

# ROMANIAN CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE EU REPORT OF A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN ROMANIA

Data Media Ltd

**T**his Synthesis presents the results of a group discussion held in Bucharest on 172 December 2013 on the subject of citizens' involvement in the European Union. It is part of a wider citizenship project managed by Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, with the support of national partners of the European Qualitative Network coordinated by OPTEM, on behalf of the European Commission.

## Introduction

This report presents the results of a group discussion held in Bucharest on 12 December 2013 on the subject of citizens' involvement in the European Union.

It is the Romanian section of a pan-European qualitative study involving 18 of the member states.

In each country the study was carried out by the national partner of the European qualitative network coordinated by optem: in Romania by data media Ltd.

This study forms a part of a wider citizenship project managed by Notre Europe – Jacques Delors institute on behalf of the European commission.

### BOX 1 ► Composition of the group of respondents

Gender	Age
Women: 4	20-34 years: 3
Men: 4	35-49 years: 3
	50-60 years: 2

#### Social class

Lower-middle social class: 4 (professions of head of household: dental technician, car driver, office worker, bookkeeper)

Higher-middle class: 4 (professions of head of household: sales manager-middle management in the private sector, artistic manager-middle management in the private sector, university lecturer, architect – self employed)

#### Political opinion

The respondents were also recruited so that diverse political opinions were represented in the group.

(2), “unity in diversity”, “progress”, “freedom of movement”, “community”, “consensus” and “united states of Europe”.

Afterwards, each participant explicitly said what first comes to their mind about the EU:

- Brotherhood – through the union we are stronger. *“We have the possibility of learning from others' experience – some nations have more experience than others; there is mutual help.”*
- Unity in diversity – there are very different nations, who grew up together. *“These countries understood that the best thing they have in common is being diverse, but that they share a continent and have some values that bring them together.”*
- Progress – developing the relationships between states, and reaching a higher degree of development. *“I would like the EU to be the most beautiful place on earth...”*
- Freedom of movement – to move freely around Europe and have equal rights with the other European citizens.
- Community – we are not “Romanians” or “French” or “Germans” anymore, we are Europeans. *“I, personally, did not necessarily start to feel that, but you can still see an evolution in comparison to how it was before.”*  
*“I have the feeling that i am a citizen of the European Union as i am a citizen of Romania.”*
- Consensus – together, we can find solutions to common problems. *“The founders realized that fighting won't work anymore, so we have to unite and do something together.”*

## 1. Initial thoughts about the European union

**Spontaneously, participants evoked different aspects** with respect to the EU: “brotherhood”

- United States of Europe – “Europe’s attempt to do what America did”. Regarding this aspect, mentioned by one participant, there were opposite opinions. Thus, several participants subscribed to the idea that “this European project is unique in the world” – it is different from the United States of America, because it entails bringing together very distinct nations.  
“For example, i don’t think there is a big difference between Alabama and Missouri, but there is a huge difference between Germany and France.”

There was an emphasis on the state of European cultures, **the preservation of member states’ specific traditions and national identities**.

- Cultural diversity can be preserved. For example, you can have a development/improvement of “romanianism through europeanism” or/and of “europeanism through romanianism”.  
“During so many hundreds of years of common history, peoples of Europe still developed different cultures. Through consensus, we can conceive systems that will maintain this diversity of cultures.”
- European traditions can arise, due to living together within this European community.  
“Only in that way traditions can be preserved, showing that you cannot have France without Spain, for example...”  
“Through the European union, a single community is being formed out of several communities, and subsequently more widespread traditions can arise.”

**Although most of the aspects discussed were positive, some participants also mentioned negative aspects** related to the EU.

- The fact that some member states might exit the EU.
- The waste or misuse of European funds
- The euro-scepticism of Romanians has increased a bit, mainly because the expected advantages “are not seen”  
“Romanians were the most eager to join the European Union. I don’t know if now we feel otherwise, but i believe that there is a little more scepticism.”  
“There is some reluctance – many wonder how they benefited from our joining the European Union. The expected advantages of that are not seen.”
- Three participants believe that Romanians do not even deserve the advantages brought by being part of the EU, because “we don’t bring a

significant contribution”. The others do not agree with that, arguing the opposite, with an emphasis on the contribution made by the Romanians who work abroad to the culture and the gdp of other European countries. Someone points out that Romanians are being helped by the EU, but that help gets “stuck in the middle” due to corruption.  
“We haven’t contributed enough to gain the advantages offered by EU.”

“our contribution is real – from ‘strawberry gatherers’ working in Spain to the bright minds who leave to study in England or France and remain there; they are trained in Romania, on our money, and they bring a contribution to their culture...”

“...or those who go directly there for a job, and they bring a contribution to their gdp.”

- Regarding Romania (sometimes unfairly) as “a poor brother within the union”, who has to do “the dirty job”, or as “the black sheep of Europe”.  
“[...] I am not a nationalist, but i see certain things and i don’t feel it is fair for us to be regarded as a poor brother within the union. It is a problem here, to consider Romania, sometimes unfairly, the black sheep of Europe... That is how they are treating us, at least at the present moment.”  
“The last to come does not really have equal rights... Romania is like the most recent employee in a firm – he will do the dirty work...”
- The rom issue is not only Romania’s responsibility – why everybody points to Romania when talking about Roms?  
“Something that bothered me is a matter regarding the rom people. It is being said that the Roms left Romania and populated the streets of Europe. [...] If you study the statistics, they also went [in the west] from countries like Poland or former Yugoslavia; more of them left from Hungary.”

**The degree of interest and involvement of participants in EU-related issues is fairly high.**

## 2. Sources of information and knowledge on the EU

The various sources mentioned by participants are, in order of frequency: **internet, television** (particularly Romanian channels), **school/university, family** and **conversations at the workplace**. Sources such as newspapers, radio and public conferences are more rarely mentioned.

*"As sources – the internet and my folks back home, who talk [about these things]?"*

*"I prefer the internet, where the information flows... You only have to look for it."*

*"The most important one is television, mainly Romanian TV stations."*

*"I choose TV as a source. At the office, we talk whenever some important news comes up. Newspapers – rarely, mainly when using the metro. I also listen to the radio, to the news from the national radio station."*

**On the internet**, they access specialised sites, like the one of the European Union or "pro-EU" websites, but also generalist sites, like Wikipedia. Some participants say they prefer analyses to raw, undebated information.

*"The internet – there is the European Union's website, which i visit. I also had a unit at the university on the EU. You also have Wikipedia, where you can find out general things."*

*"For me, the internet is crucial, mainly websites that post analyses; an analysis – this is what i like to read. I like to read an educated opinion and i usually read pro-EU websites, for this is my stance as well, i am pro-EU."*

**On TV**, they watch programmes that deliver different and distinct opinions and make analytical comparisons.

*"I like to hear different opinions, but then i filter them. I do realize whether they are well-intended or not."*

For most of them, **the internet has the highest credibility**. Some participants point out that, for them, "television is not credible", because it distorts information.

*"Internet is crucial, especially for those who want to pick out the information they receive. With television, you get what they give you."*

*"I prefer the internet, because television does not offer me credible information anymore. I cannot say that i use certain sites – the information is just there, and you only have to look for it."*

### 3. Questions regarding the future of the EU

Anticipating subsequent topics, several participants deplore **the poor degree of knowledge of the issues regarding the future of the EU**. At this point, several criticisms are made against the communication process from the EU toward national audiences.

*"Nobody knows for sure how the EU will be in the future. We can identify some objectives, such as enlargement, but i don't know anything more than that."*

There is no transparency: the decisions taken by the EU are made public only in part or not at all.

*"I am firmly convinced that we don't have access to all the information we need to form an opinion."*

There is the impression that decisions taken at the EU level are those of a small, privileged group.

*"I think that a handful of people know precisely what is going to happen."*

The vast majority of participants prove to be concerned with the future of the EU, expressing the wish to be aware with issues regarding the EU's future.

*"i think this would be a very important step forward – to be aware of absolutely all decisions and that, if possible, my opinion as a citizen be taken into consideration."*

*"[...] we have to be kept informed more. We only find out about things when the decision has already been made."*

The participants' opinions concerning **the major challenges for the EU** in the coming years are focused on the following topics:

- Generally speaking, **the development of the EU will go as it did so far**; the EU will enlarge or/and diminish. But there will not be "an exit en masse"; for example, Germany will not exit the EU, not even Greece; maybe Great Britain...

*"The future of the European union is clear. It will be like it has been so far... I think it will stick to this format – two-three countries may join, two-three may exit..."*

*"Germany is a very powerful country, and the Germans are not willing to exit the European Union."*

*"I don't think that Greece wants to exit either. There will be something going on in England – i know they are having a big referendum in two years or three; they have always been different. There are other countries that stay out – Switzerland, Norway."*

- A challenge to the EU would be that **some member states**, like Germany, **could become very powerful** and wish to impose their will, while others, like Greece or Spain, would become dependent. In that case, brotherhood breaks apart.

*"It seems to me that the main danger is that some countries become very powerful. It can be clearly seen that Germany supports, financially speaking, countries like Greece or Spain. Practically, the Greeks are Germany's slaves. All their debt comes from there."*

- **More equal opportunities:** not only economic opportunities, but also cultural and educational opportunities – for example, to go and study in another European country.
- In this respect, several participants highlight the importance of mutual help, of the European funds allocated to each member state.  
*"I don't think that a country should be assessed only from an economic point of view. Quality of life has many components, and they are not only material ones."*  
*"I wish there was a relative standardisation of opportunities, i wish it was much easier than now to go and study in another country."*  
*"I hope for a more balanced relation between income and living costs; a standardisation of lifestyles and incomes."*  
*"I think that the support given by the EU to all of its members is an exceptional thing in the history of Europe. It seems to be an opportunity that anyone, any group, should benefit from. I have heard of these funds and i tried to think of a historical precedent – i have not found one."*  
*"For me, the only difference brought by being in the union is that there are funds we can access."*
- For most participants, **the economic challenges**, especially the energetic issues, are more important.
  - People talk about the economic crisis affecting member states and the competitiveness of the European economy at the global level.  
*"...the economic problems, especially given that many member states are seriously shaken as a result of the crisis."*  
*"I think that the challenges to the European Union are economic – whether it will manage to remain competitive against countries such as china or Brazil"*
  - Regarding the energy issue, it is believed that some countries are more interested than others in this issue – Germany, for instance, seeks a collaboration with Russia; Romania treats this problem in a superficial manner.  
*"And the energy issue is also important. As far as i can see, Germany has an energy policy very much orientated toward Russia. I know the Germans prefer a tight relation with Russia and*

*want to play a role with regard to energy, which is not our case."*

*"Romania has a different line... maybe it is not interested – see the story with Nabucco or south stream."*

**Foreign policy** is seen as a weakness of the EU. In the future, it should be vitalised.

*"The major disadvantage of the EU is its foreign policy; Europeans are known to be weak, they argue against one another – see the case of Syria or Libya... In Libya, it was about nations operating separately, not together, as the European Union. I would like the EU to have a unique global stand."*

**The EU does not have yet a strong leader**, like Obama is in the USA. And it is necessary for the EU to develop. One participant does not agree, saying that "too much personality at the centre is bad", and that the USA does not represent the ideal model for the EU.

*"In general, you need leadership for every new thing you want to develop, and i don't see a leader here. America has Obama... We might have it, but it is anonymous. If you ask me to indicate one single representative name at the top of the EU, i don't know what to answer."*

*"If we would have a leader like Obama, then we would be The United States of Europe, and i don't think that this is the ideal. [...] too much 'personality' at the centre is not good either, for then you lose something. It is a difficult project. The problem is that there is no solution to that."*

The topic of **cultural diversity** is brought again into discussion and some participants express their fear that globalisation might lead to European nations losing their cultural identities and traditions.

But, as with the discussions from the first topic, contrary opinions are formulated. The general conclusion is that diversity needs to be preserved.

*"I still believe that one of the most important problems that the EU needs to address is the preservation of traditions. This globalisation may threat diversity. [...] I would regard diversity as the main priority and then the economic problem."*

*"Diversity must be maintained. I am Romanian – that is fundamental. But, at the same time, i cannot do without the others. It is pointless if i live in Romania and don't travel or study in another country. I need them in order to know what i am doing, what i am*



thinking, but at the same time i don't want to leave my country. That is how i think it should be."

"Globalisation does not mean losing identity. It is only a union of forces and a faster spreading of technologies, of development. This does not mean that we are destroying culture and traditions. On the contrary: we need to support them. But we are having an exchange: we give what we have and they do the same. We are creating a mix for the benefit of all."

"I think that traditions might be destroyed, i think we are on the verge of destroying them. Maybe we should not have such a large opening toward other things."

"Of course, diversity must be preserved, we have to avoid standardisation."

Regarding **Romania's position within the EU**, several critical opinions, often self-critical, are emitted of Romania's shortcomings on its path of integration.

- The misuse or waste of European funds  
*"I think that the EU seeks to secure equality of opportunities and the distribution of European funds. The fact that we succeed or not in accessing them, as the Germans or poles do, is questionable. It depends on the practical spirit of each country."*  
*"Regarding European funds - we receive them, but we have to be capable of managing them, and the bureaucracy does not help. It depends on who gets these funds, because there have been many grants and the money just vanished."*  
*"The only problems we have are those we ourselves created. We are not capable of managing European funds, we are not capable of being a transparent country - corruption is massive. It is pointless that they are giving us funds if these funds don't go where they should. I am not sure that this is the problem of the EU. It is our problem."*
- There is no national project - "we don't know what to do with the membership to the EU", "we are too indolent".  
*"We wanted to join the EU and then we realised that we don't really know what to do with this. We have to determine our priorities, to know what we are going to do with this membership and then make the best out of it."*  
*"We are more indolent, we wait for others to fix the problem."*
- How does the EU help Romania? Regarding this aspect, there are contradictory positions - either we are not helped at all or not enough, either we are, but we do not know how to take advantage of this help.  
*"We are not being helped either, we are being used only as a market for foreign products."*

"That is what i expect from the EU, to help us, to support us in reaching their level."

"The industry has been ruined and there are no jobs. It is difficult now to reach a gdp similar to that of western countries. We don't get any help from the outside. But i don't think that this is necessarily the solution, to get foreign help - we have to find that help within ourselves."

"I don't think that we are not being helped; we should not be that melodramatic, because we are being helped, but i feel like the support gets lost somewhere on the way and i don't figure out where exactly."

- We can talk of complexes of inferiority on the part of Romanians, which sometimes are unjustified.  
*"I think we are too small."*  
*"It is also about the feelings of inferiority we have at a national level. I think that very many Romanians say 'that's how we Romanians are'. I know many Romanians who are very nice and i would not change them for other Europeans."*  
*"The way we are now being perceived in the EU and we are taking part in this union depends on what we can do at the present moment. We can make progress."*

Almost all participants express **the need for better knowledge and understanding of the issues regarding the EU**. More particularly, they are interested in subjects that concern Romania.

The information currently available on these subjects is not satisfactory. Generally, it is believed that there is a problem with European communication, namely the information coming from Brussels "is lost or distorted somewhere on the way". MEPs from Romania do not do their job with respect to communication either.

*"I would like to find out more about the decisions regarding our country. I did not find out too much so far."*

*"I would like the EU to be less impersonal, but i don't know if that is possible. I would like it to have a better communication platform, so that Europeans get to know very well what we are aiming for. The ideals of the EU should be more present and more transparent - to reach the people."*

*"From my point of view, we are poorly represented in the European parliament. We don't have the experts we need - we did not choose them properly. They are our representatives there, who could keep us informed."*

#### 4. Current means of expression of citizens' views

Overall, participants say that there are no means for having one's voice heard with regard to future directions of the EU. The main perceived reasons for why that is difficult or impossible are **the lack of receptiveness of national and European institutions, which discourage personal or collective initiatives**, such as project proposals. Someone has the impression that "our opinion does not matter".

There are participants pleading for an EU communication strategy that is "closer to people", "less impersonal". In short, **the European Union has to be accessible**.

*"I tried to apply for European funds with a project on Nazism and fascism, but i was unsuccessful. This seems to me to be an important topic."*

*"I would like to have a more direct way to access European funds, not to depend on the intermediary bureaucracy. I would like to go directly to the EU for support."*

*"Our opinion does not count; it does not influence the decisions. How can an opinion influence them? Nothing happens."*

*"I would want a communication strategy that would be closer to people, through offices and centres, but face-to-face."*

**The vast majority of participants would want to get involved.** They think there are favourable conditions for that: people seem to be willing to become active, given for example the protests from the university square in Bucharest (against the gold mining project of a Canadian corporation at Rosia Montana, a commune of 16 villages in Transylvania).

*"i believe in action and that is why i am trying to do something."*

*"i don't feel like i have contributed so far by doing something or expressing my opinion, but i would wish to do so and i think i could do it. I could express my opinion loud and clear and, even if i would be on my own at the beginning, things could develop and i could build a community that would be concerned about the same issues. I could get involved in this way."*

*"i have noticed that this tendency to get involved in how our society functions is increasingly stronger, at least here in Romania. The university square is full with people who want to defend their point of view..."*

*"an opinion shared by a whole group does matter. If i say now that i don't want Britain to be part of the EU anymore, maybe nobody will pay attention to me, but*

*if there is ten of us, then someone might hear us, and if we all go out on the street... Maybe nothing will happen right away, but you get to be heard..."*

One participant says that, for now, he does not wish to get in any way involved with European issues, while another one expresses pessimism toward Romania's future in the EU.

*"i don't intend to have any kind contribution; i don't wish to get involved now. Maybe in a few years, i shall wish to do that, but now i don't sit and check my e-mail to see what I've received from the EU."*

*"i don't think that future is too bright for Romania. I am pessimistic."*

The **specific subjects** on which participants would particularly wish to give their opinion and to be listened to as citizens are **European funds, taxes, scientific research, conservation of the cultural heritage, and agriculture** (particularly the exploitation of agricultural fields). The expectations in that respect entail the personal involvement of people.

*"i would be interested in scientific research. There is a fund called European science foundation. Unfortunately, they give money only for very ambitious projects, involving many people."*

*"i would be interested in taxes. Some of them are imposed by the EU, but others are imposed by our authorities and are too high."*

*"i would be interested in protecting heritage sites. There are many valuable sites. It is about protecting monuments and restoring their old charm. Some of them are not monuments anymore, but ruins. I would like the EU to create a programme on that issue, because this heritage is part of our union's identity."*

*"i would like to do something related to agriculture, together with my father, because in my area (Bistrita) there are many unexploited fields. I feel very sorry for those lands."*

#### 5. Perceptions of new ways for citizens to get their voice heard

**The participants give a range of suggestions regarding new ways for citizens to get their voice heard:**

- **Promotional movies, documentaries**

*"they could make some films - promotional films - about the priorities of the European union and show them in cinemas."*

- **Advertising and entertainment shows on TV**

*"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."*

- **Territorial offices for European deputies**, through which they would keep in touch with their voters and ask for their opinion on the problems that concern them. They also have the duty to inform citizens on what is going on within the EU, to debate problems with them, to be a kind of "buffer between us and the union".

*"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."*

*"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."*

- **A PR department in every region** that would simplify the information coming from the EU.

*"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."*

- **Regular opinion polls on what is debated at the EU level.**

*"there could be polls on what topics are being discussed within the EU."*

- **A special building with several offices** providing information on EU's vital issues, where competent people would be working.

*"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."*

*"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."*

*"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."*

## 6. Assessment of several propositions for improving citizens' involvement

Participants have been shown, in turn, **8 various ideas** of means that could be put in place to allow citizens to have their voice better heard on EU related issues. They were asked how interested they are in each of them and for what reasons.

Firstly, here is **a top of the 8 suggestions** on the basis of participants' degree of interest.

- (1) **a. an information service on the functioning of the EU and EU policies, comprising an information office open for the public in every large city, a web site, and a service quickly answering any questions asked by telephone, mail or email.**
- (2) **b. debates to be organised in major media between average citizens and experts of EU issues on the directions taken by the EU.**
- (3) **h. information campaigns to be developed much more actively than in past years, in order to encourage citizens to involve themselves in the debates that are to take place and to take part in the coming election of members of the European parliament next spring.**
- (4) **g. an interactive service using the internet and social networks, to collect on a permanent basis citizens' views, wishes or criticisms on directions taken by the EU.**
- (5) **d. the possibility, given several times per year, to meet with your members of the European parliament or other EU politicians in the vicinity of where you live.**
- (6) **c. opinion polls on the EU organised regularly in the whole of Europe, allowing citizens to know both what their fellow countrymen and what the citizens of the other countries think.**

(7) **e. consultations through the internet organised by the European commission whenever major decisions have to be taken in the EU, open to all citizens.**

(8) **f. similar consultations, organised by our national government.**

Listed below are **the main reasons** for the interest participants expressed towards each suggestion, along with remarks and suggestions.

- **A:** it entails a **direct relation, face to face, direct communication**; a site also has a **forum**; there should be a social network as well; there could be a building in its own right, a more elaborate headquarter;  
*"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."*  
*"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."*  
*"a forum - usually, a site also has a forum. I am considering all that a site entails, including a forum."*  
*"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."*  
*"it should be something more welcoming, because all ministries and city halls have now such information offices and almost no-one visits them."*  
*"there is a question of design, of course. But what interests me is functionality, change of information, direct communication."*
- **B:** a mix between a and b; it is important to be there a special building (that would also have conference halls); an **interactive discussion; citizen involvement** would increase; a more consistent feedback for the EU; there would be the advantage of group discussions; media can also participate and the debates "could be filmed"; **ordinary citizens** be selected; an online video streaming of the debates; a system through which **the EU can monitor these opinions**.  
*"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."*

*"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."*

*"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."*

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

*"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."*

*"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."*

*"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."*

- **G: communication would be targeted.**

*"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."*

*"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."*

- **H: no inhibitions when communicating online; there's a need for opinion makers, like Philip de franco in the us or moise guran in Romania.**

*"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."*

*"...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."*

*"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."

- **D: it is a good idea**; the commissioners (who the respondents imagine would be present) should meet with the citizens – they are the specialists; the commissioners should not come here in the "communist" fashion.  
"i am not saying they should come that often, but at least twice a year."  
"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."  
"but he should not talk with the peasants in the middle of the corn field."
- **C: they are very useful.**  
"statistics are always welcome."
- **E: they seem efficient**; a system of video consultations, on key terms.  
"they seem efficient to me, for there may be people interested in speaking their mind and so they can post their comments."  
"consultations mean that he presents you something and expects an answer from you, not necessarily a 'yes or no' one."
- **F: not opinion polls, but consultations on the internet.**  
"yes, and they have to do the same, to ask for our opinion – consultations via the internet."

Besides the positive reasons that justify the interest, some participants **also** brought **some criticisms or expressed doubts regarding several suggestions**. Thus:

- **A:** the site is too impersonal; an office seems unfit, more appropriate is a special department.  
"i would develop a community, a site is too impersonal."  
"i would create – but i don't know where – a special department. Something bigger and more open toward citizens."
- **B:** the ideas expressed during debates should be selected; the term "brainstorming" should be used instead of "debates".  
"there is no method of selecting between all these ideas and clearly there should be one."  
"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."
- **D:** it is not a good idea; where would they come – at the televisions, at one of the centres, in the

new beautiful building? – and how can they be persuaded to come?

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

"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."

- **G:** not everybody can afford having internet, not everybody has a computer or access to the internet.  
"for example, the young people have access to the internet, but what about the old people? The European union is for everybody."

At the end, someone is wondering: through these 8 suggestions, is it us, as citizens, who want "our opinions to reach the EU or is the EU trying to reach us"? Because some of them regard "our way of getting involved", while others seem to regard "the way the centre wants to find out something from us". In response, other participants say: "it is both".

This is also the final conclusion of the group discussions: **communication has to go both ways. This enables citizens to make themselves heard and the union to answer them.**

## APPENDIX - DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Studiul calitativ « implicarea cetățenilor în uniunea europeană » Ghid de discuții

#### Introducere

Bună ziua, sunt melania bortun, cercetător la institutul data media, care realizează studiul pentru care ne-am întâlnit astăzi.

Înainte de a începe discuția, aș vrea să vă rog pe fiecare dintre dvs. Să se prezinte în câteva cuvinte: cine sunteți, dacă trăiți singur(ă) sau în cuplu, dacă aveți copii, care sunt activitățile dvs. Profesionale sau altele, și ce studii ați urmat sau urmați în prezent.

#### Tema 1

**Ne-am întâlnit astăzi pentru a vorbi despre uniunea europeană.**

**Care este primul lucru care vă vine în minte când vine vorba de uniunea europeană?**

- Reacții spontane
- Se explorează :
  - Natura lucrurilor menționate spontan despre ue;
  - Aspecte pozitive și aspecte negative legate de ue;
  - Exprimarea interesului/atracției sau a dezinteresului/distanțării.

#### Tema 2

**Acum, în legătură cu lucrurile pe care le știți și le gândiți despre ue: de unde provin ele?**

**Care sunt sursele din care obțineți informații sau aflați opinii despre ue? – mă refer la „surse” în cel mai larg sens al cuvântului, de la surse de informare oficiale și până la conversații informale cu prieteni sau cu alte persoane...**

- Reacții spontane
- Se explorează :
  - Gradul de diversitate al surselor menționate;
  - Natura aportului (de informații) primit de la fiecare sursă;
  - Cât de interesantă și cât de credibilă este fiecare sursă.

#### Tema 3

**Haideti să discutăm acum – mai concret – despre viitorul uniunii europene și despre întrebările pe care vi le puneți referitor la viitorul ei.**

**Există probabil unele aspecte pe care le considerați la fel de importante și pe care ați dori să le cunoașteți sau să le înțelegeți mai bine – aspecte privitoare la modul în care funcționează ue și la direcția în care se îndreaptă – lucruri despre care poate că nu obțineți informații suficiente de la sursele pe care le-ați menționat mai devreme.**

**Despre ce aspecte ați dori, în mod special, să știți mai multe?**

- Reacții spontane
- Se explorează :
  - Impresii generale – o bună sau o slabă cunoaștere/înțelegere a acestor chestiuni;
  - Percepții despre provocările majore cu care se va confrunta ue în următorii ani;
  - Exprimarea de către participanți a nevoii de a cunoaște mai bine și de a înțelege mai bine – ce teme, mai precis? De ce informațiile disponibile momentan despre aceste teme sunt nesatisfăcătoare?

#### Tema 4

**În calitate de cetățean, fiecare dintre dumneavoastră ar trebui să poată să-și spună părerea și să-și facă auzită opinia cu privire la direcțiile în care se îndreaptă ue – să-și exprime acordul sau dezacordul față o anumită direcție sau să-și exprime orice altă opinie.**

**Cum credeți că puteți face acest lucru la momentul actual?**

- Reacții spontane
- Se explorează :
  - Percepții despre cât de ușor sau cât de dificil este pentru ei să se exprime și să-și facă auzită opinia despre chestiuni legate de ue – prin ce mijloace?;
  - Percepții despre motivele pentru care este dificil
  - Subiecte concrete în legătură cu care participanții ar vrea în mod special să-și exprime opinia și să fie ascultați în calitate de cetățeni. Așteptări în această privință.

#### Tema 5

**Acum, v-aș propune să ne gândim care ar fi diversele mijloace prin care cetățenii europeni, așa cum suntem noi, și-ar putea face auzită opinia.**

**Haideti să încercăm să ne gândim la orice mijloc posibil. Să dăm frâu liber imaginației și să ne gândim la orice modalitate posibilă de a ne face auzită opinia – chiar dacă, pentru moment, nu știm cum ar putea fi pusă în practică. Ce modalități ne-am putea imagina?**

- Reacții spontane
- Se stimulează creativitatea grupului, încurajându-i pe participanți să „sară” de la o idee la alta.

#### Tema 6

**Acum, am să vă arăt câteva idei deja vehiculate – modalități care ar putea fi implementate, pentru a le permite cetățenilor să-și facă auzită mai bine opinia despre chestiuni legate de ue.**

**Am să vă întreb ce credeți despre fiecare în parte.**

- Se discută, succesiv, fiecare propunere în parte. Participanții sunt îndemnați să reacționeze la fiecare, întrebându-i **cât de mult îi interesează și de ce.**

**A. un serviciu de informații** despre modul în care funcționează ue și despre politicile ue, incluzând următoarele: un birou de informații deschis publicului în fiecare mare oraș, un sait pe internet și un serviciu prin care să se răspundă rapid la întrebările cetățenilor adresate prin telefon, prin poștă sau prin email.

**B. dezbateri** organizate în mass-media între cetățeni obișnuiți și specialiști în chestiuni legate de ue, având ca temă direcțiile în care se îndreaptă ue.

**C. sondaje de opinie** despre ue realizate periodic în toată europa, care să le permită cetățenilor europeni să afle ce cred atât conaționalii lor, cât și cetățenii din alte țări.

**D. întâlniri** cu reprezentanții dumneavoastră din parlamentul european și cu alți responsabili ue, organizate de câteva ori pe an, în apropierea locului unde trăiți.

**E. consultări prin internet**, deschise tuturor cetățenilor, organizate de comisia europeană atunci când în cadrul ue urmează să fie luate decizii majore.

**F. consultări similare** celor de mai sus, organizate la nivel național de guvernul nostru.

**G. un serviciu interactiv**, prin intermediul internetului și al rețelelor de socializare, pentru a colecta în mod constant din partea cetățenilor păreri, dorințe sau critici privitoare la direcțiile în care se îndreaptă ue.

**H. campanii de informare** desfășurate într-un mod mult mai activ decât în anii trecuți, pentru a-i încuraja pe cetățeni să se implice în viitoarele dezbateri și să participe la viitoarele alegeri pentru parlamentul european, din primăvara anului următor.

Vă mulțumesc din nou pentru participarea la această discuție.

Dacă, după această întâlnire, vă mai vine vreo idee legată de ce am discutat, nu ezitați să ne scrieți – la adresa: [office@data-media.ro](mailto:office@data-media.ro).

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