



Review of European Commission publications for citizens

COMM.A.2./18/2019/Lot 1

Final Synthesis Report

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Executive Summary

Aims, objectives and scope of the Review

This Final Synthesis Report has been prepared by ECORYS in the context of the 'Review of European Commission publications for citizens' commissioned by Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) at the European Commission (the Commission).

This report is part of the Commission's effort to take stock of its publications for citizens and to consolidate and improve its offer. The report is structured by evaluation criteria, namely Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and EU Added value, as required by the Better Regulation Guidelines¹. The resulting operational recommendations stemming from the analysis have been structured around the planning, development, dissemination and monitoring cycle of the publications, in order to offer operational support for the Commission's author services that produce publications for citizens.

The aim of this assignment was to explore the extent to which Commission publications for citizens address their EU information needs as well as the political priorities of the Commission and the communication objectives of its author services². The study also sought to assess the extent to which Commission publications for citizens reached out and engaged with their intended target audiences and their sub-segments. In addition, it sought to identify any gaps and inefficiencies in the Commission publications' offer to citizens.

Furthermore, the Review provided an assessment of the extent to which Commission publications for citizens are user-friendly and tailored for their readers in terms of language, visuals, and ease of access, including for people with disabilities. It also assessed the extent to which services within the Commission and beyond cooperate when developing and distributing their publications for non-specialist audiences.

This Review covered the Commission's print and online publications for EU citizens and their main segments³ published between 1 January 2018 and 31 October 2019.

Overview of the method

The methodology used to gather data for this Review included:

- ▶ A comprehensive desk research exercise to inform and contextualise the findings of this study as well as to collect secondary data on Commission publications for citizens;
- ▶ Scoping consultations with the main Commission author services and the inter-institutional offices;
- ▶ A systematic quantitative mapping of 350 publications identified through desk research, and an in-depth qualitative review of 116 Commission publications for citizens;
- ▶ Monitoring data for the publications, identified, requested and analysed from all main Commission author services as well as the Publications Office of the European Union (OP);

¹ 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

² Including Commission's Directorate-Generals (DGs), selected inter-institutional offices, Commission's Representations in the Member States as well as its Executive Agencies.

³ This Review covered all sub-segments of citizens and therefore considered publications for citizens of all age groups (including children and teenagers), genders and socio-economic backgrounds.

- ▶ A User survey to collect feedback on Commission publications for citizens, hosted by the OP or on other Europa webpages. It was available in all 24 official EU languages and collected a total of 903 replies, including 317 complete and 586 partial responses;
- ▶ Over 70 interviews, carried out with EU author services and multipliers, as well as national stakeholders in six sample countries (Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Ireland and Sweden);
- ▶ Seven online focus groups, conducted with a total of 55 citizens of various backgrounds to explore interest, participants' access and views on selected Commission publications;
- ▶ Finally, a written consultation among Commission's author services, carried out to collect data on publications planning and levels of cooperation on publications between respondents.

Findings and conclusions of the Review

Relevance

Overall, **Commission publications for citizens were considered relevant by readers and users, answering most of their information needs.** Despite there being no 'one-size-fits-all', evidence suggests that Commission publications were relevant and useful as a resource for citizens. The two main factors that limited the relevance of Commission publications for citizens were limited awareness of their availability as well as their tendency to quickly become outdated and obsolete.

The **usefulness of Commission publications for citizens appeared to depend on the format chosen and the target group.** Short and easy to read publications were considered more useful overall than longer and more detailed publications. No publication formats were preferred by particular segments of citizens, although evidence collected suggests that older audiences tend to find Commission publications more useful than younger audiences, who tend to prefer shorter publications with more personal stories.

Evidence collected from the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) and Eurobarometer indicates that **there is a strong and increasing demand for information on the EU, including hot topics that change rapidly over time** (with increasing interest in migration and climate change as well as continued interest in EU funding for research and innovation, consumer rights and education). The Review confirmed that **these most popular topics were covered by Commission publications for citizens.**

The quantitative mapping of publications showed that over two thirds of the Commission publications for citizens cover policies or programmes of direct relevance to EU citizens. The results of the in-depth publications review further illustrated that the publications with a specific call to action were also much more likely to have a well-defined target group. **While overall Commission publications for citizens were considered useful by their readers, there was a preference for short and easy to read publications.**

Commission publications for citizens were often, and when relevant, aligned with the Commission's political priorities. The priorities were generally considered in the planning and development of publications by the author services consulted and were closely aligned with their respective policy areas. However, the evidence collected also showed that Commission's political priorities were covered to varying degrees, with some author services reporting communication objectives that were either too broad or too closely related to their area of specialisation to align with a Commission priority.

Coherence

Overall, the **Commission's offer of publications to citizens showed a good level of coherence and complementarity in terms of the key topics and areas covered, with no major overlaps identified.** Evidence suggests that publications for citizens covered a wide range of issues, topics, and policies of potential interest to EU citizens. Citizens consulted indicated they would welcome more publications on current affairs, and publications offering practical information or showing how EU policies impact their lives.

Commission publications for citizens were available in both online and print formats. Evidence collected showed that the Commission was increasingly using online formats to adapt to most users' needs. However, access to printed publications was still considered important for certain groups. Overall, evidence indicated that **readers prefer shorter publications, with more information presented visually and in an interactive way.**

Evidence collected suggests that there was **scope to better tailor the content of the publications to the needs of specific sub-segments of the general public** (e.g., pupils, young people, people with disabilities, elderly people, socially excluded categories, NEETs, etc.), as well as improving access to information about the EU by increasing the range of languages covered.

Evidence collected shows that **there were good complementarities, and no major overlaps, between Commission publications for citizens and those produced by other main EU, national, regional and local sources.** Although Commission and non-Commission publications reviewed covered similar topics and policy areas of interest to non-specialist target audiences, these targeted different audience segments and presented different perspectives (non-Commission publications were often shorter, presented a more critical view of EU policies and programmes, as well as advocated or lobbied for particular changes of EU policies).

Effectiveness

In terms of focus, overall, **Commission publications for citizens had a broad but uneven coverage of topics and policy areas.** Economy, culture, environment and general EU information were the areas most frequently covered by Commission's publications for citizens. EU elections, careers, migration, children and families, history, humanitarian and foreign aid were the topics least covered. No clear gaps in the coverage of particular topics or areas were identified in the monitoring data on Commission publications for citizens. However, the stakeholders consulted perceived several gaps in the Commission's publications offer, likely a result of a lack of awareness of the availability of particular publications. Lastly, the citizens consulted welcomed more timely publications that are reactive to current events.

Overall, **Commission publications for citizens were widely perceived to be factual.** The in-depth mapping of publications for citizens confirmed that a majority presented clear information or concrete examples of the EU's activities, programmes, and policies in addition to their results and impacts. However, some publications were judged to be overly positive and reductive in their representation of the EU's activities and achievements. The citizens consulted indicated that Commission **publications would be more effective if these presented EU benefits, achievements, limitations and progress in a more balanced way.**

The reach of Commission publications for citizens was high overall. According to the aggregated monitoring data, the total estimated reach of the 350 European Commission publications for citizens covered by this study exceeded 5.4 million downloads, prints, visits and page views. The OP represented the main channel for distributing and disseminating Commission publications for citizens, with 2.9 million orders and downloads placed with this service during the

period under review (compared to an estimated 870,000 publications downloaded and distributed via other channels)⁴.

The Commission used a range of online and offline channels to promote and distribute its publications to EU citizens, with social media regarded as the most effective approach. However, the Commission's information multipliers⁵ also **emphasised the continued importance of face-to-face contact and distribution of printed Commission publications**, particularly to meet the needs of sub-segments of citizens that do not have access to the Internet or have limited digital skills. Overall, it was found that the **OP 'EU Publications' portal and other webpages on Europa that host publications were difficult to navigate** by both citizens and stakeholders⁶ and that the plurality of locations hosting publications was a barrier to citizens when looking for publications.

Commission publications for citizens were generally perceived to be readable, usable, and conducive to engagement by their readers and users. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they used (or intended to use) information from a publication in discussions or conversations, and over a quarter reported that they were doing something differently as a result of a Commission publication, confirming that publications have a positive impact in engaging EU citizens.

Evidence collected suggests that **publications produced higher engagement when they presented opportunities offered by EU programmes and initiatives directly targeting citizens.** Over one third of Commission publications for citizens provided information on how to engage with the EU, and one in seven survey respondents confirmed that the publications helped them to take part in an EU programme or initiative. Publications were reported to be more engaging when they **avoided abstract or technical discussions** of EU policies, programmes, directives or legislation, and instead presented practical information and 'real-world' examples of the EU's impact on citizens' lives in a visually attractive way.

Commission **publications for citizens had limited, but still noteworthy, capacity to impact citizens' attitudes towards the EU.** Evidence suggests some publications may have the potential to change audience's beliefs and (by extension) their attitudes, many of them would not. However, **Commission publications played an important role in contributing to knowledge and beliefs that precede attitude changes**, helped to dispel 'incorrect' beliefs, counter disinformation, promote factual information about the EU, and, in this way, impact readers' attitudes.

When looking into the availability of publications in preferred languages, it was concluded that **Commission publications for citizens have an uneven coverage of the 24 official languages** of the European Union. Just under one fifth of the publications included in the mapping were available in all 24 languages, almost one third were available in at least 20 languages, and over a half were only available in one language. Most Commission publications are not translated into

⁴ It should be noted that key information multipliers of the EU use the Publications Office (OP) to order and download publications for their work, thus increasing the number of reported downloads, prints, visits and page views of the publications carried by the OP.

⁵ Key information multipliers include organisations and networks responsible for disseminating information on the EU and EU-related topics, including for example, the 'Your Europe' services, Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs), Eurodesk, SOLVIT, the European Consumer Centre Network (ECC-NET), the European cooperation network of employment services (EURES), etc.

⁶ The Learning Corner was highlighted as the exception as several consulted stakeholders found this platform a useful and easily navigable space for children and teachers to find relevant publications.

all official languages of the EU, hindering access to a part of the EU population that is not comfortable reading English or French. Publications translated into Slovenian and Irish were particularly scarce.

Commission publications for citizens were largely perceived to be appropriate for their target audiences in terms of readability and usability. Evidence collected suggests that most Commission author services used appropriate language and visuals in their publications for citizens. However, significant barriers to accessing publications in the case of citizens with disabilities or other impairments were identified, as **over two thirds of the publications reviewed were not deemed easy to use for people with disabilities or other impairments.**

The format of publications was a strong determinant of their popularity among citizens, with larger books and notebooks being taken up at a significantly lower rate than leaflets, booklets, postcards, flyers, and other 'lighter' formats. More succinct publications, infographics or fact sheets that avoid dense blocks of text and include visually attractive imagery were more likely to attract readers. **Content that was more 'relatable' to users (e.g., 'success stories') and did not include technical jargon was more effective in publications.**

Efficiency

There was evidence of **good and efficient cooperation between author services and DG COMM, as well as with the OP in relation to the development and dissemination of Commission publications for citizens.**

While author services reported that the **cooperation with DG COMM and the OP improved** during the period covered by this Review, **cooperation with other author services was limited.** Just under one fifth of reviewed publications showed evidence of cooperation and it was determined that further one eighth would have benefitted from collaboration. Budgetary constraints within author services' communications units, lack of centralised guidance as well as difficulties in identifying colleagues responsible for particular publications were highlighted as the main barriers to more efficient collaboration. There was furthermore **no evidence of author services pooling resources, creating synergies or creating economies of scale in development and distribution of their publications for citizens.**

There was **limited evidence of strategic planning of author services in relation to their publications,** which could be construed as a hindering factor to cooperation. Very few author services had publications plans, and where these existed, different approaches were used to plan author services' work on publications. Furthermore, publication plans, and strategies were generally not shared among author services, preventing centralised or decentralised coordination. There was also **no shared space for collaboration and the coordination of work on Commission publications for citizens.**

Evidence collected showed that **collaboration between author services and the OP worked well and improved during the period under review.** Specifically, evidence suggests that the improved editorial, design and translation request management services offered by the OP were deemed useful, and it was noted that these services complement services offered by DG COMM.

There was **limited evidence that the Commission's author services and multipliers systematically captured feedback on their publications for citizens.** The most prevalent feedback mechanisms identified were the rating systems of the OP and of DG COMM. The OP's five-star rating system for publications is published on the 'EU Publications' portal. However, this

rating function was infrequently used, only captured quantitative data and did not provide the option to leave qualitative feedback on publications carried by the OP. Author services did not systematically review the feedback received through this mechanism (nor the monitoring data on publication orders and downloads that can be provided by the OP) for streamlining or improving their publications offer. The feedback mechanism of DG COMM consists of a similar rating system with smileys⁷ embedded in html versions of their publications. In contrast to the OP system, this feedback mechanism is used systematically, it provides the option of leaving quantitative feedback and this feedback is reviewed and reported on a weekly basis.

Only a minority of author services carried out audience research for their publications and testing of publications with their prospective users. Most EU and national author services consulted indicated that they had no testing mechanisms in place for the development of their publications for citizens. Teachers and young people were most frequently involved in testing Commission publications, and the most systematic publication testing was undertaken through testing panels managed by DG COMM (with teachers and managers of EDICs)⁸.

EU Added Value

Commission publications for citizens were perceived to have EU added value in four main areas: 1) they provide objective, up-to-date and complete information about the EU, its programmes and actions, 2) they include clear examples on how the EU is beneficial in the daily lives of its citizens, 3) they fill an information gap about the EU, its programmes and actions, and 4) they provide an EU perspective on specific policy areas and other topics of interest to EU citizens.

According to the evidence collected, the EU added value of Commission publications for citizens could be maximised by **conducting more thorough audience research** during early planning stages to ensure that the information needs of targeted audience segments are adequately met. **Increasing collaboration between Commission services and national, regional and local stakeholders** in the development and promotion of Commission publications for citizens could help in tailoring these to respective national contexts and increasing dissemination through national, regional and local partners.

Recommendations

Stemming from the findings and conclusions outlined above in relation to the five evaluation criteria, several operational recommendations for improving the Commission's publications offer to EU citizens were developed. These have been consolidated around the publications' planning, development, dissemination and monitoring cycle, in order to offer operational support for the Commission's author services that produce publications for citizens.

Planning of publications

- A. To promote the coordinated development of the Commission's publications for citizens, author services should develop and share publication plans and link these with their annual management plans.

⁷ The survey includes four rating questions on the usefulness of the publication, the clarity of the text, the visual aesthetics of the publication and the extent that the topic of the publication is interesting to the reader. It additionally includes an open question where readers can provide further comments on the publication in a text box.

⁸ It should be noted that these testing panels are at the disposal of other DGs' and Institutions' author services and several stakeholders consulted indicated that they had used these panels for testing their publications during the period under review.

- B. When planning publications, author services should pro-actively consider the Commission's political priorities, continued policies and new initiatives so as to anticipate citizens' information needs.
- C. The Commission should more systematically conduct audience research and testing of Commission's publications for citizens to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- D. Each Commission publication for citizens should have a clearly defined target audience, set out in its introduction, and should be accompanied by a distribution strategy to reach this audience.
- E. The Commission should develop a more systematic and coherent definition of 'general' i.e., non-specialist audiences for its publications and share this with the EU Publications Office.
- F. A collaborative space should be created to foster better coordination and cooperation between the Commission's author services in the development and distribution of their publications for citizens.
- G. Collaboration between the European Commission and national, regional and local stakeholders in the development, promotion and distribution of publications for citizens should be enhanced by author services and their contractors when delivering their distribution strategies for publications.

Development of publications

- H. The tone of new, updated or revised Commission publications for citizens should be carefully balanced to present EU achievements, acknowledge limitations and any further progress necessary.
- I. The Commission's publications for citizens should cover current topics and provide practical information for main segments of the population to show what the EU is doing to improve their lives.
- J. The Commission should adapt its most popular publications for citizens to the needs of harder to reach segments of EU citizens, including people with special needs and disabilities, elderly people, as well as groups of people at risk of social exclusion.
- K. The Commission should continue to use a mix of publication formats and supports to meet different user needs and preferences, prioritising short, visual, easy-to-read and interactive content.
- L. While there is increasing interest and demand for online publication formats, printed publications remain important in order to reach audiences that do not use the Internet, prefer printed publications for their work and or do not have the digital skills to access publications online.
- M. The Commission's publications for citizens should be available in all official languages of the EU, using high-quality translation, unless their topic or focus on a particular segment of citizens justifies more limited translation.
- N. Author services should continue to pay close attention to ensure that the language used in their publications for citizens is always appropriate for the particular EU general audience segment targeted.

- O. The Commission should continue to ensure high visual presentation quality of its publications for citizens i.e., quality of layout, quality of formatting, and quality of visuals, as these are important for capturing readers and retaining their interest in EU content.
- P. Commission author services and their contractors developing publications for citizens should revisit and systematically apply accessibility standards and guidelines, making use of the OP accessibility resources as well as other relevant guidelines (e.g., Commission's web accessibility guidelines).

Dissemination of publications

- Q. It is important to explore ways to improve the layout, organisation, and search functionalities of Europa webpages presenting the Commission's publications offer to citizens, and especially the EU Publications portal, to make these more user-friendly.
- R. The Commission could make more use of online and offline promotion opportunities provided by social media as well as national, regional and local partners that share its communication objectives, to ensure that citizens are aware of its publications offer for citizens.

Monitoring and feedback

- S. The Commission's author services should systematically collect and use quantitative and qualitative citizen feedback about their publications in order to better address their needs, as it is currently carried out for DG COMM publications. They should also use the OP monitoring data to streamline their publications offer.

Synthèse

Finalités, objectifs et portée de l'Examen

Le présent Rapport de synthèse final a été préparé par ECORYS dans le cadre de l'«Examen des publications de la Commission européenne destinées aux citoyens» commandé par la direction générale de la communication (DG COMM) de la Commission européenne (la Commission).

Le présent rapport s'inscrit dans le cadre des efforts de la Commission pour procéder à l'examen de ses publications destinées aux citoyens afin de consolider et d'améliorer son offre. 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 réglementation⁹. Les recommandations opérationnelles qui découlent de cette analyse portent sur la planification, le développement, la diffusion et le cycle de suivi des publications, afin de proposer un soutien opérationnel aux services auteurs de la Commission qui produisent des publications destinées aux citoyens.

Le but de cet exercice consistait à examiner dans quelle mesure les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens répondent à leurs besoins en matière d'information sur l'UE, correspondent aux priorités politiques de la Commission et aux objectifs en matière de communication de ses services auteurs¹⁰. L'étude entendait également évaluer dans quelle mesure les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens atteignaient et suscitaient l'intérêt de leurs publics cibles et de leurs sous-segments. En outre, elle cherchait à identifier les lacunes et les inefficacités de l'offre de publications de la Commission pour les citoyens.

De plus, l'Examen a évalué dans quelle mesure les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens sont conviviales et adaptées à leurs lecteurs en matière de langue, d'illustrations et de facilité d'accès, notamment pour les personnes handicapées. Il a également évalué dans quelle mesure les différents services de la Commission travaillent ensemble au développement et à la distribution de leurs publications destinées aux citoyens, ainsi que les modalités de la coopération de ces différents services avec les acteurs extérieurs à la Commission.

Le présent Examen portait sur les publications imprimées et en ligne de la Commission destinées aux citoyens de l'UE et à leurs principaux segments¹¹, publiées entre le 1er janvier 2018 et le 31 octobre 2019.

Aperçu de la méthode

La méthodologie utilisée pour recueillir les données pour cet Examen comprenait :

- ▶ Un exercice de recherche documentaire approfondie visant à informer et contextualiser les conclusions de cette étude et recueillir des données secondaires sur les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens ;

⁹ 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

¹⁰ Y compris les directions générales (DG) de la Commission, les offices inter-institutionnels sélectionnés, les représentations de la Commission dans les États membres ainsi que ses agences exécutives.

¹¹ Cet examen couvre tous les sous-segments de citoyens et traite de publications pour citoyens de toutes les tranches d'âge (dont les enfants et adolescents), genres et circonstances socio-économiques.

- ▶ Des consultations d'exploration auprès des principaux services auteurs de la Commission et des offices inter-institutionnels ;
- ▶ Une cartographie quantitative systématique de 350 publications identifiées via la recherche documentaire, et un examen qualitatif approfondi de 116 publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens ;
- ▶ Des données de suivi relatives aux publications, identifiées analysées et transmises par tous les principaux services auteurs de la Commission et de l'Office des publications de l'Union européenne (OP);
- ▶ Une enquête auprès des utilisateurs pour recueillir leur avis sur les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens, hébergées par l'OP ou sur d'autres pages web d'Europa. L'enquête était disponible dans les 24 langues officielles de l'UE et a récolté 903 réponses, dont 317 étaient complètes et 586 partielles;
- ▶ Plus de 70 entretiens, réalisés auprès de services auteurs et de multiplicateurs de l'UE, ainsi que de parties prenantes dans un échantillon de six pays (Belgique, Croatie, Tchéquie, France, Irlande et Suède);
- ▶ Sept groupes de discussion en ligne, organisés avec 55 citoyens issus de différents horizons, afin d'examiner les centres d'intérêt, l'accès des participants et leurs opinions sur les publications de la Commission sélectionnées;
- ▶ Enfin, une consultation écrite des services auteurs de la Commission, afin de recueillir des données sur la planification des publications et le degré de coopération entre les personnes interrogées.

Résultats et conclusions de l'Examen

Pertinence

En général, **les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient considérées comme pertinentes par les lecteurs et les utilisateurs, répondant à la plupart de leurs besoins d'informations.** Bien qu'il n'existe pas d'approche unique, les données donnent à penser que les publications de la Commission étaient pertinentes et utiles en tant que ressources pour les citoyens. Les deux principaux facteurs qui limitaient la pertinence des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient une connaissance limitée de leur disponibilité, ainsi que leur propension à devenir rapidement désuètes.

L'utilité des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens semblait dépendre du format choisi et du groupe cible. En général, les publications brèves et simples à lire étaient considérées plus utiles que les publications plus longues et plus détaillées. Aucun format de publication n'a fait l'objet d'une préférence par des segments particuliers de citoyens, bien que les données collectées indiquent que les publics plus âgés ont tendance à trouver les publications de la Commission plus utiles que les plus jeunes, qui tendent à préférer des publications plus brèves contenant davantage d'histoires personnelles.

Les données recueillies auprès du centre de contact Europe Direct (EDCC) et de l'Eurobaromètre font état **d'une demande forte et croissante en matière d'informations sur l'UE, y compris sur des sujets sensibles qui évoluent rapidement** (avec un intérêt accru pour les questions migratoires et de mobilité et le changement climatique, ainsi qu'un intérêt constant pour les financements UE dans les domaines de la recherche et de l'innovation, des droits des consommateurs et de l'éducation). L'Examen a confirmé que **ces sujets les plus populaires étaient couverts par les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens.**

La cartographie quantitative des publications a montré que plus des deux tiers des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens couvrent des politiques ou des programmes qui intéressent directement les citoyens de l'UE. Les résultats de l'examen approfondi des publications ont confirmé que les publications lançant un appel spécifique à l'action étaient également bien plus susceptibles d'avoir un groupe cible bien défini. **Alors que les lecteurs considéraient l'ensemble des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens comme utiles, les publications brèves et faciles à lire étaient toutefois préférées à celles aux contenus plus denses.**

Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient souvent, le cas échéant, alignées sur les priorités politiques de la Commission. Les priorités étaient généralement prises en considération dans la planification et le développement des publications par les services auteurs consultés. Les publications étaient également étroitement alignées sur les domaines politiques respectifs des différents services auteurs. Toutefois, les données collectées ont également montré que les priorités politiques de la Commission étaient couvertes à divers degrés, certains services auteurs rapportant agir en fonction d'objectifs de communication trop généraux ou trop étroitement liés à leur domaine de spécialisation pour s'aligner sur une priorité de la Commission.

Cohérence

En général, **l'offre de publications de la Commission aux citoyens démontrait un bon niveau de cohérence et de complémentarité en ce qui concerne les principaux sujets et domaines couverts, sans chevauchements majeurs identifiés.** Les données indiquent que les publications destinées aux citoyens couvraient un large éventail de questions, sujets et politiques d'intérêt potentiel pour les citoyens de l'UE. Les citoyens consultés ont laissé entendre qu'ils apprécieraient avoir davantage de publications sur des sujets d'actualité, ainsi que des publications proposant des informations pratiques ou montrant l'incidence des politiques de l'UE sur leur vie.

Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient disponibles dans un format imprimé et en ligne. Les données collectées ont montré que la Commission recourait de plus en plus aux formats en ligne pour s'adapter aux besoins de la majorité des utilisateurs. Toutefois, selon certains groupes, l'accès à des publications imprimées était toujours important. En général, les données indiquaient que **les lecteurs préféraient des publications plus brèves, contenant plus d'informations présentées visuellement et de manière interactive.**

Les données collectées laissent entendre qu'il était **possible de mieux adapter le contenu des publications aux besoins de sous-segments spécifiques du grand public** (par exemple, les élèves, les jeunes, les personnes handicapées, les personnes âgées, les catégories socialement exclues, les NEET, etc.), et d'améliorer l'accès aux informations relatives à l'UE en élargissant l'offre de langues couvertes.

Les données collectées font état **de bonnes complémentarités, et de l'absence de chevauchements majeurs, entre les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens et celles produites par d'autres sources européennes, nationales, régionales et locales.** Bien que les publications de la Commission et celles élaborées par d'autres acteurs examinées couvraient les mêmes sujets et domaines politiques d'intérêt pour des publics cibles non spécialisés, elles ciblaient différents segments du public et présentaient différentes perspectives (les publications qui n'étaient pas celles de la Commission étaient souvent plus brèves, présentaient un avis plus critique sur des politiques et des programmes de l'UE, et défendaient ou cherchaient à promouvoir certains changements aux politiques de l'UE).

Efficacité

En général, **les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens couvraient de manière large mais inégale les sujets et domaines politiques.** L'économie, la culture, l'environnement et les informations générales sur l'UE représentaient les domaines les plus fréquemment couverts par les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens. Les élections européennes, les carrières, les questions migratoires et de mobilité, les enfants et les familles, l'histoire, et l'aide humanitaire et extérieure étaient, quant à eux, les sujets les moins couverts. Aucune lacune précise dans la couverture de sujets ou domaines particuliers n'a été identifiée dans le cadre de l'analyse des données de suivi des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens. Toutefois, les parties prenantes consultées ont rapporté plusieurs lacunes dans l'offre de publications de la Commission, probablement dues à un manque d'informations sur la disponibilité de certaines publications. Enfin, les citoyens consultés ont accueilli plus positivement les publications plus récentes traitant de thèmes d'actualité.

En général, **les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient largement perçues comme étant factuelles.** La cartographie approfondie des publications destinées aux citoyens a confirmé qu'une majorité présentait des informations claires ou des exemples concrets des activités, des programmes et des politiques de l'UE en plus de leurs résultats et de leurs impacts. Toutefois, certaines publications ont été jugées comme étant excessivement mélioratives et réductrices dans leur représentation des activités et des réalisations de l'UE. Les citoyens consultés ont indiqué que **les publications de la Commission seraient plus efficaces si elles présentaient les avantages, les réalisations, les limites et les progrès de l'UE de manière plus objective.**

La portée des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens était en général élevée. Selon les données de suivi agrégées, la portée totale estimée des 350 publications de la Commission européenne destinées aux citoyens couvertes par cette étude dépassait les 5,4 millions de téléchargements, impressions, visites et pages consultées. L'OP représentait le principal canal de distribution et de diffusion des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens, avec 2,9 millions de commandes et téléchargements effectués par le biais de ce service durant la période examinée (par rapport à environ 870 000 publications téléchargées et distribuées via d'autres canaux)¹².

La Commission a recouru à une série de canaux en ligne et hors ligne pour promouvoir et distribuer ses publications aux citoyens de l'UE, alors que les réseaux sociaux sont considérés comme l'approche la plus efficace. Toutefois, les multiplicateurs d'informations de la Commission¹³ ont également **souligné l'importance continue du contact direct et de la distribution de publications imprimées de la Commission**, notamment pour répondre aux besoins des sous-segments de citoyens qui n'ont pas accès à Internet ou qui ne disposent que de

¹² Il est important de noter que les principaux multiplicateurs d'informations de l'UE utilisent l'Office des publications (OP) pour commander et télécharger des publications pour leurs travaux, augmentant ainsi le nombre de téléchargements, impressions, visites et pages consultées des publications rapporté par l'OP.

¹³ Les principaux multiplicateurs d'informations comprennent des organisations et des réseaux chargés de diffuser des informations sur l'UE et des sujets liés à l'UE, y compris, par exemple, les services «L'Europe est à vous», les Centres d'information Europe Direct, Eurodesk, SOLVIT, le réseau des Centres européens des consommateurs (réseau CEC), le réseau européen de coopération des services de l'emploi (EURES), etc.

compétences numériques limitées. En général, les données montrent que le **portail «Publications de l'UE» de l'OP et d'autres pages web sur Europa qui hébergent des publications étaient difficiles à naviguer**, aussi bien pour les citoyens que pour les parties prenantes¹⁴, et que la pluralité des emplacements hébergeant des publications représentait un obstacle pour les citoyens qui cherchaient des publications.

Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient généralement considérées comme lisibles, exploitables et propices à l'engagement pour leurs lecteurs et leurs utilisateurs. La majorité des personnes interrogées ont indiqué qu'elles utilisaient (ou avaient l'intention d'utiliser) les informations issues d'une publication dans des discussions ou des conversations, et plus d'un quart d'entre elles ont déclaré avoir changé leurs habitudes à la suite d'une publication de la Commission, confirmant ainsi que les publications ont un impact positif sur l'implication des citoyens de l'UE.

Les données recueillies suggèrent que **les publications suscitaient davantage d'intérêt quand elles présentaient les opportunités offertes par les programmes et les initiatives de l'UE ciblant directement les citoyens**. Plus d'un tiers des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens fournissaient des informations sur la manière de s'impliquer auprès de l'UE, et une personne interrogée sur sept a confirmé que les publications l'avaient aidée à prendre part à un programme ou à une initiative de l'UE. Les publications suscitaient davantage d'intérêt lorsqu'elles **évitait des discussions abstraites ou techniques** relatives aux politiques, aux programmes, aux directives ou à la législation de l'UE, et qu'elles présentaient plutôt des informations pratiques et des exemples «concrets» de l'impact de l'UE sur la vie des citoyens, et ce, de manière visuellement attrayante.

Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens avaient une capacité limitée, mais notable, à influencer les attitudes des citoyens envers l'UE. Des données suggèrent que certaines publications auraient le potentiel de modifier les croyances et (par extension) les attitudes du public, mais la majorité ne l'aurait pas. Toutefois, **les publications de la Commission ont joué un rôle important en contribuant aux connaissances et aux croyances qui précèdent les changements d'attitude**, elles ont permis de dissiper les «fausses» croyances, de contrer la désinformation, de promouvoir des informations factuelles sur l'UE, et d'exercer ainsi un impact sur les attitudes des lecteurs.

En s'intéressant à la disponibilité des publications dans les langues préférées par les utilisateurs, il ressort que **les 24 langues officielles de l'Union européenne bénéficiaient d'une couverture inégale dans les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens**. Un peu moins d'un cinquième des publications reprises dans la cartographie étaient disponibles dans chacune des 24 langues, près d'un tiers étaient disponibles dans au moins 20 langues, et plus de la moitié n'étaient disponibles que dans une seule langue. La plupart des publications de la Commission ne sont pas traduites dans toutes les langues officielles de l'UE, ce qui entrave l'accès d'une partie de la population de l'UE qui n'est pas à l'aise avec l'anglais ou le français. Les publications traduites en slovène et en irlandais étaient particulièrement rares.

Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient largement perçues comme étant adaptées à leur public cible en matière de lisibilité et de facilité d'utilisation. Les

¹⁴ L'Espace Apprentissage représentait l'exception, alors que plusieurs parties prenantes consultées trouvaient cette plateforme utile et facile à parcourir pour les enfants et les enseignants qui cherchent des publications pertinentes.

données collectées indiquent que la plupart des services auteurs de la Commission utilisaient un langage et des illustrations appropriés dans leurs publications destinées aux citoyens. Toutefois, d'importants obstacles à l'accès aux publications ont été identifiés dans le cas de citoyens présentant un handicap ou une autre déficience, **plus des deux tiers des publications examinées ayant été jugées difficiles à utiliser par les personnes présentant un handicap ou une autre déficience.**

Le format des publications constituait un facteur déterminant de leur popularité auprès des citoyens. En effet, les livres et cahiers plus épais étaient moins régulièrement choisis que les brochures, livrets, cartes postales, dépliants, et autres formats «plus légers». Des publications plus brèves, des infographies ou des fiches d'information qui évitent des blocs de texte denses et comportent des images visuellement attrayantes étaient plus susceptibles d'attirer les lecteurs. **Le contenu auquel les utilisateurs pouvaient davantage s'identifier (par exemple, les «modèles de réussite») et qui ne contenait pas de jargon technique s'est avéré plus efficace dans les publications.**

Efficiences

Des données faisaient état d'**une coopération efficace et satisfaisante entre les services auteurs et la DG COMM, ainsi qu'avec l'OP en ce qui concerne le développement et la diffusion des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens.**

Alors que les services auteurs ont rapporté **une meilleure coopération avec la DG COMM et l'OP** durant la période couverte par cet Examen, **la coopération avec d'autres services auteurs était limitée.** Un peu moins d'un cinquième des publications examinées montraient des signes de coopération, et un huitième aurait bénéficié d'une collaboration. Les contraintes budgétaires au sein des départements de communication des services auteurs, l'absence de consignes centralisées ainsi que les difficultés à identifier les collègues en charge de certaines publications ont été identifiées comme étant les principaux obstacles à une collaboration plus efficace. En outre, **aucune donnée ne faisait état de services auteurs regroupant des ressources ou créant des synergies ou des économies d'échelle dans le développement et la distribution de leurs publications destinées aux citoyens.**

Les **données relatives à la planification stratégique des services auteurs en matière de publications étaient limitées,** ce qui pourrait être interprété comme une entrave à la coopération. Très peu de services auteurs disposaient de plans de publications et, lorsqu'ils en avaient, ils utilisaient différentes approches pour planifier le travail des services auteurs sur les publications. En outre, les plans et les stratégies de publication n'étaient généralement pas partagés entre les services auteurs, empêchant ainsi une coordination centralisée ou décentralisée. Il n'y avait également **aucun espace partagé pour la collaboration et la coordination du travail sur les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens.**

Les données collectées ont montré que **la collaboration entre les services auteurs et l'OP fonctionnait bien et avait connu une amélioration durant la période couverte par l'Examen.** Plus précisément, les données indiquent que l'amélioration des services de gestion des demandes de rédaction, de conception et de traduction proposés par l'OP a porté ses fruits, et il a été noté que ces services complètent ceux proposés par la DG COMM.

Les **données relatives à la collecte systématique des avis sur les publications destinées aux citoyens par les services auteurs de la Commission et les multiplicateurs sont limitées.** Les mécanismes de collecte d'informations les plus courants identifiés étaient les systèmes

d'évaluation de l'OP et de la DG COMM. Le système d'évaluation à cinq étoiles de l'OP pour les publications est publié sur le portail des «Publications de l'UE». Toutefois, cette fonction d'évaluation n'était que rarement utilisée, ne collectait que des données quantitatives et n'offrait pas la possibilité de laisser un avis qualitatif sur les publications réalisées par l'OP. Les services auteurs n'examinaient pas systématiquement les avis reçus par le biais de ce mécanisme (ni les données de suivi sur les commandes et téléchargements de publications qui peuvent être fournies par l'OP) afin de rationaliser ou d'améliorer leur offre de publications. Le mécanisme de collecte d'informations de la DG COMM consiste en un système d'évaluation similaire avec des smileys¹⁵ intégrés dans les versions html de leurs publications. Contrairement au système de l'OP, ce mécanisme de collecte d'informations est utilisé de manière systématique, il offre la possibilité de laisser un avis quantitatif qui peut être examiné et rapporté de manière hebdomadaire.

Seule une minorité de services auteurs réalisait une étude auprès du public sur leurs publications et un test de publication auprès de leurs utilisateurs potentiels. La plupart des services auteurs européens et nationaux consultés ont indiqué qu'ils n'avaient pas de mécanisme de test en place pour le développement de leurs publications destinées aux citoyens. Les enseignants et les jeunes ont été les plus fréquemment impliqués dans le test des publications de la Commission, et le test de publication le plus systématique était entrepris en testant des panels gérés par la DG COMM (avec des enseignants et des directeurs des Centres d'information Europe Direct)¹⁶.

Valeur ajoutée de l'UE

Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens étaient perçues comme ayant une valeur ajoutée de l'UE dans quatre domaines principaux: 1) elles apportent des informations objectives, actualisées et complètes sur l'UE, ses programmes et ses actions, 2) elles comprennent des exemples clairs sur la manière dont l'UE est bénéfique au quotidien pour ses citoyens, 3) elles comblent un manque d'information sur l'UE, ses programmes et ses actions, et 4) elles fournissent une perspective de l'UE sur des domaines politiques spécifiques et d'autres sujets susceptibles d'intéresser les citoyens de l'UE.

Selon les données collectées, la valeur ajoutée de l'UE des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens pourrait être optimisée en **menant des études plus approfondies auprès du public** durant les premières étapes de la planification afin de garantir que les besoins en informations de segments cibles du public soient correctement satisfaits. **Une collaboration plus étroite entre les services de la Commission et les parties prenantes nationales, régionales et locales** dans le développement et la promotion des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens pourrait contribuer à les adapter aux contextes nationaux respectifs et à augmenter la diffusion par le biais des partenaires nationaux, régionaux et locaux.

Recommandations

Déoulant des résultats et conclusions soulignés ci-dessus en lien avec les cinq critères d'évaluation, plusieurs recommandations opérationnelles destinées à améliorer l'offre des

¹⁵ Le sondage comprend quatre questions d'évaluation sur l'utilité de la publication, la clarté du texte, l'aspect visuel de la publication et la mesure dans laquelle le sujet de la publication est intéressant pour le lecteur. Il comprend également une question ouverte où les lecteurs peuvent fournir d'autres commentaires sur la publication dans une zone de texte.

¹⁶ Il est important de noter que ces panels de test sont à la disposition des services auteurs d'autres DG et institutions, et plusieurs parties prenantes consultées ont indiqué avoir utilisé ces panels pour tester leurs publications durant la période couverte par l'Examen.

publications de la Commission aux citoyens de l'UE ont été formulées. Elles s'articulent autour de la planification, du développement, de la diffusion et du cycle de suivi, afin de proposer un soutien opérationnel aux services auteurs de la Commission qui produisent des publications à destination des citoyens.

Planification des publications

- A. Afin de promouvoir le développement coordonné des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens, les services auteurs devraient élaborer et partager des plans de publication et les relier à leurs plans de gestion annuels.
- B. Lors de la planification des publications, les services auteurs devraient prendre en considération de manière proactive les priorités politiques, les politiques continues et les nouvelles initiatives de la Commission afin d'anticiper les besoins en informations des citoyens.
- C. La Commission devrait mener de manière plus systématique des études et tests auprès du public en lien avec ses publications destinées aux citoyens, afin de garantir qu'elles répondent aux objectifs poursuivis.
- D. Chaque publication de la Commission destinée aux citoyens devrait avoir un public cible clairement défini, énoncé dans son introduction, et devrait être accompagnée d'une stratégie de distribution en vue d'atteindre ce public.
- E. La Commission devrait développer une définition plus systématique et cohérente du «grand» public, c'est-à-dire non spécialisé, pour ses publications et la partager avec l'Office des publications de l'UE.
- F. Un espace de collaboration devrait être mis en place pour améliorer la coordination et la coopération entre les services auteurs de la Commission dans le développement et la distribution de leurs publications destinées aux citoyens.
- G. La collaboration entre la Commission européenne et les parties prenantes nationales, régionales et locales dans le développement, la promotion et la distribution des publications destinées aux citoyens devrait être améliorée par les services auteurs et leurs contractants lorsqu'ils présentent leurs stratégies de distribution pour les publications.

Développement des publications

- H. Le ton des publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens, qu'elles soient nouvelles, mises à jour ou révisées, devrait être soigneusement pondéré pour présenter les réalisations de l'UE, reconnaître les limites et tout progrès nécessaire.
- I. Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens devraient couvrir les sujets actuels et proposer des informations pratiques aux principaux segments de la population afin de montrer ce que l'UE fait pour améliorer leurs vies.
- J. La Commission devrait adapter ses publications les plus populaires destinées aux citoyens afin de répondre aux besoins des segments de citoyens de l'UE plus difficiles à atteindre, notamment les personnes ayant des besoins particuliers et en situation de handicap, les personnes âgées, ainsi que les groupes de personnes menacées d'exclusion sociale.
- K. La Commission devrait continuer à utiliser différents formats et supports de publication pour répondre aux divers besoins et préférences des utilisateurs, en privilégiant les contenus brefs, visuels, faciles à lire et interactifs.

- L. Si les formats de publication en ligne font face à une demande et un intérêt accrus, les publications imprimées restent importantes pour atteindre des publics qui n'utilisent pas Internet, préfèrent les publications imprimées pour leur travail ou ne disposent pas des compétences numériques pour accéder aux publications en ligne.
- M. Les publications de la Commission destinées aux citoyens devraient être disponibles dans toutes les langues officielles de l'UE, en recourant à des traductions de haute qualité, sauf si leur sujet ou le sous-segment particulier des citoyens qu'elles ciblent justifient une traduction plus limitée.
- N. Les services auteurs devraient continuer à s'assurer que le langage utilisé dans leurs publications destinées aux citoyens est toujours adapté au segment particulier du grand public de l'UE ciblé.
- O. La Commission devrait continuer à garantir une qualité de présentation visuelle élevée pour ses publications destinées aux citoyens, c'est-à-dire la qualité de la mise en page, la qualité de la mise en forme, et la qualité des illustrations, étant donné que ces derniers sont importants pour attirer l'attention des lecteurs et préserver leur intérêt pour le contenu produit par l'UE.
- P. Les services auteurs de la Commission et leurs contractants développant des publications destinées aux citoyens devraient revoir et appliquer systématiquement les normes et lignes directrices en matière d'accessibilité, en recourant aux ressources d'accessibilité de l'OP ainsi qu'à d'autres lignes directrices pertinentes (par exemple, les lignes directrices sur l'accessibilité du web de la Commission).

Diffusion des publications

- Q. Il est important d'étudier des solutions pour améliorer la mise en page, l'organisation et les fonctionnalités de recherche des pages web d'Europa présentant l'offre des publications de la Commission aux citoyens, en particulier le portail des Publications de l'UE, afin de les rendre plus conviviales.
- R. La Commission pourrait davantage saisir les opportunités de promotion en ligne et hors ligne offertes par les réseaux sociaux ainsi que par les partenaires nationaux, régionaux et locaux qui partagent ses objectifs de communication, afin de garantir que les citoyens soient informés de son offre de publications.

Suivi et avis

- S. Les services auteurs de la Commission devraient systématiquement recueillir et utiliser les avis quantitatifs et qualitatifs des citoyens sur leurs publications afin de mieux répondre à leurs besoins, comme c'est actuellement le cas pour les publications de la DG COMM. Ils devraient également utiliser les données de suivi de l'OP pour rationaliser leur offre de publications.

Zusammenfassung

Ziele, Vorhaben und Umfang der Bewertung

Dieser abschließende, zusammenfassende Bericht wurde durch ECORYS im Kontext der Bewertung von Veröffentlichungen der Europäischen Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger erstellt, die von der Generaldirektion Kommunikation (GD COMM) der Europäischen Kommission („Kommission“) in Auftrag gegeben wurde.

Dieser Bericht ist Teil der Maßnahmen der Kommission, Bilanz über die Veröffentlichungen der Europäischen Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu ziehen sowie das Angebot zu konsolidieren und zu verbessern. Der Bericht ist nach den folgenden Bewertungskriterien gegliedert: Relevanz, Kohärenz, Wirksamkeit, Effizienz und europäischer Mehrwert – nach den jeweiligen Vorgaben der Grundsätze für eine bessere Rechtsetzung¹⁷. Die aus der Analyse hervorgehenden operativen Empfehlungen sind um den Planungs-, Entwicklungs-, Verbreitungs- und Überwachungskreislauf der Veröffentlichungen angesiedelt, um den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission, die Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger erstellen, Hilfe zu leisten.

Ziel des Auftrags war, zu ergründen, inwieweit Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger auf den Informationsbedarf der EU-Bevölkerung sowie auf die politischen Prioritäten der Kommission und die Kommunikationsziele der abfassenden Dienststellen eingehen¹⁸. Die Studie sollte ebenfalls ermitteln, inwieweit die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger die anvisierten Zielgruppen und ihre jeweiligen Teilsegmente erreichten und miteinbezogen. Ferner sollten Lücken und Unzulänglichkeiten im Veröffentlichungsangebot der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger ermittelt werden.

Die Bewertung ermöglichte zudem, zu ermitteln, inwieweit Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger im Hinblick auf die Sprache, visuelle Gestaltung und Barrierefreiheit, auch in Bezug auf Menschen mit Behinderung, benutzungsfreundlich und auf die Leserschaft zugeschnitten sind. Es wurde überdies ermittelt, inwieweit Dienste innerhalb und außerhalb der Kommission bei der Entwicklung und Verbreitung ihrer Veröffentlichungen für allgemeine Zielgruppen (fachkundige Personen) zusammenarbeiten.

Diese Bewertung thematisiert die Print- und Online-Veröffentlichungen für EU-Bürgerinnen und -Bürger und die jeweils wichtigsten Segmente¹⁹, die zwischen dem 1. Januar 2018 und 31. Oktober 2019 veröffentlicht wurden.

Übersicht über die Methode

Die Methodik zur Datenerhebung für diese Bewertung umfasste:

¹⁷ 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

¹⁸ Hierbei wurden Generaldirektionen der Kommission, ausgewählte interinstitutionelle Stellen, Vertreterinnen und Vertreter der Kommission in den Mitgliedsstaaten sowie Exekutivagenturen berücksichtigt.

¹⁹ Dieser Bericht gilt für alle Teilsegmente der Bürgerinnen und Bürger und thematisiert daher Veröffentlichungen für Bürger aller Altersgruppen (einschließlich Kinder und Jugendliche), Geschlechter und sozioökonomischer Hintergründe.

- ▶ Eine umfassende Quellenanalyse, um die Ergebnisse dieser Studie zu untermauern und zu kontextualisieren sowie die Erhebung von Sekundärdaten zu Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger;
- ▶ Konsultationen mit den wichtigsten abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission und interinstitutionellen Stellen;
- ▶ Eine systematische quantitative Kartierung von 350 Veröffentlichungen mittels Quellenanalyse und eine detaillierte qualitative Bewertung von 116 Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger;
- ▶ Die Überwachung von Daten für die Veröffentlichungen, die von allen wesentlichen abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission sowie vom Amt für Veröffentlichungen der Europäischen Union zusammengestellt, in Auftrag gegeben und analysiert wurden;
- ▶ Eine Benutzerumfrage, um Feedback zu den Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu erheben, die vom Amt für Veröffentlichungen oder auf anderen Europa-Webseiten bereitgestellt werden. Diese stand in allen 24 EU-Amtssprachen zur Verfügung und es wurden insgesamt 903 Antworten erhoben, darunter 317 vollständige Antworten und 586 Teilantworten;
- ▶ Es wurden über 70 Interviews mit abfassenden Dienststellen und Multiplikatoren der EU sowie nationalen Interessengruppen in sechs Musterländern (Belgien, Tschechien, Irland, Frankreich, Kroatien und Schweden) durchgeführt;
- ▶ Es wurden sieben Online-Fokusgruppen mit insgesamt 55 Bürgerinnen und Bürgern mit verschiedenem Hintergrund durchgeführt, um das Interesse sowie die Zugänglichkeit und die Ansichten der teilnehmenden Personen zu ausgewählten Veröffentlichungen der Kommission in Erfahrung zu bringen;
- ▶ Schließlich wurde eine schriftliche Konsultation unter den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission durchgeführt, um Daten zur Planung von Veröffentlichungen und zum Maß an Kooperation zwischen den Auskunft gebenden Personen bei Veröffentlichungen zu erheben.

Erkenntnisse und Schlussfolgerungen der Bewertung

Relevanz

Grundsätzlich wurden die **Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger von der Leserschaft und den Benutzenden für relevant erachtet, da der Informationsbedarf größtenteils berücksichtigt wird**. Obwohl es kein Patentrezept gibt, legen die Erkenntnisse nahe, dass die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission eine relevante und nützliche Ressource für die Bürgerinnen und Bürger sind. Die beiden zentralen Faktoren, welche die Relevanz von Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger einschränkten, waren das begrenzte Bewusstsein in Bezug auf ihre Verfügbarkeit und, dass die Veröffentlichungen sehr schnell veraltet und überholt sind.

Die **Nützlichkeit von Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürgern von dem ausgewählten Format und der Zielgruppe abzuhängen**. Kurze und verständliche Veröffentlichungen wurden im Allgemeinen für nützlicher erachtet, als längere und ausführlichere Veröffentlichungen. Es gab keine bevorzugten Veröffentlichungsformate unter bestimmten Segmenten von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern, obgleich die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse darauf hindeuten, dass ältere Zielgruppen Veröffentlichungen der Kommission tendenziell für nützlicher halten, als jüngere Zielgruppen, die kürzere Veröffentlichungen mit persönlicheren Geschichten bevorzugen.

Die durch das Europe-Direct-Kontaktzentrum (EDCC) und Eurobarometer gewonnenen Erkenntnisse legen nahe, dass **es eine starke und steigende Nachfrage nach Informationen über die EU gibt, einschließlich von aktuellen Themen, die rasanten Änderungen unterliegen** (mit steigendem Interesse an den Themen Migration und Klimawandel sowie anhaltendem Interesse an den Themen EU-Finanzierung von Forschung und Innovation, Verbraucherrechte und Bildung). Die Bewertung bestätigte, dass **die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger auf diese gängigsten Themen eingingen**.

Die quantitative Kartierung von Veröffentlichungen zeigte, dass mehr als zwei Drittel der Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger politische Maßnahmen oder Programme thematisieren, die für die EU-Bevölkerung unmittelbare Relevanz haben. Die Ergebnisse der detaillierten Veröffentlichungsbewertung brachten zudem ans Licht, dass Veröffentlichungen mit einem spezifischen Handlungsauftrag weitaus wahrscheinlicher eine klar abgesteckte Zielgruppe erreichten. **Während die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger von der Leserschaft im Allgemeinen für nützlich erachtet wurden, wurden kurze und verständliche Veröffentlichungen bevorzugt.**

Die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger waren häufig, und wenn diese relevant waren, an den politischen Prioritäten der Kommission ausgerichtet. Die Prioritäten wurden von den konsultierten abfassenden Dienststellen grundsätzlich bei der Planung und Entwicklung von Veröffentlichungen berücksichtigt und eng auf die jeweiligen Politikbereiche ausgerichtet. Die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse zeigten allerdings auch, dass die politischen Prioritäten der Kommission in unterschiedlichem Maße behandelt wurden, da manche abfassenden Dienststellen Vorhaben kommunizierten, die entweder zu weit gefasst oder zu nahe an dem jeweiligen Spezialgebiet waren, um diese an einer Priorität der Kommission auszurichten.

Kohärenz

Grundsätzlich **wies das Angebot für Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger ein gutes Maß an Kohärenz und Komplementarität in Bezug auf wichtige abgehandelte Themen und Gebiete auf, ohne dass große Überschneidungen erkannt wurden.** Die Erkenntnisse legen nahe, dass die Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger ein breites Spektrum an Sachverhalten, Themen und politischen Maßnahmen abdeckten, die für die EU-Bevölkerung potenziell von Interesse sind. Die konsultierten Bürgerinnen und Bürger gaben an, dass sie mehr Veröffentlichungen über aktuelle Angelegenheiten sowie Veröffentlichungen, die praktische Informationen bieten oder die Auswirkungen der EU-Politik auf ihre Leben veranschaulichen, begrüßen würden.

Die **Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger waren sowohl in Online- als auch Printformaten erhältlich.** Die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse zeigten, dass die Kommission zunehmend Online-Formate nutzte, um auf die gängigsten Benutzeranforderungen einzugehen. Doch gedruckte Veröffentlichungen wurden von bestimmten Gruppen nach wie vor für wichtig erachtet. Die Erkenntnisse ließen grundsätzlich darauf schließen, dass **die Leserschaft kürzere Veröffentlichungen bevorzugt, die mehr visuelle Informationen in interaktiver Weise beinhalten.**

Die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse legen nahe, dass **die Anpassung von veröffentlichten Inhalten an die spezifischen Teilsegmente der allgemeinen Bevölkerung** (z. B. Schülerinnen und Schüler, junge Menschen, Menschen mit Behinderung, ältere Menschen, Kategorien sozial ausgegrenzter Menschen, Jugendliche, die sich weder in Beschäftigung noch in Bildung oder Ausbildung

befinden usw.), wie auch die Barrierefreiheit von Informationen über die EU durch eine Ausweitung des sprachlichen Angebots noch verbesserungsfähig ist.

Die gewonnen Erkenntnisse zeigen, **dass es eine gute Komplementarität – und keine großen Überschneidungen – zwischen Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger und Veröffentlichungen, die durch andere wichtige europäische, nationale, regionale und lokale Quellen erstellt wurden, gab.** Obgleich die untersuchten Veröffentlichungen, die von der Kommission und nicht von der Kommission stammten, ähnliche Themen und politische Interessengebiete für allgemeine Zielgruppen (fachunkundige Personen) behandelten, zielten diese auf andere Zielgruppensegmente ab und präsentierten unterschiedliche Sichtweisen (Veröffentlichungen, die nicht von der Kommission stammten, waren häufig kürzer, schilderten eine kritischere Sicht auf die politischen Maßnahmen und Programme der EU und befürworteten oder warben für bestimmte Änderungen an der EU-Politik).

Wirksamkeit

Im Hinblick auf den Schwerpunkt **deckten die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger grundsätzlich ein breites, aber ungleichmäßiges Spektrum an Themen und Politikbereichen ab.** Die Bereiche Wirtschaft, Kultur, Umwelt und allgemeine EU-Informationen waren die Gebiete, die in Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger am häufigsten behandelt wurden. Die Themen EU-Wahlen, Beruf, Migration, Kinder und Familien, Geschichte, humanitäre Hilfe und Auslandshilfe zählten zu den Themen mit der geringsten Berichterstattung. In den Überwachungsdaten zu den Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger wurden keine klaren Lücken in der Berichterstattung über bestimmte Themen oder Bereiche ermittelt. In der Wahrnehmung der konsultierten Interessengruppen gab es allerdings mehrere Lücken, was das Veröffentlichungsangebot der Kommission betraf. Dies ist wahrscheinlich auf einen Mangel an Bewusstsein in Bezug auf die Verfügbarkeit bestimmter Veröffentlichungen zurückzuführen. Schließlich begrüßten die konsultierten Bürgerinnen und Bürger zeitnähere Veröffentlichungen, die auf aktuelle Ereignisse eingehen.

Grundsätzlich wurden die **Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger als größtenteils sachlich wahrgenommen.** Die detaillierte Kartierung von Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger bestätigte, dass zusätzlich zu den jeweiligen Ergebnissen und Auswirkungen überwiegend klare Informationen oder konkrete Beispiele für Aktivitäten, Programme und politische Maßnahmen der EU präsentiert wurden. Manche Veröffentlichungen wurden jedoch als zu positiv und verkürzt wahrgenommen, was die Darstellung von Aktivitäten und Errungenschaften der EU betrifft. Die konsultierten Bürgerinnen und Bürger gaben an, dass **Veröffentlichungen der Kommission wirksamer wären, wenn diese den Nutzen, die Errungenschaften, die Hindernisse und die Fortschritte für die EU in ausgewogenerer Weise präsentierten.**

Die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger hatten grundsätzlich eine hohe Reichweite. Laut den aggregierten Überwachungsdaten wurde mit den 350 europäischen Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die im Rahmen dieser Studie berücksichtigt wurden, insgesamt schätzungsweise mehr als 5,4 Millionen Downloads, Printexemplare, Besuche und Webseitenansichten erreicht. Das Amt für Veröffentlichungen repräsentierte mit 2,9 Millionen Bestellungen und Downloads, die über den Untersuchungszeitraum bei diesem Dienst in Auftrag gegeben wurden (im Vergleich zu schätzungsweise 870 000 Veröffentlichungen, die über andere Kanäle heruntergeladen und

verbreitet wurden), den zentralen Kanal für die Verbreitung und Vermittlung von Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger²⁰.

Die Kommission nutzte eine Reihe von Online- und Offline-Kanälen, um ihre Veröffentlichungen unter der EU-Bevölkerung zu bewerben und zu verbreiten, die sozialen Medien wurden hierbei als effektivster Ansatz gesehen. Die Informationsmultiplikatoren der Kommission²¹ **verdeutlichten jedoch auch die fortwährende Wichtigkeit des persönlichen Kontakts und der Verbreitung gedruckter Kommissionsveröffentlichungen**, vor allem um die Anforderungen von Teilsegmenten der Bevölkerung zu erfüllen, die keinen Internetzugang oder begrenzte digitale Kompetenzen haben. Grundsätzlich befanden die Bürgerinnen und Bürger wie auch die Interessengruppen, dass **sich die Navigation im „EU-Veröffentlichungen“-Portal des Amts für Veröffentlichungen und auf anderen Webseiten über Europa, die Veröffentlichungen beinhalten, schwierig gestaltete**²² und dass die Vielzahl an Stellen, an denen Veröffentlichungen verwaltet werden, die Suche der Bürgerinnen und Bürgern nach Veröffentlichungen erschwert.

Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger wurden von der jeweiligen Leserschaft und den Benutzenden im Allgemeinen als lesenswert, nützlich und förderlich für die Miteinbeziehung wahrgenommen. Die Mehrzahl der an der Umfrage teilnehmenden Personen gab an, dass sie Informationen von einer Veröffentlichung verwendet hätten (oder dies vorhätten), die Gegenstand von Diskussionen oder Gesprächen sei, und mehr als ein Viertel berichtete, dass sie infolge einer Veröffentlichung der Kommission ihr Verhalten geändert hätten, was bestätigt, dass Veröffentlichungen positive Auswirkungen auf die Miteinbeziehung der EU-Bevölkerung haben.

Die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse legen nahe, dass **Veröffentlichungen zu einer stärkeren Miteinbeziehung führten, wenn diese die Möglichkeiten von EU-Programmen und -Initiativen präsentierten, die direkt an die Bürgerinnen und Bürger gerichtet sind.** Mehr als ein Drittel der Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger lieferte Informationen zu Beteiligungsmöglichkeiten an der EU, und eine von sieben an der Umfrage teilnehmenden Personen bestätigte, dass ihnen die Veröffentlichungen bei der Mitwirkung an EU-Programmen oder -Initiativen geholfen hätten. Die Veröffentlichungen wurden als ansprechender wahrgenommen, wenn **abstrakte oder fachliche Diskussionen** über politische Maßnahmen, Programme, Verordnungen oder Rechtsvorschriften der EU **vermieden wurden**, und stattdessen praktische Informationen und Beispiele aus der „realen Welt“ zu den Auswirkungen der EU auf das bürgerliche Leben in visuell ansprechender Weise präsentiert wurden.

Die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger boten begrenzte, aber dennoch nicht zu vernachlässigende Möglichkeiten, um die Einstellung der Bürgerinnen

²⁰ Es gilt zu beachten, dass wichtige Informationsmultiplikatoren der EU das Amt für Veröffentlichungen nutzen, um Veröffentlichungen für ihre Arbeit zu bestellen und herunterzuladen, wodurch die Anzahl der erfassten Downloads, Printexemplare, Besuche und Webseitenansichten der von stammenden Veröffentlichungen ansteigt.

²¹ Zu wichtigen Informationsmultiplikatoren zählen Organisationen und Netzwerke, die für die Verbreitung von Informationen über die EU und EU-bezogene Themen verantwortlich sind, darunter beispielsweise die Dienste von „Ihr Europa“, Europe-Direct-Informationszentren (EDIC), Eurodesk, SOLVIT, das Netzwerk der Europäischen Verbraucherzentren (ECC-NET), das Europäische Netz der Arbeitsvermittlungen (EURES) usw.

²² Die Lernecke bildet hiervon eine Ausnahme, da mehrere der konsultierten Interessengruppen diese Plattform für einen nützlichen und einfach navigierbaren Raum hielten, in dem Kinder und Lehrkräfte Veröffentlichungen finden können.

und Bürger gegenüber der EU zu beeinflussen. Die Erkenntnisse lassen darauf schließen, dass Veröffentlichungen potenziell die Überzeugungen und (im Weiteren) die Einstellung von Zielgruppen ändern können, obgleich dies auf viele der Veröffentlichungen nicht zutrifft. Die **Veröffentlichungen der Kommission spielten allerdings eine wichtige Rolle bei der Bildung von Kenntnissen und Überzeugungen, die einer veränderten Einstellung vorausgehen**, sie halfen dabei, „falsche“ Überzeugungen aufzulösen, Desinformationen entgegenzuwirken, faktengestützte Informationen über die EU zu fördern und beeinflussen somit die Einstellung der Leserschaft.

Die Betrachtung der Verfügbarkeit von Veröffentlichungen in der bevorzugten Sprache ließ die Schlussfolgerung zu, dass die **24 Amtssprachen der Europäischen Union in Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger ungleichmäßig berücksichtigt wurden.** Knapp ein Fünftel der Veröffentlichungen, die Bestandteil der Kartierung waren, waren in allen 24 Sprachen verfügbar, fast ein Drittel war in mindestens 20 Sprachen verfügbar und über die Hälfte war ausschließlich in einer Sprache zu lesen. Die meisten Veröffentlichungen der Kommission sind nicht in alle Amtssprachen der EU übersetzt, was einem Teil der EU-Bevölkerung, dem das Lesen in englischer oder französischer Sprache nicht zusagt, den Zugang erschwert. Veröffentlichungen, die in das Slowenische und Irische übersetzt sind, waren besonders selten.

Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger wurden im Hinblick auf die Lesbarkeit und Tauglichkeit für die jeweiligen Zielgruppen größtenteils als angemessen wahrgenommen. Die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse legen nahe, dass die meisten abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission in ihren Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger eine angemessene Sprache und visuelle Gestaltung verwenden. Es wurden jedoch wesentliche Hindernisse für die Barrierefreiheit von Veröffentlichungen im Falle von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern mit Behinderungen oder Beeinträchtigungen ermittelt, da **mehr als zwei Drittel der untersuchten Veröffentlichungen für Menschen mit Behinderungen oder sonstigen Beeinträchtigungen für nicht einfach verständlich erachtet werden.**

Das Format von Veröffentlichungen war ein wesentlicher Faktor für ihre Beliebtheit unter der Bevölkerung, da auf größere Bücher und Notizbücher weitaus weniger zurückgegriffen wurde, als auf Merkblätter, Broschüren, Postkarten, Flyer und sonstige „leichtere“ Formate. Prägnantere Veröffentlichungen, Infografiken oder Informationsblätter, die dichte Textblöcke vermeiden und eine visuell ansprechende Bebilderung enthalten, hatten eine höhere Wahrscheinlichkeit, das Interesse der Leserschaft zu wecken. **„Zugänglichere“ Inhalte (z. B. Erfolgsgeschichten), die keine Fachbegriffe enthielten, waren wirksamere Publikationen.**

Effizienz

Die Erkenntnisse deuteten auf eine **gute und effiziente Kooperation zwischen den abfassenden Dienststellen und GD COMM, sowie mit dem Amt für Veröffentlichungen in Verbindung mit der Entwicklung und Verbreitung von Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger hin.**

Während die abfassenden Dienststellen vermeldeten, dass sich die **Kooperation mit dem DG COMM und dem OP über den Untersuchungszeitraum dieser Bewertung verbessert hätte, war die Kooperation mit anderen abfassenden Dienststellen begrenzt.** Bei knapp einem Fünftel der untersuchten Veröffentlichungen fanden sich Belege für eine Kooperation und es wurde ermittelt, dass bei einem Achtel der Veröffentlichungen eine Zusammenarbeit von Vorteil

gewesen wäre. Budgeteinschränkungen innerhalb der Kommunikationsabteilungen von abfassenden Dienststellen und eine fehlende zentrale Anlaufstelle und Schwierigkeiten bei der Ermittlung von Kolleginnen und Kollegen, die für bestimmte Veröffentlichungen verantwortlich sind, wurden als die Haupthindernisse für eine effizientere Zusammenarbeit hervorgehoben. Es gab zudem **keine Belege dafür, dass abfassende Dienststellen bei der Entwicklung und Verbreitung ihrer Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger Ressourcen bündeln, Synergien schaffen oder Skaleneffekte erzeugen.**

Es gab **kaum Belege für eine strategische Planung von abfassenden Dienststellen hinsichtlich der jeweiligen Veröffentlichungen**, was als Hinderungsgrund für die Kooperation gesehen werden kann. Sehr wenige abfassende Dienststellen hatten Veröffentlichungspläne, und dort, wo es diese gab, wurden verschiedene Ansätze verwendet, um die Arbeit der abfassenden Dienststellen an Veröffentlichungen zu planen. Die Veröffentlichungspläne und -strategien wurden außerdem im Allgemeinen nicht zwischen abfassenden Dienststellen weitergereicht, sodass eine zentrale oder dezentrale Koordinierung verhindert wurde. Ferner gab es auch **keinen gemeinsamen Raum für eine Zusammenarbeit und für die Koordinierung der Arbeit hinsichtlich Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger.**

Die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse zeigten, dass **die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den abfassenden Dienststellen und dem Amt für Veröffentlichungen gut funktionierte und diese sich über den Untersuchungszeitraum verbesserte.** Die Erkenntnisse deuten insbesondere darauf hin, dass die verbesserten Verwaltungsdienste für Redaktion, Gestaltung und Übersetzungsaufträge, die vom Amt für Veröffentlichungen angeboten wurden, für nützlich erachtet wurden, und es zeigte sich, dass diese Dienste die durch das GD COMM angebotenen Dienste ergänzen.

Es gab **kaum Belege dafür, dass die abfassenden Dienststellen und Multiplikatoren der Kommission systematisch Feedback zu ihren Veröffentlichungen für die Bürgerinnen und Bürger einholten.** Die auffälligsten Feedback-Mechanismen waren die Bewertungssysteme des Amts für Veröffentlichungen und der GD COMM. Das Fünf-Sterne-Bewertungssystem des Amts für Veröffentlichungen ist auf dem „EU-Veröffentlichungen“-Portal veröffentlicht. Diese Bewertungsfunktion wurde allerdings unregelmäßig genutzt, erfasste lediglich quantitative Daten und bot nicht die Möglichkeit, Rückmeldungen zu Veröffentlichungen zu hinterlassen, die durch das Amt für Veröffentlichungen durchgeführt worden waren. Die abfassenden Dienststellen überprüften das über diesen Mechanismus erhaltene Feedback nicht systematisch (und auch nicht die Überwachungsdaten zu bestellten und heruntergeladenen Veröffentlichungen, die durch das Amt für Veröffentlichungen bereitgestellt werden können), um ihr Veröffentlichungsangebot zu vereinfachen oder zu verbessern. Der Feedback-Mechanismus der GD COMM besteht aus einem ähnlichen Bewertungssystem mit Smileys²³, die in html-Versionen der betreffenden Veröffentlichungen eingebettet sind. Im Gegensatz zum System des Amts für Veröffentlichungen wird dieser Feedback-Mechanismus systematisch genutzt, er bietet die Möglichkeit, ein quantitatives Feedback zu hinterlassen und dieses Feedback wird wöchentlich überprüft und erfasst.

Nur eine Minderheit der abfassenden Dienststellen führte Zielgruppenforschung für ihre Veröffentlichungen durch und prüfte die Veröffentlichungen mit den jeweiligen

²³ Die Umfrage umfasst vier Bewertungsfragen zur Nützlichkeit, Textverständlichkeit, visuellen Ästhetik und dazu, inwieweit das Thema der Veröffentlichung für die Leserschaft von Interesse ist. Sie enthält zusätzlich eine offene Frage, bei der die Leserschaft weitere Kommentare zu Veröffentlichungen in einem Textfeld angeben kann.

voraussichtlichen Benutzenden. Die meisten der konsultierten europäischen und nationalen abfassenden Dienststellen gaben an, dass sie keine Testmechanismen für die Entwicklung ihrer Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger eingerichtet hätten. Lehrkräfte und junge Menschen waren am häufigsten an Tests von Kommissionsveröffentlichungen beteiligt, und der systematischste Veröffentlichungstest wurde mit Testgruppen durchgeführt, die von der GD COMM (mit Lehrkräften und EDIC-Fachkräften)²⁴ verwaltet werden.

Europäischer Mehrwert

Die **Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger wurden als europäischer Mehrwert** in vier zentralen Bereichen wahrgenommen: 1) sie bieten unvoreingenommene, aktuelle und vollständige Informationen über die EU, ihre Programme und Maßnahmen, 2) sie enthalten verständliche Beispiele über den Nutzen der EU im bürgerlichen Alltag, 3) sie füllen eine Informationslücke über die EU, ihre Programme und Maßnahmen, und 4) sie bieten eine EU-Perspektive auf spezifische politische Gebiete und anderen Themen, die für die EU-Bevölkerung von Interesse sind.

Laut der gewonnenen Erkenntnisse könnte der europäische Mehrwert von Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger über die **Durchführung gründlicherer Zielgruppenforschung** während der frühen Planungsphasen maximiert werden, um sicherzustellen, dass der Informationsbedarf der Zielgruppensegmente angemessen abgedeckt wird. **Eine verstärkte Zusammenarbeit zwischen Kommissionsdienststellen sowie nationalen, regionalen und lokalen Interessengruppen** bei der Entwicklung und Bewerbung von Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger könnte dabei helfen, diese auf den jeweiligen nationalen Kontext zuzuschneiden und die Informationsverbreitung durch nationale, regionale und lokale Partner erhöhen.

Empfehlungen

Ausgehend von den oben skizzierten Erkenntnissen und Schlussfolgerungen in Bezug auf die fünf Bewertungskriterien wurden mehrere operative Empfehlungen entwickelt, um das Veröffentlichungsangebot der Kommission für die EU-Bürgerinnen und -Bürger zu verbessern. Diese sind um den Planungs-, Entwicklungs-, Verbreitungs- und Überwachungskreislauf der Veröffentlichungen angesiedelt, um den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission, die Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger erstellen, operative Unterstützung zu leisten.

Planung von Veröffentlichungen

- A. Zur Förderung der koordinierten Entwicklung von Kommissionsveröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollten abfassende Dienststellen Veröffentlichungspläne entwickeln und diese zusammen mit ihren jährlichen Verwaltungsplänen weiterreichen.
- B. Bei der Planung von Veröffentlichungen sollten abfassende Dienststellen proaktiv die politischen Prioritäten, fortgeführten politischen Maßnahmen und neuen Initiativen der Kommission berücksichtigen, um den Informationsbedarf der Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu antizipieren.

²⁴ Es gilt zu beachten, dass diese Testpanels abfassenden Dienststellen von anderen Generaldirektionen und Institutionen unterstellt sind und mehrere der konsultierten Interessengruppen gaben an, dass sie diese Panels über den Untersuchungszeitraum der Bewertung zum Testen ihrer Veröffentlichungen genutzt hätten.

- C. Die Kommission sollte systematischer Zielgruppenforschung und -tests der Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger durchführen, um sicherzustellen, dass diese zweckdienlich sind.
- D. Alle Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollten eine klar abgesteckte Zielgruppe haben, die bei der Einführung festgelegt und von einer Informationsverbreitungsstrategie begleitet wird, um die betreffende Zielgruppe zu erreichen.
- E. Die Kommission sollte bezüglich ihrer Veröffentlichungen eine systematischere und kohärentere Definition für „allgemeine“ Zielgruppen, also fachkundige Personen, entwickeln und diese dem europäischen Amt für Veröffentlichungen mitteilen.
- F. Es sollte ein Raum für Zusammenarbeit geschaffen werden, um die bessere Koordinierung und Kooperation zwischen den abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission bei der Entwicklung und Verbreitung ihrer Veröffentlichungen für die Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu fördern.
- G. Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Europäischen Kommission und nationalen, regionalen sowie lokalen Interessengruppen bei der Entwicklung, Bewerbung und Verbreitung von Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollte durch die abfassenden Dienststellen und ihre Auftragnehmer bei der Implementierung ihrer Verbreitungsstrategien für Veröffentlichungen vertieft werden.

Entwicklung von Veröffentlichungen

- H. Der Ton von neuen, aktualisierten oder überarbeiteten Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollte sorgfältig ausgewogen sein, um die Errungenschaften der EU zu präsentieren und Hindernisse sowie weitere erforderliche Fortschritte anzuerkennen.
- I. Die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollen aktuelle Themen behandeln und wichtige Segmente der Bevölkerung mit praktischen Informationen versorgen, um zu veranschaulichen, was die EU unternimmt, um das bürgerliche Leben zu verbessern.
- J. Die Kommission sollte ihre gängigsten Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger auf die Anforderungen schwererer erreichbarer Segmente der EU-Bevölkerung anpassen, darunter Menschen mit besonderem Bedürfnissen und Beeinträchtigungen, ältere Menschen sowie Gruppen von Menschen, die von sozialer Ausgrenzung bedroht sind.
- K. Die Kommission sollte weiterhin eine Mischung von Veröffentlichungsformaten und Unterstützungsmaßnahmen verwenden, um auf die verschiedenen Anforderungen und Präferenzen der Benutzenden einzugehen, wobei prägnante, visuelle, verständliche und interaktive Inhalte Priorität haben.
- L. Obgleich das Interesse für und die Nachfrage nach Online-Formaten steigt, bleiben gedruckte Veröffentlichungen wichtig, um Zielgruppen zu erreichen, die das Internet nicht nutzen, die gedruckte Veröffentlichungen für ihre Arbeit bevorzugen und/oder die nicht über die digitalen Kompetenzen verfügen, um online auf Veröffentlichungen zuzugreifen.
- M. Die Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger sollten mithilfe hochwertiger Übersetzungen in allen Amtssprachen der EU verfügbar sein, sofern das entsprechende Thema oder der Fokus auf ein spezielles gesellschaftliches Teilsegment eine eingeschränktere Übersetzung nicht rechtfertigen.

- N. Abfassende Dienststellen sollten weiterhin genau darauf achten, dass die Sprache, die in ihren Veröffentlichungen verwendet wird, stets für das allgemeine Zielgruppensegment der EU angemessen ist.
- O. Die Kommission sollte weiterhin eine hohe visuelle Präsentationsqualität bei ihren Veröffentlichungen für die Bürgerinnen und Bürger sicherstellen – Faktoren wie die Layoutqualität, Formatierungsqualität und Qualität der visuellen Gestaltung sind wichtig, um das Interesse der Leserschaft an EU-Inhalten zu gewinnen und zu erhalten.
- P. Die abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission und ihre Auftragnehmer, die Veröffentlichungen für Bürgerinnen und Bürger entwickeln, sollten Standards und Richtlinien für die Zugänglichkeit von Inhalten mithilfe der Ressourcen des Amts für Veröffentlichungen für Barrierefreiheit sowie sonstiger relevanter Richtlinien (z. B. Richtlinien der Kommission für barrierefreie Webinhalte) konsultieren und systematisch anwenden.

Verbreitung von Veröffentlichungen

- Q. Es ist wichtig, Möglichkeiten zur Verbesserung des Layouts, der Organisation und der Suchfunktionalitäten von Europa-Webseiten zu erforschen, auf denen das Veröffentlichungsangebot der Kommission für Bürgerinnen und Bürger präsentiert wird, darunter insbesondere das „EU-Veröffentlichungen“-Portal, um diese Seiten benutzerfreundlicher zu machen.
- R. Die Kommission könnte verstärkt Online- und Offline-Werbemöglichkeiten nutzen, welche die sozialen Medien sowie nationale, regionale und lokale Partner, die ihre Kommunikationsvorhaben mitteilen, bieten, um sicherzustellen, dass die Bevölkerung über das Veröffentlichungsangebot für Bürgerinnen und Bürger Bescheid weiß.

Überwachung und Feedback

- S. Die abfassenden Dienststellen der Kommission sollten systematisch quantitatives und qualitatives Feedback von den Bürgerinnen und Bürgern über ihre Veröffentlichungen erheben und nutzen, um besser auf die Anforderungen der Bevölkerung einzugehen, so wie dies derzeit bei Veröffentlichungen der GD COMM durchgeführt wird. Die abfassenden Dienststellen sollten ebenfalls die Überwachungsdaten des Amts für Veröffentlichungen nutzen, um ihr Veröffentlichungsangebot zu vereinfachen.



01 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This Synthesis Report has been prepared by Ecorys in the context of the Request for Services (RfS) titled: 'Review of European Commission publications for citizens' (COMM.A.2./18/2019/Lot1), commissioned by Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) at the European Commission. The Report is a part of the European Commission's effort to take stock of its publications for citizens and to consolidate and improve its offer.

Ecorys is pleased to submit this Synthesis Report as a deliverable under the Request for Services (RfS) titled: 'Review of European Commission publications for citizens' (COMM.A.2./18/2019/Lot1), 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 1). The report presents findings and conclusions of this study as well as the recommendations stemming from these conclusions. All are based on the data collection activities proposed in our Inception Report presented in May 2020 and refined in light of ongoing feedback and discussions from the Steering Group and client.

The Synthesis Report is structured as follows:

- ▶ The remainder of **Chapter 1** defines the objectives and the scope of this Review;
- ▶ **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the methodology employed to gather the data for the preparation of this report;
- ▶ **Chapter 3** presents the preliminary findings and conclusions of our data collection activities, organised around the five criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and EU Added value.
- ▶ **Chapter 4** includes a set of operational recommendations for DG COMM, author services and the Publications Office (OP).

This report is accompanied by the following annexes:

- ▶ **Annex I:** Final inventory of publications for citizens
- ▶ **Annex II:** Overview of stakeholders consulted
- ▶ **Annex III:** Anonymised survey results
- ▶ **Annex IV:** List of literature reviewed
- ▶ **Annex V:** Qualitative in-depth mapping tool
- ▶ **Annex VI:** Focus group report

1.1 Objectives of the Review

The aim of this assignment was to produce a report that informs the European Commission (the Commission), including its Representations in the Member States, Executive Agencies and the OP, on the extent to which the Commission's publications for citizens address their EU information needs as well as political priorities of the Commission and communication objectives of author services.

The study sought to inform the client on the extent to which the European Commission's publications for citizens reached out and engaged with their intended target audiences and their sub-segments. This review also examined if there were any gaps and inefficiencies in the Commission's publications offer to citizens. It further assessed the extent to which these publications are user-friendly and tailored for their users in terms of language, visuals, and ease of access, including for people with disabilities. It also explored the extent Commission services cooperate to enhance the outreach of the Commission's publications for non-specialist audiences, examples of top publications, as well as recommendations on how to enhance the outreach, quality and EU added value of its publications in the future.

As part of this assignment Ecorys has produced an extensive and detailed mapping overview of the Commission's publications for citizens made available by the author services, via the OP, but also through other channels (own webpages, events and campaigns). We also provide an overview of the main readers and users of the Commission's publications for citizens. The findings and conclusions of the review are based on triangulation of evidence from various data sources. Based on these conclusions, the research team has elaborated operational recommendations for the client, author services and the OP across the evaluation criteria.

1.2 Scope of the Review

1.2.1 General scope of the study

In line with the requirements in the Technical Specifications for this assignment, this review covers publications developed by a selection of author services including Directorate-Generals (DGs), selected inter-institutional offices²⁵ of the Commission, the representations of the Commission in the Member States as well as its Executive Agencies²⁶. For the purposes of presentation, we simply refer to these services, covered by the scope of this review, as 'the author services' henceforth in the document, unless there is a need to single out a particular service or services for the purpose of analysis.

The review covers the Commission's publications for EU citizens and their various sub-groups²⁷. The preliminary categories of these sub-segments have been established

²⁵ I.e., European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) and the Publications Office (OP).

²⁶ CHAFEA, EACEA, ERCEA, EASME, INEA and REA.

²⁷ This Review covers all sub-segments of citizens and therefore considered publications for citizens of all age groups (including children and teenagers), genders and socio-economic backgrounds.

through our main data collection tasks (i.e., the availability of monitoring data on distribution of Commission's publications among particular segments of EU citizens, scoping expertise among author services, our User survey as well as similar categorisation that may be already established by Commission's services or networks targeting citizens)

This assignment only covers the European Commission's publications for non-specialist target audiences, i.e., on topics of general interest for citizens, and specifically designed to be understandable and meaningful for citizens. As required by the client, this review focuses on:

- ▶ Publications produced by all DGs of the Commission (including its Representations in the Member States) in addition to two service departments (the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) and the Publications Office (OP)) and six Executive agencies.
- ▶ DG COMM's publications, publications of other DGs and inter-institutional offices for citizens, including practical guides, publications on EU programmes and campaigns;
- ▶ European Commission's publications for citizens published between 1 January 2018 and 31 October 2019, i.e., during the previous Juncker Commission;
- ▶ Printed publications of the Commission's author services and publications distributed to citizens in electronic formats, when available;
- ▶ European Commission's publications for citizens carried by the OP, as well as those developed by author services and their contractors, but not distributed via the OP.

As required by the Technical Specifications, publications for specialist target audiences, including media, were excluded from the scope of this Review. This includes publications for stakeholders and experts, technical, monitoring and evaluation reports, including reports required by EU legislation, publications on EU funded research, and publications of author services and the inter-institutional offices of the European Commission that target professionals, including Commission's partners or multipliers. Publications of other EU Institutions, bodies, offices and agencies other than those listed in the beginning of this section are also excluded from this Review, including publications of decentralised EU agencies. Finally, audio-visual products (videos, apps, and websites) were also outside the scope of this review.

1.2.2 Country sampling approach for this Review

Considering the far-reaching scope of this Review, the range of European Commission's publications for citizens and the Commission's array of European, national and local partners developing, producing and distributing publications on the EU, the Review required a simple, but solid approach to sampling.

Predominantly the Key stakeholder interviews and the Online focus groups required country sampling as the budget for this Review will not allow us to interview all key stakeholders and organise focus groups in all EU Member States. Aside from consulting

the main stakeholders at the European level, we proposed to focus our Key stakeholder interviews and implement Online focus groups in six EU Member States. These were strategically chosen and provide evaluation evidence across a diverse range of country settings. In order to ensure this diversity our country sample, we selected six countries based on the following decision rules (or criteria):

- ▶ Countries with the highest share of Europeans who have a neutral 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; and
- ▶ Countries with the highest and lowest publication orders from the OP.

In our selection, we took into account the abovementioned selection criteria, the feasibility of conducting data collection tasks amidst the COVID-19 situation as well as whether the sample country had already been included the previous *DG COMM Review of materials and activities for youth*. The relationships between new selected sample countries and the selection criteria are shown in the table below:

Table 1.1 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			Publication orders via the OP
			L	M	S	N W E	S S E	C E E	
Belgium		✓	✓			✓			High
Czechia	✓	✓		✓				✓	High
Ireland	N/A ²⁸	N/A			✓	✓			Low
Sweden		✓		✓		✓			Low
Croatia	✓				✓		✓		Avg.
France		✓	✓			✓			Avg.

Source: *Ecorys Inception Report, 2020*

The final six sample countries, endorsed by DG COMM and the Steering Group in the Inception phase thus included: Belgium, Czechia, Croatia, France, Ireland, Sweden .

²⁸ Despite the fact that population in Ireland has an overall positive image of the EU, we believed it would be interesting to include it in the country sample because of Brexit related situation and also because it has a relatively high number of publications ordered from the OP by one million inhabitants.

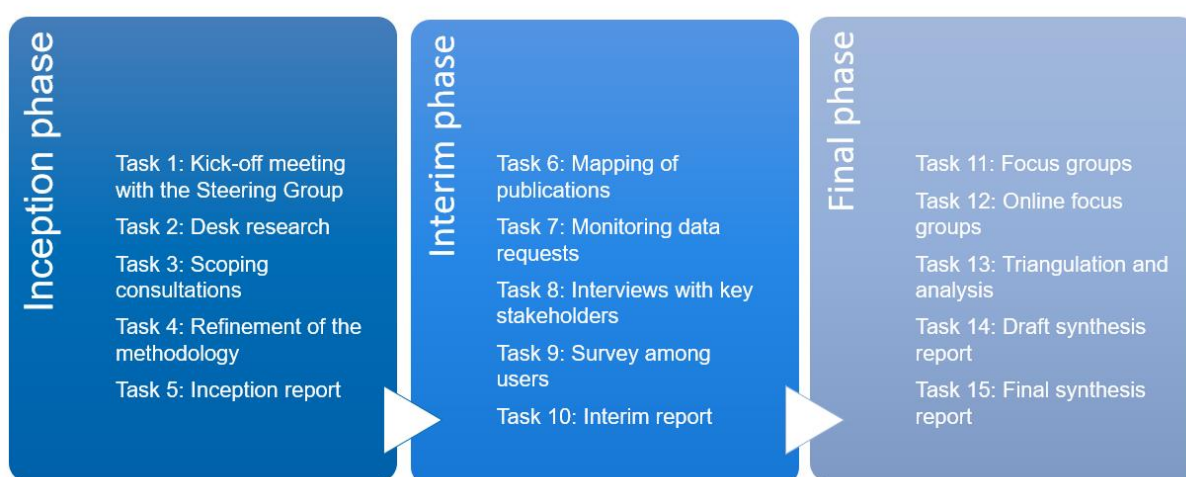


02 Overview of the method

2.0 Overview of the method

The method for this Review combined a variety of data collection and assessment methods. The approach was structured around three project phases and 15 tasks, including one additional task of a 'Written consultation' that was agreed with the Steering Group during the Interim meeting. An overview of the method is presented the Figure below.

Figure 2.1 Three project phases and the tasks of the Review



Source: Ecorys, 2020

The key tasks delivered during this Review are briefly summarised below²⁹.

- ▶ A **comprehensive Desk research** was undertaken to inform and contextualise the findings of this report as well as to collect secondary data on Commission publications included in the inventory used for the mapping exercises (please see below). The Desk research covered identification and review of the relevant literature (existing evaluations, studies and surveys) and Eurostat data sets as well as requests of relevant policy and evaluation reports from the Steering Committee (as well as reports spontaneously provided by its members). The list of literature reviewed is presented in Annex II.
- ▶ A two **Scoping interviews** with representatives from DG COMM and the OP. The scoping interviews provided a better understanding the objectives of the Review as envisaged by the client as well as their evaluation needs to be addressed by this review

²⁹ It should be noted that this study covers publications produced during the Juncker Commission (January 2018 – October 2019). Therefore, the publications included in the quantitative and qualitative mapping exercises and the reviewed publications in the focus groups only include publications produced during this timeframe. Survey respondents interviewed stakeholders or focus group participants additionally shared insights into publications that went beyond the scope of this study and these reflections were also included in the analysis where relevant and appropriate.

and informed the Ecorys on the latest developments in the Commission related to the development, distribution and dissemination of publications as well as the respective DG COMM and OP domain leadership. A **Scoping survey** was undertaken with DG COMM's Communication Network. 41 responses were received from various Commission DGs, Service departments and Executive agencies. Through the survey, respondents asked preliminary questions in relation to the development and dissemination of publications for citizens, as well as providing contacts for further data collection planned under this Review.

- ▶ A **systematic quantitative and qualitative mapping exercise of publications** for citizens was carried out by the research team. 350 publications were identified via a combination of methods, including the Scoping survey and Desk research covering a range of online and offline resources, publications identified during Key stakeholder interviews, and eligibility screening of OP publication titles. 350 publications were quantitatively mapped, using a range of indicators, while 116 underwent an in-depth review (please see Annexes I and V respectively for the mapping results).
- ▶ Several **Monitoring data requests** were undertaken during the three phases of the project. Monitoring data on publications were requested from all respondents to the scoping survey, as well as through discussions in the Key stakeholder interviews. Requests for monitoring data from the OP on all publications tagged with the 'general public' and 'youth' were carried out. Monitoring data was furthermore requested from the Europa web page to review the performance of publications not carried by the OP.
- ▶ A total of 72 **in-depth interviews with key stakeholders** were undertaken to inform the Review and complement the data collected through the other research tasks. A total of 15 interviews were completed with key EU author DGs, as well four interviews with key EU multipliers. Several of these interviews were group interviews including multiple stakeholder representatives. An additional 57 interviews with selected national stakeholders: European Commission Representations, EDICs, Eurodesks, National Agencies and national multipliers and networks. Each interview, aside covering the strategic questions, Interviews were followed up with the relevant data requests and, where agreed, an email request to promote the User survey.
- ▶ A **User survey** was developed and carried out to collect feedback on Commission publications for citizens carried by the OP or on relevant Europa webpages carrying publications without an OP identifier. The User survey was available in all 24 official EU languages. It was launched on 8 July 2020 and remained open until 30 November 2020. A total of 903 replies, including 317 complete and 586 partial responses. It has to be noted that majority of the survey respondents indicated to have used Commission publications for their work (about 70%) and many are actually employed in Europe Direct Information Centres, at the European Commission or at other EU institution or network. In order to ensure that findings stemming from this data source are reliable and still representing the genuine view of average users, answers from respondents not working

in EU institutions were isolated and compared to the overall results. This exercise was done consistently through the analysis and when results (overall and those of respondents not working in EU institutions) diverged this was reported. Furthermore, to compensate for potential bias a solid focus group exercise was conducted (see step below). The anonymised User survey report can be found in Annex III.

- ▶ **Seven online focus groups** with a total of 55 citizens with various backgrounds³⁰ from our six sample countries³¹ were conducted to provide insights for some of the strategic questions to be addressed by this Review, namely the relevance of the Commission publications for these target groups, their effectiveness in engaging and informing citizens, the main ways citizens search for information about the EU and ways that the Commission publications could be improved to better meet their information needs. More information on the composition of the focus groups and the headline findings can be found in Annex VI.
- ▶ Finally, a **written consultation** was carried out in the final stages of the study to request further information from EU author services to support the analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency criteria. 28 author services were approached, and substantive inputs were received from 19 author services.

³⁰ To ensure that citizens from all walks of life were represented, Ecorys carefully selected participants from the 295 individuals expressing interest to partake in the focus groups. As a result, there was a balanced sample of participants based on gender, age, employment status and other socio-economic factors such as individuals living in rural urban areas, having a migration background or experience or with a mother tongue of a regional or minority language in the EU.

³¹ Two smaller focus groups were conducted with Belgian citizens, to allow for respondents to share their views in either French or Dutch.



03 Findings and conclusions

3.0 Findings and conclusions

3.1 Main target audiences

This section provides our findings and conclusions in relation to the following strategic question of the Review: *'What are potential target audiences for European Commission publications for citizens and their main segments? What information about the EU are they looking for and through which channels?'*

The box below provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions presented in the remainder of this section.

Summary of the findings and conclusions regarding the main target audiences

In 2019, there were around 450 million people living in the EU. The EU's population has been slowly aging with a falling share of children and young people compared to the adult population above 70 years old. This general trend of an ageing population is relevant while developing various EU publications, particularly when considered in conjunction with other findings on information needs and preferred communication channels.

As education is a key channel for people to access information related to the EU, it is important for EU author services to consider how education systems differ across Member States when establishing target audiences and dissemination strategies for their publications. The highest percentages of the EU population with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education are found in Southern Europe, while Northern and Western European countries have the highest number of tertiary education graduates. Overall, Europeans have been increasingly participating in education, vocational training and lifelong learning. Youth education attainment levels have also increased.

Additionally, the distribution of the European population by degree of urbanisation is an important factor to consider when developing and disseminating publications, as geographical location can influence availability and preferences in channels for communication as well as needs. In 2019, the highest percentage of EU citizens who were living in the cities were in Malta, Estonia, the Netherlands and Cyprus, while the highest shares of proportions living in rural areas were in Lithuania, Slovenia, Romania and Slovakia.

Despite an increasing standard of living in Europe, a bit more than one fifth of EU citizens were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2019. Low or no income, and wider material deprivation, also broadens the digital divide and reduces the means to acquire technology to access online materials. It is important for EU author services to consider other (than online) dissemination channels to reach these hard-to-reach target groups.

Migration has been one of the key drivers of demographic (as well as economic, social and cultural) change in Europe. In 2019, almost 22 million people (or around 5%) in the EU were non-EU citizens, establishing this is a notable segment of the general public that should be considered by Commission's author services in their publications' offer.

Evidence shows that EU citizens' awareness of key EU Institutions is high, suggesting that information needs in this area overall were being met. The proportion of EU citizens who agree that they understand how the EU works has steadily increased since 2011. Nevertheless, there is a prevailing view among EU citizen that they (and their own country's citizens) are not well-informed about European matters, illustrating a perceived information need.

This information need was confirmed by monitoring data obtained from the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) that shows a strong and increasing demand for information on the EU. In addition to requiring more information about the EU overall, topics of most interest to citizens are changing, with migration now consistently listed as an important issue facing the EU, while terrorism has dropped in importance. Climate change has also emerged as an increasingly important topic.

Alongside direct queries to the EDCC, European citizens keep themselves informed through various information channels, including television, radio, printed press and the Internet. Television remains the medium most frequently used by EU citizens, followed by the Internet and online social networks.

While there has been a sharp rise in the use of the Internet by EU citizens there is a clear divergence in the levels of the Internet use across the EU Member States. Moreover, despite the increasing level of Internet use, it is consistently the medium that EU citizens trust the least (particularly online social media networks).

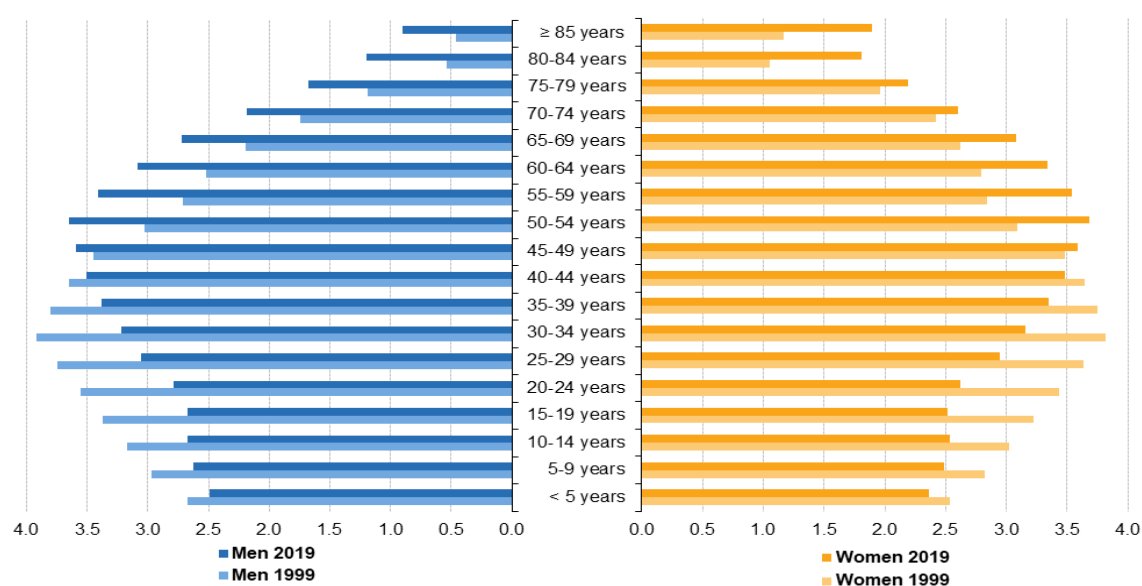
Even with the decreased trust of the Internet as an information source, it is becoming an increasingly used tool to search for information about the EU, its policies, and Institutions. In 2005, a bit more than one fifth of EU citizens used the Internet to locate information about the EU. By 2020, this share had doubled with the Internet gaining prominence as an information source about the EU. The main distribution channels for Commission's publications were the Internet, social media and the OP's 'EU publications' portal.

3.1.1 Audience characteristics

This section addresses the strategic question: *'What are the main socio-economic characteristics of EU citizens and their key sub-segments?'*

In 2019, there were around 450 million people living³² in the EU which represents almost 6% of the world population.³³ Figure 3.1 below presents the EU's age pyramid (a graphical representation of its population structure), showing that the EU's population as a whole³⁴ has been slowly aging with a falling share of children and young people compared to the adult population above 70 years old between 1999 and 2019.³⁵ This **general trend of an ageing population is relevant while developing various EU publications**, particularly when considered in conjunction with other findings on information needs and preferred communication channels as explored in Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 below.

Figure 3.1 Population structure by five-year age groups and sex, EU-27, 1999 and 2019 (% share of total population)



Note: all data as of 1 January. 1999: excluding Croatia. 2019: provisional. Breaks in series.
Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_pjangroup)

eurostat 

Source: Eurostat, 2020 [demo_pjangroup]

Since **education is a key channel for people to access communication** related to the EU, it is important to understand how it differs across the EU. The highest percentages of the EU population with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education are found in Southern Europe (Portugal, Malta, Italy and Greece). The Northern and Western European countries (Ireland, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden) have the highest number of tertiary education graduates (except for Cyprus)³⁶. As a whole, Europeans are increasingly participating in education, vocational training and lifelong learning more generally.

³² See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/57188eae-79c4-401e-8797-d37282d83b55?lang=en>

³³ See: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

³⁴ In here and below, EU refers to European Union – 27 Member States (from 2020)

³⁵ See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_demographic_trends#Europe.27s_demographic_challenge

³⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/edat_ifs_991

Youth³⁷ education attainment levels have also increased. In 2018, the European target of 40% of 30–34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment (as indicated in the Europe 2020 strategy³⁸) was achieved for the first time.³⁹

The distribution of the European population by degree of urbanisation is an important factor to consider as it can influence availability and preferences in channels for communication as well as **content that is tailored for 'urban' and 'rural' readers**⁴⁰. The highest percentage of EU citizens who were living in the cities in 2019 were in Malta (89.6%), Estonia (61%), the Netherlands (56.2%) and Cyprus (51.8%) while the highest proportion of population living in rural areas were in Lithuania (54.7%), Slovenia (44.4%), Romania (43.9%) and Slovakia (43.2%)⁴¹.

Material deprivation can prevent European households from accessing publications

produced by the European Commission. Low or no income also broadens the digital divide and reduces the means to acquire technology to access online materials. The employment rate has steadily been increasing across the EU in recent years and reached 73.1% in 2019⁴². The highest employment rates in 2019 were recorded in Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, while unemployment rates were the highest in Greece, Spain, Italy and France⁴³. Generally, a higher share of women is unemployed in the EU than men, however, there is no distinctive geographical difference by gender.

Despite an increasing standard of living in Europe, 21.4% of EU citizens were at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2019. Different groups of people are more exposed to poverty and social exclusion across the EU than others. For example, women (22.3%) are more likely to experience poverty or social exclusion compared to men (20.4%). Females are also more socially deprived in Malta, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, while a higher level of social exclusion amongst men was identified in Latvia, Lithuania and Italy.⁴⁴

³⁷ Eurostat defines 'youth' young people in the age-groups 15-19, 20- 24 and 25-29 living in a member state of the European Union on January 1. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth>

³⁸ See https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

³⁹ See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Educational_attainment_statistics#Level_of_educational_attainment_by_age

⁴⁰ Commission's publications do not need to be 'reduced' to target urban or rural users. However, certain topics may be of particular interest to these segments, while also remaining interesting to other secondary audiences.

⁴¹ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/b44f99fd-0c9a-4ebe-856b-e57b6f114219?lang=en>

⁴² See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/62e48876-3b7b-475f-8e13-1379dc6650b2?lang=en>

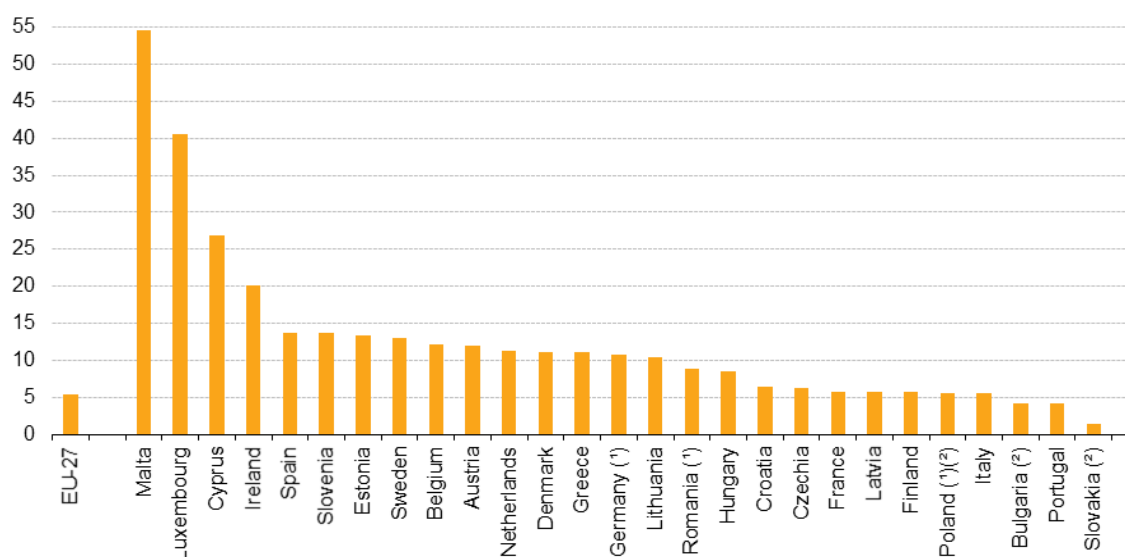
⁴³ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/d2b5c25b-c383-4575-857f-8c1cfc0db3d9?lang=en>

⁴⁴ See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps01/default/table?lang=en

Moreover, children and youth up to 17 years old (27.7%) and people with disabilities were also particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2019.^{45 46}

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**⁴⁷, with the highest immigration numbers per 1,000 inhabitants in Malta, Luxemburg, Cyprus and Ireland in 2018 (please see Figure 3.2). The demographic composition of EU Member States' populations is important in terms of the distribution, content and visuals of Commission's publications, since research shows that citizens with a migration background are less likely to see EU Added value in Commission's publications for citizens (see more in Section 3.6).

Figure 3.2 Number of immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants of EU Member States (2018)



(*) Estimate.

(*) Provisional.

Source: Eurostat, 2018 [*migr_imm1ctz* and *migr_pop1ctz*]

Intra-EU migration for work, study or leisure has also been continuously increasing during the past years. Around 2 million people crossed national borders for work in 2019 (i.e., less than 1% of the working age population that year⁴⁸). Overall employment rate (76%)

⁴⁵ Eurostat, 2020, People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex [ILC_PEPS01]

⁴⁶ In 2018, 28.7% of people with some or severe activity limitations in the EU were at risk or social exclusion. See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability_statistics_-_poverty_and_income_inequalities#Being_at-risk-of-poverty_or_social_exclusion_28ARPE.29:_higher_prevalence_among_the_population_with_activity_limitation.

⁴⁷ See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics

⁴⁸ 0.6% to be precise, calculated based on Eurostat data on the EU-27 population aged 15-74 in 2019 (that numbered 332.3 million people).

was higher among cross border employees who are EU citizens, compared with that (74%) of Member States' nationals and that (60%) of non-EU citizens. Since 2013, the number of mobile students has increased almost 40% and reached 1.3 million students in 2018.⁴⁹ While increasing, the numbers highlight the continued potential for cross-border mobility in the EU.

3.1.2 Main EU information needs

This section addresses the strategic question: *'What are the main EU information needs of EU citizens?'*

Information needs in relation to the EU overall

Eurobarometer statistics from Autumn 2019 reveal that across the EU overall, **awareness of key institutions is high**, suggesting this information need is being met. **Average awareness levels of the European Parliament are at an all-time high** of 93% across the EU, while **average awareness of the European Commission is also high (85%)**, ranging from 76% in Italy to 96% in Luxembourg.⁵⁰ The European Central Bank, the Court of Justice of the EU, the European Council, the Council of the EU, and the European Court of Auditors were also known to the majority of EU citizens.⁵¹ Awareness of other EU institutions and committees was comparably lower. In the EU27 overall, 32% of citizens had heard of the European Committee of the Regions and 40% had heard of the European Economic and Social Committee.

The proportion of EU citizens who agree that they understand how the EU works has steadily increased since 2011,⁵² currently at 59%. Respondents also appeared to be **aware of the benefits of EU membership**, as 'the freedom to travel, study, and work anywhere in the EU' was the characteristic that respondents most strongly associated with the European Union, both in Euro-area countries (where 51% of respondents ranked it first, ahead of the euro (41%) and peace (27%) and in the EU27 overall.

Nevertheless, there is **a prevailing view among respondents in the EU overall that they (60%) and their own country's citizens (68%) are not well-informed about European matters illustrating a perceived information need.** This differs drastically between Member States from as high as 80% of respondents who felt 'not well informed' in France to as low as of 39% of Eurobarometer respondents in Ireland (please see Figure 3.3 below).

⁴⁹ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/9969660/1-09072019-AP-EN.pdf/ed628add-4210-4597-8f2d-696f1b099ff9>

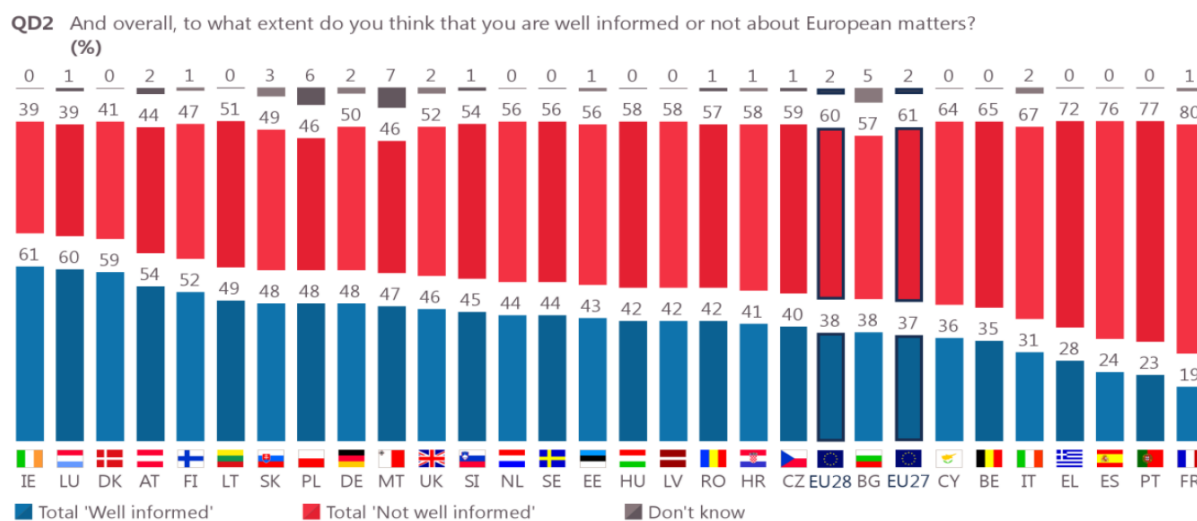
⁵⁰ Awareness was also high in Greece (95%), Portugal (95%), and Sweden (95%).

⁵¹ See:

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standardsurveyky/2255>

⁵² In 2011, 42% of EU citizens agreed that they understand how the EU works, compared to 52% of citizens who reported that they did not.

Figure 3.3 Agreement on how well EU citizens feel informed about the EU, overall



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 – Media use in the EU, Autumn 2019⁵³

Favourable views on EU membership were as high as 83% in the Netherlands, 80% in Denmark, and 77% in Germany. The only country where views on supporters and opponents of EU membership were evenly split was Slovenia⁵⁴. That said, there has also been **a steady (yet fluctuating) tendency for a greater share of EU citizens not to trust the EU than to trust it** (47% vs 43% in 2019). The tendency to trust the EU varies considerably across Member States, with lows in France (32%), Greece (34%), and Italy (38%) and highs in Lithuania (66%), Denmark (63%), and Bulgaria (60%). Levels of trust also differed significantly between different EU Institutions, with the European Parliament being the only institution to be trusted by the majority of respondents (54%).⁵⁵

Importantly, the level of trust in European Institutions appears to correspond closely with their average levels of awareness among citizens; the European Parliament, European Commission, Court of Justice of the European Commission, and European Central bank are the four **most familiar** institutions as well as the **most trusted**, whereas the European Ombudsman, European Court of Auditors, European Economic and Social Committee, and European Committee of the Regions are the four **least familiar** and **least trusted** EU bodies. This suggests that familiarity is linked to perceptions of transparency and trust, and that there are important benefits to raising knowledge and awareness of EU Institutions and their functions across the EU, including

⁵³See:

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2255>

⁵⁴ Where 47% of respondents indicated that their country would be better placed to face the future outside of the EU and 47% did not (Standard Eurobarometer 92, Autumn 2019).

⁵⁵ See:

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2255>

through publications authored by the Commission. More information on the perceived EU Added value of Commission's publications for citizens can be found in Section 3.6).

Evidence from the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) reveals that **there is a strong and increasing demand for information on the EU**. As demonstrated in Table 3.1 below, following a steady decline in enquiries following an all-time high in 2014, the number of enquiries increased by 11% in 2018 and 13% in 2019.

Table 3.1 EDCC inquiries during 2014-2019, total and percentage

Year	Total number of enquiries	Percentage change from the previous year
2014	136,296	+21%
2015	116,571	-14%
2016	99,554	-15%
2017	97,841	-2%
2018	108,929	+11%
2019	122,896	+13%

Source: EDCC Annual Activity Report, 2019⁵⁶

Furthermore, the EDCC has seen continued interest from citizens in learning more about available resources for gathering information on the EU. As demonstrated in Table 3.2 below, **enquiries relating to publication orders increased by 275% between 2018 and 2019** (contrasted to 13% increase in the total number of citizens' enquiries received by the EDCC from 2018 to 2019). Enquiries for more information on the EU, its Member States, and its Institutions also remained prevalent, amounting to 8% of all enquiries in 2019.

Table 3.2 EDCC inquiries during 2014-2019, by EU information services

EU Information services	% of 2017 total (n)	% of 2018 total (n)	% of 2019 total (n)
Publication Orders	0.5% (n=491)	0.4% (n=463)	1.4% (n=1,740)
Europa – EU Websites	-	-	0.4% (n=481)
Europe Direct	3.9% (n=3,811)	0.3% (n=371)	0.3% (n=327)

Source: EDCC Annual Activity Reports, 2017-2019

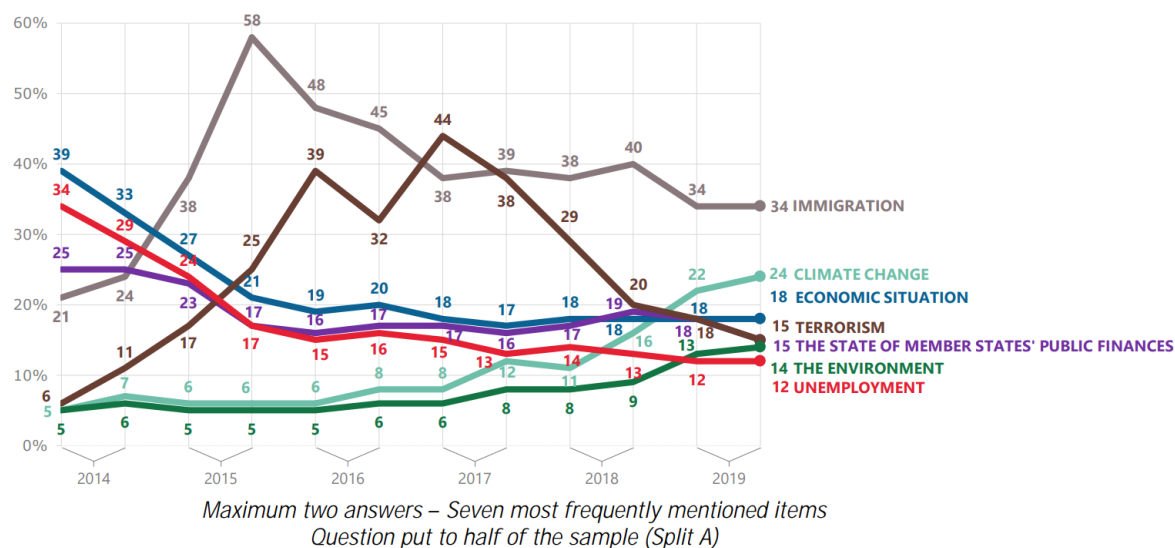
⁵⁶ See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/annual-activity-report-2019-europe-direct-contact-centre_en

Information needs on specific topics

Evidence from Eurobarometer and the EDCC indicates that in addition to requiring more information about the EU overall, some **topics are much more highly prioritised than others, and the range of topics can change rapidly over time. Immigration has consistently been identified by respondents to the Eurobarometer surveys as the most important issue facing the EU** (34% mentioned this as one of top two issues). However, while terrorism has dropped from a high of 44% in 2017 to a new low of 15% in 2019, **climate change jumped from 8% to a second-place position of 24% in the same period.** Other topics that continue to be perceived as important to the EU include the economic situation (18% in 2019), Member States' public finances (15% in 2019), the environment (14% in 2019) and unemployment (12% in 2019) (please see Figure 3.4 below).

Figure 3.4 The most important issues in the EU according to Eurobarometer respondents

QA5a What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?
(% - EU)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 – Public opinion in the EU, Autumn 2019⁵⁷

Many of the issues that EU citizens considered to be the most important for them on a personal level were also relevant at an EU level. Rising prices, inflation, and cost of living occupied a distant first place, with 31% of respondents reporting that this was one of the two most important issues they currently faced. Additional issues included health and social security (19%), pensions (15%), the environment and climate change (15%), the financial situations of their households (12%), taxation (11%), education (10%), and unemployment (10%). Similarly, to its status as an important issue for the EU, the perceived importance of climate change to EU citizens on a personal level has increased steeply, with only 5% of individuals listing it as an important personal issue

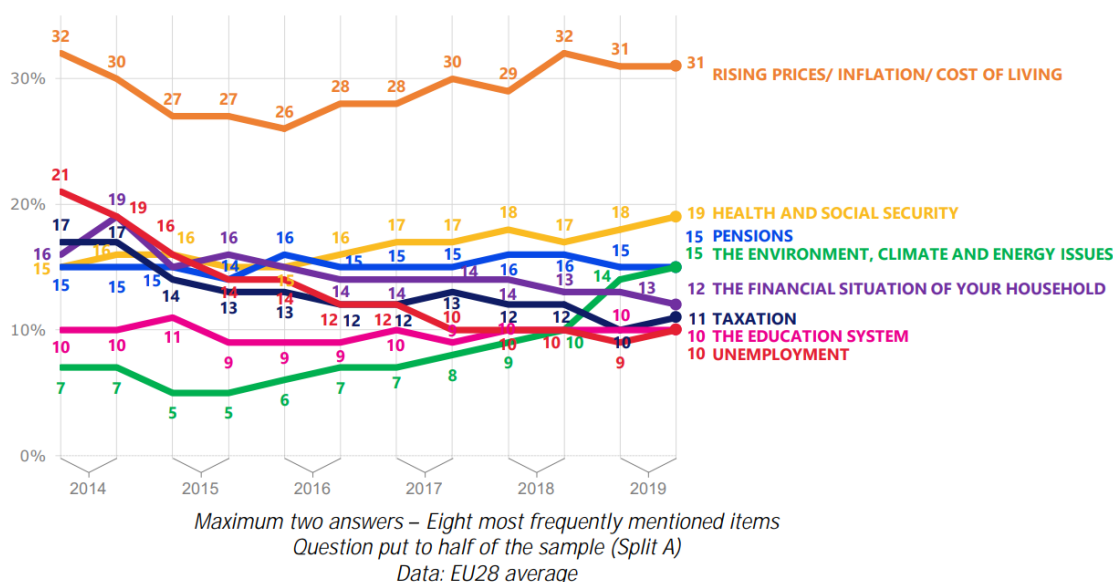
⁵⁷See:

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2255>

in 2015 and 15% doing so in 2019. This suggests that there is considerable overlap between the issues that citizens believe to be of personal importance, and the issues that they believe are the most important for the EU to engage with (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 The most important personal issues according to Eurobarometer respondents

QA4a And personally, what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment? (% - EU)



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 – Public opinion in the EU, Autumn 2019⁵⁸

Data on enquiries received by the EDCC provides further insights into the various topics that citizens require the most EU-related information about. **The top 10 most popular topics have remained consistent in the period 2017-2019, indicating that Horizon 2020 research, consumer rights, education and culture, taxation, migration, passenger rights and issues relating to employment and inclusion continue to be the areas where there is demand for more EU-level information** (see Table 3.3). Research shows that information demand on the most popular topics where being answered by the Commission publications as 70% of the publications reviewed in the study presented information on EU policies or programme directly targeting EU citizens.

Table 3.3 Top 10 most popular topics, by EDCC enquiries

Top 10 topics	% of 2017 total 97841 (n)	% of 2018 total 108929 (n)	% of 2019 total 122896 (n)
Justice and consumer rights	9% (n=8,448)	9% (n=9,723)	11% (n=13,591)

⁵⁸See:

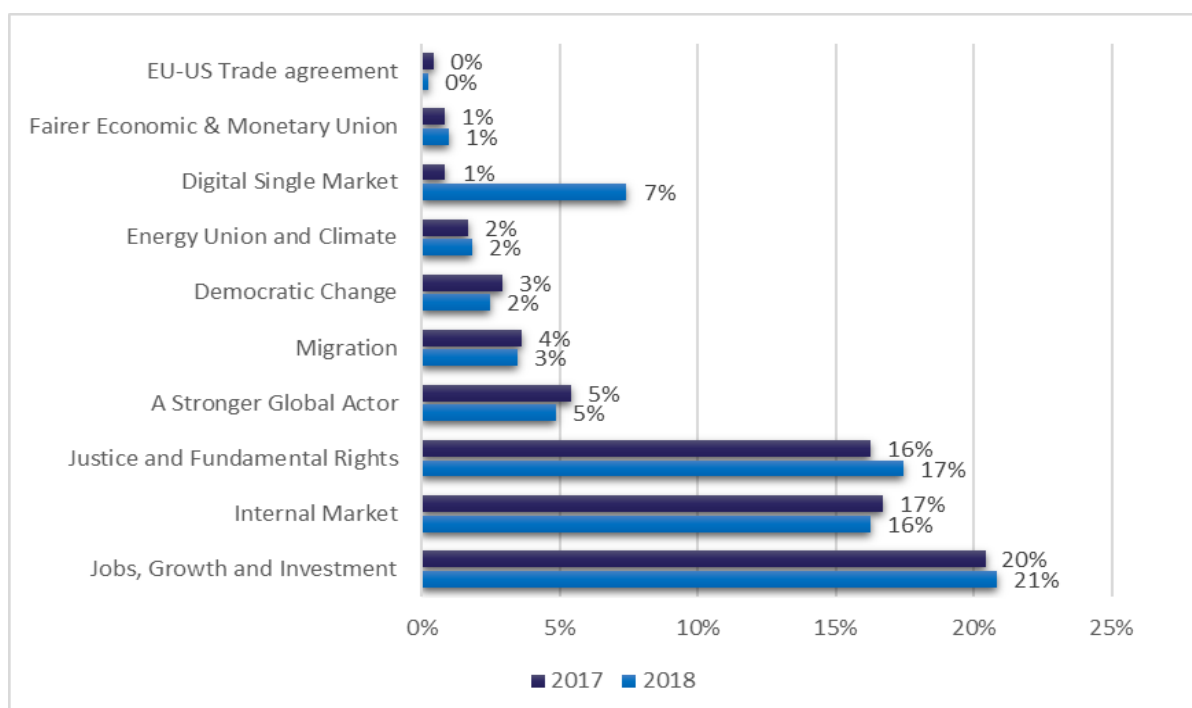
<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2255>

Wifi4EU	-	7% (n=7,403)	9% (n=10,770)
EU general, EU institutions and Member States	12% (n=11,338)	10% (n=10,485)	8% (n=10,439)
H2020 Research	8% (n=7,900)	8% (n=8,795)	8% (n=9,818)
Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion	8% (n=7,302)	7% (n=7,262)	7% (n=8,654)
Education and Culture	8% (n=7,315)	8% (n=8,809)	6% (n=7,489)
Passenger Rights	6% (n=5,628)	6% (n=6,990)	5% (n=6,165)
Working for the EU	4% (n=4,198)	4% (n=3,756)	4% (n=5,341)
Customs and Taxation	4% (n=4,130)	4% (n=4,171)	4% (n=5,148)
Migration and Home Affairs	4% (n=4,188)	4% (n=4,097)	4% (n=4,718)

Source: EDCC Annual Activity Reports, 2017-2019

Furthermore, mapping of the EDCC enquiries against the 10 priorities of the Juncker Commission demonstrated that **certain priorities are of much greater relevance and importance to citizens than others**, with Jobs, growth, and investment, a fair internal market, and justice and fundamental rights receiving significantly greater attention and interest than the remaining seven priorities of the previous Commission (see Figure 3.6)

Figure 3.6 Most common EDCC enquiries linked to top 10 Commission priorities



Source: Ecorys analysis of EDCC Annual Activity Reports, 2017-2018 (2020)

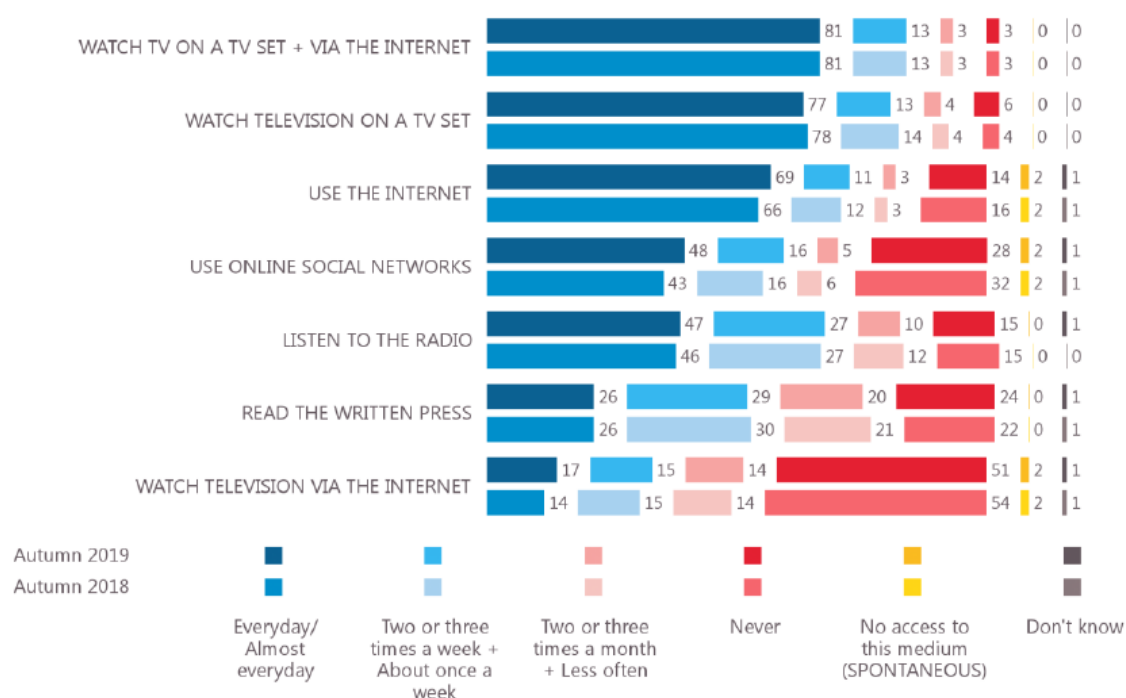
3.1.3 Preferred channels

This section addresses the specific question: *‘What are the current preferred channels for EU citizens to access information on the EU, its benefits and opportunities?’*

Media use in the EU

European citizens keep themselves informed through various information channels, including television, radio, printed press and the Internet. As shown in Figure 3.7 below, **television remains the main medium most frequently used by EU citizens**, with approximately 81% watching television (almost) every day. **69% of EU citizens use the Internet** (almost) every day and **48% of EU citizens use online social networks** on an (almost) daily basis. The radio is listened to almost daily by 47% of EU citizens, with a further 27% indicating they listen to the radio between one and three times a week. Lastly, just over a quarter of EU citizens (26%) read the written press (almost) every day, while approximately 29% read it between one and three times a week.

Figure 3.7 Frequency of media use of EU citizens, by medium

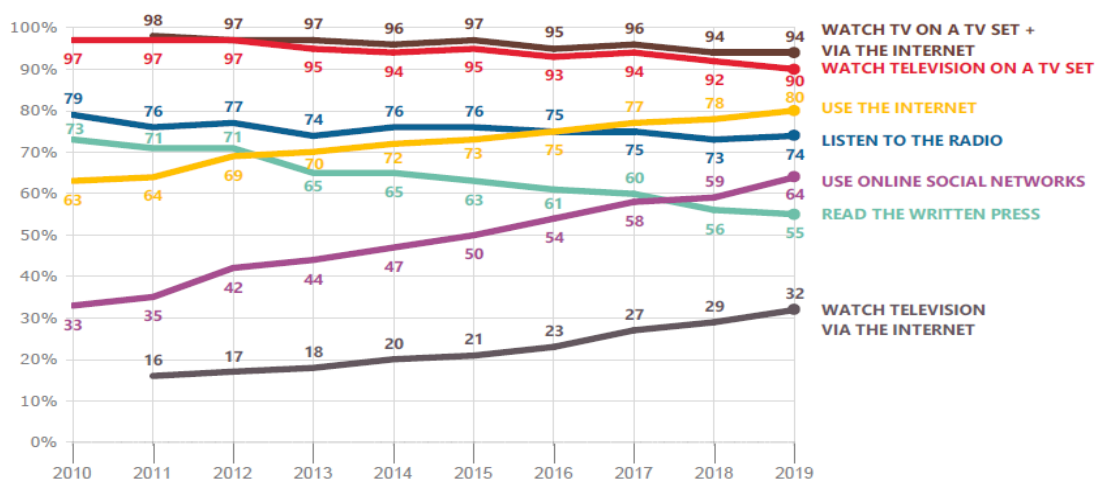


Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QD3 Could you tell me to what extent you...? (% - EU)

Looking at the developments in media use since 2010, it can be seen that **television has remained the predominant medium used by EU citizens**, with only a slight decrease in the frequency of use (from 98% to 94% of EU citizens watching television once a week). As the Figure 3.8 below illustrates, there is a **sharp rise in the use of the Internet** by EU citizens. Since 2010, the use of the Internet once a week rose from 63% to 80%, with an **increase in the use of online social networks** from 33% to 64%. There is a slight decline in the percentage of citizens listening to the radio once a week (from 79% in 2010 to 74%

in 2019) and a sharper decline in the percentage of citizens reading the written press (73% to 55%).

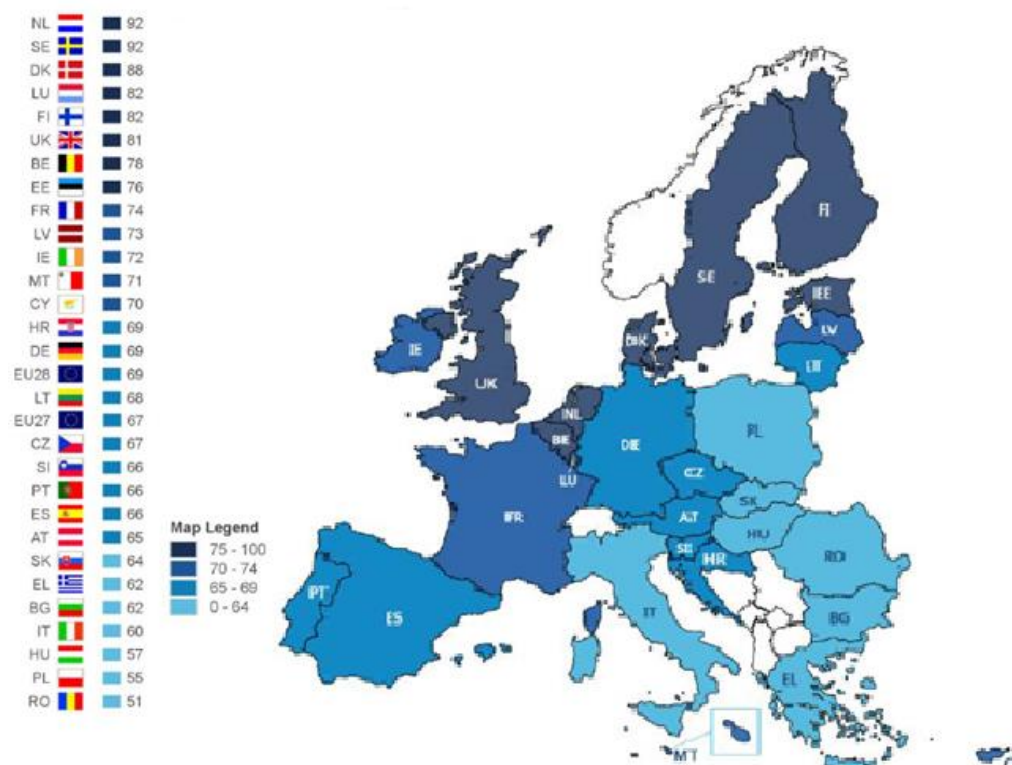
Figure 3.8 Media use of EU citizens, by medium, from 2010-2019



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QD3 Could you tell me to what extent you...? (% - EU – at least once a week)

Delving deeper into the use of the Internet across the EU, it becomes apparent that there is a **clear divergence in the levels of the Internet use across the EU Member States**. As the map presented in the Figure 3.9 below illustrates, in 2019 there was a difference of 41 percentage points between the EU Member States with the highest and lowest percentage of daily Internet use (92% in the Netherlands and 51% in Romania).

Figure 3.9 Percentage of daily Internet use, by Member State



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QD3 Could you tell me to what extent you...? Use the Internet (% - everyday / almost every day)

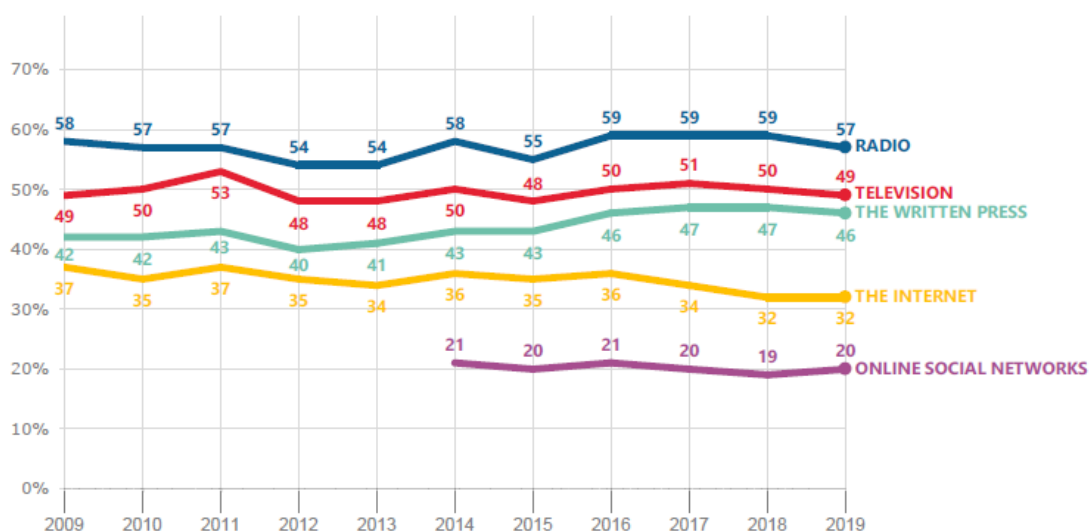
When looking at EU citizens as a whole, **69% use the Internet almost daily**, 72% of men and 67% of women. In terms of age segmentation, the 94% of younger age segment (15–24-year-olds) use the Internet almost daily, with the figure declining by age groups (89% of 25–39-year-olds, 80% of 40–54-year-olds and 43% of over-55s). Notably, **33% of EU citizens over the age of 55 stated that they never used the Internet**. This geographical difference of Internet use could also be explained by a higher aging population and the lower income levels as described in the Section 3.1.1 above.

There are also **differences in Internet use among EU citizens with different years of education**: 95% of EU citizens that are still studying indicated that they used the Internet daily, 83% of individuals with over 20 years of education used the Internet daily, with the Internet use declining as years of education decrease. Namely, 68% of individuals with 16-19 years of education use the Internet daily (with 14% indicating they never use the Internet) and **33% of EU citizens with 15 years of education or less use the Internet on a daily basis (and 45% stating they never use the Internet)**.

Trust in media sources across the EU

Despite the increasing level of Internet use, it is consistently the medium that EU citizens trust the least (particularly online social media networks). Just under a third of Europeans (32%) 'tend to trust' the Internet and only 20% 'tend to trust' online social networks. The radio is (and remains) the most trusted medium (averaging 57%), followed by television (49%) and the written press (46%).

Figure 3.10 Trust in media, by medium (2010–2019)



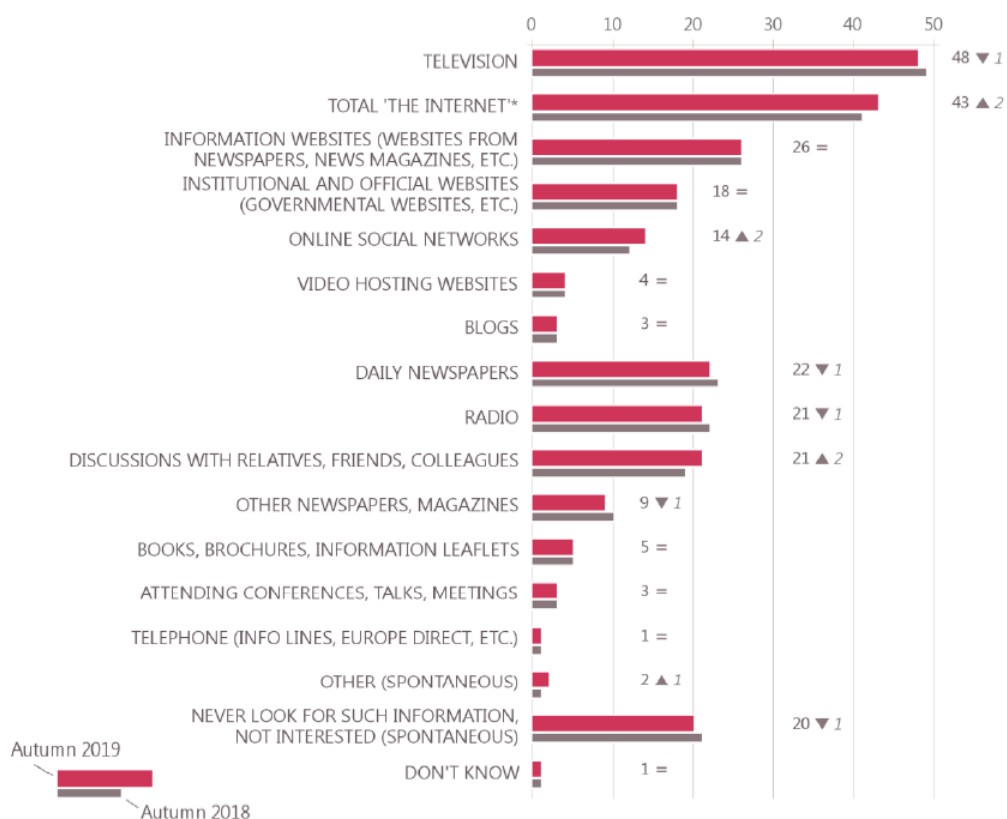
Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QA6a I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it (% - EU – Tend to trust)

Preferred media to locate information on EU matters

Even with the decreased trust of the **Internet as an information source, it is becoming an increasingly used tool to search for information about the EU**, its policies, and Institutions. In 2005, 22% of EU citizens used the Internet to locate information about the EU, compared to 70% of Europeans using television. By 2020, the difference between the two information sources decreased to four percentage points (47% of citizens using television compared to 43% of Europeans using the Internet as an information source about the EU)⁵⁹. In comparison, the main distribution channels for Commission’s publications were the Internet and social media with the OP website as the preferred channel by the author services.

Figure 3.11 below provides more detail on the **main sources that EU citizens use to look for information about the EU, its policies and its institutions**. Confirming earlier findings, **television** and the **Internet** are the predominant sources of information. When using the Internet, most favoured is the use of information websites, followed by online social networks, video hosting websites and blogs.

Figure 3.11 Preferred information sources of EU citizens to look for information about the EU, its policies and institutions



Source: Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QD5 When

⁵⁹ Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QD5 When you are looking for information about the EU, its policies, its institutions, which of the following sources do you use? (% - EU)

you are looking for information about the EU, its policies, its institutions, which of the following sources do you use? (% - EU)

When looking at various segments of citizens, presented in the Standard Eurobarometer 92⁶⁰, such as **gender** no significant differences can be seen in the preferences of men or women in their preferred channel to gather information on EU matters. There are **notable trends in preferred media channels across age segments**. Television is the preferred channel for elderly people to gather information on the EU, with 55% of over-55s indicating that this was their preferred medium to use. This figure decreases with age with 34% of 15-24s indicating that they preferred television. Older generations similarly prefer printed press (preference slowly decreasing from 27% of over-55s to 11% of 15-24s) and radio (preference decreasing from 24% of over-55s to 12% of 15-24s). The opposite trend can be seen in relation to preference for using the Internet. Younger citizens strongly prefer using this medium to learn about the EU: 62% of 15-24s selected this as their preferred medium, against 58% of 25-39s, 48% of 40-54s and 25% of over-55s.

When examining the **influence of education years on preferred communications channels to source information on the EU**, it can be seen that citizens with less years of education (under 15 years or 16-19 years) prefer television as main source (51% respectively) compared to higher educated citizens with over 20 years of education (45%) or students (29%). The opposite trend can clearly be seen in relation to the Internet as main source: 58% of higher educated citizens and 65% of students selected the Internet as their preferred channel, compared to 14% of citizens with under 15 years of education and 38% of citizens with 16-19 years of education. Less educated individuals (less than 15 years of education) were less likely to ever look for information on EU matters, with 33% indicating that they never look for such information or are not interested.

The European Commission supports a number of services and networks that provide information to EU citizens on their rights, on the functioning of the EU, its policies and priorities. The EDCC, for instance, is an information service providing general information through phone or email on the EU and its policies. Since 2014, the EDCC has received more than 550,000 inquiries and email (67%) has consistently been the preferred channel to gather information compared to the telephone (31%). Europe Direct Information Centres (EDICs) provide an opportunity to meet experts and ask questions regarding EU matters. Additionally, 'Your Europe Advice' (YEA) is an EU advice service on the personal EU rights of citizens and businesses that the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) manages under contract with, and on behalf of, the European Commission. Experts in both EU law and national law in all EU countries, respond to citizens' questions, which can be shared by an online form or by telephone. No data is available on the preferred medium used by citizens to consult the service, however the ECAS Annual Activity Report

⁶⁰ Standard Eurobarometer 92 (Autumn 2019). Media use in the European Union; QD5 When you are looking for information about the EU, its policies, its institutions, which of the following sources do you use? (% - EU – multiple responses possible)

(2019) noted that 28,034 enquiries were handled by the team of legal experts, constituting an increase of 46% compared to 2018.

3.2 Relevance

This section provides our findings and conclusions in relation to the following strategic question of the Review: *To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens relevant in the light of their users' needs and Commission's priorities?*

The box below provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions that are presented in the following sub-sections.

Summary of the findings and conclusions in relation to the Relevance criterion

Overall, Commission publications for citizens were considered relevant by readers and users, answering most of their information needs. Despite there being no 'one-size-fits-all', evidence suggests that Commission publications were relevant and useful as a resource for citizens. The two main factors that limited the relevance of Commission publications for citizens were the limited awareness of their availability as well as their tendency to quickly become outdated and obsolete.

The usefulness of Commission publications for citizens appeared to depend on the format chosen and the target group. Short and easy to read publications were considered more useful overall than longer and more detailed publications. There were no publication formats preferred by particular segments of citizens, however evidence collected suggests that older audiences (over the age of 61) tend to find Commission publications more useful than younger audiences (under 30), who prefer shorter publications with more personal stories.

Evidence collected from the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) and Eurobarometer indicates that there is a strong and increasing demand for information on the EU, including hot topics that change rapidly over time (with increasing interest in migration and climate change as well as continued interest in EU funding for research and innovation, consumer rights and education). The Review confirmed that these most popular topics were covered by Commission publications for citizens.

The quantitative mapping of publications showed that over two thirds of the Commission publications for citizens cover policies or programmes of direct relevance to EU citizens. The results of the in-depth publications review further illustrated that the publications with a specific call to action are also much more likely to have a well-defined target group. While overall Commission publications for citizens were considered useful by their readers, there was a preference for short and easy to read publications.

Commission publications for citizens were often, and when relevant, aligned with the Commission's political priorities. The priorities were generally considered in publications planning and development by author services consulted and closely aligned with their respective policy areas. However, the evidence collected also showed

that Commission's political priorities were covered to varying degrees, with some author services reporting communication objectives that were either too broad or too closely related to their area of specialisation to align with a Commission priority.

3.2.1 Relevance in the light of the users' needs

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *'To what extent do European Commission publications offer information that is interesting, pertinent and potentially useful to their users?'*

It presents the results of our assessment of the relevance of European Commission publications to their readers and users' needs. The data used for the analysis includes results of our User survey, quantitative and qualitative mapping of Commission's publications for citizens, the results of the Key stakeholder interviews and the results of the User focus groups. The results of our assessment of the relevance of the Commission's publications to users' needs are presented across the following assessment areas:

- ▶ Relevance of the Commission publications for citizens considering their information needs;
- ▶ Coverage of the main and 'hot topics' of European Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) enquiries by Commission publications for citizens;
- ▶ Coverage of Commission policies or programmes that directly target EU citizens;
- ▶ Usefulness of Commission publications for citizens; and
- ▶ Attractiveness of Commission publications from a user perspective.

3.2.2 Relevance of publications considering citizens information needs

Overall, Commission publications for citizens are considered relevant by readers and users, answering most of their information needs. As it will be shown in this analysis, despite there being no 'one-size-fits-all', Commission publications manage to be a useful resource for citizens. This finding was confirmed by interviewees (66%, or 33 interviewees), survey respondents (88%, n=310) and focus groups participants.

Findings suggest publications allow readers to acquire the information they need and are a useful means to communicate to others about the EU and relevant topics. Stakeholders interviewed in the research tended to be **divided on the level of information provided by the publications**. While some of them reported that the publications are too in-depth to be understood by the general public, the large majority of stakeholders agreed that actually EU publications for citizens are sufficiently general to be useful to the average user. These publications are also as useful to those not familiar with the EU and the specific topics discussed. For example, it was mentioned that

publications are often used in educational contexts (e.g., schools and universities) and help teachers to talk to students about the EU.

Publications are however subject to some limitations, with stakeholders highlighting two main drawbacks of Commission publications: **awareness of their availability and obsolescence**. Stakeholders reported that **the general public is not often aware of the existence of the publications, so even if there was an information need, there would be no demand for this to be filled in by Commission publications**. Additionally, stakeholders also mentioned that publications can become quickly outdated and lose relevance more quickly than other communication means (e.g., social media or websites). For example, some survey respondents wondered whether existing publications will be updated in light of Brexit (n=3) and the COVID-19 pandemic (n=4).

Survey respondents provided a good overview of topics that could be covered by Commission publications. Themes indicated are in line with those that emerged through stakeholder interviews. There is notable interest toward the twin green and digital transitions. Some 22 respondents suggested publications on the Green Deal, environment and sustainability (6) and recycling (4).⁶⁷ About 9 respondents mentioned digitalisation as a key topic to be covered by upcoming publications. Other common topics of interest included:

- ▶ Publications for children (11)
- ▶ EU Funds (7),
- ▶ Human rights, social rights, gender rights and inclusion (7)
- ▶ Common Agriculture Policy (6)
- ▶ EU Democratic participation in the EU and EU citizenship (6)
- ▶ Education (5)
- ▶ Erasmus+ and mobility of young people (5)
- ▶ EU Foreign policy (4)
- ▶ Asylum and migration (3)
- ▶ Culture and cultural heritage (3)
- ▶ EU funded research, specific focus on space and robotics (3)

Some respondents recognised that publications on a specific topic already existed but mentioned the difficulty of finding it in their national language.

No specific segmentation or target groups were identified, with the exception of the request for more publications targeting children suggested by 11 respondents. Of course, topics as Erasmus+, education and mobility of young people have also a rather

⁶⁷ Some respondents mentioned more than one topic.

clear target group although requests for publications on these themes came from different types of users.

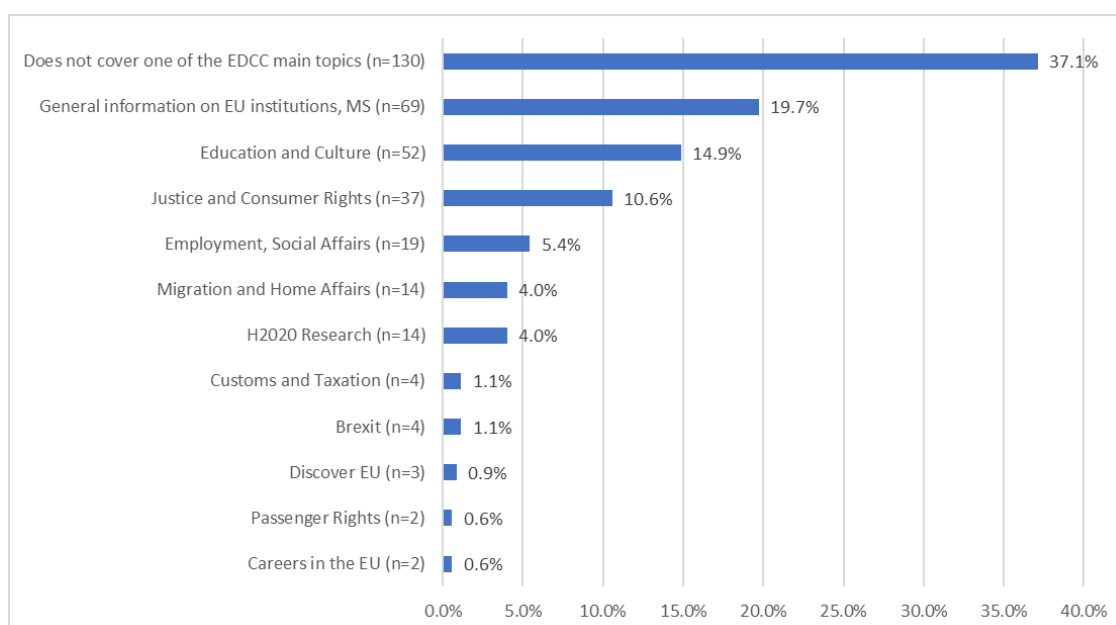
Finally, although the above list includes topics that emerged due to recent developments (e.g., Green and digital transitions), other themes indicated as of interest and not yet or sufficiently covered by existing publications actually correspond to some among the top 10 most popular topics identified by the EDCC (i.e., education and culture, EU funded research, migration). As described in the following section, these subjects are all addressed by Commission publications. **This mismatch – users perceiving a gap whereas publications do exist – might indicate either that existing publications are not sufficient to address the information need of the users or that the users do not manage to identify or find the publications they need.** In the latter case, more effort could be put into communicating the availability of Commission publications.

3.2.3 Coverage of main and 'hot topics' identified by the EDCC by Commission publications

As previously reported in Section 3.1.2, **there is a strong and increasing demand for information on the EU from EDCCs.** Overall, Commission publications for citizens cover all the Top 10 enquiries by subject addressed by the EDCC in 2018 and 2019. Although just over a third (37%) of the publications analysed do not directly discuss main subjects, Figure 3.12 below shows that the majority of the 350 publications cover the different macro-topics.

Approximately 20% of the mapped publications provided general information on the EU (the most popular Top 10 subject addressed by the EDCC in 2018 and the third most popular subject in 2019). Education and Culture, the third most popular Top 10 subject addressed by the EDCC in 2018 and sixth most popular topic in 2019, was covered by 15% of publications, followed by Justice and Consumer Rights (the second most popular subject among the EDCC enquiries in 2018 and the most popular topic in 2019), covered in about 11% of Commission publications for citizens. The least covered topics were Careers in the EU (0.3%) and Passenger rights (0.3%).

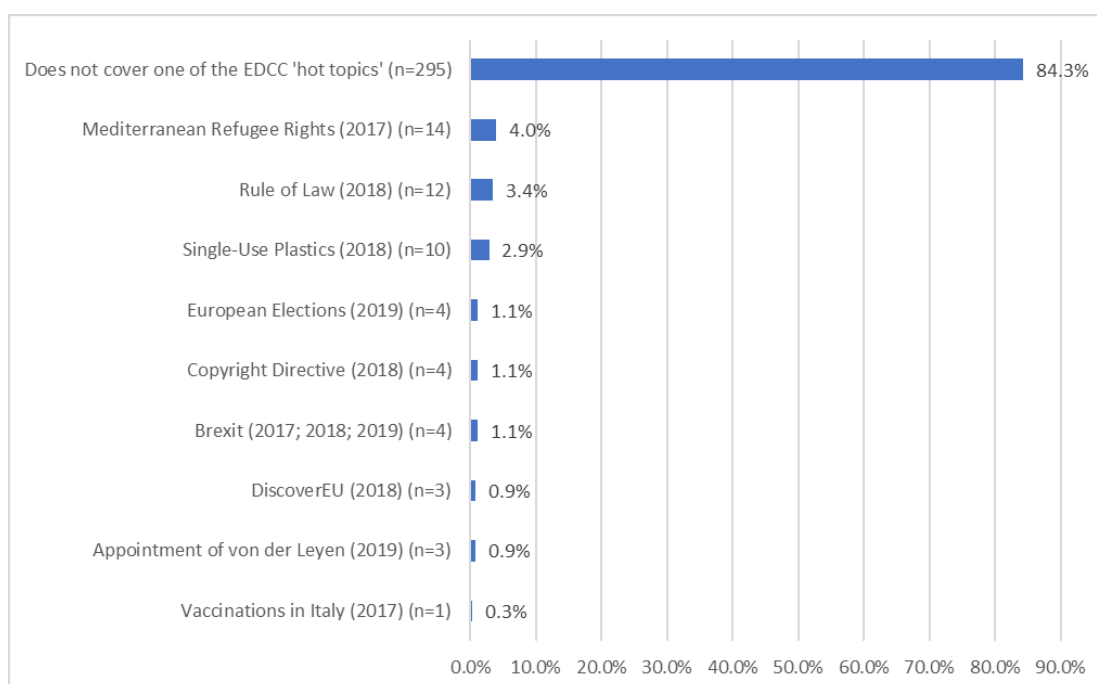
Figure 3.12 Extent Commission publications cover the main subjects addressed by the EDCC



Source: EDCC Annual activity report 2019 and Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

'Hot topics' identified by EDCC were related to events in the EU which were particularly critical during the period analysed and they were almost all covered by the mapped Commission publications for citizens. **With the exception of two 'hot topics' – 'Summer Time' and 'Catalonia – Regional Independence' – all 'hot topics' of particular interest to citizens were covered by at least one publication.** Although the largest share of publications analysed (almost 85%) does not touch upon any of the topics most relevant to citizens, this potential unbalance should not necessarily be considered problematic as a few publications can be sufficient to fulfil citizens' information needs. Some of these topics also surged to relevance unexpectedly and hence were difficult to foresee and produce relevant publications. Others, however, are linked to EU legislation and activities and, as such, could be more easily foreseen and relevant publications planned.

Figure 3.13 Extent Commission publications cover 'hot topics' addressed by the EDCC



Source: EDCC Annual activity report 2019 and Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

3.2.4 Coverage of Commission policies or programmes that directly target EU citizens

The mapping of 350 publications indicated **that more than two thirds of Commission publications for citizens cover its policies or programmes of direct relevance for EU citizens**. Some 70% (n=246) of the publications reviewed presented information on EU policies or programme directly targeting EU citizens, while 30% of publications included other types of information for non-specialist audiences. The mapping shows, however, that only 50 (20%) out of the 246 publications presenting information on EU policies or programme directly targeting EU citizens have a clear target group beyond EU citizens in general.

The in-depth analysis conducted on a smaller sub-sample of 116 Commission publications for citizens highlighted that more than a third (37%, n=43) provide information on how to take part in discussions about the EU, or sign-up, apply or take part in its citizen-oriented programmes or initiatives, in particular:

- ▶ 14 publications focus on EU funding and programmes (e.g., Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+);
- ▶ 6 publications provide information on how to 'get in touch' or participate in public consultations;
- ▶ 5 describe European initiatives (e.g., Access City Award, the European Green Capital and the European Green Leaf); and

- ▶ another 11 inform about existing services and resources (e.g., JRC, Eurostat, digital sources for students, Data Protection Authority).

The in-depth mapping suggested that when publications have a specific call to action (e.g., taking part in discussions about the EU) they are much more likely to have a well-defined target group indicating that these publications have been developed with the precise intent to provide a specific target group with relevant information on how to engage with the EU.

3.2.5 Usefulness of the Commission publications for citizens

Overall, **Commission publications for citizens are considered useful by all stakeholders reached**. Although there are variations depending on the type of publication and target/user group, there is a consensus on the usefulness of these publications. Most of the survey respondents (88%, n=310) found the Commission publications useful⁶² and a quarter (25%, n=94) stressed that the publications filled an information gap⁶³. These have been used to answer queries from citizens, as teaching materials in schools and to acquire additional information on the EU and its activities. Half of key stakeholders interviewed (50% or 25 interviewees) indicated that in their view Commission publications are useful for their targeted audiences (while only 12% or 6 interviewees said the opposite). Similarly, most participants to focus groups indicated that the publications are in principle useful.

The majority of the survey respondents indicated they had used Commission publications for their work (about 70%) while just under a fifth of respondents (16%) used them for their own information and the remaining 10% used them for their studies. Among those that used it for work, most are actually employed in Europe Direct Information Centres, at the European Commission or at other EU institution or network, suggesting that they have used publications to communicate with their direct audience. The remaining respondents indicated to be working either in schools, universities or research centres (n=33, 13%), national authorities (n=11, 4%) and private companies (n=8, 3%).

The usefulness of Commission publications for citizens does appear to depend on the format chosen and the target group. **Short and easy to read publications are considered more useful to the needs of potential average users than longer and too in-depth publications**. It was stressed in both interviews and focus groups that citizens

⁶² Looking at the answers of respondents not working in EU institutions or EU Information Centres, the percentage decrease to 75% (n=103, N=135). Although slightly lower, this result indicates that the large majority of respondents not working in EU institutions or EU Information Centres found the publications useful.

⁶³ Looking at the answers of respondents not working in EU institutions or EU Information Centres, the percentage increases to 35% (n=40, N=113). This result indicates that Commission publications for citizens are more likely to fill in an information gap for users not working in EU institutions or EU Information Centres.

that look for more in-depth information probably search on-line or seek to deepen their subject knowledge on their own using other materials.

Table 3.4 Publication Comparison

Publications comparison - European Solidarity Corps VS
Shopping online within the EU - Know your rights

While participants to the focus group were genuinely interested in the topic of the 'European Solidarity Corps' publication, they questioned it being fit for purpose. If the publication is meant to inform the target audience (young people in particular) about the programme and to attract them, then it appears too long and complex. A shorter publication, but richer in real life stories and pictures would have been more relevant and interesting. On the contrary, if the publication was meant to provide exhaustive information about the programme, then it still seems insufficient and would require the reader to look further online.

In contrast, the publication 'Know your rights' was generally appreciated by focus groups participants for being targeted, simple to read and informative. Participants felt they could easily spot the information they could require, and the publication content matched its purpose.

Source: Ecorys, 2020

Older audiences (61+) tend to find Commission publications more useful than younger people do. This was confirmed by the User survey results where older generations found the publications to be overall more useful compared to the younger generation (100% of adults aged 61+ found the publications useful against the 92% and 91% respectively of adults aged between 31-60 and young adults aged between 18-30). Probably linked to digital skills and media consumption patterns, in line with the data illustrated in Section 3.1.3, the younger audience seem to lean towards other types of dissemination mechanisms (e.g., social media, websites, etc.). When it comes to Commission publications their preference is for shorter, visually attractive publications.

Other socio-economic characteristics do not seem to have a strong impact on the perceived usefulness of the publications. Figure 3.14 shows the proportion of respondents who indicated that the content of Commission publications that they used was either useful or not for them, distinguished by sub-segment based on their socio-economic characteristics e.g., gender, age, etc. Differences between sub-groups are limited and the reasons why the publications were considered not useful do not appear to be linked to belonging to a specific socio-economic group (the most frequent reason mentioned was the information provided in the publication being too superficial).

The following analysis includes a comparison between the subgroups. For analytical purposes, the subgroups of respondents were clustered by the following socio-economic characteristics:

► **Gender of respondents**

Both genders reported that the publications for citizens were useful, more specifically 95% of women and 84% of men found the publications useful. Some 14% of men did not find the publications useful while only 7% of responding women reported a negative opinion on the usefulness of the Commission publications.

► **Age of respondents**

The User survey results for different age subgroups show that older generations found the publications to be overall more useful compared to the younger generations. The data shows that 100% of the older adults aged 61+ found the publications useful against the 92% and 91% respectively of adults aged between 31-60 and young adults aged between 18-30.

► **Respondents living in city or rural area**

Overall, a slightly higher proportion of respondents living in city found the Commission publications useful (95%) compared to respondents living in a rural area (86%). A small proportion (7%) of respondents living in urban areas did not find the Commission publications they had read or used useful, while no respondents from a rural area reported a negative opinion in regard to the usefulness of the Commission publications they had used.

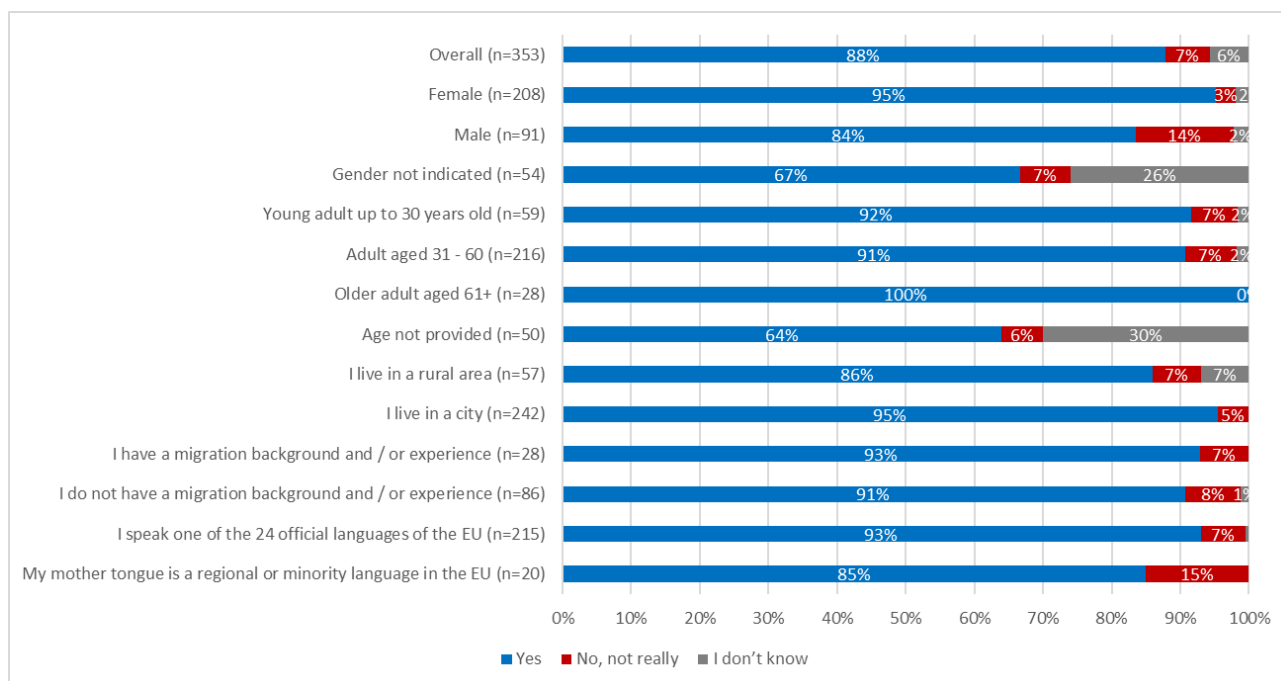
► **Respondents with or without migration background and/or experience**

A majority of respondents with migration backgrounds and/or experience found the Commission publications useful (93% of the responses). Similarly, 91% of respondents with no migration background and/or experience found the publications useful.

► **Respondents speaking EU official languages or regional/minority language as a mother tongue**

Almost all the respondents whose mother tongue is one of the 24 EU official languages (93%) indicated that they found the publications they had read or used useful. A slightly smaller share of respondents who speak regional or minority languages found, on the contrary, the Commission publications useful (85%), potentially indicating an impact of language coverage on the perceived usefulness of a publication.

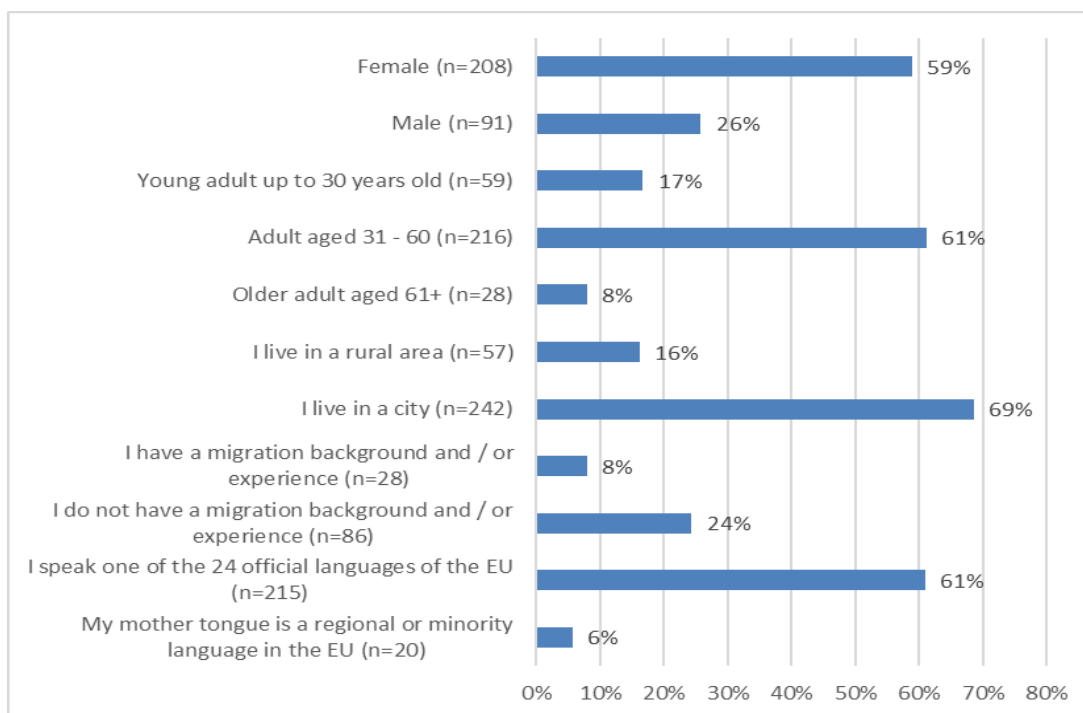
Figure 3.14 Was the content of this publication useful for you?



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

However, **socio-economic characteristics might influence ability to access and locate publications as a result, for example, of more limited access to the Internet or preferences for other media channels** as reported previously in Section 3.1.3. This in turn may indicate low relevance of Commission publication for specific groups as a result. Although based only on a sample, the survey demography suggests indeed that certain categories of users tend to be less numerous than others, potentially indicating either less interest towards the publications or the existence of barriers to access and locate them by specific socio-economic groups. However, the limits of this data collection tool (e.g., being more accessible to digital aware audience) hinders further analysis.

Figure 3.15 Demographic of survey respondents



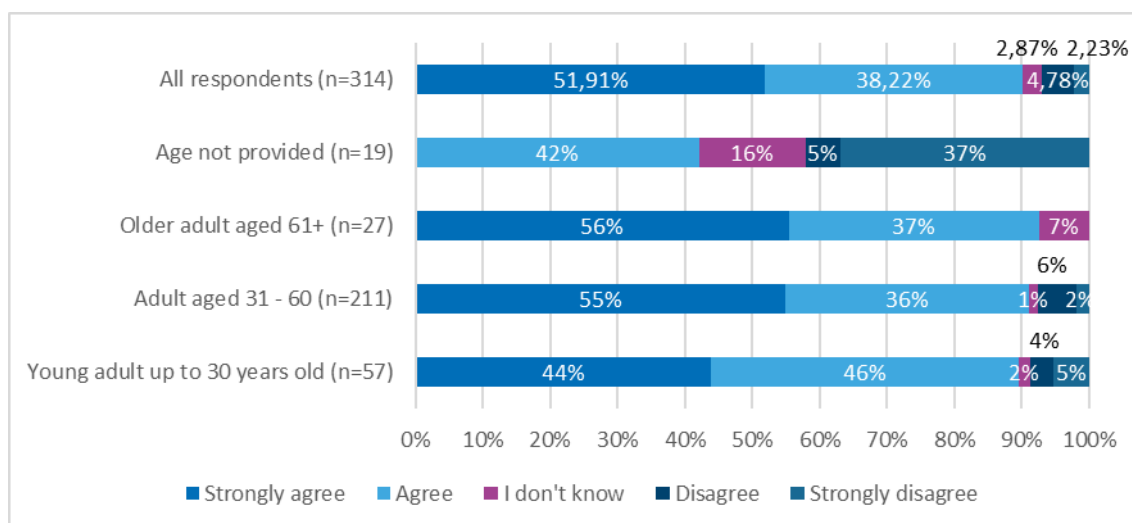
Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

3.2.6 Attractiveness of Commission publications

Commission publications come in different formats and as such are able to appeal to different audiences. Stakeholders reached through the interviews, focus groups and survey expressed different opinions of the format and general attractiveness of Commission publication for citizens, **indicating the challenge of identifying a one-size-fits-all format**. However, as shown in Figure 3.24, the overall feedback from the User survey was positive.

As mentioned above and further shown in the figure below, **current Commission publications seem to resonate more with older audiences (60+), while younger audiences (below 30 years old) would prefer shorter publications with richer personal stories they could relate to**. In particular, alternative formats and channels were mentioned in the focus groups. Many participants would prefer interactive websites and online platforms (e.g., using the Wiki format) rather than publications that are too static. On top of being more exciting to use, a website would be able to provide up to date information, whereas publications risk becoming obsolete.

Figure 3.16 Would you agree that the publication you used was attractive? By age group



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

To make the Commission publications more attractive to the different target groups, author services need to use **tailored visualisation to connect to specific target groups and to create a visual identity for publications targeting different audiences**. Publications for non-specialist audiences should use less text and more visualisation, attractive design and shorter formats which convey the information in a simpler way (such as social media posts, brochures, leaflets, blog articles, online stories)⁶⁴. Attractiveness of publications is currently decreased by:

- ▶ Not having 'Youth friendly' publications with attractive and interactive content,
- ▶ Lacking strong narrative or 'storytelling' to make the content more engaging;
- ▶ 'Old-fashioned' design (difficult to read and limited graphics);
- ▶ Limited integration of QR codes to redirect readers to additional information.

The focus group respondents also highlighted that publications could need to different levels of detail depending on the target groups, as this was not evident in all reviewed publications. For example, the publication *'The European Union: What it is and what it does'* was considered too packed with information to be aimed at someone that does not know much about the European Union (see Table 3.5 below).

Table 3.5 Presenting the European Union

The The European Union: What it is and what it does

⁶⁴ On the other hand, publications targeting experts and specialised audience should use mainly text and provide the experts with the detailed information they need.

While participants to the focus group agreed that this type of information should come from the EU, they also, almost unanimously, agreed that the publication ' *The European Union: What it is and what it does*' might not be the most effective way of presenting the EU and might even have a counterproductive effect.

Too much information?

Participants to the focus groups highlighted that the typical user of this publication would be someone that does not know much about the EU and who could easily lose interest if presented with so much information at once. They compared the publication to an academic textbook, aimed at someone that was already interested or studying a subject, in this case someone who already had an interest in EU affairs.

A more attractive format?

Participants indicated that they would prefer a flyer with more condensed information about the EU rather than such a long publication. Some participants also recommended the inclusion of more infographics or illustrations to make the document more accessible and readable.

Source: Ecorys, 2020

As described in the table below, however, **publications that are too simplistic also risk not fulfilling the information needs of the readers**. Depending on the pre-existing knowledge of the target group publication might be either not informative enough or too detailed, it is important therefore to have in mind the target group and their existing level of knowledge when producing publications.

Table 3.6 Did you know?

Did you know? EU funded research is shaping your future

This publication was generally appreciated by the focus group participants as it provides concrete examples and appears as an attractive publication. However, this publication is also a paradigm of the challenge of striking the right balance between too much and too little information. Focus groups participants also mentioned that knowing little about EU research, readers would benefit from some basic, general information on EU funding for research.

Source: Ecorys, 2020

3.2.7 Relevance in the light of priorities

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: '*To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens relevant in light of the Commission's policy and communication priorities?*'

To answer this question, the communication objectives, publication plans, and publications of European Commission author services were assessed for their alignment with the ten priorities of the Juncker's Commission outlined in Table 3.7 below:

Table 3.7 Priorities of the previous Commission

Juncker priorities	Policy areas and topics covered
Priority 1: A new boost for jobs, growth and investment	Fair employment conditions; Education; Inclusion; Public funding; Social affairs; Renewable energy; Energy efficiency; Youth employment; Infrastructure.
Priority 2: A connected digital single market	Harmonisation of digital market regulations and telecoms rules; Tackling geo-blocking; Copyright law; Growth in the digital economy.
Priority 3: A resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy	Sustainable energy; Energy efficiency; Harmonisation of cross-border electricity grids and gas pipelines; Domestic energy production; Reduction of CO2 emissions; Funding research and innovation in energy-related fields.
Priority 4: A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base	Investment in small businesses in Europe; Mobility of workers across Europe; Free movement of capital and labour; Cooperation among national tax authorities; Consolidated EU tax base.
Priority 5: A deeper and fairer economic and monetary union	Financial stability in the Eurozone; Support for member states affected by the 2008 Economic crisis; Economic & financial governance.
Priority 6: A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalisation	Exportation of goods; New trade agreements with non-EU nations.
Priority 7: An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust	Improving mutual recognition of judgements between Member State courts; Tackling cybercrime; Protection of personal data; Enhancing capacities of Europol; Countering radicalisation; Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights.
Priority 8: Towards a new policy on migration	Promoting a common EU asylum policy; Achieving a new policy on legal migration; Funding to protect and support refugees and asylum-seekers, within and beyond the EU; Proportionate allocation of refugees and asylum-seekers across EU member states; Tackling human traffickers; Reducing incentives for irregular migration.
Priority 9: A stronger global actor	External economic actions; Diplomacy; Globalisation; Sustainable development and cooperation; International development; EU enlargement; Defence capabilities.

Juncker priorities	Policy areas and topics covered
Priority 10: A Union of democratic change	Fair elections; Evidence-based policy; Transparency; Stakeholder engagement; Public consultations; Encouraging cooperation between national parliaments and the Commission.

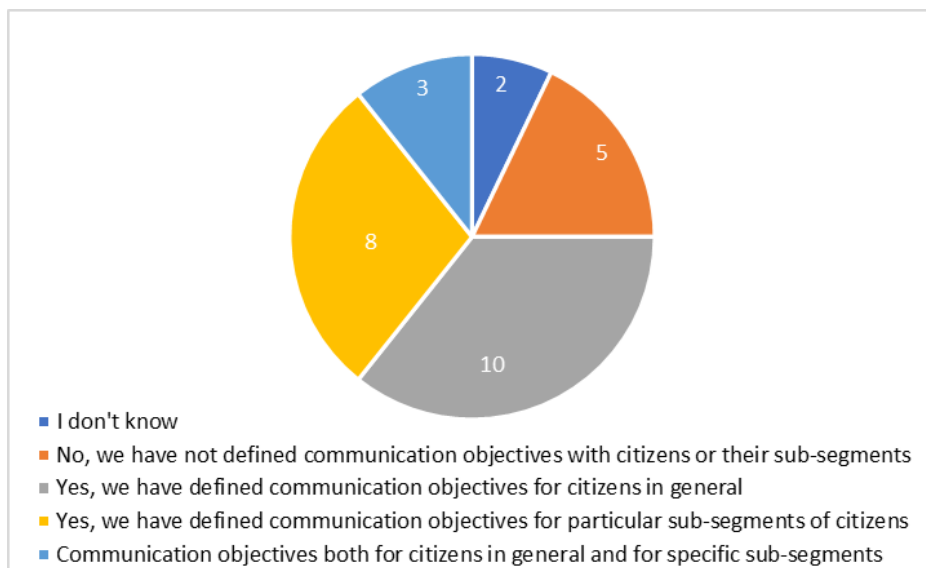
Source: DG COMM (2015), *Ten Priorities for Europe*⁶⁵

Overall, the findings of our Scoping survey, Quantitative mapping, and Stakeholder interviews indicate that the **Commission's publications for citizens were often, and when relevant, aligned with the ten priorities of the Juncker Commission**. Among the twelve author services that indicated in the Scoping survey that they have specific communication objectives for citizens and/or their sub-segments, the objectives mirrored the Juncker Commission priorities that were most relevant to each author service in terms of their policy focus. The results of quantitative mapping of 350 publications for citizens show a complete yet variable coverage of the Juncker Commission's priorities. As reported in Section 3.1.2, mapping of the EDCC enquiries against the 10 priorities of the Juncker commission demonstrated that certain priorities are of much greater relevance and importance to citizens than others which further supports this variation.

Furthermore, the Key stakeholder interviews with author services revealed that in general, **the Juncker Commission's priorities featured strongly in the planning and production of publications for each author service** consulted. This finding suggests the existence of a consolidated practice by the author services to include Commission's priorities when planning and producing publications. In the Scoping survey, the question on communication objectives with citizens and their sub-segments received answers from 28 author services. As indicated in Figure 3.17 below, the majority (75%; n=21) of author services indicated that they have set communication objectives for citizens in general (n=10), their sub-segments (n=8), or both (n=3). As illustrated in Figure 3.8, the key sub-segments targeted are children and young people, pupils and students, consumers, people living in urban areas and passengers.

⁶⁵ See: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/53f2ea1d-8cf6-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-139520270>

Figure 3.17 Has your author service defined objectives for communicating with citizens or particular sub-segments of citizens for your publications? (n = 28)



Source: Ecorys Scoping survey, 2020

Further information on the communication objectives with EU citizens and/or their sub-segments was gathered from seventeen respondents in relation to twelve author services (see Table 3.8 below). This limited sample of responses indicates that the **communication priorities of the author services aligned very closely with their specific policy areas**. Consequently, the communication objectives of author services with narrower policy areas tended to be more clearly aligned with the Juncker Commission's priorities, whereas author services with more horizontal policy specialisations tended to have an equally horizontal emphasis on the Juncker priorities in their communication objectives with citizens and their sub-segments.

For example, both the policy areas and the communication objectives of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR fall under Priority 9 of the Juncker Commission to become a stronger global actor, whereas the policy areas and communication objective of DG TAXUD correspond closely with Priority 4 of the Juncker Commission to achieve a deeper and fairer internal market.

In contrast, **some author services reported communication objectives that were either too broad or too closely related to their area of specialisation to correspond with a specific Juncker Commission priority**. For example:

- ▶ DG RTD's communication objectives reflect the interdisciplinarity nature of this service by emphasising communication with citizens about contributions of EU research in general, both to current challenges and to citizens' everyday lives.
- ▶ DG EUROSTAT's communication objective is to improve statistical literacy among citizens so that they can better appreciate and use the statistical information that the DG publishes.

- ▶ DG COMM's communication objective to communicate about the Commission's priorities as well as to address gaps in knowledge among children and adults about the EU, how it works, and what it does.
- ▶ DGT's communication objective to inform citizens about multilingualism in the EU and EU employment opportunities in translation closely mirror DGT's similarly narrow and specialised emphasis on language issues in the EU.

Table 3.8 Author service communication objectives with citizens and/or their sub-segments⁶⁶

Author Service	Summarised communication objective(s)	Corresponding priority
DG AGRI	To raise awareness on the role and relevance of EU support to agriculture and rural development through the Common Agricultural Policy. Build understanding of the CAP among urban audiences and encourage an interest in food quality and healthy eating as a lifestyle choice. Emphasise that the EU consistently ensures safe, high quality food that is sustainably produced for 500 million EU consumers , while adhering to high environmental and animal welfare standards.	1;4
DG BUDG	To provide information on how the EU Budget is allocated and used. To provide guidance on EU funding.	Horizontal
DG COMM	To communicate about the Commission's priorities as well as inform children and adults about what the EU is and what it does, including its history, policies, activities, and the way it functions using attractive and easily understandable formats.	Horizontal
DG DEVCO	To inform both the general public and specific sub-segments (young people, high-school students, pupils, etc) about the EU's development policy, and in particular how the EU maintains its commitments to sustainable development and security across the world.	9
DGT	To inform the general public about the EU's language diversity in fun and factual ways; to inform students about employment possibilities and traineeships, and to inform practicing translators or other potential applicants about our outsourcing arrangements.	Specific
DG EAC	To provide an overview of DG EAC Spending programmes (Erasmus+, Research and Innovation programme Horizon 2020, Creative Europe) and of Education and Training policy (Youth Policy, Sport Policy).	1,
DG ENER	To increase understanding of EU energy policy using simple language. The author service has upcoming publications for	3

⁶⁶ Communications objectives were gathered through interviews with author services and their responses to the Scoping survey. Communication plans are further analysed in the Efficiency section.

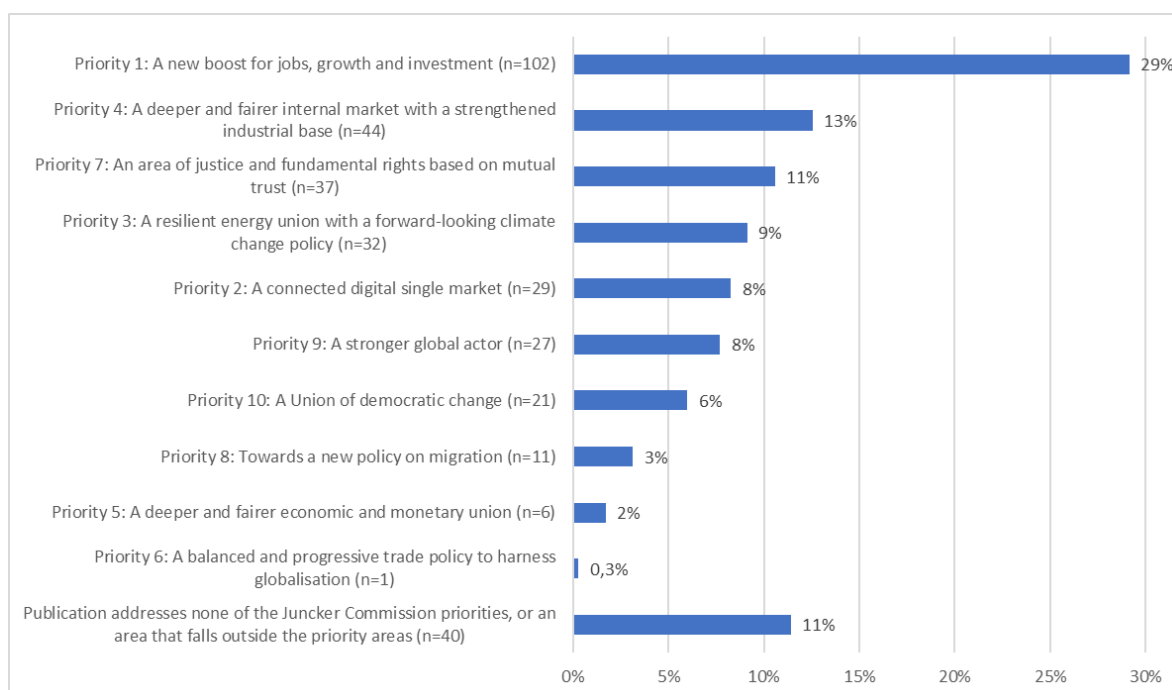
	young people aged 12-15 , which will be available on the Europa Learning Corner in all (official EU) languages.	
DG ENV	To emphasise the 'EU Added value' of the Commission by communicating its intention to 'go local', reaching out to EU citizens more than ever before. To 'be modern', using new technologies and channels; to 'be emotional', to better connect with the audience; and to 'deliver together', joining forces with all the internal and external partners and networks, beyond the usual green NGOs, to widen the reach and impact of the EU's environmental policies.	1
DG EPSO	To establish the Institutions as an employer of choice.	n/a
DG EUROSTAT	To help citizens turn data into knowledge by 1) informing citizens about the range and depth of statistics available from Eurostat, 2) increasing statistical literacy among citizens, and 3) increasing awareness of the importance and value of Eurostat's data, which is reliable, objective, and harmonised.	Horizontal
DG MOVE	To raise awareness of EU citizens' rights as passengers.	7
DG NEAR	To raise awareness of ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy); to emphasise the fact that without European aid, millions of uprooted people would not be able to sustain themselves and their families. To promote the idea that stabilising our neighbourhood will also positively affect Europe's internal stability.	9
DG RTD	To raise awareness of the impact that EU research and innovation has on citizen's lives and emphasise its role in responding to today's big challenges.	Horizontal
DG TAXUD	To inform citizens about the EU's taxation and customs union.	4
DG CLIMA	Build awareness and understanding on climate change, EU-level climate action, and the Commission's strategic vision for a climate-neutral EU.	3
EACEA	The inform applicants, potential applicants, and beneficiaries about the EU funding programmes and parts thereof which are managed by the Agency.	Horizontal

Source: *Ecorys Scoping survey, 2020*

Quantitative mapping of 350 Commission publications for citizens also indicated that **the Juncker Commission's priorities were often, but not always, explicitly covered**. As illustrated by Figure 3.18 below, all Juncker Commission priorities were covered in the publications to varying degrees, with Priority 1 being covered by the largest proportion of publications (A new boost for jobs, growth, and investment; 29%; n=102) and significantly smaller numbers of publications covering priorities 8 (Towards a new policy on migration; 3%; n=11), 5 (A deeper and fairer economic and monetary union; 2%; n=6), and 6 (A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalisation; 0.3%; n=1).

However, a total of 40 publications (11%) addressed an area outside of the Juncker Commission's ten priorities.

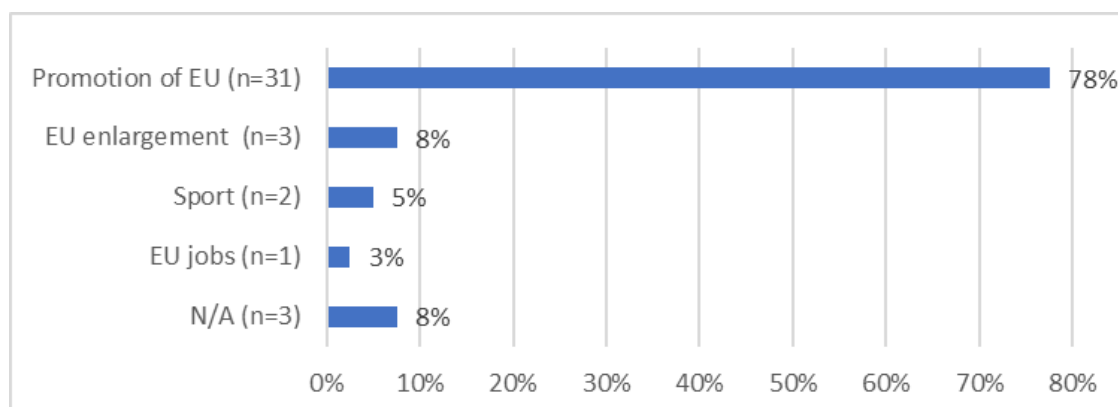
Figure 3.18 Number of publications addressing each of the Juncker commission priorities (n=350)



Source: *Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020*

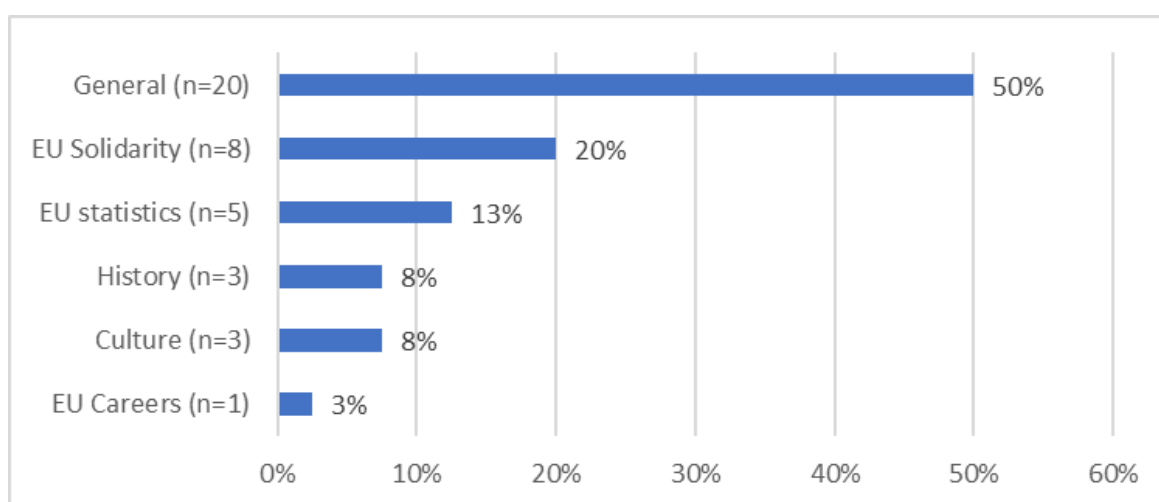
A further analysis of the 40 publications that did not address any of the Juncker Commission priorities revealed that most of these covered policy areas and topics that would not necessarily benefit from being linked to the Juncker Commission priorities. More specifically, the majority (78%; n=31) of these publications were geared towards promoting the EU in general as opposed to specific policy areas (see Figure 3.27 below), whereas in terms of topics more broadly, the majority of publications covered non-specific areas such as general information about the EU and its Institutions (50%; n=20), promotion of EU solidarity, defined here as publications that aim to promote a collective, positive European identity (20%; n=8), summaries or promotions of EU statistics (13%; n=5) and EU history (8%; n=3) and culture (8%, n=3), (see Figure 3.28 below).

Figure 3.19 Policy areas of publications that did not address one of the Juncker Commission Priorities (n=40)⁶⁷



Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

Figure 3.20 Topics of publications that did not address one of the Juncker Commission priorities (n=40)



Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

Notably, out of the 40 publications that did not cover one of the priorities of the Juncker Commission, over a third (38%, n=15) target children aged 15 or under or are suitable for young people. This finding suggests that the **specificities of the target audience may have been an important factor considered by author services when determining whether or not to link a publication to one of the Juncker Commission priorities**. This finding was confirmed by interviewees from DG COMM working on publications about what the EU is targeting children and adults. These interviewees stressed that while they may structure these publications along the ten priorities, it was not necessarily appropriate to describe these priorities in detail.

This purposeful and conditional approach to the coverage of Juncker Commission priorities in publications was also evidenced by the Key stakeholder interviews. All of the author services who were interviewed indicated that the **Juncker Commission priorities**

⁶⁷ Three publications do not cover any specific policy. These are two Wall calendars and a Europe Direct flyer.

were carefully considered in the planning and development of publications for citizens, with some reporting that all publications were purposely written to correspond to at least one of the Commission's priorities. However, whether the author services covered the Juncker Commission priorities in a targeted or a general way depended strongly on the breadth of their policy specialisms.

More specifically, **author services with narrower policy areas reported that their publications focused on the one or two priorities of strongest relevance to them**. One EU author service, for example, reported that the publications maintained a special focus on priorities one and five, whereas another EU author service reported that the publications maintained a strong emphasis on Priority 4. In contrast, nearly all of the stakeholder interviewees from Commission Representations reported that they covered most of the Juncker Commission's priorities, while author services with less specific policy specialisms tended to report that they covered the Juncker Commission priorities on a more circumstantial basis, echoing the findings of the Scoping survey presented above.

Interviewees from one EU author service reported that the publications they produced depended strongly on the data that was most recently made available, and that the statistics they published were usually relevant to one of the Juncker Commission priorities by default (for example their publications on migration statistics).

In conclusion, evidence from the Scoping survey, Quantitative mapping, and Stakeholder interviews indicates the **Commission's publications for citizens covered the priorities of the Juncker Commission on a selective basis, indicating that author services take into account the Commission priorities when planning and developing publications**. The selection of the priorities to cover seems to be done accordingly to whether or not they were relevant for the policy areas and specialisms of the author services as well as being appropriate for the specific target audiences. Furthermore, evidence from the quantitative mapping and scoping survey currently indicates that some of the Juncker Commission priorities were covered to a greater degree than others, with Priorities 1, 4, 7 and 3 being the most prominently featured in the Commission's offer.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ During the final phase we will validate this finding by conducting a systematic check of the OP 'general public' publications not included in the quantitative mapping OR the stratified randomised sampling and eligibility screening.

3.3 Coherence

This section provides our findings and conclusions in relation to the following strategic question of the Review: *'To what extent is the European Commission's offer of publications to citizens internally and externally coherent, in terms of information provided, key topics covered as well as publication types and formats?'*

The box below presents the main findings and conclusions that are presented in this Coherence section.

Summary of the findings and conclusions in relation to the Coherence criterion

Overall, the Commission's offer of publications to citizens showed a good level of coherence and complementarity in terms of the key topics and areas covered, with no major overlaps identified. Evidence suggests that publications for citizens covered a wide range of issues, topics, and policies of potential interest to EU citizens.

No gaps in topics or areas coverage were identified when the data collected on the main *perceived* gaps in the Commission publications offer to citizens was checked against the monitoring data available on these publications. It is, therefore, likely that the several gaps perceived by stakeholders and survey respondents in the Commission's publications offer were a result of a lack of awareness or the lack of an oversight for Commission publications offer to citizens.

Citizens consulted indicated they would welcome more publications on current affairs, e.g., the refugee crisis and asylum policy, the COVID-19 situation, the Green Deal and the digital single market, offering practical information or showing how EU policies impact their lives.

Commission publications for citizens were available in both online and print formats. Evidence collected showed that the Commission was increasingly using online formats to adapt to most users' needs, however, having access to printed publications was still considered important for certain groups (that prefer to work with printed materials, do not have access to the Internet or digital skills to use publications online). Furthermore, evidence indicated that readers prefer shorter formats, with more information presented visually and in an interactive way.

Evidence collected suggests that there was scope to better tailor the content of Commission publications for citizens to the needs of specific segments of the general public (e.g., pupils, young people, people with disabilities, elderly and pensioners, socially excluded categories, NEETs, etc.). The findings from the quantitative mapping of publications showed that from 350 publications, 73 targeted a clearly defined sub-segment of EU citizens, while 277 publications were addressed to EU citizens in general without a specific audience segment defined.

Reviewed publications were frequently not coherent with the needs of people with disabilities or special needs, where content needs to be specifically adapted. The

mapping of publications showed a distinct lack of braille versions of publications, examples of colours of the infographics being unsuitable for those with visual impairments and limited publications generally on the topic of disability.

Inconsistent language coverage was a factor reducing the coherence of the European Commission's publications offer to citizens. Analysis of monitoring data collected showed that most Commission publications for citizens were available in English, and then also French, with fewer translations in other languages. Although publication language may not be a barrier for citizens who can read English or French as their second language, it restricted access to information about the EU in other official languages.

In terms of external coherence, evidence collected showed good complementarities, and no major overlaps, between Commission publications for citizens and those produced by other main EU, national, regional and local sources. Although Commission and non-Commission publications reviewed covered similar topics and policy areas of interest to citizens, these presented different perspectives to their prospective readers (non-Commission publications were often shorter, presented a more critical view of EU policies and programmes, as well as advocated or lobbied for particular changes of EU policies).

3.3.1 Internal coherence of the Commission's offer

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *'To what extent is the European Commission's offer of publications to citizens internally coherent in terms of information provided by author services to citizens, key topics covered by their publications as well as main types of publications and their formats (online and print)?'*

Overall, the European Commission's offer of publications to citizens shows **a good level of coherence** in terms of the key topics covered, providing a wide range of types of materials and formats in a complementary way. However, qualitative data reveals that although citizens acknowledge the usefulness of the content published, **the target audience of the publications is not always clearly defined** and the **format and type of some materials are not always easily accessible, sharable, and visually attractive**, especially among young people. In particular, younger users, users living in a city or not having a migration background seem to recognise more the added value of Commission publications and perceive them as being more reliable and up to date. As Section 3.2.5 indicated, Commission's publications resonate more with an older audience than a younger one due to the dissemination mechanisms used and format of the publications.

The evidence from the stakeholder interviews suggests that there is **scope to tailor the content of the publications to the needs of specific sub-segments** of the general public (e.g., pupils, young people, people with disabilities, elderly and pensioners, socially excluded categories, NEETs, etc.), as well as improving access to information about the EU by **increasing the range of languages covered**.

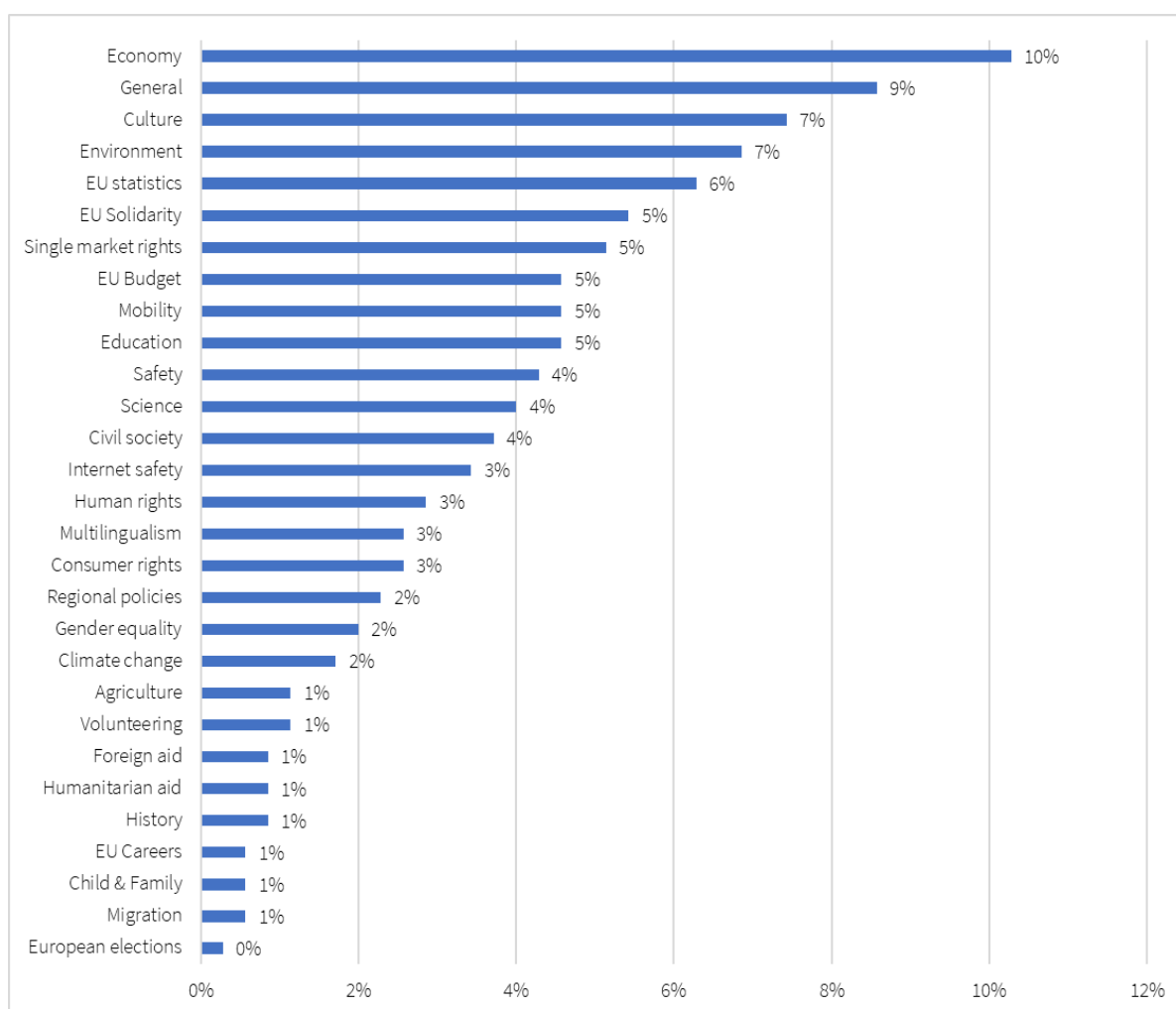
Topics and areas

Analysis of the mapping of European Commission publications for citizens shows a wide range of issues, topics, and policies of potential interest to EU citizens being covered. However, qualitative evidence from stakeholder interviews and analysis of survey open ended questions identified other key areas where there is potential for more content to be developed. In particular, focus group participants indicated that they would welcome more materials covering **current affairs** and **offering practical information on how the EU policies are impacting their lives**. A detailed analysis on citizens' information needs and specific topics based on evidence from Eurobarometer and the EDCC is provided in Section 3.1.2, while the topics of interest to the User survey are detailed in Section 3.2.2.

Out of 350 publications targeting the general public, around 40% of the materials are focused on more broad topics such as the EU economy, culture, environment and EU statistics, as well as raising awareness about the general work of the EU and its institutions. As Figure 3.21 illustrates, other topics with relatively high levels of coverage are in the area of EU solidarity, single market rights, EU budget, mobility and education. The mapping exercise also included publications from the field of science, safety, civil society, internet safety, human rights, and multilingualism etc., while a smaller number of publications were published on the topic of European elections, EU careers, migration, child & family, EU careers, history, humanitarian and foreign aid.

The evidence from the quantitative mapping suggests the **publications are largely complementary and avoid major overlaps**. For instance, where materials appear to address the same topic (e.g., the directive on unfair trading practices in the agricultural and food supply chain, a fair and effective tax system in the EU), the type of publications differs (i.e., brochure, factsheet, or leaflet). Furthermore, whilst both 'EU&ME' and 'Europe in 12 lessons' provide general information on EU institutions and Member States, their target audiences are different (i.e., young people, and adults respectively). As such, 'EU&ME' includes colourful infographics and interactive exercises, while 'Europe in 12 lessons' covers more in-depth the history and policies of the EU. There are, however, examples where content has been duplicated (e.g., Eurostat calendars for 2019).

Figure 3.21 Number of publications by topic (n=350)



Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

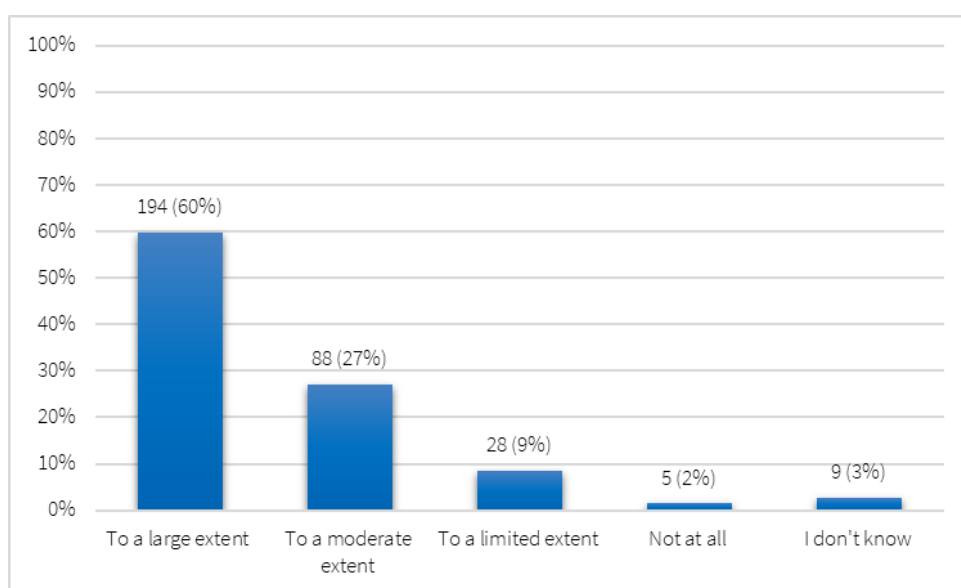
A more in-depth analysis of the Commission's priorities and policy activities revealed that specific policy areas that feature strongly amongst the publications include **research and innovation, EU's digital single market, education and training and justice and fundamental rights**. Materials aiming to raise awareness and inform the audience about the role of the EU and its history were also featured strongly amongst the analysed publications. The policy issues that are addressed least in the publications targeting citizens fall in the area of democratic processes, banking and financial services, EU competition rules, and EU jobs.

Overall, the European Commission's offer of publications covers a wide range of topics and specific policy areas. This is consistent with the survey findings, with **60% of respondents stating that the content of Commission's publications covered the information they were looking for to a large extent** (Figure 3.22). Out of 324 respondents who answered this question, 27% reported that they were only able to find the requested information to a moderate extent, 9% to a limited extent and only 2% could not find the information they were looking for at all. Among the respondents who used the publication for their work, 65% found that it covered the information they were

looking for to a large extent. Similar findings were reported by 46% of survey participants who use the publication for their studies and 47% of those who used it for their own information.

Looking at the answers of respondents not working in EU institutions or EU Information Centres, the percentage of people who considered that the publications covered the information they were looking for to a large extent decreases to 45%, while the percentage of people who found the publications covered the information they needed to a moderate extent and limited extent increases to 35% and 11% respectively. Moreover, 4% of respondents considered that the publications did not cover the information they were looking for at all.

Figure 3.22 Overall, to what extent do European Commission's publications cover the information that you are looking for? (n=324)



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Among the survey respondents who indicated that they did not find the publication useful (n=22), 41% (n=9) mentioned it was not what they needed, 18% (n=4) reported that the publication did not include the information they were looking for and 9% (n=2) thought it was too long, too complicated or too technical.

Both stakeholders and the general public would **welcome more content in publications covering the EU's position and actions on current affairs**, such as the refugee crisis and asylum policy, the COVID-19 situation, the Green Deal, digital single market, etc.⁶⁹ The 29 members of the general public who answered the question 'Are there any topics or issues you would like to find more information about?' in the survey, indicated they would like to find more content on: access to EU funding for local businesses, the use of ESF funds, practical information on the recognition of qualifications, professional and

⁶⁹ We note that this study covers publications produced in the period 1 January 2018 to 31 October 2019. However, in our view these respondents' needs are still relevant to report on. Our approach is further explained in Chapter 02. Overview of the method.

volunteering opportunities for young people, materials providing an overview of different social security and taxation systems across Member States, LGBTQ rights, etc. The findings from the focus groups also indicate that participants would welcome more materials providing practical information about how the EU is impacting their lives, materials adopted to their national context and more content addressing current affairs.

Another particular gap identified by the interviewees was the lack of publications offering general information on EU policies as well as practical and timely guidance on travelling in the EU, health insurance and mobility opportunities for seniors. To address these gaps, it was suggested the publications need to be streamlined and updated to match the consumption patterns of citizens.

No actual gaps in the coverage of particular topics or areas were identified when the data on the main *perceived* gaps in the Commission publications offer to citizens, as reported by the stakeholders and respondents consulted, was checked against the monitoring data available on these publications⁷⁰. It is, therefore, likely that the several gaps perceived by stakeholders and survey respondents in the Commission's publications offer were a result of a lack of awareness or the lack of an oversight for Commission publications offer to citizens.

The findings from the **focus groups revealed that for the majority of participants it was the first time they came across publications from the Commission**. In some cases where participants were already familiar with the official websites of the Commission or the Publications Office, this was due to their professional background. Most participants reported challenges in terms of locating the assigned publications as well of difficulties when using search engines to find materials published by the Commission. More importantly, the discrepancy between the wide range of topics identified through the mapping exercise and the demand for certain publications highlighted by the survey respondents could potentially be explained by the focus group findings. Although the materials cover a broad range of topics of potential interest to the general public, **a lack of knowledge about accessing the Commission and Official Publications' websites** could prevent citizens from locating the materials they are looking for.

Type and format of materials

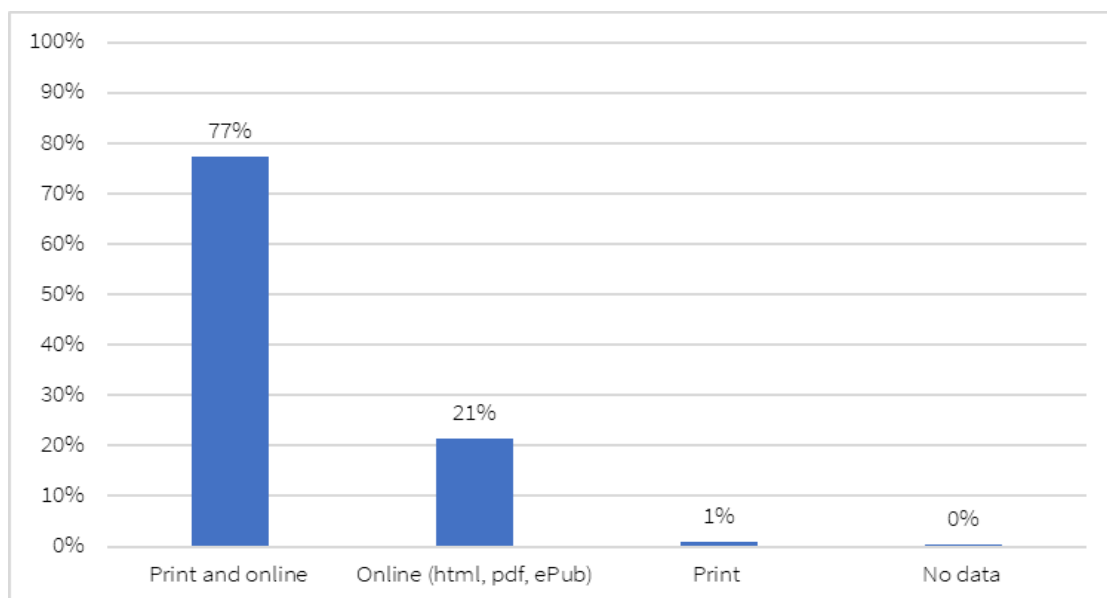
The mapping of EU publications shows that the majority of reviewed publications are available both in print and in an online format, with the number of online only materials being slightly higher than those available only in print (as shown in Figure 3.23). While there was a widespread preference among the European Commission's DGs of moving towards developing more digital content, the advantages of using printed materials were also pointed out.

⁷⁰ The OP monitoring data on Commission publications published in the period under review and the Quantitative mapping of 350 publications delivered during this study.

Stakeholders stated that printed publications were considered more outdated, expensive, and not sustainable. In comparison, **materials in an online format were thought to be more attractive to the general public, especially young people**, and easier to adjust and distribute to the target audience. Although stakeholders agreed that European Commission's publications should reflect the shifts in information consumption (as outlined in Section 3.1.3) and be tailored to social media platforms, having **access to printed publications was still considered important**, particularly for certain groups. For instance, printed materials are favoured as a tool for teaching. Interviewees noted that printed publications could be used in classrooms by children, and especially by teachers lacking digital skills. National stakeholder interviewees also mentioned that printed leaflets and brochures are useful to distribute during events organised for the general public.

The evidence emerging from the focus groups also uncovers **a generational divide regarding the preference for print over online formats** with older participants preferring to read longer publications in print and young people being more sensitive to the environmental argument against the unnecessary use of paper. The findings are supported by Eurobarometer data (reported previously in section 3.1.3) which emphasises these trends in preferred media channels across age segments. Older generations prefer television, printed press and radio as their main channels to gather information on the EU, while younger citizens prefer using the Internet.

Figure 3.23 Share of materials available in print and online (n=350)



Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

The mapping review process also categorised materials by type of publication. Out of 350 publications, more than 70% (n=250) are in a factsheet, brochure, booklet, book or leaflet format, while less than 2% (n=8) included interactive elements such as a programme, comic or colouring books, board games or an interactive publication.

Stakeholders (both at the EU and national level) indicated **a need for more materials for pupils and younger teenagers** and simpler, less formal materials covering EU policies and programmes. The demand for **more interactive materials** such as apps, online games, quizzes or maps on various EU policies was in line with the findings from the focus groups. Participants suggested the information could be better conveyed through means other than a big publication which was considered too long and too complex for the general public. There was a clear preference among the young people participating in the focus groups for **online materials which are easily sharable and include short links or QR codes** with additional information. Both participants and interviewed stakeholders pointed out the downloadable PDFs was an outdated feature of browsing and suggested that users, especially young people, would prefer other tools to retain the information. For instance, shortening the links included in the publication and using relevant key words would allow younger audiences to type the links easier in their browsers. Some participants also mentioned that they would prefer to find the information they need on **interactive websites or social media platforms** such as YouTube, Facebook or Instagram.

The widespread view among focus group participants and stakeholders was that the **content of the publications requires a shorter, straightforward, and more user-friendly format**, including more visual representations of information. While the usefulness of larger publications (e.g., 'European Union- what it is and what it does') was clear to participants, it was suggested that the design of such publications could be further improved. In order to increase readability, some publications would benefit from a better layout, a more logical sequence of information and more coherent and visually attractive colour palettes and infographics. The added value of the photographs and visual data should be carefully considered. Participants expressed a preference for publications including more real-life pictures or photos of people involved in the programmes described, which would add a more personal note to the publications targeting the general public.

The importance of **including local activities, communities and local success stories** was also emphasised. A good example was the '25 stories about Ireland and Europe' which was found very interesting, particularly because it includes local examples that Irish citizens can relate to. The use of local dialect and the simple format of the brochure was also considered useful to attract local people and increase the exposure of the publication through dissemination.

Targeted segments

The evidence shows that there is **scope to tailor the content of European Commission's publications for citizens to the needs of specific groups** of citizens. The findings from the quantitative mapping of publications reveals that out of 350, 73 publications targeted a clearly defined sub-segment of EU citizens, while 277 publications were addressed to EU citizens in general without a specific sub-segment defined.

The stakeholder interviews highlight that the number of publications targeting sub-segments of EU citizens (e.g., pupils, people with disabilities, elderly and pensioners, socially excluded categories, NEETs, etc.) is limited. Some stakeholders pointed out the **lack of publications with content adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and impairments**, especially in terms of the lack of braille versions, the colours of the infographics being unsuitable for those with visual impairments and publications generally on the topic of disability. One stakeholder also suggested that there is not enough evidence to assess whether the EU publications are reaching socially excluded groups.

Table 3.9 Inclusive practice showcase

Best practice examples of publications for people with disabilities

Among the publications mapped during this study, the materials developed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights make the most effective use of accessible communication formats. For instance, the article on the **'EU Framework for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'** provides a summary version of the provisions of the Convention including a video in sign language. The web version of the article also offers users some control over their access to the information, as they can alter the font size, colour and contrast. The Agency also provides text alternative for the infographics used for the **'EU IT systems, biometrics and human rights'** and **'Widespread data protection abuses highlighted by GDPR'**.

Source: Ecorys, 2020

Similar points were raised by the participants in the focus groups. There was an overwhelming view that the target audience of the analysed publications was unclear and raised confusion over whether the publications addressed specialists or the general public, but also in terms of the intended age group due to the choice of layout and images. Whilst participants appreciated the value of EU publications and the range of topics covered, there was a general consensus that the specific audience targeted needs to be clearly defined and the message of the publication tailored accordingly.

Language availability and technical vocabulary

Analysis of stakeholder interviews reveals **major gaps in terms of the range of languages** covered by the European Commission's publications. There was a general perception amongst DGs and EU-level stakeholders that most publications, and especially policy documents, are published mainly in English, but also French and German. Although language is not an issue for citizens with higher levels of education who have good English language skills, it can **create barriers for the broader public**, hence restricting access to information about the EU. One interviewee mentioned that the lack of publications for some people in their own language creates a certain distance towards European institutions.

Participants in one of the focus groups also indicated that where the publication had been translated into the national language, the vocabulary used lacked the natural flow of communication and technical terms appeared to be poorly translated from the original language. Another issue was the use of technical EU vocabulary in publications which could be difficult to understand for those without previous knowledge. Several stakeholders had to amend and simplify the content to better target their audience.

Overall synergy

The common view among the EU institution stakeholders who were interviewed was that there is **good collaboration and coordination at the concept or development stage**. This is achieved through regular coordination meetings gathering feedback and input from DGs, as well as on an ad-hoc basis through informal meetings where stakeholders share the initial content of the publications with other services to ensure there are no overlaps. This is seen as facilitating a **high degree of complementarity** between various Commission publications for citizens. Specific examples of good internal coherence mentioned were the publication of 'Going climate neutral by 2050', the development of 'Our planet, our future' magazine for young people and the materials developed on the topic of single use plastics and circular economy.

EU publications are also considered to be complementary to the materials produced at the Member States level. There is good cooperation between author and non-author services in communicating about EU programmes and policies at different levels. There were no particular issues of duplication or overlapping highlighted and there was a general view that while European Commission's publications offer a general framework of information, national publications provide citizens with more concrete guidance and are tailored to the specific national context. However, there is scope to achieve a closer alignment between EU and national publications.

Table 3.10 Publication Comparison

Publications comparison – Shopping online within the EU – Know your rights VS 25 stories about Ireland and Europe

While the content of the 'Shopping online within the EU – Know your rights' factsheet had a clear target audience and was considered simple to read and informative, focus group participants suggested that more information and links to national legal frameworks would have been useful for citizens.

In comparison, '25 stories about Ireland and Europe' was viewed favourably by focus group participants due to its emphasis on local examples and activities that Irish citizens can relate to and the use of local dialect.

Source: Ecorys, 2020

While most evidence emphasises that publications are largely internally coherent, there are also some overlaps and duplications in terms of the topics covered. For instance, national stakeholders indicated that publications providing general information on the

EU (e.g., 'EU&ME', 'EU what it is and what it does') are very similar in terms of the topics covered and target audience. While 'EU&ME' is addressed to young people aged 15-29, 'EU what it is and what it does' targets adults in general.

Other cases of overlap and duplication mentioned by stakeholders were in the communication campaign on Solidarity Corps, the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, and the development of ESC 2016 factsheet. An example of duplication reported was keeping online publications on the same programme but from different programming periods (e.g., ESF brochure on simplified cost options, 2014, 2015 and 2016), when the main objective should be to allow citizens to find updated and accurate information. The lack of internal coherence was justified by the nature of the programme and different funding mechanisms in the case of the Solidarity Corps campaign or cases of poor communication between the different DGs.

It was suggested that the internal communication processes between DGs and national stakeholders from the European Commission Representations could be improved even further to avoid duplications and enhance internal coherence. In particular, stakeholders reported that a lack of previous cooperation between the institutions could result in a potential overlap with the publications developed by the Representations.

3.3.2 External coherence of Commission's offer

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *To what extent is the European Commission's offer of publications to citizens externally coherent, considering the non-Commission publications for citizens available on the EU, its benefits and opportunities from the principal EU, national, regional and local sources?*

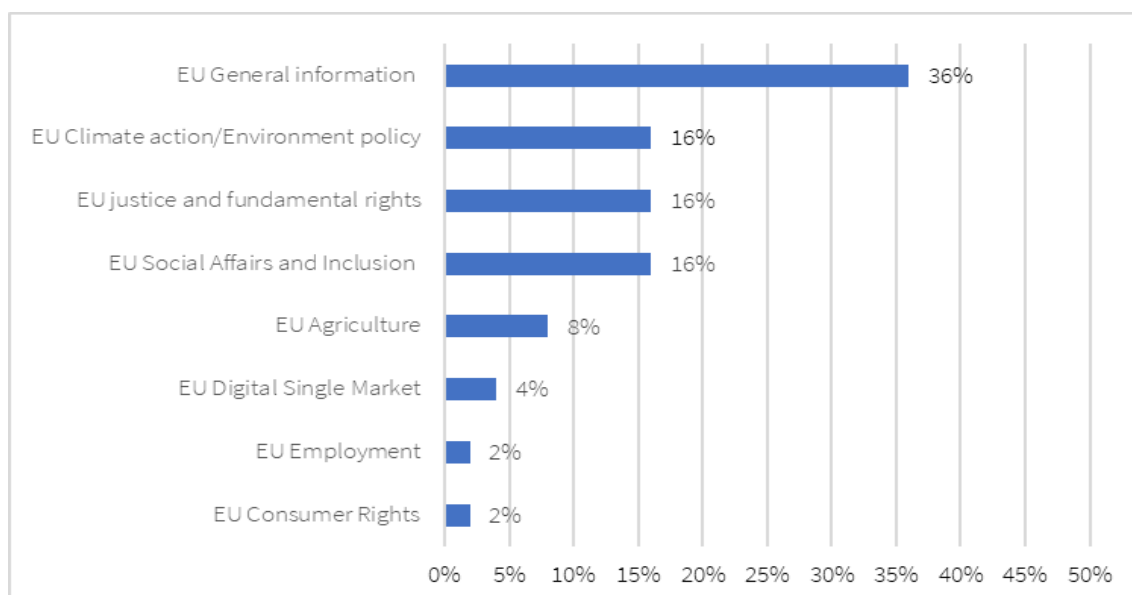
Overall, the findings from the stakeholder interviews and quantitative mapping of publications shows **good complementarities between Commission and non-Commission publications for citizens** in terms of topics and types of publications available. Although the materials cover similar topics and policy areas of interest to the general public, there are **no major duplications** due to the type and format of the materials as well as the tone adopted by the publications.

The analysis of qualitative interviews reveals that stakeholders are generally positive about the external coherence of the European Commission's offer. It was noted that stakeholders regularly follow the materials produced by non-EU institutions and that there is good coordination at the level of data collection and data sharing with other international bodies (e.g., UN, NGOs, ILO, OECD, WTO, World Bank etc.), as well as researchers, universities, Member States' statistics office and other specialised audiences.

The interviews with stakeholders highlighted that while the European Commission's publications may be covering similar topics at an overall level, the **specific materials are tailored to the EU context**. The evidence gathered in the mapping exercise corroborates the notion that the publication offer is externally coherent and avoids major overlaps regarding the information provided to citizens. As Figure 3.24 illustrates, the topics

covered by non-Commission publications are similar, with 36% of analysed materials providing general information on the EU. Other topics covered were the climate action/environmental policy (16%), justice and fundamental rights (16%) and social affairs and inclusion (16%), while less content was published on agriculture, digital single market, employment and EU consumer rights.

Figure 3.24 Number of non-Commission publications by topic (n=50)



Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

However, a more in-depth analysis reveals that the non-Commission publications provide a certain degree of complementarity through the different types of materials provided. The non-Commission publications mapped included materials developed by EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, Council of the EU, European Data Protection Supervisor, European Economic and Social Committee, European Committee of the Regions, European Investment Bank, as well as non-EU institutions such as AGE Platform Europe, Business Europe, Climate Action Network Europe, Eurodiaconia, European Anti-Poverty Network, European Disability Forum, European Environmental Bureau, European Youth Forum, Good Food Good Farming and Social Platform.

Among these more than **half of materials developed were shorter and easier to distribute** publications in the form of an infographic (30%) and leaflets (20%), while the Commission's offer favoured longer factsheets, brochures, booklets and books.⁷¹ Furthermore, where the materials appeared to cover the same topic using similar formats (e.g. colouring books on EU countries designed for children), there were often **key differences in the audience sub-segment** being targeted and the specific content of the publications. For instance, the colouring book developed by the Council of the European Union addressed children in all EU Member States, whereas the

⁷¹ Importantly, this may be because many of the non-EU institutions for which citizens' publications could be identified mainly focused on lobbying and communicating with EU-level stakeholders. The few publications that they did develop for general audiences therefore had a tendency to be precisely tailored to citizens.

Representations of the European Commission in Poland and Slovakia developed more specific publications supporting children's learning about the EU through their national language.

Another example of good complementarity are the materials providing information about the Euro. Whilst the 'Euro coin- key facts on the Euro' leaflet developed by the Council of the European Union provides the general public with useful information about the currency, DG ECFIN's brochure 'A short guide to the euro' covers in more detail the history and main facts about the Euro. Moreover, the factsheets developed by DG JUST providing guidance on GDPR ('EU data protection reform; Better data protection rights for European citizens') are very similar in terms of information covered and the format of the materials to the publications of the European Data Protection Supervisor. However, the factsheet published by the European Data Protection Supervisor ('The GDPR for EU institutions: your rights in the digital era') explores a different angle of the EU's data protection rules and includes information on the standards of data protection within the EU institutions and bodies and on citizens' rights when dealing with the EU institutions under GDPR.

The evidence from the mapping exercise indicates that **non-Commission publications offered a more balanced view on EU policies and programmes**. While half of the publications analysed presented the EU institutions and legislation in a neutral tone, 30% were critical of certain issues existing at the EU level. A more in-depth analysis reveals that only 9% of EU institutions (except Commission) adopted a critical tone. In comparison, 80% of the publications from non-EU institutions were critical of EU policies. This could be explained by the mission of these organisations which are **fundamentally more orientated towards advocating or lobbying the EU for change**. Among the EU institutions (except Commission), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights was a unique outlier. Some of its materials were more critical of certain issues existing at the EU level (e.g., the publications on racist harassment and discrimination, challenges to advance child rights and data protection abuses highlighted by GDPR). However, this is consistent with the organisation's purpose whose aim is to highlight rights under threat and respond to specific gaps and needs in the fundamental rights field.

Overall, around 44% of the non-Commission materials also encouraged citizens to act or campaign in order to support changes in EU policies. Among non-EU publications the percentage of publications calling for action was higher (90%) compared to only 30% of materials from EU institutions (except Commission). A unique outlier was again the Agency for Fundamental Rights who highlighted the areas where the EU could make changes to its policies or legislation. The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Investment Bank also called for action in policy areas such as social affairs and inclusion and climate action through publications such as 'Your Europe Your Say! – Your voice matters', 'Civil society in action for tomorrow's Europe', 'Europeans willing to reduce carbon-intensive transportation', 'Circular Economy Overview 2020', 'Climate Solutions', etc. However, the tone of these publications was more neutral or positive when addressing the EU policies.

3.4 Effectiveness

This section provides our findings and conclusions in relation to the following strategic questions, respectively:

- ▶ *To what extent do the European Commission's publications for citizens cover all the main areas and topics of interest to EU citizens in a way that presents achievements and shortcomings of the EU in a balanced way?*
- ▶ *To what extent were European Commission's publications effective in reaching citizens and various sub-sections of citizens through the current offline and online distribution channels? How could this reach be maximised, and publications made more accessible to their (potential) users?*
- ▶ *To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens effective in engaging citizens and various sub-sections of citizens via the current offline and online distribution channels? To what extent are Commission's publications for citizens effective in changing behaviours of their readers?*
- ▶ *To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens developed considering the needs of their readers in terms of easy access to content, attractive presentation, and convenient use? To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens available in their mother tongue?' and,*
- ▶ *How could the European Commission's offer of publications to citizens be streamlined to more effectively reach their readers of different ages and of different sub-segments through the main offline and online distribution channels?*

The box below provides a summary of the main findings and conclusions that are presented in this section.

Summary of the findings and conclusions in relation to the Effectiveness criterion

Overall, Commission publications for citizens had a broad but uneven coverage of topics and policy areas. Economy, culture, environment and general EU information were the areas most frequently covered by Commission's publications for citizens. EU elections, careers, migration, children and families, history, humanitarian and foreign aid were the topics least covered. No clear gaps in the coverage of particular topics or areas were identified within the Commission publications offer citizens.

Commission publications for citizens were widely perceived to be factual. The in-depth mapping of publications for citizens confirmed that a majority of publications presented clear information or concrete examples of the EU's activities, programmes, and policies in addition to their results and impacts. However, some publications could have been more effective if they presented EU benefits, achievements, limitations, and progress in a more balanced way to their readers.

The reach of Commission publications for citizens was overall high. According to the aggregated monitoring data, the total estimated reach of the 350 European Commission publications for citizens covered by this study exceeded 5.4 million downloads, prints, visits and page views. The OP represented the main channel for distributing and disseminating Commission publications for citizens, with 2.9 million orders and downloads placed with this service during the period under Review (compared to estimated 870,000 publications downloaded and distributed via other channels).

The Commission used a range of online and offline channels to promote and distribute its publications to EU citizens, with social media regarded as the most effective approach. The Commission's information multipliers emphasised the continued importance of face-to-face contact and distribution of printed Commission publications, particularly to meet the needs of citizens sub-segments that do not have access to the Internet or have limited digital skills.

Commission publications for citizens were generally perceived to be readable, usable, and conducive to engagement by their readers and users. The majority of survey respondents indicated they used (or intended to use) information from a publication in discussions or conversations, and over a quarter reported that they were doing something differently as a result of a Commission publication, confirming that publications have a positive impact in engaging EU citizens.

Publications produced higher engagement when they presented opportunities offered by EU programmes and initiatives directly targeting citizens. Over one third of Commission publications for citizens provided information on how to engage with the EU, and one in seven survey respondents confirmed that the publications helped them to take part in an EU programme or initiative. Publications were reported to be more engaging when they avoided abstract or technical discussions, presented practical information and examples of EU's impact on citizens' lives in a visually attractive way.

Commission publications for citizens had limited, but still noteworthy capacity to impact citizens' attitudes towards the EU. While some publications may have the potential to change audience's beliefs and (by extension) their attitudes, many of them would not. However, Commission publications played an important role in contributing to knowledge and beliefs that precede attitude changes, helped to dispel 'incorrect' beliefs, counter disinformation, promote factual information about the EU, and, in this way, impact readers' attitudes.

Commission publications for citizens had an uneven coverage of the 24 official languages of the European Union. Just under one fifth of the publications included in the mapping were available in all 24 languages, and almost one third were available in at least 20 languages. Most Commission publications are not translated in all official languages of the EU, hindering access to a part of the EU population that is not comfortable reading English or French. Publications translated into Slovenian and Irish were particularly scarce.

Commission publications for citizens were largely perceived to be appropriate for their target audiences in terms of readability and usability. Evidence collected suggests that most Commission author services used appropriate language and visuals in their publications for citizens. However, significant barriers to accessing publications for citizens with disabilities or other impairments were identified as over two thirds of the publications reviewed were not deemed easy to use for people with disabilities or other impairments.

The format of publications was a strong determinant of their popularity among citizens, with larger books and notebooks being taken up at a significantly lower rate than leaflets, booklets, postcards, flyers, and other 'lighter' formats. More succinct publications, infographics or fact sheets that avoid dense blocks of text and include visually attractive imagery were more likely to attract readers. Content that was more 'relatable' to users (e.g., 'success stories'), did not include technical jargon and was more effective in publications.

3.4.1 Focus of Commission's publications for citizens

This section addresses two specific evaluation questions: *'To what extent do the European Commission's publications for citizens cover all the main areas and topics of interest to EU citizens, including past, ongoing and new developments, policies, programmes and their main achievements?' and, 'What is the overall approach chosen to present information to citizens in European Commission's publications? Is the information presented in a balanced way, highlighting achievements and shortcomings of the EU?'*

Main areas and topics covered by Commission's publications for citizens

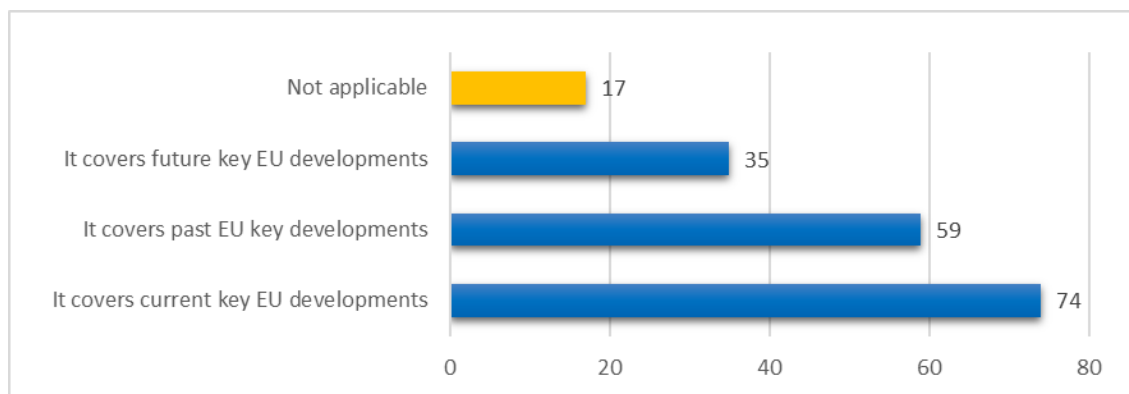
Overall, the **Commission's publications for citizens have a broad but uneven coverage of topics and policy areas**. While quantitative and qualitative mapping indicate that the publications cover key EU developments, some topics were potentially under-emphasised. Furthermore, interviews with stakeholders from author services and non-author-services revealed mixed views and knowledge levels on the completeness of the topics covered in the Commission's publications offer for citizens.

In-depth qualitative mapping of 116 publications showed that among the 99 publications for which it would be applicable to discuss past, current, or future developments,⁷² **none of the publications were judged to be missing key EU developments of relevance to their content**. Furthermore, current key EU developments were covered in 64% (n=74) of the publications, past key EU developments were presented in 51% (n=59) of

⁷² Publications for which the question was not applicable were generally either of a specific format, such as a colouring book or postcard, or were focused on explaining non-temporal aspects of the EU to children.

Commission's publications for citizens mapped by the Research team and future developments in 30% (n=35) of publications.

Figure 3.25 Number of publications that cover past, current, and future key EU developments (out of total n=116)



Source: *Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020*

As mentioned in the Coherence section, however, Quantitative mapping of 350 publications for citizens revealed that **while publications for citizens covered a broad range of topics**, with 29 topics being identified in total (see Section 3.3.1 on internal coherence above), **some topics were more greatly emphasised than others**. The topics that were covered by the greatest number of publications were:

- ▶ Economy (10%)
- ▶ General information on the EU (9%)
- ▶ Culture (7%)
- ▶ Environment (7%)

The topics with the least coverage among European Commission's publications included:

- ▶ EU elections (0<1%)
- ▶ EU careers (1%)
- ▶ Migration (1%)
- ▶ Child & family (1%)
- ▶ History (1%)
- ▶ Humanitarian aid (1%)
- ▶ Foreign aid (1%)

The stakeholder interviewees also provided a more **mixed verdict on the extent to which the Commission's publications for citizens covered** topics of importance for them. Some positive feedback on the focus of the publications was offered, with almost half (44%; n=23) of the 52 non-author service interviewees and one out of 20 author service interviewees indicating that the publications had an adequate coverage of

topics.⁷³ However, several interviewees from both author services (n=6) and non-author services (n=8) held the view that important information was missing.

Some **gaps in publications that were suggested by interviewees include youth policy, crime, and teacher's guides for educating children on the EU. Further gaps were identified by survey respondents, and include environment and sustainability, recycling, digitalisation and EU funds** (please see Section 3.2.2. for more information on gaps identified by survey respondents).

Furthermore, a common theme among many interviewees from author services and non-author services alike was that the **publications were too broad and general to be of real use or interest for citizens**. Subjects that were viewed as being too vaguely or impractically covered included:

- ▶ Ways in which EU funds can be accessed and used;
- ▶ Specific details regarding eligibility for/enrolment in EU initiatives and programmes;
- ▶ Transparent information on the main tasks and requirements of accessing an EU job through EPSO;
- ▶ Information on the EU's Budget and its relevance at the local level in Member States;
- ▶ Information on Brexit, what it means for the future EU-UK relationship, and the implications for EU citizens⁷⁴;
- ▶ Clear information on the Member State's contributions to the EU budget, how it is defined for each country and what it is used for;
- ▶ Publications explaining energy poverty and the benefits to be gained from a green transition;
- ▶ More local success stories detailing precise ways in which citizens' lives are impacted by an EU initiative.

An interviewee from a Commission Representation also posited that the **Commission's publications are not sufficiently timely or reactive to current events** and suggested that the EU's response to such crises as the COVID-19 pandemic should be covered earlier and in greater detail in order to prevent the growth of scepticism or disillusionment from citizens. Another interviewee claimed that EU publications are still

⁷³ Many interviewees from author services and non-author services felt that they lacked a sufficiently broad overview of all European Commission publications to comment on this.

⁷⁴ While the perceived lack of coverage on Brexit may be more due to the persisting uncertainty around Brexit (and thus the lack of concrete information to publish and disseminate) rather than an oversight on the part of the Commission, many interviewees felt that there was a scarcity of publications acknowledging and outlining the challenges around Brexit.

too focused on pro-EU target groups and should focus on general citizens who are less engaged with the EU.

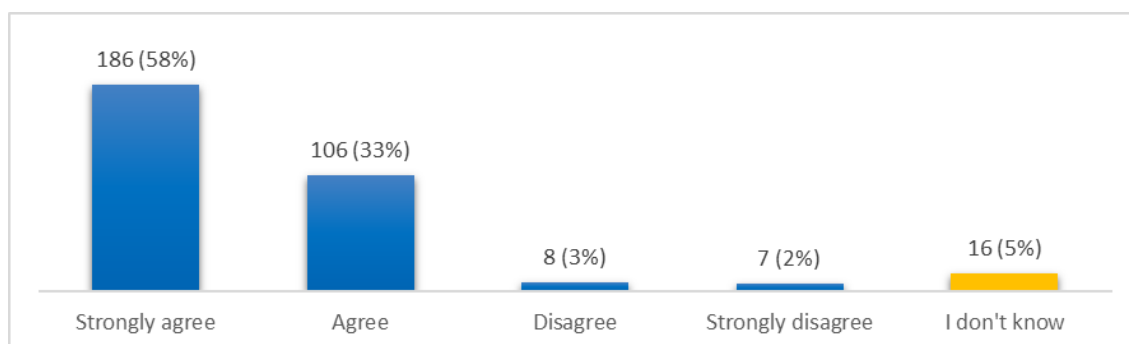
A sizeable share of interviewees lacked the knowledge to respond to this question, including 17 from non-author services (32%) and 11 from author services (55%). Notably, two interviewees (one from an author service and one from a non-author service) asserted that there are no publications on EU citizen's rights despite there being a recent series of factsheets on citizen's rights from DG GROW.⁷⁵ Similarly, some non-author service interviewees suggested that there was a lack of publications on environmental issues, democracy, and the labour market, despite publications on these themes having been identified in the quantitative mapping (please see Annex I). Several interviewees also suggested that Brexit was not covered by the Commission's publications for citizens, while four publications on Brexit were identified through Quantitative mapping. This suggests that there is widespread uncertainty both about the information needs of EU audiences and about the resources already available.

Overall approach chosen to present information to citizens

The **Commission's publications for citizens were widely perceived to be factual**, both among user survey respondents and among the researchers who conducted qualitative in-depth mapping of 100 publications. However, there was less consensus on the extent to which the publications were balanced in their coverage of the EU's achievements and shortcomings, with **some publications being judged to be overly positive and reductive** in their representation of the EU's activities and achievements. Furthermore, interviewees expressed concerns about the sensitivity of EU citizens to perceived 'propaganda' and cautioned that there is an important balance to be struck in the content and tone of publications that cover the benefits and achievements of the European Union.

As illustrated in Figure 3.26 below, the vast majority (90%; n=292) of survey respondents who answered the relevant question either agreed or strongly agreed that the publications were factual, while 5% (n=15) either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 3.26 Would you agree that this publication was factual? (n=323)

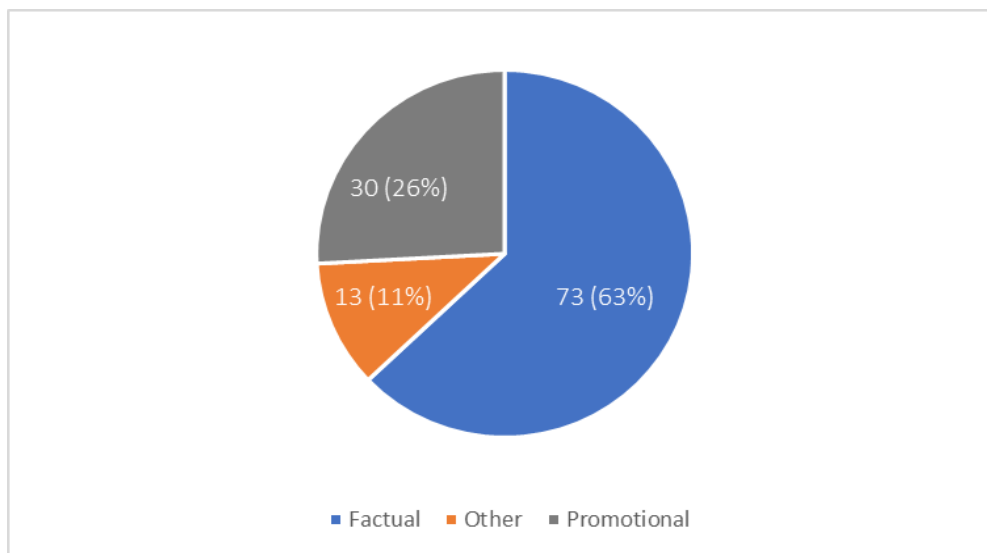


⁷⁵ E.g., DG GROW (2018), *Retiring in the EU: Know your rights*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c1c119a5-d7ff-11e8-90c0-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-139860902>

Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

This finding was reinforced by the results of the qualitative mapping, during which 63% of publications were judged to be factual in their tone, whereas just over a quarter (26%) were judged to have a promotional tone (please see Figure 3.27 below)⁷⁶.

Figure 3.27 What is the tone of the content of this publication?
(n=116)



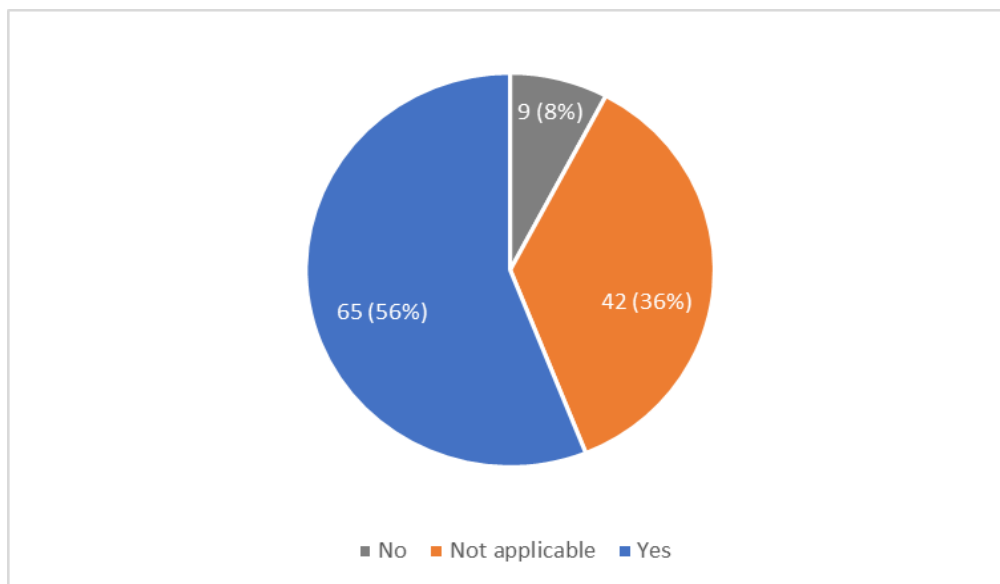
Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

Qualitative in-depth mapping also indicated that out of the 74 publications for which the question was applicable⁷⁷, the **majority (56%, n=65) presented clear information or concrete examples of the EU's activities, programmes, and policies in addition to their results and impacts.**

⁷⁶ Among the thirteen publications that were neither promotional nor factual, five were judged to be both promotional and factual, two were fictional, one was educational (targeting children), two did not have a narrative due to their format (postcard and colouring book), and one was a historical analysis.

⁷⁷The 42 publications for which this assessment was deemed 'not applicable' tended to cover a topic, area, purpose or perspective in which the specific results and impacts of policies, activities, or programmes would not be relevant to discuss. These include promotional documents which aim only to provide surface-level information on what an EU institution is and/or does; publications that invite citizens to take part in an initiative; publications that introduce a new initiative for which results and impacts would not yet be available; publications that aim to translate EU policies or legislation for citizens, such as their rights in specific areas or the meaning of the Charter of Fundamental rights; publications that aim only to explain the current situation in the EU according to specific variables (i.e. those that present statistics); or publications aimed at introducing the EU to children (colouring books, booklets, etc).

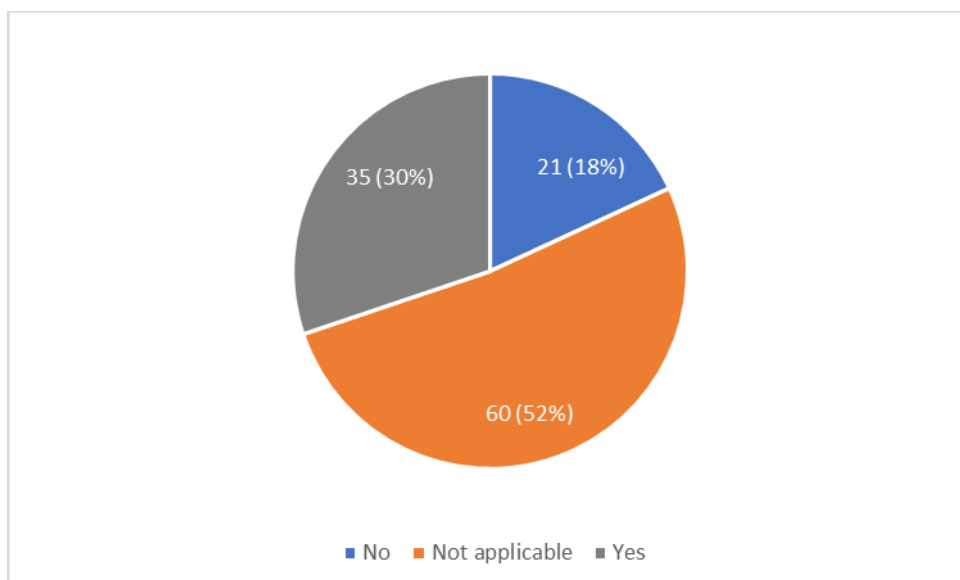
Figure 3.28 Does this publication present clear information and/or concrete examples of EU activities, policies or programmes, as well as their results?



Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

Furthermore, among the 56 publications for which this assessment was applicable⁷⁸, the **majority (63%; n=35) were judged to present information in a balanced way**, highlighting both the achievements and shortcomings of the EU.

Figure 3.29 Is the information in this publication presented in a balanced way, highlighting both the achievements and the shortcomings of the EU?



⁷⁸ This question was generally marked as being 'not applicable' for publications aimed at children (colouring books, postcards, comic books), factsheets with minimal commentary, brochures providing minimal information on a selection of projects or programmes, infographics with little text, and publications with no emphasis on the EU's achievements or policies such as country case studies.

Source: *Ecorys Qualitative Mapping, 2020*

However, **18% (n=21) of the publications were judged to present information in an imbalanced way.** In general, these publications were deemed to **focus too strongly on the achievements of the EU**, with insufficient attention paid to areas for change or improvement. Specific observations included:

- ▶ A publication covering success stories of EU-supported documentaries and projects, which failed to mention areas and themes that may still require improved funding.
- ▶ A publication on the latest developments in the field of migration and asylum, which did not acknowledge or address potential limitations and criticisms of the EU policy approaches.
- ▶ A publication on the Electronic Health Records (EHRs) which only discussed the benefits, without gesturing towards potential drawbacks of EHR systems.
- ▶ A publication on the European Citizen's Initiative, which portrays the process of launching an initiative as being overly simple and suggests that this initiative is likely to be adopted by the EU despite only five of 74 proposed initiatives being successful.
- ▶ Two publications on environment which focused too narrowly on current achievements, without covering either the past policies or practices that caused the environmental damage described in the publication, or the future efforts that will still be required for the EU to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals;
- ▶ Two publications, one on the Digital Single Market and one on cross-border EHRs, which presented initiatives in a reductively positive light without acknowledging any limitations of either.
- ▶ A factsheet on the gender gap in digital skills that lists and promotes a range of initiatives undertaken by the EU to tackle it without any further information to indicate the methodology or success of these approaches, thus risking the perception that the Commission is 'overselling' the EU's achievements in this area.
- ▶ A colouring book that presents itself as a 'myth-buster' but adopts a sarcastic tone and ridicules misconceptions about the European Union as opposed to addressing them in a neutral and balanced way.

Overall, these **'imbalanced' publications were judged to focus disproportionately on the successes of EU policies and the benefits of EU membership**, as opposed to acknowledging the limitations of the EU's influences or the many areas in which more could be done to meet citizens' needs or to address their concerns. This imbalanced presentation of information on the EU and what it does and can do, could represent a failure to anticipate potential criticisms from more sceptical readers.

While no interviewees from EU author services expressed concerns about the impact of 'unbalanced' publications on readers' attitudes towards the EU, the view that **highly**

promotional publications could backfire and trigger resistance or scepticism in readers was shared by a large number of national, regional, and local stakeholder interviewees, including Commission Representations and staff from EDICs. It was broadly suggested that when working in economically hard-hit areas where the benefits of EU membership are not immediately obvious, dialogue about the European Union needs to remain 'open and fluid', with fair attention paid both to supporting statements and criticisms of the EU. Indeed, some EDICs and Commission Representations' staff **reported receiving complaints from citizens that their publications were 'just propaganda'**. In Croatia, Czechia, Belgium, Sweden, and France, interviewees warned that citizens can be sensitive to materials that may appear biased towards an 'EU ideology' and stressed that publications on the EU should adopt a neutral language in order not to 'lose' readers.

The **risk of triggering unintended, negative reactions to publications was also evidenced by participants of focus groups** in the Member States. The DG EMPL publication entitled 'Work-life balance: what are the benefits', for example, was particularly controversial with certain groups. Czech participants interpreted the publication as an attempt of the EU to impose a biased ideology and influence the personal lives of its citizens, maintaining that work-life balance and gender roles should be determined by the cultures of individual MS. In contrast, participants in the francophone Belgian focus group acknowledged that the subject matter was indisputably important but were left with the impression that the publication verged on propaganda due to placing too strong an emphasis on the EU's position on the topic, without enough evidence of concrete EU-level actions being taken. Croatian focus group participants also expressed a general wariness at the 'too-positive light' in which the publications portrayed the EU, suspecting that the content was likely to be unbalanced.

In conclusion, **although publications are generally viewed to contain factual information, research results were mixed on the extent to which Commission's publications for citizens contain complete and balanced information**. Non-author service interviewees cautioned that due to persisting Euroscepticism, concerns about 'fake news', and sensitivity to perceived propaganda and institutional bias among citizens in certain MS, all publications from the European Commission should be designed carefully with attention to benefits, limitations and shortfalls of the EU in order to avoid triggering unintended, negative reactions from end-users.

3.4.2 Reach of European Commission's publications for citizens

This section addresses two specific evaluation questions: *'What is the total estimated reach of European Commission's publications for citizens as well as reach into particular segments of EU population covered by the monitoring data on author services' publications ordered, downloaded and distributed in printed format and online?'* and, *'What are the main current distribution channels for European Commission's publications for citizens? How can the publications be better promoted via these existing online and offline channels?'*

Are there any new channels that could be used to distribute Commission's publications for citizens?'

Estimated reach of European Commission's publications for citizens

The **reach of the Commission's publications for citizens was overall high**. According to available data from the OP and author services, the total aggregated reach of the 350 European Commission publications for citizens covered by this study exceeded **5.4 million downloads, prints, visits and page views**.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the OP emerged as being the most visible medium for distributing and disseminating Commission's publications for citizens. It needs to be noted, that this reach includes also the publication orders placed by institutional OP clients⁸⁰.

For the 251 publications that were carried by the **OP**, the number of **orders and downloads amounted to nearly 2.9 million** (see Table 3.11 below), with total aggregated reach (including OP visits and page views) exceeding 4.35 million (see Table 3.11 below). Among the 55 publications for which non-OP monitoring data could be sourced, total prints, downloads, and 'consultations' (in relation to interactive digital publications) approached 870,000 (see Table 3.12 below).

Table 3.11 OP monitoring data on 247 publications for citizens

Total OP orders, 2018-2019	Total OP downloads, 2018-2019	Total OP visits, 2018-2019	Total OP page views, 2018-2019	TOTAL ORDERS & DOWNLOADS
2,738,950	126,211	683,588	806,157	2,865,161

Source: Ecorys, 2020

Table 3.12 Non-OP monitoring data (from author services) on 55 publications for citizens

Total downloads (data requests)	Total consultations (for interactive digital publications)	Total prints (data requests)	TOTAL
105,536	600,000	163,700	869,236

Source: Ecorys, 2020

⁷⁹ This is a total aggregated number based on figures from the OP and extrapolations of monitoring data from data requests to author services.

⁸⁰ e.g., Commission Representations, EDICs, and others. These institutional orders were counted among the estimated reach of the Commission publications for citizens as these multipliers further distribute Commission publications to their end users.

A comparative analysis revealed that the **OP's EU publications portal is a more effective location for achieving outreach among the publications**. Although the average reach figure was higher for non-OP monitoring data than for OP monitoring data (15,800 per publication versus 11,400 per publication), as well as for publications without OP identifiers overall (23,400 per publication), these higher average figures could largely be ascribed to two non-OP, interactive digital publications that had achieved exceptionally high reach⁸¹. Once these were excluded, the average non-OP reach among the remaining 53 publications decreased sharply to just over 5,000 while the average reach among the 29 publications without OP identifiers decreased to 2,700⁸² (see Table 3.13 below).

Table 3.13 Total reach of Publications without OP Identifiers (n=29)

Total downloads (data requests)	Total consultations (for interactive digital publications)	TOTAL
79,186	600,000	679,186

Source: Ecorys, 2020

The OP's **higher visibility in comparison to other locations on Europa was reconfirmed** by a comparison of reach figures among publications that are downloadable both on the OP and on non-OP webpages elsewhere across Europa. Among the 24 (out of 64) publications for which both OP and non-OP monitoring data was available, reach figures were 48.6% higher for versions on the OP than for versions available elsewhere on Europa (see Table 3.14 below).

Table 3.14 Reach of publications on the OP versus non-OP locations on Europa, for publications that are available on both (n=24)

Total OP downloads/prints (data requests)	Total Non-OP downloads/prints	Percentage difference in reach
334,971	225,383	48.6% greater visibility on the OP

Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

This finding was also reinforced by a closer analysis of the divisions in OP and non-OP reach figures between individual publications. As demonstrated in Table 3.15 below, **there were some publications for which non-OP locations on Europa were associated with increased reach**, including DG RTD's *Did you know? EU-funded research is shaping your future* (101% increase in reach) and DG Move's *Road Safety in the*

⁸¹ Importantly, the 600,000 'consultations' that constitute part of these reach figures are attributable to two interactive digital publications from DG Eurostat: *People on the Move – Statistics on Mobility in Europe (2019 Edition)* and *The Life of Women and Men in Europe – A statistical portrait (2019 Edition)*.

⁸² The extent to which conclusions can be drawn from this data remains nevertheless limited, as non-OP data could only be sourced for roughly 38% of publications that were downloadable on Europa pages aside from the OP.

European Union (2,327% increase in reach) (see Table 3.16 below). However, for those publications that benefited from more outreach via the OP, the gap in reach figures tended to be bigger. The reach of DG EMPL's *European pillar of social rights: For a fairer and more social Europe*, for example, was 1.127% greater on the OP than on DG EMPL's Europa webpage, while DG CLIMA's *Our planet, Our future: Fighting Climate Change together* benefited from almost 5,000% greater reach figures on the OP than elsewhere on Europa.

Table 3.15 Examples of publications that had greater reach on the OP than elsewhere on Europa

Publication name	OP reach (orders and downloads)	Non-OP reach (orders and/or downloads)
<i>The European pillar of social rights: For a fairer and more social Europe</i> (DG EMPL)	66,260	5,400
<i>Our planet, Our future: Fighting Climate Change together</i> (DG CLIMA)	90,042	1,784
<i>Changing the way we use plastics</i> (DG ENV)	11,019	8,930
<i>Education and Training Monitor 2018</i> (DG EAC)	3,423	521

Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

Table 3.16 Examples of publications that had greater reach in non-OP locations than on the OP

Publication name	OP reach (orders and downloads)	Non-OP reach (prints and/or downloads)
<i>Road safety in the European Union</i> (DG MOVE)	79	1917
<i>Did you know? EU funded research is shaping your future</i> (DG RTD)	17,663	35,450
<i>EU budget 2017: Financial report</i> (DG BUDG)	893	1,327
<i>Snapshots from the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the EU Internal Security Fund</i> (DG HOME)	1,499	2,285

Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

In conclusion, while a large number of publications are available across both OP and non-OP webpages within Europa, analyses of the sub-sample of publications for which adequate comparative data was available have revealed that **the OP continues to be**

the most visible location for publication for publications to be promoted on the European Commission's webpages. This may be in part due to the function of the OP's EU publications portal as a dedicated and centralised space for publications, which is in direct contrast with the variety of disparate sources through which publications can be found and downloaded on other webpages within Europa. An exploration of these different channels will be described in the following section.

Main distribution channels for Commission's publications for citizens

The author services consulted in the context of this study indicated that a **wide range of online and offline channels are used to distribute publications to citizens**, with **social media being highly regarded as the most effective approach**. Nevertheless, stakeholders who work with citizens in Member States emphasised that while social media is critical for outreach, **face-to-face contact and print dissemination continue to be important**, particularly in light of perceived barriers to navigability in the webpages that host Commission publications.

Testimonies of interviewees from author services revealed that with the exception of Social media (n=7 author services), the **EU Publications portal of the OP remains one of the most popular channels** for distributing and disseminating publications for citizens, with six author services confirming that they rely on the OP (please see Figure 3.30 below). Other EU distribution channels listed by author services included EDICs (n=4), Commission's Representations (n=3), and EDCs (n=1).

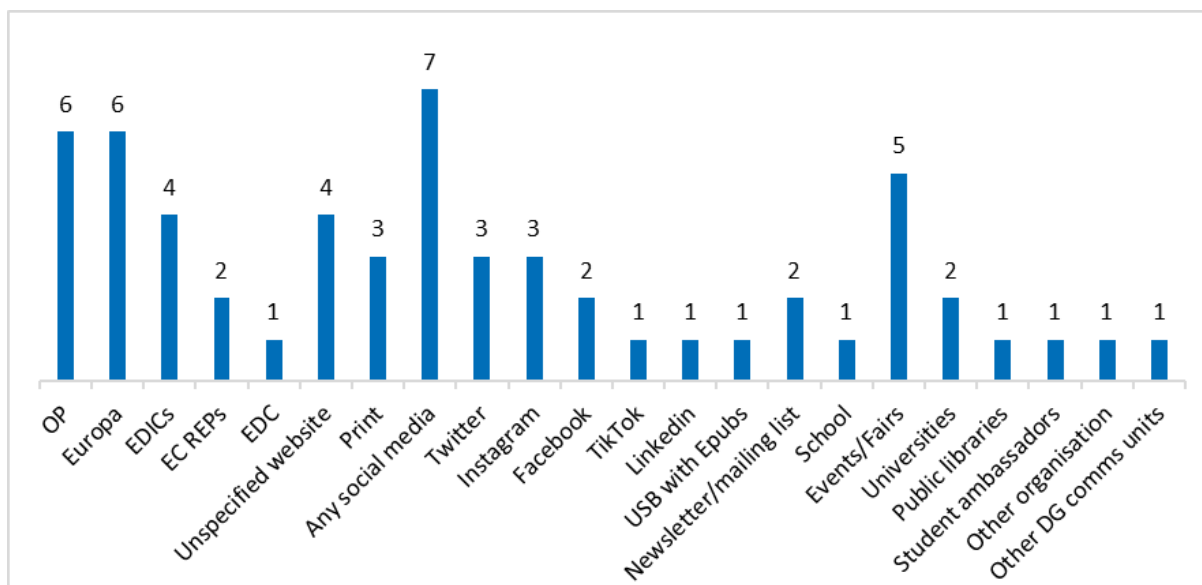
Other key online channels included:

- ▶ Europa webpages;
- ▶ Non-Europa webpages;
- ▶ Twitter;
- ▶ Instagram;
- ▶ Facebook;
- ▶ TikTok; and,
- ▶ LinkedIn.

Other key offline channels included:

- ▶ Events and fairs (n=5);
- ▶ Newsletters and/or mailing lists (n=2);
- ▶ Universities (n=2);
- ▶ Public libraries (n=1)
- ▶ Communications units of other DGs (n=1).

Figure 3.30 Distribution channels by number of author services that indicated they used them to promote publications for citizens



Source: Ecorys, Key stakeholder interviews, 2020

With regard to the visibility of their publications across this range of channels, many author service interviewees expressed uncertainty about whether or not citizens are able to find the publications that are already online, noting that sourcing them may be challenging without prior knowledge of where to look (or use of Web search engines).

Some author service interviewees expressed hopes that the OP would eventually step in to assist with dissemination, distribution, and promotion of their publications. However, others stressed the **importance of social media for promoting their publications to less engaged citizens** and explained that while individual DGs are generally prohibited from having corporate social media accounts of their own, it is also **difficult to access to the official Commission's social media accounts** for promotion of their publications.

Several author service interviewees also noted the **persisting importance of offline approaches for the promotion and distribution of their publications**. Some innovative approaches included:

- ▶ Recruiting student ambassadors on university campuses;
- ▶ Cooperating with non-EU organisations to help with the distribution of print publications; and
- ▶ Sending newsletters and publications to mailing lists.

Author service interviewees also reiterated the **value of face-to-face contact and mobile stands with citizens at fairs and events**. One EU author service explained that the DG routinely distributes USB devices with digital versions of their main publications at events, both to reduce their use of paper and to make their publications accessible to individuals who lack consistent access to the internet. Another EU author service shared that representatives of the DG attended up to five fairs each year, organised by the

Commission or its partners in the Member States, in order to use these opportunities to distribute their publications directly to citizens.

These findings were corroborated by the evidence from the interviews undertaken with non-author services EDICs, and Commission Representations in Member States.⁸³ The majority of these stakeholders listed **social media as being an indispensable communication channel, particularly for communicating with younger audiences**, with strong preferences expressed for Facebook and Instagram due to the popularity of these platforms⁸⁴. That said, national-level interviewees were also adamant that face-to-face interaction and physical distribution of printed publications are essential for maintaining contact with a wide range of audiences. Sub-segments of citizens who interviewees listed as being particularly likely to benefit from printed publications included rural and lower-income citizens, as well as children and older adults who lack strong digital skills.

Several national-level multipliers (i.e., staff at the Commission's Representations or EDICs) interviewed offered insights on why these online and offline channels continue to be so critical for reaching citizens. Some **multipliers stressed their role as information 'mediators', forming a bridge between the EU and its citizens** not only by distributing communication materials on-the-ground but also by helping citizens to link the content of Commission's publications to their daily lives.

Most commonly, however, **multipliers perceived that their most critical role was to help citizens locate the information they need**. Although some national-level multipliers expressed the view that publications were visible and easily accessible via the existing communication channels, these interviewees were a distinct minority (n=10). The majority, in contrast, expressed the view that Europa has a large amount of information and no easy ways to navigate it.

While the **Learning Corner was noted by several interviewees as a useful and easily navigable space for children and teachers** to find relevant publications, the **plurality of other locations on the Europa website where publications could be found was noted as a barrier for citizens**. Of the 55 focus group participants, only two indicated that they were aware of the Learning Corner and had actively used it in the past. A further eight indicated that they were aware of the platform but had never used it in practice, with the remaining majority of focus group participants indicating that they are unaware of the platform. Moreover, only two interviewed national multipliers highlighted that they actively used the Learning Corner for disseminating publications.

Among non-author service interviewees who mentioned the **OP's EU Publications portal**, there was a **general consensus that it is not user friendly, even for stakeholders who work regularly on EU topics** (*the portal is too complicated even for*

⁸³ Non-author services refer to EDICs and other institutions that do not produce European Commission publications for citizens.

⁸⁴ According to a Eurostat survey, 84% of your people (16-29 years old) participated in social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram in 2019.

me'). Most expressed doubts that citizens would be able to use the portal to find the publications they need without the help of staff from EDICs. Specific criticisms included:

- ▶ No easy way to distinguish 'general public' publications from stakeholder publications;
- ▶ Inability to narrow down the search using multiple filters – even when using filters for 'general public' and specific topics or policy areas, searches for publications can yield thousands of hits;
- ▶ Lack of success when using keyword searches – it was reported that publications are generally easier to locate using search engines;
- ▶ No easy way to identify recently published publications;
- ▶ Insufficiently clear signposting to distinguish latest editions of publications from their older counterparts.

This view was corroborated by an EU-level interviewee, who explained that for many of the calls they receive from citizens in relation to publications, their help is sought to identify and supply a publication that the caller has so far been unable to find on their own. In some cases, citizens have a specific publication in mind due to having used them successfully in the past – however they are unable to find the specific publication themselves using the available channels.

Due to the difficulties of locating publications via the EU Publications portal and Europa website, many national level **multipliers admitted that they relied on briefings or emails from the OP and other author services to stay informed about new publications**. While some multipliers reported that they benefited from regular OP newsletters, others appeared not to be aware that this service existed, and instead emphasised that it was an urgent necessity.⁸⁵ One interviewee, for example, reported receiving regular updates on new publications directly from DGs (in this case DG EMPL and DG EAC), and suggested that this should be the case for the OP more generally. These findings indicate a **lack of visibility and awareness not only of the publications being produced by the Commission, but also of the full range of services and channels available to distribute them** (to internal and external audiences).

Desk research undertaken to review in detail the many webpages available to identify publications on Europa largely supports this finding. Excluding the publications webpages that are specific to individual DGs, there are at least five webpages on Europa that citizens may come across when trying to find Commission publications. All these webpages use different filtering systems, prioritise different types of publications, and have very different hit counts in searches. These include:

⁸⁵ The OP newsletter (and the archive of past issues) is available online, and anyone can subscribe to it by signing up at the following link: <https://op.europa.eu/en/newsletter>

- ▶ The Learning Corner⁸⁶;
- ▶ The OP's EU Publications portal⁸⁷;
- ▶ The European Commission Publications page⁸⁸
- ▶ The European Commission Press Corner⁸⁹;
- ▶ The inter-institutional 'Documents and Publications' page⁹⁰;

Findings from the focus groups in the selected Member States support these widespread perceptions that **the main online distribution channels for promoting publications are currently underused**. Among the seven focus groups conducted, the Francophone-Belgian and Croatian groups were the only ones in which at least half of the participants could report that they had come across EU publications in the past. Furthermore, while at least half of participants in all focus groups confirmed that they had used the Europa website in the past (with the exception of participants in the focus group held in France), only a small minority of participants in each focus group were able to confirm that they were aware of, and had used, the OP Publications portal. While ten out of the 55 focus group participants indicated they were aware of the Learning Corner, only two had actively used it in the past.

The mystery shopping exercise further revealed that across Member States citizens faced considerable **difficulties in navigating the OP's EU Publications portal and the publications webpages on Europa** in order to find publications. Across all focus groups, the participants who were able to find all of the assigned publications online were a distinct minority, with most finding only one or failing to find any at all. A small number of participants went straight to the Europa website, and one went directly to Eurostat in order to find the leaflet 'Eurostat- Your Key to European Statistics, however most participants began their search for publications by using search engines such as Google, Bing, Yahoo and Ecosia.

Overall, there was a **consensus among participants that the mystery shopping exercise (i.e., finding Commission publications for citizens) was 'difficult'**, with the same themes and observations emerging across all focus groups regardless of Member State:

- ▶ EU publications were generally not the first results in their searches on Google, Bing, Yahoo or Ecosia;
- ▶ When search engines picked up EU publications, these often initially appeared to be correct; however, upon clicking on them, most turned out to be older, outdated,

⁸⁶ https://europa.eu/learning-corner/home_en

⁸⁷ <https://op.europa.eu/en/home>

⁸⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications_en

⁸⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/advancedsearch/en>

⁹⁰ <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/publications>

or only loosely connected to the publication they were searching for in terms of their format and theme;

- ▶ Search engines largely sent users to the main Europa website rather than the OP's EU Publications portal;
- ▶ Search engines often led users through direct links that led straight to PDF files, rather than to a Europa page where summary information (e.g., title, publication date, short description) could be read first;
- ▶ In some cases, the links brought up by search engines led to 'Page not Found' locations on the Europa website.

The mystery shopping exercise also raised a range of common observations on the experience of navigating the OP and the Europa publications websites. In summary:

- ▶ There were perceived to be **too many publications on the OP's EU Publications portal and the other publications webpages on Europa**, which participants described as being discouraging for their search;
- ▶ It was suggested that the **EU Publications portal and the Europa publications webpages were not suitable for beginners**, and that prior EU knowledge was needed to effectively navigate the portal;
- ▶ **The EU Publications portal and the other publications webpages on Europa returned 'too many results'** and did not offer useful or meaningful ways to filter them further;
- ▶ **Keyword searches on the OP's EU Publications portal and the other publications webpages on Europa brought up old and redundant content**, which made it more difficult to sort through irrelevant hits.

Focus group participants indicated that there were **insufficient filtering options** and that searches yield too many results.⁹⁷

It is currently deemed **difficult to navigate the EU publications portal** as there is no centralised location for all EU publications aimed at citizens. The portal includes all general and specialised publications in a central database, making it challenging to locate publications that meet citizens' EU information needs. Several interviewees noted that the **EU Learning Corner**, where publications, materials and activities for children and young people are located, **is useful** and said that they wished a similar online area could

⁹⁷ The experience of using the EU Publications portal over a multiple-month period in order to conduct research for the present study supports the focus group participants' claims that there are particular challenges with using keyword searches in the OP's search bar. When looking for a specific publication on the EU Publications portal, entering the title into the search bar word-for-word rarely yielded an exact match, and instead led to publications on loosely related topics. When searching for specific publications, the research team instead adapted to entering the catalogue number into the search bar – the only practice which almost always resulted in an exact match.

be developed for adult audiences. It was suggested that this platform could have separate 'channels' for different audience segments.

Furthermore, a range of **new distribution channels were suggested to improve the visibility of publications**, including:

- ▶ Increasing their presence in school and university libraries;
- ▶ Establishing partnerships with institutions in the Member States (e.g. private companies or public institutions) to act as multipliers for publications that are relevant to their thematic areas – for example using the chambers of commerce to distribute publications on fair competition;
- ▶ Streamlining and clearly signposting the European Commission social media accounts that are relevant for citizens, as there are currently too many for citizens to realistically know which ones to follow;
- ▶ Using paid ads on social media to reach citizens who do not already follow the official Commission accounts;
- ▶ Establish contacts with paid or voluntary 'EU ambassadors' at universities (e.g. presidents of 'European Union Societies') who can disseminate publications to fellow students in a tailored manner.

In conclusion, findings of the Key stakeholder interviews suggest that the **range of distribution channels employed by author services is continuously diversifying**. Yet while social media is widely recognised as an indispensably valuable way to reach less engaged citizens, it was emphasised that face-to-face distribution of print publications continues to be essential for reaching specific demographic groups on the ground. Furthermore, the **dual approaches of social media promotion and face-to-face print distribution were emphasised** as an effective mix of channels through which to reach citizens, particularly in light of the perceived difficulties in navigating both Europa and the EU Publications portal on it. These observations were corroborated by feedback from focus groups' participants, including via the Mystery Shopping exercise, who described the process of finding publications on Europa (and the EU Publications portal) as difficult.

3.4.3 Engagement via Commission's publications for citizens

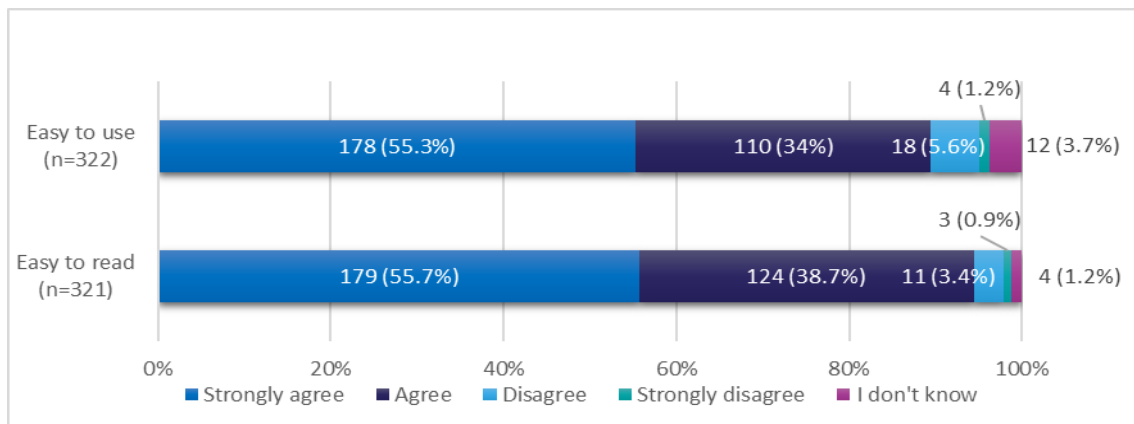
This section addresses two specific evaluation questions: *'To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens effective in engaging citizens and various sub-segments of citizens via the current offline and online distribution channels?'* and *'To what extent are Commission's publications for citizens effective in changing attitudes and behaviours of their readers through provision of clear information and concrete examples of EU activities, as well as their results and impacts?'*

Effectiveness of Commission's publications in engaging citizens

The **Commission's publications for citizens were generally perceived to be readable, usable, and conducive to engagement by their readers.**

Among the survey respondents who answered the question, the vast majority (94%; n=303) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Commission publications were easy to read (see Figure 3.31 below). Similarly, a large share of survey respondents (89%; n=288) of respondents reported that the publications they provided feedback on were easy to use.

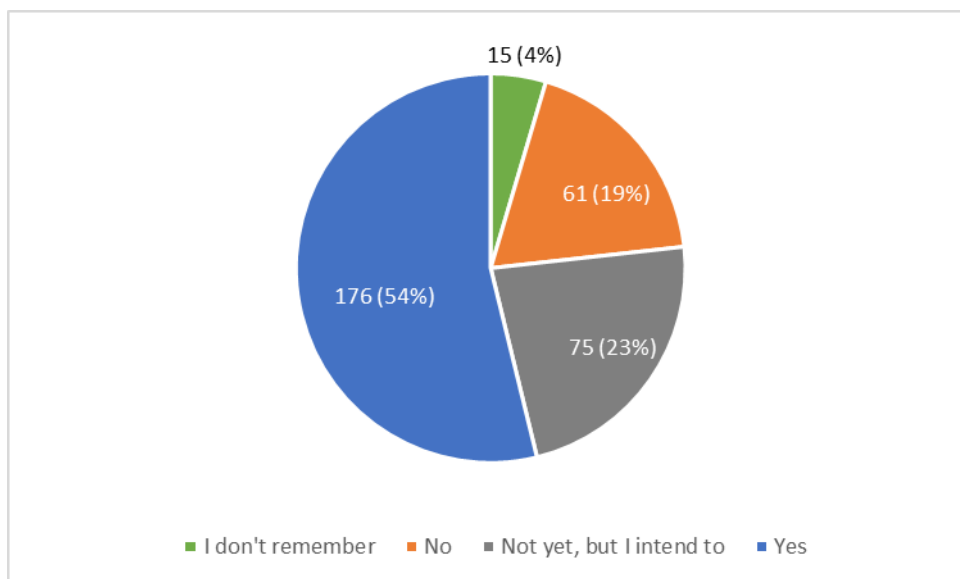
Figure 3.31 Would you agree that this publication was easy to read (n=321) and use (n=322)?



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Furthermore, out of the 327 user survey respondents who answered the question on whether or not they used the information from the publication in discussions online or offline, a large majority (77%; n=251) reported that they either already had used the information in discussions or were intending to do so in future, signalling high engagement (see Figure 3.32 below).

Figure 3.32 Did you use the information from this publication in any discussions or conversations (including online)? (n=327)

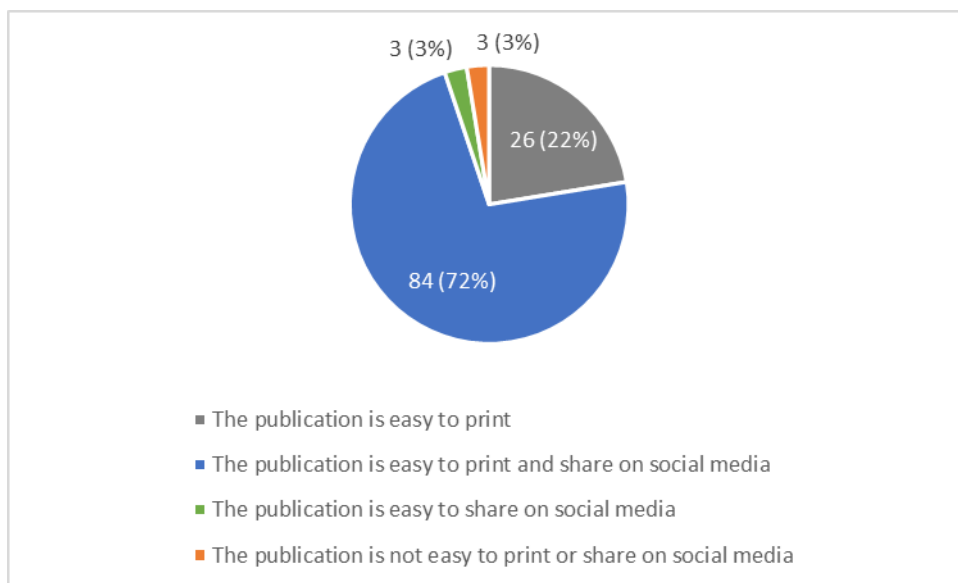


Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Qualitative mapping of Commission publications for citizens revealed that a **majority of the 116 publications examined** during the exercise **were designed to accommodate engagement and feedback**. A total of 69 (or 60%) of the publications examined in-depth included a mechanism for capturing readers' feedback, while 46 (or 40%) of publications reviewed in detail did not have this important feature. Furthermore, 84 publications (or 72%) were judged to be easy to print and share on social media, while an additional 29 (25%) publications were judged to be easy either to print (n=26, 23%) or share on social media (n=3, 3%). Only 3 (3%) of the publications were not judged to be easy to print or share on social media (see Figure 3.33 below)⁹².

⁹² This would still represent a significant figure if this share were extrapolated for the whole of the Commission's publications offer for citizens and considering social media as the main distribution channel.

Figure 3.33 Is the publication easy to print and/or share on social media?



Source: Ecorys Qualitative Mapping, 2020

Some communication techniques were more engaging for citizens than others. **Publications were reported to be more engaging if they avoided abstract or technical discussions** of EU policies, programmes, directives or legislation, **and instead included relatable, 'real-world' examples** of the impact the EU had on everyday lives of European citizens. For example, the '45 Stories' publication produced by the Commission Representation in Ireland provided 45 inspiring stories of the ways in which Ireland benefited from the EU membership during the 45 years since its accession⁹³.

Interviewees also reported that **publications produced higher engagement when they present opportunities to engage with the EU through programmes and initiatives directly targeting citizens**, such as those covering Erasmus+ and EURES. Additionally, publications that covered topical and urgent current affairs were reported to be particularly engaging for citizens. Examples mentioned by interviewees included publications that covered Brexit, fair taxation, and the European Elections.

Publications that provide relevant, practical and actionable information to EU citizens were also reported to generate comparatively higher engagement. Several interviewees mentioned DG COMM's *Travelling in Europe* publication⁹⁴, which contains practical and useful guidance, clearly directed at citizens, on how to take advantage of free mobility within the EU. In comparison, publications that listed figures were generally acknowledged to be less engaging for citizens due to the comparably lower relatability

⁹³ The *45 Stories* publication is available at https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/about-us/45-stories-celebrating-45-years-of-ireland-s-eu-membership_en

⁹⁴ Annual publication: latest edition to be found at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f68de0a4-ae84-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-179933348>

of numerical data and the tendency for statistics-heavy publications to become quickly outdated.

The format of the publications was considered to have an important impact on engagement. There was a general consensus that **visual attractiveness of publications is critical, as well as the extent to which they are small, light on text, and easy to transport and read**. For example, DG Environment's *52 Steps to a Greener City* publication was mentioned as a particularly successful example because of its compact pocket-size and strong emphasis on vibrant visuals. Foldable leaflets and small booklets were largely viewed to be more attractive and engaging to citizens than A4 size leaflets, with one interviewee noting that 'people don't want to be weighed down by bits of paper'.

Effectiveness of publications in changing attitudes and behaviours of their readers

User survey responses and in-depth qualitative mapping of **Commission's publications for citizens** confirm that these **were generally well-drafted and provided engaging content to their readers**. Commission's publications for citizens influence their reader's attitudes and behaviour to some extent, as detailed in the sub-section below. Findings from the user survey, key stakeholder interviews, and focus groups were mixed on the possibility of publications influencing readers' attitudes and the evidence collected indicates that this was possible in an indirect and to a somewhat limited, yet noteworthy extent. Commission's publications for citizens had a certain influence on their readers behaviour with around one fourth of survey respondents reporting having taken some action in line with Commission's communication objectives as the result of reading or using a publication targeting citizens.

Effectiveness of publications in changing readers' attitudes towards the EU

While interviewees were confident in the ability of publications to draw attention to EU engagement opportunities, there were **mixed views on the extent to which publications have changed, and are generally able to change, readers' attitudes about the EU**. Overall, interviewees from author services acknowledged the difficulties of gathering evidence that Commission publications could trigger attitudinal changes, with the majority stating that feedback gathered on their publications generally focused on assessing their readers' satisfaction with the publication as opposed to the ways in which the publications may have changed their views⁹⁵.

Among non-author service interviewees, however, there were distinctly **mixed views on the extent to which it is possible for Commission publications to change citizens' attitudes** towards the EU. Some interviewees speculated that publications had the

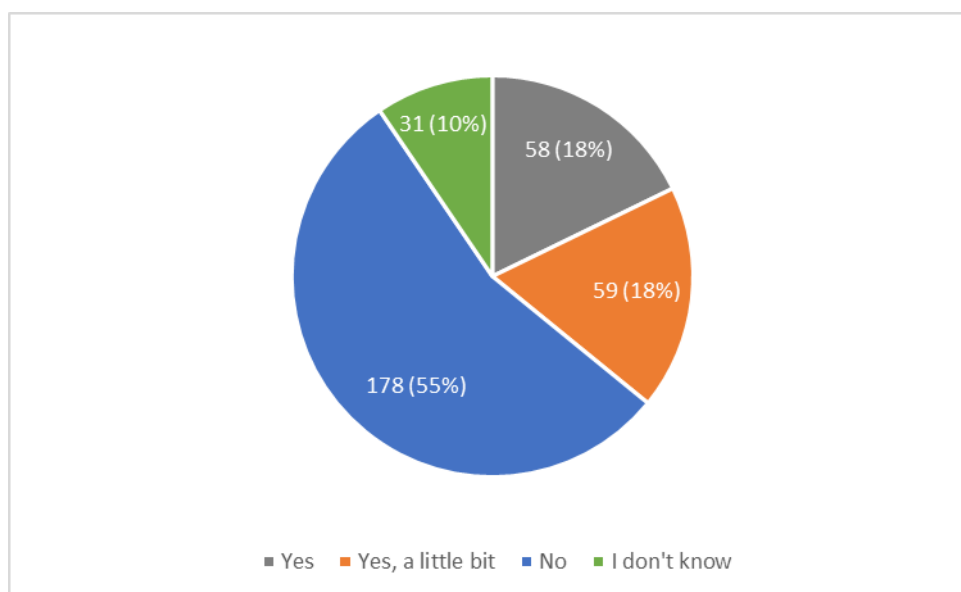
⁹⁵ While Eurobarometer was often listed as a proxy indicator of changes in citizens' perceptions of the EU over time, it was recognised to be an imperfect measure of the impact of Commission publications due to the impossibility of ruling out other contextual drivers for attitudinal change across Member States.

potential to change attitudes *indirectly* by informing citizens about, and helping them to access, life-changing engagement opportunities which are likely to affect their views through experience (examples included DiscoverEU, Erasmus+, and other mobility-related initiatives). However, two interviewees were firm in their belief that publications should be neutral and refrain from trying to persuade citizens, particularly in light of concerns (mentioned in Section 3.4.1 above) about triggering citizens' wariness about possible EU propaganda.

In contrast, several interviewees noted the critical role of knowledge and beliefs as **precursors of positive or negative attitudes** and stressed that by **correcting 'incorrect' beliefs** or raising awareness of **factual information about the EU**, publications could modify readers' knowledge and beliefs and, by extension, directly impact their attitudes. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that among audiences who held staunchly negative views of the EU, publications were unlikely to influence their opinions. One interviewee mentioned that some citizens are so 'biased against and resistant' to the EU that they 'don't even want to look at [the] publications'. Overall, it was acknowledged that while **some publications may have the potential to change audience's beliefs and (by extension) their attitudes, many of them would not.**

This limited, but still noteworthy capacity for publications to impact citizens' attitudes was corroborated by the User survey findings. A majority of User survey respondents (55%, n=178) denied that the publication succeeded in changing their attitudes towards the EU, with 18% (n=58) respondents answering 'yes' to the question and further 18% (n=59) reporting that the publication changed their attitudes towards the EU 'a little bit'.

Figure 3.34 Did this publication change your attitudes towards the EU?
(n=326)



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Among the 117 respondents who reported that the publication changed their attitudes towards the EU, 57 (49%) elaborated that they have a more positive attitude towards the EU, whereas 53 (45%) reported that they have a slightly more positive

attitude towards the EU. One respondent (0.8%) reported that they developed a more negative attitude towards the EU, whereas five (4%) reported that they developed a slightly more negative attitude towards the EU. In four cases of the six cases where respondents indicated that the publication gave them more negative attitudes towards the EU, respondents specified the publication that they were referring to.^{96:97:98:99}

Among **focus group** participants, **few publications were noted to have a positive impact on citizens**. One participant appreciated Eurostat's *Your Key to European Statistics*¹⁰⁰ and said that they would share it with a friend who spreads fake news. DG RTD's *Did you know? EU-funded research is shaping your future*¹⁰¹ and DG ENV's *52 Steps Towards a Greener City*¹⁰² were also positively received, however the extent to which this increased or reinforced existing positive views towards the EU was not measured.

In contrast, **focus group** participants were able to **identify features of some publications that risked reinforcing or exacerbating negative attitudes** towards the EU. Participants in Ireland, for instance, suggested that DG COMM's *The European Union: What it is and what it does*¹⁰³, while being detailed and informative, had the potential to enhance negative perceptions of the EU as being overly bureaucratic, complex, or inefficient among citizens who already held those views. Another example is the strong backlash against DG EMPL's *Work-Life Balance: What are the Benefits?* publication from Belgian and Czech participants. While Belgian participants suggested that it made the EU look biased in favour of promoting a positive 'image' on the topic as opposed to acting to effect concrete change, Czech participants felt that this publication supported their view that the EU was imposing an 'ideology' onto Member States.

In conclusion, the qualitative in-depth mapping and User survey data revealed that while a **sizeable share of the Commission's publications contained information that was engaging for citizens**, both in describing the policies, activities, and results of the EU and in providing information on how to participate in EU programmes and initiatives, the

⁹⁶ DG Eurostat's *Regional Yearbook*: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-HA-19-001>

⁹⁷ DG RTD's publication on the *Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan*:

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/064a025d-0703-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1>

⁹⁸ DG COMM's *The European Union: What it is and what it does*: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/715cfcc8-fa70-11e7-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

⁹⁹ DG COMM's *My DiscoverEU Companion*: https://op.europa.eu/es/publication-detail/-/publication/4ddf27a4-bf06-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en?WT.mc_id=Selectedpublications&WT.ria_c=41957&WT.ria_f=5711&WT.ria_ev=search

¹⁰⁰ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94c0b306-fa6f-11e7-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-139921118>

¹⁰¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1d15f898-0a3a-11e8-966a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-64573682>

¹⁰² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/080dfa8-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-120921685>

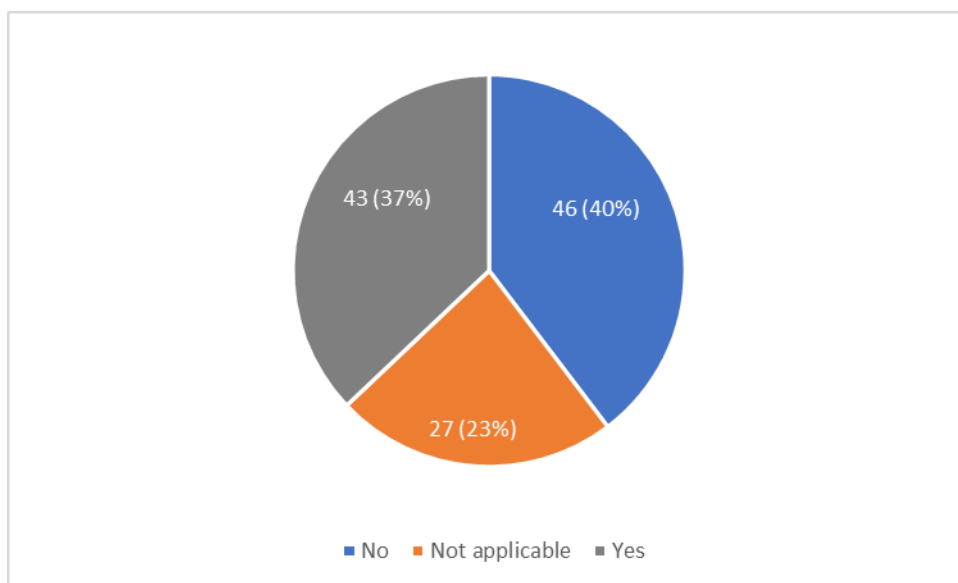
¹⁰³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/715cfcc8-fa70-11e7-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-139735866>

extent to which the publications succeed in changing attitudes and behaviours of their readers was somewhat limited, yet noteworthy¹⁰⁴. Several User survey respondents described the important ways in which the **publications benefited them in their education, careers, and personal lives**. Furthermore, focus groups in sample Member States shed light on the ways in which specific **publications could exacerbate negative attitudes** towards the EU depending on how their content is presented and perceived.

Effectiveness of publications in changing behaviours in relation to the EU

A bit **more than one third of Commission's publications for citizens provide information on how to engage with the EU**. Out of the 116 publications that underwent in-depth qualitative mapping, 43 (or 37%) were identified as providing information to citizens about how to take part in discussions on the EU or sign up, apply, or participate in citizen-oriented programmes and initiatives. Around four in ten Commission's publications did not provide this information. And little under one fourth of the publications reviewed focused on issues where this was not possible or relevant.

Figure 3.35 Is this publication providing information on how to take part in discussions about the EU, or sign-up, apply or take part in its citizen-oriented programmes or initiatives? (n=116)



Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

The **engagement opportunities** communicated by the (43) Commission's publications for citizens **included** the following:

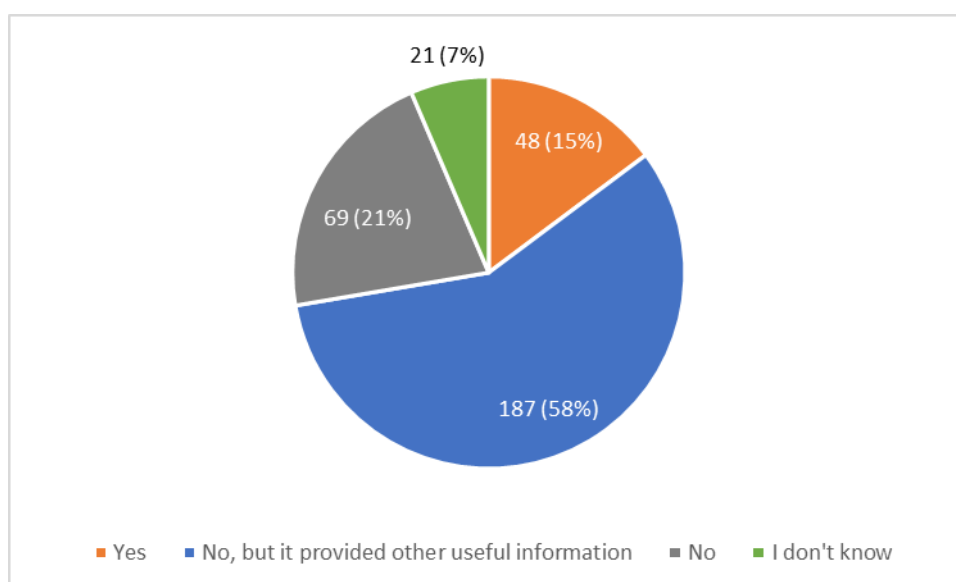
- ▶ The Erasmus+ platform, placements and traineeships;
- ▶ The European Commission's Traineeship programme;

¹⁰⁴ While the capacity of publications to change attitudes may be somewhat limited, it is important to recognise that a noteworthy share of readers Commission's publications targeting citizens reported that the publications they used changed their attitudes or changed them a little bit.

- ▶ The 'Your Europe' online resources;
- ▶ The EURES job portal;
- ▶ The European Solidarity Corps (including information on eligibility, how it works, geographical coverage, where to find out more, and how to apply);
- ▶ The European Citizens' Initiative;
- ▶ Digital Opportunity traineeships;
- ▶ Voting in the 2019 European Parliament elections;
- ▶ Lodging a complaint with the Data Protection Authority;
- ▶ Available EU funding opportunities;
- ▶ Ways to get in touch with the EU online, in-person, over the phone, in Commission's representations in the Member States, European Parliament Information Offices, and EU Delegations worldwide;
- ▶ Invitations to take part in Commission's events and campaigns e.g. the Access City Awards, Safer Internet Day, and Europe In My Region;
- ▶ Promotions of various EU's services e.g. the Natura 2000 viewer online, the Social Europe e-newsletter, and Eurostat databases.

Furthermore 15% (n=48) of survey **respondents confirmed that the publications helped them to take part in an EU programme or initiative**, and further 58% (n=187) confirmed that the publication still provided information that was useful for them.

Figure 3.36 Did the publication provide information that helped you to take part in an EU programme or initiative? (n=325)



Source: Ecorys, User survey, 2020

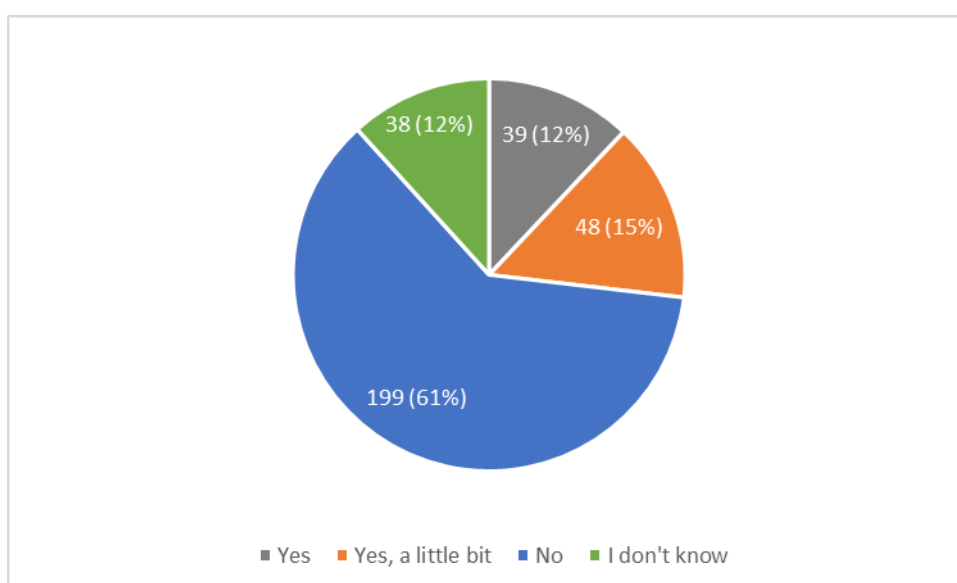
Out of the **respondents** who answered 'yes' to the question on whether the publication provided information that allowed them to engage with the EU, 29 also **provided**

additional details of the programmes and initiatives that Commission publications helped them to take part in. These included:

- ▶ Erasmus+;
- ▶ EURES;
- ▶ The European Citizens' Initiative;
- ▶ Horizon 2020;
- ▶ The Library Network Support Services, which aim to support the modernisation of libraries in Armenia, Moldova and Belarus through library staff development;
- ▶ Studies of International relations and work in an Information Centre;
- ▶ Implementation of workshops, debates, and lectures on Europe;
- ▶ Organisation of events and initiatives;
- ▶ The European Day of Languages.

While 61% of User survey respondents (n=199) denied that they were doing anything differently as a result of having read or used the publication, just **over a quarter** (27%; n=87) **reported that they were doing something differently or 'a little bit' differently as a result of the publication** (see Figure 3.37). Interviewees from both author services and non-author services were equally able to list the engagement opportunities provided by the publications, with several mentioning EURES, Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps, and other programmes listed above. This is a positive finding, indicative that for general audiences overall, Commission **publications may be encouraging participation in EU engagement opportunities on a large scale.**

Figure 3.37 Are you doing something new or differently as a result of reading this publication? (n=324)



Source: Ecorys, User survey, 2020

The **respondents** who **provided further information** to the question in the User survey **on whether they did something new or differently as a result of reading a Commission's publication**, reported the following changes in behaviour:

- ▶ Commission's publications were used as aids in classroom settings to deliver lessons and quizzes to pupils about the EU, on topics such as European geography and language diversity;¹⁰⁵
- ▶ Publications of the Commission were used to help teachers make teaching about the EU more attractive, interactive and exciting; particularly those that included (elements of) games;
- ▶ Commission's publications for citizens were used to develop lectures, workshops, and seminars on the EU in a university setting;
- ▶ Commission's publications were used to help citizens teach non-academic students about the European Union and its impact on their lives;
- ▶ They were used to help citizens strengthen their personal knowledge about the EU, including memorising the flags of Eastern countries, learning about the meaning behind the stars in the EU flag, understanding the functioning of the EU institutions, and learning more about the concept of 'being European';
- ▶ Commission's publications were shared with fellow citizens to encourage further learning about the EU, both among young people and adults;
- ▶ Commission's publications encouraged citizens to travel more though Europe and persuade others to do so;
- ▶ They helped citizens to promote the new Green Deal, become informed on personal data issues, seek out help for business loans, and stay informed about European programmes;
- ▶ Commission's publications encouraged citizens to increase biodiversity in their own gardens and neighbourhoods;
- ▶ They helped citizens to inform friends and acquaintances about the role of the European Health Insurance Card when travelling abroad, including to non-EU countries such as Switzerland;
- ▶ Commission's publications provided data for students to use in their university coursework;
- ▶ Publications of the Commission supported citizens in learning how to settle in other EU countries after migrating;
- ▶ A Commission's research magazine was used by an academic researcher as a time-saving way to keep on top of recent scientific developments.

¹⁰⁵ One respondent indicated that the publication assisted them in using a new approach to teach children about the EU.

Citizens who provided additional feedback also indicated that they viewed the publications to be reliable sources of information, thus supporting them in their decisions and own discussions about the EU.

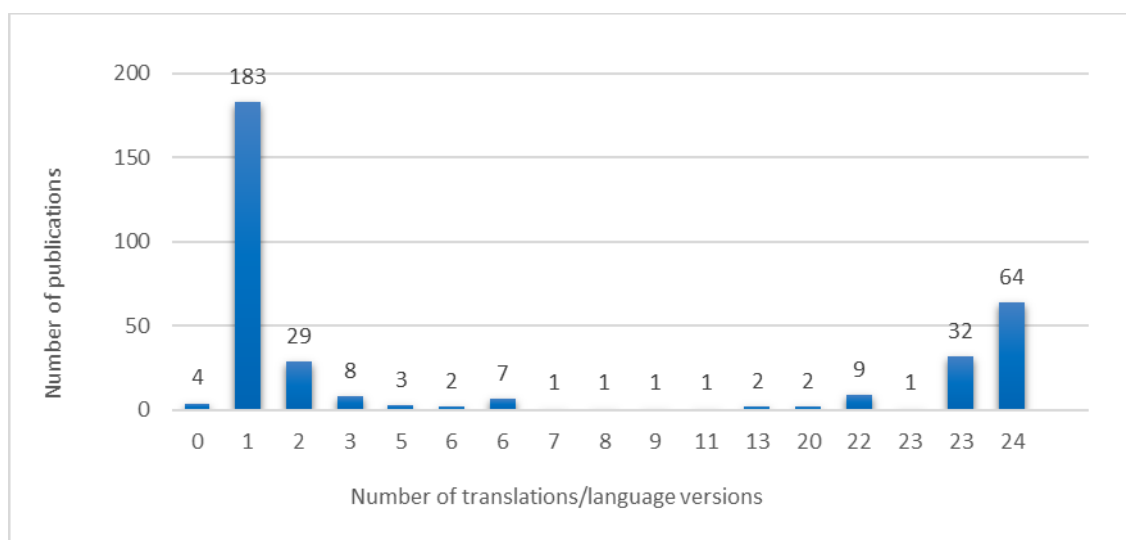
3.4.4 Extent Commission's publications consider readers needs

This section addresses two specific evaluation questions: 'To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens available in readers' preferred language and translated in all EU official languages? What are the particular publications for citizens that require more translations and those with translations that are largely redundant?' and 'To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens well structured, tailored for their users in terms of language used and presentation, designed to be suitable for print (for electronic publications) or to facilitate digital engagement (for print versions), as well as accessible and attractive to their users?'

Extent Commission's publications are available in readers' preferred languages

Data from the quantitative mapping, User survey, key stakeholder interviews indicate that although all languages are covered in the sample of 350 publications for citizens and several author services have aspirations to translate all of their publications for citizens into the 24 official languages of the EU, some language groups remain at risk of being underserved by the current publications offer.

Figure 3.38 Number of publications by the number of language versions available (n=350)



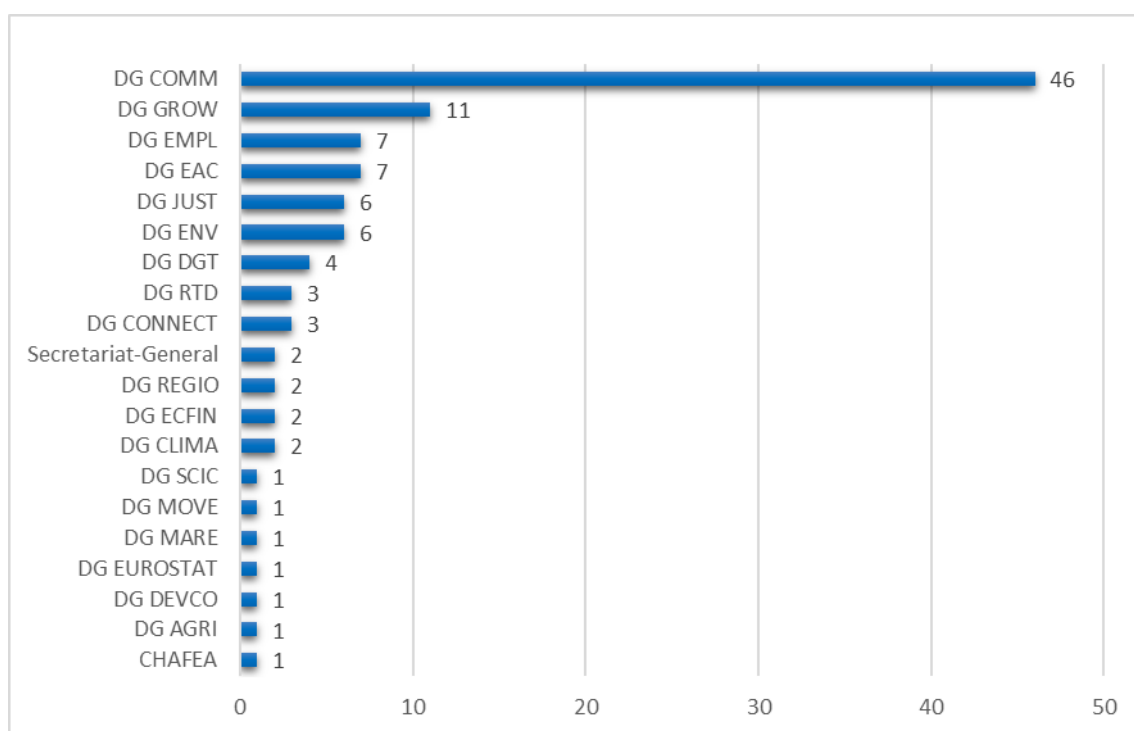
Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

Quantitative mapping of the Commission's publications for citizens revealed that **over half of the publications** included in the sample (52%, n=183) **were only available in one language**. Nevertheless, 18% (n=64) of the publications were available in all 24

languages of the European Union, while almost one third (31%; n=108) were available in at least 20 different translations (see Figure 3.38 above).

Among the publications in our quantitative mapping sample, **DG COMM was the author of the largest share of publications available in 20 languages or more**, having produced 43% (n=46) of these highly multilingual publications. DG COMM leads in this area by a significant margin, followed by DG GROW (10%; n=11) and DG EMPL (7%; n=7) (please see Figure 3.39 below). In contrast, the **other author services translated publications on a significantly smaller scale**, thus excluding large proportions of EU citizens from their publications offerings.

Figure 3.39 Number of publications with at least 20 language versions, by author service (n=108)

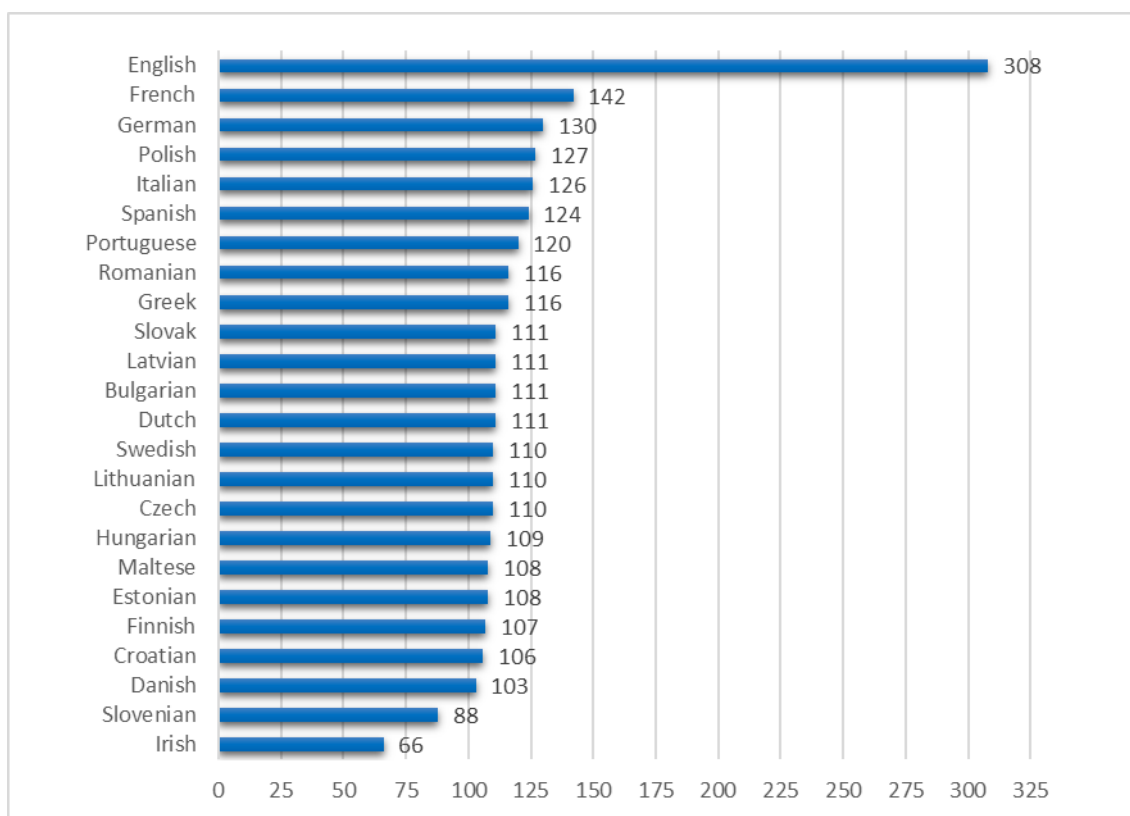


Source: Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020

In terms of the EU official languages coverage, **English was by far the most popular language among the Commission publications for citizens**, with 308 publications made available in this language. The French language occupied a distant second place with 142 publications available in this language. Most languages were covered in over one third of publications, with Slovenian (n=88), and Irish (n=66) language versions of publications that were the most scarce (please see Figure 3.40 below)¹⁰⁶. As a result, **European citizens who do not speak English or French are likely to be excluded from accessing the majority of Commission's publications.**

¹⁰⁶ Importantly, the scarcity of Irish-language publications is due to be resolved in due course, as there is a derogation of the requirement to produce all publications in Irish, meaning that from 2022, all publications will need to have Irish translations alongside the other 23 languages.

Figure 3.40 Number of publications covering each EU official language (n=350)

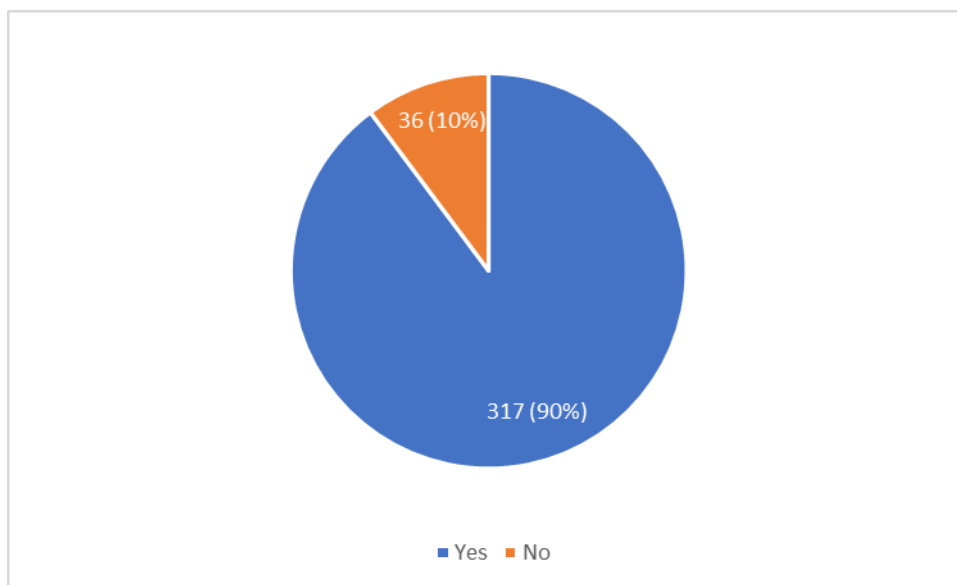


Source: *Ecorys Quantitative mapping, 2020*

Despite the fact that not all Commission publications are available in the 24 official languages of the EU, 90% (n=317) of the 354 **User survey respondents** who answered the question on the availability of the particular publication in their preferred language **confirmed that publications were available in the language of their choice** (see Figure 3.41 below).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Importantly, data on the occupation of respondents was biased towards those working in EU institutions. The survey findings in relation to the availability of a publication in their preferred language may partially skewed as respondents commented on a publication that they had located and used.

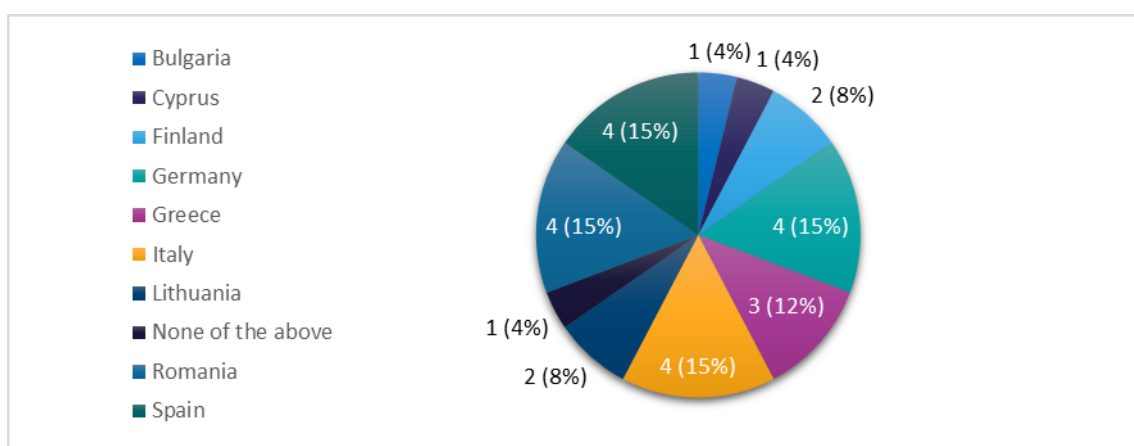
Figure 3.41 Was this publication available in your preferred language? (n=354)



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

The 26 survey respondents who provided negative answers to this question and provided information on their country of origin identified themselves as being from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Spain (see Figure 3.42 below). The 29 respondents who provided more information on the specific language version that was missing for their particular publications listed Bulgarian (n=1), German (n=3), Finnish (n=1), Italian (n=4), Lithuanian (n=1), Portuguese (n=1), Spanish (n=4), Romanian (n=5), Greek (n=5), Arabic (n=1) and Japanese (n=1).

Figure 3.42 Number of respondents by self-reported country nationality who reported that the publication was not in their preferred language (n=26)



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Interviews with stakeholders representing EU-level author services revealed that in general, **author services do not have comprehensive strategies for translating their publications into all official languages of the EU**. While some author services held the view that translating publications into a small selection of languages was sufficient, many of the interviewees were in favour of their publications covering all official EU languages.

These interviewees indicated that the scope of their translation efforts was limited by budgetary constraints. As the 'next best' alternative, several EU-level author services ensured that their publications were available in the statistically largest EU language groups – most commonly identified as English, French, German, Spanish and Italian (this finding is largely corroborated by the monitoring data).

When **national-level author services** (i.e., Commission or EDICs) **developed their own publications**, these were made available **in the local official language(s)**.¹⁰⁸ A minority of national-level interviewees reported that they take it upon themselves to translate Commission's publications produced centrally (i.e., by DG COMM or other EU author services) into the official languages of their respective Member States. However, the **extent to which such translations were necessary appeared to differ between countries**:

- ▶ In France, national-level stakeholders mentioned that some of the publications they needed (for example the EU Summit conclusions) were often not available in French, and that French translations of documents received from the European Commission sometimes needed to be revised by EDICs due to the use of incorrect legal terms.
- ▶ In Ireland, one interviewee from an EDIC explained that they are legally required to provide libraries with both English and Irish language versions of publications, meaning that publications from the European Commission often need to undergo additional translations into Irish before they are allowed to be disseminated.
- ▶ Swedish stakeholders reported that while the practice of translating Commission's publications into Swedish was common in the past, proficiency in English has since become standard across the country, thus reducing the need and urgency for local-language publications. However, Swedes who do not speak English (and may therefore be less connected to the EU) constitute an important audience sub-segment for future outreach efforts.

The quality of translations into official EU languages was reported to be an issue by citizens in several Member States. Participants of most focus groups held in the selected Member States identified several spelling and grammatical errors in versions of centralised Commission's publications that had been translated into their mother tongue. There was a distinct **preference for the quality of the language used in publications that had been produced by the Commission Representations** in the Member States, thus reinforcing suggestions from national-level interviewees that it is often necessary and important to adapt and quality-assure the translated documents provided by the Commission.

In conclusion, the evidence collected demonstrates that **Commission's publications for citizens have an incomplete and uneven coverage of the 24 official languages of**

¹⁰⁸ The interviews did not identify any cases where publications produced in Member States were centrally translated and distributed in a wider range of EU languages.

the European Union. While as a domain leader for Commission's external communication DG COMM fairs better in this area than other EU level author services, most Commission's publications are not translated in all official languages of the EU, hindering access to a part of the EU population that is not comfortable reading English or French. Furthermore, User survey results feature German and Italian respondents (i.e., representative of countries with more than 60 and 80m people) who report being unable to source a publication in their preferred language. **Translations in languages that were particularly scarce include Slovenian and Irish.**

Extent Commission's publications for citizens are tailored for users' needs

According to the results of the User survey, Key stakeholder Interviews, Online focus groups, and Qualitative in-depth mapping, the **Commission's publications for citizens were largely perceived to be appropriate for their target audiences in terms of readability, usability, and ease of access.** However, key areas for improvement were identified in terms of clearly defining and tailoring publications to their intended target audiences and making formatting and design decisions that support the usability of Commission's publications for citizens. Furthermore, the in-depth qualitative assessment of accessibility for users with disabilities or other impairments has revealed an **important shortfall** in the Commission's current offer of publications for citizens.

Extent to which target groups are defined in Commission's publications

The effective tailoring of publications to end-user's needs is predicated on a clear understanding and definition of the target group. However, interviews with EU-level author services revealed that while many will have specific communication objectives with citizens in general, **most author services do not have a standardised, working definition of 'citizen' audiences** or a systematically applied set of criteria for distinguishing 'publications for citizens' from publications for specialist target audiences.

In several cases, **distinctions between 'general' and 'specialised' publications appeared to be implicitly agreed and followed** within author services on a publication-by-publication basis, rather than explicitly laid out in strategic documents (some author services described the distinction as being 'intuitive'). Most author services confirmed that publications targeting citizens were adapted to fit perceptions of suitability, for example by being shorter, simpler, and more visually pleasing. Many also explained that when deciding whether a publication should target general audiences, key distinctions are made in terms of content, for example how 'sellable' certain policy areas are perceived to be for citizens and the level of specificity and detail in which the topics are

covered¹⁰⁹. In a small number of cases, publications intended for citizens were tested among panels of teachers to ensure adequate tailoring.

However, some author services suggested that defining 'general' or 'lay' audiences is an unavoidably ambiguous task, with the **definitions potentially changing from one policy area or topic to another**. In the case of DG Eurostat, for example, target audiences are divided not into 'citizens' and 'stakeholders', but instead by their level of statistical literacy. The 'Statistics Explained' communication materials, for example, are designed for all basic users of statistics and present figures alongside clear explanations of how they should be interpreted. In contrast, working papers and statistical reports are intended for specialised statistical audiences. Because statistical literacy can vary as much among EU-level policymakers as it does among citizens (a high school student taking advanced statistics, for example, could have much stronger numeracy skills than an EU official with a decades-long career), DG Eurostat as a rule does not distinguish its audiences in terms of 'citizens' and 'stakeholders'.

The desk research conducted as part of this study also **revealed ambiguities around the definition of a publication for the 'general public' by the OP, which applies the 'general public' label to publications on a case-by-case basis**. Indeed, over 1,700 publications were identified as being for the 'general public' on the EU Publications portal between January 2018 and October 2019, however our research indicated that a small sub-sample of these matched the working definition of 'publications for citizens' used in this study.

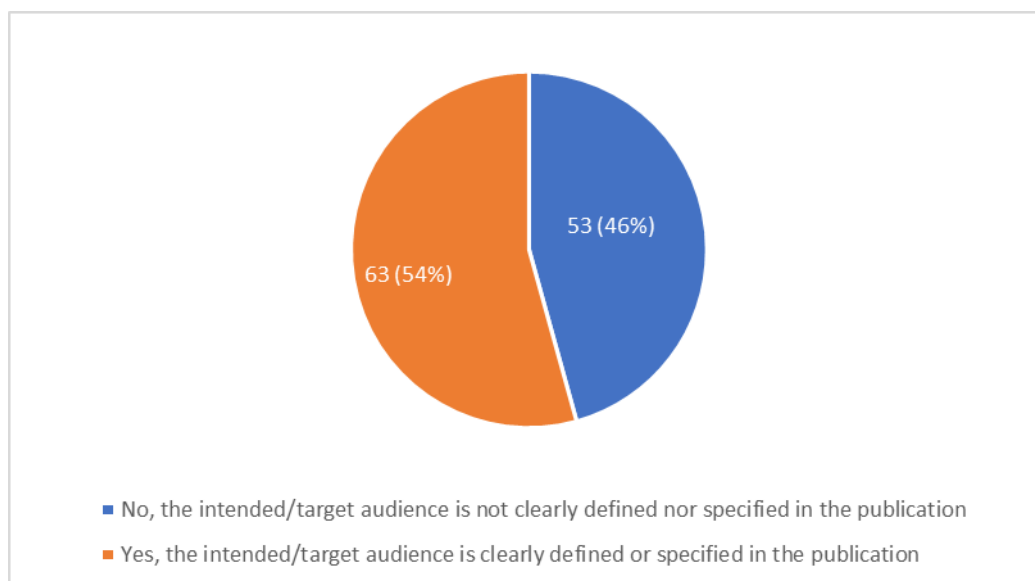
While the flexible approach to defining 'citizen' audiences can have some important advantages, for example allowing tailoring on a case-by-case basis as needed according to different policy areas, some national-level **stakeholders expressed the view that Commission publications were not adequately tailored or signposted as being for citizens**. It was acknowledged that keeping publications broad can be a purposeful choice, intended to increase the potential audiences reached. However, concerns were raised that given the large number of publications produced by the Commission and the previously mentioned difficulties in filtering the few 'general audience' publications from among them, the **failure to explicitly identify a publication as being for citizens may discourage general audiences from picking it up and using it**. The critical role of clearly defining and signposting target audiences was also emphasised by focus group participants. Participants in all focus groups identified at least one publication in which the target audience was not specified and agreed unanimously that the European

¹⁰⁹ One could argue here that publications not only need to be tailored for their audiences, but in fact developed on the basis of audience's needs assessment (that is then linked with the Commission's priorities and author services' communication objectives that support their policy development, implementation and assessment).

Commission should make a much greater effort to define and then carefully tailor the content to specified sub-segments of audiences.

In-depth qualitative mapping of a sub-sample of 116 publications for citizens revealed that while most publications do clearly define or specify the target audience the margin is relatively small; 54% (n=63) of publications included this explicit signposting of the intended target audience, whereas 46% (n=53) did not (see Figure 3.43 below).¹¹⁰

Figure 3.43 Is the target audience of the publication clearly defined? (n=116)



Source: Ecorys, *Qualitative mapping* (2020)

Overall, **author services used a variety of strategies to signpost that a publication may be for citizens.** Some used the second person imperative, for example DG Grow's *Your Europe, your rights*¹¹¹ and DG AGRI's *'There to protect you: The European Union makes sure that your food is safe from Farm to Fork.'*¹¹² Other publications referred to 'Europeans' included DG ENER's *Clean Energy for all Europeans*¹¹³ and DG Eurostat's posters on

¹¹⁰ The range of publications without a clear definition of the target audience varied. In some cases, the publication was in a format that was simple enough to clearly be for citizens. However, in cases where longer publications appeared to be purposefully broad, the results of the in-depth qualitative mapping undertaken indicated that there was room for ambiguity about the intended audience which may discourage citizens from picking up the publication.

¹¹¹ DG GROW: 'Your Europe, Your Rights'. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/335b4368-4ce9-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en?WT.mc_id=Selectedpublications&WT.ria_c=677&WT.ria_f=686&WT.ria_ev=search

¹¹² DG AGRI: 'There to protect you: The European Union makes sure that your food is safe from Farm to Fork'. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b2c591df-91c0-44d3-bc0e-c93817be3ffa/language-en/format-PDF/source-179418425>

¹¹³ DG ENER: 'Clean Energy for All Europeans'. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b4e46873-7528-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-122260727>

'Trusted Statistics'¹¹⁴, which include the taglines 'Trusted Statistics. Informed Europeans. Better decisions'.

Some publications also explicitly referred to a narrower target group. For example, the EACEA's report infographic titled *Key data on early childhood education and Care in Europe: 2019 Edition* included a sub-header reading "'How long does it take to have a place in ECEC for your child?'"¹¹⁵. Another example is DG REGIO's flyer on different engagement opportunities for young people, which is explicitly titled '*Communicating with Young People*' and speaks to users in the imperative: "just spot EU-funded projects, take the best shots and submit them to the competition. The 30 winning pictures will be compiled into an exhibition travelling around Europe."¹¹⁶

In conclusion, **clear audience targeting was recognised as an important way to encourage citizens to engage with publications intended for them.** As less than half of the publications assessed in qualitative mapping had clear definitions of the target audience, this signposting may be a promising opportunity to increase the reach of Commission publications.

Readability and usability of Commission publications

Across age groups, with or without migration experience, across languages spoken, as well as rural and urban EU territories, **Commission author services have succeeded in developing publications that are suitable for a diverse range of audiences.** Even when results are analysed by socioeconomic sub-groups, a large majority of survey respondents in every sub-sample either agree or strongly agree that the Commission's publications for citizens are easy to find (see Figure 3.44 below)¹¹⁷, read (see Figure 3.45 below), and use (see Figure 3.46 below)¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁴ E.g., DG Eurostat: 'Trusted statistics on energy.' <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5fb54d31-9ab7-11e8-a408-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-140480937>

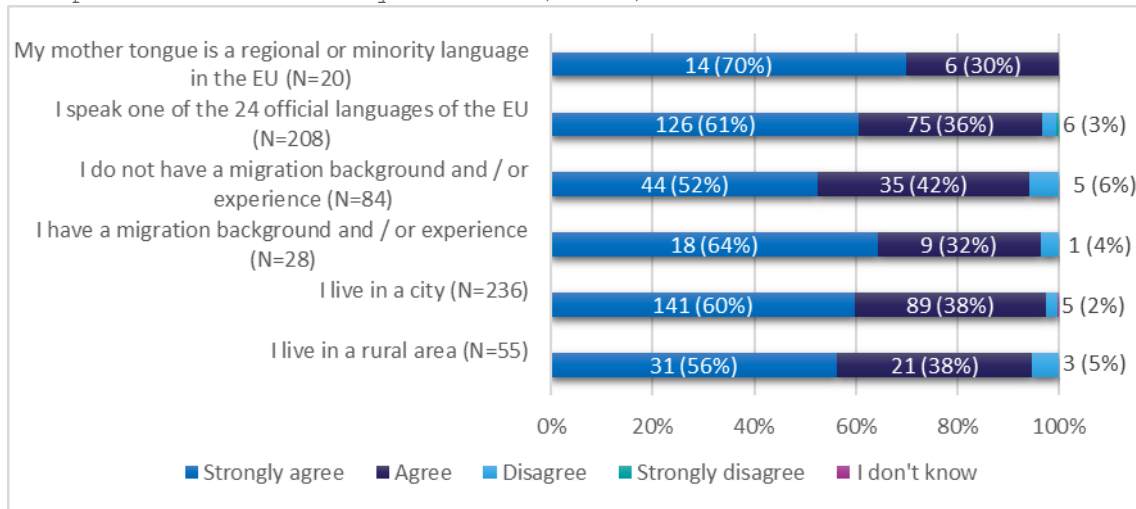
¹¹⁵ EACEA: 'Infographic: Key Data on early childhood education and care in Europe.' https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/key-data-early-childhood-education-and-care-europe-%E2%80%93-2019-edition_en

¹¹⁶ DG REGIO: 'Communicating with Young People'. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/factsheets/2018/communicating-with-young-people?utm_campaign=58c985f573a6a3222e00ec4c&utm_content=5b181b86ea1aac17ce019148&utm_medium=smarshare&utm_source=twitter

¹¹⁷ This positive feedback on the ease of finding publications appears to be in direct conflict with the suggestions from national-level interviewees and focus group participants, among whom there was a general consensus on the unnavigability of the European Commission's webpages hosting online publications. Notably, this discrepancy may be due to the fact that the survey only asks respondents about a publication they have already found and used – a finding which would naturally bias the results towards publications that are more visible.

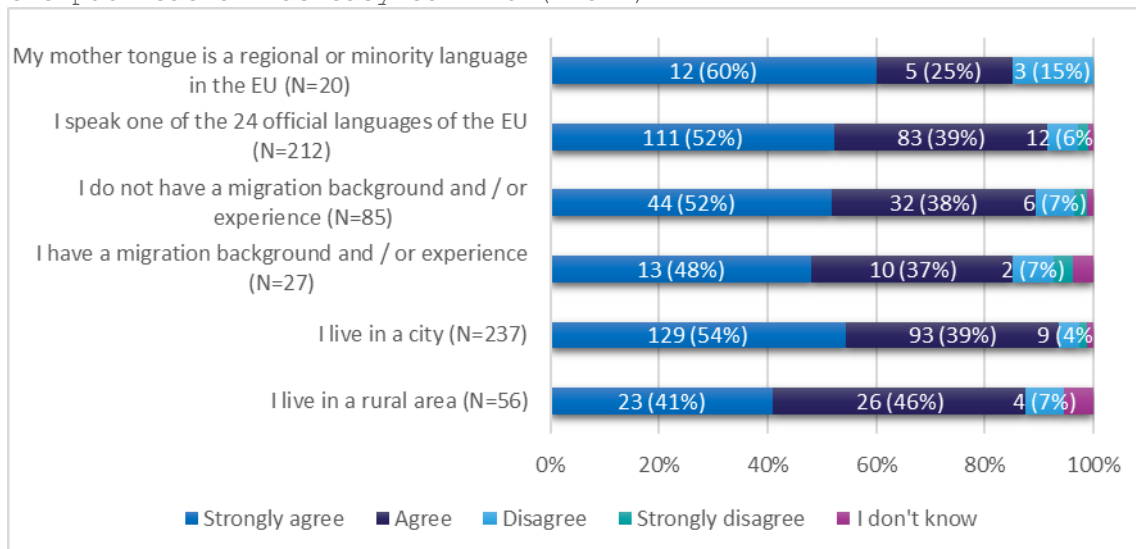
¹¹⁸ It should be noted that the link to the survey was placed on webpages hosting Commission publications, therefore potentially skewing the findings of the findability findings, as views of users that were unable to locate publications were not captured.

Figure 3.44 Percentage of respondents per sub-group who agreed that the publication was easy to read (n=321)



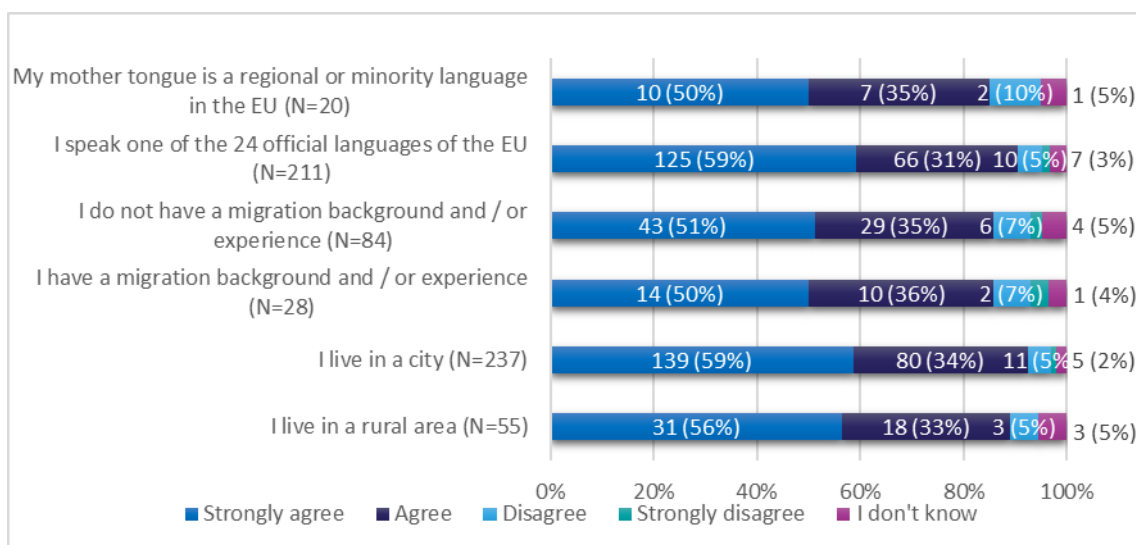
Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Figure 3.45 Percentage of respondents per sub-group who agreed that the publication was easy to find (n=321)



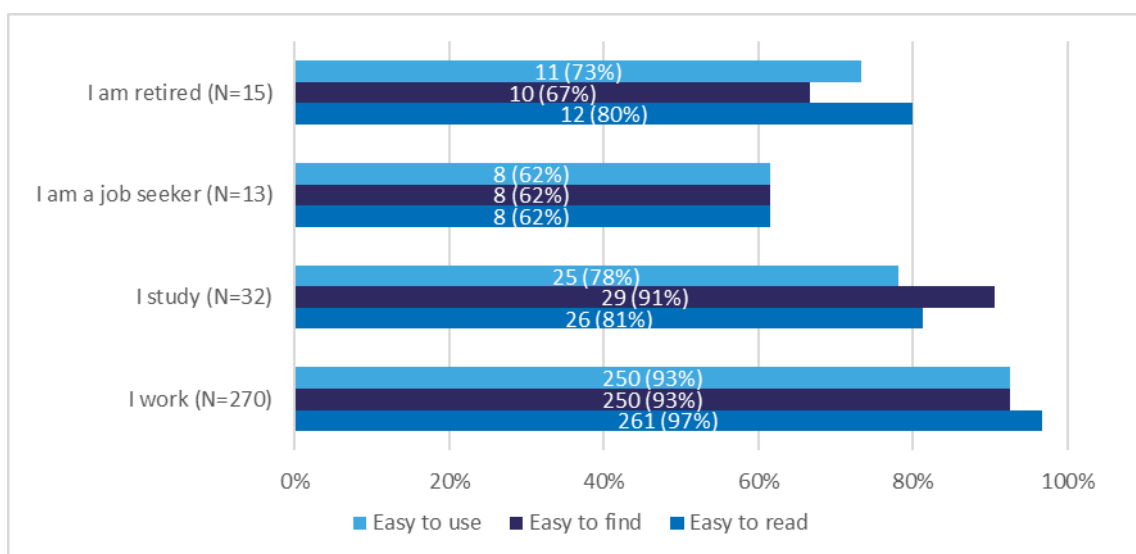
Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

Figure 3.46 Percentage of respondents per sub-group who agreed that the publication was easy to use (n=322)



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

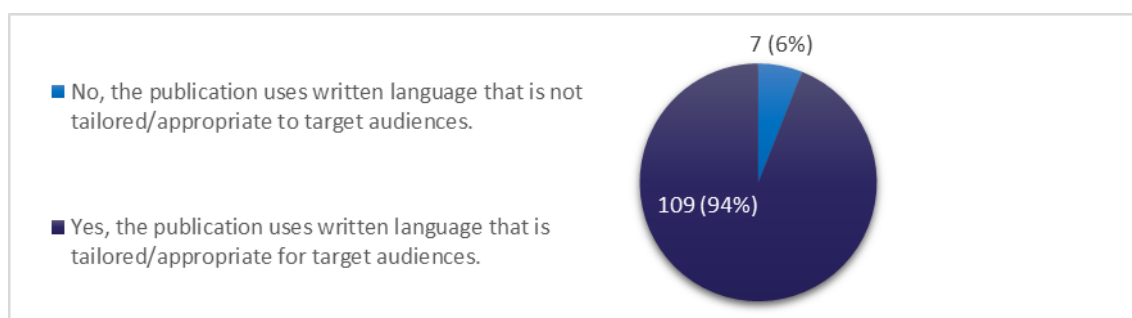
Figure 3.47 Percentage of respondents by occupation who agreed or strongly agreed that the publication was easy to use (n=322), easy to find (n=321) and easy to read (n=321).



Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

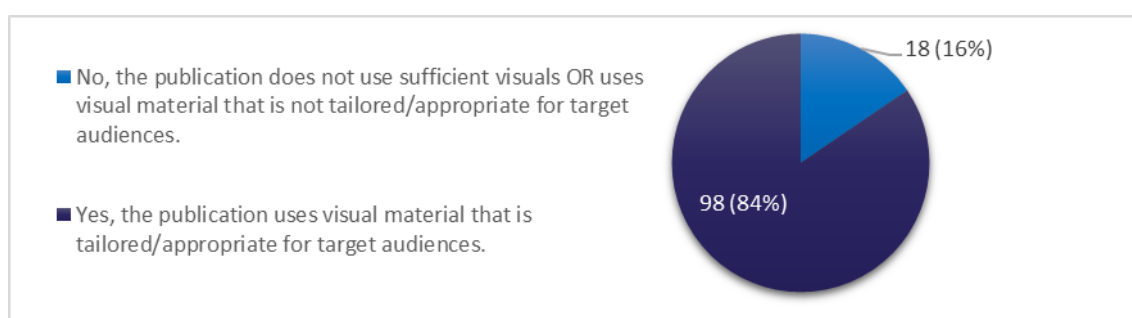
These findings were largely reinforced by the in-depth qualitative mapping of 116 publications, which determined that **only 6% of publications** (n=7) **used written language that was not appropriate for the target audiences** and 16% of publications (n=18) either did not use sufficient visuals or used visuals/illustrations that were not tailored for their target audiences (see Figures 3.48 and 3.49 below).

Figure 3.48 Qualitative mapping: Does the publication use written language that is tailored to its audience(s)? (n=116)



Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

Figure 3.49 Does the publication use visuals/illustrations that are tailored to its audience(s)? (n=116)



Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

Further analysis of the seven publications that were judged to use **inappropriate written language** evidence the following **areas for improvement**:

- ▶ Publications targeting children used sentences that are either too long or too formal;
- ▶ Publications used jargon or buzzwords without first defining them for less-familiar readers;
- ▶ Publications used formal and lengthy sentences that were not suitable for their format (e.g. a newsletter);
- ▶ Publications included too many technical and/or irrelevant details.

Furthermore, for the 18 publications judged to use **visuals that were not sufficiently tailored or appropriate for their target audiences**. In depth review of these publications revealed that they:

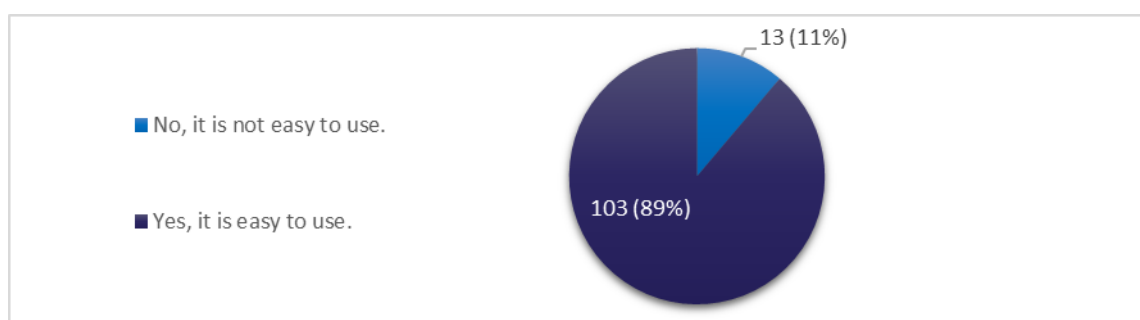
- ▶ Used too few visuals and had a high density of text;
- ▶ Used text boxes and images with vague headings, making the content challenging to interpret;
- ▶ Used graphs and charts that were not correctly formatted (e.g., the colours were too close to one another or the legend items were overlapping, making them unreadable);

- ▶ Used aggressive and garish colour schemes, making the publication both unpleasant and difficult to read;
- ▶ Used icons or terms in the legends for pie charts or graphs that were not sufficiently detailed or pertinent to correctly interpret the graph;
- ▶ Used photos which distract from the content of the page, rather than help readers to understand it;¹¹⁹
- ▶ Used images that were incoherent with the fundamental messages of the publication. For example, a publication used a depiction of asylum seekers as faceless masses at a militarily controlled border when discussing fundamental human right not to be extradited to a non-safe country; this was the only depiction of non-white EU citizens in the entire publication and was not coherent with the inclusive narrative that the publication was trying to convey.

Focus group participants also placed **critical importance on the quality, appropriateness and overall added value of the images and other graphics used in publications**. While many publications were praised as being visually pleasing and colourful, a number of publications also received constructive criticism. The drawing style in some publications was described as being ‘cheap’ and ‘unprofessional’¹²⁰, and participants were also critical of images that were generic as opposed to being illustrative of the publications’ contents¹²¹.

The qualitative review and assessment of the usability of the 116 publications indicates that the majority of Commission’s publications for citizens were easy to use in terms of layout, formatting and navigation, with 13 publications being judged as difficult to use (see Figure 3.50).

Figure 3.50 Is this publication easy to use, for example in terms of layout, formatting and navigation? (n=116)



Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

¹¹⁹ These ‘distracting’ visuals were either irrelevant/seemingly unconnected to the content of the publication or were judged to be unattractive.

¹²⁰ For example, the Belgian EC Rep’s *La Valisette de Minimip* – <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/30c3c689-896c-11e8-ac6a-01aa75ed71a1/language-fr>

¹²¹ Example 1 - *The European Union: What it is and what it does* (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/27bee15d-9ba9-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>); Example 2 – *The European Solidarity Corps* leaflet (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e255a6d3-6af0-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-120668978>)

The factors that made the Commission's **publications more difficult to use**, identified through the qualitative, in-depth mapping, **included the following**:

- ▶ Publications with few or vaguely named sections (e.g., chapters and sub-sections), thus making navigation of the document more difficult;
- ▶ Case studies and text boxes lacked subtitles, making navigation and interpretation of the text difficult;
- ▶ The presence of too many icons or figures that are not sufficiently well-explained in the text; and
- ▶ Publications that were designed to be printed and folded into leaflets displayed content in an incorrect order in their online PDF format.

Additionally, online focus group participants identified a range of ways in which a publication's format could improve or obstruct its usability. In general, participants **disliked narrow margins and small, inadequately spaced text**. There were also several longer publications for which they believed a table of contents would have made the content more navigable, for example DG ENV's *52 Steps to a Greener City*¹²² and DG RTD's *Did you Know? EU Funded Research is Shaping your Future*¹²³. Finally, participants felt that it was important for content to be arranged thematically and follow an intuitive or logical order. In both *The European Union: What it is and what it does* and *Did you Know? EU Funded Research is Shaping your Future*, participants noted that chapters or case studies in dissimilar topics were often placed adjacent to each other and would have preferred them to be grouped by topic.

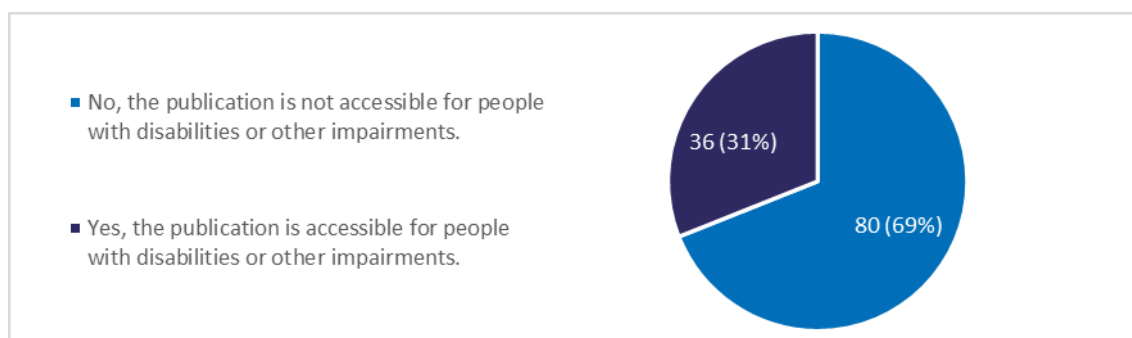
Accessibility of publications

The in-depth qualitative assessment of the accessibility of a randomly selected sample of 116 publications for citizens revealed that there are **currently significant barriers to accessing publications for citizens with disabilities or other impairments**. Over two thirds of the publications (69%, n=80) are not currently easy to use for citizens with disabilities or other impairments (see Figure 3.51 below).

¹²² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/080dffa8-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-120921685>

¹²³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1d15f898-0a3a-11e8-966a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-64573682>

Figure 3.51 Is this publication accessible for people with disabilities or impairments? (N=116)



Source: Ecorys Qualitative mapping, 2020

The OP has a range of online resources to help author services to ensure that their publications are accessible for citizens with disabilities and other impairments.¹²⁴

Accessibility of ePub and PDF publications was assessed by the OP in terms of the following characteristics, which adhere to the PDF/UA standard:¹²⁵

- ▶ Availability in ePub format, which enables publications to be viewed in varying text sizes on reading apps and facilitates text-to-speech programmes;
- ▶ PDFs which have 'tagged' headings and sub-headings following the logical reading order;
- ▶ PDFs which convey information using logical headers, which are distinguished from the main body of the text via sufficiently distinctive formatting choices such as larger font size, style and colour;
- ▶ ePubs and PDFs that use 'meaningful' graphics that include alternative text descriptions;
- ▶ ePubs and PDFs with correct metadata indicating the language of the publication, thus facilitating correct pronunciation by assistive reading software.

While the criteria used for this qualitative in-depth assessment overlap considerably with those used by the OP, the **assessment undertaken in the context of this Review included additional criteria** from a range of sources, including Euroblind's resources on making electronic documents accessible¹²⁶, the UK government's guidance on accessible PDFs¹²⁷, as well as the European Commission's guidance on web accessibility¹²⁸. The 36 publications that were judged to be accessible shared the following characteristics that allow them to be read aloud more seamlessly by automated reading software:

- ▶ Downloadable format;

¹²⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/accessibility/introduction>

¹²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf5GffTe1Ao&feature=youtu.be>

¹²⁶ www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/making-information-accessible-all#How_to_make_electronic_documents_accessible

¹²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/accessible-pdfs>

¹²⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/web-accessibility>

- ▶ Left-aligned text clearly divided by column, with sections clearly divided by conspicuous headings;
- ▶ No large blocks of text;
- ▶ Text and letters adequately spaced apart;
- ▶ Content notes for all figures and images included in the text;
- ▶ Text is set against clear, plain backgrounds (no watermarks);
- ▶ Built-in auto-reading options.

The 80 **publications that were judged to be inaccessible for persons with disabilities did not meet these minimum criteria** to be considered accessible. They **shared following shortcomings**:

- ▶ No content notes/text equivalent for any essential images used;
- ▶ Language not clearly stated somewhere in the beginning of the publication (this would have allowed the auto-reading software to adapt its own language setting automatically)
- ▶ Text not consistently left-aligned throughout the document;
- ▶ Content of tables is spread across more than one page;
- ▶ Text in the PDF is inserted as an image rather than being selectable/highlightable by a cursor;
- ▶ Text is set against colourful, patterned, and/or watermarked backgrounds, making it challenging to read both for auto-reading software and for people with impaired vision or literacy difficulties.

Some disabilities and impairments may have competing needs and requirements when attempting to make a publication broadly accessible. **Infographics and factsheets**, for example, **were often identified as being inaccessible** due to their reliance on graphs and icons to convey information in lieu of written text, which makes the essence of the content uninterpretable for auto-reading software. However, the prioritisation of visuals over long words and sentences is a central characteristic of this type of publication and may benefit audiences that have normal eyesight and instead struggle with reading difficulties such as dyslexia or the 'brain fog' that accompanies several chronic conditions.

Due to the multifarious and wide-ranging nature of disability, and the corresponding lack of a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to accessibility, **some publication types may less easily lend themselves to 'accessible' versions**. Some solutions could include:

- ▶ Including a 'plain-text only' version of each publication that has been tested for its interpretability to auto-reading software;
- ▶ Including a clickable 'read-out-loud' icon with each publication, which includes a recording of the necessary information from the publication;

- ▶ Including 'easy to read' versions of each publication for those with intellectual disabilities or reading impairments, for example those supplied by the European Disability Forum. These guides use a combination of plain, simple language and highly pertinent icons to help users understand the content.¹²⁹

In conclusion, **most publications of the European Commission for EU citizens were assessed to be easy to read and use** through qualitative in-depth review and mapping, User survey respondents, and focus group participants. However, **several recommendations emerged for improving publications' usability and appeal** to citizens and can be found in Section 4 of this report. Furthermore, the **majority of publications reviewed as part of this assignment were not designed to be accessible for readers with disabilities** and contained design elements that made these publications less readable for automated reading software.

3.4.5 Success factors and timeliness of publications

This section addresses two specific evaluation questions: '*What are the European Commission's publications that work well and should be continued, which may need to be revised or discontinued by their respective author services? What new or additional publications could be envisaged?*' and '*To what extent are European Commission's publications for citizens up-to-date? How regularly are they updated? What is the estimated life span of these publications, considering the timeliness of content and context in which they were published?*'

Main success factors of publications

Type, format and visuals

Most author services acknowledged that the **format of publications was a strong determinant of their popularity** among citizens, with larger books/notebooks being taken up at a significantly lower rate than leaflets, booklets, postcards, flyers, and other 'lighter' formats. This finding was reinforced by the focus group respondents, who tended to describe large publications (such as *The European Union: What it is and what it does*) as being 'intimidating' in comparison to the leaflets and factsheets they looked at. Examples of publications that were viewed to have appealing formats included:

- ▶ DG ENV's *52 Steps to a Greener City*
- ▶ DG GROW's factsheet *Shopping Online within the EU: Know your Rights*¹³⁰

Furthermore, there was a general consensus among interviewees and focus group participants that **large blocks of dense text are discouraging** for readers and should be prioritised only for those cases where the topic and purpose of the publication can

¹²⁹ 'The European Disability Forum in *Easy to Read*'. <http://edf-feph.org/edf-easy-read-language>

¹³⁰ Please see Annex VI Focus group report for more information citizens' views regarding the type, format and visuals of selected Commission publications.

justify such extensive detail – for example DG Eurostat’s *Regional Yearbooks*. Several focus group participants, for example, felt that the purpose of *The European Union: What it is and what it does* was not entirely clear, as it was **too simple for technical audiences and yet ‘too text-heavy’ for the general public**. It was suggested that the same content be communicated in infographics to guide readers through the main ideas in a concise way.

When dense text is used, it should be ensured that the margins are sufficiently wide, the text is sufficiently large, and the spaces between lines are generous enough to facilitate ease of reading. Visually prominent headers (using different font size and colours) should also be used at regular intervals to break up the text. Additionally, longer publications should group chapters, sections or case studies thematically, in addition to including hierarchical tables of contents (listing sections and sub-sections) to aid readers in navigating the publications. Reviewed as part of the qualitative mapping exercise, DG COMM’s publication ‘The EU in 2017 – Highlights’ was noted as an example of a publication that successfully captures the points made by focus group participants in terms of text density, layout and imagery.

Findings from interviews and focus groups suggested that **greater investment and attention should also be paid to the visual attractiveness of publications**. Whether or not a publication was pleasant to look at was important for all focus group participants, who reported that they were less likely to read publications with ‘boring’ colour schemes even if they valued the content. Furthermore, any graphs, pictures, and illustrations that are used should be of high quality (focus group participants were sensitive to ‘cheap’, ‘ugly’, ‘old-fashioned’, ‘grainy’ or ‘pixelated’ images) and should *add value* to the publication by being illustrative of, and aligned and coherent with, the subject matter of the publication.

More generally, some publication types were much more strongly preferred over others. Nearly all focus groups expressed the **desire to see more infographics from the European Commission**, as they are shareable, concise, and help the reader to grapple with potentially complex figures in a user-friendly way. Furthermore, while infographics may not be amenable to auto-reading software and are therefore inaccessible for individuals with visual impairments, infographics have the inverse benefit of using minimal text to convey ideas, meaning that they have the potential to be accessible for individuals with learning or literacy difficulties.

There was also a widespread view that the **format of publications should be more adapted to an increasingly digitised society**. Focus group participants noted that many of the publications they reviewed would be more readable in a printed format and were tiring to look at on a screen. They also noted that the **OP and Europa websites were not well-displayed on mobile devices**. Focus group participants suggested that publications be adapted to optimise their display on hand-held devices.

Several author service interviewees also suggested optimising publications for digital consumption. **DG Eurostat**, for example, reported that their **‘interactive’ digital publications**, which are clickable and include embedded animation, sound, and videos,

were among their most popular¹³¹. Importantly, it was noted that publications could be aligned better with increasing digitalisation, even in a printed format. The **younger focus group participants** disliked the use of lengthy hyperlinks in several of the publications and **recommended using QR codes** that readers could scan on their phones in order to access further information, whether from a printed publication or a digital one. Other **author services noted** that there are several **advantages to providing html or ePub versions of publications**, such as:

- ▶ Providing a more navigable user experience, particularly on mobile devices;
- ▶ Faster loading times, using less bandwidth and data;
- ▶ Better integration of audio-visual elements (such as videos, photo slides, and other interactive graphics);
- ▶ Encouraging a 'print only when necessary' culture which is consistent with the Commission's green priorities;
- ▶ Improving accessibility for hearing or vision-impaired users due to their comparable amenability to assistive technology.

The OP's **guidelines on producing accessible publications** are also particularly supportive of the ePub format due to its **compatibility with assistive software** and the ability to adjust text size and paragraph width.¹³²

Tone and content

The **tone and content of publications emerged as features to which end-users of publications are particularly sensitive**. Interviewees and focus group participants reported that '**mechanic**', **unnatural language and the overuse of jargon may reinforce the idea that the EU is both bureaucratic and 'out of touch'**. Some focus group participants expressed scepticism regarding the use of letters from Commissioners within the first few pages of the publication, as is often done in Commission publications, due to their potential to appear overly formal and create a distance between the reader and the material.

In terms of the content and overall emphasis of the publications, both interviewees and focus group participants stressed that **publications from the EU should aim to be as relatable as possible and continually link the content to the reasons why they are relevant for citizens' lives**. Using '**success stories**' and case studies that feature real, relatable individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds was recommended, as focus group participants generally appreciated seeing characters that resembled them in their publications.

¹³¹ Eurostat's 'interactive' digital publications include '*People on the Move: Statistics on Mobility in Europe*' (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/digpub/eumove/index.html?lang=en>) and '*The life of women and men in Europe – a Statistical Portrait*' (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-digital-publications/-/KS-02-19-676?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fpublications%2Fdigital-publications>)

¹³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf5GffTe1Ao&feature=youtu.be>

The strategy of **'showing' rather than 'telling'** when communicating the benefits of EU membership has the added benefit of helping the publication to maintaining a tone that is factual, while still being warm and relatable. The risks associated with being too 'promotional' or 'unbalanced' in the communication materials has been presented in the sections above (please see section 3.4.1 above). To **avoid crossing this boundary and triggering scepticism** and resistance in readers, publications should:

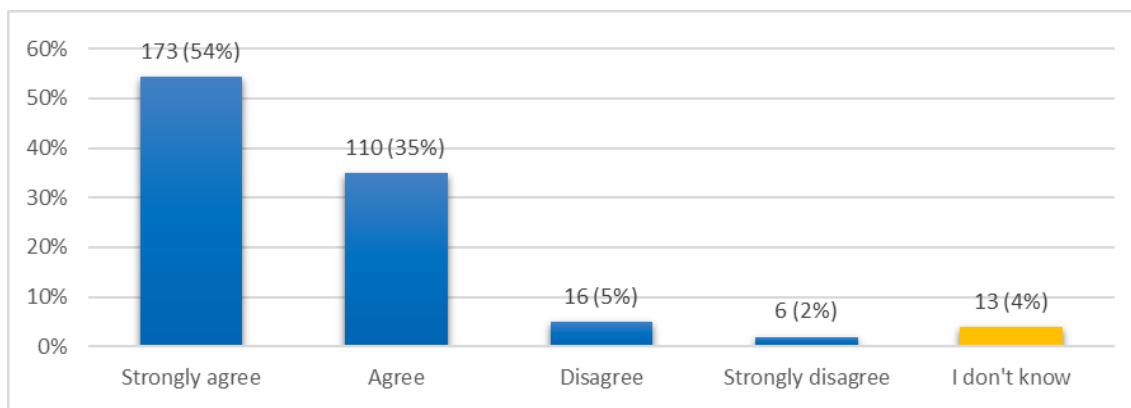
- ▶ Carefully review the tone of the publications, ensuring that they do not come across as overly positive;
- ▶ Present information as neutrally as possible, using case studies or examples to demonstrate the benefits of EU membership;
- ▶ When covering what the EU has done to address a specific issue, transparently acknowledge the current shortcomings in its approach and the progress that still needs to be made;
- ▶ Avoid publications that exclusively summarise the EU's position on an issue (e.g. Work-life balance), without also listing concrete actions that the EU is taking to address them;
- ▶ Avoid commenting on a potentially divisive topic (e.g. climate change) unless the publication *also* clearly underlines why it is being discussed at the EU level, for example by linking it to current proposals or existing legislation.¹³³

The timeliness of European Commission publications

Overall, **publications from the European Commission were viewed to be up-to-date**, with a few anachronisms identified. Among the 318 survey respondents who answered the relevant question, a large majority (89%; n=283) either agreed or strongly agreed that the publication they had used was up-to-date (please see Figure 3.52 below). This finding was reinforced by the in-depth qualitative mapping of 116 publications, which identified only 5 publications (4%) as containing anachronisms. These five publications were defined as being 'out of date' because the UK was still included as a Member State with no acknowledgement or reference to their pending withdrawal from the European Union.

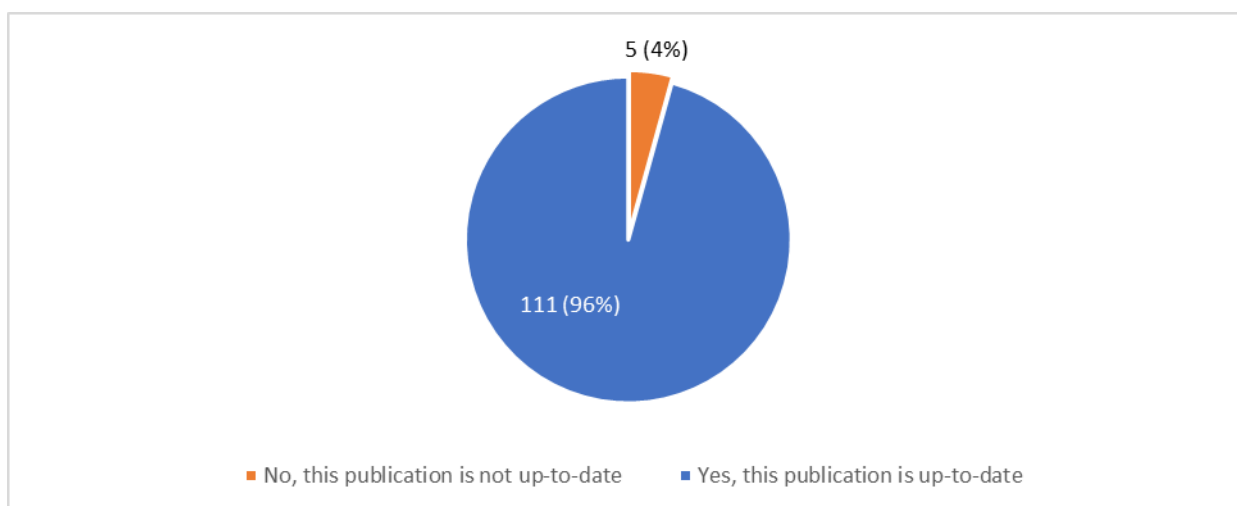
¹³³ Some participants in the focus groups did not understand why the EU was commenting on topics such as nutrition and climate change and felt that its only function was to enhance the EU's image.

Figure 3.52 Would you agree that this publication was up to date? (n=318)



Source: Ecorys, User survey (2020)

Figure 3.53 Is the content of this publication up-to-date? (n=116)



Source: Ecorys, Qualitative mapping (2020)

Interview data suggested that while many **author services had structured practices in place to review existing publications and regularly update them**, some were transitioning away from periodical publications and instead aimed to produce publications that are more reactive to current trends and information needs, as well as having shelf-lives of at least one year.

Structured **practices for reviewing and updating publications appeared to be in place across several, but not all, author services**. Some publications having yearly or biannual revisions. However, a small minority of author services also reported that there was an increasing transition away from periodical publications in favour of developing

flexible publication plans and producing publications that are more reactive to current events and fluctuations in audience needs.¹³⁴

There were also **a range of practices in place for extending the shelf life of publications**. Some interviewees endorsed producing publications that were less specific and instead provided broader, more general overviews of topics. Interviewees also recommended exercising caution when naming specific EU proposals, directives, or legislation in publications, due to how quickly the developments around these may change. A small number of interviewees also recommended avoiding the use of precise statistical figures in publications due to how quickly they become outdated.

Shelf-life of publications was acknowledged to be **highly dependent on the type and the purpose of particular publication**. DG Eurostat, for example, noted that their publications are by nature highly dependent on the availability of recent data which itself is often retrospective by the time it is released (i.e., data collected in one year can sometimes only be processed and ready for publishing in the following year). Thus, while the data in the publications may be tied to a highly specific timeframe, this time-sensitivity is integral to the added-value of the publications in contributing to an accurate, high-quality archive of European statistics.

In conclusion, **Commission publications for citizens** produced between 1 January 2018 and 31 October 2019 **were generally perceived to be up-to-date and contain few anachronisms**. Evidence suggests there was a demand for publications that grapple with current affairs and the author services consulted signalled their intention to increase their focus in this area. Several suggestions emerged for ensuring that publications have shelf-lives that are appropriate for their content and type, and developments within author services suggest that **new approaches are being planned and tested to enable new publications to be more reactive to citizens' changing information needs**.

¹³⁴ 'Flexible' publication plans were described as containing commitments to address certain policy areas, but without the exact format, topic, budget or subject matter being well-defined in advance. By being less rigid, it was suggested that the publications plans provided units with more flexibility in deciding when to publish specific materials and from what angle, with more attention paid to the immediate context and news landscape.

3.5 Efficiency

This section provides our findings and conclusions in relation to the following strategic question of the Review: *What are possible ways to produce efficiencies by enhancing cooperation within the Commission, producing synergies and economies of scale, addressing any existing surplus, duplication or deadweight in the Commission's publications produced as well as improving the way author services assess the quality of their publications, monitor their performance and use readers' feedback to better address their needs?*

The efficiency assessment was done by gathering evidence pertaining to two sub-questions, examining the extent to which the European Commission's publications were delivered through efficient cooperation between its author services, inter-institutional offices and by engaging their ultimate target group – citizens and its various sub-segments. The following sub-sections will present our findings in relation to the efficiency of internal cooperation and quality assurance as well as feedback mechanisms.

The box below provides an overview of the main findings and conclusions presented in this section.

Summary of the findings and conclusions in relation to the Efficiency criterion

There was evidence of good and efficient cooperation between author services and DG COMM and between author services and the OP in relation to the development and dissemination of Commission publications for citizens. However, the findings of this Review showed that there was considerable scope for improve cooperation between author services in developing publications for citizens by pooling resources, producing synergies and economies of scale as well as strengthening communications processes and tools.

While author services reported that the cooperation with DG COMM and the OP has improved during the period covered by this Review, cooperation with other author services was limited. Just under one fifth of reviewed publications had evidence of cooperation and it was determined that one eighth would have benefitted from collaboration. Budgetary constraints within author services' communications units, lack of centralised guidance as well as difficulties to identify colleagues responsible for particular publications were highlighted as the main barriers to more efficient collaboration. There was no evidence found on author services pooling resources, creating synergies or economies of scale in development and distribution of their publications for citizens.

There was limited evidence of strategic planning of author services in relation to their publications for citizens, which could be construed as a hindering factor to cooperation. Very few author services had publications plans, and where these existed, different approaches were used to plan author services' work on publications. Furthermore, publication plans and strategies were generally not shared among author

services, preventing centralised or decentralised coordination. There was also no shared space for collaboration and the coordination of work on Commission publications for citizens.

Evidence collected showed that collaboration between author services and DG COMM and between author services and the OP worked well and improved during the period under review. Specifically, evidence suggests that the improved editorial, design and translation request management services offered by the OP were deemed useful, and it was noted that these services complement services offered by DG COMM.

There was limited evidence that the Commission's author services and multipliers systematically captured feedback on their publications for citizens. The most prevalent feedback mechanisms identified were the rating systems of OP and DG COMM. OP's five-star rating system for publications was used on the 'EU Publications' portal. However, this feedback mechanism was infrequently used, only captured quantitative data and did not provide the option to leave qualitative feedback on publications carried by the OP. Author services did not systematically review the feedback received through this mechanism (nor the monitoring data on publication orders and downloads that can be provided by the OP) for streamlining or improving their publications offer. The feedback mechanism of DG COMM consists of closed and open questions, and is presented as a short survey embedded in html-versions of their publications. This feedback mechanism provided quantitative and qualitative data that was systematically reviewed by DG COMM.

Only a minority of author services carried out audience research for their publications and tested their publications with prospective users. Most EU and national author services consulted indicated that they had no testing mechanisms in place for the development of their publications for citizens. The most systematic publication testing was undertaken through testing panels managed by DG COMM with teachers and managers of EDICs. Hence, teachers and young people were most frequently involved in testing Commission publications for citizens.

3.5.1 Efficiency of internal cooperation

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *What are possible ways to produce efficiencies by enhancing cooperation between the author DGs and the inter-institutional offices within the Commission, producing synergies, economies of scale and cost savings in the way publications for citizens are developed, produced and distributed?*

Cooperation among author services and between author services and inter-institutional offices

There is evidence of **good, efficient cooperation among author services and between inter-institutional offices in relation to the development and dissemination of publications**, however this is a potential area that could be strengthened.

Cooperation among author services

Several EU author services indicated that there have been **improvements in the cooperation with DG COMM over the past few years and that there has been a better flow of information from DG COMM to other DGs**. It was noted that since DG COMM has moved to focusing more on corporate communication campaigns, there is clearer coordination as it allows author DGs to focus on their own specialisms, while contributing their expertise to DG COMM campaigns (focused on the 'general public') when requested. Several separate examples of this improved cooperation were identified:

- ▶ One EU author service felt this shift in organisation worked very well, and that the increasingly centralised role of DG COMM was beneficial to tailoring the author service's own communications work.
- ▶ An EU author service also indicated, through their contribution to the written consultation, that they appreciated the design, development and maintenance of a cross-Commission visual identity as a 'major contributing factor to successful collaboration between DGs, agencies and contractors'.
- ▶ Another EU author service suggested, however, that there should be more clarity around the rules for the visual identity for publications.
- ▶ Another interviewed EU author service complimented DG COMM's role and responsiveness in supporting them in their work with media, addressing journalists' questions on new initiatives, legislation, press releases, etc. They indicated that this process works well and that there is a clear line of communication. However, they did note that there was less cooperation on publications.
- ▶ Lastly, an EU author service indicated in their response to the written consultation that they participated in DG COMM's publication user panels.

There is scope for better cooperation between author services by **strengthening communication processes and tools**. Table 3.17 below shows that there was evidence of cooperation between author services in just under one fifth of the 116 publications reviewed by our Research team as part of the in-depth mapping of a sample of Commission's publications for citizens. In the bulk of the reviewed publications (70%) there was no evidence of cooperation, but it was also determined that in relation to these publications it would not have been necessary. However, 12% of the publications reviewed did not include evidence of cooperation between author services, but potentially could have benefitted from it. Cooperation would have allowed, for instance, for more concrete examples of initiatives or impacts of EU interventions on citizens' lives.

Table 3.17 Evidence of cooperation between author services

Evidence of cooperation between author services	Number of publications	% of total publications mapped
Yes, there is evidence that different author services cooperated in producing this publication.	21	18%

No, but it would not have benefited this publication.	81	70%
No, but it would have been beneficial for this publication.	14	12%

Source: *Ecorys in-depth mapping , 2020 (n=116)*

The 20 EU author services that took part in the written consultation had only a few good practices to share of cooperation among them. Three author services indicated that they had worked with DGT for translations of their publications and three author services stated that they worked with Commission's Representations for the dissemination of their publications. Only one author service provided an example of cooperation with DG COMM and other DGs to produce harmonised branding for a set of thematic factsheets and brochures, which were subsequently disseminated through Commission's Representations.

Several interviewed EU author services stated that **in most cases collaboration would not add significant value in the development of their publications, so synergies were not sought**. Where efficiencies were possible, evidence collected highlights several factors that constitute barriers to cooperation. It was posited that collaboration is hindered due to **budgetary constraints within author services' communications units**. Two interviewed national author services shared that their intent to kindle cooperation was hindered by difficulties and the time it took to identify colleagues responsible for particular publications (or particular areas of communication more generally) within author DGs. More specifically, they noted that there **is no centralised guidance on how to initialise cooperation on publications nor contact details for Commission colleagues responsible for publications**. While having access to Commission's intranet was deemed useful by national author services, the lack of process and contacts hindered the process of inter-institutional collaboration as multiple individuals had to be contacted in order to identify the respective author of a particular publication.

There is furthermore **limited evidence of strategic planning of author services in relation to their publications**, which could be construed as a hindering factor to cooperation. DG COMM, for instance, noted that when looking at the various DGs' communication strategies there is limited information on publications. Where they do have the communication strategies of DGs, there is inconsistent use of publications plans or different approaches to publication planning across DGs, Executive Agencies, Commission's Representations and Service Departments. This assertion was confirmed by Ecorys' own analysis of the publications plans and strategies of Commission's author services, as only a small number of author services were able to share publications plans or strategies for review.

As mentioned, **publications planning through dedicated publications plans or strategies is not systematic, with most Commission's author services indicating that there is but a reference made to publications in their communication strategies**.

One EU author service shared a dedicated publications strategy (for 2020), which outlines its approach to publications planning. Another representative of a Commission's author service reported a strategic decision 'to go online' with publications, and therefore limit the number of printed publications produced. This decision was subsequently reflected in their communication plan, but explicitly followed.

When publications planning occurs, there were **diverging approaches to the manner in which this is delivered**. One EU author service, for instance, shared an annual publications programme that outlines the context of their work, covers the main themes to be covered by publications throughout the year and clearly outlines the envisaged 'flagship products' and other publications. Another EU author service prepared a one-page visual diagram including an overview of the publications to be published throughout the year in the form of a timeline. Several author services indicated that they use an excel document that captures all the various publications planned by its different units. This allows updating the planning when new communication activities are planned. Most interviewed stakeholders indicated that their strategy documents that mention publications or their dedicated publications plans are generally not shared with colleagues in other DGs.

Evidence suggests that **there are currently insufficient opportunities for collaboration and consultation on Commission's publications offer for citizens**. Consulted author services noted that currently there is no space for the coordination of work on Commission's publications for citizens. Collaborative spaces already exist for Commission's social media specialists, the Europa website managers and graphic design teams, but not for coordination of work and sharing of ideas on publications. A collaborative space for planning, developing and coordinating work on publications as well as for quickly sharing ideas, addressing queries and identify relevant colleagues for cooperation in other DGs was need according to the author services consulted¹³⁵.

Cooperation between author services and inter-institutional offices

Evidence suggests that **cooperation with the EU Publications Office (OP) worked well and improved in the period under review**. Author services reported that the quality of support, response time and level of expertise has improved, and that the OP is supportive and professional in terms of advice provided:

- ▶ The improved editorial, design and translation request management services (whereby the OP liaises with DGT on behalf of author services) offered by the OP were deemed useful, and it was noted that these services complement services offered by DG COMM.

¹³⁵ The OP has recently launched their own collaborative space in relation to publications for better planning and oversight of the publications calendar. It would be worth exploring if this new space could be used a collaborative space for Commission author services to communicate, exchange best practices and queries and share ideas for publications.

- ▶ Given the ongoing digitalisation shift, and the increasing importance of social media as a dissemination tool, author services welcomed the OP's ability to efficiently support the development of graphics and visuals for publications, including creative layout and design support.
- ▶ Lastly, one EU author service indicated their appreciation for the manner in which the OP effectively signposted Europe Direct services to relevant DGs when queries on their publications arise as this allows the services to provide quick and efficient responses to EU citizens.

Inter-institutional collaboration is furthermore strengthened by the work carried out by the OP, particularly through their annual training event for author services in which they present publications that have been recently produced and that have become obsolete. They also present their portfolio of services as well as new additions to their products and services. This event is an opportunity for author services to ask questions about publication process, as well as network with other author DGs. The event was generally well-received, though one national author service requested that it take place biannually, while another EU service indicated that more time should be allowed per event for intra-institutional networking and discussion.

Several consulted author services indicated that more **strategic support from the OP would be useful, particularly in relation to the identification and engagement of particular target groups**. One EU author service requested clearer feedback on how to improve publications and tailor them to target groups, while another sought their support to strengthen the dissemination process of publications particularly by identifying and reaching out to specific target groups.

National author services, on the other hand, indicated that they would appreciate having greater involvement in the preparation and quality assurance of publications. They also noted that increased awareness of which publications are in the pipeline would be welcomed as well as direct consultation on generic topics¹³⁶.

Pooling of budgets and staff resources to produce synergies and economies of scale

Limited evidence was found during this Review on Commission author services pooling budgets or staff resources to produce synergies or economies of scale in development and distribution of their publications for citizens. Cooperation among author services, including through sharing resources and expertise, was explored through the Key stakeholder interviews with the EU author services and subsequently through a written consultation, but **no evidence was found of Commission services producing synergies or economies of scale in development and distribution of their publications for non-specialist audiences**.

¹³⁶ We are aware that needs assessment surveys take place, but these apparently are not systematically carried out for all publications.

3.5.2 Systems for quality assurance and user feedback

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *What could be efficient, practical and feasible ways for the European Commission's author services to assess the quality of their publications, address any duplication and redundancies in their offer, measure readers' satisfaction levels, and ensure mechanisms are in place for collecting user feedback necessary to better address their needs?*

Systems to capture feedback on Commission publications for citizens

There is limited evidence that the Commission's author services and multipliers systematically capture feedback on publications for citizens. Of the 116 publications reviewed through the in-depth mapping assessment, 46 did not include an opportunity to provide feedback. Hence, it is estimated that around 40% of Commission's publications for citizens do include opportunities for their readers and users to provide feedback to their author services. The most prevalent feedback mechanism identified through the mapping was the OP's five-star rating system for publications published on the 'EU Publications' portal. Six publications covered by the mapping included other means to provide feedback: a feedback survey, a general contact email of the author service, or a 'was this useful?' response box.

While several EU author services indicated that they would welcome feedback on their publications, to date vast majority of EU author services confirmed they have not developed systematic ways to capture it. Several author services monitor the comments and feedback received on their publications promoted via social media. Other author services reported having a general feedback mechanism on their websites; however, the purpose of this tool was to provide feedback on technical and content issues of the website and not specifically on publications published on their webpages. One author service indicated that they put their department contact details at the end of each publication, but that they have received limited feedback as a result of doing so.

DG COMM, on the other hand, has a relatively thorough mechanism in place to collect feedback on its publications. In 2017, the OP developed and introduced a short survey for DG COMM embedded in the html-versions of its publications. The survey currently consists of four closed questions to evaluate publications' usefulness, relevance, clarity, and visual appeal as well as an open text box for users' comments (i.e., allowing for quantitative and qualitative assessment of publications). Users can assess the the publication with closed questions with a 'smiley' rating system similar to five-star system used by the OP¹³⁷. DG COMM confirmed that hundreds of responses to this survey were

¹³⁷ The star rating is also explained, in line with good practice in evaluation, with, for example one star meaning 'not at all' and five stars 'extremely'.

received each year and that these were systematically being analysed¹³⁸. DG COMM additionally receives feedback through a survey attached to its publications on the Learning Corner, as well as conducting several surveys among EDICs, Commission Representations and EU Delegations to gather their feedback on selected printed publications¹³⁹.

The most systematic mechanism identified during this Review to capture user feedback on Commission's publications for citizens was the 'Rate this publication' five-star rating of the OP. However, this rating function is infrequently used and hence only captures feedback on the most popular publications carried by the 'EU Publications' portal. The rating system only captures quantitative data and does not provide the option to provide qualitative feedback on publications. Several author services used the monitoring data of the OP, including the order and download numbers, to better understand the performance of their publications. The feedback captured through the five-star rating system was not systematically shared by the OP with author services (or requested by author services). No evidence was found of user feedback being used to improve the Commission's publications for citizens.

More in-depth quantitative and qualitative user feedback is gathered on ad hoc basis, rather than systematically. Several national multipliers indicated that they collect feedback on their publications for citizens on an ad hoc basis through surveys or discussions. However, none of the EU and national level Commission author services consulted indicated having a systematised approach to collecting reader feedback on their non-specialist publications. The feedback gathered was generally only quantitative (i.e., number of publications disseminated) rather than qualitative (i.e., focused on content and quality of presentation). Several national multipliers indicated that they engaged with citizens face-to-face to discuss publications, however, this was not a systematic element incorporated into their work.

Systems to test Commission publications for citizens with their potential users or multipliers

Only a minority of author services carried out audience research for their publications. Most EU and national author services consulted indicated that they had no testing mechanisms in place for the development of their publications for citizens. Several author services clarified that limited testing of their publications for non-specialist audiences was due to the lack of time and resources. One EU author service stated that while they did not have an in-house testing mechanism, they regularly contracted a media agency to ensure their campaigns and publications are adapted to the needs of their target

¹³⁸ Currently, the number of responses to the survey stands at over 1,300 responses annually.

¹³⁹ This survey was available in English, German and French. On average the survey is circulated among 264 privileged users, with an average 62 responses. However, the response rate is rapidly declining since 2017 (with 110 responses to the first survey, and 40 responses to the latest survey in 2019).

groups. Other testing or audience research across author services occurs on an ad hoc basis, through focus groups or informal consultations.

Of all segments of the general interested public, teachers and young people were most frequently involved in testing Commission publications. Several EU author services used DG COMM's testing panels¹⁴⁰ in the development of their publications. One author service reported informal use of their own social networks to consult teachers on their publications. In another case, representatives of an EU author service travelled to Member States to conduct testing research with 18-35-year-olds in collaboration with the Commission Representations and EDICs. They undertook in-depth consultations with approximately 25-40 young people to gain insights into which topics were of importance to them, in order to better cover these issues in future communications activities and publications.

Aside the professional editorial support services provided by the OP as a pilot project, the most systematic publication testing is undertaken through testing panels managed by DG COMM, with teachers and managers of EDICs. DG COMM and other author services use these panels to gather feedback on publications for children and young people as well as those aimed at the general interested public. This was deemed a useful tool despite one interviewee indicated that the effectiveness of these panels was hampered by the fact that they only met once a year. It should be noted, however, that these panels have a collaborative workspace that offers a possibility to consult them throughout a year.

¹⁴⁰ There are two panels with primary and secondary school teachers.

3.6 EU Added value

This section provides our findings and conclusions in relation to the strategic question: *What is the EU Added value of European Commission's publications for citizens considering any EU-focused publications made available by non- Commission author services and the perceived EU Added value of European Commission publications for citizens by their readers and users? In what ways could this EU Added value be maximised and enhanced?*

The box below provides an overview of the main findings and conclusions presented in this section.

Summary of the findings and conclusions in relation to the EU Added value evaluation criterion

Commission publications for citizens were perceived to have EU Added value in four main areas: 1) they provided objective, up-to-date and complete information about the EU, its programmes and actions, 2) they included clear examples on how the EU is beneficial in the daily lives of its citizens, 3) they filled an information gap about the EU, its programmes and actions, and 4) they provided an EU perspective on specific policy areas and other topics of interest to EU citizens.

The perceived EU Added value of Commission publications for citizens varied slightly between the different segments of respondents consulted, indicating on the one hand that these publications can be appreciated transversally, and on the other hand that different socio-economic backgrounds had an impact on the perceived EU added value. Overall, younger users, readers living in a city or without a migration background perceived a higher EU added value of Commission publications compared to older users, users living in a rural area and those with a migration background.

Evidence collected indicates that the EU Added value of Commission publications for citizens could be maximised by conducting more thorough audience research during early planning stages to ensure that information needs of segments targeted are adequately met. Increasing collaboration between Commission services and national, regional and local stakeholders in development and promotion of Commission publications for citizens could help with tailoring these to respective national contexts and increasing dissemination through national, regional and local partners.

3.6.1 EU Added value of Commission's publications for citizens

This section addresses the first part of the strategic question: *'What is the EU Added value of European Commission's publications for citizens considering any EU-focused publications made available to citizens by non-Commission author services and the perceived EU Added value of European Commission publications for citizens by their readers and users?'*

Overall, Commission publications for citizens hold EU Added value in four main areas:

- ▶ They provide objective, up-to-date and complete information about the EU, its programmes and actions;
- ▶ They include clear examples on how the EU is beneficial in the daily lives of its citizens;
- ▶ They fill an information gap about the EU, its programmes and actions; and
- ▶ They provide an EU perspective on specific policy areas and other topics of interest to EU citizens.

The main EU Added value of Commission publications for citizens is that these **provide citizens with objective, up-to-date and complete information about the EU**. According to stakeholders interviewed, there is an inherent added value of finding information about the EU directly from the source, which is seen by citizens as more trustworthy and complete information than other available non-EU publications. This finding is partially confirmed by the results of the User survey in which 44% of respondents (n=143) indicated that the Commission publications provide more complete information. However, only a fifth of survey respondents agree that Commission publications provide more up-to-date information (23%, n=74). As described in the Relevance section, publications risk becoming quickly obsolete if not regularly updated and users might perceive this risk. Also, only 17% of respondents (n=52) indicated that Commission publications provide more objective information than other information sources available to respondents.

According to interviewees at national level, the current offer of **publications allows citizens to better understand the wider role the EU plays in their daily lives** and provides them with concrete examples on how EU membership can be beneficial for them, their families and their fellow citizens. The interviews highlighted the inclusion of success stories from different Member States in Commission's publications as a best practice to make the information contained more relatable to citizens but also noted that this practice was not common across the whole range of publications. Some stakeholders also mentioned that reliable and up-to-date EU publications are one of the best antidotes against misinformation circulating online and offline about the EU, providing EU citizens with data and arguments to defend their pro-EU positions in public and in private. According to some key stakeholders interviewed, teachers find Commission publications useful to explain what the EU does to children and young people, preparing them to becoming EU citizens in the future.

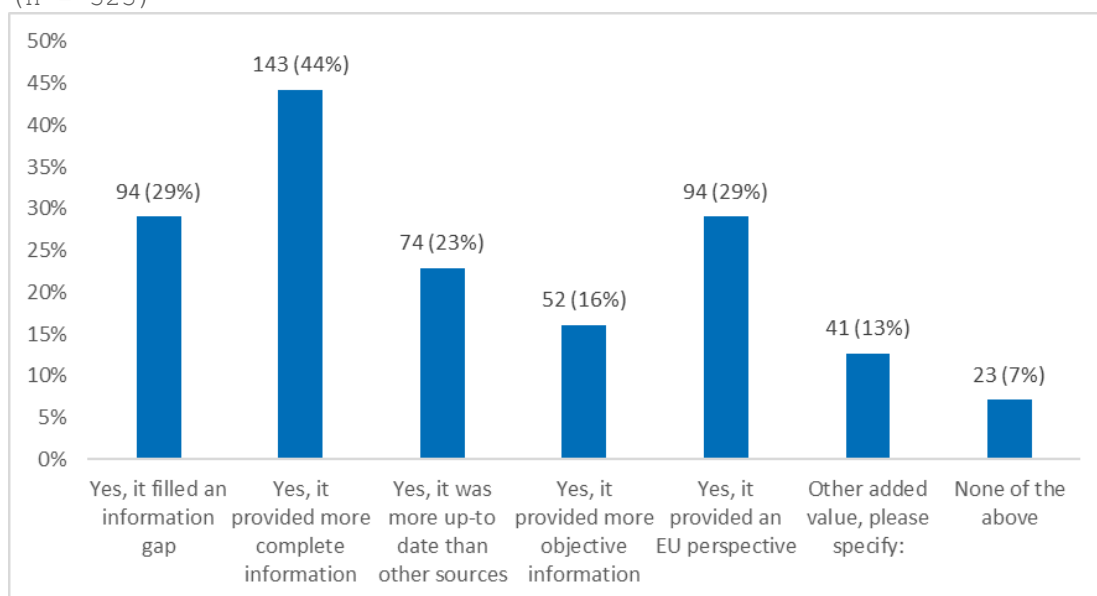
As mentioned in Section 3.1.2, Eurobarometer data highlights that about 60% of EU citizens feel not to be well-informed about European matters and, as confirmed by Europe Direct Contact Centre's research, there is a strong and increasing demand for information on the EU. Hence it is particularly important that EU publications aim to provide citizens with information otherwise not easily available. In this regard, several interviewees recognised that **Commission's publications for citizens provide them with information on the EU that they could not find elsewhere**. The key stakeholders consulted were also of the opinion that without the publications that they regularly

produce, it would be unlikely that EU citizens would find reliable information on some topics they work on, since there are no equivalent publications produced at national level. This finding was corroborated by around 30% of the User survey respondents (n=94) reporting that the Commission publications they used filled an information gap. Examples of such publications include those covering work opportunities in the European institutions, those on how to apply for participation in citizen-oriented EU programmes and actions or information on the variety of projects being financed with EU funds.

According to the key stakeholders interviewed, the EU perspective provided by Commission's publications on some specific topics (such as climate change, taxation, social rights, healthy lifestyles, food security, among others) also adds value in comparison to other non-EU publications. They help citizens to have a broader understanding of topics that matter to them at national/local level and **provide them with a good overview of how these topics are being tackled at EU level**. About one third of all respondents in the User survey (29%, n=94) reported that the Commission publications that they used provided them with 'an EU perspective' on the topic at hand. However, participants in the focus groups questioned the added value of Commission publications on topics where the EU has limited or no competence. For example, the publication 'La valisette de MiniMip' (MiniMip's suitcase) discusses nutrition and other themes that seem to be far from the EU direct competence.

The Figure below provides an overview of the results of the User survey on the perceived EU Added value of Commission's publications compared to other information sources available to respondents.

Figure 3.54 Did this European Commission's publication add value, considering the information already available to you from other sources? (n = 323)



Source: Ecorys, User survey, 2020

3.6.2 Differences in the perceived EU Added value of publications by sub-segments of EU citizens

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *'Are there any and what are the key differences in the perceived EU Added value of European Commission's publications for citizens by sub-segment of EU citizens (e.g., by age, gender, their socio-economic status or background)?'*

Perceived EU Added value of Commission publications varies slightly between the different sub-segments indicating on the one hand that these publications can be appreciated transversally, on the other hand that different socio-economic backgrounds can still impact the perception of added value.

We approached the analyses from two perspectives. Firstly, we included specific questions in our User Survey on the background of our respondents and analysed their replies on EU Added value of Commission publications from perspectives of six sub-segments of respondents¹⁴¹ to understand if there were any significant differences in terms of their perceived EU Added value of Commission's publications. Secondly, we asked an open question during our key stakeholder interviews to understand how the Commission's publications for citizens provided EU Added value for sub-segments of EU population (this question was not asked to author services).

Table 3.18 below provides an overview of the different perceptions of EU Added value of Commission's publications by type of respondent segment covered by the User survey. Overall, younger users (up to 30 years old), users living in a city or not having a migration background seem to recognise the added value of Commission publications more than respectively older users, users living in a rural area and those having a migration background. In particular, the former categories of citizens tend to see the publications as more reliable and up to date, potentially indicating that the other categories tend to trust less EU publications. In section 3.2.5, it was noted, however that Commission's publications resonate more with an older audience than a younger one, but as pointed out this might not be due to the content or quality of the publications specifically but to the preferred format and mechanisms for consumption of information. With an older audience rating publications more useful while the younger audience seem to lean towards other types of mechanisms such as social media and websites as useful information sources.

Table 3.18 Different perceptions of EU Added value of Commission's publications by type of respondent segment¹⁴²

Filled an information gap	Provided more complete	More up-to date than	Provided more objective	Provided an EU perspective	Other added value	No added value

¹⁴¹ The segmentation criteria were as follows: age group, gender, rural/urban location, migration background and/or experience, native speakers of EU main languages and of EU minority/regional languages.

¹⁴² The shading in the table indicates the difference in perception across the different categories. Column by column darker shades indicate the highest share of respondents, lighter shades indicate smaller shares.

	informati on	other sources	informati on	informati on	informati on	informati on	informati on
Female (n=208)	26%	49%	22%	13%	25%	14%	3%
Male (n=91)	36%	38%	27%	22%	36%	7%	11%
Young adult up to 30 years old (n=59)	36%	56%	29%	17%	39%	8%	5%
Adult aged 31 - 60 (n=216)	28%	43%	20%	17%	26%	14%	7%
Older adult aged 61+ (n=28)	21%	50%	29%	11%	29%	7%	4%
I live in a rural area (n=57)	26%	40%	21%	16%	25%	14%	11%
I live in a city (n=242)	29%	48%	23%	15%	30%	12%	6%
I have a migration background and / o experience (n=28)	32%	39%	18%	14%	18%	7%	14%
I do not have a migration background and / o experience (n=86)	27%	42%	31%	21%	28%	17%	9%
I speak one of the 24 official languages of the EU (n=215)	29%	47%	26%	18%	31%	16%	6%
My mother tongue is a regional or minority language in the EU (n=20)	25%	50%	30%	25%	40%	10%	10%
Total (n=353)	27%	41%	21%	15%	27%	12%	7%

Source: Ecorys User survey, 2020

The Table above shows some variations between female and male respondents regarding their perception of EU Added value of current Commission publications. Female respondents were slightly more likely to reply that that the Commission's publications provided more complete information and other kinds of added value than male respondents. In contrast, male respondents were more likely to highlight the EU perspective, the objectiveness of the information and the accuracy of the information as the main EU Added value of Commission publications.

We observe minor variations in terms of perceived EU Added value of Commission publications if we analyse the data according to different age groups. Young respondents highlighted more often the fact that Commission publications provided a more objective and complete information than other age groups.

Respondents from rural areas were more likely than users from urban areas to not agree with any of the statements on EU Added value from the survey.

Respondents with a migration background seemed to appreciate Commission publications for filling an information gap, but similar to the respondents from rural areas, were less likely than users without a migration background to recognise any added value of Commission publications.

Respondents whose mother tongue is a regional or minority language in the EU seemed to appreciate more the EU perspective that Commission publications bring to the conversation.

3.6.3 Ways to maximise the EU Added value

This section addresses the specific evaluation question: *How could the EU Added value of European Commission's publications for citizens be maximised and enhanced considering information needs and information consumption patterns of EU citizens and their different principal sub-groups?*

Several ways to maximise the EU Added value of publications were identified through the results of the key stakeholder outreach activities undertaken, mainly pertaining to the following:

- ▶ Further tailor the current offer of Commission publications for citizens to the information needs of EU citizens and their main sub-groups;
- ▶ Streamline and update the current offer of Commission publications for citizens to the consumption patterns (i.e., preferred medias, formats, languages, etc.) of EU citizens and their main sub-groups;
- ▶ Improve collaboration within the European Commission in the development and promotion of Commission publications for citizens; and
- ▶ Improve collaboration between the European Commission and national, regional and local stakeholders in the development and promotion of Commission publications for citizens.

Key stakeholders consulted suggested that the current offer of Commission publications for citizens needs to be **further adapted to the information needs of EU citizens and their principal subgroups**. As outlined in Section 3.2.1. some available Commission publications for citizens are perceived as too technical for the general population (this finding was also confirmed for 7% of Commission publications for citizens through the qualitative mapping). A general simplification of language, more practical guidance (e.g., factsheets on practical issues of health care in the EU while travelling) and a greater focus on relatable content (e.g., success stories from citizens and/or organisations from the countries of the readers and users) are seen as a potential solution for this issue.

There is also a **lack of specialised publications tailored to the information needs of particular sub-segments of the EU population** (e.g., particular sub-segments of children and young people, rural citizens, seniors or people with disabilities) limiting their potential to achieve EU Added value for these groups of citizens. As mentioned, the key stakeholders consulted also emphasised the importance of the Commission collecting and using more user feedback and testing of its publications with particular sub-segments of the EU population in order to better adapt the offer to their needs.

The key stakeholders interviewed also suggested that the current offer of Commission publications for citizens to be streamlined and updated to match the consumption patterns of EU citizens. A few stakeholders mentioned that the current range of Commission publications could be reduced and streamlined, producing less “traditional” publications as highlighted in Section 3.2.1. Some stakeholders also suggested that the Commission should produce shorter and easier to read summaries on the position of the EU on ongoing key issues (e.g., Brexit, the refugee crisis or the withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement) to show to citizens what the EU is doing on these matters and quickly respond to their questions on those topics.

It was suggested by several EU and national level key stakeholders that there is considerable scope for **increasing collaboration between the Commission services and between the Commission and national stakeholders in development and promotion of Commission publications for citizens.**

Table 3.19 Examples of cooperation with national stakeholders

How to cooperate with national stakeholders?
<p><i>Publication working group</i></p> <p>The creation of a working group could allow the Commission to engage national agencies, but potentially other relevant stakeholders as Commission representations and Europe Direct offices. The working group could discuss upcoming EC publications, make suggestions and provide inputs. Some interviewed stakeholders felt that bringing national stakeholders into the process would not only improve the quality and relevance of the publications but create a sense of ownership enhancing the dissemination of the publication.</p> <p><i>Reserving publication space</i></p> <p>The Commission could reserve a part of each publication to be tailored by national/regional organisations to better match specific local interests and be more up to date on local developments.</p>

Source: Ecorys, 2020

Regarding the cooperation between the Commission services, interviewees mentioned that there should be **more coordination between the different DGs producing publications, particularly if they are working on similar or complementary topics and/or policy areas.** This could help streamline the offer of publications to citizens, avoid overlaps between publications and reduce waste/overprinting of publications covering certain topics. A common publication strategy for all DGs was mentioned as a potential way to maximise EU Added value of publications by some author services, also ensuring coordination in this area with author services and other stakeholders in the Member States.

Lastly, several stakeholders at national level called for more cooperation between the European Commission and national, regional and local stakeholders as a way to improve

the EU Added value of its publications for citizens compared to other non-EU publications. More cooperation in the design of publications with EU representations in Member States, EDICs and EU agencies would indirectly ensure that the Commission's publications would better meet the needs of EU citizens in their home countries. It would allow the Commission to avoid potential overlaps with existing non-EU publications at national level on the same topic and highlight to its citizens the EU Added value of Commission policies and activities in specific areas of local interest. Better cooperation with these sub-national stakeholders would also facilitate the collection of user feedback and needs assessment as well as facilitate the identification of potential sub-segments of the EU population that are been under-served by the current offer of Commission publications.



04 Recommendations

4.0 Recommendations

Stemming from the findings and conclusions outlined above in relation to the five evaluation criteria, 10 strategic questions and 22 evaluation questions, several operational recommendations for improving the Commission's publications offer to EU citizens were developed. These have been consolidated around the publications planning, development, dissemination and monitoring cycle to offer operational support for the Commission's author services that produce publications for citizens. This structure should facilitate author services access to the relevant recommendations at different stages of their work on publications for citizens.

Planning of publications

- A. **To promote a coordinated development of Commission's publications for citizens, author services should develop and share publication plans and link these with their annual management plans.** As evidenced in Section 3.5.1 there was limited oversight on the Commission's publications offer for non-specialist audiences. The lack of shared planning and different approaches to planning in the few instances this was undertaken, lowered potential for cooperation, synergies and economies of scale.
- B. **When planning publications, author services should pro-actively consider Commission's political priorities, continued policies and new initiatives so as to anticipate citizens' information needs.** Some topics of particular interest to citizens surged to relevance unexpectedly and have not been adequately covered by Commission's publications for citizens in a timely manner. Other developments, linked to ongoing EU activities, could have been anticipated and reflected in publications planned (see Section 3.2.1 for more information).
- C. **The Commission should more systematically conduct audience research and testing of its publications for citizens to ensure that they are fit for purpose.** Most author services do not have testing mechanisms in place for the development of their publications for non-specialist audiences. DG COMM manages testing panels that were also used to test publications of other author services, but as illustrated in Section 3.5.2 this testing remains limited.
- D. **Each Commission publication for citizens should have a clearly defined target audience, set out in its introduction, and accompanied by a distribution strategy to reach this audience.** As illustrated in Section 3.2.1, readers expect information tailored to their needs, including all the elements required for a full understanding of the topic presented and complexity of presentation adapted to their knowledge level. A clear indication of the intended target audience in Commission's publications for citizens would help readers to understand that a particular publication is 'for them' and would also facilitate the work of Commission's information multipliers. A distribution

strategy would ensure that publications find their way to audiences through their preferred channels and multipliers.

- E. **The Commission should develop a more systematic and coherent definition of 'general' i.e. non-specialist audiences for its publications and share this with the EU Publications Office.** A shared definition would considerably facilitate an overview of the Commission's publications offer to citizens, contribute to improving the internal coherence of this offer and support the tailoring of this offer to address information needs of the various audience subsegments as well as facilitate monitoring and evaluation of Commission's publications for citizens (See Section 3.3.1 for more information).
- F. **A collaborative space for centralised and national author services should be created to foster better coordination and cooperation between Commission's author services in the development and dissemination of their publications for citizens.** The collaboration platform could be similar to those already used by Commission's social media, graphic design and Web design specialists. As suggested in Section 3.5.1, it would allow author services to efficiently share ideas and queries, as well as identify relevant colleagues in other DGs or Commission's Representations for shared publication projects. The potential of the OP managing this collaborative space should be explored.
- G. **Collaboration between the European Commission and national, regional and local stakeholders in the development, promotion and distribution of publications for citizens should be enhanced by author services and their contractors when delivering their distribution strategies for publications.** As shown in Section 3.6.3, evidence suggests that more cooperation in the design of publications with Commission's Representations in the Member States, EDICs and EU Agencies would help to better address the needs of EU citizens in their home countries, avoid potential overlaps with existing non-EU publications at national level and highlight the EU Added value of Commission's policies and activities to citizens in specific areas of local interest.

Development of publications

- H. **The tone of new, updated or revised Commission publications for citizens should be carefully balanced to present EU achievements, acknowledge limitations and any further progress necessary.** Section 3.4.5 underlines the need for author services to ensure that their publications ensure a balanced coverage of EU achievements and benefits as well as limitations and progress required. Commission's publications should avoid presenting EU position or challenges without also listing concrete actions that the EU is taking to address them in terms of current proposals or existing legislation.

- I. **The Commission's publications for citizens should cover current topics and provide practical information for main segments of the population to show what the EU is doing to improve their lives.** Publications should cover the EU's position and actions on current affairs, e.g., response to COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, migration and asylum, the EU Green Deal while also outlining how these impact citizens' (and non-citizens) lives. They should provide practical and timely guidance on, e.g., citizens' rights, practicalities for travelling in the EU, health insurance policies and mobility opportunities. This practical information needs to be tailored by audience sub-segment (please see Section 3.1).
- J. **The Commission should adapt its most popular publications for citizens to the needs of harder to reach segments of EU citizens, including people with special needs and disabilities, elderly people, as well as groups of people at risk of social exclusion.** As indicated in Section 3.3.1 the Commission should develop braille versions of its publications, develop publications that address information needs of the EU's more senior citizens, and present the support available to people who (at risk of) exclusion. The Commission publications that target segments of EU citizens that are harder to reach need to be where their users are i.e., on social media for people less engaged in the EU project and displayed at social services, employment services, education and training providers where citizens without access to the Internet can pick them up.
- K. **The Commission should continue to use a mix of publication formats and supports to meet different user needs and preferences, prioritising short, visual, easy-to-read and interactive content.** Stakeholders consulted provided a composite overview of formats most useful to them, confirming that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution when it comes to Commission's publications for citizens (please see Section 3.2.2 for more information). Short, visually rich, and easy to read publications were considered more suitable to an 'average user', but longer publications can provide more detail when required. Interactive and dynamic website formats could provide an alternative to publication updates.
- L. **While there is increasing interest and demand for online publication formats, printed publications remain important in order to reach audiences that do not use the Internet, prefer printed publications for their work and or do not have the digital skills to access publications online.** According to the findings presented in Section 3.3.1, printed materials are favoured as a tool for teaching. Distributing printed leaflets and brochures during live events are also a useful tool to inform the public about the EU, its role and programmes. The evidence collected during this assignment also underlined the importance of printed publications for older segments of EU population and those with no access to the Internet.

- M. **The Commission's publications for citizens should be available in all official languages of the EU, using high-quality translation, unless their topic or focus on a particular sub-segment of citizens justifies more limited translation.** With the exception of publications that are intended to be highly tailored to the context of a specific Member State, publications that cover content of relevance for generic segments of EU citizens should be translated into all official EU languages. Based on the evidence presented in Section 3.4.4, it is also paramount to put in place solid procedures to quality assure translations of Commission's publications for citizens. Publications not available in the preferred language of their users and poor-quality translations increase perceptions of a 'distance' between the EU and its citizens.
- N. **Author services should continue to pay close attention to ensure that the language used in their publications for citizens is always appropriate for the particular EU general audience segment targeted.** As evidenced in Section 3.4.4, author services should refrain from using jargon or buzzwords without first defining them for less-familiar readers and ensure that publications do not include too many technical and/or irrelevant details. Moreover, it is important that author services match the writing style with the type of publication, e.g., avoid using formal and lengthy sentences when producing a newsletter or publications for children. Where possible and relevant author services should also consider differences in education attainment levels as well as participation in education and training among the EU Member States when translating and adapting their publications for use in particular countries.
- O. **The Commission should continue to ensure high visual presentation quality of its publications for citizens i.e., quality of layout, quality of formatting, and quality of visuals, as these are important for capturing readers and retaining their interest in EU content.** As highlighted in Section 3.4.4, it is important that author services include a table of contents in their publications for non-specialist audiences. For online publications, these should be linked to chapter headings. Author services should furthermore ensure that margins for their non-specialist publications are not too narrow and there is sufficient spacing between text for ease-of-reading. There should be a good balance between text density and visuals. Author services (and their contractors) should avoid aggressive and garish colour schemes. It is recommended to use text boxes and images with clear headings, and when including graphs or figures it should be ensured that these are easy to interpret, are clearly labelled and include a legend. Lastly, author services should refrain from using photos that distract from the content of the page, rather than help readers to understand it.
- P. **Commission's author services and their contractors developing publications for citizens should revisit and systematically apply accessibility standards and guidelines, making use of the OP accessibility resources as well as other relevant guidelines (e.g. Commission's web accessibility guidelines).** Most Commission's

publications for citizens were found not to be optimised for use with assistive technology among persons with disabilities and special needs, The types of publications, their stylistic and formatting conventions that optimise the accessibility of publications for persons with disabilities and special needs are listed in sections 3.4.4 and 3.4.5 of this report.

Dissemination of publications

- Q. **It is important to explore ways to improve the layout, organisation, and search functionalities of Europa webpages presenting the Commission's publications offer to citizens, and especially the EU Publications portal, to make these more user-friendly.** As suggested in Section 3.4.2 introducing more specific filters, removing or archiving outdated publications, and storing all publications for citizens in a location that is clearly distinguished from specialist publications (i.e., publications for professionals) would make it easier for users to find the most relevant publications for them.
- R. **The Commission could make more use of online and offline promotion opportunities provided by social media as well as national, regional and local partners that share its communication objectives, to ensure that citizens are aware of its publications offer for citizens.** As are outlined in Section 3.4.2 awareness levels of the OP's EU Publications Portal, the Learning Corner, and other EU publications pages on Europa website overall were found to be low. Most potential users and readers were not aware of the existing publications, distribution and dissemination services available to them.

Monitoring and feedback

- S. **The Commission's author services should systematically collect and use quantitative and qualitative citizen feedback about their publications in order to better address their needs, as it is currently carried out for DG COMM publications. They should also use the OP monitoring data to streamline their publications offer.** As presented in Section 3.5.2 most author services did not capture or use feedback from readers for improving their publications. The feedback systems in place mostly collect quantitative (rating data) and most author services are not aware or using this intelligence in the process of revising and renewing their publications offer for non-specialist audiences.



05 Annexes

5.0 Annexes

Annex 1 – Inventory of publications for citizens



Annex 1 - Inventory
of Commission Public

Annex 2 – Overview of the stakeholders consulted



Annex 2 - Overview
of stakeholders consu

Annex 3 – Anonymised survey results



Annex 3 -
Anonymised survey re

Annex 4 – List of secondary literature reviewed



Annex 4 - List of
reviewed secondary li

Annex 5 – Qualitative in-depth mapping



Annex 5 - Qualitative
in-depth mapping.xls>

Annex 6 – Focus group report



Annex 6 - Focus
group report.docx