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European Commission
DG Energy and Transport

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA
(1998-2001) and mid-term
evaluation of EXTRAWEB
(2002-2006)

Final Report – 4 May 2006

Table of content

| | |
|---|-----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 5 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 9 |
| 2. PRESENTATION OF THE EXTRA AND EXTR@WEB PROJECTS | 10 |
| 2.1. EXTRA..... | 10 |
| 2.2. EXTR@WEB | 10 |
| 3. PROJECT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY | 12 |
| 3.1. PROJECT SCOPE | 12 |
| 3.1.1. <i>Limitations of the scope of the evaluation</i> | 13 |
| 3.2. METHODOLOGY..... | 13 |
| 3.2.1. <i>Key issues when evaluating information and dissemination actions</i> | 13 |
| 3.2.1.1. Data availability | 13 |
| 3.2.1.2. Personnel availability | 14 |
| 3.2.2. <i>Consequences for this evaluation study</i> | 14 |
| 3.2.3. <i>Methodological approach</i> | 14 |
| 3.2.3.1. Desk research | 14 |
| 3.2.3.2. Data collection through surveys and stakeholder consultation | 14 |
| 3.2.3.3. Analysis and recommendations | 15 |
| 4. ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS | 16 |
| 4.1. EVALUATION THEME 1: VALUE ADDED OF THE EXTR@WEB AND EXTRA PROJECTS: KEY USER OUTPUTS AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES | 16 |
| 4.1.1. <i>To what extent was the EXTRA project effective in Providing the information deliverables?</i> | 17 |
| 4.1.2. <i>To what extent was the Extr@web project effective in Providing the information deliverables</i> | 18 |
| 4.1.2.1. Objectives set for the information deliverables and current status..... | 18 |
| 4.1.2.2. Issues related to project data collection | 20 |
| 4.1.2.3. Reviewed data collection approach | 21 |
| 4.1.3. <i>To what extent has the EXTRA project been effective in implementing promotional activities</i> | 21 |
| 4.1.4. <i>To what extent has the Extr@web project been effective in implementing promotional activities</i> ... | 22 |
| 4.2. THEME 2: USE AND UTILITY OF THE EXTRA AND EW | 24 |
| 4.2.1. <i>To what extent has the information provided by the EXTRA project been used?</i> | 24 |
| 4.2.2. <i>To what extent has the information provided by the EW project been used (the Transport Research Knowledge Centre web site)?</i> | 25 |
| 4.2.3. <i>Quality and usability of the information provided through the TRKC</i> | 30 |
| 4.2.3.1. Extra | 30 |
| 4.2.3.2. Extr@web..... | 32 |
| 4.2.4. <i>Unaddressed user needs</i> | 34 |
| 4.3. THEME 3: COMPLEMENTARY BETWEEN THE EW PROJECT AND OTHER WEB-SITES | 35 |
| 4.3.1. <i>Cooperation between the CORDIS and EW providers</i> | 35 |
| 4.3.2. <i>Cooperation regarding the promotion of the TRKC</i> | 36 |
| 4.3.3. <i>Cooperation with other actors</i> | 36 |
| 4.4. THEME 4: WEB-DESIGN, FUNCTIONAL FEATURES AND VISIBILITY | 36 |
| 4.4.1. <i>Web service objectives</i> | 36 |
| 4.4.2. <i>Quality assurance and Content update</i> | 37 |
| 4.4.3. <i>visibility</i> | 37 |
| 4.5. THEME 5: MANAGEMENT AND INPUT FROM KEY STAKEHOLDERS..... | 38 |
| 4.5.1.1. The High Level Advisory Group..... | 39 |
| 4.5.1.2. The Benchmarking Group | 39 |
| 4.5.1.3. RTD project coordinators | 40 |
| 4.5.1.4. The European Commission | 41 |

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 4.6. THEME 6: COHERENCE BETWEEN THE IMPLEMENTED EW PROJECT AND THE OBJECTIVES SET FOR THE FP5 FOR DISSEMINATION AND PROMOTION | 41 |
| 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 43 |
| ANNEXES | 51 |

List of figures

| | |
|---|----|
| FIGURE 1 OVERVIEW OF THE EXTR@WEB PROJECT | 17 |
| FIGURE 2 OVERVIEW OF KEY INFORMATION/USER OUTPUTS AND DISSEMINATION TOOLS..... | 19 |
| FIGURE 3 E-NEWSLETTER RATING | 23 |
| FIGURE 4 MAIN STATISTICS E-BULLETING EXTRA | 25 |
| FIGURE 5: TOTAL WEB-PAGES VIEWED EW/ TRANSPORT RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE CENTRE | 26 |
| FIGURE 6 TOP 6 PAGES VIEWED EW 2005..... | 26 |
| FIGURE 7 NUMBER OF REGISTERED USERS | 27 |
| FIGURE 8 MAIN STATISTICS NEWSLETTER..... | 28 |
| FIGURE 9: FREQUENCY OF USE OF THE TRKC | 28 |
| FIGURE 10 BREAKDOWN OF PERSONS REGISTERED IN THE CONTACT DATABASE BY ORGANISATION TYPE..... | 30 |
| FIGURE 11 MOST USEFUL ELEMENTS OF THE EXTRA PROJECTS | 31 |
| FIGURE 12 MOST USEFUL FUNCTIONS | 31 |
| FIGURE 13: USE OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE TRKC..... | 32 |
| FIGURE 14: REASONS FOR VISITING THE TRKC WEB-SITE | 33 |
| FIGURE 15 RATING OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THE TRKC | 33 |
| FIGURE 16 UNADDRESSED USER NEEDS | 35 |

List of tables

| | |
|--|----|
| TABLE 1 INTENDED TARGET AUDIENCE | 29 |
|--|----|

Disclaimer

The views and comments expressed in this text are the responsibility of Deloitte and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and description of the projects

This report evaluates the EXTRA (Jan. 1999 – Oct. 2001) and the Extr@web (Sep. 2002 – Aug. 2006) projects aiming at disseminating and promoting transport research results among decision makers, influencers and other transport key stakeholders in the transport field.

The EXTRA project, financed under the RTD Transport programme, was set up in response to a perceived need at EU level for structured dissemination of transport research. The project was to supplement existing dissemination activities by implementing a coordinated dissemination campaign across the RTD Transport Programme. This campaign was intended to focus on providing, at programme level, structured research result information, designed to analyse modal and thematic issues, establish links between research results and promote the success of the Transport RTD programme.

The EXTRA project was based on an electronic dissemination strategy and all information was provided through the web-based Transport Knowledge Centre (TRKC). The EXTRA project provided research result information at three levels:

- at project level presenting the key results and implications;
- at programme level presenting by theme key research results; and
- at policy level highlighting policy implications of research according to different policy areas.

The project was managed by the EXTRA consortium, with limited operational support from DG.

The Ext@web project was the direct follow up of the EXTRA project and has in most respects the same objectives and the same overall approach to dissemination and promotion of research results. However, in three aspects the project differentiates:

1. The scope is substantially larger. The EW project covers transport research results financed under various national, international and EU programmes. Moreover, it is designed to provide information regarding EU and national research programmes.
2. The target group is wider. Whereas the EXTRA project focused on decision makers, the EW project aims also at targeting researchers, professional bodies, consultants and other groups.
3. The management structure is different. Various activities, related to the implementation of the project, have been allocated under the EW project to actors outside the consortium. For the purpose of assisting the EW project, and to steer the project, two groups have been set up; The High Level Advisory Group (AG); and the Benchmarking Group (BG).

Evaluation themes and Methodology

In line with the objectives of the assignment, the evaluation was broken down into six themes: the value added of the EXTRA an EW project key user outputs and promotional activities; use and utility of the Extr@Web project; complementarity between the EW project and other web-sites; web-design, functional features and visibility; management and input from key stakeholders and coherence between the implemented EW project and the objectives set for the 5FP for dissemination and promotion.

Our evaluation is based on desk research, including access to relevant file, interviews with key stakeholders and two surveys. We also took into account existing format measurements of results to the extent that these were available.

Results of the evaluation

EXTRA

The evaluation of the EXTRA project has been based on existing information, which globally has been limited. Within these overall limitations we have drawn the following conclusions.

The EXTRA project has globally been implemented as foreseen, and has provided research result information at three levels (project, programme and policy level). Given the lack of data availability has not been possible to assess results and impacts of the project. Moreover, it has not been possible to draw conclusions regarding the overall use of the project, nor on the overall number or nature of users.

However, we do note that usefulness of the project has in particular been related to its capacity provide “basic” research project information (project result summaries and access to final research project reports). The thematic papers presenting by theme at programme level key research results appear to have been globally less useful. These results tend to indicate that the quality of the provided thematic summaries and policy reports did not meet user’s needs or at least not part of the users needs.

Extr@web

For Extr@web (EW) our key conclusions by theme are presented below. We present our key recommendations as regards the future EWII project in the final section.

Value added of the EW project, key user outputs and promotional activities

In order to ensure effective implementation of the EW project a range of key user outputs should be provided by the EW project. These key user outputs focus may be resumed as follow: Information on national and EU programmes; detailed summary information on research results of EU and national funded projects by project (basic project information) and thematic analysis and policy analysis papers presenting research results and policy implications by theme and policy topics.

The EW project has at this stage of project implementation provided some but not all key user outputs. The user outputs currently missing (or uncompleted) are user outputs related to research results, which are key for the overall success of the project.

Thematic analysis and policy analysis papers are only to be provided at the final stage of the EW project. However, these papers are depending on the availability of the basic project information. Yet, basic project information on research results is to a large extent still to be collected and published. Based on the information available on the Knowledge Centre web-site and the information collected we note that about 2/3 of all the expected information relating to research *project results* still needs to be collected in order to reach the current (downsized) objectives for the collection of project information.

The principal problem for the EW project, in relation to the provision of user outputs have been dispersed responsibilities for data collection, which is the backbone of the project. In principle, Research project coordinators were expected to provide project information through a reporting scheme. The Benchmarking Group and the Commission were intended to collect research project contact data and, where necessary support the sub-contractors work, in order to ensure that data was provided. Yet, nor the Benchmarking Group, the Commission staff or research coordinators were obliged to contribute to the project.

This approach combined with too optimistic expectations as regard the BG members, Commission staff and RTD project coordinators willingness to support data collection, a data collection phase which was initiated too late and too ambitious initial objectives regarding the number of projects which were to be covered by the project, has, until now, seriously hampered the effectiveness of the EW project.

Corrective measures have been taken in 2005. The scope of the project was downsized in March 2005 and the EW consortium and its subcontractors are now responsible for all project data collection. It is too

early to draw firm conclusions as regards the effectiveness of this approach which was implemented in October 05.

Use and utility of the Extr@Web project

All the information provided by the EW project and currently available on the TRKC is used by the users but more on an occasional basis than on a regular basis. Information related to EU programmes and EU projects is substantially more searched for than information on national programmes and projects. Moreover, project information, in particular information on final project results and links to final project reports are requested by the users. The number of users may be estimated around 2000.

The quality of the information provided is well fairly well rated among the users. However the TRKC is less well rated as regard to the perceived relevance, and the completeness of the content.

The results of both the user survey and the survey among the BG members, indicate that the overall approach of the EW project is of quality, and of use, but that the missing information hamper the overall usability and utility of the EW.

Web-design, user friendliness and visibility

The users of TRKC appear to be globally satisfied with the quality of the web-service. The Knowledge Centre web site is however suffering from a lack of visibility related to the use of the project acronym *Extr@Web*.

A second issue is related to the lack of available traffic statistics which were to be provided by the Europa statistical unit. The EW consortium does not receive the Europa log files on a regular basis. Moreover, Europa log file does only include information about the number of hits and page views which is insufficient to monitor with a high level of accuracy users' behaviour and preferences.

Complementary between the EW project and other web-sites

There appears to be little of cooperation between EW and CORDIS. Moreover, there is only little evidence that the TRKC has been promoted by CORDIS. As the EW project now is in its final stage and publications of a substantial amount of information are foreseen, contact should be taken up with CORDIS in order to ensure that the TRKC is effectively promoted by the different CORDIS information tools (Newsletter & web-site).

Management and input from key stakeholders

The EW is based on the idea of decentralisation. Several actors were intended to provide key inputs and key support, without which the project could not operate efficiently. This made the project vulnerable from the outset, and led to effectiveness problems in project implementation.

Inputs to the EW project was to be provided by 5 types of key stakeholders; the High Level Advisory Group; the Benchmarking Group RTD project coordinators; Commission staff within DG TREN and Commission staff within other DGs. All key stakeholders (excepted the AG), were intended to contribute to the data collection phase and the Commission and the BG were expected to proactively promote the EW ensuring together with the EW consortium the creation of awareness among potential users.

The key stakeholders have, to various extents, fulfilled their intended roles. As indicated above, problems have in particular occurred in relation to data collection, where the contribution from the BG, the Commission Scientific officers and RTD project coordinators has been very uneven. Uneven contribution is also noted in the area of promotion where Commission staff and many BG members have played, globally, limited roles.

Coherence between the implemented Extr@web project and the objectives set for the 5FP for dissemination and promotion

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Given the overall objectives for communication and dissemination for the 5th Framework Programme and the objectives of EW and the intended outputs, it may be concluded that *the EW project has the potential to contribute significantly to the overall objectives for communication and dissemination for the 5th Framework Programme if the project is implemented as intended*. Two key elements allow us to draw this conclusion.

A) The nature of the project and its 4 specific objectives which aims at *collecting, structuring, analysing and disseminating transport research results covering not only EU supported but also national financed research in the ERA*.

B) A perception among users and key stakeholders that the EW project, if implemented as intended, will be highly useful.

As the EW project is not completed yet, it is too early to draw final conclusions, regarding the projects overall contribution to reaching the communication and dissemination objectives for the 5FP. However, while providing a coherent framework for providing information, has met substantial difficulties in providing timely access to the latest (transport research) results. For this reason EW overall contribution to reaching the communication and dissemination objectives for the 5FP, *at this time* may be considered as limited.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the Commission ensures that the scope of the EWII project is clearly defined at the outset of the project. Moreover, the project data collection phase should be initiated as soon as possible following the launch of the EWII project and key milestones for data collection should be set.
- We recommend that the Commission initiates the organisation of an AG meeting order to identify specific priorities and concerns among this group which should be taken into consideration when setting the final objectives for the EWII project. Continued support from this high level group is important to ensure accessibility to project and programme information and proactive promotion of the EWII project at national level.
- We recommend that the Commission ensures that the roles of the persons to be involved in the data collection phase, and who not parts of the EWII consortium are clearly defined and agreed upon by all involved parties. In particular we recommend that the Commission ensures that the future role of the foreseen AG is thoroughly discussed and that the scope of their work is clearly defined and agreed upon among all members of the AG group.
- We recommend that the Commission thoroughly reviews the way it contributes to EW. For the EWII project we recommend that an overall strategy is implemented aiming both at supporting data collection and promotion of the TRKC. In order to be effective this strategy needs to be endorsed by DG TREN's hierarchy in order to ensure effective implementation in the various units.
- We recommend that the Commission ensures that contacts between the EW consortium and the CORDIS Consortium are established. At the first stage this cooperation should ensure that the TRKC is promoted by the various information tools that CORDIS has at its disposal. We note that the CORDIS operators have proposed a set up to collect and present FP6 project activities on CORDIS, a service that the CORDIS service providers have not provided previously. We do not know what the status of this project is but the Commission needs to further exploit this issue.
- We recommend that the Commission ensures that for EWII an effective web-based monitoring system is set up

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this evaluation is to provide the European Commission with an Ex-post evaluation of the EXTRA project and a mid-term evaluation of the Extr@web project. The aims of both projects are to disseminate and promote transport research results among decision makers, influencers and other transport key stakeholders in the transport field.

The EXTRA project, which exclusively focused on transport research results of the Transport RTD programme, was implemented from January 1999 till end October 2001. It was financed under the RTD Transport programme (4th Framework Programme). The total budget of EXTRA was €2.884.092,00 for the total period¹.

The Extr@Web (EW) project focussing both on EU and national financed research was initiated in September 2002 and will be completed by end August 2006. EW is financed under the Growth programme, Accompanying Measures, under the 5th Framework Programme. The total budget of EW is €4.381.125,26 for the total period².

This report constitutes the final draft report. The report is organised as follows:

- Section 1 introduces the report;
 - Section 2 provides the reader with a concise description of the EXTRA and Extr@web projects;
 - The project scope and the methodology that we followed in the course of the project are presented in section 3;
 - Section 4 constitutes the core of the evaluation and provides our answers to the evaluation questions, defined in the Progress Report on the basis of the specific requests set in the Terms of Reference. These questions are grouped under 6 main themes presented in the Progress report:
 - Coherence between the implemented EW project and the objectives set for the 5th FP for dissemination and promotion
 - The value added of the EW project: Key user outputs and promotional activities
 - Use and utility of the Extr@Web project
 - Complementary between the EW project and other web-sites
 - Web-design, functional features and visibility
 - Management and input from key stakeholders
- As the theme ‘Coherence between the implemented EW project and the objectives set for the 5th FP for dissemination and promotion’ draws on all sections of the report, it is presented last.
- Section 5 draws the main conclusions that can be learned from the evaluation and provides recommendations for the negotiation of the Extr@webII project.

¹ The EXTRA project was 100 percent funded under the RTD Transport programme

² The Extr@web project was 100 percent funded under the Growth programme

2. PRESENTATION OF THE EXTRA AND EXTR@WEB PROJECTS

The following section presents an overview of the EXTRA and EW projects, the principal difference between the projects and a brief introduction to the management structures.

2.1. EXTRA

The EXTRA project, implemented from January 1999 till end October 2001 and financed under the RTD Transport programme was set up in response to a perceived need at Member State level for structured dissemination of transport research. While dissemination of transport research results financed under the RTD Transport Programme was mandatory, in practice information and dissemination activities were limited and dissemination efforts uncoordinated. As a result there was no real follow up on research results and that those results were not sufficiently exploited.

The EXTRA project was to supplement existing dissemination activities by implementing a coordinated dissemination campaign across the RTD Transport Programme. This campaign was intended to focus on providing, at programme level, structured research result information, designed to:

- analyse modal and thematic issues;
- establish links between research results; and
- promote the success of the Transport RTD programme.

In this way, the project was to pave the way for evidence based decision making.

This objective should be reached by providing decision makers³ with authoritative information on research results from across the whole of Transport RTD programme.

The Extra project was originally not based on an electronic dissemination strategy but on multiple tools for dissemination. However, by the year 2000, the dissemination strategy was altered and the web-based Transport Knowledge Centre (TRKC) became the only major dissemination tool. This dissemination approach has been continued with EW.

The EXTRA project provided research result information at three levels:

- at project level presenting the key results and implications;
- at programme level presenting by theme key research results and
- at policy level highlighting policy implications of research according to different policy areas.

The project was managed by the EXTRA consortium, with limited operational support from DG TREN. DG TREN had to provide final research reports from all research projects financed under the RTD Transport programme, whereas the EXTRA consortium was responsible for drafting of project summaries, thematic and policy reports and for all major promotional activities.

The total budget of EXTRA was €2.884.092,00 for the total period.

2.2. Extr@web

The Ext@web project is the direct follow up of the EXTRA project and has in many respects the same objectives and the same overall approach to dissemination and promotion of research results.

Yet, the EXTRA project, while providing interesting results, was perceived at Member State level, to be of too limited scope, covering only one EU programme and no national transport research activities. It was therefore decided, based on a proposal from the Member States to cover not only EU financed

³ In the transport field throughout the EU and Central and Eastern Europe

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transport research, but also national financed research. In this way the project was to contribute to the establishment of the European Research Area (ERA) and to European coordination of transport research activities and programmes.

This change of project approach had two principal consequences for the EW project:

1. *An enlargement of the project scope.* Whereas the EXTRA project covered only research results from the 4th RTD Transport Programme, the EW project is intended to cover transport research results financed under various national, international and EU programmes. Moreover, it is designed to provide information regarding EU and national research programmes. Other additional information on items such as on research networks was also to be provided.
2. *A substantial change of the management structure.* Whereas the EXTRA consortium was responsible for the management and provision of all information, various activities have been allocated under the EW project to various actors outside the consortium. For the purpose of assisting the EW project, and to steer the project, two groups have been set up:
 - The High Level Advisory Group (AG) composed by senior Member States officials, with the overall objective to contribute at ‘high level’ to the EW project by approving the EW project approach and to guarantee the access to national information; .
 - The Benchmarking Group (BG), composed by appointed Member States representatives, and the Commission with the objective to validate project outputs including both thematic summaries methodologies etc. at a “high level” and a validation of project forms and other outputs at national level. Moreover, the BG had to ensure access to RTD transport project and programme information and in cooperation with the national sub-contractor to contribute to national programme and project level output (profiles, contacts, listings etc.)

Besides these changes, a third key change is the enlargement of the target audience. Whereas the EXTRA project focused principally on decision makers, the EW project aims also at targeting researchers, professional bodies, consultants, suppliers and a range of other groups.

The EW project was initiated in September 2002 and will be completed by end August 2006. A revamped TRKC was made online in July 2004.

EW is financed under the Growth programme, Accompanying Measures, under the 5th Framework programme. The total budget of EW is €4.381.125,26 for the total period. As the EXTRA project the EW project is managed by an independent consortium⁴ and supervised by DG TREN.

⁴ A list of the consortium members is provided in annex 9.

3. PROJECT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Project scope

This evaluation covers:

1. The EXTRA project implemented from January 1999 till end October 2001 and financed under the RTD Transport programme under the 4th Framework Programme.
2. The Extr@Web project initiated in September 2002 and to be completed by end August 2006 and financed under the Growth programme, Accompanying Measures, under the 5th Framework programme.

The Terms of references stated that the evaluation had to cover three specific issues:

- An Ex-post assessment of the EXTRA project;
- A mid-term evaluation of the Extr@web project;
- Recommendations to feed into the negotiations of the planned EWII based on the evaluation.

In line with the Commission's requests, limited resources have been allocated to the evaluation of the EXTRA project.

The terms of references set by the Commission stated that the evaluation should provide conclusions as regards:

- The level of utility of the Extra project in respect to the needs and issues to be addressed;
- The extent to which the objectives set for the FP5 for dissemination and promotion for transport results are achieved by EW;
- The cost-effectiveness of Extra and – as far as already available – for the EW I project, i.e. the quantification and comparison of costs and benefits associated with the intervention, in relation with similar projects, if available.

Moreover, the evaluation should, based on the conclusions of the study, provide:

- Suggestions for indicators which can be used in the overall FP5 ex-post evaluation of DG TREN (if possible)
- Recommendations to adjust and improve the EWII project if necessary, taking into account the overall and specific objectives of FP6 and the EW II contract evaluation results.

In the context of the maximum budget which was available for this evaluation, the time which was foreseen for the execution of the assignment and the specific requests in the terms of reference, we identified in our proposal a range of issues that the evaluation would particular focus on. These issues were:

- The cost-effectiveness of the Extra and EW I projects;
- The utility of the Extra and EW I projects as regards the information needs of the users;
- The use of the web-site;
- The usability of the information provided;
- The dissemination and promotion of transport research policy and whether the objectives set for the FP5 for dissemination and promotion have been reached;
- Project management and the input provided by external actors;

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

- The value added of the service provider in particular as regards the effectiveness of data gathering and dissemination to facilitate the use of the information provided;
- The functioning of the web-site, the web design, user-friendliness and visibility.

In addition to these issues, the Commission requested that the following issues were included in the evaluation:

- The relevance of the project name;
- The potential overlapping/complementarity with CORDIS;
- A description of the changes introduced by the Extr@web project and the usefulness of these changes.

Moreover, the Commission requested that the cost-effectiveness analysis should be based on a benchmarking exercise with the following web-sites: Eltis, Opet and Manageenergy.

3.1.1. LIMITATIONS OF THE SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Our proposal clearly stated that:

- An expert evaluation of the content would not be carried out, nor would this study provide a detailed analysis of the quality of the content;
- Our conclusions regarding the nature of the information needs of the users would be based on limited research and would with this background, provide suggestions for potential new content;
- An assessment of the indirect impact i.e. of the use of information by the target groups to carry out other activities would not be carried out. We would limit ourselves to an analysis of the perceived usability of the information;
- If monitoring data was to be used in the framework of this evaluation, it was necessary that it was treated and stored in a database so to be directly usable. It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to treat other data than the processed data *already available to the Commission and some limited stakeholder and survey input*;
- If quantitative data and client satisfaction studies or other survey data did not exist, it would not be possible to carry out a detailed analysis of the utility of the Extra in respect of the needs of the target audience.

This evaluation will not assess the impact of the projects as this is impossible given the timeframe. However the surveys include questions related to the use of EW outputs. In addition, it was agreed that indicators could only be provided in relation to communication and dissemination objectives.

3.2. Methodology

This section provides a brief overview of the issues that have been identified in our proposal and progress report, as well as a brief description of the steps that we undertook during our evaluation work.

3.2.1. KEY ISSUES WHEN EVALUATING INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIONS

3.2.1.1. DATA AVAILABILITY

Evaluation of information and dissemination projects and activities are very dependent on the existing data and documents available and the quality of this data. Monitoring data has not always been available, or if available, not always in a consistent manner.

There are however differences between the EW and EXTRA projects.

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For EXTRA no useful web-statistics are available and quantitative results of other dissemination activities are not sufficiently monitored. As the Extra project ended more than three years before the start of the evaluation, it is impossible to obtain evidence of the impact of the project on their targets. Therefore a detailed analysis of the utility of the EXTRA project has not been carried out. We have only carried out a smaller analysis of this project based on the available information.

More data is available for the EW project, although we did note discrepancies in particular as regards detailed website statistics. Moreover, no monitoring data is available providing a breakdown of the cost and man days for the different parts of the EW project and for the EXTRA project.

Other data availability problems encountered during the evaluation related principally to other web-sites. No monitoring data was available for Eltis and Opet. We have been provided with some monitoring data for ManageEnergy web-site, but the nature of this project makes it incomparable with the EW project. For this reason we proposed in the progress report not to carry out the benchmarking exercise. This was agreed upon by the Commission. We however proposed to compare the EW with the DG Research financed “Energy Research” web-site.

3.2.1.2. PERSONNEL AVAILABILITY

A part of our evaluation was to be based on interviews with external key personnel from CORDIS and “Manage Energy”. However, it has not been possible to meet up with CORDIS. CORDIS was contacted but no meeting has taken place because of their unavailability.

Moreover, for the same reason it has not been possible to meet up with the responsible for the “Energy Research” web-site.

3.2.2. CONSEQUENCES FOR THIS EVALUATION STUDY

As no relevant benchmarking data is available and no detailed breakdown of the cost of the individual parts of the EXTRA and EW project, it has not been possible to carry out a cost-effectiveness analysis of the EXTRA and EW projects.

3.2.3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In the light of the scope of the evaluation and key issues defined above, we have applied an evaluation methodology based on three distinct approaches:

3.2.3.1. DESK RESEARCH

Desk research served different distinct purposes: Contribution to our overall analysis of the actions undertaken, targeting of the interviews and delivering data and other information for the draft final report. A bibliography of the main documents can be found in Annex 3.

3.2.3.2. DATA COLLECTION THROUGH SURVEYS AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Following the desk research we initiated two types of data collection. Firstly, we conducted interviews with selected key stakeholders. These involved Commission officials, the EW consortium and members of the Benchmarking and High Level Advisory Group. A list of the interviewees can be found in Annex 2.

Secondly, we carried out two surveys:

1. a web-based survey of the registered users/newsletter subscribers of the EW and
2. an Excel based survey among groups that are intended to provide input to the EW project.

Thanks to the information collected, we have been able to collect quantitative and qualitative feedback from those mostly involved in the projects and from users of the EW Transport Research Knowledge web-site. The interview guides and draft surveys are included in Annex 4, Annex 5 and Annex 6. Annex 7 contains details on the user surveys and the response rates.

The interviews and surveys took place between 10 January and 1 March 2006.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

3.2.3.3. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After having collected facts, data and opinions we analysed the data in February and early March 2006 in order to answer the evaluation question and to draw conclusions. We then reviewed the EWII proposal against our findings.

4. ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This section addresses the evaluation themes and questions which were core to our remit from the Commission.

4.1. Evaluation theme 1: Value added of the Extr@web and EXTRA projects: Key user outputs and promotional activities

Theme 1 focus on the capacity of the EXTRA and EW project to provide the intended user outputs and to implement the foreseen promotional activities.

EXTRA aimed, following the change in dissemination strategy⁵, principally at providing the following user outputs:

- A database presenting transport research projects financed under the RTD Transport Research programme by project (project summary);
- Thematic analysis across projects;
- Policy reports by policy area presenting and highlighting policy implications of research results;
- A promotional strategy aiming at increasing the awareness of the TRKC among the intended target groups.

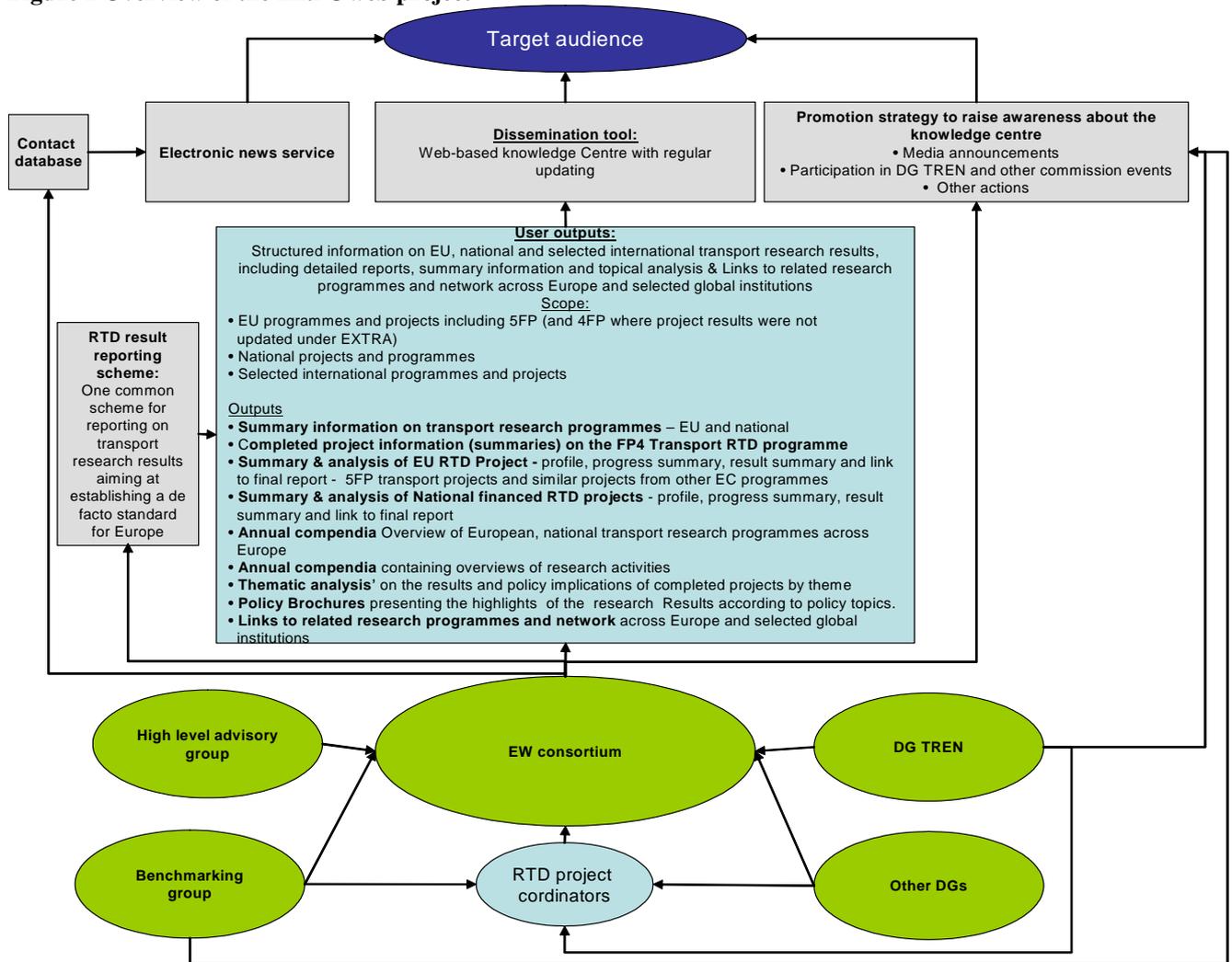
The intended user outputs of the EW project are similar to the EXTRA project, but EW aims wider, principally in terms of the information to be disseminated. The four specific objectives of the EW project are:

- to set up one common RTD result reporting scheme for reporting on transport research results aiming at establishing a de facto standard for Europe;
- to set up a consistent approach to dissemination based on a web tool, the Transport Research Knowledge Centre and flanked by an information service and a promotional strategy;
- to cover and disseminate a large amount of research results, stemming from both EU financed programmes and national programmes and to present relevant transport research programmes at EU and national level. By structuring, analysing and disseminating this information the EW project also aims at contributing to the set-up of the European Research Area;
- to analyse transport research results, by project, by theme, and by policy area and to assess policy implications of carried out research (key user outputs).

This overall approach is presented in the figure below.

⁵ A change which was endorsed by the European Commission, DG TREN.

Figure 1 Overview of the Extr@web project⁶



The RTD result reporting scheme and the framework for dissemination of information have been globally implemented as foreseen. Theme 4 presents the evaluation of the RTD result reporting scheme and the framework for dissemination of information.

4.1.1. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE EXTRA PROJECT EFFECTIVE IN PROVIDING THE INFORMATION DELIVERABLES?

The Extra project was originally not based on an electronic dissemination strategy but on multiple tools for dissemination. During the life of the project the dissemination strategy was modified. Instead of focusing on multiple dissemination tools (web-sites, paper based newsletters, scientific press) the web-site became the only major information tool, an approach continued with EW. As a consequence, the

⁶ The grey boxes indicate project outputs which were intended to facilitate data collection (RTD result reporting scheme) and to facilitate dissemination of information (web-based knowledge centre, electronic web-service and contact database). The light blue box provides an overview of the intended user outputs (see theme 2 for a detailed discussion of the key user outputs). Finally, the green boxes provide an overview of the key actors, the EW consortium and other actors intended to provide input into the project.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

informative newsletter was stopped (and replaced by a promotional e-bulletin) and articles for both the general and technical press cancelled. In addition to this, a foreseen maxi-brochure was cancelled and replaced by 10 thematic papers and 10 policy brochures. Table 1 in annex 1 provides an overview of the foreseen and realised user outputs.

Globally speaking, EXTRA project provided the information outputs that it was intended to provide, following the change in dissemination strategy, and made it available for the users. Some delay was noted in the implementation of the project, but this mainly due to a late arrival of final project reports. As a consequence the project was prolonged with 10 months and some final project results were finally not included under the Extra project. These results were instead to be included in the data collection for the EW project.

4.1.2. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE EXTR@WEB PROJECT EFFECTIVE IN PROVIDING THE INFORMATION DELIVERABLES

4.1.2.1. OBJECTIVES SET FOR THE INFORMATION DELIVERABLES AND CURRENT STATUS

In order to ensure effective implementation of the EW project, the adopted technical annex (and the work packages⁷) defined a range of key user outputs to be provided by the EW project.

These key user outputs are:

- Summary information on transport research programmes – EU and national;
- Completed project information (summaries of final project results) on the FP4 Transport RTD programme;
- Summary & analysis of EU RTD Project - profile, progress summary, result summary and link to final reports - FP5 transport projects and similar projects from other EC programmes;
- Summary and analysis of national financed RTD projects - profile, progress summary, result summary and link to final report;
- Annual compendia presenting an overview of European, national transport research programmes across Europe;
- Annual compendia providing country trends project descriptions and interim results
- Thematic analysis' on the results and policy implications of completed projects by theme;
- Policy brochures presenting the highlights of the research results according to policy topics;
- Links to related research programmes and network across Europe and selected global programmes.

Some but not all user output were quantified in the Technical Annex attached to the EW Contract. Additional specifications were provided in the detailed work packages⁸. Table 2 in annex 1 provides an overview of the specific quantitative objectives set in the Technical Annex and the work packages.

All key user project outputs are to be disseminated via the Transport Research Knowledge Centre. In addition the following dissemination tools were foreseen:

- Newsletter

⁷ Attached to the project handbook. It may be noted that the work package descriptions are regularly updated in the light of developments and recommendations from the AG and BG, and updates are discussed with and approved by the BG and the task manager within the Commission.

⁸Work packages as updated autumn 2004. We have not been provided with the original work packages.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

- Printed policy brochures (limited number of copies)
- Annual compendia in a print version

The EW project has at this stage of project implementation provided some but not all key user outputs. The user outputs provided by 1st of March 06 and which are *completed* are:

- Summary information on transport research programmes – EU and national (presented in a programme database)
- Completed project information (summaries) on the FP4 Transport RTD programme
- 1 Annual compendium presenting an overview of European, national transport research programmes across Europe (and one 1 update with a new chapter on EU programmes)

Moreover 30 Annual Thematic Research Summaries have been drafted in a first version. However they are currently not complete as the key findings on research results (based on the project level analysis) related to the theme have not yet been included (as not yet ready). For the time being they include an interim chapter on research objectives.

Table 3 in annex 1 provides a detailed overview of the status of the user outputs as available on the TRKC web-site.

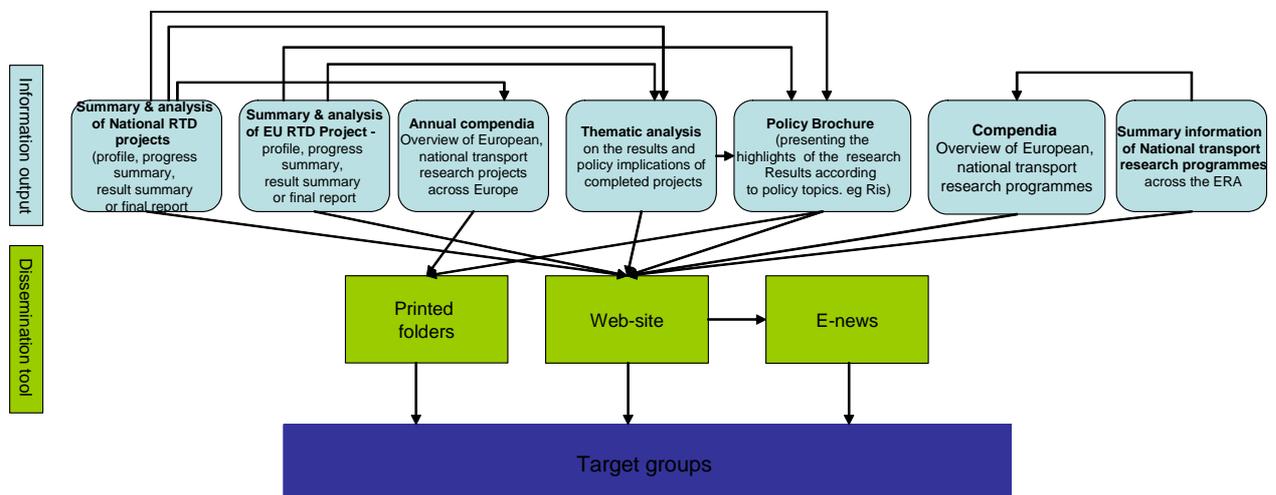
The user outputs currently missing are all user outputs related to research results. There is a general agreement among interviewees that the uncompleted user outputs are those which ensure the success (or failure) of the EW project.

The particularity of the EW project is that most of the information which is intended to be provided on research results is interrelated. This means that user outputs presenting and analysing research results, according to themes and political priorities (thematic and policy papers) are depending on the availability of the basic project information, that is project summaries on research results. These project summaries can obviously only be completed once the results of the projects are available.

Therefore, if sufficient project information (project summaries presenting the results of the individual transport research projects) is not available, the thematic and policy papers cannot, or only partially, be carried out. Indeed, if the thematic papers are carried out on the basis of a small number of projects they will be of limited use, because they will not present authoritative information about the latest research results and their implication. For this reason their use for decision making will be limited.

The links between the levels of information is presented in the model below.

Figure 2 Overview of key information/user outputs and dissemination tools



Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

Some key user outputs are only to be provided at the final stage of the EW project. These outputs are: the thematic analysis/reports and the policy brochures.

However, although the EW project has no formal deadline for the collection of project information, it is reasonable to expect that a substantial amount of the project summaries (that are summaries of project research results) would have been collected and made available by now (5 months before the closure of the project).

Moreover, according to the initial plan, two of the annual summaries related to project results should have been provided by now but these documents have not been provided. We understand that this is due to lack of available research results⁹.

4.1.2.2. ISSUES RELATED TO PROJECT DATA COLLECTION

Contrary to the EXTRA project, the EW consortium was not the primary responsible for the collection of project information, but was only intended to fill some limited missing data.

A principal problem for the EW project, in relation to the provision of user outputs have been dispersed responsibilities for data collection, which is the backbone of the project. In principle, research project coordinators were expected to provide project information through the reporting scheme. The Benchmarking Group (BG) and the Commission were intended to collect research project contact data and support the sub-contractors work to promote the reporting scheme among research project coordinators. The actions were intended to ensure that research project information was provided through the RTD result reporting scheme. However, how this was to be ensured was, if research project information was not provided was not defined at the outset of the project. This was particular problematic as BG members, Commission staff or RTD project coordinators had any obligation to contribute to the EW project.

In reality, the approach to data collection varied notably¹⁰. At Member State level, the different BG members took different approaches to data collection. Some promoted the RTD result reporting scheme and reported to the EW sub-contractors. Some took a proactive approach to data collection, collecting the RTD project data and filled in the project forms through the RTD result reporting scheme. Others BG members were substantially less involved in the entire data collection process and provided only limited support.

As for the Commission services, the approach also varied. We understand that the EW project was not systematically known by the scientific officers and that there was little effort to promote the EW project within DG TREN and other relevant DG's. As a consequence, the EW project was not systematically known by and promoted among the various units and directorates involved in the management of the RTD projects.

A second factor which contributed negatively to the data collection process was the initial scope of the EW project. As indicated above a large amount, of national projects were initially to be covered by the EW project. We were told that, based on the labelling process, the list of projects to be covered were distributed to all BG members, and that this list covered most of labelled projects. The task related to data collection was therefore substantial, in particular for BG members stemming from countries where many

⁹ We understand that in 2005, the BG had decided and DG TREN had approved that the consortium should only produce the interim Annual Thematic Research Summary for these themes for which a sufficient number of research results will be available. Such results have not yet been available

¹⁰ Unfortunately, we do not know who submitted the project information through the RTD result reporting scheme, as this has not been monitored, and cannot be monitored through the reporting scheme.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

RTD projects were implemented. This approach we were told discouraged active contribution from some BG members.

There was eventually an agreement that not all projects would be covered but we understand that such an agreement was only reached at a later stage.

A third factor which contributed to ineffectiveness in data collection was the timing of the process. Although the EW project was initiated in August 2002 the data collection process was only initiated at national level in early 2004 and there were no key milestones set for data collection. Revised objectives and structure for data collection were set only in March 2005, and only implemented in October 05 which in the light of the current results appear to have been too late to change the data collection process.

4.1.2.3. REVIEWED DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

As a result of lacking project information the scope of the project was modified in March 2005. The EW project was by then only intended to cover 600 projects (which have since been modified to only about 500 projects) and the EW consortium and its subcontractors were made responsible for all project data collection. About 50% of the projects to be covered are EU funded projects and 50% are national funded projects.

While at first sight this approach appears to be more realistic, it is too early to draw firm conclusions as regards the effectiveness of this approach to data collection and hence of user outputs.

A substantial number of RTD project results still needs to be collected to reach the reviewed objectives. Based on the information available on published and unpublished project data, we note that about 2/3 of all the expected information relating to research *project results* still needs to be collected in order to reach the reviewed objectives for the collection of information on project information.

On this basis it may be concluded that even though the EW project has provided some of the intended user outputs, it has until now (1st of March 2006) proven ineffective in providing the key user outputs related to project research results.

4.1.3. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE EXTRA PROJECT BEEN EFFECTIVE IN IMPLEMENTING PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

According to the Technical annex the EXTRA project was intended to carry out a range of promotional activities. These activities included:

- Technical articles and press realises
- Thematic maxi-brochure
- Technical newsletter
- Stand a events

As indicated above EXTRA's dissemination strategy was altered during the life of the project at the promotional activities adapted accordingly. The foreseen activities and actual implementation is presented in table 4 in annex 1.

In addition to the specific promotional activities carried out by the EXTRA consortium, the Commission carried out a range of promotional activities, in particular presentation at national level by scientific officers.

There is only very limited monitoring data to support an evaluation of the effectiveness of the promotional activities implemented under the EXTRA project. Most data regards the press announcements.

The monitoring data on press announcements indicate that press actions implemented by the EXTRA Consortium were implemented very unevenly. More than 75% of all announcements were distributed in

6 countries (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Austria and Germany) and only about 25% of all announcements were distributed in the UK, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Netherlands and Greece. There was no distribution in Belgium and Luxembourg. This may indicate that the EXTRA web-site was more effectively promoted via the press in the northern countries than in the southern EU Member States. However, as press clippings are not systematically available, it is not possible to draw final conclusions on this issue.

Press clippings were carried out but not in a consistent manner. The press clippings available indicate that to some extent use has been made of the press announcements. General press has shown little interest in the project, but the Transport press has generally shown more interest and published articles based on the media announcements. It is hard to estimate the overall effect of press announcements since press clippings are uncompleted.

Media actions and other promotional actions, however, had little web multiplier effect. By the end of the EW project only 30 non-Europa (.eu.int) references could be found on the web-site¹¹.

4.1.4. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE EXTR@WEB PROJECT BEEN EFFECTIVE IN IMPLEMENTING PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

According to the Technical annex the EW project is intended to carry out a range of promotional actions which has as primary objective to promote the TRKC web-site and the related information, and thereby increase the level of awareness of transport programmes and results.

As is the case for data collection, the EW consortium is not solely responsible for the promotional activities, but is to be assisted and supported by the BG group. Support from the Commission is also expected. Moreover, it was foreseen to use relevant networks and information relays to promote the TRKC. For this reason, we were told, the budget foreseen for promotional activities was initially set at a low level¹².

Globally speaking, the EW consortium has, according to the EW consortium director, kept a somewhat low profile on promotion. This is due firstly to the lack of available data stored in the TRKC and secondly, we were told, to lack of budget specifically assigned to promotional activities¹³.

Regarding the lack of available data stored in the TRKC we were told that there was an agreement between the EW consortium and the BG group that no major promotional activities were to be carried out as long as the TRKC was not satisfactorily filled with the intended information. This was the case until recently and therefore only few promotional activities have been carried out.

Table 5 in annex 1 contains an overview of the intended promotional and dissemination activities.

The EW consortium considers that the TRKC is now ready to be promoted. A request to transfer un-used budget for the BG and AG to promotional activities has been submitted to the Commission, but a reply on this issue has not yet been received.

To support activities it was, moreover, intended to use an extended network to promote the TRKC, composed of: networks of excellences, transport professional networks and other transport stakeholders.

The dissemination strategy was amended in September 05. The principal changes and tools thereto were to be:

¹¹ Google search carried out by the Consortium.

¹² We have requested a budget breakdown by type of activity, but have not received any. We are therefore not able to address this issue in detail.

¹³ In this regard it should be noted that the overall budget for the EW project is devised in sub-budget categories. Any change in the budget for different sub-categories, require the Commission's approval. As mentioned a budget breakdown by type of activity has been requested but not received.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

- A stronger focus on the e-newsletter as the reference for external marketing. In this regard, it may however be noted that no newsletter has been published since April 05;
- Policy brochures published in batches as of the spring 06 (one brochure on RIS has been published in Feb 05, the rest is not yet published)
- Press packs distributed in relation to major updates;
- Contacts with DG research to promote the TRKC via tools such as CORDIS focus;
- Cooperation with research organisations and thematic associations in the context of the extended Benchmarking Group was to be intensified in order to use their existing networks for research, innovation and business support to promote the TRKC. They were to be provided with each e-newsletter and press pack and encouraged to use them in their own marketing activities;
- Participation in one event ‘Communicating European Research’ in November 05, and participation in other events in 2006.

Table 6 in annex 1 provides an overview of objectives and the status of the implemented dissemination and promotion activities.

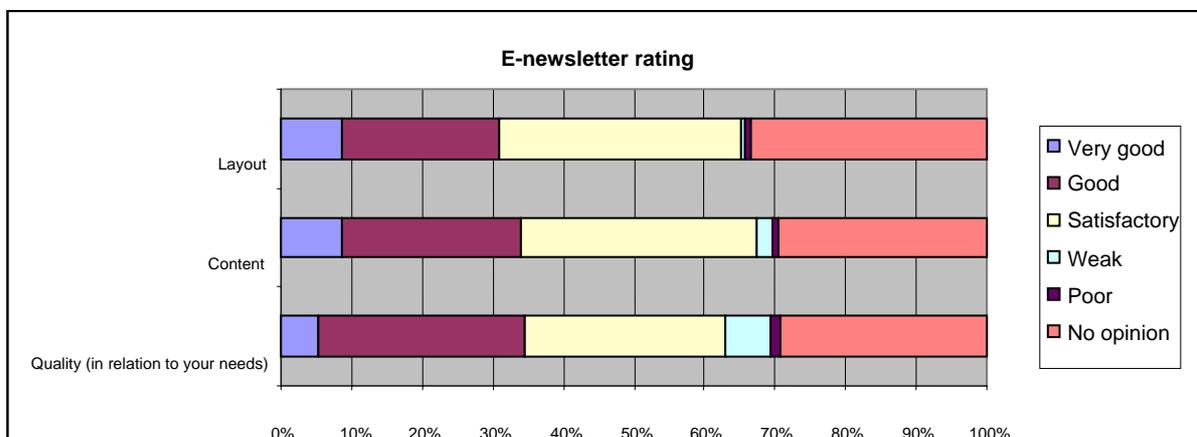
We have found little evidence of monitoring data allowing us to assess the effectiveness and impact of the carried out dissemination and promotion activities. Moreover, a substantial part of the foreseen, and revised, dissemination and promotion activities have not (yet) been carried out. The lack of promotion and dissemination activities, in particular in the last year of the EW project, is closely related with the lack of information available and the perception that promotion activities should only be carried out once a substantial amount of information is available.

On this basis we are not able to pronounce us on the overall effectiveness of the dissemination and promotional strategy as implemented.

We may, however, make the following observations based on current promotional activities, the user survey carried out and the surveys carried out by the contractor:

- The dissemination strategy, targeting regular users, and based on the e-newsletter, is of clear value to the users. The quality, content and layout is globally appreciated by the users who have replied to this question, and the frequency is globally considered appropriate by about 73% of the respondents;

Figure 3 e-newsletter rating



- The participation in the DG Research event ‘Communicating European Research’ appears to have generated additional visits to the TRKC website (see section 3);

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

- Few promotional activities have been carried in the life of the TRKC and as the project is now in its final stage and additional user outputs are foreseen, a more proactive promotional strategy may be envisaged. The overall conclusions and recommendations relate to how a more proactive promotional strategy could be carried out.

4.2. Theme 2: Use and utility of the Extra and EW

Use is about the quantity of information provided to the key audience and the number of users. It is ideally quantitatively measured, and gives indication about the efficiency of the programme.

Utility is about the quality of the information provided and its relevance to the users. In the context of an evaluation which is supposed to provide input to the negotiations of the continuation of the project, utility should also address if other types of information would be useful for the users.

In the progress report we proposed to analyse 4 questions related to the use and utility of the EXTRA and EW projects. The questions related to:

- the actual use of the information provided by the EXTRA and EW projects;
- the quality of the information provided by the EXTRA and EW projects;
- the relevance of the information tools provided; and
- unaddressed information needs among the users.

As discussed above, the monitoring data is not available for all tools, and if available, not in a consistent manner. In particular, monitoring data and survey data is lacking for the EXTRA project. This section is based on existing EW monitoring data collected by the EW Consortium as well as:

- web statistics from the EW web-pages provided by the European Commission;
- interviews and surveys among the BG members carried out within the framework of this study carried out;
- the user survey of TRKC/EW carried out within the framework of this study; and
- The final user survey carried out among the registered users of EXTRA.

4.2.1. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE EXTRA PROJECT BEEN USED?

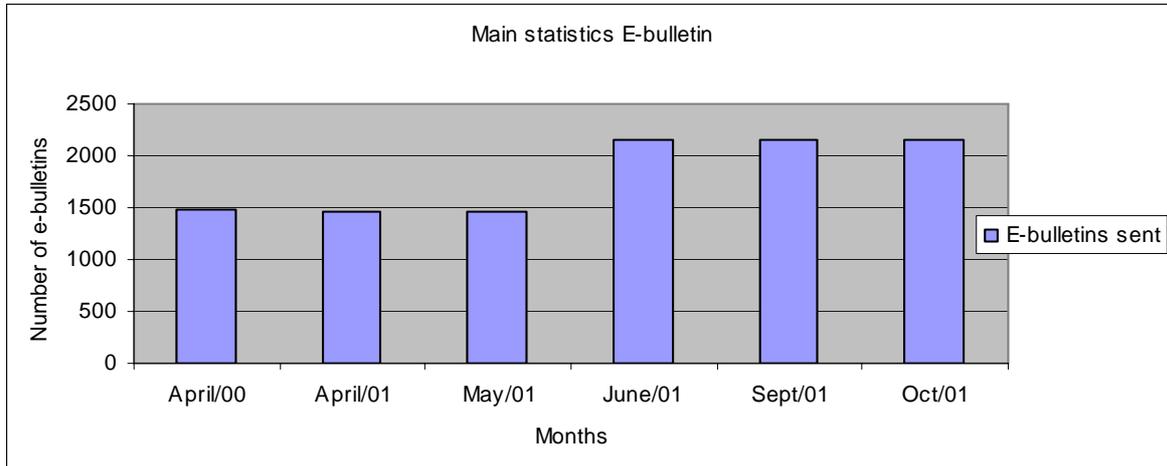
The available data for the EXTRA project does not allow us to draw conclusions regarding the overall use of the project, nor on the overall number or nature of users.

Data is available on the total number of contacts in the EXTRA contact data base, on the number of e-bulletin sub-scribers, the total number of inquiries received, and the number of recipients of the newsletter. There is no useful information regarding the (quantitative) use of the web-site or about the users of the EXTRA project nor is there any information regarding a potential effect of non-web-based actions.

The overall number of contacts in the database appears to be very impressive at first sight (more than 20000 contacts in 1999 and following a cleaning in 1999 about 9000 contacts), but we understand from the current contractor that these contacts did not reflect actual users or the actual contacts with users. This database was compiled using various existing contact databases, and contained numerous irrelevant contacts. Yet it was used to distribute the paper based newsletter until end 1999 when the newsletter was substituted by the e-bulletin.

The number of e-newsletter recipients was substantially lower than the number of recipients of the paper based newsletter (initially 1472 but increased to a total of 2163 recipients). The evolution of recipients may be seen from the table below.

Figure 4 main statistics e-bulleting EXTRA



We do not know if all the addresses of e-newsletter recipients were valid and whether this was actually checked. Moreover, we do not know whether the subscribers had actually requested the e-bulletin or if they had received it without requesting it. It is therefore not possible to say if the recipients reflected the actual 'regular' users of the EXTRA project. As regards the regularity of the use of the EXTRA project, a user survey carried out at the end of the EXTRA project indicated that most users used the EXTRA website occasionally (57%), while 27% used the website monthly and about 15 % weekly.

There is no information about the background (nationality or work background) of the users, and it is therefore not possible to assess whether the users corresponded to the initial target groups.

4.2.2. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE EW PROJECT BEEN USED (THE TRANSPORT RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE CENTRE WEB SITE)?

Given that all information provided through the EW project is web-based and only a few selected documents are distributed in paper format, web-monitoring data is fundamental to assess the use of the information provided. This data should not only include the number of pages opened, but also information regarding single users, which pages were viewed etc.

The data available does not allow us to draw firm conclusions as regards the quantitative use of the EW project nor about the number of actual users. Monitoring data of the use of the website is available but it is incomplete and covers only the most visited web-pages. Moreover, data is only available on the number of visited web pages and not on the number of single users or returning users.

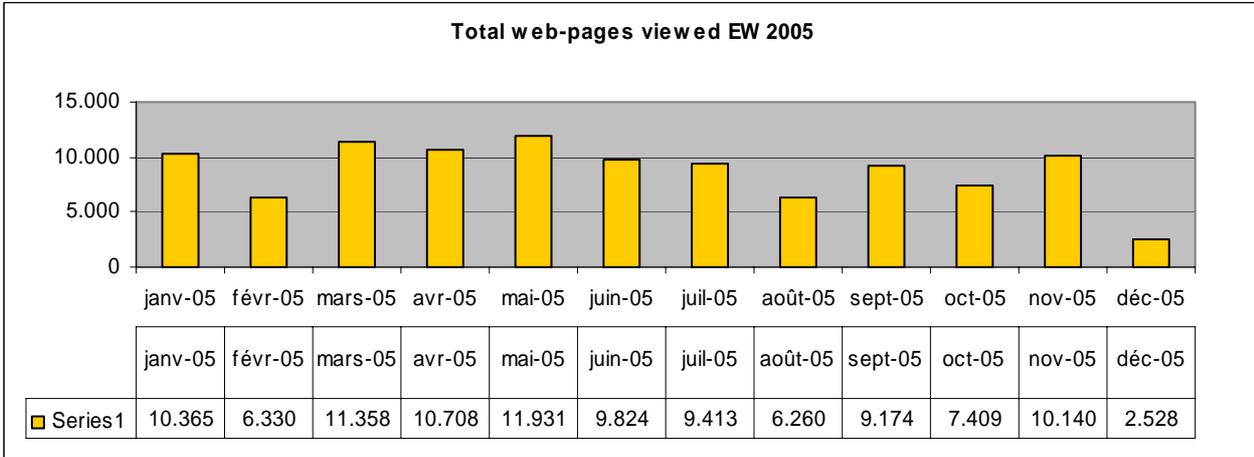
Within these limitations the following observations have been made:

Visits of the Transport Research Knowledge Centre

Compared to other web-pages of DG TREN, the EW web-site is fairly well visited. Throughout 2005, more than of 8787 EW pages were viewed per month (average of 293 per day), with peaks during the months of March, May and November¹⁴. There are no comparable data for 2004. The main page of the EW project was permanently on the top 20 list of the most visited web-pages of DG TREN, and in 10 months also on the top 10 list.

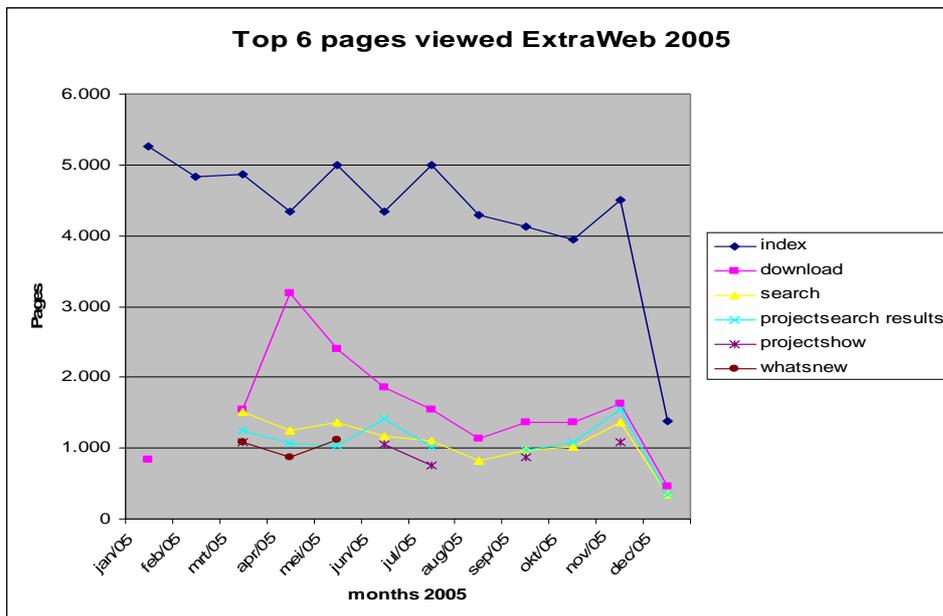
¹⁴ We do, unfortunately, not have figures on the total number of pages visited. Please also note that the figures for December 2005 does not cover the entire month

Figure 5: Total web-pages viewed EW/ Transport Research Knowledge Centre



Besides the starting page, the 4 most viewed pages are *downloading information*, followed by *search*, *search for specific project results*, and the *news* section. These pages are all included in the top 100 of most visited pages of the DG TREN web-site. The number of page views, by page, is presented in the figure below.

Figure 6 Top 6 pages viewed EW 2005



There is a slight overall trend of decreasing use of the TRKC. However, visits of the website increases when dissemination and promotion activities (with direct link to the website) have been undertaken. This is the case for March, April and May when e-newsletters have been issued announcing the RIS brochure, the Thematic Summaries, and the evaluation results (by the contractor). The notable increase in downloads in April is most likely related to the publication of the new thematic research summaries. The project results and news sections are visited in a more consistent manner.

The number of pages visited correlates with the publications of the e-newsletter with indicates that subscribers actually read the newsletter. Therefore, given that the information currently available is limited in scope, an increase in the use of the web-site may be expected once more information is available.

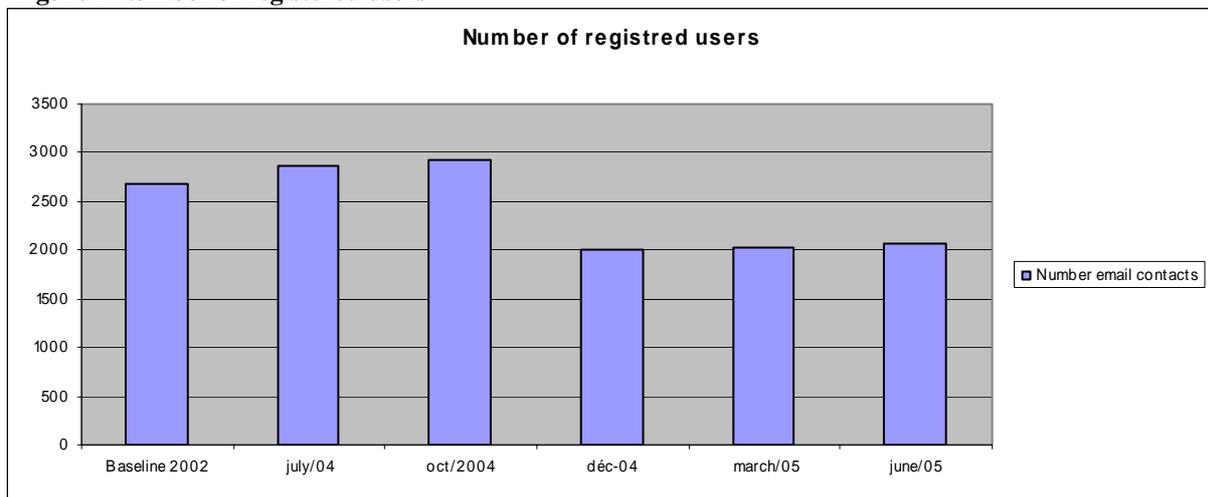
Size of users of the transport knowledge centre

The data on the use of the TRKC web-pages does not provide us with any indication of the number of users. We therefore do not know whether the total result of the pages visited is the result of many short visits by many users or the result of fewer more in depth visits. Nor are we able to say how many users actually use the web-site.

Given the nature and scope of the project, however, we assume that a substantial amount of the regular users subscribe to the newsletter. There are, of course other regular and occasional users, not subscribed, but their size is impossible to assess.

There are currently 2077 registered users¹⁵. The number of registered users decreased substantially in the autumn 2004. We understand that this was due to cleaning of the user database deleting non existing e-mail addresses¹⁶. The number of users in the database has increased since the cleaning in 2004 by 74 users.

Figure 7 Number of registered users

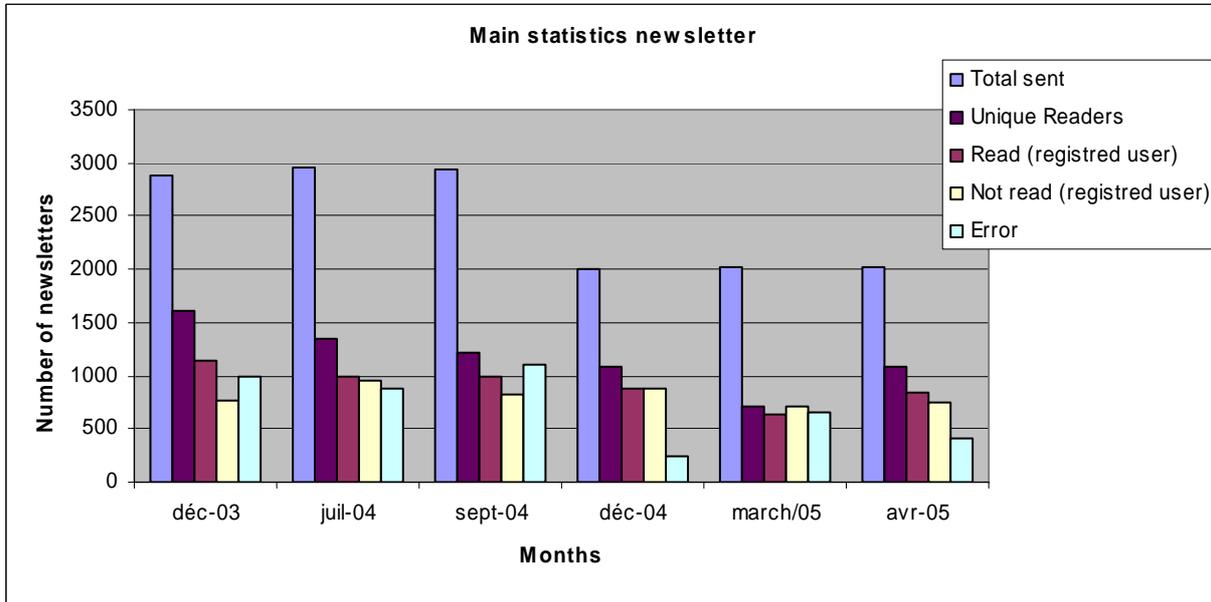


The number of ‘real’ registered users is, however, substantially lower. Mailings of the newsletters indicate an error rate between 38% (September 04) and 12% (December 04) indicating that the actual number of ‘real’ registered users was in September 04, 64% of the total number of registered users and in December 88% of the total number of registered users. By the time of the last newsletter the error rate was 20% (June 05)

¹⁵ June 2005. New figures are not available

¹⁶ The original user database was composed partially by users stemming from the user database from the EXTRA project

Figure 8 Main statistics newsletter



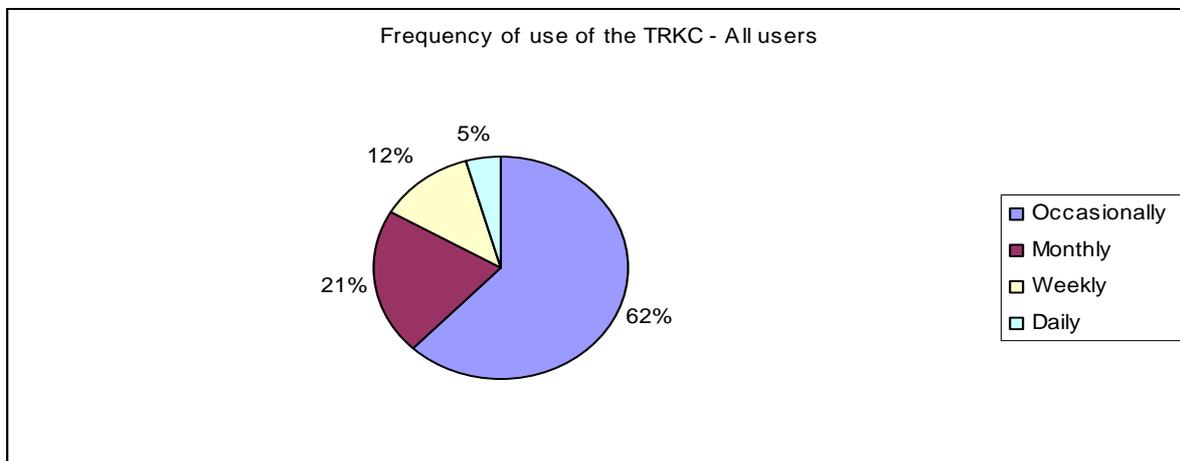
The figure above present the total number of send newsletters, the number of newsletters actually read by the recipients/registered users, the number of newsletter not read by the recipients/registered users and the number of errors¹⁷. The number of unique readers (meaning the number of persons who have opened the newsletter) is, however, higher than the number read by the recipients/registered users as the table indicates. This is mainly due to forwarding of the e-newsletter by the registered users.

On the basis of the table it may be concluded that on average 1100 to 1200 readers of the newsletter may be considered as regular users of the website.

Frequency of use

The web-statistics do not allow us to study the frequency of use of the TRKC but the user survey provides clear indications on this issue. A significant majority (62%) of the respondents uses the TRKC only occasionally while 21% uses the TRKC monthly, 12% weekly and 5% daily.

Figure 9: Frequency of use of the TRKC



¹⁷ Please note that no newsletters have been sent out since April 05.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

User profile

According to the EW contract, and the technical annex attached to, the target audiences are defined as follows:

Table 1 Intended target audience

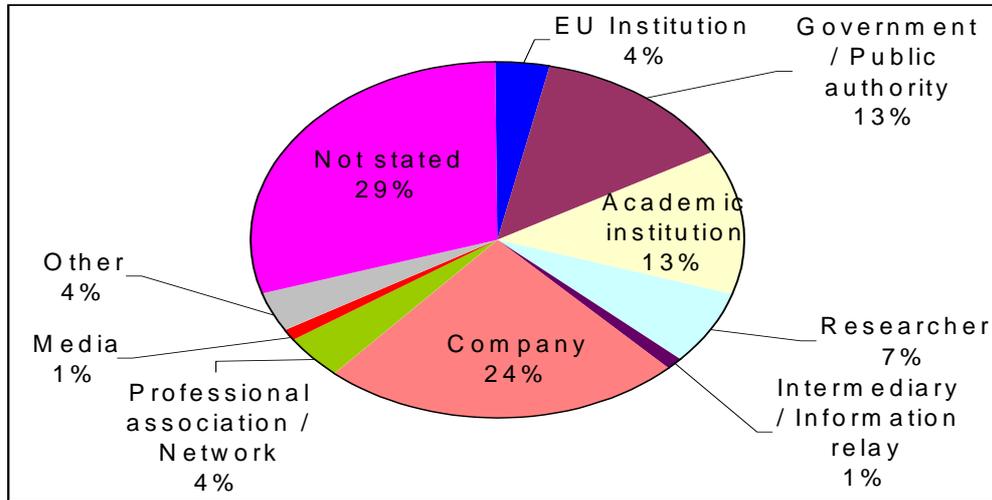
| Priority | Target audience |
|---|---|
| <i>Primary target group (priority 1)</i> | <i>Policy makers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>European Institutions</i> - Council, European Parliament MEPs, EP committees, EC officials (policy makers), EC officials (task managers) • <i>National Governments</i> – MPs, Policy makers, planners and Treasury • <i>Regional/Local government</i> – Councillors, Policy makers and planners |
| <i>Primary target group (priority 1)</i> | <i>Influencers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade associations/professional bodies • Trade Unions • Pressure groups • Academic/research • Consultants • Press |
| <i>Important target audience (priority 2)</i> | <i>Suppliers/retailers/manufactures</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure (physical) • Infrastructure (telematics) • Vehicles |
| <i>Important target audience (priority 2)</i> | <i>Operators and financiers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure (physical) • Infrastructure (telematics) • Vehicles |
| <i>Relevant target audience (priority 3)</i> | <i>Owners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure (physical) • Infrastructure (telematics) • Vehicles |
| <i>Relevant target audience (priority 3)</i> | <i>Consumers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Companies |

As the table indicates, the target audiences are fairly wide even if the priority 3 target audiences are excluded. Our interviews indicate that with EW the target audiences have grown wider than what was originally the case for EXTRA, which appeared to target more clearly policy makers.

A more close study of written documentation and consulting among key stakeholders appear, however, to indicate that the principal target group is, or should be policy makers. Or at least that, if the project does not feed into policy making the value of the project and its success would be limited.

Data on the registered users indicates that the user profiles are distributed as follows:

Figure 10 Breakdown of persons registered in the contact database by organisation type¹⁸



As it may be seen, the current registered users are not formed by one specific group, but are composed of several groups. These groups correspond globally to the identified primary and important target groups (we understand from our user survey that group of companies to a wide extent covers product and service providers).

As it will be discussed in the following section the needs and use of information varies among groups, which influences their perception on the usability of the TRKC.

We do not have any information regarding the nationality of the registered user, so we are not able to verify to what extent regular users stem from both the EU 15 and, EEA countries and new Member states. However, our user survey provides some indications. The survey indicates that the total number of users from the new Member States is low. Only 8% of all respondents are living in the new Member States. Moreover, most respondents stemming from the new Member States belong to two groups: researchers/universities (7 out of 11) and public administrations (3 out of 11). There are replies from 5 out of the 10 new Member states, and from all ERA countries (with the exception of Iceland)

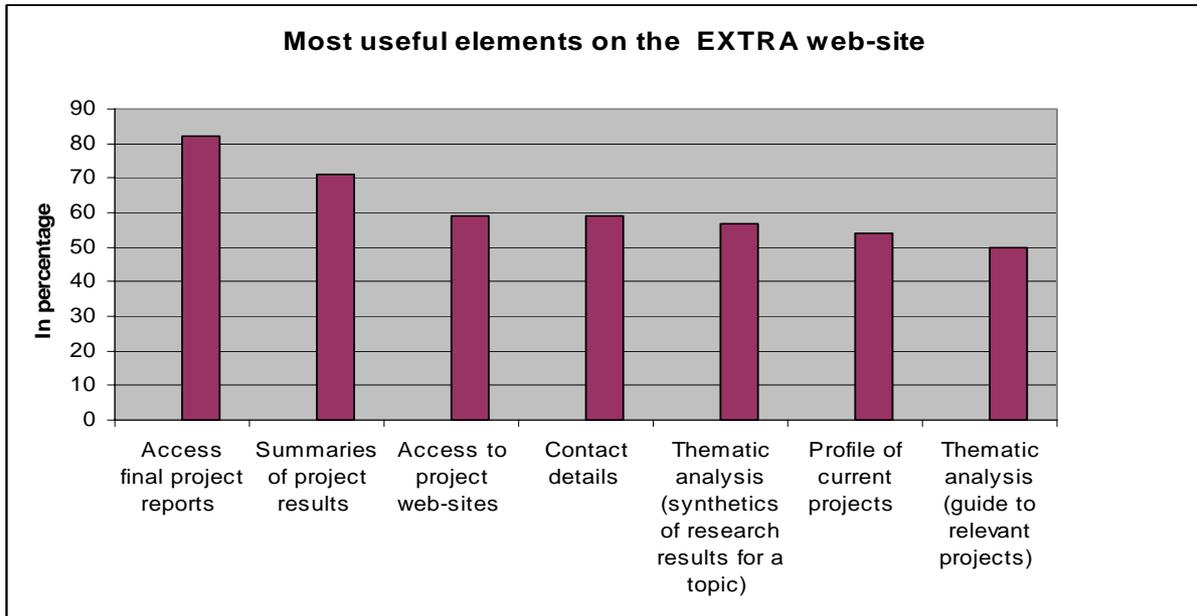
4.2.3. QUALITY AND USABILITY OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED THROUGH THE TRKC.

4.2.3.1. EXTRA

Globally speaking, the most useful elements of the provided information in the EXTRA project, was the basic layer of information, i.e. access to project results, project summaries and contact details. While thematic summaries were well noted they were substantially less well rated than the 'basic' layer of information.

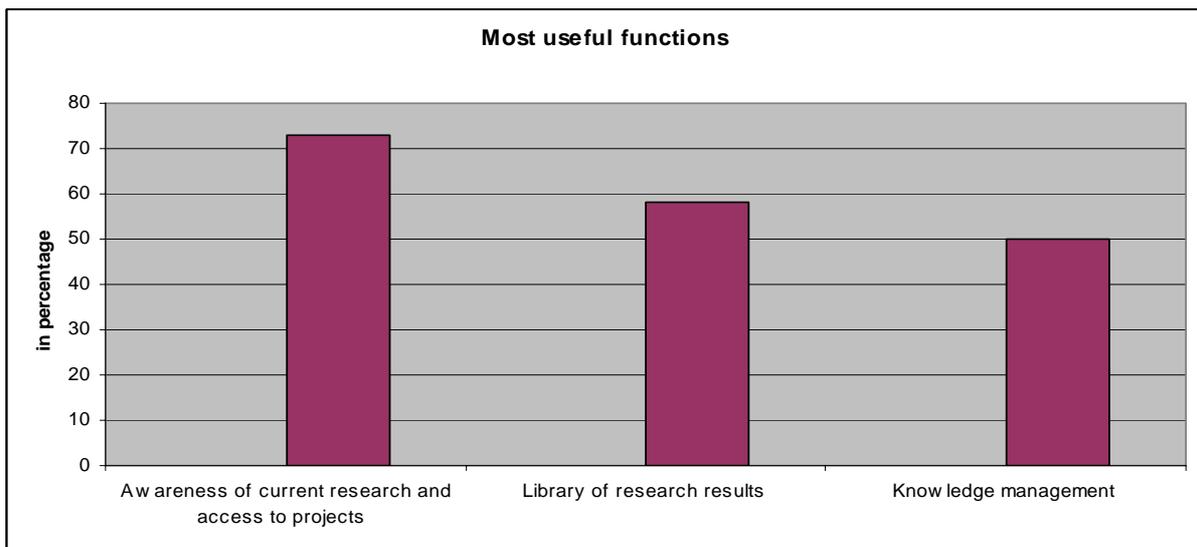
¹⁸ Source EW Consortium Evaluation mid-term report (Deliverable 4.4.2)

Figure 11 Most useful elements of the EXTRA projects



The fact that basic information i.e. project summaries and final project reports was substantially more useful than the thematic analysis was also confirmed by the fact that information on current research and access to project was perceived as a substantial more useful function than knowledge management.. These results tend to indicate that the quality of the provided thematic summaries and policy reports did not meet user’s needs or at least not part of the users needs. Interviews carried out during this study confirm this. The thematic summaries carried out under EXTRA are perceived as being too generic and not of a sufficient high quality to be of high value. This is problematic as in principle the most interesting part of the project for decision makers is potentially the thematic summaries (and policy papers which are based on the thematic papers).

Figure 12 Most useful functions

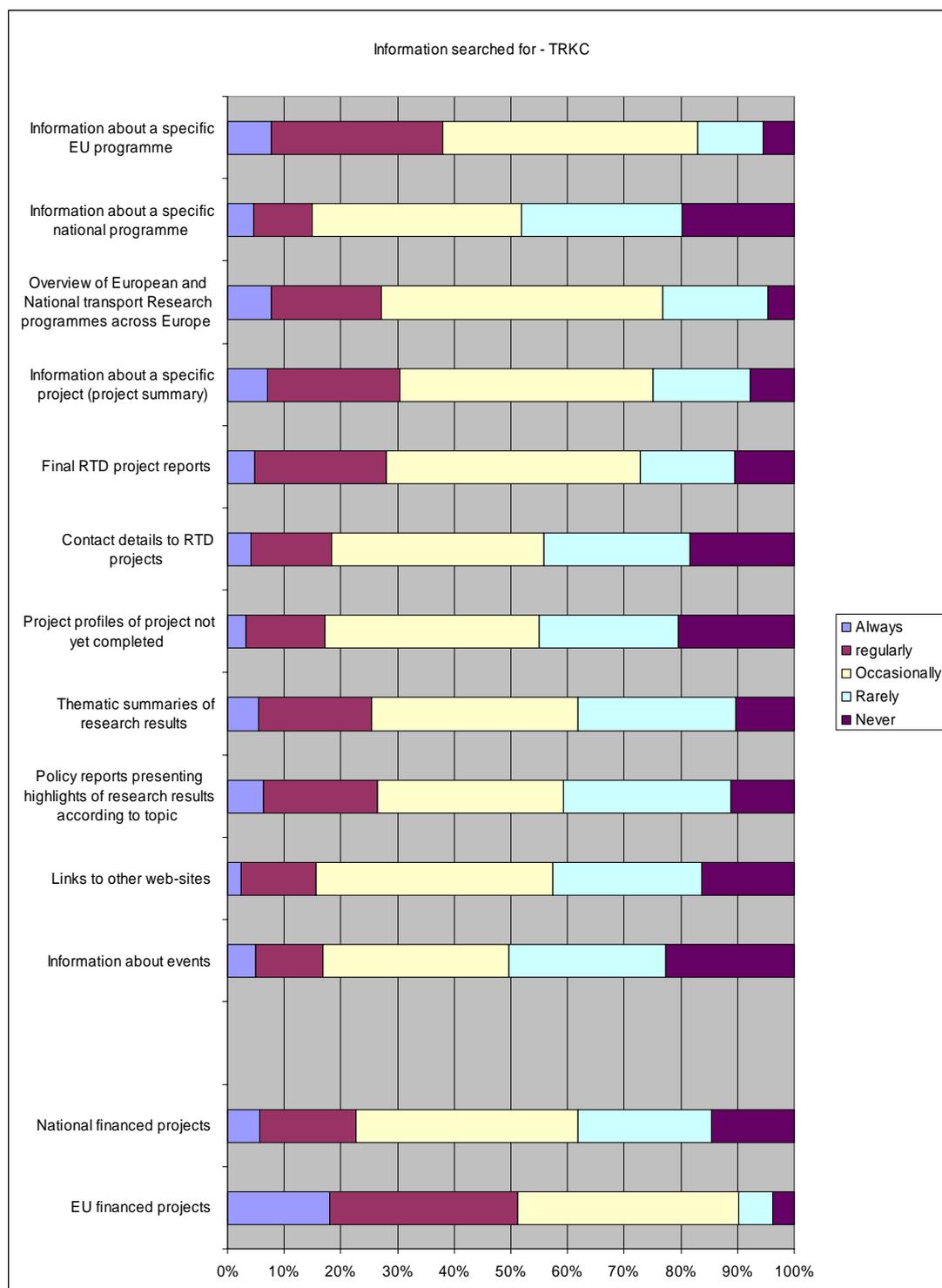


Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

4.2.3.2. EXTR@WEB

Globally speaking all the information provided by the EW project and currently available on the TRKC is used by the users but more on an occasional basis than on a regular basis.

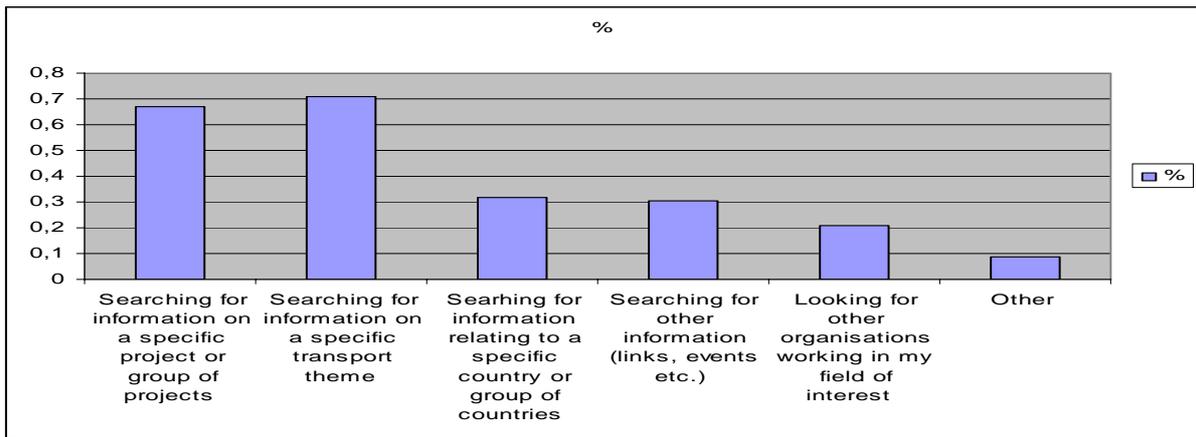
Figure 13: Use of the different types of information provided by the TRKC



Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

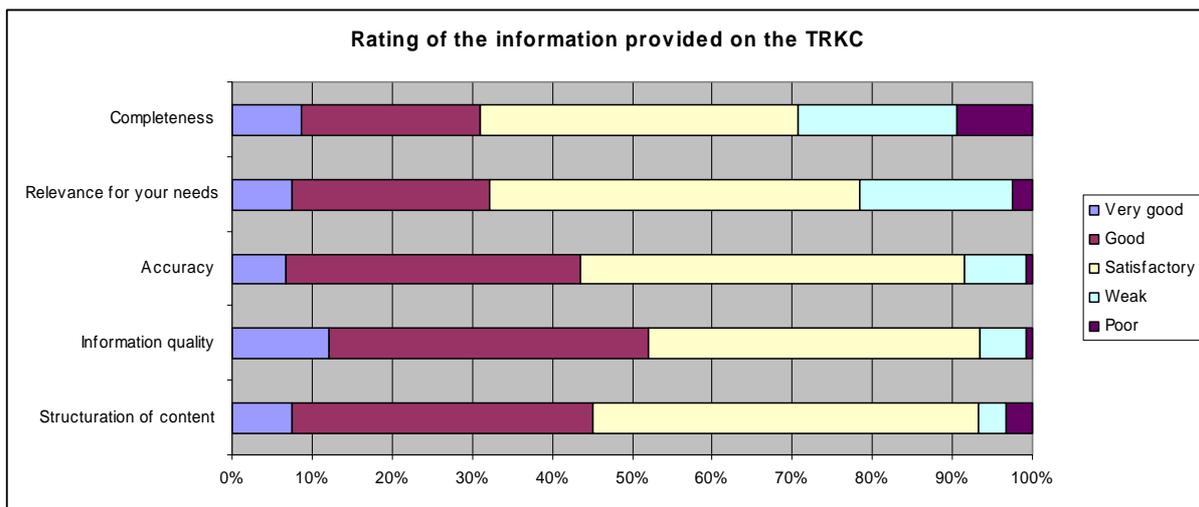
Information related to EU programmes and EU projects is substantially more searched for than information on national programmes and projects. Moreover, project information, in particular information on final project results and links to final project reports are requested by the users. Links to other transport research web-pages, information about foreseen events and project profiles are the information outputs the least used. This result is consistent with results from a web survey carried out by the EW consortium, which indicates that the principal reasons for visiting the TRKC web-site is to search for specific projects/groups of projects and to search for information on a specific transport theme¹⁹.

Figure 14: Reasons for visiting the TRKC web-site



Quality wise, the EW project is fairly well rated in the user survey. In particular the technical orientation of the content, the structure of the content, the accuracy and the information quality are well rated. However, TRKC is less well rated as regard to the perceived relevance for users and the completeness of the content.

Figure 15 Rating of the information provided on the TRKC



The TRKC is substantially less well rated by the BG members. This group perceives the project in its current form of very limited use, essentially because key information is currently lacking. The project approach and the potential usability of the project are, however, very well rated.

¹⁹ Survey carried out by the EW consortium in May 2005

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

The user survey, as well as the BG survey and the interviews carried out with BG and AG members, indicate that the EW project is, in its current form, of somewhat limited use. The TRKC is used occasionally and with the exception of EU programmes and EU funded projects none of the information is used regularly by the registered users. Moreover; if relevance of the project for users is globally rated positively, the number of replies ‘poor, weak and satisfactory’ indicates that there is scope for improvement of the project.

The overall results of the surveys and the interviews with the BG group also point clearly in this direction. Both surveys indicate that the principal problem of the TRKC is the lack of project information available. This has not only been highlighted by the BG members but also in the user survey where about 40% of all comments received focus on project and thematic information availability²⁰.

The results of both the user survey and the survey among the BG members, indicate that the overall approach of the EW project is of satisfactory quality and of clear use, but that the EW project is, in its current form, of somewhat limited use. In particular missing information hampers the overall usability and utility of the EW.

4.2.4. UNADDRESSED USER NEEDS

Unaddressed user needs regard assessing the needs among the current users for information and services that are currently not provided by the TRKC. We have selected some key information that we considered potentially relevant for the current users and requested feedback from users on the perceived needs. Identifying unaddressed user needs is not relevant for the current EW contract, but the extent that changes may be made to the EWII contract, identification of unaddressed user needs provides inputs to how the project may be improved in the future.

In order to assess unaddressed user needs we asked 3 questions (two multiple choice questions and one open ended comment question). We proposed 5 types of information. The type of information proposed was selected on the basis of the information available on the Research Energy web-site financed by DG Research.

The user survey clearly indicates that users are overwhelmingly interested in additional information which is not currently provided by the TRKC. In the survey users were asked what type of additional information they would find useful to be included on the TRKC web-site or in the newsletter and which is currently not provided. We proposed 5 types of information:

- General updated information about transport research policy
- Information about new research programmes (e.g. 7th FP)
- Regular articles on transport topics
- Information on relevant calls for proposals
- News on outcomes of Transport research events

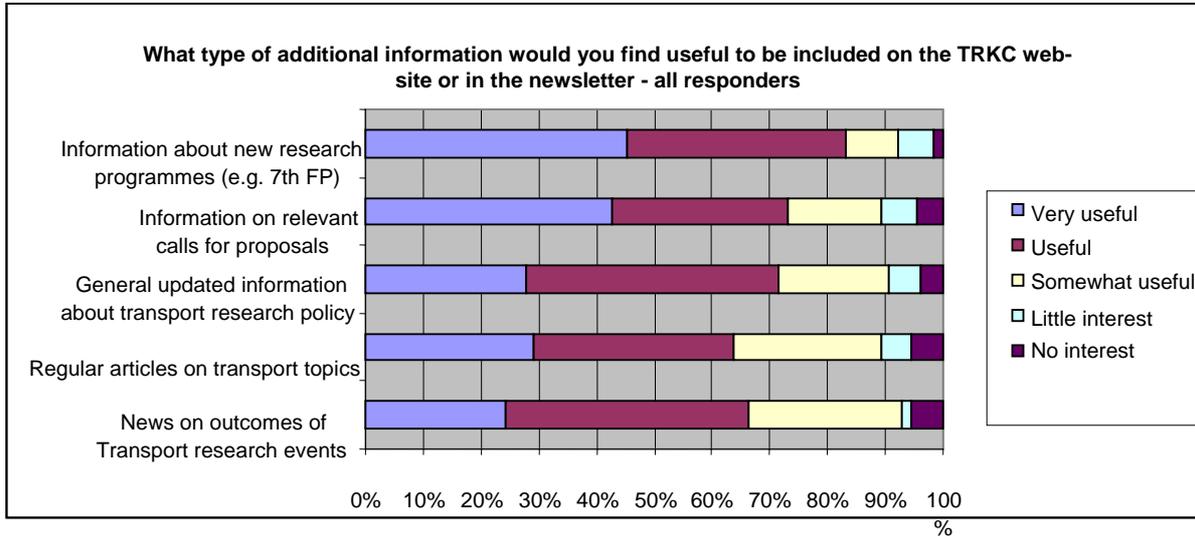
In addition we included an open ended question on other types of information

All 5 types of information were considered useful or very useful by more than 60% of responders. Information about new research programmes and information about relevant calls for proposals as considered very useful or useful by more than 80% and 70% respectively, and the rate of very useful was

²⁰ 65 qualitative comments were registered, whereof 7 were either not relevant (such as good luck), from members of the EW consortium, or not readable. 22 of the comments received regarded lack of available data, 3 persons indicated that they did not or only rarely use the TRKC, 2 comments indicated that the overall project was of value, 5 comments mentioned that the layout and/or search functions should be improved, 3 comments indicated that more information was needed on events, 3 users requested information on specific topics, two users requested articles on transport issues, two users requested a discussion forum. Other comments were one off.

in both cases higher than 40%. General updated information about transport research policy was also considered as being useful or very useful by more than 70% of the responders. In all cases little or no interest on the proposed types of information was expressed by less than 12% the respondents.

Figure 16 Unaddressed user needs



There are however some differences regarding the perceived usefulness of the different types of information. Users stemming from national and regional government institutions are, with the exception of outcomes of transport events relatively less interested in additional information. The other user groups have all high interest in additional information.

Specific requests for additional information mostly related to additional information on project research results (7 of the 11 relevant specific requests for information).

4.3. Theme 3: Complementary between the EW project and other web-sites

This theme was intended to cover the complementarities or overlap with CORDIS as well as the cooperation between the CORDIS and EW service providers. Cooperation should ensure that the services provided would complement each other and that relevant information would be exchanged. In addition, cooperation should ensure that the TRKC is promoted by CORDIS which has a larger audience than TRKC.

We have contacted CORDIS and got in contact with a person that appeared to be able to provide us with the needed information. However, despite several e-mails and telephone calls to this person proposing different meeting dates it has not been possible to arrange a meeting or a telephone discussion. Therefore, we are not able to address fully the issue of complementarities/overlap. Within these limitations we have made the following observations.

4.3.1. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CORDIS AND EW PROVIDERS

There appears to be little or no evidence of cooperation between the CORDIS and EW providers. We were told that some contacts may have been taken at the outset of the EW project but they have not been followed up. No attempts to ensure cooperation on a regular basis have been identified.

We understand that this lack of cooperation is, at least partially, due to a perception among the EW consortium that the scope of overlap is limited and that the information provided by CORDIS on research projects is of limited quality. As we were not able to meet with the providers of the CORDIS web-service we are not able to assess this.

We do note that the CORDIS operators have proposed a set up to collect and present FP6 activities on CORDIS²¹, based on a predefined template, a service, we understand, that the CORDIS service providers have not provided previously. From the documents available to us we understand that this service appears to aim at providing a project service which is similar to the EWII project service (for FP6 projects). As we have had no opportunity to meet with CORDIS we do not know what the status of this initiative is.

4.3.2. COOPERATION REGARDING THE PROMOTION OF THE TRKC

There is little evidence that the TRKC has been promoted by CORDIS²² and it appears that the EW consortium has taken little actions to ensure prominent proactive promotion by CORDIS. While this may partly be explained by the limited information available on the TRKC web-site it is nevertheless surprising given that the EW project is currently in its final stage, and that promotion efforts need to be properly prepared.

We understand from the EW contractor that the TRKC is now ready to be promoted and that a lot of information will soon be launched on the TRKC web-site. For these reasons we recommend that contact is taken with CORDIS and that the promotion of the TRKC is effectively ensured by the different CORDIS information tools (Newsletter & web-site).

4.3.3. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ACTORS

Studying the EW project's cooperation with actors and actions aiming at providing similarly results to the ones provided by the EW project is out of the scope of this study. This said, some of our interviewees have highlighted the need to improve EW links to other projects and actions with similar objectives such as for example the Transport Research Arena Europe²³.

This issue should be further explored. Attention should be given to assessing to what extent information from other actions could provide input to the EW project and how this information could be integrated into the EW project. Using information from other actions, such as the Transport Research Arena Europe, may add value to the EWII in particular to thematic reports and policy reports.

4.4. Theme 4: Web-design, functional features and visibility

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the role of the web site and its functionalities in information circulation and the quality of communication. The evaluation steps followed are:

- Web services objectives;
- Architecture;
- Functional features and user experiences;
- Quality assurance and content update;
- Visibility;
- Traffic;

Sections on architecture, functional features and user experiences and traffic are included in Annex 8.

4.4.1. WEB SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The *Extra@Web* web service has the following objectives:

²¹ Intrasoft International *Supporting promotion of FP6 projects activities – A proposal to collect and propose FP6 project activities on CORDIS*

²² A web-search indicated that one reference to the TRKC web-site (a promotional article from 2005 regarding the programme compendium). The TRKC is not included in the link section of CORDIS

²³ See Traconference.com

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

- Setting up and maintaining a dynamic web site for knowledge exchange management. This task covers multiple layers of information and acts as the hub for access to and promotion of transport research activities and results throughout the European research area (at EU and national level);
- Providing an intuitive user interface with a technological and ergonomic architecture. This interface will permit to adapt comfortably to the evolution of user needs. Furthermore it will facilitate, through an extranet, data collection and input from programme and project providers as well as data analysis and validation by the Programme Analysis Group (PAG);
- Establishing an Electronic News Service (monthly e-bulletins) linked to the monthly web updates providing targeted, timely and structured information to decision-makers, research institutions, industry and other interested parties.

The following practical elements have been implemented in order to achieve these objectives:

- Development of an extranet for data collection, data validation and data publication of transport research information.
- Inter-connecting European and national programmes and individual networks concerned with transport research into an easily navigable European network;
- Offering a powerful search function, supported by indexing: this allows free-text search, search by keyword, programme areas, specific countries, project acronyms and result areas.
- Registering users to receive e-mails of new information in specific areas of interest.

4.4.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTENT UPDATE

In order for a web portal to continue to provide a quality service after it has been launched it is necessary both to maintain the relevance of the content and to ensure that the impact of any break in service is minimised.

The content on the *Extra@Web* web service must be regularly maintained to ensure that it remains up-to-date and relevant. However, we noted that the data update frequency could be improved in order to reach a monthly web update as stated in the Technical Annex.

User feedback mechanisms, such as email links or web forms are used to encourage users to report on inaccuracies. In addition, the web site is also including features for temporary evaluation such as online surveys and standard feedback forms. Any enquiry posted on the web will be directed to the main helpdesk which will automatically dispatch to the partner who has the most relevant expertise to respond to it (within the next 48 hours) if the enquiry does not fit into the standard FAQs²⁴. Periodic evaluations of the web portal, should be continued to help spotting errors, evaluating the accessibility of the web portal and the success of project data dissemination.

Further maintenance operations are needed to respond to any failure of hardware or network connections and to any corruption of content whether through accident or malicious breach of security. In addition to making necessary changes to content, the integrity of existing content is regularly checked. Content is also backed up to ensure rapid reestablishment of service should content be corrupted or lost due to catastrophic server or storage medium failure. To ensure services are restored as quickly as possible after any network failure, the availability of the *Extr@Web* web service is monitored continuously using services such as InternetSeer.

4.4.3. VISIBILITY

Once a web portal has been developed and checked for compliance with appropriate standards, it is usually promoted in order to ensure that end users know about the service. The EW consortium did it by

²⁴ Frequently asked questions

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

using metadata (information about a Web resource, such as the author, keywords, brief description, etc.) on key areas of the site and submission services to promote the web portal to key search engines (e.g. Google) and directory services (e.g. Yahoo).

The Knowledge Centre web site, nevertheless suffers from a lack of visibility:

- on search engines by using some keywords.
- on the European Commission DG TREN web site;
- on other national/institutional site;

It is in fact quite easy to retrieve the site by using “Transport Research Knowledge Centre” keywords on search engines. However, it is not the case when using the project acronym “EXTR@Web” as search keyword. Moreover, the visibility on the DG TREN web-site is fairly low, and the acronym “EXTRA” is used to promote the site (as opposed to TRKC or EW).

The EW consortium has established reciprocal links with relevant national/institutional sites. This has for objectives to increase the visibility of the site on widely used search engines like Google as well as promoting the site in selected communities. Priority was given to links from sites which are used by users of transport research results and portal sites which themselves attract large numbers of users from transport research target audiences (thematic transport associations, venture capital association sites, specialist subject gateways in the university sector, SME support associations, etc). However, the Transport Research Knowledge Centre home page URL²⁵ is not referenced directly. Very often only the DG TREN home page URL is quoted on these sites as being the key entrance for accessing information about transport research.

Based on our analysis of the architecture; the functional features and user experiences; quality assurance and content update; visibility and traffic the following may be noted.

The EXTR@Web web service users seem to be globally satisfied by the quality of the service. However, we have identified some room for improvement in the visibility; the data update frequency and the traffic management of the website.

4.5. Theme 5: Management and input from key stakeholders

The EW is based on the idea of decentralisation. Several actors were intended to provide key inputs and key support, without which the project could not operate effectively. This made the project vulnerable from the outset, and led to effectiveness problems in project implementation.

Input to the EW project was to be provided by 5 types of key stakeholders

- The High Level Advisory Group (AG);
- The Benchmarking Group (BG);
- RTD project coordinators;
- Commission staff within DG TREN; and
- Commission staff within other DGs (most notably DG INFSO and DG Research)

All key stakeholders but the AG (which had a steering and facilitating role), were intended to contribute to the data collection phase. The project was based on the assumption that RTD project coordinators when prompted would provide through the reporting scheme project profiles and project summaries on research results. Commission staff and BG members were intended to provide contacts to RTD project coordinators and to “open doors” (i.e. help access to recent and accurate information at EU and national

²⁵ The URL is the address of a resource, or file, available on the Internet.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

level). Moreover, the BG members were expected to proactively promote the EW ensuring together with the EW consortium the creation of awareness among potential users. Additional tasks relating to the validation of the content and structure was to be carried out by the BG.

The key stakeholders have, to various extent, fulfilled their intended roles.

4.5.1.1. THE HIGH LEVEL ADVISORY GROUP

The High Level Advisory Group, composed by senior Members States officials, has as overall objective to contribute at 'high level' to the EW project by providing the platform for approving the EW project approach and to guarantee the access to national information. Involvement in tasks related to the implementation was delegated to the BG members selected by the AG. The Members of the AG are, we understand, identical to the "Sustainable Surface Transport Committee".

The AG group met regularly during the initiation and first years of the EW project, to provide direction to the project and provide the necessary political support. However, besides contribution to the start up of the EW project and as initial door opener to data collection, the AG contribution has been limited. The group has not met for a considerable period (since 2004) and most of its tasks have de facto been taken over by the BG.

Given the difficulties encountered by the EW project it is surprising that the AG has not been consulted on the proposed EWII project.

4.5.1.2. THE BENCHMARKING GROUP

The BG group was intended to play a key role in the implementation of the project, validating project outputs (including thematic summaries, project profiles etc.) and ensuring access to RTD transport project and programme information. The BG was incorporated into the EXTR@Web project at the request of the European Commission and they were appointed by the AG. Not all of the countries covered by EXTR@Web have had a BG member appointed²⁶. In such cases, the responsible partner or subcontractor works without official validation. Most of the countries without a BG member are New Member States or Accession Countries.

According to the ToR for the BG, their key roles were to:

- Test prototype web design/structure;
- Approve the web strategy and final web structure;
- Quality control of analysis' carried out by the service providers in highly specialised sectors;
- Check and validate the relevance of the national work and overall analyses provided by EW;
- Provide support in harmonizing reporting standards as far as possible for national/institutional activities in context with the EU projects;
- Provide input to the definition of web user need;
- Select national and institutional web sites to be included in the database;
- Provide a basic list of major relevant national transport research related actors and favourable contact persons;
- Provide information to the EW service provider about major on-going and planned national programme initiatives and project activities;
- Facilitate access to national project information by providing endorsement letters to be used by the EW consortium and sub-contractors for their contacts;

²⁶ There are BG Member in 18 of the EEA countries

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

- Provide information on national transport RTD that does not receive public funding, on links to national research in transport related fields, and on links between national, European and selected global institutional transport research and bilateral research with other countries;
- Provide information on best practice on a national level;
- Advise on and benchmarking of the EW dissemination strategy and tools;
- Provide of information on national end users' information needs as well as on existing dissemination channels;
- Provide lists of national target audiences with contact names, addresses, emails, topic of interest and level of responsibilities;
- Provide global feed back as input into project evaluation;
- Collection of feed back from selected segments of the national target audience;
- Disseminate national, regional and local target audiences transport RTD results;
- Advise on forthcoming national transport relevant events;
- Translate press announcements into national language and ensure their publication in the relevant national press;

Globally speaking the BG members were quite involved in the validation of information, less involved in the data collection phase and only little involved in the proactive promotion of the TRKC.

Their actual participation, commitment and contribution varied, however, notably. Some BG members took a lead in the collection of information at national level, providing not only access to project information but also drafting project profiles and summaries (in cooperation with the EW partner or subcontractor). Other BG group members provided access to information (contact details) to the subcontractor. Other group members were little or not involved in the data collection process and in other activities. A survey carried out by the EW contractor²⁷ indicated that in 10 of the 18 countries with a BG member (surveyed), there was evidence that they provided a useful support to the project. Some 8 BG members provided significant value added project²⁸.

The lack of contribution of some BG members must be seen in the specific context of the programme. BG members are not contractually obliged to undertake tasks and the work that was expected from them appears in some cases to have exceeded clearly their initial expectations and the resources allocated to the EW activities. Therefore, it is of key importance that the roles of the future support group are thoroughly discussed and that the scope of their work is clearly defined and agreed upon.

4.5.1.3. RTD PROJECT COORDINATORS

RTD project coordinators were intended to provide information on their projects to the EW consortium through the extra-net reporting scheme. We do not know how many project profiles and summaries were actually provided by RTD project coordinators as the EW consortium does not monitor this. However, given the overall data collection result their contribution appears globally to be somewhat limited. This lack of contribution appears on the one hand to be due to lack of awareness of the extra-net reporting scheme and on the other hand to limited interest in providing the intended information which in all cases is not mandatory.

²⁷ EW Consortium (2005) Review of the Extr@web Benchmarking group

²⁸ In a further three countries, it was considered that the BG member did provide some added value to the project.

Ex-post evaluation of EXTRA (1998-2002) and mid-term evaluation of EXTRAWEB (2002-2006) under the Framework Contract for Impact Assessments and Evaluations.

As discussed above and below the BG (for national projects) and the Commission scientific staff (for EU financed projects) were expected to support the EW contractors and sub-contractors in promote the reporting scheme among project coordinators but this was not done systematically at EU level and not done in all Member States.

4.5.1.4. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Commission staff was indented to play 2 key roles in the implementation of the EW project: Provide contact details to research project and where relevant ensure that (well identified) RTD project coordinators provided structured project information trough the intranet web-site (or via a word document) and promote the TRKC centre both within the Commission and externally (DG TREN only).

There have been problems in fulfilling both roles. The EW project has suffered from limited high level political support and a dispersed management structure of research projects within DG TREN in various units and Directorates, with regularly changing of scientific officers. These factors have made it difficult both to coordinate contribution to the EW project and to promote the project within DG TREN and in other DGs.

As a result the Commission has not been able to provide on a regular basis updated overview lists (including contact details) of the project status of the various RTD projects it managed to the EW consortium nor has it been able to ensure that information from projects financed under EU programmes was provided in a systematic manner. In addition, there is little evidence of a coordinated effort to promote more actively the TRKC. There have been a few actions to promote the project, but obvious promotion actions, such a proactive promotion on the DG TREN web-site and in the DG TREN newsletter, and systematic encouragement to the scientific officers to present the project when carrying out presentations externally have not taken place.

The problems related to data collection at EU level could be resolved by a contractual obligation for EU financed transport RTD projects to contribute to the EW projects. There has been no such obligation under the 5FP. The EWII project bases its data collection on the hypothesis that for the 6FP there will be a contractual obligation for EU financed transport RTD projects to contribute to the EWII projects. We however understand that there is no such obligation under the 6FP. Therefore, others solutions are necessary if the EWII is to be a success.

4.6. Theme 6: Coherence between the implemented EW project and the objectives set for the FP5 for dissemination and promotion

Theme 5 regards the coherence between the EW dissemination and communication objectives and results and the overall communication and dissemination objectives of the 5th Framework Programme.

The EW project is intended to contribute to the communication and dissemination objectives as set out in the Council's Decision of 22 December 1998 *concerning the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities and for the dissemination of research results for the implementation of the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Community*²⁹. This decision states that:

The Community and the contractors shall use, or ensure that effective use is made of, any knowledge suitable for use in their possession, in conformity with the interests of the Community

And that

The Commission shall ensure that knowledge resulting from work carried out under indirect RTD actions and which is suitable for dissemination is disseminated through appropriate forums (e.g. scientific publications) by the contractors or, where appropriate, by the Commission itself.

²⁹(1999/65/EC) OJ L26/46 01.02.1999

The Council Decision does not specify which tools are to be used in order to ensure that research results are effectively disseminated nor does it define the intended target audience. It does however state that the primary responsibility for dissemination or use of research results rests with the contractors³⁰.

As indicated in the introduction, the EW project was formulated following the recognition that the dissemination of research results was at a low level in comparison to what could be achieved and that well-targeted and well-structured communication and dissemination is vital in order to raise awareness of, and to ensure effective access to, research results in the transport field. Therefore, it was considered necessary to improve the way in which researchers, decision-makers and other stakeholders obtained the information in order to maximise the exploitation of research results. The EW project was to address these issues and thereby:

“Support (-ing) the research and policy making process over the next four years (2002-2006) providing timely access to the latest (transport research) results and their implications³¹”

Given on the one hand the overall objectives for communication and dissemination for the 5th Framework Programme and on the other hand the objectives of EW and the intended outputs, it may be concluded that *the EW project has the potential to contribute significantly to the overall objectives for communication and dissemination for the 5th Framework Programme if the project is implemented as intended and if the quality of the outputs meets the needs of the target audience.* Two key elements allow us to draw this conclusion. These two elements have composed the subject of our study and of this report.

- A) The nature of the project and its 4 specific objectives which aims at *collecting, structuring, analysing and disseminating transport research results covering not only EU supported but also national financed research in the ERA* i.e. a very large amount of research.
- B) A perception among the users and key stakeholders that the EW project, if implemented as intended, will be highly useful for the users.

As the EW project is not completed yet, it is too early to draw final conclusions, regarding the projects overall contribution to reaching the communication and dissemination objectives for the 5FP. However as indicated all along this study the EW project, while providing a coherent framework for providing information, has met substantial difficulties in providing timely access to the latest (transport research) results. For this reason EW overall contribution to reaching the communication and dissemination objectives for the 5FP, at this time (1 March 2006) may be considered as limited.

³⁰ Council's Decision of 22 December 1998 *concerning the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities and for the dissemination of research results for the implementation of the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Community*, Whereas (15).

³¹ Extr@web Technical Annex page 2

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall conclusions and recommendations, presented in this report, relate to an evaluation of the Extra and Extr@web projects financed by the European Commission. The desk and field research for this evaluation took place from end December to early March 2006. The findings in the report, and the conclusions and recommendations in this section are largely based on interviews and two surveys carried out among the registered users and the Benchmarking Group members.

The evaluation is broken down into six themes:

- The value added of the EW project: Key user outputs and promotional activities
- Use and utility of the Extr@Web project
- Complementarity between the EW project and other web-sites
- Web-design, functional features and visibility
- Management and input from key stakeholders
- Coherence between the implemented EW project and the objectives set for the 5FP for dissemination and promotion

Our conclusions and recommendations are presented by theme.

Theme 1: Value added of the Extr@web and EXTRA projects: Key user outputs and promotional activities

In order to ensure effective implementation of the EW project a range of key user outputs should be provided by the EW project. These key user outputs focus may be resumed as follow:

- Information on national and EU programmes, provided in summary format by programme (in a programme database) and in an overview format (in PDF and print version)
- Detailed summary information on research results of EU and national funded projects by project provided in a summary format by project (in a database) and for uncompleted projects in a project profile presenting the research objectives
- Thematic analysis and policy analysis on research results and policy implications of completed projects by theme and by policy topics

The EW project has at this stage of project implementation provided some but not all key user outputs. The user outputs provided by the 1st of March 06 and which are completed mainly regard summary information on transport research programmes and programmes overviews. The user outputs currently missing (or which are uncompleted) are user outputs related to research results. Our interviews show that the uncompleted user outputs are those which ensure the success (or failure) of the EW project.

Some key user outputs presenting and analysing research results according to themes and political priorities are only to be provided at the final stage of the EW project. However, the particularity of the EW project is that most of the information which is intended to be provided on research results is interrelated, meaning that user outputs presenting and analysing research results according to themes and political priorities are depending on the availability of the basic project information.

Therefore, although the EW project has no formal deadline for the collection of project information, it is reasonable to expect that a substantial amount of the basic project information (that is project summaries of project research results) would have been collected by now. This is not the case. By March 1 2006, project information has been provided (via the TRKC) on a total of 216 Projects, whereof 67 includes final summaries of research results. Additional research results have been collected on 100 projects but

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are not disseminated yet. These results must be seen in relation to the intended scope of the EW project. Initially the EW project aimed at covering a very wide number of projects (more than 2500 national and EU projects whereof more than 1000 were to be covered by the reporting scheme). These results are also significantly below the amended objectives.

The principal problems for the EW project, in relation to the provision of user outputs have been dispersed responsibilities for data collection, which is the backbone of the project. In principle, Research project coordinators were expected to provide project information through the reporting scheme. The Benchmarking Group (BG) and the Commission were intended to collect research project contact data and support the sub-contractors work to promote the reporting scheme among research project coordinators. The actions were intended to ensure that research project information was provided through the RTD result reporting scheme. However, how this was to be ensured was, if research project information was not provided was not defined at the outset of the project. This was particular problematic as BG members, Commission staff or RTD project coordinators had any obligation to contribute to the EW project.

This combined with unrealistic expectations the BG members, Commission staff and RTD project coordinators as regard their willingness to support the data collection phase and to provide project information, a data collection phase which was initiated too late and too ambitious initial objectives regarding the number of projects which were to be covered by the project, has, until now, seriously hampered the effectiveness of the EW project.

Corrective measures have been taken and the scope of the project was modified in March 2005. The EW project aims now only to cover 600 projects (priority 1 projects i.e. project summary and projects analysis, priority 2 and 3 projects are not given priority) and the EW consortium and its subcontractors are made responsible for all project data collection (500 projects according to a new estimate). Is too early to draw firm conclusions as regards the effectiveness of this approach to data collection and hence its effectiveness to provide the intended project user outputs. However, based on the information available on the Knowledge Centre web-site and the information collected we note that about 2/3 of all the expected information relating to research *project results* still needs to be collected in order to reach the reviewed objectives for the collection of information on project information..

On this basis it may be concluded that even though the EW project has provided some of the intended user outputs (such as information on EU and national programme, some project information etc.), it has proven ineffective in providing the user outputs that ensures the success of the EW project.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Commission ensures that the scope of the EWII project is clearly defined at the outset of the EWII project. In particular the (approximate) number of research projects to be covered should be clearly identified. In this regard, we note that the EWII proposal propose to cover a priority set of 600 projects. We recommend that the Commission ensures that the AG group, which is foreseen for EWII, is consulted on the project definition and the scope.

We recommend that the Commission ensures that the project data collection phase is initiated as soon as possible following the launch of the EWII project in order to ensure that a sufficient time frame for data collection is provided. We therefore recommend that the proposed timetable for EWII is adapted to meet this objective.

We recommend that the Commission ensures that key milestones for data collection are set at the outset of the project, in order to ensure that the data collection process may be effectively monitored by both the Commission and the EWII contractors, and that corrective measures may be taken in due time.

We recommend that the Commission ensures that the role of the persons to be involved in the data collection phase, and who are not parts of the EWII consortium, is clearly defined and agreed upon by all

involved parties. In this regard specific attention should be given to the definition of the role of the foreseen AG, which we understand is intended to contribute to the data collection.

We recommend that the Commission explores, in cooperation with the EWII consortium and other actors to be involved in the data collection process, the possibility to collect project information on a thematic basis, that is collecting project data by specific theme to which the project is mostly related. The interviews carried out indicate that thematic data collection would be easier to manage. Moreover, by providing batches of project information all related to one theme, the usability of the TRKC at an earlier stage would be increased. The Commission should define the priority themes in cooperation with both the foreseen AG group and the EWII Consortium, with the aim to ensure that thematic data collection reflects both the Commission and Member States annual priorities. Although the EWII project recognise the need to market batched deliveries around a transport theme a thematic data collection approach is not foreseen.

Theme 2: Use and utility of the Extr@Web project

Use of the EW

The data currently available does not allow us to draw firm conclusions as regard the quantitative use of the EW project nor about the number of actual users. Monitoring data of the use of the web-site is available but it is incomplete and covers only the most visited web-pages. Within these limitations the following conclusions may be drawn.

Compared with the other pages of the DG TREN web-site the TRKC web-pages are fairly well visited. The number of pages visited is relatively high given that the target group is more limited than the overall DG TREN web-site. Given that the information currently available is limited in scope, an increase in the use of the web-site may be expected once more information is available.

The data on the use of the TRKC web-pages do not provide us with any indication of the number of users. Given the nature and scope of the project, however, we assume it reasonable to consider that a substantial amount of the regular users subscribe to the newsletter. There are currently 2077 subscribers (June 05³²). The number of readers of the newsletter, however, indicates that the actual number of users may be somewhat lower. The number of registered users has remained fairly stable, and the evidence available indicates that most users stems from the EU-15.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Commission ensures that for EWII an effective web-based monitoring system is set up in line with our recommendations under theme 5.

As the EW project is now in its final phase and that additional user outputs may be expected in the coming month we recommend that the TRKC is more proactively promoted. For these promotion activities specific attention should be provided to the new member states.

Usability of the information provided

Globally speaking all the information provided by the EW project and currently available on the TRKC is used by the users but more on an occasional basis than on a regular basis. Information related to EU programmes and EU projects is substantially more searched for than information on national programmes and projects. Moreover, project information, in particular information on final project results and links to final project reports are requested by the users. Links to other transport research web-pages, information about foreseen events and project profiles are the information outputs the least used.

The quality of the information provided is well fairly well rated. In particular the technical orientation of the content, the structure of the content, the accuracy and the information quality are well rated. The TRKC is less well rated as regard to the perceived relevance for users, and the completeness of the

³² No new figures are available

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content. The TRKC is substantially less well rated by the BG members. This group perceives the project in its current form of very limited use. The framework of the project is well rated and its potential is perceived as very useful if implemented as intended. The actual information outputs are rated poorly.

The results of both the user survey and the survey among the BG members, indicate that the overall approach of the EW project is of quality, and of use, but that the missing information hamper the overall usability and utility of the EW.

Recommendations

Given the perceived potential usability and utility of the EW project and the overall high interest in the research project in formation, in particular EU project information, we recommend that the Commission provides better support to the data collection process. Under theme 6 we have proposed a strategy to be implemented.

Unaddressed user needs

Unaddressed user needs is about assessing the needs among the current users for information and services that are currently not provided by the TRKC. Identifying unaddressed user needs is not relevant for the current EW contract, but the extent that changes may be made to the EWII project provides input to how the project may be improved in the future.

Users are overwhelmingly interested in additional information which is not currently provided by the TRKC. The 5 types of information that we proposed (general updated information about transport research policy, information about new research programmes (e.g. 7th FP), regular articles on transport topics, information on relevant calls for proposals and news on outcomes of transport research events) were considered useful or very useful by more than 60% of the respondents in our user survey. In particular information about new research programmes, information on relevant calls for proposals, and general updated information about transport research policy were considered very useful or useful by more than 70% of all users.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Commission explores the possibility to include within the framework of the EWII contract the provision of additional information. Additional information, of the type that we have indicated above, would not only respond to users' needs but would also be possible to provide on a regular basis. It could therefore work as "window dressing" keeping users interested in the TRKC, though it is only timely information, while the database is being built up (which in the light of the EW project experience appears to take years before it is of high utility to the users).

The nature and scope of this type of information service needs to be identified. In particular, the Commission should investigate if this type of "information service" can be included within the EWII project given the nature of the contract. The precise nature of the information and the amount and detail of the information also need to be discussed. Our proposed approach would be to provide little but in depth information (e.g. one or two articles pr. newsletter eventually flanked by news on relevant calls for proposals) as this would minimise the additional work load for the contractors while still work as "window dressing". Moreover the focus of the information needs to be discussed in the light of the key audience(s). Information needs varies and it should be defined if the information should be targeted to one or more of the intended audiences or if it should cover all. We would recommend that the Commission includes the current AG and the BG in the definition and scope of the "information service" in order to ensure that the target audience(s) needs are best met.

Theme 3: Complementary between the EW project and other web-sites

This theme was intended to cover the complementarily and/or overlapping with the CORDIS services as well as the cooperation between the CORDIS and EW providers. Due to unavailability of CORDIS staff it

was not possible to arrange a meeting with CORDIS. Within these limitations we have made the following conclusions and recommendations.

There appears to be little of cooperation between EW and CORDIS. Moreover, there is only little evidence that the TRKC has been promoted by CORDIS. As the EW project now is in its final stage and publications of a substantial amount of information are foreseen, contact should be taken up with CORDIS in order to ensure that the TRKC is effectively promoted by the different CORDIS information tools (Newsletter & web-site).

Studying the EW project's cooperation with actors and actions aiming at providing similarly results to the ones provided by the EW project is out of the scope of this study. This being said, some interviewees have highlighted the need to the link EW with other projects and actions with similar objectives. This issue should be further exploited.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Commission ensures that contacts between the EW consortium and the CORDIS Consortium are established. At the first stage this cooperation should ensure that the TRKC is promoted by the various information tools that CORDIS has at its disposal (Web-site, e-bulletin, paper based newsletter).

We note that the CORDIS operators have proposed a set up to collect and present FP6 activities on CORDIS³³, a service that the CORDIS service providers have not provided previously. We do not know what the status of this project is but the Commission needs to further exploit this issue. In order to avoid potential overlapping between this service and the EWII project, we recommend that the Commission ensures that communication between the two service operators is established as a priority. The Commission should identify in cooperation with the EW Consortium, the CORDIS Consortium and DG Research to what extent project information collected by CORDIS may be used to feed into the EWII project and vice versa, and how regular cooperation on the issue may be established.

For the EWII project we also recommend that Commission ensures that cooperation regarding promotional activities between the CORDIS and EW providers is initiated at an early stage in order to ensure that the information provided by the EW project is regularly promoted by CORDIS.

We recommend that the Commission in cooperation with the EWII Consortium exploit the possibility to link the EWII project to other projects and actions with similar objectives. Using information from other actions, such as the Transport Research Arena Europe, would add value to the EWII project in particular to user outputs with value added (thematic reports and policy reports). In this regard we note that an extended network is proposed under the EWII project.

Theme 4: Web-design, user friendliness and visibility

The users of TRKC appear to be globally satisfied with the quality of the web-service. The Knowledge Centre web site is however suffering from a lack of visibility. It is in fact quite easy to retrieve the site by using "Transport Research Knowledge Centre" keywords on search engines. However, it is not the case when using the project acronym "EXTR@Web" as search keyword.

The EW project has established reciprocal links with relevant national/institutional sites. The objective of this is to increase the visibility of the site on widely used search engines like Google as well as promoting the site in selected communities. However, the Transport Research Knowledge Centre home page URL³⁴ is not referred to directly. Very often only the DG TREN home page URL is quoted on these sites as being the key entrance for accessing information about transport research.

³³ Intrasoft International *Supporting promotion of FP6 projects activities – A proposal to collect and propose FP6 project activities on CORDIS*

³⁴ The URL is the address of a resource, or file, available on the Internet.

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In order to assess the performance of the Knowledge Centre, the EW consortium intended to liaise with DG TREN webmaster and with Europa statistical unit in order to get appropriate traffic statistics. However, The EW consortium does not receive the Europa log files on a regular basis. Moreover, Europa log file includes only access statistics for the first hundred most popular DG TREN Europa web pages and does include only information about the number of hits and page views. This is insufficient to monitor with a high level of accuracy users' behaviour and preference.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Commission ensures that the name "Transport Research Knowledge Centre" is used exclusively both in internal and external communication. If both names are to be used we would recommend that the EW consortium use on regular basis submission software and services to promote the web portal by using the project acronym "*EXTR@Web*" as reference keyword as well in order to increase its visibility.

Considering the lack of quantifiable data, we recommend that the Commission ensures that additional monitoring features are used to enhance the system and to optimise traffic to the web site. The use of independent monitoring and statistical analysis tools should be considered. Software such as "Google Analytics" is completely free and provides accurate, in-depth web site traffic statistics for a web site. With such a tool, webmasters, web site owners can use web site tracking to understand web page hits and visitor activity - giving an in-depth and easy-to-understand picture of site traffic.

Theme 5: Management and input from key stakeholders

The EW is based on the idea of decentralisation. Several actors were intended to provide key inputs and key support, without which the project could not operate efficiently. This made the project vulnerable from the outset, and led to effectiveness problems in project implementation.

Inputs to the EW project was to be provided by 5 types of key stakeholders; the High Level Advisory Group; the Benchmarking Group RTD project coordinators; Commission staff within DG TREN and Commission staff within other DGs. All key stakeholders (excepted the AG), were intended to contribute to the data collection phase and the Commission and the BG were expected to proactively promote the EW ensuring together with the EW consortium the creation of awareness among potential users.

The key stakeholders have, to various extents, fulfilled their intended roles. As indicated above, problems have in particular occurred in relation to data collection, where the contribution from the BG, the Commission Scientific officers and RTD project coordinators has been very uneven. Uneven contribution is also noted in the area of promotion where Commission staff and BG members have played, globally, limited roles.

At national level, some BG members took a lead in the collection of information at national level, and contributed proactively to validation activities, other provided some support and some were only little or not involved in the data collection process or in other activities. This variation in contribution must be seen in relation to the fact that contribution to the project was not mandatory.

EU level there have been problems in ensuring consistent support to the data collection and in ensuring consistent promotion of the TRKC centre.

The EW project has suffered from limited high level political support and a dispersed management structure of research projects with DG TREN in various units and Directorates, with regularly changing scientific officers. These factors have made it difficult both to coordinate contribution to the EW project and to promote the project within DG TREN and in other DGs.

Moreover, there is little evidence of a coordinated effort within DG TREN to promote more actively the TRKC to potential external users. There have been a few actions to promote the project, but obvious promotion actions, such a proactive promotion on the DG TREN web-site and in the DG TREN

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newsletter, and systematic encouragement to the scientific officers to present the project when carrying out presentations externally have not taken place.

RTD project coordinators were intended to provide information on their projects to the EW consortium through the reporting scheme. We do not know how many project profiles and summaries were actually provided by RTD project coordinators. However, given the overall data collection result their contribution appears globally to be limited. This lack of contribution appears on the one hand to be due to lack of awareness of the extra-net reporting scheme and on the other to limited interest in providing the intended information which in all cases is not mandatory.

The problems related to data collection at EU level could be resolved by a contractual obligation for EU financed transport RTD projects to contribute to the EW projects, but there has been no such obligation under the 5FP. The EWII project base its data collection on the hypothesis that for the 6FP there will contractual obligation for EU financed transport RTD projects to contribute to the EWII project. We however understand that there is no such obligation under the 6FP. Therefore, others solutions are necessary if the EWII is to be a success.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Commission initiates the organisation of an AG meeting order to identify specific priorities and concerns among this group which should be taken into consideration when setting the final objectives for the EWII project. Continued support from this high level group is import to ensure accessibility to project and programme information and proactive promotion of the EWII project at national level.

We recommend that the Commission ensures that the future role of the foreseen AG is thoroughly discussed and that the scope of their work is clearly defined and agreed upon among all members of the AG group. The EWII proposal appears to indicate that the current AG is intended to pay a more proactive role under the EWII project and take over some of the responsibilities from the current BG. Therefore, defining future role of the foreseen AG should be a key priority during the initiation of the EWII project.

Given the experience with the BG and AG groups there is a need to limit the scope of the AG under the EWII project. The EWII consortium and its sub-contractors need to play a more proactive role as regard to data collection and promotion activities, compared to the system that was envisaged under the EW project.

We note that the EWII project foresees to sub-contract key activities to a group of “institutional sub-contractors”. It is foreseen that this is intended to be composed, at least partially, by the current BG members. We recommend that the Commission investigates to what extent this is feasible and if the AG support such an approach.

We recommend that the Commission thoroughly reviews the way it contributes to EW. For the EWII project we recommend that an overall strategy is implemented aiming both at supporting data collection and promotion of the TRKC. *In order to be effective this strategy needs to be endorsed by DG TREN's hierarchy in order to ensure effective implementation in the various directorates.* The key elements of this strategy should be:

- An overall internal policy within DG TREN obliging all scientific officers to proactively promote the EW project and in particular to inform regularly the RTD transport project coordinators about the EW project, and the RTD reporting scheme and encourage them to fill in the template. This internal policy should be supported by a document presenting the EWII projects and its objectives and which clearly indicates the actions that each scientific officer should take when administrating RTD transport projects. The document should be distributed to each scientific officer and provided systematically when new scientific officers are employed in DG TREN.

- As a part of this internal policy, scientific officers should be obliged to provide the final approved RTD transport reports to the EW consortium. In order to facilitate this process, final approved RTD transport reports could be centralised within the Commission in the unit responsible for the EWII project. In addition, each unit within DG TREN responsible for the management of RTD transport should provide an overview list of the project managed (including contact details to the RTD project coordinator) to the unit responsible for the EWII project which should centralise this information. This list should present an overview of the status of the projects, and should be updated on a regular basis.
- The second part of the strategy regards promotion actions. The Commission should as a minimum ensure that its proper information tools are used to promote the TRKC. The visibility of the TRKC should be improved on DG TREN web-pages, and the Transport Research Knowledge Centre name³⁵ should be systematically used. Moreover, once the TRKC is sufficiently updated, it should be promoted via information tools such as the DG TREN newsletter. In addition, a more proactive promotion approach could be envisaged, encouraging scientific officers to proactively promote the TRKC when carrying out presentations. This could be facilitated by the existence of a ready to made short power point presentation supported by a written presentation of the EW project and its objectives.
- The third part of the strategy regards the cooperation with other DGs. We recommend that DG TREN communicates on a high level to other DGs that manage EU financed transport research programmes presenting the EW project encouraging the scientific officers to regularly inform the RTD transport project coordinators about the EW project, and the RTD reporting scheme. This approach could be combined with a proposal to present the EWII project to scientific officers in the most relevant DGs.

Theme 6: Coherence between the implemented Extr@web project and the objectives set for the 5FP for dissemination and promotion

Given on the one hand the overall objectives for communication and dissemination for the 5th Framework Programme and on the other hand the objectives of EW and the intended outputs, it may be concluded that *the EW project has the potential to contribute significantly to the overall objectives for communication and dissemination for the 5th Framework Programme if the project is implemented as intended and if the quality of the outputs meets the needs of the target audience.* Two key elements will allow us to draw this conclusion. These are the two elements which compose the subject of our study and of this report.

A) The nature of the project and its 4 specific objectives which aims at *collecting, structuring, analysing and disseminating transport research results covering not only EU supported but also national financed research in the ERA* i.e. a very large amount of research.

B) A perception among the users and key stakeholders that the EW project, if implemented as intended, will be highly useful for the users.

As the EW project is not completed yet, it is too early to draw final conclusions, regarding the projects overall contribution to reaching the communication and dissemination objectives for the 5FP. However as indicated all along this study the EW project, while providing a coherent framework for providing information, has met substantial difficulties in providing timely access to the latest (transport research) results. For this reason EW overall contribution to reaching the communication and dissemination objectives for the 5FP, *at this time* (10 March 2006) may be considered as limited.

³⁵And not the Extra or Extra@web which are the names of the projects.

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ANNEXES