

FINAL REPORT

INTERREG NWE – Communication Evaluation 2014 – 2020

This report was prepared for
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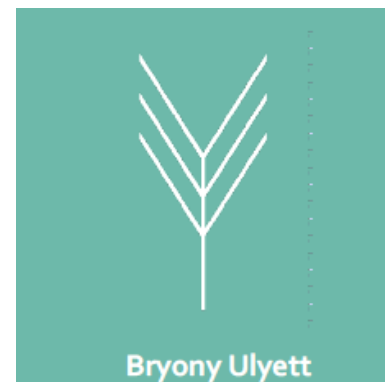


Table of contents

Introduction	5
I. Methodology	6
1. Analysis of key communication objectives.....	6
2. Survey.....	7
3. Interviews	8
II. Global analysis of the NWE communications strategy	9
1. Inputs.....	9
a. Communication strategy and objectives.....	9
b. Investments	11
c. Distribution channels.....	13
2. Outputs	13
a. Owned media.....	14
b. Earned media	15
c. Paid media.....	15
3. Outcomes	15
a. Changes in knowledge about the programme.....	15
b. Changes in behaviour	17
c. Changes in beliefs	18
4. Impacts	18
a. Average number of eligible applications in step 1	19
b. Average number of successful applications in step 2.....	19
III. Conclusions of the global analysis of the communications strategy	23
IV. Recommendations	25
1. Inputs.....	25
2. Outputs	25
3. Outcomes	25
4. Impacts	26
5. Salient points from survey and interviews.....	26
6. Commendations.....	27
7. Further suggestions	27
8. General conclusion.....	27
V. Annexes	28
1. External communications matrix.....	28
2. List of survey questions	30
3. Detailed channels usage (survey).....	31
4. Interview summaries.....	32
5. Suggestions from the survey.....	34

Introduction

The present evaluation is destined to provide an overview of the success of the communication strategy which the Interreg programme for North-West Europe (NWE Programme) implemented from 2014 to 2020, of the perceptions which stakeholders had of the programme throughout its implementation, and of the impacts of this communication strategy on the programme objectives.

The evaluation was performed over the summer of 2020, at the end of the programming period, and will be used to inform decisions about communication in the following programming period.

Input used for the evaluation:

- NWE Cooperation Programme and NWE programme manual
- NWE communications strategy (and social media strategy)
- Success rate of projects
- NWE evaluations of events
- Brief notes step 1 targeted calls and step 2 calls
- TA budget and yearly follow ups
- Time spent by the JS on communication activities
- Information available on the NWE website
- Survey of 181 people
- 9 interviews of project partners from around the NWE area
- 2014 communication evaluation
- Discussions with the communication unit

I. Methodology

1. Analysis of key communication objectives

The evaluation was designed based on the objectives and predefined indicators set out in the communications strategy, which was approved by the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) in November 2015:

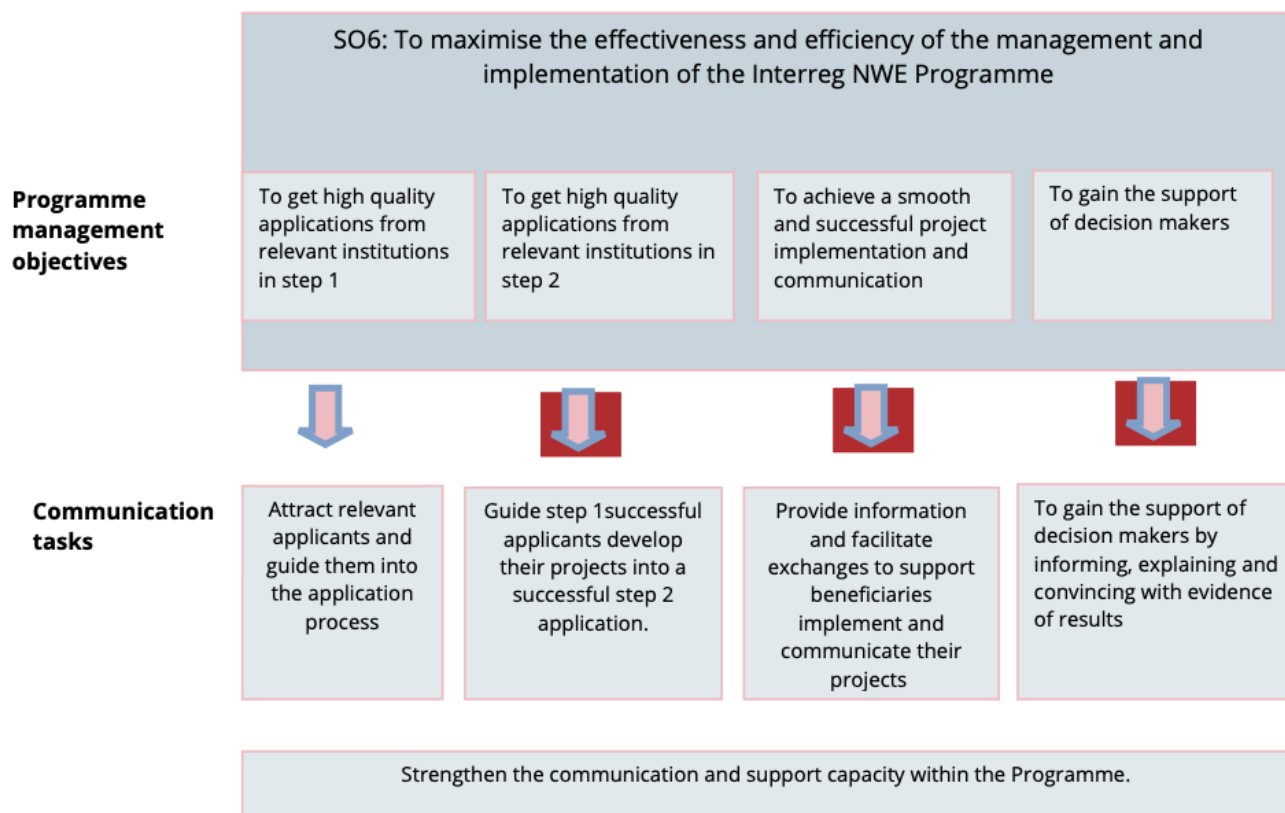


Figure 1 communication objectives ('tasks') / communication strategy 2015

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Resources allocated to the campaign or effort	Activities conducted to influence audiences to perform a desired behaviour	Audience response to outputs	Levels of impact on the programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Money - Staff time - Distribution channels used - Materials used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of materials disseminated, calls made, events held, - Social media tactics employed - Reach and frequency of communications - Free media coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes in behaviour intent - Changes in knowledge about the programme - Changes in beliefs - Responses to campaign elements (shares, likes, number of participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Average number of eligible applications per call - Average number of successful applications per call

Figure 2 Evaluation Indicators / communication strategy 2015

Inputs and outputs

The documents were compiled and compared to retrace the key programme objectives, and to assess how the programme communications strategy supports these objectives.

Information regarding communication activities and channels (website, events) and were examined either online or via documentation and evidence provided by the programme's communications team (e.g., TA workplans, success rates, 'brief notes', event evaluations, publications, budgets, estimations of time spent).

Outcomes and Impacts

Outcomes were measured via the survey conducted over a 5-week period in August and September 2020.

Social media and web frequentation figures were provided by the programme's communication team, as well as event feedback forms.

Impacts (number of applications) were measured by the programme, as calls were published, and collected in the 'brief notes'.

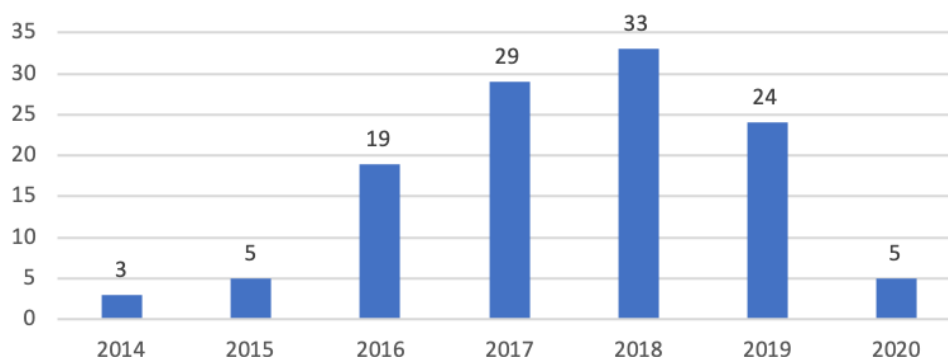
2. Survey

The survey was open and promoted by the JS on the website, by email and on social media from 8 August to 14 September 2020. A total of 181 respondents participated, including mostly project stakeholders (159), but also 22 respondents from a broader audience base.

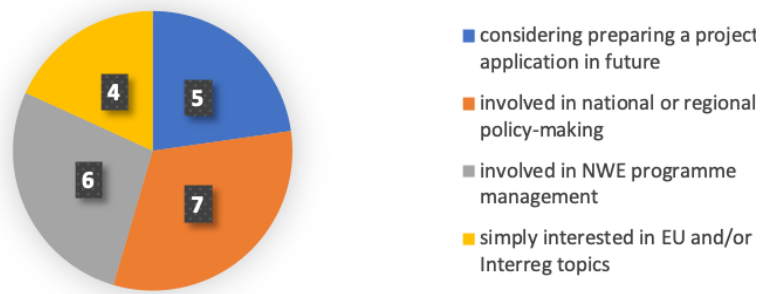
PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS: 159

	Associated Partner	Lead Partner	Project Applicant	Project Partner	Total
No Answer		1	1	3	5
Belgium	1	9		16	26
France	2	2	1	21	26
Germany	2	7		17	26
Ireland		3	1	7	11
Luxembourg		1		5	6
Netherlands		14	5	9	28
Switzerland				1	1
UK		7	1	22	30
Total	5	44	9	101	159

INVOLVED IN INTERREG PROJECTS SINCE 2014: 118



OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: 22



The survey was designed in collaboration with the JS to measure perception and use of the different activities and channels, their clarity and accessibility, and to collect suggestions.

The questionnaire (EUSurvey.eu) was open to all, to allow for any internal (programme management) or external perspectives (“simply interested in EU and/or Interreg topics”) and to consider the views of all the programme audiences. The focus was however clearly expressed by the programme as being on the perceptions of the programme’s main audience: project stakeholders.

The majority of questions offered a 5 point rating from 0 to 4 or from never to frequently, where the lowest two points are considered negative, the third point is considered neutral, and the fourth and fifth are considered positive.

Questions unfolded according to stakeholder categories selected, so that the more specific detailed questions (e.g. project guidance activities, project communication...) were asked only of project partners. None of the questions were mandatory, but overall and per stakeholder category they were completed at 90%. The full list of questions is included in the Annex 2 of this document.

It should be noted that as most of the surveyed individuals were involved in existing projects, perceptions tend to confuse project guidance and communications activities. However, it would be unreasonable to expect project partners to talk exclusively about the communication strategy and not to take a global perspective on their experience working with the North-West Europe programme.

Given the profiles of the respondents, the global survey results need therefore to be considered with the perspective of “interactions that *project partners* have had with the programme”, as it is normal from a user perspective, not to distinguish between communications teams and project teams but to come away with an overall impression of “programme communications”.

The survey included multiple opportunities to offer suggestions (e.g. when a respondent answered that information provided was insufficient, he/she was offered the opportunity to say what was missing) and more information, all of which is included in Annex 5 of this document.

3. Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 9 project stakeholders (2 from UK, 2 from the Netherlands, 1 each from France, Luxemburg, Belgium, Germany and Ireland), coming from a representative sample of partners, lead partners and project applicants. The final questions of the survey offered the opportunity to discuss further and to provide contact details, and the interviewees were selected from this list.

The 30-45 minute interviews discussed in more detail some of the more salient answers which were provided in the questionnaire, views on accessibility and clarity of programme information and any specific changes which were perceived.

An anonymised list of points raised during these discussions is included in Annex 4 of this document.

II. Global analysis of the NWE communications strategy

The KPI used were selected based on what was provided by the JS to perform this evaluation as far as inputs, outputs and impacts are concerned. The survey and interviews were mostly used to measure outcomes as defined in the table of indicators. The detail of the analysis is proportionate to the timing and contract value of the evaluation.

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Resources allocated to meet programme objectives	Activities conducted to influence audiences to perform a desired behaviour	Audience response to outputs	Levels of impact on the programme
Cooperation programme Communication strategy TA communication budgets + Expenditure 2015-2019 Time spent Communication channels set up	Number of materials disseminated, calls made, events held, social media tactics employed Reach and frequency of communications Free media coverage Survey results on usage of com activities and project implementation support	Web and social media frequentation Participation and appreciation of events Survey results on appreciation Survey results on changes (behaviour, knowledge, beliefs)	Average number of eligible applications per call Average number of successful applications per call

1. Inputs

The inputs measure the resources allocated by the programme to meet its objectives. The first input is therefore the **communication strategy and objectives** set for the communication activities. The second is **investments**, and the third is the **channels** that were set up.

a. Communication strategy and objectives

The 'Cooperation Programme' mentions communications in support of:

- *Specific objective 6: To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the INTERREG NWE programme*
*Key to achieving this result will also be **the development of suitable channels and activities for the communication of funding opportunities and the dissemination and capitalisation of results** of transnational cooperation projects. (p.59)*
- *2.B.5.1. A description of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives (p.61)*
 - *Continuous development of the programme website.*
 - ***Creation of programme information** and publications and other relevant online tools.*
 - ***Organisation of events** to generate interest for participation in the programme, showcase and disseminate results of the programme supported actions to professional audiences and the wider public and facilitate inter-project interaction and cooperation.*
- *The communication strategy will be implemented in the Joint Secretariat, under the direction of the programme director and the Managing Authority. It will work **in partnership with the NWE-MS and other bodies** identified in Annex XII (3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. In particular, the NWE-MS will support the communication activities through providing,*

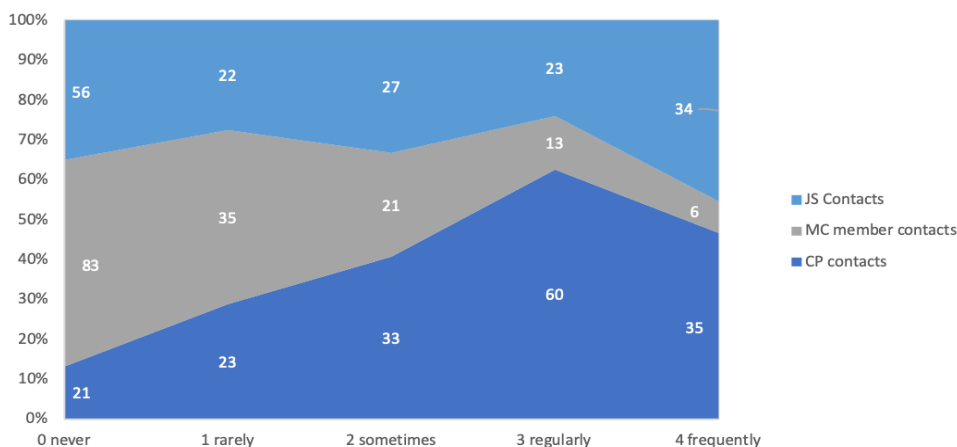
where necessary, national specific information on potential beneficiaries; providing a point of contact for potential applicants; ensuring wide dissemination of programme information; organising national events. (p.82)

- *The communication strategy aims in particular to inform potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under this Cooperation Programme and to publicise to citizens the role and achievements of cohesion policy, through information and communication actions on the results and impacts of the programmes and projects. It will take into consideration the elements detailed in Annex XII of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. (p.82)*

Responsibilities for meeting communication objectives are shared between the JS, the Monitoring Committee members, the CPs and the beneficiaries.

The communications strategy goes into some detail about the different responsibilities/audiences but the evidence of this shared responsibility is mostly apparent in the survey results, by considering the different

FREQUENCY OF INTERACTIONS WITH PROGRAMME



frequency of interactions with programme bodies, and the perceptions of the 75 communication leaders. A large majority of both of these are positive, with a particularly regular interaction between project partners/applicants and Contact Points, which was confirmed in the interviews as respondents appear to get most of their first level information about the programme (calls, results...) from the programme's channels (NWE website and events) and clarifications and guidance from the JS and Contact Points.

The 'external communication matrix' (point 6.2 of the communication strategy, included in Annex 1 of this document) includes SMART indicators for specific activities designed to meet the specific programme communication objectives ("communication tasks"), benchmarked against the reference values of IVB (2014), although these were not measured at the planned intervals or for specific tactics/activities beyond those included in this document.

Objectives 1, 2 and 3 of the SO6 ("attract relevant applications and guide them into the application process", "guide step 1 successful applicants to develop their projects into a successful step 2 application" and "provide information and facilitate exchanges to support beneficiaries implement and communicate their projects") all focus on **information and opportunities for projects** (attraction of applicants, guidance, implementation support) and objective 4 ("to gain the support of decision makers by informing, explaining and convincing with evidence of results") leans less clearly towards "gaining the support of decision-makers" via **support and facilitation of exchanges** which was done to a degree during transnational events and seems to have been dealt with outside the communication strategy via the 'capitalisation' activities.

The communications matrix (included as an annex) goes into a lot of detail concerning the expected behaviours, tactics approaches and performance indicators with precise point increases per year. However, no mid-term evaluation was made, so this survey took a more global look at the use of tactics and channels to meet objectives and general perception indicators that cover the progress made from 2015 to 2019.

The below table shows the measurements that were provided to assess how well the different target audiences were reached. Unfortunately, it also shows that these measurements of reach are not sufficiently representative of success: many of these stakeholders also interact with the programme

outside of the activities defined in the communication strategy (e.g. project development, programme management).

RELEVANT AUDIENCES LISTED IN THE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION MATRIX

Stakeholders	Reach measurement
Potential project partners	Number of contacts in the database Average rate of eligible applications per call
“Multipliers” in contact with relevant potential applicants	Networking/Public relations (external events)
Applicants with a project approved in step 1	Successful applications in step 1
Partners of approved projects	Satisfaction survey
European Commission elected officials of local, regional and national governments	Policy makers opening transnational events, or attending info days
Journalists	Project media clippings

At the time of defining the new communication strategy for the next programming period, it is strongly recommended to include a regular monitoring system for communication activities as well as standard KPI linked to programme activity types and stakeholder reach which will enable consistent follow up and regular adjustment of the different strategies according to content/timing or any other parameters which influence the success of a call for proposals.

b. Investments

- **Staff Time**

The JS provided an estimation of time spent on different activities which shows that the programme spends a total amount of 7,4 FTE (Full Time Equivalents – i.e. staff time) on communication activities per year, based on this table established by the JS for 2019.

Overall, around a third of time spent is spent on events (33%), and just under a third (28%) is spent on the tools and activities used for project guidance. At the lower end of the time investment, public relations (presentations and participation in external events) accounts for only 9% and web and digital activities take up a mere 16% of total communication time.

Categories		TOTAL estimated % of FTE	TOTAL FTE per category	AVERAGE
Web	NWE programme website	50,5	0,72	10%
	NWE programme newsletter	18,1		
	NWE Making an impact video	2,75		
	Europa website	0		
	www.interreg.eu	1		
Social media	NWE YouTube channel	2,25	0,44	6%
	LinkedIn account	20		
	Twitter	22		
Programme promotion and capitalisation events	NWE Infodays at national / regional level	47,75	2,42	33%
	NWE transnational events (e.g. NWE Making an Impact 2019 or Project Idea labs)	195		
Publications	NWE brochures and leaflets	2,5	0,02	0%
Public Relations / external events and presence	participation / networking and external events	52,6	0,68	9%
	Interact meetings	15,5		
	Local / National media	0		
	EU Infocentres	0		
	Policy makers	0		

Support and guidance to projects	Enhancing programme reference documents (e.g. programme manual, guidance documents, cap call docs...)	12,55	2,06	28%
	Video tutorials	11,5		
	Step 2 Workshops	32		
	Support to applicants or PPs on project communication (individual meetings, calls, emails....)	109		
	Approved Projects Seminars	41		
Developping and promoting programme communication strategy	Communication evaluation	2,5	0,38	5%
	Capitalisation strategy	20,5		
	Other documents (AIR, gap analysis...)	14,9		
	Other	0,5		
Internal coordination for communication	Communication team meetings / staff meetings	37	0,66	9%
	CP meetings and trainings	29,1		
TOTAL		740,5	7,4	100%

As the communications objectives are first and foremost set to attract project participants and the desired impacts concern eligible and successful applications, this explains why a majority of JS and CP time (4,48 /7,4 FTE = more than 60%) was dedicated to **events and direct support and guidance** to projects.

However, we can also see that relatively little time was spent by the JS and CPs on **public relations** (0,68 FTE), which is the only effective (although difficult to measure) way to reach multipliers such as media or policy-makers. The proportionally small amount of time spent on these activities by the JS and the CPs could explain why so few outcomes exist for this target audience. Media relations (as a multiplication activity) seems to have been devolved entirely to projects: a total number of 199 online project press clippings (mostly local) were collected by the JS and the CPs.

In terms of **ongoing monitoring** it should be noted that these media clippings were simply listed each year, but it would be worth compiling these clippings by country and analysing the actual texts (positive/negative/EU and Interreg mentions etc.) in relation to the country and the reach of the publication to extract relevant information and to monitor the content of these clippings more regularly to ensure Interreg/Cohesion Policy messages are included.

The **digital activities** appear to be the most useful time investment as they only take up a total amount of 1,14 FTE by the JS and the website is nonetheless the most used communication channel to find out about the programme (more under 'Outputs').

- **Communications budget** (excluding staff costs)

The communications budget was set for the period 2015-2023 and in 2017, 2018 and 2019 we can see a clear underspend, which could be due to over-budgeting.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total 2015-2023
Website		75 000 €	50 000 €	51 000 €	52 020 €	53 060 €	40 591 €	27 602 €	14 077 €	363 351 €
Newsletter - web tool										0 €
Other promotion material		40 800 €	41 616 €	42 448 €	43 297 €	44 163 €	33 785 €	23 000 €	11 750 €	280 860 €
Conference	95 000 €	96 900 €	98 838 €	100 815 €	102 831 €	104 888 €	80 239 €	54 563 €	27 827 €	761 900 €
Other Events		51 000 €	52 020 €	53 060 €	54 122 €	55 204 €	42 231 €	28 717 €	14 646 €	351 000 €
Total	95 000 €	263 700 €	242 474 €	247 323 €	252 270 €	257 315 €	196 846 €	133 882 €	68 300 €	1 757 110 €
Actual costs	N/A	241 583 €	85 967 €	162 060 €	207 538 €					

Closer monitoring (and more detail linking the terminology of expenditure to communications activities planned) would be beneficial to demonstrate more “value for money”.

c. Distribution channels

The programme's main distribution channels are included below. In terms of meeting the requirements of the communications strategy, this seems ample in terms of owned channels of communication.

Website: This is where all information about the programme and the calls is found. It is updated for each call, as well as on a regular basis by the JS and projects (for the project webpages). It is the central information point of the communication activities. The design is modern and attractive but some of the 'newer' project partners reported finding it difficult to navigate. It is however beyond a doubt the most used and appreciated tool of the programme (please refer to the 'Outputs' section). Frequentation peaked at 14000 visits per month in 2019, when it was at around 5500 unique visitors at its' launch in 2016 (+254%).

The general **distribution list** (alerts) implemented in 2016, increased from 1200 subscribers at the time of the 5th call for proposals to 2983 at the time of the 9th call in 2019, showing a **148% increase**, and the appreciation of interested parties to being informed directly by email when a call comes out. CPs were also cited as extremely useful sources of information as they "adapt" the general information to the specific countries/languages and some send out their own emails.

Social Media: Twitter has just over 5000 followers at the time of writing, steadily rising (+43%) between call for proposals 5 and 9. The LinkedIn account (currently nearly at 4000 followers) shows a sharper progression (+135%) but progressed only from 1124 followers to 2652 between calls for proposals 5 and 9.

Events: Overall, events are well-attended and appreciated. They are still the main project development and result sharing tool of the NWE programme. Meeting people and forming partnerships is still very much at the heart of all communications in the Interreg world – this is reflected in the budget, time spent, and appreciation levels of the survey.

2. Outputs

Communication activities/channels were measured quantitatively in relation to **category, reach, perception** as "regularly or frequently used to find out information about the NWE programme", and investment (cost + time).

Outputs/activities = list of activities carried out as reported in the brief notes and the time estimate.

Outcomes/reach = number of people/responses (e.g. analytics and event participation) reported by the JS in brief notes and directly by the communication team.

Impact = number of positive ratings in the survey (frequently and regularly, or 3 and 4) divided by number of responses to that question.

Inputs = investment (cost and time should be added to obtain actual Investment per activity).

Categories	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT	INPUTS	
	Activities	Reach	Used as source of info about NWE	Average Yearly Cost (2017-2019)	JS yearly time estimate (FTE)
Web	NWE programme website	+ 227% sessions (2016-2019)	76,2 %	29000 €	0,73
Social media	NWE YouTube channel	80 subscribers	7 %	3000€ (videos)	0,45
	LinkedIn	3808 followers	18,5 %		
	Twitter	5131 followers	12 %		
Events	NWE Infodays at national / regional level	3652 participants	39 %	80976 €	2,43
	NWE transnational events (e.g. NWE Making an Impact 2019 or Project Idea labs)	1620 participants	44 %		

Publications	NWE brochures and leaflets	4400 printed distributed at 75+ events	22,5 %	14251 €	0,02
Public Relations	External events	31 events/ presentations (over 3000 people)	4,5 % (OpenDays/EWRC)	N/A	0,52
	EU Infocentres	N/A	9 %	N/A	0
	Local / National media	199 project clippings	23 %	N/A	0
	Policy makers	20 attended events	11 %	N/A	0

The table above can be used to estimate the relevance and future opportunities of **owned media** (the tools and channels managed by the JS) by comparing usage/reach vs investment.

For example, the inputs vs/impact of digital channels could be further increased, and the evaluation/monitoring of all activities including earned media could be further developed to track in the step 1 calls “where applicants found out about the call”.

More insights into these outputs are provided below under owned, earned and paid media.

a. Owned media (under NWE control)

Website: Although one interviewee who was unfamiliar with the NWE programme and remembered clearly having difficulty finding useful information on the website at the beginning, this source of information and usage has confirmed its popularity and widespread usage as the first source of programme information (**76,2% Frequent usage vs 30k€ investment and 0,73 FTE**). Recommendations include adopting a user experience process to better understand and cater for the information needs of new participants, and to update the website navigation periodically to focus on results when they are available.

Social Media: There are over 5000 followers on Twitter but the activity on social media has not been regularly monitored or analysed so it is difficult at this time to understand how to further grow or better target publications. **Less than 0,5 FTE was spent on developing this activity in 2019, so reach is proportionally excellent.** It would be worth periodically crossing Twitter accounts with LinkedIn users to see if people tend to follow one or both. The social media “strategy” (which is more a set of guidelines for use than a strategy) has only existed since 2018. More growth and clarity of purpose can definitely be expected in this area. Recommendations include making more frequent (monthly) analysis of follower/subscriber profiles and behaviours (likes/subscriptions) which would help adjust content to interest.

Events: Meeting people and forming partnerships is still very much at the heart of all communications in the Interreg world, **75 events** were organised by the JS/CPs during the programme. Physical events are widely appreciated by all (although some comments did mention that it was always the usual suspects). The relatively low scores in the above survey results refer to “usage of events to find out more about the programme”, despite **consistently positive evaluation forms** (94% satisfied with “Making an Impact” on both content and organisation, with 90-95% satisfied with PI labs). This is probably due to the main appeal of events being more about networking than finding out about the programme itself (for “Making an impact” 73% said they came to network and 70% said the most interesting was the exhibition and forum, indicating that these participants enjoy finding out what others are doing and meeting people).

It may be worth considering integrating more digital formats in a systematic way (eg National infodays) but principally when the focus is to provide programme information and not actually to build partnerships. This would also help to keep costs low and to move into a post-Covid era.

Publications: In the survey, participants expressed a low usage of printed documentations, even if interviewees generally appreciated being able to pick them up at events. In terms of costs, it seems that most of the other costs in “communication materials” are actually used only for events (promo materials, leaflets, roll ups) with graphic design of the programme manual taking up substantial resources. The quality of publications (structure, design, linguistic clarity) is however very good for those who have access to their printed versions or who download them from the website (potentially

projects/decision-makers), but it is mostly the programme manual which was used by the projects themselves of course.

b. Earned media (indicative of public relations / time spent working with multipliers)

Public Relations: Most external activities involve programme **participation in external events** with a thematic link or a cooperation network perspective (e.g. Interact). This could certainly be expanded to build stronger links with audiences that are relevant to NWE projects via thematic events at which specific external “decision makers” or media are present, to share programme/project results more widely.

Other potential information sources about the programme were not included in the survey, as only “DG Regio Open Days” (as formulated in the survey, a.k.a. EWRC ‘European Week of Regions and Cities’) which scored 4,5% popularity as a way to find out about Interreg NWE. What could be concluded from this is that Public Relations/External events activities at the Open Days are not a worthwhile investment by the programme **to reach projects/future projects**. As there were very few non-project responses it would be unreasonable to use this result to measure the interest of decision-makers or journalists in the Open Days.

There are also many other **external channels** which inform their own audiences (Interreg potential partners) about Interreg NWE’s opportunities and results, not just EC platforms, Interact or the media. Building better profiles of specific audiences (e.g. private sector, policy-makers...) and participating in external activities where these audiences are present, will also help to distribute content/materials and increase visibility of NWE opportunities and results.

c. Paid media (online or offline advertising)

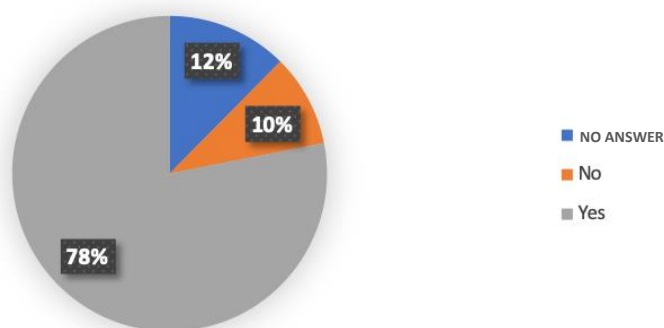
There were no paid media activities between 2014-2020. In the current digital landscape, more and more promotion of posts/content is necessary to target and reach specific online audiences. Even though no budget was set aside for this, it may have to be in future. It is however particularly important before engaging in paid media activities to have a clear set of user profiles and engagement objectives/paths to make it worthwhile.

3. Outcomes

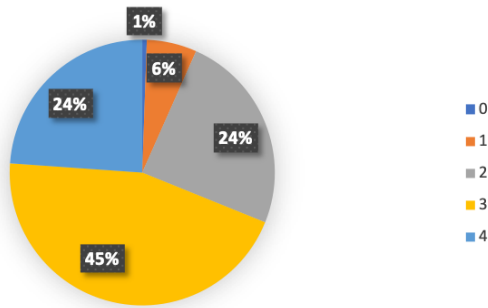
a. Changes in knowledge about the programme

The objective set by the programme of 76% satisfaction in 2020 has been reached and exceeded.

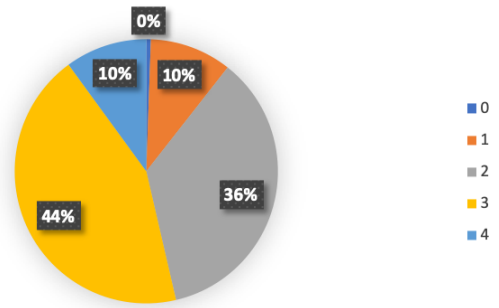
OVERALL, 78% FEEL SUFFICIENTLY INFORMED



EASY TO FIND : 69% AGREE

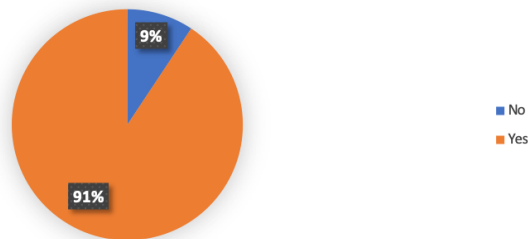


EASY TO UNDERSTAND : 54% AGREE



The majority of questions offered a 5 point rating from 0 to 4 or from never to frequently, where the lowest two points are considered negative, the third point is considered neutral, and the fourth and fifth are considered positive.

91% OF PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS LEADERS FEEL THEIR COM OBLIGATIONS ARE CLEAR



From the interviews, it appeared that the differences in ease of understanding and ease of access were mostly due to the **complicated nature of the programme information**, and not to the way in which this information is communicated (linguistic clarity, copy, design...). Overall, interviews were conducted with people who have mostly been involved in the current programming period. Those involved for longer tend to understand where to get the information and the clarifications that they need.

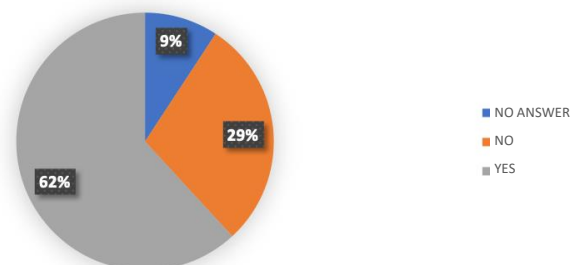
This points towards a possible additional level of information (and **audience mapping**) which is needed between those who **have been involved** in Interreg projects before and who are accustomed to the language and technicalities, and those who are **completely new** to these types of projects but who are desirable as partners in future projects.

Calls for proposals

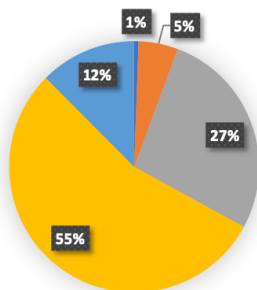
Suggestions for further promotion of calls for proposals are provided by survey respondents and are listed under Annex 5.

Many interviews and suggestions from the survey point to the usefulness of previous **results** for building new projects, and quite a few did express that more success stories (or warnings) could be shared. One interviewee mentioned being a little frustrated that their project's results were shared with the JS but was not promoted by the JS. Most respondents were however happy with the accessibility and quality of project results.

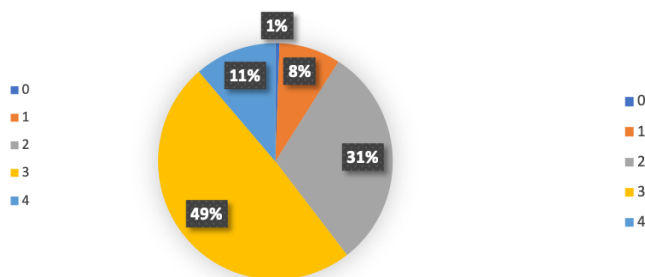
62% project respondents consider calls for proposals to be sufficiently promoted



67% consider information about Programme and Project Results to be of good quality



60% consider information about Programme and Project results to be clearly accessible



In addition, survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement with different changes they experienced.

Between 2014 and 2020, respondents:	Negative					Positive				
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
Gained knowledge about the programme	1	6	20	60	92					
Have become more aware of the benefits of participating in the programme	2	10	30	61	71					
Found programme information and guidance to have become clearer	2	17	55	64	37					
Actively encouraged others to participate in the NWE programme	14	20	39	52	52					

Overall respondents **gained knowledge about the programme**, increased their **awareness of the benefits** and generally tended to recommend participation in the programme to others (mostly as part of the project development process, not as multipliers), but results were less positive about **programme information and guidance**, which only seems to have gained moderately in clarity, despite the number of activities organised and the positive ratings attributed to events. As addressed above, this potentially reflects more on the complexities of the programme itself than on communication activities to engage with these audiences.

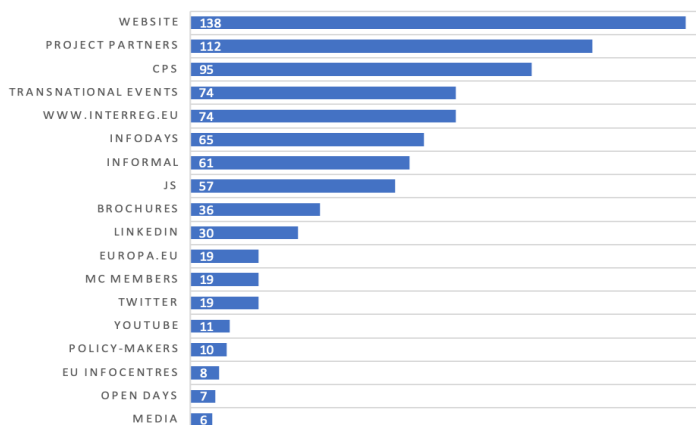
b. Changes in behaviour

Overall, behaviours seem to have shifted to adapt to new means of communication (and completely new content) throughout the 2014-2020 period. Although social media is only slowly becoming a popular way to find out about the programme, it has not been a huge transformation catalyst for programme audiences (mostly projects), who remain focused on the NWE website, direct contacts with CPs and other project partners, and in networking at events.

To measure these behaviours, the survey asked “Which of these channels do you use the most to get information about the Interreg NWE programme and its cooperation opportunities, benefits or results?”. The exact ratings are provided under Annex 3.

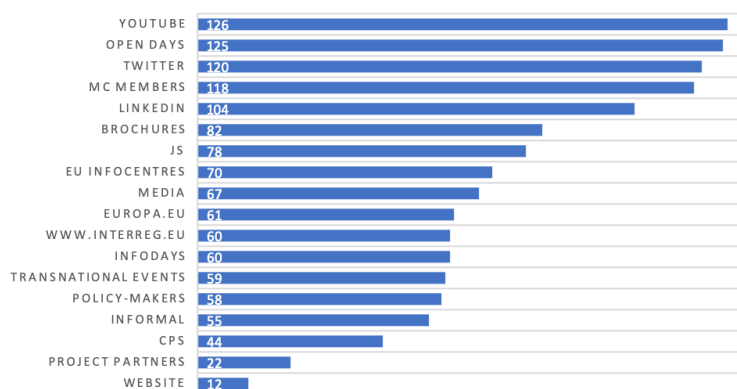
MOST POPULAR WAYS TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE PROGRAMME (SCORES 3 AND 4)

By a substantial margin, the most popular and frequently used source of information about the NWE programme is **the NWE website**, with 138 respondents (**76,2%**) using it regularly or frequently, followed by **project partners and CPs**. This is understandable as the website is a central source of information but what is remarkable is that the three next most popular sources of information are direct contacts and transnational events – which does not confirm an overwhelming tendency to lean towards digital channels in general.



LEAST POPULAR WAYS TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE PROGRAMME (SCORES 1 AND 2)

Over 100 people said they never or rarely found information about the Interreg NWE programme on Youtube, Twitter, Linked In, via MC Members or at the Open Days (EWRC). 82 people rarely or never use brochures, however 4400 were distributed at events. Only 12 persons said they rarely or never used the website – which is consistent with the above graph of most used channels.



Social media tools, although low in investment terms, seem not yet to have been particularly appreciated by audiences as a particularly useful information source to partners – at least not as much as direct contacts. Three of the interviewees did not even know there were video tutorials or where to find them. Many suggestions in the survey suggest social media as a place to find more information, however this is likely to be content related, and not be a sign of low awareness of these channels, or the frequency of posts. This expectation should therefore be taken into account when defining the content calendar for social media channels, and definitely adjusted to adapt to the profiles/needs of the followers.

c. Changes in beliefs

Project respondents were asked to rate the impact of interactions with the NWE programme on knowledge, behaviours linked to project development.

Thanks to interactions with the NWE programme I have...	Not at all	Somewhat	Reasonably	More than I expected	Absolutely
Increased my knowledge about cooperation opportunities	2	7	56	49	42
Changed my approach to communicating about the work I do	12	26	54	52	11
Found partners for successful projects	13	17	42	47	35
Found partners for future projects	11	25	47	41	28
Changed my perception of Europe	27	25	43	35	23

Responses show a considerable amount of self-perceived change in these areas.

4. Impacts

In 2014-2020 the NWE programme organised calls in two stages.

In **step 1**, the programme’s aim is to get an appropriate number of eligible applications (which requires applicants to understand the purpose, requirements, partnership, themes), then **step 2** goes into further detail on project development, this is measured via the survey results (“usefulness of the specific project development tools”).

The purpose of a step 1 call is mostly to attract and inform relevant partners about the criteria and opportunities of putting together an Interreg NWE partnership. More importantly, this could not happen without a very **pro-active communications plan** to reach out and engage with the potential applicants.

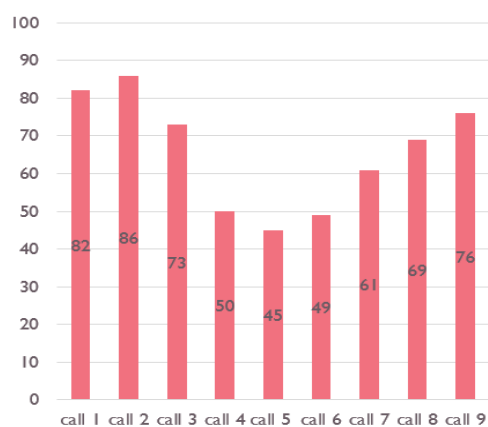
We therefore focused on the “attraction” of the documented communication activities to the step 1 phase in the brief notes step 1, and then looked at the appreciation rate of project development

activities which the JS organises for step 2. We did not take the targeted call figures into account as this call was focused on renewable energy and therefore did not require the same levels of promotion from communications.

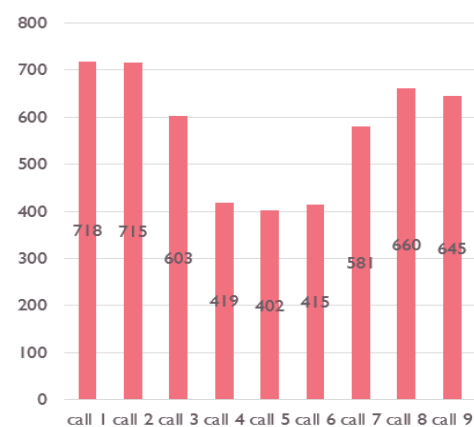
The success rate is calculated by dividing the number of **subsidy contracts** signed by the number of **submitted applications** in either step 1 or step 2.

a. Average number of eligible applications in step 1

Total number of **projects** (step1)



Total number of **partners** (step 1)



Dates	May-15	Nov-15	May-16	Nov-16	May-17	Nov-17	Apr-18	Nov-18	Jun-19	Average # step 1
Step 1 Calls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Applications	82	86	73	50	45	49	61	69	76	65,6
Eligible applications	77	79	71	50	43	48	59	68	73	63,1

This table shows that the criteria and key information communicated by the programme about the calls to the potential applicants was **well targeted and of good quality** (96%).

b. Average number of successful applications in step 2

The overall success rate of 28,6% in step 1 and 62% in step 2 then leads to a total success rate of 16,76%. This can obviously not be attributed to communication activities alone, and the impact of communications activities should be primarily linked to the step 1 calls, as step 2 is a more complex development process with fewer projects, all of which have been through step 1.

Step 1 Calls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average # step 1
Applications	82	86	73	50	45	49	61	69	76	65,6
Successful applications	19	21	17	18	14	17	21	23	19	18,7
Step 1 success rate										28,6%
Step 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average # step 2
Applications	15	20	16	16	14	17	20	23	19	17,7
Successful applications	9	15	10	13	9	11	13	12	7	11
Step 2 success rate										62%
Overall Success rate (subsidy contracts signed/step1 Call applications)										16,76%

To understand step 1 activities in more detail and link them to the rest of the project development process, we looked at the activities carried out and reported in the brief notes for step 1 and the event evaluation forms.

Some key figures are included below, which show that there has been a steady increase in usage of digital channels, mostly since 2016, that the events organised for or around step 1 have been extremely popular and useful in the overall project development process.

Call Dates	May-15	Nov-15	May-16	Nov-16	May-17	Nov-17	Apr-18	Nov-18	Jun-19	
Contextual Milestones	<i>Launch</i>		<i>Brexit</i>		<i>GDPR</i>					
New tools implemented			<i>Website launch</i>	<i>PI database</i>	<i>Social media strategy</i>					
Step 1 Calls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Digital Activities										Progress
# Web Sessions / year			66 195		106.44		146 369		217 069	+227%
Calls Peak NWE website frequentation			5500	5500	7000	9000	10000	10500	14000	+254%
# Contacts in Database			7000	7000	6000	6000	6000	5500	5500	-21%
# Subscribers			<i>(launch)</i>	<i>(launch)</i>	1200	1300	2868	2711	2983	+148%
# Twitter followers					3200	3750	3967	4249	4603	+44%
# LinkedIn followers					1124	1543	1806	2179	2652	+136%
Events										Averages per call
# Infodays		3	12	4	14	13	5	3	6	10,5
# Participants per event		102	83,3	56,2	43	42,3	30	30	30	52
Average reach per call (subtotal)										547
# External events				5	3	6	7	5	5	31
# Participants per event		<i>(included in infodays)</i>	<i>(included in infodays)</i>	65	86,6	163,3	163,3	163,3	163,3	134
Average reach per call (subtotal)										4154
# PI labs (#)			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
# PI lab participants			158	158	219	232	222	183	300	208
Average reach per call (subtotal)										1458
Average number of people reached per call via events										6159

* Figures in italics are estimations based on averages rather than reported figures when the latter was not available.

Application numbers of calls at step 1 are linked to a clear **peak in digital frequentation** when calls are announced: applicants come to get the information online and find out the deadlines, new rules and processes. Peak figures are not to be confused with yearly averages. E.g. a peak comes from web alerts or social media posts: it is clearly linked to a call, whereas yearly web averages show overall activity.

In June 2019, the peak web frequentation was at 14000 which is 89% of the 15738 contacts (combined from the contact database, the web alert subscribers, Twitter and LinkedIn followers). This is a very good rate, assuming that all of these contacts are different people. Even if they are not, the peak frequentation went from 5500 to 14000 between call 3 and call 9, which is a **254% increase** showing that the pull to the website from other channels is working well.

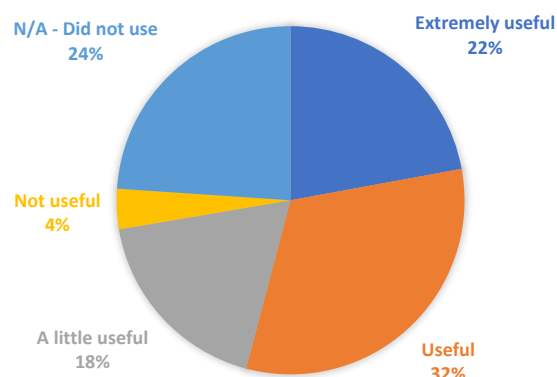
Overall, the events for Step 1 reached more than 6000 participants per call, and in total there were 5158 applicant partners (573 per call). Participant data (names/projects/attendance lists) would need to be crossed in order to analyse this relationship in any more detail.

The only **decreases** shown in this table (number of contacts in the database and Infodays participants) can be explained by the GDPR regulation coming into effect in 2018 and the fewer Infodays organised in the last three calls. Both of these decreases were matched with increases in other areas: more people signed up to the web alerts when GDPR came into effect, and more people participated in PI labs toward the end of the programme.

Step 2 guidance

Regular activities in support of **clarifying project guidance and information** were appreciated in both the survey and the interviews, with **54% of positive ratings** overall (in the useful and extremely useful categories), so although there are still some improvements to be made in comparison with the overall satisfaction levels of 76% it is not clear that this is a question of how the project guidance is communicated, and it could very well still refer to the complexity of the programme itself.

OVERALL USAGE OF PROJECT GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES



Overall, the usefulness of project guidance communications in project development and implementation was clear to survey respondents. Step 2 workshops were regularly cited in interviews as a particularly useful source of information for partners, however the survey points to **reference documents, approved project seminars and meetings** as the most useful project guidance activities, as shown in the table below.

Some inconsistencies between official programme documents were raised in two of the interviews - both referred to first level controls (FLC), as well as the bureaucratic/technocratic terminology which is a low frequency sign of the difficulties that “new” potential applicants may have in understanding and resolving some key questions or changes from call to call.

Project Guidance	Positive ratings	Extremely useful	Useful	A little useful	Not useful	N/A - Did not use	# responses
Reference documents	85,2%	67	66	17	2	4	156
Infodays	41,8%	19	43	29	8	50	148
Brochures	31,2%	7	39	55	11	35	147
Step 2 workshops	49,6%	26	44	13	6	52	141
Approved projects seminars	69%	46	52	16	5	39	142
Meetings	70,8%	58	49	18	4	22	151
Video tutorials	32%	14	35	39	6	55	149
Transnational events	56,5%	29	57	32	3	31	152

Project guidance support is a communication activity insofar as it organises the transfer of information to project audiences, but it would be restrictive to use the figures in the table solely to “rate” the perception of these activities as communication activities. The figures should be looked at within the overall evaluation of the programme.

Overall, a majority of survey respondents find the communication support to projects **very helpful**, even if it does not seem to be able to cover specific tailoring issues for specific partnership configurations. A couple of interviewees mentioned that these questions were easier to address in person thanks to direct contacts with the programme. All this is to be expected, as programme communication cannot be held responsible for addressing every single specific possible partnership configuration. Efforts can however be made to segment audiences better (please see other comments about new projects, private/public sector, multipliers, user experience journeys: understanding your different audiences and their information needs helps to produce more targeted information).

The communications push around calls for proposals seems to work well in combination with the work of CPs, and survey results point towards a need for continued targeted emails (web alerts) linked to clear information available on the website and social media channels.

The main point of satisfaction for project guidance and support in communication activities seems linked to meeting people (**networking/partnership building**) and learning about what others are

doing (**results, case studies** etc.), with technical guidance being found more in **formal documentation and seminars**.

This general level of satisfaction is consistent with the objectives that participants included in the evaluation form of the “Making an Impact” event in 2019 (73,74% came to network and 62,63% came to learn about NWE project results) and also with the initial (September 2015) conclusions of the first step 2 workshop “networking opportunities were valuable” and “case studies were useful”.

FIRST STEP 2 WORKSHOP (2015) GENERAL CONCLUSION

- “Participants were happy with the hands on approach and the availability of officers and CPs.
- They were happy with the step 2 approach
- The presentations were appreciated
- Case studies generally useful although there were some exceptions
- They liked breaking down into smaller groups
- Networking opportunities were valuable”

PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES: MAKING AN IMPACT (2019)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Learn more about NWE’s call for capitalisation and other support opportunities	41.41% 41
▼ Find partners to answer the call for capitalisation	15.15% 15
▼ Showcase your project and its results	53.54% 53
▼ Network with peers	73.74% 73
▼ Learn more about NWE projects	62.63% 62
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 3.03% 3
Total Respondents: 99	

The support and guidance provided by communications activities is very valuable, however the programme bodies should again keep in mind that it is not possible to attribute the **success of the project development process** (step 1 or step 2) only to the communication activities, or only to project development activities, or only to the strategic content of each call, as these things were not designed to be measured separately and remain the joint objective of the Joint Secretariat.

III. Conclusions of the global analysis of the communications strategy

Overall, the objectives laid out in the ‘Cooperation Programme’ were met and often exceeded by the JS communication team, even though the communications strategy does not explicitly reach out to citizens as an audience of the programme.

Implementation of the communication strategy tends to focus on strategic objective 6 (Applications and Results) which is focused on project partners (for calls for proposals) and on publicising results via the website or at programme events, neither of which appear to be particularly frequented by the “citizens” or “decision-makers”, other than those directly involved in projects.

This means that:

Objective/Task 1

Attract relevant applications and guide them into the application process: **96% of eligible applicants in step 1.** This could possibly be further improved by attracting specific types of project applicants, but still an excellent result.

Objective/Task 2

Guide step 1 successful applicants to develop their projects into a successful step 2 application: **62% of successful applicants in step 1 are approved in step 2.** This could possibly be improved by better tailoring the content of the guidance to sub-categories of stakeholders/applicants.

Objective/Task3

Provide information and facilitate exchanges to support beneficiaries implement and communicate their projects: **91% of project communication leaders consider their communication objectives to be clear.** Also, many supporting activities including web portal services are provided to projects, and networking is a key feature of events.

Objective/Task4

To gain the support of decision makers by informing, explaining and convincing with evidence of results. Best practice sharing / results (as a communication activity) **could be improved upon** – possibly by using examples of successful outcomes (not objectives) from previous programmes, and/or by spending more time reaching this target audience.

Objective/Task5

To strengthen the communication and support capacity within the programme. The team went from 1 communication officer only (reporting directly to the director) to a communication team: 2 communication officers, a part-time office assistant integrated into a unit with the CPs, under the responsibility of a unit coordinator. This is apparent in an **increase of activities and better integration of transversal communication responsibilities** within the programme. It has however complicated reporting and measurement.

Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Resources allocated to the communications strategy	Activities conducted to influence audiences to perform a desired behaviour	Audience response to outputs	Levels of impact on the programme
Strong points			
- Substantial and well documented investments in communications activities for project attraction and development.	- Varied communications support to project development activities, both in steps 1 and 2. - Frequent and multi-channel communications around calls and good cornerstone communications (NWE	By the end of the programme, projects know where to find information about NWE / Calls and 78% feel sufficiently informed. Changes in knowledge and usage of all communication channels	Step 1 activities are very focused on attraction/promotion and clarification. 96% eligibility is excellent.

- Key communication channels (NWE website + events). - Shared responsibility for communication between JS/CP/MS/projects	website, programme manual, citizens summaries...).	has increased substantially on all platforms.	
Weak points			
- Non-project stakeholders may have been under-targeted. - Desired behaviours from "decision-makers" not clear.	- Activities seem to focus only on Interreg partners. - Desired user journeys not clear for all target groups/all activities.	The benefits of receiving updates via social media still seem unclear to projects.	KPI of number of successful projects is not a relevant indicator of successful communication activities.

"The documentation is really excellent, the Contact Points very supportive and the JS always helpful." (survey quote)

IV. Recommendations

1. Inputs

In order to fulfil the fourth requirement of “gaining the support of **decision-makers**” it would have been useful to have described this audience in more detail in the communications strategy, so as to understand and acquire this support with proactive communication tactics for the specific type of “decision-maker” the programme seeks to interact with and what kind of support is expected of this/these type(s) of decision-maker. The communications strategy is a living document which is meant to be picked up and understood by new members of communications staff, and if not, it should be updated/clarified.

In order to better target the **full range of audiences** of the programme (which, for example involves many more private companies than in previous programmes), some key messages, designed specifically for each target group would help to clarify the different needs, focus the level of information required by each stakeholder group, organise specific activities/information, and help measure their success.

Despite what is announced in the introduction re “Annual implementation plans”, communication activities are only summarily listed in the TA Workplans, in the form of “objectives, tasks and milestones” per team, and therefore do not fully reflect the time and efforts that go into promoting the programme to its audiences, or the impact/results they produce. The **estimation of time spent** provided by the JS should be continued to fully reflect not just TA budgets but also the quality and quantity of investments.

The communications strategy goes into details at certain levels (e.g. **communication matrix**) and stays vague in others (e.g. audiences and key messages) which makes it complicated for the JS to regularly measure the impact of activities and the achievement of communication objectives. Indicators and specific targets from the matrix are also very specific and were not all deemed relevant and/or measurable in this evaluation.

2. Outputs

In terms of **operational promotion of results**, it seems that many of the activities fall under the ‘capitalisation’ activities of the programme, thus leaving a gap in the external communication approach, and the potential to reach out to citizens (and policy makers) as per the cohesion policy objectives expressed in the ‘Cooperation Programme’. Communication of results vs capitalisation activities might be further clarified according to stakeholder group (e.g. future projects and policy-makers vs current projects). Results could be made much more visible on the website, particularly at the end of the Programming period. Generally, they should be easy to find and categorise to help others understand the potential outcomes and benefits of transnational cooperation projects.

Social media has huge potential which has not yet been fully exploited although initial take-up has been very encouraging. To do this the programme needs to understand who the followers are (e.g. a dedicated and very short yearly social media survey “who are our followers, which of our channels do you use (Twitter, LinkedIn), what type of information are you interested in”.) would provide a better profiling of audiences there and therefore more adapted content.

3. Outcomes

Direct communication still plays a very strong part in the project life-cycle, whether it’s with the JS, the CPs or networking at transnational events. It seems that most attend events to find partners and

network, rather than to understand programme information, which can be found online and in publications for the general aspects and via direct contact for the specific ones.

Behaviours have shifted even more towards digital thanks to the **NWE website** which is easy to access and full of all the information projects could want and is consequently the most used source of information about the programme (76,2%). But direct contact is still overall the favourite. With more remote-working, less travel and fewer opportunities to meet in person in 2020, the programme should anticipate a large contextual change, and with it, changes in behaviour for the future. The health crisis will affect budgets and staff time (fewer events and/or fewer participants), and will put a lot of pressure on the digital sphere – more online workshops, targeted opportunities with fewer people, virtual interactions will dominate communications at least for the foreseeable future.

4. Impacts

Impacts were only defined as the **eligibility rate (96%)** and the **success rate (28,6%)** of step 1 even though this is inconsistent with the objectives as described in the strategy. Presumably, the overall success rate would have been easier to apprehend before the two-step process. Although the eligibility rate is relevant in terms of awareness and initial explanations, success rates are not attributable to communications alone, nor should they be measured in that way.

Impacts in communications are first and foremost measured in perception, by comparing usage, perceptions and intentions by different target groups before and after, or year after year in the same format.

5. Salient points from survey and interviews

Points raised in the interviews confirmed the perceived complexity of the content, but the appreciation of the efforts deployed to make content clearer and more accessible.

Interreg struggles with **complexity management**, and when one clarification is made, it seems that a new complexity emerges. Unfortunately, this is an on-going challenge, and one which makes it necessary to communicate Interreg all the more dynamically and flexibly.

In terms of **project communications**, the main debate seemed to be around obligatory project websites: for some this is too prescriptive, but very useful for others who do not want to communicate that much.

- The obligatory nature of Interreg platform project websites serves a clear purpose for capitalisation and results sharing, however it should not prevent “independent” alternatives from emerging from projects.

The challenges of programme management are not considered at project level, so it is frequent that the more experienced project partners feel that **Interreg should do more to connect them with new partners** or to help them thematically more than administratively, while more recent partners are still experiencing the thrill of transnational collaboration whilst getting over the administrative challenges.

- A **better audience segmentation and better explanation of communication objectives** at programme/project level would certainly help clarify the objectives of specific activities and responsibilities of different stakeholders.
- **The role of CPs** stood out as being particularly necessary and appreciated by partners, which justifies their strong implication in communication activities.

6. Commendations

The JS dedicated 7,6 FTE time to communicating and engaging with partners and future partners in 2019.

This is reflected in the quantity and variety of interactions and opportunities offered to potential partners in the NWE region – from events to digital and one-to-one guidance.

7. Further suggestions

- Continuously **check coherence** of reference and guidance documents.
- Spend (proportionally) **more time engaging with “decision-making” stakeholders** and working on multiplication activities to broaden the reach of information (for calls, results) but also to involve new partners from relevant stakeholder groups.
- A **yearly review** of communication strategy/plan/outputs seems necessary to implement and monitor progress and adjust direction when necessary according to changing objectives in project development and the implementation of new strategies/tools/activities and their specific objectives.
- Use **SMART objectives** and related KPIs for specific stakeholder groups.
- Consider **using results of previous programmes** where European cooperation is at the heart of the project (not so much the technical content) to engage with external audiences/citizens.
- Adopt a **more user-focused approach**: look into modern audience segmentations and get inspiration from marketing techniques such as ‘personas’ to define user journeys and experiences.

8. General conclusion

In aid of future (regular) **evaluations / impact measurements**, it may be useful to develop a 7 year strategy which focuses on the programme’s permanent communication mission (objectives, stakeholders, approach, frequency of measurement, resources, responsibilities), and to draw up complementary yearly (and detailed) **communication calendars and plans which are linked to budgets and expenditure** to focus the yearly tactics and activities (and measurement) in a more adaptable, measurable and stakeholder-focused manner according to specific objectives.

The flexibility needed to identify and approach different audiences based on the advancement of the programme (e.g. **implementation vs results phases** or from call to call) and to rethink or adapt these approaches as and when necessary (e.g. Brexit, Covid...) seems to be there to a certain extent, and is supported by the survey and interview perceptions, but was unfortunately not supported in the formal communication documentation of the programme (which was not updated to reflect the changes e.g. ‘capitalisation’ activities, team growth) or by regular impact monitoring per objective or per audience group. This could also be improved upon by ensuring the next communication strategy is clear in its’ mission but adaptable in its implementation.

V. Annexes

1. External communications matrix

The external communications matrix is a part of the NWE Programme's communications strategy.

Second monitoring committee. Ghent, 18 November 2015

6.2. External communication matrix

This chapter provides an overview of audiences, objectives, tactics (approaches) and the evaluation system (performance indicators, baselines and targets).

- a) Programme objective: To **get high quality applications** from relevant institutions in step 1
 Related Communication task: **Attract relevant applicants and guide them** into the application process

Target Audiences	Communication objectives			Tactics/Approaches	Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets ⁶		
	What does NWE want them to know	What does NWE want them to feel	What does NWE want them to do			2014	2017	2019	
Relevant applicants	-Who can apply -How to apply -When to apply -What the application process entails -What a successful project looks like -Who to contact for more information -What results the Programme expects from projects	-Inspired by the challenges put forward by the Programme and by other/previous projects -Informed about the application process -Confident they have what they need to apply -Easy to apply -Committed to provide results	-Read documentation -Read case studies/success stories -Reach out to Contact Points for support -Apply for funding and succeed	-Take a proactive approach, actively seeking visibility for NWE in external thematic events relevant to our target audience. -List potential relevant applicants per theme to tailor and target communication actions -Make Programme rules and requirements sound simple by using plain language and a combination of active/passive channels: website, brochures, events, emails, etc. - Facilitate applicants' access to Contact Points - Facilitate exchange among partners/potential partners (events, online platforms)	Average number of eligible applications per call Average number of successful applications per call Level of satisfaction about accessibility and quality of information	(IV B average)	1 point increase	2 points increase	2 points increase
"Multipliers" in contact with relevant potential applicants	-How and when to inform potential applicants about NWE requirements and calls	-Informed about the application process -Motivated to disseminate NWE's funding opportunities	-Disseminate NWE's funding opportunities among relevant applicants	-Regular exchanges with professional networks relevant to NWE's themes -Provide easy to share materials for them to share with relevant applicants	Level of satisfaction about accessibility and quality of information	7 (on a 1-10 scale)	7.5 (on a 1-10 scale)	8 (on a 1-10 scale)	8 (on a 1-10 scale)

⁶ Targets marked as „to be developed“ will be calculated on the basis of the results of Calls 1 and 2

- b) Programme objective: To **get high quality applications** from relevant institutions in step 2
 Related Communication objective: **Help applicants to transform concept notes into successful full work plans**

Target Audiences	Communication objectives			Tactics/Approaches	Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets		
	What does NWE want them to know	What does NWE want them to feel	What does NWE want them to do			2014	2017	2019	
Applicants with a project approved in step 1	-What a successful full work plan looks like -Who to contact for more information -What results the Programme expects from projects	-Informed about the application process -Confident they have what they need to apply -Inspired by other/previous projects -Easy to apply -Committed to provide results	-Apply for step 2 and succeed -Read case studies/success stories -Reach out to Project officers for support -Read documentation	-Make Programme rules and requirements sound simple by using plain language and a combination of active/passive channels (events for step 2 advice): website, brochures, events, emails, etc.	Average number of eligible applications per call Average number of successful applications per call Level of satisfaction about accessibility and quality of information Types of beneficiaries represented in applications Programme regions represented in applications Number of newcomers ⁷ represented in applications	(IV B average)	1 point increase	2 points increase	2 points increase
						7 (on a 1-10 scale)	7.5 (on a 1-10 scale)	To be developed	To be developed
						Call 1 data	To be developed	To be developed	To be developed
						Call 1 data	To be developed	To be developed	To be developed

c) Programme objective: To achieve a **smooth and successful project implementation and communication**

Related Communication task: Provide **information and facilitate exchanges** to support beneficiaries implement and communicate their projects

Target Audiences	Communication objectives			Tactics/Approaches	Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets	
	What does NWE want them to know	What does NWE want them to feel	What does NWE want them to do			2014	2017	2019
Partners of approved projects	-What a successful project looks like	-Informed about the application process	-Apply for funding and succeed	-Make Programme rules and requirements sound simple by using plain language and a combination of active/passive	Average number of eligible applications per call	(IV B 1 point increase)	1 point increase	2 points increase
	-Who to contact for more information	-Confident they have what they need to apply	-Read case studies/success stories		Average number of successful applications per call	(IV B 1 point increase)	1 point increase	2 points increase
	-What results the Programme expects from projects	-Inspired by other/previous projects	-Reach out to Project officers for support		Level of satisfaction about accessibility and quality of information	7 (on a 1-10 scale)	7.5 (on a 1-10 scale)	8 (on a 1-10 scale)
	-How to apply rules							

⁷ The term „newcomer“ refers to organisation not having received funds in the 2007-2013 and with a potential to become applicants in the 2014-2020 period

-How to report on progress finance and results	-Easy to apply	-Read documentation	channels: website, brochures, events, emails, etc.					
-How to close and how to achieve long term impact	-Committed to provide results			Statistics on ineligible costs	IVB values	To be developed	To be developed	

d) Programme objective: **Gain the support of decision makers⁸**

Related Communication task: Gain the support of decision makers

Target Audiences	Communication objectives			Tactics/Approaches	Performance indicators	Baseline	Targets	
	What does NWE want them to know	What does NWE want them to feel	What does NWE want them to do			2014	2017	2019
European Commission, elected officials of local, regional and national governments	-Interreg NWE has allocated funding to projects that will bring measurable positive long term change to communities -Funding is being used responsibly and according to NWE criteria	-Confident that funds are in the right hands and projects	-Read facts and figures	-Expand stakeholder matrix of decision-makers and multipliers in order to extend Interreg NWE's existing network of contacts. -Combine "proactive" actions (meetings with key people, events) with tools that allow this target audience find specific Programme/project data -Improve the collection and visibility of "measurable" results	Level of support for Transnational Cooperation	75% of respondents	80%	85%
		-Impressed with the results of projects	-Read and share case studies and success stories		Level of support for NWE	85% of respondents	90%	95%
		-Investing in NWE is worthwhile	-Sign up for updates		Level of satisfaction with accessibility of information about Programme/project results	7.6 (on a 1-10 scale)	8 (on a 1-10 scale)	8.6 (on a 1-10 scale)
			-Approve funding in the future programme period		Level of satisfaction with quality of information about Programme/project results	6.4 (on a 1-10 scale)	7 (on a 1-10 scale)	7.5 (on a 1-10 scale)
Journalists	-Interreg has allocated EU monies in a responsible manner to successful projects -Successful outcomes on Programme level and of various projects -Funding facts and figures	-Impressed by NWE projects and results -Informed about NWE funding opportunities	-Report in a positive light about NWE projects and successes	-Train project Communication managers in press relations -Provide an online platform for projects to share their stories and media-friendly assets: videos, photos.	Project's media coverage to be integrated in the monitoring process	N/A		

⁸ In this document, decision makers are elected representatives (and/or their advisers) dealing with Regional Policy at EU, national and regional level who can decide (or influence decisions) about NWE's existence and scope in the next programming period (after 2020)

2. List of survey questions

- 1) What is the country where you have your main professional activity? *(to all)*
- 2) What is your relationship with the Interreg NWE programme? *(to all)*
- 3) Are you: *(to all)*
 - Associated Partner
 - Lead Partner
 - Project Applicant
 - Project Partner
 - Other – Please specify:
- 4) Overall, would you say that information about the NWE programme is: *(to all)*
 - Easy to find
 - Easy to understand
- 5) Which of these channels do you use the most to get information about the Interreg NWE programme and its cooperation opportunities, benefits or results: *(to all)*
 - NWE programme website
 - NWE YouTube channel
 - LinkedIn account
 - Twitter
 - NWE Infodays at national / regional level
 - NWE brochures and leaflets
 - NWE transnational events (e.g. NWE Making an Impact 2019 or Project Ideas Labs)
 - www.interreg.eu
 - Word of mouth / Informal discussions
 - Contact Points
 - Monitoring Committee Members
 - DG Regio Open Days
 - Direct contact with programme Joint Secretariat
 - Project partner(s)
 - Europa website
 - EU Infocentres
 - Local / national media
 - Policy makers
 - Other – Please specify:
- 6) Which of the following project development and implementation tools have been the most useful to you: *(to projects)*
 - Reference documents (e.g. programme manual, Cooperation Programme)
 - NWE transnational events (e.g. NWE Making an Impact 2019 or Project Ideas Labs)
 - Video tutorials
 - Meetings with Contact Points (CPs) and/or Joint Secretariat (JS)
 - Step 2 workshops
 - Approved projects seminars
 - Brochures and publications
 - NWE Infodays at national / regional level
- 7) If any, which other resources have you used for project development and implementation? *(to projects)*
- 8) Please rate your agreement with the following statements: “Between 2014 and 2020, I have...”: *(to all)*
 - gained knowledge about the programme.
 - become more aware of the benefits of participating in the programme.
 - found the programme information and guidance to have become clearer.
 - actively encouraged others to participate in the NWE programme.
- 9) Is there any additional information which you would like the programme to provide to its external audiences? *(to all)*
- 10) Have you previously submitted a project to the NWE programme? *(to project applicants)*

- 11) What additional information could we provide to help you to become involved? *(to project applicants)*
- 12) Since when have you been involved in an NWE project? *(to projects)*
- 13) Overall, do you feel sufficiently informed about the programme's activities? *(to projects)*
- 14) What information are you missing? *(to projects)*
- 15) Are you a project communication leader or directly involved in communication activities for a project? *(to projects)*
- 16) Do you consider that the information, support and resources provided by the programme enables you to fulfil your communication objectives and obligations? *(to projects)*
- 17) Communication obligations: what is missing? *(to projects)*
- 18) Do you believe that calls for proposals are sufficiently promoted by the JS? *(to projects)*
- 19) If relevant, how (in what channels/activities) would you like to see calls for proposals more visible? *(to projects)*
- 20) To what extent are you satisfied with the accessibility and quality of information about programme / project results? *(to all)*
- 21) If relevant, how (in what channels/activities) would you like to see programme / project results more visible? *(to all)*
- 22) What has changed for you between 2014 and 2020? Thanks to interactions with the NWE programme I have: *(to projects)*
 - increased my knowledge about cooperation opportunities in North-West Europe.
 - changed my approach about the work I do.
 - found partners for successful projects.
 - found partners for future projects.
 - changed my perception of Europe.
- 23) Your contact details will be used only to contact you within the evaluation of the Interreg NWE programme 2014-2020 and will not be shared, or stored for longer than necessary. You can contact me: *(to all)*
 - Would you like to provide more feedback on the communication activities of the Interreg NWE programme? Name, organisation, contact information (tel or email or both)

3. Detailed channels usage (survey)

appreciation/satisfaction

Where information about the NWE programme is found	0 never	1 rarely	2 sometimes	3 regularly	4 frequently
NWE website	3	9	27	58	80
Project partner	6	16	33	52	60
CPs	21	23	33	60	35
Europa.eu	27	34	28	15	4
Informal	27	28	44	40	21
Infodays	27	33	39	41	24
Media	28	39	13	5	1
Transnational events	28	31	35	38	36
Policy-makers	32	26	23	9	1
www.interreg.eu	32	28	33	37	37
EU Infocentres	38	32	9	7	1
Brochures	38	44	42	27	9
JS	56	22	27	23	34
LinkedIn	77	27	28	22	8
MC members	83	35	21	13	6
Youtube	97	29	18	10	1
Twitter	97	23	18	11	8
Open Days	100	25	22	5	2

4. Interview summaries

Indication of status (Partner, Lead Partner, Project Applicant), type of organisation and country replace the name of the interviewee.

- ❖ **Interreg creates new ways of working together.** (P, private company, NL)
 - “Interreg should make us love it as much as we need to make Interreg love us”.
 - We learned a lot about admin and finance but not about ‘how to cooperate’: how to create a new brand (“new feathers”) for the projects.
 - Appreciates direct contact and events the most, and would like more regular individualized touchpoints with JS/CP.

- ❖ **Interreg makes me love Europe but it sometimes feels a bit like a club.** (P, Municipality, NL)
 - Love Interreg, as it’s about how to work together.
 - “Interreg made me believe in Europe again” (after Brexit etc.).
 - “Interreg is a practical demonstration of how Europe works”.
 - “You shouldn’t get involved in Interreg for the money because it’s not interesting financially for small companies”.
 - “Added value of transnational cooperation is demonstrated internally thanks to all the research we get access to in these projects”.
 - We need more “new blood” (new partners) as events can feel like a friends’ club.

- ❖ **Withdrew my business from the application process to protect my patent.** (PA, Private company, IE)
 - Pulled out of application process as research was already done, was only looking for funding.
 - Possible lack of clarity about the types of business ventures supported by Interreg NWE.
 - Under the impression that to receive funding, his business would have to hand over IP rights to the research.
 - Enjoyed networking opportunities of events but did not seem to understand the territorial development aspect of the cooperation opportunities and remained focused on the business development side.

- ❖ **Overall modernisation of Interreg has been appreciated.** (P, Private company, Lux)
 - Since 2008 – 2 NWE projects (3 in other Interreg programmes).
 - Easy to find on the website, but info from CP is most useful to map new opportunities. Details come from CP = “what is really needed for the call”.
 - Perception that FR and BE partners are better trained/informed than others.
 - Doesn’t use NWE social media channels. Was not aware of there were tutorials.
 - Lettre de Mission is a very useful document. Huge administrative progress. Modernisation of Interreg has been appreciated this last programming period.
 - Projects are now very results focused, whereas before they were more about demonstration and results were not shared/used so much.
 - Results: Previous project has led to GEIE – new clients and new partners, very successful. Presentation was made in Belgium (with other successful projects in the same field) to potential Interreg partners.
 - Suggestion: announce calls earlier (6 months ideally), to give more time to involve internal and external partners, + more publicity in more places.

- ❖ **Project communication obligations change from application to implementation.** (LP, Public authority, DE)
 - Slightly less easy to understand in terms of possible interpretations of programme manual.

- Project communication – impression that what is requested at application stage is completely different than communication strategy.
- Expectation that programme should help with EU “lobbying” (networking between DGs on thematic topics to advance on policy).
- Project results – results were offered by EGLV to JS but got no response.
- Difference in terms of types of projects – has gone from local investments to research, now more like H2020. More difficult to see the impacts of this type of cooperation. Projects such as Urban Water (IIIB) are no longer possible.

❖ **Overall very good communication but specific aspects need face to face explanations.** (LP, state owned company, BE)

- Translations FR can be different which is confusing.
- Instructions not clear – e.g. what partners need to provide “justification documents” – whose FLC needs to provide the documents? Lead Partner or partners?
- Good support.
- Events are good to discuss with JS + find project partners + share results.
- Specific issues need f2f discussions with JS/CP.
- Biggest project in the programme (7M€) needs its own website. It’s a shame that it is so difficult to justify why you need your own website.
- State Aid issues often complex to understand.
- Capitalisation (website/results) is difficult to predict/quantify when you don’t have control over the website.

❖ **We will continue our work as energy management is a priority with or without EU funding.** (P, Public Authority, UK)

- Biggest communication issue = programme manual vs FLC documentation say different things. “Inconsistencies make FLC’s job impossible”.
- Nature of information conveyed difficult to understand – it’s always going to be difficult to understand what Interreg wants.
- Since 2015, incremental improvements, some inconsistencies have been resolved.
- New initiatives e.g. impact days were very good. Results/Progress sharing initiative with all projects. Needs more of those. Networking opportunities and cross fertilization of projects/capitalisation.
- H2020 projects + 1 Interreg funding + Innovate UK. Clean energy, clean transport etc. Different technologies. This Interreg partnership exists thanks to other EU projects.
- Interreg has helped to do it faster than they would have done it anyway.
- “No point doing it just for the funds.”
- Project purpose is about creating scalable systems (co-developed) that can be transferable no matter the size of the issue.

❖ **We are keen to get locally elected representatives involved.** (P, municipality, FR)

- EU project officer so “translates” for her colleagues.
- Technocratic projects are not super easy to find/understand to them.
- Programme manual is clearer than in previous programming period.
- All in English is difficult for many (could be just France). Not enough translation in NWE.
- Project results (e.g. making impact event): Municipality likes to involve elected officials in results presentations and they don’t feel comfortable with English. Difficult to involve policy-makers in this or in partner meetings. It’s too technical. Not enough impact/policy discussions (as the most obvious link between elected officials and the citizens).
- Interactions with the Region/National rep (MC) rather than CP.
- RegioStars (prize) were good to talk about impact/successes of the project > elected members went to Brussels with the LP (networking opportunities, reception).
- Centralised project websites much easier to manage – similar support would be good on tools to promote results (not just an event).
- Suggestion: How do you communicate EU programme support to citizens? Europe seems very far to them. Training?

❖ **We hope we can continue to collaborate with our EU partners in future.** (LP, University, UK)

- Found out about NWE at conference about sustainability metrics, project partner who was presenting his project and looking for future collaborations. Then attended an event in Luxembourg, met people, and developed project from there.
- Once you know about it, it's fine. It's finding out about it which is difficult, particularly in Universities as Interreg doesn't fund research so it's not well known.
- The NWE website not clearly structured: e.g. - who can apply is not answered very clearly – vs and EMS is super difficult to use (character counts different from word).
- The programme manual is written in complex bureaucratic speak.
- Project search makes it difficult to find. "Submit project idea". Not sure if it's project ideas or project results.
- "I'd like things to be a lot clearer".
- No "user experience" principles. Should plan how people will navigate through this.
- Really thrived working with other partners.

5. Suggestions from the survey

(Additional input provided in the survey)

Overall, do you feel sufficiently informed about the programme's activities? NO: What is missing?

- NWE Making an Impact 2019 was top, finally meet many different project, partners, good discussion and exchange ideas, the workshops, the interaction with the officials of JS. Our project is just one of many, so the meeting in Tourcoing was an eye opener to see what is happening within Interreg NWE and even other Interreg project. This interaction was a boost for our project, and enabled a new project.
- Activities of other projects in the programme.
- Deadlines for next calls.
- Regular information on other project activities e.g. compilation of programme activities/newsletter.
- Lacking information during corona.
- I need more reasons/time to feel connected and do research myself.
- It would be helpful for all projects to have a means of communicating with each other within their theme.
- Information on other projects, information to participate in a new project.
- Updates about future programme calls.
- Other projects, interaction, exchange, collaboration. Project are still too much islands on their own.

Is there any additional information which you would like the programme to provide to its external audiences?

- Case studies and best practice examples.
- Clarity over intellectual property and commercialisation.
- Clearer focus on the content for the open calls and timelines for submission of application.
- Content.
- Financial rules.
- Financing is very complicated.
- How are these projects more than a simple addition of local activities.
- I think it's important to inform about the success, but also about the difficulties and the way they can be overcome.
- I've found not enough information regarding the COVID19. In Interreg 2 seas, the projects have been automatically extended 6 months (website).
- No position of UK for the future Interreg visible on web.

- In general: More content, less communication. In projects, the balance between communication and real research could be improved.
- Information and Communication Technology.
- Information on co-financing for different partners.
- It was very difficult to estimate for 'commercial businesses' like us, whether it actually is a good decision to engage in an Interreg project.
- IVB was clearer to me; 'outcomes' 'outputs' 'results' are still confusing talking to different people in the NCP and in the JS.
- Make sure you are well informed about the programme before to submit a proposal; most project proposals will not receive funding.
- More details about cost eligibility at earlier stages - we have had a lot of problems with costs unexpectedly being ruled ineligible, where local FLC and project FLC have different views on key points.
- NWE Making an Impact 2019 was top, finally meet many different project, partners, good discussion and exchange ideas.
- Please adapt the funding rate. It is by far too low!!!
- Sort out contradictions between official document, eg Prog manual and FLC manual.
- Tangible results of current projects and how they relate to the programme + project ideas in search for partners.
- The administr. load (esp financial claims) is (very) high and (too) complex. More clear and understandable guidance needed (timesheets are nightmare, made my one). Project must be on result, not on admin.
- The nature of the selection procedure.
- The way you ask for completing the proposal is a bit tricky, in particular if you are used to the way it is done in Horizon2020 and Eurostar and many other national funding bodies.
- To inform about Interreg, it is advisable to facilitate the link between the abstract European body and the effective workplaces. The impact of projects should be 'felt'.
- We brought in a local social housing provider to a project as a partner to develop a pilot site for low carbon heating.

Other places people have found information about NWE project development and implementation

- A consultant.
- Colleagues who have found ways to navigate the bureaucratic nightmare that is the NWE project administration process via FLCs and so on; this is the most convoluted and inefficient project management system I've ever been unfortunate enough to work within; we waste far more money on audits than could possible have been saved through their scrutinising of expenditure.
- Earlier applicants sharing their experience.
- Have used a consultant who specialises in European / funded projects.
- I learnt about the NWE Interreg by chance via earlier project presentations at a conference - I would not have known about it without this - I followed up and made contacts myself otherwise I would not have been aware of the programme.
- Lead Partner.
- Meetings and events related to the topic of the project.
- Natural, monetary and manpower resources.
- Personal contacts/networks.
- Project specific platform for data sharing.
- Reference documents.
- Google scholars.
- Internal European department.
- Clusters.
- Defined needs by quantity as well as thorough databases for wind, wave, and ocean currents.
- Public national events, own institute networks, communication office and facilities.
- Project leader.
- Project meetings with lead partner and other project partners.

- My experience. Many project partners do not even know all these channels and info exist, so first job is to get to know and get more visible all those tools!
- Project partners.
- RegioStars Awards.

How (in what channels/activities) would you like to see calls for proposals more visible?

- All EU Project call are a labyrinth, it is hard to keep up with all the calls. Thanks to our Lead Partner, but otherwise we would never know there is a call.
- By email or through national agencies that usually do calls for proposals (eg: ADEME in France).
- By emails.
- Direct mail and movie.
- Email.
- Email/website announcements/E-Newsletters.
- If the Lead Partner would not be informed we would not even know new calls where there. What with the new period because new budget period for EU government.
- Informing letter to Lead Partner.
- More Emails and announcements on LinkedIn.
- National environmental agencies.
- Newsletter.
- Official letter sent to mayors / conurbation etc.
- Overarching website for calls.
- Promotion of calls can be useful to do via local authorities.
- Regular newsletter.
- Roundups per project would be extremely helpful, in order to help the projects grow further.
- Universities.
- Via Email either directly to me, or via my research office.
- As above I learnt about the NWE Interreg by chance via earlier project presentations at a conference - I would not have known about it without this, I followed up and made contacts myself. It's a great scheme and should be promoted more widely across all media.
- Getting direct communications from NWE programme or country representatives is very useful.
- LinkedIn.
- National / Regional / Local media.
- Yes, if you have already experience with Interreg and you are already the part of the Interreg-community. If not, and you have never heard about Interreg, I am not sure you will find easily by yourself information on new calls.
- You tube, LinkedIn profile, Facebook, Instagram.

How (in what channels/activities) would you like to see programme / project results more visible?

- 'Future of Interreg NEW - ERDF Committed, ERDF available (home page)'.
- An interdisciplinary exhibition, that can be displayed - analog or digital - with core results of the different projects would be very nice.
- At /regional/local level.
- Besides promoting news articles, deliverables or tweets by the projects, the programme could also create content and make it very visible: interviews with Lead Partners, visits to pilot sites...
- Connecting project results on the main page of the website or newsletter.
- Dedicated project websites.
- Gathering all the project webpages on the Interreg NWE website is a good idea. It proves to be very useful when it comes to learn about other ongoing or completed projects. However, it is not always easy to find back a project if you don't remember exactly its name. Browsing through the database could be more convenient and user-friendly. Plus, despite the similar format of each webpage, the information available for each project remains a bit unequal (not the programme's fault, obviously).

- In terms of the quality of the results of projects supported by Interreg, the programme seems very inclusive, which is probably a good thing. Yet, it may also result in having some project results that are maybe not that innovative (personal point of view). Based on my own partial and biased view on the different Interreg projects that I have met these last years, a lot of them seem to be based on some sort of sectoral animation, but not really producing new tools, methods or very specific outputs. Not to say that sectoral animation is wrong but, sometimes, it may give the impression that there are more means allocated for those who animate a sector than for those who develop it from the front-line.
- Regarding this, it is likely that the relative complexity to apply to an Interreg project hinders the involvement of front-line organisations: the format of the call is rather complex (even though the documentation is really excellent, the Contact Points very supportive and the JS always helpful, it still takes time to become familiar with all the intricacies of the programme); the fact that the advance payments are not proportional to the expenses prevents organisations with a tight cashflow to enter the programme (and so does the artistic blur around the delays of the different slices of refunding...); the co-funding scheme can become an infernal jigsaw for organisations based in regions in which regional co-funding are not automatic; the question of State Aid remains quite a kabbalistic topic requiring topnotch juridical expertise... But this goes beyond the scope of communication ;-)
- I think it is very important to tell about the results of projects and the programme. I remember how inspired it was during Interreg NWE day in the Hague when project partners told about their projects and results and the change they made due to the project. I think network events and other information events should pay more attention to this kind of stories. It is very inspiring and moves you to step into an Interreg project.
- Imposing the use of a single template for all the projects websites limits the communication potential and means. It is frustrating.
- LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other NWE ICT.
- Long term storage.
- More promotion for the website.
- More promotion of the Interreg NWE YouTube channel; short and standardised interviews with project Lead Partners on location (5 minute video).
- More visibility in the general press/media would be great.
- National / Regional / Local media.
- Newsletter?
- Newsletters - concrete result nog 'project X- project Y' but first 'what' than the project.
- Not relevant here, but a general remark: I think the happenings are “overzised” - something greener and less expensive would also do it.
- Give possibility to projects to use EU communicaiton supports for their projects - as now during Corona we all need advise for online meetings, or material during physical meetings that could be shared between projects.
- Once you know where to find, easy access to all relevant info about the project. But then reading and understanding those documents is a challenge, specially about the financial claims. It is sometimes very technical, many rules to follow, as a beginner lots of time can be lost, a pity because time lost, not able to work on the scoop, to deliver. A bit lost in administration in the beginning. At that time is discouraging, what is more important, getting good results or getting lost in the administration of the project?
- Personal visits, small groups, job shadowing. All concrete. Not too much window-dressing. I have the feeling Interreg is not that well known in Flanders. Not something often mentioned on a local level.
- Social media and conferences.
- The accessibility is hampered by the special language, such as on State Aid.
- The information shared in reports and presentations is rather superficial.
- The website is not very user-friendly and could be restructured to make all information more accessible. Searches should be by theme, subject, geographical area, name, etc. and results should be highlighted on front page (e.g NWE Interreg supported this project to the value of X and the project generated X revenue, created X jobs, reached audience of X and reduced environmental impact by X%).
- Through the project website.
- Universities.

- Via a regular newsletter or ezine.
- Via homepages of the projects or a common database of Interreg NWE.

Project communication leaders: Do you consider that the information, support and resources provided by the programme enables you to fulfil your communication objectives and obligations? NO: What is missing?

- Communication too institutional for a large audience.
- Either individual project websites or more detailed and user orientated programme website for projects.
- Evaluation of target groups.
- Support for political lobbying, e.g. at EU-level (DGs) is missing.
- Resources provided not always adequate to the groups targeted by the project.
- The formats for presentations etc. lack a modern future looking design.
- The structure of the website put at the disposal for projects is not user-friendly and the duration is limited in time. We have to find other ways to ensure that the deliverables are available longer.
- Would be preferable that there is guidance on comms templates but you are not 'locked in' and can create what you need, edit designs, etc. and also be able to create your own project website.

Potential project applicants: What additional information could we provide to help you to become involved?

- Directories of potential partners and their capabilities, interests, experience.
- Make working on natural territories as forests or watersheds, lakes possible within NWE instead of trying to get all countries into it.
- Projects, descriptions of projects and partners.