

Public Information Strategy on Montenegro's Accession to the European Union

2019-2022



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Evropska unija



VLADA CRNE GORE



Montenegro

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01 Introduction

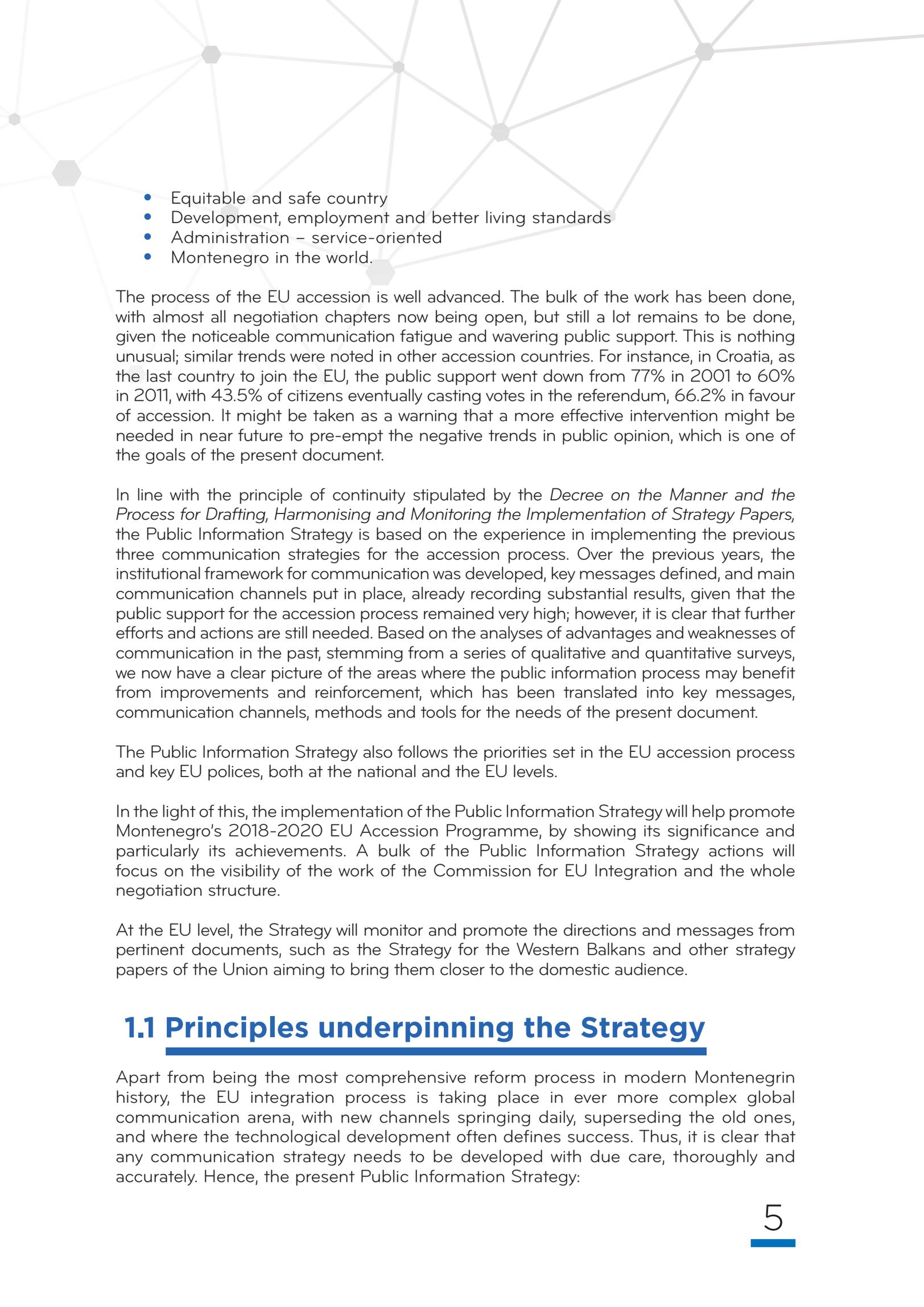
For Montenegro, the EU integration is its single most significant foreign policy priority, but at the same time, also the most comprehensive and complex process the country has ever embarked on throughout its history. It is an all-pervasive process touching upon all areas of life, from security, over human rights to living standards and economic development. Hence, it is essential for each citizen¹ to be thoroughly informed of the accession process, to be aware of the reasons why Montenegro aspires to be a part of the European Union, and have a clear picture of the benefits and responsibilities stemming from membership. It is only then that citizens may make informed choices in their personal lives and for their country. Therefore, the present document wishes to ensure greater awareness and understanding of the EU accession process.

The Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2019-2022 (hereinafter: the Public Information Strategy) is a strategy paper of the Government setting the framework and the guidance for communicating the accession process. Its adoption is envisaged as one of the priorities by Government's Medium-term Work Programme 2018-2020. Specifically, it is envisaged as *Priority 6: Montenegro – a country with strong international standing; Objective 38. Achieving internal readiness to close negotiations with the EU by 2020; Key commitment - 38.4. Public awareness of the EU accession process will be enhanced*².

The Public Information Strategy also reflects the priorities set by the umbrella communication paper of the Government, the *Communication Strategy of the Government of Montenegro* (2018). Given that the accession process in itself is a comprehensive reform effort, the Public Information Strategy covers all four key, communication priorities from the umbrella strategy:

¹ All terms used herein for individuals in masculine gender imply the same terms in feminine gender.

² The Commission for Developing and Monitoring Medium-term Government Work Programme (2018), Medium-term Government Work Programme 2018-2020, Podgorica, p. 51.

- 
- Equitable and safe country
 - Development, employment and better living standards
 - Administration – service-oriented
 - Montenegro in the world.

The process of the EU accession is well advanced. The bulk of the work has been done, with almost all negotiation chapters now being open, but still a lot remains to be done, given the noticeable communication fatigue and wavering public support. This is nothing unusual; similar trends were noted in other accession countries. For instance, in Croatia, as the last country to join the EU, the public support went down from 77% in 2001 to 60% in 2011, with 43.5% of citizens eventually casting votes in the referendum, 66.2% in favour of accession. It might be taken as a warning that a more effective intervention might be needed in near future to pre-empt the negative trends in public opinion, which is one of the goals of the present document.

In line with the principle of continuity stipulated by the *Decree on the Manner and the Process for Drafting, Harmonising and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers*, the Public Information Strategy is based on the experience in implementing the previous three communication strategies for the accession process. Over the previous years, the institutional framework for communication was developed, key messages defined, and main communication channels put in place, already recording substantial results, given that the public support for the accession process remained very high; however, it is clear that further efforts and actions are still needed. Based on the analyses of advantages and weaknesses of communication in the past, stemming from a series of qualitative and quantitative surveys, we now have a clear picture of the areas where the public information process may benefit from improvements and reinforcement, which has been translated into key messages, communication channels, methods and tools for the needs of the present document.

The Public Information Strategy also follows the priorities set in the EU accession process and key EU policies, both at the national and the EU levels.

In the light of this, the implementation of the Public Information Strategy will help promote Montenegro's 2018-2020 EU Accession Programme, by showing its significance and particularly its achievements. A bulk of the Public Information Strategy actions will focus on the visibility of the work of the Commission for EU Integration and the whole negotiation structure.

At the EU level, the Strategy will monitor and promote the directions and messages from pertinent documents, such as the Strategy for the Western Balkans and other strategy papers of the Union aiming to bring them closer to the domestic audience.

1.1 Principles underpinning the Strategy

Apart from being the most comprehensive reform process in modern Montenegrin history, the EU integration process is taking place in ever more complex global communication arena, with new channels springing daily, superseding the old ones, and where the technological development often defines success. Thus, it is clear that any communication strategy needs to be developed with due care, thoroughly and accurately. Hence, the present Public Information Strategy:

- is based on measurable historic data
- is transparent
- sets measurable performance indicators.

Measurable data underpinning planning

All parts of the Public Information Strategy, from situation analysis and lessons learned, over setting its goals and messages to defining target groups and actions, **are based on confidential empirical data**. These involve public opinion polls done in continuity since 2013, thus making it possible to monitor trends regarding the public sentiment, then consultative meetings with the representatives of major groups, media analysis, and interviews with key actors in the process. Put collectively, such data also constitute a solid evaluation of **outputs** of the previous Public Information Strategy.

Transparency

Deeply convinced that the integration process is something that belongs to all citizens and is intended for the society at large, the present Public Information Strategy is **open, inclusive and pursues a genuine intention of bettering communication and increasing awareness** of this major process. Therefore, the widest public, the civil society and all stakeholders have been included in all stages of its development to make the present document as sound, effective and meaningful as possible. The pertinent Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is based on the same principles. Moreover, the Public Information Strategy sees to it that the communication process is inclusive and open for all.

Measurable performance indicators

Given that the Public Information Strategy is underpinned by empirical data, its outputs will be verifiable, not only as regards implemented actions, but also in the sense of measuring the impact such actions produced. The Public Information Strategy's objectives and indicators are *SMART*, which **means that all the set objectives will be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound**.

The communication strategy promotes the strategic approach based on three principles:

- set priorities
- professionalise
- check performance.

Setting priorities

The complex and comprehensive EU integration process generates a host of information and possible narratives, which are not all of the same communication value. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to catch and maintain public's attention competing with thousands of other contents attempting to do the same through own communication channels. Thus, **prioritisation of messages, channels and target audiences is needed to increase quality and maximise outreach**. Additionally, communication needs to be target audience-specific.

Professionalization

The present document aims to serve as a guide for communication practitioners at the national and the local levels, and in other related sectors. The previous Public Information Strategy had major achievements in overcoming the lack of administrative capacities and professionalization of communicators. The professionalization process needs to continue, particularly at the local level, **through training and education, closer cooperation, institutionalisation of internal communication channels and clear division of competences.**

Checking performance

Performance needs to be constantly measured, but not only in terms of the success/failure or done/pending dichotomy. The aim of **continuous monitoring and evaluation** is to check whether the chosen communication channels are effective, whether the messages are still relevant or need to be redefined, and whether there is a noise in the communication channel. Communication takes place in real time, with ever more frequent changes in effectiveness of the chosen channel, method or tool. Communicators have to be ready to constantly re-evaluate their own work to avoid poor resource efficiency.

The Public Information Strategy is cognizant of the fact that communication is often reactive, a **result of external factors**. On one hand, communication is always conditioned by the communicated contents, something we often have no influence over. On the other hand, communication does not take place in a vacuum, but rather in a complex space where numerous national and international, largely unpredictable, political, economic and technological factors interact. Thus, notwithstanding that the key goal pursued by this document is to set the bases of communication for a four-year period, this Public Information Strategy aims to set up a reliable communication system able to properly respond to external effects and adapt communication on the move.

1.2 Document overview

The Public Information Strategy operates in three main directions:

- internally
- externally:
 - towards the domestic public
 - towards the international public
- towards partners and multipliers.

Internally, it primarily focuses on the public administration, as being formally the most responsible to communicate the European integration process, and recognised as such by the general public. Integration has to be communicated consistently to avoid overlapping of messages, redundancy and differences in standpoint. This calls for a well-structured communication of the accession process, well-trained negotiation team members and enthusiasm. The Strategy envisages a number of actions to familiarise all those directly involved in the negotiation process with the topics, to train them for communication and set a clear framework and conditions for their work.

Externally, the primary focus is on the **domestic public**, as the key group targeted by this communication. The bulk of communication efforts will target the general public,



since the key goals include better information for citizens and general support to European integration. Such communication is mostly done via the media, including debate as one of its formats, but also direct contact may be quite significant in a country the size of Montenegro. Moreover, the Public Information Strategy will identify specific target audiences, with relevant communication channels, messages and modes. Apart from traditional communication, ongoing education is also significant, so as to educate the information recipients to properly understand, accept and use the information provided.

International public, particularly the European Union member states, are essential for the integration process, and one of the four key priorities of the Communication Strategy of the Government of Montenegro. By sending messages of successful integration process, new positive views on the EU enlargement are generated, which is one of the key preconditions for the enlargement to actually take place. Carefully crafted messages sent to diplomatic and consular missions, international organisations and foreign media, given the limited possibilities for communicating with the international audiences, will help ensure their timely and regular information of the reform and integration efforts and processes, but also of potential benefits stemming from Montenegro/s prospective membership.

The Government is not alone in the EU integration communication, and its **partners** and **multipliers** give an opportunity to make the process more efficient. The institutions like the EU Delegation or civil society organisations have their own budgets, programmes and compatible goals – informing the public of the EU integration process. Collaboration and coordination are essential to maximise the impact of communication from all entities. Even so far, multipliers have been successfully used to extend the scope of communication, while this Strategy only redefines their positioning in respect of new communication channels.

The key aspects of the present document – messages and objectives – are arranged around those three lines of actions.



02 Situation analysis

Before identifying essential elements regarding informing the public of the EU integration process, the state-of-play and the current situation in which the communication will take place need to be analysed. The data for situation analysis have been chosen in reference to the goals set by the previous *Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union (2014-2018)* using available and measurable data. Having such an approach, it is possible to identify current and anticipate future challenges and their underlying causes, and plan any future goals and actions in reference to them.

The following methodology and sources have been used for the situation analysis:

- Public opinion poll on perceptions about the EU integration of Montenegro in 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018³
- Public opinion polls done by the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) from 2012 to 2018
- Consultations with the expert and interested public including:
 - members of the Consultative and Operational Bodies and the civil society
 - media community
 - the academia
- SWOT analysis
- Media presence analysis: ⁴
 - 1 January – 31 March 2018
 - 1 April – 30 June 2018
 - 1 July – 30 September 2018

3 The polls were carried out by De Facto Consultancy for the needs of the organisational unit of the Government of Montenegro responsible for EU integration at the time. The poll done in 2013 was supported by the UNDP, in 2015 by the British Council, and in 2016, 2017 and 2018 by the EU Info Centre. <http://www.euic.me/me/4711/>. All polls were done on a representative sample for Montenegro which includes over 1,000 respondents. The data gathering methodologies used were CAPI and PAPI (for the first wave).

4 The media presence analysis was done by Arhimed.

- The Action Plans and the Implementation Reports for the Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2014–2018 for each individual year.⁵

The framework for the situation analysis was the general goal set by the *Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2014–2018*. Here, it is set in two directions:

- better understanding of the EU integration process as such
- ensure support for Montenegro's accession to the European Union (Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2014–2018, p 16).

2.1 Support to the EU accession among the Montenegrin public

Based on regular longitudinal opinion polls regarding support for the EU integration conducted since 2013, public support for Montenegro's accession to the European Union has been very stable. Putting together the ones who "absolutely" and the ones who "mostly" support the accession, steady and stable growth, from 57% in 2013 to 65.9%, in 2018, is observed.

Support for the accession of Montenegro to the EU

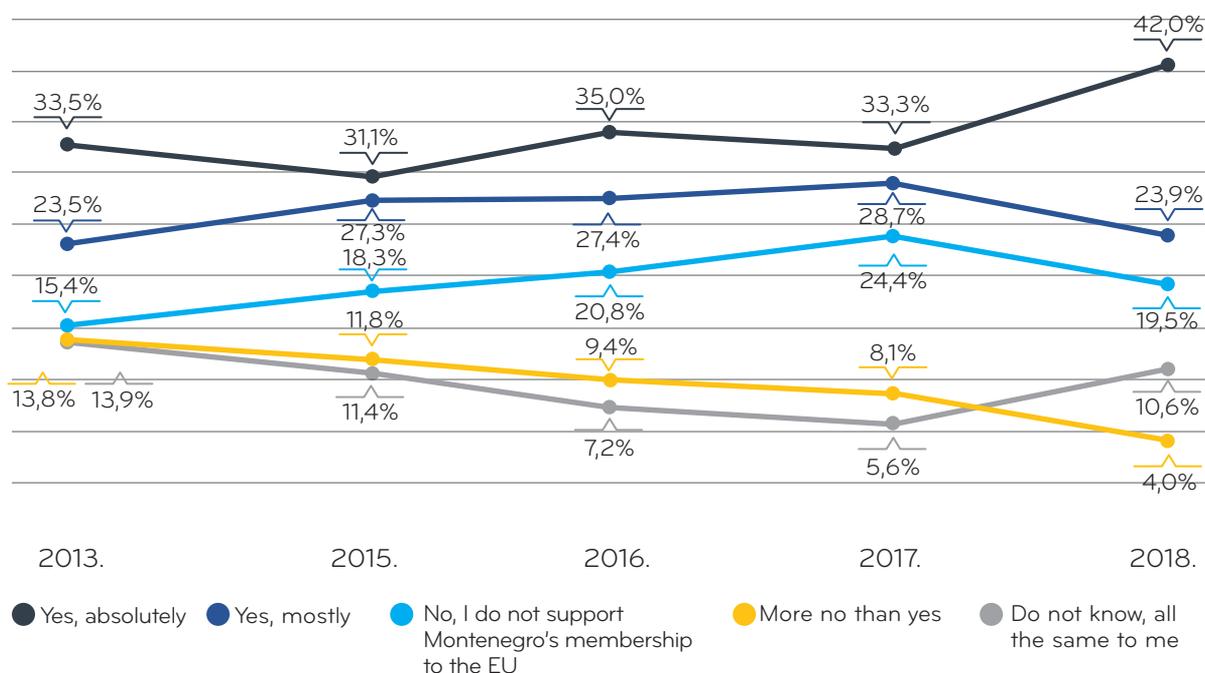


Chart 1: Support for Montenegro's accession to the EU over time in reference to intensity of support, Public opinion polls on the perception of Montenegro's EU accession 2013–2018

⁵ http://www.mep.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=273997&rType=2&file=Akcioni%20plan%202017%20SI_fin.pdf

The findings of the regular political opinion poll, conducted by the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) have the same trend. These data are available since 2007, and the chart below shows the data from 2012 onwards ⁶

Support for EU membership

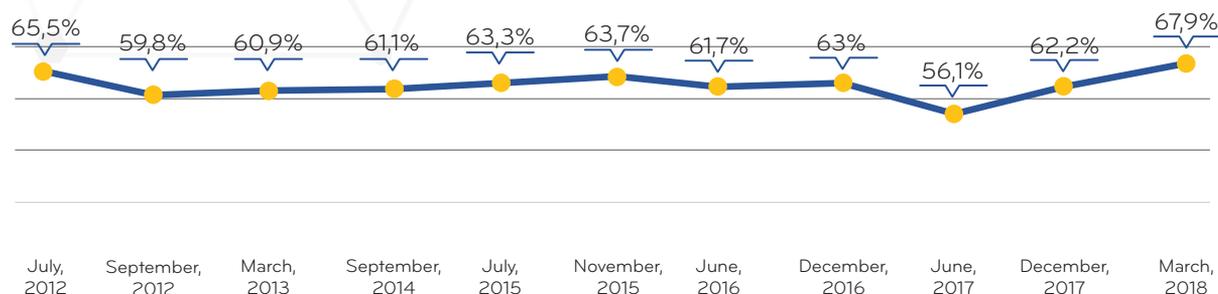


Chart 2: Support for EU membership, political opinion poll, CEDEM 2012–2018

Nevertheless, looking at the breakdown of both groups, either supporters or opponents of accession, certain changes are observable that are important for anticipating future trends. First, the percentage of respondents who have "no opinion and who do not care" first went down from 13.9% to 5.6%, only to rise again to 10.6% in the last poll.

In the group of supporters, there was first some decrease in the level of certainty (in 2017, the share of those who "mostly" support integration increased against the absolute supporters), only to see the reverse trend in 2018, where support grew more certain again.

Among the ones who oppose integration, first the share of those decisively against integration increased in 2017, only to go down again in the last poll, probably moving towards the group of those with no opinion on the matter.

The above is even more readily visible in the next chart showing the response to the question *What is your general opinion of the European Union*:



65.9% citizens of Montenegro support EU accession



68.2% of young people in Montenegro support EU accession

⁶ <http://www.cedem.me/programi/istrazivanja/politicko-javno-mnjenje/summary/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1900-cedem-objavio-rezultate-istrazivanja-politickog-javnog-mnjenja-crne-gore> accessed on 17 October 2018)

General view of the EU

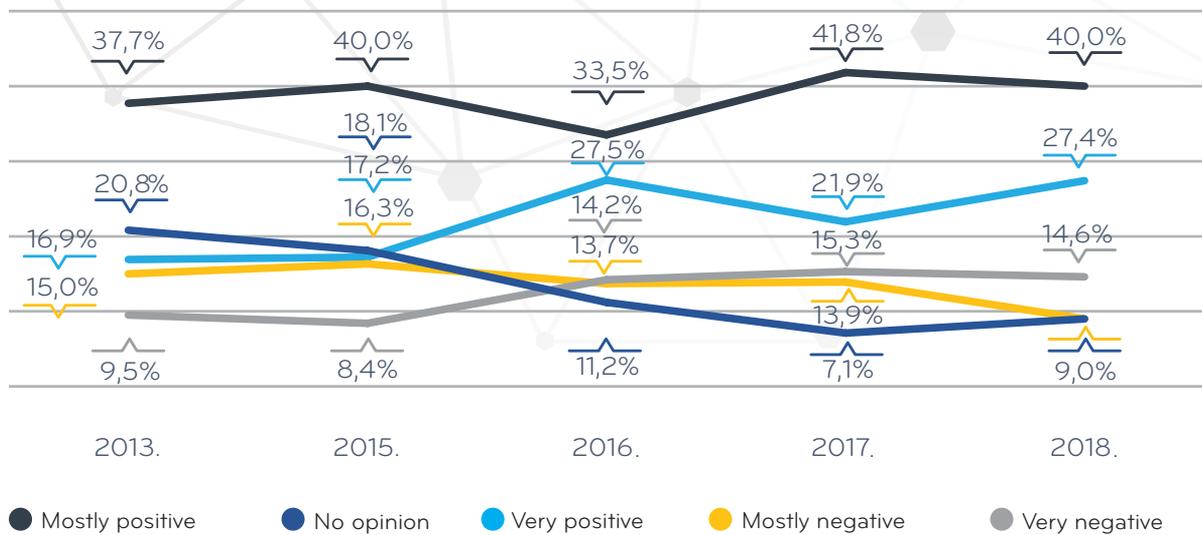


Chart 3: General view of the EU over time in reference to its intensity, Public opinion polls on the perception of Montenegro's EU accession 2013-2018

In addition, respondents show some signs of indifference. The share of those interested in the information about the EU or the accession is in strong decline, except when it comes to information directly relevant for citizens. The last 2018 poll showed a great increase in the share of those interested in the information about the EU "which is directly relevant for them" to as much as 37.8%. The second indicator of the mild loss of interest is the response when asked whether they would cast a vote in the hypothetical referendum on Montenegro's accession to the EU, where the share of those who would definitely cast a vote in such a referendum is going down in favour of those who would probably cast their vote.



The main reasons for supporting EU integration are stability, better living standards and because it is in the best interest of citizens.



The main reason stated for the lack of support to EU integration is that respondents do not believe they would be better off, then the crisis in the EU and the migrant crisis.

Interest in information about accession

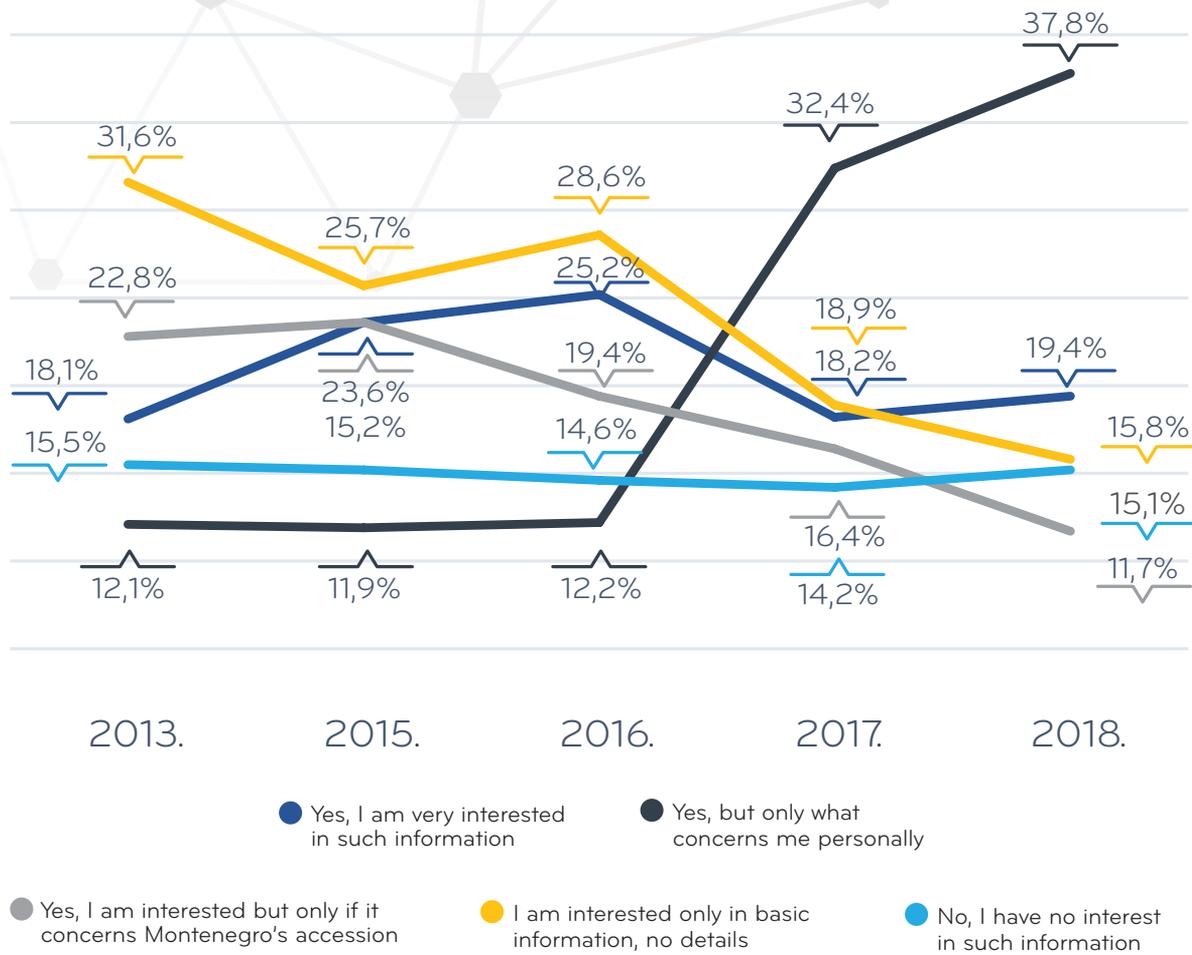
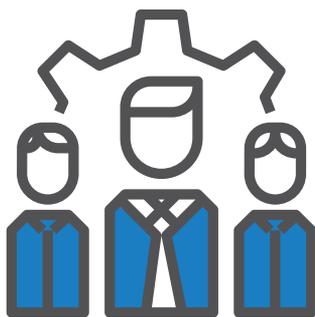


Chart 4: Level of interest regarding on the accession of Montenegro to the EU in reference to its intensity, Public opinion polls on the perception of Montenegro's EU accession 2013-2018



Citizens believe that the accession to the EU would be to the greatest benefit of the unemployed and young people.



Citizens are interested in the EU-related information that concerns them personally.

2.2 Information and understanding of the EU integration process

The response to the question of how citizens understand the EU and the integration process can be obtained only through indirect indicators, such as: self-assessment of the level of information, the reasons stated for the lack of information, and free associations on the EU topics. The understanding of how and to what extent citizens understand the process is gained through their responses to factual questions about the integration process or the EU proper.

According to their own assessments, the level of information citizens have is on the slight upward trend both as regards the European Union and the integration process. We also see some differentiation within this group, with the percentage of those who believe that they are "mostly informed" increasing at the expense of those who are "partly informed".



82.4% of citizens believe to be well-informed about the integration process.



The undecided about the integration process are the least informed – 34%

Level of information about the EU
- self-assessment -

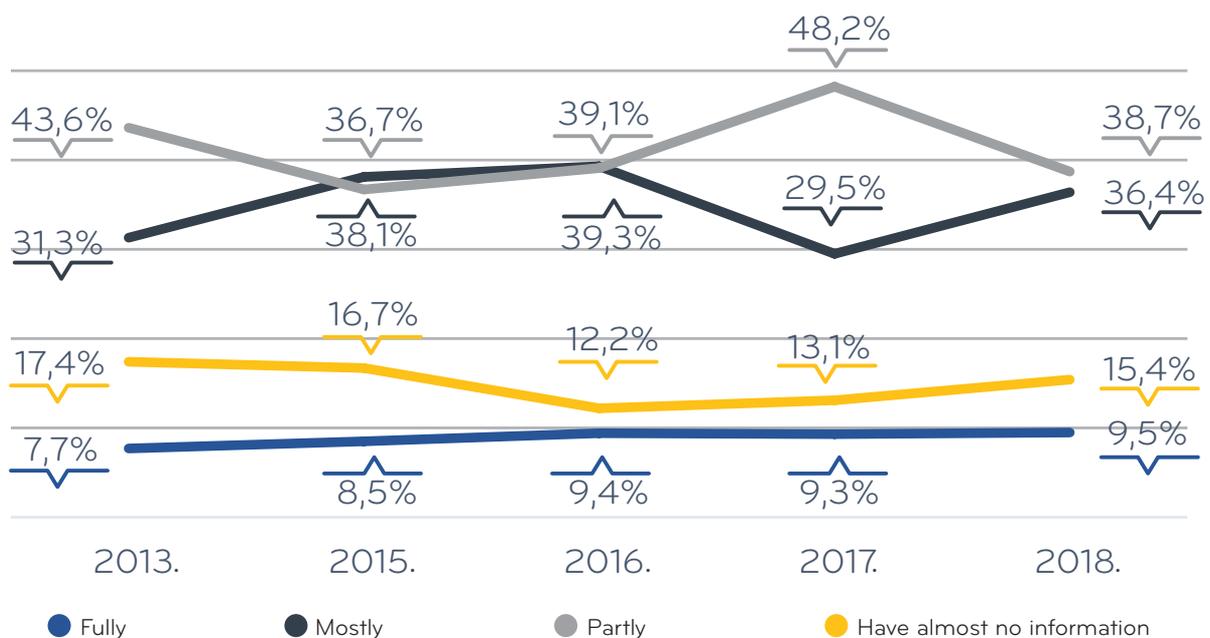


Chart 5: Response to the question of how well informed about the EU do you think you are by its intensity, Public opinion polls on the perception of Montenegro's EU accession 2013-2018

As regards communication, the positive correlation between the level of information and the degree of support is quite relevant – the better informed, the more supportive citizens become of the integration process. Among the supporters of integration,

91.9% , are well informed, as opposed to 75% among the opponents. The least informed are the ones who are indifferent towards integration – 15.8% believe to be well-informed about the accession.



Although the total level of information among young people regarding the integration process is at the level of the general average – 81.9%, the highest share is accounted for by young people who believe to be partly informed – 40%.

Level of information about the integration - self-assessment -

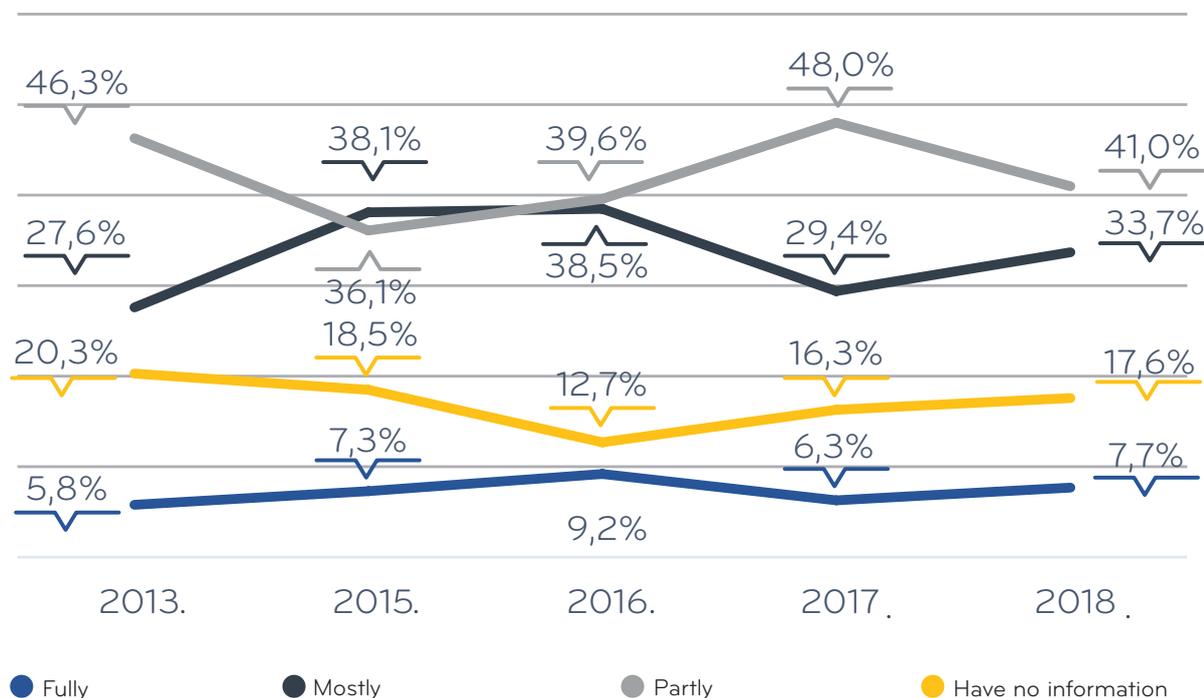
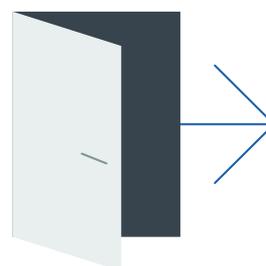


Chart 6: Response to the question of how well informed about the integration process do you think you are by its intensity, Public opinion polls on the perception of Montenegro's EU accession 2013-2018

The main reasons cited for the lack of information regarding the integration process include too much talk of corruption and organised crime, then that the process is closed and the institutions do not provide enough information, and not enough information in the media. Also, 39.6% believe that the information is at the general level without enough discussions of specific topics that interest them, while 20.0% see the language used in communication as unclear.



Chief negative associations citizens have regarding the European Union are the loss of control and fear.

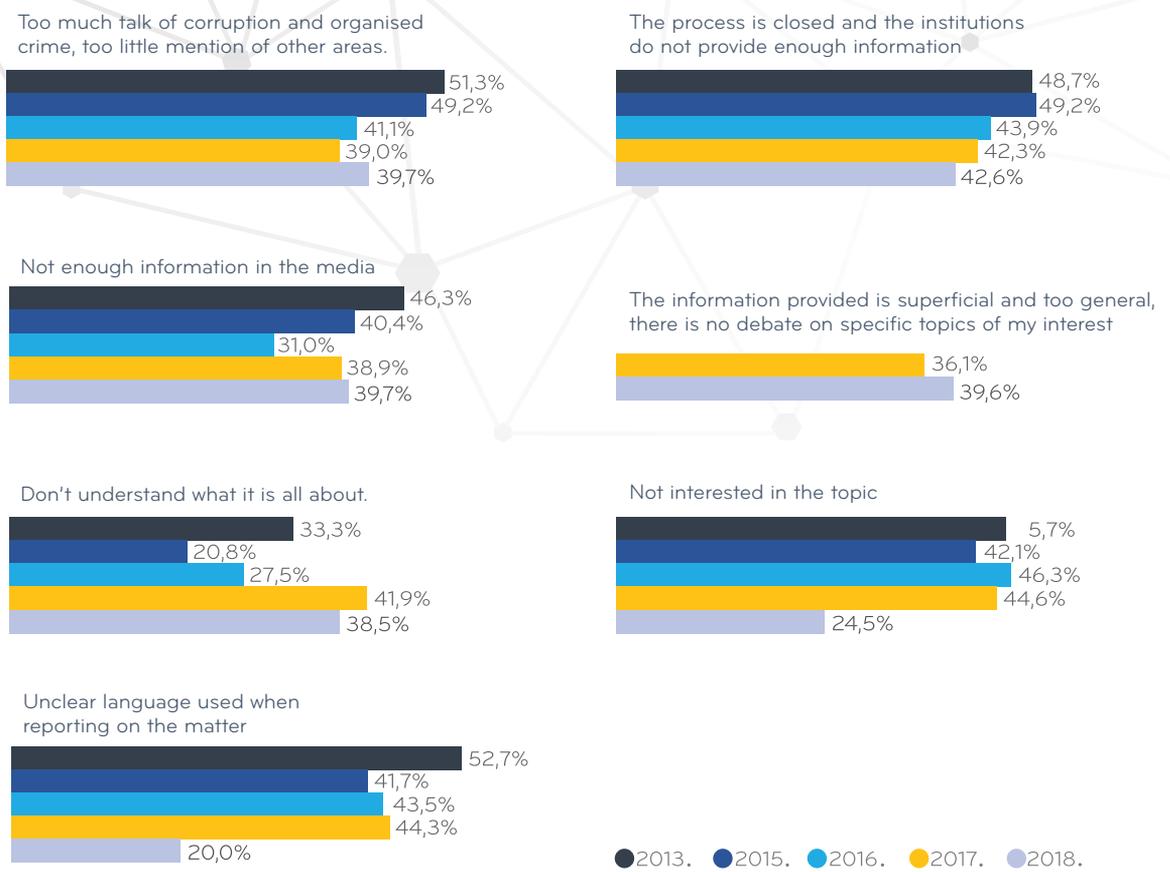


Chart 7: Reasons for the lack of information cited by the citizens who believe to be uninformed or partly informed of Montenegro's accession to the European Union

Several objectives pursued by the previous Public Information Strategy involved the media, either as regards the provision of easy and timely access to information on the negotiation process or the endeavours for the media to be interested in reporting on various aspects of the negotiation process upon own initiative. Based on three reports of the *Media Presence Analysis*, certain conclusions may be reached as to how the integration process was covered by the media before. These reports cover planned and unplanned mentioning of the actions taken in pursuit of the Action Plan for implementing the Strategy obtained through keyword searches. It should be stressed that the data do not refer to all mentions of the process which do not occur within the framework of the Action Plan.



Main positive association citizens have in reference to the European Union are travel, employment and standard.



Among young people 15.4% heard of the Erasmus+ and claim to know what that is, 19.4% heard about it, but are unaware of what that is, while as many as 65.2% never heard of the programme.

Analysis of the contents covered

The total of three (quarterly) analyses were done in 2018.

Division by topics:

Q1: 1 January – 31 March 2018

- Internal communication
- Education
- Information
- Strengthening the dialogue with the civil society
- Visibility and promotion
- Promotional materials
- Social media
- Media
- Promotional events
- Information for the foreign public
- Monitoring
- Evaluation

Q2: July 2018 – keywords

The Office for EU Integration and Chief Negotiator Mr Aleksandar Drljević Negotiations (progress, events, meetings, assessments, chapters, IGC...) Chapters 23 and 24
Chapter 27 (Environment)
IPA (pre-accession funds, projects, applications, public calls...)

Q3: October 2018 – keywords

The Office for EU Integration and Chief Negotiator Mr Aleksandar Drljević Negotiations (progress, events, meetings, assessments, chapters, IGC...) Chapters 23 and 24
Chapter 27 (Environment)
IPA (pre-accession funds, projects, applications, public calls...)

One of essential findings of all three reports was that the media reported on the actions taken as per the Action Plan mostly upon the initiative of relevant implementing institutions and organisations, i.e. "with low level of initiative taken by the media outlets themselves" (with the exception of the culture section). Moreover, the analysis showed that the largest share of reporting was accounted for by online media, followed by the press and finally TV. Surveys also showed that, however, citizens get informed about EU integration mostly via television, followed by online portals and the press.



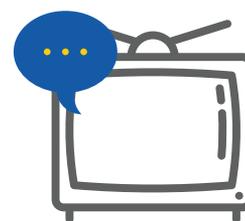
Over the previous period, media reporting on the actions taken towards the implementation of the Action Plan for the Public Information Strategy was predominantly positive.

Over the period observed, the largest share of media reports was positive (above 80% in all three quarters). At the time of the first and the third quarter, only one negative report was noted, and three such adverse reports in the second quarter. Such a breakdown is positive on one hand, but on the other, it is indicative of a bias in covering the topic.

The interactions with the members of the media community showed that the media are open for information about the integration process, but for a number of reasons are often very passive when it comes to actually reporting on the topic (the most frequently cited reasons include the absence of specialisation within desks due to few staff and high mobility of trained journalists). Although, as a general impression, over the previous period the cooperation with the communication departments was quite sound, it was quite formalistic to be able to come up with a good and interesting story. Journalists notice the trend of communicating primarily through *press releases*, which, although accurate, are quite stunted to generate attention. Moreover, it is evident that social networks are frequently used for providing information about meetings, which can hardly be expected to generate attention. According to them, in future training should continue, communicating as many specific cases and examples, together with introducing some sort of informal meetings where journalists could clear doubts and better understand the process. Also, when planning training, one should endeavour to bring in the journalists truly dealing with these matters the most for whom such training would be most meaningful.



Over the previous period, most media reports was in online media, followed by the press and then television.



General audience was mostly informed about EU integration via television, newspapers and web portals.

The analysis of Facebook activity shows the most frequently used social network for communicating EU integration to be the ME4EU Facebook page with three types of postings: videos, photographs and links to messages. Videos proved to have the highest reach of 8525 visitors of the Facebook page a day on average. Links to postings have an average of 1680 hits, while the photographs have 1357 average daily hits. Photographs receive the highest number of clicks, reactions and comments – on average 98 per posting. Paid postings reach much higher number of social network users. Thus, for instance, a paid video presenting the results of public perception survey and communicating the EU accession process in Montenegro reached more than 25,000 Facebook users.

Page statistics show that the webpages specialised on EU integration EU www.eu.me had 28,312 visitors last year (13,336 from Montenegro), viewing 111,102 pages in total.

Young people most often use Internet for getting information. To get informed about EU integration, 14.6% of them use web portals, 11.5% Facebook and 5.4% Twitter.⁷

Example: Non-paid postings have a high reach if focusing on interesting topics, such as the ones including young people and the new faces involved in the EU integration process. Thus, the photo album from the event entitled "Ask the Minister", involving some 40 students from all Montenegrin universities and three ministers in the Government had 5,879 organic views. The photo of a representative of the Ministry for European Affairs from a talk show on the public broadcaster reached 3,880 Facebook visitors and generated 337 reactions (likes, comments and shares).

2025 (34.6%); 17.3% believe it to happen in 2022, the total of 10% chose 2027, and 11.7% mention the year 2030. Interestingly, the share of those who have no opinion on the matter went down from 34.3% in 2017 to 26.4% in 2018.

Finally, the 2018 poll shows that most citizens view the EU as the most significant international partner. When asked "Which country or group of countries Montenegro should have the strongest links with in future" most respondents name the EU – 46.3%, followed by neighbours – 19.1%, then Russia – 18.5% and the USA – 5.2%.

2.3 Monitoring and coordination of communication (experiences from implementing the previous Strategy)

One of essential objectives of the previous Strategy was setting up of bodies for monitoring and coordination of communication (the Operational Body and the Consultative Body). The objective was subdivided into three segments: improve internal communication across Government for implementing the Communication strategy, strengthen the participation of local self-governments by setting up municipal communication teams, and enhance communication among and between the Government, the Parliament and other state administrative authorities and the civil society (focusing on NGOs).

The Consultative Body and the Operational Body were set up as envisaged by the Strategy, however, certain problems arose. The participants to consultations pointed out that both bodies were very important for communication over the previous period, and that the selected model was a good choice. On the other hand, they noted that the actual operation of these bodies depended very much on personal initiative of the individuals leading the process, which had its both positive and negative implications. All participants to consultations point out that in future more efficient coordination among all parties is needed, both as regards communication across government, and as regards the external communication towards general public or the communication among and between the Government, Parliament, various institutions and the civil society (primarily NGOs).

In future, the Consultative Body and the Operational body should operate more efficiently and be a hub for linking all actors, exchanging information, multiplying messages and coordinating communication stakeholders formally and essentially involved in communicating the integration process. It has been observed that the meetings of these bodies became few and far apart, and were quite formalistic.

As regards monitoring and evaluation, a number of measurable indicators should be adopted to measure actual output, not the efforts invested. It is noticeable that the monitoring of Action Plan implementation so far has been based on mapping all actions and the actually implemented ones. In addition to this indubitably important, but primarily descriptive evaluation, a number of measurable indicators should be introduced to measure the outputs in line with the *Methodology* (2018) adopted by the Government of Montenegro.

2.4 Lessons learned

Some lessons were learned from the implementation of the previous Strategy which may help future communication be more effective:

- ▶ The success of certain actions in Montenegro very often depends on the motivation and enthusiasm of individuals. This is obvious both in operation of the monitoring and coordination bodies, and in the operation of specific services and organisations. Although this can be an assets since motivated individuals may make substantial changes, at this stage we should attempt to further institutionalise and adopt good practices and procedures based on systemic institutional memory.
- ▶ The absence of direct budget allocation to ensure the implementation of al actions envisaged by action plans and strategies continues to be a serious problem. Relying on partners and multipliers is not enough for proper management of the process of communicating EU integration.
- ▶ Communication needs to be precisely and accurately targeting different audiences to preserve and retain the positive attitude towards integration, but at the same time without setting unrealistic expectations. The expectations set too high may backlash as unfulfilled hopes and fatigue.
- ▶ Communication plan should not be rigid but rather open to constant monitoring and changes designed to respond to emerging challenges.
- ▶ The bodies in charge of overseeing and implementing the communication strategy need to be motivated, efficient and active. These bodies should act as corrective and supportive tools in reference to the coordination of communication activities among all entities formally and informally involved in such communication.
- ▶ Sector-based communication should continue to be improved by networking, strengthening and education of PR services at all levels. Over the previous period there was some overlapping or even failure to recognise the "integration" dimension of certain actions carried out by various public administration departments, which led to less-than-efficient use of existing communication resources. The PR services of various departments should be mutually informed of priorities and actions. The key and subordinated messages communicated by Government PR services should be well-coordinated and follow a hierarchical order.
- ▶ The awareness of the importance of communication with different target audiences is still inadequate within all government departments and across public sector. Communication is still seen as an ancillary activity that is the sole responsibility of the PR service, and not an essential element of all government actions.
- ▶ Segmenting target audiences should continue towards ever more specific narrow target groups, particularly in direct communication in order for the information communicated to resonate better with the audience. This is in line with the current integration stage, but also survey findings showing that citizens are more interested in the process if having personal relevance.
- ▶ New forms of both formal and informal communication need to be introduced to strengthen cooperation with the media. One of the preconditions for this to take place is having an open and honest dialogue where they may present own views and give suggestions.



The largest share of postings on the integration process is found in the online media, followed by press and finally television, while the predominant source of information for the general public is television, followed by web portals and the press, a fact to be borne in mind while planning communication efforts.



Communication should use meaningful easy-to-understand language that would spur interest. Also, care should be taken to provide meaningful messages to the media. Unenlightening press releases from meetings devoid of any meaningful message will get reported, but will also go unnoticed.



Building a team spirit is extremely important for communication to function properly. Informal activities which help build good relations within a team on any task increase efficiency and productivity of the team output. Additionally, this has proven to be a good opportunity to build a positive image of the institution.



With technological advancement, communication undergoes fast and radical changes. One should keep pace with modern trends in communication and learn from good practices.



It is not a good approach if communication goes through one or few people. Then communication becomes overly dependent on the communicator. A large number of persons (particularly from negotiation teams) should be involved to communicate the integration process from within their area of expertise.



Public figures are very good communicators of the integration process. The general public responds positively to them and is open for the messages they send. Experience has shown that many among them are quite open for cooperation and are an asset that should be used.



We need to get out of big towns as the focus of most activities and visit remote communities, particularly the ones that are often left neglected. Citizens appreciate a forthcoming and direct contact and respond quite positively to such initiatives.

2.5 SWOT analysis

S – STRENGTHS

1. Public support for EU integration is relatively high and stable.
2. More than four fifths of Montenegrins believe to be partly or fully informed of the EU integration process.
3. Citizens recognise EU as the largest foreign donor in Montenegro.
4. Almost one in two citizens believe that Montenegro should in future have the strongest links with the EU.
5. Majority of parliamentary parties publicly support Montenegro's accession to the EU.
6. The media are open for reporting on the EU integration process.
7. Eurosceptic views and positions against integration do not receive much media attention.
8. EU supports the Government of Montenegro to communicate integration both through funding and expert assistance.
9. Many nongovernmental and other domestic organisations and associations and international organisations dealing with communicating Montenegro's EU integration.
10. The EU integration process became branded through efforts in implementing the previous communication strategy.

W – WEAKNESSES

1. There is no specific budget allocation for implementing the communication strategy.
2. Internal communication lines at the level of individual actors in the process are inefficient.
3. Local capacities for communicating EU integration are underdeveloped.
4. Lack of specialisation among journalists to report on EU integration
5. Members of negotiation teams are not adequately involved in communicating the integration process.
6. The EU support programmes are not recognised or understood enough.
7. In case of unpopular measures, integration is seen as an external process forced upon us, at times blaming the EU for that.
8. Structural changes and staff turnover as faces representing the negotiation process.
9. The Operational Body and the Consultative Body lack efficiency.
10. Communication is still overly formalistic and bureaucratic.

O – OPPORTUNITIES

1. Montenegro is recognised as the regional frontrunner in EU integration.
2. New communication channels with high reach (paid promotion on Instagram, for instance) may be used.
3. The EU Delegation to Montenegro is increasing funding for communication projects that may generate synergies.
4. The availability of IPA and Erasmus+ programmes is increasing.
5. Possible better coordination with the civil society, NGOs in particular.
6. Possible better coordination of communication activities with the EU Info Centre.
7. Increasing professionalization of PR officers within the public administration.
8. Possible cooperation with education institutions to prepare young people for the obligations and opportunities stemming from the integration process.

T – THREATS

1. Duration of the negotiation process may be discouraging for citizens and lead to communication fatigue
2. Migrant crisis is worsening.
3. The block in the European Parliament opposing enlargement gained strength after the elections, particularly with nationalistic and populist forces.
4. The EU may shift focus to other enlargement countries.
5. Political figures sent Eurosceptic messages.
6. Media desks lack capacities to report on EU integration process.
7. Declining public trust in institutions.
8. Many young people see EU as the opportunity to leave the country.
9. Increasing levels of disinformation and fake news in Europe and in the Western Balkans.
10. Citizens have unrealistic expectations of EU membership.

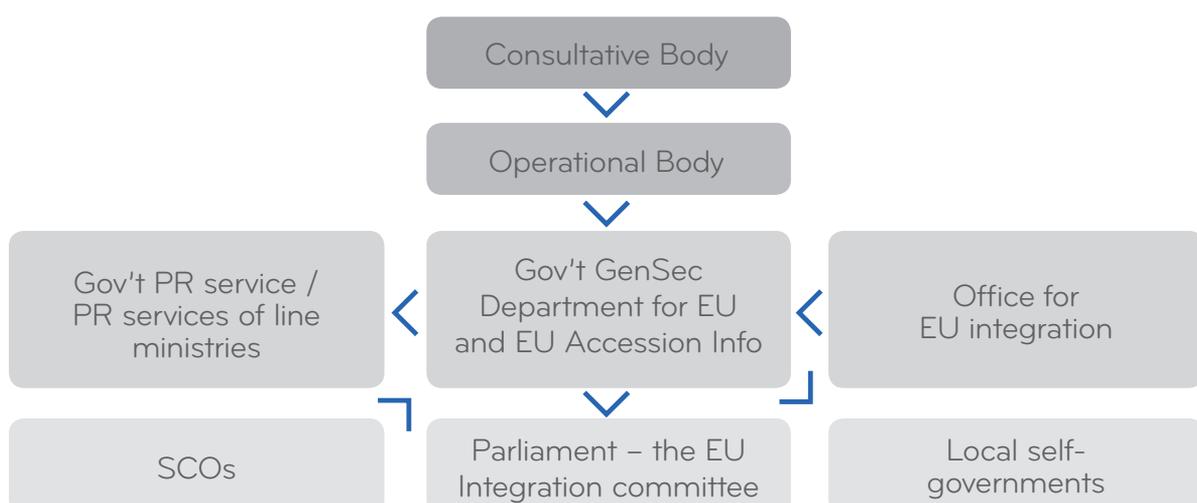
03 Target audiences

The 2019–2022 Public Information Strategy focuses on communication with the domestic and foreign audiences at the following levels:

- Internal audience (central and local level public administration employees)
- External audience:
 - domestic audience (general public and segregated into supporters, opponent, undecided and young)
 - international public (foreign media, diplomats)
- Multipliers and partners

The above are so-called strategic target audiences, while other target audiences should be defined and redefined with each annual Action Plan.

3.1 Internal audiences





In order for the ultimate message for the public to contain clear, understandable, comprehensive and timely information on benefits and obligations stemming from membership, internal communication within the public administration and the system already in place should be enhanced to lead to more efficient and better coordinated communication of Montenegro's EU integration. Given that each line ministry is responsible to manage pertinent negotiation areas, the present Public Information Strategy should insist on improving coordination among PR officers across government.

Operational Body and Consultative Body

One of the key internal communication tools was set up with the establishment of the **Operational Body** for implementing the Public Information Strategy. As shown in the Situation Analysis section, certain shortcomings have been identified in its operation so far. **It is recommended this body should be more agile** in the period ahead covered by the present Public Information Strategy. The Operational Body members need to invest efforts and exchange information continuously to coordinate actions better. The increase in the frequency of meeting is advisable should it be deemed necessary, and even more importantly, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of meetings.

Something similar is recommended for the **Consultative Body**, composed of the members of the Working Group involved in drafting the Public Information Strategy, the representatives of the EU Delegation to Montenegro and independent experts and NGO representatives. As a body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Public Information Strategy, it should take a more proactive and efficient approach, and intervene if noting any deviations, problems, changes in the communication framework or priorities or any other changes in circumstances that may interfere with the smooth implementation of the Public Information Strategy..

Leading actors

Given that the **Department for information** on EU and EU accession of the Government's General Secretariat is the leading actor in communicating EU integration process, it is important to set procedures for information flow from the Department towards other institutions and vice versa, but also increase the involvement of public institutions in communicating EU accession topics.

A useful tool for coordination would be a **Plan of Actions** for a certain period at the Government level. Such a Plan of Action would make it possible for all officers to understand the timing and the schedule of actions, which would help avoid overlapping, particularly in case of some major periodic events, such as conferences for opening/closing chapters, presentation of progress reports, visits of highest-ranking officials to European institutions and vice versa.

The **coordination of statements issued by Government officials** on EU-related topics, their content and the tone, given upon the enquiries from the media, is equally important. It is advisable for the leading actors to respond to media enquiries promptly and provide proper interlocutors to increase transparency and improve the quality of information. Here it is important to act proactively and offer news to the media.

In order to avoid the public gaining the impression that one (or a handful) person/s leads the whole EU integration process, it is important to **involve as many people as possible from the negotiation teams** in the communication process and properly train them for public speaking.

Professionalization of communicators

The implementation of the previous strategy set a good basis through training staff for communicating the integration process. Due to staff turnover, such **training should continue** in order to improve internal communication. Care should be taken that the training provided is up-to-date and efficient, relying on practical examples for training to be meaningful and effective. It is also recommended to deliver a series of **trainings on social network and digital media management**, given the permanent need to keep pace with new trends and innovations.

Internal level of information on accession and current issues within the administration should be increased, **with a particular focus on current EU programmes**, given the low level of withdrawals from several programmes. These are non-IPA programmes, but the ones operational at the EU level, for which Montenegro pays a participation fee to be eligible for applying with projects. In addition, the programmes like Horizon 2020, Europe for Citizens and Creative Europe have low public visibility, judging by the most recent poll. Through better coordination with national offices and national coordinators in charge of implementing these programmes, their visibility and recognisability should be increased, particularly for prospective applicants.

Local level

Local administrative staff are both part of internal communication and a significant multiplier. They are at the core of the reform processes and, even more importantly, often have direct communication with groups of citizens at the local level and as such are a valuable communication resource. Local self-governments are represented on the Operational Body for implementing the Public Information Strategy by the Union of Municipalities. In addition, it is important for local self-governments to designate at least one person to be in charge of communicating EU integration and coordinate all pertinent communication efforts at the municipal level (municipal companies, NGO, IPA projects, etc.)

It is advisable for the Action Plan to envisage the drafting of a Model EU Integration Communication Plan, which local self-governments may adapt to their contexts. As is the case at the central level, the general level of information and knowledge of local officials and civil servants regarding EU accession should be improved; as a result, this would strengthen capacities for applying for project funding, increase visibility of project results, and maintain high level of support for EU integration. It is also necessary to strengthen communication between local governments and local businesses in order to present EU programmes of support for business.

As regards the central level, the good practice of frequent visits to municipalities and direct contact with local communities and multipliers should continue. Such visits should also include other key actors, such as the EU Delegation and ambassadors of member states. Although the direct contact is the primary goal of such visits, the multiplying effect of the stories made during the visits should not be neglected. Thus, focus should be on preparing success stories for such visits which may be reported both in the local and the central media.

Message format

In order for the Public Information Strategy to be in line with contemporary communication techniques and practices, information departments from different agencies should have **design, layout, editing and animation services provided**. Some such skills may be acquired through training of the existing staff, but the bulk would still require hiring professionals, either as part of the administration or external to it. Since this is rather costly, it is recommended to have proper coordination in place and to use such resources reasonably.

3.2 Domestic audience

The largest share of messages transmitted while communicating the integration process is intended for domestic audiences. Nevertheless, based on the data available, particularly given the situation analysis which showed certain redistribution of views, we have identified four major target groups that should be approached separately and differently in future:

- supporters of the EU membership
- opponents to the EU membership
- the undecided
- the young

Each of the groups has some specificities described below, which may help in arranging proper communication. Moreover, the goals of communication with each of the groups below are specific.

Supporters

The findings of the analysis show that most citizens do support the integration process, but their views have fluctuated over time. Given the challenges ahead, we may expect such views to become less certain, hence, communication efforts should be aimed at maintaining the existing level of support and preventing such loss of certainty. The main challenges to that effect, apart from external factors such as the migrant crisis, may include the expectations from the moment of accession and the fatigue for protracted waiting for the moment to come. The messages designed for the needs of this Strategy respond to both.

Opponents

The growth trend among those who oppose EU membership has been reduced in favour of the undecided. Thus, in 2017 there were some 32.5% opponents, while the last poll in 2018 had this at 23.5%. Nevertheless, the comparative data from the region speak of the possible reversing of the trend as the process advances. It is important to focus efforts on preventing the increase of the share of those who oppose integration, particularly their re-distribution to the benefit of those who have strong views on this matter. The barrier to effective communication with this group is the fact that they do not trust institutions (67.2% claim to have no trust in either domestic or European institutions) which means that proper communicators for this audience should be public figures, for instance famous athletes or public figures from other areas of life generating greater societal consensus, but also direct beneficiaries of EU assistance as the

examples for the positive impact of the EU integration. In addition, a large share of those who oppose integration believe they would be at a personal loss if Montenegro would join the EU, which should be reduced through insistence on personal success stories.

The undecided

The share of citizens still undecided about the EU integration reduced over time. It was expected that as the process progresses, the percentage of those who do not have a view on the matter would go down to the benefit of either supporters or opponents. However, the last poll showed the increase in the share of the undecided from 5.6 to 10.6%. As we have seen before, this was simultaneously accompanied by a decline in the share of those who are expressly negative, which leads to the possible conclusions that these two categories are directly related. This, on the other hand, means that the opposite movement is also possible – from the undecided to the opponents.

If we have a closer look at the features of this group, we see that they are either indifferent or fully mistrustful of institutions (35.8% mistrustful, as opposed to 55.7% with no view on the matter). In addition, it is characteristic of this group that they have little information on accession as such (over 70% claim not to have any information at all and no interest in such matters). Finally, this group of respondents includes a disproportionate share of unemployed or of those in the lowest wage category, so the communication targeting this group should focus on the benefits that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have seen following the accession in reference to improved living standards (e.g. the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic is at the all-time low of 3%, compared to 10% before acceding to the EU).

Youth

According to the last census, young people aged 15 to 29 account for 21.4% of the total population in Montenegro. Given the pace of negotiation, it is primarily the young who are the group that would have the largest experience of the EU membership. The poll showed that 62.4% of respondents believe the young people stand to gain the most from membership and that they would have the greatest benefits. It is essential for this specific target group to receive such information which will not spur any unrealistic expectations on their part, but rather prepare them for the benefits and responsibilities stemming from the membership. It is extremely important that the share of young who support the EU accession at the level of the general average – 38.7% fully support, and 29.4% mostly support Montenegro's accession. It is also noteworthy that the largest share of the young are still in education, hence bettering the cooperation with educational institutions at all levels for them to take over regular information provision for the young would have a multiplying effect. More relevance should be attached to the frequently neglected courses in EU integration and the EU and popularise them through various activities done at the school level. Such activities, such as school visits, students visiting various institutions, quizzes, exchanges and the like may contribute to building and strengthening of the positive attitude young people have towards accession. It is advisable, in collaboration with the NGOs working with young people, to set up groups of young ambassadors/peer educators to be involved in pursuing the Strategy goals and supporting youth media and programmes to provide sound coverage of the EU-related topics.

A disproportionate share of young people follow web portals (52.3%), Facebook (57.6%) and Instagram (51.5%), so these channels should be used for communicating with this group in the form adapted both to the channel and the audience.

International audiences

Diplomatic missions of the EU and of the member states, as well as Montenegro's diplomatic missions in the EU, EU institutions and officials, international organisations based in Montenegro, foreign academic institutions, international nongovernmental and think-tank organisations, foreign media and international business community are the international audiences with whom the collaboration on EU integration communication should be reinforced. Of no lesser importance is the image of Montenegro as a prospective member in different EU member states. This image will affect the perception in member states, each of which individually will have to ratify and approve Montenegro's accession.

The continuity of support should be maintained, coupled with partnership of the Government with international partners in bringing the EU policies closer to Montenegrin citizens and in implementing the Public Information Strategy. This has to be a two-way communication, since the embassies and the EU Delegation are the main sources of information affecting the perception of Montenegro in Brussels and in member states, and thus by extension, support among EU citizens.

Diplomatic missions

A specific role in informing the general public and increasing the image of Montenegro in EU member states and regular information on Montenegro's progress achieved in the negotiation process is played by **Montenegro's mission with the EU and the diplomatic and consular offices of Montenegro abroad**. To ensure regular flow of information it is extremely important to establish communication channels among such offices, missions and the Department for Public Information on the EU and EU Accession. Communication products, such as newsletters, but also other shorter forms, such as infographics, success stories in visual formats and similar formats should be sent to Montenegrin embassies and consular offices as tools that could be used in further actions directed at international audiences.

Media

Foreign media have a strong influence on international public opinion. Through direct contact, cooperation should be established with regional and international media to generate more interest in Montenegro as the forerunner in the integration process and the prospective EU member state. Establish cooperation with:

- Regional media with their correspondents in Montenegro (Al-Jazeera, VOA, Balkan Insight, Radio Free Europe, N1, BBC Serbia) – develop a database and have regular contacts. Ensure interlocutors for interviews and features.
- The media solely dealing with the EU (Euractiv) – Establish contacts to ensure the free flow of information and to be able to promptly respond in case of negative reporting.
- European Broadcasting Service – uspostaviti saradnju s video servisom EU da bi se promovisao u Crnoj Gori, posebno kao servis medijima, ali i da bi Crna Gora češće bila dio njihovog sadržaja.
- European Broadcasting Service – establish cooperation with the EU video service for its promotion in Montenegro as the service available to media outlets, but also for Montenegro to be more often covered by their reports.

U koordinaciji s ambasadama zemalja članica, Delegacijom EU i info centrom EU, potrebno je inicirati **uspostavljanje studijskih posjeta Crnoj Gori za novinare iz Evropske unije.**

Availability of information

The Internet and search engines are the first place where any interested party would search for information about Montenegro. **As much pertinent information about Montenegro as possible should be translated into English**, from all domains, not only in direct reference to the EU integration. Such information has to be well-presented, easily accessible, key-words based and reliable. More actions are needed in reference to digital relevance of public administration webpages to increase their SEO (search engine optimizer), i.e. to make them come up among the first hits in search engines for relevant topics. Additionally, since Twitter is the main source of information for many journalists and international partners, all Twitter accounts of Government departments should be bilingual or have a version in English. Moreover, the www.eu.me should be further promoted as the main Internet source of relevant accession-related information.

Multipliers and partners

Previous strategies have already successfully established the approach of using multipliers in communicating the EU integration. The crux of the process is to avoid having communication as top-down (public services to citizens) only, but add multipliers at their core, bearing in mind they could be used for two-way communication.

This approach has shown its multiple positive impacts:

- Democratisation of communication by involving more actors
- Multiplication of communication, i.e. increasing its outreach and impacts due to the specific approach to the audience that multipliers have
- This adds to the quality of communication, since multipliers give their personal touch during communication.

The Strategy will continue to rely on such multipliers and partners, with somewhat different systematisation, streamlining and adaptation to new developments in communication. The Strategy has identified the following multipliers and partners in communicating the EU integration:

- EU Delegation to Montenegro/EU Info Centar /embassies of member states
- Local self-governments
- The media
- Research and education institutions and the teaching staff
- NGOs
- Parliamentary political parties
- Business associations, professional associations and unions
- Parliament (all MPs, and the EU Integration Committee in particular)
- Influential public figures (and digital influencers)
- Religious communities.

EU Delegation to Montenegro/ EU Info Centre / EU member states' embassies



Why: Diplomatic offices of the EU and member states help Montenegro on its accession journey and provide information on the EU support. The aim is to maintain and strengthen the partnership between the Government and its foreign partners in bringing the EU closer to Montenegrin citizens, and in implementing the Public Information Strategy. The communication in the opposite direction is also highly relevant, given that the embassies and the EU Delegation serve as the main sources of information for establishing the views about Montenegro within member states.



How: Maintain regular communication and coordination of actions, organise public events, conferences and round table discussions jointly. With the assistance of the EU Delegation, consider arranging for useful study visits⁷ training for NGO representatives, members of the press and students. To provide for proper information to the European audience, cooperate on arranging for study visits of foreign journalists. Coordinate communication activities with the EU Info Centre and share the resources.

Local self-governments



Why: The bulk of reform efforts is directly linked with the local level and a major share of EU funding is focused there. The aim is to improve the knowledge among public official and civil servants at the local level regarding EU accession, with a particular focus on the EU support programmes and thus gradually build capacities for absorbing EU funding while ensuring high level of support for the EU integration.



How: By organising several events within different municipalities attempt to improve communication on the ground with local and rural communities regarding EU accession. It is advisable to set up communication teams or contact points from among the existing local administration staff to establish cooperation and have regular interactions with to consider topical issues and host events, panels, Info Days, etc. The training and information sharing programmes aim at building capacities of the local administration staff for absorbing EU funding and extending their coverage to include local public institutions and companies.

Media



Why: The media are vital as the single most important channel for communicating EU integration to citizens. The aim is to get more engaged and unbiased media reporting and journalists specialised in these matters.



How: Apart from the usual communication channels covered by the Strategy, it is recommended to have direct interactions with editors and journalists, sign MoUs, where meaningful, build trust through informal briefings, organise study visits and training, incentivise by envisaging awards for best stories.

Research and educational institutions and teaching staff



Why: Teaching staff have a key role in reinforcing the dialogue within educational institutions. Young people have a special place in communicating EU integration, given that they will be future EU citizens and stand to gain from benefits offered by membership. The aim is to have young people who are well-informed about the EU accession, particularly about the aspects that are already relevant for them, such as the EU education, mobility, science, research and culture programmes that are already accessible.



How: Apart from the usual methods that involve the participation of representatives of research and education institutions in public debates, in regular interactions with Montenegrin universities and their faculty we should feel the pulse of the student body and provide the information they need. Surveys have shown that only a small portion of young people uses the education system to gain knowledge about the EU integration, hence, there is a need to improve teaching and extra-curricular activities to that effect, particularly through the already mentioned promotion of pertinent courses. Moreover, schools and other educational establishments should be used as intermediaries for the direct communication that the implementing partners will have with the young. There is a need to increase the visibility of Erasmus programmes, given that relatively few young people are aware of the programme. Through joint efforts of the National Erasmus Office and the EU Info Centre the programme needs to be better communicated, presenting the students who were granted access, explaining the application procedure and encouraging young people to apply. This should be done using innovative formats and channels familiar to young people, such as social networks. The focus of Erasmus programme presentation should shift to university departments that assumed the role of coordinators in bilateral exchange programmes.

Nongovernmental organisations



Why: One of the key partners and multipliers due to their strong engagement, involvement in the negotiation process and having own capacities already in place. The aim is to strengthen the partnership, involve NGOs in all communication efforts and join resources through concerted actions towards having better results



How: Use shared communication channels for the public administration and NGOs, respecting their autonomy, to multiply outreach. Hold regular and frequent meetings. Have joint presentations at public events co-hosted by both parties and pertaining to EU integration process communication. Particular attention should be devoted to availability of communication formats for reaching out to disabled people in partnership with their representative organisations.

Parliamentary parties



Why: The support for EU membership and/or shared underpinning values proclaimed by parliamentary parties in their party manifestos is quite significant for further integration. The aim is to reinforce partnerships with all parliamentary parties and involve them as much as possible in all actions concerning communicating the process. Political parties have their party infrastructures to support this, with dozens of thousands of supporters and members with whom they have open communication channels.



How: Have joint presentations at the events presenting to citizens the benefits and obligations stemming from the EU accession. Given the inevitable political differences, but also the consensus around the EU integration, political parties may reinforce the dialogue around those issues and build the democratic capacity of the process itself. Strengthen partnerships with all parties so that they would put their resources and channels of communication at the national and local levels to convey the messages to their electorates.

Business and professional associations and unions



Why: From the very onset of the process, professional associations hold information on the rights and responsibilities in the common market, but also on the opportunities offered at this stage to Montenegrin business community through EU support programmes. Given their direct contact with own members and technical expertise regarding the common market opportunities and demands, such associations are precious in managing expectations of the membership and preventing unrealistic hopes.



How: Business and professional associations and unions take part in specialised fairs and in the work of European trade unions. It is important to involve the industry, unions and professional associations in all relevant communication efforts and inform them of available EU support programmes to be well-positioned to provide timely information to their members. Particularly in interactions with business associations, focus should be on promoting businesses that already at this pre-accession stage import on the EU market and withstand the competition there, but also those who have improved their businesses with the support of EU funding (IPARD, COSME). Through their experiences, the business community and the general public alike will gradually gain knowledge and prepare for entering the much more competitive market.

Parliament



Why: As the legislature, the Parliament is the nexus for adoption of the EU acquis, and at the same time the promoter of the integration process, given that all MPs publicly support Montenegro's accession to the EU. The aim is to reinforce and further strengthen the role of the Parliament in the EU integration, particularly as regards communicating the process as such, with a particular role to be played by the EU Integration Committee. The MPs are one of the central points and multipliers in presenting accession to foreign audiences, given their regular contacts with their European counterparts.



How: It is recommended for the relevant committee to initiate meetings of different societal actors involved in the process to contribute through public discussions, consultations and panels increasing the level of information among the general public and keeping the current across-the-board consensus on EU membership. Maybe even more importantly, the Committee and MPs should continue with and even intensify interactions with their counterparts from European national parliament, and by extension with the general public in member states.

Influential public figures (and digital influencers)



Why: Certain public figures, such as actors, athletes, musicians, authors are true opinion-makers given their popularity among certain populations. The aim is, by using the influence and the reach their messages might have conveyed through the traditional and social media, to reach as many young people, inspire and engage them in the EU integration matters by presenting positive examples and practices and promoting shared European values.



How: Involve certain public figures in the campaigns and events aimed at increasing the level of information about the EU. It is advisable to involve such individuals who lead by example as regards shared values. Possibly introduce the title of EU integration ambassadors.

Religious communities



Why: Multiculturalism and religious diversity are inseparable aspects of Europe, and the EU insists on preserving identities of each member state and respect the diversity as the right of each EU citizen. The aim is to make the members of all religious communities in Montenegro aware of the advantages of living in the EU, but also that becoming part of that family of nations they would not stand to lose any part of their identity or the right to hold own beliefs.



How: Involve members of religious communities in public events and vice versa, organise the visits of EU ambassadors to places of religious practices. Increase the visibility of IPA projects whose beneficiaries are religious communities to show that the cooperation between religious communities and the EU is successful and productive.



04 Strategic goals and operational goals

The present Strategy aspires to increase the level of information of the general public on EU integration process and secure support for Montenegro's accession. Consequently, and given the current situation and the problems identified in the Situation Analysis, and with a view to four main target audiences, the following strategic and operational goals have been identified:

Internal audience: Enhance operation of the system to ensure professional, efficient and well-coordinated communication of the EU integration process at the state and local levels

Operational goals:

- Ensure effective operation of the Operational and of the Consultative Body, and foster internal information sharing by establishing permanent communication channels on the EU accession process
- Continue with the education and training of PR officers in state and local administrations, including the information on EU-supported programmes available to them

External domestic audience: Provide clear, comprehensive and timely information on the advantages and obligations stemming from membership through understandable, appealing and adapted messages

Operational goals:

- Increase the share of citizens who believe to be fully or partly informed of the EU integration process
- Improve the quality and outreach of EU integration information
- Increase visibility of the EU support programmes

- Improve public perception of the EU as a key global player
- Shatter misconceptions and unrealistic expectations from the EU accession process.

External international audience: Improve international recognisability of the process of Montenegro's accession to the EU through provision of information on actions and reforms undertaken and the successes achieved.

Operational goals:

- Timely and regular information provided to EU member states on Montenegro's process of accession
- Increase availability of information on EU integration in English

Multipliers and partners: Achieve multiplying effect and maximise communication outreach by developing targeted messages, tools and communication channels for all multipliers and partners in the process.

- Establish regular cooperation with multipliers involved in the integration process.

Performance indicator table

Strategic goal:

Enhance operation of the system to ensure professional, efficient and well-coordinated communication of the EU integration process at the state and local levels

Operational goal: Ensure effective operation of the Operational and of the Consultative Body, and foster internal information sharing by establishing permanent communication channels on the EU accession process

| Performance indicator | Baseline | Target | Measurement methodology |
|---|----------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Performance indicator 1: Assess performance of the Operational and the Consultative Team based on a structured questionnaire | N/a | Value of the index above one half | Structured questionnaire |
| Performance indicator 2: Assessment of internal communication of PR officers based on a structured questionnaire | N/a | Value of the index above one half | Structured questionnaire |
| Operational goal: Continue with the education and training of PR officers in state and local administrations, including the information on EU-supported programmes available to them | | | |
| Performance indicator 1: Training matches needs at the national and local levels | N/a | Training delivered as needed | Mapping the training needed and delivered Records Evaluation |

Strategic goal:
Provide clear, comprehensive and timely information on the advantages and obligations stemming from membership through understandable, appealing and adapted messages

| | | | |
|---|-------|------|---------------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Share of citizens interested in Montenegro's accession to the EU | 68.9% | 70% | Public opinion poll |
| Performance indicator 2: Share of citizens who believe that public information on EU accession is sound and complete and that it provides all key information | 51.2% | >45% | Public opinion poll |

Operational goal:
Increase the share of citizens who believe to be fully or partly informed of the EU integration process

| | | | |
|--|-------|-------|---------------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Share of citizens who believe to have no information on the EU integration | 17,6% | < 15% | Public opinion poll |
|--|-------|-------|---------------------|

Operational goal: Improve the quality and outreach of EU integration information

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Performance indicator 1: Share of positive postings generated By actors in implementing the AP | 80% positive | 90% positive | Quantitative analysis of media reporting on the EU accession process |
| Performance indicator 2: Average outreach of postings on social networks | FB video – 8.525 | 9000 | FB statistics |
| | FB photo – 1.357 | 1500 | FB statistics |
| | FB link – 1.680 | 2000 | FB statistics |
| | Clicks and reactions - 98 | 100 | FB, Instagram and tiwttter statistics |
| Performance indicator 3: More EU integration stories with a human face posted on webpage www.eu.me | 4 stories a year | >10 stories a year | Webpage statistics www.eu.me |

Operational goal:
Increase visibility of EU support programmes

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Share of citizens who perceive EU as the largest donor in EU | 50.5% | >50% | Opinion polls |
| Performance indicator 2: Share of citizens who heard and claim to know what IPA and EU funds are | 21% - IPA 27.5% - EU funds | 25% - IPA 30% - EU funds | Opinion polls |
| Performance indicator 3: Share of young people who heard and Claim to know of Erasmus+ programme | 15.4% | 20% | Opinion polls |

Operational goal:
Improve public perception of the EU as the key global player

| | | | |
|--|-------|------|---------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Share of citizens who would rely on the EU in foreign policy | 46.3% | >50% | Opinion polls |
|--|-------|------|---------------|

Operational goal:

Shatter misconceptions and unrealistic expectations of the EU accession process

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Share of citizens who agree with 5 Key messages | Average for all messages 55 % | Average for all messages - 57% | Opinion poll |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|

Strategic goal:

Improve international recognisability of the process of Montenegro's accession to the EU through provision of information on actions and reforms undertaken and the successes achieved

Operational goal:

Timely and regular information provided to EU member states on Montenegro's accession

| | | | |
|--|----------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Increase the number of events for EU member states | 4 events | Increase by 20% | Records and reports |
|--|----------|-----------------|---------------------|

Operational goal:

Increase availability of information on EU integration in English

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Increase the number of users in the English pages www.eu.me | 2057 Users in 2017 | Increase by 20% | No of users as per google analytics |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|

Strategic goal:

Achieve multiplying effect and maximise communication outreach by developing targeted messages, tools and communication channels for all multipliers and partners in the process.

Operational goal:

Establish regular cooperation with multipliers involved in the integration process.

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Performance indicator 1: Increase the number of joint actions/ Projects between the Gov't and multipliers | 33 joint actions/ events | Increase by 10% | Records and reports |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|



05 Key messages communicated to different audiences

Over the coming period, communicating the EU integration process should revolve around five key messages and a number of ensuing supporting messages. All messages stem from four communication priorities as set by the Government Communications Strategy (2018).



Key message 1:

EU is our destination, and better living standards for citizens the key goal of our reforms.

Supporting messages:

- The process of Montenegro's accession to the EU improves the living standards for all citizens.
- We are conducting reforms for citizens to live in a prosperous society of equal opportunities.
- EU offers better opportunities for education, mobility and youth employment.
- The rule of law is in the interest of Montenegrin citizens.

Why these messages?

The reforms countries undergo to reach certain standards in the rule of law, human rights, economic development areas lie at the very heart of the EU integration. The belief that Montenegro is in the process solely to meet EU requirements and tick the boxes should be avoided, because it moves the EU integration process away from daily lives. The key goal of integration is to transform the society to better match the needs of all citizens.



Key message 2:

Joining the EU, Montenegro will keep its identity and have a say in deciding on major issues

Supporting messages:

- Montenegro is already a part of Europe.
- By joining the EU, Montenegro will enrich it with its culture, history and nature.

Why these messages?

Losing independence, identity and control are justified fears all countries have when joining bigger systems, and in case of Montenegro its history may play a particular role. At the same time this is one of the most frequent negative associations with the integration process, according to the polls. Thus, there is a need to remind that the EU, led by the "united in diversity" motto, fully respects specificities of its members and respects their opinion, irrespective of size.



Key message 3:

Assistance from European funds is already improving the lives of Montenegrin citizens.

Supporting messages:

- The assistance which Montenegro receives from the EU is increasing.
- EU assists in most essential aspects of life, from safety over healthcare and infrastructure to the environment.
- After joining the EU Montenegro will have up to ten times more funding available from European funds.

Why these messages?

For more than a decade Montenegro has been a recipient of pre-accession funding and the effects are already visible in various areas of life. Citizens have recognised that since most of them know that the EU is the largest donor in Montenegro. Now, the results should be made more visible and citizens reminded that the funding is gradually increasing and that it is only a preparation for withdrawing much more substantial structural funds following accession.



Key message 4:

The EU accession process is being intensified since now the adopted regulations and standards are to be applied.

Supporting messages:

- Montenegro is closing chapters and showing its increased readiness for membership.
- Montenegro is the forerunner in the integration process.
- Montenegro will join the EU once when it is ready based on own merits.

Why these messages?

With the 2025 perspective now set, Montenegro finally got a timeframe. Given that the negotiations were opened in 2012, from the point of view of communication there is a danger of communication fatigue and loss of enthusiasm for the process due to its protraction. Thus, there is a need to remind that the ensuing phase does not slow things down; in fact, it is becoming more intensive, since now chapters are being closed after meeting the benchmarks and successfully implementing the reforms.



Key message 5:

European Union is a strong global actor with high living standards, based on democratic values and thus a priority for Montenegro.

Supporting messages:

- EU is stable, despite Brexit and other crises that affected it (migrant, security, etc.).
- EU is the only one strong enough to oppose monopolistic corporations and protect its citizens.

Why these messages?

The financial and the migrant crises, together with Brexit, tarnished the image of the EU in the eyes of Montenegrin citizens; according to the poll, they cited these crises as the reasons for the declining trust in the EU. Therefore, the image of the EU as a global economic and political power that makes no compromises with values, protects its citizens and represents their interests needs to be reinforced.

Testing the messages

All key and supporting messages from the Public Information Strategy have been tested through opinion polls. Namely, a representative sample of respondents was offered to respond to each of the above messages.

The key findings are as follows:

- There is an above average positive response to almost all above messages.
- The three messages that less of one half of respondents agree to come close to the threshold
 - The EU accession process is being intensified since now the adopted regulations and standards are to be applied – 48.3% agree
 - Montenegro is the forerunner in the integration process – 44.2% agree
 - The level of trust in the EU following Brexit is larger than ever before – 44.0% agree.
- The best assessed are the messages that refer to the living standard, the future for young people, the quality of reforms and the possibility of taking part in decision-making. Hence, these would be the easiest to come through.
- Respondents agree the least with the messages on the strength of the EU to curb monopolistic tendencies, on assistance in most important areas of life and that it is up to Montenegro to set the pace of the process. Hence, these would prove more difficult to communicate.

Given the overall positive response, all messages are appropriate.

Communication tone and language

The key messages present the main contents to be conveyed; however, the tone and language need to be adjusted to maximise their impact. The language needs to be clear, accurate and simple. It should be borne in mind that the whole point of the process is to improve the quality of life, and thus, this should be the alpha and omega of any communication endeavour. Language must be such to focus on results and impacts, but always with a human face. Or to illustrate this, housing units are not being built, but rather – people are getting their homes.

The language and the tone of the messages have to match the target audiences, but also the nature of the communication channel used. Writing a feature for a current affairs section in a weekly magazine and for Instagram are completely different things, although sharing the same goal. The language and tone have to show openness, inclusiveness and to be two-way, and indicate that the accession process and reforms are the joint endeavours and shared responsibility. Thus, one should not shun away from a less formal approach when the communication channel and the situation allow, since it instils the feeling of closeness, equality and openness, and messages more likely to resonate with the audience.



06 Key actions for pursuing operational goals

6.1 Communicating support programmes

One of the most valuable resources in communicating the EU integration is the pre-accession assistance (IPA and other programmes). Almost as a rule, the support programmes are positively perceived, by their nature they focus on the advantages of the enlargement process and if properly communicated, may show real and tangible effects of the process. Therefore, this resource should be put to maximum use, at all times, efficiently and consistently.

Communicating the support programmes follows the same rules as the overall public information process, but due to some specificities and its overall significance, we will cover it in a separate section.

The Situation Analysis has shown that the financial support is relatively well-communicated and that most citizens are aware that the EU is the biggest foreign donor in Montenegro, where a substantial share of citizens know what IPA and other programmes are. Nevertheless, the experience so far has shown a set of challenges for communicating the support programmes:

- a large number of actors, some of which lack experience in communication
- unclear division of competencies with occasional overlapping
- inefficient communication
- absence of personal stories
- lack of systematised data

The EU Delegation together with the EU Info Centre, the Office for European Integration, the Department for Public Information on the EU and EU Accession, the IPA Structure and a whole range of project beneficiaries (state and local level institutions, international actors, NGOs, farmers) are involved in communicating support programmes. This frequently leads to overlapping and lack of consistency in communication. The implementing partners often meet merely due to contractual duties regarding communication, most often kick-



off and project closure press events to meet the visibility requirements (the EU flag, the title, “EU-sponsored”). The communication done like this only reinforces the bureaucratic spirit of the process and not only fails to produce proper results, but even puts this valuable resource to waste.

Citizens are not the only target group for communicating support programmes, but also multipliers, the media in particular. For their sake, support programmes and success stories should be presented in a systematic and appealing way. A simple web search should suffice for journalists or any other interested person to get the information on projects by municipality, the largest/most significant projects in Montenegro, the people whose lives have changed thanks to the EU support programmes.

The following is recommended how to improve communication of support programmes:



Improve coordination among all the participants in the process – with faster and more efficient flow of information that can be achieved through regular meetings or an information sharing platform to avoid overlapping and lack of coordination.



Communication-related training – ongoing training, particularly for those who lack experience in communication, would add to the quality of the process. Whether this involves training for social media, or how to make a good photo of the project or how to present the information from an interesting angle, all of it will help professionalise communication of this major aspect of integration.



Provision of communication-related services – Government staff responsible for EU integration communications might become a sort of a hub for the information on assistance programmes, and they would provide technical and expert assistance in further conveyance of such information.



Develop communication products with due care – Sometimes it is better to make only one good story for one media outlet than have several press events and print thousands of brochures that do not generate any interest.



Give priority to projects with a clear effect on daily life – All projects are important, but not equally appealing. A smaller-scale project that made it possible for one farmer to obtain a loan or a municipality a fire truck bears much greater communication potential than a large-scale project of building administrative capacities.



Results-oriented – The target audience should understand clearly at each point how the project will improve theirs or the lives of other people.

Mapping projects at www.eu.me – Not only one-time mapping, but regular updates identifying, for instance, success stories, five largest projects in the country, examples of projects in each project area or each municipality, etc. Have a list of all EU programmes in which Montenegro is involved with clear instructions for applicants.

Use all project resources – Sometime project activities are not overly interesting, but the foreign expert may prove to be an excellent interlocutor for the media.

6.2 Communication channels, methods and tools

Media

Media are at the same time the single most important communication channel, a multiplier and a partner in communicating the accession process. They are still the most efficient way of reaching the largest number of people in least time. Thus, media communication should be done with utmost care. The data show that the European Union as such and the EU integration process are quite present in the media, almost always positively covered. There is, nevertheless, a discrepancy between the number of consumers of such media reporting and the number of citizens who believe to be well informed about the integration. We saw that they explain that by saying that they have no interest in the integration process, that it is too complicated or not relevant to them. On the other hand, we have seen a substantial increase in the share of those who are interested in the stories that touch upon their lives. These are the premises that the communication with the public via the media should be based on, and therefore **it should be understandable, simple and resonate with people.**

Not all the information that should be released is of equal communication value. Hence, **prioritisation** is needed. The best and the most appealing stories, the ones where human interest and the impact on daily life is visible, should be released in prime time, with largest audiences and when certainly reaching the desired target groups.

This does not mean that other stories have no communication value. All may be given an interesting angle with some effort and enough skill. Use a simple animated graph to present meeting of benchmarks, do an interview with an international lecturer regarding building of judicial capacities, make it possible for the media to make a story on how to do food testing in a newly opened laboratory. In case of a formal meeting, show anything that might be interesting for target audiences and agree in advance the key messages, in line with the communication priorities. Do not create noise in the communication channel with bureaucratic formalities having no message.

Negotiation chapters constitute mere administrative division of the negotiation process to better frame reforms and legislative approximation for the sake of efficiency. **Negotiation chapters have not been devised with communication purposes in mind and should not be used as a communication tool.** It involves 33 chapters with varying communication potentials that by sheer number might overwhelm the communication. As the poll has shown only 31% of citizens know what chapters 23 and 24, overly present in communication, actually involve. Areas and results should be communicated, not the negotiation chapters.



An example

If the Slovak embassy is on a visit to the ministry, it is not enough to publish just photographs of the two officials and the press release. This requires additional efforts and some research, but if all do their share you will know where to look for additional information. In the social media and through other communication channels, remind of:

- Višegrad scholarships offering opportunities for Montenegrin students to attend master's studies in Slovakia, the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava which is on a bilateral Erasmus agreement with its counterpart in Cetinje.
- Farmers from both countries who were on study visits.
- How Slovak economy developed since joining EU and why today they have one of the lowest unemployment rates.

It should not be forgotten that media are not there just to communicate the integration processes in Montenegro, but also the European Union proper, its values, successes, challenges, current situation in member states. All of that contributes to getting a general picture of the EU integration and particularly affects the forming of views for supporting or not Montenegro's accession to the EU. Therefore, in partnership with the media, the public should **receive a more realistic picture of the European Union**. Particular focus should be on countries of the region which are already member states, that citizens can relate to. For these stories, just like for the local ones, the same rules apply: the stories have to be simple and interesting and resonate with people.

Television

Television remains a predominant information channel, particularly for those above 35 years of age. As regards communication via television (and other video formats) it should not be forgotten that it is primarily a visual tool and that no story, no matter how good, will leave an impression if not supported by a good photo, regardless whether an emotional statement of a speaker or a good footage of the event/scene.

Montenegrin televisions have small desks and specialisation of journalists for reporting on the EU can hardly be expected except in the case of the public broadcaster. Small desks also result in correspondents being overworked, which prevents them from focusing properly on any story. Hence, it is recommended to use the air time wisely, to work in collaboration with televisions, use video agencies and supply video footage.



Case study: How to ensure a real life story on TV

We showed that it is only the stories that have a human dimension and which show how processes affect and change daily life may generate the audience interest. But how can we ensure to get such a story without doing the journalist's work? How can we prevent TV reports from being mere press statements taken during press events? The only way is to invest efforts and be proactive:

Find an additional interlocutor. A story must not rely on one official giving a statement. Find a farmer recipient of the grant, a police officer driving the donated car, a customs officer whose job has become faster and more efficient, a judge attending the training, a parent whose child was made safe from using faulty toys⁸ These should be articulate people expressing well their thoughts and feelings, because it is the emotion that resonates with the audience.

⁸ <https://youtu.be/6WJ-DX51mpA>
<https://youtu.be/hX-I5RvzIOo>
https://youtu.be/Is_0W7czoKA

Proper setting. Do not shoot in offices unless absolutely necessary. The setting and field footage is essential.

Proper timing when the story is topical. Follow media cycles. A story stands a fairer chance of getting better air time over weekend or in summertime, when there are fewer news. Do not wait for the journalists to approach you, offer them a story.

Find archived materials to be used in the story. To avoid a story being visually dull because journalists used generic archived materials, offer them relevant archived video material. This is not always easy, but with the assistance of Government's PR Bureau and own video archives you should develop a readily available database of video footage.

In such a case you not only get a personal story, but also control all communication aspects of the message.

Internet

Internet is the fastest-growing communication channel used for information primarily by young people, with the prospect of their influence only growing in future. If you fail to keep pace with very fast changing trends, your communication may very easily become obsolete or ineffective. Therefore, online communication, whether via an information portal or social media, should be based on the following principles: **learn, inform, involve.**

Learn, because the Internet unlike the mass-media, is interactive, offers direct feedback of the quality and effect of the communication.

Inform, because the number of those who primarily receive online information only increase, and internet offers a wider array of communication formats and a range of options for your message.

Involve, because of the hybrid nature of Internet and the fact that the audience still perceives it as its own, and not a communication channel which has been forced upon them, the possibility to involve the audience is much bigger.

Information portals

Communicating the EU integration processes via information portals is similar to the traditional media with a few notable differences. Whether you post on your own portal or send press releases to media portals, pay attention to the following:

- Journalists working for portals are less likely to be specialised than journalists in the press and normally post several texts a day. Do not count on them to spend too much time working on your release or finding other sources, do it yourself.
- Internet is fast, thus prepare in advance to be the first source of information.
- You can give links to whatever might seem interesting, and not found in the statement. Use that to get readers interested.
- Write short statements, long ones do not get read online. Around 55% of users focus for 15 seconds, while 10-20% scroll down to the end of the page.⁹

⁹ <http://time.com/12933/what-you-think-you-know-about-the-web-is-wrong/>

- Headlines should contain keywords (to be searchable) have a small “bait” (in line with good communication practices).
- If you have a video, always add it to the text.
- Comments are not representative of the audience views, but may prove to be useful in recognising trends. Analyse them.

Social networks

Social media are not only a desirable but an essential communication channel for any successful communication. They give the option of communicating directly with target audiences without any intermediaries, with full control of the content posted. Likewise, they put you in a position to compete with the most diverse attention-seeking contents, with an impersonal algorithm making the decisions. Writing practical tips on using social networks in a multi-year strategy might seem futile, since with a couple of changes your approach has to change, but nevertheless there are some rules that should be observed to maximise the effect of communication:

Choose carefully the social network you use.

By target audience: Primarily young, but also middle-aged people use Facebook. Instagram is primarily used by even younger audiences (15–30).¹⁰ If you wish to target younger teens and children, Snapchat is the right choice, although it now might be losing popularity. Forget about the general public on Twitter, since in Montenegro a bigger community of users never developed. Nevertheless, Twitter is relevant because of the international audience, the foreign and some domestic media and partners using it. Tweet in English. Do not skip LinkedIn if your target audience is interested in jobs or vacancy announcements.

By content: You cannot use the same formats on all social media. Adapt. Vertical or horizontal photos, 3 : 4 or 16 : 9 video, text caption on the photo or below, these might seem like trivial choices, but without them your content does not stand a chance on social media. (<https://www.online-convert.com/>)

By timing: Follow most recent developments in social network algorithms. At any point you should know the best timing for posting something on social media to maximise reach.

Paid promotion.

The business models of social media have made it indispensable to pay for promotion if you wish your contents to reach large audiences. Prioritise when choosing for what postings to pay promotion.

Respond promptly.

Social media users are used to having a quick and meaningful response.

Use two-way communication.

Two-way communication is a powerful tool, but does not happen by itself. Encourage your followers with a somewhat more casual attitude, show that you are aware of the developments in the society and that you have own opinion on that, just like them.

¹⁰ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/274829/age-distribution-of-active-social-media-users-worldwide-by-platform/>

Think of sharing their contents, where appropriate. It will give them importance and encourage them to engage in an open communication with you.

Use competitions and awards

Games, quizzes and mini competitions raise visibility and appeal of your contents substantially. Awards, even symbolic ones, are one of the best tools for organic increase in reach and the number of followers.

Do not overload social networks.

If you exaggerate, algorithms will reduce the reach of your postings, and thus you risk that something essential will not reach the intended public. This depends on dozens of factors, but if you target general audience not showing too much engagement, it is not advisable to have over two posts on Facebook a day.

Keep pace with and use innovation.

When a new option is introduced, social media usually increase the organic reach to popularise it among users. Use that. Currently, stories on Instagram have a greater reach than traditional posts.

Use influencers.

They already have the resource you need, a large number of followers that they can reach with your message. Pay attention to false influencers and that what the influencer is famous for must be compatible with the nature of EU integration, at least in broad terms.



Adnan Husić, a young man from Bijelo Polje, the most popular Montenegrin youtuber, with 467,000 subscribers and over 100 million views. Adnan is popular because he plays video games and is only one of Montenegrin digital influencers whose followers might be used as an asset for communication.

Use video

Videos are essential for communication on social media and a whole section is devoted to them.

Video

Over the last years, video has become so dominant on the Internet that marketing experts have called it "king of content". Here are some reasons why you should not skip video in communicating integration on social media:

- Companies using video record some 42% more organic visits than the ones who do not use them.

The information from video content is ten times more memorable than text [\[1\]](#).

It is estimated that 92% of people watching video content on mobile platforms share these with other people. Our analysis also showed that video content on the Facebook page ME4EU had most shares.

By 2021 80% of the whole Internet traffic will be video contents.

Video is not so expensive any more. It does not have to be a proper video any more. Using free software (WeVideo, Moovly), with the help of photographs and data, you may make a "storytelling" video that will present your message in a much more appealing way. Video contents in e-mails increase clickability by up to 50%.

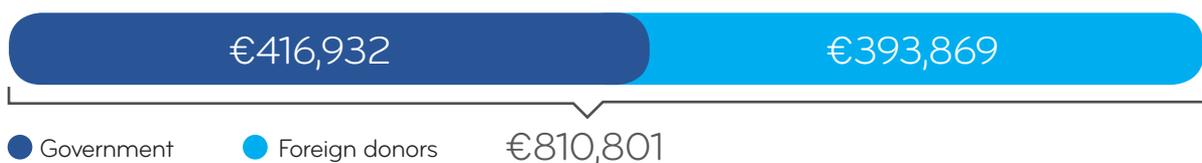
Using video has its rules, as well. There is a number of rules that need to be observed in order to maximise the effect:

- Most videos are watched on mobile devices and without sound. All being said needs subtitling.
- It is best to have a special format for all, but if not possible, go for 4:3 video which does not require to change the phone position from vertical to horizontal in order to view it.
- Videos under one minute receive most shares.
- Re-use video. Edit a video posted on TV. Make a series of jingles from documentaries.
- Use animation. That is one of the most expensive forms of presentation, but the results justify investment.
- Videos explaining "What will Montenegro be like after joining the EU", "How is toy safety tested according to the EU standards", "What is it like to monitor Montenegrin border on a quad bike" (donated by the EU). Surveys have shown that the so-called "How" videos are always among the most viewed and the ones generating largest number of interactions. Use that.

Budget

Apart from the regular activities, the budget of EUR 810,801 is envisaged for the first year of the Public Information Strategy implementation, where the Government is supposed to allocate 416.932 EUR, while the remaining EUR 393,869 will come from donor-supported projects. Based on the data available, it is projected that approximately 3 million EUR will have to be provided for the four years of the Public Information Strategy implementation, with half of the sum to be appropriated from the state budget.

Budget for the first year of implementation



2019-2022 Strategy budget





07 Monitoring and evaluation with performance indicators

In line with the *Methodology for Developing Policies, Drafting and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers* (Government of Montenegro, 2018), the *Public Information Strategy* sets its monitoring and evaluation plan.

Monitoring and annual reporting

Monitoring is defined as a regular ongoing process of gathering and analysis of the information on attainment of goals and results of actions. Thus, monitoring is linked with the Action Plan and refers to **annual** monitoring of the degree of implementation of the AP actions. The monitoring report mostly operates with the **output indicators**, and with a reference to performance indicators if the data are available. For its part, evaluation will primarily focus on **performance indicators**. Given the principle of *verification of performance*, annual monitoring will aim at examining which communication channels are effective and whether messages are still relevant or should be redefined.

As envisaged by the *Methodology for Developing Policies, Drafting and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers* the annual report will include the following:

- **An executive summary** giving a general assessment of the implementation with a reference to both the strategic and operational goals
- **Presentation of the status of output indicators and the values of performance indicators (if available)**
- Presentation of the planned and used **budget** with an overview of costs and a reference to allocations in accordance with the sources of funding
- **Recommendations** for more effective pursuit of goals
- **New deadline** for completing the actions which are still pending
- **A table presenting** the actions implemented in reference to indicators.



The annual report is prepared by the Department for Public Information about the EU and the EU Accession Process within the Government's General Secretariat in collaboration with all services responsible for implementing the Action Plan. Both the Operational and the Consultative Body deliberate the Annual Report and give recommendations. The Annual Report is endorsed by the Government of Montenegro.

Evaluation

The *Methodology for Developing Policies, Drafting and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers* (2018, p 81) defines evaluation as a systemic and objective "assessment of the ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results". Given the evaluation aims – "establish the relevance and achievement of goals, the efficiency of development, effectiveness, impact and sustainability" – this *Public Information Strategy* envisages final evaluation at the end of the implementation period which will evaluate the effects and performance of the *Public Information Strategy* in reference to the set goals and objectives, and prepare the situation analysis for the following strategy paper in this field.

An external evaluator will be in charge of the evaluation. The Operational Body and the Consultative Body will examine the process and the final evaluation and give their opinions, which will feed into the final report to be endorsed by the Government of Montenegro.

Final evaluation will be done using the methodology contained in the Table of Performance Indicators.



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- **Marija Maraš**, the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro,
- **Vanja Starovlah**, the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro,
- **Ljiljana Filipović**, the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro,
- **Marko Pejović**, NGO Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, Podgorica,
- **Damir Nikočević**, NGO Centre for Civic Education, Podgorica,
- **Nina Šćepanović**, NGO Juventas, Podgorica,
- **prof. dr Olivera Komar**, Faculty of Political Sciences, the University of Montenegro,
- **Radovan Bogojević**, a journalist and communication expert,
- **Jelena Mrdak**, UNDP Montenegro.



