

# HOW WOULD CITIZENS LIKE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION?

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Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute, with the assistance of the OPTEM network, organised the first stage of the “Horizon EU: European citizenship, a horizontal development” from 7 December 2013 to 3 January 2014 collecting opinion in discussion groups of 157 European citizens from 18 member states about their vision of the EU and their access to European institutions. This synthesis covers the main points of the discussion on how citizens would like to communicate with the European Union.

## Introduction

157 citizens from 18 European Union member states (see *Map 1*) met in representative groups in order to discuss their vision of the EU and their access to the EU. Discussion groups were organised by the OPTEM network from 7 December 2013 to 3 January 2014 (see *Annex 1*).

They were chosen so as to establish a sample in which the diversity of European citizens is represented considering several socio-demographic criteria (see *Table 1*).

**TABLE 1** ▶ The profile of the 157 European citizens participating in the first stage of the “Horizon EU” project

|                             |                 |     |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----|
| Participants                |                 | 157 |
| Age range                   | 20-34           | 52  |
|                             | 35-49           | 59  |
|                             | 50+             | 46  |
| Socio-professional category | Low to middle   | 76  |
|                             | Middle to upper | 81  |
| Gender                      | Male            | 80  |
|                             | Female          | 77  |
| Nationality                 |                 | 18  |

This synthesis looks at the main points addressed in the discussion on how citizens would like to communicate with the EU. This text, written by Virginie Timmerman, is based on the elements from a European synthesis written by Daniel Debomy<sup>1</sup> and the (18) national reports produced by the partners of the Optem network. Opinions expressed here are only those of the participants in the discussion groups, and do not necessarily reflect those of the whole European citizens.

## 1. New means of expression for citizens: spontaneous reactions

Participants in the group discussions were asked how they would like to communicate with the European Union and initially asked to come up with new means of expression for citizens they could use to make their voices heard.

The wide range of proposals (see *Map 2*) reflects the different resolutions produced in the discussion groups<sup>2</sup>. Citizens frequently expressed a desire for closer and more consistent communication with the European Union (via closer points of contact for citizens), better access to European institutions and rep-

1. Daniel Debomy, “The involvement of EU citizens in the European project”, *Synthesis*, Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute, July 2014.

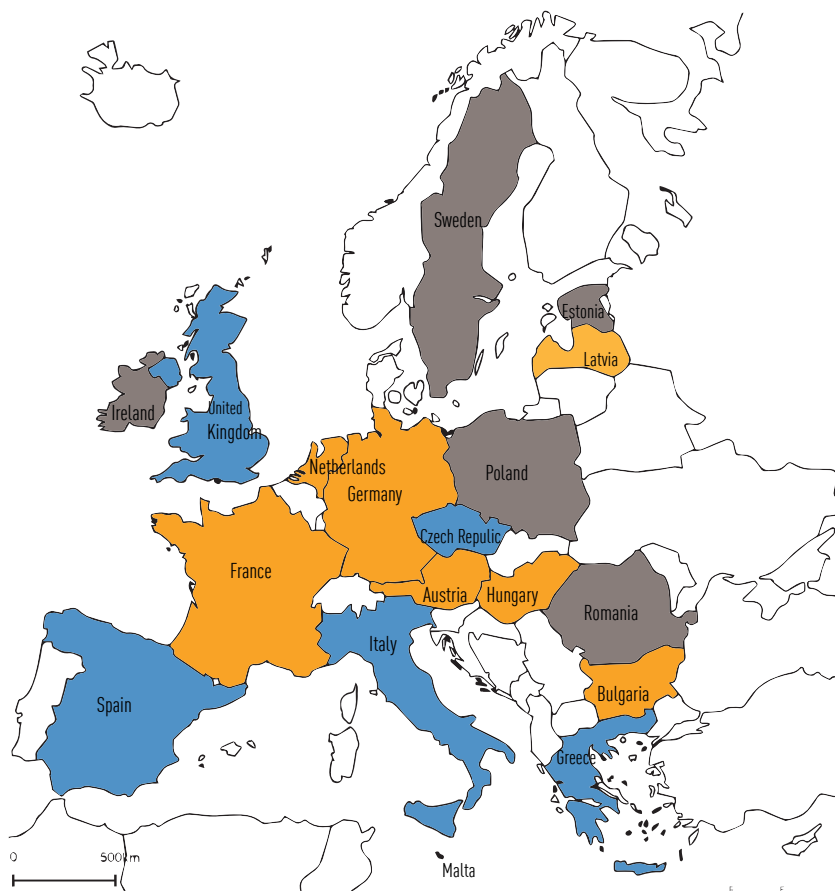
2. Virginie Timmerman, “How do citizens see the European Union?”, *Synthesis*, Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute, November 2014; Virginie Timmerman and Daniel Debomy, “How does the European Union communicate with citizens?”, *Synthesis*, Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute, November 2014.

representatives (via less bureaucracy and more direct, personalized contact) and, lastly, more information (particularly on European issues that affect their daily lives) so the EU mattered more in their lives. In fact, the ideas of means of expression for citizens suggested are very often related to the Internet and

other electronic communication tools, which are seen as quick, accessible and practical.

The different means of expression for citizens suggested by the participating citizens can be divided into five categories (see Graph 1).

MAP 1 ► Proposals of citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project for new means of expression for citizens



KEY ► Maps 1 and 2

| POSITIVE                  | MIXED (BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIDES)    | NEGATIVE                           |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Estonia                   | Austria                                     | Czech Republic                     |
| Ireland                   | Bulgaria                                    | Greece (major disappointment)      |
| Malta                     | France (deterioration)                      | Italy (disillusion and resentment) |
| Poland                    | Germany (deterioration)                     | Spain                              |
| Romania (moderation)      | Hungary                                     | United Kingdom                     |
| Sweden (partially offset) | Netherlands                                 |                                    |
|                           | Latvia (initial fear substantially reduced) |                                    |

MAP 2 ► Proposals of citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project for new means of expression for citizens

**Austria**

Ongoing online surveys on various topics based on representative samples, information and discussion events organised in regional capitals, discussion and events about EU topics with people from various European states

**Bulgaria**

Personal meetings held in EP’s offices in Bulgaria, online communication with EU representatives, creation of a think tank collecting citizens’ opinions

**Czech Republic**

Direct contact with a mediator, a city centre information office, open debates between citizens and EU representative, letterbox/ emails, regular (live) television broadcasts, regular EP reports

**Estonia**

Crazy stupid idea to draw attention (protest song festival, setting oneself on fire on the main square, melting snow with blow-dryers, Facebook groups/ events to gather the interested people, pan-European support groups and pressure groups via Facebook and other social networking sites

**France**

Use electronic means of communication (Internet, social networks), proximity in provision of information and debate (halls, public places as “local district councils”, “citizens’ consultations”

**Germany**

Referenda for a direct democracy, institutionalised contacts with MEPs, television programme broadcast at prime time hours and presented by a charismatic personality

**United Kingdom**

Demonstrations, opinion polls communicated thanks to publicity, EU representatives going out into the community, promote awareness of the names and contact details of the MEPs, develop means to reach non-English-speaking speakers

**Sweden**

Direct voting through Internet, signed petitions for a more direct democracy

**Spain**

Citizens’ Advice Bureau in every country, website, unique 24h dedicated communication channel, TV show and news, EU publicity, international cross-cultural meetings on TV programmes, idea exchange across EU citizens, work exchanges with other countries

**Romania**

Promotional movies, documentaries, advertising and entertainment shows on TV, territorial offices for MEPs, a public relation department in every regions, opinions polls, special information building

**Poland**

Discussion forums (both on the Internet and in public), telephone helpline, website, special TV programme, meetings with MEPs in local communities

**Netherlands**

Joint work of consultation citizens-lobby, Internet referenda, online continuous surveys, citizens’ consultations, debates, online communities, entertaining trainings

**Malta**

Direct email correspondence with the EU, online polls, online forums, all of this with an actual follow-up, creation of workshops to discuss issues

**Latvia**

Special uniform homepage where citizens can express in their own languages, get answers, and easy-to-use, series of TV broadcasts in all the member states, specially created institution for claims and recommendations

**Greece**

Pan-European tv channel, representative citizens’ forum, support group per commissioner comprised by citizens, online voting system, friendlier, more interactive website, pan-European referenda

**Hungary**

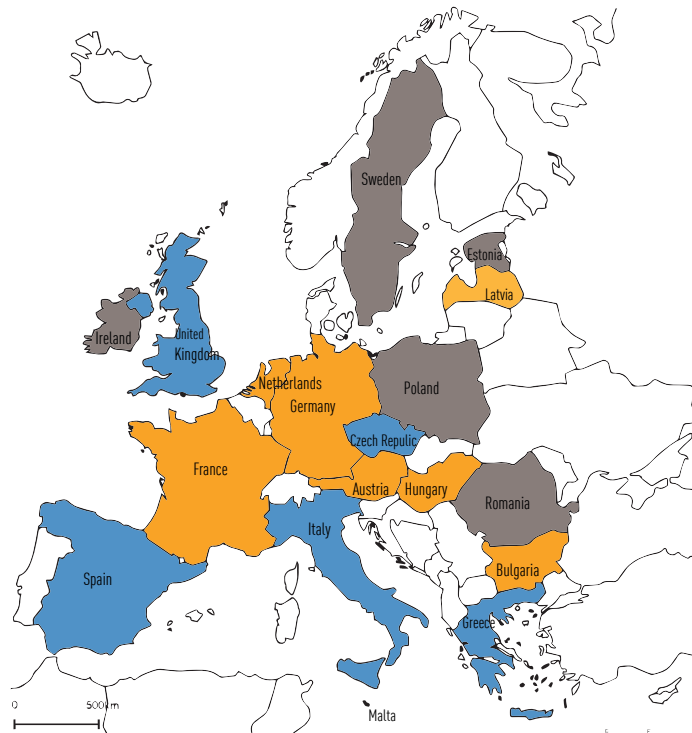
A citizens’ platform on the Internet where you could be informed, debate, have feedback and analyses of what is said

**Ireland**

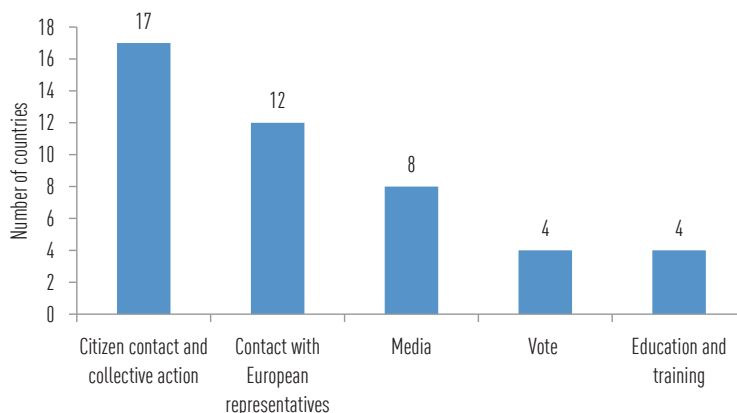
Improved communication with MEPs, promotion of the EU in schools, detailed information regarding the EU’s rationale behind new legislations, detailed information on the EU’s websites, telephone helpline

**Italy**

Website dedicated to the reception of opinions and news from the Italian citizens, public offices (counters at the Communes’ or Provinces’ offices), meet EU politicians



GRAPH 1 ► Proposals of citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project for new means of expression for citizens



All the discussion groups – with the exception of German participants – came up with means of expression for citizens that involved regular contact with – or between – European citizens, through joint initiatives in particular. The most frequently suggested means<sup>3</sup> would be an online platform or interactive forum where citizens could find information, discuss issues and freely express their views with help from moderators or experts. The latter could also provide answers using various methods (the question of anonymity was raised in several group discussions). The second means discussed in several groups<sup>4</sup> was online polls with a simple design (one question for a representative group) which would be held regularly and whose results would be widely published so that every citizen could be informed. The other means mentioned were: a Facebook group – one possible variant of the previously cited citizen platform<sup>5</sup>, public consultations<sup>6</sup>, the creation of a citizen think tank that would survey, analyze and share public opinion<sup>7</sup>, or, in the same vein, lobby-citizen partnerships in which both groups would work together to provide a full and comprehensive assessment to members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and representatives<sup>8</sup>, local public debates and discussions where each citizen could share their opinion on European proposals (modelled on French neighbourhood council meetings)<sup>9</sup>, events involving citizens from various member states<sup>10</sup>, petitions<sup>11</sup> and rallies<sup>12</sup>.

3. Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom.  
4. Austria, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, United Kingdom.  
5. Estonia, France.  
6. France, Netherlands, Poland.  
7. Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia.  
8. Netherlands.  
9. France, Greece.  
10. Austria.  
11. Sweden.  
12. United Kingdom.

### Citizens' voices

*“The Internet is a huge network for people. You could do online surveys on alternatives, objectives etc. with a certain number of people from every social structure per country. This would be a practical way to involve citizens” Austrian citizen*

*“I think going to another country and talking to the people living there will lead to a new way of thinking” Austrian citizen*

*“There should be events, organised by the EU in corporation with the respective states, which offer people from various countries the chance to get together and exchange views” Austrian citizen*

*“I don’t do Twitter and my mother doesn’t even have a computer” British citizen*

*“Put someone from the street next to every lobbyist.” Dutch citizen*

*“Make people answer one question every morning.” Dutch citizen*

*“Recruit people from the street for different subjects.” Dutch citizen*

*“Put a large group together to have a debate.” Dutch citizen*

*“Develop an online community.” Dutch citizen*

*“[A local district councils to] motivate those who are not motivated and who do not vote” French citizen*

*“Like a jury, people from different countries, selected to have different backgrounds that offer their opinion and input on decisions to be taken” Greek citizen*

*“Since I cannot reach the commissioner directly, nor the members of the European Parliament, such a group [a representative citizens’ forum] can collect my petitions or even ideas and communicate them to the respective bodies... In such a way, they would be obliged to listen to what we have to say, now they are not” Greek citizen*

*“Like a news portal, dedicated to the updating on main EU subjects. One can choose which sections interest him and news can come through e-mail or Facebook” Greek citizen*

*“EU matters would be decided based on a continuous referendum flow [thanks to a website]” Hungarian citizen*

*“If the case reaches a certain level or a certain number of contacts, it would be obligatory to make it public in some form, on TV, at courts, in the Parliament etc., depending on what the matter is about.” Hungarian citizen*

*“In fact, I don’t know if this really exists, i.e. that a case must be examined above a critical level. Who knows? Maybe it is prescribed somewhere in the EU, but we don’t know about it.” Hungarian citizen*

*“I can imagine that what we write down here as a utopia is already used e.g. in Sweden” Hungarian citizen*

*“I would form an opinion about anything only if I give my name to it. I guess it is not fair to tell something without a name.” Hungarian citizen*

*“I think it is more and more important in Hungary that this can be made anonymously. Maybe I would not want them to know the email address from where I sent my opinion.” Hungarian citizen*

*“It would be important to make sure that they won’t throw dirt at me if I give my name. This is essential! An absolute guarantee would be required for this.” Hungarian citizen*

*“Have some link on the website that says what happened this week; you can click on it yourself if you really want.” Irish citizen*

*“Discussion Centre close to the Parliament would be good. Because an ordinary Pole has not enough opportunity to express views. So I am not really sure if the Polish members of the EU Parliament really know what Mr Smith is thinking.” Polish citizen*

*“Can we be more involved? Of course, you can go and express your views. The question is about the reaction. Will our case be passed to somebody who has the power to decide? Or will we just be talking to bureaucrats, who would just listen?” Polish citizen*

*“There could be polls on what topics are being discussed within the EU.” Romanian citizen*

*“It would be nice to have a building comprising all of these. It would be interesting to have all these ideas gathered under one roof.” Romanian citizen*

Most discussion groups<sup>13</sup> suggested means of expression that involved contact with MEPs and representatives from European institutions. These means are not particularly new, but participants suggested adding features to make them new for them – regularity, proximity, publicity and personalised exchanges. The most frequently suggested means in this category<sup>14</sup> was debates, with MEPs, representatives from EU institutions and experts, held on a regular basis and accessible to citizens – in regional capitals – where each participant can express his or her viewpoint and be taken into consideration. In addition to debates, certain citizens<sup>15</sup> would like to be able to meet MEPs individually. MEPS could perhaps have offices in large and medium-sized cities with set office hours on specific days. Participants were aware, however, that this would be virtually impossible, given the already very busy schedules of MEPs. Other citizens<sup>16</sup> imagined a local information centre where individuals can find information and talk with experts. Lastly, participants suggested electronic communication<sup>17</sup>, written or by telephone, which is already possible but not optimal given that responses, if there are any, are slow to arrive. English citizens in their group discussions added that if these exchanges are available, citizens should be given the contact details of MEPs to make them more effective.

13. Germany, Bulgaria, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, United Kingdom.

14. Austria, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Czech Republic, United Kingdom.

15. Germany, Bulgaria, Spain, Poland, Romania.

16. Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Romania.

17. Bulgaria, France, Malta, Czech Republic, United Kingdom.

### Citizens' voices

*"The regional offices should organise events and discussions on specific topics, distribute information, take ballot cards for ongoing surveys – we could do this in all of the capitals"* Austrian citizen

*"But also in the state capitals, because events and such in Vienna are of no use for me if I live in Tyrol"* Austrian citizen

*"A dedicated service to which questions, complaints, requests could be addressed, and getting a reply"* French citizen

*"I would like to have some Merkel or the alike come and get in contact with the people and their problems"* Italian citizen

*"The deputies should have territorial offices where people who live there can come and express their opinion. They have the duty to ask people about their opinions on alimentation, culture, education, industry etc."* Romanian citizen

*"These European deputies are like a buffer between us and the Union. They should present us the state of affairs, so that we don't have to read those long and boring documents. Briefly – tell us what projects are being debated and then ask for our opinion."* Romanian citizen

*"It would be interesting to have a PR/client service department that would be extended to a local level. We don't have time to go on the EU's website and try to decipher all that technical language. I think there should be a department or some kind of entity that would simplify the information."* Romanian citizen

*"There should be a building where you have offices for all the big issues – agriculture, research etc. –, where you can get rapidly informed and also express your opinion. [...] In short – a building with offices providing quick information about the major current topics and also absorbing people's opinions, for the European Union has a soul, but not a body."* Romanian citizen

*"Regarding the idea of offices where you could go (like when you get a meeting with your mayor) and then be guided further on, to other offices – it is not a bad idea, but it has to be personalized, the relation should be personal. In these offices there should be*

*people you can talk to and who are open toward citizens."* Romanian citizen

*"For example, doctors or medical representatives who want to talk to their MEP to be heard on some issue and defend their rights"* Spanish citizen

In several group discussions, media-related means of expression for citizens were mentioned: regular broadcasting of interesting television programmes during prime time<sup>18</sup>, documentaries, promotional films about Europeans and/or European issues<sup>19</sup>, televised reports of MEPs about their activities<sup>20</sup>, a Europe-wide television channel<sup>21</sup>, publicity<sup>22</sup>, mobilising media interest with attention-grabbing events (protest song festival, melting snow with hairdryers, etc.)<sup>23</sup>.

### Citizens' voices

*"We could imagine a programme called 'News from the EU'. That would be well made, interesting and not broadcasted at 11 pm when you doze off in front of your TV. It should be short and interesting"* German citizen

*"Such an institution like the EU should have its own means to inform and interact... they should have their own TV channel"* Greek citizen

*"They could make some films – promotional films – about the priorities of the European Union and show them in cinemas."* Romanian citizen

*"Advertising clips or entertainment TV shows on European topics, in order to make these topics more accessible, funnier... And you could have documentaries for the more serious people."* Romanian citizen

Citizens in a few discussion groups said they would like to express their views by voting in referenda. German citizens (referenda on European issues are not provided for under German law), Swedish citizens and Dutch citizens would like to express their views on certain issues directly via referenda – via the Internet, for example. Greek citizens believed that Europe-wide referenda were a good way to develop a feeling of belonging to the EU.

18. Germany, Spain, Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania.

19. Romania.

20. Czech Republic.

21. Greece.

22. Spain.

23. Estonia.

**Citizens' voices**

*"Hold referenda via the Internet." Dutch citizen*

*"I voted, but I do not know for whom. We do not know the others either (laughter!). Because we are not really interested. The Chancellor we do know!" German citizens*

*"In many cases, Internet voting have made a difference... this could also happen here" Greek citizen*

*"A referendum on whether Greece should abandon the euro area, for example, could be really catastrophic. A referendum on whether homosexual couples should have the same rights as heterosexual ones, however, could make sense" Greek citizen*

Lastly, citizens in a few discussion groups mentioned education- and information-related solutions: classes on the EU and European issues in schools<sup>24</sup>, workshops and/or exchanges for professionals<sup>25</sup>. These ideas are not direct means of expression for citizens but would result in citizens being better informed and able to forge and express their opinions.

**Citizens' voices**

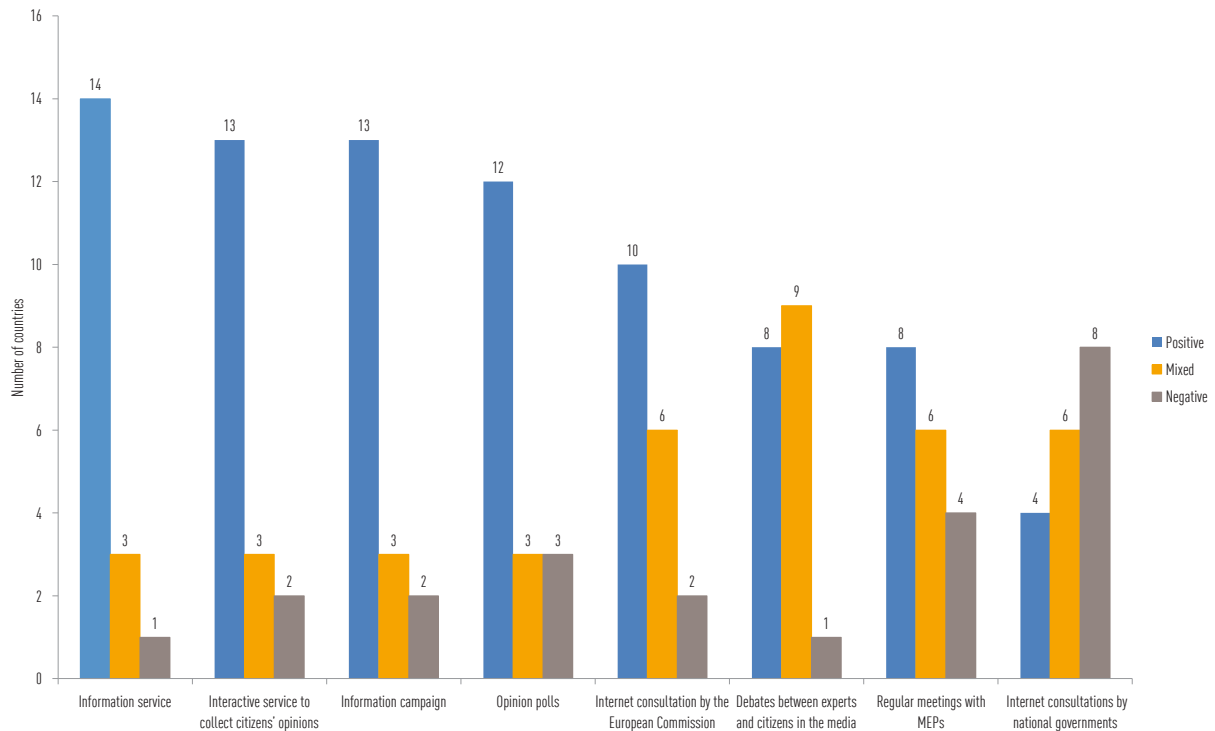
*"Develop a real life game/training." Dutch citizen*

*"They will be more European than we will [thanks to promotion of the EU in school]." Irish citizen*

**2. Assessment of the proposals of the new means of expression for citizens**

Discussion group participants were then asked to assess eight proposals aimed at enhancing citizen involvement. The assessment of the different proposals by citizens is consistent with the priorities and reactions expressed during discussions (see Graph 2).

**GRAPH 2** ▶ Assessment of the new means of expression for citizens to express by citizens taking part in the "Horizon EU" project



24. Ireland.  
25. Spain, Malta, Netherlands.

The assessment is also consistent with citizens' overall attitude towards the EU (*see Map 1*); certain citizens - British and Czech - show little enthusiasm for any of the proposals, whereas others, the Estonian and Romanian participants, for example, are favourable.

- **An information service on how the EU works and EU policies, with an information office in every major city that is open to the public, a website, and a service that provides a prompt response to questions asked by phone, letter or email.**

This proposal elicited a very positive response (*see Map 3*).

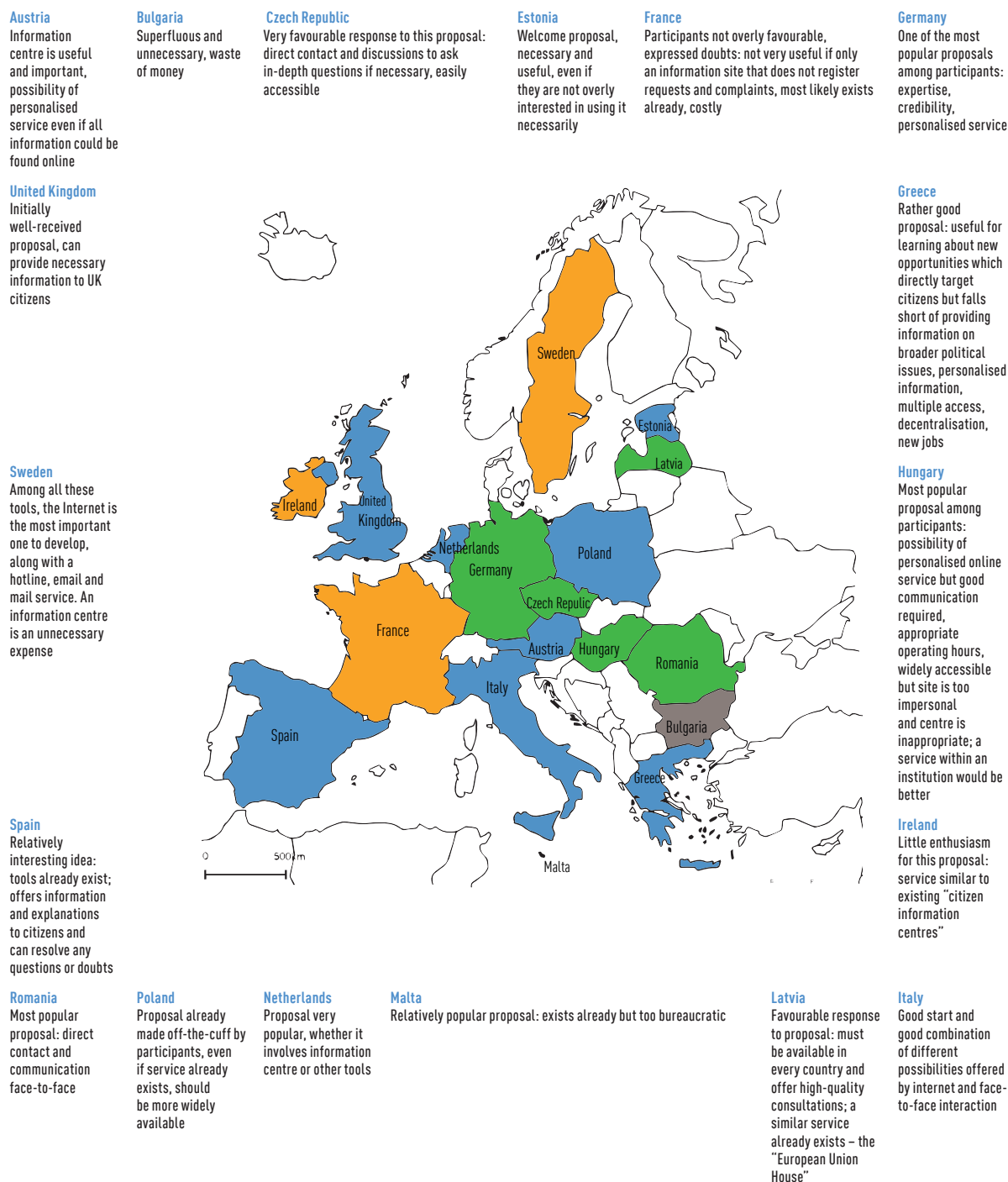
It received a relatively or completely favourable response in most of the groups, provided that it involved a competent and efficient information service which was easily accessible and local, where visitors were given a personalised welcome and could obtain explanations and discuss issues as opposed to just finding information alone.

Some participants had reservations based on the fact that a simple information service did not require an expensive office given that all information would already be available on the website.

This proposal is similar in content to the Europe Direct services created several years ago but which few people have heard of.



**MAP 3** ▶ Assessment of the proposal for an information service by citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project



**KEY** ▶ Maps 3 to 10

|        |               |
|--------|---------------|
| GREEN  | Very positive |
| BLUE   | Positive      |
| ORANGE | Mixed         |
| GREY   | Negative      |

## Citizens' voices

*"It's useless because nobody picks up the phone. I needed information as I am commuting to a non-EU country but I just couldn't reach anyone"* Austrian citizen

*"Questions about the functioning of the EU can simply be looked up somewhere else"* Austrian citizen

*"Important for older people without Internet access"* Austrian citizen

*"If I need information about the EU and I need it fast, I don't want to be searching the Internet for hours; I just want to make a call and get all the information I need"* Austrian citizen

*"The group that has concrete questions on the EU is very small, so an office will not be useful."* Dutch citizen

*"A website seems rather abstract. You really have to search."* Dutch citizen

*"Asking questions electronically would be handy."* Dutch citizen

*"It would be super. We would know where to go when looking for information. If you don't understand, there is someone to talk to, we would be dealing with specialists. And personal contact, I find that is important. We would know that there is a centre in the city where we can go when we feel the need to get informed. And when we just pass by, we can pick up a brochure"* German citizens

*"For an average citizen it is good to meet a living person there, to whom they can tell what they want. It is already comforting to know that someone listens to you."* Hungarian citizen

*"I would use it, but - on the one hand - do they tell me which forum to go to? Where can I write and what, and what can I find and where?"* Hungarian citizen

*"When we joined the EU, there used to be such 'Europe Point' offices, then they were gone."* Hungarian citizen

*"Each local municipality should have a small, separated office where I can submit my proposals or letters."* Hungarian citizen

*"Each district or village should have a place that I can go to."* Hungarian citizen

*"The people who are already working in citizens advice offices, train them up on it ... expand someone within the government or some civil service role already".* Irish citizen

*"The problem is: who would make it go? The idea is good, but it would clash with the Italian problems, at the counters there would be inefficient people, as in all public offices"* Italian citizen

*"A cry in the desert, it serves no purpose"* Italian citizen

*"I would definitely use such an opportunity if, for instance, I would like to go to work to another EU member state for some 3 months. Then I would need a consultation on what I need to know in this country, for instance, about taxes or other issues."* Latvian citizen

*"I would like this service to be a guide, like a tourist information centre, which could provide professional advice what to do in every situation, what would be correct, what the risks are, etc."* Latvian citizen

*"I am very interested in this. It concentrates the ideas (so that I don't waste my time reading all the documents), and then it asks for my opinion on the issues that have been discussed."* Romanian citizen

*"I would go a bit further. I would create a social network where everything would be very transparent and with a FAQ section where I can find or even suggest a topic that interests me."* Romanian citizen

*"A forum - usually, a site also has a forum. I am considering all that a site entails, including a forum."* Romanian citizen

*"Not necessarily an office, but a building in its own right. I would find interesting an architecture competition for that. It should be a totally futuristic building and people would know that it is the EU's building."* Romanian citizen

*"It should be something more welcoming, because all ministries and city halls have now such information offices and almost no-one visits them."* Romanian citizen

*"There is a question of design, of course. But what interests me is functionality, exchange of information, direct communication." Romanian citizen*

*"I would develop a community, a site is too impersonal." Romanian citizen*

*"I would create - but I don't know where - a special department. Something bigger and more open toward citizens." Romanian citizen*

*"I said 'quickly' which means there would be many people to receive all the queries. It may exist already so this could be happening now, but I don't use it now because I feel abandoned". Spanish citizen*

*"The channel is not appealing to me if at the end of the line, a machine is answering the telephone". Spanish citizen*

*"I think it is very good but maybe too ambitious and a bit difficult to maintain both the 'quickly', which is a bit subjective, and the 'on the telephone' - it is impossible that the person picking up the telephone will answer all your doubts". Spanish citizen*

- **Debates via major media outlets on European Union policy between average citizens and experts in these areas**

This proposal elicited a very mixed response (see Map 4).

Groups that tended to welcome this proposal supported the participation of ordinary citizens in these debates and the promised interaction with experts.

Participants from other member states expressed doubts - to varying degrees - over the conditions needed to ensure that the debates were successful and "produced results": high-quality and representative experts and moderators, broadcasting schedules, choice of subjects, neutrality, objectivity, honesty, balance, broadcasting using different channels (TV, the Internet). Many spoke of their experience with political information or 'talk' shows in their own countries which were disappointing.

**MAP 4** ► Assessment of the proposal for debates between citizens and experts in the media by citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project

**Austria**

Very important proposal if information is given in a neutral, objective, balanced and honest manner; a column on European issues in newspapers, or even a whole paper about the EU are other possibilities

**Bulgaria**

Idea accepted with a slight degree of irritation – similar debates have already been organised which have no impact and/or influence on decision makers; useful for obtaining information

**Czech Republic**

Proposal accepted but in a contradictory way: debates are often long and boring, therefore they should meet certain requirements: participants chosen objectively, a real objective: participants chosen objectively, a real possibility for citizens to express their opinions to obtain the desired responses

**Estonia**

Little enthusiasm for proposal: completely useless for some, somewhat interesting for others; gives experts access to the realities faced by citizens

**France**

Interesting but not very original proposal, programmes like this already exist and interactive aspect is interesting

**Germany**

Controversial proposal: citizens could ask “real” questions, but many similar programmes exist, worthwhile depending on the quality of participants and when they are shown

**United Kingdom**

Proposal raising some interest; such programmes are already available at European level, few are actively participating on account of laziness and a lack of information, time would be too short to cover all the issues

**Sweden**

Interesting proposal: relevant and easy to access; debates on European issues concerning Swedish citizens are already broadcast

**Spain**

Interesting proposal: a good way to bring together different viewpoints but information must be provided simply to remain accessible. Interaction between citizens and experts makes EU a part of daily life; discussion is preferred to debate

**Romania**

Positive reactions: interactivity that could encourage citizens’ participation and EU reactions; in addition to traditional media, debate could broadcast online

**Poland**

Very attractive proposal: an open discussion between citizens and experts promises to be interesting, but some doubts expressed about the diverse range of opinions represented in society, on the emotional level of debates and on the influence of such debates on political decisions

**Netherlands**

Doubts about the interest and credibility of these debates if they are not conducted with European Union representatives

**Malta**

Such debates are unnecessary because they have no influence, the EU should have a specific channel for those who are interested

**Latvia**

Interesting proposal because some issues warrant debate, its success depends on its format and the moderators’ work

**Greece**

Negative reaction because solutions related to national “rules” while even the public TV channels are virtually inexistent and not watched to a great extent and private channels only show their point of view

**Hungary**

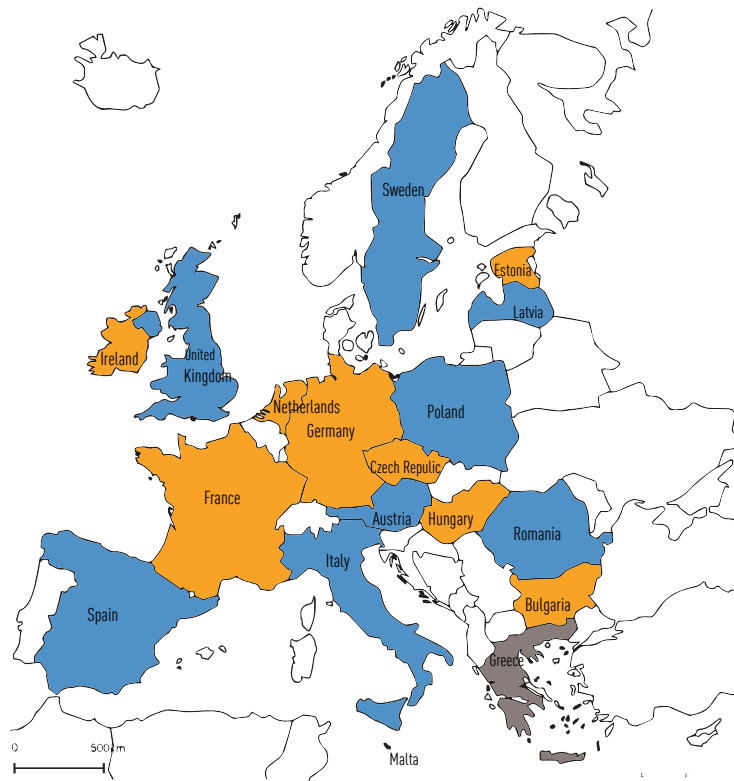
Not very enthusiastic reactions; possible manipulation with regard to the choices of experts, moderators and the audience, debate is not part of Hungarian cultural habits sometimes seen on foreign channels

**Ireland**

Little interest in attending or listening to such debates; issues debated should be topical and concern the daily lives of citizens, the moderator should provide some explanations so that everyone can understand and participate

**Italy**

Certain consider that this proposal is necessary so as to be able to forge an opinion on European issues, but they should be accompanied by practical services and prepared content so that everyone can participate and tailored to the citizens’ needs



## Citizens' voices

*"How about a separate column in the newspaper with EU-related information only?" Austrian citizen*

*"This way, I would get information about the EU with all the other articles I read every day" Austrian citizen*

*"Combining such information with a daily routine makes sense to me. This way, you receive information about the EU via a medium that you use every day, like the newspaper 'Kurier'" Austrian citizen*

*"I think it might be useful." Dutch citizen*

*"It has to be someone from Europe that comes to the work floor." Dutch citizen*

*"I doubt if people would come voluntarily. The EU already is very distant. Better if you treat it like an opinion poll." Dutch citizen*

*"It's always the same thing. It's like 'Hart aber fair'. It depends on the participants, once it is interesting, another time not. And the personality of the moderator also plays a great part" German citizen*

*"See something from a different aspect. If I think about something, I usually don't think of any other aspect. So this would be the advantage of such a debate" Hungarian citizen*

*"The problem is that most Italians would not know what they are talking about, they should first be exposed to the basics" Italian citizen*

*"That would really be interesting if the problems would be analysed in a broader context, at the EU level not only at the national level." Latvian citizen*

*"Besides going to an information office, there could be debates between citizens (like the one we are having now), in the presence of those who are informed about the EU. It shouldn't be like when you just sit into an audience." Romanian citizen*

*"Fifty people could fit in there and everyone could express his/her opinion. There should be an interactive discussion, on a weekly basis, a kind of Vox Populi, where everyone could speak his/her mind and receive information." Romanian citizen*

*"Some people would get more involved in EU issues and their feedback would get to the EU institutions in a more consistent fashion than having a hundred people with a hundred questions." Romanian citizen*

*"In a group discussion, certain problems and solutions would prevail and communication with the EU would become smoother in both ways." Romanian citizen*

*"There could be very simply a live stream of the debates, besides having televisions filming. YouTube offers something like that and it costs nothing. Everyone can watch it. You don't depend on anyone - the debates are there on the Internet and who wants to can watch them." Romanian citizen*

*"I find it to be the most productive proposition... Debates may have a crucial role, but it is important how we use them - where they go and how they can change things." Romanian citizen*

*"If the commissioner for agriculture comes to the debates, then there should be 10-15 people interested in agriculture. Topics should be previously announced, so that people interested in them would show up." Romanian citizen*

*"There is no method of selecting between all these ideas and clearly there should be one." Romanian citizen*

*"I would rename these debates as 'brainstorming'. This is what we are doing now and I personally discovered here a lot of interesting ideas that I had not even thought about." Romanian citizen*

*"It is ridiculous. In the end, you'll go to a radio station or a TV channel, and it will all be focused on what they are interested in. I don't think this will allow citizens to find out about European rules, and why a rule is really going to be implemented". Spanish citizen*

*"I think an exchange of opinions between experienced and inexperienced people is very good. But a debate including people who are not at the same level is totally unrealistic. In the end, it is not a debate - one will clearly swallow the other". Spanish citizen*

*"Experts may know more about some topics but they are not the owners of the truth, and the ones who know about real everyday situations are us, the citizens". Spanish citizen*

- **Regular polls throughout Europe so as to learn what all of the European citizens are thinking.**

The proposal for cross-border polls was most often seen favourably (see Map 5).

The existence of such Europe-wide surveys - Eurobarometer - is virtually unknown.

In the groups where the proposal was assessed positively, the benefit of the proposal was first in polls which are a form of citizen consultation, and second in the possibility which it provides to make comparisons with other countries (provided that the questions concern and affect citizens in concrete terms, and that the results are easily and rapidly accessible).

**MAP 5** Assessment of the proposal for opinion polls by citizens taking part in the "Horizon EU" project

**Austria**

Very important and useful, attractive way to keep citizens informed and to raise their interest, already mentioned spontaneously

**Bulgaria**

Positively seen idea, thanks to the possibility of having transnational exchanges concerning opinions of European citizens; they should be organised regularly via the Internet and broadcast during media events before important decisions are taken

**Czech Republic**

Positive concept: possibility to compare opinions of European citizens on different issues, easily conducted, interesting source of information but processing data takes a long time, doubts about the influence over European institutions, possible animosity between citizens of different European countries

**Estonia**

Very positive reaction: should be conducted regularly and the results should be widely communicated

**France**

Extremely positive reaction: regularly, possibility to make comparisons between opinions of European citizens, wide communication of results, and easy access, representing the diversity of the populations

**Germany**

Very positive reactions; representing the diversity of European populations, possibility to compare opinions of European citizens, but lack of credibility in view of the differences between the pre-election polls and the election outcome

**Sweden**

Interesting proposal, raised in spontaneous ideas: provides new possibilities, polls solely in Sweden on European issues would be even more interesting

**United Kingdom**

Interest, doubts about the existence of this type of poll enabling the EU to take the opinion of European citizens into account

**Spain**

Negative and very negative reactions, interesting but who could be interested in knowing the opinion of Spanish people

**Romania**

Very useful

**Poland**

Widely recognised and accepted activity because of its use during Poland's accession but discussions are a better way to collect opinions of people who provide sometimes unpredictable responses as opposed to pre-completed questionnaires

**Netherlands**

Very useful, already regularly produced by the EU but the results should be widely spread

**Malta**

Very good way to communicate with the EU because very direct, use of electronic channels is very practical, doubts about the security and monitoring of Internet services and the language that can be used given the wide range of EU languages

**Latvia**

Very interesting to learn what other European citizens think about European current events, results should be published on popular news websites, it would provide a certain credibility to the EU

**Italy**

Abstract and torturous, no interest in knowing the opinion of other European citizens, waste of time and money

**Greece**

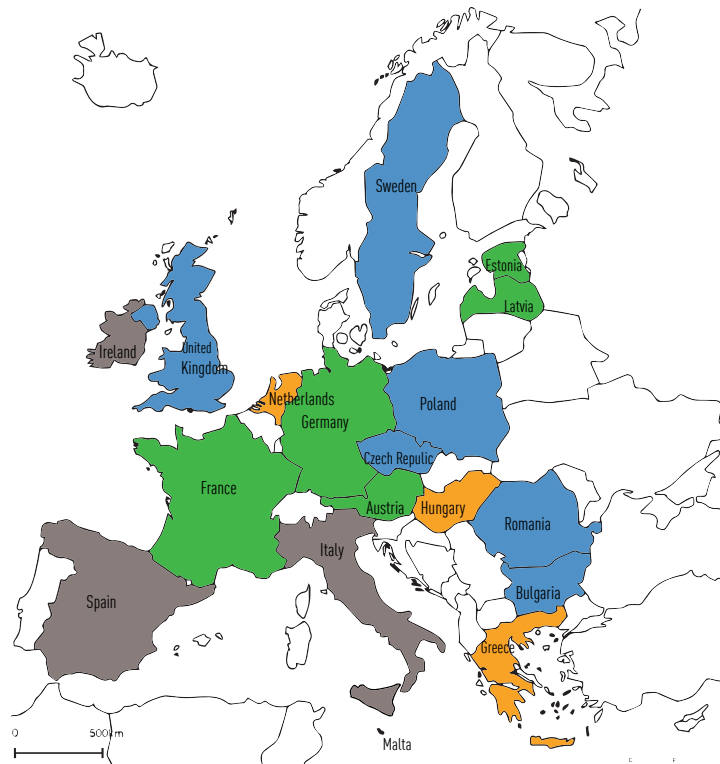
Ambivalent proposal: the possibility to express your opinion and to compare European opinions are the positive sides, but polls are not attractive enough and intrusive, an indirect way to express your opinion, loss of individuality

**Hungary**

Proposal raising interest: depends greatly on the questionnaires, the means used (representative samples, the Internet), the advantage is that passive citizens can be reached

**Ireland**

Very interesting proposal, Eurobarometers exist already, and national polls are published regularly in the media without much influence



## Citizens' voice

*"It would provide a useful opportunity for all citizens to stay up to date if they are invited to take part in surveys on a regular basis"* Austrian citizen

*"The statistical results are shortened in most cases which makes it difficult to get an understanding of the questions asked or the samples used..."* Austrian citizen

*"The transparency of results is important".* Austrian citizen

*"They should always publish a condensed version and the full version including all of the details".* Austrian citizen

*"Most opinion polls are useful."* Dutch citizen

*"It shows everyone has his own opinion."* Dutch citizen

*"Useful for us and for the European Commission."* Dutch citizen

*"You can learn from each other and from other countries."* Dutch citizen

*"It is a totally unrealistic idea. It is terribly time and energy consuming to put oneself on the move to go and attend such a debate"* German citizen

*"On the occasion of the recent election, there was a debate in the bar down the street from my home with an SPD deputy. I listened to him for 5 minutes because I was there, but not more. It was terribly boring"* German citizen

*"A permanent poll... why not?"* French citizen

*"For better (mutual) understanding"* French citizen

*"You must not need to go and search for them"* French citizen

*"For such an initiative to be productive, it needs strong advertising so that people are interested and*

*expect the results in anxiety. And it also needs to be analysed on TV or other media"* Greek citizen

*"Numbers are not enough to express a mentality. I want the freedom to express myself as an individual"* Greek citizen

*"This is interesting only if they ask as many people as possible."* Hungarian citizen

*"Just like in a referendum"* Hungarian citizen

*"It is not for sure that they can hear opinions from all social groups."* Hungarian citizen

*"If they contact me, it may be easier to voice an opinion about something, compared to having to do something or go somewhere in order to say what I think, e.g. going to an office, sending a letter."* Hungarian citizen

*"You see them in the Sunday papers and all, Labour are up and Labour are down. They are up this week and down the next week".* Irish citizen

*"Why we as Italian citizens should be interested in what the other European citizens think, and why should we take an interest in the problems of the others, we are not even interested in our Italian neighbour, let's imagine people from other countries"* Italian citizen

*"Statistics are always welcome."* Romanian citizen

*"Everything that involves having information from other countries, other citizens, is always positive".* Spanish citizen

*"It is another channel so people express themselves, and this is fine, but I don't know to what extent I may be interested in what other people may think about it".* Spanish citizen

*"I don't think that, generally speaking, anybody cares what people in other countries think about anything, and I don't know what value this would have".* Spanish citizen

- **The possibility to meet locally, several times in the year, with your member of European Parliament and other political officials.**

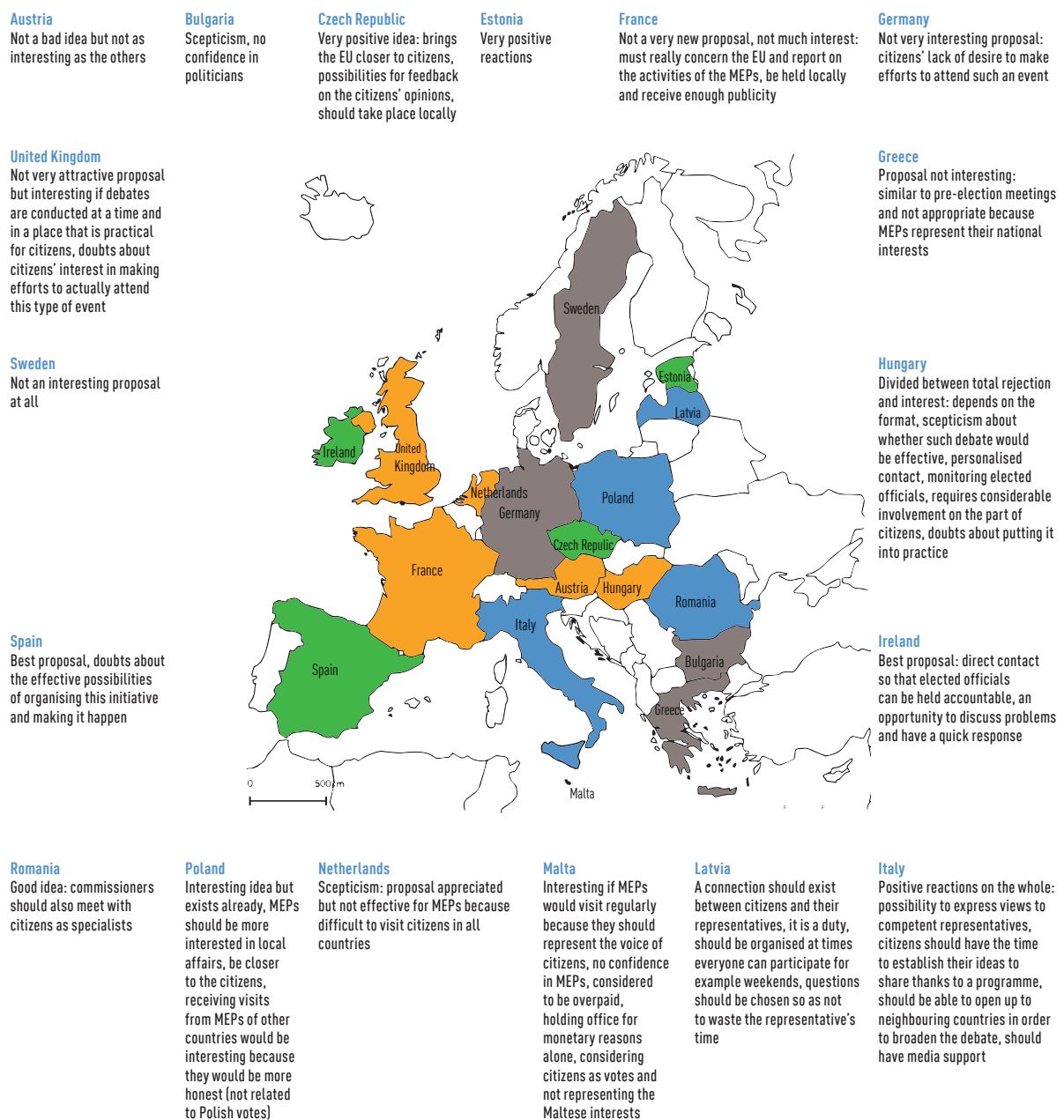
This proposal elicited a very mixed response (see Map 6).

When this idea was announced, participants from several of the groups expressed real and considerable

interest. They considered it to be a possibility for personal contact with officials to whom they could directly address questions and from whom they could obtain responses.

Doubts concerning the reality of the local and direct contact promised contributed to the more lukewarm reactions and the scepticism noted in other groups.

**MAP 6** ► Assessment of the proposal for regular meetings with members of the European Parliament by citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project





## Citizens' voices

*"To be honest, I'm not interested in it. I wouldn't want to meet Karas or Swoboda". Austrian citizen*

*"If they stayed in Vienna for the weekend, they would have panel discussions and press events anyway, which would be sufficient in my opinion". Austrian citizen*

*"I don't think many people would seize the chance but offering this kind of opportunity wouldn't do any harm either, I guess". Austrian citizen*

*"This is hypocritical. They should not be allowed to take any decision without the approval of the public." Bulgarian citizen*

*"I would like to know how it works from day to day and what the problems are." Dutch citizen*

*"It will not be very useful for the members of Parliament." Dutch citizen*

*"It is only a tiny part of reality that they will see. Online college settings might be better to get in touch with much more people." Dutch citizen*

*"Strange that this kind of meetings doesn't exist already?" Estonian citizen*

*"A little like the yearly evaluation meeting between an employee and his/her superior in business firms" French citizen*

*"It already exists, more or less, and we do not attend" French citizen*

*"I am personally not very comfortable with the Internet, I would not go and reply to a survey. Yes, but we check our emails everyday, so if you are asked to spend 5 minutes to reply to a survey, it's easy, fast, and afterwards you can have a look at the results" German citizens*

*"It leads to a scandal, which makes no sense. They all want to tell about their problems, and then they start a fight." Hungarian citizen*

*"If it is personal, it may be easier for people to tell about their thoughts and opinions." Hungarian citizen*

*"It makes them accountable to people and there will be a certain amount of people who will want to go." Irish citizen*

*"They could do the week of meeting with the Parliament member, question time style" Italian citizen*

*"There should be a TV talk, to give authoritativeness. Doing it behind closed doors would be nonsense" Italian citizen*

*"I am not saying they should come that often, but at least twice a year." Romanian citizen*

*"They should come a few times a year in the vicinity of where we live... I don't have money to go to Brussels and meet them." Romanian citizen*

*"But he should not talk with the peasants in the middle of the corn field." Romanian citizen*

*"It is a rather bad idea, because these people are busy and we should let them do their job." Romanian citizen*

*"If it is somewhere where he [the EU representative] cannot get away easily, like in front of TV cameras, with a lot of people around him, he might not find time for it." Romanian citizen*

*"This is what we want, it is very desirable". Spanish citizen*

*"It would be terrific". Spanish citizen*

*"This is what I rated the highest by far". Spanish citizen*

*"Who is not going to like this? I just don't think it is realistic". Spanish citizen*

*"If anything must be discarded, this would go first - I think it is unfeasible. It is physically impossible. And even if it were not, if you are face to face with a politician, you won't be able to say what you want to say, I think you'd start talking to someone who has very clear ideas and is very articulate, and they would take 2 seconds to tell you 3 sentences which at the time would seem fine to you, only to notice 5 minutes later that you didn't say this or that..." Spanish citizen*

- **The European Commission’s holding of a consultation on the Internet that is open to all citizens every time an important decision must be taken in the EU.**

This proposal elicited an overall positive response (see Map 7).

The idea of a consultation, open to all, on important political subjects, is overall welcome. And, for most people who were interviewed, the means being considered (Internet) has advantages in terms of accessibility, convenience (in people’s home, consult when they like) and modernity (despite some reservations expressed when it comes to people who do not have access to the Internet).

However, some people mentioned the conditions needed for the main principle to be established: information needed on the launch of a consultation; then feedback to citizens and the Commission taking their opinion into account.

Doubts, in these respects, about questions related to the “logistics” of processing information to be introduced mitigate or determine the support from the people interviewed.

With, in addition, the expression of only moderate interest in European political issues, they result in considerably more reserved opinions in some countries.

**MAP 7** – Assessment of the proposal for Internet consultations to be held by the European Commission by citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project

**Austria**

Positive idea but doubts about the choice of issues and about the Internet tool to which older people do not have access

**Bulgaria**

Reluctance: useless because consultations exist already and MEPs are the ones who should be informed and consult citizens

**Czech Republic**

Contradictions: convenient means to express opinions and easy to access, but very anonymous, doubts about the fact that their opinions would be heard and receive an appropriate response in this way

**Estonia**

Very good course of action: interesting to have such an opportunity

**France**

Very positive reactions: meets the need to be heard by decision makers, must be communicated and have feedback from representatives

**Germany**

Interesting proposal: representative results, possibility to express your opinion in a relatively direct manner, doubts about the Internet tool to which certain people do not have access, more convenient if information is sent by email

**United Kingdom**

Good idea but doubts about the practical side, not much interest

**Sweden**

Little interest: good way to keep informed, doubt about the actual participation of citizens, doubts about the choice of issues submitted

**Spain**

Good way to show interest in citizens and listen to their opinion; realistic proposal, doable, not very costly and simple, easily conceivable, must be used before taking important decisions

**Romania**

Effective if it is possible to do via video on important European issues

**Poland**

Reservations about the availability of the European Commission to organise this type of consultation

**Netherlands**

Positive reactions but little interest given the distance that already exists between national and local levels

**Malta**

Good opportunity, innovative, but doubts about logistics

**Latvia**

Theoretically useful and interesting but in reality depends on technical solutions, a bit of scepticism about conditions (anonymity of participants?)

**Greece**

One of the most interesting proposals: intrusive and interactive nature, the Internet is a powerful tool for citizens, enables them to express their opinion and learn what other citizens think, communication necessary to attract citizens

**Hungary**

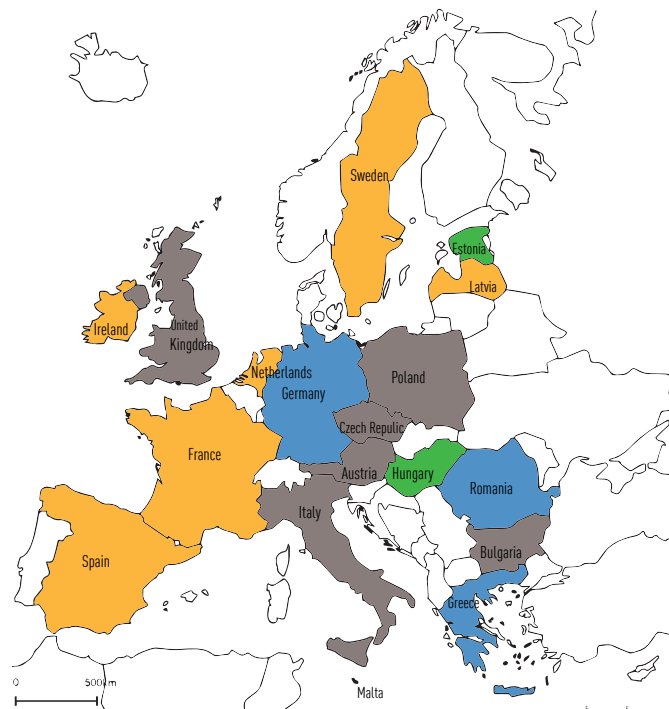
One of the most interesting proposals: everyone can participate, even if the Internet is an exclusive tool, must be communicated, simple to use and obtain a response

**Ireland**

Interesting proposal but fears that older people would be excluded because they would have to use Internet, that the responses be automatic and not authentic, more interesting for younger generations

**Italy**

Good idea: need to promote the service widely via the various media



## Citizens' voices

*"I could imagine being able to be present at video conferences and listen to them... Is that correct?" Austrian citizen*

*"That's a good thing". Austrian citizen*

*"I didn't know about that but I like it". Austrian citizen*

*"Yes, that's definitely interesting". Austrian citizen*

*"This is a good thing. I think it would be important to put up draft directives and such, which might not be met with approval by everyone, for discussion. One major point the NGOs criticised was that the ACTA treaty had not been published before its signing. Of course, organised institutions like Amnesty didn't have the chance to express their point of view this way. It shouldn't be the case that only simple and non-sensitive issues are put to discussion" Austrian citizen*

*"Online consultation for all citizens - that's not correct. My parents don't have Internet access, so does this mean they are no citizens?" Austrian citizen*

*"People without Internet access should also be given the opportunity to participate. They could go to the town hall, for example". Austrian citizen*

*"Elderly people are afraid of the Internet and think they might do everything wrong. They don't want this. And there are even young people without Internet access in other countries". Austrian citizen*

*"It should make our views better taken into consideration" France*

*"We Greeks do not have a participating culture, overall. Only if the subject is interesting and you come across it, through Facebook, for example, will you be urged to contribute" Greece*

*"It depends on the subject and on how it is presented on the site; if all Europeans citizens participate, it will eventually become chaotic, it needs to be well-structured" Greece*

*"You're excluding a huge proportion of society who aren't on the Internet" Ireland*

*"Someone talking to you is more genuine, it's more effective I think". Ireland*

*"It already exists, though for particular situations and limited to some sectors. They should make more advertising" Italy*

*"The official language is French, then the communications are being translated into English, to have the directives in other languages one has to wait for a very long time" Italy*

*"Good idea to have a forum [to discuss with the Commission] on specific subjects, for instance in the area of care." Netherlands*

*"It might be a start to tighten the gap between citizens and politic." Netherlands*

*"They seem efficient to me, for there may be people interested in speaking their mind and so they can post their comments." Romania*

*"Consultations mean that he presents you something and expects an answer from you, not necessarily a 'yes or no' one." Romania*

*"It is feasible, viable, low cost, and the process to screen information can't be very complicated. Once all these opinions were checked, the majority would win". Spanish citizen*

*"It looks good to me, it is inexpensive, it could be done and we can optimize the questions. Whether MEPs would then take notice, that is the question". Spanish citizen*

*"It is an economical option to test citizen's opinions when making decisions". Spanish citizen*

*"I think it is very good but I don't like the fact it is only used to make important decisions". Spanish citizen*

- **The organisation of similar consultations organised by national governments.**

This proposal elicited a negative response (*see Map 8*).

The only difference between this proposal and the previous one is in who issued it: the national government instead of the European Commission.

In most countries, it was the idea of a consultation held by the Commission that was considered preferable: because it is the central body of the European Union and this would be its logical responsibility, and especially - despite dampened interest in Community

institutions - because it is considered to be neutral and objective unlike national authorities.

Consultations via the Commission are very clearly preferred in France, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Malta.

In only two countries - the Netherlands and the United Kingdom - do the people interviewed tend to have greater interest in national consultations. The latter had little interest in either of the two options. Lastly, in the two other countries, Sweden and Latvia, reactions to the two options were quite similar. In Sweden they were more mixed and in Latvia, more positive.

**MAP 8** ▶ Assessment of the proposal for Internet consultations held by the national governments by citizens taking part in the Horizon EU project

**Austria**  
Preference for the European Commission less involved in national affairs with less influence over information

**Bulgaria**  
Extremely reticent

**Czech Republic**  
Rejection of this proposal, no confidence in national institutions

**Estonia**  
Positive reaction

**France**  
Unanimous preference for the European Commission, more neutral and objective

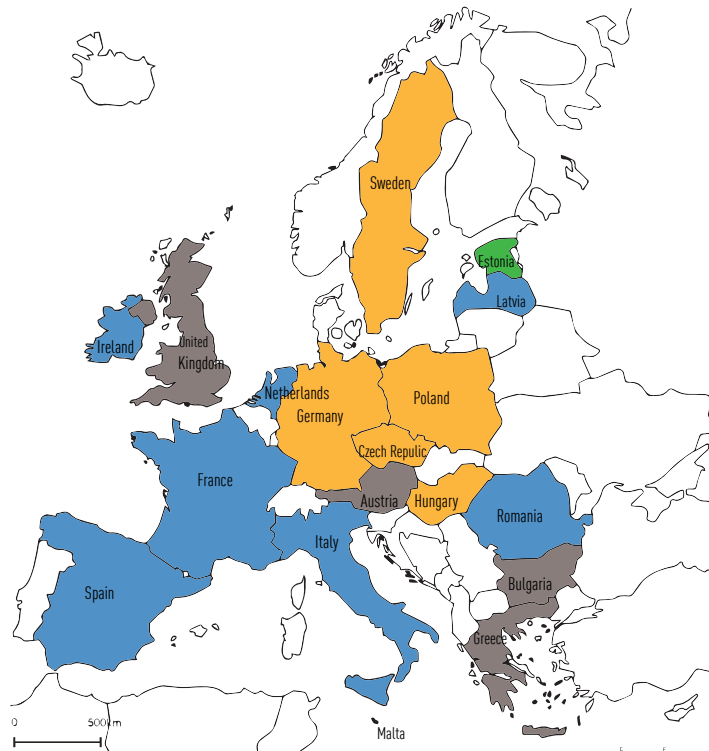
**Germany**  
European Commission more credible to organise European consultations

**United Kingdom**  
Little interest: preference for the national level, relates more to British citizens, must be simple

**Greece**  
National filter considered very negative

**Sweden**  
Little interest: waste of time, doubts about the influence on decision makers

**Spain**  
Division: real protection of national citizens' interests, means favourable to Spanish politicians with partisan interests, lack of objectivity



**Hungary**  
Positive reactions but slightly more critical, unnecessary to involve several levels for dialogue about the EU

**Ireland**  
Not much positive feedback, clear preference for the European Commission which is an independent institution

**Romania**  
Good idea, via the Internet

**Poland**  
Very negative reactions, mistrust in national government and politicians

**Netherlands**  
Useful, opportunity to express views on the EU, reduce the gap between decision makers and citizens, first step towards reducing the gap between the EU and citizens

**Malta**  
Least interesting proposal: exists already, too much red tape, no confidence in national institutions

**Latvia**  
Theoretically useful and interesting but in reality depends on technical solutions either with anonymous comments or with public comments with the names of the people who made them

**Italy**  
Idea perceived negatively because of the lack of confidence in national political institutions

**Citizens' voices**

*"Information would have to be provided by the EU because the national governments would only present information they want to reach the public". Austrian citizen*

*"Yes, this kind of information distribution needs to be politically neutral, that's very important." Austrian citizen*

*"That's why it has to be provided by the EU itself". Austrian citizen*

*"Dutch members of Parliament that collect information to use in European Parliament and to tell our problems." Dutch citizen*

*"Too indirect. Better organise a forum with members of Parliament. You already see those on LinkedIn." Dutch citizen*

*"Otherwise, if each government [will] make its own cooking with it..." French citizen*

*"It is important to choose a modern enough tool to keep being performant in the future. Facebook is highly performant" German citizen*

*"But the answers must be up to the point, no standard replies" German citizen*

*"It will be filtered based on national interests, thus it beats its purpose" Greek citizen*

*"When localised, there is no value in it any more... The point is to exchange views with other people abroad, not with other Greeks - I already know what Greeks think" Greek citizen*

*"This can slow down the processes." Hungarian citizen*

*"There is another chance that information may get lost." Hungarian citizen*

*"Maybe the government would pose the question a bit differently, maybe they would try to control my answer." Hungarian citizen*

*"In this way I would not have a direct access to the European Union, but I would be filtered by our government" Italian citizen*

*"Yes, and they have to do the same, to ask for our opinion - consultations via the Internet." Romanian citizen*

*"The involvement of the government in EU's decision is critical" Spanish citizen*

*"It is vital we are all together in the same boat in defence of the EU, but coming from the government, they would be thinking that the money would help*

*them pay their own super-salaries instead of investing". Spanish citizen*

*"Depending who is ruling in the country, if it does not move in the same direction as the EU...that's bad". Spanish citizen*

- **An interactive service, using the Internet and social networks, to collect continuously opinions, desires, criticisms of citizens on the directions of the European Union.**

This proposal elicited a very positive overall response (see Map 9).

In addition to the effective modern quality of consultations via the Internet, there was a notion of proximity and informality both in the form and the content of communication via social networks.

The name of proposal suggested the idea of a direct channel that communicates easily with the Commission - provided that the system would be operating on a permanent basis.

Questions that were posed in certain groups stemmed from the very informal and non-organised nature of communication used on social networks: it was decided to study the way in which this "chaos" can be structured so that it can be used effectively.

Similar to the previous Internet-based proposals, comments about people who would be "excluded" were made because they do not have access to electronic means of communication, and questions were posed concerning feedback to citizens and how their contributions would be used—without however questioning the benefit of what is being proposed.

In all or almost all of the countries, interest was acknowledged, and very strongly in many of them.

**MAP 9** ➤ Assessment of the proposal for interactive service to collect citizens' opinion by citizens taking part in the "Horizon EU" project

**Austria**

Idea welcomed but European issues may be too complex to be discussed in such a framework

**Bulgaria**

No interest because it already exists

**Czech Republic**

Accepted proposal contradictorily: targeted audience very limited, implication necessary to participate, even if comfortable and easy

**Estonia**

Very good way to express views without needing to reach a critical mass of support before communicating, doubts on the relevance of comments expressed and on the organisation arrangements (filters, moderation, access to the Internet limited to certain citizens)

**France**

Idea assessed very positively Reservations and questions on organisational arrangements

**Germany**

Widely approved idea: continuity of opinion collection, social networks are communication tools of the future, necessary to receive an appropriate response

**United Kingdom**

Limited support: easy and direct access to citizens' opinions, possibility to respond

**Sweden**

Very interesting, requires less effort than other proposals

**Spain**

Very interesting and innovative proposal: use of social networks is easy and in today's norms, anonymity is not recommended because it is impossible to know the target audience, could be combined with the first proposal

**Romania**

Very interesting if surrounded by good communication to raise awareness about the service

**Poland**

Idea particularly accepted by young people: attractive, necessary to be informed of comments without needing to be active, anonymity would increase honesty and trust of users

**Netherlands**

Innovative proposal, benefits the EU more than citizens

**Malta**

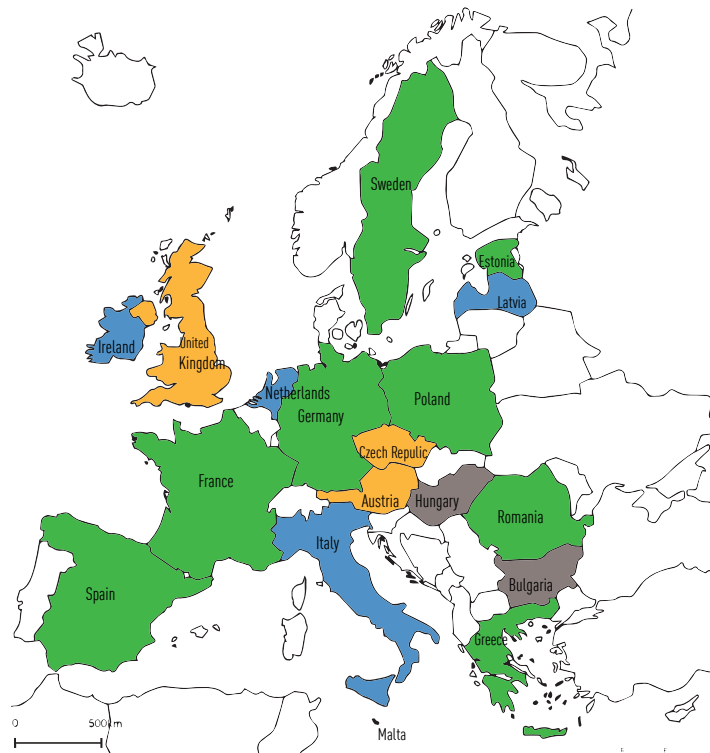
Good way to communicate: direct connections, Internet is a convenient tool, concerns about security, monitoring and language used

**Latvia**

Can be interesting but doubts about use: needs to be well organised so that the site is not overloaded, chaotic, with duplicated issues, doubts about the filters on the validation of subjects and comments

**Italy**

Very good proposal: direct, rapid, immediate access to information, no censoring of responses, means to generate support for a petition, must be well organised, registered and analysed in order to be transformed into concrete action



**Greece**

The freest, most open and direct proposal because the tool is easy, simple and effective and based on a means used everyday, danger of it becoming chaotic especially because of the different languages used, therefore it has to be well defined

**Hungary**

The most criticised proposal: use of social media would result in a huge quantity of data and opinions impossible to manage, analyse and interpret for the EU, requires massive resources, counter-productive, anonymous means are preferred

**Ireland**

Very well received idea: use of social networks provides a solid base and generates debates, more effective than case-by-case responses, interest for young citizens at the expense of older people, desire for anonymity

**Citizens' voices**

*"I like the idea of a citizens' regular poll. Citizens could be selected by certain criteria and have three months to comment on various issues. This makes the amount of comments manageable. The group changes every three months". Austrian citizen*

*"We are talking about complex problems and issues here. So which role could social media play in this context? To send pictures? Mr Barroso posting some*

*updates? Of course they should use Facebook for image purposes, but listening to citizens' opinions via social media is not useful in my opinion". Austrian citizen*

*"This might be difficult with complex topics - if 90% of the people don't understand what this is about, it's completely pointless". Austrian citizen*

*"This is just searching the web on key words." Dutch citizen*

*"It looks difficult to manage" French citizen*

*"It would too easily give people a say and on so many subjects..." (the problem being the great mass of information and the need for it to be structured) French citizen*

*"But there would be moderators" French citizen*

*"Will it be anonymous or not?" French citizen*

*"How will I understand what Germans say? Automatic translations are not good enough and often lead to misunderstandings. And, on top, how will I be able to focus on the subject that really interests me?" Greek citizen*

*„Who's going to read them?" Hungarian citizen*

*"It is probably feasible in technical terms, because we know how many people have been tapped recently." Hungarian citizen*

*"There would be plenty of personal remarks, sometimes in a simply unprintable tone, and one could not filter out the essential thoughts". Hungarian citizen*

*"It would be counter-productive". Hungarian citizen*

*"It would be like an EU rage room where people can smash their anger away." Hungarian citizen*

*"Internet cannot be controlled or filtered by anyone, therefore it can be considered as definitely positive to give voice to one's own convictions without being controlled" Italian citizen*

*"Interactive service is modern. It would reach more people. Meetings with MEPs would gather 200 or 300 people, and here it can reach maybe several thousand users. So for sure a piece of information would reach them every day. Like it or not, you would see it.*

*Plus you can express your opinion in every moment. And meetings have their time. Here giving your personal view – simply we are more courageous." Polish citizen*

*"I think that it is the most important thing, because you have to appeal to people somehow. Right now, people are not that interested in participating... Many don't even vote in the elections." Romanian citizen*

*"The European Union is for everybody, including old people. If Internet would work for young people, maybe meetings or an info service would be more appropriate for older people." Romanian citizen*

*"For example, the young people have access to the Internet, but what about the old people? The European Union is for everybody." Romanian citizen*

*"It is possible to learn from people, from the exchange of points of view. I'm not a big fan of social media but they may make you think things differently or open up your mind". Spanish citizen*

*"A lot easier, more accessible, and more convenient for everybody". Spanish citizen*

*"With a simple 'Like' or 'Don't like', you can find out". Spanish citizen*

*"Everything looks good to me but ultimately you don't know who will get this". Spanish citizen*

- **Information campaigns much more active than in the past to encourage citizens to become interested in debates that will be held and to participate in the next elections of MEPs in May 2014.**

This proposal elicited a very mixed response (see Map 10).

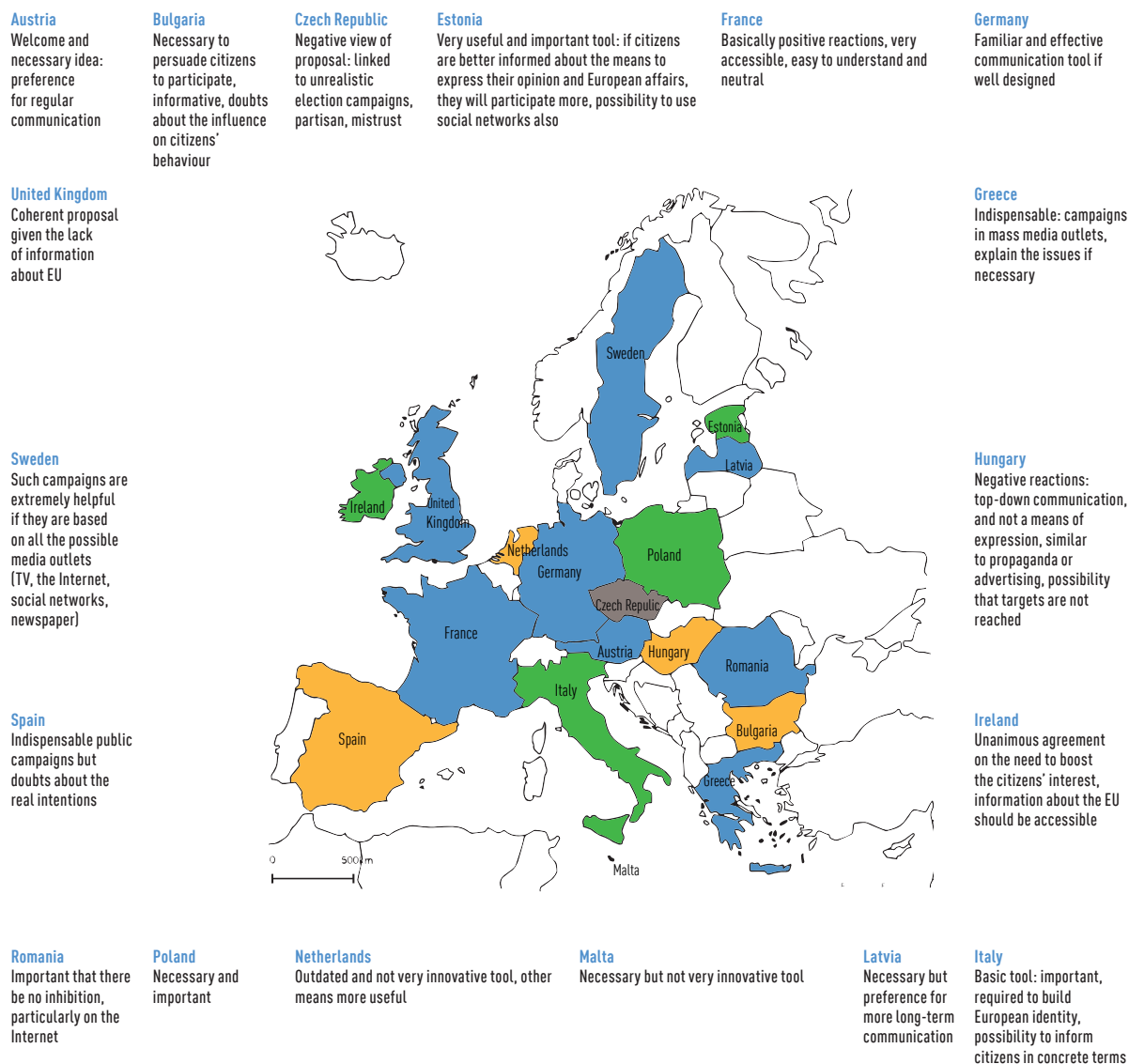
Establishing this type of information campaign was generally recognised as being a good idea, particularly ahead of European elections whose ins and outs are not necessarily clear and whose turnout is low.

The people questioned expected information campaigns to be neutral and nonpartisan: with regard to the European Union overall, implications of its policies on the life of citizens in the country, election issues and political projects present.

However there was less support than for some of the previous proposals that seemed more innovative – that is one of the reasons for the only relative interest shown by certain countries.



**MAP 10** ► Assessment of the proposal for information campaigns by citizens taking part in the “Horizon EU” project



**Citizens' voices**

*“We can only approve of it. We'll see if it'll get us anywhere”. Austrian citizen*

*“Yes, they should be more active in this respect but it's also important that they are objective and neutral”. Austrian citizen*

*“The problem is: if the citizens receive loads of information before the elections but hardly anything in between, they might get the impression that they're dealing with hidden canvassing”. Austrian citizen*

*“I also think that we should be kept informed on a regular basis and in a neutral and objective way. This way, the EU institutions might be given a more positive image”. Austrian citizen*

*“Right now, we have the problem that most citizens in the EU are pretty frustrated and dissatisfied and are not very well disposed towards the EU. This leads to a very limited willingness to intensely deal with campaigns”. Austrian citizen*

*“Everyone is having the impression that everything is getting more expensive and that we have to work for the Greeks... So many bad news just seem to happen at the same time”. Austrian citizen*

*"Right now, people feel like they have had enough". Austrian citizen*

*"And the national policy is using the EU as their scapegoat. 'It's all the EU's fault, not ours'. But increases in prices are not the EU's responsibility; people would rather have to blame local companies, tax laws, charges and the such, but they simply don't know enough about it". Austrian citizen*

*"The competitive environment, caused by the EU, exists but I doubt that they are responsible for rising prices". Austrian citizen*

*"Especially now, that everybody is so dissatisfied, information campaigns are needed and important; I think we need more of them". Austrian citizen*

*"Yes, all of these things might have to be communicated more effectively, but the thing with information provision is that it has to appeal to the people. They have to read or watch it, however the topics are quite often rather complex... so it's difficult". Austrian citizen*

*"We are very negative about the EU because we don't know much about it. We only know what we are told. If we knew more maybe we would be more positive." British citizen*

*"I do not feel represented in my own country, and we are talking about Europe - no way." Bulgarian citizen*

*"No this does not really help me." Dutch citizen*

*"Everyday life is so rapid and intense that there is not much time left over after completing the tasks. It's easy to miss the small campaigns that appear 2-3 times in media." Estonian citizen*

*"It would be fine to increase the number of voters; the turnout is always miserable. It's not surprising if we don't know the date" German citizen*

*"This is not a proposition... whatever they do, they first have to let us know it exists!" Greek citizen*

*"It is part of the game, of course they should run campaigns. Now that Europe is in a critical moment, they need to tell us why we should vote; if they leave this to national authorities, the elections will turn into a local political debate and their meaning will be lost" Greek citizen*

*"The online method or notifications registered to names could draw my attention better than campaigns organised on a monthly basis. There are lots of them. If it goes online, I have a look and decide if I am interested." Hungarian citizen*

*"Yes, you definitely need more on that, because I mean the turnout for those European Elections all over Europe, not just here, is tiny you know". Irish citizen*

*"It is fundamental to come closer to the citizens and to create the European conscience" Italian citizen*

*"It is very interesting, because usually, unlike a conference which many people attend and where you might not have the courage to ask a question or speak your mind, you have no inhibitions when you are online." Romanian citizen*

*"...On YouTube there is the channel of a man called Philip De Franco, who talks about the political problems in America and I think it would be useful to have several specific channels, for every region, where an opinion leader would tackle citizens' problems." Romanian citizen*

*"There are a few opinion leaders, like Moise Guran. He already is an opinion leader. He has a TV show at the public television and a radio show at Europa FM on economic issues." Romanian citizen*

*"Because after all, a campaign is a campaign, and they are trying to sell us hot air." Spanish citizen*

*"It is just an informational campaign". Spanish citizen*

*"Elections, next spring, and informational campaigns - these three phrases worry me. Now they show an interest in making us aware because the elections are coming, right? I feel again cheated". Spanish citizen*

*"It is a good idea, but that they would remember us because of the elections, is very sad. It should be on a continuing basis. It is laughable and utopic that we could have an influence on MEPs". Spanish citizen*

*"It encourages citizens to get involved. So far we've heard and voted without much basis for it". Spanish citizen*

*"Publicity is fundamental. So is providing information. But it smells of elections." Spanish citizen*

**ANNEX 1** ► Calendar of discussions organised by the OPTEM network during stage 1 of the “Horizon EU” project

| Calendar         | PLACE OF DISCUSSION GROUP | OPTEM, EUROPEAN QUALITATIVE NETWORK                  |
|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 7 December 2013  | Tallinn (Estonia)         | SarrPoll   |
| 10 December 2013 | Sofia (Bulgaria)          | Alpha Research Ltd                                   |
|                  | Lille (France)            | OPTEM worked in cooperation with Inter View Partners |
| 11 December 2013 | Athens (Greece)           | Focus Bari   |
|                  | Dublin (Ireland)          | Behaviour & Attitudes                                |
|                  | La Valette (Malta)        | MISCO International Limited                          |
|                  | Amsterdam (Netherlands)   | True Research  |
| 12 December 2013 | Bucharest (Romania)       | Data Media Ltd                                       |
| 13 December 2013 | Cologne (Germany)         | Echanges Marktforschung in relation with Psyma       |
| 16 December 2013 | Budapest (Hungary)        | Psyma Hungary  |
|                  | Milan (Italy)             | Periscope  |
| 17 December 2013 | Vienna (Austria)          | Karmasin Motivforschung                              |
| 18 December 2013 | Warsaw (Poland)           | BSM  |
|                  | Madrid (Spain)            | Psyma Ibérica Marketing Research                     |
|                  | London (UK)               | AIMR   |
| 19 December 2013 | Prague (Czech Republic)   | Mareco, s.r.o  |
|                  | Stockholm (Sweden)        | Kommunicera  |
| 3 January 2014   | Riga (Latvia)             | Latvian Facts  |

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