

EVALUATION OF POLISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: INFORMATION AND PROMOTIONAL MEASURES IMPLEMENTED UNDER MDCP 2016-2020

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES



The evaluation study on communication activities implemented under MDCP 2016-2020 was commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and conducted from April to September 2019 by a team of independent evaluators of the IBC GROUP Central Europe Holding JSC. **Its main purpose was to assess the functioning and effects of information, educational and promotional activities carried out in individual areas of Polish development cooperation, that is in information, global education, and promotion. The results of the study are to support the design and implementation of communication initiatives under the new multiannual programme. A report on the study is available at <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/>.**

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As part of the evaluation, a **wide range of qualitative and quantitative research and expert analyses** were carried out, including: an **analysis of existing data**, that is materials and documents related to Polish Development Cooperation – PDC; a **structuring workshop** with representatives of the SCU responsible for information, promotional and educational activities regarding PDC; **30 in-depth interviews** with development cooperation stakeholders, including project coordinators; a **survey** conducted on a representative sample of adult residents of Poland (n = 600); an **analysis of the information about development cooperation available on the Internet**; and a **website usability study** on www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/.

In addition, **five communication campaign case studies**, both effective and ineffective, were conducted, together with **benchmarking** of communication initiatives used in the framework of development cooperation by Ireland, Austria, Denmark, and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Quantitative and qualitative data collected during the evaluation was subjected to a **SWOT analysis**. In the final stage of the study, a **panel of experts and an implementation workshop** were carried out, the purpose of which was to develop and operationalise recommendations based on the conclusions drawn from the conducted studies.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Assessment of the system for implementing communication activities under Polish development cooperation

Polish Development Cooperation is conducted on the basis of three main documents: *the Development Cooperation Act*, *the Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme 2016-2020 (MDCP)*, and annual *Development Cooperation Plans*. **Both the MDCP and the annual Development Cooperation Plans contain very general references to communication activities related to Polish development cooperation.** Although the objectives and scope have been defined, the documents do not include the characteristics of the target groups, identification of communication channels and tools, and a description of how to manage and coordinate communication activities related to PDC. The implementation of communication activities is mainly based on the current decisions of the management of the Department of Development Cooperation (DDC) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the initiatives of the team directly involved in conducting these activities.

Recommendation: Developing a communication strategy

It was recommended that a communication strategy be developed which should at least include a description of the initial situation, the goals of communication activities, the characteristics of the target groups along with the assignment of communication channels and tools, as well as a description of how to manage and coordinate communication activities. This would include details on how to cooperate with partners in information, promotional and educational activities; the method employed for assessing the effects of the strategy, monitoring and reporting;

a framework schedule for the implementation of activities; and the estimated budget. The strategy should be a multiannual document, developed for the same period as the MDCP. **The role of coordinator in the process of developing the strategy, including implementation thereof, should be undertaken by the Social Communication Unit (SCU) in the DDC.** The communication strategy should be developed and agreed upon no later than 12 months from the adoption of the MDCP by the Council of Ministers. It should be consulted with stakeholders of the communication policy related to PDC (these will include government administration and non-governmental organisations) and appraised by the Development Cooperation Policy Council. **Its development and implementation are key to increasing the efficiency and usefulness of conducted communication activities.**

The five-person Social Communication Unit in the DDC is currently responsible for implementing tasks related to information, promotion, and education.

In the third quarter of 2018, the team composition was partially changed. New tasks were imposed on the Unit, the optics of communication activities was changed, and work on improving the efficiency and usefulness of communication was intensified. The team members have many years of experience working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including at Polish diplomatic missions abroad, which guarantees the use of institutional memory. They also have the necessary competences in conducting communication activities.

The results of the study indicate that the Unit often experiences situations in which work accumulates, including tasks that go beyond broadly understood communication activities. It was also identified that social media is used in communication activities; this does not, however, apply to Facebook. Meanwhile, this is an important communication channel from the point of view of the main recipients of information on development cooperation; it is used, among others, by many non-governmental organisations. However, managing, running and animating a Facebook profile would require at least a **reorganisation of the SCU tasks, in order to focus part of the team on activities in social media.**

Recommendation: Strengthening the importance of communication policy

It was recommended to strengthen the importance of communication policy related to development cooperation and the position of the Social Communication Unit; this could be put into effect by clearly defining tasks, limiting them to the scope of communication policy related to development cooperation, and increasing financial resources.

When assessing the consistency of the communication activities conducted, it should be remembered that, **relatively speaking**, there are **many partners** involved in them. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the principal sender of messages, but other entities, such as government administration, non-governmental organisations, as well as schools and universities, can conduct their own communication policy independently of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the Humanitarian Aid Department operates within the structure of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, with a minister who is also a member of the Council of Ministers. Pursuant to the *Organisational Regulations of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister*, one of the tasks of this department is to build and shape relations with public opinion and the media, including the promotion, dissemination and propagation of humanitarian aid issues as well as conducting information policy on the minister's activities, which overlaps with communication activities under Polish Development Cooperation. Another example of activities carried out in the field of PDC communication are concerts organised by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (*Poland Helps*). **The decentralisation of PDC message senders may, in practice, lead to information noise that prevents the recipient from selecting useful and relevant information.**

As a result of the study, it was found that **coherence between communication carried out by project implementers and the communication policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is varied.** In order to increase the coherence between information activities carried out by other entities and the information policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Guidelines on providing information about Polish development cooperation projects and their labelling* have been developed and attached to the calls for proposals documentation. The guidelines set out how to use the *Polish Aid* graphic symbol and detail the obligation to provide information on the source of financing and project activities. This is an important step that intends to introduce order, however, it has limited recipients and does not fundamentally change the quality of the communication. **Enforcing implementation of the guidelines and verifying the appropriateness of their application remains a significant problem.**

Recommendation: Creating a working/expert group for coordinating PDC communication

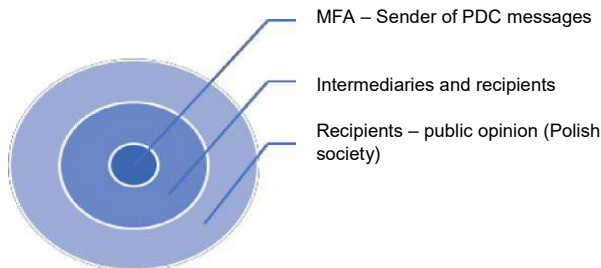
It was recommended to create a working/expert group which will at least include ministerial representatives participating in the implementation of PDC. Its goal will be operational coordination of communication policy on PDC. The group's work should be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the group should consist of people who, at operational level, deal with the implementation of communication policy related to PDC.

Recommendation: Enforcing communication guidelines

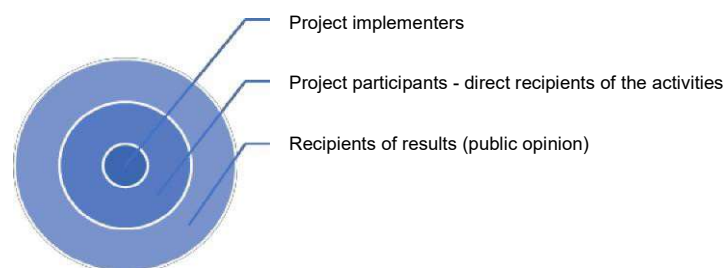
It was recommended that the DDC employees responsible for carrying out projects should compel, or otherwise remind and monitor project implementers to comply with the provisions of the guidelines specifying their obligations in terms of PDC communication activities.

During the study, two main recipient categories regarding PDC communication activities were identified; these were **domestic** and **foreign** recipients.

Domestic recipients



Foreign recipients



The first group is specific with a high degree of diversity, and comprises both public opinion and information intermediaries, such as non-governmental organisations, schools (including teachers, children and young people), universities, central and local government administration, volunteers, the media, parliamentarians, and entrepreneurs, who are also recipients of PDC communication. On the other hand, the group of foreign recipients includes direct recipients of activities carried out as part of ongoing projects, societies of countries where the projects are implemented, as well as the countries' central and local government administration bodies, and the media.

The main channel of information about PDC is the **website www.polskapomoc.gov.pl**.

Social media (Twitter, YouTube, Flickr) is also used, but **with the exception of Facebook** which is important for communication carried out by, among others, non-governmental organisations. On the basis of the conducted research it can be concluded that the **Polish Aid** website contains a lot of useful information and documents, it is clear and presents all details required from the point of view of people interested in projects listed there. However, it has its drawbacks, namely there is little content which shows current activities in projects carried out under PDC – or the content is not displayed clearly enough. Problems also occur when moving around lower navigation levels. Another disadvantage of the website is its non-working search engine and the structure of its articles which often constitute a stodgy, hardly readable block of text, requiring the reader to delve into extensive content in order to find the necessary information. However, Twitter maintains its current activity, also by sharing informative posts of other entities. Messages about PDC are marked with the hashtag #polskapomoc.

Recommendation: Rebuilding the PDC website

It was recommended that the PDC website, which is the main information channel, be rebuilt. It should be modernised and adapted to the possibilities of mobile use and, consequently, the quality and attractiveness of content posted there should be adapted to the modern conditions and requirements of recipients. Technical errors should also be eliminated, such as problems with moving around at lower navigation levels.

Assessment of the effectiveness and usefulness of PDC communication activities

According to a survey conducted among the inhabitants of Poland, **television (74%) followed by the Internet (40%) are the most frequently indicated sources of information on assistance provided by Poland to other countries.** Among Internet sources, the respondents pointed primarily to popular news websites, such as Onet, WP, Interia, etc. – 32%, as well as to social media, namely Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Issuu, etc. – 8%.

Official websites about PDC are very rarely a source of information for the public, as is evidenced by the low percentage of indications of these sources: the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.msz.gov.pl – 2%, and the **Polish Aid** website: www.polskapomoc.gov.pl – 1%.

Conducted with the use of SentiOne software, an analysis of PDC web content for 2017-2018 showed that **most mentions of Polish Aid are neutral** (approximately 83% in 2017 and 89% in 2018). **Positive mentions** on the Internet refer, primarily, to information about **successful actions** carried out thanks to **Polish Aid**, such as training, delivery of equipment or necessary materials. On the other hand, **negative** statements mainly relate **to opposition to the allocation of money to help other countries**; in the opinion of these opponents this money should be earmarked for purposes implemented in Poland. The transfer of communication from portals to Twitter is noticeable, as is evidenced by the higher percentage of mentions on this platform in 2018 when compared to the previous year. This effect is certainly due to the intense activity of the **Polish Aid** account.

Recommendation: Creating a Polish Aid profile on Facebook and activating intermediary groups

Taking into consideration the participation of social media as a source of information and its huge role as the space where people spend free time, it is important to use these platforms and maximise the opportunities they offer in implementing a communication strategy. The number of users of social networking sites is expected to grow. **Facebook is the most often visited social networking site in the world** (2.2 billion users). One useful feature that Facebook offers is creating events. The platform's users, having expressed interest in a given event, are notified about forthcoming dates or new information about the event. Moreover, it is worth engaging intermediary groups in communication activities; this would include bloggers, opinion leaders, journalists, and influencers who inform their communities about various events. The more and more frequently used form of promoting an event, which is a trend that should be considered by *Polish Aid*, are the so-called Igers – this word comes from 'Instagrammers' and means the Instagram fan community and Instagram photos.

The *Polish Aid* logo is legible. **Its graphic part is often identified as a Polish smile or a 'smiley' face, which contributes to creating a positive image of development cooperation and thus positively affects its acceptance.** Conclusions of the study indicate that the motif used in the logo is recognisable and understandable both to Poles and foreigners.

As part of the study, the accessibility of the language of messages about information, promotional and educational activities related to Polish development cooperation was analysed. Materials financed by *Polish Aid* as well as materials concerning projects/activities financed from other sources were selected for the analysis. All texts that were analysed can be considered moderately difficult. The average values of the FOG index, that is entry and text forms, indicate that 12 to 14 years of education are needed to fully understand the message. In other words it is necessary to have higher education, at least at Bachelor's level.

Recommendation: Simplifying the language of communication about PDC

A more effective simplification of the language of communication about PDC was recommended. It is necessary to create guidelines for developing text materials that would indicate the need to control language difficulties, for example by using the popular FOG analysis tools. The guidelines should be addressed to all partners involved in communication activities.

The knowledge about and the perception of development cooperation in society

In 2019, 69% of the surveyed Polish residents admitted that at some point in their lives they had encountered some information about the assistance provided by Poland to other countries. The survey has shown that the majority of Poles (53%) help others financially. Among the reasons for helping, they point to the fact that such actions allow one to feel needed and give satisfaction and joy. Poles usually help on impulse, because of external factors such as charity campaigns that receive a lot of media coverage. An even larger percentage of Poles (79%) agree that Poland should help other countries – that is those which are developing, with the largest percentage of Poles (91%) considering it important to help people in other countries. The data indicates that Poles are more willing to help specific individuals or families than countries where help would seem to be too impersonal. At the same time, it should be noted that

Polish society is divided in this aspect. Poles who are aware of the provision of assistance and who are in favour of Poland's support for developing countries constitute the largest group at over 60% of the population. **Those unaware of Poland's assistance to developing countries, yet in favour of it, in turn constitute 25% of the population. This is a group with great potential in terms of conducted communication activities.** The basic goal should be to reach these people with information about the ways in which Poland assists other countries and the scope of *Polish Aid*. **Opponents of Poland's support for developing countries** form the smallest group of respondents and represent less than 15%. This last group is dominated by young people (18-29 years) and older people (60 years and older) as well as by men and full-time employees. Almost 50% of this group claim that Poland should definitely not provide assistance to developing countries.

Recommendation: Continuing research on global education

Issues related to global education require further in-depth studies of the directions that necessary work and activities addressed to the society should take. However, even this study shows that it is necessary to **engage the society more in the process of formal education, as well as involving subsequent groups of stakeholders, such as libraries and parents, in these activities.**