

**Evaluation of the
European Parliament
and European
Commission
cooperation in
communication in
the Member States**

Presentation of the results

June 2017

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1. Background

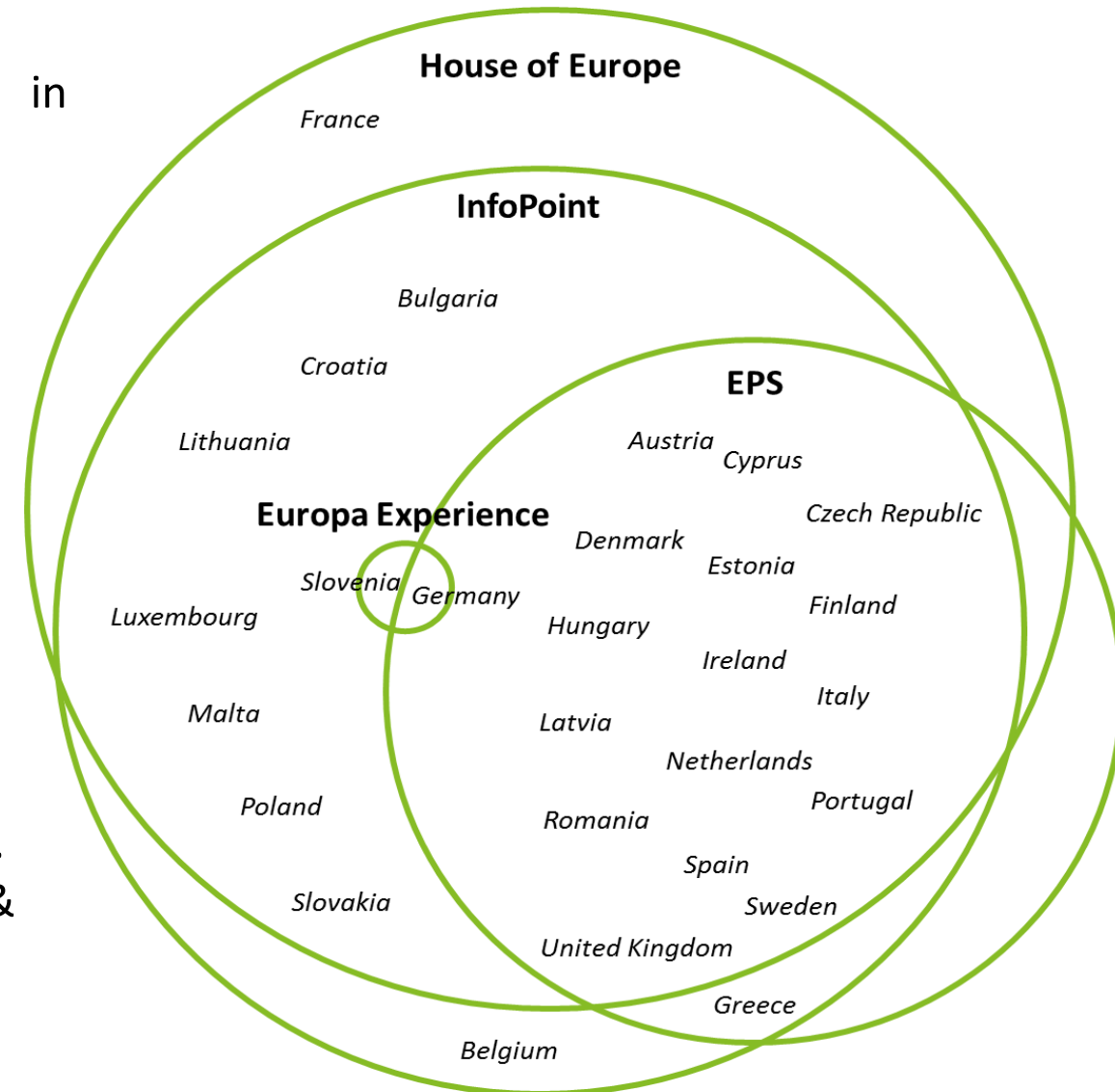
Overview of Parliament-Commission cooperation in communication

- For the past 20 years, EPIOs and EC Representations have been **visibly cooperating more closely on communication with citizens**, starting with the concept of sharing premises in “House of Europe”.
- Over time, mechanisms have been developed for more formal cooperation between Parliament (EP) and Commission (EC) at central Headquarters level.
- Up to 2012, there were regular meetings of the **Interinstitutional Group on Information** involving the EP, EC and Council, established to identify common communication priorities that would be communicated at national level
- There is currently **no formal governance structure at EU level for EP/EC communication** cooperation, but an understanding in both institutions that working together brings benefits. Annual planning requirements also make the EPIOs and the Representations spell out how they plan to jointly cooperate.
- More recently, European Heads of State and Government called for **enhanced interinstitutional collaboration** in the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap and the Joint Declaration on the EU’s legislative priorities for 2017.

Joint approaches for cooperation in communication

The range of approaches to EP/EC cooperation in communication currently deployed includes:

- House of Europe;
- European Public Spaces;
- Information Points;
- Europa Experience;
- Strategic & ad hoc partnerships;
- Cooperation through the Europe Direct Information Centres
- Cooperation with other EC Information networks (e.g. Creative Europe Desks, European Consumer Centres & national entities dealing with Erasmus & EURES).



2. Evaluation objectives and questions

Evaluation objectives

The **overall objective of the evaluation** was to provide recommendations to improve the quality and impact of future EP and EC cooperation in communication.

Specific objectives:

1. Generate knowledge on **what works and what does not**, with a view of finding more innovative forms of cooperation in communication, achieve efficiency gains and identify factors that contributed to the success of the different forms of communication;
2. Facilitate **evidence-based** decision making by analysing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of:
 - Joint communication services and the impact of actions organised jointly by EPIOs and EC Representations;
 - Prioritising and planning processes at headquarters level and in the Member States;
 - EP/ EC cooperation in setting priorities for the EPS and reporting on EPS activities;
 - Roles of Heads of EPIOs and Representations in setting up the EPSs' annual work plans and reporting results
 - New ways of communicating with citizens in the different MSs including recent developments;
 - Different forms of cooperation between the EP and the EC in communicating EU topics at national level.

Evaluation questions

Effectiveness	How effective is EPIO & Rep collaboration as a means of meeting communication goals ?
	To what extent has EP/EC cooperation at MS level improved the quality & impact of communication on the EU?
	To what extent is current EP/EC cooperation in the MSs effective at meeting the communication objectives of the institutions ?
Efficiency	To what extent is EP/EC cooperation cost-effective, in the sense that cost efficiencies result from EP/EC cooperation?
	Are there additional efficiency gains to be made in the communication prioritisation & planning processes at EP & EC HQ, in EPIOs & Reps, that will either improve or not be detrimental to the quality & impact of communication?
	To what extent is EP/EC cooperation, in particular in relation to House of Europe & European Public Spaces, more or less cost-effective than other forms of cooperation ?
Relevance	To what extent are the activities covered by EP/EC cooperation appropriate for achieving institutional communication goals?
	To what extent are the activities falling under EC/EP cooperation based on analysis of the needs of target groups (stakeholders & citizens) & appropriate to the needs identified?
	To what extent are the choices of communication tools & channels of the different forms of EP/EC cooperation appropriate to the target audiences & their needs?
Coherence	To what extent are the various forms of EP/EC cooperation well aligned & do they form a coherent whole in terms of achieving the objectives?
	To what extent are the various forms of EP/EC cooperation coherent with: a) other EU-driven actions with similar objectives? b) other activities on similar topics carried out by the MSs?
Added-value	What is the added value of EC/EP cooperation on communication & of the different forms of cooperation relative to: a) the absence of cooperation? b) alternative/new forms of cooperation?

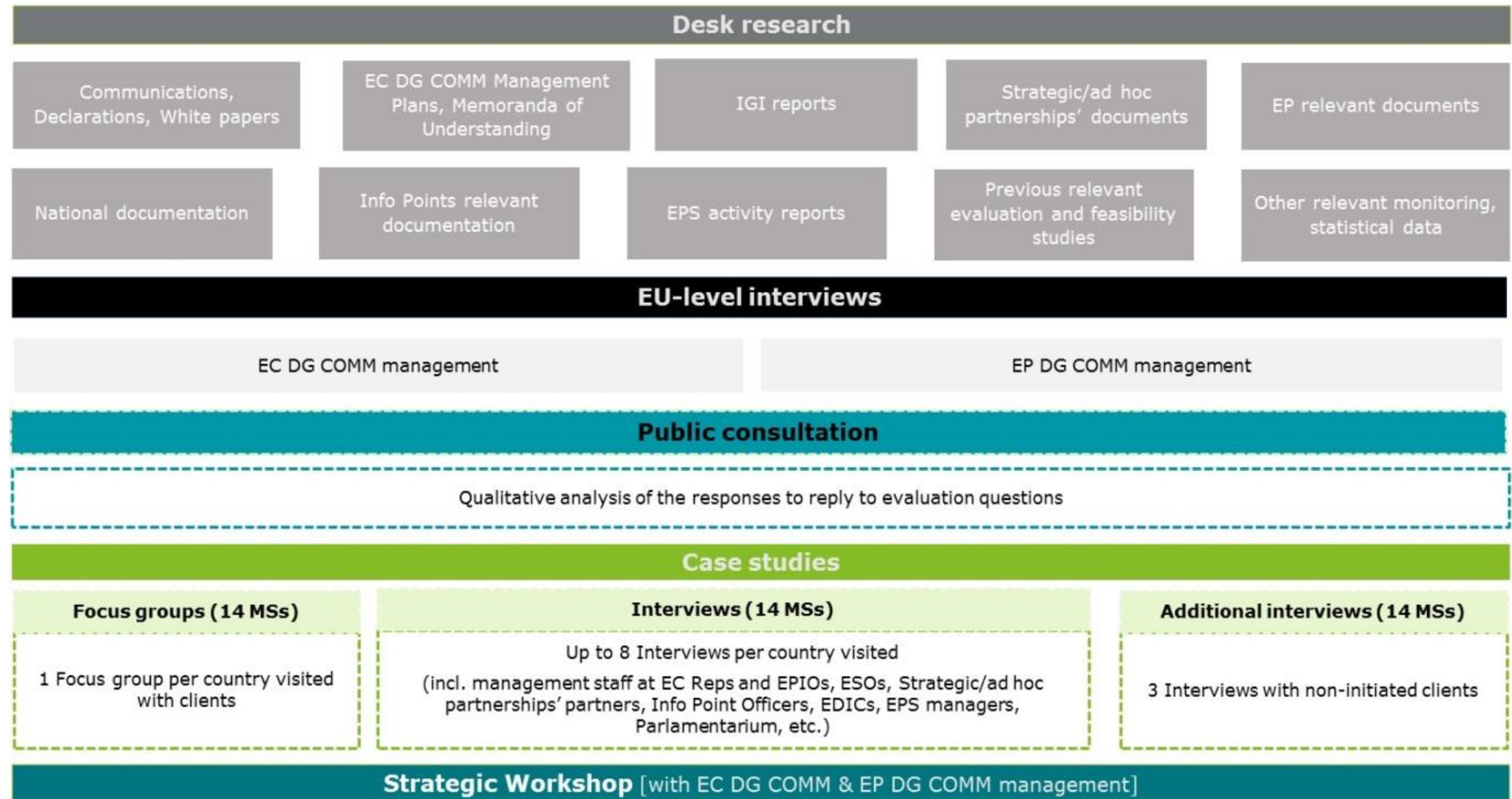
3. Evaluation approach and methodology

Evaluation approach



Objectives	Preparatory work for the next two phases	Collecting data to feed into our analysis so as to reply to each evaluation question and sub-question(s)	Providing conclusions and recommendations for future
Expected outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth understand of the context and work to be done. - The methodological approach to be deployed. - Detailed planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data gathering to address all indicators listed in the Analytical Framework, upon availability of data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answers to the evaluation questions based on sound, evidence-based analysis. - Precise and practical recommendations for the future work and functioning of the cooperation.
Methodological tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intervention Logic - Evaluation questions (Analytical Framework) - Preliminary strategic interviews - Interview guides and survey templates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk research (e.g. key documents, statistics, ..) - Public consultation - Case studies (interviews and focus groups) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case studies' analysis - Public consultation analysis - Triangulation of all data - Validation during Strategic Workshop
Deliverables	Draft Inception Report Inception Report Final	Draft Interim Report Interim Report Final	Draft Final Report Final Report
Meetings	Kick-off Meeting Inception Report Meeting	Interim Report Meeting	Strategic Workshop Final Report Meeting

Evaluation methodology



Evaluation methodology

1. Extensive field work – case studies

- 14 EU MSs (AT, BG, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, LV, NL, PL, SK, SI, ES and SE). Fieldwork included up to 13 interviews / group discussions and one focus group per country.

2. Desk research:

- Review and analysis of numerous data sources, including Communications, Declarations, White Papers, management plans, EPS activity reports, budgetary information, Commission and Parliament reports, evaluations and feasibility studies and others.

3. A target group identification exercise:

- A stakeholder analysis and mapping exercise to identify groups whose views would be important to the evaluation.

4. Open Public consultation

- Analysis of replies to the OPC organised by the Commission. A total of 105 replies were collected from relevant stakeholder groups and citizens between February & May 2017.

5. Strategic workshop

- Management staff of the two institutions met with the evaluation team to discuss and validate preliminary conclusions and recommendations.

4. Key findings and conclusions

Key findings and conclusions - Relevance

- Joint communication priorities are **consistent with institutional communication goals**. Cooperation on communication activities is not limited to EPSs. It is less formal but real in some Houses of Europe.
- There are inherent **limits to cooperation**, though no consensus on where they lie. The current collaboration model also has limits given the human resources and financial constraints, making it challenging to reach new audiences.
- Priorities are also consistent in terms of **targeting**, with a focus on citizens, in particular youth, and multipliers. Stakeholders important to legislative developments are another major target.
- **Analysis of target groups' needs** is an exception, though there are good practice examples which show what is possible. The challenge remains consolidating these studies (including ex-ante & monitoring) into a regular practice to use the results as a planning tool.
- **Cooperation is diverse** and the tools are decided locally. In most cases, there does not appear to be a general strategic reflection on the adequacy of the current communication tools, or what is appropriate in the context of cooperation. This leads to a high reliance on tried and tested activities.

Key findings and conclusions – Effectiveness (1/2)

- Cooperation in the MSs is **more effective at communicating on EU recurrent themes and common values** than on disseminating *joint* messages on the political priorities.
- Target group engagement is positive in relation to stakeholders and partners, but there are **challenges communicating with broader audiences**.
- The **upcoming European elections** will be an important test to jointly reach out to citizens.
- The absence of **monitoring that embraces both EPS and non-EPS activities** makes it difficult for Headquarters to have an overview of cooperation or provide top-down steer on expectations.
- Cooperation between the two institutions has **improved the quality and impact** of EU communication via effective engagement with target groups, leveraging synergies with formal and ad hoc partners and outreach. Having shared offices and common spaces has contributed significantly to this.
- The backdrop to delivering effectiveness is a patchwork of different approaches – 26 Houses of Europe, 18 EPSs, 13 Strategic Partnerships, other types of partnerships in most but not all MSs, and provision of publications and answers to questions in various configurations.

Key findings and conclusions – Effectiveness (2/2)

The effectiveness of cooperation between EPIOs and Representations as a means of meeting communication goals is currently **limited by several factors**:

- The **diversity of cooperation concepts** in place, none of which have been rolled out in all MSs.
- **Variability going beyond national specificities**: having an EPS or a Strategic Partnership does not necessarily result in closer cooperation or more cooperation than not having these.
- **No common understanding of what is expected** beyond the formal processes for an EPS, thus allowing for a disproportionate influence of personalities, different approaches to collaboration structures and an absence of incentives for developing a cooperation reflex.

Key findings and conclusions – Efficiency

- The **House of Europe format has been a success** which has delivered efficiencies and cost-effectiveness. This is even greater where there is a (small) budget and a combined planning in place.
- **Budgets for EPIOs and Representations are not comparable** - they do not all fund equivalent expenditure categories.
- **Strategic Partnerships and EPSs**: cost-effectiveness is diverse, but they offer the advantage of involving others in a formal framework in order to make the most of pooled resources.
- The EPS definition and designation, and the justification for 18 locations having an EPS and others not, has not been formally reviewed for 10 years. The **distinction has become blurred and potentially inequitable** vis-à-vis Houses of Europe cooperating de facto in many of the same areas as the EPSs.
- Despite problems, the **EPS concept is successful enough** to make it eligible for a more complete rollout.
- Cooperation with **other networks** seems to be the least strategic form of any of the forms of cooperation

Key findings and conclusions – Coherence

- Coherent communication appears to be achieved in **communication activities around “values”**, with joint planning and regular structured meetings, where an overall EU brand is felt appropriate.
- The **absence of tools and joint reflection** on how to ensure the coherence of joint activities can limit coherence, or even lead to divergence in countries where there is no clear view on respective roles. There are **clear examples of best practice**, but the overall picture is mixed.
- **Differing cycles over time** can be a barrier to EP/EC cooperation particularly for media activities, given the differences in messages and the timing of relevant topics, but proper coordination ensures coherence.
- Consensus exists on the need for cooperation allied with coherence to **fill the communication vacuum** on the EU in certain MSs and the urgency of ensuring coherence as **the EU elections** approach.
- Coherence with other networks results from **individual initiatives** – mostly on the part of Representations. There are good-practice examples of partnering, and **successful partnerships** are vehicles for coherence.
- The regular IGI meetings provided a framework for interinstitutional prioritisation and coherence, and the Management Partnerships created bonds with MS governments for coherence at national level, that have left **a gap at both EU and MS levels**.

Key findings and conclusions – Added value

- **There is financial, political and operational added value in EP/EC cooperation that are worth pursuing.** Cooperation avoids fragmentation and duplication of efforts, and ensures the EU speaks with a single voice when appropriate.
- There are no obvious areas that are not being exploited in one or a number of EU MSs, but the overall EU-wide picture is one where **the full cooperation potential has yet to be realised**, including in relation to the following approaches:
 - Strategic and Ad Hoc Partnerships
 - Work with EDICs and other EC networks
 - Work with local and regional figures with whom there is a shared interest (within or outside formal partnerships)
 - More joint (or shared) capacity-building
 - More exchange of good practice
 - Business cases for cooperation

5. Overarching and specific recommendations

Overarching recommendations

The evaluation identified **three main aspects** that need to be addressed for cooperation to improve:

- I. A **strategic interinstitutional approach** should be defined regarding common areas of cooperation and joint processes
- II. An **appropriate EU budget** should be **allocated specifically** for cooperation activities; notably with a view to the next multiannual financial programming period;
- III. A **culture of cooperation** will be necessary to allow this renewed approach to succeed.

Specific recommendations (1/5)

Simplify the landscape of cooperation formats

- Transition from the EPS concept to a **broader cooperation under the House of Europe banner** (with specific allocated EU budget) to be used as a concept in all Member States.
- This concept should include **different modules**, which could be selected to meet national needs, specificities, infrastructure and budgets. Suggested modules include:
 - Conference Centre;
 - Exhibition Space;
 - Europa Experience (with sub-modules a) Information Point, b) Interinstitutional Multimedia Experience, and c) Library/Reading Area);
 - Joint Publications.
- Adoption and implementation of modules should **form the basis of funding allocation from a single EU Cooperation funding budget**. Additional funding should be foreseen for Houses of Europe to remain open at evenings and weekends.
- As an obligatory module, cooperation activities should be **evaluated every 3 years**.

Specific recommendations (2/5)

- **House of Europe should not be only seen as a concept confined to the limited physical space of the premises:** events outside its premises should be organised and promoted.
- **Guidance should be provided by EP and EC HQs in each MS.** This should then be embedded in **dialogue** (including live discussions) concerning the local House of Europe modules to be implemented.
- The single model under the upgraded House of Europe concept should continue to have **joint Work Plans** (as do the EPS at present). The section in the country strategies on cooperation should be drafted jointly.
- The two offices should run an **independent national target group segmentation exercise**, for which HQs should provide a “Terms of Reference” template. The two offices should also conduct a **stakeholder mapping** together. Offices should have maximum freedom to **choose priorities**.
- The joint Work Plans should be **evidence-based**, drafted in a comparable *xls format*, and describe where the offices see the added value in cooperation; and how they plan jointly to reach priority audiences.
- The Work Plan of the House of Europe should be **designed as a Communication Plan**, including business cases for different types of cooperation or around certain events, such as the European elections, European Years, anniversaries of important steps or achievements of European integration.

Specific recommendations (3/5)

- To foster the culture of cooperation, **processes designed by HQs** should provide clear guidance and objectives and include at least bi-annual coordination meetings (including exchange of best practice) for Heads of Communication and designated Cooperation Coordinators.
- Another important element should be a **strategic approach for partnerships**, in particular for:
 - National governments (attempting to make SP the norm everywhere);
 - EDICs and other EC networks;
 - Other EU institutions [EIB, CoR and EESC (or their members)];
 - Network of National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC), as a priority considering that 2018 is the European Year of Cultural Heritage.
- Strategic and Ad hoc Partnerships should be better documented and incorporated in reporting processes.

Specific recommendations (4/5)

- Cooperation should be supported by a joint **Cooperation Coordinator** in each MS (paid by the Europe House specific budget). One of their roles should be to identify areas of capacity building.
- The misalignment in the level of authority over **financial issues** between the two offices needs addressing, currently it is a barrier to closer cooperation.
- Encourage informal exchanges to **establish a working group providing guidance on whether the two offices should communicate case-by-case with individual (EP or EC), dual (EC and EP together) or joint (under “EU” or “House of Europe”) branding**, depending on target groups, topics, type of event, tools and timing.
- Cooperation should be supported by materials produced by communication experts and tailored to national contexts. **Both offices should provide input to editing of materials produced centrally** in the official language(s) of their MS.

Specific recommendations (5/5)

Concerning **operational aspects**:

- **Monitoring the Cooperation** should be **made possible** by both institutions **throughout the year**.
- The **tool used for monitoring should include fewer questions than the Representations' 'Event & Actions' tool** columns and require less (quantitative) data.
- This upgrade of the tool should also be accompanied by **more feedback from HQs** regarding the ways data collected is used.
- Use of **state-of-the-art digital tools**:
 - by the two offices for a common document repository, joint calendar and meeting room booking system;
 - by the two HQs for a reporting tool (allowing for monitoring).
- The **Future of Europe exercise** will be concluded end of 2017 and rolled out in 2018-2019. This will coincide with the run-up to the European Elections in 2019, hence creating a perfect common denominator for joint communication action around this crucial topic.



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