



The European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument
for the Republic of Armenia

European Union Advisory Group to the Republic of Armenia

Communication and Information Strategy



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LIST OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Abbreviations | 3 |
| I. Introduction | 4 |
| II. Communications Assessment | 4 |
| 1. Key Findings and Recommendations | 5 |
| III. Communications Strategy | 13 |
| 1. Key Messages and Target Audiences | 14 |
| 2. Communications Objectives and Activities | 16 |

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| ABM | Advisory Board Meeting |
| AEPLAC | Armenian-European Policy and Legal Advice Centre |
| CEPS | Centre for European Policy Studies |
| DCFTA | Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement |
| (D)HoM | (Deputy) Head of Mission |
| DHR | Democracy and Human Rights |
| EaP | Eastern Partnership |
| ENP | European Neighbourhood Policy |
| EPC | European Policy Centre |
| EU | European Union |
| EUAG | European Union Advisory Group to the Republic of Armenia |
| EUDEL | European Delegation to the Republic of Armenia |
| GIZ | Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NSC | National Security Council of the Republic of Armenia |
| JLS | Justice, Liberty, and Security |
| OSCE | Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |

I. Introduction

The EU Advisory Group assists the Armenian authorities in the preparation of a process to negotiate, conclude and implement an Association Agreement with the European Union, including setting up a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The group provides tailored policy advice on legal, democratic, economic and institutional issues to the Armenian Presidency and other national authorities. Additional beneficiaries are different bodies of the Republic of Armenia, the social partners and indirectly civil society organisations.

This paper provides an assessment of the communications environment and current communications practices of the European Union Advisory Group (hereafter: EUAG) before developing a communications strategy and a communications work plan for 2012. The strategy will define communications objectives, strategic approaches, recommended activities, key messages and target audiences with an overall aim of creating awareness and increasing information about the EU Advisory Group in Armenia and the EU.

Basic field work in Armenia was conducted by the international communications expert during an assignment as communications advisor of the EU Advisory Group in summer 2010. In addition, interviews particularly related to this assignment were held in Yerevan from 5 to 9 September 2011. These included the management and Advisors of the EU Advisory Group, the task manager at the European Union Delegation (hereafter: EUDEL), senior staff of the Armenian government and international organisations, and last but not least representatives of civil society.

II. Communications Assessment

The following assessment builds on the extensive desk review of EU Advisory Group documents such as the needs assessment report, the work plan, progress reports and the final evaluation report on the EU Advisory Group. EU policy documents on the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership were analysed as were various studies and research papers on the domestic Armenian policy and communications context. Most helpful for assessing the situation was a series of interviews carried out during a field mission in Yerevan in September 2011. The assessment has been completed in close consultation with the Team Leader, the Project Management Specialist and the Communications Officer. Furthermore, discussions were held with following experts and stakeholders:

- Ina Iankulova, EU Delegation, Communication Officer and Project Manager for the EUAG
- Christoph Breunig, German Embassy, Deputy Head of Mission
- Constantin N. Zelenty, German Embassy, Attaché

- James Macbeth Forbes, GIZ, Country Director
- Aram Ananyan, Government of Armenia, Communications Advisor to the Prime Minister
- Harutyun Amiryanyan, National Security Council, Press Speaker
- Vigen Sargsyan, World Bank, External Affairs Officer
- Tsovinar Arevyan, OSCE, National Programme Officer Freedom of the Media
- Richard Giragosian, Regional Studies Centre, Director
- Hovhannes Sarajyan, UNDP Armenia, Communications Associate
- Maria Aslamazyan, Internews Network, Representative in Armenia
- Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Country Director

1. Key Findings and Recommendations

Communications Objectives and Target Audiences of EUAG and EUDEL

At its core, the EU Advisory Group is a rather new policy tool which, at the request of the Armenian Presidency and in coordination with the EU Delegation, contributes to reaching specific objectives of the EU-Armenia European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan, the follow-up cooperation programme and the Eastern Partnership through providing high-level advice to the Armenian government and other selected institutions.¹

In almost all interviews it appeared to be difficult for those questioned to distinguish between the roles of the EU Advisory Group and the EU Delegation in Armenia. In 2010, a first evaluation report recommended that the group should be positioned “[...] in the middle: neither attached to the EC Delegation nor tied to the beneficiary.” (Final Evaluation Report on the EU Advisory Group, October 2010, §2.2.17, p.14) However, talks with the group’s management and the delegation as well as with stakeholders and civil society left the impression that roles of the EUDEL and the EUAG are not yet thoroughly defined and communicated internally nor properly presented externally. It is therefore

¹ “The EUAG is a facility providing access to high-level policy advice. The high level policy advice is targeted at assisting the national authorities to negotiate and conclude the EU-Armenian Association Agreement, implement the EU-Armenia ENP Action Plan and make effective use of EC external assistance instruments and programmes. In this context high level policy advice is understood as raising awareness of the policy implications of the AA and the ENP-AP, explaining the policy options, acquainting the beneficiaries with EU best practice, assisting in the identification of policy priorities, supporting the national authorities to draft Green and White Papers, and moderating the policy consultation processes. The EUAG will also assist the national authorities to elaborate a policy implementation action plan. Once the national authorities have formally adopted the policy, the EUAG will assist them to identify and draw down support for the implementation of the policy from the appropriate EC instrument/programme (Framework Contract, SIGMA, TWINNING, TAIEX, CIB) or an ongoing/planned TA project. In this context and where necessary, the EUAG will help the national authorities to prepare the formal applications/fiches/Terms of Reference for implementation support. The EUAG does not itself engage in support to policy implementation.” (Final Evaluation Report on the EU Advisory Group, October 2010, §2.1.5, p.11)

strongly recommended that the group more clearly defines its key communications objectives and key target audiences, which should be complementary to the delegation.

The task is challenging for the EUAG because many of the more visible outputs and results, which potentially interest the Armenian public beyond beneficiaries and stakeholders, have an effect on relations between Armenia and the EU in a broader way and should rather be communicated by the EUDEL. The blurry positioning and self-perception of the EUAG in the Armenian reform process has led to extraordinary high expectations among civil society², going far beyond the group's mission if not impossible to satisfy at all. The vague distinction of roles of the EUAG and EUDEL has also resulted in stakeholders and parts of the EUAG management wanting the group to become more visible towards the Armenian general public³ and to position itself as a driver of reform activities in the country. Making this a key communications objective is, however, not recommended for reasons explained below.

While ambitions to increase EUAG communication activities directed at the public at large might lead to higher visibility of the group among Armenians, it is most likely going to conflict with the EUDEL's main communication objective of positioning itself as the 'Voice of the European Union' in Armenia and as the main driving force of reforms in the country. The EUAG certainly has a role to play in communications with the Armenian public but mainly as a catalyst or a buffer at times. This view was affirmed by the EUDEL Communications Officer, who expects EUAG communications to focus on raising visibility of the group on the working level (i.e. beneficiaries and stakeholders in Armenia and the EU) in order to ensure their continued support for reforms and EU activities.

Recommendations

- Identify key communications messages and dialogue groups of EUAG in Armenia
- Aim for complementarities between EUAG and EUDEL communications objectives
- Establish mechanism(s) for communications coordination between EUAG and EUDEL
- Communicate more effectively the complimentary roles of EUAG and EUDEL in Armenia
- Channel EUAG communications to the general public through EUDEL (especially media)

Communications to Stakeholders on EU and Member State Level

In the interviews, the EUDEL emphasised that an increased visibility of the EUAG on European level should also be a communications priority. The idea is to position the EUAG as a role model for

² Civil society is a diverse and broad group in Armenia that clearly needs further distinction when targeting it.

³ In the interviews it remained somehow vague whether the often mentioned 'general public' was not just another term used for civil society.

providing policy advice to development and transition countries within and also beyond the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This should encourage a roll-out of this approach to other countries and, as a welcome side effect, help to interest member states in seconding more Advisors to the group.

Currently, the information flow from the EUAG to Brussels is mostly limited to the monthly and quarterly reports that are sent by the EUDEL to the European Commission. There is no proper distribution and information mechanism in place to reach out to other EU level institutions. Regarding direct contacts, experts from the European Commission's Directorate General Development and Cooperation occasionally meet with individual EUAG Advisors in Yerevan at the fringe of official negotiations with the Armenian counterparts. Some Advisors personally based in Brussels are in addition exchanging views and opinions with the Commission when there.

Member states are informed through their embassies in Yerevan that participate in the Advisory Board Meeting and receive the reports for further distribution. However, the view that personal contacts and the reporting need to be improved was a common feedback in interviews with this target audience.

Recommendations

- Identify key communications messages and dialogue groups of EUAG on EU level
- Develop strategies and activities to bring across the key messages in Brussels
- Increase contacts with member state embassies through participation in (D)HoM meetings
- Closely coordinate all EU level activities with the EUDEL

Communicating with the Armenian Media and Blogosphere

The renowned Press Freedom Index 2010 rated Armenia 101st among 178 countries in terms of its freedom of the press. Interviews have revealed that the traditional problems of Armenian media have remained unchanged, and no significant positive changes have taken place recently. Television is still the country's dominant medium and the government maintains tight control over most of the broadcast media. State-run Armenian Public Television and Armenian Public Radio are the only stations with nationwide reach. Many of the private TV stations are owned by government-friendly business elites, and broadcasters engage in a high degree of self-censorship to avoid having their licenses revoked. Few private newspapers are financially viable or able to distribute their editions outside the major cities, the maximum print run being 2,000 copies. Regional newspapers sometimes fail to reach the streets if the authorities dislike their content.

Blogs from Armenia are increasingly appearing in Armenian language, rather than in Russian, and are gaining more and more political relevance. The past two years have also seen a large growth of social networks in Armenia, recognisable most of all by the increase in Facebook users. The site had 149,000 registered users in Armenia in spring 2011 according to Socialbakers website. Nevertheless, stakeholders in Armenia have displayed a certain hesitation in using this channel to communicate with the public, mainly because it is a resource-intensive activity without having yet proven to have a clear added value in comparison to traditional websites. A policy project would also face a story shortage for this fast-changing medium.

A positive dynamic is registered also in the area of internet penetration, according to official statistics the number of broadband internet users had reached 160,000 by the end of 2010 and more than 1.1 million users have access to internet via mobile devices. According to the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC), Armenians use the Internet mostly for socialising purposes and for searching national information.

The EUAG currently has only limited contact with the Armenian media focusing press releases and interviews on public events such as the Advisory Board Meetings and awareness workshops. The Armenian media is loosely monitored in order to detect and if necessary to react to misleading information about the group. Advisors are furthermore informed about relevant media reports through a daily news service provided by the EU Delegation and UNDP. EU-level media are not monitored.

As the public can be ruled out as a key target audience of the EUAG (see above), relations with the media are instrumental at times but should overall bear less importance for the group. The EUDEL is positioned as the prime interlocutor for the Armenian media on EU issues and should remain so. The role of the EUAG is and should be that of a content provider and story facilitator for the EUDEL mainly. However, concerns voiced by civil society that the EUAG leaves information about reform activities too much in the hands of its Armenian counterparts have to be taken seriously not least because this potentially undermines the credibility of the group. In this respect the group has to take counter-measures by communicating its positions more clearly and more directly to civil society.

Recommendations

- Channel results and success stories regarding the reforms through EUDEL to the media
- Establish guidelines on how to respond quickly to negative coverage (with EUDEL)
- Treat key political bloggers like the traditional media (invite them to events etc.)
- Continue to inform the media about public events and the publication of key documents

- Keep out of social media (start with an optional Facebook presence if resources allow)
- Closely coordinate media activities with EUDEL to provide the public with an EU opinion

Communication Channels beyond the Media

As has become clear, the media is most likely not a very effective tool to reach out to and to inform Armenian counterparts and international stakeholders about the EUAG. Events such as round tables and seminars are expected to be more useful on the working level as they offer a chance to exchange views directly and to keep all stakeholders informed in a reliable way. The interviews suggested that informal events work best, in particular those organised linked to lunch or breakfast occasions.

For the moment, the EUAG organises relatively few public awareness and information events on working level. Some Advisors seem slightly hesitant of the additional work load despite encouragement by the EUAG management. Most events organised are coordinated with the Armenian counterparts. The most important events in terms of visibility are the quarterly EUAG Advisory Board Meetings under the co-chairmanship of the Secretary of the National Security Council and the Head of EUDEL. In these events EUAG quarterly reports and work plans are presented to the highest political level in Armenia, which regularly attracts good media coverage. In addition, the initiative to reach out to students in a first EUAG Lecture Series was well received in summer 2010 and beyond.

Many stakeholders criticised though that the EUAG is not yet visible enough at working level events publically organised by civil society or other international organisations. While this shortcoming might partly be due to a limited availability of the longer-term and even more so the short-time Advisors, the representatives of international organisations openly wondered why the EUAG Team Leader has not been regularly present at monthly donor coordination meetings in Yerevan. From the European Union level it is the Head of EUDEL only who currently participates in these meetings.

Altogether, the result is a widely perceived low visibility in the event-focused public reform debate. This has contributed to a general feeling that the work of the EUAG is not transparent enough and potentially damages its reputation and credibility among stakeholders. Some concerns were raised that the Advisors seem not to be too interested in sharing views and activities with other organisations. However, a constructive suggestion for improving the information flow between the EUAG and other international organisations came up in the interviews: joint stakeholder team meetings.

In addition to events, electronic and printed newsletters are a much used instrument to inform the public and stakeholders in many countries. In Armenia the situation seems slightly different though with communicators from both the government and international organisations questioning the added value of having such newsletters. The World Bank neither has an internal nor an external newsletter

as most government institutions do not. The Prime Minister's office publishes a weekly news digest called "Armenian Highlights" in English, which only reaches about 200 persons. The UNDP newsletter has completely changed focus to human touch stories in order to stay relevant, a feature which the EUAG as a technical policy instrument cannot deliver easily.

Recommendations

- Increase the presence of individual Advisors in other stakeholders' events
- Team leader should participate in coordination meetings of the EUDEL and other donors
- Further refine the event strategy to engage more directly with EUAG target audiences
- Do not introduce a quarterly newsletter but ensure a better readability of all reports and further ensure high visibility in EUDEL newsletter

Reporting and Policy Papers

The publication of progress reports and policy papers ensures transparency. Done in the right way they inform target audiences about results achieved and challenges remaining. According to most stakeholders interviewed, EUAG reports are too long though and often miss focus on results, outputs, remaining challenges, possible threats and recommendations. Rather than offering an overview, progress reports resemble a work description. The way they are written, structured and also targeted they fail to fulfil their reporting function and do not keep the key EUAG beneficiaries or stakeholders informed. At the time of finalising this paper, however, the reporting was undergoing a review facilitated by this expert.⁴ In addition, policy papers were recently introduced for public information.

The EU Advisory Group should issue three kinds of progress reports in addition to ad-hoc policy papers on specific issues: monthly reports that are working level documents as well as quarterly and annual reports that are public documents. Important distinctions between the reports should be the detail of information (more detail in monthly reports through additional pull option of individual reports including tables and annexes) and the style of writing (professional editing of quarterly and annual reports). In order to guarantee a high visibility among all target audiences, EU Advisory Group reports have to be comprehensive and limited in length. The focus in all reports has to be on results and outputs, as well as on remaining challenges.

⁴ A detailed outline for a revised reporting of the group has been discussed and agreed upon between the international communications advisor, the EUAG management and the EU Delegation It was presented to the Advisors in a team retreat in October 2011.

A related issue was identified in the evaluation report in 2010, which found that “[...] the beneficiaries themselves failed to distinguish between policy advice and technical assistance. When asked to prioritise their needs, they immediately began to describe implementation issues: support to revising a draft law, building departmental capacity, and training for the staff to enable them to understand the content of a particular Directive etc.” At the time of writing this paper, there was no institutionalised briefing procedure in place for neither new beneficiaries nor new Advisors or national experts to inform these about the scope of work of the EU Advisory Group.

Recommendations

- Revise the reporting system; introduce monthly reports that are working-level documents and quarterly/annual reports that are concise and well-written policy level documents, which also serve to inform the interested public
- Use edited quarterly reports as a substitute for a EUAG newsletter to inform target audiences on working- as well as on political-level about the ‘bigger picture’ of the EUAG contribution to the Armenian reform efforts
- Introduce policy papers on specific subjects in addition to reports and make them publicly available if possible
- Prepare a briefing package for new beneficiaries as well as Advisors and national experts
- Establish a proper distribution mechanism for reports and policy papers in Armenia and on EU level

Visibility Materials and Corporate Design

Regarding visibility materials, the must-have tools of such a project are all in place based on a simple yet clear corporate design consisting of the EU flag and the project name. A website provides general information about EUAG contacts, services and activities. It is available in English and Armenian. Information on future developments, announcements of upcoming events and news updates are also available through the website. A leaflet was developed providing basic information about the EUAG such as its context, objectives and beneficiaries. The format of the EUAG leaflet is basic and omits financial and administrative details. It incorporates the elements of the EU’s visual identity and is fully in line with EU visibility guidelines. In addition there are roll-up banners as well as pens, notebooks, lanyards and other professional give-aways to be used in events.

Recommendations

- Keep basic corporate identity as it is. It is learned by target audiences and links the group clearly to the EU (flag plus project title)

Communications Resources and Institutional Issues

Besides a permanent Communications Officer responsible for implementing communications and visibility activities of the group, the EUAG is supported by one long-term international Advisor on communications who works with the Prime Minister's Office on practical training needs.

In the EUAG work plan, a number of activities can be identified that would benefit from or will even require strategic communications support. However, at the time of writing, the long-term international communications Advisor was neither working closely together with the human rights Advisor on supporting the Armenian Ombudsman to raise the awareness on preventing torture nor with the justice, liberty and security pillar coordinator on recommendations for the National Security Council on how to increase its dialogue with civil society.

Another issue with an effect on the efficiency of EUAG communications is the current handling of the presence of individual Advisors in Yerevan. The Advisors are allowed to almost freely choose the dates on which they want to work in the country without any peak periods defined. But there are efforts undergoing to improve the situation with Advisors asked to provide an overview over their presence in the coming two months at least.

Last but not least the presidential and parliamentary elections in Armenia in 2012 will affect EUAG communications. Due to the proximity of the group to the National Security Council headed by Mr Baghdasaryan, himself the leader of an opposition party, the elections will limit the way in which the EUAG might be able to run public working level events and other activities in more disputed reform fields such as democratic reform, human rights and migration without taking sides in the political contest. In any case, the visibility of the EUAG and its Advisors in these months will have to be closely coordinated with the EUDEL.

Recommendations

- Identify activities in EUAG work plan where strategic communications advice is needed
- Increase strategic communications capacity either through specifically trained short-term

experts or through additional working days for the long-term communications advisor.

- Improve coordination of the presence of the Advisors with communications activities up to the point of defining peak periods if necessary
- Closer to election periods communications activities should be limited to non-controversial issues to avoid taking sides. Events and other public activities should concentrate on EU good practices and be closely coordinated with the EU Delegation

Evaluation of Communications

Communications activities of the EU Advisory Group have so far been evaluated as part of the overall evaluation reports in October 2010 and October 2011 only. When developing a new communications strategy, it is generally advised to take the time to evaluate the impacts of planned activities prior to their implementation. Such kind of ex ante evaluation helps to propose activities that maximise impact for a given cost. However, this is currently out of scope for the EU Advisory Group due to time constraints as well as limited financial and human resources. Nevertheless communications needs to be evaluated by running both simple ad hoc and more complex ex post surveys and analyses.

Recommendations

- Measure satisfaction at EUAG events by having participants fill in a short evaluation form while they are still present. Annex the results and a short summary to the advisor reports
- Contract a local social research organisation to run a (baseline) survey among EUAG stakeholders and beneficiaries. It could resemble a short Eurobarometer survey on “Stakeholder knowledge about the EU-Armenian reform relationship”. Results should be broadly presented in the Advisory Board Meeting, in the reports and on the website

III. Communications Strategy

The following communications strategy is based on the key findings of the above assessment and presents communications objectives, their strategic approaches and corresponding activities. It is important to note that the proposed activities, further developed in greater detail later in this document, are only a menu from which the EU Advisory Group can select from. The document will outline in the work plan some recommendations for the implementation of activities on various levels during the year 2012. Other activities included in the strategy can be considered as optional for implementation.

Prior to presenting objectives, strategic approaches and activities, the document defines the key messages to be conveyed and the intended target audiences. Two sets of new key messages are suggested, one directed at decision makers at EU and member state levels and one to the Armenian level including other international organisations, both public and political. These key messages are derived from the interviews with the EUAG and the EUDEL, the current EUAG work plan and the needs assessment carried out in spring 2011.

1. Key Messages and Target Audiences

Key messages open the door to direct communication with dialogue groups, because they bridge where they already are and the place the communicator is trying to take them. As part of any communications initiative, key messages are those messages that are important for the target audience to remember and react to. By prompting the target audience to ask questions, key messages immediately get them involved in the issue. That in turn makes them curious about what is being said, and curiosity is the first step to participation. The following key messages need to be further broken down into sub messages for the specific areas the EUAG works in. This is best done in a joint effort involving individual Advisors, pillar coordinators, the Team Leader as well as the Communications Officer and could be documented in an annex to this strategy later in 2012.

Key Messages to Armenian stakeholders

The EU Advisory Group is an EU policy advice instrument that, in support of the EU Delegation,

- ➔ strengthens reform capacities in the Armenian government and other institutions
- ➔ accelerates negotiations on an EU-Armenia free trade agreement
- ➔ works on improving the human rights situation in Armenia
- ➔ contributes to strengthening the rule of law through facilitating judicial reform in Armenia
- ➔ helps the Ombudsman office in strengthening democracy and the rule of law in Armenia
- ➔ accelerates negotiations on EU-Armenia visa facilitation and readmission

It might from time to time be useful to include a message on what the EU Advisory Group by its name is not: yet another instrument of technical assistance to the Armenian government.

Dialogue Groups

These messages, just like the proposed objectives and actions presented later in the strategy, are intended to effectively impact the following dialogue groups:

- EUAG counterparts
- Civil servants on all levels
- Embassies of EU member states in Armenia
- International organisations in Armenia
- Economy-related civil society
 - Armenian business communities
 - Armenian trade unions
 - Students and youth organisations
- Democracy and Human Rights-related civil society
 - Armenian human rights groups
 - Armenian political parties and their platforms
- Armenian media

Key Messages to EU level stakeholders

The EU Advisory Group is a flexible policy advice tool that

- ➔ plays a key role in making the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership a success in Armenia
- ➔ facilitates negotiations on the Association Agreement between the EU and Armenia
- ➔ helps coordinate other EU instruments like Twinning and TAIEX in Armenia
- ➔ helps to link EU objectives with those of the Armenian government and thus contributes to building a working relationship based on mutual trust
- ➔ is a successful tool that offers EU member states to get directly involved through seconding Advisors to the group

Here too it might at times be relevant to pass on the message that the EU Advisory Group is not yet another instrument providing technical assistance to the Armenian government but rather focuses on high-level policy advice.

Dialogue Groups

These messages, just like the proposed objectives and actions presented later in the strategy, are intended to effectively impact the following dialogue groups:

- Cabinet of the Commissioner responsible for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy
- Cabinet of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
- European Commission DGs Development Cooperation, External Affairs and Trade
- ENP-related think tanks in Brussels (e.g. EPC)
- EU-Armenia NGOs in Brussels (e.g. Friends of Armenia)
- Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Parliamentary Cooperation committee of the European Parliament
- EU media

2. Communications Objectives and Activities

Objective 1

Build a trustful working relationship with counterparts and international organisations

Strategy: Keep the counterparts and international organisations well informed on all levels in a transparent and if possible direct way

➤ **Establish a proper distribution mechanism for publications in Armenia**

To be successful, many activities outlined in this and the following two chapters depend on properly researched and regularly updated e-mail distribution lists. Distribution lists should be segmented according to the audiences mentioned above so that information can be sent out in a targeted and if needed specific way within Armenia.

➤ **Monthly Reports**

The monthly progress reports of the EUAG should be widely distributed on working level to better inform the EUAG counterparts in the Armenian institutions and the international organisations. The length of the semi-public (distributed but not officially published) EUAG monthly reports should be limited to 3 pages to ensure readability and assign activities to the respective Advisors in order to give specific advice a 'face' on working level in Armenia.

These monthly EUAG reports will be based on internal individual reports drafted by the Advisors, which should in addition contain tables and annexes allowing for a more detailed overview of their activities for the EU Delegation and the European Commission. The Advisors'

reports should only be distributed to Armenian stakeholders on request and after a check of confidentiality by the EUAG management.

➤ **Policy Papers**

To provide an overview on EU Advisory Group advice provided and activities carried out in specific areas of expertise, policy advice papers should be regularly drafted and published. Beneficiaries should be informed about the policy papers without formal approval as they will reflect the views of the EU Advisory Group only. Policy papers are expected to contribute to a better common understanding about EUAG activities on the working level in Armenia. They will furthermore help to keep civil society and stakeholders well informed and allow tracking advice provided to beneficiaries.

In the future, policy advice papers could, together with quarterly and annual reports, become the basis for an online library of EU AG Good Practices to be used in other countries. A yearly overview of policy papers to be written will be reflected in the work plan. Whether a policy paper is published or only provided to a restricted readership should, however, be decided by the EU Advisory Group and the EU Delegation case-by-case.

➤ **Standard Briefing Package on EUAG**

Assuming that the EU Advisory Group's scope of activities might still be mixed up by some beneficiaries working with the group (see assessment), distributing a standard briefing package including a clear description of the EUAG scope of work to beneficiaries (but also new Advisors and local experts) will avoid misunderstandings and wrong expectations at an early stage. This information package should be more comprehensive than the current brochure. Besides the flow chart on how requests for advice are handled within the EU Advisory Group, it should at least give basic background information on the framework of the ENP and EaP as well as other relevant basic EU documents relevant for the work of the EU Advisory Group in the three pillars.

➤ **Welcome Seminar on EUAG**

Based on the above briefing package, the background, mission, values, and most important the working mechanisms of the group should be presented directly in an additional, rather informal half-day 'Welcome Seminar'. This could be organised when appropriate (at least twice a year) with a minimum of 5 new counterparts and be facilitated by the EUAG management together with the EU Delegation, which should provide the bigger picture. It will enable both the EUAG

management and the EU Delegation to get to know new beneficiaries in person and enable a kind of cross-fertilisation among the various beneficiaries.

➤ **Higher participation in Armenian working-level events**

As pointed out in the assessment, it is expected by international stakeholders in Armenia that the EUAG management and the Advisors become more visible in working level events in order to ensure transparency. The EUAG Team Leader should participate in and contribute to the monthly donor coordination meetings as well as the (deputy) Head of Mission meetings (HoM) of EU member states. If the Team Leader is unavailable, a pillar leader should attend.

In addition, an internal Outlook calendar should be introduced in which (public) working level events by civil society or international organisations are collected. This calendar could be discussed at the weekly team meetings where it should be decided whether the EUAG participates in an event and if so, which advisor should attend. This will keep the Advisors informed about activities of the other organisations and raise the visibility of the group.

➤ **Bilateral team meetings with international organisations**

In order to further facilitate the exchange with the most important international organisations working on the same issues as the EUAG, regular joint team meetings should be introduced with at least World Bank, IMF, Council of Europe, OSCE and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The idea is to directly debrief each other about past activities, to coordinate positions on reform issues where possible and to plan joint future activities like workshops or position papers.

The meetings should take place at least every three months so that activities for the following quarter can be discussed. They should comprise of presentations given by the EUAG Team Leader and the pillar coordinators as well as by the key representatives of the other organisation. It is recommended to have all relevant Advisors participate in the meetings to promote personal exchange and allow for more specific questions. At least a week before the meetings the agenda should be circulated and agreed. After the meetings minutes with action points should be distributed and approved.

➤ **FAQs: EUAG website and brochures**

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) are listed questions and answers, all supposed to be commonly asked in some context, and pertaining to a particular topic. FAQs have become a standard tool on many websites to answer anticipated user questions about basic principles of an organisation and its work. The level of detail can vary.

For the EU Advisory Group it would be beneficial to provide information in form of FAQs on its vision and mission, its structure and the consequences of its work in individual areas of advice. A duplication of information given in other places on the website is not problematic as long as the wording is adjusted.

FAQs explaining key terms and basic questions relating to a specific pillar should also be published in the form of booklets and distributed to the counterparts. These practical publications will come in handy for either personal reference of new counterparts on EU-Armenia reforms or for use in their day-to-day interaction with the public and other stakeholders.

➤ **“How to respond” Manual**

In addition to the progress reports and policy papers, specific information materials can serve as an important resource for public employees looking to educate themselves further and in their day to day relations with the general public. To support public officials that encounter reform-related issues on a regular basis, an internal orientation manual – potentially titled “How to respond” – should be developed. It would provide an employee or government official with detailed guidance on how to respond when faced with a reform-related situation during the course of their work. This should be particularly helpful for the pillar working on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).

➤ **Media relations**

A series of interviews should be initiated on various topics the EUAG is working on in order to provide an expert opinion on the state of affair in a specific field. In these interviews, which need to be coordinated closely with the EUDEL, it should be emphasised that the EUAG is an EU project that helps Armenia to reform.

It would be possible to organise one interview per month so that ten topics can be covered over a year. The recommendation would be to have such print/web interviews with Mediamax, who were rather professional in past interviews they did on the DCFTA and the Association

Agreement. Once done, the interviews could be put up on the EUAG website in the respective thematic sections.

Objective 2

Generate realistic expectations in the public and among civil society

Strategy: Improve readability and accessibility of reports and use events as a platform to inform and exchange views with civil society

➤ **Quarterly Reports**

Concise quarterly reports of the EU Advisory Group should be drafted and widely distributed in Armenia in order to keep the civil society and also higher level beneficiaries and stakeholders informed. These reports would substitute for a newsletter, which is not expected to bring any added value according to the assessment. They should be made available on the website thus ensuring transparency of the group's work to a wide, public audience. The publication should be accompanied by a press release and other media activities around the Advisory Board Meeting.

➤ **Annual Reports**

Annual reports should summarise achievements of the EUAG during a working year. They should be brochure style publications, with concise texts based on the quarterly reports and neatly laid out with photos and graphs. They should be printed and mailed to the highest-level stakeholders in Armenia and made available at EUAG events as well as on the website. Like with the quarterly reports, the publication of the annual reports should be accompanied by a press release and other media activities around the Advisory Board Meeting.

➤ **Policy Papers**

The policy papers described in detail in the chapter above are expected to also help to ensure realistic expectations among representatives of civil society as they outline the scope of advice by the EU Advisory Group on a specific issue.

➤ **Awareness Workshops**

Awareness workshops are already organised in cooperation with the National Security Council (NSC) in order to inform a wider audience affected by the reforms about activities in a certain field of work. As the workshops have been received well by the participants so far and contribute to raising awareness through wider media coverage, it is recommended to organise these medium-scale working-level events every 2 months on a specific topic.

However, in order to avoid the impression of being too close to one institution, it should be considered to partner with other beneficiary institutions or civil society/other international organisations when organising the events.

➤ **Focus Group Breakfasts**

Focus groups are originally a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a service, concept, or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive, lightly moderated group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. It is suggested to make use of this approach in addition to the much larger awareness workshops in order to generate more feedback from those target audiences directly affected by reform plans. Focus groups will also help to raise the level of information on EUAG activities and objectives.

They should be organised rather informally over breakfast to discuss for maximum 2 hours with a restricted number of participants (max. 20 persons) one specific subject. The counterparts should be invited too and shortly after the meeting a summary (minutes) should be written and approved by the participants. The summary could then be published on the website and widely circulated to stakeholders. Examples for focus groups topics could be customs (with the Chamber of Commerce and SMEs), SPS (with representatives of farming associations) or IPR (with representatives of various sectors like pharmaceuticals). This approach currently seems most relevant for the DCFTA pillar.

➤ **'What, Where, When?' Game**

'What? Where? When?' is an intellectual game of Russian origin which is widely popular in Armenia through a TV show of the same name. In the game, a panel of persons brainstorm in order to attempt to answer questions. For each question, the time limit is one minute. The kind

of the questions is such that it takes logical thinking and insight to find the correct answer. The panel earns points if they manage to get the correct answer.

The game should be used in EUAG awareness workshops and in the EUAG lecture series (see chapter below) to break up the often formal atmosphere and to check on the level of information of participants in a playful way. Advisors should be asked to identify relevant questions from their fields of expertise and these should be posed to at least two groups of participants that play against each other. This would be facilitated by the EUAG Communications Officer and is expected to contribute to a better discussion atmosphere and to increase information.

Beyond using this game format in events, a special edition of the Armenian TV show should be negotiated, which then focuses exclusively on questions related to EU-Armenia relations. This show should be broadcast around Europe Day (9 May) and needs to be closely coordinated with the EU Delegation as it will ideally not only touch on reform issues.

The questions used in either the events or the TV show should also be published on the EUAG website including the correct answers. People could then download these and play the game at home with a focus on EU-Armenia relations.

Objective 3

Support the EU Delegation to position the EU as a key driver of reforms

***Strategy: Concentrate on key public target groups and channel communications
of results with an effect on the public through the EU Delegation***

➤ Press Conferences

The already well organised Advisory Board Meetings should be followed by press conferences that offer a “Quarterly update on the EU-Armenia reform cooperation”. Rather than inviting journalists to attend the opening of meetings and to take note of the standard addresses, they should be directly briefed by the Head of EUDEL, the EUAG Team Leader and the NSC Secretary and be encouraged to ask specific questions on achieved results and upcoming challenges in the EU-Armenia reform cooperation. As currently done, a joint news release should be issued summarising the main statements. This will create good media coverage helping to spread the key reform messages to wider audiences.

➤ **EUAG Lecture Series**

A series of lectures on trade, democracy, and JLS issues, organised at the European Regional Academy and other universities in Yerevan, should be initiated to introduce Armenian students to key areas in the development of EU-Armenia relations.

Lectures by the Advisors of the EUAG could focus on various aspects of EU-Armenia relations, including EU support for an Armenian quality infrastructure reform, EU best practices in fighting organised crime, the development of a Human Rights Protection Action Plan in Armenia, EU best practices for parliamentary reform and many other issues deriving from the concrete work of the group.

Such a series of lectures will allow addressing a key target group for the future development of Armenia. The lectures should be organised in a block twice a year in spring and in autumn. Students could be asked to register for the lectures through the EUAG website in order to increase traffic to the website (registration page needs to be set up).

A newsletter about the lecture series, written by journalism students, should be produced and distributed the week after the end of the lectures. It could consist of reports about and pictures of the lectures itself but also include additional interviews with the EUAG management.

➤ **Essay contest on EU-Armenia reforms**

One way for getting students more actively involved in the reform activities is to potentially have them partake in the process. One way to do so is to organise an essay contest among university students on the proposed subject of “How to best tackle economic and/or democratic reforms in Armenia”. This will allow students the opportunity to generate ideas that could in fact even grow to become part of the country’s reform agenda.

The contest should be announced and advertised during the EUAG Lecture Series and winners would be announced around 9 May, close to Europe Day. The awards for being selected as winners could be a short-term internship at the EUAG. For the selection process, the EUAG could partner with the government and respected NGOs, members of the donor community and academics to create a judging panel that will set the criteria for the yearly award and decide upon the winner.

As the EUDEL is already running a multimedia contest around Europe Day, this activity needs to be closely coordinated to profit from potential synergies regarding organisational matters.

➤ **Strategic and operational support to EUDEL**

The EUAG should suggest and closely coordinate with the EUDEL communications activities with a broader appeal. Examples of activities that could potentially help to position the EU as a key driver of reforms in Armenia and in which the EUAG can support the delegation are a journalist prize on EU-Armenia reform relations and cartoon videos on reform issues.

A journalist prize is an established tool to generate more objective and positive media coverage. As with the essay contest suggested above, the EUDEL and EUAG could partner with the government and respected NGOs, members of the donor community and academics to create a judging panel. The prize for the three winners could be a study visit to the European institutions in order to lead interviews with key stakeholders on EU-Armenia relations there. If opting for this activity the EUDEL and EUAG should take into account learnings from a previous activity with young journalists in the framework of the AEPLAC project in 2010.

Another recommended activity is to create cartoon videos on reform issues. These would aim to explain in maximum two minutes what visa facilitation, DCFTA, democratic reform and other issues mean for Armenians. Videos should be easy-to-understand and could be broadcast on TV and published on EUAG website, YouTube etc. In cooperation with the Armenian authorities the videos could also be sent to and used in schools for educational purposes.

Objective 1

Make the EU Advisory Group a household name in Brussels

*Strategy: Inform key policy makers and development cooperation organisations
on EU-level about achievements of the EUAG*

➤ **Establish a proper distribution mechanism for publications on EU and member state level**

To be successful, the activities outlined in this chapter depend on properly researched and regularly updated e-mail distribution lists. Distribution lists will be segmented according to the audiences mentioned above so that information can be sent out in a targeted way on EU level. However, the EUDEL has to remain the main distributor of reports and policy papers to the European Commission. The EUAG will be kept in copy here.

➤ **Quarterly and Annual Reports**

The quarterly and annual reports described in detail above will play a key role for raising awareness and increase information about the EUAG among EU level stakeholders as they provide a concise and easily digestible overview of activities and results of the EU Advisory Group. They are expected to attract the interest of a wide audience and to open doors for further activities outlined below.

➤ **Contributions to relevant EU level meetings and consultations related to EaP and ENP**

Together with the EUDEL opportunities should be identified in which the EUAG could directly present its achievements to European stakeholders, most of all the European Commission. So far, there have been hardly any efforts to bring in the EUAG as a good practice example in EU level discussions.

The group should start with trying to get hold of the Commission's event calendar announcing events related to the Eastern Partnership: http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/docs/calendar_en.pdf. Beyond this institutional calendar, think tanks and organisations like the ENPI Info Centre (<http://www.enpi-info.eu>) should be scanned for events in which the EUAG could participate.

Regarding EU institutional events, the Democracy and Human Rights pillar coordinator should support the management to identify key contacts in the Commission and other institutions, which would be helpful in securing presentation slots. The EUAG management (i.e. Team Leader and pillar coordinators) should then approach the organisers and offer to present the Armenian experiences.

Last but not least, the European Commission's regular consultations on the ENP and EaP offer a good opportunity to increase visibility and to bring EUAG experiences into the political debate. In case there are consultations related ENP or EaP, the EUAG management should formulate a position. The EUDEL could be asked to inform the management about such opportunities as they are expected to have information more readily available. The position itself should then be closely coordinated with the EUDEL.

➤ **Cooperation with other EU projects, think tanks and NGOs related to ENP and EaP**

Currently there are hardly any contacts between the EUAG and organisations like the ENPI Info Centre, the European Friends of Armenia (<http://www.eufoa.org>), the EPC (<http://www.epc.eu/>) or CEPS (<http://www.ceps.be>). In a first step, relevant experts from these organisations should

be taken on the distribution lists for reports, policy papers, and press releases to keep them informed about EUAG activities. In particular the policy papers are expected to be of interest to the think tanks, which could spread the information further. In addition, personal contacts should be established when the management is in Brussels in order to identify further ways of cooperation.

These organisations reach a wide audience with their communication tools and especially in the case of the ENPI Info Centre it should be ensured that the EUAG gets more visibility on their website at least. A good example is the list of projects in a country, where the EUAG is currently not represented: http://www.enpi-info.eu/list_projects_east.php?country=56. Other relevant organisations to be contacted should be researched.

➤ **Visits by EU institution delegations to Armenia**

The EUAG pillar coordinator on Democracy and Human Rights as well as the EUDEL from time to time organise study visits for groups from the European Parliament and other EU institutions to take a closer look at the Armenian reform efforts. In coordination with the EUDEL, the EUAG management will further use the opportunity of these high-level visits to present to the study groups the overall picture of the group's contributions to the Armenian reform process. Reports, policy papers as well as visibility materials such as the USB sticks will be handed over.