



COHESIFY
The impact of EU Cohesion Policy
on European Identification

Cohesion policy implementation, performance and communication Cyprus case study

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1. Introduction

Objectives and rationale

The purpose of this case study is to investigate EU Cohesion policy performance and communication in the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), as well as its impact on citizens' perceptions and attitudes to the EU.

The case study focuses on two Operational Programmes (OPs), "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" and "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion", which have been in place during the 2007-2013 funding period, as well as the current 2014-2020 period. Both programmes form the principal pillar of EU Cohesion policy in the island. This case study thus revolves primarily around the multitude of aspects pertaining to both OPs.

The selection criteria for the case study included Cohesion policy eligibility and financial intensity, programme type, governance system and European identity.

- **Funding and eligibility.** In 2007-2013, Cyprus was allocated €492.665.838 for the OP "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" from the EU, whereas it was allocated €119.769.154 for the "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion" OP. All three funds related to Cohesion policy were involved in the OPs; the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund in the case of "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness", and the Cohesion Fund and the ESF in the case of "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion". Both OPs are in place for the current programme period running from 2014 to 2020. The exact proportion of resources coming from each fund, as well as the proportion of EU and national contributions are detailed in this study. For "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion" during this period, the EU allocated €140.560.988 from a total of €163.323.737 earmarked for the OP. EU contribution for "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" was €561,840,720.
- **Governance.** Cyprus is both an EU region and a sovereign state. Ever since joining the EU in 2004, RoC has been a recipient of EU Cohesion funds. The Managing Authority (MA) is deeply intertwined with state institutions, thus providing an easy overview of implementation, monitoring and partnership structures.
- **EU attitudes and identity.** Cyprus is considered geographically a part of the Middle East; however, its orientation has historically been towards Europe and the West more general. Local politics are dominated by the ongoing Cyprus dispute, the division of the island between the internationally recognized Greek-dominated RoC and the breakaway "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC). To a lesser degree, public discourse is structured by the economic crisis affecting the island since 2010-12. Euroscepticism as a political phenomenon centered on the rejection of the EU, has been largely absent. Nevertheless, given its geographical distance from "Europe", Cyprus presents an interesting case study in establishing if and in what manner Cohesion funds help strengthen feelings of belonging to "Europe" and the EU despite the obvious geographical limitations.
- **Implementation settings.** COHESIFY analysis of the regional relevance of EU policies, examining the objective vulnerability, receptivity and desirability of EU policies, from the point of view of the structural development situation, needs and challenges of regions, along with the analysis of relations between the features of territories, their receptiveness to EU policies and the perceptions of the EU and EU Cohesion policy, resulted in the development of territorial typologies, which also served the basis for the case study selection. The analysis of European identification in EU regions based on two dimensions – citizens' image of the EU and their attachment to the EU – using Eurobarometer data

showed that a *negative-neutral* image prevails in Cyprus and the majority of citizens do not feel *attached* to the EU (Dąbrowski et al. 2017).

Methodology

In addition to secondary and primary resources for the desk-based analysis, the case study is based on the following original data:

Stakeholder survey

A stakeholders' online survey was carried out in the spring – summer of 2017. The survey was sent to 81 stakeholders, involved in Cohesion policy during the 2007-13 and 2014-20 programming periods, including (i) Monitoring Committee members: stakeholders involved in the management and monitoring of operational Programmes, including Managing Authorities, implementing bodies, associations of local authorities or businesses, economic and social partners, education institutions, civil society organisations and NGOs; (ii) local state authorities: stakeholders involved in the delivery of EU projects as project promoters at the local level, (iii) and other economic development stakeholders. Out of the 81 stakeholders that were contacted, 51 confirmed that they received the survey. From these 51 stakeholders, 21 returned to us a completed questionnaire which is translated into 41% response rate.

Stakeholder interviews

Interviews were conducted with 9 stakeholders representing the Managing Authority, business associations, trade unions, Cohesion policy officers attached to various state institutions and ministries, as well representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations during the month of July 2017 (see Annex I for more details).

Focus groups

In the case study of Cyprus 14 participants (10 male and 4 female) took part in 4 focus groups in the city of Limassol. The ages ranged from 21 to 70. Groups displayed relative homogeneity in relation to age cohorts. One group consisted entirely of students, another of people in their early thirties. All participants were residents of Limassol, whereas one participant was from the Czech Republic.

Some participants were recruited through the COHESIFY citizen survey, which asked a random sample of respondents' living in Cyprus to provide a contact telephone number if they were willing to participate in a focus group discussion on the topic of EU funding, attitudes to the EU and European identity. However, the majority of participants who did eventually show up for the focus groups were recruited through the mobilization of the main researcher's social network creating a snowball effect. Participants expressed the will to participate voluntarily without offering any incentive for their participation. (see 41 and 42 in Annex 1 for more details).

Citizen survey

A citizen survey was conducted via telephone using a dual sampling design to cover the entire target population while taking into account Cyprus' specific variation in landline and mobile phone penetration. The sample was designed to be representative of all people aged 18 and over from the population and it was randomly selected, having identified a sufficient set of auxiliary variables for population weights (e.g. age, gender, or educational groups). The final sample was pre-stratified by posing screening questions and it consisted of 500 respondents. The data collection took place from 24.08.2017 until 07.09.2017 (See Borz et al. 2017).

Structure of the case study

The case study is structured as follows. The contextual scene is set in the next section by reviewing the socio-economic and political background including public opinion on the EU, territorial identity issues and political context. It then proceeds to the analysis of the implementation and performance of Cohesion policy, based on desk research, stakeholders' surveys and interviews. The analysis of the communication aspects follows in terms of the effectiveness of communication strategies and wider media framing of Cohesion policy, based on desk research, surveys, interviews and media framing analysis. Public perceptions of Cohesion policy and the impact of Cohesion policy on identification with the EU are reviewed in the final sections, drawing on policymaker surveys and interviews, the citizen survey and focus group results. The key findings are summarised in the conclusion including the policy implications and recommendations stemming from the case study.

2. Context and background

2.1 EU attitudes and identity

According to the 2016 Eurobarometer, Cyprus was among four countries where citizens define themselves primarily in terms of their nationality rather than European identity (50% versus 49%), the other three countries being the United Kingdom, Greece, and Bulgaria (Eurobarometer 2016a: 21). In the European Parliament's 2016 Parlameter, and in contrast to other EU countries, Cyprus – along with Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and Bulgaria – figures as one of the countries where less than 50% of citizens believe their country has benefited from EU membership (Parlameter 2016: 17). According to the same poll, Cyprus ranked third to last in the question "My voice counts in the EU" (Parlameter 2016: 30). Cyprus ranked below the EU average of 71%, as only 68% of respondents on the island believe that "what brings together the European Union member states is more important than what separates them" (Parlameter 2016: 33). According to the Spring 2017 Standard Barometer, 57% of Cypriots tend not to trust the European Union, although this is less than the 61% that tend not to trust the national government (Eurobarometer 2017: 2). In terms of identity, Cyprus has one of the lowest rates of EU citizenship awareness (53%), ranking fourth to last, whereas 73% state they do not feel attached at all to the EU (Eurobarometer 2016b: 7).

These results among many, indicate that European identity in Cyprus generally lags behind average EU values. A hypothetical explanation for this must take three factors into account. Firstly, Cyprus is a geographical outpost of the EU, located geographically in the Middle East and experiencing a lower grade of interaction with other member states due to its insular character. In addition, political discourses are monopolized by the ongoing Cyprus dispute, leaving little or no room for the articulation of a pro-European/Eurosceptic cleavage. Finally, the results of the economic crash and the EU's handling of the affair during the 2013 "bail-in" have led to a certain degree of disillusionment with the EU as a political institution, as well as detachment from established politics in general.

2.2 Political context

In political terms, membership in the EU is directly linked to the ongoing division of the island. The Greek-controlled Republic of Cyprus (RoC) has joined the EU in 2004, whereas the internationally unrecognized Turkish Republic of Cyprus (TRNC) is considered a part of the EU where the *aquis communautaire* is suspended. Prior to accession, the EU viewed Cypriot EU membership as preconditioned on a resolution of the Cyprus question. However, when the Greek Cypriots

overwhelmingly rejected the UN Annan Plan for reunification in the 2004 referendum (while Turkish Cypriots voted in favour), this led to the RoC joining the island alone (Katsourides 2014).

The majority of political forces in the Cypriot South supported EU accession on the grounds that it would facilitate a resolution of the Cyprus question. Economic considerations played a lesser part, given that the RoC had a prosperous service-based economy in the three decades prior to accession. Given its hub as a financial services hub between Europe and the Middle East, Cyprus has a better standard of living compared to other countries of the EU South, such as Greece and Portugal.

The overwhelming majority of political parties support Cypriot membership in the EU. This is particularly true for the right-wing Democratic Rally (DISY) and centre-right Democratic Party (DIKO). The main opposition party, the left-wing Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) has traditionally opposed EU membership but modified its position in 1995, supporting EU accession as a catalyst for solving the Cyprus question. Other minor parties, such as the nominally social democratic EDEK could also be considered pro-EU (Cf. Debus/Gross 2018: 10-12).

Going against general European trends (Cf. Hobolt and de Vries 2016), Euroscepticism has played little or no part as a political issue in Cyprus. EU membership is perceived either as a validation of the Greek Cypriots' self-perception as "Europeans" vis-à-vis the Turkish Cypriots, or alternatively, as a source of funding for various infrastructure and entrepreneurial projects.

2.3 Socio-economic context

The current economic situation in Cyprus is characterized by a modest recovery following the March 2013 "bail-in", where bank depositors over 100,000 Euro had to pay a levy to resolve the country's fiscal crisis. The measure had detrimental effects for the island's service-based economy. Manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, public and private consumption, the export of goods and services, electricity production, and the provision of professional-scientific services among others, all dramatically shrunk.

The Eurozone crisis in Cyprus owes much to the rapid expansion of Cypriot banks to Greece and the Balkans, making them vulnerable to the turbulences centred around the restructuring of Greek debt. This caused the collapse of one of the island's two main banks. The debt incurred by the rescue of Laiki Bank transformed the banking crisis overnight into a fiscal crisis of the state, prompting Cyprus to seek assistance from the European Stabilizing Mechanism (ESM).

Following the 2013 "bail-in", a modest recovery of the economy could be observed. This, however, was more linked to the global recovery which set in in 2012 than any substantial change of course. In addition, the Cypriot government has enacted a so-called "golden visa" scheme, whereby Cypriot EU citizenship is granted to wealthy individuals purchasing high-priced real estate on the island. It is estimated that golden visa revenues account for a quarter of the country's GDP. Due to this and other factors, Cyprus officially exited ESM supervision in 2016. However, given that no significant long-term restructuring of the country's flawed productive model has taken place, it is doubtful whether this economic recovery is sustainable. Investment in manufacturing as well as research and innovation remain low compared to the EU average, whereas the vulnerable finance and tourism branches still dominate the economy.

3. Cohesion policy implementation and performance

3.1. EU Cohesion policy strategic and implementation framework

Since joining the EU in 2004, Cyprus has been through three phases of Cohesion policy implementation. These phases are:

1. 2004-2006, soon after the country's entry into the EU, when Cyprus was allocated 113 million Euros in fully absorbed funds;
2. 2007-2013, as part of two Operational Programmes (OPs) – “Sustainable Development and Competitiveness” and “Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion”;
3. the ongoing phase (2014-2020), as part of the same OPs mentioned for the previous phase.

Below is a detailed presentation of both OPs for the 2007-2013, as well as 2014-2020 periods.

The OP “Sustainable Development and Competitiveness” for Cyprus (2007-2013) was one of the implementation instruments of National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, a national-level document defining the policies concerning the utilization of EU funds for development purposes. Responsibility for preparation and oversight of the OP rested with the Managing Institution, in this case the Cyprus Managing Authority (CMA).

“Sustainable Development and Competitiveness” set itself a strategic goal, to be implemented through achieving three interrelated goals. These were: 1) improving the country's attractiveness through the creating and upgrade of basic infrastructure; 2) promoting knowledge and innovation society, while improving the productive environment; 3) creating sustainable communities in the urban centres as well as the countryside.

The above-mentioned goals were to be achieved by focusing the OP along five Priority Axes: 1) basic environmental and energy infrastructures; 2) basic transport infrastructure; 3) society of knowledge and innovation; 4) the promotion of a productive environment; and 5) rejuvenating urban and rural areas. In addition, two technical axes were included to help with the smooth implementation of the programme. These were 1) the technical assistance provided by the ERDF and 2) the technical assistance of the Cohesion Fund. An overview of the funding allocated to each axis can be found in the following tables.

Measures to improve competitiveness included funding to 272 SMEs, 18 of which were newly founded businesses. The funding pertained to issues of technological upgrade in the manufacturing and service sectors. In the context of promoting youth and women's entrepreneurship, 152 enterprises received investments, benefiting 78 women 74 young entrepreneurs. A total of 1617 mixed jobs were created by 2013.

Other actions and measures included widespread investment in tourist and environmental infrastructure, improvements on the road network, and 218 work contracts with research centres, where one partner is a research centre and the other one a business.

Funding for the above-mentioned Priority Axes was allocated from the ERDF (c,d,e) and the Cohesion Fund (a,b). The following table shows the indicative allocation of ERDF funding broken down by the relevant Priority Axes:

Table 1: ERDF funding allocation per Priority Axis ("Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" (2007-2013)

2007-2013	ERDF allocation (%)	ERDF allocation (€)
PA: Knowledge and Information Society	32,9%	92,220,000
PA: Productive Environment	17,14%	47,600,000
PA: Rejuvenation of Urban and Rural Areas	45,49%	127,141,354
PA: ERDF Technical Assistance	4,47%	12,500,000
TOTAL	100.00	279,461,354

The other source of funding for "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" was the Cohesion Fund. CF funds were allocated to Priority Axes related to infrastructure projects in the areas of environmental and energy infrastructure, as well as transport. The following table shows CF funding broken down by the relevant Priority Axes:

Table 2: Cohesion Fund funding allocation per Priority Axis ("Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" (2007-2013)

2007-2013	CF allocation (%)	CF allocation (€)
PA: Basic Environmental and Energy Infrastructure	73,29%	156,095,000
PA: Basic Transport Infrastructure	23,8%	51,109,484
PA: CF Technical Assistance	2,81%	6,000,000
TOTAL	100.00	231,204,484

Besides "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness", Cyprus implemented a second OP with Cohesion Policy funds, entitled "Employment, Human Capital, and Social Cohesion" (total EU funding: 119.769.154 Euro, or 80% of total funding). The second OP's goal was mainly to synergize with its other counterpart, placing a strong emphasis on job creation, increasing competitiveness and social cohesion, while promoting sustainable development. It was funded jointly by funds allocated from the ESF and CF. The OP was based on two main Priority Axes and a further third Technical Support Axis (EU funding: 3.397.710 Euro, or 85% of total funding). The two Axes were: a) the development of human capital and adjustability (EU Funding: 81.443.025 Euro, or 85%); b) the expansion of the labour market and social cohesion (EU Funding: 1134.928.419 Euro, or 70%).

In the following 2014-2020 period, Cyprus implemented the same OPs as during the previous periods. This time, however, the OPs revolved around different Priority Axes. Specifically, Sustainable Development and Competitiveness focussed on the following priority axes: 1) Promoting economic competitiveness; 2) Promoting the use of information technologies and communication; 3) Reducing carbon dioxide emissions and climate change adjustment; 4) Environmental protection and efficient resources management; 5) Providing sustainable modes of transportation; 6) Promoting sustainable urban development. Two technical assistance axes for every participating fund were also included. The following tables provide information about the amount and percentage of funds allocated to the OP from both the ERDF and ESF.

Table 3: ERDF funding allocation per Priority Axis ("Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" (2014-2020)

2014-2020	ERDF allocation (%)	ERDF allocation (€)
PA 1: Promoting economic competitiveness	49.63%	145,000,000
PA 2: Promoting the use of information technologies and communication	25.14%	73,500,000
PA 4b: Protecting the environment and efficiently managing resources	2.39%	7,000,000
PA 6: Sustainable urban development	20.61%	60,250,000
PA 7a: Technical assistance	2.23%	6,549,018
TOTAL	100.00%	292,299,018

Table 4: Cohesion Fund funding allocation per Priority Axis ("Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" (2014-2020)

2014-2020	CF allocation (%)	CF allocation (€)
PA3: Reducing carbon dioxide emissions and adjusting to climate change	15.58%	42,000,000
PA4a: Protecting the environment and efficiently managing resources	47.11%	127,000,000
PA5: Promoting sustainable transportation	31.53%	85,000,000
PA7b: Cohesion Fund technical assistance	5.76%	15,541,702
TOTAL	100.00%	269,541,702

As during the previous funding period, the second OP, "Human capital, employment, and social cohesion" has a stronger focus on social cohesion rather than infrastructure projects. EU contribution, overwhelmingly from the Cohesion Fund, amounted to €140.560.988 from a total of €163.323.737. It revolves around four priority axes and an axis of technical assistance. The axes are: 1) Improving employment perspectives and developing human skills (CF participation: €43.479.899); 2) Improving youth employment and facilitating entry into the labour market (€37.592.202); 3) Combating poverty and social exclusion (€27.000.000); and 4) Developing human resources skills and improving public service efficiency (€31.055.000). Contribution to the technical assistance axis amounted to €1.433.887.

Stakeholders interviewed provided mostly vague and evasive answers on the nature and character of needs and problems to be addressed by the OPs. However, reducing unemployment and boosting the competitiveness of the Cypriot economy stood out as the two main tasks facing OP stakeholders. A qualitative change of priorities is to be observed between the two programme periods. Catching up with average European standards considering the island's relatively recent accession to the EU figured prominently between 2007 and 2013. In contrast, dealing with the economic effects the so-called "bail-in", or "haircut", imposed on bank deposits in March 2013, had on the Cypriot economy, determines the thrust of both OPs for the 2014-2020 period.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The implementation framework and partnership structures for the 2007-2013 period were identical for both OPs. The same structures are also in place for the 2014-2020 period. These are:

- The National Coordination Authority

- The Managing Authority
- The Intermediate Bodies
- The Certification Authority
- The Controlling Authority
- The Treasury of the Republic of Cyprus

The OPs differ as regards to the IBs. For the OP “Sustainable Development and Competitiveness”, the IBs were:

- The Ministry of Communication and Works
- The Interior Ministry
- The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism
- The Cyprus Tourism Organization
- The Urban Planning and Housing Department
- The Research Promotion Foundation

The only IB for “Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion” was the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

All interviewees but one referred to the Managing Authority, as well as the Audit/Control and the Certification Authorities of Cyprus. One interviewed stakeholder also mentioned the Payments Authority.

The Monitoring Committee was the sole public discussion forum mentioned by all interviewed stakeholders. This is most likely due to the fact that all interviewees were members of the MC at the time of the interviews. The most elaborate response to the question came from an interview partner working directly for the Managing Authority, who also referred to the framework of the “Partnership Agreement”. He further referred to the existence of two committees: a) a Coordinating Committee comprised of the General Directors of ministries in charge of Cohesion policy funds; b) a Consulting Committee, comprised of business associations, trade unions, and other civil society actors, such as NGOs.

3.2 Assessment of performance

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

The main document highlighting the performance of OP “Competitiveness and Sustainable Development” for the 2007-2013 period is the 2014 Annual Implementation Report. Performance is measured according to expenditure to the OPs various thematic priorities, or “Dimensions”. The following tables provide an overview for the percentage implementation of each PA in “Competitiveness and Sustainable Development”, as well as the amount of EU contribution in every programme Dimension.

The performance indicators of the OP “Human Capital, Employment and Social Cohesion” derive from the OP’s 2014 AIR. The following data relate solely to the 2007-2013 period, as there are not yet any available data on the 2014-2020 period.

Table 5: Implementation Percentage by Priority Axis for OP "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" (2007-2013) by December 31st, 2014

Priority Axis /Fund	Percentage of implementation (%)
PA: Basic environmental infrastructure	41,57%
Cohesion Fund	41,57%
PA: Basic transportation infrastructure	96,5%
Cohesion Fund	96,5%
PA:	57,36%
ERDF	57,36%
Press Expenditure ESF	0%
PA: Productive environment	99,13%
ERDF	99,13%
PA: Rejuvenation of urban and rural areas	80,06%
ERDF	80,06%
Press Expenditure ESF	0%
PA: ERDF Technical assistance	72,91%
ERDF	72,91%
PA: Cohesion Fund technical assistance	71,4%
Cohesion Fund	71,4%
General Programme Total	71,24%

Table 7: Performance indicators (OP "Human Capital, Employment and Social Cohesion")

Strategy Indicators OP "Human Capital, Employment and Social Cohesion"	Measure ment Unit	Baselin e 2005	Target 2015	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Female employment percentage	(%)	58,4	63	62,4	62,9	62,3	63	62,1	59,4	56,9	58,6
Youth employment percentage (15-24-year-olds)	(%)										
Total employment percentage		36,6	Beyond 37	37,4	38	34,8	33,8	30,1	28,1	23,5	25,8
Unemployment gender gap	(%)	68,5	71	71	70,9	69	68,9	67,6	64,6	61,7	62,1
Reduction of youth unemployment	(%)	2,1		1,2	1,1	0,2	0,2	-0,4	-1,5	-1,4	-2
Reduction in unemployment rate	(%)	8,6		6,3	5,3	8,4	10,3	14,5	15,8	23	19,8
Increase in the level of convergence between labour supply and	(%)	5,9 (2000-05)		-0,7	-0,2	1,7	0,9	1,6	4	4	0,2
Increase in Participation in continuing learning	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reduction of school drop-out rate	(%)	5,9	Beyond 12,5%	8,4	8,5	7,8	7,7	7,5	7,4	6,9	6,9
Female employment percentage	(%)	58,4	63	62,4	62,9	62,3	63	62,1	59,4	56,9	58,6
Youth employment percentage (15-24-year-olds)	(%)										

While it is premature to speak of any visible results from the 2014-2020 period, notable achievements cited by some officials regarding the previous funding period pertained overwhelmingly to infrastructure projects, such as the construction of new road links or the improvement of pre-existing port facilities.

A further listed achievement was the creation of jobs for youth and women. It should be noted, however, that around half of the interviewees could not provide an adequate (or any) answer to the question. Those who did were usually employed in related state institutions, such as the General Directorate or CP-oriented task forces among ministries. MC members, such as representatives of the trade unions or environmental organizations were less aware of any achievements.

Notably, an MC member and trade union official castigated the rationale of both OPs, characterizing them as ineffectual and mostly cosmetic instruments in the fight against unemployment. The creation of more jobs in this case, according to his explanation, is neutralized by rising precarity, the liberalization of the labour market and a race to the bottom in the field of wages, rendering the creation of new workplaces because of OP resources meaningless.

There was a near-universal consensus among interviewed stakeholders that an excessive amount of bureaucracy played a key role in obstructing the successful implementation of many Cohesion Policy projects and actions. This challenge combined with another one during the 2007-2013 period (shortly after Cyprus's accession into the EU), namely the harmonization of Cypriot procedures with standards set by the EU. A second important challenge named by many stakeholders were the effects of the economic crisis, especially after the so-called "bail-in" of March 2013. This had the effect of delaying or cancelling many Cohesion policy projects co-funded to an important extent by national resources. A further problem cited by some stakeholders was the understaffing of relevant services dealing with the implementation of CP funding, e.g. the relevant Cohesion policy task forces assigned to various ministries and other state institutions. Most stakeholders voiced no serious complaints regarding the efficacy of implementation structures. Regarding issues of priorities, most interviewees found the question either vague or could not provide an adequate answer. However, when a priority was mentioned, it was usually "compliance" and then "spending the funds", with "publishing achievements" never mentioned.

Regarding the use of Cohesion policy funds on the regional and municipal levels, the results of the stakeholder survey point to a lukewarm degree of satisfaction but also lack of awareness, with 23.8% of respondents "not knowing" if funds on the municipal level have been used in a positive or negative manner. On the other hand, an equal portion of respondents deems the use of funds on the municipal level as "acceptable". There is a slight differentiation when it comes to acknowledging the effect of Cohesion funds on the regional level. A majority of surveyed stakeholders believes Cohesion funds have been utilized "well", with only 14% pleasing ignorance. The discrepancies between the municipal and regional levels can perhaps be explained by the greater visibility of (perceived) regional projects, such as road infrastructure, university facilities or airports.

Table 8: Stakeholder Survey Q1 - How well – in your opinion – have Cohesion policy funds been used in your municipality and region?

	Very well	Well	Acceptable	Poorly	Very poorly	Don't know
Municipality	14%	19%	23.8%	0%	9.5%	23.8%
Region	19%	42.9%	19%	4.8%	0%	14%

Reflecting the above-mentioned discrepancy between the municipal and regional levels, a higher number of respondents acknowledges the positive contribution of Cohesion fund-related projects for the development of the region rather than the municipality.

Table 9: Stakeholder Survey Q2 - To what extent have the Cohesion policy objectives reinforced the development objectives of your municipality and region?

	Very well	Well	Acceptable	Poorly	Very poorly	Don't know
Municipality	4.8%	23.8%	14%	0%	14%	28.6%
Region	4.8%	42.9%	19%	4.8%	14%	19%

Regarding the impact of Cohesion policy on the increase or reduction of discrepancies in the regional, national, and European level, a significant number of respondents lacked any awareness on the subject and was unable to answer all four segments of the question. A steady portion of 38% of respondents state that Cohesion policy has "somewhat decreased" social inequalities within Cyprus, as well as the gap between urban and rural regions on the one hand, and the gap between Cyprus and other EU countries. As with the previous responses, reactions to this section vacillate between lack of awareness and lukewarm endorsement of Cohesion policy.

Table 10: Stakeholder Survey Q3 - To what extent have Cohesion policy funds helped to increase or decrease

	Decreased	Somewhat decreased	Had no impact	Somewhat increased	Increased	Don't know
Differences in the development level between poorer and richer regions in your country	4.8%	23.8%	23.8%	0%	9.5%	38%
Differences in the development level between rural and urban areas in your region	4.8%	38%	14%	4.8%	9.5%	28.6%
Differences in the development level between poorer and richer areas in your region	4.8%	38%	9.5%	0%	9.54%	38%
Differences in the development level between your country and other EU Member states	0%	38%	14%	9.5%	4.8%	33.3%

When asked on the impact of specific problems and challenges during the implementation of Cohesion policy projects, the answers given by stakeholders in the survey give emphasis to a number of issues. Scarcity of Cohesion policy funds, complicated rules, excessive auditing, reporting, as well as the difficulty in obtaining access to cover expenses for their own contribution, were those problems considered by most respondents as "very significant". Communication between implementation partners or the existence of unclear evaluating objectives were some of the problems deemed relatively insignificant.

Table 11: Stakeholder Survey Q5 - How significant was the impact of the following problems and challenges during the implementation of Cohesion policy projects?

	Very significant	Significant	Average	Insignificant	Not at all	Don't know
Scarcity of Cohesion policy funds	28.6%	19%	19%	4.8%	9.5%	19%
Problems with obtaining Cohesion policy financing such as complicated rules for submitting applications	28.6%	33.3%	23.8%	0%	4.8%	19%
Excessive, cumbersome reporting	28.6%	33.3%	19%	0%	4.8%	14%
Unclear objectives for evaluating project results	4.8%	28.6%	38%	14%	0%	14%
Poor cooperation between project partners	14%	4.8%	43%	9.5%	0%	28.6%
Excessive audit and control during or after the project completion	19%	33.3%	14%	9.5%	0%	14%
Lack of funds for own contribution (co-financing)	35.71%	14%	38%	4.8%	0%	23.8%
Difficult access to credit and/or loans for own contribution	14%	9.5%	14%	9.5%	9.5%	28.8%
Lack of capacity such as qualified staff	35.71%	33.3%	24%	10%	0%	19%

Despite the concerns voiced regarding procedural aspects of Cohesion policy, the Stakeholder established wide agreement among stakeholders on the positive contribution of Cohesion policy for the development of the region, as well as an endorsement of the way the projects are allocated. Corruption, fraud, and nepotism regarding the implementation of projection do not appear to be considered acute problems, whereas many respondents “neither agree nor disagree” with the relevant questions

Table 12: Stakeholder Survey Q6 - How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Cohesion policy funds finance those investment projects which your municipality/region needs the most	9.5%	52.4%	23.8%	4.8%	0%	9.5%
In your municipality/region Cohesion policy funding goes to investment projects which are most valued by the local residents	9.5%	43.5%	28.5%	0%	4.8%	14%
There are many irregularities in spending Cohesion policy funds due to non-compliance with EU rules	4.8%	24%	23.8%	19%	4.8%	23.8%
Fraud, such as corruption or nepotism, is common in spending Cohesion policy funds	9.5%	19%	28.6%	23.8%	4.8%	14%
There have been many positive changes in your municipality/region thanks to Cohesion policy funds, which would not have been achieved without the funds	23.5%	47.5%	9.5%	4.8%	4.8%	9.5%
The spending of Cohesion policy funds is adequately controlled	9.5%	4.8%	19%	38%	19%	9.5%
The money from Cohesion policy funds is in most cases wasted on the wrong projects	4.8%	9.5%	38%	33.3%	9.5%	4.8%
The administration of Cohesion policy has been delivered in an efficient	14%	33%	38%	5%	0%	10%

The relatively positive attitude concerning the allocation of projects also translates into a rather positive approval of the various monitoring and evaluation mechanism, with only tiny minorities of the sample “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” with the relevant statements.

Table 13: Stakeholder Survey Q8 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Total
The monitoring and evaluation reports provide adequate information on the implementation and performance of the programme/s	19%	42.9%	19%	4.8%	0%	14%	100%
The monitoring and evaluation reports of the programme/s are easily accessible	9.5%	33%	33.3%	9.5%	0%	14%	100%
The monitoring and evaluation reports of the programme/s are easy to understand	4.8%	28.6%	38%	9.5%	0%	19%	100%
The monitoring and evaluation report results are used to improve policy-making and implementation	4.8%	38%	28.6%	9.5%	0%	19%	100%

Yet despite the high approval rating of Cohesion policy mechanisms, the active involvement of Cypriot stakeholders, for instance in training sessions, workshops and seminars is not necessarily commonplace, with a significant percentage of respondents stating to have never participated in any activity. This probably reflects the relative lack of awareness of Cohesion policy even among the implicated stakeholders, as well as inherent difficulties in stimulating interest on the subject in Cyprus, despite the acknowledgement of the generally positive role played by Cohesion policy funds in the development of Cyprus.

Table 14: Stakeholder Survey Q9 - In what Cohesion policy workshop or training sessions did the representatives of your organisation/municipality/region participate in the last two years?

Management	Control	Monitoring	Evaluation	Communication	Nobody participated in such events
62%	43%	62%	62%	43%	0%
38%	57%	48%	48%	57%	100%
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES

The main partnership institution in Cyprus for the OPs is the Monitoring Committee. No other institution or body could be identified during the desk research.

Broadly speaking, the functioning of partnership and discussion forums was judged in a neutral to positive way by most participants who took part in the *interview research*. Accountability was interpreted in most cases as synonymous with the publication of the results and participants of every MC meeting. One major exception was a trade union representative who cited issues of transparency and lack of accountability. A representative of the Managing Authority rejected the characterization of the MC as “accountable”, stating only those in charge with handling Cohesion policy funds are accountable, not the MC, which plays a mostly consulting role.

The public profile and visibility of Structural Funds in Cyprus is deemed very high. Interview partners referred to various advertisement and awareness campaigns from time to time, as well as TV and radio spots.

When asked if citizens are aware of the existence of Cohesion policy funds, the responses of stakeholders during interviews were contradictory. Whereas some characterized the level of civic awareness as very high, other respondents stated that - while the majority of citizens certainly know of the existence of Cohesion policy and Structural Funds – the actual level of knowledge on the concrete functioning and role of Cohesion policy remains limited within the sphere of state and municipal officials, Managing Authority and Monitoring Committee members, as well as direct beneficiaries of Cohesion policy funds.

Furthermore, it is generally understood that Cypriot politicians acknowledge the contribution of EU funds to regional development, however, not in a manner than transcends mere formality (for example during the inauguration of a Cohesion policy infrastructure project).

Regarding efforts to increase the profile of Cohesion policy, respondents referred overwhelmingly to developments in their respective fields, e.g. publication and dissemination of results of specific projects. All respondents cited the possibility of increasing the profile of Cohesion policy in Cyprus.

Concerning the role of partnership structures, the results of the Stakeholder Survey do not list any significant grievances with the way the partnership structures operate towards achieving the goals of Cohesion policy. A significant minority, however, has voiced concern that implementation partners display a tendency of promoting their own organisational and financial interests. However, the issues do not seem to be a polarizing one among surveyed stakeholders.

Table 15: Stakeholder Survey Q7 - How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the operation of the partnership principle in practice?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The way the programme partnership operates is inclusive, open and fair	14%	28.6%	4.8%	4.8%	0%	4.8%
The operation of the programme's partnership principle facilitates a shared understanding and shared commitment by partners to achieving the programme's objectives	14%	42.8%	38%	0%	0%	4.8%
Partners are only interested in promoting their own organisational and financial interests	9.5%	23.8%	43%	14%	4.8%	4.8%

Overall, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the interviews as well as the Stakeholder Survey, in regard to the key aspect of implementation. Cypriot Cohesion policy stakeholders are moderate, if sometimes lukewarm supporters of Cohesion policy and its objectives. They generally acknowledge the visibly positive role played by Cohesion policy in the development of Cyprus. They tend to approve of the way Cohesion policy funds are allocated and state to be

rather satisfied with objectives, guidelines, and the partnership structures in place. Corruption does not figure as a major concern in the implementation process. Grievances revolve mainly around excessive bureaucracy, auditing, and reporting, as well as a scarcity of funds. The latter aspect concerns mostly the funds needed to cover local contributions to various projects, something related to the effects of the economic crisis still affecting the island.

4. Cohesion policy communication

4.1 Approach to communication

The following sections deal with the aspect of communication strategies for the Operational Programmes. As the Cypriot experience with Cohesion policy is relatively young, it is worth examining if a) the communication of Cohesion policy is perceived as a key priority for stakeholders; b) how well practical results have corresponded with targets set.

The Communication Policy (CP) for Cyprus for 2007-2013 period lists two strategic objectives: a) ensuring transparency regarding access to OP resources, and b) highlighting the EU's role in implementing co-funded OPs and emphasizing the EU's positive role in the social and political development of the country. Furthermore, there were seven detailed special objectives concerning the implementation of the Communication and Publicity Measures (CPMs). These were:

- Providing a clear, detailed, and transparent provision of information to all potential recipients regarding funding opportunities.
- Creating a reliable and accessible information and communication mechanism regarding the capabilities of each OP, as well as funding opportunities.
- Ensuring that all bodies involved in the implementation of OPs conform to the principles of publicity and information and are fully aware of their obligations in accordance to relevant EU regulations.
- Regular dissemination of information to the media, the public bodies involved, as well as to the wider public, regarding the EU's role vis-à-vis Structural Funds and implementation of OPs.
- Highlighting the content and objectives of the thematic priorities of each OP.
- Ensuring that all results from the implementation of projects co-financed by the EU in the framework of each OP are visible to the wider public.
- Advancing the greatest possible understanding among the wider public, of the social and economic benefits resulting from the contribution of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

The CPMs' Target Groups are divided into funding recipients, potential recipients, and the wider public. The CPM timetable is described as the following:

- Phase A: (2007-2008) Involves a general briefing on OPs and the actions involved in them
- Phase B: (2008-2010) Dissemination of information regarding access to funding directed towards recipients and potential recipients.
- Phase C: (2011-15) Dissemination of successful results.

There is a wide range of indicators measuring the success or failure of CPMs. These are divided into a) impact indicators concerning the outreach of CPMs;

b) result and implementation indicators measuring the practical implementation of specific measures.

The Impact Indicators listed in the CP and their set targets are:

- Daily visitors' sessions on the website of the Managing Authority (MA): 40
- Number of queries per year: 50
- Number of distributed printed material: 250000
- Number of film screenings: 30
- Ratio of event guests to participants target set at 20%
- Satisfaction degree of participants at events set at 60%
- Number of queries seeking more information per event: 8
- TV and radio advertising recipients as percentage of total population: 20%
- Percentage of targeted readers of placed advertising: 40%
- Number of printed news-stories, interviews, articles: 80
- Target percentage of booked public advertising space: 8% of total.
- Area coverage target percentage: 10% of total.
- Focus groups target percentage on bus routes: 5%
- Number of distributed merchandise items: 85000
- Percentage target of available merchandise to target audiences per distribution: 20%

The Result and Implementation Indicators listed (together with their corresponding targets) are:

- Website pages included in the Managing Authority (MA) website: 150
- Other websites with direct links to MA website: 8
- Publications (brochures, guides, etc.): 20
- Produced films: 3
- Events: 40
- Event attendees: 8000
- Marketing campaigns: 4
- TV and radio commercials: 1400
- Placed advertising (in the press): 300
- Press releases: 100
- External billboards: 100
- Posters: 2000
- Full advertisements on busses: 10
- Merchandise items: 30
- Total produced merchandise: 100000

An Evaluation for the 2007-2013 CP was concluded in June 2011. The responsible authorities did not publish it, but it is nevertheless highly referenced in the 2010 AIR.

The Budget for the implementation of the 2007-2013 CP was the following:

€4.900.000, of which €4.165.000 funded by EU; €7350.000 by the Republic of Cyprus (Roc)

The Budget was divided between the two OPs, as well as between the two Thematic Priorities embedded in the OP Sustainable Development and Competitiveness. The bulk of funding in all cases was provided by the EU.

The Planning Bureau, acting as the Managing Authority of these funds in Cyprus, has overall responsibility for the management and exploitation of available resources. For the implementation, monitoring and controlling of programs and projects to be co-financed, other public-sector bodies are also involved.

The Administrative Bodies have the responsibility of implementation of the CPMs. The Managing Authorities are the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination, and Development, whereas the Intermediate Bodies are the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance- European Social Fund Unit.

Table 16: Communication policy implementation goals (2007-2013)

Information Measures	Potential Tools	Target Groups	General Target Served	Special Target	Central message content
Measure A1 – Identity and central messages	Logo Message	All groups	Transparency	A, B, C, D, E, F, G	Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure A2 - Ongoing electronic updates	Website Newsletter Hotline	All groups	Transparency Role of EU	A, B, C, D	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure A3 – Printed material	Guides Publications and other informative material	Beneficiaries Potential beneficiaries	Transparency Role of EU	A, B, C, D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure A4 – Special events	Informative events Roadshows Seminars for beneficiaries Seminars for journalists School events	All groups	Transparency Role of EU	A, B, D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure A5 - Use of media	Advertising campaign Newspaper interviews Columns in financial journals Film Press releases	Wider public Potential beneficiaries	Transparency Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure A6 – External advertisement	PISA Network Bus sheds Posters Bus dress-up	Wider public Potential beneficiaries	Transparency Role of EU	D, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure A7 - Promotional material	Pens, conference bags, coasters, etc.	Wider public Potential beneficiaries	Transparency Role of EU	D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure B1 – Media relations	Journalist awards	All groups, especially: Wider public	Transparency Role of EU	D, E	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure B2 – Special events	Road excursions Business awards	Wider public	Transparency Role of EU	B, C, D, E	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure B3 – Printed material	Periodical publications	All groups, especially: Wider public	Transparency Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results

Measure C1 – Special actions/Events	Periodical publication Special brochures	Wider public Potential beneficiaries	Transparency Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure C2 – Printed Material	Student and pupil contest	All groups, especially: Wider public	Transparency Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Transparency Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure D1 – Signs on buildings, offices, construction sites		Wider public	Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure D2 – Raising of EU flag		Wider public	Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure D3 – Use of EU emblem		Wider public	Role of EU	B, D, E, F, G	Role of EU Information on OP strategy and results
Measure D4 – Publication of catalogue with approved actions		Wider public	Role of EU	B, D	

As during the previous period, relevant EU laws and regulations define the Regulatory Framework for Information and Communication. Accordingly, the General and Special Goals for the 2014-2020 period are the same as for the 2007-2013 period. However, there is an additional emphasis on the subgroup of Multipliers (media, professional associations, local governments).

The CP for 2014-2020 follows identical guidelines as the 2007-2013 CP. The Intermediate Evaluation report of the previous period established the overall superiority of television as the most effective avenue of dissemination. Accordingly, the CP reserves a more prominent role for this medium in the 2014-2020 period, while emphasizing that this does not in any way constitute a demotion of other forms of media.

The CPM timetable is described as the following:

- Phase A: (2014-2015) Involves a general briefing on OPs and the actions involved in them
- Phase B: (2015-2019) Dissemination of information regarding access to funding directed towards recipients and potential recipients.
- Phase C: (2018-23) Dissemination of successful results.

The base values used in the indicators for the 2014-2020 are the results of the Intermediate Evaluation for 2007-2013. Assessing the question if target values have been reached or not will take place in the framework of two evaluations that will be concluded in 2017 and 2019 respectively.

The budget to 2014-2020 CP is €3.500.000. There is a detailed description of funds allocated for every measure, however, there is no information as to which percentage of the CP budget is allocated by the EU.

Authority for the implementation of the CP rests with the same institutions listed for the 2007-2013 period.

Table 17: Communication policy implementation goals (2014-2020)

Information Measures	Potential Tools	Target Groups	General Served	Special Target
Information through use of media	Information campaigns Media PR Film production	Wider public Potential beneficiaries	Ensuring transparency Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	2,3,4,5,6
Electronic media	Obligatory MA website IB websites Information via newsletter Social Media	All groups but especially: Beneficiaries Potential beneficiaries	Ensuring transparency Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	1,2,3,4,5
Special events	Information events Seminars for beneficiaries	All groups	Ensuring transparency Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	2,3,4,5,6
Information through printed material	Guides targeted to potential beneficiaries Publications and other printed material	All groups according to content of printed material	Ensuring transparency Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	2,3,4,5,6
Promotional material	USB sticks, bags, etc.	All groups, especially: Wider public	Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	4,5,6
Information through external advertising	PISA Network Bus sheds Bus "dress-up"	All groups, especially: Wider public Potential Beneficiaries	Ensuring transparency Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	2,4,5,6
Other obligatory information measures	EU logo in front of MA building Publication of works catalogue by MA MA and IB obligations under the capacity of Technical Assistance beneficiary	Wider public	Ensuring transparency Highlighting role and achievements of OPs	4,5,6

The functioning of the communication strategy was judged as adequate by those *interviewed* stakeholders who felt competent enough to answer this question. Representatives of trade unions and other civil society actors often declined to respond to issues pertaining to matters of communication, citing lack of awareness on the subject. There is a general feeling of satisfaction among relevant stakeholders with the current communication approach. Nevertheless, stakeholders also cited the margins of improvements.

Asked if the communication of Cohesion policy programmes and projects is considered a key priority, the responses of stakeholders interviewed were partially negative. The response by a representative of the Managing Authority was particularly illuminating. A lack of available resources, time and personnel were cited here as the major reasons of the weak overall focus on communication strategies, as was Cyprus' small size and therefore limited capacities. Other respondents spoke of a high priority allocated to communication measures, however, this was mostly substantiated with the existence of meetings concerning the planning of communication measure

Table 18: Stakeholder Survey Q10 - How regularly are the following communication tools used to disseminate information about the use of Cohesion policy funds?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Total
TV	4.8%	38%	42.9%	14%	0%	100%
Radio	4.8%	28.6%	38%	28.6%	0%	100%
Local and regional newspapers	4.8%	14%	47.6%	33.3%	0%	100%
National newspapers	4.8%	9.5%	42.9%	33.3%	9.5%	100%
Workshops, seminars	4.8%	0%	42.9%	38%	14%	100%
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters	4.8%	14%	14%	38%	28.6%	100%
Press releases	4.8%	4.8%	28.6%	38%	23.8%	100%
Programme website	4.8%	0%	9.5%	23.8%	61.9%	100%
Film clips/video	4.8%	19%	61.9%	9.5%	4.8%	100%
Plaques/billboard with EU flag	4.8%	4.8%	23.8%	28.6%	38%	100%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)	4.8%	9.5%	28.6%	38%	19%	100%
Advertising campaigns on television and/or radio	4.8%	33.3%	42.9%	19%	0%	100%

4.2 Assessment of effectiveness of communication strategies

The Intermediate Evaluation Report was concluded on 10 June 2011 and includes data up to 31 May 2011. The AIR then proceeds to make certain recommendation based on the finding of the IE. Overall, the results are deemed highly satisfactory. Out of 15 implementation indicators, 8 have exceeded their target for the entirety of the program period. Especially performing well were the number of pages on the MA website (198,6%), the number of printed material (205,0%), the number of events (182,5%), as well as the number of other websites with links to the MA website (162,5%). The underperforming indicators centred mostly on advertising measures, such as external billboards, advertising campaigns, and advertisements on busses. Moreover, ten out of 15 result indicators have been evaluated, with daily website clicks (305%), percentage of coverage by TV and radio marketing (340%) and ratio of event participants to event attendees (201,5%) performing particularly well. Underperforming were indicators pertaining to distributed printed material (27%), the number of press reports and other newspaper items (12,5%), as well as film screenings (13,3%). Overall, the implementation of measures targeted at the wider public was seen to be lacking compared to measures intended for recipients and potential recipients. However, this is not seen as an anomaly, given the fact that implementation of measures with underperforming indicators stretches from 2010 to 2015. All the impact indicators concerning public awareness were over-performing, apart from indicators related to perceptions of the EU (see above, Evaluation for 2007-2013). Suggestions concerning the general character of the Plan included the creation of a central marketing campaign, as well as the need for synergizing actions (e.g. Road-Shows) that have not been implemented up to that point. Suggestions concerning aspects of the CP emphasize the need to cultivate better relations with the media, improving the content of information provided online, as well as geographically orienting external advertisement towards areas with lower awareness ratings on OPs. Highlights of this year included the production of a documentary film about completed EU-funded projects in Cyprus during the 2004-26 period, as well as a photography exhibition in all major cities.

The following tables provide an assessment on the effectiveness of the Communication Policy. The data concerns the 2007-2013 period, as data concerning the 2014-2020 period are not yet available.

Table 19: Communication performance indicators (2007-2013)

Information Measure	Correspondence to Special Target	Indicator	Implementation (May 2011)	Target	% of Target Accomplishment
Ongoing electronic updates	All STs	Number of pages on website	298	150	198,6
		Number of other websites with links to MA site	13	8	162,5
Printed and audiovisual material	All STs	Number of informational brochures, other printed material	41	20	205,0
		Number of films to be produced	2	3	66,6
Special Seminars-Workshops	All STs	Number of events	108	40	182,5
		Number of guests	9.775	8.000	122,2
Media use, advertisement	All STs	Number of advertising campaigns	2	4	50,0
		Number of television and radio spots	1.483	1.400	105,9
		Number of placed advertisements	234	300	78,0
		Number of press releases	30	100	30,0
External advertisement	STs 4, 6, 7	Number of external billboards	55	100	55,0
		Posters printed	2.700	2000	135,0
		Covered busses	0	10	0,0
Promotional material	STs 4,5,6,7	Number of objects	13	30	43,3
		Produced objects	150.790	100.000	150,8
Ongoing electronic updates	All STs	Daily visits on MA website	122	40	305,0
		Questions submitted per year	37	50	74,0
Printed and audiovisual material	All STs	Distributed printed material	67.400	250.000	27,0
		Film showings	4	30	13,3
Special Seminars-Workshops	All STs	Participants and participant-guest ratio	36,4%	20%	201,5
Media use, advertisement		TV/radio coverage percentage	68%(1)	20%	340,0
		Percentage of printed media targeted readers	40%	40%	100,0
		Published interviews-articles	10	80	12,5
External advertisement	STs 4, 6, 7	Coverage percentage of target groups-areas through bus routes	-	5%	-
Promotional material	STs 4,5,6,7	Distributed material	145.700	85.000	171,4
		Material available to total target audience	22% (1)	20%	102,0

Special informative workshops on Cohesion policy were deemed the most effective tools in raising awareness on Cohesion policy and its results. There is a slow but steady increase in the use of social media, according to some interview partners with sufficient knowledge of the subject. In accordance with the previously mentioned underdeveloped communication capacities, informative workshops and seminars were characterized as the most cost-effective instrument for raising awareness on Cohesion policy. Television is perceived by nearly all relevant stakeholders as the most effective medium for this purpose, however, a more intensive use of TV spots is hindered by the associated high costs.

There is a slight divergence in the **stakeholder survey** regarding the perception of Communication Policy. High percentages of respondents state to be “neither satisfied or unsatisfied” with various aspects of Communication Policy, indicating that among a wider circle of stakeholders, Communication Policy does not figure as a priority. There is, however, a high degree of satisfaction with the branding and the messages already in place, whereas – curiously for a rather underdeveloped aspect of Cohesion policy in Cyprus – a significant percentage of survey respondents appear unsatisfied with the use of personal stories and human interest in disseminating awareness on Cohesion policy.

Table 20: Stakeholder Survey Q11 - How satisfied are you with:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Don't know	Total
The way Cohesion policy is communicated to citizens	4.8%	19%	61.9%	14%	0%	08%	100%
The branding and messages used to communicate Cohesion policy	19%	42.9%	38%	14%	0%	0%	100%
The use of human interest/personal stories	4.8%	19%	38%	28.6%	4.8%	4.8%	100%
The support from the European Commission on communication	4.8%	14%	66.6%	9.5%	9.5%	4.8%	100%
The targeting of different groups with different communication tools	4.8%	4.8%	66.6%	9.5%	9.5%	4.8%	100%
The administrative capacity and resources dedicated to communication activities	4.8%	14%	47.6%	19%	0%	14%	100%

The general lack of awareness on matters of communication is reflected in the responses to a further question regarding their effectiveness. Again, significant percentages of respondents plead ignorance on the questions related to the effectiveness of branding and messages, whereas other respondents appear to moderately endorse statements indicating a positive effect. Strikingly, the use of social media as well as the cultivation of good working relations with the media appear to have made little impact in conveying Cohesion policy messages, at least according to the perception of surveyed respondents.

Table 21: Stakeholder Survey Q12 - To what extent are the communication efforts effective in

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used	Total
Conveying the achievements of Cohesion Policy programmes overall and the role of the EU	4.8%	28.6%	42.9%	19%	0%	4.8%	0%	100%
Conveying the achievements of co-funded projects and the role of the EU	4.8%	33.3%	42.9%	14%	0%	4.8%	0%	100%
Using social media to promote the programme and projects (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, Facebook)	14%	14%	33.3%	23.8%	4.8%	9.5%	0%	100%
Fostering good working relations with the media and press to reach the general public	4.8%	9.5%	47.6%	19%	4.8%	14%	0%	100%

4.3 Good practice examples

There are several good practice examples in the communication of Cohesion policy in Cyprus, which are listed in the Annual Implementation Reports. These are:

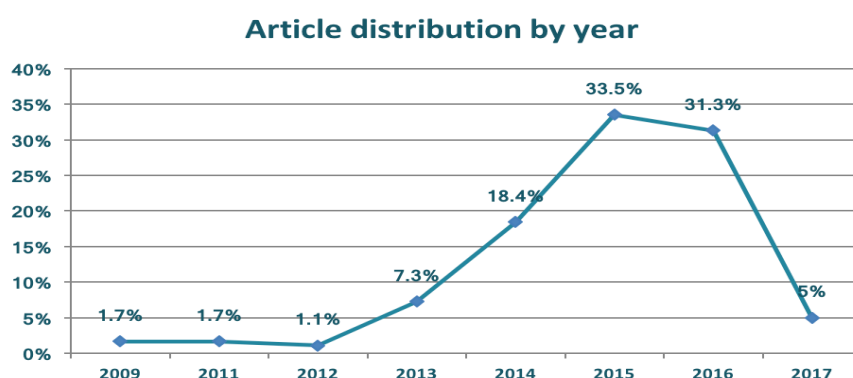
- Implementation of annual activities

- Publication of the list of beneficiaries
- Raising the flag of EU in front of the offices of the Managing Authorities (9-16 may)
- Wider use of the internet
- Organizing meetings
- Participation in Exhibitions
- Publication and dissemination of the printed material, presenting the development of projects and their benefits
- Informing the public about the outcome of the results of the projects' actions with the exploitation of the communication tools (information multipliers, press conferences, opinion leaders, network, etc.)
- Effective use of social media (Campaigns to advertise the results)
- Measurement of the effectiveness in raising visibility of the programme

4.4 Media framing of Cohesion policy

The **framing analysis** of the Cypriot sample according to Triga and Vadratsikas (2018) comprised 179 media articles, which amount for the 79.9% of the sample collected from the Cypriot media. The sample was drawn from 13 media sources discussing issues of EU Cohesion policy. This sample is smaller compared to other countries, but this is due to the demographical specificities of Cyprus, since Cyprus has a smaller population, and therefore fewer media outlets than other countries included in this study. Most of the press articles were identified in the period 2014 to 2016, a finding that coincides with the rest of the countries included in the framing analysis (Figure 1).

Table 22: Media articles on cohesion policy per year as identified in the Cypriot press

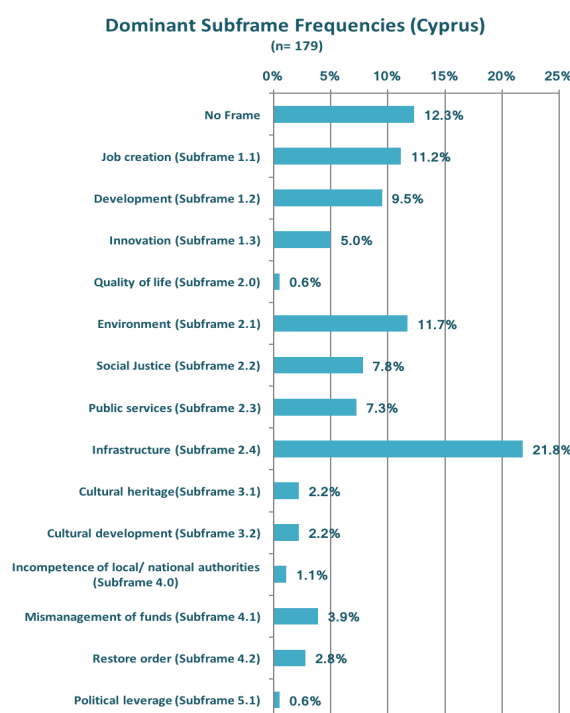


In the Cypriot context no distinction between national, regional and local media was made, as Cyprus is treated as a distinct case study on its whole. Most of the articles collected and coded were drawn (66%) from mainstream or legacy media, 31% derived from web native media sources and only 2% from alternative media sources.

The framing analysis of the Cypriot sample reveals that almost half of the analyzed articles frame EU Cohesion policy using the frame of "Quality of life" (Frame 2) which is dominant in 49.2% of the sample. The most dominant subframe in the Cypriot sample is "Infrastructure" (Subframe 2.4), which approaches EU cohesion policy in terms of the positive consequences it brings to citizens' everyday lives, mainly by financing the construction of squares, parks, bicycle lanes etc. (21.8%). The second most recurrent frame is the one of "economic consequences" (Frame 1) which appeared

in 25.7% of the analysed articles. As shown in Figure 2 below, this refers mainly to the subframe regarding the reduction of unemployment” (1.1) which was found in 11.2% of the sample, followed by the “Development” subframe (1.2) with 9.5%. In addition, it is worth noting that 12.3% of the articles contained no framing, while the remaining Frames 3 (“Culture”),⁴ (“Incompetence of local authorities”) and Frame 5 (“Power”) appear as dominant in lower percentages (4.5%, 7.8%, 0.6%, respectively). Finally, Frames 6, 7 and 8 were not identified in any of the media articles within the Cypriot sample.

Table 23: Dominant subframes in the Cypriot media articles



In terms of media tone, the framing analysis revealed that 88.8% of the articles have a positive valence. This result is considered to amplify readers’ positive predispositions towards the EU and raise their sense of belonging in a European community. However, only 8.4% of the articles approach EU cohesion policy from a European perspective. Out of the percentage of the articles that employ a Europeanised vision of Cohesion policy, just 5.6% construct the EU cohesion policy as a common project.

When asked how “Europe” and “Cohesion policy” are viewed by the media, responses by interviewed stakeholders tended to be largely negative. While there is no mention of any hostile attitudes towards Cohesion policy and “Europe” on behalf of the media, there is a widespread perception that representatives of the media display little or no interest in reporting on the achievements, results, and existence of the OPs. Journalists report on Cohesion policy only when summoned for press conferences by the relevant authorities, according to one response. This is explained by the general state of ignorance about the existence of the OPs, beyond an initiated circle of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The perception of stakeholders regarding the framing of Cohesion policy by the media, as expressed in stakeholder interviews can be interpreted in various ways. While some interview partners spoke of excellent relations between them and the media, “excellent relations” in this case

meant mostly the positive responses by journalists to invitations to attend conferences or inaugurations.

Furthermore, due to the weak emphasis on communication strategies in Cyprus, relationships with the media are largely circumstantial and unstructured. Cohesion policy task forces within state institutions have a person in charge of publicity, however, the effectiveness of such measures was characterized as questionable.

Table 24: Stakeholder Survey Q14 - How effective do you think each of these communication measures are in increasing citizens' awareness of EU Cohesion Policy?

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	Don't know	Not used in my region
TV	57.2%	38%	0%	0%	0%	4.8%	0%
Radio	28.6%	42.9%	19%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Local and regional newspapers	14%	52.4%	19%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
National newspapers	23.8%	57.2%	9.5%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Programme website	19%	38%	19%	14%	4.8%	4.8%	0%
Video/film clips and presentations	28.6%	52.4%	9.5%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Plaques /billboard with EU flag	66.6%	14%	9.5%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Social media	4.8%	61.9%	28.6%	0%	0%	4.8%	0%
Media /advertising campaigns on TV or radio	9.5%	52.4%	28.6%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Press releases	4.8%	61.9%	28.6%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Brochures, leaflets, newsletters, other publications	9.5%	52.4%	28.6%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%
Events	23.8%	57%	28.6%	4.8%	0%	4.8%	0%

Table 25: Stakeholder Survey Q15 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The communication activities have led to an increased awareness among citizens of the contribution of Cohesion policy to regional and local development	14%	47.6%	33.3%	4.8%	0%	0%
The communication activities of Cohesion policy funds increase the sense of belonging of citizens to the European Union	28.6%	42.9%	23.8%	4.8%	0%	0%
The communication activities of Cohesion policy funds contribute to increasing citizens' support for the European Union	28.6%	47.6%	19%	4.8%	0%	0%
Citizens mistrust Cohesion policy communication activities and messages or consider them to be propaganda	9.5%	4.8%	33.3%	47.9%	4.8%	0%

As to the communication tool used most extensively, television was mentioned quite often as the most effective tool in communicating the existence and achievements of Cohesion policy projects. Interactive tools such as Roadshows were rarely if ever mentioned. Recent years have also witnessed the ever-expanding role of the internet, particularly the homepages of the Managing Authority, in disseminating information on Cohesion policy. On the other hand, social media has been a modestly developed terrain in the communication of Cohesion policy in Cyprus.

Finally, concerning the overall effect of communication measures, a significant majority of surveyed stakeholders holds a positive view, largely agreeing with statements that Cohesion policy messages resonate with the public, that these have increased support for the EU, strengthened citizens' sense of belonging to it, and solidified their perception as key components of development on the local and regional levels.

4.5 Implications for citizens CP perceptions and attitudes to the EU

The MA did not publish an Evaluation report for the 2007-2013 period. However, the Communication Strategy outline for 2014-2020 alludes extensively to the results of an intermediate evaluation (IE) report with overall positive results, which in many cases exceed the targets set by the Communication Strategy outline for the 2007-2013 period (example: target percentage set for public awareness of impact of EU Structural Funds: 60%; results of IE: 70,5%). However, favourable opinions of the EU's Cohesion Policy as well as a favourable opinion of the country's EU membership fell below the intended percentage targets (65% for both; results of IE: 50,4% and 53,1% respectively). Positive attitudes were more prevalent among younger ages (18-24, 25-24), a surveyed focus group of teachers, as well as among residents of urban areas. However, the MA stresses that the attitudes to the EU and its policies are affected by numerous factors independent of the Communication Strategy, most notably the financial crisis and current political events.

Table 26: Communication policy awareness performance indicators

Indicator	Measurement Unit	Correspondence to Special Target	Percentage (May 2011 survey)	TARGET
Change in the level of public knowledge among potential beneficiaries regarding Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund	% of information on benefits provided by Cohesion Policy	ST1	70,5%	60%
Change in the level of information regarding projects and actions funded by the two OPs	% of knowledge (spontaneous answer) among the wider public about projects/actions/sectors co-funded by the Funds in both OPs in the framework of Cohesion policy	ST2	45,5%	25%
Change in the level of accessibility regarding Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund	% of positive opinion on the grade of accessibility to information on SFs and CF	ST3	69,3%	70%
Change in the level of public knowledge regarding Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy	% of basic knowledge on OPs and Cohesion Policy	ST4	59,5%	60%
Change in the level of perception regarding Cohesion Policy benefits	% of positive opinion on actions implemented in the framework of Cohesion policy	ST5	50,4%	65%
Changes in the level of perception regarding benefits of EU accession	% of positive opinion on benefits deriving from EU accession of Cyprus	ST7	53,1%	65%

More informative events and measures with a "horizontal" character such as "roadshows" were mentioned as possible ways of increasing awareness on Cohesion policy among the public and

improving the communication of EU policy objectives. An interview partner suggested the opening of an annual fair, in which the results and achievements of Cohesion policy are presented.

5. Citizens views of Cohesion policy and the EU

5.1 Survey results

The citizen survey provides more direct and representative insight into citizens' awareness and appreciation of Cohesion policy funding, as well as their attitudes to and identification with the EU.

AWARENESS OF COHESION POLICY FUNDS

When asked on awareness on EU funds tasked with the implementation of Cohesion policy, a wide discrepancy was observed between awareness of the ERDF in contrast to the registered lack of awareness of the two other funds. However, overall knowledge on the specific role of each Cohesion policy fund must be deemed low.

Table 27: Citizen Survey Q9 - Have you heard about the following funds?

	Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	53,0%	46,6%	0,0%	,4%
The Cohesion Fund	32,8%	67,0%	0,0%	,2%
The European Social Fund (ESF)	45,2%	54,4%	0,0%	,4%

Despite a general approval of EU funding, an overwhelming majority of Cypriots lacks the feeling of having individually benefited from the three CP funds. This is on the one hand a direct result of the general lack of awareness of the specific character of said funds. On the other hand, this can be interpreted as the result of the general awareness of EU funding as positive for society as whole, rather than individuals. Direct beneficiaries of EU funding are more likely to answer this question positively, rather than daily users of an EU-funded project, such as a new road or bridge.

Table 28: Citizen Survey Q10- Have you benefited in your daily life from a project funded by any of these three funds?

Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
6,6%	90,8%	0,0%	2,6%

Notwithstanding the generally positive view of EU funding in Cyprus, an overwhelming majority of citizens are also not aware of the nature of concrete EU funded projects.

Table 29: Citizen Survey Q1 - The European Union provides funding for infrastructure, business development and training to regions and cities. Have you heard about any such EU funded projects to improve your own region or city?

Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
39.6%	60.0%	0.0%	0.04%

In cases where awareness on the existence of a specific EU project was generated, the most important source of information, according to the citizen survey, was the internet (57.6%). National television, often cited by communication policy officials as the most effective medium of communication, came second (46%). Personal experiences with EU funding, as well as social media ranked third (39.9%). The creation of awareness through more “traditional” media, such as printed newspapers ranked relatively low. An age gap on the level awareness can be assumed, given that internet and social media users tend to be younger at age, compared to readers of printed media.

Table 30: Citizen Survey Q2 - Where did you hear about it?

	Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
National newspapers	25,8%	73,7%	0,0%	,5%
Local or regional newspapers	19,2%	80,3%	0,0%	,5%
National TV	46,0%	53,0%	0,0%	1,0%
Local or regional TV	25,8%	73,7%	0,0%	,5%
National radio	32,3%	67,7%	0,0%	0,0%
Local or regional Radio	22,2%	77,3%	0,0%	,5%
Internet	57,6%	42,4%	0,0%	0,0%
Social media	39,9%	59,6%	0,0%	,5%
Billboard	30,3%	69,2%	0,0%	,5%
Workplace	27,8%	72,2%	0,0%	0,0%
Personal experience or knowledge of projects	39,9%	60,1%	0,0%	0,0%
Other	22,2%	77,8%	0,0%	0,0%

Another surprising finding from the citizen survey concerns the visibility of signage attributing funding to several visible projects to the EU. More than half of respondents claimed never to have noticed any public acknowledgement of EU funding in the form of banners or placards.

Table 31: Citizen Survey Q21 - Have you noticed any public acknowledgement of EU funding in your region/town in the form of banners, placards etc.?

Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
39,6%	60,0%	0,0%	,4%

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FUNDING

Cypriot respondents have a positive perception the impact of EU funding on their region or city with 68.2 percent of respondents assessing the impact as ‘positive or very positive’ (not far from the average of 78 percent for COHESIFY regions). This comes as no surprise, as the accession of the island in the EU in the 2004 was accompanied by many visible projects, such as the rejuvenation of formerly neglected city centres or the expansion of university campuses.

Table 32: Citizen Survey Q6 - How positive or negative was the impact of the funding of the European Union on your region or city?

Very positive	Positive	No impact	Negative	Very negative	Not applicable for my region or city	Refused	Don't know
19,2%	49,0%	15,2%	4,0%	2,0%	5,6%	0,0%	5,1%

When no positive impact was assessed, this was more likely to be blamed on the factor of local corruption, either among government officials awarding EU tenders or beneficiaries, rather than the selection of wrong projects, bad management, and untimely delivery of the projects.

Table 33: Citizen Survey Q7 - Why do you think there was no positive impact?

	Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
Not enough funding	52,4%	45,2%	0,0%	2,4%
Allocation to wrong projects	50,0%	47,6%	0,0%	2,4%
Bad management	73,8%	21,4%	0,0%	4,8%
Not executed on time	59,5%	40,5%	0,0%	0,0%
Corruption among government officials awarding EU tenders	71,4%	21,4%	0,0%	7,1%
Corruption among beneficiaries of EU funds	59,5%	28,6%	0,0%	11,9%
Other reasons	36,8%	63,2%	0,0%	0,0%

Conversely, positive results were far more likely to be attributed to the organisational factors, such as extensive funding and good management, rather than the lack of corruption among government officials, thereby contrasting the objectively positive perception of EU assistance with the irrelevant to negative role played by government institutions on the national level.

Table 34: Citizen Survey Q8 - Why do you think there was a positive impact?

	Yes	No	Refused	Don't know
Extensive funding	74,8%	23,7%	0,0%	1,5%
Allocation to the right projects	74,1%	22,2%	0,0%	3,7%
Good management	44,4%	40,7%	0,0%	14,8%
Executed on time	34,1%	54,8%	0,0%	11,1%
No corruption among government officials awarding EU tenders	25,9%	48,1%	0,0%	25,9%
No corruption among beneficiaries of EU funds	27,4%	47,4%	0,0%	25,2%
Other reasons	25,2%	74,8%	0,0%	0,0%

When no positive impact was assessed, this was more likely to be blamed on the factor of local corruption, either among government officials awarding EU tenders or beneficiaries, rather than the selection of wrong projects, bad management, and untimely delivery of the projects.

Table 35: Citizen Survey Q11 - How do you think your region or city would have developed without EU funding?

Much better	Somewhat better	Same	Somewhat worse	A lot worse	Not applicable for my region or city	Refused	Don't know
7,8%	16,6%	23,8%	29,0%	11,6%	5,4%	0,2%	5,6%

EU ATTITUDES

The general lack of awareness on the specific nature and character of EU-funded project does not seem to translate into a negative attitude towards the EU. More than half of respondents state that Cyprus has benefited from EU membership, either "agreeing" (17.6%) or "strongly agreeing" (37.2%) with the proposition. This can, in all probability, be traced to the fact that there is a general consensus that the EU membership has in various ways provided material benefits to ordinary Cypriots, such as more opportunities to interact with the other EU citizens (e.g. the ERASMUS academic exchange programme), more funding opportunities for individual beneficiaries, as well more publicly visible improvements in various local communities.

Table 36: Citizen Survey Q3 - To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "My country has benefited from being an EU member"

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Refused	Don't know
19,0%	37,2%	17,6%	12,6%	12,2%	0,0%	1,4%

Cypriots generally take a neutral attitude to somewhat positive attitude towards European integration. The absence of strong emotions on the subject is likely to be related to the dominant framing of EU accession prior to 2004 as a catalyst of solving the ongoing Cyprus dispute, rather than a prosperity-promoting measure. The potential benefits and challenges of a potential deepening and expansion of the EU do not seem to weigh heavily on the considerations of Cypriot citizens.

Table 37: Citizen Survey Q12 - How would you describe your general position on European integration?

Strongly opposed	Opposed	Somewhat opposed	Neutral	Somewhat in favour	In favour	Strongly in favour	Refused	Don't know
7,4%	9,6%	5,8%	26,8%	15,4%	19,8%	12,2%	,4%	2,6%

EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND ATTACHMENT

Expressions of a purely European identity are in a minority in Cyprus. Cypriots tend to see themselves as both Cypriot and European, whereas a significant minority of 32% views itself strictly as Cypriot. It is in retrospect a weakness of the survey not to have included the category "Greek" or "Greek Cypriot" as an option next to "only Cypriot". This is because possible correlations with "European" could have revealed correlations on the left-right spectrum, with left-wing voters usually identifying as "Cypriot" and right-wing voters as "Greek" or "Greek-Cypriot".

Table 38: Citizen Survey Q13 - Please listen to the following options and pick one that describes best how you see yourself. Do you see yourself as:

Only Cypriot	Cypriot and European	European	European	Refused	Don't know
32,0%	44,0%	16,0%	6,4%	0,0%	1,6%

The overall feeling of attachment to Europe and the European Union appears to be in line with the weak degree of self-identification as “European” prevalent in Cyprus. While the material contributions of EU membership are widely acknowledged, the strongest forms of belonging displayed, according to the findings of the citizen survey, are towards the country first, to the local community second, and the region third. Barely a fourth of respondents feel a very strong attachment to either Europe or the EU. Almost forty percent of respondents feel “somewhat” attached to both, revealing neither a negative nor an enthusiastic, but rather a lukewarm degree of attachment to “Europe” and the EU. Furthermore, the near identical percentages of respondents claiming to be “very” (23.2%, 24.2%), “somewhat” (37.8%, 39.8%) or “a little” (both 20.2%) attached to Europe and the European Union respectively, indicates that the cultural-geographical notion of “Europe” in Cyprus is widely identified with the political project of the European Union. A possible explanation for this could be the geographical location of Cyprus in the Middle East, away from the theatre of turbulent European history that shaped the impetus for European unification after World War II, as well as previously mentioned framing of EU accession prior to 2004 as a possible catalyst for resolving the ongoing Cyprus dispute.

Table 39: Citizen Survey Q14 - People may feel different degrees of attachment to places. Please tell me how attached you feel to:

	Very	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	Refused	Don't know
Your city/town/village	65,6%	20,8%	8,6%	4,8%	0,0%	,2%
Your region	58,0%	26,0%	10,2%	5,4%	0,0%	,4%
Your country	75,6%	15,2%	6,2%	2,8%	0,0%	,2%
The European Union	23,2%	37,8%	20,2%	18,2%	0,0%	,6%
Europe	24,2%	39,8%	20,2%	15,0%	0,0%	,8%

5.2 Focus group results

Below we provide a summary of the focus groups discussions that were conducted in Cyprus, broken down along the themes of Cohesion policy, European identity, as well as European identity and Cohesion policy.

COHESION POLICY

Participants in the four focus groups in Cyprus showed low level of awareness of Cohesion policy terminology. More than half of all the participants openly stated they had never heard of the term “Cohesion policy” or that they did not know what it meant. Even if the term was unknown, nevertheless, one participant defined Cohesion policy in the following way:

CY2, Participant 2: “Hearing of this policy for the first time, for me such a policy’s purpose would be to bring about an equilibrium between Member States, so that all areas have a more or less equally developed infrastructure firstly, and secondly for ordinary people to believe that we are all European, that we all beneficiaries and not only, let’s say, Brussels or Stuttgart.”

Despite low terminology awareness, around half of the participants could name a project they believed was co-financed by the EU. Most of these related to infrastructure projects and a few related to sustainable development and education (Table 1). Participants learnt about EU-funded projects through signs. One participant was aware of projects in energy efficiency through personal

experience, since the company he was employed by was implementing an EU-funded project. Similarly, another participant employed in the education sector talked about projects in education. One of the participants was a direct beneficiary of EU-funds).

While in general the view of the participants was that Cohesion policy has had some positive impact, most of the discussion focused on the challenges of Cohesion policy. Two types of positive impacts were identified: a) funding additionality and b) reduction of inequalities. For example, one of the participants said the following on the additionality of EU funding for Cyprus:

CY2, Participant 2: "If the money invested by the EU left tomorrow, we would be much poorer. I understand that the state is quite a complex machine, and that in some cases it is hard to motivate it around specific programs. The EU comes in to address some of these issues, which I find positive. What we do with this money is a different issue altogether. But I just cannot blame the EU for providing an impetus in addressing real issues."

Another participant acknowledge that the EU provides additional funding but questioned the need and impact of EU funding for the development of Cyprus. The most frequently mentioned problems were project mismanagement, insufficient communication, fraud, and low project utility. Below we provide some extracts to highlight the way participants described the problems associated most often with Cohesion policy for Cyprus.

Mismanagement	CY3, Participant 1: "It is my opinion that there are funding opportunities offered by the EU. But it is also my opinion that we are not managing properly these funds and what the EU has to offer."
Project utility	CY3, Participant 2: "The biggest possible budget must be given to education, from where everything is derived. Then to agriculture, in accordance with the size of each undertaking. Only then will we be in a position to estimate whether funding is utilized as it should."
Communication	CY2, Participant 1: "There is insufficient information and even transparency about EU programs; and I suspect this is so in order to preserve these openings for the "few and select". When knowledge of what is available is inaccessible to all but few, some stand to seriously benefit."
Fraud	CY2, Participant 3: If I see a project funded by the EU I am really pleased, but then I feel really sorry to hear after some years that so and so had embezzled funds from this very project. It's the whole state mentality that bothers me.

Table 40. Participants' reference to projects co-financed by EU funds

<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bicycle lanes - Garillis walkway - Walking trails in Troodos - Roads, Kranos Street in Germasogia, roundabout/junction of Yermasoyia, seafront road in Limassol <p>Sustainable development:</p>

- Photovoltaic stations
- Projects in water loss (Kourris Dam)
-

Education and culture:

- Language learning courses
- Investments in universities (CUT)
- Exchanges between students in secondary schools
- Organizations of seminars
- Youth Orchestra

EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Participants mainly talked about European identity as a set of human and social rights. Being European was also linked to the welfare state and the right to healthcare and education. For Cypriot participants, European identity means living in a democratic system, where people abide by the law and are protected by law. A “European” has a “European way of thinking”, which means understanding and accepting differences, having a “pluralist outlook” and the ability to “think outside the box”. Participants’ accounts therefore represented European identity in a positive way to the extent that it was constructed as an ideal rather than a state of being. For one participant, the EU contributes to this ideal through the adoption of environmental protection laws. Although participants described European identity in more idealistic terms, there were several views that juxtaposed this ideal to a more pragmatic representation. More specifically, a participant mentioned that the economic relations are the binding force for the EU and its members and this is the reason that the EU cannot uphold European values. Based on this logic, EU actions are motivated solely by economic interests and, therefore, the preferences of the wealthiest and largest states (like Germany) will prevail. The bailout programmes for Greece and Cyprus were cited as examples. The unresolved dispute between Cyprus and Turkey was mentioned as another example, where the EU is unable to act as a unified actor because it has no economic interest for a resolution. The enlargement of the EU was also mentioned as an example of Germany serving its own economic interests. The participants clearly stated that the EU cannot create a sense of European identity since it is merely an “institution” or a “legal arrangement” and “the euro”. Participants in the Cypriot focus groups based their views on the wider political and economic crises and consider the EU responsible for the adopted solutions or lack thereof.

The discussions in all groups revealed participants’ perceptions about the differences between the member states of the EU and more specifically between the European north and south. Northern European countries were described as more organised and rich providing better wages and a stronger welfare state. In line with the dominant economic rationale attributed to Europe, European identity was associated with privileges and benefits such as salaries and more generally the standard of living. While participants associated Europeanness with policies and their philosophy, European identity was more clearly linked to geography. For example, it was mentioned that being European also means to be born in a “European country” and share a territory that is not shared by the countries of the Middle East. This kind of representation of the European identity echoes an inward-looking theorisation of the European identity that is grounded on cultural, ethnic and geographical differences against ‘others’.

EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND COHESION POLICY

In discussing whether Cohesion policy can contribute to building European identity, participants agreed that Cohesion policy through its targets and tangible outputs, or in other words, its utility can have the potential to make citizens in various member states appreciate the EU. This is indicative from the following extract:

CY4, Participant 3: "You feel better when you know that the EU fixes your roads or gives money to make your town better."

6. Conclusions

6.1 Key findings

Problems in communicating the effects of Cohesion policy notwithstanding, funding from the EU's Structural Funds has played a major role in the economic development of the Republic of Cyprus in recent years. Since the island's accession into the EU, there has been a visible improvement in a variety of fields, most notably public works, cultural and scientific programmes, as well measures in support of agriculture and fisheries. Cohesion policy funds have led to an exponential increase of public spending, thus acting as a pillar of support for the Cypriot economy, which is still reeling from the effects of the banking crisis.

Since Cyprus began receiving Cohesion policy funding in 2004, their practical implementation has faced many **challenges** on multiple levels. However, the most common challenge mentioned during this research was the level of bureaucracy and countless complex EU regulations, as well as excessive auditing, that impede the proper implementation of Cohesion policy projects. Another challenge concerns the effects of the 2013 "bail-in" – a levy imposed on bank deposits over €100.000 to (ostensibly) help deal with a banking crisis turned overnight into a fiscal crisis – which had a detrimental effect on the Cypriot economy, particularly small- and medium-size enterprises. The crisis affected Cohesion policy via the slashing of positions in the public sector, often in public services assigned with the implementation of Cohesion policy. A common victim of these cutbacks was communication policy.

In addition, Cohesion policy in Cyprus, especially regarding the combatting of youth unemployment has been met with some **criticism**, given its strong focus on promoting "competitiveness". Cohesion policy programmes in this direction coexist with a large-scale deregulation of the labour market, which has witnessed the growth of a low-wage sector. Cohesion policy can thus theoretically be credited with reducing unemployment, however, other factors such as youth emigration must also be considered, not to mention the fact that new employment opportunities lack social security, are generally precarious and often based on the model of part-time and/or outsourced "service provision".

Despite the well-documented fact of a positive contribution of Cohesion policy in the development of Cyprus, **general awareness** of Cohesion policy remains low, with knowledge regarding the specific purpose and character of each Cohesion policy fund remaining within a relatively close circuit of stakeholders, beneficiaries, and other policy insiders. Cohesion funds are broadly regarded a "EU money", as means by which ordinary Cypriots can support their small business, fund their scientific research, or get a financial boost for their cultural work. It is safe to state that the relationship between Cohesion policy funds on the one hand, and Cypriots citizens on the other, is characterized by a non-ideological utilitarianism.

The **communication of Cohesion policy** does not figure as a priority for the stakeholders involved in its implementation. It is generally understood that information will become available upon request by interested applicants and beneficiaries. Despite this, the available data on the effects of communication strategy suggest a successful meeting of targets set. As there are no available corresponding data on the 2014-2020 period, it is hard to tell if this positive trend has continued, or if it was affected by crisis-related cutbacks.

The results of citizen surveys and focus group suggest that awareness on Cohesion policy is generally lacking. There are **differentiations in the levels of awareness**, with younger ages exhibiting more knowledge on European affairs in general, with older generations lacking this knowledge. This date corresponds with the findings regarding **the ways in which information on Cohesion policy is communicated**. Accordingly, television and the internet, both media used by younger ages, are considered more effective communication tools than the printed press, which is usually read by older ages.

Furthermore, **views on European identity** can be described as only loosely related to the perception of Structural Funds. Cypriots generally associate “Europe” with the rule of law, environmental protection, or opportunities to live and study abroad. The relation to “Europe” and the EU can be considered as lukewarm to above-average positive. This positive perception does not in any way substitute the primacy of national (Cypriot) or ethnic (Greek Cypriot) identities. Despite the widespread recognition that EU membership has been overall beneficial for the Republic of Cyprus, there is also a diffuse feeling of disappointment with the EU, notably regarding its role in the crisis – in Cyprus as well as in neighboring Greece – or its failure to act as a catalyst for a solution to the longstanding Cyprus dispute.

. Some of the key findings regarding Cohesion policy communication in Cyprus are listed below.

- The approach to communication can be characterised as basic. Despite the existence of a coherent communication strategy with its own budget, indicators, and targets set on paper achieved, there is a low awareness of Cohesion policy in Cyprus.
- Stakeholders attach a low importance to communication strategy, while focussing primarily on implementation measures.
- Communication activities seem to take place during a concentrated period within each funding period.
- The media rarely cover Cohesion policy achievements and only do so at the request of stakeholders, mostly in the form of press conferences.
- There is no standardized and systematic cooperation between stakeholders and the media.
- Politicians rarely if ever take interest in Cohesion policy measure. Structural funds and their utilization rarely figure as issues of public discourse.
- The Cohesion fund measures for Cyprus have a strong focus on the advancement of the economy’s competitiveness, whether in the fields of public infrastructure, employment or scientific research and innovation.
- Citizens are primarily concerned with the results of Cohesion policy measures rather than their source. There is low awareness of the complexities of the EU laws and funding allocation.
- There is a diffuse criticism of the complexities of acquiring EU funding and the bureaucracy involved.

6.2 Policy implications and recommendations

In light of these and other evidence, the case study presents the following policy implications and recommendations, which might facilitate a better understanding of Cohesion policy in Cyprus:

- Invest in a more proactive role in communicating the ESIF and their benefits by the MA and the European Commission.
- Expand the content of communication from merely showcasing the benefits of EU funding to highlighting the achievements of Cohesion policy in Cyprus.
- Communication measure should be equally spread throughout the entire funding period, instead of just during a specific timeframe. to
- Ensure an EU Commission supporting presence in Cyprus to compensate for crisis-related weaknesses in communicating Cohesion policy.
- Give more prominence to human resources related to communication. Create more officer positions among various stakeholder institutions and beneficiaries.
- Continue with the growing use of internet and social media in promotion the Cohesion policy message, without neglecting the importance of printed press media for people in older ages.
- Organize more roadshows and events akin to trade fairs, where the achievements of Cohesion policy are publicized to the wider public.
- Use simple and accessible language to overcome the feeling that EU funding opportunities involve too many technicalities and bureaucracy.
- Involve ordinary citizens as well as well-known personalities in promoting the ESIF message.
- Attach greater importance to those aspects of Cohesion policy that have a social, rather than profit-oriented character.

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8. Annexes

Annex 1: Focus groups

Table 41: Focus groups

ID / file name	Region	Location	Date	Duration	N of participants	Female participants	Age range	Age range by year of birth
CY1	Cyprus	Limassol	21.10.17	63 mins	4	2	25-32	1984-1992
CY2	Cyprus	Limassol	21.10.17	55 mins	3	0	36-28	1981-1989
CY3	Cyprus	Limassol	21.10.17	70 mins	3	0	38-70	1947-1979
CY4	Cyprus	Limassol	1.11.17	64 mins	4	2	21-24	1993-1996

Table 42: Focus groups participants

ID / file name	Age	Gender	Name	Recruitment method	Education level	employment status
CY1	32	Female	P1	snowball	Post-secondary	employed
CY1	33	Male	P2	snowball	Post-secondary	employed
CY1	32	Female	P3	snowball	Post-secondary	unemployed
CY1	25	Male	P4	snowball	Post-secondary	employed
CY2	35	Male	P1	snowball	Post-secondary	employed
CY2	36	Male	P2	snowball	Post-secondary	employed
CY2	28	Male	P3	survey	Secondary	unemployed
CY3	38	Male	P1	snowball	Post-secondary	employed
CY3	70	Male	P2	survey	Secondary	retired
CY3	62	Male	P3	survey	Secondary	retired
CY4	22	Male	P1	snowball	Tertiary education – first level	student
CY4	21	Female	P2	snowball	Tertiary education – first level	student
CY4	24	Male	P3	snowball	Tertiary education – first level	student
CY4	21	Female	P4	snowball	Tertiary education – first level	student

Annex 2: List of interviewees

Table 43: List of interviewees

Interview	Date	Type of organisation	Role
1	04.07	Economic partner	Director of Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry
2	05.07	Representative of the Ministry responsible for implementation of Cohesion Policy	Director of Labour Department
3	06.07	Representative of the Ministry responsible for implementation of Cohesion	Director of Cohesion policy in Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism

4	07.07	Social partner	Representative of trade union in MC
5	12.07	Intermediary/implementing partners	Controlling Authority, senior officer
6	12.07	Interest group, NGO, civil society organisation	NGO representative in MC
7	13.07	Representative of the Ministry responsible for implementation of Cohesion	Controlling director, Ministry of Communication, Transportation and Public Works
8	26.07	Intermediary/implementing partners	Environment Commissioner, chief of staff
9	27.07	Managing Authority	Programme director