



Evaluation of the EURAXESS Project (2008 – 2012)

5 July 2013

Executive Summary

Purpose of the evaluation

The European Researcher's Mobility Portal (ERMP) was launched in June 2003, followed by the launch of the ERA-MORE network of Mobility Centres in June 2004¹. The ERA-Link (ELA) was established in 2006 in order to connect European Researchers in the US to the broader network of European researchers. Later, Japan and China were added to connect both research communities to their counterparts in Europe.

Based on the recommendations of an evaluation in 2007, the Commission decided to re-brand and regroup all services provided by EURAXESS. The ERMP, the ERA-MORE Network of Mobility Centres, and the European Charter and Code were reformed and together with the ERA-Link bundled under one brand. These activities were respectively renamed as EURAXESS Jobs, EURAXESS Services, EURAXESS Rights and EURAXESS Links, which form the current four branches of EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion. As part of the activities linked to the re-branding and re-grouping exercise, the EC set up a totally renewed portal and provided each of the participant members of the network with common templates.

The purpose of this assignment was twofold. First, the aim was to assess the overall progress achieved after the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS Services and Jobs activities in 2008 (**Part I**). Second, the aim was to evaluate the impact of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan and China on the networking of European researchers (**Part II**).

More in details, Part I looked at the overall progress made in implementing the six recommendations of the 2007 study, the level of awareness within the researchers' community and the type and extent of assistance required by researchers' community since the previous study, as well as the main problems and barriers encountered. Part II focused on the extension of EURAXESS Links in terms of membership and service provided to the members, the information on EU research policies and career opportunities, the links established between the host country and the EU, as well as best practices implemented, barriers encountered and improvements to be made.

The evaluation study is based on extensive desk research, interviews with relevant EU-level informants, national informants, online surveys and fieldwork in 10 EURAXESS participating countries and three EURAXESS Links destinations as well as visits to scientific conferences.

PART I – Assessment of the overall progress achieved after the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS activities (2008)

Awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and EURAXESS Jobs among the researchers' community

The analysis conducted in relation to awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community lead to some interesting findings.

The level of awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community has slightly increased (though it is still low in absolute terms). Among the different branches, awareness is higher for the EURAXESS Jobs portal than EURAXESS Services. Researchers normally find out about

¹ Another measure, not covered in this evaluation, is the adoption of The European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers in 2005

EURAXESS via word-of-mouth, whether from colleagues and friends or employers, in addition to web searches.

The increased awareness does not necessarily translate into higher use of the EURAXESS portals, however.

As far as the type of services provided by EURAXESS Services and Jobs, researchers consider them as relevant to their needs. They also identified areas for improvement, such as supporting the social networking of researchers. Similarly, the EURAXESS Jobs portal is considered a key source for researchers looking for a new job opportunity. However, it is rarely the only or the most important source consulted. Personal networks and other specialised websites (such as medical journals, LinkedIn, jobs.ac.uk, etc.) are often considered more important.

Researchers seem to appreciate the quality of the services and information provided by EURAXESS online (i.e. via the Services and Jobs portal). Characteristics such as language options, structure and visual attractiveness of the portals were appreciated by the majority of the researchers who answered the web survey. Improvements identified encompassed the navigation of the EURAXESS Services portals (both the European and the national ones) where tools such a navigation map would improve the users' experience and the details of information provided on specific topics (such as legal affairs), which often depend on the expertise of the EURAXESS staff on quite peculiar cases.

The direct support provided by the EURAXESS staff was also widely praised by those researchers who received it, in particular aspects such as the quality and timeliness of services provided. With regard to improvements, a desire for more direct contact and consultation on specific topics, such as legal issues, was highlighted.

Implementation of recommendations of 2007 – Approach and Strategy

The EU-level Communication Strategy is generally known to EURAXESS staff. Indeed, answers from the web-based survey and from fieldwork interviews show that the majority of the staff is aware of the EU-level Communication Strategy at least to some extent. Similarly, national strategies or plans are elaborated in the majority of countries, even though the national network is not always fully aware of them.

National strategies and plans identify researchers and supporting staff working in universities and research organisations as main targets of the communications and promotion activities. EURAXESS staff (mainly BhOs) carries out a strong promotion action towards national authorities and policy makers as well. In particular, they tend to promote lobbying actions besides policy-makers that actively promote measures that would benefit researchers' mobility.

The EURAXESS staff interviewed acknowledged the support provided by the EC in consolidating the network and developing and sharing promotion strategies in via the T.O.P. I and T.O.P II projects. Problems reported include the lack of a systematic follow-up to these activities and a stronger support in the upcoming periods.

One of the main issues for promoting EURAXESS is the struggle for actively engaging supporting staff in promoting the initiative. In addition, stakeholders interviewed felt that promoting EURAXESS by simply raising awareness about its existence (the 'brand' approach) is less effective than promote it explaining how it can help researchers (the problem-based approach). While this is done in some cases, it is not a widespread and common approach.

Implementation of recommendations of 2007 – Awareness

Information gathered during fieldwork revealed that a variety of activities take place at national level to increase visibility of EURAXESS. It is quite rare to have clear and dedicated communication campaigns, often due to financial constraints. Promotion campaigns and awareness activities in general are based on "traditional" tools (such as printed materials and presentations at events). The use of innovative tools such as social media is still at a developing phase.

Co-operation with multipliers (mainly with Marie Curie NCPs and national authorities) exist in most of the countries but the potential has not been fully explored.

The recommendations and technical guidelines on Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) developed since the EU-level Communication strategy at EU level have been implemented in the EURAXESS European portal. However, at national level, BhOs interviewed did not report on any specific activity taken in the field. This pointed out some misalignments between the BhOs and the administrators of EURAXESS national portals.

The main obstacles for implementing the recommendations about awareness include lack of financial support and human resources as well as a certain level of buy-in among the EURAXESS staff (be it the limited guidance some ESCs and LoCPs received by the BhOs in putting promotional activities forward).

Implementation of recommendations of 2007 – Branding

The EURAXESS staff interviewed expressed appreciation for the re-branding and re-grouping exercise, as it helped reaching better homogeneity in service provision across the entire network and better supporting the beneficiaries (i.e. the researchers).

The re-branding and re-grouping exercise is now completed across the entire network. However, the time and processes of completion varied among the participating countries. In addition, there is still some misalignment among the EURAXESS national portals.

The EC was very supportive throughout the process via concrete instructions and guidelines on how to implement the changes, the regular trainings organised (Ambassadors training, Web writing training, Portal technical training, etc.) and support to the whole process of implementation and promotion. Added to this, the set-up and functioning of the extranet was much appreciated by the EURAXESS Staff since it allows applying directly for trainings, funding, receiving notifications in real time, etc.;

On their side, researchers also appreciated the re-branding of EURAXESS (however, a minority still expressed some concerns about the name and logo chosen, which they find confusing and/or difficult to remember).

The main obstacles to the full implementation of the recommendations about re-branding concern the limited involvement of the EURAXESS local staff in the exercise. For instance, LoCPs were neither consulted on the re-branding exercise, nor given clear instructions throughout the implementation process.

Implementation of recommendations of 2007 – Effectiveness of I&C activities (at EC and National level)

The (national) websites, newsletters and events are the communication tools most widely used by the EURAXESS networks to promote the initiative. The adoption of more innovative tools such as social media is still very limited, although their relevance is acknowledged increasingly by the BhOs interviewed. Promotion via media and other multipliers is not very common either, as EURAXESS staff do not feel like having the capacity for creating events relevant enough to obtain media's attention.

Promotional materials are normally produced at national level by the BhOs and then distributed to the national network members for use. Materials from the EC are rarely used exclusively. Tailoring is normally done at national level, while local EURAXESS staff (i.e. ESCs and LoCPs) tend to be not involved in these activities. Furthermore, attention to target groups other than supporting staff in universities and research institutions (e.g. policy-makers and national administrations) has notably increased.

The main barriers identified are the difficulty in involving multipliers and supporting staff (so that visibility of EURAXESS at local level is sometimes limited), and the need for a more face-to-face approach.

Implementation of recommendations of 2007 – Role of the EC and Participating countries in order to improve I&C activities of the EURAXESS Services

Coordination of Information and Communication activities within national EURAXESS networks and with the EC is considered to be effective. On the other hand, coordination across participating countries is working less well, as ESCs and LoCPs are often isolated from the international network and would like to be more involved in international events and strategy design phase.

Training provided at European level within the current framework is considered of good quality and relevant (in terms of topics covered and quality of the coverage), but frequency should be increased. There is also a demand for covering topics not included so far (from issues linked directly to researchers' mobility to others more related to management of staff and use of communication tools).

Implementation of recommendations of 2007 – Challenges and risks (Sustainability and homogeneity of the services provided)

The main risk identified for the EURAXESS network is the sustainability of the network. Stronger political support at European and national level are considered crucial for ensuring the sustainability of the initiative. This entails stronger links with European strategies (such as Horizon 2020) and with national strategies and plans on research and human resources.

This risk is well acknowledged by the EURAXESS staff interviewed, who has been actively working to gain the necessary support at national level. A more direct intervention from the EC would strongly support this effort (as well as stronger dialogue between the EC and national institutions responsible for researchers' mobility and related policies).

Stakeholders pointed out that low awareness about the EURAXESS network could create a vicious circle as EURAXESS Services would fail to be used and the Jobs portal would be unlikely to attract vacancies and users. Therefore, the required national support would be more difficult to achieve and overall sustainability to reach.

With regard to the level of homogeneity of the services provided in relation to information and communication activities, some improvements have been identified, such as the common template of the EURAXESS Services national portals.

Potential additional features of EURAXESS Services and Jobs

Under request of the EC, the study team included three additional questions in the set of demands to the stakeholders met during fieldwork. Those questions concerned possible services to be included in those provided by EURAXESS.

The first feature encompassed the provision of more practical information also to non-mobile researchers (for example regarding career development and training) via the EURAXESS network. With regard to this proposition, stakeholders interviewed expressed that if this is intended to add extra activities to the ones currently carried out, it would not be feasible with the current amount of resources. The proposition of having EURAXESS centres providing personalised assistance to researchers (for instance by becoming career development centres) conveyed fears about its feasibility in the current framework of human and financial resources available. Stakeholders interviewed consider that it would require developing competencies which are not currently owned

by the EURAXESS staff, such as knowledge of different fields of research (as each of them has different dynamics) and skills in HR management and coaching.

Finally, a stronger involvement of industry partners in EURAXESS Jobs (the third proposition) was very much praised by the stakeholders encountered. In particular, allowing industry partners to publish their vacancies on the portal was deemed as a good way to increase opportunities for researchers and to strengthen cooperation with private sector. Interestingly, while this is already possible in the current EURAXESS framework, there seems to be a low awareness around it among many of the stakeholders interviewed (especially among researchers).

Recommendations

To further increase the visibility and thus, potentially the awareness and use of EURAXESS, we recommend:

- Further promotion of the EU-level Communication Strategy at national and regional levels by strengthening the link with the ESCs and LoCPs and among them (e.g. regular get-togethers, training session, online communications and consultation with each other, etc.) and directly involving them during the strategy design phase;
- Exploring the use of more innovative tools as part of EU-level Communication Strategy, by developing social platforms and online forum for the end-users. This would foster the set-up of a real EURAXESS community;
- Reinforcing the corporate identity of EURAXESS at national level by for instance, engaging the EURAXESS staff to use the logo in their signatures, adding the EURAXESS logo and banners in universities web sites, etc. This is relevant especially for EURAXESS staff at local level (i.e. ESCs and LoCPs) as they are the direct interface of the initiative with the researchers' community;
- Promoting and communicating in a clear way all the functionalities and potential uses of the EURAXESS Jobs portal. In fact, many of the improvements on the EURAXESS Jobs portal functionalities demanded by its users are going to be deployed with the upcoming refreshments of the portal (to be released in mid-2013), such as the refinement of search criteria, the inclusion of links to other specialised websites (e.g. naturejobs), integration of links of other European initiatives related to researchers' working conditions) etc. However, users do seem to be very much aware of many of the current functionalities either;
- Strengthening the cooperation with the business sector by encouraging industry to use the EURAXESS Jobs portal to publish their vacancies. This would multiply the opportunities for researchers and in turn generate higher awareness and use levels.

To ensure the sustainability of EURAXESS, we recommend:

- Maintaining the T.O.P. projects but adopting a long-term vision in the corresponding call focusing on defining a sustainable plan towards that vision. In addition, we suggest to establish stronger links with European (such as Horizon 2020) and national strategies and plans on R&D, since such an approach would increase the credibility and the perceived importance of the EURAXESS initiative at national level as well as support by the national authorities. This in turn will increase the sustainability of the network;
- Supporting the BhOs in their policy advisory role at national level (e.g. being invited in Government meetings, contributing in written on the subject of researchers' mobility, etc.) so that European policies on researchers' mobility are reflected to the extent possible on national measures;
- Identifying and engaging additional multipliers such local EU information networks, (i.e. Europe Direct, EURES, Enterprise Europe Network, etc.) emphasising on the European aspect

of the EURAXESS initiative and possible links with other European initiatives at national level. A larger network of engaged stakeholders would help in better promoting the EURAXESS services throughout Europe.

With regard to the EURAXESS staff and the network's operations, we recommend:

- Enhancing coordination among the EURAXESS staff and especially among the LoCPs by actively involving them at international level beyond the bi-annual conferences and training sessions, via for instance the organisation of regular webinars or the creation of an open platform for discussion other than extranet (which could serve as a 'wall' to share information, as a library, to publish upcoming events/study visits, etc.);
- Organising more training sessions. A wider spectrum of topics need to be explored, such as conducting campaigns on social media, coaching and mentoring, intercultural communication, etc.;
- Assessing the feasibility of additional features in the current set-up of the national networks, such as career development and trainings for researchers, taking into consideration the limited availability of human and financial resources.

With regard to the potential additional features of EURAXESS, we recommend:

- Taking into consideration that there is still the need to keep consolidating the existing operational model of EURAXESS Services and reducing the differences in the level and quality of services provided in the participating countries;
- Sharing future strategies and plans (including any potential novelty of the services to be provided under the EURAXESS brand, such as annexing a career development centres) with the entire network, by communicating clearly the long-term vision, the resources envisaged and the timeline for the developments identified.

PART II – Evaluation of the impact of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan and China on the networking of European researchers

Relevance of the services provided by EURAXESS Links

Evidence collected for the evaluation of EURAXESS links in the period 2008-2012 pointed out that EURAXESS Links responds to most of researchers' needs in the US, Japan and China, in large part because the IOs have been able to shape the network's offering to local needs in terms of the content of the various activities.

Many researchers expressed their problems in permeating the vast array of local institutions in the countries where they are based, due to intrinsic complexity, the multiplicity of actors and, in the case of China and Japan, the relevance of language skills that European researchers often lack. Though they look to EURAXESS Links to help them make local connections, this need has only been met to a small extent so far.

While feedback from EURAXESS Links members is taken into account, there is no mechanism in any of the three EURAXESS Links countries to ensure this is done in a systematic way, thus putting the continued relevance of the initiative at risk.

Awareness of EURAXESS Link is varied. It appears to be higher in Japan and China, where the perceived need is greater and the researcher community smaller, than in the US, where EURAXESS

risks being drowned out in a large environment with little scope to reach the majority of members of the target audience.

Awareness of EU research policies and career and collaboration opportunities

In general, EURAXESS Links is a key source of information for researchers to keep abreast of European research policy and opportunities for careers and collaboration with Europe. However, there were differences between the US, where researchers used EURAXESS to find out about potential moves to Europe, and China and Japan, where researchers were on shorter stints and used EURAXESS Links to identify funding and other opportunities leading to further work and projects in the country in question.

Success of EURAXESS Links in linking European researchers with the European research base and stimulating research cooperation

The impacts of EURAXESS Links are hard to discern and measure in terms of concrete examples demonstrating how the network led to researchers finding posts in Europe or establishing research ties.

However, there are several punctual examples showing that it has played an indirect, contributory role in propelling the careers of some researchers on an individual basis, and fostering dialogue among relevant institutions and organisations.

Problems, barriers and good practices in implementing EURAXESS Links

There were several barriers EURAXESS Links faced during the period 2008-2012. While those relating to funding have been addressed with the new Framework Contract, others could plausibly be targeted. Such barriers include those relating to engagement with national-level institutions in the EURAXESS Links countries, the approach to monitoring and evaluation, cooperation with other researcher assistance interventions and the longer term strategy of EURAXESS Links;

Among good practices worth implementing across the EURAXESS Links network, it is worth considering the high level of collaboration between the IO and EU Delegation, especially in China and in Japan. Networking events in all three countries have also received nearly universal praise, as has the European Funding Guide, which has already been adopted elsewhere after initial success in Japan

Recommendations

The evaluation team is confident making a number of recommendations in order to improve EURAXESS Links over the coming years. Indeed, some of these have already been taken into account in the new Framework Contract setting which defines the parameters of the network for the 2013-2015 funding period.

Cross-cutting recommendations

- **Systematic monitoring of EURAXESS Links:** It is recommended that a systematic monitoring mechanism be developed and rolled out across the EURAXESS Links locations. This should be consistently applied throughout the network and encompass several elements, namely 1) standardised methods and templates for gathering user feedback on EURAXESS Links activities (e.g. newsletter, portal, networking events, publications); 2) periodic member surveys; 3) standardised methods for collecting quantitative data on EURAXESS activities (e.g. portal use, applications made/positions awarded against job/fellowship postings,

publications downloaded/distributed, number of event participants, etc.). Where possible, objectively verifiable indicators should be developed and used. The monitoring mechanism would facilitate the taking into account of member needs, in addition to making it easier to identify which activities have achieved greater and lesser success. Given the flexibility of IOs and the variation in activities across the EURAXESS Links network, it would also be expected that good practices would be noticed more quickly than has been the case and, where applicable, implemented elsewhere.

- Establish more formal relationships between IOs and EU Delegations: It is recommended that the EC consider establishing a more formal relationship between IOs and the EU Delegation in the EURAXESS Links locations. Building on success achieved particularly in China and in Japan, this would help ensure that EURAXESS Links plays its role effectively as a 'bridge' between the policy level and researchers themselves. It would also encourage the exploitation of synergies and cross-promotion, increasing the profile of EURAXESS Links and helping to raise awareness among members of European research policy and other relevant issues. In addition, it is recommended that EURAXESS IOs work on fostering relationships also with Member States S&T counsellors, who can help leverage EURAXESS (modest) budget against larger initiatives and promote more international scientific cooperation;

Relevance of the services provided by EURAXESS Links

- Develop future strategy with clear intervention logic: It is recommended that EURAXESS Links develop a strategy with objectives at output, outcome and impact levels articulating what EURAXESS Links intends to achieve at both in the individual locations and network-wide. This would help IOs tailor their offering to researchers' needs effectively, and ensure that activities are designed and conducted in a purposeful manner. The monitoring mechanism described above could be used to gauge progress over time and highlight areas that need particular attention.
- Establish and/or deepen relationships with local institutions and organisations: It is recommended that EURAXESS Links prioritise the establishment and/or deepening of relationships with local authorities, institutions and other organisations responsible for research cooperation, policy and funding in EURAXESS Links countries. The evaluation revealed that European researchers often have trouble navigating the multifarious research environments in their destination countries, especially, but not only, in China and Japan. Catalysing the formation of links between researchers and actors in the local context would be expected not only to enhance the level of research in the short term, but increase the chance that cooperation and collaboration will continue over the long term when European researchers return home. This applies not only to China and Japan, where language presents a significant barrier, but in the US, where the research environment encompasses a potentially daunting number of actors.

Awareness of EU research policies and collaboration opportunities

- Focus on promoting European research funding: It is recommended that a proportion of EURAXESS Links networking events focus on European funding available to partners based in the EURAXESS Links locations, and that both Europeans and local actors be invited to participate. While members of the network felt the events often helped them meet other Europeans, they professed trouble forging links with researchers and other actors from their destination country (though this was more of a problem in China and Japan than in the US). Encouraging more contact in the framework of concrete opportunities for research collaboration could help bridge this gap.

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Introduction

The Directorate General Research and Innovation (DG RTD) commissioned The Evaluation Partnership (TEP) and Deloitte to carry out the Evaluation of the EURAXESS Project (2008 – 2012) in the context of the Framework Contract RTD-L05-2010.

The purpose of this assignment was twofold. First, the aim was to assess the overall progress achieved after the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS Services and Jobs activities in 2008. The second aim was to evaluate the impact of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan and China on the networking of European researchers

This document constitutes the draft final report of the evaluation entailing the answers to all the evaluation questions. It also includes conclusions and recommendations. The draft executive summary will be presented upon EC's comments on this present report.

A final report will be delivered after consultation with the EC within a period of 10 working days on receipt of comments. The Final Technical Report will follow within 30 calendar days after acceptance of the final report.

The present report is structured as follows:

- a brief description of the context of the EURAXESS Project (section 1);
- an overview of the methodology, scope and coverage of the evaluation (section 2);
- a detailed presentation of the results by evaluation questions (section 3) entailing the assessments of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs (section 4.1) and the EURAXESS Links (sections 4.2);
- general conclusions and recommendations (section 4).

The annexes are presented in a separate document. They present the detailed analysis of the data gathered, including analyses of the online surveys, analyses and summary of interviews (EU-level informant report and country reports) and analyses of the poll-type interviews at scientific conferences. They also entail the list of stakeholders involved in the various evaluation activities and the structuring and data collection tools used.

This draft final report will be discussed with the EC during the draft final report meeting on 13 June 2013.

1 Context

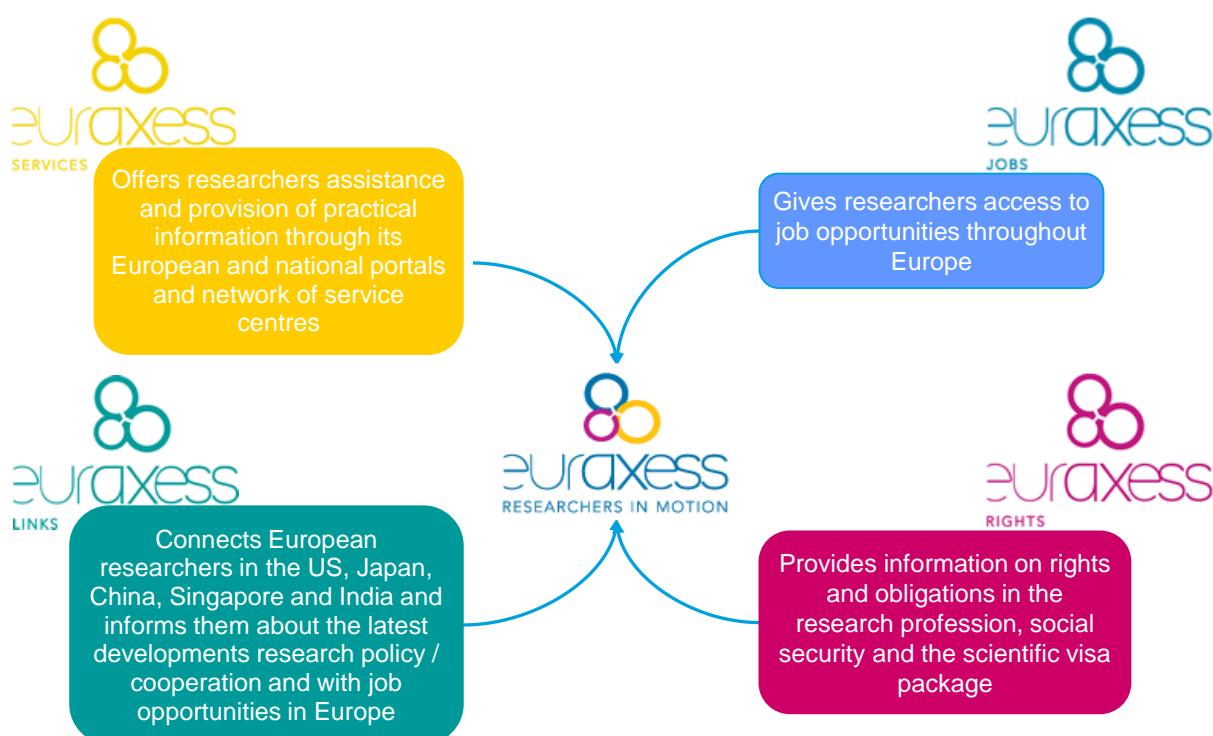
1.1 EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion initiative at a glance

As the core producers of new knowledge and the main agents in its transfer and use, researchers are indispensable for a competitive knowledge-based economy. A global approach is needed in order to attract and retain the best researchers, and to ensure that researchers benefit from the right training, attractive careers, and the removal of barriers to their mobility. Mobility is a key component of the European Research Area, which in turn is fundamental to the EU's growth and jobs strategy and vision for 2020², which aims to improve the dynamism and competitiveness of the EU economy.

Within the EU2020 Strategy, Innovation Union Commitment #30 foresees that by 2012, the European Union and its Member States should put into place integrated policies to ensure that leading academics, researchers and innovators reside and work in Europe and to attract a sufficient number of highly skilled third-country nationals to Europe.

As stated in the tender specifications, *with the aim of contributing to the development of the European Research Area (ERA) and thus an open and attractive labour market for researchers, EURAXESS-Researchers in Motion provides support to mobile researchers seeking to advance their careers and personal development by moving to other countries.*

The current EURAXESS activities are divided into four branches³:



1.2 The birth of the EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion umbrella

Following its Communication, "Towards a European Research Area"⁴, of 18 January 2000 the EC emphasised the need for more abundant and mobile human resources in research. Mobility was

² Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (op.cit); <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

³ EC, EURAXESS, retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm>

perceived as one of the major instruments to enhance the transfer of knowledge and to boost the European Union's attractiveness for research talent from all over the world. The Lisbon European Council of 22 and 23 March 2000 invited the EC, in close collaboration with the Member States, to take the necessary steps to remove the obstacles to mobility by 2002. In order to respond to the Lisbon mandate, the EC adopted on 20 June 2001 the communication "A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area"⁵ aiming to create favourable environment of the mobility of researchers.

As a part of the concrete measures foreseen to improve the overall environment of researchers in Europe, it was proposed to set up an internet portal linking national and EC internet sites by providing a common entry point for researchers to national and community level information. Furthermore, national internet sites were proposed providing to EU and foreign researchers practical information on national legislation and procedures and listing job vacancies and funding opportunities. The creation of national Mobility Centres was also proposed in order to assist foreign researchers in dealing with legal and administrative matters and provide practical information on accommodation, day care or education for children and give advice on job opportunities for the accompanying partner⁶.

European Researchers Mobility Portal and ERA-MORE Network

The European Researcher's Mobility Portal (ERMP) was launched in June 2003. It was followed by the launch of the ERA-MORE network of Mobility Centres in June 2004.

DG RTD commissioned Deloitte and TEP to carry out two evaluations of the European Researcher's Mobility Portal and the ERA-MORE network of Mobility Centres focusing respectively on assessing the extent to which the researchers' community was aware of the initiatives and to identify how researchers could efficiently be made aware (in 2007) and on assessing the effectiveness of the Mobility Centres (in 2008).

The main conclusion of the evaluation in 2007 stated that:

- **awareness** amongst European researchers about the ERA-MORE Network and the ERMP was generally low. Recommendations were made to enhance awareness by increasing ERMP visibility on internet search engines and proactively seeking out further multipliers;
- with regard to the **branding** of the services, the evaluation recommended a single name and logo, i.e. for DG RTD to drop the former ERA-MORE slogan and to encourage the National Mobility Portals to showcase fewer logos;
- the **effectiveness of the I&C activities** could be improved by limiting the centralised production of I&C materials and continuing the development of I&C materials and activities at national level;
- final recommendations included that the EC should continue the networking, exchange of experiences and sharing good practice and improve the ERMP. A **coordinated, strategic and long term communication approach** should be put in place and defined clearly in a policy document.

ERA-Link

ERA-Link (ELA) was established in 2006 in order to connect European researchers in the US to the broader network of European researchers. Later, Japan and China were added to connect both research communities to their counterparts in Europe.

⁴ COM(2000) 6 Final *Towards a European Research Area*

⁵ COM (2001) 331 Final *A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area*

⁶ As part of the concrete measures foreseen to improve the overall environment of researchers in Europe, The European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (C&C) was adopted. The C&C is not described further in this study as it is not under examination in this evaluation.

In 2009, the EC commissioned Deloitte and TEP with a feasibility study on ELA Geographic Expansion to establish recommendations for the new series of countries/regions on the next generation of ELA candidates to be assessed and on the various models of its structure and management in the future. The main objective of this study was to collect and analyse useful data in order to recommend in which countries next ELA networks should be established, whether ELA networks should be created country by country or using a 'hub' approach and which management models could be envisaged to run the networks. Following the study, Singapore and India were established, given their strategic importance to the European Science & Technology policy⁷.

EURAXESS

The ERMP, the ERA-MORE Network of Mobility Centres, and the European Charter and Code were reformed and together with the ERA-Link bundled under one brand. These activities were respectively renamed as EURAXESS Jobs, EURAXESS Services, EURAXESS Rights and EURAXESS Links, which form the current four branches of EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion⁸.

EURAXESS Services: actions taken by the EC since the 2007 evaluation study

Following the evaluation of 2007, the EC decided to re-brand and regroup all services provided by EURAXESS. The EC set-up a totally renewed portal and provided each of the participant members of the network with common templates and brochures. At that time, countries showed no resistance to the re-branding exercise, and the EC and the countries/members of the network worked closely together.

In 2009, the EC in order to reinforce the quality, effectiveness and coherence of the services provided by the EURAXESS Services Network, decided to launch a call won by a Consortium consisted of 11 participant organisations led by Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation (AvH), Germany; that was the EURAXESS T.O.P. project⁹. The total budget of T.O.P. was EUR 1.5 million and aimed to *reinforce the quality, effectiveness and coherence of the services provided by the EURAXESS Services Network by promoting trans-national cooperation along with identification, refinement and exchange of best practice*.

In 2012, the EC published a follow-up call (T.O.P. II project) won by a Consortium of 17 participant organisations led by *Fundación Española para la Ciencia y la Tecnología* (FECYT), Spain. The budget was twice as much as T.O.P. (EUR 3 million) for a period of three years and the focus was on actively involving all members of the EURAXESS network to upgrade their services (establish better professional service centres) and the content of their portals and also to enhance their networking activities (continued dialogue with policy makers and other stakeholders), such as targeted training sessions, study visits, awareness and dissemination, etc. Quality criteria were also established for the countries willing to send to the T.O.P. II Consortium their calls to receive financial support.

Over time the network has been expanded in Europe; Albania, FYROM, Moldova, Faroe islands are the newcomers in the network and are entitled to apply to receive funding to set-up their national portals. Additionally, countries from Asia as well as the Middle-East have expressed their interest in joining the network in the coming years.

EURAXESS Links: status of implementation at a glance

For the last two and a half years, the EURAXESS Links have been animated and operated under a Framework Contract of the DG COMM. In the beginning, there was one Information Officer (IO) per

⁷ EC, EURAXESS – Links Countries, Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/links/countries_en.htm.

⁸ We do not refer further in the study to the EURAXESS Rights, fourth part of the EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion initiative, as this specific activity is not in the scope of this study.

⁹ "Enhancing the Outreach and Effectiveness of the EURAXESS Network Partners".

country (Link) who was responsible for running the local website (with the contractor responsible for the technical aspects of the portal), attending fairs but not organising events himself.

As from 2013 a new era, corresponding to the second phase of the project, for the EURAXESS Links was initiated and a whole new structure was put in place (under a new Framework Contract specifically designed for the project and owned by DG RTD.B2). Nowadays, the Links Information Officers (now known as EURAXESS Links Representatives) have the opportunity to further develop their services and better coordinate their actions to serve the researchers' needs. Moreover, a central structure is being set up (e.g. the EURAXESS Links monthly reports are sent to a central structure which guarantees their quality and coherence and the way the network members work and deliver), the Information Officers are in charge of organising four events per year so as to improve visibility and training sessions will be held in Brussels twice per year to train the Information Officers and increase their awareness and understanding of the assignment.

In the framework of the second phase, the mandate EURAXESS Links has been extended geographically by adding new countries and hubs but also by extending the purpose of the network which now aims to not only address European researchers but also local researchers and therefore, the whole international community of researchers that may be interested in working and living in Europe.

2 Methodology, scope and coverage of the evaluation

2.1 Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The study consists of two main evaluation areas:

- **Part 1:** assessment of the overall progress achieved after the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS activities in 2008 (with a focus on the EURAXESS Services and Jobs);
- **Part 2:** evaluation of the impact of the functioning of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan, and China on the networking of European researchers both within these countries and with their counterparts in Europe.

2.1.1 Part I - EURAXESS Jobs and Services

This part looks at the overall progress made, the level of awareness within the researchers' community and the type and extent of assistance required by the researchers' community since the previous study.

As defined in the ToR, the following evaluation questions have been addressed:

Main topic	Evaluation questions
Evaluation questions concerning the researchers' community	To what extent is the researchers' community aware of the existence of the EURAXESS tools for finding jobs and funding opportunities (EURAXESS Jobs) as well as practical support for issues related to the mobility of researchers (EURAXESS Services)?
	To what extent does the researchers' community make use of the services and support provided by EURAXESS?
Evaluation questions concerning the Services Centres and the stakeholders' community	To what extent have the six main recommendations (Approach and Strategy, Challenges and Risks, Awareness, Branding, Effectiveness of information and communication activities, Role of the EC and participating countries) from the 2007 study on ERA-MORE network and the European Researcher's Mobility Portal been implemented?
	What are the main problems and the barriers hindering the full implementation of the recommendations?
	Overall to what extent has the objective of a coordinated, strategic and long term approach to better communication of the activity been a success?

In addition to these questions, examples of good practice concerning the new features introduced since 2008 have been identified. Furthermore, the evaluation team developed a set of recommendations for future improvement. In this context, the evaluation team has taken the opportunity to examine three additional questions that are currently assessed by the EC, namely:

- Do you think it would be useful if the EURAXESS Portal provided more practical information also to non-mobile researchers, for example regarding career development and training?

- Do you think it would be useful if the EURAXESS Service Centres expanded their personalized assistance, e.g. in becoming careers development centres?
- Do you think that EURAXESS Jobs Portal should dedicate a specific section to industry partners?

We present in annex the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of 2007 as well as their correlation with the objectives of the current study in relation to the overall progress in implementing these recommendations.

2.1.2 Part II - EURAXESS Links

This part discusses the impact of the EURAXESS Links in US, China and Japan during the period 2008-2012.

The following evaluation questions have been examined:

Main topic	Evaluation questions
<i>Membership</i>	How many members are there and how many participate actively?
<i>Services</i>	What services are offered? To what extent do the services offered meet the needs of members? What feedback has been received from the members?
<i>Information on European Policy, jobs and collaboration</i>	To what extent are the members of the network informed about EU research policies and made aware of career opportunities in Europe as well as opportunities for collaboration with Europe? How was this achieved?
<i>Linking host country with the EU</i>	Overall, to what extent has EURAXESS Links been successful in linking European researchers with the European research base and stimulating scientific cooperation between Europe and the host countries where they work? To what extent has this initiative been helpful in creating synergy among researchers and finding new job opportunities?
<i>Best practice and challenges</i>	Are there examples of good practice? What problems have been encountered in trying to meet the objectives?
<i>Improvements</i>	What improvements could be made?

The evaluation team developed a set of recommendations for future improvement of the services offered by the EURAXESS Links hubs.

We present in annex the main findings of the feasibility studies carried out in the framework of EURAXESS Links.

2.2 Evaluation design (methodology)

In order to cover all the topics in a logical and interconnected way, the evaluation team followed an approach that allowed handling several issues concurrently.

The approach included the following features:

- a clear understanding of the work to be performed in order to tailor our approach to the evaluation requirements;
- a comprehensive and tailored methodological approach for gathering and analysing data to ensure a strong base of evidence and coverage of all tasks specified in the Terms of Reference;
- an open attitude towards stakeholders who want to contribute proactively (EC officials, EURAXESS Services Centres staff, EURAXESS Links Information Officers, etc.).

According to our approach validated by DG RTD, we carried out the evaluation according to subsequent phases, as follows:

- Phase 1: Structuring (inception);
- Phase 2: Data Gathering;
- Phase 3: Analysis, Judgement and Reporting.

2.2.1 Structuring the evaluation

The **structuring phase** allowed the evaluation team to structure the evaluation study according to the evaluation questions to be answered (via fine-tuning our understanding of the objectives and scope of the assignment based on initial desk research and preliminary interviews with DG RTD officials).

The table below gives an overview of the key activities undertaken:

Table 1: Evaluation activities & results (structuring phase)

N°	Evaluation activities	Results
1	Preliminary interviews with DG RTD officials	4 interviews
2	Preliminary desk research	List of documents in Annex
3	Analytical Framework	Presented in Annex

2.2.1.1 Preliminary interviews

We conducted three group interviews with DG RTD officials in charge of the EURAXESS project in order to deepen our understanding of the context and issues related to the scope of the study.

The evaluation team met and interviewed:

- Maria Teresa Bertamino, Assistant Policy Officer - Legal Assistant, Unit B2;
- Kitty Fehringer, Assistant Policy Officer - Network of Service centres, Unit B2;
- Alessandro Quadri Di Cardano, Assistant Financial and Policy Officer, Unit B2;
- Stefania Bettini, IS Coordinator for the EURAXESS portal, Unit B2.

The evaluation team had also the opportunity to identify together with DG RTD other relevant stakeholders at EU level who should be interviewed during the data collection phase.

2.2.1.2 Preliminary desk research

The evaluation team has collected and conducted preliminary analysis of a first set of relevant documents. The list of documents that has been used during the desk research of the data gathering phase includes:

- Strategic documents (including the EURAXESS EU-level Communication Strategy);
- available quantitative and qualitative on the activities of the EURAXESS project (including survey results and statistics);
- relevant studies (including previous evaluation reports and feasibility studies).

The list of documents is presented in annex.

2.2.1.3 Refine methodological approach

The kick-off meeting, the preliminary interviews with DG RTD and the initial desk research have been used to further refine our proposed methodology. In particular, this included the elaboration of the analytical framework.

The evaluation project was structured and conducted by using an analytical framework based on the evaluation objectives and questions identified in the task specifications and our understanding of the services to be delivered. The analytical framework maps the following elements:

- the evaluation questions;
- the judgement criteria used to answer the evaluation questions in an accurate and sound manner;
- the indicators used to substantiate the judgement criteria. Indicators may be qualitative or quantitative;
- the sources of the information and data that feed the indicators.

We have also refined our work plan and data collection tools. These latter include interview guides, web-based survey questionnaires, focus group questioning route and poll-type interview guide.

The analytical framework approved by the Steering Committee is presented in annex.

2.2.2 Data collection

The **data gathering phase** aimed to collect data to respond to the evaluation questions and has been carried out through the evaluation activities as listed in our project plan including data collection at European and national level (based on a series of interviews and focus groups during fieldwork in the selected countries). During this phase, the evaluation team also further conducted desk research.

The table below gives an overview of the key activities undertaken:

Table 2: Evaluation activities & results (structuring phase)

N°	Evaluation activities	Results
1	Desk Research (including MORE2 survey)	List of documents in Annex
2	Interviews with EU level stakeholders	10 interviews
3	Web-based surveys BhOs and ESCs Researchers' community EURAXESS Links members	136 replies 996 replies 200 replies
4	Poll-type interviews at scientific conferences	163 poll-type interviews
5	Fieldwork in 10 EURAXESS participating countries Interviews with key stakeholders Focus group	60 interviews 67 participants
6	Fieldwork in three EURAXESS LINKS destinations Interviews with key stakeholders	26 interviews

2.2.2.1 Desk research

The desk research has been a dynamic exercise, continuing along the evaluation process. It started at the inception phase where the main documents have been made available to the evaluation team. The evaluation team continuously sought for any relevant document including during the fieldwork (national desk research).

2.2.2.2 Interviews with EU level stakeholders

We have conducted semi-structured interviews with a series of European stakeholders. The interviews aimed to gain further insights into activities conducted by the EURAXESS activities among international and EU stakeholders. Tailored interview guide has been used in order to specify the different themes to be treated while maintaining the flexibility for interviewers and interviewees to broach other topics considered particularly salient or important.

A summary report of the findings is presented in annex.

2.2.2.3 Web-based surveys

Three web-based surveys have been launched:

1. the Bridgehead Organisations (BhOs) and the EURAXESS Service Centres;
2. the researchers registered to the EURAXESS portal. An e-mail with a link to the web-based survey has also been sent to the EURAXESS researchers' database;
3. the researchers registered to the EURAXESS Links.

The surveys were hosted on a dedicated site to allow responses to feed directly into our specialised survey software, with a link to the survey included in an email sent to the BhOs, the ESCs and the IOs by the EC. The questionnaires were available for respondents in English.

Detailed analyses of the three surveys including profile and background data are presented in annex.

2.2.2.4 Poll-type interviews at four International Scientific Conferences

In order to gain a better view on the level of awareness of the EURAXESS activities among the researchers' community and thus to be able to compare with the results of the previous study, the

evaluation team attended four International Scientific Conferences during which poll-type interviews have been carried out with researchers attending the conferences. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions and was short enough to ensure sufficient responses.

The four selected International Scientific Conferences were the following ones:

- International Congress on Targeted Anticancer Therapies, 4-6 March 2013, Paris;
- EU Science: Global Challenges, Global Collaboration (ES:GC2), 4–8 March 2013, Brussels;
- London School of Social Sciences PhD Conference 2013, 19 April 2013, London; and
- International Spinal Cord Repair Meeting, 26-27 April 2013, Barcelona.

A survey summary report is presented in annex.

2.2.2.5 Fieldwork in ten EURAXESS participating countries and three EURAXESS Links destinations

In order to collect additional data, the evaluation team undertook fieldwork activities in ten EURAXESS member countries (Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and UK) and EURAXESS Links destinations (China, Japan and USA).

All the fieldwork activities have taken place in English and were based on interview guides and focus group questioning route.

Detailed analyses of the fieldwork, presented as country reports are presented in annex.

2.2.3 Analysis, judgement and reporting

The **analysis, judgement and reporting phase** concentrated on drafting the findings coming from the analysis of the data collected, structuring them according to the evaluation questions. Those findings are presented in this final report and drove the formulation of our conclusions and recommendations. Our findings are based on an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the previous phases of the assignment.

3 Evaluation of the EURAXESS project

3.1 Introduction and structure of findings

This section presents the findings of the study in relation to the evaluation questions and sub-questions of the Analytical Framework.

The section is divided in two main parts.

The **first part** reports the findings of the analysis with regard to the assessment of overall progress achieved after the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS activities in 2008 (Part I of the Analytical Framework). It is organised in seven sub-sections. The first section presents the main findings in relation to the awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community (sub-section 3.2.1). Later, each of the six following sub-sections corresponds to one evaluation question.

Each sub-section starts with a recall of the main conclusions and recommendations from the 2007 evaluation, presents the findings of the current evaluation and terminates with the main conclusions stemming from the analysis.

The **second part** presents answers to the evaluation questions relating to Part II of the study, the evaluation of the impact of EURAXESS Links in China, Japan and the US. The section is structured around the answers to evaluation questions on several topics, namely the relevance, effectiveness and impact of EURAXESS Links.

As requested, good practices were also identified in the participating countries. For the sake of clarity, they are included in the analysis that follows in blue boxes.

3.2 Part I – Assessment of overall progress achieved after the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS activities (2008)

Overall evaluation question: To what extent have the six main recommendations from the 2007 study on ERA-MORE network and the European Researcher's Mobility Portal been implemented?

3.2.1 Awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and EURAXESS Jobs among the researchers' community

Evaluation question: To what extent is the researchers' community aware of and making use of the services and tools provided by EURAXESS?

3.2.1.1 Introduction

This section looks first at our findings as to the extent to which researchers are aware of the existence of the EURAXESS practical support for issues related to the mobility of researchers (EURAXESS Services) as well as the tools for finding jobs and funding opportunities (EURAXESS Jobs) and second, to the extent to which researchers are making use of the services and tools provided by the EURAXESS Services and Jobs.

The assessment of the overall level of awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs within the researchers' community is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the BhOs, the ESCs and the LoCPs (EURAXESS staff) and the survey targeting the researchers' community, poll-type interviews in four international scientific conferences and data collected during desk research e.g. MORE2 survey) as well as **qualitative** data (i.e. interviews with EU and national stakeholders and focus groups with researchers in the ten visited countries).

The analysis that follows draws on and compares various sources to the extent possible. At the same time, any comparison should be taken very cautiously given the different time series, sampling techniques and dissemination channels¹⁰ of the available sources.

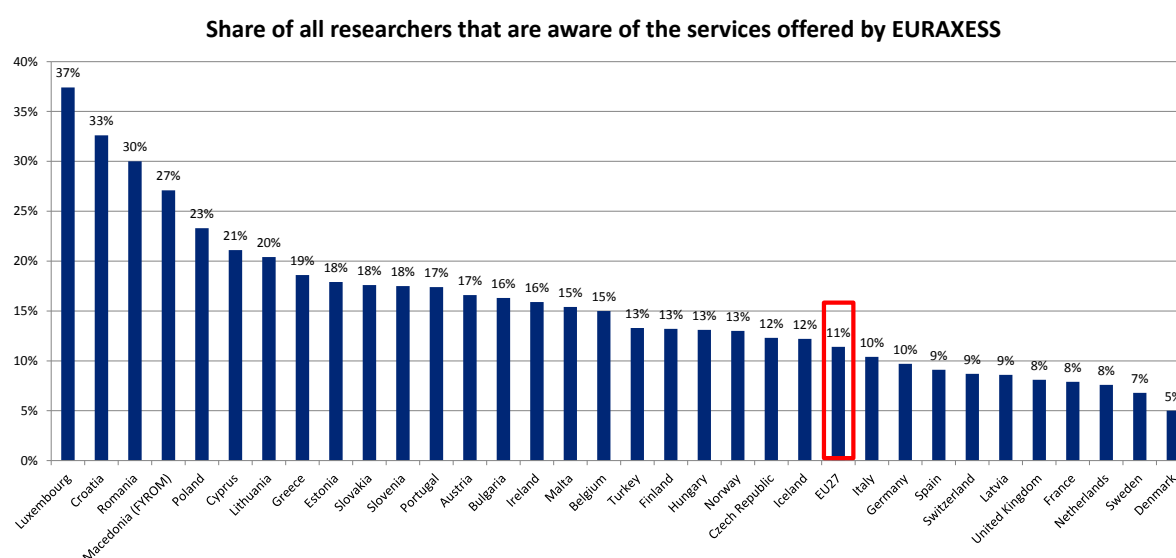
3.2.1.2 Findings

Due to the re-branding of EURAXESS and the different sources of information available (online surveys questionnaires and researchers interviewed), comparison between the situation at the time of the first evaluation and today should be conducted in a cautious way; what follows in this section reflects this approach and provides an indicative but sound estimate of the current level of awareness and use.

Awareness of EURAXESS

According to the preliminary findings of the MORE2 study (2012¹¹), the EU27 average share of the researchers aware of the services offered by EURAXESS is 11%. The highest share of researchers aware of EURAXESS belongs to Luxembourg, Croatia and Romania (37%, 33% and 30% respectively) whereas the share of researchers in two Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Denmark) is the lowest among the countries sampled (7% and 5% respectively).

Figure 1: Share of researchers knowing the services provided by EURAXESS



Source: MORE2 Higher Education Survey (2012)

Although the following data sets cannot be fully comparable to the MORE2 study, they seem to corroborate its findings. These data stem from interviews with randomly sampled researchers at four international scientific conferences performed in 2007 and a similar exercise carried out during the first months of 2013 in the framework of the current evaluation.

In 2007, out of 203 researchers polled¹², only 2% of respondents had heard of the ERA-MORE network and 9% of the European Researcher's Mobility Portal. Five years later, the feedback received¹³, even though after the re-branding we only made reference to EURAXESS, in general

¹⁰ The study does not present any statistical inference.

¹¹ Source: MORE2 Higher Education Survey (2012). Idea Consult (2013), "Support for continued data collection and analysis concerning mobility patterns and career paths of researchers", February 2013

¹² EC (2007), Evaluation of Communication and Information activities relative to ERA-MORE and the European Researcher's Mobility Portal, Final Report, October 31, 2007.

¹³ See annex 5 'Conference Survey Summary Report'

seems quite identical; the share of researchers polled who are aware of EURAXESS seems to remain very low (13%).

Additional data on awareness come from online surveys of researchers reached via an email list provided by the EC (including EURAXESS registered members, members of the Institutional HR Strategy Group - four cohorts). Therefore, not surprisingly, the level of awareness among these respondents (researchers who have already been exposed to European research programmes) is higher than in the case of the data presented before (researchers surveyed at random).

The results of the 2007 evaluation indicated a total of 47% of the respondents admitted they had at least heard about the ERA-MORE network and 66% have at least heard of the European Researchers Mobility Portal. Five years later, a slight increase of awareness level is found; a bit less than three-fourth of the researchers replying to this survey (**73%**) suggested that have heard of EURAXESS (Services and Jobs) before.

Table 3: Results on awareness of the ERA-MORE network and the European Researchers Mobility Portal (2007)

Aware of the ERA-MORE network	Awareness of the European Researchers Mobility Portal
53%: never heard about it	34%: never heard about it
33%: they have heard about it but do not know what type of assistance it provides	27%: they have heard about it but never made use of any of its portals
14%: they know about it and the assistance provided	39%: made use of one of the portals (the EU or a national one)

Source: Evaluation of Communication and Information activities relative to ERA-MORE and the European Researcher's Mobility Portal, Final Report – Annexes, October 31, 2007¹⁴

Additional qualitative data received during the fieldwork supports the view that awareness remains low. For example, the majority of EU-level stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation¹⁵ were of the opinion that awareness of EURAXESS Services (both the web-site and the Services Centres) and Jobs among researchers is rather low. According to them, awareness is in general higher among researchers already involved in other EU-funded initiatives or Marie Curie fellows, since Marie Curie National Contact Points (NCPs) inform them about EURAXESS directly (in particular according to interviewees in Croatia and Italy), even though they themselves get to know about EURAXESS only when receiving their fellowship. Another reason cited for the higher awareness amongst Marie Curie scholars was the fact that positions advertised under that programme must be advertised on the EURAXESS Jobs portal.

Likewise, feedback gathered from focus group participants during the fieldwork in the ten participating countries¹⁶ suggested that, in general, there is still a low level of awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community. Several reasons were provided to explain this. Among them, the brand is not widely recognised by the researchers, the key message is not considered salient and straightforward. Also, participants stated that it was not very clear from the very beginning whether EURAXESS is a European initiative or a national mobility tool. Leading from this, they added that even when

EURAXESS CZ national portal

In the case of the Czech Republic, the EURAXESS national portal and its services are well known among researchers thanks to the close collaboration between EURAXESS staff and the responsible Ministry.

¹⁴ A total of 2 160 persons (registered users) responded to survey stemming from more than 90 countries.

¹⁵ See annex 3 'EU level interviews'

¹⁶ See annex 4 'Country Case Study Reports'

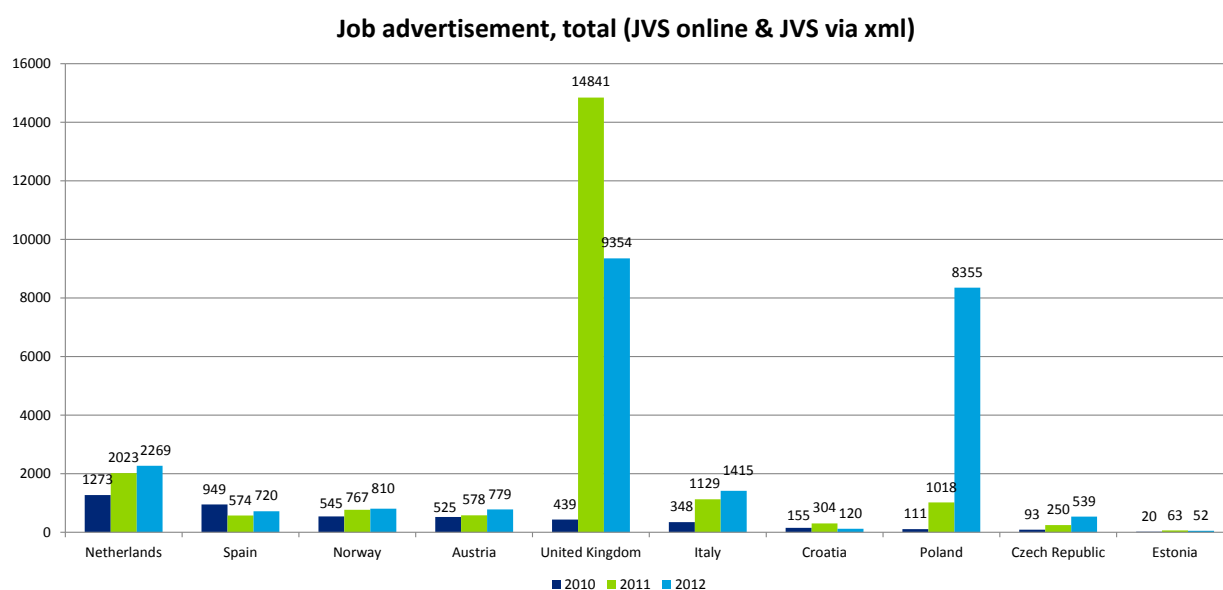
researchers are aware of EURAXESS Services and Jobs they do not always make use of them. Nevertheless, in small countries where the number of (foreign) researchers is relatively low (such as the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia), there is tendency that more researchers know about EURAXESS - especially those coming from outside the EU.

When comparing awareness of the EURAXESS Services and EURAXESS Jobs, overall, awareness is slightly higher for the latter; among the four branches of EURAXESS, the EURAXESS Jobs portal was the one most known among the focus groups participants. They very much appreciated the fact that the EURAXESS Jobs is now directly linked to Nature jobs (<http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/>) since researchers on the EURAXESS Jobs site get routed to the Nature site (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/jobs/index>). According to participants this has increased visibility of the EURAXESS Jobs portal. In addition, in some countries (for instance in Poland and Norway), there is a statutory requirement to publish all job vacancies on the EURAXESS Jobs portal, further increasing awareness of the portal among the researchers. Nevertheless, Nature Jobs and other sites are more widely known and used by the interviewed researchers with greater frequency.

The results of the survey of EURAXESS staff¹⁷ are consistent with the findings cited above. As proof of the rising awareness of the EURAXESS Jobs portal, the interviewed EURAXESS staff pointed to the increased number of job vacancies posted on the portal in question.

The figure below illustrates how the number of advertisements published on the portal has grown since a 2010 baseline, especially in the UK, Poland, Italy and the Czech Republic but also in the other countries visited.

Figure 2: Job advertisements, 2010-2012



Source: European Commission, 2012

Nevertheless, according to many interviewees, the EURAXESS Jobs portal is still less known to the business sector, which is one reason why the portal may still lack visibility.

Taking into account the re-branding of EURAXESS and the fact that the data gathered and sources of information used during the 2007 and current evaluation limit the comparability of findings, the

¹⁷ See annex 6 'Survey to the BhOs and the ESCs'

analysis provides some indication that the level of awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community has slightly increased (though it is still low in absolute terms). Awareness is higher for the EURAXESS Jobs portal than EURAXESS Services (both the web-site and the Services Centres).

With regard to the way researchers become aware of EURAXESS, it is often thanks to informal dissemination channels, in particular word-of-mouth. It is either via their employers (universities, research institutes, HR department of the company) or colleagues that they are made familiar with EURAXESS Services. To a more limited extent, researchers seem to find out about EURAXESS from university communication efforts or information received during social events.

The online survey provided similar findings. Online searches and recommendations from colleagues/friends were cited (23% and 22% respectively) frequently by respondents¹⁸. Similarly, 20% of respondents suggested another EC website whereas printed materials about EURAXESS scored very low (2%). Among those replying 'other', universities' portals, participation in workshops and social media (Facebook, LinkedIn) were among the more common responses.

The findings of the EURAXESS survey in 2012¹⁹ were slightly different, with 44% of the respondents first hearing of the EURAXESS website via the official portal of the European Union (<http://ec.europa.eu/>), 26% by another researcher, 9% via the ESCs, whereas the share of researchers that was informed about EURAXESS via advertisements or social networks was 12% and 7% respectively.

Word-of-mouth, whether from colleagues and friends or employers, in addition to online searches, appears to be the most common way for researchers to find out about EURAXESS.

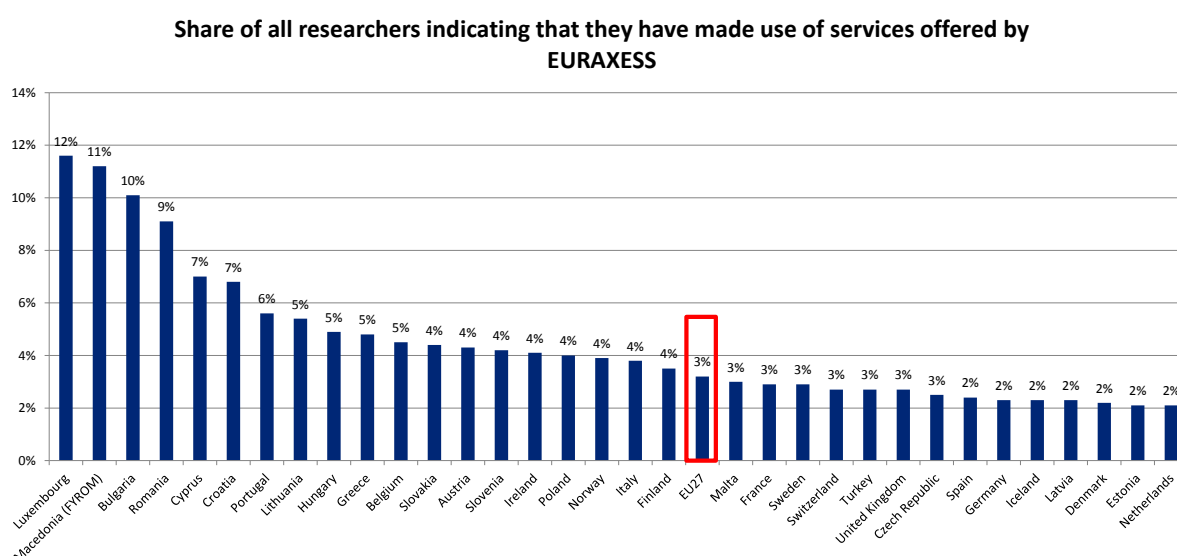
Use of EURAXESS

In relation to the use of EURAXESS, according to the preliminary findings of the MORE2 study, the EU27 average share of the researchers indicating that they have made use of services offered by EURAXESS is only 3%. The share of researchers having made use of EURAXESS in Luxembourg, Croatia and Romania is the highest (12%, 11% and 10% respectively) whereas the share of researchers in two Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Denmark) was the lowest (2%) in the countries for which data was available.

¹⁸ See annex 6 'Survey to the researcher' community'

¹⁹ EURAXESS Survey 2012, 21-11-2011, Version 1, p. 15. The survey was launched on 30th October 2012 and closed on 21st November 2012, aiming at identifying the areas of interest in the EURAXESS website. The survey was addressed to researchers (both registered and not) and registered research organisations. The survey was developed using the Google Doc platform and was carried out in English.

Figure 3: Share of researchers making use of the EURAXESS services



Source: MORE2 Higher Education Survey (2012)

Evidence gathered²⁰ using poll-type interviews at four international scientific conferences is consistent with the MORE2 survey; the share of researchers who have made use of EURAXESS was only 3%. Those who have made use of EURAXESS indicated that they predominantly used EURAXESS Jobs.

EURAXESS Jobs was also the most popular part among survey respondents²¹, claiming to have made use of EURAXESS. Of them, 83% have made use of at least EURAXESS Jobs while 26% of at least EURAXESS Services.

The findings presented above about the increasing awareness and the respective level of use of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs are supported by the website statistics provided by the EC.

For example, looking at the number of unique visitors to the EURAXESS portal²², it can be seen that figures have increased steadily over the last four years; reaching a total of 619 450 visitors in 2012 compared to 291 143 in 2009.

Table 4: Number of Unique Visitors

Year	Visitors	Page views
2012	619 450	8 159 691
2011	552 463	7 053 327
2010	365 769	4 761 323
2009	291 143	3 363 727

Source: European Commission

With regard to the number of visitors to the EURAXESS national portals, the following table depicts the total number of visitors in the ten visited countries. Based on this evidence, the Dutch national portal is the most visited (164 886 unique visitors) followed by the British (50 193) and the Croatian (46 648) ones.

²⁰ Comparison with data from 2007 is not possible due to lack of comparable findings.

²¹ See annex 6 'Survey to the researchers' community'

²² EURAXESS RiM, 01/01/2009 – 31/12/2012

Table 5: Web analytics of the 10 European EURAXESS national portals included in the study between 2006 and 2012

COUNTRY	Nr Unique Visitors ²³		Nr Page Views ²⁴	
	2006	2012	2006	2012
Austria	21 744	41 591	30 133	170 086
Croatia	N/A	46 648	N/A	205 550
Czech Republic	N/A	43 840	N/A	129 641
Estonia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Italy	10 920	10 510	21 000	35 429
The Netherlands	N/A	164 886	N/A	703 555
Norway	N/A	38 184	N/A	129 756
Poland	N/A	13 579	N/A	46 248
Spain	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UK	4 900	50 193	12 870	152 324

Source: European Commission

As mentioned in the previous part, awareness of the EURAXESS Jobs portal is higher than that of EURAXESS Services. Added to this, according to the Web Analytics Report²⁵, the number of unique visitors is the highest for the EURAXESS Jobs portal (96%) compared to the three other EURAXESS branches.

Overall, there was a consensus among focus groups participants that if they knew more about EURAXESS they would have made more use of the services available.

The total number of visitors of both the EURAXESS Services web-site (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/services>) and the national EURAXESS portals has increased over the years.

Awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs does not necessarily imply use of the portals and/or the services of the EURAXESS Centres, which still remains low even if higher than in previous years.

Additionally, findings on whether the services provided by EURAXESS are relevant to the researchers' needs are presented below. The following part presents an overall assessment on the topic.

When it comes to evaluate the relevance of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs to the researchers' needs, feedback from the researchers (users of which include both users and non-users of EURAXESS) demonstrated that the information and services provided on EURAXESS Services and Jobs are generally relevant to their needs when relocating, but there is room for improvement.

For instance, some researchers stressed that more assistance would be appreciated when moving abroad to expand their social network and fully integrate into the host country (the case in Poland especially). Also, more face-to-face assistance on behalf of the ESCs is required (such as in Norway).

The general view among interviewees was that the use of the EURAXESS Jobs as a source of information is quite widespread, even though it is rarely used as the only or main source of information because of various reasons cited among researchers.

²³ The number of visitors who visit a site during a certain period of reporting time (hours, days, one month) and unique visitors can make more than one visit during a period, they will in fact be counted only one time.

²⁴ All complete pages displayed. Images, graphics and all other page components as well as pages accessed for indexing by search engines, robots and spiders etc. are not counted as page views.

²⁵ Web Analytics Report, Data from January to June 2012, Version 1.0, p. 4.

Focus group participants noted that job offers for researchers are normally published by several websites, many of which are specialised by subject area (e.g. for economists, biologists, etc.) and those are often the first and main sources of information.

In addition, there was a need stated to refine the research criteria in the EURAXESS Jobs portal since, in some countries (Poland, Italy, Austria) there was a feeling that hard sciences are currently overrepresented. In addition, the portal was not perceived as a specialised website (unlike rivals such as medical journals, LinkedIn, jobs.ac.uk, etc.) by many users. Nevertheless, they praised the recently added link to the Nature jobs portal (<http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science>) and favoured further expanding to other specialised websites.

Moreover, the majority of interviewed researchers stressed the importance of their personal networks (employers and universities included) as the most important source of information when looking for job opportunities.

EURAXESS Services and Jobs are generally relevant to researchers' needs but there is room for improvement, such as supporting the social networking of researchers.

The EURAXESS Jobs portal is perceived as a key source researchers use when looking for jobs/fellowships but other specialised websites and personal networks are considered more important.

Quality of services provided by EURAXESS

The following part presents the opinions of the end-users in relation to the improvements made and the quality of information and services provided by EURAXESS portals and the ESCs.

To evaluate the EURAXESS portal (European and national ones), information is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the researchers' community and data collected during desk research) as well as **qualitative** information (i.e. interviews with national stakeholders, focus groups with researchers in the ten visited countries).

When it comes to the overall use of the EURAXESS portal, 50% of the researchers responding to the survey²⁶ showed high level of satisfaction for the language options of the portal and 49% highly appreciated the fact of easily surfing on the portal. The portal was also praised for its clear structure and visual attractiveness. When asked to evaluate the quality of the information provided by the EURAXESS Services and Jobs, the general feeling was quite positive.

In relation to the EURAXESS Services web-site²⁷, respondents stated that the portal provides reliable and relevant information to a great extent. Up to date information and high quality services were highly appreciated by the researchers. However, many respondents agreed on the fact that there is still room for improvement in terms of navigability of the portal when looking for information²⁸.

Regarding the EURAXESS Jobs portal, 46% of the respondents much valued the fact that the portal provides up to date announcements of job opportunities. Nevertheless, concern about the current job search categorisation and criteria as well as easiness of navigation was raised by the respondents (among others, lack of ability to look for a job by field and country, no possibility to mention the title of the degree due to universities' degrees that are very different among EU countries, refresh

²⁶ See annex 6 'Survey to the researchers' community'

²⁷ The data provided by the online survey cover both the EURAXESS Services portal and EURAXESS Services Centres.

²⁸ Ibid.

notifications, relevance of advertisements to search criteria, etc.)²⁹. Added to this, when asked about the most important improvement of the EURAXESS Jobs portal in the past few years, more than 40% of respondents affirmed that the offering of EURAXESS Jobs has notably improved (42%). It should be however noticed that after ten years of the EURAXESS Jobs portal, the whole EURAXESS web-site underwent various changes and a complete refresh. The new EURAXESS web-site is about to be released during June 2013 and will include features and improvements with regard to job search categorisation and criteria, easiness of navigation, etc.

Based on the findings of the EURAXESS survey in 2012³⁰, researchers evaluated the EURAXESS website aspects (content quality, easiness to use, easiness to understand the content, information about their field of research and services to researchers) as 'important' (48%, 40%, 44%, 36% and 36% respectively). Based on their experience, they also evaluated as 'important' the following aspects; job vacancies quality, job vacancies description and easiness to apply for a job vacancy (41%, 42% and 30% respectively). In the same survey, the registered organisations evaluated the EURAXESS portal as 'good' in terms of content quality, easiness to use and easiness to understand the content (42%, 39% and 45% respectively). The same group when asked if interested in searching for CVs on the EURAXESS website replied 'yes' in a percentage of 48% whereas 29% said they prefer to only place adverts on it. With regards to the most important aspects in CV searching, the registered organisations mentioned the quality of the CVs and the availability of CV in their research field on the top of the list. In the same survey³¹, opinions about the services provided by EURAXESS Jobs praised the quality of job opportunities provided (54% of respondents). The other features identified were ranked in the following descending order: user-friendly navigation (38%), appropriate search criteria (33%) and appropriate job search categories (29%).

Generally positive was also the opinion of the people interviewed during fieldwork with regards to the quality of EURAXESS.

The EURAXESS portal was generally considered to serve as basic source of information when it comes to researchers' mobility, according to the majority of the focus group participants. In practical terms, the idea of clicking on the interactive map looks simple and nice according to them. However, some of them stated that the use of the portal becomes simple and clear only when they pass the entry page. In terms of quality and quantity of information, detailed information about taxation, 'dual careers' and career development was judged as not frequently updated, according to the interviewees.

The quality and quantity of information provided by the EURAXESS national portals was considered by many interviewees during fieldwork as good enough to provide a general overview of the main issues and procedures relevant for incoming researchers (both from EU and non-EU countries). Support for the housing market, immigration authorities, police, etc. was generally acknowledged and very appreciated by the researchers participating in the focus groups. Despite the fact that the EURAXESS national portals provide general and up-to-date information on procedures and practicalities for some topics (such as accommodation), the level of detail was judged not sufficient by many focus group participants. Nevertheless, roughly half of the focus group participants emphasised that the EURAXESS national portals are limited to the basic needs of mobile researchers.

To evaluate the services provided by the EURAXESS staff, information is based on **qualitative** data (i.e. interviews the focus groups with researchers in the ten visited countries).

²⁹ See annex 6 'Survey to the researchers' community' – However, it should be borne in mind that the scope of the evaluation was EURAXESS until end 2012 and thus do not take into consideration the revamping of the website's layout in the framework of the 10 years of EURAXESS Jobs. The new portal will be released in the course of June 2013.

³⁰ EURAXESS Survey 2012, 21-11-2011, Version 1, pp. 8-10.

³¹ Ibid, pp. 18-21.

The vast majority of the focus groups participants that have made use of the EURAXESS services on site, acknowledged the good work performed by the EURAXESS staff. In most cases, their requests were met rightly and fast enough with the exception of few unmet questions and demands (for instance, the case of Norway). This fact is mainly due to the lack of expertise of the EURAXESS staff on specific topics (e.g. legal affairs). Another, reason cited was the lack of personal contacts with some ESCs around Europe. This latter point was also mirrored by the survey respondents; 19% admitted that face-to-face services by EURAXESS are provided to a little extent³². Also, some interviewees attributed this to the limited connection among the ESCs in different countries when the researchers are about to relocate.

3.2.1.3 Conclusions

Taking into account the re-branding of EURAXESS and the fact that the data gathered and sources of information used during the 2007 and current evaluation limit the comparability of findings, the analysis provides some indication that the level of awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community has slightly increased (though it is still low in absolute terms).

Awareness is higher for the EURAXESS Jobs portal than EURAXESS Services (both the web-site and Services Centres).

Word-of-mouth, whether from colleagues and friends or employers, in addition to online searches, appears to be the most common way for researchers to find out about EURAXESS.

The total number of visitors of both the EURAXESS Services web-site and the national EURAXESS portals has increased over the years.

Awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs does not necessarily imply use of the portals, which still remains low even if higher than in previous years.

EURAXESS Services and Jobs are generally relevant to researchers' needs but there is room for improvement, such as supporting the social networking of researchers.

The EURAXESS Jobs portal is perceived as a key source researchers use when looking for jobs/fellowships but other specialised websites and personal networks are considered more important.

The quality of the services and information provided by EURAXESS online (Services and Jobs) was much appreciated by the end-users. Nevertheless, a need for improvements related to the level of information detailed as well as navigation of the EURAXESS Services portals (the European and the national ones) was clearly stated among the people. When it comes to the support provided by the EURAXESS staff, the majority of the people received such services showed their appreciation for the work delivered in terms of quality and time. However, researchers expressed a need for even more personal support (be it being accompanied by the EURAXESS staff when dealing with the public authorities when visiting kindergartens, etc.).

3.2.2 Approach and Strategy

Evaluation question: To what extent have the recommendations of 2007 related to approach and strategy been implemented?

3.2.2.1 Introduction

The evaluation of 2007 highlighted the notable work done in the field of information and communication by both the EC and participating countries. Nevertheless, it pointed out the lack of a coherent Communication Strategy since the beginning of the initiative and the existence of scope for further improvement. As a result, the 2007 evaluation came up with the following

³² See annex 6 'Survey to the researchers' community'

recommendations: i) develop a coordinated, strategic and long-term **approach to communication** and ii) develop a well-defined and promoted **Communication Strategy** (at EU and national level).

The present evaluation aims to assess to what extent have the recommendations related to the approach and strategy been implemented, what have been the main problems and barriers hindering the full implementation of the recommendation and to what extent the overall objective of a coordinated, strategic and long-term approach to communication has been a success.

The assessment of the level of approach and strategy in communicating EURAXESS is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the BhOs and ESCs) as well as **qualitative** data (i.e. interviews with stakeholders in ten visited countries, information collected during desk research).

3.2.2.2 Findings

The EC published the EU-level Communication Strategy 2010 and beyond for EURAXESS in May 2010³³. The EU-level Communication Strategy stressed the need to develop a clear vision on the role that EURAXESS should play in the stakeholders' lives and to tailor the messages to the different target groups.

The complex structure of the audiences of EURAXESS was well acknowledged by the EU-level Communication Strategy, which identified different groups of audience and the role of each of them, either as external and internal audience, or as target audience and intermediate audience which can also be effective dissemination channels. More important, for each of those groups the EU-level Communication Strategy identified the needs, the communication objectives and the strategy to adopt, as well as tools and tactics to deploy. Those groups were:

- Researchers;
- Employers (i.e. university faculties, private companies that employ researchers, especially SMEs, and research related organisations and institutes);
- Supporting organisations (i.e. university career offices, research organisations, funding institutions and research professional organisations, etc.);

The Action Plan for Mobility of Researchers in Croatia

Specific plans and strategy for the implementation and dissemination of EURAXESS were included for the first time in the Action Plan for Mobility of Researchers for the period 2009-2010. This plan was prepared by Croatian authorities as part of the negotiations for entering the European Union and gathering the *acquis communautaire*. A second plan was prepared for the period 2011-2012, which included explicit provisions for:

- continual development of the EURAXESS Service Centre for the promotion of the mobility of researchers and scientists; and
- ensuring the sustainability of the EURAXESS Service Centre after the existing model of funding by the EC has expired.

All the Plans have been prepared for the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. While it was not necessary anymore for Croatia to prepare those Plans, stakeholders interviewed confirmed that it was decided to still have them and to revise them on a bi-annual basis, in order to provide impetus to policies for researchers' mobility (inbound, outbound and, more recently, inter-sectorial mobility).

³³ EURAXESS, EU-level Communications Strategy 2010 & beyond, May 2010

- EURAXESS staff (i.e. BhOs, ESCs, and LoCPs);
- Ministries and Public administrations;
- Media.

The EU-level Communication Strategy should then represent the starting point for action at national level. Participating countries were supposed to develop and implement National Communication Strategies on the basis of the objectives, strategy, tools and tactics identified in the EU-level one.

Data from the survey to the EURAXESS staff show that the level of familiarity with the EU-level Communication strategy is overall good. While only a limited group (21% of respondents) affirmed to know it to great extent', the largest part of respondents declared to have some knowledge of it (41% of respondents know it 'to some extent', while 29% 'to a little extent'). Only a limited part of the EURAXESS staff that participated in the survey had no knowledge of it (6% of respondents said they do not know it 'at all', while 3% said they 'don't know')³⁴.

The same source pointed out that most participating countries have a national strategy (64% of respondents answered positively to the question about the existence of a national strategy to promote EURAXESS)³⁵.

A similar proportion emerged from the fieldwork data. While the majority of the countries included in the fieldwork has a specific strategy for promoting EURAXESS (whether extremely structured or less well defined), a minority has not elaborated any (such as in the case of Poland).

Evidence from the fieldwork indicates that new Member States tend to include EURAXESS initiative in national policies for research more often than older Member States.

National strategies to promote EURAXESS vary depending on the degree of formality and on the specific targets identified for action. Instead of formal Strategies or National Plans, they are often operational documents, defining a calendar of activities to be implemented within the defined timeframe (usually, one year). Information coming from fieldwork pointed out different approaches. A small number of countries have a high-level policy strategy for promoting EURAXESS, as part of a larger and more ambitious policy to increase researchers' mobility towards and outside the country (as in the case of Croatia, which can be considered as a good practice). In the majority of cases (as for instance for Italy, the Netherlands and Norway) there is no formal Communication Strategy, however the BhOs plan and coordinate communication activities at national level and prepare and disseminate a calendar of activities within the network. Those plans are often more operational than

The EURAXESS Advisory Board in Estonia

The Estonian EURAXESS staff have set up the 'EURAXESS EE Advisory Board' inviting long-term researchers (non-nationals) to participate in ad-hoc focus groups related to the EURAXESS services in Estonia. The initiative has proved successful and met the expectations, according to the stakeholders interviewed in the country. The selection of the researchers is based on their involvement and proactivity in the EURAXESS initiative.

The same idea has also been implemented in other countries, such as Norway.

³⁴ See annex 6 'Survey to the BhOs and the ESCs'

³⁵ Ibid.

high-level, medium-term Communication Strategy, nevertheless they manage to ensure coordination of activities and a consistent communication of EURAXESS within the national territory.

Awareness about strategies and plans for promoting EURAXESS is not so widespread within national networks. ESCs and LoCPs met during fieldwork were usually not aware of the EU-level Communication Strategy, and only vaguely (or not at all) aware of national plans and strategies.

The alignment between the EU-level Communication Strategy and the National Communication Strategies of participating countries is overall quite good, according to data gathered via the survey to BhOs and ESCs. Almost half of the respondents affirmed that the national and the European strategies are aligned to some extent³⁶.

With regard to the different audiences identified by the EU-level Communication Strategy, National Strategies and Plans (whether more or less formal) tend to focus mostly on two groups, namely researchers and supporting organisations.

Researchers are the main target groups for EURAXESS promotion and are identified as such in all cases; the final purpose of the EURAXESS initiative is always considered the delivery of relevant and updated information and services to researchers.

In a few cases, researchers have been directly involved in the testing of promotion and awareness campaigns of EURAXESS and related materials (this was the examples of Estonia and Norway).

In a smaller number of cases (such as in Austria and in the Netherlands within the countries visited for the study), the main target of EURAXESS activities at national level are the HR supporting staff in universities and research institutions. Many of the supporting staff is already part of the EURAXESS national network (as they are in EURAXESS ESCs and LoCPs), while others are not part of the network.

The Dutch BhO adopted a peculiar approach in this respect. Given the limited amount of resources available (both in terms of human and financial resources) they decided to focus their efforts on supporting administrative staff in universities and research institutions. As those are the persons in direct contact with researchers and students, they evaluated as more effective to develop services and support for them, in order to provide high-level services to the target audience (i.e. the researchers). Therefore, the BhO is extremely active in organising and providing trainings on different topics (from visa procedures to taxation issues) to university staff³⁷.

Focus on EURAXESS staff is not explicit in the countries included in the fieldwork, as in most cases they are included as supporting organisation staff. This was the case of all the countries included in the fieldwork. In fact, it is often difficult to make a clear distinction between EURAXESS staff and supporting organisation staff working in universities and research centres, as they coincide in many cases (as for many ESCs and LoCPs).

Another target group identified by the EU-level Communication Strategy (Ministries and public administrations) is often not explicitly mentioned by National Communication Strategies and Plans. Despite this, promotion of the EURAXESS besides national stakeholders is often a relevant part of the activities of EURAXESS staff, especially of BhOs. Information gathered during fieldwork pointed out how communication of the relevance of the services provided by the initiative is crucial for obtaining the resources for keeping the network working and to implement awareness and promotion campaigns. Furthermore, the EURAXESS BhOs interviewed have taken very seriously their role of spokespersons on behalf of researchers and try to influence the policy-making process, going

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ See annex 4 'Country case study reports'

well beyond the EU-level Communication Strategy minimum requirements. EURAXESS BhOs are among the best placed stakeholders in each country to represent (mobile) researchers' interests and requests towards competent authorities, as they know both the practical aspects linked to researchers' moving to one country and the administrative and legal procedures of the country.

Many of the BhOs interviewed during fieldwork mentioned their accomplishments in this field. One of the most relevant examples mentioned by the stakeholders interviewed during fieldwork concern the recent legislative provisions in the visa domain for highly qualified workers (including researchers) active in the Netherlands from June 2013³⁸.

Notably, national stakeholders (such as Ministries and Agencies) are normally aware of the role played by EURAXESS BhOs in the deployment of the new legislative provisions and fully acknowledge this leading role.

National authorities are rarely put in direct contact with mobile researchers living in the country.

One noteworthy exception collected during the fieldwork was the lunch meeting organised in Croatia. This event had a double purpose: on the one hand, it was an opportunity of direct discussion between researchers and policy-makers (which rarely happens), on the other hand it gave high visibility to the EURAXESS network in the country outside the 'inner circle' of those involved in European projects and initiatives in this and related fields.

Industry and media are usually not expressly targeted by national EURAXESS strategies and plans. They are often included in the list of newsletters' recipients and in the invitations to events and workshops organised. The EURAXESS staff interviewed during the fieldwork reported the inherent difficulty in involving more directly those audiences. Industry often perceives these events are far away from their activities (as they often have their own recruitment channels and HR departments taking care of administrative procedures). Likewise, BhOs do not always have the expertise or the resources to "create an event" relevant enough to interest media³⁹.

Several problems with implementing a national strategy for promoting EURAXESS were mentioned.

At strategy level, there is no need to further define the target audience; it is only at tactical level that dedicated communication campaigns should be developed and implemented at national level.

Lunch meeting with Professors and National Authorities in Croatia

The EURAXESS BhO recently organised a lunch with a group of foreign researchers, a group of university Professors, the EURAXES staff, the President of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry for Science, Sport and Education. The event was appreciated by researchers (especially those who participated) because it gave them the opportunity to have "a very honest and open discussion" on the issues of moving to the country as a foreign researcher and to explain their problems and expectations. The event had an echo also on national press. Researchers considered that it made policy-makers much more aware of their needs and problems, and will represent leverage for acting on relevant parts of the legislation. They also added that the echo on the press gave the EURAXESS staff a large visibility and also a well-earned recognition for their hard work.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Many stakeholders interviewed felt that it is very hard to communicate anything about EURAXESS using a 'brand' approach. They consider that promoting EURAXESS by simply raising awareness about the existence of EURAXESS (the approach currently undertaken in many cases) is not very effective. They deem that a promotion more focused on communicating how it will help researchers with specific problems would work better and induce researchers to promote it directly via word-of-mouth. While this is done de facto in some countries, it is not a widespread and common approach.

Another common barrier is linked with the active engagement of supporting staff for promoting EURAXESS. Many interviewees pointed out that there is little incentive for them to do so. The main duty of those staff (often part of EURAXESS ESCs or LoCPs) is that of serving researchers and students within their institutions, which are their two main constituencies. Where these needs coincide with the services provided by EURAXESS, supporting staff will promote the portals (both the Jobs and Services) to students and researchers. Where those interests do not coincide, or EURAXESS would not provide the best answer to the researchers' needs (for instance, another website would be more pertinent), supporting staff would not hesitate to promote another provider to serve researchers at best. Furthermore, as ESCs and LoCPs are fully dependent on their institutions for funding and functioning, they need to respond to them and to comply with their policies, which sometimes limit the visibility of EURAXESS. In short, supporting staff, even the most committed LoCPs, takes an *à la carte* approach to the promotion of EURAXESS.

T.O.P. I was intended to play a relevant role in supporting the EURAXESS network in consolidating the established network and reinforced cooperation/exchange of experience. Three Work Packages (WP2, WP3 and WP4) concerned the collection of relevant experiences (WP2), generating strategies for implementation and awareness and exchange of good practices within the network (WP3) and promotion and implementation of results also outside the network (WP4) respectively. T.O.P. II plays an even stronger role in supporting outreach and promotion of EURAXESS. It builds from the results of T.O.P. I in sharing of good practices and experience and consolidating the network (and its activities) and puts a stronger emphasis on external promotion. The Work Package 2 aims to increase not only the number of researchers reached, but also the other target groups. It also supports the development and testing of new PR strategies for EURAXESS.

BhOs interviewed during the fieldwork were involved in the implementation of T.O.P. I and T.O.P. II to a different extent and all praised the relevance and effectiveness of such project for coordinating activities within the network and for elaborating consistent strategies and exchanging experiences (including learning that what is a best practice in one country will not necessarily work in another country).

The lack of a systematic follow-up on those activities (while not included in the project's specifications) was a complaint common to several BhOs interviewed during our fieldwork. More information on the use of data gathered and more guidance on how to proceed in the future would have increased the effectiveness of the project, they affirmed. For instance, it was considered unfortunate that the project on mentoring did not have a structured follow-up, such as on how to write a strategy for mentoring.

3.2.2.3 Conclusions

The EU-level Communication Strategy is generally known to EURAXESS staff, at least to some extent. National strategies are elaborated in the majority of countries, even though the national network is not always fully aware of them.

The main target audiences of EURAXESS identified are researchers and supporting staff, consistently with the EU-level Communication Strategy. National authorities and policy-makers are clearly identified as main audiences as well. EURAXESS staff (BhOs mostly) tend to involve them in national activities and to promote lobbying actions besides them to actively promote

measures that would benefit researchers' mobility. With respect to this, BhOs go well beyond the basic requirements of the EU-level Communication Strategy.

The support provided by the T.O.P. I for developing and sharing promotion strategies is well acknowledged. Problems reported include the lack of a systematic follow-up to these activities (i.e. once provided with the theoretical knowledge and tools, centralised support at EU level in the practical development of the activities they learned about was seen as a benefit and a way to increase effectiveness by BhOs) and a stronger support in the upcoming period.

The main barriers for promoting EURAXESS include the difficulty of promoting it via a 'brand' approach (while a problem-based approach is often considered more effective) and the struggle for actively engaging supporting staff in promoting the initiative.

3.2.3 Awareness

Evaluation question: To what extent have the recommendations of 2007 related to awareness been implemented?

3.2.3.1 Introduction

Based on the evaluation of 2007, awareness of the ERA-MORE Network (including the ERA-MORE brand, existence of the Mobility Centres and consequently, the existence of a pan-European network) appeared to be low among researchers. Researchers tended to associate mobility services with international offices at universities. Moreover, awareness levels among the researcher community appeared to be higher for the European Researcher's Mobility Portal compared with the ERA-MORE Network. With regards to where researchers were most likely to search for information when relocating abroad, internet was ranked the first and thus, it was indicated that the European Researcher's Mobility Portals should be optimised for internet searches. As a result, the 2007 evaluation came up with the following recommendations: i) seek for **multipliers** to help promote the services throughout Europe, ii) optimise the use of internet **search engines** and exploit the ways people search online for information relating to working as a researcher abroad.

This section on the implementation of the recommendations related to awareness of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs looks first at our findings as to the extent to which awareness and promotion strategies have been designed and implemented, second, the extent to which level of awareness among researchers' community has increased since the implementation of recommendations and third, the extent to which the researchers' community make use of the services and support provided by EURAXESS.

This evaluation question also examines the existence of any problems and barriers that hinder the full implementation of the recommendation in question.

The assessment of the overall level of implementing the recommendations related to awareness of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the BhOs and ESCs and the researchers' community) and **qualitative** data (i.e. stakeholders in the ten visited countries).

3.2.3.2 Findings

Based on the feedback received during the fieldwork in the ten visited countries, most of the countries have been implementing several communication activities to raise awareness around EURAXESS. The data gathered indicated that they keep on taking similar initiatives to those in the past with a limited adoption of additional innovative tools such as presence on social media.

Most of the BhO and the ESCs staff interviewed reported a range of initiatives/activities undertaken at national level to increase the visibility of EURAXESS. Examples, among many stated, are promotional materials (such as leaflets, brochures, posters) to Career Fairs, presentations at Universities and Faculties, social events for researchers, lunch sessions inviting distinguished speakers, seminars in cooperation with the Rector's Conference, promotion letters to leading scientists introducing EURAXESS services, communication with Foreign Ministry and embassies, etc. The most effective communication channels stated by the interviewees remain the EURAXESS national portals, the newsletter and the Guide while press releases are rarely prepared and disseminated due to the difficulty of generating interest in the national media.

Some of the BhOs and the ESCs interviewed (the case of the Czech Republic, Estonia) mentioned that they also distribute printed guides and leaflets; also a small selection of EURAXESS promotional items is available (including cups, pedestrian reflectors, key chains) to the public.

Among the few reported innovative dissemination channels, webinars and social media (such as Facebook, LinkedIn) were mentioned.

Dedicated communications campaigns were not often mentioned by the interviewed BhOs (for instance in the Netherlands, Norway) due to the lack of adequate resources to prepare and launch national EURAXESS communication campaigns.

In other countries, like in Italy and Spain, awareness and communication campaigns are mostly implemented at local level. The BhO has only a coordination role while activities to promote EURAXESS take place locally including presence at job fairs and international events at universities and the set-up of welcome desks for foreign researchers.

With regards to any existing co-operations and coordination activities with potential multipliers, interviewees agreed that the EURAXESS staff have taken steps towards identifying and exploiting many multipliers but the full potential has not been reached yet. This spurred a debate about who could prove to be a relevant and effective multiplier to raise visibility around EURAXESS.

In most of the cases, the BhOs have no formal cooperation agreements with multipliers. During the fieldwork, the general feeling was that the EURAXESS national networks have been established and are effectively operating thanks to the EURAXESS staff's willingness and motivation. Cooperation with multipliers such as the national authorities and national institutional stakeholders is mainly 'bridged' through the BhOs, thanks to the wide network and communication skills of the EURAXESS staff.

The Guide

Researcher's Guide was mentioned by the vast majority of the EURAXESS staff. The Guide is available online or/and in printed version, and contains practical information about everyday life and guidelines for dealing with the formalities of employment and work in the country. The guide was well known by researchers interviewed and was considered very useful and updated.

The majority of the EURAXESS national networks mostly collaborate with the Marie Curie NCPs (except for the case when the BhO and the Marie Curie NCP happen to be the same person when the cooperation is maximal). In addition, stakeholders such universities and (public) research centres as well as associations of university personnel are often included in the network (when not EURAXESS centres already) helping increase visibility.

To interviewees' opinion, the best multipliers at national level are national authorities' representatives and other EU networks, even though synergies with the local EU information networks, such as Europe Direct, Enterprise Europe Network, etc. are still missing. Another type of multipliers are the participants in some FP7 and national research projects where the EURAXESS staff may present the EURAXESS services in project dedicated conferences, workshops and exhibitions.

With regards to the implementation of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) strategies at European and national level, the relevant recommendation was taken into consideration when developing the EU-level Communication Strategy in 2010. The EC has followed the SEO rules⁴⁰ in developing the EURAXESS European portal. As for the EURAXESS national portals, training on SEO rules and their implementation was organised in 2011, under T.O.P. I project, gathering the portal administrators. Regarding the current level of implementation of SEO strategies at national level, no major progress has been identified. The EURAXESS staff interviewed during fieldwork did not make concrete reference to such a development, in some cases, due to lack of coordination with the national portals administrators. However, due to the significance of the SEO strategies to optimise the EURAXESS national portals, dedicated actions towards their full implementation are being taken in the framework of T.O.P. II. Based on empirical tests, the ranking of EURAXESS portal (both European and national) was high when the search was done by using English key words. When introducing key words in other languages, the results were poor.

The extent to which the level of awareness among researchers has increased since the implementation of recommendations and the extent to which the researchers' community make use of the services and support provided by EURAXESS is presented in detail in the section 3.2.1. above.

Concerning any barriers in implementing the recommendations about awareness, the EURAXESS staff emphasised the lack of financial resources for undertaking further initiatives in promoting awareness campaigns and disseminating information about EURAXESS. In some cases, the need of increasing the human resources was also stated among the EURAXESS staff due to fact that most of them are working part-time and on a voluntary basis. In addition, the limited guidance some ESCs and LoCPs received by the BhOs was mentioned as another important problem in putting promotional activities forward.

When asked about any possible tools and measures to improve awareness of EURAXESS, a number of suggestions were gathered from the interviewees: further involving the business sector; improving the Internet ranking of both the Jobs portal and of national websites; creating a monthly synthetic newsletter reporting statistics on the volume of use of EURAXESS (besides the national dimension) and some success stories.

3.2.3.3 Conclusions

A variety of activities are still at place at national level in an attempt to increase visibility of EURAXESS. However, there are few clear and dedicated communication campaigns, often due to financial reasons.

⁴⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/content/optimize/seo/index_en.htm

Very few innovative tools to increase visibility around EURAXESS are currently implemented (we note the reflection on social media presence in the framework of the T.O.P. II project).

Co-operations with potential multipliers (mainly with Marie Curie NCPs and national authorities) exist in most of the countries but the potential has not been fully explored (for instance, collaboration with other EU networks).

The recommendation on search engine optimisation of EURAXESS at European level has been taken into consideration when developing the EU-level Communication Strategy in 2010. Further, practical guidelines have been developed by the EC and included in the EURAXESS European portal. However, at national level, progress on implementing SEO strategies was not clearly reported by the BhOs interviewed.

The main obstacles for implementing the recommendations about awareness include lack of financial support and human resources as well as a certain level of buy-in among the EURAXESS staff.

3.2.4 Branding

Evaluation question: To what extent have the recommendations of 2007 related to the re-branding been implemented?

3.2.4.1 Introduction

In the 2007 evaluation it was concluded that the names of the ERA-MORE Network and the European Researcher's Mobility Portal were used quite consistently across the network compared to the logos. In addition, there was little similarity between the European National Mobility Portal and the national portals. The URLs used by the national portals were to some extent inconsistent and the ERA-MORE slogan was judged to be particularly irrelevant. As a result, the 2007 evaluation came up with the following recommendations: i) adopt a **single name and logo** that convey an online and offline presence, ii) **drop** the ERA-MORE **slogan** and iii) exploit a more consistent approach for the National Researcher's Mobility Portals in terms of design to reinforce the **corporate identity**.

This section on recommendations related to the re-branding and re-grouping of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs looks at our findings as to the extent to which recommendations about re-branding and re-grouping of services have been implemented.

This evaluation question also examines the existence of any problems and barriers that hinder the full implementation of the recommendation in question.

The assessment of the overall level of implementing the recommendations related to re-branding of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the BhOs and ESCs and the survey targeting the researchers' community and data collected during desk research) as well as **qualitative** data (i.e. stakeholders in the ten visited countries, EU stakeholders).

3.2.4.2 Findings

According to the EU-level Communications Strategy 2010 & beyond⁴¹, "a clear and strong brand vision" was broadly stated. The following four statements were mentioned as a prerequisite for a successful re-branding of the EURAXESS:

- A recognised logo;
- A clear visual identity – describing the vision;

⁴¹ EURAXESS, Communications Strategy 2010 & beyond, 3rd of May 2010.

- A clear endline to describe the promise of the brand;
- A clearly defined personality and tonality.

When the EURAXESS staff was asked (online survey)⁴² about what in their opinion was the most remarkable improvement of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs over the past few years, 59% identified the re-branding of EURAXESS.

Feedback from the interviews during the fieldwork was also positive with regards to the re-branding and re-grouping of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs.

The EURAXESS staff interviewed during the fieldwork largely agreed on the fact that the re-branding has led to higher awareness of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs within the researchers' community and helped a larger and better knowledge of European policies in the field (especially of the ERA's researchers' rights and obligations).

Overall, the EURAXESS staff interviewed agreed on the fact that the use of one brand (name and logo) and common templates (as included in the Guidebook provided by the EC) proved to be of a great need as it reduced the possibilities of researchers getting confused when visiting more or two national portals. Nevertheless, the EURAXESS national portals are not fully identical; e.g. in some countries, the EURAXESS 'domain' had to be included in a university 'domain' as it could not stand alone.

With regard to the level of completion of the re-branding and re-grouping of EURAXESS Services and Jobs, for all visited countries that participated in the re-branding exercise, it was considered as complete and the results as satisfactory enough by the EURAXESS staff. For those countries that were not involved in the process, like Norway and Croatia, it was not possible to comment on the extent to which the re-branding had been successfully completed, although some noted the introduction of the Charter and the Code, the new logo and promotional materials.

The re-branding process in some countries was relatively quick – less than a year (Italy and Poland) whereas for other it took longer than foreseen (Estonia, Spain). For the majority of the visited countries, the final version of the national portals was released in 2010 (or 2011). According to the EURAXESS staff experience, the new logo and structure, with the four distinct areas (and related colour) were an improvement from the previous stage. However, having people (mostly from the University HR departments) get acquainted with the new structures and logo was difficult in the beginning, but it was surpassed over the last years. Yet, the EURAXESS logo is not broadly used in the signatures of the EURAXESS staff, since – as they mentioned – they encounter the discouragement of the host institutions to promote the EURAXESS logo.

Concerning the complexity (e.g. number of phases and actors involved) of the re-branding and re-grouping exercise, for almost all visited countries the re-branding exercise was viewed as complex and having included many different steps. The transition period was difficult due to lack of financing as of 2009⁴³.

Italian Action Plan

In Italy, about a year ago, the ESCs were asked to prepare an Action Plan describing all activities with regards to the EURAXESS branding. The BhO will start monitoring the completion of those requirements in the following months.

⁴² See annex 6 'Survey to the BhOs and the ESCs'

⁴³ The money received was only to set up the national portals but not to sustain them.

Overall, the re-branding exercise was seen as necessary and very important by all interviewees. The new branding was also well received and appreciated by the focus groups participants aware of EURAXESS. The general feeling received during the fieldwork was that the re-branding was of utmost importance to create a unified European network for the European research. It brought a fresh design and a new concept according to the majority of the interviewees. There is now a unique logo that identifies the project whereas before it was mostly kept in mind through personal contacts and ‘faces’ working for it.

When the EURAXESS staff in the visited countries was asked about the degree of cooperation between the participating countries and the EC during the re-branding exercise, all EURAXESS staff involved praised the EC for being very helpful in providing concrete instructions and guidelines on how to implement the changes. On its behalf, the EC organised regularly trainings (Ambassadors training, Web writing training, Portal technical training, etc.) and supported accordingly the whole process of implementation and promotion. Added to this, the set-up and functioning of the extranet was much appreciated by the EURAXESS Staff since it allows applying directly for trainings, funding, receiving notifications in real time, etc.

Regarding the effectiveness of the recommendations in increasing visibility and use of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs, some interviewees thought the branding was effective enough in relation to what was available before since it has become easier for researchers to navigate from one national portal to another.

Yet, many focus groups participants expressed their dislike for the name – sounds like money, credit card, and other things. Others commented that ‘EURAXESS’ is very difficult for researchers to remember. In addition, focus groups participants expressed their dissatisfaction for the entry page and the fact that it is hard to find the national portals. They suggested including a direct link on the interactive map to the national portals in the very first page.

Confusion as to what content should be under each of the branches was also perceived by the participants. In addition, according to the people interviewed during the fieldwork, the EURAXESS logo is not well promoted. It is known, if so, by coincidence.

When measuring the implementation of the recommended dropping of the slogan “*ERA-MORE opens the doors*”, the general feedback from the fieldwork was that it was rightly dropped and on the positive side, the new EURAXESS slogan “*Researchers in Motion*” was deemed appropriate.

Regarding the adoption of a corporate identity, the National EURAXESS Portals Evaluation, Annex I⁴⁴ gives an overview of the progress made since the recommendations. In detail, the majority of the EURAXESS national portals have been developed and implemented based on fifteen evaluation criteria. The vast majority of the EURAXESS national portals have already included “*a link to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*” (criterion 6), their “*entry page has the RSS feed of national job vacancies published on the EURAXESS Jobs Portal*” (criterion 14) and their “*URLs have the format www.euraxess.country*” (criterion 15). On the contrary, almost no progress has been identified in terms of “*setting up a system for finding and repairing broken links, including an automatic link check run*

Testing the EURAXESS national portals

In Estonia and Norway, *ad hoc* focus groups of researchers were asked to check the usability of the EURAXESS national portals and discuss any future activities.

⁴⁴ Trinidad Consulting OÜ, National EURAXESS Portals Evaluation, Annex I, 30.03.2011 – 10.05.2011.

at least once per month” (criterion 4) and “external links from the English-language pages of the Portal that lead to pages in a language other than English have a clear indication of the target language” (criterion 5). According to the study findings, the most complete EURAXESS national portals (based on the 15 criteria) were the Italian, the Estonian and the Polish.

3.2.4.3 Conclusions

The re-branding and re-grouping of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs is completed and considered worth-implementing.

The time and processes of completion varied among the participating countries and still, the EURAXESS national portals are not fully aligned among each other.

The EC was very supportive throughout the process and significantly contributed to the best implementation of the changes.

The re-branding of EURAXESS was also appreciated by the end users. However, the name and logo still create some dispute among the researchers.

The main obstacles for implementing the recommendations about re-branding include the limited involvement of all EURAXESS staff throughout the exercise. There is still some room for improvement.

3.2.5 Effectiveness of I&C activities (at EC and National level)

Evaluation question: To what extent have the recommendations of 2007 related to the effectiveness of information and communication activities been implemented?

3.2.5.1 Introduction

The 2007 evaluation concluded that the communication materials produced by the EC were adequate to reinforce awareness of ERA-MORE and ERMP among target groups, particularly among those already familiar with the programme, but less well adapted to raise awareness on their own. The same study also pointed out that the effort done to actively involve supporting staff in universities for them to promote EURAXESS and provide information to researchers had to be enlarged to reach additional high-potential multipliers. Those included: departmental staff at research institutions and organisations, funding bodies and journalists as well as a better use of the Internet.

The 2007 evaluation included a series of recommendations for improving the communication materials. Some of the recommendations concerned directly the activity of the EC; it was recommended to i) focus **communication materials** produced by the EC on communicating to policy makers and national administrations, limiting the materials produced centrally by the EC to generic material, ii) explore ways in which generic communication material could be produced centrally and customised locally and continuing producing materials and organising promotional activities directly in participating countries which could take a **customised approach**.

The present evaluation aims to assess to what extent have the recommendations related to the effectiveness of information and communication activities (at European and National level) been implemented, what have been the main problems and barriers hindering the full implementation of the recommendations.

The assessment of the level of approach and strategy in communicating EURAXESS is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the BhOs and ESCs) as well as **qualitative** data (i.e. interviews with stakeholders in ten visited countries, information collected during desk research).

3.2.5.2 Findings

The EU-level Communication Strategy for promoting EURAXESS lists a number of communications tools and provides a series of recommendations on the most effective use of each of them. The recommendations stress the need for tailoring the use of the different tools and the messages conveyed by each of them to different target audiences. The communication tools listed are the following:

- Website; E-Newsletter; Magazine; Search engine optimisation (SEO); Visual identity; Print publications; Promotional presentations; Direct marketing and Customer relationship management; HRS4R; Events; Events by other parties; Media relations.

The Work Package 2 of the T.O.P. II initiative deals with the promotion of EURAXESS and its services. While the final objective is the development, elaboration and update of a Promotion Action Plan (PAP) for EURAXESS, specific tasks are directly aimed at supporting the production of a promotion toolkit and of more targeted materials such as leaflets and website banners⁴⁵.

Additional activities foreseen by the Work Package include presenting EURAXESS at relevant conferences, seminars and similar events within Europe and outside Europe. In the latter case, the need of liaising with EURAXESS Links Information Officers and with Embassies to raise awareness mainly about the Scientific Visa Package is clearly stated. The need of putting special attention and targeting directly early stage researchers and final year students both in Europe and in third countries via appropriate multipliers is highlighted. The relevance of social media for promoting EURAXESS is recognised, as well as the technical and non-technical challenges these media pose. A pilot project on a promotion campaign via Facebook (and/or other social networks) is planned under the same Work Package.

The actions planned (and financed) under the T.O.P. II projects are thus relevant and overall consistent with the objectives of the EU-level Communication Strategy and with the conclusions and recommendations of 2007.

Answers to the online survey to EURAXESS staff administered for the present evaluation highlighted that the promotion materials used for promoting EURAXESS vary greatly among the participating countries. The most used include own website and meeting in persons. Internet advertising, leaflets, flyers and brochures and presence at relevant conferences and events more in general were also considered quite important and used (while to a smaller extent). Newsletters, social media and printed advertisements registered smaller adoption rates.

From data gathered during fieldwork it emerged that national newsletters are prepared and distributed by many EURAXESS BhOs. Those newsletters include information relevant for researchers such as new opportunities for funding and changes in the most relevant administrative procedures. In some cases, the BhO prepares and distributes different newsletters for different audience groups, such as in the Netherlands.

⁴⁵ The creation, development and update of a Promotion Action Plan is the main objective of the Work Package 6 of the T.O.P. II initiative. The PAP is expected to incorporate inputs coming from other Work Packages of the T.O.P. II initiative and to be aligned with the EU-level Communication Strategy. The main purpose is to translate into understandable terms and easy-to-implement guidelines a means to carry out promotion and communication by the EURAXESS network based on the project results and in line with the EU-level Communication Strategy.

Similarly, newsletters are often produced at local level of the EURAXESS network. However, the visibility given to EURAXESS is quite limited, as the newsletters are designed to promote the universities/research institutions ESCs and LoCPs belong to, rather than the brand and the service.

Presence at job fairs and international events at universities is an activity performed by all the BhOs interviewed for the study. They consider that those events are crucial for improving visibility and awareness about EURAXESS and to concretely show the support provided by EURAXESS to researchers. In some cases, the presentation is supported by testimonials for foreign researchers who have benefited from the EURAXESS centre in the country. The 'real life experience' is well praised by researchers, who consider the testimonial a reliable source of information (as emerged in our focus groups). Additional examples include the presentation of EURAXESS during a seminar expressly organised by the EURAXESS centre to teach students how to write applications (as in Austria)

Events with policy makers and national institutions are also organised quite frequently by the EURAXESS BhOs interviewed for the study. Those are considered as good opportunities to promote the initiative at national level and gain larger support for it.

In several cases, ESCs and LoCPs present EURAXESS in local events at universities and research institutions. However, information gathered during the fieldwork revealed that the staff is often there to represent their own institutions and that they present and promote EURAXESS only within other initiatives and projects carried out by the institutions (i.e. the visibility of the brand is quite reduced).

The use of media and multipliers in general is quite low. As some of the BhOs interviewed pointed out, it is really difficult to obtain a buy-in from them, or to create an event relevant for the media. A notable exception is represented by the use of national media by the BhO in Czech Republic. The fact that the EURAXESS CZ is financed by the government (part of the national strategy) helps the visibility of the project; they contact the media, the BhO Prague has given short speech on the TV, radio contribution, etc. An additional initiative in this respect is being carried out in Italy.

The level of coordination mechanisms for developing and producing information and communication materials was considered the most established at national level. The implementation of those mechanisms was judged at a good level among EURAXESS members within the same country by 40% of the survey respondents, whereas the same level of completion was considered as achieved among the members of the network across all participating countries by 25% of respondents and between the European and national level by 22% of respondents.

EURAXESS newsletters in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, for instance, the BhO prepares two newsletters. The first newsletter is aimed at mobile researchers and contains news and information about procedural deadlines (for instance on taxation) as well as funding opportunities and research awards. It is published in English on a monthly basis and has about 10,000 subscribers. The second newsletter is targeted at supporting staff working in universities and contains updates on administrative procedures and news about upcoming training activities. It is published in Dutch on a bi-weekly basis and has about 20,000 subscribers

The evidence coming from the fieldwork is consistent with the results reported above. In many of the countries visited for fieldwork, promotion materials are produced at national level by the BhO following the guidelines provided by the EC and then distributed within the national network. Those materials range from posters and leaflets to gadgets (such as pens). In some number of cases (such as for Italy, Norway and Poland), the production of materials at national level is quite limited, and the materials available are mostly those provided by the EC. This is so for several reasons. Besides the lack of resources to produce and distribute them, the relevance and effectiveness of some of those materials is questioned. In the case of Poland, for instance, the relevance of printed materials such as brochures and posters was questioned by researchers themselves, who considered them as resource intensive, not environmentally-friendly and not cost-effective, as they are rarely targeted explicitly to a person who reads them.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are countries where many different materials are produced and distributed. In Austria, for instance, stronger support was given to LoCPs by the BhO and ESCs via the preparation and distribution of promotional materials such as leaflets and gadgets, PowerPoint presentations for downloading and adapting and templates for articles to be published in institutions' students newsletters.

This strong support does not always give the results hoped for. LoCPs do not always make use of these materials or are willing to make additional efforts to tailor materials and information, as the EURAXESS activities are a small part of their tasks and are often carried out as voluntary job.

In general, the human element appears to be a crucial factor in communication. The use of testimonials, EURAXESS Ambassadors (as done in some countries like Spain) and in general personal presence at meetings and events is perceived as much more effective and appealing than a standard non-personalised channel. In this respect, many of the stakeholders interviewed during the fieldwork said that social media could help notably in promotion, once the technical and non-technical barriers can be overcome.

Suggestions about methods and actions to improve promotion of EURAXESS in participating countries were numerous and varied greatly. Some comments focused on the policy level and support at national level. A second group of suggestions stressed the need for closer cooperation among EURAXESS network members, both within the same country and across all the participating countries. On a more operational level, suggestions included participation to a much larger number of events (at universities, but also at those relevant for the private sector). Stronger coordination from BhOs and more attention to the national level were mentioned. More presence on social media and a better use of those and promotion and dissemination channels were

"Progetto IntraReti" in Italy

The initiative "Progetto Intra Reti" has been developed in cooperation with the EU Representation to Italy (which also coordinates EuropeDirect in the country) and other national institutions coordinating European projects and programmes in the country. The purpose is creating a one-stop-shop where to group all information about European projects and initiatives active in Italy. Another objective is that of increasing the coordination of the different players and strengthen the role and relevance of the EU representation in Italy. The design includes the development of citizens' profiles to group information and sources (such as websites and online publications) relevant for the different profiles. The web platform has been finalised (<http://www.comunicare-europa.eu>) and will be officially launched in the upcoming months.

also listed. Furthermore, respondents mentioned focusing efforts on improving online provision of information and on developing staff competences on the topics most important for researchers. This should also include search engine optimisation strategies (especially when the research is done in non-English-speaking countries) and the development of forum or similar interactive platforms where mobile researchers could exchange their experiences (see section on awareness)⁴⁶.

3.2.5.3 Conclusions

In general, the targeting of EURAXESS promotional materials has improved, and attention to target groups other than supporting staff in universities and research institutions has notably increased.

Besides the website, newsletters and events are the communication tools most widely used by the EURAXESS network to promote the initiative. More innovative tools such as social media are not usually adopted yet, even if their relevance is acknowledged. The use of multipliers is still difficult.

Promotional materials are normally produced at national level by the BhOs and then distributed to the national network members for use. More rarely the materials used is almost exclusively the one coming directly from the EC. Tailoring is normally done at national level, while ESCs and LoCPs tend to be not involved in these activities. Visibility of EURAXESS at local level is sometimes limited, as ESCs and LoCPs tend to promote mostly their own institutions.

The main barriers identified are the difficulty in involving multipliers and supporting staff, and the need for a more sharing-experience approach (including EURAXESS ambassadors, testimonials from researchers who used EURAXESS services, more success stories, etc.).

3.2.6 Role of the EC and Participating countries in order to improve I&C activities of the EURAXESS Services

Evaluation question: To what extent have the recommendations of 2007 related to the role of the European Commission and Participating countries in order to improve I&C activities of the EURAXESS Services been implemented?

3.2.6.1 Introduction

The 2007 evaluation observed that the EC had taken a coordinating and supporting role in the organisation of the communication activities, giving the ERA-MORE network members freedom in organising national activities and encouraged the EC to take further actions.

The evaluation recommended the EC to i) keep a role of **strategic guidance** and to assist participating countries in developing detailed communication plans, with well-defined time span, ii) maintain a **coordinating role** of the network, facilitating the exchange of experiences, granting access to network members' contact details to other members and organising training and iii) keeping exploring **ways and tools to improve** the European Researcher's Mobility Portal.

The present evaluation aims to assess to what extent have the recommendations related to role of the EC and participating countries to improve I&C activities of the EURAXESS Services been implemented, what have been the main problems and barriers hindering the full implementation of the recommendations and to what extent the recommendations have been implemented.

The assessment of the role of the EC and Participating countries is based on both **quantitative** data (i.e. findings from the survey targeting the BhOs and ESCs) as well as **qualitative** data (i.e. interviews with in ten visited countries, information collected during desk research).

⁴⁶ As reporting in section under Awareness, there seem to be a low level of awareness of SEO strategies among the ESCs interviewed.

3.2.6.2 Findings

T.O.P. I and T.O.P. II initiatives are crucial component for the coordination of Information and Communication of activities across all participating countries and to provide dedicated trainings. They allow coordination of activities, exchange of experience and good practices and organisation of specific trainings. The crucial role of those projects for coordination of activities and for the functioning of the EURAXESS network (also as source of funding) is well acknowledged by the stakeholders interviewed during the fieldwork. One of the few criticisms concerned the limited number of places available for each participating country, which forces network members to make choices.

Coordination of Information and Communication activities is usually considered quite good, according to the EURAXESS staff met during fieldwork.

In more details, coordination within EURAXESS national networks works pretty well, according to the EURAXESS staff interviewed during fieldwork. The mechanisms implemented at national level to ensure coordination vary. Often an annual (sometimes bi-annual) meeting gathering the entire national EURAXESS staff is organised. The annual meeting is generally used to discuss the main activities carried out in the previous year, to introduce and finalise a schedule of activities for the upcoming year and to present any relevant legislative or administrative provision come into force. Besides this formal event, an internal newsletter or period email is often adopted, complemented by more informal exchange of information (via email and telephone mostly). The BhO leads the planning and deployment of such coordination initiatives, while systematic reporting from ESCs and LoCPs is not very common (usually in order not to impose a burden). Informal exchange of information and knowledge is considered effective by the EURAXESS staff interviewed. This happens especially in smaller countries where the number of EURAXESS centres is quite small and the international researchers' community is reduced as well. Overall, there is no need for more formal and systematic coordination mechanisms at national level at least among the countries visited during fieldwork.

Similarly, coordination with the EC is considered effective by the BhOs interviewed. They are in constant contact with the EC and receive information and answers requested in timely and complete manner, they affirmed during the interviews. The twice yearly meeting is considered relevant by the BhOs met, in that it helps establishing the international EURAXESS network and exchange information.

Opinions on the coordination of Information and Communication activities are more composite when situation across the participating countries is considered. The BhOs interviewed consider that overall coordination is good, despite some episodes (in a few cases BhOs said that they did not receive replies to their requests to other members of the network). However, opinions differ when it comes to ESCs and LoCPs. They do not usually participate in international gatherings and in general have fewer opportunities to interact at international level. They said during interviews that feel quite 'isolated' from the international EURAXESS network and would like to be more involved in international events and gatherings and to be more consulted by the EC.

EURAXESS staff interviewed during fieldwork also has mixed opinions about the extranet, which was indeed created to facilitate direct contacts among the EURAXESS network members and a smoother exchange of information and experiences. In general, the use of the extranet is not so widespread. The majority of the staff interviewed considers that it is a helpful tool, providing easy-to-use support. Others, instead, consider that, while the idea is very relevant, the current instrument should be notably improved. They affirmed that the extranet is confusing and difficult to navigate *"If you do not know the name of a document, you are lost"*.

When it comes to the training provided so far and the training needs, opinions of the EURAXESS staff interviewed and answering the online survey are overall positive.

When asked about their participation in training organised by DG RTD more than half of respondents to the online survey to BhOs and ESCs answered that they did not participate in any training sessions.

The delivery of the training at European level elicited mixed opinions among those who participated in the trainings. The quality of the trainings was judged as quite good as it received a high rating by 46% of respondents. Appraisal on the relevance as well as the frequency of the training provided was not very high (34% and 30% of positive rating respectively).

Findings from the fieldwork are consistent with the evidence from the survey.

In addition, information collected during fieldwork highlight some notable initiatives at national level. What EURAXESS coordinators find particularly effective in relation to knowledge share is the distribution of a best practice handbook on information and communication activities and study visits to significant EURAXESS Services Centres in Europe. The possibility of study visits is very well praised by the EURAXESS staff, which in many cases suggested the possibility to prolong their duration and to make them available also to BhOs.

In some cases, trainings delivered at European level are disseminated within the national network in order to ensure coordination of activities within the national network and to increase the perception in ESCs and LoCPs of being part of an international network, as happens in Croatia.

In addition, the provision of training (at national level) is one of the key activities of the EURAXESS BhO in the Netherlands, as a characteristic of the approach adopted in the country. Trainings and workshops are organised for the HR staff several times per year, adopting a very practical set-up and content. Trainings are often organised on demand. A pre-defined scheduled approach was used at first, but it was criticised as considered too static. It was thus decided to use an on-demand approach. In general, two trainings are organised in autumn, two in spring and other two in other periods (depending on the requests). In addition, a two-day intensive training on immigration procedures is usually organised every two years. The information given to the HR staff is considered as relevant and updated.

Answers to the survey to the EURAXESS staff highlighted a demand for training currently not satisfied; 37% of respondents affirmed to have specific training needs not met yet. Those needs concern different fields, some of which more directly linked to researchers' mobility, while others more related to EURAXESS staff management. Among the first group of topics, the following are the listed more frequently by respondents:

- Funding opportunities and application procedures;
- Regulation, e.g. existing instruments for legal migration (researchers and student's directives);
- Legal framework (such as visa procedures);
- Social security issues (also, overview of main issues across the participating countries);

EURAXESS training in Croatia

Within the Croatian EURAXESS network, trainings organised at European level normally provide the basis for national trainings. As normal procedure, all staff members participating in trainings have to write a report and share it alongside any training materials they have received with the rest of the national EURAXESS staff.

- Intellectual and property rights;
- Types of grants for researchers' mobility towards industry.

Training needs more related to management of EURAXESS staff and promotion of the services in general include:

- People management;
- Coaching and mentoring;
- Intercultural communication;
- Use of social media (especially LinkedIn);
- Web design and management of national portals;
- Events organisation and management.

Respondents also highlight the high turnover among EURAXESS staff and therefore the need to repeat trainings on a regular basis. Answers point out also the relevance of having real case examples on how to deal with a mobile researcher, including how to prepare the receiving institution to receive the researcher.

Additional considerations about future activities for coordination and training within the EURAXESS initiative concern the future of the T.O.P. initiatives. The need of continuing them via a T.O.P. III initiative is shared by all the EURAXESS staff interviewed. In some cases, however, a partial change in the approach is suggested. Some BhOs observe that BhOs have acquired knowledge and awareness of their role, and realised that they can be real counterparts in the discussions with the EC and in influencing policy-making across Europe. They propose adopting a vision for a longer timeline (such as from 2015 to 2020) and focusing the exercise on defining a pattern towards that vision. In this way, different groups could make the exercise and funding could be provided to groups of organisations working on the same policy (e.g. EU pension funds, immigration policy, etc.). In summary, what was proposed was the setting-up of an Expert Group harvesting ideas and solving problems.

3.2.6.3 Conclusions

Coordination of Information and Communication activities within national EURAXESS networks and with the EC is considered to be effective. Coordination across participating countries is working less well, as ESCs and LoCPs are often isolated from the international network and would like to be more involved in international events and strategy design phase.

Training provided at European level within the current framework is considered of good quality and relevance, but frequency should be improved. Many members of EURAXESS staff have never participated in any of them. There is a relevant demand for additional trainings on several topics (from issues linked directly to researchers' mobility to others more related to management of staff and use of communication tools). The delivery of training at national level (including sharing knowledge acquired at European level) differs from one country to another, where some are more active than others.

3.2.7 Challenges and risks

Evaluation question: To what extent have the recommendations of 2007 related to the challenges and risks (sustainability and homogeneity of the services provided) been implemented?

3.2.7.1 Introduction

The major risk identified by 2007 evaluation was the limited time horizon for EU funding of the network, which would make the EURAXESS network members very much dependent on national resources. The second risk identified concerned the homogeneity of services provided across the participating countries. While the freedom give to participating countries in organising the national

network improved the tailoring to national situation and needs, it would make coordination and consistency of services more difficult. With regard to the risks identified, the 2007 evaluation recommended the EC and the participating countries to i) develop a **mitigation plan** to ensure the sustainability of the initiative and ii) develop predominantly **information and communication activities and materials** at national level to reflect the situation of the EURAXESS network in the country.

The present evaluation aims to assess to what extent have the recommendations related to the challenges and risks been implemented, what have been the main problems and barriers hindering the full implementation of the recommendations.

The assessment of the level of approach and strategy in communicating EURAXESS is based mostly on **qualitative** data (i.e. interviews with stakeholders and in ten visited countries and results from the survey to the researchers' community, information collected during desk research).

3.2.7.2 Findings

The Work Package Six (WP6) of the T.O.P. II initiative provides some support in achieving the overarching objectives of the recommendations on challenges and risks. The WP aims to ensure sufficient contact and coordination between EURAXESS and related activities of external stakeholders, at raising awareness on the implementation of the Charter and the Code, at preparing and starting a mapping of social security systems (and proposals for improvements and at promoting open recruitment of researchers. These outcomes are in line with the need of a stricter link between EURAXESS and other European initiatives as a way to ensure sustainability of the network (see next paragraphs).

As mentioned, the first and main risk for the EURAXESS network is the end of EU funding. The amount of resources available for the provision of services (both human and financial resources) is clearly crucial for the same existence of the network. The risk is well acknowledged by the EURAXESS staff interviewed during the fieldwork.

According to the interviewees, a key element for ensuring the sustainability of the network is obtaining the political support for it, both at European and national level. Stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation reiterated the need for it. The relevance of political support for ensuring continuity of EURAXESS activities and sustainability of the network was already well acknowledged in 2007, as reported in the 2007 evaluation.

At European level this would entail a stronger cooperation and maybe even integration in larger strategies and plans for research and economic development, such as Horizon 2020. In this way, additional synergies could develop and the EURAXESS network could benefit from the large and increasing interest towards those European initiatives, interviewees affirmed. This would also enhance the European dimension of the network, which is sometimes lacking at local level in participating countries.

Stronger political support is crucial especially at national level, as national authorities should provide the larger part of resources to sustain the initiative and make it grow, according to the stakeholders interviewed. National support should lead to a 'buy-in' of the initiative by public national authorities. A direct intervention of the EC in this sense was considered a strong leverage. Many of the BhOs interviewed affirmed that there is a widespread demand for professional information and services in the field of researchers' mobility which is partially unmet, but this is often not considered a priority at national level (especially as far as the European dimension is concerned).

A condition for EURAXESS network to obtain the needed recognition at national level (and the subsequent willingness to pay for it) is that of imposing themselves as providers of professional

services in the field (ideally, the most qualified providers) and obtaining acknowledgement for that, interviewees affirmed.

Inclusion of the EURAXESS network in national strategies and initiatives for research and human resources is a relevant point for ensuring the sustainability of the network. While this is a medium to long-term objective of most the BhOs interviewed, in some cases relevant progress have been made already. Those include the cases of Czech Republic and Croatia, where EURAXESS is part of the national research strategy (and already funded by the competent Ministry, in Czech Republic). Stronger integration of EURAXESS within other European initiatives implemented at national level is being implemented in Italy, via the initiative of the *“Progetto IntraReti”*⁴⁷.

Linked to overall sustainability there is another aspect mentioned by several of the stakeholders interviewed during the fieldwork, which entails the dimension of the EURAXESS initiative. According to interviewees, a crucial aspect for ensuring the sustainability of the network is reaching a ‘critical threshold’ in terms of quality, quantity and relevance of the services provided across all the participating countries that would make impossible for them to consider the option of calling off the existence of the network. Stakeholders interviewed affirmed that while this critical threshold has not been reached yet, a lot of work in this direction has been done already.

A potential risk stemming from the lack of resources identified by the researchers’ community (during focus groups) is the lowering of the quality of the services provided by the national EURAXESS network. A low level of users’ satisfaction would make the decision of not providing national sustain easier, putting at risk the survival of the initiative.

A major risk for the overall sustainability of the EURAXESS network identified by the stakeholders interviewed (both by the EURAXESS staff and by the researchers’ community and both during focus groups and in the survey) is linked to a general low awareness of it within the researchers’ community. If awareness were to drop, it was clear EURAXESS Services would fail to be used and the Jobs portal would be unlikely to attract vacancies. This would lead to a vicious cycle with fewer researchers consulting the site as a source of opportunities.

Generating awareness is a crucial point for ensuring sustainability. Many of the stakeholders interviewed (also within the researchers’ community) suggested a more active involvement of incoming researchers who have benefited from EURAXESS services. Researchers are perceived as a reliable source of information by other researchers and their testimonials would increase the effectiveness of any promotion activity. Many activities are carried out in participating countries with the active involvement of incoming researchers who benefited from EURAXESS services (for instance, testimonials during job fairs and presentations at universities). However, this is not a widespread approach in the participating countries visited during fieldwork.

The second main risk identified concerned the homogeneity of the services provided in relation to information and communication activities. With respect to this, the EC has been developing and providing guidelines tools and templates to ensure the provision of materials consistent across countries. Those tools are normally used by the EURAXESS staff. The EURAXESS extranet is known by all the EURAXESS staff met during the fieldwork, even if the use is less widespread. The relevance and usefulness of the tool is well acknowledged by the interviewees, while many of them consider it non user-friendly and outdated in many of its functionalities.

Further evidence on the level of implementation of the recommendations on this issue is presented in section 3.2.5 above.

⁴⁷ See annex 4 ‘Country case study reports’

Monitoring of activities at national level and users' satisfaction surveys are not carried out often at national level (not in a systematic way), so that cross-country comparison is extremely difficult. In most of the case, the BhOs have a general overview of the main activities and actions, but LoCPs are not generally required to submit formal periodic reports. This decision is made to avoid imposing a further administrative burden on the LoCPs.

The new branding and the common template of the EURAXESS national portals were considered by the interviewees (both EURAXESS staff and researchers met) to have improved the perceived homogeneity of the services provided to a great extent.

3.2.7.3 Conclusions

The main risk identified for the EURAXESS network is the sustainability. Stronger political support at European and national level are considered crucial for ensuring the sustainability of the initiative. This entails stronger links with European strategies (such as Horizon 2020) and with national strategies and plans on research and human resources. Low awareness about the EURAXESS network could create a vicious circle as EURAXESS Services would fail to be used and the Jobs portal would be unlikely to attract vacancies and users. Therefore, the required national support would be more difficult to achieve and overall sustainability to reach. This risk is well acknowledged by the EURAXESS staff interviewed, who has been actively working to gain the necessary support at national level. A more direct intervention from the EC would strongly support this effort.

With regard to the level of homogeneity of the services provided in relation to information and communication activities, some improvements have been identified, such as the common template of the EURAXESS Services national portals.

3.2.8 Brief discussion about potential additional features

This section explores additional aspects related to the EURAXESS project.

First, as part of the evaluation, and under request of the EC, the study included three additional questions about possible additional services to be included in those provided by EURAXESS. Those three services that potentially reply to additional researchers' needs are the following:

- more practical information also to non-mobile researchers, for example regarding career development and training;
- personalised assistance to researchers, e.g. in becoming careers development centres;
- a dedicated section to industry partners in the EURAXESS Jobs portal.

Those questions were asked to the EURAXESS staff and other stakeholders encountered during fieldwork in the ten selected countries and to interviewees at EU level. Therefore, the findings reported below are based on **qualitative** information only.

With regard to the first topic, stakeholders interviewed expressed that if this is intended to add extra activities to the ones currently carried out, it would not be feasible with the current amount of resources (both human and financial resources).

The proposition of having EURAXESS centres providing personalised assistance to researchers conveyed fears about its feasibility in the current framework of human and financial resources available. Stakeholders interviewed consider that it would require developing competencies which are not currently owned by the EURAXESS staff. Those competencies entail the knowledge of different fields of research (as each of them has different dynamics) and skills in HR management and coaching which are very far from the abilities currently required to provide EURAXESS services. Enlarging the scope of EURAXESS services towards this direction would require time and clear

communication planning, as it may entail an enlargement of the current network and a scaling-up of the volume of activities.

Finally, a stronger involvement of industry partners in EURAXESS was very much praised by the stakeholders encountered. While the creation of a dedicated section on the EURAXESS Jobs portal was considered not very relevant, allowing industry partners to publish their vacancies on the portal was deemed as a good way to increase opportunities for researchers and to strengthen cooperation with private sector (also reducing the distance between academia and industry). While this is already possible within the current EURAXESS framework, there seems to be a low awareness around it among many of the stakeholders interviewed (especially among researchers). Furthermore, private companies do not seem to use this possibility much. While large companies would still probably keep using their HR departments for international recruitment, SMEs could benefit notably from this opportunity, stakeholders added. An additional awareness campaign expressly targeted to industry is deemed as necessary to make industry aware of the option and convince them to use more the portal. Stakeholders suggested to make more use of success stories and of accesses and use data to show the relevance of the portal and to actively look for policy support (for instance, by involving industry associations).

3.3 Part II – Evaluation of the impact of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan and China on the networking of European researchers

The ensuing section presents answers to the evaluation questions relating to Part II of the study, the evaluation of the impact of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan and China. The answers are based on extensive fieldwork that took place in these countries during the first months of 2013, whereby interviews were carried out with the Information Officers (IOs) contracted to manage all aspects of the network, in addition to EC and Member State officials and European researchers themselves. This was supplemented with an online survey of EURAXESS Links users and considerable desk research, including a review of S&T cooperation between the EU and the countries in question and monitoring data made available by the EC and the IOs.

Though the findings were broadly positive, especially with regard to stakeholders' perceptions of and engagement with the EURAXESS Links, the evaluation also served to highlight the difficulty for this type of initiative in achieving real impact and measuring it. The evaluation also reflected the differences in the maturity of EURAXESS Links networks which were launched at different times: the US network was opened first, in November 2007, followed by Japan in November 2008 and China in December 2009. Nonetheless, as is discussed in detail in the section on recommendations, some room for improvement, especially with regard to strategic thinking and monitoring and evaluation, could result in a greater and more discernible impact over the coming years. It should also be mentioned that the evaluation was based on EURAXESS Links' first funding period, which ran from 2008 (or, in the case of China, 2009) until the end of 2012. Leading from this, some of the issues raised in the course of the evaluation either have been or will be addressed in the new Framework Contract for EURAXESS Links which came into effect in 2013 and will run until 2015. The conclusions and, in particular, the recommendations in this evaluation were drafted without prejudice to the new Framework Contract, meaning that some of them have already been taken into account.

3.3.1 Relevance of the services provided by EURAXESS Links

3.3.1.1 Introduction

Relevance is traditionally conceived of as ‘the extent to which an intervention’s objectives are pertinent to needs, problems and issues to be addressed.’⁴⁸ In the case of EURAXESS Links, this concept encompasses two main factors, namely the extent to which:

- The services offered by EURAXESS Links respond to the needs of the target group (i.e. European researchers based in, or with connections to the US, Japan and China);
- Registered members of EURAXESS Links perceive the services to be of good quality in terms of the information provided, timeliness and completeness;
- Members of the target group are aware of EURAXESS Links.

The ensuing paragraphs treat each of these in turn, beginning with an examination of the needs of European researchers based in the US, Japan and China. As per the analytical framework, this draws on all the sources named above, namely interviews, the online survey and analysis of the relevant documentation.

3.3.1.2 Findings

Needs of European researchers based in the US, Japan and China and perceptions of services offered

Before looking at the activities carried out by EURAXESS Links, it is worth considering researchers’ needs on a conceptual level. EURAXESS as originally conceived⁴⁹ can be thought of as a response, albeit a partial one, to concerns about the brain drain, mainly with relation to the United States. In brief, the logic ran as follows: European researchers were pursuing opportunities in the US by the thousands and, once there, often remained for substantial periods of time or even their entire careers. Setting up a network to keep these researchers connected to European institutions, projects and colleagues would serve a dual purpose: first, by keeping researchers abreast of opportunities in Europe, some of them might return. Second, they would be more likely to take part in EU- or EU-Member State-funded projects and other possibilities for collaboration.

In the US, this logic still appears to hold broadly true. Robust estimates of the number of European researchers in the US are not forthcoming, but IOs estimate the figure near 100 000; even if this were off by a factor of two, about 50 000 European researchers would be in the US. Moreover, it appears that European researchers who embark for the US often remain- of those completing the EURAXESS Links survey, nearly two thirds (60%) of respondents based in the US had been in the country for over ten years. It is likely that this has resulted in a huge loss for Europe in terms of foregone innovation and economic growth, and with the benefit of hindsight, it might have justified increased spending on EURAXESS type interventions to minimise the loss. Moreover, it is perfectly plausible that, given the rich environment for research in the US, European researchers would gradually lose touch with the European research environment. EURAXESS’ primary function is therefore to keep European researchers in the US in touch with that environment, in particular concerning opportunities to collaborate with European institutions or take up posts back home.

Japan and China present profoundly different scenarios. Though robust figures are again not forthcoming, the number of European researchers estimated to be in Japan and China is

⁴⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/evaluation/docs/eval_activities_en.pdf.

⁴⁹ A survey of potential users of European Researchers Abroad Link (ERA-Link), a communication tool for European researchers in the US, TEP, 2005.

exponentially lower; interviewees estimated that around 1 000 European researchers were present in each country. In addition, most of these researchers, particularly in China, embark only for stints of short- or medium-term duration (6 months to 2 years), according the IOs and Member State S&T counselor. The typical European researcher in Japan or China is working on a specific project, often funded jointly or wholly by a European institution, and has a clear intention to return to Europe. While in the US, European researchers cover a broad spectrum of research topics, in Japan and China they are often (though of course there are exceptions) dealing with a subject specifically concerned with the country in question (e.g. Chinese language and culture). There is little concern about ‘losing’ these researchers to their host countries, but instead there is a perceived need to help them find their feet, network and identify opportunities for collaboration with other researchers in similar or complementary situations.

Taking these differences into account, the EC has given the contractors responsible for implementing EURAXESS Links in each of the three countries some leeway to tailor their offering to researchers as appropriate. Thus while the form of support – an internet portal, monthly newsletter and other publications, periodic events – is consistent across the three countries under examination, the content is actually quite different. In all locations the findings in this regard were broadly positive: researchers and other stakeholders felt that EURAXESS Links addressed the needs described above, though they also made some criticisms.

Of the criticisms, a couple were consistent across all three countries. Firstly, interviewees were of the view that EURAXESS Links should do more to forge connections between European researchers and institutions and sources of funding in the host countries. This element was missing in the first mandate of the project due to concentration only on European researchers and a lack of budget for the organisation of events. Interviewees pointed out they are often inexperienced when it comes to navigating the vagaries of national institutions outside their home environment, and that EURAXESS could 1) offer training sessions to address this and 2) foster networking between relevant stakeholders from the US, Japan and China (e.g. ministry officials) and European researchers. In addition, there were some concerns that EURAXESS Links concentrated heavily on hard sciences at the expense of other disciplines. Other feedback was country-specific as per the points below.

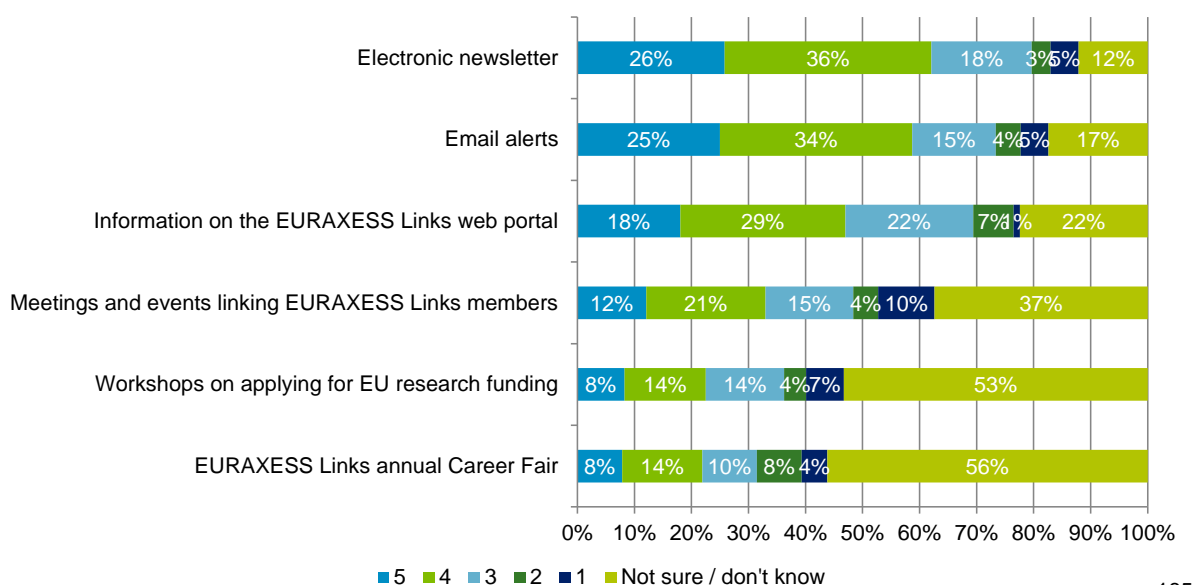
- EURAXESS Links US: researchers interviewed for the evaluation felt that EURAXESS Links acted as a ‘bridge’ between the US and Europe, appreciating in particular the monthly newsletter. However, there was some disagreement about researchers’ *demand* for information about funding and collaborative opportunities. A number of interviewees thought that EURAXESS Links should offer training courses on applying for European funding, as they considered their knowledge lacking (especially with regard to drafting successful applications). Other interviewees expressed having a thorough knowledge of the European research environment and explained that it is the conditions of European opportunities, rather than a lack of knowledge, that prevents them from taking them up;
- EURAXESS Links Japan: Researchers interviewed in Japan voiced positive opinions of the network’s relevance and consistency with their needs. Given the relatively small number of European researchers in Japan and their expressed need to meet people in similar situations both to foster collaboration and forge social ties, researchers praised the focus on networking events, though they suggested involving more Japanese stakeholders. The content and timing of the monthly newsletter were also lauded;
- EURAXESS Links China: Researchers in China were very positive about the informal networking events and monthly newsletter, and felt that it responded to their needs especially inasmuch as they had difficulties meeting researchers in similar situations and with similar interests. They did not feel a need for the network to inform them about opportunities in Europe, but welcomed the focus on European funding that could be applied to research in China. In addition, some interviewees lamented the lack of events outside of

Beijing, which, in combination with sparse travel funding, limited the participation and engagement of researchers based elsewhere in China.

The online survey, while not going into detail on the specifics of each EURAXESS Links activity, does shed some light on which *types* of activity were most used by respondents. This did not differ much by country and was generally consistent with the above. The monthly newsletter was the EURAXESS Links activity they most frequently engaged with, with about two in three respondents claiming to use it either once per month or more than once per month. Online postings, both for sources of funding / career opportunities in Europe and collaboration opportunities were also frequently used: With regard to the former, over 10% of respondents checked the portal more than once per month, with nearly 30% looking at it about once per month and nearly 40% making use of it several times per year. In terms of posting for collaboration opportunities, the results were similar if slightly less enthusiastic: 9% checked more than once per month, 19% about once per month and 39% several times per year. Meetings and events which put researchers in contact with their peers are also relatively frequent points of contact with EURAXESS Links, with about one in three engaging such services several times per year and smaller numbers even more often.

The survey also shows that researchers' satisfaction with the various activities tracks the frequency of use. As shown in the figure below, email alerts and the electronic newsletter were most favoured, followed by other online information and meetings/events.

Figure 4: On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being 'highly satisfied', please rate your satisfaction with the following features of EURAXESS Links



Source: Survey to the researchers registered to EURAXESS Links

Coupled with the findings from interviews with researchers, the evidence indicates that EURAXESS Links members are broadly satisfied with most features of these activities. The monthly timing of the newsletter was considered appropriate, and while not all of the content was relevant for all researchers, they explained that it was easy to find the parts that were most pertinent for them.

While some interviewees suggested a greater number of events (though IOs did not find this feasible due to a lack of budget in the first phase of the project), others explained that dedicating an afternoon or evening to a EURAXESS Links event every few months was sufficient and contributed to a degree of enthusiasm and excitement about attending. In China especially there was some

criticism of the subject matter chosen for events; while usually treating general subjects, some interviewees (and indeed the IO) would prefer to hold more specialised events. However, given the limited scope to expand the number of events, holding to more general topics was seen as a workable compromise.

Interviewees' opinions of the portal were less pronounced. While they were not very critical, their primary source of information about EURAXESS Links and European research policy was the newsletter; they only appeared to check the portal as a secondary source when more information was needed.

It is also worth mentioning that EURAXESS Links does not have, in this first phase of the project, a robust mechanism in place for monitoring and evaluation. While this is discussed at length below, in terms of the relevance of EURAXESS Links activities it is clear that, while they appear in line with members' needs, this is due to the skills and experience of IOs and informal dialogue with members and other stakeholders rather than any systematic way of taking feedback into account.

Awareness of EURAXESS Links in the US, Japan and China

Given the vast community of European researchers dispersed across the US and the comparable offering in terms of size and scope provided by EURAXESS in all three countries, it is perhaps not surprising that interviewees felt that awareness was much lower there than elsewhere. In Japan, where EURAXESS is relatively long established, interviewees described awareness as 'good, especially among researchers who have been in Japan for several years'. In China, where EURAXESS is newer, interviewees admitted that many researchers did not yet know about the network, but added that a growing proportion of them do.

Figures to corroborate this anecdotal evidence are relatively thin on the ground. Website statistics are not available on a country-level basis, for example, while IOs have not been required to collect monitoring data on event attendance, information requests, number of jobs/fellowships/funding opportunities listed or responded to, or other potential proxies for awareness. The number of registered users for each EURAXESS Links network is available, however. Of course these figures cannot simply substitute for detailed awareness data. It is highly probable that some researchers are aware of EURAXESS without registering for it, for example, and some registered users serve as multipliers, forwarding newsletters and promotional material to others. From the other end, registered users who move back to Europe are not required to resign from the EURAXESS Links site, meaning a proportion of them do not belong strictly to the target group. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that EURAXESS Links US has about 3 500 registered users, which is fairly small considering the enormous number of European researchers in the country. Indeed, the IO in the US emphasised the difficulty in reaching such a large and disparate pool of researchers, especially given limited funding for events outside of the Washington area.

EURAXESS Links Japan has about 800 registered users, though the IO explained that the newsletter is also sent to about 12 000 further potentially interested individuals. In China there are about 850 registered users. In relation to the size of the European researcher community in these countries, it can be assumed that the proportion being aware of EURAXESS Links is far higher than in the US.

In all three countries event attendance was described in positive terms, with the vast majority of the informal events well attended. The number of events has varied considerably by country due to EURAXESS Links' reliance on other organisations to fund events. Thus, in China there have been an average of three to four events over the last few years, while in Japan there have been 15-20. In both countries these events have been supported by the EC Delegation in nearly all cases, while

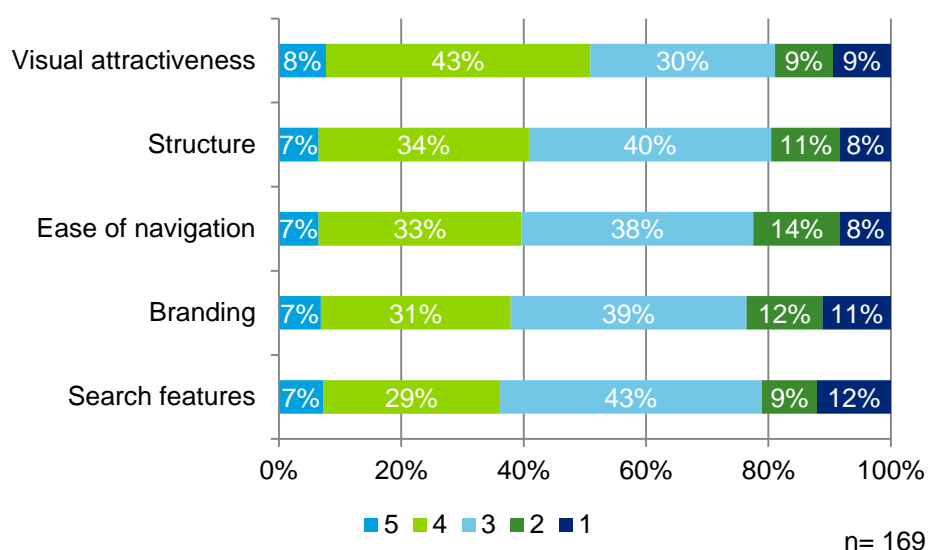
Member State representations and other organisations have sometimes played a role (for example, a recent event in Beijing was hosted by the French Embassy)⁵⁰.

In terms of the methods most effective for informing researchers about EURAXESS, it appears that word-of-mouth has been the most effective. This was clear both from interviews, where colleagues and friends were often cited as the reason a given researcher found out about the network, in addition to the online survey. Among respondents, a significantly higher proportion (29%) found about EURAXESS Links from ‘friends / colleagues’ than the second and third most popular methods, which were EURAXESS staff (20%) and internet search engine (15%). These results speak to the importance of multiplier effects, as researchers with positive views of EURAXESS Links spread the word, in addition to events and other fora that facilitate direct contact between researchers and representatives of the network. It also highlights the importance for EURAXESS of being easily searchable online. One can currently locate EURAXESS Links using search terms such as ‘European researchers China’, but not with more generic keywords.

Asked more directly to comment on the best ways to promote EURAXESS Links, respondents expressed views consistent with the findings described above. While many of them were not aware of any printed materials produced by EURAXESS Links, they were favourably disposed to the EURAXESS newsletter, the portal and presence at conferences and events.

In terms of the portal specifically, respondents provided views that, while positive⁵¹, were not overwhelmingly so. Asked to rate their satisfaction with the portal on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied, very few respondents positioned themselves at the extremes, instead opting mostly for 3s and 4s, as shown in the chart below. While it is heartening that the portal is perceived as visually attractive, the findings also indicate that, it is also not seen as especially novel or innovative, or providing them with an extra impetus to engage with the network.

Figure 5: On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being 'highly satisfied', how would you rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the EURAXESS Links portal?



Source: Survey to the researchers registered to EURAXESS Links

⁵⁰ Data on events in the US was not available at the time of writing.

⁵¹ It should also be noted that the EURAXESS Links members' area is very dated and hardly used by any researchers.

3.3.1.3 Conclusions

In broad terms, during the first phase of the project, EURAXESS Links responded to researchers needs in the US, Japan and China. While these needs differ considerably, the IOs have been able to shape the local offering to meet them. This extends to generally favourable opinions of services provided, such as the newsletter, jobs and collaboration postings, the portal and informal networking events. However, given researchers' difficulties in navigating the national institutions and funding sources in their destination countries, it has been suggested that EURAXESS Links activities focus on them more than has been the case up to this point. A continued ability to meet members needs also depends partly on taking member feedback into account more systematically than has been the case so far.

While it is difficult to describe awareness of EURAXESS Links in concrete and certain terms, it appears higher in Japan and China, where the perceived need is greater and the researcher community smaller, than in the US, where EURAXESS risks being drowned out in a large environment with little scope to reach the majority of members of the target audience. Indeed, it is likely that in the US only a small proportion of European researchers have heard of the network, whereas in China, and especially Japan, some knowledge about EURAXESS Links either is already or is becoming the norm.

3.3.2 Awareness of EU research policies and career and collaboration opportunities

3.3.2.1 Introduction

Given that a key objective of EURAXESS Links is to keep European researchers informed about relevant policies in Europe and opportunities for collaboration, this section can be regarded as an assessment of the extent to which the network has achieved its desired immediate results. In a causal chain running from the EC's financial resources as inputs to the ultimate desired impact of researchers better connected to the European researchers' community, this part relies on awareness of and engagement with EURAXESS Links leading to increased awareness of EU research policy and career collaboration opportunities.

In the absence of any baseline data to demonstrate how awareness on these issues has changed over time, or a comparison group to contrast with respondents to the EURAXESS Links user survey, it is not possible to *attribute* awareness to EURAXESS Links directly, or to disentangle it from other potential sources of information, such as S&T officers, except for in **a qualitative way**, based on the perceptions of interviewees. Nonetheless, based on the sources available, the following paragraphs attempt to provide an indication of awareness among researchers *already engaged with EURAXESS Links* of EU research policies and career and collaboration opportunities.

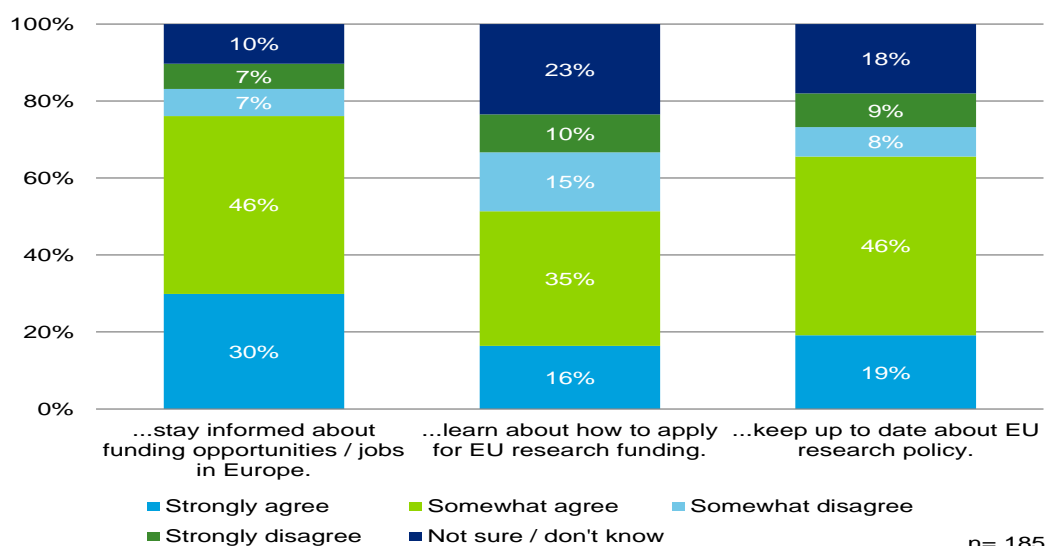
3.3.2.2 Findings

As mentioned above, European researchers in Japan and China tend to maintain strong links with their home institutions while away. Given their frequent contact with colleagues in Europe and the temporary nature of many of their stays, interviewees in these countries claimed that they were well abreast of research and collaboration opportunities in Europe, and that they would be regardless of their involvement with EURAXESS Links. Instead, they felt that the network helped them learn about European sources of funding and/or opportunities for collaboration that would allow them to conduct further research or extend their involvement with the country in question. In the US,

interviewees assigned a more instrumental role to EURAXESS Links. The Guide⁵², in addition to the portal and other EURAXESS Links activities, were considered a key way for researchers to learn about calls for projects and job opportunities in Europe, neither of which they felt very aware of before their engagement with the network.

The online survey results were less equivocal, with respondents across all countries drawing a more direct relationship between EURAXESS Links and their level of awareness about funding opportunities and jobs in Europe, information about applying for EU research funding and keeping up to date about EU research funding. As shown in the figure below, over three in four respondents felt that EURAXESS Links helped them stay informed about opportunities and jobs in Europe, about two thirds thought it helped them stay up to data about EU research policy and more than half considered EURAXESS Links helpful in finding out about how to apply for EU research funding.

Figure 6: EURAXESS Links' role in increasing awareness of EU research policies and career and collaborative opportunities: EURAXESS Links has helped me...



Source: Survey to the researchers registered to EURAXESS Links

3.3.2.3 Conclusions

EURAXESS Links provides an important source of information for researchers to keep abreast of European research policy and opportunities for careers and collaboration with Europe. This is more pronounced among engaged EURAXESS users in the US, who are less exposed to European organisations and institutions; researchers in Japan and China are often on shorter stints and thus in regular contact with Europe regardless of EURAXESS Links. However, for the latter group EURAXESS plays a crucial role in promoting funding and other opportunities leading to further work and projects in the country in question.

⁵² http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/links/usa/funding_opportunities_en.htm.

3.3.3 Success of EURAXESS Links in linking European researchers with the European research base and stimulating scientific cooperation

3.3.3.1 Introduction

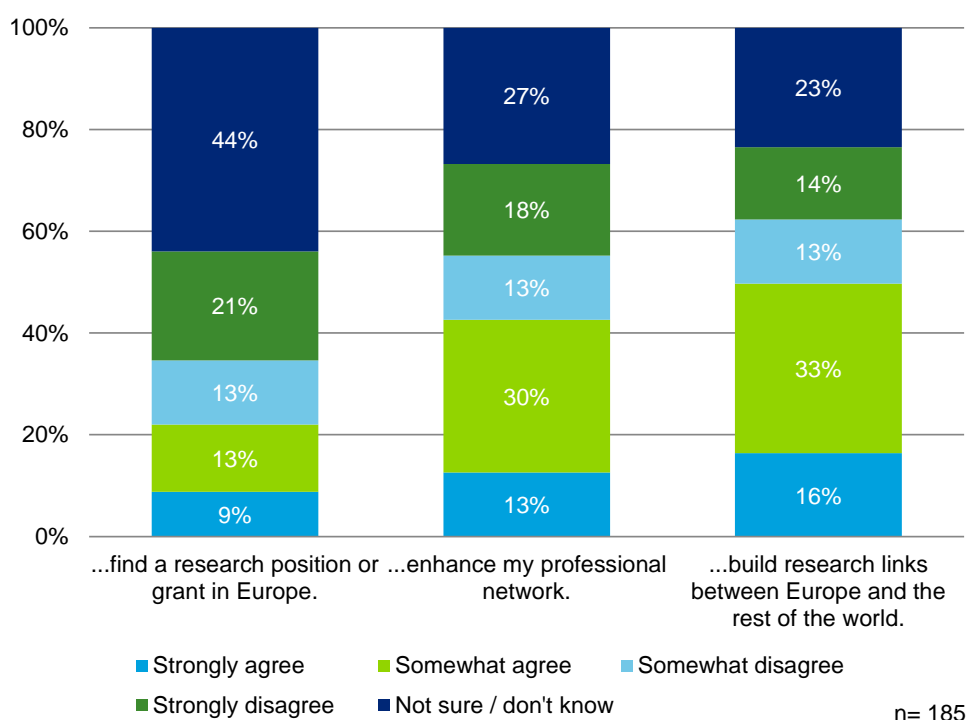
it been successful in making real, observable connections between European researchers based in the US, Japan and China and Europe, in addition to stimulating scientific cooperation on a wider level. Such connections could take several forms. A researcher could find a job due to EURAXESS Links and move back to Europe, bringing with him or her the network acquired while abroad in addition to experience and knowledge. Success could also stem from the establishment of collaborative work between European researchers based abroad and their counterparts in the EU, either on a short- or long-term basis. In terms of stimulating scientific cooperation more generally, EURAXESS Links could also hope to play a partial role, whereby it could be ascertained that the network played some *contributory* role in fostering cooperation.

The myriad factors involved at all of these stages render it nearly impossible to determine the role of EURAXESS Links with any degree of certainty, especially given the lack of this kind of statistical or monitoring data on EURAXESS. For example, since job advertisements often appear in several locations, the fact that a position advertised on EURAXESS is eventually filled does not imply that the network was in any way responsible for the researcher moving back to Europe, and there are no data available concerning researchers who were formerly based in the US, Japan or China. Instead, the evaluation is reliant on **qualitative data** based on interviews with researchers and other stakeholders, notably the IOs, in the three countries, in addition to the online survey. This gives some notion of impact, but only indicatively, and is more insightful for understanding the ways in which EURAXESS Links can have an impact, rather than the magnitude of that impact in absolute terms.

3.3.3.2 Findings

Researchers in the countries where fieldwork was carried out had trouble pointing to a specific impact that EURAXESS Links had had on their careers, whether in terms of leading them to a new position or fostering a connection that led to new collaboration. In general, researchers based in Japan and China felt that they made connections with counterparts at EURAXESS Links events that *might* eventually lead to future collaboration, but they could not provide specific examples where this was the case. Moreover, since the researchers interviewed intend to return to Europe after their stint abroad, they declined to consider EURAXESS Links a key factor in any future decision to return. Nonetheless, results of the online survey were more positive. Most respondents based in all three countries felt that EURAXESS Links had had some impact on their careers (though the majority of these only described the impact as ‘little’), while the fact that nearly half (46%) had already recommended EURAXESS Links to a friend and a further 15% stated that they would definitely recommend the network indicates that they considered it important to be connected to the network. In addition, a significant proportion of respondents claimed that EURAXESS Links had enhanced their personal networks, helped them build research links between Europe and the rest of the world and even find research positions or grants in Europe, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 7: EURAXESS Links' impact. EURAXESS Links has helped me...



Source: Survey to the researchers registered to EURAXESS Links

Indeed, on the last point in particular respondents were quite positive: over one in five strongly agreed that EURAXESS Links had helped them build research links between Europe and the rest of the world, while 44% somewhat agreed, meaning that fully two in three felt that EURAXESS Links had discernible impact in this area. Moreover, findings from the interviews chimed with the survey results. In the US, for example, where it was not possible to find other evidence of impact, interviewees noted that some cooperation had taken place between EURAXESS Links and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in addition to cross-promotional links between Wild Geese, a network of Irish researchers active in the US and, to a more limited extent, the Belgian Embassy. In China, joint work between EURAXESS Links and Member State S&T officers was described as very highly developed, though the IO admitted that EURAXESS Links' impact on bilateral cooperation between China and the EU was minimal at this point. In Japan, interviewees had trouble to describe the impact of EURAXESS due to the only recent signing of an S&T agreement between the country and the EU; this was however regarded as a positive development in which EURAXESS Links might have played a small role.

3.3.3.3 Conclusions

The impact of EURAXESS Links is difficult to measure at this stage, especially in terms of concrete examples demonstrating how the network led to researchers finding posts in Europe or establishing research ties. At the same time, researchers and other stakeholders are very positive about the contributory role EURAXESS Links has played. While some researchers consider it instrumental in propelling their careers, in more concrete terms it is evident that EURAXESS Links has fostered dialogue among a number of institutions and is contributing to, albeit in a 'soft', indirect way, to levels of cooperation that are generally increasing.

3.3.4 Problems, barriers and good practices in implementing EURAXESS Links

3.3.4.1 Introduction

The ensuing section focuses on the specific problems and barriers that have prevented EURAXESS Links from being more effective in the three countries under examination during this phase of the project (2008-2012), in addition to identifying a number of good practices that could potentially be implemented more widely. The analysis draws mostly on the in-depth interviews with stakeholders, who were asked to comment in detail about the specific factors that either acted as a brake on EURAXESS Links or explained its relative success.

3.3.4.2 Findings

Despite the generally positive tone, interviewees pointed out several problems and barriers that have thus far prevented EURAXESS Links from being having a greater impact. Broadly speaking, these fall into several categories:

- Constraints of funding and scope: in the US, but also in China, interviewees emphasised the difficulty in extending the network's reach beyond Washington and Beijing, respectively. While events are very well received, they are limited in number and duration. This has precluded the IOs from pursuing ideas that would likely be positively received, such as holding more subject-specialised events.
- Difficulty involving national authorities and institutions: stakeholders, including the IOs themselves, stressed the need to play a larger role in facilitating contact and collaboration between European researchers and national authorities in each EURAXESS Links country. This limitation in the scope of the project during the period 2008-2012 has been a substantial brake on the usefulness of the network, and its potential impact. Improvements in this area could greatly increase EURAXESS Links' profile, especially in light of the difficulties researchers expressed in forging such links themselves.
- Duplication, overlaps and failure to exploit potential synergies: interviewees highlighted the existence of many programmes and services for researchers, including some funded and managed by the EU itself. This created some confusion with programmes such as the Marie Curie fellowships, Erasmus Mundus and EU Centres at universities, while also presenting significant opportunities for cross-promotion and collaboration that have not (yet) been sufficiently developed.
- Lack of monitoring data: as pointed out several times in this section, monitoring data is very thin on the ground. This has precluded a robust, data driven assessment of which aspects of EURAXESS work well and are impactful, and which are not. In particular, this renders the identification of good practices considerably more difficult than would be the case if more detailed figures were compiled with regard to, for example, event attendance and follow-up and the results of advertisements for jobs and fellowships placed on the EURAXESS Links portals.
- Insufficient strategic direction: while all three EURAXESS Links locations have been assessed as somewhat successful, it is clear that a vision for how the networks should evolve in the short-, medium- and long-term has not been clearly articulated and shared with IOs. This has precluded the development and rolling out of more strategic initiatives, including some of the collaboration with other entities mentioned above.

In general the EURAXESS Links activities such as the monthly newsletter, events and portal were well received. But the fieldwork also served to highlight some particularly successful practices, identified in some of the countries under assessment, which could be worth emulating across the EURAXESS Links locations:

- Collaboration between the IO and EU Delegation: where the IO works closely with the EU Delegation, **namely in China and in Japan**, EURAXESS Links has been able to exploit synergies effectively, play complementary roles and hold joint events. Given the strong mutual interest between the EURAXESS Links, which deals with researchers directly, and the EU Delegation, which is responsible for scientific cooperation on a more institutional level, successful collaboration has allowed EURAXESS Links to act as a bridge between the EU and researchers individual researchers that would not have been existed otherwise.
- Informal networking events: these were universally lauded **in all three EURAXESS Links countries** under review for fostering connections among researchers and other stakeholders, in addition to providing a sense of belonging for researchers far from home. However, it was suggested that the involvement of more local institutions and organisations, in addition to holding events specialised for particular audiences, would make increase their effectiveness even further.

Publications: though some paper publications such as leaflets were not positively reviewed, the European Funding Guide for Researchers and Students **in Japan** was highly praised for presenting a synthesis of the 300 programmes implemented by the EU, its Member States, countries participating in the FP7 and Japanese funding institutions. Iterations of the Guide published in other countries were also very well received.

3.3.4.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, it is clear that a number of factors are continuing to hold EURAXESS Links back. Some of these would be difficult to address meaningfully, at least in the short term. For example, it is unlikely that significantly more funding will be allocated to EURAXESS Links in the near future. Others barriers, relating to engagement with national-level institutions in the EURAXESS Links countries, especially China and Japan, where European researchers found making such contact difficult, the approach to monitoring and evaluation, cooperation with other researcher assistance interventions and the longer term strategy of EURAXESS Links, could be improved without supplemental resources and therefore should be targeted.

There are also several good practices that could be rolled out more widely, and indeed in some cases, such as the European Funding Guide, first rolled out in Japan, this is already the case. A high level of collaboration between the EU Delegation and the IO, which has been most notable in China, also appears crucial, as it allows synergies to be exploited and joint events pursued. Networking events, praised universally across all three countries, seem particularly successful, meriting their repeated mention here.

4 General conclusions and recommendations

4.1 General conclusions and recommendations - PART I

4.1.1 Conclusions – PART I

4.1.1.1 *Awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and EURAXESS Jobs among the researchers' community*

We conclude in relation to awareness and use of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community that:

- The analysis provides some indication that the level of awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs among the researchers' community has slightly increased (though it is still low in absolute terms). For instance, compared to the 2007 evaluation results (47% of the respondents had at least heard about the ERA-MORE network and 66% of the European Researchers Mobility Portal), a slight increase of awareness level is found in 2013; 73% of the researchers have heard of EURAXESS (Services and Jobs) before;
- Awareness is higher for the EURAXESS Jobs portal than EURAXESS Services. In particular, the number of unique visitors is the highest for the EURAXESS Jobs portal (96%) compared to the three other EURAXESS branches;
- Word-of-mouth, whether from colleagues and friends or employers, in addition to online searches, appears to be the most common way for researchers to find out about EURAXESS;
- The total number of visitors of EURAXESS Services (European and national portals) has increased over the years, reaching a total of 619 450 visitors in 2012 compared to 291 143 in 2009;
- Awareness of EURAXESS Services and Jobs does not necessarily imply use of the portals, which still remains low even if higher than in previous years;
- EURAXESS Services and Jobs are generally relevant to researchers' needs but there is room for improvement, such as supporting the social networking of researchers;
- The EURAXESS Jobs portal is perceived as a key source researchers use when looking for jobs/fellowships but other specialised websites (such as medical journals, LinkedIn, jobs.ac.uk, etc.) and personal networks are considered more important when looking for job offers by subject area (e.g. for economists, biologists, etc.). Nevertheless, they praised the recently added link to the Nature jobs portal (<http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science>) and favoured further expanding to other specialised websites;
- The quality of the services and information provided by EURAXESS online (Services and Jobs) was much appreciated by the users (50% of the researchers responding to the survey showed high level of satisfaction for the language options of the portal and 49% highly appreciated the fact of easily surfing on the portal. The portal was also praised for its clear structure and visual attractiveness). Nevertheless, there were several areas for improvement highlighted by users such as the need for more detailed information in relation to specific requests (e.g. legal affairs) due to the lack of expertise of the EURAXESS staff on specific topics;- navigation of the EURAXESS Services portals (the European and the national ones) in terms of simplifying the site structure, providing a site map etc.
- In terms of support provided by the EURAXESS staff, those who had received support spoke highly of the level of service. In particular they rated the quality (i.e. accuracy of information provided) and the timeliness of services provided. With regard to improvements, a desire for more direct contact and consultation on specific topics, such as legal issues, was highlighted.

4.1.1.2 Approach and strategy

We conclude in relation to implementation of the recommendations about approach and strategy (a. develop a coordinated, strategic and long-term **approach to communication** and b. develop a well-defined and promoted **Communication Strategy** (at EU and national level) that:

- The EU-level Communication Strategy is generally known to EURAXESS staff, at least to some extent. Data from the survey to the EURAXESS staff show that 62% of respondents know it at least 'to some extent' (data from fieldwork show a similar proportion). National strategies are elaborated in the majority of countries, even though the national network is not always fully aware of them;
- The main target audiences of EURAXESS identified by national strategies are researchers and supporting staff. National authorities and policy-makers are clearly identified as main audiences as well. EURAXESS staff (BhOs mostly) tend to involve them in national activities and to promote lobbying actions besides them to actively promote measures that would benefit researchers' mobility. With respect to this, BhOs go well beyond the basic requirements of the EU-level Communication Strategy;
- The support provided by the T.O.P. I and T.O.P. II for developing and sharing promotion strategies is well acknowledged. Problems reported include the lack of a systematic follow-up to these activities and a stronger support in the upcoming period;
- The main barriers for promoting EURAXESS include the difficulty of promoting it via a 'brand' approach (while a problem-based approach is often considered more effective) and the struggle for actively engaging supporting staff in promoting the initiative. In particular, stakeholders interviewed felt that promoting EURAXESS by simply raising awareness about its existence (the 'brand' approach) is less effective than promote it explaining how it can help researchers (the problem-based approach). While this is done in some countries, it is not a widespread and common approach.

4.1.1.3 Awareness

We conclude in relation to implementation of the recommendations about awareness (a. seek for **multipliers**⁵³ to help promote the services throughout Europe and b. optimise the use of internet **search engines** and exploit the ways people search online for information relating to working as a researcher abroad) that:

- A variety of activities are still at place at national level in an attempt to increase visibility of EURAXESS. However, there are few clear and dedicated communication campaigns, often due to financial constraints;
- Very few innovative tools (i.e. social media) to increase visibility around EURAXESS are currently implemented;
- Co-operation with multipliers (mainly with Marie Curie NCPs and national authorities) exist in most of the countries but the potential has not been fully explored;
- The recommendation on search engine optimisation of EURAXESS at European level has been included in the EU-level Communication Strategy in 2010 requesting for "being in the top list of natural search results!" by optimising the new site content wise and technically (choosing right URL, choosing right domain extension, good SEO copywriting, link building, meta-keywords and titles,...)⁵³. Further, practical guidelines have been developed by the EC and included in the EURAXESS European portal. However, at national level, –concrete information on the level of implementing SEO strategies was not clearly reported by the BhOs interviewed;

⁵³ EU-level Communication Strategy 2010.

- The main obstacles for implementing the recommendations about awareness include lack of financial support and human resources as well as a certain level of buy-in among the EURAXESS staff (be it the limited guidance some ESCs and LoCPs received by the BhOs in putting promotional activities forward).

4.1.1.4 Branding

We conclude in relation to implementation of the recommendations about the re-branding (a. adopt a **single name and logo** that convey an online and offline presence, b. **drop** the ERA-MORE **slogan** and c. exploit a more consistent approach for the National Researcher's Mobility Portals in terms of design to reinforce the **corporate identity**) that:

- The re-branding and re-grouping of the EURAXESS Services and Jobs is completed and considered worth-implementing by the EURAXESS staff interviewed in order to reach a better level of homogeneity of the EURAXESS network and help the beneficiaries (researchers) when looking for services provided. Researchers also appreciated the re-branding of EURAXESS;
- The time and processes of completion varied among the participating countries and still, the EURAXESS national portals are not fully aligned among each other;
- The EC was very supportive throughout the process via concrete instructions and guidelines on how to implement the changes, the regular trainings organised (Ambassadors training, Web writing training, Portal technical training, etc.) and support to the whole process of implementation and promotion. Added to this, the set-up and functioning of the extranet was much appreciated by the EURAXESS Staff since it allows applying directly for trainings, funding, receiving notifications in real time, etc. ;
- The re-branding of EURAXESS was also appreciated by the end users. However, the name and logo still create some dispute among the researchers since some of them find them confusing and/or difficult to remember;
- The main obstacles for implementing the recommendations about re-branding include the limited involvement of all EURAXESS staff throughout the exercise (for instance, LoCPs were neither consulted on the re-branding exercise, nor given clear instructions throughout the implementation process). There is still some room for improvement.

4.1.1.5 Effectiveness of I&C activities (at EC and National level)

We conclude in relation to implementation of the recommendations about effectiveness of I&C activities (a. focus **communication materials** produced by the EC on communicating to policy makers and national administrations, limiting the materials produced centrally by the EC to generic material and b. explore ways in which generic communication material could be produced centrally and customised locally and continuing producing materials and organising promotional activities directly in participating countries which could take a **customised approach**) that:

- The targeting of EURAXESS promotional materials has improved (as in many of the countries included in the fieldwork promotion materials are produced by the BhOs on the basis of national needs), and attention to target groups other than supporting staff in universities and research institutions (e.g. policy-makers and national administrations) has notably increased;
- Besides the website, newsletters and events are the communication tools most widely used by the EURAXESS network to promote the initiative. Tools such as social media are not being used to a limited extent, although their relevance is acknowledged increasingly by the BhOs interviewed. The use of multipliers (especially media) is still difficult. EURAXESS staff do not feel like having the capacity for creating events and obtain the attention of the media
- Promotional materials are normally produced at national level by the BhOs and then distributed to the national network members for use. Materials from the EC are rarely used

exclusively. Tailoring is normally done at national level, while ESCs and LoCPs tend to be not involved in these activities. Visibility of EURAXESS at local level is sometimes limited;

- The main barriers identified are the difficulty in involving multipliers and supporting staff, and the need for a more face-to-face approach.

4.1.1.6 Role of the EC and Participating countries in order to improve I&C activities of the EURAXESS Services

We conclude in relation to implementation of the recommendations about the role of the EC and participating countries to improve I&C activities (a. keep a role of **strategic guidance** and to assist participating countries in developing detailed communication plans, with well-defined time span, b. maintain a **coordinating role** of the network, facilitating the exchange of experiences, granting access to network members' contact details to other members and organising training and c. keeping exploring **ways and tools to improve** the European Researcher's Mobility Portal) that:

- Coordination of Information and Communication activities within national EURAXESS networks and with the EC is considered to be effective. Coordination across participating countries is working less well, as ESCs and LoCPs are often isolated from the international network and would like to be more involved in international events and strategy design phase;
- Training provided at European level within the current framework is considered of good quality and relevant (in terms of topics covered and quality of the coverage) , but frequency should be increased. There is a demand for additional training on several topics (from issues linked directly to researchers' mobility to others more related to management of staff and use of communication tools).

4.1.1.7 Challenges and Risks

We conclude in relation to implementation of the recommendations about any challenges and risks identified (a. develop a **mitigation plan** to ensure the sustainability of the initiative and b. develop predominantly **information and communication activities and materials** at national level to reflect the situation of the EURAXESS network in the country) that:

- The main risk identified for the EURAXESS network is the sustainability. Stronger political support at European and national level are considered crucial for ensuring the sustainability of the initiative. This entails stronger links with European strategies (such as Horizon 2020) and with national strategies and plans on research and human resources;
- Low awareness about the EURAXESS network could create a vicious circle as EURAXESS Services would fail to be used and the Jobs portal would be unlikely to attract vacancies and users. Therefore, the required national support would be more difficult to achieve and overall sustainability to reach;
- This risk is well acknowledged by the EURAXESS staff interviewed, who has been actively working to gain the necessary support at national level. A more direct intervention from the EC would strongly support this effort (such as a closer dialogue between the EC and national institutions);
- With regard to the level of homogeneity of the services provided in relation to information and communication activities, some improvements have been identified, such as the common template of the EURAXESS Services national portals.

As regards potential additional features, we conclude that:

- A closer relationship with industry particularly in terms of encouraging this sector to make use of the EURAXESS Jobs portal was widely welcomed by the stakeholders interviewed.
- Using the EURAXESS network to provide more practical information also to non-mobile researchers (such as career development and trainings) was not considered feasible by the

stakeholders interviewed given the limited amount of human and financial resources currently available;

- Adding offerings such as career development centre to the current workload of the ESCs was judged as not feasible given the current set-up of the network (limited human and financial resources).

4.1.2 Recommendations – PART I

To further increase the visibility and thus, potentially the awareness and use of EURAXESS, we recommend:

- Further promotion of the EU-level Communication Strategy at national and regional levels by strengthening the link with the ESCs and LoCPs and among them (e.g. regular get-togethers, training session, online communications and consultation with each other, etc.) and directly involving them during the strategy design phase;
- Updates of the
- Exploring the use of more innovative tools as part of EU-level Communication Strategy, by developing social platforms and online forum for the end-users. This would foster the set-up of a real EURAXESS community;
- Reinforcing the corporate identity of EURAXESS at national level by for instance, engaging the EURAXESS staff to use the logo in their signatures, adding the EURAXESS logo and banners in universities web sites, etc. This is relevant especially for EURAXESS staff at local level (i.e. ESCs and LoCPs) as they are the direct interface of the initiative with the researchers' community;
- Many of the improvements on the EURAXESS Jobs portal functionalities demanded by its users are going to be deployed with the upcoming refreshments of the portal (to be released in mid-2013), such as the refinement of search criteria, the inclusion of links to other specialised websites (e.g. naturejobs), integration of links of other European initiatives related to researchers' working conditions) etc. However, these improvements should be clearly promoted and communicate to the end users, who do not seem to be well aware of all the website's functionalities;
- Strengthening the cooperation with the business sector by encouraging industry to use the EURAXESS Jobs portal to publish their vacancies.. This would multiply the opportunities for researchers and in turn generate higher awareness and use levels.

To ensure the sustainability of EURAXESS, we recommend:

- Maintaining the T.O.P. projects but adopting a long-term vision in the corresponding call focusing on defining a sustainable plan towards that vision; Establishing stronger links with European (such as Horizon 2020) and national strategies and plans on R&D, since such an approach would increase the credibility and the perceived importance of the EURAXESS initiative at national level as well as support by the national authorities. This in turn will increase the sustainability of the network;
- Supporting the BhOs in their policy advisory role at national level (e.g. being invited in Government meetings, contributing in written on the subject of researchers' mobility, etc.) so that European policies on researchers' mobility are reflected to the extent possible on national measures;
- Identifying and engaging additional multipliers such local EU information networks, (i.e. Europe Direct, EURES, Enterprise Europe Network, etc.) emphasising on the European aspect of the EURAXESS initiative and possible links with other European initiatives at national level. A larger network of engaged stakeholders would help in better promoting the EURAXESS services throughout Europe.

With regard to the EURAXESS staff and the network's operations, we recommend:

- Enhancing coordination among the EURAXESS staff and especially among the LoCPs by actively involving them at international level beyond the bi-annual conferences and training sessions, via for instance the organisation of regular webinars or the creation of an open platform for discussion other than extranet (which could serve as a 'wall' to share information, as a library, to publish upcoming events/study visits, etc.);
- Organising more training sessions. A wider spectrum of topics need to be explored, such as conducting campaigns on social media, coaching and mentoring, intercultural communication, etc.;
- Assessing the feasibility of additional features in the current set-up of the national networks, such as career development and trainings for researchers, taking into consideration the limited availability of human and financial resources.

With regard to the potential additional features of EURAXESS, we recommend:

- Taking into consideration that there is still the need to keep consolidating the existing operational model of EURAXESS Services and reducing the differences in the level and quality of services provided in the participating countries;
- Sharing future strategies and plans (including any potential novelty of the services to be provided under the EURAXESS brand, such as annexing a career development centres) with the entire network, by communicating clearly the long-term vision, the resources envisaged and the timeline for the developments identified.

4.2 General conclusions and recommendations - PART II

4.2.1 Conclusions – PART II

4.2.1.1 *Relevance of the services provided by EURAXESS Links*

Our conclusions on the relevance of EURAXESS Links during the period 2008-2012 can be summarised as follows:

- EURAXESS Links responds to most of researchers' needs in the US, Japan and China, in large part because the IOs have been able to shape the network's offering to local needs in terms of the content of the various activities;
- Many researchers feel unable to permeate the vast array of local institutions in the countries where they are based because they are complicated, involve many actors and, in the case of China and Japan, would be facilitated by language skills that European researchers often lack. Though they look to EURAXESS Links to help them make local connections, this need has only been met to a small extent so far;
- While feedback from EURAXESS Links members is taken into account, there is no mechanism in any of the three EURAXESS Links countries to ensure this is done in a systematic way, putting the continued relevance of the initiative at risk;
- Awareness of EURAXESS Link is varied, and appears higher in Japan and China, where the perceived need is greater and the researcher community smaller, than in the US, where EURAXESS risks being drowned out in a large environment with little scope to reach the majority of members of the target audience.

4.2.1.2 *Awareness of EU research policies and collaboration opportunities*

Our conclusions on the awareness among target audiences of EU research policies and opportunities for collaboration are as follows:

- EURAXESS Links is a key source of information for researchers to keep abreast of European research policy and opportunities for careers and collaboration with Europe. However, this **differed for members in the US**, who used EURAXESS to find out about potential moves to Europe, and **Japan and China**, where researchers were on shorter stints and used EURAXESS Links to identify funding and other opportunities leading to further work and projects in the country in question.

4.2.1.3 *Success of EURAXESS Links in linking European researchers with the European research base and stimulating scientific cooperation*

Our conclusions on the impacts of EURAXESS Links are as follows:

- The impacts of EURAXESS Links are hard to discern and measure in terms of concrete examples demonstrating how the network led to researchers finding posts in Europe or establishing research ties. However, it has played an indirect, contributory role in propelling the careers of some researchers on an individual basis, and fostering dialogue among relevant institutions and organisations.

4.2.1.4 *Problems, barriers and good practices in implementing EURAXESS Links*

A number of conclusions can also be drawn with relation to the problems, barriers and good practices identified in the implementation of EURAXESS Links:

- There were several barriers EURAXESS Links faced during the period 2008-2012. While the main issues related to funding have been addressed by the new FWC, others could plausibly be targeted, specifically those relating to engagement with national-level institutions in the EURAXESS Links countries, the approach to monitoring and evaluation, cooperation with other researcher assistance interventions and the longer term strategy of EURAXESS Links;
- Among good practices worth implementing across the EURAXESS Links network, it is worth considering the high level of collaboration between the IO and EU Delegation, **especially in China**. Networking events in all three countries have also received nearly universal praise, as has the European Funding Guide, which has already been adopted elsewhere after initial success in **Japan**.

4.2.2 **Recommendations – PART II**

The evaluation team is confident making a number of recommendations in order to improve EURAXESS Links over the coming years. Indeed, some of these have already been taken into account in the new Framework Contract setting which defines the parameters of the network for the 2013-2015 funding period. These can be considered in terms of 1) cross-cutting recommendations; 2) relevance; 3) awareness of EU research policies and collaboration opportunities; and 4) success in linking European researchers with the European research base and stimulating scientific cooperation⁵⁴.

Cross-cutting recommendations

- Systematic monitoring of EURAXESS Links: It is recommended that a systematic monitoring mechanism be developed and rolled out across the EURAXESS Links locations. This should be consistently applied throughout the network and encompass several elements, namely 1) standardised methods and templates for gathering user feedback on EURAXESS Links activities (e.g. newsletter, portal, networking events, publications); 2) periodic member

⁵⁴ Findings and conclusions with relation to problems, barriers and good practices in implementing EURAXESS Links have been integrated into the other three sub-sections.

surveys; 3) standardised methods for collecting quantitative data on EURAXESS activities (e.g. portal use, applications made/positions awarded against job/fellowship postings, publications downloaded/distributed, number of event participants, etc.). Where possible, objectively verifiable indicators should be developed and used. The monitoring mechanism would facilitate the taking into account of member needs, in addition to making it easier to identify which activities have achieved greater and lesser success. Given the flexibility of IOs and the variation in activities across the EURAXESS Links network, it would also be expected that good practices would be noticed more quickly than has been the case and, where applicable, implemented elsewhere.

- Establish more formal relationships between IOs and EU Delegations: It is recommended that the EC consider establishing a more formal relationship between IOs and the EU Delegation in the EURAXESS Links locations. Building on success achieved particularly in China, this would help ensure that EURAXESS Links plays its role effectively as a 'bridge' between the policy level and researchers themselves. It would also encourage the exploitation of synergies and cross-promotion, increasing the profile of EURAXESS Links and helping to raise awareness among members of European research policy and other relevant issues.

Relevance of the services provided by EURAXESS Links

- Develop future strategy with clear intervention logic: It is recommended that EURAXESS Links develop a strategy with objectives at output, outcome and impact levels articulating what EURAXESS Links intends to achieve at both in the individual locations and network-wide. This would help IOs tailor their offering to researchers' needs effectively, and ensure that activities are designed and conducted in a purposeful manner. The monitoring mechanism described above could be used to gauge progress over time and highlight areas that need particular attention.
- Establish and/or deepen relationships with local institutions and organisations: It is recommended that EURAXESS Links prioritise the establishment and/or deepening of relationships with local authorities, institutions and other organisations responsible for research cooperation, policy and funding in EURAXESS Links countries. The evaluation revealed that European researchers often have trouble navigating the multifarious research environments in their destination countries, especially, but not only, in China and Japan. Catalysing the formation of links between researchers and actors in the local context would be expected not only to enhance the level of research in the short term, but increase the chance that cooperation and collaboration will continue over the long term when European researchers return home. This applies not only to China and Japan, where language presents a significant barrier, but in the US, where the research environment encompasses a potentially daunting number of actors.

Awareness of EU research policies and collaboration opportunities

- Focus on promoting European research funding: It is recommended that a proportion of EURAXESS Links networking events focus on European funding available to partners based in the EURAXESS Links locations, and that both Europeans and local actors be invited to participate. While members of the network felt the events often helped them meet other Europeans, they professed trouble forging links with researchers and other actors from their destination country (though this was more of a problem in China and Japan than in the US). Encouraging more contact in the framework of concrete opportunities for research collaboration could help bridge this gap.

Success of EURAXESS Links in linking European researchers with the European research base and stimulating scientific cooperation

- Set realistic objectives and maximise leverage by working more closely with EU Delegations: Given the relatively small and hard to measure impact that EURAXESS Links has had so far, it is recommended that, when formulating objectives for the network, the EC and IOs take stock of the size and scope of EURAXESS Links within the research environment and set realistic and measurable goals. In particular, it is recommended that EURAXESS define its position alongside other actors and foster relationships, such as with the EU Delegations and Member State S&T counsellors, which can help leverage EURAXESS modest budget against larger initiatives.