European Commission

Ex-post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013

Final report

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Ex post evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013

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0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

0.1. The Europe for Citizens Programme

Based on the experience of a prior programme for Active Citizenship, in December 2006, the **Europe for Citizens Programme** (hereafter referred to as the programme or EFCP) was established for the period 2007-2013[1]. The Decision establishing this Programme underlined that, to enhance citizen support for European integration, one must place greater value on "common values, history and culture as key elements of a European society founded on the principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights, cultural diversity, tolerance and solidarity".

With a **budget of EUR 215m**, the purpose of the programme was to give citizens a greater role in constructing Europe, develop a sense of European identity, foster a sense of citizens' ownership in the EU and enhance tolerance and mutual understanding. Three mechanisms of co-funding were possible under the programme, namely project grants, operating grants and service contracts.

Through these mechanisms, the programme provided financial support for a wide range of projects, which were further grouped under **four action strands**:

- **Action 1**: Active citizens for Europe - Funds for organising town citizens' meetings and networks of twinned towns, as well as citizens' projects of a trans-national and cross-sectoral dimension. These activities are all aimed at strengthening mutual knowledge and understanding between citizens from different municipalities and cultures. This action also included support measures with the purpose of making town-twinning and citizens' projects work better.

- **Action 2**: Active civil society in Europe – Structural support for European think tanks, civil society organisations and projects initiated by civil society organisations. This action was aimed at strengthening their ability to operate at European level and (thereby) to contribute to achieving the overall objectives of the EFCP.

- **Action 3**: Together for Europe – Support for high visibility events organised by the European Commission (in partnership with others) aimed at raising awareness of European history and values. This includes studies to provide a better understanding of citizenship; information and communication tools; and a network of Europe for Citizens Contact Points that provided practical information to applicants and beneficiaries.

- **Action 4**: Active European remembrance – Funds for projects aimed at preserving sites, memorials, archives, as well as for the commemoration of victims of mass extermination and deportations.

The programme was **jointly managed** by the European Commission, the Education, Audio-visual and Cultural Executive Agency (EACEA) and the Programme Committee, comprised of representatives appointed by the Member States.

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[1] Decision No 1904/2006/EC establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme Europe for Citizens to promote active European Citizenship (EU OJ L378/32, 27.12.2006)

0.2. Background to the evaluation

The **purpose of this evaluation**, defined in the Terms of Reference produced by the Commission, was as follows:

- Assess the results and measures of the EFPC compared to its objectives;

- Assess qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme;

- Provide examples of good practice and successful model projects under each action of the programme;

- Provide recommendations on how to further develop the EFCP as an instrument for the development of a European Citizenship Policy.

The **scope of the evaluation** was to assess the results and implementation of the EFCP 2007-2013. To evaluate the programme without repeating earlier work, we sought to maximise the use of existing sources while collecting additional data to fill gaps and delve into areas that were previously underexplored.

The **approach to the evaluation** was underpinned by a series of principles. These included a need to build on (extensive) previous research, emphasis on providing the Commission with findings and recommendations that could be used to improve the next iteration of the programme and focus on explaining whether the theory of the programme (as illustrated in the intervention logic above) was realistic in practice.

With regard to the **explanatory focus** of the evaluation, the diversity of programme activities alongside its relatively small size relative to the many factors affecting citizenship and civic engagement meant that it was not possible to measure the impact of the programme in any quantitative sense. Rather, we sought to shed light on the pathways to impact and likely contribution of given programme activities to objectives at different levels. The limited size of the evaluation led us to rely on samples of projects, their key features, success and failings and, especially, the reasons behind these.

The evaluation used several **methodological tools** including desk-based research, interviews and a focus group with key stakeholders, a survey of unsuccessful applicants, case studies of a selection of projects and a benchmarking exercise that allowed comparison with other EU spending programmes.

0.3. Results

Based on the data collected, we drew the following overarching conclusions about the EFCP.

Relevance

The EFCP aimed to engage citizens with the EU, develop a sense of European identify, foster a sense of ownership of the EU and enhance mutual tolerance and understanding. The evaluation served to confirm the relevance of the programme's objectives and activities. Prevailing conditions (e.g. declining favourability towards the EU and increased Euroscepticism, diversion of resources towards initiatives focused on the economy) created a need for a platform for civic participation related to the EU that the EFCP could potentially fulfil. That the level of interest in the programme, as well as the quality of applications for participation, progressively increased indicates a good match between the programme and target groups.

In terms of complementarity with other initiatives, the EFCP was sufficiently distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups to provide a complementary offering. Even those initiatives that were the closest to the EFCP, such as the Youth in Action programme,[2] focused on different audiences, while the EFCP was unique in bringing together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities, and in supporting town twinning and remembrance activities. At the same time, the evaluation also uncovered the potential for further synergies and scope to reduce overlap. This highlighted the importance of the (sometimes-insufficient) communication between DGs; where there was evidence of good communication (e.g. the European Years[3] and Fundamental Rights programme[4]), then value was demonstrated through institutional learning and the sharing of good practices. Where discussion was more limited (e.g. between the EFCP and Youth in Action and Jean Monnet[5] programmes), such opportunities were missed.

Finally, an examination of the EU added value of the programme showed that it enabled activities that could not have been funded elsewhere, in addition to promoting the spread of best practices. In some cases, the evaluation found evidence of such practices actually being implemented, and of being scaled up across wider groups of countries and stakeholders. However, many projects also produced relatively little evidence to show whether and to what extent shared practices were actually applied in practical terms. Partly this was due to the short timescales of projects, as well as the evaluation's reliance on reports compiled shortly after individual projects were completed (before best practices could have been implemented). It can also be attributed to the lack of concrete plans for follow-up. Considering the complexity of tailoring given practices to new contexts and the relatively short timeframe of individual projects, follow-up action is vital for this aspect of EU added value to be achieved.

Effectiveness

The evaluation found that they types of projects funded through the EFCP could potentially make an impact in numerous ways, depending on their particular mechanisms, target groups and methods. High potential impact tended to draw on factors such as involving children and hard to reach groups, establishing sustainable networks and linking to policy-making. While the projects examined in depth for case studies were generally implemented and delivered successfully, the presence of these factors varied significantly among individual projects.

In general, meaningful results were achieved for projects that were grounded in a clear rationale, with some feasible change in the medium-term. Also crucial were a well-delineated scope and set of objectives, a plausible intervention logic and the

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[2] Web page of the Youth in Action Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/tools/youth-in-action_en.htm.

[3] Web page of the European Years of Citizens 2013 and 2014: http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/

[4] Web page of the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2007-2013/fundamental-citizenship/index_en.htm

[5] Web page of the Activities Jean Monnet: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/jean-monnet_en

involvement of relevant partners. Given the short timeframe for EFCP projects in comparison to the sustained engagement needed for to effect change in a complex area like civic engagement, wider applicability / replicability of project outputs and credible plans for follow-up efforts (including funding) were of vital importance. Examples drawn from the case studies show how the presence or absence of these factors influenced the ability of projects to produce lasting results. In line with the more strategic approach pursued during the second half of the programme (as reflected in the annual priorities), there is some evidence to suggest that these factors were concentrated among the projects selected and implemented during that time. However, other examples demonstrated that even relevant and well-implemented projects sometimes failed to generate tangible outcomes in the absence of clear follow-up plans.

At a higher level, for the programme to maximise its impact at a wider level, it would need to leverage its relatively small budget, identifying specific areas where it can add the most value and complementing larger initiatives. The evidence collected for the evaluation suggests that improvements would be possible in each of these areas. The programme's relatively small budget is spread across a vast spectrum of subject areas and funding mechanisms, creating a risk that the programme's achievements will be diluted in a sea of other factors and initiatives. The benchmarking analysis conducted for the evaluation showed that the EFCP's offer was unique in some areas, namely where it provided a first entry point for ordinary citizens to discuss and engage with the EU and where it brought together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities. Town twinning and remembrance activities were also found to be areas of focus specific to the EFCP. It could be argued that the programme's potential impact would be greater if it consolidated its focus on these areas, leaving the remaining issues such as youth and values of intercultural dialogue to be respectively covered by other programmes like Youth in Action and the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship that already address them to a large extent.

Similarly, as the only EU programme that targets citizens directly, the EFCP provides a unique outlet to involve ordinary citizens in the EU through a bottom-up approach. Since around 45% of the programme budget is also devoted to CSOs, which could plausibly benefit from EU funding from other sources, it could be argued that the contribution to these objectives could be increased by focusing more on citizen-centric projects, and / or ensuring that CSO-led projects were comprised of strong citizen-centric components.

Efficiency

The diversity and complexity of the EFCP does not allow for simple comparisons between the cost-effectiveness of the various Action strands. At the same time, it is worth noting (as illustrated above) that costs per participant varied considerably between Action strands, with CSO projects and remembrance projects reaching greater numbers of people for less funding than town twinning meetings or (in particular) networks of twinned towns.

In addition, the case studies showed that the effectiveness (and requisite cost-effectiveness) of individual projects varied; projects displaying the key success factors outlined above provided better value for money than those lacking them. The evaluation also noted the potential for a greater proportion of the budget to be allocated towards citizen-led projects, and / or that CSO-led projects could be structured as to ensure the direct involvement of citizens.

Turning to the achievements at European and national levels, the scale of the problems falling within the programme's scope is immense, particularly in light of its

relatively small (EUR 215m for seven years) budget and the myriad demographic, social and cultural factors affecting citizenship and civic engagement. Leading from this, a greater strategic focus on the target audiences, types of actions and guidance for applicants / beneficiaries would increase the ability of the EFCP to provide value for money. The mismatch between the programme's budget and ambition was also clear from the monitoring data, which should persistently fierce competition for funding despite growing application quality.

Sustainability

The programme made a real, if unquantifiable, contribution to its objectives. In the presence of key success factors, particularly credible plans for follow-up action, individual projects led to sustainable outcomes at the local and organisational levels. With regard to the higher-level objectives, successful projects were able to foster lasting cooperation among CSOs and help preserve the memory of Europe's past. Contributions relating to EU integration and active citizenship were harder to pin down beyond the level of specific projects and participants, especially given overarching trends relating to the economic crisis and nationalist sentiment.

0.4. Recommendations

The following recommendations provide evidence-based suggestions for improving the programme during the 2014-2020 funding period.

1. **Focus and scope**: the evaluation found that the one of the distinguishing features of the EFCP is its unique ability to reach ordinary citizens. Despite this, much of its budget is devoted to activities redolent of more traditional spending programmes. Moreover, the broad scope of the programme dilutes its already limited ability to make a lasting impact in an extremely complex and crowded environment. The next review of the EFCP's scope should therefore narrow it so the programme can deploy its limited funding more strategically and focus on citizen-centric activities, either through boosting the proportion of the budget for Action strand 1-type activities or taking steps to ensure funding aimed at CSOs involves citizens directly.

2. **Draw more on theory**: the systematic review found that projects addressing certain types of activities, target groups and themes, particularly young people, civic education, social inequality and tolerance towards and of migrant groups are more likely to generate impacts on civic engagement. The Commission should consider commissioning comprehensive research in order to inform the setting of annual priorities and refine selection criteria in order to maximise the cost effectiveness of the programme's limited budget.

3. **Improve programme and project monitoring**: monitoring a diverse programme that addresses a subject as complex as active citizenship is inherently difficult. However, the lack of monitoring data beyond activity level holds the programme back, making it difficult to compare projects in a meaningful way and establish with certainty which types of projects are working well and less well. Part of the solution should involve more standardised monitoring provisions for projects (e.g. that help beneficiaries

distinguish between reached individuals) and the integration of indicators developed as part of a recent study commissioned through the programme with the monitoring system.[6] This could possible take the form of a long list of output- and outcome-level indicators that beneficiaries could be encouraged to apply to their projects.

4. **Increase support for first-time applicants and underrepresented Member States**: the evaluation found that vast discrepancies in participation between Member States? were due more to divergent success rates in applying for funding than in the amount of interest in the programme, while first-time applicants reportedly had trouble breaking into the EFCP. To increase participation, the Commission could fund some remedial sessions with ECPs, who have an important role to play in raising awareness and providing support and guidance to first-time applicants, and potential applicants in target countries, potentially using real (but anonymised) successful applications as guides.

5. **Consider more involvement for ECPs**: Feedback from ECPs suggested that communication channels between ECPs and the central programme management were not fully open. Steps should be taken to increase the collaboration between these two crucial actors in the ECFP's implementation, potentially by putting in place some goals that would demonstrate the purpose of this collaboration (including, for example, increasing participation among hard to reach groups) and ensure that mutual interests are in place.

6. **More insistence on, and scrutiny of, purposeful, outcome-oriented planning**: while the majority of case study projects were competently delivered, tangible outcomes and impacts were thin on the ground. This was attributed to differences in the purposefulness of projects and activities within them, including dissemination plans. Successful projects also demonstrated outcome-oriented thinking, plausible intervention logics and credible plans for follow-up. Potential beneficiaries should therefore be required to demonstrate their thinking in these areas, with a set of criteria developed to score them accordingly.

7. **Maximise synergies by intensifying consultation with other DGs**: the benchmarking analysis showed that more could be gained from using good practices developed within other programmes, such as Youth in Action, to support issues where the EFCP is active. In addition, if the EFCP continues to fund projects in areas that are also addressed by larger programmes, more formal links could be established. Among other things, it would be worth exploring in more depth whether the dynamic observed for one case study project, whereby the EFCP functioned as a kind of laboratory for a small project that was then scaled up through the Creative Europe programme, could be applied more widely to identify and scale up innovative projects.

8. *Encourage remembrance projects to look more towards the future*: the case studies showed that remembrance projects tended to be more salient when they considered practical implications for the present and future, in addition to the past. The Commission should therefore encourage potential participants to demonstrate such links in funding applications and take them into account as part of the scoring process. This would allow the programme to continue to preserve the memory of Europe's past while applying lessons learned to the issues facing citizens today.

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[6] Measuring the impact of the Europe for Citizens programme, Euréval, 2013, url: http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/final_report_efc_may_2013_eurevalppmi.pdf.

1. INTRODUCTION: THE EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME

1.1. Context

The Treaty of Maastricht officially introduced the concept of **European citizenship** which acquired legal meaning. Since then, the now re-named European Union (EU) provides the citizens of its Member States with Union citizenship, which complements their national citizenship, and provides them with certain rights and privileges.

However, the **concept of citizenship refers to more than just legal rights**. It also has a 'cultural' dimension; in the context of Europe, this means engaging citizens in the European project and fostering their feeling of 'Europeanness'.[7] This is closely linked to the topic of civic participation. In addition to meeting citizens' needs and promoting their rights, the EU has been keen to involve European citizens actively in decision making, and to stimulate awareness and open dialogue on the role of the EU in people's daily lives. The EU recognises that democratic legitimacy and transparency are crucial to stimulating civic awareness and participation. In turn, civic awareness and participation are crucial to support European integration, social cohesion, economic development, and the broader future of the Union.

For these reasons, the **Community Action Programme to promote active European citizenship** (civic participation) was set up for 2004-2006. It provided the first legal basis to award grants in the field of active European citizenship. The programme set out to reinforce an open dialogue with civil society according to the principles of transparency and democratic control and to intensify links between citizens of different countries. In order to achieve this, it supported bodies working in the field of active European citizenship and promoting activities in that field, with a budget of EUR 72m over three years.

In total, the Community Action Programme 2004-2006 funded over 30 organisations, as well as more than 250 projects by NGOs, associations and federations, and trade unions. Over 2,800 town twinning projects received funding from the programme.

1.2. The Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013

Based on the experience of the prior programme, as well as on the results of an ex-ante evaluation (including an impact assessment) carried out in 2005,[8] the EU recognised that there was a need to continue promoting sustained dialogue with civil society organisations and municipalities and supporting the active involvement of citizens.

In December 2006, the **Europe for Citizens Programme** (hereafter referred to as the programme or EFCP) was established for the period 2007-2013[9]. The Decision establishing this Programme underlined that, to enhance citizen support for European integration, one must place greater value on "common values, history and culture as key elements of a European society founded on the principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights, cultural diversity, tolerance and solidarity".

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[7] The Cultural Component of Citizenship: an Inventory of Challenges, 2012, compilation of essays published by the Access to Culture Platform; p. 6.
[8] Ex-ante evaluation of the EFCP; COM(2005)116.
[9] Decision No 1904/2006/EC establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme Europe for Citizens to promote active European Citizenship (EU OJ L378/32, 27.12.2006)

With a **budget of EUR 215m**, the purpose of the programme was to give citizens a greater role in constructing Europe, develop a sense of European identity, foster a sense of citizens' ownership in the EU and enhance tolerance and mutual understanding. Three mechanisms of co-funding were possible under the programme, namely:

1. **Project grants**: actions with a limited lifetime (based on calls for proposals);

2. **Operating grants**: to cover costs of an organisation with usual or permanent activities of European interest (based on calls for proposals) and

3. **Service contracts**: based on calls for tender.

Through these mechanisms, the programme provided financial support for a wide range of projects, which were further grouped under **four action strands**:

- **Action 1**: Active citizens for Europe - Funds for organising town citizens' meetings and networks of twinned towns, as well as citizens' projects of a trans-national and cross-sectoral dimension. These activities are all aimed at strengthening mutual knowledge and understanding between citizens from different municipalities and cultures. This action also included support measures with the purpose of making town-twinning and citizens' projects work better.

- **Action 2**: Active civil society in Europe – Structural support for European think tanks, civil society organisations and projects initiated by civil society organisations. This action was aimed at strengthening their ability to operate at European level and (thereby) to contribute to achieving the overall objectives of the EFCP.

- **Action 3**: Together for Europe – Support for high visibility events organised by the European Commission (in partnership with others) aimed at raising awareness of European history and values. This includes studies to provide a better understanding of citizenship; information and communication tools; and a network of Europe for Citizens Contact Points that provided practical information to applicants and beneficiaries.

- **Action 4**: Active European remembrance – Funds for projects aimed at preserving sites, memorials, archives, as well as for the commemoration of victims of mass extermination and deportations.

The figure on the next page illustrates the Actions and Measures of the EFCP, as well as the portion of the budget attributed to them. The text below presents some data on the type and number of projects funded under the different Actions, as well the geographical spread.

Figure 1: Actions and distribution of the budget of the EFCP 2007-2013
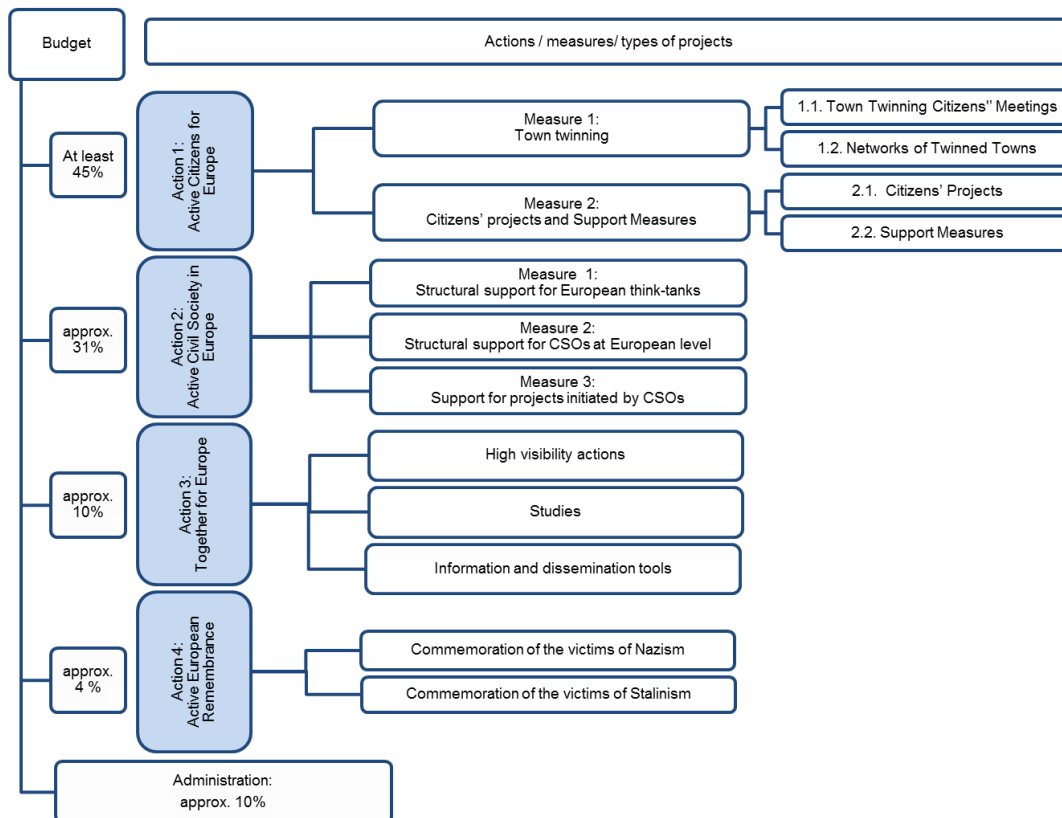
Source: Coffey's elaboration EACEA data

1.2.1. Intervention logic

An intervention logic is a kind of flow chart that visually depicts the theory of how an initiative (in this case the EFCP) is meant to work, based on a series of causal relationships. In this case, funded projects are meant to contribute to specific objectives related to bringing citizens together, fostering collaboration among CSOs and preserving the memory of Europe's past. This in turn should lead to increased civic engagement (as expressed through several general objectives) and, more broadly, increased active European citizenship overall. The intervention logic for the EFCP is displayed on the next page. The relationships it illustrates were examined as part of the present evaluation, as explained in more detail in the next section on the evaluation background.

Figure 2: ECFP intervention logic
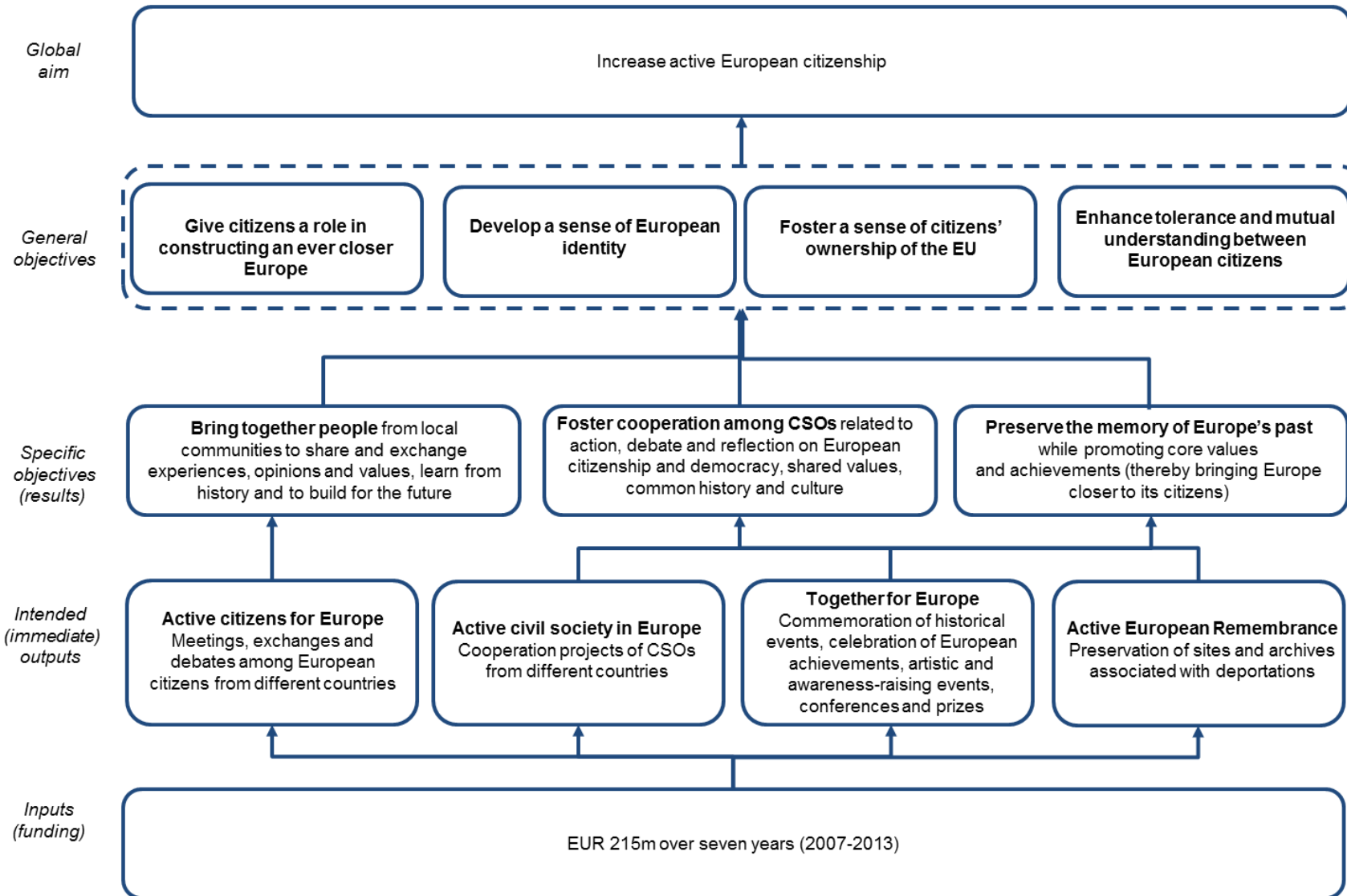
1.2.2. Implementation and management

Three actors were jointly responsible for the management of the 2007-2013 EFCP:[10]

- **The European Commission** had ultimate responsibility for both the direction and efficient running of the EFCP. More specifically, it set priorities, targets and criteria on an annual basis, based on regular consultations to the Programme Committee. It also had oversight over implementation, managed the budget and monitored the general implementation, follow-up and evaluations of the Programme. The Commission also directly managed the high visibility events implemented under Action 3 of the EFCP.

- **The Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** was the body that co-managed all the Actions and Measures (except for the abovementioned high visibility events) in conjunction with the European Commission. The EACEA also managed the relationship with Europe for Citizens Contact Points (ECPs), which were organisations appointed in each country as a kind of bridge between the programme management and interested stakeholders and participants.

- **The Programme Committee** provided advice to the Commission in relation to the annual work plans, the annual activity reports and the selection results. The Committee was formed by representatives appointed by the Member States. Non-EU Member States had an observer status.

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[10] Europe for Citizens Programme Guide 2013, European Commission Internal Documents.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

2.1. Purpose and rationale

The **purpose of this evaluation**, as defined in the Terms of Reference produced by the Commission, was as follows:

- Assess the results and measures of the EFPC compared to its objectives;
- Assess qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme;
- Provide examples of good practice and successful model projects under each action of the programme;
- Provide recommendations on how to further develop the EFCP as an instrument for the development of a European Citizenship Policy.

The **scope of the evaluation** was to assess the results and implementation of the EFCP 2007-2013. To evaluate the programme without repeating earlier work, we sought to maximise the use of existing sources while collecting additional data to fill gaps and delve into areas that were previously underexplored.

2.2. Approach and methodology

The approach to the evaluation was underpinned by a **series of principles**. These included a need to build on (extensive) previous research, emphasis on providing the Commission with findings and recommendations that could be used to improve the next iteration of the programme and focus on explaining whether the theory of the programme (as illustrated in the intervention logic above) was realistic in practice.

With regard to the **explanatory focus** of the evaluation, the diversity of programme activities alongside its relatively small size relative to the many factors affecting citizenship and civic engagement meant that it was not possible to measure the impact of the programme in any quantitative sense. Rather, we sought to shed light on the pathways to impact and likely contribution of given programme activities to objectives at different levels. The limited size of the evaluation led us to rely on samples of projects, their key features, success and failings and, especially, the reasons behind these.

The evaluation used several **methodological tools** including desk-based research, interviews and a focus group with key stakeholders, a survey of unsuccessful applicants, case studies of a selection of projects and a benchmarking exercise that allowed comparison with other EU spending programmes.

2.2.1. Desk-based research

This element of the evaluation was comprised of two parts. Firstly, we drew on various documents and monitoring data related to the EFCP. These ranged from policy documents and Annual Activity Reports to budgetary data and statistics about programme and project implementation.

Secondly, we conducted a systematic review of literature aimed at scrutinising the programme's intervention logic, and its underlying assumptions, in relation to existing knowledge about participatory citizenship. The purpose of this aspect of the research was to deepen our understanding of how participatory citizenship works and identify explanatory factors behind the perceived success of interventions aimed at fostering

participation. This was based on sources suggested by the evaluation's expert panel and described in more detail in Annex 1 of this report.

2.2.2. Interviews and focus group with key stakeholders

Feedback from several types of stakeholders allowed us to gather rich data on various aspects of the programme. The table below gives an overview of the interviews conducted and main issues discussed, while summaries of the interviews can be found in Annex 2 of this report.

Table 1: Summary of interviews

Stakeholder group	No of interviews	Topics discussed
Familiarisation interviews with DG COMM / HOME and EACEA	8	- Programme structure and design - Implementation and administration - Monitoring and evaluation provisions - Impact
Designated beneficiaries	8	- Beneficiary profile - Impressions of the EFCP and its objectives - Funding mechanisms - Implementation - Accountability and monitoring - Results of programme funding - Expectations of the evaluation
Structured Dialogue and Programme Committee members	6	- Role within the EFCP - Impressions of the programme and its objectives - Suitability of the programme budget - Programme implementation
Europe for Citizens Contact Points	Focus group	- Profiles and roles of the Europe for Citizens Contact Points General views of the programme - Programme implementation - Programme impact

2.2.3. Survey of unsuccessful applicants

A survey of unsuccessful applicants was conducted to collect and analyse external perspectives on the EFCP and to determine how it is perceived by the programme outsiders. The purpose was to deepen our understanding of several issues, such as:

- Rationale of given organisations for applying for funding;

- Visibility and perceived effectiveness of the Europe for Citizens Contact Points;

- Transparency of the selection process;

- Existence of alternative sources of funding to the EFCP; and

- 'Counterfactual' data on what happened to organisations that were unable to benefit from the programme.

Issues treated in the survey included profile information, views on the EU, the application process and engagement with Europe for Citizens Contact Points. The

survey was promoted online and gathered responses from a sufficient proportion of respondents as to allow for robust statistical analysis. The detailed methodology and results of the survey can be found in Annex 3 of this report.

2.2.4. Case studies

The evaluation included 16 case studies of projects funded through the Europe for Citizens programme. The purpose of the exercise was to provide insight into the success of the programme as a whole by looking at individual projects in detail. Each case study entailed an analysis of project documentation (supplied by EACEA) according to a standard set of criteria developed for a reporting template (discussed and agreed with DG COMM / DG HOME) that allowed us to assess the evidence-base systematically and transparently. The detailed methodology for the case studies, in addition to individual case study reports, can be found in Annex 4 of this report.

2.2.5. Benchmarking exercise

Part of the evaluation consisted of a systematic comparison between actions and programmes across different DGs that aimed to increase levels of civic engagement. The aim is to identify the extent that the EFCP is complementary to these other actions. The methods used for this analysis have been the comparison of objectives set out in legal texts, the programmes' user guides and interviews with officials from the relevant DGs. The actions that we explored are as follows:

- DG EAC: Youth in Action Programme
- DG EAC: Jean Monnet Programme
- DG Justice: Fundamental rights and Citizenship programme

We have also explored the two European years:

- DG Comm: 2013 and 2014 European Years of Citizens
- DG Comm: 2011 European Year of Volunteering

Detailed results from the benchmarking exercise can be found in Annex 5 of this report.

3. RELEVANCE

The 'Relevance' criterion in the context of the present evaluation

Relevance can be conceptualised as the 'need' for a given initiative. This section examines the objectives and activities of the 2007-2013 EFCP, with a view to gauging how well they correspond to the needs of its main target group, European citizens. In other words, we seek to answer the question: if the EFCP didn't exist, would we have to invent it?'

The Decision establishing the programme (hereinafter – Decision No 1904[11]) sets out the general objectives of the programme as follows:

(a) giving citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united in and enriched through its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union;

(b) developing a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture;

(c) fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens;

(d) enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

Leading from these general objectives, the programme aims to provide citizens with the opportunity to interact and participate in the construction of an ever closer Europe and to develop their sense of European identity.

The programme is grounded in the idea that **interaction with peers** from other European countries in the context of activities focused on mutual understanding, diversity, dialogue and respect will **improve participants' perceptions** of citizens from other Member States. In the programme's logic, these positively altered perceptions in turn increase the participants' sense of belonging and European identity, as they are made aware of the European values, culture, history and heritage they share with other European citizens. In addition, as a related effect the EFCP seeks to enhance civic participation of Europeans in democratic processes, as well as their knowledge of and interest in the European project. The combination of all the intended effects of the programme should ideally encourage European citizens to get involved with peers from other Member States in the development of democratic activities, in a bid to increase **active European citizenship**.

The relevance of the EFCP in this context should therefore be thought of as a **need for increased civic engagement** and as an adequate source of opportunities for European citizens of all backgrounds to learn about and experience the common values, history and culture of the European Union.

To establish the existence of these needs, the paragraphs below provide some context on civic participation and perceptions of the EU during the period under review,

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[11] Decision No 1904/2006/EC of 12 December 2006, establishing for the period 2007 to 2013 the programme 'Europe for Citizens' to promote active European citizenship, Official Journal of the EU L 378, pp. 32 (27.12.2006).

highlighting issues such as perceptions of EU enlargement and Euroscepticism, as well as the relatively small provision of initiatives to address them other than the ECFP.

Relevant contextual factors for the period from 2007 to 2013

Desk research conducted for the evaluation identified two main factors which point to the relevance of the programme's objectives during the period under review, namely the Member State accession process and increase in Eurosceptism in recent years. First, the **accession of 12 Member States, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe**, between 2004 and 2007 presented **new challenges to European integration**. The dramatic extension of the EU's borders also implied the inclusion of additional cultures, traditions and heritage. This brought to the fore a pressing need to ascertain a shared understanding of European culture and values across the 27 countries of the enlarged EU.

This was evident in the results of the Special Eurobarometer on the European's *Attitudes towards European Union Enlargement*.[12] The survey, published in July 2006, reflects the simultaneous apprehension and enthusiasm of citizens towards enlargement, just over two years after the major accession wave. While, seven out of ten (71%) interviewed EU citizens agreed that enlargement enriches Europe's cultural diversity, a substantial proportion (41%) worried that enlargement could threaten the integrity of national cultures. In other words, Europeans surveyed were enthusiastic about the positive aspect of enlargement, but also for the maintenance of their cultural identities.

This brings to the fore the cultural dimension of EU enlargement and EU integration more generally. Reactions to the expansion of the EU's borders highlighted the political necessity to facilitate the engagement of citizens with the European project and to promote civic participation in Europe. Furthermore, the concept of a European identity is also closely linked to one's acquaintance with collective memory and common cultural heritage. Lacking awareness of those issues relates to questions of political legitimacy and the "democratic deficit", i.e. the disconnect that citizens across the Member States feel with European institutions, that the EU has faced.

Disillusionment and disinterest among European citizens towards EU institutions and the wider process of European integration have persistently grown since 2007. As an example, the Standard Eurobarometer EB82 from autumn 2014 found that, between spring 2007 and spring 2014, trust in the European Union deteriorated substantially, falling from 57% (EB67) to 31% (EB81).[13] This underlined the political crisis surrounding the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe rejected by France and the Netherlands in 2005, as well as hindering the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon, which was initially rejected by the Irish electorate in 2008. Furthermore, turn-out in European Parliament elections has fallen consistently, reaching 43% in 2009 and declining by another 0.5% in 2014, thereby confirming the downward trend in motion since the first elections in 1979.

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[12] Special Eurobarometer 255, Wave 65.2: Attitudes towards European Union Enlargement, p. 55. Published July 2006, *TNS Opinion & Social*.
[13] Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014, p 110.

To illustrate this, the chart at right shows trends in participation to European elections and answers to Eurobarometer questions on favourability towards the EU (based on 1999-2014 Eurobarometer data)[14].
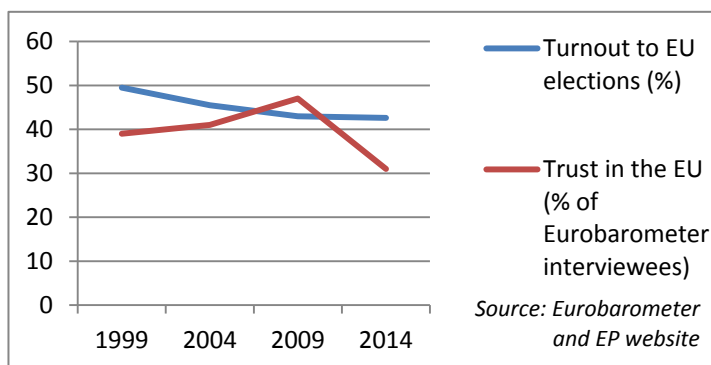
The election results of the year 2014 reflected these trends and commensurate rise of nationalism in Europe. The centre-right (and generally pro-EU) European People's Party won the most seats, but came up well short of a majority. In Denmark, France and the United Kingdom, groups opposed to the EU won unprecedented victories. Elsewhere, populist parties won significant seats. The figure below illustrates the respective wins and losses in seat numbers in comparison to the results of the previous election, in 2009. In total, **roughly a quarter of all seats went to parties sceptical of the EU or protest parties,** such as those belonging to the group Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), or many of the non-attached members. The French far-right party Front National, as well as some of the other nationalist parties in Europe are not affiliated to a European political group and their rise can be seen in the gains of the "Non-attached" members in the graph below.[15]

Figure 3: European Parliament composition (parties and political affiliation)
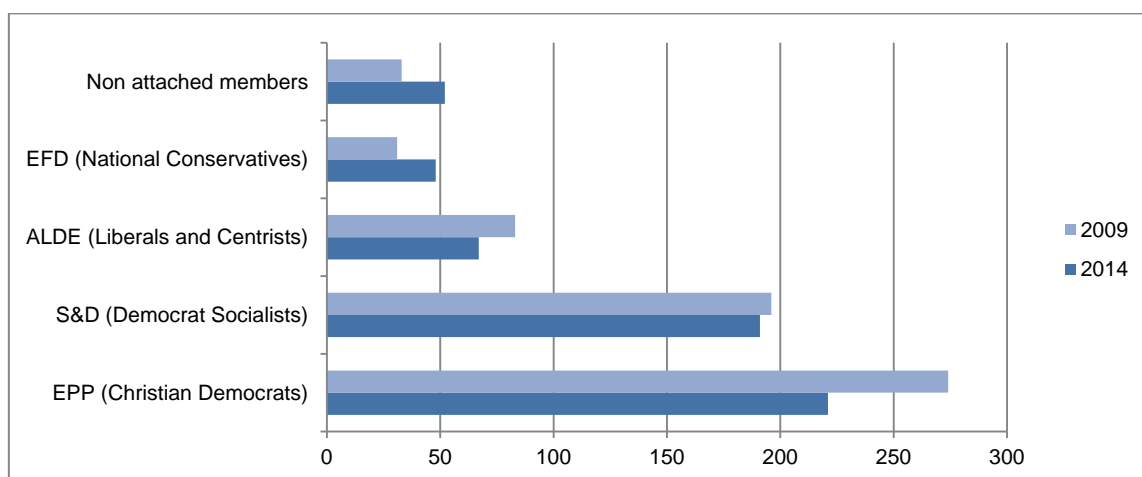
Source: European Parliament

The "democratic deficit" was exacerbated by additional contextual factors. During the period of the 2007-2013 EFCP, the EU underwent an **economic crisis** that further challenged people's trust in European Institutions and at the same time moved the European and national policy agenda towards measures to foster economic recovery, growth and tackling unemployment. An analysis of responses to the Standard Eurobarometer survey reflects that, while the programme ran, the main concerns of European citizens revolved around the economy and issues such as inflation, the

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[14] Standard Eurobarometer 51; Standard Eurobarometer 62; Standard Eurobarometer 72; Standard Eurobarometer 82; Question "Please tell me if you tend to trust or tend not to trust the European Union?"

[15] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html

economic situation, public finances and unemployment. While the degree to which these issues represented a concern varied between 2007 and 2013, [16] they were always high in respondents' priorities.

In 2007, unemployment and rising prices were the two main problems cited by Europeans. Faced with a choice of 14 issues, more than a quarter of people polled (27%) mentioned unemployment as one of the two main problems facing their country.[17] In 2013, rising prices were the main personal concern of Europeans (mentioned by 41% of respondents), while unemployment was the second-ranked concern (22%), ahead of the national economic situation (18%).[18] It is important to note that the responses varied greatly among different Member States, and these are only figures representing the key trends. According to the European Parliament Eurobarometer titled *Two years to go to the 2014 European elections*, from August 2012, the 'struggle against poverty and exclusion' was a concern of the largest proportion (50%) of respondents, while 'coordination of economic policies' came second with 37%, followed by 'consumer protection and public health' (31%). Similarly, when asked to name the most important issue in times of crisis, the vast majority of respondents (72%) pointed to **employment and combatting unemployment**..[19]

Against this backdrop, the EU understandably prioritised policies tackling such issues. In particular, **Europe 2020 strategy** was launched in 2010 to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as the European Union's ten-year jobs and growth strategy.[20] Many of the EU's other policies and programmes were harnessed to support this[21], leaving little room in the EU budget for initiatives (at least partly) aimed at addressing citizenship and civic participation, despite its relevance for reasons cited above.

A few EU programmes (all with relatively modest budgets) did support active citizenship during this period, and as part of the evaluation we conducted a benchmarking analysis aimed at assessing the complementarity of the ECFP with these initiatives as well as exploring further scope for synergies and identifying best practices. In a context with limited resources, the complementarity of the spending programmes examined seems an important factor in the assessment of the contribution of the EFCP to the increase of active citizenship.

The benchmarking exercise examined the following (relatively small) EU programmes supporting active citizenship during this period, albeit it not being their *primary* aim, as it is in the case of the EFCP:

- *Europe for Citizens Programme* (DG COMM) – Subject of the present evaluation, a budget of EUR 215m during the period 2007-2013.

- *Youth in Action Programme* (DG EAC) – A programme set up for young people, it aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to involve them in shaping the

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[16] Standard Eurobarometer EB68 to EB79, *TNS Opinion & Social*.
[17] Standard Eurobarometer EB 68, p. 23, *TNS Opinion & Social*.
[18] Standard Eurobarometer EB 79, p. 16, *TNS Opinion & Social*.
[19] European Parliament Eurobarometer (EB/EP 77.4) Two years to go to the 2014 European elections, p.8.
[20] http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/index_en.htm
[21] The European Union explained: Europe 2020: Europe's growth strategy, European Commission Directorate-General for Communication, Citizens information, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014.

Union's future[22], overall budget EUR 885m euros for the seven years (2007-2013).[23]

- *Jean Monnet Programme* (DG EAC) – This programme aims at stimulating teaching, research and reflection in the field of European integration studies at the level of higher education institutions within and outside the European Community.[24] Since 2007, this programme falls under the umbrella of the Lifelong Learning programme which had a budget of nearly EUR 7bn for the period 2007 to 2013. *Jean Monnet* is a smaller action in this framework and got its budget from the remaining 16% non-allocated to bigger programmes such as *Erasmus* and *Leonardo Da Vinci.[25]*

- *Fundamental rights and Citizenship* programme (DG JUST) – This programme sought to contribute to the strengthening of the area of Freedom, Security and Justice over the period 2007-2013, through activities focussed towards issues such as the protection of the rights of the child, combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, as well as active participation in the democratic life of the Union, EUR 387m.[26]

- *2013 & 14 European Year of Citizens* (DG COMM) - The European Year of Citizens 2013 was dedicated to the rights that come with EU citizenship. In 2014, some of the activities continued, this time with more of a focus on the European Parliament elections, that took place in May 2014. The activities undertaken sought to "encourage dialogue between all levels of government, civil society and business at [various types of] events and conferences around Europe to discuss notably the importance of both representative and participatory democracy in the European Union and inform on the existing tools to better participate in the European democratic process".[27]. The total budget of the 2013 and 2014 European Years was EUR 3,8m.[28]

- *2011 European Year of Volunteering* (DG COMM) – The EU used the Year to work towards the creation of an enabling an environment conducive to volunteering in the EU, as well as to carrying out communication and awareness-raising measures to highlight the value and importance of volunteering. The European Year of Volunteering 2011had a budget of EUR 8m, which built on EUR 3m devoted to preparatory actions in 2010.[29]

These programmes shared **similar goals** of increasing civic engagement and promoting intercultural understanding. We discuss the synergies, complementarity and potential overlaps of the EFCP with those programmes as part of section 3.2 below.

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[22] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.php
[23] Decision No 1719/2006/EC, establishing the 'Youth in Action' programme for the period 2007 to 2013, OJ L 327/30, 24.11.2006.
[24] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/jean_monnet/jean_monnet_en.php
[25] Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, Annex B 11, p. 67.
[26] Decision 2007/252/EC of 19 April 2007 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the specific programme "Fundamental rights and citizenship" as part of the General programme "Fundamental Rights and Justice, OJ L 110 of 27.4.2007.
[27] European Year of Citizens website, url: http://europa.eu/citizens-2013/.

[28] Decision No 1093/2012/EU on the European Year of Citizens (2013), OJ L 325, 23.11.2012, p.1.
[29] http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/european-year-of-volunteering/index_en.htm

Here, we can point out that the **programmes referred above are not in themselves sufficient** to address the challenges of active participation and European identity (see in depth discussion as part of section 3.1 below). While these measures potentially contribute to the attainment of the EFCP's aims and share some of its objectives, their primary focus is not to increase civic engagement among the general public.

The EFCP's "unique European offer"

Leading from the challenging context described above, the ensuing paragraphs argue that **the EFCP provides a unique platform** for promoting civic engagement among European citizens (either directly or through organisations targeting them). This is based on numerous sources, including interviews with CSOs benefiting from programme funding, a focus group with the Europe for Citizens Contact Points charged with supporting applicants for EFCP funding in the Member States and a benchmarking analysis of other comparable EU initiatives.

Below we discuss key aspects of the programme in the context of evidence collected through series of interviews with various stakeholders of the programme, as well as identified during the benchmarking exercise.

- Fills a gap in EU policy**:** interviews with CSO receiving funding from the EFCP showed that such organisations thought that the EFCP is **indispensable** in Europe, as it fills a gap in EU policy, which otherwise fails to involve citizens in civil society and generate interest among EU citizens' in questions pertaining to EU identity / integration. This view was largely shared by interviewed members of the Programme Committee. In line with the statements from beneficiaries and stakeholders, a majority of the participants in a focus group with the Contact Points were of the opinion that the EFCP fills a gap in EU policy by promoting the engagement of citizens with the European project, as well as their active participation in civic activities.

- Horizontal focus on citizenship: Importantly, all categories of interviewees, as well as the majority of the Contact Points participating in a focus group noted that the EFCP is one of the few EU programmes to support organisations which is not directly linked to other EU policy objectives (e.g. social inclusion). This makes it exceptional, in the sense that it benefits organisations that can remain highly independent with regards to the activities they undertake to fulfil the higher-level objectives of the programme. A corroborating statement from the focus group with the Contact Points is the statement that the EFCP is unique, because it is not tied to specific policy priorities.

- Responds to the need to raise awareness on the EU, its processes and achievements: As discussed at length above, the present political and economic context has exacerbated tensions and negative attitudes towards the EU. Unanimously, when asked about the relevance of the EFCP, interviewees and participants in the focus group highlighted that the current circumstances are hostile and facilitate to the increase of nationalist tendencies in Member States, and therefore the EFCP is more needed than ever to promote the EU's achievements and facilitate the citizens' understanding of its processes.

- Relevant aims and objectives: Interviewed beneficiaries expressed approval of the overall aims of the programme, namely that it was meant to increase the participation of citizens in society (and specifically in the construction of Europe), as well as to foster discussion about the EU on a local level. The

views of key stakeholders and delegates from the Contact Points were more measured, as they highlighted the disconnect between the programme's overarching objectives and those at scale of the projects funded through the programme. Respondents to the survey of unsuccessful applicants also considered the objectives relevant. However, it is worth noting that more immediate objectives relating to enhancing tolerance, bringing together people from local communities and developing a sense of European identity were considered more relevant than those at a higher level, such as fostering a sense of 'ownership' of the EU, fostering action and promoting Europe's values.

- Added value: The benchmarking analysis' findings highlighted that the added value of the EFCP is the targeting of **ordinary European citizens** in their local communities, with involvement in an EFCP project a potential first point towards wider engagement with the EU. It also identified the EFCP as unique in bringing together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities. Town twinning and remembrance activities are also areas where the EFCP has a specific focus not found in other programmes. In addition, representatives from beneficiary CSOs pointed out in their interviews that the EFCP has an additional role on the national level, considering the scarcity of similar initiatives run by the Member States (NB: France, Poland, Sweden and Bulgaria were discussed).

Four potential solutions

The EFCP proposes four potential solutions to the challenges of increasing civic participation throughout the EU. Through its four actions, the EFCP reaches out to the different strata of civil society (citizens, CSOs, local authorities), and devises bespoke activities (events, projects, structural support, Remembrance activities) in order to maximise the impact on civil society as a whole.

Below we discuss the rationale for including each type of action in the EFCP, as well as their specific target groups. The four actions of the EFCP have in common the objective to touch a defined strata of the population and seek in particular to establish a link between the EU and the "hard to reach" audiences.

In light of the programme objectives and contextual factors discussed above, the table on the next page describes how the programme's four Actions strands link with the various needs that the EFCP could address. The table scores each action against objectives of the EFCP and contextual factors, awarding a maximum of (***) if the action could plausibly make a highly relevant contribution to the objective. As the table makes clear, while the relevance of the four Action strands varies across the specific 'needs', as a whole the programme addresses all of them.

	Providing a platform for citizens to actively and directly engage in the European project	Raising awareness about the EU, and its role in citizens' lives	Addressing the "democratic deficit" and Euroscepticism	Promote common values, history and culture in the development of citizens' sense of a European identity
Active Citizens for Europe (Action 1)	(***) Projects often succeed in bringing together a wide range of citizens (including from "hard to reach" categories) in the context of activities promoting active citizenship	(**) Activities undertaken are required to have an EU dimension (for instance, fostering debates on common European issues)	(*) Project content could potentially aim at bringing the EU institutions closer to its citizens	(**) Transnational dimension of projects helps bridging the gap between European peoples
Active Civil Society in Europe (Action 2)	(*) Projects do not necessarily involve the direct participation of citizens	(***) Projects target themes of general European interest paying particular attention to the impact of the European policies	(***) Projects and operating grants support activities with a strong EU dimension	(*) Not the primary focus of this action
Together for Europe (Action 3)	(**) Conferences and debates are directly addressed to European citizens	(***) Events target themes of general European interest, achievements and values of the European Union	(***) Action focuses on bringing Europe closer to its citizens	(**) Action aims at deepening the concept of "active European citizenship" and at promoting its understanding all over Europe
Active European Remembrance (Action 4)	(**) Projects often involve citizens directly	(*) Some projects have the potential to establish a link between events in the past and to role of the EU in the present	(*) Not the primary focus of this action	(***) Europeans get in touch with the memory of the past, including its dark sides, which enhances their understanding of the common values of the EU shared in the present

Legend: *******   Very relevant / ******   Relevant / *****   Not the primary focus of this action

3.1. Relevance of the Programme objectives and activities

> EQ 1: To what extent the programme's objectives and activities have been relevant to give citizens the opportunity to interact and to participate in constructing an ever closer Europe and to develop their sense of European identity? To what extent did the objectives and activities of the EFCP correspond to the needs of the target groups?

The programme aims to provide citizens with the opportunity to interact and participate in the construction of an **ever closer Europe** and to develop their **sense of European identity**. For the purpose of the evaluation, we considered these concepts in terms of the EFCP's potential to increase civic participation, engagement with and favourability towards the EU. As discussed in the section above, the evidence gathered during the evaluation confirms that the EFCP provides a unique offer with added value among other initiatives at EU and national levels.
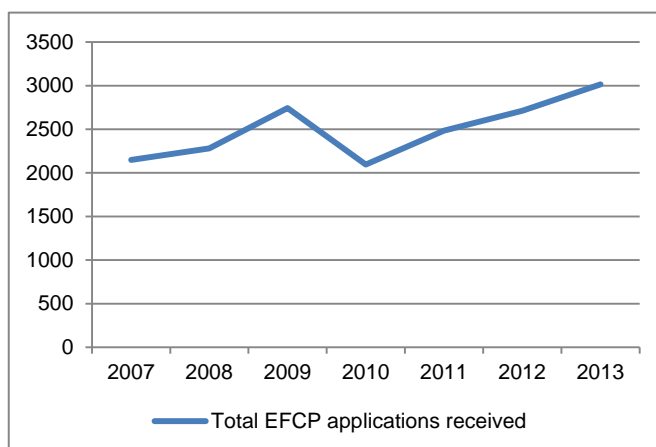
The relevance of the EFCP's objectives and activities in the pursuit of an increase in civic participation in Europe is reflected by its potential to provide a platform for projects through which **citizens can directly participate** in the European project, as well as learn about and experience the common values and history of the European Union. This in turn has the potential to increases their sense of European identity and contributes to the building of an ever closer Europe.

The evidence allows us to say that the EFCP fulfils this unique role by providing funding through its four actions. As set out in table above, the EFCP's four actions all contribute to addressing those objectives to a different degree. In particular, activities undertaken under Actions 1 and 4, and to a certain extent Action 2, suppose the direct involvement of EU citizens. The benchmarking analysis' findings highlighted that the targeting of ordinary European Citizens in their local communities and involvement in an EFCP project can be a first point of entry for ordinary citizens to discuss and engage with a European activity. An analysis of the Programme guide lists an array of target audiences from various backgrounds and confirms that Actions 1 and 4 fund projects which are accessible for "non-convert" citizens. Interviews with the programme's beneficiaries and stakeholders also concluded in similar findings, as a majority of interviewees pointed out that the EFCP's strength is its direct connection with the citizens. Furthermore, most case studies that were conducted as part of the evaluation showed evidence of direct participation of citizens.

These statements are also valid in relation to projects supported by **CSOs**, but in many cases to a lesser extent. In this respect, the analysis shows that funding allocated to CSOs benefited from a high degree of professionalism, clearly defined methodologies and longer-term planning. However, these aspects of the programme allowed for less of the direct involvement of citizens that distinguish the EFCP.

In terms of the **breadth of the programme**, evidence from numerous sources, including interviews with CSOs benefiting from programme funding and a focus group with the Europe for Citizens Contact Points, suggests that the broadly defined objectives of the EFCP allow for a wide range of target groups to get involved in the activities funded through the programme.

The **relevance for target groups** of the programme's objectives and activities is demonstrated by strong (and growing) interest in participation, as well as the continuously increasing quality of applications submitted. These trends were evident from the focus group with ECPs as well as application data. The latter showed consistently large number of applications received by EACEA and illustrated by the table. During the programme's five-year run, applications for all actions combined were in excess of 2,000 each year. The applications peaked in 2013 at 3,015, suggesting growing awareness of the programme and its possibilities. Application quality also rose consistently throughout this period, showing a gradually improving match between the programme and target groups.

Source: EFCP monitoring data provided by EACEA

Conclusion

Leading from this, the evaluation served to confirm the relevance of the programme's objectives and activities. Prevailing conditions (e.g. declining favourability towards the EU and increased Euroscepticism, diversion of resources towards initiatives focused on the economy) created a need for a platform for civic participation related to the EU that the EFCP could potentially fulfil. That the level of interest in the programme, as well as the quality of applications for participation, progressively increased indicates a good match between the programme and target groups.

3.2. Complementarity of the Programme with other comparable EU initiatives

EQ 2: To what extent has the programme proved complementarity to other EU funding programmes, in particular in the area of citizens' rights, education, youth and culture and to other EU initiatives such as the European Year?

The evaluation included a **benchmarking analysis** that examined three active citizenship programmes across the European Commission, as well as two European years that shared the EFCP's ambitions of increasing citizenship engagement and promoting intercultural understanding. The methods used for this analysis have been the comparison of objectives set out in legal texts, the programmes' user guides and interviews with officials from the relevant DGs.

The closest programme to the EFCP is **Youth in Action programme**, which is funded by DG Education and Culture (DG EAC). In many ways, the EFCP can be conceptualised as an adult version of Youth in Action programme, allowing adults to participate and learn from exchanges across Europe and supporting the structures for European civil society as a whole. An added value of the EFCP is the targeting of ordinary European Citizens in their local communities and involvement in a EFCP project can be a first point of entry for ordinary citizens to discuss and engage with a European activity. The EFCP is also unique in bringing together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities. Town twinning and remembrance activities are also areas where the EFCP has a specific focus not found in other programmes.

As with the EFCP, both **Youth in Action and the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programmes** target funding at civil society organisations. The EFCP activities are aimed at ordinary citizens in their local communities, whereas the distinct feature of the Youth in Action programme is that it focuses on young people aged 13-25 and allows young people informally as a group to apply for funding. The distinctive feature of the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme is the funding for actions that support the networking of judicial and administrative authorities and the legal professions. The Jean Monnet programme, alternatively, targets higher education institutions, academics and teachers. Overall, there could be some overlap between a youth organisation project being submitted for a Youth in Action project and then resubmitted to EFCP under Action 1, measure 2.1 Citizens' project, as both are aimed at CSO's delivering citizenship projects.

The analysis also uncovered **further synergies that could be exploited**. For example, non- and informal learning is likely to be taking place in EFCP activities and more could be gained from the Youth in Action programme's use of these methods. The focus on the legal aspects of European Citizenship may have made a greater distinction between Youth in Action and the EFCP, though it could also reduce the value of the programme for ordinary citizens. More generally, the legal aspects of European citizenship were less likely to be a priority in the context of the economic crisis. One of the main added values provided by the EFCP has been the **structured dialogue and network with civil society**, which are not only used by the Programme itself but by other citizenship programmes such as the Youth in Action Programme to inform and communicate their work. Rather than duplicating efforts, the European Years were an extension of the EFCP; interviews suggested that the added value came from the close cooperation and coordination of these activities within DG Comm.

The **main challenge** of the various EU projects targeting active citizenship is the sometimes lacking of communication between DGs. Where there has been good communication (as with the European Years and with the Fundamental rights programme) then value was demonstrated through institutional learning and sharing of good practice. Where discussion was more limited (as between EFCP and DG EAC Youth in Action and Jean Monnet programmes), the sharing of good practice and institutional learning was held back, with some officials expressing concerns regarding the quality of the ECFP activities. As all programmes dealing with citizenship face many of the same challenges, including relatively small budgets compared to target groups, there is the potential for more to be gained through increased collaboration and the regular sharing of successful approaches.

While the assumption that the primary focus of the EFCP is to foster the direct involvement of citizens and enhance their civic participation is valid, it does not apply equally to all of the programme actions. There is scope to argue that certain activities funded through the programme could be financed under other instruments. For example, one project examined through the case studies failed to establish a direct link with EU citizens' participation. While the information contained in the final report of this project was limited, it focused on fostering NGO cooperation and did not explicitly mention any activities aimed at involving citizens directly or plans for them to use project results. The impact of such projects in the context of the EFCP is more questionable, as the direct involvement of citizens generates stronger results.

In light of these considerations, it could be argued that the EFCP's scope could be narrowed. For instance, any youth related activities could be directed towards the existing Youth in Action programme, whereas any activities focusing explicitly on teaching and learning could be funded under the auspices of Erasmus+ or similar programmes. This would also address the issue of "*saupoudrage*", or dilution of modest budget of EFCP across a large number of projects, reducing the chances of the programme to generate a discernible impact. It should be noted however, that findings from interviews with beneficiaries suggested that a move towards the

incorporation of EFCP in the Erasmus+ framework could be risking lose the programme's integrity as it would be would be too small to play a meaningful role.

Conclusion

The evaluation determined that the EFCP was sufficiently distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups to provide a complementary offering. Even those initiatives that were the closest to the EFCP, such as the Youth in Action programme, focused on different audiences, while the EFCP was unique in bringing together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities, and in supporting town twinning and remembrance activities. At the same time, the evaluation also uncovered the potential for further synergies and scope to reduce overlap. This highlighted the importance of the (sometimes-insufficient) communication between DGs; where there was evidence of good communication (e.g. the European Years and Fundamental Rights programme), then value was demonstrated through institutional learning and the sharing of good practices. Where discussion was more limited (e.g. between the EFCP and Youth in Action and Jean Monnet programmes), such opportunities were missed.

3.3. EU added value of the Programme

EQ 3: What is the European added value of the programme?

The principle of subsidiarity implies that EU action is only justified as a last resort, when initiatives at local, regional or national levels would be unable to achieve similar results. The EU-added value of the EFCP can potentially add value in two main ways, namely:

- Pooling resources to address transnational issues of common concern;

- Sharing and implementing best practices between Member States (and thereby achieving economies of scale).

The analysis conducted for the evaluation shows that in both of these areas the potential EU added value is clear. The paragraphs below summarise that analysis and provide examples to show where the EU added value is more and less pronounced.

Pooling resources

Analysing the programme literature enabled us to understand that the promotion of EU values, the involvement of European citizens in the process of integration, as well as the concept of pan-European Remembrance are issues intrinsically related to the European project. These are matters of common concern where **pooled resources can add value**. This was also reiterated in the interviews with key stakeholders dealing with the EFCP on a national level, who highlighted the absence of comparable policies or programmes at other levels. Such sentiments also apply to the importance of EU support in the functioning of civil society in Europe. Key stakeholders pointed out the crucial role of the EU in providing structural support to the pan-European CSOs who contribute to the pursuit of EU policies. It was also noted that the existence of these organisations depended largely on EU funding, as for some of them the EFCP provided for up to 90% of their budget.

This view was unanimously shared by representatives of CSOs who received **structural support** in the form of operating grants through the programme. Our analysis of the findings of these interviews concluded that umbrella organisations at

EU level, and to some extent think tanks operate as sources of knowledge and multipliers in the dissemination of relevant information on the EU and its role in everyday life to citizens across the territory of the EU. This is not a mission that can be fulfilled sensibly at national level only.

The interviews with beneficiaries also highlighted the legitimacy of funding these activities under a European programme. Based on their org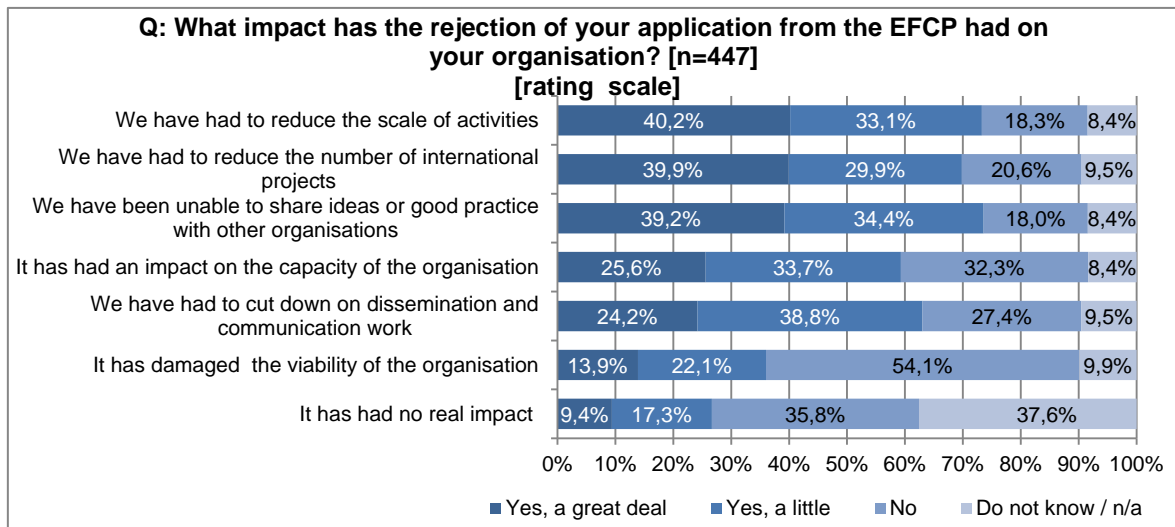anisational goals, which are heavily oriented towards the promotion of European values and the "European added-value" of their

Q: Did you manage to find replacement funding for this project or activity? [n=440]

- 12,5% Yes
- 69,3% No
- 18,2%

activities, the representatives of organisations preserving the memory of the EU's founding fathers saw a clear link that justified their use of EU funding. This belief in legitimacy based on pro-European views and mission also drew partly on a concern among interviewees that they would lose credibility in front of possible donors if the EU failed to finance their activities.
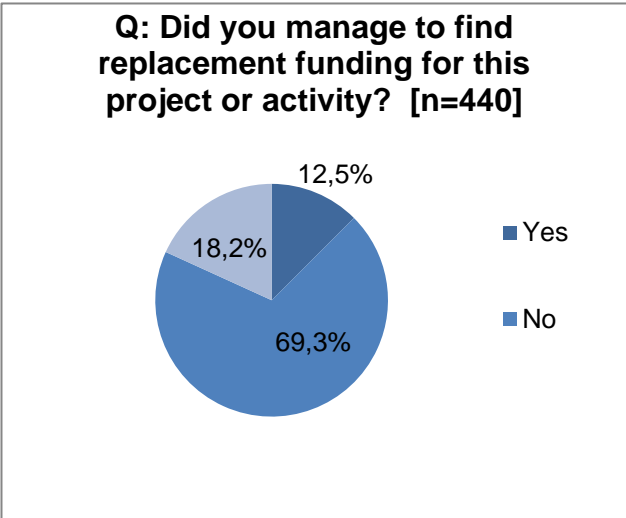
In the context of the survey of unsuccessful applicants, we collected data on the organisational impact of rejection of application from the EFCP. As shown in the figure below, nearly all respondents reported some impact on their organisations resulting from the failure to secure EFCP funding.

Figure 4: Impact of rejection for funding on applications

Q: What impact has the rejection of your application from the EFCP had on your organisation? [n=447]
[rating scale]

	Yes, a great deal	Yes, a little	No	Do not know / n/a
We have had to reduce the scale of activities	40,2%	33,1%	18,3%	8,4%
We have had to reduce the number of international projects	39,9%	29,9%	20,6%	9,5%
We have been unable to share ideas or good practice with other organisations	39,2%	34,4%	18,0%	8,4%
It has had an impact on the capacity of the organisation	25,6%	33,7%	32,3%	8,4%
We have had to cut down on dissemination and communication work	24,2%	38,8%	27,4%	9,5%
It has damaged the viability of the organisation	13,9%	22,1%	54,1%	9,9%
It has had no real impact	9,4%	17,3%	35,8%	37,6%

The three most significant impacts (almost 70% of agreement) were reducing the scale of activities, reducing the number of international projects and being unable to share ideas or good practice with other organisations. Only around one respondent out of ten (9.4%) reported that there was no impact of their application being rejected, mostly due to the presence of funding from other sources..

Almost 70% of respondents among unsuccessful applicants reported not being able to find replacement funding for the projects or activities for which funding was sought, and only 12.5% reported that they have. Other sources of funding reported include organisations such as Erasmus+ Sport Chapter, FRASECOPE, national funds, public authorities and local government. Some respondents also reported revising the application, based on feedback received, and resubmitting to EFCP, whilst others still

reported relying on internal resources, funding from families, partners and member organisations.

Sharing and implementing and scaling up best practices

The discussion of relevance in the preceding pages shows that the EFCP had the potential to add value in numerous areas, among them the sharing and implementation of best practices. This is examined in depth in the following chapter on effectiveness. However, it is worth pointing out that case studies of 13 projects funded through the programme showed that sharing best practices was a component of most of them. Evidence of such practices actually being implemented was rarer, partly due to the short timescales involved.

Some of the projects we analysed also demonstrated that simple initiatives that can be easily replicated could potentially be scaled up, thereby maximising the effect of EU funds on civil society. For instance, one case study pointed out that inexpensive activities, such as the planting of flowers, could generate substantial impacts. Others highlighted that the chances of a potential policy impact can be enhanced through straightforward actions such as the dissemination of a statement to the right authorities.

Conclusion

The programme was thus shown to provide EU added value in terms enabled activities that would not have been funded elsewhere, in addition to promoting the spread of best practices. In some cases, the evaluation found evidence of such practices actually being implemented, and of being scaled up across wider groups of countries and stakeholders. However, many projects also produced relatively little evidence to show whether and to what extent shared practices were actually applied in practical terms. Partly this was due to the short timescales of projects, as well as the evaluation's reliance on reports compiled shortly after individual projects were completed (before best practices could have been implemented). It can also be attributed to the lack of concrete plans for follow-up. Considering the complexity of tailoring given practices to new contexts and the relatively short timeframe of individual projects, follow-up action is vital for this aspect of EU added value to be achieved.

4. EFFECTIVENESS

This section discusses the effectiveness of the EFCP in terms of its objectives and wider impact on active citizenship. In simple terms, an examination of effectiveness means figuring whether the programme 'worked', and why (or why not). Ideally, this would entail some kind of quantitative measurement that would allow us to attribute change over time to the programme. Such an approach was not possible here, due to the programme's small size alongside much larger factors affecting citizenship in Europe, in addition to the diversity of the programme in terms of objectives, Action strands and types of organisations and projects supported.

The evaluation also had to consider its fit within the existing body of research. As explained in the Impact Assessment for the 2014-2020 iteration of the ECFP, the programme has already 'been thoroughly evaluated'.[30] Aside from the present evaluation, five distinct studies had been conducted since 2008,[31] all of which examined (various aspects of) the programme in depth. This was beneficial in the sense that we started with a substantial evidence base. It was challenging in that we had to find a way to add value in an environment where much of the 'low hanging fruit' had already been picked. In particular, the 2010 interim evaluation[32] conducted an extensive assessment of the programme's effects on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of beneficiaries.

Neither the parameters of the EFCP nor the surrounding context underwent changes over the last three years that would invalidate the findings of previous research. Our task has therefore been to take a fresh look at the effectiveness of the programme, approach it from a different perspective and hold it under a different lens, while maintaining enough continuity to the holistic assessment required of ex post evaluations.

This section is structured with these considerations in mind. We first discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the EFCP and the various kinds of actions it funded. This sets the bar in terms of the nature and scale of impact that could be expected. A section follows on implementation, working from the assumption that the programme can only realise its potential if successfully delivered. This leads into an examination of short-term results. A final section explores lasting impacts, particularly with regard to active European citizenship and the programme's contribution to policy-making. We draw heavily on 16 in-depth case studies of individual projects funded through the EFCP, as well as a review of secondary research on initiatives related to citizenship and interviews with key stakeholders. Where relevant, we also reference monitoring data compiled by the EACEA and the findings from previous evaluations and studies.

NB: Since much of the ensuing discussion relates to the case studies, it is worth reiterating the methodology that was used. Case studies of 16 projects, from a sample covering the majority of funded actions, were undertaken with the purpose of providing insight into the success of the programme as a whole by looking at individual projects in detail. Each case study entailed an analysis of project documentation according to a standard set of criteria developed for a reporting

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[30] Commission Staff Working Paper, Impact Assessment accompanying the proposal for a Regulation of the Council establishing for the period 2014-2020 the programme "Europe for Citizens" to promote European citizenship, SEC(2011) 1562 final.

[31] These include the survey of town twinning citizens' meetings (2008); the survey of the EFCP (2009); the interim evaluation of the EFCP (2010) and report from the Commission; the Impact Assessment of the EFCP 2014-2020 (2011) and the Study on measuring the impact of the EFCP (2013).

[32] Interim evaluation of the Europe for citizens programme, Ecorys, 2010.

template. Scores were awarded cross five areas (theory, implementation, results, context and impact) in order to facilitate comparison, identify key success factors and barriers that applied beyond the level of single projects. See Annex 4 for more detail on the methodology as well as the individual case study reports.

Context

The EFCP funded a vast array of activities, covering myriad aspects of active citizenship and employing a variety of delivery mechanisms. Despite this diversity, the programme's four action strands and the projects funded within them share an **underlying assumption**, which is that bringing together Europeans from different Member States to discuss and work together on issues of common concern can increase civic engagement and involvement with the EU. This assumption describes the smallest town twinning projects, which relatively small numbers of citizens from as few as two countries for a one-off series of events, as well as it applies to larger operating grants that allowed NGOs to pursue citizenship-focused goals at a more political and institutional level.

The results of studies reviewed for the evaluation are **broadly aligned** with this assumption. Such research (see overview in Annex 1) shows that focused initiatives to promote association and networking can increase social capital and thereby contribute to civic engagement. This is a positive finding, given that the majority of projects funded through all four of the EFCP's Action strands involved such components. Indeed, they were as crucial for town twining projects like a four-day meeting that united fire-fighters from Hungarian and Croatian towns as for remembrance projects like one that brought together schoolchildren from nine countries to plant crocuses in memory of Jewish children killed in the holocaust.

However, a more detailed look at the studies brings into relief the sheer number of **factors that affect civic engagement**. These range from those that are completely outside the EFCP's control, such as the demographic, and social factors influencing an individual's patterns of (civic and political) engagement and participation, to others where the programme may have some influence but where small, one-off interventions risk being crowded out. These include family, education, media and the discourse at work and other social fora. The review (see Annex 1) also served to emphasise the outsized impact of initiatives dealing with young people, civic education, social inequality and tolerance towards and of migrant groups. Children in particular were singled out as suitable target groups, because they offer a relatively clean slate, carry the effects of given initiatives with them for a (very) long time and can spread effects more widely as multipliers.

This implies that the potential impact is greater for some types of projects than for others. For example, of the 16 projects examined in depth, three were **targeted mainly at children** (though some of the others included children in some capacity). Some of the Together for Europe activities, such as the Golden Stars Awards, also targeted children, as did grants for organisations like the Maison Robert Schuman, whose audience consisted largely of school groups.

In a similar vein, the potential impact was higher among projects aimed at **hard-to-reach groups**. Town twinning, networks of twinned towns, citizens' projects / support measures and some remembrance projects targeted subsets of what could be called 'normal citizens', allowing the programme to reach individuals who were not otherwise engaged with the EU. But many of the case study projects reached primarily individuals who were already likely to be active, such as local officials and members of existing civic organisations. Since their level of engagement is likely already to be high, the potential impact on beneficiaries on these projects, in terms of *increased* civic engagement, is necessarily limited.

On the other end of the spectrum, potential impact could stem from links to the **policy-making process**. This speaks for operating grants that add to the voice of CSOs at European level, as well as some of the CSO projects. However, many case study projects received low scores for demonstrating little or tenuous links in this area. For example, while many projects sought to identify best practices, few provided credible plans for to ensure that they would actually be implemented.

The **length of funded projects** also differed substantially, affecting their potential impact. Town twinning meetings typically lasted only a number of days, making it difficult to for the issues discussed and networks formed between participants to gain traction. By contrast, the two networks of twinned towns examined for the evaluation were funded over periods of 1.5-2 years and thereby provided beneficiaries with substantially more time to engage with each other and the subject matter. Most of the other projects studied, ranging from citizens projects / support measures to CSO and remembrance projects allowed for similar levels of sustained involvement, lasting between nine months to 1.5 years.

In **summary**, the types of projects funded through the EFCP could potentially make an impact in numerous ways, depending on their particular mechanisms, target groups and methods. High potential impact tended to draw on factors such as involving children and hard to reach groups, establishing sustainable networks and linking to policy-making varied significantly among projects. The presence or absence of these features differed markedly across the projects examined in depth. While it is unlikely that every project could (or even should) tick every one of these boxes, the findings imply that they could be considered more during programme design and the selection of individual projects.

Implementation

Successful implementation relies less on theoretical underpinnings than on sound project management. Despite the differences in form and content between the 16 projects examined for the case studies, for the most part they were well organised, involved a wide range of partners and were **delivered successfully** and according to plan. The few adjustments we observed reflected practical issues that could not have been foreseen at the proposal stage. For example, for some projects, a small number of partners had to be replaced, or events took place later than originally planned. Rarer were exceptions such as that observed for one project, whereby the actual content of training activities was altered such that they became less relevant to the overall objectives of the EFCP.[33]

The successful implementation of the vast majority of projects reflects professionalism of the selected organisations and their ability to match available budgets to concrete plans. Indeed, this follows from the fierce competition for funding and trends that favoured organisations that could absorb it as the programme became better known during its seven-year life. As illustrated in the chart below, the proportion of proposals that were awarded funding peaked at 60% in 2008 and then fell precipitously for all types of projects, to close at less than 15%.

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[33] EACEA is responsible for the management of the complete life cycle of projects, and in this role is authorised to make changes to project parameters provided that they are duly justified. For more information about EACEA's formal role, see http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.php.

Figure 5: Selectivity of the EFCP
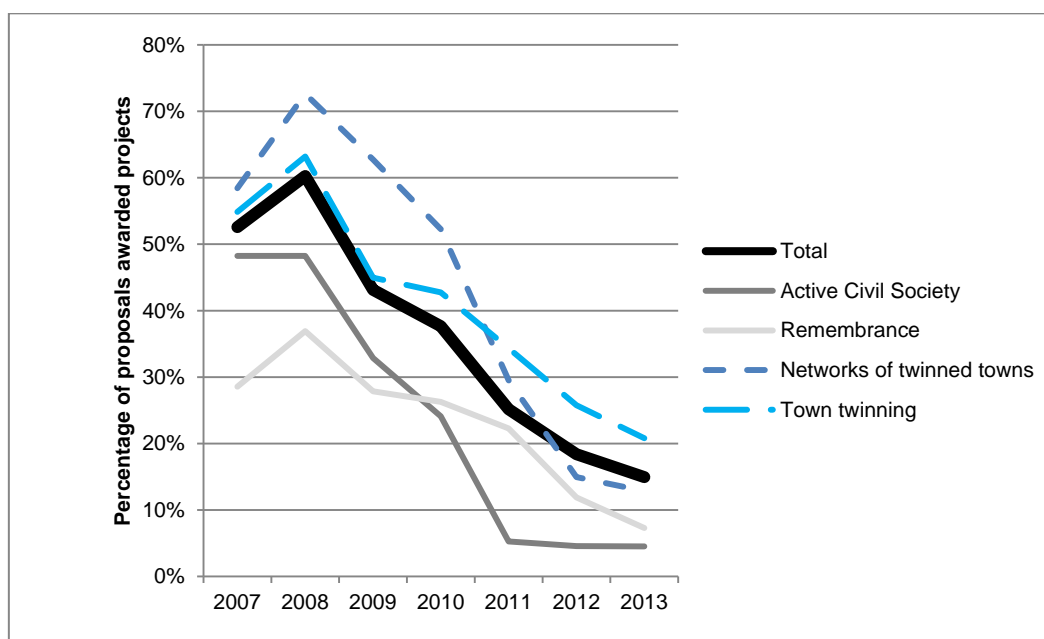
Source: monitoring data provided by EACEA

Indeed, during the last year of the programme applications under the Active Civil Society action strand stood only a 4.5% chance of success. Even the least selective Town Twinning action strand had an award rate of just over 20%, which is still low in absolute terms. At the same time (as is discussed in more detail below in the Results section), the size of projects grew steadily during the second half of the programme in terms of number of direct participants, reflecting growing ambition among applicants and a requisite ability to deliver more effectively that was potentially driven in part by the intense competition.

Divergence among the case study projects concerned primarily two areas, both significant. The first relates to the **rationale and purposefulness** of projects. While nearly all projects articulated realistic plans for implementing a set of activities, there were some instances where a clear intervention logic and links to broader, outcome-level objectives were lacking. In other words, these projects did not have satisfactory answers to the 'so what' question, often posed by evaluators, that would explain why given events, promotional material, workshops were important and illustrate how they would contribute to the broader aims of the programme.

As an **example**, one project consisted of training sessions targeting officials from local authorities in Malta and Spain. While achieving the stated aims of fostering interaction and learning between officials from different Member States, no tangible links were drawn to show how the project would contribute to the broader aims of the programme, such as increasing civic participation. Another project produced tools providing information about existing volunteering opportunities but did not attempt to put in place follow-up plans that could generate concrete outcomes such as increased participation in volunteering activities. The intervention logic and ultimate purpose for some projects was much clearer. For example, one project included a workshop of young people that produced a set of rules for engaging with policy makers that participants then adapted and applied to their local circumstances.

Projects also differed substantially with regard to plans for **communication and dissemination** of results. Promotion was important for all projects as a way to reach multipliers and others not directly involved. However, only some projects presented an integrated approach to dissemination that used it as a way of pursuing wider goals. A **positive example**, singled out for its innovativeness, consists of a project that realised the importance of mutually intelligible channels for communications between

young people and local authorities, and set out producing guidelines that could be applied by both sides in the future. Another project produced a tailored publication for local authorities that would allow them to operationalise some of the best practices identified during a series of workshops and presentations. Unfortunately, some projects produced publications and other material, such as press releases and websites, which did not have a clear enough purpose to serve as genuine communication tools.

Results

At the 'Results' and 'Impact' stages we turn away from *what* the programme did and focus instead on the *difference* it made to participants and to Europe as a whole. The simplest way to measure this is to look at the reach of the programme and the perceived difference it made to individual participants and organisations. As illustrated in the ensuing paragraphs, while the programme's achievements are substantial in this regard, the results were mixed, with some projects providing much stronger results-level evidence than others.

Surveys conducted for the interim evaluation captured the views of programme beneficiaries across a range of issues, such as feeling more European, learning about European issues, sharing a European culture, strengthening links with other EU Member States, developing the capacity of their organisations and supporting innovation and the transfer of best practices. The **survey results were overwhelmingly positive** insofar as they showed that large majorities of directly involved participants answered positively to questions regarding their perceptions of Europe and feeling European.[34]

Moreover, monitoring data for the second half of the programme shows that such results are being achieved among a **relatively large and growing number** of individuals. Between 2011 and 2013 the average number of total yearly participants (direct or indirect) in funded activities increased by nearly 75%, from about 1.8m to just over 3.1m. This was particularly driven by a steady and significant increase in the number of participants reached by Active civil society projects but it was clearly present in all strands. Crucially, as shown in the chart below, this is indicative of a significant increase in the number of participants reached *per project*. The number of projects actually fell year on year, from 1,130 in 2007 to 451 in 2013. It should, however, be noted that the monitoring data report 'reach' in a binary way (i.e. a person was either 'reached' or not). This means that the figures do not capture nuance and variation in terms of what it meant to be 'reached' by a given project, even though the reality would differ according to factors like direct or indirect participation and length and intensity of involvement, as well as factors like project relevance and quality.

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[34] Interim evaluation of the Europe for citizens programme, Ecorys, 2011.

Figure 6: Average number of participants per project, per action strand
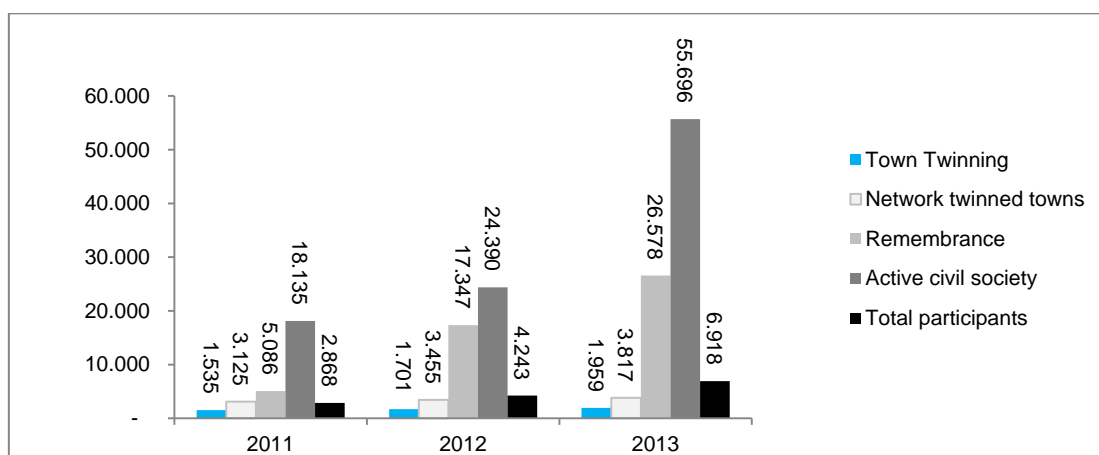
Source: monitoring data provided by EACEA

Despite the positive sentiments of participants, case studies show that the expected outcome **of projects varied significantly**. About half of the case study projects provided evidence (in their final reports) to show how the relevant but time- and resource-limited initiatives funded through the programme would lead to tangible, lasting outcomes. Importantly, the variability of expected outcomes of projects did not appear linked to particular Action strands or subject areas; positive and negative examples cut across these areas. Rather, relative success stemmed from the presence or absence of several key factors relating to project theory, context and implementation.

In general, **meaningful results** were achieved for projects that were grounded in a clear rationale, with some feasible change in the medium-term. Also crucial were a well-delineated scope and set of objectives, a plausible intervention logic and the involvement of relevant partners. Given the short timeframe for EFCP projects in comparison to the sustained engagement needed for to effect change in a complex area like civic engagement, **wider applicability / replicability of project outputs and credible plans for follow-up efforts (including funding)** were of vital importance. Examples drawn from the case studies show how the presence or absence of these factors influenced the ability of projects to produce lasting results. In line with the more strategic approach pursued during the second half of the programme (as reflected in the annual priorities), there is some evidence to suggest that these factors were concentrated among the projects selected and implemented during that time.

There were numerous **examples** of especially successful projects, whereby participants managed to identify relevant areas for future engagement and (in some cases) sources of funding to do so. This happened across the spectrum from small twinning meetings to larger civil society projects, as illustrated in the examples below:

- Town twinning meetings: communities from Scotland, France and Germany met to discuss local action to combat climate change. By involving an MEP (who later took evidence from the project to debates at the European Parliament) and scheduling follow meetings with surrounding communities, it appeared likely that the results of the project would be taken forward.

- Citizens' projects and support measures: associations Finnish and Baltic local authorities aimed at promoting thematic networking of twinned towns. The project achieved higher-than-foreseen interest, leading to an increased budget (approved by EACEA), and concrete follow-up action (e.g. extranet, website presence) led to future partnerships.

- Support for CSO projects: a group of CSOs from the UK, Sweden, Greece, Finland and the Netherlands aimed to share best practices and foster partnerships regarding youth and migration. By developing a new EU-wide network, tapping into existing connections and formalising the partnership between members, the project ensured mutual learning would take place after project completion.

- Remembrance: several ministries and CSOs in Finland sought to raise awareness about the Roma holocaust through theatre performances, an exhibition and a conference. The project made future action likely by involving other stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, well-known speakers), securing agreements to have the exhibition shown in other countries and developing a new project that was awarded funding through the Creative Europe programme. The latter point shows how the EFCP's flexibility and ability to finance relatively small projects allows it to between participating organisations. An exemplary remembrance project led to the development of a four- act as a **laboratory for piloting innovative projects** that can then be 'scaled up' to make a wider impact.

Other examples demonstrated that even relevant and well-implemented projects sometimes failed to generate tangible outcomes in the absence of clear follow-up plans. For instance, one project produced innovative, concrete outputs and established partnerships between young people and local authorities, but did not provide for follow-up, specifically in terms of (financial) means to ensure that these partnerships would be maintained upon project completion. This created a risk that the project's substantial achievements would be lost over time. Similarly, another project fostered a sense of unity and purpose among individuals from towns sharing common geographical features, but did not identify issues of sufficient interest for efforts at further collaboration to gain traction. This reflects the importance of replicability for the medium-term achievements of individual projects.

In **summary**, the ability of projects to generate enduring, tangible results stemmed from several factors. Most important among these was the capacity of participating organisations to form lasting links and identify sources of funding for sustained action. This occurred in numerous instances where the abovementioned success factors were present. In other cases, networks petered out after EFCP funding ended, pointing to the importance of encouraging programme applicants to consider such issues early in the application and implementation processes. A route which could be investigated is the inclusion of a requirement to produce realistic and practicable follow-up plans as part of the project application, so as to ensure the replicability of results over time.

Impact

To assess the impact of the programme, we have to take another step back and ask whether its mix of projects and activities, some relatively successful and others less so, has allowed a EUR 215m programme to make a positive contribution across an immense range of fundamental issues. These include European identity, mutual tolerance and understanding and, most importantly, active European citizenship. To consider the EFCP's impact, we tried to put the EFCP in context and to hold it up alongside the many factors outside the programme's control in each of its diverse areas of action. This is a difficult task. As remarked in the previous evaluation, there is

'no way of objectively assessing the programme's influence on wider society because many other factors influence trends in terms of civic participation'.[35]

In the section above, we argued that projects funded through the programme could produce **lasting results in the presence of the right factors** and credible plans for sustained follow-up action. The latter was found to be especially important because projects themselves were too short to generate policy impacts directly Such projects undoubtedly made an impact on directly involved individuals and participating organisations. In some instances, this impact extended into policy-making through diverse mechanisms (e.g. the creation of formal networks between partners, the involvement of decision-makers in project activities). The operating grants provided to European CSOs were also found to have the potential to make a policy impact through giving such actors a voice at EU level that can influence policy to some extent (e.g. through lobbying). Grants for think tanks could lead to the production of relevant studies, which, if disseminated effectively, could then influence policy.

For the programme to maximise its impact at a wider level, it would need to leverage its relatively small budget, identifying specific areas where it can add the most value and complementing larger initiatives. The evidence collected for the evaluation suggests that improvements would be possible in each of these areas. The programme's **relatively small budget** is spread across a vast spectrum of subject areas and funding mechanisms, creating a risk that the programme's achievements will be diluted in a sea of other factors and initiatives. Stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation were nearly unanimous on this point, despite their appreciation of the flexibility offered by the EFCP's broad scope.

Further to this, the benchmarking analysis conducted for the evaluation showed that the EFCP's offer was **unique in some areas**, namely where it provided a first entry point for ordinary citizens to discuss and engage with the EU and where it brought together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities. Town twinning and remembrance activities were also found to be areas of focus specific to the EFCP. It could be argued that the programme's potential impact would be greater if it consolidated its focus on these areas, leaving the remaining issues such as youth and values of intercultural dialogue to be respectively covered by programmes like Youth in Action and the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship that already address them to a large extent.

Regarding the ability of the EFCP to **complement larger initiatives**, the evaluation did not find evidence of systematic efforts to maximise the synergy effects with other EU programmes, despite the potential gains from doing so. For example, a formal mechanism could be created that would allow relatively small EFCP grants to test innovative projects that could then be scaled up through larger programmes, such as Erasmus+, Youth in Action or Creative Europe.

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[35] Ibid.

4.1. Achievement of general and specific objectives

> EQ 4: To what extent have the activities undertaken have been effective in achieving the programme's general and specific objectives? Where the objectives are not fulfilled in a satisfactory way, which factors have hindered the programme to be effective?

The EFCP sought to contribute to a wide range of general and specific objectives. This contribution is not possible to measure in quantitative terms due to a range of issues, not least the absence of programme-wide indicators or an outcome-level monitoring system and the multifarious nature of civic engagement, which is affected by many factors outside the programme's control. This leaves us with quantitative data at activity and output levels and qualitative findings for the general and specific objectives.

It is first worth noting that individual projects, regardless of Action strand or the specific issues addressed, contributed more substantially to overarching programme objectives in the **presence of certain factors**. These included:

- Clear rationale, with feasible gains to be realised in the medium term;[36]
- Clear objectives and intervention logic given the timeframes involved;[37]
- Involvement of relevant partners;[38]
- Wider applicability / replicability of project results;[39]
- Credible plans for follow up, including ways of securing future funding.[40]

About half the projects examined through case studies demonstrated the consideration of most of these factors, with a concentration on the second half of the programming

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[36] As an example, one citizens' project brought together municipal authorities from the Baltic states around the mutual need of finding innovative ways of dealing with the economic crisis and economic downturn. This clear rationale ensured buy-in from all partners and good participation in project activities that were spread over the course of a year.

[37] As an example, one remembrance project articulated a set of activities, each targeting different audiences in specific ways, with a view towards reaching decision-makers, young people, researchers and the general public. Project objectives were clearly achievable and linked clearly to the broader aims of the EFCP, as well as a realistic plan for the achievements that could be made during the life of the project.

[38] As an example, one CSO project created a network of NGOs operating in the Baltic region, brought high-level stakeholders (e.g. government ministers) into the project and issued a declaration that ensured the sustainability of the network over subsequent years.

[39] As an example, a remembrance project entailed the planting by children of yellow crocus bulbs in memory of children that died during the Holocaust (with the yellow crocus standing in for the Jewish Star of David). This introduced students to the study of the Holocaust in a low-cost and symbolically powerful way that could easily be replicated and scaled up.

[40] As an example, one town twinning project brought together citizens from several European countries around the issue of climate change, which was affecting all of the towns involved. The involvement of high-profile stakeholders (e.g. MEPs, local leaders) and practicability of lessons learned among participants helped garner enthusiasm for the project and generate concrete follow-up action.

period. This implies that the more strategic applied after the interim evaluation was successful, at least to some extent. Monitoring data and interviews with Commission and EACEA officials also pointed to the dramatic increase in the quality of proposals submitted and requisite increase in selectivity. However, positive and negative examples were to be found across the life of the EFCP.

Regarding the **specific objectives**, case studies for this evaluation and surveys conducted for previous studies such as the Study on measuring the impact of the EFCP in 2013[41], the 2011 Interim Evaluation conducted by Ecorys in 2011[42] and the survey conducted in 2009[43], demonstrate that funded projects were able to make a significant impact on individuals and organisations that were reached directly. While the extent to which those participants were impacted varied according to the quality of projects and the length and intensity of such individuals' involvement, it is notable that, in terms of the **bringing citizens together** objective, the EFCP directly reached about 7m citizens from around the EU during the second half of the programme for which figures were available. These were spread across the different Action strands, with about 40% participating through Active civil society projects, as illustrated in the chart below. The previous studies cited above as well as the case studies conducted for this evaluation showed that participating in such projects does make a difference in terms of the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of the individuals involved.[44] This is only a small proportion of the EU population as a whole, but it is in line with the size and scope of the programme.

Figure 7: Participants per Action strand
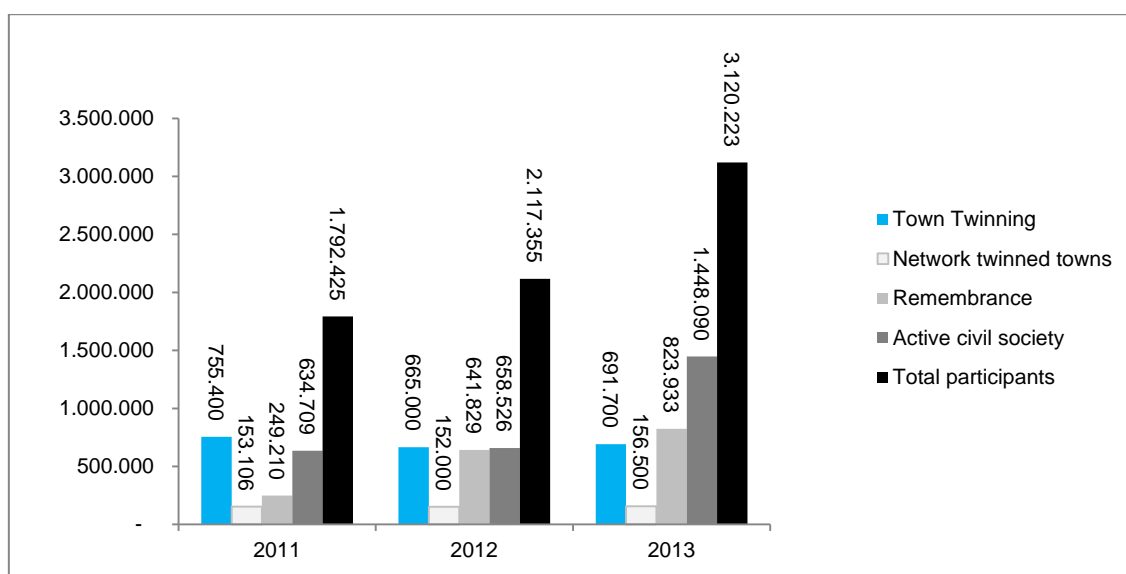
Source: monitoring data provided by EACEA

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[41] Study on measuring the impact of the EFCP, Eureval, http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/final_report_efc_may_2013_eurevalppmi.pdf.

[42] Interim Evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-13: Final Report; Ecorys (2010).

[43] Europe for Citizens Survey 2009: Developing impact indicators for the Europe for Citizens programme and adapting them to the 2009 Annual Management Plan; ECOTEC (2009).

[44] For example, the 2013 Eureval study found that, among participants in funded actions, 92% learned more about people's lives in other European countries, 90% intended to take part in more European events and 78% developed lasting contacts or friendships with people from other EU countries.

Reach can also be conceptualised at a more organisational level, with 25,000 towns and cities and 350 networks of twinned towns participating in funded projects. Some of these led to lasting connections, while others petered out once project funding ended. Moreover, these figures represent only a small proportion of European towns and cities.

Regarding the objective of **fostering cooperation among CSOs**, EACEA data shows that 4,250 CSOs participated in the programme. This is a substantial figure in absolute terms, although it is difficult to estimate the proportion of relevant CSOs that participated. At the same time, the fact that only 18% of applications for CSO projects were successful implies a much larger absorption capacity in the sector than the programme was able to satisfy. Effectiveness also relies on the extent to which the EFCP helped establish lasting networks. The case studies uncovered some exciting examples, whereby partners identified areas of mutual interest and secured funding to pursue them, sometimes as part of larger projects funded through other EU programmes, such as Creative Europe. Less purposeful projects were often unable to transform interesting activities into sustainable networks. Operating grants also played an important role in this area by uniting CSOs under European umbrellas and ensuring long-term collaboration.

Remembrance projects made the largest contribution towards the objective of **preserving the memory of Europe's past**. Over 500 organisations were involved in such projects during the life of the programme, with about 1.7m individuals reached during the years 2011-2013. Case studies and academic research in the field of citizenship showed that these activities were particularly successful when they targeted children, as many of them did (for example, two of the four remembrance projects examined in depth). A considerable proportion of funding under the Together for Europe Action strand, which was not studied in as much detail for the evaluation, also worked towards this objective. However, evidence from the systematic review suggests that one-off events make less of lasting impact on participants than those allowing for more sustained action.

Pinning down the plausible contribution of the programme to its **general objectives** is much more difficult. These consist of higher-level aims, namely giving citizens a role in constructing Europe, developing a sense of European identity, fostering a sense of citizens' ownership of the EU and enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens. In the best circumstances, the case studies showed that individual projects can contribute to all of these objectives for directly involved participants, harness multipliers to increase impact and gain the traction necessary for follow-up work. A criticism is that the EFCP has trouble reaching organisations and individuals that are not already pro-EU. For example, over eight in ten respondents to the survey of unsuccessful applicants expressed positive views of the EU, while less than 1% expressed negative opinions.

More importantly, as the only EU programme that targets citizens directly, the EFCP provides a unique outlet to involve **ordinary citizens** in the EU through a bottom-up approach. Since around 45% of the programme budget is also devoted to CSOs, which could plausibly benefit from EU funding from other sources, it could be argued that the contribution to these objectives could be increased by focusing more on citizen-centric projects, and / or ensuring that CSO-led projects were comprised of strong citizen-centric components. These also accounted for about 45% of funding during the 2007-2013 period. This supports another theme that emerged during the evaluation, namely that the programme was spread too thinly to achieve a critical mass of impact across such a broad spectrum of funding mechanisms, subjects and target groups. This is especially important given external factors like the economic crisis and rising nationalist sentiment. Such factors show that the EFCP faces an uphill battle, in which a narrower focus may be necessary to (at least partly) offset countervailing trends in (at least some) areas.

Conclusion

The evaluation found that individual projects were able to make an contribution to the programme's specific objective in the presence of certain factors. These included a clear rationale with feasible goals, a well-defined and practicable intervention logic, the involvement of relevant partners, wider applicability / replicability of results and credible follow-up plans, especially regarding funding. About half of the 16 projects examined through case studies considered these factors, with a concentration during the second half of the programming period that demonstrated gradual improvement over time. While it was difficult to pin down the programme's impact on its higher-level general objectives, we found that successful projects were able to make a contribution for the directly involved individuals and organisations, in addition to harnessing multipliers to increase impact and laying the ground for further action. However, we also found that the programme had major difficulties reaching beyond pro-EU individuals and organisations. Finally, as a unique outlet for reaching ordinary citizens, the EFCP's impact could be increased by focusing (more) on citizen-centric projects, and / or CSO projects with strong citizen-centric components.

4.2. Contribution to civic participation

EQ 5: In how far has the programme contributed to the objectives of the European citizenship policy, in particular to increase civic participation and to bring citizens closer to EU institutions? In how far has the programme influenced citizenship policy at the national level in the participating countries?
NB: also answers EQ 13 on the programme's influence on policy

The first part of this question follows directly from the one above on the contribution of the EFCP to its general and specific objectives. As explained in section 4.1 above, the programme has made a **substantial contribution** towards engagement with EU *for the individuals and organisations that have participated directly*. A large and growing number of funded projects have also been sufficiently well designed and executed as to reach beyond their direct participants, establish sustainable networks and enact lasting change. It is likely that a greater contribution could have been made if the programme was more focused on the areas where it provides a unique offer, particularly as the only EU programme capable of reaching large numbers of citizens who are not otherwise engaged with the European project.

With regard to making a **policy impact**, here it should be acknowledged that the EFCP faces a difficult balancing act. On the one hand, projects aimed directly at citizens are lauded for their unique ability to reach beyond 'usual suspect' beneficiaries. On the other hand, such projects are relatively unlikely to incorporate the expertise and ambition needed to influence policy. Networks of twinned towns, citizens' projects / support measures and (to some extent) CSO projects provide a way to influence policy while involving citizens, but they have difficulty reaching individuals who are not already actively engaged.

Irrespective of the area of focus, the evaluation also found substantial diversity in the ability of given projects to influence national policy. As described in the general discussion above, **projects that were able to make a policy impact** usually had a clear rationale and understanding of context, coupled with a plausible intervention logic that articulated the steps that were expected during the available timeframe. They also had clear plans for follow-up action; this was especially important given that the policy cycle, even at local level, extends beyond the life of a typical EFCP project. Examples from the case studies of areas where policy impact was achieved (or appeared likely to be achieved) were numerous and included youth / local government dialogue, holocaust education (through e.g. changes to school curricula) and cross-

border cooperation (through e.g. establishing fora for the discussion of border disputes).

Additionally, operating grants and the structured dialogue made a considerable (if unquantifiable) contribution to policy-making at the EU level. This stemmed from strengthening the presence of independent civil society voices in EU debates, the carrying out of relevant research and on-going discussions with the Commission and other institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the programme clearly made a contribution towards engagement for the EU for directly involved individuals and organisations, a greater difference could have been made by focusing more on the areas where the EFCP's offer is unique. This includes especially the EFCP's ability to reach large numbers of ordinary citizens. The policy impact of the programme as a whole was not possible to measure, but the evaluation found that individual projects were able to make an impact under certain conditions. Above all, these included clear plans for follow-up action that took into account the relatively short project life in comparison with the policy cycle. At EU level, operating grants and the structured dialogue fed into policy-making, through strengthening the voice of civil society in EU debates, carrying out relevant research and participating in discussions with various institutions.

4.3. Impact on participating organisations

EQ 6: How does the programme influence the town twinning movement, European civil society organisations, think-tanks and remembrance organisations directly participating in the programme?

The programme aimed to contribute to the development of the town twinning movement, CSOs, think tanks and remembrance organisations in terms of issues like fostering lasting networks, cultivating expertise and increasing the links between activities of the organisations involved with policy. Taking these in turn:

Town twinning

The previous evaluation found that the programme was helping to advance the town twinning movement by encouraging potential beneficiaries to think in more thematic, policy-related ways. The current evaluation shows that this trend has continued. While much of the exchange at twinning meetings is still of the cultural sort, annual programming priorities have given them some focus. The increasing competition for grants (only 21% of applicants were selected in 2013) has led to a degree of innovation, with more multilateral grants and events that consider the wider context to incorporate key issues like the EU role in combatting climate change or the impact of EU membership. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the two town twinning projects selected (at random) for case studies, scored highly for their consideration of context and were assessed as having achieved some concrete results despite their brevity (both projects lasted a matter of days). More precisely, one of these projects brought together communities from Scotland, France and Germany that all faced similar challenges from climate change, while the other allowed citizens from a country that had recently joined the EU (Hungary) to share experiences with individuals with similar profiles in a country that was about to accede to EU membership (Croatia).

Networks of twinned towns involve much bigger grants and last much longer than town twinning projects, calling for a requisitely higher degree of organisation. This is innovative in itself, providing participating towns with an opportunity to forge lasting links, produce substantial outputs and get involved with policy-making processes. The two networks examined in depth for the case studies were both grounded in relevant theories and produced some tangible results, but appeared unlikely to maintain organisational links or make a wider impact, mainly due to the lack of concrete follow-up plans or broader applicability. Further investigation would be needed to understand the dynamics at play, particularly whether other networks of twinned towns demonstrated greater success and due to what factors.

European CSOs

The programme targeted CSOs through both operating grants and project funding. With regard to the former, interviews with designated beneficiaries[45] showed that the EFCP reached a range of EU-focused organisations that pursued active citizenship in a variety of different ways. This contributed to continued attention to particularly relevant areas and the presence of independent voices during important policy debates. It also supported these organisations to cultivate considerable expertise that would have been difficult to fund from other sources. While these are all positive findings, the interviews also showed a significant degree of dependence among beneficiaries. After receiving funding for so long, it was far from clear that these organisations would have the capacity to identify other sources in the short- to medium-term.

The dynamics for CSOs receiving project funding were completely different. The projects of more limited duration encouraged CSOs to form partnerships with counterparts in other Member States to pursue common challenges. Evidence suggests that participating in the programme allowed partners to build their capacity and international experience, learn from each other and, in some cases, form sustainable networks. While the existence of organisations did not depend on the EFCP funding, case study suggested that not all networks continued to operate after funding ended.

Remembrance organisations

Remembrance gained increasing prominence during the life of the programme as evidenced by the increase of its share of programme funding from 5.9% in 2007 to 14.1% in 2013[46] and stood out as the only Action for which funding applications were not required to involve partners from multiple Member States. The sensitive nature of projects relating the holocaust and genocide implies a natural fit for an impartial funder, such as the Commission, can add value by encouraging free exchange and the consideration of others' points of view. Of the projects that we looked at for case studies, two were highly innovative, produced tangible results and were either easily replicable or described credible plans for follow-up. Provided that the funding for such

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[45] Nine organisations were designated beneficiaries for the years 2007-2009, then applied for funding through open calls for proposals.

[46] EACEA Programme Results 2007 – 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/bilan_en_22102014_en.pdf

projects would be unavailable from other sources in a similar form, it can be assumed that the contribution to the capacity of remembrance organisations is substantial.

Conclusion

The EFCP was able to influence the town twinning movement, European CSOs and remembrance organisations in various ways. Regarding town twinning, the programme has encouraged potential beneficiaries to think in more thematic, policy-related ways, with a focus on annual programming priorities and important contextual issues that go beyond 'mere' cultural exchange. Networks of twinned towns have increased the organisational sophistication of beneficiaries due to their relatively large grants and long duration, though we did not identify evidence to support the longer-term impacts of such projects. With regard to CSO projects, operating grants helped keep attention on particularly relevant issues, ensure independent voices for EU-level debates and cultivate expertise, though the long-term nature of the funding also created considerable dependence among beneficiaries. CSO projects were completely different and encouraged CSOs to form partnerships with counterparts in other Member States, building their capacity and international experience and, in some cases, forming sustainable networks. Remembrance organisations benefited from the impartial nature of a funder such as the Commission, which facilitated the free exchange of ideas on sensitive topics and encouraged innovative practices to unite Europeans around potentially difficult subjects.

4.4. Balance of participation

EQ 7: Does participation in the programme appear satisfactory in terms of the balance between new organisations and those which have received support previously, as well as between the different EU MS?

In order to assess the geographical representativeness of the programme, we looked at the spread of projects across participating countries, and then controlled for population by dividing by the square root of population.[47] The chart below depicts the results of this analysis, revealing among other things that some Member States participate much more (or less) than would be expected, other things being equal.

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[47] Since the civil society landscape of a given country differs according to its size (in particular, smaller countries are likely to have more CSOs and other relevant actors per capita than larger ones), the natural (or optimal) level of participation in the EFCP is also likely to vary. This is to say that, other things being equal, the natural tendency would be for smaller countries to also participate more in the programme. In order to control for this natural level of variation, it is useful to apply a 'degressively proportional' analysis (like that used for calculating the number of MEPs per MS) that holds up participation in the programme against the square root of population rather than using per capita terms. This allows for a more meaningful comparison between countries of vastly differing sizes.

Figure 8: Geographical spread of EFCP projects, by square root of population
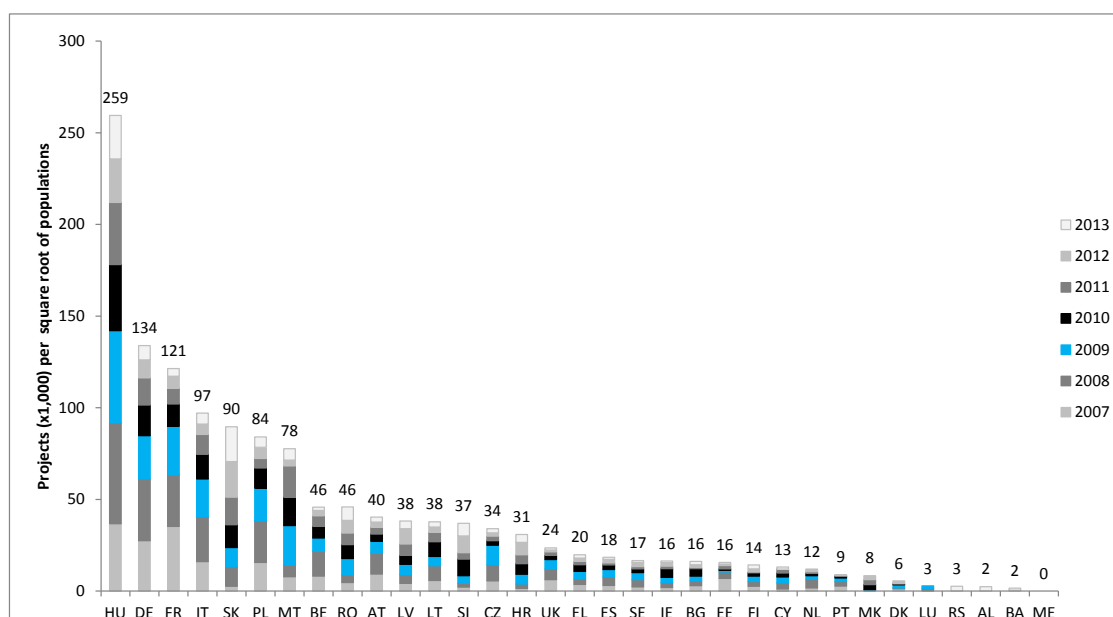
Source: Coffey analysis of EACEA monitoring data

Organisations from Hungary stand out for having led far more projects than their counterparts from any other country, in absolute and relative terms. Germany, France, Italy, Slovakia, Poland and Malta also participated more than would be expected. After these countries was a substantial drop, with countries like Luxembourg, Denmark, Portugal and the Netherlands participating very little.

This inequitable distribution would not be intrinsically unsatisfactory if it reflected greater needs, such as the unavailability of other sources of funding, in certain countries. Such a case could plausibly be made for a country like Hungary. However, monitoring data shows relative parity between countries in terms of the amount of project applications submitted, with some exceptions. This implies that the major difference was in acceptance rates, and indeed these varied substantially. Four countries, namely Sweden, Germany, Poland and Malta had funding awarded for over 40% of their applications, whereas for 10 countries that were in the EU during the programme, the figure was 27% or less.[48]

During a focus group with Europe for Citizen Contact Points, it was suggested that such discrepancies relate to difficulties faced by organisations who had not received funding previously. While many organisations were eligible (indeed, fewer than 1% of applications were deemed ineligible), the specificities of EU programming language and experience required to assemble strong applications led to repeat successes (or failures).

Conclusion

The evaluation found that the balance of participation in the programme was far from balanced. Organisations from Hungary stood out for having led more projects than their counterparts in other countries. Germany, France, Italy, Slovakia, Poland and Malta also participated more than one would expect given their population, while some

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[48] These were Portugal Spain, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovenia.

countries played very little role in the programme. Moreover, these disparities persisted despite numbers of applications that were mostly proportionate to the population of given countries. The main difference was in acceptance rates, which ranged from over 40% to less than 27%. Europe for Citizens Contact Points suggested at a focus group that this reflected difficulties for the programme in reaching organisations that did not already have substantial experience with the European institutions.

5. EFFICIENCY

Ideally, our assessment of the EFCP's efficiency would allow us to hold up its costs against quantifiable benefits relating to higher-level objectives relating to citizens' engagement with the EU and active citizenship. Such conditions do not apply to the ECFP (and would be difficult to apply to any initiative dealing with an issue as broad as citizenship). Instead, we can examine the programme's cost drivers, itemise them against measurable benefits where possible, make some statements about the value for money of (various aspects of) the EFCP and identify areas for improvement.

Funding mechanisms

As with most spending programmes, disbursement for various types of projects and grants was by far the EFCP's biggest cost driver. This accounted for around 90% of the programme budget. The figure below shows how this was spread across the main types of funding mechanisms (over the second half of the programme for which comprehensive data was available). As the chart illustrates, the two types of twinning projects (citizens meetings and networks of twinned towns) account for the largest share (41%) of funding (though it decreased year-on-year), while about 30% of funding was dedicated to operating grants.

Figure 9: Spread of EFCP funding across projects
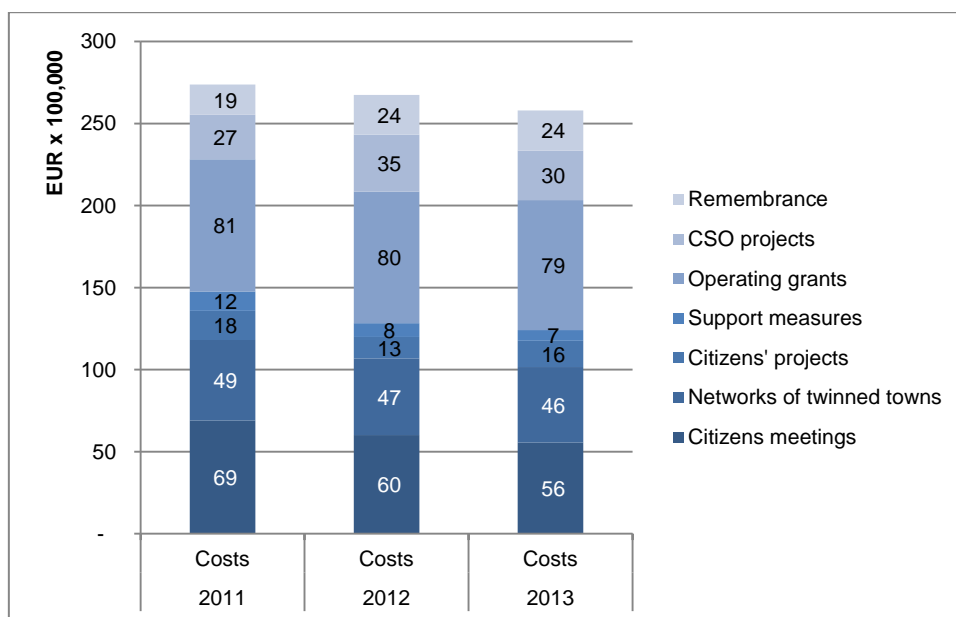

Source: EACEA monitoring data

Looking at the major costs of the programme in relative terms helps us to identify where the **'battle' for value for money** can be won or lost. Based on the chart, it seems that our priority should be to understand whether the various types of operating grants and twinning projects (included both Citizens meetings and Networks of twinned towns) achieved their benefits cost effectively.

For the **operating grants**, 161 projects were funded during the second half of the programme, with an average value of about EUR 150,000. There was little change over time. While the impacts of such funding are hard to quantify (and difficult to benchmark), beneficiaries argued that the operating grants were invaluable. They pointed to benefits such as giving civil society a voice at European level, ensuring the independence of CSOs, providing a bridge between citizens and EU policy makers and allowing for organisational capacity building and the existence of organisations that

would expressed difficulty securing other sources of funding. Importantly, the transition towards (competitive) calls for proposals tendering process was seen to increase the pressure on beneficiaries to use programme funding effectively.

Town twinning meetings and networks of twinned towns were studied in more depth through a limited sample of case studies, two for each project type. . While the small sample only provides anecdotal evidence, we found that purposeful and well-managed projects were able to make a real difference to directly involved participants, many of whom were otherwise unlikely to engage with the EU. While the quantitative benefits are harder to pin down, their targeting of mass audiences and attempts to monitor reach provide some data for us to examine and hold up against costs. The chart below pitches the cost per participant of the four types of projects targeting ordinary citizens, namely town twinning meetings, networks of twinned towns, CSO projects and remembrance projects.[49] It shows that CSO and remembrance projects reached audiences relatively cheaply (at EUR 3 and EUR 4 per participant, respectively). For twinning meetings, the cost per participant was more than twice as high, while exponentially larger costs were incurred to reach individuals through the networks of twinned towns mechanism.

Figure 10: Number of participants compared with costs per participant, 2011-2013
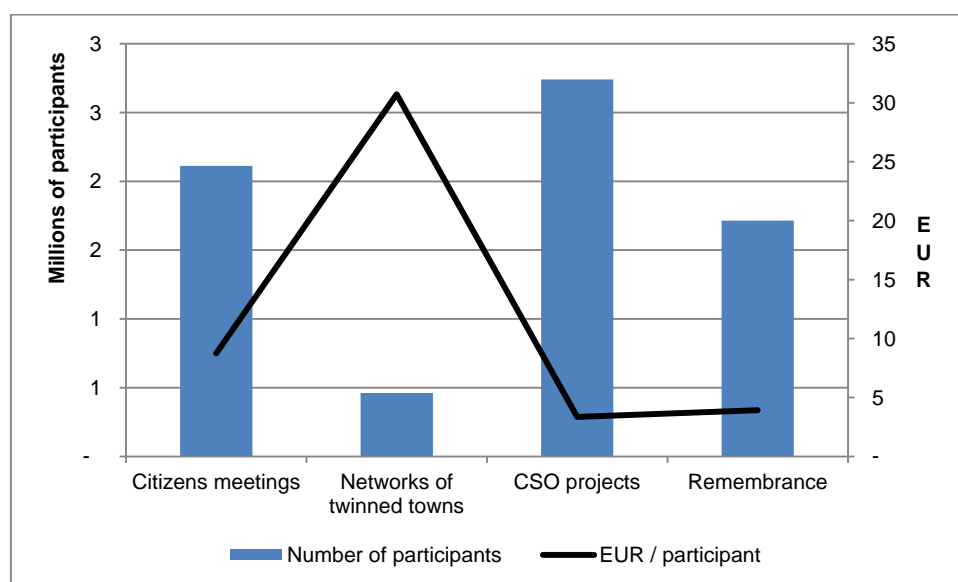
Source: Annual activity reports provided by EACEA

This does not imply that CSO projects are relatively more cost effective, or that a greater share of funding should be directed towards them. The chart is crude in that it ignores all benefits not linked to participation, like policy impact. It also does not **distinguish between 'reached individuals'** who likely differ profoundly. For example, networks of twinned towns may have reached strategically important audiences (like citizens normally disengaged from the EU) or made a relatively large difference to the individuals who were involved. The data merely allows such issues to be considered and weighed when making decisions about how to allocate scarce resources. If (as shown in the case studies), networks of twinned towns can generate

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[49] Unfortunately, segmented data was not available to differentiate between different 'participants' and the extent to which they were reached and potentially impacted by EFCP projects. Clearly, an individual participating in a twinning meeting abroad would be more truly reached than someone who read a news article about a CSO project (to give but one example). For the final report, it will be important to try to get a better idea of how many individuals truly participated in given projects.

sustainable networks between hard-to-reach individuals, the large cost per participant could be easily justified.

Leading from this, the most obvious way to increase the cost effectiveness of the programme would be to **increase the effectiveness of funded projects**. The previous section identified numerous factors whose presence was linked to successful projects, but that were often not in place. These include such factors as clear rationale and purpose, links with policy and clear plans for follow-up action. Taking steps to ensure their presence across a greater proportion of projects could plausibly improve cost-effectiveness as much or more than efforts to cut costs.

It is also important to consider the extent to which the **strategic focus** of the programme allowed for maximum impact. The Effectiveness section argued that trends on Euroscepticism and disengagement from the EU were of such a scale that a programme the size of the ECFP would have trouble achieving a critical mass of impact. The survey of unsuccessful applicants and interviews with various stakeholders corroborated this, pointing to the inadequacy of the programme budget and unmet demands for funding. The ability to add value above what is provided through other initiatives, important in any circumstances, attains vital importance in this context.

Based on the stakeholder interviews and benchmarking analysis, part of the **unique offer** of the EFCP lies in its ability to fund projects that revolve around ordinary citizens.. Despite this, only around 50% of the programme's operational budget was aimed at Action strand 1, i.e. citizens' meetings, networks of twinned towns, citizens' projects and support measures. This suggests that the cost effectiveness of the programme would be increased by directing a larger proportion of available funding towards such projects, or towards ensuring that funding for CSOs involved citizens directly.

Programme management

While only accounting for around 10% of the EFCP's budget, programme management is an important component of efficiency. While the evaluation did not focus on administrative performance, our limited examination of it yielded broadly positive findings. Various types of stakeholders lauded the split in functions between DG COMM and EACEA, with on describing the EFCP as a 'machine that works well'. The online application process, which had only recently been put in place, was singled out by interviewees as a particularly positive development. Even unsuccessful applicants to the programme were favourable towards the application and selection processes, expressing positive views towards its clarity and transparency, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 11: Respondents' satisfaction with the application and selection process
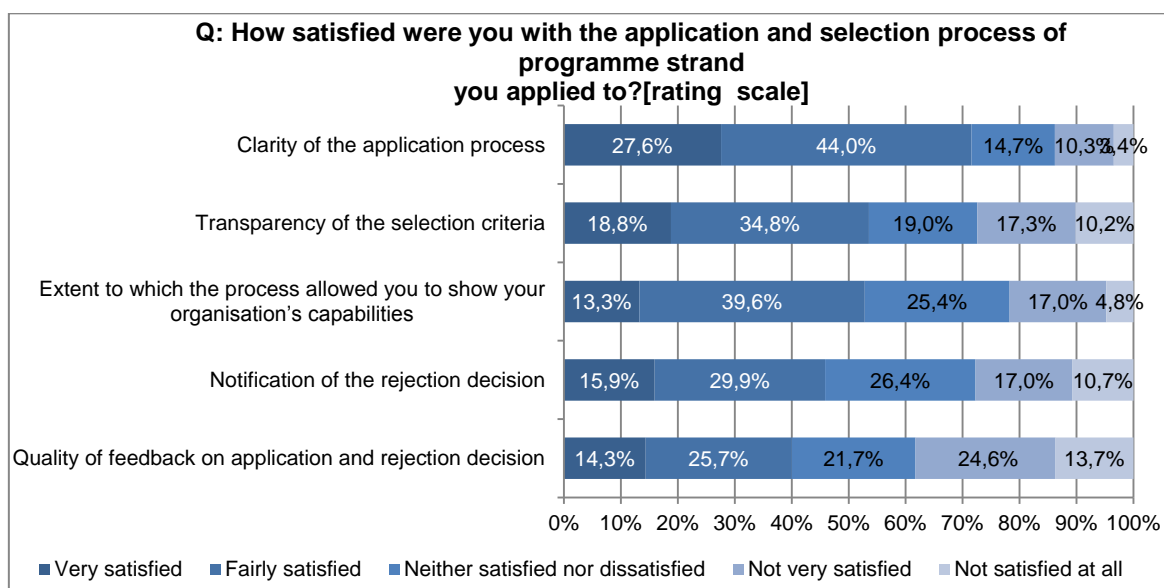
n=466

There was some criticism of programme management, relating to such issues as the transparency of award criteria, difficulty obtaining feedback and the amount of time needed for EACEA to deal with various requests. While performance in such matters can always be improved, the feedback received is typical for EU spending programmes and partly reflects inevitable frustration with the need to balance expediency with accountability.

In terms of suggestions to improve programme management, there appeared to be some scope to increase the involvement of the European Contact Points. Optimally, ECPs would connect the Commission / EACEA to applicants / grantees, but interviews and a focus group with ECPs implied that lines of communication were less open than might be expected. Some interviewees also felt that the grants provided through the programme did not appear to consider substantially differing costs across countries, and that this partly led to the low interest experienced in some high-income Member States, such as Sweden.

5.1. Cost effectiveness of Programme activities

EQ 8: How efficient were the activities undertaken in the framework of the actions and measures of the EFCP to reach the results at European and national level?

The diversity and complexity of the EFCP does not allow for simple comparisons between the cost-effectiveness of the various Action strands. At the same time, it is worth noting (as illustrated above) that costs per participant differed considerably between Action strands, with CSO projects and remembrance projects reaching greater numbers of people for less funding than town twinning meetings or (in particular) networks of twinned towns.

In addition, the case studies showed that the effectiveness (and requisite cost-effectiveness) of individual projects varied; projects displaying the key success factors outlined in section 4.1 provided better value for money than those lacking them. The evaluation also noted the potential for a greater proportion of the budget to be

allocated towards citizen-led projects, and / or that CSO-led projects could be structured as to ensure the direct involvement of citizens.

Turning to the achievements at European and national levels, the scale of the problems falling within the programme's scope is immense, particularly in light of its small budget and the demographic, social and cultural factors affecting citizenship and civic engagement. Leading from this, a greater strategic focus on the target audiences, types of actions and guidance for applicants / beneficiaries would increase the ability of the EFCP to provide value for money.

Conclusion

While simple comparisons between the cost-effectiveness of the various Action strands were not possible, costs per participant varied considerably between them. CSO projects and remembrance projects reached greater numbers of people for less funding than town twinning meetings or networks of twinned towns. The effectiveness (and requisite cost-effectiveness) of projects depended on the presence (or absence) of key success factors (discussed above) that determined the success of individual projects. More widely, the scale of the problems within the programme's scope and small budget meant that a tighter focus on certain audiences and actions could have increased the ability of the EFCP to provide value for money.
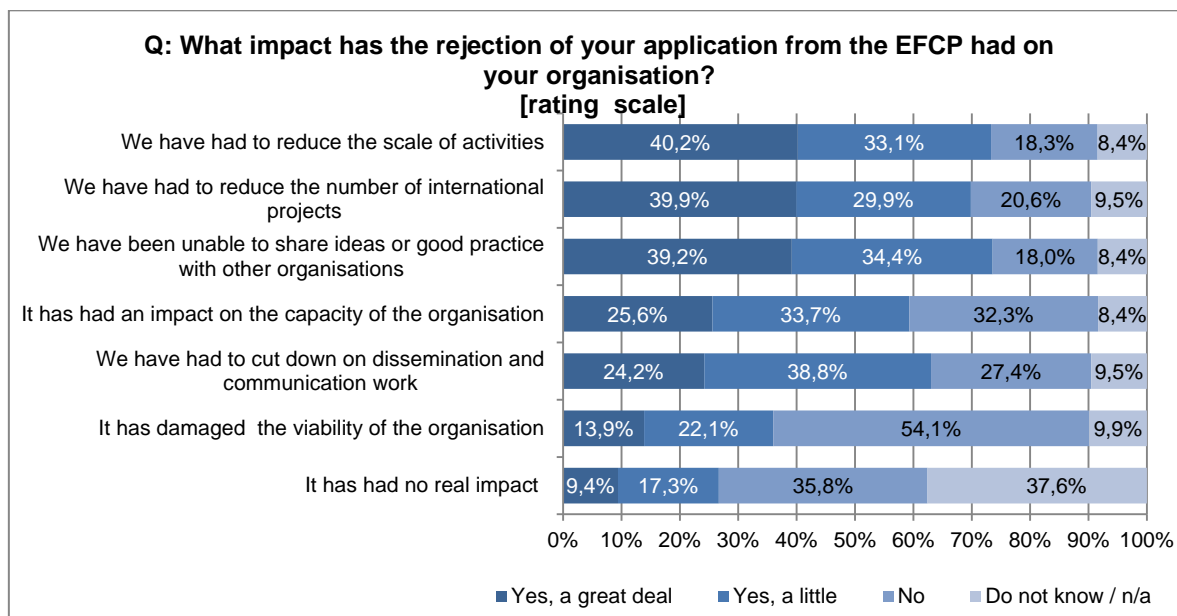
5.2. Suitability of the Programme budget

EQ 9: Was the size of the budget for the programme appropriate and proportional to what the programme was set to achieve?

Numerous sources of evidence suggest that the budget and scope of the programme are mismatched, calling either for an increase in the former or a narrowing of the latter. Civic engagement and citizenship are very broad topics that are affected by a wide range of factors against which a EUR 215m budget appears insignificant. The relative flexibility and ambitiousness of the programme has allowed it to touch on a range of relevant issues, but spread too thinly to achieve a lasting impact in many of them. Interviewees representing various organisations and interests were unanimous in echoing this sentiment.

It was also clear from the monitoring data, which showed persistently fierce competition for funding despite growing application quality. This increasing selectivity was consistent across all Action strands (see figure 8 in section 4), with less than 15% of applications being awarded funding by 2013. The very low level of ineligible applications (typically less than 1%) also highlight the impossibility of satisfying interest in a programme whose parameters are so flexibly and broadly defined. This risks alienating potential beneficiaries and driving them away from the EU. As shown in the chart below, taken from the survey of unsuccessful applicants, the vast majority of respondents had to scale back their activities after failing to receive EFCP funding. A more narrowly defined programme would be able (potentially) to meet the expectations of a greater proportion of applicants while targeting issues and audiences where the EFCP (rather than EU funding more generally) can add the most value.

Figure 12: Organisational impact of rejection of application from the EFCP

Q: What impact has the rejection of your application from the EFCP had on your organisation?
[rating scale]

	Yes, a great deal	Yes, a little	No	Do not know / n/a
We have had to reduce the scale of activities	40,2%	33,1%	18,3%	8,4%
We have had to reduce the number of international projects	39,9%	29,9%	20,6%	9,5%
We have been unable to share ideas or good practice with other organisations	39,2%	34,4%	18,0%	8,4%
It has had an impact on the capacity of the organisation	25,6%	33,7%	32,3%	8,4%
We have had to cut down on dissemination and communication work	24,2%	38,8%	27,4%	9,5%
It has damaged the viability of the organisation	13,9%	22,1%	54,1%	9,9%
It has had no real impact	9,4%	17,3%	35,8%	37,6%

n= 447

Conclusion

The budget and scope of the programme were severely mismatched, calling for either an increase in the former or a narrowing of the latter. Civic engagement and citizenship are very broad topics that are affected by a wide range of factors against which a EUR 215m budget appears insignificant. This was reflected in the fierce competition for funding, despite application quality that continuously increased throughout the life of the programme.
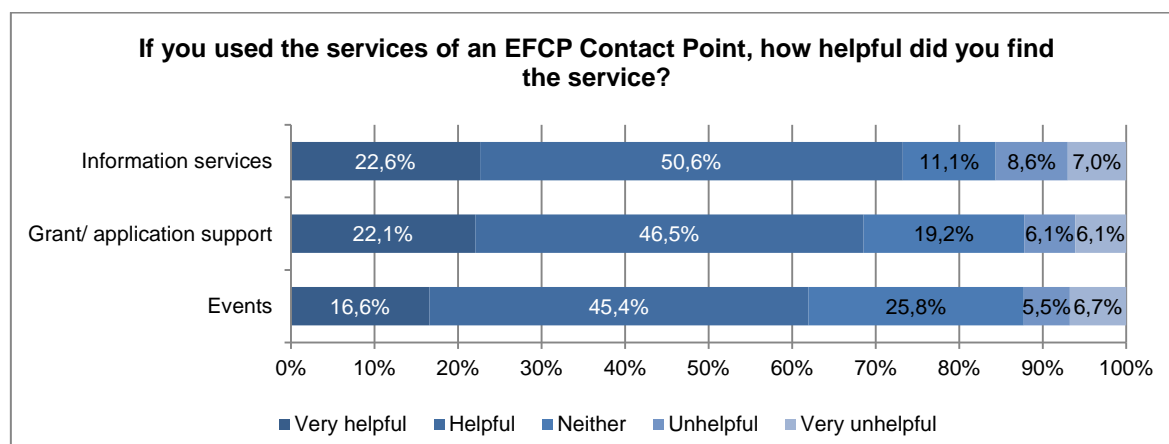
5.3. Role of the Europe for Citizens Contact Points

EQ 10: To what extent did the Europe for Citizens Contact Points contribute to the efficient implementation of the programme?

ECPs are staff working for either national authorities or other designated organisations that dedicate a proportion of their time to spreading awareness of the programme and assisting potential applicants with their efforts to apply for EFCP funding. While Member States are not required to host an ECP, their costs are split between the Commission and Member States and their number has steadily grown, reaching 22 by the end of the programming period. ECPs can support the efficient implementation of the programme in several ways, all of which amount to them acting as a kind of bridge between the Commission / EACEA and organisations that are interested in the programme. For example, by alerting relevant organisations to the existence of the programme, they can increase the proportion of high quality applications. In a similar vein, ECPs can 'translate' the Commission's programmatic language, so that application requirements are clear. By directly helping individual potential beneficiaries with their applications, ECPs can increase application quality directly, increasing the chances of selection.

While the ECPs were not a major focus of the current exercise, we found that since the interim evaluation they have become more established and effective. For example, the survey of unsuccessful applicants showed that over half of respondents had made use

of at least one of the services offered by ECPs. These respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of the various services on offer. While all three services were rated favourably, information services, such as websites and brochures, were considered helpful by the largest proportion (nearly 75%), followed by grant / application support (about 69%). Events received fewer favourable responses and more 'don't know' responses, implying that many unsuccessful applicants were either unaware of such events or unable to attend them. Since attendance at events is necessarily limited by location, it is worth considering whether resources could be more usefully directed towards activities open to a larger share of potential applicants, particularly those based outside of the capital cities where such events typically took place.

Figure 13: Usefulness of EFCP contact point services

n=243 (former applicants having used Europe for Citizens Contact Points

A focus group with ECPs showed that their roles, and potentially effectiveness, could vary considerably depending on the individuals involved and the engagement with the programme. For example, some ECPs were responsible for several EU programmes, allowing them to assess the circumstances of potential applicants and steer them towards the most appropriate programme. Anecdotal evidence from the focus group with ECPs suggests that this setup allowed potential applicants to benefit from their ECP's broad understanding of how EU programmes work. Other ECPs focused mainly on the EFCP.

This difference in working arrangements stemmed partly from the size of the grant provided by the Commission to establish and maintain ECPs; in low cost-countries, this covered a large proportion of ECP salaries, but went less far in high-cost ones. It also appeared that ECPs from countries whose applicants were relatively successful were enthusiastic in their efforts to attract interest in the programme. In addition, some ECPs also felt that they were not provided with sufficient information about funding decisions to provide applicants with useful guidance, especially given the competitiveness of the programme.

Conclusion

ECPs are meant to act as a kind of bridge between the Commission / EACEA and organisations that are interested in the programme. We found that, since the interim evaluation in 2011, ECPs have become more established and effective. This was evident from the survey of unsuccessful applicants, which revealed generally positive views, particularly towards information services and grant / application support. Events, whose attendance is necessarily limited by location, were able to reach smaller proportions of potential applicants, implying that resources might be more usefully directed towards activities reaching a large share. There were also considerable

differences between ECPs, whose working conditions and responsibilities varied; some were responsible for several EU programmes whereas others focused mainly on the EFCP. This depended partly on the size of the grant provided by the Commission to national organisations to establish and maintain ECPs, which went further in some countries than in others. ECPs from countries whose applicants had been successful also seemed to promote the programme with a level of enthusiasm that was not achieved elsewhere. Finally, questions were raised about whether more information on funding decisions would help ECPs provide better guidance to applicants.

5.4. Role of the structured dialogue

EQ 11: To what extent did the structured dialogue contribute to achieving the objectives of the programme?

Conclusion

The structured dialogue with civil society provides a forum for CSOs to engage with the Commission on a regular basis. This allows them to ensure their views are taken into account in the formulation and implementation of citizenship policy. For the purposes of this programme, the dialogue helps the Commission align priorities and activities of the EFCP with other initiatives and prevailing trends. The idea is that this should promote synergies and complementarity, and thereby improve the efficiency of the programme.

The evaluation found that the structured dialogue did contribute to the efficiency of the programme, as well as helping it to recognise trends 'on the ground' and adjust priorities accordingly. This was based on interviews with key stakeholders, who listed several benefits of the dialogue, including its ability to incorporate stakeholders into the decision-making process, keep them in touch with the Commission and EACEA, allow civil society to feed into the annual work programme and implement the European Years. Moreover, the dialogue was used by other programmes, namely the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme, to maintain ties with civil society in the absence their own such forum.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

For evaluation purposes, sustainability refers to the lasting benefits of the programme and the extent to which they are dependent on continued funding. These issues are discussed in the subsections below. Broadly speaking, as argued in the ensuing paragraphs and subsections, we found that the actions funded through the programme were able to influence the attitudes and perceptions of participants in a sustainable way. At higher levels, the evidence was mixed. While the more successful projects led to lasting networks that were able to secure funding for future collaboration, others petered out once EFCP ended. Regardless of Action strand or subject matter, it appears that this was the case for around half of projects, though the qualitative nature of the evidence renders extrapolations fraught and unreliable.

Similarly, certain high quality projects appeared capable of making and exploiting policy links, but such instances were rare. A greater case for policy impact can be made for other aspects of the programme, such as operating grants for EU-level think tanks and CSOs, as well as the structured dialogue, all of which dealt more directly with policy-making processes. While these ensured that CSOs' views were taken into account during policy-making, examples regarding the extent of this influence were thin on the ground.

6.1. Sustainability of Programme outcomes

EQ 12: To what extent has the EFCP been successful in delivering sustainable outcomes in relation to its objectives?

Conclusion

As discussed in section 4.1 on effectiveness, the programme made a real, if unquantifiable, contribution to its objectives. In the presence of key success factors, particularly credible plans for follow-up action, individual projects led to sustainable outcomes at the local and organisational levels. With regard to the higher-level objectives, successful projects were able to foster lasting cooperation among CSOs and help preserve the memory of Europe's past. Contributions relating to EU integration and active citizenship were harder to pin down beyond the level of specific projects and participants, especially given overarching trends relating to the economic crisis and nationalist sentiment.

6.2. Dissemination of Programme results

EQ 14: To what extent have the results of the programme been properly disseminated to stakeholders and the general public?

Conclusion

Through a beneficiary survey, the previous evaluation found that the vast majority of grantees claimed to use such tools as publications, media work, websites and events to disseminate the results of their activities. Given the requirement for dissemination plans among all funded projects, it is not surprising that all 16 case studies conducted

for the present evaluation showed a similar commitment to dissemination efforts. However, the case studies also revealed vast discrepancies in the quality and appropriateness of communication plans. Some projects tailored materials and messages to specific audiences, linked communication to wider objectives and monitored results. Other projects described the production of various brochures and other materials without stipulating how they would be used or by whom, or what broader purpose would be served. As with the more general comments on success factors contained in the section on effectiveness, dissemination planning is an area where applicants / beneficiaries should be encouraged to be purposeful and outcome-focused.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section draws conclusions for the main criteria around which the evaluation was structured, followed by a series of (preliminary) recommendations that should be addressed during the 2014-2020 iteration of the programme. They will be discussed, refined and built on in discussion with the evaluation steering group.

7.1. Overall conclusions

Relevance

The EFCP aimed to engage citizens with the EU, develop a sense of European identify, foster a sense of ownership of the EU and enhance mutual tolerance and understanding. The evaluation served to confirm the relevance of the programme's objectives and activities. Prevailing conditions (e.g. declining favourability towards the EU and increased Euroscepticism, diversion of resources towards initiatives focused on the economy) created a need for a platform for civic participation related to the EU that the EFCP could potentially fulfil. That the level of interest in the programme, as well as the quality of applications for participation, progressively increased indicates a good match between the programme and target groups.

In terms of complementarity with other initiatives, the EFCP was sufficiently distinct from other programmes in terms of its scope, objectives, activities and target groups to provide a complementary offering. Even those initiatives that were the closest to the EFCP, such as the Youth in Action programme, focused on different audiences, while the EFCP was unique in bringing together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities, and in supporting town twinning and remembrance activities. At the same time, the evaluation also uncovered the potential for further synergies and scope to reduce overlap. This highlighted the importance of the (sometimes-insufficient) communication between DGs; where there was evidence of good communication (e.g. the European Years and Fundamental Rights programme), then value was demonstrated through institutional learning and the sharing of good practices. Where discussion was more limited (e.g. between the EFCP and Youth in Action and Jean Monnet programmes), such opportunities were missed.

Finally, an examination of the EU added value of the programme showed that it enabled activities that could not have been funded elsewhere, in addition to promoting the spread of best practices. In some cases, the evaluation found evidence of such practices actually being implemented, and of being scaled up across wider groups of countries and stakeholders. However, many projects also produced relatively little evidence to show whether and to what extent shared practices were actually applied in practical terms. Partly this was due to the short timescales of projects, as well as the evaluation's reliance on reports compiled shortly after individual projects were completed (before best practices could have been implemented). It can also be attributed to the lack of concrete plans for follow-up. Considering the complexity of tailoring given practices to new contexts and the relatively short timeframe of individual projects, follow-up action is vital for this aspect of EU added value to be achieved.

Effectiveness

The evaluation found that they types of projects funded through the EFCP could potentially make an impact in numerous ways, depending on their particular mechanisms, target groups and methods. High potential impact tended to draw on factors such as involving children and hard to reach groups, establishing sustainable

networks and linking to policy-making. While the projects examined in depth for case studies were generally implemented and delivered successfully, the presence of these factors varied significantly among individual projects.

In general, meaningful results were achieved for projects that were grounded in a clear rationale, with some feasible change in the medium-term. Also crucial were a well-delineated scope and set of objectives, a plausible intervention logic and the involvement of relevant partners. Given the short timeframe for EFCP projects in comparison to the sustained engagement needed for to effect change in a complex area like civic engagement, wider applicability / replicability of project outputs and credible plans for follow-up efforts (including funding) were of vital importance. Examples drawn from the case studies show how the presence or absence of these factors influenced the ability of projects to produce lasting results. In line with the more strategic approach pursued during the second half of the programme (as reflected in the annual priorities), there is some evidence to suggest that these factors were concentrated among the projects selected and implemented during that time. However, other examples demonstrated that even relevant and well-implemented projects sometimes failed to generate tangible outcomes in the absence of clear follow-up plans.

At a higher level, for the programme to maximise its impact at a wider level, it would need to leverage its relatively small budget, identifying specific areas where it can add the most value and complementing larger initiatives. The evidence collected for the evaluation suggests that improvements would be possible in each of these areas. The programme's relatively small budget is spread across a vast spectrum of subject areas and funding mechanisms, creating a risk that the programme's achievements will be diluted in a sea of other factors and initiatives. The benchmarking analysis conducted for the evaluation showed that the EFCP's offer was unique in some areas, namely where it provided a first entry point for ordinary citizens to discuss and engage with the EU and where it brought together CSOs and local authorities to develop citizenship activities. Town twinning and remembrance activities were also found to be areas of focus specific to the EFCP. It could be argued that the programme's potential impact would be greater if it consolidated its focus on these areas, leaving the remaining issues such as youth and values of intercultural dialogue to be respectively covered by other programmes like Youth in Action and the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship that already address them to a large extent.

Similarly, as the only EU programme that targets citizens directly, the EFCP provides a unique outlet to involve ordinary citizens in the EU through a bottom-up approach. Since around 45% of the programme budget is also devoted to CSOs, which could plausibly benefit from EU funding from other sources, it could be argued that the contribution to these objectives could be increased by focusing more on citizen-centric projects, and / or ensuring that CSO-led projects were comprised of strong citizen-centric components.

Efficiency

The diversity and complexity of the EFCP does not allow for simple comparisons between the cost-effectiveness of the various Action strands. At the same time, it is worth noting (as illustrated above) that costs per participant varied considerably between Action strands, with CSO projects and remembrance projects reaching greater numbers of people for less funding than town twinning meetings or (in particular) networks of twinned towns.

In addition, the case studies showed that the effectiveness (and requisite cost-effectiveness) of individual projects varied; projects displaying the key success factors outlined above provided better value for money than those lacking them. The

evaluation also noted the potential for a greater proportion of the budget to be allocated towards citizen-led projects, and / or that CSO-led projects could be structured as to ensure the direct involvement of citizens.

Turning to the achievements at European and national levels, the scale of the problems falling within the programme's scope is immense, particularly in light of its relatively small (EUR 215m for seven years) budget and the myriad demographic, social and cultural factors affecting citizenship and civic engagement. Leading from this, a greater strategic focus on the target audiences, types of actions and guidance for applicants / beneficiaries would increase the ability of the EFCP to provide value for money. The mismatch between the programme's budget and ambition was also clear from the monitoring data, which should persistently fierce competition for funding despite growing application quality.

Sustainability

The programme made a real, if unquantifiable, contribution to its objectives. In the presence of key success factors, particularly credible plans for follow-up action, individual projects led to sustainable outcomes at the local and organisational levels. With regard to the higher-level objectives, successful projects were able to foster lasting cooperation among CSOs and help preserve the memory of Europe's past. Contributions relating to EU integration and active citizenship were harder to pin down beyond the level of specific projects and participants, especially given overarching trends relating to the economic crisis and nationalist sentiment.

7.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations provides evidence-based suggestions for improving the programme during the 2014-2020 funding period.

1. **Focus and scope**: the evaluation found that the one of the distinguishing features of the EFCP is its unique ability to reach ordinary citizens. Despite this, much of its budget is devoted to activities redolent of more traditional spending programmes. Moreover, the broad scope of the programme dilutes its already limited ability to make a lasting impact in an extremely complex and crowded environment. The next review of the EFCP's scope should therefore narrow it so the programme can deploy its limited funding more strategically and focus on citizen-centric activities, either through boosting the proportion of the budget for Action strand 1-type activities or taking steps to ensure funding aimed at CSOs involves citizens directly.

2. **Draw more on theory**: the systematic review found that projects addressing certain types of activities, target groups and themes, particularly young people, civic education, social inequality and tolerance towards and of migrant groups are more likely to generate impacts on civic engagement. The Commission should consider commissioning comprehensive research in order to inform the setting of annual priorities and refine selection criteria in order to maximise the cost effectiveness of the programme's limited budget.

3. **Improve programme and project monitoring**: monitoring a diverse programme that addresses a subject as complex as active citizenship is inherently difficult. However, the lack of monitoring data beyond activity level holds the programme back, making it difficult to compare projects in a meaningful way and establish with certainty which types of projects are working well and less well. Part of the solution should involve more

standardised monitoring provisions for projects (e.g. that help beneficiaries distinguish between reached individuals) and the integration of indicators developed as part of a recent study commissioned through the programme with the monitoring system.[50] This could possible take the form of a long list of output- and outcome-level indicators that beneficiaries could be encouraged to apply to their projects.

4. **Increase support for first-time applicants and underrepresented Member States**: the evaluation found that vast discrepancies in participation between Member States? were due more to divergent success rates in applying for funding than in the amount of interest in the programme, while first-time applicants reportedly had trouble breaking into the EFCP. To increase participation, the Commission could fund some remedial sessions with ECPs, who have an important role to play in raising awareness and providing support and guidance to first-time applicants, and potential applicants in target countries, potentially using real (but anonymised) successful applications as guides.

5. **Consider more involvement for ECPs**: Feedback from ECPs suggested that communication channels between ECPs and the central programme management were not fully open. Steps should be taken to increase the collaboration between these two crucial actors in the ECFP's implementation, potentially by putting in place some goals that would demonstrate the purpose of this collaboration (including, for example, increasing participation among hard to reach groups) and ensure that mutual interests are in place.

6. **More insistence on, and scrutiny of, purposeful, outcome-oriented planning**: while the majority of case study projects were competently delivered, tangible outcomes and impacts were thin on the ground. This was attributed to differences in the purposefulness of projects and activities within them, including dissemination plans. Successful projects also demonstrated outcome-oriented thinking, plausible intervention logics and credible plans for follow-up. Potential beneficiaries should therefore be required to demonstrate their thinking in these areas, with a set of criteria developed to score them accordingly.

7. **Maximise synergies by intensifying consultation with other DGs**: the benchmarking analysis showed that more could be gained from using good practices developed within other programmes, such as Youth in Action, to support issues where the EFCP is active. In addition, if the EFCP continues to fund projects in areas that are also addressed by larger programmes, more formal links could be established. Among other things, it would be worth exploring in more depth whether the dynamic observed for one case study project, whereby the EFCP functioned as a kind of laboratory for a small project that was then scaled up through the Creative Europe programme, could be applied more widely to identify and scale up innovative projects.

8. **Encourage remembrance projects to look more towards the future**: the case studies showed that remembrance projects tended to be more salient when they considered practical implications for the present and future, in addition to the past. The Commission should therefore encourage potential participants to demonstrate such links in funding applications and take them into account as part of the scoring process. This would allow the programme to continue to preserve the memory of Europe's past while applying lessons learned to the issues facing citizens today.

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[50] Measuring the impact of the Europe for Citizens programme, Euréval, 2013, url: http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/final_report_efc_may_2013_eurevalppmi.pdf.

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