



Evaluation of prizes of the Commission

Final Report

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General of Communication
Directorate D — Resources
Unit — D.1. — Planning, Budget and Evaluation
Contact: Sonja Ziemer

E-mail: COMM-EVALUATION@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

Evaluation of prizes of the Commission

(Ref. COMM/01/2021/Lot)

Final Report

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission however it reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication. More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

Manuscript completed in December 2022

The European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication.

© European Union, 2022



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Except otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

Table of contents

List of abbreviations	6
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1.1. Methodology	7
1.2. Overview of European Commission prizes	8
1.3. Conclusions	9
1.4. Recommendations	11
2. INTRODUCTION	13
3. OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION	14
4. OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRIZES	20
5. ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS	26
5.1. Relevance	26
5.2. Efficiency	51
5.3. Effectiveness	66
5.4. Coherence	93
5.5. EU Added Value	100
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	107
6.1. Conclusions	107
6.2. Recommendations	111
6.3. Recommendations for the communication of prizes	114
ANNEX 1: CHECKLIST WITH CONDITIONS FOR SETTING UP A PRIZE	118
ANNEX 2: KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) FOR PRIZES	118
ANNEX 3: SURVEY ANALYSIS REPORTS	118
ANNEX 4: NON-EU PRIZES: CASE STUDY REPORTS	118
ANNEX 5: EC PRIZES: CASE STUDY REPORTS	118
ANNEX 6: MAPPING OF EC PRIZES	118
ANNEX 7: LITERATURE REVIEW	118
ANNEX 8: ASSESSMENT OF COMMISSION WEBPAGE DEDICATED TO PRIZES	118

List of abbreviations

CN	Communication Network
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG COMM	Directorate-General for Communication
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG GROW	Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
DG MOVE	Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DG TRADE	Directorate-General for Trade
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network
EEPA	European Enterprise Promotion Award
EIC	Energy Industries Council
EITA	European Innovation in Teaching Awards
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Executive Agency
EQ	Evaluation question
EU	European Union
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HoC	Head of Communication
JC	Judgement criteria
KPI	Key performance indicators
MS	Member State
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
ToR	Terms of Reference
UI	User interface
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UX	User experience

1. Executive Summary

The Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission contracted Tetra Tech International Development Sp. z.o.o. to undertake the evaluation of prizes of the Commission, with the support of Netcompany Intrasoft. The evaluation was launched on 17 November 2021 and the kick off meeting took place on 26 November 2021.

The objectives of the evaluation, according to the Terms of Reference, were to:

- better understand the position of the Commission's prizes in the broader landscape of the EU and international prizes;
- evaluate the potential of effectiveness and efficiency gains by assessing the existing prizes' relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU-added value;
- assess the potential of increasing prizes' communication value and to recommend measures for rationalisation and increased communication impact;
- design a more strategic approach to their future use by the Commission.

1.1. Methodology

The evaluation methodology was designed to address the objectives listed above as well as to answer 19 evaluation questions under the five Better Regulation evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU-added value). The evaluation methodology allowed an assessment of the breadth and depth of the EC landscape of prizes, as well as the consideration of how prizes are managed outside the EU.

The study started with a mapping exercise of Commission prizes, based on an initial mapping carried out by the Commission in 2018, which identified 101 prizes. The mapping within this evaluation identified that there were at least 181 prizes in 2018-2021 period, and that the number of prizes fluctuates year-on-year, with around one third of prizes awarded on a one-off basis. The majority of the Commission's prizes (64%) are awarded by a minority of DGs: DG NEAR (37 prizes), DG EMPL (23), DG RTD (18), DG GROW (17), DG EAC (12) and DG ENV (9), which award all together 116 prizes. The mapping was complemented with additional primary and secondary data collection and analysis, involving:

- a survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers, which generated 56 responses;
- a survey of contestants and winners of Commission prizes, which generated 189 responses;
- a review of current academic and related grey literature on prizes;
- case studies on three external prizes:
 - the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge
 - the OECD's Decarbonising Transport Award and
 - the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education.
- case studies involving desk research and interviews with staff and winners of seven Commission prizes:
 - Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) Award
 - European Capital of Innovation Awards (iCapital)
 - European Innovation in Teaching Award (EITA)
 - "I am European" school prize
 - Natura 2000 Award
 - TANDEM Media Awards
 - Science Technology and Arts Prize (S+T+ARTS).

The results of the individual data collection activities are available as standalone annexes to the Final Report on the evaluation of prizes of the Commission.

An overview of the European Commission's current use of prizes is provided below. It describes how prizes, which are managed by individual policy Directorates General and Executive Agencies, fall into two main types, which serve different communication and policy-support purposes. The next section also describes the costs and benefits for the institution of awarding prizes, as well as the benefits for prize winners beyond the rewards offered.

Even with two main types of prizes, there is significant variation in terms of the specific objectives, categories, types of contestants (including individuals, teams, organisations, and cities) and eligibility criteria of individual prizes, as well as types of rewards. Yet to date, there has been a lack of consistency in the management of European Commission prizes, and key questions is about how to enhance the approach in the future.

The evaluation draws a number of conclusions and makes recommendations, which should help to ensure a more consistent and impactful approach, to allow the institution to build upon identified lessons from inside and outside Commission. A summary of the conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation is provided in a subsequent section (1.3).

1.2. Overview of European Commission prizes

The awarding of prizes by the Commission has a history stretching back several decades. While they were initially designed to highlight the values and principles of EU integration, in recent years they have tended to focus on showcasing EU policies. Two thirds of prizes reward past achievements within a specific policy area and one third set a challenge to achieve a specific policy-related result or breakthrough. These challenges can be very simple, for example asking school children to answer a quiz on the EU, or highly complex, for example setting a challenge for new predictive software to support energy management (Horizon prize for big data technologies, 2021).

While a 2021 independent study¹ cited in the evaluation Terms of Reference (p. 3), found that EU prizes are increasingly used as policy tools, this evaluation identified that there are two main types of European Commission prizes²:

- i. **Communication vehicles (around two thirds of the total):** prizes which set communication type objectives to raise awareness of a policy initiative and/or achievements in a policy area (usually so-called recognition prizes). For instance, the objective of the TANDEM Media Awards is to create awareness and positive perceptions of the EU within the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood region. This prize is used as a communication vehicle, to promote the EU and its policies abroad.
- ii. **Policy vehicles (one third):** prizes, which set objectives to generate a policy breakthrough or result (usually so-called challenge prizes). For instance, the Horizon prize for better use of antibiotics sought to develop a test to identify patients with respiratory tract infections. This prize was used as a policy vehicle to generate an innovative breakthrough within the policy area of the awarding Directorate-General.

Both types of prizes use promotion to raise awareness of the prize contests and of the winners. This promotion also contributes to raising awareness of policy, and therefore to

¹ FORET F., VARGOVČÍKOVÁ J., 2021, The Prize of Governance. How the European Union Uses Symbolic Distinctions to Mobilize Society and Foster Competitiveness, Journal of Common Market Studies.

² A small number of prizes can also be classified as hybrids, i.e. combining both types of objectives.

reinforce relationships between the European Commission and different stakeholders, and between stakeholders themselves.

Prizes used as communication vehicle are mostly **recognition prizes**. This term refers to prizes that reward past achievements or recognise work, which has already been performed. Two thirds of the prizes awarded by the Commission are recognition prizes, which indicates that most prizes are intended as communication vehicle. Prizes which are intended as policy vehicle are usually **challenge prizes**, a term which refers to prizes, which set a challenge for contestants and reward the participant(s) that most effectively meet the challenge. 30% of the Commission prizes are challenge prizes. The remaining 7% of prizes are **hybrid prizes**, which combine elements of both recognition and challenge prizes.

The varied nature of prizes is reflected by the range of rewards provided to winners. Rewards include symbolic awards (certificates and/or trophies), cash prizes, and items with a monetary value (iPads, travel costs etc.) Fewer than half of all prizes (40%) offer a cash reward. While the value of these can range from EUR 500 to EUR 10 million, most cash prizes award less than EUR 20 000.

Whilst one third of prizes are managed via a direct grant, the remaining prizes are managed by between 0.5 FTE and up to 2 FTE. In terms of direct costs, the typical financial allocation is lower than would be required for a communication campaign, with circa 40% of prizes allocated a budget of EUR 20 000 and 75% of prizes with a budget of under 200 000. In return, prizes offer a range of benefits to winners including recognition and the prestige associated with winning an EU prize. Prizes also offer a range of benefits to the Commission, including in relation to the direct contacts with networks of stakeholders in target policy areas.

1.3. Conclusions

Relevance

- 1) The Financial Regulation³ definition for a prize: “a financial contribution given as a reward following a contest” is out of sync with many Commission prizes given that most of them do not provide such a contribution.
- 2) There is a **lack of oversight** of all prizes managed by the various Directorates-General and Executive Agencies of the European Commission or which are run on behalf of the European Commission. In consequence, there is no mechanism to support the identification of synergies and/or to consolidate prizes going forward.
- 3) Most prizes are relevant to one or more of the European Commission’s political priorities, but they are **not explicitly used to support these priorities** or to increase their visibility.
- 4) EU prizes mainly **focus on promoting EU policies to and within stakeholder audiences** rather than the wider public.
- 5) For many European Commission prizes **feedback from their stakeholder groups is not collected** to support the design of new prizes and/or to check the extent to which prizes are still relevant.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2018:193:TOC>, Article 2, Paragraph 48

Efficiency

- 6) Whilst the Commission would like to maintain a spectrum of large and small prizes, there is a **strong argument for reducing the number of prizes to refocus** fragmented budgets and efforts on a smaller number prizes which have greater impact.
- 7) There is some appetite⁴ within the European Commission to **streamline the number of prizes**. It also appears that discontinuing some prizes is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on stakeholder audiences⁵. However, the evaluation finds that there is **no clear rationale to identify prizes that could be phased out**.
- 8) **Closer attention should be paid to one-off prizes**, as they need more resources to achieve breakthrough with a target community, are not able to build on awareness generated by previous editions, and **do not offer continued visibility benefits over the longer term**.
- 9) There is **no established rationale for when to set up a prize** within the Commission. There are also no established criteria or minimum standards, which should be applied to **protect/reinforce the EU brand**.

Effectiveness

- 10) Individual prizes can offer a **range of benefits** to the winning individuals, groups and organisations, as well as to the responsible Directorates-General and Executive Agencies. However, the current approach to the design and implementation of prizes makes **it impossible to assess if existing prizes have met their objectives**. In all the cases examined for this study, the Commission sets general and not (SMART) specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timeframed objectives.
- 11) Many prizes are **unable to generate the desired level of visibility for their policy area** within the target stakeholder community, due in part to the low levels of resources, the small scale of most (over 60%) of prizes, and low impact communication activities.

Coherence

- 12) There is in-house prize managers' experience in managing prizes, but there is no mechanism to share this knowledge and / or to document this for future prize managers.
- 13) The Commission is also **yet to integrate international good practices** within most prizes.

EU added value

- 14) Prizes bring a **clear added value to contestants**, given the prestige of the EU brand, but the quality of the actual award and the experience of receiving that award do not always match expectations among contestants.
- 15) There is **a lack of consistency in the branding** of Commission prizes, which do not consistently include the EU brand in their name or messaging.

⁴ The number of prizes in the Commission has nearly doubled since the last mapping of prizes by the CN in 2018. The survey of Heads of Communication Unit and prize managers confirmed that sizable proportion of staff consider that there maybe some duplication in the landscape of prizes.

⁵ It is unlikely that there would be detrimental effect on most stakeholder communities, provided that the relevant DG or Executive Agency uses other mechanisms to engage with the community.

1.4. Recommendations

Relevance

It is recommended:

- 1) to develop **an institution-wide definition for prizes**. The following definition is suggested:

'a prize is a financial and/or symbolic reward following a contest to select best-in-class past achievements and/or results in response to a new challenge. To protect the EU brand, awards are only made when the highest quality is achieved.'
- 2) to set up **a central registry of prizes** on the staff intranet, as well as on EUROPA⁶ to provide a clear overview for staff and stakeholders;
- 3) that a relevant Commission's entity **takes a strategic oversight role** for prizes to help to strengthen the EU brand;
- 4) that the policy Directorates-General and Executive Agencies consider if there is a need / interest to **link prizes more closely to the Commission's political priorities**;
- 5) that the policy Directorates-General and Executive Agencies **research the interests and availability of other similar prizes** (a "target group needs assessment") prior to designing any new prize, and to ensure that all prizes are required to follow up with winners as part of the prize implementation process.

Efficiency

It is recommended:

- 6) that those Directorates-General and Executive Agencies awarding the most prizes **consider reducing the number of prizes**, so that resources can be used to greater effect on fewer prizes;
- 7) **not to set up new one-off prizes**, unless there is a strong rationale for doing so;
- 8) (linked to the above) **systematically use the checklist and criteria developed by this evaluation**, to support future decisions on setting up a prize. New prizes should only be created if they meet the identified criteria, summarised below and listed in Annex 1.
 - There is a policy need for action.
 - The need is not already met by other means.
 - A prize is an appropriate vehicle.
 - Clear objectives are defined, which correspond to target group interests.
 - The prize can be differentiated from other external prizes.
 - There are sufficient financial and human resources.
 - The potential for internal / external partnerships has been assessed.
 - There is a minimum political commitment of four years.

⁶ See: [Prizes | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-commission.europa.eu)

Effectiveness

It is recommended to:

- 9) Directorates-General and Executive Agencies to **include prizes within their communication strategies, plans and use key performance indicators**;
- 10) Directorates-General and Executive Agencies **to engage their communication unit and its resources to maximise prize promotion** and ensure appropriate framing of SMART objectives. In cases where insufficient communication support can be provided in-house, this should be subcontracted to a communication agency;
- 11) **set SMART objectives for all** European Commission prizes, irrespective of their size or value, and **to follow up with** some form of **monitoring and evaluation**.

Coherence

It is recommended to:

- 12) share the results of this evaluation with the **Communication Network** and ensure that a **mechanism is set up to share internal and external good practices**.

EU added value

It is recommended to:

- 13) **include the term EU or European Union** as a requirement⁷ **in the title of all prizes and the EU flag** in all visuals.

⁷As an exception, this can be waived for prizes implemented in third countries, where for political reasons a lower EU profile maybe required.

2. Introduction

The European Commission uses a variety of prizes, contests, and awards to recognise the past achievements of individuals, groups, organisations and others, and as a way to solve a particular policy challenge and/or to generate new ideas. In November 2021, the European Commission (EC) contracted Tetra Tech International Development and Netcompany-Intrasoft to conduct an evaluation of the prizes it manages, under DG COMM's Framework Contract COMM/2020/OP/0020. This document is the **Final Report** of the evaluation.

The evaluation addresses the need to analyse how the Commission's prizes fit into the broader European and international communication context with a view to establishing a more strategic orientation of prizes' future use. The purpose of this report is to present answers to the evaluation questions, as well as draft conclusions and recommendations for the future. In the study, we also developed a set of criteria that should be taken into consideration, when setting up a new prize and guidance for the optimal use of prizes, based on identified best practices. We also developed a set of prize-specific communication recommendations to support increasing the communication potential of prizes, as well key performance indicators to measure the performance of prizes in the short and medium term.

The evaluation team discussed these elements with the members of the Steering Group set-up for this study during the meeting organised on 15 November 2022. This report is structured as follows:

- **Section 1:** Executive summary
- **Section 2:** Introduction and overview of report content
- **Section 3:** Overview of the evaluation approach, including the purpose and scope of the evaluation, its design and its conduct
- **Section 4:** Findings, in the form of answers to each of the evaluation questions based on the evidence found, and the analysis carried out
- **Section 5:** Preliminary conclusions and recommendations for future prizes linked to the relevant evaluation questions.

This report is accompanied by the following annexes, which are provided in separate documents:

- **Annex 1:** Checklist with conditions for setting up a prize
- **Annex 2:** Key performance indicators (KPIs) for prizes
- **Annex 3:** Survey analysis reports
- **Annex 4:** Non-EU prizes: case study reports
- **Annex 5:** EC prizes: case study reports
- **Annex 6:** Mapping of EC prizes
- **Annex 7:** Literature review
- **Annex 8:** Assessment of Commission webpage dedicated to prizes.

3. Overview of the evaluation

3.1. Objectives and scope

The European Commission set the following four main objectives for this evaluation.

Table 1: Objectives

Objectives
1. To better understand the position of the Commission's prizes in the broader of the EU and international prizes.
2. To evaluate the potential of effectiveness and efficiency gains by assessing the existing prizes' relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU-added value and to assess the potential of increasing prizes' communication value and to recommend measures for rationalisation and increased communication impact .
3. To design a more strategic approach to their future use by the Commission.
4. To identify gaps and / or overlaps between already existing or planned prizes, taking into account, and testing, also the rationale of using prizes as a financial tool complementing, not substituting, other funding instruments and also looking into the efficiency of the prizes (" value for money ").

Additionally, the study also assessed and made recommendations on:

- prizes' effectiveness with regard to visibility, relevant channels, passing the right message about the EU and its policies and impact, and lessons learned in the management of prizes⁸, etc.;
- the potential added value of the existing and / or new prizes in terms of the visibility of the EU's action in Europe and beyond;
- a rationalisation of the existing prizes and how to make the approach of setting up new prizes more coherent, coordinated, and effective in the future; and
- how to increase the communication value of EU prizes so that they better reinforce the impact of EU communication.

The scope of this study covers prizes awarded between 2018 and 2021, managed by the European Commission⁹, implemented inside and outside the European Union.

3.2. Evaluation questions

The evaluation answers 19 evaluation questions under the five Better Regulation evaluation criteria (Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence and EU-added value). DG COMM requested a particular focus on helping the Commission to better understand:

- potential gaps in the current landscape of European Commission prizes, these gaps might relate to thematic scope, target groups, and or types of awards;
- actual and potential duplication between existing and / or planned prizes; and

⁸ Based on the initial insights gained as part of the inception phase of the evaluation, there is a wealth of experience and lessons already learned by staff involved in the management of prizes, which this evaluation may define and consolidate for the future.

⁹ The evaluation also takes into account prizes that were implemented in 2022.

- ways to more systemically increase efficiency and value for money across the prizes, reflecting the Commission's commitment to increase synergies and efficiencies.

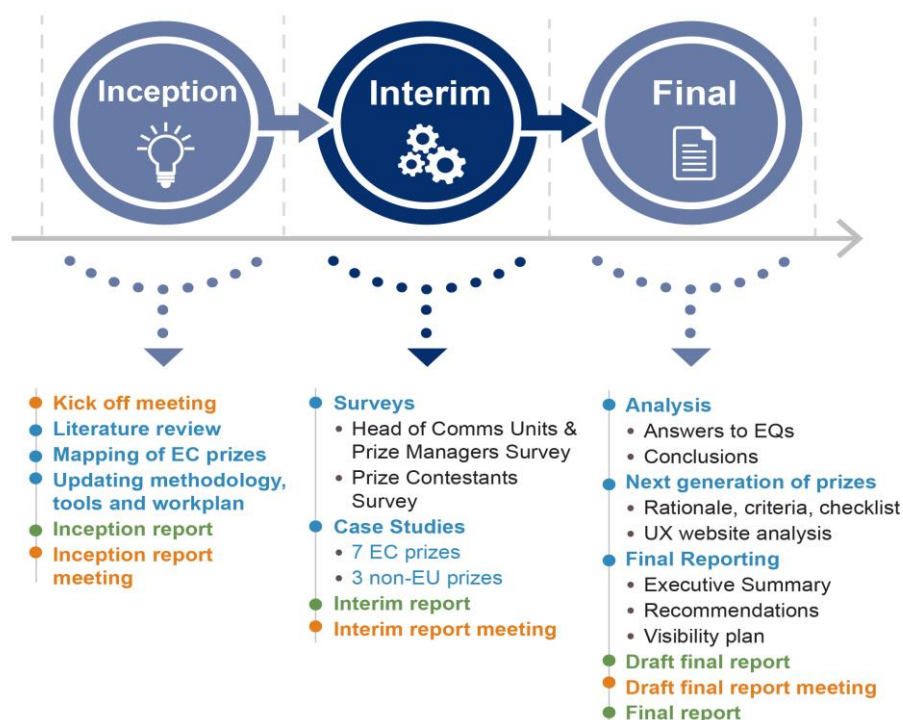
3.3. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology allowed an assessment of the breadth and depth of the EC landscape of prizes, as well as the consideration of how prizes are managed outside the European Union.

We used case studies to allow us to understand how prizes work within their individual context and these case studies were selected using a sampling strategy to allow insights into as diverse a sample of prizes as possible, as well as three external prizes. We engaged with the staff responsible for managing the prizes, as well as senior communication staff. We also spoke to prize winners and gathered feedback from a broad spectrum of winners and contestants using an on-line survey to gain their perspectives on European Commission prizes.

Our methodology supported a common understanding of lessons learned and best practices in the management of prizes, as a tool to improve the communication and enhance visibility of EU political and policy priorities. We delivered this evaluation in three phases: an inception or preparatory phase; an interim or main data collection phase and a final analysis and reporting phase.

Figure 1: Overview of our approach



Preparatory activities

The **inception phase** ensured a thorough preparation for our work, drawing on evidence and insights that supplemented the information provided as part of the tendering process. This first phase focused on:

- complementing an initial mapping of 101 existing European Commission prizes, which had been developed by DG COMM;

- identifying key insights from existing academic literature on prizes, using this evidence to:
 - develop a sampling strategy for the selection of case studies; and
 - refine our evaluation framework and develop data collection tools.

The inception phase culminated in the mapping of 181 prizes managed by DGs and Executive Agencies. The mapping led to the identification of different analytical dimensions, related to: management and categorisation of prizes.

In turn, these elements supported the selection of the prizes for the ten case studies. Case studies allowed a deep dive into a topic and its broader context, to identify lessons learnt and best practices and make recommendations that are relevant for EC approach to prizes in the future. We followed a single case study design, with each individual case study selected to allow the team to explore specific parameters, which are replicated across the landscape of prizes:

- seven EC case studies on the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) Award; the European Capital of Innovation Awards (iCapital); the European Innovation in Teaching Awards (EITA); the “I am European” school prize; the Natura 2000 Award; the TANDEM Media Awards; and the Science Technology and Arts Prize (S+T+ARTS);
- three non-EU case studies on the Bloomberg’s Mayors Challenge¹⁰, the OECD’s Decarbonising Transport Award¹¹ and the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education¹².

In addition, the literature review on prizes provided a background on EU prizes and an overview of key elements of prizes:

- what prizes are, their characteristics, why they are used;
- what makes them successful with a focus on key factors related to prizes’ recognition value or signalling, their audience, the status of the prize-giver, the existence of a monetary reward, and the frequency of prizes; and
- how to design and deliver a prize, including the prize communication and branding.

Data collection

The **interim phase** was the main data collection phase. It was dedicated to gathering feedback on existing EC prizes and complementing this with insights and analysis of prizes managed by other organisations, outside EU institutions. The methodology for data collection in this phase was desk research, interviews, surveys and social listening.

In particular, we conducted two online surveys:

- a survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers to collect feedback from EC staff on the prizes awarded by the Commission. In total, we received 56 responses to the survey out of the 116 relevant contacts which were approached to complete the survey (namely a response rate of 48.3%);
- a survey of EC prize contestants. The survey was published on the Europa website and targeted anyone who had previously entered (as an individual or as part of a group) any prize awarded by the European Commission. In total, 189 contestants responded to the survey, 80% of which were contestants in the prizes selected for the case studies and 20% from other Commission prizes.

¹⁰ [Mayors Challenge | Bloomberg Philanthropies](#)

¹¹ [Decarbonising Transport Award: Supporting ideas that cut transport CO2 in emerging economies | ITF \(itf-oecd.org\)](#)

¹² [UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education | UNESCO](#)

We conducted ten case studies (seven case studies on EC prizes and three case studies on non-EU prizes) to investigate the detailed context, design, and implementation of individual prizes, as well as the internal and external factors that have influenced their performance. We also collected evidence to confirm the communication and / or policy results and impacts, which have been achieved.

The case study approach relied on mixed methods: desk research, 46 interviews with prize managers and other EC staff, contractors and partners, winners and contestants, and other stakeholders. The case studies on EC prizes also built on the results of the contestants' survey, as well as a social listening exercise, which provided insights into the effectiveness of social media for promotion.

Challenges and mitigation strategies in data collection

We faced several challenges in data collection activities carried out during the inception and interim phases of the study. Below, we highlight the main ones as well as the activities undertaken in consultation with DG COMM to mitigate the impact of these challenges for the study.

- **Mapping of Commission prizes was challenging** due to staff knowledge gaps, difficulties in contacting staff responsible for prizes and poor response rates to requests for information. These challenges were exacerbated by changes to personnel and the discontinuation of some prizes. The mitigating actions undertaken by the study team and DG COMM increased the number of responses, and the agreed thresholds for response rates were met on 18 February 2022.
- **Selection of the prizes for case studies.** Picking appropriate prizes that would provide insights for the wider Commission was challenging. In the case of the EEN Award, the original focus was the Resilience Award, which was selected as it was a one-off prize awarded in 2020. However, the focus of this case study was later extended to include the 'regular' EEN Award, given the very limited data available for the Resilience Award. This approach also allowed the team to make a more comparative assessment of the awards to support richer insights.
- **Reliance on prize managers and access to key stakeholders.** Data collection in the case studies relied to a large extent on prize managers' and winners' availability to provide information. They were asked to provide insights about their prizes, share relevant documents and contacts to winners (for interviews), but also disseminate the survey to the contestants of their prizes. We had to respect prize managers' workloads and contestants' schedules to suit their availability, for example securing interviews with teachers before the summer break.
- **Variable approach to promotion of prizes.** Some prizes selected for case studies are widely promoted and have significant communication budgets (TANDEM, iCapital, Natura 2000, etc.). Other prizes were more for an 'internal-type audience' or did not have a budget for promotion (in particular the "I am European" school prize and EEN Award). This made the comparative analysis particularly challenging, but also raised a question about them being suitable for a social listening exercise. In consultation with DG COMM, it was agreed not to carry out social listening for the "I am European" school prize, because the promotion of the prize in social media is limited with no specific hashtag used.
- **Language coverage.** The TANDEM Media Awards raised another challenge related to social listening. This award targets countries in the Southern Neighbourhood region, which meant that we had to translate relevant content from Arabic (for the social

listening) and carry out some of the interviews with contestants in this language. We engaged an Arabic-speaking consultant to support this task.

- **Other issues with social listening and variable access to data on prize promotion including delays in receiving information.** The social listening exercise was also affected by the privacy rules for some channels (in particular Facebook and LinkedIn) and the lack of access to the social media accounts of the different prizes. Therefore, it was not possible to provide a detailed analysis on these platforms. However, some prizes¹³, for example the TANDEM Media Awards, were promoted by professional communication agencies, which provided their own detailed assessment of social media.
- **Generating survey responses:** due to GDPR, the promotion of the contestants' survey relied heavily on prize managers. As we were not sure if all of them would be able to promote it towards their contestants, we agreed with DG COMM to expand the scope of the survey to cover not only case study prizes, but all EC prizes. Eventually, the survey link was also published on DG COMM website and sent to the prize managers of other EC prizes for further dissemination. We kept the surveys open for a relatively long period (about 10 weeks, from mid-May until mid-August) to maximise its accessibility and reach a satisfactory response rate.

Data analysis and triangulation

The focus of the **final phase** was on answering the evaluation questions and formulating conclusions and recommendations. It was carried out in two steps.

- **Step 1: Analysis and judgements on current prizes**
The team completed the single source analysis of evidence, mapping the key findings against each evaluation question, and triangulating the data to answer the evaluation questions.
- **Step 2: Analysis and judgements for future prizes**
We analysed potential ways for the future of EC prizes and their promotion built on analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat (SWOT analysis) of the current Commission's approach to prizes. This included:
 - recommend rationale for using prizes as complementing, not substituting, other funding instruments;
 - consider if a broader / more extensive operational definition of what should be considered a prize is needed;
 - develop a framework to support decision making on prizes to ensure a more strategic use of the prizes, including creation of a checklist with concrete conditions to be considered before setting up a new prize and a guidance to support implementation of prizes, to provide the Commission services and agencies with 1) a framework for the rationalisation of existing prizes to improve value for money and internal coherence and overall impact, 2) ways to strengthen visibility at corporate level and 3) insights for prize managers to enhance the communication impact of individual prizes;
 - recommend concrete ways for how to increase the visibility and the communication potential of existing prizes.

Our multi-disciplinary prize expert panel supported the analytical phase.

¹³ We received an assessment of social media performance for the TANDEM Media Awards and a social media report on paid activities for the EITA Award.

In addition, our digital and social media experts developed a user experience (UX) audit of the prizes' websites, with a view to assessing usability-related elements as well as elements related to performance and potential improvements.

During the analytical phase, the evaluation team organised an expert workshop, intended to support Commission's future decision-making on prizes and the rationalisation of existing and future prizes. The experts provided feedback on the recommendations for the future.

4. Overview of European Commission prizes

4.1. Background

While prizes and awards have been used by European institutions since the establishment of the European Economic Community in the 1950s, their use has changed over time. In the 1970s and 1980s, culture and media prizes emerged, which aimed to recognise contributions to the development of a common European identity. In the 1980s and 1990s, prizes were launched reflecting European common values, such as for human rights concerns. Since 2000, awards have been used to support an increasing range of policy domains, with the majority of existing prizes created during this period.¹⁴ Some of these developments reflect international trends.¹⁵

Prizes administered by the Commission

European Commission prizes and awards come in lots of different shapes and sizes. Commission prizes reward individuals and groups, as well as networks, including but not limited to students and researchers, school children and educators, journalists, businesses and cities. Some prizes offer a purely symbolic reward and others provide a monetary incentive. Some reward past achievements and others set contestants new challenges. The landscape of prizes is diverse, which makes rationalisation particularly challenging. Nevertheless, a distinction can be made between prizes used by the European Commission as communication vehicles and those used as policy vehicles.

- Prizes intended as **communication vehicles** seek to showcase and bring visibility to a policy. For instance the objective of the TANDEM Media Awards is to create awareness and positive perceptions of the EU within the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood region. This prize is used as a communication vehicle, to promote the EU and its policies abroad.
- Prizes intended as **policy vehicles** seek to generate a policy breakthrough or result. For instance, the Horizon prize for better use of antibiotics sought to develop a test to identify patients with respiratory tract infections. This prize was used as a policy vehicle to generate an innovative breakthrough within the policy area of the DG.

Prizes used as communication vehicle are mostly **recognition prizes**. This term refers to prizes that reward past achievements or recognise work, which has already been performed. Two thirds of the prizes awarded by the Commission are recognition prizes, which indicates that most prizes are intended as communication vehicle. Prizes which are intended as policy vehicle are usually **challenge prizes**, a term which refers to prizes, which set a challenge for contestants and reward the participant(s) that most effectively meet the challenge. 30% of the Commission prizes are challenge prizes. The remaining 7% of prizes are **hybrid prizes**, which combine elements of both recognition and challenge prizes.

¹⁴ François Foret and Jana Vargovčíková, 2021, The Prize of Governance. How the European Union Uses Symbolic Distinctions to Mobilize Society and Foster Competitiveness

¹⁵ There has also been an increasing use of innovation prizes in the USA in recent years. In 2010, the www.challenge.gov platform was created to enable all American federal agencies to publish contests on-line. Over 740 challenges were launched between 2010 and 2018, with a total of €210 million in prize money offered by different federal agencies.

Beyond this distinction, both types of prizes use promotion to raise awareness of the prize, as well as of the contests and the winners, which raises awareness of the policy and helps to reinforce relationships within the stakeholder community. In that sense, all prizes have an embedded communication element. Two intervention logics are presented below to further illustrate the distinction between these two types of prizes.

Figure 2: Intervention logic of a challenge prize intended as a policy vehicle

Policy objective: to support the implementation of an EC priority / EC policy...					
Prize overarching objective: to fill a gap / meet an unmet need in a policy area.					
Specific objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs*	Results*	Impact
1. To stimulate policy stakeholders to generate a new activity / solutions / innovations within XX timeframe 2. Increase the nr / quality of entries / programme applicants from XX Member States / stakeholder groups 3. Increase volume of take ups & discussion of policy breakthrough by stakeholder /international community within XX timeframe	• Prize budget of ..., including: ○ Prize money of: ... ○ Prize management: ... ○ Communication activities: ... ○ Travel and accommodation: ... ○ Other elements: ... <u>[add amounts]</u> • Human resources [if not included above] in the DG and external stakeholders (partners, contractors, other EU institutions) • The work of the jury etc. <u>[add relevant and adjust]</u>	Promotion • Press release / media activities • Social media campaigns and activities • Information provided to Reps, National Contact Points, etc. • Information on website • Video / digital content • Promotional packs • Engaging previous winners / jury ambassadors / influencers) Award • Organisation of award processes (application process, selection etc) • Q/A session on award process • Organisation of award ceremony • Organisation of other events <u>(if relevant)</u>	Pre-award promotion • Nr online views of press releases • Social media ○ nr impressions / nr mentions / reactions • Nr video views • Nr of prize webpage visits • Influencer /previous winners use of promotional packs <u>[check communication KPIs; add expected values]</u> Award • Number of entries • Award ceremony: [add title and location] ○ Number of attendees • Winners and runners up joining alumni network <u>[if relevant]</u> Post-award promotion <u>[as above]</u>	Promotion • Media coverage at EU / national level • Number of engagements per post and total [shares, likes, comments] [For Instagram Stories: completion rate] • Overall usefulness of the video for the users • Engagement rate [engagements per impressions] • Increased stakeholder awareness of a policy / programme / problem evidenced by survey Award • Satisfaction of winners • Strengthened capacity of contestant / winners • Provide benefits to winners: ○ Monetary award ○ Participation in award ceremony and topical debate ○ Increased networking ○ Opportunities for cooperation <u>[add relevant and adjust]</u> • Benefits for EC <u>[add relevant]</u>	<u>[depending on prize, examples include:]</u> • Increased awareness of prize in stakeholder community. • Innovations / breakthroughs developed and perceived as very high value by stakeholder community. • Increased debate / knowledge exchange and involvement of new and existing stakeholders • Commission understanding of policy challenges & relations with stakeholders enhanced • New collaborations, including involving new participants, developed to implement policy breakthrough / best practices. • Prize money used to further progress in specific field

Candidates	Risks
<i>[Add based on eligibility criteria and categories of the prize]</i>	- Challenges for contestants in participating: ... <i>[add, e.g. time needed to prepare application]</i> - Challenges for EC: ... <i>[add, e.g. underrepresentation of MSs]</i> - Challenges for other stakeholders involved: ... <i>[add if relevant, e.g. capacity issues]</i>

Figure 3: Intervention logic of a recognition prize intended as a communication vehicle

Policy objective: to support EC priority or a policy					
Prize overall objective: To improve awareness / perceptions of... (a policy/activity/network/problem) with a view to changing a behaviour					
Specific objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs*	Results*	Impact
- To create, expand or deepen EC and/or stakeholder relationships/networks on specific policy topics year on year. - Increase the number / quality of prize contestants / programme applicants from stakeholders in XX Member States in each contest / programme. - Promote take up of new guidelines / best practices developed through EU support by XX stakeholders in XX each year.	- Prize budget of ..., including: - Prize money of: ... - Prize management: ... - Communication activities: ... - Travel and accommodation: ... - Other elements: ... - Human resources [if not included above] in the DG and external stakeholders (partners, contractors, other EU institutions) - The work of the jury, etc. - Support from NCPs	Promotion - Media activities - EU media and social media campaigns and activities - National level events and media promotion - Information on prize and policy webpage - Engaging previous winners / jury members as ambassadors / influencers - Promotion pack for winners / NCPs, etc. Award - Organisation of award processes (application process, selection etc) - Q/A sessions - Organisation of award ceremony - Organisation of other events <i>(if relevant)</i>	Promotion - Online views of media releases - Social media: - nr impressions, nr posts / reactions - Nr video views / downloads - Nr posts winners / influencers using materials - Website visits Award - Number of applications - Award ceremony: [add title and location] - Number of attendees	Promotion - EU and national media coverage - Number of engagements per post and total [shares, likes, comments] [For Instagram Stories: completion rate] - Overall usefulness of the video for the users - Engagement rate [engagements per impressions] - Downloads / shares of best practices by stakeholder groups / organisationsIncreased stakeholders - Direct contacts and discussion between stakeholders / and with the Commission on prize topic Award - Satisfaction of winners - Number of high quality applications / entries - Strengthened capacity / visibility of contestant / winners - Provide benefits to winners: - Monetary award - Participation in award ceremony	- Increased awareness of prize in stakeholder community. - Enhanced the relationship between the EU and a group of stakeholders supports positive perceptions of EU - Greater balance in high-quality prize entries and generated new opportunities for winners - Increased use of / reference to best practices by stakeholders

Evaluation of prizes of the Commission

				○ Increased networking ○ Feelings of accomplishment • Benefits for EC	
Candidates				Risks	
<i>[Add based on eligibility criteria and categories of the prize]</i>				• Challenges for contestants in participating: ... <i>[add, e.g. time needed to prepare application]</i> • Challenges for EC: ... <i>[add, e.g. imbalances in MSs involved]</i> • Challenges for other stakeholders involved: ... <i>[add if relevant, e.g. capacity]</i>	

* At output and result level, the intervention logic templates only includes selected key indicators for promotion. There may be a need to add more indicators, depending on a specific prize and its communication activities, based on *Key performance indicators* presented in Annex 2 to this report.

In 2018, DG COMM carried out a *mapping of prizes and awards* managed/ implemented by the European Commission. Based on this, the evaluation team undertook a systematic mapping of the prizes and awards managed by DGs and Executive Agencies. A total of **181 prizes were identified** – from Horizon prizes awarding hundreds of thousands of Euros (and up to €10 million in at least one case), to small prizes with low monetary or purely symbolic rewards. Overall, most of the EC prizes are managed by a small number of DGs.

- **Management modality** (i.e. ratio of prizes managed by DGs, agencies and those co-managed): Most of the EC prizes (87%) are managed by a DG while 7% are managed by an Executive Agency. Only 6% of the EC prizes are co-managed, either by two DGs together (1%) or by a DG and an Executive Agency (5%).
- **Concentration of prizes** (i.e. distribution of prizes within the Commission): The majority of the Commission's prizes (64%) are awarded by a minority (14%) of DGs (DG NEAR (37), DG EMPL (23), DG RTD (18), DG GROW (17), DG EAC (12) and DG ENV (9) which award all together 116 prizes). The remaining 65 EC prizes (36%) are awarded by 38 DGs and Executive Agencies. Overall, most DGs and Executive Agencies award only one (52%) or two (14%) prizes.

The management of EC prizes presents the following key features.

- **Longevity** (i.e. number of years for which the prizes have been awarded): most (73%) of the ongoing prizes were first implemented in the last 10 years and 41% within the last four years (i.e. between 2019-2022).
- **Frequency** (i.e. intervals at which the EC prizes are awarded): two-thirds (66%) of the prizes are re-occurring, most on a yearly basis.
- **Target group** (i.e. the intended audience of the prizes): all EC prizes had eligibility criteria and most (83%) identified specific audience segments as target groups within the prize design.
- **Human resources** (i.e. number of Full Time Equivalent staff (FTEs) per year at the EC mobilised for the management and implementation of the prizes): half of the prizes (50%) require less than one FTE and 44% between one and two FTE.
- **Prize budget** (i.e. total yearly EC budget used for the management and implementation of the prizes): the EC budget per prize has a wide range but remain below 100,000 EUR for most prizes (63%).
- **Partnership** (i.e. percentage of prizes implemented with partners): almost half of the prizes (48%) were implemented with partners but only a third of the prizes had a grant agreement with the partners. The partners include civil society organisations, associations, and industries as well as local authorities and national governments.
- **Communication** (i.e. communication measures set up to increase the prizes outreach): most of the prizes (93%) have communication measures in place to increase the outreach and recognition of the prize. Similarly, most prizes (84%) include an award ceremony.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** (i.e. measures in place to collect and analyse data on the result and impact of the prizes): two thirds of the EC prizes mapped collect analytics on offline engagement as well as online and social media engagement. Most prizes gather some form of feedback.
- **Most (75%) EC prizes have a monetary incentive.** But the incentives vary greatly, and the analysis shows that, while the EC provides monetary incentives, most EC prizes (68%) either have a low monetary value (below 2,500 EUR) or no monetary value. The range of cash incentives ranges from the hundreds up to EUR 10 million.

5. Answers to the Evaluation Questions

This chapter provides an assessment of the Evaluation Questions set in the ToR for this evaluation, based on the data that was collected in earlier stages of the study. The analysis in this section is based on the triangulation of the data from the following sources.

- **Mapping exercise:** the analysis of the mapping of 181 EC prizes in existence at the time of the mapping.
- **Desk research:** literature review on prizes and their evaluation in academic and professional literature.
- **An online survey of Heads of Communication (HoC) and prize managers (PMs),** which generated a total of 56 responses (11 from HoC, 36 from PM, and 9 from other respondents).
- **An online survey with contestants and winners of European Commission prizes,** which generated 189 respondents.
- **Ten case studies:** the findings from seven case studies on prizes of the European Commission and three case studies on non-EU prizes.
- **Social listening:** findings from a social listening exercise.

Each Evaluation Question (EQ) is assessed on the basis of different judgement criteria, which were developed in the inception phase of the study.

5.1. Relevance

The evaluation criterion relevance looks at the relationship between the needs and problems at the time of introducing the intervention and during its implementation. Relevance also looks at the relationship between the current and future needs and problems in the EU and the objectives of the intervention. Relevance analysis requires a consideration of how the objectives of an EU intervention correspond to the wider EU policy goals and priorities.¹⁶

Here we present key findings in relation to the relevance of the use of prizes by the European Commission. The analysis of relevance considers:

- the extent to which the EC prizes are relevant to the policies they support, the Commission's political priorities and their general political and social context (EQ 1.1);
- how the objectives of the prizes correspond to the needs/characteristics of the target audiences (EQ1.2); and
- the extent to which prizes' contests are relevant to the interests and communication habits of their intended target audiences, and the extent to which they have the potential to attract the attention of and engage these audiences (EQ 1.3).

¹⁶ European Commission, Better Regulation: guidelines and toolbox, available at: [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/).

To answer these Evaluation Questions, we considered a set of judgement criteria, which were defined during the preparatory phase of the study.

EQ 1.1: To what extent are the prizes relevant to the policies they support, to the Commission's political priorities and to the general political and social context in which they took place?

Answer to the evaluation question

There is a decentralised approach to the management of prizes in the European Commission prizes, with different Directorates-General and Executive Agencies taking responsibility for the design and roll out of prizes. In consequence, all European Commission prizes are aligned with the specific EU policy objectives, which they support. Contestants and winners indicate that they understand the EU policies that underpin the prizes in which they are involved.

While the European Commission's six political priorities (a European Green Deal, promoting our European way of life, an economy that works for the people, etc.) have been developed at corporate and/or central level, many prizes have not in fact been designed to directly support these priorities. For example, prize objectives are generally set up to raise awareness or generate a very specific EU policy achievement. However, the link between the objectives of a prize and its specific policy area can be easily tracked back to one or more of the priorities.

Within the European Commission, the correspondence between prizes and political priorities has not been defined as a requirement, nor has any need to ensure equal amounts of coverage of each priority. In consequence, there are many prizes, which support the first political priority 'a European Green Deal' and few that support other priorities, such as 'a new push for European democracy'. This could be a point for future consideration. In consequence, the lack of strategic focus is reflected in Heads of Communication responses to our survey. Some were unsure about the link between prizes in their DG and the political priorities.

As all types of prizes are a vehicle to enhance a specific EU policy area, they can be considered to correspond to the wider societal context. Recognition prizes reward and raise awareness of past policy achievements and challenge prizes set a new policy challenge and promote the results of the contest. Some challenge prizes (which are designed to support the achievement of a specific breakthrough or policy result) focus on highly topical issues in the political and/or societal context, for example the Horizon prize for better use of antibiotics¹⁷. There may be more scope for prizes to do this by changing prize categories from time-to-time, which could also help prizes to capture the media's attention and increase awareness of the prize among stakeholders and the wider EU community.

To answer this question, we consider evidence relating to three judgement criteria (JC) on the extent of relevance of:

- the objectives of prizes for the European Commission's political priorities (JC1);
- the objectives of prizes for specific thematic policies (JC2);
- prizes' contributions to wider political and societal issues (JC 3).

¹⁷ [Better use of antibiotics \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/better-use-antibiotics)

JC 1: Extent to which the objectives of the prizes (both the overall objectives, as well as the specific focus in a given year) support the Commission's six current political priorities.

Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies

Staff feedback and desk research suggest that EC prizes are supportive of the European Commission's political priorities. Yet, there are some nuances to this view.

Whilst only a small number of Heads of Communication responded to the evaluation [survey](#), most of these respondents (six out of nine) agreed that the prizes in their DG support the Commission's political priorities. However, one Head of Communication indicated that the prizes awarded by the DG or Agency were 'very unsuccessful' at supporting the Commission's political priorities and pursuing policy objectives and two respondents indicated that they did not actually know¹⁸. This implies that there may be some doubt that all EC prizes are supportive of the current political priorities.

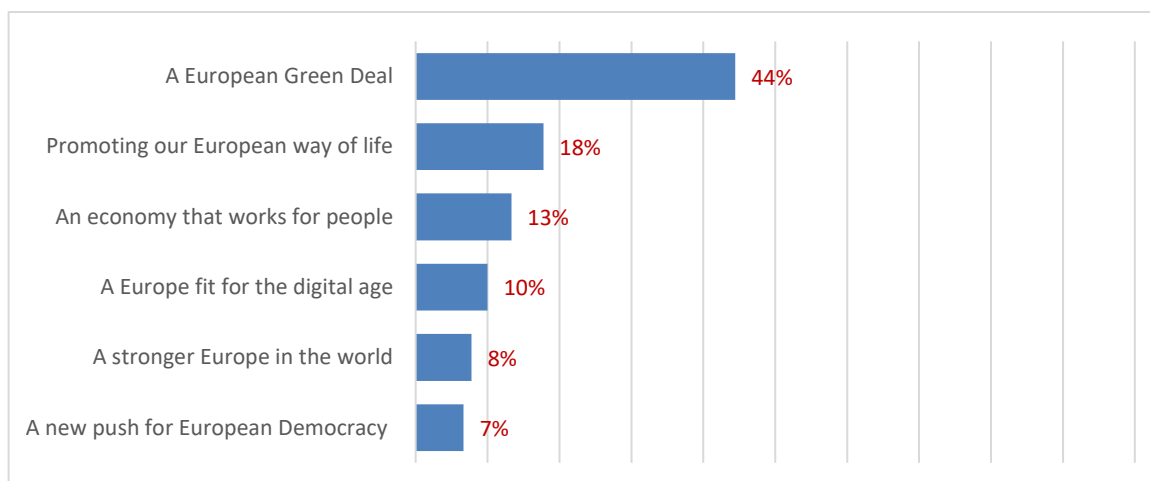
European Commission priorities 2019-2024

- A European Green Deal
- Promoting our European way of life
- An economy that works for people
- A Europe fit for the digital age
- A stronger Europe in the world
- A new push for European Democracy

Out of the 119 prizes in the [mapping](#) for which data was provided, the majority (76%) contribute to at least one Commission priority (58% contributed to one Commission priority and 18% to multiple). In most cases (76% of the mapped prizes), the objectives set for EC prizes are framed so as to make a direct contribution to the current political priorities set by the Commission for 2019-2024. It can be observed that in cases where prize objectives do not directly recall the Commission's political objectives, these are typically framed to contribute to other thematic policies, which themselves feed into the Commission's six political priorities.

Out of the 76% of Commission prizes whose objectives are set to contribute to at least one political priority, the largest proportion contribute to a European Green Deal (44%), followed by promoting our European way of life (18%) and an economy that works for people (13%). The least represented political priorities were a Europe fit for the digital age (10%), a stronger Europe in the world (8%) and a new push for European democracy (7%).

¹⁸ Unfortunately, no supporting comments were provided to explain these answers.

Figure 4: Prizes contributing towards the EC priorities (N=90)

Source: EC Prize mapping

The seven EC prizes **case studies** provide concrete examples of how prizes are supportive of the Commission's political priorities. In all cases, as described below, the intention behind each of these prizes is to contribute to policies that support at least one political priority, and some prizes can be considered to contribute to multiple political priorities. The extent of alignment relates to the fact that European Commission political priorities are broad and encompassing. They can be understood as broad umbrella themes into which more specific EU thematic policy priorities fit.

Box 1: Alignment of case study prizes with EC political priorities

- The TANDEM Media Awards aims to improve awareness and perceptions of EU cooperation and policies in the Southern Neighbourhood region, which is aligned with the Commission's priority of "promoting our European way of life" and "a stronger Europe in the world".
- Natura 2000's goal is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats, in line with "a European Green Deal".
- EITA's policy objective falls under "communication on achieving the European Education Area (EEA) by 2025", improving cooperation between Member States to help all EU citizens benefit from the EU's education and training offer. Similarly, the "I Am European" school prize aligns indirectly with "promoting our European way of life" in the policy area of education and training.

However, our assessment identifies the importance of distinguishing between intentions and the actual stated objectives, given that prizes are focused on generating results, which should reflect the objectives set. Our analysis of the actual objectives of the sampled EC prizes, including the EC prize case studies and the objectives harvested through the mapping exercise, confirms that in all cases prizes themselves have very broad objectives. Furthermore, in many cases prize objectives and their specific criteria (some of which change year-on-year) are focused on very specific policy goals, rather than the EC political priorities, as highlighted below.

Box 2: Case study prize objectives

EEN Award: objectives

- Promote EEN activities and the support its member provide to SMEs.
- Showcase the success of SMEs that have received support from the EEN.
- Recognise the work of EEN members and disseminate good practice of supporting SMEs within the Network.

S+T+ARTS Prize: objectives

- To award the most pioneering collaborations and results in the field of creativity and innovation at the crossings of science and technology with the arts.
- Award the most pioneering collaborations and results in the field of creativity and innovation at the crossings of science and technology with the arts.

iCapital Awards: objectives

- To recognise European cities for their role as catalysers of the local innovation ecosystem and stimulate new activities aimed at boosting game-changing innovation.
- Recognise European cities for their role as catalysers of the local innovation ecosystem and stimulate new activities aimed at boosting game-changing innovation.

Key findings on this JC

It is hard to assess the extent to which prizes' objectives support the European Commission's political priorities, given that any assessment largely relates to a comparative assessment of the phrasing of objectives and priorities, and does not necessarily show a clear and direct link. The comparison is also somewhat vague given that political priorities are described in very broad terms and the objectives set for prizes are also described in broad terms.

However, all EC prizes are intended to support specific EU policy objectives, which are themselves supportive of the EC political priorities. On this basis, it can be assessed that a majority of prizes are in some way supportive of the Commission's political objectives although not in equal measure. There appears to be much greater focus on supporting the EU Green Deal than the new push for the European democracy. The fact that at least three Heads of Communication highlighted that they were either not sure whether the prizes implemented by their DG support the political priorities, and one indicated that prizes in a particular DG were very unsuccessful at doing this, suggests that there may be some scope for improvement. However, to date, there is no guidance for DGs or Executive Agencies as to whether correspondence with the current set of political priorities is in fact an institutional expectation.

JC 2: Extent to which the objectives of specific awards are relevant to supporting the current policy priorities in their specific EU policy area.

Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies

This judgement criterion is intended to assess the relevance of the objectives to meeting policy needs, which is challenging given the diversity of policy topics which provide the focus for EC prizes, and the diversity of objectives, which describe the goals of each individual prize. It is beyond the scope of the methodology employed for this evaluation to make a detailed assessment of each individual prize. However, some key findings arise from our analysis of the evidence.

Based on desk research and interviews with staff, it seems that European Commission prizes are designed to support a managing DGs' policy needs and, consequently, attract target group(s) relevant to these policies (in nearly all cases, EC prizes focus on rewarding stakeholders of the relevant policy areas rather than general target groups). This is confirmed in the **HoC survey**, where seven out of nine respondents agreed that their prizes are "generating stakeholders' awareness of/engagement on the EU's contribution to the concerned policy area". Furthermore, most (67%) respondents to the **prize managers' survey** indicated that their prizes had achieved their purpose "to a large extent".

Nonetheless, prize managers who responded to the **survey** also found that the main success factors considered for their prizes, included the fact that they have a well-defined audience and clear, narrow, and relevant objectives that align with stakeholders' needs.

However, our analysis also suggests that the degree of direct relevance to specific policy areas relates, in many cases, to prizes' capacity as a vehicle to promote or raise visibility of the specific policy (i.e. communication through the prize) and not as a vehicle to generate a new result, which improves the policy landscape.

The **mapping** of EC prizes identified several prizes, which are used for a very specific policy purpose, for example the use of hackathons and similar competitions¹⁹ to generate ideas to support policy developments. There is also a series of Horizon Europe prizes which set a policy challenge and use a prize as a vehicle to address that challenge. It was not feasible, nor within the capacity of this evaluation to assess the extent that such prizes contribute to generating specific policy outcomes, but a general finding is that there is a sometimes inconsistent follow-up of prizes following the announcement of awards. We also note here that there is some debate in the public arena on whether prizes are the best mechanism to tackle specific policy challenges.²⁰

The Horizon prize for better use of antibiotics provides an example of an EC challenge prize. The aim of this prize is to develop a rapid test to identify, at the point of care, patients with upper respiratory tract infections that can be treated safely without antibiotics. established scientist in the field or from an innovative newcomer. The incentive for this prize is EUR 1 million.

See: [Better use of antibiotics \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/better-use-antibiotics)

The iCapital Awards reviewed as part of the **EC case studies** can be considered as a hybrid combining challenge and recognition aspects, with some award criteria setting a challenge, e.g. 'to support development of an innovation ecosystem', and some which recognise past

¹⁹ For example, DG Competition's student challenge to shape competition policy in the era of digitisation

²⁰ [The Climate Question - Are prizes the best solution for climate change? - BBC Sounds](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55888888)

achievement, ie ‘positive innovations which have contributed to transforming the city.’ iCapital has set out a pathway for post award follow-up through the establishment of an alumni network, but there is some internal discussion as to whether this prize should stipulate how prize money should be spent.

However, in most cases, EC prizes tend to serve a communication purpose to draw attention to a policy. The **mapping** of EC prizes suggests that most prizes (65%) are recognition prizes i.e. they reward achievements that have already been made. The implication is that these prizes are largely communication vehicles. Drawing on the evidence from the case studies, the communication role of prizes is reflected in their set objectives, which typically describe:

- raising awareness
- recognising excellence
- encouraging networking
- promoting and thereby strengthening a network
- showcasing achievements
- promoting best practice.

Despite this, a review of **EC case study** prizes’ documentation confirms that there is sometimes an expectation within the DGs and Executive Agencies that prizes will also generate policy results. For example, the EITA has three objectives, two objectives are intended to ‘highlight the value’ and to ‘generate visibility’ and the third objectives is: ‘to make a career in education more appealing’, yet this objective appears to go beyond the communication potential of this award. Taking this into account there may be some overestimations of what prizes are really able to achieve, and this is at the centre of decisions on whether or not a prize is the right vehicle.

Key findings on this JC

All EC prizes are set within a context of a specific EU policy area. Most of the objectives set for prizes are focused on supporting a policy area by drawing attention to specific topics, by engaging directly with a sample of relevant policy stakeholders, with the aim of creating awareness within the wider stakeholder group.

It was not possible to assess the extent to which EC challenge prizes succeed in actually shaping a policy area and/or bringing new policy results to the table, given that this is the job of the specialist juries who are engaged to judge prizes and awards. This specialist question is at the centre of decisions, relating to whether or not a prize is the most effective policy stimulation mechanism, which goes beyond the scope of this evaluation.

It is important that DGs and Executive Agencies set realistic and targeted objectives that reflect what their intended prizes can actually achieve to avoid a potential mismatch between expectations and intentions and results. There also appears to be a need for more consistent follow up (there are numerous formats for this) to allow a better assessment of the extent that prizes’ objectives are generated the intended impacts to support EU specific policies.

JC 3: Extent to which the prizes were explicitly focused on addressing topical issues in the wider general political and social context.

Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies

This judgement criterion considers the extent to which prizes are relevant within wider political and social contexts. As highlighted, all European Commission prizes sit within the context of a specific policy area. Each specific policy is intended to support positive changes, within the wider political and social context. This being the case, it can be assessed that prizes are broadly relevant in this sense.

At the same time, as highlighted, the relevance of a majority of EC prizes that address topical issues relates more to their capacity as a vehicle to put the spotlight on a topic rather than their capacity to address a topical issue directly. Challenge prizes stand out as exceptions to this point, for example on the use of antibiotics illustrated above. However, all prizes support their policy area irrespective of whether they relate to generating visibility or supporting a policy achievement, because they engage with the relevant policy stakeholder group, which further amplifies direct engagement with the policy.

Our review of the seven prizes included as **case studies** confirms that this assertion is correct. All seven reviewed prizes are in some way relevant to society in terms of themes or topics they support, such as Natura 2000 which covers long-term survival of threatened species and habitats and is clearly linked to the environment and EITA which recognises achievements in the education field through the Erasmus+ programme.

However, some prizes are highly specific and very ‘niche’ to the extent that it may be harder for lay people to understand their significance to broad political and/or societal issues²¹. An example from the prize case studies is the S+T+ARTS Prize, which focuses on the interface between art and technology. This is likely to be of relevance to broader societal issues, but it may not be easy for non-specialists to identify how this is the case.

With regards to setting topical objectives, our review of the seven **EC case study** prizes identified that these did not tend to set year-on-year objectives, for example to adapt the prize to an unexpected or breaking news topic. It is assumed that many prizes may tend to take a similar approach, i.e. maintain the same objectives, at least for the lifespan of the programme or policy to which they relate, for example a four-year period. One-off prizes are the clear exception, as they are set up to focus on a specific issue.

However, we also identified that some of the case study prizes, occasionally developed specific categories, as a way to refocus the prize and/or in response to stakeholder feedback (Natura 2000). An example here is the EEN Resilience award category, which was set up as a one-off award to reward SMEs that had adapted to the COVID-19 crisis. This highlights the potential of prizes to put a spotlight on specific issues.

The results of the **Heads of Communication survey** suggest that these staff tend to view the prizes as being relevant to topical issues, in the wider general political and social context. Six out of the nine respondents to the HoC survey agreed that their prizes are “raising awareness about a certain issue/promoting certain activity or behaviour”. Also, six

²¹ These types of very specialised prizes sit clearly within a specialist stakeholder context. For this reason, these prizes may be more challenging to communicate to non-specialists.

out of nine indicated that they can “promote interest and engage citizens in policy topics”. However, there was some dissatisfaction with this point at least by one HoC, which is a point for further consideration.

Key findings on this JC

All EC prizes focus on supporting EU policies, which are relevant to political and societal issues. It seems likely that there is general acceptance within the European Commission that this is the case. However, whilst prizes are topical because they engage with stakeholders on relevant policy topics, their societal relevance is not always explicit. This assertion relates directly to the topic of the prize. Natura 2000 and EITA are examples of direct relevance with their focus on environment and education.

The Commission uses one-off prizes as a mechanism to allow a focus on a specific topic. However, another mechanism, which may not be fully exploited by the Commission is the capacity to focus specific prize categories on urgent or very ‘hot’ topics. This approach may help the Commission to generate wider awareness. It may also help to reinforce the value of and trust in the Commission because it is seen to focus on current issues.

Conversely, drawing a stakeholder groups attention to very topic issues within an on-going prize, may be a way of reducing the loss of resources on one-off prizes, given their limited sustainability / impact on building the relationship with a particular stakeholder group.

EQ1.2: How well do the objectives of the prize correspond to the needs/ characteristics of the target audiences?

Answer to the evaluation question

Prize objectives correspond relatively well to their target audiences. All European Commission prizes are designed with specific policy audiences in mind, and feedback from contestants and winners confirms that they consider the topics to be relevant.

Many prizes that reward past achievements select winners from a pool of projects/ initiatives that have already received funding from an EU programme. This confirms the relevance of the objectives of these prizes to their target audiences. Our limited feedback on the other main type of prize, challenge prizes, suggests that the DGs and Executive Agencies are satisfied that the level of challenge is appropriate.

However, whilst some prizes are rolled out following a test pilot phase, the collection of feedback upfront to support the design of prizes is not common practice. It is assumed that this is because DGs and Executive Agencies consider that they know their own stakeholders, yet they miss an opportunity to make their prizes correspond more closely to stakeholder expectations, and this may also impact levels of prize awareness within the stakeholder community.

One of the indicators that prizes indeed meet target stakeholders needs is the number of entries received (this may be less relevant for prizes for which nominations are put forward). The setting of appropriate categories within individual prizes appears to be the main opportunity to ensure that prizes meet stakeholder needs. Categories need to be clearly expressed to avoid any potential misunderstandings. In terms of numbers of entries, it can be expected that numbers should stay the same and/or increase over time, in relation to the size of the pool or potential contestants and the effectiveness of promotion at increasing awareness of individual prizes. However, feedback suggests that most prizes could do better at raising awareness within their target communities. Also, there are challenges relating to the geographic spread of applicants for EU-wide prizes, with some countries and/or much less represented than others.

With regards to rewards for winners, feedback suggests that participants are not particularly focused on the amount of money provided, when there is a cash prize or a prize with a monetary value. Yet, some nuance is required here. When contestants are required to make a significant investment, there is an expectation that this will be recompensed. Also, findings confirm that contestants expect that rewards, including symbolic rewards will meet their expectations of the EU, i.e. confirm the quality of the EU brand. The evaluation identified a few examples, which suggested that this is not always exactly the case²².

It was noted that staff managing prizes do not always know whether the amount of reward provided meets expectations. The lack of systematic check-in target stakeholder groups is a gap here. This issue maybe exacerbated when the Commission's relationship with contestants is more distant, for example in the one third of prizes which are managed by an external contractor via a grant. The absence of consistent feedback and/or use of monitoring and evaluation makes it challenging for DGs and Executive Agencies to assess whether their stakeholders are satisfied and that their needs are met in relation to the amount of money, if offered, and the format of any symbolic awards.

To answer this question on relevance to contestants' needs, we consider three judgement criteria on contestants' perceptions of the extent to which:

- prizes are relevant as an incentive to attract contestants (JC1);
- prizes' rewards in terms of their valued for target groups (JC 2);
- eligibility criteria, requirements, and numbers of categories are relevant to stakeholders (JC 3).

Six concepts competed to win the recent Horizon prize for the cleanest engine of the future. From these six, two submitted working prototypes by the deadline. Neither prototype met the minimum threshold of the competition, so the prize was not awarded. Not awarding a prize in this situation helps to maintain the prestige of the Horizon brand. See: [Cleanest engine of the future \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/cleanest-engine)

JC 1: Extent to which the framing of the prizes: challenge / recognition (i. e. specific challenge set / type of recognition) was an appropriate incentive to attract prize contestants.

Sources of evidence

- Contestants' survey
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies
- Non-EU prizes case studies

A first point to note is that the design of prizes does not always lend itself to incentivising contestants. This is because not all prizes are awarded to contestants (including individuals, groups and organisations). Some prizes reward individuals and organisations, which are nominated by third parties, with the following implications.

- When prizes select winners from contestants that submit a prize entry, the framing of the incentive offered by the prize is important. People will not put effort into submitting an entry if they consider that there will be no benefit in doing so.
- When prizes select winners from nominations, having an incentive to enter the prize is only relevant when the nominations come from individuals or organisations that are external to the European Commission. This implies that they find out about the prize and decide that it is worth nominating someone/something else for the prize. In this case, there is a need to ensure that there is a clear incentive, like the need to incentivise prize contestants. However, when nominations are made by organisations linked to the European Commission or based on previously selected project for EU funding²³, then the importance of the incentives offered by prizes relates more to winners' perceptions than to contestants' perceptions of the value offered.

Evidence from the [survey of prize contestants](#) (see below) suggests that there are two main reasons, which motivate people to enter European Commission prizes:

- having an achievement recognised;
- getting personal and/or institutional recognition by the European Commission.

Most respondents to the [contestants' survey](#) indicated that the EU prize, which they knew, had a similar level of prestige or more prestige than prizes on similar topics, awarded by other organisations. However, circa one in four respondents (28%) indicated that the EC

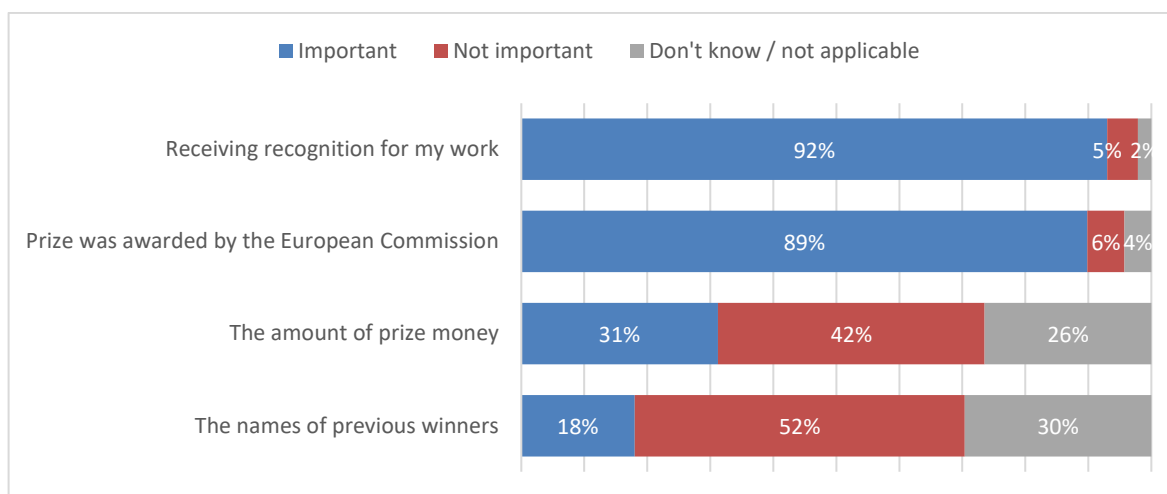
²² There were some spelling errors on certificates, some feedback that a prize had not made any significant difference, and some surprise about the amount of prize money offered.

²³ For example, in the case of the EITA award, where national Erasmus+ agencies selected Erasmus+ funded schools.

prize was less prestigious. Whilst the EU brand is strong and feedback confirms that it is viewed as denoting high quality, this does not necessarily equate to EC prizes being the most prestigious.

Respondents to this survey indicated that the amount of prize money was not the main incentive but drawing on interviews including in the **EC case studies** and **non-EU case studies**, we suggest that prize money is likely to provide an additional incentive, in some cases. The survey implies that this may be the case for nearly a third of contestants. Furthermore, we assume that a financial reward is a 'must' for prizes, which require contestants to invest in a significant challenge given the time and money that may be required to respond to the challenge, although this evaluation did not gain access to evidence to confirm this point.

Figure 5: When deciding whether to enter/apply for the prize, how important were/are these following factors? (N = 189)



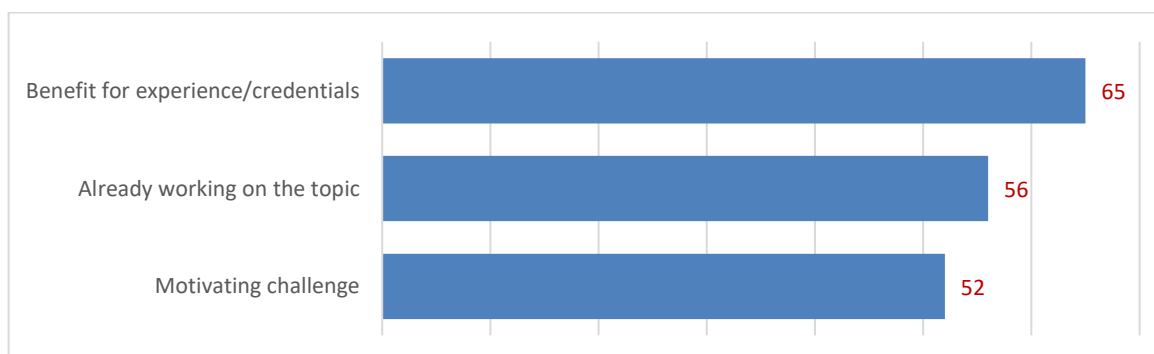
Source: Survey of contestants

Individual contestants, who responded to survey were also asked about the importance of three further factors in influencing their decision to submit an entry to the prize:

- relevance of the topic
- motivation relating to the challenge set
- potential to enhance a CV or career.

Of these three, the relevance of the topic to the individual came out as the most important factor following the motivation relating to the challenge. Meanwhile, the survey results suggest that the motivation to apply is different for groups and organisations. As highlighted below, most organisations enter a European Commission prize contest, because they assess that winning will benefit their experience or credentials.

Figure 6: What were the reasons that your organisation, institution, project entered or applied for the prize? Multiple choice (N=153)



Source: Survey of contestants

In terms of assessing the extent to which prizes are framed in a way that was relevant to incentivise contestants, nearly half of respondents to the [survey](#) indicated that the large majority (88%) were satisfied with contestants' perceptions of the value and benefits of winning their prize. This included nearly half of prize managers, who were very satisfied.

Despite prize managers' satisfaction, the survey also indicates that there may be some important gaps in the processes to allow prize managers to understand their target groups' expectations. Most prize managers follow up with winners at a later date, but only a quarter always follow up. Post-award follow up is not a consistent process. Also, in the case studies we did not identify a focus on identifying contestants' expectations to support the design of prizes, although we understand that DGs and Executive Agencies are likely to have a good general understanding of the stakeholder group from which their contestants are drawn. This does not equate to understanding expectations for prizes.

Key findings on this JC

Initial considerations on whether or not to submit an entry to a prize contest relate to the topics put forward for prizes and their relevance to the work / activities of contestants and nominees. The prestige of winning a European Commission prize is a very significant pull factor for potential contestants to EU prizes, irrespective of whether or not the prize is intended to reward individuals, groups, organisations, or other types of contestants.

Individuals and groups or organisations value prizes in slightly different ways. Individuals focus on getting recognition for their personal achievements, whereas organisations' needs seems to relate more to the opportunity to reinforce credentials and track record, most likely in support of the pursuit of future opportunities.

Given that the majority of prizes are recognition prizes that reward past achievements the need to 'frame' the prize, relates more directly to prizes that focus on new achievements in response to a challenge. For challenge prizes, it is important to set a challenge which is achievable yet stretching. The wider stakeholder group must also value the challenge. If a challenge is not considered to be sufficiently 'challenging', then this weakens the prestige of the prize contest. At the same time, the Commission should not reward a prize which does not hit the expected level of quality.

Ultimately, key result indicators of whether prizes were framed appropriately relate to the numbers of entries received, which relates directly to levels of awareness of the prize within the stakeholder group. However, we note that the former does not appear to be explicitly tracked or viewed as an indicator of the effective framing of prize. With regards to the latter point, staff do not appear to be completely satisfied with levels of awareness.

DGs and Executive Agencies do not necessarily understand the expectations of contestants for their prize, even if they receive feedback from winners, who are inevitably likely to be satisfied.

JC 2: Extent to which target audiences value the prizes awarded (symbolic/monetary and amounts awarded), their focus and the type and level of award provided.

Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of contestants
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies

European Commission prizes offer a range of different types of monetary and symbolic rewards. According to the **mapping** exercise, the majority (109 out of the 145 for which information was provided) of the Commission's prizes offer some form of monetary incentive. However, most European Commission prizes (60 in our mapping) offer small amounts of prize money, up to EUR 2 500 per winner, while others (49) offer alternative monetary incentives, these include: vouchers, iPads, study visits, travel, and accommodation to attend events, including award ceremonies etc. High value awards are the exception and not the norm. The highest level of monetary incentive is EUR 10 million for a challenge prize.

Based on **EC prizes case study** interviews, symbolic rewards, and the symbolic elements of a reward for example a trophy, badge or certificate are also to be very important. Even smaller amounts of funding and/or financial support, for example a trip to Brussels can be motivating factors to participate. Yet, non-monetary prizes must still be of high quality. In one case study prize, some interviewees noted that they received certificates with spelling errors or plaques made of cheap material, which took away from their experience as prize winners. Whilst this specific experience may have somewhat weakened the image of the European Commission/the EU brand, it was addressed by the relevant DG.

It is critical to select the right type of award for the right stakeholder segment and to correspond to the type of prize (recognition, challenge or hybrid). Contestants need to feel that what they receive is appropriate. Interviewed winners of the TANDEM Media Awards expressed some surprise that the amount of prize money offered by the European Commission was not higher. This implies a degree of mismatch between contestants' expectations of the European Commission and the Commission's actual offering. Meanwhile, student contestants in the "I am European" school prize run by the Europe House in Portugal, were thrilled by the opportunity to visit Brussels.

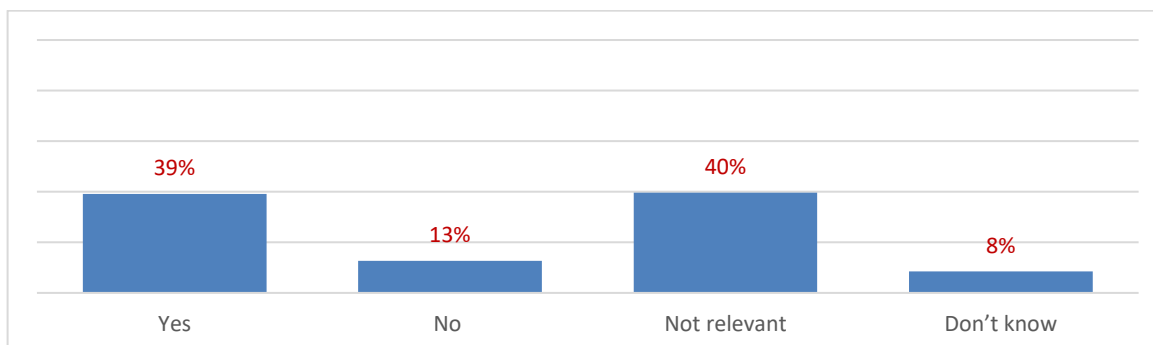
Yet, we also received feedback from winners of the Natura 2000 prize that winning the prize had made no difference. This feedback also implies that it is important that the bundle of benefits offered by prizes align with stakeholder expectations. The benefits include EC recognition, as well as a possible financial reward or certificate and may also relate to important networking or new business opportunities. The implication is that to assess whether individual prizes strike the right balance in their offering, there is a need to ask contestants and winners.

However, the evaluation has identified gaps in relation to conducting target group needs assessment, as well as ex-post follow up with contestants. In the **survey**, only 25% of respondents confirmed that they 'always' follow up with winners. Also, 38% prize manager respondents indicated that they did not know about winners' perceptions of whether the amount of prize money awarded was relevant.

With regards to financial rewards, our assessment suggests that, in general, target audiences do value monetary rewards, and many consider them to be an additional motivating factor, because they can be used to finance new activities. However, as

highlighted for many recognition prize contestants, monetary rewards were not a relevant reason to apply, and they considered a symbolic reward more valuable, as long as it paid attention to detail and was of good quality (i.e. certificates with no spelling mistakes). In a context where the majority of financial rewards are low value (up to 2,500) it is logical that contestants are not typically focused on money. We anticipate that challenge prizes are the exception here. In the **contestants' survey**, 39% of respondents gave feedback that the amount of prize money was "important" when deciding to apply, as highlighted in the below figure.

Figure 7: If the prize involved a financial reward, did you find the amount of the prize money to be motivating? (N=189)



Source: Contestants' survey

Key finding on this JC

EU recognition and the associated prestige are the key incentives for contestants in European Commission prizes. Winners of European Commission prizes are highly satisfied. They are driven by the chance to receive EU recognition for their work, which fits with the topic and objectives set for the prize. The EU brand is strong and it is prestigious for individuals, groups, and organisations to be recognised by the European Commission.

Whilst there are some high value prizes within the EU landscape, in particular the challenge prizes managed under Horizon Europe, the average European Commission prize is of modest value at under EUR 2 500. Thus, the amount of money does not typically provide a significant incentive, although it is nice to have. Yet, some prizes select winners from nominations, in which case the amount of prize money might not be a consideration at all. Staff report that winners are happy with their reward, but a significant proportion do know about perceptions about the amount of monetary reward, which reflects the lack of consistent follow up / way of assessing contestants' satisfaction.

Given the high value accorded to the EU brand, it is critical that all aspects of awards reflect the quality of the brand. The evaluation identified some examples where aspects of the reward were considered to be of low quality or unsuitable and winners who did not feel that the reward received made much difference. We anticipate that it is likely that there may be other examples, which we have not identified, which is a point for concern.

JC 3. Extent to which target audiences perceive that the eligibility criteria and requirements for contestants, number of awards to be relevant / appropriate.

Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- Survey of contestants
- EC prizes case studies

Based on the **mapping**, eligibility criteria are set for all Commission prizes. Most prizes (our mapping suggests over 80%) have identified specific audience segments as target groups within their prize design. As noted in section E.Q 1.1, there is a clear alignment between prizes, the EU policies they support and the target groups they aim to attract. All prizes' eligibility criteria cohesively mirror their target groups and geographical coverage requirements.

In the **contestants' survey**, 79% of respondents (150 out of 189) considered the criteria to enter the prize to be "about right". Furthermore, 69% (131 out of 189) indicated that it was "important" to them that the prize targeted their specific profile or experience. This was also confirmed in the **case studies on EC prizes** during interviews with previous winners and runners-up, who stated that the criteria were in line with the type of prize and/or target group.

Target groups consider their prizes' entry criteria and requirements appropriate. Some prizes directly engaged with their target audience or adapted categories to reinforce their relevance. This highlights, on the one hand, the Commission's ability to accurately communicate prize frameworks to contestants and, on the other, its adaptability to ensure they remain relevant to their target audience.

All seven **case studies on EC prizes** also demonstrate the Commission's ability to clearly communicate each prize's framework, eligibility criteria and requirements. In addition, steps taken by several prize managers, such as piloting prizes prior to full launch and engaging target groups in the prize design (EITA and S+T+ARTS), have helped to reinforce their relevance to target groups. Other examples include the revision of prize categories to better correspond to audiences' needs, such as Natura 2000 re-categorisation of the conservation category or iCapital, which added an additional category to be able to include smaller cities. On iCapital, we received feedback that pre-2021 some questions in the application process had been vague but that this has now been addressed with more specific questions, which made it easier to write a cohesive proposal.

Excluding the process, whereby winners were nominated from an existing pool of recipients of EU funding (i.e. winners were already selected through an EU panel process), the most tangible evidence, which supports whether or not a prize has been framed to provide appropriate levels of incentives to contestants and their nominees, relates directly to:

- the numbers of entries
- the quality of the entries
- the profile of contestants.

The results of the **survey of prize managers** point to satisfaction with all of these elements. However, at the margins, the results suggest some dissatisfaction with the number of applications from all relevant countries (11% indicated that they were very dissatisfied). This finding corresponds with evidence from the EC prize case studies, which highlighted that unless there were structural mechanisms in place to guarantee contestants from all target

countries, in the case of the EITA Award, which picks winners from each country, there is significant variation. We found this to be an issue in several of the **EC case study prizes**, including: iCapital and Natura 2000.

We also found gaps in the level of regional geographic coverage of the Portuguese contest run via the Europe House in Lisbon. Although we were informed that full country coverage was never intended, we considered that this was a missed opportunity particularly in view of the longevity of the prize, which has been running for 10 years. Prize managers at EISMEA took steps to try to address the geographic imbalance, with a targeted campaign in 2021. This approach is likely to be beyond the resource capacity of lower profile, small budget contests. One of the best options for smaller prizes to address this issue is to set profiles for specific profiles per prize category, in line with the example provided by the TANDEM Media Awards, which pairs male and female contestants.

There was limited evidence to confirm whether or not the number of prize categories per award was appropriate. Winners were not able to comment on this question in a meaningful way. However, the main rationale for different categories relates to the scope of each prize. If a prize wants to be all encompassing within a policy area, then specific categories are required, for example EITA includes categories for different levels of education to avoid the challenges of judging the merits of activities for primary schools against vocational education providers, for example. As highlighted, categories can be used to ensure certain profiles of contestant are included. Yet, too many categories, inevitably splits the pool of contestants, with the result that there may be low numbers of contestants in some categories.

Key finding on this JC

The evidence suggests that contestants in European Commission prizes are broadly satisfied with the eligibility criteria and requirements for their prizes of interest. This view is supported by prize managers. However, when designing a prize there is a need for careful consideration of the description of prize categories as these are the main drivers of the profile of respondents. Prize categories can be used to address profiles of contestants that may be lacking and confirm the expected content of each prize entry. Lack of clarity in this description weakens the result that prizes can expect to achieve.

One of the challenges for EU-wide prizes relates to trying to ensure the representation of all EU Member States in the pool of contestants and, where relevant, the winners. The evidence suggests that this is an area for improvement in some cases.

There does not appear to be systematic tracking of the number of applications and/or their quality as an indicator of the success of prize design and/or the promotion of calls for entries, even if this is being tracked in individual cases.

EQ 1.3: To which extent are prizes' contests relevant to the interest and communication habits of their intended target audience? And do they have the potential to attract their attention and to engage with them?

Answer to the evaluation question

Prizes managers' satisfaction with the overall number and quality of applications received indicates that EC prizes attract the desired number of contestants. This demonstrates that the prizes are relevant to the interests of the intended audience.

We did not find strong evidence that the prizes are relevant to the communication habits of their intended target group as EC prizes do not conduct target group analysis about such habits. However, the low percentage of contestants believing the prize to be well-known among the targeted audience indicates that the prizes communication activities may not be sufficiently targeted at the relevant audience.

Thus, while EC prizes have the potential to attract the targeted audience attention, the EC could consider strengthening the visibility and promotion of the prize through the use of relevant internal and external multipliers (i.e. the EC Representations, national authorities, relevant stakeholder associations and organisations) to promote the prizes further via their own relevant networks and websites. This would ensure that the prizes have a wider but targeted reach with the intended audience, making the prizes better known among potential contestants. This is relevant for all prizes but particularly relevant for prizes with countries, regions or stakeholders which are under-represented in terms of applications received.

Several elements could be considered in this regard ranging from the more low-cost options of using winners/contestants and jury members to promote the prize, to the more expensive options of using partners, communication agencies and contractors to conduct more extensive communication campaigns. These different options would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis for each prize, as they depend on several factors, including the intended scope of the prize, as well the amount of available budget.

The European Commission could also consider making better use of internal multipliers, to further strengthen the promotion of EU prizes within existing services and tools within the EU (i.e. strengthening the exposure of the prizes in EC channels through greater endorsement, developing a corporate, centralised approach to prize branding with a strong focus on outreach and communication, developing communication guidelines for prize managers, etc.).

JC 1: Extent to which the desired number and quality of entries/applications for EC prizes is met.

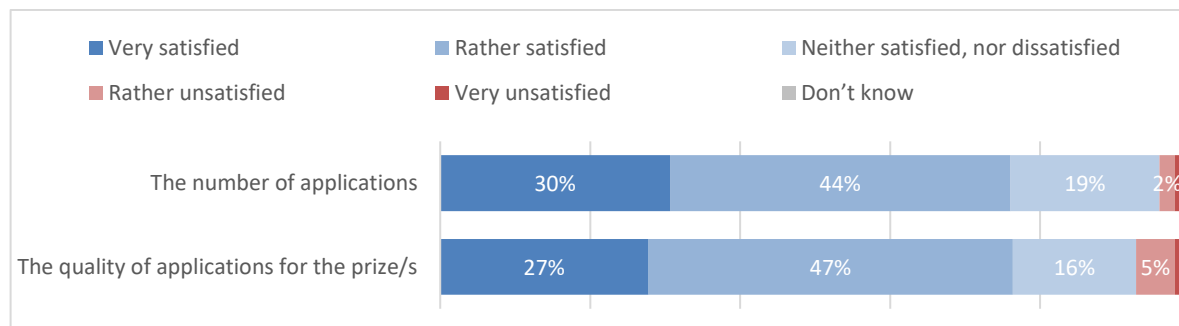
Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

The analysis of the **EC case studies** suggests that it is uncommon for the Commission's prizes to set submission targets. Yet EC prize managers consulted as part of the EC case studies were satisfied with the number and quality of applications received. Most respondents (74%) to the **prize managers' survey**, were either "very satisfied" or "rather satisfied" with the number of applications and only 5% reported being unsatisfied. Most respondents (74%) also indicated that they were "very satisfied" or "rather satisfied" with

the quality of applications for their prizes and only 2% reported being unsatisfied. This suggests that EC prizes attract the desired number of contestants within the pool of potential contestants.

Figure 8: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the prize(s) that you manage (N=36)



Source: Survey of prize managers

The number of applications varied between prizes. For instance, iCapital receives 30 to 35 applications yearly, Natura 2000 receives an average of 85 applications while EITA received up to 200 applications per country and per category each year (33 countries and four categories). The number of applications varies depending on several factors.

- **The targeted stakeholders:** The iCapital Awards is only open to cities in the EU and of a certain size. The “I am European” school prize, on the other hand, is a quiz open to all students within a pre-defined age group. Therefore, a low number of applications may not necessarily indicate a low interest from the targeted audience but could be due to a narrow pool of potential applicants (i.e. cities in the EU of a certain size).
- **The geographical coverage:** Whether a prize is open to contestants with a country or within a group of countries will necessarily influence the number of applications received as the pool of applicants will tend to be bigger when more countries are concerned, as highlighted by the EITA prize.
- **The design of the prize:** Whether the contestants are nominated or need to send an application, whether the eligibility criteria are restricted or open, whether the topic is a niche topic with a smaller pool of potential applicants etc. – these are all factors which will impact the number of applications received.
- **The visibility of the prize:** The promotion and communication outreach of the prize will influence how many potential contestants are aware of the prize and thus apply to the prize. Prizes should consider targeted communication activities with the potential contestant’s audience instead of a wider general communication campaign which may increase the wider public awareness of the prize but not those within the targeted stakeholders’ community (depending on the objectives of the prize and the intended audience).

Beyond the number of applications per prize, the number of applications per country may also vary within a prize. This was reported as an issue in some cases. When consulted, 11% of respondents to the **prize managers’ survey** reported being unsatisfied about the number of applications *from all relevant countries*. This finding was also evidenced in the case studies which highlighted gaps in the representation of different Member States, countries, and regions in applications to most prizes.

For instance, in the 2022 edition of the Natura 2000 Award, there were no applications from 15 EU Member States. To ensure the high quality of applications despite a large number of applications, some of the EC prizes introduced pre-selection rounds. For instance,

S+T+ARTS uses a dual-submissions approach in which potential contestants who apply for the Ars Electronica Award can also submit their project to S+T+ARTS (and vice versa). This has proven to be an effective tactic as it not only ensures that the right stakeholders are targeted from the start, but it also allows for more quality submissions to be considered given the Ars Electronica Award's established reputation. However, it is important that such pre-selection is adapted to the circumstances of the prize and remains fair to all potential contestants. For instance, for the EITA Award, the selection process in 2022 made it difficult and time consuming for the larger countries to select winners due to the large pool of contestants, while smaller countries faced the opposite challenge because their pool was significantly smaller, and they could not find an awardee for each category.

Key findings from the JC

Due to the diversified landscape of EC prize in terms of scope, targeted audience, geographical coverage, etc., the number of applications received for each prizes varies significantly between prizes (i.e., from a few dozen entries to hundreds).

The lack of set targets regarding the desired number of entries for each prizes prevents a quantitative assessment of the extent to which the desired number and quality of entries/applications for EC prizes is met. However, stakeholders' feedback indicates that prize managers are satisfied with the number of applications and their quality. One limitation highlighted by the analysis of the data collected suggest that EC prizes face challenges in receiving applications from all relevant countries/regions.

JC 2: Extent to which relevant internal and external multipliers, i.e. EC Representations, national authorities, relevant stakeholder associations/organisations were activated to promote prize contests, via their own networks / websites.

Sources of evidence:

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

EC prizes are promoted both through the use of internal (i.e., EC Representations, EU services, etc.) and external multipliers (national agencies, stakeholder organisations, partners, etc.). The following internal multipliers were used for EC prizes.

- Most EC prizes take advantage of existing frameworks to increase their visibility through greater exposure. For instance:
 - the iCapital Awards is part of the European Innovation Council (EIC) Prizes²⁴ within the Horizon Europe programme and benefits from the high visibility that Horizon prizes have on the Europa website;
 - the TANDEM Media Awards is part of a broader regional communication programme funded under the EU Neighbours South. The prize was launched and promoted within the existing SPEAK UP CULTURE! communication campaign;
 - the EITA award is part of the Erasmus+ funding programme. DG EAC is responsible for the EU-level communication campaign, including social media content for the Erasmus+ accounts/channels;

²⁴ The other prizes in this grouping are Women Innovators EU Prize, The European Innovation Procurement Awards and European Social Innovation Composition Challenge Prize.

- the “I am European” school prize is integrated within the activities managed by House of Europe which provides the prize with an additional platform as well as links to the Representation of the European Commission and the European Parliament Liaison Office in Portugal. For instance, the House of Europe promotes the prize within its newsletter and sends reminders through specific email marketing to schools.
- Several EC prizes also make use of other internal Commission and EU services to be promoted. This was confirmed by most (6 out of 9) respondents to the HoC survey which indicated using National Contact Points and/or EC Representations to promote their prizes (2 respondent “never” and one did not know). This was further confirmed by the analysis of the EC case studies. For instance:
 - 15 Europe Direct Centres, the “I am European” school prize promotion is reinforced by the European Parliament Liaison Office and the 15 Europe Direct Centers. Similarly, the TANDEM Media Awards is promoted at the national level by the EC Delegations in each of the targeted countries. Additionally, Delegations in Syria, Libya and Algeria also collaborated with winners following the award thus further promoting the prize (indirectly). For instance, in Syria, the winner generated footage on EU-funded projects, which was used in the Brussels VI Conference “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”.
- Beyond using the media channels and platforms of these broader programmes, some EC prizes also conduct award ceremonies as part of broader high-profile events within these programmes in order to increase their communication outreach. For instance, the TANDEM Media award ceremony took place within the context of a broader conference of the EU Neighbourhood South programme. It was attended by media professionals from both sides of the Mediterranean, including journalists and influencers which acted as multipliers. Most (7/9) respondents to the HoC survey indicated using EU-level events to promote their prizes.
- Some prizes also use senior officials to award or make an appearance or presentation during the award ceremony to increase the recognition value of the prize and its visibility. For instance, in the EITA Award, the presence of the Commissioner as well as other political representatives was highlighted as an important symbolic gesture for many of the attendees.

However, despite making use of internal multipliers, the findings from the case studies suggest that there is scope to further strengthen the promotion of EU prizes within existing services and tools within the EU by strengthening the exposure of the prizes in EC channels through greater endorsement. Several respondents to the [HoC and prize managers' survey](#) also reported the need for a corporate, centralised approach to prize branding with a strong focus on outreach and communication, clear guidelines for prize managers and more support and engagement from DG COMM to promote prizes and provide suggestions and best practices.

Externally, most EC prizes also engage with multiple types of stakeholders to ensure that they are reaching their desired target audience. However, the findings from HoC survey indicates that this is not done in a systematic manner. Only five out of nine respondents to the [HoC survey](#) indicated conducting joint promotion with external institutions and/or organisations, while three respondents indicated never doing so (one did not know). The findings from the EC case study evidence similar split results as well as a diversity of external stakeholders. The following type of stakeholders were used as multipliers.

- National authorities and agencies: for instance, EITA is managed in a decentralised approach with DG EAC responsible for the EU-level organisation but supported by 33 Erasmus+ agencies at the national level who are responsible for the implementation of

the prize at the national level and oversee promotion within their country and conduct award ceremonies at the national level, often held in combination with other awards or events from the agencies.

- EU wide networks: iCapital use the Eurocities network to disseminate and promote its prize, similarly the EEN award is promoted internally through the EEN network.
- Media stakeholders: several prizes, such as the TANDEM Media Awards use influencers or “Goodwill ambassadors” to promote them in the media.
- Partners and contractors: several prizes such as the S+T+ARTS Prize use consortium partners to promote the prize on social media. Other like the TANDEM Media Awards rely on strategic communication agencies.
- Stakeholders’ organisations: several prizes use relevant stakeholder organisations or similar organisations to promote the prize within the targeted audience. For instance, the “I am European” school prize use the following organisations as promoters - the Centro de Informação Europeia Jacques Delors (Jacques Delors European Information Center - Ministry of Foreign Affairs), School Libraries Network and Programa Operacional Capital Humano (Human Capital Operational Programme).
- Jury members: most (6/9) respondents to the HoC survey indicated engaging the jury members to support the promotion of the prize.
- Winners/contestants: the iCapital created an “Alumni network” where winners and runners-up can exchange knowledge and cooperate. For post-ceremony communication, the alumni network plays an important role as it ensures further networking and cooperation between the cities and EISMEA. As previously mentioned, it is important to keep this network active from the Commission’s side since one of the main reasons cities know about iCapital is because previous winners/runners-up promote and speak about it.

However, one of the important factors to consider is that using external multipliers tends to increase the cost of a communication campaign (compared to using internal resources) and may therefore explain why external multipliers are used to a lesser extent. External multipliers may also not be relevant or appropriate for all EC prizes (i.e., using EU wide networks or national agencies may only be needed for prizes with a large geographical coverage).

Moreover, the EU already has extensive networks across the Member States and abroad and a dedicated communication service. Using external multipliers may not therefore be as necessary as for non-EU prizes (as long as EC prizes make effective use of these existing services). Nonetheless, certain external multipliers such as jury members and winners/contestants should be considered, as they offer an effective and low cost means of promoting prizes and increasing their visibility. These are further discussed in EQ 3.4 (success factors and lessons learnt).

Key findings from this JC

EC prizes use both internal and external multipliers to promote the prize to the targeted and wider audience. Different multipliers are used to various extent depending on the prize (scope, budget, audience, etc). This reflects the varied landscape of EC prizes. However, some key overall findings emerged which are further developed in the recommendations section, and which should be considered when promoting a prize:

- the Commission could consider strengthening the promotion of EU prizes by using existing EU channels, services and tools as a way to both maximise promotion and EC endorsement;
- the Commission could consider developing a corporate, centralised approach to prize branding with a strong focus on outreach and communication, clear

guidelines for prize managers and more support and engagement from DG COMM to promote prizes;

- each prize could consider using external multiplier depending on the relevance/need and available budget. At the minimum, the low-cost option (i.e., using winners and jury members) should be considered.

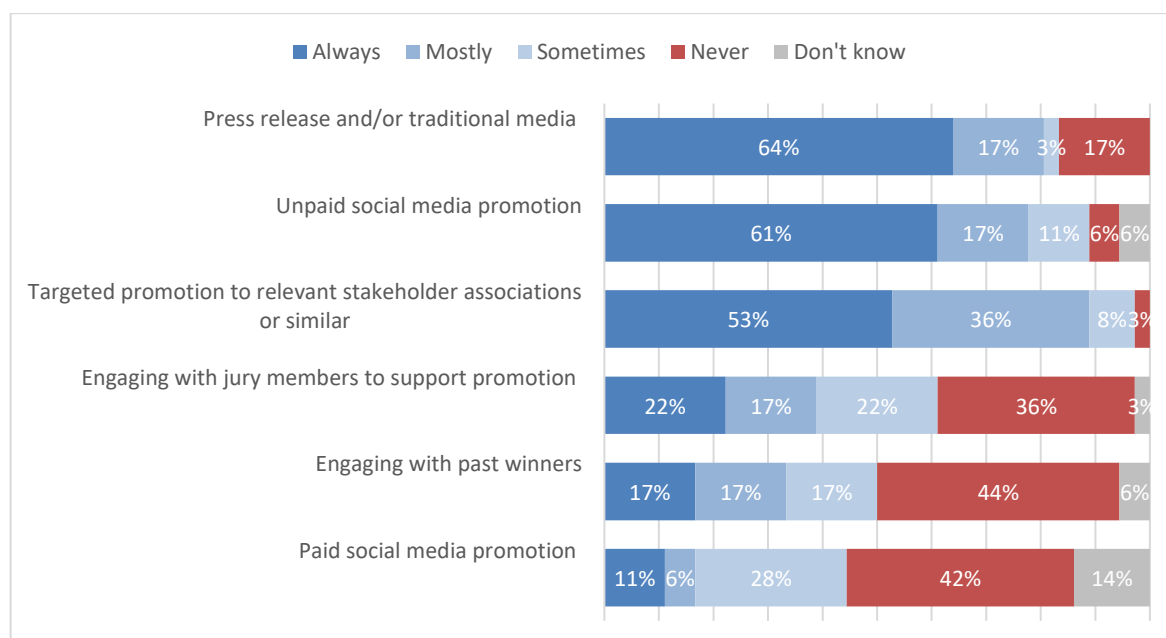
JC 3: Extent to which communication on specific prizes was designed and managed with the communication habits of contestant populations in mind.

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- Survey of contestants
- Social listening exercise

Respondents to the **prize managers' survey** reported that the three most used activities to promote their prizes were press releases and/or traditional media (64%), unpaid social media (61%), and promotion at EU-level events (53%). In comparison, the least used activities were engaging with past winners (44%), paid social media promotion (42%) and engaging with jury members to support promotion (36%). However, when consulted on how they had found out about the prize, most respondents to the contestants' survey indicated having learnt from the prize on the European Commission website (22%), from a peer, colleague, friend, etc (22%) or via national/regional or local governments (16%).

Figure 9: Which of the below activities do you undertake to promote your prize(s) to potential contestants and other audiences? (N=36)

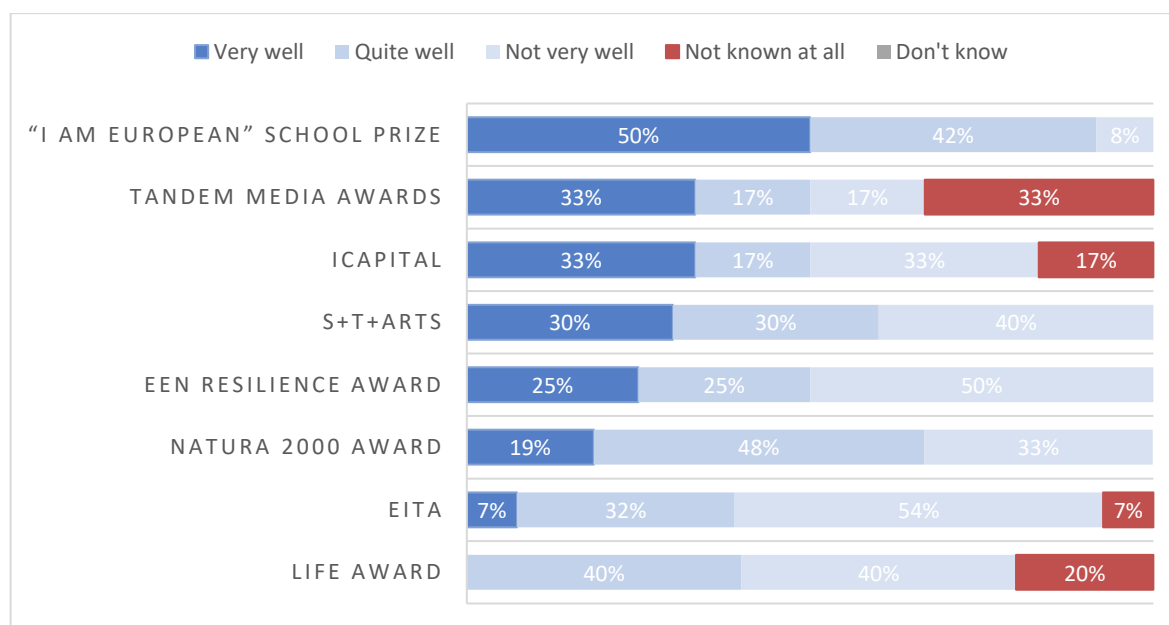


Source: Survey of prize managers

This finding suggests that both internal and external multipliers are particularly effective in promoting a prize and that using multiple types of communication activities increases the likelihood of reaching the targeted audience. However, it also suggests that the current communication activities conducted by the prizes may not be the most effective for attracting the targeted audience.

This finding was further reinforced by the findings from the **contestants' survey**. Half (49%) of respondents to the contestants' survey considered that the prize was either not known at all (6%) or not very well known (43%) among potential contestants/people like them. This may suggest that the communication activities are either not effective or not targeted enough to reach the intended audience. However, a closer examination of this findings highlights a diversified picture with some prizes being very well known according to contestants (i.e. "I am European" school prize) and others not very well known (i.e., the EU Health Award). This may indicate that the effectiveness and relevance of a communication activity is dependent on the type and scope of prize.

Figure 10: In your opinion, how well is the prize known among potential contestants/people like you? (N = 189)



Source: Survey of contestants

While our **social listening exercise** highlights significant variations between the different prizes in the level of target group reach and engagement, overall, the level of impressions and reach registered across the prizes suggests that the EC prizes have a large audience. While there is no data to confirm whether the audience reached is the targeted audience, we can assume that the followers of the prize and awarding DGs channels are the same type of stakeholders as those who would be interested in participating in the prize, and the same audience which the awarding DG/Executive Agency is trying to reach.

However, the **social listening exercise** also evidenced that most Commission prizes, when using social media, tend to engage predominantly with the countries of the winners rather than all relevant countries (i.e. any country from which participants can apply to the prize). For example, in the case of S+T+ARTS, geolocation analysis demonstrates that the top 5 countries in terms of mentions, 4 were the countries of award-winning projects (Austria, Spain, United Kingdom and Italy). Similar patterns can be seen with iCapital, EEN and Natura 2000. Here, engaging with contestants in general rather than just the winners, could be beneficial to increase the pool of potential contestants reached. Another common factor is the limited use of relevant media outlets and niche publications, which could drive more exposure.

Key findings from this JC

There is limited data to support the assessment of the extent to which communications on specific prizes are tailored to the communication habits of intended target groups. Most prizes used the types of channels and tools that would be expected for example, the EC website, social media posts, direct emails and press releases, but did not necessarily make use of sector-specific channels or platforms. We also did not find evidence that DGs and Executive Agencies had the time or capacity to conduct a target group analysis on which tailored channels should be used. In all of the case studies, the prizes managers were satisfied with the number and quality of applications received, which implies that the correct target group is being reached. This suggests that the prizes' communication activities are able to attract the desired audience, although some prizes do so relatively better than others.

However, some evidence suggests that there is scope in many prizes to better tailor prize promotion so that it is more relevant to, and therefore more impactful on target groups. For example, prizes that seek to cover wide geographic regions, such as the whole EU, typically struggle to ensure that all Member States are well represented. Also, prizes which have a particular country focus for example the location of the award ceremony, or the countries of the winners, tend to generate more visibility in those specific countries than in others. Feedback from a large share of respondents to the contestants' survey, indicated that prizes they themselves were aware of, were not in fact well known within the relevant stakeholder community. This suggests that there is room for improvement in how the prizes are promoted to target audiences.

5.2. Efficiency

Efficiency considers the resources used by an intervention compared to the changes generated (which may be positive or negative). Efficiency analysis considers whether:

- the costs generated are necessary to reach the policy objectives;
- the benefits exceed the costs;
- there is potential for simplification and further efficiency savings.

EQ2.1 What are the related direct and indirect financial and human resource implications needed to implement the prize contest (process) for a specific DG/Executive Agency and for other DGs possibly involved in the decision process (panels etc.)?

Answer to the evaluation question

There is a need for a more consistent approach to reporting the costs of prizes. We identified significant gaps in costs data for most prizes mapped by the study. For instance, budgetary data was not available for two out of seven case study prizes. This makes the analysis of direct and indirect financial and human resources particularly challenging and analysing specific costs – such as costs for other DGs involved – impossible.

The data collected by the study suggests the Commission prizes vary significantly when it comes to the financial and human costs needed to implement them. In the study we categorised the prizes in three categories based on their costs, covering both human and financial resources. One of the challenges in assessing human resources relates to the fact that these are accrued during peak periods and not on a consistent basis for example weekly or monthly. However, there appears to be some correlation between the levels of financial and human resources used.

A significant share of EC prizes (about 40-46%) seem to be relatively small in terms of resources deployed (with a budget under EUR 20,000, and staffing levels of 0.5 full-time equivalent employees per year).

The level of resourcing sends a signal that strategically these prizes are not important. It also implies that many prizes are not very powerful instruments to generate efficient results. Only about a quarter of them have significant budgets of above EUR 200 000 and two or more full time personnel involved.

The main costs of implementing a prize include: administration of the prize (selection of the winners, organisation of the award ceremony, communication activities and, when relevant, travel and accommodation of the winners to the ceremony).

However, the level of costs relates to the scope of the prize and the available budget. Another finding is that budgets tend to be set prior to the design of a prize and may not consider what is actually required to ensure a well-performing prize. This approach is problematic given the identified inconsistencies in tracking costs and monitoring prize performance. Some direct costs could also be reduced by sharing with other European Commission activities – in some cases this occurs where award ceremonies are integrated into other events.

Prizes are generally managed by specific DGs/Agencies. However, there are examples of cooperation or synergies, for instance when other DGs use their channels to enhance communication of prizes, or where other EU institutions are involved in juries. This

highlights the scope to use partnerships more consistently to enhance visibility in a more efficient manner.

JC 1: Extent to which it is possible to identify approximate direct and indirect financial and human resource costs required implement the prize, as well as a range of costs across different prizes

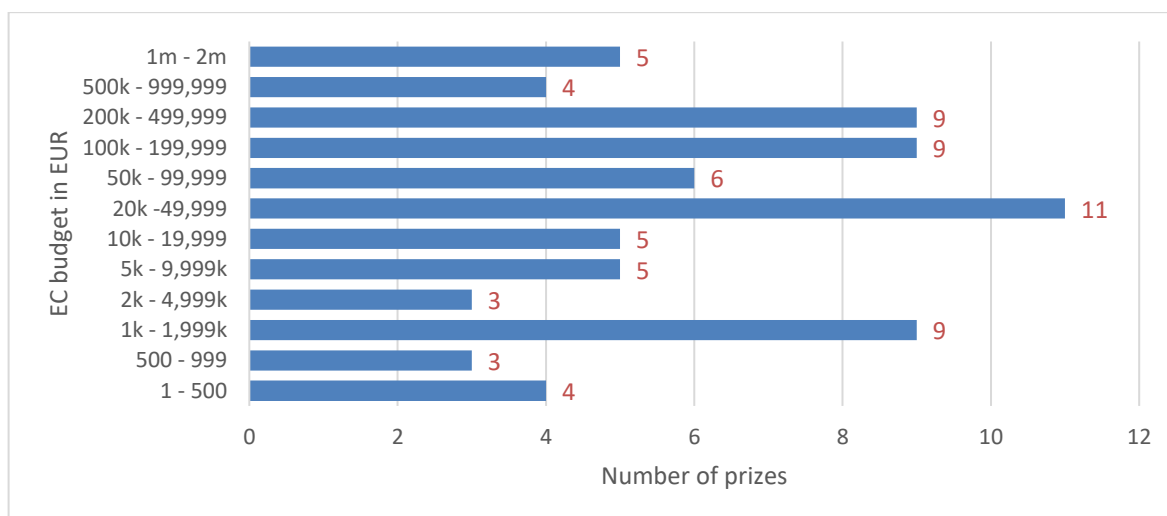
Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- EC prizes case studies

Financial resources

According to the data provided by prize managers in [the mapping of prizes](#), the EC budget for the management and implementation of each prize (i.e. award ceremony, communication activities, etc.) ranges between less than EUR 500 and EUR 2 million. Most prizes (63%) have a budget of less than EUR 100 000 per year.

Figure 11: Total annual EC budget for the management & implementation of the prizes (N= 73)



Source: Mapping data collected by the study team

This data should be analysed cautiously, as prize managers had difficulties in providing prize budgets. Out of the 117 prizes for which information was provided, concrete estimates were provided for only 73. For the other prizes, the prize managers either reported that the data was not available or that there was no budgets (only indirect expenses or costs).

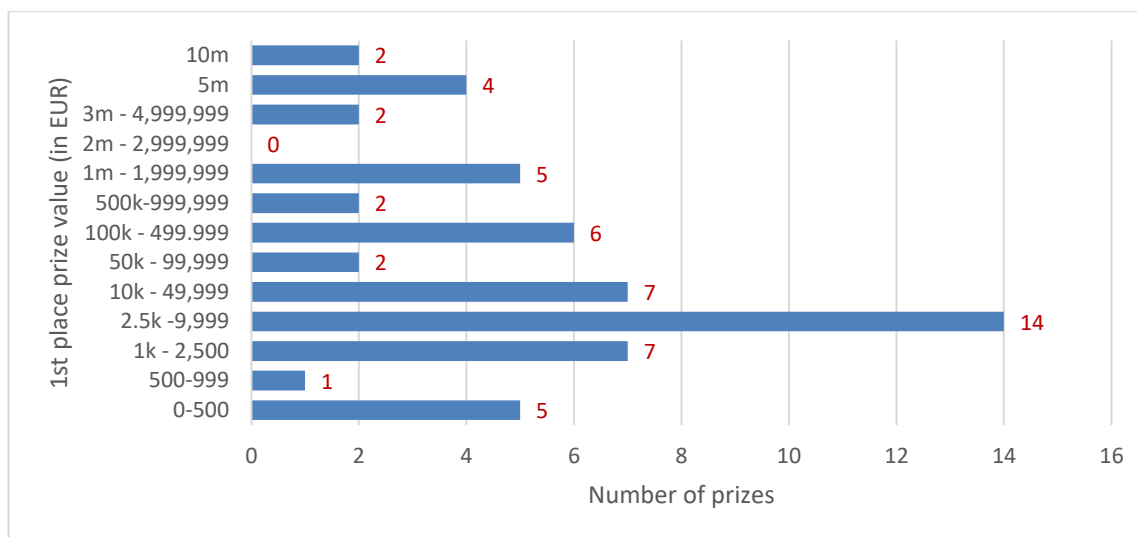
Nevertheless, there are large variations in costs/budgets allocated to prizes and budgets are usually decided ex ante, before a prize is launched. There are a number of **low-budget prizes** with budgets below EUR 20 000 (about 40% of the total), with half of these being very low cost, below EUR 2 000 (about 22% of the total). On the other side of the spectrum, there are **high-budget prizes** with budgets above EUR 0.2 million (24%) and some with very high budgets above EUR 1 million (7%). About one third of prizes (36%) are in the middle of the scale with budgets between EUR 20 000 and EUR 200 000.

According to the [mapping](#) data, three out of four Commission prizes include a monetary reward. The figure below provides an overview of the value of the cash prizes. Some prizes

have a staggered approach (i.e. different cash prize values for first place, second place, etc.). However, the figure only captures the amount for the 1st prize.

There is a wide range in the value of the cash prizes starting from less than 500 EUR (9%) and reaching 10 million EUR (4%). Overall, the biggest proportion (39%) of the cash prize value ranges from 1 000 EUR to 10 000 EUR. Only 11% of prizes award cash prizes below 1 000 EUR while 21% of the prizes award cash prizes ranging between 1 million and 5 million EUR.

Figure 12: Values of monetary prizes (N=57)



Source: Mapping data collected for the study

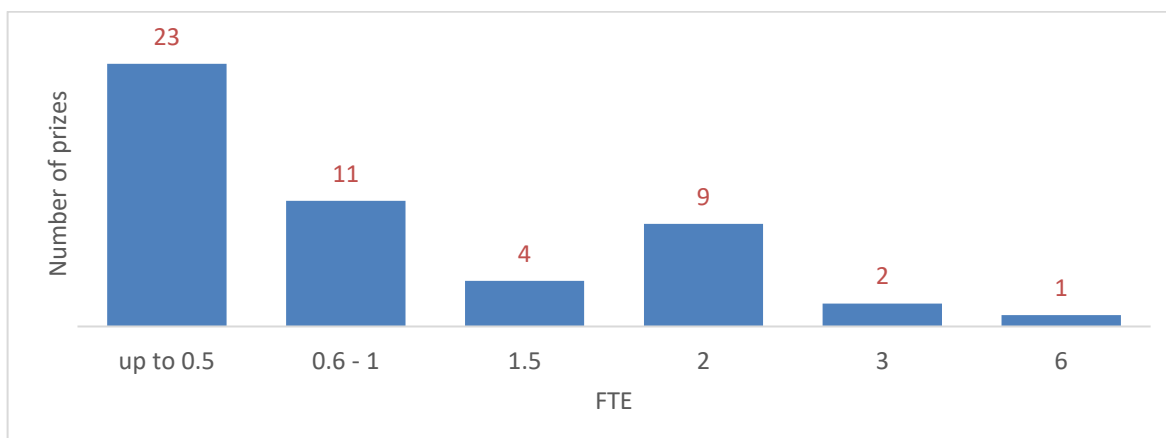
Human resources

Most prize managers, when requested to fill in the **mapping template**, were not able to provide detailed information about human resources in terms of full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) required to implement a prize²⁵. Those who provided data highlighted that the prizes were often managed for a short time (a few months) and rarely on a full-time basis during period. This made it challenging to provide an accurate estimate.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a correlation between the number of people involved (FTEs) and the budgets allocated to prizes. 46% of the prizes for which estimates were provided required 0.5 FTE or less. This percentage approximately reflects the number of **low-budget prizes**, mentioned above. Also, nearly a quarter of the mapped prizes require two FTEs or more, which reflects the numbers for **high-budget prizes**. 6% require more than two FTEs - similar to the share for very high budget prizes. About one third of prizes (30%), are in the middle of the scale with human resources above 0.5 but below two FTEs. The detailed FTE shares are presented in the figure below (the numbers were provided by prizes managers, there was no scale imposed).

²⁵ The fact that most prize managers were not able to provide the number of FTEs may suggest that prize work is added on top of regular workload, but there is not other evidence confirming this. It can also suggest that calculation of FTEs is not a common practice in DGs managing prizes.

Figure 13: Estimate of the number of FTEs per year that the EC mobilised for the management and implementation of the prize



Source: Mapping data collected for the study

Typology of prizes based on their costs

Based on the above findings, the table below presents the three categories of prizes in relation to their costs, which is useful for cost-efficiency analysis.

Table 2. Categorisation of Commission prizes by resources

Category	Total yearly budget (EUR)	Human resources (FTEs per year)	Share of prizes (approximate)
Low-budget prizes	< 20 000	0.5 or less	43%
subcategory: Very-low budget	> 2 000	0.5 or less	22%
Medium-budget prizes	20 001 – 200 000	0.5 – 2	33%
High-budget prizes	> 200 000	2 or more	24%
subcategory: Very high budgets	> 1 m	3 or more	6%

Source: Mapping data collected for the study

The EC prizes case studies allowed us to gather additional data on the resources required to implement prizes.

The total annual budgets of these prizes were as follows²⁶:

- EITA, EUR 0.35 million in 2022 and 0.25 million in 2021, but in 2021 only EUR 0.16 million was spent due to COVID related limitations;
- iCapital, EUR 1.8 million in 2021;
- Natura 2000 Award, EUR 0.55 million in 2022, which is the value of an external contract (624 man/days);

²⁶ The total budget for the EEN Award or "I am European" school prize were not provided.

- S+T+ARTS, EUR 2 million for 3 years (2021-2023), i.e. circa EUR 0.67 million yearly on average;
- TANDEM Media Awards, EUR 80 000 in 2021.

The prizes, for which total budgets were available, were generally high-budget prizes, including the iCapital Awards, which has one of the largest budgets of all the Commission's prizes. The iCapital is managed directly by staff in EISMEA. In 2021, its budget was EUR 1.8 million. iCapital is currently funded by the European Innovation Council under Horizon Europe. All direct costs go to the payment of the monetary reward, as implementation of the prize is done in-house.

A contrasting example is the Natura 2000 Award, which is implemented by an external contractor. The award does not include a monetary reward for winners and its EUR 0.55 million budget is the value of the contract for the implementing consortium. The largest position in the budget were communication activities, consuming one third of the financial resources and 45% of man/days. They cover the costs of the selection process (25% of the budget and 14% of days), the award ceremony (21% and 17%). Administrative support consumed 13% of the budget and 15% of days, and deliverables – 7% of the budget and 9% of days.

S+T+ARTS is another high-budget prize with a multiannual budget of EUR 2 million for 2021-2023, funded by Horizon Europe. The total budget is divided between consortium partners. In the previous phase (2017-2020), the budget was EUR 1.03 million. The budget is used for the organisation of exhibitions at the Ars Electronica Festival, where the S+T+ARTS Prize award ceremony takes place, as well as the BOZAR Electronic Art Festival in Brussels and other dissemination activities, such as conferences. In addition, 120 000 EUR is allocated to the monetary award of the prize for both categories. The budget is also dedicated to S+T+ARTS Prize implementation activities, including the call, jury meetings, press conference, winner announcement and award ceremony, as well as financial and administrative management.

The TANDEM Media Awards has a much smaller budget and falls within the medium-budget category. The total budget of EUR 80 000 budget includes the following categories of costs:

- event management: EUR 30 000
- audio-visual / multimedia: EUR 10 000
- travel and accommodation: EUR 20 000
- social media influencers: EUR 4 000
- prize money for three categories: EUR 12 000 (EUR 4 000 per pair per category)
- various materials (not specified): EUR 4 000.

Key findings on this JC

The prizes budgets vary significantly and range between less than EUR 500 and EUR 2 million. Four out of ten prizes have a budget of less than EUR 20 000 per year. The human resources required to implement prizes range from 0.5 FTE to 6 FTEs. Most of the prizes require fewer than 1 FTE per year to be implemented.

EQ 2.2 To what extent are the costs associated with the prize proportionate to the benefits it has generated?

Answer to the evaluation question

The importance of understanding the costs and benefits of an intervention is set out in the Better Regulation Guidelines, yet there has been no standardisation in the collection of data on prizes to support this type of assessment. Thus, it is challenging to make an overall assessment of the cost-benefit ratio of the Commission's prizes and this challenge is exacerbated due to the different types of prizes and management models. Another factor that makes such an assessment difficult relates to data gaps and comparability of data. While some assessment of the cost-efficiency of a single prize is possible, it is much more challenging to assess cost-efficiency of the entire Commission's approach to prizes, given the lack of a unified approach to reporting costs or performance.

There is consensus among Commission staff that the costs associated with prizes are generally proportionate to their benefits. However, it is hard to corroborate this with other sources. Nevertheless, the case studies confirmed that Commission prizes have some efficiency mechanisms built into their approaches. This is mainly related to creating synergies between award ceremonies and other events and cooperation with partners, to achieve efficiency gains.

There are some opportunities to increase the efficiency of each prize, but this is more related to the design of each prize, rather than the overall approach. However, developing a standardised framework for reporting the performance of prizes and their costs could be useful for future management of prize schemes. This would support comparative analysis, benchmarking and could strengthen mechanisms to reduce inefficiencies and enhance organisational learning.

Given the lack of a corporate approach within the Commission to assess the efficiency of prizes and the lack of unified reporting, it is challenging to measure or compare prizes' cost-benefit ratio. DGs and Executive Agencies do not tend to track communication effects against the costs of specific activities. This makes the assessment of efficiency challenging, as it is usually not possible to quantify the efficiency of communication activities if mechanisms to measure their effects (outcomes and impacts) have not been integrated into their design.

Furthermore, the variability of prizes in terms of their size, scope and target groups, as well as the approach and extent of their promotion and communication also hampers a cost-effectiveness comparison. This relates to the fact that money and time spent on promotional activities tend to generate somewhat variable results. There is some evidence inside the Commission with regards to benchmarks for promotion, for example via paid social media and organic promotion, but this evidence is usually only available for high budget communication activities, for example large scale communication campaigns.

The challenges in this specific evaluation also relate to lack of accessibility to data, which is not easily provided to external consultants, as well as the extent to which data relating to budgets, costs and benefits is collected and stored. There are no predefined indicators for efficiency and this is also likely to relate to the multi-dimensional character of prizes, which involve different phases and types of activities, including promotion and launch of the prize, engagement with contestants and the jury, organisation of events and promotion of results, as well as some add-on activities in some cases.

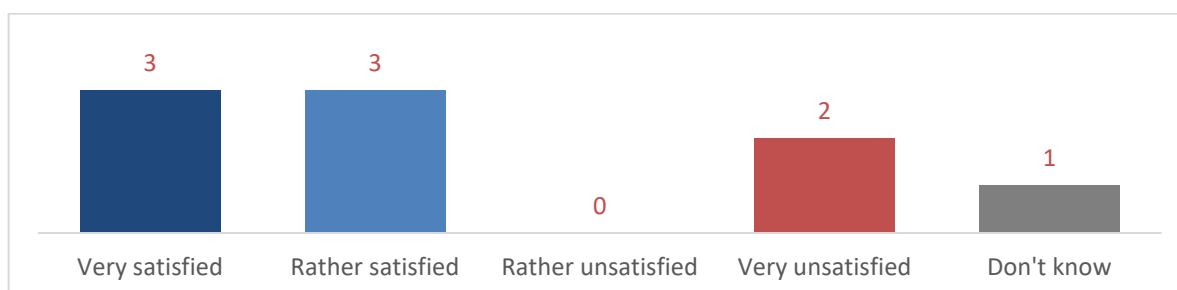
JC1: Extent to which staff members perceive that the human and financial costs of prizes are proportionate to the communication results achieved and any intangible benefits generated for the DG/Executive Agency, contestants and winners

Sources of evidence

- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

According to the **survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers**, as indicated below, six out of nine Heads of Communication were satisfied with the cost-benefit ratio of prizes. Three out of nine were 'very satisfied' that the prizes managed by their DG or Executive Agency achieved the desired communication effects at a reasonable cost and three out of nine were 'rather satisfied'. On the other hand, two respondents indicated that they were 'very unsatisfied' with the results.

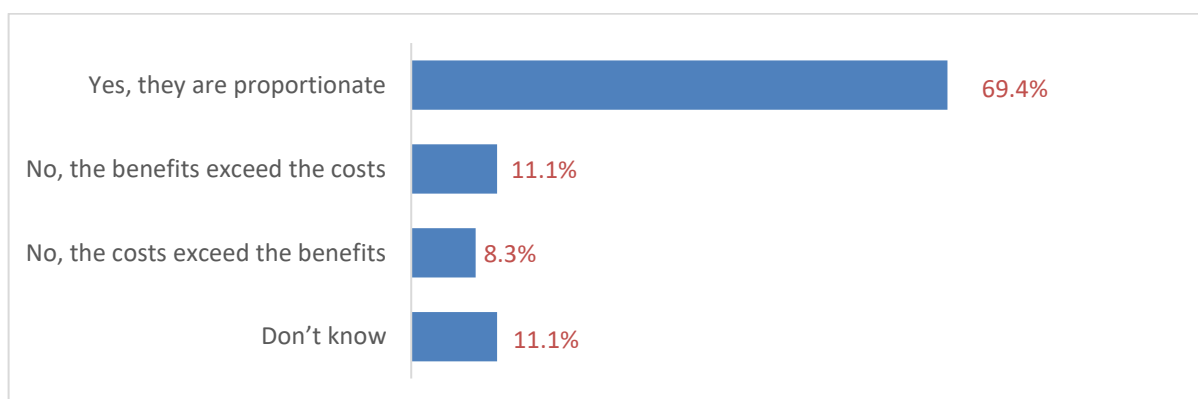
Figure 14: How satisfied are you that prizes managed by this DG / Executive Agency achieve communication effects at a reasonable cost? (N=9)



Source: Survey of HoCs and prize managers

The assessment by prize managers was similarly positive. Most respondents (69%, 25 out of 36) agreed that overall, the human and financial costs (beyond the value of the prizes themselves) of organising and/or implementing their prizes was proportionate to the benefits, and another 11% (4 respondents) assessed that the benefits had exceeded the costs. Only 8% (3 respondents) assessed that the costs had exceeded the benefits. Only 11% (3 respondents) assessed that the costs had exceeded the benefits.

Figure 15: Overall, are human and financial costs (beyond the value of the prize/s itself) of organising/implementing your prize(s) proportionate to the benefits? (n=36)



Source: Survey of HoCs and prize managers

In open comments to the **prize managers' survey**, 19 prize managers provided recommendations on how to improve the cost-benefit ratio of their prizes. The most

recurrent suggestions were linked to improving management processes, rather than reducing costs. Respondents suggested:

- reducing the administrative burden for organising and implementing prizes, for instance simplifying the implementation process so that fewer people are involved and by creating a prize management team to manage all of the prizes for a DG or Agency, instead of having different project officers from different units managing prizes as one of their responsibilities;
- providing more guidance on procedures to prize managers such as with a specific clear-cut workflow on all the steps to follow when implementing a prize.

The tools created within this study should address these recommendations to some extent (mainly the second one), but creation of a prize management team in DGs might be challenging. Prizes are in most cases managed by teams, which also manage the wider programmes, which prizes are part of. Nevertheless, this highlights the needs for some standardisation of processes to ensure consistency.

Key findings on this JC

Most Heads of Communication are satisfied with prize cost-benefit ratios in terms of communication effects, with a small number very unsatisfied. Most prize managers consider human and financial costs of prizes proportionate to the benefits created by them.

JC2: Extent to which efficiency measures are taken into account in prize design and implementation

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies

The case studies illustrate that many of the EC prizes have built efficiency into their approach through structured synergies with other high-profile EU initiatives. One of the main costs for prizes is the organisation of an award ceremony. For some prizes there is a specific award ceremony, e.g. Natura 2000 Award, but in many cases this is combined with other events, which are well-known and already have an audience. For instance, the EEN Award combines the award of the prize with the annual EEN meeting and the S+T+ARTS is awarded at the Ars Electronica Festival. TANDEM is awarded at *Les Assises Internationales du Journalisme*, the largest journalism event in the region.

This approach is also taken by all three organisations, selected for non-EC case studies: UNESCO, OECD and Bloomberg Philanthropies. They all conduct the award ceremony as part of a high-profile event. Winners of Bloomberg Mayors Challenge are announced at the City Lab event, the OECD ITF Decarbonising Transport Award is awarded during the ITF Annual Summit of Transport Ministers and the UNESCO prize at other UNESCO high-level political events. According to prize managers, this allows them to increase both the number and profile of the attendees. It also raises the prestige and visibility of the prizes and the winners, strengthening their recognition value and the incentive to participate due to the networking benefits conferred by the awarding ceremony.

The EITA awards use a hybrid model, with the main event organised specifically for the prize, and national ceremonies combined with other local events, depending on the national implementing agency. This is another efficiency mechanism built into this prize's approach,

which is **working with national agencies or other partners on the implementation of the prizes.**

One aspect that makes this award unique from others is that national Erasmus+ agencies (which are typically managed and supervised by national government ministries) are involved in the creation and conception of the award. They are also responsible for selecting the winners for each category. The efficiency gain is not related to the fact that this has been off loaded and therefore it is less work as such, but relates instead to the fact that the prize benefits from the agencies' knowledge of the local context and networks in the Member States, as well as the specialist Erasmus+ knowledge of the national agencies. This would not be the case if the prize were outsourced to a communication agency.

This approach may create efficiency gains, but the challenge here is to keep a balance in the amount of work transferred to the agencies, so that efficiency gains achieved at Commission level do not cause administrative burden at the national level. According to this case study, the efficiency of the selection process is sometimes questioned, and this seems to relate to the scope and nature of the prize. Some national agencies find it hard to select winners because entries are of very high quality, having already been selected for Erasmus+ funding and given the sheer volume of applicants in larger countries. There have been some changes following feedback from last year's edition, but it seems that the challenges of the process remain.

The role of partners was also highlighted in the S+T+ARTS case study. The prize is managed through a grant agreement with Ars Electronica, and its consortium partners. This has been a key factor for its strong outreach within the targeted community due to Ars Electronica's reputation as it has been able to attract the high quality entrants. There is a good balance of work between DG CNECT and Ars Electronica, labelled in interviews as a "winning team" but it was also noted that both sides did not know in detail about each other's work, especially when discussing potential lessons learned in managing the prize.

Prize design will be discussed in other parts of the report under the effectiveness criterion (section 3.3). One element of the design, however, which is interesting from a cost perspective, is the benefit for the winners. There is no clear answer, whether including a monetary reward makes the prize less cost-efficient. On the one hand, it obviously increases the cost. On the other, there is evidence suggesting that prizes including monetary rewards have higher potential to attract contestants and create communication value.

In the literature, the size and nature of the monetary reward were cited as a success factor as the size (or value) of the award signals the importance of the award to the prize giver, therefore the value must be large enough to demonstrate the significance of the achievement. The nature of the monetary reward – whether it is cash or a gift – is also said to be a determinant of the success or positive perception of the award.

Some academics who have studied the issue suggest that cash rewards are often, but not always preferable. This was also confirmed in the survey of contestants. Three out of four contestants (75%²⁷) reported that they found the amount of the prize to be an important motivation for applying. Ensuring that participants get benefits does not necessarily need to come at a high cost, as it is also the quality of the experience which is an important factor. Nor does this need to be financial in all cases financial. Other options include a visit to Brussels, visit at the European Commission or participation in the award ceremony (including networking opportunities), or just the benefits related to being recognised as a winner of a Commission prize.

²⁷ 'Not relevant' and 'don't know' answers were excluded.

Challenges in assessing cost efficiency

As discussed above, assessing efficiency is particularly difficult due to data gaps. In this section we therefore present a possible way to assess this issue in future, based on common cost-benefit indicators.

One approach would be to agree a common set of performance indicators, which could be used across prizes, and compare them with prize budgets, therefore creating efficiency indicators. One indicator considered within this study was **cost per application**, as it indicates the cost of engaging a representative of the target group, which is a reflection of cost-benefit ratio of prize design and communication. Our analysis for the case study prizes is presented below.

Figure 16: Case study prizes cost per application

Case study prize	Annual budget (EUR)	Number of applications a year	Cost per application (EUR)
EITA	0.25 (2021) 0.35 (2022)	n/a	n/a
iCapital	1.8 million (2021)	40-50 per year	36 000 – 45 000
Natura 2000	0.55 million (2022)	40 in 2022 <i>85 on average before 2020</i>	13 750 <i>6,470 if the same budget</i>
S+T+ARTS	0.67 million	1 564 in 2021 <i>over 2 000 until 2020</i>	428 <i>below 335</i>
TANDEM	80 000 (2021)	127	630

Source: Cost data collected from the case studies

These calculations suggest that the most cost-efficient prize is S+T+ARTS, with a cost per application of EUR 428 (or even less before the pandemic), followed by TANDEM Media Awards with a cost per application of EUR 630. The figures for the Natura 2000 Award and iCapital are much higher: EUR 13 750 and EUR 36 000 – 45 000. EITA does not have application process and costs data for other case study prizes were not provided.

There are some caveats for this analysis. It is clear that iCapital, which is directed at cities, will have limited opportunities to increase the number of applications significantly. This is perhaps also not necessary, as an application from a city overall requires more effort and has a higher communication effect than an application from an individual. Similarly, the Natura 2000 Award has a target audience that is limited to those engaged in Natural 2000 sites.

This indicator would be most useful in measuring efficiency case of prizes granted to individuals and similar types of organisations (for instance to compare prizes awarded to entrepreneurs). Prizes such as iCapital would need a different approach. This could focus on measuring if the resources invested generated appropriate levels of benefit, compared to other Commission activities and their communication performance indicators. They could be compared with, for instance, communication campaigns against a set of communication indicators. In fact, these indicators could be used for all prizes, which have communication

activities in place, if there was consistent approach to measuring communication performance.

Standard communication efficiency indicators, included in 2022 EC Communication indicators, could also be used. They include output indicators for events (cost per attendee), social media (CPM or cost per mille/thousand) as well as results indicators, i.e. cost per result for social media and other similar activities (cost per click, cost per engagement, cost per person recalling the campaign. These indicators are already used, for instance in the EITA social media report, but using them more consistently would support organisational learning across the Commission.

Key findings on this JC

Many of the EC prizes have built efficiency into their approaches through structured synergies with other high profile EU initiatives, for instance organising award ceremonies as part of larger events. There are challenges in assessing cost-benefit ratio of prizes. There is scope to use indicators such as cost per application across the prizes, as long as there is a consistent reporting framework for prizes.

EQ2.3. What factors are increasing the efficiency of the prizes as a communication vehicle? What other factors are reducing the efficiency of the prizes?

Answer to the evaluation question

One of the main factors, which can increase the efficiency of prizes as a communication tool is cooperation with partners (stakeholders, jury members, previous winners, etc). There is potential to create synergies between the Commission and the stakeholders if this cooperation is carefully managed. First, the Commission needs to create win-win situations and make sure partners are adequately incentivised to contribute to the promotion of prizes. Second, they must be provided with sufficient communication tools to help them promote and talk about the prize in a coordinated and harmonised manner.

Typical factors which can affect efficiency include duplication and fragmentation of effort and focusing on communication activities with no or limited impact. We note here the limited use of paid promotion to support social media promotion. Although the study did not identify any specific duplications, there seem to be a fragmentation of effort, which may lead to inefficiencies. There is also scope to develop a more consistent approach to reporting performance and budgets of prizes and to use this to identify efficiencies in communication work undertaken across prizes. There may also be scope to group prizes with similar goals and target groups to pool costs.

These points link back to the need for better articulation of EC prizes, including the use of intervention logics and SMART objectives and communication targets so that it is possible to assess where efforts should be placed to reinforce visibility. For example, which communication channels and tools are working well and in which country. While many prizes and their communications focused on the EU level, significant awareness-raising impacts related to the announcement of the prize tend to happen in the countries of the winners. A focus on more localised awareness raising efforts may further reinforce achievement of communication impacts.

JC 1: Extent to which it is possible to identify common factors in relation to the design and management of a range of prizes that increased/reduced the level of efficiency in the implementation and promotion of prizes

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Non-EU prizes case studies

The Better Regulation Guidelines recommend that efficiency analysis looks closely at the costs of the EU intervention as they accrue to different stakeholders, and identifies what factors are driving these costs and how these factors relate to the EU intervention. The purpose of efficiency assessment is therefore to show that resources are used to their best and that the costs incurred are strictly necessary. However, cost data provided in this study were very limited. The guidelines further *place a strong emphasis on identifying and where possible measuring (i.e. if possible, quantifying or monetising) the costs and benefits of EU interventions*, but this was not possible in most cases in the study.

This question focuses on communication aspects of prizes, which relate to visibility towards applicants and target groups in relation to the promotion of calls for applications and the announcements of the results. This evaluation question relates to factors that are currently increasing efficiency, but there may be other ways to reinforce this. Efficiency can be achieved either by getting the same result at a lower cost, or getting a better result at the same costs. For instance, paid promotion will generally have greater impact than organic (unpaid) promotion, although it will also generate additional costs. The issue is therefore not just about reducing budgets, but also about achieving more with existing budgets.

There are a number of factors that can help to improve cost-benefit ratios. These include working with others to create synergies, merge resources and avoid duplication of effort, as well as focusing on impactful communication activities (and avoiding activities with limited impact).

Cooperation with partners

Our EC and non-EC case studies confirmed that working with stakeholders can increase synergies and achieve efficiency gains by merging resources and increasing visibility. This also covers cooperation with winners, jury members and other stakeholders (such as EU level networks) to promote prizes.

All three **non-EU case study** prizes are implemented in cooperation with partners, and our respondents considered them an important element in increasing the visibility and outreach of a prize, especially within the target audience, by providing an entry point into regions or audiences which are otherwise difficult to reach.

Bloomberg Philanthropies works with the main partner who serves as the overall administrator of the competition, but also with numerous local outreach partners who support communication efforts as well as the coaching and the dissemination of the grants to the finalists and winners (such as EuroCities and UNDP).

ITF also collaborates with other international organizations and universities who act as outreach partners. UNESCO uses partners, such as non-governmental organisations, to support communication outreach and the application process for those applicants who lack capacity due to language, technical or other barriers. The use of partners has thus increased

the number of applications in particular from regions or stakeholders' where there is a recognised capacity gap.

According to the interviewees, renowned partners increase the visibility and prestige of a prize especially those with an already established presence within the thematic field of the prize. However, cooperation with partners also needs to be sufficiently managed and comes with a cost. For instance, both Bloomberg and UNESCO provide a communication toolkit and / or promotional materials (templates for social media, graphics, talking points, etc.) to their partners to help them promote and talk about the prize in a coordinated and harmonised manner. We consider in most cases this would also be beneficial for the Commission prizes and in the EITA case study it was mentioned that national agencies expect this.

Bloomberg and UNESCO also use participants and jury members to enhance the outreach of the prize through communication via their network and social media platforms. The interviewees considered these stakeholders (and especially geographically and thematically diverse renowned jury members with regional networks and a social media following), to be an effective resource in increasing the visibility of prizes.

In the case of Bloomberg Mayors Challenge, there is a requirement for contestant cities to include information about how they will promote the award in their application. A similar approach was adopted in iCapital. This is a very good practice befitting the size and scope of this award. Consideration could be given to making this standard practice in relevant EC prizes, particularly where there is a monetary award. In fact, much of the communication efforts post-award ceremony seem to come from the cities.

Another example of synergies is illustrated by the "I am European" school prize. The prize enables the creation of synergies between schools and Casa Europa, which is a citizen-oriented service that promotes knowledge and debate on European Union issues, and a joint initiative of the Representation of the European Commission in Portugal and the Information Office of the European Parliament.

In addition to schools, there is potential to create synergies with other stakeholders, in particular Europe-Direct centres, where involving them in the running and promotion of the prize could reduce the need for students to visit the Casa Europa in Lisbon. This approach would also have the benefit of promoting the Europe Direct Centres to students, who from an early age become "consumers" of European information and future users and ambassadors of these centres.

A factor linked to cooperation with partners, is the organisation of an award ceremony as part of larger event as discussed above. DGs running a prize can reduce their direct costs if they announce winners at an event that has been set up for another similar policy initiative. This is also more likely to increase the communication impact of individual prizes, especially new prizes. In addition, for larger events the prize may benefit from the presence of journalists. For instance, the S+T+ARTS Prize was associated with the Ars Electronica Festival because this was already engaging with a target audience of people working in the highly specific niche of technology and art.

Interestingly, organisers of Bloomberg Mayors Challenge do not always organise the award ceremony. Due to the busy schedules of city mayors, an award ceremony is not always feasible, especially if it does not align with the timeframe of the City Lab event. In many cases, the award ceremony is part of the value of winning the prize and therefore high-profile prize ceremonies are important. However, given their significant cost, it might make more sense for some prizes to dispense with the ceremony and use the resources instead for promoting the prize winners in the media. This could be an option for some EC prizes too.

Finally, cooperation with partners creates costs. In most cases, if external stakeholders are to be engaged in prize promotion, they need to be rewarded. This is also confirmed by non-EU case studies. Outreach partners in the Bloomberg Mayors challenge receive a fee for contributing to promotional efforts. This increases the overall costs of prize implementation and there needs to be a win-win approach so that everyone involved is sufficiently rewarded, either financially or with other benefits.

A related issue is cooperation with contractors. Whether to engage an external contractor will always depend on the specific context, objectives and budget for a prize. Where this is considered, it is important to ensure the contractor has both operational and communication expertise in the implementation of prizes, which may be a challenge. Operational expertise should ideally relate to previous experience of running a prize. Communication activities must be implemented by communication agencies. If both these dimensions are not properly covered, outsourcing may be inefficient. Engaging a contractor also creates cost for the Commission due to the need to supervise the contractor. The level of this cost will depend on many factors, in particular the extent of the contractor's experience.

Avoiding duplications and fragmentation

Duplication is another factor influencing the efficiency of prizes. The study did not identify any particular duplications among different EC prizes given the broad spectrum of different prizes each with their own objectives and characteristics.

However, the data presented above suggests that there is some fragmentation of effort and resources. The fact that about four of ten Commission prizes are small also suggests that fragmentation may be an issue. Fragmentation was also highlighted by the [survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers](#). According to the survey a significant share of EC staff (32%) considers that there are too many Commission prizes.

Prizes with very low budgets are unlikely to be impactful in terms of communication and other outcomes. This suggests that there may be scope for discontinuing some or merging them (for instance as individual categories under an umbrella prize), where they address the same target audience or challenge. About a quarter of respondents also noted that the prizes of their DGs address similar audiences and topics as those of other DGs (see section 4.4 for the details). To achieve greater economies of scale, prizes with similar goals and addressing similar target groups could be grouped as different categories to pool costs. This issue is further discussed in section 5.5.

Focusing on impact

Another area where inefficiencies may exist is in implementing communication activities, with limited impact. The lack of consistent approach to reporting performance may limit the ability of the Commission to identify such potential inefficiencies of communication across prizes. A more consistent approach could help to identify these through comparative analysis between prizes and between the different tools used.

There are smart ways of reducing communication costs, while keeping the focus on impact. For instance, celebrities/influencers can make an issue visible to the wider public, whereas recognised thematic experts are likely to be viewed by their thematic community. They can be more impactful than high-level paid campaigns. This kind of endorsement does not just raise visibility, but it is also more likely that messages are accepted by target groups.

Key findings on this JC

Typical factors likely to increase cost-benefit ratios include working with others to create synergies, merge resources and avoid duplication or fragmentation of effort. The same

will also be achieved by focusing on impactful communication activities (while avoiding activities of no or limited impact). There are several best practices identified in Commission and non-EU prizes in cooperating with winners, stakeholders or jury members to enhance communication efforts. On the other hand, the data suggest that fragmentation may be an issue which could be addressed through consolidation in some cases.

5.3. Effectiveness

Effectiveness considers how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives, which factors drive or hinder progress and how they are linked (or not) to the EU intervention. The effectiveness analysis looks at the benefits of the EU intervention as they accrue to different stakeholders.²⁸

In this section we present the findings in relation to the effectiveness of the use of prizes by the European Commission. The analysis of effectiveness measures:

- how successful EC prizes have been in achieving or progressing towards their objectives (EQ 3.1), including their communication objectives (EQ 3.2);
- to what extent prizes engage and benefit the participants as well as the awarding DGs/Executive agencies (EQ 3.3);
- the factors driving or hindering progress towards the achievements / effects observed and lessons learnt / best practices on ways to increase the effectiveness of prizes (EQ 3.4);
- the extent to which EC prizes engage with the targeted audience and the wider public through their activities (EQ 3.5).

5.3.1. EQ 3.1: To what extent were the set objective(s) of the prizes achieved?

Answer to the evaluation question

EC prizes have objectives outlining the purpose of the prizes and their eligibility criteria, as well as their territorial coverage and target audience. This is in line with the best practices identified in the literature review. Some prizes also have different categories for specific segments of applicants, which help narrow down the prizes' objectives.

However, overall, the objectives tend to be broadly defined, often as statement of intent. Moreover, the objectives do not generally set specific, measurable and time bound targets to measure the extent to which the prizes' objectives have been achieved. As a result, while qualitative feedback from the Commission's stakeholders indicates that prizes' objectives have been effectively achieved, it is not possible to quantitatively assess the extent to which this is the case.

JC 1: To what extent are EC prizes' objectives being met?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- Literature review identifying best practices in regard to setting objectives
- Mapping of EC prizes

As highlighted by the reconstructed intervention logic developed for each of the seven **EC case studies** (and presented in the EC prize case studies reports in annex 3), EC prizes are typically framed around an overall objective and supported by three to four specific

²⁸ European Commission, Better Regulation: guidelines and toolbox, available at: [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/).

objectives. The objectives are generally formulated as broad statements of intent, such as “to stimulate new activities aimed at boosting game-changing innovation” (iCapital) or “to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats” (Natura 2000). As a result, these objectives are often beyond what can be realistically achieved by a prize. As such, and as evidenced in the reconstructed intervention logic, many of the objectives do not translate into results or impacts.

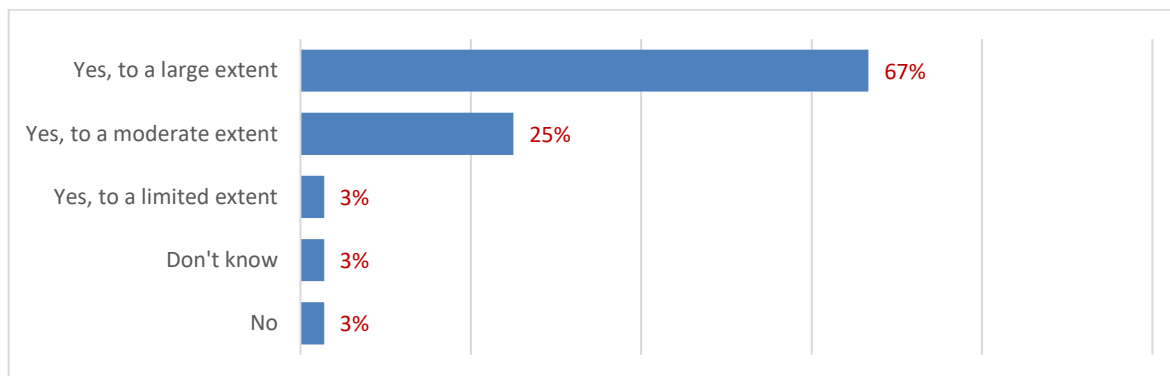
While being more targeted, the specific objectives are also framed broadly such as “To foster cooperation between European cities” (iCapital) or “To attract and raise interest in EU's subjects” (“I am European” school prize). As a result, these objectives are often difficult to measure especially due to the lack of set deadlines or measurable targets within the objective. As highlighted in the literature review, objectives should instead be based on SMART criteria meaning objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound. For instance, in the case of the iCapital example, the specific objective could be developed further to specify the type and degree of cooperation intended, between how many cities (i.e., setting achievable and measurable targets) and within what timeframe.

Beyond the objectives, and as evidenced by the [mapping of EC prizes](#), most (83%) EC prizes identify specific target groups within audience segments (i.e. youth, minorities, women, etc.), and within specific fields of activity (media, education, industries, etc.). Most (84%) prizes also limit participation based on predefined geographical delimitation (i.e., individual countries/Member States, group of countries, or regions). This is in line with the best practices identified in the literature review which highlighted the importance of determining the size and composition of the participants as part of the prizes' strategy. These target groups and geographical delimitation help narrow the prizes' objectives further. Similarly, some of the EC prizes include categories to further delimit participation within a prize. For instance, the TANDEM Media Awards which promotes collaboration between two journalists has three categories: a male and female journalist duo; a student and professional journalist duo; and an artist and journalist duo. These categories also help narrow down the prizes' objectives. For instance, EITA has four categories, one per sector of education²⁹. This specific categorisation helps to ensure that the broader objectives of identifying and promoting outstanding teaching (specific objective of EITA) can be met in the specific sectors identified by the prize.

EC stakeholders consulted as part of the [EC case-studies](#) believed the prizes had met their objectives. Similarly, respondents to the [HoC survey](#) considered that the prizes were very effective in generating stakeholders' awareness of the EU's contribution to the concerned policy area and their engagement in this action (7 out of 9 respondents). Most (66.7%) respondent to the [prize managers' survey](#) also considered that the prize(s) that they managed achieved or had achieved its / their purposes “to a large extent”. This suggests that to a large extent EC staff perceive that prizes add value and contribute to the prizes' objectives. However, due to the broad framing of the objectives and lack of set targets, it is not possible to quantitatively assess the extent to which the prizes' objectives have been achieved.

²⁹ Early childhood education and care; Primary education; Secondary education, and Vocational education and training (VET) schools

Figure 17: In general, do you think that the prize(s) you manage achieve/s their/its purpose (N=36)



Source: Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

5.3.2. EQ 3.2: What were the communication objectives of the prizes and to what extent were the objective(s) for communication of the prizes achieved?

Answer to the evaluation question

Most EC prizes have communication objectives (either as overall and/or as specific objectives) intended to promote or raise awareness of the policy or programme related to the prize and increase participation and awareness among the targeted audience. However, these objectives are generally broad and few prizes set targets for their communication activities such as in regard to the number of posts, expected reach, engagement rate, etc. As a result, it is not possible to quantitatively assess whether the EC prizes meet their communication goals.

Despite these limitations, stakeholders feedback indicates that the EC prizes are overall, effective in generating stakeholders' awareness and engagement among the targeted stakeholder community. However, stakeholders consulted also highlighted scope to further increase the effectiveness of the communication activities. The following suggestions were made in that regard:

- to increase the engagement of traditional media;
- to strengthen the social media campaign;
- to endorse the prizes in EU channels;
- to engage winners/participants, distinguished experts and / or juries in the prizes' communication activities;
- to provide a communication toolkit / promotion material to relevant stakeholder;
- to ensure applications from all countries/regions within the prize territorial coverage.

While several communication activities contributed to the promotion and outreach of the prizes (i.e., online campaign, press release, etc.), award ceremonies were particularly effective in that regard. They contribute to the promotion and outreach of the prizes and benefit both the European Commission (by engaging the media, creating content for communication activities, and showcasing EU policies and the work it does) and the participants (increasing the visibility and recognition value conferred by the prize and providing a networking opportunity).

Despite the importance of communication activities to extend the communication impact of prizes following their award, EC prizes conduct limited or no communication

activities after the award ceremony. This results in dormant periods between and after the main events (announcement and award) which suggests that there is room to enhance the communication impact of prizes. While recognised as important, stakeholders from the EC case studies highlighted the lack of time and resources available as the main barriers limiting the extent to which post-award communication activities are conducted. Lessons learnt and good practices from both the EC and non-EU case studies suggest that participants / winners as well as networks / partners and jury members are an effective low cost mean of enhancing the outreach of the prizes through communication via their networks and social media platforms.

While most (66%) DGs/Executive Agencies reported having systems in place to collect evidence on the communication activities conducted and their outputs, monitoring remains minimal, it is not conducted on a regular basis and does not inform specific goals/objectives. Similarly, while most EC prizes (75%) reported conducting evaluation of their prizes, their frequency, methodology and depth vary significantly. Overall, this suggests that most EC prizes do not have effective systems in place for monitoring, reviewing performance and lessons learning.

JC 1: To what extent were communication objectives set, and were these objectives achieved?

Sources of evidence:

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- Desk research (prizes' Terms of Reference and other strategic documents identifying their communication objectives and activities)

As evidenced by the **EC case studies**, a large share (three out of the seven case studies) of EC prizes are intended as communication instruments. As such, their overall objective is a communication objective. For instance:

- the TANDEM Media Awards is part of a broader communication programme/campaign funded under the EU Neighbours South. The overall objective of the prize is to create awareness and positive perceptions of the EU, and to increase acceptance of EU values in the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood region;
- the EITA Award is used as a promotional tool to support the achievements of teachers and schools under the Erasmus+ funding programme. One of its main objectives is to increase the visibility of the Erasmus+ programme;
- the "I am European" school prize overall objective is to reach out to citizens, academia, civil society, social partners, and other stakeholders and to organise communication, dialogue, and other activities to raise awareness of EU priorities and policies.

Moreover, as previously evidenced in EQ3.1, most EC prizes' objectives are framed broadly as supporting an EU policy and/or programmes. As a result, most EC prizes have an imbedded communication element to promote or raise awareness of the policy or programme in question which is reflected in the prizes' specific objectives. For instance, the following specific objectives of the EC case studies' prizes are communication objectives:

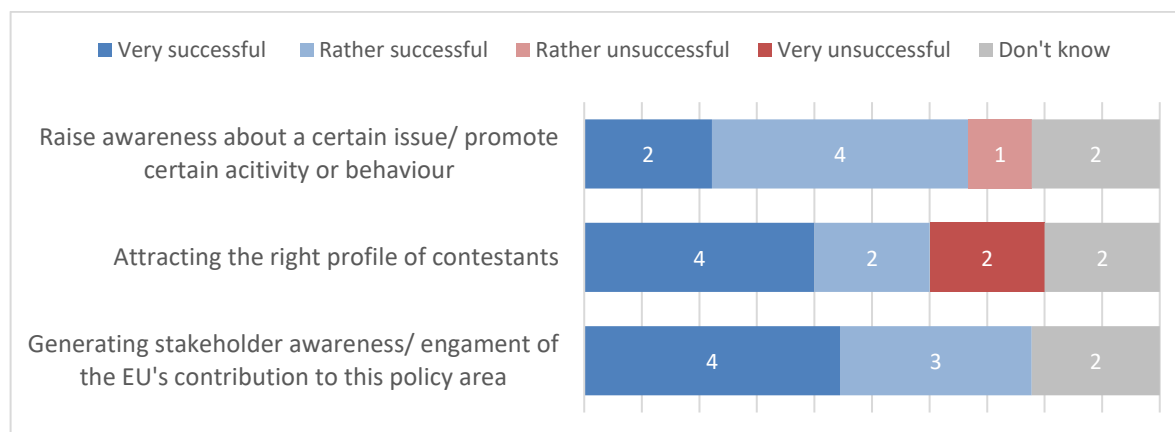
- to promote the activities of the EEN and the support its members provide (EEN);

- to promote and raise awareness about the S+T+ARTS Programme;
- to raise awareness about the existence of Natura 2000 network (Natura 2000).

However, while most EC prizes have communication objectives (either as overall and/or as specific objectives), the evidence from the case studies suggests that few prizes set targets for their communication activities such as in regard to the number of posts, expected reach, engagement rate, etc (i.e., only EITA and TANDEM Media Awards). As a result, **it is often not possible to quantitatively assess whether the EC prizes meet their communication goals**. Instead, the EC prizes' approach to communication is highly variable. This reflects the organisational set-up of each prize, whether there is a dedicated budget to communicate about the prize, as well as if the prize is supported by other similar but visible initiatives, which bolster awareness levels within the target community. For instance, communication on some prizes (TANDEM Media Awards, Natura 2000) is outsourced to communication agencies (Stantec, Arctik), while others need to rely on the frequently stretched resources of in-house communication departments.

Despite these variances, and while highlighting limitations and scope for improvement (see further below), stakeholders from all seven **EC case studies**, were satisfied with the communication activities of the prizes. Similarly, when asked about the achievements that prizes had made most **HoC** consulted as part of the survey considered that the Commission's prizes were either 'very successful' or 'rather successful' at generating stakeholders' awareness / engagement, attracting the right profile of contestants, promoting and raising awareness, and engaging citizens (see Figure 18). These are all indicators which highlight the effectiveness of the prizes' communication activities.

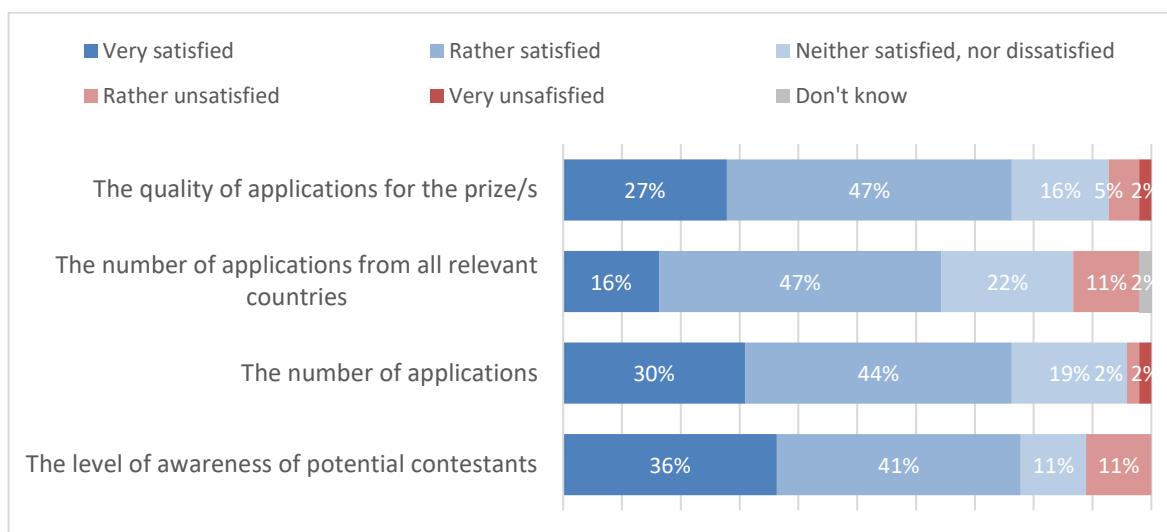
Figure 18: HoC's perception of the extent to which prizes awarded by their DG / Agency were effective in achieving the following objectives? (N=9)



Source: Survey of Heads of Communication

Similarly, most respondents to the **prize managers' survey** indicated being "very" or "rather" satisfied regarding the level of awareness of potential contestants, the number and quality of applications, and the reputation and level of awareness of the prizes within the targeted stakeholder community. These indicators suggest that stakeholders consider that EC prizes meet their promotion objectives (see Figure 19). However, while satisfied with the overall number of applicants, this satisfaction level decreased when asked about the number of applications *from all relevant countries* with 11% being unsatisfied. This finding was also evidenced in the **EC case studies** which highlighted gaps in the representation of different Member States, countries, and regions in applications to most prizes. For instance, in the 2022 edition of the Natura 2000 award, there were no applications from 15 EU Member States. Similarly, over the 10 years of the "I am European" school prize, only 12 of the 20 autonomous regions of Portugal have participated in the prize.

Figure 19: Prize managers level of satisfaction with the following aspects of the prize(s) that they manage (N=36)



Source: Survey of prize managers

Nevertheless, despite this positive feedback, several limitations were highlighted both in the **surveys** and the **EC case studies**, which suggest that more could be done to further increase the prizes' communication outputs and effectiveness. The following limitations and scope for improvement were highlighted:

- lack of or very limited coverage by traditional media (Natura 2000 and “I am European” school prize);
- scope to make the social media campaign more engaging, active, and targeted (EEN Award and “I am European” school prize);
- scope to strengthen the exposure of the prizes in EC channels through greater endorsement (EITA, S+T+ARTS, and TANDEM);
- lack of communication toolkit or material that can be shared with and used by participants and partners (case studies);
- scope to increase the engagement of winners / participants, distinguished experts and / or juries in the prizes' communication activities (case studies and survey);
- lack of applications from all targeted countries/region due to the eligibility criteria and / or the low visibility of the prizes in certain countries / regions (survey and social listening exercise).

Key findings on this JC

This judgement criteria needs to consider that there are in fact two types of communication objective in use:

- prize objectives, which relate to raising awareness of a policy area, programme or activity; and
- objectives or targets which relate to the promotion and visibility of the prize.

Based on the evidence accessed during this evaluation, it seems likely that the first group of objectives (prize objectives) are almost always broad. There is some evidence that some prizes set targets and indicators for their communication activities, but this seems to be relatively rare. However, when a communication agency is involved in promoting a prize and it can be assumed that DGs'/Agencies communication units are involved, there

is a greater focus on setting targets for promotional channels and tools and evidence that these targets are met and surpassed.

Yet, we also noted that prize managers are not always aware of the details of prize promotion and its effectiveness, and, in consequence, it was hard to gain access to monitoring data. It seems that even when communication units might support there are still gaps in targets and monitoring awareness raising results. As a consequence, it is not possible to quantitatively assess whether all EC prizes meet their communication goals. But we received some positive feedback from winners in the EC case studies that prizes were being well promoted / and generating good visibility in the stakeholder group.

JC 2: To what extent do award ceremonies increase the communication benefits of prizes and lessons learned?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of contestants
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- Literature review
- Social listening exercise

The analysis of the **non-EU prizes and EC prizes**, and the feedback collected from the surveys, demonstrated that award ceremonies added value to both the awarding organisations and the winners/contestants. For the European Commission, award ceremonies are an opportunity to:

- **engage the media and generate communication content thus increasing the communication benefits of the prizes.** As evidenced by the social listening analysis, the announcement of the winner is the most important communication moment for a prize, resulting in high media coverage. For instance, the EEN awards 2021 recorded a surge in mentions at the beginning of the EEN21 conference (where the prize was awarded) with a second spike shortly after, when the award ceremony took place at the end of the conference. Similar spikes were reported in all EC case studies (see [Figure 20](#) and [Figure 21](#) below highlighting spikes during the award ceremony for EITA and EEN awards);
- **showcase EU policies and the support the Commission provides** to individuals, organisations, cities, etc. For instance, the TANDEM Media Awards ceremony included a panel discussion on EU-funded media projects and an EU-branded stand bringing together representatives from the Delegations, Commission, EU-funded projects /programmes, and invitees to discuss EU policies and contributions in the region.

For the winners and contestants, award ceremonies are an opportunity to:

- **network with relevant stakeholders** attending or participating in the event. For instance, the TANDEM Media award ceremony took place within the context of a broader conference attended by media professionals from both sides of the Mediterranean, along with the TANDEM runners-up, journalists, influencers, panel speakers and EU Neighbours South programme staff;
- **increase the recognition value of the award by increasing the communication outreach and thus visibility conferred by winning the award.** As noted in the literature review, award ceremonies are an effective way of providing visibility to both the

awarding institution and the winners. They can have a direct impact on the perceived importance of the prizes by increasing public awareness.

The following successful practices and suggestions when organising award ceremonies were highlighted in the **EC case studies, non-EU case studies and survey of contestants**.

- Choosing a fixed date for the launch of a prize and an award ceremony / announcement of the winners that coincides with the theme of the prize increases the visibility and legitimacy of the prize (i.e. for instance, UNESCO's Prize for Girls' and Women's Education is launched every year on the 8th of March – the International Women's Day).
- Running the award ceremony within a high-profile event:
 - increases the number of attendees as well as the profile of the attendees and eliminates the risk that there will be few or no attendees at a bespoke event, which could devalue the prize;
 - raises the prestige and visibility of the prizes and of the winners, strengthening their recognition value;
 - increases the incentive to participate due to the perceived networking benefits conferred by the awarding ceremony.
- Holding the ceremony at the premises of the awarding institution has a similar impact on the prestige and visibility of the prize while increasing the visibility of the institution awarding the prize.
- The timing of the award ceremony (i.e. at the end of the day and / or conference) influences attendance and therefore the visibility of the ceremony. Award ceremonies should not be left until the end of an event, as people tend to leave early, which reduces the visibility benefits of associating the prize with a wider, well-attended event.
- On-line award ceremonies are deemed as less engaging and as limiting networking opportunity for winners as opposed to in-person ceremonies³⁰. Respondents to the contestant survey emphasised the need to meet in person and network and be recognised in-person in front of their peers.
- Inviting runners up / finalists to participate in the event ensures that a wider pool of contestants can benefit. As highlighted in the S+T+ARTS Prize, including honorary mentions / finalists increases the potential to showcase more projects, including via the media in their respective countries / regions.
- The attendance of renowned jury members and officials increases the recognition value of the prize and its visibility. For instance, in the EITA Award, the presence of the Commissioner, as well as other political representatives, was highlighted as an important symbolic gesture for many of the attendees.
- Keeping ceremonies short (one-hour appears to be optimal) and information about who has won confidential, increases the suspense and communication impact of the announcement.

³⁰ This does not imply that any web-streaming of events should be discontinued, more that it should ideally be complementary

Key findings on this JC:

Award ceremonies effectively contribute to the promotion and outreach of the prizes and benefit both the European Commission (by engaging the media, creating content for communication activities, and showcasing EU policies and the work it does) and the participants (increasing the visibility and recognition value conferred by the prize and providing a networking opportunity).

JC 3: To what extent is it possible to extend the communication impact of prizes following their award and/or including to support the next prize / amplify policy goals?

Sources of evidence

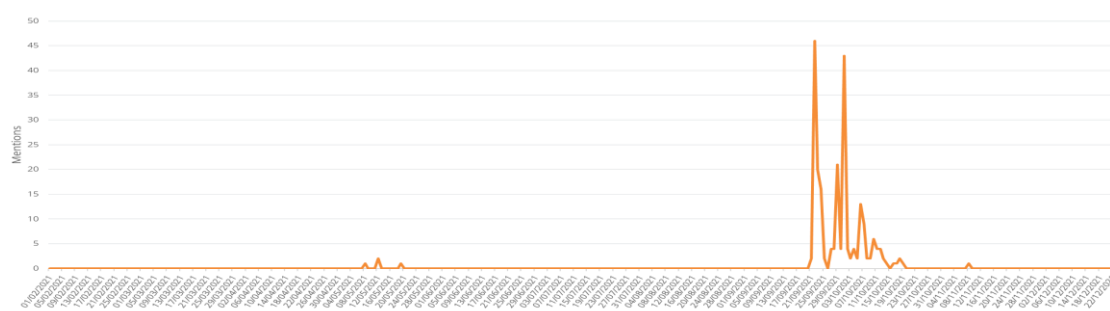
- EC prizes case studies
- Non-EU prizes case studies
- Mapping of EC prizes
- Literature review
- Social listening exercise

As noted in the **literature review**, communication activities which are conducted after the prizes are awarded are important to increase the impact of the prizes by amplifying their message(s). For recurring prizes, communication after the award ceremony is deemed particularly important as it helps promote the prize and keep the momentum for the next iteration but also builds on and amplifies the policy goals of the awarding DG/Executive Agency.

Communication activities which are conducted after the prizes are awarded are particularly relevant for the Commission as based on the **mapping**, two-thirds (66%) of the EC prizes are recurring prizes, most annually with some organised bi-annually or on an ad-hoc basis. Post-award activities may include:

- organising activities (i.e., conferences, events, networks, workshops, etc) around the prizes and inviting the winners to attend to present their projects/activities;
- producing and disseminating media content (i.e., posts, newsletter articles, press releases, blogs, etc) such as sharing best practices and lessons learnt to further inspire and engage future potential contestants;
- following up on past winners' projects/activities and providing them with a platform to share their findings.

However, as evidenced by the **social listening exercise**, most EC prizes do not appear to, or only to a very limited extent, conduct communication activities after the award ceremony. For instance, in the case of EITA, the promotional campaign for the award only lasted for approximately three months, peaking twice in that period (at the announcement and at the award ceremony) before gradually fading afterwards. This trend in online mentions was similar across all prizes reviewed as part of the **EC case studies**. It illustrates dormant periods between and after the surges of mentions linked to main events as illustrated by both figures below. This finding indicates that there is room to extend the communication impact of prizes following their award.

Figure 20: EITA mentions per day (August to December 2021)**Figure 21: EEN mentions per day (February to December 2021)**

Source: Social listening exercise

When consulted on the topic, stakeholders from the **EC case studies** were aware of the benefits and in favour of conducting additional **post-award** communication activities but highlighted the lack of time and resources as **limiting** factors. Several good practices and lessons learnt were, nonetheless evidenced, such as using networks (iCapital Awards), partners / contractors (S+T+ARTS and EITA) and participants / winners (S+T+ARTS) to further the outreach of communication activities after the prize was awarded.

Similar good practices and lessons learnt were also highlighted in our review of three **non-EU prizes** (The Bloomberg's Mayors Challenge, the OECD's Decarbonising Transport Award, and UNESCO's Prize for Girls' and Women's Education) with the addition of the use of jury members to further enhance the outreach of the prize through communication via their own networks and social media platforms.

Key findings on this JC

Most EC prizes conduct limited or no communication activities after the award ceremony. This results in dormant periods between and after the main events (announcement and award), which suggest that there is room to enhance the communication impact of the prizes. While recognised as important, stakeholders from the EC case studies highlighted the lack of time and resources available as the main barriers limiting the extent to which post-award communication activities are conducted. Lessons learnt and good practices from both the EC and non-EU case studies indicate that participants / winners as well as networks / partners and jury members could enhance the outreach of the prizes through communication via their networks and social media platforms.

JC 4: To what extent are there effective systems in place to monitor, review performance and integrate lessons learnt?

Sources of evidence

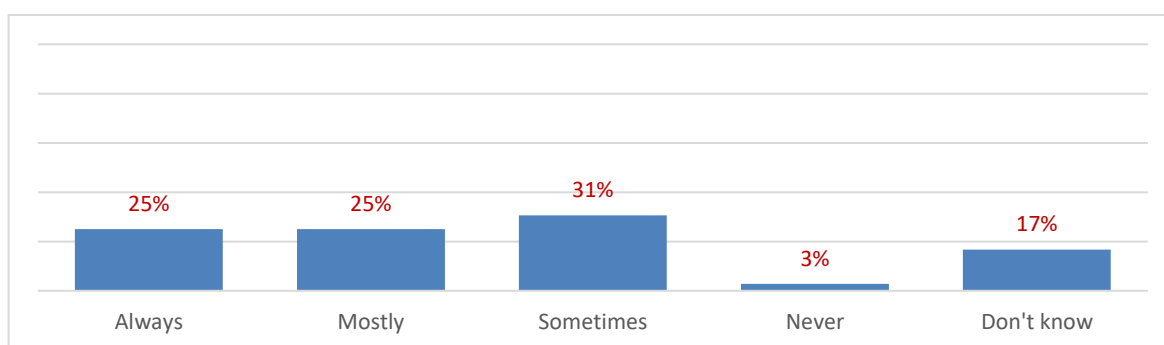
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies
- Mapping of EC prizes

As previously examined in EQ 3.2, two-thirds (66%) of EC prizes collect analytics on offline engagement and / or online and social media engagement. This indicates that most DGs/Executive Agencies have systems in place to collect evidence on the communication activities conducted and their outputs. However, evidence from the **EC case studies** suggest that this monitoring remains minimal (mostly feedback from participants and metrics on number of applicants) and does not inform specific goals / objectives since – as reported in EQ3.2 – EC prizes do not seem to set specific targets for individual prizes.

Additionally, while most EC prizes (75%) reported conducting evaluations of their prizes, their methodology and depth vary significantly as evidenced by the **mapping** of EC prizes. For instance, some prizes are evaluated based solely on their track record in terms of the number of applications received, others through an informal de-brief of the participants or satisfaction surveys while others conduct more in-depth structured evaluations that include lessons learnt and proposals for future iterations. Beyond the use of evaluations, two of the seven **EC case studies** prizes (S+T+ARTS and EITA) also highlighted a good practice of using the first implementing year as a pilot to test the prize and make changes accordingly.

The frequency at which these evaluations are conducted also differs between the prizes as evidenced by the **prize managers' survey**. For instance, while 25% of respondents indicated that they “always” follow up with prize winners, at a later stage, to find out if prizes have generated any benefits or effects, 25% and 30% reported “mostly” or “sometimes” doing so. While the scale and frequency of the monitoring and evaluation should vary depending on the scope of the prize (i.e., a larger prize may require more frequent and in-depth evaluations with more extensive stakeholders' consultations) all prizes should incorporate a system to monitor, review performance and integrate lessons learnt in order to assess the impact of the prize, whether the prize is still needed, and ways in which the prizes can be improved. Findings such as the fact that 38% of prize managers do not know how winners perceive the amount of money awarded by the prize suggest that EC prizes would benefit from a more regular monitoring system.

Figure 22: In your view, do you / does your DG or Agency follow up with prize winners, at a later stage, to find out if prizes have generated any benefits/effects? (N=36)



Source: Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

Key findings on this JC

While most (66%) DGs/Executive Agencies reported having systems in place to collect evidence on the communication activities conducted and their outputs, monitoring remains minimal, it is not conducted on a regular basis and does not inform specific goals/objectives. Similarly, while most EC prizes (75%) reported conducting evaluation of their prizes, their frequency, methodology and depth vary significantly. Overall, this suggests that most EC prizes do not have effective systems in place for monitoring, reviewing performance and lessons learning.

5.3.3. EQ 3.3: What have been the (quantitative and qualitative) effects of the prizes?

Answer to the evaluation question

EC prizes provide benefits to all types of contestants by providing individuals with visibility and recognition for their work thus contributing to their professional status, and providing organisations and groups with additional credentials, which might contribute to securing future funding. Based on the case studies, we identified several examples of prizes that had generated a tangible outcome for contestants, for example SMEs that secured new contracts and individuals who were taken more seriously at work and gained more opportunities. There is significant prestige attached to receiving an EU prize and the benefits are felt by recipients.

Direct personal benefits generated as a result of participating and/ or winning an EC prize include new career prospects, funding opportunities and professional relationships. However not all EC prizes were seen as conferring benefits to the same extent. If the benefits of a prize are unclear or perceived to be weak by the contestants, this raises questions about the design of the prize and its sustainability. This highlights the necessity of regularly contacting past participants to assess the extent to which each prize benefits contestants as a means of evaluating whether the prize should be discontinued or amended.

Beyond the participants, EC prizes also generate benefits to the awarding DGs and Executive Agencies by contributing to the policies they support, generating some awareness among the targeted stakeholders and helping to reinforce the EU brand. This contributes to strengthening the image of the EU within the Member States and abroad. Depending on the nature of the prize, the prize process may also help to strengthen the work of EC staff and reinforce insights in a policy area, Horizon challenge prizes come to the fore here.

JC 1: To what extent do the EC prizes confer benefits to the contestants

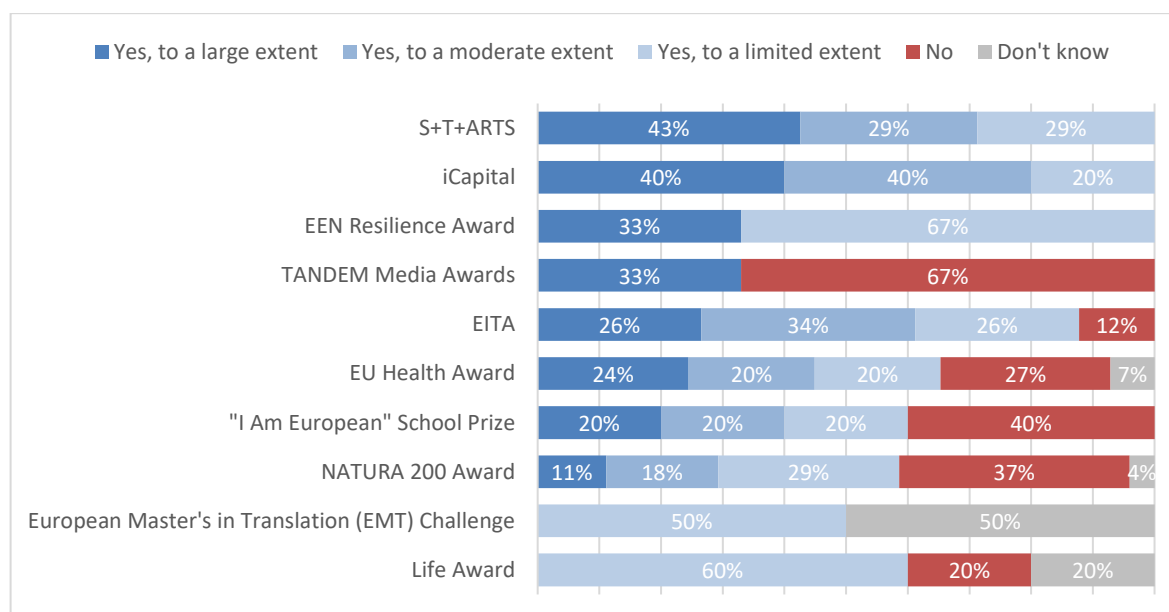
Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of contestants
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

Participating and winning EC prizes generate important benefits for contestants personally as well as for their organisation / institution / project. This view was shared by most contestants interviewed as part of the seven **EC prize case studies**, as well as most (74%)

respondents to the **contestants' survey**. However, a large share (22%) of respondents reported that participating in the prize had not generated benefits for them and 5% did not know. A closer examination of these opposing views highlights a significant divergence between prizes. For instance, 72% of respondents among the contestants in the S+T+ARTS Prize indicated that participation in the prize had generated benefits to a large or moderate extent for them (and 29% to a limited extent). In contrast, two-thirds of respondents (68%) involved in the Natura 2000 Award indicated that their involvement had given them no or little benefits. This suggests that while prizes can generate strong benefits for the contestants, and most EC prizes do, some prizes are less effective in that regard. If the benefits of a given prize are unclear or perceived to be weak by the contestants, this raises questions about the design of the prize and its sustainability.

Figure 23: Has participation in the prize generated any benefits for you? (N = 153)

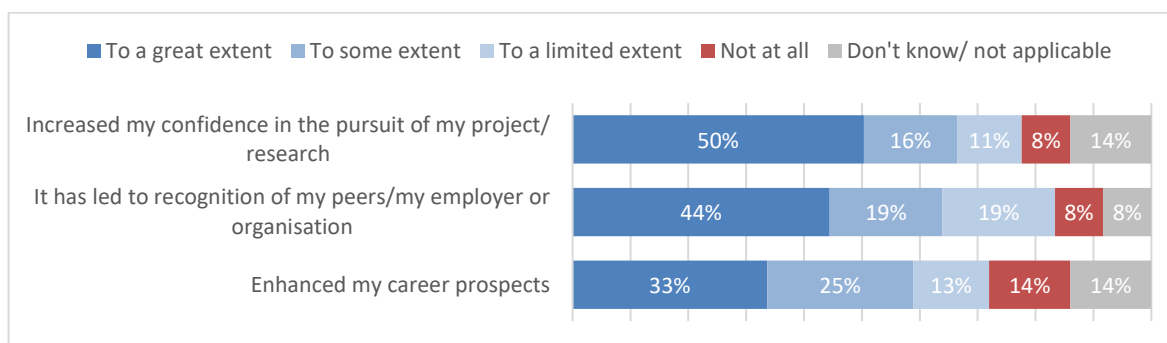


Source: Survey of contestants – responses from individuals involved in EC prizes on behalf of an organisation

Overall, and despite a variance between prizes, the Commission's prizes were deemed particularly beneficial by contributing to contestants' professional status and development. Most respondents to the **contestants' survey** indicated that the prize provided an opportunity for people like them, organisations or companies, etc. to get recognition for their contribution to society (87%) and to showcase the specific achievements made by contestants / prize applications (80%). The largest proportion of respondents, who were involved in Commission prizes as individuals, indicated that their participation had:

- increased their confidence in the pursuit of their project / research (50% "to a great extent", 16% "to some extent" and 11% "to a limited extent");
- led to recognition of their peers / their employer or organisation (44% "to a great extent", 19% "to some extent" and 19% "to a limited extent");
- enhanced their career prospects (33% "to a great extent", 25% "to some extent" and 13% "to a limited extent").

Figure 24: Has participating and/or winning the prize created the following results? (N = 36)

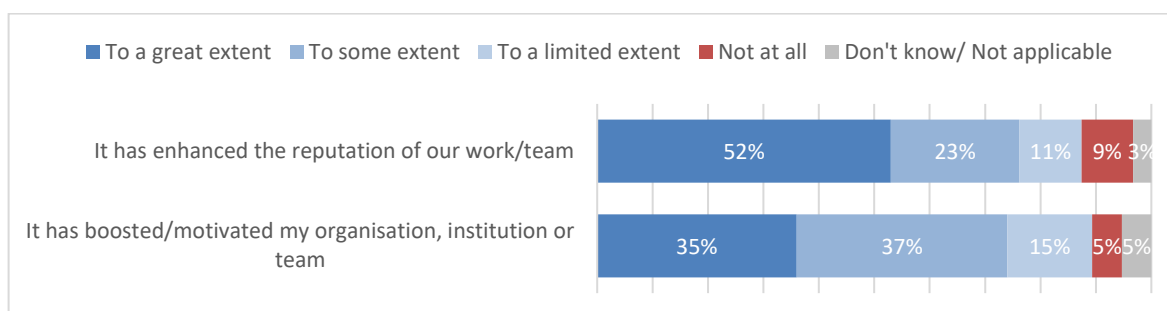


Source: Survey of contestants – responses from individuals involved in EC prizes as individuals

Similarly, respondents, who were involved in Commission prizes as an organisation, on behalf of a project team, on behalf of a city / town / municipality or other, were positive about the benefits conferred by the prizes. They indicated that participating and / or winning the prize had:

- enhanced the reputation of their work / their team (52% “to a great extent”, 23% “to some extent” and 11% “to a limited extent”);
- boosted/motivated their organisation, institution, or team (35% “to a great extent”, 37% “to some extent” and 15% “to a limited extent”).

Figure 25: Has participating and/or winning the prize generated any of the following results? (N = 153)



Source: Survey of contestants – responses from individuals involved in EC prizes on behalf of an organisation

Overall, the **EC prize case studies** reported similar findings demonstrating that winning an EU prize has a strong motivational impact on winners who feel particularly positive about their work being recognised and the opportunity to stand out. Beyond the positive feelings and increased motivation, prizes also generated a number of benefits, as illustrated by the examples below:³¹

³¹ The exception to the examples presented is Natura 2000. Participants welcome the EU recognition of their work but indicated that they experienced ‘no real benefits’ to winning the Natura 2000 prize.

Examples of benefits generated by EC prizes for participants

- The 2164 students and teachers from 214 schools who participated in the “I am European” school prize run by the ECRepresentation in Portugal over the last 10 years, have increased their knowledge and understanding about the EU, as a direct result of their involvement.
- The design of the TANDEM Media Awards, with categories for male and female journalist collaborations, cross-country journalist collaborations, and collaborations between journalists and student journalists stimulated several positive effects, including learning impacts for contestants. Winners confirmed that other tangible benefits included consolidating professional relationships and supporting new work opportunities.
- Potential effects are also built into the design of the EITA Award, which recognise outstanding teaching and learning practices and inter-school collaborations. As well as the motivational boost of winning, teachers welcomed the positive feedback that they received from their peers, as well as parents. In terms of tangible benefits, some reported being able to attract additional funding, as a result of winning the award.
- Winners of the S+T+ARTS Prize, reported that the prize had helped to validate their ideas and had supported networking, leading to the creation of new national and international partnerships, as well as in some cases attracting new funding.
- Some of the less tangible effects of winning the iCapital Awards, included the opportunity, and potential for increased investment in cities, which rebrand themselves as innovative and move away from outdated negative perceptions.
- Winners of the EEN Award for companies in the EEN network benefit from business-to-business promotion. They reported raised visibility and recognition from the award, including in relation to attending the EEN event and due to the promotional video on prize winners. Vuplast, the winner of the Resilience Award, grew its international business partnerships after winning the EEN Award, exporting to a distributor in Switzerland, which expanded distribution inside the EU and EEA, including to Austria, Germany, and Norway.

Key findings on this JC

Overall, EC prizes have benefited contestants by providing them with visibility and recognition for their work thus contributing to their professional status. Direct personal benefits generated as a result of participating and/ or winning an EC prize include new career prospects, funding opportunities and professional relationships. However not all EC prizes were seen as conferring benefits to the same extent. If the benefits of a prize are unclear or perceived to be weak by the contestants, this raises questions about the design of the prize and its sustainability. This highlights the necessity to regularly contact past participants to assess the extent to which each prize benefits contestants as a mean of evaluating whether the prize should be discontinued or amended.

JC 2: To what extent do EC prizes confer benefits to the awarding DG / Executive Agency?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of contestants
- Social listening exercise

While our **social listening** exercise highlights significant variations between the different prizes in the level of target group reach and engagement, overall, the level of impressions and reach registered across the prizes suggested that the EC prizes have a large audience (Table 3). Additionally, for most **EC case study** prizes (apart from TANDEM) the number of shares and retweets surpassed the number of original posts in terms of volume, which implies a significant audiences' engagement in the relevant discussions. This suggests that the prizes generated benefits for the DG or Executive Agency by generating stakeholder awareness and engagement with the EU's contribution to the concerned policy area. For instance, the EEN Award enables DG GROW, EISMEA and the EEN to communicate about the benefits of the EU and the support it provides to enterprises. Similarly, most (70%) respondents to the **contestants' survey** reported that their participation in EC prizes had increased their interest in collaborating at the EU level and in engaging with other EU opportunities. This further demonstrates the benefits of prizes for the European Commission.

However, the analysis of sentiment in social media traffic relating to EC prizes shows that most shares, retweets and comments were framed neutrally, while on average, only between 10% and 20% of the total mentions were of positive sentiment. This suggests that EC prizes do not elicit a strong positive emotional response. However, no negative sentiment mentions were recorded, except for the EEN Award, where one negative comment from a Facebook user was recorded, expressing their dissatisfaction with the winner of an award category.

Table 3: Findings of the social listening exercise for the EC case studies³²

EC PRIZES	TANDEM Media Awards (2021)	Natura 2000 Award (2022)	iCapital Awards (2021)	S+T+ARTS Prize (2021)	EEN Award (2021)	EITA (2021)
Reach:	1,986,792	11,153,915	3,058,893	2,919,779	521,338	4,328,999
Impressions:	16,072,577	80,777,105	17,634,126	12,203,982	2,220,268	21,907,148
Original Posts	242	632	285	168	88	228
Shares / Retweets	143	2,421	874	634	122	1,086
Comments / Replies	10	185	63	57	17	92

³² In consultation with DG COMM, it was agreed not to carry out social listening for the "I am European" school prize, because the promotion of the prize in social media is limited with no specific hashtags used.

% of shares/retweets versus original posts	59%	383%	307%	377%	139%	476%
---	-----	------	------	------	------	------

Source: Social listening exercise

As evidenced in EQ1.1, EC prizes directly contribute to the policies they support, to the Commission's political priorities and to the general political and social context in which they take place (see EQ1.1). For instance, the TANDEM Media Awards seeks to increase acceptance of EU values in the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood region and enhanced the relationship between the EU and its partner countries in the region. While it is not known to what extent the prizes improved the perception of the EU among citizens from these countries, given the relatively high social media and media coverage, we can infer that it contributed to raising awareness of the EU and what it does.

Key findings on this JC

EC prizes generate benefits to the awarding DGs and Executive Agencies by generating awareness among the targeted stakeholders and wider public, supporting and promoting the policies of the DG/Executive Agency and fostering citizens' engagement with the EU. This contributes to strengthening the image of the EU within the Member States and abroad.

5.3.4. EQ 3.4: What factor(s) influenced the achievements/effects observed?

We previously foresaw three different judgement criteria to assess the extent to which different internal/external factors, factors specific to recognition/challenge prizes, or factors related to policy area influence the achievements/effects observed. However, a review of the data did not indicate that these factors impacted the success of a prize. As a result these three judgement criteria were merged into one and answered below in EQ1. In addition, one of the judgement criteria related to monitoring, reviewing performance and integrating lessons learnt was moved to EQ3.3. as it was deemed more relevant to that EQ.

Answer to the evaluation question

Four key elements were identified as having an impact on the success of a prize (understood in the context of this evaluation question as the extent to which the prize contributed to or achieved its objectives):

- the frequency of a prize and whether the prize is intended as a one-off prize or as a recurring prize;
- the geographical coverage of the prize and the targeted audience;
- the type and value of the award;
- the visibility of the prize, its active engagement with stakeholders and its reputation / credibility.

Interlinked to the above factors, our analysis highlighted several lessons learnt and best practices on how to enhance the effectiveness of prizes. These include:

- conducting market research, stakeholder consultation and / or a feasibility study prior to the implementation of the prizes and regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the prizes to ensure the (continued) need and effectiveness of the prizes, and ways in which they can be improved;
- considering how external management and/or partners can bring an added value to the prizes;
- including capacity building elements in the design of the prize to increase the benefits conferred to participants (and thus the incentive to participate) and strengthen the long-term impact of the prizes;
- establishing a jury of external, international, independent and multi-disciplinary renowned experts to increase the visibility, notoriety and legitimacy of a prize;
- strengthening the communication activities of the prizes;
- strengthening the exposure of the prizes in EC channels, establishing a dedicated communication budget (including for paid social-media promotion), organising award ceremonies, developing a communication toolkit / promotion material and encouraging panel members, and participants/winners to communicate about the prize (using the toolkit).

JC 1: To what extent do key factors influence the success of a prize?

Sources of evidence

- Literature review identifying best practices and factors impacting the successfulness of prizes
- Analysis of the mapping of EC prizes
- Surveys of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- Survey of contestants
- EC prizes case studies
- Non-EU prizes case studies
- Social listening exercise

The success and effectiveness of a prize are understood in the context of this evaluation question as the extent to which a prize contributed to or achieved its objectives. To better conceptualise the extent to which different factors may influence the effectiveness of prizes, we identified four key elements in the design of a prize and assessed how each contributes to the success of a prize.

- **The frequency:** the frequency of a prize and whether the prize is intended as a one-off prize or as a recurring prize.
- **If the prize is intended as a communication instrument or if communication is only part of its broader objective.**
- **The scope of the prize:** the geographical coverage of the prize (i.e. a single member State, a third country, a region, worldwide/undefined, etc.) and the targeted audience (i.e., Whether the prize is open to a wide range of stakeholders or limited to a specific segment of the population and whether the prize's topic is accessible to the wider public or if it is a localised niche theme only accessible to those with knowledge and an interest in the topic.).
- **The award:** the type and value of the award.
- **Recognition value:** the visibility of the prize, its active engagement with stakeholders and its reputation / credibility.

(1) The frequency at which a prize is awarded

According to the **literature review**, giving the same award out too often, or handing out too many different awards in a given field can diffuse attention. The incentive and loyalty effects then become muted. Awards in one field can also have a negative effect on one another if they compete for the same audience's attention. Thus, having too many overlapping prizes or awarding a prize too often can reduce the effectiveness of the prize. However, awards in different fields or targeting different segments/ categories (e.g. by age) may benefit from one another if they facilitate positive comparisons.

Beyond these considerations, whether a recurrent prize is more or less successful than a one-off prize will also depend on the objective and design of a prize. For instance, if the intent of a prize is to raise awareness for a one-time event (i.e., EURES25 Prize: To generate active participation from external audiences in the celebration of EURES 25th anniversary), then whether the prize is recurring or not, will not be a deciding success factor. On the other hand, if the prize is intended to establish and support a network and/or support longer-term changes, whether the prize is recurring will have an important impact on its success.

It is also important to consider that these decisions will also have an impact on other elements in the design of the prize. For instance, a recurring prize may require a more extensive communication campaign (such as conducting post-award communication activities to maintain the momentum of the prize) and long-term capacity-building activities built in around the prize (such as setting up a network of winners), and therefore a larger budget to account for these additional activities.

(2) The scope of the prize

Respondents to the **HoC and prize managers' survey** considered that clear, and narrow objectives that are relevant to the targeted stakeholders' needs, and a well-defined target audience (whether it is a narrow or a wide range of organisations depending on the prize's intended purpose) were important elements for the success of a prize. This is also in line with the best practices identified in the literature review, and the findings from the **EC and non-EU prizes**, which confirmed the importance of setting clear objectives and determining the size and composition of the participants, as part of the prize strategy. Two important elements regarding the scope of a prize should be considered in the context of EC prizes.

- The geographical coverage of a prize is directly linked to its scope and objective and whether it is targeted at a wider audience within all Member States for instance, or a specific audience within a third country. However, it is also important to consider that the geographical coverage of a prize will have an impact on other elements in the design of the prize. For instance, prizes which have a larger geographical coverage may require

more financial and human resources than prizes which are smaller in scale to account for the wider communication activities that would be required and the resources necessary to deal with a larger number of applications. To be successful, prizes which have a larger geographical coverage may also require partners (external and/or internal) and/or outsourcing the management of the prize to support its implementation and running. Other considerations to account for include using a geographically diverse jury to reinforce the credibility and legitimacy of the prize, and considering broadening the language requirements for the applications to ensure a level playing field between contestants of different countries. All are factors which will contribute to the success of a prize and which could be considered when deciding on the geographical coverage of a prize.

- The target audience (tailored or all-encompassing) and whether the prize's topic is accessible to the wider public. Prizes which have a very niche/ specific focus and/or which are targeted at a very narrow group of stakeholders may not attract enough applications (and of sufficient quality) and/or a wider public engagement and interest beyond the targeted community. Alternatively, prizes which are open to a wide range of individuals and/or organisations may risk receiving too many applications which would render the selection process more complicated, time-consuming, and costly. The target audience is such an important determining factor influencing the success of a prize.

(3) Financial incentive

Our analysis of the **HoC and prize managers' survey** responses by prize shows that a large proportion of respondents, who were involved in the TANDEM Media Awards (83.3%) and the European Capital of Innovations Awards (66.7%) indicated that the amount of prize money was important when deciding to enter / apply for the prize. However, winners of the non-monetary EEN Award for enterprises reported not being concerned by the lack of financial reward as they place a higher value on the EU recognition of their business and the resulting opportunity for promotion. This suggests that the financial benefits that EC prizes offer to winners do not necessarily have to be significant financially for contestants to perceive that the package of benefits offered is valuable – although it helps. For instance, even smaller amounts of funding and / or financial support such as a tablet / iPad or a trip to Brussels were reported as very valuable in the eyes of contestants. A high amount of prize money is thus not necessary as long as the prize is considered valuable to the targeted audience. The importance of the financial incentive for the success of a prize will thus be dependent on several other factors.

- **The objective of the prize, its scope and the targeted audience.** For instance, while a tablet and a trip to Brussel may be considered valuable to students of the “I am European” school prize they would most likely not be considered valuable to participants (i.e., cities) in the iCapital Awards.
- **The amount of work required to win the prize.** A recognition prize which rewards past achievement will require less input from the contestant than a challenge prize which requires solving a pre-defined challenge.
- **A comparison to other similar prizes being awarded by other organisations.** For instance, on S+T+ARTS the EC deliberately put the prize money higher than the prize money for the similar Ars Electronica prize, which was run at the same time by the consortium led by Ars Electronica in order to raise its visibility and attract more contestant.
- **The extent to which visibility is an important outcome of the prize** - to draw participant and/or promote the objective of the prize. A significant amount of prize money

can help to achieve a stronger communication impact and this impact is part of the recognition that winners receive.

(4) Recognition value

The visibility of a prize, its active engagement with stakeholders and its reputation / credibility are important for the success of the prize, as reported by respondents to the **contestants' survey** and the **HoC and prize managers' survey**. Moreover, as highlighted in the **literature review** and evidenced by the **case studies**, prizes with a strong recognition value attract more participants, as well as better quality applications. Prizes which have a strong recognition value are more newsworthy and media friendly which benefit not only the participants and winners but also the awarding institution and its partners. Several elements contribute to the recognition value of a prize and influence its effectiveness.

- **Use of promotional channels and tools** such as press releases and social media campaigns raise the profile and visibility of the prizes, the awarding institution, and the participants and eventual winners (see EQ3.3). Award ceremonies were also considered very beneficial in that regard as they increase the communication outreach and the benefits conferred by the prize (see EQ3.2). Communication activities are thus an important factor influencing the success of a prize.
- **The status of the awarding institution.** When consulted as to why they chose to participate in EU prizes, most (89%) respondents to the contestant survey indicated that they considered the fact that the prize was awarded by the European Commission to be an important factor. Similarly, the EC case studies suggest that the Commission's (or EU's) brand is one of key assets of the prizes awarded by the Commission. If a prize is awarded by the EC, it is generally perceived as prestigious. Winners have described receiving EC prize as an honour, and some reported that EC brand creates a feeling of trust, as they know the process is just and transparent. The recognition value attached to winning an EU award is thus an important factor influencing the success of a prize.
- **The status of the individual handing out the award.** As highlighted in the literature review, awards given by the head of an organisation or by a well-known public figure have a greater social signalling value than those given by unknown individuals. This was confirmed by both the EC and non-EU case studies - for instance, in the EITA Award, the presence of the Commissioner, as well as other political representatives, was highlighted as an important symbolic gesture for many of the attendees. Participation from senior members within an organisation also strengthens the visibility of the prize and of its objectives within the DGs and helps connect the prize to the broader work of the DG as reported in the Bloomberg case study.
- **The status and prestige of the jury** was also considered an important factor by 64% of respondents to the contestant survey. This is aligned with the feedback from the case studies which indicates that this factor influences the legitimacy of a prize but also its visibility as jury members can make for an effective communication multiplier. The importance of the status and prestige of a prize as a success factor impacting the effectiveness of the prize will vary depending on the scope of the prize.

Key findings on this JC

Four key elements were identified as having an impact on the success of a prize (understood in the context of this evaluation question as the extent to which the prize contributed to or achieved its objectives).

- The frequency of a prize and whether the prize is intended as a one-off prize or as a recurring prize.
- The geographical coverage of the prize and the targeted audience.
- The type and value of the award.
- The visibility of the prize, its active engagement with stakeholders and its reputation / credibility.

Each of these factors will influence the success and effectiveness of prizes to different extents depending on the intended scope and purpose of the prize. In addition, each of these elements will also influence other elements in the design of a prize which will further determine the success of a prize.

JC 2: To what extent are there lessons that can be learned regarding ways to increase the effectiveness of prizes?

Sources of evidence

- Literature review identifying best practices and factors impacting the successfulness of prizes
- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of contestants and of Heads of Communication and Prize Managers
- EC case studies
- Non-EU case studies
- Social listening exercise

This section presents lessons on how to increase the effectiveness of the prizes. These lessons learnt were identified through the triangulation of the data collected and built upon / complement the above-mentioned key factors. These key lessons learnt relate to:

- the target audience
- the feedback loop/ monitoring and evaluation
- the type of management
- the use of partners
- the use of capacity-building elements
- the jury
- the type of communication activities.

Target Audience

It is important to know your target audience. In the **non-EU case studies**, both Bloomberg Philanthropies and the UNESCO conducted market research, stakeholder consultation and / or a feasibility study prior to the implementation of their prizes. This was done to assess:

- the need (relevance) for the prize (i.e., whether there would be an appetite for the prize);

- the objective(s) to be achieved and the type of prize needed to achieve these objectives;
- the stakeholders to be engaged in line with the objective to be achieved;
- the type of incentive to be used to attract the targeted audience.

Including a feedback loop

In the **non-EU case studies**, both UNESCO and Bloomberg also conduct regular independent / external evaluations of their prizes to assess the impact of the competition, whether the prizes are still needed, and ways in which the prizes can be improved. Lessons learnt and best practices are integrated into the next iteration of the prizes. In addition, Bloomberg monitors and evaluates the winning projects (once implemented) to assess their impact and whether the same project can be replicated in other cities or if any lessons learnt from the project implemented can inform other ongoing or future projects. Beyond the use of evaluations, two of the seven **EC case studies** prizes reviewed (S+T+ARTS and EITA) considered their first implementing year to be a pilot exercise to test the prize and see how it can be improved/ amended.

Management

The capacity to outsource management relates to the amount of budget available, and whether it is possible to access a contractual instrument to engage a subcontractor. The cost may be slightly reduced if there is the possibility to run the prize as part of a contract already set up for another activity. For example, as evidenced in the **EC case studies**, DG NEAR includes the TANDEM Media Awards within its regional communication contract with STANTEC.

The choice of a contractor is a key consideration when outsourcing, with the deciding factor being the extent to which the contractor adds value to the prize. For instance, there are strong benefits in subcontracting to a communication agency, in the case of the TANDEM Media Awards (a prize with a strong communication objective). Contractors (or partners) can also add value due to their proximity to the targeted audience, for example as is the case for the Erasmus+ agencies and for the Ars Electronica-led consortium which managed the S+T+ARTS Prize. However, indirect management may also result in a loss of control and a less visible EU branding. The pros and cons need to be balanced on a case-by-case basis, noting that contestants like direct contact with the European Commission, which also helps to reinforce the EU being approachable to citizens. Retaining management of the prize but subcontracting communication aspects is also an option that can work well. For instance, EEN subcontracted a firm to make videos of winning SMEs, Natura 2000 worked with communication agency Arctik to promote the prize.

Partners

All three **non-EU prizes** in cooperation with partners considered them an important element in increasing the visibility and outreach of a prize within the targeted audience. For instance, partners, who have a local presence can provide an entry point into regions or audiences, which are otherwise difficult to reach. Partners can also increase the prestige of a prize especially those with an already established presence and audience within the thematic field of the prize. Findings from the EEN and EITA **case studies** highlighted similar findings with regard to the benefit of using national partners to further the communication outreach of a prize on national social media and traditional press. For instance, in the case of EITA, the prize is awarded on two occasions, one during a European ceremony organised by the Commission to celebrate all the winners and the other at a ceremony at national level organised by each national agency for its winners. The use of partners with networks across the relevant countries thus help amplify the prize and its visibility.

Capacity Building

In addition to monetary award and the prestigious recognition of winning an EU award, both EC and non-EU prizes highlighted the strong benefits of **including capacity-building elements in the design of prizes** such as workshops and training providing wider knowledge and expertise to all participants; networking during the award ceremony or by inviting the winners to side-event, trips, etc.; or the creation of a community of winners and partners to network, share best practices / lessons learnt and cooperate on joint projects. These capacity building elements serve not only to increase the benefits conferred to participants (and thus the incentive to participate) but also strengthen the long-term impact of the prizes.

Monitoring and evaluation

According to feedback from the three **non-EU prizes**, an external, international, independent and multi-disciplinary jury composed of renowned experts increases the visibility and legitimacy of a prize. Both the UNESCO and the OECD also highlighted the importance of selecting geographically diverse (within the geographical scope of the prize) experts for the jury to further enhance the legitimacy and visibility of a prize within the relevant target countries. In addition, Bloomberg's jury includes senior members from Bloomberg Philanthropies which strengthens the visibility of the programme within the organisation. It also helps connect the prize to the broader work of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Communication

Several good practices and lessons learnt were identified to strengthen the communication activities of prizes.

- Encouraging participants, runners up and winners to communicate about the prizes themselves to maximise prize visibility. For example, city applicants to the iCapital Awards include a communication plan as part of their applications.
- Using jury members to enhance the outreach of the prize through communication via their network and social media platforms. This is particularly effective with the geographically and thematically diverse renowned jury members with established relevant regional networks and social media following.
- Providing a communication toolkit and / or promotional material (templates for social media, graphics, talking points, etc.) to all relevant stakeholders (partners, participants, jury members, etc.) to help them promote and talk about the prize in a coordinated and harmonised manner.
- Developing a corporate, centralised approach to prize branding with a strong focus on outreach and communication, and clear guidelines for prize managers.
- Strengthening the exposure of the prizes in EC channels through greater endorsement and support from DG COMM.
- Availability of a dedicated communication budget, including for paid social-media promotion, increases the capacity to generate communication effects.
- Using award ceremonies to increase the visibility of the prize and the benefits conferred to the participants and awarding institution (see EQ3.2).

Key findings on this JC

Our analysis highlighted several lessons learnt and best practices on how to enhance the effectiveness of prizes.

- Conducting stakeholder consultation and / or a feasibility study prior to the implementation of the prizes and regular monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the prizes to ensure the (continued) need and effectiveness of the prizes, and ways in which they can be improved. The extent of the monitoring may differ depending on the size and scope of the prize (i.e., taking into account that smaller prizes may have less human and financial resources), however all prizes should seek to gather some feedback such as from winners and/or participants.
- Considering how external management and/or partners can bring an added value to the prizes.
- Including capacity building elements in the design of the prize to increase the benefits conferred to participants (and thus the incentive to participate) and strengthen the long-term impact of the prizes.
- Establishing a jury of external, international, independent and multi-disciplinary renowned experts to increase the visibility and legitimacy of a prize.
- Strengthening the communication activities of the prizes through greater outreach (including through award ceremony) and use of multipliers (i.e., participants, jury members, EC channels, etc.).
- Strengthening the exposure of the prizes in EC channels, establishing a dedicated communication budget (including for paid social-media promotion), organising award ceremonies, developing a communication toolkit / promotion material and encouraging panel members, and participants/winners to communicate about the prize (using the toolkit).

5.3.5. EQ 3.5: To which extent do prizes engage with citizens - the general public and/or specific target groups - through their core activities and/or targeted communication?

Answer to the evaluation question

EC prizes engage with citizens through a wide range of communication activities – both online and in traditional media - as well as through the use of award ceremonies which attract participants to attend the event in person (in most cases although some prizes conduct online ceremonies) and in some case, by allowing citizens to partake in the selection of the winner(s). While some prizes engage with both their target audience, stakeholders and general public (i.e., Natura 2000 Award), most prizes focus mainly on the targeted audience and relevant stakeholders to their policy focus. For instance, it may not be relevant and/or necessary for prizes targeted at a specific audience (i.e., narrow eligibility criteria) and/or in a niche topic/area of interest to engage a wider audience. Financial consideration are also an important contributing factor (i.e., bigger audience require more extensive communication activities which raises the cost).

However, the findings from the surveys and feedback gathered from the case studies suggest that there is scope to improve the visibility and engagement of the prizes to make the prize more well-known within the targeted audience. This would increase the number of participants, as well as the extent to which the prize achieves its communication objectives (if relevant). Whether prizes should increase visibility among the wider audience (i.e., beyond the targeted group) should be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the objective and scope of the prizes (i.e., whether a prize

is intended as a mechanism to engage and raise awareness with the wider public and whether the budget allows for a wider communication outreach).

JC 1: To what extent do DGs/ Executive Agencies engage citizens and reach the wider public and/or their specific target audiences?

Sources of evidence

- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers
- EC prizes case studies

Citizens' engagement is understood in the context of this evaluation as engaging the targeted audience as participants in the prizes (i.e., contestants) and/or a wider audience to the prizes' activities (i.e., observers in the contests).

The findings from the **HoC and prize managers' survey** indicate that a wide range of communication activities is used to promote the EC prizes and engage their targeted audience and to a lesser extent the wider public. These include unpaid social media promotion, press release, traditional media advertisements, promotion at EU-level events and targeted promotion to relevant stakeholder associations or similar organisations. As reported in EQ 3.3 and evidenced by the EC case studies social listening exercise, these activities have contributed to the visibility of the EC prizes (i.e. the greater volume of earned mentions compared to the owned ones highlights the audiences' engagement in promoting the prizes).

In addition to these online communication activities, most EC prizes (84% based on the analysis of the **mapping**) also organise award ceremonies which attract and engage citizens. For instance, in the **EC case studies**, the S+T+ARTS Prize award ceremony takes place during the annual Ars Electronica Festival in Linz (Austria). Before the pandemic, approximately 1 500 people were invited to attend the ceremony, including winners, honorary mentions, local and EU politicians, as well as researchers and artists. The festival attracts about 20 000 citizens who participated and attended different activities including the winners' presentation as well as different expositions, tours, workshops, concerts, and performances.

Example of S+T+ARTS Prize reach and engagement with citizens through its communication activities

Between 2017 and 2020, the S+T+ARTS Prize conducted the following dissemination activities which generated a total of 2 460 000 visitors exposed to information about the prize at physical events; and 16 million exposed to information from on-line promotion generated content:

- four prize ceremonies at the Ars Electronica Festival;
- seven exhibitions;
- representation at 11 other exhibitions (organised by the consortium and collaboration partners);
- 28 conferences;
- 37 presentations of S+T+ARTS Prize at events of dissemination partners;
- 344 social media posts, 45 videos, 25 press releases and five publications.

Beyond engaging citizens online or through attendance in an award ceremony, some prizes also involve citizens directly in the decision making by allowing the public to vote for the winners. For instance, the Natura 2000 winners are selected based on the result of a public vote. In 2020, this resulted in 45 661 individual citizens voting for the winner. Such initiatives ensure the general public's inclusion in dialogue, help initiate discussions, and drive further user engagement. Yet, there are some limitations here. It is not possible to ascertain whether or not the 'public' voting for this prize were in fact members of the stakeholder audience. Also, it is not desirable or feasible to hold a public vote as a key element of each prize.

However, despite these various communication activities to promote the prize to the wider public and / or their specific target audiences, the evidence suggest that this is only achieved to a limited extent. When consulted on the question of how well the prize was known among potential contestants / people like them, 43% of respondents to the [contestants' survey](#) indicated "not very well"³³. Similarly, the two aspects that the largest proportions of respondents to the [HoC and prize managers' survey](#) were "rather unsatisfied" with concerned the level of awareness of potential contestants and the number of applications from all relevant countries (11% each). The findings suggest that more could be done to further increase the the visibility of the prizes. The findings from the [social listening exercise](#) also evidenced that citizens are more inclined to share content with others rather than directly engage in discussions via comments or replies. This suggests that more could be done also to increase the active engagement of the audience.

However, this finding should be caveated as different prizes may also seek to engage citizens to different extent depending on their scope and intended objective. For most EC prizes engaging with the wider public may not be relevant and/or necessary. For instance, prizes targeted at a specific audience (i.e., narrow eligibility criteria) and/or in a niche topic/area of interest may be more focused on their primary stakeholder audience and may not seek to engage a wider audience.

³³ Slightly less than half of the respondents (48.1%) indicated "quite well" (31.7%, 60 out of 189) and "very well" (16.4%, 31 out of 189).

5.4. Coherence

The evaluation of coherence criterion involves looking at how well (or not) different interventions, EU/international policies or national/regional/local policy elements work together. The 'internal' coherence element considers how the various components of the same EU intervention operate together to achieve objectives, while the 'external' coherence element examines how EU intervention work in relation to other interventions at different levels, for example, between EU interventions within the same policy field³⁴.

Our assessment of coherence therefore looks at the ways in which the Commission's prizes complement, overlap and/or create synergies with similar actions inside and outside of the Commission, and the extent to which they comply with and contribute to the Commission's wider corporate communication approach.

EQ 4.1. To what extent do the prizes overlap with other similar EC actions?

Answer to the evaluation question

There are good examples of Commission prizes with internal coherence built into their design, in particular, those prizes that recognise the achievements of a linked EU funding programme, for example EITA and Erasmus+, S+T+ARTS and the S+T+ARTS programme, and Natura 2000 and the Natura 2000 network.

The mapping of the landscape of EU prizes confirms that there are multiple European Commission prizes, addressing similar target groups. However, our investigation suggests that even where there are multiple prizes in the same DG or policy area, they are clearly distinguished from each other. We found no evidence of exact duplication of the Commission's prizes with other similar Commission actions. We did observe some minor overlaps in terms of target groups and topics between the Commission's prizes and other prizes inside and outside of the Commission, in particular the S+T+ARTS Prize, the Natura 2000 Award, and the EEN Award.

JC1: Extent to which there are other types of EC 'flagship' communication activities or are other types of EC funding in place to support the different policy areas covered by prizes towards the same target audience or generating the same or similar communication / policy results

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

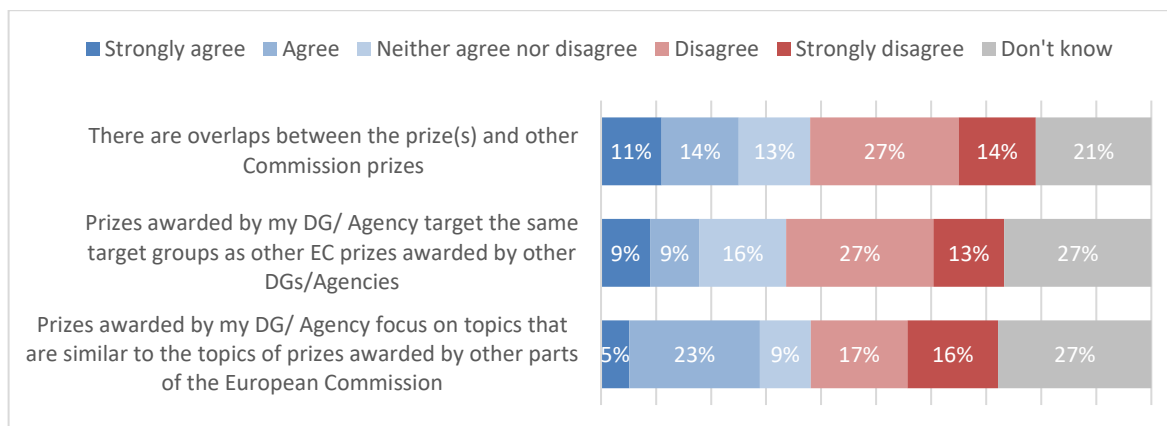
The evidence collected by the study does not confirm that the prizes directly duplicate other Commission actions. In fact, some of the prizes that we assessed in-depth were found to fill gaps, such as the EITA, the iCapital Awards and the TANDEM Media Awards.

In our **survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers**, most respondents did not say there were overlaps between their prize(s) and other Commission prizes, or that they targeted the same target groups or focused on the same topics (see Figure below). Only one of four respondents assessed that there are such overlaps. Furthermore, 18% assessed that the prizes awarded by their DGs target the same audience as prizes of other

³⁴ European Commission, Better Regulation: guidelines and toolbox, available at: [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en).

DGs and 28% that they focus on similar topics as prizes of other DGs. The remaining respondents disagreed or had no opinion.

Figure 26: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (N=56)



Source: Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

In the case studies, our comparison of the reviewed prizes to other prizes inside and outside the European Commission did not identify any exact duplication. However, we did observe some overlaps in the following cases.

- The S+T+ARTS Prize is unique within the EU landscape of prizes, rewarding collaborations that combine science and technology with the arts. Yet, there is some overlap with a similar prize, which is run by the consortium managing the prize. There have been some benefits to this overlap in that applicants can apply to both prizes. Yet, there are some concerns that the EU branding for the S+T+ARTS Prize is less prominent than desirable.
- There are other prizes awarded by the Commission in similar areas to the Natura 2000 Award, in particular the LIFE Awards. There are no direct overlaps between them and they have different target groups. Nonetheless the interviewed winners perceived both prizes as overlapping to some extent.
- There are several EU awards targeted at EU SMEs, albeit with different aims and geographical scope. For example, the EEN Award is targeted at the EEN network and aims to highlight the benefits of that network. A similar award is the European Enterprise Promotion Award, which rewards those who promote entrepreneurship and small business at the national, regional and local level in all EU Member States, as well as in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine, Iceland and the United Kingdom.

Additional desk research suggests there is a significant number of prizes in some areas or directed to similar target audiences. The most significant example, are prizes for cities, which are awarded by at least seven Commission entities:

- European Capital of Innovation Awards (iCapital, which was covered by a case study; (EISMEA)
- European Green Capital Award (DG ENV)
- EU Green Leaf (DG ENV)³⁵

³⁵ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/urban-environment/european-green-capital-award_en

- EU Cities for Fair and Ethical Trade Award (DG TRADE)³⁶
- European Capitals of Smart Tourism (DG GROW)³⁷
- Best Organic City prizes, as part of EU Organic Awards (organised jointly by the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions, COPA-COGECA and IFOAM Organics Europe)³⁸
- Access City Award (DG EMPL)³⁹
- European sustainable mobility awards (DG MOVE)⁴⁰.

We identified one example, which can be considered an overlap between a prize and other activity. DG Environment implements the European Green Capital Award, but there is also a prize with a very similar name – The Green Cities Europe Award. It is awarded by the European Nurserystock Association and its members are from EU Member States, so it is an independent award, but it is funded by the European Union. This is not a significant issue, but it nevertheless suggests that there is scope for some coordination of prizes. This could be achieved, for instance, in a registry which should be reviewed before a new EC prize is established or a prize implemented by external stakeholders is financed by an EU programme.

The case studies suggest that the Commission's prizes are quite coherent in their alignment with other EU policies – reflecting the fact they are often part of wider EC actions or EU programmes. As such, they contribute to communicating that action and to raising awareness of these actions among relevant target groups. For example:

- the S+T+ARTS Prize was set up to support the S+T+ARTS initiative and has become one of its main pillars, drawing artists, engineers and industry to the programme;
- the EEN Award is an element facilitating the promotion of the network. It allows DG GROW, EISMEA and the EEN to tangibly communicate the benefits of the network and the support it provides to SMEs. EITA was established as a promotional tool to support the achievements of teachers and schools under the Erasmus+ funding programme. It also explores synergies within the Erasmus programme and engages with the national Erasmus agencies, which have a significant role in the selection process for the prize and communicating about it. The Natura 2000 Award raises awareness of the Natura 2000 network of nature protection areas and how this helps to preserve Europe's biodiversity and contribute to human well-being, communities and economies across the Union.

Although there may be room to cluster some of the prizes, if they are addressed to the same audience (in this case, cities) and cover similar topics, this would need to be considered on individual basis, as the prizes are often elements of a wider policy. For instance, the Best Organic City prize is a category of a wider group of EU Organic Awards, so these prizes are in fact already clustered. The same is the case for the European Green Capital Award and the EU Green Leaf, which are awarded jointly (to capital cities and other cities respectively). European sustainable mobility awards are part of wider communication initiative of the European Mobility Week and the Access City Award is an element of EU Disability Strategy and the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.

³⁶ <https://trade-city-award.eu/about/>

³⁷ https://smart-tourism-capital.ec.europa.eu/about_en

³⁸ <https://www.organic-cities.eu/2022/09/28/eu-organic-awards-seeham-wins-best-organic-city/>

³⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1141>

⁴⁰ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news/european-sustainable-mobility-awards-12-cities-final-race-2022-02-14_en

Another example identified in this study is the EU Prize for Women Innovators, which is an element of a wider policy of supporting women in research, science and education (it also includes: the WomenTech EU programme, measures of the European Strategy for Universities, the call for women experts, and a social media campaign “#SHEULEads” amongst others).

These examples confirm that in most cases, Commission prizes explore synergies with other EC actions, rather than create overlaps.

Key findings on this JC

Most Commission staff who responded to the survey said there were no significant overlaps between Commission prizes. While the mapping and the case studies confirmed there are multiple European Commission prizes addressing similar target groups, the overlaps are minor. In general, the Commission’s prizes are coherent with EU policies, as they are in fact often parts of wider EC actions, such as specific EU programmes, which they serve to promote.

EQ 4.2. To what extent do the prizes complement or create synergies with actions carried out by other DGs or outside the Commission (other EU institutions or external partners)?

Answer to the evaluation question

Our evidence shows that some prizes create synergies with other EU initiatives, which generate efficiency gains. Moreover, prizes in the education field were found to lend themselves particularly well to complementing and creating synergies with similar actions taking place at national or regional level. However, there is scope to further increase synergies between prizes and other communication activities of DGs or Agencies.

JC 1: Extent to which prizes reinforce and add value / create synergies between EC prizes and actions carried out by other DGs or outside the Commission (other EU institutions or external partner)

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

In the case studies, we found that some prizes generated efficiency gains through creating synergies with other EU initiatives, such as Erasmus+ (EITA), the S+T+ARTS programme (S+T+ARTS), and the European Innovation Council funding (iCapital), which was already mentioned in section 4.2. Such synergies involved, for example, announcing awards during events that were being run to celebrate other similar or related initiatives.

When it comes to the external coherence of Commission prizes, there is some evidence of attempts to create synergies with other EU institutions or external partners. It appears that when prizes focus on issues of wide general concern, there is an interest in collaborating with other organisations, which may be used to show a united front on a particular issue and/or used to underpin its international significance. Representatives of other EU institutions can for instance be involved in jury prizes. This was identified in one of the case study prizes, Natura 2000 Award, which has a jury with representatives from the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions as well as stakeholder organisations. Another

example of external coherence is provided by the EU Organic Awards, which involves representatives of both the European Parliament the Council in its jury. This is a particularly good example of synergies with other actors, as it is co-organised by the Commission along with the Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee and stakeholders - COPA-COGECA and IFOAM Organics.

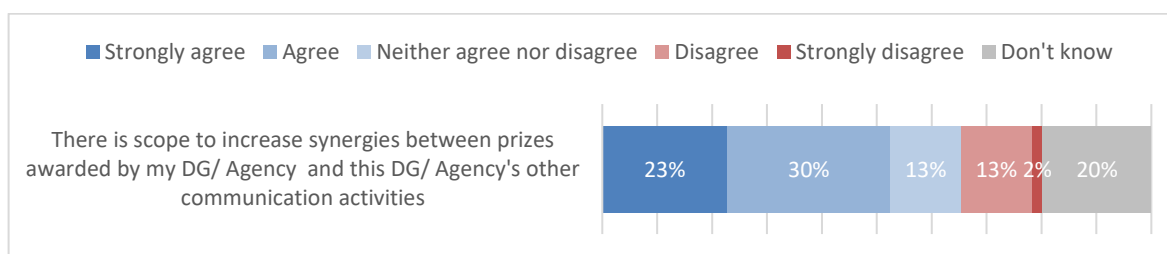
The Commission is also involved in some prizes awarded by other institutions. It is involved in the European Audience Film Award (LUX Audience Award), awarded by the European Parliament, the European Film Academy and Europa Cinemas. Another example is European Entrepreneurial Region, a project which rewards EU regions and cities, which is implemented by the Committee of the Regions in partnership with the Commission. This type of cooperation creates synergies, as it potentially widens the audience and recognitions of prizes. It also sends a message that EU institutions work together towards common goals.

There are several other examples of the involvement of specialist partners in Commission prizes, such as the European Disability Forum which cooperates with the Commission in the award of the Access City Award.

Moreover, in the case studies, we found that prizes in the education field lent themselves particularly well to creating synergies at national level. For example, the EITA was found by winners to complement national prizes in this field, whereas the “I am European” school prize enabled the creation of synergies between schools and Casa Europa, a citizen-oriented service that promotes knowledge and debate on European Union issues.⁴¹

However, findings from the [survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers](#) show that there is scope to increase synergies between prizes and other communication activities of DGs or Agencies, with most of the respondents agreeing that this was the case (54%, 30 out of 56 respondents, see Figure 27).

Figure 27: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? (N=56)



Source: Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

One example that emerged in the [case studies](#) was the “I am European” school prize, where we identified opportunities to increase synergies with the Europe Direct Centres (see above).

The [social listening](#) confirmed that some prizes lacked significant endorsement by EU institutional or related social media channels, registering a lower mention volume. For instance, iCapital Awards and Natura 2000 Award were both heavily endorsed on EU-related Twitter accounts delivering broad reach and higher engagement. However, this was not the case for all prizes. The study did not identify synergies between the prizes and communication campaigns implemented by the Commission either.

⁴¹ Casa Europa is a joint initiative of the Representation of the European Commission in Portugal and the Information Office of the European Parliament.

There also seem to be scope for greater involvement of the EC Representations in promoting Commission prizes at local level, in particular the Member States of the winners. This would require some coordination of communication efforts by DG COMM however.

Key findings on this JC

Most Heads of Communication and prize managers agreed that there is scope to increase synergies between prizes and other communication activities of DGs or Agencies. The case studies suggested that some prizes generated efficiency gains through creating synergies with other EU initiatives.

5.4.1. EQ 4.3: To what extent are the prizes coherent with the wider Commission corporate communication approach?

Answer to the evaluation question

It is difficult to assess prizes' coherence with the corporate communication approach, as prizes are not mentioned in the Commission Communication on corporate communication⁴². Commission staff report that the prizes are coherent with the Commission's wider communication approach and the study did not identify any particular incoherencies, apart from one issue with inconsistent branding.

However, the study suggests that there is scope for a corporate approach to prizes, which would also cover their communication dimension. It shows that there was no corporate approach to reporting prizes' communication performance or costs, and the prizes tend not to use the EC Communication indicators. We also noted no coordination in the communication efforts of different prizes, for instance using a shared calendar or award ceremony. Coherence could therefore be strengthened through a "corporate communication approach to prizes", meaning a centralised approach to prize communication and reporting, as well as more support and guidance from DG COMM.

JC 1: Extent to which the design and management of prizes reflects the Commission's corporate communication approach

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Mapping of EC prizes
- Survey of Heads of Communication and prize managers

European Commission prizes are managed by specific teams within policy-DGs and Executive Agencies. As such, there is no centralised approach, nor is such a centralisation within DG COMM's remit. However, it is reasonable to expect prizes to refer to the European Commission Communication indicators to allow a consistent approach to measuring communication effects. Our **mapping of the Commission's prizes** found that although information about prize contests and their winners is promoted using a range of

⁴² Communication on corporate communication under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 (2014-2020 MFF), [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=C\(2018\)4063&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=C(2018)4063&lang=en)

communication tools, the measurement of the results of this promotion appears to be patchy. There is also limited use of the EC Communication indicators.

In **the survey of Heads of Communication**, the Commission's prizes were found to be coherent with the Commission's wider communication approach. Six out of nine Heads of Communication indicated that they "strongly agreed" and "agreed" that this was the case. Despite this feedback, we identified little evidence that this intention or expectation actually reflects how prizes are managed in practice. In all of the examined case studies, Directorates General and Executive Agencies largely managed their prizes without the inputs or support of other DGs.

In theory, there could be opportunities for the cross-promotion of prizes, which have similar or the same target groups. However, very stretched human resources and the lack of a central registry of prizes makes it very difficult for staff managing prizes to know about other prizes for the same target group managed elsewhere.

Despite the lack of a corporate approach, Heads of Communication and prize managers noted a desire for an exchange on prizes to help streamline and rationalise their number, and a corporate approach to prize branding. They suggested that such a working group on prizes (or similar structure) could oversee all new Commission prizes being implemented and promote an exchange of lessons learnt in managing and designing prizes. Some respondents also reported the need for a corporate, centralised approach to prize branding with a strong focus on outreach and communication, clear guidelines for prize managers and more support from DG COMM.

Key findings on this JC

Most Heads of Communication and prize managers considered prizes to be coherent with Commission corporate communication approach. However, we did not identify any efforts to align them with a broader EC corporate communication approach.

5.5. EU Added Value

EU added value looks for changes that are due to the EU intervention, over and above what could reasonably have been expected from national actions by the Member States. In many ways, the evaluation of EU added value brings together the findings of the other criteria, presenting the arguments on causality and drawing conclusions, based on available evidence, about the performance of the EU intervention.⁴³

The section below explores the EU added value criterion in the use of prizes by the European Commission. It assesses the added value for both the participants / winners (EQ 5.1) and for the awarding DGs and Executive Agencies (EQ 5.2), and the extent to which the EU is recognisable as the author of the prizes (EQ 5.3). This section also includes a forward-looking element, assessing the impact of discontinuing EU prizes (EQ 5.4) and whether there are too many prizes awarded by the EC (EQ 5.5).

5.5.1. EQ 5.1 Does it add any value that the prizes are offered by the European Commission?

Answer to the evaluation question

The European Commission is considered as prestigious and trustworthy and, by association, prizes awarded by the European Commission are also considered as such. This strengthens their branding and the recognition value they confer on contestants and winners. There is therefore tangible EU added value in EC prizes, which would not necessarily arise if the prizes were awarded by another actor at the national level.

However, as evidenced in EQ 1.3, 3.3, and 3.5, while EC prizes engage with their target audiences and the general public through a wide range of communication activities, the findings from the surveys and feedback from the case studies indicates there is scope to improve the visibility and engagement of the prizes. The added value of the EU could be further strengthened if the prizes had greater visibility.

JC1: To what extent does the EU brand add value?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of contestants
- Literature review identifying success factors in prizes

As evidenced in EQ 3.3., the fact that the prize is awarded by the European Commission adds value for the participants. This is because the status of the awarding institution is an important factor, which increases the visibility and recognition value attached to the prize.

- Most respondents to the **contestant survey** (89%) considered the fact that the prize was awarded by the European Commission to be an important factor in their decision to participate in the prize.
- Similarly, the analysis of the **EC case studies** suggest that the Commission's (or EU's) brand is one of key assets of the prizes awarded by the Commission.

⁴³ European Commission, Better Regulation: guidelines and toolbox, available at: [Better regulation: guidelines and toolbox | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox/).

Prizes awarded by the European Commission, are perceived as prestigious/well-known and trustworthy/transparent by contestants. Some winners, as well as other external stakeholders described receiving an EC prize as an honour, and some reported that the EC brand created a feeling of trust, as they know the process is just and transparent. Several factors were highlighted as enhancing or damaging the EC brand.

- The involvement of the Commissioner and/or high officials in the award ceremony increases the prestige and visibility of a prize. As reported in EQ 3.4 for some prizes, the recognition value of the EU brand is even more important than the financial reward. For instance, winners of the non-monetary EEN Award for enterprises reported not being concerned by the lack of financial reward as they place a higher value on the EU recognition of their business and the resulting opportunity for promotion.
- The quality of the physical awards. For instance, for EITA, the award which consisted of a small plaque and a certificate was often labelled as “cheap” by participants and not considered a very memorable or personalised prize. The congratulatory letters were also reported as containing typos. The certificate/plaque is one of the main visual communication tools winners can use to highlight their work but also indirectly make the prizes more visible and mainstream at local level. While DG EAC has now taken measures to remedy this issue, it is important for EC prizes to pay attention to these details.
- Clarity and transparency of the prize management processes including setting clear eligibility and selection criteria, communicating changes on time and being responsive to applicants’ questions.

5.5.2. EQ 5.2: To what extent do the prizes give information about the EU and how do they promote the positive impact of EU policies?

Answer to the evaluation question

Prizes awarded by the European Commission add value for the EU and the awarding DGs and Executive Agencies by promoting and raising awareness of EU policies. This is done through the prize itself (raising awareness of a policy area/topic) and also through the communication activities for the prize – brochures, posts, newsletters etc. that highlight the prizes’ contribution to specific policy. However, a review of materials used to promote prize contests suggests there is potential to directly highlight the policy impact rather than implying it through implicit messaging and content. This would also create a direct link between the prize, the policies and the resulting positive impact.

JC1: To what extent messaging relating to prizes generates and provides information about EU priorities and specific policy priorities, as well as the confirmation of specific EU impacts?

Sources of evidence

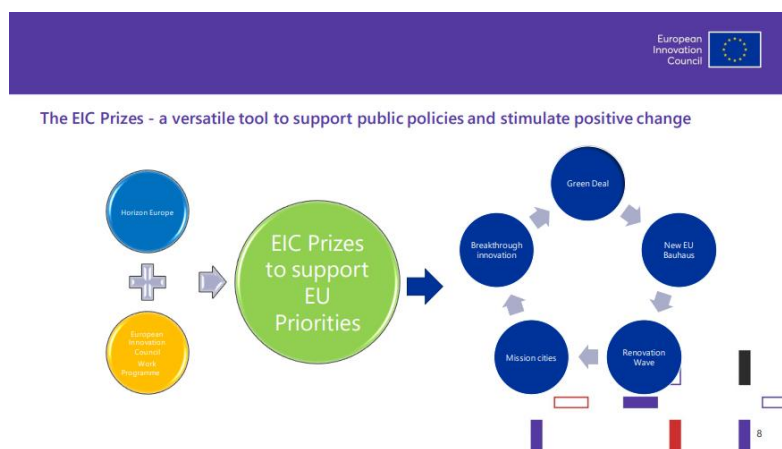
- EC prizes case studies
- Survey of contestants
- Literature review

As evidenced in EQ 3.4, DGs and Executive Agencies use prizes to promote and raise awareness of the EU policies. Namely, messaging relating to the EC prizes and their award provides information about EU priorities and specific policy priorities and generates awareness among the targeted stakeholders and wider public. This contributes to strengthening the image of the EU within the Member States and abroad.

For instance, in the **EC case studies**, the “I am European” school prize is awarded to winners of a test on the EU, following an information session, which is provided to students during their visit to Casa Europa. The test and information session are designed to provide information on the EU and the impact of EU policies and actions on citizens’ lives. Similarly, the TANDEM Media Awards provides information about the EU, its policies and culture projects in the region. It ensures that journalists engage with and learn about EU-funded culture projects, and then disseminate information about these in their entries. Given that the prize has enjoyed high media coverage in major newspapers, as well as significant social media coverage, it can be assumed that the awards contributed to informing audiences in the region about EU policies and projects and thus promote the positive impact of EU policies.

The promotional material and communication activities of the EC prizes are also sometimes used to promote the policies of the prizes.

Figure 28: Screenshot of the iCapital webinar presentation



For instance, the iCapital awards organised an informative webinar in 2022 to provide information about the prize. The hour-long webinar included a presentation of the EIC funding programme and how EIC prizes are used to support EU priorities (see screenshot of the webinar).

Similarly, at the award ceremony for the S+T+ARTS Prize 2022, the managing director for the prize introduced it as part of the broader S+T+ARTS initiative, its pillars and their contribution to EU policies.

However, a review of the promotional material (press release, brochures, leaflets, videos, posts etc.) used by EC prizes suggest that this is not done in a systematic manner across all EC prizes and/or to the same extent. In most cases the EC support is implied rather than implicitly stated. For instance, while the Natura 2000 Award promotional video highlights the number of protected sites across the EU, it does not explain the role of the EU, showcase the Natura network or state how the prize contributes to EU policies.

5.5.3. EQ 5.3 Is the European Commission, or at least the EU, recognisable as the author of the prize?

Answer to the evaluation question

Participants and external stakeholders consulted as part of the EC case studies considered that the EU is recognisable as the author of the prizes. However, the findings suggest that there is room to further increase the visibility of the EU such as by providing partners and participants with branded promotional material to share. Additionally, most EC prizes do not include the word “EU” and/or “European” in their names which reduces the recognition value and the visibility of these prizes.

JC 1: To what extent are prizes and the EC communication channels and tools used to communicate about prizes are clearly branded with the EU logo and name?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Mapping of EC prizes
- Literature review
- Non-EU prizes case studies

Participants and external stakeholders consulted as part of the **EC case studies** considered that the EU is recognisable as the author of the prizes. Several factors enhance and/or reduce the visibility of the EU branding.

- The use of EC channels to communicate about the prizes. EC channels are an effective means of increasing the visibility of the EU as the owner of the prize. However, as highlighted in the lessons learnt (EQ 3.4) there is scope to strengthen the exposure of the EU prizes in EC channels.
- The visibility of the EU/EC logos in the prizes' communication activities. The EU emblem is the single most important visual brand used to acknowledge the origin and ensure the visibility of the EU branding. A review of the promotional material (press release, brochures, leaflets, videos, posts, etc) used by EC prizes suggest that overall, and in line with the EU guidelines, the communication material produced for the EC prizes includes the EU/EC logo. However, some cases were found where this was not always the case such as, for instance, in some communication material of the Natura 2000 Award and the "I am European" school prize. Moreover, the analysis of the EC case studies suggests that EC prizes generally do not provide participants/winners and/or partners with communication toolkit with logos and other materials to be used for promoting the prizes.
- Being part of a broader EU programme/project. Being based on EU-funded projects which are usually well-known and recognisable as being managed and/or funded by the EU (i.e., Erasmus) can increase the visibility of the prize as an EU prize.

Figure 29: Communication material from Natura 2000 and "I am European" prizes



Our analysis of the **EC mapping** shows that most (58%) EC prizes do not include the words "EU" or "European" within their name. This could limit the recognition value of the prizes, in particular for new prizes or prizes which are less well-known. Overall, only 20% of EC prizes

have the word “EU” included within their title (e.g. the EU Health Award) and 22% have the word “European” (e.g. the European Innovative Teaching Award).

Our analysis of the evidence from the **literature review** and the **non-EU case studies** shows that including the name of the awarding institution in the title of the prize provides greater visibility, legitimacy, and recognition value to the prize and – if the prize is well perceived – to the awarding institution. For instance, all UNESCO prizes include the name “UNESCO” as per the requirement of the UNESCO prize strategy. Given the importance given by participants to EU branding, this suggests that there is scope to improve the visibility of the EU through the prizes it awards.

5.5.4. EQ 5.4: What would be the most likely consequences of discontinuing or withdrawing the existing prizes?

Answer to the evaluation question

The likely consequences of discontinuing or withdrawing a prize would depend on several factors, including the prize’s objectives and whether they have been achieved, its relevance and synergies / overlap with other prizes or programme etc. As such the consequence of discontinuing prizes would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, overall, the evidence suggests that discontinuing a prize would not have a serious negative impact as long as the awarding DGs/Executive Agencies continue to engage with the targeted audience with some other form of direct engagement (i.e. through a different prize and or instruments).

However, discontinuing *all* EC prizes would inevitably result in the loss of the positive effects that have been generated both for the targeted audience and the awarding DG / Executive Agencies, in particularly regarding the visibility of the EU and its policies and the extent to which the EU engage with citizens within and outside the EU.

JC1: To what extent would discontinuing prizes have a strong negative effect?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Mapping of EC prizes
- Literature review
- Non-EU prizes case studies

The landscape of European Commission prizes is extremely diverse, which implies that the likely consequences of discontinuing or withdrawing the existing prizes might depend on the specific prize and on the objectives of the prizes. For instance, if the project was intended as a one-off prize or intended to solve a particular challenge which was solved, then discontinuing the prize will not have a negative impact. Similarly, if the pool of applicants becomes too small or if the prize stops generating interest, discontinuing it will probably not have a negative impact. For instance, one winner questioned the potential longevity of iCapital suggesting that at a certain point all potential innovative cities would have been awarded the prize at which point the prize might need to be discontinued or amended.

Overall, we did not find any evidence to suggest that discontinuing a prize would have a serious negative impact as long as the awarding DGs/Executive Agencies continue to engage with the targeted audience with some other form of direct engagement (i.e., through

a different prize and or instruments). Several factors should nevertheless be considered prior to discontinuing a prize.

- Discontinuing a prize may send a message that the policy/topic concerned by the prize is no longer a priority for the EU. However, that will also depend on how the prize was presented.
- Target group disappointment is also a likely outcome of discontinuing or withdrawing an existing prize. For instance, the S+T+ARTS Prize represents a niche community that has been able to create new opportunities for artists. Discontinuing the prize would have a negative impact on the community as it fills the gap in the art-technology nexus and has strong ties to well-known art galleries and exhibitions.
- In some cases, where a prize is tied to a particular funding programme or network, such as the S+T+ARTS programme, the EEN network, or Erasmus+, discontinuing the prizes may have a somewhat negative impact on the programme. However, this was identified as a minor risk as prizes tend to be a complementary element rather than a central component of a programme. On the other hand, if these programmes were discontinued at any point, then it may be questionable if the related prizes should be continued.
- Events and conferences which are organised in conjunction with award ceremonies may have a reduced attendance if the prizes are discontinued. For example, the annual EEN conference would reportedly lack content, and possibly company presence as the award ceremony is the main moment in which companies are invited to network events. This implies that award ceremonies add value to events but could also suggest that these events should be reinvigorated with other activities to become more attractive to stakeholders.
- The impacts of withdrawing a prize will also relate to the amount of work that has gone into developing the prize brand, the network around it and the extent that this might be sustainable and/or transferred to another EU initiative if the prizes were discontinued.

Although it is difficult to identify direct negative impacts, discontinuing prizes would result in the loss of the positive effects that have been generated including both the benefits provided to the participants/winners and to the awarding DG / Executive Agencies and the EU more broadly (EQ 3.3 and 5.2). For instance, without the prize, participants and the EU would miss out on the visibility that the awards give them. However this would not consist of a negative impact but rather the loss of a positive impact (i.e., the same as choosing not to run an awareness raising campaign or a stakeholder event).

5.5.5. EQ 5.5: Does the number of existing prizes in the Commission affect their EU added value and appreciation by the audience and their communication potential?

Answer to the evaluation question

The questions, as it is currently phrased, was already partially answered in the section 5.2 on efficiency and 5.3 on effectiveness, where it was suggested that the high number of prizes may influence the communication potential. A significant share of EC prizes are relatively small in terms of resources deployed, which implies that many prizes have limited communication potential. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the appreciation by the audience is affected by the number of prizes. In fact, there is evidence that the EU brand is valued and considered prestigious.

It is important to take a more structured approach to setting up new prizes and using the tools developed in this study (in particular the checklist) in this process. But it is not the number of prizes, but their quality which is crucial to ensure EU added value, appreciation by the audience and the best use of EU branding. The EU added value

does not seem to be affected by the number of prizes, because the EU is viewed as a positive brand and also perhaps the current number of prizes does not cause a problem from the perspective of contestants.

There may be scope for clustering some prizes by a working group. Overall however, the discontinuation of prizes is probably not a priority. Instead the future focus should be on ensuring all prizes are of high quality in all of their elements, including a strong process, reward which meet expectations, good award ceremonies and strong accompanying communication outputs.

JC 1: To what extent is there evidence that the number of existing prizes in the Commission affects their EU added value and appreciation by the audience and their communication potential?

Sources of evidence

- EC prizes case studies
- Mapping of EC prizes
- Literature review
- Non-EU prizes case studies

The study mapped 181 prizes of the Commission. Some of the DGs award as many as 20-30 prizes every year. Additionally, the analysis of the **mapping** suggests that some of the prizes target similar audiences, with 29% of EC prizes targeting youth, students, schools, or VET providers, 7% media stakeholders (journalists, social media influencers, cartoonists, etc.), 6% companies and industries, and 5% communities, cities and administrations. As mentioned above, there are at least eight prizes awarded to cities.

However, despite this strong convergence of prizes within specific policy areas / topics and target groups, we found very limited evidence of direct duplication of the Commission's prizes with other similar Commission actions (as reported in EQ4.1 and 4.2). This would suggest that each prize has its own added value in terms of its objective and targeted audience. Moreover, feedback from contestants (**contestants' survey and EC case studies**) suggests that the number of EC prizes does not affect their appreciation by the audience, or their communication value as demonstrated by the continued importance and appreciation of the recognition value of EU prizes (as reported in EQ 5.1).

On the other hand, there was some limited evidence of inadequate quality of prize-related activities, such as not engaging award ceremony and insufficient quality of diplomas (in case of EITA Award) or the value of the reward in case of TANDEM Media Awards, which were noticed by stakeholders.

When asked to provide suggestions or comments on the Commission's approach to prizes and considerations on their branding, the most recurrent suggestions by **prize managers and Heads of Communication** were for the creation of a working group on prizes (or a similar structure) to oversee all new Commission prizes. The intended objective of this group would be to streamline and rationalise the number of prizes within the Commission. In a similar vein, several respondents noted that the Commission should consider fewer prizes, with a careful evaluation of prizes' added value prior to their development and implementation.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Over the last two decades, the European Commission has multiplied its use of prizes, with 101 identified in a 2018 and 181 identified in a 2021 mapping exercise, the latter conducted as part of this evaluation. The number of prizes fluctuates year-on-year, given that one third of prizes are awarded on a one-off basis. The majority of the Commission's prizes (64%) are awarded by a minority of DGs: DG NEAR (37 prizes), DG EMPL (23), DG RTD (18), DG GROW (17), DG EAC (12) and DG ENV (9), which award all together 116 prizes.

Whilst a 2021 independent study cited in the Terms of Reference (p.3), found that EU prizes are increasingly used as policy tools, this evaluation identified that there are two main types of European Commission prizes. Prizes that are communication-type vehicles and prizes that are policy-type vehicles⁴⁴. Around two thirds of European Commission prizes fall into the first category.

- **Communication vehicles:** prizes which set communication type objectives to raise awareness of a policy initiative and/or achievements in a policy area (usually so-called recognition prizes).
- **Policy vehicles:** prizes, which set objectives to generate a policy breakthrough or result (usually so-called challenge prizes).

Both types of prize use promotion to raise awareness of the launch of prize contests and the winners of these contests. This promotion also contributes to raising awareness of the policy, and typically helps to reinforce relationships between the European Commission and stakeholders, and between stakeholders themselves.

Prizes were initially designed to highlight the values and principles of EU integration but in recent years have tended to be used to showcase EU policies. Two thirds of prizes reward past achievements within a specific policy area and one third set a challenge to achieve a specific policy-related result or breakthrough. These challenges can be very simple, for example asking school children to answer a quiz on the EU, or highly complex, for example setting a challenge for a new predictive software to support energy management (Horizon prize for big data technologies, 2021).

The varied nature of prizes is reflected by the range of rewards provided to winners. Rewards include symbolic awards (certificates and/or trophies), cash prizes, and items with a monetary value (iPads, travel costs, etc.). Fewer than half of all prizes (40%) offer a cash prize. While the value of cash prize ranges from EUR 500 to EUR 10 million, the typical prize value is under EUR 20 000.

6.1. Conclusions

Relevance

- 1) **There is a need for a more inclusive definition of what constitutes a prize within the European Commission context.** The current definition in the Financial Regulation⁴⁵ defines a prize as a "*a financial contribution given as a reward following a contest.*" The current definition does not reflect the spectrum of types of prizes and their rewards. Only 40% of prizes offer a cash reward, circa 33% a reward with a monetary value (an iPad, etc.) and the rest, circa a quarter, are purely symbolic (i.e. offer a certificate and/or a trophy).

⁴⁴ A small number of prizes can also be classified as hybrids, i.e. combining both types of objectives.

⁴⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ.L:2018:193:TOC>, Article 2, Paragraph 48

- 2) **There is a lack of oversight of the prizes managed by the various Directorates-General and Executive Agencies of the European Commission or which are run by or on behalf of the European Commission.** The lack of oversight means that there is no central mechanism to support the identification of synergies and/or to consolidate prizes going forward. This also reduces the potential to introduce standardised approaches and guidelines to support process improvements. There is also potential for duplication and overlap between prizes.
- 3) **Most prizes are relevant to one or more of the European Commission's political priorities, but they are not used to explicitly support the priorities or to increase their visibility.** In consequence, the thematic relevance of prizes to different political priorities is variable with greater relevance to the European Green Deal and least relevance to the new push for European democracy. This situation raises the question as to whether the Commission wants to take a more strategic approach and use prizes to support its political priorities.
- 4) **EU prizes mainly focus on promoting EU policies to and within stakeholder audiences.** The main target audiences for awareness raising about calls for entries and the winners of prize contests are specific stakeholders. This implies that promotional content should be tailored to these audiences and efforts should be made to expand awareness within these groups, rather than the wider public in the EU.
- 5) **For many prizes feedback from their stakeholder groups is not systematically collected to support the design of new prizes and/or to check the extent to which prizes are still relevant.** Given the limited levels of staffing allocated to prizes, it is understandable that formal target group analysis may appear to be too burdensome, but getting feedback from target audiences is critical to the success of prizes. DGs and Executive Agencies know their stakeholder audiences, but the need to check stakeholder expectations is not formally recognised as part of the process of designing or updating a prize. Including feedback-gathering as a key step in the prize process would help DGs and Executive Agencies to ensure that the prize and its reward is designed in a way that suits the target audience, and address identified gaps in prize managers' understanding.

Efficiency

- 6) **Whilst the Commission would like to maintain a spectrum of large and small prizes, there is a strong argument for reducing the number of prizes to refocus fragmented budgets and efforts on less prizes but to greater effect.** This conclusion is based on the following:
 - a. despite two thirds of prizes having an awareness-raising focus, and promotion being an essential part of launching a prize contest and announcing the winners, many prizes are not well known within stakeholder communities;
 - b. communication budgets and efforts are fragmented across many different prizes, with the implication that the amount of available human and financial resources is insufficient to maximise the communication impact of prizes. This fragmentation is most apparent in seven policy areas, which manage multiple prizes, as follows:
 - Neighbourhood policy (36 prizes): EU NEAR HQ and the Delegations
 - Employment (23 prizes): DG EMPL
 - Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (22 prizes): DG GROW/EISMEA
 - Research and innovation (20 prizes): DG RTD
 - Education, youth, sport and culture (12 prizes): DG EAC/EACEA
 - Public diplomacy / communication (13 prizes): DG COMM HQ and the Representations
 - Environment (12): DG ENV/CINEA.

- 7) **Although, there is some appetite⁴⁶ within the European Commission to streamline the number of prizes, the evaluation was unable to identify any prizes that should be phased out.** This reflects the extremely heterogeneous nature of prizes and the fact that DGs and Executive Agencies are invested in their policy area and do not want to cut rewards to their stakeholder groups. Also, there is no mandate, which would facilitate a centralised go/no-go decision because decisions on prizes fall under the responsibility of the managing DG or Agency. Despite this, there is a need and scope for a more rational approach to be taken to future prizes.
- 8) **Closer attention should be paid to one-off prizes, which represent one third of all prizes, to ensure that the Commission optimises its resources.** Whilst one-off prizes may be useful to put the spotlight on a very topical issue and as a catalyst for change/improvements in specific sectors, these prizes are not able to build on awareness generated by previous editions of the prize and do not offer continued visibility benefits over the longer term. This implies that more resources may be required to achieve breakthrough with a target community and that impacts may be very short lived. It also underlines the need expressed earlier for post-award follow up mechanisms to maximise impacts.
- 9) **The rationale for setting up a prize has not yet been established within the institution, nor have any criteria or minimum standards, which should be applied to protect the EU brand.** This links to the identified interest within the Commission and apparent need for additional guidance to support decision making and staff involved in the management of prizes.

Effectiveness

- 10) **The current approach to the design and implementation of prizes by the European Commission, makes it impossible to assess whether or not existing prizes have met their objectives.** In all examined cases, the Commission sets very general objectives, which are not backed up by specific and measurable targets, including in relation to numbers and quality of prize entries, and to assess the effectiveness of their promotion. In consequence, whilst prizes are generally valued both by the Commission and by different stakeholder communities, it is not possible to make a thorough assessment of whether the choice to run a prize was the best option to generate a communication or policy outcome.
- 11) **Many prizes are unable to generate the desired level of visibility for their policy area within the target stakeholder community.** This appears to be linked to multiple factors:
 - a. the low levels of human and financial resources allocated to run the majority of European Commission prizes:
 - 40% of all Commission prizes are run by 0.5 FTE and 30% are run by up to 2 FTE's;
 - 40% of prizes have a budget of less than EUR 20 000;
 - b. the lack of access to specialised communication resources (in many cases) to generate visibility and impacts, including low levels of paid promotion;

⁴⁶ The number of prizes in the Commission has nearly doubled since the last mapping of prizes in 2018. The survey of Heads of Communication Unit and prize managers confirmed that sizable proportion of staff consider that there maybe some duplication in the landscape of prizes

- c. the scale and scope of the majority of Commission prizes, with 68% offering a monetary reward of EUR 2 500 or less;
- d. inconsistent EU branding, many prizes do not include the word EU in their title and there are occasional instances, when the EU flag is not clearly displayed.

12) Individual prizes can offer a range of benefits to the winning individuals, groups and organisations, as well as to the responsible DGs and Executive Agencies. Benefits for winners include recognition, validation, an increase in prestige and reputation, and new connections and networks, which in some cases generate tangible impacts. Benefits for the Commission can include the opportunity to:

- develop new or reinforce existing networks, including with stakeholders, who might not typically engage with the European Commission (all prizes);
- raise the visibility of good practices/innovation within and towards a stakeholder community (recognition prize);
- raise the visibility of a network, policy, or funding opportunity within and towards a stakeholder community (recognition prize);
- generate a specific outcome in response to a policy need (challenge prize).

Coherence

13) Despite significant in-house experience in managing prizes, there is no mechanism to facilitate sharing this knowledge and / or to document this for future prize managers. There is scope to harness good practices and learned lessons to enhance the prize experience and rewards both for the Commission and for contestants and winners, which should enhance the potential for internal coherence, reduce institutional memory loss and provide support to the high number of staff who are managing a prize for the first time (as identified in the mapping).

14) The Commission is yet to integrate the body of international good practice on ways to maximise the benefits that can be generated from prizes for both contestants and institutions, although some prizes have managed or plan to take these good practices into account, which include:

- integrating capacity-building activities into the design of large prizes, including to maximise the prize experience and reinforce the impacts which each prize is able to generate;
- maximising the potential of contestants, winners, and juries to support information provision, communication and awareness raising about the prize;
- good practices in the ways to maximise the potential benefits of award ceremonies to increase their value for money;
- ensuring consistent follow-up with winners following the award ceremony to gather feedback and new ideas for next year's prize.

EU added value

15) Commission prizes bring a clear added value to contestants due to the positive connotation attached to the EU brand (i.e. prestige, high quality and trust). However, the quality of the actual award (whether financial or not) and the experience

of receiving that award do not always match the expectations of contestants and winners.

- 16) There is a lack of consistency in the branding of Commission prizes.** When prizes do not include the EU brand in their name or messaging, then they cannot be easily recognised as belonging to the EU and do not support the EU brand. Appropriate branding should be a requirement and closer attention may be required on this point when prizes are managed by an external contractor.

6.2. Recommendations

Relevance

- 1) It is recommended to develop an institution-wide definition on what constitutes a European Commission prize** and its role as an instrument to support EU policies. Based on the current landscape, the description should acknowledge the monetary and non-monetary nature of prizes, confirm that all prizes must meet high quality standards to be monitored by DGs and Executive Agencies. The following definition is suggested:

'a prize is a financial and/or symbolic reward following a contest to select best-in-class past achievements and/or results in response to a new challenge. To protect the EU brand, awards are only made when the highest quality is achieved.'

- 2) It is recommended to set up a central registry of prizes on the staff intranet, to facilitate an institutional overview for staff of prizes run by the Commission.** A list of prizes can also be published on EUROPA website⁴⁷. The registry is a low-administrative burden approach to the gap in overview, which will help to reduce duplication and potentially increase synergies between DGs and Executive Agencies. Anyone setting up a new prize should be required to check the registry, before they go ahead. As a minimum, the registry should include:
- name, policy area, objective(s) and target groups;
 - key prize dates and locations (call launch and award ceremony).
- 3) It is recommended that a relevant Commission's entity provides a strategic oversight role for prizes.** Options for consideration include a written procedure and/or an annual discussion on the following year's strategy. This recommendation is one of several that should help to strengthen and protect the EU brand.
- 4) It is recommended that policy-DGs and Executive Agencies consider whether there is a need / interest to link prizes more directly to the Commission's political priorities,** considering the checklist for setting up a new prize, which has been provided by this evaluation.
- 5) It is recommended that policy-DGs and Executive Agencies** research the needs, interests and availability of other similar prizes (a "target group needs assessment") prior to the design of any new prize, and to ensure that all prizes are required to follow up with winners following the award as part of the prize process.

⁴⁷ See: [Prizes | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/default/press-articles/12122)

Efficiency

- 6) **It is recommended that the DGs and Executive Agencies awarding the most prizes consider if they could reduce the number of prizes**, for example by using fewer prizes with more categories, so that existing limited resources can be used to greater effect on fewer prizes.
- 7) **It is recommended that new one-off prizes are not set up, unless there is a strong rationale to do so.** All DGs and Executive Agencies should use the checklist and guidelines to consider if a one-off prize will allow them to maximise prize impacts. As a rule of thumb, one-off prizes may work well to reward a stakeholder community that is well known to a DG or Executive Agency or as a catalyst for change, but they should not be used to connect with a new community, where there is no existing relationship in place.
- 8) **Linked to the above, it is recommended that the Commission introduces the checklist and criteria developed by this evaluation, to support future decisions on whether or not to set up a prize.** New prizes should only be created if they meet the identified criteria, summarised below and listed in Annex 1.
 - There is a policy need for action.
 - The need is not already met by other means.
 - A prize is an appropriate vehicle.
 - Clear objectives can be set, which correspond to target group interests.
 - The prize can be differentiated from other external prizes.
 - There are sufficient financial and human resources.
 - The potential for internal / external partnerships has been assessed.
 - There is a minimum political commitment of four years.

Effectiveness

- 9) **It is recommended that DGs and Executive Agencies always include prizes within their communication strategy, plans and use key performance indicators.** This should ensure greater consistency in the use of:
 - the already defined EC communication indicators⁴⁸ to monitor and measure communication results and impacts, which should help to maximize communication results;
 - EU branding of prizes;
 - good practices in award ceremonies;
 - high quality materials to promote and reward winners.
- 10) **It is recommended that DGs and Executive Agencies engage their communication unit and its resources to maximise prize promotion and ensure appropriate framing of SMART objectives.** In the case, where there is insufficient communication support in-house, this must be subcontracted to a communication agency.

⁴⁸ Example KPIs are presented in Annex 7 to this Final Report (a separate document).

- 11) It is recommended that all Commission prizes, irrespective of their size or value, set some SMART objectives, which are followed up with some form of monitoring and evaluation mechanism.** This recommendation is in line with the checklist and guidelines for prizes (see Annex 1). An intervention logic should be used as a tool help DGs and Executive Agencies to ensure alignments between all parts of the results chain, including balance between inputs and expected results as well as objectives and impacts.

Coherence

- 12) It is recommended to share the results of this evaluation with the Communication Network and that a mechanism is established to facilitate sharing internal and external good practices in the management of prizes across the Commission.** Whilst it is understood that large prizes may have greater resources, and there is a need to choose approaches, which are most appropriate, all prizes can make improvements and many good practices should be implementable without excessive additional efforts.

EU added value

- 13) It is recommended to include the term EU or European Union as a standard in the title of all prizes.** This is in-line with current practices identified by other high profile organisations⁴⁹. Furthermore, prizes should be included within the EU visibility guidelines, and as such should be required to include the EU flag in all visual materials, videos, websites, etc. As an exception, prizes that support the creation of networks and awareness raising in third countries, where for political reasons a lower EU profile maybe required and, for example, stakeholders must be profiled as the lead communicator.

⁴⁹ All UNESCO prizes are required to include the word UNESCO in their title.

6.3. Recommendations for the communication of prizes

The below recommendations relate both to promoting the launch of the prizes (and the call for applications, when relevant) and promoting the prizes themselves along with the winners.

Given the variety of Commission prizes and their budgets, these recommendations will need to be applied with flexibility and proportionality. For prizes where the overall cost and effort are low, they may be too ambitious. Prize managers should select the elements that are best suited to their prize. However, in most cases they will all be applicable to some extent. There are some elements that should be reflected in every prize, such as promotion of the call and of the award and providing clear and accessible information to would-be participants.

To increase the visibility of EU prizes, we recommend that:

Strategic approach to communication

- (1) Each prize has a set of SMART **communication objectives** drawn up in consultation with communication professionals, e.g the DGs or Agency's communication unit and/or an external agency. The establishment of these objectives should be followed by the setting of **baselines/targets** for key performance indicators developed by the study (see page 6 of this Annex), so that the communication performance of prizes becomes measurable.
- (2) As a general rule, prizes should have dedicated **communication strategies**, but given the significant number of smaller prizes, this rule should apply in flexible manner. The strategy should be derived from the objectives and include **target audience analysis** and the communication needs and preferences of the audience(s). The analysis should define **the best channels and tools** to be used to engage the target audience(s) with the resources available. The strategy should define the communication measures used to promote the launch of the prize (the call), build expectation of the results between launch and the award, both the award itself and the winners. The strategy should distinguish clearly between three related but separate forms of communication activity:
 - (a) awareness-raising with groups likely to be interested in applying for the prize⁵⁰ at the time of the launch;
 - (b) awareness-raising of the results and their usefulness to a wider audience;
 - (c) awareness-raising of audience which will provide recognition to awardees in their local communities.

In case of smaller prizes, strategies may be less detailed, and a fully-fledged target audience analysis may not be feasible. Nevertheless, some strategic reflection of who the target audience is and how to approach it, it indispensable in most cases.

- (3) **The communication tools be branded in line with DG COMM requirements** on visibility and identity and the strategy should take into account that association with the EU is a valuable selling point, and that terms such as EU, European and/or the use of the European stars is likely to convey more than individual DG descriptors.

⁵⁰ Most prizes are in response to submissions by participants. The targeting will be different in any cases where there is a call to nominate potential winners.

Focus on maximising visibility / reinforce prize

- (4) The target stakeholder groups for prizes can act as important **relays**, as can the EC's own relays both at the level of the institution (social media accounts of the DG and other relevant DGs) in the Member States (national contacts points and agencies, Representations etc.). The communication strategy should include stakeholder mapping with identification of social media handles, widely used hashtags on the topic. It should also build new email databases where needed. These and existing EC databases should be used to seek the involvement of these stakeholders in promoting the prize and to feed 'intelligent' use of social media through, for example, tagging.
- (5) Communicators should consider carefully the **social media channel(s)** appropriate to the audience (Facebook, LinkedIn, Mastodon and other alternatives to Twitter, or LinkedIn). They should consider **paid promotion and campaigns** to increase reach and engagement, rather than relying solely on organic promotion. Paid social media promotion is particularly useful to increase reach within a predefined target audience that may be dictated by age, interests or locations and other factors. Targeted social media promotion is an opportunity to increase reach in Member States or groups if it becomes evident during the period between launch and submission that there is an imbalance in responses compared to expectations.
- (6) Over and above the use of relays, communication plans could consider using influencers specific to the area of a prize. These can be paid social media influencers or personalities in the field who can be used as '**ambassadors**'. Jury members and previous winners should always be seen as potential ambassadors, but others may be used too. They may want remuneration and will almost certainly need logistical support (DG COMM guidance document on influencers should be respected). Working with jury members and previous winners may require developing a communication toolkit for use as part of the communications strategy, including to support third parties promoting the prize. This should include straightforward background information that can be used 'as-is' by the media, key messages and branding material. It should be a living document as, for example, social media messaging is likely to evolve over the period covered by the strategy.
- (7) Communication should not be limited to social media and where feasible include activities to **generate media coverage**. This requires a commitment from the Commission, most likely in cooperation with local stakeholders. Nevertheless, the *news* must originate from the Commission to ensure the required visibility and prestige. The likelihood of this being picked up is enhanced by holding press events at the time of a media release. These can be offline. Release via the Spokesperson's Service, preferably at the Midday Briefing, is the optimum. Press events should include access to a policy official. For specific prizes only, DG COMM HQ and the Representations could be actively engaged in this process, so that their knowledge of the media landscape, including the local media landscape of the winners, is utilised.
- (8) **Communication should not be limited to social media and/or mainstream traditional media, but make the best use of all existing channels** that relate to the specific prize. This can include sector-specific publications and specialist online platform and portals. Other sector-specific events, including conferences and workshops, being run by the DG or the Executive Agency as well as external stakeholders can be promotional opportunities on social media or through the distribution of materials about the prize. Prize announcements gain in visibility when they are made at events, providing the announcement is embedded in the programme at a time chosen to maximise audience awareness. Ongoing visibility can come from success story videos on EC channels and provide promotional

material for the next edition. A fact sheet with information on past prizes and winners can serve a similar purpose.

Prizes website

- (9) The importance of the prize website/web page as a communication tool cannot be over-emphasised. It should have an easy-to-communicate web address and be attractive and user-friendly. Search Engine Optimisation is critical. There is no evidence however, confirming that there is a need for one EC website covering all the prizes from the perspective of target audiences. Target audiences of each prize are different and most likely they do not need a prizes' hub website, we therefore do not consider it a priority.
- (10) Concerning the current website⁵¹, the following improvements / changes should be applied:
- (a) increase page's header title size and make titles in the text bold, to have better hierarchy;
 - (b) distances between titles and text should remain consistent throughout the interface;
 - (c) when a section is selected, the title should be visible, to provide context to the users;
 - (d) external links should open in a new browser window to retain users;
 - (e) the state of visited links should change (e.g., color) so that users are informed about the links already visited;
 - (f) since social media are important, links should be added to every page to give users the option to follow;
 - (g) a "home" icon or the EC logo could be used to inform users that they are going to return to the home page;
 - (h) groups of items under the same context or similar categories should be created in the footer to help users differentiate content faster;
 - (i) unknown terms should be accompanied by references or links.
- (11) In case a new site or a page redesign is to be examined, the following recommendations should be taken under consideration:
- (a) visuals are always a great addition, given the nature of the info presented (i.e., prizes have a people and social side that must be highlighted). Images (for example photos of the awards' ceremonies) can be used in combination with text to create a livelier experience for the user;
 - (b) Provided information about past winners or contests including interviews and award-winning work would also increase engagement. Other visual tools, like photos and videos, or non-visual, like podcasted interviews, should be considered;
 - (c) a call to action, for example "Apply to a European Prize" and/or "Follow the 2023 edition of the xxx Prize", etc, would improve engagement and would also urge people to be more actively involved.

⁵¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/prizes_en

Other communication principles to increase impact

- (12) Communication must **aim for engagement**, not just reach. Communication is most successful when it is a two-way process. Impactful communication on prizes should engage the target audience, not just inform it. More specifically it should:
- (a) call for action, for instance: to apply for a prize, to recommend it to a friend, to engage in a public vote;
 - (b) use engaging tools, such as:
 - videos, for instance video interviews with the winners, videos from award ceremonies. Videos need to be short, engaging and of high quality;
 - high-quality images from award ceremonies or related to winners' activities;
 - attractive visuals and infographics, which reflect the topic of the prize or the challenge addressed by the prize.
- (13) **Endorsement** of prizes and their key milestones in the variety of Commission channels be ensured, including a coordinated use of the generic channels and channels of the Commission or relevant DGs' channels.

Annexes provided in separate documents:

Annex 1: Checklist with conditions for setting up a prize

Annex 2: Key performance indicators (KPIs) for prizes

Annex 3: Survey analysis reports

Annex 4: Non-EU prizes: case study reports

Annex 5: EC prizes: case study reports

Annex 6: Mapping of EC prizes

Annex 7: Literature review

Annex 8: Assessment of Commission webpage dedicated to prizes