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the second generation (2009-2012) of the Europe Direct Information Centre (EDIC) network. More specifically the objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the extent to which EDICs comply with their mission to promote an informed and active European citizenship;

- To assess the extent to which the amended management system – as implemented since 2009 – contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations.

The evaluation provides operational conclusions and recommendations linked to each of the objectives of the evaluation. It also provides recommendations for the continuation and planning of the EDIC network beyond 2012.

1.2 Scope of the evaluation

This study covers the implementation of the EDIC network in the period 2009-2012 – corresponding to the second generation of the EDICs.

The evaluation paid specific attention to the extent to which the current management system as implemented since 2009 compared to the management system of the first generation of Europe Direct Relays has changed, and how these changes have had an impact on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the network.

The study also examined the vertical coordination of the network (coordination between DG COMM/Headquarters, Representations and EDICs) as well as the horizontal coordination and cooperation (i.e. how EDICs cooperate with other EDICs and with local stakeholders providing information about the EU). In addition, the evaluation also examined options for increasing the involvement of other line DGs, EU institutions and national authorities in the work of EDICs.

1.3 Context of the evaluation – The Commission's communication policy and strategy

Over the last years and in particular since the rejection of the Draft constitution by French and Dutch voters in 2005, information and communication policies within the EC have gained increased importance.

In recent years, a number of key communication initiatives and documents have been produced at the Commission level that set a blueprint for information and communication policy and activities. These have been a response to the recognised need to improve communication policies and instigate mechanisms that address weaknesses. The principal initiatives or documents that have driven the Commission's communication activities and focus have been:

- **The Action Plan to Improve Communicating Europe** by the Commission[4] was produced in 2005 and sets out a detailed list of specific measures the Commission would take to improve the way it communicates with its citizens;

- The **Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate**[5] was drawn up as part of the "period of reflection" following the negative votes in relation to the ratification of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands. This was intended "to stimulate a wider debate between the EU's democratic institutions and its citizens". Plan-D was intended to dovetail with the Action Plan;

- A **White Paper on communication strategy and democracy**[6] started a consultation process on the principles behind the EU communication policy. The White Paper promotes communication as a discreet policy, and the notion that citizens should feel closer to the decision making process in Brussels.

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[4] Action Plan: SEC (2005) 985 final, 20 July 2005

[5] Plan D: COM (2005) 494 final, 13 October 2005

[6] White Paper on a European Communication Policy COM(2006) 35 final

In addition, the following three initiatives were launched, focusing on the need to provide tailored information at the local level and to promote the debate on EU issues.

Information and Communication Strategy

In 2004, the Commission published a Communication Strategy[7] which emphasized a more citizen-focused approach in which the communication should improve at regional and local level. The main objective of the Commission's Communication Strategy was "*to improve perception of the European Union and its institutions and their legitimacy by deepening knowledge and understanding of its tasks, structure and achievements and by establishing a dialogue with its citizens*".

The Strategy announced a need for a modernised framework in which EC information relays and networks would be used to communicate from the EU level to the local level and where the citizens would be at the heart of all communication. With new challenges, such as the EU enlargement, on the horizon, the Commission rationalised the existing communication networks and relays.

Communicating Europe in Partnership

In 2007, the communication Communicating Europe in Partnership[8] stressed the need to take the debate on Europe beyond the institutions to its partnerships. Based on the principles of "Listening, Communicating and Going Local", activities should be targeted at creating and nurturing exchange, debate and understanding between European institutions and the public, organised civil society and specialised audiences at European, national, regional and local levels.

Citizenship Report

The 2010 EU Citizenship Report[9] aimed at identifying and addressing issues and obstacles faced by citizens when exercising their EU rights. Hereby, the EU Citizenship Report, together with the Single Market act communication, was instrumental in the delivery of commitment to build a Citizens' Europe and a well-functioning Single Market which matches citizens' needs and expectations.

The report outlined 25 specific measures that the Commission is taking to overcome the barriers and ensure that European citizens are capable of fully exercising their rights within the EU. One such measure stresses the need to strengthen communication at the local level and the increasing role the EDIC network should play in this regard: *"The Commission ... is streamlining its information networks in the Member States so that citizens easily find the right contact point at national, regional and local level. The Commission's Representations in the Member States, together with the 500 Europe Direct information centres, will improve the promotion of citizens' rights by 2012, including through a better cooperation and interaction with existing EU-level assistance and problem-solving services."*

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[7] COMM (2004)196

[8] COM (2007) 569 final, 3 October 2007

[9] COM(2010) 603 final, 27 October 2010; EU Citizenship Report 2010 'Dismantling the obstacles to EU citizens' rights'

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1.4   Object of the evaluation: the EDIC network

1.4.1   Mission

The EDIC network is a European Commission co-funded network of Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs). Over 460 local centres are placed all over Europe, hosted by organisations.

The EDICs are intended to provide information, raise awareness and promote debate on the EU among the EU citizens, so that they feel adequately informed about the Union. Furthermore, the second "generation" of the EDIC network, is intended to support a number of information needs and communication priorities defined in the 2005-2007 period - namely:

- "Going local" – supporting debate and dialogue at local level and providing feedback to EU institutions (from local to the EU level);

- Facilitating and simplifying access to EU information - EDICs should operate as a "first-stop-shop" to information on the EU providing first level information and guiding citizens towards appropriate EU sources and EU actors and networks.

Through these priorities and objectives the EDIC network aims at contributing to the wider EU communication objective of promoting "an informed and active European citizenship" – as well to the 3 main priorities of DG COMM communication efforts over the last 6 years:

- Informing: keep the general public and the media up to date on EU activities;

- Explaining: how EU policies work – and how they affect citizens everyday lives;

- Listening: taking into account the public's views and concerns.

In order to contribute to these objectives, the second generation of EDICs is based on a number of "strategic principles" which may be defined as follows:

- A clear focus on proactive information and dialogue promoting activities (supported by a definition of mandatory and complementary activities – and funding related to the activities undertaken to support more outreach activities);

- "EDICs as the EU's local partners" supporting the communication on the EC priorities at local level, ensuring feedback to the EC on topics of interest to the EC and ensuring local cooperation with other EU stakeholders/networks (signposting and streamlining of EU information and assistance services);

- Multiplication of effects via a stakeholder outreach function, including in particular the media;

- A localised communication approach: specific activities and targeted audiences defined at local level to best meet local needs (bottom up approach).

The intervention logic of the EDIC network is set out in Annex 10 to this report.

The ED Network is part of the European Commission (EC) public information and communication policy and is implemented by DG COMM. The Europe Direct information services, also include the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC), the European Documentation Centres (EDC) and Team Europe. The network covers all 27 EU Member States.

1.4.2 Expected outputs and activities

In order to meet its mission and to contribute to the overall objectives the EDIC network is expected to deliver on the following main tasks[10]:

- Provide information, advice, assistance and answers to questions on the Union's legislation, policies, programmes and funding opportunities to EU citizens tailored to their local needs;

- Undertake communication and awareness-raising activities that stimulate an informed debate of the Union's priorities, policies and programmes via a pro-active communication approach and cooperation with other information networks and organisations;

- Act as EU Institutions' partners at local level for their initiatives, campaigns and actions;

- Give citizens the opportunity to provide feedback to the EU institutions in the form of opinions and suggestions.

In addition to these tasks the Commission defines communication objectives on an annual basis (and since 2011 political priorities) on which the centres are expected to inform and communicate. In the year 2011 these priorities covered:

- Dealing with the economic crisis and building the momentum of the recovery;
- Restoring growth and jobs by accelerating the Europe 2020 reform agenda;
- Building an area of freedom, justice and security;
- Launching negotiations for a modern EU budget;
- Pulling the EU's weight on the global stage,

1.5 Nature and size of the network

EDICs are hosted by local institutions, which co-fund the EDIC and various types of other support. EDICs are selected through call for proposals.

By November 2011 the EDIC Network was composed of some 469 EDICs[11]. The number of EDICs has been decreasing since 2009, from some 500 members.

Table 1.1   Number of EDICs per Member State

Member States	2009	2010	2011	Member States	2009	2010	2011
Austria	11	10	10	Latvia	9	9	9
Belgium	10	11	11	Lithuania	10	10	10
Bulgaria	14	14	14	Luxembourg	2	2	2
Cyprus	2	2	2	Malta	2	2	2
Czech Rep.	11	10	9	Netherlands	13	10	9
Denmark	4	4	4	Poland	27	27	23
Estonia	8	8	8	Portugal	16	15	15
Finland	23	22	22	Romania	31	30	31

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[10] Framework agreement and Guidelines for the EDICs management, version 2, November 2010

[11] The number of EDICs has been decreasing since 2009. As the reporting year 2011 is yet incomplete, the figure for 2010 – 484 EDICs – is used as a constant reference in most of this report.

Member States	2009	2010	2011	Member States	2009	2010	2011
France	56	54	53	Slovakia	12	12	10
Germany	59	58	58	Slovenia	6	6	6
Greece	18	17	12	Spain	47	47	45
Hungary	18	16	16	Sweden	19	17	17
Ireland	8	8	8	UK	16	14	14
Italy	50	49	49	**Total**	**502**	**484**	**469**

Source: Number of EDICs per Member State – Annex 2 of the ToR for 2009 and 2010, ED intranet for 2011 (November figures), population data Eurostat 2010.

The geographical spread and density of EDICs differs within the EU – and also within individual Member States. The geographical density is relatively high in Member States such as Belgium, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Italy – but low in countries such as Denmark, the UK and Sweden.

Figure 1.1   Map with EDICs' geographical locations in the EU

1.6   Network structure

DG COMM of the European Commission is responsible for the implementation of the EDIC network. The Commission, represented by the EC Representation in a particular country, signs Framework agreements with organisations it has selected to host EDICs.

DG COMM (Headquarters) provides strategic steering and assistance to the Network coordinators in the EC Representations and general support to the network.

The EDIC grants are subject to direct centralised management by the Commission Representations[12] in the 27 EU Member States. They are responsible for the selection of the host structures as well as the monitoring, animation of the national network and the day-to-day management.

The organisations selected to host EDICs are responsible for ensuring that their Centres fulfil the requirements of the Framework and Specific agreements, that they comply with the mission and tasks of the Network and provide impartial information[13].

The host structures are also required to appoint a full-time member of staff (or several staff equivalent to 1 FTE), responsible for the management of the centre and ensure that staff has the necessary qualifications to ensure an adequate management of the Centre, including good communication skills, project management and good knowledge of EU affairs.

The Commission is assisted in supporting EDIC information and communication activities of the network by service providers. The on-going service contracts cover information management, communication and promotion, intranet site for communicating and networking and training sessions and networking activities[14].

1.7   Costs of the network

The budget for the implementation of the second generation of the EDICs is a maximum of €11,400,000 per year. The action grant for a host structure per centre is a lump sum. The lump sum may vary between €12,000 and €25,000 per year. This grant may cover a maximum of 50% of the eligible expenses of the EDIC.

To ensure the stability of the network, secure funding for and continuity of its information and communication activities, framework agreements of four years are concluded between EC Representations and the organisations hosting EDICs. While the framework agreements secure the membership in the EDIC network, yearly action grants are actually awarded based on the EC Representations' acceptance of the EDIC action plans and conclusion of Specific annual agreements.

The EDIC network funding per Member State is allocated depending on the number of its seats in the European Parliament and the geographical area of each Member State, while ensuring continuity with the first term of the Europe Direct network.

The average expected funding per Centre in 2010 ranged from around €14,500 in Estonia, €16,500-22,000 in most of the EU-12 countries[15] and €22,000-25,000 in the EU-15 countries.

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[12] Some larger Member States like France, Germany and Spain have several Representations that have divided spheres of influence for the EDIC network within their country, usually based on regional or linguistic considerations.

[13] More detailed responsibilities of the host structure are listed in the Framework Agreement (Article I.6).

[14] Supplied by ESN, Eworx and Demos respectively

[15] With the exception of Cyprus, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia that anticipated around €23,500-25,000 per EDIC on average.

Table 1.2   EDICs grant allocation by Member States (2010)[16]

Member State	2009 (EUR)	2010 (EUR)	EDICs in 2010	Average budget available per centre in 2010) (€)
Austria	253,500	253,500	10	25,000
Belgium	250,000	275,000	11	25,000
Bulgaria	267,200	266,200	14	19,014
Cyprus	50,000	50,000	2	25,000
Czech Rep.	208,600	205,800	10	20,580
Denmark	106,500	88,500	4	22,125
Estonia	112,000	108,800	8	13,600
Finland	535,000	535,000	22	24,318
France	1,300,300	1,260,500	54	23,343
Germany	1,409,000	1,406,500	58	24,250
Greece	372,500	398,000	17	23,412
Hungary	322,800	305,600	16	19,100
Ireland	175,000	175,000	8	21,875
Italy	1,210,500	1,217,850	49	24,854
Latvia	173,600	244,400	9	25,000
Lithuania	175,200	189,600	10	18,960
Luxembourg	50,000	50,000	2	25,000
Malta	48,000	49,600	2	24,800
Netherlands	299,500	235,880	10	23,588
Poland	596,000	588,800	27	21,807
Portugal	373,000	344,000	15	22,933
Romania	600,000	562,000	30	18,733
Slovakia	208,600	197,600	12	16,467
Slovenia	125,200	140,800	6	23,467
Spain	1,120,200	1,076,000	47	22,894
Sweden	411,000	392,500	17	23,088
UK	368,000	327,000	14	23,357
Total allocated	**11,121,200**	**10,944,430**	**484**	

Source: EDICs allocations in the Member States 2009 and 2010 information from DG COMM

In addition to the grant of the EDIC network, Headquarters and Representations have a specific budget for support and coordination activities for the network. The annual total "support budget" has varied from some €2,5M to €3,5M in the years 2009-2011. In 2011 the support budget included a specific budget for EC Representations of €980,000 for supporting and promoting coordination and streamlining of networks at national level.

2 Methodological approach to the evaluation

2.1 Evaluation questions and analytical framework

The methodology for this evaluation was developed in the light of the objectives and the research questions set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR).

The ToR defined two main evaluation questions and 9 sub-questions to be addressed in the framework of the evaluation. These are:

Table 2.3   Main evaluation questions and sub-questions

Evaluation question 1: *To what extent do the EDICs comply effectively with their mission of promoting an informed and active European citizenship?*	**Evaluation question 2:** *To what extent do the organisation and management of the EDICs contribute to efficiency and effectiveness of their operations?*

Sub-questions: *To what extent do the EDICs comply effectively with their mission in terms of:*
  a. *Providing their target groups with information services tailored to local needs;*
  b. *Facilitating citizens' access to the appropriate contact point for their specific EU needs, in line with the one-stop logic outlined in the Citizenship report;*
  c. *Carrying out communication and awareness-raising activities focused on the Commission's political priorities;*
  d. *Contributing to an informed debate on EU issues.*
	Sub-questions:
	  a. *To what extent does the current grant scheme contribute to an increased efficiency of the EDICs as compared to the previous generation and how could the model be improved and simplified;*
	  b. *To what extent do the requirements defined in the model agreements and the Guidelines ensure an appropriate execution of the action plans;*
	  c. *To what extent does the monitoring and supervision procedures ensure an appropriate follow up of the implementation;*
	  d. *To what extent does the steering and coordination provided by the Representation and Headquarters meet the programme objectives and are cost-effective;*
	  e. *Are there any particular concerns concerning the co-financing of the EDICs activities by the organisations hosting the centres.*

The evaluation question 1 relates to the effectiveness of the EDIC network in terms of fulfilling its core information, awareness raising and communicating missions. In order to comprehensively cover the EDIC mission the following additional sub-questions were added to the evaluation theme.

- To what extent do the EDICs comply effectively with their mission in terms of:

  – Ensuring adequate visibility of their services

  – Providing effectively feedback services to the EC

- To what extent is the network capable of taking up new activities and responsibilities (defined by other EU actors or by taking over activities currently undertaken by other EU networks and services)?

The analytical framework (AF) which the study used to address the two main evaluation questions and all of the associated sub-questions and their judgement criteria, indicators and associated data collection tools is presented in Annex 1.

2.2 Evaluation design

The evaluation methodology was designed in light of the evaluation questions. The evaluation design combined a variety of data collection and assessment methods. This report relies upon data collected through the following methods and tools:

- Desk research and analysis of monitoring data;
- Interviews with EU level stakeholders;
- Survey among EDICs;
- User survey;
- Case studies;
- Focus groups; and
- Benchmarking.

Each of these is briefly described below.

2.2.1 Desk research

Desk research was undertaken during the course of the whole evaluation and covered various documents. Desk research included:

General management documentation
- Guidelines for the management of the EDIC network;
- The Commission 2009 Work programme for the funding of the EDIC network;
- The templates for the Framework partnership agreement and the Specific Grant Agreement for an Action;
- Quantitative data on the size and the budget allocations for the network by Member State;
- Guidelines for Monitoring visits.

EDIC Monitoring data and other data on activities undertaken by the EDIC network and support services

- Monitoring data (monthly monitoring data on all EDIC for the period 2009-2011);
- Raw data and summary reports of investigative surveys undertaken by ESN among the EC network (on their work with media and on their work with social media);
- ED fact sheets, thematic info dossiers, "Yours Directly" newsletters, thematic info sheets and various other documents related to the EDIC modules;
- Monitoring visits reports;
- Existing reviews of EDIC website.

Evaluations, surveys and studies

- Satisfaction surveys among participants to EDIC trainings;
- 2011 Satisfaction survey among EDICs of the support services;
- The 2008 Mid-term evaluation of the EDIC network;
- User satisfaction data from evaluations of other EC networks (EURES, EDCC and ECC-Net);
- Relevant Eurobarometer reports;
- Evaluations of Enterprise Europe Network, EDCC, EURES and the Youth programme.

In order to assist the various analysis tasks mapping and analysis were carried out on a number of separate themes:

- All EDIC monitoring data was regrouped, mapped and analysed;

- Analysis of all previous EDIC survey data was undertaken – including analysis of raw data;

- A review of 44 randomly selected EDICs' newsletters (produced in 2011) was undertaken to create a typology of newsletters and map their contents;

- Action plans and final reports (in the period 2009-2011) for 64 EDIC were reviewed and mapped in the process of preparing the case study work and contributed to the data analysis[17].

Finally, a number of EU policy and DG COMM internal documents were reviewed in the process of preparing a note on the streamlining of the EC networks[18]. This note is delivered to DG COMM as a separate analysis document, in addition to the reporting foreseen under ToR.

A full list of documents reviewed is presented in Annex 6.

2.2.2 Interviews with EU level stakeholders

A total of 33 interviews have been undertaken in the framework of consulting the relevant EU level stakeholders. Interviews included:

- 11 interviews with DG COMM officials in Units C and B;

- 2 interviews representatives of DG COMM contractors – ESN and Demos – working with the EDIC network;

- 14 face-to-face interviews with other Commission line DGs, the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee;

- 6 interviews with EC Representations in the non-case study countries.

The full list of interviews is included in Annex 9.

2.2.3 Survey among EDICs

An online survey among EDICs was implemented, covering all the Member States.

The survey was open for a period of one month (1-30 September 2011). The survey was promoted by DG COMM to the EC Representations. They in turn promoted it to the EDIC in their respective countries. The EDIC survey was carried out in three languages (English, French and German).

With regard to the representativeness of the survey results, a total of 359 replies were received from the 469 EDICs across the EU. This represented 75% of all the active EDICs (November 2011). EDICs that were already operating in the previous generation of the network accounted for 71% of the responses to the survey, while the rest came from those that started operating in 2009 or later.

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[17] As each EDIC was expected to have 3 Action Plans and 2 Final Reports for the evaluation period 2009-2011, amounting to a total of over 300 documents, these have not been included in the list of literature reviewed.

[18] The scope of the evaluation was enlarged during the Inception phase of the study to best suit the needs of DG COMM. Following the interest repeatedly expressed by DG COMM, the "Review of activities to streamline EC networks: Streamlining note undertaken in the framework of the Mid-term evaluation of Europe Direct Information Centres (2009-2012)" was added to the tasks of the evaluation and delivered to DG COMM on 6 October.

Table 2.4   Number of EDICs' responses and the response rate by country

Countries	Number of Surveys submitted	Number of EDICs per country	Response rate %
Austria	8	10	80%
Belgium	9	11	82%
Bulgaria	13	14	93%
Cyprus	2	2	100%
Czech Republic	8	9	89%
Denmark	4	4	100%
Estonia	6	8	75%
Finland	11	22	50%
France	45	53	85%
Germany	40	58	69%
Greece	9	12	75%
Hungary	10	16	63%
Ireland	6	8	75%
Italy	24	49	49%
Latvia	4	9	44%
Lithuania	7	10	70%
Luxembourg	1	2	50%
Malta	3	2	150%[19]
Netherlands	6	9	67%
Poland	23	23	100%
Portugal	12	15	80%
Romania	33	31	106%
Slovakia	7	10	70%
Slovenia	6	6	100%
Spain	32	45	71%
Sweden	20	17	118%
United Kingdom	10	14	71%
Grand Total	359	469	75%[20]

In terms of representation per country, all EDICs may be assumed to have filled in the survey in Malta, Sweden, Romania, Cyprus, Denmark, Poland and Slovenia.

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[19] The number of responses per country were not limited to the number of EDICs in this particular country, hence for some countries the number or responses is slightly higher than the number of EDICs. This may indicate that several people working in one EDIC have taken the time to fill in the survey.

[20] In the calculation of the average the response rates higher than 100% were reduced to 100%,

In 13 Member States the response rate was above 70%, in three countries it was above 60% and around 50% in two Member States. The response rate was between 40 and 50% in Latvia and Italy.

In numerical terms, most replies to the survey among EDICs were received from France (13%), Germany (11%), Romania and Spain (9% each). The response rates per country were relatively high and homogeneous. Even in the case of Latvia – the country with the lowest response rate – four out of nine EDICs submitted responses to the survey. Therefore the survey results may be assessed as overall representative of the national diversities of the EDIC network and should not have any major country bias[21].

Full survey results are presented in Annex 2.

2.2.4 Case studies

Case studies, consisting of face-to-face and phone interviews, were undertaken in seven Member States (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK) during September and October 2011.

The aim of the case studies was to provide the evaluation with in-depth insights in EDIC operations and activities in the countries selected.

The case study approach consisted of a desk review undertaken before the fieldwork and fieldwork in the case studies' countries – consisting of consultations with various local, regional and national level stakeholders.

The case study fieldwork consisted of a total of 155 interviews, carried out face to face or in some cases on the phone.

Table 2.5   Summary of case study interviews by country and stakeholder group

	BG	FR	DE	PL	PT	SE	UK	Total
Representations	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**14**
EDICs	6	14	14	9	9	5	7	**64**
Host structures	3	3	8	8	4	3	7	**36**
National associations or organisations	1	2	2	0	1	2	1	**9**
Local, regional or national authorities	2	4	1	1	0	2	1	**11**
EU networks	4	3	2	5	2	3	2	**21**
Total	**18**	**28**	**29**	**25**	**18**	**17**	**20**	**155**

The list of interviewees was endorsed by the EC Representations in each of the case study countries. In addition to the EDICs, the case studies included in-depth interviews with the following key stakeholders:

- Network Correspondents and Heads of Representations in the case study countries;

- Directors of the Host Structures;

- Managers of other EC networks and/or national agencies managing contact points for EU programmes, working with the themes of most interest to the EDIC users in the particular country;

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[21] Other than the natural higher prevalence of responses from the countries with a higher number of Centres.

- National associations or organisations informing citizens on the themes that are also the principal themes of interest to the EDICs users in the particular country; and

- Local, regional and national authorities providing information on the EU.

Annex 7 presents a list of interviewees and the dates of the interviews. Annex 4 presents the summary results of the case studies.

2.2.5   User survey

An online survey among the users of the EDIC network services was carried out with the overall purpose to contribute to the assessment of the effectiveness, usefulness and visibility of EDICs from the point of view of the citizens and other groups reached.

The survey was promoted for one and a half months – from 5 September to 14 October 2011. The survey was undertaken in all seven case study countries (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK) in seven language versions.

The survey was promoted directly by GHK by sending it to the EC Representations. They further requested EDICs in their respective countries to promote it among their users.

A total of 1,690 responses to the User survey were received by the end of the survey period. The number and share of the responses by the countries covered by the survey are presented in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6   Responses received to the EDIC User Survey by language and no. of EDICs

Language	No.	% of total respondents	Country	No. of EDICs	% of EDICs
German	553	33%	Germany	58	30%
French	342	20%	France	53	27%
English	223	13%	UK	14	7%
Bulgarian	191	11%	Bulgaria	14	7%
Polish	178	11%	Poland	23	12%
Swedish	153	9%	Sweden	17	9%
Portuguese	50	3%	Portugal	15	8%
N=	**1690**	**100%**	**Total=**	**194**	**100%**

Numerically the most responses to the User survey were submitted by the German users of the EDICs' services, constituting one third (or 33%) of all the survey responses received. This was followed by the French (20%), English (13%), Bulgarian and Polish (11% each) users.

If the share of responses is compared to the relative share of EDICs in each country covered by the survey (the total number of EDICS in all case study countries taken as the total) the survey results show that most responses have been received from the UK (16 per EDIC on average[22]) and Bulgaria (14 per EDIC), followed by Germany (10), Sweden (9), Poland (8), France (7) and Portugal (3).

A review of the results of the survey data would suggest some bias in the results. For example a very high share of those having responded have visited the EDICs – whereas

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[22] The average response rate per EDIC = number of user replies / by the number of EDICs in each country.

case study results would suggest that there are very few walk in users. Similarly the national bias should be noted since German and French users represent 53% of all respondents.

Furthermore, it would appear reasonable to assume that the survey has reached different types of users unevenly. "One off" participants to outreach events are much less likely to have been reached than for example people who are subscribed to newsletters as these can be directly and easily targeted via mailings. Similarly, users having walked in are more likely to have responded to the survey than those who have been encouraged via email or via the telephone (as email and telephone promotion typically have much lower response rates). The latter is likely to explain the high levels of respondents from walk in users.

Finally there are two major other factors to be considered which are likely to have influenced the validity of the EDIC User survey results:

Frequency of use – regular users of the EDIC services have a larger stake and interest in the activities of the EDIC – and they are therefore more likely to have responded to the survey. Being regular users moreover, they are "easy" to contact as EDICs typically have their contact details. However, being regular users they are also more likely to be positive about the services delivered – and hence more likely to have evaluated positively the EDIC activities. It should be noted that returning users are much more frequent in Bulgaria and Portugal than they are in the other countries. The UK users in particular are much more frequently one off. This difference is likely to have had an impact on satisfaction rate – with higher satisfaction rates in Bulgaria and Portugal and lower in other countries - especially the UK.

Table 2.7   Amount of one off and regular "users" – as share of respondents

	SE	PT	PO	BG	FR	UK	DE
Once	26%	6%	8%	3%	14%	52%	28%
2 to 3 times	26%	22%	32%	24%	32%	31%	29%
4 to 5 times	19%	20%	19%	18%	21%	5%	17%
5 to 10 times	10%	22%	17%	20%	15%	4%	9%
More than ten times	18%	30%	24%	34%	18%	8%	17%
Total 1-3 contacts	**52%**	**28%**	**40%**	**27%**	**47%**	**83%**	**57%**

Approach for the promotion - The link to the User survey was promoted by the EDICs themselves. Due to data protection issues it has not been possible to promote the surveys among users of randomly selected EDICs – nor among randomly selected users.

Considering that not all EDIC are equivalently proactive it could be expected that not all EDICs have been equivalently active in promoting the survey. It would be reasonable to expect that more proactive and dynamic EDICs have been more proactive in promoting the survey. Also, it could be expected that EDICs included in the case studies overall have been more proactive in terms of promoting the survey. Several of these were selected as being "good practice".

Overall therefore it may be estimated that the survey results have a positive bias towards more "satisfied" users – than had the survey been undertaken among a sample of random EDIC users. The bias is likely to be particularly strong in cases such as Bulgaria and

Portugal where a majority of users in addition are frequent users (having been in contact with the EDICs 5 or more times).

This said the survey did have a significant reach and is therefore likely to be reasonably representative in terms of overall user satisfaction trends. Full survey results are presented in Annex 3.

2.2.6 Focus groups

Seven focus groups were undertaken in the case study countries at the end of October, beginning of November 2011.

Five focus groups were organised with the users of the EDIC services. Two of the seven focus groups (in Germany and the UK) were carried out with non-users of the EDIC network.

The user focus groups were selected from respondents to the survey who indicated an interest in participating. Where there were not large enough cohorts in close proximity, further work was undertaken to find people through the EDICs.

Non-user participants were sought through advertisements facilitated by EDICs and other regional stakeholders, including universities, the European Movement and local charities (UK, DE).

Each focus group was held by a member of the team from Technopolis or GHK. A briefing document and topic guides were prepared in advance and were provided in the interim report for the evaluation.

The focus groups were all between 90 and 120 minutes in duration and were held in conference rooms, some provided by the regional EDIC.

The write ups of the focus group discussions are presented in Annex 5.

2.2.7 Benchmarking

A separate small scale benchmarking exercise was undertaken to identify how other EC networks are organised and which lessons may be learned from these. The exercise covered ECC-Net, Enterprise Europe Network and Eurodesk)

In addition user satisfaction data from selected other EU "citizens" network was collected to benchmark user satisfaction

The review of ECC-Net, Enterprise Europe network and Eurodesk is included in Annex 8.

2.2.8 Workshop with Network Correspondents

A workshop with the Network Correspondents was undertaken during a meeting held in Brussels on 13/14 October 2011 with the purpose to discuss the shaping the next generation of the network.

The workshop consisted of a plenary session followed by eight group work sessions. The group work sessions were facilitated by the evaluators. Results were used to feed the analysis of the evaluation data and reporting.

2.3 Key issues and challenges related to the assignment

A number of issues and challenges have been encountered during the implementation of the study which have had an impact on the outcomes, the analysis undertaken and the presentation of the report. These are:

- *Availability and reliability of the monitoring data.* The availability of reliable quantitative and quantitative monitoring data – based on firmly established monitoring and reporting requirements – is important for the evaluation of such large scale communication

initiative as the EDIC network. The mere scale of the network and its considerable evolution through the years do not allow the evaluator to collect primary data. Therefore, adequate monitoring needs to be available. However, the review and analysis of the monitoring data from the Europe Direct intranet suggest that there are significant issues with the reporting system and the way data is reported. Issues relate in particular to:

– *Lack of data over the years covered by the evaluation* – comprehensive data is only available for 2010 (probably due to the changes in IT contractor);

– *Reliability of data* – reporting by EDICs is very often misleading and often put in wrong categories. Also there are issues with over reporting – the same activities being reported several times. Misleading reporting may be due to misinterpretations of reporting requirements.

To the extent possible the study has compensated for major inconsistencies. However, some data has not been included – and other data has to be assessed with significant caution due to the lack of reliability.

▪ *Lacking qualitative assessment of activities.* While data available presents some indicators for the overall scale of the EDIC services, types of activities and the main themes and target groups covered, there is no qualitative assessment of the activities undertaken and little such assessment in the EDIC action plans and final reports. The study has aimed to address this issue though user surveys. However, as noted above there are also issues with reliability of this data as users cannot be surveyed at random.

▪ *Variation in data availability among case study countries.* The action plans and final reports for the EDICs consulted in the framework of the case study visits were reviewed to prepare for the field work (individual interviews) and to create a "general picture" of the part of the Network to be visited in the country. The extent to which data was made available by the EC Representations differed significantly from one country to another. Apart from the general outline of the action plans and final reports, the documents received also contained various level of detail, with exhaustive information provided in some reports and some missing content in others (e.g. descriptive annexes). In addition, data often proved not to be directly comparable across countries.

▪ *EDIC promotion of User survey*. The survey targeting the EDIC users was sent to Representations that further asked EDICs to promote the link to their users. This process is likely to have impacted on the survey results, as it is likely that returning users and established partners (e.g. teachers, representatives of EU projects or regional actors working with EU issues) have been overrepresented – whereas one off participants to events and other activities have been under represented.

This self-selection of users to whom the survey was promoted and the usual bias associated with the survey tool – the more regular users and satisfied users responding – is likely to have influenced the outcome of this survey.

▪ *Limitations of focus groups* Overall, the focus groups included participants representing various age groups, occupations and both genders. Nevertheless, some methodological issues should also be noted.

– First, issues of representation from the public and private sector – most if not all of the focus group were better represented by individuals from the public sectors;

– Secondly, there was a number of people already involved in various European projects who participated in some groups ;

– Thirdly, in two user groups there were some people who were already acquainted with each other, thus increasing the risk of bias;

- Fourthly the user focus groups were mainly made up of people who were self-selecting (i.e. put themselves forward) and therefore were more likely to be positively engaged with an EDIC than negatively;

- Lastly, in the non-user group there was the balance between having some knowledge of Europe and therefore being able to engage in the focus group, coupled with the need to try and "represent" the general citizen, who in many cases will have little interaction with European information. Therefore these non-users were "well informed" non-users and therefore a subsection of the population.

- *Timing of the study*. The evaluation was initiated in mid June 2011, with the Inception report delivered on 25 July 2011. As many stakeholders to be consulted were on holiday during the summer months, an initial delay was unavoidable which had an impact on most of the data collection (which could not be initiated before the month of September), fieldwork analysis and reporting tasks, which had to be completed within relatively short deadlines.

3 Assessment of the extent to which EDICs comply with their mission

3.1 Introduction

This section addresses the first objective of the evaluation – **i.e. the extent to which the EDICs have complied with their mission to promote an informed and active citizenship.**

According to the Framework partnership agreement and the Guidelines for the management of EDICs, EDICs are expected to deliver on a certain number of specific outputs and tasks in order to fulfil their mission. The main expected outputs and tasks for the network overall are summarised in the Table below. Some activities are mandatory - marked with a (*) - whereas others are add-on activities which the EDIC may take on under a module system (see section 4).

Irrespective of whether outputs and tasks are mandatory or non-mandatory, it is expected that the second generation of the EDIC network focus on outreach activities.

Table 3.8   Expected outputs and tasks

Information	Outreach	EU institutions partner
- Offering information, advice, assistance and answers to queries about the European Union's legislation, policies, programmes, funding opportunities, etc. (*) - Facilitating citizen access to answers to more complex or specialised questions by promoting public awareness of the Europe Direct Contact Centre, Europa website and Your Europe portal (*) - Promotion of the available services and enhancing visibility to potential users (*)	- Events and/or information products for the general public - Events and/or develop information products for specific target groups - Events and/or cooperation with local and regional media - Collaborating with local and regional institutional stakeholders (*);	- Channelling citizens' feedback to the Commission (Citizens' feedback on service and EU issues) (*); - Assistance with local media monitoring (*) - Cooperating and liaising with other information networks and contact points at national level (*) - Support to the Representations for organising EC local events (*)
EDIC outputs and delivered tasks should	- Be delivered in coordination and a close cooperation between EDICs and the EC Representations in the Member States; - Be implemented in a spirit of an active communication that ranges from addressing queries, to interacting with local stakeholders, multipliers and media, while stimulating debate through organisation of conferences and events; - Provide information on communication priorities as well as on other issues which are essential for citizens.	

Source: Framework partnership agreement, and Guidelines for the management of EDICs of November 2010 and action plan template

Evaluation questions to be addressed

In order to address the main evaluation question the ToR defined the following questions to be addressed:

To what extent do the EDICs comply effectively with their mission in terms of:

    a.　Providing their target groups with information services tailored to local needs;

    b.　Contributing to an informed debate on EU issues;

    c.　Carrying out communication and awareness-raising activities focused on the Commission's political priorities;

    d.　Facilitating citizens' access to the appropriate contact point for their specific EU needs, in line with the one-stop logic outlined in the Citizenship report.

In order to comprehensively assess the extent to which the EDIC network complies with its mission the following sub-questions were added to the study:

To what extent do the EDICs comply effectively with their mission in terms of:

    e.　Ensuring adequate visibility of their services;

    f.　Providing effectively feedback services to the EC;

Finally, a prospective question was included to assess opportunities for further development of the network:

To what extent is the network capable of taking up new activities and responsibilities (defined by or undertaken with other EU actors)?

"Smart" objectives, target audiences and judgement of the EDICs implementation

The Framework partnership agreement and Guidelines for the management of EDICs defines relatively straightforward outputs and activities to be undertaken. However, the EDIC network does not have specific measurable objectives – at output or result level – towards which actual achievements can be measured. Put differently, the objectives and expected outputs and results do not meet SMART[23] criteria.

Similarly, the target audiences of the EDICs' activities are defined broadly as the "general public" or European citizens in general – comprising potentially any group of citizens – but also users who may use the services for professional purposes. In addition, EDICs may target "specific groups" but their nature is not defined.

The fact that objectives and target audiences are defined broadly reflects the idea of "going local", the idea being that more specific objectives and specific target audiences are best defined by the EDICs at the local level. The validity of this approach is not questioned. It however has implications on any assessment that may be undertaken.

In order to minimise subjectivity the study set out four types of core judgement criteria at the outset of the study. These are:

    ▪　Compliance with the minimum baseline mission – and widespread take up of non-compulsory tasks;

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[23] SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

- Substantive evidence of change of EDICs activities – from "reactive" to "proactive";

- High level of relevance and usefulness of the activities (judged via user satisfaction);

- Impact on users (evidence that users have actually improved their knowledge and understanding of EU related issues).

The study operated with a set of core indicators – providing indications of the scope and relevance of the activities undertaken:

- Scale of the outputs delivered and thematic coverage;

- Type of audiences reached and reach within the EU territory;

- Variety within the network (It there a minimum service level which is adequate to offer satisfactory services to citizens?).

As objectives have not been defined in a "measurable way", since the approach is bottom up, and as target audiences are only very broadly defined it is not possible to assess with certainty the extent to which objectives have been achieved and if the delivered outputs have met the expected ones. The assessments will therefore inevitably have a certain degree of subjectivity.

Structure of the section

In order to address comprehensively each evaluation question and to feed indicators and judgement criteria the section is organised around 8 main headings.

Section 3.2 provides a summary of main points for each of the evaluation questions defined under this section. This is followed by the detailed analysis.

Section 3.3 covers the weighting of the overall mission, the extent to which the EDIC network has adapted to the requirement of being "proactive" and the extent to which the EDIC network provides a heterogenic level of services.

Section 3.4 covers the scope of the services delivered. It presents an analysis across the network of the scale of outputs, the themes covered, the number of people reached and the importance of the political priorities in outputs and activities overall.

Section 3.5 assesses the extent to which the EDIC network meet user needs and contribute to increased understanding of EU issues and EU information sources.

Section 3.6 presents and assesses EDIC media interaction - and how EDICs reach out via the media.

Section 3.7 assesses the effectiveness of the EDICs in term of facilitating citizens' access to the appropriate contact points

Section 3.8 covers visibility and promotion of EDICs

Section 3.9 covers the overall reach of the network

Section 3.10 covers the extent to which EDICs are able to take up new activities defined by other EU actors

3.2 Summary and replies to the evaluation questions related to the mission of the EDIC network

To what extent does the EDIC network comply with its mission overall?

Judged by the evidence available, EDICs overall comply with the minimum baseline mission and nearly all EDICs undertake proactive outreach activities. There is substantive evidence of change of EDICs activities – from "reactive" to "proactive and of uptake of non-compulsory tasks. Overall the importance of outreach activities has increased with the

second Generation of the EDIC network – with the EDIC network overall undertaking more events, developing more information material, engaging more with local stakeholders and working more extensively with media. The change has been encouraged by the change in EC focus – but also by the changes in information needs among potential users.

EDICs perceive the main mission as being one of information provision. Promoting discussion and debate and providing advice are mostly also considered being core to the mission of the EDIC. The perceived importance of the different aspects of the EDIC mission has not changed. It is not clear if such a change was actually expected.

Providing feedback to the EC is overall a secondary activity. The results of the evaluation would furthermore suggest that this activity is neither well understood nor is there shared understanding of the purpose or the need that this function is to address. Often feedback is confused with reporting on EDIC activities undertaken – and there is little evidence of citizen feedback from the EDICs to the EC.

While EDICs overall comply with their mission, the network remains very heterogeneous. This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that the network has broad objectives and a very broad definition of target audience allowing various types of organisations – with very different objectives – to fit the EDIC framework. This situation has both important strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side:

- <u>At EU level</u> it supports the EC's objectives in a broad sense, it ensures geographical coverage, and it gives a level of activity and leverage which overall could not be expected without EU support – and this overall at very low costs to the EU. Put differently, with the given inputs outputs are maximised.

- <u>At local level </u>it allows the EDIC to adapt its activities to local needs – and the host to adapt the EDIC's activities to fit/support the objectives and priorities of the organisation. In turn this supports the continued interest of Host Structures in co-funding and participating in the network.

The key weaknesses lie in the heterogeneity of services delivered. EDICs do not undertake the same type of activities, and only partially cover the same target audience. The overall level of activity also differs very significantly among the EDICs – as does the relevance and content of the EDICs activities and outputs. This implies that:

- <u>At EU level:</u> While the EDIC network overall complies with the mission there is little assurance that this is the case for all EDICs. Thus, the EC overall has medium to low levels of control of its network

- <u>At local level</u> there is no assurance that citizens benefit from similar services and activities across the different territories of the EU

To what extent do the EDICs comply with their mission in terms of providing their target groups with information services?

Given the broad definition of the EDIC mission with regards to information services and the lack of specific measurable objectives and specific target audiences is not possible to assess with certainty the extent to which objectives have been achieved and whether the delivered outputs have met the expected ones.

However, judged by overall scale of the outputs delivered, thematic coverage, the type of audiences reached and the level of user satisfaction, it may be considered that overall the EDIC network has met its mission in terms of providing information services and in terms of reaching the expected type of audience. However although it is not possible to assess the size of audiences reached with certainty, judged against the potential target audience (Citizens in the EU) the EDICs reach is relatively marginal.

The full scale of activities delivered cannot be assessed due to lack of reliable monitoring data. However, with regards to information services targeting the general public (reactive

and proactive information services: websites, publications, newsletters and AV material) the following conclusions may be drawn:

- As a network the EDICs comply with their baseline mission – that is to provide reactive information services and publications. The actual reach of these activities however differs very significantly – with a significant share of the EDICs (33%) receiving fewer than 5 telephone and email enquires a week. More than half of the network receives less than 10 enquires a week. While usage of this service is relatively low the user satisfaction in contrast is high – and higher than satisfaction with similar services provided by other ED networks and services.

  The fact that EDICs have few enquiries may be explained by several factors – besides lack of awareness of the EDICs a main reason is that citizens mostly do not have specific questions about the EU. Usage of Q/A services happens mainly when the citizen has a concrete question of direct relevance to him/her (for professional or for private reasons). Users do not contact proactively an information service for themes they may have an interest in but which are not of direct importance to them. A similar conclusion was drawn for the evaluation of the EDCC – and is thus not specific for the EDICs.

- As a network the EDICs overall have taken up proactive information activities (website, publications, newsletters) – and the uptake of most of these activities by the EDIC network is substantial. Some 96% of EDICs have some sort of web presence and about half of the EDICs produce newsletters. Much fewer (~20%) produce AV material. The content of both newsletters and websites however differ significantly. As for websites they range from purely promotional tools to highly informative tools. In the latter case websites are often national EDIC sites rather individual sites.

  Publications and other print material are often promotional in nature – which needs to be seen in a context where a lot of the publications disseminated are those produced by the EC. It may be estimated that more than half of the print material produced is actually promotional material. Some of the AV material is promotional in nature however most is content driven.

  There is no evidence of reach of these "proactive information services". In contrast user survey data would suggest that these services are satisfactory or good. The output that is least well rated is websites – where there in particular appear to be issues with the level of comprehensiveness of information provided.

To what extent do the EDICs comply with their mission in terms of contributing to an informed debate on EU issues?

For the purpose of this evaluation it is understood that activities that are expected to contribute to an informed debate are events and media activities – as opposed to the "information services". The distinction between information services activities promoting an informed debate is however blurred and it may be argued that information services also contribute to better knowledge and hence also contribute to a better basis for debate. Similarly events and media activities also contribute to providing information – even if they cannot be considered as "information services".

With regards to EDIC events it may be concluded that these overall have contributed to an informed debate on EU issues – as well as to improving awareness and understanding of the EU and more broadly European related issues. As for information services the definition of the EDIC mission with regards to contributing to an informed debate is broad and there are no specific objectives toward which the EDIC outputs and results can be judged.

However, judged by the overall scale of the outputs delivered, thematic coverage, the type of audiences reached, the relevance of this type of activity and the level of user satisfaction it may be considered that events have contributed significantly to these objectives. With regards to events the following specific conclusions may be drawn:

- EDICs mostly have a very strong focus on events. Organising events, undertaking presentations and participating in events organised by other actors form a crucial part of the EDIC overall activities. Nearly all EDICs (92%) organise or participate in events and a total of some 9,600 events were reported in 2010.

- For many EDICs events are the principal tool to proactively raise awareness and – where appropriate – promote informed debate. Events often form the centre around which other outreach activities are developed. The importance of events were also highlighted by external stakeholders who, when prompted on the added value of the EDICs, points towards the EDICs capacity to reach out to citizens face to face during events.

- Events cover a very wide range of activities. However four types are important in numerical terms: Events at schools/educational institutions (covering both class lectures on the EU and events aiming at presenting the opportunities that the EU provides); conferences and debates; Europe days; participation to fairs, festivals and other large scale events and cultural events. Events cover many different topics – but 'education and training' is by far the single most frequent. Where cultural events are undertaken (which is the case for most EDICs) they typically cover much broader aspects such as European culture/about other EU countries, European diversity and living in other countries.

- User satisfaction with events is high – as is the perceived relevance of these activities both among potential and actual users. Events also contribute to promoting increased understanding of EU issues and allow citizens to express their viewpoints. In this respect they contribute to promoting debate locally.

As for events, media activities have – at least to some extent – contributed to promoting an informed debate. However, the extent to which EDICs are involved in or undertake media activities differs significantly amongst Member States and among EDICs. Overall EDICs have become more involved with media but there are wide differences between countries and between EDICs. Within the case study countries Portuguese and Bulgarian EDICs are very involved in media activities whereas most EDICs in Sweden and the UK only occasionally or rarely interact with media. Overall 64% of EDICs interact "regularly" in some form with media whereas some 36% only occasionally, rarely or never interact with media.

Broadly speaking EDICs undertake four main types of activities targeted at traditional media: advertising, Public Relations, media support and media training and structured cooperation. Very often media activities are related to events organised by the EDICs. The case study results would suggest that communicating on events organised constitute the bulk of the media interaction – and does therefore not directly support public debate. Instead, it rather supports promotion and awareness raising of the EDICs' activities

Of the activities targeting traditional media it is only the media support and the structured cooperation which may be considered to substantially contribute to an informed debate (as covering EU content – as opposed to information on events). This is especially true as these activities are also reported to be most successful in terms of actually ensuring media coverage.

Other activities may however be considered as indirectly supporting an informed debate by promoting participation and awareness of such events. The extent to which media activities are effective however differ, with many EDICs noting that their media impact is average or even poor.

The effectiveness of media activities is affected by a number of factors – some of which are related to the specific EDIC and its host structure's capacity (EDIC media skills, EDIC resources available, existence of communication strategy and an effective PR department within the host, public figures in the host) – and some of which are external to the EDIC (extent of media interest in EU issues, extent to which media uses other EU sources). The role of the Representation and the requirements that the Representation places on EDICs for media interaction is also important.

In addition to working with traditional media, social media is gaining importance as a tool to communicate to EDICs users and potential users. Benefits of social media are related to its interactivity (exchange with citizens). Social media are also often perceived as useful for circumventing the filter of traditional media.

The main social medium used is Facebook – followed by YouTube and Twitter. Social media are first and foremost used to raise awareness and promote the activities of the EDICs. All social media used serve this purpose – and the conclusions for traditional media work are thus largely applicable for social media also. However, different social media have different purposes. Facebook in particular serves the purpose of promotion and raising awareness of EDIC events and activities as well as general promotion of the EDIC and basic interaction with users. Use of Twitter in contrast more often has a content related purpose – either tweeting about EU news or as a tool to follow other EU sources. Blogs also more often have an EU content related purpose. There are some examples of "good practice" tweeting on EU news.

In order to further develop EDICs media activities, adequate media training is crucial. This is true for both traditional media and for social media. Furthermore, in order to promote the use of social media there is a need to consider social media as part of the media module – recognising that working with social media is also working with media.

Who are the target audiences reached via information and awareness raising activities?

A very significant share of the audiences reached and targeted are students and their teachers. Depending on the country and the activity this group represents some 35% to 50% of the EDIC audience (core activities). Most students reached are reached through events and presentations. Teachers, by contrast, are reached through all the EDICs activities – and form a significant part of the EDICs "returning users"

Employees in public authorities and NGOs/civil society organisations make up another significant audience group. The importance of this group cannot be assessed with certainty – and will differ across EDICs. However, judged by the survey results this group may represent some 20% to 25% of the EDICs returning users.

Most EDICs have an outreach function to the general public – beyond students, pupils, youth in general and their teachers. However, reaching the group 30 to 60/65 years of age who are active on the labour market is difficult – even if great creativity is employed to reach this group. It may be estimated that that this group overall represent some 30% of the EDICs returning users – but there are great differences between countries. Judged by the survey results EDICs overall interact little with the unemployed and homemakers across all case study countries. In contrast, EDICs in some countries have a good reach among those that are retired (e.g. UK and France)

Beyond the reach among school children and youth in general the EDICs appear to reach a very highly educated group – with possibly as much as two thirds of the returning users

holding university degrees. Where EDICs are the most likely to reach out to the general public is though events such as conferences, fairs and cultural activities. Ad hoc cultural events, outdoors events including Europe days and participation in fairs are the types of activities which are most likely to reach those that are less educated. However, there is no reliable data on the participants and the actual EDIC reach related to such events and it is therefore not possible to assess this reach or those reached. If further analysis is to be undertaken among this group of audience it will require better monitoring data as well as on the spot surveys and observatory participation research.

To what extent do the EDICs comply with their mission in terms of carrying out communication and awareness-raising activities focused on the Commission's political priorities?

EDICs are well informed overall about political priorities and their importance. However, EDICs use and interpret political priorities broadly – and select and focus on specific aspects of the political priorities of relevance to their audiences. Often the Annual Years are considered among priorities to be communicated even if strictly speaking they do not form part of these.

Many EDICs focus a lot of resources on communicating the political priorities. Almost half of surveyed EDICs estimated that 50% or more of their activities were focused specifically on communication on political priorities – but there are significant country differences – and as noted this share covers activities with some form of alignment to the priorities.

Information dissemination and communication on political priorities takes place principally through events. The Management Guidelines indicate that the priorities should also be covered by other activities but this happens much less frequently.

Political priorities are useful to provide direction and inspiration for activities. Adaptation is important, in order for the themes to remain relevant to their local contexts and specific target audiences. Some priorities are nevertheless easier to communicate than others – and some EDICs report that it is difficult to raise interest around the priorities. Some are not likely to be subject to much attention (Lisbon Treaty; Europe on the global stage; and EU Budget). In contrast the European Year is often subject to significant attention – typically being topics of proximity to citizens.

There are a number of barriers to communication on the political priorities. Besides lack of interest within the public, lack of timely communication from the EC, lack of clarification on what is expected when communicating, lack of expertise on topics, variety of EC Representations requirements on communication of priorities, coverage of only a minor aspect of the priories, lack of host structure interest and planning issues all contribute to limit the extent and effectiveness of the EDICs communication on the priorities.

To what extent do the EDICs comply with their mission in terms of facilitating citizens' access to the appropriate contact point for their specific EU needs, in line with the one-stop logic outlined in the Citizenship report?

An important part of the EDIC role as a "first stop shop" is signposting to EU information services, EU networks, and to other actors informing about EU related issues at national and sub-national levels. There is abundant evidence of signposting. However not all EDIC actually signpost to other networks and other EU information services. Signposting is focused on a few selected networks, on Europa and Your Europe.

Signposting – and more generally cooperation - happens in most cases regularly with networks such as EURES, Enterprise Europe Network, Eurodesk and the National Agencies for the Youth programme and the Lifelong Learning programme. These are also the best-known networks. However, awareness differs and there is systematically a small share of EDICs who actually do not know which services are provided by these EC

networks. A clear majority of EDICs also signpost to and cooperate with national actors informing about EU related issues, programme administrators of EU programmes and/or National Contact Points of EU programmes – but there is also a significant minority that does not undertake this type of activity.

More specialised networks are often not well known – and can therefore not be appropriately signposted to. Low awareness covers in a number of cases EC networks and services targeting the general public or target audiences close to those of EDICs (Your Europe Advice, European Consumer Centres, Europass and Euroguidance).

Where signposting and referrals are used they largely meet user's expectations and allows user to access the information looked

To what extent do the EDICs comply with their mission in terms of ensuring adequate visibility of their services?

EDICs are generally known to local stakeholders in most countries. In contrast, EDICs are not well known among the general public, either at national level or at local level and are unlikely to be known by those not having a stake or knowing somebody who has already been in contact with the EDIC.

EDICs place importance on promotion and awareness raising about their services. However, judged by the level of awareness among the general public, activities seem at best to have low impact.

Besides knowing somebody who knows the EDIC already, host structures, events participation and ensuring web visibility is generally the means through which new users reach the EDICs. In contrast, physical presence and presence in Audio-visual media does not appear to contribute significantly to the EDICs visibility or to promoting the service to potential users.

To what extent do the EDICs comply with their mission in terms of providing feedback for the EU institutions?

EDICs provide many sorts of feedback to the EC, in the main to the EC Representations. However, little is actually provided which meets the criteria of "channelling citizens' opinions and suggestions to EU Institutions".

Overall, the definition of the feedback function and the purpose of this feedback is ambiguous to EDICs as well as Representations. What is actually meant by feedback to be gathered by EDICs is understood very differently, ranging from reporting and feedback on EDIC management issues to feedback from citizens aiming at informing policy making.

Feedback for the purpose of informing policy making is generally not working. There are ad hoc examples where citizen feedback was gathered to prepare briefings or notes going to the headquarters. However, it is not clear if such feedback has served any purpose or if it has actually been used. Consequently such activities have been one off – lacking overall guidance. There is also an example of EDICs picking miscommunication on an EU issue for the EC Representation to follow up on – but the example is an isolated one.

Where content feedback appears to be most used and most useful is through consultations with the EDICs on the development of Representations' national communication strategies. More operational feedback, reporting – and ad hoc oral feedback on citizens' issues – is also perceived as useful. It is questionable however, if this sort of feedback is included in the definition of "citizen feedback"

Opportunities to expand the network mission to take up new roles and responsibilities

Case study results and interviews with other EU institutions and actors would suggest that

there is potential for enhancing cooperation with other EU institutions and actors.

There is interest from both other EU institutions and from EDICs in exploring opportunities for cooperation. EDICs are generally interested in speakers and would welcome cooperation with other EU institutions if the right language skills and cultural fit are in place

However it is also noted that such cooperation around speakers for events needs adequate support from the other institutions. EDICs do not have the capacity to interact and ensure that EP, CoR, EESC members participate in their events.

Strategic cooperation with other DGs could be also envisaged – and many EDICs would welcome such cooperation. EDICs however also note that that such cooperation needs planning and cannot be ad hoc. Furthermore, while many EDICs welcomed the idea of being involved in different DGs' campaigns or similar large scale activity, it was also noted that such activity should be optional.

The idea of having a DG Module for communication activities for other DGs was also welcomed – again if it is optional.

3.3 Importance and weight of the different parts of the EDIC mission – development and heterogeneity

In order to contribute to the overall objectives of the EDIC network – and more broadly to the Commission priorities of Informing, Explaining, and Listening - EDICs are expected to disseminate information, provide guidance and advice, promote discussion and provide feedback to the EU institutions.

Providing information services and undertaking outreach activities on EU related issues constitute the core of the EDIC network activities – and its "raison d'etre". From the first to the second generation of the EDIC network, the Commission aimed at increasing the weight and focus placed on proactive information, awareness raising and dialogue – this was reflected (among other things) in the changes of the funding system.

The guidelines and the contractual arrangements define that an EDIC as a minimum is to provide "reactive" information services, including an informative telephone services (baseline activities). Other services provided directly to the general public are "add on" activities where the EDIC itself defines the scope and scale of such activities. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the resources used on the different activities and the type of activities undertaken differs significantly – both across the EU Member States and within.

3.3.1 Compliance with the baseline services and uptake of outreach activities

All EDICs consulted provide the baseline information services (physical presence, telephone and email services) and thereby meet the formal minimal requirements set out for the EDICs. The research undertaken has not identified any centres that clearly did not comply with the requirement to provide basic information services.

In many cases, the EDIC baseline information services are integrated – where the EDIC person is replying to incoming telephone and email enquiries while at the same time being present in the EDIC. The approach to the provision of basic information services however somewhat differs – and, there are a few examples of centres where the EDIC Q/A service is increasingly organised as a back office function disassociating the physical presence and the

direct access to the EDIC persons[24]. Where this approach is used it is with the aim to increase efficiency of service delivery, not only of the EDIC but also in the host structure (Such centres have been identified in the UK, France and Sweden but may possibly exist elsewhere).

In addition to baseline "reactive" information services nearly all EDICs undertake proactive outreach activities (under module 2-9 and 11). The most frequent modules taken up are events, in particular indoor events, followed by websites, newsletters and print materials. Overall the uptake of audio-visual and media contributions is patchier. A very limited number of EDICs undertake the baseline module only (e.g. in Poitiers in France).

As presented in the subsequent sections there is a great variety of activities undertaken. Across the network however, a key characteristic of the main outreach activities is that they are events-based. Events increasingly are the focal point of EDICs activities, around which other activities are organised and implemented.

3.3.2   Importance of the different aspects of the EDIC mission

EDICs give attention to all of the main priorities of their mandate - dissemination of information, promoting debate, providing advice and feedback to the EU institutions. However, not surprisingly, some parts of the EDIC mission are perceived as more important than others.

Across the case studies EDICs generally perceive dissemination of information as the main (or as one of the two main) activity to be undertaken. Promoting debate is also considered important – but in many cases of secondary importance if compared to information delivery.

Overall these results are consistent with the EDIC survey results. According to the 2011 EDIC survey undertaken in the framework of this evaluation, at least 66% of the EDICs consider that dissemination of information is "A very important part of their mission". Less than 10% find it somewhat or not important. "Promotion of debate" is perceived by a significant majority as "important" for the EDIC mission. The share of those who find the promotion of debate is "a very important part of their mission" is, however, significantly lower than for dissemination of information (39% vs. 66%). Similar results can be seen for the importance associated to "providing advice".

Out of the four main priorities only "feedback" is frequently considered of more secondary importance – with less than half of the EDICs (42%) considering this as important or very important.

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[24] That is: EDIC staff may be available – but is not necessarily present in the EDIC. Host structure staff may in this case provide basic information and call upon the expertise of the EDIC staff who may then contact the enquirer (by phone or in the centre)

Figure 3.2 Survey results: Overall, please indicate the relative importance of the following to the mission of your EDIC
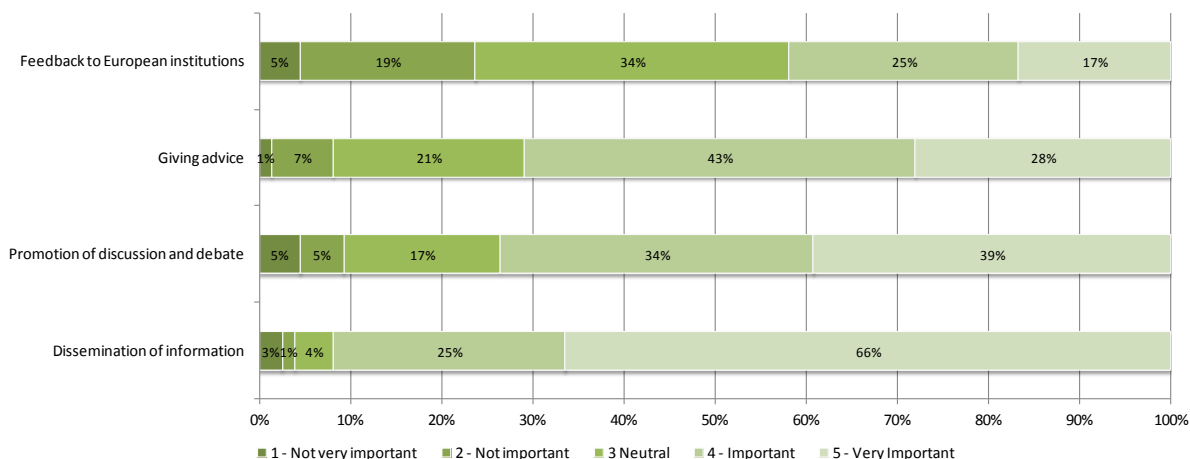
Source: GHK's EDIC Survey 2011; base = 356

Given the Commission's increased focus on proactive activities, it could be expected that the importance placed on promoting discussion and debate would have increased with the second generation of the EDICs. The data available from the 2011 and 2008 surveys, however, suggests that this change only had a marginal effect on the EDICs' perception of the priorities. This is illustrated in the Figure below, which represents the perceived relative importance of the different aspects of the EDIC mission.

Figure 3.3 Compared survey results 2011 and 2008 overall, please indicate the relative importance of the following to the mission of your EDIC – *average rating where 5 is very important and 1 is not important*
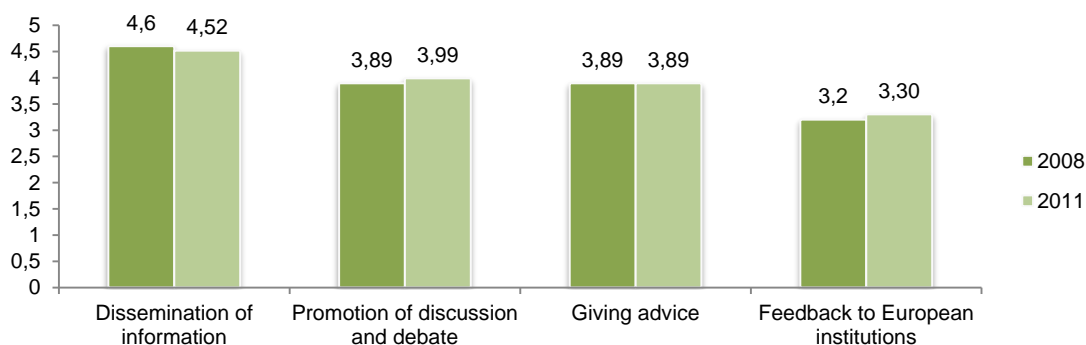
Source: GHK's EDIC Survey 2011 and Deloitte's EDIC survey 2008

3.3.3 Importance of, and resources allocated to, the different types of information and awareness raising activities undertaken

Whereas the perception of the relative importance of the different aspects of the EDIC mission does not appear to have changed, the evidence available would suggest that overall there has been a change in the activities undertaken by the EDIC network from the first to the second generation.

About half of EDICs consulted in the framework of the case study countries note that their activities have become more proactive and more "outgoing". Such changes were in particular prominent in Portugal, Sweden, Poland and Bulgaria. EDICs that did not note such a change

(in particular France, Germany and the UK) generally indicated that they already had a focus on outreach activities before 2009.

Case studies, and interviews with the EC Representations furthermore suggest that many of the ED Relays from the previous generation that were in the main "reactive" in their approach did not continue to operate after 2011[25].

Similar results have been obtained from the survey. A large majority, 75% of the surveyed EDICs who participated in both the first and second generation of ED network indicate that the resources allocated to different activities have changed from the first to the second generation. In most cases, the change is associated with a step up in activity level. Also a significant number indicate that the weight given to the activities has changed[26]. Only 4% of those who participated in both the first and second generation of ED network indicate that they undertake fewer activities than before 2009.

The change is primarily associated with increased level of proactivity – and in particular the organisation of, or participation in, more events. Seventy three per cent of those indicating a change in activities – and 51% of all first generation EDICs - indicate that they participate and/or organise more events than previously. Overall, conferences, presentations (including in particular presentations at schools) and participation with stands in fairs or other larger scale events is increasingly gaining prominence as one of the main – or even the main – type of activity undertaken. The importance of events has been noted in all the case study countries and reported spontaneously as the most frequent change reported through the different data collection tools.

Other important changes relate to outreach to new audiences and new information tools. In addition, EDICs are increasingly involved in cooperation activities with the media. For a number of EDICs, proactive approaches towards media and developed/enhanced cooperation with local actors and/or EDICs constitute major innovations within the second generation.

Both push and pull factors have contributed to these changes. It is unquestionable that the module system and the EC increased focus on outreach have pushed EDICs towards a greater focus on outreach. In addition the EC Representations have selected EDICs that have more of an outreach focus in their proposals. In addition, interviews suggest that the baseline function of an EDIC as a source of information is increasingly losing its value with the opportunities for finding information online. As a consequence, EDICs are pushed to re-invent themselves as proactive information providers. The Figure below presents the share of all "first generation" EDICs who have become more proactive – and the main type of change in activities.

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[25] Either because they did not apply or because they were not selected for the second generation

[26] 47% of those who participated in both the first and second generation of ED network indicate that they do more activities. 23% indicate that they undertake the same types of activities but the weight given to the activities has changed

Figure 3.4   Share of all first generation ED Centres which are more involved in proactive activities –
and the nature of the change (Q: Please indicate which of the following changes apply)
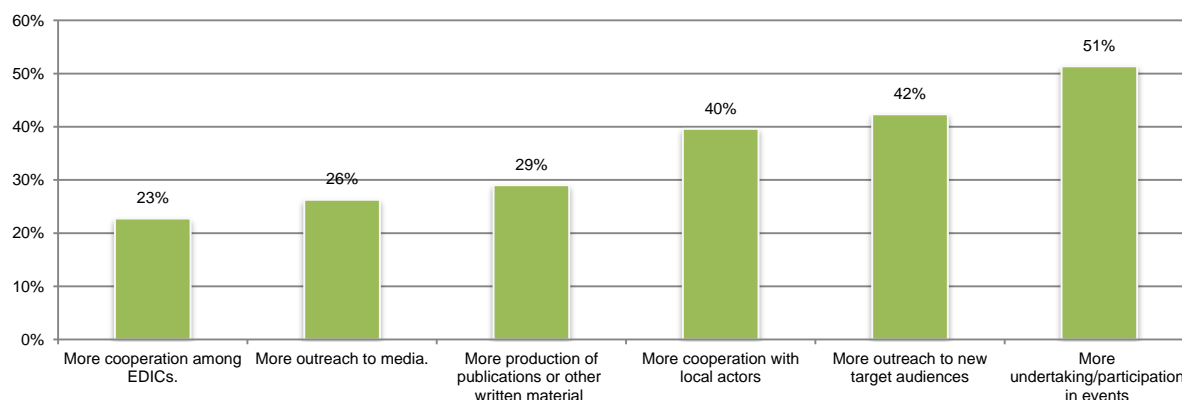
Source: GHK's EDIC Survey 2011; base = 255 (all First Generation EDICs participating in the survey)

3.3.4   Resource distribution across activities

EDICs have quite limited resources at their disposal[27]. Data from the cases studies would suggest that EDICs in the main have a total of 1 to 2 FTE at their disposal – based on one or more employees. In addition EDICs may have ad hoc support from the host structures.

Case study data would also suggest that EDICs in the newer Members States overall have more staff at their disposal than EDICs in EU-15. The median number of FTEs available in the EDICs interviewed in the framework of the case studies is presented in the Table below. This excludes ad hoc support from the host structure.

Table 3.9   Median staff in the EDICs consulted in the framework of the case studies

BG	FR	DE	PL	PT	SE	UK
2.25	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1	1

Source: EDIC case studies

Of the staff resources, a significant share is allocated to a presence in the centre and Q/A services. Overall survey results would suggest that on average some 32% of total EDIC staff resources are allocated to these functions. The main secondary activity is events – reflecting again the overall importance of this activity – followed by development of information material and tools.

Overall, 9% of resources are allocated to reporting and a similar share to networking and media activities.

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[27] No comprehensive data is available mapping out staff in full time equivalent (FTE). Mapping of human resources is further complicated by the fact that EDICs in some cases have volunteers/trainees, who are not necessarily accounted for in the monitoring system, to assist them in their activities.

Figure 3.5   Share of EDIC time spent on different activities
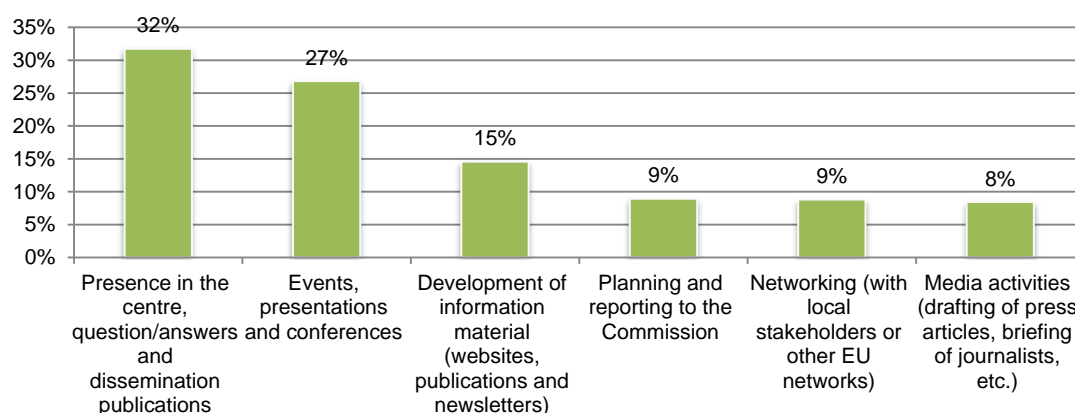
Source: GHK's EDIC Survey 2011; base = 356

3.3.5   Heterogeneity of the EDIC network

Being part of the same network and subject to a unique set of requirements, EDICs share common baseline characteristics. As noted in the sections above all EDICs provide some sort of reactive information services and nearly all undertake some sort of proactive outreach activities.

However, beyond these baseline characteristics the EDIC network is largely heterogeneous. The heterogeneity relates to nearly all aspects of the EDICs operation – but in particular to the orientation/focus of the EDICs, their target audiences and the specific themes, the activities undertaken, the services delivered and scale of activities.

For these aspects there are significant differences both between and within countries. These differences may be illustrated by a selected few indicators: working time on different activities, perception of the importance of debate and discussion and the importance of specific target audiences.

Table 3.10   Variation of EDICs resource allocation, promotion of debate and target audiences

	High	**Low**	**Average**
Working time allocated to different activities			
Presence in the EDIC and Q/A services	17% of EDICs spend 50% or more of their time on presence and Q/A services	16% of EDICs spend 15% or less of their time on presence and Q/A services	32% of total EDIC resources allocated to this activity
Events	8% of EDICs spend 50% or more of their time on events	18% of EDICs spend 15% or less of their time on events	27% of total EDIC resources allocated to this activity
Resources allocated to media activities	9% of EDICs spend 20% or more of their time on media activities	9% of EDICs do not spend any time on media activities/do not work with media	8% of total EDIC resources allocated to this activity
Perception of importance of activities			
Promotion of discussion and	73% of EDICs consider this	10% of EDICs do not consider this an important	NA

	High	Low	Average
debate	important/very important	objective	
Weight to different specific target audiences			
NGOs	A principal target audience for 12% of EDICs	18% rarely or never inform this audience	NA
Public authorities	A principal target audience for 17% of EDICs	12% rarely or never inform this audience	NA

Source: EDIC survey

These differences may also be illustrated qualitatively. The EDIC network includes very generalist centres, highly specialised centres, and centres focusing on a single or a few target audiences and/or one or more themes. Similarly EDICs may specialise in providing a specific service or on providing many of the same type of activities to a specific target audience.

The variety of centres is so large that it is not possible to provide a comprehensive typology of EDICs. This is especially true as a group of EDICs may share some characteristics but may diverge on others. Therefore differences may only be illustrated by providing examples of different types - including both specialised and more "generalist" EDICs – as presented in the Table below.

Table 3.11   Examples of specialised and more "generic" EDICs

Specialist EDICs	
EDIC (and country)	*Nature of specialisation*
Stockholm (SE) HS: Intercult	▪ Opportunities for funding of cultural projects under EU programmes (the Culture programme excluded) ▪ Target audience: cultural operators, artists organisations working with culture
Seine et Marne (FR) HS: Centre Information Jeunesse	▪ Target audience: youth (16-25) ▪ All activities focused around promoting EU opportunities for youth ▪ NB: several of this type of centres in France
Paris (FR) HS : Centre de la documentation Française	▪ Documentation provider ▪ support detailed research
Bordeaux (FR) HS : Regional Chamber of Agriculture of Aquitaine	▪ Follow up of previous Carrefour ▪ Target audience: farmers and businesses relating to farming industry ▪ Opportunities for EU findings, CAP and farming focus
Chitalishta (BG) HS: Chitalishte Development Foundation	▪ Targets primarily its members (community centres)
Non "specialist" EDIC	**Nature of activities (selected)**
Paris (FR) HS: Maison d'Europe	▪ Significant inflow of visits and dissemination of publications ▪ Wide range of events – ranging from conferences on a specific theme of a political nature, political debates, to various cultural

		activities (projection of films, Belgian literature, Europe day, cultural activities for Erasmus students etc.)
	▪	Newsletter and media contributions
	▪	School lectures (undertaken by a team of volunteers)
Gothenburg (SE)	▪	Principal focus on events, and in particular debates, conferences,
	▪	Wide target audience
	▪	Support activities include publicity of events
Porto (PT)	▪	School activities and lectures
	▪	Conferences and debates
	▪	Cultural events (e.g. exhibitions)
	▪	Significant inflow of visitors (received at the municipality) – but actually few questions and information requests

Source: EDIC case studies

To a significant extent the diversity and heterogeneity of EDICs may be explained by a number of contextual factors. Three factors are particularly important:

▪ The Host structure;

▪ The local context;

▪ Competences of staff and resources available.

Each of these factors is important. Overall, the specific combination of these largely explains the focus of the EDIC and the scope and type of activities undertaken.

3.3.5.1 The Host structure

Type of hosts

EDICs are hosted by a wide range of different types of structures. A number of hosts (8%) are associations which have been specifically set up to provide information about Europe (e.g. the Maison d'Europe in France) and have objectives which are very similar to those of the EDIC network.

Other hosts have a clear public information function – without focusing on the EU (e.g. public libraries). Many hosts (43%) are regional, provincial or local authorities (e.g. most EDICs in Germany) - some of which have quite specific objectives for the EDIC whereas others have not set out any objectives. A few hosts have a clear thematic or content focus, some are hosted by NGOs or community centres (e.g. for most EDICs in Bulgaria) and a few are chambers of commerce, other sort of business service providers or agricultural chambers not obviously having a general public target audience.

Finally, in some countries EDICs have been integrated into pre-existing publicly hosted EU information centres again having similar objectives to those of the EDICs – in some cases co-funded/hosted by the national public authorities (e.g. Finland).

Impact of the Host

The Host structure, its organisation, resources, objectives and – where relevant – the audiences that the host reach have a significant impact on the operation of the EDICs.

If the Host has a specific target audience (e.g. students or school children or enterprises), a specific thematic focus (e.g. agriculture or rural development, culture, education etc.), a specific mission (guidance and orientation of youth) it is likely that the EDIC will have a similar focus – covering the same aspect with an EU angle. Similarly, if the Host structure

has a broad mission and/or target audience (e.g. contributing to informing and educating the general public) it is less likely that the EDIC's activities will be focused on a single group.

A second way in which the Host structure influences the operation of the EDIC is through its reach. In some cases the host "provides" an audience for the EDIC. This is for example often the case when an EDIC is hosted/located by a well-visited public library, an educational institution or the like. When the Host does not provide an audience and a clear mission it similarly has an impact on the operation of the EDIC. In those cases the EDIC will have to proactively create an audience – which is often complicated and time consuming. For this reason EDICs in this category have a certain tendency to focus on audiences which are in demand (e.g. schools). This is for example the case for some EDICs hosted by local or regional public authorities located within the public administration.

Finally, the EDICs may in some cases "service" its' Host structure or organisations close to/associated to its host structure. This appears for example to be the case for a number of EDICs which are hosted by regional or provincial authorities and which see public authorities as one of their primary audiences.

3.3.5.2   The Local Context

EDICs operate in a local environment that for each EDIC is unique and which provides both opportunities and restrictions. The results from the case study suggest that the approaches implemented are generally adapted to these local environments. However, case studies also suggest that some contexts are more conducive for some activities and less for others.

Of particular importance are: the political context and the geographical location of the EDIC.

The political context

The perception of the EU – and how supportive the population is towards the EU – plays a role for the activities undertaken. If there is an interest in and support for the EU it is obviously easier to undertake activities and to attract audiences than if this is not the case.

Where the local population is strongly against the EU, there are likely to be limitations to the type of activities that may be undertaken. In such a context EDICs are more likely to undertake cultural/non-policy content activities showing the diversity of Europe – and focusing on "Europe" – rather than "the EU".

Among the case study countries the political context played a particular important role in the UK. However, ensuring varied views including critical views – and ensuring the neutrality of the EDIC as an information provider – was also noted by other EDICs as important in countries where larger shares of the population are euro-sceptic (e.g. SE, NL and AT).

The geographical location of the EDIC

The geographical location – that is being in a city/larger town as opposed to a more rural/remote area is important for its activities. Across the network many EDICs are located in smaller towns. According to the survey results about one quarter of the EDICs (27%) are located in towns with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. In some countries large cities are not covered (e.g. In Bulgaria the biggest cities after the capital – Plovdiv, Varna and Bourgas do not have an EDIC).

The location plays a role for the EDIC activities and their immediate reach. EDICs located in smaller towns and rural areas often note that participation in events is limited – and that accordingly it is difficult to reach the expected number of participants. As for EDICs located in large towns or capitals they often note difficulties in reaching out to the media. In this respect EDICs situated in smaller towns or more rural areas often have easier access to local media as there is "less going on" and hence less competition with regards to media space.

3.3.5.3 *Competences of staff and resources available*

The competences, experience and background of the EDIC manager (and where available other staff) play an important role for the operation of activities.

The case study results suggest that the EDIC managers are generally highly motivated and committed to their work within the EDICs. However, the activities that they are likely to take up are dependent on their varied backgrounds.

The importance of the background is frequently highlighted in relation to media activities. Many EDIC managers do not feel adequately equipped to interact successfully with the media. Similarly, EDIC managers with backgrounds such as librarians or archivists are frequently not inclined to take up activities requiring them to work as speakers – but may be highly effective with regards to other type of activities (e.g. event organisation, production of written material or assistance with advanced information searches).

In addition obviously, the financial resources available (and the associated human resources) play a role for the scale of activities.

3.4 Services delivered to the general public

In order to for the EDIC network to comply with its mission the network is expected to deliver on a range of outputs and activities. These cover provision of information, advice and assistance as well as events and information products – on EU themes of relevance to users. Obviously also the reach of these activities should be "significant" – albeit what is significant is not defined.

This section presents the scope and scale of the EDICs outputs and activities, size of the audiences reached and the themes covered – including the importance of the political priorities. The section covers activities targeted directly at the general public, sub groups of the public and other final users. Activities targeting the media are covered in section 3.6.

The analysis presents a consolidated overview. As noted above, there are significant differences across the network. Where key differences may be clearly identified they have been included.

The section draws among others on the EDIC monitoring data. Where available the analysis covers the years 2008-2010. However, for most activities data is only available for 2010 – which therefore has been used as a reference year.

3.4.1 Information and guidance services (reactive)

Provision of information and guidance services relate to the first tasks of the EDIC. Besides signposting activities, it is the only mandatory action delivered to the EDICs direct target audience (general public). It concerns the delivery of the following services[28]:

- Question and answer service (email and telephone/call requirement) – one person delivering services

- Physical presence – the EDICs are to be open minimum 20 hours a week, providing access to publications as well as online access to information

- Signposting services (covered in section 3.6)

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[28] In addition, module 1 also covers assistance to the EC Representation, insurance of proper visibility of the EDIC and participation in coordination and training meeting organised by the Commission.

3.4.1.1 *Use of the information and guidance service*

On the basis of the monitoring data available we estimate that EDICs overall have had in the range of 500,000 incoming telephone and email enquiries. To this figure should be added queries from users who have visited the EDIC centres in person – which cannot be measured quantitatively due to lack of reliable data.

However, actual use and reach of these services cannot be assessed with certainty due to issues with data collection and categorisations in the monitoring system[29].

Usage figures of enquiry services should, not be interpreted as user figures. Survey results from the EDIC survey and the user survey would suggest that a significant share of the users are returning users. When prompted on the EDICs' user groups, only 5% of the EDICs assess their users to be almost or always new. In contrast, 40% indicate that their users are composed of returning users. Fifty five per cent indicate that their users are "mostly new" but occasionally come back for more information.

It would therefore be reasonable to assume that the number of users of the EDIC enquiry services is lower than that the number of enquiries.

Telephone and email enquiries

The monitoring data available suggest that EDICs had a total of some 525,000 telephone and email enquiries in 2010, down from 656,000 queries in 2009. Approximately 60% are emails. The reported number of emails has fluctuated quite significantly over the last 4 years whereas telephone queries have remained somewhat more stable around 200,000 queries annually. The total number of reported email and phone enquiries increased significantly from 2007 to 2009, but decreased by more than 100,000 enquiries from 2009 to 2010.

Table 3.12   Total annual number of email and telephone queries - EDICs 2007-2010

	2007	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**
No. of EDICs	475	468	502	484
Email	255,636	319,577	423,178	320,769
Phone	192,418	201,650	232,856	205,202
Total	**448,054**	**521,227**	**656,034**	**525,971**

Source: EDICs monitoring data (intranet)

An analysis of the monitoring data undertaken in the framework of this study suggests that the actual number of telephone and email enquiries differs very substantially from EDIC to EDIC.

The reported monthly average of total telephone and email enquires of all EDICs in all countries taken together over the year 2010 is 90. But this apparently reasonable figure hides large country / EDIC differences.

Monthly averages of telephone and email enquires reported by EDICs vary from 3 to 1311. 16 EDICs have reported receiving more than 500 enquires on average per month – or an average of at least 27 enquiries per day (taking 18 working days in a month), which is barely realistic for an average over a one-year period. Overall, the enquires reported by 25 EDICs having the most enquiries represent not less than 35% of all enquires, whereas the EDIC

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[29] For some EDICs there are issues with over reporting of the number of telephone and email enquiries. For face to face contacts there are issues with what is actually reported – as data often include participants in events.

themselves represent only 5% of all EDICs. Fifty two per cent of all enquiries are reported by only 10% of all EDICs.

This significant difference may also be illustrated by the difference between the average and median number of enquiries. Whereas the average number of yearly enquires per EDIC is 1,086 – or 21 enquires a week – the median number of enquiries is only 396 enquiries annually – or 8 telephone or email enquires weekly.

In total, 56% of all EDICs report that they on average have less than 10 enquires a week. Thirty three per cent report that they have less than 5 enquiries on average a week.

This very significant difference in the number of enquiries could suggest that some EDICs "over-report" and consequently that the actual total number of email and phone enquiries is lower than the monitoring data suggests[30].

Some key indicators of usage of "reactive" services are represented in the Table below.

Table 3.13   Key indicators - EDIC email and telephone enquires (2010)

Average and median number of enquiries – per EDIC (2010)

	Per year	Per week
Average	1,086	23
Median	396	7.6

Relative weight of the EDICs reporting high number of enquiries

	Number of email and telephone enquiries reported (total)	Share of all enquires	Share of all EDICs
The 25 EDIC with the highest number of enquires	185,682	35%	5%
The 48 EDIC with the highest number of enquires	271,467	52%	10%
The 300 EDIC with the lowest number of enquires	74,509	14%	62%

Enquiries per week (based on 48 weeks in a year – i.e. one holiday month excluded)

	Number of EDICs	Share of all EDICS
EDICs having more than 100 enquiries a week	21	4%
EDICs having less than 10 enquiries a week	273	56%
EDICs having less than 5 enquiries a week	161	33%

Source: EDICs' monitoring data (intranet) and GHK calculations

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[30] This view has also been supported by some interviewees who have noted that some EDIC are likely to over report in order to place these in a "positive light".

These results prevent us, however, from further elaboration of the actual average number of people reached per month by all EDICs in particular countries or by all EDICs in country per million inhabitants.

Face to face contact: "at the counter" information services

The monitoring data does not provide an indication of actual usage of "at the counter" information services. This is due to the fact that many EDICs report under "personal contacts" participants to events – including in some cases participants to large-scale fairs. Hence personal contacts do not represent face-to-face enquiries.

The evidence collected during the case studies suggests that questions "at the counter" differ very substantially. In some cases EDICs may have large inflow of visiting users. However, the case studies also suggest that in some countries (SE, UK, PT) – and for a number of EDICs in other countries – the actual number of citizens spontaneously visiting the centres is quite low.

In addition to country differences – and differences related to the host (host already being visited by many people – or on the contrary not at all visited[31]) use of the "walk in function" depends on other factors including:

- Geographical coverage - if the EDIC is centrally located users are more likely to visit than if it is far away);

- Age of users – young people are more likely to use emails than to call in;

- Type of enquiry – the more specific the enquiry is the more likely it is that the user would visit the centre and vice versa.

Limited use of walk in functions in the EDICs in countries such as the UK, Bulgaria and Sweden is also reflected the survey data. This data also suggests that walk in services are more frequently used in Poland – even though emails and phone are becoming more popular amongst users.

3.4.1.2 Themes in enquiries

The monitoring data suggests that queries over the last three years have first and foremost been related to the theme of education and training, followed by EU grants and general EU affairs. Other topics of interest are social policy, justice, citizenship, fundamental rights, EU institutional affairs and agriculture and rural development.

Monitoring data would also suggest that EU grants are generally subject to fewer enquiries than in 2008, 'education and training' has become a more frequent subject, and justice and citizenship as well as employment and social policies have become subject to a significantly higher number of enquiries than previously.

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[31] This difference is not necessarily related to the "type" of host. For example a municipality may be visited by many people (in Portugal) or nobody or almost nobody (e.g. Sweden)

Figure 3.6   Reported most frequent topics of enquiries (per month) from 2007 to 2010 (2010 priority topics excluded)

Legend: ■ 2008 ■ 2009 ■ 2010
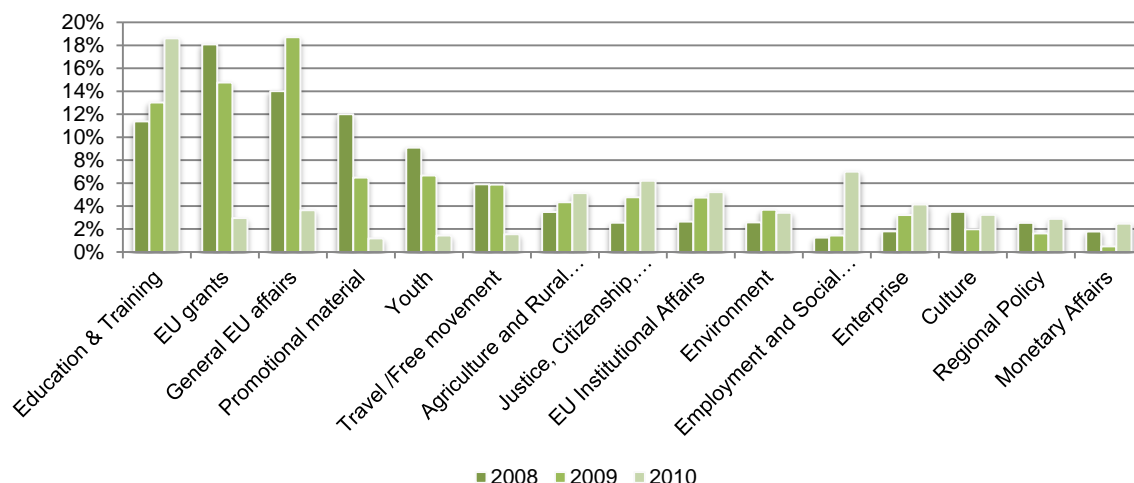
Source: EDICs monitoring data (intranet) and GHK calculations

The data available does not provide an overview of the actual share of different enquiry types but is limited to collecting of data on the topic per month "which was most often raised in citizens' queries". This implies that the actual weight of different topics cannot be assessed based on the monitoring data available – and that monitoring data may not provide an accurate picture of the actual frequency of the topics covered.

This, as well as a different categorisation and reporting method, may explain why the reported user topics differ significantly from the user survey results. According to user survey results main topics of enquiries are: How the EU and its institutions work (general information about the EU), followed by EU grants and funding programmes and studying and learning in the EU.

Figure 3.7   Reported topics of enquiries among those users having reported using the EDIC enquiry service
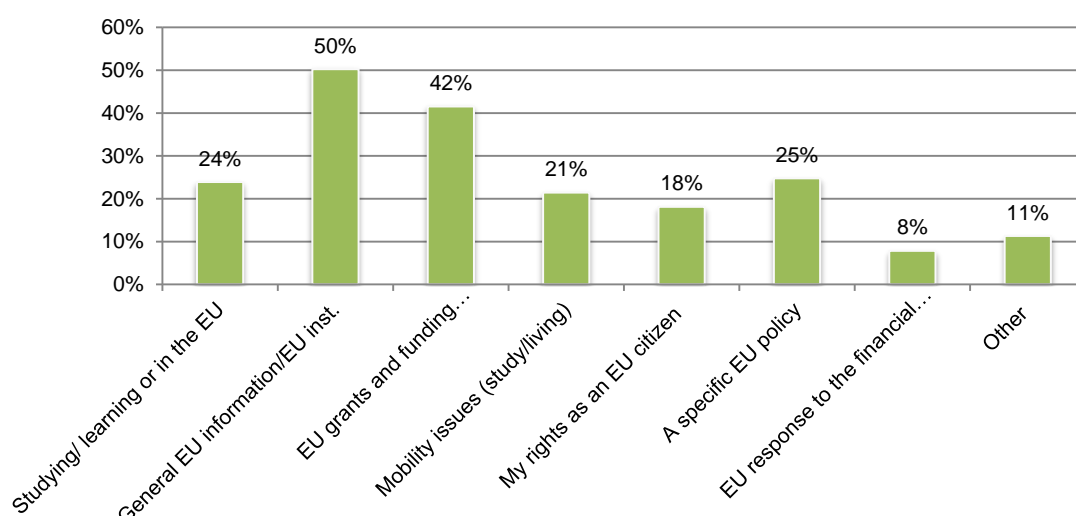
Source: GHK's EDIC Survey 2011; base = 691(all users reporting contacting the centre)

3.4.2 Events

EDICs mostly have a very strong focus on events. Organising events, undertaking presentations and participation in events organised by other actors forms a crucial part of the EDICs; overall activities. For many EDICs events are the principal tool to proactively raise awareness and – where appropriate – promote informed debate. Often, events form the core around which other outreach activities are developed. For example, press activities, newsletters, online tools often serve mainly as a tool to promote events, or to multiply the effects of these. The importance given to events is also reflected in the use of EDIC resources – as noted above.

The importance of events have also been highlighted by external stakeholders who, when prompted on the added value of the EDICs, point towards the EDICs capacity to reach out to citizens face to face during events.

3.4.2.1 *Scale of event organisation*

According to the monitoring data, 443 EDICs – or 92% of the total – carried out events in 2010. A total of 9,605 events were reported in the period. The majority of EDICs carried out at least one event a month, with 10% carrying out at least 4 events per month. Two EDICs in five (38%) organised, or participated in less than one event per month. A small minority of centres (six - among which four Italian centres) carried at least eight events per month on average (i.e. more than 98 events during the year).

On average, the monitoring data suggests the number of events organised or participated in per EDIC is higher in the newer Member States (EU 12) than in the older Member states - possibly reflected that EDICs in these countries have more staff at their disposal. The highest number of events reported (average) per EDIC is found in the Czech Republic, followed by Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Italy (between 31 and 37 events reported on average per EDIC). The lowest averages may be found in Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovak Republic, Malta and Luxembourg (<11 events per EDIC on average reported).

The review of the monitoring data suggests, however, that not all event reporting is reliable – and that a number of EDICs have reported internal meetings, media participation and other activities as events.

Accordingly, it may be reasonable to assume that the actual number of events targeted at the EDICs target audiences – in which the EDICs have participated or have organised - is lower than presented in Table 3.14.

Table 3.14   EDICs by number of event

	Number of EDICs	As a share of total
Active EDICs	484	100%
Reported at least one event during 2010	443	92%
Less than one event per month	185	38%
One event per month or more	258	53%
Including:		
Four events per month or more	44	9%
Eight events per month or more	6	1%
Total events reported	**9,605**	**100%**
Events all EDICs	**Number of events reported annually _average per EDICs_**	**Share of total events**

All MS	18	100%
Events in the New Member States	20	35%
Events in the Old Member States	16	65%

Source: EDICs monitoring data (intranet)

A majority of the events are reported to be held indoors (70%), some "mixed" (20%) and some outdoors (10%). Case study data however suggest that the understanding of indoors, outdoors and mixed differs among the EDICs[32]. Therefore this distinction is not likely to be meaningful.

3.4.2.2 *Type of events*

EDICs overall undertake a very wide range of events. Events vary from school presentations, journalist trainings or briefings, cultural events of various natures, conferences and debates, European days/week, all year cultural events, participatory events but also at small scale events and organisation of visits to Brussels.

The nature and choice of events undertaken by the different EDICs is influenced by a number of factors – including aspects such as:

- Local needs and opportunities
- The nature of the host structure and its objectives and target audience
- European years and political priorities

The breadth of activities is such that it is not possibly to completely categorise EDIC events. However, five broad categories of events may be distinguished which are important in numerical terms. These are: interventions at schools/educational institutions; conferences and debates; European days; participation in fairs, festivals or other larger scale events; and cultural events. Events in each of these broad categories share common characteristics – even if exceptions may be noted for each category.

Events at schools/educational institutions

Events in schools are undertaken by a very large share of EDICs. Many EDICs have a specific focus on schools and undertake regularly activities at educational institutions. In all the case study countries several EDICs were identified having a specific focus on educational institutions, teachers, pupils/students and more broadly youth. Even those that do not have a specific focus on youth undertake a high number of activities for this group.

Overall there are two main broad categories of events at educational institutions. A first group - important both in terms of number and in the overall importance given to this activity – is school/class presentations. Many EDICs provide lectures to pupils and/or students in primary and secondary school (in addition to providing school material) on regular basis. The themes covered are diverse – from general introductions to the EU, EU institutions and decision making systems, EU interventions/policies on specific topics, topics associated to the annual political priorities and more practical topics. In a few cases those presentations are also organised on the premises of the EDIC, in order to familiarise the pupils with an environment where they can get additional information on the EU.

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[32] The following interpretations were for example given: distinction between events within the premises of the EDIC (indoor – irrespectively if they took place physically outdoor using the stand of the EDIC) and outside, in another location (outdoor); distinction between events organised for the usual public of the EDIC (indoor) and the general public, non-usual users (outdoor).

A second group of events are presentations of opportunities that the EU provides to students and pupils. This second category is specifically focused on opportunities under key EU programmes – in particular the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action programme. In these cases, events can constitute presentations but also participation in school/university events/fairs where the EDIC have a stand, disseminate publications and provides answers to student enquiries.

In some cases EDICs undertake both types of activities. In a number of cases however, EDICs specialise on one of these two types of activities. For example in the case of France the EDICs hosted by the Centre d'Information Jeunesse[33] tend to have a clear focus on mobility related issues and youth opportunities – and this given the mission of the Host structure to provide information and guidance on opportunities to youth. In contrast, a number of EDICs hosted by the "Maisons de l'Europe"[34] have a stronger focus on educational activities. Similar specialisations may be noted in UK and Germany where some EDICs have a clear focus on opportunities for youth and the educational sector within Europe.

The current strong EDIC focus on school/educational institution events is driven by both push and pull factors. Educational institutions are increasingly demanding information on the EU for pupils and students (e.g. SE, UK) – and in some of countries Europe is part of the curriculum (e.g. UK). Many EDICs are therefore subject to regular requests for presentations.

On the push factor side some EDICs – for example in Portugal and Bulgaria – note that "the youth is the future". Therefore focus should be on this group. Also, several EDICs in the different case study countries note that organising school events is "easy". Schools provide an accessible audience – for example in Sweden - compared to other event types which mostly require more capacity and resources to organise (with little assurance of audiences).

Conferences and debates

Many EDICs organise – at least on an occasional basis – conferences and debates with specialists on a given topic, and/or with parliamentarians from the European Parliament or national politicians. In the election year 2009 most EDICs were very active in this area and this has continued as a recurrent activity for many EDICs – even if the frequency has reduced in some EDICs.

The target audience for conferences and debates is typically the "general public". However, it is recognised that it is difficult to attract people in the 30-65 age groups and various approaches are used to attract this group.

Debates with MEPs and other known political speakers – as well as with known media people and other public figures – are often reported to be successful. A key condition however is "cultural fit" and language skills. Conferences and seminars with participation of Commissioners and senior EU officials who do not speak the local language and who are not familiar with the local culture are much less successful – and may leave the impression of a "Europe that does not understand its citizens". This is also the case even in countries such as Sweden where foreign language skills are good within the broader population.

Europe days

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[33] Youth information centres are centres co-financed by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Associative Life: they provide information to young people on various topics (e.g. health, education, employment, juridical activities etc.).

[34] European Houses are part of an independent association created in 1956 with an aim to raise awareness on European Affairs amongst French citizens.

Most EDICs are involved in organising events on 9 May or around this date. The celebration of Europe day – or even in some countries Europe week (e.g. Bulgaria) – forms an important part of the outreach activities. If EDICs undertake large-scale events it is typically in this period.

Events organised during Europe day include conferences, film presentations, political debates and roundtables, sports activities, concerts, exhibitions and competitions or other activities for children and youth.

In numerical terms EDIC events on (or around) 9 May are significant. In the week of 3rd to 10th of May 2010 some 804 events were reported to have taken place – representing some 8.4% of all events organised in 2010. Also, the reach of these events is significant representing >10% of the total reported reach in 2010.

While Europe days are generally important it should be noted however that not all EDICs undertake specific activities. In this respect, the UK exception should be noted. In the UK, EDICs report that it is politically too difficult to undertake significant events to celebrate Europe and specific 9 May activities are therefore often not undertaken.

Participation at fairs, festivals and other large-scale events

In order to promote their services and disseminate information many EDICs participate in fairs, festivals and other large-scale cultural events. The perceived benefits of participation is associated to reach and visibility. Through participation the EDICs reach out and engage with new audiences.

Typically, participation takes the form of stands at the events, but may also include other types of activities (e.g. presentations or exhibitions). The events in which EDICs participate are often not directly associated with the EU. For example these may include fairs for students, agricultural fairs or cultural events – for example book fairs or festivals of various sorts.

In addition, many EDIC participate in EU related events organised by third party actors. Such events include open days, the researcher's night or European job days.

Cultural events and activities

Many EDICs undertake cultural activities. Cultural events provide an opportunity to attract new audiences and communicate about Europe to groups which are less interested in EU related topics.

They typically cover much broader aspects such as European culture/about other EU countries, European diversity and living in other countries. A very wide host of cultural events is undertaken. Within the case study countries events include:

- "Euro reads" read your way around Europe – reading competition encouraging citizens to read at least five European books (UK);

- Professional football players presenting how it is to work and live in different countries (Sweden and France);

- Bicycle contest: 'pedalling against poverty' where volunteers were invited to participate in a bicycle race to promote the fight against poverty (Portugal);

- Speed dating in EU languages - Erasmus students teach pupils a couple of sentences in different EU languages (Sweden);

- Exhibitions for the general public (e.g. of photography on the Berlin Wall, " How European funds changes your life in Ile de France", symbols of Europe, EP elections, in France);

- Dance performance, fashion shows and Christmas decorations (France);

- Cream teas (UK).

Cultural events – or events with cultural dimensions - are implemented across all case studies. In a number of cases they play an important role to attract the 30-65 age group.

Cultural events, however, appear to be more prominent in some countries. Within the case study countries UK EDICs had a specific focus on cultural events – to quite some extent reflecting the need to communicate on "non-conflicting" issues.

3.4.2.3   Topics and themes of events

The analysis of the monitoring data, as well as results from the case studies show that events cover a very wide range of topics, from education and training, to EU Foreign and Security Policy, to transport over to maritime affairs and culture. Results however also suggest that a few topics are more prominent.

According to both the monitoring data and case study results education and training is by far the single most frequent topic. One in four events cover the topic of education and training (24%). This share is even higher if only events with a reported topic are taken into account (29%). The second most frequent topic is culture followed by energy and EU Institutional Affairs. Sixteen per cent of the events are reported to cover culture (and 19% of events with a reported topic), and 9% of events energy or EU Institutional Affairs (11% of events with a topic). Other very frequent topics are climate action and energy; employment and social policy; making the Lisbon Treaty work for citizens; justice, citizenship, fundamental rights; environment; driving the economic recovery, agriculture and rural development and regional policy. Each of these topics has been covered in between 5% to 10% of the events on which a topic was reported.

However, many EDICs report that events cover several topics. On average almost 2 topics (1.76) are reported for each event having reported a topic – with several events reported to cover a very wide range of topics. Also, a significant share of events have no reported topic at all (14% of all events).

If events are grouped under broad thematic headings a slightly different distribution may be noted. Education and training remains the main theme. Seventeen per cent of all events having a theme cover exclusively this topic. In addition some 3% cover youth or education and training – in combination with culture or employment. The second most frequent topic is General EU affairs/EU institutional affairs covered exclusively by 12% of all events. Environment, climate change and energy are the topics of some 9% of all events, followed by culture (8%). Sixteen per cent of all events having a topic could not be clustered due to the variety of themes covered. Also, 6% of all events are reported to cover topics that fall outside of the categorisation.

Figure 3.8   Reported event topics 2010 – events regrouped under key topics –all events where a topic has been reported
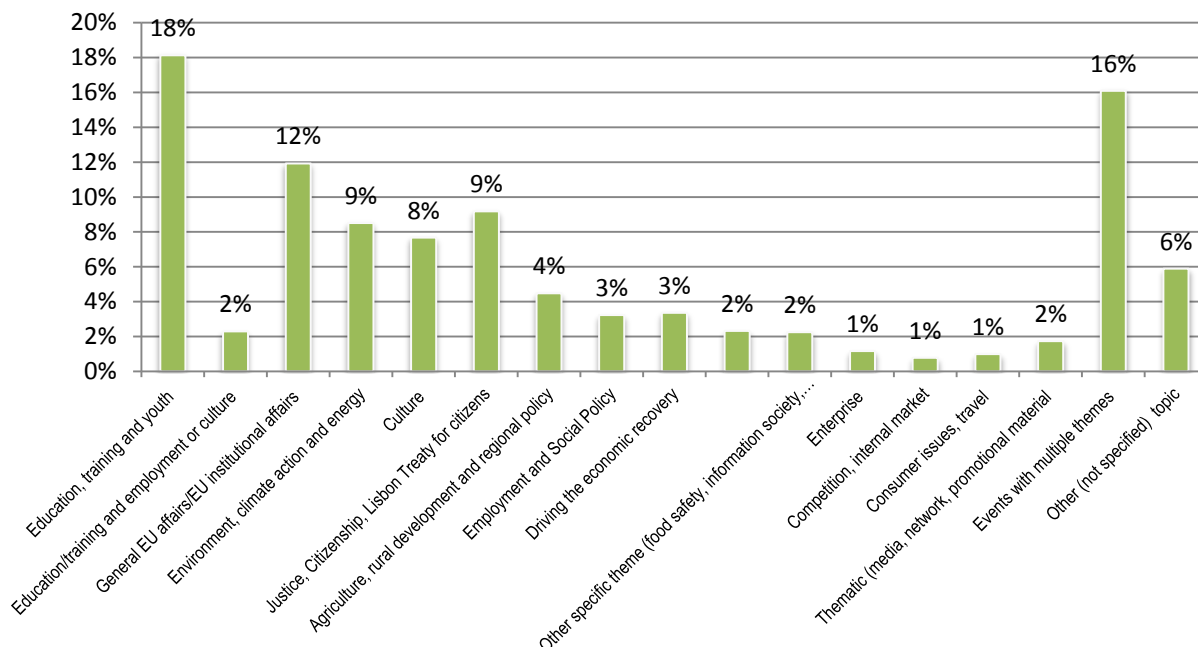
Source: EDICs monitoring data (intranet); base = 8236 (total events 9605)

3.4.2.4   *Reach of the events*

The data available suggests that events in the main are relatively small scale. The median number of participants to the reported EDIC events is 50.

Nearly all events have a reach of 500 people or fewer. Also, 70% of all events on which attendance data is available have a reported reach of 100 people or less.

Table 3.15   Reach of EDIC events (2010)

Median attendance at events		
All EDIC events	50	
Number of attendees	**Number of events**	**Share of all events on which attendance figures have been provided**
Between 5 and 10 participants	429	5%
Between 5 and 20 participants	1,494	18%
Between 5 and 50 participants	4,242	52%
Between 5 and 100 participants	5,713	70%
Between 5 and 500 participants	7,483	92%

Source: EDICs' monitoring data; base = 8,118 (events where audience figures have been provided)

According to the monitoring data EDIC events have a total reach of some 2.57 million people. However, as for the monitoring data on enquiries and number of events, the data available on reach refers in a number of cases not to actual EDIC reach. For example many

EDICs report total participation at a fair to which they have participated – even if they did not actually reach this number.

In this respect it may be noted that some 35 events (out of the reported 9,605) are reported to have a reach of 1.1 million persons – or 43% of total event audience. Similarly events reported to have a reach of 1000 or more participants – representing 3.3% of total events – have a total reach 1.8 million participations or 69% of total of total reach. Fifteen per cent of all events did not contain any data on reach.

If it is assumed that individual EDIC events are unlikely to reach more than 5,000 people (hence all events having more than this number of reported participants have been discarded) it may be estimated that EDICs through events have reached some 1.33 million participants. If the threshold is set at 1,000 (all events having this number of participants or more have been discarded) than the estimated number of participants to events would be 787,000.

3.4.3 Websites

Providing information on the web is a popular activity and most EDICs have a web presence of some sort. As for other activities however, the actual content, the frequency of updating and the overall use of the web as a tool to disseminate information differs very significantly.

By January 2011, a total of some 464 EDICs – or 96% of all EDICs - had a website, web presence on the host structure's website or some other sort of web presence. There are also a total of 13 national EDIC websites (January 2011)[35].

In addition to national websites individual websites/webpages regional websites exist covering two to three EDICs (for example in FR, PL and ES Balearic Islands). In total some 20% of EDICs are present on two or more websites.

Content and quality of individual websites has been reported as being an issue in a number of the case study countries. Also, some EC Representations note that the requirements for the website module are not clear and that funding is provided for websites with very different content.

3.4.3.1 Content

A mapping undertaken of a sample of 113 websites in January 2011[36] suggests that the content and quality of the website presence differs significantly. Information covers typically as a minimum the information on EDIC activities and services. In addition some EDIC websites provide general EU information – and/or on specific EU topics. The level of detail of EU information (general and specific) differs, with some good practice on general EU information for example in Finland and Ireland (both national) – and good practice on specific policies for example in Estonia and Germany. Only a few websites contain information of regional relevance – and the information is generally not very informative. There are only few examples of FAQs (e.g. in the NL).

EDICs websites in some cases also link to other EU sources – including Europa. However, there are significant differences in content. About two thirds (65%) of the mapped websites link to the EC's Europe Direct Website and 42% of EDIC websites featured a link to Your

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[35] Some websites however do not appear be working or appear to have been taken over by others. This is the case for the Danish national website (not functioning) and for the Polish website (http://www.europedirect.pl) which actually correspond to a national network of information centres outside the EDIC network.

[36] Mapping undertaken by DG COMM – Number of mapped websites: 113.

Europe. There are also many examples of links to policy news and topical information - for examples in BG, CZ, AT, LT (e.g. EurActiv, DG campaigns, EU info updates).

Some 80% of EDIC websites link to Host structure websites. Around 19% link to an EDIC's Facebook page and around 7% to the EDIC's Twitter page or other Social Media (MySpace, Digg, Yahoo). Few websites (<5% of those mapped) make use of forums, quizzes, blogs, voting/like, guest books and chat opportunities. Slightly more, 7%, provide feedback opportunities (surveys/polls).

In terms of practical information EDIC websites provide contact information. In about three in five cases, websites also provide opening hours and one in four provides a feedback form through which the EDICs can be contacted. About 25% of the websites mapped contain videos and 10% contains audio material. Half of the sites contain some sort of photo galleries. Also about half (55%) are updated on weekly basis.

3.4.3.2 *Organisation*

The quality of websites in many instances is dependent on organisation. How the implementation of the website module is organised depends on a country – the level of EC Representations' involvement and control, presence of prominent host structures and national or regional level coordination among EDICs. Basically, four types of structures exist:

- Individual sites

- Common websites managed by a prominent Host structure - Finland and Lithuania

- Common national websites managed by EDIC(s) – Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Austria

- Websites managed by EC Representations - CZ, NL

In the three latter cases individual websites in most cases exist. EDICs in Luxembourg and Latvia however only have web presence via the national EDIC site. Also the presence of informative websites outside the common website appears limited in Ireland and Hungary.

National websites generally fall into two broad categories: those that mainly have a purpose of linking up to individual EDICs (e.g. BE, BG, SI, DK[37]) and those having an informative nature (e.g. AU, IE, GR, FI, CZ, LT and LU). While there are differences in quality among the latter, data overall suggests that national websites having an informative nature are of better quality and content than those of individual EDICs. They are typically also more professional in terms of layout. Good practices include Austria (www.europainfo.at) and the Czech Republic (www.europe-direct.cz).

There is almost no data available on the reach of the websites (visits, hits or similar) and no consolidated data.

3.4.4 Newsletters

The production and dissemination of newsletters is the most frequent awareness raising activity undertaken by EDICs besides events and websites. Newsletters are generally perceived as a helpful tool to disseminate information to wider groups, to keep in contact with the EDIC's users and to promote activities. However, the requirements to produce monthly editions is questioned by a number of EDICs

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[37] Previously – The Danish national website appear to have been taken over by others (see http://www.europe-direct.dk/)

The monitoring data suggest that some 216 EDICs regularly[38] disseminated newsletters in 2010 (45% of all EDICs). Mostly newsletters are monthly, but there are examples of by-weekly or even weekly newsletters. However, it is not possible to identify exactly the number of EDICs that produce newsletters.

3.4.4.1 Content

In order to assess the quality and content information of the EDICs' newsletters, a mapping was undertaken looking at: the focus of the articles (e.g. EU news, National/regional news); the level of detail of the articles; references to other EU sources or EU actors or EU calls; promotion of EDICs' events or other events; promotion of publications and the layout. The mapping covered 42 newsletters.

The mapping suggests that the content and quality of the newsletters differs. Nevertheless, all newsletters have an EU focus and divulgate news information. What differs is the level of detail that each newsletter provides. In terms of content four categories of newsletters were identified:

- Newsletters presenting articles on EU policies (e.g. 'the new Directive against fake medicine') as well as on EU politics (e.g. Enlargement of the EU) and offering analysis of each issue. Content is typically relatively comprehensive and appears to target an informed public ("content newsletter")

- Newsletters presenting short informative articles on EU news (EU policies and EU politics), often referring to a hyperlink to another EU source (EU News in brief).

- Newsletters presenting short informative articles especially on national/regional news (e.g. 'the Rioja region- tourism award', 'ETA announces the permanent cessation of violence', etc.) as well as EU related news in brief (Regional news in brief).

- Newsletters principally promoting EU Programmes (e.g. European Day of Languages, Back to School, etc.) and with no particular focus on policy news (Highlights).

Most newsletters (42%) fall in the first category. The two following categories – 24% and 22% of the mapped newsletters – usually offer summarized articles (i.e. a paragraph) – on National/Regional news or on EU policies/politics, which often links/redirect the reader to another EU source (usually an European Commission's webpage). The last category (12% of the mapped newsletters) generally contains little detail.

In addition, various newsletters occasionally present an article covering the EDIC's activities. They often also advertise EDIC's events or EU related events. Newsletters covering national/regional news often advertises regional non EU-related events. Also promotion of EU calls for proposals or tenders is frequent. EU or EDICs' publications are mostly not promoted. The average number of pages is around 7 pages with Newsletters presenting articles on EU policies being in the longest and the Highlights category being the shortest.

Table 3.16 provides an overview of the type of information contained in the EDICs' newsletters.

There is no data available on the reach of the newsletters.

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[38] EDICs having reported at least 6 newsletters have been counted for this estimation.

Table 3.16   Mapping of content of EDIC newsletters   (+++: very often, ++: often, +:sometimes, - :rarely - - : never)

Type of Newsletter	EU politics	EU policies	National/Reg ional News (not EU)	Use of hyperlink	EU calls	Events promotion	EU Programmes /competition	Reference to other actors	Pages
Content Newsletter	++	+++	- -	+	-	+++ EU related	++	-	2-18
Regional News in brief (inc. EU)	-	++	++	++	+++	++ EU and non EU	++	+++ (regional)	3-11
EU News in brief	++	++	- -	+++	+++	-	++	-	1-10
Highlights	- -	- -	- -	- -	-	-	+++	- -	1-4

Source: mapping of EDIC newsletter by GHK

3.4.5   Printed material

As part of the EDICs activities to proactively inform citizens many EDICs produce some sort of printed material. In 2010, 271 EDICS – 56% of the EDICs operating that year – reported they had produced at least one sort of print material. One third of these (33%) had indicated that they had produced one piece of printed material and an additional 35% indicated that they had produced between 2 and 4 printed materials. 14% reported between 5 and 10 printed material. The remaining 10% reported more than 10 printed materials.

Printed material covers a wide range of documentation. The results of the case studies and the review of the monitoring data would suggest that half and possibly more of the printed material funded under the "Module 5" is promotional material. These cover publications presenting the EDICs and its services, business cards, EDIC calendars, leaflets and flyers on/for specific events, promotional leaflets on a specific topic, posters, gadgets, games and other sort of promotional material. The case studies suggest that the majority of printed material in Bulgaria, Sweden and the UK is promotional material.

The remaining part is in the main informative publications on specific topics or print versions of newsletters (the case in France and Portugal). A selection of informative publications produced in 2010 in the case study countries is presented in the Table below.

Table 3.17   Examples of informative publications

Country	Title
FR (Vendée)	Livrets des Ressources Europe à l'attention des enseignants
FR (Paris – Ile de France)	Brochure « Pauvreté, exclusion : que fait l'Union européenne ? Ce qu'il faut savoir »
FR (Pyrénées Languedoc Roussillon)	De la Déclaration Schuman au Traité de Lisbonne : Document d'information
FR (Pyrénées Languedoc Roussillon)	L'Europe et les Parcs naturels régionaux : Dossier d'information
FR (Basse-Normandie)	Guide pratique « Etudier dans l'Union européenne
FR (Dunkerque)	Guide des bonnes pratiques de l'emploi transfrontalier agglomération dunkerquoise Province de Flandre occidentale

BG (Dobrich)	Thematic fiches on topics such as Water, Biodiversity, Mobility, Europe of languages
BG (Gabrovo)	Booklet "Keeper of living treasures – Central Balkan National park"
DE (Bremen)	Different publications on: Was macht die EU für …. Frauen ? Für Kulturschaffende ? Für Arbeitnehmer ? Für Senioren ?
DE (Gütersloh)	Factsheets on different topics: Armut in Europa, Klimaschutz in Europa and Gemeinsame Währung EURO
DE (Warendorf)	Warum sollen wir Energie sparen?
DE (Osnabrück)	EU-geförderte Projekte in der Region Osnabrück
SE (Nordväst)	Resa i Europa
UK (Cornwall)	European Funding Guide

Source: EC monitoring data and case studies

In a number of cases publications support other activities (in particular events). There are also examples (e.g. in Portugal) where publications have been subject to a lot of attention – and have subsequently given birth to events on the topic in question.

The fact that many EDIC do not produce and print specific publications needs to be seen in a context where most of the publications used and disseminated are provided by the EC, other EU institutions, national actors – or even by other networks (for example Eurodesk publications disseminated by some EDICs).

As many of the publications are not informative but promotional the current requirements for print material – minimum 10 pages, A5 format – are considered to be difficult to fulfil.

There is no data available on the reach of the publications or on the distribution figures.

3.4.6 Audio-visual material

With about one EDIC in six reporting some sort of audio-visual material, production of audio-visual material is the least frequent awareness raising activity undertaken. Case studies would suggest that undertaking of audio-visual material is even less frequent than the monitoring results would suggest.

In general, where EDICs produces AV material they produce only a single or two DVD items. Themes are broad – with much material reported to cover many topics. Most frequent topics are education and training, the political priorities for 2010, culture and environment.

The produced items cover content such as small videos promoting the EDIC or alternatively EU opportunities, registration of interviews, videos of events undertaken by the EDICs, videos presenting a specific policy and its implementation in the region (e.g. sustainable development and biodiversity ones). In a few cases also audio-visual material includes items such as educational and informational multimedia CDs and audio books (Sweden and Austria). Finally it appears that CDs in a number of cases are composed of photos.

The low take up of the module audio-visual material may be explained by three main factors. Cost is a major obstacle. Those having worked with the Audio-visual module generally indicate that the cost of developing content and replicating 500 CD-ROMs exceed €2,000 (EC co-funding and 50% host structure funding). Second CD ROMs are no longer an attractive format – in particular for developing short videos. Finally, lack of technical skills is an issue.

There is no data available on the reach of the audio-visual material produced.

3.4.7 Importance of the political priorities

In line with the Framework Agreement[39] EDICs are required to raise awareness, inform and communicate on the EU's political priorities (2009-2010: the communication priorities). Communication on the priorities form part of the baseline requirements for the EDICs.

The priorities are listed in Table 3.18. As it may be seen there is some continuity in the priorities – but also discontinuity.

In addition to the overall political priorities EDICs are required to take note of the objectives of the EC Representations communication strategies[40], and in some cases EDICs are also consulted on these (SE, PT, DE, AT, FI, GR, LT and NL),

Political priorities are typically communicated to EDICs via e-mail before the next year (usually in September of the previous year) to allow EDICs to prepare their action plans. In most countries this is followed up by phone or personal interactions on priorities – but there is some variety across countries. In most countries the formal communication on political priorities is followed up by training (e.g. PT). Often training on political priorities is undertaken in relation to other types of training – on the management, professional or personal skills.

Other EC Representations prepare factsheets for EDICs (e.g. UK). Finally, the EC Representations usually operate as a helpdesk for any question related to the priorities.

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[39] Framework agreement concluded between the EC Representations and EDIC's Host Structures and the Module Action Plan.

[40] These strategies were introduced two years ago and the work on refining them is still ongoing. The strategies are analytical documents that take stock of the main issues relevant for a particular country (based on opinion polls, stakeholder and political consultations). The strategies include communication, media and political strategies, which should address the EU political priorities. As Representations have limited resources, work in partnerships with local governments is intended to maximise the communication impact. Strategies are translated into annual management plans, allocating resources to concrete activities.

Table 3.18   EC communication and political priorities for the EU (2009-2011)

Comm. priorities 2009	Comm. priorities 2010	Political priorities 2011
▪ European Parliament elections 2009	▪ Driving the **economic recovery** and mobilising new sources of **growth**	▪ Dealing with the **economic crisis** and building the momentum of the recovery
▪ Sustaining **Growth**, Jobs and Solidarity		▪ Restoring **growth** and jobs by accelerating the Europe 2020 reform agenda (includes targets for **climate change** and **energy,** employment, education, poverty and social exclusion, R&D and **innovation**)
▪ **Energy** and **Climate Change**	▪ **Climate action** and **energy**	
▪ EY of Creativity and **Innovation**		
▪ 20th Anniversary of democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe		▪ Building an area of freedom, justice and security
▪ Future of a Europe for **Citizens**	▪ Making the Lisbon Treaty work for **citizens**	▪ Launching negotiations for a modern EU budget
▪ Europe in the **world**		▪ Pulling the EU's weight on the **global stage**

3.4.7.1   *Activities focused on the political priorities*

EDICs are overall well informed about the political priorities and their importance. However, case study results would also suggest that EDICs use and interpret political priorities broadly – and select and focus on specific aspects of the political priorities of relevance to their audiences. Furthermore, several EDICs also point towards the Annual Years as among the priorities to be communicated even if strictly speaking they do not form part of these.

This broad interpretation needs to be taken into account when reading the following section.

Information dissemination and communication on political priorities takes place principally through events. The Management Guidelines indicate that the priorities should also be covered by other activities (websites, newsletters, audio-visual and printed material media contributions) – but this appears to happen much less frequently.

The activities undertaken covering the political priorities are diverse in nature and include:

Events

- Activities in schools with teachers and children, including school focused competitions;
- Conferences, debates and other meetings;
- Exhibitions;
- Lectures, such as post-work lectures on health reforms, the economic crisis, green issues;

Other activities

- Written articles and publications, including newsletters, bulletins and press releases;
- Communication via social media (Twitter);

Survey results suggest that many EDICs focus a lot of resources on communicating the political priorities. Almost a half of surveyed EDICs (47%) estimated that 50% or more of

their activities were focused specifically on communication on political priorities. Also, 28% estimated that 25 to 50% of their activities focused on the priorities. In contrast, only 13% of the surveyed EDICs reported that less than 10% of their activities focused on the priorities. Only 2% indicated that they did not focus any activities on the priorities.

Figure 3.9   Share of activities within the last 2 years that were focused specifically on informing and communicating on the communication/ political priorities
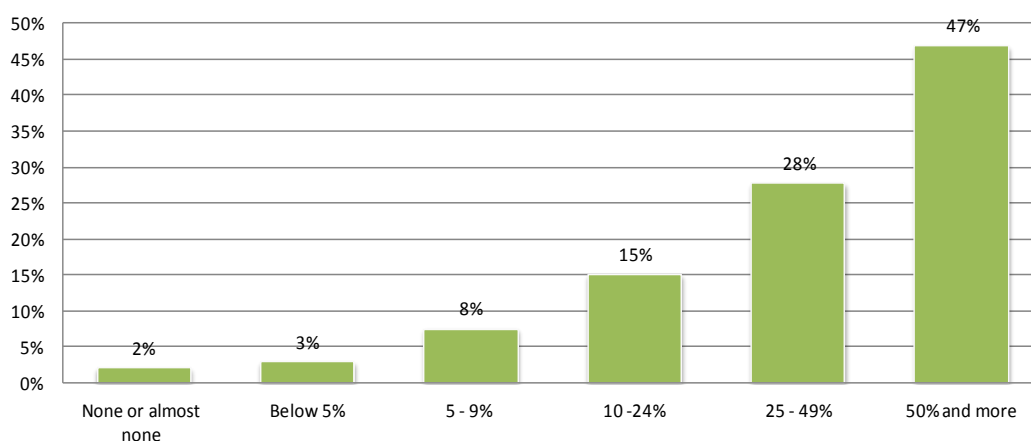
Source: EDIC survey data: base = 346 responses

When broken down by country however, the survey results outline differences in the EDIC estimations on the share of their activities focused on political priorities. Twenty five per cent or more of EDICs in 6 of the new Members states and Austria indicated that less than 10% of their activities were focused on the political priorities. Also in the case of Belgium more than half of the EDICs (56%) indicated that less than 25% of their activities were focused on the political priorities.

3.4.7.2   *Usefulness of priorities*

Overall EDICs felt that the political priorities were useful to provide direction and inspiration for their activities. The work around political priorities is also viewed as helpful in planning EDIC activities.

EDICs and EC Representations generally note the political priorities offer enough flexibility for the EDICs to adapt these to the local needs. Adaptation is important, in order for the themes to remain relevant to their local contexts and specific target audiences.

Nevertheless case study interviews suggest that some political priorities[41] have been more interesting to citizens (easier for the EDICs to "translate" to local level) than others. The priorities that were found to be relatively easy to communicate are:

- Europe 2020 (especially the environment and climate change targets – these were also found to be of most interest to youth, alongside fighting social exclusion);

- 2009 European Parliament elections; and

- The economic crisis.

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[41] Most of the case study interviews covered political priorities for the current year – 2011. However, the interviewees also evoked the priorities of the previous years – namely the communication on the Lisbon Treaty (2010 communication priority) and the 2009 European Parliament elections (2009 communication priority).

Priorities that were found harder to communicate and were perceived as less interesting to EDIC target audiences were:

- Lisbon Treaty;

- Europe on the global stage; and

- EU Budget.

Furthermore, although formally not among priorities in 2010 and 2011 there is generally consensus that the European Years generate a lot of interest among the citizens. These are also reported as being the most useful in guiding communication actions and in engaging local organisations and networks on common interest themes and in partner search. For example EDICs in the UK have actively engaged in full day activities with local volunteers.

More generally, it was noted that good priorities are those that are both of importance to the EU and interesting to citizens. When dealing with the more difficult priorities stakeholders in the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK proposed interactive debates (among parties on equal footing) as a good mechanism.

3.4.7.3 Barriers for communicating priorities

Among the EDICs who responded to the survey 47% indicated that they have not met any barriers in communicating political priorities. This however, also means that 53% of EDICs encountered various obstacles in informing about and communicating political priorities. Of these the majority indicated that the primary barrier is low interest among their target audiences.

The case study work confirms that lack of interest constitutes a major obstacle. Lack of interest in turn is influenced by external factors such as the general attitude towards the EU in the particular country. Overall levels of euro-scepticism and citizens' interest in daily concerns – were perceived barriers in the communication of priorities in Austria, France and the UK.

Support and information appears to be another important barrier. One third of those EDICs surveyed who encountered barriers indicated that lack of support or information on the priorities – as well as a lack of adequate information on the EC expectations regarding this communication – constitute a significant barrier. In this respect timing is a key issue.

Several EC Representations note that information on priorities is received too late from the headquarters (CZ, FI, GR, NL, ES), mostly due to the official Commission Work Programmes being completed only in October or November of the previous year. This leaves EDICs with little time to prepare quality action plans covering the political priorities. It was also suggested that in the absence of EU priorities host structures tend to play a more determining role in the agenda setting process for the EDICs. In order to address this issue some EC Representations indicated in this respect that they provide "early warning" to EDICs based on the State of the Union Address and/or individual EC Representations' communication strategies.

Adding to this, some EDICs also reported that in some instances they did not have the required expertise to diffuse information on all the priorities.

The case study work also identified other factors, which may explain the diversity in communicating political priorities:

- *Stringency of Representations' requirements for communicating priorities.* Case study work suggests that Representations in different Member States place a varied degree of emphasis on the importance of communicating political priorities and have different levels of flexibility in interpreting what can be covered by EDICs under these priorities. While in some countries Representations felt that they cannot impose the communication

on political priorities (France), in others such communication was perceived mandatory on at least one or some of the priorities (e.g. Germany, Portugal, Lithuania). Representations in countries where euro-scepticism is not a major issue, generally also felt more in a position to demand more direct communication on priorities. On the contrary Representations in countries with a more euro-sceptic public were forced to resort to less direct communication on political priorities – through debates (e.g. Netherlands), EU crosswords (Austria) and "sugar coat" the messages (UK) in order to ensure they are palatable to a largely euro-sceptic audience.

- *Ability of EDIC to adapt priorities to the local needs.* Case study work suggests that EDICs are rather dexterous in adopting the priorities to their local contexts and target group needs. Yet, such "adapted activities" often link only very broadly or only to one particular theme under a priority (rather than having a holistic discussion of the theme). Furthermore, some EDICs were reported to have a good focus on priorities in their action plans, but faced difficulties in actually communicating these due to euro-sceptic attitudes in society (e.g. AT and UK).

- *Alignment of the host structure communication objectives to priorities.* The type and the mission of the organisation hosting a centre influences the extent of communication on political priorities. Host structures with very similar missions to EDICs (like the Maison de l'Europe in France, EU centres in the local governments in Spain, EDICs hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland) were generally perceived as stronger communicators on priorities. In contrast, host structures such as NGOs working with particular themes or private companies with a public service mission in some countries were perceived to have the lower interest in priorities (AT) or lacking specialisation to deliver communication on political messages (e.g. UK).

- *Work in calendar years*. EDICs extensively work with schools and youth and EDIC activities are often organised according to school years. Accordingly working with yearly planning in calendar years may for some EDICs prove difficult.

- *Integration into the work plan of the EDIC.* Notwithstanding the issue of timing mentioned above, some EDICs also have difficulties with annual changing priorities. Several EDICs have pointed out the need for continuity of activities over more than a year period. This wish mostly does not fit with the need to communicate annually changing priorities. Similarly, as priorities are defined a long time before activities are implemented they may not prove relevant at the moment of the activity.

3.4.8   Users of the EDICs information services

In order to fulfil the EDIC mission it is important that the audience reached is actually the expected audience. As noted in section 3.1 the definition of the target audience is very broad – covering the "general public" as well as "specific target groups". Therefore to the extent that the user groups can be considered to fall into these groups it may be considered that the actual audience reached is the expected one.

Users of the EDIC services and information offers are composed of a largely heterogeneous group. Users, use and usage diverge across countries and across EDICs depending on the services, the information offer provided, the level of pro-activeness of the EDIC and associated, the host, the resources available and the geographical location of the EDIC. Within this overall framework however, specific user groups and patterns of usage may be identified which are particular prominent.

3.4.8.4   *Overall patterns*

The single most targeted and reached group is school children, students and teachers. All other groups are overall less targeted and reached. The prominence of this group is noted across all case study countries – as well as in survey results and monitoring data.

Not less than 64% of the surveyed EDICs consider that this group is a primary audience. All other groups are much less frequently considered the primary audience.

Figure 3.10   Shares of EDICs considering different groups to be **the "primary audience"**
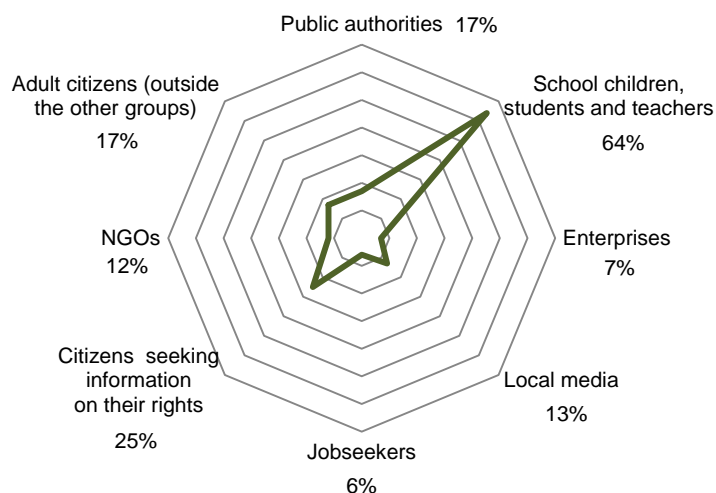
Source: EDIC survey[42]; base = 352

Within the citizen group of 'users', the data suggests that (beyond school children, students and teachers) citizens seeing information about their rights and other general public groups are relatively frequent user groups. However, about half of the EDICs indicate that the general public not having questions about their rights is more an "occasional user group".

"Non-citizens" users first and foremost constitute public authorities. Not less than 61% of the EDICs indicate that public authorities are a prime or one of the regular audiences of the EDICs activities. Other non-citizen groups are less targeted and reached – and are overall more "occasional" or "rare" users. There are significant differences however, depending on the specific EDIC. Some EDICs work extensively with NGOs and there are also EDICs that regularly work with enterprises.

The importance of different audiences – as reported by the EDICs – is illustrated in Figure 3.11. The figure reflects the EDICs perception of their main audiences in quantitative terms.

The importance of school children, students and their teachers and public authorities as major audiences is also reflected in the results of the survey undertaken among users of the EDIC services in the eight case study countries. Teachers compose the single largest group of survey respondents. 23% of all respondents are teachers or professors. In Poland, Bulgaria and France these figures are even higher – representing a total of 41%, 29% and 32% of all respondents.

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[42] Selected responses to the question: Please indicate in quantitative terms which of the following groups you mostly inform – response options: primary, regularly inform, occasionally inform, rarely inform and not inform/very rarely

Figure 3.11   Relative weight of different EDIC user groups (Q: in quantitative terms which of the following groups would you say that you inform?)

User group	Principal audience	Regularly informing this audience	Occasionally, rarely or never
School children, students and teachers	64%	32%	4%
Citizens seeking information on their rights	25%	46%	29%
Jobseekers	6%	26%	68%
Adult citizens (outside the other groups groups)	17%	36%	49%
Non citizen			
NGOs	12%	36%	53%
Public authorities	17%	44%	39%
Local media	13%	51%	36%
Enterprises	7%	21%	72%
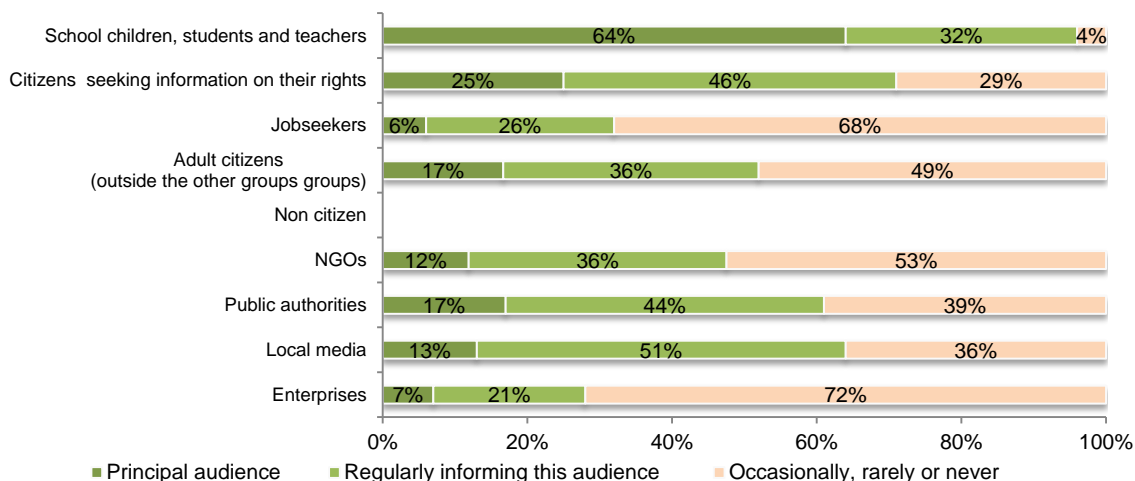
Source: EDIC survey; base = 352

In terms of socio economic category the other main groups of users, as reflected in the survey results are employees in public authorities and private sector employees, self-employed and employed in NGOs/civil society organisations. Employees in public authorities represent a total 23% of survey respondents – but as much as 35% of the Swedish respondents and 31% of the German respondents. In contrast they only represent some 12 to 15% of the Bulgarian, Polish and French respondents. NGOs represent a total of 9% of respondents but about one in five of the respondents from Bulgaria and Portugal.

Jobseekers and other not in employment do overall not constitute a frequent user group. Only 3% of the users surveyed were unemployed or not seeking employment. The significant share of retired should, however, be noted. A total of 10% of the survey respondents indicated that they were retired. Most of these were found in the UK (23% of all UK respondents) and France (17% of all French respondents) whereas there were no retired among respondents from Bulgaria, Portugal and Poland. Students and pupils in the user survey represent a total of 10%.

Figure 3.12   Distribution of user survey respondents by employment category
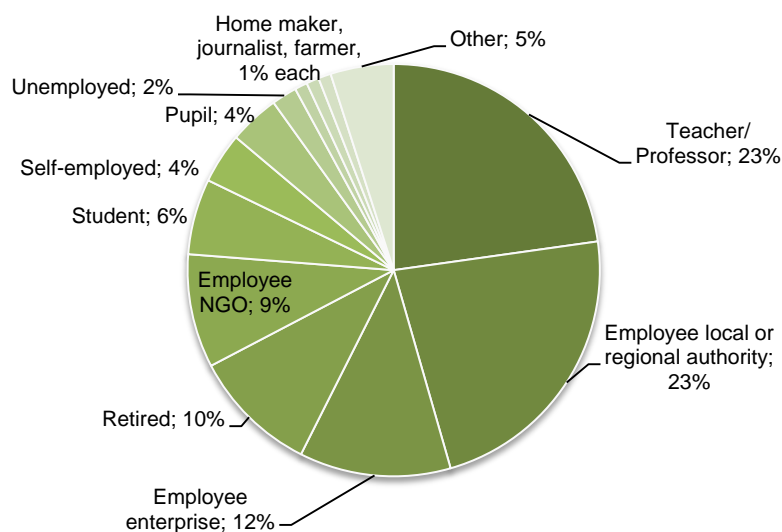
Survey data suggest that the employment category is important for understanding why and how the EDICs services are used. Obviously, any employee as well as any person not employed forms part of the general public. However, it is often not in this "role" that interaction happens with the EDIC. Not surprisingly, teachers interact in essence with the EDICs in the framework of their teaching role (92% of teacher respondents indicate that they interact with the EDICs as part of/in relation to their work). Similarly, survey results suggest that EDIC users working for local or regional authorities, working in media or working for an NGO / civil society organisation in a very clear majority interact with the EDIC for professional reasons. In contrast, users working in the private sector to a much wider extent use the EDIC services for private or other non-professional reason (e.g. for studies or similar activity outside work) – reflecting that most EDICs do not – or only to a limited extent – work with enterprises.

Not surprisingly, the users who are retired and the users who do not look for employment interact nearly exclusively with the EDIC for private reasons – or for other non-professional reasons such as studies (94% and 95% of respondents indicate non-professional reasons for interaction) Similarly pupils and students interact with the EDIC mainly for study related reasons or for private reasons.

The figure below shows the relative importance of "professional" versus "private" interaction with the EDIC for selected professional categories.

Figure 3.13   Share of the survey respondents who have interacted with the EDIC for professional or private reasons – broken down in different selected professional categories*.
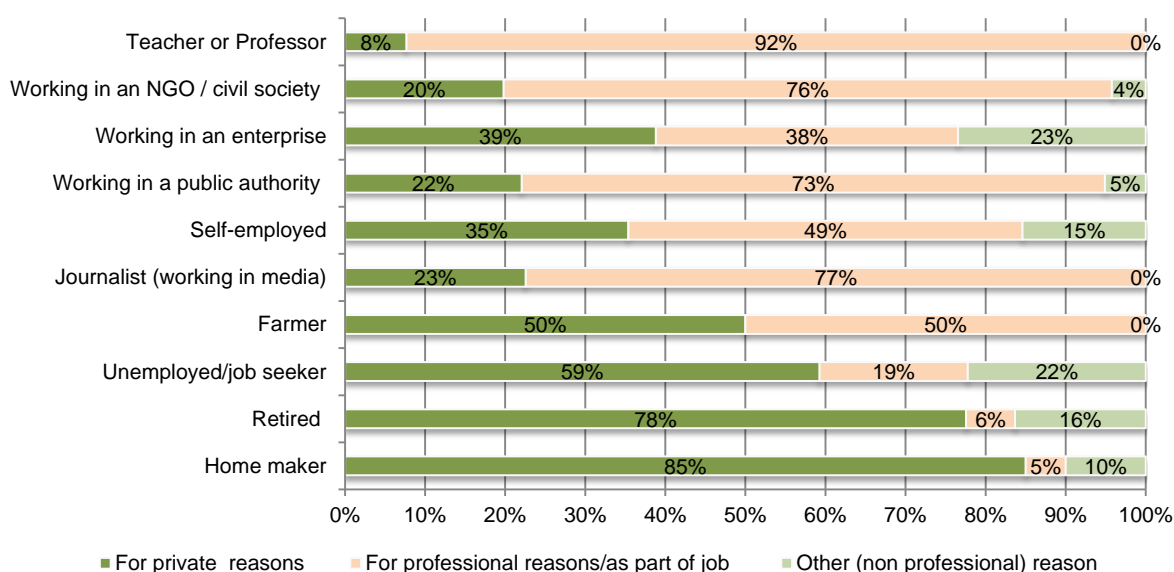
*Interaction cover: have participated to an EDIC event, contacted the EDIC with a question, and used the EDIC's website and/or received a publication or AV material

Combining the share of the different user groups with the user purpose provides insight into the share of public which may be considered as the "general public" – i.e. those who are not students, pupils, other youth and their teachers, and those who do not interact with the EDIC for professional reasons but for private ones. The results of such an analysis would suggest that some 30% of all respondents are "general public respondents". One third of these are retired.

This figure is not likely to be representative for the full reach of the EDICs – as survey data is not likely to have reached adequately pupils and to ad hoc participants to events – and hence does not reflect outreach to these groups. It may in contrast provide an idea of share of returning "general public" audience reached.

Educational background

There is no comprehensive data allowing an assessment of the educational background of users. Obviously, a significant share is pupils and students. Beyond this group it is not possible to comprehensively assess the background of the EDICs audiences - as groups reached by one off events (including cultural events, school presentations and exhibitions) are unlikely to have been reached by the EDIC user survey.

Within these limitation however, the user survey data suggests that EDIC users are very well educated. Not less than 66% of the survey respondents have a university degree. In contrast only some 5% have a compulsory degree – and this group is in the main the pupils having responded to the survey.

The percentage of highly educated users is significantly higher than among the European population at large. In total 19% of the EU population 18 years and older holds a university degree, 48% hold an upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education and 32% hold primary and lower secondary education certificates as their highest levels of education[43].

The proportion of survey respondents with non-academic qualifications was significantly lower than the EU population as a whole. Only some 15% had an upper secondary or lower secondary education as highest level of education. Twelve per cent had a vocational background.

In contrast the results are not radically different from the results of the EDCC evaluation – which also suggested that the users of this service are very well educated.

3.4.8.5 Relative weight of different groups across EDICs activities

The data also suggests some differences in user groups and patterns across different activities.

Question and answer services

According to the user survey data, question and answer services are first and foremost used by teachers and professors. Not less than 31% of those having indicated that they have proactively contacted the centre are teachers and professors. Compared to the total average, fewer retired persons and farmers use this service. Other groups are similar to the overall total average.

Case study results would furthermore suggest that users contacting the service largely do so for specific reasons. Typically teachers collect general EU information – but do so for educational purposes. Similarly, when other users contact the service they do it to receive a piece of information directly of relevance to them. For citizens, the information may serve a mobility purpose (e.g. studying abroad, looking for employment abroad, paying taxes/receiving pensions if moving abroad), may allow citizens' to address a specific issue that they face (for example trans-border consumer issues), an educational purpose (e.g. collecting information in relation to studies) or a professional purpose. Very few users

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[43] Source: Eurostat

proactively contact the EDIC with a general question on an EU topic of their general interest. Within the case study countries the main exception identified was in Germany where EDICs report that they receive many questions about the Euro and the financial crisis and what the EU is doing to address it.

According to the survey data as much as 52% of the users proactively contact the EDIC for professional purposes. Only 14% indicated that they contacted the EDIC proactively for private reasons. Some 5% of those having contacted the EDIC proactively did so to receive a publication.

As noted above a large share of those using the EDICs services work in the public sector, work for NGOs or work for enterprises. Their interest is often related to opportunities for funding of specific projects. A total of 42% of respondents having proactively contacted the EDICs indicated that they were looking for funding opportunities. Among employees working for public sector, for NGOs or for enterprises who contacted the EDIC for professional reasons as much as 61% indicated that they were looking for information on EU grants and funding programmes. For public authorities also, requests for information often also relate to whom to contact within EU institutions. Other specific professional use includes information for farmers.

Events

The single largest audience of EDIC events is students, pupils and their teachers. Events targeting exclusively youth, children and their teachers represent some 39% of all events

In many cases the events do not target specific groups. They are meant for the general public or for multiple wide groups of stakeholders. As most are events targeting several groups – a regrouping of targeted audiences was undertaken. In cases where monitoring data reported targeting of specific groups and general public, these have been counted as general public. The result is presented below. As it can be seen events targeting multiple groups including the category general public represent 29% of all reported events in 2010.

Figure 3.14   Audience of events – share of events targeting different publics
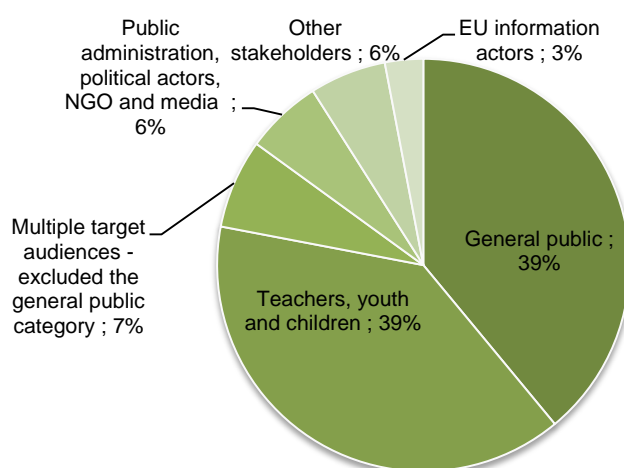
Source: EDIC monitoring data; base = 9605

The importance of children, youth and teachers is particularly significant in countries such as Malta, Italy, Cyprus Poland and Estonia. About half or more of all events reported in these countries are exclusively targeting these groups. In contrast, monitoring would suggest that there is overall less attention to these groups in countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, Ireland, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Figure 3.15   Events with exclusive target teachers, youth and children (as a share of number of events with information on target audience)
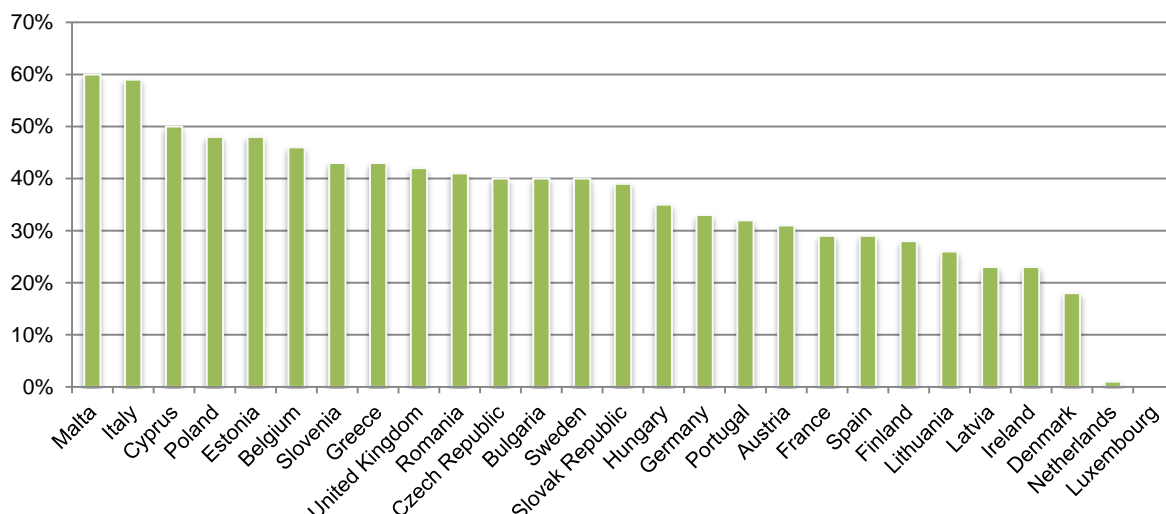
Source: EDIC monitoring data; base = 3745 (all events targeted teachers, youth and children)

According to the monitoring data the most attended events are those for the general public: while accounting for 39% of events, they make up for 60% of attendees. But if one focuses the analysis on those events that constitute the core of EDICs' business, i.e. indoor and mixed events that gather 100 attendees or fewer (that represent 68% of all events where information on attendance is provided).Teachers, youth and children represent 45% of the people reached – reflecting again the importance of this group.

Beyond this group, events reach out to a wide group. Considering that ad hoc participants to events are unlikely to be adequately represented in the survey results the nature of this group is difficult to capture. Survey results however would suggest that a significant part of event participants are employees who participate as part of their job. This said, not less than 40% of those surveyed who participated in events did so for "private reasons" as they had an interest in the topic (45% if teachers are discarded). An additional 9% indicated that they had participated at an event at their school.

Participation for "private reasons" is according to the survey results much prominent among those who have only had one contact with the EDIC. Among one off users respondents having participated in events, not less than 58% had participated for private reasons and an additional 14% indicated that they had participated at an event at their school. These results support the conclusion that it is first and foremost via events that the EDICs reach out to the "general public".

Website and newsletter

EDIC websites and newsletters are used essentially by a user group having regular contact with the EDICs. According to the survey results about 3 out of five of those using the website have had four or more contacts with the EDIC – only 7% had only had a single contact with the EDIC. Similar results may be noted for the surveyed readers of the EDICs newsletters.

Survey results furthermore suggest that the newsletter and websites are mainly used to keep multipliers and users that interact with the EDICs for professional purposes. Not less than 70% of the user survey respondents using the EDICs website report that they do so for professional reasons – whereas only 25% indicate that they read it for private reasons.

Similar results may be obtained for the users of the newsletters. Not surprisingly therefore, employees working for public authorities and working for NGOs/civil society organisations

are – compared to the overall user sample – overrepresented among website users and subscribers to the newsletter, representing a total 44% of newsletter subscribers. Also, teachers are "over represented" among website users. In contrast, as it could be expected survey respondents who are retired, job seekers and other groups interacting mainly with the EDIC for private purposes are less represented.

Main topics of interest are events organised by the EDICs (77% reporting interest) update on EU news of relevance for the local community, information on calls for proposals/EU funding programmes, general information about development – as well as educational material for pupils and studies and publications.

Publications and AV material

According to the survey results the main users of publications and AV material are teachers (and through these their students and pupils) and public authorities. Thirty three per cent of those having indicated that they have received publications or AV material are teachers/professors and 27%work for a public authority. An additional 8% work for NGOs. Considering the user groups it is not surprising that publications in the main are used professionally. Seventy per cent of respondents indicate a professional use – whereas 23% indicate a private use. Private usage is more prominent in the UK and Germany (40% of the UK respondents and 30% of German respondents have indicated that they receive publications for private use) – whereas only 9% of the Polish and 14% of the Portuguese respondents indicate that they have requested publications for private use. Six per cent – corresponding to the student group – receive publications for their studies.

Case study results suggest that publications of interest are general rather than specific. Publications that users are interested in are educational material, general introductions to the EU (e.g. EU in 12 lessons), information about studying and living in other countries – and EU opportunities for mobility – and information about EU programmes. Also publications covering a specific topic but written for the broader public are of interest. In contrast specialised publications are generally not of much use – and do not enjoy much interest among the EDIC's user groups.

These results are confirmed by the survey results. Sixty three per cent of the survey respondents having received publications indicate that the publications they have requested cover EU affairs in general (including how the EU and its institutions work), 43% indicate that they have requested educational material, 39% indicate that they have requested publications on EU programmes and funding opportunities, 26% have indicated that they have requested publications about living and working in the EU and 24% have indicated that they have requested publications about studying/learning in the EU. There are however differences in terms of interest in specific topics. Significant differences are illustrated in the Table below (for countries where sufficient number of respondents for publications was received)

Table 3.19   Interest in topics across respondents in selected case study countries (difference of more than 5 per cent point indicated)

	All respondents	BG	UK	FR	GE	PL
General information about the EU/working of EU institutions	**63%**	55%	41%	70%		71%
EU for pupils/students (educational material)	**43%**			55%	32%	55%
EU grants and funding programmes	**39%**	50%	22%	21%		55%
A specific EU policy	**29%**	40%	22%	17%	39%	20%

Information on travelling, working or living within the EU	**26%**	38%			13%	32%
Studying or learning or in the EU	**26%**			34%		
My rights as an EU citizen (e.g. consumer issues)	**24%**	45%			18%	
N=	**294**	**40**	**37**	**47**	**93**	56

Source: EDIC User survey results

3.5 Results of EDIC intervention: Ability of the EDIC network to address user needs and increasing citizens knowledge and participation

For the EDICs' activities and outputs to be translated into the expected results it is of central importance that these – in addition to reaching the right audiences - meet four criteria:

- Activities and topics that they cover should be relevant to potential and to actual users – that is they should be considered interesting, attractive and correspond to their needs for information.

- The actual satisfaction with the activities should be high - generally and with regards to content, organisation, and relevance of the information provided.

- The recipients of information/participants to activities should feel that they have learned something about the EU that they did not know

- The recipients of information/participants to activities should feel that they are listened to (as part of the EU listening function)

In order to assess the extent to which the EDIC activities have met each of these criteria, user surveys have been undertaken among actual users in each of the seven case study countries. To complement these results qualitatively focus groups were undertaken in the case study countries – with both user and non-users. Finally, the section draws on case study interviews where relevant[44].

3.5.1 Overall trends

Overall, both focus groups and survey results would suggest that the EDICs activities are relevant to both actual users and potential users. Focus groups largely agreed on the fundamental objective of EDICs - to facilitate access to information on Europe. This service should be available to all and targeted broadly. Audiences that are perceived as particularly important are also those that are actually reached. Similarly the services delivered – the mix of online, print and face to face interaction both at the EDIC and at events is perceived as relevant.

Users surveyed across countries and the results of the focus groups among actual users indicate high levels of satisfaction with the services delivered. User satisfaction has been measured using a number of matrixes – from general satisfaction with specific services, details on satisfaction of specific aspects of specific activities, the extent to which they feel better informed bout EU issues thanks to the and EDICs services and the likeliness that they

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[44] As discussed in section 2.2.5 and 2.3 there are issues with bias of the respondents to the user survey and with the focus groups with users. Overall, survey results and focus groups have over representation of more regular users – and possibly among more content users. The bias is particularly strong for Bulgaria and Portugal. The analysis presented should be read in this light.

would contact the EDIC in case they had more questions and if they would recommend the service.

Across all questions the services and the EDICs activities are rated positively. Users are generally satisfied or very satisfied with services, would contact the EDIC again in case they had other questions and would recommend the EDICs to people they know.

Similarly, users largely feel that they are better informed about the EU, know better where to find information and feel that they are "heard" and can express their views via the EDICs activities.

Levels of satisfaction are similar or higher than those identified during a similar study of the Europe Direct Contact Centre undertaken in 2010, and compare favourably to user satisfaction results of other EU networks targeting citizens. They also compare favourably to standard benchmarks for information services.

3.5.2 Relevance of the type of services delivered

Relevance of the EDICs was assessed mainly through the use of focus groups. Overall judged by the results of these groups, the EDIC activities undertaken and the themes that they cover are relevant – including the more cultural ones. In contrast, the feedback opportunity does not appear to be of great relevance to users or potential users – and would therefore need to be clearly relevant to EU institutions to add value.

Overall, focus groups participants welcomed the mission of the EDICs as providing information on the EU to the general public, either through direct provision of information or through signposting. Participants also recognised the underlying need for information – highlighting issues such as lack of knowledge and/or interest of the majority of citizens about the EU, lack of (neutral) information on the EU in the media and a lot of misinformation published in the public domain.

The focus group participants believed it to be fundamental that EDICs provide both general and specific information – on site and online. All participants thought that EDICs should be for multiple groups rather than one type of user – as currently.

Beyond the objective of servicing the Member State populations at large, the focus groups also concluded EDICs should support specific groups. These were largely identified to include: School pupils and teachers to support educational activities on European issues, young people in general and potential beneficiaries of funding opportunities – thus largely the groups currently targeted. However some participants also pointed out that by organising activities in schools, there was a risk that EDICs focus too heavily on target groups that are already aware of or interested in the EU. There was a real need to identify areas of importance where Europeans lack information or where there is considerable misinformation published.

Users generally welcomed the mix of reactive and proactive activities. Events for specialised groups such as schools, jobseekers, businesses – enabling awareness-raising on the EU and information on specific aspects – as well as of talks, conferences, exhibitions and social events were assessed to be highly relevant as was print and online information in users' first language.

For non-users, the most important questions to be addressed by the EDIC were information concerning mobility (studying abroad in particular), travel, laws in other Member States and current affairs, especially regarding the Euro and economic consequences of EU membership. The publication of newsletters was considered a useful and accessible service for gaining information from EDICs, but also more interactive activities – events and talks – were applauded. Non-users also underlined the importance of providing neutral and unbiased information.

Both among non-users and users there was more widespread interest (FR, PT, SE for example) in finding out more about a European identity. This was an aspect that focus groups participants found difficult to concretely describe, but it tended to revolve around culture and history. For users of EDICs, this was an important way through which to view and discuss the European Union, and to 'regionalise' the European Union. Also there was interest in several focus groups to learn more about European legislation and to support individuals and organisations in their understanding of European current affairs. Most notably, focus group participants expressed a wish to discuss the Eurozone countries and current developments regarding the Euro. EDICs should be up-to-date and well informed of such happenings. In contrast, a majority of users or non-users did not express the need to communicate messages to the institutions of the European Union – even if the perception of this differed with some participants calling for interactive activities specifically aimed at asking European to provide feedback to EU institutions.

3.5.3 Overall satisfaction with the information services provided

The user survey undertaken in the seven case study countries and the focus groups with users generally indicate high levels of satisfaction with the different services provided. Overall satisfaction rates are 95% or above for each of the types of services delivered by the EDICs (question and answer service, events, newsletters, websites and publications). Similarly, participants to focus groups were all very satisfied with the services provided – and generally felt that the mix of EDIC activities was the right one.

The highest levels of satisfaction are found among users having proactively contacted the EDIC and among users having participated in events. Not less than 60% or more of these user groups have indicated that they are "very satisfied" with the services provided. Satisfaction with the EDICs newsletters is overall lower, with users on average being "satisfied" rather than "very satisfied".

Table 3.20   Levels of satisfaction with key EU information services
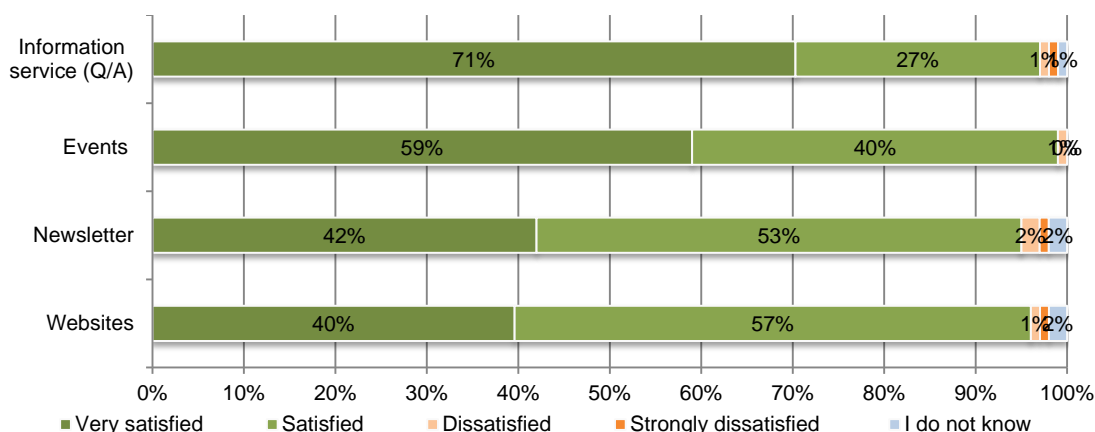
Source: EDIC user survey results; base = 1587

Publications, for which EDICs overall are not responsible (in the main produced by the EC), also rated positively, albeit, somewhat less positively that other services. Thirty eight per cent found these very useful, 50% found these somewhat useful and 3% did not find these useful.

The very high levels of satisfaction are also reflected when asking users if they would use the services again – or if they would recommend it. Not less than 90% indicated that they would use the service again, against only 1% indicating that they would not. Similarly, 92% would recommend the EDIC to a friend or a colleague having questions related to the EU. Only 2% would not.

EDIC services compare overall favourably to other EU information services. There are no other EU networks that fully provide the same range of services. However, it is possible to compare the information service to that provided by the EDCC. Also benchmarks exist for the ECC-Net and EURES for their information services – albeit questions raised are not systematically comparable to those in the EDIC survey. As Figure 3.21 shows user satisfaction with the EDICs information services is higher than other services – and are significantly higher than for those of EURES and ECC-Net.

Table 3.21   Levels of satisfaction with key EU information services – compared to data from the EDIC network, the EDCC, ECC-Net and EURES
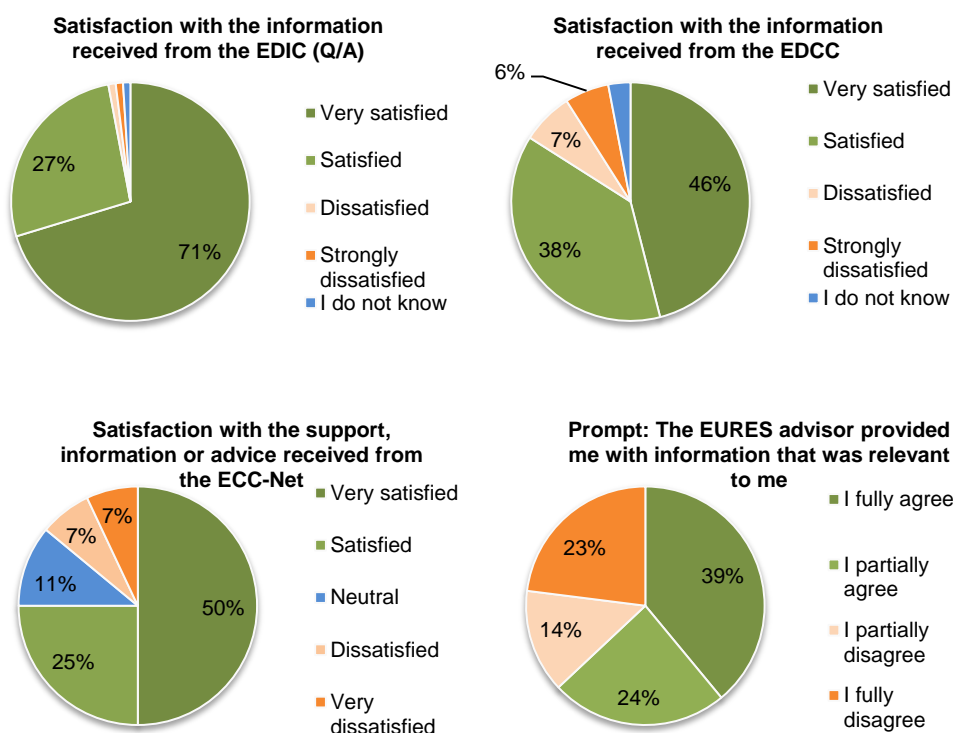
Source: EDIC survey; base: 1591 Evaluation of the Europe Direct Contact Centre (2010); base 1024, Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network (2011) Base : 406 and Ex-post evaluation of the EURES programme (2010)[45]

3.5.4   Usefulness and relevance of specific parts the EDIC services – and variation across countries

User assessments of specific aspects of the EDICs services and activities follow the general trends of user satisfaction. When prompted on usefulness of the service delivered, the relevance of the information provided and timeliness of service users rate positively activities. There are differences however, with ad hoc information services and events being more positively evaluated than other services. There are differences across countries with somewhat higher levels satisfaction in Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria and somewhat lower levels of satisfaction in Sweden. National differences are particularly notable for some activities.

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[45] All evaluations lead by GHK

3.5.4.1 Use and usefulness of the reactive information services

Use of the EDICs reactive information services is generally low with one third of EDICs reporting fewer than 5 questions on average a week. In contrast, satisfaction with all aspects of the reactive information service is high – suggesting high levels of service quality. When prompted on the usefulness, the relevance and timeliness of information delivery a very clear majority of users express satisfaction. Satisfaction is high across all types of users – and of equivalent importance across all countries. At least two third of all respondents in all countries (and often more) express full satisfaction with all information services.

Table 3.22   User views on statements of EDIC service quality

■ I fully agree   ■ I partially agree   ■ I partially disagree   ■ I strongly disagree   ■ I do not know
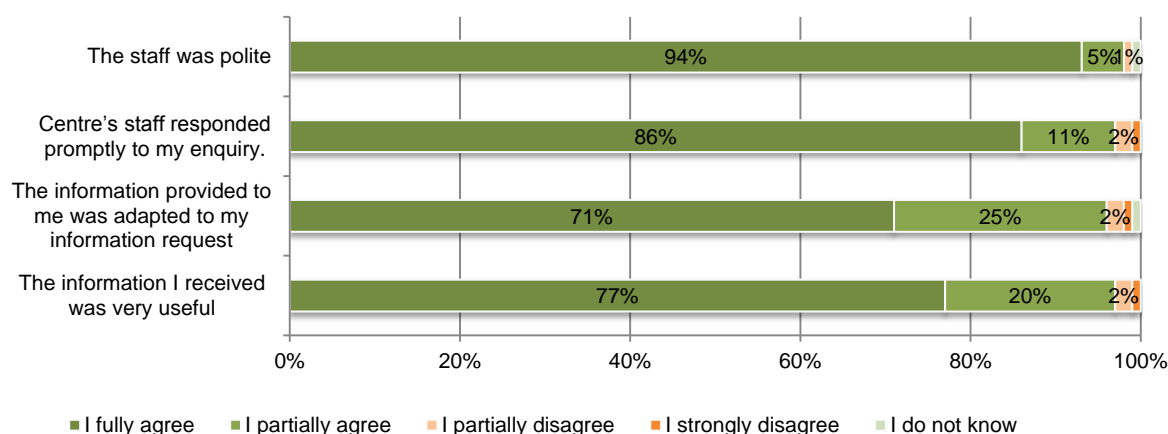
Source: EDIC user survey; base = 639

3.5.4.2 Use and usefulness of the walk in function

A core feature of the EDIC network is the obligation to have a physical presence. Mostly, EDICs have a physical presence within their Host structure. A total of the 87% of the EDIC surveyed are located within the Host. Those that are not located within the Host either have their own premises (47% of those located outside the host) or alternatively are located within another structure – typically a library.

Having a physical presence is typically perceived important for visibility reasons. More than half of the EDICs surveyed consider the fact of having a physical presence improves visibility and facilitates access to the EDIC. Only 13% of the EDICs disagree with this viewpoint. A physical space is also often positively associated with having a permanent space for events and other outreach activities.

Actual use and usefulness of the centre presence however, differs significantly – both across countries and between centres.

Use - Variation across countries

Within the case study countries usage of the "walk in function" appears more frequently used in Bulgaria, Poland and Portugal. In these countries the importance of the physical presence is often highlighted. In contrast there is much less usage of the walk in function in the UK and Sweden. In these countries the benefits of the requirements to have a physical space open a minimum of 20 hours is often questioned – given the significant HR resources allocated to this type of activity. For the two other case study countries (Germany and France) the picture is more mixed – with both views strongly present.

This result is also to quite some extent supported by the user survey results. On average 54% of the respondents indicating that they had contracted the EDIC via telephone, email or personal contracts indicated that they had visited the centre in person[46]. However, this figure is substantially lower for Sweden (28%) and for the UK (30%). In contrast, not less than 66% of the respondent group in Poland, and 59% in Bulgaria indicated that they had contacted the centre in person.

Use - variation across centres

Besides country factors, key determining factors for the use and usability of the "physical" presence and permanent opening hours are the host structure and the location.

For many EDICs the host structure plays a crucial role for access – or lack of access – to new audiences. For example, public libraries and youth centres may expose the EDIC services to potential users who were not yet aware of Europe Direct - *if they are well visited*. Similarly, a location in a municipality building may attract many users if the municipality building is visited (for example in Portugal). Being in a municipality building however is not in itself assuring visibility as citizens in some countries (e.g. Sweden) do actually visit the municipality building but contact it by mail or by telephone.

Similarly, the location plays an important role. A location on a main square may attract users but a location in the suburbs – or simply in a road with few people walking by (even if it is in the centre) – is likely to attract few users.

Usefulness – variation among users

When asking focus groups of the relevance and usefulness of "a walk in function" the perception largely differed among those who were actual users of the EDICs services and those who were not.

It was a common conclusion among the user focus groups that the personal contact (face-to-face or telephone) established with EDIC was the best way of accessing information.

In contrast, non-users were more likely to think an online presence was more important and suggested a central website to facilitate the EDIC identity. Non-users were not as clear, or sure of, the importance of physical centres being located in the regions.

3.5.4.3   *Use and usefulness of events*

As events form a core part of the EDICs activities and a key activity to reach out to citizens it would be important that all aspects of event organisation and content are assessed positively by those participating.

As noted above, participants surveyed generally express high levels of satisfaction with the events. Similarly, focus groups participants generally evaluate the events to which they have participated very positively. These groups also generally assess positively the mix of tailored interventions on specific themes for specific groups (schools, jobseekers, and businesses), specific interventions for intermediaries (e.g. teachers and public servants) and organisation of talks, conferences, exhibitions and social events, targeting the general public –covering more complex issues and topics more related to exploring Europe in a broad sense.

However, looking at specific aspects of the survey results which address event coverage also show that there is scope for improvement - in particular in some countries. In terms of

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[46] It is important to note that there is likely to be a significant overrepresentation of the users which have used the walk in function. It is generally easier to survey this group and to ensure actual survey participation. Response rates will unavoidably be much lower for email and telephone enquiries.

content and organisation events are overall rated very positively. Events are mostly perceived as well organised, presenting interesting information in attractive ways.

In contrast, events are less frequently perceived as innovative or creative as an approach to presenting EU/European information. The perception that events are not or only to a limited extent innovative/creative is more frequently expressed in the UK, Sweden and Germany – where more than 20% indicated that they did not think that the events are innovative or creative – and more than half only partially agreeing with this statement. Similarly, while a clear majority of participants overall perceive that events are relevant to their concerns, events appear overall less focused on citizens' concerns in Germany, France and Sweden. In each of the countries, 40% of more of the surveyed participants only partially agreed that the events were relevant to their concerns and needs, suggesting opportunities for further adaptation of events to local concerns.

Table 3.23   User views on statements on EDICs events
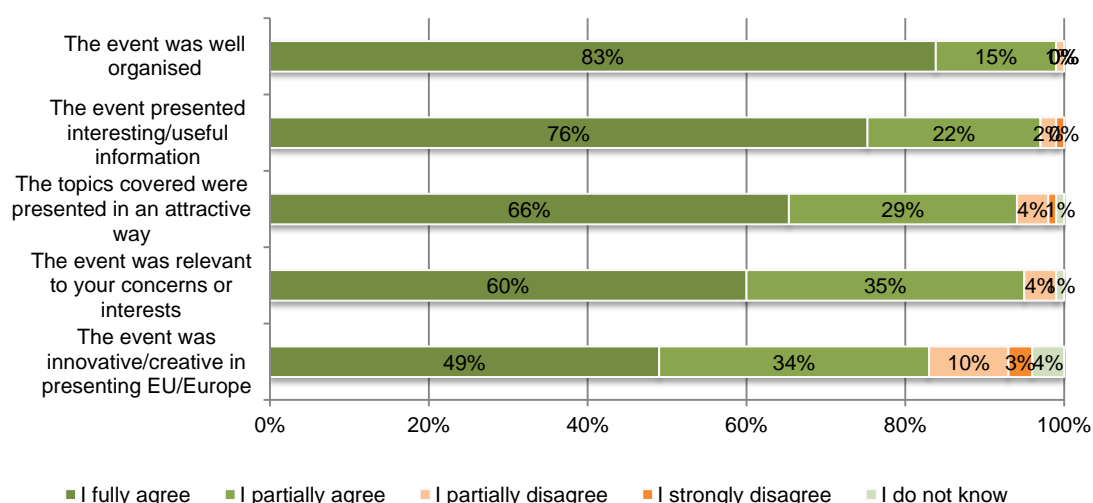
Source: EDIC user survey base = 514

3.5.4.4   Use and usefulness of the EDIC websites/web pages

Websites are implemented by most EDICs (as outlined in the Section 3.4.3) and as such form one of the core activities of the whole network.

Websites overall enjoy good satisfaction levels among users (57% satisfied and 40% very satisfied users) – but nevertheless is an aspect of the service that users express the least satisfaction with.

Users in a clear majority fully agree that the information provided is useful and interesting; that information is up to date and also that the information is well presented – linking up to additional websites with useful information.

Overall, however, the information available appears only somewhat comprehensive. While users express satisfaction with the service, more than half of the survey respondents indicate that they only "partially agree" that the website they had used contained all the information they were looking for – suggesting that more could be done to meet users' information needs. Only 37% of respondents fully agreed that the websites used contained all the information that they were looking for.

Websites in Bulgaria, Poland and Portugal were reported as best meeting the user expectations, while the EDIC websites in France, Germany and Sweden met the user expectations to a lesser degree.

Table 3.24   User views on statements on EDICs websites
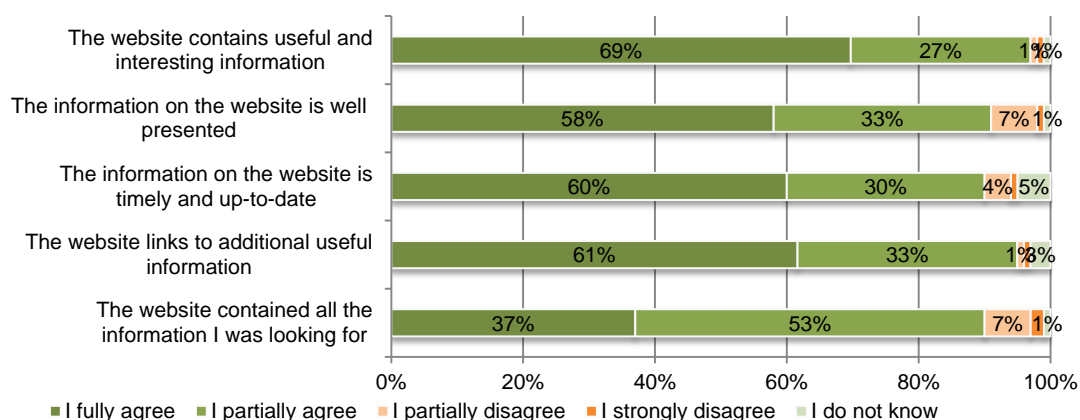
Source: EDIC user survey; base = 382

3.5.4.5   *Use and usefulness of EDIC publications*

Overall satisfaction with EDIC publications is quite high – with 57% of the user survey respondents indicating that these are very useful with a further 38% indicating that these are somewhat useful. Only 3% indicated that they did not find the publication very useful.

Publications are generally perceived as trustworthy, comprehensive and included an adequate level of detail. Bulgarian and Polish respondents in particular indicate full satisfaction with these aspects (75% and 72% fully agreed to the statements). Swedish and Portuguese respondents tend to partially agree to the statements (only 38 and 43% respectively fully agreed to the statement).

Useful publications tend to be those with non-specialist content (e.g. EU in 12 lessons), those covering mobility related issues and those that are edited for primary or secondary schools. School publications were also reported as useful for the adult population in some countries – the general public publications being too specific and too long for a general public audience.

Specialised publications are generally not perceived as useful and are hardly ever disseminated by the consulted EDICs.

A clear majority of respondents (72%) indicate that they have not encountered any problems with receiving an adequate number of publications. Very few respondents have met significant problems with receiving the needed number of publications.

Table 3.25   User views on statements on the available publications
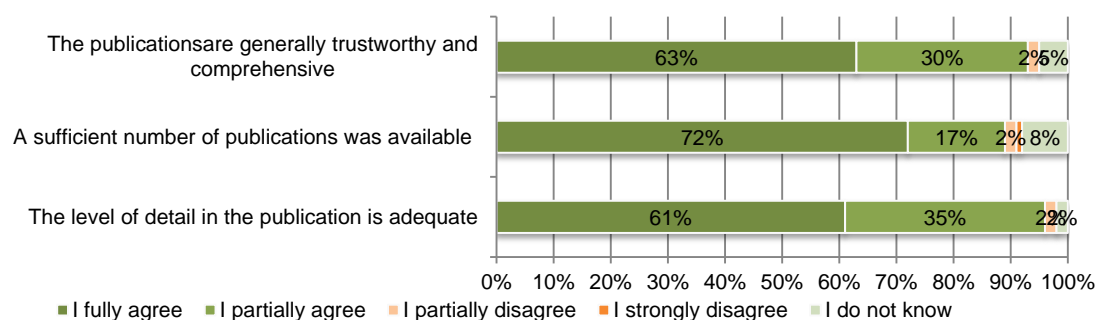
Source: EDIC user survey; base = 307

3.5.4.6 *Use and usefulness of EDIC e-newsletters*

Most aspects of the e-newsletter are well received. User satisfaction is high with 42% of respondents being fully satisfied with e-newsletters and an additional 53% being satisfied. 2% were dissatisfied by EDIC newsletters.

Newsletters are rated positively on their content. They are also rated very positively in terms of providing users information about what is happening in the EU. In addition, newsletters are generally perceived very helpful to keep more regular users abreast of the activities that the EDICs are undertaken.

Newsletters are perceived somewhat less helpful in terms of providing concrete information that actually can be used. Similarly, newsletters are also perceived less helpful in terms of providing information about EU related issues of direct local relevance.

If responses by country are examined, the following trends in the use and usefulness of EDIC e-newsletters can be identified:

- Most Bulgarian (86%), Portuguese (83%) and English (81%) respondents agreed with the statement that the information provided in EDIC e-newsletters is interesting and useful. In contrast, only 46% of the Swedish respondents, 54% of French and 56% of German users fully agreed with this statement.

- More respondents have indicated that e-newsletters provide information that they can directly use in Bulgaria, the UK and Poland (above 70%). The share of such respondents was lower in France and Sweden (34 and 39% respectively).

- There were considerably more respondents who indicated that EDIC e-newsletters allows them to be well informed about EU related issues in their region in the UK (73% fully agreed), than in any other country. The lowest shares of these who fully agreed with this statement were in Sweden and Germany (28% and 34% respectively).

- Finally, 72% and 64% of respondents fully agreed to the statement that EDIC e-newsletters allow them to be well informed about what is happening in the EU in Bulgaria and the UK. The lowest scores for this question were in France (43%) and Sweden (47%).

Table 3.26   User views on statements on the EDICs newsletters
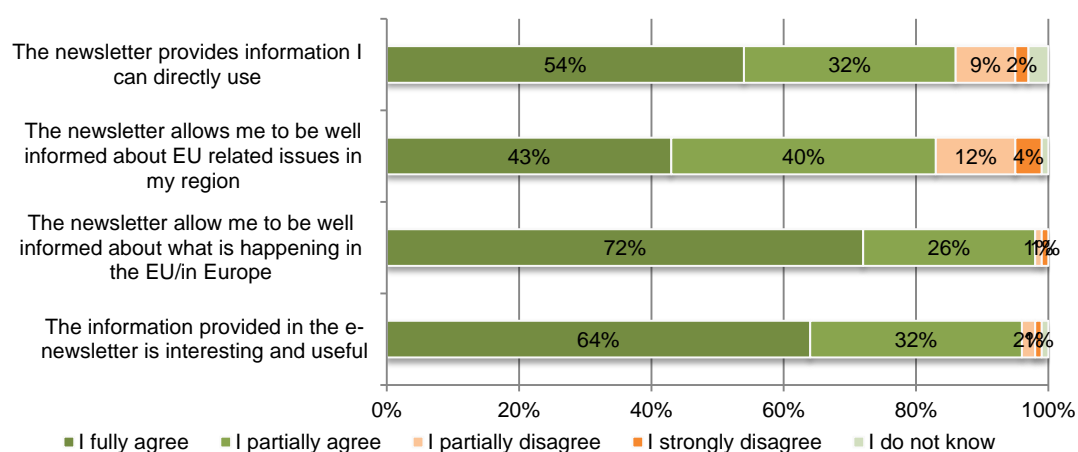
Source: EDIC user survey: base = 360

3.5.5 Results of the EDICs activities and outputs

In order for the EDICs activities and outputs to translate into the expected results and outcomes it is necessary that users are satisfied but it is not sufficient. There should also be evidence that users have learned something. It is also necessary that that they can express their views (as a baseline for feedback).

3.5.5.1 *Learning*

User survey results suggest that EDICs perform well in terms of translating information into learning. A clear majority of respondents to the user survey (close to 60%) fully agree that they feel better informed about EU issues thanks to the EDIC activity. About the same share also fully agree that they are better equipped to find information about the EU after interacting with the EDIC. 5-8% did not feel that after using the service they are better informed about EU issues or how to find information on the EU.

More respondents from Portugal and Poland felt well informed about EU issues (100% and 96% respectively[47]). UK respondents less frequently felt that this was the case (80%). As for being better equipped to find additional information there are relatively small differences between respondents from the case study countries. There is only a small share of respondents who do not feel they now know better where to find information (in the range 0-14%[48]) – with the lowest numbers to be found in Sweden.

Figure 3.16   As a consequence of obtaining information or advice from Europe Direct Information Centre which of the following apply?
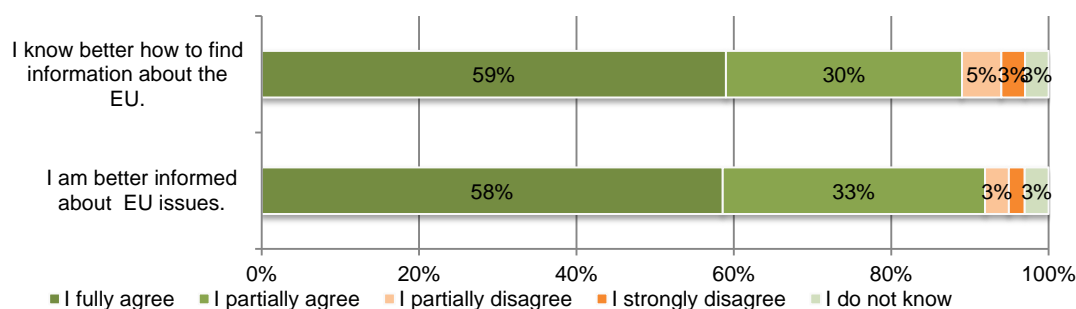
Source: EDIC user survey; base = 1603

The User survey also gathered data on whether the respondents felt better informed after attending an EDIC event. The survey results obtained for the events were very similar to the indicators for overall better information levels.

A majority (58%) of those respondents who had participated in an EDIC event fully agreed to the statement that the event has taught them something new about the EU/Europe that they did not know before, while 30% partially agreed to this statement. Concerning the impact of the EDIC events, more respondents in Portugal, Bulgaria and Poland felt like they have learnt something new (100%, 98% and 95% respectively) and less in the UK (71%). 22% of respondents in the UK partially or strongly disagreed with the statement that they learned something new about the EU/Europe that I did not know through EDIC events.

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[47] Sum of those respondents who indicated that they fully and partially agree to the statement.

[48] Sum of those respondents who indicated that they partially or strongly disagree with the statements.

3.5.5.2 Promoting debate and listening to citizens

Promoting debate and listening to citizens happens due to its interactivity essentially during events. Survey results would suggest that events are organised to ensure that citizens can express their views. A clear majority (60%) of those surveyed who had participated in events fully agreed they felt able to express their views – or to ask questions. An additional 28% partially agreed. In six out of seven countries, at least 82% of respondents fully or partially agreed that they could express their view. The rate is somewhat lower in the UK (71%).

3.6 Reaching out via media

Reaching out via the media forms part of the EDIC mission – but is not a compulsory activity.

According to the framework agreement EDICs are encouraged to cooperate with local and regional media and where appropriate organise events for these. In addition, EDICs may receive funding under the media module (for press articles or AV coverage).

This section presents the scope and nature of EDICs media interaction. Media interaction obviously covers traditional print and AV media. In addition, EDICs are increasingly engaging with social media as a means to reach out directly to users and potential users.

3.6.1 Overall trends

The extent to which EDICs are involved in or undertake media activities differs significantly amongst Member States and among EDICs. Overall survey data suggest that EDICs have become more involved with media but there are wide differences between countries and between EDICs.

EDICs, having participated in the first and second generation, have become much more active in countries such as Portugal, Ireland, the Baltic States and Slovenia. In contrast changes are much more marginal – or non-existent - in countries such as the UK, Finland, Denmark, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Hungary. This variation is illustrated below

Figure 3.17   Share of EDICs indicating that they have increased their cooperation with the media - as compared to pre-2009 generation
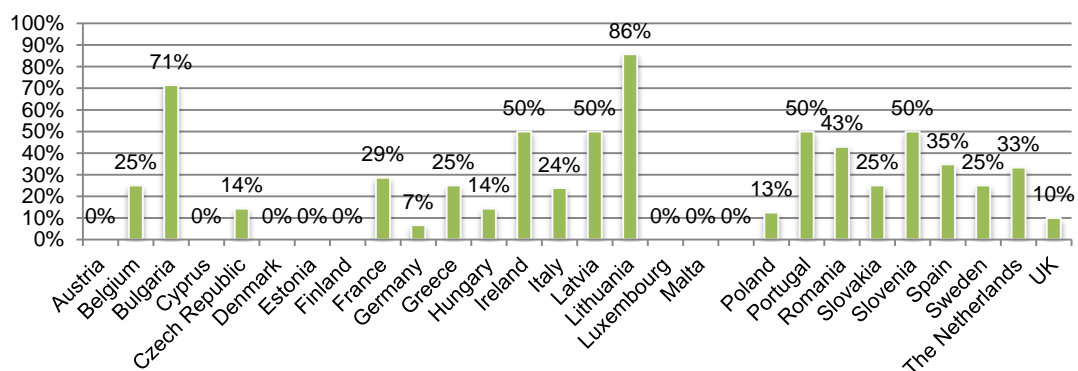
Source: EDIC survey results; base = 256

In addition to working with traditional media many EDICs work with social media. Among social media Facebook is by far the most used tool – followed by Twitter and YouTube.

3.6.2 Working with traditional media

3.6.2.1 Frequency of interaction with traditional media

Survey results would suggest that EDICs on average spend 8% of their time working with media – but behind this figure lie significant differences.

According to the survey data some 64% of EDICs interact "regularly" in some form with the media. In contrast 36% of EDICs indicate that they only occasionally, rarely or never interact with media. Overall data however, poorly reflect national variety. In some countries EDICs are very active with media activities. Among the case studies this is particularly the case in Portugal and Bulgaria. In addition, survey results would suggest that about half or more of EDICs in Cyprus, Italy, Lithuania and Romania frequently interact with media.

In contrast, many EDICs in other countries are not very active with media. This is for example the case in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Malta, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK where half or most of the EDICs only occasionally or rarely interact with the media. The EDICs consulted in these countries (France, Sweden – but also Germany) often report that ensuring media attention to EU is difficult and that – beyond publicity – there is often little effect of their media efforts.

Figure 3.18   Share of EDICs in the Member States that indicate that they occasionally, rarely or never interact with media
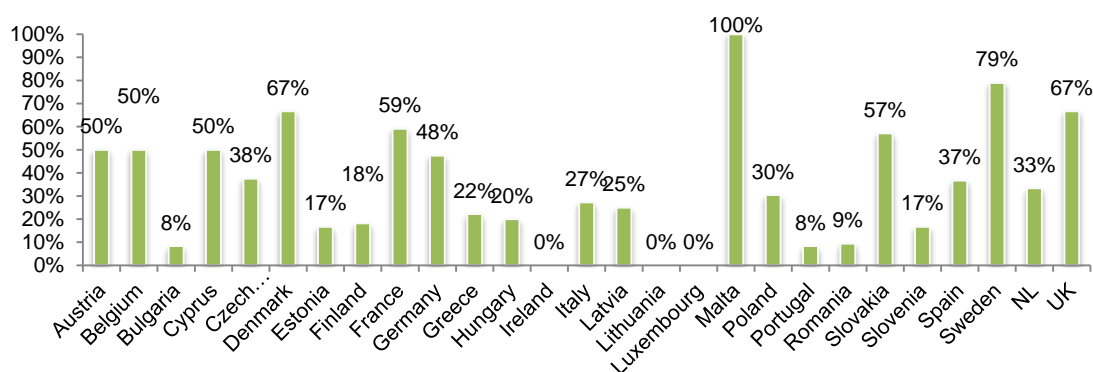
Source: EDIC survey; base = 345

In terms of concerted media contacts the frequency of media interaction is for most EDICs monthly – but for most not weekly. 78% of the EDICs surveyed indicate that they at least have monthly contacts with the media - nearly one of these in 3 has weekly contacts (27% of the EDICs). The share of EDICs having frequent (weekly) contacts has increased with 8% from the first to the second generation.

The fact that interaction and proactivity differ across the network may also be illustrated by the amount of contacts that EDICs have with media.

Whereas few have no media database, the distribution of EDICs is evenly spread among those who have few contacts, those who have some and those who have many. When looking at individual Member States, the EDICs surveyed in Hungary, Malta, Romania and Slovenia tend to have large databases of media contacts (above 20 contacts). By contrast, in Estonia, Poland, the Netherlands and the UK, more than half of the EDICs surveyed tend to have less than 10 contacts in their database.[49]

Most contact and interaction with media cover local newspapers and local radio. According to a survey that was undertaken among EDICs *being active with media*[50] 85% interact with

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[49] EDIC survey

[50] Data from the ESN 2010 survey on Media relations completed by 139 EDICs. Considering the questions and the very low response rate it may be estimated that those that replied were only those being active with media. A very high number of potential respondents entered the survey – but did not reply to questions.

local newspapers and 61% interact with local radio. Also, some 41% of those being active interact with online media – and just about the same share (37%) work with local/regional TV.

Figure 3.19   Size of the EDICs media contact databases
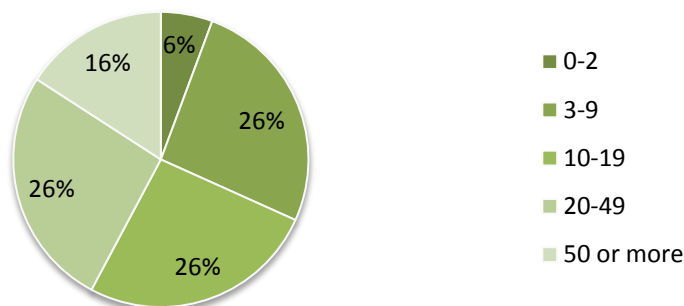
Source: EDIC survey; base = 345 responses

3.6.3   Scope and type of activities

Broadly speaking EDICs undertake four main types of activities targeting traditional media:

- Advertising;

- PR (e.g. press releases);

- Ad hoc support and training;

- Structured cooperation.

Very often media activities are related to events organised by the EDICs. The case study results would suggest that communicating on events organised constitute the bulk of the media interaction. In the cases where EDIC interact with media on EU topics not related to events it mostly takes place via structured cooperation – or via social media. Differences however are significant:

- In France and Bulgaria, an estimated 50% of centres carry out media activities (half of which is publicity, 50% to other media activities - mostly event related);

- In Poland, it may be estimated that between 50% and 70% of EDICs carry out media activities (of which an estimated 70% of is linked to the promotion of events);

- In Portugal an estimated half of the EDICs are active with the media – and this very often via structured cooperation, 25% are currently in the process of setting up cooperation with the media, and 25% do not substantially cooperate with the media;

- In Germany and the United Kingdom, there seems to be little cooperation with the media. This is also the case for Sweden where most media work is concentrated on publicity and other promotion of events.

Advertising

Many EDICs advertise their activities. Advertising may be in the printed local press or alternatively in the local radio. Judging by the case study results, advertising forms a significant share of all funded media activities under the media module. .

Typically advertising is event related and aims at ensuring participation to events. It may take the form of simple advertising – or alternatively the form of advertorials (short articles that the EDIC pays for having published).

Advertising is generally perceived as an effective way to ensure participation in events.

Public Relations

Public relations (PR) activities mainly relate to sending press releases to the media about their activities and invitation to their events. Survey results[51] suggest that that this is the most frequent media activity undertaken – and among the most important ones. Among those working with media, 82% indicate that this activity belongs to the one of the three most important media activity they carry out[52]. In order to disseminate information about their activities, EDICs tend to use mailing lists. More than three quarters of EDICs which carry out media activities (80%) maintain a database with media contacts[53].

Other important media activities include press conferences and working meetings with the media. Among the EDICs having responded to the ESN 2010 survey on Media relation (which constitute 28% of EDICs), 41% organise press conferences and 21% organise working meetings to keep the media informed of the activities of the EDIC

Finally, according to the ESN survey results about half of EDICs working with media are directly contacted by media regarding their events.

In one example, the EDIC sends the press releases to the government of the region Cantabria in Spain, which relays the information to regional media through a mass mailing of its press office.

Support and training

In addition to PR activities a number of EDICs provide ad hoc support to the media and training on EU issues.

In terms of support, a third of the EDICs which cooperate with the media indicate that they reply to requests from local journalists for EU background information. Journalists tend to contact them for ad hoc questions on "hot" topics rather than for on-going update of EU news.

In terms of training, amongst the EDICs surveyed by ESN, 13 EDICs also indicated that they organised information sessions on EU policies. These can for example be on the communication priorities of the European Commission.

Case studies have also shown that some EDICs organise meetings EDICs for journalists to express potential needs/ requirements for information on EU topics and issues. Another example was that of a course on "eurojournalism" for students who then propose their articles to local media. On-going support of EDICs to the media can also take the form of contributions to clubs such as:

- "Press clubs" in Montpellier, France (where media actors meet, discuss and exchange views);

- The "Friends of Europe Direct journalists club" in Tarnovo, Bulgaria: the club was launched by the EDIC and gathers journalists of EU issues, enabling the exchange of knowledge and information on the EU in general as well as on the activities of the EDIC.

Other examples of activities organised for the media include the organisation of competitions and awards for the local media which cover European ideas.

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[51] ESN 2010 Media Survey

[52] ESN 2010 Media Survey

[53] ESN 2010 Media survey

As services offered by the EDICs to the media are generally free of charge, the EDICs stated that this provided a good incentive for journalists to attend: in exchange, the EDICs increased their coverage in the local media.

Structured cooperation

According to the ESN survey many EDICs working with the media have developed privileged partnerships (almost half of the EDICs surveyed). Although it is not clear what a "privileged partnership" entails in this survey, the case study visits showed that many EDICs have developed formal and structured cooperation agreements with the media, whereby the EDIC provides a service to the media, contributing to its activities. Examples of structured cooperation identified during the case studies are listed below.

Table 3.27   Example of structured cooperation with traditional media

EDIC	Structured cooperation
EDIC Dunkerque (France)	▪ Weekly 10-minute programme on local TV in a 52 minute EU programme
EDIC Silven (Bulgaria)	▪ Weekly column in the newspaper Slivensko delo
EDIC Centre d'Information jeunesse Val d'Oise (France)	▪ Podcasts about Europe on a local associative radio - 12 per year
EDIC Ruse (Bulgaria)	▪ Radio games with the local radio station ▪ Questions about one of the Commission communication priorities or related issues presented to listeners. Award given to winners.
EDIC Aveiro (Portugal)	▪ Daily podcast on the local radio and bi-monthly articles about the EU in a local newspaper. ▪ In "compensation", the EDIC advertises (pays) its events using the same press contacts.
EDIC Entre Douro e Minho (Portugal)	▪ Weekly podcast on the radio ▪ Inclusion of Representation's speeches in a local newspaper. ▪ The EDIC do not pay the media but invite them to a tour to Brussels.
EDIC Setúbal (Portugal)	▪ The EDIC has a page of its own on the local online newspaper.
EDIC Algarve (Portugal)	▪ Two cooperation agreements: Once per week and once per month ▪ The EDIC provides EU brief for journalists to write articles about EU news, advertising the logo of the EDIC and promoting the EDIC

Source: EDIC case studies

3.6.4   Factors affecting cooperation with the media

Judged by the EDICs own assessment (those being active with media) the results of media interaction are mostly "average" with one in four judging it to be weak or very weak.

Independent assessment of the impact of EDICs media activities is difficult due to lack of data[54].

A number of the EDICs consulted in the framework of the case studies indicated that it was difficult to get media coverage of PR activities and that such activities often have little media results. Often, when EDICs considered their media activities successful they were either publicity based (i.e. the EDIC has control) or based on more structured forms of cooperation with media.

Figure 3.20   Self-assessment of impact of the EDIC's presence in the local/regional media

■ Strong   ■ Average   ■ Weak and very weak
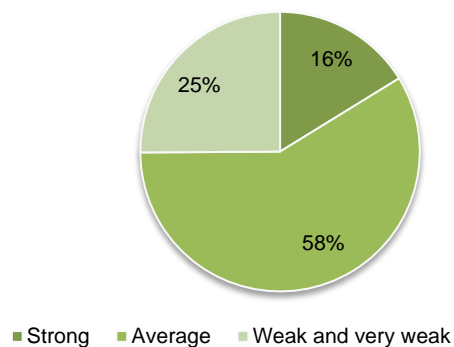
Source: ESN 2010 Media survey; base = 130

Case study results and the media survey suggest that a number of factors affect media activities – the most important being:

- Time put in versus results - The production of press releases or articles can be time consuming for limited or no results (when these are not taken up by the media). Also in order to ensure media coverage there is a need to ensure a regular provision of information/stories to media which is time consuming and therefore difficult to implement;

- Lack of skills - in many instances, EDICs note their lack of skills: not all EDIC staff have the knowledge nor capacity to develop activities to ensure media coverage of their activities;

- Other available sources - Journalists often do not go to the EDICs for information/stories but tend to inform themselves directly through EU institutions or EU websites. Related to this, it is difficult for EDICs with the resources available to adequately follow media - and to provide the right information at the right time. This is especially true in large cities where there are many media actors;

- Contacts – in order to be successful there is a need to have privileged contacts with journalists;

- Media interest – in some countries (e.g. UK) lack of media interest in the EU in general and a largely hostile media environment makes it difficult for the EDICs ensure media coverage.

To some extent the host may counterbalance some of these factors. When the host has a clear defined communication strategy and an effective PR department the EDIC may be a part hereof and benefit from the hosts activities. Also, EDICs often have access to the

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[54] Lack of data to undertake media analysis

database of media contacts of their host. Finally, a well-known host can play a positive role for media coverage.

In contrast when the host does not have well-established relationships with the media it is often more difficult for the EDICs to find its own way of cooperating. Hosts having a proactive strategy are not always perceived as a benefit. In some cases a host may also be limiting or hindering the cooperation as it sometimes filters the press releases. In addition, in some instances, EDICs are bound to cooperate with the media through the Host Structure and cannot have their own approach or strategy.

The role of the EC Representation in working with the media is also important. In Portugal for example, where the largest share of EDICs proactively is cooperating with media was found the Representation place significant importance on media activities – and aims at focusing the future network exclusively on centres working with the media. In order to support EDICs the Representation has provided training to the EDICs on working with the media.

3.6.5   EDICs work with social media

No overall data is available as to the number of EDICs using social media. In part this is due to lack of integration of social media in the media module and hence lack of reporting.

Case study results, however would suggest that social media is gaining importance as a tool to communicate to EDICs users and potential users. Benefits of social media are related to its interactivity (exchange with citizens). Also social media are often perceived as good for circumventing the filter of traditional media

The main social medium used is Facebook – followed by Twitter. An ESN survey undertaken among 97 EDICs using social media indicated that 66% use Facebook, 28% YouTube and 24% Twitter. As survey results only cover a sample of EDICs (~20%) and as EDICs could not choose to indicate that they do not work with social media they are not likely to be representative for all EDICs – but possibly for those working with social media.

Among those using social media, blogs and RSS feeds are also occasionally used (20% and 18% of the EDICs which were surveyed by ESN and which use social media indicated that they use such tools).

Facebook also stands out as the tool the most used actively/frequently used (53% of the EDIC respondents indicating that it is the most frequent used tool) – followed by, YouTube (8%), blogs (8%) and RSS feeds (7%). Case study and survey results suggest that there are country differences in the use of tools. Some countries seem to be exclusively using Facebook (e.g. Bulgaria), some combine the use of Facebook with that of Twitter (e.g. Ireland and Portugal), whereas other work more extensively with YouTube (e.g. Italy and Romania) or with RSS and blogs (e.g. Spain).

Figure 3.21   Use of social media and most frequently used social media
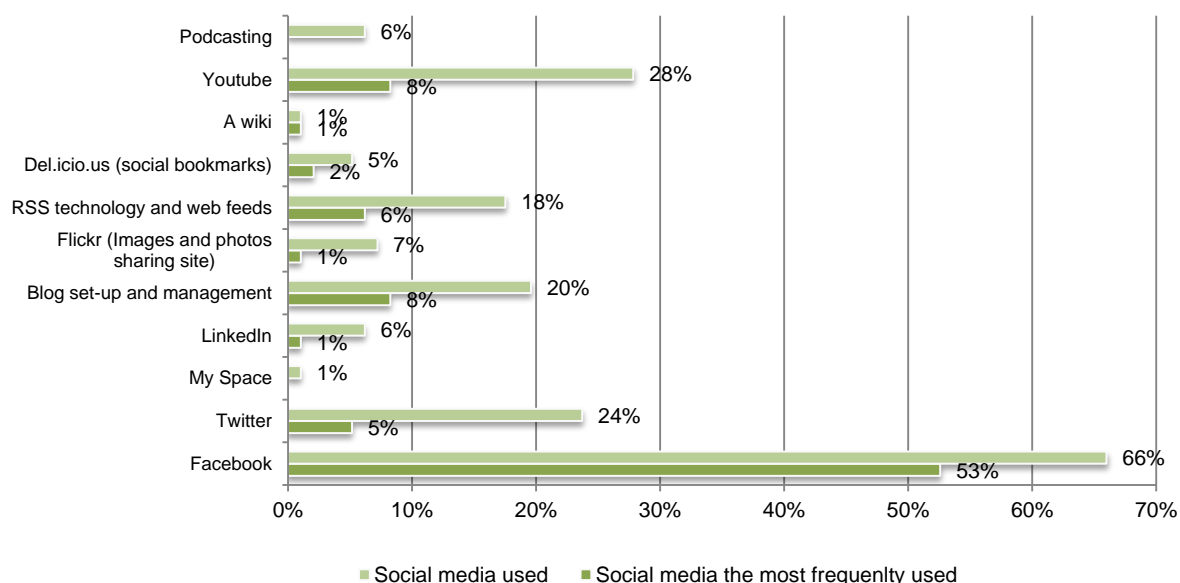
ESN 2010 Survey on Social Media; base = 97

3.6.5.1   *What are social media used for?*

According to both survey data and case study data social media is first and foremost used to raise awareness and promote the activities of the EDICs. All tools used serve this purpose. However, case study results also suggest that tools have different purposes. Facebook in particular serves the purpose of promoting and raising awareness of EDIC events and activities as well as general promotion of the EDIC and basic interaction with users. The target audience is often young people. Facebook is not often used to provide EU content information – but may contain concrete information that citizens directly can use.

Use of Twitter in contrast more often has a content related purpose – either tweeting about EU news or as a tool to follow other EU sources. Also blogs more often have an EU content-related purpose. There are a few examples of "good practice" tweeting for example in the UK where an EDIC is tweeting on EU news on a daily basis.

Finally, the case studies suggest that the EDICs that use Facebook, frequently use the Facebook account of their Host Structure. There are however many cases where EDICs have their own Facebook page.

3.6.5.2   *Frequency of use*

Considering the varied purpose of use, it is hardly surprising that that the frequency of use of social media differ across EDICs. Twitter is mostly used on a daily basis (43%) or a weekly basis. Facebook and YouTube are also often used daily – with more EDICs however indicating weekly or monthly use.

Figure 3.22   Frequency of use of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter

	Daily	Weekly or more often	Monthly or more often	Less frequently than monthly
Youtube	30%	33%	20%	18%
Twitter	43%	26%	13%	17%
Facebook	34%	33%	20%	13%

■ Daily   ■ Weekly or more often   ■ Monthly or more often   ■ Less frequently than monthly
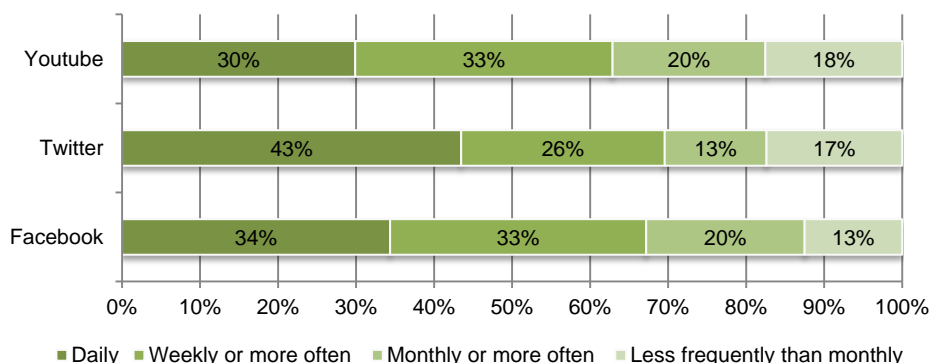
ESN 2010 Survey on Social Media; base = 97

3.6.6   Obstacles using media and how to ensure effective use

Judged by the ESN survey results and the results of the case studies a key factor that influences effectiveness of media interaction is skills.

For example for social media, besides Facebook, the actual knowledge about how to use the tools is low. For all social media, besides Facebook 70% or more of the EDICs surveyed indicate that their knowledge of these tools is non-existent or weak.

Figure 3.23   EDIC Self-assessment of knowledge of social media tools

	Good	Average	Weak	Inexistent
Wiki	6%	8%	19%	67%
Delicious	7%	5%	9%	78%
RSS Technology – web feeds	13%	15%	18%	54%
Blog set-up and management	13%	18%	16%	53%
LinkedIn	8%	11%	18%	63%
Twitter	11%	14%	26%	48%
Facebook	36%	29%	21%	14%

■ Good   ■ Average   ■ Weak   ■ Inexistent
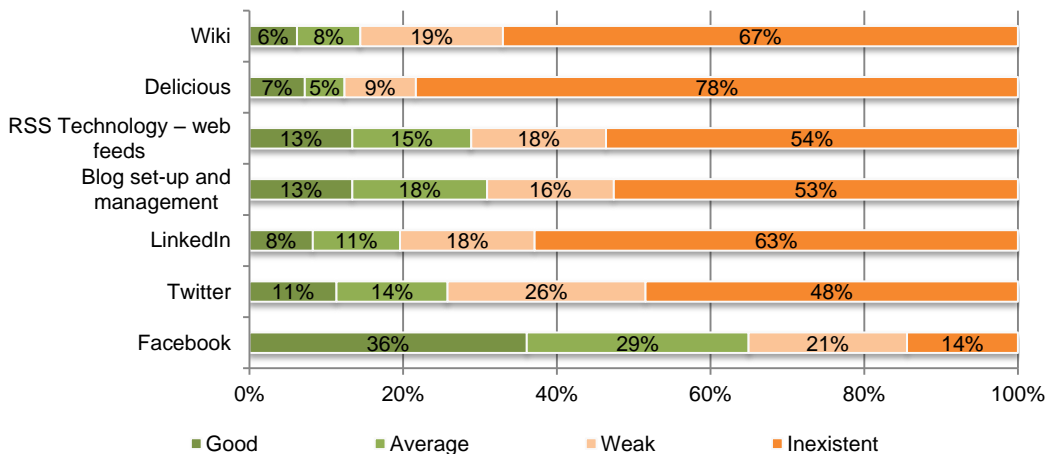
ESN 2010 Survey on Social Media; base = 97

The key issue related to lack of knowledge of how to use both traditional and social media appears to be one of training. Only a small share has being trained by DG COMM, the EC Representation or their host.

In order to further develop EDICs media activities, adequate and practical media training is generally perceived as key. Many EDICs – and in particular those currently active with media have called for media training. Media training for traditional needs to covers aspects such as how to present stories and preparation of information material. Social media also needs to cover more basis work as data suggest that EDICs mostly have learnt to work with traditional and social media by themselves.

3.7 Facilitating citizens' access to the appropriate information points

In order to comply with their mission EDICs are expected, where appropriate, to guide citizens to specialised sources of information or advice on EU issues. In principle, the EDICs should be familiar with all relevant sources – be these EU or national – in order to effectively operate as the "first-stop shop" for EU relevant information. More specifically it is expected that citizens – where appropriate – are guided to:

- Centralised EU information and EU information services – i.e. Europa, the Europe Direct Contact Centre, the Your Europe portal and Your Europe Advice

- EU networks, NCPs, and National Agencies for EU programmes operating at a national or local level

- National administrations managing the implementation of EU programmes – or other national actors informing on EU related issues

This section assesses the extent to which the EDICs comply with their mission terms of *facilitating citizens' access to the appropriate contact point for their specific EU needs* (first-stop shop). In this section operating as a first stop shop is understood as a signposting function – that is users are provided with the relevant information and contacts to other services. The enquiry is not transferred by the EDIC directly to another service. Currently there is no IT system in place that allows direct transfer of enquiries[55].

3.7.1 Scale of signposting

The monitoring data suggest that most EDICs signpost enquiries to other EU networks, at least on an occasional basis. Overall monitoring data also suggest that the number of signposted enquiries has been increasing since 2008. However, if the number of signposted enquires is seen as a percentage of total enquiries the share has remained relatively stable. In this respect it needs to be noted that the rise in the number of signposted enquires from 2009 to 2010 is due to the EDIC "Réunion" that reported in 2010 3,084 signposted enquires (and none in the previous years).

Table 3.28   Number of total signposted queries - EDICs 2007-2010 – in total and as a share of total email and telephone queries

2007	2008	2009	2010
None reported	17380	20218	23158
	3.33%	3.08%	4.40%

Source: EDICs monitoring data (intranet) and GHK calculations

The extent to which monitoring data is a reliable source of total signposting and referral to other information sources is however questionable. According to the survey data (which however only cover 8 countries) a significant larger share of users are actually guided towards other sources of information. Not less than 61% of those having indicated that they had contacted the EDIC face to face, by mail or by phone indicated that they had been referred to other sources to get information. While the levels of referrals differ (from 74% in Germany to 34% in Sweden) the share of referrals are in all cases high.

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[55] This type of system currently only exist between 3 EU services and networks: Solvit, EDCC and your Europe Advice

Accordingly, monitoring data is therefore likely not to reflect all referrals – but possibly exclusively those enquiries where the EDIC was not able to provide any information and where the EDIC directly proposed a different information service.

3.7.2 Which services do the EDICs signpost to?

Monitoring data would suggest that EDICs refer to all of the expected services. The share of referrals however differs significantly.

3.7.2.1 *Signposting to EU sources of information (Europa, the Europe Direct Contact Centre, the Your Europe portal and Your Europe Advice)*

According to the EDIC user survey data main source is the EC website Europa – including the Your Europe Portal. Not less than 50% of all those indicating that they were referred to another source were referred to Europa.

The fact that Europa is a main source of information and of referral is also supported by the case studies which generally suggest that web-referrals to Europa are often used as a source of additional information for enquiries.

As for the Your Europe Portal 90% of the EDICs indicate that they systematically or occasionally refer to Your Europe and an additional 9% indicate that they use it themselves to collect information. Only 1% of the EDICs indicate that they do no use this tool

Survey data from the EDIC survey would furthermore suggest that EDICs refer in a relative systematic fashion to the EDCC. According to the EDIC survey 58% of the EDICs "systematically signpost to the EDICs when appropriate" and an additional 30% indicate that they signpost occasionally to the EDCC. Only 4% indicate that they do not promote or use themselves to find information to enquiries.

There is no data on the actual share of enquiries signposted to the EDCC. However, case studies would suggest that the EDCC de facto is not often referred to. Generally, EDICs perceive it as their role to find an answer to the enquiry received – even if the research is time consuming. Also, feedback from the EDCC would suggest that few EDICs use the EDCC as a back office for specialised requires.

Your Europe advice appears to be the EU information and guidance services which EDICs least refers to. Data from the EDIC survey would suggest that only some 28% of EDICs signpost to Your Europe Advice. Hereof only 6% indicate that they systematically/regularly signpost to Your Europe Advice – and 70% report no cooperation. These figures are even lower if only the "new" EDICs are considered (21% report some sort of signposting – 5% report regular signposting.

Considering that "Justice, Citizenship, Fundamental rights" is reported as the third most frequent topic of enquiries for EDIC in 2010, that "employment and social policies" is the second most frequent topic[56], and also that 39% of the enquires reported by the user survey are related to mobility issues and to citizens' rights, it appears reasonable to assume that there is substantial unexploited potential for cooperation and use of Your Europe Advice. In this respect, there would be benefit in ensuring that all EDICs are familiar with the service – which is currently not the case.

Promotion towards the EDICs could be undertaken at low cost – for example via their participation in the national EDIC meetings. To date this has only happened once (in Germany). Yet, judged by the feedback from DG MARKT and by the EDIC survey results, the promotion has been a success. Survey data from the EDIC in Germany indicate that not

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[56] Analysis of the monitoring data from the EDIC monitoring tool: most frequent topics of enquiries

less than 58% of the EDICs signpost – at least occasionally - to Your Europe Advice, which is 30 present points higher than the average for all EDICs.

In this respect also, there would be benefit in cooperating with the EDICs on the outreach activities that Your Europe Advice is currently planning with their experts. From the interviews undertaken it was not clear if this was actually planned.

3.7.2.2 *Signposting to EU networks*

An important part of the EDIC role as a "first stop shop" is signposting to EU networks at national and sub-national levels. Evidence collected through the EDIC user survey, the EDICs survey and the case studies would suggest that there is abundant evidence of signposting – but also that not all EDIC actually signpost to other networks. Furthermore, signposting appears to be focused on a few selected networks – working in areas where the EDICs have many enquiries (education and training in particular).

Signposting – and more generally cooperation - happens in most cases regularly with networks such as EURES, Enterprise Europe Network, Euro desk and the National Agencies for the Youth programme and the Lifelong Learning programme. These are also the best known networks. However, awareness differs and there is systematically a small share of EDICs who actually do not know which services are provided by these EC networks.

Furthermore, more specialised networks are often not well known – and can therefore not be appropriately signposted to. To the extent that these networks are highly specialised the negative impact of low awareness among the EDICs is likely to be limited. However, also a number of EC networks targeting the general public or targeting audiences close to those of EDICs are currently inadequately known across the EDIC network. This is for example the case for the European Consumer Centres, Europass and Euroguidance. Figure 3.24 provides an overview of the share of EDICs that do not know specific networks – or that do not know the services delivered by these.

It should be noted that higher shares of EDICs report that they do not signpost to these networks – even if they report that they know them.

Figure 3.24   Share of EDICs that that do not know specific networks/the services delivered by these
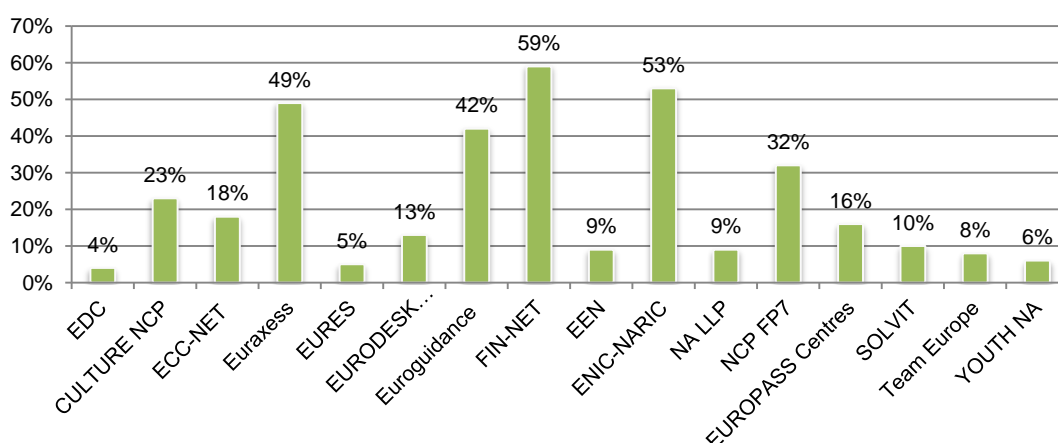
Source: EDIC survey; base = 351

3.7.2.3 *Signposting to national actors working with EU issues*

Results of both case studies and EDIC survey results suggest that EDICs in many cases interact – and where appropriate signpost to national actors informing about EU related issues. Overall 68% of the surveyed EDICs state that they signpost or have contact with such national actors.

Also, about half (53%) of EDICs surveyed indicate that they signpost or have other contacts to Programme administrators of EU programmes or to National contact points of EU programmes. Most signposting relates to programmes such as ESF, ERDF, LIFE + and INTERREG. While these results are positive – they nevertheless also indicate that a significant share of EDICs do not have such contacts.

3.7.3 Effectiveness of signposting

While the extent of signposting and awareness of other EU sources differ across the EC network survey data also suggest that where signposting and referrals are used they largely meet user's expectations.

As noted above some 61% of the users surveyed having indicated that they had contacted the EDIC face to face, by mail or by phone indicated that they had been referred to other sources to get information. Of these 94% indicated that with the help of the services they had accessed, they had found the information they were looking for. Even if some country difference may be noted (the share is slightly higher for Portuguese, Bulgarian and Swedish respondents and slightly lower for UK respondents) 90% or more of respondents across all countries indicated that they found the information they were looking for.

These results suggest that when the EDICs are referring to other sources they are in general relevant and of good quality.

3.7.4 How to improve local cooperation and signposting

Case study results would suggest that a baseline condition for signposting and more broadly cooperation is adequate awareness and knowledge of other services. In this framework the EC Representations may play an important role.

Case study results suggest that EC network managers have a better overview of other EC networks and services than previously. Also there is evidence that cooperation efforts with all EU related actors have stepped up since the first generation of the EDIC network. However, cooperation is also to a wide extent driven by individuals or by individual representations rather than a structured approach. Accordingly cooperation and signposting structures differ across countries.

Considering the interest among the EDIC managers to learn more about other networks there would be benefit in a coordinated Representation led approach to enhance awareness and cooperation among EC networks. Some sort of central guidance would possibly be needed, as case studies would suggest that not all Representations consider promotion of network cooperation as a priority.

There would also be benefit in drawing on the experience of some EC Representations that have worked on network cooperation for years. Most prominent examples are Austria and the Czech Republic[57].

3.8 Visibility and promotion

In order to ensure that EDIC services are known and used, and to maximise impact, EDICs are required to draw up a "visibility plan" and to implement activities that will ensure the

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[57] For an overview of examples of EC Representations initiatives to promote cooperation of networks – as well as to promote EC networks please see "How do the EC Representations stimulate cooperation among EU networks at country level?, A collection of examples"

visibility of the centre within the local/ regional community. EC Representations are further to support the awareness training of the available services.

3.8.1 Visibility of the EDIC network

EDICs are in most countries (SE, PT, AT, FIN, FR and GR) reported as generally known to local stakeholders (partners and multipliers – schools, universities, libraries, people working with EU projects, national actors informing about the EU and people responsible for EU dimension at the municipalities).

In contrast EDICs are not well known among the general public. According to a 2006 Eurobarometer[58] and a more recent 2010 Eurobarometer, among mobile European citizens[59] very few have actually heard about Europe Direct. Case study results provide similar results. Overall there is general consensus among the stakeholders interviewed in the case study countries that the awareness among citizens of the EDIC network is very low.

The visibility of EDICs network also in the immediate geographical area they operate is also low. More respondents than stakeholders perceive that the EDICs are well known. Nevertheless 69% of the user survey respondents indicate that their local EDIC "somewhat" to not at all known in their community or region.

Figure 3.25 According to you, is EDIC well known in your community, locality or region?
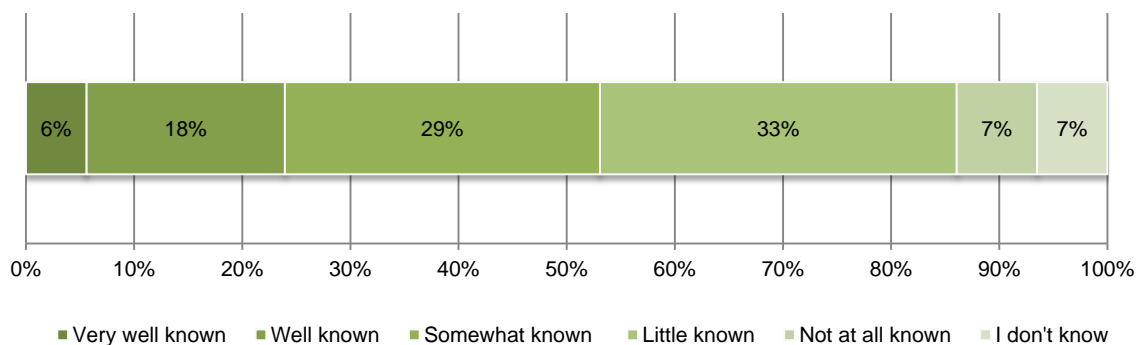
Source: EDIC User survey; base = 1,658

The perception that the EDICs are not well known is stronger in the UK, Germany and France – whereas more users in Bulgaria felt that the EDIC was well known. User survey data indicates that the users who have used the EDIC services several times tend to perceive the EDIC as better known in their locality – which may to a certain extent explain the higher perceived visibility of EDICs in Bulgaria. Only 13% of the occasional users[60] of EDIC services thought that EDICs are very well and well known in their community, locality or region while the figure was even lower for the one time users at 7%.

3.8.2 How do users find the EDICs?

Overall, data would suggest that there are discrepancies between the way that users actually find the EDIC – and the promotional/informational tools that the EDICs believe have attracted their users. According to the survey carried out among the centres, EDICs believed

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[58] Eurobarometer (2006) Eurobarometer 254: Internal Market Opinions and experiences of Citizens in EU-25.

[59] Eurobarometer (2010) European Citizenship – Cross-Border Mobility Aggregate Report, Qualitative study – TNS Qual+.

[60] Respondents who have used the EDIC services one to three times.

that citizens who contacted them for the first time became aware of the service through the EDIC presence on the Web e.g. through internet searches, followed by word of mouth, attending events and visits to the EDICs offices and media.

The results of the User survey however suggest that most respondents (21%) had first heard about the EDIC through 'word of mouth' (friend, colleague, family, etc.). A further 16% had heard of the EDIC through an event they had attended with only 13% indicating that they found the service via a search engine or elsewhere on the internet. The relatively small importance of physical location of the EDIC and its presence in the social media for the visibility of EDICs has to be noted. Only 3% of users first came in contact with the EDIC by noticing the centre "on a street" and only 0.4% through social media. This result is very different from the results of the EDIC survey where 63% of the EDIC respondents indicated that they considered that their physical presence added a lot to their visibility.

Figure 3.26   How did you first hear about EDIC?
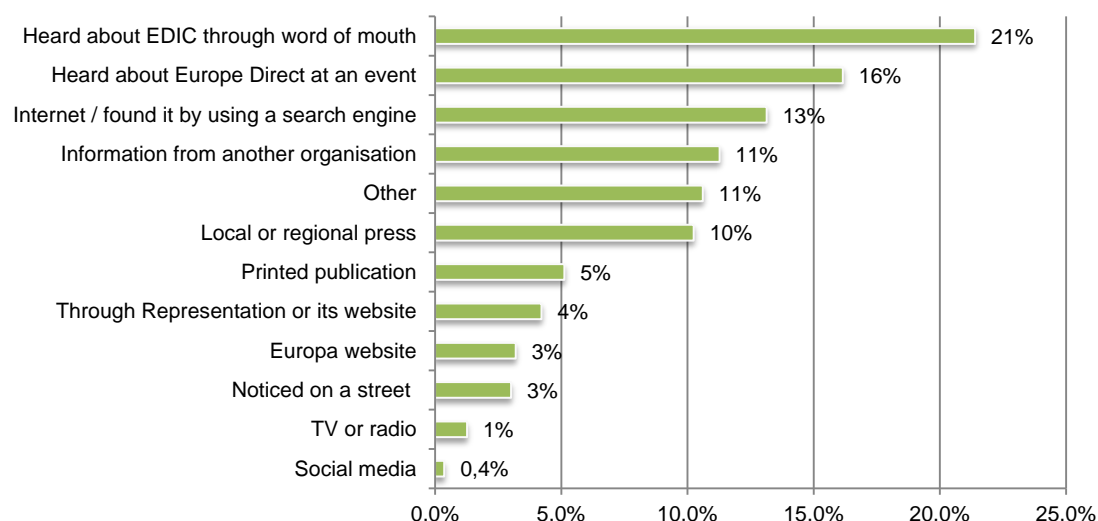
If the user survey results by language are examined, word of mouth was still the most popular means of learning of the EDIC in Sweden (35%), Bulgaria (25%), France (22%), Poland (23%) and Germany (19%). Portuguese users were more likely to have found the EDIC through an Internet search (18%) while UK users had been signposted from another organisation (16%).

3.8.3   Factors influencing EDIC visibility

Based on the data on how users have first heard about EDICs, it is apparent that EDIC visibility at least currently is strongly dependent on the willingness of the previous users to recommend EDIC services to new users (work of mouth). In this respect the fact that service quality is rated very positively is important.

The user survey also suggests that making an EDIC better visible among search engine results, could considerably improve their visibility. Also, a lot of new users receive information on EDICs via other organisations – which outlines the importance of developing networking and partnerships with local and regional actors – as well as the importance of the host.

The fact that the host plays an important role for visibility (or lack of such) is generally recognised by the EDICs. Almost 40% of EDICs note that they are mostly known through their host structures with 47% partially agreeing with this statement. Strong host structures may contribute to the visibility of EDICs among general public or segments of this public (e.g. Intercult among cultural sector workers in Sweden). They may however also hinder some

aspects of EDIC operations – for example, the work with media that tends to use the national host structure, rather than the EDIC as references.

The physical presence does overall not appear to have a significant impact on visibility. In contrast, judged by the survey results a considerable share of new users seem to be reached for the first time via events – suggesting that the current stronger focus on outreach events is likely have impacted positively on visibility – but also suggesting that visibility would be further improved if even more resources were allocated to this type of activity. This result is also supported by the focus groups, which suggested that events, talks, workshops and other such activities represented a positive way of reinforcing the brand and the visibility of the Centres. In contrast, focus groups were generally against too much direct marketing to general audiences and the publication of brochures being too positive or vague about Europe.

Finally the multiple EU brandings, names and logos is confusing for users and contribute to overall levels of visibility.

3.8.4 Importance of brand and logo in visibility

Overall EDICs and Representations reported a consistent use of ED brand name and logo on all materials produced and also in events (as on stands, backgrounds, tents, etc.). However, it was generally perceived that the ED brand is not recognised among citizens, while EDICs are often "hidden" behind more popular events (e.g. Europa Days) or prominent host structures.

A few stakeholders also questioned the usefulness of the ED brand in general, noting that it must not necessarily be known among wider public, noting that "Europe Direct" is not an eloquent and direct enough name for an information service.

3.9 Reach of the network overall within Europe

Local reach is by far the most important benefit of the EDIC network. "Being local" allows EDICs to be in a daily contact with citizens, to be a part of a local community, with often exclusive knowledge of the local or regional authorities, local or regional media, information multipliers, partners working with the EU issues, topics of local importance as well as local problems and information needs. These assets make EDICs valuable partners for joined activities on the local or regional level for Representations, national authorities informing about EU and institution partners interested in going local (other EC networks, EPOs and line DGs).

However, the extent to which EDICs are able to reach and assist other stakeholders communicating the EU to reach out to citizens is limited by their geographical spread within the EU and their physical outreach in the areas they cover.

3.9.1 Extent of geographical reach

The number of EDICs per Member State notably varied with as many as six EDICs per one million inhabitants in Estonia, more than four Centres per one million inhabitants in Malta, Finland, Latvia and Luxembourg and less than one Centre per one million inhabitants in Spain, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Denmark, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and the UK (2010 figures).

Figure 3.27   No. of centres per 1 million inhabitants in 2010
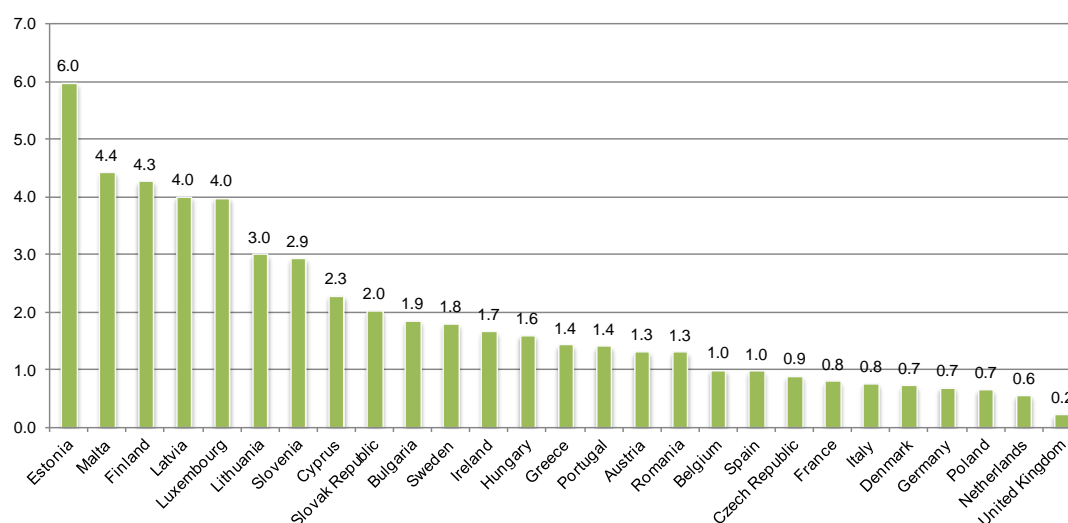
Source: EDIC monitoring data and Eurostat population statistics for 2010

The geographical spread of EDICs within Member States is uneven. For example, regions without any EDICs exist in Sweden, Austria, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands. In Bulgaria three of the largest cities after the capital do not have any EDICs. The network is also very unevenly distributed in the UK with clusters of Centres in North Wales and in the South West region, while big gaps in coverage exist in the South East, East Anglia and the Midlands – the most densely populated part of the country. At the other extreme there are regions and cities with more than one EDIC, for example in Germany and France.

The interviews with Representations suggest that several of these would like to increase the number of EDICs located in their country, in most cases to improve what is considered to be the minimum desired coverage (e.g. coverage of all the main regions and urban areas in the country). Among the 14 Representations consulted it was considered that there would be a potential to improve the geographic coverage (to the minimum desired level) by adding 19 EDICs. A simple extrapolation of this data would imply that to reach the minimum geographic coverage the whole network would benefit from additional 30-35 EDICs. This would bring the number of EDICs back to the level of 2009 (502 EDICs).

In some countries the present number of EDICs was considered optimal (Czech Republic, Finland, Lithuania and Spain). While in few others (France, Germany and Poland) the Representations expressed the desire to slightly reduce the number of EDICs.

Table 3.29   Potential for changing the number of EDICs

Member State	Current number	Desired number	EDICs "missing" or "extra"
Austria	10	11	+1
Bulgaria	14	18	+4
Czech Republic	9	9	0
Finland	22	22	0
France	53	50	-3
Germany	55	54	-1
Greece	13	17	+4
Lithuania	10	10	0

Member State	Current number	Desired number	EDICs "missing" or "extra"
Netherlands	9	11	+2
Poland	23	22	-1
Portugal	15	18	+3
Spain	45	45	0
Sweden	17	25	+8
UK	14	16	+2
Total	309	328	+19

Source: Interviews with the Representations

The considerable variations in the average number of EDIC per one million inhabitants in the Member States and the above outlined gaps in geographical coverage suggest that EDICs do not have an even geographical reach across the EU.

3.9.2 Extent of EDIC coverage

Naturally the EDIC potential to reach citizens depends not only on where they are located physically, but also on the area they cover with their information and outreach activities.

Outreach of EDICs is limited by the geographical coverage of the host or of co-funding partners[61] and the capacity of the HS, the type of activities that an EDIC is focusing on (information on location vs. outreach activities) and the often-interrelated personal skills and motivation of the EDIC Manager.

Although there are exceptions to the rule, the rural/urban location of EDICs also plays a role in outreach. EDICs placed in larger towns tend overall to have a more limited geographical reach – in many cases limited to the town in which they are located. EDICs in small towns and rural areas aim generally at covering beyond the town in which they are located.

3.9.3 Addressing issues of geographical coverage

In order to address issues with local reach – and reach beyond the town in which the EDIC is located – some EDICs have taken specific initiatives. The case studies outline a number of ways that help EDICs in extending their geographical coverage and reach. These include:

- Organisation of events in different towns (the EDIC in Sofia organised, together with other EC networks, a tour of Pleven, Varna, Bourgas, Haskovo, Plovdiv and Pazardjik to disseminate information about each network's activity and how they could assist citizens);

- Dissemination of print newsletters in part of the local newspaper (Braga);

- Set up of information points at the municipalities or community centres in smaller towns and villages (many EDICs in Bulgaria);

- EU kiosks in France (in schools and coordinated by centres hosted by Youth Information Centres).

- Development of local networks with partners undertaking activities (Germany)

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[61] Host structures that are public authorities do not have the political mandate to work outside their locality or region.

- Working with voluntary groups (UK) or regional partners

3.10 Feedback function

According to the Framework agreement[62] EDICs contribute to the mission of the EDIC network – promotion of an informed and active EU citizenship – also by giving citizens the opportunity to provide feedback to the EU institutions in the form of opinions and suggestions.

Although the feedback function is enshrined in the mission of the network, the process and the purpose of this service are not well defined. The case study results indicate that the definition of the feedback function and the very purpose of this feedback is ambiguous to EDICs as well as Representations. The understanding of what kind of feedback is meant when talking about the feedback to be gathered by EDICs is very different, and ranges between:

- Citizen feedback intended to inform and influence EU policy making, which is a very minor part of all the feedback gathered; to

- EDIC feedback to Representations on various management and thematic issues, which accounts for most of the EDIC feedback to Representations.

This very diverse "interpretation" of the feedback function should be accounted for when looking at the data collected on the relative importance of the feedback service, as compared to the other tasks of the network defined in its mission (see section 3.2).

3.10.1 Feedback on citizens' opinions and suggestions

There is very little evidence of any form of formal gathering of citizens' feedback in the understanding "channelling citizens opinions and suggestions to EU Institutions", as defined by the Framework agreement.

Citizens' feedback in this sense should be gathered through EDICs, brought to the attention of Representations or EU Institutions centrally for the purpose of informing and influencing the EU policy making process. Stakeholders felt that this type of feedback service – Representations channelling citizen feedback to Headquarters – was not really working.

Equally, there is little evidence of EDICs having identified misconceptions in the media. Within the 12 Representations interviewed only one example was identified of an EDIC picking up miscommunication on an EU issue on the local level and actively engaging with the Representation to remedy the situation (Austria). In the context of this example it was noted that the level of citizens' awareness of an EDIC in their region is an important pre-condition for the citizens to turn to the network if they have any EU-related concerns. The EDICs and the Representations consulted explained the absence of such feedback by:

- Lacking direction on what kind of feedback is needed and a clear incentive to provide the feedback from the Headquarters;

- Absence of structure for providing such feedback (module) and instructions on the form of such feedback;

- Lack of clarity regarding what such feedback should cover and the nature of such feedback.

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[62] Pg. 2.

Several ad hoc examples of EDICs gathering and Representations collecting feedback from citizens for the purpose of informing the EC and briefing notes were identified through the case study work:

- In Bulgaria citizen feedback was gathered to prepare briefings and reports sent to Headquarters;

- In Czech Republic Representation prepared a note on political developments in a region that was forwarded to Headquarters;

- In Finland citizen feedback was gathered and sent to Headquarters;

- In Lithuania a "Closer Europe" initiative was implemented, gathering citizens' letters to the EU across the country, which were then forwarded to the Commission;

- In Austria and Germany feedback, also regarding citizens' needs is gathered during annual EDICs meetings and shared in meetings with the Headquarters.

In these examples EDICs and Representations noted that after forwarding citizens' feedback there was no feedback from the Headquarters regarding the use and usefulness of this feedback. This was also one of the main reasons EDICs and Representations named for discontinuing such activities. It was also noted, that when the feedback was gathered, it was not always clear to whom to send such feedback at the Commission/Headquarters.

3.10.2 Other types of feedback

Although other forms of EDIC feedback to Representations cannot be seen as part of the EDIC feedback mission, as defined by the official documents, it nevertheless forms the major part of what EDICs and Representations see as the feedback function.

The following types of EDIC feedback to Representations were identified during the framework of the study:

- *Local / regional media monitoring.* According to an ESN survey[63] around 50% of all EDICs that contributed to this consultation indicated that they undertake local or regional media monitoring for Representations. Media Monitoring was however not confirmed to be among the main tasks of the EDICs consulted during this evaluation and EC meeting further indicated that media monitoring is mostly the responsibility of Representations.

- *Informal feedback.* This feedback includes EDICs' day-to-day feedback to Representations on various management and organisational questions. This includes feedback on meetings, training and management problems encountered by EDICs. This type of feedback is also received through Representations' *informal* monitoring and observation activities – informal visits to EDICs, review of their publications, articles in media, newsletters, etc.

- *Feedback via surveys. T*his feedback is mainly collected by ESN and covers EDIC activities and need for support activities

- *Feedback from events.* This feedback includes the feedback of participants to EDIC events. EDIC report this citizen feedback further to the Representation through intranet, e-mails, newsletters or directly to the participating official. If the event produces valuable insights into the needs of the target group, this may also be forwarded to Representations. In some countries such feedback was used to determine the quality of

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[63] ESN 2010 Media survey.

an event (what worked and what not), see whether this approach is worth repeating and to identify EDICs skills gaps in delivering events communicated to Representations.

▪ *Feedback through action plans and reporting.* This is the most regular type of feedback provided by EDICs to Representations. Aside monitoring and financial purposes, the feedback also provide Representations with insights into the themes, subjects and target audiences covered by EDICs. It also provides general feedback on the types of modules/activities implemented by EDICs, and hence also the related types of broad audiences targeted. The case study interviews indicate that, at least in some countries, there is Representations feedback on this EDIC feedback in the form of guidance on how to improve EDIC action plans and final reports (e.g. Finland and Lithuania).

All the above forms of feedback to Representations would unavoidably include some ad hoc feedback on the issues of concern to citizens locally as well as on what interests them. All of this feedback is channelled to Representations through informal and formal channels. Hence in a very broad sense this feedback could be seen as citizen feedback to institutions. However, the extent to which such feedback is further channelled by the Representation to the Commission e.g. through the process of informing national communication strategies or otherwise is expected to be limited.

It is clear that the main purpose of the EDIC feedback to Representations is not to convey the concerns and interests of the EU citizens to EU institutions, but rather to convey feedback on operational and management aspects of the network. The case study interviews confirm that the main purpose of the above EDIC feedback is to inform Representations of where the EDICs stand (monitoring purposes), what is required for the network to evolve and operate effectively (information and training needs) as well as to identify local issues of importance and to plan accordingly (thematic and practical planning and anticipation) and hence this feedback cannot be seen as forming a part of the EDIC networks' feedback service, as centrally "defined".

3.10.3 Possibilities to extend the feedback function

Formal mechanism for consulting EDICs, on the realities of the citizens' concerns and their information needs already exists in the form of consultations in the development of Representations' national communication strategies.

The strategies were introduced as annual planning document (with some multi-annual elements) two years ago and include an assessment of contextual factors for communication in a particular country. They also propose communication, media and political strategy to address EU political priorities on the national level.

The idea of partnerships with national governments is of particular importance in the context of the national communication strategies to maximise the scale of Representations' communication efforts. The consultation process for development of communication strategies also includes consultations with line DGs in four thematic clusters, which provide feedback on the strategies in their areas of expertise.

In most Member States (SE, PT, DE, AT, FIN, GR, LT, NL) EDICs are already consulted and their activities should take note of the objectives of the Representations communication strategies[64] - however this is not systematically the case.

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[64] These strategies were introduced two years ago and the work on refining them is continuing. The strategies are analytical documents that take stock of the main issues relevant for a particular country (based on opinion polls, stakeholder and political consultations). The strategies include communication, media and political strategies, which aligned should address the EU political priorities. As Representations have limited resources, work in

The strategies are operationalised in annual management plans – foreseeing concrete cooperation actions between Representations and EDICs – and some Representations also consult EDICs regarding the adequacy of the chosen work areas, topics and target groups in these plans (FIN, GR). Formally, however, EDICs are not required to take account of the priorities in these documents neither by the Framework agreement nor by the Management guidelines.

It is questionable if other sorts of content feedback can be developed unless actual needs and content are specified

3.11 Opportunities to expand the network mission, or take up new roles and responsibilities

Case study results and interviews with other EU institutions and actors would suggest that there are potential for enhancing cooperation with other EU institutions and actors.

Evidence collected in the framework of the case studies suggest that there is cooperation between EDICs and other institutions – but also that cooperation currently remains limited and ad hoc.

Most cooperation with other EU actors concerns cooperation with the EP and MEPs. In preparation to the 2009 Parliament elections where were many examples of local MEPs touring a region, where EDICs supported them in the practical organisation of their visits. There are also a number of examples of cooperation with the EP Information Offices - where the EP provides an MEP and EDICs organise the events. Such cooperation however appears to be dependent on the country and the EP office. Finally there are examples of EDICs having directly engaged with MEPs in order to have them participate in events.

There is little relatively evidence of cooperation with other institutions and other DGs. However, cooperation with the Committee of the Regions in some cases takes place during the Open Days.

Other DGs which EDICs have worked with are DG REGIO, DG AGRI and DG EAC. EDICs tend to contact the other DGs directly when they need some information or when the DGs visit their regions. It was also reported that the involvement of the EC Representations had improved the visibility of the EDICs towards other DGs.

The table below presents examples of this cooperation.

Table 3.30   Ad hoc cooperation with other EU institutions and DGs

Country	Example of cooperation
France (e.g. EDIC Provence Alpes)	Presentations or participation in debates organised by the local office of the EP.
France (e.g. EDIC Ile de France)	The EDIC cooperates with the Representation of the EP in Paris: they attend their meetings for librarians, attend openings of exhibitions, ask for brochures. The EP is also part of the Europe Ile de France network.
France (e.g. EDIC Champagne Ardennes, CRAA - Aquitaine)	Ad hoc support, mostly for the support of tours of MEPs, e.g. 2009 before the EP elections.
France (e.g. EDIC Strasbourg)	Close cooperation for visits to the EP.

partnerships with local governments is intended to maximise the communication impact. Strategies are translated into annual management plans, allocating resources to concrete activities.

France (e.g. EDIC Languedoc Roussillon)	EDIC Info Flash sent to EP in Paris and Marseille
France (e.g. EDIC Languedoc Roussillon)	Cooperation with the Committee of Regions during events on regional policies. The EDIC provided feedback to the CoR on the work after 2013.
France (e.g. EDIC CRIJ Aquitaine)	The EDIC refers to DG EAC, SANCO and EMPL for publications. Cooperated with DG AGRI when they went to Bordeaux.
Portugal (e.g. EDIC Stubal)	Regular invitations for MEPS to take part in conferences and debates.
Portugal (e.g. Santarem, Aveiro)	Regular cooperation with the EP office in Lisbon (exchange of information, invitations to events
Sweden (e.g. EDIC Frybodal)	Events with local MEPs during the EP elections in 2009.
Sweden (e.g. EDIC Goteborg)	Afterwork events organised in cooperation with the EP, where everybody is welcome to join and discuss with the MEPs.
UK (e.g. EDIC Leeds)	DG AGRI (Hosted an event for their ambassador to visit schools in Leeds)
UK (e.g. EDIC Leeds)	Participation of MEPs to events
UK (e.g. EDIC Plymouth, Carmarthen)	Events during the EP elections
UK (e.g. EDIC Cornwall and Gouclester)	Briefing meetings with MEPs.
UK (e.g. EDIC Llangollen)	Ad hoc contacts with the Committee of the Regions, through the Welsh Assembly.

Case study results and other interviews clearly suggest that there is interest from both other EU institutions and from EDICs in exploring opportunities for cooperation. EDICs are generally interested in speakers and would welcome cooperation with the EP, COR, and EESC if these could ensure that speakers – having the right language skills and cultural fit – could participate in their events. However it is also noted that such cooperation needs adequate support from the other institutions. EDICs do not have the capacity to interact and ensure that EP, COR, EESC members participate in their events.

Strategic cooperation with other DGs could also be envisaged – and many EDICs would welcome such cooperation. EDICs however also note that such cooperation needs planning and cannot be ad hoc. While many EDICs welcomed the idea of involving EDICs in different DGs campaigns or similar large-scale activity it was also noted that such activity should be optional.

The idea of having a Module for communication activities for other DGs was also welcomed – again if it is optional.

4 Network organisation and management system

4.1 Introduction

This section addresses the second major evaluation question – **i.e. to what extent do the organisation and management of the EDICs contribute to efficiency and effectiveness of their operations?**

The main elements of the EDIC network organisation and management may be summarised as follows:

Table 4.31   Key organisational and management elements for the EDIC network

Organisational elements	Management elements

▪ Documents setting the legal basis for the network operations an written agreements
  – Framework agreements
  – Specific annual agreements
▪ Selection of organisations to host EDICs
  – Financial and operational capacity of host structures
  – Geographical balance
▪ Organisational structure
  – Management system
  – Monitoring system
  – Reporting system
▪ Funding structure
  – EC co-funding
  – Host structure co-funding
	▪ Guidelines for management
	▪ Management implementation
	  – Direct centralised management method
	  – Roles and responsibilities of different management levels
	▪ Monitoring guidelines and the implementation of monitoring
	▪ Reporting implementation
	▪ Support activities
	  – Publicity and promotion
	  – Contractors' services

Source: Commission Decision, Framework partnership agreement and the Guidelines for the management of EDICs of November 2010

Evaluation questions to be addressed

In order to answer the second main evaluation question the ToR defined the following sub-questions to be addressed:

a. To what extent does the current grant scheme contribute to an increased efficiency of the EDICs as compared to the previous generation, and how could the model be improved and simplified?

b. To what extent do the requirements defined in the model agreements and the Guidelines ensure an appropriate execution of the action plans?

c. To what extent do the monitoring and supervision procedures ensure an appropriate follow up of the implementation?

d. To what extent does the steering and coordination provided by the Representation and Headquarters meet the programme objectives and is it cost-effective?

e. Are there any particular concerns concerning the co-financing of the EDICs activities by the organisations hosting the centres?

In order to fully assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the EDIC network organisation and management this section also looks at:

▪ General benefits of the management system as compared to the previous generation of the network;

- Adequacy of the requirements for the organisation of the network (e.g. selection of host structures, benefits of the framework agreements);

- Strengths and weaknesses of the module system;

- Efficiency and effectiveness of the reporting system, including use and usefulness of the reporting;

- Use and usefulness of the publication and promotion materials provided by the EC;

- Use and usefulness of the Contractors' services and products, including the functionality and user-friendliness of the ED intranet, and

- Adequacy of the EC funding.

Judgement criteria for the EDIC network organisation and management

The evaluation's analytical framework (see Annex 1) establishes a number of judgment criteria for the evaluation questions on the EDIC network organisation and management. These have been complemented to cover additional issues covered by this section and could be summarised as follows:

- The organisation and management of the network are perceived as superior to the previous generation.

- The requirements for the organisation of the network (e.g. selection of host structures, requirements of the Commission Decision and Framework agreements) are adequate.

- The requirements for the implementation of the network defined in the model agreements and the Guidelines are clear, unambiguous and feasible. These offer sufficient guidance on how the network should be managed. EDIC action plans are in line (form and contents) with these requirements.

- The Headquarters and the Representations provide adequate steering and support to the network. The management structure is clear and roles between levels are clearly divided. Support adds a significant value to the operations of EDICs and is proportionate to the overall costs associated with the network.

- The grant scheme based on the module system of the second generation of the network is perceived as more effective or as effective as the first generation. It adds to the efficiency and effectiveness of network organisation and management.

- The monitoring system has improved compared to the previous generation. The monitoring procedures are clear. Representations undertake monitoring uniformly across Member States. Monitoring results allow a comprehensive overview of the activities undertaken. Corrective actions based on monitoring reports are possible and implemented.

- The reporting burden is proportional to the grants allocated and allows efficient and effective reporting for financial management and planning.

- The support offered directly by the Headquarters to EDICs is used, useful and proportionate to investment.

- The Commission co-funding is adequate and host organisations will be able to match this funding also in the future.

Structure of the section

In order to address comprehensively each of the evaluation questions and to account for other significant aspects of the EDIC network organisation and management this section is organised as follows:

Section 4.2 summarises the findings on this section

Section 4.3 reviews and assesses the main requirements for the organisation and implementation of the EDIC network;

Section 4.4 assesses organisation, steering and management;

Section 4.5 reviews the module system;

Section 4.6 covers the monitoring system;

Section 4.7 reviews the reporting system;

Section 4.8 covers support services and tools;

Section 4.9 assesses EC and host co-funding.

4.2 Summary and replies to the evaluation questions relating to organisation and management

To what extent do the organisation and management of the EDICs contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations?

The evidence indicates that the organisation and management of the EDIC network, as implemented since 2009, has contributed to a more efficient and effective implementation of the network. Data indicates improved efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation of the network as roles are clearly divided and assistance provided on each of the main organisational levels. The evidence for the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the network has been gathered as stakeholder feedback and review of the main management "structures" – the grant scheme with its lump sum payments, the module system, the monitoring system, reporting system and support services. All of these systems, monitoring and support services aside, indicate improvements compared to the management system of the previous generation.

The available data suggest that organisation of the network is adequate and decentralised to a sufficient degree. Guidance and assistance are provided on an adequate level at the closest possible levels to implementation (i.e. Headquarters mostly to Representations[65] and these to EDICs). At the same time the support services for the network as a whole are rationalised and provided by DG COMM centrally – maximising efficiency by concentrating the support service provision among three main providers addressing the needs of the whole network.

With regard to the management, the current direct management of the network by Representations was confirmed to be more efficient that the management through intermediary bodies, in countries where this existed during the previous generation. The direct management was also reported to be more efficient in terms of staff resources required and more clearly divided responsibilities. The grant scheme introduced with the current generation of the EDIC network was reported to have considerably reduced the administrative and management burden compared to the previous system. The reporting

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[65] Some setbacks to the quality of the service were observed by the Representations during the restructuring in DG COMM in the end of 2010.

system requirements were found to be reasonable for annual planning, monthly reporting and final reports. The current planning, monitoring and reporting system organised around modules was overall perceived as more efficient than the system of claiming real eligible costs under the previous system by most of the stakeholders consulted.

While the overall Monitoring system framework was found to be well developed and adequate, the actual yearly monitoring practices seemed to be in decline in comparison to the previous generation, mostly because of the little focus on this aspect of management. Hence monitoring may be argued to be the only area where practice (not framework and requirements) was weaker in the new implementation period of the EDIC network.

To what extent does the current grant scheme contribute to an increased efficiency of the EDICs as compared to the previous generation, and how could the model be improved and simplified?

The grant scheme based on lump sum contracts as implemented since 2009 has increased the efficiency of the network overall. As outlined above, the current lump sum system has significantly reduced the administrative burden related to reporting and control, and hence increased efficiency. It was also argued that the new lump sum system is more transparent and the output based modules system encourages more proactivity.

The grant scheme with lump sum modules has shifted the focus of the network from administration of costs to implementation of activities. This change was mostly due to the module system that was perceived as superior to the previous system of global budget necessary for the implementation of all the activities. This was because it encourages forward planning of activities, provides better structured implementation, contributes to financial predictability and encourages outputs and proactive activities.

To what extent do the requirements defined in the model agreements and the Guidelines ensure an appropriate execution of the action plans?

Requirements as defined in the Management guidelines, Framework and Specific agreements were perceived as adequate and useful in guiding the implementation of the EDIC network by all stakeholders consulted. The monitoring guidelines were little known, but individual interviewees confirmed that these are 'adequate', 'very helpful' and 'excellent'.

Consultations suggest that the model action plan requirements were perceived as clear and useful by most interviewees. A review of model action plan outlined a need for it to more clearly and explicitly relate communication and awareness raising activities foreseen in EDIC action plans to political priorities and local information needs. The review also suggested relating EDIC activities to SMART criteria and minimum quality indicators.

While the monitoring framework appears to be generally adequate,, the Monitoring guidelines currently do not have any requirements concerning a number or a share of EDICs to be visited annually. Consultations indicate that compulsory monitoring visit plans are currently prepared only by very few Representations. There are currently no specific requirements for Representations to allocate resources for monitoring visits.

While the reporting requirements for the preparation of action plans, monthly reporting and final reports are perceived reasonable, the requirement for monthly reporting (in the Management guidelines) and a regular review of this reporting are currently not enforced by Representations. The EDIC reporting requirements were also reported not to be directly relevant for Representations' checking final reports and for evaluation purposes.

A number of alternative funding approaches were identified during the fieldwork, which could have the potential to increase the reach of the network and its financial sustainability. Such alternative options for finding and hosting EDICs could be included among the

parameters of the Model agreements and Management guidelines.

To what extent do the monitoring and supervision procedures ensure an appropriate follow up of the implementation?

The Monitoring framework of the EDIC network – Representations' monitoring visits and centrally implemented financial checks and audits – was found to be adequate for the needs of the network. However, as mentioned above the actual monitoring activities were perceived as taking place less often and less systematically across Member States in the current generation in comparison to the previous generation. And there were no financial checks and audits implemented by DG COMM centrally that were identified through the fieldwork.

A majority of EC Representations reported undertaking monitoring visits. However, opinions were divided regarding the necessity of such formal monitoring. While some individual Representations expressed the need for more monitoring, including checks and audits undertaken centrally, others reported no perceived need for formal monitoring visits. The latter suggested that appropriate levels of monitoring are ensured by informal visits, personal contact and participation in EDIC activities.

Only a small number of Representations reported undertaking mandatory regular monitoring of EDIC activities on the intranet, while two reported undertaking "mystery shopping" to monitor EDIC visibility and performance.

It was generally felt that the resources allocated by Representations for monitoring are not adequate. As monitoring visits were perceived as time consuming, Network Correspondents felt it would be easier to justify such investment if the Heads of Representations were directly notified by the Headquarters of the importance of monitoring visits.

The few monitoring reports available suggest that monitoring, when carried out, has been carried out to a sufficient standard. In line with the Monitoring guidelines the monitoring visits reports reviewed included the results of the assessment and recommendations for follow up.

Overall, monitoring currently appeared to be undervalued in the steering, planning and national EDIC networks. If a critical mass of monitoring visits reports could be produced by Representations implementing at least two monitoring visits per year, these could be used as data source for external evaluation.

To what extent do the steering and coordination provided by the Representation and Headquarters meet the programme objectives and is it cost-effective?

Steering and coordination by Headquarters and Representations was perceived as adequate. The division of steering and coordination tasks between the Headquarters and the Representation is considered to be optimal with the Representations in charge of national planning, steering and coordination and Headquarters – for the overall coordination, assistance and the development of the network.

The support provided by Headquarters to the Representations is considered to be good and mostly improving, with only very minor issues noted, also in the relation to the downwards curve in the quality of support due to the recent restructuring. Only a couple of Representations indicated that the Headquarters support was of an average quality. The Representations were also generally satisfied with the Headquarters assistance with the management of grants.

The quality of the guidance and assistance by the Headquarters towards the EDICs is perceived as broadly adequate, but there is some room for improvement specifically around coordinated promotion, awareness raising and support for the exchange of good

practice. EDICs also underlined the importance and usefulness of training provided by Representations.

The guidance and assistance from Representations to EDICs was also perceived as excellent to good, with only few individual exceptions. However, different interpretations of the network requirements by Representations were reported, suggesting that EDIC performance is not judged fairly across the EU.

The staff availability at Representations – measured as the number of EDICs managed by one FTE at the Representation – varied considerably across the EU. However, there was no correlation identified between the Representations' perceived staff shortages and those with the lowest FTE per EDIC.

Overall it is difficult to give any indication of the cost-effectiveness of Headquarters and Representations' performance. However, no activities have been identified in the Headquarters or Representations' steering that would clearly suggest an inefficient use of resources.

Are there any particular concerns concerning the co-financing of the EDICs' activities by the organisations hosting the centres?

Data on the security and sustainability of the host structure co-funding overall presents a mixed picture across the Member States. While over half of EDICs were certain to receive adequate co-funding from their host structures over the next few years, almost one fifth of EDICs were concerned they will not receive host structure funding.

Serious concerns over host structure funding during the next few years were identified in Finland, and to a lesser degree in Austria and Belgium. In the case of the first two countries the limited availability of funding was confirmed to be due to the cuts of public spending as the result of the crisis. EDICs in Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark and Latvia were relatively more certain that they will receive adequate co-funding from their host structures.

Reporting by the EDICs

The reporting requirements are generally clear and the EDICs are satisfied with the reporting system overall. Consultations suggest current reporting requirements are less burdensome than under the previous contractual period. However, the implementation of the reporting requirements is variable. This, in some part, is due to the perceived weaknesses of the Intranet system and the Reporting tool more specifically.

The reporting tool needs a more detailed review to identify why it is not fit for purpose. The assessment should take due account of the needs of the EDICs in terms of reporting. The reporting requirements should be directly related to the needs of Representations in monitoring and approving final reports as well as overall evaluation purposes.

Monthly reporting is considered by a majority of EDICs to be an efficient way of reporting especially if the system would allow the annual report to be an automatic collation of the monthly reports. However, many EDICs are behind with their reporting.

There is currently a lack of a common approach to filling in the categories on the reporting tool that becomes apparent when analysing the data entered for monitoring purposes. Improving the reporting mechanism would considerably improve the reliability of the monitoring data.

Adequacy of the EC co-funding

There are mixed views on the adequacy of the EC co-funding. One fourth of EDICs felt that the EC co-funding was globally adequate and one third described it as somewhat adequate. The remaining EDICs considered the EC co-funding as inadequate or totally

inadequate.

Data suggest that EC co-funding levels are generally perceived as more acceptable and appropriate in the EU-12 countries and less so in EU-15. EDIC in Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic were the most satisfied with the adequacy of EC funding. The most dissatisfied EDICs were located in Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Germany.

Consultations suggest that EDICs in the EU-12 countries would mostly like to see the EC increasing the co-funding rate because the host structures tend to find it difficult to secure co-financing, while the interviewees from EU-15 mostly argued for a higher co-funding *amount*, as the present maximum 25,000 Euro does not cover half of all the operation costs.

Publication and promotion materials provided by the EC

Publications are one of the key tools for disseminating EU information and many EU publications are available to EDICs. However many of these publications are not of interest to the EDICs: some tend to be very specialised, written in a very technical language which is often only available in English. EDICs and their users mostly use generalist information on the EU in their mother tongue, in a user-friendly format. Publications are mostly needed to target youth, pupils and teachers.

The ordering of publications has greatly improved since the last evaluation. Ordering via the EU bookshop in particular has made the ordering of publications more manageable for EDICs. There is still room for improvement in the mechanism: particularly in ensuring that adequate quantities of needed publications are available as well as reducing or limiting the number of publications sent out without EDICs specifically requesting it. EDICs also reported sample copies wrapped in paper and plastic to be wasteful and preferred electronic samples to choose from.

Consultations suggest that promotional material (so called goodies) provided by the EC was generally good and fit for purpose – it was found to be user-friendly and useful, and users or citizens in general like receiving it. EDICs reported that goodies contribute to the promotion of the network. Most pro-active EDICs would welcome a greater number of goodies, provided that these are delivered in time for key events, while EDICs undertaking no or fewer events reported a surplus of goodies.

Contractors services

The services provided by the three contractors: Demos, ESN and Eworx are important. However the visibility and use of services provided by ESN (information material) is limited and few EDICs make actual use of these products. One explanation for this can be the low use of Intranet for information purposes. In addition, the products need to be tailored to the needs of the EDICs.

The Intranet, contracted to Eworx, received much criticism from the EDICs and Representations. It appeared not to be widely used, even for the mandatory monthly reporting purposes. The intranet is not user-friendly, technical issues are common. In addition, the use of English prevents some EDICs from navigating the intranet freely.

Finally, the training services provided by Demos were rated positively by the EDICs. They stated it was a good opportunity to learn about specific policy issues as well as for networking amongst EDICs. However, EDICs also expressed concerns as some of the issues covered did not match their needs, as well as the focus on theoretical knowledge which was too heavy as opposed to the exchange of real life experiences and practical exercises.

4.3   General network requirements

This section examines the key requirements in the agreements and Management Guidelines, which set up the framework of the network. These in particular concern:

- Selection of Host Structures;
- Framework agreements;
- Action Plans.

4.3.1   Selection and availability of host structures

The EDIC host structures are selected through a Call for Proposals[66] launched in parallel in all the EU Member States, based on the Commission Decision and the Model Framework agreement. The EC Representations coordinate the selection process.

According to the selection criteria, the candidate is to show that it has sufficient and stable financial resources to ensure the operations of the EDIC over the four-year period.

In addition, the candidate should have human resources whose competencies and qualifications include good communication skills, project management and sound knowledge of European affairs; and technological and physical infrastructure allowing for successful implementation of the action, with due regard to location and accessibility of premises.

Finally, eligibility criteria state that the candidate should be a public or private body with a public-service mission, with two years of pre-existing solid communication experience with the public, preferably on EU issues;

When these criteria are met, the criteria for award are as follows:

- Relevance of the prospective host structure's application,
- Profile, potential outreach and impact of the information centre in the region,
- Quality of the set of mandatory information services,
- Quality of the communication and awareness raising activities,
- Quality and cost-effectiveness of the budget.

Adequate geographical coverage is also a key requirement during the selection process in order to ensure:

- A maximum level of proximity of EU information provision to citizens
- An equitable spread of EDICs at national level;
- An adequate representativeness across the Community;
- An optimum level of geographical coverage; and
- Continuity with the previous generation.

In case there are several applications with the same geographical coverage, the EC Representation are to select the best on the basis of the award criteria.

The grants are then awarded on the basis of the annual action plan and estimated budget submitted by the host structure for a specific year and approved by the Representation.

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[66] Selection of host structures for the Information Centres of the Europe Direct network in 2009-2012

The requirements for the selection of the EDIC host structures appear to be appropriate. The results from the case studies show no issue with the requirements. However, the wider fieldwork (with EC Representations) highlights a more varied interpretation of the importance of individual selection criteria and correspondingly – slightly different practices in the selection of EDIC host structures.

Interviews suggest that the relevance, profile and quality criteria are primary award criteria in France, Germany and the UK, followed by considerations of geographical coverage. By contrast ensuring optimum geographical coverage is a primary criterion for the selection of host structures in Portugal and the Czech Republic. Geographical coverage was also reported to be one of the most important criteria for the selection of host structures in Sweden and Bulgaria. Portugal places attention not only on the geographical coverage and quality of the host offer, but also on ensuring a diversity of host structures. The Czech Representation underlined the importance of also ensuring continuity in EDIC host structure selection.

The interviews suggest also that financial transparency and capacity as well as the management skills of the EDIC Manager are of particular importance in the selection of host structures in Poland.

In five (SE, FR, DE, PT and LT) countries out the 14 covered by interviews, shortages in the potential host structure offer were identified. In part this was due to a relatively low number of proposals, and in two countries – because of the potential host structures withdrawing once they became aware of the expectations and co-funding requirements. Three of the five Representations mentioned above reported some concessions to quality in the selection of host structures in order to ensure better geographical coverage.

On the contrary four Representations reported a healthy supply of host structures (BG, PL, GR and UK) for the present call. However, these were not sure if the situation will be the same also for the next call.

The Representations also underlined certain vulnerability within the network, when some of the EDICs in a country are hosted by a single type of host structure. There can be gains in terms of ease of management (e.g. LT), but if there are financial difficulties or shifting organisational priorities, this may lead to a significant proportion of a network being affected (e.g. FI).

Finally, host organisations should be required to clearly demonstrate how services funded by the Commission will complement and fit with their existing services during the selection process. The results of the benchmarking exercise[67] suggest that this could limit the duplication of existing activities.

4.3.2 Benefits of framework agreement

In line with the Commission Decision, action grant awards to the EDIC host structures are covered by a multi-annual framework agreement of four years. The purpose of the framework agreement is to contribute to the stability of the network and continuity of its information and communication activities.

Framework agreements are signed between the EDIC host structures and EC Representations, thereby formalising their cooperation as well as defining their respective

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[67] The exercise compared the key organisational features of three selected networks: the European Consumers Centres Network (ECC-Net, DG SANCO), the Enterprise Europe Network (DG ENTR) and Eurodesk (DG EAC) with the EDIC network.

roles and responsibilities. The award of a grant for the operation of the EDIC for a specific year is formalised only by the signing of a "Specific grant agreement for an action".

Specific annual agreements are signed between the Representation and the host structure upon acceptance by the Representation of the EDIC annual action plan, which lists the modules to be carried out by an EDIC in a particular year and the related estimated budget submitted by the host structure for the implementation of the action plan.

The EDICs four-year funding framework appears to be appropriate for the implementation of the EDICs. It allows for longer term business planning, continuity of actions as well as regular performance reviews and annual steering of priorities through the specific annual grant agreements for funding concluded upon acceptance of the annual EDIC action plans

The results of the benchmarking exercise illustrated several advantages of the EDIC network funding framework if compared to the funding frameworks of the other networks reviewed. The benchmarking exercise demonstrated that in the absence of framework contracts, the host structures may face significant pressures and uncertainty in planning and managing cash flow effectively (e.g. ECC-Net). These pressures are likely to be heightened as constraints on national budgets increase in certain Member States. While even longer framework agreements (e.g. EEN[68]) may contribute to further significant costs savings, these do not necessarily allow sufficient flexibility to adjust contractual arrangements (e.g. in cases of underperforming host structures).

4.3.3   Requirements of action plans

The requirements for the Action Plans are set out in the Management Guidelines and the "Model action plan" in the Annex I of the Framework and Grant specific agreements.

In the development of an action plan EDICs must describe:

- Objectives of the Centre (as linked to EU developments, priorities, regional and local environment);

- Impact of the EDIC in the region (profile, visibility and networking capacity of the EDIC, analysis of the local information needs and activities to address these needs, etc.);

- Information and feedback services (EDIC premises, team, opening hours, visibility plan, actions to provide feedback from citizens and media, involvement of partners (if applicable), a strategy for web developments and updates as well as methodology for any evaluation of own activities planned);

- EDIC's communication and awareness raising activities (objectives, topics, formats/types, partners (if applicable), target group, timetable and expected results for most activities planned);

- Budget estimation – drawn up on the basis of the lump sums system and eligible expenditure – and the EDIC resource description.

In all case studies, the EDICs reported that the guidelines and the requirements of the "Model specific grant agreement" are overall clear and useful. When clarifications on the Management Guidelines or action plans were required, these have been readily provided by Representations.

A review of the action plans in the context of this evaluation highlighted the varied level of detail and quality of description in the action plans. The EDICs had covered the information

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[68] EEN has framework agreements for a six-year period.

"categories" required by the Guidelines; however the links between the EDIC activities planned and the EDIC mission, EU priorities and the local public needs was often weakly established. Overall the Guidelines need to better reflect the minimum standard expected by requesting EDICs to set SMART objectives for their operations.

More detailed points were raised by some of the Representations. Some suggested shortening the sections describing the impact of the EDIC on the Region as this is not something that changes dramatically year by year. This would allow making any subsequent annual action plans submitted after the first plan for the four-year period to be shorter, and focus on how the EDIC will address any significant changes or emerging information needs among the local/regional public.

With regard to the definition of the communication and awareness raising activities (i.e. information products, media contributions and events) in the action plans - the Guidelines currently require EDICs to relate these to "Commission's priorities and local needs". This is not done well by many EDICs – and there are various levels of detail presented. Furthermore, the case study work suggests that the Representations have various interpretations of the stringency with which the EDIC communication and awareness raising activities need to be linked to political priorities. Some Representations reported they make sure that EDIC action plans cover political priorities (e.g. CZ, PT and AT) while others accept a less precise link between EDIC planned activities and priorities (ES, NL).

In addition to the Information services EDICs are also required to define how they will feed   back the citizen and media opinions and suggestions to the EU institutions. As the feedback function of the network currently does not have a clear definition, form and purpose, most action plans do not cover this service requirement. The requirement to reflect the EDIC activities that will provide feedback to EU institutions needs to be better defined once the purpose of this service is better defined on the Representations and Headquarters levels.

The Management Guidelines *recommend* implementing a formal contract amendment to reflect any modifications of the annual action plan such as changes in the included indicators, as well as for modification of the annual action plan involving replacement of one module by one or several representing an equal value. The Guidelines also establish a procedure for requesting such amendments – requesting a formal approval of the required changes by the Representation and attesting of such modifications by signatures of both parties. The case studies suggest that some Representations are more flexible in allowing modifications of action plans without a formal contract amendment, while others are more formal about such amendments. The case studies attest that such differences result in more resources being required for the administration of contracts in some countries in comparison to others. To avoid such inequalities an online system for submitting, approving and modifying action plans has been proposed in the case study interviews[69].

4.4   Organisation and management

This section looks at the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation and management of the EDIC network by the DG COMM Headquarters and Representations and especially as compared to the previous generation.

It first presents the overall organisation of the EDIC network and then describes how the steering of the network is ensures and its adequacy.

Then it describes the current management structure, followed by a brief presentation of the previous generation. In conclusion, it assesses the current system against the previous one.

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[69] With signed paper copies of the agreements issued, if required by parties.

4.4.1   Organisation and steering

DG COMM is the overall responsible for the implementation of the EDIC network. The Headquarters provide strategic steering and assistance to the Network coordinators in the EC Representations and general support to the network.

The EDIC grants are further subject to direct centralised management by the Commission Representations[70] in the 27 EU Member States (under DG COMM Unit B, current Unit C). As mentioned previously, the Representations are responsible for the selection of EDIC host structures, approval of the EDIC annual action plans and final reports, monitoring of the network implementation in their countries/regions[71] and day-to-day support to the network as well as mediation between the Headquarters and EDICs.

Host structures in turn are responsible for ensuring that their EDICs comply with the mission of the network and securing the daily functioning of their centres (by providing premises, human, financial and technical resources).

Assessment of organisation and steering

Overall the organisation of the EDIC network is sufficiently decentralised – with guidance and support offered efficiently – at appropriate levels.

The quality of the guidance and assistance was generally perceived as adequate by Representations and EDICs in respect of the support of Headquarters and by EDICs in the respect of the assistance of Representations.

Nonetheless the interviews among Representations and EDICs as well as the survey among EDICs identified a number of areas where further improvements are possible.

Headquarters' support to Representations

Steering and assistance of the Headquarters to Representations include:

- Preparation of Calls for Proposals for the selection of host structures for EDICs;
- Recommendation on the pre-allocation for grants and support;
- Recommendation on the use of uncommitted pre-allocations;
- Administrative and financial support for managing of grants to EDICs;
- Preparation of management and monitoring guidelines;
- Coordination and animation of the network of ED Correspondents in the Representations.

DG COMM Headquarters provide support to the Representations in the form of documentation for Calls to select host structures, assistance in the management of grants, in preparation of management and monitoring guidelines and animation of a network of the Network Correspondents coordinating the work of the EDIC network on the national level.

The Representations did not voice any concerns regarding the division of tasks and responsibilities among Headquarters and Representations. Some Representations specifically noted that the division should stay as it is. This allows the Representation to do

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[70] Some larger Member States like France, Germany and Spain have several Representations that have divided spheres of influence for the EDIC network within their country, usually based on regional or linguistic considerations.

[71] In FR, DE and ES where regional Representations exist.

most of the national planning, steering and coordination (while the Headquarters concentrate on the assessment of the general quality of the network).

Overall the support and assistance in the management of the EDIC network was perceived as good to sufficient by most of the Representations interviewed. Only two out of 14 Representations consulted noted that Headquarters support was of average quality[72].

Similar opinions were noted on the quality of the Headquarters assistance with the management of grants. Most Representations consulted found that such support was adequate and only one indicated that the quality of this support has declined.

With regard to specific Headquarters support, the following concerns were noted by the Representations consulted[73]:

- In relation to the centrally provided publications, Representations generally noted that most press releases prepared centrally are too dry, and if transmitted to EDICs in their current form, would not be accessible to citizens. They expressed the need for a publication that balances the dry style of the official press releases with the citizens needs.

- Some Representations expressed the desire to see more (if not all) publications in their local languages, while others did not object to receiving publications only in English.

- A couple of Representations voiced concerns over the delays with the translation of the documents related to Calls for the selection of host structures. It was suggested that the need for these translations should be communicated to Representations in time, and hence the Headquarters should request DG Translation to include these in the annual planning for the upcoming year.

- Finally, the consultations with Representations suggest that better information on some support tools is necessary. While all Representations tend to be familiar and satisfied with the Guidelines for the management of EDICs, around one third of the Representations interviewed were not familiar with the Guidelines for the monitoring visits[74].

Headquarter support to EDICs

Support services of the Headquarters' to the EDICs, including:

- Regular information products and communication toolkits,

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[72] It has to be noted that the quality of the Headquarter assistance was influenced by the restructuring within DG COMM, undertaken in the end of 2010. Three Representations did not experience any problems with the availability and quality of the Headquarters services due to internal restructuring. Further four noted that the communication and the quality of assistance used to be better before the restructuring, while two indicated the Headquarters needed time to reorganise and that the service now is returning to normal levels. Two Representations also noted that they have not had much occasion to meet the Headquarters staff and would like to have clearer guidance on who is responsible for what at the Headquarters. Overall it has to be noted that the Representations did not so much have issues with the quality of the current service, but rather complimented the knowledgeable individuals providing the service before.

[73] These also include suggestions gathered during the Network Correspondent event, hosted in Brussels on 13/14 November.

[74] It was also not clear whether the Checklist for Financial procedures and accounting (annexed to some monitoring visit reports) is a requirement and some Representations underlined that the monitoring visits should focus on the operational performance rather than financial aspects of EDIC operations (which should be subject to central DG COMM Unit D audits). It was also not clear to some Representations whether Monitoring visits plans need to be developed and provided, and whether central (Unit D) control plan exists in the current generation.

- Provision of ED intranet,

- Training seminars,

- Annual general meetings and other networking among EDICs;

- Promotion via the Europa website;

- Promotion and strategic development at EU level; and

- Assessment of the efficiency of the EDIC Network and follow-up.

The Headquarters also provide a number of services directly to EDICs. These in the main include a regular provision of information products and communication toolkits, organisation of annual general meetings and promotion of the network on the EU level.

The annual general meetings were generally seen as useful by most EDICs and the usefulness of these meetings – as a way to share ideas and receive training – has improved overall. There were some more individual concerns voiced as regards the usefulness of some of the general presentations in these meetings and difficulties associated with considerable time investment in travelling to and attending these meetings.

There is a need for the EC to improve its own promotion of the EDIC network internally and externally. None of the EDICs interviewed were aware of any promotion activities or campaigns undertaken to promote the EDIC network on the EU level. Better awareness of the network within the Commission and among other institutions was evoked by some EDICs as a precondition for improved cooperation with other DGs and Institutions on the local level[75]. It was argued that the lack of awareness on the central level leads to missed local cooperation opportunities and thus results in reduced effectiveness of EU communication.

EC Representations – management tasks and staff

Representations are responsible for issuing the Calls for the selection of EDICs' host structures and promotion as well as coordination of cooperation within the EDIC network and beyond (with other EU networks, line DGs and other EU Institutions as well as national stakeholders – e.g. national government and parliament representatives).

Representations are also responsible for administrative and financial management of direct grants to EDICs (with support from the Headquarters), including the assessment of EDIC final reports and related financial management.

The EC Representations have varying staffing levels for the management of the EDICs. Data from the case studies suggests an average of around 1.5 FTE per Representation but it varies from 0.4 FTE in Finland to 4.3 FTE[76] in Lithuania. The average per EDIC according to the data is around 0.09 FTE[77]. This does not in general include support external to the policy and administrative staff.

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[75] The interviews with DG COMM staff actually suggest that the intra-Commission awareness of the EDIC network has not improved and in fact has decreased in the current generation.

[76] In Lithuania the management of nine out of 10 EDICs in the country is centralised via an administrative body under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and overseen by a coordination team of four people. The MoFA is the host structure for the 9 EDICs, also responsible for the development and maintenance of the common EDIC national website. While the four people support team is calculated in the common FTE for the network, most of the operational costs of the support team are borne by the MoFA.

[77] The FTE calculations should be seen as indicative, as these have been gathered through the interviews and may be subjective with regard to the assessment of the time spent on the management of the EDIC network.

Among the Representations consulted the staff resources were perceived as adequate in Sweden, France and the UK. Representations' staff resources were perceived as insufficient in Bulgaria, Poland and Portugal – where it was generally felt that one more FTE is required to cover all the tasks associated with the management of the network.

Table 4.32   Number of FTEs per EDIC

Member State	No. of FTE contributing to EDIC net.	No of EDICs in the country	No. of FTE per EDIC	Variance (av. FTE per EDIC minus actual no. of FTE per EDIC
AT	0.5	10	0.05	0.04
BG	2	14	0.14	-0.05
CZ	0.6	9	0.07	0.02
DE	2	58	0.03	0.05
ES	1.3	45	0.03	0.06
FI	0.4	22	0.02	0.07
FR	3.5	53	0.07	0.02
GR	0.8	13	0.06	0.03
LT	4.3	10	0.43	-0.34
NL	0.75	9	0.08	0.01
PL	2	23	0.09	0.00
PT	1	15	0.07	0.02
SE	0.5	17	0.03	0.06
UK	1	14	0.07	0.02
		Average	**0.09**	

If the ratio between the number of FTE involved in the coordination and management of the EDIC network in Representations[78] and the number of EDIC in each country is examined, this does not exactly correlate with the adequacy of staff as perceived by the Representations[79]. This suggests that the perceived availability of staff resources for the management of the EDIC network largely depends on the Representations' ways of working and varied stringency in the interpretation of the management and monitoring requirements.

It is not possible to give any indication of the financial performance of the EC Representations.

Representations' support to EDICs

In terms of direct support to the EDICs, Representations are in charge of the day-to-day assistance to EDICs, including the interpretation and application of requirements of official documents, mediation between the Headquarters and EDICs, assistance with the

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[78] The FTE of Representations staff involved in the management and coordination of the EDIC network in each country has to be viewed with a certain amount of caution, as the interviewees were invited to assess the approximate percentage of their (and their colleagues') time spend on EDIC related tasks. Therefore the ratio can only serve as an indication.

[79] In Sweden one FTE at the Representation manages ~30 EDICs, France ~15, The UK ~14, Bulgaria ~7, Poland ~11 and Portugal ~15

preparation of action plans. They organise annual coordination meetings (one to three) to EDICs as well as sometimes participate in EDICs' events.

The support offered by the Representation to EDICs in management and reporting is generally perceived as adequate. Fifty nine per cent of the EDICs surveyed in the framework of this study characterised the Representation's efforts to coordinate the EDIC network in their country as "excellent" and 39% as "satisfactory". Just 2% felt that the coordination was "unsatisfactory".

Interviews with EDICs and Representations have indicated that currently Representations interpret the various network requirements with very different levels of stringency. This may be due to the ways of working characteristic to a particular country (e.g. more informal interpretation in Sweden and Austria and more stringent in France, Germany and Poland). Interviews suggest that this diverse interpretation of the requirements may lead to significant differences in time required for individual tasks (e.g. the review of final reports) at the Representations. Such unequal interpretation of requirements may disadvantage Representations and EDICs in certain countries in terms of their perceived performance during network evaluations (in countries where Representations observe certain requirements in a stricter sense they and EDICs may spend more time in fulfilling these requirements).

While few individual Representations were identified as providing assistance and even a possibility to amend EDIC action plans, no examples of Representations' assistance with the feedback to the EDIC final reports have been identified for purposes other than requesting more information and justification of activities and costs.

Training provided by the Representations

Several Representations have reported assistance in the form of a training offered to EDICs. In most countries such training is offered on political priorities, often linked to the national coordination meetings (e.g. Bulgaria, Sweden, Portugal, Finland and Lithuania). Such mixed coordination and training meetings organised by the Representations tend to occur between twice and four times a year. Questions around the priorities and the grants are recurring issues in these meetings.

In addition, Representations have offered training on various professional and personal skills, related to the perceived EDIC needs in their country context: e.g. media training (in Poland, Estonia, Portugal and Greece[80]), summer school on Euro (Estonia), training on intranet (Austria, France and Finland), training in management (Finland, and team building in Lithuania).

There is an identified need for media training in the UK and various EU policies and legislation in Romania. Training on social media is planned in UK and Greece.

Host structures

Host structures are meant to provide a full-time member of staff (or several staff equivalent to 1 FTE), responsible for the management of the centre and ensure that staff has the necessary qualifications to ensure an adequate management of the Centre.

In addition, the host structures are responsible for:

▪ Ensuring EDICs comply with the mission and tasks of the Network and provide impartial information;

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[80] Seminars on work with the regional press in cooperation with the Press office of the EPIO.

- Ensuring the visibility and accessibility of EDICs' premises and documentation;

- Ensuring the availability of telecommunications;

- Ensuring consistent use of the Europe Direct brand, name and logo;

- Bearing the administrative and financial costs related to the EDICs' compliance with its obligations as defined in the Framework and Specific agreements (financial coverage of day-to-day operations of Centres and ensuring cooperation in annual or occasional monitoring check).

4.4.2 Current management system

Grant scheme

The current grant scheme is based on a lump sum contract, which was introduced in the new generation of the network. It is based on an estimate of the real costs of the actions. Each of the actions is then divided into modules, to which a maximum budget is allocated. The lump sum system, in addition, takes the following features:

- one module can be selected as well as several;
- module 1 regarding information services for the general public is mandatory;
- modules 2 to11 are voluntary;
- grant amount increases with the number of modules;
- modules for audio-visual materials, printed materials, media, indoor and outdoor events can be requested several times (up to the limit of the grant).

No lump sum is foreseen for module 11 (other activities): the costs are borne by the host structure. The amount of the lump sum paid for each module depends on its level of completion, which is assessed on the basis of documents provided in the final report:

- A complete list of Modules implemented;
- A list of actions per each module undertaken;
- A list of support documents justifying the lump sum costs.

Lump sums

The amount for one module is fixed. However, as noted above modules for audio-visual materials, printed materials, media, indoor and outdoor events can be requested several times (up to the limit of the grant). In addition, if a host structure considers that a lump sum is insufficient, it should ensure adequate top up funding in addition to co-funding. Host structures are not allowed to ask for a part of the lump sums.

The maximum grant is 25,000€: the co-funding is of 50% applicable to the overall project and not per module. In addition, the amount is adjusted per Member State[81]. The amount for each of the modules is presented in the table below.

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[81] The standard lump sums are adjusted to the List of comparative price levels by countries for 2006. The standard lump sum concerns: AU BE, DK, D, IE, EL, ES, IT, CY, LU, NL, AT, PT, FI, SE, UK. The remaining countries are subject to the adjusted lump sum.

Table 4.33   Amount granted per module

Module – Activity	Mandatory/ voluntary	Lump sum (adjusted) in €
Module 1 – Basic information services for the general public, EU partner on the local level and feedback	Mandatory	12,000 (9,600)
Module 2 – website	Voluntary	2,000 (1,600)
Module 3 – e-newsletter	Voluntary	500 (400)
Module 4 – audio-visual materials	Voluntary	1,000 (800)
Module 5 – printed materials	Voluntary	1,000 (800)
Module 6 – media contributions	Voluntary	1,000 (800)
Module 7 – indoor events	Voluntary	2,000 (1,600)
Module 8 – outdoor events	Voluntary	2,000 (1,600)
Module 9 – mixed events	Voluntary	3,000 (2,400)
Module 10 – evaluations/impact assessments/feedback	Voluntary	500 (400)
Module 11 – other activities	Voluntary	0

4.4.3   Previous management system

Three main principles guided the previous management structure include:

- Differentiation in the management structures between EU15 and newer Member States;

- Payment based on real eligible costs (proven);

- One budget for all activities.

The first generation of centres had two separate management structures:

- A direct management structure was in place in the 15 "old" Member States. The direct management implied a direct link between the Representations and the host structures. The host structures in turn could be responsible for one or several centres.

- In the indirect centralised management, set up in EU12, the Representations were liaising with an intermediary body to reach the host structures. Those could, as in the other management system, be responsible for one or several centres.

In the first generation, the centres were applying for grants on the basis of a work programme, which was foreseeing the activities to be carried out and the related breakdown of all the costs to be occurred (in terms of infrastructure, staff, training, as well as for each of the individual activities, such as publications, events etc). Once it was accepted they were receiving a pre-financing of 70%.

At the end of the contract, the centres were reporting on their activities first with an end-of-year written report with supporting material (in 2005 and 2006), and from 2007 onwards on a monthly basis on the intranet. Together with their Annual reports, the centres were submitting the financial information in an Annex, as a list of the activities carried out as reported on the intranet, together with the breakdown of all the costs which had occurred. The validation of the Annual reports triggered the payment of the balance of the remaining 30% according to the eligible expenditure.

The calculation of the grant was based on the total costs reported by the centres and the justification of those.

In the previous generation, the maximum grant allocated to the centres was 24,000 Euro, based on the total of the costs incurred during the year. The costs were taken as a whole and did not depend on the number or type of activities carried out: the centres could fulfil their tasks with the number and variety of activities they suggested were the most appropriate.

In addition, the budget was not dependent on the level of completion of the activities, or a foreseen target (such as the number of participants at event, or the number of publications).

4.4.4 Comparison between the current and previous management systems

The main differences between the previous and the current organisation and management systems are outlined in the Table below.

Table 4.34   Previous and current structures – the main differences

Previous gen.	Weaknesses of the previous system	Consequences	Current EDIC	Strengths of the new system
Two management structures – direct and indirect	Indirect structure – tendency towards over-staffing No advantage of intermediary system	Need to address efficiency	One direct management structure	Single and unified system for all MS Efficient system
Reporting and payment based on real eligible costs	Detailed reporting by HS and meticulous control by EC	Heavy, time-consuming	Performance based model - lump sum payments	Simplifications in procedures, reduce work load related to financial reporting and control Shift of focus from financial reporting operational aspects (activities)
Single overall budget for all activities	No incentive for centres to diversify their activities or ensure completion of defined target	Limited variety of activities and limited outreach	Budget allocated as a maximum lump-sum per activity	Incentive for EDICs to be pro active and diversify their activities and reach pre-defined targets

The *Mid-term evaluation of the Europe Direct Relays Network 2005-2008[82]* showed that there were no (proven) advantages of using the intermediary body system. At the same time, the intermediary body system was putting a higher pressure in terms of human resources, and there was no evidence that it led to efficiency in the management of the network. The two-structure system was rather addressing effectiveness. In the current system, only the direct management system was kept: it simplifies the structure as there is a single system for all Member States as well as addressing the efficiency of management of the network.

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[82] Deloitte (2008) *Mid Term Evaluation of the Europe Direct Relays Network 2005-2008*

The move to direct management is generally seen as positive as was observed during the case studies: management is more "direct" and Member States which were previously in the decentralised system welcomed the simplification of system. It must be noted though that in some countries there is still some degree of national coordination. In Lithuania for example 9 of the 10 EDICs are managed by an administrative body under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). In this instance coordination by MoFA is seen as useful and beneficial.

In the first generation, the fact that the grant scheme was based on claiming real eligible costs meant a very detailed financial reporting by the host organisations and close control by the Commission services. The Mid-term evaluation of the centres concluded that the financial processes were heavy and time-consuming. It recommended simplifying the procedures and considering compliance costs which would include linking payments to performance criteria, and not expenditures anymore, as well as devising a system that would make payments as a lump sum (p.146).

The current generation of EDICs is based on a lump-sum system: the grants are allocated up to a maximum amount for each of the activities (modules), on the basis of the proven achievements. The reporting is similar to the previous generation it terms of outputs, however, the financial reporting was simplified, as EDIC are no longer required to submit all the supporting documents for costs incurred on a particular year (they are still obliged to gather and preserve such financial evidence for any possible requests or audits). This has reduced greatly the workload related to financial reporting and control. This in addition has enabled shifting the focus from the financial burden to the operational aspects of the centres (their activities).

In the previous evaluation, the fieldwork suggested the reporting requirements were disproportionate to the amount of money involved. In addition data of the survey from the same evaluation suggested that 58% of EDICs surveyed spent more than 20% of their time on administration and management, whereas 24% stated they spent more than 30% of their time on administration and management (p.108). The survey carried out in the current study amongst EDICs stated that on average EDICs spent 9% of their time planning and reporting. Although the data is not immediately comparable with the data from the current, it would tend to show that there has been a strong decrease in the time spent by EDICs on administrative tasks. In addition, the EDIC survey showed that 16% of surveyed EDICs spent less time in the new generation on planning and reporting. Twenty two per cent stated they were spending more time on planning and reporting: this was expressed though as overall being positive reflecting an overall increase of activities of the EDICs, especially with other local actors and other EDICs.

The case studies have in addition shown that the new system is generally considered to be an improvement (Sweden, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, and Lithuania) although it could be even more improved. In Bulgaria, Germany, Finland and Lithuania the new system is said to have specifically reduced administrative burden and the accountancy is simpler. Both Sweden and Bulgaria highlight that an output based management system is much better and that it encourages proactive planning.

Similarly in the case of France the planning approach has become more systematic enabling a greater focus than before and enhances the speed and efficiency of implementation of the activities. Also, the allocation of budget per module gives a better visibility for the overall functioning of the EDICs. In addition, the new system has enabled the reduction of administration burden for the financial reporting.

This was also confirmed by the benchmarking exercise that found the module system to be particularly suitable for the EDIC network with relatively small grants and a high number of

host structures as it was expected to reduce the administrative costs and time required for evaluation.

Finally, another major change from the previous generation of the network lies within the allocation of budget for the centres: the previous grant scheme was based on a global budget necessary for all the activities. The centres had little incentives to diversify their activities as the indicator that enabled payment was merely the achievement of the activity, which was proven with relevant invoices and documents. The lump-sum system with a maximum budget allocated to individual activities provided an incentive for the centres to be proactive in their activities, to propose innovative and varied activities, at the same time as focusing on their performance in achieving pre-defined objectives.

4.5 Module system

As presented in the section on Management, the activities carried out by the EDICs within their specific grant agreements are organised around 11 Modules.

Overall the results of the case studies indicate the module system is an improvement on the previous system for organising the EDIC network activities (e.g. as reported by Representations in AT, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FIN, GR, LT, PL and SE). Additionally, the Representations reported a steady improvement in EDIC understanding and functioning of the modules system since its introduction. However, the case study and the interviews with Representations[83] also suggest that there is room to improve this system further in the next generation.

There is a common consensus among the DG COMM Headquarters and Representations that the current module system (and the related planning, implementation and reporting) focuses on encouraging outputs, rather than qualitative assessment of these outputs, or their shorter term results or longer term impact.

4.5.1 Overall strengths and weaknesses in the module system

The case studies, interviews with Representations and other consultations[84] provide a wealth of data on both the advantages and disadvantages of the current modules system. The wide range of opinions and contradictory views gathered concerning the specifics of the module system, however, highlight that it will be difficult to come to a "one size fits all" solution across the EU Member States.

The consultations certainly outline some confusion over how the modules should be implemented and also variations in what is judged to be acceptable to the Representations in terms of meeting the minimum modules' requirements, change of modules as well as what certain modules should cover and to what extent. As underlined by the workshop discussions in the 2011 EDIC Annual General Meeting (AGM), the different Representations' interpretations and requirements may also contribute to creating an impression that in countries where module requirements are interpreted with more stringency the EDICs may seem as underperforming or the Representations as too rigid when evaluated. Consequently, there is a need to strike a balance between uniform interpretations of the requirements related to modules and country specific needs for oversight, management traditions and styles.

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[84] Discussions in the workshops of the Network Correspondents' meeting and in 2011 AGM.

According to the case studies and interviews with Representations, the strengths of the monitoring system are generally related to it encouraging and facilitating planning, providing improved and simplified oversight of activities and encouraging more proactive approach to EDIC implementation. The Representations underlined that the current module system is less centred on costs and more focused on activities; it improves activity and financial planning (as modules are known in advance) and gives Representations a greater influence on this planning. Several Representations underlined that the modules system has encouraged EDICs to be more active (more outgoing activities) and to comply with their action plans in implementation (as otherwise they are not eligible to get the lump sums). One Representation also welcomed the introduction of Module 10 – qualitative evaluation of EDICs own activities – as in the previous generation quality was mostly ensured by financial controls.

Apart from this focus on outputs rather than quality outcomes, the consultations indicate that the main general weakness of the module system is the various interpretations and expectations regarding the module requirements (what can be and cannot be covered by certain modules). This lack of a shared understanding leads to even greater heterogeneity in the implementation of the network in various Member States and leads to inconsistencies in reporting. For example, there exist various interpretations of reporting on "personal contact" (whether to count everyone who walks in, actual one to one session, include those attending events – even though they are counted in other modules[85], etc.). There are also different ways of reporting on events and how many people actually attended; including how to report on events that take place over the course of several days (whether it counts as one or two events for example).

Table 4.35   Strength and weaknesses of the module system

Main strengths	Main weaknesses
- Financial transparency and forward financial planning - Less focused on money, more focused on activities and outputs - Better planning of activities - Representations can influence the targeting of activities - More freedom/flexibility in implementation - Easier monitoring of EDIC activities by Representations - Facilitates being proactive - Decreases administrative burden to Representations and EDICs - Relatively easy change modules chosen in some countries	- Little focus on content and quality requirements (as opposed to quantitative requirements - More restrictive - Module requirements insufficiently defined leading to: - Varying expectations - Payment rejections - Confusion regarding separate deliverables for publications, media and event modules - Inconsistencies in reporting - No module for coordination or exchange of good practice - Discrimination towards EDICs operating in areas with smaller populations - Difficult to change modules chosen in some countries

Source: EDIC case studies and interviews with Representations

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[85] These inconsistencies in reporting make the monitoring data on the EDIC reach less reliable.

4.5.2　Specific issues in the current modules

Module 1 – basic information services for the general public

Module one is the only mandatory module. The minimum delivery requirements necessary to obtain payment for this Module include:

- Basic information services for the general public, offering citizens information, advice, assistance and answers to queries about the European Union's legislation, policies, programmes, funding opportunities, etc.;
- Signposting of citizens to other services, when required;
- Centre facilities open at least 20 hours per week;
- One FTE staff member providing information services;
- Adequate equipment (at least one computer with internet connection and related IT equipment);
- Assistance to the EC Representation;
- Providing access to information materials of the EU institutions;
- Participation to coordination and training meetings organised by the Commission.

The case studies suggest that not all EDICs have use for the premises and the equipment required by Module 1 and for many EDICs these requirements are clearly not effective. The data gathered also suggest that more flexibility is needed in the requirements of Module 1.

The amount of funding for Module 1 is considered to be quite large for some EDICs which do not get large numbers of visitors. These EDICs have suggested that it would be more effective if this money could be reallocated to outgoing activities (e.g. Poland, Sweden and Spain). Other EDICs already do this and consider it to be embedded in the rules, highlighting the issue of different interpretations.

The requirement for staff according to the case studies was considered to be either adequate or low (low for France, Poland and Bulgaria). The monitoring data and case studies indicate that there are various permutations and combinations of staff making up the EDICs' FTE, in some instances, with only one Member of staff and others using a variety of staff from the host structure as well as volunteers and interns to help with the presence in the centres, enquiries and events. The case study interviews suggest that the EDIC Manager skills are overall adequate to very good. However, the case studies also identified individual examples of EDIC managers who have had difficulty in adjusting to the more out-going requirements of the second network generation (e.g. in libraries).

Overall, the case study work outlines the need for a greater variety of approaches to be integrated in a mandatory module, if such is preserved. Also there is a need to consider the benefits of a mandatory 20h "walk in" and Q/A service.

If the physical presence was discontinued as mandatory the general citizen enquiries could be channelled from EDICs to EDCC (as this service is already used by the EDICs on an ad-hoc basis and enjoys high levels of user satisfaction). However, the improved cooperation between services can only take place if there is mutual trust in the quality of the services provided – and if the EDICs support the EDCC in enquiries requiring local knowledge.

In relation to the information provision module, the benchmarking exercise also suggested to consider the introduction of minimum service requirements to ensure consistent delivery across the network. An elaborate 'case handling protocol' for citizens' enquiries already exists in the ECC-Net as this network needs to meet the requirements of consumer legislation and involves international cooperation. The EDIC network could adapt a much 'lighter version' of the protocol, including guidance on deadlines for handling and finalising enquiries and signposting to other networks and services.

Module 2 – website

Module two is the website and it is voluntary. The minimum requirements for an EDIC to claim the considerable lump sum for the implementation of Module 2 - website are to have a website or dedicated webpage on the host structure's website signposting to the EDIC and updated at least weekly. These should in addition focus on the political priorities and local needs. The analysis of EDIC websites suggests that this requirement is addressed to the extent websites include information on EDIC activities and services, however none of the interviews suggest that this requirement is specifically enforced by Representations.

Case studies have shown that the requirements were assessed as being quite light, in that they did not set any thresholds for output length or quality as well as no monitoring of web statistics and optimisation of EDIC websites. This was assessed as leaving enough room for manoeuvre for those EDICs being quite active in the update of their website as well as those having developed many functionalities or useful pages on it. At the same time, it was noted that the freedom left by the requirements led to a large variety in the quality of websites, and did not allow consistency amongst the network.

The requirement to relate the website content to political priorities and local needs appeared to be artificial. They were neither followed by EDICs nor enforced by Representations. No particular comments were collected on the adequacy of amount, suggesting it is adequate.

Module 3 – e-newsletter

According to the requirements e-newsletter must be dispatched at least monthly to 100 contacts and its EU content should focus on the Commission's communication priorities and local needs.

The most common issues reported by EDICs relates to the required frequency of delivery of e-newsletters. The guidelines require EDICs to distribute 12 e-newsletters per year. Some EDICs considered this to be too frequent and there has been a reduction in the take up of the newsletter module in some countries (but increased use of other methods of news production). Nevertheless, there are also EDIC e-newsletters prepared by-weekly or even weekly.

Another issue identified through the case studies' interviews relates to the lump sum foreseen for the funding of e-newsletters. As the amount the lump sum amount foreseen for e-newsletter is €500 it was highlighted that this implies EDICs take Module 10 (evaluation/impact assessment/feedback) if they wish to receive a rounded up maximum amount of co-funding €25,000 (as Module 10 is the only other Module worth a lump sum of €500).

In this case as well, the requirement to relate the website content to political priorities and local needs appeared to be artificial

Module 4 – audio-visual material

The requirements for Module 4 include minimum 500 CDs/ DVDs or DVD with minimum 15 minutes of recording or CD ROM with minimum 0.6 GB of material – all related to political priorities and local needs.

Case studies suggest that the requirements to the production of CDs and DVDs are somewhat technically obsolete: indeed, the use of CDs and DVDs by the general public tends to be decreasing every year. The discussions indicated that the requirements should be refocused on the production of online videos and podcasts, while information could be distributed on USB keys.

In addition, interviews showed that AV material only partially focuses on the required political priorities and that the quality of AV material produced varies considerably. EDICs indicated

that the requirements for the module are too focused on the medium itself: it should focus rather on quality involving coverage and reach.

Module 5 – printed material

The printed material module requires a minimum of 500 copies, minimum of 10 pages in an A5 format. It is also required to focus on political priorities and local needs.

There were overall few comments received on the publications module during the case studies or other consultations; and hence no perceived need to change the requirements of this module.

Module 6 – media contributions

The minimum requirements for this module include at least 20 contributions to AV (participation in TV or radio programmes) or printed media as well as EDIC advertising in printed or AV media. The media contributions should be focused on the political priorities and local needs.

The EDICs and Representations consulted in different Member States overall had a very different interpretation of the minimum requirements for media contributions. While there appeared to be a general consensus that working with the media is important, most stakeholders consulted indicated that the media contributions module is too loosely defined and needs to be re-thought. For example, the current apparently equal treatment of paid-for media contributions (advertising) and "earned" media coverage (public relations) in terms of the same lump sum applicable, seems unjustified in terms of totally different amount and type of work required in preparation.

The EDICs and Representations consulted underlined that the requirements are not clear on whether the 20 media contributions requirement relates to the media contributions actually sent out by EDICs or should only the contributions actually picked up by media be counted. It was further not clear whether the module comprises only printed and audio-visual contributions or also contributions to online media (e.g. France and the UK). It was also uncertain whether the articles or reports on EDIC activities picked up media (and not specifically prepared as media contributions by EDICs) can be counted under the module. Finally, there was a grey area around what is considered official and non-official publishing. In line with these considerations one Representation suggested that if only specifically prepared contributions that have been actually published by media are counted under the module, 10 such contributions could be sufficient for the module requirements to be considered met.

In addition there are issues with different Representations' interpretation of what are the eligible contributions to the media module. It was suggested that some Representations count all media *mentions* of an EDIC among the 20 contributions required to obtain the lump sum – some others only accept specifically prepared published articles (e.g. DE). The different interpretations of the media contributions module requirements were reported to cause disagreements between EDICs and Representations regarding the amounts EDICs can claim under the media module. It is likely that EDICs that have lost money due to these different interpretations become less inclined to work with media.

Finally, the case studies and other consultations underlined that the media module is not set up to take into account contributions to social media. However, the relatively limited current use of such media for accessing information on the EU and the need to target such communication through social media should be taken into account when drafting the revised requirements.

Module 7, 8 and 9 – event modules

The event modules have different minimum requirements

- indoor events: minimum 100 participants and 3 hours of activity;

- outdoor events: minimum 200 participants and 3 hours of activity; and,

- mixed events: minimum 200 participants and 3 hours of activity.

All events are required to relate to political priorities and local needs.

The case studies and consultations with Representations underline a number of issues of concern in relation to the events modules:

- The definition of event is not uniformly interpreted. EDICs can engage in a number of different events – events organised and led by an EDIC, joint or co-organised events with other organisations or officials, participation with stands at other large events, small in house sessions and competitions and exhibitions spanning over a longer period of time. The various event types required different type of investment and varying resource investment. The current event modules also do not encourage particular types of event that may save resources and consequently render the implementation of event modules more financial and thematically effective i.e. joint and co-organised events (nor do these specify how the costs should be shared if such events are implemented).

- The interpretation of the minimum requirements for events varies by substantially across Member States. Some EDICs and Representations work on the premise that events with fewer than 100 participants cannot be claimed under the events modules (which has significant cost implications). Stakeholders in other countries report relatively flexible interpretation that multiple events can add up to the number needed to claim the events modules lump sums.

- The EDICs in more rural areas with smaller populations reported more difficulties with fulfilling the requirement to gather at least 100 participants, no matter how good the events or speakers. Some of these EDICs reported organising multiple events of average size (20-30 participants) in order to receive the foreseen lump sum. The calculations regarding the participants and the length of these multiple events were further reported as cumbersome by Representations. The limitations of population size in relation to the current events requirements for participation also hindered some EDICs from becoming more outgoing as well as from receiving recognition for events organised well despite their smaller than required attendance.

- The stringency with which the Representations approach the requests for modification of the annual action plan involving replacement of one module by one or several representing an equal value[86] differ in Member States. This interpretation of flexibility is particularly important in the context of the event modules as these are the ones most influenced by external factors (and hence more prompt to change) and the formal contract amendment procedure required is time-consuming.

- Defining the target audience and the subsequent reporting and review of EDIC events meeting the participation requirement can be challenging. There are quite a few categories for reporting on the target audience and the theme of an event on the ED intranet. There is also the option to choose multiple themes and events. This makes analysing the data difficult and in some cases unhelpful as too many events end up being targeted at multiple "wide audiences" or in other words – the general public.

Most Representations and EDICs consulted had one uniform wish to have the current distinction between indoor, outdoor and mixed events abolished. These categories also

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[86] The Management guidelines in such cases recommend, but do not impose contract amendments, pg. 25.

appeared to be interpreted differently in different Member States – some interpreting mixed events as co-organised, some others outdoor events – as events organised in other organisations' premises (rather than own).

Module 10 - evaluation and impact assessment module

Module 10, impact assessment study/ feedback report, requires the production of an impact assessment study/ feedback report of minimum 5 pages, based on a methodological evaluation of at least 75% of the activities.

Module 10 is to contribute to developing and fine-tuning EDIC activities. The idea is that by implementing Module 10 an EDIC can do a self-assessment of its own activities and use the results to improve the action plan for the next year.

The case study work suggests that this module is used by few EDICs and only a share of these employ it to adjust next year's activities. The data collected also show that EDICs are uncertain about what is requested from them in the implementation of this module. The interviews with Representations suggested the deliverables received produced under this module seldom meet their quality expectations, unless carried out by external consultants.

However, there is evidence from individual EDICs in France, Sweden and the UK that have undertaken this module that it can be very useful in shaping future activities. One EDIC in Sweden and one in France reported choosing this module every year as it was perceived as very useful for evaluating and developing in the action plan for the next year. Another EDIC in the UK used this module for mapping networks and partners in the region. In addition, it was noted that the module helps EDICs to demonstrate to their host structures the quality of their work.

The case study interviews suggested that an explanation of the module and its purpose is needed to EDICs. It also underlined the need for the Headquarters to provide guidance on the structure, methods and concrete tools to guide the process of self-evaluation.

It would furthermore be useful to develop the Module as the Management Guidelines already require EDICs to list the expected results; however these are not linked to SMART criteria[87]. In addition, the benchmarking exercise as well as interviews with DG COMM and Representations also underlined the need to relate the module activities to concrete expected outcomes and some quality assessment, rather than mere outputs.

Module 11 – other activities

Module 11 should cover innovative activities proposed by the host structure. Some examples of activities included under this module include study trips (e.g. UK) and highly creative or events that do not fit under other modules (e.g. poetry context, flash mob in Italy).

The module is currently little used and is mostly used by host structures to justify their part of the co-funding.

4.6 Monitoring system and activities

According to the Management guidelines the EDIC network monitoring is to consist of monitoring visits, financial checks and audits.

Monitoring visits are to be conducted on the basis of the provisions of the Framework agreement, which states that by signing the framework agreement, the host structure

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[87] The Guidelines go further and request EDICs to develop indicators to assess satisfactory completion of Module 11 – innovative actions.

undertakes to fully cooperate with annual or occasional checks on the implementation of the framework agreement and/or the specific agreements.

The monitoring visits to the EDICs in their country are the responsibility of Representations. Headquarters staff members may also perform monitoring visits in the context of in-country missions and in coordination with the Representation concerned. According to the Management guidelines the monitoring visits have the following purpose:

- Obtain reasonable assurance that the objectives of the framework and specific agreements are achieved;
- Provide tailor made guidance, assistance and support to the EDIC's operations; and
- Foster a working partnership with the EDICs' host structures at a local and regional level.

The monitoring visits should be completed with reports with assessment and indications for follow up. As such, the Monitoring guidelines[88] provide the main elements to be taken into account when preparing and performing a monitoring visit, to ensure the application of equal and consistent standards in monitoring.

EC Representations are also to regularly monitor the activities of the EDICs via the Intranet.

Finally, financial check and audits are to be carried out by Commission staff centrally or by an external body commissioned to do so. The case study work has not pointed out any monitoring activities organised by the Headquarters in the sample countries, while the interviews with DG COMM staff suggest that those activities take place in the previous network generation.

4.6.1 Monitoring by Representations

Case studies indicate that monitoring visits have been undertaken by eight of the 14 Representations consulted. They further suggest that Representations undertake a number of other activities to monitor the EDICs' activities and operations. The main types of Representations' monitoring activities have been mapped in the Table below:

Table 4.36   Monitoring by Representations in the case study countries

	AT	BG	CZ	DE	ES	FI	FR	GR	PL	PT	LT	NL	SE	UK
Monitoring visits	*			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		*
Monitoring on ED intranet			✓			✓		✓			✓			
Reporting checks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitoring of EDIC activities		✓		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Mystery shopping									✓			✓		

Source: Case study visits (Representation reported monitoring visits planned for the future)*

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[88] Guidelines for Monitoring Visits to the Europe Direct Information Centres.

4.6.2   Usefulness of monitoring

Formal visits

Of the 14 Representations consulted only one reported to have a monitoring visits plan (although it had undertaken no visits so far in the current network period). The case study work further suggests that Austrian Representation is planning monitoring visits in 2012 and the UK has just started a round of monitoring visits as in the last few years there have been some staffing issues.

Representations in two countries argued that the monitoring visits in their country were of little relevance as the Representations tend anyway to visit most EDICs in the framework of participating in their activities. In fact informal visits have to some extent been replacing the role of the monitoring visits in a number of EU-15 Member States (e.g. Finland, Sweden and Austria).

However, some Representations argued for increasing the importance and the number of monitoring visits as well as the financial checks and audits to be carried out centrally (by Unit D of DG COMM). The Representation in Greece underlined the need for two to three monitoring visits per year. The Representation in the Netherlands also underlined the importance of monitoring visits as a way to check that the EU taxpayers' money is well spent. The Representations in Greece and Spain (Barcelona) also called for more controls from DG COMM each year during the period before the submission of EDIC final reports.

At the moment there are no requirements concerning the number or a share of EDICs to be monitored through the monitoring visits. The Representations are responsible for defining the sample of EDICs to be included in the yearly monitoring visits plan, based on the criteria pre-defined by the Monitoring guidelines. The Representations are required to transmit monitoring visits plans to DG COMM within the first three months of the year for which the plan is drafted. However, only one such plan (from Slovenia) was reported to have been received by DG COMM in the current implementation period.

In addition, the case studies highlighted that not all Representations are aware of the monitoring requirements and there are differences in the perceived need for monitoring (with some Representations finding it unnecessary, while others would like to undertake more monitoring).

Equally, not all Representations were aware of the existence of the Guidelines for Monitoring Visits to the EDICs as well as the requirement to set up an annual or multi-annual monitoring visits plan (updated annually in the latter case) with a requirement to transmit it to DG COMM. However, when Representations were familiar with the Monitoring Guidelines, they were seen as overall adequate.

It was also indicated that monitoring visits should be a complementary tool to the regular monitoring of the EDICs' activities through the ED intranet.

Intranet

Only four of the 14 Representations consulted reported undertaking regular checks of the EDIC reporting on the ED intranet for monitoring purposes. Representations have different awareness and interpretation of the compulsory requirement to undertake regular network monitoring via intranet. While some do very little to no monitoring online, others have made it a contractual obligation for the EDICs to fill in information on the intranet by given deadlines.

Informal visits

All Representations also reported having an informal and ad hoc contact with the EDICs and some sort of monitoring through reporting (in the UK, most of the monitoring was reported to be done through an analysis of the reports). This was followed by informal monitoring of EDIC activities, implemented through participation and verification of information on the

events organised by EDICs, verification of materials produced by centres and monitoring of their websites.

In addition, many Representations reported informal visits to EDICs as a way to establish contact with the EDIC Manager, monitor and participate in EDIC activities, and gather feedback on EDICs' operations (undertaken by roughly a half of all Representations – e.g. Sweden, Portugal and Bulgaria). Representations in countries with more EDICs (e.g. France) reported difficulties visiting and familiarising themselves with all EDICs. It was also underlined that while the EDICs activities become more outgoing it is hard to check the quality of events (e.g. in Bulgaria).

Mystery shopping

Two Representations in the Netherlands and Poland reported undertaking "mystery shopping" to monitor EDICs' services, either by walking in the centres or by calling or e-mailing these with enquiries (and then checking on the quality of responses). At least in the Netherlands, this monitoring practice has yielded results (although not always flattering to the EDICs).

4.6.3 Resources for monitoring

The majority of the Network Correspondents consulted felt that they do not have sufficient resources (time and budget) to carry out thorough monitoring (e.g. AT, DE, ES, FR, GR, NL, PL and PT). The Correspondents noted that monitoring visits to an EDIC located in a region may take up to one full day and that Representations currently do not foresee an allocation of such resources for monitoring visits.

It was also underlined that formal monitoring and informal monitoring (of all the centres), requiring developed personal relationships, may be more challenging in countries with relatively many EDICs (e.g. France). The allocation of staff by Representations to monitor the quality of the undertaken activities or events may be further complicated by the staff turnover in EDICs and the perceived under staffing in both EDICs and Representations.

The interviews further suggested that if monitoring visits are perceived important by the headquarters, the need for these visits should be communicated directly to the Heads of the Representations personally. Such communication could make the justification of the monitoring visits as well as ensure the allocation of the required resources.

4.6.4 Use of monitoring

According to the Monitoring guidelines monitoring visits reports should be produced shortly after each monitoring visit. These reports are to include the findings of the monitoring visit alongside conclusions of the assessment and recommendations for follow up. The reports are to be sent to the Head of the Representation and the concerned host structure for follow up.

Five monitoring reports have been gathered by DG COMM in 2011 and reviewed in the framework of this evaluation (one report from Estonia, one from Spain and three from Germany). The reports are of varied length, but overall follow the requirements of the Monitoring guidelines. As per the Guidelines, these reports also include conclusions and recommendations for improving the operations of the EDIC reviewed. However, the interviews with the Network Correspondents suggest that there should be a clearer indication on the extent Reps should check the finances i.e. by using the "Checklist/ Report: Financial Procedures and Accounting[89]".

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[89] The checklist is part of the Estonian monitoring visits report, but not included in the other reports provided.

Since most of the monitoring undertaken by Representations is informal, it is also predominantly used for informal purposes – for example, on improving relationships between the Network Correspondent and EDIC managers, creating awareness of the EDIC activities and performance, exchanging information, gathering feedback, guiding activities and promoting good practice. In cases where EDICs collect participant feedback on the events they organise or activities they carry out or media monitoring they undertake also this information may be collected by Representations for monitoring purposes.

There are some examples from the Network Correspondent interviews of more formal use of the monitoring results. For example, in Greece these have been used for auditing purposes, while there is evidence from Spain that the monitoring results are used to ensure that EDICs are performing on the required standard level.

Nevertheless, there is an untapped potential for a more widespread monitoring as well as the use of the monitoring visits reports to inform and guide the development of the national networks. For example, the Representation in the UK suggested that the intranet, if improved and used regularly for reporting, could be used to access timely information to check where the Representation needs to go for monitoring visits (e.g. flagging issues with the clarity of reporting, EU angle on activities, quality, etc.). Furthermore, more regular monitoring (two to three monitoring visits / reports per year), if implemented uniformly across Member States, could also provide valuable data and insights to any subsequent external evaluations.

4.7 Reporting system

Reporting is one of the key requirements in the Framework agreement. Its aim is for the Representations to get a better sense of the EDIC activities on the local level

The reporting on the EDIC network activities is undertaken via ED intranet. The reporting is organised on a monthly basis in module-specific forms. The host structure is required to fill in the various fields of the reporting tool as detailed as possible so as to be able to meet the reporting requirements of Article 4.2 of the Specific Agreement. It is envisaged that the host structure should be able to print a single list of all of its activities for the whole year, or month by month for its final report.

4.7.1 Requirements for EDIC reporting

There is a general consensus that the reporting requirements are clear and the EDICs are satisfied with the reporting system. During case study interviews EDICs mostly described the reporting as "*appropriate*", "*reasonable*" and "*adequate*".

However, the interpretation of how regularly the reporting should be done and also the time allocated to fulfil the requirements varies greatly across the EDICs and the Representations. In addition, the case studies identified an important number of suggestions to be considered for refinement of the reporting obligations and process that could improve the quality of the data and save time in reporting in the future.

The EDIC survey contained questions that were aimed at exploring the views of the Centres regarding the reporting obligations with which they have to comply and the changes that have occurred since 2009. As highlighted by Figure below the majority of EDICs expressed the view that current reporting requirements relating to the development of action plans (78%), monthly reporting (70%) and the development of final reports (75%) are 'reasonable', with some slight variance between the different types of reporting tasks.

While a strong majority of respondents felt that the reporting obligations are 'reasonable', one quarter of EDICs surveyed felt that monthly reporting on actions via the Europe Direct intranet was 'excessive'. Regarding the annual final reports and the annual work plans the same opinion was expressed by 20% and 18% of the respondents respectively. Only 4-5% of the EDICs that responded to the survey felt that reporting requirements are 'not adequate'.

Figure 4.28 The reporting requirements were largely deemed to be 'reasonable' by the majority of EDICs
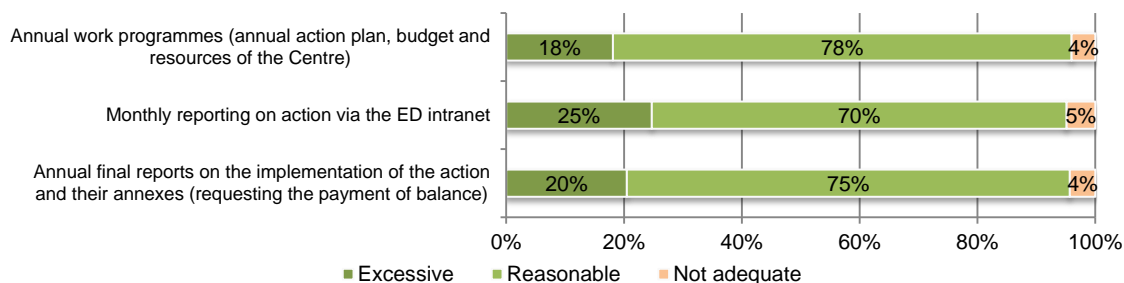
Source: EDIC survey; base = 348

The case studies' evidence suggests that some EDICs welcome the monthly reporting as it allows and facilitates the compiling of final reports at the end of the year. In many instances, however, EDICs reported that the requirement to report on the ED intranet once a month is too frequent. Furthermore, the monitoring data for 2011 from the ED intranet show that many of the EDICs do not actually report once a month.

This also might have an impact on the quality of the monitoring data and could be addressed by more stringent online monitoring checks by Representations and host structures. During the Network Correspondent meeting in Brussels[90], the Representations highlighted that for EDICs, where the majority of funding is actually from elsewhere, the reporting was burdensome. They put forward a recommendation for quarterly reporting.

4.7.2   Reporting requirements – previous and current generation

Half of the EDICs (49%) who responded to the survey felt that the reporting requirements had become 'a little' less burdensome in the second generation of the EDIC network (i.e. from 2009 onwards) and a further 30% of EDICs indicated that the reporting requirements have eased "a lot" in the current period. Exactly one fifth of EDICs (20%) felt that there had been no easing of reporting requirements since 2009.

Overall the results of the interviews undertaken in the framework of the case studies and with Representations support the findings of the survey regarding the easing of the reporting requirements and process in comparison to the previous generation. Apart from content focus to be adjusted and technical issues to be improved in the reporting tool, most stakeholders consulted indicated that the overall reporting system has improved, especially on the administration side (e.g. FR, LT, NL, PL, SE and UK). Some individual interviewees also described the system as more effective and user-friendly.

Evidence from the case studies and from the Representation interviews, report that the financial management of the grants has improved with fewer resources needed for financial accountability than in the previous generation (particularly Bulgaria, Germany and Lithuania). At the same time as being less time consuming the reporting system was described as more rigorous in terms of ensuring that activities have been undertaken as specified.

4.7.3   Actions to improve reporting

As part of the EDIC survey and case studies the EDICs and Representations were asked what actions could be taken to improve the reporting system. The main improvements

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[90] Network correspondents' meeting 13/14 October 2011

required were related to facilitating and simplifying EDIC reporting on the ED intranet and making it more directly relevant for the Representations to review EDIC activities.

Some interviewees underlined that the monthly and final reports filled in by EDICs on ED intranet do not permit the full diversity and the real extent of EDICs activities to be represented (e.g. in Finland and France). Issues related to the use of the intranet for reporting are presented in the section 4.8.3.5. The consultations with Representations and the discussions in the 2011 Network Correspondent event have also underlined the need to create a more common understanding regarding the regularity of reporting. Representations have proposed making the reporting an annual or quarterly requirement rather than monthly, as this would allow more time for implementing field activities. However, the overall satisfaction with the reporting system and the case studies' interviews suggest EDICs currently do not have major objections regarding the frequency of their reporting. It could also be argued that EDICs may find it difficult to keep track of their performance and activities data if reporting is less frequent than monthly.

4.8 Support services and tools

EDICs are assisted in their mission by a number of support services. These aim at providing material directly useful for the daily activities of the EDICs (mission of informing) as well as providing the EDICs with the adequate skills enabling them to fulfil their mission. Finally, other activities focus on the cooperation and communication amongst EDICs as well as wider promotion.

Some of the services are provided directly by the European Commission, whereas others are provided through the three sub-contractors ESN, Demos and Eworx. The main types of support services are:

- The European Commission:
  - Promotion material;
  - Publications;
- Contractors:
  - ESN:
    - Regular information products;
    - Information exchange;
    - Promotion activities
  - Eworx: the intranet
  - Demos:
    - Training seminars,
    - Annual general meetings

This section looks at each of those services in turn.

4.8.1 Promotional material

The European Commission produces a series of promotional materials which are sent to the EDICs and take different forms including USB sticks, rulers, pens, mugs, Post-Its, bags, key holders, carnet memo, etc.

In general, the case studies showed that promotional materials are used principally by proactive EDICs and less by those only undertaking the information provision modules. This is complemented by some promotional material produced by the EDICs themselves.

Promotional materials are considered as an important support. EDICs usually distribute them at events where they are used to attract people to the EDIC's stand. Promotional materials are also sometimes used as prizes for the EDICs' contest activities (e.g. Wheel of Fortune in

PL, quiz games in FR, etc.). Often, they are also distributed at schools when requested by teachers for their students/pupils.

Promotional material are said to have a lot of success, in particular among young people. USB sticks, pens, rulers and post-its are said to be the most successful materials whereas key holders are said to be of no use.

The great majority of the EDICs also reported that the number of materials they receive each year is insufficient. Very often, when participating at events and fairs, EDICs quickly run out of promotional material. Another issue is that sometimes the material is not delivered in a timely fashion and delivery should be for example tied into events such as Europe days and ensure that the right quantity is delivered based on the proposed activities.

4.8.2   Publications

Publications are available to EDICs on a wide variety of topics. The most useful ones for them focus on youth-related issues and general information on the EU, relating to the main users of the services of the EDICs. These publications are promoted mostly in public spaces and at fairs. The extent to which the publications are perceived to meet the needs of the EDICs and their users is quite mixed: some of the publications received are too technical, not in the right languages. At the same time, when some are appropriate, it is impossible to order large enough quantities of them. This section presents those aspects in details, as well as options to further improve the system of publications received.

Topics of publications: availability and needs

EDICs have access to the material issued by the Publications Office which is available from the EU bookshop. It is free of charge. These publications are issued by all EU institutions, including all European Commission DGs. As presented in the Figure below the publications available to EDICs mostly cover issues related to scientific and technical research (a third of available publications), followed by social issues (one in tenth publications). Only 9% of publications actually cover issues of information-education-culture and sport and 7% on the activities of the European Union.

Figure 4.29   Number of publications available through the EU bookshop[91]

- Scientific and technical research
- Social
- Information - Education - Culture - Sport
- Energy
- Economy - Finance
- Activities of the European Union
- Environment - Ecology
- Industry - Enterprise - Services
- External relations
- Agriculture - Forestry - Fisheries
- Trade - Competition
- Law and justice
- Transport

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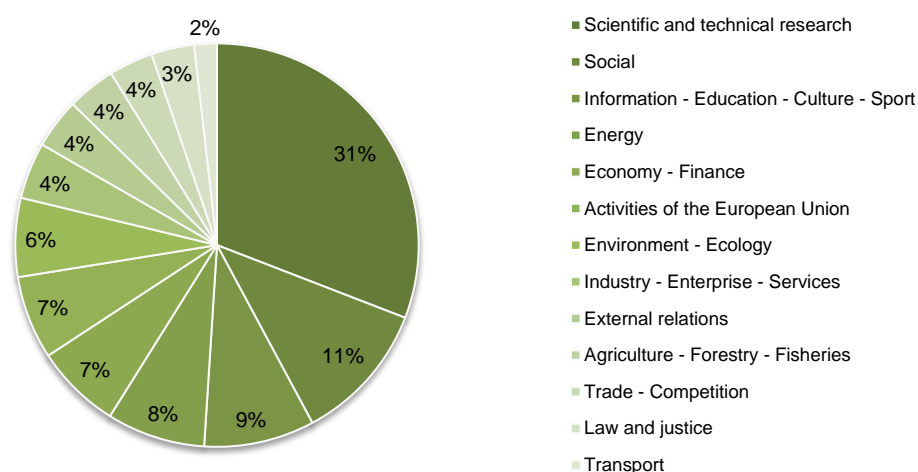
[91] Checked on the 28 November 2011

At the same time, EDICs need generalist information. Three quarters of EDICs surveyed by ESN in 2011 on their needs in publications expressed that they need general rather than specialised information. This is also reflected by the fact that the major topics of interests for publications or the EDICs are: Facts about Member States (72 %), how the EU institutions work (71 %), and the rights of EU citizens (64%).

Figure 4.30   Need for basic information
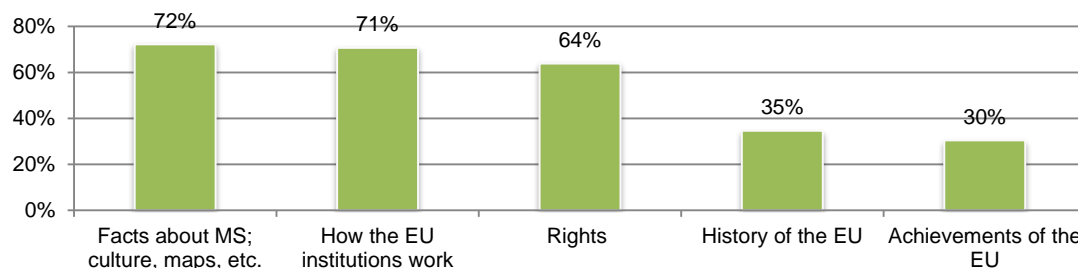
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 263

In addition, a clear majority of EDICs surveyed (91%) expressed that it would be useful for them to have a series of brochures covering the most important or interesting EU policies. In terms of specialised information, EDICs need information on topics that are thought to affect citizens' daily lives. In a survey carried out by ESN in 2011, around three quarters of EDICs expressed their need to receive information on "Youth on the Move" (74%) and the "Agenda for new skills and jobs" (72%).

Figure 4.31   Need for specialist information
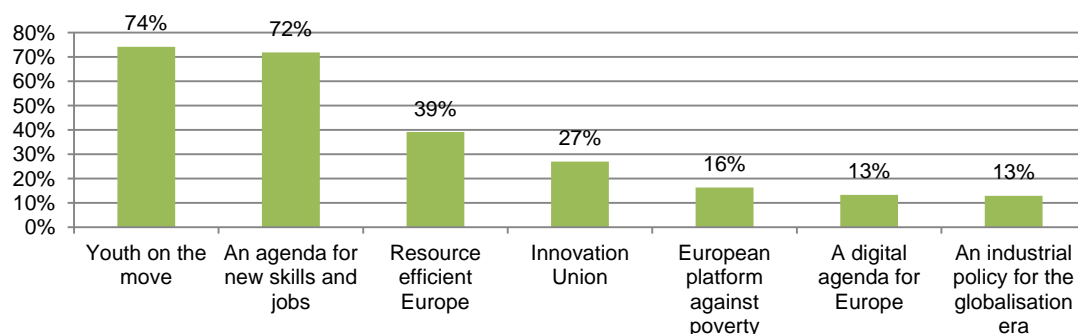
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 263

Target groups for publications

Overall, EDICs have a significant need for publications targeting the youth, children and their teachers. For a striking majority of EDICs (almost 90% of EDICs surveyed) young people should be the target of EU publications, whereas teachers account for 61% and children up to 14 for 41%. In comparison, the overall working population would account for 58%.

Figure 4.32   Groups which should be the main target of EU publications
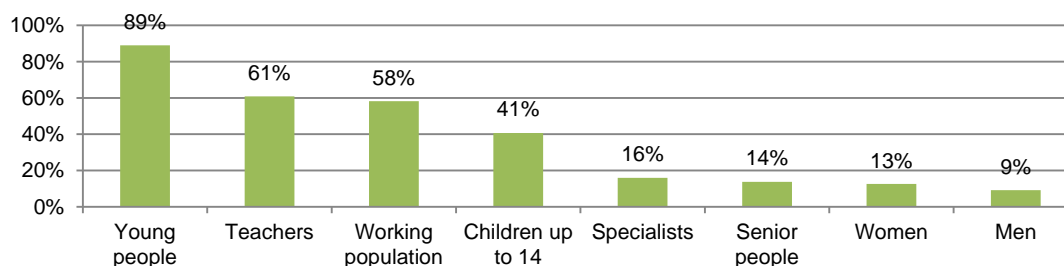
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 63

Consequently, EDICs tend to have a clear preference for children's publications and material. "Travelling in Europe", "Europe in 12 lessons", "Let's explore Europe", the map wall chart in particular tend to be highly appreciated by more than two thirds of EDICs. The publications which are more technical, more focused on a given policy area and for an older public tend to be less appreciated. To a lesser extent other publications are appreciated by the EDICs users (e.g. "History Wall Chart", "Key facts and figures", "Europe and You", "Combating climate change", "Your guide to Lisbon Treaty", How the EU works") whereas very specialised publications such as "An opportunity and a challenge – Migration in the EU" and "Europe for women" are not really so appreciated. These are appreciated because they are user-friendly both in layout and information provided.. EDICs and users met during the case studies expressed that it would be beneficial to have similar publications available for a larger publication as well as on focused topics, e.g. a generic brochure explaining the EU for adults, or very specialised – but understandable – brochures on specific EU policies. Short format documents were also said to be appreciated. Interactive publications in the form of quizzes or games were also stated by several EDICs as being needed.

Figure 4.33   Level of appreciation of publications
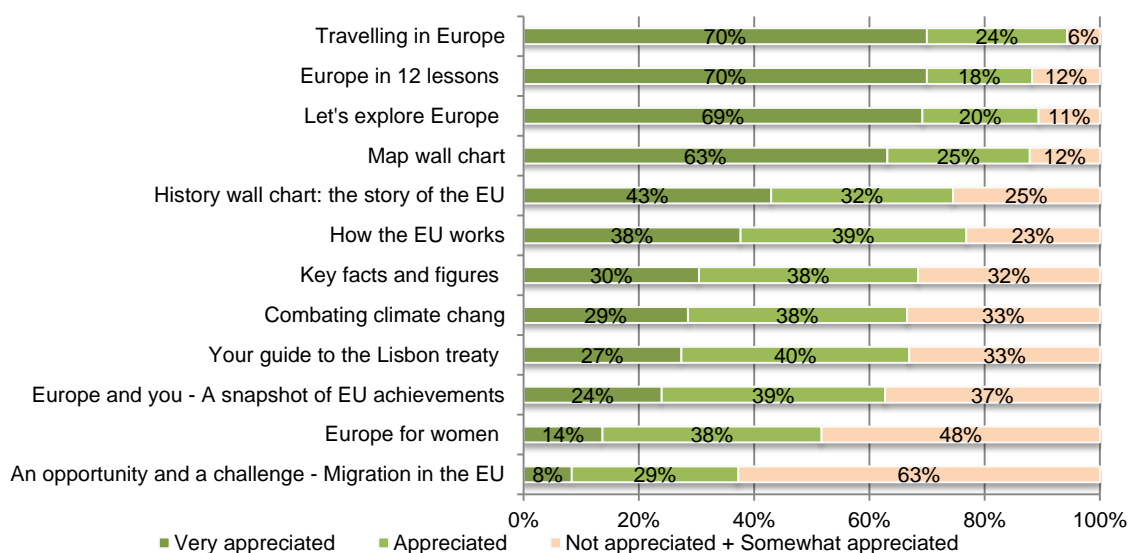
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 263

Evidence from actual users of the EDICs (survey and focus groups) confirms that EDICs' users need more general information as well as publications aimed at youth. The functioning of the EU was the most common topic for the publication and audio-visual material received by users who completed the user satisfaction survey (62%). In addition, educational material

was received by 43% of those who had received publications or materials. The third most important topic of publications and AV materials received as information on EU grants and programmes (received by 38% of users). Less than a third of users had received information on a specific EU policy or theme (29%), while only one quarter had received information on personal rights as an EU citizen across the survey respondents (26%). The extent of interest of the EDIC publication materials on the EU response to the financial crisis was low with just one in ten requesting information (9%).

Figure 4.34   Topic of publications or audio-visual material received from EDICs
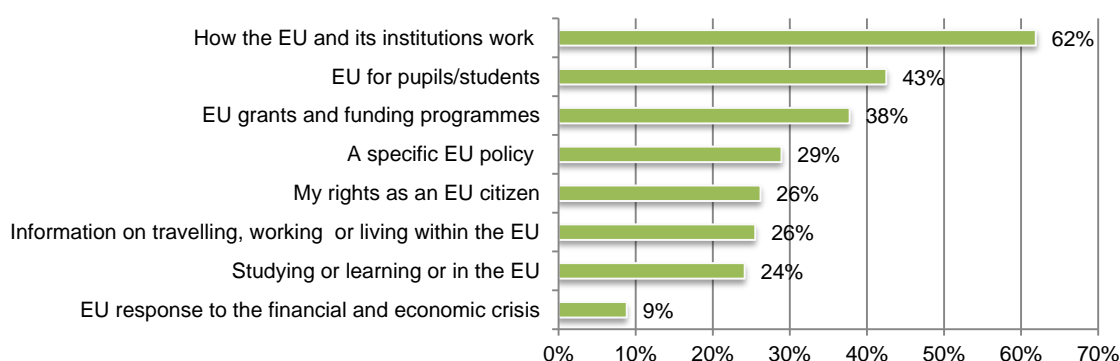
Source: EDIC user survey; base = 294

At the same time, the users of the publications and audio-visual materials request them mostly for professional reasons (70%). It appears than in many cases, the publications tend to be used by professors and teachers (a third of those who completed the user satisfaction survey), followed by those working in local or regional authorities. This explains the need for publication for young people as well as overall information for the general public.

Usefulness of publications

EDICs assess the publications as a crucial tool for disseminating information on the EU. Out of the 263 EDICs surveyed by ESN in 2011 on their publications needs, more than three quarters (83%) stated that printed material should be prioritised as an EU information dissemination tool.

Figure 4.35   Tools which should be prioritised for providing EU-related information
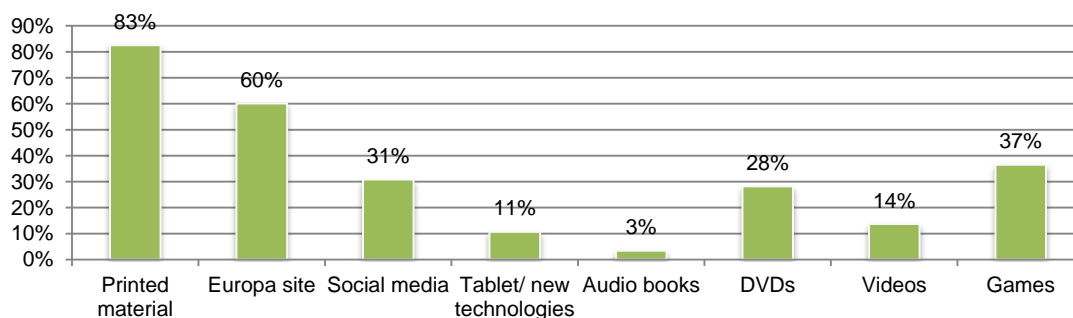
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 263

EDICs also consider for almost all of them (96% of the EDIC surveyed by ESN) that the publications should remain free of charge for users. It appeared to be crucial to make the publications available to the largest possible public, and especially to schools, school-related institutions and libraries. EDICs would not have the budget to purchase such publications and provide them for free to users. At the same time it is also considered that it is part of the

EU's role and information mission. Some EDICs, however, expressed the view that criticisms have appeared as to the waste of EU resources (EU taxpayer's contributions) in having too many publications, which can sometimes be too expensive to produce (e.g. layout, paper quality). In this regard, it was stressed that it is important to focus the production and diffusion of publications by target group and content.

Furthermore, the main channels which should be used for the diffusion of the publications should be the public spaces as well as electronic copies though Europa and via the EU bookshop. As presented in the Figure below distribution of hand-outs at events or distribution through mailing lists, on the contrary, tend not to be considered as important by EDICs.

Figure 4.36   Channels to be prioritised to distribute publications to citizens
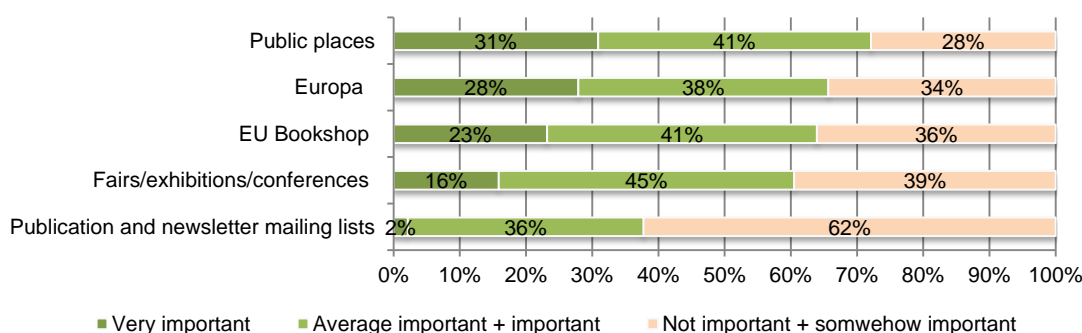
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 263

However, according to the EDIC survey undertaken for this study, only a third of EDICs stated that all or nearly all of European Commission publications were useful. The majority however felt that some publications were useful, while others were not (62%). This finding was confirmed during the case studies when EDICs had the impression of sometimes receiving material which was corresponding to their needs and was particularly useful and needed, whereas other times, they had no use of the material they were receiving (because these were too technical, in English or not corresponding to their needs more broadly). Just under one in ten felt that the majority of publications were not useful and were largely unused.

Figure 4.37   Usefulness of publications received from the Publications Office
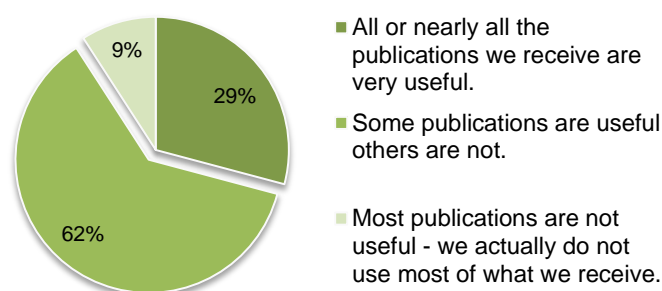
Source: EDIC Survey; base = 350

Satisfaction with publications

Overall EDICs were satisfied with the quality of language of publications as well as with their layout: between a third and two thirds of EDICs rated the most important publications ("Europe in 12 lessons", "How the EU works" and "Key facts and figures") as being very good in terms of layout and language, with an additional third to over a half of EDICs rating them

as rather good. Only for "An opportunity and a challenge – Migration in the EU" were EDICs on average more on the "rather good" side than "very good", as presented in the Figure below. Similarly, more than 67% of surveyed EDICs rate the length of publication as about the right length.

Figure 4.38   Satisfaction with quality of language and layout in publications
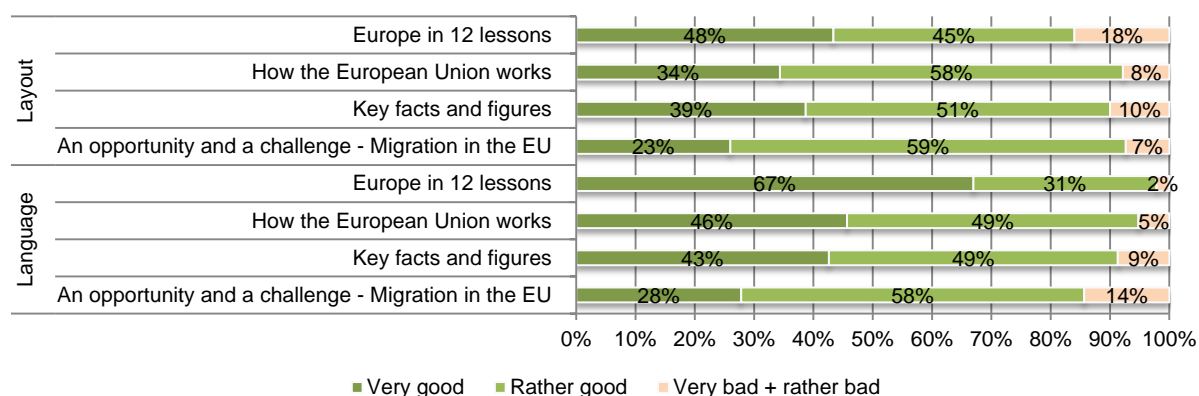
Source: ESN 2011 Publications survey; base = 263

However, the interviews with the EDICs and the focus groups during the case studies expressed the strong need to ensure that all relevant publications are available in their mother tongue. Indeed, some of the publications are available only in English, or potentially in French and German; however, this prevents other citizens of the EU who do not speak those languages from reading them.

Publications delivery mechanism

At the moment, more than two thirds of EDICs are satisfied with the system and stated they were able to provide feedback and request new or different publications (according to the EDIC survey). However, the case studies showed that the efficiency of the delivery system can still be improved.

The previous evaluation mentioned the issues of ordering and receiving adequate quantities of publications (p.61-61 of the Deloitte 2008 ED Relay Evaluation). Views of the current system and as to whether it has improved since then were mixed: a slight improvement was mentioned, but overall the issues remained similar. The previous system had set up the use of the Bookshop for ordering, in addition to which unsolicited deliveries from DGs were also received. This resulted in a mismatch between the content of the issues and the size of the order compared to the needs of the EDICs. The evolution towards the use of the EU bookshop for ordering had proven to be efficient as EDICs have a larger control over their orders.

At the moment, EDICs tend to receive publications based almost equally on ordering for themselves and automatically based on prior orders. According to the ESN survey on publications, 47% of EDICs tend to order publications themselves via the EU Bookshop and 53% tend to be delivered based on order in prior surveys concerning the first delivery of a new publication.

EDICs encountered difficulties sometimes in finding suitable publications. As such, a large share of EDICs would welcome a training session on searching information on EU publications and ordering publications via the Bookshop.

Figure 4.39   Usefulness of training on search for information on EU publications and on order of publications (Bookshop)

■ Very useful and useful

■ Somehow useful

■ Not useful
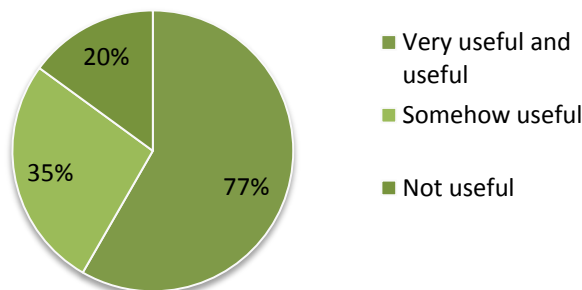
Source: ESN 2010 Survey on training needs; base = 36

Also, during the case studies, EDICs expressed some limits to the EU bookshop:

- The size of orders for a single publication is limited: when EDICs have a strong need and use for the publications, they need to develop techniques to order more than the limit (e.g. making several orders). This can be an important issue when this concerns the publications which are the most popular amongst EDICs' users;

- EU bookshop is not up to date and the availability of recent publications is not clear (for a few publications, the distinction between old and new versions is unclear);

- New publications are not clearly visible and EDICs feel they might miss some of them;

- EU bookshop lacks user-friendliness and users have sometimes issues making simple orders.

In addition, the current mechanism which implies that the Publication Office sends one example of publication prior to them making the order was considered as wasteful: when the publication does not meet the needs of the EDICs (in terms of content or format) it is a wasteful system in terms of space required to store them, paper used to print them as well as time managing them.

A solution which could be put forward in this regard would be to dispense with sending example publications to the EDICs and instead to set up a simple regular email alert for new publications which they can then view or download as a pdf from the central bookshop. It may also be possible to do this before the printing by the office, thus allowing EDICs to influence print runs on publications of most interest.

4.8.3   Contractors services and activities

The Commission is assisted in supporting EDIC information and communication activities of the network by service providers. The on-going service contracts for information management, communication and promotion (lot 1), intranet site for communicating and networking (lot 2); and training sessions and networking activities (lot 3) were awarded early 2010 and were allocated as follows[92]:

- Lot 1 - information communication and promotion: ESN;
- Lot 2 - Intranet: Eworx;

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[92] http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:39130-2010:TEXT:EN:HTML

- Lot 3 - training and network meetings: Demos

The three sub-contractors operate their activities under a framework defined by DG COMM, which provides with a format, scope and coverage for activities. The definition of activities is made on the basis of policy decisions of DG COMM as well as the needs of EDICs: these are assessed through evaluations of training activities and surveys of interests prior to AGMs by Demos and surveys on publications and training needs by ESN. The results of these analyses feed into the analysis of the remainder of the section.

4.8.3.4   *Information, communication and promotion*

ESN was contracted by the European Commission to carry out activities and deliver products related to the provision of EU information to EDICs, the communication between them and the promotion of their activities.

A main category of products ESN delivers to the EDICs within its contract are editorial products: these overall aim at informing EDICs about EU news, providing them with information they can use in their daily, as well as ensuring diffusion of information amongst EDICs and to external audiences. ESN is also responsible for surveys ensuring an efficient working practice of the EDICs through and assessment of their satisfaction and needs for support services. It manages a Pan-European working group that brings together some EDICs to exchange their best practices on a given topic. This is completed by online chats and fora where EDICs can communicate directly amongst themselves. Finally, ESN carries out some promotional activities.

Most of the products are available on the Intranet: the daily news, factsheets, the e-newsletter, the annual reports, the PEWG and online fora and chats. In addition, the e-newsletter is promoted via email and the Annual reports are also sent in paper copy to all EDICs. Finally, the survey is promoted by email.

The detail of those activities is presented in the table below.

Table 4.37   Overview of ESN's support activities

Products	Objectives	Target groups	Frequency	No of users	Topics
ESN: Information, communication and promotion (lot 1)					
Editorial products					
Daily news on EU topical development	To provide members with information on a particular issue.	EDN members	Daily	580 views per month (Eworx statistics)	Various
Thematic factsheets on EU policies	Background on policy areas	EDN members	1 per month 10 per year	45 per month (Erwox statistics)	Various
"Yours directly" – e-newsletter	For members to share views about their activities – networking	EDN although more related to EDICs	Every two months	50 views per month (Erwox statistics)	Various
Annual Report	Promotion activity	Wide	1 per year	Sent to all EDICs	Presentation of activities
Other products					

Products	Objectives	Target groups	Frequency	No of users	Topics
Online surveys	Need and satisfaction	EDN	3 per year	Average 50% response rate	Various, media, Intranet product needs
Pan-European working group	To pool expertise and make it available.	EDICs	3 in 2010	22 members per group	Media relations. Web 2.0 tools Online repositories etc
Online fora and chat sessions	Fora: To share examples and good practices discussed during the PEWGs.	EDICs	4 in 2011	All	Media relations; Web 2.0 tools etc

ESN's contract is completed following a series of modules, which encompass the above-mentioned activities, which are proposed to DG COMM and agreed at the beginning of the year. In 2011 the selected modules were:

- Module 2: Management of 3 surveys;
- Module 4: Edition of 10 thematic factsheets (EN, FR, DE) and daily e-news;
- Module 5: Management of 3 Pan-European Working Groups (PEWGs);
- Module 7: Edition of e-newsletters (EN);
- Module 8: Management of online fora and 6 chat sessions;
- Module 9: Promotion activities.

Use of ESN's products

The extent to which the products developed by ESN are actually used tends to be low. Data from the case studies would tend to show that EDICs do not make much use of these tools, which would be confirmed by the Intranet statistics.

This general trend appears to be supported by information available on the use of support products by EDICs, such as the recent survey carried out by ESN on support activities. The different products tend on average to be used only occasionally: this is the case for more than half of the EDICs and up to more than two thirds. In terms of individual tools, the most frequently used are not those produced by ESN but rather training material. Amongst the ESN products, the E-news is the most frequently used, followed by the newsletter and the factsheet. Their use is quite limited though.

Figure 4.40   Frequency of use of support products on the Intranet

	Never	Occasionally	Regularly
Other items/other yibrary documents	18%	66%	15%
Other items on the ED intranet/training materiays	15%	73%	12%
E-news	20%	51%	29%
ED newsyetter	13%	58%	28%
ED fact sheet	17%	65%	17%
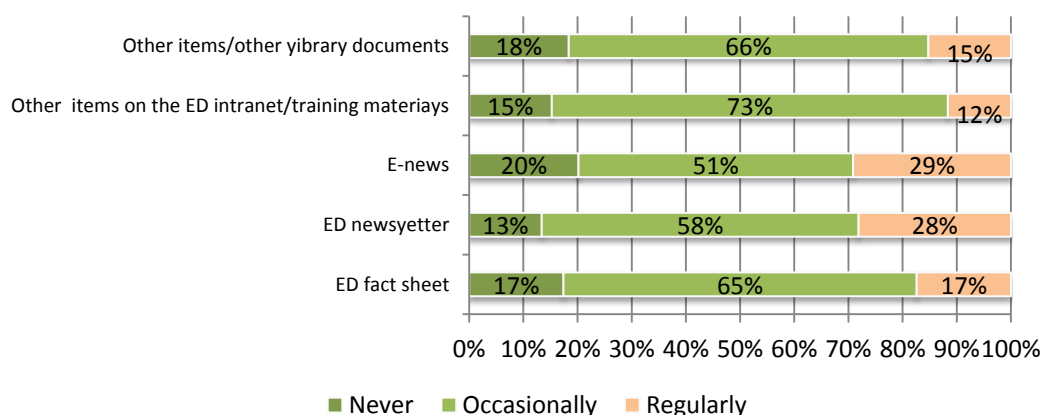
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

Of those who indicate they are not using the products, a vast majority find it does not cover their needs. This is followed closely by those who do not have products in their working language. In addition, 18% expressed that the documents are difficult to find, whereas 17% that they are unaware when the new issues are available.

Figure 4.41   Reasons for never accessing the products on the Intranet
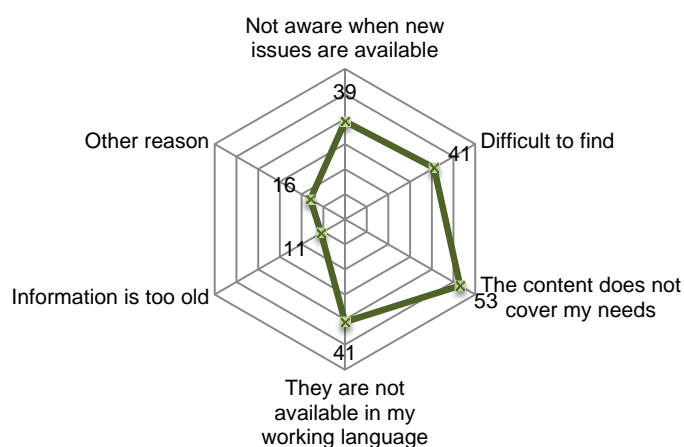
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

The issue of language of the products was supported by the fact that more than a quarter of EDICs surveyed by ESN stated they would read the factsheets and newsletter more often if these were made available in other languages.

Figure 4.42   Satisfaction with the language of fact sheets and newsletters

	Fully agree	Partly agree	Disagree	I don't know
I would read the newlsetters more often if it was also published in French and German	25%	15%	52%	8%
I would read the factsheets more often if they were published not only in English, French and German	33%	22%	34%	10%
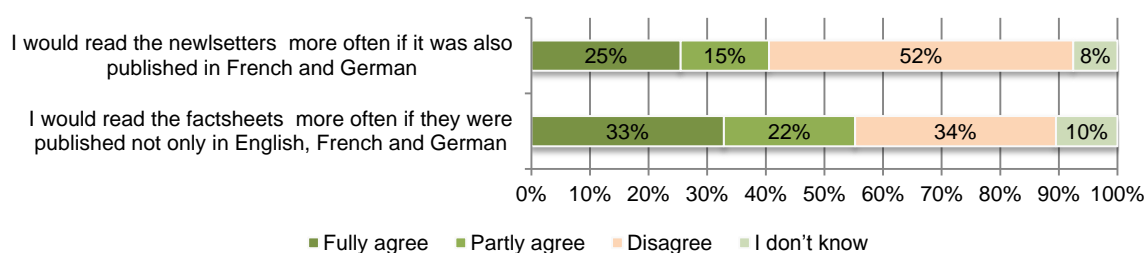
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

With regard to the low visibility of the products, the use of the Intranet for accessing products is limited. The statistics of the Intranet available for the period November 2010-May 2011 is patchy and covers access to the Intranet of all users (including EDICs, EDC and Team Europe). However, the data would suggest low visits of the following pages:

- News and announcements were viewed an average 580 times a month.

- Each newsletter is viewed on average only by 23 unique visitors.

- The 12 factsheets loaded onto the Intranet during the last reporting period were viewed 255 times in total, an average of 45 times per month.

With regard to the low use of ESN products as reported by the Intranet statistics, one explanation could be the limited amount of time spent on the Intranet by EDICs for information purpose, as opposed to reporting. Additionally, it could also be that promotion of the intranet as an information source is not well developed, thus preventing the visibility of tools developed by ESN.

EDICs also mentioned they were overloaded with information. The fact they tend to use other sources for the information they look for. As such, the Intranet is not the first source of information used by EDICs for looking for information to reply to a request from a citizen, to prepare an event, or to give a speech. Amongst the EDICs surveyed by ESN, the large majority (more than three quarters) use the Europa website, slightly less the website of their Representation. The Rapid database is used by half of the EDICs whereas only 44% of the EDICs use the Intranet

Figure 4.43   Information sources used answer to a request, preparing an event, giving a speech
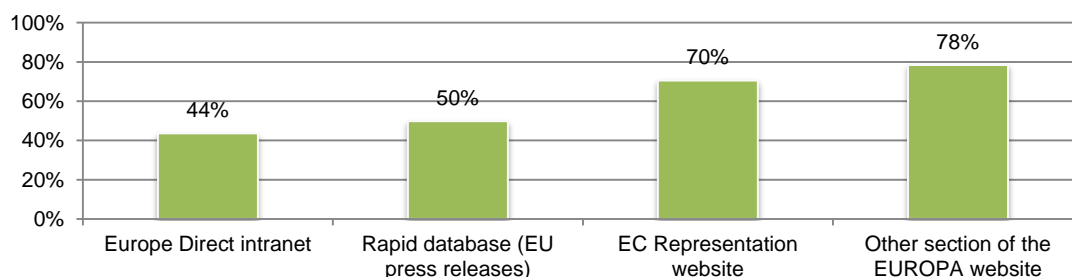
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

Usefulness of ESN's products

With regard to the newsletter and the factsheets, less than half of the EDICs found the content as being useful on average. The most useful topics though of ED factsheets tend to be EU policy information and facts and figures, whereas for newsletter it would be good practice and life of the network and information on forthcoming events.

Figure 4.44   Usefulness of content in the factsheets and newsletters
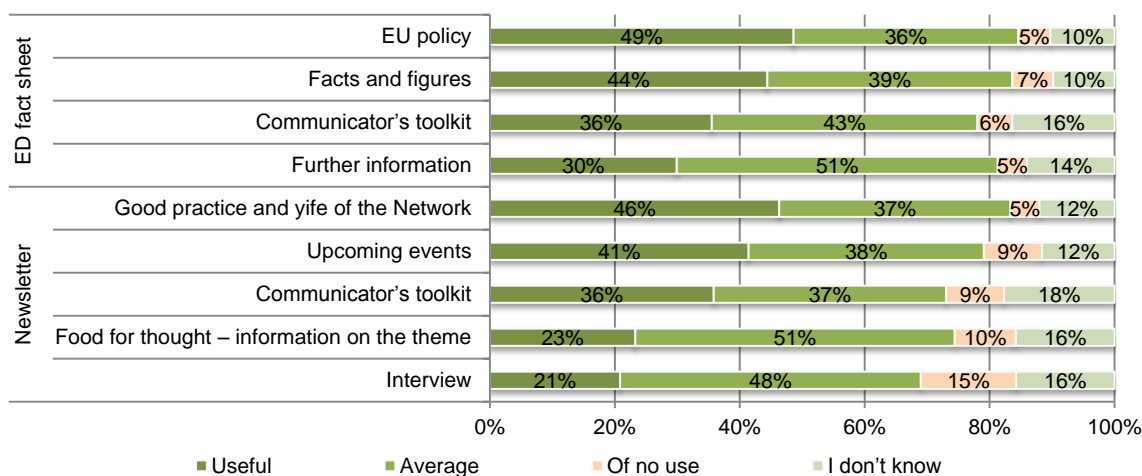
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

The data from the previous evaluation enables comparison of the evolution of satisfaction of the EDICs for the aspect of the newsletter relating to information provision as well as to the life of the network. Overall, the trends are similar with an increased satisfaction with the newsletter in the new generation.

Figure 4.45   Comparison of usefulness of newsletter between the 2008 and 2011 evaluations of EDICs
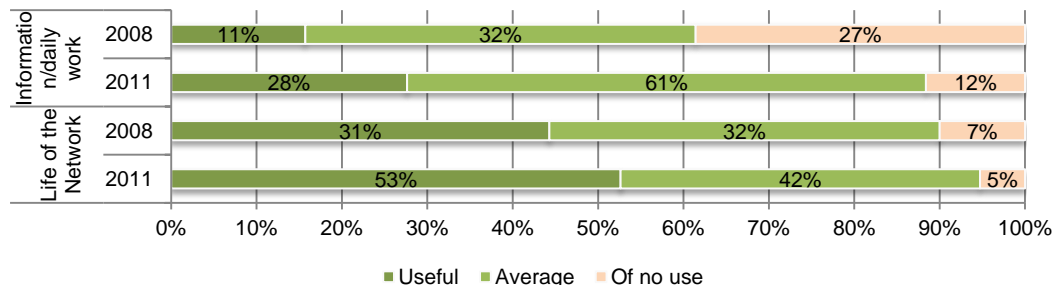
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; Base = 227 and 2008 Deloitte Evaluation of ED Relays

In addition, the news tends not to be of interest to users. The Intranet statistics indeed showed that visitors of the Intranet did not spend much time on the homepage and did not go to the news page: it could be that visitors would read the extract of the news from the homepage but would not actually go and read the full news section.

In contrast to the tools mentioned above, the Pan-European Working Groups (PEWG) are quite successful. This virtual platform which is restricted to 22 members always fulfils its "seats": in 2010 there were over 100 applications to join. According to ESN, the members are satisfied with the exchange that happens. The results of the discussion are shared on the open online fora. It must be noted though, that notwithstanding the success of this activity, it is quite limited if compared to its overall visibility amongst the whole network.

With regard to the remaining tools, limited feedback was obtained from users during the case studies. The Annual reports are a good tool to report in a very general way on the activities of the ED network as well as to present good practices. The fora and chat sessions are potentially very useful tools but are not very well known or used.

Finally, the online surveys are not used directly by the EDICs but help assessing the different tools produced by the three contractors.

Improvement of activities

The modules and related activities are continuously monitored by ESN and DG COMM in order to best address the needs of the EDICs. Formal feedback is collected on the different tools through the online surveys, the visits to the intranet pages is an indicator of their use, as is informal conversation during events where ESN is present.

The cooperation between DG COMM and ESN appears to be crucial in the development of the products as well as ensuring a sound understanding of expectations. As such, ESN is currently discussing with DG COMM the change of the activity on daily news to the provision of links on pieces of information that can be obtained through tools and product directly available from Europa (e.g. factsheets, brochures etc.). The survey on support services formulated a question in this regard: "Do you think a weekly selection of the most interesting information and communication products and services available on Europa (websites, AV products, online publications) would be useful, if this service was offered in future on the ED intranet?" Eighty four per cent of EDIC surveyed answered positively (10% did not know).

In addition, the e-newsletter, which originally was produced in English only, is now also produced in German and French (the number of e-newsletters has subsequently been reduced from 12 to 10 per year).

4.8.3.5   ED intranet

The Intranet is currently managed by Eworx, and has been running since October 2010. The Intranet is a central tool for the EDICs in the management and reporting of activities. It is also used for information provision as mentioned in the previous section. Finally, it is also a key tool for networking amongst the EDICs.

Functions of the Intranet

The homepage of the Intranet presents the latest news on the EU network (e.g. on the AGM in Malta), on the individual EDICs activities (e.g. conferences, project launch) as well as EU news (e.g. passengers' rights, Working Time Directive). It provides links to go and obtain further information on each of those. In addition, the Intranet offers a range of functions related to the three main objectives of the Intranet:

- Obtain EU news and information support;

- Report on their activities;

- Communicate amongst each other (networking)

The detail of each of those functions is presented in the table below:

Table 4.38   Intranet functions

Objective	Section	Description of the section
Main task's bar		
Reporting Networking	Contacts	Database of EDC, EDIC or Team Europe contacts. Possibility to extract the full contact list.
Reporting Networking	Library	Database where EDICs upload, share and search for documentation ranging from marketing material to manuals, to reports and evaluations. Users can use various categories as search functions such as: Communication Toolkit, Document, ED Factsheet, EDIC related material (e.g. reports, evaluations, etc), Info sheet, Manuals and Guidelines, Network Report, Photo

Objective	Section	Description of the section
		Gallery, Training Material, Audio & Video, Yours Directly - ED Newsletter.
Networking	Members Events	Database where EDICs upload their calendar of activities. Users can search for activities by country, by themes, by date or by target group.
Networking EDIC information	Networking Meetings	Database of annual general meetings, coordination meeting and Representations national meetings. Users can access information about the meetings, photos and relevant documentation.
Networking EDIC information	Training Seminars	Database of specific seminars organised by Representations, by Team Europe, or by EDICS. Users can access information about the seminars, photos and relevant documentation.
Networking	Forums	Forums where users can post their questions and answers. Various sub-forums are accessible, namely the forums about: Networking, Europe Direct Intranet, Media Relations, Web 2.0 tools, E-repositories, Promotion and marketing activities, AGM 2011 Malta.
EU information Networking	News & Announcements	List of EU-related news (e.g. Fair trial throughout Europe, addressing an ageing population, etc.)
Personal Account		
Privacy control	Profile management/privacy	This panel allows users to view and amend their personal details.
Shortcuts to personal files		
Privacy control	Profile management/privacy	This panel highlights shortcuts to help users customise their accounts (manage their saved items and so on) and also allows them to view EDIC reports or submit questions.
Tag Cloud		
EU information	Tagging of key words	Items are possible tagged by the individuals uploading them – and are thus defined by the individual user uploading them – and are based on various themes. When users click on the link of a tag, they can view a list of any item sorted under that particular theme (e.g. Best practice), and further read about and download documents according to what type they are – Library, Events or News.
Interactive Map		
Networking	Map of all contacts	Interactive Map of all EDC, EDIC and Team Europe contacts.

Use of the Intranet

The extent to which EDICs use the intranet tends to be low. Contractually, the EDICs are bound to use the Intranet for reporting purposes. At the same time available data tends to show that they do not use it regularly, either for information or networking purposes.

The Intranet is accessible to all Europe Direct Members including EDICs, EDCs, and Team Europe. It is also available to DG COMM and sub-contractors to users. As such, 1,685 users are registered to use the Intranet, out of which there are 601 EDIC users[93].

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[93] There can be more than one person registered per EDIC.

Data from case studies show that EDICs do not use regularly the Intranet for monitoring purposes. Their tendency would be to report on a very ad hoc basis, as opposed to the required monthly basis, which could be up to only a couple of times a year.

At the same time, only a limited fraction of EDICs visit the intranet for information or communication purpose. The ESN survey on support activities showed that less than half of the EDICs visited the intranet on a daily basis to check the information that has been published by DG COMM and/or Network members explicitly (excluding the reporting activities). In addition, 40% of EDICs surveyed stated they visit the Intranet between once and twice a month. These results seem to be an overestimate compared to the data obtained from the case studies, which indicated that few EDICs were using the Intranet for information and communication, and that few knew about such functionalities.

Figure 4.46   Frequency of use of the Intranet by the EDICs
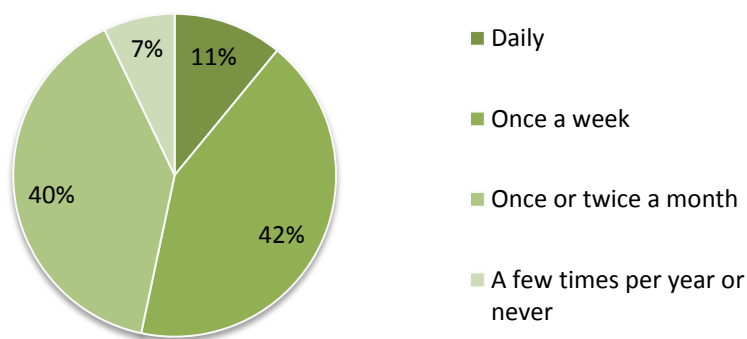
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

In addition, the Intranet is used for networking only to a limited extent. 90% of the EDICs surveyed by ESN answered negatively to the question "When you publish your events in the "Members' Events" section http://ednetwork.ec.europa.eu/?i=ed-intranet.en.members-events) do you receive any comments or reactions from your Network colleagues?". However, although interaction between the EDICs is maybe not very active, interviews from the case studies showed that they welcome the possibility to get access to other EDICs' documentation.

Usefulness of the Intranet

The individual sections of the intranet are rated as not being very useful. Only a quarter of EDICs rated the sections on training seminars and networking meetings as being very useful. The sections on contacts, the library, and the member's events are rated by 40% to 43% as being useful. On the more negative note, more than 40% of the EDICs rated the remaining sections as average or of no use to them. This is particularly the case for the networking functions (messaging tool and messaging system, as well as forum) and the information system (news and homepage).

Figure 4.47   The usefulness of sections of the Intranet

	Very useful	Useful	Of no use or average	I don't know
Training seminars	26%	47%	24%	2%
Network meetings	25%	50%	23%	2%
Contacts	20%	40%	36%	4%
Library	19%	43%	37%	1%
Members' events	18%	43%	38%	1%
News & Announcements	14%	41%	40%	5%
Messaging tool	13%	31%	44%	12%
Section Personal – Messaging system	13%	32%	44%	10%
Homepage	11%	45%	40%	4%
Section Personal – Profile and…	11%	35%	43%	10%
Forums	8%	25%	56%	11%
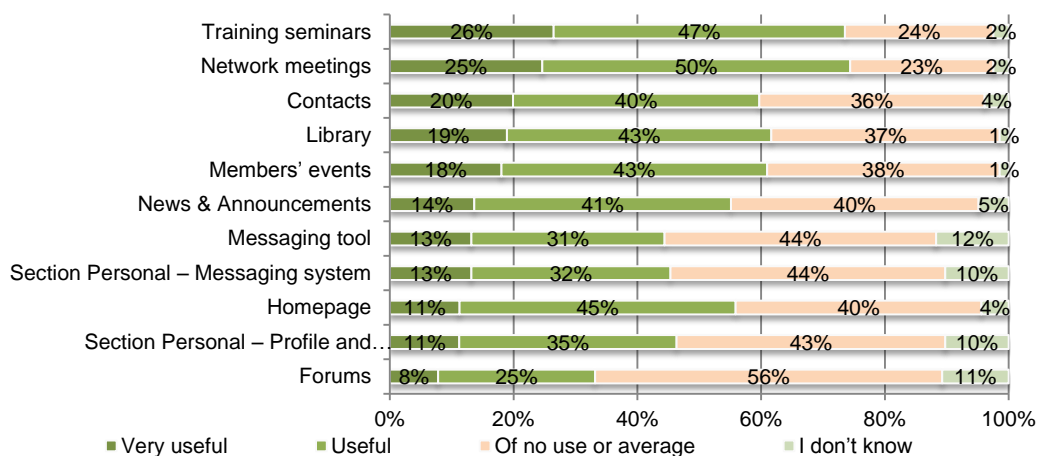
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

User-friendliness of the Intranet

The Intranet is mostly not considered user friendly. The majority of the surveyed EDICs (44%) rated the user friendliness of the Intranet as being average in the ESN survey. An additional 11% rated it as being bad.

Figure 4.48   User friendliness of the Intranet

Very good 5%
Good 36%
Average 44%
Bad 11%
I don't know 3%
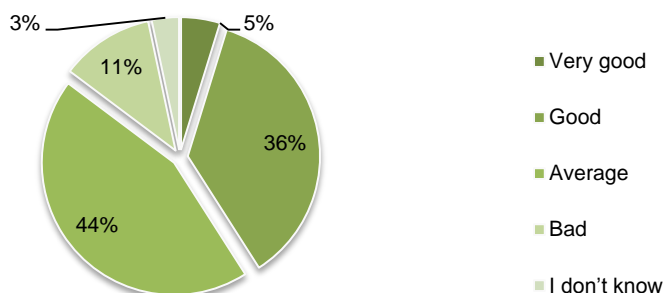
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

In particular, EDICs in the ESN survey expressed thoughts shared by EDICs during the case studies and felt that it "*had too many levels*" to explore in order to achieve simple tasks. As a result, the reporting processes became unnecessarily burdensome; often activity was duplicated as reporting was undertaken through the Intranet and then also provided in paper form.

In addition, for reporting purpose, EDICs are limited in the information they can provide in the reporting tool (e.g. in the reporting for events modules there is no possibility to enter the number of participants, the length of the event or its description (e.g. France and Finland) – to get around the problem some EDICs have been putting the description in title).

The interviews with EDICs and Representations also repeatedly suggested that the process of entering monitoring data by EDICs is perceived as too complex and time consuming (e.g. in France, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Lithuania). Significant improvements to the reporting tool could be made by simplifying the procedure for uploading documents. Currently in the reporting tool the documents first need to be uploaded and then related to an event or module. Suggestions were put forward to modify the reporting tool to enable the uploading of documents directly under a specific module. Individual EDICs also reported the

system crashing or freezing when files are uploaded. EDICs also felt that procedures for reporting any deviations from annual action plans or in contractual information could be simplified by the core information being stored in the system (i.e. removing the requirement for certain information such as the EDIC address to be input each month, if there had been no changes since the previous monthly report).

Interviews with Representations also suggested that the ED intranet is not currently used to its full potential – and its use in the future could be extended to compiling action plans, amending these plans by EDICs, approving such amendments by Representations, keeping track of progress on EDIC activities, reporting on the quality of these activities, reporting on EDIC skills needs and submitting and approving the final reports electronically[94] (e.g. Bulgaria, France, Sweden). For such system to be used and be useful it would need to be sufficiently flexible, allow easy uploading of documents, provision of comments, enable changes and replace of activities and feature simple and effective procedures for approval. This could be done by improving the following functionalities of the Intranet:

- Reviewing the reporting categories on the ED intranet and refining these to only include the information that is required to the Representations and external evaluators in assessing the performance of the network;

- Including a possibility to filter or search the EDIC monthly reports info by key-words (e.g. key themes or priorities[95]). Such search functionality could be used to compile national network results of particular themes or priorities (e.g. FR) as well as for monitoring and feedback functions (e.g. UK);

- Developing an overview of the final reports on the ED intranet that should allow planning, execution and comments on the same page as currently the EDICs and Representations have to work on the basis of different documents (e.g. PT).

EDICs also felt that the Intranet could be better used to share information. In particular, the fact that it is impossible to search within specific tag results was reported as limiting the use of a tool that contained an array of rich and useful information, which cannot be used.

In addition, EDICs expressed that reporting systems could be streamlined, reducing the requirement for paper returns. The use of the Intranet was made worse when there were technical issues and, for example, it "crashed" when returns were being made. This was often the case when users tried to add photos to an event, for example. EDICs felt that by making online tools more streamlined and less complicated, the reporting system would be improved.

It must also be noted that not all EDICs have the capacity to master the use of the intranet and for some it remained very difficult to understand. From the case studies, EDICs expressed the wish to obtain centralised training on the functional use of the Intranet.

Another issue expressed by EDICs is the fact that it is in English. For some of them it makes it difficult to navigate on it, whereas for others it also prevents them from going to look for further information.

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[94] Official certificates attesting the accuracy of the information in the final reports could be signed and submitted in paper copies. The electronic final reports could be printed, if need be.

[95] General search functionality (right upper corner of the ED intranet pages) and a refined search by categories already among the Library items already exist, but these do not yield quality results for more elaborated searches.

4.8.3.6 Training and networking

Demos was contracted by DG COMM to organise and facilitate the training seminars and the Annual General Meetings of the EDICs.

The **training seminars** aim to increase the EDICs' knowledge of EU policies and institutions and to develop their skills and competences in the areas related to their tasks. Each seminar focuses on the different ways of communicating on a single topic. They target exclusively EDICs. Demos cooperates with various actors for the seminars such as other DGs, journalists, think tanks etc. the seminars are held in English, French and German. The number of participants is limited to 60 for each seminar: each EDIC can express interest to come and attend..

Within the current contract, the following topics have been covered by the seminars:

- Exiting the crisis: towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (11-13/05/2011 and 25-27/05/2011);
- European Year of Volunteering (March and April 2011);
- Communicating EU action in the area of Justice, Freedom and Security (2-4 June 2010 and 14-16 June 2010).

At the beginning of the contract, the seminar had the format of a short workshop. The approach was revised for the following topics, in order to include more integration between the participants (the Tapas format).

The **Annual General Meeting** takes place once a year and focuses on interactive exchange, innovative ideas and social networking. There is one main theme for the EDICs' communication activities, which is mainstreamed in all the sessions of the event. Each AGM brings together between 300 and 500 participants in total.

The approach to the AGM was changed in 2011 to create and open space/world café approach, where the discussions come from the participants and not the speakers. This aims at fostering networking as well as enabling EDICs to express their needs and interests and to obtain information corresponding to their needs.

Satisfaction with the training

According to Demos post event evaluation, EDICs tend overall to be satisfied with the seminars. The area in which EDICs tend to be the least satisfied is with regard to the relevance of the seminar to their day-to-day work (where on average65% of EDICs were satisfied or highly satisfied).

Figure 4.49   Satisfaction with the training seminars carried out by Demos (EDICs satisfied or highly satisfied)
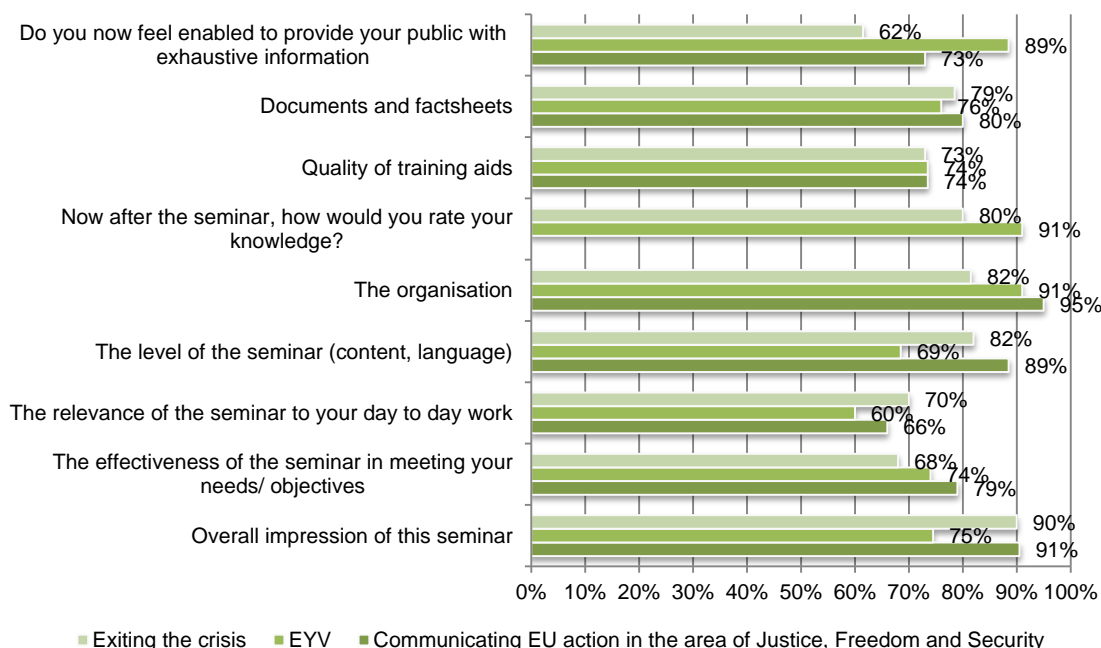
Source: Aggregated Demos post event evaluation reports

Overall, EDICs were more satisfied with the seminars on Justice, Freedom and Security than on the economic crisis, for example. Participants of the seminars noted that not all the topics of the sessions were relevant to their needs. For example, "coaching on personal projects" was a seminar that was not adapted to all the EDICs. The case study interviews also highlighted that some of the topics covered are not very relevant to the daily concerns of the EDICs. As such, some EDICs mentioned their preference for national or regional training.

In terms of forthcoming seminars, the ESN survey on training needs showed that EDICs need to be trained around policy issues such as the "Youth on the move" and "An agenda for new skills and jobs" (53% and 52% rated them as being "very useful", 83% and 85% as being "very useful" and "useful"). Other topics of interest were the Innovation Union, Climate action and energy, Lisbon Treaty for citizens, Sustaining Europe's social market economy, and Restoring growth and jobs. This highlights the importance of the policy priorities of the European Commission being translated downwards to the EDICs.

Figure 4.50   Importance of being informed/ trained in 2011 in the categories of strategic and communication priorities

	Very useful	Useful	Somehow useful	Not useful
Youth on the move	53%	31%	15%	2%
An agenda for new skills and jobs	52%	33%	12%	3%
Lisbon Treaty for citizens	42%	33%	20%	5%
Climate action and energy	40%	40%	19%	1%
Restoring growth for jobs	39%	37%	20%	4%
Sustaining Europe's social market economy	30%	39%	27%	4%
Pursuing the citizens' agenda: Rights, Freedom and Justice	27%	37%	32%	3%
Innovation Union	27%	39%	26%	7%
European platform against poverty	27%	41%	27%	5%
A digital agenda for Europe	21%	37%	33%	9%
Resource efficient Europe	18%	41%	35%	6%
From input to impact: making the most of EU policies	16%	28%	42%	14%
Europe pulling its weight on the global stage	16%	29%	45%	11%
An industrial policy for the globalisation era	11%	32%	44%	14%

Source: ESN 2010 survey on training needs; base = 236

A large share of EDICs also expressed the need for training on specific EU funding issues: the most important aspects would be to obtain information on EU funding incentives for SMEs as well as those focused on environmental actions and structural funds (very useful for more than half of EDICs).

Figure 4.51   Importance of training on EU funding issues

	Very useful	Useful	Somehow useful	Not useful
Spec info on EU funding incentives for SMEs	60%	24%	12%	4%
Spec info on EU funding incentives focused on environmental actions	51%	23%	20%	6%
Spec info on Structural Funds	50%	36%	12%	2%
Spec info on EU funding initiatives on employment and social affairs	47%	36%	16%	1%
Where & how to search information on EU funding opportunities	44%	31%	21%	5%
General info on EU Funding opportunities	37%	36%	20%	7%
Spec info on EU funding initiatives for actions targeting citizens in the fields of culture and education	27%	46%	25%	2%

Source: ESN 2010 survey on training needs; base = 236

More than half of the EDICs also expressed the need for skills training in relation to the functioning of the centre itself and the implementation of the modules. For example, skills for the management of the centre, communication and media as well as networking, event management, media training, online searching and information and workshops skills.

Figure 4.52   Importance of training
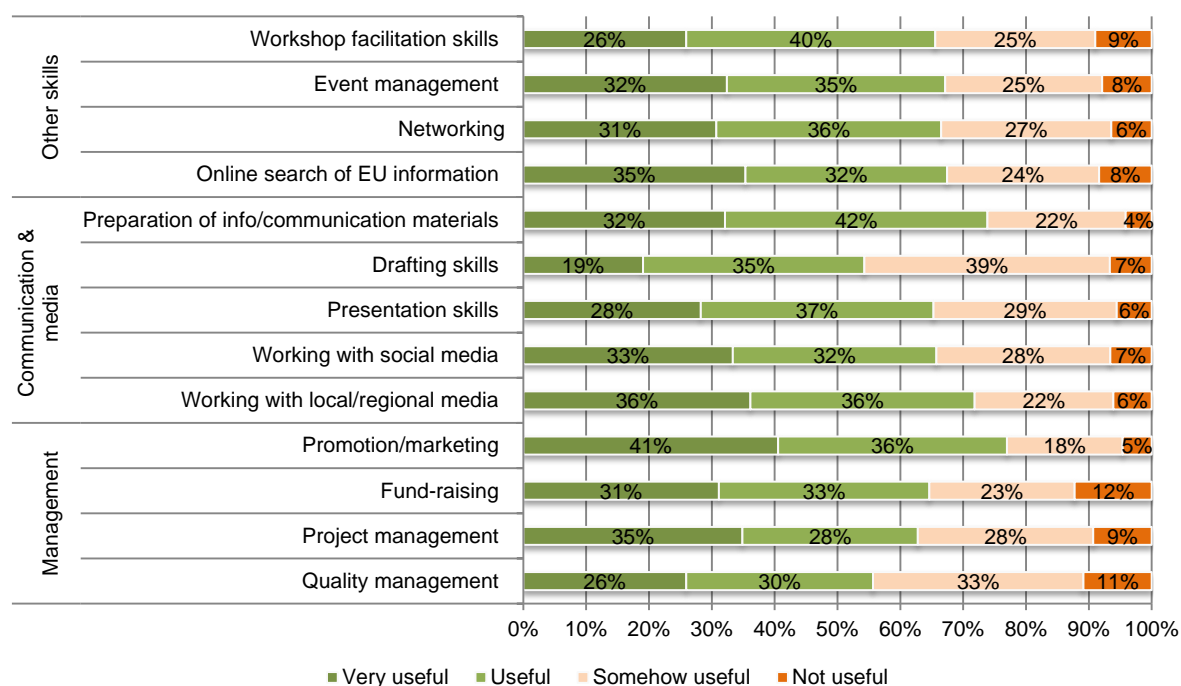
Source: ESN 2010 survey on training needs; base = 236

The extent to which EDICs express the need to be trained for search for online information is more limited. All EDICs have well developed basic knowledge of online search for EU information. The training most needed would be an advanced training for looking for information on EU policy areas related to citizens (for 39% of surveyed EDICs). The proposed fields: legal information on EUR-lex, Beginners level of EU policy areas, and Bookshop were rated by less than a quarter of users as being very useful.

Figure 4.53   Importance of being trained for search of online information
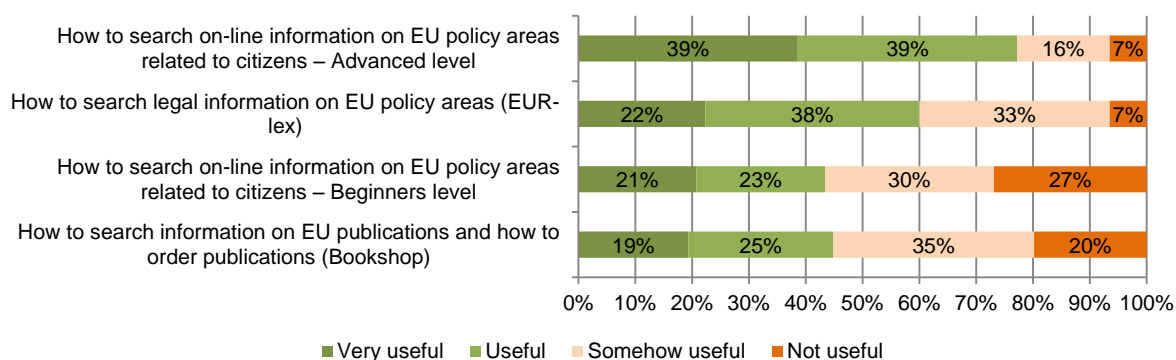
Source: ESN 2010 survey on training needs; base = 236

Format of the training seminars

In terms of format of the seminar, the participants noted a need for interactive and practical sessions: theoretical knowledge is needed, but this should not be sole focus of the seminars. Too many statistics and very specialised terminology make the seminars difficult to follow. As such the survey carried out by ESN on training needs showed that for almost half of the EDICs it is crucial to have an adequate balance between knowledge and practical skills during the training seminars.

Figure 4.54   Preferred combination of knowledge and skills in a training seminar

Source: ESN 2010 survey on training needs; base = 236

More specifically, EDICs tend to prefer interaction during the training and practical work rather than plenary sessions and speeches. As such, almost half of th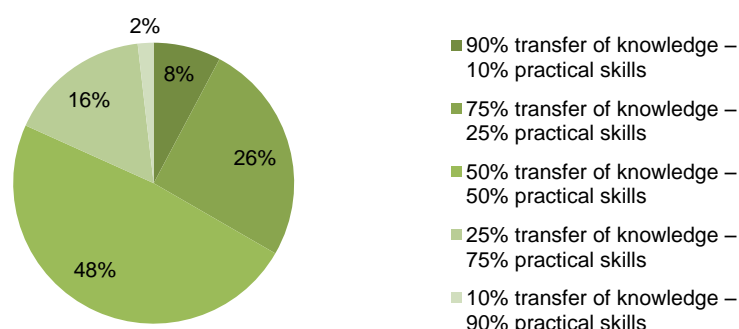em rated the interactive sessions in small groups with a moderator as they preferred training method, closely followed (38%) by parallel session on political topics. Only 13% of surveyed EDICs would prefer plenary sessions. This data confirms the success of the "tapas" format which is interactive and allows covering several topics in small groups. The recent developments of the training seminars as well as the interview with the contractor also confirmed a tendency to change the format in the direction of more interaction and proactive role played by participants.

Figure 4.55   Preferred training method
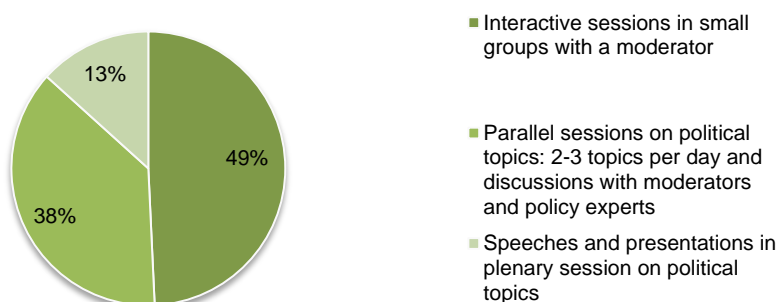
Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

Furthermore, the EDICs would be in favour of a new format of training seminar focusing on the communication skills, on the EU strategic an communication priorities (learning and developing skills as well as developing communication projects) as well as enhancing their ability to address the needs of different target groups.

Figure 4.56   Objective of a new training seminar

Source: ESN 2011 EDIC survey on support activities; base = 227

Finally, during the case studies, EDICs also mentioned that the training seminars were not always accessible to them they might have difficulties attending the event (e.g. they have too many responsibilities to take care of for them to be able to spend two days on a training course).

4.9   EC and host co-funding

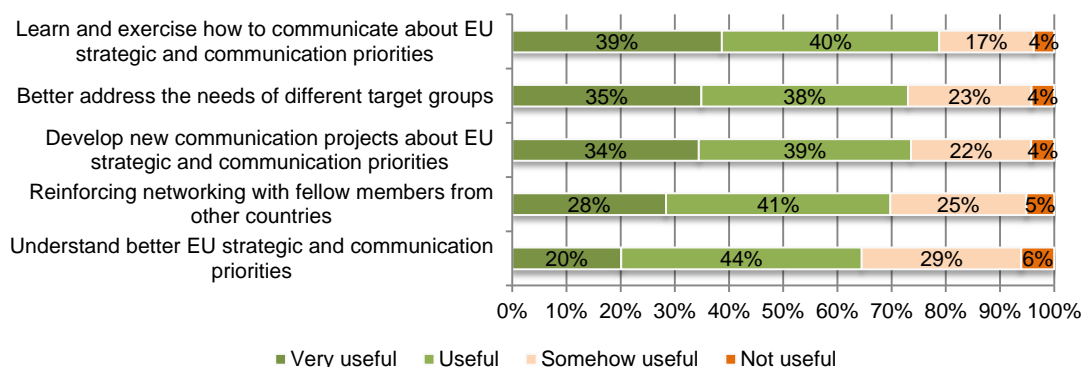The main evaluation question address in this section is *"are there any particular concerns over the co-financing of the EDICs activities by the organisations hosting the centres"?*

Co-funding framework and the overall costs of the network

The EDIC network funding per Member State is allocated depending on the number of its seats in the European Parliament and the geographical area of each Member State, while ensuring continuity with the first term of the Europe Direct network.

4.9.1   EC funding

There are mixed views on the adequacy of the EC co-funding according to the EDIC survey. While one fourth of all EDICs felt the EC co-funding was "globally adequate to co-fund 50% of our activities" and one third of all EDICs described it as "somewhat adequate" – 17% of EDICs indicated that EC funding was "totally inadequate – and covers only a small part of activities" and further one quarter as "inadequate". If the partial responses are included, such as funding is "somewhat adequate" or "inadequate", the share of those who feel the EC co-funding is adequate (58%) outweighs those who think it is inadequate (42%).

In addition, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic tend to be the most satisfied with the funding levels from the EC. The most dissatisfied are Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Germany. The data suggests that most EDICs that assessed the EC co-funding as globally or somewhat adequate are EU-12 countries (except the Netherlands) and EDICs that generally viewed the EC-funding as inadequate or totally inadequate were EU-15 Member States. This suggest that the EC co-funding levels are generally perceived as more acceptable and appropriate in the EU-12 and less so in EU-15.

Figure 4.57   Perception of how adequate EC funding is by country
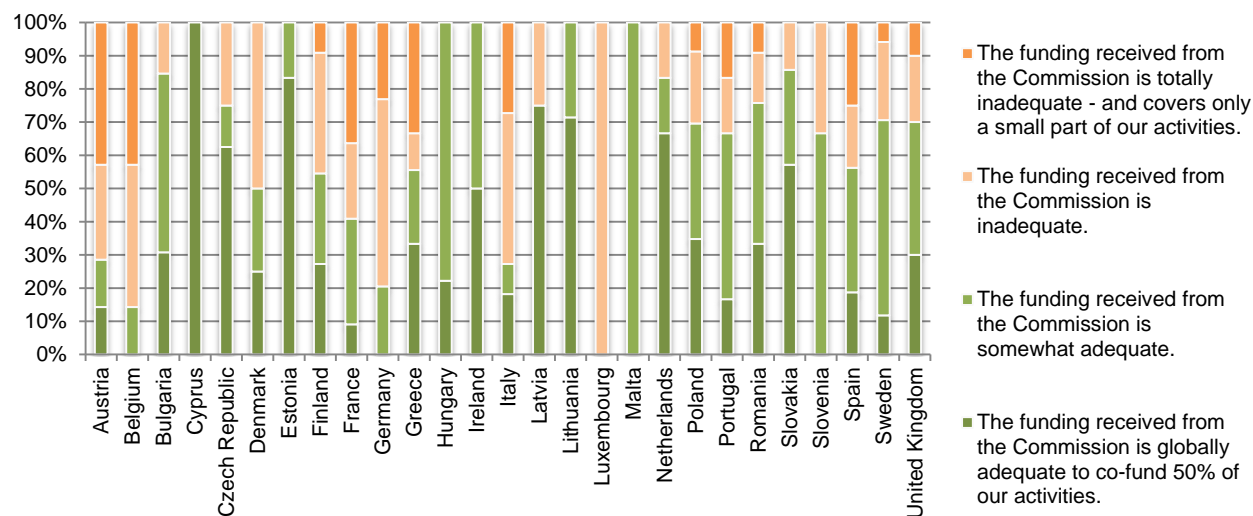
Source: EDIC survey; base = 348

If the relative number of EDICs globally or somewhat satisfied with the EC funding is assessed (the Figure below), it is apparent most of such EDICs are located in Romania, Spain and Poland. On the contrary a large majority of those EDICs that found the EC-funding inadequate or totally inadequate were located in France, Germany and Italy.

Figure 4.58   Perception of how adequate is EC funding by country (absolute numbers)
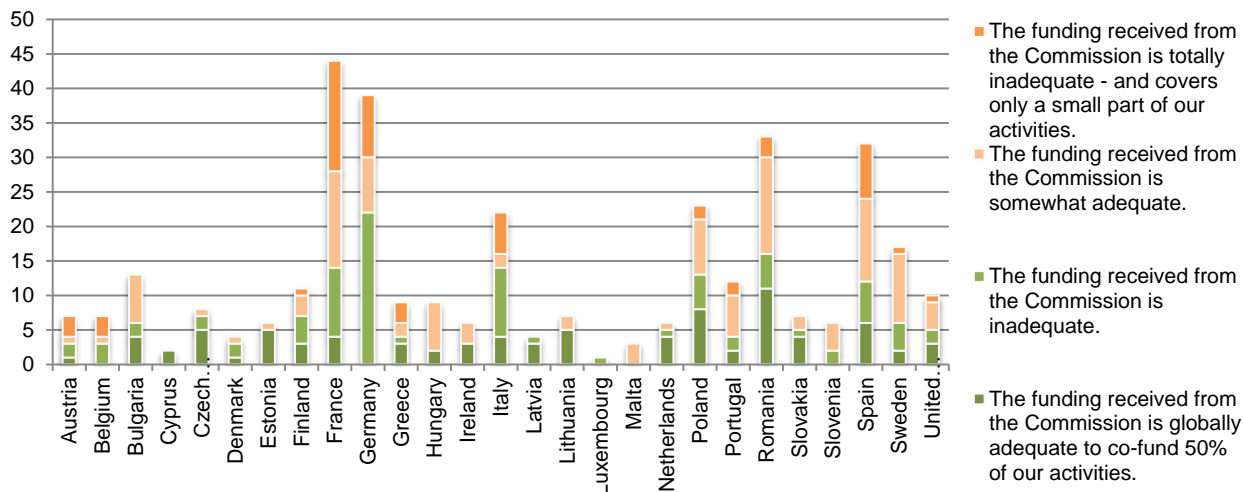
Source: EDIC survey; base = 348

The case studies further suggest that the stakeholders in the EU-12 countries tend to argue for a higher EC co-funding *rate* mostly because the host structures tend to find it difficult to secure co-financing, while the interviewees from EU-15 mostly argued for higher co-funding *amount*, as the present maximum € 25,000 does not cover the half of all the operation costs. Moist interviewees suggested that more money would allow the organisation to have more, more diverse and bigger events.

4.9.2   Host structure co-funding

The EDIC survey results indicate that just over half (54%) of EDICs were certain that they would receive adequate co-funding from their host structure over the next few years. One quarter were uncertain whether they would have future co-funding but had been aware that this was the case. However, 17% of EDICs who responded to the survey were concerned that they would not have future funding and a further 2% were certain that host structure co-funding would be a problem in a near future. Consequently, these 2% of EDICs (or 6 EDICs) anticipated that their centre would be closed. Furthermore, the monitoring data and the case studies suggest that around five EDICs have discontinued operations in 2011 alone, in part due to funding issues.

The data on the security of future host structure co-funding by country presents a mixed picture across the Member States. EDICs in Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark and Latvia were relatively certain that they will receive adequate co-funding from their host structures also in the future. EDICs in three countries – Finland, Austria and Belgium – anticipated that they will have serious problems with the host structure co-funding in the near future.

Figure 4.59   Security of future funding from host structures by country (including absolute figures)
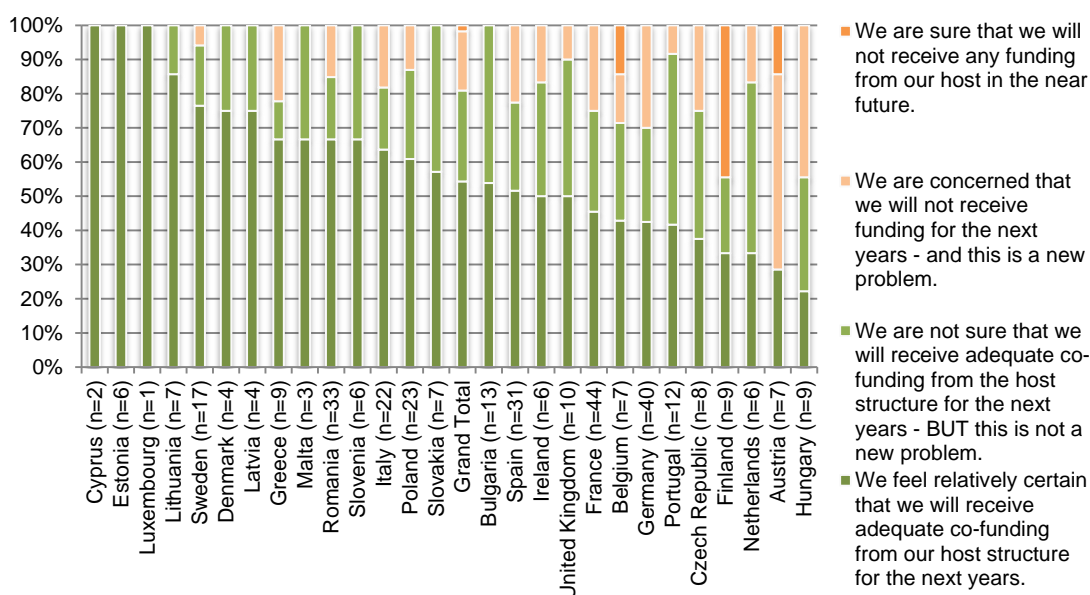
Source: EDIC survey; base = 346

Anticipated problems associated with the host structure funding in Finland and Austria were also confirmed through interviews with the Representations in these countries[96]. The Austrian Representation reported the closing of EDIC in Vienna, as the host structure decided to take part in another EU network. It feared a domino effect as two more provinces (Salzburg and Burgenland that currently have two EDICs) were considering closing down centres due to financial cuts. In Finland the Representation reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) currently hosting 19 of the 22 EDICs in the country was considering closing all its regional EDICs in the end of 2011 and 2012 and work only in the capital region by providing a service centrally via phone and email.

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[96] Belgium was not part of the consultations sample.

The case studies and the interviews with the Representations suggest that problems with host structure co-funding may also be anticipated also in the UK and Greece. In the UK there are huge problems with budget cuts in local authorities and a number of redundancies. At the time of the case study, two EDICs were at risk of reducing their functions to back office. The downsizing in the UK may lead to the EDICs not being able to fulfil their contractual requirements. In Greece due to changes in legislation, there is a reduction in the number of regions and some of the EDICs which are run by prefectures and municipalities will cease to exist. Greece is also in line for another round of austerity measures which could also impact on the number of proposals coming through for the next funding round.

Finally the EDIC survey data suggest a rather strong correlation between the perceived adequacy of the EC co-fudging and the expected availability of co-funding from EDIC host structures. EDICs in most EU-12 Member States (with some exceptions) were relatively satisfied with the EC co-funding and also felt relatively sure about their host structure co-funding. The EDICs in the countries that felt most unsure about the host structures' co-funding (e.g. Finland, Austria and Belgium) also largely felt that the EC co-funding is inadequate.

Figure 4.60   Security of future funding by type of host structure (including absolute figures)
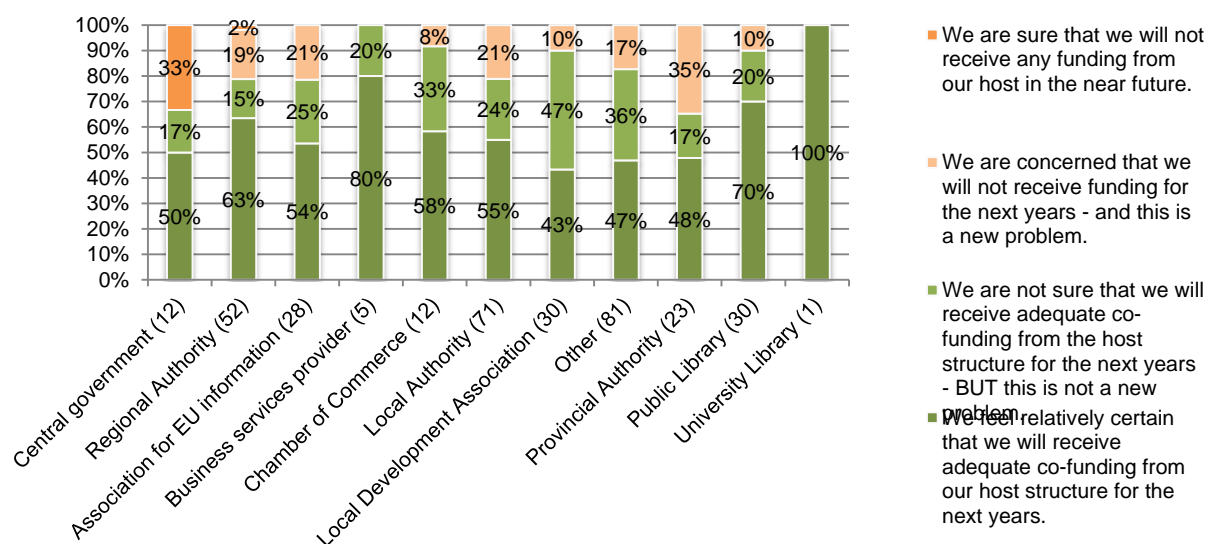
Source: EDIC survey, Base = 346

The EDIC survey data on the sustainability of the host structures' co-funding highlight that libraries and business support organisations are the most sure about their ability to maintain matched funding. This may be due to the "in kind" payments of staff time seen at libraries for example. On the contrary – and as outlined above – the EDICs hosted by central governments and regional authorities in some countries expected to lose or have serious concerns over the host structure co-financing.

The EDIC survey also asked the Centres to consider whether their host structure would be able to match additional funding should the Commission increase its budget allocation for the EDICs, while the share of match funding remaining constant (50/50). Just 26% felt that their host structure would definitely be able to match the additional funding, while further 48% felt that there was the possibility of additional funding. 22% of EDICs reported that their host structure would not have the financial capacity to provide additional funding. A small share of EDICs that responded to the survey (4%) reported that they would not be unable to absorb additional funding given their level of activity.

Looking at the survey data by country EDICs in some "smaller" Member States – Luxembourg, Malta and Denmark – were more certain that the host structures would match an increased EC funding. While EDICs in the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Estonia and Finland more often indicated that their host structures would not match additional funding. EDICs in Latvia, Finland, Estonia, Portugal, Ireland and Poland more often reported that they would not have the capacity to absorb additional EC funding.

Figure 4.61   Please comment on the extent to which you think that your host structure would provide additional co-funding should the commission increase the budget allocation but not the share of co-funding
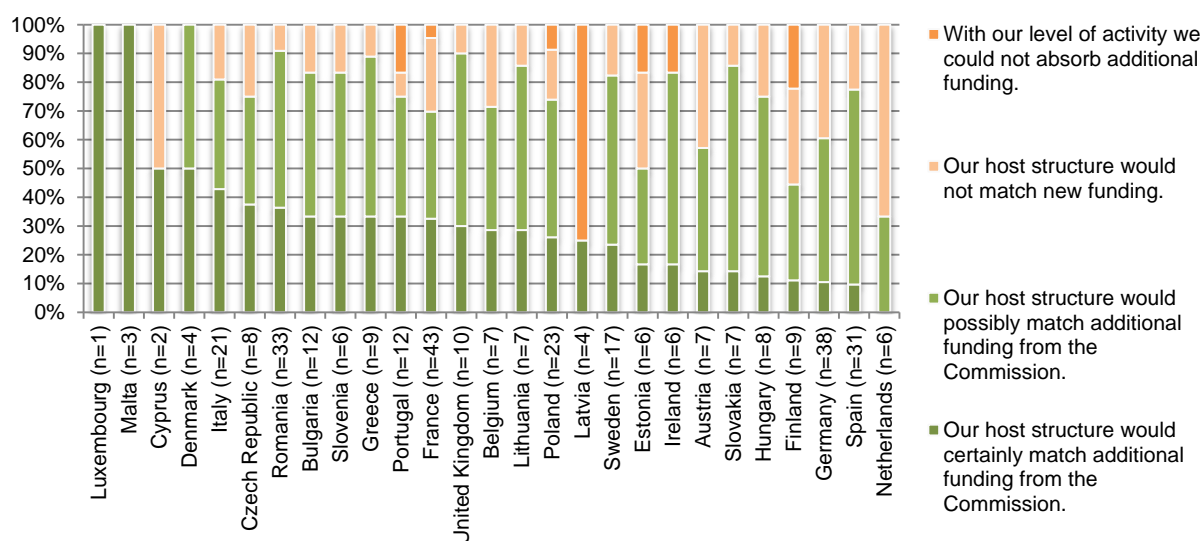
Source: EDIC survey; base = 340

The case studies further suggest that in some countries the host structures co-funding of EDICs far exceeds the contractually required 50%. The stakeholders consulted reported that the host structure co-funding on average exceeds 50% in Germany and Portugal (some hosts fund up to 65-75% of EDIC operations), it is around 60% in Lithuania and between 65-70% in Austria (as high as 85-90% for some EDICs), Finland and Sweden. The higher host structures funding in these countries consulted indicates a strong host organisations' commitment to the network as well as relatively small size of the grant in comparison to the minimum funding required to ensure the execution of the compulsory network requirements.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Compliance with the mission of promoting an informed and active European citizenship

5.1.1 Conclusions

Given the broad definition of the EDICs mission, the lack of specific measurable objectives and specific target audiences, it is not possible to assess with certainty the extent to which the EDICs have complied with their overall mission and whether the delivered outputs have met expectations.

However, judging by the compliance with key requirements for information services and awareness raising activities; the changes in activities and outreach from the first to the second generation of the network; the scale of services; the relevance of the activities undertaken for users and potential users; user satisfaction and increased knowledge among users, it may be concluded that the network overall complies with its mission of promoting an informed and active citizenship. Overall compliance should be understood as "average compliance" – as there are very significant differences across the EDIC network.

As a network, EDICs comply overall with the baseline mission and nearly all EDICs proactively undertake outreach activities.

There is substantial evidence of change of EDICs activities – from "reactive" to "proactive" and of their uptake of non-compulsory tasks. Overall the importance of outreach activities has increased for the second generation of the EDIC network – with the EDIC network undertaking more events, developing more information material, engaging more with local stakeholders and working more extensively with media. These changes have been encouraged by the change in EC focus – but also by the changes in information needs among potential users.

The overall scale of the outputs delivered cannot be accurately assessed due to issues with the available monitoring data. However, the data available suggests that overall activity levels are in line with or above expectations – even if there is significant variance across the network. Themes covered by the EDICs' activities overall are mostly relevant to the broader mission of informing on issues related to the EU. Also, a clear majority of EDICs have a focus on the EC political priorities – and a significant share of EDICs' activities covers the EC political priorities or is in some broader form related to these.

The overall reach of the EDICs' activities cannot be assessed – but data would nevertheless suggest that, compared to the overall potential target audience (the European Public), the reach is modest. The reach of different activities varies - with events representing the most substantive form of interaction with citizens. Events form a significant part of the EDICs' overall activities and, for many EDICs, is the activity type around which other activities are undertaken (e.g. media activities, print material, etc.).

The reach of the reactive services (Q/A services and walk-in function) varies significantly – but for a majority of EDICs the reach is modest or even very modest.

Users fall within the very broad group of "EU citizens". However, de facto the main groups directly informed by and engaged with EDICs are: pupils and their teachers; students; employees in public authorities; various actors looking for funding; and, in some countries, retired people. Overall EDICs note difficulties in engaging with the 30-60 age group – even if many EDICs (albeit not all) are relatively creative in terms of undertaking activities to attract this group.

Overall, judged by user satisfaction, the quality of the EDICs' outputs targeted directly at European citizens are high and contribute to raising knowledge and understanding of the EU and/or of the opportunities that the EU provide. Also, evidence would suggest that EDICs' activities – and events in particular– allow users to engage with EU issues that are of interest to them.

Outputs relating to websites and media activities have more varied results. Websites often have limited content. Of the activities targeting media, only structured cooperation appears to have a continued and substantial impact. Use of social media is evolving but relatively few EDICs use it proactively to engage with EU policies or EU developments.

An important part of the EDIC role as a "first-stop shop" is signposting to EU information services, EU networks, and to other actors providing information about EU related issues at national and sub-national levels. There is abundant evidence of signposting.

However, not all EDICs are actually signposting to other networks and other EU information services. Signposting is generally focused on a few selected networks, Europa and Your Europe and the extent of signposting is closely related to knowledge and awareness of other EU related networks and information services. Awareness differs across different types of services and networks. More specialised networks are often not well known, while a small share of EDICs did not know the main EU networks and services available for citizens. Visibility of the EDICs remains low.

EDICs provide different types of feedback to the EC, in the main to the EC Representations. However, little is actually provided which meets the criteria of "channelling citizens' opinions and suggestions to EU Institutions".

5.1.2 Considerations for the future of the EDIC network – mission, scope, activities and coverage

While the results of the evaluation suggest that the network is complying with its mission and while there is significant evidence of EDIC staff commitment to their role and mission, data also suggest that there are a number of issues that impact the network negatively and – which if were addressed – would improve the overall effectiveness of the EDIC network.

Geographical coverage

The EDICs key benefits lie in their local anchoring. This enables the EDICs to reach out to and interact with groups that would be difficult to reach by other means. It also allows EDICs to adapt their activities to the local environment. In many respects, being local is also what makes the EDIC network complementary to other EC networks and other EU and national information services targeting citizens.

Being local however also has implications for reach and for the EDICs coverage of the EU territory. EDICs mostly have a relatively limited geographical coverage – and the current 469 EDICs unlikely to provide comprehensive coverage of the current EU territory. Attempts aimed at concentrating resources on fewer but bigger EDICs are likely to be counterproductive. Importantly, the concentration of resources would not allow EDICs to benefit from their local anchoring. Also, there is no reassurance that such an approach would lead to increased geographical coverage. Finally, there is a risk that larger lump sums would not meet match funding requirements and would hence require more substantial levels of co-funding.

In contrast, in order to address current issues of patchy geographical coverage there would be benefits in considering options or specific activities aimed at ensuring a more adequate geographical coverage at a local level. Such activities could include setting up local info points/stands, road shows, replication of the same events or similar activities in several locations. Alternatively, geographic coverage could be considered as a part of the selection criteria for the future network. In this respect there would be a benefit in considering collections of specific EDIC practices that have aimed at ensuring local coverage.

Objectives at EU level

The aim of the EDIC network is to encourage an informed and active European citizenship. The mission is further specified only in very broad terms and the mission statement is complemented by specific tasks and activities that the EDICs are expected to undertake. In contrast there are no specific and measurable objectives associated with the interventions.

The target audience is very broadly defined to cover the "general public" as well as other "specific groups" and there are a series of thematic requirements as well as the requirement to communicate on the political priorities and on any issue related to the EU.

The approach has had a number of key benefits. At local level it has allowed EDICs to adapt activities to local needs – and Host Structures to adapt the EDICs activities to fit/support the objectives and priorities of the organisation. In turn, this flexibility has contributed to ensuring the continued interest of Host Structures to co-fund and participate in the network. At EU level the network supports the EC's objectives in a broad sense; it ensures geographical coverage and a level of activity and leverage, which overall could not be expected without EU support – and at very low costs to the EU. In other words, outputs are maximised, given the level of inputs from the EU.

However, the consequence of a very broad mission statement without more specific objectives is the current heterogeneity of the EDIC network – not only in terms of EDICs but importantly in terms of audiences reached and the results that the network delivers at local level. The level of heterogeneity of the EDIC network is very substantial.

With the current set up there is no assurance that citizens would benefit from similar services and activities across the EU – nor is there a benchmark against which EDICs can be measured in terms of their relevance and utility for the EDIC mission overall.

While individual EDICs may have been effective in their implementation there is no assurance that the overall network is effective – as the EDICs are not necessarily pulling in the same direction.

Considering both the strengths and weaknesses of the "bottom-up" approach it cannot be recommended that SMART objectives be fixed centrally for the entire EDIC network. In order for the network to be attractive to hosts and for EDICs to adapt their activities to the local context, flexibility needs to be ensured. However, there would be a benefit in a reflection process to reconsider the vision and objectives of the network, and the scope and potential limits of the network to:

- Limit the heterogeneity of the network and hence ensure greater consistency in the results achieved across the network and the EU territory;

- Ensure a clearer link between what is expected in terms of results and actual achievements – and thereby provide a better basis for the selection of EDICs and for the guidance and management of the network;

- Ensure complementarities with other EC networks and services to ensure effective resource allocation and to avoid duplication of services; and,

- Cover specific areas or activities which are perceived as a priority for the EC (political priorities).

The definition of a vision and objectives for the network will need to be guided by EC policy objectives and cannot be defined as a part of this study. However, the vision and objectives should give considerations to aspects such as:

- Potential priority target audiences;

- Specific themes that need to be covered – and whether the communication of political priorities or other themes should be to some extent mandatory for EDICs; and,

- Cooperation with other EU institutions.

It is further recommended that a better defined strategy is implemented in conjunction with less specific requirements – and more flexibility for EDICs to implement local communication strategies.

If the EC decides to place certain imperatives on the network, it will be important to consult the network on feasibility issues. This is especially true if the EC decides to make specific activities, which are not currently mandatory in the future generation.

Use of resources – physical presence

EDICs overall have quite limited financial and human resources available for the implementation of their activities. Currently the EDIC requirements imply that 50% of a FTE is to be available for incoming enquiries and to have a physical presence. While user satisfaction with information services is high, case study data suggest that the benefits of a physical office with opening hours differ very significantly across the network. Some network members have many incoming enquiries and some have many users and potential users visiting the service. However, others have a few or no visitors – and about 33% of all EDICs have fewer than five telephone and email enquiries per week.

For some EDICs the requirement to be open 20 hours per week can easily be met using host structure resources. For other EDICs this implies that half of total staff resources are used simply for ensuring a physical presence. This is a high cost and is an inefficient use of resources if the EDIC has few visits or enquiries.

A key argument for ensuring physical presence and access has been visibility. It has been argued that a physical presence ensures visibility and promotion, which could not be achieved by other means. User survey data suggest however that very few users actually discover EDICs via its physical presence. Other activities – events, web promotion, and networking with local stakeholders – are much more likely to improve the visibility of EDICs.

The activities associated with the highest level of reach are reported to be events. It could also be expected that proactive information tools (e.g. newsletters and informative publications) and media activities have higher levels of reach for many EDICs than reactive services. Therefore there would be a benefit in considering options for making "the reactive information service" a voluntary module rather than mandatory – allowing EDICs to concentrate on the activities that would prove most useful to their users.

Within such a framework "first-stop shop" user enquiries could be addressed by the EDCC instead of the EDICs. The EDICs could still operate as a "back office" addressing specific enquires via email or, where necessary, by phone. This approach would free resources for activities that would be more appropriate at local level.

It is important to note that while the physical visiting space would disappear in some EDICs where it has been less used and useful – the physical presence of the EDIC would not. Instead, the physical presence and the "meeting" with the EDIC would take place at events. Judging by the number of users getting to know the EDICs through events, this would also improve awareness raising – while at the same time using a visibility instrument to which non-users would feel associated.

Activities that can be to some extent centralised

Among all the activities on which users were surveyed, EDIC websites are generally those enjoying the lowest level of satisfaction. The analysis of the EDICs web presence suggests that the quality of websites differ – but also that many EDICs have fairly static websites – with little information beyond contact details, information on events and newsletters. In contrast, national websites where EDIC resources have been concentrated (not just those linking up to the EDIC sites) are generally of better quality and more informative.

There would be benefit in considering a more centralised approach to EDIC websites. A centralised approach would allow resource allocation not just to the basic information – but would allow the development of more informative websites at national level (or where needed for linguistic reasons at regional level). Web pages of individual EDICs would form an integrated part of the national website – allowing EDICs to present their own activities,

provide their contact details, newsletters and other specific information. This more centralised approach would improve visibility, facilitate user access and still allow citizens to find local information.

A similar approach could be envisaged for other activities where a localised approach is not needed – or only partially needed (e.g. tweeting on EU news – or development of common newsletters).

Clarification of the feedback function

EDICs provide different types of feedback to the EC but very little feedback actually focuses on channelling citizens' opinions and suggestions to EU Institutions.

Overall, the definition of the feedback function and the purpose of this feedback are ambiguous to EDICs as well as Representations. The requirements of feedback to be gathered by EDICs is understood very differently across the network – ranging from reporting and feedback on EDIC management issues to feedback from citizens aimed at informing policymakers. At the same time formalised feedback on national communication strategies does not appear to have much use for the EC Representations or for Headquarters – besides for management purposes.

If a citizens' feedback function is to continue it will be important to specify what feedback is needed by the EU institutions (at Headquarters level or at EC Representation level). The definition of feedback should be driven by its actual usability. It will be important to identify in advance what the feedback is to be used for, who is to use it and how. It is of equivalent importance that "top down" feedback is provided – in order to ensure motivation and continued relevance of the feedback provided. If clarification is not provided there would be benefit in discontinuing the citizens' feedback requirement.

Considerations should also be given to how to integrate and formally interlink the EDICs feedback in the formulation of national communication strategies

The role of EDIC as a first-stop shop

Providing first level information and signposting to other EU information sources, EU networks and national actors that provide information on EU related issues, form an integrated and important part of the EDIC's activities – and is important given citizens difficulties in finding the right contact points and the multitude of actors informing on issues related to EU topics.

An obvious key requirement for signposting is to have an awareness and knowledge of the relevant actors and services. EC network managers have a better overview of the other EC networks and services than previously, although knowledge still remains inadequate.

Considering the interest among the EDIC Managers to learn more about other networks there would be benefit in a coordinated Representation-led approach to enhance awareness and cooperation among EC networks. Some sort of central guidance would possibly be needed as not all Representations consider promotion of network cooperation as a priority.

There would also be benefit in drawing on the experience of some EC Representations – that have previously worked on enhancing the network cooperation.

Media and skills development

EDICs are increasingly engaged with media and social media – and several EU stakeholders consulted have called for enhanced media activities. Given the lack of skills and competences – but also given the EDICs role as a neutral information provider - it cannot be recommended that media activities become a core EDIC activity – nor can it be expected that many EDICs will take up a very proactive role to communicate EU stories to the media or address misconceptions.

Nevertheless, if media interaction – including social media – is to gain importance further training will be necessary as most EDIC Managers do not have adequate skills for media communication.

<u>Opportunities for expanding the network mission by taking up new roles and responsibilities</u>

Evaluation results would suggest that there is potential to enhance cooperation with other EU institutions and actors. Currently cooperation is mainly ad hoc. There is interest from both other EU institutions and from EDICs in exploring opportunities for more systematic cooperation.

There would be benefits in developing such cooperation in terms of effectiveness. However, it is recommended that DG COMM investigates the kind of resources and support that these institutions could provide to EDICs as such cooperation will not be effective without support.

Strategic cooperation with other DGs is welcomed by many EDICs and should be further investigated. In this investigation phase DG COMM should focus on exploring opportunities for planned communication projects to be organised well in advance. Cooperation needs planning and cannot be ad hoc.

The idea of having an optional DG Module for communication activities for other DGs should also be exploited.

5.2 Conclusions and recommendations regarding the organisation and management of the EDIC network

Overall the organisation and management of the EDIC network, as implemented since 2009, has contributed to more efficient and effective EDICs operations. This was valid for the network organisation and most components of the management system, except for monitoring that has decreased in importance since the last generation.

With regard to the overall framework of the network, the four-year framework agreements with annual grant agreements were found to be adequate and should be continued. The same applies to the Management and Monitoring guidelines of the EDICs.

The organisation of the network is adequate and decentralised to a sufficient degree. The direct management system was confirmed to be more efficient that the management through intermediary bodies in the previous generation.

Steering and coordination by Headquarters and Representations is adequate, as are the division of roles and the quality of support provided. The guidance by Representations to EDICs is overall very good and training is very useful. However, it was not possible to assess the cost effectiveness of Headquarters and Representations' performance.

The grant scheme introduced with the current generation was perceived as more efficient than the financing system of the previous generation. The current module system with related lump sums is considered adequate, however most modules need more specific definitions and some need to be adjusted to better reflect EDIC implementation realities.

The overall Monitoring system framework was found to be well developed. However, the frequency of the actual yearly monitoring visits and the perceived added value of monitoring vary considerably among Representations.

There is no need to change the overall reporting system as the requirements were found to be reasonable for annual planning, monthly reporting and final reports. However, the Reporting tool on the ED intranet needs to be improved in terms of its usefulness for evaluation purposes. However, a more consistent reporting of monitoring data needs to be ensured.

The Commission co-funding was perceived as somewhat adequate, however less so in the EU-15. Serious difficulties with the availability of host structure co-funding were expected in Finland and to a lesser degree in Austria and Belgium.

The data suggest that DG COMM support services are helpful overall, but of mixed use, user-friendliness and usefulness.

The results of the evaluation suggest that there would be benefit in keeping the current broad organisation and management structures of the EDIC network. However, in terms of improving effectiveness and efficiency it is recommended that specific aspects of the management system are amended as suggested below.

5.2.1 Considerations for the future of the EDIC network – management, modules, monitoring, reporting, co-funding and support services

Grant scheme

The grant scheme based on lump sum contracts as implemented since 2009 has increased the overall efficiency of the network and reduced the administrative burden related to reporting and control.

The Module system is better than the previous system of global budgets. However a number of weaknesses of the system remain including: a focus on outputs rather than outcomes, a lack of quality indicators in implementation, insufficient definitions of several modules, outdated and irrelevant requirements, as well as different interpretations of module requirements by Representations, resulting in inequalities in assessing EDIC performance and activities eligible for lump-sum payments.

There would therefore be benefit in developing and fine-tuning the requirements for individual modules as suggested in the table below:

Module	Changes proposed
Module 1 – basic information services, EU partner on the local level and feedback	Sub-divide into two parts of which only one can be chosen and is mandatory: ▪ A centre with a physical presence, equipment, etc. open 20 hours per week with a minimum of 1FTE; and ▪ A centre without walk-in facilities, with a minimum of 1FTE, but a limited e-mail and phone information service provided through a "back office" and with a lower budget than option one.
Module 2 – website	Discontinue (as separate sites) - one website per country or where deemed necessary – per region. Payment could be included in module 1, a separate restricted call could be made for EDICs or the EC Representation to manage. The requirement for the national website should cover web analytics and regular monitoring.
Module 3 – e-newsletter	Develop 10 editions as a minimum requirement.
Module 4 – audio-visual materials	Change requirements not to cover DVDs. Clarify what can be covered and the type of content included.
Module 5 – printed materials	Clarify content (informative vs. promotional) – consider two sub-sections – one for information and one on promotion (at least for reporting).
Module 6 – media contributions	Define the type of media contribution that can be funded. Clarify whether the items picked up by media (and not specifically prepared by EDICs) are covered by this module. Include social media (increasing the importance of EDICs contributions to social media needs to be reflected by the module). Consider 4 sub-sections for the module to cover different activities: advertising, PR, social media and production of programmes (at least for reporting). Sub-categories should possibly be related to differentiated lump sums.
Module 7, 8 and 9 – events	Integrate in one module – but allow EDICs to report on different categories of activities.

	The sub-division typology of events must cover the broad categories of events EDICs currently organise or participate to. Different lump sums should be considered for the types of events requiring various resources.
Module 10 – evaluations/impact assessments/feedback	Integrate in module 1 – and make mandatory – for the purpose of learning. Provide support and training to EDICs for implementation including centrally developed tools, guidance or services.
Module 11 – other activities	Consider discontinuation.
New modules	Consider the introduction of: ▪ Module for the management of EDICs. ▪ Module for cooperation with other DGs on specific activities (paid partially by the other DGs).

It is recommended that EC Representations are informed and formally consulted on the proposed amendments to the module system. The system will keep most of its present components and the broad outlines, making it familiar to the EDICS, but better fine-tuned to the specifics of their everyday realities.

Overall framework and the adequacy of requirements

The four-year Framework agreement is adequate, providing enough security and continuation to EDICs activities, while ensuring sufficient flexibility to adjust contractual arrangements. The requirements for the selection of EDIC host structures are pertinent overall. However, there is an insufficient offer of quality proposals in most Member States. A number of alternative funding and EDIC hosting approaches have been identified that could be added as alternatives in the Calls for selection of host structures.

The requirements as defined in the Model action plan and the Management guidelines are generally clear, appropriate and useful in the implementation of the EDIC network. The action plans differ in terms of their quality, length and content. There is a need to relate communication and awareness raising activities in the EDIC action plans more clearly and explicitly to political priorities and local information needs. EDIC activities also need SMARTer objectives and minimum quality indicators.

The reporting requirements for action plans, monthly reporting and final reports are reasonable. The requirement for monthly reporting is currently not enforced. The reliability of the monitoring data entered is low, while many reporting categories allow submission of data in non-comparable formats. The EDIC reporting is only partially relevant for Representations' and evaluation needs.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the EDIC network requirements, it is proposed to:

Requirements	Changes proposed
Calls for the selection of host structures	Require host structures to clearly demonstrate how the implementation of an EDIC will be complementary to their existing services. Consider formalising alternative co-funding and hosting approaches (e.g. local+ regional+ EC co-funding) alongside the present approach.
Management guidelines	Include formulations that encourage similar interpretation by Representations of the requirements for the modification or replacement of modules. Define the requirements for the feedback service on citizens' opinions, if the feedback function is preserved.
Action plans	Move towards introducing SMARTer requirements for the planning of EDIC activities and minimum quality assessment requirements. Consider the introduction of an integrated system for submitting, approving and modifying action plans online (as part of the existing Intranet).
Reporting	Standardise the categories used for reporting to improve the quality and reliability of data used for monitoring, evaluation and presentation of the network.

	Relate reporting requirements more directly to the Representations' needs in terms of evaluating final reports and the needs of external evaluators.

Monitoring

The overall monitoring framework is adequate for the needs of the network. However, the actual monitoring activities take place less often and less systematically across Member States than in the previous network generation. There were no centrally provided monitoring activities (financial checks and audits) reported.

A majority of EC Representations undertake monitoring visits, but some did not see the need for formal monitoring visits as EDICs were monitored through personal contact and Representations' participation in events. Monitoring guidelines are useful, but little known and used. The few monitoring reports available followed the requirements of the monitoring guidelines and were prepared to a sufficient standard. Only a small minority of Representations undertake the mandatory regular monitoring of EDIC activities on the Intranet.

The current resources allocated for monitoring are not adequate to ensure a consistent and uniform level across all the Member States. This is currently not perceived as a major issue as Representations have different management styles and perceived need for oversight. However, the monitoring requirements and practices may have to be reinforced if the EC chooses to strive towards a more homogenous (network) performance. The central financial checks and audits need to be reinstated to ensure minimum monitoring of an adequate and lawful use of EU funds.

With regard to the monitoring practices it is recommended that the monitoring guidelines are promoted among the Representations, encouraging these to undertake a minimum yearly monitoring to ensure that there are adequate preconditions for EDIC delivery, performance and visibility. A more uniform and systematic approach to monitoring visits (including a number of EDICs to be visited and monitoring of EDIC compliance with the new requirements) could be considered if the EC chooses to increase the homogeneity of the network.

The Headquarters should also ensure that the centrally provided financial checks and audits of EDIC finances take place to ensure minimum control and accountability on the EU spending.

Reporting by EDICs

The reporting system requirements were seen as clear and the burden mostly reasonable. Data suggests that the reporting requirements are generally less burdensome than under the previous contractual period.

The monthly reporting was found to be adequate. However, the frequency of reporting differs despite the requirement for regular reporting.

The main problems with EDICs' reporting, relate to the Intranet functionality and in particular the unnecessary complexity of the reporting tool. The reporting tool needs to be revamped, taking into account the monitoring needs of Representations and external evaluation as well as user-friendliness.

There is also a lack of common approach to filling in the monitoring data categories on the Reporting tool, which becomes apparent when data is analysed. Improving the consistency of data submitted as well as avoiding misreporting would considerably improve the reliability and usefulness of the monitoring data.

It is therefore recommended that the following improvements are made to the Reporting tool in consultation with EDICs and Representations to ensure they are fully compatible with the actual activities undertaken by the EDICs and Representations' requirements in reviewing final reports:

- Review and standardise the data categories EDICs are required to enter during the monthly reporting to improve the reliability of monitoring data and ensure the categories meet Representations' and evaluation needs;
- Review the current extended search function to allow compiling of data on the activities, themes and political priorities covered by EDICs in a particular Member State;
- Develop the current Reporting tool to allow the annual report to be an automatic collation of the monthly reports and ensure it complies with the requirements of Representations.

If possible from the technical and contractual points of view, it is also suggested to develop the current Intranet tool to allow compilation, submission and amendment of action plans online, keeping track of the progress of EDIC activities, reporting on the quality of these activities and EDIC skills needs and submitting as well as approving the final reports.

Adequacy of EC co-funding

There are mixed views amongst EDICs on the adequacy of the EC co-funding. Data suggest that EC co-funding levels are generally perceived as more acceptable and appropriate in the EU-12 countries and less so in EU-15.

Consultations suggest that EDICs in the EU-12 countries would mostly like to see the EC increase the co-funding *rate*, while interviewees from EU-15 mostly argued for a higher co-funding *amount*.

In order to maximise geographical coverage it is recommended to preserve the current levels of EC co-funding for the EDIC network in the next funding round (should the total budget remain the same).

However, DG COMM should explore options for increased funding – including alternative host structure funding approaches – as current funding levels are likely to imply that some EDICs will leave the network. DG COMM should furthermore explore opportunities for "add on" funding from other DGs for specific communication activities undertaken on their behalf by the EDIC network.

Security of host structure co-financing

The security of the host structure co-funding varies considerably across the Member States. Over half of EDICs are certain to receive adequate co-funding from their host structures over the next few years. Almost one fifth of EDICs are concerned they will not receive host structure funding in future years.

In the countries consulted serious concerns over host structure funding during the next few years were identified in Finland, Austria, Belgium and the UK. National EDIC networks are more vulnerable in countries where most EDICs are hosted by a few or a single organisation as a potential withdrawal of these host structures from the network would represent a serious disruption to the continuity of the network and its services.

It is recommended that the Headquarters closely follow the national developments on the availability of host structure co-funding through Representations at least in the countries where several or important host structures anticipate having to withdraw from the network. The Headquarters could offer support and assistance to such Representations in the identification of new potential host structures in Member States by participating in actions promoting the network among potential host organisations or promoting the overall image of the network in the country.

There would also be benefits in Representations monitoring potential leaving and staying host structures and proactively promoting – at an early stage – the EDIC network among potential hosts within territories where there are currently no EDICs or where the current host is expected to withdraw.

Publication and promotion materials provided by the EC

Many publications provided by the EC are not relevant for EDICs due to their specialised focus and very technical language, which is also often only available in English. EDICs and their users mostly use generalist information on the EU in their mother tongue, in a user-friendly format. Publications for youth, pupils and teachers are particularly important.

The ordering of publications has greatly improved since the last evaluation. The EU bookshop in particular has made the ordering of publications more manageable for EDICs. However, there is still room for improvement in the mechanism by ensuring that publications are available in the required number and limiting the number of irrelevant publications received by EDICs.

The promotional material (i.e. goodies) is generally good and useful, particularly for more "outgoing" EDICs, while these are less useful for EDICs that do not deliver events.

The system for ordering publications should be further rationalised. It is recommended that the EC publications office sets up a simple regular email alert for new publications that would allow EDICs to access to PDF documents/downloads from the central EU bookshop. EDICs could then order publications considered to be of potential use. It is suggested that the current practice of sending a paper copy of all publications as a sample is discontinued.

The quantity of promotional material delivered to the EDICs that implement events could be increased. In addition, the delivery should be better scheduled so that EDICs can disseminate them during key events (such as Europe Days).

Services of contractors

The services provided by the three contractors, ESN, Eworx and Demos are important. However the visibility and use of services provided by ESN (information material) is limited, and few EDICs make actual use of these products.

The Intranet, contracted to Eworx, does not appear to be widely used and is criticised for not being user-friendly.

The training services provided by Demos are rated positively by the EDICs overall. However, EDICs also expressed concerns that some of the issues covered by training were not relevant or focused too little on exchange of real life experiences and practical exercises – aspects of the training that have recently been improved.

It is proposed that the ESN publications are continuously reviewed in order to ensure their actual relevance. Considering the low use of these publications there would also be benefit in considering limiting the number of publications produced in order to avoid EDICs being overloaded with information. Adequate publication and promotion of selected ESN publications should also be undertaken – as should the monitoring of their actual use.

Regarding the Demos training seminars there is a need to further develop activities focused on exchange of experience, "hands on" training and practical experiences. It is important to continue involving EDICs in the design of their training sessions to ensure that these are appropriate for their needs. The inclusion of a variety of sessions in each seminar should continue to ensure that EDICs can take part in the most relevant ones for them.