



**Follow-up review and sub-segmentation of Commission materials and activities targeting 5-18 year olds (COMM.A.2/14/2020/Lot2)**

**Final Report**

LOT 2 of the DG COMM Framework Contract PO/2016-06/01 - Impact assessment, evaluation and evaluation-related services in the field of communication activities

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A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark, curly hair pulled up into a bun. She is wearing a light blue school uniform with a white collar and a grey tie. She is smiling warmly and looking down at a book she is holding. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom setting with a window. A dark grey diagonal graphic element is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## Aims, objectives and scope of the Review

This Final Report has been prepared by Ecorys in the context of the 'Follow-up review and sub-segmentation of Commission materials and activities targeting 5-18 year olds' commissioned by Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) at the European Commission (the Commission).

This report was part of the Commission's effort to follow up on the recommendations that emerged from the 'Review of European Commission materials and activities targeting youth', completed by Ecorys in 2018. This previous study recommended to: (i) consider tailoring youth materials and activities for demographic segments that are less engaged and more at risk of social exclusion and poverty, using social media and user-centred approaches to reach into these segments, as well as (ii) reinforcing the work with particular youth groups and youth organisations to establish longer-term relationships based on common interests in the development of Commission communication materials and activities for youth, to better understand the information needs of the different sub-segments of this audience and together discover ways to engage them.

The aims of the assignment were as follows:

- ▶ Develop a typology of the 5-18 target audience, including a matrix of target audience segments for future use to inform how to tailor materials for the main sub-segments<sup>1</sup> of this target audience.
- ▶ Identify the EU information and learning needs of the sub-segments as well as preferred material formats and communication channels to advise how to effectively reach and engage with this target group and its main sub-segments.
- ▶ Produce recommendations and an outreach strategy on how to maximise the impact of the Commission's materials for 5 to 18 year olds, including how to streamline the current material's offer to this target group and its main sub-segments to better address their needs and to more efficiently cooperate on the distribution and promotion of author services' materials for 5-18 year-olds.

The report is structured by evaluation criteria, namely Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and EU Added value, as required by the Better Regulation Guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

**The resulting findings and recommendations stemming from the analysis have been consolidated into a Toolkit and an outreach strategy to offer guidance for the Commission's author services that produce materials and activities for children aged 5-18.** Both can be found in Annex 4

This Review covered the Commission's print and online materials and activities for children aged 5-18 and their main sub-segments produced between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2020.

## Overview of the method

The methodology used to gather data for this Review included:

- ▶ One scoping interview with DG COMM and a scoping survey with Commission author services (87 responses received).
- ▶ Mapping of materials and activities (227 materials mapped in total, 154 fully in-scope of the study).
- ▶ Monitoring data requests on materials carried by the Publications Office (OP) and other materials on the Learning Corner, Europe Direct Information Centres (EDIC<sup>3</sup>) websites, Commission Representations websites and social media.
- ▶ Research into the target group and its sub-segments through desk research and literature review.
- ▶ 55 Key stakeholder interviews.

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<sup>1</sup> The identified sub-segments for this study are as follows: Children aged 5-18 in rural areas; Children aged 5-18 facing material and/or social deprivation; Children aged 5-18 with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities; Children aged 5-18 with a migration background or experience; Children aged 5-18 with ethnic minority backgrounds; Early school leavers and LGBTIQ youths – i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Better Regulation Guidelines, please see: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en)

<sup>3</sup> until 30 April 2021, the network was called EDICs. Since 1 May 2021, the name was changed to Europe Direct Network.

- ▶ A User survey conducted in all official EU languages (297 responses received: 153 from professionals, 77 from parents/guardians, and 67 from children).
- ▶ 10 Classroom based consultations with children aged 5-6 and 7-9 carried out in the five sample countries (Denmark, Slovakia, Italy, Lithuania and Portugal)
- ▶ 15 Online focus groups with children aged 10-12, 13-15 and 16-18 carried out in the five sample countries.

## Findings and conclusions of the Review

### Target Groups

(i) **Five suggested age segments of the 5-18 year-old** audience were identified. Analysis of key literature and data, particularly in terms of child literacy development and the varying rates of digital media use resulted in identification of several potential implications for materials for the different age segments.

For **children aged 5-6** who are emergent readers, materials should minimise the use of long sentences and complex narratives. Materials targeting **children aged 7-9** can include longer sentences, a larger vocabulary, and more elaborate storylines. Interactive, playful formats of materials (e.g online and offline games, puzzles, colouring maps, origami) were found to be the most engaging with both age groups. Across both age groups, cognitive abilities are developing at different rates suggesting materials or activities that can adapt to different levels or difficulties would be most suited. This age segment associated Technology channels most with play, suggesting that videos or online games would be effective types of communication materials to reach and engage this target group. Findings suggests that digital communication materials targeting this age group are likely to be more effective if firstly, parents themselves are aware of them and can guide their children in their use and secondly, if they are embedded and used in the school learning environment as educational tools.

Preadolescent **children aged 10-12** can deal with more detailed concepts and ideas, longer sentences and a more varied vocabulary. Children of this age confirm their interest and preference for online materials and in particular a preference for video content. However, less than a third of children use smartphones to access the Internet daily. This suggests that online games and materials that are accessible from computers are more likely to reach this age group than mobile apps and games. Social media materials are unlikely to be as effective as online games in reaching this age group. A preference was expressed for interactive materials which offer the opportunity for children of this age to decide what information they engage with.

The ages of **13-15** mark a shift from preadolescence to early adolescence. For this age range, materials should take a digital format. Games, videos, and posts that can be accessed and shared via social media have particularly strong potential to gain traction and visibility in this age group. There is some indication that social media habits are potentially changing with references to some of the newer platforms such as TikTok being increasingly used as it provides the video content typically preferred by children.

Minimal tailoring is necessary for a material aimed at EU citizens in general to be readable and understandable for adolescents **aged 16-18**. For this age group, complex political concepts and EU topics can be introduced (e.g., individual rights, legal rights, civic responsibility). Videos, posts, games, and other materials that are shareable via social media are therefore particularly visible to this age group and should be used at a greater rate than printed materials. Materials should include a 'call for action' for a specific 'EU cause' (e.g., climate action, standing up for EU values) with a strong storytelling element from another young person.

(ii) Audience **sub-segments by demographic group** were refined through the triangulation of existing demographic data with the findings of factsheets, reports, and other documentation from a range of EU-level, international, non-governmental and advocacy organisations.

**Children from rural areas** may struggle with more complex language in written materials and may thus benefit from more visual aids in communication materials targeting them. The available data also indicates that there is a divide between rural and urban Europeans with regard to digital skills and multilingualism. The gap in digital skills, for example, means that while rural youths also prefer online communication materials, they may benefit more than their urban counterparts from access to printed materials. Furthermore, the fact that 40% of rural Europeans can only speak their native language increases the need for communication materials targeting this group to be available in all 24 of the EU's official languages.

**Children facing material and/or social deprivation** in Europe are likely to face increased barriers to accessing digital media. This has implications for the communication needs of children within this sub-group, with for example, communication materials being more effective in offline format for this target group. Lower rates of school completion within this cohort, as well as higher likelihood of less developed vocabulary and language skills also means that materials might be more effective if written in easy-to-read language, with more visual aids. The increased scepticism of parents from low-income households towards the use of digital technologies by their children, may also warrant action to ensure that communications materials targeting this sub-group have the 'trust' of parents, through for example, being 'validated' by being used in schools.

The specific information needs of **children with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities** will vary widely depending on the type and nature of each disability. Evidence suggests however that the use of video, audio or visual aids are key tools for effectively communicating with children with additional needs. Testing is also suggested as essential with children and professionals who work with them by type of disability and adaptation required.

While **early school leaver children** may prefer online communication materials due to low formal education, they may still benefit more from access to printed materials. The lower likelihood of persons with lower education speaking a foreign language also adds to any need for materials targeting this group to be available in all 24 of the EU's official languages. Furthermore, as early school leavers will not be reached at school, strong consideration should also be given to where communication materials are made available. Making materials available at second-chance schools and education centres, or at Public Employment Services would be key.

Communication materials targeting **children with migration backgrounds** will have to be especially tailored to the specific sub-group they are trying to reach. Given that individuals born in a foreign country are less likely to report computer use, offline communication materials are preferable to better reach this group. Leaflets and brochures in some non-official EU languages with clear and simple information about the EU and on EU programmes were found to be examples of such useful materials. For online materials, they should be available on a smart phone or adapted for mobile use and should be tested for use without the technological support of parents.

**For children with ethnic, religious and minority backgrounds**, due to low trust in institutions among these groups, there is a need to work through organisations, opinion leaders and influencers as well as to further sub-segment where necessary to ensure appropriate language, examples, and imagery in the materials.

The lack of availability of accurate EU-level data on the prevalence or circumstances of **LGBTIQ youth** limit the availability of specific evidence on the communications preferences and needs for this group. However, there is a wealth of evidence that persisting intolerance against LGBTIQ populations exposes them to unique vulnerabilities including social exclusion and a higher risk of suicide. This supports a need for materials for all that feature or promote inclusion and tolerance for LGBTIQ children and youths in the form of gender-neutral imagery or inclusion of non-heteronormative families in their visuals.

### **Relevance**

Overall, the Commission's materials and activities for children aged 5-18 and professionals who work with them **are relevant and useful in terms of topics and the variety of formats and types of activities to address their EU-related information needs**. However, qualitative evidence suggests that more materials and activities could be developed, **with content and formats of materials better tailored to different age and demographic groups**.

**Communication channels used to reach children aged 5-18 and professionals who work with them were found to be relevant, however, they should be carefully chosen to reach different target audiences**. The online channels, particularly social media and online platforms, are the preferred communication channels for children. However, based on the findings, younger children should be targeted indirectly through parents or professionals working with them, as older children search for the information independently and could be better targeted through online channels such as websites or social media.

Evidence shows that **cooperation with teachers** in disseminating the Commission's materials and including them either as part of different school subjects (e.g., geography, history) or extra curriculum activities (e.g., European exam, school competitions) is crucial in reaching children. Children who were familiar with the Commission's materials mostly heard about them through teachers at schools, since there is limited information included in formal education curriculum in schools.



Qualitative evidence shows that most of the respondents **were satisfied with the formats of the materials and types of activities and a diversity of material formats is much appreciated by children and professionals.** Most stakeholders interviewed agreed that playful activities e.g. quizzes, games, and colouring books are better suited for younger children while videos, podcasts, webinars and participatory - storytelling activities are preferred by older ones.

Most of the materials in the inventory were designed to provide general information about the EU to raise awareness of the role of the EU, its Member States and policies. **The content of Commission materials for 5–18-year-olds was also easy to read and understand and most of the materials can be accessed by their users in their preferred language.** Moreover, most of the EU and national level interviewees agreed that the existing EU legislation and policies should be accessible in a child friendly language and adapted to their age group.

**Evidence shows that the current Commission’s materials and activities for children aged 5-18 cover all the relevant political priorities of the current Commission for the period of 2019-2024.** However, topics linked to the priorities of the Green Deal and EU way of life are considered more relevant for children while there is a lack of information about digitalisation and EU international relations.

### *Coherence*

Overall, the **Commission’s offer of materials to children showed a good level of coherence but with potential opportunities to improve alignment with Commission priorities and to address some gaps in materials by topic.** Evidence suggests that materials for children covered a good range of topics with a reasonable alignment with the Commission’s priorities, but with a significant proportion of materials that did not directly support a Commission priority.

There was **good level of complementarity between the offer of Commission Directorates General (DGs).** Most DGs had publication plans or strategies and their offer of materials aligned with their policy remits, with no significant overlaps or duplications. There was also some evidence that materials are being produced as part of broader information or educational campaigns that support the Commission’s strategic priorities.

The review found that there was a **general lack of segmentation by age in Commission materials** that has limited the extent to which **an assessment can be made about what age groups are well served and where there are gaps in the offer.** Based on the review there may be a need for greater targeting of materials for younger and pre-teen children. **The accessibility of materials was broadly good** but there is a potential **gap in accessible materials for children with a visual disability.**

Stakeholders believed that the **breadth of materials by type was a strength of the Commission’s offer and welcomed the diversity that was available in terms of both formats and their offer to different ages.** The emphasis on digital materials was supported by stakeholders and aligned with the expectations of children however stakeholders and children noted that patterns of digital media consumption are evolving amongst young people.

There appears to be a broadly complementary approach to materials between the Commission’s materials and other EU institutions or organisations. National multipliers and stakeholders also particularly welcomed the important role that materials produced by the Commission and EU institutions more generally play in providing an authoritative source of information in support of local educational curricula.

### *Effectiveness*

The findings from the review suggest the Commission **materials and activities for children could be more effective in reaching their intended target group.** Analysis of monitoring data for both physical and multimedia materials and activities suggest that the Commission’s **materials and activities reached around 7% of total children aged 5-18 in the EU.** Despite the European Commission’s materials and activities being visible online and that significant efforts were made by the Commission to make these materials more visible through their networks working with the target group, available monitoring data from the OP shows an uneven dissemination of orders among EU Member States, with 75% of the physical orders being requested coming from six EU Member-States (Poland, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain). Monitoring data for the online games hosted at the Learning Corner website shows a similar pattern, with the majority of visitors coming from large EU Member States.

The number of individuals primarily accessing European Commission materials in English is quite substantial potentially indicating that most users reached by the European Commission’s channels are usually comfortable with the language and are more likely to not come from a disadvantaged, rural or early-school leavers background.

Evidence suggests that materials are also **reaching teachers and educators** more than other professionals working with segments of children aged 5-18. There was also a noticeable 'echo chamber' effect for the current dissemination channels, with materials typically reaching individuals who are already highly involved in EU related activities and thus keener in looking for such information in official EU channels i.e., the Learning Corner or the OP's 'EU publications' portal.

**Awareness of the Learning Corner was limited among the target group but viewed positively where it was known.** The majority of focus group participants found that the website was very well designed and reported the materials available there useful for them. **Social media content was found to be less effective in engaging with the target group** as this was not present on the most used platforms of the older age groups. Our findings from the Online Focus Groups also show that the main social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter – used by author services have fallen out of favour with younger users who now use some of the newer platforms – namely Reddit, TikTok, Twitch, and Discord. Social media was still useful to engage with parents, teachers/educators or multipliers who work with children.

Despite limitations in reach, there were **positive views where materials and activities were known.** Online games, brochures, activity books, publications, boardgames and leaflets were the most successful types of materials and activities in terms of outreach among the 153 materials mapped for this Follow-up review. Stakeholders highlighted **DG COMM's good track record of producing effective materials and activities for this target group**, particularly of the online games available in the Learning Corner. The data shows that Commission materials effectively engage with the target group in a variety of ways, from different kinds of formats (games, posters, activity books, comics, teaching kits, etc.) to content (Environment, history of EU and its institutions, travel around the UE, EU values, etc.).

**Users also generally found the materials and activities in the Learning Corner to be quite engaging, of good quality and quite useful for them. Data collected suggest that the Commission is producing materials that successfully engage with the younger age groups of the target audience but less successful with the older age groups.** Materials which are more tactile or activity oriented (such as games, quizzes, colouring books, with stickers or/and other tactile elements) work very well with the younger age groups, relying on the 'learning-by-doing' approach to communicate about the EU and what it is currently doing on the topics at hand.

**Availability of these games in paper format is still welcome for schools/homes who do not have the means to use online formats.** While teachers also highlighted that online content is preferable, they mentioned that not all schools or homes have computers available for all children. There was a view from some stakeholders that **materials are more commonly ready for use by teachers, with great didactical potential but not suited for direct use with children without some major changes beforehand.** Stakeholders and teachers also acknowledge that these **more playful formats lose their effectiveness with the older section of the target group (12 olds and above) and that the existing offer does not particularly engage well with this age group.** For this age group, they found that the Commission materials relying on videos, those with a call for action or which can be easily shared on their preferred social media are more successful in engaging with this target group.

Evidence also suggests that just under **one third of the Commission's author services cooperate with the intent to increase the effectiveness of their outreach, or their materials and activities offer to children aged 5-18 and the professionals who work with them.** This cooperation is mostly based around shared communication objectives. Evidence suggests that **Commission materials and activities for 5-18 year-olds resulting from the cooperation among author services are not common and that there is space for further cooperation to be explored.** Overall, evidence collected and reviewed indicates that Commission author services **need to continue their ongoing efforts** to address the needs of the 5–18 year-old target group and the professionals who work with them, with a particular focus on the needs of sub-groups and other categories of professional than teachers. In particular, making more use of the **knowledge and experience of organisations at national and EU-level that work with the target group.**

### *Efficiency*

There was **evidence that collaboration among author services occurred in relation to the development, revision and distribution of materials targeting 5-18 year-olds.** Collaboration amongst author services for the purpose of distribution or promotion of materials or activities for children aged 5-18 years was most commonly reported.

There have been **improvements in the cooperation with DG COMM** over the past few years for the purpose of producing materials for children. The availability of the DG COMM team for ad hoc advice and support for others developing materials for children was appreciated, as was the creation of a more formal structure in the form of a

Communications Network. Author services were also appreciative of the support offered by the OP in producing and distributing materials for children.

The evidence collected suggests there is **scope to develop and strengthen collaborative relationships across author services**. The proportion of author services reporting in the Scoping survey not to be working with others illustrates this and that the collaboration that does exist is very much on a case-by-case basis. Typically, there is a lead author service and contributions are sought with only one or two other DGs to add content rather than this being a more formal joint effort. In pursuit of greater efficiency and building on the collaborative work already underway, suggestions were made in terms of further raising awareness of existing networks and/or new forums for thematic collaboration, maximising reach via digital platforms and engaging external expertise.

### **EU Added Value**

**A positive picture on the perceived added value of the Commission's materials for children was found** with 94% (252 respondents) identifying at least one aspect of added value showing support for the Commission to continue to produce materials for children. Commission materials and activities for children aged 5-18 were perceived to have EU added value in four main areas: 1) providing up-to-date and complete information about the EU; 2) filling an information gap, in relation to national curricula; 3) topics are covered in an impartial/objective way; and 4) they provide an EU perspective on the topic.

According to the evidence collected, the EU added value of Commission materials for children could be maximised by continuing to consider the mechanisms and channels for distribution. Highlighted was a **need to stay up-to-date and reflect on the preferred ways for the different sub-segments, typically older children, to consume information**, particularly in terms of the online platforms or social media used in different Member States and the fact that young people are quick to move from one preferred platform to another.

The need to **continue to reflect on how to bridge the gap between children and EU institutions** was also highlighted. A range of other suggestions were made by stakeholders including reducing the emphasis on strongly pushing the EU visual identity on materials, instead focusing on more subtly or subliminally conveying that the information is about or from the EU.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Commission priorities and author services communications objectives**

- A. The European Commission should more systematically conduct audience research and testing of its materials and activities for children and professionals who work with them to ensure that these meet the needs of its target audience.
- B. When designing their materials, the Commission should take into consideration the needs and preferences of the 5-18 years old target group and its main sub-segments, using the Toolkit for the development of materials and activities for children aged 5-18 as a guide (available in Annex 4).
- C. Materials developed by Commission author services should be accompanied by an outreach strategy that takes into account the preferred channels and the relevant multipliers for the target group.
- D. The Commission should enhance the collaboration and coordination among author services in relation to the development, revision, testing and distribution of their materials for children via new and existing networks.
- E. The Commission should reach out more to key multipliers (e.g., teachers and trainers as well as other professionals working with children and their parents) while promoting materials for children aged 5-18 in the Member States.
- F. The Commission should further maximise the use of the existing Commission's materials by improving awareness of the Learning Corner among key EU and national stakeholders.
- G. Linking the Learning Corner to relevant national-level education portals and resources would improve the reach of the current Commission's offer of materials and activities for children aged 5-18.

- H. The layout of the EU Publications portal should be improved alongside the tagging system for materials targeting children aged 5-18 hosted on this portal.
- I. The Commission needs to go beyond its current dissemination channels for materials and activities targeting 5-18 year-olds and professionals working with them to reduce the 'echo chamber effect' in its communication.

### Target Groups

- J. The Commission should implement a system to review and verify the appropriateness of the format and the content of its materials and activities for different age groups and main segments of 5-18 year-olds.
- K. The Commission could consider splitting the current age segment of 5-9 year olds into two age groups (ages 5 to 6: emergent readers and ages 7 to 9: developing readers) to account for the rapid development of child literacy during these formative years.
- L. The Commission could consider further differentiating the 'ages 15 and over' age group on the Learning Corner to include a 16-18 years old age group to support the identification and development of materials tailored for their needs.
- M. The Commission should increase its offer of materials covering the needs of children with disabilities by adapting materials in sign languages, Braille and, where appropriate, other relevant formats.
- N. The Commission should encourage author services to review the handful of materials for children that were found during this Follow-up review to not be in line with the EU values of equality, freedom and human rights<sup>4</sup>.
- O. The Commission should strongly encourage author services to produce materials and activities in as many EU languages as possible to ensure accessibility and encourage the use of the material across different Member States.

### Communication Messages

- P. When designing materials and activities for children aged 5-6 (Emergent readers) the use of long sentences and complex narratives in presenting basic information on EU geography and symbols should be avoided.
- Q. Materials and activities for children aged 7-9 years old (Developing readers) could cover introductory information on EU history, geography, and symbols and can include longer sentences, a larger vocabulary, and more elaborate storylines.
- R. Materials and activities for children aged 10-12 (Preadolescents) could focus on general concepts, ideas and aspects of the EU e.g., EU Institutions, common values and currency that can be presented in more detail, with longer sentences and more varied vocabulary.
- S. Materials and activities for children aged 13-15 (Early adolescents) could focus on EU current affairs, particularly EU topics that support or compliment national curricula and other aspects which directly impact on their lives e.g., EU solidarity, EU culture, and EU citizenship.
- T. Materials and activities for children aged 16-18 (Late adolescents) could cover complex EU concepts and topics, e.g., individual rights, legal rights, conventions, shared European identity, European heritage, EU solidarity, political and civic responsibility in the EU.
- U. Based on the policy and related communication objectives of a Commission author service, that service should, when relevant, consider developing materials and activities specifically addressing the EU information needs of children from rural areas, children with migration and ethnic backgrounds, LGBTIQ children and youths, and children facing a higher risk of social exclusion and poverty (i.e., NEETs and early school leavers)<sup>[1]</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en)

<sup>[1]</sup> These materials will be relevant also for other child audience segments, as well as other adult readers, users and participants who are concerned with inclusion, equality and anti-discrimination topics.

### *Communication Activities*

- V. The Commission should continue to maintain a mix of formats and types of materials to meet different needs and preferences of 5-18 year-olds, prioritising short, visually appealing, easy-to-read and interactive content.
- W. Availability of physical copies of Commission materials (through their schools, libraries and/or Europe Direct Network centres) will continue to be essential to ensure that these materials are reaching younger age groups and segments of children at risk of poverty and exclusion.
- X. Materials and activities for children aged 5-6 (Emergent readers) or for 7-9 years old (Developing readers) should focus on hands on or creative activities for children, reflecting the importance of 'learning through doing' or play focused approach.
- Y. Materials and activities for children aged 10-12 (Preadolescents) should be designed to directly engage children with the content (e.g., through games, school events or competitions) and to be used online and offline with their peers and friends.
- Z. Materials and activities for children aged 13-15 (Early adolescents) and 16-18 (Late adolescents) that can be accessed and shared via their preferred social media e.g., games, videos, and posts have a particularly strong potential to gain traction and visibility but effectiveness of offline materials should not be disregarded.
- AA. While designing online interactive materials and activities Commission's author services should consider opportunities for introducing options to support segments of EU children with different cognitive and physical abilities to allow for their full participation.
- BB. The Commission should monitor the evolution of social media use by young people and continuously adapt the choice of channels used to optimize its outreach and engagement with 5-18 year olds.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

- CC. The Commission should encourage its author services to systematically collect and use monitoring data, including quantitative and qualitative feedback on the needs of its 5-18 years-old target audiences. Ex-ante research and testing of materials and activities is also recommended.
- DD. The Commission should improve existing feedback mechanisms for games hosted on the Learning Corner and videos on European Commission's Audio-visual Portal.

## Note de synthèse

### Buts, objectifs et portée de l'Examen

Le présent rapport final a été préparé par Ecorys dans le cadre de l'«Examen de suivi et sous-segmentation des supports de communication et activités de la Commission ciblant les 5-18 ans» commandé par la direction générale de la communication (DG COMM) de la Commission européenne (la Commission).

Ce rapport s'inscrit dans le cadre des efforts déployés par la Commission pour assurer le suivi des recommandations issues de l'« Examen des supports et activités de la Commission européenne ciblant les jeunes », réalisé par Ecorys en 2018. Cette précédente étude recommandait: (i) d'envisager d'adapter les supports et activités destinés aux jeunes des segments démographiques les moins engagés et les plus vulnérables à l'exclusion sociale et à la pauvreté, en recourant aux réseaux sociaux et à des approches centrées sur l'utilisateur pour atteindre ces segments, ainsi que (ii) de renforcer le travail avec des groupes et organisations de jeunesse, afin d'établir des relations à plus long terme fondées sur des intérêts communs, dans le développement des supports et activités de communication de la Commission destinés aux jeunes, afin de mieux comprendre les besoins en information des différents sous-segments de ce public et de découvrir ensemble des moyens de les impliquer.

Les objectifs de la mission étaient les suivants:

- ▶ Développer une typologie du public cible des 5-18 ans, y compris une matrice des segments du public cible qui permettra plus tard de déterminer comment adapter les supports aux principaux sous-segments<sup>5</sup> de ce public cible.
- ▶ Identifier les besoins en matière d'information et d'apprentissage des sous-segments de l'UE, ainsi que les formats des supports et les canaux de communication privilégiés, afin de fournir des conseils sur la manière d'atteindre et d'impliquer efficacement ce groupe cible et ses principaux sous-segments.
- ▶ Formuler des recommandations et une stratégie de sensibilisation sur la manière de maximiser l'impact des supports de la Commission pour les 5-18 ans, y compris la manière de rationaliser l'offre actuelle de supports pour ce groupe cible et ses principaux sous-segments afin de mieux répondre à leurs besoins et de coopérer plus efficacement à la distribution et à la promotion des supports des services auteurs pour les 5-18 ans.

Le rapport s'articule autour de différents critères d'évaluation, à savoir la pertinence, la cohérence, l'efficacité, l'efficience et la valeur ajoutée de l'UE, tels que stipulés dans les lignes directrices pour une meilleure réglementation<sup>6</sup>.

**Les résultats et les recommandations découlant de l'analyse ont été regroupés dans une boîte à outils et une stratégie de sensibilisation destinées à guider les services auteurs de la Commission qui produisent des supports de communication et des activités pour les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans.** Ces deux documents se trouvent à l'annexe 4.

Cet Examen a couvert les supports imprimés et en ligne ainsi que les activités de la Commission destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans et leurs principaux sous-segments produits entre le 1er janvier 2018 et le 31 décembre 2020.

### Aperçu de la méthode

La méthodologie utilisée pour recueillir les données pour l' Examen comprenait:

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<sup>5</sup> Les sous-segments identifiés pour cette étude sont les suivants: Les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans vivant dans les zones rurales; les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans confrontés à une carence matérielle et/ou sociale; les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans souffrant de handicaps intellectuels, physiques ou sensoriels; les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans issus de l'immigration; les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans issus de minorités ethniques; les jeunes en décrochage scolaire et les jeunes issus d'une minorité sexuelle – c'est-à-dire les lesbiennes, les gays, les bisexuels, les transgenres et les personnes intersexuées (LGBTI).

<sup>6</sup> Pour plus d'informations sur les lignes directrices pour une meilleure réglementation, veuillez consulter: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_fr)

- ▶ Un entretien exploratoire avec la DG COMM et une enquête exploratoire auprès des services auteurs de la Commission (87 réponses reçues).
- ▶ Une cartographie des supports et des activités (227 supports recensés au total, 154 entrant entièrement dans le champ de l'étude).
- ▶ Un suivi des demandes de données sur les supports communiqués par l'Office des publications (OP) et d'autres supports sur l'Espace Apprentissage, les sites web des centres d'information Europe Direct (EDIC<sup>7</sup>), les sites web des représentations de la Commission et les réseaux sociaux.
- ▶ Une recherche sur le groupe cible et ses sous-segments par le biais d'une recherche documentaire et d'une analyse de la littérature.
- ▶ 55 entretiens avec les principales parties prenantes.
- ▶ Une enquête auprès des utilisateurs, menée dans toutes les langues officielles de l'UE (297 réponses reçues: 153 de professionnels, 77 de parents/tuteurs et 67 d'enfants).
- ▶ 10 consultations en classe avec des enfants âgés de 5 à 6 ans et de 7 à 9 ans, menées dans les cinq pays pilotes (Danemark, Slovaquie, Italie, Lituanie et Portugal)
- ▶ 15 groupes de discussion en ligne avec des enfants âgés de 10 à 12 ans, de 13 à 15 ans et de 16 à 18 ans, organisés dans les cinq pays pilotes.

## Résultats et conclusions de l'Examen

### Groupes cibles

(i) **Cinq segments d'âge suggérés parmi le public des 5-18 ans** ont été identifiés. L'analyse de la littérature et des données clés, notamment en ce qui concerne le développement de l'alphabétisation des enfants et les taux variables d'utilisation des médias numériques, a permis d'identifier plusieurs implications potentielles pour les supports destinés aux différents segments d'âge.

Pour les **enfants âgés de 5 à 6 ans** qui sont des lecteurs émergents, les supports devraient limiter l'utilisation de longues phrases et de récits complexes. Les supports destinés aux **enfants âgés de 7 à 9 ans** peuvent comporter des phrases plus longues, un vocabulaire plus étendu et des intrigues plus élaborées. Les supports interactifs et ludiques (jeux en ligne et hors ligne, puzzles, cartes à colorier, origami) se sont avérés les plus attrayants pour les deux groupes d'âge. Les capacités cognitives des deux groupes d'âge se développent à des rythmes différents, ce qui suggère que les supports ou les activités susceptibles de s'adapter à différents niveaux ou difficultés seraient les plus appropriés. Cette tranche d'âge associe davantage les canaux technologiques au jeu, ce qui suggère que les vidéos ou les jeux en ligne seraient des types de supports de communication efficaces pour atteindre et impliquer ce groupe cible. Les résultats suggèrent que les supports de communication numériques ciblant cette tranche d'âge sont susceptibles d'être plus efficaces si, premièrement, les parents eux-mêmes les connaissent et peuvent guider leurs enfants dans leur usage et, deuxièmement, s'ils sont intégrés et utilisés dans l'environnement d'apprentissage scolaire comme outils pédagogiques.

Les **préadolescents âgés de 10 à 12 ans** peuvent appréhender des concepts et des idées plus détaillés, des phrases plus longues et un vocabulaire plus varié. Les enfants de cet âge confirment leur intérêt et leur préférence pour les supports en ligne avec une préférence particulière pour les contenus vidéo. Cependant, moins d'un tiers des enfants utilisent des smartphones pour accéder quotidiennement à internet. Cela suggère que les jeux en ligne et les supports accessibles depuis un ordinateur sont plus susceptibles de toucher ce groupe d'âge que les applications et les jeux mobiles. Les supports provenant des réseaux sociaux ne seront probablement pas aussi efficaces que les jeux en ligne pour toucher cette tranche d'âge. Une préférence a été exprimée pour les supports interactifs qui offrent aux enfants de cette tranche d'âge la possibilité de décider des contenus qui les intéressent.

La **tranche d'âge de 13 à 15 ans** marque le passage de la préadolescence à l'adolescence. Pour cette tranche d'âge, les supports devraient être au format numérique. Les jeux, les vidéos et les messages qui peuvent être partagés et consultés via les réseaux sociaux sont particulièrement susceptibles de gagner en popularité et en visibilité dans cette tranche d'âge. Il semblerait que les habitudes en matière de réseaux sociaux soient en train

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<sup>7</sup> Jusqu'au 30 avril 2021, le réseau s'appelait EDICs. Depuis le 1er mai 2021, son nom a été changé en Europe Direct Network.

de changer, les références à certaines des nouvelles plateformes telles que TikTok, étant de plus en plus utilisées car elles fournissent un contenu vidéo généralement plébiscité par les enfants.

Des ajustements légers sont nécessaires pour qu'un support destiné aux citoyens européens en général soit lisible et compréhensible pour les adolescents **âgés de 16 à 18 ans**. Pour cette tranche d'âge, il est possible d'introduire des concepts politiques et des thèmes européens complexes (par exemple, les droits individuels, les droits légaux, la responsabilité civique). Les vidéos, les messages, les jeux et autres supports partageables via les réseaux sociaux sont donc particulièrement adaptés à cette tranche d'âge et devraient être plus utilisés que les supports papiers. Les supports devraient inclure un «appel à l'action» pour une «cause européenne» spécifique (par exemple, l'action pour le climat, la défense des valeurs de l'UE) avec un élément narratif fort émanant d'un autre jeune.

(ii) Les **sous-segments d'audience par groupes démographiques** ont été affinés par la triangulation des données démographiques existantes avec les conclusions de fiches d'information, de rapports et autres documents provenant de diverses organisations européennes, internationales, non gouvernementales et de défense des intérêts.

Les **enfants vivant dans les zones rurales** peuvent avoir du mal à comprendre le langage plus complexe des matériels écrits et peuvent donc tirer profit d'un plus grand nombre d'aides visuelles dans les supports de communication qui leur sont destinés. Les données disponibles indiquent également qu'il existe une fracture entre les Européens ruraux et urbains en ce qui concerne les compétences numériques et le multilinguisme. L'écart en matière de compétences numériques, par exemple, implique que si les jeunes ruraux préfèrent également les supports de communication en ligne, ils peuvent bénéficier davantage que leurs homologues urbains d'un accès à des supports papiers. En outre, le fait que 40 % des Européens vivant en milieu rural ne parlent que leur langue maternelle augmente la nécessité de disposer de supports de communication destinés à ce groupe dans les vingt-quatre langues officielles de l'UE.

Les **enfants en situation de vulnérabilité socio-économique** en Europe sont susceptibles de rencontrer davantage d'obstacles pour accéder aux médias numériques. Cela a des conséquences sur leurs besoins en matière de communication, les supports de communication étant par exemple plus efficaces en format hors ligne pour ce groupe cible. Les taux plus faibles de réussite scolaire au sein de cette catégorie, ainsi qu'une probabilité plus élevée de disposer d'un vocabulaire et de compétences linguistiques moins développés, suggèrent que les supports pourraient se révéler plus efficaces s'ils étaient rédigés dans un langage facile à lire, avec davantage de supports visuels. Le scepticisme accru des parents de ménages à faibles revenus à l'égard de l'utilisation des technologies numériques par leurs enfants peut également justifier une action visant à garantir que les supports de communication ciblant ce sous-groupe bénéficient de la «confiance» des parents, en étant par exemple «validés» par leur utilisation dans les écoles.

Les besoins en information spécifiques des **enfants en situation de handicaps intellectuels, physiques ou sensoriels** varient considérablement en fonction du type et de la nature de chaque handicap. Toutefois, les données suggèrent que les supports vidéo, audio ou visuels sont des outils clés pour communiquer efficacement avec les enfants qui présentent des besoins supplémentaires. Procéder à des tests est également recommandé comme essentiel avec les enfants et les professionnels qui travaillent avec eux, par type de handicap et par type d'adaptation requise.

Si les **enfants ayant prématurément abandonné l'école** peuvent préférer les supports de communication en ligne en raison de leur faible niveau d'éducation formelle, ils peuvent néanmoins tirer davantage profit de l'accès à des supports papiers. La plus faible probabilité que des personnes peu instruites parlent une langue étrangère renforce également la nécessité de disposer de supports destinés à ce groupe dans les 24 langues officielles de l'UE. En outre, étant donné que les personnes en décrochage scolaire ne pourront pas être atteintes par le biais de l'école, il convient d'accorder une grande attention à l'endroit où les supports de communication sont mis à disposition. Il serait judicieux de les mettre à disposition dans les écoles et les centres d'éducation de la deuxième chance, ou dans les services publics de l'emploi.

Les supports de communication destinés aux **enfants issus de l'immigration** devront être spécialement adaptés au sous-groupe spécifique qu'ils veulent toucher. Étant donné que les personnes nées dans un pays étranger sont moins susceptibles d'utiliser un ordinateur, les supports de communication hors ligne sont préférables pour mieux atteindre ce groupe. Les dépliants et brochures rédigés dans certaines langues non officielles de l'UE et contenant des informations claires et simples sur l'UE et ses programmes sont autant d'exemples de supports utiles. Les supports en ligne devraient être disponibles sur un smartphone ou adaptés à une utilisation mobile et devraient pouvoir être utilisés sans l'aide technologique des parents.



En ce qui concerne les **enfants appartenant à des milieux ethniques et/ou religieux minoritaires**, en raison de la faible confiance de ces groupes dans les institutions, il convient de travailler par l'intermédiaire d'organisations, de leaders d'opinion et de personnes influentes, ainsi que de sous-segmenter davantage si nécessaire, afin de proposer dans les supports un langage, des exemples et des images appropriés.

L'absence de données précises au niveau de l'UE sur la prévalence ou la situation des **jeunes LGBTIQ** limite la disponibilité de preuves spécifiques sur les préférences et les besoins de communication de ce groupe. Cependant, il existe de nombreuses preuves que l'intolérance persistante à l'égard des populations LGBTIQ les expose à des situations de vulnérabilité uniques, notamment l'exclusion sociale et un risque plus élevé de suicide. Cela confirme la nécessité de disposer de supports de communication destinés au grand public qui mettent en scène ou promeuvent l'inclusion et la tolérance à l'égard des personnes ayant une orientation sexuelle minoritaire, sous la forme d'une imagerie de neutralité du genre ou de l'inclusion de familles non hétéronormatives dans leurs visuels.

### **Pertinence**

Dans l'ensemble, les supports et activités de la Commission destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans et aux professionnels qui les encadrent **sont pertinents et utiles en termes de sujets et de diversité de formats et de types d'activités pour répondre à leurs besoins en information sur l'UE**. Cependant, des données qualitatives suggèrent que davantage de supports et d'activités pourraient être développés, **avec un contenu et des formats mieux adaptés aux différents groupes d'âge et démographiques**.

**Les canaux de communication utilisés pour atteindre les enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans et les professionnels qui travaillent avec eux ont été jugés pertinents, mais ils doivent être choisis avec soin pour toucher les différents publics cibles.** Les canaux en ligne, notamment les réseaux sociaux et les plateformes en ligne, sont les canaux de communication privilégiés par les enfants. Toutefois, d'après les résultats, les plus jeunes enfants devraient être ciblés indirectement par l'intermédiaire des parents ou des professionnels qui travaillent avec eux, alors que les enfants plus âgés recherchent les informations de manière indépendante et pourraient être mieux ciblés par le biais de canaux en ligne tels que les sites web ou les réseaux sociaux.

Les données indiquent que pour atteindre les enfants, il est primordial de **coopérer avec les enseignants** pour diffuser les supports de communication de la Commission et les inclure dans différentes matières scolaires (par exemple, la géographie, l'histoire) ou dans des activités hors programme (par exemple, les examens européens, les concours scolaires). Les enfants qui connaissaient les supports de la Commission en ont surtout entendu parler par les enseignants à l'école, étant donné que le programme d'éducation formelle dans les écoles contient peu d'informations à ce sujet.

Des données qualitatives révèlent que la plupart des personnes interrogées **étaient satisfaites des formats des supports et des types d'activités proposés, et qu'une diversité de formats est très appréciée par les enfants et les professionnels**. La plupart des parties prenantes interrogées s'accordent à dire que les activités ludiques, telles que les quiz, les jeux et les livres de coloriage, conviennent mieux aux jeunes enfants, tandis que les plus âgés préfèrent les vidéos, les podcasts, les webinaires et les activités de narration participative.

La plupart des supports de l'inventaire ont été conçus pour fournir des informations générales sur l'UE afin de sensibiliser les enfants au rôle de l'UE, de ses États membres et de ses politiques. **Le contenu des supports de la Commission destinés aux 5-18 ans était également facile à lire et à comprendre, et la plupart des supports peuvent être consultés par leurs utilisateurs dans la langue de leur choix**. En outre, la plupart des personnes interrogées au niveau européen et national ont reconnu que la législation et les politiques européennes existantes devraient être accessibles dans un langage adapté aux enfants et approprié pour leur tranche d'âge.

**Des données probantes démontrent que les supports et activités actuels de la Commission destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans couvrent toutes les priorités politiques pertinentes et actuelles de la Commission pour la période 2019-2024.** Toutefois, les sujets liés aux priorités du pacte vert et au mode de vie européen sont considérés comme les plus pertinents pour les enfants, tandis qu'il y a un manque d'information sur la numérisation et les relations internationales de l'UE.

### **Cohérence**

Dans l'ensemble, **l'offre de supports pour enfants de la Commission présentait un bon niveau de cohérence, mais il existe une marge d'amélioration de l'alignement du contenu de ces supports sur les priorités de la Commission. Il est également possible de combler certaines lacunes des supports par thème**. Des données probantes suggèrent que les supports pour enfants couvraient un large éventail de sujets, avec un alignement

raisonnable sur les priorités de la Commission, mais avec une proportion importante de supports qui ne soutenaient pas directement une priorité de la Commission.

On a pu constater un **bon niveau de complémentarité entre l'offre des différentes directions générales (DG) de la Commission**. La plupart des DG disposaient de plans ou de stratégies de publication, et leur offre de supports s'alignait sur leurs attributions politiques, sans chevauchements ni duplications majeurs. Certains éléments indiquent également que les supports sont produits dans le cadre de campagnes d'information ou d'éducation plus larges qui soutiennent les priorités stratégiques de la Commission.

L'examen a révélé un **manque général de segmentation par âge pour les supports de la Commission**, ce qui a restreint la possibilité d'**évaluer dans quelle mesure les différents groupes d'âge sont correctement couverts et d'identifier les lacunes de l'offre**. Sur la base de l'examen, il pourrait s'avérer nécessaire de mieux cibler les supports destinés aux plus jeunes enfants et aux préadolescents. **L'accessibilité des supports était globalement bonne**, mais il existe un **manque potentiel de supports accessibles aux enfants souffrant d'un handicap visuel**.

Les parties prenantes estiment que la **diversité des supports est un point fort de l'offre de la Commission et se félicitent de la diversité des formats et des offres destinées aux différents âges**. Les efforts en matière de développement de supports numériques ont été salués par les parties prenantes comme correspondant aux attentes des enfants. Toutefois, les parties prenantes et les enfants ont constaté que les modes de consommation des médias numériques chez les jeunes évoluent constamment.

Une approche très complémentaire semble exister entre les supports de la Commission, ceux des autres institutions de l'UE et des organisations européennes. Les multiplicateurs nationaux et les parties prenantes ont également salué le rôle important que jouent les supports produits par la Commission et, plus généralement, les institutions de l'UE, en fournissant une source d'information qui fait autorité pour soutenir les programmes d'enseignement locaux.

### **Efficacité**

Les résultats de l'examen suggèrent que les **supports et activités de la Commission destinés aux enfants pourraient toucher leur groupe cible de manière plus efficace**. L'analyse des données de suivi des supports physiques et multimédias et des activités suggère que les **supports et activités de la Commission ont touché environ 7 % de l'ensemble des enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans dans l'UE**. Bien que les supports et les activités de la Commission européenne soient exposés en ligne et que la Commission ait déployé des efforts considérables pour rendre ces matériels plus visibles par l'intermédiaire de ses réseaux travaillant avec le groupe cible, les données de suivi disponibles de l'OP montrent une diffusion inégale des commandes entre les États membres de l'UE, 75 % des commandes physiques provenant de six États membres de l'UE (Pologne, France, Allemagne, Belgique, Italie, Espagne). Les données de suivi des jeux en ligne hébergés sur le site web de l'Espace Apprentissage présentent un schéma similaire, la majorité des visiteurs provenant de grands États membres de l'UE.

Le nombre de personnes accédant principalement aux supports de la Commission européenne en anglais est assez important, ce qui indique potentiellement que la plupart des utilisateurs touchés par les canaux de la Commission européenne sont généralement familiarisés avec cette langue et sont moins susceptibles d'être issus d'un milieu défavorisé, rural ou d'être en situation de décrochage scolaire. Tout porte à croire que les supports **atteignent également les enseignants et les éducateurs** plus que les autres professionnels travaillant avec des segments d'enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans. On constate également un effet de «chambre d'écho» pour les canaux de diffusion actuels, les supports atteignant généralement des personnes déjà fortement impliquées dans des activités liées à l'UE et donc plus enclines à rechercher de telles informations dans les canaux officiels de l'UE, c'est-à-dire l'Espace Apprentissage ou le portail «publications de l'UE» de l'OP.

**La notoriété de l'Espace Apprentissage était limitée au sein du groupe cible, mais celui-ci était perçu positivement lorsqu'il était connu**. La majorité des participants aux groupes de discussion ont jugé le site web très bien conçu et ont souligné l'utilité des supports qui y sont disponibles. **Le contenu des réseaux sociaux s'est avéré moins efficace pour atteindre le groupe cible**, car il n'était pas présent sur les plateformes les plus utilisées par les groupes plus âgés. Les résultats des groupes de discussion en ligne montrent également que les principales plateformes de réseaux sociaux – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter – utilisées par les services auteurs sont tombées en désuétude auprès des jeunes utilisateurs qui se tournent désormais vers des plateformes plus récentes, à savoir Reddit, TikTok, Twitch et Discord. Les réseaux sociaux demeurent utiles pour engager le dialogue avec les parents, les enseignants/éducateurs ou les multiplicateurs qui travaillent avec des enfants.

En dépit d'une portée limitée, les **avis sont positifs dès lors que les supports et les activités sont connus**. Les jeux en ligne, les brochures, les cahiers d'activités, les publications, les jeux de société et les dépliants ont été les types de supports et d'activités les plus efficaces en termes de rayonnement parmi les cent-cinquante-trois supports répertoriés pour cet examen de suivi. Les parties prenantes ont souligné les **bons résultats de la DG COMM en matière de production de supports et d'activités efficaces pour ce groupe cible**, en particulier les jeux en ligne disponibles dans l'Espace Apprentissage. Les données révèlent que les supports de la Commission s'adressent efficacement au groupe cible de diverses manières, qu'il s'agisse du format (jeux, affiches, cahiers d'activités, bandes dessinées, kits pédagogiques, etc.) ou du contenu (environnement, histoire de l'UE et de ses institutions, voyages dans l'UE, valeurs de l'UE, etc.).

**En général, les utilisateurs ont également trouvé les supports et les activités de l'Espace Apprentissage très attrayants, de bonne qualité et très utiles. Les données collectées suggèrent que la Commission produit des supports qui suscitent l'intérêt des groupes d'âge les plus jeunes du public cible, mais moins celui des groupes d'âge plus avancés.** Les supports plus tactiles ou axés sur des activités (tels que les jeux, les quiz, les livres de coloriage, les autocollants et/ou d'autres éléments tactiles) rencontrent un réel succès auprès des groupes d'âge les plus jeunes, car ils s'appuient sur l'approche de l'«apprentissage par la pratique» pour communiquer sur l'UE et sur ses activités courantes dans les domaines concernés.

**La disponibilité de ces jeux en format papier est toujours la bienvenue pour les écoles/foyers qui n'ont pas les moyens d'utiliser les formats en ligne.** Bien que les enseignants aient également souligné une préférence pour le contenu en ligne, ils ont fait remarquer que toutes les écoles ou tous les foyers ne disposent pas d'ordinateurs pour tous les enfants. Certaines parties prenantes estiment que **les supports sont le plus souvent prêts à être exploités par les enseignants, avec un grand potentiel didactique, mais qu'ils ne sont pas adaptés à une utilisation directe avec les enfants sans quelques modifications majeures préalables.** Les parties prenantes et les enseignants reconnaissent également que ces **formats plus ludiques perdent de leur efficacité auprès de la partie plus âgée du groupe cible (12 ans et plus) et que l'offre existante ne s'adresse pas particulièrement à cette tranche d'âge.** Pour cette tranche d'âge, ils ont constaté que les supports de la Commission qui s'appuient sur des vidéos, ceux qui comportent un appel à l'action ou qui peuvent être facilement partagés sur leurs réseaux sociaux préférés réussissent mieux à susciter l'intérêt de ce groupe cible.

Il semble également qu'un peu moins d'un tiers des services auteurs de la Commission coopèrent dans le but d'accroître l'efficacité de leurs actions de sensibilisation ou leur offre de supports et d'activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans et aux professionnels qui travaillent avec eux. Cette coopération s'articule principalement autour d'objectifs de communication communs. Des éléments probants suggèrent que les **supports et activités de la Commission destinés aux 5-18 ans et résultant de la coopération entre les services auteurs sont rares et qu'il existe un potentiel de coopération supplémentaire à examiner.** Dans l'ensemble, les éléments recueillis et examinés indiquent que les services auteurs de la Commission **doivent poursuivre leurs efforts** pour répondre aux besoins du groupe cible des 5-18 ans et des professionnels qui les encadrent, en mettant l'accent sur les besoins des sous-groupes et des catégories de professionnels autres que les enseignants. Notamment, en utilisant davantage les **connaissances et l'expérience au niveau national et européen des organisations qui travaillent avec le groupe cible.**

### *Efficiences*

Il s'est avéré qu'une **collaboration entre les services auteurs est intervenue dans le cadre du développement, de la révision et de la distribution des matériels destinés aux 5-18 ans.** Cette collaboration a été le plus souvent rapportée dans le cadre de la distribution ou de la promotion de supports ou d'activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans.

**La coopération avec la DG COMM s'est améliorée** au cours des dernières années dans le domaine de la production de matériels destinés aux enfants. La disponibilité de l'équipe de la DG COMM pour fournir des conseils et un soutien ad hoc à d'autres personnes développant des matériels pour enfants a été appréciée à sa juste valeur, tout comme la création d'une structure plus formelle sous la forme d'un réseau de communication. Les services auteurs ont également apprécié le soutien offert par l'OP pour la production et la distribution de supports destinés aux enfants.

Les données recueillies suggèrent qu'il **est possible de développer et de renforcer les relations de collaboration entre les services auteurs.** La proportion de services auteurs qui ont révélé dans l'enquête exploratoire qu'ils ne travaillaient pas avec d'autres illustre ce phénomène : la coopération se fait ainsi essentiellement au cas par cas. En général, un service auteur principal ne recherche la contribution que d'une ou de deux autres DG pour ajouter du contenu, plutôt qu'un effort conjoint plus formel. Dans le but d'améliorer l'efficacité et de s'appuyer sur le travail de collaboration déjà en place, des suggestions ont été émises pour mieux

faire connaître les réseaux existants et/ou les nouveaux forums de collaboration thématique, optimiser la portée des plateformes numériques et faire appel à des experts externes.

### *Valeur ajoutée de l'UE*

**La perception de la valeur ajoutée des supports de la Commission destinés aux enfants est positive** dans la mesure où 94 % des répondants (252) ont identifié au moins un aspect de la valeur ajoutée, encourageant ainsi la Commission à poursuivre la production de supports destinés aux enfants. Les supports et activités de la Commission destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans sont perçus comme apportant une valeur ajoutée de l'UE dans quatre domaines principaux: 1) fournir des informations actualisées et complètes sur l'UE; 2) combler une lacune en matière d'information par rapport aux programmes scolaires nationaux; 3) les sujets sont traités de manière impartiale/objective; et 4) ils apportent une perspective européenne sur des sujets précis.

Selon les données recueillies, la valeur ajoutée de l'UE des supports de la Commission destinés aux enfants pourrait être maximisée en continuant à prendre en considération les mécanismes et les canaux de distribution. L'accent a été mis sur la **nécessité de rester à jour en matière d'actualité et de réfléchir aux moyens de communication préférés des différents sous-segments, généralement des enfants plus âgés, pour consommer l'information**, notamment en ce qui concerne les plateformes en ligne ou les réseaux sociaux utilisés dans les différents États membres, et sur le fait que les jeunes passent rapidement d'une plateforme privilégiée à une autre.

La nécessité de **poursuivre la réflexion sur la manière de combler le fossé entre les enfants et les institutions européennes** a également été soulignée. Les parties prenantes ont formulé un certain nombre d'autres suggestions, notamment celle de réduire l'importance accordée à la promotion de l'identité visuelle de l'Union européenne sur les supports, au profit d'une communication plus subtile ou subliminale indiquant que les informations concernent l'Union européenne ou proviennent de celle-ci.

### **Recommandations**

#### *Priorités de la Commission et objectifs de communication des services auteurs*

- A. La Commission européenne devrait plus systématiquement mener des études d'audience et tester ses supports et activités destinés aux enfants et aux professionnels qui travaillent avec eux, afin de s'assurer qu'ils répondent aux besoins de son public cible.
- B. Lors de la conception de ses supports, la Commission devrait prendre en considération les besoins et les préférences du groupe cible des 5-18 ans et de ses principaux sous-segments, en utilisant comme guide la boîte à outils pour le développement de supports et d'activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans (disponible à l'annexe 4).
- C. Les supports élaborés par les services auteurs de la Commission devraient être accompagnés d'une stratégie de diffusion qui tient compte des canaux préférés et des multiplicateurs pertinents pour le groupe cible.
- D. La Commission devrait renforcer la collaboration et la coordination entre les services auteurs en ce qui concerne le développement, la révision, le test et la distribution de leurs supports destinés aux enfants via des réseaux nouveaux et existants.
- E. La Commission devrait s'adresser davantage aux principaux multiplicateurs (par exemple, les enseignants et les formateurs ainsi que d'autres professionnels travaillant avec des enfants et leurs parents) tout en promouvant les supports destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans dans les États membres.
- F. La Commission devrait maximiser l'utilisation de ses propres supports en faisant mieux connaître l'Espace Apprentissage aux principales parties prenantes européennes et nationales.
- G. Établir un lien entre l'Espace Apprentissage et les portails et ressources éducatives pertinents au niveau national permettrait d'améliorer la portée de l'offre actuelle de la Commission en matière de supports et d'activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans.
- H. La présentation du portail des publications de l'UE devrait être améliorée, tout comme le système de marquage des supports destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 18 ans hébergés sur ce portail.

- I. La Commission doit aller au-delà de ses canaux de diffusion actuels pour les supports et activités destinés aux enfants de 5 à 18 ans et aux professionnels qui travaillent avec eux, afin de réduire l'effet «chambre d'écho» de sa communication.

### Groupes cibles

- J. La Commission devrait mettre en place un système permettant d'examiner et de vérifier l'adéquation du format et du contenu de ses supports et activités pour les différents groupes d'âge et les principaux segments des 5-18 ans.
- K. La Commission pourrait envisager de scinder le segment actuel des 5-9 ans en deux groupes d'âge (5-6 ans: lecteurs émergents et 7-9 ans: lecteurs en développement) pour tenir compte du développement rapide de l'alphabetisation des enfants pendant ces années de formation.
- L. La Commission pourrait envisager de différencier davantage le groupe d'âge «15 ans et plus» de l'Espace Apprentissage et inclure un groupe d'âge de 16 à 18 ans afin de faciliter l'identification et le développement de supports adaptés à leurs besoins.
- M. La Commission devrait augmenter son offre de supports couvrant les besoins des enfants handicapés en adaptant des supports en langue des signes, en braille et, le cas échéant, dans d'autres formats appropriés.
- N. La Commission devrait encourager les services auteurs à réexaminer les nombreux supports destinés aux enfants qui ont été jugés, au cours de cet examen de suivi, non conformes aux valeurs de l'UE en matière d'égalité, de liberté et de droits de l'homme.<sup>8</sup>
- O. La Commission devrait fortement encourager les services auteurs à produire des supports et des activités dans le plus grand nombre possible de langues de l'UE afin de garantir l'accessibilité et d'encourager l'utilisation de ces supports dans les différents États membres.

### Messages de communication

- P. Lors de la conception de supports et d'activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 6 ans (lecteurs émergents), il convient d'éviter l'utilisation de phrases longues et de récits complexes pour présenter des informations de base sur la géographie et les symboles de l'UE.
- Q. Les supports et activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 7 à 9 ans (lecteurs en développement) pourraient couvrir des informations introductives sur l'histoire, la géographie et les symboles de l'UE et inclure des phrases plus longues, un vocabulaire plus étendu et des intrigues plus élaborées.
- R. Les supports et activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 10 à 12 ans (préadolescents) pourraient se concentrer sur des concepts, des idées et des aspects généraux de l'UE, tels que les institutions européennes, les valeurs et la monnaie communes, qui peuvent être présentés de manière plus détaillée, à l'aide de phrases plus longues et d'un vocabulaire plus varié.
- S. Les supports et activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 13 à 15 ans (jeunes adolescents) pourraient se concentrer sur l'actualité européenne, en particulier sur les sujets européens qui consolident ou complètent les programmes nationaux et sur d'autres aspects susceptibles d'avoir un impact direct sur leur vie, tels que la solidarité de l'UE, la culture de l'UE et la citoyenneté européenne.
- T. Les supports et activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 16 à 18 ans (adolescents plus âgés) pourraient couvrir les concepts et sujets complexes de l'UE, par exemple, les droits individuels, les droits légaux, les conventions, l'identité européenne partagée, le patrimoine européen, la solidarité européenne, la responsabilité politique et civique dans l'UE.
- U. Sur la base des objectifs politiques et des objectifs de communication connexes d'un service auteur de la Commission, ce service devrait, le cas échéant, envisager de développer des supports et des activités

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<sup>8</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief\\_fr](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_fr)

répondant spécifiquement aux besoins en information sur l'UE des enfants des zones rurales, des enfants issus de l'immigration et de milieux ethniques minoritaires, des enfants appartenant à des minorités sexuelles (c'est-à-dire les segments LGBTIQ) et des enfants exposés à un risque plus élevé d'exclusion sociale et de pauvreté (c'est-à-dire les NEET et les jeunes en décrochage scolaire)<sup>[1]</sup>.

### Activités de communication

- V. La Commission devrait continuer à maintenir un mélange de formats et de types de matériels pour répondre aux différents besoins et préférences des 5-18 ans, en donnant la priorité aux contenus courts, visuellement attrayants, faciles à lire et interactifs.
- W. La disponibilité de copies physiques des supports de la Commission (dans les écoles, les bibliothèques et/ou les centres du réseau Europe Direct) continuera à être essentielle pour garantir que ces supports atteignent les groupes d'âge plus jeunes et les segments d'enfants exposés au risque de pauvreté et d'exclusion.
- X. Les supports et les activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 5 à 6 ans (lecteurs émergents) ou de 7 à 9 ans (lecteurs en développement) devraient être axés sur des activités pratiques ou créatives pour les enfants, reflétant l'importance de «l'apprentissage par la pratique» ou d'une approche axée sur le jeu.
- Y. Les supports et activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 10 à 12 ans (préadolescents) devraient être conçus de manière à intéresser directement les enfants au contenu (par exemple, par le biais de jeux, de manifestations scolaires ou de concours) et à être utilisés en ligne et hors ligne avec leurs proches et leurs amis.
- Z. Les supports et les activités destinés aux enfants âgés de 13 à 15 ans (jeunes adolescents) et de 16 à 18 ans (adolescents plus âgés) qui peuvent être consultés et partagés via leurs réseaux sociaux préférés, par exemple les jeux, les vidéos et les messages, sont particulièrement susceptibles de gagner en popularité et en visibilité, mais l'efficacité des supports hors ligne ne doit pas être négligée.
- AA. Lors de la conception de supports interactifs en ligne et d'activités, les services auteurs de la Commission devraient envisager la possibilité d'introduire des options qui permettraient de faciliter leur accès, de manière à ce que des segments d'enfants de l'UE ayant des capacités cognitives et physiques différentes, puissent pleinement participer.
- BB. La Commission devrait suivre l'évolution de l'utilisation des réseaux sociaux par les jeunes et adapter en permanence le choix des canaux utilisés pour optimiser sa portée et son engagement auprès des 5-18 ans.

### Suivi et évaluation

- CC. La Commission devrait encourager ses services auteurs à collecter et à utiliser systématiquement des données de suivi, y compris un retour d'information quantitatif et qualitatif sur les besoins de ses publics cibles de 5 à 18 ans. Il est également recommandé d'effectuer des recherches et des tests ex ante sur les supports et les activités.
- DD. La Commission devrait améliorer les mécanismes de retour d'information existants pour les jeux hébergés sur l'Espace Apprentissage et les vidéos sur le portail audiovisuel de la Commission européenne.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Ces matériels seront également pertinents pour d'autres segments du public enfant, ainsi que pour d'autres lecteurs, utilisateurs et participants adultes qui s'intéressent à l'inclusion, à l'égalité et à la lutte contre la discrimination.

# Zusammenfassung

## Ziele, Vorhaben und Umfang der Bewertung

Dieser abschließende Bericht wurde durch Ecorys im Kontext der „Überprüfung und Teilsegmentierung von Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission für junge Menschen im Alter von 5-18 Jahren“ erstellt, die von der Generaldirektion Kommunikation (GD COMM) der Europäischen Kommission („Kommission“) in Auftrag gegeben wurde.

Dieser Bericht war Bestandteil der Bemühungen der Kommission, die Empfehlungen weiterzuentwickeln, die aus der „Überprüfung der Materialien und Aktivitäten der Europäischen Kommission für die Jugend“ hervorgingen, welche von Ecorys im Jahr 2018 abgeschlossen wurde. In dieser früheren Studie wurde empfohlen, i) die Anpassung von Materialien und Aktivitäten für Jugendliche an demografische Segmente in Erwägung zu ziehen, die weniger engagiert und stärker von sozialer Ausgrenzung und Armut bedroht sind, und dabei soziale Medien und nutzungsorientierte Ansätze zu verwenden, um diese Segmente zu erreichen, ii) die Zusammenarbeit mit bestimmten Jugendgruppen und Jugendorganisationen zu verstärken, um längerfristige Beziehungen anhand gemeinsamer Interessen bei der Erarbeitung von Kommunikationsmaterialien und -aktivitäten der Kommission für die Jugend zu schaffen, damit die Informationsbedürfnisse der verschiedenen Teilsegmente dieser Zielgruppe besser verstanden und gemeinsam Wege gefunden werden, um sie einzubeziehen.

Folgende Ziele wurden mit der Aufgabe verfolgt:

- ▶ Eine Typologie der Zielgruppe im Alter von 5-18 Jahren einschließlich einer Matrix von Zielgruppensegmenten für die zukünftige Verwendung entwickeln, um zu erfahren, wie Materialien für die wichtigsten Teilsegmente<sup>9</sup> dieser Zielgruppe angepasst werden können.
- ▶ Der Informations- und Lernbedarf der Europäischen Union (EU) in den Teilsegmenten sowie bevorzugte Materialformate und Kommunikationskanäle sind zu ermitteln, um darüber zu beraten, wie diese Zielgruppe und ihre wichtigsten Teilsegmente effektiv erreicht und mit ihr in Kontakt getreten werden kann.
- ▶ Es werden Empfehlungen und eine Strategie für die Öffentlichkeitsarbeit erstellt, wie die Wirkung der Materialien der Kommission für Personen im Alter von 5-18 Jahren maximiert werden kann, einschließlich der Frage, wie das derzeitige Materialangebot für diese Zielgruppe und ihre wichtigsten Teilsegmente gestärkt werden kann, um ihren Bedürfnissen besser gerecht zu werden, und wie eine effizientere Zusammenarbeit bei der Verteilung von und Werbung für Kommunikationsmaterialien der abfassenden Dienststellen für 5-18-Jährige erreicht werden kann.

Der Bericht ist nach den folgenden Bewertungskriterien gegliedert: Relevanz, Kohärenz, Wirksamkeit, Effizienz und europäischer Mehrwert – nach den jeweiligen Vorgaben der Grundsätze für eine bessere Rechtsetzung<sup>10</sup>.

**Die sich aus der Analyse ergebenden Erkenntnisse und Empfehlungen wurden in einem Toolkit und einer Strategie für die Öffentlichkeitsarbeit zusammengefasst, um den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission, die Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren erarbeiten, einen Leitfaden zu bieten.** Beide sind in Anhang 4 aufgeführt

Diese Überprüfung umfasst die Print- und Online-Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren und die jeweils wichtigsten Teilsegmente, die zwischen dem 1. Januar 2018 und 31. Dezember 2020 erstellt wurden.

## Übersicht über die Methode

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<sup>9</sup> Die ermittelten Teilsegmente für diese Studie sind folgende: Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren in ländlichen Gebieten; Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren, die mit materieller und/oder sozialer Benachteiligung konfrontiert sind; Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren mit geistigen, körperlichen oder sensorischen Behinderungen; Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren mit Migrationshintergrund oder -erfahrung; Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren, die einer ethnischen Minderheit angehören; junge Menschen ohne Schulabschluss und Jugendliche, die einer sexuellen Minderheit angehören – d. h. lesbische, schwule, bisexuelle, transsexuelle und intersexuelle Personen (LGBTI).

<sup>10</sup> Weitere Informationen zu den Grundsätzen für eine bessere Rechtsetzung: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox\\_de](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_de)

Die Methodik zur Datenerhebung für diese Bewertung umfasste:

- ▶ Ein Rahmeninterview mit der GD COMM und eine Rahmenumfrage bei den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission (87 Antworten eingegangen).
- ▶ Kartierung von Materialien und Aktivitäten (insgesamt 227 kartierte Materialien, 154 vollständig im Rahmen der Studie).
- ▶ Überwachung von Datenanfragen zu Materialien des Amts für Veröffentlichungen (OP) und anderen Materialien auf den Websites der Lernecke, der Europe-Direct-Informationszentren (EDIC<sup>11</sup>), der Kommissionsvertretungen und der sozialen Medien.
- ▶ Recherche über die Zielgruppe und ihre Teilsegmente per Sekundärforschung und Literaturstudium.
- ▶ 55 Interviews mit wichtigen Beteiligten.
- ▶ Eine Umfrage unter Nutzenden, die in allen Amtssprachen der EU durchgeführt wurde (297 erhaltene Antworten: 153 von Fachkräften, 77 von Eltern/Erziehungsberechtigten und 67 von Kindern).
- ▶ 10 in den fünf als Stichprobe dienenden Ländern (Dänemark, Italien, Litauen, Portugal und Slowakei) im Klassenzimmer durchgeführte Gespräche mit Kindern im Alter von 5-6 und 7-9 Jahren.
- ▶ In den fünf genannten Ländern fanden 15 Online-Fokusgruppen mit Kindern im Alter von 10-12, 13-15 und 16-18 Jahren statt.

## Erkenntnisse und Schlussfolgerungen der Überprüfung

### Zielgruppen

(i) Für die Zielgruppe **im Altersbereich von 5-18 Jahren wurden fünf Alterssegmente vorgeschlagen**. Die Analyse der wichtigsten Literatur und Daten, insbesondere zur Entwicklung der Lese- und Schreibfähigkeit von Kindern und die unterschiedlichen Nutzungsraten digitaler Medien, sorgte für die Erkenntnis mehrerer potenzieller Auswirkungen für Materialien für die verschiedenen Alterssegmente.

Für **Kinder im Alter von 5-6 Jahren**, die gerade erst anfangen zu lesen, sollten die Materialien möglichst wenig lange Sätze und komplexe Erzählungen enthalten. Materialien, die sich an **Kinder im Alter von 7-9 Jahren** richten, können längere Sätze, einen größeren Wortschatz und ausführlichere Handlungsstränge enthalten. Interaktive, spielerische Formate von Materialien (z. B. Online- und Offline-Spiele, Puzzles, Karten zum Ausmalen, Origami) wurden bei beiden Altersgruppen als am ansprechendsten empfunden. In beiden Altersgruppen entwickeln sich die kognitiven Fähigkeiten unterschiedlich schnell, so dass Materialien oder Aktivitäten, die sich an unterschiedliche Niveaus oder Schwierigkeiten anpassen lassen, am besten geeignet sind. Dieses Alterssegment assoziierte Technologie am meisten mit Spielen, was darauf hindeutet, dass Videos oder Online-Spiele wirksame Arten von Kommunikationsmaterialien wären, um diese Zielgruppe zu erreichen und einzubinden. Die Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass digitale Kommunikationsmaterialien, die auf diese Altersgruppe abzielen, wahrscheinlich effektiver sind, wenn erstens die Eltern selbst sie kennen und ihre Kinder bei der Nutzung anleiten können und zweitens, wenn sie in die schulische Lernumgebung eingebettet und als Lehrmittel genutzt werden.

Kinder im vorpubertären **Alter von 10-12 Jahren** können mit detaillierteren Vorstellungen und Ideen, längeren Sätzen und einem vielfältigeren Wortschatz umgehen. Kinder in diesem Alter festigen ihr Interesse und ihre Vorliebe für Online-Materialien und insbesondere ein Faible für Videoinhalte. Allerdings nutzen weniger als ein Drittel dieser Kinder Smartphones für ihren täglichen Zugriff auf das Internet. Das deutet darauf hin, dass Online-Spiele und -Materialien, die über Computer zugänglich sind, diese Altersgruppe eher erreichen als mobile Apps und Spiele. Es ist unwahrscheinlich, dass Materialien für soziale Medien ebenso wirksam sind wie Online-Spiele, um diese Altersgruppe zu erreichen. Priorität haben interaktive Materialien, die den Kindern in diesem Alter die Möglichkeit bieten, selbst zu entscheiden, mit welchen Informationen sie sich beschäftigen möchten.

Die Altersstufe von **13-15 Jahren** bildet den Übergang von der Vorpubertät zur frühen Pubertät. Für diesen Altersbereich sollten die Materialien ein digitales Format haben. Spiele, Videos und Beiträge, die über soziale Medien abgerufen und geteilt werden können, bergen ein besonders hohes Potenzial, in dieser Altersgruppe an Zugkraft und Sichtbarkeit zu gewinnen. Einige Anzeichen deuten darauf hin, dass sich die Gewohnheiten für

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<sup>11</sup> bis zum 30. April 2021 wurde das Netzwerk EDIC genannt. Seit dem 1. Mai 2021 lautet der Name Europe Direct Network.



soziale Medien möglicherweise ändern, wobei einige der neueren Plattformen wie TikTok zunehmend genutzt werden, da sie die von Kindern normalerweise bevorzugten Videoinhalte anbieten.

Damit Material, das sich an EU-Bürgerinnen und -Bürger im Allgemeinen richtet, für Jugendliche im **Alter von 16-18 Jahren** lesbar und verständlich ist, sind minimale Anpassungen erforderlich. Für diese Altersgruppe können komplexe politische Begriffe und EU-Themen eingeführt werden (z. B. individuelle Rechte, Rechtsansprüche, staatsbürgerliche Verantwortung). Videos, Beiträge, Spiele und andere Materialien, die über soziale Medien geteilt werden können, sind daher für diese Altersgruppe besonders gut sichtbar und sollten häufiger als gedruckte Materialien verwendet werden. Die Materialien sollten einen „Handlungsauftrag“ für ein bestimmtes „EU-Anliegen“ (z. B. Klimaschutz, Eintreten für EU-Werte) mit einem starken erzählerischen Element eines anderen jungen Menschen enthalten.

(ii) Die **Teilsegmente** der Zielgruppen **nach demografischen Gruppen** wurden durch die Triangulation vorhandener demografischer Daten mit den Erkenntnissen aus Informationsblättern, Berichten und anderen Unterlagen einer Reihe von Organisationen auf EU-Ebene, internationalen Organisationen, Nichtregierungsorganisationen und Interessenverbänden verfeinert.

**Kinder aus ländlichen Gebieten** haben möglicherweise Schwierigkeiten mit komplexerer Sprache in schriftlichen Materialien und könnten daher von zusätzlichen visuellen Hilfsmitteln in Kommunikationsmaterialien, die auf sie zugeschnitten sind, profitieren. Die verfügbaren Daten deuten außerdem an, dass hinsichtlich digitaler Kompetenzen und Mehrsprachigkeit eine Kluft zwischen Menschen aus ländlichen und städtischen Gebieten besteht. Die Lücke bei den digitalen Kompetenzen bedeutet z. B., dass Jugendliche in ländlichen Gebieten zwar auch Online-Kommunikationsmaterialien bevorzugen, aber mehr als Gleichaltrige in Städten vom Zugang zu gedruckten Materialien profitieren könnten. Darüber hinaus erhöht die Tatsache, dass 40 % der aus ländlichen Gebieten stammenden Europäerinnen und Europäer nur ihre Muttersprache sprechen, die Notwendigkeit, Kommunikationsmaterialien für diese Gruppe in allen 24 EU-Amtssprachen zur Verfügung zu stellen.

**Kinder**, die in Europa **mit materieller und/oder sozialer Benachteiligung** konfrontiert sind, müssen wahrscheinlich größere Hindernisse beim Zugang zu digitalen Medien überwinden. Dies hat Auswirkungen auf die Kommunikationsbedürfnisse von Kindern innerhalb dieser Teilgruppe, wodurch u. a. Kommunikationsmaterialien im Offline-Format für diese Zielgruppe besser geeignet sind. Die geringere Anzahl von Schulabschlüssen innerhalb dieser Kohorte sowie eine höhere Wahrscheinlichkeit für einen weniger entwickelten Wortschatz und schwächere Sprachkenntnisse bedeuten zudem, dass Materialien wirksamer sein könnten, wenn sie in leicht lesbarer Sprache und mit mehr visuellen Hilfsmitteln erstellt werden. Die zunehmende Skepsis von Eltern aus einkommensschwachen Haushalten gegenüber der Nutzung digitaler Technologien durch ihre Kinder könnte auch Maßnahmen rechtfertigen, die sicherstellen, dass Kommunikationsmaterialien, die sich an diese Teilgruppe richten, das „Vertrauen“ der Eltern genießen, indem sie beispielsweise durch den Einsatz in Schulen „validiert“ werden.

Der spezifische Informationsbedarf von **Kindern mit geistigen, körperlichen oder sensorischen Behinderungen** ist je nach Art und Ausprägung der jeweiligen Behinderung sehr unterschiedlich. Es gibt jedoch Hinweise darauf, dass der Einsatz von Video- oder Audiohilfsmitteln bzw. visueller Unterstützung besonders wichtig für die effektive Kommunikation mit Kindern mit zusätzlichen Bedürfnissen ist. Auch bei Kindern und Fachkräften, die mit ihnen arbeiten, werden Tests nach Art der Behinderung und der erforderlichen Anpassung als wesentlich empfohlen.

Auch wenn **Kinder, die die Schule abbrechen**, aufgrund ihrer geringen formalen Bildung Online-Kommunikationsmaterialien bevorzugen, könnten sie dennoch mehr vom Zugang zu gedruckten Materialien profitieren. Die geringere Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass Personen mit niedrigerem Bildungsniveau eine Fremdsprache sprechen, trägt ebenfalls dazu bei, dass Materialien, die sich an diese Gruppe richten, in allen 24 Amtssprachen der EU verfügbar sein müssen. Da Jugendliche, die die Schule abbrechen, nicht über die Schule erreicht werden können, sollte außerdem genau überlegt werden, wo die Kommunikationsmaterialien zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Die Bereitstellung solcher Materialien in Schulen der zweiten Chance und in Bildungszentren oder bei den Arbeitsämtern wäre ein wichtiger Schritt.

Kommunikationsmaterialien, die sich an **Kinder mit Migrationshintergrund** richten, müssen speziell auf die jeweilige Teilgruppe zugeschnitten sein, die sie zu erreichen versuchen. Da Personen, die im Ausland geboren wurden, seltener angeben, einen Computer zu nutzen, sind Offline-Kommunikationsmaterialien vorzuziehen, um sich bestmöglich an diese Gruppe zu wenden. Als Beispiele für solche nützlichen Materialien wurden Informationsblätter und Broschüren in einigen Nicht-EU-Amtssprachen mit klaren und einfachen Informationen über die EU und über EU-Programme angesehen. Online-Materialien sollten auf einem Smartphone abrufbar sein

oder für die mobile Nutzung angepasst werden und die Nutzung müsste ohne die technische Unterstützung der Eltern getestet werden.

Für **Kinder mit anderem ethnischen oder religiösen Hintergrund und jene, die Minderheiten angehören**, besteht aufgrund des in diesen Gruppen vorhandenen geringen Vertrauens in die Institutionen die Notwendigkeit, mit Organisationen sowie meinungsstarken und einflussreichen Personen zusammenzuarbeiten und gegebenenfalls weitere Teilgruppen zu bilden, um eine angemessene Sprache, ansprechende Beispiele und Bilder in den Materialien sicherzustellen.

Das Fehlen genauer Daten auf EU-Ebene über die Prävalenz oder die Lebensumstände von **LGBTIQ-Jugendlichen** schränkt die Verfügbarkeit von konkreten Erkenntnissen über die Vorlieben und Bedürfnisse dieser Gruppe in Sachen Kommunikation ein. Es ist allerdings vielfach belegt, dass die anhaltende Intoleranz gegenüber LGBTIQ-Personen diese einer besonderen Gefährdung aussetzt, einschließlich sozialer Ausgrenzung und einem höheren Selbstmordrisiko. Damit geht ein Bedarf an Materialien für alle einher, die Inklusion und Toleranz für einer sexuellen Minderheit angehörige Menschen in Form von geschlechtsneutraler Bildsprache oder der Einbeziehung von nicht-heteronormativen Familien in ihre Darstellungen zeigen oder fördern.

### Relevanz

Insgesamt sind die Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren und Fachkräfte, die mit ihnen arbeiten, **relevant und hilfreich, was die Themen und die Vielfalt der Formate und Arten von Aktivitäten angeht, um ihren EU-bezogenen Informationsbedarf zu decken**. Die qualitativen Erkenntnisse deuten jedoch darauf hin, dass mehr Materialien und Aktivitäten erarbeitet werden könnten, bei denen **die Inhalte und Formate der Materialien besser auf die verschiedenen Alters- und demografischen Gruppen zugeschnitten sind**.

**Die Kommunikationskanäle, die genutzt werden, um Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren und Fachkräfte, die mit ihnen arbeiten, zu erreichen, wurden als relevant befunden, sollten jedoch sorgfältig ausgewählt werden, um unterschiedliche Zielgruppen zu erreichen**. Online-Kanäle, besonders soziale Medien und Online-Plattformen, gelten als die bevorzugten Kommunikationskanäle für Kinder. Basierend auf den Ergebnissen sollten jüngere Kinder jedoch indirekt über Eltern oder Fachkräfte, die mit ihnen arbeiten, angesprochen werden, da ältere Kinder die Informationen selbstständig suchen und besser über Online-Kanäle wie Websites oder soziale Medien angesprochen werden könnten.

Es hat sich gezeigt, dass die **Zusammenarbeit mit Lehrkräften** bei der Verbreitung der Materialien der Kommission und deren Einbindung entweder in verschiedene Schulfächer (z. B. Geografie, Geschichte) oder in Aktivitäten außerhalb des Lehrplans (z. B. Europaprüfung, Schulwettbewerbe) entscheidend ist, um Kinder anzusprechen. Kinder, die mit den Materialien der Kommission vertraut waren, hatten meist durch Lehrkräfte an den Schulen von ihnen gehört, denn diese Informationen sind nur begrenzt in den formalen Lehrplan der Schulen integriert.

Qualitative Belege zeigen, dass die meisten der Befragten **mit den Formaten der Materialien und den Arten der Aktivitäten zufrieden waren und eine Vielfalt an Materialformaten von Kindern und Fachkräften sehr geschätzt wird**. Die meisten befragten Beteiligten stimmten darin überein, dass spielerische Aktivitäten, z. B. Quiz, Spiele und Malbücher, besser für jüngere Kinder geeignet sind, während Videos, Podcasts, Webinare und sie einbeziehende Aktivitäten – wie das Erzählen von Geschichten – von älteren Kindern bevorzugt werden.

Die meisten Materialien in der Bestandsaufnahme dienten dazu, allgemeine Informationen über die EU bereitzustellen, um das Bewusstsein für die Rolle der EU, ihrer Mitgliedstaaten und ihrer Politik zu schärfen. **Die Inhalte der Kommissionsmaterialien für die 5-18-Jährigen waren zudem leicht zu lesen und zu verstehen, und die meisten Materialien können von den Nutzenden in ihrer bevorzugten Sprache abgerufen werden**. Darüber hinaus stimmten die meisten Befragten auf EU- und nationaler Ebene darin überein, dass die geltenden EU-Rechtsvorschriften und politischen Maßnahmen in einer kinderfreundlichen Sprache zugänglich und an die Altersgruppe angepasst sein sollten.

**Es ist ersichtlich, dass die aktuellen Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren alle relevanten politischen Prioritäten der gegenwärtigen Kommission für den Zeitraum 2019-2024 abdecken**. Allerdings werden Themen im Zusammenhang mit den Prioritäten des Grünen Deals und der EU-Lebensweise als relevanter für Kinder angesehen, während es an Informationen über die Digitalisierung und die internationalen Beziehungen der EU mangelt.

### Kohärenz

Insgesamt zeigte das **Angebot der Kommission an Materialien für Kinder ein gutes Maß an Kohärenz, jedoch mit potenziellen Möglichkeiten, die Ausrichtung an den Prioritäten der Kommission zu verbessern und einige Lücken in den Materialien nach Themen zu schließen.** Die Belege deuten darauf hin, dass die Materialien für Kinder ein gutes Spektrum an Themen mit einer angemessenen Ausrichtung an den Prioritäten der Kommission abdeckten, jedoch ein beträchtlicher Anteil an Materialien keine Priorität der Kommission direkt unterstützt.

Das **Angebot der Generaldirektionen (GD) der Kommission war gut aufeinander abgestimmt.** Die meisten Generaldirektionen verfügten über Pläne oder Strategien für die Veröffentlichung, und ihr Angebot an Materialien stimmte mit ihren politischen Aufgabenbereichen überein, wobei es keine nennenswerten Überschneidungen oder Doppelungen gab. Hinweise deuteten außerdem darauf, dass Materialien als Teil übergeordneter Informations- oder Aufklärungskampagnen erstellt werden, welche die strategischen Prioritäten der Kommission stützen.

Die Überprüfung ergab, dass in den Materialien der Kommission ein **genereller Mangel an Segmentierung nach Alter** besteht, der die Möglichkeit einschränkt, **eine Einschätzung vorzunehmen, welche Altersgruppen gut versorgt werden und welche Lücken im Angebot vorhanden sind.** Die Überprüfung ergab, dass Materialien für jüngere Kinder und Jugendliche gezielter eingesetzt werden sollten. Die **Zugänglichkeit der Materialien war im Großen und Ganzen gut**, doch **bei Kindern mit einer Sehbehinderung ist hier eine potenzielle Lücke** entstanden.

Die Beteiligten waren der Meinung, dass der **Umfang der Materialien nach Art eine Stärke des Angebots der Kommission sei und begrüßten die Vielfalt, die sowohl in Bezug auf die Formate als auch verschiedene Altersgruppen vorhanden war.** Der Schwerpunkt auf digitalen Materialien wurde von den Beteiligten unterstützt und stimmte mit den Erwartungen der Kinder überein, jedoch merkten Beteiligte und Kinder an, dass sich die Muster des digitalen Medienkonsums unter jungen Menschen verändern.

Die Materialien der Kommission und anderer EU-Organe oder -Organisationen scheinen sich größtenteils zu ergänzen. Nationale Multiplikatorinnen und Multiplikatoren sowie Beteiligte begrüßten besonders die wichtige Rolle von der Kommission und den EU-Organen im Allgemeinen erstellter Materialien als maßgebliche Informationsquellen zur Unterstützung der lokalen Lehrpläne.

### **Wirksamkeit**

Die Ergebnisse der Überprüfung legen nahe, dass die **Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission für Kinder die beabsichtigte Zielgruppe besser erreichen könnten.** Die Analyse der Kontrolldaten sowohl für physische als auch für multimediale Materialien und Aktivitäten deutet darauf hin, dass die **Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission etwa 7 % aller Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren in der EU erreichten.** Die Materialien und Aktivitäten der Europäischen Kommission sind zwar online sichtbar und die Kommission unternahm erhebliche Anstrengungen, die Materialien über ihre Netzwerke, die mit der Zielgruppe arbeiten, noch sichtbarer zu machen, doch die verfügbaren Kontrolldaten des Amts für Veröffentlichungen zeigen dennoch eine ungleichmäßige Verbreitung der Bestellungen in den EU-Mitgliedstaaten, wobei 75 % der angeforderten physischen Bestellungen aus sechs EU-Mitgliedstaaten (Belgien, Deutschland, Spanien, Frankreich, Italien, Polen) stammen. Die Kontrolldaten für die Online-Spiele, die auf der Website der Lernecke betrieben werden, zeigen ein ähnliches Muster, wobei die Mehrheit der Besucherinnen und Besucher aus großen EU-Mitgliedstaaten kommt.

Die Anzahl der Personen, die primär auf Materialien der Europäischen Kommission in englischer Sprache zugreifen, ist beträchtlich, was möglicherweise darauf hindeutet, dass die meisten Nutzenden, die von den Kanälen der Europäischen Kommission erreicht werden, mit der Sprache vertraut sind und eher nicht aus benachteiligten Gruppen, ländlichen Gebieten oder die Schule abbrechenden Personenkreisen stammen. Es gibt Hinweise darauf, dass die Materialien zudem eher bei **Lehrkräften sowie Erzieherinnen und Erziehern** ankommen als bei anderen Fachleuten, die mit Segmenten von Kindern im Alter von 5-18 Jahren arbeiten. Zudem gab es spürbare Resonanz für die aktuellen Verbreitungs Kanäle, wobei die Materialien in der Regel Personen erreichen, die bereits stark in EU-bezogene Aktivitäten involviert sind und daher eher nach solchen Informationen in den offiziellen EU-Kanälen suchen, z. B. in der Lernecke oder im Portal „EU-Veröffentlichungen“ des Amts für Veröffentlichungen.

**Der Bekanntheitsgrad der Lernecke war in der Zielgruppe begrenzt – sie wurde aber positiv aufgenommen, wenn sie bekannt war.** Die Mehrheit der Teilnehmenden an Fokusgruppen fand, dass die Website sehr gut gestaltet ist und berichtete, dass die dort verfügbaren Materialien für sie hilfreich sind. **Inhalte in sozialen Medien erwiesen sich als weniger wirksam, um die Zielgruppe anzusprechen,** da diese nicht auf den von den älteren Jugendlichen am meisten genutzten Plattformen zu finden waren. Unsere Ergebnisse aus den Online-Fokusgruppen zeigen außerdem, dass die wichtigsten von den abfassenden Kommissionsdienststellen genutzten

Plattformen – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter – bei jüngeren Nutzenden in Ungnade gefallen sind, die nun stattdessen einige neuere Plattformen nutzen – nämlich Reddit, TikTok, Twitch und Discord. Soziale Medien waren dennoch nützlich, um mit Eltern, Lehrkräften/Erzieherinnen und Erziehern oder Multiplikatorinnen und Multiplikatoren, die mit Kindern arbeiten, in Kontakt zu treten.

Trotz der eingeschränkten Reichweite gab es **positive Rückmeldungen, wenn Materialien und Aktivitäten bekannt waren**. Online-Spiele, Broschüren, Aktivitätsbücher, Veröffentlichungen, Brettspiele und Merkblätter waren in Bezug auf ihre Reichweite die erfolgreichsten Arten von Materialien und Aktivitäten unter den 153 Materialien, die für diese Überprüfung erfasst wurden. Die Beteiligten hoben die **Erfolgsbilanz der GD COMM bei der Erstellung geeigneter Materialien und Aktivitäten für diese Zielgruppe** hervor, insbesondere bei den in der Lernecke verfügbaren Online-Spielen. Die Daten zeigen, dass die Materialien der Kommission die Zielgruppe auf vielfältige Weise ansprechen, von verschiedenen Formaten (u. a. Spiele, Poster, Aktivitätsbücher, Comics, Unterrichtsmaterialien) bis hin zu Inhalten (u. a. Umwelt, Geschichte der EU und ihrer Organe, Reisen durch die EU, EU-Werte).

**Die Nutzenden empfanden die Materialien und Aktivitäten in der Lernecke im Allgemeinen als recht ansprechend, qualitativ hochwertig und für sie praktisch. Die erhobenen Daten deuten darauf hin, dass die Kommission Materialien erstellt, die erfolgreich die jüngeren Altersgruppen des Zielpublikums ansprechen, aber weniger erfolgreich bei den älteren Altersgruppen sind.** Materialien, die greifbarer oder aktivitätsorientierter sind (wie Spiele, Quiz, Malbücher mit Aufklebern bzw. anderen haptischen Elementen) funktionieren sehr gut bei den jüngeren Altersgruppen und stützen sich auf praxisorientierte Lernprozesse, um über die EU und ihre derzeitigen Aktivitäten zu den aktuellen Themen zu kommunizieren.

**Die Verfügbarkeit dieser Spiele im Papierformat ist für Schulen/Haushalte, die nicht über die Mittel zur Nutzung von Online-Formaten verfügen, weiterhin zu begrüßen.** Die Lehrkräfte betonten zwar auch, dass Online-Inhalte vorzuziehen sind, erwähnten aber, dass nicht allen Schulen oder Haushalten Computer für alle Kinder zur Verfügung stehen. Einige Beteiligte vertraten die Ansicht, dass **die Materialien in der Regel bereits für den Einsatz durch die Lehrkräfte geeignet sind und ein großes didaktisches Potenzial aufweisen, jedoch von Kindern nicht direkt genutzt werden können, ohne zuvor einige größere Änderungen vorzunehmen**. Beteiligte und Lehrkräfte räumen auch ein, dass diese **eher spielerischen Formate beim älteren Teil der Zielgruppe (ab 12 Jahren) an Wirksamkeit verlieren und dass das bestehende Angebot diese Altersgruppe nicht besonders gut anspricht**. Für diese Altersgruppe fanden sie heraus, dass die Materialien der Kommission, die auf Videos setzen, die einen Handlungsaufruf enthalten oder die leicht in den bevorzugten sozialen Medien geteilt werden können, erfolgreicher sind, um diese Zielgruppe anzusprechen.

Es gibt auch Hinweise darauf, dass knapp **ein Drittel der abfassenden Kommissionsdienststellen mit der Absicht kooperieren, die Effektivität ihrer Öffentlichkeitsarbeit oder ihres Angebots an Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren und die Fachkräfte, die mit ihnen arbeiten, zu erhöhen**. Diese Zusammenarbeit beruht meist auf gemeinsamen Kommunikationszielen. Belege deuten darauf hin, dass **Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission für 5-18-Jährige, die aus der Zusammenarbeit zwischen den abfassenden Dienststellen resultieren, leider nicht der Regel entsprechen und dass hier Raum für eine umfassendere Zusammenarbeit besteht**. Insgesamt deuten die erfassten und überprüften Belege darauf hin, dass die abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission **ihre laufenden Bemühungen fortsetzen müssen**, um die Bedürfnisse der Zielgruppe der 5-18-Jährigen und der Fachkräfte, die mit ihnen arbeiten, zu berücksichtigen, wobei ein besonderer Schwerpunkt auf den Bedürfnissen von Teilgruppen und anderen Kategorien von Fachkräften als Lehrkräften liegen sollte. Das **Wissen und die Erfahrung von Organisationen auf nationaler und EU-Ebene, die mit der Zielgruppe arbeiten**, sollte besser genutzt werden.

### Effizienz

**Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den abfassenden Dienststellen in Bezug auf die Entwicklung, Überarbeitung und Verteilung von Materialien, die sich an die 5-18-Jährigen richten**, wurde nachgewiesen. Am häufigsten wurde eine Zusammenarbeit zwischen abfassenden Dienststellen zum Zweck der Verteilung von oder Werbung für Materialien oder Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren gemeldet.

In den vergangenen Jahren hat sich die **Zusammenarbeit mit der GD COMM** bei der Erstellung von Materialien für Kinder **gebessert**. Die Bereitschaft des Teams der GD COMM für Ad-hoc-Beratung und Unterstützung für andere, die Materialien für Kinder erstellen, wurde begrüßt, ebenso wie die Schaffung einer formelleren Struktur in Form eines Kommunikationsnetzwerks. Die abfassenden Kommissionsdienststellen waren zudem für die Unterstützung durch das Amt für Veröffentlichungen bei der Erstellung und Verteilung von Materialien für Kinder dankbar.

Die gesammelten Erkenntnisse deuten darauf hin, dass **Spielraum für die Entwicklung und Stärkung kooperativer Beziehungen zwischen den abfassenden Kommissionsdienststellen vorhanden ist**. Der Anteil der abfassenden Kommissionsdienststellen, die in der Rahmenumfrage angaben, nicht mit anderen zusammenzuarbeiten, verdeutlicht dies und zeigt, dass die bestehende Zusammenarbeit sehr stark auf Einzelfallbasis erfolgt. In der Regel ist eine abfassende Kommissionsdienststelle federführend tätig, und es wird nach Beiträgen gesucht, zu denen nur ein oder zwei andere Generaldirektionen Inhalte hinzufügen, anstatt dass es sich um eine formellere gemeinsame Arbeit handelt. In dem Bestreben, die Effizienz zu steigern und auf der bereits laufenden Zusammenarbeit aufzubauen, wurden Empfehlungen ausgesprochen, wie die Kenntnis bestehender Netzwerke und/oder neuer Foren für die thematische Zusammenarbeit gesteigert, die Reichweite über digitale Plattformen maximiert und externes Fachwissen eingebunden werden kann.

### *Europäischer Mehrwert*

**Es ergab sich ein positives Bild bezüglich des wahrgenommenen Mehrwerts der Materialien der Kommission für Kinder:** 94 % (252 Befragte) nannten mindestens einen zusätzlichen Nutzen und sprachen sich dafür aus, dass die Kommission weiterhin Materialien für Kinder erarbeitet. Die Materialien und Aktivitäten der Kommission für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren wurden in vier Hauptbereichen als EU-Mehrwert wahrgenommen: 1) sie bieten aktuelle und vollständige Informationen über die EU; 2) sie füllen eine Informationslücke in Bezug auf die nationalen Lehrpläne; 3) die Themen werden auf unparteiische/objektive Weise behandelt; und 4) sie bieten eine EU-Perspektive auf das Thema.

Nach den gesammelten Erkenntnissen könnte der EU-Mehrwert von Kommissionsmaterialien für Kinder maximiert werden, indem die Mechanismen und Kanäle für die Verteilung neu überdacht werden. Hervorgehoben wurde die Notwendigkeit, **auf dem Laufenden zu bleiben und darüber nachzudenken, auf welche Weise die verschiedenen Teilsegmente, typischerweise ältere Kinder, Informationen bevorzugt konsumieren**, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die in den verschiedenen Mitgliedstaaten verwendeten Online-Plattformen oder sozialen Medien und die Tatsache, dass junge Menschen schnell von einer bevorzugten Plattform zur anderen wechseln.

Auch die Notwendigkeit, **weiterhin darüber nachzudenken, wie die Kluft zwischen Kindern und EU-Organen überbrückt werden kann**, wurde hervorgehoben. Die Beteiligten machten eine Reihe weiterer Vorschläge, wie z. B. eine verringerte Hervorhebung der visuellen Identität der EU auf den Materialien und stattdessen eine größere Fokussierung auf eine subtilere oder unterschwelligere Vermittlung, dass die Informationen über die oder von der EU sind.

### **Empfehlungen**

#### *Prioritäten der Kommission und Kommunikationsziele der abfassenden Dienststellen*

- A. Die Europäische Kommission sollte systematischer Zielgruppenforschung und Tests ihrer Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder und Fachkräfte, die mit ihnen arbeiten, durchführen, um sicherzustellen, dass diese den Bedürfnissen dieser Personenkreise entsprechen.
- B. Bei der Gestaltung ihrer Materialien sollte die Kommission die Bedürfnisse und Vorlieben der Zielgruppe der 5-18-Jährigen und ihrer wichtigsten Teilsegmente berücksichtigen und dabei das Toolkit für die Entwicklung von Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren als Leitfaden verwenden (verfügbar in Anhang 4).
- C. Die von den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission entwickelten Materialien sollten von einer Strategie für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit begleitet werden, die die bevorzugten Kanäle und die relevanten Multiplikatorinnen und Multiplikatoren für die Zielgruppe berücksichtigt.
- D. Die Kommission sollte die Zusammenarbeit und Koordination zwischen den abfassenden Dienststellen in Bezug auf die Entwicklung, Überarbeitung, Prüfung und Verteilung ihrer Materialien für Kinder über neue und bestehende Netzwerke verbessern.
- E. Die Kommission sollte sich verstärkt an wichtige Multiplikatorinnen und Multiplikatoren wenden (z. B. Lehrkräfte und Unterrichtende sowie andere Fachleute, die mit Kindern und ihren Eltern arbeiten) und gleichzeitig Werbung für Materialien für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren in den Mitgliedstaaten veröffentlichen.

- F. Die Kommission sollte die Verwendung ihrer vorhandenen Materialien weiter optimieren, indem sie die Bekanntheit der Lernecke bei den wichtigsten Interessengruppen auf EU- und nationaler Ebene erhöht.
- G. Eine Verknüpfung der Lernecke mit relevanten Bildungsportalen und Ressourcen auf nationaler Ebene würde die Reichweite des derzeitigen Angebots der Kommission an Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren erhöhen.
- H. Das Layout des Portals für EU-Veröffentlichungen sollte neben dem Kennzeichnungssystem für Materialien für Kinder im Alter von 5-18 Jahren, die auf diesem Portal bereitgestellt werden, ansprechender gestaltet werden.
- I. Die Kommission muss über ihre derzeitigen Verbreitungskanäle für Materialien und Aktivitäten hinausgehen, die sich an 5-18-Jährige und Fachleute, die mit ihnen arbeiten, richten, um die Resonanz für ihre Kommunikation zu steigern.

### Zielgruppen

- J. Die Kommission sollte ein System zur Überprüfung und Verifizierung der Angemessenheit des Formats und des Inhalts ihrer Materialien und Aktivitäten für verschiedene Altersgruppen und Hauptsegmente der 5-18-Jährigen einführen.
- K. Die Kommission könnte in Erwägung ziehen, das derzeitige Alterssegment der 5-9-Jährigen in zwei Altersgruppen aufzuteilen (Alter 5-6: angehende Lesende und Alter 7-9: sich entwickelnde Lesende), um der raschen Entwicklung der Lese- und Schreibfähigkeit von Kindern während dieser prägenden Jahre Rechnung zu tragen.
- L. Die Kommission könnte darüber nachdenken, die Altersgruppe „15 Jahre und älter“ in der Lernecke weiter zu differenzieren und eine Altersgruppe von 16-18 Jahren zu berücksichtigen, um die Erarbeitung und Entwicklung von Materialien zu unterstützen, die auf deren Bedürfnisse zugeschnitten sind.
- M. Die Kommission sollte ihr Angebot an Materialien, die die Bedürfnisse von Kindern mit Behinderungen abdecken, erweitern, indem sie Materialien an Gebärdensprachen, Blindenschrift und ggf. andere relevante Formate anpasst.
- N. Die Kommission sollte die abfassenden Dienststellen ermutigen, die wenigen Materialien für Kinder zu überprüfen, die bei dieser Überprüfung als nicht im Einklang mit den EU-Werten Gleichheit, Freiheit und Menschenrechte befunden wurden<sup>12</sup>.
- O. Die Kommission sollte die abfassenden Dienststellen nachdrücklich ermutigen, Materialien und Aktivitäten in möglichst vielen EU-Sprachen zu erstellen, um die Zugänglichkeit zu gewährleisten und die Nutzung des Materials in verschiedenen Mitgliedstaaten zu fördern.

### Kommunikationsmitteilungen

- P. Bei der Gestaltung von Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-6 Jahren (angehende Lesende) sollten die Verwendung langer Sätze und komplexer Erzählungen bei der Darstellung grundlegender Informationen über die EU-Geografie sowie Symbole vermieden werden.
- Q. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 7-9 Jahren (sich entwickelnde Lesende) könnten einführende Informationen über die Geschichte, Geografie und Symbole der EU enthalten und können längere Sätze, einen größeren Wortschatz und ausführlichere Handlungsstränge umfassen.
- R. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 10-12 Jahren (vor der Pubertät) könnten sich auf allgemeine Begriffe, Ideen und Aspekte der EU konzentrieren, z. B. EU-Organe, gemeinsame Werte und Währung, die detaillierter, mit längeren Sätzen und vielfältigerem Wortschatz beschrieben werden können.
- S. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 13-15 Jahren (frühe Jugend) könnten sich auf aktuelle EU-Themen konzentrieren, insbesondere auf solche, die die nationalen Lehrpläne unterstützen oder ergänzen, sowie auf andere Aspekte, die sich direkt auf ihr Leben auswirken, z. B. Solidarität, Kultur und Bürgerschaft in der EU.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief\\_de](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_de)

- T. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 16-18 (späte Jugend) könnten komplexe EU-Begriffe und -Themen behandeln, z. B. individuelle Rechte, Rechtsansprüche, Konventionen, gemeinsame europäische Identität, europäisches Erbe, EU-Solidarität, politische und bürgerliche Verantwortung in der EU.
- U. Ausgehend von den politischen und damit zusammenhängenden kommunikativen Zielen einer abfassenden Dienststelle der Kommission sollte diese Dienststelle gegebenenfalls die Entwicklung von Materialien und Aktivitäten in Erwägung ziehen, die speziell auf die EU-Informationsbedürfnisse von Kindern aus ländlichen Gebieten, von Kindern mit Migrationshintergrund und mit anderem ethnischen Hintergrund, von Kindern aus sexuellen Minderheiten (d. h. LGBTIQ-Segmenten) und von Kindern, die einem höheren Risiko der sozialen Ausgrenzung und Armut ausgesetzt sind (d. h. junge Menschen, die weder arbeiten noch eine Schule besuchen oder eine Ausbildung absolvieren), eingehen<sup>[1]</sup>.

### Kommunikationsaktivitäten

- V. Die Kommission sollte weiterhin eine Mischung von Formaten und Arten von Materialien beibehalten, um den unterschiedlichen Bedürfnissen und Vorlieben der 5-18-Jährigen gerecht zu werden, wobei kurzen, visuell ansprechenden, leicht zu lesenden und interaktiven Inhalten Priorität eingeräumt werden muss.
- W. Die Verfügbarkeit von physischen Kopien der Kommissionsmaterialien (über die Schulen, Bibliotheken und/oder das Europe-Direct-Netz) wird weiterhin von entscheidender Bedeutung sein, um sicherzustellen, dass diese Materialien jüngere Altersgruppen und Segmente von Kindern erreichen, die von Armut und Ausgrenzung bedroht sind.
- X. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 5-6 Jahren (angehende Lesende) oder Kinder im Alter von 7-9 Jahren (sich entwickelnde Lesende) sollten sich auf praktische oder kreative Aktivitäten für Kinder konzentrieren, die die Bedeutung des „Lernens durch Handeln“ oder des spielerischen Ansatzes widerspiegeln.
- Y. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 10-12 Jahren (vor der Pubertät) sollten so gestaltet sein, dass Kinder direkt mit dem Inhalt in Berührung kommen (z. B. durch Spiele, Schulveranstaltungen oder Wettbewerbe) und diese online und offline mit Gleichaltrigen und Freunden genutzt werden können.
- Z. Materialien und Aktivitäten für Kinder im Alter von 13-15 Jahren (frühe Jugend) und Kinder im Alter von 16-18 Jahren (späte Jugend), die über ihre bevorzugten sozialen Medien zugänglich sind und geteilt werden können, z. B. Spiele, Videos und Beiträge, haben ein besonders großes Potenzial, an Zugkraft und Sichtbarkeit zu gewinnen, aber die Wirksamkeit von Offline-Materialien sollte nicht außer Acht gelassen werden.
- AA. Bei der Gestaltung interaktiver Online-Materialien und -Aktivitäten sollten die abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission Möglichkeiten für die Einführung von Optionen zur Unterstützung von Segmenten von Kindern in der EU mit unterschiedlichen kognitiven und physischen Fähigkeiten in Betracht ziehen, um deren volle Einbeziehung zu ermöglichen.
- BB. Die Kommission sollte die Entwicklung der Nutzung sozialer Medien durch junge Menschen beobachten und die Auswahl der verwendeten Kanäle kontinuierlich anpassen, um ihre Reichweite und ihre Interaktion mit den 5-18-Jährigen zu optimieren.

### Kontrolle und Bewertung

- CC. Die Kommission sollte ihre abfassenden Dienststellen dazu anhalten, systematisch Kontrolldaten zu erheben und zu nutzen, einschließlich quantitativer und qualitativer Rückmeldungen zu den Bedürfnissen ihrer Zielgruppen im Alter von 5-18 Jahren. Ebenso wird eine vorausschauende Untersuchung und Prüfung von Materialien und Aktivitäten empfohlen.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Diese Materialien werden auch für andere Zielgruppen von Kindern relevant sein, sowie für andere erwachsene Lesende, Nutzende und Teilnehmende, die sich mit den Themen Inklusion, Gleichberechtigung und Kampf gegen Diskriminierung beschäftigen.

DD. Die Kommission sollte die vorhandenen Feedback-Mechanismen für Spiele, die in der Lernecke bereitgestellt werden, und für Videos auf dem Portal der audiovisuellen Dienste der Europäischen Kommission verbessern.





# 1.0

Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

Ecorys is pleased to submit this Final Report as the last deliverable under the Request for Services (RfS) entitled: 'Follow-up review and sub-segmentation of Commission materials and activities targeting 5-18 year-olds' (COMM.A.2/14/2020/Lot2) released under the Multiple Framework Contract for Impact assessment, Evaluation and Evaluation-related services in the field of communication activities - PO/2016-06/01 - Lot 2). This report builds on our Inception Report of October 2020 and the Interim Report of February 2021.

The Final Report is structured as follows:

- ▶ The remainder of **Chapter 1** defines the objectives and the scope of this Follow-up review;
- ▶ **Chapter 2** presents the final analysis and findings based on the data collected during the Review and draws together and concludes upon the findings, structured around the domains of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value.
- ▶ **Chapter 3** sets out a number of recommendations under the headings of an outreach strategy for the European Commission to inform ongoing and future work around producing materials and activities for children aged 5-18

This report is accompanied by the following Annexes:

- ▶ **Annex 1:** Overview of the methodologies used to deliver this external evaluation;
- ▶ **Annex 2:** Mapping of Commission's materials and activities for children aged 5-18;
- ▶ **Annex 3:** Visuals illustrating the reach of Commission's materials for children aged 5-18;
- ▶ **Annex 4:** Toolkit for the development of materials and activities for children aged 5-18.

### 1.1 Objectives of the review

The overall aim of the Review was to produce a report that follows up on the recommendations that emerged from the 'Review of European Commission materials and activities targeting youth', completed by Ecorys in 2018. This previous study recommended to: (i) consider tailoring youth materials and activities for demographic segments that are less engaged and more at risk of social exclusion and poverty, using social media and user-centred approaches to reach into these segments, as well as (ii) reinforcing the work with particular youth groups and youth organisations to establish longer-term relationships based on common interests in the development of Commission communication materials and activities for youth, to better understand the information needs of the different sub-segments of this audience and together discover ways to engage them.

The specific aims of this Follow-up review, therefore, were to:

- ▶ Develop a typology of the 5 to 18 target audience, including a matrix of target audience segments for future use to inform how to tailor materials for the main sub-segments<sup>13</sup> of this target audience.
- ▶ Identify the EU information and learning needs of the sub-segments as well as preferred material formats and communication channels to advise how to effectively reach and engage with this target group and its main sub-segments.
- ▶ Produce recommendations and an outreach strategy on how to maximise the impact of Commission's materials for 5- to 18-year-olds, including how to streamline the current materials offer to this target group and its main sub-segments in order to better address their needs and how to more efficiently cooperate on the distribution and promotion of author services' materials for 5 to 18 year olds.

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<sup>13</sup> The identified sub-segments for this study are as follows: Children aged 5-18 in rural areas; Children aged 5-18 facing material and/or social deprivation; Children aged 5-18 with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities; Children aged 5-18 with a migration background or experience; Children aged 5-18 with ethnic minority backgrounds; Early school leavers and LGBTIQ youths – i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals.

## 1.2 Scope of this review

### 1.2.1 General scope of the study

In line with the requirements in the Technical Specifications for this assignment, the target audience of the materials and activities to be reviewed is limited to EU Member State residents between the ages of 5 and 18 and materials produced between 2018-2020, completing the evaluation of materials published during the Juncker Commission (2015-2020) and covering some materials produced during the current Von der Leyen Commission (2020 – present).

The review would furthermore cover current communication materials and activities for the specific sub-segments, including:

- ▶ All types of materials (books, games, quizzes, videos, etc.) currently accessible via the Learning Corner<sup>14</sup>;
- ▶ News and materials targeting 5- to 18-year-olds (and those working with them) on the official social media accounts of the Commission (both corporate accounts and those of DGs);
- ▶ Communication materials developed by the European Commission; DG Communication Headquarters, DG Communication Representations, and their regional offices as well as the Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs<sup>15</sup>) in Member States, other DGs developing materials for the relevant public and the EU executive agencies.

The Technical Specifications stipulate that the study would not cover:

- ▶ Materials produced exclusively for the press, such as press releases and memos;
- ▶ Materials from other EU Institutions, bodies and offices.

### 1.2.2 Country sample

Considering the far-reaching scope of this Review, the range of the European Commission's materials for children aged 5-18 and the Commission's array of European, national, and local partners developing, producing and distributing materials on the EU, the review required a simple, but solid approach to sampling. We selected the country sample based on the following criteria:

- ▶ Countries with the highest share of Europeans who have a neutral or negative image of the EU;
- ▶ Distribution of countries in the sample by their population sizes i.e., 'demographic weight';
- ▶ Geographical balance of countries across the territory of the EU;
- ▶ Levels of internet access among EU households;
- ▶ Number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants across EU Member States;
- ▶ Countries with the highest and lowest publication orders from the OP;
- ▶ Countries not covered by the two previous Reviews (focusing on youth materials and publications for citizens).

Based on the above criteria, the following countries have been selected as potential sample countries to be covered by this Follow-up review:

- ✓ Denmark
- ✓ Portugal
- ✓ Lithuania

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<sup>14</sup> The Learning Corner is the European Commission's online repository, collating EU materials and activities for children and resources for teachers. Accessible via: [https://europa.eu/learning-corner/home\\_en](https://europa.eu/learning-corner/home_en)

<sup>15</sup> until 30 April 2021, the network was called EDICs. Since 1 May 2021, the name was changed to Europe Direct Network.

- ✓ Italy
- ✓ Slovakia

The relationships between the sample countries and the selection criteria are demonstrated in the table below:

Table 1 Relationship between sample countries and the selection criteria

Sample country	Above average share of neutral image of the EU	Above average share of negative image of the EU	Population size			Geography			Below average internet access	Immigration levels among population	Publication orders via the OP
			L	M	S	NW E	SE E	CEE			
Denmark				✓		✓				Medium	Avg.
Portugal				✓			✓		✓	Low	Avg.
Lithuania	✓				✓			✓	✓	Medium	Avg.
Italy	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	High	Low
Slovakia	✓			✓				✓	✓	Low	Avg.

Source: Ecorys analysis 2020

The five proposed sample countries meet the defined criteria, and importantly also build on the coverage of Member States by the previous *Review of European Commission materials and activities targeting youth* and the on-going *Review of Publications for citizens* undertaken by Ecorys.

A young boy with short brown hair is shown in profile, looking down at a smartphone he is holding with both hands. He is wearing a blue and black jacket over a grey long-sleeved shirt. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor setting with green grass and a blue sky. The overall image has a blue tint and a bokeh effect in the background.

**2.0**

**Final findings and conclusions**

## 2.0 Final findings and conclusions

This section offers the final findings of this Review, organised by evaluation criterion and triangulated based on the data collected in the Mapping of materials and activities, Literature review, Monitoring data, Key stakeholder interviews, User Survey, Classroom-Based Consultations, Online Focus Groups and Desk research.

### 2.1 Target Group

This section provides our final findings in relation to the following strategic question of the Review: *What is the size of potential target audience for European Commission’s materials for children aged 5-18, and what are its main segments?*

We analysed the 5–18-year-old audience in order to further segment the current age groups adopted by the Learning Corner (up to 9 years old, 9-12 years old, 12-15 years old, and 15 years or older) to provide systematic definitions of child and adolescent age-groups, which are currently lacking across DGs. Using studies, existing data, and peer-reviewed articles, in particular on child literacy development and on the varying rates of digital media use across children aged 5-18 in the EU, we proposed the following age ranges:

- ▶ Ages 5-6 (Emergent readers)
- ▶ Ages 7-9 (Developing readers)
- ▶ Ages 10-12 (Preadolescents)
- ▶ Ages 13-15 (Early adolescents)
- ▶ Ages 16-18 (Late adolescents).<sup>16</sup>

With the exception of the two youngest age groups, these age groups are largely aligned with the age groups suggested in the Learning Corner. The age groups selected for this study firstly convert the above-9 age groups into non-overlapping and mutually exclusive categories, and secondly split the ‘under-9’ age group into Emergent (aged 5-6) and Developing (aged 7-9) readers to account for rapid changes in reading and cognitive ability during the first 4 years of school. These age segments are described in the sections that follow, based on Desk research on the characteristics of the different groups and the findings from the CBCs and Focus groups which allowed us to consult directly with children across the different age ranges in relation to information and communication needs.

#### Ages 5-6 and 7-9: Emergent and developing readers

Although the ‘Learning Corner currently includes 5-6 and 7-9-year-olds within the single group of target audiences ‘Under 9’, findings from the field of child development and literacy suggest that the period from age 5-9 is a critical and rapidly changing stage in the development of child literacy in which children make a transition from ‘decoding’ to ‘fluency’<sup>17</sup>. The ages between 5-7 are largely understood to be a period in which children learn to decode words using their phonetic understanding of alphabetical letters, whereas the ages of 7-9 are a period during which children cultivate fluency and reading for most becomes an increasingly automatic process<sup>18</sup>. The table below describes some of the common developments in children’s reading and writing abilities in each of the two age groups.

Table 2 Summary of literacy developments in children aged 5-6 and 7-9

Age group	Description of the stage	Specific reading and writing skills
Ages 5-6	Decoding	Developments at or around age 5:

<sup>16</sup>Importantly, the age of 18 should not be interpreted as an ‘upper ceiling’ when considering materials targeted at teenagers in this age group. Materials and activities aimed at 15 to 18 year olds are also likely to be useful for youths (aged 15-30) and adults more generally.

<sup>17</sup>Christine E. Moran & Karlen Senseny | (2016) An examination of the relationship between a child’s developmental age and early literacy learning. *Cogent Education* 3:1, 1169577, DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2016.1169577

<sup>18</sup>Source: ‘Normal Development’, *Perpetual Literacy*: <http://www.perceptualliteracy.com/Parents/Articles.aspx?id=17> and ‘Literacy Development’, *Literacy for children with combined vision and hearing loss*: <http://literacy.nationaldb.org/index.php/literacy-development-continuum/>

Age group	Description of the stage	Specific reading and writing skills
<b>Emergent readers</b>	The process of reading is phonetic. Children learn to recognise and read words by 'decoding' the alphabetical letters and sounds they are made of.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Phonological awareness:</b> Understanding that sounds can be combined to make words;</li> <li>▶ <b>Alphabet knowledge:</b> Understanding that sounds can be matched to specific letters of the alphabet.</li> </ul> <p><b>Developments at or around age 6:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Print awareness:</b> Ability to write and read most letters of the alphabet and use writing to build words;</li> <li>▶ Ability to 'sound out' unfamiliar words;</li> <li>▶ Ability to read short sentences and follow simple narratives.</li> </ul>
<b>Ages 7-9 Developing Readers</b>	<b>Fluency</b> The process of 'decoding' becomes automatic, so that the emphasis of reading shifts from recognising letters and sounds to expanding knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.	<p><b>Developments at or around age 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reading more automatically and increasingly less phonetically;</li> <li>▶ Familiarity with the sounds of vowel digraphs such as 'ou', 'ie', 'oa', etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Developments from around age 8-9</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ability to read silently, independently, and for extended periods of time;</li> <li>▶ Ability to confidently use written word to express personal ideas.</li> </ul>

Source: *Ecorys analysis, 2021*<sup>19</sup>

The rapid literacy development that is typical from ages 5-9 suggests that materials for 8-year-old children are unlikely to be easily understood by children between the ages of 5-6, while materials that are appropriate for 5-6-year-olds are correspondingly unlikely to be stimulating or meaningful for (cognitively 'normal')<sup>20</sup> children aged 8 or 9. For children aged 5-6, materials should **minimise the use of long sentences and complex narratives**. Words should be short and phonetically simple (where possible) to ensure ease of 'sounding out.' Text should be descriptive as opposed to abstract. However, most children in this age group will be able to understand straightforward metaphors and similes. Materials targeting children aged 7-9 can include longer sentences, a larger vocabulary, and more elaborate storylines. The CBCs confirmed the need for materials that address different cognitive abilities within this age group. The [Match the Landmarks](#) game tested in several of the consultations worked well in this respect with different levels of game difficulty available. One teacher did feed back that it would have been enhanced further by an ability to slow down the images shown to be more accessible to those children with lower cognitive ability who would benefit from more time.

In terms of use of digital technology in communication with this age group of 5-9, research shows that children under the age of 8 used digital technologies mainly in their leisure time, for relaxing and entertainment. The CBCs conducted with this age group, likewise, confirmed that **technology was a channel used by this age segment and that it typically was associated with play**. A study on young children aged 0 to 8 by the JRC found that the most common digital activity for this age group is *'watching (online) videos or (on demand) TV programmes'*<sup>21</sup>. Another common digital activity is video gaming, with most young children having their first contact with video games through their parents, 'in times and places where they need their children to be safely occupied.' This

<sup>19</sup> The sources used included: 'Reading Milestones', *Kid's Health*: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/milestones.html>; 'Ages and Stages of Literacy Development – Ages 3 to 12', *Promoting Literacy Development*: <https://pld-literacy.org/product/ages-stages-of-literacy-development-fact-sheet/> ;

<sup>20</sup> As children with intellectual and/or learning difficulties will often read materials at a more elementary level than normally able peers in their same age group, the availability of simple texts suited to the earliest of reading levels is particularly important.

<sup>21</sup> Chaudron, S., Di Gioia, R. and Gemo, M. (2017). Young Children (0-8) and Digital Technology - A qualitative study across Europe. Joint Research Centre, *Publications Office of the European Union*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/young-children-0-8-and-digital-technology-qualitative-study-across-europe>

suggests that **videos or online games would be effective types of communication materials** to reach and engage this target group. This was confirmed by the CBCs where children aged 5-6 and 7-9 participating in the consultation reported **video content as a preferred format for information**.

Wider research also highlights the important role that parents and schools play in influencing a child's interaction and use of digital technology between the ages of 0 and 8. For example, the JRC study found that, whilst children under-8 attending primary school<sup>22</sup> can sometimes use the Internet and digital technologies for learning and studying, this usage clearly increases if supported or requested by the school itself, or if their parents direct them to educational/learning apps to use for this purpose. Furthermore, other studies examining the age groups of 5-9's interaction with digital technologies have pointed out that when schools embed digital technologies in teaching, parents are more likely to have clear views on their educational purposes and are more disposed to support their usage at home. In these instances, parents shift from being 'gatekeepers' in children's access to digital technologies, to being 'scaffolders' – "a transactional process where parents discover the optimal level at which to instruct the child, intervening in such a way that the child can succeed at the task but also gradually learns the skills to complete the task independently".<sup>23</sup> These findings suggests that digital communication materials targeting this age group are likely to be more effective if firstly, parents themselves are aware of them and can guide their children in their use and secondly, if they are embedded and used in the school learning environment as educational tools.

One teacher involved in the CBCs noted a potential recent change in the role of technology as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of lockdowns in many EU countries, much of the teaching for these age groups moved online for a period and the use of technology for educational purposes had increasingly become part of the interest and routine of younger children's lives. As a result, for some children technology has become a stronger and preferred channel for accessing information. Although in contrast, one other teacher noted that children probably experienced the 'digitalisation' of teaching in a potentially negative way, with it happening at short notice with limited preparation, so while these children had greater exposure to technology and online materials the experience may not result in a permanent change in their preferred channels.

### Ages 10-12: Preadolescents

The years from ages 10-12 mark the tail end of 'middle childhood' and are often referred to as 'preadolescence'<sup>24</sup>. This period is marked by rapid progress in children's social, cognitive, and literacy skills which have significant implications for the communication materials that they are likely to find relevant and interesting. Furthermore, this period is commonly characterised by rapid increases in digital skills, use of technology, and consumption of digital media. These changes are described in detail in the table below.

Table 3 Summary of literacy and cognitive developments in children aged 10-12

Domain	Specific reading and writing skills
Reading ability	<p><b>Literacy Developments:</b><sup>25</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased efficiency and accuracy in reading and writing; emphasis of learning shifts from developing fluency to expanding vocabulary and boosting comprehension skills;</li> <li>▶ Increased tendency to read for the acquisition of knowledge;</li> <li>▶ Ability to analyse written texts critically and synthesise information from several sources;</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> roughly between the ages of 5 and 8, depending on the Member State

<sup>23</sup> Conner, DB, Cross, DR (2003) Longitudinal analysis of the presence, efficacy and stability of maternal scaffolding during informal problem-solving interactions. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 21: 315–334. Available at: <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1348/026151003322277720>

<sup>24</sup> 'Chapter 7: Preadolescence', *American Psychiatric Association – Psychiatry online*: <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.books.9781615370979.kg07>

<sup>25</sup> Sources used: 'Ages and Stages of Literacy Development – Ages 3 to 12', *Promoting Literacy Development*: <https://pld-literacy.org/product/ages-stages-of-literacy-development-fact-sheet/>; 'Literacy Development', *Literacy for children with combined vision and hearing loss*: <http://literacy.nationaldb.org/index.php/literacy-development-continuum/>



Domain	Specific reading and writing skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Reading and writing take on an increasingly large role as a means of communicating via e.g., the Internet and mobile phone.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive developments</b>	<p><b>Cognitive developments:<sup>26</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ability to form increasingly complex and individual thoughts and opinions;</li> <li>▶ Increased critical thinking;</li> <li>▶ Emergence of a distinct identity/sense of self and awareness of one's place in the world.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital skills</b>	<p><b>Use of technology<sup>27</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Emerging but still limited frequency in the use of mobile internet – less than a third of EU children aged 9-11 access the Internet from their smartphones on a daily basis;</li> <li>▶ Across the EU, children in this age range spend between 1 and 3 hours on the Internet each day;</li> <li>▶ Compared to older age groups, children aged 9-11 spend more time playing online games than they do on social networks.</li> </ul>

Source: Ecorys analysis, 2021

In order to remain interesting and stimulating, materials for this age group should focus on **slightly more detailed concepts and ideas, using longer sentences and a more varied vocabulary**. The newly developed cognitive skills in this age group also offer a range of new possibilities. In particular, the central role of early identity formation at this stage may be interpreted as a unique opportunity to introduce children to the concept of a collective European identity.

Notably, children in this age group already use the Internet regularly. In terms of the specific activities that the Internet is used for, 54% of 9-11 years responding to the EU Kids Online 2020 Survey stated that they watch video clips daily, whilst 43% play online games daily<sup>28</sup>. Evidence from the Focus groups involving this age of children confirmed the **interest and preference for online materials and in particular a preference for video content**. However, less than a third of children use smartphones to access the Internet on a daily basis. This suggests that **online games and materials that are accessible from computers** are more likely to reach this age group than mobile apps and games. Furthermore, **social media materials are unlikely to be as effective as online games** in reaching this age group – the EU Kids Online Survey found that just 28% of 9–11 year-olds visit social network sites daily and this age group falls below the typical minimum age for many social media platforms. In terms of the role of parents in mediating access and use of digital technologies, research shows that this role tends to shrink from 9 years old onwards, when friends instead take on a more influential role in children's digital choices. Evidence from the Focus groups involving this age of children confirmed this emerging independence in accessing information, with a preference expressed for **interactive materials** which offer the opportunity for children to decide what information they engage with.

### Ages 13-15: Early adolescents

The ages of 13-15 mark a shift from preadolescence to early adolescence. Within this age range, children generally spend several hours a day accessing the Internet for homework and leisure, meaning that reading and writing are more likely to have an increased role in children's lives as a means of facilitating communication online. Furthermore, critical changes in reading and writing ability continue, with adolescents generally being able to understand texts containing more sophisticated vocabulary and subject matter.

The years from ages 13-15 also host important cognitive developments. Early adolescents tend to demonstrate increased critical thinking and are able to form personal opinions through a synthesis of competing ideas and

<sup>26</sup> Brinthaup, T. M. and Lipka, R. P. 'Understanding Early Adolescent Self and Identity – an Introduction'. <https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/60549.pdf>;

<sup>27</sup> Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S. and Hasebrink, U. (2020). 'EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries'. London School of Economics: London;

<sup>28</sup> Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S., and Hasebrink, U. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries. EU Kids Online. <https://doi.org/10.21953/lse.47fdeqj01of0>

narratives. Early adolescence is also recognised as a significant point in the development of ‘selfhood’, in terms of both individual and group identities. Furthermore, this period tends to coincide with a shift in online behaviour, with early adolescents developing a presence on social media and diverting from online games in favour of music and videos. These changes are described in more detail in the table below.

Table 4 Summary of literacy and cognitive developments in children aged 13-15

Domain	Specific reading and writing skills
<b>Reading ability</b>	<p><b>Literacy Developments:</b><sup>29</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased reading comprehension due to growing vocabulary;</li> <li>▶ Heightened ability to sense and create ‘tones’ in written text;</li> <li>▶ Ability to understand more complex written styles and subject matter;</li> <li>▶ Reading and writing are automatic and may be used regularly as a mode of communication via digital media.</li> </ul>
<b>Cognitive developments</b>	<p><b>Cognitive developments:</b><sup>30</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increased critical thinking;</li> <li>▶ Burgeoning introspection and understanding of ‘self’;</li> <li>▶ Development of increasingly complex individual and group identities.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital skills</b>	<p><b>Use of technology</b><sup>31</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The vast majority (98%) of children aged 12-15 have access to the Internet at home;</li> <li>▶ On average across the EU, children between the ages of 12 and 14 spend between 2.5 and 4 hours on the Internet each day;</li> <li>▶ Online activities shift from an emphasis on online games to increased participation in social networks and watching music and videos.</li> </ul>

Source: Ecorys analysis, 2021

Due to the frequency of Internet use among early adolescents, and in particular the consumption of social media and videos, materials for this age range should generally take a **digital format**. Games, videos, and posts that can be accessed and shared **via social media** have particularly strong potential to gain traction and visibility in this age group. Data from the EU Kids Online 2020 survey showed that 77% of children aged 15-16 years old visit social network sites daily, while 76% of them watch video clips daily<sup>32</sup>. In terms of preferred social media channels, latest data from the online social media tool NapoleonCat, states that teenagers prefer **Instagram** over Facebook.<sup>33</sup> In Belgium, for example, 13–17-year-olds account for 4.9% of Facebook users nationally but 7.7% of Instagram users. Data from Denmark (6.4% vs 8.2%), Portugal (2.5% vs 3.8%), Italy (3.3% vs 4.9%), Lithuania (3.9% vs 6%) and Slovakia (3.9% vs 5.9%) confirms this general trend. Evidence from the Focus groups, although only a small sample of children of this age, gives some indication that social media habits are potentially changing with references to some of the newer platforms such as TikTok being increasingly used as it provides the video content typically preferred by children.

Furthermore, due to the developments in critical thinking and independent, automatic, and frequent reading and writing that are typical for the 13-15 age group, **materials should cover topics in more detail, using more**

<sup>29</sup> Jessie Ricketts, Arne Lervåg, Nicola Dawson, Lucy A. Taylor & Charles Hulme (2020) Reading and Oral Vocabulary Development in Early Adolescence, *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 24:5, 380-96, DOI: 10.1080/10888438.2019.1689244

<sup>30</sup> Brinthaup, T. M. and Lipka, R. P. ‘Understanding Early Adolescent Self and Identity – an Introduction’. <https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/60549.pdf>;

<sup>31</sup> Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S. and Hasebrink, U. (2020). ‘EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries’. London School of Economics: London;

<sup>32</sup> Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S., and Hasebrink, U. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries. EU Kids Online. <https://doi.org/10.21953/lse.47fdeqj01of0>

<sup>33</sup> For more information about NapoleonCat, please visit: <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/>

**sophisticated language.** As young people's identities are normally emergent and flexible at this stage, youths may be receptive to simply communicated concepts concerning EU solidarity, EU culture, and EU citizenship.

### Ages 16-18: Late adolescents

Although developments in reading abilities are generally recognised to stabilise on or around the age of 15, improvements in reading comprehension are expected to continue indefinitely and are generally predicated on the ever-continuing expansion of vocabulary<sup>34</sup>. It can therefore be assumed that **minimal tailoring is necessary** for a material aimed at EU citizens in general to be readable and understandable for adolescents aged 16-18.

Importantly, later adolescence is associated with the increased exploration in, and stabilisation of, young people's personal, social, national, and other group identities<sup>35,36</sup>. This age group has an increasingly developed understanding of political-related concepts, including elements such as recognising individual rights in contrast to those of society; understanding the concept of compromise; and an increased ability to distinguish between conventions and legal sanctions<sup>37</sup>. This means that **children of this age are likely to be particularly receptive to materials covering complex political topics** that are relevant to the EU, such as a shared European identity, shared and unique European heritage, EU solidarity, national and EU political and civic responsibility etc. This was confirmed by the oldest participants in the Focus groups, who expressed an interest in current affairs and EU information that related to things that affected their lives.

EU adolescents aged 15-16 spend an average of 4 hours on the Internet per day and more than half access the Internet from smartphones several times a day<sup>38</sup>. **Videos, posts, games, and other materials that are shareable via social media are therefore particularly visible to this age group and should be used at a greater rate than printed materials.**

## 2.1.1 Audience segmentation by demographic group

Audience sub-segments by demographic group were refined through the triangulation of existing demographic data (from sources including Eurostat and the World Bank) with the findings of factsheets, reports, and other documentation from a range of EU-level, international, non-governmental and advocacy organisations. These audience sub-segments were validated through comparisons across a wide range of indicators in order to identify digital, health, wealth, or educational inequalities between groups. These included:

- ▶ Digital skills, Internet use, and access to digital technology;
- ▶ Educational attainment, early school leaving, and participation in formal education;
- ▶ Self-perceived health and long-standing illness, depressive symptoms;
- ▶ Rates of material deprivation, poverty and social exclusion;
- ▶ Percentage of youths in specific income quintiles.

Based on the data available from Eurostat, indicators were compared for several demographic groups. These included comparisons of:

- ▶ Male versus female populations;
- ▶ Populations in cities versus those in towns and suburbs or in rural areas;
- ▶ Single-parent versus dual-parent households;

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<sup>34</sup> Jessie Ricketts, Arne Lervåg, Nicola Dawson, Lucy A. Taylor & Charles Hulme (2020) Reading and Oral Vocabulary Development in Early Adolescence, *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 24:5, 380-396, DOI: 10.1080/10888438.2019.1689244

<sup>35</sup> Klimstra, T. A. and van Doeselaar, L. 'Identity formation in adolescence and young adulthood' in (2017) *Personality Development Across the Lifespan*, pp. 293-308.

<sup>36</sup> van Doeselaar, L., McLean, K.C., Meeus, W. et al. Adolescents' Identity Formation: Linking the Narrative and the Dual-Cycle Approach. *J Youth Adolescence* 49, 818–835 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01096-x>

<sup>37</sup> Buchanan-Barrow, Eithne. (1996) Children's understanding of political concepts. Doctoral thesis, University of Surrey (United Kingdom). Available at: <http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/843795/>

<sup>38</sup> Smahel, D., MacHackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Olafsson, K., Livingstone, S. and Hasebrink, U. (2020). 'EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries'. London School of Economics: London;

- ▶ Populations with versus without disabilities, physical or sensory impairments, long-standing health conditions, and some or severe activity limitations;
- ▶ Populations facing material or social deprivation versus those that are not;
- ▶ Populations in the first income quintiles versus those in the third and fifth;
- ▶ Populations with citizenships or countries of birth other than their place of residence, versus non-migrant populations;
- ▶ Populations whose parents have a citizenship or country of birth, which is different to their own (i.e., second-generation migrants), versus those who do not.
- ▶ Populations with lower-secondary education or less, versus those with upper-secondary education.

Following this process, the following demographic sub-groups were identified, and research was conducted to explore their characteristics, and their needs and preferences in relation to communication:

- ▶ Children aged 5-18 in rural areas;
- ▶ Children aged 5-18 facing material and/or social deprivation;
- ▶ Children aged 5-18 with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities;
- ▶ Children aged 5-18 with a migration background or experience;
- ▶ Children aged 5-18 with ethnic minority backgrounds;
- ▶ Early school leavers;
- ▶ LGBTIQ children and youths – i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex (LGBTIQ) individuals.

Gaps in the data that were identified during the Inception phase, following the initial desk research (i.e., on children with disabilities, LGBTIQ children and youths and ethnic minority children) have been filled as far as possible through more extensive desk research drawing upon reports of advocacy organisations as well as research and surveys conducted on an international level, i.e., beyond EU Member States. Information on the needs and characteristics of the sociodemographic audience sub-segments that resulted from this research and triangulation are highlighted below. **The audience segmentation matrix contains all the data that was used to define these groups and to explore their needs and is included in Annex 1.**

### Children aged 5-18 in rural areas

In 2018, 29.1% of the total EU population resided in rural areas<sup>39</sup>. Children in rural areas therefore constitute a significant section of the overall EU population aged 5-18<sup>40</sup>. Eurostat data indicates that rural populations overall, and by extension, rural children aged 5-18, are affected by significant socioeconomic inequalities. Rural Europeans in general are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion than their urban counterparts (23.6% vs 21.4%). This is also the case for people experiencing material or social deprivation (13.3% in cities vs 15.0% in rural areas) as outlined in Table 5 below.

Furthermore, rural populations face disadvantage across a range of educational indicators. As outlined in Table 5 below (indicators 11-12), a greater share of 18-24-year-olds in rural areas (10.7%) left school earlier than their counterparts in cities (9.1%). Similarly, a slightly larger share of rural youths aged 15-19 are not in education, employment or training (5.8%) than is the case for youths in cities (5.4%), although the differences are very small.

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<sup>39</sup> 'Urban and Rural living in the EU'. *Eurostat – Statistics Explained*. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20200207-1>

<sup>40</sup>There is no precise data on the total population of EU children who live in rural areas, so this must be extrapolated from data on the total population of EU residents/citizens.

Table 5 Prevalence of specific health, poverty, and educational indicators by degree of urbanisation

#	Indicator	Population in cities	Population in towns and suburbs	Population in rural areas
1	Population aged 16-24 with 'some or severe' limitations in activities due to health (%)	9.4	9.0	8.3
2	Population aged 16-24 with no limitations in activities due to health (%)	90.6	91.0	91.7
3	Population aged 16-24 with self-perceived 'very good' or 'good' health (%)	91.9	92.0	92.3
4	Population aged 16-24 with self-perceived 'fair' health (%)	6.6	6.5	6.4
5	Population aged 16-24 with self-perceived 'bad' or 'very bad' health (%)	1.5	1.5	1.3
6	People experiencing material and social deprivation (%)	13.3	11.6	15.0*
7	People in severe material deprivation (%)	6.1	5.2	6.1
8	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)	21.4	19.8	23.6*
9	Population aged 15-24 with no more than primary and lower-secondary education (%)	42.5	50.3	50.2*
10	Population aged 15-24 with upper secondary and post-secondary education (%)	46.2	42.3	43.1*
11	Share of 18-24 year olds who are early school leavers (%)	9.1	11.2	10.7*
12	Population aged 15-19 who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) (%)	5.4	5.7	5.8*

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021; \*marks an indicator for which populations in rural areas are at a disadvantage.

Rural and urban populations are also distinguished by the well-known '**digital divide**'. Significantly fewer Europeans in rural areas (65%) use a smartphone to access the Internet compared to Europeans in cities (76%). In comparison to Europeans who live in cities, those in rural areas are also less likely to report that they have used a computer in the last 3 months (72% vs 82%) or 12 months (75% vs 84%), and more likely to report that they have never used a computer (20% vs 12%) as outlined in indicators 2-4 in Table 6 below. Household level of Internet access figures show similar disparities, with 90% of households located in cities having access to the Internet, as opposed to 82% of households located in rural areas.

Finally, this divide between urban and rural populations is also evident in their rates of **multilingualism**. In total, 40.3% of rural Europeans are monolingual in contrast to only 26.3% of Europeans in cities. Although a similar share of rural versus urban Europeans report that they speak one foreign language (35.7% vs 37.3%), the divide again broadens when considering the share of Europeans who speak two (18.5% vs 25.0%) or three (5.4% vs 11.4%) foreign languages (see indicators 5-8 in Table 6 below).

Table 6 Digital skills, technology use, and foreign language skills by urbanisation

#	Indicator	Population in cities	Population in towns and suburbs	Population in rural areas
1	Percentage of total population using smartphone to access mobile internet (%)	76.0	70.0	65.0*
2	Individuals reporting computer use in the last 3 months (%)	82.0	77.0	72.0*
3	Individuals reporting computer use in last 12 months (%)	84.0	79.0	75.0*
4	Individuals reporting that they have never used a computer (%)	12.0	17.0	20.0*

#	Indicator	Population in cities	Population in towns and suburbs	Population in rural areas
5	Individuals reporting that they do not speak a foreign language (%)	26.3	31.6	40.3*
6	Individuals reporting that they speak one foreign language (%)	37.3	37.8	35.7*
7	Individuals reporting that they speak two foreign languages (%)	25.0	22.3	18.5*
8	Individuals reporting that they speak three foreign languages (%)	11.4	8.3	5.4*

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021; \*marks an indicator for which populations in rural areas are at a disadvantage.

### Implications for communication materials for children in rural areas

There is a lack of statistics on rural Europeans aged 5-18 specifically. However, data on older adolescents, youths, and the population of rural Europeans overall indicates that by the time rural children reach adulthood, they are at greater risk of a series of key socioeconomic disadvantages, as outlined above. These disadvantages are likely to have an impact on children from 5-18 and the types of communication materials that will reach them. For example, higher rates of early school leaving and being out of education, employment or training means that children from rural areas may struggle with more complex language in written materials and may thus benefit from **more visual aids in communication materials targeting them**. The available data also indicates that there is a divide between rural and urban Europeans with regard to digital skills and multilingualism – both domains that have significant implications for the types of communication materials that will be likely to reach them. The gap in digital skills, for example, means that while rural youths also prefer online communication materials, **they may benefit more than their urban counterparts from access to printed materials**. Furthermore, the fact that 40% of rural Europeans can only speak their native language increases the need for communication materials targeting this group to be available in all **24 of the EU's official languages**.

### Children aged 5-18 facing material and/or social deprivation

Child poverty and deprivation is a persistent problem affecting a significant proportion of children aged 5-18 across the EU. The rate of child-specific material deprivation is estimated to be 23.1% among children aged 1-15, representing up to 15.7 million children across the EU27.<sup>41</sup>

Table 7 Rate of child-specific material deprivation

Age group	Rate of child-specific material deprivation
<b>Total (1 to 15)</b>	23.1%
<b>1 to 5</b>	20.6
<b>6 to 11</b>	23.9
<b>12 to 15</b>	25.3

Source: Ecorys analysis of 2014 Eurostat data, 2021

Disadvantaged children in the EU are profoundly impacted by health inequality. As displayed in the table below, children under 16 in the 1<sup>st</sup> (lowest) income quintile are significantly less likely to report being in 'good' or 'very good' health than their counterparts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> (middle) income quintile, as well as being more likely to report 'fair' or 'bad' health (see Table 8 below).

<sup>41</sup> This number was arrived at through extrapolation based on the total number of children in the age range (1-15) across the EU27 (68.1 million)

Table 8 Child general health levels by income quintile, aged 16 and under

#	Health Indicator	1 <sup>st</sup> income quintile	3 <sup>rd</sup> income quintile	Total average
1	Children aged 16 and under with 'very good' general health (%)	61.3*	67.5	66.1
2	Children aged 16 and under with 'good' general health (%)	28.7*	33.2	29.9
3	Children aged 16 and under with 'fair' general health (%)	4.6*	3	3.2
4	Children aged 16 and under with 'bad' general health (%)	0.7*	0.6	0.6
5	Children aged 16 and under with 'very bad' general health (%)	0.2	0.2	0.2

Source: Ecorys analysis of 2017 Eurostat data, 2021; \* marks an indicator for which lower-quintile populations are at a disadvantage

This health inequality persists in the 16-19 age group, in which youths with some or severe long-standing health limitations are overrepresented in the first (lowest) income quintile (7.6% of all 16-19-year-olds in quintile) as compared to the fifth (highest) income quintile (only 4.8% of all 16-19-year-olds in quintile). Children aged 16-19 in the first income quintile are also less likely to rate their health as being 'good' or 'very good' (92.1% vs 96.3% in the fifth income quintile), and more likely to rate their health as being 'fair' (6.3% vs 3.3% in the fifth income quintile) or 'bad or very bad' (1.6% vs only 0.4% in the fifth quintile) (see Table 9 below).

Mental health inequality also persists. Whilst comparable EU data on mental health of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion is not available, research from the World Health Organisation shows that in more than one third of WHO European region countries<sup>42</sup>, adolescents from low-affluence families reported higher levels of feeling low.<sup>43</sup>

Table 9 Child health indicators by income quintile, aged 16-19

#	Health Indicator	1 <sup>st</sup> income quintile	3 <sup>rd</sup> income quintile	5 <sup>th</sup> income quintile
1	People aged 16-19 with some or severe long-standing limitations in activities due to health (%)	7.6*	7.5	4.8
2	People aged 16-19 with no long-standing limitations in activities due to health (%)	92.4*	92.5	95.2
3	People aged 16-19 with self-perceived 'good or very good' health (%)	92.1*	94.3	96.3
4	People aged 16-19 with self-perceived 'fair' health (%)	6.3*	4.8	3.3
5	People aged 16-19 with self-perceived 'bad' or 'very bad' health (%)	1.6*	0.8	0.4

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021; \*marks an indicator for which lower-quintile populations are at a disadvantage

<sup>42</sup> The WHO European region consists of 53 countries, including all EU27 Member States. List is available here: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/countries>

<sup>43</sup> Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being. Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada, 2020, World Health Organisation. Available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Life-stages/child-and-adolescent-health/health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-hbsc/publications/2020/spotlight-on-adolescent-health-and-well-being.-findings-from-the-20172018-health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-hbsc-survey-in-europe-and-canada.-international-report.-volume-2.-key-data>

Poorer children are also impacted by educational inequalities. Materially deprived 16-19 year-olds are over-represented among those with lower educational attainment, comprising 14.2% of youths with lower-secondary education or less and only 9.1% of youths with upper- and post-secondary education (see the audience segmentation matrix). Evidence also suggests that children from low-income families are likely to lag behind their peers in language at school entry, with gaps in vocabulary particularly pronounced.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, there is a deep digital divide between Europeans across different income quartiles. Individuals in the first and lowest income quartile are significantly less likely to access mobile Internet via smartphones (58% as compared to 85% of individuals in the 4<sup>th</sup> and highest quartile). They are also less likely to report having used a computer in the last 3 or 12 months, and that they have never used a computer (27%) in comparison to their counterparts in the third (9%) and fourth (4%) income quartiles (see Table 10 below).

Table 10 Use of technology by income quartile

#	Technological Indicator	1 <sup>st</sup> income quartile	3 <sup>rd</sup> income quartile	4 <sup>th</sup> income quartile
1	People using smartphones to access mobile internet (%)	58.0	77.0	85.0
2	Individuals reporting computer use in the last 3 months (%)	63.0	85.0	92.0
3	Individuals reporting computer use in last 12 months (%)	67.0	87.0	94.0
4	Individuals reporting that they have never used a computer (%)	27.0	9.0	4.0

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021; \*marks an indicator for which lower-quartile populations are at a disadvantage

Research has also shown that parental attitudes towards children's use of digital technologies changes with socio-economic status. Parents of lower income, less educated families (especially mothers) tend towards a restrictive approach towards the use of digital technologies by their children.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, parents that do not encourage the pedagogical use of digital tools are mostly less confident in the use of technology and tend to be from a lower socioeconomic status.<sup>46</sup>

### Implications for communication materials for children facing material and/or social deprivation

Although there is no reliable data on digital inequalities between children specifically and digital divides tend to narrow in the presence of children (see audience segmentation matrix), the poorest children in Europe are likely to face increased barriers to accessing digital media. This has implications for the communication needs of children within this sub-group, with for example, communication materials possibly being **more effective in offline format** for this target group. Lower rates of school completion within this cohort, as well as higher likelihood of less developed vocabulary and language skills also means that materials might be more effective if **written in easy-to-read language, with more visual aids**. The increased scepticism of parents from low-income households towards the use of digital technologies by their children, may also warrant action to ensure that communications materials targeting this sub-group have the 'trust' of parents, through for example, **being 'validated' by being used in schools**. This may be particularly important for younger age groups (under 9) for whom a parental gatekeeper role plays a more significant role in use of digital technologies (as outlined earlier).

<sup>44</sup> The links between children and young people's speech, language and communication needs and social disadvantage, The Communication Council, 2015. Available at:

[https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/381242/the\\_links\\_between\\_children\\_and\\_yp\\_s\\_slcn\\_and\\_social\\_disadvantage\\_final.pdf](https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/381242/the_links_between_children_and_yp_s_slcn_and_social_disadvantage_final.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Livingstone, S., Mascheroni, G., Dreier, M., Chaudron, S. and Lagae, K. (2015) How parents of young children manage digital devices at home: The role of income, education and parental style. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. Available at:

[https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/63378/1/\\_lse.ac.uk\\_storage\\_LIBRARY\\_Secondary\\_libfile\\_shared\\_repository\\_Content\\_EU%20Kids%20Online\\_EU\\_Kids\\_Online\\_How%20parents%20manage%20digital%20devices\\_2016.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/63378/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_EU%20Kids%20Online_EU_Kids_Online_How%20parents%20manage%20digital%20devices_2016.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Chaudron, S., Di Gioia, R. and Gemo, M. (2017). Young Children (0-8) and Digital Technology - A qualitative study across Europe. Joint Research Centre, Publications Office of the European Union. Available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/young-children-0-8-and-digital-technology-qualitative-study-across-europe>



## Children aged 5-18 with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities

According to Eurostat data, there were 42 million disabled people in the EU27 in 2012.<sup>47</sup> More recent estimates have placed the prevalence of disability in the EU27 at one in every five people.<sup>48</sup> In light of their susceptibility to illness, poverty, violence and other socioeconomic and health inequalities, the World Health Organisation has recognised people with physical and intellectual disabilities as the world's 'largest minority'.<sup>49</sup> In the EU, research on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) amongst children found that out of 631,619 children that were examined in the research, there was an average estimated prevalence of 12.2 per 1 000 children aged 7-9 years (one in 89 children). Overall ASD prevalence estimates varied among European countries, from 4.4 to 19.7 per 1000 children aged 7-9 years.<sup>50</sup>

Collecting accurate EU-level data on intellectual and physical disability among children remains a challenge, not only due to the problem of under-reporting<sup>51</sup> across EU MS, but also because definitions of disability vary widely and there is currently no standardised, EU-level definition of 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN) or disability in children.<sup>52</sup> An estimate from 2012 placed the number of EU children with SEN at 15 million.<sup>53</sup> Using data from 23 EU Member States collected in 2015, the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education estimated that the prevalence of children with SEN among children enrolled in formal education amounted to 6.24%.<sup>54</sup> Rates between countries varied from 1.54% in Luxembourg to 13.4% in Lithuania, indicating a potential lack of harmonisation in the definitions and thresholds used to define intellectual disabilities.

Eurostat data on European children under age 16 does not distinguish between intellectual and physical disabilities. The data nevertheless provides a useful overview of the prevalence of disability across age groups in the EU27 and has yielded findings that are consistent with the broader observed trend that disability prevalence 'starts low' in early childhood and increases with age. Among EU children aged 5-9, the rate of moderate and severe disability is estimated to be 3.1% and 0.6% respectively, increasing to 3.6% and 1.3% among 10-15-year-olds (see Table 11 below). Among EU youths aged 16 to 19, 6.8% are reported to face some or severe activity limitation due to a health problem or disability. This data suggests that in 2019 there may have been as many as 3 million European children aged 5-19 who live with moderate or severe activity limitations due to health problems.

Table 11 Rate of degrees of disability in children by age group

Age group	% of children with no limitation in activities due to health problems	% of children with moderate limitation in activities due to health problems	% of children with severe limitation in activities due to health problems
5 to 9	95.8	3.1	0.6
10 to 15	95.1	3.6	1.3
Under 16 (TOTAL)	96.0	3.2	0.8

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021

Although data on the health, educational outcomes, and digital skills of disabled children under 16 in the EU is not readily available, Eurostat data on various relevant age groups shows that by late adolescence and early adulthood, youths with disabilities already face disproportionate susceptibility to a range of socioeconomic disadvantages. Compared to their non-disabled peers, disabled youths are more likely to be in severe material deprivation (10.6% vs 6.2%) and are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion (33.4% vs 26.8%) (see indicators 1-2 in Table 12 below). Disabled youths also make up a greater share of youths in the lowest income quintile (7.6%) than they do

<sup>47</sup> 'Disability statistics – prevalence and demographics'. *Eurostat – Statistics Explained*.

<sup>48</sup> 'People with Disabilities'. *DG EMPL*. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137&langId=en>

<sup>49</sup> 'Disability and Health'. *World Health Organization*. <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

<sup>50</sup> European Commission (2018). Autism Spectrum Disorders in the European Union (ASDEU). Available at <http://asdeu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/ASDEUExecSummary27September2018.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> 'Disability statistics – prevalence and demographics'. *Eurostat – Statistics Explained*.

<sup>52</sup> Jordan, V. and Prideux, R. (2019). 'Access to quality education for children with special educational needs.' *European Platform for Investing in Children – DG EMPL*.

<sup>53</sup> 'Special needs children and disabled adults still getting a raw deal from education, says report.' *European Commission Press Release*. 10 July 2012. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_12\\_761](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_12_761)

<sup>54</sup> European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education: 2016 Dataset Cross-Country Report.' *European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*, 2018. <https://www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/european-agency-statistics-inclusive-education-2016-dataset-cross-country>

in the highest income quintile (4.8%) (see indicators 3-5 in Table 12 below). Furthermore, a greater share of disabled youths is unable to afford a computer in comparison to their non-disabled peers (10.6% vs 6.2%).

By the time disabled and non-disabled youths reach later adolescence, deep educational divides are also apparent. The share of 18-24-year-olds with a disability who leave school early is three times greater than that of their non-disabled counterparts. Additionally, 31.2% of youths with a disability aged 15-24 are not in employment, education, or training, compared to only 11.1% of non-disabled youths in the same age group (see indicators 6-9 in Table 12 below).

Table 12 Prevalence of persons with disabilities by poverty indicator

#	Indicator	Persons with disabilities	Persons without disabilities
1	People aged 16-24 facing severe material deprivation (%)	10.6*^	6.2
2	People aged 16-24 at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)	33.4*^	26.8
3	People aged 16-19 in the first (i.e., lowest) income quintile	7.6*^	92.4
4	People aged 16-19 in the third (i.e., middle) income quintile	7.5*^	92.5
5	People aged 16-19 in the fifth (i.e., middle) income quintile	4.8*^	95.2
	People aged 16-24 who cannot afford a computer (%)	10.6*^	6.2
6	People aged 18-24 who left school early (%)	31.0*^	10.0
7	People aged 15-24 who are not in employment, education, or training (%)	31.2*^	11.1
8	People aged 16-24 with upper secondary and post-secondary education (%)	7.0^	93
9	People aged 16-24 with less than primary and lower-secondary education (%)	8.9*^	91.1

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021 (see audience segmentation matrix); \*marks an indicator for which disabled populations are at a disadvantage; ^in these cases, disability was defined as 'Youths reporting difficulties in basic activities'; □ in these cases disability was defined as 'Youths reporting moderate or severe activity limitation'

### Implications for communication materials for children with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities

Disability is a multifaceted and ever-evolving concept,<sup>55</sup> with the official definition having expanded over the years to include any health problem or other affliction which causes limitations or difficulties with certain activities.<sup>56</sup> The specific information needs of this group will thus vary widely depending on the type and nature of each disability. The increased likelihood of children with disabilities also belonging to another vulnerable demographic group – individuals at risk of poverty, NEET, etc. – means that such needs will vary even more, requiring well-thought out, tailored communication materials. Nonetheless, there is a substantial body of guidance from disability rights organisations and other similar groups that outlines the main methods and tools that are effective for communicating with children and adults with disabilities. Whilst further research will be needed to identify the specific ways in which different segments of physically and/or intellectually disabled children and young people may be better included by the Commission's current materials offering, these general principles can provide a useful starting point:

- **Easy-to-read and child-friendly texts and information:** According to a report of Inclusion Europe on working with children with intellectual disabilities, 'Sentences should be short and simple, instructions

<sup>55</sup> 'Disability statistics introduced'. Eurostat – Statistics Explained.

<sup>56</sup> 'Disability statistics – prevalence and demographics'. Eurostat – Statistics Explained.

should be given as short lists of tasks, and emphasis must be put on the words and expressions that are most important and familiar to the children. Sentences should be pronounced in the positive, and the active voice should be preferred over the passive voice.<sup>57</sup>

- **Visual aids, audio or videos:** Inclusion Europe also highlights that ‘for children who do not use written communication, visual aids, audio or video are of great utility in complementing or substituting for written information. These tools can be created and used individually or collectively. They can be prepared for children by others or developed by the children themselves. Images, drawings or symbols may be used to facilitate the understanding of a text, but care must be put into the selection of such visual aids in order that they not become obstacles.’<sup>58</sup> Evidence from the CBCs confirmed this, with feedback from teachers that the more visual materials such as the Match the Landmarks game allowed those with learning difficulties to participate in the activity.
- **The view of the child:** The literature on communicating with children with disabilities also points to the importance of involving them in decision-making with experts highlighting that ‘only they know what it is like for them to live as a child with disabilities in an increasingly digitised world’<sup>59</sup>. Co-production is highlighted therefore as a keyway to ensure that communication materials reach and can be used by children with disabilities effectively.<sup>60</sup>

### Children aged 5-18 with a migration background or experience

Migration is one of the key drivers of demographic (as well as economic, social and cultural) change in Europe. In 2019, almost 22 million people (4.9%) in the EU were non-EU citizens, with the highest immigration numbers per 1,000 inhabitants in Malta, Luxemburg, Cyprus and Ireland in 2018.<sup>61</sup> The demographic composition of EU Member States’ populations is important in terms of the distribution, content and visuals of Commission’s materials, since research shows that citizens with a migration background are less likely to see EU Added value in Commission’s publications for citizens.

According to Eurostat data from 2019, 6.9% of children aged 5-18 have migration backgrounds or experiences, representing an estimated 4.7 million children (see Table 13 below). Despite this, research from the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed that alongside ethnic minority status, having a migration background remains the most common ground for discrimination in the EU.<sup>62</sup> While migration experiences can differ vastly depending on the countries of origin and the circumstances of migration, individuals with migration backgrounds share common socioeconomic, health-related, and other characteristics, which distinguish them from populations without migration experiences.

Table 13 Population of children with and without migration backgrounds by age group

Age group	Population (EU27) of EU residents with migration background*	Population (EU27) of EU residents without migration background	Population with migration background as % of total population (EU27)
<b>Total (5-18)</b>	4,475,649	60,101,794	6.9
<b>5-9</b>	1,800,752	21032375	7.8
<b>10-14</b>	1,513,975	21751026	6.5

<sup>57</sup> Inclusion Europe (2014). Hear Our Voices! Developing Participatory Processes with Children with Intellectual Disabilities – Concepts, Tools and Good Practices. Available at: [http://www.childrights4all.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Best\\_practices\\_EN\\_fin\\_logo.pdf](http://www.childrights4all.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Best_practices_EN_fin_logo.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/documents/167024/6210529/Report+on+Safer+Internet+Forum+2020+-+FINAL+-+December+2020.pdf/f7c34bd8-afe2-f56a-fa83-a23cabb351f3?t=1608126212592>

<sup>60</sup> See for example: [http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SHIFT\\_EN\\_Final.pdf](http://www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/SHIFT_EN_Final.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Source: Eurostat, 2018 [migr\_imm1ctz and migr\_pop1ctz]

<sup>62</sup> ‘Second European Union minority and discrimination survey: main results.’ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-main-results>

Age group	Population (EU27) of EU residents with migration background*	Population (EU27) of EU residents without migration background	Population with migration background as % of total population (EU27)
14-17	1,102,175	17194829	6.0

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat 2019 demographic data, 2021; \*a migration background is here defined as having a country of birth that is different from the 'reporting country' that the subject resided in at the time of the survey

Eurostat data on 16-24 year olds shows that those with migration backgrounds are less likely to report living with a long-standing illness than those without (25.9% versus 29.8%). They are also less likely to report 'bad or very bad' self-perceived health and more likely to report having 'good or very good' health (see Table 14 below). This is consistent with global observations of individuals with migration backgrounds and is often referred to as the 'immigrant advantage'<sup>63</sup>. Despite their superior physical health, however, individuals with migration backgrounds across the EU27 also demonstrate higher rates of current depressive symptoms (6.5% vs 5.0%) and chronic depression (5.0% vs 3.5%) than their non-migrant peers (see indicators 7-8, Table 14 below).

Table 14 Health indicators among persons with migrant vs non-migrant backgrounds

#	Indicator	Persons with migrant background	Persons with non-migrant background
1	% of 16-24-year-olds with long-standing illness	25.9*	29.8
2	% of 16-24-year-olds with 'some or severe' self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health	4.4*	7.4
3	% of 16-24-year-olds with no self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health	95.6*	92.6
4	% of 16-24-year-olds with self-perceived 'very good' or 'good' health (%)	91.2*	92.1
5	% of 16-24-year-olds with self-perceived 'fair' health (%)	7.7*	6.5
6	% of 16-24-year-olds with self-perceived 'bad' or 'very bad' health (%)	1.0*	1.5
7	Current depressive symptoms	6.5^	5.0
8	Chronic Depression	5.0^	3.5

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021; \* indicates citizenship of foreign country; ^ indicates place of birth in a foreign country; values in bold indicate an area where the sub-group is at a disadvantage.

With the exception of their physical health advantage, individuals with migration backgrounds in Europe are otherwise affected by pervasive socioeconomic and educational inequalities. As illustrated in Table 15 below, the risk of poverty is dramatically higher for children whose parents are born in and/or are still citizens of a foreign country (33.7% and 39.3% respectively) than children whose parents are born in and/or citizens of the reporting country (16.2% and 16.8%).

<sup>63</sup> Yao Lu, Nicole Denier, Julia Shu-Huah Wang, Neeraj Kaushal. (2017). Unhealthy assimilation or persistent health advantage? A longitudinal analysis of immigrant health in the United States. *Social Science & Medicine*, 195, pp. 105-114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.11.019>.

Table 15 Percentage of children (0-18) at risk of poverty by the presence or absence of parental migration background

Indicator	% of children at risk of poverty aged 18 and under
Parents born in a foreign country	33.7
Parents born in the reporting country	16.2
Parents are citizens of a foreign country	39.3
Parents are citizens of the reporting country	16.8

Source: Ecorys analysis of 2018 Eurostat data, 2021

Furthermore, data on the educational outcomes of 15-17-year-olds who are born in and/or are citizens of a foreign country (as opposed to the reporting country where the data was collected) shows these young people are more likely than their counterparts not to be in employment, education, or training (NEETs), a gap that widens considerably when broadening the comparison to include 15-19-year-olds (see indicators 1-2, Table 16 below). By the ages of 18-24, youths who are born in and/or citizens of a foreign country are over twice as likely to be early school leavers than youths who are born in, and are citizens of, the reporting country (see indicator 3, Table 16 below). Although there is no data on these specific indicators relating to children aged 5-18, these disparities are likely to extend to the population of children aged 5-18 with migration backgrounds.

Table 16 Rate of early school leaving and not being in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) among youths with and without migration backgrounds.

#	Indicator	Country of birth: foreign country	Country of birth: reporting country	Citizenship of foreign country	Citizenship of reporting country
1	% of youths aged 15-17 not in employment, education, or training	3.9	2.6	4.3	2.6
2	% of youths aged 15-19 not in employment, education, or training	8.4	5.4	9.1	5.4
3	Early school leavers aged 18-24 (%)	22.2	8.9	25.6	8.9

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021

The stark inequality in educational outcomes affecting youths with migration backgrounds is compounded by a considerable 'digital divide' between migrant and non-migrant individuals overall. While individuals with migrant backgrounds are slightly more likely to report accessing the Internet via a smartphone than those without migration backgrounds (74% vs 71%), they are also less likely to report having used a computer in the last 3 months (71% vs 78%) or 12 months (75% vs 80%). Furthermore, they are slightly more likely to have never used a computer (18% vs 16%) and report having low digital skills (34% vs 25%) (see Table 17 below). Studies also point to the fact that there is a bigger generational gap in digital media expertise between parents and children among lower income, less educated immigrant families, than their non-immigrant counterparts.<sup>64</sup>

Table 17 Digital skills and technology use among individuals with and without migration backgrounds

#	Indicator	Persons born in a foreign country	Persons born in the reporting country
1	Mobile internet access using smartphone (%)	74.0	71.0

<sup>64</sup> Livingstone, S., Mascheroni, G., Dreier, M., Chaudron, S. and Lagae, K. (2015) How parents of young children manage digital devices at home: The role of income, education and parental style. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. Available at: [https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/63378/1/\\_lse.ac.uk\\_storage\\_LIBRARY\\_Secondary\\_libfile\\_shared\\_repository\\_Content\\_EU%20Kids%20Online\\_EU\\_Kids\\_Online\\_How%20parents%20manage%20digital%20devices\\_2016.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/63378/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_EU%20Kids%20Online_EU_Kids_Online_How%20parents%20manage%20digital%20devices_2016.pdf)

#	Indicator	Persons born in a foreign country	Persons born in the reporting country
2	Individuals reporting computer use in the last 3 months (%)	71.0	78.0
3	Individuals reporting computer use in last 12 months (%)	75.0	80.0
4	Individuals reporting that they have never used a computer (%)	18.0	16.0
5	People who have basic or above basic digital skills (%)	47.0	56.0
6	People who have low digital skills (%)	34.0	25.0
7	People who have no digital skills (%)	1.0	1.0

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021; \* indicates citizenship of foreign country; ^ indicates place of birth in a foreign country

### Implications for communication materials for children with a migration background or experience

In addition to the increased risk of poverty, depression, and lower educational attainment, individuals with migration backgrounds also face persistent and well-documented discrimination throughout the EU.<sup>65</sup> This set of unique challenges means that communication materials targeting children aged 5-18 with migration backgrounds will have to be especially tailored to the specific sub-group they are trying to reach. Given that individuals born in a foreign country are less likely to report computer use, **communication materials would probably better reach this group if available on a smart phone**. Given also the greater generational divide between parents and children in immigrant families in terms of digital skills, **materials that can be used without the technological support of parents might be more effective in reaching this subgroup**, which is particularly important to consider for younger subgroups of children that are more reliant on parental mediation to access digital technologies in the first place.

### Early school leavers

In 2019, 10.8% of 18-24 year-olds in the EU27 were early school leavers<sup>66</sup>. As demonstrated from the data described in the sections above, this group overlaps considerably with other disadvantaged sub-groups, including those with migration backgrounds, disabilities, and experiences of poverty and deprivation, as well as youths in rural areas.

Table 18 Prevalence of youths with low educational attainment

Indicator	Percentage of total age group
% of youths aged 15-17 not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEETs)	2.7
% of youths aged 15-19 not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEETs)	5.6
% of youths aged 18-24 who are classed as 'Early school leavers'	10.8

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021

Despite the transversal nature of this socioeconomic characteristic, however, early school leavers may still constitute an adequately distinct sub-group to be targeted directly by Commission materials. Among 16-24 year-

<sup>65</sup> 'Second European Union minority and discrimination survey: main results.' *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*, 2017: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-main-results>

<sup>66</sup> Eurostat, 2019.

olds, for example, those with low formal education are more likely to have low digital skills (20%) than those with high formal education (7%), while the reverse holds true for those with basic or above basic digital skills (76% of those with low formal education versus 91% of those with high formal education) (see Table 19, indicators 1-3 below). Among individuals aged 25-54, moreover, 29% of those with low formal education have reported never using a computer, compared to only 1% of those with high formal education (see Table 19, indicator 5 below).

Table 19 Digital skills among individuals with low, medium, and high levels of formal education

#	Indicator	Low formal education	Medium formal education	High formal education
1	Youths aged 16-24 who have no digital skills (%)	1.0	0.0	0.0
2	Youths aged 16-24 who have low digital skills (%)	20.0	16.0	7.0
3	Youths aged 16-24 who have basic or above basic digital skills (%)	76.0	82.0	91.0
4	Youths aged 16-24 accessing mobile internet using smartphone (%)	91.0	94.0	96.0
5	Individuals aged 25-54 reporting that they have never used a computer (%)	29.0	6.0	1.0

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021

Importantly, low educational attainment is also associated with monolingualism. The majority of persons with primary or lower-secondary education do not speak a foreign language (56.4%), compared to just over a third of persons with upper and post-secondary education (33.4%) (see Table 20 below).

Table 20 Percentage of individuals who speak foreign languages by educational attainment level

#	Indicator	Persons with primary or lower-secondary education	Persons with upper- and post-secondary education
1	Individuals who do not speak a foreign language	56.4	33.4
2	Individuals who speak 1 foreign language	30.5	38.9
3	Individuals who speak 2 foreign languages	10.1	21.2
4	Individuals who speak 3 or more foreign language	3.0	6.5

Source: Ecorys analysis of Eurostat data, 2021.

### Implications for communication materials for early school leaver children

Whilst the early school leaver subgroup is a heterogeneous one, the above characteristics can help guide decisions on appropriate communication materials to reach these children. The gap in digital skills for example, means that **while those with low formal education may prefer online communication materials, they may still benefit more from access to printed materials than those with higher formal education.** The lower likelihood of persons with lower education speaking a foreign language also adds to any need for materials targeting this group to be available in **all 24 of the EU's official languages.** Furthermore, as early school leavers will not be reached at school, strong consideration should also be given to *where* communication materials are made available. **Making materials available at second-chance schools and education centres, or at Public Employment Services**

would be key, as would be working directly with local youth groups/youth centres or sports clubs that can ensure materials are available in places where young people that have left school congregate and socialise<sup>67</sup>.

### Children aged 5-18 with ethnic minority backgrounds

Determining the prevalence of minority ethnic individuals in the EU is currently unfeasible. This is due both to the EU's own policy of 'colour blind' statistics, and to the variety in regulations around the collection of data on ethnicity between EU countries.<sup>68</sup> In several Member States, including Portugal, collecting data on the ethnicity of residents and citizens is restricted. Coupled with the relative paucity of data on children in comparison to adults at an EU-wide level, determining the circumstances of minority-ethnic children in the EU is especially challenging.

Despite the difficulties involved in gathering accurate data on children in this population, minority-ethnic children remain an important audience sub-segment for assessment in this study. Research from the European Union agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), which consulted ethnic minority individuals randomly selected from all EU Member States, reconfirmed the well-acknowledged finding that throughout adulthood they continue to face pervasive challenges in key areas of life due to discrimination. Specific challenges include lower educational attainment on average, discrimination when accessing employment, experiences of hate-motivated harassment and violence, and indicators of low social cohesion including reduced trust in public institutions and limited attachment to the EU Member State of citizenship or residence.<sup>69</sup>

### Implications for communications materials for children with ethnic minority backgrounds

The extent to which ethnic minority individuals are affected by systemic disadvantage by the time they reach adulthood has led FRA to call for increased intervention during childhood to reduce early school leaving and promote social, educational, and language-related integration, in particular through easier access to Early Education and Care and additional learning support in schools.<sup>70</sup> Due to the unique constellation of challenges faced and their higher risk of disengagement in their Member State of residence, ethnic minority children constitute an important sub-group of the Commission's target audience upon which to focus inclusion efforts.

As experiences differ considerably across ethnic groups, a key challenge when designing communications materials will be in **determining the granularity (if any) of the ethnic groups** to be targeted. Table 21 below lists a typology of the ethnic groups that were chosen and surveyed for the purpose of FRA's minority and discrimination survey and underlines the diversity of this particular group. Targeting ethnic minority children with communications materials may require further sub-segmenting of this group, particularly in order to decide on issues such as which languages to cover. Furthermore, the reduced trust in public institutions and limited attachment to the EU Member State of citizenship or residence are likely to also have a significant impact on the reach of communications materials, regardless of their type/format. **Efforts to accompany any communication materials with dissemination and outreach campaigns specifically targeting this sub-group may thus be an important consideration to ensure effectiveness of the materials with ethnic minority children.** Getting formal and informal organisations that represent people with particular migration backgrounds to support both the creation and dissemination of such materials would also be key in building trust and in ensuring the materials reach the targeted subgroup.

Table 21 Ethnic minority groups surveyed in the second FRA EU Minority and Discrimination survey

Ethnic minority group	EU MS where group was surveyed
Descendants of immigrants from Asia	Cyprus
Descendants of immigrants from South Asia	Greece; Italy

<sup>67</sup> European Commission, 2019, Effective outreach to NEETs, Available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20118&langId=en>

<sup>68</sup> Simon, P. 'Collecting ethnic statistics in Europe: a Review.' (2012). *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35(8):

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.607507>

<sup>69</sup> 'Second European Union minority and discrimination survey: main results.' *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*, 2017: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-main-results>

<sup>70</sup> 'Second European Union minority and discrimination survey: main results.' *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*, 2017: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-main-results>



Ethnic minority group	EU MS where group was surveyed
Descendants of immigrants from Turkey	Austria; Germany; Belgium; Denmark; Netherlands; Sweden;
Descendants of immigrants from North Africa	Belgium; Spain; France; Italy; Netherlands
Descendants of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa	Austria; Germany ; Denmark; Finland; France; Ireland; Italy; Luxembourg; Malta; Portugal; Sweden
Russian Minority	Estonia; Lithuania; Latvia
Roma	Bulgaria; Czechia; Greece; Spain; Croatia; Hungary; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia

Source: European Agency for Fundamental Rights<sup>71</sup>

## LGBTIQ youths

The fundamental rights of LGBTIQ Europeans continue to be a significant priority for the European Commission<sup>72</sup>. Notably, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is legally prohibited<sup>73</sup>. Yet while the latest FRA survey on LGBTIQ people in the EU indicated that discrimination against LGBTIQ individuals has improved in some EU Member States, there has largely been limited progress in the last decade<sup>74</sup>. The latest Eurobarometer report on perceptions of minorities in the EU found that 53% of respondents still view discrimination based on sexual orientation as being widespread. Furthermore, tolerance of LGBTIQ people varies greatly between EU MS. While the share of respondents who believe that LGBTIQ people should have the same rights as heterosexual people is as high as 97% in the Netherlands and 98% in Sweden, only 31% of respondents in Slovakia and 38% of respondents in Romania shared this view<sup>75</sup>.

Because collecting data on the sexual orientation of citizens remains either restricted or illegal in some Member States, no reliable EU-level data is currently available on the prevalence of non-heterosexual individuals across Europe, including among younger age groups<sup>76</sup>. The collection of accurate and harmonised data on sexual orientation is also made difficult by pervasive under-reporting due to stigma, as well as variation in understandings and definitions of non-heterosexual orientation between countries<sup>77</sup>.

## Implications for communications materials for LGBTIQ children

The lack of availability of accurate EU-level data on the prevalence or circumstances of LGBTIQ youth in turn limits the availability of specific evidence on the communications preferences and needs for this group. However, there is a wealth of evidence that persisting intolerance against LGBTIQ populations exposes them to unique vulnerabilities including social exclusion and a higher risk of suicide<sup>78</sup>. This supports a need for materials for all that feature or promote inclusion and tolerance for LGBTIQ children and youths in the form of gender neutral imagery or inclusion of non-heteronormative families in their visuals. That said there remains differences between Member States' perspective on persons belonging to the LGBTIQ community so any materials produced on the rights of this group need to appreciate this context.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> 'List of actions to advance LGBTI equality.' *European Commission – DG JUST*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/list-actions-advance-lgbti-equality\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/list-actions-advance-lgbti-equality_en)

<sup>73</sup> 'Legal aspects of LGBTI equality.' *European Commission – DG JUST*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/legal-aspects-lgbti-equality\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/legal-aspects-lgbti-equality_en)

<sup>74</sup> 'A long way to go for LGBTI Equality'. (2020). *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>

<sup>75</sup> 'Eurobarometer on the Social Acceptance of LGBTI people in the EU – 2019.' *European Commission*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/eurobarometer-social-acceptance-lgbti-people-eu-2019\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/eurobarometer-social-acceptance-lgbti-people-eu-2019_en)

<sup>76</sup> 'Data collection in relation to LBGTI People – Analysis and comparative review of equality data collection practices in the European Union'. 2017. *European Commission – DG JUST*

<sup>77</sup> Bailey, J. M. et al. (2016). 'Sexual Orientation, Controversy, and Science.' *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 17(2):pp 45-101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100616637616>

<sup>78</sup> di Giacomo E, Krausz M, Colmegna F, Aspesi F, Clerici M. (2018). 'Estimating the Risk of Attempted Suicide Among Sexual Minority Youths: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis'. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 172(12):1145-1152. DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2018.2731.

## Draft audience segmentation matrix

The full Audience segmentation matrix based on the research on socio-economic subsegments highlighted above can be consulted in Annex 4 of this report. We streamlined the audience segmentation matrix in line with comments of the Steering Group received during and after the Interim Report meeting and made a more visual appealing version for dissemination among author services. The data version can still be consulted under Annex 1.

## 2.2 Relevance

This section provides our initial findings in relation to the first strategic question of the Review: *To what extent are the European Commission's materials targeting children aged 5-18 relevant for their anticipated target audiences and in light of the Commission's political priorities and policy priorities of Commission's author services?*

### 2.2.1.1 Relevance in terms of needs

This section addresses the specific question: *'To what extent are the European Commission's materials for children aged 5-18 relevant for the needs of their anticipated target audiences, including professionals who work with children and young people?'*

This section presents the results of our assessment **to what extent Commission's materials and activities for children aged 5-18 address their EU information needs in terms of topics or opportunities that they cover** (or any gaps in this coverage). The data used for the final analysis include results of our User survey, quantitative and qualitative mapping of the Commission's materials and activities for children, results of the Key stakeholder interviews and the results from both the CBCs and Focus groups.

The findings from this Review indicate that the Commission's materials and activities for children aged 5-18 and professionals who work with them **are relevant and useful in terms of topics and the variety of formats and types of activities presented to address their EU-related information needs**. However, qualitative evidence suggests that more materials and activities could be developed, with content and formats of materials better tailored to different age and demographic groups.

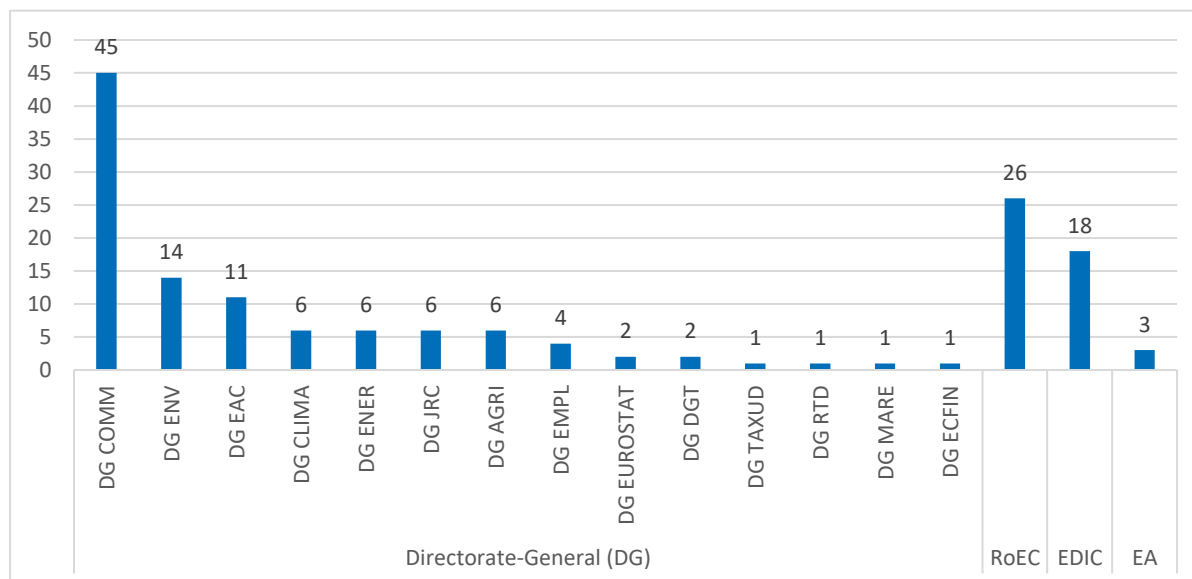
Evidence also shows that communication channels used to reach children aged 5-18 and professionals who work with them are also relevant, however, they should be carefully chosen to reach different target audiences. Based on the findings from the Key stakeholder interviews, CBC and Focus groups, **younger children should be targeted indirectly through parents or professionals working with them, as older children search for the information independently and could be better targeted through online channels such as websites or social media**.

Overall, professionals working with children were more aware of the Commission's materials than children who participated in the Review. Children who were familiar with Commission's materials mostly heard about them through teachers at schools, due to the fact that there is limited information included in formal education curriculum in schools. Therefore, evidence shows that **cooperation with teachers** in disseminating Commission's materials and including them either as part of different school subjects (e.g., geography, history) or extra curriculum activities (e.g., European exam, school competitions) could be beneficial.

### General overview

The final mapping of the Commission's materials and activities shows that **children and teenagers are an important target group for author services**. Figure 1 shows that Commission DGs' are the main author services that produce materials for children (106 of 153) followed by the Commission's Representations in the Member States (Representations) (26) and EDICs (18). The mapping also identified DG COMM (45) as the main author service that produced materials for children followed by DG ENV (14) and DG EAC (11).

Figure 1. Commission's materials for 5-18 year-olds by author service

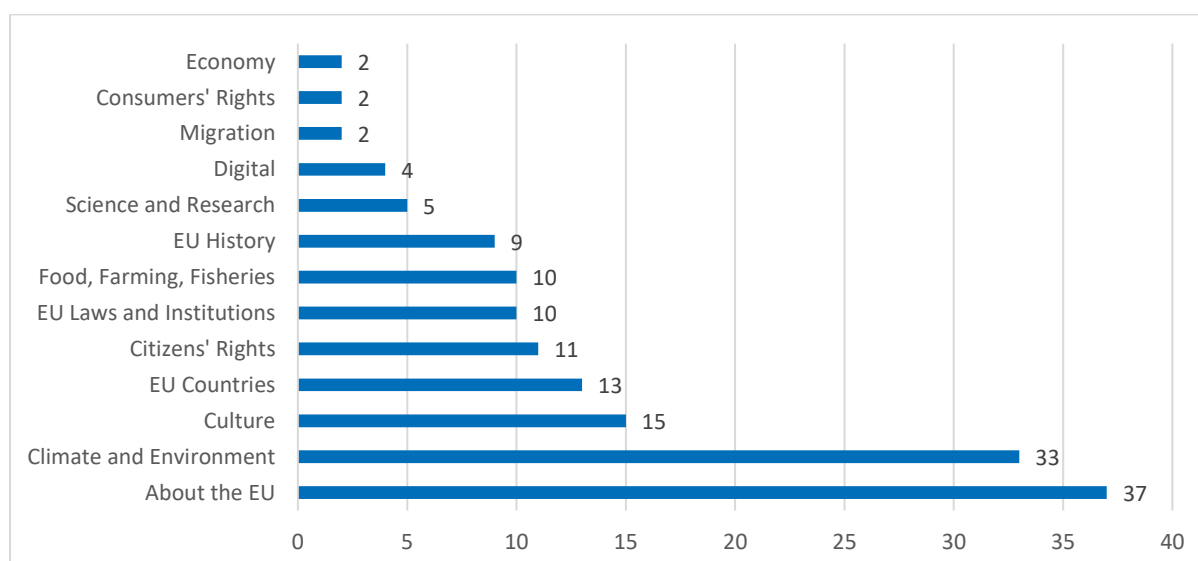


Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission's materials, n=153, 2021

It is evident that author services with a specific mandate to address the general public in the EU or in their Member State are the biggest producers of materials for children. For example, DG COMM materials for children mostly provide general information about the EU and its benefits as DG ENV or DG EAC focus on specific policies such as environment and climate change, education, youth, culture and sports. Also, a large number of materials mapped were produced by the Commission's Representations and EDICs to better address the needs of children and teenagers in their Member States providing them with more tailored information at the national level.

The majority of the materials in the inventory were designed to provide general information about the EU in order to raise awareness of the role of the EU, its Member States and policies (see Figure 2). Secondary topics focus on climate and environment, citizen's rights or culture. According to the qualitative evidence, **general information is of particular interest for children of 5-9 years old while other materials that focus on policy areas such as culture, climate and environment are mostly interesting for older 10-18 year-old children.** The same findings were confirmed by CBCs and Focus groups.

Figure 2. Commission's materials for 5-18-year-olds by topic



Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission's materials, n=153, 2021

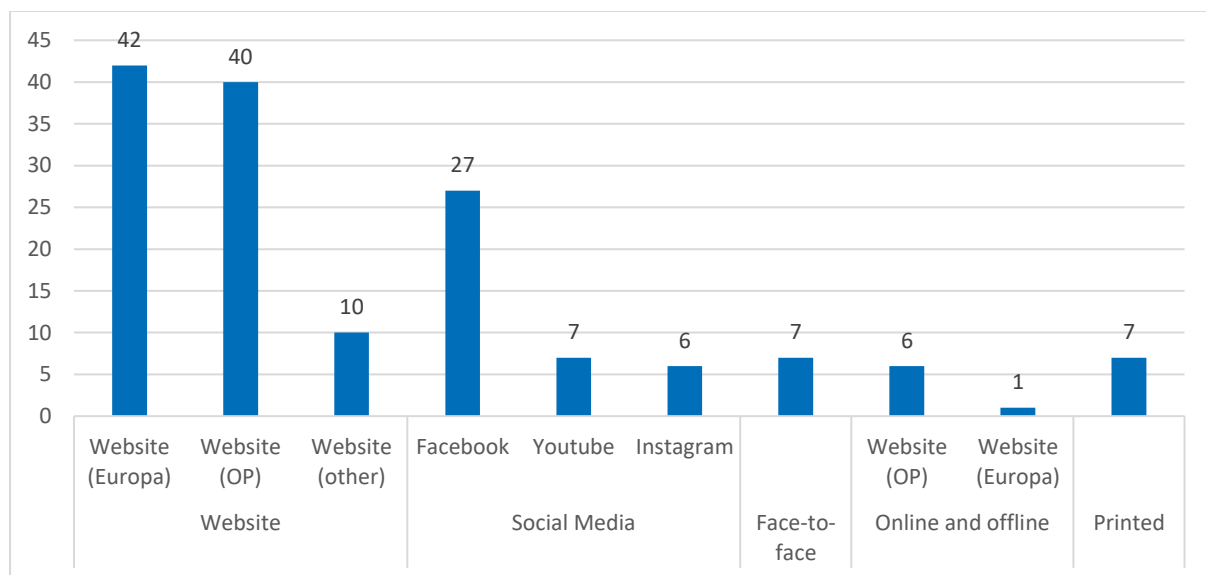
Most of the User survey respondents (92%) strongly agreed or agreed that **the content of Commission materials for 5–18 year-olds was easy to read and understand.**<sup>79</sup> It was also confirmed by a majority of Focus group participants and teachers who conducted CBCs. Furthermore, **most of the EU and national level interviewees agreed that the existing EU legislation and policies should be accessible in a child-friendly language and adapted to their age group.** Interviewees (10 out of 41) suggested that materials should not use any EU jargon, terminology or abbreviations and the content should be clear and concise to be better understood by children. The materials should be visually attractive, interactive and support teachers during the learning process. It was agreed that information should be communicated in an amusing and/or positive way, with a mini-series or a story that children could relate to.

**Evidence shows that most of the materials can be accessed by their users in their preferred language.**

According to the quantitative mapping, Commission’s materials are mostly available either in one language (84 out of 153) or in all 24 EU languages (37 out of 153). Materials that were produced only in one language were mostly in English (49) and French (13), followed by Latvian and Spanish (4). Most of the respondents to the User survey (92% agreed that they can access the materials in their preferred language.<sup>80</sup> However, a few national stakeholders consulted (5 out of 30) indicated that it is hard to find relevant printed materials in their national language, particularly those that are very popular among different stakeholders due to a limited availability of printed copies. A few interviewees also identified language barriers for various segments of children, for example, children with disabilities or children with ethnic minority background due to a lack of materials in the national sign or non-official EU languages, especially for younger children of 5-7 years old. A few interviewees also mentioned that children with fewer opportunities also struggle with foreign languages, therefore, it is crucial to have information in their native language.

Most of the Commission’s materials for 5–18-year-olds can be accessed online (143 out of 153). However, their intended use was either online (79 out of 153) or offline (71 out of 153).<sup>81</sup> According to our quantitative mapping, websites were the most popular channel for sharing Commission’s materials for children (92 out of 153), followed by social media (40 out of 153). The most common social media channels used were Facebook, YouTube or Instagram (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Commission’s materials for 5–18-year-olds by type of channel



Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission’s materials, n=153, 2021

<sup>79</sup> Ecorys Survey, Question: Would you agree that this material or activity was... Easy to read / understand. N=271.

<sup>80</sup> Ecorys Survey, Question: Was this publication available in your preferred language? N=272.

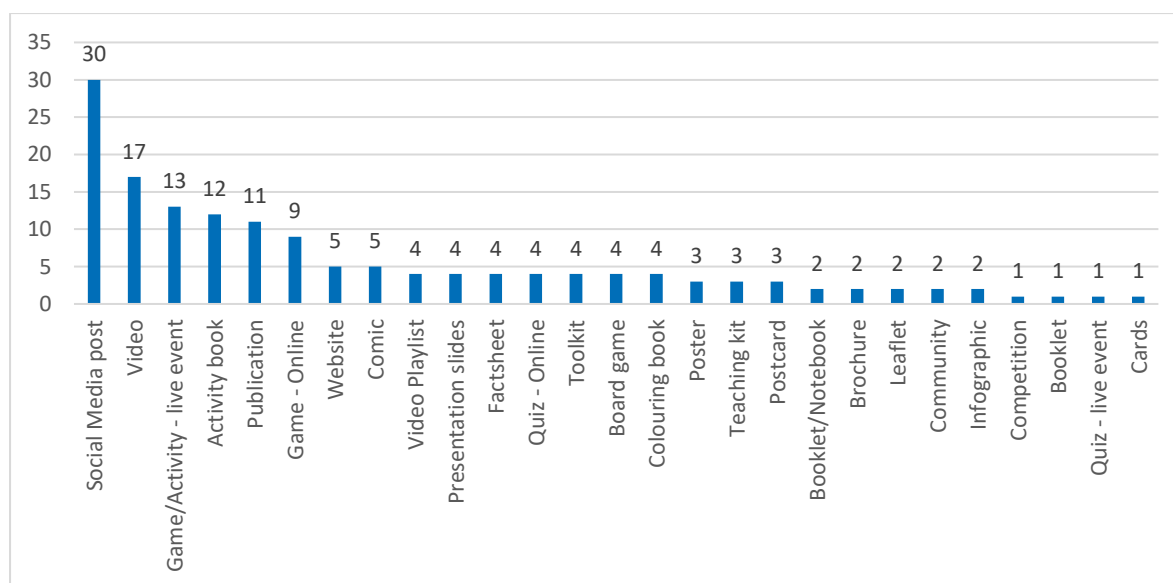
<sup>81</sup> Only three materials identified were for combined use. Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission’s materials, n=153, 2021

**The online channels, particularly, social media and online platforms are the preferred communication channels for children.** According to the User survey respondents, 69% of children and 63% of professionals working with them agreed that the materials were available through their preferred channel.<sup>82</sup> However, findings from the Focus groups suggest that children are not aware of the Commission’s websites (e.g., Learning Corner) and usually use search engines (e.g. Google) to find information. According to the interviewees and Focus group participants, children generally prefer social media to share information such as Instagram, Messenger, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube. National stakeholders also emphasised the use of social media, face to face meetings, discussions, competitions, quizzes, orientation games, games, and video workshops as a few examples of direct communication channels with children.

Professionals working with children choose different online platforms to find information. According to some of the national stakeholders interviewed, materials for teachers should be shared via online platforms e.g., School Education Gateway or eTwinning. A few professionals working with children emphasised that due to a lack of time they prefer that the relevant resources e.g., e.g. references to materials in the Learning Corner, are available in the commonly used online platforms among teachers. Professionals working with children and parents usually use emails, websites, newsletters and social media to access and share information.

According to the mapping, there is a large variety of material formats produced for children. Most commonly used formats include social media posts (30 of 153) and videos (17 of 153), followed by games adopted to live events (13), activity books (12) and publications (11) (see Figure 4). According to the results of the User survey, **most of the respondents were satisfied with the formats of the materials and types of activities including children themselves (78%) and professionals working with children (80%).**<sup>83</sup> However, a few respondents indicated that some materials lacked interactive elements such as videos or visuals.<sup>84</sup>

Figure 4. Commission's materials for 5-18 year-olds by format



Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission’s materials, n=153, 2021

Qualitative evidence shows that **a diversity of material formats is much appreciated by children and professionals.** A majority of stakeholders interviewed agreed that there is no ideal type of format and there should

<sup>82</sup> Ecorys Survey, Question: Was this publication available in your preferred language? N=272.

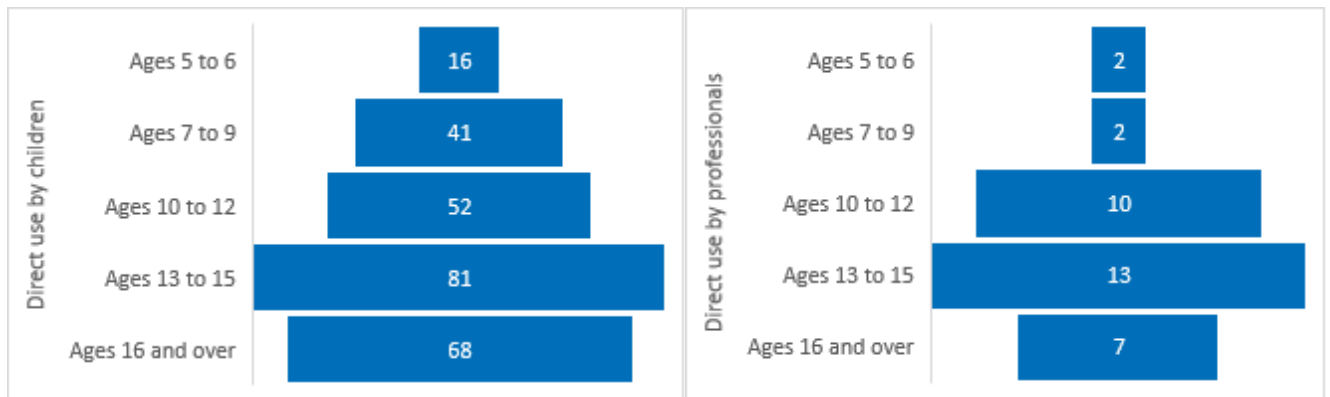
<sup>83</sup> Ecorys Survey, Question: Was this material or activity delivered or presented in a format that was appealing to you? (e.g. a brochure, a short meeting, an interactive game, etc.)?, question only for children, N=58. Question: Was this material or activity delivered in the preferred format(s) (e.g. a brochure, a short meeting, an interactive game, etc.) of the children you work with?, question only for parents and professionals, N=216.

<sup>84</sup> Ecorys Survey, Question: Please tell us why not or indicate the format that would have worked better for the children you are responsible for. N=9

be a mix of formats and types of activities to increase the relevance of Commission's materials for 5–18 year-olds. More than half of the stakeholders consulted (20 out of 34) agreed that **playful activities e.g., quizzes, games, colouring books are better suited for younger children while videos, podcasts, webinars and participatory - storytelling activities are preferred by older ones**. This was also confirmed by CBC and Focus group findings. However, during group interviews, stakeholders suggested that videos with subtitles in the national language are less suitable for the youngest children, therefore, animated videos with less text would be more appreciated.

A majority of the Commission's materials for 5–18-year-olds mapped were produced for direct use by children (128 out of 153).<sup>85</sup> The quantitative mapping shows that most of these materials were targeted to be used by older age groups of the audiences covered by this Review (see Figure 5).<sup>86</sup> The most common age group identified was 13–15 year-olds (81), followed by 16-18 year olds (68).<sup>87</sup> Similar findings were confirmed in terms of ages between the materials produced for professionals working with children and children's age groups.

Figure 5. Commission's materials for 5–18-year-olds by end-user and age group



Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission's materials, n=153, 2021

According to the qualitative and quantitative findings, Commission materials and activities were mostly relevant for children as a group, however different subsegments of children require more relevant materials based on their specific needs.

### Findings by age and demographic group

Based on the evidence collected and reviewed, there are clear differences in topics, format and accessibility based on children's age and their backgrounds (see Section 2.1.1 for a more detailed description). Results from the quantitative mapping of materials for 5–18-year-olds and the qualitative evidence from the stakeholder interviews, CBCs and Focus groups highlight the following differences in the topics relevant for the young audiences covered by this Review:

#### 1. Age 5-6 years olds

**Content of materials.** According to the quantitative mapping, only six materials were dedicated to 5–6 year-old children. However, another ten materials were identified for a larger age group, including the youngest children. The most common topics include general information about the EU followed by basic information about the EU countries, food, culture, climate and history. In general, most of the stakeholders interviewed indicated that **pupils in primary education have a need for basic information on the EU, its historical background, how it functions and what its institutions' responsibilities are**. National stakeholders and teachers who conducted CBCs agreed that with the youngest children they most commonly talk about the **EU, environment, EU Member States, cultural diversity, and EU symbols**.

According to the majority of the interviewees, materials for the youngest children must focus on **introducing the EU in the simplest terms**. CBC findings show that children enjoy content which focuses on general information about the EU, its Member States, famous symbols or flags. Some differences were also noticed

<sup>85</sup> During the mapping, other materials were produced for adults working with children (21 out of 153) and both (4 out of 153).

<sup>86</sup> The figure 5 shows the first intended age group for an individual material or activity based on Ecorys assessment or age group identified in the material. However, some materials can be used by different age groups of children.

<sup>87</sup> In the calculations, materials that were suitable for different age groups were multiplied. Five materials that were for both direct use of children and professionals were omitted from the calculations, 2 materials were not applicable.

between the same age children regarding their knowledge of the EU and Europe in general. Therefore, the content must be presented in an **easy-to-read language and include more interactive elements** to keep those with existing knowledge them engaged longer. Based on teachers' feedback, materials used during the CBC had a learning component which is very important for this age group.

*Format and types of materials.* Evidence shows that **interactive, playful formats of materials** are the most engaging for the youngest children, e.g., interactive online and offline games, puzzles, colouring maps, origami, etc. Several of the CBCs tested the Paper Hen<sup>88</sup> and the EU Puzzle<sup>89</sup> materials and feedback was universally positive with the hands on and creative nature of the activities being highlighted as key to its success in engaging children. A few teachers who conducted CBCs in the Member States agreed that the formats of the materials are similar to the ones they use in classes. It was also noted by teachers that **linking activities or materials to hobbies or areas of interest of children** of this age can be successful to engage them. As an example, in using the Europe and You<sup>90</sup> material in the CBCs it was observed that some of the boys undertaking the activity cross referenced and linked some of the capital cities to football teams they knew. Reflecting after the session, the teacher involved in this session confirmed that this is a common strategy they employed in teaching or while using external materials.

Most of the teachers who viewed the materials with children agreed that they were adequate to the proposed age group of children, however, a few teachers pointed out that some identified materials from the Learning Corner for the CBCs were too difficult for the proposed age group of children<sup>91</sup> and require a lot of guidance from the adult. Related to this an overall reflection from CBCs was that the materials being tested were often enriched by additional knowledge from teachers delivering the sessions or they facilitated the use of other resources such as maps. It was noted that teachers typically bridged each activity very skilfully and provided additional explanations. Although the activity and materials were of high quality and received well, an important part of the equation in their successful use was how the teacher used it and how she communicated it with the children.

*Communication channels.* Limited evidence suggests that the most relevant communication channels to reach the youngest children are their **parents and practitioners including teachers and day-care managers**. A few national stakeholders interviewed suggested that it is difficult to reach the youngest ones directly, therefore it is better to focus on professionals working with children. Also, a few interviewees suggested that more information could be shared at a local level through **city councils and youth/parent associations**.

## 2. Ages 7-9 year-olds.

*Content of materials.* Based on the quantitative mapping, only eight materials were dedicated to 7-9-year-old children. However, another 33 materials were identified for larger age groups (7-15- or 7-18-year-olds). The most common topics include climate and environment, general information about the EU and farming followed by basic information about the EU countries, culture, and citizen rights. According to some of the national stakeholders interviewed, most of the content is relevant and can be easily combined with school subjects, however, they need to be written in a child-friendly language. The relevance of the materials was also confirmed by most of children during CBCs where most of them were very interested in the content of Commission materials reviewed.

Some national stakeholders interviewed (4 out of 34) reported that there is little information about the EU provided in pre- primary or primary education, representing an information gap for this particular age group of children. This was also confirmed by some teachers who conducted CBCs at schools. Teachers fed back through the CBCs that the **EU is not covered directly by the curricula for the younger age range** and due to crowded curriculum in history or geography subjects, there is typically limited time to cover EU and wider subjects in any depth. Materials for this age should therefore be pitched as an **introduction or way of gaining**

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<sup>88</sup> See: [https://europa.eu/learning-corner/paper-hen\\_en](https://europa.eu/learning-corner/paper-hen_en)

<sup>89</sup> See: [https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-puzzle\\_en](https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-puzzle_en)

<sup>90</sup> This material was created by Council of the European Union and, while it was not the scope of this study to evaluate materials or activities made by non-Commission author services, it was agreed that two materials in this category would be tested with two groups of children during the CBCs as a control group for the rest of data collection exercise. The material in question is available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1b5cd8ec-9a42-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>91</sup> The materials for the CBCs were 'EU Puzzle', 'Guess the gifts with Grandma!' and 'On the farm'. The main complaint was from teachers working with 5 year olds stating that the materials above were too complex to work with their groups but less complaints were received from teachers working with the older age groups (6 year olds)

**basic knowledge and any linkages made to curricula is likely to increase their propensity to be used.**

One teacher also suggested that the materials should be developed specifically for the educational needs and competences of different grades to be useful in the classroom setting.

*Format and types of materials.* Evidence shows that there is little difference between the age groups of 5-6 and 7-9-year-olds regarding the relevant format and types of activities used. According to national stakeholders interviewed, **interactive, playful face-to-face formats** are the most engaging for children such as games, quizzes, videos or visuals. Through the CBCs children in this age segment likewise expressed a preference for materials that are hands on or creative facilitating a 'learning through doing' or play-focused approach. Most of the teachers who conducted CBCs in the Member States agreed that the formats of the materials were very engaging for their pupils due to their interactivity and presented in a consistent, clear, and a child-friendly format. During all CBCs, children liked the format of the material as they could interact with it themselves (e.g., folding the 'Paper Hen' or playing an online game 'Match the landmarks'<sup>92</sup>). However, some children suggested that the online games could include some further information about the famous landmarks they had to match helping them to learn.

A few teachers involved in the CBCs added that some formats of the materials cannot be used in the classroom due to a lack of technology or children's skills. One teacher also suggested to enlarge a repository of interactive formats (e.g., online games) and cover different cultural aspects of the EU.

*Communication channels.* Similarly, as with the youngest children, the most relevant communication channels to reach young children are their **parents and practitioners**. All teachers who conducted CBCs were not aware of the Learning Corner and suggested that these **resources could be shared through the teacher networks or national governments**.

### 3. Age 10-12 year-olds.

*Content of materials.* There are rather a **small number of materials** dedicated to middle age children. Based on the quantitative mapping, only 7 materials were developed specifically for older children of 10-12 years old, another 45 mapped materials were dedicated to a wider age group of children between 10-18 years old. Most of these materials include information about climate and environment, culture and other general information about the functioning of the EU, its Member States and history, what are the main institutions and how they work. Similarly, findings from the Focus groups show that children of 10-12 years old are overall curious about different topics, particularly those that relate to their free time activities or hobbies, therefore topics such as climate and environment, fisheries, and history were the most interesting subjects. Based on the Focus group responses, by this age knowledge of the EU as an institution is a little more developed for some children going beyond the geographical focus and knowledge of young children, demonstrating more enhanced awareness of the EU as an organisation with commonalities of currency and values.

Even though, thematically, Commission materials for 10-12 year-olds are similar with the younger age group, some national stakeholders (6 out of 34) emphasised that despite the information overlap it should be communicated in different formats (offline/online) and include **more in-depth information linked to children's school subjects including geography, languages, or history**. Based on the evidence from the Focus groups, Commission materials should use easy to understand language and terminology, avoiding general terms such as digital or innovations without providing explanations.

*Format and types of materials.* Based on the evidence collected, a **mix of interactive online/offline formats** such as games and videos were the most often mentioned examples of the preferred formats for this age group. Most of the participants in the Focus groups preferred online materials to learn such as short activities, videos, quizzes and games. For example, children of this age also reported to like quiz activities because of the mix between competition and learning. Some children also mentioned **printed materials** because they enjoyed reading from a paper copy and they were more commonly used in the classroom. This was seconded by some national stakeholders interviewed, who emphasised that the interactivity elements should be able to support educational activities that they do in schools.

*Communication channels.* Evidence suggests that 10-12 year-old children start searching for information on their own online or via social media, therefore most of the national stakeholders interviewed suggested trying to share the information about the EC materials through **social media channels**. This was also confirmed by the findings from the Focus groups. Most of the children agreed that they prefer online channels to find new information and mostly use search engines. Some children would use social media such as YouTube, Facebook or Instagram. However, independent access to technology cannot be assumed for this group given the level of smartphone ownership and the need for computer access which for this age group is likely to be in an education

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<sup>92</sup> See: [https://europa.eu/learning-corner/match-the-landmarks\\_en](https://europa.eu/learning-corner/match-the-landmarks_en)



setting or through parents. As such **the education setting remains a key channel** through which materials are able to reach children of this age. A few national interviewees also suggested that various multipliers such as EDICs, youth organisations could also help in reaching children.

#### 4. Age 13-15 year-olds.

*Content of materials.* Based on the quantitative mapping, 16 materials directly targeting this age group were identified and 65 other materials suitable for different ages of children. Their content focuses on both EU communities, cultures, and languages and also includes more information about **specific EU policies** (e.g., education, climate change, migration, mobility, etc.). Most of the Focus group participants were also interested in science and research, economy, digital and cultures. Their thematic interests stem from their curiosity of learning something new or activities they enjoy.

Evidence from the Focus groups in terms of EU information needs of this age group of children showed a preference for information being presented in terms of policy areas or in relation to subject areas of interest to children such as climate change. Nonetheless there appears to be still a need for explanation of concepts or more introductory information for some children. Materials would therefore benefit from having short reference sections to explain key terms **or signposting to more introductory information**. In contrast, where children who participated in the Focus groups already had more advanced knowledge, they were typically from schools where the EU is promoted beyond curriculum teaching in the form of European extra curricula clubs or involvement in activities such as the eTwinning initiative, suggesting the continued promotion of these alongside materials for children.

Most national stakeholders interviewed confirmed that children of 13-15 years-old are more interested in practical information and there is a need to provide information about youth programmes and initiatives on mobility, volunteering, traineeships, and working and studying abroad. According to a few interviewees and online focus participants, between the ages of 13-15, teenagers start questioning **what the EU can do for them** and how the opportunities provided by the EU can help them. Therefore, the focus of materials should be on **more practical information provided through personal testimonies and success stories from their peers**.

A few interviewees also suggested that it would be interesting for children to better understand the importance of politics in their lives and the importance of their participation in these processes. More information should also be provided on their rights as EU citizens and consumers, EU values and EP elections to get children acquainted about their civic rights and duties when they are older.

*Format and types of materials.* Evidence shows that more **participatory formats such as team games, videos, quizzes, or creative workshops** are more preferred by older children. However, clear differences emerged comparing the types of materials used for learning or used during children's free time as most of the children prefer offline materials to learn such **as books, infographics, brochures, or workshops** and use online quizzes or games for fun. For example, all Focus group participants found the format of the material 'EU Timeline - the EU through the years' attractive and interactive enough to keep them engaged. However, the online game 'Time machine' was indicated as too slow and more suitable for younger age groups due to its animations.

*Communication channels.* While at this age, children have many of the skills necessary to independently find information, **multipliers and educators continue to be a still important channel through which information is accessed**. Focus group participants of this age reported that if looking for information on the EU they would ask parents or teachers before directly searching themselves. This was confirmed through the User survey where 47% of children reported that the material accessed and reported in the survey was found through school or their teacher. National stakeholders interviewed most commonly reported that children use online sources or social media to access information. In contrast, the Focus group feedback showed that **social media is not necessarily a principal channel that children of this age would look to for information on the EU**, reinforced by only 5% of respondents aged under 18 in the User survey who found the material they accessed through social media and the limited number of children aged 13-17 following official Commission social media accounts. In the Focus groups, children instead talked about social media as a way they would share content with their friends so it does nonetheless have some potential for reaching children through peer shared information. Some children also suggested a more direct communication through **school competitions** on EU topics.

#### 5. Age 16-18 year-olds.

*Content of materials.* According to the quantitative mapping, there were 68 materials identified for this age group, including 16 directly targeting the oldest children. According to the stakeholder interviews and Focus groups, the materials for the oldest target group focus more on EU policies and the political aspects of the EU.

Materials mostly cover digital, EU laws, citizens' rights, climate and environmental topics. During Focus groups, participants emphasised cross-border issues such as climate change, migration or digital transformation as the most interesting topics at the EU level.

According to a few national interviewees (5 out of 34) teenagers aged 16-18 years old should be given information enabling them to participate in debates and reflect critically about the current state of the EU as well the issues that are featured in current headlines and public debates such as **Brexit or COVID-19 pandemic or the 'Spitzenkandidaten-process'**<sup>93</sup>. It was also confirmed by Focus group participants who mentioned that there should be specific information on policies directed to youth specifically, for example in terms of employability. The materials should also include topics on mobility, promote their engagement in the elections, volunteering, ERASMUS+ and career opportunities in the EU institutions and how they can be more active at local level in civil life (e.g., Youth Dialogue).

*Format and types of materials.* Evidence shows that a **combination of online and offline materials** is necessary to reach the oldest age group of children. According to the interviewees and Focus group participants, the type and format of materials change based on their use. The Focus groups still found some support for printed materials, particularly linked to the need for information when studying. If used for this purpose, children in this age group would more likely choose 'heavier' publications, printed materials or books, although it was highlighted that if materials should become too pedagogical, it might be experienced as not suitable for their age group any longer. This information need was also evidenced by the User survey where 52% of under 18 year-old respondents reported to use the material to study. While discussing about the format of Commission materials, they found interactive games, websites and online videos attractive and visually appealing, particularly videos, which have a concise message and could be easily shared on social media.

*Communication channels.* Evidence shows that from the online channels used to reach the oldest age group of children **websites or social media** should be mostly used. Feedback from the Focus groups involving children of this age, however, noted a need for this not to be done in a too excessive manner and should be targeted, as one of them said "I would drown in too much of this kind of information on social media". It was reported that information needed to be accessible and relevant and presented in a way that appealed to the age group. One route to achieve this was to ensure information was accompanied by opportunities for engagement or active involvement in advocating for the EU and communicating the advantages, e.g., through video campaigns on social media. The use of influencers was also mentioned as an entry point to their age group.

Findings show that, overall, the **Commission's materials are found to be relevant, accessible and inclusive for children from different demographic groups**. Qualitative mapping shows that 36 out of 153 materials were identified as overall inclusive. Most of the respondents to the User survey also agreed (86%) that in general the Commission materials were adapted to the needs of children aged 5-18<sup>94</sup>. However, Figure 6<sup>95</sup> shows that according to the user survey respondents, **children with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds are the most excluded demographic groups**.

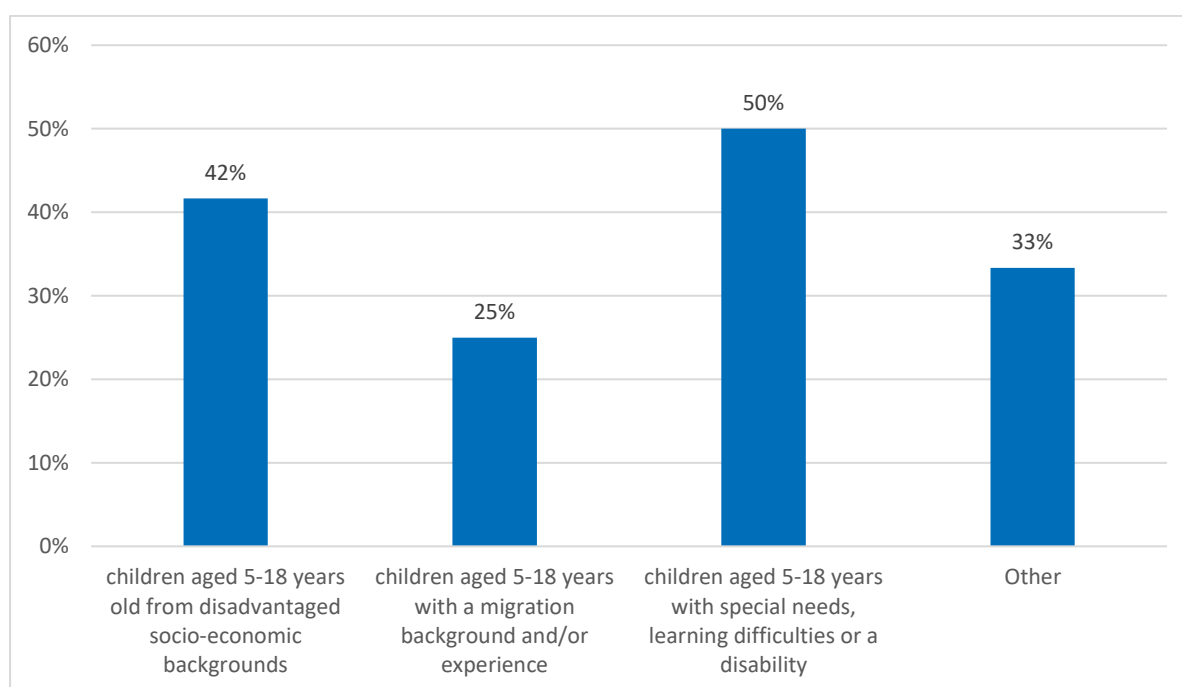
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<sup>93</sup> The 'Spitzenkandidaten process' refers to a procedure where European political parties, ahead of European elections, appoint lead candidates for the role of Commission President. See more: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630264/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)630264\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630264/EPRS_BRI(2018)630264_EN.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> Ecorys survey. Question: Do you feel that this material or activity was in general adapted to the needs of children aged 5-18, including any specific sub-groups of children that you work with?, question only for professionals and parents, N=220.

<sup>95</sup> Ecorys survey. Question: What groups of children aged 5-18 were not covered by the contents of this material or activity? Please select all that apply, question only for parents and professionals answering 'No, not really' to the previous question, N=12.

Figure 6: Groups of children aged 5-18 who were not covered by the contents of the material or activity reviewed<sup>96</sup>



Source: Ecorys Survey, N=12 [multiple selection]

## 6. Children aged 5-18 in rural areas, facing material deprivation and early school leavers.

Based on the qualitative mapping of the Commission's materials it is not possible to identify if the materials are inclusive of rural children. In general, national stakeholders indicated that the information needs of children and teenagers vary depending on their information resources, which depend on their social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Most of the national interviewees agreed that a majority of children are not aware of the mobility and non-formal, volunteering opportunities or that language proficiency might not be sufficient to take part in a short or long-term exchange or mobility programmes abroad. Therefore, children with fewer opportunities would benefit from the materials on information about EU programmes and mobility schemes or scholarships that would help them to think about their future.

According to a few national stakeholders, materials should be adapted to the education level of children, particularly those who are in vocational education in comparison with secondary schools. Therefore, **materials should consider not only the age groups of children but also their educational skills**. Some teachers who conducted CBCs also mentioned that not all children have a continuous internet connection, therefore, some **online materials could be downloadable or have adapted paper versions to reach rural youth**.

Evidence also revealed that professionals working with children in rural areas are less aware of the Commission's materials and where to find them than their colleagues in cities. Some author services interviewed mentioned that most of the inquiries they receive are from the urban schools. This was also confirmed by the group interviews where local stakeholders indicated that young children facing material deprivation are mostly taught about tolerance, social interactions and anti-bullying, therefore professionals working with them would benefit from materials relevant to these topics.

## 7. Children aged 5-18 with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities.

According to the qualitative mapping, 32 out of 153 were considered accessible for children with disabilities. However, there were only a few materials depicting children with disabilities in their content. Furthermore, based on the User survey almost one third of respondents (27%) used the material with a particular group of children, including children with disabilities. Therefore, there is a high demand for accessible and inclusive materials for

<sup>96</sup> Ecorys survey. Question 22. What groups of children aged 5-18 were not covered by the contents of this material or activity? Please select all that apply, N=12.

professionals working with disabled children. One interviewee suggested having more audiobooks / podcasts for visually impaired as an interesting solution.

According to a few national interviewees children with disabilities require basic information about the EU presented in an easy-to-read format. Based on the results from the CBCs, **children who had learning disabilities enjoyed interactive Commission materials, including online games or videos**. For example, one boy who stated he had dyslexia was very fast to tell that he learned best from watching videos. Furthermore, children who have disabilities can be more difficult to engage, therefore, any information that could be relevant to them, including ERASMUS+ or Discover EU should be presented in an interactive and accessible way.

#### **8. Children aged 5-18 with a migration background or experience and with ethnic minority backgrounds.**

There is limited evidence to judge how inclusive the Commission's materials are for children with migration or ethnic background. Qualitative mapping shows that there are few materials showcasing children with a migrant background. In general, there is a lack of awareness among the national stakeholders on what these children's specific information needs are and how it should be presented. However, one interviewee suggested that children from ethnic minorities usually do not have any Commission materials in their mother tongue (e.g., Russian).

According to a few interviewees (3 out of 34), materials relevant for children with a migrant background could emphasise the linguistic diversity in the EU or help them to find and access the information that is easy to understand. For example, teaching materials encouraging them to learn the national language and improve their language skills could motivate them to learn more about a relevant topic that is of particular interest for them (e.g., citizenship, studying abroad).

#### **9. LGBTIQ youths.**

According to the qualitative mapping, it is hard to assess if materials are inclusive of LGBTIQ children and youths. Only one material was found having gender neutral images. A few national stakeholders interviewed suggested that materials for children should be gender neutral and include an international perspective. For instance, informing them about their rights as EU citizens, what policies promote LGBTQIA+ rights and the EU position towards the community's rights. According to a few national stakeholders, materials that illustrate differences between different Member States' perspectives on persons belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community and their rights would be relevant. According to one interviewee, teachers could benefit from materials that could help navigate a complex world with many kinds of identities they may not be familiar with.

#### **10. Professionals working with children.**

Most of the national stakeholders agreed that professionals working with children have similar information needs, however, the **information should be concise and ready to be used for direct work with children**. Materials should include background information which they need to prepare for the classes or could be used as additional reading for children and their skills development. Materials should also include up to date practical information and various examples for older children to understand the topics better. Other topics identified by the interviewees that could be relevant for professionals working with children include child rights, current 'Hot' topics such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, migration (with older children), internet safety, humanitarian aid, digital Europe; and prevention of violence against children.

Some of the teachers who conducted CBCs acknowledged an educational gap on EU topics in formal education, therefore, any materials that could be adopted in various school subjects would be welcome.

Based on desk research, there is little research conducted that consults children and people working with children on their EU information needs. A couple of examples of this type of research were identified through EU and national interviews. For example, an EU study on involvement of children in political and democratic life<sup>97</sup> included focus groups with children in 10 EU Member States. The Upshift programme in Ukraine targeted to young people (14–17 year-olds) included workshops focused on how they can make changes in their communities as young entrepreneurs.

Evidence collected through the EU and national stakeholder interviews shows that there is a limited number of evaluations, surveys or assessments carried out to understand what the thematic or format preferences of children and professionals working with them are. A few EU level interviewees acknowledged that there are some surveys or feedback questionnaires that provide some general information about materials and activities, however, they lack a more country specific focus. A few national stakeholders confirmed that they have carried out surveys to ask

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<sup>97</sup> See: <https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/eu-child-participation-in-political-democratic-life.html>

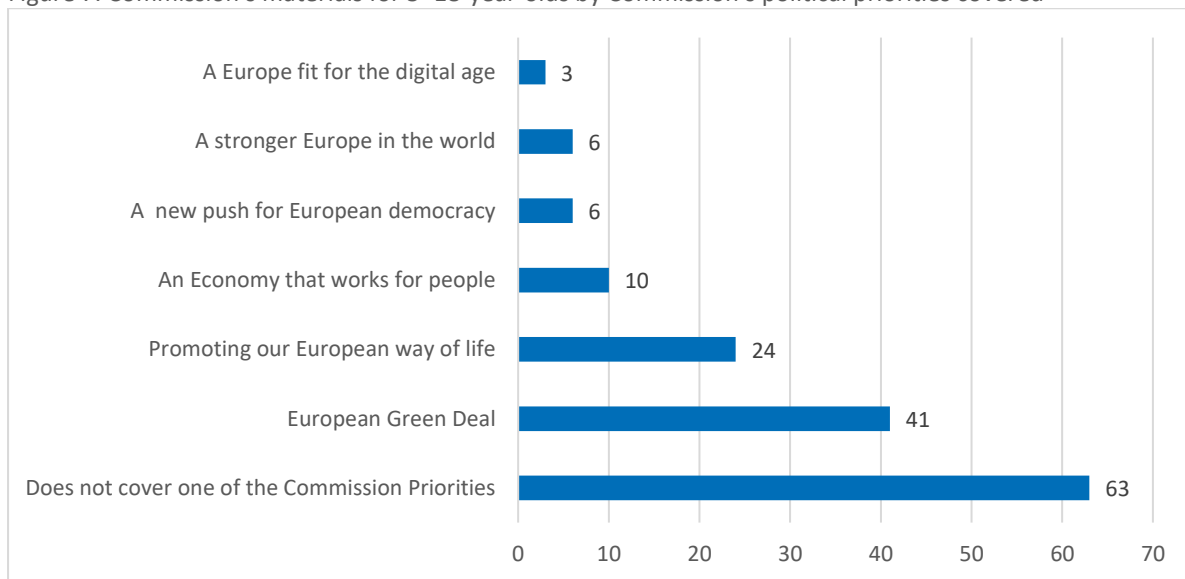
what information about the EU would be interesting and relevant for them, however, they are not systematic and are usually conducted verbally after events or meetings. Most of the knowledge indicated by a few stakeholders come from their direct involvement with children, observing the popularity of their different materials and activities among them. Therefore, there should be a more systematic way of collecting the data to better understand the information needs of children.

### 2.2.1.2 Relevance in terms of communication objectives

This section addresses the specific question: *To what extent are the European Commission’s materials for children and young people relevant in light of the communication objectives of the Commission’s and of author services regarding key aspects of the European Union, its history and its functioning covered by the scope of this Follow-up review?*

Evidence shows that the current Commission’s materials and activities for children aged 5-18 **cover all the relevant political priorities of the current Commission for the period of 2019-2024**. A majority of the Commission’s materials and activities for 5–18-year-olds mapped were linked to one out of six Commission’s current political priorities (90). The largest share of materials referred to the Commission priorities of the European Green Deal (41) and Promoting European way of life (24) (see Figure 7). According to the interviews with author services, the current offer of materials and activities is aligned with the political priorities and there are clear efforts in making them more attractive for younger audiences, e.g., EU Ecological Pact, multilingualism, single use plastic materials.

Figure 7. Commission's materials for 5–18-year-olds by Commission's political priorities covered



Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping of Commission's materials, n=153, 2021

Based on the evidence, some priorities are better covered than others. For example, the mapping shows that topics linked to the priorities of the Green Deal and EU way of life are considered more relevant for children while there is a lack of information about digitalisation and EU international relations. Furthermore, a few EU stakeholders interviewed, based on their limited knowledge, indicated that more efforts could be made to produce and update materials for the young audiences (10 years and younger) on European way of life and European Green Deal.

Evidence shows **that the Commission’s materials and activities are relevant in the light of their DG’s communication objectives and priorities**. According to the scoping survey, 46 out of 87 respondents indicated that they have defined objectives for communicating with children and teenagers, aged 5-18 years old. Most of the objectives are related to increasing pupils' general knowledge of the EU, engaging with children through various educational activities to inform them about various EU policies, prepare teaching materials for professionals, etc. Based on the materials identified during the quantitative mapping, materials reflect the objectives identified during the scoping survey. This finding is also confirmed by all author services interviewed who agreed that according to

their knowledge<sup>98</sup> their materials and activities for 5 – 18-year-olds are relevant in light of their communication objectives. However, a few interviewees acknowledged that more efforts are needed to improve the materials to potentially make them more relevant to sub-segments of children and their age groups (a lack of materials for children between 6-11 years old and children with disabilities).

A few interviewees suggested that their Commission's objectives aim to provide materials that are instructional, raise awareness and trigger the interest of children and teenagers in putting in practice their own ideas through European projects. For example, they have completed a collaborative project with the Italian Environment Fund (Fondo Ambiente Italiano) targeted at 14-18 year olds in secondary schools in Milan. During the project, children were taught about the importance of preserving cultural heritage, respecting the nature, and what the EU does on this topic and which initiatives exist to renovate cities focusing on green energy and sustainability.

## 2.3 Coherence

This section provides our findings in relation to the second strategic question of the Review: *To what extent is the European Commission's offer of materials targeting 5-18 year-olds internally coherent in terms of topics, formats and segments of target audience covered, and externally coherent with the offer of the main non-Commission author services?*

This section reviews the internal and external coherence of the commission's offer, including an assessment of the alignment between the materials on offer and the Commission's policy priorities, and to identify whether there are overlaps in the outputs of the Commission for segments or in its channels and formats. The review found that there is **generally a good degree of internal coherence in the offer of materials to children but with potential opportunities to improve alignment with Commission priorities and to address some gaps in materials by topics**. Most notably there was a clear need to improve the segmentation of materials by age. Externally the review found that the Commission produced a far higher volume of materials than other EU institutions and that whilst there were no notable concerns in relation to duplication or overlap, end users typically make little meaningful distinction between the Commission and other EU institutions.

Most author services who are a Directorate-General (DG) have a clear communication strategy or plan, however this was not replicated amongst Europe Direct Information Centres (EDIC) or Representations of the European Commission (Representations). The review also found that there was a good degree of coherence between the outputs of different DGs, with a high degree of alignment with their remits or national functions, with limited or no overlap that was aided by generally positive collaboration between DGs. However, whilst most materials directly supported one of the Commission's policy priorities there was a significant minority that did not, suggesting an opportunity for improved planning and integration of materials with Commission policy priorities.

The review also found that there was a **good alignment between the topics published by the Commission and the needs or interests of children**. The mapping identified a relatively high volume of materials on environmental issues that were generally considered of interest to children. Similarly, the volume of materials on promoting the EU way of life was also considered to be an important topic for the Commission to address. The review identifies topics that are less well served by Commission materials, particularly factual material for older children that addressed commission priorities in relation to employment, equality and diversity, and digital privacy.

There was generally a **good coherence in terms of the channels and outputs of materials** produced by the Commission with a broad range of materials and topics that were welcomed by stakeholders and national multipliers. The emphasis on online materials aligned with the expectations of end users, including children. However, whilst there was use of social media in the Commission's outputs, feedback from stakeholders and children also suggests that potential gaps may emerge as patterns of social media usage amongst children continue to evolve into the future. Furthermore, there is a **need to consider a potential gap in accessible materials for children with a visual disability**.

The main issue in the Commission's offer of materials identified in this review is in relation to age segmentation, in particular the granularity of segmentation. There is **limited segmentation in the offer between different age groups**, with a large volume of materials aimed at very broad age groups that often spanned both younger and older age groups. This both limits the ability to identify gaps in the offer to children, and to plan future outputs accordingly, but also potentially undermines the relevance and effectiveness of materials for children. The review

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<sup>98</sup> A few interviewees acknowledged that they are not fully aware of all the communication objectives of their author service.

did identify a potential preponderance of materials aimed at older age groups amongst commission output and potential gaps in materials for younger age groups, in part due to the emphasis on materials in English amongst DGs, but this would require further testing.

Externally there appears to be a reasonable degree of coherence between the outputs from the European Commission and other EU institutions. However, in practice the Commission published the vast majority of materials identified in this review (90%) and end users did not typically make a significant distinction between the Commission and other EU institutions. The Commission's outputs, as with those of the other EU institutions, were seen as serving an important niche in providing authoritative information about European issues.

### 2.3.1 Internal Coherence

This section addresses the specific question: *To what extent is the European Commission offer of materials to children aged 5-18 internally coherent in terms of covering all main sub-segments of this target population, their main information needs (in terms of key topics and preferred ways of accessing information) and needs of professionals working with this target group? What is missing and what should be covered still and why?*

Based on the findings from the mapping exercise and interviews with key stakeholders and national multipliers there appears to be a reasonable level of coherence in the Commissions materials for children. Across the 153 materials that were identified through the mapping exercise as in scope of the Review, 90% were published by the European Commission across the author services of 14 DGs, 12 Representations, 6 EDICs and 1 Executive Agency.

#### 2.3.1.1 Topics and priorities

Through the mapping review process, the materials and activities for children have been categorised according to which Commission priority they typically responded to and the topics that they covered. This exercise has shown that there was a **reasonable degree of alignment between commission materials and the Commission's own policy priorities but that there was a significant minority of materials that did not directly support a Commission policy priority**. Of the 153 materials identified by the mapping exercise, 58% directly or explicitly supported a European Commission priority (Figure 8: Materials by Commission priority). The Commission priority with the largest volume of materials was a European Green Deal (41) which was also produced across the largest number of DGs (6). Promoting our European way of life had the next largest number of materials (24), however the other priorities each had notably fewer resources. Of the 41% of materials that did not directly or explicitly support a European Commission priority, most provided information about the European Union or European countries, history and culture.

Key stakeholder interviewees were positive about the complementarity and coherence of Commission materials, with a high level of internal confidence amongst author services that Commission materials for children had clear objectives (12 of 16 interviewees) with no problem of duplication between different DGs. This view was partly supported by national multipliers, who believed that EU materials were complementary with no significant issues with overlap, but they were not familiar enough with material to provide a more detailed assessment of the coherence with Commission objectives. Furthermore, feedback via the Scoping survey and EU stakeholder interviews indicates that almost all Commission Directorates Generals had a publication strategy or plan in place that sets out strategic goals and objectives for their work. A number of respondents noted a good degree of coordination and engagement between Commission DGs, allied to clear policy remits, that aided the coherence of the commission offer of materials to children in terms of avoiding overlap between outputs.

The coherence and complementarity of commission outputs is also illustrated by the alignment between the remit of Commission DGs and the materials they produced. Most DGs published materials in relation to one or two priorities and these were clearly aligned to priorities relevant to their remit. Six different DGs of the European Commission publish materials supporting the European Green Deal, including DG ENV, DG AGRI, DG CLIMA and DG ENER. When analysing materials produced by these directorates there is also a good degree of coherence between the topic of the materials and the respective remits of the DGs. For example, DG ENER's materials addressed topics linked to energy efficiency whilst DG ENV materials addressed topics in relation to conservation and waste whilst DG CLIMA addressed climate change issues. This broader theme of coherence was also supported in interviews with EU stakeholders who noted that the responsibilities of different DGs helped to limit overlap in outputs.

Where Commission author services did publish materials across a broader range of topics this pattern also reflected their roles. For example, DG COMM was the only DG to publish across all six priority areas reflecting its cross-cutting communication remit. Representations and EDICs collectively also covered a range of materials reflecting their national communication remits, for example materials from Representations spanned five priorities and materials from EDICs spanned four priorities. In the case of materials from Rep's there was a gap in relation to materials supporting the priority 'Europe for Digital Age' whilst in the case of EDICs there was also gap in materials supporting the priority 'a Europe that works for people'. These national service directorates were also notable for offering materials in local languages or a wider set of languages. In particular, the availability of materials in local languages was welcomed by some national multipliers who also made use of materials by adapting them to local purposes.

DG COMM also published the largest volume of materials that were not linked to a specific priority (24 items), followed by Representations (13 items). However, DG EAC had the largest percentage of materials that did not have a clear link to a Commission priority (11 out of 12 items). DG COMM materials that were not directly linked to a specific Commission priority were educational or information resources about the EU itself, European culture or EU countries or on specific topics, such as migration. Similarly, Representations and EDIC materials that did not support a Commission priority also typically covered topics that provided information about the EU, European culture or history. In the case of DG EAC materials that did not directly support a Commission priority they were primarily linked to an information campaign for European Youth or educational resources about European heritage that could also indirectly support the Commission's priority of 'promoting our European way of life'.

There is **some evidence that materials are being produced as part of broader information or educational campaigns that support Commission strategic priorities**. Of the 153 Commission materials identified in the mapping 47 were linked to a broader campaign, compared to 55 materials that were published as standalone items. There were 20 campaigns identified across the mapping including campaigns about environmental issues such as Our Planet EU, that was led by DG ENV, information campaigns about the European Union such as Europe+ together which involved DG Comm as well as Representations. There were 21 materials that were published as part of 8 website resources. For example, the Energy and EU by DG ENER included six resources covering topics linked to the commission priority European Green Deal whilst the EDIC of France has seven materials on the website Maison de l'Europe en Bourgogne-Franche-Comté.

National multiplier and EU stakeholders made a range of suggestions about relevant topics for children that would support the Commission's broader policy priorities. For example, some national multipliers and EU stakeholders recommended materials that were directly relevant to children's lives such as youth rights, employment, privacy, and consumer rights that would align with the Commission agenda of creating an economy that works for people and ensuring Europe is fit for the digital age. In addition, stakeholders and national multipliers also noted the importance of addressing contemporary topics relevant to the European way of life and democracy, in particular issues or topics relating to diversity and discrimination based on ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, gender, and identity as well as topics on misinformation and migration. Materials addressing environmental issues, including climate change and other types of environmental and conservation issues were also noted as topics of interest to children that are also well covered by Commission materials.

### 2.3.1.2 Sub-Segments of the target group

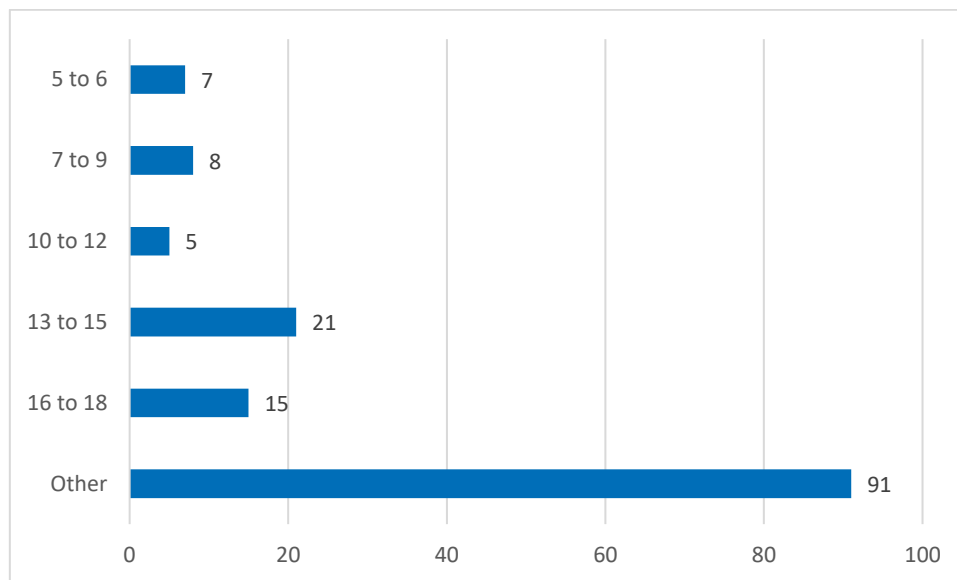
The mapping of materials also grouped materials by age. Amongst the materials identified by the mapping nearly 60% (91) did not fit into the main age segments used for this evaluation and of these 87 materials were targeted at age groups that spanned more than two years, i.e., a larger span of ages than the segments used in this Review. Approximately 120 of the materials mapped were predominately targeted at children over 10 years old, however, there was a significant minority of materials that were targeted at very broad age categories that limits any conclusion about the overall focus of materials by age. For example, 44 were aimed at age categories that had a range of over seven years. This suggests that there is a **general lack of segmentation by age in Commission materials that undermines the coherence of the offer**. This was highlighted in some Focus groups where whilst children broadly welcomed the materials on offer, they also believed that some exercises were not properly targeted at their age group.

**The lack of effective segmentation of materials for children limits the extent to which an assessment can be made about what age groups are well served and where there are gaps in the offer.** There does appear to be a slight emphasis on older children in the materials offered by the Commission based on the mapping exercise. However, in some cases Focus groups with older children suggested that these materials may be better suited for younger children. Of the materials mapped in the exercise 44% (67) were targeted at children aged 13 and over, including 21 aimed at the 13-15 age group and 15 materials aimed at the 16-18 (15) (Figure 9). There



were a further 31 materials that were targeted at a broader category of older children aged 13-18 years olds plus a further 38 materials that served children 13 years and older alongside younger age groups. In addition, there were 14 materials targeted at 10-18 year olds, making it the third largest segment identified in terms of materials offered by the Commission.

Figure 8: Age segments covered by materials (all materials)



Source: Ecorys, *Qualitative mapping of Commission’s materials, n=153, 2021*

Stakeholder and national multipliers did identify a **potential need for materials for younger and pre-teen children**. For example, the mapping identified 8 materials specifically for the 7-9 year olds segment. There were a further 41 materials serving larger segments that included the 7-9 year old segment but this also included 24 materials aimed at larger age groups from 7 years and over. Similarly, the mapping identified 7 materials directly aimed at 5-6 year olds but with a further 13 materials aimed broader age groups of 5 years and over. There were only 5 materials specifically aimed at children aged 10-12 year olds but there were a further 57 materials that also covered this age group. This included 38 materials that were also aimed at younger and 43 materials that also covered older children, of which 26 materials served age groups younger and older than the 10-12 segment illustrating the generally broader age categories targeted by Commission materials.

Most national multipliers (22) did not feel in a position to comment in detail on the coverage of the Commission’s offer across age segments. However, where interviewees, including EU stakeholders and national multipliers were able to respond, many noted that although coverage of Commission materials was broadly good there was limited segmentation by age. This feedback confirms the results of the mapping that showed that where materials were typically targeted at broad age ranges. Furthermore, some stakeholders also noted that there were potential gaps in the offer for both youngest age groups, including materials in their native language. In addition, there was also thought to be an opportunity for information resources for older children covering relevant issues such as rights. More generally EU stakeholders noted the challenge of bridging the needs between younger and older age groups.

Amongst all stakeholders there was a relatively **good degree of confidence that the accessibility needs of different groups were being addressed**. National multipliers noted the relationship between Commission materials that were offered in local languages and those that were published in English or a small number of languages. For example, exactly a third of materials identified (51) were only in English of which 48 were by DGs of the European Commission. There were 36 materials published in one language other than English, all of which were published in local languages by Representations or EDICs. The mapping identified 49 materials that were in 20 or more languages, nearly all from DGs. DG COMM is the only DG that consistently publishes materials in all the European languages, nearly half of its output (26 items). Other DGs did not systematically publish materials in all the European languages except in limited cases as part of a campaign or suite of resources, for example DG ENERs website Energy and the EU or DG ENV EU pollinators campaign.

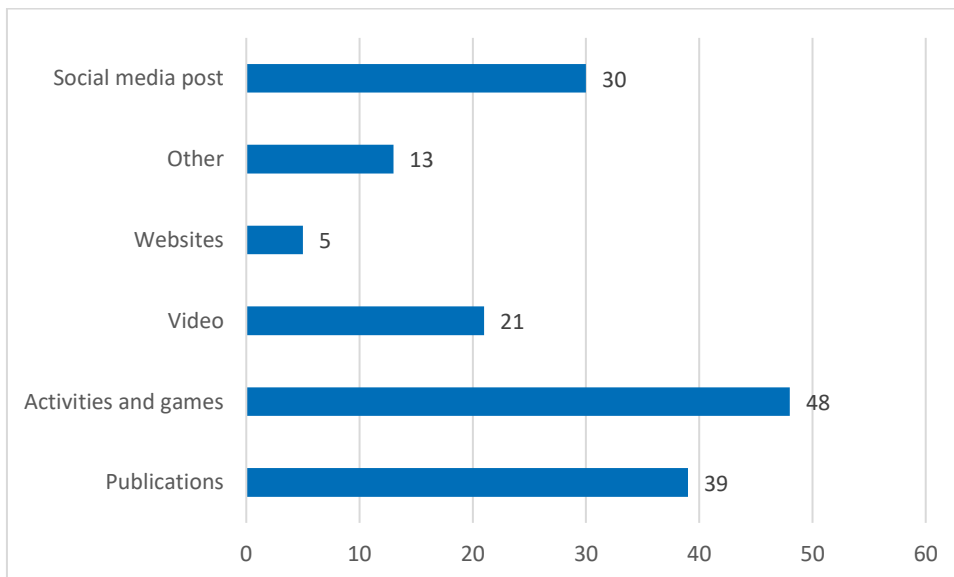
The inclusivity of materials was broadly welcomed by stakeholders. However, the results of the mapping were unclear, with 123 items considered inclusive in terms of representation or where it was not possible to judge. Some stakeholders and national multipliers also identified a need for accessible materials for those with a visual disability,

particularly use of braille and other types of accessible formats. However, the results from the mapping exercise on this issue were unclear, one material was identified as inaccessible for children with a visual disability, but an assessment of accessibility was not possible for 115 of the 153 materials that were identified<sup>99</sup>. Stakeholders and national multipliers noted potential concerns about online access for children from deprived economic backgrounds, however it should also be noted that feedback from Focus groups with children emphasised a stronger interest in online resources amongst children. Stakeholders and national multipliers also identified a potential need for materials aimed at young migrants who did not speak a European language as their first language.

### 2.3.1.3 Types of materials

Stakeholders believed that the **breadth of materials by type was a strength of the Commission's offer and welcomed the diversity that was available in terms of both formats and their offer to different ages.** Stakeholders and children welcomed materials of different types, including information resources as well as fun games and exercises. The breadth of the Commission's offer in terms of types of materials was also shown by the mapping exercise. Across all materials identified by the mapping exercise, activities and games were the most common (48 items), including online games or quizzes (14) and activity books (12) (Figure 10). The next largest group of materials was publications (39), which includes comics, booklets, factsheets, and infographics. In addition, there were 21 videos and 13 other types of resources, including resources such as teaching toolkits and presentations plus a total of 30 social media posts that were all part of a broader campaigns.

Figure 9: Type of materials



Source: Ecorys, *Qualitative mapping of Commission's materials*, n=153, 2021

The mapping also suggests that there was a coherent alignment between the types of materials on offer and the ages that they were targeted at. For example, there was a clear preponderance toward older children aged over ten amongst publications (75%), which was also the case for videos and websites where almost all were targeted at older age groups. In contrast approximately 2/3 of materials aimed at children under 10 were fun games and activities (18 items) reflecting their educational needs. It should also be noted however that games and quizzes proved popular formats in a number of the Focus groups with older children, notwithstanding some reported concerns about the design and age ranges of certain games. At the same time older children did tend to value the more factual publications or website materials targeted at them, where materials gave clear information about topics that they want to know about. All the social media posts identified were aimed at older children or adults working with younger children.

<sup>99</sup> The review was only required to map the accessibility of materials when this was directly mentioned by the material or the website that hosted it. If material had specific features that were immediately identifiable as accessible (e.g. a braille version or sign language) this was also indicated in the mapping. Where accessibility was not clearly indicated materials were not assessed further for their accessibility. Further work is recommended to properly explore accessibility of commission materials for children.

Stakeholders generally supported the Commission's emphasis on online digital resources which was clearly reinforced by feedback from Focus groups with children. Of the 153 resources identified in the mapping, 119 were intended for use online, either exclusively or with the potential offline use as well. Websites were the primary channel identified for disseminating materials in the mapping exercise, with all items available online including items that are intended for use offline. There were 34 materials published via the Europa website and 36 via the publications office website, of which Representations were responsible for just under half (15 items). Almost all the children engaged as part of the Focus groups expected materials to be available online with only a small number expressing an interest in printed publication. This applied across all groups, including groups where there was less online access. However almost none of the children were familiar with European Commission websites and almost none were familiar with the Learning Corner.

A number of stakeholders and national multipliers also noted that digital channels are evolving for younger children, including use of mobile and apps, which was reinforced by the results of the Focus groups. The mapping identified 36 materials that were available via social media platforms, principally Facebook (26 items) with only five items on Instagram. Stakeholders and national multipliers all noted the increasing importance of social media channels to children and young people. Notably children in Focus groups reported that social media, including Facebook or Instagram alongside other examples such as TikTok or Snapchat, played an important role for searching for information alongside conventional search engines such as Google. In contrast few would commence their search for information about the EU or associated materials with a website of the European Commission, almost exclusively accessing them via other search engines or social media channels.

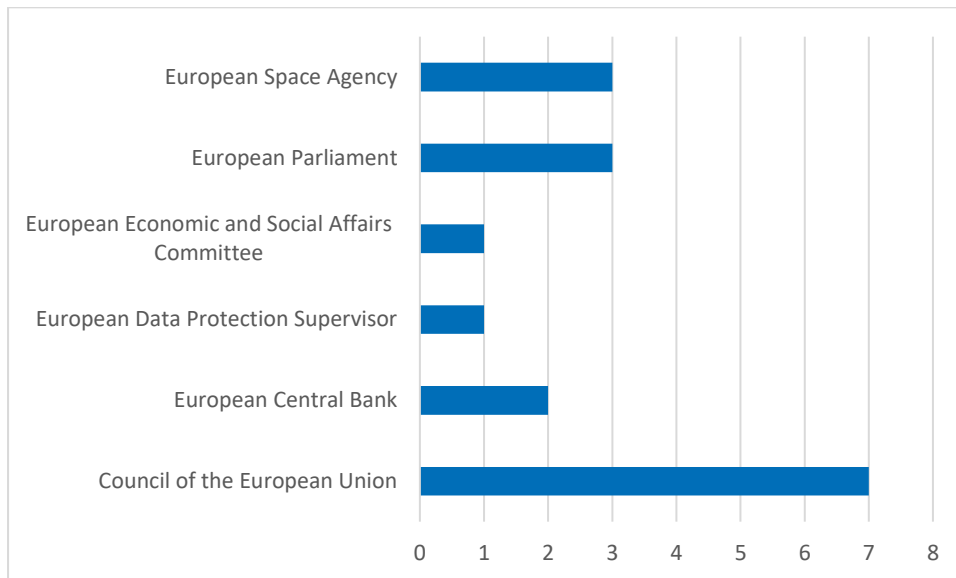
### 2.3.2 External Coherence

This section addresses the specific question: *To what extent is the European Commission's offer of materials for children aged 5-18 externally coherent, considering materials' offers of the other EU Institutions as well as the main non-EU (European and national level) information sources?*

There appears **to be a broadly complementary approach to materials between the Commission's materials and other EU institutions or organisations**. National multipliers and stakeholders also particularly welcomed the important role that materials produced by the Commission and EU institutions more generally play in providing an authoritative source of information. Furthermore, some national multipliers noted the role that these materials can play in local education curricula, including when combined with materials from other organisations. At the same time, it was also clear amongst national multipliers, as well as in feedback from children participating in Focus groups, that end users are unlikely to make a practical distinction between the materials produced by the Commission and other EU institutions and largely consider them to be outputs from the same organisation.

The mapping identified 17 materials from institutions of the European Union other than the European Commission, of which seven were produced by the Council of the European Union, representing 10% of the total volume of materials identified during the mapping exercise. Of the materials identified, seven were from the Council of the European Union and three from the European Parliament as well as materials from four other institutions (Figure 10). Of these over half (9) did not directly support a European Commission priority. There were three materials that supported the Commission's priority 'an economy that works for people', with one for each of the remaining five priorities. Of those materials that did not directly support a Commission priority four were on the topic of science and research which included three from the European Space Agency that were part of the 'ESA Kids' resources.

Figure 10: Resources by published by other EU institutions



Source: Ecorys, *Qualitative mapping of Commission's materials*, n=17, 2021

The general topics covered by these materials were also broadly comparable to those covered by European Commission resources, with a slight emphasis on topics about the European Union itself and European countries more generally (6 items). In addition to general information about the EU, materials published by other EU institutions also included resources on European achievements such as the Euro and the single market. In addition, both the Council and Parliament and European Economic and Social Committee have each published a resource on digital and employment rights respectively and citizen rights in all European languages which helps to address areas of interest noted by stakeholders. In contrast to the preponderance of materials supporting the European Green Deal agenda published by Commission DGs, only one item was published by other EU institutions on this topic.

**The general offer of materials in terms of format and channels was broadly comparable to the Commission's materials.** All of the materials from other EU institutions identified in the mapping were available online via the Learning Corner. In contrast to a pattern seen in the Commission's outputs where a significant proportion are part of a broader campaign, all of the materials produced by EU institutions were standalone materials, with the exception of a set of materials produced by the European Space Agency. Six of the 17 materials were videos or video playlists, including three published by the Council, whilst five were games or activities, including just one online game and five publications. There were no social media posts or resources for children, e.g. Facebook posts, other than videos hosted on YouTube, offered in all the European languages. For example, all of the Council of the European Union's materials, whilst only four items identified in the mapping, were all published in just English.

As with the Commission's outputs there is evidence that the offer of children's materials has limited segmentation by age. Only four materials were clearly targeted at one of the principal age segments used in this analysis whilst the remaining materials were all targeted at segments with an age range of over three years. The overall age profile of materials was also broadly comparable to Commission materials, but with a greater emphasis on ages 7-10. For example, there were five materials for children over 10 years of age and upwards but there were eight materials that included seven year-olds in the age bracket. Notably there were also five materials identified that included the youngest children, i.e., aged 6 and below, a higher proportion than offered by the Commission. This may in part be linked to the greater proportion of materials that are offered in all European languages by other EU institutions than the Commission. However, given the breadth of the age group segments that have been identified in this mapping it is hard to draw firm conclusions about the relative coherence of the offer between the Commission and other EU institutions.

## 2.4 Effectiveness

This section provides our findings in relation to the third strategic question of the Review: *To what extent are the current European Commission materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds effective in reaching their target audience? To what extent author services are aware of each other's offer and use it for their outreach?*

It also provides our findings in relation to the fourth strategic question of the Review: *To what extent are European Commission's materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds effective in engaging with this target audience? To what extent are these fit for purpose in terms of converting communication messages of author services and effectively addressing the needs of their target groups?*

We requested and received monitoring data for 78 materials and activities out of the 153 materials mapped as part of this Follow-up review (48 materials and activities, 21 audio-visual materials and 9 games). Of these 78 materials, 20 of these materials were designed by Representations of the European Commission in Member-States (Greece, Germany, France, Portugal, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Romania, Slovakia and Latvia) and 1 material was created and implemented by an EDIC (Spain). The rest of the materials were designed by European Commission author services namely DG COMM, DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG ENV, DG EMPL, DG EAC, DG JRC, DG RTD and DG ENER. The Publication Office of the European Union kindly provided the research team with monitoring data for all physical orders and digital downloads of the materials and activities hosted in their website from their publication date until 30 April 2021. The remaining data was sent by the author services themselves or collected by the research team via desk research. The research team also conducted analysis of the main European Commission's social media accounts distributing content for children aged 5-18 which can be consulted in page 66-67 of this report.

### 2.4.1.1 Outreach to the target audience

This section addresses the specific question: *'To what extent are the current European Commission materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds effective in reaching their target audience?' What are the most effective author services' materials for children aged 5-18 in terms of their reach?*

Based on the analysis of the available data, we estimate that, over the period covered by this Follow-up review (2018-2020), the European Commission reached to 5,015,694<sup>100</sup> both through physical and multimedia materials and activities. This included 2,946,851 reached through published materials and activities from the OP, 58,806 reached through downloads from OP website, 1,557,963 reached through the online games available on the Learning Corner and 1,208,053<sup>101</sup> reached through the European Commission's multimedia offer on both YouTube and the European Commission Audio-visual Portal. These estimated reach numbers suggest that the Commission's materials and activities reached around 7% of total children aged 5-18 in the EU<sup>102</sup>.

Regarding what are the most effective author services' materials for children aged 5-18 in terms of their reach, our analysis of the monitoring data, User Survey and Key stakeholder interviews allowed us to identify the following 15 materials were the most popular in terms of reach during the period covered by this Follow-up review.

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<sup>100</sup> This number is an estimation based on the total number of physical orders from the OP and the number of visits for the corresponding page in the OP website for the 2018-2021 period. These numbers are the closest value we currently have available to calculate the reach of the European Commission materials and activities but should not be taken as a perfect estimate of this number.

<sup>101</sup> The research team decided to be conservative regarding reach numbers for audio-visual content on Youtube and the European Commission Audio-visual portal since there was no clear way to identify the percentage of children viewers from the general population with the available monitoring data. The research team decided to remove from the calculation three videos that are available in the Learning Corner (EU Green Deal, What is the European Citizens' Initiative? Take the initiative, EU Customs Union – 50 years young) that gathered over 1m views but were arguably more directed at citizens than children specifically. These videos gathered on their own over 4m views which pushed the total reach considerable upwards. This data will still be analysed in the section below regarding reach of audio-visual content.

<sup>102</sup> According to Eurostat (2021), there around 69 million children aged 5-18. It is important to take into account that the research team assumed for this calculation that each material reach exactly one child and did not took into account the possibility of a teacher or parent using a material with 2 or more children each time. This means that the actual reach number, particularly for materials being used in classrooms by teachers, can be much higher than presumed in this follow-up review.

Table 22 Final list of effective materials and activities according to total reach

Name of Material	Link to material	Publishing date	Author service	Type of Material	Total Reach
<b>The European Union: What it is and what it does</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ac0a88a6-4369-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ac0a88a6-4369-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en</a>	2020	DG COMM	Brochure	595.074
<b>EU &amp; Me</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/955ebbf-4366-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/955ebbf-4366-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en</a>	2020	DG COMM	Activity Book	440.771
<b>Paper hen</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/93862d6e-436a-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/93862d6e-436a-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1</a>	2020	DG COMM	Boardgame	419.858
<b>EU &amp; Me Quiz</b>	<a href="https://europa.eu/learning-corner/quiz_en">https://europa.eu/learning-corner/quiz_en</a>	2019	DG COMM	Online Game	404.905
<b>Travelling in Europe 2020</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc7c96f5-93fa-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-195227357">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc7c96f5-93fa-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-195227357</a>	2020	DG COMM	Leaflet	345.208
<b>Let's explore Europe!</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1632f7f3-4368-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1632f7f3-4368-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en</a>	2020	DG COMM	Publication	314.758
<b>EU Puzzle</b>	<a href="https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-puzzle_en">https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-puzzle_en</a>	2019	DG COMM	Online Game	266.769
<b>EU Timeline</b>	<a href="https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-">https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-</a>	2019	DG COMM	Online resource	253.450

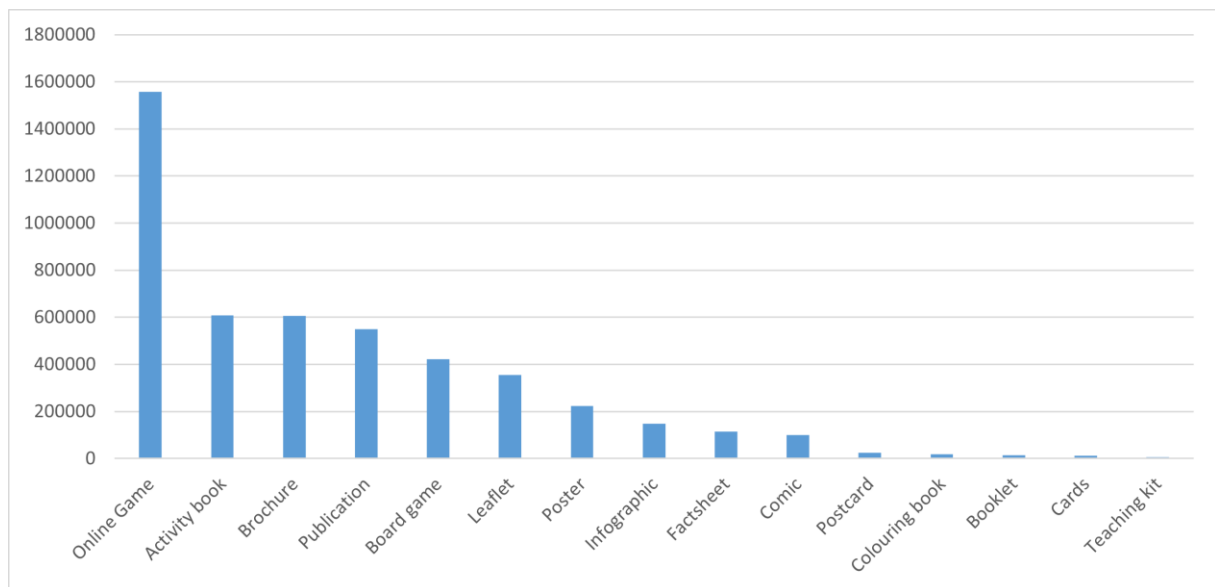
	timeline/overview_en				
<b>The EU: what's it all about?</b>	<a href="https://europa.eu/learning-corner/the-eu-whats-it-all-about_en">https://europa.eu/learning-corner/the-eu-whats-it-all-about_en</a>	2019	DG COMM	Online Game	194.441
<b>Match the flags</b>	<a href="https://europa.eu/learning-corner/match-the-flags_en">https://europa.eu/learning-corner/match-the-flags_en</a>	2019	DG COMM	Online Game	177.340
<b>The European Union Map</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8f8c764d-43da-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8f8c764d-43da-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1</a>	2020	DG COMM	Poster	157.761
<b>52 steps towards a greener city</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/080dffa8-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/080dffa8-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/</a>	2018	DG ENV	Publication	154.933
<b>Travelling in Europe 2019-2020</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f68de0a4-ae84-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-208294773">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f68de0a4-ae84-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-208294773</a>	2019	DG COMM	Infographic	148047
<b>L'Europe en jeux</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cf365f32-e80c-11ea-ad25-01aa75ed71a1/language-fr/format-PDF/source-195382444">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cf365f32-e80c-11ea-ad25-01aa75ed71a1/language-fr/format-PDF/source-195382444</a>	2020	European Commission Representation in France	Activity Book	99.493

Source: Ecorys, OP Monitoring Data and Learning Corner Monitoring Data, n= 4.760.324, 2021

The findings from this analysis are supported by the results of the User survey and the Key stakeholder interviews confirm this so we can conclude that the results from the analysis of the monitoring data accurately reflect the reality in the ground. The above data also highlight the **good track record of DG COMM in producing effective materials and activities for this target group, particularly of the online games available in the Learning**

**Corner**<sup>103</sup>. The variety of the materials highlighted above also supports the claim from stakeholders (also mentioned in Section 2.1) that a diversity of material formats and topics from the EU is much appreciated by children and professionals. A notable absence on this list is the teaching kits, which seem to be underperforming compared to other material formats, despite teachers being one of the key target groups for the European Commission. Table 5 provides a breakdown of the popularity of certain materials by total number of orders and page visits between 2018-2021.

Figure 11: Most popular types of materials and activities by total number order and visits from OP and Learning Corner website



Source: Ecorys, OP and Learning Corner Monitoring Data, n= 3.202.291, 2021

**Available data shows that online games, brochures, activity books, publications, boardgames and leaflets are the most popular types of materials and activities among the 153 materials mapped for this Follow-up review.** These results seem to match the findings reported in Section 2.1 of this report in which more than half of the stakeholders consulted (20 out of 34) agreed that playful activities e.g., activity books, quizzes, games, colouring books are popular among 5-18 year old group. The data also shows that short and direct materials i.e., brochures and leaflets also work quite well among this target group. The popularity of the publication category also matches what was reported from our interviews with stakeholders, the CBCs and the Focus Groups that both children and professionals working with children use publications when doing work related to the EU since they trust the contents and the information contained in them.

To these formats, it is also important to refer the low reach of some of the mapped audio-visual content such as videos available on YouTube or the European Commission Audio-visual Portal. While data collected from stakeholders and participants indicated that the video format was popular among our target group, most of the videos mapped during the exercise had less than 3000 views, with only three videos breaking the 100.000 views mark. While the monitoring data for these materials does not allow to do a precise analysis of the reach of these materials to children and professionals working with them<sup>104</sup>, these three videos which are available in the Learning Corner (EU Green Deal, What is the European Citizens' Initiative? Take the Initiative, EU Customs Union – 50 years young) that gathered a total of 4.000.000 views combined. Due to the characteristics of these videos, we believe that these numbers are not representative of the actual reach of videos made for children since these were assessed to be for more for general public consumption. While this fact does not exclude the use of this materials with the target group, we cannot make an assessment of the actual reach of these videos without more precise data on the share of views from professionals and from children.

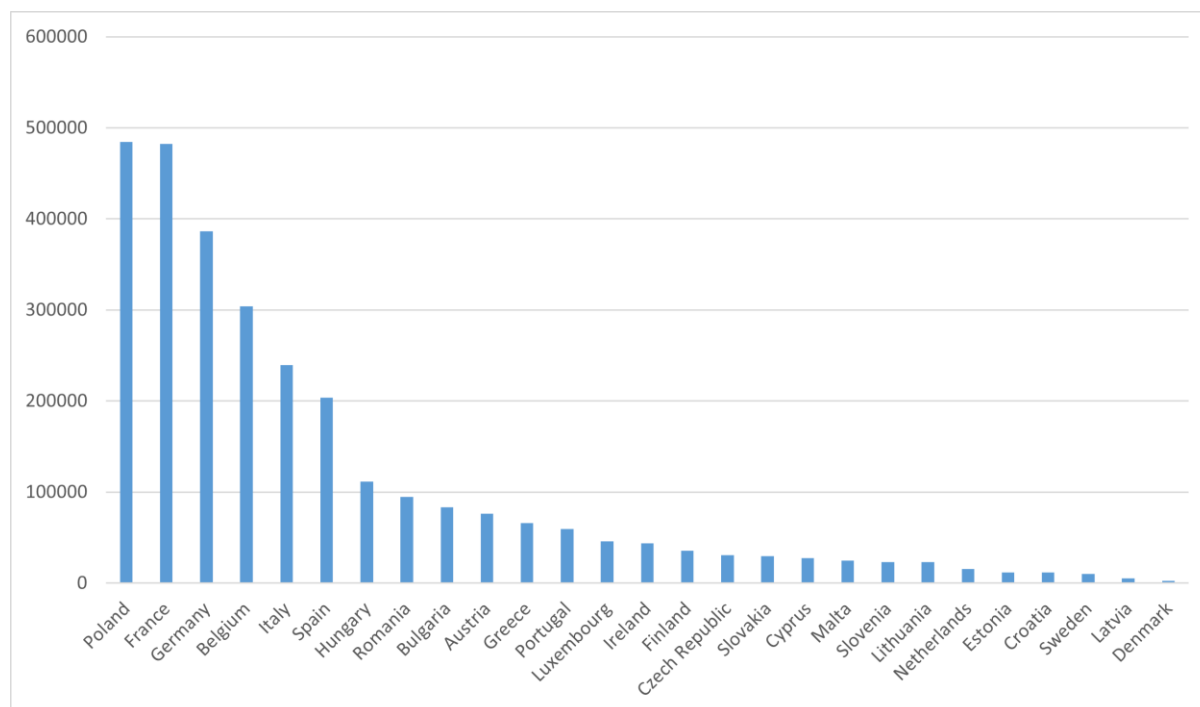
<sup>103</sup> The online games are also according to data responsible for 63% of total visits of the Learning Corner between 2019 and 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Available monitoring data does not allow us to know what is the share of video views that were generated by children and professions who work with them



**In terms of geographical dissemination, available monitoring data shows an uneven dissemination of orders among EU Member States**, with 75% of the physical orders being requested coming from six EU Member States (Poland, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain). Poland, France and Germany take the lead in terms of orders with 46% of total orders with the rest of the EU Member States taking between 2-5% of total orders. By looking at the distribution in the sample countries for this study, we also notice a great disparity of distribution between the 5 countries with Italy having the ordered the most publications (8.16%) then followed by Portugal (2.03%), Slovakia (1.01%), Lithuania (0.89%) then Denmark (0.08%). This provides some extra support to the claims provided by stakeholders and participants consulted for this study of general lack of awareness of the existence of Commission’s materials for children and highlighting a possible lack of physical publications in many Member States. Table 13 shows a breakdown of the orders by EU Member State.

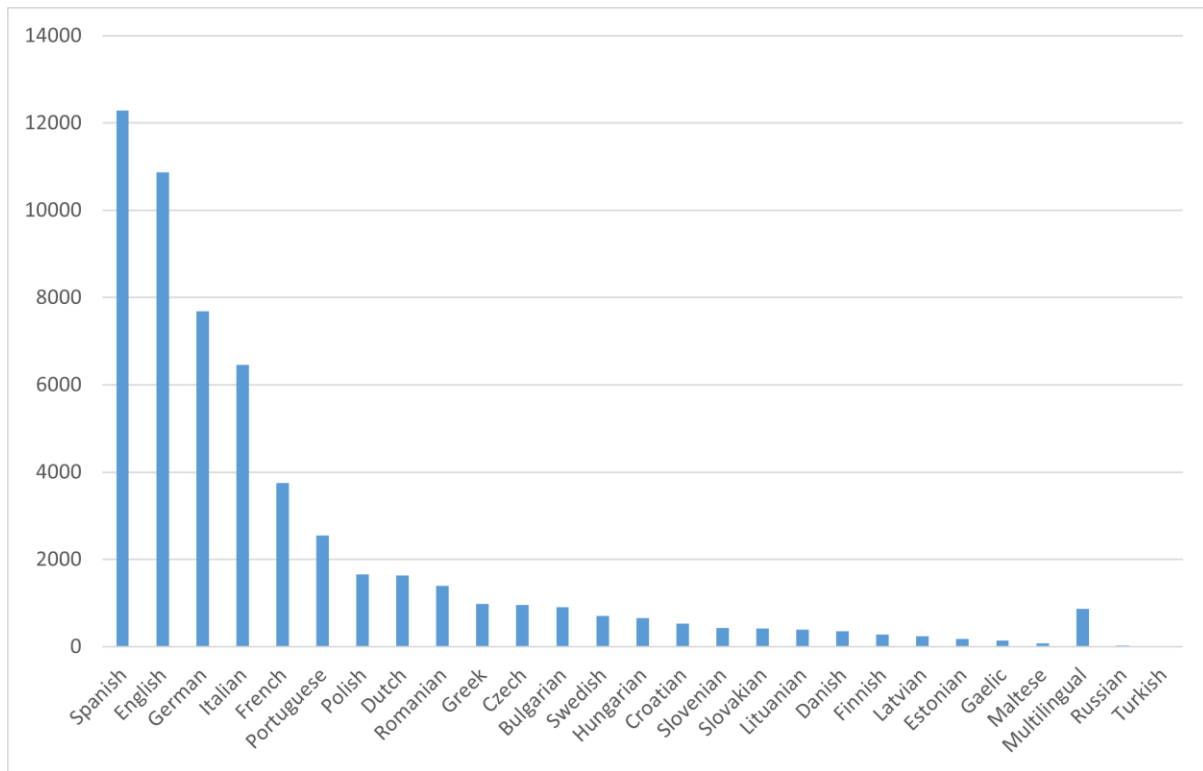
Figure 12 Geographical Distribution of physical copies ordered from OP portal (EU27)



Source: Ecorys, OP Monitoring Data, n= 2.932.162, 2021

Another likely explanation for this uneven distribution is that these Member States are the most populated Member States of the EU meaning that the concentration of orders also matches the distribution of children, teaching staff and schools in the EU. A notable exception in this list is the Netherlands that, despite being one of the most populated EU Member States, comes very low in the list of countries that have ordered copies of the mapped materials from the OP portal. As mentioned in page 36 of this report, the lack of availability of some mapped materials in all EU official languages might have had an effect on the willingness of users to order materials that were not available in their national languages.

Figure 13 Distribution of digital downloads from OP per language version (EU27)

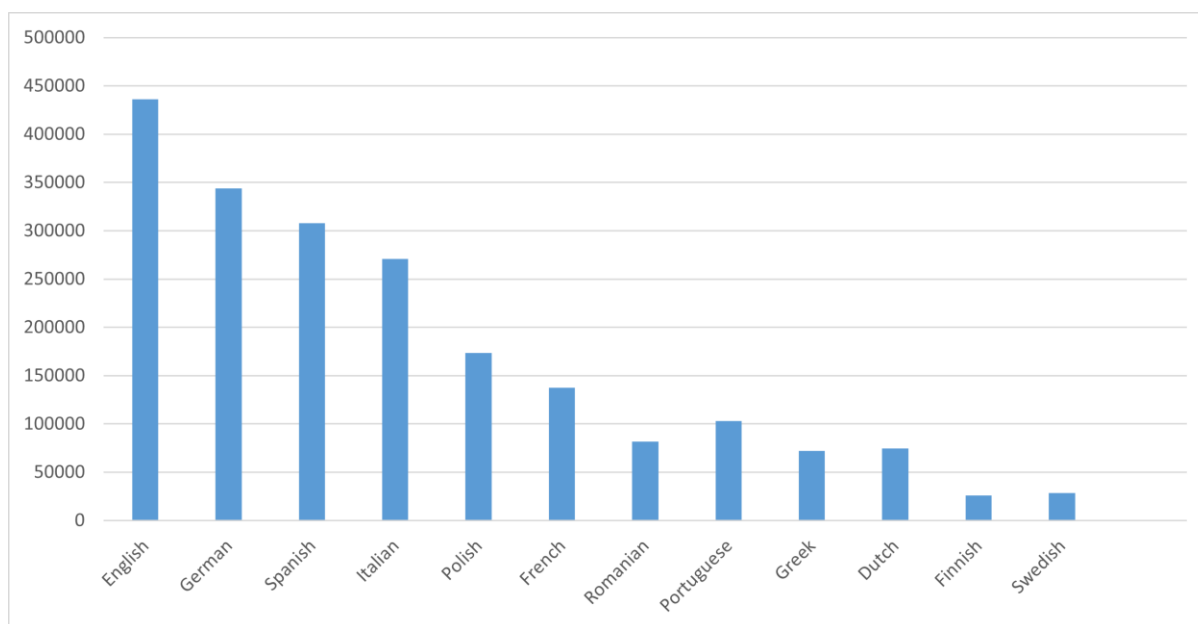


Source: Ecorys, OP Monitoring Data, n= 58.806, 2021

As shown in Table 2, the analysis of the data from the digital downloads from the OP follows the same trend as described above, with 75% of the downloads being done in one of the five most spoken languages in the EU (Spanish, English, Italian, German and French) then being followed by Portuguese, Polish, Dutch and Romanian as responsible for the large part of the remaining downloads. This again corresponds quite well with the known linguistic and demographic distribution of the EU. It is also to note the small but noteworthy number of downloads of materials and activities from the OP portal in Russian and Turkish, which are the languages spoken by large minority communities in some EU Member States.

Regarding the geographical distribution of audio-visual materials, our available monitoring data only covers the online games hosted at the Learning Corner website, which shows a similar pattern than described above, with **visitors coming in their majority from large EU Member States.**

Figure 14 Visits to Learning Corner Website by Browser Language (2019-2020)



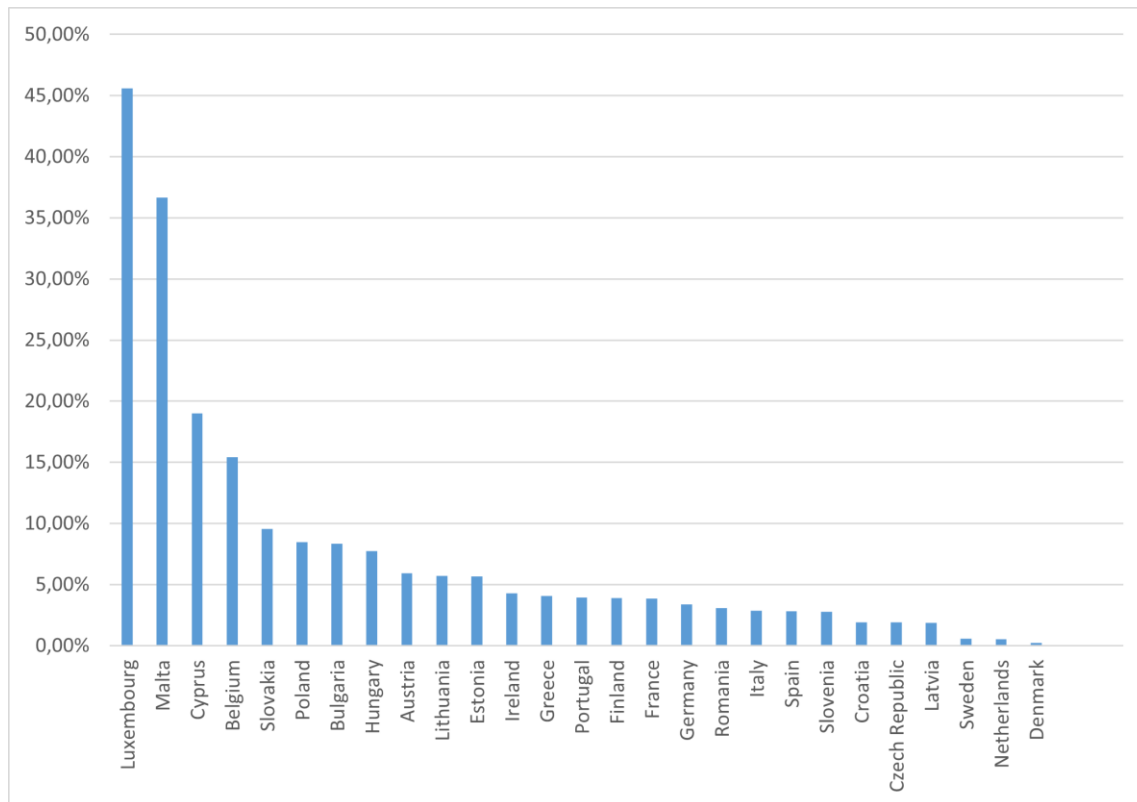
Source: Ecorys, Learning Corner Monitoring Data, n=2.054.933, 2021

One element of note from the analysis of the datasets above is that the number of individuals primarily accessing European Commission materials in English is quite substantial. While English remains a widely used language in the EU, the high number of downloads and website accesses in English can potentially indicate that **the majority of users reached by European Commission’s channels are usually comfortable with the language and are more likely to not come from a disadvantaged, rural or early-school leavers background.**

By comparing available data to Eurostat data<sup>105</sup> on our target group, we can have a better estimate of how successfully Commission’s materials have been able to reach the target group. As shown in Figure 16, **the outreach of Commission’s materials to the core target group though the OP is quite low, averaging 4% of the children population of EU Member States.** The very high percentages from Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus can be explained by their relatively small populations compared to the number OP orders and should be taken with caution.

<sup>105</sup> The used dataset gathered from Eurostat also includes children aged 19years olds which mean that the average can be slightly higher than mentioned.

Figure 15 Percentage of OP orders per total number of children aged 5-19 in EU member states (2020)



Source: Ecorys, OP Monitoring Data and Eurostat, n=69.294.836, 2021

The above mentioned data seem to indicate that, in spite of the European Commission's materials and activities being visible online and that **significant efforts were made by the Commission to make these materials more visible in their networks and for the general public<sup>106</sup>**, the current offer is not effective in reaching their intended target group (i.e., children aged 5-18 in the EU and professionals who work with them) in all EU countries. The bulk of orders, downloads and website access seem to be concentrated in five large countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland) and raises questions on how successfully the European Commission has been in reaching out to children and the professionals who work with them in the remaining EU Member States. The final results of the User Survey also seem to support this view, with 43% of the responses received coming from Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland<sup>107</sup> which potentially indicates that the European Commission has managed to better leverage its distribution channels (OP, EDICs and Representations) in these countries than in other Member States.

**The analysis of the data collected for this follow-up review also suggest that Commission materials and activities are not reaching out to all intended target audience segments.** 15 out of 34 interviewees with national multipliers mentioned that the information is reaching some specific groups more than others, particularly teachers and educators, and that some core target groups such as children 5-18 are not reached at all, at least directly through online dissemination. For example, only seven out of 34 interviewees mentioned that they were aware of the existence of Commission materials for children. The feedback from teachers and children collected during the CBCs seem to support this view as well, with all participants in nine out of 15 Focus Groups and seven

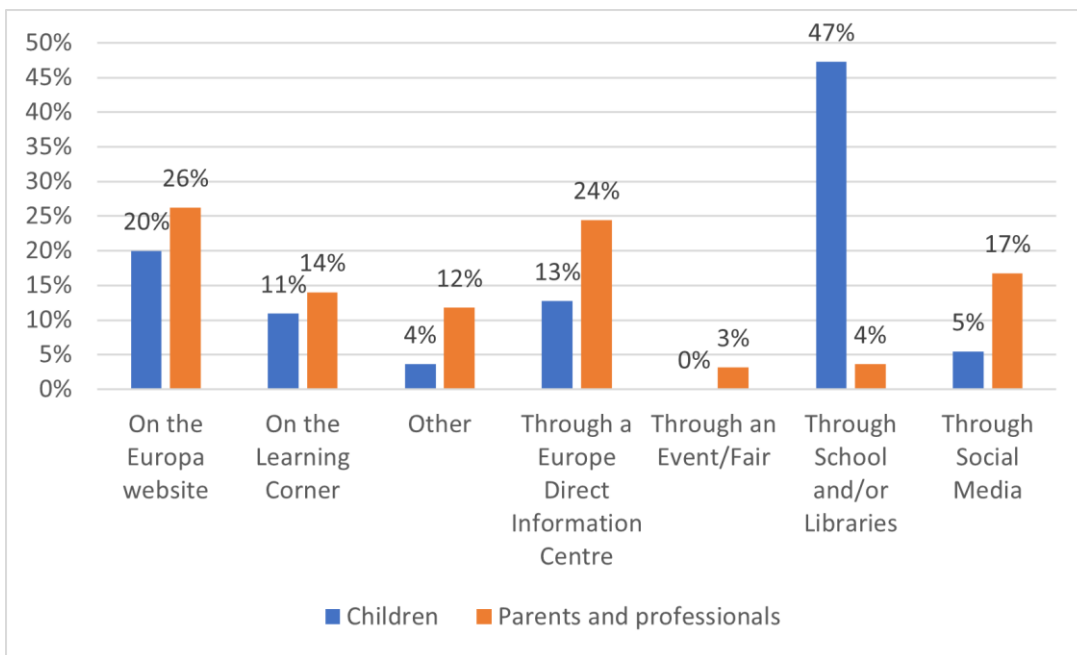
<sup>106</sup> As mentioned in the Interim report, our analysis of interview results with Directorate-Generals and Commission's Representations show that eight out of 13 interviewees mentioned that they feel that the materials are quite visible online and that significant efforts were made by the Commission to make these materials more visible in their networks and for the general public through social media, mailing lists, distribution of physical copies through EDICs and Commission's Representations and dedicated websites such as the Learning Corner.

<sup>107</sup> Please note that the survey also received a large amount of responses from children and teachers from Portugal, which corresponded to 22.7% of the total sample. This was quite disproportionate compared to other EU countries whose response rates averaged around 5%. One possible explanation for this result is the very active network of schools that the Representation manages in Portugal and might have contributed to the very high number of responses from that EU Member State. Nevertheless, if we take out Portugal from the sample, the response rates from the 5 countries mentioned above are even higher so the argument still stands.

out of 10 CBCS reporting that they have not seen Commission’s materials beforehand or/and are not aware of the existence of the Learning Corner or the OP Portal.

For the participants who have seen or have used Commission’s materials before, they mentioned that they have come into contact with them through non-official channels such as school clubs dedicated to the EU, national websites dedicated to teaching materials or through school/public libraries. Seven stakeholders also raised concerns that **information on Commission materials and activities for 5-18 year-olds may only be reaching individuals who are already highly involved in EU related activities and thus more keen in looking for such information in official EU channels i.e., the Learning Corner or the OP’s ‘EU publications’ portal.** According to these stakeholders, most of the teaching body is likely not aware of the existence of this offer and would in principle not think to use EU resources and would look for information about the EU through better known national websites or dedicated teacher materials repositories. This finding is supported by the findings of the User Survey which, as Figure 17 shows in more detail, the importance of school (particularly for children) and professional networks<sup>108</sup> (for teachers) in accessing Commission materials.

Figure 16: Where did you first discovered this material or activity?, per type of respondent



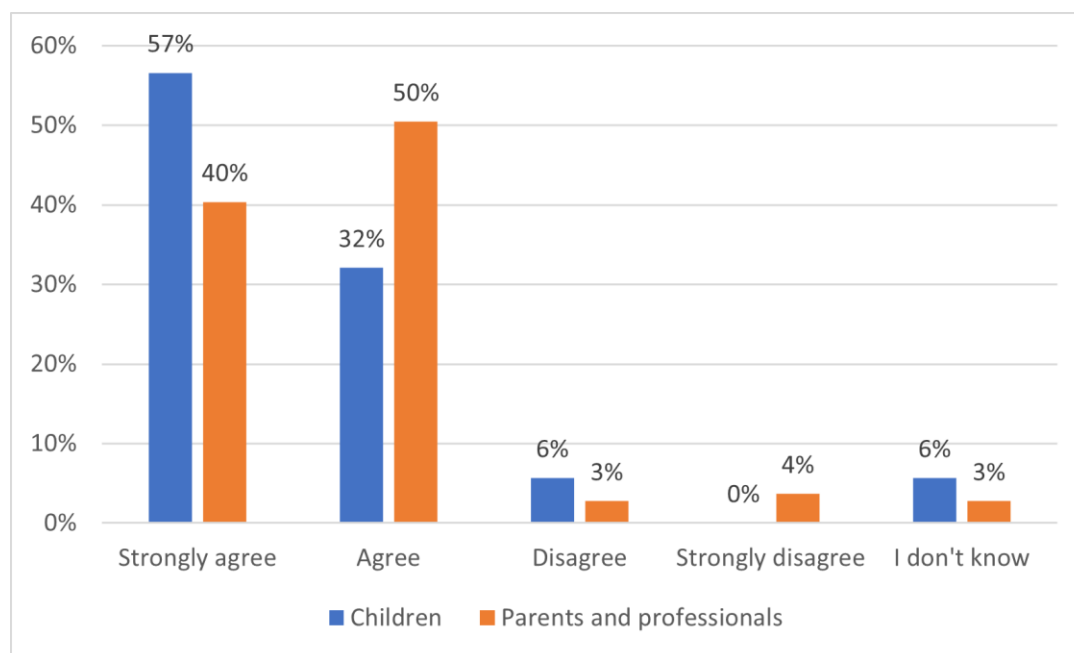
Source: Ecorys Survey, N=276 (children, N=55; parents and professionals, N=221)

The final data from the User Survey seems to go against the trend described above, with 63-69% of the respondents replying that the material and/or activity was accessible through their preferred channels<sup>109</sup> and over 90% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that the material or activity they were reviewing was easy to find and access. Further breakdown of responses between professionals who work with children and children themselves do not seem to change the results, with 89% of professionals and 90% of children agreeing with the above statement. Figure 18 provides an overview of the responses per category of respondent. As mentioned below, these results should not be taken at face value due to the characteristics of the respondents.

<sup>108</sup> For the 12% of the professionals that replied 'Other' in this question of the survey, they mentioned as their source among others, colleagues, former students, internal mailing list of the school they work in, contacts in academia.

<sup>109</sup> Survey question - Was this material or activity available through your preferred channel for accessing information (e.g. social media, website, printed material, face-to-face event, etc.)?,

Figure 17: This material or activity was easy to find / access



Source: Ecorys Survey, N=271 (children, N=53; parents and professionals, N=218)

The User survey received a high number of responses from teachers, which constituted 46% of all professional respondents to this survey. They were followed by trainers (8%), youth workers (8%) and researchers (3%). The survey also received responses from staff from EDICs, parents, social workers, health professionals and career advisors (all around 1% of responses). Even after excluding the teachers' responses from the sample, the responses to the above question remain overwhelmingly positive, with 86.5% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that the material or activity they were reviewing was easy to find and access.

The User survey respondents also seemed to be quite aware of existing Commission websites (Europa, Learning Corner, and the OP 'EU publications' portal) and to use them regularly compared to the participants contacted for the other data collection tasks. Due to the way the survey was disseminated (via banners in the OP website, through the EDICS and Representations and through DG COMM and other author services contact lists), there is **a high chance that the survey reached a group of users that were particularly aware of the Commission offer for children aged 5-18** and thus found it easier than other consulted groups to find and use Commission's materials for their work.

This interpretation of the survey results is supported by the findings of the Stakeholder Interviews, of the Focus Groups and the CBCs, which highlighted that teachers or students involved in European-related school activities, professional networks and/or organisations are more easily reached by European Commission materials than other groups. As mentioned before, the majority of stakeholders and participants consulted during the other research tasks were overwhelmingly not aware of the Commission's offer which might indicate that the current European Commission's distribution channels are not being effective enough in disseminating information about materials outside of an 'already-in-the-know' group of professionals and children. This finding seems to be supported by the fact that none of the participants of the group interviews (eight in total) that work with sub-groups of children reported that they were aware of the Commission's offer of materials for children aged 5-18, while highlighting the importance of such materials being produced for these groups.

The User Survey also received 53 replies from children aged 5-18, with some replies coming from sub-segments of children identified in this follow-up review. Table 24 provides an overview of the profile of the children respondents.

Table 23: Socio-economic profile of respondents, question only for children

Answer option	
Respondents in urban/rural areas	
I live in a rural area	58%

I live in a city	36%
<b>Respondents with a migration background or experience</b>	
I was not born in the country I am living in now	9%
I was born in the country I am living in now	75%
<b>Respondents whose mother tongue is an EU official language</b>	
My first language is one of the 24 official languages of the EU	83%
My first language is not one of the 24 official languages of the EU	4%
<b>Respondents with a disability, special need or a learning difficulty</b>	
I have a disability, special need or a learning difficulty	4%
I do not have a disability, special need or a learning difficulty	79%
<b>Respondents facing financial difficulties</b>	
My family sometimes has financial difficulties	19%
My family does not have financial difficulties	70%
<b>Respondents from a social minority</b>	
I consider myself as part of a social minority (religious, sexual, ethnic, etc.)	19%
I do not consider myself as part of a social minority (religious, sexual, ethnic, etc.)	53%
<b>Respondents with access to a computer</b>	
I have access to the Internet and/or a computer at home	81%
I do not have access to the Internet and/or a computer at home	2%
<b>Respondents who are still in school</b>	
I have dropped out of school	0%
I am still studying	79%
<b>Respondents who preferred to not reply</b>	
Prefer to not reply	8%

Source: Ecorys Survey, N=53

As illustrated by the data in the table above, the User survey reached various social minority segments of children to varying degrees, but their opinion regarding the accessibility of materials from the Commission was very similar to the other groups, i.e., overwhelmingly positive regarding their accessibility. As mentioned before, however, these results need to be seen with some caution due to how the User Survey was disseminated and responses may have come from an already well-informed group of children about the Commission offer of materials for their group.

**Online portals with Commission materials for children (such as the OP portal or the Learning Corner) were found to be difficult to find during a simple online search.** Only two out of 28 interviewees consulted indicated that Commission materials for 5-18 year-olds were visible and easy to access via the OP 'EU publications' portal and the Learning Corner. The majority of interviewees did not know of the existence of these portals and often complained about not finding relevant information about the EU adapted for children when looking for them with a search engine. The findings from the Online Focus Groups seem to contradict these claims as only 1 group in 10<sup>110</sup> encountered difficulties in finding EU materials adapted to their needs during their Mystery Shopping exercise but it is true that most of the materials reported found were not in their majority Commission materials or part of the materials mapped by the research team as suitable for children.<sup>111</sup> The majority of the search results did also not lead to either the OP Portal or the Learning Corner but to individual author service websites hosting the contents.

<sup>110</sup> For the Online Focus Groups, only the 14-16 years olds and the 16-18 years olds were asked to do the Mystery Shopping exercise.

<sup>111</sup> Only 2 groups found materials from the Commission for children with Google search (on the topic of Gender equality and Climate change) and only one group found a link to a Learning Corner material (The European Union. What it is and what it does). Most of the groups either found materials which are more suitable for citizens in general and materials from non-Commission institutions such as the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and national governmental bodies. None of the focus group participants had prior knowledge of the Learning Corner so they did not use it as their first choice

Similar to what was found in the recently completed Ecorys Review of the Commission Publications for Citizens, **interviewees and participants found it difficult to navigate and find suitable materials on the 'EU publications' portal**. This finding was confirmed by the Online Focus Groups. Regarding the Learning Corner, **the majority of focus group participants found that the website was very well designed and reported the materials available there useful for them (particularly for their studies)**.

From the user's perspective, the findings of the User survey also seem to support the view from the author services that the materials are effective in conveying EU messages and addressing their needs with 92% of respondents found the material in their preferred languages and 59% of respondents used the material as a support on a discussions and conversations they had about the topic. The findings of the Online Focus Groups seem also to support this finding, with only 1 group out of 10 facing difficulties in finding materials about specific EU topics in their language through a simple online search. Again, we remind that the majority of the search results during this exercise were not in their majority Commission materials so this finding needs to be viewed with caution.

Regarding social media reach, our research looked into total reach across the different Commission author services, particularly the total reach figures for the key author service accounts where posts or activities relevant to 5-18 years olds were identified. Table 25 and 26 provide more detail on the total reach number for main Commission Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Table 24 Facebook total reach – main Commission accounts

Account	Author service	No of fans/likes
EU Environment	DG ENV	277,424
European Commission	DG COMM	1,162,599
European Youth EU	DG EAC	261,559
Erasmus+	DG EAC	640,320
Creative Europe	DG EAC	101,906
Europe in my Region	DG REGIO	55,887
EU Climate action	DG CLIMA	106,136
EU Social	DG EMPL	149,139
EU Food and Farming	DG AGRI	171,616
EU Science Hub - Joint Research Centre	DG JRC	24,590
EU Science & Innovation	DG RTD	80,181
Digital EU	DG CONNECT	34,461
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,065,818</b>

Source: Ecorys, Monitoring Data Requests, 2021

Table 25 Instagram total reach – main Commission accounts

Account	Author service	No of followers
Our Planet EU	DG ENV	24,900
Europeancommission	DG COMM	587,000



<b>European Youth EU</b>	DG EAC	38,000
<b>EU In my Region</b>	DG REGIO	18,900
<b>Euagrifood</b>	DG AGRI	17,000
<b>EU Science &amp; Innovation</b>	DG RTD	3434
<b>Total</b>		689,234

Source: Ecorys, Monitoring Data Requests, 2021

Since the majority of the author services that manage them were not able to provide their reach within the target group covered by this study, our research team decided to not include these numbers in the overall reach analysis for the following reasons:

- ▶ The proportion of fans/followers aged 13-17 across the key social media accounts is quite low. Our research showed that the main Facebook account of the European Commission<sup>112</sup> has only 0.0732% of total fans aged 13-17. This means that a vast majority of the fans / likes represent individuals outside of the scope of this study.
- ▶ Nearly all social networking sites used by the European Commission (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) only allow users aged 13 and over meaning that a sizeable amount of our target group (5-12 years olds) are not included in the data above limiting the usefulness of this research.
- ▶ It is also difficult to breakdown the reach data according to professional status as well, further limiting our research on this part of our target group.

Our findings from the Online Focus Groups also show that the main social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter – used by author services have fallen out of favour with **younger users who now use some of the newer platforms – namely Reddit, TikTok, Twitch, and Discord**. Thus, further analysis of the above data would not bring any additional insights regarding reach to the core audience.

### 2.4.1.2 Mutual awareness and impact on outreach

This section addresses the specific question: *To what extent author services covered by the scope of this Follow-up review are aware of each other's materials to 5 to 18 year olds and use these for their outreach?*

Evidence suggests that author services have very limited knowledge of the materials and activities produced by the other author services. Out of 16 interviews with author services, only one author service mentioned that they were aware of materials and activities produced by another author service other than DG COMM since they share the use of some social media accounts.

Evidence collected for this Review show **that the DG COMM Learning Corner serves as a source of materials for author services to use to complement their materials and activities offer to children aged 5-18 and professionals who work with them**. Four out of 16 interviewed author services mentioned materials produced by DG COMM and/or available in the Learning Corner among the materials that they distributed or most used to support their outreach. They also reported that they included direct links to the Learning Corner in their communication materials.

One author service consulted also highlighted the **advantages of having a single EU level resource such as the Learning Corner** that they could use with their communication with children and people who work with them, giving the Commission a comparative advantage compared to other EU and non-EU institutions they work with. One author service also suggested that more work needs to be invested in promoting the Learning Corner among author services, possibly through annual seminars or existing resources for children and people who work with them.

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanCommission>

Evidence also suggests that a bit less than **one third of Commission’s author services cooperate with the intent to increase the effectiveness of their outreach or their materials and activities offer to children aged 5-18 and the professionals who work with them.** This cooperation is mostly based around shared communication objectives. Under a third (30%) or 26 respondents to the scoping survey highlighted that they are working with other Commission services in pursuing common objectives for communication targeting children, specifically to jointly develop materials and/or organise activities targeting children aged 5-18<sup>113</sup>. Only two interviewees out of 16 mentioned that they were not using any materials for other author services but instead were actively cooperating with other author services regarding communication to the target group.

Regarding the effectiveness of this cooperation and joint efforts to outreach to the target group, **available monitoring data does not allow us to infer any conclusions on the effectiveness of this outreach for this Follow-up review.** None of the interviewed author services provided the research team with examples, monitoring or evaluation data to assess the effectiveness of shared communication materials, activities, and campaigns.

Evidence suggests that **Commission materials and activities for 5-18 year-olds resulting from the cooperation among author services are not common and that there is space for further cooperation to be explored.** The only known example by DG JRC and DG HOME is still under development at the time of writing so no data on it is available.

### 2.4.1.3 Engagement with the target audience

This section addresses the specific question: *To what extent are European Commission’s materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds effective in engaging with this target audience?*

Analysis of the available monitoring data indicates that over the period covered by this follow-up review (2018-2020), the European Commission engaged with 131.822 individuals both through physical and multimedia materials and activities over the period covered by this follow-up review.<sup>114</sup> 125.014 individuals engaged with the offer of published materials and activities and 6808 individuals<sup>115</sup> were engaged through the European Commission’s multimedia in the Learning Corner feedback option. It is important to note that while the online games available on the Learning Corner were mentioned as highly engaging by both users and stakeholders alike (particularly during the Online Focus Groups and CBCs), available data does not allow us to properly access the level of engagement generated by each online game on the Learning Corner website<sup>116</sup>.

From available data, we identified the following 10 materials to have engaged the largest number of users for the period covered by this follow-up review.

Table 26 Final list of effective materials and activities according to total engagement

Name of Material	Link to material	Publishing date	Author service	Type of Material	Total Engagement
EU & Me	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/95">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/95</a>	2020	DG COMM	Activity Book	15.979 engagements

<sup>113</sup> For example, one author service reported sharing the same social media account (on Instagram) with another author service to build on the existing community for their outreach when promoting materials targeting children and professional that work with them. Another interviewee mentioned that they were cooperating with another author service to jointly produce materials for this target group and jointly address their needs.

<sup>114</sup> This number is an estimation based on the total number of individuals that ordered from the OP portal, the number of downloads for each mapped materials in the OP website and the number of individuals that provided feedback to the online games on the Learning Corner for the 2018-2021 period. These numbers are the closest value we currently have available to calculate engagement with the European Commission materials and activities but should not be taken as a perfect estimate of this number.

<sup>115</sup> The research team used the collected feedback data until November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 provided by DG COMM

<sup>116</sup> Data relevance to access engagement with online games such as Data regarding number/% of users that finished the game, number/% of users that started a game but did not finish it and number of reshares through imbedded link at the bottom of the game page by type of link was to DG COMM but this data was not collected.

	5ebbf-4366-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en				
<b>52 steps towards a greener city</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/080dffa8-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/080dffa8-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/</a>	2018	DG ENV	Publication	15.269 engagements
<b>Travelling in Europe 2020</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc7c96f5-93fa-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-195227357">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc7c96f5-93fa-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-195227357</a>	2020	DG COMM	Leaflet	14.657 engagements
<b>Let's explore Europe!</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1632f7f3-4368-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1632f7f3-4368-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en</a>	2020	DG COMM	Publication	12.359 engagements
<b>The European Union: What it is and what it does</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ac0a88a6-4369-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ac0a88a6-4369-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en</a>	2020	DG COMM	Brochure	10.491 engagements
<b>Paper hen</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/93862d6e-436a-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/93862d6e-436a-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1</a>	2020	DG COMM	Boardgame	10.179 engagements
<b>The European Union Map</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8f8c764d-43da-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8f8c764d-43da-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1</a>	2020	DG COMM	Poster	9656 engagements
<b>Know your pollinators</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f229629c-c0c5-">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f229629c-c0c5-</a>	2020	DG ENV	Playing Cards	4150 engagements

	11ea-855a-01aa75ed71a1				
<b>The big bonfire</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/92f3741b-5224-11ea-aece-01aa75ed71a1">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/92f3741b-5224-11ea-aece-01aa75ed71a1</a>	2020	DG AGRI	Comic	4150 engagements
<b>Europe better together</b>	<a href="https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4cd94b64-4368-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en">https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4cd94b64-4368-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en</a>	2019	DG COMM	Teaching Kit	3225 engagements

Source: Ecorys, OP Monitoring Data, n= 125.014, 2021

The findings from the monitoring data seem to be supported by the evidence collected via the User Survey and the Key Stakeholder Interviews regarding the most engaging materials and mentioned in the Interim Report.

**The data shows that Commission materials effectively engage with the target group in a variety of ways, from different kinds of formats (games, posters, activity books, comics, teaching kits, etc.) to content (Environment, history of EU and its institutions, travel around the UE, EU values, etc.).** The analysis of User Survey results seems to support these findings, with 76% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that the material they used was engaging, without statistically relevant differences between child respondents and professionals who work with child respondents. Table 12 provides a more precise breakdown of the replies to the User Survey. As mentioned before, the User survey seems to have received mainly responses from a very informed and pro-EU group of respondents, but their opinions seem to be supported by the findings collected from the other data collection tasks.

Table 27 Share of responses to the question: Would you agree that this material or activity was...

	Easy to find / access	Easy to read / understand	Easy to use / take part in	Engaging	Informative	Designed in a way that appealed
Strongly agree	43%	51%	52%	49%	60%	51%
Agree	47%	41%	40%	37%	34%	40%
Disagree	4%	4%	3%	7%	2%	5%
Strongly disagree	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
I don't know	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%	3%

Source: Ecorys Survey, N=271

**Users also generally found the materials and activities in the Learning Corner to be quite engaging, of good quality and quite useful for them.** The analysis of the feedback data from the materials and activities

(including the online games) available on the Learning Corner also seems to support this finding. Table 29 and 30 provides a more precise breakdown of the replies to the Feedback survey.

Table 28 Share of responses to the question: Would you agree that this material or activity was...

	What is your overall evaluation of this product?
Excellent	36,33%
Good	29,33%
Fair	10,98%
Poor	4,04%
Very poor	9,02%
Do not know / Did not reply	10,31%

Source: Learning Corner feedback survey N= 6808

Table 29 Share of responses to the question: Would you agree that this product was...

	Interesting?	Clear?	Visually appealing?	Useful?
Strongly agree	49,45%	48,77%	48,57%	58,91%
Agree	19,19%	19,19%	19,14%	19,09%
Neither agree nor disagree	12,39%	12,25%	12,24%	10,10%
Disagree	5,34%	5,20%	5,16%	3,56%
Strongly disagree	13,64%	13,17%	12,98%	4,84%
Do not know / Did not reply	0,00%	1,42%	1,92%	3,49%

Source: Learning Corner feedback survey N= 6808

**Data collected suggest that Commission is producing materials that successfully engage with the younger age groups of the target audience but less successful with the older age groups.** Regarding materials that users found particularly engaging, we find EU & Me, Let's Explore Europe and The European Union Map. These materials match the materials already identified on Table 11 and highlight the importance of materials that contain in them various and interlinked ways to engage with its content (EU & Me) and whose format allows to engage with it in a playful and pedagogical way (Let's Explore Europe).

The materials identified above are good examples of the use of interactive and engaging formats by the author services to engage them with EU related topics and information about the Commission's work. They particularly highlighted the following formats as good practices with the younger age groups (until 10 years old):

- Highly colourful materials (such as activity books, colouring books or maps of Europe),
- Interactive and playful games
- Live experiences (such as science experiments, school visits or organised activities in author services visitor centres)
- Use of technology, particularly VR (such as virtual tours of Europe or games)
- Competitions

These findings are also supported by interviews with key stakeholders **which mention that some Commission materials, particularly those who are more tactile or activity oriented (such as games, quizzes, colouring books, with stickers or/and other tactile elements) work very well with the younger age groups, relying on the 'learning-by-doing' approach** to communicate about the EU and what is currently doing on the topics at hand.

The results of CBCs, in which 90% of the teachers chose online games to use with their groups, also support this view mentioning that these were the easiest format to work with large number of children and engage them with the content. They particularly appreciated the use of sound and colourful effects to convey success and the opportunity to play these games together as a class, fostering cooperation among children.

**Availability of these games in paper format is still welcome for schools/homes who do not have the means to us online formats.** While teachers also highlighted that online content is preferable, they mentioned that not all schools or homes have computers available for all children.

Stakeholders and teachers also acknowledge that these **more playful formats lose their effectiveness with the older section of the target group (12 olds and above) and that the existing offer does not particularly engage well with this age group.** For this age group, they found that the Commission materials relying on the following formats were more successful in engaging with this target group:

- Videos
- Materials with practical information about travel and EU-funded opportunities
- Materials with calls for action (such as fighting against discrimination or civic engagement)
- Materials that can be found and/or easily reshared over their preferred social media
- Materials that provide content adapted to their level of studies but provide opportunity to explore more if needed (i.e., Wikipedia).

These format preferences were further supported by the findings from the Online Focus Groups which confirmed the interest of these older age groups for the types of materials mentioned above. Regarding social media content, participants agreed that sharable materials would be engaging for their age groups but that the European Commission should also invest in activities and materials that can be easily accessible at their schools in their own language. **Support for EU related school clubs and student-driven events was also mentioned as an interesting type of activity for their age group.** Regarding professionals who work with children such as teachers, evidence shows that any materials that they can bring to the classrooms and use as teaching kits about the EU are very well received by this group. Evidence also suggests that teachers particularly like interactive materials i.e., online games and short videos about the EU.

**Findings from the Users survey, Online Focus Groups and the Key stakeholder interviews suggest that Commission's materials are somewhat effective in producing behavioural changes but improvements can still be made.** A bit less than two thirds of professional respondents also mentioned that they saw changes in behaviour of children they are responsible for after using the material with them, which potential indicate that some of the materials used do resonate with the target group at many levels, including personal attitudes and behaviours. Nevertheless, only 51% of children respondents mentioned that the material had led them to change their behaviour after using it with 36% replying that they did not change their behaviour.

Regarding the materials that users reported to be not engaging were *The EU - what's it all about*, *The European Union Map* as well as materials designed by the Representation of the European Commission. No specific information about why they did not engage well with the materials above but it should be noted that the majority of negative responses to the above materials came from professionals working with children and parents, potentially indicating that these materials are not adapted to the work they do with the target group.

One specific criticism from users was that some of the materials, particularly *The EU - what's it all about*, were too male-centric and did not present any examples of women's contribution to the European project. **Data collected from the mapping of materials and from the group interviews highlighted the existence of materials that, while rare, were not inclusive nor representative of the diversity of race, gender, religion or sexual identity of EU citizens.** 2 materials were found to include sexist imagery of women, 1 material was found to have a negative portrayal of migrant communities and 2 materials portraying families did not include as well non-heteronormative families in their visuals. The next section will present in more detail the level of inclusiveness of Commission materials.

A particularly interesting find while looking at the feedback from users who classified the online games as poor or very poor is **the number of access complaints (i.e., not being able to load the games on specific browsers and devices) and the existence of some game-breaking bugs that hindered their experience (i.e., not being able to grab/drag certain objects, not being able to move forwards in some levels, etc.).** These complaints were also encountered during the CBCs and the Online Focus Groups providing extra support to this finding.

Another particular finding is that the European Commission **Audio-visual Portal does not provide the user with any kind of engagement opportunity aside from shares through email, Facebook and Twitter** which severely limits this kind of analysis. The data on engagement with other types of multimedia content such as videos on YouTube or the European Commission Audio-visual Portal is unfortunately too little to provide a full analysis of the level of engagement with this kind of materials.

Existing data on the engagement of the target group with the social media content produced and disseminated through the European Commission main accounts is also quite limited, particularly when it comes from engagement with children below 13 years old. From our research on the topic, **this medium is of limited use in disseminating content to certain groups of children but remains useful to engage with parents, teachers/educators, multipliers etc who work with children**. From our analysis, this is also the strategy of some author services, which can be illustrated by the following examples of posts sharing materials with this specific target audience:

- ▶ **DG CLIMA Twitter post targeting parents** (247 likes, 186 retweets, 1,431 engagements): <https://twitter.com/EUClimateAction/status/1243484554779922432?s=20>
- ▶ **DG CLIMA Facebook post targeting teachers** by marking Education Day linking to Our Planet, Our Future website/platform (35 reactions, 6 shares, 97 engagements) [https://m.facebook.com/EUClimateAction/posts/2583095665100242?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=%2C0%2AF](https://m.facebook.com/EUClimateAction/posts/2583095665100242?__tn__=%2C0%2AF)

Social media platforms have been as well used by author services as part of a campaign to distribute or promote materials for children aged 5-18. Examples include:

- ▶ **DG EAC Facebook post to launch new version of the Happy Life internet safety toolkit:** <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanYouthEU/posts/2714163425286346>
- ▶ **DG ENV post to promote the Learning Corner by linking to Education Day:** <https://www.facebook.com/EUEnvironment/posts/10156375404689285>
- ▶ **DG COMM/European Commission post – linked to beginning of school year to promote the Learning Corner:** <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanCommission/posts/3360998700614253>
- ▶ **DG REGIO creating a playlist of short videos to promote the UNI! The Regions Game** (4 videos, 85 views) <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOga7xzPa5G2uRUX8tdJ0HdZ4GJD74Bkm>

Limited data available suggests that these posts do not produce high levels of engagement among users and thus seems to be of limited use in promoting or disseminating materials and activities for the target group for this follow-up review. **One interesting finding is that often large numbers of views do not translate into followers on the account, with users interested in the content presented but not committing to follow the account regularly.** Our data from the Key Stakeholders Interviews and the Focus Groups seems to confirm this finding, with most respondents and participants not being aware of Commission social media accounts and, when queried if they would re-share Commission material in their social media, often responded that they would not since often the material is not on brand or right for dissemination with their network.

#### 2.4.1.4 Meeting the needs of the target group and of key multipliers

This section addresses the specific question: *To what extent are Commission's materials for children aged 5-18 fit for purpose in terms of conveying communication messages of author services and effectively addressing the needs of their target groups, including the needs of professionals who work with them?*

Evidence collected and reviewed indicates that Commission author services **need to continue their ongoing efforts** to address the needs of the 5-18 year old target group and the professionals who work with them, with a particular focus on the needs of sub-groups and other categories of professional than teachers.

From the author services point of view, **considerable progress has been made to ensure that their materials are fit for purpose in terms of conveying communication messages from the Commission.** Just over a half of interviewed author services (seven out of 15) considered that their materials are fit for purpose and based this assessment on the positive feedback they received from users on their materials and on their capacity to produce materials that tackle current topics in an effective manner. One author service acknowledges that improvements in term of format can be still made (e.g., phasing out the production of long publications, investing more in creating interactive materials for the target group) but considered that the materials produced were effective and of good quality. No feedback data was provided to the research team to support these claims. One author service also mentioned that collecting this kind of feedback from children users is quite complicated, so they prefer to collect the feedback from teachers rather than the direct users.

This finding is somewhat contradicted by the feedback received by teachers during the CBCs and the Online Focus Groups which **found that it is rare that they can directly comment on the Commission's offer for the target group they are working with.** While some teachers have contacts with EDICs and Representations, the establishment of this contact often comes from the initiative of the teacher and the use of their own personal time to work with the EDICs and Representations and obtain the materials they need for their sessions. The consulted

teachers were also surprised by the age classification of certain materials and activities on the Learning Corner, which they found inadequate for the target group, often in terms of complexity, reading level requirements and level interactivity.

The analysis of data from stakeholders at EU and national level seem to support this view and shows that the **current offer of materials and activities is not as effective as it could be in conveying EU messages and addressing target group needs**. Among the interviewees that were familiar with Commission materials, two stakeholders mentioned that the current offer still contains materials that are not stimulating for the target group (i.e., as long publications with a lot of text) which does not help motivate children to find out more about the EU. **Some stakeholders also mentioned that often materials are more commonly ready for use by teachers, with great didactical potential but not suited for direct use with children without some major changes beforehand**. Stakeholders familiar with Commission materials felt that there are many materials that talk about the EU, its institutions and history but not many that critically engage with this material or allow the emergence of a discussion about the role of the EU and its values.

Analysis of the available data also indicates that **the production of materials and activities is underutilising the knowledge and experience of organisations at national and EU-level that work with the target group**, limiting the efficacy of Commission materials. There is a distinct lack of materials made in co-operation with children, children's organisations, or parents to be distributed for children on EU topics that interest them the most. Relatable materials i.e., as stories of other children who live in the EU, who came to the EU (i.e., migrant children) or benefited from the EU actions directly (i.e. Erasmus) are also not very common. These co-created materials are in the opinion of stakeholders much more effective in terms of addressing the target group needs and interests and are more effective in their experience in terms of dissemination because they are by their age peers, in their language and on topics that matter to them. Examples of potential sources of materials of this kind are competitions, either online and/or in schools.

Stakeholders are not aware of the offer of the Commission for specific sub-groups of the target group. For stakeholders not familiar with Commission materials (14 out of 30 interviewees), **there was a clear need of materials who are more adapted to the needs of the target group, both in terms of age group (specially 12-14 years old) but also for specific sub-groups** i.e., rural children, migrant children, visually impaired children, and hearing-impaired children. There were a number of Commission materials for these segments of 5-18 year-olds identified during the mapping undertaken in the context of this Follow-up review, and notably:

- ▶ 29 out of 153 materials identified as inclusive of children with migration background.
- ▶ 12 out of 153 materials identified as inclusive of rural children.
- ▶ 4 out of 153 materials identified as inclusive for children with disabilities.

These findings suggest that there was an insufficient awareness of the offer of the Commission materials for minority target groups, particularly among the organisations directly working with these sub-groups in the sample Member States.

Regarding accessibility in terms of languages, our findings show that the **offer in terms of non-official EU languages and braille could be improved**. Three national stakeholders pointed out that it was difficult for them to find materials in braille or in national sign language, which limits the accessibility of these materials to children with sensory disabilities. Our mapping of materials shows no materials for children available in braille or national sign language, but the research team did not test all materials for text-to-speech functionality. The majority of the videos mapped had the option for automatic captions in all EU languages, but quality of such captions varied if the video was available on YouTube (good to quite poor) or if available in the European Commission Audio-visual Portal (quite good). Materials in minority languages according to two national stakeholders were also quite rare, limiting the reach of these materials to certain linguistic minority communities or migrant communities. This finding is supported by our current mapping exercise which only identified three materials out of 125 that were translated in non-official EU languages namely Norwegian, Russian, and Turkish.

## 2.5 Efficiency

This section provides our findings in relation to the fifth strategic question of the Review: *How efficient is the collaboration between the author services covered by the scope of this Follow-up review in development and revision of their materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds? What could be efficient, practical and feasible ways to improve this collaboration in the future?*

It provides our findings in relation to the sixth strategic question of the Review: *What would be the most efficient approach for author services covered by the scope of this Follow-up review to improve and streamline their*



materials offer to 5 to 18 year olds in the future (e.g., develop new materials, adapt their existing materials, or combine both approaches)?

### 2.5.1.1 Collaboration between author services in the development and improvements of materials and activities

This section addresses the specific question: *How efficient is the collaboration between the author services covered by the scope of this Follow-up review in development and revision of their materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds? What could be efficient, practical and feasible ways to improve this collaboration in the future?* The findings presented here on both questions draw on the initial Scoping survey, Key stakeholder interviews and our Mapping of materials.

Overall, there is **evidence that collaboration among author services occurred in relation to the development, revision and distribution of materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds but that this is an area that could be strengthened.** In 60 of the 115 materials (52%) identified by author services in the initial Scoping survey there was explicit acknowledgement that the author service producing that material or activity had worked with another Commission author service or Service Department in producing or distributing them.

Author services stated that they mostly collaborated to promote, distribute or disseminate materials and activities (43 of the 60 materials). Author services indicated that they jointly developed materials and/or organised activities targeting children aged 5 to 18 for 28 of the identified materials and activities. For 21 materials or activities, author services indicated that they pooled resources for joined communications campaigns or communication coordination.

Table 30 Collaboration among author services in pursuing common communication objectives

Is your author service working with other Commission services in pursuing common objectives for your communication targeting children? If so, in what ways? Please select all that apply:	
Yes, to jointly develop materials and/or organise activities targeting children aged 5 to 18	28
Yes, to pool resources for joined communication campaigns or communication coordination	21
Yes, to promote, distribute or disseminate our materials or activities	43
No, our author service is not working with other Commission services in pursuing common communication objectives with children target audience	31

Source: Ecorys, Scoping survey, 2020

The key stakeholder interviews provided more tangible examples of these types of collaboration:

- ▶ On a previous SharkBase project, DG DEFIS collaborated with DG ENV who provided content for a particular web page.
- ▶ DG ENV reported that they have involved DG CLIMA in delivery of their classroom dialogues in the past, which involve DG colleagues voluntarily going to schools all over Europe, although there has been no delivery of this activity in the last year due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.
- ▶ DG AGRI reported they are in the early stages of planning a potential joint material with DG SANTE aimed at children utilising the content they already have on the Fork to Farm Strategy.

Collaboration amongst author services for the purpose of distribution or promotion of materials or activities for children aged 5 to 18 was more commonly reported. In the Key stakeholder interviews, author services also highlighted examples of collaboration for this purpose, including DG DEFIS who supplied materials to other DGs for distribution, one example being materials suitable for children given to DG AGRI to support the Farming by Satellite initiative. DG EAC were reported to have been involved in advertising the DG ENV classroom dialogue opportunity through their networks.

Several EU level author services indicated in the Key stakeholder interviews that **there have been improvements in the cooperation with DG COMM over the past few years for the purpose of producing materials for children**. DG COMM themselves felt they have made some good progress here. They stated that since 2017, the team responsible for materials for children worked hard to build a network and relationships with other DGs and to establish DG COMM as available for advice and support for others developing materials for children. This offer of support was taken up, for example, by DG CLIMA who reported that they have previously checked with DG COMM on whether the content they were producing was pitched at the right level for the 5 to 18 year old target group. The creation of a more formal structure by DG COMM to support these collaborative relationships in the form of a Communications Network was also appreciated by other author services, with one EU level stakeholder reporting: *"I have been in network groups by DG COMM and I think these work quite well."*

**Author services were appreciative of the support offered by the EU Publications Office (OP) in producing and distributing materials for children.** One author service highlighted the ability to access graphic design support through the OP. The process for requesting this was reported to be straightforward and it was felt to enhance all types of materials. It was seen as particularly important for those targeting children where visual presentation is important. The advice the OP can offer on formats was also welcomed, but less so the editorial advice as author services felt they would know the subject matter better. In contrast, one interviewee highlighted that some staff find it more challenging working with the OP as they are less familiar with the technical aspects of publications. There was also an isolated example of feedback being received from the OP too late to have an immediate impact on production of a material as a result of the political calendar.

As a whole, the evidence collected suggests **there is scope to develop more collaborative relationships across author services to develop and revise materials for children aged 5 to 18**. The proportion of author services reporting in the Scoping survey not to be working with others illustrates this, although it is not expected that every material should be a joint venture. Likewise, the Key stakeholder interviews suggest that the collaboration that does exist is very much on a case-by-case basis and typically there is a lead author service and contributions are sought with only one or two other DGs to add content rather than this being a more formal joint effort. Several author services reported a desire to collaborate more with DGs with which it shared policy goals which have yet to be actioned. A common theme emerging across the stakeholder interviews was that additional resourcing and capacity for producing materials for children were not necessarily readily available. This further supports the case that collaborative working and pursuing this as a joint venture was a sensible approach, however, increasing cooperation activity with other DGs also requires staff resource.

In pursuit of greater efficiency and building on the collaborative work already underway, suggestions were made in the Key stakeholder interviews of how collaboration could be improved or made more efficient.

Forums or networks for those with responsibility for, or having an interest, in developing materials for children were commonly suggested as a mechanism to facilitate collaboration. The DG COMM network already exists in this vein but with one EU multiplier stakeholder reporting to be unaware of any such mechanisms, awareness raising could be undertaken. Other stakeholders suggested the creation of a network or collaborative group working on materials for sub-segments of the target audience could be useful. An example was given of DGs working on youth issues potentially having shared interests and potential efficiencies if they shared knowledge and activities on materials targeting this segment. Maximising digital platforms was another improvement suggested which may support the desire for more networking without the need for formal meetings and significant additional staff resource. One suggestion was to create a Wiki to allow the sharing of plans for materials targeting children and any hints, tips or reflections.

### 2.5.1.2 Identified efficiency gains in the development and improvements of materials and activities

This section addresses the specific question: What would be the most efficient approach for author services covered by the scope of this Follow-up review to improve and streamline their materials offer to 5 to 18 year olds in the future (e.g., develop new materials, adapt their existing materials, or combine both approaches)?

The combination of developing new materials and adapting material that exists already is most likely to be the most efficient approach to improving the Commission's offer of materials and activities for the target audience. **A strong overall theme to emerge from the Key stakeholder interviews was that too much rationalising of materials for children should be prevented and that it would be preferable to have a larger offer of material for children.** As one EU stakeholder suggested: "The more material for children, the better." Moreover, author services stated that current capacity within their respective teams would not allow for a full refresh of materials.

**The production of clear guidelines on how to produce materials for children was suggested as a way improving the efficiency of the development process.** While the DG COMM resource of 'Dos and Don'ts' exists to support the production of materials, the suggestion was for a more formal agreement across the Commission that communicating with children is a priority which may in turn support the case for more budget and more human resources to be dedicated across author services. Engaging additional expertise or externalising the production of some of the materials for children was a suggestion made. Given the available capacity in some author services, it was reported it was often the case that materials were drafted by staff who were also responsible for publications for stakeholders and citizens as well so not necessarily by those with specialist skills in communicating with children. Involving more external consultants who know more about the target group and their need was an additional suggestion to improve the type of collaboration. Going further on this theme, one EU stakeholder suggested setting up a Framework Contract, to secure this type of support and to make it available on a call down basis. In the same vein, another suggestion from a national level stakeholder was that it may be useful to have a reference group of organisations working with children and/or children themselves, so the Commission could get more direct feedback. Consideration would need to be given as to specifically what purpose this would play in light of the existence already of DG Comm's teacher panel who play an important role in testing materials for children to be used in education settings.

**A common theme relevant for improving new and existing materials was the importance of testing materials by their end users.** While DG COMM's teacher panel exists, there were limited examples of such testing being used by other author services. National level stakeholders in particular appeared to be less aware of the existence of this panel. As result, one suggestion was made to indicate more explicitly where materials have been reviewed or tested perhaps in the form of a 'seal of approval.' Beyond this, there is no identified mechanism to work directly with the end users (such as teachers and children) to develop materials. It should be acknowledged, however, that this is a resource intensive activity and the feasibility significantly restricted by current COVID-19 restrictions. Exploring what possible alternative existing mechanisms are in place could offer a more efficient route. An interviewee from UNICEF, gave the example of their use of the U-Report messaging tool to gain direct input from young people on the name for a recent report on Europe and the African Union.

Similarly, there was recognition **that feedback systems could be used more widely in particular to support revisions to existing materials.** One EU multiplier stakeholder specifically supported this approach, suggesting that "the Commission must ask for and listen to stakeholder feedback. Better communication with the relevant stakeholders is key for better relevance and dissemination of material for children." While DG COMM have a feedback system for their own materials on the Learning Corner, other author services rely on the rating system on the OP or ad hoc feedback at fairs or events. National stakeholder likewise will gather their own feedback but it is not routinely collected. What is more challenging, however, is robustly and routinely capturing and channelling this feedback so it is of benefit to all who are developing materials for children. Continuing to utilise DG COMM's Communication Network to share feedback is one mechanism but should the previously mentioned digital platforms be utilised in the future this could also be a source of efficiently sharing feedback of benefit to all developing materials for children.

Lastly, emerging from the Key stakeholder interviews was evidence that **further raising awareness of existing materials should be a focus.** One national stakeholder held the view that the Commission could improve its perceived offer by sharing more information on what materials are available for children and how these are intended to be used. In contrast, others felt the onus should be agencies, groups and individuals themselves to become more familiar with what already exists. The Learning Corner was highlighted as a key single resource or starting point for locating materials for children: "I think the main thing is to promote the Learning Corner as much as possible as there are so many good materials there and very little people know about it."

## 2.6 EU added value

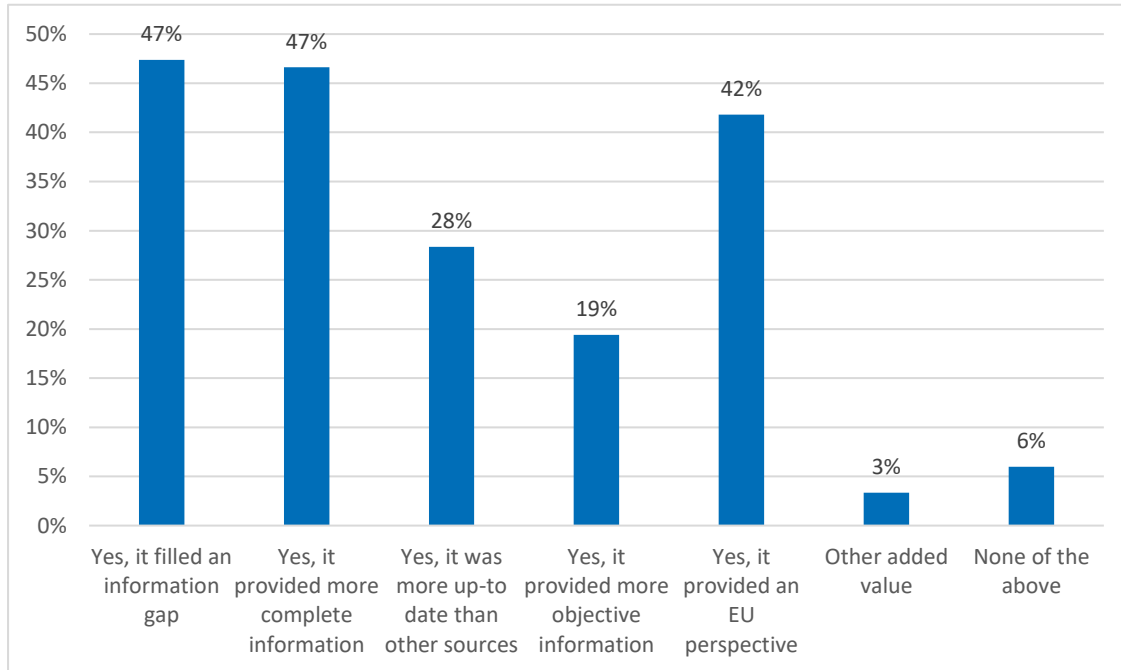
It will also provide our findings in relation to the seventh strategic question of the Review: *What is the perceived EU added value Commission's materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds to their users? In what ways could this EU added value be maximised and enhanced?*

### 2.6.1 Added EU value of materials and activities

This section addresses the specific question: *What is the perceived EU added value Commission's materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds to their target audience and its various sub-segments?*

The findings from the User survey (Figure 19 below), suggests a positive picture on the perceived added value of the Commission's materials for children, with some 94% (252 respondents) identifying at least one aspect of added value showing support for the Commission to continue to produce materials for children. The most common aspects of added value identified by respondents being the materials filling an information gap (47%), providing more complete information (47%) and providing an EU perspective (42%).

Figure 18: Do you think the Commission should continue to produce this kind of material/activity?



Source: Ecorys, User survey n=268 (multiple selection), 2021

Analysis of the Key stakeholder interviews provided some greater evidence on these main ways in which the Commission materials for children 5-18 provide added value largely supporting the findings from the User survey.

Stakeholders commonly highlighted that **added value of materials for children stems from the fact they are relatively unique and distinctive in terms of content**. EU multipliers and national stakeholders typically felt Commission materials were a valuable source of teaching materials on the EU for the target group of children and simply did not exist elsewhere so served to fill a gap in the curriculum. One other national stakeholder went further to explain that they felt the materials added value by providing something new or something that the user would unlikely already know. It was perceived that the curriculum on the EU for younger, primary age children, in particular, is likely to be narrow. The Commission materials **add value as they provide wider or more general information to children about history, geography or citizenship than what they likely would cover at school**. This was further confirmed in the feedback given by teachers during the CBCs where teachers similarly reported limited time and opportunity to teach much to younger children (5-9 years old) on the EU other than in the context of geography or history.

The format of materials, particularly the games and quizzes which are more interactive, additionally supported the view that they added value by being distinct. It was recognised by author services that producing this type of activity takes time and few other agencies or authors possess the skills to produce these activities. National stakeholders in particular reported they are welcomed by users such as teachers who use them as an extra activity to reinforce learning that may be delivered in a more traditional way.

Another area of added value perceived by stakeholders, reflecting the findings of the User survey is that materials to provide objective and complete information. The fact that the author is the European Commission supports a

strong perception that the materials are of high quality and generally regarded as something reliable and trustworthy, as these national stakeholders suggest:

*“There is an element of trust that cannot be found elsewhere”.*

*“The added value is that what arrives directly from the Commission is of high quality and is quite reliable, when you give the material to a teacher or to a student you know that they will not return complaining about the quality or about the inaccuracy of the info provided.”*

In addition, stakeholders perceived that **Commission materials typically cover topics in an impartial way, containing and being based on facts and evidence and often presented from a neutral EU perspective**. As a result, it was felt that they are more likely to be relatable and to speak to some of the sub-segments in the audience of children 5-18 as they would unlikely contain any biases. One contrasting view among the stakeholders, however, was that as a result of the desire to produce common materials for all Member States, this serves to reduce the value of Commission materials as they end up being based on the ‘lowest common denominator’ and do not cover enough complexity and nuances to reflect the sub-segments.

One final element of added value highlighted by stakeholders was the way the materials were curated by the Commission with two elements highlighted here in particular. **The Learning Corner was identified as an element of added value, providing access in a single location and serving to provide materials for sub-segments through its division of materials by age group**. Although not on the same scale and with a narrower focus the DG TAXUD tax education portal was also highlighted by one stakeholder as a similar mechanism to collate materials for children produced at EU and national level, offering added value.

Secondly, the availability of materials in multiple languages was also recognised as a significant added value. For national stakeholders, this allowed them to access and provide materials to users more easily and without having to translate themselves. Others highlighted the benefit of materials for children in other languages as a way to introduce foreign language teaching and learning from a young age.

## 2.6.2 Maximising existing added value for target group and key multipliers

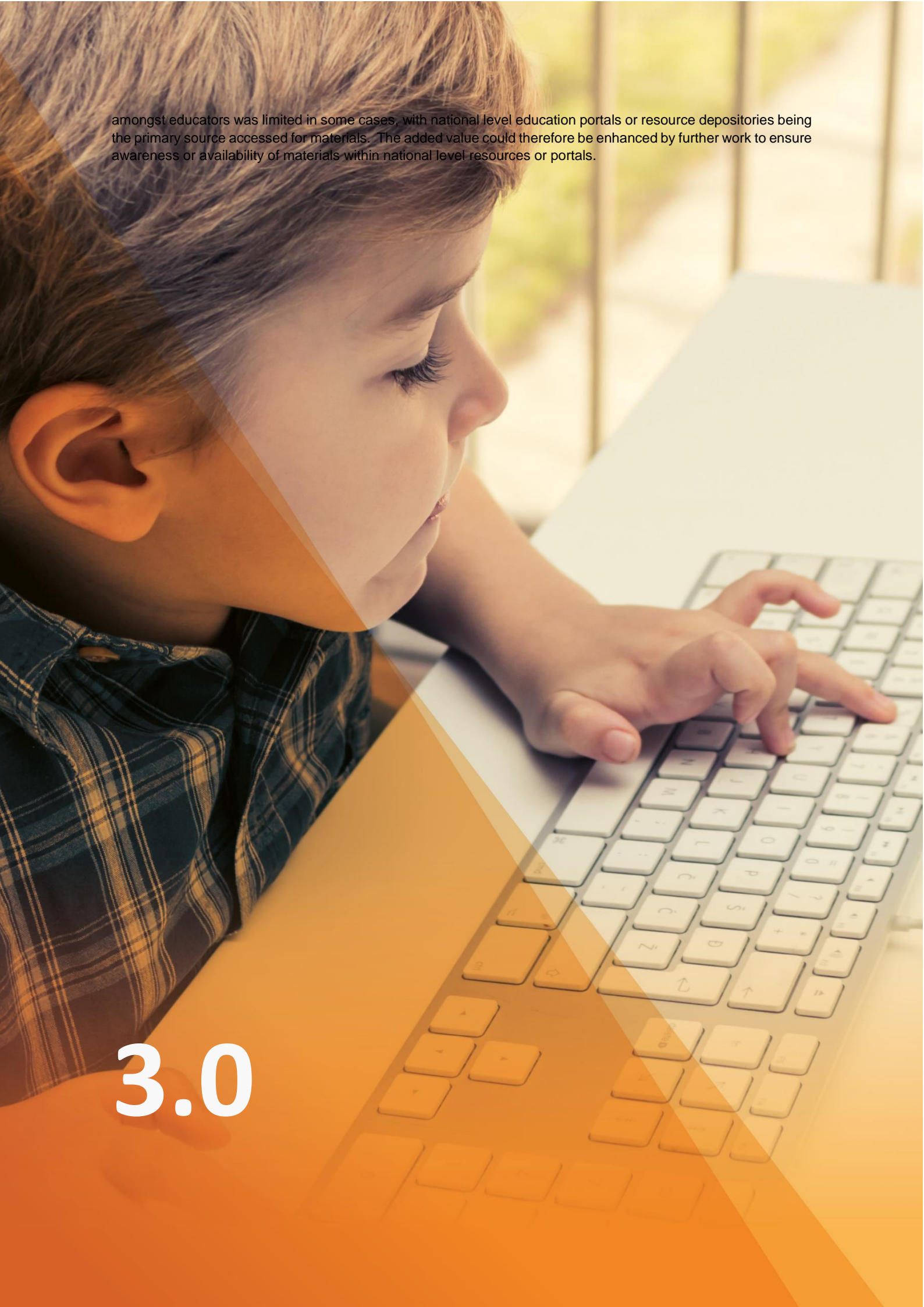
This section addresses the specific question: *In what ways could the EU added value of Commission’s materials targeting 5 to 18 year olds, and different segments of this target audience, be maximised and enhanced considering their needs as well as needs of professionals working with them?*

Two main areas emerged from the key stakeholder interviews in which the EU added value of the Commission materials for children can be further maximised and enhanced.

A number of stakeholders interviewed at both national and EU level suggested that the **added value of Commission materials for children could be enhanced by continuing to consider the mechanisms and channels for distribution**. Highlighted in particular was a need to stay up-to-date and reflect on the preferred ways for, typically older children, within the different sub-segments to consume information, particularly in terms of the online platforms or social media used in different Member States and the fact that young people are quick to move from one preferred platform to another.

Other stakeholders highlighted the need to continue to reflect on how to bridge the gap between children and EU institutions or information about the EU which may appear to be some distance away from their everyday reality. A range of other suggestions were made by stakeholders including reducing the emphasis on strongly pushing the EU visual identity on materials, instead focusing on more subtly or subliminally conveying that the information is about or from the EU.

Another stakeholder highlighted the importance of **local events to interact with children and to disseminate material, either through live visits or virtual visits to overcome current restrictions due to COVID-19**. The Focus groups and CBCs additionally supported this where it was evident that more in-depth existing knowledge of the EU was gained from extra-curricular activities such as E-twinning events that schools had participated in or the existence of a European club. One further suggestion to lessen the gap was instead to think most about connecting to schools rather than children on an individual level and continue to focus on the provision of materials for use in an education setting. Findings from the Focus groups reinforced that a key channel for accessing information on the EU was through teachers and/or in an education setting so this suggests it must continue to be a priority. Specifically, the feedback from a number of teachers suggested awareness of materials and the Learning Corner



amongst educators was limited in some cases, with national level education portals or resource depositories being the primary source accessed for materials. The added value could therefore be enhanced by further work to ensure awareness or availability of materials within national level resources or portals.

**3.0**



## 3.0 Recommendations

Stemming from the findings and conclusions outlined above in relation to the five evaluation criteria, seven strategic questions and 16 evaluation sub-questions, several recommendations for improving the European Commission's offer of materials and activities to children aged 5-18 were developed.

### Commission priorities and author services communications objectives

- A. **The European Commission should more systematically conduct audience research and testing of its materials and activities for children and professionals who work with them to ensure that these meet the needs of its target audience.** As mentioned on page 111 of this report, collected data highlighted the lack of examples of testing by end users (children aged 5-18 or professionals working with them) being used by other author services aside from DG COMM through its teachers' testing panels. An indication included in Commission materials available for children that these were tested, reviewed and approved by professionals and specialists working with particular segments of children targeted would also be advisable.
- B. **When designing their materials, the Commission should take into consideration the needs and preferences of the 5-18 years old target group and its main sub-segments, using the Toolkit for the development of materials and activities for children aged 5-18 as a guide (available in Annex 4).** As mentioned on page 71 and 79 of this report, data collected indicates that materials and activities were on quite a few occasions found not to be tailored enough for their intended target groups. It was also found that the granularity of the offer for the 5-18 year old target group was lacking, with a large volume of materials aimed at very broad age groups that often spanned both younger and older age segments.
- C. **Materials developed by Commission author services should be accompanied by an outreach strategy that takes into account the preferred channels and the relevant multipliers for the target group.** As mentioned on page 80 of this report, most DG author services were found to have a communication strategy or plan. However, there was no evidence found that Europe Direct services and Representations have similar planning documents. The evidence (please see p.96-97 of this report) also showed that Commission materials are reaching teachers and educators more than other professionals working with particular segments of 5-18 year-olds.
- D. **The Commission should enhance the collaboration and coordination among author services in relation to the development, revision, testing and distribution of their materials for children via new and existing networks.** As mentioned on page 110 of this report, the levels of collaboration, coordination and knowledge sharing between Commission author services during the period covered by this study did not make a full use of opportunities to minimise duplication, pool resources and develop synergies in tailoring materials, developing a more integrated offer and more effective outreach to children aged 5-18 and professionals working with them.
- E. **The Commission should reach out more to key multipliers (e.g., teachers and trainers as well as other professionals working with children and their parents) while promoting materials for children aged 5-18 in the Member States.** As mentioned in page 107 of this report, the level of contact between the Europe Direct Network, Representations and key multipliers working with children aged 5-18 was found to be uneven in the sample Member States. The initiative of this contact was often found to originate from the side of multipliers rather than as part of a coordinated outreach strategy by the European Commission. Targeted cooperation on dissemination and distribution of specific Commission's materials could be envisaged as part of the above-mentioned outreach strategies<sup>117</sup>.
- F. **The Commission should further maximise the use of the existing Commission's materials by improving awareness of the Learning Corner among key EU and national stakeholders.** As shown on page 68 of this report, the Learning Corner was not a well-known resource among children and

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<sup>117</sup> However, for this cooperation to be sustainable it needs to be based on shared objectives and mutual gains (multipliers help Commission to distribute its materials for children and in turn get materials that have been developed with their support and are suited for their specific needs).



stakeholders who work with them. It was nonetheless recognised by those who know it as a very useful tool for finding specific information about the EU that is already structured by age segments (please see evidence on page 100 of this report).

- G. **Linking the Learning Corner to relevant national-level education portals and resources would improve the reach of the current Commission’s offer of materials and activities for children aged 5-18.** As mentioned on page 114 of this report, the awareness of Commission materials for children and the Learning Corner amongst educators was limited, with national level education portals or resource depositories being the primary source used by professionals working with 5-18 year-olds.
- H. **The layout of the EU Publications portal should be improved alongside the tagging system for materials targeting children aged 5-18 hosted on this portal.** As evidenced on page 98 of this report, stakeholders and children found the EU publications portal difficult to navigate and to understand if the material was suitable for their age and needs. Adding filters for the available materials to be sorted by topic and by age group, similar to those used on the Learning Corner, would improve user experience and boost reach of Commission materials hosted on the EU Publications portal.
- I. **The Commission needs to go beyond its current dissemination channels for materials and activities targeting 5-18 year-olds and professionals working with them to reduce the ‘echo chamber effect’ in its communication.** As evidenced on page 96 of the report, the current dissemination channels used by the Commission are not effective in reaching out to relevant stakeholders outside of an already very engaged group of individuals, schools and organisations. Parents, youth workers, social workers, health professionals and researchers outside this circle reported low levels of awareness of the Commission’s offer of materials and activities to children, including children with special needs and other social minorities. The findings of this study (please see page 73 of this report) indicate that enhanced cooperation with national, regional and local stakeholders, including organisations representing or working with particular groups of children should be explored as a way to improve outreach.

## Target Groups

- J. **The Commission should implement a system to review and verify the appropriateness of the format and the content of its materials and activities for different age groups and main segments of 5-18 year-olds.** As mentioned on pages 111-112 of this report, there was no system and processes in the Commission to systematically and adequately assess and verify the appropriateness of the format and the content of its materials and activities for different main segments of 5-18 year-olds.
- K. **The Commission could consider splitting the current age segment of 5-9 year olds into two age groups (ages 5 to 6: emergent readers and ages 7 to 9: developing readers) to account for the rapid development of child literacy during these formative years.** As highlighted on page 42 of the report, this split in the Learning Corner is required to differentiate the 5-6 year old segment that focuses on decoding information and follows a phonetic process of reading from the 7-9 year old segment for which the reading process has become automatic. Furthermore, materials tagged as suitable for the 5-6 years old segment, which typically should be the most focused on visuals, with very limited text and hence require more basic literacy skills will also aid the identification of materials suitable for children with intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities; and/or those whose first language is different from the country in which they reside e.g., children of ethnic minorities and/or with a migration background.
- L. **The Commission could consider further differentiating the ‘ages 15 and over’ age group on the Learning Corner to include a 16-18 years old age group to support the identification and development of materials tailored for their needs.** As reading abilities generally stabilise around the age of 15, separating this segment of 16-18 year olds on the Learning Corner would help the Commission, as evidenced on page 46-47 of this report, to identify materials among its offer for EU citizens<sup>118</sup> suitable for this age group that require little or no tailoring for this age segment but cover topics of interest to this age group e.g., materials or activities targeting youth in general and/or Commission materials that could be used for studies, identified as a key information need for this 16-18 age group.

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<sup>118</sup> A list of these materials has been produced by another Ecorys study on focusing on the Review of European Commission publications for citizens that was finalised in 2021.

- M. **The Commission should increase its offer of materials covering the needs of children with disabilities by adapting materials in sign languages, Braille and, where appropriate, other relevant formats.** Our findings presented on pages 108 of this report indicate that the accessibility of Commission's materials for 5-18 year-olds could be improved to better meet the needs of children with sensory disabilities. An increased cooperation between Commission author services, organisations and experts at EU and national level that work with or represent children with disabilities would help to better adapt content and formats of author services' materials and activities for this diverse segment of 5-18 year-olds.
- N. **The Commission should encourage author services to review the handful of materials for children that were found during this Follow-up review to not be in line with the EU values of equality, freedom and human rights<sup>119</sup>.** As highlighted on page 106 of this report, the results of the materials mapping and the group interviews identified materials that were not inclusive nor representative of the diversity of race, gender, religion or sexual identity of EU citizens. While not common, these materials highlight the need for an editorial review (ensured before publication) to guarantee that visuals and contents of Commission materials are in line with the values that the EU stands for. Alternatively, diversity, equality and inclusion guidelines could be prepared and circulated among Commission's author services to help them to ensure the inclusivity of their materials.
- O. **The Commission should encourage author services to produce materials and activities in as many EU languages as possible to ensure accessibility and encourage the use of the material across different Member States.** As evidenced in page 67, only a minority of the materials mapped during this study were found to be available in all EU official languages, which limited the accessibility and reach of said materials for children who only speak their national languages. Ensuring that all materials, when relevant, are translated in all EU official languages would increase the use of materials across the EU and help foster more synergies between author services, Europe Direct services and Representations.

## Communication Messages

- P. **When designing materials and activities for children aged 5-6 (Emergent readers) the use of long sentences and complex narratives in presenting basic information on EU geography and symbols should be avoided.** As mentioned on pages 42-44 of this report, most children in this age group will be able to understand straightforward metaphors and similes but text should be descriptive as opposed to abstract. Focus should be on presenting basic information about the EU as a way of gaining basic knowledge about the Member States, food, culture, climate and history with a focus on the geography and symbols of the EU.
- Q. **Materials and activities for children aged 7-9 years old (Developing readers) could cover introductory information on EU history, geography, and symbols and can include longer sentences, a larger vocabulary, and more elaborate storylines.** As mentioned on pages 44 and 71 of this report, the focus of Commission materials and activities for this age segment should be on introductory information on the EU history, geography, climate, environment and citizens' rights i.e., all topics that can be easily combined with school subjects. As the EU is typically not covered directly by the curricula for this age segment, and due to crowded curriculum in history or geography subjects, there was evidence of limited time to cover EU subjects in any depth. Materials and activities for this age segment should also be promoted as useful and relevant for other segments that may lack introductory knowledge of the EU.
- R. **Materials and activities for children aged 10-12 (Preadolescents) could focus on general concepts, ideas and aspects of the EU e.g., EU Institutions, common values and currency that can be presented in more detail, with longer sentences and more varied vocabulary.** Our findings, presented on pages 45 and 72 of this report showed that materials for this age group can present slightly more detailed concepts and ideas, using longer sentences and a more varied vocabulary. It is also a good stage to introduce children to the concept of a collective European identity, information on EU climate and environment, EU information related to their daily lives and hobbies, as well as history and functioning of the EU. Recognising the need for explanation of some concepts or that more introductory information may be needed for some children, it is recommended that materials contain glossaries or links to other recommended reading.

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<sup>119</sup> [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en)

- S. **Materials and activities for children aged 13-15 (Early adolescents) could focus on EU current affairs, particularly EU topics that support or compliment national curricula and other aspects which directly impact on their lives e.g., EU solidarity, EU culture, and EU citizenship.** As detailed on pages 47 and 73 of this report, materials for this age group should cover EU topics in more detail, using a more sophisticated language. It is also a good stage to start introducing complex concepts of EU solidarity, cultural identity, and citizenship due to the developments in critical thinking and identity creation. Children in this age group were also found to be interested in science, economy, and digital technologies. Consideration should be given as to how materials for this age group could be used to support or compliment the education curricula more directly as this is likely to increase their propensity to be used as highlighted on page 39 of the report.
- T. **Materials and activities for children aged 16-18 (Late adolescents) could cover complex EU concepts and topics, e.g., individual rights, legal rights, conventions, shared European identity, European heritage, EU solidarity, political and civic responsibility in the EU.** As evidenced on pages 48 and 74 of this report, complex concepts, e.g., individual rights, legal rights, conventions, climate change, migration, digital transformation, etc. start to be well understood at this stage. For this age group, materials or activities should include a 'call for action' for a specific 'EU cause' e.g., nature conservation, climate action, standing up for EU values. Stories of other children who live in the EU or information on additional activities or opportunities that children can pursue in terms of mobility or studying abroad can be used to reinforce the relevance of EU information for this age group (as illustrated on page 95 of this report).
- U. **Based on the policy and related communication objectives of a Commission author service, that service should, when relevant, consider developing materials and activities specifically addressing the EU information needs of children from rural areas, children with migration and ethnic backgrounds, LGBTIQ children and youths, and children facing a higher risk of social exclusion and poverty (i.e., NEETs and early school leavers)<sup>120</sup>.** As illustrated on pages 64 and 76 of this report, data collected show that there was a lack of materials tackling issues and topics of particular interest to children representing these minority segments. The evidence collected indicates that children from these minority groups and professionals working with them would benefit greatly from having more Commission materials explaining what the EU is doing to defend the rights of minority groups, promote equality within the EU as well as particular EU opportunities tailored to address the needs of groups at risk of poverty and exclusion. As evidenced on page 89 of this report, the use of external experts and/or cooperation with organisations who work with these groups of children could be beneficial for the successful tailoring and dissemination of Commission materials.

## Communication Activities

- V. **The Commission should continue to maintain a mix of formats and types of materials to meet different needs and preferences of 5-18 year-olds, prioritising short, visually appealing, easy-to-read and interactive content.** As mentioned on page 69 of this report, evidence collected across several data sources showed that the diversity of Commission's material formats was very much appreciated by children and professionals who work with them. Playful activities e.g., quizzes, games, and colouring books better met the needs and preferences of younger children while videos, podcasts, webinars and participatory storytelling activities were found to be more appreciated by older segments.
- W. **Availability of physical copies of Commission materials (through their schools, libraries and/or Europe Direct Network centres) will continue to be essential to ensure that these materials are reaching younger age groups and segments of children at risk of poverty and exclusion.** As highlighted by the findings presented on pages 54 and 105 of this report, the Commission should consider producing printable versions of materials alongside online versions, particularly for materials targeting younger age groups or segments of children at risk of poverty and exclusion. This would be in line with the findings of this study that confirmed various levels of access to digital technology in schools, which were the main channel through which Commission materials reached children, including younger children,

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<sup>120</sup> These materials will be relevant also for other child audience segments, as well as other adult readers, users and participants who are concerned with inclusion, equality and anti-discrimination topics.

who had limited direct access to digital technologies. Compatibility of materials for display on mobile devices should also be examined.

- X. **Materials and activities for children aged 5-6 (Emergent readers) or for 7-9 years old (Developing readers) should focus on hands on or creative activities for children, reflecting the importance of 'learning through doing' or play focused approach.** As shown by the evidence presented on pages 70-71 of this report, when producing new materials and activities for these age groups, the Commission should, as far as the topic allows, link materials and activities to potential hobbies or areas of interest to children of these ages to stimulate their engagement. Online content, especially videos and games work for this age group but they also engage quite well with the use of offline materials e.g., colouring books, boardgames, story books and activity books. Materials that engage both parent/teacher and children can be an especially effective way to engage this group.
- Y. **Materials and activities for children aged 10-12 (Preadolescents) should be designed to directly engage children with the content (e.g., through games, school events or competitions) and to be used online and offline with their peers and friends.** As mentioned on page 72 of this report, data gathered shows that this age group engages far more with materials that involve some level of competition and can be used to support learning in the classroom. Commission author services should develop materials and organise activities that build on this competitive learning element to increase engagement with this age group. Pupil-led EU-related school activities or/and clubs were shown to be effective examples of this type of activities (please see page 83 of this report).
- Z. **Materials and activities for children aged 13-15 (Early adolescents) and 16-18 (Late adolescents) that can be accessed and shared via their preferred social media e.g., games, videos, and posts have a particularly strong potential to gain traction and visibility but effectiveness of offline materials should not be disregarded.** As mentioned on pages 46-48 and 73-74 of this report, due to the frequency of the Internet use among these age groups materials and activities should generally take a digital format but need to be adapted to the platforms that are currently used by these segments i.e., YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, Twitch, Discord and TikTok. As evidenced on page 105 of this report, offline materials continue to work well with these age groups, particularly leaflets and brochures with clear and simple information about the EU, its programmes and how its policies influence young people's lives and their communities.
- AA. **While designing online interactive materials and activities Commission's author services should consider opportunities for introducing options to support segments of EU children with different cognitive and physical abilities to allow for their full participation.** As mentioned on pages 43-44 of this report, Commission's author services should harness the opportunities provided by digital technologies to make their online materials and activities more suitable for children with different cognitive abilities by developing content with various difficulty settings. This may include but is not limited to options of increasing the time available for a game or other activity, a speed of a game or a quiz, colour-blind support and size of in-game items or objects in the design of a material or activity. Adding this differentiation would mean the material or activity would be suitable also for younger segments of children, as well as those in these age groups with cognitive and/or physical disabilities.
- BB. **The Commission should monitor the evolution of social media use by young people and continuously adapt the choice of channels used to optimize its outreach and engagement with 5-18 year-olds.** As highlighted on page 100 of this report, evidence collected suggests that the main social media platforms used by Commission author services (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) primarily work as dissemination channels with professionals who work with children or their parents, and not children directly. With the age restrictions for use of these platforms as well as their decreasing reach within preadolescent target groups, these platforms are increasingly less effective as channels for reaching and engaging children directly. Nonetheless, social media remained important as a channel for the older segments of children and as tools they use to share information with peers. New platforms that are more used by children should be tested by Commission author services for dissemination of their materials and activities, including YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitch, Discord and TikTok, using influencers on these platforms to boost reach and engagement on their materials and activities.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

- CC. **The Commission should encourage its author services to systematically collect and use monitoring data, including quantitative and qualitative feedback on the needs of its 5-18 years-old**

**target audiences. Ex-ante research and testing of materials and activities is also recommended.**

As detailed on page 107 of this report, most author services did not systematically gather or use feedback from readers and participants for improving their materials and activities targeting children. Some author services were also reluctant to collect direct feedback from this target group due the perceived difficulties linked to the task. Commission author services would benefit from guidelines on how to set up feedback mechanisms for their materials or activities in line with DG COMM and the OP current practices. Commission's author services should review this feedback regularly to improve their exiting materials and activities offer for 5-18 year-olds and professionals who work with them as well as when developing new materials and activities for this target group.

- DD. **The Commission should improve existing feedback mechanisms for games hosted on the Learning Corner and videos on European Commission's Audio-visual Portal.** As presented on page 101 of this report, DG COMM should consider collecting monitoring data related to the online games available on the Learning Corner against indicators that are better suited for measuring engagement with these activities, including completion rate, most used difficulty settings or number of reshares on social media. The Commission's Audio-visual Portal did not provide its users with any kind of engagement opportunities on its videos aside from the possibility to share these via email, Facebook and Twitter, which severely limited opportunities for feedback and engagement as well as data availability for analysis of engagement on videos targeting children and youth hosted in this website.



4.0

Annexes



## 4.0 Annexes

### ***Annex 1 - Overview of the methodologies used to deliver this external evaluation***



Annex 1\_Final  
Methodological Over

### ***Annex 2 - Mapping of Commission's materials and activities for children aged 5-18***



Annex  
2\_Mapping\_Materials.

### ***Annex 3 - Visuals illustrating the reach of Commission's materials for children aged 5-18***



Annex  
3\_Visual\_Reach\_Comr

### ***Annex 4 - Toolkit for the development of materials and activities for children aged 5-18***





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