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EU-related communication in Eastern Partnership countries

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Biographical notes



Anneli Kimber

Anneli Kimber is a communication professional with over 13 years of experience in the public and international development sectors in Estonia, the UK and the EU's Eastern Partnership countries. After having worked as the press secretary for the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for five years, she moved to London in 2006 and worked as the Europe team press officer for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. From 2007 to 2010 she was the first press diplomat posted at the Estonian Embassy in London and after that became a communications manager for an international development organisation based in London. In the past three years she has worked as an independent consultant for the EU and the UNDP on communication-related projects in Armenia and Moldova. She is currently working as a Communication Expert and Digital Media Specialist for the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership. She is also one of the leading experts involved in the Center's comprehensive training programme for improving EU-related communication in Eastern Partnership countries.



Ehtel Halliste

Ehtel Halliste is a highly qualified communication professional with over 20 years of experience gained from the public sector, as an international communication expert for the EU and as a consultant and trainer for the UNDP. She has advised government authorities and trained public communicators in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine and Uzbekistan on communication, public relations and public diplomacy. For more than ten years Ehtel served as the press spokesperson for the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and she has been posted to Moscow and later to Brussels during the Estonian accession process to the EU and NATO. She has also worked for the European Union in Pakistan, Nepal, Cambodia, Lebanon, Sudan, South Sudan and Nigeria. For the past two years Ehtel was the Team Leader for the EU Centre in Armenia coordinating the communication efforts and activities of more than 90 EU-funded projects in Armenia. Currently she is working as a Senior Expert on Communication and Public Diplomacy for the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership and advises the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on external communications.

INTRODUCTION

In late 2013, the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership (ECEAP) made the development of EU-related communication in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries one of its top priorities by launching a comprehensive training programme involving public sector communicators, journalists and the civil society from all six partner countries. The main goal of the programme was to develop their skills in the area of EU-related communication and share the relevant experience of Estonia and other countries who have become EU members in the past eleven years.

The first stage of the programme lasted 16 months and covered more than ten events, including bilateral and multilateral seminars in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as well as multiple study-visits to Estonia. The methodology of the programme used three main elements: a needs assessment survey; training events, seminars, study tours and fieldwork. The individual concepts were developed in close cooperation with partner governments, media and the civil society representatives. The first stage of the training programme concluded with the ECEAP's 11th Public Administration Reform Seminar "Communicating the European Union in the Eastern Partnership Countries" in Brussels in April 2015.¹ The high-level seminar brought together key stakeholders from EaP countries, the communication directors of EU institutions, leading Brussels-based journalists and representatives of EU Member States, offering a platform for exchanging views on the current situation and developing further cooperation.

The EU is a major donor for the Eastern Neighbourhood region. Nonetheless, the combined efforts of the EU and its Member States are still often not recognized within the region. There is a lack of visibility and also lack of awareness and sometimes understanding by the citizens from partner countries, the final beneficiaries and also at the level of opinion makers. Following the conclusions of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council on 29 January, and the European Council conclusions of 19-20 March 2015, the EU is now moving forward with specific plans for stepping up its strategic communication activities in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the contribution of individual Member States has become even more vital. For Estonia, highlighting the importance of effective communication and supporting the people at the forefront of delivering communication in the Eastern partner countries is an essential part of the EU's renewed strategic approach. Thus ECEAP remains committed to continuing the training programme in close partnership with individual countries based on their diverse needs.

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of the first stage of the training programme and to analyse the current situation in the partner countries in the area of EU-related communication. The paper aims to identify gaps and possible ways to fill them by providing key findings and recommendations. Having previously worked on EU-related communication projects in four partner countries, the authors of this paper also suggest possible ways for enhancing the EU institutions' communication and outreach activities in the region.

The authors of this paper take the opportunity to thank the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership and the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who have helped make this publication possible. Special thanks go to the good colleagues in the Eastern partner countries and within the EU institutions, who have kindly shared their information and professional insights.

1 See <http://eceap.eu/en/eu-communication-seminar-in-brussels/>

1. SETTING THE SCENE

Time to reflect and review

On 4 March 2015, the High Representative of the EU, the Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn formally launched the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Eastern and Southern neighbourhood region of the EU has experienced dramatic changes since 2004, when the policy was first developed. The newly launched consultations focus on developing the EU's partnerships with the countries in those regions and concentrate on finding new ways for taking the cooperation to a new level. In his speech at the launch², Commissioner Hahn highlighted the need for the EU to recognise the diversity of its partners, acknowledging the differences between the East and South and also within the East and within the South. According to him, it is important to offer adequate responses to the changing aspirations of the partners, as some countries want closer integration with the EU and some envisage different kinds of relationships.

The changes and growing diversity are definitely present within the ENP's regional cooperation initiative for the Eastern partners - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The new Association Agreements (AA) signed with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are already being provisionally applied. For Georgia and Moldova, provisional application already includes the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The AA/DCFTAs involve ambitious political, economic and social reform agendas, drawing the Eastern partner countries concerned closer to the EU.³ Against the background of the Ukrainian political crisis, the EU launched an unprecedented programme of support to help Ukraine stabilise its economy, assist with transition, encourage political, judicial and economic reforms and support inclusive development. The EU and Armenia are working on further developing and strengthening comprehensive cooperation where this is compatible with Armenia's obligations under the Eurasian Economic Union. With Azerbaijan, the EU is looking to continue developing its ties under a Strategic Modernisation Partnership and towards Belarus the EU has continued its policy of critical engagement.⁴

Effective communication key to success

Whatever the ambition of each individual partner country, effective communication is an essential part of successful policies, productive initiatives, mutually beneficial partnerships or cooperation projects. According to the latest EU Neighbourhood Barometer report⁵, since spring 2013 the image of the EU as a partner contributing to the development of the Eastern partner countries has increased from 38% to 44% in the Eastern neighbourhood region. There is a need to build on this momentum and deepen the understanding on the extent of the EU support for the region.

For the EaP countries effective EU-communication, first and foremost means taking the ownership. Outside advice can help and be useful, but in the end every country has to take its own decisions and therefore the main burden of informing the public lies on the shoulders of partner countries themselves. If these countries want their people to support EU integration, taking the main responsibility of EU-related communication is fundamental. At the same time, the support and active participation of the EU and its Member States is necessary for ensuring that the desired results will be achieved. Effective communication from both sides also needs to take into account that each of the six countries are in a unique situation with many varied topics and different stories to tell. For some of the partners building public support to the EU and to the reforms carried out by their governments is an important prerequisite for being successful

2 Opening remarks by Commissioner Johannes Hahn at the joint press conference with High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini on European Neighbourhood Policy Review, March, 2015 // http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-4553_en.htm

3 Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Eastern Partnership Implementation Report, Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014, March, 2015 // http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/enp-regional-report-eastern_partnership_en.pdf

4 Op. cit.

5 Autumn 2014 Wave 6 EU Neighbourhood Barometer, "ENPI Regional Communication Programme 2011-2014: opinion polling and media monitoring", European Commission's Development and Cooperation Office, Europe Aid // http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/6009ENPI_Report-Wave-6_East_EN_final.pdf

in implementing the AA/DCFTAs. For the others the benefits of individual cooperation projects, new opportunities for students or the civil society, advancing trade and mobility of citizens can be the main priorities.

At the 11th Public Administration Reform Seminar organised by ECEAP in Brussels in April 2015, the communication directors of the EU institutions jointly acknowledged the need to enhance EU-related communication vis-à-vis Eastern partner countries. It was stressed at the event that a lot of good work has been done, but now is the time to take the longer view and start communicating the real substance of development cooperation. For the European Union, communication with impact is essential for achieving wider recognition of the benefits of the Eastern Partnership policy while showcasing the positive changes within societies brought about by hundreds of EU-financed projects and programmes operating in the region. Moreover, strategically planned and wisely executed communication work challenges the spread of false and misleading information in the region and within the EU itself and helps promote the EU narrative in a proactive way.

Sharing Estonia's experience

When Estonia joined the European Union 11 years ago, communication – both at home and abroad – was one of the most important components of the country's European Union accession process. The domestic audience wanted to know what changes to expect from the plethora of reforms, be aware of and have an influence on the government's negotiating positions. As a potential new member state that was not known by many people living in the European Union back then, Estonia suddenly found itself in the focus of European media attention. Understandably this newly found interest came with limited background knowledge and was often based on curiosity towards the unusual, since the label "former Soviet Republic" had been attached to Estonia from the very beginning of the accession process.⁶ Raising awareness of the European Union at home and promoting a positive image abroad became a serious challenge for the country and required great effort on the part of Estonian communicators.

It is because of the relevance of this experience and based on the notion that effective communication is vitally important for gaining public support for any kind of transformation within a society, that ECEAP decided to make developing EU-related communication in the Eastern partner countries one of its priorities. During the accession process Estonia clearly took the main responsibility for communicating the EU to the public and established a clear coordination system to support these communication efforts. At the same time Estonia could always rely on EU's strong and timely support. Countries seeking closer association with the EU today will need to work at least as hard and as long as Estonia did and inevitably modern communication combined with the revolution of online media has become even more important to the whole process. However, there are still many shared principles, methods and tools that the Eastern partners can use from the Estonian experience, either repeating the successes or avoiding the mistakes that were made.

⁶ Halliste, E. "How We Communicated Estonia into the EU", Estonia's Way into the European Union, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009 // http://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/web-static/052/Estonias_way_into_the_EU.pdf

2. ECEAP'S TRAINING PROGRAMME ON EU COMMUNICATION

The main aim of the Center's training programme was to develop specific communication and media skills of the main stakeholders in the partner countries and create a new regional network that can be used as a powerful tool in EU-related communication. The methodology used by the Center for developing the programme consisted of three main elements: (1) a needs assessment survey based on questionnaires sent out to all partner countries, (2) interactive training events, multilateral seminars and study-visits to Estonia and (3) extensive fieldwork. As the Center did not organise bilateral seminars in Azerbaijan and Belarus, the findings from these countries are based on the information obtained from several multilateral platform meetings.

In the past 16 months the programme has made use of different formats available through the EU's Eastern Partnership cooperation initiative, including bilateral training events, practical workshops, visits and individual mentoring. The Public Administration Reform (PAR) platform within the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership initiative has also provided an excellent framework for organising events for all six partners together. In essence, using the aspect of public administration reform anchors the entire process to the partner country as the public communicators are the main stakeholders in this process.

Novel approach

The programme's training events were developed using a novel approach designed to encourage open discussion and critical debate. Bilateral seminars put public sector communicators from one side, journalists and representatives of the civil society from the other side together in mixed groups with the aim of building a mutual understanding of how to approach the issues related to EU communication in their country.

This particular style of work is not very common in the partner countries, instead mistrust is wide-spread. The concept was specifically aimed at breaking the vicious circle of skepticism, whereby communicators think that journalists are not adequate to cover their issues, but fail to acknowledge that they themselves have contributed to this situation. On the other hand, journalists sometimes don't take the time to focus on more complicated topics, don't check their facts and as a result produce low-quality content. Neither side is completely right or wrong, but both parties would definitely gain a lot more from an open and professional relationship based on mutual respect and trust. Especially, as state institutions, media and the civil society share a common goal of informing the public on issues that matter to the society.

This approach proved to be successful and was highly praised in the participants' feedback to the training events. As planned, the trainings have served as excellent platforms for establishing each other's roles and responsibilities and new networks have been created. The sessions have always included journalists from the regions of each country in addition to representatives of national outlets, as they have a big influence on local populations and are often neglected or their huge potential on these matters overlooked.

Seeing is believing

As part of the programme the Center decided to take the most active participants of the bilateral seminars to Estonia so they could see with their own eyes what the European Union has meant for the country. The study tours took place within a couple of months after the training events in their own countries with the main objective of reinforcing the key messages from the seminars. The tours incorporated meetings with key government communicators, Estonian top journalists covering EU issues, active members of the civil society and visits to the regions to showcase the transformation of the country. During the training events, the speakers often discussed the benefits that the EU has brought to Estonia, so the tours became an excellent way for the partner countries to witness these changes with their own eyes.

Involving professional expertise from EU and Member States

ECEAP has involved a team of senior communication experts in the development and implementation of the training programme, who have worked many years in the Eastern Partnership countries on EU-related communication and have long-term experience of promoting the EU before and during Estonia's, Latvia's, Poland's and Bulgaria's accession processes to the EU. As the partner countries are all different, they require

different examples, so the Center also involved other EU Member States' representatives as communication experts in the programme, including the United Kingdom and Sweden. The Center has worked closely with the EU Delegations in each country to ensure maximum benefit for all parties.

Timeline of activities

| | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------|--|
| 1. | 27-28.04.2015 | BRUSSELS | Multilateral PAR seminar on EU-related communication for Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian public sector communicators, journalists and the representatives of civil society - "Communicating the European Union in Eastern Partnership Countries" |
| 2. | 04-05.12.2014 | UKRAINE | Bilateral practical training seminar for Ukrainian public sector communicators, civil society and journalists: "Informing the public about AA/DCFTA and other EU issues" |
| 3. | 20-21.10.2014 | ARMENIA | A modified version of the bilateral practical training seminar for Armenian public sector communicators and journalists: "Informing the public about EU-related issues and EU-funded activities in Armenia with a special focus on EU budget support initiatives" |
| 4. | 30.09-05.10.2014 | ESTONIA | Study visit to Estonia for Georgian public sector communicators and journalists. As a separate group, Georgian TV-channels visited Estonia in April 2014 |
| 5. | 14-16.07.2014 | GEORGIA | Bilateral practical training seminar for Georgian public sector communicators and journalists: "Informing the public about the Association Agreement, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and other EU-related issues" |
| 6. | 27-31.05.2014 | ESTONIA | Study visit to Estonia for Moldovan public sector communicators and journalists. As a separate group, journalists from Comrat in Gagauzia visited Estonia in March 2014 |
| 7. | 22-24.04.2014 | MOLDOVA | Bilateral practical training seminar for Moldovan public sector communicators and journalists: "Informing the public about the Association Agreement, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and other EU-related issues" |
| 8. | 07-08.04.2014 | GEORGIA | Multilateral PAR seminar on EU-related communication for Armenian, Azerbaijani, Belarusian, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian public sector communicators: "Improving EU-related public communication in the partner countries" |
| 9. | March 2014 | ESTONIA | Journalists from Armenia on a study trip to Estonia |
| 10. | December 2013 | ESTONIA | Journalists from Belarus on a study trip to Estonia |

Statistics and feedback

- More than **10 events** in total have taken place during the past **16 months**, which have been dedicated entirely to the development of EU-related public communication in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood.
- In total more than **240** public sector communicators, journalists and civil society representatives from all six Eastern partner countries have taken part of the Center's training events.
- More than **90%** of the participants have rated the training events either excellent or very good.
- **98%** have said in their feedback that they can use the knowledge and information from the training events in their daily work.

Participants testimonials

"I really learned a lot from the experience of different countries who have gone through a similar process as my country"

"It was very useful to get practical examples on how to communicate with the audiences about EU issues and draw on the vast experience of speakers"

"It was extremely useful that the seminar was in Russian and we could discuss these important issues in a shared language instead of using interpretation that usually kills the conversation"

"The seminar increased my interest and wish to better communicate the EU in my country. The information and experience I got from the event gives me the opportunity to find solutions for problems in my country in a new way"

"It was interesting and useful to find out how journalists and communicators worked together in Estonia during the accession and I really started to look at communication matters in my ministry in a new way"

"I highly valued the informal discussion, the interaction with journalists and their feedback was very useful"

"It made me more optimistic in terms of what can be achieved"

"The knowledge I have gained I can share with my colleagues"

"I had the opportunity to talk to a journalist from my region for the first time"

3. CURRENT SITUATION

In Armenia

Background

The press departments and offices of the Armenian ministries and government institutions carry out EU-related communication work on ad hoc basis driven by political leaders' visits to the EU, EU dignitaries visiting Armenia and the official launches of large regional EU programmes. Currently, there are no government-wide EU communication strategies developed in Armenia. Individual action plans for communicating specific EU-related activities or sectoral cooperation are in place for the national Vocational Education and Training (VET) development programme and for some of the budget support financed activities. Public sector communicators often don't have sufficient information for proactively communicating EU-funded activities within their area of responsibility. However, there is an interest on the part of communicators to increase the coverage and necessary coordination within the government to reach wider audiences. Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Ministry of Economy in particular who is the main coordinator of EU's assistance to Armenia, has repeatedly called for better coordinated EU communication on the governmental level. Many journalists in Armenia lack necessary language skills to follow EU stories from their primary sources, although a substantial group of reporters across different outlets is eager to cover EU-related events and topics if given the background information.

The EU Delegation to Armenia delivers its communication work using conventional methods and tools and well-established distribution channels focusing on issuing multilingual press releases and organising media events and facilitating interviews for journalists. In addition, the delegation has outsourced an online newsletter covering EU-related events and topics in Armenia producing online content in English and in Armenian. A series of television broadcasts have been commissioned by the delegation in order to promote its activities, key EU policies and projects and programmes in Armenia. The Europe Day is celebrated in Yerevan and in other towns every year with many events happening throughout one week, including cultural activities, information fair, overnight performances etc. The delegation is also active on social media using Facebook, Twitter and Youtube accounts for posting official information, event invitations, photos and video clips regularly. The delegation is using dedicated communication projects with the aim of improving EU-related communication in the country by requesting them to advise projects directly on how to better promote their activities.

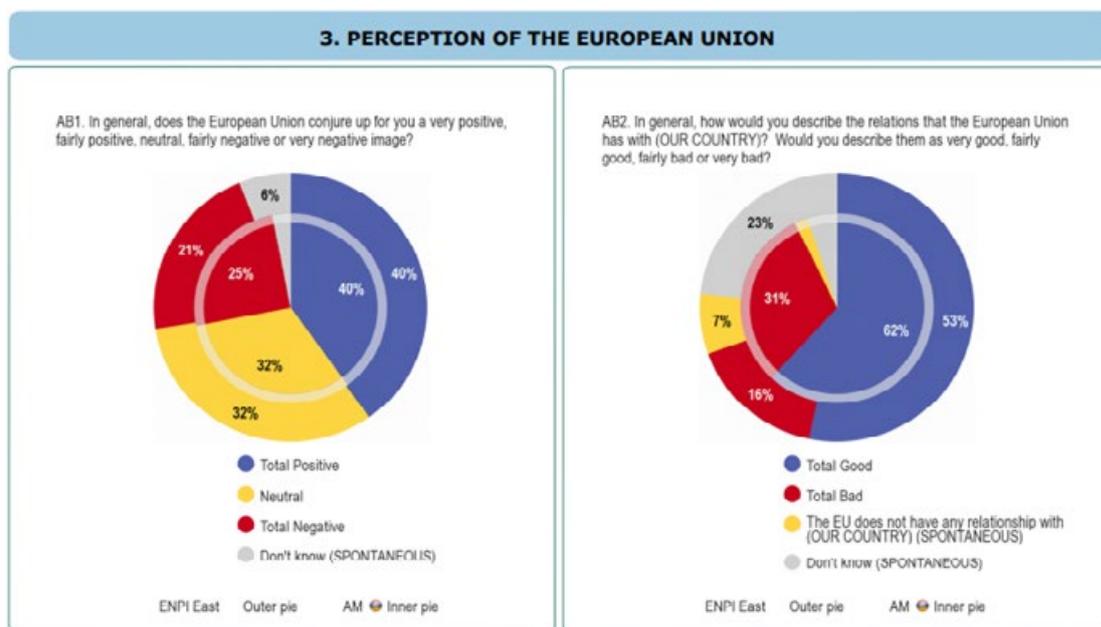


7 Winners of the second online quiz organised by the EU Centre in Armenia, photo taken in front of the EU Centre in July 2014

A good initiative by the delegation was the establishment of the EU Centre in Armenia between 2012-2014. The centre was the objective of the EU-funded project “Support to EU communication on reforms in Armenia”, which supported the communication on EU-Armenia development cooperation. The project established a physical EU information centre in Yerevan, organised monthly informal meetings for journalists and the youth to guide them through important EU issues and established the “EU in Armenia Club” – regular training courses and networking events for senior officials and distinguished representatives of the Armenian society. The EU Bus tours engaged with people from all Armenian regions and the centre’s online quizzes reached thousands of young people giving them information about the EU. The centre also coordinated the communication activities of the EU-funded projects offering consultations and quality assurance of their promotional materials. With the second component, the project worked in the area of education by developing innovative EU-related courses that are now taught in six universities and launched project-based learning models for 17 secondary schools during its two-year cycle.

Public opinion

According to the Spring 2014 EU Neighbourhood Barometer survey for Armenia⁸, published in autumn 2014, 58% of Armenians feel that the European Union is an important partner (compared to 67% in the entire ENPI East region), while 56% believe that the EU and Armenia have sufficient common values to cooperate (higher than the regional average). However, only 48% (compared to 55% six months earlier) feel that the EU brings peace and security to the region, and only 44% think that the EU support contributes substantially to the development of their country (compared to a regional average of 58%).



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What can be communicated vis-à-vis Armenia and the EU?

- In 2014, the EU-Armenia bilateral trade amounted to € 992 million and the EU has remained Armenia’s main trading partner
- The EU-Armenia Visa-Facilitation and Readmission Agreements came into force in 2014
- EU bilateral aid to Armenia will amount to € 140-170 million between 2014-2017
- More than 100 EU-funded projects currently operate in Armenia

⁸ Spring 2014 Wave 5 EU Neighbourhood Barometer, “ENPI Regional Communication Programme 2011-2014: opinion polling and media monitoring”, European Commission’s Development and Cooperation Office, Europe Aid // <http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FS-ENPI-Wave-5-AM-EN.pdf>

⁹ Op. cit.

- Armenia participated in the Tempus programme with 29 projects in 2014
- 246 students and staff were selected in 2014 for mobility within partnerships supported by the Erasmus Mundus programme
- EU has supported reforming the VET sector in Armenia for more than 5 years with substantial investment programmes
- Armenia participated in the eTwinning plus action with 23 schools in 2014
- Young people and youth organisations benefited from Erasmus+, with 1,443 participating in mobility projects and 123 in the action for young people and decision-makers
- Armenia was involved as leader or partner in 13 regional projects in the Eastern Partnership culture programme.¹⁰

In Azerbaijan

Background

As Azerbaijan is a strategic partner for the EU in the sector of energy cooperation, most of the official communication in relation to the EU is focused on the topical visits of officials and celebrating the milestones of the most prominent EU-funded projects, such as INOGATE in the sector of energy and TRACECA in the sector of transport. Education is another area of cooperation, which has the potential to create great stories as Azerbaijan is actively engaged in the Erasmus+ programme.

The Center of Excellence in EU Studies was established at the ADA University (former Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy) in January 2013 as a part of the agreement between the Government of Azerbaijan and the EU. The main goals of the center are to increase the knowledge of civil servants on EU matters, to facilitate the implementation of agreements and to help deepen the relations between Azerbaijan and the EU. The center also has its own promotional programmes for raising awareness of the EU among the Azerbaijani population. In 2015 the center will hold its very first EU Summer School, which is a two-week certificate programme organised in partnership with the College of Europe.

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN EU STUDIES
1ST EU SUMMER SCHOOL JULY 13-24 2015

THE EU SUMMER SCHOOL IS A TWO-WEEK CERTIFICATE PROGRAM HELD BY ADA UNIVERSITY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN EU STUDIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COLLEGE OF EUROPE.

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

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- Human rights in EU policy
- EU negotiations, presentations and communication skills
- EU taxation policy, etc. all related to EU matters

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- Local or foreign graduate and undergraduate students who are major in EU relations, European Integration, International relations, int. EU related spheres
- Civil Servants dealing with EU Affairs
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EU Resources, Adapted from: EASA, Commission, Az 2014
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Contact Person: Ailf Mammadov, Project Assistant, Centre of Excellence in EU Studies (a.mammadov@ada.edu.az)

11

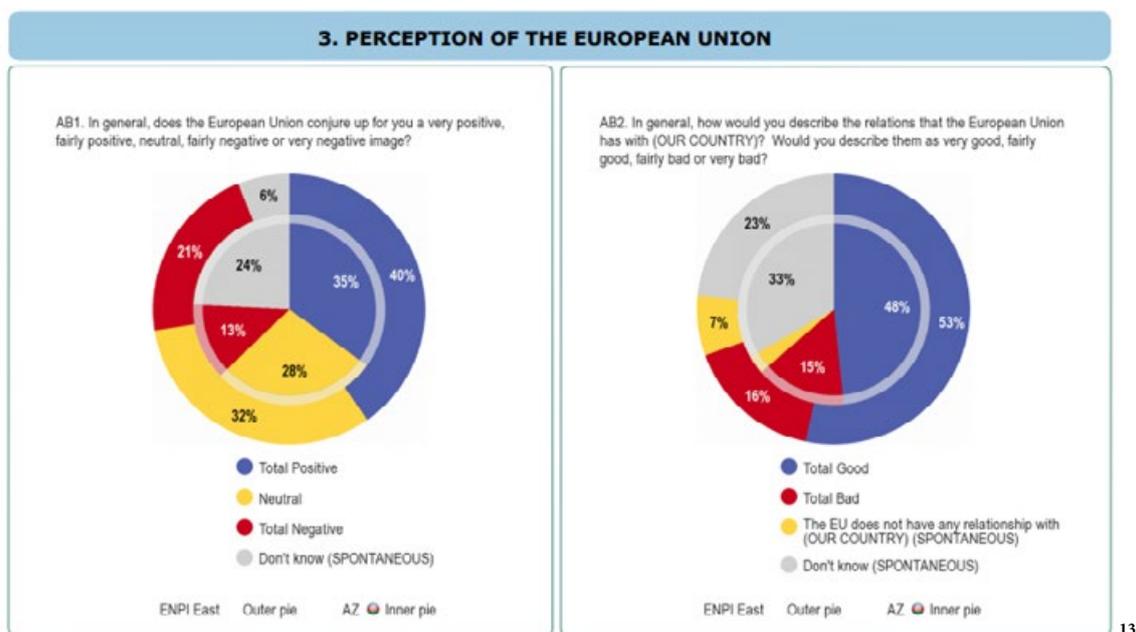
10 Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Armenia, Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions, Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014, March, 2015 // http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/armenia-enp-report-2015_en.pdf

11 The official poster of the ADA 1st EU Summer School in Azerbaijan, May 2015

The EU Delegation to Azerbaijan predominantly uses cultural events and Ambassador's interviews to communicate EU-related issues to the wider audiences in the country. The European Film Festivals have been organised by the delegation since 2010 with the aim to strengthen cultural links between the EU's Member States and Azerbaijan. In May every year, the delegation celebrates the Europe Day in Azerbaijan, during the celebrations in 2015 the delegation opened its doors to the public and the staff of the delegation made presentations at schools.

Public opinion

According to the Spring 2014 EU Neighbourhood Barometer for Azerbaijan, almost half of Azerbaijanis feel that relations between their country and the European Union are good, compared to just 15% of those who think they are bad. The survey found that 42% of people asked feel that the EU is an important partner, with 46% believing that the EU and Azerbaijan share sufficient common values to be able to cooperate, which is lower than the average across the Eastern Partnership countries.¹²



What can be communicated vis-à-vis Azerbaijan and the EU?

- The EU is the main trade partner for Azerbaijan and a strategic partner in the energy sector
- In 2014, the EU completed procedures to support civil society through grants of more than € 3 million to 14 projects
- In 2013 three agreements (Visa Facilitation Agreement, Readmission Agreement, and Mobility Partnership) were concluded, which will make it easier for people to travel between Azerbaijan and the EU
- Large EU-funded project has supported the successful launch and operation of the Azerbaijani e-governance service assessment network institution (ASAN)
- In 2014 Azerbaijan participated in the Tempus programme with 22 projects
- 226 students and staff from Azerbaijan were selected for mobility within partnerships supported by Erasmus Mundus
- Azerbaijan participated in the eTwinning plus action with 44 schools in 2014

¹² Spring 2014 Wave 5 EU Neighbourhood Barometer, "ENPI Regional Communication Programme 2011-2014: opinion polling and media monitoring", European Commission's Development and Cooperation Office, Europe Aid // <http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FS-ENPI-Wave-5-AZ-EN.pdf>

¹³ Op. cit.

- The Erasmus + programme helped young people and youth organisations, with 877 participants in mobility projects and 27 in the action for young people and decision-makers in the field of youth.¹⁴

In Belarus

Background

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus is the main national body responsible for the relations with the EU. The Ministry of Communication and Information of Belarus supports the foreign ministry with some of the EU-related communication and information activities. The official communication of the ministries covers high-level EU-related events and official visits, participation in seminars and conferences. This material is available on the ministry's website and on official social media accounts, including Twitter, Youtube and Instagram.

The EU supports the civil society and numerous projects in Belarus in areas such as energy, environment, food safety, regional and local development, higher education, as well as media and the social domain. All of these topics provide opportunities for advancing EU-related communication within the country. The EU Delegation to Belarus organises cultural events, most recently the Europe Day Film Festival and Europe Day Education and Language Fair 2015 for students, teachers, and researchers promoting study opportunities in Europe.

3 нагоды Дня Еўропы
 Прадстаўніцтва ЕС у Беларусі, амбасадарства краін ЕС у Беларусі
 з падтрымкай Украіны па кінематаграфіі Міністэрства культуры Рэспублікі Беларусь
 і УП «Кінавідавзррат» Мінгарвыканкома прастаўляюць

Фестываль сучаснага еўрапейскага кіно:

Новы погляд на Стары Свет

**Мінск
 кінатэатр
 «Победа»
 11–17 траўня
 2015 года**

**УВАХОД
 ВОЛЬНЫ**
 Колькі кожна аглядаць
 і кінастужку і аглядаць
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| 11 траўня панядзелак | 18:00 Адерцыц. Паказ фільма «Гулец» (Loseijs) Сустрэча з аніматарам В. Кікошэісам | *** | Літва |
| | 21:00 Сярод нас развітанне Веры Сустрэча з рэжысёрам Аляксандрам Букаро і аніматарам Ілія Сялічанка і Юлія Сялічанка | ** | Беларусь |
| 12 траўня аўторак | 18:30 Калекцыя кароткаметражных фільмаў Карацей казачы... па-галацку! Shorty speaking...Dutch! | *** | Нідэрланды |
| | 21:00 Прывід бацькі (Прызрак отца) Tata! Fantoma | *** | Румынія |
| 13 траўня серада | 18:30 Борт (Bort) Bogowie | *** | Польшча |
| | 21:00 Цёмна-сіні свет (Зіваюцца сінева) Tmavomodry svet | ** | Чэхія |
| 14 траўня чацвер | 18:30 Бістрашны (Неустрасимый) L'Intrepido | * | Італія |
| | 21:00 Мост праз Ібар (Мост через Ибар) Die Brücke am Ibar | *** | Германія |
| 15 траўня пятніца | 18:30 Пакрыўджаны (Обиженный) Milefnyarhoitaja | * | Фінляндія |
| | 21:00 Жонка мастака (Жена художника) Marie Kruger | *** | Данія |
| 16 траўня субота | 18:30 Сям'я на троіх (Брак втроём) Le mariage à trois | *** | Францыя |
| 17 траўня нядзеля | 18:30 Эго (Ego) | ** | Швецыя |

311 да 26 траўня ў фойе кінатэатра працуе выстава Рамаўса Чароўна (жывапіс)
 і Ядзігі Адамчык (фатаграфія)

Кінатэатр «Победа»: Мінск, вул. Інтэрнацыянальная, 20
 тэлефон для даведак (017) 203 77 66

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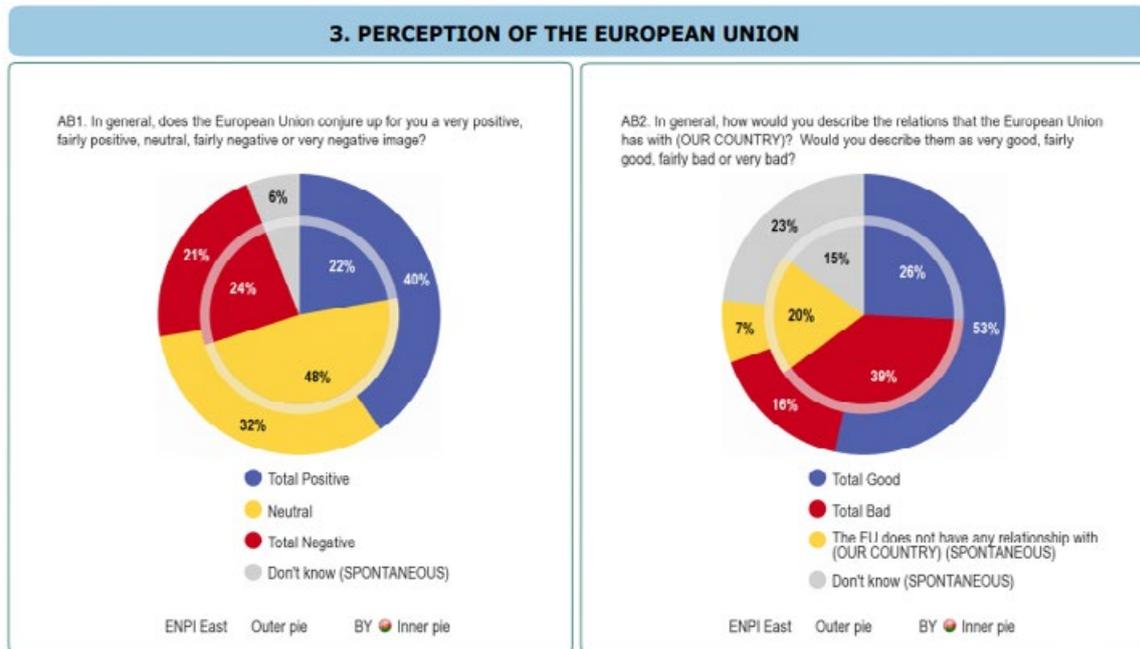
The delegation also issues the Eurobulletin magazine in the Belarusian and Russian languages reporting on the EU-funded assistance to Belarus. Starting from 2014, the magazine is issued in four quarterly issues online. The delegation has also produced an “EU Guide for journalists” that can be downloaded from their website in Belarusian or Russian.

14 Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Azerbaijan, Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions, Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014, March, 2015 // http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/azerbaijan-enp-report-2015_en.pdf

15 The official poster of the Europe Day Film Festival 2015 at the Pobeda Cinema in Minsk, May 2015

Public opinion

The Spring 2014 EU Neighbourhood Barometer for Belarus found that 51% believe that the EU and Belarus share sufficient common values to be able to cooperate, and 42% believe the EU is an important partner. The numbers are, however down on those found by a similar poll six months earlier, when the figures stood at 60% and 51% respectively. Only 27% of the respondents felt that the EU brings peace and stability to the region, down from 38%. In Belarus, the figures are all lower than the average for the ENPI East region as a whole. 70% saw the EU in a neutral (48%) or positive (22%) light, compared to 24% for whom it conjured up a negative image. 26% (down from 39%) of those asked said they trusted the EU – with the UN at 27% and NATO trusted by only 9% of those asked. Merely 26% of Belarusians felt that the EU had good relations with their country (compared to 53% in the ENPI East region as a whole), while 39% felt the relations were bad.¹⁶



What can be communicated vis-à-vis Belarus and the EU?

- In 2014, Belarus and the EU launched negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements.
- EU funds are used for modernising the Belarusian border and customs infrastructure and for implementing projects in the area of energy, transport, agriculture, nature protection, education and culture.
- Projects with a total budget of € 55 million have been implemented in Belarus under the EU cross-border cooperation programmes “Poland – Ukraine – Belarus”, “Latvia – Lithuania – Belarus”, and “Baltic Sea Region”.
- Belarus is actively involved in the EU thematic programmes and instruments, including TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus, TAIEX and others.
- Around 80 Belarusian students have received full scholarships to study for undergraduate and graduate degrees at universities across the EU.
- Assistance for Belarus is granted under the Country Strategy Paper 2014-2020 and the indicative allocation for 2014-2020 is € 129 million to € 158 million.¹⁷

¹⁶ Spring 2014 Wave 5 EU Neighbourhood Barometer, “ENPI Regional Communication Programme 2011-2014: opinion polling and media monitoring”, European Commission’s Development and Cooperation Office, Europe Aid // <http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FS-ENPI-Wave-5-BY-EN.pdf>

¹⁷ Programming of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) - 2014-2020, Strategy Paper and Multiannual Indicative Programme for EU support to Belarus (2014-2017) // http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/financing-the-enp/belarus_2014_2017_programming_document_en.pdf

In Georgia

Background

The office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration is the main coordinator of the Georgian government's activities in relation to the European integration. Its public relations department disseminates information regarding the integration process and the specifics of the Association Agreement. The Georgian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development is responsible for explaining the content and the implementation process of the DCFTA to the public. The ministry has launched a dedicated webpage providing public information in Georgian on every chapter. The Georgian government has also produced a government-wide communications strategy in the sphere of EU integration for the period of 2014-2017. This is a comprehensive document outlining government aims, communication methods, audiences etc. This document together with annual action plans for different institutions provide a good basis for advancing government communication on EU-related issues.

For the purpose of informing the public on Georgia's NATO integration and the future plans, an information center on NATO was created in 2005 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. In 2013, the functions of the center were moved under the State Minister and expanded to incorporate EU issues. Since then the center is called "Information Center on NATO and EU".¹⁸ The center's main task vis-à-vis EU integration is to implement the government's communications strategy and inform the public on EU benefits. In addition to the main office in Tbilisi, the center currently has four regional offices, however, in the near future further regional branches will be opened bringing the total number to ten. The center works closely with EU Member States and has chosen specific focus groups within the Georgian society as their priority target audiences. This includes youth organisations, medical staff, farmers, public servants of local authorities etc. The center has also started to create new media projects and launched campaigning activities to promote EU integration via broadcasters. New weekly talkshows will premier soon on one of the leading TV-channels focusing on the implementation of reforms. Georgia has also made first steps towards establishing clear coordination mechanisms between government departments regarding EU-related communication. The Prime Minister's Office is in the process of creating a new coordination unit that will be responsible for implementing the EU communications strategy in close cooperation with the State Minister's Office. The State Minister's Office itself will have a dedicated strategic communication unit.

The EU Delegation to Georgia is organising many initiatives for promoting the EU and the AA/DCFTA within the country and has issued relevant information materials, including factsheets, background notes and a selection of "mythbusters" debunking false information/facts circulating within the society. The delegation is actively using cultural events and youth initiatives for engaging with the younger generation, like the recently launched EU Reporter for One Day competition for creating 3-minute mobile phone films.



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18 See <http://www.natoinfo.ge/en/>

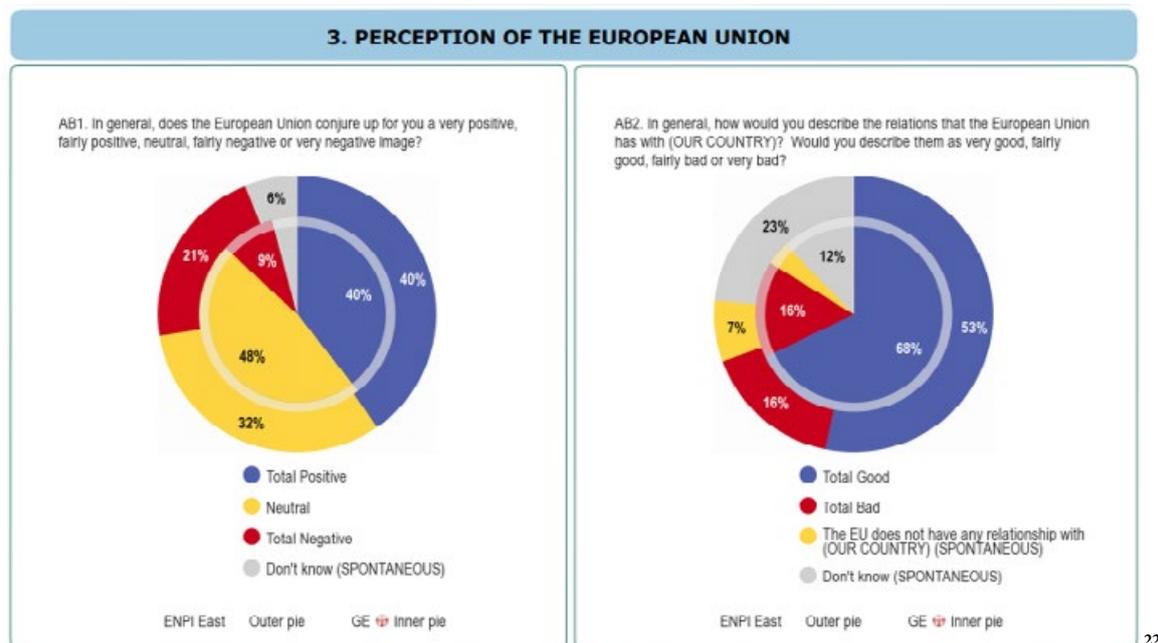
19 Let's Meet Europe Facebook page for promoting EU-Georgia cooperation online

The delegation has outsourced the majority of their public relations activities on the EU to a dedicated communication project Let's Meet Europe that has to develop and implement EU's communication strategy in Georgia from the EU's side. The project carries out information and communication campaigns on the implementation of the AA/DCFTA. The project is also responsible for organising the regional tours of the EU Mobile Info Centre and participates in the organisation of the Europe Day activities, competitions and open days in Georgia.

Public opinion

In spite of the overall support for the country's European integration process, public opinion polls and surveys conducted during the past years have revealed that the majority of the population does not possess sufficient information regarding the process of integration of Georgia to the European Union, which has sometimes resulted in false perceptions and the development of stereotypes and myths. According to the study published by the Eurasia Partnership Foundation in 2014²⁰, that looked at the results of three waves of surveys conducted in 2009, 2011 and 2013, the declarative support for EU integration remains strong in Georgia, with overwhelming majority of Georgians ready to vote for joining the EU if a referendum were to be held tomorrow. That said, only 13% think that the country is ready to join the EU and only about one third of the respondents think that the majority of the EU citizens would like Georgia to join the EU.

The Spring 2014 EU Neighbourhood Barometer for Georgia also finds that Georgian population is looking fondly towards its European future and many feel that the EU supports and contributes to the development of the country. The survey found that 69% of respondents felt the EU was an important partner for Georgia and 56% believed that the EU and Georgia shared sufficient common values to be able to cooperate. Almost 90% of those polled saw the EU in a positive (40%) or neutral (48%) light, compared with just 9% who perceived the EU in a negative way. More than half of those surveyed (58%) felt the EU's support contributed immensely to Georgia's development. The majority of Georgians (68%) felt the EU had good relations with their country (compared to 53% across the ENPI East region), while merely 16% felt relations were poor.²¹



20 Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia: Changes and Trends 2009 – 2013, Survey report commissioned by Eurasia Partnership Foundation and conducted by CRRG-Georgia, January 2014 // http://www.epfound.ge/files/eu_survey_report_2013_final_eng_.pdf

21 Spring 2014 Wave 5 EU Neighbourhood Barometer, "ENPI Regional Communication Programme 2011-2014: opinion polling and media monitoring", European Commission's Development and Cooperation Office, Europe Aid // <http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FS-ENPI-Wave-5-GE-EN.pdf>

22 Op. cit.

What can be communicated vis-à-vis Georgia and the EU?

- Georgia and the EU signed the Association Agreement including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area in the beginning of 2014 and the AA/DCFTA have been provisionally applied since 1 September 2014
- Implementation of the DCFTA will bring three fundamental freedoms of the EU to Georgia and it will also provide Georgia with access to the European single market
- Good progress has been made in the visa liberalisation dialogue and the implementation of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements
- Close to 200 EU-funded projects are currently being carried out in Georgia
- EU remains Georgia’s first trading partner with a trade volume of € 2.57 billion in 2014
- Georgia participated in the Tempus programme with 35 ongoing projects in 2014
- 491 students and staff were selected in 2014 for mobility within partnerships supported by Erasmus Mundus
- 19 researchers and 132 staff members benefited from Marie Curie actions
- EU helps implement the government’s action plan for the 2014-20 national vocational education and training (VET) strategy in Georgia.²³

In Moldova

Background

In Moldova, the national coordinator of EU relations is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, therefore the ministry is also responsible for EU-related communication and disseminates information on the Association Agreement. With the help of donors, the ministry issues a monthly newsletter ObiectivEUROPEAN, presenting information about the process of European integration.²⁴ The ministry has commissioned video clips²⁵ to debunk some of the myths and urban legends about the EU-Moldovan Association Agreement. The ministry has also organised special training sessions for journalists inviting their colleagues abroad to Moldova to share their experiences. Government-wide EU communication initiatives also include regional visits by ministers, topical communication trainings for deputy ministers and for press officers.



26

23 Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Georgia, Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions, Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014, March, 2015 // http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/georgia-enp-report-2015_en.pdf

24 See April 2015 edition <http://www.mfa.gov.md/img/docs/OBIECTIV-EUROPEAN-nr-11-rom-web.pdf>

25 See <https://youtu.be/yAmrDVIU32w>, <https://youtu.be/N9qjkNZVIuE> and <https://youtu.be/-Aioil7bm44>

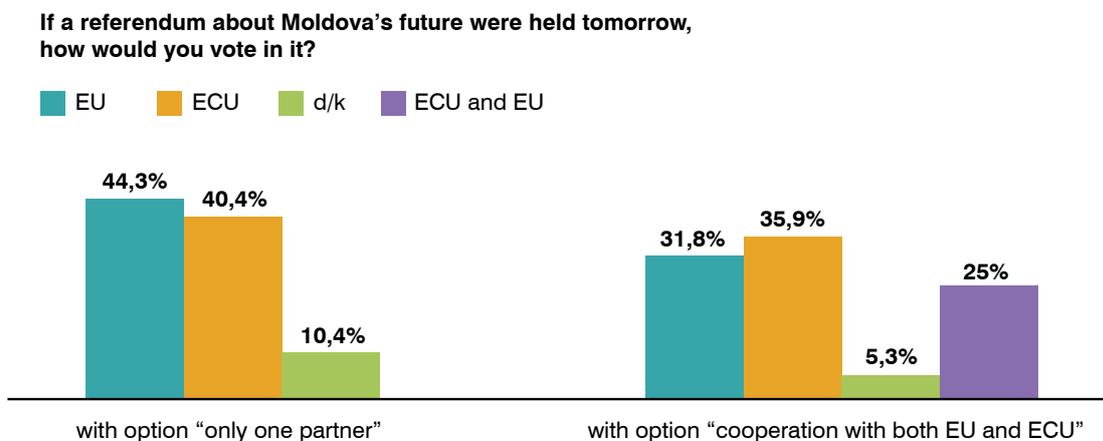
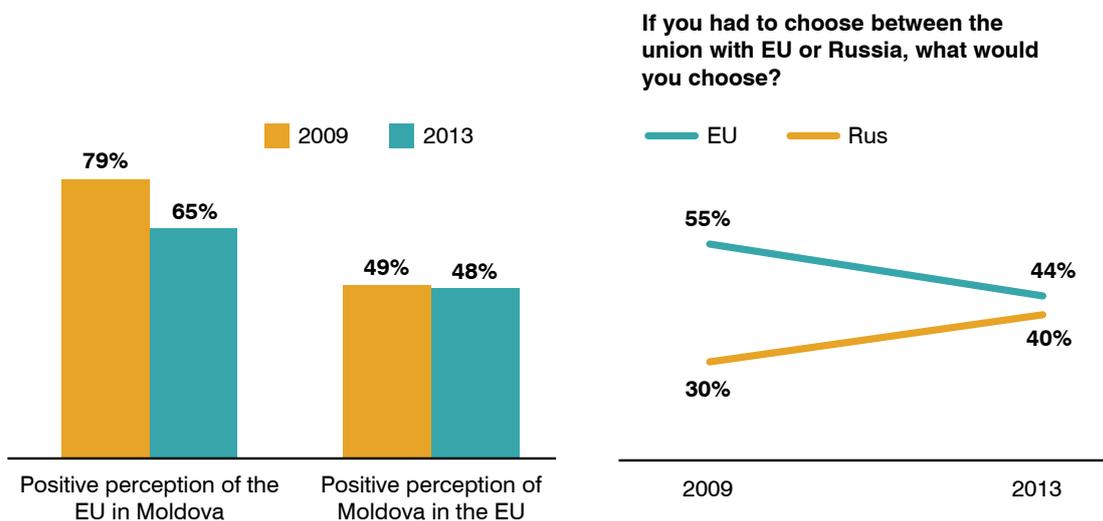
26 The cover page of the monthly newsletter ObiectivEUROPEAN issued by the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2015

As it is in Georgia, in Moldova the Ministry of Economy is responsible for the implementation of the DCFTA and is therefore in charge of related communication work. Currently an EU-funded project is assisting the Ministry of Justice with their activities for communicating reforms funded by the EU's direct budget support. The government ministries regularly inform the public about incoming and outgoing official EU visits and disseminate information about EU-related events.

The EU Delegation to Moldova has launched several initiatives for promoting the EU and the AA/DCFTA in Moldova, including publishing factsheets, background notes and creating similar “mythbusters” as in Georgia. Similarly, the delegation is actively using cultural events and youth initiatives for engaging with the younger generation to promote study opportunities in Europe. The delegation regularly organises Press Club meetings with the focus on different topics and involving expert guest speakers. The operations team of the delegation now has a dedicated communication officer working solely on promoting joint cooperation projects. As in other partner countries, the delegation participates in the Europe Day celebration and takes an active part in other EU-related events in Moldova.

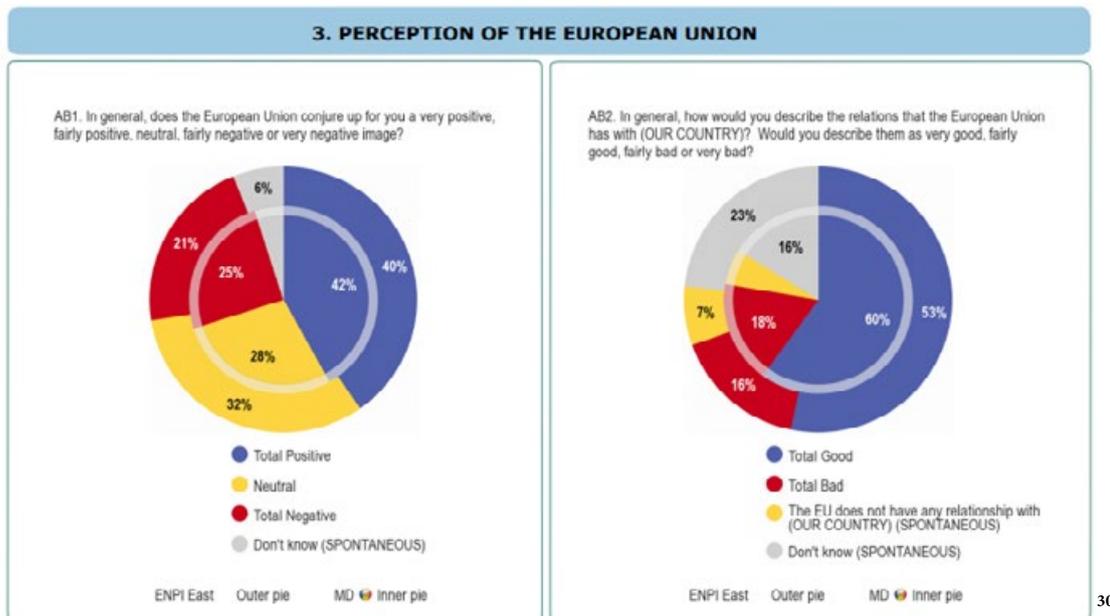
Public opinion

The EU remains an attractive, but not a default option for Moldovans, concluded a public opinion survey commissioned by the Slovak Atlantic Commission and the Central European Policy Institute in early 2014²⁷.



27 CEPI presents a public opinion poll in Chisinau, Press Release of the Central European Policy Institute, February, 2014 // <http://www.cepi.org/news/cepi-presents-public-opinion-poll-chisinau>

A subsequent opinion poll, commissioned by the same institutions in summer 2014²⁸ showed that despite a decline in support for the EU, which the previous poll showed, the EU narratives are making inroads into Moldova's public attitudes. What constitutes a real shift, however, is an increasing sense of urgency focused on rebuilding Moldova's state capacity – as a „home“ – to make it a strong, independent, stable, functional and self-respecting nation. This is coupled with the notion that local reforms must come first, EU membership (perspective) after. According to the Head of the EU Delegation to Moldova, Pirkka Tapiola this survey shows that “a lot of thinking is maturing” in Moldova and that the strong nation-building paradigm registered by the survey implies a growing sense of ownership, responsibility, and dignity among the Moldovan citizens.²⁹



The Spring 2014 EU Neighbourhood Barometer for Moldova³¹ found that most Moldovans feel the European Union contributes a lot to the development of their country. The survey revealed a rise in positive perceptions of the EU among Moldovans. In particular, it finds that 58% of those polled recognize the EU's significant role in the development of Moldova (compared to 44% in the overall ENPI East region, excluding Russia); 59% of Moldovans feel that the EU is an important partner (a 4% rise from the previous poll conducted early this year), with 54% believing that the EU and Moldova share sufficient common values to be able to cooperate (a 6% rise from the previous poll). Half of those polled feel that the EU brings peace and stability to the region (compared to 47% in the previous poll). Nearly three quarters of respondents (70%) saw the EU in a positive (42%) or neutral (28%) light, compared to 25% for whom it conjured up a negative image. More than half of those asked (51%) said they trusted the EU – more than they do other international institutions like the UN (40%) or NATO (30%). The majority of Moldovans (60%) felt the EU had good relations with their country (compared to 53% in the ENPI East region), while only 16% felt they were bad.

What can be communicated vis-à-vis Moldova and the EU?

- Moldova and the EU signed the Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area in 2014 and major parts of the agreement took effect provisionally on 1 September 2014
- Starting from April 2014, Moldovan citizens were able to travel to the Schengen area visa-free. Around 360,000 people took advantage of this opportunity in 2014

28 Qualitative survey: Make Moldova a „Home“, Press Release of the Central European Policy Institute, June, 2014 // <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/qualitative-survey-make-moldova-home>

29 New survey presented in Moldova, Press Release of the Central European Policy Institute, June, 2014 // <http://www.cepolicy.org/news/new-survey-presented-moldova>

30 Spring 2014 Wave 5 EU Neighbourhood Barometer, “ENPI Regional Communication Programme 2011-2014: opinion polling and media monitoring”, European Commission's Development and Cooperation Office, Europe Aid // <http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/FS-ENPI-Wave-5-MD-EN.pdf>

31 Op. cit.

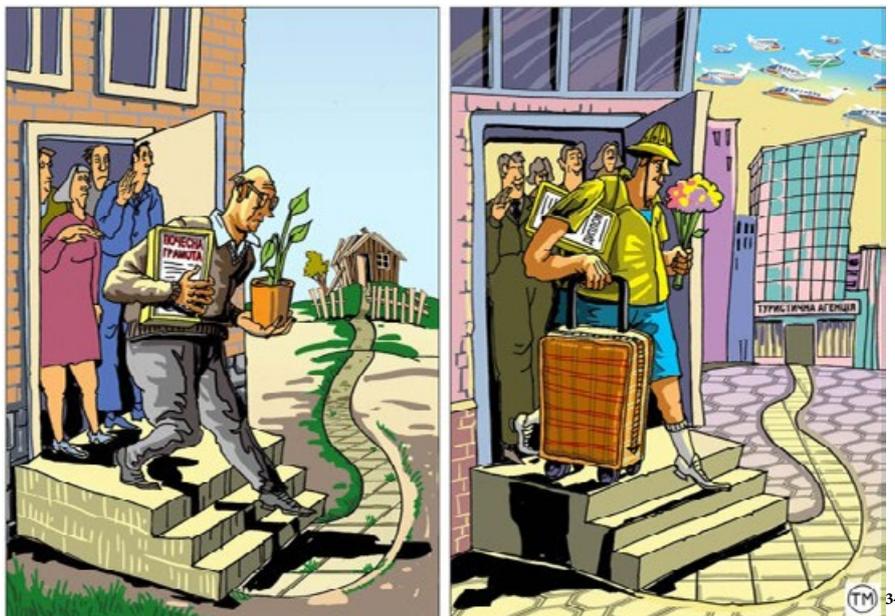
- Implementation of the DCFTA will bring three fundamental freedoms of the EU to Moldova and it will also provide Moldova with access to the European single market
- The EU remained the main trading partner for Moldova and the EU imports increased in 2014 by 20% amounting to € 1.16 billion
- Moldova became the first Eastern Partnership country to conclude an Agreement with the EU on its participation in the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises programme (COSME)
- Moldova participated in the Tempus programme with 18 on-going projects
- 314 students and staff were selected in 2014 for mobility within partnerships supported by Erasmus Mundus
- 47 Moldovan schools participated in the eTwinning plus project.³²

In Ukraine

Background

In 2014 the European Neighbourhood Policy reforms in Ukraine were carried out in a very difficult political, economic, social and security context of conflict. The Ukraine Crisis Media Center³³ was set up in March 2014 to provide the international community with objective information about events in Ukraine. The center provides media support on a 24/7 basis to all those covering events in Ukraine and runs a daily schedule of live press briefings. Since its inception the center has evolved into a key communications hub with outreach to both internal audiences in Ukraine as well as conducting active outreach to opinion formers and the media outside of Ukraine. The center has actively contributed to distributing information about the EU by hosting media events and providing regularly up-to-date information on the EU-Ukraine relations.

The Cabinet of Minister of Ukraine has established the Government Office for European Integration as a part of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers. The Statute of the office was adopted on 13 August 2014. The office is currently working with other government departments to build a foundation for developing a conceptual vision for the cross-government communications strategy for the implementation of the Association Agreement. This strategy will set out tasks and responsibilities to all government departments involved in the EU integration process. The new office and other government departments are working closely with international experts and communications consultants and use their experience and best practice for developing these new EU communications mechanisms in Ukraine.



32 Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Moldova, Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions, Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2014, March, 2015 // http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/republic-of-moldova-enp-report-2015_en.pdf

33 See <http://uacrisis.org/about/>

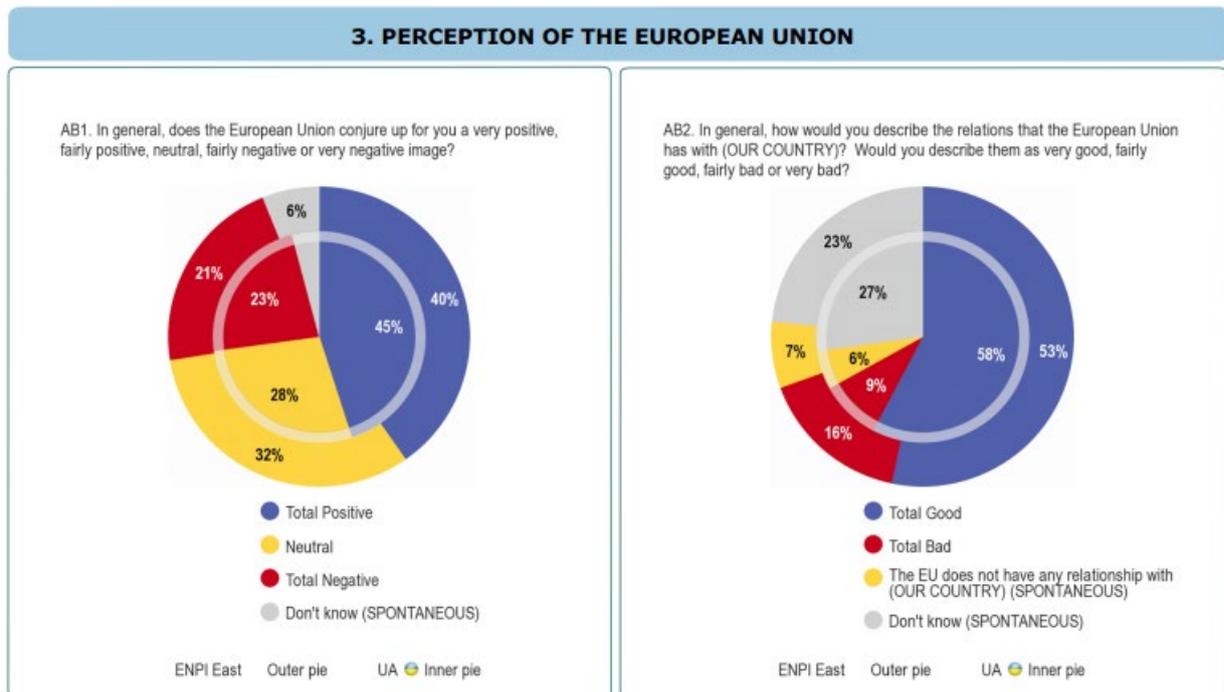
34 One of the caricatures “Differences in life expectancy in the EU and in Ukraine”, published by the Stronger Together campaign in order to promote EU benefits in an innovative and humorous format // <http://iwp.org.ua/caricatures.html>

When it comes to speaking about the EU integration benefits to the people of Ukraine, local civil society has been particularly active. Together with the Embassy of the United Kingdom, other EU Member States' embassies and the EU Delegation to Ukraine the hugely successful “Stronger Together” information campaign was launched in 2013 aimed at informing Ukrainian people about the benefits of cooperating more closely with the European Union. The campaign brought together governmental authorities, civil servants, the EU Delegation to Ukraine, EU member country diplomatic missions, the Ukrainian and European business communities, media and the civil society. The main activities of the Stronger Together have been (1) a comprehensive public awareness campaign involving national and regional media: analytical articles, infographics, TV project on the First National Channel called “Made in Europe,” public events with top politicians from Eastern and Central Europe, and flash mobs; (2) “Doing Business in EU” Consultational Platform to support domestic businesses, who are beginning to enter promising EU markets and (3) political dialogue with the parliament and the government.

In addition to supporting the Stronger Together campaign, the EU Delegation to Ukraine is actively participating in many other activities promoting the European integration agenda in Ukraine. The delegation organises cultural events, the European Day activities, study days, interactive workshops, competitions, seminars, regional visits and much more. The delegation also issues an online magazine Eurobulletin and regularly publishes EU cooperation news.

Public opinion

Most Ukrainians feel that the European Union is an important partner bringing peace and stability, according to the Spring 2014 EU Neighbourhood Barometer for Ukraine. The survey found that 63% of Ukrainians feel that the EU is an important partner (a rise of 11% from a similar poll conducted by the project six months earlier), with 52% believing the EU and Ukraine share sufficient common values to be able to cooperate – slightly higher than the average for the ENPI East region. The poll found that 53% of Ukrainians trusted the EU (up from 46% in the previous poll) – more than other international institutions like the UN (43%) and NATO (34% - up from 21% earlier this year). 58% of respondents felt that the EU had good relations with Ukraine (a rise of 12% from the previous poll), while only 9% felt they were bad (compared to 28% earlier this year).



What can be communicated vis-à-vis Ukraine and the EU?

- Provisional application of important parts of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement began on 1 November 2014. The provisional application of the DCFTA is set to start on 1 January 2016
- In response to the challenging situation in Ukraine, the European Commission adopted a support package for Ukraine in March, worth € 11.1 billion over the coming years
- In 2014 the EU committed € 10 million in a programme to support the civil society in Ukraine
- More than 250 EU-funded projects are currently being carried out across a wide-range of sectors, regions and cities in Ukraine
- Last year Ukraine participated in the Tempus programme with 60 on-going projects
- 786 students and staff were selected for mobility within partnership by Erasmus Mundus
- Ukraine also participated in the eTwinning plus project with 86 schools
- Young people benefited from the Youth in Action programme, with 2,349 people taking part in mobility projects and 264 in the project for young people and decision-makers in this field. In Brussels, within the EU institutions

In Brussels, within the EU institutions

Background

The EU has already started to take concrete steps for enhancing the communication efforts within the Eastern Neighbourhood. Following the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on 29 January, and the European Council conclusions of 19-20 March, the EU's High Representative is now in the process of establishing a dedicated team of experts, to be based within the Strategic Communications Division of the European External Action Service (EEAS), focused specifically on Eastern Partnership related communication.

The European Commission is continuing a wide range of communication activities for and in the Eastern Partnership region, which will be reinforced with the currently updated Visibility Strategy for the Eastern Partnership region. In addition, the Regional Communication Programme "OPEN Neighbourhood: opportunities, participation, engagement and networking with people from the southern Neighbourhood area (Regional Communication Programme phase II)" (OPEN programme) has been launched that will build on the achievements of the previous Regional Communication Programme (2009-2014) for the region. The previous programme was designed around three components: a journalism training component (Media Neighbourhood), an Information and Campaign Support component best known as the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre and a media monitoring and opinion polling component (EU Neighbourhood barometer, daily Neighbourhood Media Monitoring and regular media analysis). The general objective of the new programme is to contribute to the improvement of public perception of the EU and a better understanding of European policies and their impact through the regional and bilateral EU support and cooperation programmes in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Public opinion

According to the latest EU Neighbourhood Barometer report, the image of the EU has slightly improved since spring 2014. Fewer respondents now see the EU in a negative light and the proportion of respondents considering the EU's image as positive has also increased. More respondents now think that the EU should play a greater role in security and defence. The areas in which respondents are most likely to call for greater EU involvement continue to be trade (76%), economic development (74%) and human rights (64%). Relations between the Eastern partnership countries and the EU also continue to be perceived in a predominantly positive light: 57% describe relations between their country and the EU as good. Both the availability and quality of information about the EU have improved.

AB6. Could you tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements concerning the European Union?

| | The European Union is an important partner of (OUR COUNTRY) | | (OUR COUNTRY) and the European Union have sufficient common values to be able to cooperate | | The European Union brings peace and stability in the region surrounding (OUR COUNTRY) | | The support of the European Union contributes a lot to the development of (OUR COUNTRY) | | The European Union has the appropriate level of involvement in (OUR COUNTRY) | |
|--|---|------------------------|--|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | Total 'Agree' | Diff. Aut.2014-Sp.2014 | Total 'Agree' | Diff. Aut.2014-Sp.2014 | Total 'Agree' | Diff. Aut.2014-Sp.2014 | Total 'Agree' | Diff. Aut.2014-Sp.2014 | Total 'Agree' | Diff. Aut.2014-Sp.2014 |
| ENPI East | 61% | +3 | 59% | +3 | 52% | +4 | 47% | +3 | 47% | -4 |
|  GE | 68% | -1 | 56% | = | 58% | +2 | 55% | -3 | 39% | -6 |
|  UA | 67% | +4 | 63% | +5 | 58% | +6 | 51% | +5 | 52% | -5 |
|  AM | 75% | +8 | 62% | +10 | 62% | +12 | 65% | +7 | 59% | +6 |
|  AZ | 42% | = | 47% | -1 | 38% | -4 | 37% | -2 | 40% | -7 |
|  BY | 42% | = | 51% | = | 30% | +3 | 22% | = | 25% | +1 |
|  MD | 60% | +1 | 54% | = | 48% | -2 | 60% | +2 | 58% | -3 |

35

Eastern Partnership on Facebook

(as of 19 April 2015)

- Europe Day in Armenia 10,654 likes
- EU Delegation to Ukraine 9,888 likes
- EU Delegation Armenia 9,670 likes
- The EU's FB page for Eastern Partnership community 8,303 likes
- Information Center on NATO and EU in Georgia 7,119 likes
- Let's meet Europe in Georgia 6,142 likes
- EU Delegation to Azerbaijan 5,181 likes
- "Stronger together" campaign in Ukraine 3,935 likes
- EU Delegation to Moldova 2,976 likes
- EU Delegation to Belarus 1,865 likes

4. MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter of the paper presents key findings of the Center's training programme on EU-related communication in partner countries. There are many good examples of activities that have been successful in terms of advancing EU-related communication in individual countries. Furthermore, with some modification these initiatives can successfully be used in other partner countries. For example the Ukrainian civil society and EU Member States led "Stronger together" information campaign in Ukraine on EU benefits; a comprehensive government-wide EU communications strategy and related action plans in Georgia; fun video clips debunking EU myths and stereotypes and a dedicated EU online magazine in Moldova; the activities of the EU Centre in Armenia between 2012-2014, European film festivals in Belarus and the newly established EU Summer School in Azerbaijan. A lot of good work has been done, but there are many more opportunities to take the EU-related communication in the partner countries to a new level. There is always room for improvement, so the points below are specifically designed to provoke thought and draw attention to the challenges that the countries still face when it comes to effective EU-related communication. The findings reflect the overall context, wide-spread attitudes and common trends within the partner countries rather than describe specific situations in individual states.

- **Difficulties with adjusting to the new realm of communication**

The change of communication paradigm has created an entirely new situation for the communicators whereby information has to be predigested, appropriately packaged and then taken directly to the end consumer instead of hoping that people make an effort to look for the information themselves. The time for "SOS-communication" or "Send-Out-Stuff" method of distributing information is now in the past and the communicators have to be innovative and creative for finding new effective methods for disseminating their information. This also means that the focus has to move from producing uniform materials to targeted distribution/specific target groups and active campaigning.

- **Importance of EU-related communication not universally recognized**

Partner countries' ambitions vary in great degree when it comes to their relations with the EU, therefore, as might be expected, the interest towards developing EU-related communication within these countries is also varied. However, even for those who are clearly committed, often the priorities are not seen as something that should be proactively communicated, which means that these important issues are only dealt with when they surface. The situation is not made easier by the fact that the level of attention paid to communication work can depend on the personalities of government ministers and deputy ministers. If the minister decides not to communicate, then it is very difficult for the communicators to work effectively.

- **Communication strategies and plans tend to stay on paper**

Although there are many good examples of communications strategies and action plans in place in several countries, it seems that the strategies and plans still sometimes stay on paper and tend to be forgotten as soon as they are finalised. In several cases a lot of effort has been put into producing and approving the documents, but in reality not much has changed since the approval. It is important to remember, that these documents serve as very useful platforms for communication work, unifying the individual efforts of different institutions and maximising the achievements. If made really well, these documents can even act as proper to-do lists for all those involved in the communication implementation process. However, it has to be noted, that some of the countries don't yet have any strategies in place for communicating the EU-agenda.

- **Room for improvement in government-wide coordination efforts**

Well-coordinated government-wide effort was pivotal in Estonia's EU integration process and related communication work. First steps are now taken in some of the countries, but there is certainly room for improvement in each country for making sure that dedicated central coordinating mechanisms are in place, functioning smoothly and everybody is kept in the loop. Unfortunately, weak coordination often results in lack of clarity and focus in communication work. If one hand doesn't know what the other is doing, the end result will not achieve the desired results. In the worst case scenario,

one stakeholder is not even interested what the others are doing, which in turn leads to lack of or confusing messages.

- **Communication units are in a wrong place within organisational structures**

More or less every government department in partner countries now has a dedicated communication unit within its organisational structure, but often the communicators are very distant from the management and decision-making within the hierarchy. People who work on communications tend to be seen as technical specialists who only have journalists' contacts and have the capacity to organise events. They are seldom involved in policy formulation or strategic planning as they are not always regarded as sufficiently qualified or competent. However, the research for this paper has shown that the majority of communicators working in these institutions are professionals and competent to provide advice if they are given the right responsibilities and access to information. Giving the communication units the appropriate profile within the organisations would also solve the problem of lengthy approval processes, which result in delayed information flows.

- **Policy divisions are tasked with delivering communication activities**

For the reasons explained in the previous bullet point, the task of developing communication activities in relation to a specific policy or reform is often given to the policy divisions within the organisational structures. Understandably, with their main priority of developing the policy in the first place, communication will be pushed back on the to-do list and as a result it is often late and ineffective. These units also lack professional knowledge and experience when it comes to planning communication activities.

- **Lack of human and financial resources for communication activities**

Communication units within government departments and official institutions are usually small consisting of a few specialists or civil servants. At the same time proactive communication needs planning and those few people might not have the extra time for new activities. Hiring Public Relations companies or outsourcing communication work is also not a good solution for the problem, as these contracts require substantial amount of extra funding and competent people from the organisation still need to oversee the activities of these companies as public sector communication is very specific.

- **EU-related communication work revolves around official visits and events**

Very often EU-related communication work and the related coverage is driven by the activities of politicians, EU dignitaries and official events, which produces information that does not appeal to most of the target audiences. Press releases and information materials focus on political leaders meeting their EU counterparts, official launches or huge conferences. The materials tend to state bare facts like a meeting has taken place, initiative has been launched, project has been concluded etc. Not much attention is paid to the actual content – what does this meeting signify or initiative mean for local people, why is this being done now and what might be the impact in the future. This type of event-driven approach also leads to another problem - the flow of information is inconsistent. If there are no meetings or events on the agenda, there is simply no new information available about EU cooperation.

- **Relations between communicators and journalists often not based on trust**

Public sector communicators sometimes tend to think that journalists are unprofessional, lazy, unfriendly and not competent to cover their topical issues, but at the same time they fail to acknowledge that they themselves have substantially contributed to this situation. A few seminars in a year is not enough background information to cover complicated topics or publish in-depth analysis. On the other hand, journalists sometimes don't take the time to focus on more complex topics, don't check their facts and as a result produce low-quality content. With a bit more effort from both sides this situation can be turned around as professional relationships based on mutual respect would benefit everyone. In some cases communicators still seem to have the dream that they can only rely on journalists who write exclusively on issues related to their area of expertise. Unfortunately, in modern journalism with the multitude of topics and demanding deadlines this is no longer possible.

- **EU information in communication materials often too technical and full of jargon**
EU's official documents used by governments' own policy papers often use technical language full of abbreviations that are known only to people who deal with these issues on a daily basis. Communicators are often tempted to take this shortcut and copy these texts directly into their communication materials without translating it into a simple language that people can understand. This results in information products that are never read or picked up by journalists.
- **Full potential of social media not harnessed**
The majority of government institutions in partner countries now actively use social media for distributing official information and some are very successful in doing this. However, there is still a tendency for packaging the information in a tedious way that is not suitable for social media, which feeds on quick human interaction. Perhaps this is driven by fear that if you start using simple language the official information is no longer credible or there is simply not enough time to change official texts.
- **Journalists lack foreign language skills**
In partner countries many journalists don't have the necessary foreign language skills for them to be able to access official information about the EU. Therefore they have to rely on sources in their mother tongue or in Russian. More often than not even basic English is not understood or spoken, which makes covering EU-related news for them particularly difficult. This is especially evident among regional journalists, but a common feature among national media too.
- **Public outreach activities not based on strategic planning**
It is commendable that the politicians and government institutions have recognized the need to go to people in the regions as they have much less access to information compared to people living in the capitals. However, as these activities need a lot of time and resources, the tours should be developed based on the strategic objectives of these individual institutions. With limited resources all activities need to be prioritized and aligned with the strategic plans. Hiring PR companies is not always the magic wand for replacing the lack of resource or insight, as the concepts and messaging should still be overseen by the institutions themselves in order for the regional campaigns to be successful.
- **Jointly agreed systems for handling journalists' queries don't exist**
According to the journalists that participated in the training events, the current systems are confusing and often the communication units of the state institutions play "pass the parcel" game directing journalists with questions to other institutions. Often the questions will remain unanswered or the journalists are provided with vague information. This creates a lot of confusion and frustration among journalists, which can easily be avoided.
- **Many EU-funded projects lack visibility and their good work is not known**
There are hundreds of EU-funded projects operating in each of the partner countries and even the smallest ones can have a real impact on local communities. Unfortunately, as the projects are tasked with communicating their own activities and their communication skill levels are varied, there is not enough credible and attractive information available. The existing information tends to be difficult to find, very technical, lacking a human perspective and good quality visual materials.

5. THE WAY FORWARD

Based on the Center's research for the programme, key findings and the expertise of the highly-qualified communication professionals involved, the authors of this paper have developed (1) recommendations that propose different ways for developing EU-related communication in partner countries and (2) suggestions for the European Union for enhancing visibility of cooperation activities in partner countries. In the case of the partner countries, as delivering effective EU communication is closely linked to the practices and conduct of government communication as a whole, some of the recommendations take into account the broader context. For the EU institutions, the authors of the paper suggest to try to enhance the communication efforts in the region by tapping into the currently underused promotional potential of hundreds of EU-funded projects and programmes operating in the region.

Recommendations for partner countries

1. Coordinating EU-related communication and establishing clear responsibilities

In order for EU-related communication to work and achieve its objectives, it has to be very well coordinated on a national level. For the association countries, one option is to bring it under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, as prime ministers are in the position to require information and action from line ministries and other state institutions. For journalists and other stakeholders, a new establishment within these offices would serve as a key focal point, the main contact, where they can get comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding EU issues. Establishing such a unit requires close cooperation between all state institutions who deal with EU-related issues, other domestic stakeholders and the EU partners.

2. Upgrading the status of communication units within organisational structures

If communication units are positioned on very low levels within the organisational hierarchies, they lack access to vital information and are therefore kept completely out of the loop. Successful public sector communication does not only mean managing media relations, but it should serve as a key instrument for top management for planning and carrying out the organisation's activities effectively. Communication and disseminating EU-related information should be considered as important as the main activities of government institutions and therefore strategic communication planning should be an integral part of the organisations' functioning. The governments should budget enough resources for the communication units to run smoothly with sufficient resources to focus on proactive promotional activities as well as reactive media work.

3. Using simple human language when producing communication materials

Information products are not official or legal documents, people should be able to understand these texts without extensive background knowledge on these topics. The content should always be concise and to the point using simple human language, so the target audiences understand the information easily. In a way communicators should act as translators/interpreters predigesting and packaging technical information so that journalists can easily pick it up and people can quickly relate to the issues governments are trying to communicate.

4. Using topic-based approach instead of event-driven communication

Communicators need to move away from the standard approach using official meetings and events as the main source for EU-related news and replace it with important topics explaining how the changes and reforms will affect people in their daily lives. This enables them to communicate the EU proactively and consistently not depending on the events agenda. Different/specific target audiences (students, farmers, wine producers etc.) need to know what kind of opportunities will be available for them and what is required of them during the reform processes. At the same time, these specific topics should fit into the larger context and be aligned with the government's strategic EU-related communication objectives.

5. Involving representatives of different target groups as spokespeople

It is important to involve opinion leaders representing different interest/target groups in EU-related communication instead of using only politicians and officials as the key spokespeople. People trust and relate to their peers and colleagues, therefore the members of these groups can successfully carry EU messages to them. In Estonia, as the EU negotiations progressed, many target groups expected and demanded specialized

information (farmers, entrepreneurs, those involved in the fishery sector and oil shale industry, etc.), so capable spokespeople were chosen from those groups and they were able to distribute relevant information to their peers. The civil society organisations are very useful partners in this and they should be actively involved in disseminating relevant information to different target groups.

6. Producing more content suitable for online use

Given the impact that social media can have on certain target groups and its low cost implications, a lot more attention could be placed on producing suitable content. Widely used document formats such as Adobe .pdf or even Word .doc do not work on social media, therefore communication products and information materials should avoid these formats and always be packaged appropriately. What works are short messages, attractive visuals, engaging competitions and listing concise key points/facts. It is definitely a challenge for any communicator to present a four-page policy in 140 letters, but it's a challenge worth taking.

7. Building trust between public sector communicators and journalists

It is evident that there is still a lack of trust between the communication officials working for government institutions and journalists. This is partially caused by prevailing negative attitudes towards critical media coverage that is in a democratic society an elemental part of free media. A good tool for developing relations between government communicators and journalists on neutral grounds is to start organising regular informal off-the-record briefings, especially if the topics in relation to the reforms or the EU-agenda are complicated. This gives both sides a good opportunity to get to know each other better and understand each other's positions. Naturally, these relations come with certain limitations, but the current situation can be improved.

8. Treating media equally

Getting information from state institutions and officials cannot be dependent on whether media outlets are critical towards ruling government parties or not. The media should not be divided into good partners and enemies, as all journalists deserve accurate and timely information about government activities and the work being carried out by their government in partnership with the EU.

9. Including regional journalists in EU-related communication activities

Journalists from the regions are an invaluable tool for government communicators for disseminating information to the people living in the regions. They can give an enormous contribution to managing the fears and expectations of regional populations outside the capitals. It would be beneficial to always include regional journalists in all types of EU-related communication and activities, as the research shows that currently they tend to be forgotten or not seen as a priority group to work or partner with.

10. Managing people's expectations and highlighting the country's own responsibility

This is especially important in the association countries, as people will often expect things to improve overnight and forget that there is a lot of homework to be done before changes start to happen. The countries have to implement many difficult reforms, which will all take time before they start bearing fruit and deliver tangible benefits to people. For the communicators, it is important to manage these kinds of false expectations within the society early on, focusing on long-term benefits and showcasing small step-by-step improvements that are taking place already. It is important to highlight that it is up to the countries themselves to make change happen within their societies and others can only provide support. If the false expectations are not managed properly, the disappointment is just around the corner and this has a negative impact on the public support to the reforms.

11. Turning the EU into a domestic issue instead of a foreign issue

For the association countries, the Association Agreement together with the DCFTA will affect the state in all areas possible. Therefore speaking about these issues and necessary reforms should not only be the task of government institutions or departments dealing with foreign/EU relations. Every line ministry and each individual government organisation has its own set of priorities and activities that need to be communicated to the public hence the communicators of all government institutions have to be involved in developing and implementing EU-related communication.

12. Establishing media self-regulation bodies and codes of ethics

It became evident during the discussions at the training seminars, that unnecessary accusations towards both sides are still quite common among communicators and journalists. To improve this situation, media self-regulation can be used and necessary new bodies established that can handle complaints from the public. These bodies can be established using the best practice from current EU Member States and provide the public and the institutions with a possibility to find solutions to disagreements with the media without the need to go to court. It is also important to establish a neutral body, where the journalists can turn to, in case they counter problems when interacting with state institutions. Creating codes of ethics for both sides helps set the framework for media relations based on trust, which in turn advances media freedom.

13. Educating journalists on the issues and work of the European Union

National as well as regional journalists would all benefit from trainings and seminars about the EU, so they are prepared and have an understanding of the history of the union, know fundamental principles and how the EU institutions work. It is also essential for them to know the right sources for EU information, the necessary contacts and ways of getting access to relevant spokespeople.

14. Creating clear systems and networks for handling journalists' queries

In order to achieve successful and effective EU communication, the governments have to create very clear systems, which both parties – the officials as well as the journalists are aware of and follow. For example, it has to be defined what line ministries can communicate, what are the responsibilities of the foreign ministry, prime minister's office, EU stakeholders etc.

Suggestions for the EU for enhancing visibility in partner countries

1. Increasing the visibility of and promoting EU-funded projects in the region

According to the EU's communication and visibility manual, communication and visibility activities should be included in the work plans of all EU-funded or co-funded actions. Therefore all the projects and programmes financed by the EU, including the ones active in the Eastern Partnership region, have developed their own communication agendas and have allocated financial resources in their budgets to fund promotional activities. However, apart from these general guidelines on visibility and communication, there is little to ensure that projects come up with good plans and communicate their activities effectively. It is important to note that because of the nature and size of the projects, only a small number can afford professional media or communication officers as part of their project teams. This creates a situation where the skills of people working on communication activities can be very different, which in turn means that the quality and impact of the projects' public outreach work is extremely varied and the achievements of the projects are often not visible. In reality, the majority of the projects are not communicated professionally: there is a lack of good quality information available either in print or online; press releases use complicated language and are sometimes not even sent out, or are sent out days after the events have taken place; there are not enough attractive visual materials available and the "news" comes from the launching and closing events of the project rather than presenting achievements and results. This leads to minimal media interest in projects' activities and as a result many great stories are never told.

Suggestion: *Project communication could be carried out by communication professionals, who have relevant expertise and resources for promoting the projects' activities in print, online and using public relations initiatives skillfully. If the project cannot afford to hire a dedicated communication professional, the service could be outsourced to a dedicated project like it is in Armenia/Georgia (EU Centre in Armenia, Let's Meet Europe); the delegations can hire individual communication professionals or the EU can provide regional communication teams to help deliver these services. As one option, the funding allocated directly to projects' communication and visibility activities could be pooled to finance such new services that ensure professional results.*

2. Updating the communication and visibility manual for EU external actions

The "Communication and Visibility Manual for the European Union External Actions"³⁶ was developed in 2010. The manual has served as a point of reference for hundreds of EU-financed activities providing guidance and examples on how to highlight EU participation in cooperation projects and the achievements of EU support. The majority of the guidance is as relevant today as it was five years ago, however, some of the areas of communication have substantially developed and some of the requirements are no longer relevant or cannot be used in modern communication work. This is especially true to some of the visibility requirements when designing templates for communication products, including press releases, leaflets, brochures, newsletters, display panels, banners etc. While it is very important to use the EU flag as the EU's main logo, the unified templates with pastel colours are no longer as effective in communication as are attractive visuals showing the EU in action. The revolution of social media has made communicators stop using portable document formats (pdfs) for the majority of communication materials, especially for the items meant for online use. The guidelines are also missing a section dedicated to tips for using social media for promoting the EU and encouraging communicators to maximise the online presence of their projects.

Suggestion: *The manual could be updated with a new edition, renewing the guidelines in the areas where communication has advanced during the past years. A more flexible approach could be adopted towards designing communication products as ready-made templates are not necessary for certain types of the products. Guidelines and helpful advice could be added to encourage social media use and direct engagement with beneficiaries and partners.*

36 See https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication_and_visibility_manual_en.pdf

3. Creating visual materials from the region that tell stories

The visual materials produced from the region by the EU projects tend to capture official launches and meetings instead of demonstrating the projects' work with beneficiaries in their environments. The communication and visibility plans of the projects often require them to organise opening and closing events, mid-term conferences and official meetings, which means that most of the visuals come from the coverage of these events. Although taking photos of official gatherings is an important tool, these images don't usually illustrate the actual work of the project and the beneficiaries in action. Moreover, as most of these official events are organised in the same conference rooms in each country due to similar capacity requirements, the photos all tend to turn out very similar with only changed faces and banners on the background. For someone who does not recognize any of the people, the photos look almost identical and do not give much information about the project nor distinguish it from others.



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Suggestion: Incorporating modern visual communication techniques in promotional activities and social media efforts can significantly increase their effectiveness. The projects could take photographs of their work with their beneficiaries throughout the duration of the project cycle as one picture is worth a thousand words. The visual materials should not only be coming from official settings, but constantly show the project in action and its beneficiaries. In many cases these photos already exist in the personal galleries of the project managers, but because of the official requirements to mainly cover visibility events they often don't reach the EU communication services and therefore cannot be widely used in EU promotional materials.

4. Producing EU information materials suitable for local audiences

Printed information materials are still a necessary tool for promoting the EU within the partner countries, especially in the regions. However, there is a big demand for materials in the local languages and in Russian that are written in a simple language and have been designed with specific target groups in mind.

Suggestion: Visually attractive leaflets with a few simple messages are more successful than glossy magazines, technical booklets or lengthy annual reviews of project/policy activities. As people nowadays tend to read less, the texts should be short and the messages right to the point, illustrated with interesting visuals. The information should be in the local language to achieve maximum impact.

5. Using human language instead of EU project talk

As it was already mentioned in the list of recommendations in the previous chapter, information products are not official documents, people should be able to understand these texts without extensive background knowledge or without having an academic degree. The use of technical texts and complicated

37 "Leadership in the context of improvement and coordination of decision making process in VET sphere development seminar-discussion took place on 15 April, 2015" // Photo and title used by the project Possibilities and challenges of introduction of dual system in VET sphere in Armenia

38 "Children enjoying healthy food grown with the help of EU-funded project training farmers in Khachpar village" // Photo and title used by the Rural Income Generation (RIG) project implemented by Save The Children in Armenia and financed by the EU

acronyms in promotional materials is still wide-spread, which in turn means that the real messages are not communicated properly.

Suggestion: *It is very important to avoid technical jargon and complex sentences, which make it impossible for readers to understand the main messages. Communicators need to speak human, which means different things to different people in different contexts, so understanding the context is essential and that can be done by collaborating with colleagues and stakeholders in the region.*

6. Engaging with visitors of social media accounts and websites

Social media is actively used by most of the EU stakeholders in partner countries and the majority of large projects and initiatives has their own website. However, the social media accounts and the websites still tend to use the standard approach of uploading information without engaging with the visitors and not keeping the web homes “live” after the launch. This is especially true in the case of many dedicated project websites.

Suggestion: *The websites and social media accounts can be brought to life with short and interesting news on relevant topics, photos and infographics about the projects’ progress, interactive online quizzes and competitions, instead of publishing lengthy press releases. For example, online quizzes developed by the EU Centre in Armenia reached thousands of people and at the same time educated its participants, tripled the website traffic and handing out great prizes provided excellent media opportunities for the EU. The more interactive the online platforms are, the more rewarding it is to communicate with the younger generation. If there are no plans to keep some of the websites and accounts live after the launch, it is better not to launch them as individual platforms, but incorporate the information into other active portals.*

7. Developing new formats for open discussions and peer encouragement

New times require new ways of getting people to interact and contribute to discussions and debates. While the traditional formats of lectures and presentations are still very much in place, new formats and settings can be used to encourage an open exchange of views and critical debate of important EU topics. Peer encouragement is also a valuable tool that could be used more as people who have experienced different EU programmes are likely to recommend these to their peers, so they can be used as excellent spokespeople in communication materials in print, online or in person.

Suggestion: *Bringing together people with very different backgrounds from senior civil servants, business men, professors to religious leaders for a few days outside the capitals/usual settings with interesting topics for discussions is an innovative format that proved to be very successful in Armenia where the “EU Club in Armenia” was established. Similarly, encouraging networks of the Erasmus alumni can be very useful for promoting the programmes among the youth.*

8. Increasing awareness among policy and opinion makers

EU-related communication in Eastern partner countries still tends to be targeted to the public at large with a few exceptions like youth organisations and student associations that are already seen as important target audiences. However, there are many more specific segments of the general public that could potentially be good partners and information multipliers helping to grow public support in many designated areas.

Suggestion: *EU-related communication is effective only if local opinion-leaders and relevant state and non-state actors start acting as multipliers of information. Involving policy and opinion makers more in EU-related communication by offering different and relevant cooperation formats will help increase awareness of EU cooperation and activities in the region and spread the necessary messages.*

9. Offering foreign language training courses to journalists

Many journalists in the Eastern Partnership region don't speak either English or French, they have to rely on information in their mother tongue or in Russian. This means that their coverage lacks the information and data available on official EU sites and this can ultimately hinder objective reporting on EU matters.

Suggestion: *Intensive language training courses could be offered to journalists, editors and editors-in-chief dealing with EU/international topics in partner countries. This could fit into the EU's new project for the whole neighbourhood focusing on the training of journalists and media specialists - the new "Media Hub project". Foreign language training courses could be an integral part of this new training platform.*

10. Focusing on broadcasters and TV-channels as the most influential medium

There are hundreds of print media outlets and magazines in each of the Eastern partner countries publishing thousands of print copies every day. However, television is still by far the most influential medium in each of the Eastern partner countries, as the circulation numbers of the print media are marginal and only a tiny group of people takes their news and analysis mainly from newspapers. According to the local public surveys, 80-90% of the population in each country get their information from television news.

Suggestion: *Currently local TV-channels tend to report on the EU only in relation to political developments in the countries. Development projects and their benefits to the countries rarely make it into the media. Good cooperation with broadcasters and different TV-formats developed for local channels can have make a real difference. It is important not to forget or underestimate the power of local TV-channels who have a huge impact on local communities.*

11. Working with local media instead of publishing ready-made articles

Drafting articles for local media is a standard communication tool and works well in many cases. However, for the EU's communication activities in the Eastern Partnership region it might not be the best or most effective approach. Ready-made articles for the entire region very often don't take into account the context of each individual country and might come across as too generalized or not relevant at all.

Suggestion: *Local journalists are excellent cooperation partners when it comes to getting the messages out to local populations. It really pays off to work with them regularly, provide them with relevant information and invite them to different EU-related activities. An interview with an EU dignitary conducted by a local journalist published in a local newspaper has much more resonance within these countries than a pre-made article. Taking a group of local journalists to see the activities and achievements of EU-funded projects on the ground has much more impact than a press release or off-the-shelf product on EU-wide and ENI-wide initiatives sent to the journalists.*



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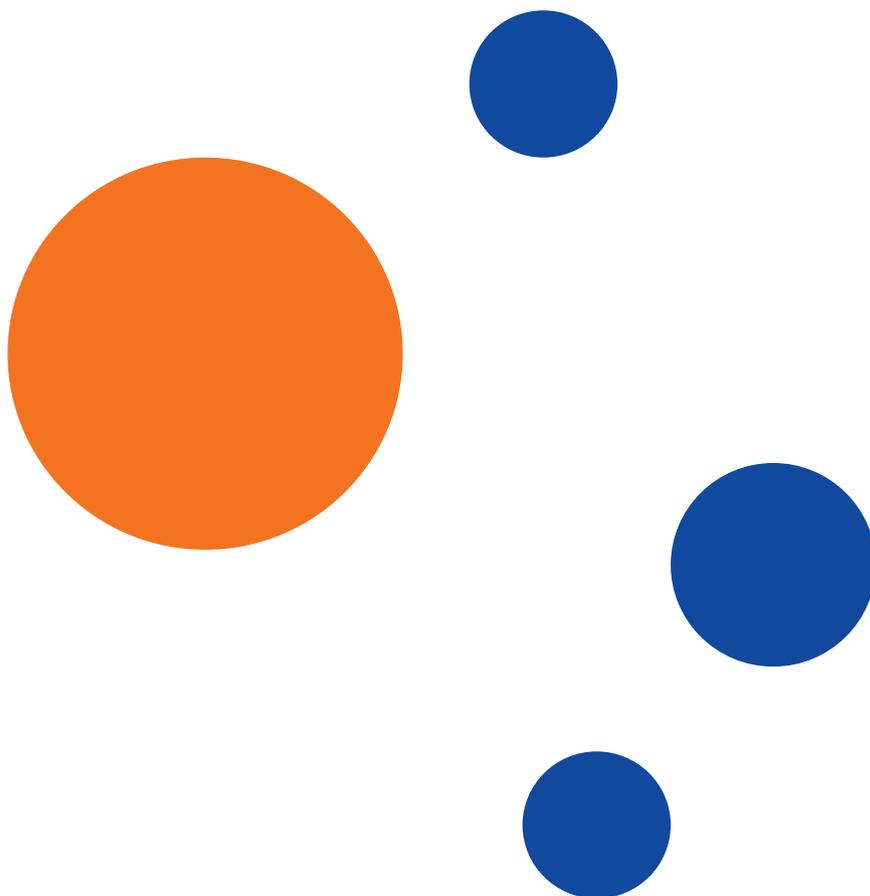
**ESTONIAN
DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION**

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