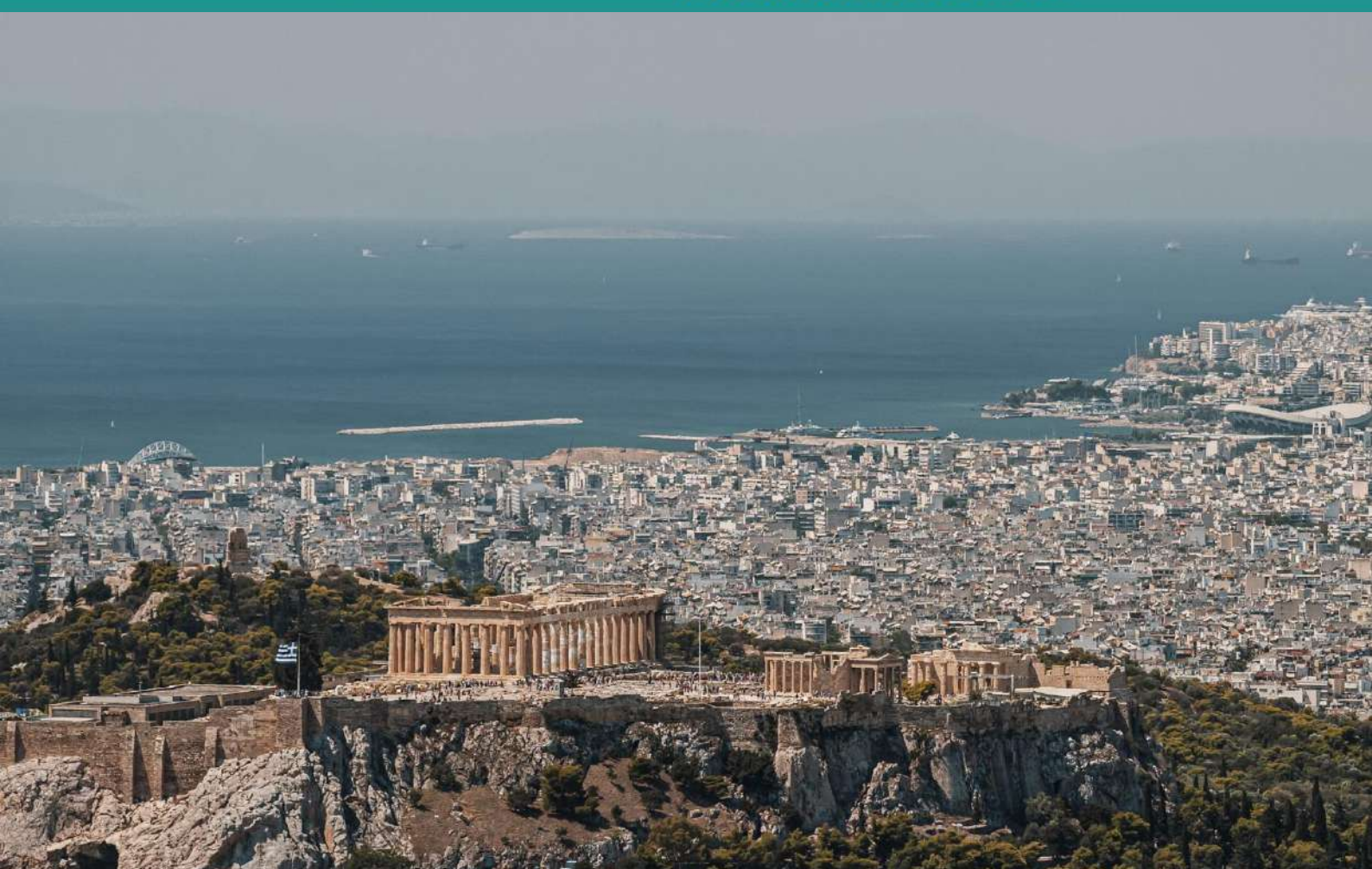


Strengthening the Capacity of Independent Fiscal Institutions

Deliverable 4A. Communication Review of the Hellenic
Fiscal Council

Technical Support Instrument

Supporting reforms in 27 Member States



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Executive summary

Analysis

This report provides an analysis of the current communication strategy of the Hellenic Fiscal Council (HFISC), with the aim to provide recommendations for further improvement. The assessment is part of a EU-project to support Independent Fiscal Institutions (IFIs) in several aspects of their functioning, under the umbrella of the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI).

To make the assessment, the report draws lessons from the literature on IFI communication and from practical experience of other IFIs. Based on that, the report assesses HFISC's communication strategy, its use of communication channels and the impact its communication generates.

IFI communication

Communication is important for IFIs to fulfil their watchdog role with respect to government finances. This is because the influence of IFIs in fiscal policy making is persuasive. The analysis of IFIs need to reach others that can influence government policies. Hence, media coverage of their work as well as the use of other communication channels helps to fostering informed constituencies that can compel the government to behave responsibly in fiscal matters.

To be an effective communicator, IFIs need to know and reach their audiences. In general, these audiences are the executive and legislative branches of government, the media, the academic community and the general public. To reach these audiences, an IFI should make use of the different communication channels at its disposal. This includes different types of publications as well as parliamentary hearings, the use of (social) media and bilateral contact with ministries and other relevant organizations.

Based on the literature, the report draws the following lessons about IFI-communication:

1. Develop a solid communication strategy
2. Embed communication within the organization (rules, openness, example, etc.)
3. Make things simple and invest in communication channels
4. Assess the communication strategy and keep learning

HFISC's current communication strategy

HFISC's communication strategy aims to deliver its messages concerning the Greek government finances to several audiences. To get there, HFISC is step-by-step developing its communications strategy and its communication tools. Recently, HFISC has made an audience segmentation that identified four audiences to which it wants to tailor its communication. These are: policy makers, politicians, the media and academia.

HFISC analytical work is published in several types of periodic reports. An important part of HFISC's influence comes from its endorsement (or not) of the government budget and macroeconomic forecasts. These endorsements are concise reports of about six pages that are easy to digest and are thus a useful means of communication. In addition, HFISC publishes twice a year a flagship report in which assess government finances in more detail. These are informative reports, but somewhat harder to digest for non-specialist. Moreover, HFISC publishes working papers to explain the analytical models it uses and to disseminate its academic research.

Recently, HFISC has invested in its contacts with the press. Since 2023 HFISC has added press releases to its publications to increase the awareness of its publications among journalists. HFISC also has taken a more pro-active approach by contacting journalist around publication dates, for example to offer an interview with the chair of HFISC. In addition, HFISC has recently started to monitor its presence in the media.

HFISC makes use of social media in a modest way. The website of HFISC is mainly used to publish its reports and to support social media. In addition, HFISC uses LinkedIn as a social media platform to alert followers on new publications.

HFISC has not established a formal communication strategy. The organisation is aware of the importance of communication and has been improving its communications activities. However, it has not yet made a formal communications plan, that provides a solid basis for the way it will communicate its message. Current resources are limited: a part-time external communications expert and the Chairperson are involved in communication of the institution.

HFISC has already a good relationship with its four most important audiences. As part of the endorsement process it has developed a good working relationship with the Ministry of Finance. The chair of HFISC periodically addresses the parliamentary budget committee to give HFISC's view on the government's finances. HFISC's recent investing in media relations has resulted in additional media coverage and increased its impact. In addition, HFISC has close ties with the academic community in Greece. The Chair of HFISC has been invited to lecture at the Athens University of Economics and Business, as well as participating in academic conferences and workshops. Additionally, university student visits have been arranged, during which the institution's role, activities, and the new fiscal framework are presented.

Recommendations

- HFISC's could enhance its communication strategy. As part of this plan, HFISC should determine: its communication goals, its audiences, the ways to reach these audiences, the types of publications, the type of language it wants to use, and the process needed to ensure it reaches its communication goals.
- To further enhance its communications, HFISC should consider attracting dedicated communication staff. Recently, HFISC attracted a part-time communications advisor. This has already resulted in large step forward in terms of professionalising communications. The ties with journalists and the media presence of HFISC have clearly strengthened. Against this background, we see room further improvements (see recommendations below). Implementing them will require additional budget to finance resources, including additional communication staff. Given the size of the organisation, 1 full-time equivalence staff member tasked with communication would be the minimum.
- HFISC could enrich its current reports, to enhance their impact especially in the executive sphere. This can be done in several ways, such as including some more analysis about risks to government finances, upgrade its visuals and layer them to different audiences. In addition, a short summary of these reports on the website, could also help to make them more easily accessible.
- HFISC could develop publications that are attractive to read for several of its audience. An option is to develop short notes providing economic analysis that are easy to read and visually attractive. Such notes should be policy oriented. Several other IFIs make such publications, which are often very informative for the executive sphere. In the case of HFISC, they can also be seen as an exercise that help to learn

to perform policy costings. By analysing specific policies, HFISC would already gain some knowledge about certain policy areas about which they would at a later stage perform a policy costing.

- HFISC could better track its reputation, among its audiences. There are several ways to do so. Different IFI's carry out surveys and polls periodically to get better knowledge of their reputation amongst different audiences.
- HFISC can further improve its relationships with the media in several ways. A next step would be to organize press conferences around the publication of certain reports. Such a conference could be organised at the premisses of the council, which would help to make itself better known among journalists and foster a communication culture among its staff. In addition, HFISC could provide background briefings to journalists on the more technical aspects of its work
- To further strength its ties with the academic community, HFISC could organize a regular event (once every one or two years). Such an event could for example consists of asking a well-established economist to provide a lecture. This will attract an academic audience and help HFISC to establish its academic reputation.
- To reach its audiences, HFISC should consider sending a newsletter to those interested in the organisation. Such a letter is a convenient way to notify people about a new publication or new economic developments. Through this channel several audiences can be reached, including the press, policy makers, academics and those people within the wider public that are interested in HFISC's analysis.
- If and when HFISC will undertake a costing of election platforms exercise (as stipulated by its new mandate) the communication strategy of the output of this exercise merits special attention, to preserve its reputation as an impartial and independent institution. This will probably temporarily require additional resources (communications staff) during and directly after the publications of the costing.

Introduction

This report provides an assessment of the current communication approach of the Hellenic Fiscal Council (HFISC). The assessment is part of an EU-project to support Independent Fiscal Institutions (IFIs) in several aspects of their functioning, under the umbrella of the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI). For IFIs it is important to develop a good communication strategy. The main purpose of these institutions is to advocate sound budgetary policies. However, as IFIs, including HFISC, do not have formal powers to amend the budgetary policies of governments, their influence is based on high-quality assessments of policies in combination with communicating the results of these assessments to those who can amend government policies directly or indirectly.

As part of this assessment, the report first presents the context in which HFISC operates. More specifically, the political, economic, social, technical and environmental context is briefly touched upon as to have an idea how these aspects might change the environment of HFISC.

In addition, the report gives an overview of lessons learned regarding IFI communication. To do so, the report looks at lessons learned, based on several studies on IFI communication and how these can be translated into best practices.

Based on this background, an assessment is made of several aspects of the HFISC communications. Subsequently the report assesses: the communication strategy, the audiences of HFISC, the channels used and its communication impact. In addition, a simple benchmark and SWOT analysis is performed.

Based on this analysis, the report provides a set of recommendations for HFISC. These recommendations can be the basis for an enhancement of the communication strategy for HFISC. Part of these recommendations can be supported under the TSI, in the next phase of the project.

Chapter 1: Context Analysis

This chapter briefly describes several developments that are important for the context in which HFISC operates. Especially the decline in trust in governmental organizations and increased climate risk are relevant topics for HFISC.

1.1. Political context

Democracy is suffering from a weakening all around the world. The global democracy score experienced a drop only equivalent to the one that happened in 2010 due to the global financial crisis. The global political situation is also marked by armed conflicts that affect key areas of western territories. These have increased tensions between the global powers, such as Russia, the US, the EU and China.

Worldwide, trust in the government and the media have dropped¹. Many citizens around the globe consider the government “a source of false or misleading information”. The number of those who consider the media a source of false or misleading information is equal to those who consider it a reliable source of trustworthy information. In addition, citizens in the European Union consider misinformation and disinformation a threat to their countries in the coming years². When asked about divisive elements that intensify differences and feed polarization, government leaders and journalists are considered the main dividing forces that pull people apart. Local institutions, including regionalized media hold a higher rate of trust.

As the focus of mistrust is shifting towards political leaders’ and systems’ legitimacy, IFIs can play a positive role by showing their independence. This provides an opportunity to channel the public’s trust towards them, emerging as objective citizenry’s allies. Potential paths for IFIs emerge through alternative communication channels, besides the traditional media and journalists, which are losing the public’s trust.

Political context in Greece

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis leads the centre-right New Democracy party, which secured a second term in the June 2023 elections. The New Democracy party currently enjoys a slim parliamentary majority with 156 seats, while the centre-left PASOK holds 31 seats and the left-wing SYRIZA 26, making this the most right-wing Greek parliament since 1974. A July 2024 poll revealed that public trust in political institutions remains relatively low.

1.2. Economic context

During the past years the global economy can be characterised by increased tensions amid strong interdependence amongst countries. The Covid-19 crisis, the fallout of the Russian invasion and the recent US tariffs showed the interdependence of food and other supply chains as well as threats to international trade. These topics have emerged as world-

¹ Edelman Trust Barometer – Global Report (2023) at <https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/202303/2023%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2023-03/2023%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

wide economic concerns. As a result, strategic autonomy has become an increasingly important topic³.

Economic context in Greece

Due to steady economic growth and sound budgetary policies, the Greek government debt is recently on a downward path. Unemployment in Greece has fallen below ten percent and is expected to continue to decline. Despite this downward trend, low income and unemployment are still important concerns for young Greeks (Metron Analysis for Dianeosis, 2024). In addition, mainly due to supply constraints and rising prices, it has become more difficult for Greeks with less income to find a house. Although the outlook for the overall economy is positive, there are some concerns looking ahead. One is the impact of climate change on the economy. Natural disasters such as floods and forest fires could affect economic growth and lead to additional costs. Another one is increased geopolitical risks, which can reduce trade flows, lead to further economic uncertainty and high defence spending. Moreover, aging poses a challenge for the government budget due to expenditure on pensions and healthcare. Another risk is the low productivity growth. In addition, the Greece national debt is still high relative to GDP, even though it has been declining over the past years. These risk factors underline the importance of sound budgetary policies and therefore the role of HFISC as a fiscal watchdog.

1.3. Technological context

Artificial intelligence is reaching a professional and sophisticated level, where its potential to raise productivity is increasingly manifest. It is becoming an established tool, and it introduces challenges such as policy making and legal safeguards from its misuse. It will also be necessary to estimate the impact it could have on the labour market and production processes.

Technological context – Greece

The Greek government is actively developing a national strategy for artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance the country's technological capabilities and infrastructure. In October 2023, Prime Minister Mitsotakis established an AI advisory committee comprising leading experts in technology, ethics, law, and science. This committee is tasked with formulating policy recommendations and creating guidelines for a long-term national AI strategy. In addition, in December 2024, Greece initiated the integration of AI into its public education system. This move followed extensive discussions on the role of AI in education and reflects the government's commitment to preparing students for a future where AI plays a significant role.

1.4. Environmental context

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) points out that the past nine years have been the warmest years on record within our history. The World Meteorological Organization (UN) expects during next 9 years, temperatures will sequentially beat these records.

Extreme weather events may reduce economic growth. According to Swiss Re Group in the 2012–2021 period, storms, wildfires, and floods alone caused losses of about 0.3% GDP globally each year. Due to that, different countries around the world are already

³ EY PARTHENON, 2024 (December 2023), Geostrategic Outlook, How to thrive amid ongoing geopolitical complexity.

preparing for the mitigation of natural disasters, like the US, which has devoted resources to improving buildings structures and protecting them from hazards. Singapore is developing a new urban designing system based on nature to make urban areas cooler; Tokyo is implementing cooling pavements. Australia is getting ready to face more wildfires and cyclones or even tsunamis.

To solve the challenges that climate change presents, governments need sound climate policies. IFIs can contribute to such policies. It offers an opportunity for IFIs to demonstrate their value in long-term risk analysis.

Environmental context – Greece

Climate change is an important item in Greece, given the direct effects in terms of droughts, floods and wildfires. These consequences are already visible in Greece, stressing the need for sound climate policies. Climate events and disasters can have significant fiscal implications. This underlines the importance of HFISC's task to assess their impact as well as compliance with national and European fiscal rules in this regard and to disseminate its findings.

Chapter 2: IFI communication in theory and practice

This chapter gives an overview of the communication channels of IFIs in general, and of factors influencing the quality of communication and lessons that can be learned from the literature as well as experiences from other IFIs. An important lesson is to embed the communication strategy within the IFI-organization. While drawing lessons from other IFI's it is important to recognize that the institutional context, mandate and size of IFI's differs, and will be reflected in their communication.

2.1. IFI communication and its audiences

The OECD and others (IMF, EU) underline the importance of communication for IFIs to fulfil their watchdog role with respect to government finances. Given that the influence of IFIs in fiscal policy making is persuasive, rather than coercive, the analysis of IFIs need to reach others that can influence government policies. Hence, media coverage of their work as well as the use of other communication channels can help foster informed constituencies that may then compel the government to behave responsibly in fiscal matters. Empirical analysis shows that countries, where the IFIs have a higher media impact, tend to exhibit better fiscal outcomes, provided key messages are submitted when they matter the most, i.e. during the budget process (see World bank paper for reference / IMF).

Effective communication should be seen in the context of the goals that an IFI pursues. These goals can be formulated as follows (see Raudla & Douglas 2020): 1) reduce information asymmetry between the government and others (e.g. parliament, wider public), 2) increase the accuracy of economic forecasts, 3) increase the importance of longer-term sustainability of public finances and 4) strengthen the position of the guardian of the purse, normally the Ministry of Finance. In each of these areas the communication endeavours of the IFI play an important role. To reduce information asymmetry between the electorate and the government for example the IFI needs to find communication channels to inform the wider public on the state of public finances. In addition, if the government chooses to neglect the longer-term consequences of their policies, it can be seen as the role of an IFI to communicate this.

An IFI exerts influence by informing various audiences on fiscal and budgetary matters. In this respect one can distinguish several audiences, each of which influences policies through its respective means. These constituencies include Executive and/or Legislative, the Media, Think Tanks and Academics, and the general public.

Communication with the executive branch

By informing policy makers about fiscal and budgetary policies, an IFI can influence the decisions they make. There are many possible interactions between an IFI and the government, depending on the local institutional setting. Examples include interactions with the Ministry of Finance related to assessment of the economic forecast models (macro, budgetary, debt sustainability), related to adherence to fiscal rules or to policy costings. An IFI can improve the quality of policy making, in budgetary and fiscal matters, and through providing information on and assessments of the fiscal position. Although such advice might be willingly considered by the ministry, it is explicitly recognized in the setup of IFIs that policy makers might be unwilling to do so, possibly derived from the political gains they expect from current government spending. The reason that IFIs are independent is because this provides them with the possibility to independently comment on government policies and to leverage political pressure, through their communications to specific audiences (parliament, media, think tanks). Hence, although some of the advice of

IFIs will probably willingly be considered, it is the potential treat to communicate its comments to a variety of audience that helps to create leverage for an IFI.

Although (and because) IFIs and the Ministry of Finance have regular interaction and cooperation, IFIs should be careful to preserve a nonpartisan reputation. The Ministry of Finance and the IFI both are responsible for keeping government finances in check. Therefore, their goals are to some extent aligned, warning others of the negative consequences of increasing government expenditure. In addition, both spend time and resources analysing the general government budget, which in turn provides close relationships between the two, often through informal contact as well as through the exchange of staff. Especially given this regular interaction between the institutions, it is important for an IFI to stay impartial and show this through its communication. If an IFI is seen as “always in favour of austerity”, as was the case in the early days of the Irish fiscal council, this damages its reputation as an impartial assessor of government finances (see Raudla & Douglas 2020). Given these regular interactions between the IFI and the Ministry of Finance, it is also important to be careful in deciding what type of communication is informal and what is formal (see World bank 2024).

The extent to which an IFI communicates with specific spending departments depends on its mandate, on its role in policy costings. As explained above an IFI is a natural assessor of government finances. The extent to which an IFI assesses and thus comments and communicates about the policies of a spending department, depends mainly on the question to what extent the IFI is involved in policy costings. However, even if the IFI is not explicitly tasked with policy costings, it implicitly assesses policy costings of major budgetary policy measures when assessing the fiscal projections. If these are endorsed, the IFI implicitly also endorses the policy costings forming the basis of the fiscal projection. Other IFI's perform policy costings or explicitly assess those of the Ministry of Finance; in these cases, IFI's should be careful about the way it communicates its findings. Costings of specific policies involve specific interest groups, such as business representatives, that are ready to criticize these costings when these go against their interest. Against this background, an IFI should not only assure the quality of such costing, but also carefully communicate the results and “stick to the facts”. This is even more important when costing election platforms, because the risk of being accused of being partisan is than increased manifold.

Some government expenditures are large and increasing due to aging, such as pensions and health care costs. Such budget items often deserve individual attention, even if an IFI is not mandated to perform or assess policy costings. Also, these items represent the interests of specific groups that have an incentive to react and thus deserve special care in terms of communication strategies.

An IFI can help to foster well-balanced discussion between policymakers, thereby addressing the common-pool problem. An IFI can potentially address the common-pool problem inherent in budgeting, resulting from the fact that public organizations internalize only part of the costs of their programs and do not consider the overall costs of higher debt (Beetsma & Debrun, 2016; Calmfors & Wren-Lewis, 2011; Debrun et al., 2013). An IFI can do so by showing the costs of different policy measures and their impact on the government finances, on the economy and other impacts. In this respect an IFI is probably better positioned to do so compared to the Ministry of Finance, given its independence, whereas a Minister of Finance is normally associated with a particular political party. Hence, an assessment of the budgetary consequences of a set of policy measures by the IFI (e.g. at the start of a new government tenure or at the start of a budgetary year) can contribute to a well-balanced discussion of government expenditure. To foster a balanced discussion, such an analysis deserves attention in the way it is communicated.

Communicating with the legislator and politicians in general

As the parliament ultimately decides on budgetary matters, it is a valuable audience for an IFI. By informing parliament, the IFI enhances parliamentary control of the executive branch. First and foremost, as an independent assessor of compliance with the fiscal framework: it is harder to cook the books when there is independent scrutiny of the framework. This is relevant, because politicians that are in power might have an incentive to increase expenditure to gain support from the electorate, also when this has negative long-term consequences. Secondly, there have been instances when the opposition in parliament can be a counterforce to these incentives. There are examples of parliamentarians from the opposition using the insights from the IFI, such as recent reports on the state of public finances, to criticize the government (see e.g. AIReF A4 report).

To be most effective, an IFI should tie its publications to the yearly budgetary cycle, as most IFI's (including HFISC) do. Budget discussion normally follows a yearly process, as the executive puts forward budgetary projections, consisting of government income and planned expenditures, to the parliament, at specific moment during the year. For an IFI to be effective, it should take these yearly budgetary discussions into account, so it informs all relevant stakeholders (including parliament) at the right time about the budgetary consequences of their decisions.

Even though informing all stakeholders including the parliament can help to get a better-informed discussion about public finances, there still is a risk of short-termism. An important reason is of course that the governing party mostly has a majority in parliament and can have an incentive to enhance current spending. Therefore, it is important for an IFI to also address politicians through informing the electorate.

Communication with the wider public

To be effective and viable over the longer run, an IFI should engage with the wider public (see also OECD 2014). It is ultimately the wide public, in their role as voters, that decide on the politicians that are in charge of government budgetary policies. To be able to do so, citizens need to be informed about budgetary policies, such as the long-term consequences of a high budget deficit. The literature on IFI communication stresses the need to reach out to the wider public. Haldane (2017) stresses out the importance of informing the wider-public, when talking about his experience as Chief Economist at the Bank of England: "It is the public who decide, ultimately, whether central banks are serving society well or poorly". The same is true for IFIs.

Especially when addressing the wider public, IFIs should be wary that there are obstacles to reach them. Governments finances is a technical subject, that concerns large numbers and complicated trade-offs, that are difficult to understand for most citizens. Therefore, IFIs should aim to find ways to explain such trade-off as simple as possible. Otherwise, it will be difficult to reach the wider public. This underscores the importance of a sound communication strategy.

Citizens can be reached mainly through intermediaries. Intermediaries include the news media, such as TV, radio and newspapers. In addition, citizens might look at particular opinion makers for their view on budgetary policies. Economist for example, that discuss budget matters in these media are themselves also intermediaries that citizens consider. Through means such as the social media and the IFI's website, it is also possible to reach citizens directly.

Communication with academics and think tanks

Because of the analytical character of the work of an IFI, it is relevant to engage with academics and think tanks. Part of the work of IFI is academic in nature, such as the

econometric models an IFI uses to make macroeconomic or budgetary projections. To build a reputation as high-quality research institute, it is relevant that the academic work of an IFI is respected by those who can assess its quality, hence the economic, academic community. In addition, academics and other opinion leaders in budgetary and economic discussions, will often use their media platforms to comment on the work of the IFI, which in turn influences the opinions of policymakers, politicians and the wider public. Another reason to want to reach academia is that people working in academia often see it as their role in society to “tell truth to power” and this can reinforce the critical voice of IFIs in the public debate. In this respect, academia can be, and in practice has been in many instances, a natural ally of the IFI in the public debate.

An IFI should be aware that there often is a policy debate going on among academics and policy makers about the right fiscal policy. The IFI should inform this audience in such a way that it is respected as an institution. This means high quality economic analysis, sometimes of an academic nature. This discussion will feed back into the policy-making process and the views of politicians.

Communication with the academic community can have several forms. A good starting point is for an IFI to publish sound economic analysis (on its website or elsewhere), including the models it uses for economic forecasting. In addition, to engage with this community, one can appoint academics in the IFIs advisory board, or engage academic partners for specific economic topics (e.g. labour market economists etc.). Moreover, to show its close relationship with the academic community, an IFI can for example also organize a regular lecture in which it invites a well-established academic and invites the local academic and policy community.

Communication and financial markets

Fiscal councils can contribute to making market discipline more effective by providing regular updates on fiscal performance (IMF 2013 B). These updates could be effective in providing relevant budgetary information because, instead of monitoring fiscal developments, financial markets would monitor the fiscal policy reports of the IFI, which is likely to be more impartial than communication of the government themselves. This type of communication should be easily accessible to foreign economist and be available in English.

2.2. Factors influencing communication quality

Certain factors influence the quality of communication: 1) to what extent the communication strategy is supported by a solid overall IFI strategy, 2) to way the message is tailored to its audiences, 3) the timing and frequency of communication and 4) the reputation of the IFI.

Communication needs to be part of the overall strategy

An effective communication strategy is important to disseminate the work of an IFI and ensure that it has impact. Essentially, such a strategy describes what audience the IFI wants to reach and through which channels. Influential IFIs report that it is particularly important to develop an effective relationship with the media (see OECD report on IFI principles). Specialised stakeholders may be directly involved in an IFI's reports, but the wider public is most likely to learn about an IFI's work through summaries of its reports in the media.

A communication strategy should be supported by a sound overall strategy and mandate. OECD (2024) research shows that IFI's communications impact does not depend on a single communications tool, but on the interaction between several crucial facets. In a regression analysis the OECD papers distinguish three key features of an IFI: 1) its

communications apparatus (consisting of elements such as the presence of communications staff, communication strategies and the use of press releases etc.), 2) its independence and 3) its analytical focus. The analysis suggest that it is indeed the joint effect of all three dimensions that best explains an IFI's communications impact. Hence, IFIs need to be independent, analytically focused, and equipped with tools to communicate their work effectively if they are to succeed in influencing the national debate.

Tailoring the message to the public

Messages should be understandable for their intended audiences. OECD's IFI's principles state only 50% of the IFI's success at reaching their potential is related to its reports, while the other 50% depends on the way their conclusions or information is transformed into knowledge and gets through the institution's audiences. This attention is specially needed for reaching the wider public, as they will be less acquainted with budgetary discussion.

To reach its audiences, the IFI should invest in communicating its message in a simple and understandable way. Reports should thus be clearly written, use plain language (see box below). Several of the audiences an IFI intend to reach, such as policymakers, politicians, members of the media, do not have an economic background. Hence, in the reports addressing these audiences' economic concepts should be explained and jargon should be avoided.

When commenting on the policies of the sitting government, the IFI should decide on the right tone of communication. On the one hand, the IFI should be willing to openly confront the government when its policies give reason to do so. On the other hand, it is important to be respected by the government. By being too confrontational an IFI risks getting neglected or to get into an open, non-productive conflict with the government. In their study on IFI communication Raudla et al. (2020) refer to the confrontational style of the Portuguese IFI (PFC), which enabled the government to say: 'The PFC is just like an opposition—they are just out to criticize us and they will find a reason'. This was detrimental to the reputation of the institution. To find the right tone, an IFI concentrate its communication on the facts of its analysis.

Box 1: Plain language

Shannon, founder of information theory, measured the information process according to the effect of reducing uncertainty it would create on the part of the receiver, not based on words or digits. If the receivers would feel discouraged by the difficulty of the report or overwhelmed by its complexity Shannon would consider that reporting action to be disinformation. Haldane (2017) points out: "For a chunk of society, the very volume of reporting may be increasing uncertainty and impairing information, understanding and trust".

History of economic-related communications shows how, in other times, when trust in institutions was high, "complex language posed no trust problem. Little was published, even less read. Public discourse was infrequent and attentive audiences were narrow. Complex language added to the "mystique" of institutions, including central banks, and as a sign of technical competence. Complex language is these days more likely to breed mistrust than mystique (...) and it has become a source of scepticism rather than reassurance." (Haldane 2017).

The Plain Language Movement was born to avoid disinformation and rejection towards institutional communication in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Plain language focuses on ways of writing a text so that it is clear, concise and flows well for the reader. The Centre for Plain Language states that: "[a] document, web site or other information is in plain language if the target audience can read it, understand what they read, and confidently act on it". Writing in plain language does not mean oversimplifying the concepts but presenting the information in a way that makes it easier to understand and use by a wider audience.

Texts written in plain language are still formal but are easier to read and inspire confidence for the reader. Using plain language in communications ultimately improves efficiency, because there is less ambiguity for the readers, and less time is needed for clarifications. Clear communication improves the user's experience with the organization, ultimately creating trust in the organisation.

Software can help plain language: The Canadian PBO is active in coaching staff on plain speaking. To help with this, the PBO uses software tools like "Antidote" which highlight redundancies, repetition, dull verbs, and other stylistic features of writing as well as more conventional errors. This is used, not just for publications, but for internal communications as well. more conventional errors. This is used, not just for publications, but for internal communications as well.

To reach the intended audience, IFIs need to decide which communication channels to use and build a constructive relationship with the media. An IFI has several means of communication at its disposal and most of them reach more than one audience. There is thus no one-to-one relationship between channel and audience. However, one can say that policy papers are aimed at policy makers, engagement with the media is aimed at the wider public and technical papers are aimed at the academic community. Several papers (ref.) stress the importance of a good relationship with the media, as this can be an effective communication channel to reach several of the IFIs audiences. At the same time, this relationship required some attention, as the media will interpret the message of the IFI and might combine it with other sources of information in its publications and broadcasts. This implies for the IFI that the message needs to be clear and easy to receive for the media and that the media is convinced of the quality and impartiality of the message. There are several ways to facilitate the relationship with the media, including holding press conferences, provide background information on more technical issues and it can also be very effective to give a certain journalist the possibility to be the first one to publish on a particular IFI-paper or research project. Journalists are keen to have a "scoop". In addition, an IFI should determine which types of publications and communication channels are aimed at what audience. Some publications can be read directly by policymakers, while others are aimed at academics. Moreover, social media can be used to advocate these different publications.

The timing and frequency of the message

The impact of IFI messages is the largest when the timing is right, which is often at the start of the policy discussion. First, the IFI's regular publications of the government budget, should be aligned with the budget cycle (IMF 2013, World bank 2024), as to optimally inform the discussion on the government budget. In doing so, the release dates of these publications should be clearly established to show to the public that these dates are aligned with the budget cycle and will not be changed because of political pressure. Another element to consider is the election cycle. Analysis that is available before the new government comes into office, is likely to be considered during the policy negotiations of the incoming government. An IFI that performs election costings, would always do so to some extent. Another example of timing is being quick to inform policymakers and other audiences, after an economic shock. The Covid-shock is an example. An OECD-study (2020) analysed the timeliness and content of IFI's in response to Covid. It concluded that IFIs have reacted quickly from the onset of the crisis, providing vital analysis to their

stakeholders and that IFIs were unanimous in their assessments that significant fiscal responses to the crisis by government are appropriate.

The literature also refers to the need to carefully decide on the frequency of communication. To preserve a good signal-to-noise-ratio, an IFI should not comment on all budget relevant events (IMF 2013). When an IFI comments often on relatively small budgetary items, it reduces the impact of its commentary when it really matters. This is because it is for audiences less clear to identify the important warning signals of an IFI, in between the smaller comments (the noise). The study by Raudla et al. (2020) names several examples of IFIs that were too frequently signalling concerns through the media.

The reputation of the IFI

The reputation of the IFI is an important basis for giving weight to its communication. If it builds on a solid reputation, the message of an IFI is taken more seriously. Building a good reputation is a much broader issue that has to do with the strategy of the IFI, including the quality of its staff and research, and not solely with its communication strategy. However, some communicational aspects can help to build a solid reputation.

The literature underlines the importance for an IFI to be seen as non-partisan (Beetsma & De Brun 2018). More analysis highlights that the credibility of the independence of the IFI as an important pre-condition for its views to be reflected in the public debate (OECD 2014). In this regard the remark of the first head of the US Budget Office is telling:

“As we begin the first full year with the new Congressional budget procedures in place, I want to emphasize once again that CBO must be, and must be perceived to be, an objective, non-partisan, professional organization in the service of the Congress ... Our work and our publications must always be balanced, thorough and free of any partisan tinge ... Our task is to provide information which will help the whole Congress in reaching its decisions.” See Beetsma & De Brun 2019.

In addition, an IFI should built a reputation as centre of expertise on budgetary matters. This gives weight to its budgetary analysis. Doing so requires that an IFI publishes thorough analysis and comments. This sometimes gives rise to a difficult weighting between timeliness and thorough analysis (Beetsma et al. 2018). There are examples of IFIs in that responded quickly, but made mistakes in doing so, which seriously hurt their reputation (see Raudla et al. 2020).

Moreover, although an IFI has the role to support sound budgetary policies, it should be careful not to be seen as a one-sided commentator on fiscal policy. To avoid such a reputation, an IFI should pursue to always be balanced in its comments. For example: the comment that expenditure needs to be funded is more nuanced than the stance an increase in expenditure increases the budget deficit, see Raudla et al. (2020).

It takes time to build a reputation. This is inherently the case, as the concept of reputation is based on a repeatedly positive experience, in the case of IFI with independent, high-quality analysis. A study by Morda et al. (2024) illustrates that reputation is not always present. Using a survey on a representative sample of 900 inhabitants of the Czech Republic, their study evaluates how the framing of a message regarding the negative effects of rising government debt would impact the attitudes of respondents. The results show that framing the message as coming from the Czech Fiscal Council does not increase its credibility. Hence, as the reputational effect of the IFI was small, it should focus on the content of its message.

2.3. Lessons for good communication in practice

According to the paragraph above, an IFI should relate communications to its overall strategy, tailor messages to its audiences, secure a good timing and frequency of communication and build a good reputation. To do so, an IFI can learn from others. Lesson can be structured around four themes:

1. Develop a solid communication strategy
2. Embed communication within the organization (rules, openness, example, etc.)
3. Make things simple and invest in communication channels
4. Assess the communication strategy and keep learning

Develop a solid communication strategy

A first thing an IFI can do to enhance its communication, is to develop a communication strategy. This strategy should be aligned with the overall strategy of the IFI. An IFI that does election costings for example, faces different communication challenges, compared to an IFI that has a more limited mandate, focused on government finances. The same holds with respect to policy costings. Critical assessments of particular expenses (healthcare, elderly pensions, infrastructure) for example, could be more open to critic, as it is more confrontational towards a certain interest group.

A communication strategy contains the following elements:

It contains the communication goals of the organization. These are the goals that help to reach the overall strategy and provide some general guidance to the way the organization communicates. The US CBO for example has defined four goals: “CBO is committed to providing information that is objective, insightful, timely, and clearly presented.

It defines the different audiences to address in its communications and why. For an IFI logical candidates are policymakers (including their staff), politicians, the media, the wider public, the academic community, and other institutions that are relevant for public finances, such as: other IFIs and the central bank, international organizations (OECD, IMF, EU). The reason to reach these audiences is related to their ability to influence budgetary policy and this should be borne in mind when formulating the communication strategy.

It defines through which communication channels it will reach these different audiences. There are many different channels an IFI can use to communicate its message. Some target a particular audience, others are broader, but each has its own characteristics, which should be considered. See below for a more detailed analysis of different communication channels. In addition, next to such formal communication channels, an IFI could also think about using informal communication relationships.

It defines how it will tailor its publications to different audiences. This refers to the type of publications an IFI will issue and to the guidelines with respect to these publications. Think of things such as the maximum length of (policy) publications, rules regarding the type of language that is used, rules regarding the use of social media or with respect to checks and balances regarding the publication process, for example with respect to readability or the academic quality of the working papers. In addition, think about the use of TV and social media or the use of the website.

It defines the timing of publications. The timing of publications is important, in essence because an IFI's can only improve budgetary finances by influencing the decisions of others. Hence, an IFI should make sure that its analysis is timed in such a way that it can be considered in policy discussions and parliamentary endorsements of budgets and that it informs voters. An obvious element to consider is the yearly budgetary cycle. In addition, it

is important to publish publication dates in advance so that it is clear for all relevant audiences when an IFI will publish its reports and thus that it will not let its timing of publications be influenced by others (e.g. the sitting government).

It defines the frequency and tone of communications. To be effective an IFI should not only try to be in the media but also try to optimize its signal-to-noise ratio. The latter implies that an IFI is selective regarding the type of issues it communicates about. In addition, the tone of publications is also relevant. An IFI should probably find the right balance between “ruthlessly telling the truth” and being too confrontational to preserve the respect of its audiences as a voice of reason in budgetary discussions.

It defines how the institution will act in times of a crisis. A communication strategy should contain some rules and guidelines concerning crisis communication. When an IFI comes under attack from the government or certain interest groups, it should be prepared to respond timely and in well thought-through manner. This is even more relevant when an IFI is also involved in costing of election platforms, as a balanced and adequate communication is then even more important to preserve a non-partisan reputation.

Embed the communication strategy within the organization

To become a good communicator, it helps to develop a communication-based culture.

It is important that there is awareness within the organization that not only the analysis of an IFI should be of high quality, but also the way it is communicated. The latter largely determines the impact of the analysis. Several elements support a communication-based culture.

First, a high-quality communication strategy is built on high-quality analysis that are impartial and factual. One reason to embed the communication strategy within the organization is that the analysis that an IFI produces is the foundation of its communication strategy. To be a strong communicator, the publications of an IFI need to be impartial, based on a solid factual basis and well thought-through. If this is the case, there is a good basis for a high-quality communication strategy.

Second, the staff of an IFI should understand that communication is central to its work.

This is needed to prevent that analytical staff, who writes reports is focused solely on the analysis. Leaving the task to communicate clearly to communication experts within the IFI does not work as this person is not able to substantially rewrite the reports that the IFI's analytical staff has produced. It would also be a waste of resources to do so. In any case, a clear policy should be established defining who has the mandate to communicate on behalf of the institution in which situation. To enhance a communication-based culture, several IFIs give communication training to their staff. The CPB for example communication capabilities are already considered at the recruitment phase and new staff receive communications training one day per week over eight to ten weeks. In this time, the communications team explains what outputs have produced more impact and positive outcomes in the past. They also go through basics such as formulating clear sentences, ways to visualize material effectively, reducing the length of reports and formulate clear takeaways. In addition, management of the CPB also receives media training. The Irish Fiscal Council conducts internal training sessions on effective writing and presenting, drawing on its own past experiences. In addition, its staff undertake professional media training with a focus on media engagements. The US CBO also provides such trainings, including formal and informal instruction about how to communicate on behalf of the organisation.

Third, being open also supports a communication-based culture. One element in this is to support interactions with staff and journalist (on background). This helps to get staff involved in thinking about the right way to communicate their messages, especially as they

are given a certain responsibility to do so. At the same time, it is important to secure that the institution speaks with one voice. Sending different messages by different members of staff will significantly reduce the effectiveness of communication. Examples of IFIs where staff is open to speak with the press are the CPB and the Canadian PBO. In both organizations staff are allowed to speak on background with journalists based on their research. In support of this, they receive careful media training which sometimes means coaxing analysts out of a tendency towards introversion. A second element of openness is to publish most material an IFI produces on its website. Thus, not only the official reports, but also presentation of members of staff, speeches, media appearances and the IFI's workplan.

Fourth, take a proactive communication approach. This for example implies that, instead of waiting for researchers to develop outputs and responding to the latest fiscal events as they arise, a communications expert can get involved in report production at earlier stage. It also looks ahead and tries to anticipate key emerging themes or areas of focus.

Fifth, ensure good internal process to safeguard the quality of publications. To make sure that the quality of publications is up to standards, internal process and certain rules are helpful. Such an internal review process could focus on elements such as objectivity, analytical soundness and clarity of the analysis. At the US CBO for example, this entails a rigorous process involving multiple people at different levels in the organisation and for a particularly sensitive reports, the team of analysts who contributed to it sometimes gathers to review the text page by page to ensure its accuracy.

Optimize communication channels and tailor to the audience

To reach the different audiences, it is important to invest in the relationship with the press. Especially the wider public will learn about the analysis of an IFI through the media, but also other audiences, such as policymakers and politicians, this is a notable communication channel. There are different ways to invest in this relationship. As a basis a IFI should accompany its publications with press releases. Key publication could be accompanied with press conferences, that provide the opportunity for the IFI to explain its message in more detail and for journalist to ask questions and thus to fill those elements of the analysis that are unclear or especially relevant from a media perspective. In addition, since much of the work of an IFI is relatively technical and thus time-consuming to understand for a journalist, several IFIs organize technical briefings for journalist. In such meetings, the IFI for example explains the workings of the economic model that makes the medium term (on a conceptual level). Moreover, investing in relationships can also include that journalist receive publications in advance under embargo. The reason to do so is to create time for journalist to read and understand a publication, before they publish about it. This is relevant given the media culture that sometimes emphasises being the first to publish. Another way to invest in media relations is to be open to questions of the media, also not directly relating to a particular publication, and provide them with rigorous answers, including the possibility to speak with staff about a particular subject.

There are several reasons to invest in media relationships. First, given that journalists are often not trained economists and given the often technical nature of the work of an IFI, it is worthwhile to take the time to explain the analysis and its main message to journalists. This provides them with the background needed to portray the message as accurate as possible. Second, as media will not only distribute the message of the IFI but will often also comment on it or place it in a certain context, it helps if the IFI can itself provide such context. This is one of the reasons to hold press conferences and to invest in answering questions of journalist, as these may not only concern the publication itself, but also its context. Examples could be questions about the validity of EU fiscal rules, about the quality of the budgetary program of a new government or about some concrete examples that a

journalist wants to use to illustrate a story. Being approachable to journalists who have such questions is a simple but valuable way to improve media relations. In addition, as journalist will possibly comment on the analysis of an IFI, it is helpful when they are convinced of the quality of the analysis and the impartiality of the institution. Hence, investing in showing these aspects to journalist is worthwhile.

Box 2: Examples of IFIs that invest in relationships with the press

CBO: seeking to foster accurate press coverage of CBO's work, the agency strives to develop constructive relationships with reporters by being responsive and providing access to CBO staff on a timely basis when questions arise about CBO's work. CBO often holds widely attended formal press briefings about the budget and economic outlook reports and sometimes holds telephone conference briefings after other reports are released. CBO staff also speak frequently with reporters on a background basis to help them better understand the agency's work

Ireland: The Council has cultivated ongoing relationships with the media. It regularly engages with journalists on background. It sees this as important for building and maintaining relationships vital to its success.

To reach its audiences the publications of an IFI should be simple to understand. Given the fact that the analysis of budgetary policies is a relatively technical subject to which many people are not acquainted investing in simplicity and readability of publications is worthwhile to get the message across. One element to increase readability for a wider audience is to use plain language, see box below. Another is to make sure that a publication is self-explanatory and does not assume knowledge of economic concepts. In addition, visualising the message with infographics, graphs and tables, helps to bring the message across and make a publication more interesting to read. Moreover, simple examples can help to gain a better understanding of the message. For example, instead of talking about billions of euros for a country as a whole, an IFI could in some cases simplify this to euros per person. Or instead of using percentages gain in BBP, an IFI could translate it to working weeks per working (see CPB gain from EU membership).

Explain difficult topics in simple terms, that people can imagine. To make difficult topics understandable for a broader audience, it helps to use plain language and to make publications and concepts visual attractive. However, this might not be enough to make trade-off within fiscal policy easy to understand. More creativity can be required. One standout example of is the Irish Council's ability to capture the public's attention is its coverage of ageing pressures. The Council condensed some of the analysis in its Long-term Sustainability Report to a more human level by showing the implications for individual taxpayers. It estimated that workers on average wages would have to pay an extra €1,000 social contributions annually just to finance the larger number of people reaching retirement age. It estimated an additional €800 would be required if pension age increases did not go ahead. This analysis generated substantial and sustained media debate on the implications for different generations of taxpayers.

Given that a publication will probably be relevant for multiple audiences, an IFI could bring in layers targeting these different audience. Many IFI publications are relevant for different audiences and should take this into account. Think of a critical review of the government long-term budget policies. This is relevant policymakers, the wider public and thus the media, but also to foreign investors and academics interested in the underlying model. To tailor to such different audiences, a publication could include elements such as a clear summary, a section stressing the main messages, these messages could already be provided on the website (thus before opening this publication). The latter is also easily

translated into other languages by AI-translators. In addition, a publication could consist of two parts, a short policy-oriented paper (with a maximum number of pages of say fifteen) and a background document. The latter contain different types of background information, including additional data, the technicalities of the model used, a literature review etc. An example is the Canadian PBO that layers its communications to make work accessible to different audiences. Each report has an executive summary and is accompanied by a “highlights” document. This summarises the report in two to four paragraphs. The highlights document is seldom published but is used to help design press releases and as a refresher tool when speaking to parliament or media.

Use the human factor to reach the wider public. To reach a wide audience, it helps to add a “human factor” in communication. There are several possibilities to do so. One is to make the chair a prominent spokesperson, on TV or radio or podcasts, so the voice of the IFI is the voice of a person. Another way is to use a blog, written by the chair of the IFI, to communicate messages to the public, as this also gives it a more personal touch. The Dutch CPB is an example of an IFI where the chair uses a blog. Also, several other organizations such as the European Central Bank, the European Commission or the International Monetary Fund are enhancing the humane aspect of their organizations by linking it to a face, a human story.

The website and social media are important communication channels. They have the potential of reaching different audiences directly, without the media as intermediary. A website also offers many possibilities for presenting information. First, it is a platform for the publications of the IFI, such as its endorsement letters, policy costings, economic assessments and working papers. In addition, it offers the possibility to share data, show graphs, post videos or podcast and to add interactive elements. Examples of the latter include graphs of models that viewers themselves can manipulate and download. Social media can be a good platform for IFI to alert followers on new publications or analysis. At the same time, the interactive element of social media complicates this channel, as there might be negative or falls posts surrounding a new publication. In such circumstances it is often best practice not to take part in the discussion, to preserve the reputation of the IFI. Hence, a logical strategy is to use social media as means to just send messages to followers.

Assessment of the communication strategy

To measure their effectiveness, IFIs should periodically assess the impact of their publications. This can be done in several ways. One way is a survey among the different audiences. Specialised consultants are often able to offer this service and also do a survey among the wider public. The Dutch CPB performs a survey among Dutch citizens in which it measures its reputation, every three years. Another way to assess its performance is to interview different stakeholders, as has been done as part of the TSI project. A third way is to organize focus groups among specific audience. An example could be a focus group of journalists with whom the IFI discusses its performance. The benefit of this is that people can react to each other and explain their views on the organisation, which can help foster a more in-depth discussion.

Chapter 3: HFISC's Communications

This chapter gives an overview of HFISC's current communication strategy, and the communication channels it uses. It provides several ways for further enhance the communication strategy.

3.1. Some background on HFISC

HFISC is the IFI responsible for assessing and monitoring the government budgetary policies. HFISC has been established in 2015 in response to EU regulation requiring all Member States to establish independent bodies to monitor compliance with fiscal rules and budgetary and macroeconomic forecasts. The organization is of medium size compared to other IFIs within the EU, with a staff of around 15 persons and a budget of circa 1 million euro.

HFISC role as an independent fiscal institution is mandated by the Greek national parliament. The budget of HFISC and the appointment of board members are endorsed by the parliament. To explain its take on the economic and budgetary stance of the Greek economy, the president of HFISC appears before the parliament at least once a year.

To assess and monitor budgetary policies, HFISC is given a broad range of tasks. HFISC is given the mandate to endorse macroeconomic projections and budgetary plans of the Ministry of Finance as well as compliance with fiscal rules. The assessments of HFISC take the form of opinions, in which HFISC explains whether it endorses these plans or projections. In addition, HFISC has the mandate to assess the methodology used by the ministry to make budgetary and macroeconomic projections.

In addition to these opinions, HFISC publishes twice a year a report on the macroeconomic and fiscal developments and several other publications. These reports provide an overview of the macroeconomic and fiscal developments of the Greek economy and a chapter that monitors the budgetary policy. HFISC also publishes notes on current economic topics and academic background papers. Examples are the informative note the HFISC published in the wake of the covid crisis on the increased uncertainty of the economic situation and thus of the macroeconomic and fiscal forecasts. A recent academic paper focusses on improvements in government debt arithmetic.

HFISC is young and has not yet had the time to build a reputation. HFISC has not yet build a strong reputation as fiscal watchdog, as is evident from interviews conducted for this analysis. There are however quite some opportunities to do so. Especially its broad mandate can be the basis for an articulated voice on public finances within Greece. Further increasing its analytical (work, models, assessments, economic analysis) is a cornerstone for the enhanced fulfilment of its mandate.

3.2. HFISC's current communication strategy

HFISC communication strategy aims to deliver its messages concerning the Greek government finances to several audiences. To get there, HFISC is step-by-step developing its communications strategy and its communication tools. Recently, HFISC has made an audience segmentation that identified four audiences to which it wants to tailor its communication. These are: policy makers, politicians, the media and academia. HFISC has not yet developed specific communication goals for each of these audiences.

Currently, HFISC analytical work is published in several types of reports, that form the basis for its communication. An important part of HFISC's influence comes from its endorsement (or not) of the government budget and macroeconomic forecasts. These endorsements are concise reports of about six pages that are easy to digest and are thus a

useful means of communicating its view of the Greek government finances. In addition, HFISC publishes twice a year a flagship report in which assess government finances in more detail. These are very informative reports, but somewhat harder to digest for non-specialist. Moreover, HFISC publishes working papers to explain the analytical models it uses and to disseminate its academic research. A fourth category of publications are occasional notes, that for example can refer to acute economic risks.

Recently, HFISC has invested in its contacts with the press. Since 2023 HFISC has added press releases to its publications to increase the awareness of its publications among journalists. This also facilitates the work of journalists, as these press releases are written in a language that they can directly use in their media communications. HFISC also has taken a more pro-active approach by contacting journalist around publication dates, for example to offer an interview with the chair of HFISC. In addition, HFISC has recently started to monitor its presence in the media.

HFISC makes use of social media, but in a modest way. The website of HFISC is mainly used as a means to publish its reports and to support social media. Currently, HFISC only uses LinkedIn as a social media platform.

HFISC has hired an external advisor to assist in developing its communication strategy. Based on the advice of this specialist, HFISC has been improving its communications over the past couple of years. The resources to do so are relatively modest. HFISC has no communication specialists among its staff and no dedicated spokesperson, that could help to draft and execute a communication strategy, although it considers hiring such a person.

The chair of HFISC is the person that communicates on behalf of the Council. She gives interviews with the press, hearings in parliament and answers questions of the press.

HFISC has not yet developed a strong communication culture. The publications are not specifically tailored to audience, the use of visual elements in publications can be improved, there are no specific processes in place to assure that simple language is used in publications and publications are not layered to the different audiences that might want to read them. In addition, there is no tradition of staff communicating directly with the press.

HFISC has not established a formal communication plan. The organisation is aware of the importance of communication for an IFI and has been improving its communications activities. However, it has not yet made a formal communications plan, that provides a coherent basis for the way it will communicate its message. In addition, HFISC has not yet developed a specific communication strategy to follow during a communication crisis, for example, as the institution is being attacked in the media.

HFISC has not yet developed a record of the sentiment of its closest audience. HFISC monitors the website visits and whether it is mentioned in the media. It does, however, not yet monitor its reputation. To get an impression of the reputation of HFISC we conducted several interviews (see list in annex). Based on these interviews, we are of the opinion that HFISC is not yet seen as a strong voice in the public policy debate. Which is something to improve upon, partly through its communications.

Looking forward, communication will become even more important as HFISC will further fulfil its mandate. Currently, HFISC does not fully fulfil its mandate however, policy costing of electoral platforms is new task. When HFISC starts performing such additional tasks, it will face additional communication challenges.

Possible enhancements

In terms of communication strategy, we see several possible enhancements.

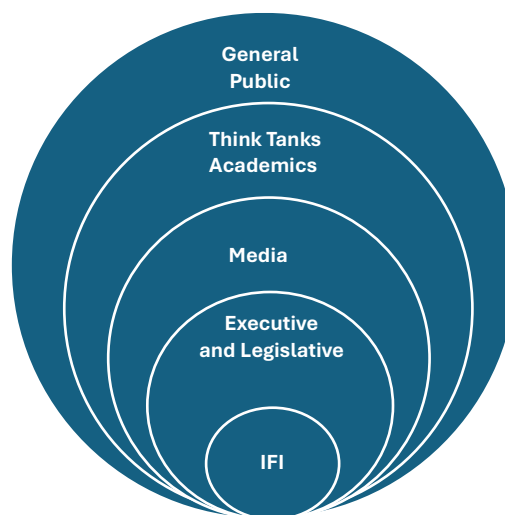
- **First, it would help HFISC's effectiveness if it would enhance its communication strategy.** As part of this strategy, HFISC should determine: its communication goals, its audiences, the ways to reach these audiences, the types of publications, the type of language it wants to use, and the process needed to ensure it reaches its communication goals.
- **Second, HFISC can take steps towards a more open communication culture.** Elements could include engagement with the press (on a background basis) of its staff, additional attention for the way it want to spread its message when writing a publication (think of adding simple, easy to understand examples of trade-offs) and rules and processes for plain language.
- **Third, HFISC could develop publications that are attractive to read for several of its audiences.** A good option would probably be to develop short notes providing economic analysis that are easy to read and visually attractive. During the COVID-crisis, HFISC published a short paper on how the increased economic uncertainty could affect the government budget balance. This paper was well received and thus a good example of the type of economic analysis that HFISC could produce to reach its audiences and build a reputation for itself as economic centre of excellence.
- **Forth, HFSIC could better track its reputation.** There are several ways to do so. Different IFI's carry out surveys and polls periodically to get better knowledge of their reputation amongst different audiences. The Netherlands' Central Planning Bureau (CPB) conducts an awareness and reputation survey amongst the wide public. At Belgium's Federal Planning Bureau (FPB), several surveys have been carried out amongst university students and employers since the very recent professionalization of its communications activities.

Chapter 4: Relationship with audiences

This chapter assesses how HFISC currently reaches its different audiences and what measures can help to extend the reach of the organization. These include more reader friendly content and a more interactive relationships with the press.

4.1. The audiences

Audiences' classification could be carried out following a wide range of criteria, depending on each organization's needs or interests, such as the public's potential interest to establish relation with the organization, what they can offer or obtain, or the nature of their activities. OECD's standards, as well as other institutions and studies focused on IFI's communications, identify 4 different spheres of IFI's audiences: Executive and/or Legislative, the Media, Think Tanks and Academics, and the general public. Within an effective and well-structured communications plan, these audiences need to be analysed and classified to develop closely targeted strategies, tactics, actions and to evaluate their performance.



4.2. The executive and legislative sphere

HFISC has contact with the executive sphere, most notably the Ministry of Finance, through several communication channels. These channels include reports, related to the work of the ministry. One of the main publications of HFISC, its endorsement reports, require interactions with the ministry. Especially during the assessment process of the budgetary and macroeconomic forecasts, HFISC has intensive contact with the ministry. In addition, HFISC will also reach the executive branch through the media (new papers, social media). Another possible communication channel is through its website. Especially given that policymakers are specialised professionals, they can be considered an important target group for the website, as they are able to read and understand the different policy and economic reports published on the website.

Next to the ministry of Finance, there is a group of institutions that HFISC has contact within the executive sphere. These include I, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) and the Public Debt Management Office (PDMA). These institutions are not themselves active as policy makers and are should therefore not been seen as an audience for HFISC. However, these institutions do (sometimes) also influence policy decisions through their communication about the government's budgetary policies or debt. Hence, for HFISC to be most effective it would be helpful is such communications are aligned with those of HFISC, without infringing the independence of the organization.

Currently, HFISC does not have much contact with the spending departments. HFISC is tasked with the assessment of the projections of the ministry of finance, this includes the assessment of spending forecasts made by the ministry of Finance but concerning other ministries. In practise, however, HFISC mainly has contact with the Ministry of Finance. This will change, when HFISC starts performing policy costings. Such costings will almost

always involve one of the spending departments. Communication about such costings is in some ways more challenging. The reason is that such costings involve particular interest groups, that have an interest in criticizing the policy costing when the costing conflicts with their interests. Hence, when HFISC starts performing policy costings, it is important to carefully think about the way it communicates the results of such costings.

HFISC is well-known within the executive sphere, but it can increase its impact. It is known for its assessments of the budgetary and macroeconomic forecasts of the ministry of Finance. These endorsements are short reports, that are easy to digest, which helps to reach audiences. However, the analytical content of the reports is limited and can be improved by further analysis about the risk to government finances. In addition, HFISC does currently not often publish short analytical, economic papers about specific subjects (e.g. the costs of aging, the new EU fiscal framework of the environmental risk) as several other IFIs do. Such publications can often be especially interesting for policy makers in the executive sphere.

HFISC communicates with the parliament through several channels. Most notably are the periodic parliamentary hearings of the president of HFISC. During these hearings the president of HFISC gives her assessment of the Greek budgetary stance and fiscal outlook. Sometimes special hearings are organized, about a specific topic. For example, in 2024 there was a hearing on the new EU fiscal framework, where the chair of HFISC explained this framework to the parliament. These hearings are coordinated with the Greek PBO, the other IFI, so that both organizations are heard at the same time. These hearings form a solid basis for contact with the parliament. An important reason to inform the parliament is that politicians from all sides, including from the oppositions, have a clear and impartial picture of Greek government finances. This helps them to critically assess the budgetary plans of the sitting government.

Possible enhancements

To further enhance communication with the executive and legislative stance, we see several possible improvements:

- **HFISC could enrich its current endorsement reports, to enhance their impact especially in the executive sphere.** This can be done in several ways, such as including some more analysis about risks to government finances, upgrade its visuals and layer them to different audiences. In addition, a short summary of these reports on the website, could also help to make them more easily assessable.
- **HFISC could produce more policy-oriented publications.** Several other IFIs produce such publications, which are often very informative for the executive sphere. In the case of HFISC, they can also be seen as an exercise that help to learn to perform policy costings. By analysing specific policies, HFISC would already gain some knowledge about certain policy areas about which it would at a later stage perform a policy costing. Moreover, it could also help HFISC to communicate about a specific policy item.
- **HFISC could consider further investing in its relationship with the parliament.** The parliament is an important audience, with the power to influence budgetary policies. To invest in the relationship with parliament, HFISC could align its publication of its two flagship reports with the budgetary cycle (at least one of them). In addition, HFISC could consider providing technical briefings to parliament, for example on the new EU fiscal framework, or the models and methods it uses to assess the government's projections. In addition, HFISC could possibly be a reliable source of certain data for members of parliament. Moreover,

HFISC could organise a regular event (every year for example) where it invites members of parliament to the office of HFISC.

- **HFISC could begin tracking its mentions in parliamentary debate transcripts.** This will allow HFISC to assess trends in its impact on the political debate and adjust its strategy accordingly. Tracking is possible through search engines.
- **A separate and specific communication strategy is needed for communication around HFISC's new task of election platform costing.** Clear and transparent communication on process and preparations to political parties from the start of the exercise is vital, and a strategy to communicate the results of the exercise in an independent and non-partisan manner is equally crucial. Also, a script how to communicate in unexpected circumstances (e.g. leakage of premature results by an individual party) should be ready.

4.3. The media

A good relationship with the media is an important cornerstone of a solid communication strategy. The media can help the IFI to reach its different audiences. Especially the wider public will learn about the analysis of an IFI through the media, but also for other audiences, such as policymakers and politicians, this is a notable communication channel. However, to get the message across in a correct manner, journalists need to understand the analysis the IFI performed, as well as its context.

Box 3: Examples of enhanced communication with parliament

Different IFIs around the world organize yearly or once every two years meetings with congress members and other political representatives. They invite and welcome the parliamentarians to their offices to strengthen its relations with them, hear their doubts or needs and show them what they could offer to better their countries' democracy and favour budgetary decision-making processes. This also works as a transparency exercise and to show accountability for the fulfilment of their mandate.

It is worthwhile investing in relationships with the media. Given that journalists are often not trained economists and given the often-technical nature of the work of an IFI, it is worthwhile to take the time to explain the analysis and its main message to journalists. This provides them with the background needed to convey the message as accurate as possible. In addition, as media will not only distribute the message of the IFI but will often also comment on it or place it in a certain context, it helps if the IFI can itself provide such context.

As part of its communication strategy, HFISC has identified the media as one of its key audiences and started to proactively engage with media. Relatively recently, in 2023, HFISC started to add press releases to accompany its opinions and other publications. This has already paid off as recent increases in media attention suggest. In this regard, it is helpful. The UK's ORB has also shown that this helps to disseminate its message (see example below). In addition, the president of HFISC published an article in a well-established Greek newspaper on the new EU fiscal framework. In the article she also highlights how this framework will increase the importance of IFIs as fiscal watchdogs. This is good example of proactively engaging with the press. Moreover, the council has invested in good relations with certain media, mostly the written press. It has compiled a mailing list of the relevant Greek journalists, according to journalists' guidelines. HFISC has not yet invested much in other types of media, such as TV, radio or podcasts.

HFISC has not yet defined which specific audience it would like to reach through specific media. Currently, the message of HFISC is mostly picked up by financial and economic media and many articles are based on the press releases HFISC has shared with the press. In this way HFISC will probably reach policy makers, politicians, foreign investors and academic economists that play a role in Greek policy debate. However, exposure to the wider public is much less guaranteed through this channel. In addition, the coverages is somewhat light touch, focussing on the main conclusions of the publications of HFISC and to a lesser extent portraying the analytical quality of HFISC.

It is also important to define what type of information can be shared through the media, and this determines the targeted audiences as well. One can use the media to simply inform the different audiences. But one can also use the media to be critical of the current policies. Doing so after the fact and in a surprising manner is most likely ineffective and can even harm the reputation of an IFI. Therefore, HFISC (and other IFIs) are more likely to be successful in influencing government policies by signalling through the media that a certain (combination of) policy measure(s) will lead to a non-endorsement of the budget, in a early stage. Then, there is time for policymakers to react in a constructive way.

HFISC has not yet given press conferences regarding its publications or background briefings. Press conferences can be a helpful instrument to inform the press about the analysis of an IFI. By answering questions of journalist, IFIs can tailor their message to the interests of journalist and clarify those elements of the analysis that are less clear or difficult to understand due to their technical nature. In addition, during a press conference, an IFI can outlines the context which is relevant to fully understand the character of the publication. For these reasons, it can be valuable to organise press conferences supporting particular publications. Press conferences are however not always easy to manage and require good preparation, as the answers need to be given directly, without preparation. Mistakes can be costly for the reputation of the IFI. Hence, organizing a press conference should not be taken lightly. In this context, it is understandable that HFISC has been reserved about organizing press conferences. In addition, the timing of a press conference is important. It is preferable to organize a press conference before a budget event than afterwards. This will give policymakers time to react constructively, and it helps to prevent that the (public) discussion will concentrate on the quality of HFISC's judgement of public finances. Next to press conferences, an IFI can also interact directly by providing background briefings to the press about publications of models or methods. This is mostly done to explain the more technical subjects, such as economic models of the specifics of policy costings. Background briefing is not meant to directly lead to an article in media but aim to inform journalist. An except is a briefing that is meant to give a certain journalist the possibility to the first to publish on specific project of HFISC and thus have a "scoop".

HFISC just started tracking its media presence. Since the Autumn of 2024 HIFSC tracks publications that refer to HIFSC. Doing so is valuable as it provides a measure of the attention its publications get. It also helps to reflect on the way messages are send to the media and to improve communication.

Possible enhancements

- **HFISC should continue pro-actively engaging with the media.** The articles that the chair has written in well-respected newspapers are already a good example. Other ways are to invite a particular journalist to write about a certain publication that is forthcoming.
- **HFISC can further improve its relationships with the media is several ways.** A next step would be to organize press conferences around the publication of certain reports. Such a conference could be organised at the premisses of the council,

which would help to make itself better known among journalists and foster a communication culture among its staff. Staff could then easily join the press conference and get an idea of the type of topics, examples journalists are looking for. In addition, HFISC could provide background briefings to journalists on the more technical aspects of its work. Given the parliamentary budget cycle, a press conference in Spring, and thus before the government budget is decided upon, is possibly the most effective timing.

- **HFISC could further investigate which audiences it wants to reach through which media.** The current media strategy is mainly aimed at reaching the media. A next step could be to further distinguish which audiences it wants to reach through which media.
- **Layer publications, so they are more interesting for journalists.** Currently, media use the press releases of HFISC in their publications. This is an effective way to get the message across. However, a next step could be to make publications more interesting for journalists, by adding layers in its publications, such as main messages, visuals, good summaries, possible elements in English and boxes with examples that are easy to understand.

4.4. Academics and think tanks

HFISC has well-established contacts with the academic community in Greece. It has a MoU with Athens University of Economics and Business its board consists of several economic professors, it has traineeships for students of the university, its staff publishes in economic journals, and some are part time assistant professor. The Chair of HFISC has been invited to lecture at the Athens University of Economics and Business, as well as participating in academic conferences and workshops. Additionally, university student visits have been arranged, during which the institution's role, activities, and the new fiscal framework are presented.

HFISC is also an active participant of the EU IFI network. The first working paper of the IFI network, on the effectiveness of IFIs, was coauthored by HFISC. HFISC also actively participates in all meetings of the network and is a clear advocate of the opportunities the networks provide for IFIs to learn from each other.

Contacts with other IFIs are less frequent. Up till now, no interactions or work visits with other IFIs have taken place. HFISC, however, has signalled clearly during this project that it is interested in working together with other IFIs and learn from them. Especially those smaller IFIs that face the same issues as HFISC, are interesting to relate to. In addition, a working visit to the larger, more established IFIs (CPB, OBR, AIReF, Belgian Federal Planning Bureau) can also be helpful and is something these organizations are probably open to. HFISC is member of the EU-IFI network and of the OECD Working Party of Parliamentary Budget Officials.

Possible enhancements

- **To further strengthen its ties with the academic community, HFISC could organize a regular event (once every one or two years) or a workshop with academics.** Such an event could for example consist of asking a well-established economist to provide a lecture (as is done in the Netherlands by the CPB). This will attract an academic audience and help HFISC to establish its academic reputation.

4.5. General public

For IFIs engagement with common citizens is of strategic importance (OECD 2014)⁴. In this regard, it is important to highlight the IFI's' influence towards government policies is based on persuasion, rather than legal sanctions or punitive measures. Because of that, engagement with society enhances IFIs' capabilities and opportunities to generate impact.

One way to reach the general public is through official media. These media consist of many different parties, ranging from TV and radio to newspapers and more recently other media such as podcast. Each of these media has a somewhat different audience. Hence, an IFI that wants to reach the general public should have some idea about the availability of these different media in the country it operates in, as well as which segment of the public can be reached by each of them. However, in general terms, one can say that with appearances on TV, the IFI has the largest potential reach. In addition, TV or radio appearances help to add a "human aspect" to the communication. This in turn helps to reach people that are less acquainted with the subject of government finances. At the same time, TV is a more challenging medium for IFI, compared to for example the written press. One reason is that it requires the capacity to quickly respond to questions in a convincing and compelling way. Another one is that it requires the capacity to translate relatively technical subjects into plain language. Hence, it is a medium with large potential, but also one that requires some training and specific skills to be effective. Therefore, an IFI with less capacity should be careful, and possibly refrain from TV exposure.

HFISC has reached parts of the general public, but not yet developed a media strategy that specifically aims to reach a large part of the public. HFISC has proactively engaged with the written press. This has led to an increased presence in both traditional newspapers and news website. Through these media channels, HFISC mainly reaches its more professional audiences (policy makers, politicians, academics). In addition, HFISC has probably reached some part of the general public. However, these press outlets, will probably reach especially those people that are interested in financial news and thus only a limited part of the general public.

Another way to reach the general public is through social media and the website. These channels provide the possibility to establish a more direct relationship with the general public, without the intermediary role of the press.

Currently, HFISC has chosen to use its website and social media in a restrained manner. HFISC currently uses its website mainly as a reference platform to publish its budgetary assessments, working papers and other documents. Regarding social media, HFISC uses LinkedIn as a platform to inform its followers of new publications.

The publications of HFISC are currently mainly aimed at economic professionals and not specifically tailored to a larger audience. To reach audiences that are not specialized in government finances, it helps to make publications visually attractive and as simple as possible. Such publications are then still not accessible to all groups within the wider public, but one can tailor publications to let's say "the interested newspaper reader". In addition, such simple to read documents also help the members of the press to translate

⁴ OECD, Recommendation of the Council on Principles for Independent Fiscal Institutions, OECD/LEGAL/0401.

the message to a wider audience. Moreover, if publications resonate with journalist, they are more likely to see their value as content for their reporting.

HFISC has not yet carried out a survey amongst any of its audiences. Therefore, it is not possible to deeply determine the extent to which citizens know about HFISCs existence, functions or activities.

Box 4: Examples from several IFI's

When analysing other international IFI's better acquainted with common citizens, such as the Canadian IFI – PBO, the United Kingdom's IFI – OBR -, or the Netherland's CPB, along with their good practices, it is possible to note the three of them present different inception and contextual circumstances that have naturally favoured their relationship with the wide public.

In Canada's case, the IFI has had a longer trajectory than some of its peers (established in 2006) and it benefits from a fiscally conscious population. Canadian citizens are concerned about their taxes and their fiscal system. This means the wide public is interested in information about these items. As a result, the PBO is usually requested to participate on TV or radio news outlets even without efforts from their side.

In the UK, the IFI profits from a good momentum. Its mandate establishes that their assessment should be published at the same time as their government's budgetary forecasts, which assures attention from all kinds of media. This provides them with as much coverage amongst and helps to reach multiple audiences including the wider public.

In the Netherland, the CPB is well-known among the wider public. Although many elements contribute to this wide recognition, especially important are the election costing the CPB makes.

These analyses play a role in the citizen's voting choice and generate lot of attention for the institution among the wider audience.

Possible enhancements

- **Add easy to understand examples in reports.** To reach the general public, an IFI should explain thing in terms that people withing the public can understand. This could be done through easy-to-understand examples that refer to concept most people are familiar with, such as a monthly salary, or euros per year for each Greek family etc. The press can use such examples, as they will help communicate the message to the wider public. In addition, during a TV or radio interview it also helps to explain things easily using an example that people can understand. HFISC could invest in adding such examples in its reports to extend its reach.
- **To reach its audiences, HFISC should consider sending a newsletter to those interested in the organisation.** Such a letter is a convenient way to notify people about a new publication or new economic developments Through this channel several audiences can be reached, including the press, policy makers, academics and those people within the wider public that are interested in HFISC's analysis. People should be able to subscribe to the newsletter on the webpage. Compiling such a letter will require some resources and could be combined effort of communication research staff of HFISC.

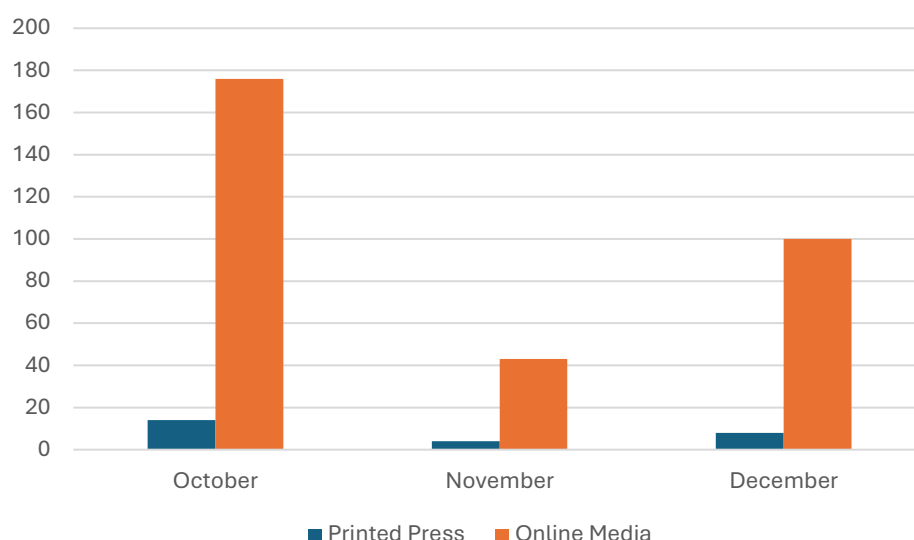
Chapter 5: Channels and impact

This chapter gives an assessment of the impact of HFISC's communications and provides measures for enhancement. A more interactive way to track impact would help to find additional improvements.

5.1. Press coverage

HFISC has been tracking its media coverage recently yielding positive results. The results show that there has been quite some media attention for HFISC in the last quarter of 2024 (see figure 1.1). This was especially true in October, when it published its opinion on the draft 2025 government budget. HFISC was 14 times referred to in printed media, which is quite a substantial given the small number of newspapers. Much of these articles were substantial in length and did put the opinion of HFISC in some context. The 176 online news articles were shorter and relied mostly on information in the press releases that HFISC published, without adding much additional context. To generate media attention, HFISC makes sure to publish its press releases a couple of hours before the Ministry of Finance publishes the documents HFISC refers to (in October the draft budget).

Figure 1.1 Media coverage HFISC in last quarter of 2024



Source: HFISC data

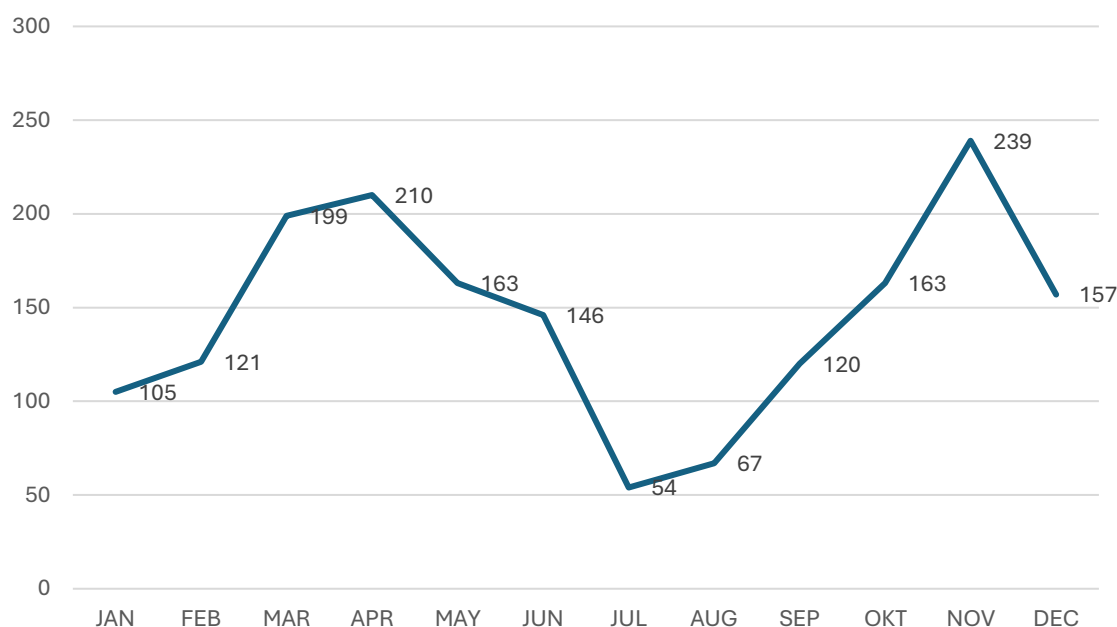
5.2. HFISC's Web page

HFISC has a relatively basic, but functional website. It functions as the platform where all publications of HFISC can be found. This includes: 1) endorsement letters, 2) the two-yearly flagship publications on the government's budgetary stance, 3) working papers and 4) occasional economic notes. In addition, the site explains the responsibilities of HFISC and its organisation.

The website is not posited as an attractive platform to come to and learn about HFISC. This is a deliberate choice. Given the limited resources of HFISC and the limited expected pay-off of a fancy website, HFISC has decided to invest in other ways to reach its audience, such as good relationships with journalists and mailing to the relevant people and organisations.

As is to be expected, the web page does currently not attract much traffic. As figure 1.2 shows the number of visitors of HFISC’s website is around 150 per month, which is relatively few. This number increased around the publication of opinions in March and April and in the last months of the year.

Figure 1.2 Number of unique visitors per month in 2024 on www.hfisc.gr.



Source: HIFSC data

Possible improvements

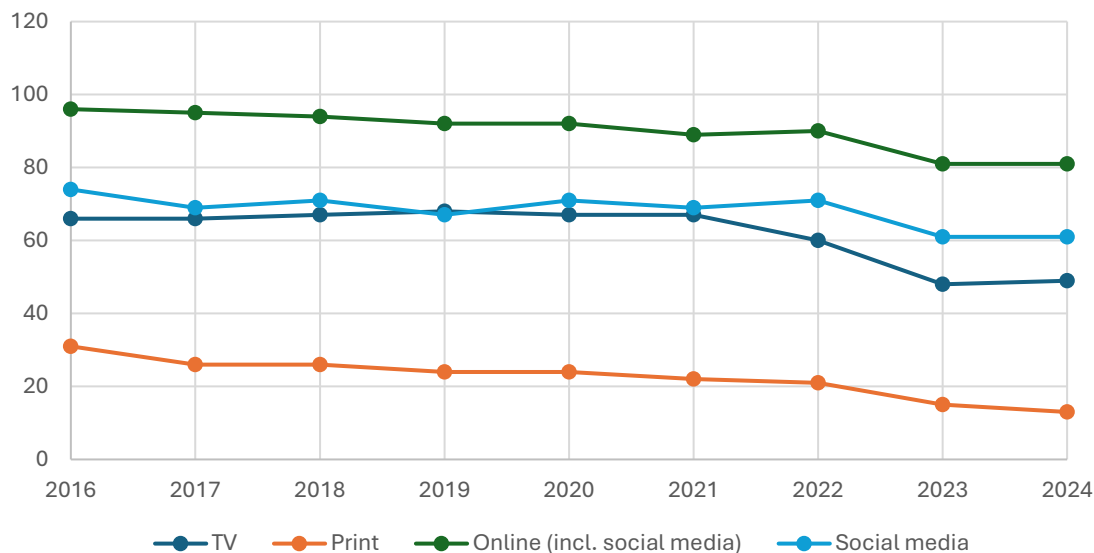
- **The website can be improved in several ways.** A first step can be to improve the structure of the website and add accommodating texts. Both would help to more easily find materials as well as the key messages of these publications. This enhancement is relatively easy to implement. There are also other enhancements possible. Think of the publication of data based on outcomes of economic models, such as forecasts, dashboards, infographics and better visuals. However, given the limited budget of HFISC, it is uncertain to what extent such additional improvements of the website would pay-off in the current situation. For HFISC it makes probably more sense to make a small investment in the structure of the website, but not to spend too many resources upgrading the side. Priority should be to enhance its publications (see above) and modelling tools, to create additional content.

5.3. Social media

With the loss of trust traditional media are experiencing, social media have emerged as news spreading entities, especially amongst the younger audiences (Unesco/IPSOS, 2023). This is especially true in Greece. According to the Reuters Digital News report Greece, the media landscape in the country is characterized by the lowest trust in media amongst the 47 markets Reuters monitors and one of the highest uses of social media for news.

Social media is used by most Greeks online to get news (61%)⁵. It dominates over TV among online news users in Greece, since a couple of years. At the same time, print continues to decline (see figure 1.3).

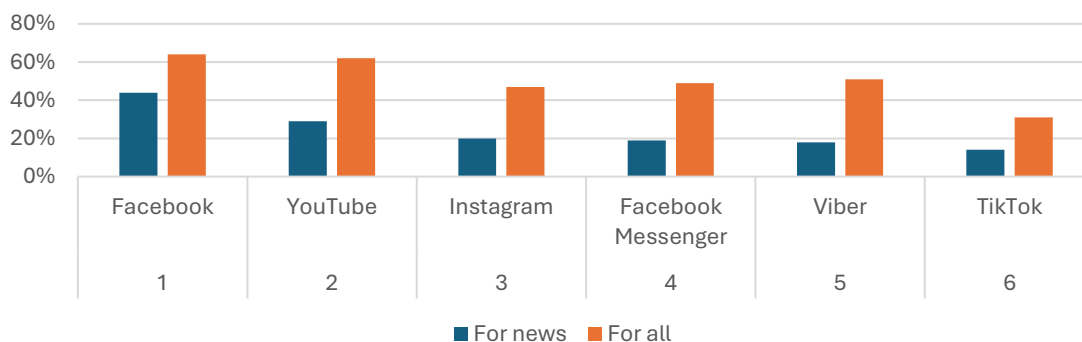
Figure 1.3 Social media is important news channel in Greece



Source: Reuters Institute

Although social media steadily continues to increase its importance as news media, the platforms used are changing. Within the social media outlets, Facebook is now only used for news by 44% of Greeks who are online, down from 68% in 2016. Meanwhile Instagram and TikTok are now increasingly used for news, 20% and 14% respectively, particularly among younger audiences (see figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4 Facebook and YouTube are most popular for news among social media

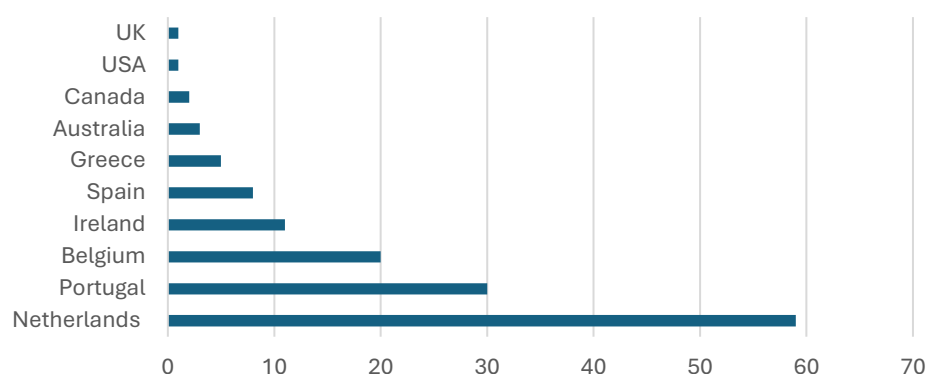


Source: Reuters Institute

⁵ <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/greece>

Although the use of social media by HFISC is limited, LinkedIn seems the right social medium for the organisation (figure 1.5). HFISC does have a LinkedIn account with a decent number of followers but does not use X or other social media. It uses this account especially to highlight new reports of HFISC. Given that LinkedIn is currently seen as the most professional form of social media, this is probably the right choice for an IFI. In addition, LinkedIn is becoming more personal and Microsoft Corp⁶, has revealed “users have shared 41% more content on the network than they had in the same period in 2021”⁷. Internet culture experts, such as Bloomberg’s newsletter author, Sarah Frier have echoed this trend: “writing earnestly on LinkedIn was once derided as awkward and professionally desperate (...) Now, trying to become a so-called think-fluencer seems strategic” (Frier, 2023).

Figure 1.5 Number of LinkedIn followers per 100.000 inhabitants



Source: HFISC data, AIRef Communication Report

HFISC LinkedIn account has a decent amount of followers but can also improve on that. HFISC has 524 followers, which is about 5.1 per 100.000 inhabitants. This compares favourably to some Anglo-Saxon countries, such as the US, Canada and Australia. It is, however, somewhat smaller than most EU countries.

Possible enhancements

- **The use of LinkedIn as the only social media platform is the right choice for HFISC, it can be more active in doing so.** HFISC could probably best start with enhancing its use of LinkedIn. HFISC is currently not very active on this platform and can thus increase its presence. In doing so, it would be helpful to produce more material that is interesting for a wider audience and easy to digest.

⁶ Socio Squares (8/2/2024) The Growing Influence of Social Media: Key Insights for 2024, LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/growing-influence-social-media-key-insights-2024-sociosquares-skqyc/>

⁷ Bloomberg Newsletter, Frier, S. 22/8/2023: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2023-08-22/linkedin-user-engagement-is-growing>

5.4. Other way to measure impact

HFISC does not measure its impact through surveys or interviews but could consider this in the future. Looking forward, it could be interesting for HFISC to measure its impact through additional channels.

Possible enhancements

- **HIFISC could approach the assessment of its impact more interactively.** A possible option could be interviews with journalists. As contacts are good, it is probably relatively easy to investigate what journalist think of the way HFISC communicates and how this can be improved. In addition, when HFISC has made some additional steps in terms of their assessments and thus role in the Greek economy, for example by doing policy costings, it would also be interesting for HFISC to investigate what its reputation is among a wider audience.

Chapter 6: Benchmarking

This chapter provides a brief benchmark and SWOT analysis of HFISC. In the benchmarking the communication of HFISC is compared to that of four IFI's with about the same budget. The SWOT summarizes how HFISC can build on its strengths and the threats that should be avoided.

6.1. Benchmarking

To benchmark the communication of HFISC, we look at four IFI that are somewhat comparable. To select comparable IFIs, we looked at three criteria: 1) size of the organization in terms of staff, and 2) its budget and 3) EU membership. Based on these criteria, four IFIs are selected: Portuguese Public Finance Council, the Italian Parliamentary Budget Office, the Czech Fiscal Council and the Slovak Council for Budget Responsibility (see table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Benchmark IFIs for HFISC

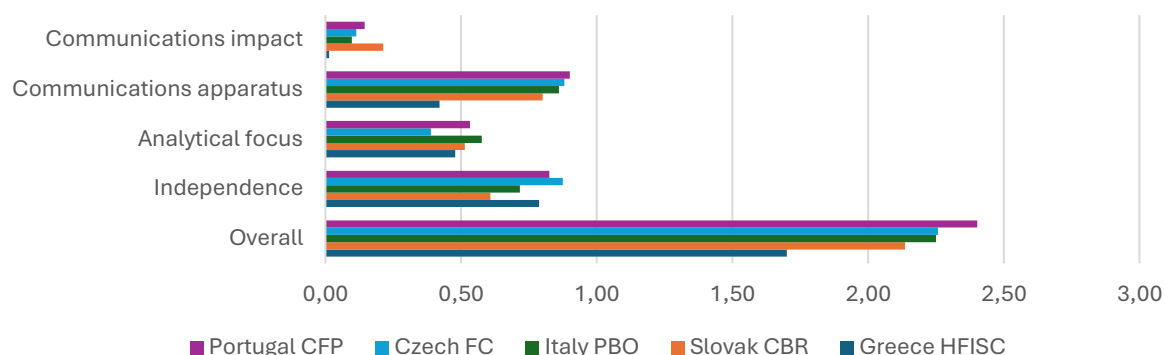
Country	Greece	Czechia	Italy	Portugal	Slovakia
Name IFI	HFISC	Czech Fiscal Council	Parliamentary Budget Office	Portuguese Public Finance Council	Council for Budget Responsibility
Staff size: Total	15	14.5	24	17	27.9
Budgetary appropriation: actual in EUR per year	750.000	950,000	4.814.000	1.961.399	2.396.988
Budgetary approved in EUR for year + 1	1.100.000	1.040.500	6.000.000	2.786.893	3.890.000

In 2023 the OECD compiled a so-called fiscal advocacy index to compare IFIs⁸. This index compares IFIs on four criteria: its communication impact, its communication apparatus, its analytical focus and its independence. The idea behind this index is that all four of these elements together determine the impact of an IFI in terms of advocating sound fiscal policies.

In terms of communication impact, HFISC lags somewhat behind the benchmark IFI's. When comparing HFISC with the benchmark IFIs along criteria of the fiscal advocacy index, it scores relatively good in terms of independence and analytical focus, see figure 1.6. However, HFISC communication apparatus is clearly smaller than that of the four benchmark IFIs. This is probably one of the reasons the communication impact of HFISC is smaller.

⁸ See: [https://one.oecd.org/document/GOV/SBO\(2024\)13/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/GOV/SBO(2024)13/en/pdf)

Figure 1.6 HFISC communication impact compared to benchmark IFIs



Source: OECD IFI communication index

The communication approach of HFISC can also be compared to the approaches of the benchmark IFIs. Do to so we look at a set of items that are relevant for the way HFISC and others communicate, see table 1.2, which is based on an OECD database (2021). What is remarkable is that HFISC does not employ dedicated communication staff, in contrast with the other benchmark IFIs. In addition, HFISC is the only IFI that does not hold press conferences, while most other IFIs also hold early access briefing to the press. Most other IFIs have a newsletter to inform their audiences. HFISC is the only IFI where the leadership currently does not appear on TV or radio. All IFI track website and media mentions, but only a few tracks mentions in parliament or among stakeholders.

Table 1.2 HFISC communication approach compared to benchmark IFIs

	Czech FC	Italy PBO	Portugal CFP	Slovak CBR	Greece HFISC
Communications					
Has a communications policy		✓	✓		✓
Has a communications strategy	✓	✓	✓		✓
Has a dedicated communications staff or agency	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Publications accompanied by press release	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Holds press conferences for key reports	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Holds early access briefings or releases reports under embargo	✓		✓	✓	
Has a blog or newsletter			✓	✓	
Distributes research with social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leadership appears on TV	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leadership appears on radio	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tracks IFI website activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tracks IFI media mentions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tracks IFI parliamentary mentions	✓	✓			
Has conducted a survey on stakeholder perceptions				✓	

6.2. HFISC communications SWOT analysis

As part of the assessment of HFISC's communication strategy, we prepared a brief SWOT-analysis, summarized in this section.

Table 1.3 SWOT analysis of HFISC

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Independence ▪ Good relationship with press ▪ Strong academic ties ▪ Well-known in profession ▪ Good relations with other institutions	▪ Small budget ▪ Relatively young institution ▪ No dedicated comms team ▪ Limited communication strategy
Opportunities	Threats
▪ Enhance economic content (e.g. policy costing, modelling) ▪ Enhance use of communication channels (press conferences, website)	▪ Enhanced political pressure (when HFISC is more prominent in the media, e.g. due to policy costing) ▪ Difficulty in attracting staff

Strengths

- HFISC scores high in terms of its independence, given its solid legal basis. In terms of communication this is a strength as it provides a good basis to be an impartial voice in the public policy debate.
- The already good relationship with the media is another strength of HFISC. Looking forward, this helps to make press conferences a success and more in general to inform the different audiences of HFISC.
- HFISC also has strong ties with the academic community. This can support HFISC's communication strategy, as it can build on these ties to further increase its voice in the academic community.
- HFISC is a well-known organization among Greek economic institutions. It has invested in good ties with several related organizations, which provide a good basis to spread its analysis or specific concerns or views within the policy-making community.

Weaknesses

- An important weakness of HFISC is underutilisation of its already limited budget. This implies that the organization needs to make clear choices with respect to its communication strategy, as it does not have the resources to implement all useful improvements at the same time.
- HFISC is a young organization that is in the process of building a reputation as fiscal watchdog. This is weakness in the sense that HFISC cannot build on an already strong reputation, for example when it comes to making fiscal projections or policy costing. Then HFISC is ready to publish these types of products, this will require careful communication.
- HFISC has no dedicated communications team within the organization. Communication services are provided by an external, part-time advisor.

- The current communication strategy is limited. This is a weakness, as it does not provide a clear direction for improvements in communication the coming period. A clear focus is helpful to be successful.

Opportunities

- An opportunity for HFISC lies in increasing the amount of economic analysis it produces. The current plan the enhance macroeconomic and fiscal modelling as well as to start with policy costings will provide a solid basis to build upon in terms of communication. A good communication strategy needs such inputs to be successful.
- In addition, HFISC can further enhance its use of communication channels, for example by organizing press conferences and background press briefings and by upgrading its website. This could be done in tandem with producing additional economic analysis, and that would give rise to additional interest from the press.

Threats

- The largest threat for HFISC is probably the difficulty to attract staff. This cannot be fully addressed within the communication strategy. However, given the current limited number of communication staff, trying to attract additional for the purpose of enhancing its communication could help to improve HFISC's communication strategy.
- Currently, HFISC is not under political pressure, but this can change when it will produce additional economic analysis. When HFISC would publish policy costings, this is likely to generate additional political pressure on the organization. HFISC should be prepared to withstand such pressure, and its communication strategy could help in this regard, especially by securing that the analysis published is factual and impartial.

Chapter 7: Recommendations

Based on the assessment of HFISC's communications and impact, this chapter provides a set of recommendations that can help to improve HFISC's communication strategy.

HFISC's could enhance its communication strategy. As part of this plan, HFISC should determine: its communication goals, its audiences, the ways to reach these audiences, the types of publications, the type of language it wants to use, and the process needed to ensure it reaches its communication goals.

To further enhance its communications, HFISC should consider attracting dedicated communication staff. Recently, HFISC attracted a part-time communications advisor. This has already resulted in large step forward in terms of professionalising communications. The ties with journalists and the media presence of HFISC have clearly strengthened. Against this background, we see room further improvements (see recommendations below). Implementing them will require additional resources, including additional communication staff.

HFISC could enrich its current reports, to enhance their impact especially in the executive sphere. This can be done in several ways, such as including some more analysis about risks to government finances, upgrade its visuals and layer them to different audiences. In addition, a short summary of these reports on the website, could also help to make them more easily accessible.

HFISC could develop publications that are attractive to read for several of its audience. An option is to develop short notes providing economic analysis that are easy to read and visually attractive. Such notes should be policy oriented. Several other IFIs make such publications, which are often very informative for the executive sphere. In the case of HFISC, they can also be seen as an exercise that help to learn to perform policy costings. By analysing specific policies, HFISC would already gain some knowledge about certain policy areas about which they would at a later stage perform a policy costing.

HFISC could better track its reputation, among its audiences. There are several ways to do so. Different IFI's carry out surveys and polls periodically to get better knowledge of their reputation amongst different audiences.

HFISC can further improve its relationships with the media in several ways. A next step would be to organize press conferences around the publication of certain reports. Such a conference could be organised at the premisses of the council, which would help to make itself better known among journalists and foster a communication culture among its staff. In addition, HFISC could provide background briefings to journalists on the more technical aspects of its work.

To further strength its ties with the academic community, HFISC could organize a regular event (once every one or two years). Such an event could for example consists of asking a well-established economist to provide a lecture. This will attract an academic audience and help HFISC to establish its academic reputation.

To reach its audiences, HFISC should consider sending a newsletter to those interested in the organisation. Such a letter is a convenient way to notify people about a new publication or new economic developments. Through this channel several audiences can be reached, including the press, policy makers, academics and those people within the wider public that are interested in HFISC's analysis.

A separate and specific communication strategy is needed for communication around HFISC's new task of election platform costing. Clear and transparent communication on process and preparations to political parties from the start of the exercise is vital, and a

strategy to communicate the results of the exercise in an independent and non-partisan manner is equally crucial. Also, a script how to communicate in unexpected circumstances (e.g. leakage of premature results by an individual party) should be ready.

Chapter 8: Good practices guide

As part of the TSI-program, a good practice guide for communication has been developed, for all three participating countries. This guide is presented in this chapter and shows many examples that might be useful, although they are not specifically tailored to HFISC communication needs.

8.1. Technical documents

United Kingdoms' IFI- OBR- and Canada's IFI's – PBO

These are two IFI's considered amongst its peers particularly successful. Both share the fact that most of their efforts and resources are focused over the development, design, accessibility and availability of their published materials. Their communications assessment is based on the downloads, clicks and access to their publications within their webpage.

Canadian IFI - PBO

The IFI provides the option to read the complete version of its reviews within their own webpage, where they make available an interactive index that brings the user to the specific chapter it is looking for. Canadian PBO also gives the user the opportunity to find the Report and the Communications about them in an extra tag, and the possibility to download the PDF document.



Source: PBO Canada

The first information the user gets when opening a report is a color square with the Highlights, the most relevant data and conclusions from the report, focusing on the real-life implications of the study's findings.

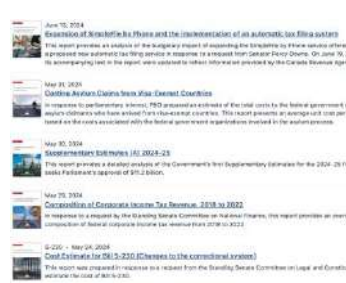


Source: PBO – example of a public policy evaluation review.

PBO also adds a summary at the beginning of the report characterized by Plain Language and a very neat and simplified aesthetic design. The summary usually includes a table or a graphic to call the readers' attention.



Source: PBO- Canada

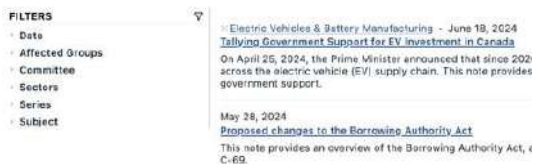


Within the report, PBO gives great importance to the aesthetics and attractiveness of its documents; because of that, the IFI considers it very important to illustrate its reports with pictures that contribute to localize, personalize and connect the information with civil life. The Canadian PBO considers the use of varied and attractive images one of the practices that has rendered them the best results, and they count on access to premium picture libraries.

8.2. Additional materials

Both the Canadian IFI and UK's IFI agree and spontaneously mention one of the practices they carry out that has reported best results is to focus on the readability and cognition accessibility of reports – embrace of Plain Language standards and Clear Communication. They are constantly researching ways to reduce as much as possible the length of the reviews, while giving their users the opportunity to access more in-depth materials creating other kind of formats. In that regard, apart from producing the reviews PBO is mandated to, it repurposes some adjacent information creating technical brief notes or mini reports focused on different issues. To ease the user's access to this mini-reports, PBO's web site gives the possibility to filter them by different tags – Affected Groups, Sectors, Subject... The mini reports have been a way to attract other field's technical audiences and are positioning the institution as a referential data-based knowledge organism when coming to public policy.

Additional Analyses



Within its website Canada's PBO organizes all its tools under a common box, illustrated by an image and a text description to call the user's attention and orient them.



Source: PBO Canada

8.3. Web Page aesthetics

Canada's IFI aims to prevent overwhelming the user with data and complex information and focuses over calming colours and a local image. Its home page shows the images of its reports and their brief descriptions.



Source: PBO Canada

For the OBR, its publication's creation processes are one of the most relevant aspects. One of their pillars is transparency and because of that, UK IFI's informs and offers detail about every single movement or change they introduce on their methodology, variants or any other element comprehended within the development of their reviews.

8.4. Clear Communication and Plain Language

OBR pays special attention to the readability and access standards to its reviews, always looking for new ways to portray the information in the simplest way possible.

The institution takes care of the whole review's developing process inhouse: their graphic design, their internal coherence assessment, their adequation to accessibility standards in the webpage and their adequation to Plain Language principles. In this regard, OBR constantly tests and assess their reviews' complexity levels. For this purpose, they have tested the comprehensibility of their materials amongst high school teachers and nowadays they are also applying the use of AI driven tools, concluding their texts are comprehensible to a standard university degree student from any knowledge field. The institution even promotes consultations amongst its closes stakeholders and internal audiences to research ways to improve the delivery of their findings, such as the optimal length of the documents - which nowadays is leaning towards the idea that shortening them increases their use rates.

In fact, **OBR – like the Canadian PBO-** has started replacing long reviews with shorter materials that are complimented by more in-depth documents, which offers all their audiences the most personalized materials possible. To achieve this goal the institution's staff have agreed upon a dynamic consisting on the reviews' need to provide the information

within a 2-page length document, a “20-page length document and a-200-page length document”, where the user chooses the degree of depth, he/she/they need according to their interest.

When writing their reviews, OBR staff are encouraged to focus on the “translation” of such abstract data into their links and implications towards material life, which highlights the influence the IFI’s activities have over the citizens’ life.

CPB – Netherlands

The Netherlands’ IFI also gives great importance to its technical documents’ development processes, specially to their format, structure, readability and accessibility - which are periodically tested. CPB’s communications department devotes many of its tasks to making sure the creation and delivery process of its reviews are curated in detail.

It counts on an information specialist to manage data flows in the publications, a specific function for infographics design, and visual design adaptation of the brand’s materials – provided by an external company that was hired to create their brand image-. The department also counts with writing guides where it records its most advisable writing practices.

Concerning the importance the IFI attributes to Clear Communication and Plain Language standards, one of its long-standing practices is the fact that all its staff members count on the guidance and expertise of an externally hired writing coach that is available for consultations to bring support in the whole process of materials’ development. The IFI also provides all its new staff members with a writing course, to help them create messages from the best optic to inform the audience in the most clear and accessible way possible.

As a newly implemented best practice, CPB’s communications staff’s participation has been included at earlier stages of the review’s development processes, which endows them with more preparation time to create their own materials. For example, as the IFI considers its graphics a cornerstone of its document’s readability and visibility, this new practice provides the infographic’s designer with advanced information and extra time to consider the best way to portray the studies’ results to external audiences.

This also allows the communications team to manage their audiences’ expectations and potential threats or strong opposition when addressing sensitive matters. Having early access to the reviews’ general framework allows them to measure to what extent the final conclusions could be received positively or with opposition, to locate the potentially most problematic points and implement a strategy to smooth reactions. In some cases, the department would offer a non-detailed overview of the possible outcomes of a particular review to the media or other audiences to signal the direction insights are pointing, which would avoid the uncertainty massive surprises could generate and ease the acceptance of the final conclusions.

8.5. Website disposition

When accessing OBR’s main publications, the site presents the user a two text-lines description of every chapter, the option to download the PDF version of the document, direct access to the Executive summary and to the full report.

8 March 2024

Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2024

The latest update of our forecasts was published on 6 March 2024 in the March 2024 Economic and fiscal outlook. Read the [Executive summary](#) for the key messages of our forecast or the [full report](#) on our website.

Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2024
March 6, 2024 – 3:29 MB (8)

Chapter 2 sets out our forecasts for the economy over a five-year horizon. We cover our latest forecast changes in light of recent developments and the effect of policies in the Spring Budget.

In **Chapter 3**, details the policy measures announced since the Autumn Statement last November, provides an update on selected previous measures, and discusses policy risks and uncertainties.

Source: OBR – United Kingdom

It also offers an “*At a glance view*”, a very graphic summarized view of the review’s conclusions and the supporting documents of the report, a chart and tables repository with all the graphics that complement each of the review’s chapters. Finally, like the Canadian PBO, OBR’s mandated publications allow the user to read the whole report within the institution’s site, which benefits users’ permanence rates, and offers an index to easily access to the different chapters.

At a glance



Supporting documents

- March 2024 Economic and fiscal outlook – charts and tables: Executive summary
March 6, 2024 – 3:14 MB
- March 2024 Economic and fiscal outlook – charts and tables: Chapter 2
March 6, 2024 – 3:31 MB

Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2024

Foreword

This Economic and fiscal outlook (EFO) sets out our central forecast and the uncertainties that surround it for the five years to 2028-29, taking account of recent data and government policies announced up to and including the Spring Budget 2024. The forecasts presented in this document represent our collective view as the five independent members of the OBR's Budget Responsibility Committee (BRC). We take full responsibility for the judgements that underpin them and for the conclusions we have reached.

As always, we have been greatly supported in our work by the staff of the OBR. We are very grateful for their commitment, professionalism, and expertise. We have also drawn on the analysis of numerous officials across government in preparing these forecasts, including HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Department for Education, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Home Office, the Department for Transport, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Health and Safety Executive, the Office for National Statistics, the UK Data Management Office, National Savings and Investments, the British Business Bank, the BBC, Hermes.

Contents

Foreword

Chapter 1: Executive summary

Chapter 2: Economic outlook

Chapter 3: Policy measures

Chapter 4: Fiscal outlook

Chapter 5: Performance against the Government's Fiscal Responsibility

Annex A: Detailed tables

Index of charts and tables

Publications	Tables	Data	News	Articles	About	FQ&A	Contact	Q
Yes to tax, spend by spend	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Source: OBR.

Additional materials

To host complimentary materials OBR has created an In-depth box within the main menu of its Home page. Within their forecasts OBR uses boxes to highlight specific topics to signal the most technical readers the importance of certain data or findings. The IFI also groups all the boxes in the *Box sets space within In-depth*.



Source: OBR.

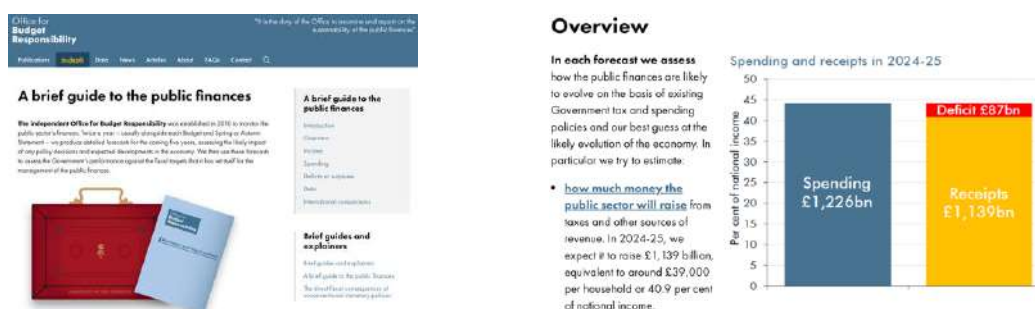
*Note the different colors according to the different topics of the documents.

A successful format amongst all OBR’s audiences is the *Tax by tax, spend by spend* space, where OBR provides all kind of simple information grouped by topic that links data to real life elements.



Source: OBR

As a way to promote fiscal literacy OBR has created the *Brief guides and explainers* space within its website where it places its own Brief Guide to public finances.



Source: OBR

8.6. Digital media and Newspapers

OBR doesn't consider its mentions on the media a relevant performance assessment tool due their limitations to provide deep trustworthy information about the impact of its communications activities or the audience's sentiment towards the institution. Also, it believes the counting of the mentions – once an initial knowledge level about the institution has been surpassed-, could be misleading as usually the newspapers repeat, copy and paste the same mention, which could lead to the overestimation of the institution's impact⁹.

8.7. TV, radio and Spokespeople visibility - Interviews

United Kingdom's IFI (OBR) deems the presence of the institution's main representative figure, its President's, one of its most valuable tools to foster knowledge and familiarity of the institution towards its external audiences. The institution is trying to extend its visibility to other members such as technical professionals. The IFI's communication strategy includes and encourages its President to give interviews, especially those meant to be spread through TV and radio media outlets. OBR's Presidents interviews and appearances are considered very valuable by the media and granted prime-time visibility.

⁹ See As Is analysis, Impact, p.



Source: @OBR_UK

The institution holds very clear limits when facing interviews and uses those occasions to enhance its mandate's limits. When journalists ask other kind of questions the institution motto is to "just don't answer the questions it can't answer"; The spokesperson is directed to explain the institution he/she/they represent is not allowed to answer or it is legally unable to comment on government policies - for example.



Source: @OBR_UK

Source: @OBR_UK

The Netherlands IFI (CPB) considers its director the face of the institution, which constitutes the most visible and recognized figure. During last years the IFI has been delegating some of the representation tasks to other staff members with the aim to expand its visibility to them and is now enhancing their participation on the record.

The IFI also undertakes interview preparation and offers training sessions to its researchers. They also spread-out videos of projects where junior analysts explain their conclusions or development processes in very simple ways. The division of representative tasks is determined by the relevance of the announcements.

CPB's staff and director are encouraged to concede arranged TV, radio and newspaper interviews. To strengthen the IFI's relation with journalists, gatekeepers and the media, its director holds yearly catch-up sessions one on one with the institution's closest or more relevant journalists, whom, as result of that, would usually ask for interviews.

For the CPB, the importance of TV and radio interviews or the transference of its visibility to its staff members lies within one of its most relevant mottoes: "to show people CPB is made of people, not made of calculators".



Source:
CPB Netherlands

The **Irish Fiscal Advisory Council** also participates in TV interviews, the main media outlet's Economic Radio programs, and National-relevance Media outlet's podcasts.



Source: Irish Fiscal Advisory Council.



Other IFI's that place strategic importance over TV and Radio presence through interviews are the Federal Public Bureau- Belgium -, IFI Brazil, CARF, the Colombian IFI, and Canada's Parliamentary Budget Office Canadian.



The **Brazilian IFI** grants its President's interviews to relevant TV and radio channels, such as Band News, one of the most important news outlet in the country – spreading knowledge about Independent Fiscal Institution's mandate and values in a country with more than 200 million population-. The IFI's last TV interview was carried by Vilma Pinto, director of the IFI, and emitted in May 2024. It was framed on the space economy for you (Economia para você). The **Brazilian IFI** also considers very important to stress out that the declarations are always made on behalf of the institution and not linked to the persona dimension of the spokesperson.



8.8. IFI's & Their Representatives – Presidents

Still talking about **United Kingdom's IFI (OBR)**, the institution has managed to overcome its most popular and charismatic president's name. During its first 10 years of history, OBR was directed by a very well-known and experienced spokesperson, which, to the eyes of public opinion, internal audiences and experts, was the best possible "personification" of fiscal policy and the IFI's values.

As his mandate evolved, concerns about his substitution – due to his name's strong link to the OBR - raised. As a risk-preventive strategy, in all its public appearances or interviews the President was oriented to always answer the questions on behalf of the OBR, referencing it and stressing out the fact that he is a part to the group. The UK's IFI's experience showed its

first President's reputation fed the institutions and the institution's also fed the Presidents'. After the arrival of a new President, OBR's audiences perceive its reputation as a wider concept. The President's image was just a tool to embed the IFI with personality.

8.9. Social Media

Concerning social media, the main adjusts IFI's are implementing is their approach to their X's profiles. **Canadian PBO** has decided to close it, the **Netherlands CPB** is noticing the effects of the platform's crisis and considers it used to be better to reach wider audiences, but it has gotten less useful to do so, as well as is becoming more polarized. The Dutch IFI is very hesitant to reply to any messages at X and prefers to relegate the tool to a spreading use rather than to engage with the audiences. With that purpose it uses LinkedIn, a tool the IFI has observed is gaining traction and could offer it more exposure and interaction. Based on similar observations, **The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council** embraced the use of BlueSky as a plan B social network to fully replace the use of X, if or when needed.

8.10. Collaboration Agreements

Brazilian IFI, as well as the **Canadian IFI (PBO)** have external agreements with the Senate Office in the Brazilian case, and the Library of the Parliament in the Canadian case. Both institutions partner with these other organisms to develop joint strategies and communications actions.

In the **Brazilian case**, the IFI is developing agreements with the Senate's media outlets – TV channel, radio- to place its contents within the different programs available:

- TV Senado that offers Senado Notícias - news program with 3 daily emissions-, the Economic Agenda - a weekly program focused on economy-, and Citizenship, a multi-thematic program about issues related to common citizens and public management.
- Radio Senado: which emits Senate Connection, a daily news program, Gender Program, focused on gender issues, Cultural Programs and Brazil's Voice, with more political content.

The IFI also develops joint coverage and campaigns with the Senate Communications office to spread its information amongst its social media platforms and get broader visibility.

8.11. Education Campaigns

Brazilian IFI is developing a Plain language campaign based on a dictionary of fiscal and IFI terms, explaining every concept in a very simple way, to foster knowledge of the pillars of the institution and its mandate.

The Netherlands' CPB could be considered the most present IFI amongst the common citizens, with mild visibility rates amongst them, as its Reputation Review 2023 shows. This entails the fact that high-school level teachers and students have heard about the institution, the country has subjects within its education curriculum that include fiscal education, and the IFI has been exploring the possibility to include direct mentioning of their name at books and teaching materials.

Amongst its staff, the IFI counts on a working professor who writes economic and education methods for high schools – not for the IFI's activities-, which also provides insights about how to portray and communicate different matters in an accessible way.

Concerning fiscal literacy, it has been proven high school economy teachers know about the existence of the IFI and its activities. They establish contact with it to request information about different issues to prepare their own materials for their classes, and

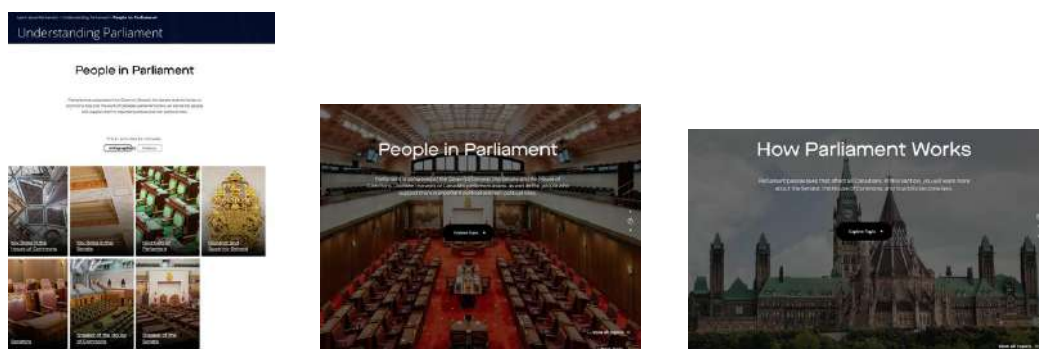
guidance to introduce fiscal literacy to their pupils. It is a reactive contact – the IFI doesn't proactively reach out to high schools, but answers to their demand. For the Dutch CPB, these contacts are a vital element to help the IFI transcend and to be coherent with the nature of the institution, focused on mid- and long-term, as “the students from today will be the politicians and adult citizens of tomorrow”.

When spreading their information to younger generations, CPB considers it important to focus over the trade-offs and real-life implications of the application of measures, as politicians, more visible and present figures amongst common citizens, usually focus over the upsides. The IFI also believes this kind of relations pose a good opportunity to confront the youth with other views of the world and the economy.

Open Day is another of the fiscal literacy initiatives the IFI develops. CPB offers economy university students the opportunity to visit its offices and introduces them to the institutions' functions and tasks through a guest lecture. The IFI's staff prepare very curated and personalized materials for the Open Day; they create a storyline and establish the optics of the messages they want to share. The IFI considers this initiative very successful; it fosters its visibility, enhances its prestige, and is also aimed at attracting talent.

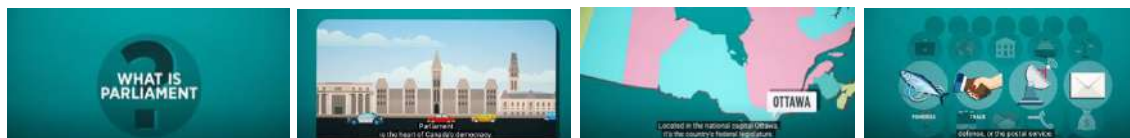
The periodicity of the visits is programmed attending their demand. Since the implementation of this initiative the application numbers have increased – At their last Open Day the institution received 110 participation requests and only had 55 available spots-.

Canadian IFI is also including fiscal and IFI literacy campaigns and materials, following the Canadian Parliament Library's reference. The **Library of Parliament in Canada** presents with very attractive, clean and modern aesthetic different introduction educative materials to know more about the Parliament's activities.



Source: Parliament of Canada, <https://learn.parl.ca>

This organism also shows educational dynamic and very simple animated videos where it explains the Parliament's functioning, and responsibilities – with more than 40.000 views-.



Source: Parliament of Canada, YouTube

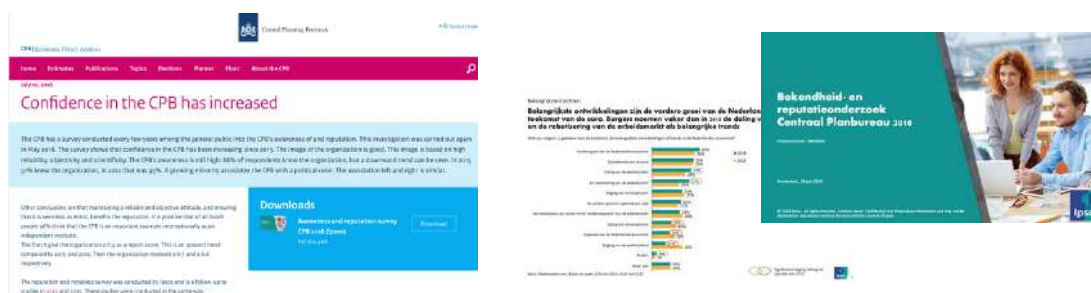
8.12. Open communication channels - WhatsApp or Telegram

Brazilian IFI, the Canadian PBO, and CARF (Colombia's IFI) have open communication channels with their closest stakeholders; some IFI's use these channels to inform the

media, gatekeepers and journalists about the release of new reviews; some other use it as a direct channel to inform and establish direct and fluent contact with parliamentarians.

8.13. Surveys and questionnaires

The Netherlands and the UK's IFI's develop surveys and questionnaires. OBR (OK) uses these tools to ask its internal audiences about decisions concerning their functioning or details about their materials. The Dutch IFI carries out an internal employee satisfaction review, where it includes questions about the communication department. It also develops a survey amongst its global population to measure its sentiment towards the institution.



Source: Central Planning Bureau, CPB, Netherlands.

Its aim is to better understand the institution's audiences, their behaviors and perceptions, and the nature of its relationship with them, rather than getting quantity outputs. The study is undertaken by an external company every three years. The last review has shown, for instance, 21% of the respondents know what the IFI does and 50% of the interviewees consider the IFI leans towards right-handed views, and 50% considers it leans towards left-handed views.

8.14. Blogs

To engage with common citizens and less specialized audiences, all staff from the Netherlands IFI is asked to collaborate on the creation of the IFI's blog. The requirements for the entrances are:

- To focus on fiscal and economy-related issues.
- To be written from the optics of its author's personal life – small details, thoughts or experiences- and in a very accessible way.

This kind of approach has resulted in building a better connection amongst fiscal issues, the IFI's publications and daily life; it humanizes the institution and gives visibility to the staff that compose it. The staff are advised to focus their conclusions or messages on providing the public with the answer to why the IFI does what it does, or how citizens can support the institution instead of highlighting or explaining what it does, which relegates the receiver to a passive role.

To make sure the blog entrances add value to the readers, all the staff members at the IFI receive a workshop on how to write blogs.

The CPB also works with a communication's academic expert – professor on communications science-, that offers training seminars to the staff.

The USA’s Congressional Budget Office hosts a blog within its official website since 2007 and until the date.



Source: Congressional Budget Office

8.15. Internal staff and civil society engagement

As part of the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the Canadian IFI takes part in different activities aimed to positively impact Canadian’s society and enhance the relations amongst its internal staff.

The employees organize in-house events to raise fund for those in need in Canadian communities and to help charities across the country:

Bibliofest:

To welcome the summer - and to collect donations for the 2024–2025 Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign -, the IFI participates in a festival with musical acts put on by the PBO’s and the Library of Parliament, where the participants bring their books and home-baked foods to sell and install a cash bar. The income proceeding from the bake sale is destined to the charity campaign.

Annual art auction:

The staff are encouraged to donate their original art, craft, service or experience. Some of the examples that could be used as auction items are a meal at their home or a restaurant, an afternoon making glass art, well-being treatments, services or experiences.

Soup of the day:

It consists of a luncheon event in support of the Charitable Campaign (GCWCC). The staff prepare different soups to create a buffet to have lunch with colleges during a working day.

8.16. Use of Instagram

[Many political or institutional spokespeople have their own personal Instagram accounts. Instagram is the chosen tool to connect with audiences for many worldwide multilevel organizations, whose communications structure consists of a general web site and Instagram profile to represent the organization. To locate their actions, these kinds of organizations have country placements; to take care of the country or more localized operations they implement country programs and create networks represented by their “country level” social media profiles, in the past located mainly in X that have been migrating to Instagram recently. Through their “country level” or “country program” profiles the organizations gather localize information and humanize their activities.

NDP – United Nations Development Program

The UN has different programs to put into practice their mission. In the case of UNDP, all UNDP’s country- level programs have Instagram account.

Hellenic Fiscal Council | Communications Review



Source: UNDP Chile



Source: UNDP Niger

European Committee of the Regions



Source: @eu_regions_cities

International Monetary Fund



Source: @the_imf

European Central Bank



Source: @europeancentralbank

Spanish Data Protection Agency AEPD

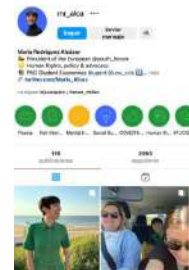


Source: @aepd_es

European Youth Forum – and María Rodríguez, President of the European Youth Forum



Source: @European_youth_eu



Source: @mr_alca

Spanish Ministry of Economy – Carlos Cuerpo



Source: @minecogob_



Source: @carlos_cuerpo, Instagram & X – fediverse dynamics-.



Apart from having his own Instagram account the current Spanish Ministry of Economy is starting to embrace or reference what could be considered “fediverse dynamics” within its social media, implementing crosscutting publications amongst different platforms.

8.17. Gamification

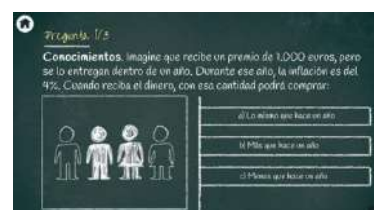
[Many institutions gamify their communications actions; it is a way to foster engagement, feedback, to know the organizations' audience and enhance social media presence. The **European Central bank** or the **Bank of Spain** are good examples of institutions that successfully implement this practice.



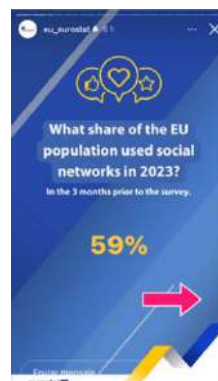
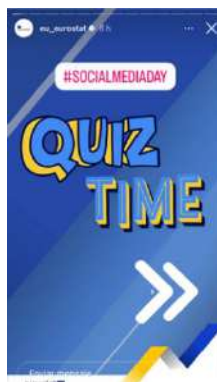
Source: @europeancentralbank



Source: Bank of Spain



Eurostat also uses gamification to spread knowledge about its publications through social media, which enhances its public interest and promotes conversation and interaction, at the same time it provides with behavioral information about its followers.



Source: @eu_eurostat | Eurostat

European Committee of the Regions



Source: Instagram @eu_regions_cities

8.18. Influencers

Many organizations benefit from the influence and visibility of niche opinion leaders and recognizable figures amongst the category of audiences they want to engage with or mobilize.

Spanish Ministry for Ecologic Transition partners with different environmental influencers to spread information about their initiatives, to engage with their audiences and foster a desired behavior amongst them, like their participation in events.

The European Commission partnered in Instagram with many influencers to prompt targeted public to vote in European elections.

The Spanish Ministry of Defense partnered with the **European Commission** – EU in action and RescUE campaign and influencers to spread information about their activities.



Source: Instagram @Climabar



Source: Instagram @Climabar



Source: @Ally_viamalam

8.19. Awards and competitions

[Many educational campaigns and initiatives include awards and knowledge contests - As part of its literacy activities **Bank of Spain** holds a competition on financial Knowledge-. Within the Global Money Week **OECD** organizes competitions. And both the initiative and the organization have Instagram profiles. **EducaFestival**, the International Festival for Educational Communication awards literacy campaigns and initiatives carried out by institutions, companies or foundations.



Source: EducaFestival

The regional media outlet CMM Castilla La-Mancha Media establishes agreements with organizations to create competitions through which, it promotes knowledge about the organizations and the region.

It is the case of the program *Soy Quien Más Sabe de la Región*, *Los Investigadores* – amongst High School students, or *Aventura con los romanos*.

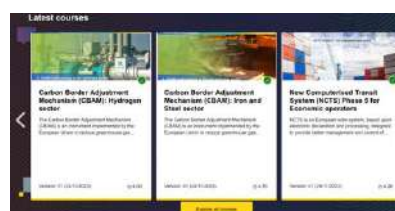
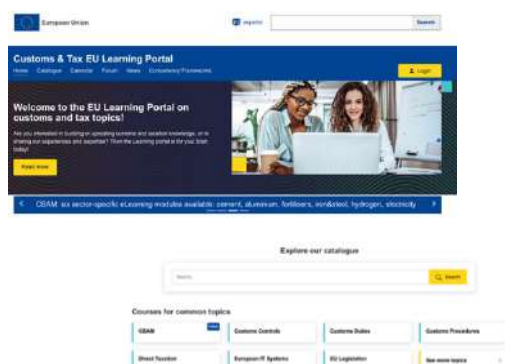


Source: <http://www.cmmedia.es> – Castilla La-Mancha Media

8.20. E-learning and webinars

Apart from the **Bank of Spain Economic Literacy programs** and initiatives, which contain E-learning courses, other organizations promote this kind of initiatives.

The **European Commission** provides a wide range of open eLearning courses as part of its Department for Taxation and Custom Union's activities; the courses are offered within a web site wholly dedicated to host them – the Customs & Tax EU Learning Portal.



Source: Customs & Tax EU Learning Portal

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Annex A: List of interviewees

The review team conducted interview with the following organizations:

- The Hellenic Fiscal Council: board, management and staff
- The external communication advisor of HFISC
- The Ministry of Finance in Greece
- The Public Debt Management Agency
- The Hellenic Statistical Authority
- The Parliamentary Budget Office
- Several journalists of leading Greek newspapers
- The CPB in the Netherlands



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