



EFA “Meet and Greet the European Union (EU) Institutions” Training Evaluation Report

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The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and COPD patients organisations, representing 34 national associations in 21 countries and over 400,000 patients. 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

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Introduction

On the 20th and 21st of March 2012, EFA organised its third “Meet and Greet the EU Institutions” training. It was built upon the experience of the previous two events that took place on the 29th and 30th of November 2007 and on the 3rd and 4th of December 2009. Based on the feedback received from these previous trainings, this was a combination of beginner and advanced training.

An open invitation was sent to all members of EFA at the end of 2011, just before the Christmas break, inviting 12 members to a capacity building seminar to be held in Brussels in March 2012. The goal of the training was on the one hand to give the members a general overview of the EU functioning and policies directly or indirectly related to allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients in Europe, and on the other hand to gain better understanding of how EU policies channel the decisions of national governments and how EFA patients’ associations can contribute to the EU decision-making process. The overall and long-term objective was to involve and engage EFA members towards working at the EU level in the future.

By the deadline indicated to receive back the reply forms (31st of January 2012), EFA received responses from 17 participants who wanted to join the capacity building programme. Given the limited budget allowing for 12 members to take part in the training, a selection was made based on the below criteria:

- First come, first served basis;
- Geographical balance to represent as much EFA members as possible;
- Maximum one representative per EFA member organisation.

As a result, representatives of the following organisations participated in the training:

1. [Österreichische Lungen-Union](#) from Austria;
2. [Patientenliga Atemwegserkrankungen e.V.](#) from Germany;
3. [Allergia-ja Astmaliitto](#) from Finland;
4. [Fédération Française des Associations et Amicales d'Insuffisants Respiratoires](#) from France;
5. [ANOIKSI](#) from Greece;
6. [Asthma Society of Ireland](#) from Ireland;
7. [Federasma](#) from Italy;
8. [Dutch Food Allergy Organisation](#) from The Netherlands;
9. [Norwegian Asthma and Allergy Association](#) from Norway;

10. [Swedish Asthma and Allergy Association](#) from Sweden;
11. [Swedish Heart and Lung Association](#) from Sweden;
12. [Allergy UK](#) from the United Kingdom.

Thanks to this event, EFA members had the opportunity to come to Brussels for one and a half day. They were given presentations by EU public affairs professionals and EFA staff in Brussels, they dug deeper in a case study, a legislative text under review, they met and greeted EU officials from the EP and the Commission and MEPs from their countries.

Programme

Day 0 – 19th of March (Monday)	
<u>Venue:</u> Hotel du Congres (42, Rue du Congres – B-1000, Brussels) Résidence Marie-Thérèse (53, Rue Marie-Thérèse – B-1210, Bruxelles)	
Late afternoon	Arrival of the members Optional visit of the Parlamentarium , European Parliament (EP) new interactive learning centre (<u>to be arranged by the participants</u>)
Evening	Dinner at Titanic (31, Rue du Congres – B-1000, Brussels)
Day 1 – 20th of March (Tuesday)	
<u>Venue:</u> EFA office (35, Rue du Congres – B-1000, Brussels)	
09:00	Welcome by Susanna Palkonen, EFA Executive Officer
09:05	First presentation: The EU and its functioning – David Brennan, EFA EU Policy and Project Assistant → The supremacy over national legislations and the “institutional triangle”: European Parliament, Council, Commission → European Commission: the new “comitology” and the implementation of acts – The Commission has the power to implement legally binding acts when uniform conditions for their implementation are needed (art. 291 TFEU) Questions and answers

09:15	<p>Second presentation: Health policy in the EU – Roberta Savli, EFA EU Policy and Project Officer</p> <p>→ The novelties introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon and how they relate to health: the legal basis, shared competence EU/Member States in case of common safety concerns and a new integration principle – The EU should take into consideration a high level of human health protection in the definition and implementation of all its policies and activities (arts. 9 TUE, 168 TFUE)</p> <p>→ Past actions and possible future developments</p> <p>Questions and answers</p>
09:30	Coffee break
09:45	<p>Third presentation: How to engage with the decision-making process – Tamsin Rose, Director at Progress Works, former Secretary-General of the European Public Health Alliance</p> <p>→ European Parliament: the legislative process and other initiatives</p> <p>→ Role-play: members will be divided in two groups (representing the Committees on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) of the EP), four additional people (EFA staff) will represent industry, EFA, consumers’ group and healthcare professionals’ one</p> <p>Questions and answers</p>
10:45	Departure for the European Parliament
<p>Venue: European Parliament (Meeting room 5B35 of the Paul Henri Spaak Building at the visitors' entrance, rue Wiertz)</p>	
11:30-13:00 In the framework of the visit:	<p>Group visit of the European Parliament – Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM), Visits and Seminars Unit</p>
12:30	<p>Meeting the secretariat of the ITRE Committee – Gai Oren, Administrator responsible for Research</p> <p>→ The latest EU developments in the field of research, with a focus on the forthcoming Horizon 2020</p> <p>Questions and answers</p>
13:15	Lunch at Il Pasticcio (3, Rue Marie de Bourgogne – B-1050, Brussels)

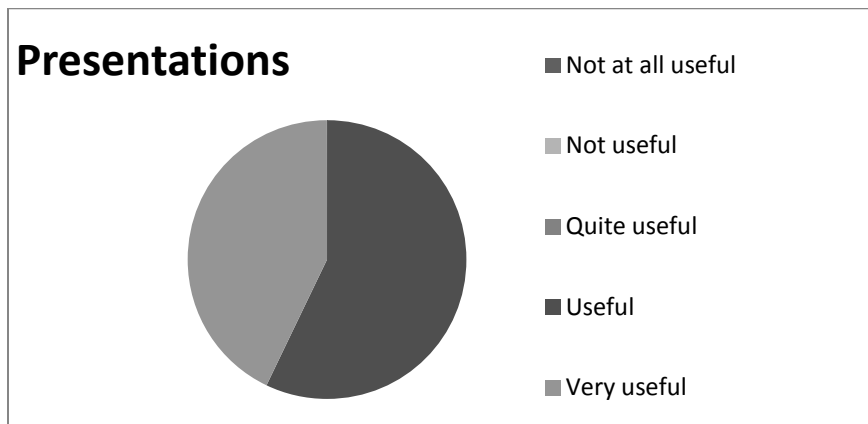
14:30-19:00	<p>Meetings with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the countries of the members present</p> <p>In between meetings, optional visit of the Parliamentarium, European Parliament new interactive learning centre</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Public hearing organised by the ITRE committee of the European Parliament on the Horizon 2020, The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation</p>
19:30	Dinner at Madou's Provence (23, Rue de la Presse – B-1000, Brussels), arranged by EFA and hosted by Novartis
Day 2 – 21st of March (Wednesday)	
<u>Venue:</u> EFA office (35, Rue du Congres – B-1000, Brussels)	
09:30	<p>Case-study: Tobacco products directive (to be reviewed in 2012)</p> <p>→ 09:30 General overview given by Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) officials on this dossier (Unit D4 Substances of human origin and Tobacco control) – Katja Broman, Policy Officer</p> <p>→ 10:00 Workshop moderated by European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention (ENSP) on the involvement of EFA members through EFA and ENSP on the revision of the tobacco products directive – Francis Grogna, Secretary General</p>
10:45	Networking coffee break
11:00	<p>Meeting DG SANCO officials, Unit C4 Health determinants – Natacha Grenier, Policy Officer</p> <p>→ The activities of DG SANCO related to chronic respiratory diseases</p> <p>Questions and answers</p>
11:30	Lunch
12:00	<p>Departure for the European Parliament to participate in the Public Workshop on "Allergies in Europe", organised by the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) – 12:00-14:00, room JAN 6Q1</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Launch of the European COPD Coalition (ECC) – 12:00-14:00, room A3H-1</p>

Evaluation forms

In the participants' pack, EFA members taking part in the training found the evaluation form. Seven out of 12 filled in the questionnaire, and on the basis of these responses, the following conclusions were drawn.

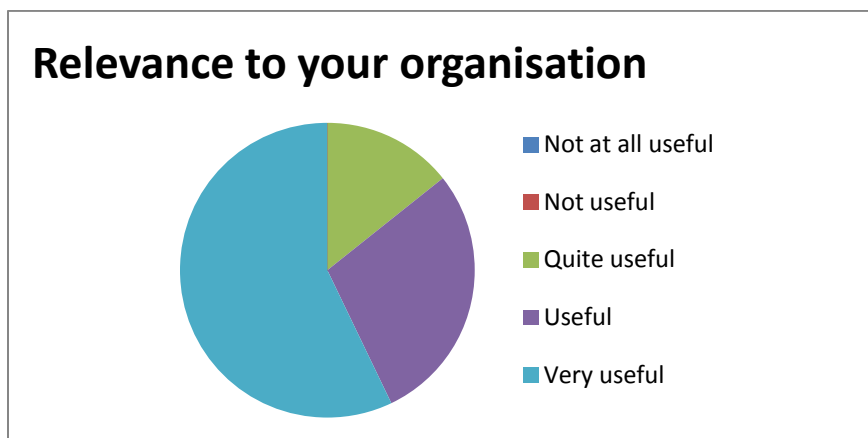
1. How did you find the following?

a) Presentations



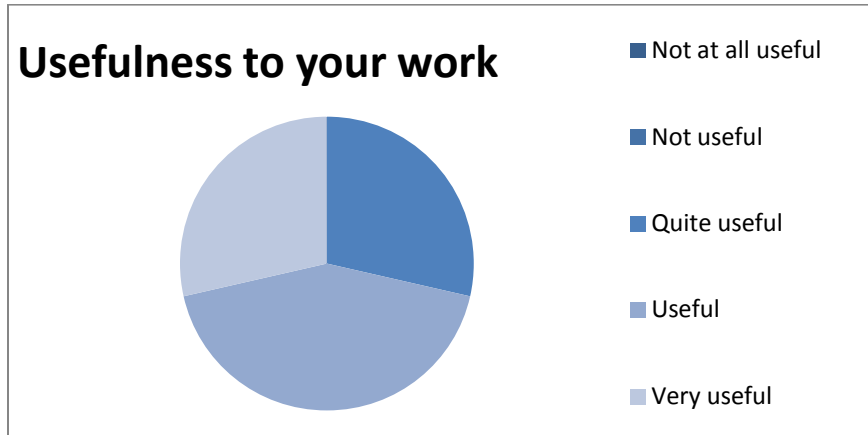
All the respondents were satisfied with all the presentations, 43% of the attendees giving the highest possible rating.

b) Relevance to your organisation



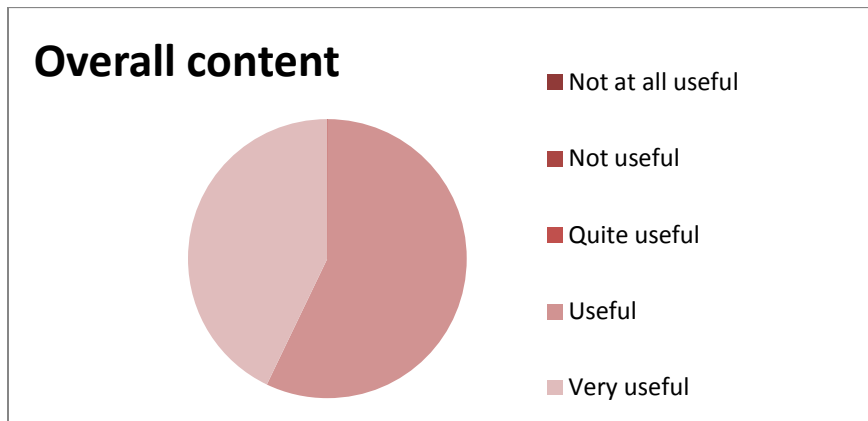
Concerning the relevance of the training to the individual organisations, the vast majority (57%) considered it very useful.

c) Usefulness to your work



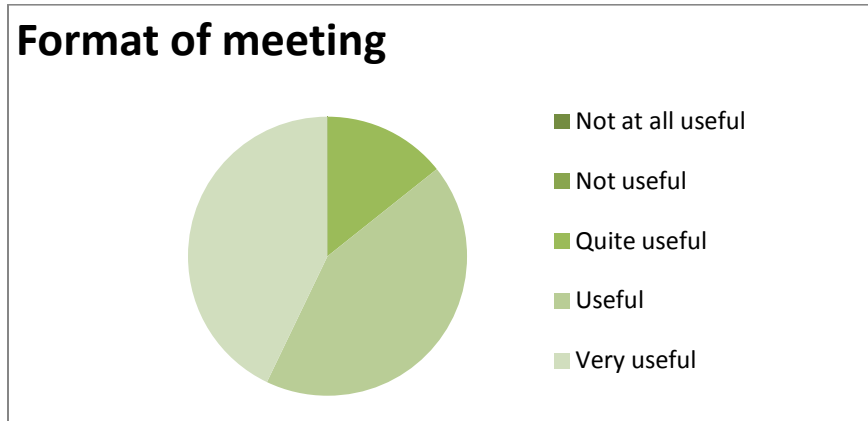
As for the usefulness of the training for the work of the participants, the answers were largely spread with about 43% of attendees rating useful, 29% quite useful and exactly the same percentage very useful.

d) Overall content



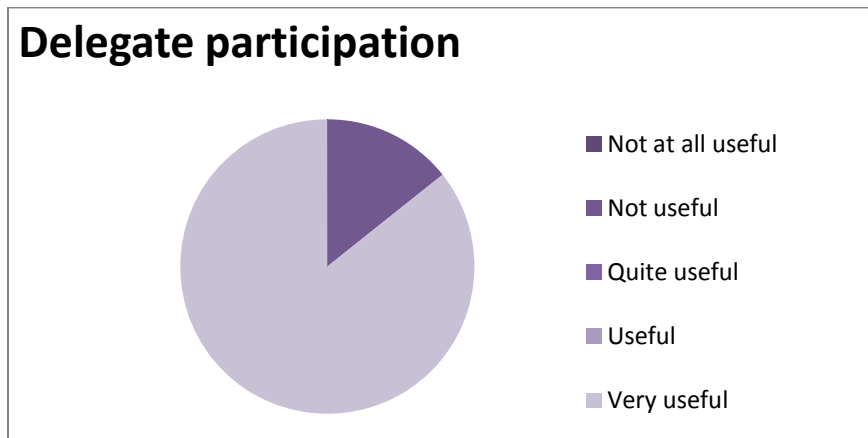
All respondents were satisfied with the overall content of the training, no one rating this aspect below useful.

e) Format of meeting



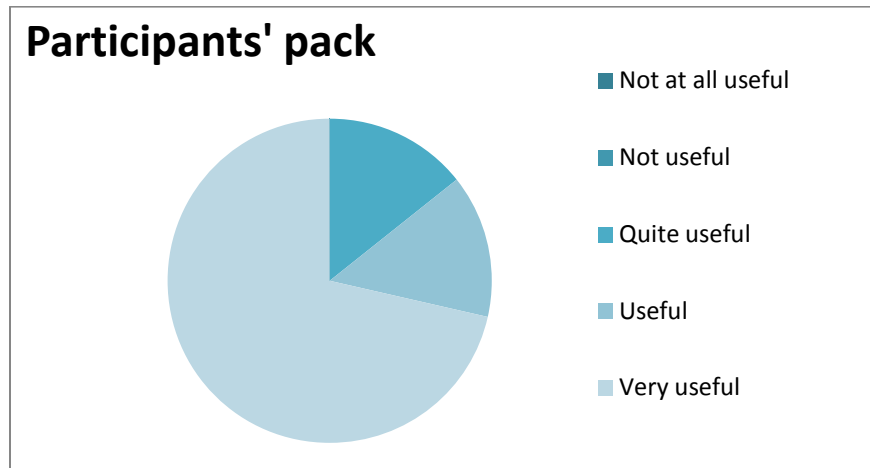
The vast majority of the participants (86%) were content or very content with the format of the meeting.

f) Delegate participation



Attendees were, on the whole, very satisfied with the delegate participation (86%).

g) Participants pack

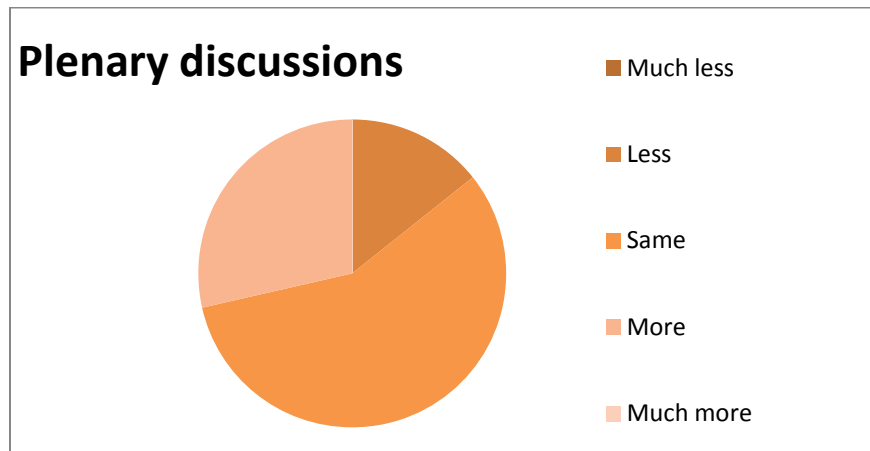


Concerning the participants' pack, the vast majority (71%) considered it very useful.

Reviewing the responses, it is clear that the majority of attendees were thoroughly satisfied with their stay in Brussels rating every question useful or very useful.

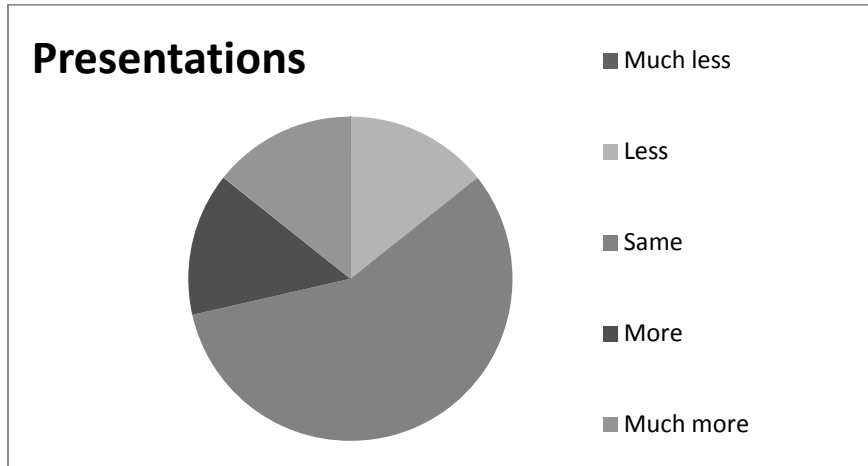
2. Would you have liked to have more or less of the following?

a) Plenary discussions



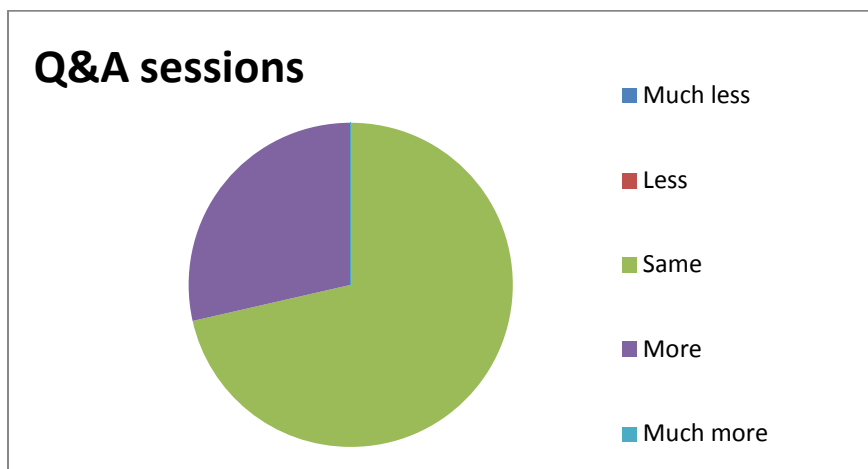
As for the plenary discussions, the answers were largely spread with about 57% fully satisfied, 29% wanting more and 14% less.

b) Presentations



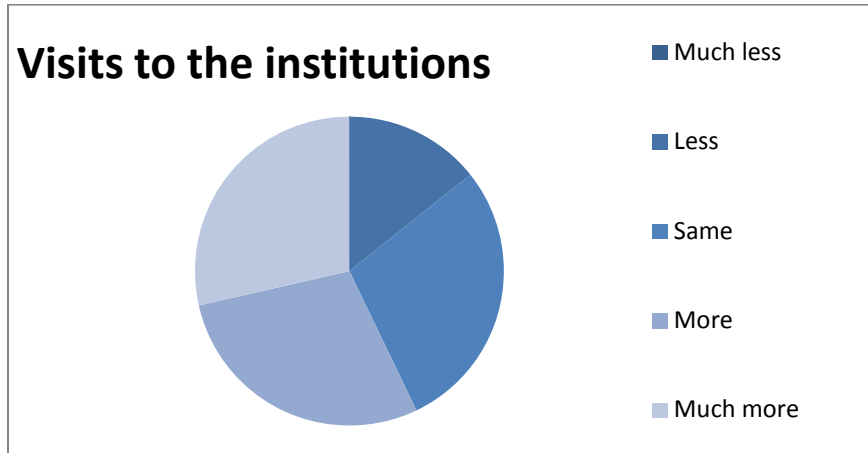
The same answer was given for the presentations. 57% of the participants were neutral, while the remaining 43% was split.

c) Question and answer sessions



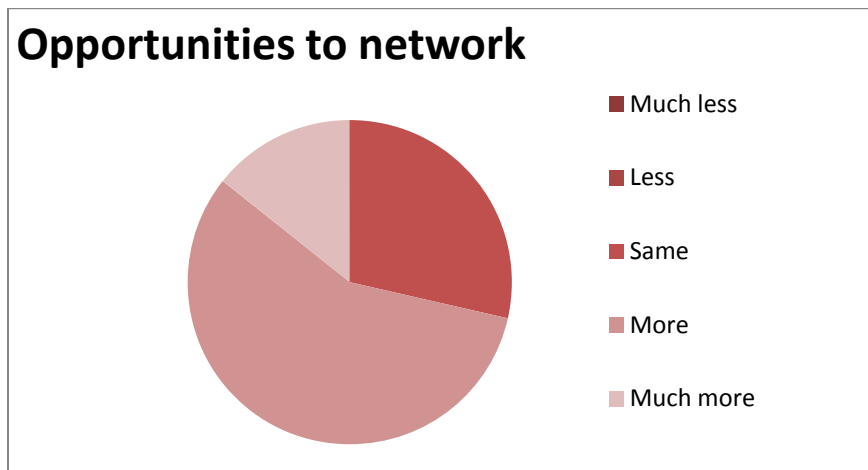
While 71% of the attendees were satisfied with the number of question and answer sessions, 29% of them wanted more.

d) Visit to the institutions



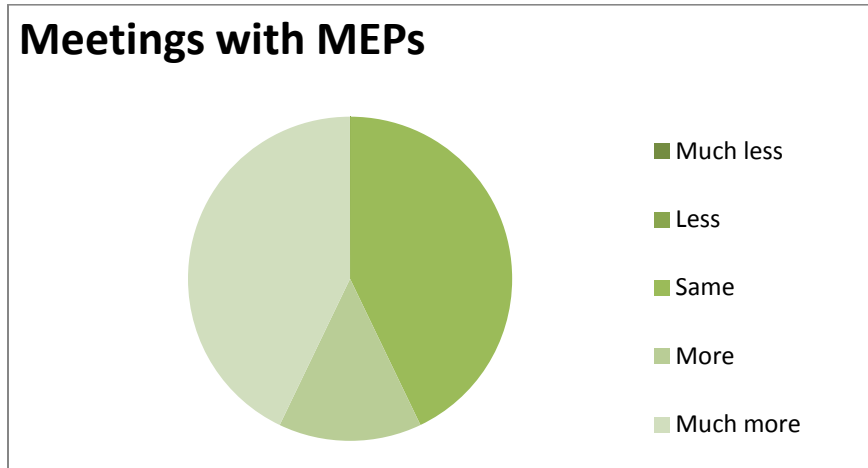
The majority of respondents (about 58%) wanted more visits to the institutions, with 29% being neutral and only 14% wanting less.

e) Opportunities to network



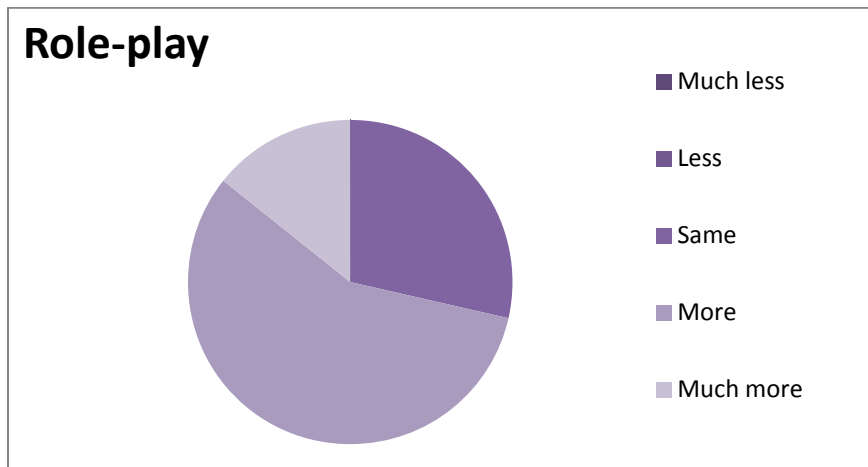
The vast majority of the participants (71%) wanted more opportunities to network, only 29% of them being completely satisfied with the training.

f) Meetings with MEPs



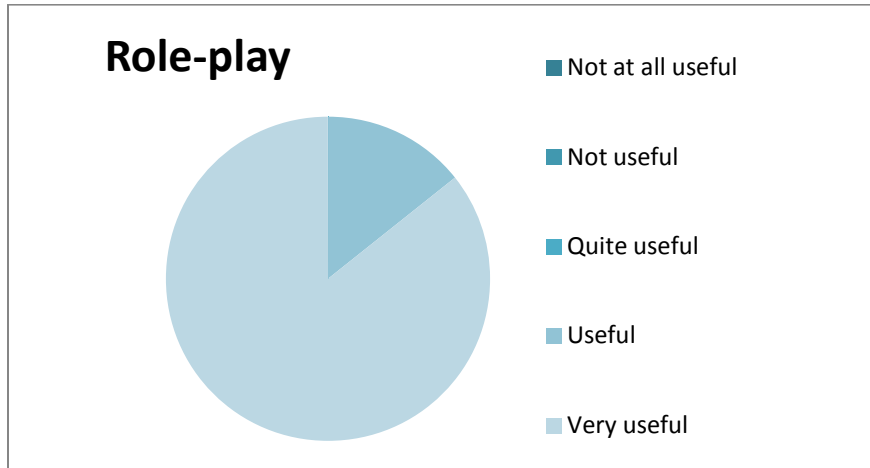
The majority of respondents (57%) wanted more meetings with MEPs.

g) Role-play



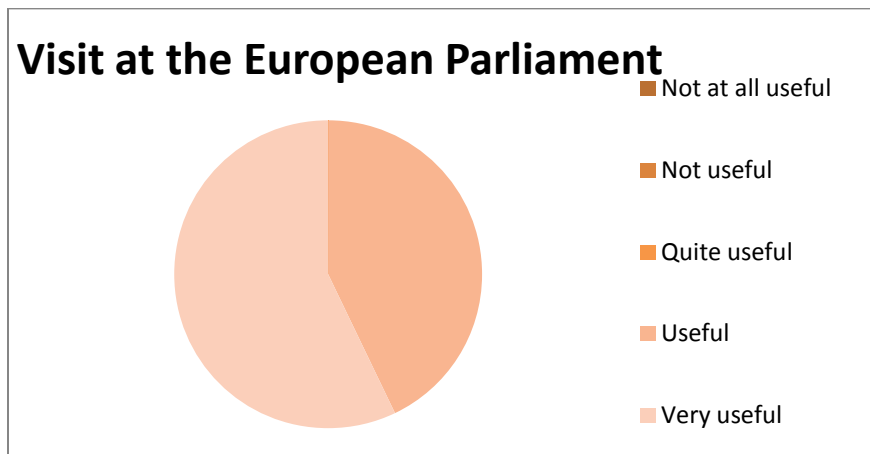
71% of attendees wanted more role-play, with 14% giving the highest possible rating.

3. Was the role-play worthwhile?



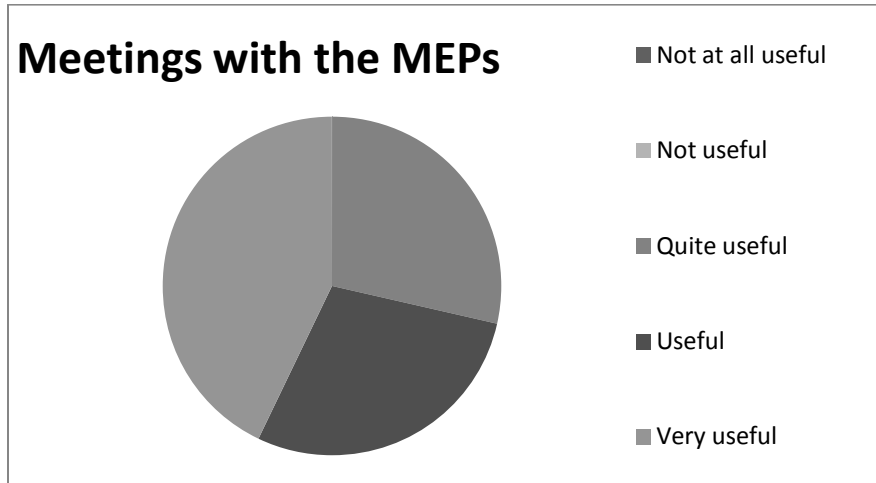
The totality of the participants found the role-play useful or very useful.

4. Was the visit at the European Parliament worthwhile?



All the attendees considered the visit at the European Parliament as useful or very useful.

5. Were the meetings with the MEPs worthwhile?

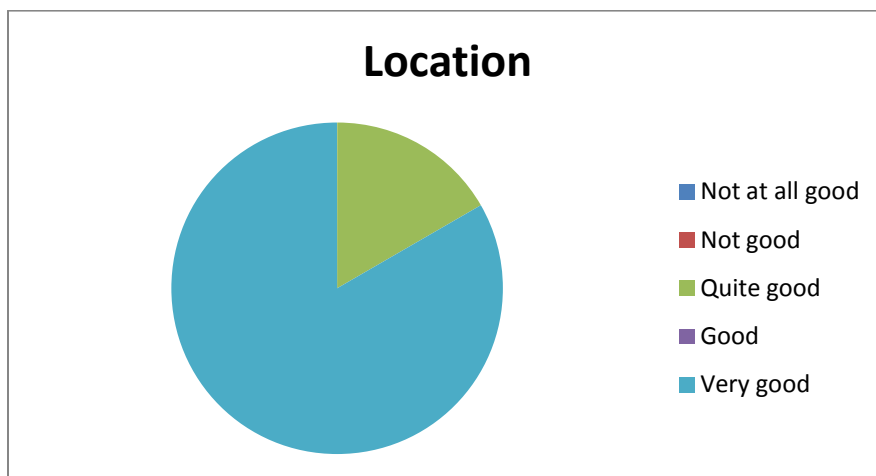


The meetings with the MEPs were considered as very useful, useful or quite useful by the totality of the participants, 43% of them giving the highest possible rate.

Interpreting the responses given, it appears that the participants would like to have a more interactive training with less plenary discussions and more or much more role-play, case-studies, visits to the institutions, meetings with the MEPs, Q&A sessions and opportunities to network. In addition, from the comments and suggestions collected, attendees would like to have a less heavy agenda for future trainings and, especially, no overlaps between presentations.

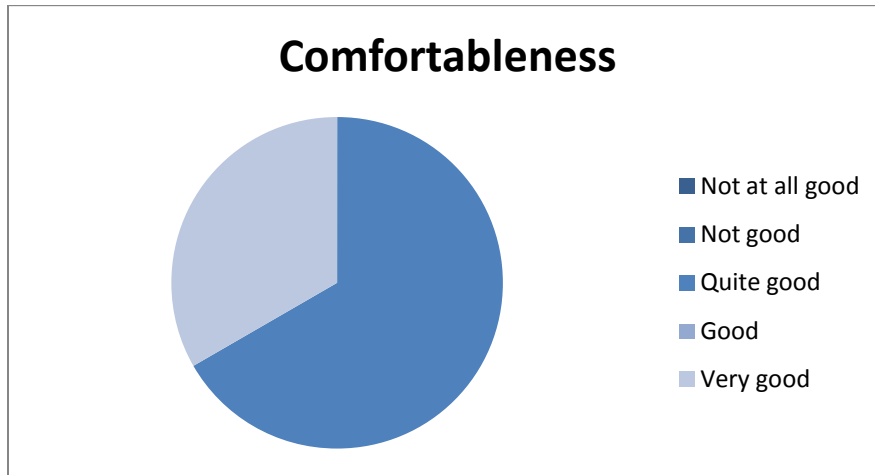
6. How was the hotel, would you have preferred? (1 = not at all good, 5 = very good)

a) Location



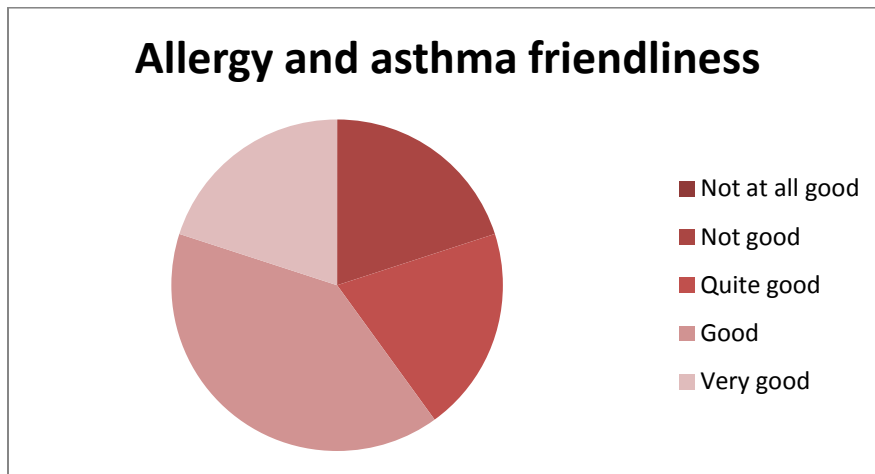
The location of the hotel was rating very good by 83% of the participants.

b) Comfortableness



The comfortableness of the hotel was considered as quite good or very good by the totality of the attendees.

c) Allergy and asthma friendliness



The responses were wide spread with 20% of the participants rating the allergy and asthma friendliness of the hotel not good, especially for the presence of carpets.

The feedback regarding the hotel demonstrates that the accommodation may be improved, especially in terms of comfort and allergy and asthma friendliness. On the other hand, the location was appreciated by the totality of the attendees.

During the Network meeting held in Dublin on the 12th of May 2012, a presentation on the feedback received and the possibilities for the future was given. The subsequent ideas and suggestions were presented by the members.

- The role-play was a real eye-opener for the participants. It gave them an insight in how the decision-making process at the European Parliament functions and not a simple theoretical lecture. Therefore, the time dedicated to it should be increased.
- The opportunity to meet with MEPs was very much appreciated. However, it was proposed that next time the advocacy activity at the EP should be carried out by all participants on the same topic in order to boost the possibilities of success for EFA. This means that next training should be organised in conjunction with the revision of a legislative text directly or indirectly related to asthma, allergy and COPD or in connection with EFA's advocacy actions.
- It was underlined the importance to follow-up with the MEPs met. EFA's members should keep the contact with them as much as possible and use them as a mean to disseminate EFA's activities and publications within the EP.
- Finally, it was emphasised that there should be no restriction in the number of participants. All EFA members should have the right to take part in this capacity building programme.

Conclusions

Based on the forms collected and the verbal evaluation held during the meeting in Dublin, the following conclusions and recommendations may be drawn. On the whole, respondents were very pleased with their stay in Brussels. They were thankful towards the organisers and complimented them for a successful event. They commented that the programme gave a good overview over ongoing issues in Brussels and how to work at EU level.

It was, however, suggested that perhaps the event ran a little short on time and in some cases overlaps between presentations could be avoided. From the organisers' side, collecting the evaluation forms was quite complicated. For the next training, filling in the questionnaire should be obligatory before receiving reimbursement of expenses. A dedicated time after the meeting should be foreseen for filling in the evaluation forms.

A further training may be organised by the end of the year to allow other EFA's members to take part in the event. Depending on the target of the attendees, it could be a beginners' training or a specialist one. In the latter case, it could be focused more specifically on a

legislative text under review. As a consequence, members could meet with the decision-makers to channel their efforts and obtain increased results from their advocacy activity. This could be done in the framework of the tobacco products directive, as the new proposal is expected to be published by the end of this year, or of the revision of the ambient air directive, scheduled for 2013.