



European Documentation Centres

Annual Activity Report 2021

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Executive summary

The overall **response rate** of the survey was **59 %**, slightly lower than last year's survey. 79% of respondents indicated to have signed the 2018 revamped Partnership Agreement, whilst 7% intend to do so in 2022. The trend for more EDCs signing the Partnership Agreement remains on track.

In 2021, EDCs actively involved their host structures in many of their activities, in particular via **sharing its promotional material (78%)**, promoting the website within the host structure (73%), and inviting host structures colleagues to EDC activities (63%).

The **most frequent topic in 2020** for **41%** of EDCs was the **future of the EU**, closely followed by **Education and culture, 39%**.

The survey confirmed the finding from the previous two years that **EDCs continue to have a stronger relation to the EUROPE DIRECT family**, in terms of frequency of common events, compared to other EU networks.

2021 was overshadowed by the COVID19 pandemic. Even if the survey confirms that the number of activities have picked up from last year, they have not yet rebounded to pre-COVID levels. Hosting universities were at times closed, and some students followed distance learning. Maintaining an active presence online proved challenging and had a knock on effect on the capacity to reach out to the academic community.

The **outlook for 2022 looks brighter.** The COVID19 situation has appeased since the beginning of 2022. At the moment of writing (July 2022) physical meetings have resumed all over the EU. This opens a window of opportunity to meet, reconnect, and acquire new skills. To make the most of that opportunity, DG COMM will be organising a **1.5 days training conference in Brussels in November** for all EDCs having signed the 2018 Partnership Agreement. The conference seek to help to upgrade skills, foster networking, and set the scene for the forthcoming European Elections 2024.

1. Introduction

This document reports on the activity of European Documentation Centre (EDC) members in 2021. It is based on the findings of the online EDC Activity Survey¹, published from 25 May to 10 June 2022. The 2021 survey included a set of questions introduced in 2020 to reflect the EDC cooperation with other EU networks and organisations.

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² In this document, 'EDCs' refers to the EDCs of survey respondents.

1. EDC members

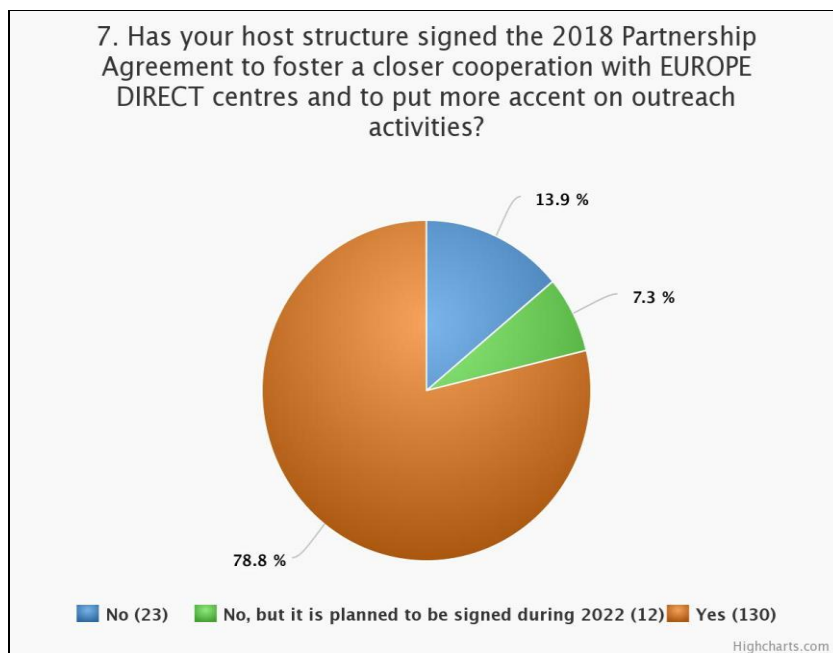


Figure 1: Share of respondents that signed the new Partnership Agreement

EDCs exist in all EU Member States except Lithuania (which has recently expressed an interest to attract new EDC candidates) and Luxembourg (universities in Luxembourg are already hosting EUROPE DIRECT centres). 165 out of the 280 EDCs took part in the 2021 survey. The response rate was thus 59 %. The survey shows that an **overwhelming majority (79%)** of respondents had **signed the 2018 Partnership Agreement (PA)**, and another **7%** of respondents were **planning to sign** it before the end of 2021. Thus, the trend for having more EDCs signing up to the Partnership Agreement persists. Currently more than 2/3 (69%) of all EDCs have signed the 2018 PA.

The **overwhelming majority (77%)** of respondents had more than **5 years of experience as managers**, aged between 45 and 65 years (67%), and active in a host structure that have signed the 2018 PA.

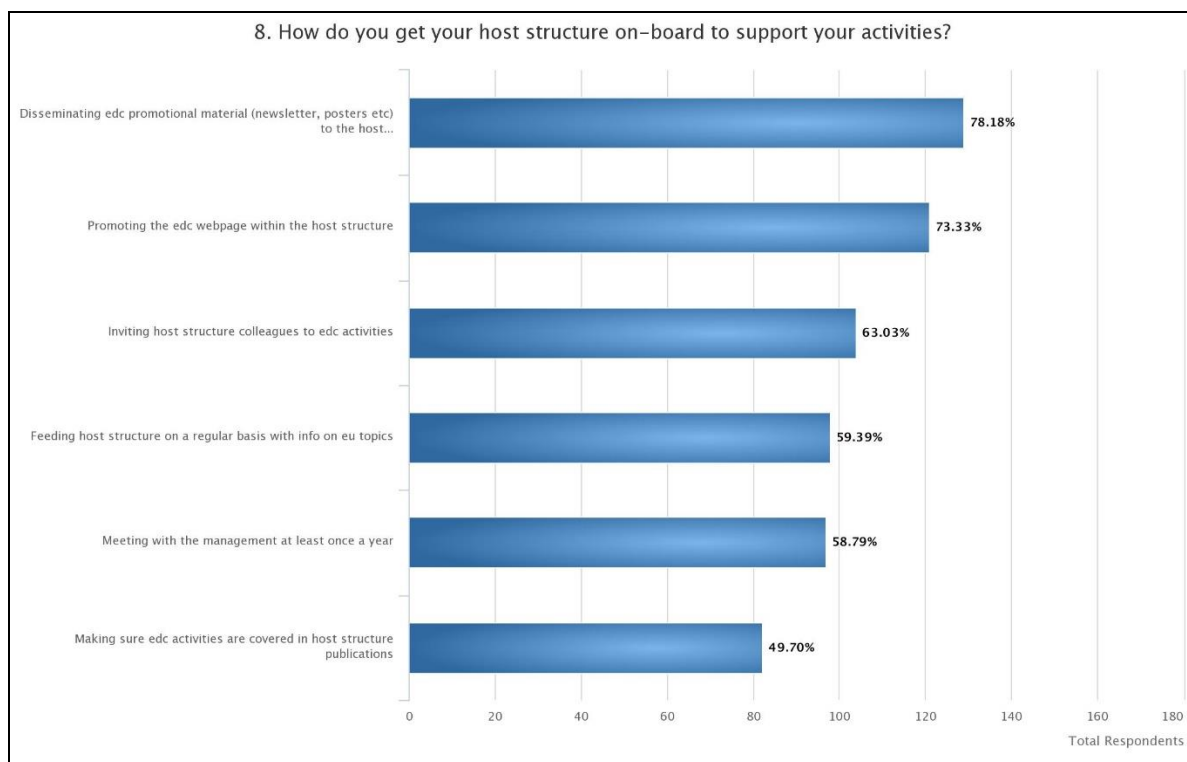


Figure 2: Getting host structures on-board to support EDCs' activities

Figure two shows that EDCs were quite **active in advertising their promotional material** (78%), and webpage (73%), as well as and inviting host structures colleagues to EDC activities (63%).

It would be crucial to also continue to invite Jean Monnet professors, and other lecturers in political science, economics and law, in particular those involved in EU programmes to EDC activities. Finally, about 6 in 10 respondents met with their host structure's management on a yearly basis.

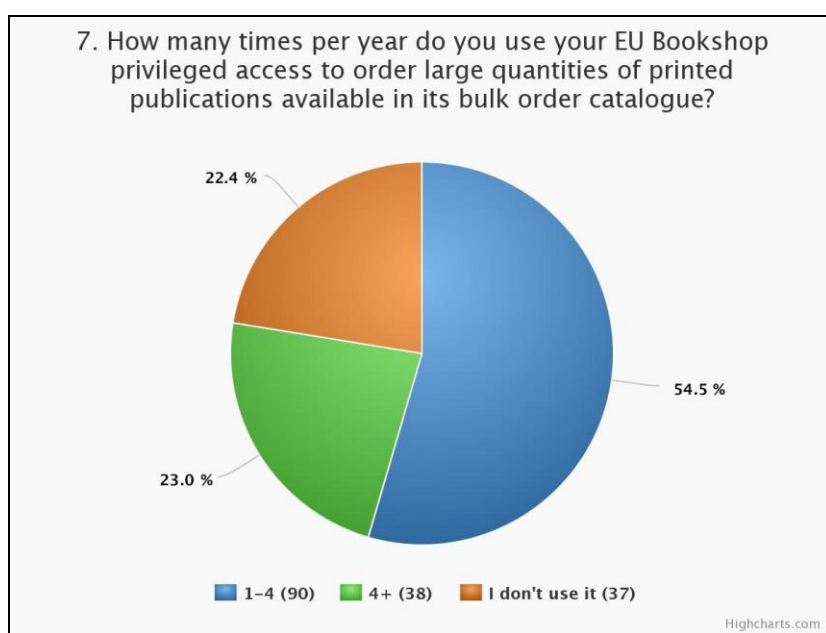


Figure 3: EDCs' use of privileged access to the EU Bookshop

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 77%, use the EU bookshop, and more than half use it 1-4 times a year. This confirms earlier surveys' results that the privileged access to the **EU bookshop** to order large quantities of printed publications is an **appreciated service**.

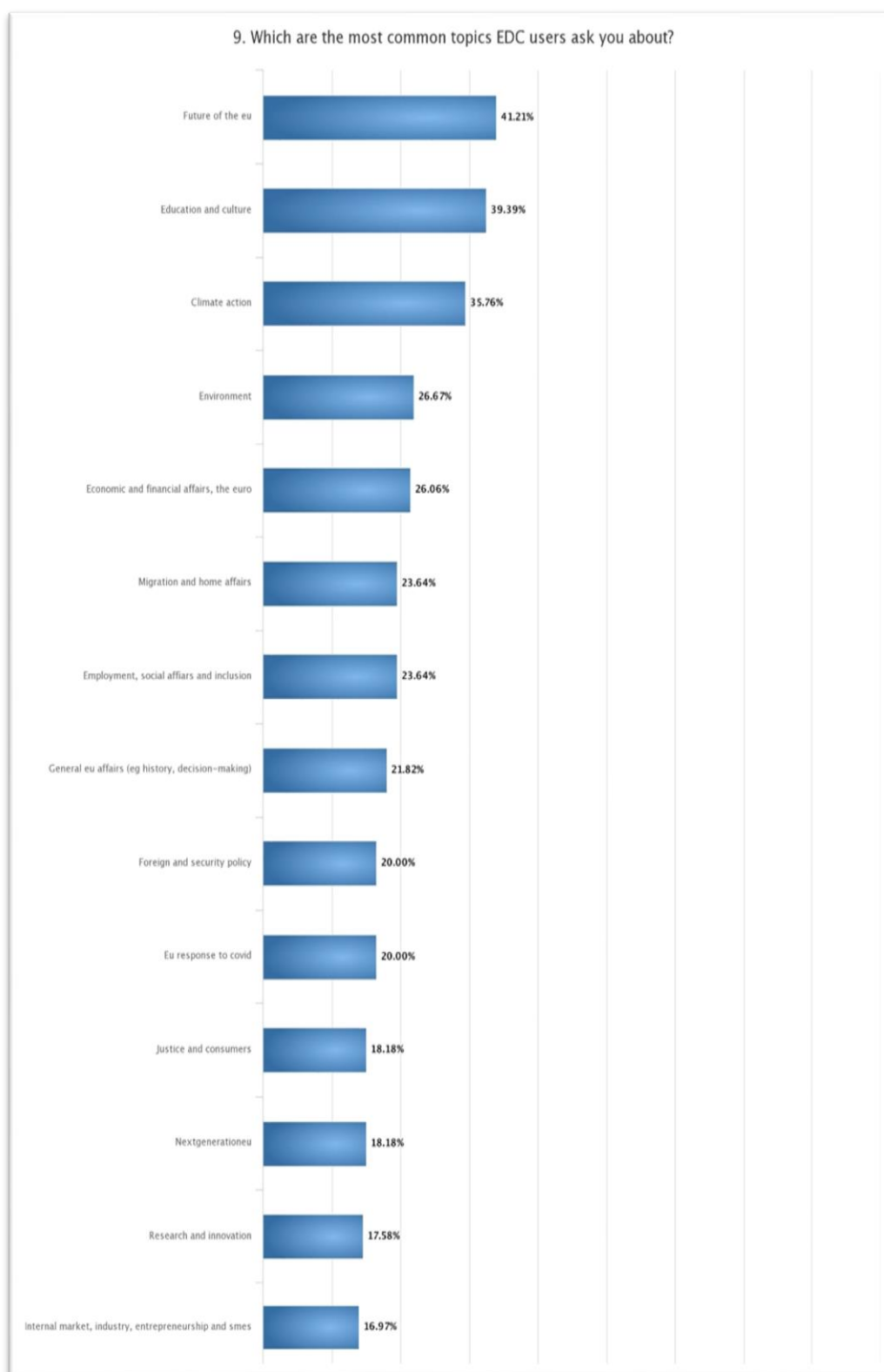


Figure 4: Topics of interest to EDC users in 2021

Almost half of the EDCs mentioned **Future of the EU** as one of the **most common topics** in 2021. This calls for more action by the European Commission to feed EDCs with timely and relevant information in the run up to the **2024 European Elections**.

2. Activities

2021 was **another extraordinary challenging year**. The COVID19 pandemic disrupted the usual ways of working. The pandemic had adverse impacts on the EDCs on various fronts: physical activities were reduced, or cancelled. Working increasingly or entirely online was not an easy transition for many EDCs. On top of that, online teaching at universities and “screen fatigue” among students and academic community contributed to making online activities less appealing. However, on a positive note, some EDCs gained new digital skills that would prove useful for the future. And last, but not least, as we will see, the EDCs increased participation in meeting contributions, from 50% in 2020 to 65% in 2021.

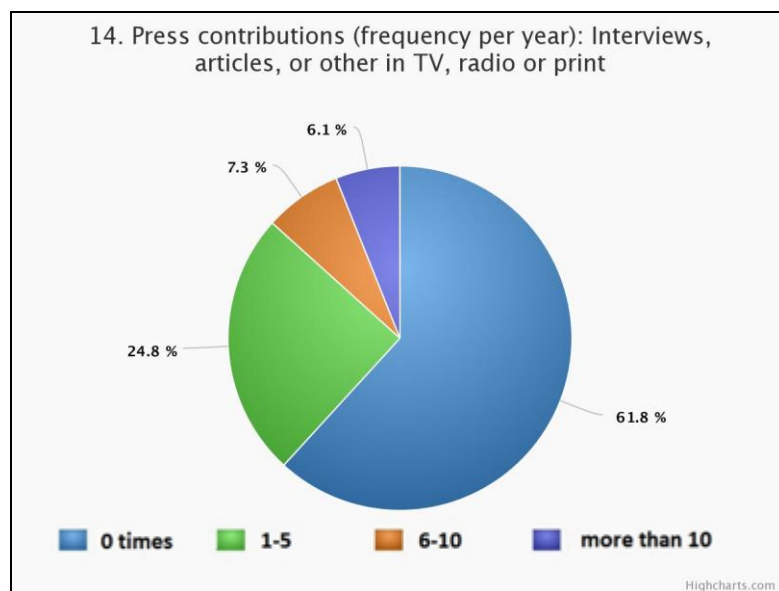


Figure 5: Number of press contributions

13. Supporting EUROPE DIRECT centres (frequency per year):
Providing access to a venue for an event, brokering a
speaker at your host institution for an EUROPE DIRECT event

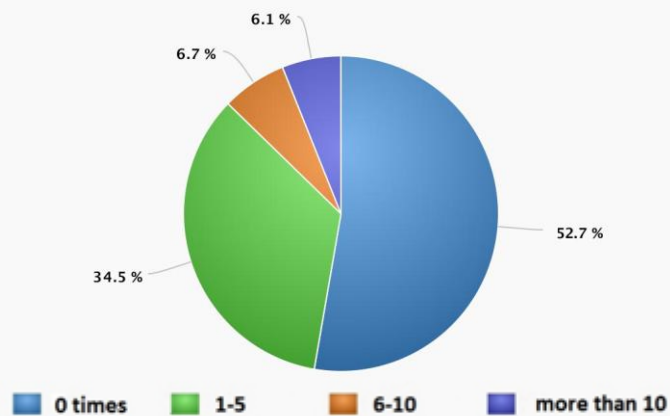


Figure 6: Number of activities to support EUROPE DIRECT centres

11. Meeting contributions (frequency per year): Organisation
of meeting, conference or workshop

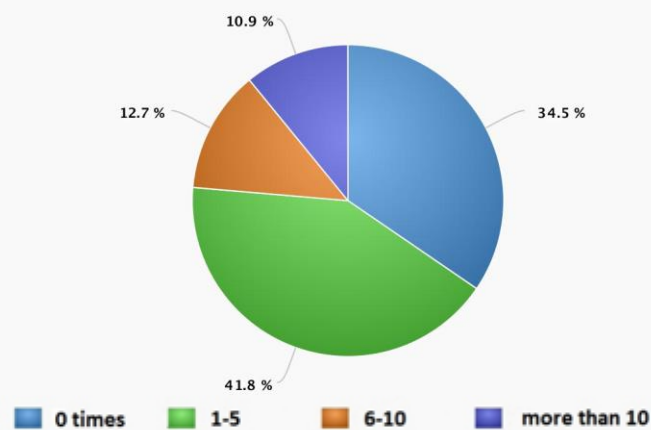


Figure 7: Number of meeting contributions

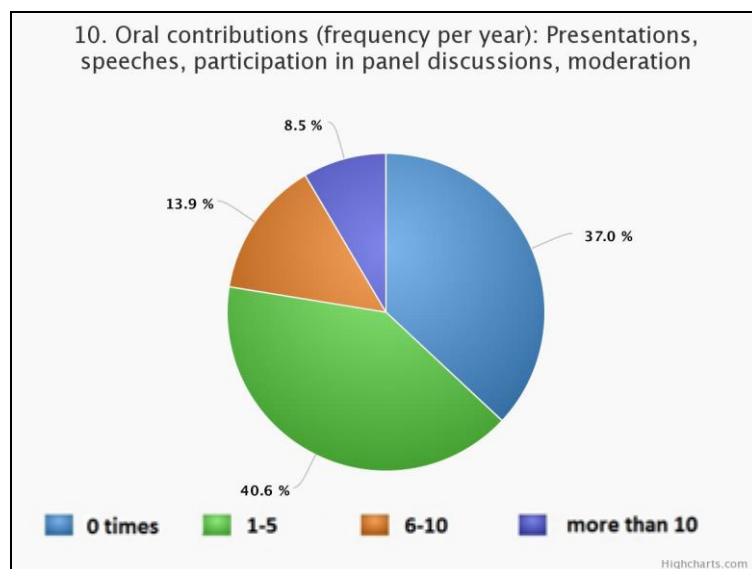


Figure 8: Number of oral contributions

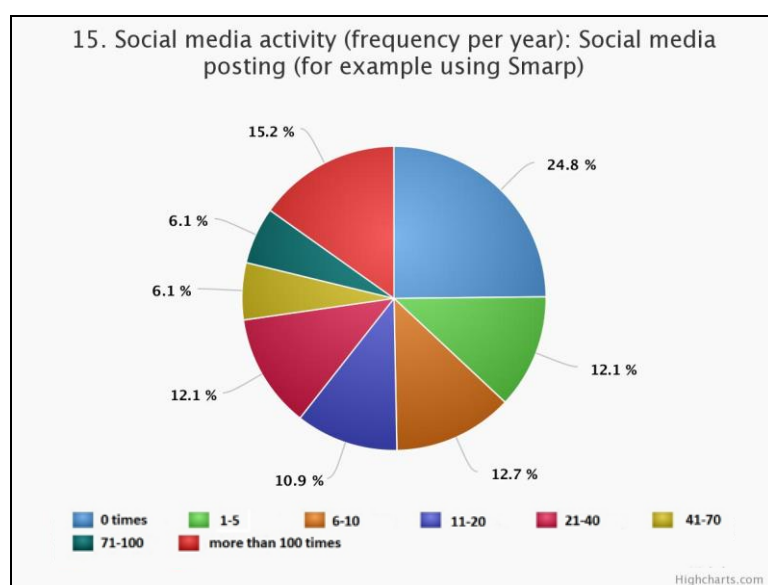


Figure 9: Frequency of social media posting

Among all activities carried out in 2021, EDCs have been most frequently active on **social media**. EDCs have at a varying degree posted online. 12% posted very frequently, more than 100 times throughout 2021. Between 2020 and 2021 we have seen a positive surge in the use of social media increasing from 64% to 75%.

Around 1/3 of EDCs produced press contributions (53% in 2019), and about half of EDCs supported a EUROPE DIRECT centre (60% in 2019). 65% of EDCs participated in meetings (up from 50% in 2020), out of those, 11% held more than 10 meetings in 2020. The frequency of organisational contributions, presentations and speeches has scope for improvement, as these are important building blocks of the 2018 Partnership Agreement. However, as mentioned, the reduced number of activities shall be understood in the context of a challenging year.

As regards activities for EDCs hosted by universities, it will continue to be crucial to **liaise** with **Jean Monnet professors**, and other lecturers in political science, economics and law, in particular those involved in Team EUROPE DIRECT and in EU programmes, and invite those to their activities. Besides, EDCs could play an important role in **engaging** students and **academic community** via the **Back2University** initiative by helping European Institution staff to organise their visits.

3. Cooperation with others

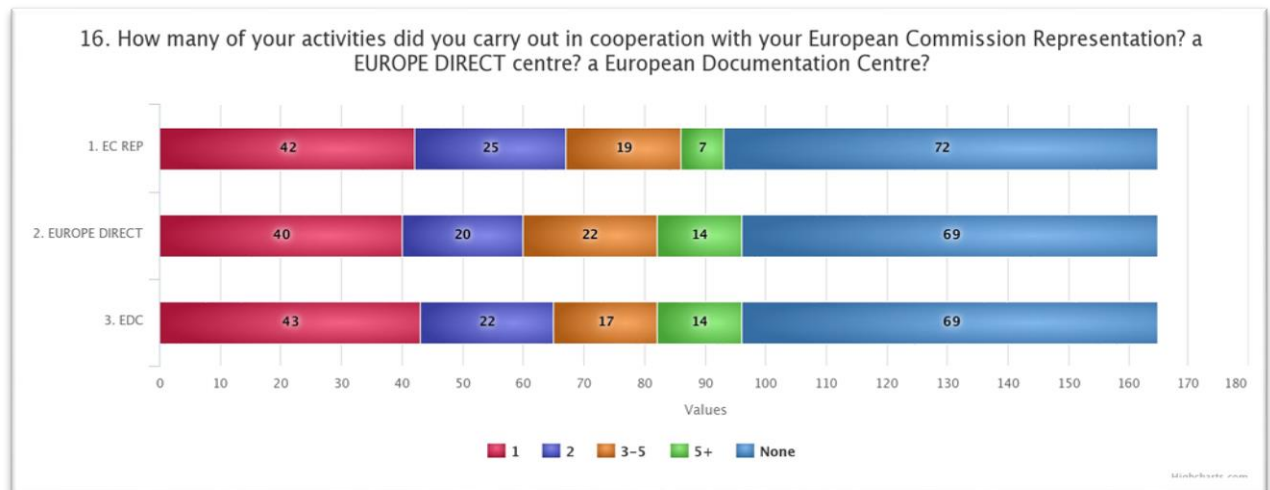


Figure 10: Cooperation with EUROPE DIRECT Networks and the European Commission's Representation

More than half of respondents **joined forces** with another **EDC**, a **EUROPE DIRECT centre**, or a **European Commission Representation** in 2021. The survey also shows that there was a marginally stronger cooperation between the EDC and a EUROPE DIRECT centre and another EDC, as opposed to a European Commission Representation.

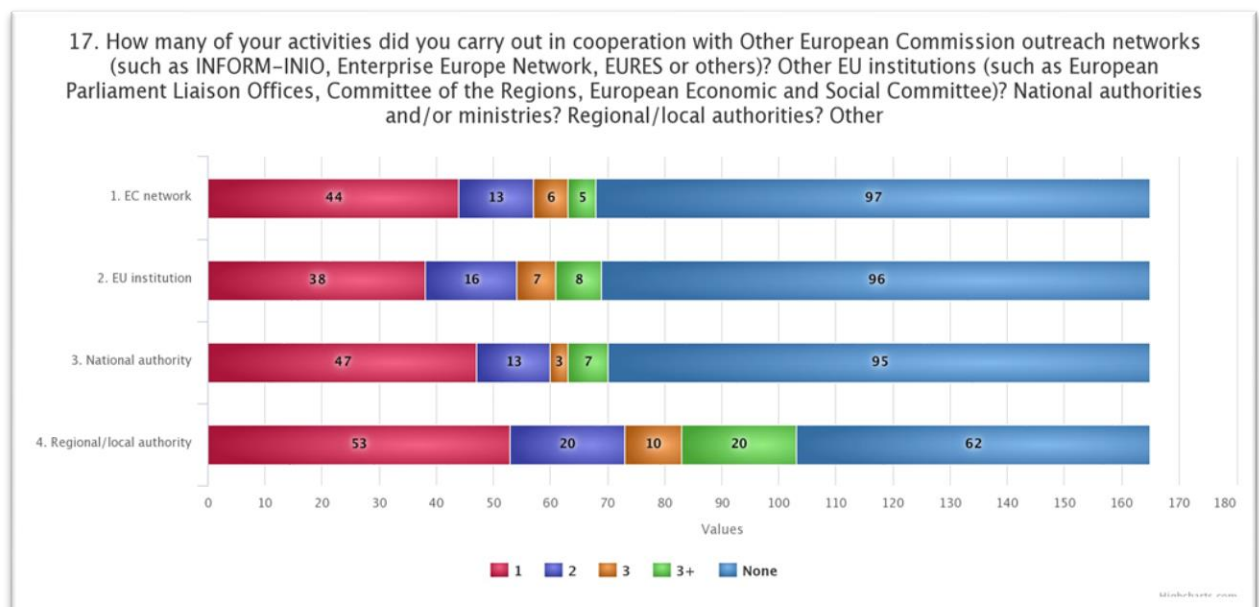


Figure 11: Cooperation with other EC networks and organisations

The results also show that EDCs cooperated more loosely with organisations not belonging to the EUROPE DIRECT family, notably with the exception of regional and local authority.

More than **6 out of 10** responding EDCs **cooperated with a regional/local authority**, and almost **4 out of 10 cooperated** with another **EU network**, an EU institution and/or a national authority. This report confirms that there is scope for further enhancing the cooperation between EDCs and other EU networks.

Joining forces with other EU networks was precisely the goal of 8 European Commission regional pilot projects across the EU held in the first half of 2021. These pilot projects aimed at fostering systematic collaboration between European networks, the endgame being to create **EU in my region**.

“EU in my region” is about establishing mutual signposting, and local and regional cooperation on communicating Europe, with the ultimate goal of facilitating citizens’ access to EU information and services. **EU in my region projects will now be rolled out in regions across the entire EU**. Whilst EUROPE DIRECT centres will be in the lead for this cooperation, **EDCs are strongly encouraged to play an active role** in these new models of cooperation.

4. Conclusions

2021 turned out to be another challenging year for EDCs. The **COVID19 pandemic continued to hit the academic sector**. Students in many locations were imposed distance learning. Lockdowns, and closure of universities noticeably impacted EDCs’ work. As a result, there was **a reduction in most activities** by EDCs in 2021 as compared to pre COVID levels. In contrast, one **activity** which **surged** was **social media**, showing EDCs resilience to adapt to a changing environment.

The **outlook for 2022 looks brighter**. At the moment of writing (July 2022) we have returned to a “new normal” that looks quite different to before the COVID19 outbreak. In particular, distance working has become a permanent feature in many work places.

2022 will also be an interesting year in terms of training opportunities for EDCs. The European Commission will offer a **1.5 days training seminar in Brussels in November 2022** for all EDCs having signed the 2018 Partnership Agreement. It shall help to strengthen the capacity of EDCs and, finally, allow physical networking to take place. It will also be looking to the future and eyeing in the European Election 2024.

