



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

Roberta Savli, EU Policy Officer

The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations (EFA) is a non-profit network of allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients’ organisations, representing 35 national associations in 22 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

Introduction

On the 15th and 16th of October 2013, EFA organised our fourth “Meet and Greet the EU Institutions” training. It was built upon the experience of the previous three events that took place on the 29th and 30th of November 2007, on the 3rd and 4th of December 2009 and on the 20th and 21st of March 2012. All programmes and previous reports are available [here](#).

Based on the feedback received from these trainings, this was a combination of beginner and advanced training. Beginners’ programme covered the decision making process in the EU, main developments in the health policy at the European level and introduced to different roles stakeholders play here in Brussels. Together with advanced participants, the beginners met and greeted key actors from the Commission and the Council working on issues important to them, and also selected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from their home countries to present EFA Manifesto for the European Parliament Elections 2014 for the first time. A role-play enabled all participants to dig deeper in the EU Tobacco Products Directive case-study and replay the legislative process. Thanks to a workshop on air pollution they got a first-hand experience of the European decision making process on the Commission’s proposal for the revision of the EU Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution. All presentations can be found [here](#).

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 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, engage and empower EFA members towards advocating for their interests and taking part in the EU legislative process in the future.

As a result of the call for expression of interest sent to all EFA members of in April and reiterated during the Annual General Meeting and Networking Meeting in May-June, thirteen members showed their interest in participating in the training:

1. Artur Badyda, Polish Federation of Asthma, Allergy and COPD Patients’ Organisation
2. Jim Bennett, Allergy UK
3. Javier Contreras and Victoria Palomares, FENAER, Spain
4. Maria Inês Mesquita Guimarães Seguro Pereira, APA, Portugal
5. Diana Hadzhiangelova and Petrova Rayna Simeonova, ABBA, Bulgaria
6. Niamh Kelly, Asthma Society of Ireland
7. Christine Rolland, Asthme & Allergies, France
8. Giorgio Salerni, FEDERASMA, Italy

9. Isabel Saraiva, RESPIRA, Portugal
10. Inga Zalnerauskiene, Lithuanian Council of Asthma Clubs
11. Marianella Salapatas, ANIKSI, Greece

A gallery with the pictures of the training can be found [here](#) on EFA Facebook profile and the hash-tag on Twitter was #MeetAndGreet. The event was kindly supported by an unrestricted educational grant by Novartis.

Programme

Day 0 – Monday, 14th October	
<u>Venue:</u> Hotel du Congrès (42, rue du Congrès – B-1000, Brussels)	
Late afternoon/Evening	Arrival of participants/Dinner <u>Venue:</u> Titanic (31, rue du Congrès – B-1000, Brussels)
Day 1 – Tuesday, 15th October	
Setting the scene	
<u>Venue:</u> EFA office (35, rue du Congrès – B-1000, Brussels)	
10:00	Welcome by Susanna Palkonen, EFA Executive Officer
10:20	1. <u>How does the EU work?</u>, David Brennan, EFA Membership and Programme Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The legislative process: basic introduction to decision-making - Main actors: the role of the institutions and the Member States - Q&A session
10:40	2. <u>Health policy in the EU</u>, Roberta Savli, EFA EU Policy Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The division of competencies: who does what - Focus: the role of and patient involvement at the European Medicines Agency (EMA) - Q&A session
11:00	3. <u>Advocacy priorities for people with allergy and airways diseases</u>, Roberta Savli <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting the scene: what are EFA’s priorities and what is currently under discussion within the institutions?

	- Q&A session
11:20	Coffee break
11:40	<p>4. <u>The role of stakeholders in Brussels</u>, Susanna Palkonen and Laurène Souchet, European Patients' Forum (EPF), Policy Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common efforts with other similar organisations - Focus: EFA and social media in the Brussels scene, Jan Meissner, EFA EU Policy and Programme Assistant - Q&A session
12:00	Lunch
<p>Meetings at the European Parliament</p> <p>Venue: European Parliament</p>	
14:00	<p>5. <u>Visit to the Parliamentarium</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This interactive and informative visitors' centre offers a refreshing new way to discover more about European institutions and integration. Thanks to handheld multimedia displays guides, visitors can learn more about the legislative process and the impact of European decision making on our everyday lives in all 24 EU official languages. The Parliamentarium features 360° surround-screen digital projection of the parliamentary chamber, a vast 3D lighting installation representing a shifting map of Europe, a virtual visit to all Member States or video messages from MEPs. The visit can take place before or after meetings with MEPs and is dedicated to members that have not visited it yet.
From 14:00 on	<p>6. <u>Meeting MEPs from the participants' countries</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions around EFA's and its members' priorities under review within the institutions
19:30	<p>Dinner in the presence of David Palacios, Patient Relations, and Keith Allan, Medical Advocacy at Novartis, funding partners of the event</p> <p>Venue: Madou's Provence (rue de la Presse 23 – B-1000, Brussels)</p>
<p>Day 2 – Wednesday, 16th October</p>	
<p>Working with specific legislative proposals: tobacco and air pollution</p> <p>Venue: EFA office (35, Rue du Congres – B-1000, Brussels)</p>	
09:30	Second day welcome – introduction of the programme and objectives
09:40	<p>1. <u>Workshop – Air pollution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Commission's proposal for the revision of the EU Thematic

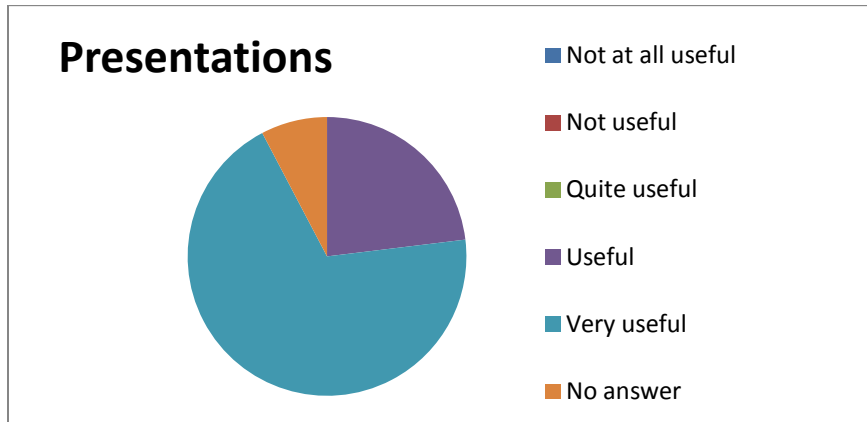
	<p>Strategy on Air Pollution, Scott Brockett, European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV), Team Leader for Industrial Emissions, Air Quality and Noise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greek Presidency of the European Union’s priorities in the field of air pollution – the view of the Council of the European Union, Petros Varelidis, Environment Attache of Greece to the EU - NGOs strategy, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), Anne Stauffer - Q&A session
10:40	Coffee break
11:00	<p>2. <u>Role-play – Tobacco Products Directive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Division of participants into different interest groups and EU institutions (EP and Council), replaying the legislative process - Moderator: Roberta Savli
13:00	Lunch
<p>Evaluation: were the learning objectives met and proposals for future improvement</p> <p><u>Venue:</u> EFA office (35, Rue du Congres – B-1000, Brussels)</p>	
14:00	<p>3. <u>Evaluation, Roberta Savli</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Filling in the evaluation forms - Suggestions for future steps, organisations, comments

Evaluation forms

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.

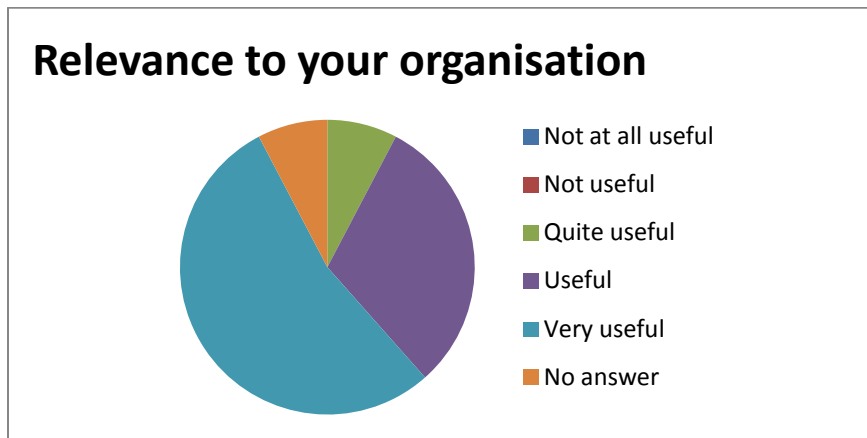
1. **How did you find the following?** Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful

a) Presentations



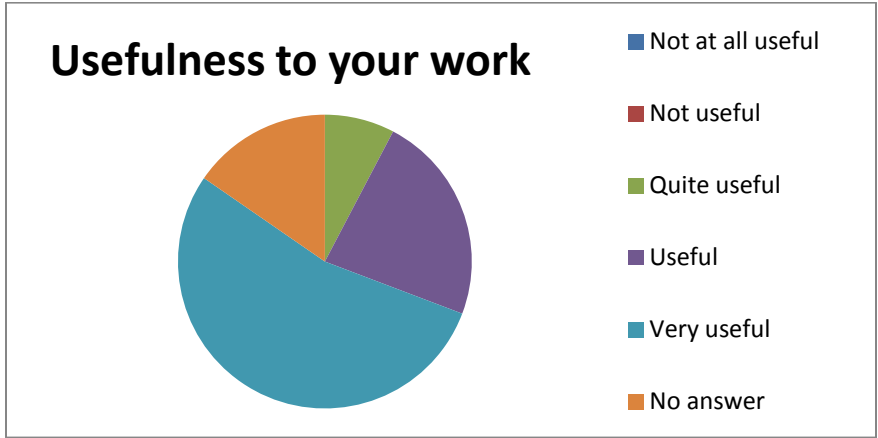
All participants were satisfied with the presentations, 69% of them giving the highest possible rate. Some members commented that the presentations of the first day were too charged with information.

b) Relevance to your organisation



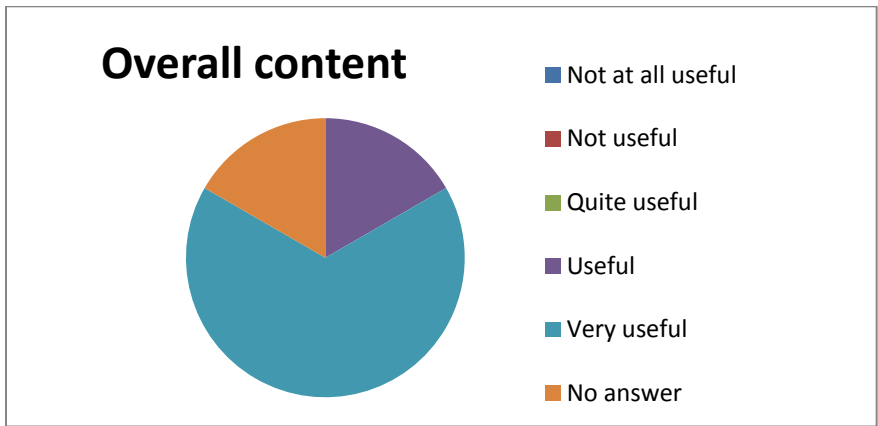
Concerning the relevance of the training to our members' organisations, the majority (54%) of attendees considered it very useful.

c) Usefulness to your work



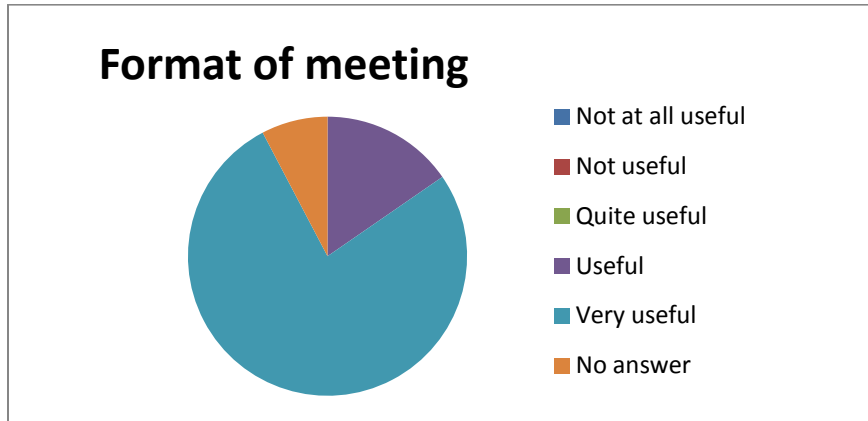
Same as above, 54% of attendees rated the training very useful to their work.

d) Overall content



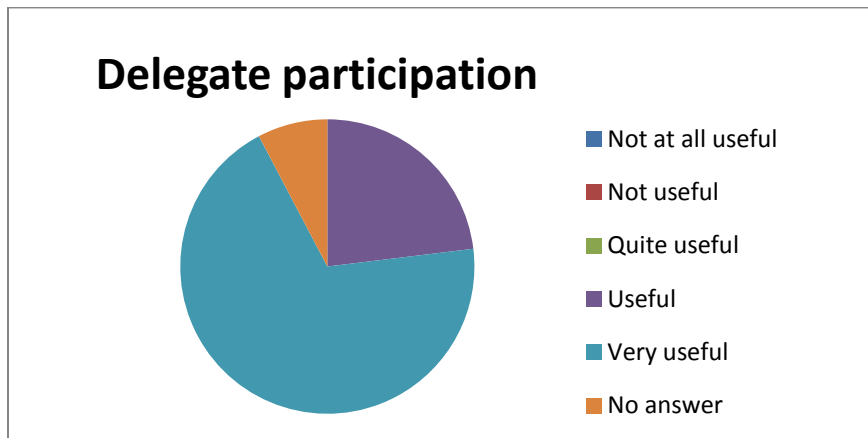
All respondents were satisfied with the overall content of the training, 67% of them considering it very useful.

e) Format of meeting



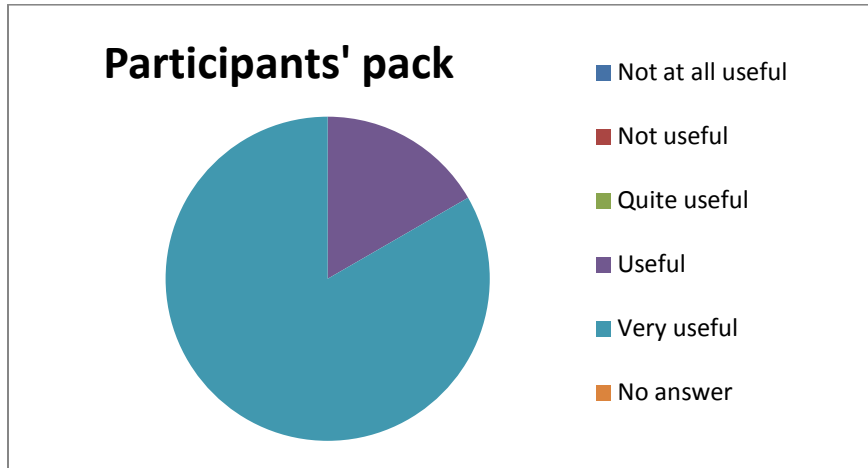
The vast majority of the participants (92%) were content or very content with the format of the meeting.

f) Delegate participation



Attendees were, on the whole, satisfied with the delegate participation (92%).

g) Participants pack

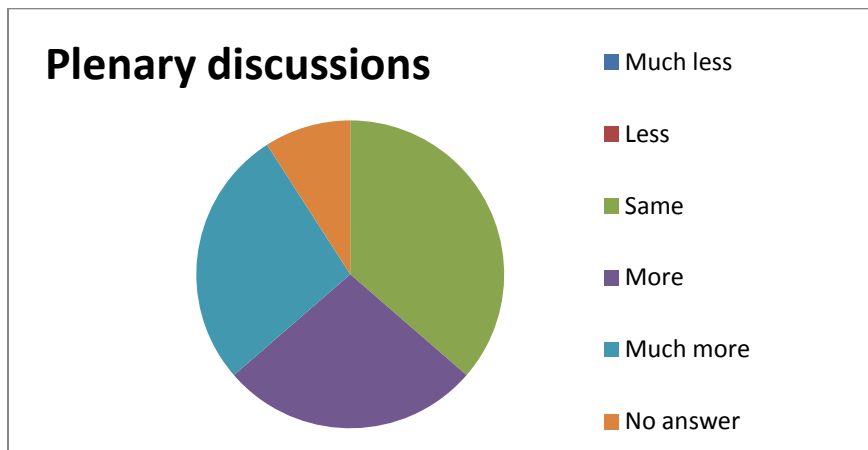


All respondents were satisfied with the participants' packs, no one rating this aspect below useful.

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

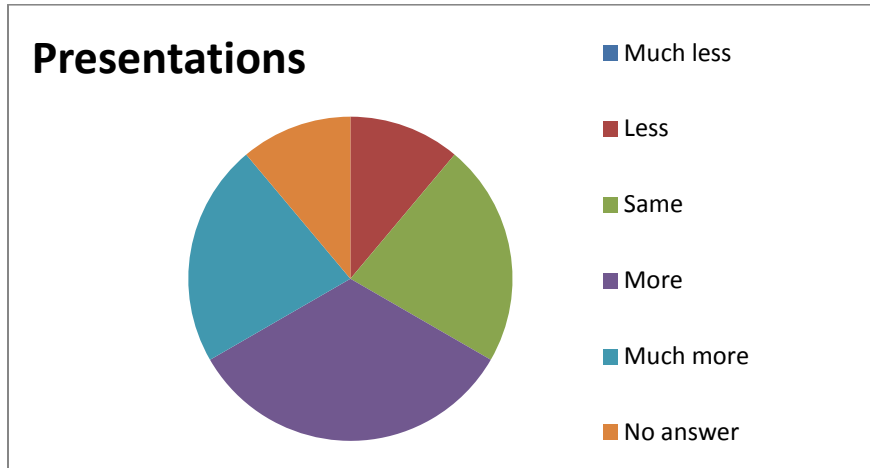
2. **Would you have liked to have more or less of the following?** Rate from 1 = much less to 5 = much more

a) Plenary discussions



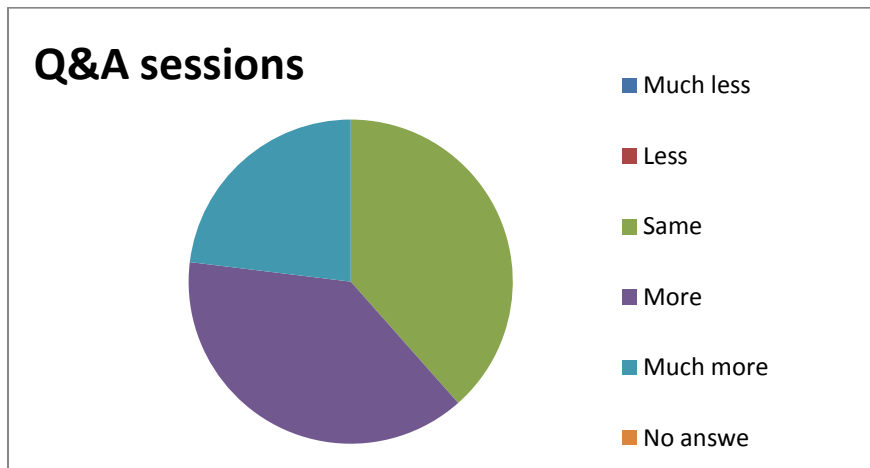
36% of the attendees were fully satisfied with the plenary discussions in the agenda, while 27% of them wanted more discussions and the same percentage much more.

b) Presentations



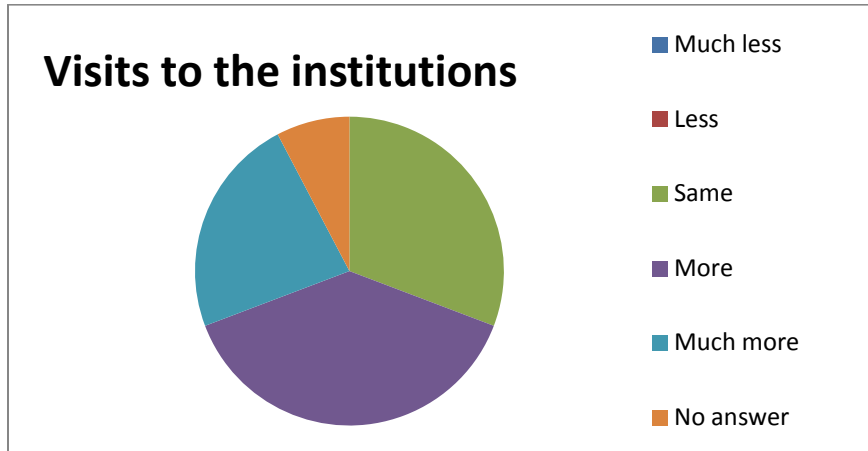
As for the presentations, the answers were largely spread: 22% of participants were satisfied with their number, 55% of them wanted more or much more, 11% less and the same percentage was neutral.

c) Question and answer sessions



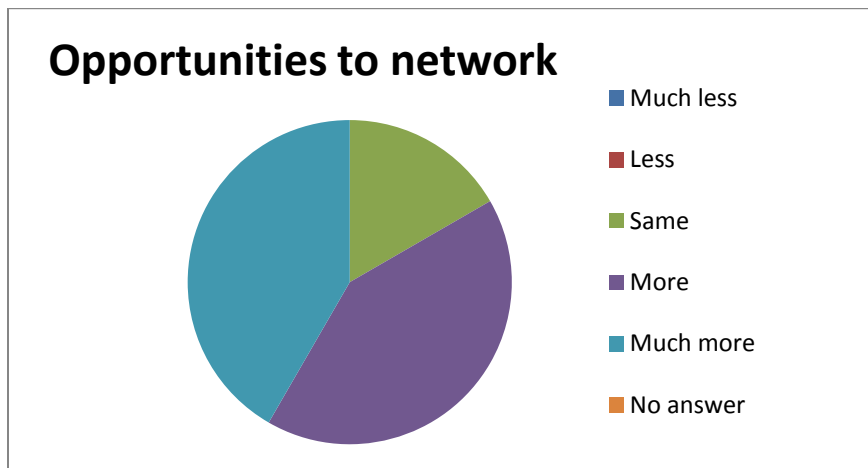
The majority of attendees (61%) wanted more or much more questions and answers sessions.

d) Visit to the institutions



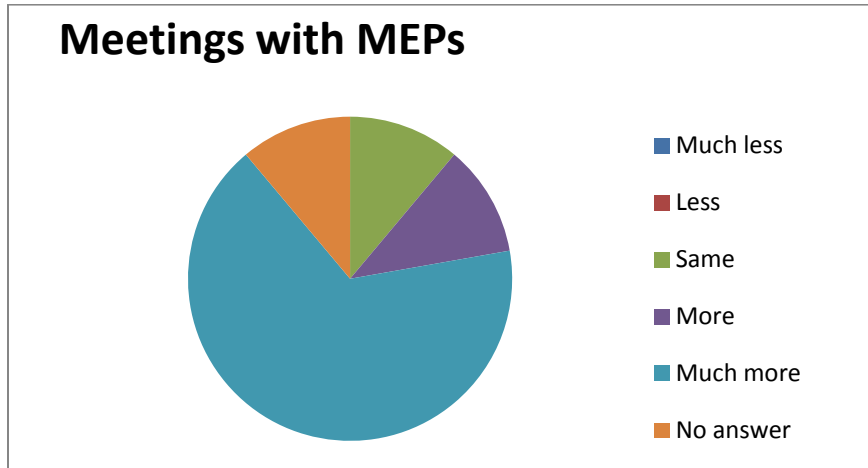
The same answer was obtained while asking for the visits to the institutions: the majority of respondents (61%) wanted more or much more visits.

e) Opportunities to network



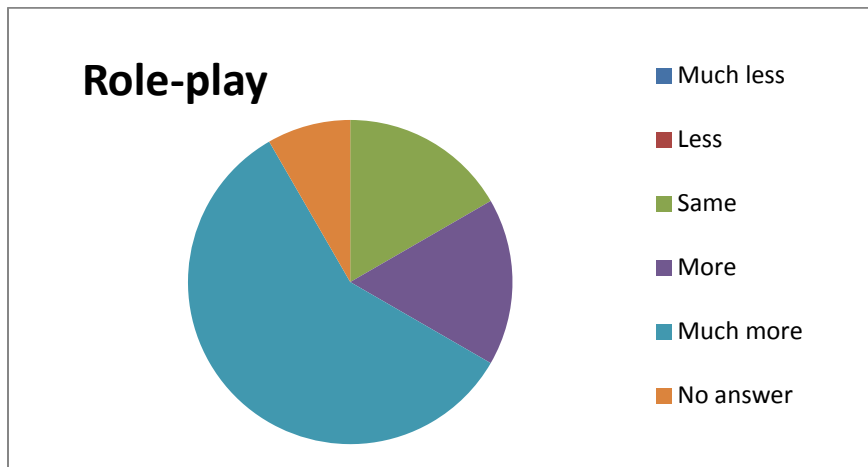
84% of participants clearly stated that they would have preferred to have had more or much more opportunities to network, only 17% of them being completely satisfied with the opportunities provided by the training. It was suggested to organise a networking event during the first night, where people could introduce and share some of their literature on projects and speak of their priorities.

f) Meetings with MEPs



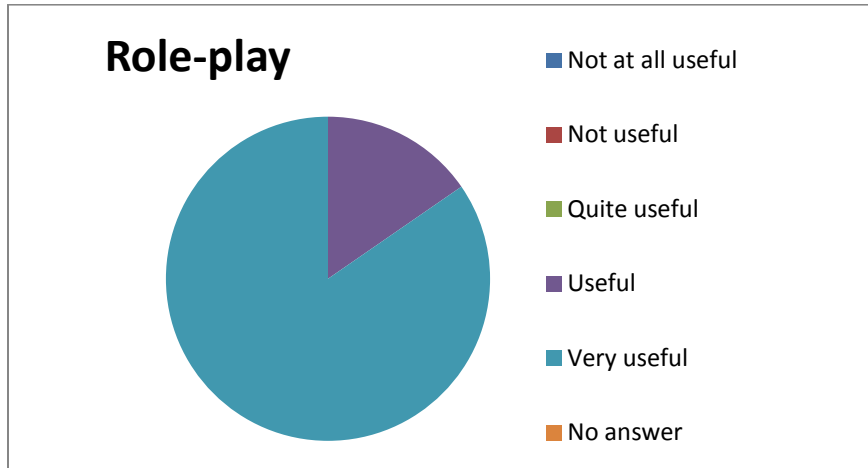
The majority of respondents (67%) wanted much more meetings with MEPs.

g) Role-play



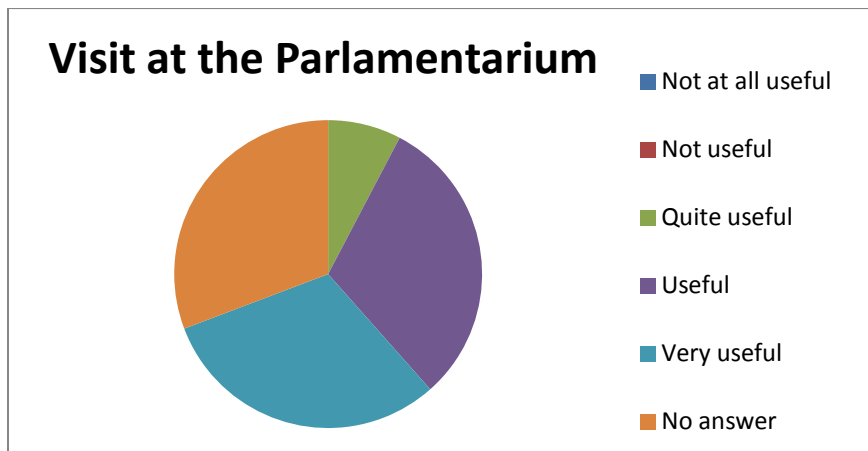
75% of attendees wanted more or much more role-play, 58% of them giving the highest possible rate.

3. Was the role-play worthwhile? Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful



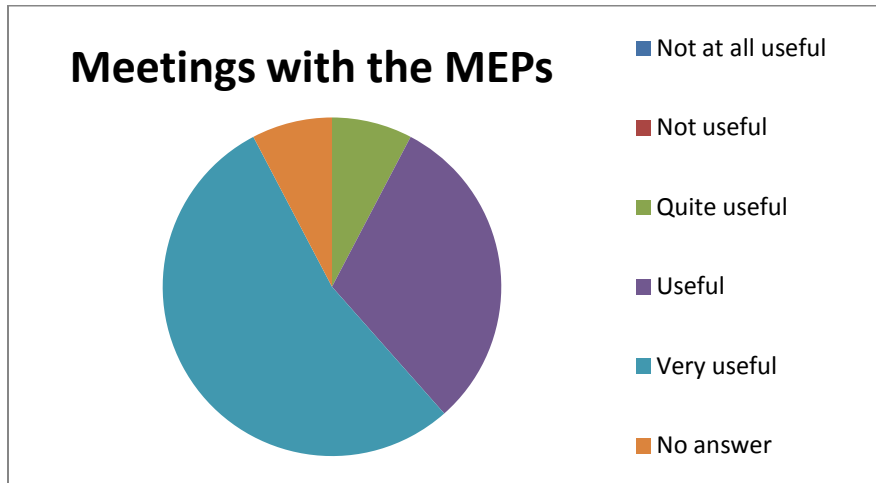
The totality of the participants found the role-play very useful (85%) or useful (15%). It was suggested that it would have been better for each participant in the Council to represent his/her own country and that the voting rules at the Council with the qualified majority should have been clarified in beforehand to get benefit of the negotiations.

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



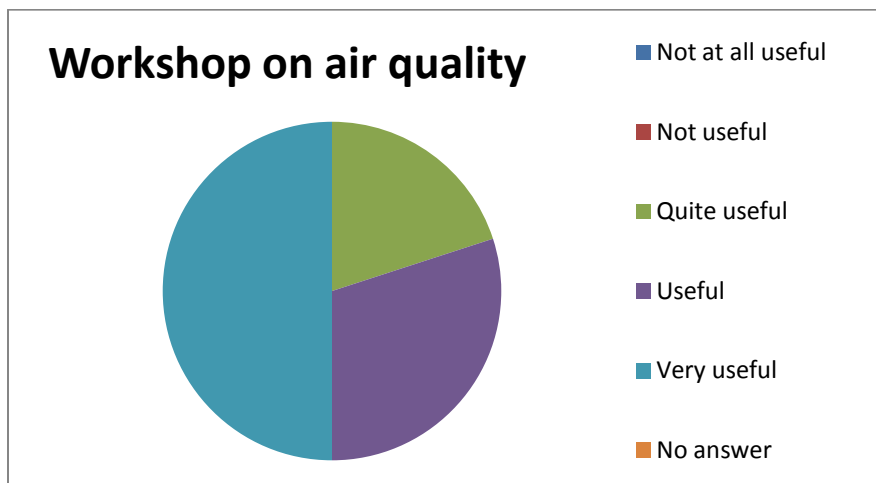
The answers were quite spread as 31% of the participants did not visit the Parliamentarium due to concomitant meetings with MEPs, while the remaining 69% of them found the visit generally useful.

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



The meetings with the MEPs were considered as very useful or useful by the vast majority of the participants (85%), 54% of them giving the highest possible rate.

6. **Was the workshop on air quality worthwhile?** Rate from 1 = not at all useful to 5 = very useful

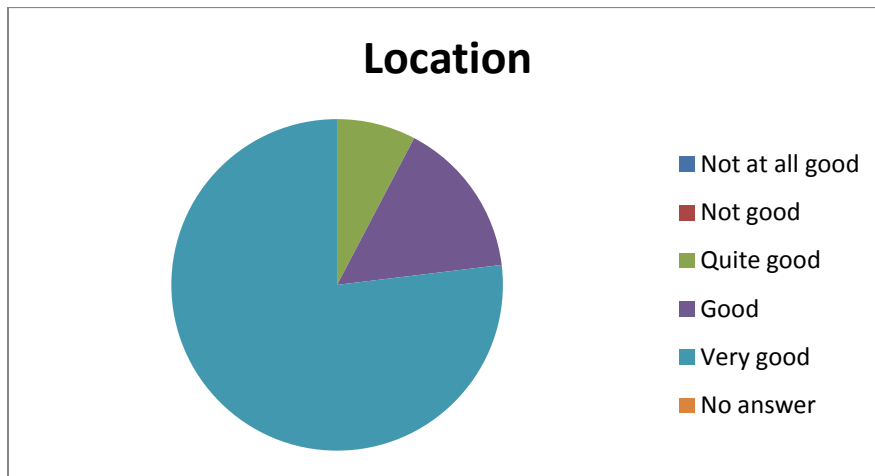


The totality of the participants considered the workshop on air quality generally useful. For some of our members, it was too technical, while others really appreciated it and suggested to have more room for discussion with the speakers. It was underlined the need for EFA templates and communication packages on this topic.

Interpreting the responses given, it appeared that the participants would like to have had a more interactive training with less plenary discussions and presentations and more or much more case-studies, plenary discussions, opportunities to network and meetings with the MEPs.

6. **How was the hotel, would you have preferred?** Rate from 1 = not at all good to 5 = very good

a) Location



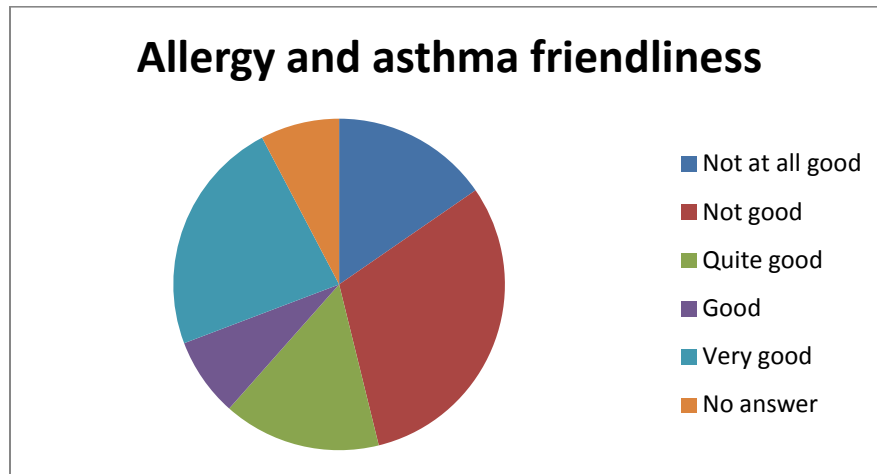
The location of the hotel was rating very well by 77% of the participants.

b) Comfortableness



The comfortableness of the hotel was considered as quite good in general.

c) Allergy and asthma friendliness



Most of the attendees (46%) considered that the hotel was not allergy and asthma friendly, especially for the presence of carpets and the absence of elevator.

The feedback regarding the hotel demonstrated that the accommodation may be improved, especially in terms of allergy and asthma friendliness. Indeed, while the location was appreciated by the totality of the attendees because of the proximity with the office, the lack of elevator and the presence of carpets were problematic for people with asthma, allergy and COPD.

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 over ongoing issues in Brussels and how to work at EU level. The role-play, especially, was deemed to be an eye-opener and the meetings with the MEPs were very much appreciated too.
- Some improvements were, however, suggested by members: presentations of the first day were too charged with information and another more interactive format should be preferred with questions and answers sessions and networking opportunities more than plenary sessions.

The next training that will consider all these comments will be organised by EFA next year.