**Evaluation of the Public Information Strategy on Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022**

**FINAL EVALUATION Report**

**Prepared for:** General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro

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Acronyms and abbreviations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EU | European Union |
| DEU | Delegation of the European Union |
| LA | Leading Actor |
| CB | Consultative Body |
| OP | Operational Body |
| WG | Working Group |
| AP(s) | Action Plan(s) |
| SG(s) | Strategic Goal(s) |
| OG(s) | Operational Goal(s) |
| OF | Objectives Framework |
| PI(s) | Performance Indicator(s) |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| SMART | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| IPA | Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance |
| NS | Negotiating Structure |
| UNOPS | United Nations Office for Project Services |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |

# Executive Summary

The development of the Public Information Strategy 2019-2022 was based on the priorities of the EU accession process and the key EU polices, both at the national and the EU levels. At the national level, the Strategy aimed for promoting Montenegro’s 2018-2020 EU Accession Programme by demonstrating its significance and particularly its achievements, thus reflecting the four key communication priorities of the *Communication Strategy of the Government* *of Montenegro* 2018: 1. Equitable and safe country; 2. Development, employment, and better living standards; 3. Service- oriented administration; and 4. Montenegro in the world. At the EU level, the Strategy encompassed the directions and messages from the pertinent documents, such as the *Strategy for the Western Balkans* and other strategy papers of the Union aiming to bring them closer to the domestic audience.

Capitalizing on the lessons learned from the previous *Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2014- 2018,* the framework of the Strategy for 2019-2022 was set in two directions: 1) better understanding of the EU integration process as such; and 2) ensuring support for Montenegro’s accession to the European Union. The Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2019-2022 hence aspired to increase the level of information of the general public on EU integration process and secure support for Montenegro’s accession.

To achieve that, the Strategy envisaged four strategic objectives, with the corresponding operational objectives and target audience, to be implemented in the four-year period. The implementation was carried by the General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro as the Leading Actor (LA) and the Operational Body (OB) composed of the line ministries and local self-governments representatives, and a representative from the Parliament. Supervision and monitoring of the Strategy implementation was entrusted to the Consultative Body (CB) composed of the members of the Working Group involved in drafting the Public Information Strategy, including institutional stakeholders, the representatives of the civil society and business sector, as well as independent experts.

The overall Strategy was successfully implemented, regardless of a number of challenges that occurred during the implementation, including COVID pandemic, changes in the Government in 2020, and the recent cyberattacks, and the financial forecasts for the 2019-2022 Strategy were realized in full. While nearly all performance indicators were fully achieved, with the exception of the younger population outreach, certain risks have been identified during the evaluation process that may affect impact and sustainability of the future Public Information Strategies on Montenegro's Accession to the EU.

## Evaluation Ratings Table

Overall rating is presented in the Table 1 below, with clarifications in the comments and observations section:

**Table 1. Evaluation ratings table**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria |  | Rating | Comments and observations |
| **Monitoring & Evaluation** | Design at entry | S | The performance indicators provided at the Strategy were overall relevant, although some of them were not SMART. |
| Implementation | HS | M&E was based on annual Action Plans and reporting, and complemented by annual public perception surveys that supported the data. |
| Overall assessment of M&E | HS | Overall, M&E design and implementation was highly satisfactory. |
| **Supervision and implementation execution** | Supervision | MS | Supervisory role of the CB could have been stronger during the implementation, with more meetings and feedbacks from its members. |
| Implementation | HS | Implementation was conducted timely and in quality manner by the LA and OB. |
| Overall execution | S | Overall execution was satisfactory. |
| **Progress towards the Goals of the Strategy** | Strategic Goal 1 | S | The effective operation of the OB was fully achieved, while the CB was operational but not as efficient. Education and training of PR officers was fully achieved, and communication action plans adopted in every municipality. |
| Strategic Goal 2 | MS | The achievements within the SG 2 demonstrated the most prominent success of the Strategy in relation to the public information and support to the EU accession. However, information on the EU support programs, especially among youth, was slightly below the expected targets. Also public perception of the European Union as a key global player is below the set targets. |
| Strategic Goal 3 | HS | The progress within the SG3 was highly satisfactory, with overachieved targets at the level of both OGs. |
| Strategic Goal 4 | HS | The progress within the SG4 was highly satisfactory, with over 40 joint actions and events with multipliers. |
| **Relevance** | | HS | The planning process was inclusive, transparent, and relied on evidence-based policy making. |
| **Effectiveness** | | S | The implementation of the Strategy was effective in terms of achieving majority of targets and exceeding several of them. Out of 22, only 3 targets were unachieved, or slightly underachieved. |
| **Efficiency** | | HS | The LA managed to keep all relevant stakeholders onboard during the entire implementation period. The Strategy used up nearly all the forecasted resources by the end of the implementation. |
| **Overall outcome** | | S | The overall outcome of the Strategy is Satisfactory. |
| **Sustainability** | Financial | ML | The Strategy does not have its own budget, but rather depends on the involved stakeholders and their activities, which is why financial sustainability is moderately likely. |
| Institutional | ML | Frequent staff turnover, and a risk of institutional memory loss is why institutional sustainability is moderately likely. |
| Socio-political | ML | The success of the future strategies implementation will largely depend on the socio-political situation, and the general attitude of the main political actors regarding the EU integration. |
| Overall likelihood | ML | For the reasons above, the overall sustainability likelihood is moderately likely. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, Implementation/Supervision, Execution, Relevance** | **Sustainability ratings:** |
| 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS): exceeds expectations and/or no shortcomings  5 = Satisfactory (S): meets expectations and/or no or minor shortcomings  4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS): more or less meets expectations and/or some shortcomings  3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): somewhat below expectations and/or significant shortcomings  2 = Unsatisfactory (U): substantially below expectations and/or major shortcomings  1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe shortcomings  Unable to Assess (U/A): available information does not allow an assessment | 4 = Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability  3 = Moderately Likely (ML): moderate risks to sustainability  2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks to sustainability  1 = Unlikely (U): severe risks to sustainability  Unable to Assess (U/A): Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability |

## Summary of KEY findings

Planning and design phase

**Finding No. 1** The planning process of the Public Information Strategy 2019-2022 was inclusive, transparent, and efficient.

**Finding No. 2** The planning process relied on national strategic priorities and evidence-based policy making, while the Strategy was designed in line with the Government’s methodology for strategic documents preparation.

**Finding No. 3** Some performance indicators were not SMART; Risks and assumptions were not formulated in the planning documents.

Implementation phase

**Finding No. 4** While the Operational Body was fully functional and efficient, the Consultative Body was not as involved in the implementation monitoring/supervision.

**Finding No. 5** The 2019-2022 Strategy was efficiently coordinated as a result of the efforts and management capacities of the Leading Actor, regardless of the pandemic and political changes in 2020.

**Finding No. 6** Staff turnover and institutional memory loss will remain as likely risks for the succeeding Strategy.

**Finding No. 7** The Strategy managed in achieving the majority of targets, and in some cases exceeding them. However, the exceptions are related to insufficiently informed youth on the EU support programmes, and the public perception of the EU as the key global player.

## summary OF KEY Recommendations

**Table 2. Key recommendations summary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Recommendation |
| 1 | Formulate SMART indicators with baselines and target values, along with risks and assumptions. |
| 2 | Clarify mandate of the Consultative Body in the succeeding Strategy, as well as the selection process of its members. |
| 3 | Build a unique database on the relevant activities and projects that each stakeholder can update on a monthly basis. |
| 4 | Stronger promotional activities aimed at youth should be encompassed in the next Public Information Strategy, based on best practices and innovative models. |
| 5 | Additional communication efforts are necessary in order to improve public perception of the EU as the key global player. |
| 6 | Address disinformation / information manipulation in the succeeding Strategy. |

# Introduction

## Evaluation context

The Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2019-2022 (the Public Information Strategy, or the Strategy) is a strategy paper of the Government setting the framework and the guidance for communicating the accession process. Its adoption was envisaged as one of the priorities by Government’s Medium-term Work Programme 2018-2020, with the overall objective to bring the EU, its values, policies and standards closer to the citizens, as well as to explain the importance of accession negotiations and present the results and upcoming tasks in each of the negotiating chapters. Furthermore, the Strategy aimed for supporting the process of informing and educating the public about the importance of EU financial assistance, applying for available funds and promoting the results achieved in this field.

Based on the previous experience, one of the essential assumptions for the successful implementation of the Strategy was setting up the Operational Body (OB) and the Consultative Body (CB), that would be in charge of its implementation, and monitoring and overall coordination, respectively. Establishment and operability of these bodies had a three-fold purpose: to improve internal communication across Government for implementing the Communication strategy, to strengthen the participation of local self-governments by setting up municipal communication teams, and to enhance communication among and between the Government, the Parliament and other state administrative authorities and the civil society (focusing on NGOs). As regards monitoring and evaluation, a number of performance indicators were adopted to measure the results and achievements of the Strategy, while implementation and reporting arrangements were conducted annually through Action Plans and corresponding reports.

The Public Information Strategy for 2019-2022 also built up on the results of the previous three communication strategies for the accession process, that contributed to developing of the institutional framework for communication, defining the key messages, and establishing the main communication channels, which resulted in high public support for the accession process. However, analyses of advantages and weaknesses of the past communication, stemming from a series of qualitative and quantitative surveys, allowed for identifying the areas where the public information process could benefit from improvements and reinforcement, which was translated into key messages, communication channels, methods and tools for the needs of the new 2019-2022 Strategy.

Apart from the regular activities, the budget of EUR 810,801 was envisaged for the first year of the Public Information Strategy implementation, with the 416.932 EUR allocation from the state budget, while the remaining EUR 393,869 would derive from donor-supported projects. It was projected that approximately **3 million EUR** would have to be provided for the four years of the Public Information Strategy implementation, with half of the sum being appropriated from the state budget.

## Scope and objectives of the evaluation

Having in mind that the current Strategy expired at the end of 2022, according to the *Decree on the procedure of drafting, alignment and monitoring of the implementation of strategy documents*, the General Secretariat of the Government has to submit a Final report to the Government. The findings of the ex-post evaluation should form an integral part of the Final report on implementation of the strategy document. Based on the results of the evaluation, a new strategy that will be valid from 2023 onwards will be prepared. An external evaluator was in charge of the evaluation with the aim to determine the relevance and level of progress towards the achievement of the goals and the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Strategy. The expert evaluated the effects and performance of the Public Information Strategy in reference to the set goals and objectives and prepared the situation analysis for the following strategy paper in this field. Final evaluation has been done using the ***methodology contained in the Table of Performance Indicators defined in the Strategy.*** In addition, the evaluation expert cooperated with the Operational Body and the Consultative Body, which allowed for examining the process of the final evaluation and contributed to the final report to be endorsed by the Government of Montenegro. The key functions of the evaluation expert have been two-fold: to provide technical expertise and to conduct stakeholder engagement.

The technical expertise of the evaluation expert included the following tasks:

* To Prepare a methodology for evaluation of the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022. It should be a short document identifying the steps and aspects of the evaluation process;
* To Draft Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 which will specifically answer each of the evaluation questions agreed in the inception phase and meet all the specific objectives and requested services;
* To Organise consultations with the beneficiary on the proposed Draft Evaluation report;
* To Draft the Final Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 that will include a synthesis of the findings of the evaluation questions, an overall conclusion and detailed conclusions and a set of recommendations based on the lessons learned.

In terms of the stakeholder engagement, the evaluation expert was obliged to:

* Establish solid working relationships, engage, discuss, negotiate and liaise with key national stakeholders, including government officials;
* Support the development of good working relationships with key personnel in the EU, through a large network of key contacts at EU institutions.

Expected deliverables of the evaluation expert, as per the ToR, are as follows:

1. A **Workplan** with details of the steps (activities and measures) that the expert will take for the successful finalisation of the assignment;
2. **Methodology for evaluation of the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022** prepared. The methodology needs to be agreed with the Beneficiary and identify the steps and aspects of the evaluation process; The basis for the methodology evaluation is contained in the Table of Performance Indicators defined in the Strategy;
3. **Draft Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022** prepared. The document will specifically answer each of the evaluation questions agreed in the inception phase and meet all the specific objectives and requested services. The aim would be to determine the relevance and level of progress towards the achievement of the goals and the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the development. The expert will evaluate the effects and performance of the Public Information Strategy in reference to the set goals and objectives, and prepare the situation analysis for the following strategy paper in this field;
4. **Consultations with the beneficiary on the Draft Evaluation report** organised**;**
5. **Final Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022** finalised. The report should include a synthesis of the findings of the evaluation questions, an overall conclusion and detailed conclusions and a set of recommendations based on the lessons learned;
6. **A brief final mission report** prepared and delivered to UNOPS. The report should contain the information on the assignment and accomplishments that have been made under the work of the expert.

## Methodology

The evaluation process included the following steps:

### Inception Phase

#### Documentation review

In order to prepare the Inception Report, initial documentation review was conducted. This allowed clarifying the context around the Strategy and identifying the main challenges of the evaluation and information gaps to be completed. The documentation review was an ongoing process throughout the evaluation. An in-depth analysis of all Strategy’s key documents, action plans and reports, and all the other documents provided by the General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro has been conducted. Adjustments to the evaluation matrix were inserted based on the collected information.

#### Preparation of the evaluation matrix

On the basis of the documentation review, the Evaluation matrix was developed and elaborated. The Evaluation matrix is a key tool for data collection and analysis. It includes the evaluation questions, following the three proposed sections, i.e. Strategy formulation, Strategy implementation, and Strategy results, assessed along the main evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact). The matrix details the most relevant qualitative and quantitative indicators that informed on the review questions, data collection methods and information sources. The Evaluation matrix is contained in *Annex 3.*

#### Inception Report

Based on the documents review and the initial communication with the Beneficiary, the Inception Report was prepared. It reflects the improved understanding of the assignment and incorporates a detailed work plan for the mandate. This draft Inception Report had been submitted for comments and exchanges with Beneficiary and the UNOPS team; on this basis, the final Inception Report was prepared and submitted for approval before the data analysis and interpretation phase commenced.

### Data Collection Phase

#### Interviews with the stakeholders

In addition to the review of documentation conducted for the preparation of the Inception Report, in-depth interviews with the stakeholders were organized in order to deepen the analysis and understand the key determinants of the Strategy implementation history, the strengths and weaknesses of the Strategy in regards to the country/local situation and context, and how beneficiaries and other key stakeholder perceived the Strategy’s relevance, results, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The interviews also helped in assessing the limits of the local challenges and the options for improvement. The list of the interviewed stakeholders is presented in *Annex 2.*

### Data Analysis and Reporting Phase

#### Data analysis and cross-checking

This stage included a comprehensive analysis of the key quantitative and qualitative data, through integration and comparison of findings from documentation review and stakeholders’ interviews. The verification of data and the articulation of key findings and lessons learned was ensured in order to assess the Strategy’s achievements and formulate conclusions and recommendations.

#### First draft Evaluation Report

The first draft Evaluation Report was prepared, addressing the key review questions as set in the ToRs and presenting the scope and methods and the review findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations. In particular, the ‘Findings’ chapter includes three subsections - Strategy design/formulation, implementation, and results, and covers the relevant evaluation criteria. The section on Main findings, conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned closes the Report. Following the first draft Evaluation Report, the Beneficiary conducted a review and provided the evaluator with the relevant observations.

#### Final Evaluation Report

After the necessary discussions and clarifications with the Beneficiary, consolidated feedback was taken into account in the preparation of the final Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Report was to be submitted after actual receipt of consolidated comments. It includes, wherever possible, clarification points, factual information as well as relevant observations, views and suggestions expressed by the Strategy stakeholders.

## Data colection and analysis

### Data Collection

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through two different channels:

* ***Documentary analysis***. Key design and implementation documents were desk reviewed in order to properly understand the context and situation of the Strategy to date and start feed-in the evaluation framework, identifying information gaps and data collection needs. The list of the relevant documents received and reviewed by the evaluator is contained in *Annex 1.*
* ***In-depth interviews***. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Strategy stakeholders. The data was obtained mainly from the General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro as the main Beneficiary,and the relevant partners and organizations. The purpose of interviews was to acquire information from different sources in order to cross-check information and answer the evaluation questions on the basis of evidence. This approach involved the participation and inclusion of stakeholders from different institutions and sectors. The list of the stakeholders with whom the in-depth interviews were conducted is presented in *Annex 2.*

### Data analysis and interpretation

The data was compiled and analysed in reference to meeting the set strategic and operational goals of the Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the European Union 2019-2022 and reported gaps. Cross-checking the data by a variety of informants was a key tool for the verification and confirmation of the collected information. Findings are related to pertinent information through interpretative analysis. The interpretative process applied both deductive and inductive logic. This systematic approach ensured all the findings, conclusions and recommendations were substantiated by evidence.

## Limits to the evaluation

The evaluation process did not experience any major limitations. A few members of the OB and CB were not able to participate in the interviews for private reasons; This however has not impacted the evaluation process negatively and was compensated for by other interviews and document review.

## Structure of the report

The Evaluation Report is structured as follows: after presenting the description of the Strategy, the Report presents the detailed findings. This section covers design and formulation, implementation, as well as results and impacts. The last section of the Report summarizes the main findings and conclusions, and formulates recommendations based on lessons learned.

# Strategy Description

## Problems that the Strategy sought to address

As described in the Strategy itself, the framework for the situation analysis was set in two directions: to better understanding of the EU integration process; and to ensure support for Montenegro’s accession to the European Union. The problem analysis is comprehensively summarized in the SWOT analysis of the Strategy, in the Weaknesses and Threats sections.

The weaknesses were identified as following:

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

The identified threats were:

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

## Consistency with the national priorities

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

The Public Information Strategy also reflects the priorities set by the umbrella communication paper of the Government, the *Communication Strategy of the Government* *of Montenegro* (2018). Given that the accession process itself is a comprehensive reform effort, the Public Information Strategy covers all four key communication priorities from the umbrella strategy: Equitable and safe country; Development, employment and better living standards; Service- oriented administration; Montenegro in the world.

In line with the principle of continuity stipulated by the *Decree on the Manner and the Process for Drafting, Harmonising and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers,* the Public Information Strategy was based on the experience in implementing the previousthree communication strategies for the accession process. In addition, the Strategy also relied on the priorities set in the EU accession process and key EU polices, both at the national and the EU levels.

Finally, the implementation of the Public Information Strategy aimed at promoting Montenegro’s 2018-2020 EU Accession Programme, by highlighting its significance and particularly its achievements. A number of the Public Information Strategy actions focused on the visibility of the work of the Commission for EU Integration and the whole negotiation structure.

Based on the above it can be affirmed that the overall objective of the Strategy, and the planned activities within the Action Plans were fully compliant with country’s national policies.

## Goals of the Strategy

The Public Information Strategy for 2019-2022 aspired to increase the level of information of the general public on EU integration process and secure support for Montenegro’s accession. With a view to four main target audiences, the following strategic and operational goals were identified:

**Table 3. Strategic and Operational Goals of the 2019-2022 Strategy**

|  |
| --- |
| Strategic Goal 1. Enhance operation of the system to ensure professional, efficient and well-coordinated communication of the EU integration process at the state and local levels |
| **Target group: Internal audience** |
| **Operational goals:**  1.1 Ensure effective operation of the Operational and of the Consultative Body, and  foster internal information sharing by establishing permanent communication channels on the EU accession process;  1.2 Continue with the education and training of PR officers in state and local administrations, including the information on EU-supported programmes available to them. |
| **Strategic Goal 2.** Provide clear, comprehensive and timely information on the advantages and obligations stemming from membership through understandable, appealing and adapted messages |
| **Target group: External domestic audience** |
| **Operational goals:**  2.1 Increase the share of citizens who believe to be fully or partly informed of the EU integration process;  2.2 Improve the quality and outreach of EU integration information;  2.3 Increase visibility of the EU support programmes;  2.4 Improve public perception of the EU as a key global player;  2.5 Shatter misconceptions and unrealistic expectations from the EU accession process. |
| **Strategic Goal 3.** Improve international recognisability of the process of Montenegro’s accession to the EU through provision of information on actions and reforms undertaken and the successes achieved |
| **Target group: External international audience** |
| **Operational goals:**  3.1 Timely and regular information provided to EU member states on Montenegro’s process of accession;  3.2 Increase availability of information on EU integration in English. |
| **Strategic Goal 4.** Achieve multiplying effect and maximise communication outreach by developing targeted messages, tools and communication channels for all multipliers and partners in the process |
| **Target group: Multipliers and partners** |
| **Operational goal:**  4.1 Establish regular cooperation with multipliers involved in the integration process. |

## Main stakeholders: summary list

The key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation activities. Table 3 provides an overview of the main stakeholders as identified in the strategy document, with their key function, mandate and role. The actual involvement of stakeholders will be discussed in Section 3.2.

Table 4. Overview of the main Strategy stakeholders and their roles

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stakeholder | Role in the Strategy |
| **Institutional stakeholders** | |
| **Government of Montenegro/ line ministries**  Government PR service / PR services of line ministries | Beneficiary of the Strategy |
| **General Secretariat of the Government**, Department for EU and EU Accession Info, Office for EU integration | Leading actor in design and implementation of the Strategy, member of the Consultative and Operational Body |
| **Consultative Body**/ members of the Working Group involved in drafting the Public Information Strategy, the representatives of the EU Delegation to Montenegro and independent experts and NGO representatives | Design and monitoring the implementation of the Strategy |
| **Operational Body**/ representatives of the line ministries, the Parliament, the local self-governments and NGOs | Implementation of the Strategy |
| **Parliament of Montenegro**/ the EU Integration committee | Member of the Consultative and Operational Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **Local self-governments** | Multiplier and partner |
| **Associations and non-governmental organizations** | |
| **Union of Municipalities of Montenegro** | Members of the Consultative and Operational Body |
| **Chamber of Economy of Montenegro** | Member of the Consultative Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **NGO Centre for Democracy and Human Rights** | Member of the Consultative Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **NGO Centre for Civic Education** | Member of the Consultative Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **NGO Juventas** | Member of the Consultative Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **NGO Association of Disabled Youth** | Member of the Operational Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **NGO Montenegro Pan-European Union** | Member of the Operational Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **NGO Multimedijal Montenegro** | Member of the Operational Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **International missions and organizations** | |
| **EU Delegation to Montenegro** | Member of the Consultative Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **UNDP Office in Montenegro** | Member of the Consultative Body, Multiplier and partner |
| **EU institutions and officials of the member states** | Multipliers and partners |
| **Montenegro’s diplomatic missions in the EU** | Multipliers and partners |
| **International organisations based in Montenegro** | Multipliers and partners |
| **Academic and research stakeholders** | |
| **DeFacto Agency** | Member of the Consultative Body, research partner |
| **Domestic and foreign academic institutions** | Multipliers and partners |
| **Domestic and international nongovernmental and think-tank organisations** | Multipliers and partners |
| **Other stakeholders** | |
| **Media (domestic and foreign)** | Multipliers and partners |
| **International business community** | Multipliers and partners |
| **Influential public figures (and digital influencers)** | Multipliers and partners |
| **Religious communities** | Multipliers and partners |

# Findings

## Strategy Design/Formulation

### Analysis of Objectives Framework and indicators

Section IV of the Public Information Strategy on Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 presents the objectives framework (OF) with strategic and operational goals, as well as target groups on the level of each Strategic Goal. Analysis of the OF in the Strategy and the Action Plans shows that it is well integrated vertically. Overall, the goals were formulated as likely to lead to the expected results and contribute to the overall objective of the Strategy. Equally, Action Plans were clearly elaborated, with the corresponding activities. No major elements seem to be missing.

Section IV of the Strategy also presents the performance indicators table at the strategic and operational goals’ levels, including baselines, targets, and the measurement methodology. The performance indicators provided at the Strategy were overall relevant, although several of them were formulated as activities, while some were formulated as outputs rather than performance indicators. Baseline and target values also seem to be missing for some performance indicators. For the purpose of this evaluation, but also for the benefit of the succeeding Strategy planning, some performance indicators were reformulated, and additional ones suggested that demonstrate SMART indicators. Furthermore, appropriate numbering of the Strategic and Operational Goals with the corresponding indicators was proposed for a better overview of the Performance Indicators Table.

In the table below are presented suggested re-formulations of the existing, as well as formulations of additional performance indicators that could help more comprehensively capture the level of achievement of the corresponding goals.

Table 5. Assessment of the Strategy’s Performance Indicators Table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator formulation in the Strategy 2019-2022 | Evaluator’s observations | Evaluator’s suggestion for (re)formulation |
| Strategic Goal 1.  **Enhance operation of the system to ensure professional, efficient and well-coordinated communication of the EU integration process at the state and local levels** | | |
| N/A | Performance indicator not formulated | ***Performance indicator (1.1)***  *Establishment and quality of operability of CB and OB;*  ***Performance indicator (1.2)***  *Number of established and used communication channels (or tools, i.e., communication plans) at the national and local level*  *(with baseline and target values reference)* |
| Operational goal (1.1) **Ensure effective operation of the Operational and of the Consultative Body, and foster internal information sharing by establishing permanent communication channels on the EU accession process** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Assess performance of the Operational and the Consultative Team based on a structured questionnaire  Performance indicator 2:  Assessment of internal communication of PR officers based on a structured questionnaire | Formulated as activity;  Additional performance indicators would be useful. | ***Performance indicator (1.1.1)***  *Percentage of members who positively assess the Operational and the Consultative Teams’ performance*  ***Performance Indicator (1.1.2)***  *Number of meetings held by the Operational and Consultative Team members (with baseline and target values reference)*  ***Performance Indicator (1.1.3)***  *Percentage of PR officers who positively assess the internal communication* |
| Operational goal (1.2) **Continue with the education and training of PR officers in state and local administrations, including the information on EU-supported programmes available to them** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Training matches needs at the national and local levels | This performance indicator is formulated as output, while the proposed target value does not allow for measuring of the proposed indicator | ***Performance Indicator (1.2.1)***  *Number of delivered trainings that match the needs at the national and local levels, and/or number of trainees.*  *\*The target should propose at least an indicative number of trainings and/or trainees.*  *In addition, measurement methodology should then be records of trainings - agendas, photos, participants’ lists, evaluations and training reports* |
| Strategic Goal 2.  **Provide clear, comprehensive and timely information on the advantages and obligations stemming from membership through understandable, appealing and adapted messages** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Share of citizens interested in Montenegro’s accession to the EU;  Performance indicator 2:  Share of citizens who believe that public information on EU accession is sound and complete and that it provides all key information | These performance indicators are correctly formulated. | ***Performance indicator (2.1)***  *Share of citizens interested in Montenegro’s accession to the EU;*  ***Performance indicator (2.2)***  *Share of citizens who believe that public information on EU accession is sound and complete and that it provides all key information* |
| Operational goal ( 2.1) **Increase the share of citizens who believe to be fully or partly informed of the EU integration process** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Share of citizens who believe to have no Information on the EU integration | This performance indicator is correctly formulated, however additional indicators would be useful. | ***Performance indicator (2.1.1)***  *Share of citizens who believe to have no Information on the EU integration*  ***Performance indicator (2.1.2)***  *Number of promotional events per year (info days, workshops, etc.)* |
| Operational goal (2.2)  **Improve the quality and outreach of EU integration information** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Share of positive postings generated by actors in implementing the AP  Performance indicator 2:  Average outreach of postings on social networks  Performance indicator 3:  More EU integration stories with a human face posted on webpage www.eu.me | These performance indicators are correctly formulated, however additional indicators would be useful. | ***Performance indicator (2.2.1)***  *Number of information dissemination channels (i.e., traditional and social media, online streaming platforms, websites, etc)*  ***Performance indicator (2.2.2)***  *Share of positive postings generated by actors in implementing the AP*  ***Performance indicator (2.2.3)***  *Average outreach of postings on social networks*  ***Performance indicator (2.2.4)***  *Number of EU integration stories with a human face posted on webpage www.eu.me* |
| Operational goal (2.3) **Increase visibility of EU support programmes** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Share of citizens who perceive EU as the largest donor in EU  Performance indicator 2:  Share of citizens who heard and claim to know what IPA and EU funds are  Performance indicator 3:  Share of young people who heard and claim to know of Erasmus+ programme | These performance indicators are correctly formulated, however additional indicators would be useful. | ***Performance indicator (2.3.1)***  *Share of citizens who perceive EU as the largest donor in EU*  ***Performance indicator (2.3.2)***  *Share of citizens who heard and claim to know what IPA and EU funds are*  ***Performance indicator (2.3.3)***  *Share of young people who heard and claim to know of Erasmus+ programme*  ***Performance indicator (2.3.4)***  *Number of promotional events (info days, workshops, conferences, etc) on EU support programmes*  ***Performance indicator (2.3.5)***  *Number of media reports and informative articles on EU support programmes (both with baseline and target values)* |
| Operational goal (2.4) **Improve public perception of the EU as the key global player** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Share of citizens who would rely on the EU in foreign policy | This performance indicator is correctly formulated, however additional indicators would be useful. | ***Performance indicator (2.4.1)***  *Share of citizens who would rely on the EU in foreign policy*  ***Performance indicator (2.4.2)***  *Number of events (lectures and promotional events) that promote the EU as the key global player* (with baseline and target value) |
| Operational goal (2.5) **Shatter misconceptions and unrealistic expectations of the EU accession process** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Share of citizens who agree with 5 Key messages | This performance indicator is correctly formulated, however additional indicators would be useful. | ***Performance indicator (2.5.1)***  *Share of citizens who agree with 5 Key messages*  ***Performance indicator (2.5.2)***  *Number of public events (debates, info days, workshops, study visits, etc) that communicate realistic* expectations of the EU accession process  ***Performance indicator (2.5.3)***  *Number of produced and disseminated material that informs/educates on the expectations of the EU accession process*  ***Performance indicator (2.5.4)***  *Number of media reports and articles that promote the 5 Key messages (all* with baseline and target values) |
| Strategic goal 3.  **Improve international recognisability of the process of Montenegro’s accession to the EU through provision of information on actions and reforms undertaken and the successes achieved** | | |
| N/A | Performance indicator not formulated | ***Performance indicator (3.1)***  *Number of events that promote Montenegro to the EU community*  *(with baseline and target value)* |
| Operational goal (3.1) **Timely and regular information provided to EU member states on Montenegro’s accession** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Increase the number of events for EU member states | Indicator formulated as activity | ***Performance indicator (3.1.1)***  *Number of events for the EU member states and/or EU representatives* |
| Operational goal (3.2) **Increase availability of information on EU integration in English** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Increase the number of users in the English pages www.eu.me | Indicator formulated as activity | ***Performance indicator (3.2.1)***  *Number of users/visitors of the English version of www.eu.me* |
| Strategic goal 4.  **Achieve multiplying effect and maximise communication outreach by developing targeted messages, tools and communication channels for all multipliers and partners in the process** | | |
| N/A | Performance indicator not formulated | ***Performance indicator (4.1)***  *Number of informative and educational events for multipliers and partners* |
| Operational goal (4.1) **Establish regular cooperation with multipliers involved in the integration process.** | | |
| Performance indicator 1:  Increase the number of joint actions/ Projects between the Gov’t and multipliers | Indicator formulated as activity | ***Performance indicator (4.1.1)***  *Number of joint actions/ Projects between the Gov’t and multipliers* |

### Risks and assumptions

The Strategy did not foresee any risks, nor risk mitigation plan. However, this section will give an overview of the risks that occurred during the implementation and how they can be formulated in the design and formulation stage in the future public information strategies. Also, some of the risks identified below are likely to emerge during the implementation of the succeeding Strategy.

While the initial findings indicate the success of the Strategy in terms of the relevance and performance, the in-depth interviews with the stakeholders highlighted several obstacles in the implementation phase. These obstacles reflect the risks that could have been anticipated and those that couldn’t, both having a slight impact on the implementation of this, but potentially on future Public Information Strategies on Montenegro's Accession to the EU.

**The risks that could have been anticipated:**

1. Potential lack of interest of some stakeholders to take active role in the Strategy implementation;
2. Staff turnover in the central and local level institutions, and loss of institutional memory related to the key processes envisaged by the Strategy;
3. Delays in communication and reporting, and/or lack of timely feedback by the Operational and Consultative Body members;
4. Limited outreach to the vulnerable groups and specific social categories;
5. Lack of capacities in addressing disinformation and fake news related to the European integration process.

**The risks that could not have been anticipated:**

1. Emergence of the global pandemic, the restrictions on movement and public events;
2. Impact of the 2020 elections and political changes on the European integration process in Montenegro;
3. Cyber-attacks on the public institutions that disabled access to e-mails and thus limited one of the main communication channels.

While the risks that could not have been anticipated were mainly force majeure and had a small or insignificant impact to the implementation of 2019-2022 Public Information Strategy, they provide an insight into some of the trends that may occur in the period of the succeeding Strategy implementation, which will be subject of the recommendations below.

For the risks that could have been anticipated, the initial findings indicate that some of them did occur during the implementation, which reflected on the efficiency and performance of the Strategy only to a smaller extent, as a result of efforts and capacity of the LA to mitigate their impact. In specific terms, the collected data suggest that the academic community (as well as Erasmus office) did not take a sufficiently active role in the implementation, although they were recognized as one of the key stakeholders in the strategic document. This may have reflected on results concerning younger population that according to the latest public perception surveys are not sufficiently informed about the EU integration processes and the EU support programmes.

Also, staff turnover and loss of institutional memory is observed as a persistent problem of Montenegrin institutions, which in the case of the 2019-2022 Strategy reflected in the slight delays in communication related to the Action Plans formulation and reporting. Although the LA demonstrated the capacity for efficient communication, coordination, as well as agile management in this regard, these risks should be recognized in the following Strategy, with adequate mitigation measures, or proposed more sustainable solutions.

Furthermore, there is limited data on the level of familiarization of vulnerable and other social categories with the EU integration process. However, outreach of these target groups could be either addressed through specific activities, or at least recognized as a risk with the corresponding mitigation measures. Finally, as disinformation and the so called ‘’fake news’’ appear to be an emerging trend in Montenegro and globally, to ensure that accurate information in the context of the EU accession are communicated with the public, both preventive and mitigation measures should be considered.

### Planned stakeholder participation

The Strategy was inclusive in terms of identifying and involving key stakeholders, including institutional stakeholders on both central and local level, civil society, business and academic sector, as well as domestic and international audiences as target groups.

In addition, the Strategy provided opportunities for the stakeholders to be actively involved in the planning phase through participation in the Working Group for drafting the strategy document, as well as in implementation through participation in the Operational Body, and in supervision/monitoring through participation in the Consultative Body.

A list of the stakeholders with their roles as provided in the Strategy is presented in Table 3 above.

***Were stakeholders properly identified and their roles and responsibilities clarified prior to the Strategy implementation?***

From the interviews it seems that the stakeholders were more or less clear on their roles at the beginning of the Strategy implementation. Also, all interviewees acknowledged that stakeholder coordination was conducted efficiently by the LA, which in addition to successful implementation also contributed to strengthening the horizontal cooperation between the institutions, and with the civil society. Though dynamic in terms of membership, from the interviews it transpired that the Operational Body operated efficiently throughout the implementation, while the Consultative Body was less proactive in meetings and in general communication.

## Implementation

Regardless of the several obstacles that occurred during the implementation, it did not experience any major delays, or changes. On the contrary, the implementation appears to have been conducted efficiently and in a timely manner. The Department for information on EU and EU accession of the Government’s General Secretariat was in charge of the overall Strategy as the Leading Actor (LA); the Operational Body was in charge of implementing the Strategy while the Consultative Body had a supervisory and advisory role.

***How well was the implementation managed by LA? Did the LA react appropriately to inquiries, difficulties and identified risks, in a timely manner?***

The assessments based on both the document review as well as the feedback during interviews confirm that the implementation was managed exceptionally well by the LA and that it reacted appropriately and in a timely manner to any identified issues. The LA ensured smooth cooperation with the OB and CB, while also carefully managing collaboration and good communication between all the stakeholders.

***Did the OB and CB sufficiently ensure that the Strategy was implemented as planned? What were their roles in implementation and supervision?***

While the Operational Body had regular quarterly meetings, and communicated on the regular basis with the LA, the interviewees highlighted that the CB was not as involved pertinent to its role in the Strategy. The meetings of the CB were held much less frequently throughout the implementation, while the feedback on the Action Plans and Action Plan Reports, as well as other issues that arose, ‘’*was provided mainly by the civil society members’’* as pointed out by some interviewees. From the interviews, it appears that the mandate of the Consultative Body should be better clarified in the following Strategy document, along with the selection procedure of its members, that were appointed on the basis of participation in the Working group for drafting the Strategy.

### Actual stakeholder participation

***What was the nature and extent of interactions between the LA, CB and OB, as well as wider stakeholder groups (e.g., civil society, media, and other partners and multipliers)?***

The Strategy was characterized by a high level of stakeholder involvement in its design and implementation. The Strategy identified a broad range of stakeholders from national and local self-governments, private sector, civil society and academia at its start (presented in Table 3), as well as domestic and international audiences. In the design and formulation phase, this was reflected by an inclusive planning process conducted by a Working group responsible for the Strategy drafting. The WG was composed of institutional stakeholders, civil society and independent experts, that would later be appointed as the Consultative Body members in charge of supervision and monitoring. Based on the collected and analysed data, however, their role during the implementation was not as committed[[1]](#footnote-1).

The Operational Body members, on the other hand, attended several training workshops and seminars on capacity building, which resulted in appointing key persons responsible in the central and local level institutions for communicating the EU accession process with the public, as well as creating local communication action plans[[2]](#footnote-2). The LA noted that OB members also regularly reported on the planned and implemented activities and thus contributed to the Action Plans and reporting. Likewise, based on the document review and interviews, the partners and multipliers had a significant role in public information and visibility of activities, which resulted in the record support to the EU accession and the general familiarization of the public in regard to this process[[3]](#footnote-3). In addition to this, a number of events for domestic and international audiences was implemented by partners and multipliers, while the accessibility of information on the [www.eu.me](http://www.eu.me) website and the social networks in both the local language and English contributed to achieving, and in some cases exceeding the set targets[[4]](#footnote-4).

On the other side, according to the latest public perception surveys, the general public, especially the younger population, are not as informed on the EU support programs (IPA, Erasmus+ and EU funds in general). While the familiarization with the EU support programs appears to be better than in the previous years, the portion of young people who don’t know, or use Erasmus+ remained at a worrying level[[5]](#footnote-5). Based on the conducted interviews, the reasons for this are two-fold: on one hand the youth has lost trust in the institution-led processes, but on the other the Erasmus+, and other support programs aimed at youth seem to not have been as promoted as expected. Majority of interviewees believe that the responsibility for this lies in the lack of stronger involvement of the academic sector during the Strategy implementation, as well as the Erasmus+ office in Montenegro. Therefore, the future public information strategies should consider introducing innovative models for increasing the familiarization of youth with the accession process, opportunities and benefits, but also a stronger involvement of the academic sector and Erasmus+ office in the promotion of the EU support programs.

Overall, based on the documents review, as well as the interviews, the Strategy succeeded in keeping the majority of stakeholders onboard throughout the implementation.

### STRATEGY RESOURCES

***Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could have financial resources been used more efficiently?***

For the four-year implementation of the Public Information Strategy on Montenegro's Accession to the European Union 2019-2022, a total of EUR 3 million allocation was projected, out of which EUR 1.5 million was planned to be covered from the state budget.

The processed data at the end of the four-year implementation of the Strategy show that a total of EUR 2,992,001.3[[6]](#footnote-6) was spent for the implementation of the planned activities, which confirms appropriate budget planning and efficient utilization of the financial resources during the implementation of the Strategy. Funding sources and actual expenses of the 2019-2022 Strategy are as follows[[7]](#footnote-7):

**Table 6. Strategy’s funding sources and overall expenses**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SOURCE | Government | | \* Other sources/ donors & partners | | Total disbursement | |
| **Per year** | **Proposed** | **Actual** | **Proposed** | **Actual** | **Proposed** | **Actual** |
| **2019** | 416,932.00 EUR | 396,365.00 EUR | 393,869.00 EUR | 662,254.00 EUR | 810,801.00 EUR | **1,058,619.00 EUR** |
| **2020** | 406,990.00 EUR | 222,969.40 EUR | 487,407.00 EUR | 375,765.00 EUR | 894,397.00 EUR | **598,734.40 EUR** |
| **2021** | 56,400.00 EUR | 98,782.73 EUR | 555,652.23 EUR | 467,486.12 EUR | 612,052.23 EUR | **566,268.85 EUR** |
| **2022** | 255,080.00 EUR | 235.587,19 EUR | 498,450.54 EUR | 532,791.86 EUR | 753,530.54 EUR | **768.379,05EUR** |
| **Total** | 1,135,402.00 EUR | **953,704.32 EUR** | 1,935,378.77 EUR | **2,038,296.98 EUR** | 3,070,780.77 EUR | **2,992,001.30 EUR** |

### Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry AND implementation

#### Design at entry

The Section VII of the Strategy envisages monitoring and evaluation arrangements, in line with the *Methodology for Developing Policies, Drafting and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers* (Government of Montenegro, 2018).[[8]](#footnote-8)

Furthermore, this Section determines that monitoring is conducted annually based on the indicators formulated in the Action Plans and the values presented in the AP Reports in order to measure the level of progress for each year of the implementation. In that sense, the AP Reports are also annual monitoring reports, that encompass output indicators with reference to performance indicators as set in the Strategy document. The Strategy also suggests that the monitoring responsibilities are divided between the Operational and the Consultative Body, with the LA in charge of preparing the AP Reports, while both the OB and CB deliberate on the reports and provide recommendations.

The final evaluation was envisaged to take place at the end of the implementation period, with the purpose of assessing the effects and performance in reference to the set goals and objectives of the Strategy. Final evaluation is based on the methodology contained in the Table of Performance Indicators provided in the Section IV of the Strategy The Operational Body and the Consultative Body are responsible for examining the process and the final evaluation and providing opinions that will feed into the final report to be endorsed by the Government of Montenegro.

Analysis of the Performance Indicators Table shows that the indicators were overall relevant, and that most of them included baselines, targets, and the measurement methodology. However, several of them were formulated as activities or outputs rather than performance indicators, implying that some indicators were not SMART. This is further elaborated in the sub-section 3.1.1 of this Report. Also, based on the interviews, although the monitoring responsibilities were divided between the Operational Body and the Consultative Body, the CB members did not seem to be clear on their roles in this regard.

Based on the above, the design of the Monitoring and Evaluation plan is rated as **Satisfactory**.

#### Implementation

The Strategy stipulates that the implementation progress is monitored annually through the Action Plan Reports generated by the LA and based on the data collected from the key stakeholders. The collected data related to the implemented activities and results, that were further supported with public perception surveys data conducted on an annual basis[[9]](#footnote-9). In this sense, the AP Reports were a crucial tool for monitoring, and based on the documents review, they clearly elaborated and specified the values of the output indicators.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Furthermore, the meeting minutes, as well as the interviews clarify a quality and timely communication between the LA and OB members in exchanging the data for both the APs and the AP Reports, followed by comments and feedback, which enabled efficient implementation of the monitoring activities that were conducted in joint effort.

Although the CB members were not as proactive in this regard, as suggested by the meeting minutes and conducted interviews, it appears that this did not affect the quality of the monitoring process. Finally, the AP Reports contained and elaborated the key data that facilitated the evaluation process, and along with the stakeholders involved in the interviews, allowed adequate assessment of the performance indicators on the level of the Strategy.

Based on the above information, the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation is rated as **Highly Satisfactory.**

#### Overall assessment of M&E

From the above it transpires that, regardless of the minor challenges, the implementation of the Strategy was closely and effectively monitored, and all stakeholders were informed in a transparent and detailed way. This is further substantiated by interviewees praising the quality coordination and the responsiveness of the LA to any arising issues.

Therefore, **the** **overall assessment of the M&E of the Strategy is Highly** **Satisfactory.**

### Supervision and implementation execution

#### Supervision execution

Section III of the Strategy describes the roles of the Leading Actor (LA), the Operational Body (OB) and the Consultative Body (CB). This Section clarifies that the CB is *a body in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Public Information Strategy*.[[11]](#footnote-11) Furthermore, the CB is composed of the members of the Working Group involved in drafting the Public Information Strategy, the representatives of the EU Delegation to Montenegro and independent experts and NGO representatives. The Strategy also highlights that the Consultative Body was not efficient in the implementation of the previous public information strategies, with suggestions for its improvement.[[12]](#footnote-12)

From the documents and interviews analysis, a few issues have been recognized in this regard:

1. Regardless of the lessons learned from the previous strategies, the 2019-2022 Strategy does not fully clarify the mandate, and provides insufficiently elaborated role of the Consultative Body;

2. The interviewees were more or less clear on the CB's supervisory role in the implementation phase, however majority of them did not appear to perceive this role as crucial during the implementation. Majority of the interviewees also stated that this Body had a very few meetings and rarely provided feedback.

The collected data suggests that the actual supervision of the implementation was conducted mainly by the LA, and to some extent by the civil society representatives in the CB, which resulted in additional workload and efforts for the General Secretariat in ensuring a timely and quality communication and implementation[[13]](#footnote-13). Though the supervisory role of the CB could have been stronger during the implementation, analysis of the documents and interviews imply that the LA managed to mobilize sufficient capacities in filling in the gaps and making up for the CB’s lack of proactiveness pertinent to its role.

For this reason, the assessment of Supervision execution is **Moderately Satisfactory.**

#### Implementation execution

Section III of the Strategy also clarifies the roles of the Department for information on EU and EU accession of the Government’s General Secretariat as the Leading Actor (LA) in communicating EU integration process, and thus responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the Strategy. The role of the Operational Body, composed of central and local level institutional stakeholders’ representatives, was crucial in the implementation phase. The OB provided the relevant data for the Action Plans in line with their institutions' planned activities, implemented those activities, and reported the results of the implementation to the LA, which fed into the AP Reports.

From the documents and interviews analysis, a few observations were established:

1. The communication between the LA and OB was timely, transparent and efficient, with frequent meetings and correspondence;

2. The OB members were efficient in providing all the relevant data and feedback to the LA for both the Action Plans and Action Plan Reports;

3. The lessons learned from the previous Strategy, stipulating that *‘’this body should be more agile in the period ahead covered by the present Public Information Strategy''[[14]](#footnote-14)* was applied in the implementation phase of the 2019-2022 Strategy;

4. The OB members participated in various capacity building trainings, appointed key persons in their respective institutions for communicating the EU accession process, while on the local level communication plans were created and adopted in every municipality.

5. The LA demonstrated a high capacity for coordination and management, and in mitigating all the risks and challenges that arose during the implementation, which is supported by the statements of all interviewed stakeholders.

For this reason, the assessment of Implementation execution is **Highly Satisfactory.**

#### Overall assessment of supervision and implementation execution

While the LA and OB ensured smooth cooperation and highly satisfactory implementation execution, the CB appeared to have been moderately efficient in its supervisory role. For this reason, **the overall assessment of the supervision and implementation execution is Satisfactory.**

## Results and Impacts

### Progress towards the Goals of the Strategy

Analysis of the Objectives Framework (OF) presented in the Section IV of the Strategy document, encompassing four Strategic Goals with the corresponding Operational Goals, shows that it is well integrated vertically and formulated as likely to lead to the expected results. Equally, Action Plans were clearly elaborated, with the corresponding activities, where no major elements seem to be missing.

The Performance Indicators Table, for the most part, included baselines, targets, and the measurement methodology. The performance indicators provided at the Strategy were overall relevant, although several of them were not formulated as SMART indicators. Nevertheless. this did not impose larger obstacles to the performance assessment, and for the purpose of this evaluation, some performance indicators were reformulated, or additional ones suggested. For the missing baseline and target values, acceptable assumptions were created based on the data collected throughout evaluation.

The performance assessment as presented in the Table 7 below shows that the implementation of the 2019-2022 Public Information Strategy on Montenegro‘s Accession to the EU was successful in terms of managing to meet, and in some cases exceed the set targets. In total 3 targets remain underachieved. This includes citizens familiarization with the EU funds, percentage of youth that is informed on Erasmus+ programme, and a percentage of citizens who would rely on the EU in foreign policy. On the other hand, citizens perceive the EU as the largest donor; they believe that public information on EU accession is sound and complete; the public generally agrees with the promoted EU values and messages, and finally the latest public perception survey shows a record support for the EU accession process amounting to 75%.

It is also worth noting that interviewees expressed high praise with the way the implementation of the Strategy was managed and coordinated by the LA, regardless of a number of internal and external obstacles that occurred during the implementation, which will be specifically discussed in the conclusions and recommendations. Finally, all interviewees confirmed that the efficient communication and extra efforts committed by the LA during the implementation phase should be credited for the Strategy’s results.

Based on the above, and on the Performance Assessment Matrix below, the overall performance of the Strategy is assessed as **Satisfactory.**

Table 7. Performance Assessment Matrix

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objectives/Goals | Performance Indicator | Baseline | Target | Final Status | Rating | Comments |
| **Strategic Goal (SG) 1**.  Enhance operation of the system to ensure professional, efficient and well-coordinated communication of the EU integration process at the state and local levels | ***\* Performance indicator (1.1)***  *Establishment and quality of operability of CB and OB;*  ***\* Performance indicator (1.2)***  *Number of established and used communication channels (or tools, i.e., communication plans) at the national and local level* | N/A  N/A | N/A  N/A | CB and OB established and operational throughout implementation. Data from the interviews and meeting minutes suggest different levels of operability quality of these two bodies.  Communication Action plans created and adopted at the level of all local-self-governments. | **S** | Based on the interviews, AP Reports and meeting minutes, CB and OB were established and operational throughout the implementation. The assumption for operability quality assessment was frequency in meetings and communication of these two bodies, implying that OB was significantly more efficient (regular meetings and/or communication, involvement in monitoring activities).  Communication Action plans were created and adopted at the level of all local-self-governments.. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 1.1)**  Ensure effective operation of the Operational and of the Consultative Body, and foster internal information sharing by establishing permanent communication channels on the EU accession process | ***Performance indicator (1.1.1)***  *Percentage of members who positively assess the Operational and the Consultative Teams’ performance;*  ***\*Performance Indicator (1.1.2)***  *Number of meetings held by the Operational and Consultative Team members;*  ***Performance Indicator (1.1.3)***  *Percentage of PR officers who positively assess the internal communication;* | N/A  N/A  - | Value of the index above one half  N/A  Value of the index above one half | Over 98% of positive responses in 2022  Meeting minutes and interview-based data suggest that OB was meeting/communicating quarterly, and later on a monthly basis; CB was initially meeting twice a year, and only once in the second half of the implementation.  This indicator was fully achieved (over 98% of positive responses). | **S** | On annual basis, the OB and CB members filled the questionaries assessing the performance of these two bodies. While the responses are indicative of the positively assessed performance of both bodies, the document and interview-based data suggest that the CB had significantly less meetings and less frequent communication with the LA than the OB.  The questionaries were also filled by PR Officers related to internal communication and this target was reached. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 1.2)**  Continue with the education and training of PR officers in state and local administrations, including the information on EU-supported programmes available to them | ***\*Performance Indicator (1.2.1)***  *Number of delivered trainings that match the needs at the national and local levels, and/or number of trainees.* | N/A | N/A | 4 training workshops (17 July 2019, 18-19 July 2019, 22-23 July 2019, 26 November 2019) and one round table (8 July 2019) were held for the PR officers. | **S** | Assuming that a baseline value is 0, 5 training events for the PR officers on the local and national level are indicative that the positive change occurred. For the 4-year implementation period, this number can be assessed as Satisfactory. |
| **Strategic Goal (SG) 2.**  Provide clear, comprehensive and timely information on the advantages and obligations stemming from membership through understandable, appealing and adapted messages | ***Performance indicator (2.1)*** *Share of citizens interested in Montenegro’s accession to the EU;*  ***Performance indicator (2.2)***  *Share of citizens who believe that public information on EU accession is sound and complete and that it provides all key information.* | 68.9%  51.2% | 70%  >45% | This indicator was achieved (84,6 **%** are interested in the EU accessionbased on the 2022 public perception survey).  This indicator was achieved (very informed and very well-informed amounts to 52% in total, according to the 2022 public perception survey). | **MS** | Though both targets were overachieved on the SG level, on the level of OGs 2.3 and 2.4 targets were not achieved. These OGs being encompassed within this SG thus resulted in Moderately Satisfactory rating of the SG2. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 2.1)**  Increase the share of citizens who believe to be fully or partly informed of the EU integration process | ***Performance indicator (2.1.1)***  *Share of citizens who believe to have no Information on the EU integration* | 17,6% | < 15% | This indicator was achieved (14.5% of citizens consider themselves not informed about the EU, based on the 2022 public perception poll) | **HS** | The target was overachieved and resulted in Highly Satisfactory rating.  - |
| **Operational Goal (OG 2.2)**  Improve the quality and outreach of EU integration information | ***\*Performance indicator (2.2.1)***  *Number of information dissemination channels (i.e., traditional and social media, online streaming platforms, websites, etc);*  ***Performance indicator (2.2.2)***  *Share of positive postings generated by actors in implementing the AP;*  ***Performance indicator (2.2.3)***  *Average outreach of postings on social networks;*  ***Performance indicator (2.2.4)***  *Number of EU integration stories with a human face posted on webpage* [*www.eu.me*](http://www.eu.me) | -  80% positive  FB video –  8.525  FB photo –  1.357  FB link –  1.680  Clicks and  reactions – 98  4 stories a  year | -  90% positive  9000  1500  2000  100  >10 stories a year | Traditional and social media, online portals and websites eu.me, as well as websites and social networks of partners and multipliers.  82 % – 86.20% (2021)  Facebook: 18.9 thousand people reach, 7.8 thousand engagements, total followers 11,339;  Instagram: 6.3 thousand reach, 397 engagements, a total of 3,169 followers;  Twitter: total 3,018 followers, 7066 tweets.  30 stories by 2021, 2022 AP report indicates that the overall target is achieved in 2022. | **S** | From the AP reports it appears that all the available information dissemination channels were used during the implementation.  Results were not measured for 2022 and this target is slightly underachieved.  These targets were fully achieved and exceeded.  The evidence suggests that this target was achieved. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 2.3)**  Increase visibility of EU support programmes | ***Performance indicator (2.3.1)***  *Share of citizens who perceive EU as the largest donor in EU;*  ***Performance indicator (2.3.2)***  *Share of citizens who heard and claim to know what IPA and EU funds are;*  ***Performance indicator (2.3.3)***  *Share of young people who heard and claim to know of Erasmus+ programme* | 50.5%  21% - IPA  27.5% - EU  funds  15.4% | >50%  25% - IPA  30% - EU funds  20% | 54,7% as per the 2022 public perception survey  25,1% – IPA  27,7 % - EU funds, as per the 2022 public perception survey  11,8% based on the 2022 public perception survey | **MS** | This target was achieved.  The target was slightly underachieved related to the citizens’ familiarisation with the EU funds.  This target was not achieved.  Based on the above, the rating is Moderately Satisfactory. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 2.4)**  Improve public perception of the EU as the key global player | ***Performance indicator (2.4.1)***  *Share of citizens who would rely on the EU in foreign policy* | 46.3% | >50% | 38,9% based on the 2022 public perception survey | **MU** | This target was not achieved, resulting in Moderately Unsatisfactory rating. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 2.5)**  Shatter misconceptions and unrealistic expectations of the EU accession process | ***Performance indicator (2.5.1)***  *Share of citizens who agree with 5 Key messages* | Average for  all messages  55 % | Average for all messages - 57% | Average for 5 messages ˃ 60%, based on the 2022 public perception survey | **HS** | This target was achieved and exceeded. |
| **Strategic Goal (SG) 3.**  Improve international recognisability of the process of Montenegro’s accession to the EU through provision of information on actions and reforms undertaken and the successes achieved | ***\*Performance indicator (3.1)***  *Number of events that promote Montenegro to the EU community* | N/A | N/A | Based on the AP reports, on average more than 20 events were organized during the implementation phase. | **HS** | Although the baseline and target values were not formulated on the level of SG3, judging by the indicated values in the corresponding OGs, the overall performance on this SG’s level was highly satisfactory. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 3.1)**  Timely and regular information provided to EU member states on Montenegro’s accession | ***Performance indicator (3.1.1)***  *Number of events for the EU member states and/or EU representatives* | 4 events | Increase by 20% | On average, ˃ 5 events were organized per year | **HS** | This target was achieved and exceeded. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 3.2)**  Increase availability of information on EU integration in English | ***Performance indicator (3.2.1)***  *Number of users/visitors of the English version of www.eu.me* | 2057 users in 2017 | Increase by 20% | 10 242 users in 2022, based on the Google Analytics and 2022 AP report | **HS** | This target was achieved and exceeded. |
| **Strategic Goal (SG) 4.**  Achieve multiplying effect and maximise communication outreach by developing targeted messages, tools and communication channels for all multipliers and partners in the process | ***\*Performance indicator (4.1)***  *Number of informative and educational events for multipliers and partners* | N/A | N/A | Over 40 joint actions, based on the AP Reports, for the overall implementation period | **HS** | Although the baseline and target values were not formulated on the level of SG4, judging by the indicated values in the corresponding OG, the overall performance on this SG’s level was highly satisfactory. |
| **Operational Goal (OG 4.1)**  Establish regular cooperation with multipliers involved in the integration process. | ***Performance indicator (4.1.1)***  *Number of joint actions/ Projects between the Gov’t and multipliers* | 33 joint actions/ events | Increase by 10% | Based on the AP Reports, over 10 joint actions were organized annually. | **HS** | This target was achieved and exceeded. |

*\* PIs proposed or reformulated to enable performance assessment*

### Relevance

As described in Section 2 of this Report, the Strategy is fully in line with national priorities. Its adoption was envisaged as one of the priorities by Government’sMedium-term Work Programme 2018-2020 and it also reflects the priorities set in the Communication Strategy of the Government of Montenegro 2018. Furthermore, the Strategy also relied on the priorities set in the EU accession process and key EU polices, both at the national and the EU levels.

In addition, the Public Information Strategy was based on the experience in implementing the previousthree communication strategies for the accession process and involved a wide range stakeholder in the planning and implementation phase, including representatives from central and local level authorities, civil society, business sector and independent experts.

Also, the Strategy was based on comprehensive situation analysis through identification of the main challenges for the process of public information on the EU accession, and addressing them through four sets of strategic goals that encompassed capacity building of the key stakeholders, communicating the benefits of the EU accession and making all the necessary data accessible for the general public, while also collaborating with the partners and multipliers and thus ensuring wider information dissemination and outreach.

The Strategy paid particular attention to the target audiences, both domestic and international, and the tools that would facilitate the transmission of the key messages. All interviewees emphasised the relevance of the Strategy for Montenegro’s EU accession and that continuation of public information on this process is imperative.

The planning process was inclusive, transparent, and relied on evidence-based policy making. Considering the above, the relevance of the Strategy is assessed as **Highly Satisfactory.**

### Effectiveness

As identified in the Performance Assessment Matrix, the Strategy managed to achieve majority of its targets and exceeding several of them. Out of 22, 7 targets were overachieved, and only 3 targets were unachieved, or slightly underachieved. On the level of Strategic Goals, the effective operation of the OB was fully achieved within the SG 1, while the CB was operational but not as effective as confirmed during the interviews with the stakeholders. Education and training of PR officers was fully achieved, as evidenced in the AP Reports, and communication action plans adopted in every municipality. The achievements within the SG 2 demonstrated the most prominent success of the Strategy in relation to the public information and support to the EU accession[[15]](#footnote-15). However, information on the EU support programs, especially among youth, and public perception of the European Union as a key global player are below the set targets, as presented in the Performance Assessment Matrix. The progress within the SG3 was highly satisfactory, with overachieved targets at the level of both OGs – over 20 organized events for the EU member states and/or EU representatives, and over 10.000 users of eu.me website in English. Finally, the progress within the SG4 was highly satisfactory, with in total over 40 joint actions and events with multipliers by the end of the implementation.

Furthermore, based on the documents review as well as the interviews, a quality and timely communication between the LA and OB members in exchanging the data for both the APs and the AP Reports, followed by comments and feedback, contributed to effective implementation that was a result of joint effort. Although the CB was not as involved, it appears that it did not significantly affect the effectiveness of the Strategy’s implementation. Finally, all interviewees expressed that the success of the Strategy’s implementation is to be credited to the LA and its key personnel.

Based on the above, the effectiveness of the Strategy is assessed as **Satisfactory.**

### Efficiency

Regardless of the several obstacles that occurred during the implementation, it did not experience any major delays, or changes. On the contrary, the analysis of the collected data implies that the implementation was conducted efficiently and in a timely manner.

While the risk management plan was not involved in the Strategy document, nor in the Action Plans, the LA managed to mitigate all the challenges that arose during the implementation, according to the interviewees. This included emergence of COVID pandemic, and the changes in the Government following the 2020 parliamentary elections. The first affected postponements of events due to movement restrictions, while the latter caused stuff turnover, changes in the Negotiating Structure (NS), and overall a slight shift from the priorities of the previous Government in relation to the EU.[[16]](#footnote-16)

However, the data collected from the documents and interviews imply that the LA demonstrated a high capacity for adapting and successfully handling the challenges, while also managing to keep all relevant stakeholders onboard during the entire implementation period.

The Strategy was also efficient in using up nearly all the forecasted resources by the end of the implementation. The processed data at the end of the four-year implementation of the Strategy show that out of the 3,000,000.00 EUR planned in the Strategy a total of 2,992,001.3 EUR was spent for the implementation of the planned activities[[17]](#footnote-17), which confirms appropriate budget planning and efficient utilization of the financial resources during the implementation of the Strategy.

Based on the above, the efficiency of the Strategy is assessed as **Highly Satisfactory.**

### Overall Outcome

Table 8 below gives an overview the ratings in reference to the evaluation criteria concerning performance, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Strategy. Considering these, **the overall outcome of the Strategy is assessed as Satisfactory.**

Table 8. Overview of outcome related ratings

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aspect | | Rating | Comments |
| **Progress towards goals of the Strategy** | Strategic Goal 1 | S | The effective operation of the OB was fully achieved, while the CB was operational but not as efficient. Education and training of PR officers was fully achieved. |
| Strategic Goal 2 | MS | The achievements within the SG 2 demonstrated the most prominent success of the Strategy in relation to the public information and support to the EU accession. However, information on the EU support programs, especially among youth, was slightly below the expected targets. Also public perception of the European Union as a key global player is below the set target. |
| Strategic Goal 3 | HS | The progress within the SG3 was highly satisfactory, with overachieved targets at the level of both OGs. |
| Strategic Goal 4 | HS | The progress within the SG4 was highly satisfactory, with over 40 joint actions and events with multipliers. |
| **Relevance** | | HS | The planning process was inclusive, transparent, and relied on evidence-based policy making. |
| **Effectiveness** | | S | The implementation of the Strategy was effective in terms of achieving majority of targets and exceeding several of them. Out of 22, only 3 targets were unachieved, or slightly underachieved. |
| **Efficiency** | | HS | The LA managed to keep all relevant stakeholders onboard during the entire implementation period. The Strategy used up nearly all the forecasted resources by the end of the implementation. |
| **Overall outcome** | | S | The overall outcome of the Strategy is Satisfactory. |

### Sustainability: financial, institutional, SOCIO-POLITICAL and overall likelihood

**Financial**

The Strategy was funded from several financing sources - the Government, the EU projects, NGOs, the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro, the Parliament, and the Association of municipalities of Montenegro. The final cost estimates provided in the Section 3.2.2 of this Report have shown that less than 1/3 of the total expenses at the end of the implementation was covered from the state budget, while the rest was funded from the external partners.

Furthermore, the Strategy does not have its own budget, but rather depends on the involved stakeholders and their activities. Recognizing the risk related to the interest and will of both the Government and the external partners for funding the communication activities on Montenegro’s EU accession in the future, which was also confirmed by the interviewed stakeholders, the financial sustainability is assessed as **Moderately Likely.**

**Insitutional**

Although EU accession is officially among the priorities of Montenegrin Government, where the public communication of this process is fully aligned with this priority, data analysis indicates that there are certain risks that could jeopardize the institutional sustainability of the Strategy. This was tackled in the section 3.1.2 and will be the subject of conclusions and recommendations of this Report. Namely, staff turnover and loss of institutional memory is observed as a persistent problem of Montenegrin institutions, which in the case of the 2019-2022 Strategy reflected in the slight delays in communication related to the Action Plans formulation and reporting[[18]](#footnote-18). The changes in the Negotiation Structure following the 2020 parliamentary elections, insufficient staff in positions relevant to the Strategy, as well as lack of involvement of institution leaders to ensure Strategy’s larger impact, seem to have imposed additional workload and responsibilities on the LA. Although the LA showed the capacity to successfully mitigate these obstacles, as one of the interviewees noted *‘’if the key staff from the LA leave their positions, the future public information strategies will be most certainly doomed to failure’’.*

For these reasons, the institutional sustainability is assessed as **Moderately Likely.**

**Socio-political**

The success of the future strategies’ implementation will largely depend on the socio-political situation, and the general attitude of the main political actors regarding the EU integration. The data collected from majority of interviewees outlined a slight shift in political priorities following the 2020 parliamentary elections, encompassing the EU accession and overall communication with the public on these processes. Nearly all interviewees agree with the statement that in the last two years, the public was receiving mixed messages related to these processes from the politicians, which ‘’produced confusion among citizens’’ as one of the interviewees stated.

The interviewees also noted that the negotiation process hasn’t made any progress in the last two years, that key staff is missing from the Negotiating structure, and that the current Government does not demonstrate a strong commitment to the EU accession as before, *‘’which could make the implementation of the future public information strategies on this process futile’’.*

According to the latest public perception surveys, however, the EU accession process has the highest public support ever recorded[[19]](#footnote-19). The reasons for this, as one of the interviewees noted *‘’could be deriving from an effective public communication on the EU accession on one hand and a public response to the current Government’s idle attitude towards the EU agenda on the other’’.*

Nevertheless, it is yet to be determined if the socio-political situation in Montenegro will negatively reflect on the public support to the EU in the future.

Recognizing these risks, the socio-political sustainability is assessed as **Moderately Likely**.

**Overall sustainability**

Based on the above, the **overall sustainability** **of the Strategy is rated as Moderately** **Likely**.

# Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons LEARNED

## Main Findings

**Relevance**

The 2019-2022 Public Information Strategy on Montenegro’s Accession to the EU was **relevant and remained relevant** during the implementation phase. Its adoption was envisaged as one of the priorities by Government’sMedium-term Work Programme 2018-2020 and it also reflects the priorities set in the Communication Strategy of the Government of Montenegro 2018.

The Strategy also relied on the priorities set in the EU accession process and key EU polices, both at the national and the EU levels, and was based on the experience in implementing the previousthree communication strategies for the accession process, involving a wide range of stakeholders.

**Design**

The planning process relied on national strategic priorities and evidence-based policy making, while the Strategy was designed in line with the Government’s methodology for strategic documents preparation.

Overall, the 2019-2022 Public Information Strategy was **well-designed**, and characterized by a high level of stakeholder involvement in this process. The Objectives Framework was well integrated and contributed to the overall objective of the Strategy. Although some of them were not SMART, the performance indicators provided at the Strategy were overall relevant. Providing a risk management plan in the next Strategy will facilitate the monitoring and implementation process.

**Stakeholder engagement**

The Strategy was **inclusive in terms of identifying and involving key stakeholders**, encompassing institutional stakeholders on both central and local level, civil society, business and academic sector, as well as domestic and international audiences as target groups. It provided opportunities for the stakeholders to be actively involved in the planning phase through participation in the Working Group for drafting the strategy document, as well as in implementation through participation in the Operational Body, and in supervision/monitoring through participation in the Consultative Body.

Though the CB was not as committed pertinent to its supervisory role during the implementation as the OB, overall the Strategy succeeded in keeping the majority of stakeholders onboard throughout the implementation. The exception is the academic community, whose lack of involvement during the implementation possibly reflected in Strategy’s outreach of younger population and unfulfilled targets related to their familiarization with the EU support programmes.

**Management**

The management of the Strategy was initially **well conceived** and divided between the LA, CB and OB. The role of the LA was to coordinate the overall planning and implementation process, the OB was responsible for implementing activities pertinent to their respective institutions and organizations, while the CB was composed of the WG members in charge of drafting the Strategy and had a supervisory role during the implementation.

The actual management of the Strategy relied mostly on the efforts of the LA, who demonstrated **high management capacities** for coordinating implementation and reporting, as well as successfully mitigating any risks that arose during the implementation. While the OB was proactive in communication and implementation, the analysis show that the CB was not as committed during the implementation phase. In the future public information strategies, this can be avoided though clarification of the CB’s mandate in the strategy document, as well as members selection proccess and obligations deriving form their appointments within this Body.

**Effectiveness**

The Strategy was **effective** and managed to achieve majority of its targets and exceeding several of them. Out of 22, 7 targets were overachieved, and only 3 targets were unachieved, or slightly underachieved. The most prominent success of the Strategy reflects in the record public support to the EU accession amounting to up to 75%, followed by capacity building activities, general outreach activities and joint activities with partners and multipliers. Targets that were unachieved, or slightly underachieved, relate to information on the EU support programs, especially among youth, and public perception of the European Union as a key global player.

The effectiveness of the Strategy also appears to be the result of the joint effort between the LA and OB, characterized by quality and timely communication in exchanging the data for both the APs and the AP Reports, followed by comments and feedback. Although the CB was not as involved, it appears that it did not significantly affect the effectiveness of the Strategy.

**Efficiency**

The analysis of the collected data implies that the implementation was conducted **efficiently** and in a timely manner. The LA managed to mitigate all the challenges that arose during the implementation, including emergence of COVID pandemic, and the changes in the Government following the 2020 parliamentary elections, which affected delays and staff turnover respectively.

The LA demonstrated a high capacity for adapting and successfully handling the challenges, while also managing to keep all relevant stakeholders onboard during the entire implementation period. The Strategy was also efficient in using up nearly all the forecasted resources by the end of the implementation.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Strategy envisaged monitoring and evaluation arrangements, in line with the *Methodology for Developing Policies, Drafting and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategy Papers.* Supervision and **monitoring** of the Strategy implementation was entrusted to the Consultative Body (CB), however during the implementation the monitoring activities were mainly conducted by the LA and OB.

M&E was based on annual Action Plans and reporting, and complemented by annual public perception surveys that supported the data. In this sense, the AP Reports were a crucial tool for monitoring, containing comprehensive and elaborated progress-related data per each year, which made the monitoring process **suitable and efficient.**

The final evaluation was also envisaged, taking place at the end of the implementation period, with the purpose of assessing the effects and performance in reference to the set goals and objectives of the Strategy. The Operational Body and the Consultative Body are responsible for examining the process and the final evaluation and providing opinions that will feed into the final report to be endorsed by the Government of Montenegro.

**Impact and Sustainability**

The 2019-2022 Strategy was successful in terms of achieved results and targets. However, analysis of the collected data suggest **sustainability of the Strategy is moderately likely.** In terms of the financial sustainability, so far the Public Information Strategies on Montenegro’s Accession to the EU did not have own budget, but rather depended on the involved stakeholders and their activities. Applying the same model in the future carries many risks, including sufficient interest of the stakeholders to continue with funding the EU accession communication activities.

Staff turnover and loss of institutional memory is observed as a persistent problem of Montenegrin institutions, which may impact the institutional sustainability of the Strategy. This also involves the changes in the Negotiation Structure following the 2020 parliamentary elections, insufficient staff in positions relevant to the Strategy, as well as lack of involvement of institution leaders to ensure Strategy’s larger impact.

The success of the future strategies’ implementation will also largely depend on the socio-political situation, and the general attitude of the main political actors regarding the EU integration.

## Conclusions

**Good practices**

The planning process of the Public Information Strategy 2019-2022 was inclusive, transparent, and efficient. It relied on evidence-based policy making and was designed in line with the Methodology for Policy Development, Drafting and Monitoring Implementation of Strategic Documents of the Government of Montenegro. Overall, the implementation of the Strategy was very successful, which was demonstrated by the latest public perception surveys related to the record public support to the EU integration, as well as the wide public consensus regarding EU integration, which is the basis for building a future consensus.

Communication and cooperation among the stakeholders on both central and local level during planning and implementation is very highly assessed, mainly as a result of efficient coordination by the LA. The LA also demonstrated high-level management capacity in the times of crisis (coronavirus pandemic, staff turnover due to changes in the Government, cyberattack, etc.), so the implementation did not face significant delays. Good coordination and management also produced positive side-effect that projected on strengthened horizontal cooperation between the institutions, as well as with the civil society.

The 2019-2022 Strategy implementation was also characterized by a strong engagement of the local level authorities that improved their technical capacities for public information on Montenegro’s EU accession and generated results that contributed to the overall objective of the Strategy. On the local level, the staff was trained, the responsible persons for communicating on the EU integration appointed, and the local action plans were created and adopted.

**Challenges and risks**

One of the key challenges in the implementation of this, but also future public information strategies is the lack of interest of decision makers/ leaders to take a more proactive role in contributing to the Strategy’s objectives. Also, mixed messages from the politicians, especially following the 2020 elections contribute to public confusion related to the EU integrations, which in the future period may negatively reflect on the general public’s perception of the EU. In addition, the negotiations process have lasted for over a decade and the decline of public support to the EU membership is expected. This scenario is assessed as very likely, especially due to inefficiency and the lack of key staff in the Negotiation structure and the working groups, and the general impression that this demonstrates that the political priorities regarding the EU integration changed in the last two years, and that the current Government’s pro-EU narrative appears to be only declarative.

Younger population is not sufficiently informed on the EU accession process, nor the EU support programmes. Although the situation is slightly better than in the period before 2019, the 2019-2022 Strategy had the potential and resources to achieve much better results in this regard. The reasons for this are two-fold: on one hand, the youth lost confidence and trust in institutions and thus the interest in the opportunities of the institution-led processes. On the other hand, the academic community is not sufficiently involved in informing the youth on the EU integrations and opportunities deriving from this process, while the Erasmus office appears to be insufficiently active in the promotion and assistance related to the support programmes for youth.

Although disinformation has not harmed the public perception of the EU so far, it is highlighted as an increasing trend that could be one of the main challenges in the future in this regard. The social media are seen as the main tool for spreading disinformation and fake news, where the traditional media may have to play a crucial role in limiting the so-called ‘’information manipulation’’. Fighting this issue successfully largely depends on the current political actors and the policies against disinformation on which the succeeding Public Information Strategy on Montenegro's Accession to the EU should rely on.

## Lessons learned

Several lessons can be learned from the Public Information Strategy for 2019-2022. In terms of design and management, the experiences point towards the importance of elaborating and clarifying the role of all involved stakeholders during the implementation. This primarily refers to the Consultative Body, its composition, members selection process, as well as their responsibilities and obligations. Also, defining SMART indicators in the Strategy as well as the Action Plans, and creating a comprehensive risk management plan, will facilitate monitoring and implementation process.

In the implementation phase, it is crucial to engage and maintain all the stakeholders identified in the Strategy document. For instance, the academic community was recognized in the 2019-2022 Strategy as an important channel for increasing the awareness and familiarization of students related to the EU support programmes for youth (Erasmus +), though the actual results in this regard were below expectations. Also, the collected data imply that the Erasmus office in Montenegro has sufficient capacities in conducting the promotional and informative activities, hence it’s important to examine how engagement of these actors can be improved in the future public information strategies’ implementation.

In terms of the information sources on Montenegro’s EU accession process, according to the latest public perception survey, television appears to be the number one source, followed by online portals, ‘’word of mouth’’, social media, and finally the press. While considering these data for planning the future communication efforts, the issue of the increasing trend of disinformation and ‘’information manipulation’’ must also be taken into account.

In addition, a better involvement of decision makers/leaders of institutions and organizations that participate in the Strategy would prioritize implementation, monitoring and communication activities, and ultimately increase the likelihood of institutional sustainability. Good practices also show that involving high officials/public figures that enjoy credibility among citizens would create a much higher impact in communicating key messages with the public.

Finally, so far the public information strategies, including the 2019-2022 Strategy, did not have their own planned budget, but rather relied on activities implemented by individual institutions and organizations. This was also one of the lessons from the previous Strategy and remains to be addressed in the future.

## Recommendations

Based overall evaluation process, the following recommendations can be issued:

1. Stronger promotional activities aimed at youth, as well as outreach of vulnerable groups and social categories, should be encompassed in the next Public Information Strategy. Good practices in this regard can be used from Croatia, where the EU values are promoted in preschools, elementary schools and high schools. The promotion of EU support programmes for youth should imply stronger engagement of the academic community and the Erasmus office, for which a successful model can be borrowed from Serbia. In addition, innovative interventions and the use of contemporary communication channels are key in the successful outreach of these target groups.

2. Additional communication efforts are necessary in order to improve public perception of the EU as the key global player. Innovative communication campaigns and cooperation with the EU representatives in Montenegro and abroad with a potential to positively affect the public perception in this regard is something to be considered.

3. In order to facilitate the coordination and management, the next Strategy should foresee a unique database on the relevant activities and projects that each stakeholder should update once a month. In this way, monitoring and reporting will be more efficient, it will ease a workload carried mainly by the LA and make the coordination process more sustainable, while also enabling potential for synergetic activities. The existence of this database will also prevent the institutional memory loss caused by staff turnover. In addition, for the purpose of stronger stakeholder engagement, one of the recommendations is also to plan joint activities of the stakeholders that will be funded from the Strategy's own budget.

4. The role of the Consultative Body should be more elaborated and strengthened during the implementation. The CB had a supervisory and advisory role in the 2019-2022 Strategy, but its contribution to the Strategy (except for the planning and design conducted by the working group whose members joined the CB by default) appeared to be slightly limited as assessed by some of its members during the interviews. In the future, this can be prevented by clarifying the mandate of this Body in the strategy document, the selection process of its members, and by including the civil society to a larger extent, as well as the representatives of institutional stakeholders with power in decision making.

5. The monitoring model of the implementation may also include annual coordination meetings, where the Action plan reports will be presented to the local stakeholders, representatives of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro, embassies, and the general public. This will also contribute to a better promotion of the Strategy itself.

6. The links with the academic and the business sector should also be strengthened in the implementation phase, by establishing cooperation with universities, as well as high schools and elementary schools, and the business support organizations.

7. In addition, all promotional activities and general communication with the public should use a more simple and clear language of communication that the public understands and can relate to. The key is to adapt the communication as well as the communication channels to different target groups. For this, a more focused and innovative promotional campaigns should be used, that promote not only opportunities, but also EU values. Also, the challenge in the future period will be to maintain the level of support to EU integration by the general public and to increase the support by youth, for which the next Strategy may envisage a spokesperson recognized as trustworthy and who will regularly inform the public on the milestones and benefits deriving from the accession to the EU.

8. Finally, in regard to combating disinformation, the Government of Montenegro is addressing this issue through the Media Strategy 2022-2026. The Public information Strategy on Montenegro's EU accession should align with the Media Strategy in this regard, and define short-term measures to identify risks for the perception of the EU in Montenegro and long-term measures to increase media literacy and quality information. It is necessary to insist on simple language so that citizens are not misled, and to use the eu4me website for this purpose by making it more user-friendly for all social categories. Having a spokesperson that enjoys public trust, and using innovation to appeal to younger demographics is key.

# Annexes

* **Annex 1** List of reviewed documents
* **Annex 2** List of interviewed stakeholders with timetable
* **Annex 3** Evaluation Question Matrix
* **Annex 4** ToR of the Evaluation expert
* **Annex 5** Updated Work Plan

**ANNEX 1** – List of reviewed documents

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Document name |
| 1. | Public Information Strategy on Montenegro’s Accession to the European Union 2019-2022 |
| 2. | Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for 2019 |
| 3. | Action Plan for 2020 |
| 4. | Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for 2020 |
| 5. | Action Plan for 2021 |
| 6. | Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for 2021 |
| 7. | Action Plan for 2022 |
| 8. | Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for 2022 |
| 9. | 2020 Public perception survey on the process of accession of Montenegro to the EU |
| 10. | 2021 Public perception survey on the process of accession of Montenegro to the EU |
| 11. | 2022 Public perception survey on the process of accession of Montenegro to the EU |
| 12. | List and contacts of members of the Operational and the Consultative body |
| 13. | Draft Public Information Strategy on Montenegro’s Accession to the European Union 2023-2026 |
| 14. | Samples of Minutes from the Consultative Body meetings |
| 15. | Samples of Minutes from the Operational Body meetings |
| 16. | Structured questionnaire for the CB and OB members, with responses samples |
| 17. | Participants’ lists of the round tables for the local self-governments’ representatives |
| 18. | Participants’ lists of the training workshops for the Operational Body members |
| 19. | Participants’ lists of the trainings for Public Relation Officers on communicating the EU accession process |
| 20. | Participants’ lists of the trainings for the members of the EU Negotiating structure |

**ANNEX 2 -** List of interviewed stakeholders

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | NAME | INSTITUTION | ROLE | DATE /TIME |
| **1** | * **Nada Vojvodić** | General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro | * LA, Member of the Consultative and Operational Body | **Mon 6 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |
| * **2** | * **Vanja Starovlah** | * Association of municipalities of Montenegro | * Member of the Consultative and Operational Body | **Tue 7 Feb,**  **10 a.m.** |
| **3** | **Milena Ražnatović** | * Ministry of Culture and Media | * Member of the Operational Body | **Tue 7 Feb,**  **2 p.m.** |
| **4** | **Sanja Žugić** | * Ministry of Human and Minority Rights | * Member of the Operational Body | **Wed 8 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |
| **5** | **Zorica Minevski** | * Ministry of Defence | * Member of the Operational Body | **Thu 9 Feb,**  **10 a.m.** |
| **6** | **Marija Šoć** | * Ministry of Interior | * Member of the Operational Body | **Thu 9 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |
| **7** | **Luka Pejović** | * Committee for European Integration of the Parliament of Montenegro | * Member of the Operational Body | **Thu 9 Feb,**  **2 p.m.** |
| **8** | **Emina Kalač** | * Ministry of Public Administration | * Member of the Operational Body | **Fri 10 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |
| **9** | **Marija Maraš** | * Parliament of Montenegro | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Tue 14 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |
| **10** | **Marko Pejović** | * Centre for Democracy and Human Rights | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Fri 17 Feb,**  **2 p.m.** |
| **11** | **Damir Nikočević** | * Centre for civic education | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Wed 15 Feb,**  **1 p.m.** |
| **12** | **Nina Šćepanović** | * NGO Juventas | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Thu 16 Feb,**  **10 a.m.** |
| **13** | **Prof dr Olivera Komar** | * DeFacto Agency | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Thu 16 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |
| **14** | **Radovan Bogojević** | * Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Thu 16 Feb,**  **2:30 p.m.** |
| **15** | **Jelena Mrdak** | * UNDP Office in Montenegro | * Member of the Consultative Body | **Fri 17 Feb,**  **12 p.m.** |

**ANNEX 3** - Evaluation Questions Matrix

| **Evaluative criteria** | **Evaluation questions** | **Indicators** | **Information Source** | **Data Collection Method** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Strategy Design / Formulation** | | | | |
| Analysis of Strategic and Operational goals; and Performance indicators table | * Were the Strategy’s goals and components clear, practicable and feasible within its time frame? * Were the performance indicators from the Strategy document effective for measuring progress and performance? Were they SMART? | * Coherence/difference between stated goals and progress to date * Quality of performance indicators in the Strategy document * Both Consultative and Operational Team members understanding of objectives and timeframe? | * Strategy document and Action Plans * Members of the Consultative and Operational Body | * Documentation Review; * Interviews with the Beneficiary and stakeholders’ representatives |
| * Was the M&E plan well-conceived and sufficient to monitor results and track progress toward achieving objectives? | * Existence and quality of baseline assessment, performance measurement methodology, roles and responsibilities, budget and timeframe | * Strategy document and Action Plans * Annual AP Reports * Consultative and Operational Body | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the Beneficiary and stakeholders’ representatives |
| Assumptions and Risks | * Were the Strategy’s assumptions and risks well-articulated? | * Assumptions and risks stated in the Strategy, with corresponding response methods/measures | * Strategy document * Action Plans and Reports * Review procedures/planning meeting minutes | * Documentation Review |
| * Did stated assumptions and risks help to determine activities and planned results? | * Quality of risk management system(s) in place at appropriate levels of reporting, accountability * Use of assumptions or noted risks to tailor or adjust planned activities and results | * Strategy document and Action Plans * Annual AP Reports * Members of the Consultative and Operational Body | * Documentation Review: planning and monitoring documents * Interviews with the Consultative Body members |
| * Have externalities that are relevant to the findings been duly considered? | * Degree and nature of influence of external factors on planned activities * Extent to which planning documents anticipated or reflected risks/externalities already faced during implementation to date | * Strategy and APs * AP reports * Members of the Consultative and Operational Body | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the Consultative Body members |
| Lessons from previous Public Information Strategies | * Were lessons from previous Strategies properly incorporated in the Strategy design? | * Evidence of planning documents utilizing lessons learned/ recommendations from previous strategies as input to the planning process | * Planning documents: the Strategy and the APs | * Documentation review |
| Planned stakeholders’ participation | * Were the stakeholders properly identified and roles and responsibilities elaborated prior to implementation of the Strategy? | * Evidence of stakeholders’ participation and understanding of roles and responsibilities * Coherence between nature and extent of Consultative and Operational Body’s responsibilities and roles | * Consultative and Operational Body members * stakeholders) * Planning documents: the Strategy and APs * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation review * Interviews with the stakeholders’ representatives |
| Linkages between the Strategy and other strategic documents and programmes | * Were other relevant strategic documents and programmes clearly identified? | * Other relevant strategic documents and programmes described and their possible linkages with the Strategy analysed | * Planning documents: the Strategy and the APs | * Documentation review |
| Management arrangements | * Were the capacities of the Operational Body members properly considered when the Strategy was designed? | * Evidence of scoping activity or assessment of Operational Body members capabilities with respect to implementation of the Strategy * Number, extent and types of gaps between planned and available capacities | * Planning documents: the Strategy and APs * CB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the Consultative Body members |
| * Did the available resources enable adequate management arrangements in place at beginning of the Strategy implementation? | * Coherence/extent of gap in timing between available resources and institutional readiness for the implementation commencement | * APs Reports * Members of the Consultative and Operational Body | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the Consultative Body members |
| 1. **Strategy Implementation** | | | | |
| Changes to the Strategy design and goals during implementation | * Did the Strategy undergo significant changes as a result of recommendations from meetings, or other review procedures? | * Number and quality of mechanisms for re-adjustment of strategy or approach * Responsiveness of OB to recommendations made through review processes * Origins of suggestions for significant changes (e.g., sources of recommendations) | * CB and OB members * APs and APs Reports   CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB and OB members |
| * If the changes were extensive, did they materially change the expected results of the Strategy? | * Nature and degree of change in activities and results based on recommendations from review procedures | * CB and OB members * APs and APs Reports * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB and OB members |
| * Were the changes articulated in writing and then considered and approved by the Consultative Body? | * Number and type of approved changes that were put in writing for the Consultative Body | * APs and APs Reports * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review |
| Stakeholders’ engagement | * To what extent were effective partnership arrangements established for implementation of the Strategy with relevant stakeholders involved? | * Number and types of partnerships developed for the Strategy implementation * Extent and quality of interaction/exchange between the Beneficiary and other stakeholders/partners/multipliers | * CB and OB members * APs and APs Reports * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB and OB members |
| * Did the Strategy involve the relevant stakeholders through information sharing and consultation and by seeking their participation in the design, implementation, and M&E? For example, did the Strategy implementation include appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns? | * Number, type, and quality of stakeholder engagement at each stage of the Strategy design, implementation and M&E * Changes in public awareness/opinion as a result of outreach/ communication of the Strategy | * CB and OB members * APs and APs Reports * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB and OB members |
| * Did the Strategy make use of the skills, experience, and knowledge of the appropriate government entities, nongovernmental organizations, community groups, private sector entities, local governments, and academic institutions in the design and implementation of the Strategy? | * Number and frequency of engagement with stakeholders for consultation and review | * CB and OB members * Planning documents- the Strategy and APs * APs Reports * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB and OB members |
| Financing resources | * What were the overall and annual costs for implementation? | * APs financial execution per year * Amount of resources leveraged since inception (and source(s)) | * APs reports * CB members | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB members |
| * Was there any variance between planned and actual expenditures and why? | * Planned budget per year as per APs * Actual budget execution per year as per APs reports | * APs and APs reports * CB members | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB members |
| * What resources were leveraged for Strategy’s implementation since inception? (Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGOs, associations, or local self-governments) | * Amount of resources leveraged since inception (and source(s)) | * APs and APs reports * CB members | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB members |
| Monitoring and evaluation: design at entry and implementation | * What tool was used during implementation for management and M&E? | * Extent of management use of the implementation and M&E tool (number and type) | * Beneficiary and CB members * APs and APs reports | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB members |
| * Was the M&E plan sufficiently budgeted and funded during preparation and implementation of the Strategy? | * Proportion of executed M&E budget against planned amount * Degree of adherence of the implementation of the M&E plan to intended timeline * Evidence of external factors that have affected M&E budget or timeline (and extent to which they were addressed in risk management plan) | * Planning documents * Planning meeting minutes of the Working group/CB * Monitoring and reporting documents (APs reports) | * Documentation Review * Interviews with the CB members/WG |
| * Was the Strategy’s objectives framework revised during the implementation period? Were the performance indicators revised, and if yes were they effective for measuring progress and performance? | * Coherence between planned and actual results and activities on the ground | * CB members * Monitoring and reporting documents (APs reports) * Direct observation | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB members |
| * Do the Strategy’s Action Plans reports comply with the progress reporting requirements/ schedule, including quality and timeliness of reports? | * Proportion and types of reporting materials submitted a) correctly and b) on time * Quality of M&E/reporting materials | * Monitoring and reporting documents (APs reports) * CB members | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB members |
| * Were monitoring and evaluation reports discussed with stakeholders? | * Number and quality of meetings, workshops or other mechanisms used to share M&E materials with stakeholders * Number of stakeholders aware of M&E materials generated and/or lessons/findings they contain | * CB and OB * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB members |
| * Was feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management? | * Uptake of M&E/reporting information into management decision-making * Example of discrepancies identified by the CB and addressed * Examples of changes made during the Strategy implementation as a result of the CB recommendations | * Monitoring and reporting documents (APs reports) * CB and OB * CB and OB Meeting minutes | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB members |
| CB and OB coordination and operational issues | * Have CB and OB teams provided quality and timely inputs/responses to the LA (leading actor, i.e., GenSec)? | * Perceived timeliness of management response to LA’s inquiries, needs * Perceived quality of management response to LA’s inquiries, needs * Perceived quality of risk management by LA * Evidence of timeliness and quality in annual reporting | * LA- GenSec * CB and OB team members * APs Reports | * Documentation Review * Interviews with LA, CB and OB |
| 1. **Results and Achievements** | | | | |
| **C1. Relevance: How does the Public Information Strategy for 2019-2022 relate to the main objectives and priorities at the national level?** | | | | |
| Is the Strategy relevant to Montenegro’s priorities and objectives? | * How does the Strategy reflect the priorities and objectives of Montenegro?? * What was the level of stakeholder participation in the Strategy design? * What is the level of stakeholder ownership in implementation? * Does the Strategy adequately take into account the national realities, both in terms of institutional and policy framework in its design and its implementation? | * Degree to which the Strategy reflects national priorities and objectives * Degree of coherence between the Strategy and national policies and strategies * Degree of involvement of stakeholders with respect to Strategy design and implementation, reflective of national realities and existing capacities * Degree of stakeholders needs expressed in the Strategy | * Strategy, APs and reports * National policies and strategies * Key stakeholders | * Documentation Review * Interviews with LA, CB and OB |
| Does the Strategy address the identified challenges regarding identified target audiences? | * Were the challenges regarding key target audiences properly identified during the situation analysis and addressed in the Strategy? * Has the implementation of the Strategy been inclusive of all relevant target audiences? * To what extent were the identified key target audiences involved in the Strategy design and implementation? | * Degree of the challenges regarding target groups addressed through the objectives/goals of the Strategy * Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of key target audience in the Strategy design and implementation | * Strategy, APs and reports * Key target audience | * Documentation Review * Interviews with LA, CB and OB |
| Is the Strategy internally coherent in its design? | * Are there logical linkages between the objectives/goals of the Strategy and the planned stakeholders, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc)? * Was the set timeframe of the Strategy sufficient to achieve its objectives? | * Level of coherence between objectives/goals of the Strategy * Level of coherence between the design and the implementation approach of the Strategy | * Strategy, APs and reports * Key stakeholders | * Documentation Review * Interviews with LA, CB and OB |
| Does the Strategy provide relevant lessons and experiences for the succeeding public information strategy on Montenegro’s EU accession? | * Has the experience of the Strategy implementation provided relevant lessons for the succeeding public information strategy on Montenegro’s EU accession? |  | * Data collected throughout evaluation | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| **C2. Effectiveness: To what extent have the Strategy’s objectives/ goals been achieved?** | | | | |
| Has the Strategy been effective in achieving its objectives/goals ? | * Has the Strategy been effective in achieving its strategic and operational goals? | * Performance indicators on the level of both strategic and operational goals as set in the Strategy * Performance indicators on the level of both strategic and operational goals as suggested by the evaluator | * Data collected throughout evaluation | * Documents review with the supporting evidence of achieved indicators * Interviews with the relevant stakeholders |
| How were the risks and risk mitigation managed? | * How well were risks, assumptions and impact drivers being managed? * What is the number and quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Were these sufficient? | * Number and quality of risk identification and assumptions during the Strategy planning and design * Quality of management systems in place to identify and address emerging risks and other issues during implementation | * Strategy, APs and reports * CB and OB members * Meeting minutes of OB and CB | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| What lessons can be drawn regarding effectiveness for the succeeding strategies? | * What lessons have been learned from the implementation phase of the Strategy regarding achievement of objectives/goals? * What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the Strategy in order to improve the achievement of its objectives/goals? |  | * Data collected throughout evaluation | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| **C3. Efficiency: Was the Strategy implemented efficiently, in-line with the set norms and standards?** | | | | |
| Did the CB and OB operate in an efficient manner? | * Was adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? * Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for management and producing accurate and timely financial information? * Were APs reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? * Was the Strategy implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) * Did the leveraging of funds happen as planned? * Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? * Did the Strategy implementation experience any delays? If so, has that affected cost-effectiveness? | * Availability and quality of AP reports, timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided * Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures * Planned vs. actual funds leveraged * Occurrence of change in Strategy design/ implementation approach (i.e. restructuring) when needed to improve efficiency * APs milestones in time * Planned results affected by delays * Required adaptive management measures related to delays | * Data collected throughout evaluation | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| How efficient were arrangements with the stakeholders for the Strategy? | * To what extent were partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported? * Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which ones can be considered sustainable? * What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? * Which methods were successful or not and why? * Was there an effective collaboration between institutions/organizations responsible for implementation? * Were the relevant country representatives from government and civil society involved in Strategy implementation? | * Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners * Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained * Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized * Number and titles of representatives from a) government, b) civil society, present at workshops and meetings * Proportion of OB and CB members who represent a) government, b) civil society, etc. | * Data collected throughout evaluation * Relevant stakeholders | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| What lessons can be drawn regarding efficiency for succeeding Strategies? | * What lessons can be learnt regarding efficiency? * How could have the implementation been carried out more efficiently (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc…)? * What changes could have been made (if any) to the Strategy in order to improve its efficiency? |  | * Data collected throughout evaluation | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| **C4. Sustainability** | | | | |
| What is the likelihood of financial sustainability | * Is the succeeding strategy likely to leverage sufficient additional (external) financing sources | * Evidence of the Strategy funding and/ or other possible external financial sources of continuation | * Strategy, APs and AP reports * CB and OB members, other stakeholders | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| What is the likelihood of socio-economic sustainability? | * What are the socio-economic implications of the Strategy and what are the means of sustaining them? | * Level of improvement of the socio-economic indicators based on the public opinion polls and reports * Evidence of adequate mechanisms for socio-economic sustainability incorporated in the succeeding strategy planning/design phase | * Strategy, APs and AP reports * CB and OB members, other stakeholders * Public opinion polls | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| What is the likelihood of institutional sustainability? | * Were the adequate institutional stakeholders engaged in the Strategy, and are they likely to be involved in the succeeding strategy(ies)? * Were the institutional stakeholders involved in the capacity building activities and are they likely to preserve the institutional memory for the succeeding strategy(ies)? | * Number and type of institutional stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of the Strategy * Number of capacity building training workshop of institutional stakeholders’ representatives (on the local and central level) * Number of meetings and / or correspondence with the institutional stakeholders’ representatives (on the local and central level) in the planning and implementation phase | * Strategy, APs and AP reports * Evidence of workshops and meetings * CB and OB members, other stakeholders | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| **C5. Impact** | | | | |
| What is the overall impact of the Strategy in regard to beneficiaries and target audiences? | * Was the Strategy successful in achieving the overall objective and impact in both- informing the target audiences on Montenegro’s EU accession process, and building the capacities of the beneficiaries to adequately continue this process? | * Increased percentage of informed target audiences drawn from the latest public opinion polls * Increased percentage of media articles and reports on the EU accession process * Increased capacities of the beneficiaries to adequately convey the key messages | * CB and OB members, other stakeholders * Public opinion polls * AP and AP reports | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |
| Replication | * Are any activities, and/or techniques likely to be repeated in the succeeding strategies, or other similar interventions nationally, regionally or internationally? | * Examples of activities/techniques used in the Strategy implementation with a likelihood of being replicated in the succeeding strategies, and/or in other geographical areas | * CB, OB and other relevant stakeholders | * Interviews |
| Added value | * Have there been any unintended results of the Strategy and what were they? | * Number and type of unplanned positive consequences from activities or results to date * Extent and nature of unplanned external factors’ influence on progression toward intended results of the Strategy | * Action Plans reports * CB and OB members, and other relevant stakeholders | * Documentation Review * Interviews with CB and OB |

**ANNEX 4** - ToR of the Evaluation expert

**Title:** One Senior Advisor on evaluation of the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 – 45 days (subject to change)

**Project:** Knowledge for Reform Action in the Western Balkans

**Duty station:** Podgorica, Montenegro

**Section/Unit:** ECR, AUMCO

**Contract/Level: ICS-11**

**Supervisor:** Chief Technical Advisor

**1. Background Information**

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is an operational arm of the United Nations, supporting the successful implementation of its partners' peacebuilding, humanitarian and development projects around the world. UNOPS supports partners to build a better future by providing services that increase the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of peace building, humanitarian and development projects. Mandated as a central resource of the United Nations, UNOPS provides sustainable project management, procurement and infrastructure services to a wide range of governments, donors and United Nations organizations.

**Austria Multi-Country Office (AUMCO)**

The Austria Multi-Country Office (AUMCO) is part of the UNOPS Europe and Central Asia Region (ECR). Specifically, AUMCO aims to enable achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement through global programmes and tailored interventions in the Balkans, South Caucasus, and Central Asia, focused on:

- Infrastructure

- Procurement

- Project Management (full service, back on track)

- HR and Transactional Services

- Grants Management

- Technical and Advisory Services

- Project Information

**Project Information**

Under the framework of the multi-year project titled “Knowledge for Reform Action in the Western Balkans,” UNOPS is providing support in the six countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) with access to tailored expertise, knowledge and best practice to assist them with advancing their respective reform agenda. Learning and exchanges will be promoted across the Region, as well as from neighbouring countries which have joined the European Union (EU). The aim of the project is to strengthen institutional, administrative and legislative frameworks and practices.

This Terms of Reference (ToR) refers to the request submitted by the Secretariat General of the Government of Montenegro to evaluate Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022.

**Purpose and Scope of Assignment**

The Government of Montenegro adopted the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022. The goal of implementing the Strategy is to bring the EU, its values, policies and standards closer to the citizens, as well as to explain the importance of accession negotiations and present the results and upcoming tasks in each of the negotiating chapters. Also, through the implementation of the Strategy and its action plans, continuous support is provided for informing and educating the public about the importance of EU financial assistance, applying for available funds and promoting the results achieved in this field.

The Strategy follows the priorities set in the EU accession process and key EU polices, both at the national and the EU levels. The implementation of the Public Information Strategy helps promoting Montenegro’s 2018-2020 EU Accession Programme, by showing its significance and particularly its achievements. Most of the Strategy actions have focused on the visibility of the work of the Commission for EU Integration and the whole negotiation structure. At the EU level, the Strategy has monitored and promoted the directions and messages from pertinent documents, such as the Strategy for the Western Balkans and other strategy papers of the Union aiming to bring them closer to the domestic audience.

Having in mind that the current Strategy expires at the end of 2022, according to the *Decree on the procedure of drafting, alignment and monitoring of the implementation of strategy documents*, the General Secretariat of the Government has to submit final report to the Government. The findings of the ex-post evaluation should form an integral part of the final report on implementation of the strategy document. Based on the results of the evaluation, a new strategy that will be valid from 2023 onwards will be prepared An external evaluator will be in charge of the evaluation with the aim to determine the relevance and level of progress towards the achievement of the goals and the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the development. The expert will evaluate the effects and performance of the Public Information Strategy in reference to the set goals and objectives, and prepare the situation analysis for the following strategy paper in this field. Final evaluation needs to be done using the ***methodology contained in the Table of Performance Indicators defined in the Strategy.***

The Senior Advisor will cooperate with the Operational Body and the Consultative Body, which will examine the process and the final evaluation and give their opinions, which will feed into the final report to be endorsed by the Government of Montenegro.

**2. Summary of Key Functions**

1. Technical Expertise

2. Stakeholder Engagement

*1. Technical expertise*

* Prepare a methodology for evaluation of the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022. It should be a short document identifying the steps and aspects of the evaluation process
* Draft Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 which will specifically answer each of the evaluation questions agreed in the inception phase and meet all the specific objectives and requested services
* Organise consultations with the beneficiary on the proposed Draft Evaluation report.
* Draft the Final Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 that will include a synthesis of the findings of the evaluation questions, an overall conclusion and detailed conclusions and a set of recommendations based on the lessons learned.

*2. Stakeholder engagement*

* Establish solid working relationships, engage, discuss, negotiate and liaise with key national stakeholders, including government officials.
* Support the development of good working relationships with key personnel in the EU, through a large network of key contacts at EU institutions.

**3. Monitoring and Progress Controls**

The work of the Senior Advisor on evaluation of the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022 directly impacts on UNOPS’ contribution in supporting the country’s EU accession process. This consequently reinforces the visibility and image of UNOPS, and strengthens its competitive positions as a partner of choice in working with governments in enhancing and modernising their legal, economic and institutional system.

The incumbent will be engaged as a retainer and asked to perform specific tasks linked to supporting delivery of the project's work in Montenegro in advance when the requirements arise. The incumbent’s contributions and milestones will be assessed based on this agreed work plan for each assignment.

**Expert deliverables**

* **Consultations with the beneficiary on the Draft Evaluation report** organised**.**
* A **Workplan** with details of the steps (activities and measures) that the expert will take for the successful finalisation of the assignment
* **Methodology for evaluation of the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022** prepared. The methodology needs to be agreed with the Beneficiary and identify the steps and aspects of the evaluation process. The basis for the methodology evaluation is contained in the Table of Performance Indicators defined in the Strategy.
* **Draft Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022** prepared. The document will specifically answer each of the evaluation questions agreed in the inception phase and meet all the specific objectives and requested services. The aim would be to determine the relevance and level of progress towards the achievement of the goals and the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the development. The expert will evaluate the effects and performance of the Public Information Strategy in reference to the set goals and objectives, and prepare the situation analysis for the following strategy paper in this field.
* **Final Evaluation report on the Strategy on Informing the Public about Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2019-2022** finalised. The report should include a synthesis of the findings of the evaluation questions, an overall conclusion and detailed conclusions and a set of recommendations based on the lessons learned.
* **A brief final mission report** prepared and delivered to UNOPS. The report should contain the information on the assignment and accomplishments that have been made under the work of the expert.

**4. Qualifications and Experience of the Senior advisor**

**a. Education**

- An advanced university degree (e.g. Masters) in social science disciplines is required. A first-level university degree (e.g. Bachelor) in combination with 2 additional years of progressively relevant experience may be accepted in lieu of an advanced university degree.

**b. Work experience**

- A minimum of seven (7) years of relevant experience with working in the area of public communication, visibility, awareness raising or transparency

- Familiarity with the monitoring and evaluation of communication strategies is highly desirable.

- Familiarity with the Western Balkan environment is desirable.

- **Proven records of building strong relationships and/or operate in an influential manner with gov authorities and/or UN officials is required**

- Ability to consistently exercise discretion and confidentiality with sensitive information is highly desirable.

**c. Languages**

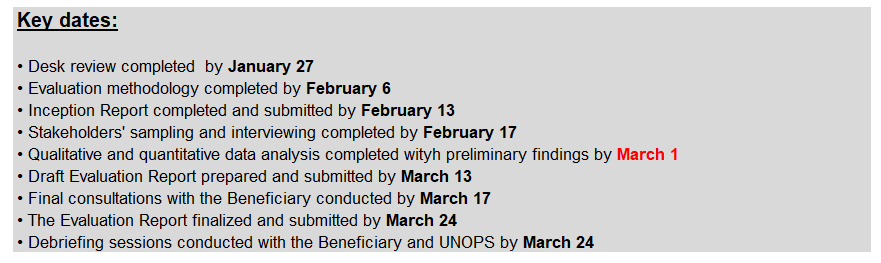
- Proficiency in English is required.

- Knowledge of locally spoken languages including *lingua franca* is an advantage.

**ANNEX 5** - Updated Work Plan

Timeline

Description automatically generated



1. Stated by majority of interviewees. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Based on AP Reports and trainings participants lists. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Public Perception Survey for 2022, conducted by DeFacto Agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Action Plans Reports for 2019,2020,2021 and 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Public Perception Survey for 2022, conducted by DeFacto Agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Action Plans Reports for 2019,2020,2021 and 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Action Plan Reports for 2019,2020,2021, and 2022, and the data provided by the LA. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Pg. 53-54, Public Information Strategy on Montenegro’s Accession to the EU 2019-2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Public Perception Surveys for 2020, 2021 and 2022, conducted by DeFacto Agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Action Plans Reports for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Pg. 27 Public Information Strategy on Montenegro’s Accession to the EU 2019-2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Pg. 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Majority of interviewees confirmed this statement. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Pg. 27 Public Information Strategy on Montenegro’s Accession to the EU 2019-2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Public Perception Survey for 2022, conducted by DeFacto Agency [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This was expressed mainly by the interviewees from the NGOs. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Action Plans Reports for 2019,2020,2021 and 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The data is based on the interviews with the stakeholders. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Public Perception Survey for 2022, conducted by DeFacto Agency [↑](#footnote-ref-19)