

Online Consultation on the Future of the Europe for Citizens Programme

Final analysis of responses, March 2011



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1.0 Introduction

This document presents the final analysis of responses received under the online consultation on the next generation of the "Europe for Citizens" Programme. The consultation ran for 10 weeks between October 27, 2010 and January 5, 2011 and invited contributions from all interested parties: individual citizens, civil society organisations, public authorities and administrations, research institutions, European and international organisations and others. It forms part of the preparatory process for the future "Europe for Citizens" Programme 2014-2020, building on a wider engagement process and feeding into a full impact assessment by the Commission.

The consultation sought to collect the views of a broad range of stakeholders, potential beneficiaries and interested third parties about changes to the programme's general objectives, delivery mechanisms, themes and financial arrangements. The results of this consultation will, together with the other results of the impact assessment, feed into the Commission proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a new Programme 2014-2020.

The consultation contained fixed questions asking respondents to ascribe relative value or importance to a set of statements, as well as 13 open questions. These open questions gave respondents an opportunity to provide further detail, suggestions or comments and over 2,000 individual comments were received in 19 languages.

This document is structured around the responses to the fixed questions, supported where relevant by information provided under the open questions. The report addresses each of the following sections in turn:

- Response levels
- Profile of respondents
- Patterns in responses
- Need for a programme and budget allocated
- Relevance of objectives
- Methods
- Delivery mechanisms
- Outputs
- Target groups
- Priority themes
- Synergy effects

2.0 Descriptive Information

2.1 Response levels

412 respondents participated in the online consultation, with five additional submissions received separately. These can be broken down by organisation/occupation status, host country, age band, number of citizens represented and whether respondents have benefitted under previous rounds of the programme.

- The largest single group of respondents is individual citizens with 160 responses (or 39% of the total), followed by representatives of regional or local government with 82 (20%), civil society organisations with 68 (17%) and third sector organisations or foundations with 31 (8%).
- The UK provided most responses, with 68 (16%), followed by France with 53, Germany with 51, Romania with 34, Belgium with 33¹ and Italy with 26. No organisations based in Estonia or Cyprus took part, although there were responses from the non-member states participating in the programme (Albania, Croatia and FYR Macedonia).
- The UK provided nearly one-third of all responses from individual citizens.
- The bulk (89%) of respondents were aged between 25 and 64, with relatively few aged under 24 (18²) or 65 and over (26). Citizens form the largest group in both youngest and oldest age bands.
- Respondents were asked how many citizens they represent, with the largest number (45%) claiming to be representing the smallest category – fewer than 100 citizens. It appears that there has been some ambiguity in the way this question has been answered; respondents taking part in an individual capacity also stated that they represent varying numbers of citizens.
- 69% of respondents have not benefitted from earlier rounds of the Europe for Citizens programme, suggesting the consultation contains large numbers from outside the circle of supported organisations (potentially with less of a vested interest in the design of the future programme).

The number of responses received means that there needs to be a difference of $\pm 4\%$ between the number of responses to individual statements (for responses in the middle range, less for answers at more extreme ends of the spectrum) in order to be statistically reliable.

2.2 Patterns in responses

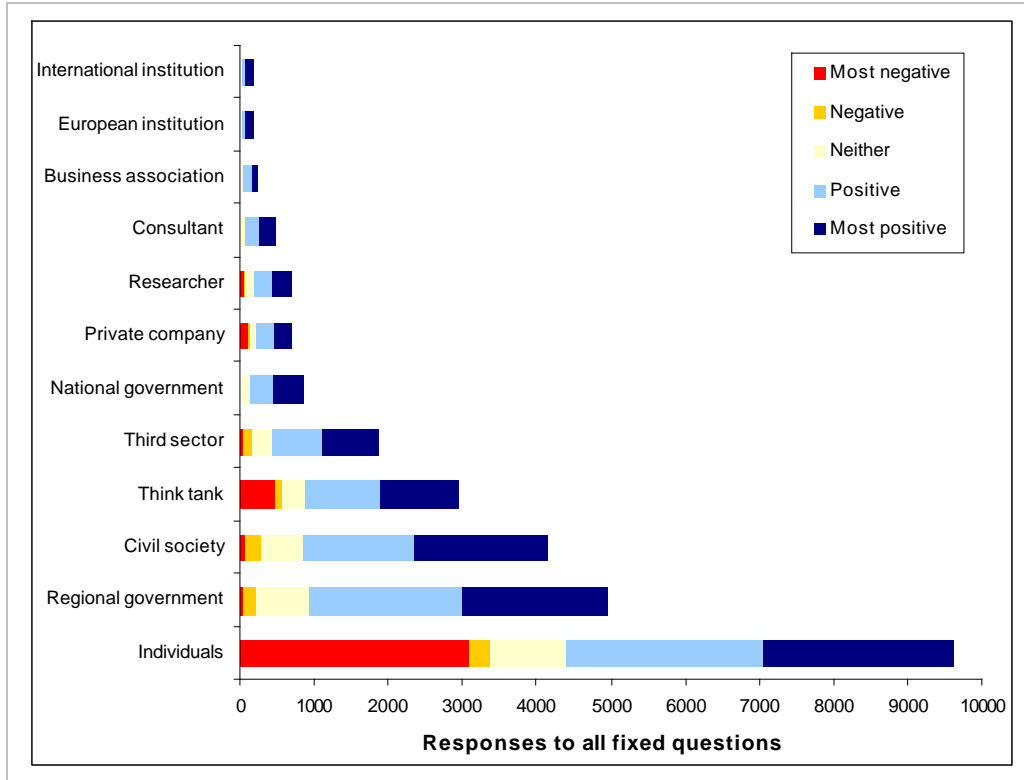
In order to understand how the responses of the different groups of respondents vary - and therefore whether any are clearly unrepresentative or tend to skew the results in a particular direction - we have assembled and analysed the responses to all fixed questions.

Figure 3.1 shows how positive or negative the responses of the different types of organisations and respondents tend to be. Individual citizens provide the lion's share of the most negative responses, followed by think tanks and private companies.

¹ Experience suggests that many of the organisations based in Belgium (or France to a lesser extent) have a European or international remit, though officially only two responses came from EU-wide organisations.

² 18 is likely to be too small a number for detailed analysis

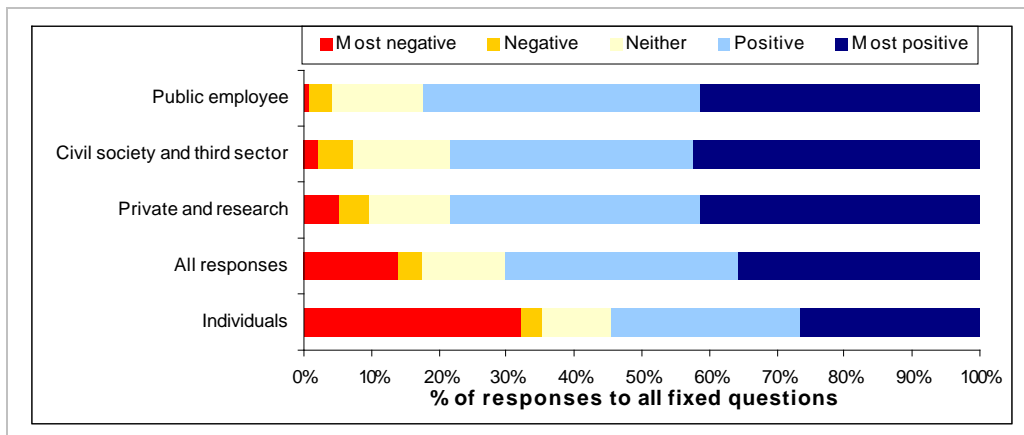
Figure 2.1 All responses by organisation/status



As some of these types of organisations and respondents contributed very small numbers of responses, these have been aggregated into groups for the more detailed analysis that follows. This has been done by combining organisations and respondents that are most similar and gave broadly similar responses, creating groups that are larger (i.e. with at least 50 responses) and can generate more reliable results.

Figure 3.2 shows how positive or negative the responses tend to be for each of these groups, highlighting the fact that citizens produce significantly more negative and fewer positive responses than all other groups of respondents.

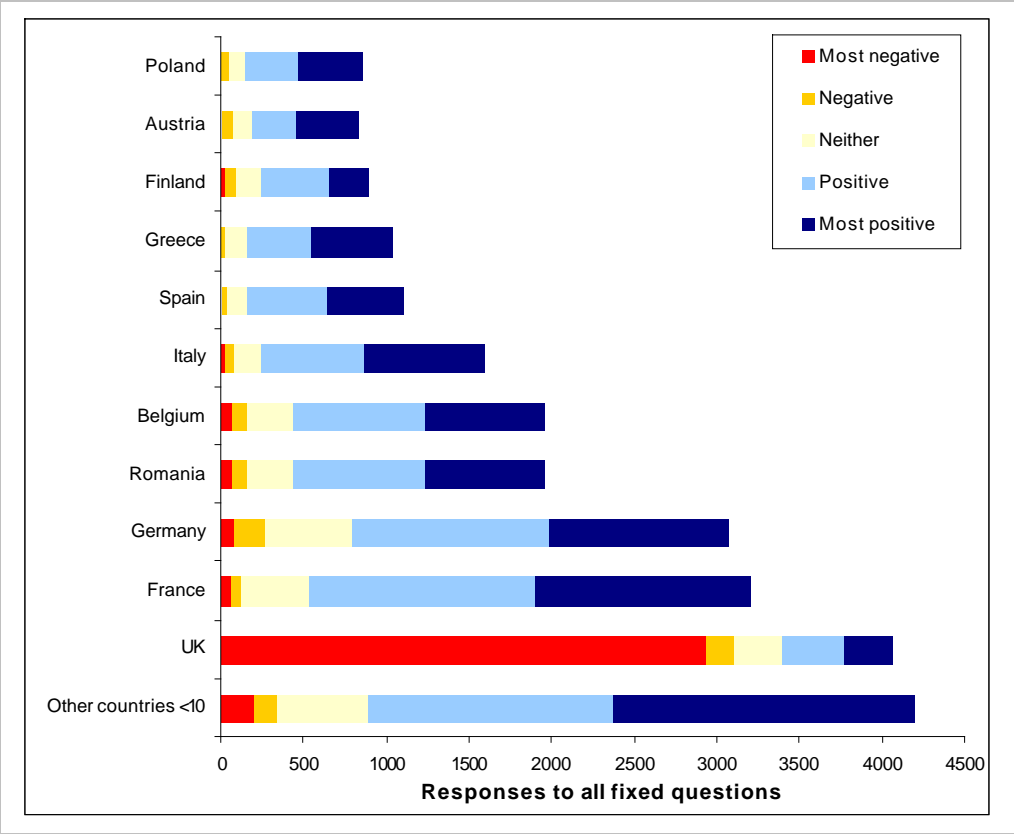
Figure 2.2 All responses by organisation or respondent groups



Responses by the number of citizens represented show a very similar pattern, with those representing fewer than 100 citizens producing very similar responses to citizens themselves, i.e. with many more negative responses than the other groups. Respondents who have benefitted from previous rounds of the programme also tend to generate much more positive responses than those who have not participated in the programme.

It is also important to understand geographical patterns in the responses, and Figure 3.3 breaks down results by host country.

Figure 2.3 All responses by host country



This shows that responses for the UK are radically different from other countries. Nevertheless, while UK citizens produce overwhelmingly negative responses, UK organisations and their representatives present a much broader range of viewpoints. In addition, 22 respondents selected the least positive response for every single question, all but one of these from the UK and all but one an individual citizen. Taken together, these findings show that it is important to consider the following questions:

- How the respondents based in the UK produce markedly different responses compared to other countries and whether there are any reasons for this.
- The contrast between the responses of citizens and other groups and types of respondents.
- How the responses from smaller organisations compare with those representing much larger numbers of citizens.
- How the responses of beneficiaries compare with those of respondents who have not participated in the programme.

- The fact that all questions have a significant number of negative responses means that it may be important to form judgements based on differences in the number of positive responses.

The following analysis sections focus on the overall findings, seeking to identify groups of respondents associated with noticeably different results.

3.0 Analysis of Responses

3.1 Need for a future programme

81% of respondents agree that “there is a need for an EU programme promoting and supporting civic participation”. Civil society and third sector groups are most likely to agree that there is a need for a programme (98%); and while citizens are less likely to agree, a majority (59%) are still in favour. Interestingly, respondents aged 65 and over are most likely to feel there is a need for the programme, though this is based on a relatively small sample of 26 people. 234 comments provide further information on why the programme is needed, producing a wide variety of responses and very few common themes.

Of the 67 who do not feel that the programme is needed, only one has benefitted from previous rounds of the programme, while most are individual citizens (61) or from the UK (55). The reasons given vary from general criticisms of the EU to claims that it is a waste of money, too costly (especially in the current fiscal environment), or that it should be up to local communities and local, regional or national governments to develop activities or programmes in this area.

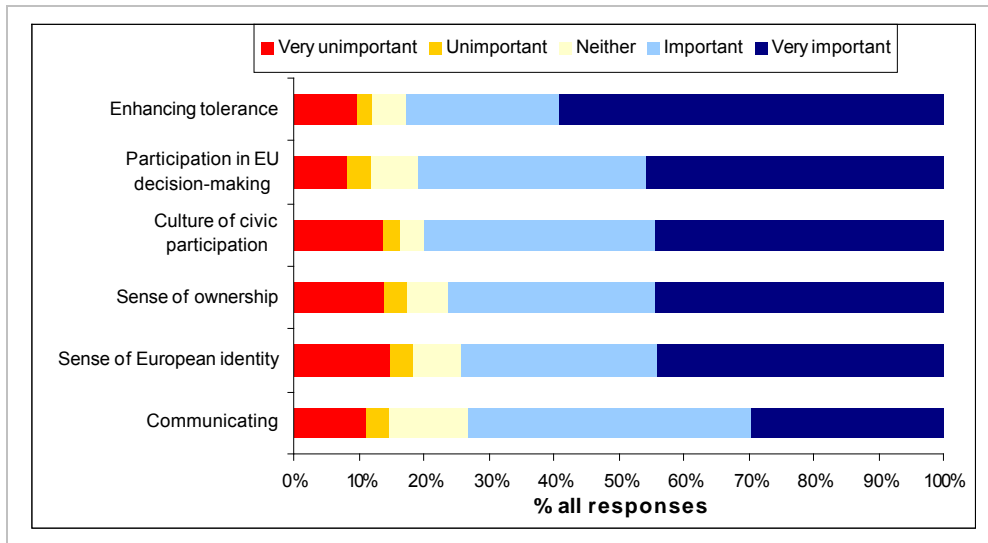
3.2 Programme budget

Turning to the overall budget for the programme, respondents were asked: “is the current budget of €215 million (for the period 2007-2013) sufficient and appropriate?” 52% have answered in the negative, though this includes people who feel the budget is too high as well as others who feel that it is too low.

Relatively few respondents commented explicitly on the relationship between what the programme is trying to achieve and its resources. Instead they were more likely to suggest specific themes, activities, groups or places that they feel require additional support. Most of the respondents who felt that the budget was too high gave general criticisms of the European Union and its programmes rather than specific comments about the Europe for Citizens programme.

3.3 Relevance of objectives

Figure 3.1 In your view which of the following objectives are of most and least relevance/importance for the new programme?

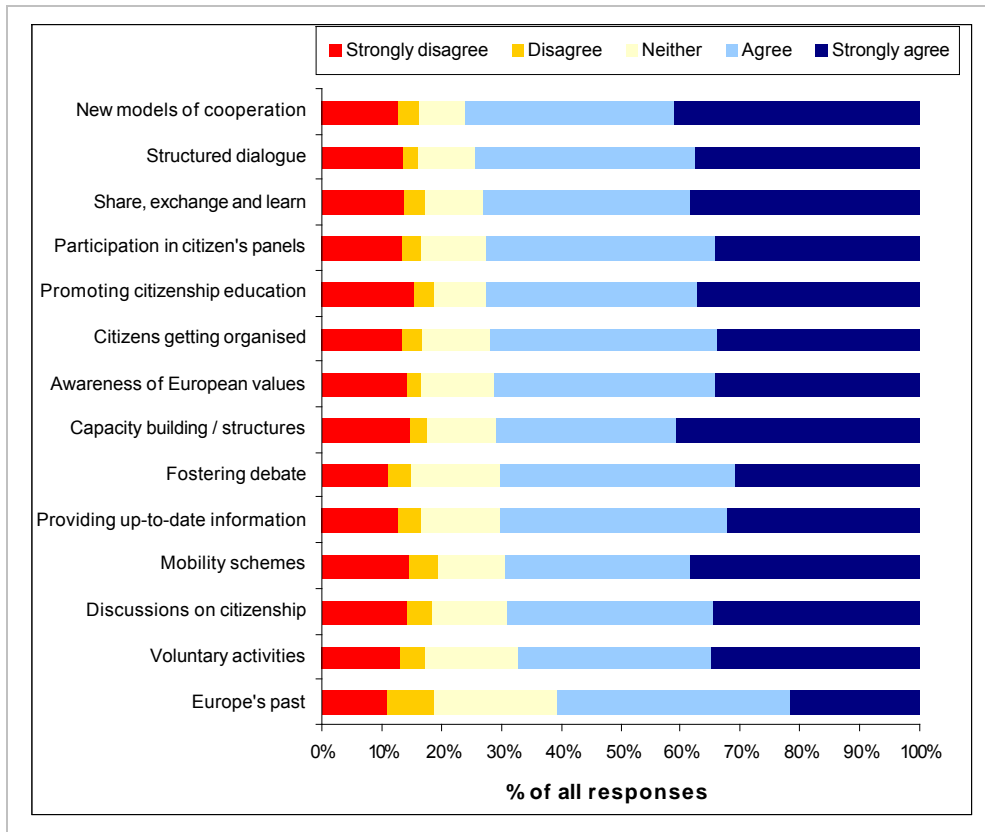


While all objectives are rated positively on balance, respondents assign most significance to objectives around enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding, promoting participation in decision-making and fostering a culture of civic participation. In line with the results of surveys carried out for the interim evaluation, respondents feel a less direct connection with the longer-term or more intangible objectives around developing a sense of European identity or ownership of the EU. Fewest positive responses were received for “Communicating on institutional issues (such as European elections and functioning of the EU)”.

Enhancing tolerance is seen as the most important single objective across all organisation and respondent groups (see figure 3.2) with the exception of individual citizens, who place most importance on participation in EU decision-making processes. UK respondents also identify participation in EU decision making as the most relevant (or least irrelevant) objective.

3.4 Methods

Figure 3.2 How would the programme seek to achieve this (new and/or proven methods)?



The most favoured methods across all respondents focus on new models of cooperation and networking between different types of organisation, dialogue between civil society and EU institutions and a number of citizen-focused methods, such as citizens panels, helping them to get organised and promoting citizenship education. This pattern is repeated for open responses with the following frequently observed:

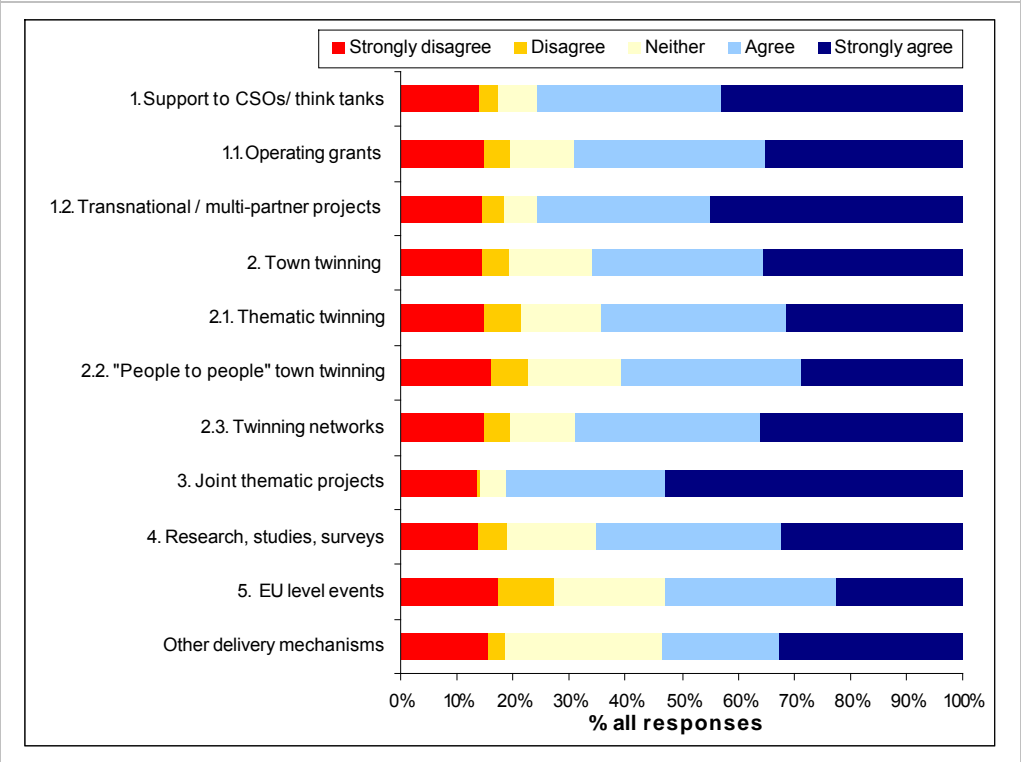
- Co-operation between different types of organisation, such as local government and civil society or third sector bodies
- Pan-european or transnational networks and databases of organisations interested in specific issues or problems
- Exploring ways for civil society and citizens themselves to have an influence on political decisions, policy or ways to ensure greater accountability to citizens
- Linking the programme with the education curriculum or civic education practice
- Methods tailored to national contexts, interests and preferences
- Greater promotion or media work and collaboration with media and journalists

The least favoured methods are associated with preserving Europe's past (despite the Interim Evaluation finding strong demand for projects in this area), discussions, debates, provision of information and specific areas such as voluntary activities and mobility schemes.

Civil society and third sector groups prioritise capacity building, structured dialogue and citizen's panels, while citizens themselves tend to value the provision of up-to-date information and preserving Europe's past. UK respondents also tend to value preserving Europe's past, but differ by ascribing more importance to fostering debate and promoting volunteering.

3.5 Delivery mechanisms

Figure 3.3 What would be the most effective delivery mechanisms?



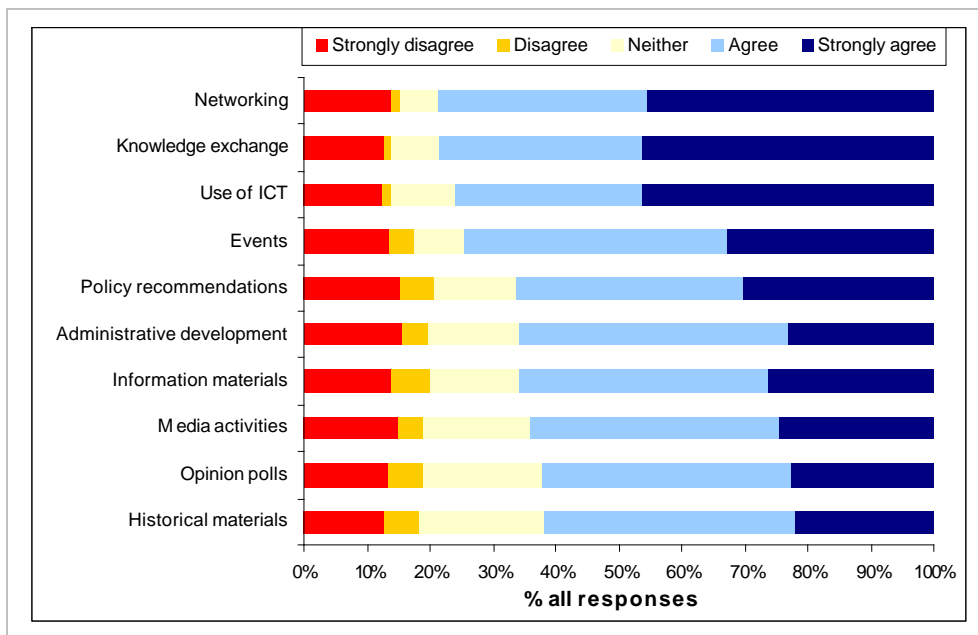
Respondents are most likely to state that “Support to joint projects by local authorities, civil society organisations and other local actors” is likely to be the most effective delivery mechanism, while high-profile EU-level events are likely to be least effective. This pattern is repeated across most groups of respondents (i.e. whether or not they have participated in the programme, for citizens and civil society groups). Support to civil society organisations and think tanks is also rated favourably, although transnational and multi-partner collaborations are rated as marginally more effective than operating grants.

Public employees also tend to value twinning, but primarily thematic and network-based twinning projects. Overall, “People to people” twinning events are rated less positively than the other types of twinning, including by citizens themselves.

On balance there is strongest support for collaborative, transnational and thematic approaches, and although the open responses included several statements that tend to support this assertion, there is great variation in responses. Respondents have varying understanding of ‘delivery mechanisms’, commenting on types of activity, target groups, themes and even financial rules, making it extremely difficult to identify recurring or common responses in this area.

3.6 Outputs

Figure 3.4 What, in your view, should be the main outputs of the new programme?

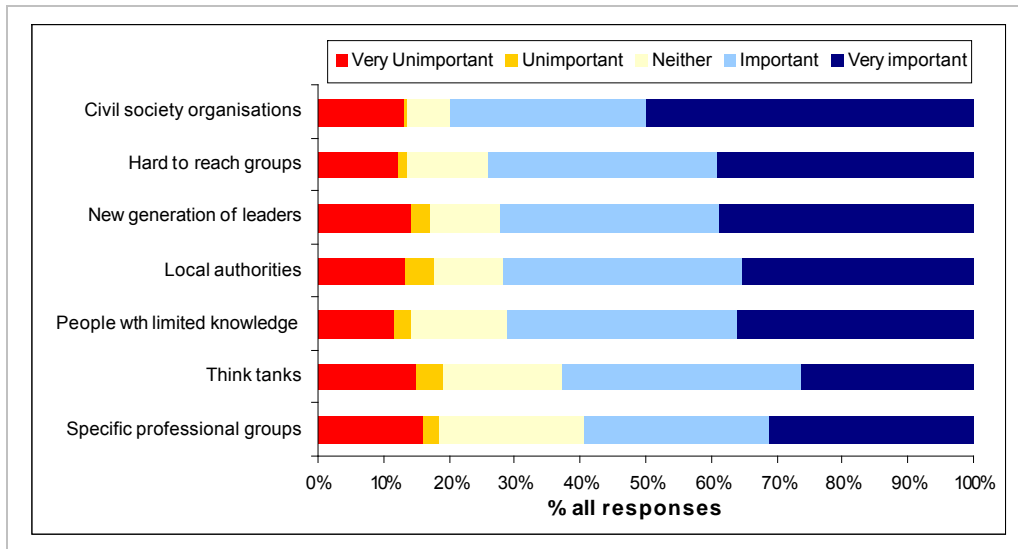


There is some consensus around networking, exchange and knowledge, including specific methods such as the use of information technologies. Given the responses in previous sections, this is less likely to be about mobility or movement in a physical sense, and more about promoting joint working, knowledge sharing and collaboration between organisations and their employees. Despite a wide variety of responses to the open question on outputs, the most frequently mentioned outputs tend to be similar to those above, including networks, platforms and forums for exchange of knowledge and good practice, awareness and social media campaigns, as well as specific events such as competitions or public holidays.

Although less emphasis is placed on provision of historical materials, opinion polls and media activities, these are still rated positively by the majority of respondents. Results are similar across all groups of respondents, although the private sector and research groups places more emphasis than most on opinion polls.

3.7 Target groups

Figure 3.5 On which target groups should the programme primarily focus?



Civil society groups are most frequently felt to be an important target group for the future programme, even though there are more citizens and representatives of local and regional government among the respondents. This pattern of responses repeats across most groups of respondents, and even government representatives place CSOs on an equal footing with local authorities and the new generation of leaders.

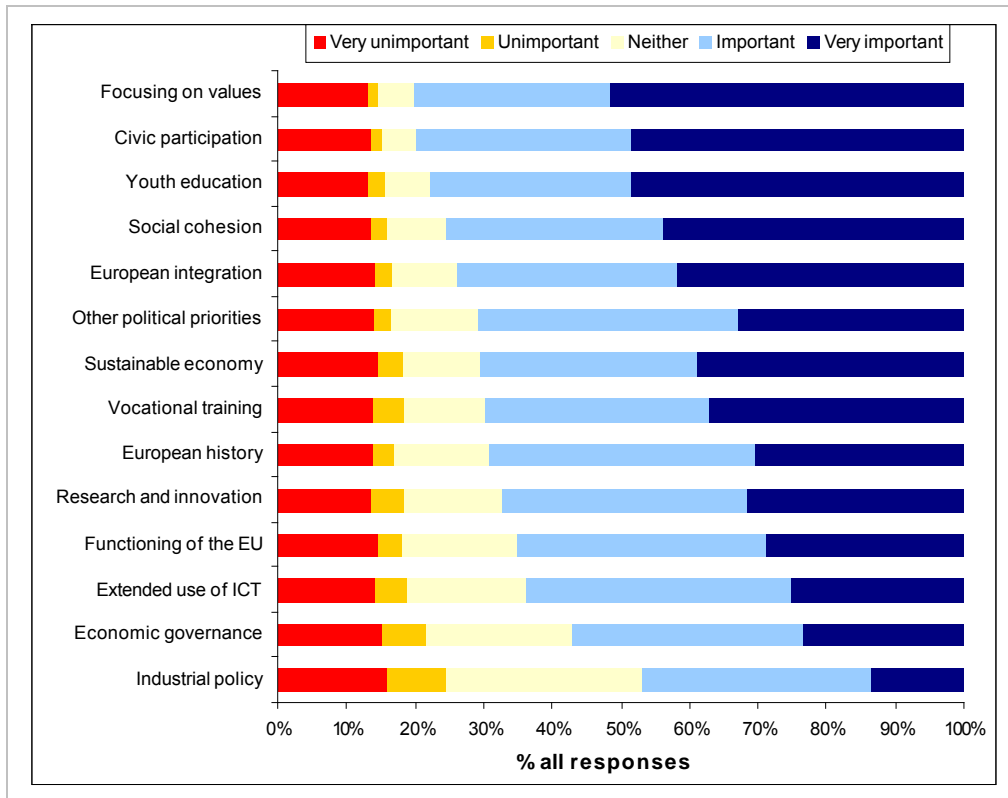
Citizens also tend to prioritise 'hard to reach' groups and people with limited knowledge of EU matters, with respondents from France and the UK placing these groups above local authorities and CSOs respectively. Of all the specific groups above, think tanks are least likely to be seen as an important target group, although a majority of respondents still feel they are important to some extent.

A wide variety of suggestions are made under 'specific professional groups', with the most frequently mentioned being (in approximate order of significance):

- Education professionals and students
- Civil and public servants, including health and social workers, emergency services
- Cultural or creative workers and artisans
- Journalists and media
- Policymakers and legal professions
- Entrepreneurs and business groups
- Religious groups

3.8 Priority themes

Figure 3.6 Which of the following themes are of the most and least importance/relevance?



Respondents are most likely to state that the most significant themes for the future programme are around “Values of the EU, fundamental rights, citizenship, diversity and integration”, civic participation (which is the overarching aim of the current programme), youth education and employment, social cohesion and European integration. These general themes receive many more positive mentions than specific topics such as industrial policy, economic governance and extended use of ICT. Although this appears to contradict earlier findings on the use of information technologies by supported organisations, it may be that respondents see the value of using ICT in their work, but do not see it as a thematic focus of the programme.

These patterns are consistent across the groups of respondents, although citizens also rate “European history and multicultural approaches” highly, private sector and research organisations place value on research and innovation and government representatives cite youth education as the most important single thematic focal point.

3.9 Synergy effects

The consultation also incorporated an open question on the best ways in which the programme can develop synergy effects with other programmes and policies. A wide variety of responses was also received here, though the most common responses fell under three broad categories:

- Through collaboration with other DGs
- By enhancing the role of national structures
- Through the work of supported organisations and beneficiaries.

In line with the findings of the Interim Evaluation, most respondents see the potential for supporting programmes in the area of youth, education, culture and sport, or human rights, equality, social and (to a lesser extent) economic inclusion. This could be through the use of shared themes or priorities across DG work programmes. A number of others see the promotion of democracy and human rights as a way for the programme to link to neighbourhood or third country programmes. A number also suggest a potential role for Europe for Citizens in communicating, explaining and disseminating the results of other EU programmes to civil society and citizens.

National structures such as the Europe for Citizens Points are highlighted by some respondents as a way for the programme to link to national priorities, political agendas and timetables (or to highlight needs or funding gaps at national level). A small number also recommend joint working by the national agencies and EU representative bodies in each member state as a way to make practical linkages between Europe for Citizens and other EU programmes or European institutions.

It is perhaps most common for respondents to see potential for linking to European and national programmes (and global issues) through the work of supported organisations. This could be by allowing organisations in receipt of organisational support grants to access funding from other EU programmes. Several respondents suggest that complementarities could be extended through networking around themes or issues of European (and usually global) interest, such as the environment, energy or poverty. Involving different types of organisations in this (for example local or regional government and civil society) could further increase the likelihood of synergy effects.

A small number of respondents commented that the programme should not prioritise synergy effects, but should instead focus on organisations and citizens that are not able to take part in other programmes. This could be by maintaining low entry thresholds that benefit smaller organisations or alternatively by focussing on areas that are not funded by other European or national programmes or are likely to be affected by budget cuts (i.e. civic education initiatives).

3.10 Relevance to needs of citizens

Arguably the most important synergy effect would be aligning the programme with the needs of citizens, with several suggesting an expanded role for research, consultations and new information technologies, or collaborations with (preferably small or local) organisations that are closest to citizens, or understand their needs and aspirations.

Although some place importance on the need for flexibility in themes, so that project promoters have room to react to emerging issues, others appear to contradict this by suggesting that the programme needs to link to the policy agenda better, as all new policies and programmes will impact on citizens. Others suggest that more detailed analysis of results (especially levels of participation) will help the Commission to understand which types of activities and issues are of most interest and relevance to citizens.

4.0 Summary

The main observations are as follows:

- The consultation generated a good distribution of responses, by country of origin, type of respondent and size of organisation.
- The responses of individual citizens (especially from the UK) differ from the rest of the respondents, in that they are more likely to give negative responses.
- Many of the negative responses were directed towards the European Union and EU institutions in general rather than the Europe for Citizens programme.
- Responses, especially under the open text questions, tend to be highly polarised and often contradict each other. This means that finding consensus amongst respondents is problematic, so the analysis of open responses therefore focuses on identifying frequent suggestions and criticisms.
- The number of open questions and misunderstanding caused by the technical nature of some of the questions mean that respondents often give similar responses under several questions.
- Respondents are much more likely make suggestions on themes requiring attention or groups requiring support than make specific comments on changes to the programme's methods, delivery mechanisms or outputs.
- The majority of respondents (81%) agree that there is a need for an EU programme promoting and supporting civic participation, with civil society respondents more likely to agree than individual citizens.
- There is strong support for objectives around promoting tolerance and mutual understanding, enhancing the participation of citizens in EU decision-making and promoting a culture of civic participation.
- Respondents prioritise cooperation and networking between different types of organisation, dialogue between civil society and EU institutions and citizen-focused methods, such as citizens panels, helping them to get organised and promoting citizenship education.
- On balance there is strongest support for collaborative, transnational and thematic approaches, especially 'joint projects by local authorities, civil society organisations and other local actors', with lowest levels of support for EU-level events and people-to-people twinning.
- There appears to be some consensus around the value of networking and platforms for information exchange or sharing of knowledge and best practice, including specific methods such as extending the use of information technologies, databases and social media.

- Civil society organisations, hard-to-reach groups, policymakers and local authorities are felt to be the most important target groups for the programme alongside education professionals, students, civil servants, cultural workers, journalists and legal professionals.
- The most significant themes for the future programme are around European values, fundamental rights, citizenship, diversity and equality, civic participation, youth education and employment, social cohesion and European integration.
- Respondents see potential for achieving synergy effects through collaboration with other DGs, by enhancing the role of national structures or through the work of supported organisations and beneficiaries.