

## Report of EFA “Meet and Greet New European Parliament and Commission” Training 2014

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and COPD patients organisations, representing 38 national associations in 25 countries and over 400,000 patients in Europe. EFA is dedicated to making Europe a place where people with allergies, asthma and COPD have the right to best quality of care and safe environment, live uncompromised lives and are actively involved in all decisions influencing their health. [www.efanet.org](http://www.efanet.org)



This report arises from EFA operational programme 2014, which has received funding from the European Union in the framework of the Health Programme (2008-2013). The content of this report is EFA’s sole responsibility; it can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission and/or the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers or any other body of the European Union. The European Commission and/or the Executive Agency do(es) not accept responsibility for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

## Introduction

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On the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, EFA organised its fifth training for members on the functioning of the European Union and policies related to the health of patients with asthma, allergy and COPD. The training was built upon the experience of previous editions, namely 2007, 2009, 2012, and 2013. EFA has been organising this training as part of our strategy to involve members in the decision-making of EU policies. All programmes and previous reports are available [here](#).

Based on the feedback received from those trainings, the 2014 training was conceived as a combination of beginners and advanced training. The goal of the training was, on the one hand, to give members an overview of the composition and functioning of the European Parliament and the European Commission during the next legislature 2014-2019, and, on the other hand, to empower them to take an active role in the EU legislative process influencing their health. The overall and long-term objective was to involve and engage EFA members towards advocating for their interests, both at the EU and national levels.

Beginners learnt about the composition, powers and functioning of the newly elected European Parliament and the European Commission, the main developments in the health policy at the European level, and EFA's collaboration with other Brussels' stakeholders. Together with advanced participants, beginners met and greeted officials from the European Commission and key Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from their home countries, and were introduced to EFA's communication strategy. A role-play enabled them to dig deeper in the EU medical devices regulation and replay the legislative process, after which participants attended a workshop on mobile health (mHealth) that served them to understand the Commission's plans on mHealth, its potential for respiratory diseases patients as well as its safety aspects. Programme of the event can be found [here](#).

As a result of the call for expression of interest sent to all EFA members, ten members showed their interest in participating in the training:

1. Javier Contreras, [FENAER](#)
2. Juan Fuertes, [FENAER](#)
3. Diana Hadzhiangelova, [Association of Bulgarians with Bronchial Asthma, Allergy and COPD](#)
4. Martine C.J. Puhl, [Longfonds](#)
5. Antonia Šandrić, [Association of Patients of Asthmatic Children of Zagreb](#)
6. Emily Humphreys, [Asthma UK](#)
7. Dan Murphy, [Asthma UK](#)
8. Luke Tomlinson, [Asthma UK](#)
9. Giorgio Salerni, [FEDERASMA e ALLERGIE](#)
10. Isabel Saraiva, [Respira](#)

Mogens Ekelund, President of Lung Cancer Europe (LUCE), also participated in the training.

## European Parliament 2014-2019

EFA EU Policy Advisor Roberta Savli gave a comprehensive presentation on the European Parliament's elections and their outcomes.

The European Parliament has greater and more consistent powers than in the past. However participants discussed about the main risks for the future legislature, namely the continent-wide rise of Euroscepticism and extremist parties, together with the still marginal role played by health issues – health considerations were almost absent in the manifestos of the main political parties competing for elections-.

Roberta presented key Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), as well as opportunities for EFA members to liaise and engage with them through [EFA Manifesto](#).

## European Commission 2014-2019

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The composition and functioning of the new Commission, as well as the new Health Commissioner and Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) priorities for the coming years were presented EFA Junior EU Policy Officer Jelena Malinina.

Participants got an overview of the key changes in the new Commission's structure, an update on responsibilities of the designated vice-presidents, as well as on crucial portfolio shifts in DG SANCO and DGs related to the environment, energy and climate change.

Furthermore, participants learnt about EFA's and other organisations representing European public health community

[initiatives](#) influencing the work and structure of the European Commission.

## EFA and other organisations

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EFA Communications Officer Isabel Proaño, presented an assessment of current EFA communication tools, audience and visibility. She unveiled EFA's plans to review [www.efanet.org](http://www.efanet.org), develop a visual identity and better adapt and translate EFA's messages and content to support our policy work, improve communications with members and reach more individual patients.

## Advocacy priorities for people with allergy and airways diseases

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Health is a competence of Member States, but the EU supports them and regulates on several aspects that impact patients' lives by setting standards and procedures that need to be applied in all 28 EU Member States.

Roberta Savli presented EFA's priorities and the issues currently under discussion within the institutions, underlining the potential opportunities for members to advocate at EU and national levels for the protection of patients' rights.

Participants got a better insight on specific policy dossiers such as the legislation on air quality and medical devices that are being discussed at Parliament and Council of the European Union, or the laws on food allergen labelling and tobacco that have to be transposed into national rules.

## Meeting Members of the European Parliament

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EFA members had the opportunity to meet and greet key Members of the European Parliament and to discuss EFA's priorities for the five-year to come.

In particular, Antonia Šandrić from the Association of Patients of Asthmatic Children of Zagreb met with Members of the European Parliament [Marjana Petir](#) (EPP) and [Biljana Borzan](#) (S&D); EFA Board member Isabel Saraiva from RESPIRA met with [Carlos Coelho](#) (EPP); Diana Hadzhiangelova from Association of Bulgarians with Bronchial Asthma, Allergy and COPD met with [Andrey Kovatchev](#) (EPP); Dan Murphy and Luke Tomlinson from Asthma UK met with the shadow-rapporteur of the directive on national emission ceilings for certain pollutants [Seb Dance](#) (S&D); Javier Contreras and Juan from FENAER Fuertes met with [Soledad Cabezón Ruiz](#) (S&D) and [Francisco Sosa Wagner](#) (ALDE).

### Workshop on mobile health

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Claudia Prettner, Policy Officer from the Health and Well-Being Unit at the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT), provided on the second day an overview of the Commission's plan in the topic of mobile health and announced that the Commission will be publishing a Digital Health Survey.

She presented the Green Paper on mHealth that was open for public consultation until July 2014 (EFA's [response](#) raised patients' concerns). The Commission received 211

responses, the summary report is expected for November 2014 and further actions announced in 2015. She explained the potential of mobile health applications with a special focus for patients with asthma, allergy and COPD.

During the discussion EFA members shared their concerns on safety issues of mHealth and called on the Commission to regulate these aspects that are now characterised by a legal vacuum.

### Role-play on medical devices

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Members unveiled the EU decision-making process through a role-play, where they dig deeper into a legislative dossier and put in practice what they had learnt in theory during the previous day. Members played the role of national Health Ministers, key Members of the European Parliament, Commission representatives and interested stakeholders in the revision of the medical devices legislation (EFA's position on this topic can be found [here](#)).

### Conclusion and acknowledgments

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The training was conducted in a very friendly atmosphere and despite the fact that many of the participants met each other for the first time, they were cooperating directly.

All participants were largely satisfied with both content and execution of the training, and provided useful recommendations for EFA in developing further trainings. Their proactivity was essential for all the sessions. The evaluation report is annexed to this report. A picture gallery of the training can be found [here](#) at EFA Facebook profile.

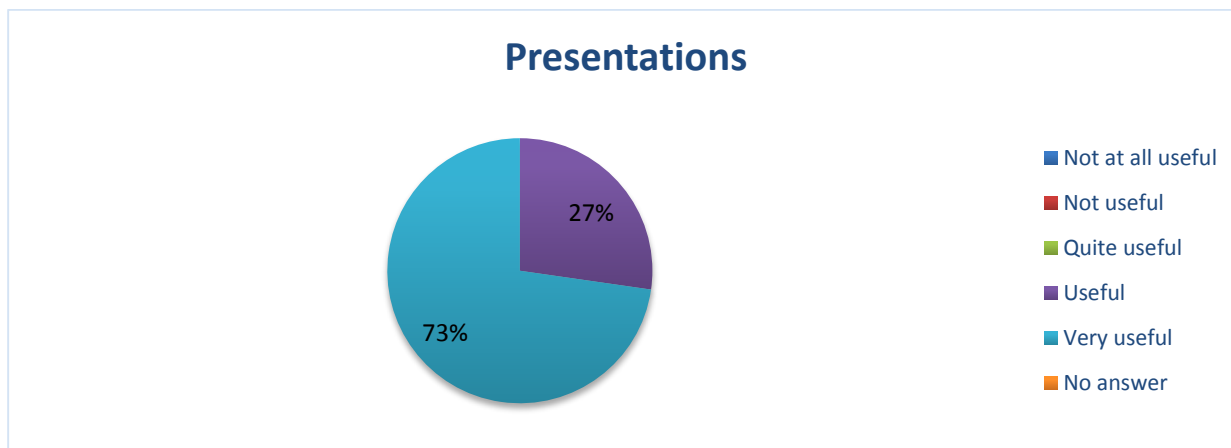
## Annex: Evaluation report

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EFA members were asked to fill in evaluation forms, and on the basis of their responses, the following conclusions were drawn. We were pleased to see that all attendees submitted their evaluation forms.

### 1. How did you find the following? Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful

#### a) Presentations



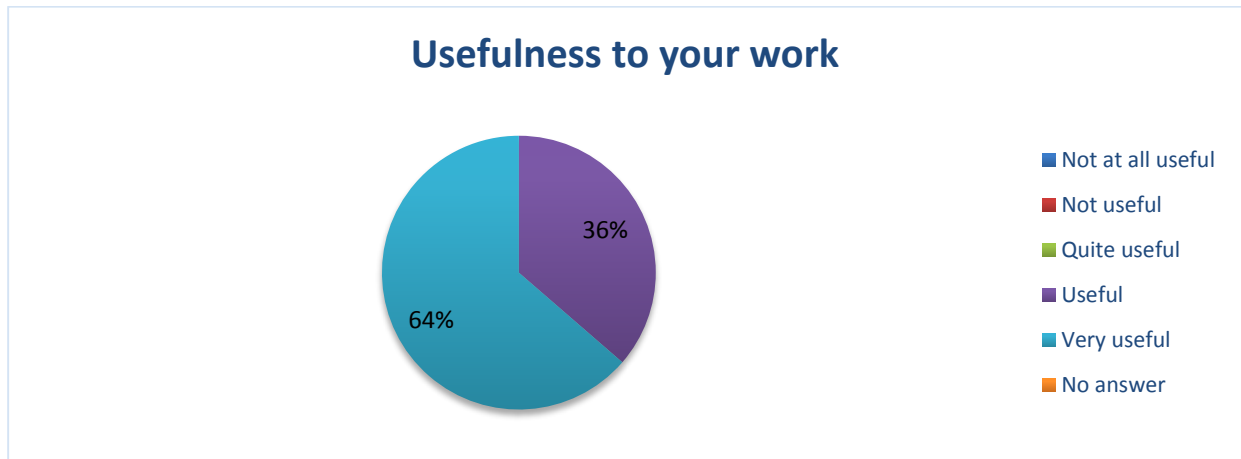
All participants were satisfied with the presentations of the training, 100% found presentations very useful or useful.

#### b) Relevance to your organisation/the organisation you represent



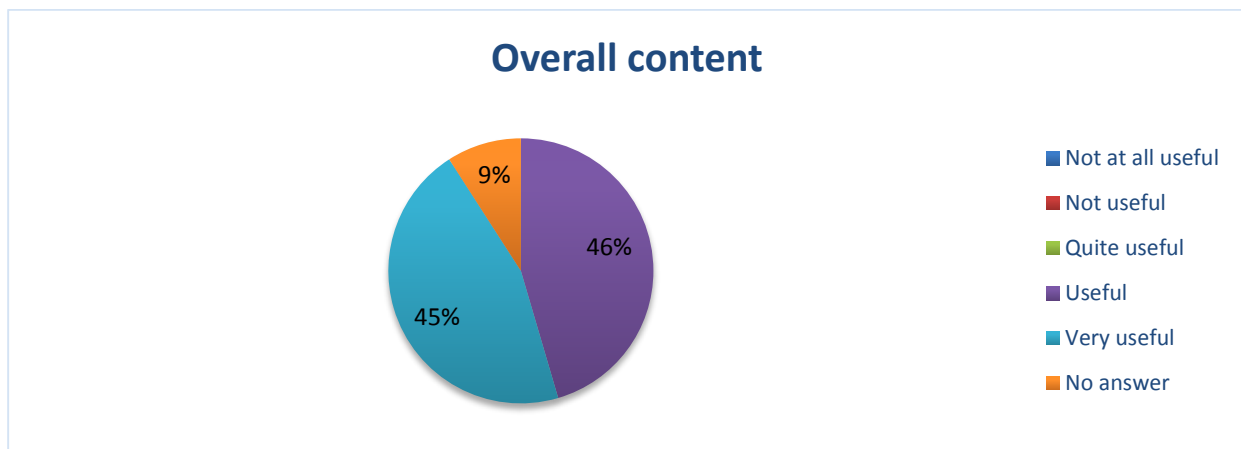
Concerning the relevance of the training to our members' organisations, the majority (64%) of attendees considered it very useful.

c) Usefulness to your work



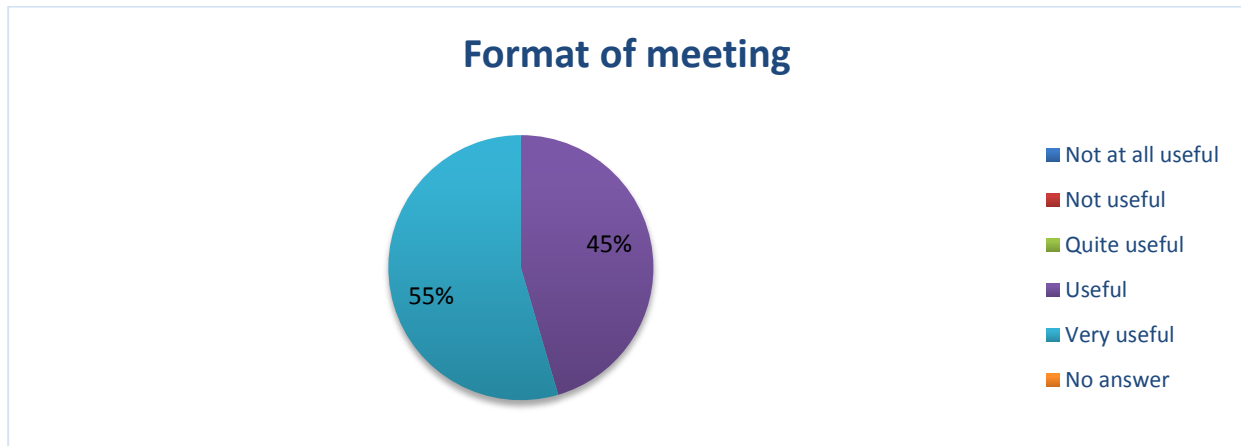
All participants considered the training to be useful to their work, 64% of them rating it as very useful.

d) Overall content



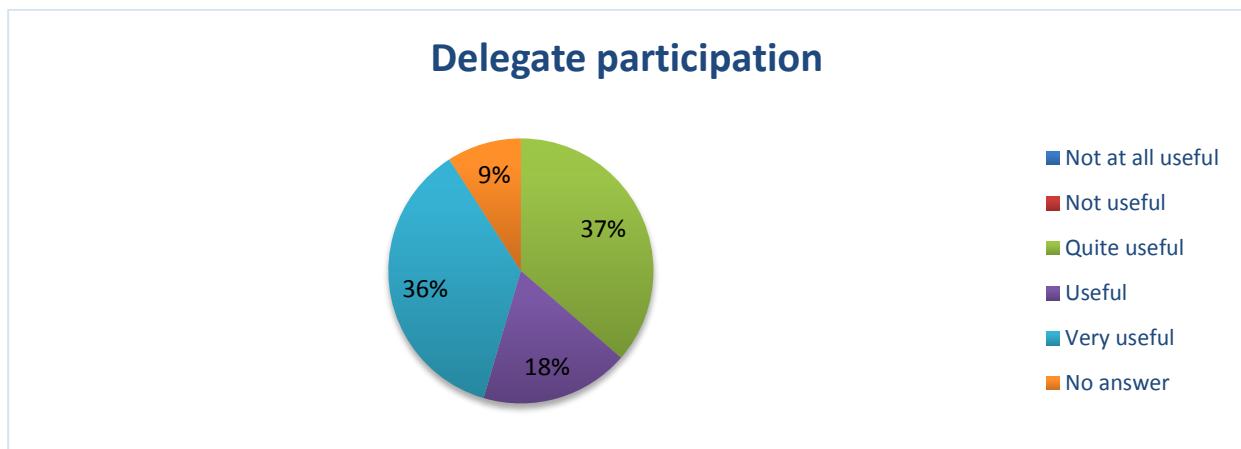
All the participants evaluated the overall content of the training as useful or very useful.

e) Format of meeting



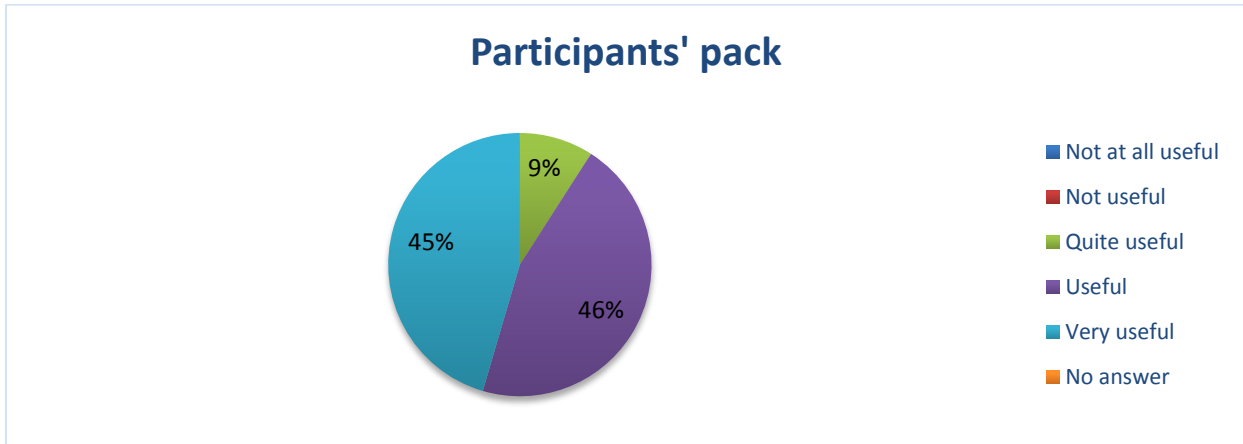
The totality of participants (100%) were content or very content with the format of the training.

f) Delegate participation



The evaluation of delegate participation was more divergent, although the majority of participants assessed it positively.

e) Participants pack

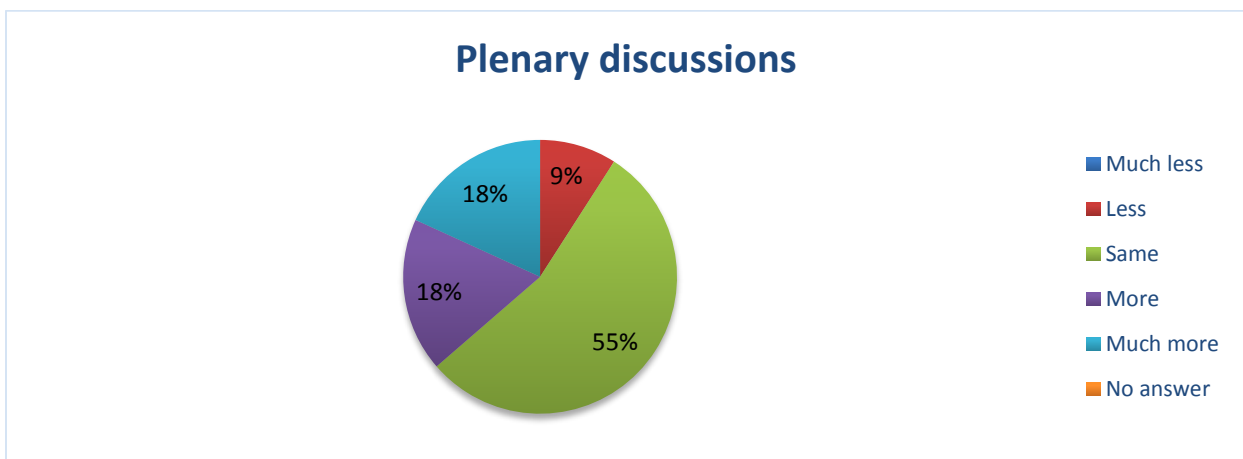


All respondents were satisfied with the participants' pack, 46% of them considered the materials provided very useful.

While reviewing the responses, it appeared that the vast majority of attendees were thoroughly satisfied with their stay in Brussels, the usefulness of the training, the format chosen and the materials distributed.

2. **Would you have liked to have more or less of the following?** Rate from 1 = much less to 5 = much more

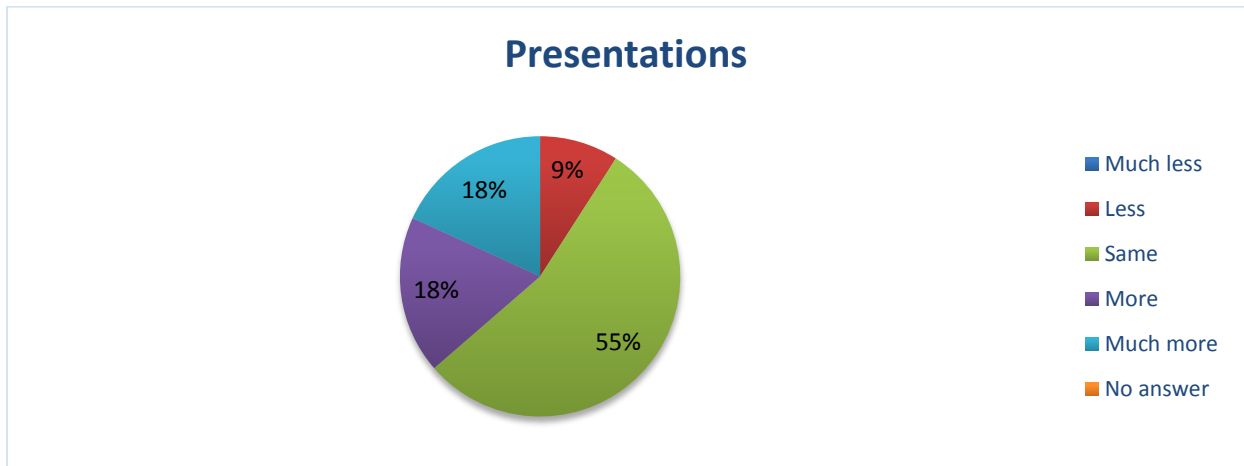
a) Plenary discussions



While 55% of the attendees were fully satisfied with the plenary discussions in the agenda, 36% of them would have preferred to have more or much more discussions.

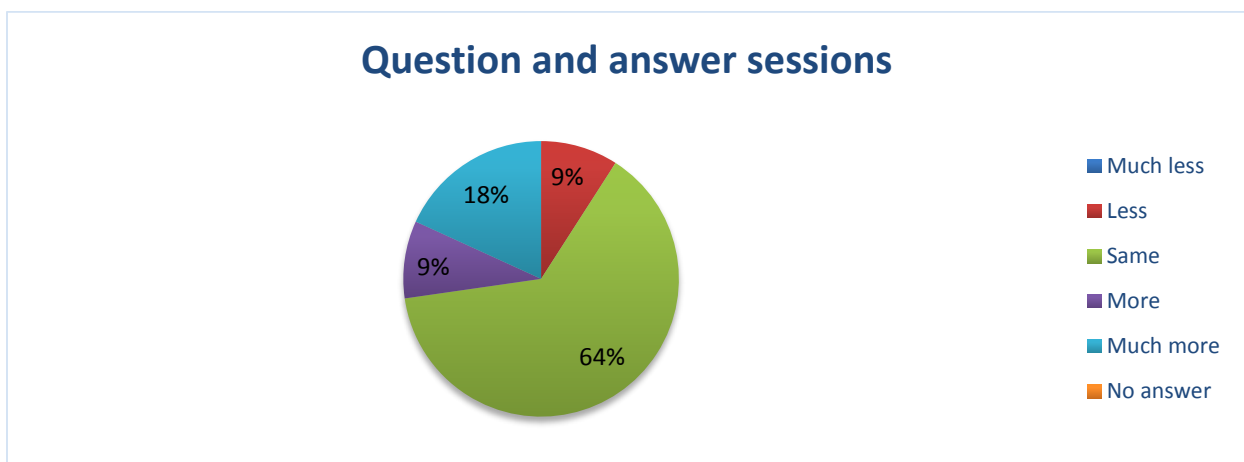


b) Presentations



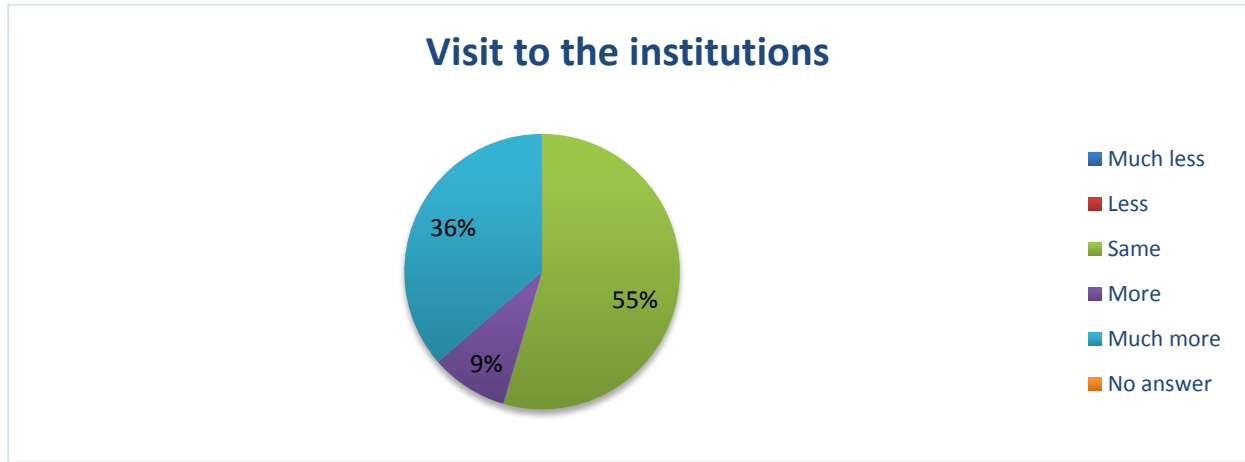
More than half of the participants were happy with the number of presentations, 36% of them would have wanted more or much more.

c) Question and answer sessions



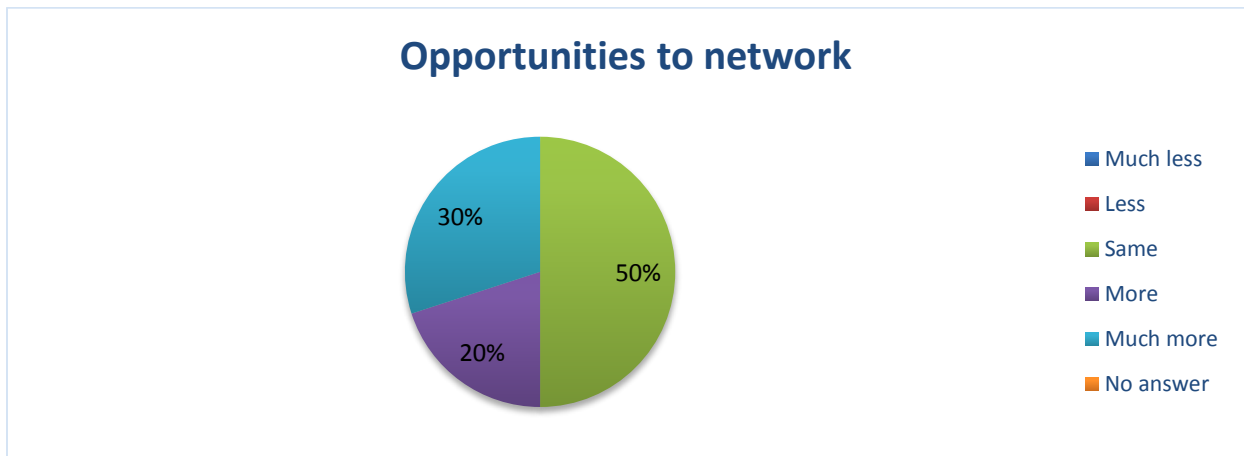
Although 64% of participants were in general satisfied with their number, 27 % of them would have preferred more or much more question and answer sessions.

d) Visit to the institutions



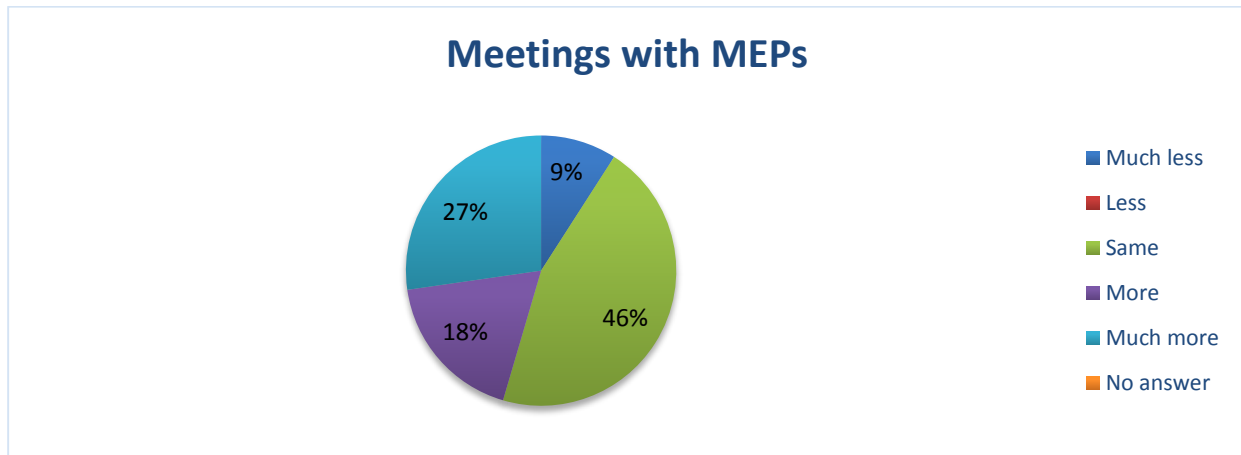
55% of participants were satisfied with the amount of time dedicated to institutions visit, however 45% of attendees would like have had more or much more time spend on that.

e) Opportunities to network



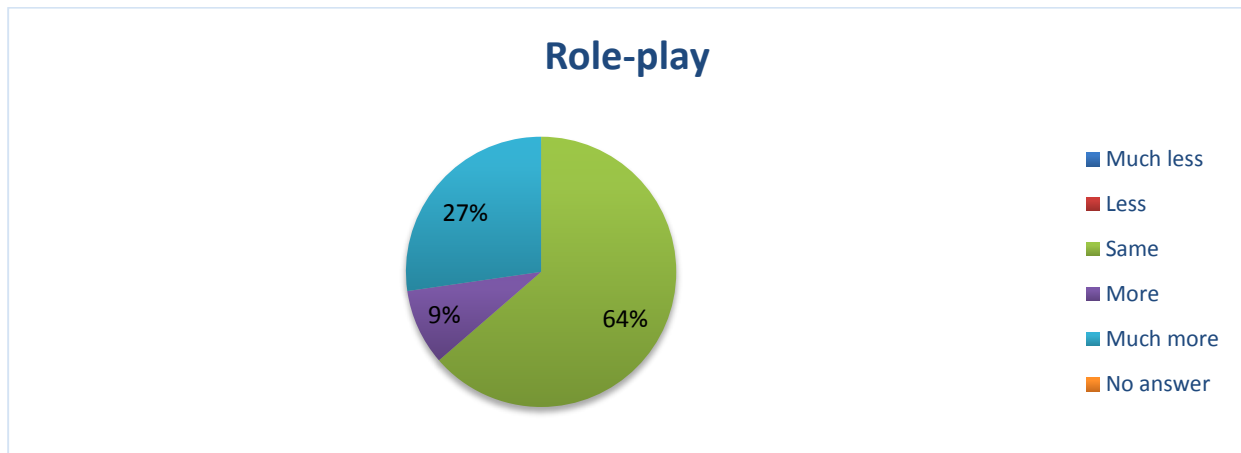
Half of the participants were happy with the networking opportunities and another half would like to have more or much more opportunities to network.

f) Meetings with MEPs



46% attendees were satisfied with the amount of meetings held with MEPs, whereas 45% of participants would like to have more or much more meetings with MEPs.

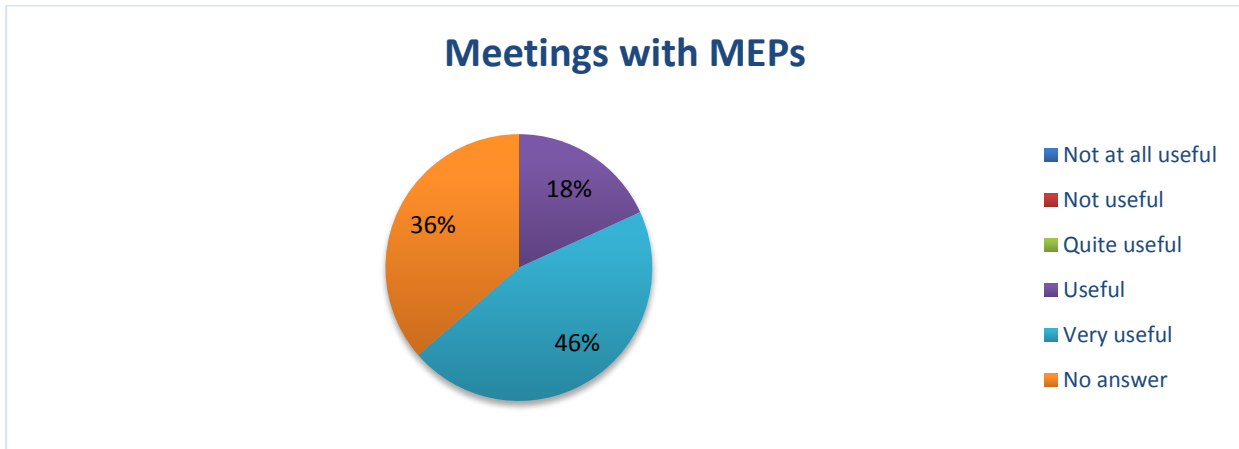
g) Role-play



The vast majority of the participants – 64% – was satisfied with the amount of time spent for the role play, however, 36% of attendees would like to have more or much more time for the role play.

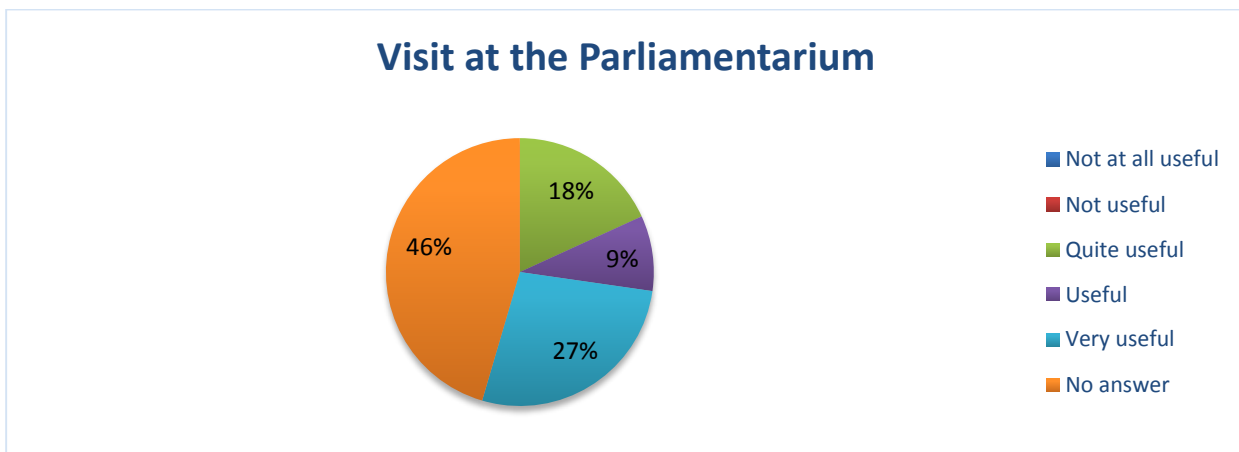
Participants were generally satisfied with the amount of presentations, discussions, question and answer sessions, as well as with time dedicated to institutions visits, networking opportunities and the role-play. They would have nonetheless preferred to have more of all of these, in particular more meetings with the MEPs.

**3. Was the meetings with the MEPs worthwhile?** Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful



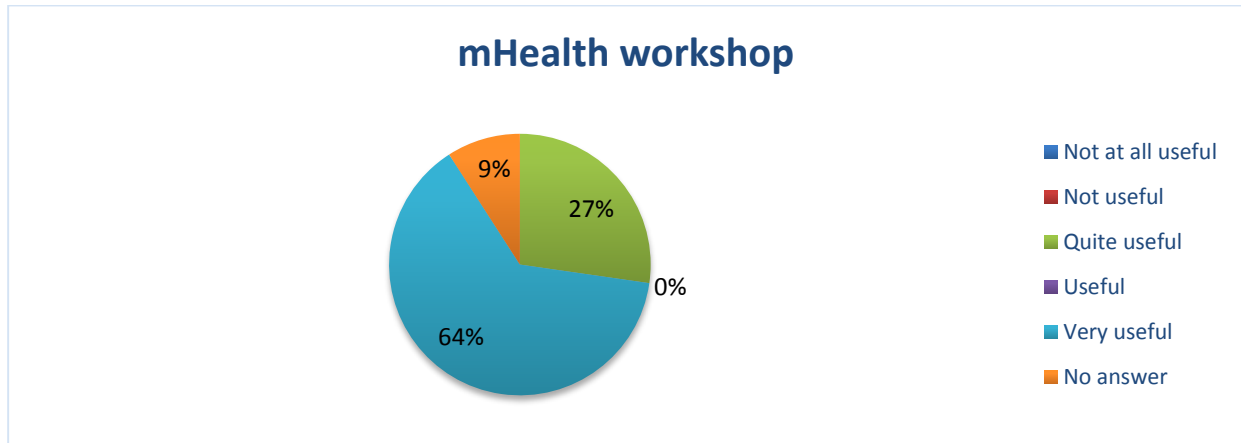
7 out of 11 participants had meetings with their national representatives at the European Parliament, and the majority of them – 71% – found the meetings very useful. Those who did not have meetings with MEPs expressed their wish to have it during future visits to Brussels or in their home countries. EFA will do our best to arrange these meetings both in Brussels and at the national level.

**4. Was the visit at the Parliamentarium worthwhile?** Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful



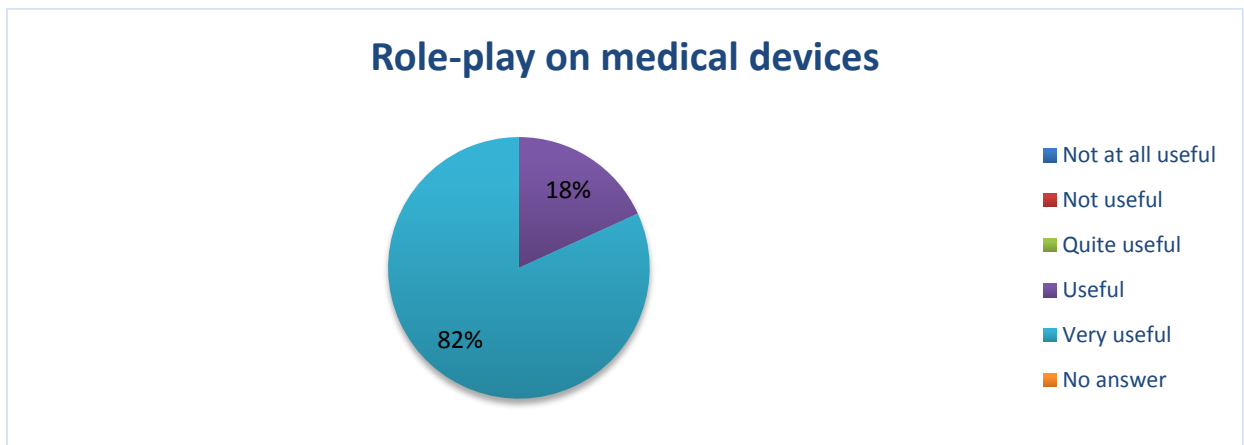
6 out of 11 participants have used an opportunity to visit the Parliamentarium, 36% found it useful or very useful, whereas 18% evaluated it as quite useful.

5. **Was the workshop on mobile health worthwhile?** Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful



The workshop on mobile health by the vast majority (64%) was evaluated as very useful.

6. **Was the role-play on medical devices worthwhile?**

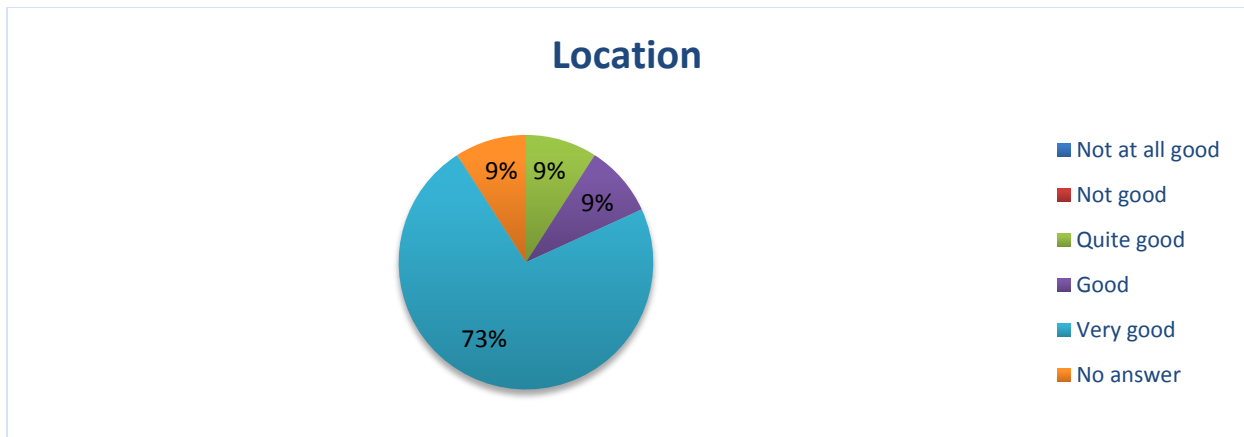


Most of the participants (82%) very positively assessed the usefulness of the role-play on medical devices.

In general, participants very much appreciated the most interactive part of the training and were particularly satisfied with the role-play on medical devices. However, negative comments were given by some participants due to the absence of meeting with MEPs.

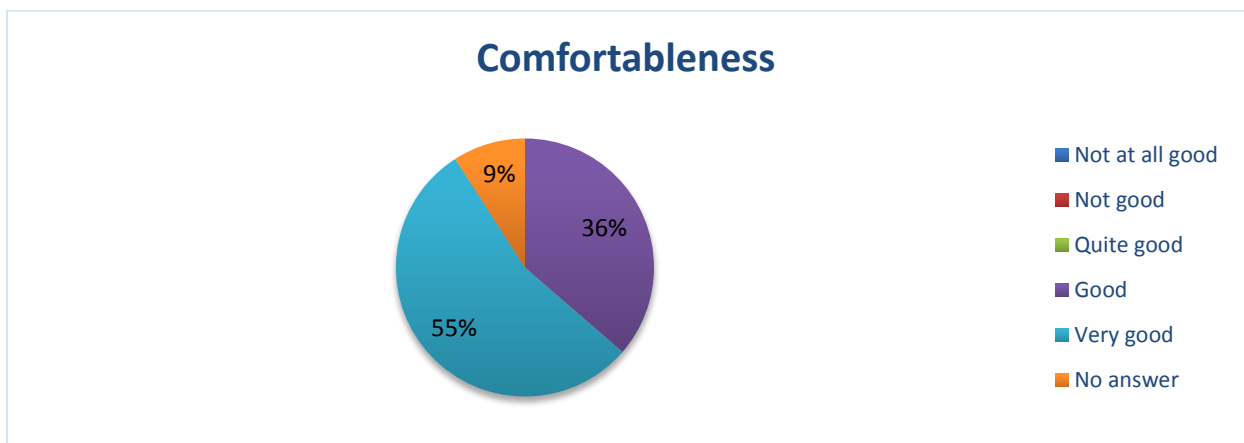
6. **How was the hotel?** Rate from 1 = not at all good to 5 = very good

a) Location



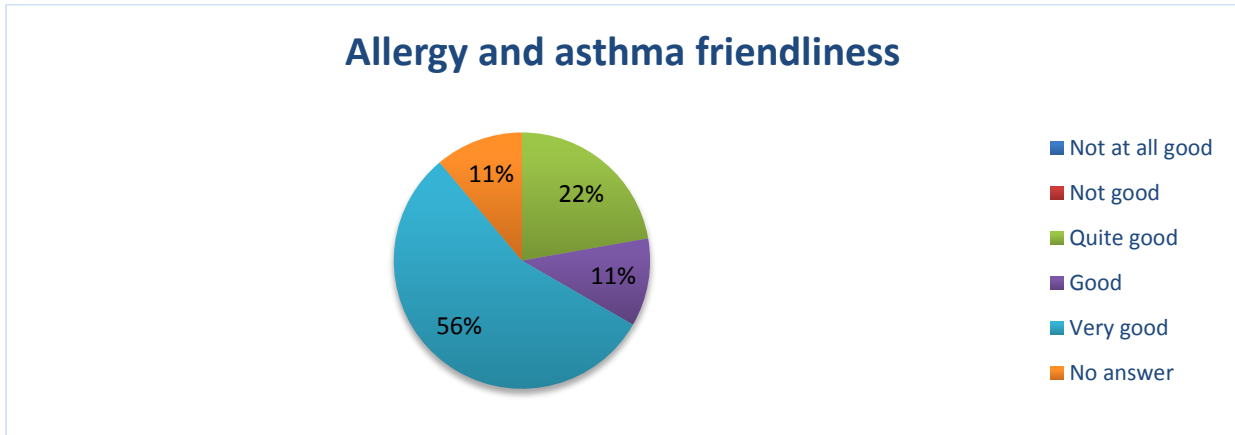
The majority of the participants – 73% – considered the location of the hotel as very good.

b) Comfortableness



Most of the participants evaluated the comfortableness of the hotel as very good or good.

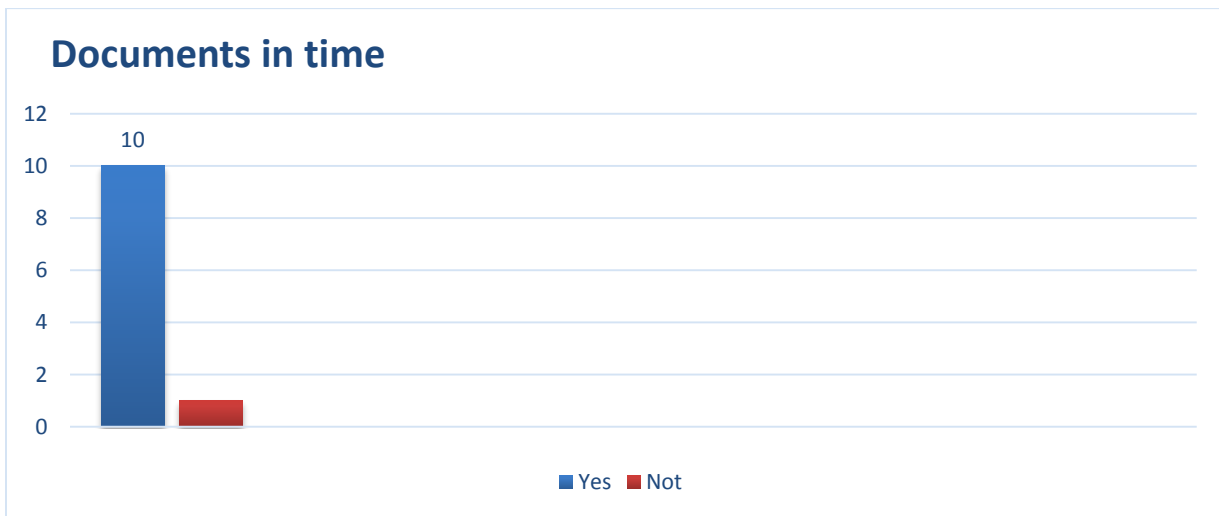
c) Allergy and asthma friendliness



67% of attendees considered the hotel as allergy and asthma friendly, whereas 22% pointed out that it is quite friendly.

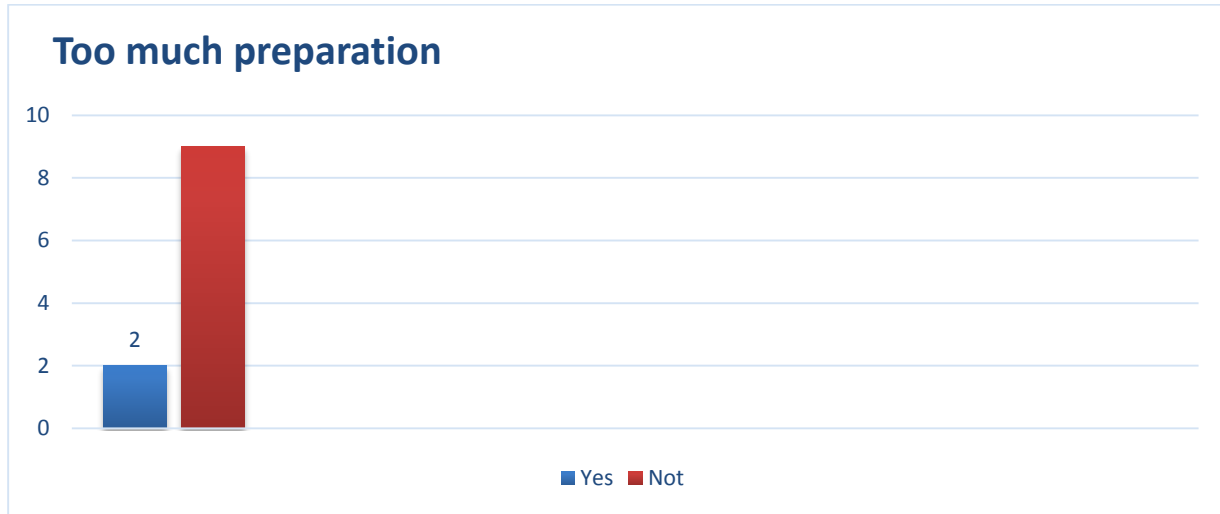
The feedback regarding the hotel was positive compared with other previous accommodations EFA has used. Therefore, it is considered as a suitable option for future meetings too.

7. Where the documents sent in due time? Yes or Not



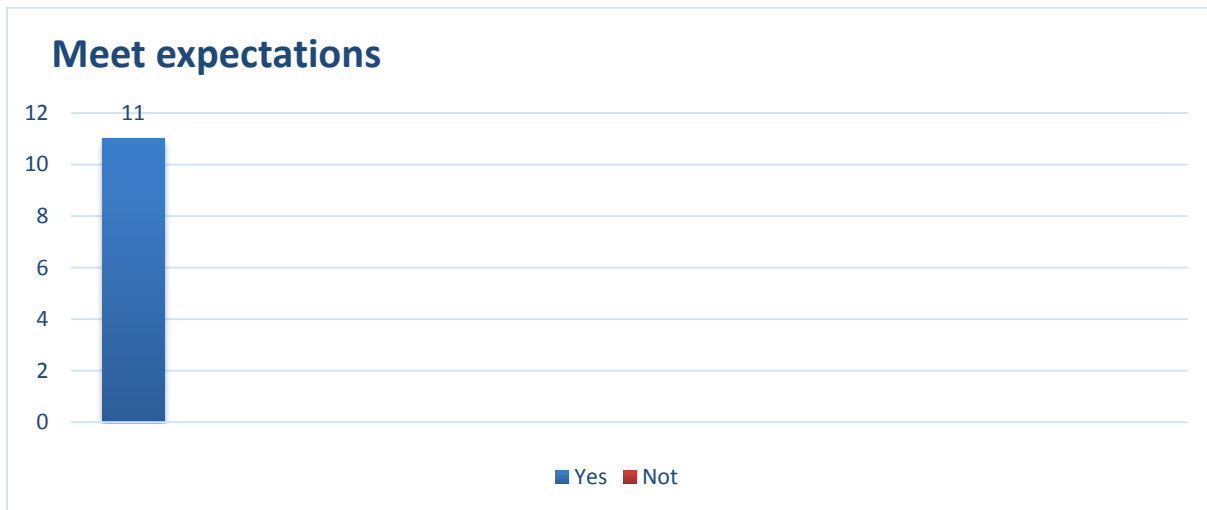
Most of the participants confirmed that the documents were sent in time, whereas one participant noted that the final programme and hotel confirmation was sent quite late.

**8. Did the training required too much preparation from your part? Yes or Not**



The vast majority of the attendees noted that preparation for the training did not require too much preparation from their side. Whereas few participants noted that they would have spent less time preparing to the meeting if all the presentations and documents were sent before the training.

**9. Did the training meet your expectations and the objectives stated? Yes or Not**



All participants were very satisfied with the training: the expectations they had before the meeting were met and the objectives of the training reached.

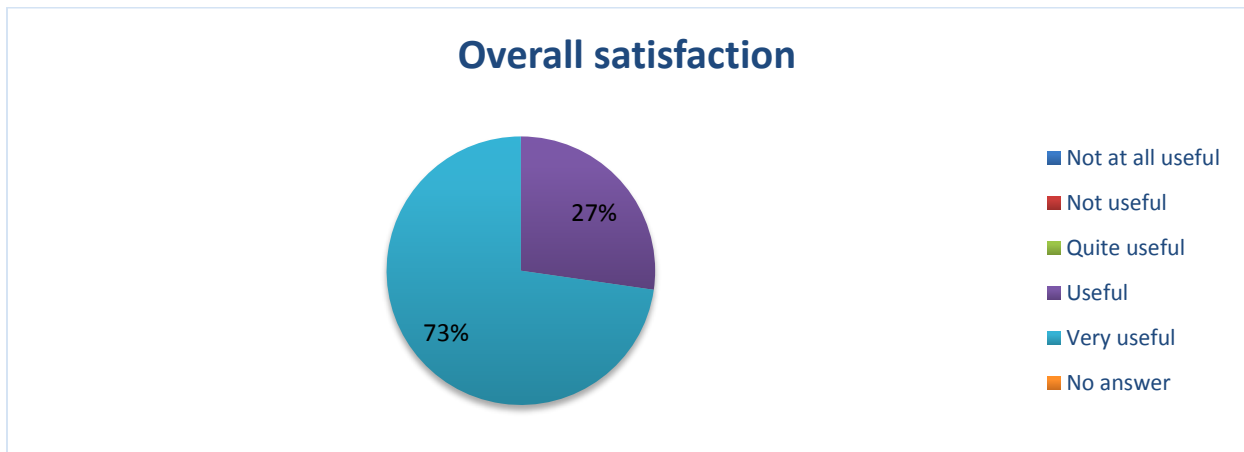
**10. Do you feel empowered to get more involved with the EU through EFA? Or do you require more training? 1 = I feel empowered, 2 = I need more training**





Only minority of the participants felt fully empowered to get involved with the EU, and the majority of attendees felt empowered but at the same time would require more training.

**11. Are you overall satisfied with the training?** Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful



All the participants found the training very useful or useful.

## Conclusions

Based on the forms collected, the following conclusions and recommendations may be drawn:

- On the whole, respondents were very pleased with their stay in Brussels. They complimented the organisers for a successful event. They commented that the programme gave a good overview of the developments related to the new European Parliament and the Commission, as well as on communication and advocacy opportunities at the EU level. The role-play, the workshop on mobile health and the meetings with the MEPs were very much appreciated too.
- For the next trainings, the following aspects were suggested: (1) organisation of a tour of the European institutions; (2) inclusion of more information on the EU functioning, particularly on the Council of the EU and the funding opportunities offered by the European Commission to Member States (e.g.: structural funds); (3) the role-play should be held earlier, thus through practical and interactive activities it is easier to understand the theoretical part of the training, (4) beforehand briefings on meetings with MEPs should be done by EFA staff, so the attendees would have clear and active messages to present to their national representatives in the European Parliament.

All the comments and suggestions will be taken by EFA while organising another training next year.

*"EFA's Meet and Greet was a really engaging event and a great introduction to the EU institutions. I'm now much more confident about how to make sure people with asthma have their voices heard in Europe".*

*Emily, Asthma UK*



*"Education about patients' rights is a key element of continuous learning that parents of children with long-term conditions need to have. The insight I got from this training is a precious heritage that I will share with other parents. This training empowered me, thank you EFA for organising it!"*

*Antonia, Association of Parents of Asthmatic Children of Zagreb*