



# **Mid-term evaluation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020**

## **Results of the public consultation**

**September 2017**

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# Public consultation results

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A **public consultation** in all languages was available online for the mandatory period of 12 weeks between 9 January 2017 to 10 April 2017. In total, the public consultation received **322 responses**. The public consultation gave the possibility to interested parties to express their views and opinions on the EfCP and focused on the following topics:

- Awareness, experience and involvement of survey participants in the EfCP and EU-related activities;
- Importance of activities funded by EfCP for EU action;
- Effects of the survey respondents' participation in the EfCP; and
- Interest in taking part in activities funded by the EfCP.

The public consultation was accessible to all citizens. It was announced and promoted in different channels such as the EACEA website, the National Contact Points, and Your Europe, but also on DG HOME's webpage.

The purpose of the consultation was to collect insights and experiences on the EfCP from the general public but also from beneficiaries (i.e. organisations that have received/receive funding), from organisations who could be interested in the programme but who have not yet submitted an application for funding, as well as unsuccessful applicants. It also fulfils the consultation requirement stipulated in the Better Regulation Guidelines that were published in May 2015.

The Public Consultation gave the possibility to interested parties to express their views and opinions on the EfCP and focused on the following topics:

- Awareness, experience and involvement in the EfCP and EU-related activities;
- Importance of activities funded by EfCP for EU action; and
- Interest in taking part in EfCP activities and effects of past participation.

The Public Consultation also included a number of profile questions and asked for contact details (optional) whereas allowed the respondents to strengthen their replies by uploading any position papers of their organisations.

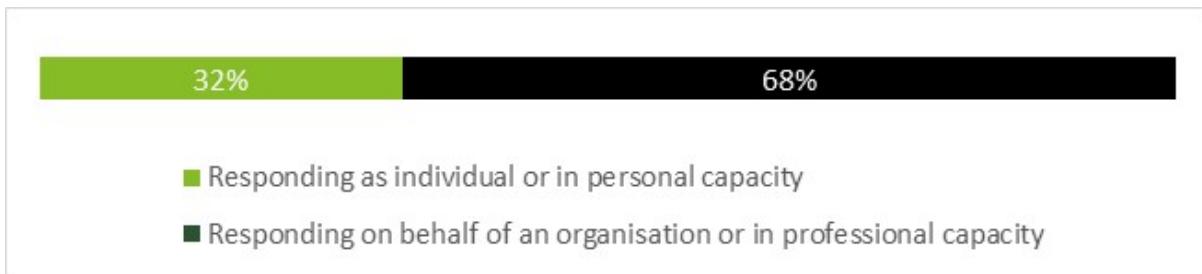
A total of 35 questions were included, in both open and close format. The Public Consultation was available in all official languages of the EU.

The paragraphs below summarise the findings of the Public Consultation survey on the basis of the responses collected and analysed by the evaluation team, as well as any received contributions.

## Profile of respondents

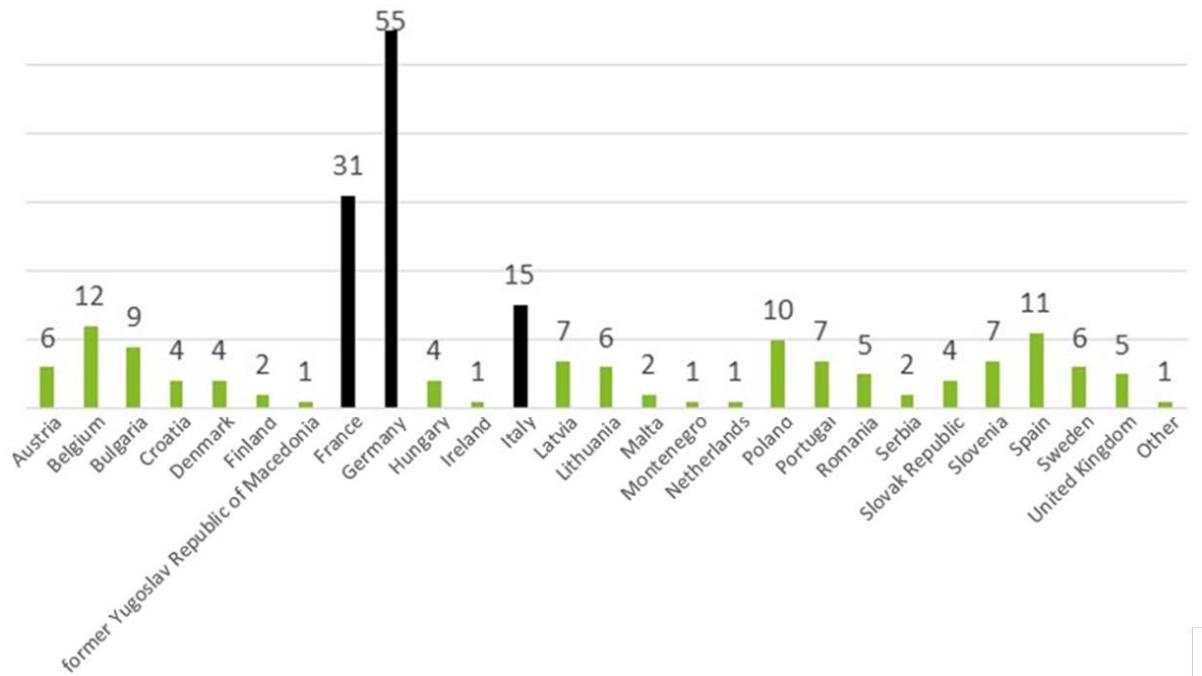
At the closing of the survey on 10 April 2017, a total of 322 responses had been received. The survey respondents were initially asked to state the quality in which they were filling out the survey. Figure 26 indicates that over two thirds of respondents responded on behalf of an organisation or in their professional capacity.

*Figure 1: Capacity in which respondents filled out Public Consultation questionnaire (n=322)*



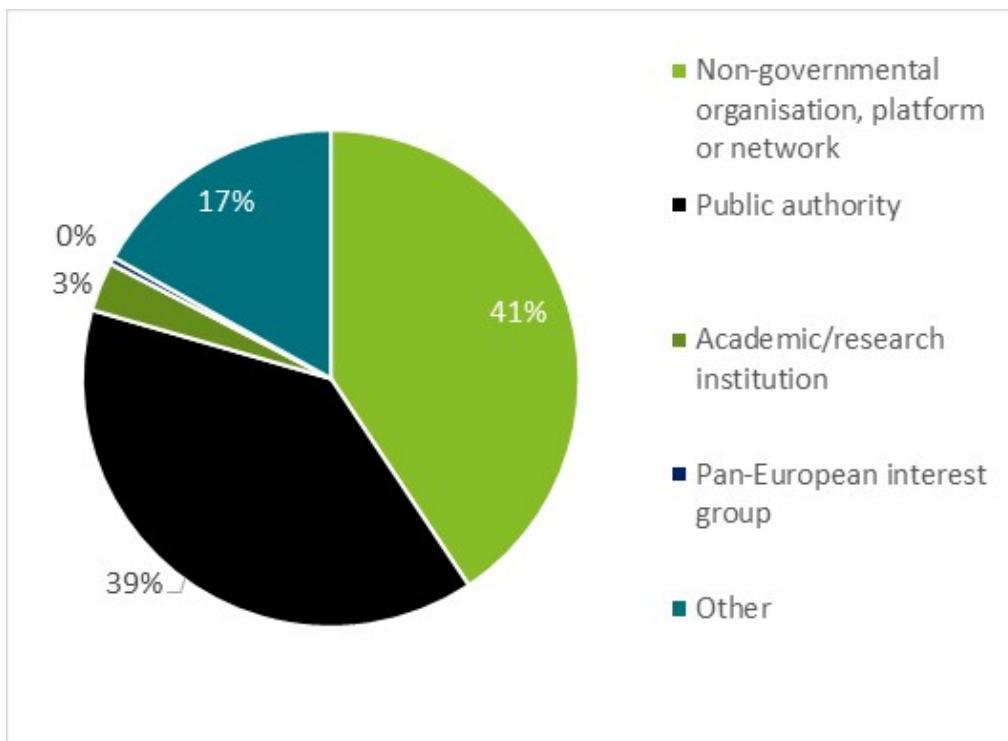
The Figure below shows a breakdown of the responding organisations' country of headquarters. More than one in four respondents in the Public Consultation on the EfCP stated Germany as country of residence (55 replies), followed by France which totalled 31 responses. The third most represented country was Italy. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia had one responding organisation each. There was also one reply stated the Republic of Serbia.

*Figure 2: Country of organisation's headquarters (n=219)*



The respondents were then asked to specify the type of their organisation, as shown in the Figure below.

*Figure 3: Type of organisations responding to Public Consultation survey (n=219)*



More than two thirds of the participating organisations stated they are either a non-governmental organisation, platform or network or a public authority (41% and 39% respectively). Significantly less noted they were an academic or research institutions and there was only one pan-European interest group. A total of 37 organisations identified themselves as *Other*. The details provided in their open responses notably included at least six Town-Twinning organisations, five associations of local/regional authorities and one National Contact Point (NCP) of EfCP.

Among those respondents completing the survey in their personal capacity or as individuals (32% as indicated in Figure 26, those residing in Italy were the most numerous by a significant margin, followed by respondents from France and Germany which were twice as less, as shown in Figure 27. Notably, one response was provided for each of the associated countries Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia. The two open responses for the category *Other* included a respondent from Kosovo and another from the Dominican Republic.

*Figure 4: Respondents' country of residence (n=103)*

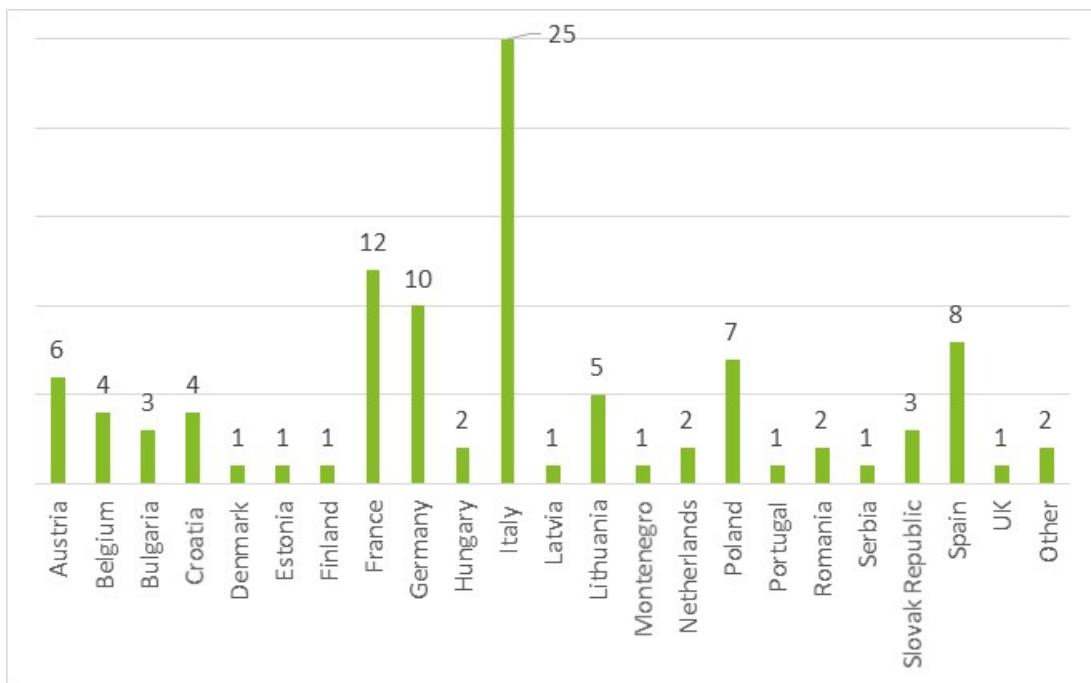
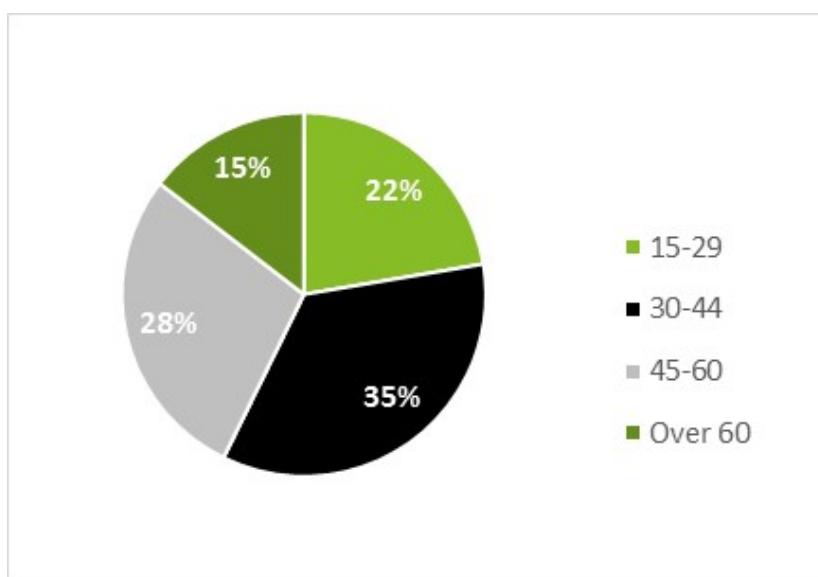


Figure 30 indicates that the participation in the survey in terms of age groups was fairly balanced among respondents who filled out the Public Consultation in their personal capacity. The respondents aged 30 to 44 years were slightly more numerous than the other age groups, whereas the respondents aged over 60 were the least represented in the sample.

*Figure 5: Respondents' age group (n=103)*



## Awareness, experience and involvement in the EfCP and EU-related activities

The following paragraphs summarise the survey results for the questions relating to the respondents' awareness, experience and possible involvement in the EfCP and other EU-related activities.

As shown in Figure 31, the overall level of awareness of the EfCP among survey participants was very high, as more than eight out of ten reported that they had heard about the EfCP prior to their participation in the Public Consultation.

*Figure 6: Prior awareness of survey participants of the EfCP (n=322)*

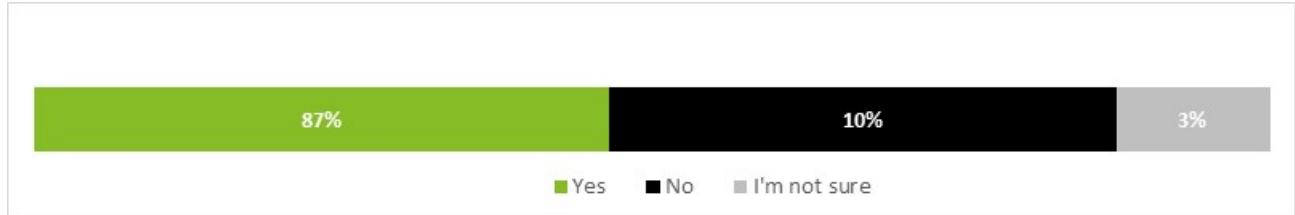
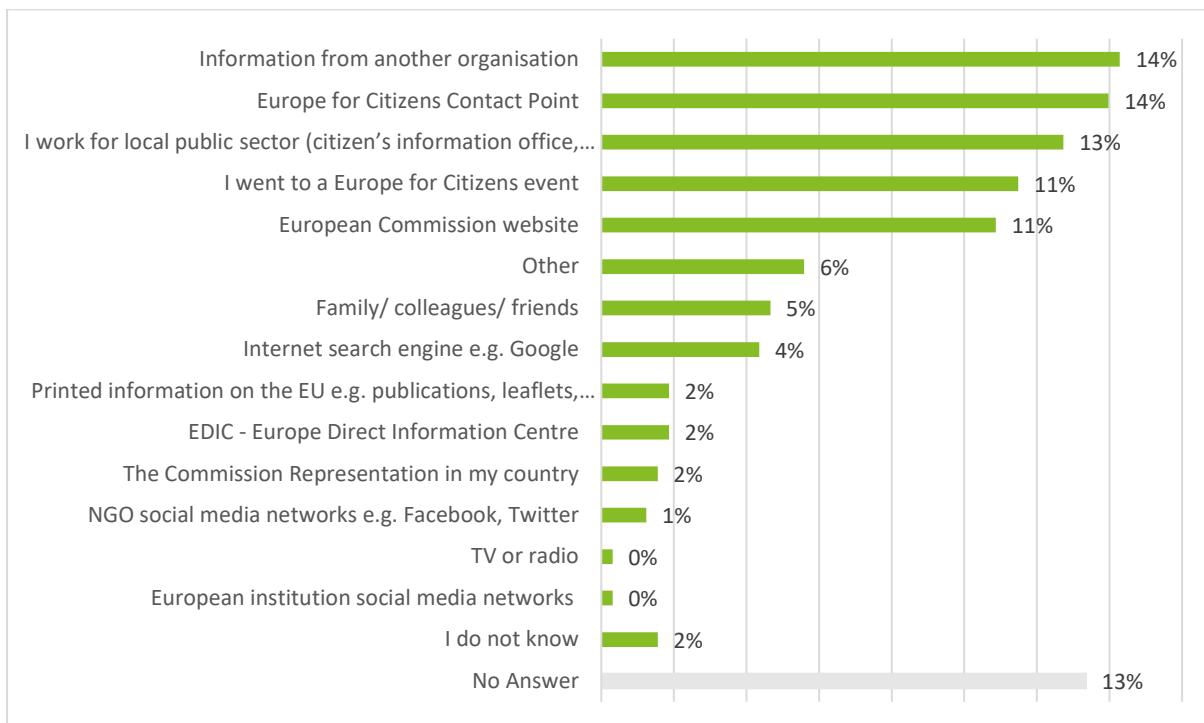


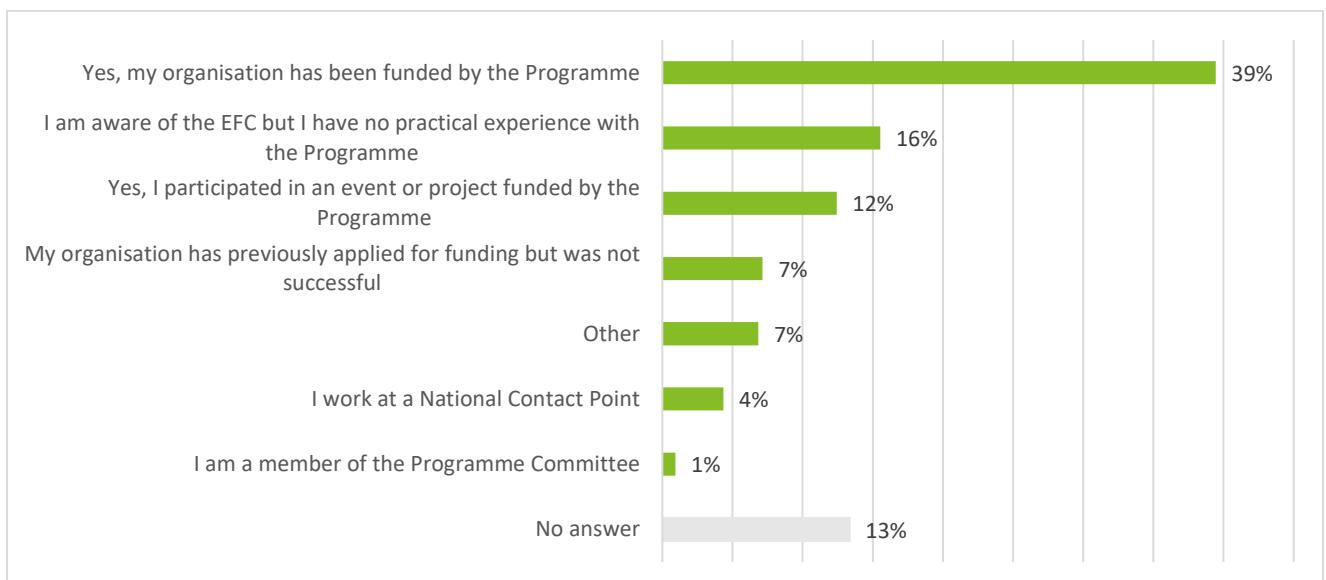
Figure 32 presents a breakdown of the main sources from which the survey respondents first found out about the EfCP. Almost half of all survey respondents initially heard about the programme from another organisation, a Europe for Citizens NCP or because they work in the local public sector (each of these options was selected by similar numbers of respondents). More than one in ten participants reported that they first learned about the EfCP upon attending a programme event or that they had come across the programme on a European Commission website (such as [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)). The least popular information sources were EU institutions and NGOs' social media networks and TV or radio. The open responses of those who stated they initially heard about the programme from another source (6%) included through university/studies, working for a beneficiary of the EfCP and through one's previous employment as EU civil servant.

*Figure 7: Sources of information on the EfCP (n=322)*



The participants to the Public Consultation were later asked to provide details on their experience with the EfCP by selecting one option from a number of suggestions. Figure 33 presents the responses given. Almost 40% of respondents stated that their organisation had received funding from the EfCP. More than one in six noted that they were aware of the programme but had no practical experience with it and slightly less reported that they knew of the EfCP because they had attended an event or participated in a project funded by the programme.

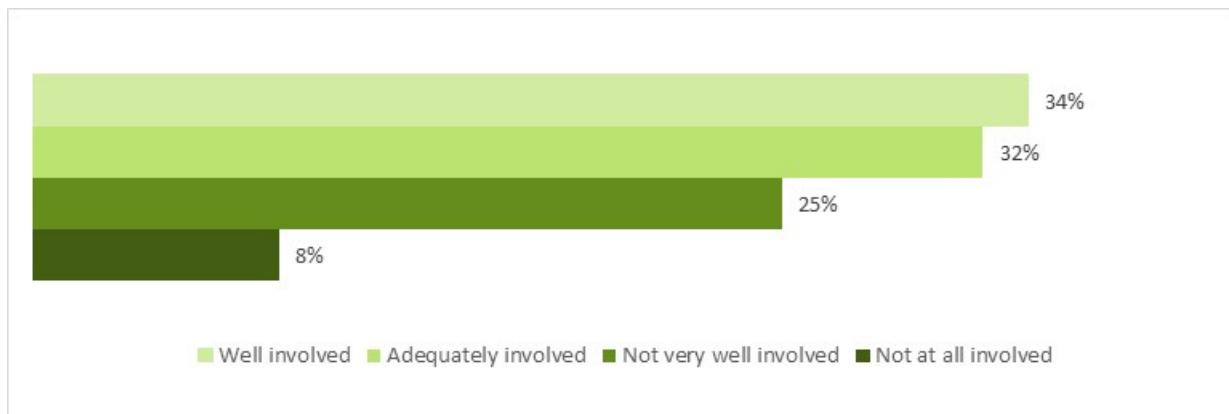
*Figure 8: Experience of participants with the EfCP (n=322)*



Proportionately, an important number of participants (13%) were unsure and did not provide an answer. A total of 22 respondents (7%) did not identify with any of the suggested responses. The analysis of the open replies uncovered prospective and current applicants, CSOs with an interest in the policy field and other interested parties, such as organisations acting as multipliers for the promotion of the programme on a local and regional level from two Member States.

The respondents to the Public Consultation were then asked about their general level of involvement in EU activities such as ability to voice their opinion on the EU, engagement in EU affairs and participation in the EU policy making process. Figure 34 presents the summary of the received responses. Two-thirds of all participants to the Public Consultation stated that they are well or adequately involved in EU-related activities. Only less than one in ten respondents reported not being involved at all.

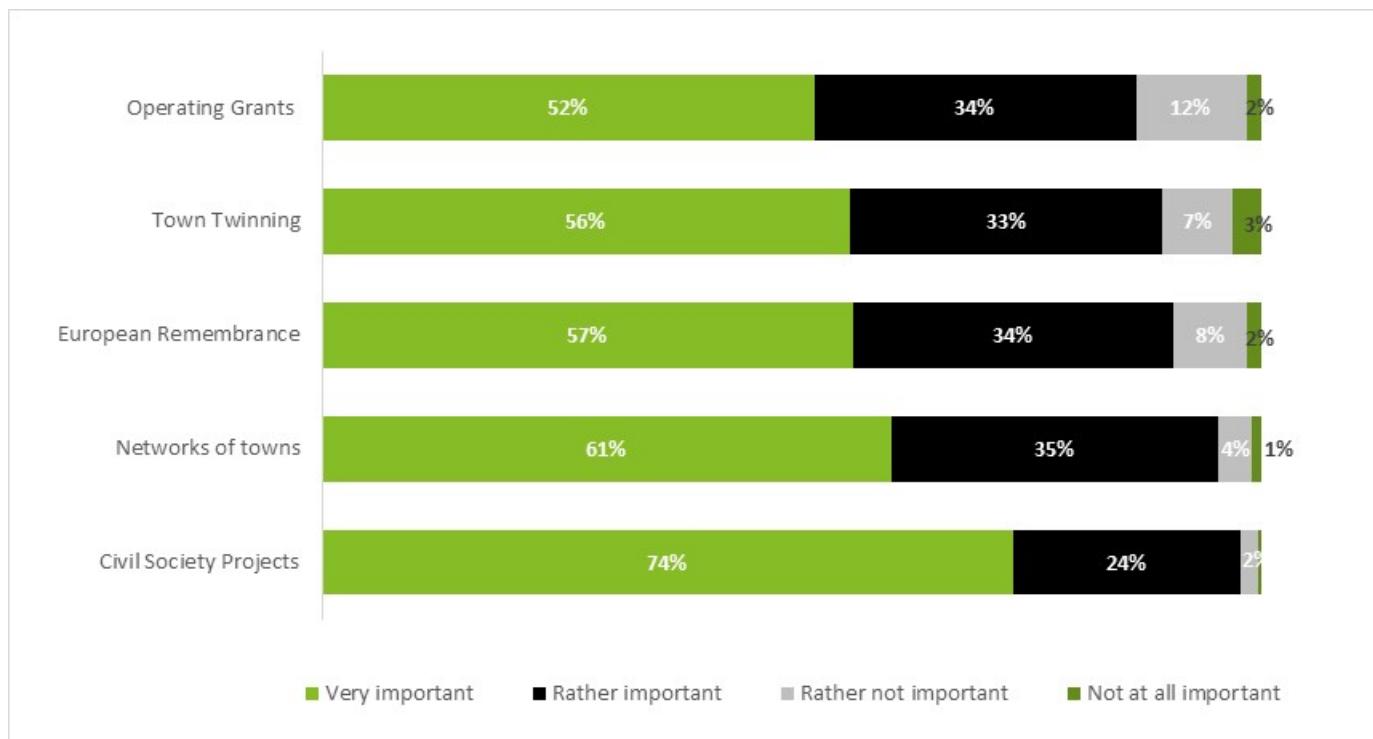
*Figure 9: Survey respondents' involvement in EU-related activities (n=322)*



## Importance of activities funded by EfCP for EU action

The respondents to the Public Consultation were asked to reflect on the importance of the different types of activities that the Programme funds for EU action. Their responses are shown in Figure 35. The participants appeared overall to assess all activities as important to a certain extent. The most relevant activity for EU action was considered to be the Civil Society Projects followed by the Networks of Towns, whereas the least important was the financing of Operating Grants.

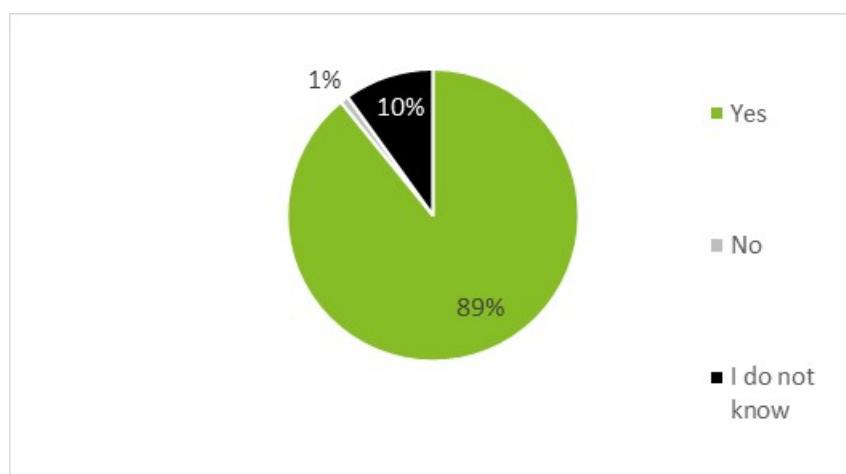
*Figure 10: Importance for programme activities for EU action (n=322)*



## Interest in taking part in EfCP activities and effects of past participation

As shown in Figure 36, a large majority of the Public Consultation respondents were overall keen to participate in activities funded by the EfCP in the future. One in ten, however, replied negatively.

*Figure 11: Interest in participating in EfCP-funded activities in the future (n=322)*

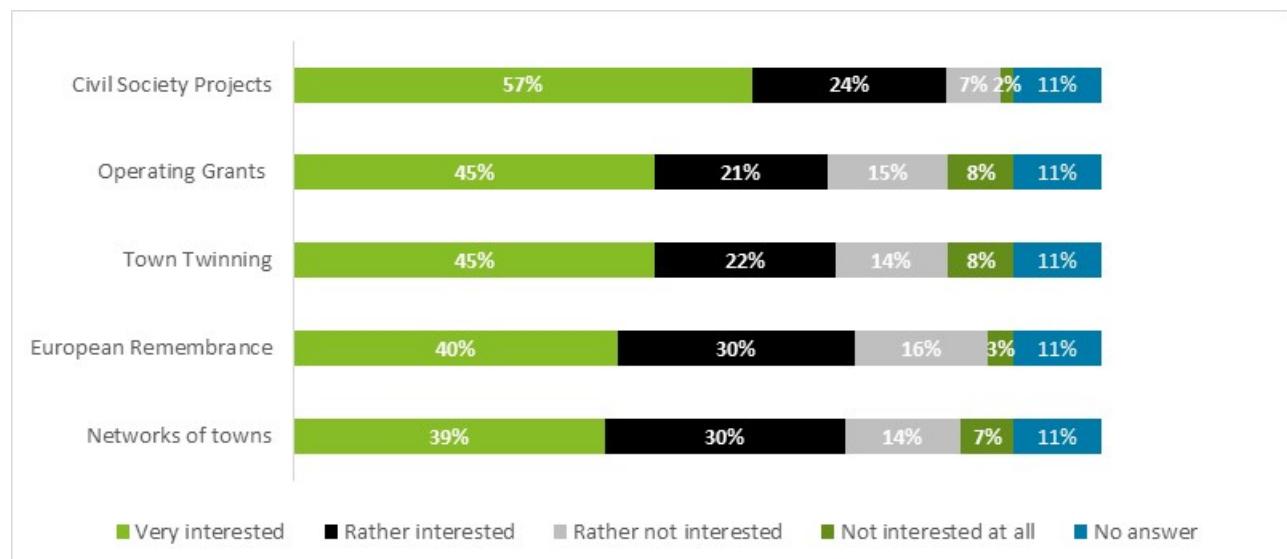


For those respondents showing interest in taking part in future activities of the EFC, Figure 37 summarises the interest reported for each type of activity funded by the EfCP.

Participation in Civil Society Projects attracted the biggest interest from the respondents to the Public Consultation. This was also the activity that they deemed most important for EU-action (as shown in Figure 35 above). Almost half of the respondents who expressed an interest to participate in EfCP-funded activities were very interested in obtaining an Operating Grant or funding for Town-Twinning activities. This is somehow in contrast with the fact that Public Consultation respondents considered Operating Grants as the least important aspect of the EfCP for EU action. While the activities taking place under Networks of Town were deemed to be the second most important type of activity for EU action, it appears that Public Consultation respondents were attracted the least by participation in this programme area. For each activity, less than one in ten respondents stated no interest to participate at all.

Overall, at least two out of three respondents stated they were very interested or rather interested to participate in the activities funded by the EfCP.

*Figure 12: Interest of respondents to participate in EfCP-funded activities in the future (n=322)*



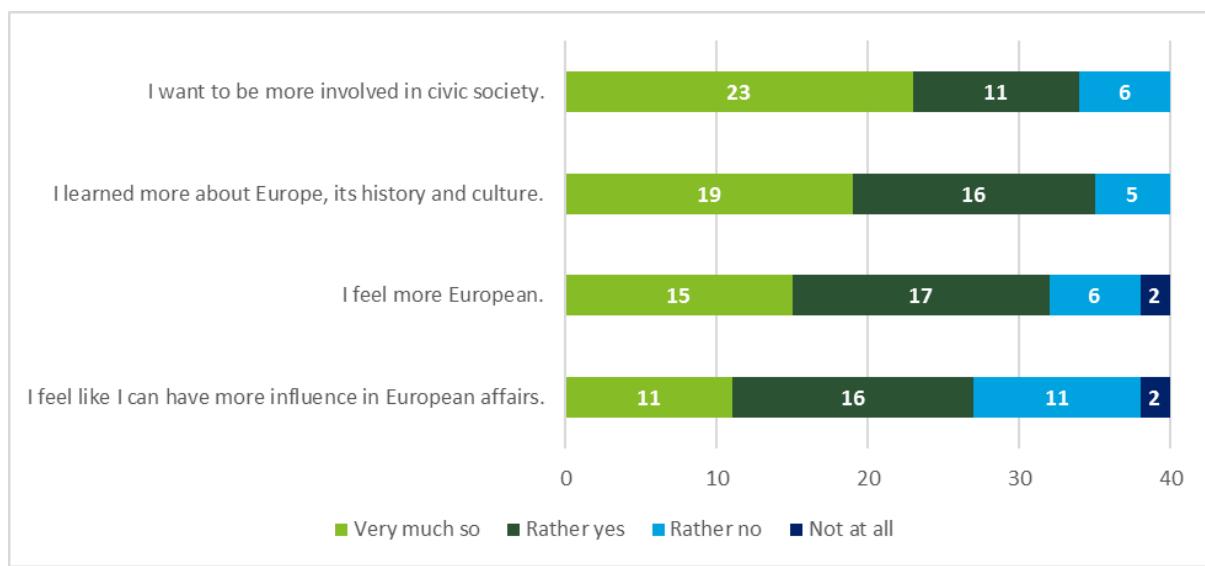
Finally, the respondent to the Public Consultation who had already been involved in activities financed through the EfCP were asked to comment on the effects of their participation in relation to four aspects of their relationship with European identity and the EU. As shown in Figure 38, more than two thirds of the respondents to this question reported that had felt some effects from the participation in EfCP activities.

Among the 40 respondents to this question, the effect of the participation in EfCP activities that was felt the strongest was that afterwards participants wanted to get more involved in civic society. A significant number also noted that they had learned more about Europe, its history and culture, and slightly less that they felt more European following their participation in the EfCP.

In relative terms, for the respondents the least powerful effect of their participation in EfCP activities appeared to be the feeling that they could have more influence in European affairs.

An open response was given by one respondent who felt that participation in the EfCP had enhanced their knowledge of their European neighbours.

*Figure 13: Effects of participation in EfCP-funded activities (n=40)*



## Summary of open comments, contributions and position papers submitted to the Public Consultation

Respondents to the Public Consultation were finally given the opportunity to add any comments/suggestions as well as share any position papers expressing the views of their organisation regarding the EfCP. **A total of 102 comments and, 32 contributions** had been submitted. Below we outline the main comments and recommendations made by the respondents to the Public Consultation, grouped by key theme.

### Programme objectives and priorities

- At the European level, the EfCP is perceived as dealing with important issues such as strengthening European citizenship, improving citizens' and democratic participation at EU level, and raising awareness of shared history and shared values.
- The EfC Programme is considered unique as it supports citizen-led projects in which ordinary citizens are the real protagonists of the action. It targets citizens of different age and social groups while putting particular emphasis on the participation of disadvantaged groups of people such as women, minorities, migrants and people with disabilities.
- It is felt that, in practice, the EfCP falls short to achieve its potential to bring the EU closer to its citizens and strengthen overall civic and democratic participation.
- The introduction of multi-annual priorities is considered a great improvement.
- While the priorities of the EfCP are generally perceived as adequate, it has been suggested that they could be adapted to support a broader range of projects specifically linked to European citizenship, such as actions to promote European values and policies, mobility, Intercultural discovery and best practices sharing at the local level.
- EfCP is highly important nowadays due to the political and societal context in most European countries. Especially 'Town-Twinning' actions.

## **Funding**

- The funding is insufficient to match the ambitious objectives. Its current financial envelope of EUR 185.5 m , despite its distinctiveness in contributing to the European project, is extremely marginal if compared to programmes such as Creative Europe (1.46 bn) and Erasmus+ (14.7 bn). It is suggested by many stakeholders that the budget is increased at least to the symbolic “one euro per citizen”, thus raising the budget to EUR 500 m.
- The maximum funding rates per project are thought to be low.
- Low success rates lead to frustration of applicants and an overall negative image of the programme.
- The current financing system does not take into account the differences between Member States in terms of geographical distances and cost of living.
- Constant increase of costs to accommodate the needs of and expectations from the project.
- It is common that projects rely on volunteering to cover additional occurring costs.
- Although it requires many partners to be involved, the financial support per involved partner remains small.
- Dissemination activities (which guarantees sustainability) of the projects needs separate lump sum.

## **Civil Dialogue Group**

- There were a few suggestions to reform the Civil Dialogue into a permanent structured dialogue and a platform of discussion between beneficiaries, the European Commission and National Contact Points (NCPs).
- Not only to discuss the priorities of the Programme, but also, the policy developments in the fields of democratic engagement, civic participation and citizenship in general, as well as the proportion of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) dedicated to it.

## **Administration**

- The EfCP has been and remains a pioneer in the application of simplified financial procedures, such as the introduction of the lump-sum approach.
- The overall administrative burden to applicants and beneficiaries is lighter compared to other EU spending programmes.
- Beneficiaries would like to be supported more effectively in their search for project partners within the Programme e.g. through a central online platform.

## **Application and evaluation process**

- The selection process but also the competencies of the evaluators and therefore the liability of the evaluation results was questioned.
- It is difficult to address the size of the applied partnership.
- High workload for applying and high risk of rejection.

## **Operating Grants**

- Many stakeholders advocate for this line of funding to be maintained, as it provides a minimum of stability and an opportunity of long-term planning to organisations which are essential to the development of civil society and operate in a difficult financial climate.
- Some stakeholder organisations question the eligibility of think tanks and research organisations to financing in the form of an Operating Grant. It is thought that they have an easier access to other forms of financing.

## **Directorate-General in charge of EfCP**

- The current compartmentalisation of EU citizenship policies across different DGs (HOME, JUST, EAC, COMM, including the Secretariat-General) is weakening the programme. This makes it problematic to identify one interlocutor for EU citizenship policies, thereby negatively affecting the programme's understanding and visibility compared to other programmes that are assigned to a particular DG.
- The change of responsibility from DG COMM to DG HOME is not considered as positive. Some organisations would welcome a shift in responsibility from DG HOME to DG EAC, where the EfCP was hosted originally because of its obvious links to culture policy.
- It is suggested that the Citizenship departments across different DGs are bundled together.

## **Role of the European Parliament**

- It is suggested that for the next programming period, the European Commission addresses the issue of the legal base enabling the European Parliament to be involved in the adoption of the programme as a co-legislator under the ordinary legislative procedure. Several stakeholders estimate that the European Parliament must be able to play its role as legislator for a special programme created with the aim of strengthening the links between Europe and the citizens it represents.

## **Promotion and visibility**

- The programme clearly lacks the communication for it to be better known and increase a diverse participation rate. A one-stop-shop platform bringing together all the information related to this programme as well as other actions, grants and structural funds that come under the umbrella of European Citizenship (i.e. ECI, European Voluntary Service) could be useful.
- Lack of promotion and therefore, limited visibility of the EfCP does not guarantee the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.
- The Programme should pay closer attention to the media, as the media environment has proven to be an essential component of political and social participation.
- It is suggested that long-term synergies with Erasmus+ programme should be considered.