

Evaluation of information and communication activities towards the EU Member States in the area of EU Enlargement

ELARG.A2/18/2014

FINAL REPORT
ANNEXES – Part 2



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18 December 2015

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Evaluation of information and communication activities towards the EU Member States in the area of EU Enlargement

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Introduction

In the Annexes that follow, the results from the eight online focus groups across four countries (see table below) are presented, in turn.

1. Table 1: Overview of the focus groups

Country	Dates	No of participants
France	8 July	10 participants
	13 July	10 participants
Austria	9 July	12 participants
	10 July	10 participants
The Netherlands	29 July	10 participants
	6 Aug	10 participants
Finland	17 Aug	10 participants
	18 Aug	10 participants

For each country, the participants recruited were from that country (i.e. they were Austrian / French / Finnish or Dutch) with a secondary education background or vocational training at least. They were screened not to have self-declared extreme positions on the EU and not to be employed in the European institutions. The full breakdown of participants' profiles is presented for each country.

A professional moderator led both focus groups and the participants engaged in a healthy debate, responding to points raised by each other, as well as to our questions. The discussions reflected the main objectives of the focus groups, which were to:

1. Explore information and news habits, including the channels and tools of information used by the general public depending on the topic / context;
2. Discuss awareness and perceptions on the EU enlargement policy / process;
3. Better understand how the following information and communication materials on enlargement are received:
 - DG enlargement brochure
 - Sample of video clips
 - Infographics and leaflet
4. Explore overall appreciation of materials and ideas for improvements

1. Annex 1: Focus Group Report: France

1.1 Overview

The French online focus groups took place on 8 and 13 July 2015. Each group lasted one hour and a half, and involved a mixture of male and female participants, with 10 participants in each group. The full breakdown of participants' profiles is described in the tables above.

Dates	8.07.2015	13.07.2015
Times	16h-17h30	
Number of participants	10	10

Profile of participants FG1

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
2	1	3	2	1	1
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
3			7		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in an NGO	Employed in a school/university	Employed in the government/public sector at a local level	Employed in the government/public sector at a national level
2	2	1	2	2	1
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
6		1		3	

Profile of participants FG2

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
0	3	3	2	1	1
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
2			8		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in an NGO	Employed in a school/university	Employed in the government/public sector at a local level	Employed in the government/public sector at a national level
2	6	0	1	1	0
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
7		2		1	

1.2 Results from the French focus groups

The following sets out the main findings from both groups.

1.2.1. Information and news habits

The discussion kicked off with participants reflecting on their use of different information and communication channels. The purpose of this first step of the discussion was to warm up the participants and to define where they were looking / would look for information, relevant when thinking about communication and information channels and their effectiveness. They listed the different sources of information they were exposed to / consulted on a regular basis. When asked about information habits on the way to work, participants tended to either say that they did not access news/information, except one reference to the free press available in public transport, or that they listened to the radio (most of them driving to work).

Participants cited TV for daily news, online newspapers, different web search tools. When asked where they would go to look for specific information, participants in both groups indicated that the internet was the main source of reference. A number of different search tools were suggested: Google, Yahoo, and specialised media such as BFM, Arte and iTele. Some indicated turning to sources outside France, as highlighted below:

"I am watching CNN, ARTE on the sat, it is interesting to have different points of view" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"I would use English news websites such as CNN" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"I would listen to foreign radio on the internet" (male participant, aged 65+)

Participants also said that they would use a combination of the same types of sources they use for accessing news when looking for information about a particular topic in order to ensure the impartiality of the information. Some participants also made a specific reference to asking friends or family when they want to find out about something, which highlights the way that information is passed on between citizens. None of the participants had set up news alerts / RSS feeds.

Participants were then asked where they would turn to source information on EU affairs. A broad consensus emerged as to the insufficient quality of the coverage of EU affairs in French media:

"It is difficult to get information on the EU because we can never know the truth" (female participant, aged 55-64) *"...and because it is too abstract"* (male participant, aged 65+)

"I would not trust TV channels in any case...not serious enough and always scoop-driven...while also being too French-centric" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"[Media] should principally deal with EU news to make us feel like EU citizens...." (female participant, aged 25-34)

Participants also specifically criticised the way information about the EU tends to be presented:

"There is sometimes too much information without any real analysis" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"The content is often difficult to understand" (female participant, aged 18-24)

[I would like to be better informed] about the concrete consequences on our daily life (female participant, aged 55-64)

Although they reported that they were not actively following developments on EU affairs, the majority of the participants indicated that they would use a combination of different sources (generalist newspapers, ad hoc internet search, specialised media such as iTele, ARTE or BFM) to get as objective an information as possible on the EU:

"[I would use] ARTE news, independent, comprehensive and reliable." (female participant, aged 25-34)

"[I would turn to] specialised TV such as BFM..." (male participant, aged 65+)

"The educative programmes on ARTE would be interesting to talk about the EU..." (male participant, following up during the discussion on DG Enlargement brochure, aged 55-64)

When specifically asked about Europa and Europe Direct with one exception participants had never heard of them:

"I've never heard of the site, or the information centre." (female participant, aged 35-44)

"I tend to prioritise news websites, Le Figaro, Le Monde, Le Point, etc." (male participant, aged 65+)

"Europa, yes I heard about that when I was studying..." (male participant, aged 55-64)

1.2.2. Awareness and perceptions on enlargement

Moving away from the specifics of participants' news and information search habits to focus more on the EU and enlargement, participants were asked to introduce the different themes they associated with the EU. A clear focus on economy, the sovereign debt crisis and financial instability emerged quickly because of the current coverage of the Grexit debate. However, participants also referred to a few policy areas of the EU and to some of its core values, including the following:

"[The EU is about] freedom, security, tolerance, human rights but also unfortunately about technocracy, liberalism (female participant, aged 25-34);

"he crisis, banks, Greece..." (female participant, aged 45-54)

"The insufficient management within this Europe" (male participant, aged 18-24)

A priori, participants noted their lack of knowledge about enlargement as a policy and a process:

"I have lost track with all the countries willing to join and all those that are already in..." (male participant, aged 25-34)

"[I do not know much about enlargement] but member states want to attract new members..." (female participant, aged 18-24)

To launch the discussion on enlargement, participants were asked if they knew any countries that had recently joined the EU. Participants cited a few countries (Baltics, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia), or a region (Eastern Europe), and made references to Turkey, the Balkans and the Ukraine, as well. Overall, there was a sense of uncertainty about the newer Member States / candidate countries, sometimes expressed in a provocative manner:

"We do not know much about the newest EU Member States, which tends to prove that the communication budget was mismanaged" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"There are already too many countries that need help, we will need to be more cautious in the future..." (female participant, aged 55-64)

Participants were not able to say much about the candidate countries or the newest Member States:

"[I know a little] about their recent history and their relationship with the USSR and Yugoslavia (male participant, aged 65+)

"We learn a little through the media but their accession remains vague" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"In many of these countries, the majority is not happy about EU membership..." (male participant, aged 18-24)

In general, participants were extremely critical about what they considered to be enlargement policy and the consequences for them. The current media coverage of EU affairs focused on the Greek debt crisis in France also influenced very much the participants' position on enlargement and the (potential) candidate countries. Participants expressed concerns about the budget, economic and financial situation of the candidate countries (with a few references to the criteria of the Growth and Stability Pact), hiding their debt to join the EU and get a financial support

from the rest of the MS. Throughout the discussion, participants put very much the emphasis on the economic and financial dimensions of enlargement

"In the long run, this is a bad strategy..." (male participant, aged 18-24)

"These countries are benefiting from the opening of the borders ... This is an advantage for poor countries at the expense of richer countries such as France" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"This is a unique opportunity for certain countries towards economic development" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"[Concretely, enlargement] leads to companies being shut down because of the competition from Eastern Europe" (male participant, aged 55-64)

"This is the fear of unemployment and poverty" (female participant, aged 55-64)

Participants repeatedly asked how much enlargement would cost them [the EU citizens], adding that it would be the most tangible effect of enlargement for them. They also noted that they did not consider that media coverage of EU enlargement was objective:

"Objective information? It depends very much on the country" (male participant, aged 55-64)

"Not really [objective], often the topics are hardly covered" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"[I would rather turn to] independent organisations (NGOs, Pirates, etc.) because the other channels serve the system" (male participant, aged 65+)

When specifically asked about what enlargement / EU membership meant and represented, the majority of the participants could identify the main dimensions of the policy (on shared values such as democracy, human rights, and on the market economy)

"Sadly, the only criteria only accounted for are economic" (male participant, aged 65+)

"[Conditions include] public finance, respect of human rights, (too slow) legal alignment on EU" legislation (female participant, 25-34)

"[The candidate country] needs to meet certain political (human rights) and economic criteria" (male participant, 65+)

In spite of a general understanding of the existence of conditionality, hardly any participant could clearly identify the different steps of the enlargement process.

"The country applies to become a member, the EU reviews the application and sets a roadmap. If the country is able to implement it, it becomes a member after a long time" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"[Organisation of an] accession referendum in the candidate country" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"The candidate country] needs to undertake reforms..." (male participant, aged 45-54).

Diagram on the enlargement process

As a follow up, we circulated the diagram included in the DG Enlargement brochure to test whether it was a good way of showing enlargement as a process.

The diagram was well received. Participants could easily understand the message. They assessed the information presented as clear, visible, although they noted the presentation was not extremely attractive

"[The diagram] presents the different steps of the accession process. Yes, this is clear!" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"[I like the diagram] because it is easy to understand and straight forward..." (female, aged 35-44 and male, aged 25-34 participants)

"[The process] is well summarised" (female participant, aged 35-44)

The discussion then moved on to the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a member of the EU:

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Opening of borders and market access - the 4 freedoms - Schengen area - Single currency - Solidarity between Member States - EU redistribution - Stronger position on international market - Stronger international role - Common policies	- Position of norm-taker - Loss of sovereignty - Solidarity between Member States (from the richer MS' perspective) - Economic crisis - Dependence on financial markets - External competition on labour market - Lack of European diplomacy and of European defence

Participants noted that their understanding and perception about the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership / enlargement was strongly influenced by the current context of economic crisis.

1.2.3. Feedback on materials to communicate about Enlargement

The rest of the discussion focused on the different communication materials that we circulated:

1. The **DG Enlargement brochure 'Enlargement of the European Union'**: participants were asked to read the Foreword, p.2, p.4 and p.7, before quickly scrolling through the whole document noticing the presentation and titles;
2. **Video clips**: Two video clips were shown to each group. All participants viewed the celebrity ambassador video clip with Ermonela Jaho. One group was shown the 'Hidden Treasures' movie and the other group was shown the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik;
3. **Infographics**: it was planned to show two infographics in the focus groups: one on fundamental rights and one on the global role of the EU. However, there was insufficient time to show both infographics. Therefore, we tested both infographics in the first focus group and thereafter we tested the infographic on the global role of the EU, as having greatest relevance to participants.
4. Leaflet: **"So similar, so different, so European"**

DG Enlargement brochure

Overall, the brochure triggered positive reactions. On the specific sections we asked them to read, participants were positive. In general, they liked the presentation, emphasising that it was simple, straight to the point, well-illustrated and not too text-heavy, while only one participant noted that the presentation was "too traditional":

"I like the way the brochure is structured, very well explained, very interesting" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"[The brochure] is simple, I would like to give it a good read. It looks very well explained with loads of details easy to understand" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"[The presentation] is clear, simple, straight forward (female participant, aged 45-54) but it is too traditional..."
(male participant, aged 55-64)

Participants felt that the brochure was very informative. From the scan read of the rest of the brochure, they declared that they would be interested in reading it more carefully.

However, several comments were made on the content and on the credibility of the messages in general:

"The document is clear, the content is unrealistic though..." (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Only those actually drafting this document believe what it says..." (female participant, aged 45-54)

"I liked the first pages, but soon after it becomes too idealistic..." (female participant, aged 35-44)

and in particular:

"Higher food standards? What a joke! Who allowed endocrine disruptors because of lobby pressure?"
(female participant, aged 25-34)

"You should not integrate the countries which cannot afford it" (female participant, aged 18-24)

Participants were unanimously most critical about the perceived subjectivity of the brochure, telling only one side of the story. More efforts should be put into presenting not only the advantages for both the EU, the current member states and the candidate countries, but also the disadvantages for the different parties, the risks that enlargement entails and what is done to manage these risks:

"We have the impression to be told only about the positive impact of enlargement, about the integration into a wealthy organisation. Except that for several years now some of the EU member states are also not wealthy" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"The document deals with the advantages for the candidate countries, but does not say anything about the risks" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"[For instance, [the brochure] could focus more on the challenges for the candidate countries to meet the conditions set by the EU" (male participant, aged 65+)

Participants also highlighted which information they felt could be added / was missing in the brochure, for example the information that would interest them the most:

"A focus on recent years is missing" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"This information is interesting, but we miss something about what the candidate country has to undertake vis-à-vis the EU" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"[I would like to see] more economic and financial data on the candidate countries" (female and male participants, aged 35-64)

These perceptions resonated in the exchange on who would be the target audience of the brochure. A priori, participants indicated that they would see the benefit for any citizen to read the brochure, but one noted that

"The brochure could target Eurosceptics and citizens of candidate countries in order to convince them about the advantages brought by EU membership" (female participants, 45-54)

Nevertheless, participant also suggested that the brochure could be used in schools for educational purposes

"[It should be] compulsory in schools" (male participant, aged 45-54)

"[It is] pedagogic" (male participant, aged 45-54)

However, they did not know where to look for the brochure. Some suggested that it could be available in public administrations (e.g. city halls) or in public libraries.

Feedback on video clips

The first group was shown the Hidden Treasures clip and the celebrity ambassador clip with Ermonela Jaho. The other group watched the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik and the celebrity ambassador clip with E. Jaho.

Video clip 1: “Hidden Treasures”

Participants praised the quality of Hidden Treasures as a video clip, the beauty of the images and the positive values associated with them. They identified the message of the video as portraying the unity of the EU and the wealth of its differences:

“[The clip says something about] happiness and freedom” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“[The chance of] growing together” (male, aged 35-44 and female, aged 25-34 participants)

“The union of Europeans based on our differences” (male participant, aged 35-44)

However, they criticised the “idealist tone” and its credibility of the clip:

“[It shows] how Europe should be and how it is actually not” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“I had the impression to watch an ad for a travel agency” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“The clip is really not informative but it was surely not its objective” (male participant, aged 65+)

Although sensitive to the message on the similarities between Europeans, participants criticised the lack of substantial information it provided – noting in particular that the “hard economic reality was missing” while it was “currently their major concern”.

Participants were neutral as to the length of the clip, but generally did not like the background music with some suggesting that it was somewhat inane / silly. In terms of the target audience of the video clip, participants’ comments were straight forward:

“It targets foreigners who want to spend their holidays in the EU” (male participant, aged 45-54)

“It must have been targeted at the gullible and the naïve” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“It targets European eurosceptics but it is not informative” (male participant, aged 35-44)

Video clip 2: “Jacques Rupnik on Enlargement”

Although they recognise that the clip with Jacques Rupnik was going beyond the economic dimension of the EU, participants outlined the lack of counterweight to the expert’s point of view:

“This clip is informative, but it is useless if watched on its own. It must be watched together with an interview of someone EU-sceptical” (female participant, aged 35-44)

“This guy is convinced he is right and he is really good at putting his message through” (female participant, aged 55-64)

“What he says is beautiful, but when I listen to someone talk like him, I wish he could be debating with someone with has opposite ideas” (female participant, aged 35-44)

Although one participant noted that she liked this clip very much

“Because [the Professor] made me dream for a short while” (female participant, aged 55-64)

Because of the perceived bias in the message, participants doubted the utility of this clip, discussing how to better balance the presentation and to include information on the challenges and disadvantages of the EU. Nevertheless, they emphasised that they could relate to this clip because Jacques Rupnik was also telling their stories (female participant).

Video clip 3: “So similar, so different, so European” with Ermonela Jaho

The clip with Ermonela Jaho was more negatively received across the two groups. Participants like neither content, nor the format.

On the content, participants could not relate to the glamorous image given by the opera singer, presenting Albania as a “heaven”, with some more provocative remarks such as:

“It makes me think too much of propaganda and manipulation... We need something more real to love Europe” (female participant, aged 35-44)

Criticising the approach to the video and the message, they expressed serious doubt as to the credibility of the celebrity ambassador and the portrayal she was giving of her country:

“If this is a portrayal of real life in Albania, then it is perfect. But I seriously doubt it” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“Heartbreaking... beautiful as in a Microsoft ad, everyone is beautiful, who are you kidding... you think people are gullible and you might be right” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“She belongs to the elite so she knows only about beauty and easy life” (female participant, aged 55-64)

Comments made by male participants were less elaborate but supported the same view:

“Too idealistic...” (male participant, aged 65+)

“I do not know what was the message of this clip? I had the impression she was advertising what she was doing and her country” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“I do not get any interesting information out of it” (female participant, aged 35-44)

While the connection with the EU was also perceived as overstretched:

“We cannot see how the EU has helped her live her dream” (male participant, aged 35-44)

They suggested that these clips should rather build on the experience of “real citizens” and their “real life”:

“I have a question: why do all these clips portray celebrities? Why is it never about real people?” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“[The persons interviewed] need to be realist, they cannot play a role only” (female participant, aged 55-64)

“I have mixed feelings about the EU. When I watch this kind of video clip, it sounds hypocritical and it is annoying. It does not help” (female participant, aged 35-44)

They did not think that they could be the target audience for this video clip, considering rather that it was targeting Albanians.

Participants were also critical of the format of the video clip. They found it too long and repetitive, while the background music was annoying. They were also sceptical as to the distribution of this clip, doubting that it would make sense to show it between other clips (e.g. music clips).

This was the least preferred clip in both groups.

Feedback on other print materials (infographics and leaflet)

Infographics

The first group was shown two infographics, one on the EU's position in the world and one on fundamental rights, while the second group was shown only the infographics on the EU's position in the world. Overall, the two topics proved rather abstract and more difficult for the participants to engage with.

The presentation of the **first infographic** was well received:

"The infographic is well done, well structured" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"The information is easily accessible" (male participant, aged 35-44) and *"well illustrated"* (female participant, aged 35-44)

"It is clear, we understand..." (male participant, aged 35-44)

However, the views on the message were diverse:

"It deals with economy only, nothing about democracy, citizenship, social policies, freedom" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"[It deals with] fundamental rights, yes, it is very interesting" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"The EU ranks amongst the first global power" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Growing together? Let me laugh" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"We do not experience what is described in the infographics" (male participant, aged 18-24)

Except for one participant noting

"It is interesting because it shows figures and this is factual evidence" (male participant, aged 55-64)

The majority of participants in both focus groups expressed doubts as to the credibility of the message and their real life experience of the EU:

"Utopia – or I do not live on the same planet" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"Yes, this is a little utopian, but it does not mean that it is not true" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"The EU may have become one of the first global powers, but it is not what its population feels like" (male participant, aged 55-64)

Nevertheless,

"[The infographics are] more interesting than some of the topics covered in the other materials" (male participant, aged 18-24).

On the **second infographic**, participants of the first focus group easily identified the message on fundamental rights. However, they also noted immediately what they perceived as a limitation of the infographics across the EU

"It deals with equality in general" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"But for these values, issues vary greatly between countries" (male participant, aged 65+)

They also appreciated the clarity of the infographics:

"Well done..." (male participant, aged 18-24)

"It is clear and understandable" (male participant, aged 35-44)

However, they could not identify the target audience for this infographics:

"[It targets] all the countries which want to join the Eurozone" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"I do not know what is the added value of this type of information for the EU citizens..." (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Unfortunately, this is too economic, it does not raise passion" (male participant, aged 65+)

These views seemed to be in contradiction with the interest they expressed for the economic information presented. They did not know either where to find the infographics, suggesting they could be available in administrative buildings (city halls), public spaces (train stations, airports) and in schools.

Leaflet: 'So similar, so different, so European'

Participants were then presented with the leaflet 'So similar, so different, so European, which had been produced as part of the awareness-raising campaign.

Participants were more critical on the leaflet with regards to the level and depth of information provided and the utility of this format for this type of information. One participant did however note:

"I like very much the "Le saviez-vous?" side because I had no idea!" (female participant, age 55-64)

They were not convinced by the presentation

"I do not think that a leaflet is a good way to present such a wide topic" (male participant, aged 65+)

"I would have thought of something longer, a presentation alike our school geography books to cover better the different countries" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"The information is clear but not exactly crucial as Europe is not a holiday destination only" (female participant, aged 55-64)

Participants overall criticised the content:

"It says too little and I think it is lying...or maybe not lying but idealistic" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"I really wonder if these people live in the same Europe as us" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It is too easy to describe the geographic situation of the candidate countries without saying anything about their economic and financial situation" (female participant, aged 35-44)

One participant even expressed strongly her reservation on enlargement with respect to certain countries:

"I am really not convinced [by the leaflet], we are already so many. In the case of the Baltics, enlargement was a geopolitical mistake" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Participants considered that the leaflet could be used in tourism info centres, but not as a political document.

1.2.4. Overall impressions

In terms of the **specific content of the materials**, views were more critical. The thin line between what constitutes information and what is an advertisement was the point most often raised by the participants. Advertising as a concept generated more negative feelings.

"The more you try to make things look ideal, the less they are" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"[I would be more convinced if] they were not trying so hard" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"I liked the effort to focus on the candidate countries. I did not like the ad-like type of the information" (male participant, aged 65+)

Participants appreciated the focus on the candidate countries, but emphasised that this focus should not be at the expense of:

- A truly informative character of the materials, to avoid turning them into an ad or a prospectus of a travel agency
- An objective analysis of the benefits and costs for the EU and for them as EU citizens.

This point affected the **perceived credibility** of the information provided. Participants would have liked to learn more about the pros and cons and not only about the achievements of EU enlargement and the advantages for the candidate countries:

"Not credible because always one-sided, we miss the negative aspects" (female participant, aged 35-44).

"Other information, more negative, would be true too" (male participant, aged 55-64)

"These documents aim at convincing people and not at promoting a public debate on the topic. Is this really a democracy?" (female participant, aged 25-34)

In addition, participants criticised the style of the materials presented. They saw them as very general and dealing only marginally with what they were really worried about.

"I have the impression that there is a gap, although I can see they are trying to have stories we can relate to" (male participant, aged 35-44)

In particular, participants consistently asked about the "costs of enlargement". They identified this type of information as clearly missing in the materials and acknowledged in the conclusion of the discussion that costs were the most important element to them.

Lastly, participants also drew a line between information and perception on enlargement. While they recognised that the materials discussed were useful and informative (even if to varying degrees), they stated that these would not be enough for them to change their views about enlargement and the (P)CC.

"The brochure is good to provide information, but if you want people to change their minds..." (male participant, aged 65+)

1.3 Summary findings

Overall, participants engaged well with the materials presented. They acknowledged **the topic of the focus group discussion as very interesting and informative**. Some participants indicated that they had saved the materials we had circulated in order to read them more thoroughly afterwards, with a minority announcing that they would further research the topic by themselves, which suggests that the discussion tapped into a latent interest area. Nevertheless, throughout the exchange, they emphasised that communication materials could not compensate for the **lack of citizens' involvement and of public debate on enlargement**.

When asked about preferences for the different materials shown, participants identified the brochure (and in particular the diagram on the enlargement process) as their favourite material. Some also noted that the Hidden Treasures video clip was particularly nice and well produced, but not especially useful from an information point of view.

The **format and presentation of the different materials was always perceived as clear**, easily accessible and well structured. However, participants noted that this type of information would be valuable only to an audience that had already an interest in the topic, although it is interesting to note the contradiction with different participants indicating their plans to undertake further research on the topic.

However, participants consistently expressed their doubts as to the **credibility of the messages**. They perceived them as subjective and telling only one side of the story to sell the idea of enlargement and new Member States. They emphasised that the messages could easily have been made stronger if more space was given to potential risks and challenges of EU enlargement as well. They also repeatedly outlined that they needed to relate to the stories presented and suggested the addition of “real life experience” and of issues that had a direct and concrete impact for them.

The credibility issue had consequences in terms of what the participants could identify as **target audiences** of the different materials. Participants were critical as to the added value for them given the limitations noted in the content of the messages. In addition, it was clear that they did not know that these information and communication materials existed and **where to find them**.

2. Annex 2: Focus Group Report: Austria

2.1. Overview

The Austrian online focus groups took place on 8 and 13 July 2015. Each group lasted one hour and a half, and involved a mixture of male and female participants, with 10 participants each. The full breakdown of participants' profiles is described in the tables below.

Dates	9.07.2015	10.07.2015
Times	17h-18h30	
Number of participants	10	10

Profile of participants FG1

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1	6	2	1	0	0
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
7			3		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in an NGO	Employed in a school/university	Employed in the government/public sector at a local level	Employed in the government/public sector at a national level
3	2	0	1	2	2
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
5		3		2	

Profile of participants FG2

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
3	5	1	1	0	0
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
4			6		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in an NGO	Employed in a school/university	Employed in the government/public sector at a local level	Employed in the government/public sector at a national level
1	6	2	1	0	0
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
3		1		6	

2.2. Results from the Austrian focus groups

The following sets out the main findings from both groups.

2.2.1. Information and news habits

The discussion started with participants reflecting on their use of different information and communication channels. The purpose of this first step of the discussion was to warm up the participants and to define where they were looking / would look for information, relevant when thinking about communication and information channels and their effectiveness. They listed the different sources of information they were exposed to / consulted on a regular basis. When asked about information habits on the way to work, most participants tended to say that they either read the written press or listen to the radio (most of them driving to work). One person mentioned free press available on public transport. Three participants said they did not access any information on the way to work.

Participants cited TV, radio, newspapers (e.g. Kurier, free newspapers available on the tube) and internet for daily news. When asked where they would go to look for specific information, participants in both groups indicated that the internet was the main source of reference (search engines e.g. Google, Ecosia, Wikipedia, blogs). Additionally, certain participants would look for specialist literature or ask knowledgeable acquaintances or friends:

"I would mostly use the internet and whenever I am traveling by car the radio" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"In case of scientific subjects, [I would use] relevant literature" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"Sometimes I borrow books from the university library" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants were then asked where they would turn to source information on EU affairs. The majority of the participants indicated that they would use the same sources for EU-related information. Three participants mentioned internet as the main source of information on EU affairs, one person would rely on the press or TV.

"I use the same sources" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"I watch TV or read newspapers" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"I look for this type of information most often online" (male participant aged 25-34)

When specifically asked about Europa and Europe Direct, none of the participants had ever used them.

2.2.2. Awareness and perceptions on enlargement

The majority of participants noted their lack of knowledge about enlargement as a policy and a process. Those who indicated what they know, provided the following replies:

"Well, discussions with Turkey are currently on hold; favourite candidates are Serbia, etc...." (male participant, aged 25-34)

"On-going expansion eastwards...Escalation with Russia" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"More and more countries in crisis..." (male participant, aged 45-54)

To launch the discussion on enlargement, participants were asked what they knew about countries which could join the EU. Several participants mentioned Turkey, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Albania and Montenegro. One participant also asked what would be the consequences of the changes in Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and the EU's strategy towards these countries. A few participants even asked about the situation of Switzerland or suggested Iceland and Norway would be *"more interesting candidate countries"*. In response to the question which countries had recently joined the EU, participants cited the following: Baltic States, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czech Republic.

Participants' general knowledge on the candidate countries reflected a rather negative tone, with the emphasis put on 'social dumping' and the increased economic competition within the EU resulting from enlargement. They characterised the candidate countries as follows:

"Rather politically and economically unstable countries" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Especially countries where it is possible to produce cheaply, low social level, usually they have to privatise what is owned by the state, a cheap workbench for companies" (male participant, aged 25-34)

“Cheap production and therefore cheaper exports...” (male participant, aged 25-34)

Overall, participants expressed their interest in being more informed about the enlargement process. They would like to receive **more information with regard to the advantages for the EU**, how the **social standards** and standards of living in the countries joining the EU would improve and whether the candidate countries were in a stable economic situation, **what the risks were** for the EU, including military threats, and what kind of **‘return service’** would have to be provided to these countries.

“I think everyone should know more about it” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“In general, yes, [I would like to be more informed about enlargement], about plans for accession, rationale behind accession / enlargement, requirements, expected benefits, etc. The dialogue would be important” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“What are the benefits for the EU?” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“What is the price to pay to let them in?” (male participant, aged 18-24)

“[More information on] how social standards have evolved in [the newer Member States] since they joined” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“What are the potential risks [for the EU] associated with the candidate countries?” (female participant, aged 35-44) and in particular *“what are the military threats resulting from the eastward expansion?”* (male participant, aged 25-34)

“[I would like to know] if these countries are in as bad an economic situation as Greece” (female participant, aged 18-24)

Only a **very few participants had any knowledge** about the enlargement process. They emphasised that they had **not tried to get more** information about it and that the **media coverage was poor** in that respect. Two participants had a vague recollection from their university years.

“I have not tried to get information about it” (female participant, aged 35-44)

“Media do not precisely cover this” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“I had to learn it once but I have now forgotten about it” (female participant, aged 25-34)

Views were more confused about the accession criteria, with the first group focusing on the need for the candidate countries to respect Human Rights (one participant referred to *“the European Convention on Human Rights [as] the starting point”*), while the second group put the emphasis on economic criteria (the Maastricht criteria with an express reference to the public debt and public deficit ceilings). This economic focus seemed to reflect a more defensive attitude vis-à-vis the candidate countries and translated into more critical comments on the I&C materials presented during the discussion group.

Diagram on the enlargement process

Next, we circulated the diagram included in the DG Enlargement brochure to test whether it was a good way of explaining the enlargement process.

The diagram was well received. Participants said that the different stages of the process were clearly presented

“Yes, it presents the accession process, step by step...” (male and female participants, aged 25-34)

“Yes, clear, although shown in a very simplified way...” (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants understood the message – the formal and substantial conditionalities associated with the access process. The discussion went on with the advantages of the EU enlargement, with participants acknowledging that their views had been shaped by:

“my own experience” (female participant, 18-24)

“my observations of the current situation” (2 male participants, aged 25-34 and 45-54 and female participant, aged 18-24)

“the media” (male participant, aged 25-34)

The second group explained the many disadvantages of EU enlargement. One person saw no advantages at all in the EU membership and EU enlargement

“because one only needs to observe the current situation to realise that any improvements are unlikely” (female participant, aged 18-24).

Participants explained they associated EU membership with the following advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Single currency and monetary union - o Elimination of exchange rate risk - o Reduction of transaction costs - Free trade / free movement of goods & people - Peacekeeping - Europe is coming closer together / European community - Economic growth - Solidarity principle between Member States (“crisis aid”) - Cross-border projects - Simplified rules and common legal order - Common values, e.g. human rights - Better competition - Education	- Instability - Social dumping - Economic competition - Dependence - Economic changes - Solidarity principle between Member States - Fluctuations in the single currency - The European currency is not used in every Member State - Weak border controls - Disconnection between the European Union and “ordinary people” - Lowering of standards

2.2.3. Feedback on materials to communicate about Enlargement

The rest of the discussion focused on the different communication materials that we circulated:

1. The **DG Enlargement brochure ‘Enlargement of the European Union’**: participants were asked to read the Foreword, p.2, p.4 and p.7, before quickly scrolling through the whole document noticing the presentation and titles;
2. **Video clips**: Two video clips were shown to each group. All participants viewed the celebrity ambassador video clip with Ermonela Jaho. One group was shown the ‘Hidden Treasures’ movie and the other group was shown the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik;
3. **Infographics**: one group discussed an infographic on fundamental rights and the other one an infographic on the global role of the EU.
4. Leaflet: **“So similar, so different, so European”**

DG Enlargement brochure

Overall, participants like the presentation of the brochure, but were more critical about the level of information provided.

They liked the presentation, design and structure of the material, outlining that the way the presentation supported the information well:

"Nice design" (female participant, aged 18-24 and male participant, aged 25-34) and *"The layout is clear and modern"* (male participant, aged 25-34)

"Facts about individual countries balance well the dry text" (female participant, aged 25-34) and *"It is presented in a beautiful way, especially the process (accession negotiations) is described in a simple way"* (male participant, aged 25-34)

"I find the brochure very well structured" (female participant, aged 35-44)

Although participants a priori found the brochure interesting, they quickly questioned its informative character. They did not like the one-sidedness of the information presented, as the brochure was too much focused in their views on the candidate countries, on the advantages of their joining the EU, but also because it only described the positive impacts of enlargement

"It only deals with the advantages of the candidate countries without saying anything about what is wrong and what they need to work on to become members" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"The brochure does not name any risks... economic risks, when new countries join the EU" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It does not say everything. There are also negative elements that the EU leaves untold because they are not so positive" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"It is interesting, but it is too shiny a description ... which does not describe any risks. Yet, the Greek example shows that not all the accessing countries do systematically well" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"It is absolutely not a critical document" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It is very well done but it gives the impression of being more of an ad than an informative brochure" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants expected information going beyond what they considered to be the obvious benefits of the EU:

"Think of the roaming fees, which have dropped dramatically or the time we used to wait when crossing a border. But these are not 'information', they do not belong in an information brochure" (male participant, aged 25-34)

They suggested the brochure would have benefited from the inclusion of a discussion of potential risks and disadvantages resulting from the enlargement, and the concrete effects of enlargement on the EU.

In general terms, participants thought that the brochure could be targeted at EU citizens or used as a teaching material, and expected it to be available online (including from the EU websites), in schools and public buildings (administration, train stations, etc.).

In conclusion, participants liked the most the **layout of the brochure**, finding it very well finished, **modern** and **illustrating well** the information provided. They were less impressed with the perceived **subjectivity** of the information provided. In the first group, there was a consensus that the brochure was a good means of informing audiences while people in the second group were of the opinion that there were better information tools than a brochure.

"I believe that this topic includes too many unanswered questions which could not be covered by a brochure" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"Most people would not have any interest in reading it" (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Hardly anyone picks up a book or a brochure nowadays” (male participant, aged 25-34), “[The use of] TV or short news reports in newspapers [would be more adapted]” (female participant, aged 18-24)

Feedback on video clips

Both groups were shown the Hidden Treasures clip. Then, the first group was shown the celebrity ambassador clip with Ermonela Jaho. The other group watched the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik.

Video clip 1: “Hidden Treasures”

In general, participants acknowledge the beauty of the pictures, but outlined that the video clip was weak content-wise. Nonetheless as highlighted below they understood the overall message of the clip that people living in the candidate countries are not so different from those of us living in the Member States; ‘so similar, so different’.

Participants found the clip to be attractive and described it as:

“Super clip” (female participant, aged 35-44)

“Beautiful pictures” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“The length is just right. We remain attentive throughout” (male participant, aged 25-34)

But when asked about the clarity of the information presented, participants expressed different opinions. If for some the clip was clear:

“Really good to show the advantages [of the candidate countries] and to put things in perspective” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“[It shows that] we might not be as different as we think we are” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“[It shows that] we all belong together” (male participant, aged 25-34)

Others said that for them the video clip was precisely lacking content / any information:

“Landscapes are beautiful, but there is no content at all” or “The content could be more concrete...” (2 male participants, aged 25-34)

“This is an ad – it shows only the best but there is no information (female participant, aged 45-54)

“It is really nice to watch and I like the music but other than that I do not find the clip interesting” (female participant, aged 35-44)

A consensus quickly emerged criticising the subjectivity of the clip. Participants did not like the fact that the clip gave a very embellished version of reality:

“Apparently, the idea is to present everything as “beautiful”, although it is not like that. Why not to show what is really going on?!” (male participant, aged 18-24)

“It only shows the positive points. It does not show how the countries really are” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“It would be good to see what is really going on, unemployment, soup kitchens...” (male participant, aged 25-34)

Ultimately the clip did not generate positive emotions only and participants concluded that they felt it to be unrealistic:

“It shows one side of the country but does not give an overview” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“Irritation and eyes rolling” (female participant, aged 25-34) and “Scepticism” (female participant, aged 18-24)

"They are taking us for complete idiots" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Video clip 2: "Jacques Rupnik on Enlargement"

In general, participants preferred this clip to the first one – although it was considered slightly too long – because they perceived it as **more informative**

"It is slightly better than the first clip because at least some of the difficulties and problems are underlying" (female participant, aged 25-34).

They identified the key message as

"A united EU, bringing about peace, hope" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"The accession of Eastern European countries has contributed to the economic growth of the EU. Also, the EU is a peace project" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"The benefits accrued through European integration are not limited to the economy" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Nevertheless, participants criticised again the **lack of supporting evidence** and of a thorough discussion of the pros and cons of enlargement. They perceived the clip as another advertisement for the EU.

"The principle is the same as for the first clip. These clips aim to generate positive feelings" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"Informative, well. Useful, maybe. Again no big facts" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"Well, a little too long, information is ok, but again only the positive aspects are highlighted" (male participant, aged 25-34)

In general, when asked what kind of video on the enlargement topic they would prefer, participants pointed out to a video with more facts, pros and cons, with a comparative explanation on countries in a good situation (Latvia was named) and on those in a worse-off situation (Greece and Portugal were cited).

Video clip 3: "So similar, so different, so European" with Ermonela Jaho

The majority of the first focus group found the clip with Ermonela Jaho more appealing than the "Hidden Treasures" video overall, despite some participants finding it a bit too long.

"Nice video" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Appealing" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"Better than the first clip..." "It is however a bit too long..." (2 male participants, aged 25-34). However, "[even if] it is a little too long for an ad, it remains sufficiently interesting so that I watch it through..." (female participant, aged 45-54)

The clip was seen as partially informative because, firstly, the message was light and secondly, because it showed only one person from the upper class and not the situation of the rest of people in Albania.

"I do not know what the clip wants to say" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"Very emotional and individual" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It does not create the feeling of belonging to a community. It is more appealing at a personal level" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants discussed the messages as follows:

“A personal story which can serve as an inspiration for a whole country” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“The dream of a better future together” (male participant, aged 18-24, female participant 35-44, male participant, aged 25-34)

“Albania is a great country and is ready to join the EU” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“The EU is the stage on which every Member State can achieve anything” female participant, aged 35-44)

To some extent, they found the celebrity ambassador credible but would have preferred and considered more useful to include average citizens and different sectors represented:

“This is an interview with a person from the upper class, but what is the situation of an average person from Albania. What does the country outside the capital look like?” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“It shows only one facet of the country, it does not give an overview” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“We learn a little about a particular person, but it is too good to be true: what about the rest of Albania?” (female participant, aged 45-54)

Overall, the weaknesses noted by the participants across all three clips were the one-sidedness of the stories told and the disconnection with the reality of the candidate countries.

Feedback on other print materials (infographics and leaflet)

Infographics

The first group was shown the infographic on fundamental rights, while the second group was shown the one on the EU's position in the world.

The presentation of the **first infographic** was well received. It was perceived by all participants as interesting; the way of presenting the information was seen as good; the information itself was clear.

“Short and concise – very good” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“Clear and appropriate” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“Crystal-clear” (female participant, aged 25-34)

Participants easily identified the focus on fundamental rights. Even more strongly than for the other materials discussed, they emphasised that this infographic should target all EU citizens as the topic should be a direct concern for anyone:

“Because this is information that every EU citizen should have” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“Fundamental rights concern everyone”, even “worldwide” (male participant, aged 25-34 and female participant, aged 35-44)

“[It should target all EU citizens] simply because we have to respect everyone and to be respected” (male participant, aged 18-24)

The **second infographic** was perceived as good from a graphical point of view. The information presented was also clear to participants.

“Design is good” (female participant, aged 18-24)

“I find it great. Visually, it is better than a lot of text” (male participant, aged 25-34)

"[I find it] much better than a brochure...short and providing a good overview" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants identified the focus on economy. Some only criticised the **presentation of average figures**, because it simplified the reality of what citizens experienced. For others, more explanation on how the figures were achieved would have been a plus

"These are indicators that are not relevant for us citizens, since only an average is shown" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It provides the EU average but nothing on the individual situation of particular Member States" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"Figures only show that the economy is growing, that's clear. But how did we get there? And are the figures comparable worldwide?" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants suggested that this infographic could be distributed widely, including to EU-sceptics, and used as teaching material.

Leaflet: 'So similar, so different, so European'

Participants were then presented with the leaflet 'So similar, so different, so European', which had been produced as part of the awareness-raising campaign.

The majority of the participants from both groups said the presentation was clear. Participants in the second group indicated that it was good from the graphical point of view.

"For me very clear" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"Graphically, nice" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants noted that the information presented should be carefully selected as *"there is little space in a leaflet"* (male participant, aged 35-44) while there was still *"irrelevant information included"* (male participant, aged 25-34)

In addition, the leaflet was perceived as an advertisement and too positive for the majority of the participants from this group. Including risks and threats would make it more reliable for them:

"Again too much advertisement" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"Potential risks and threats are not addressed, therefore it is not trustworthy" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"We can see very well from the situation in Greece what we have actually won" (male participant, aged 25-34)

The first group assessed the leaflet as not really interesting for two reasons, the insufficient depth of the information presented and its lack of credibility. For some of the participants, it did not bring new information while others saw it as an advertisement:

"There is not enough content, as for the rest of the materials" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"I do not know exactly which information I should receive via this brochure. It does not tell me anything new" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"Not interesting. It does not catch one's attention" (male participant, aged 18-24)

Overall, participants viewed the leaflet as one of the materials circulated during electoral campaigns.

2.2.4. Overall impressions

In terms of the **specific content of the materials**, views were quite critical. Often participants expressed views that the material was too positive and one-sided. They were quite demanding, expecting articulate evidence to support the statements made on enlargement while including in the analysis not only the candidate countries' perspective but also the impact on the current Member States, on their situation and on the EU as a whole.

Consequently, the materials also lacked **credibility** in their view. Participants did not like the ad-like approach and this clearly impacted their perception of the materials.

2.3. Summary findings

Overall, participants were interested in the materials presented. They acknowledged the topic of the focus group as thought-provoking and appreciated the discussion. In general, participants found the material informative.

Information sources mostly used by the participants for daily news included TV, radio, newspapers and internet. Internet was the main source of reference, which was also used for EU-related information. Participants indicated that they had never used Europa and Europe Direct.

The majority of participants noted their lack of **knowledge about enlargement**, their uncertainties about it as a policy and a process. They broadly knew which countries were the last to join, with important exceptions, and some of them mentioned a few of the candidates and potential candidates. Overall, participants' knowledge on the candidate countries reflected a rather negative tone with an emphasis put on the social and economic consequences of enlargement.

The **diagram** on the enlargement process (included in the brochure) was well received. Participants noted the clarity and accessibility of the information presented and led to a frank discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of EU enlargement.

Participants liked the presentation of the **brochure** but were more critical about the level of information provided. They found it a priori interesting but noted that they would have appreciated it more if the information would not have given the impression to focus on the benefits for candidate countries only.

The **Hidden Treasures video clip** was well received for the beauty of the pictures. However, participants quickly questioned what they perceived as a lack of message or information conveyed by the clip. Eventually, the clip did not generate positive emotions as a consensus quickly emerged about the subjectivity of the clip, giving an embellished version of reality.

Participants preferred the **video clip with Jacques Rupnik** (first group) or with **Ermonela Jaho** (second group) to the Hidden Treasures clip. Although the two clips with the expert and the celebrity ambassador were perceived as too long (especially the clip with E. Jaho), participants noted that they were more interesting informative and interesting because there was a clear message. However, they also noted the perceived subjectivity of both clips, asking for a more balanced approach to be promoted instead. Participants also discussed the representativeness of the celebrity ambassador, concluding that it did not weaken the credibility of the clip per se but that they would still have preferred to have average citizens and different sectors represented.

Participants liked the **infographic on fundamental rights**. They perceived it as interesting, clear and informative. They emphasised, more strongly than for the other materials discussed, that it should target all EU citizens because the topic should be a direct concern for anyone.

The **second infographic** was also well received. Participants noted the good graphical presentation, its clarity and its informative character. But they considered that more details about the statistics provided would have been a plus.

Participants' views on the **leaflet** were more diverse. Despite its clarity and its presentation, which were well received, the leaflet was perceived as less informative with not enough information being presented or information not sufficiently relevant.

Overall, the **format and presentation** of the different materials was in general perceived as clear, easily accessible and well structured. However, participants noted that this type of information might be too simplified for people already

acquainted with the topic. Participants also expressed their preferences in terms of the different materials discussed. They did not like the last leaflet (with one exception). They liked the infographic on human rights. They perceived the video clips as more effective in informing them. The brochure was also seen as good by the majority of the participants. Participants expected to find the information and communication materials on the Internet (the video clips), while they considered that print materials should be available at schools, in public offices and at the post office.

Participants consistently expressed their doubts as to the **credibility** of the messages. Participants did not trust the information in the materials, since they did not deal with both the pros and cons of EU enlargement. According to them, one should stay critical, inform himself / herself; more factual information would be needed about the problems of the (potential) candidate countries.

At the end of the focus groups, participants felt 'a bit more informed' or 'informed', but their opinion towards the (potential) candidate countries had not changed.

3. Annex 3: Focus Group Report: Finland

3.1. Overview

The Finnish online focus groups took place on 17 and 18 August 2015. Each group lasted one hour and a half, and involved a mixture of male and female participants, with 10 participants in each group. The full breakdown of participants' profiles is described in the tables above.

Dates	17.08.2015	18.08.2015
Times	19h-20h30	
Number of participants	10	10

Profile of participants FG1

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
2	3	5	0	0	0
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
6			4		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in an NGO	Employed in a school/university	Employed in the government/public sector at a local level	Employed in the government/public sector at a national level
4	4	0	2	0	0
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
2				8	

Profile of participants FG2

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1	3	5	1	0	0
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
8			2		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in an NGO	Employed in a school/university	Employed in the government/public sector at a local level	Employed in the government/public sector at a national level
2	4	0	0	3	1
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
2		4		4	

3.2. Results from the Finnish focus groups

The following sets out the main findings from both groups.

3.2.1. Information and news habits

The discussion kicked off with participants reflecting on their use of different information and communication channels. The purpose of this first step of the discussion was to warm up the participants and to define where they were looking / would look for information. They listed the different sources of information they were exposed to / consulted on a regular basis. When asked about information habits on the way to work, participants tended to either say that they did not access news/information, except one reference to the free press available on public transport, or that they listened to the radio (most of them driving to work).

Participants cited TV for daily news, newspapers, internet news sites and sometimes even discussion forum. Participants also said that they would use a combination of the same types of sources they use for accessing news when looking for information about a particular topic or about the EU specifically, citing Google and Ampparit for instance. Only one participant (female, aged 25-34) said she would use the EU's websites.

3.2.2. Awareness and perceptions on enlargement

Moving away from the specifics of participants' news and information search habits to focus more on the EU and enlargement, participants emphasised they were not particularly following enlargement-related news actively and had only a **poor knowledge of the policy area** and its implications:

"I haven't followed the enlargement process, therefore I do not know much about it..." (male participant, aged 35-44)

"I know what I hear on the news. I do not follow the news actively" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"I do not know anything about the future of EU enlargement" (male participant, aged 25-34).

Participants had only a **vague recollection of which countries had last joined** the EU and what were the candidate countries. They cited Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltics and "Eastern European countries" as the most recent members, and Turkey as a candidate country. Some of the comments made in relation to the latest countries to join, included:

"Would it be some countries in Eastern Europe?" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Well, Bulgaria, Romania, etc., as well as the Baltic countries." (female participant, aged 25-34)

"I do not know which were the latest countries to join" (male participant, aged 45-54).

With regards to the candidate countries, a sample of comments made include:

"Embarrassing but I cannot name any" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"I know roughly which countries are in the EU, but at the moment I do not know which countries are under consideration" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"I know that there has been talk about Turkey joining the EU for a long time, but I do not think that the case has proceeded concretely" (female participant, aged 25-34)

In general, participants were rather critical about the prospect of enlargement and the consequences for the EU and its Member States:

"I think the EU has already expanded too much" (female participant, aged 35-44) or *"Why do you want to expand?"* (male participant, aged 35-44)

"It seems that the so-called second and third wave countries have brought financial and "refugee" problems" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"How could this have gone through, for example in Bulgaria and Romania...that is the question!" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Emphasising that they would like to know more about the concrete impact of enlargement on the current members in terms of the financial impacts:

"I want to know about the impact for Finland" (male participant, aged 25-34) or "I would like to know how the amount we pay for the EU will change when we accept new member countries" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"There is no information, but it would be pretty good for the Finns to know because we are now paying more for Europe" (female participant, aged 45-54)

As well as in other specific policy areas:

"Why do not all countries need to take refugees in the EU?" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"I would like to know if there will be EU directives that affect private entrepreneurs" (female participant, aged 25-34).

In spite of a general understanding of the existence of conditionality:

"I guess pretty much any country can join if it meets the criteria" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"I think that there are strict restrictions regarding the application such as gross domestic product...Precisely I do not know" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"At least I know that the application process is a difficult one" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Few participants could clearly identify the different steps of the enlargement process.

"I don't know; you just have to meet certain criteria" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"You can get in by fraud (the Greek economy)" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"...there must be some clear link in Europe culturally and geographically" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Diagram on the enlargement process

As a follow up, we circulated the diagram included in the DG Enlargement brochure to test whether it was a good way of showing enlargement as a process.

The diagram was perceived as **clear and understandable**

"The process is presented in a very concise and clear way" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"The material is a good way to simplify the enlargement process" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"Displays EU application process, the text is a little small, but I can understand it" (male participant, aged 35-44)

However, participants identified different messages:

"Apparently you need to change your laws according to the EU's policy line" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It is not a small elite group which takes the decision" (male participant, aged 18-24) or "The chart emphasises the need for consensus" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"[The diagram shows] the clear steps of what must be done before becoming an EU member" (female participant, aged 25-34).

However, they expressed some doubts as to the veracity of the message:

"I doubt it's that simple anyway" (female participant, aged 35-44) or "[The] general scenario is clear, but we wonder if it works in reality as indicated here" (male participant, aged 25-34)

“It sounds unbelievable, that all Member States would accept new applicants. Are they really so united?” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“I am wondering how the countries are divided? That is, what is Europe, what is not?” (female participant, aged 35-44)

The discussion then moved on to the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a member of the EU, which are highlighted below:

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Freedom of movement - Trade - Common currency - Security and common defence	- Organised crime - Weakening of the Euro - Solidarity principle between members - Social dumping - Financial instability - Economic crisis

Participants acknowledged the influence of the current media coverage on their perception of enlargement and the information and communication, citing the refugee crisis and the generated “side effects” (female participant, aged 25-34), the Euro crisis and the Grexit debate, as well as the unemployment challenge.

3.2.3. Feedback on materials to communicate about Enlargement

The rest of the discussion focused on the different communication materials that we circulated:

1. The **DG Enlargement brochure ‘Enlargement of the European Union’**: participants were asked to read the Foreword, p.2, p.4 and p.7, before quickly scrolling through the whole document noticing the presentation and titles;
2. **Video clips**: Two video clips were shown to each group. All participants viewed the celebrity ambassador video clip with Ermonela Jaho. One group was shown the ‘Hidden Treasures’ movie and the other group was shown the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik;
3. **Infographics**: one group was shown an infographics on fundamental rights and the other group the infographics on the global role of the EU.
4. Leaflet: **“So similar, so different, so European”**

DG Enlargement brochure

Overall, participants’ feelings about the brochure were mixed. While they liked the presentation and acknowledged that it was informative, they questioned the credibility of the messages conveyed.

Participants appreciated the layout of the brochure and its structure and emphasised that it supported the content well:

“It is not at all a ‘dry’ article” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“The length does not matter at all because the issues are clearly set out” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“What I like the most is the text layout. It is easy to read and easy to find the main points. What I like the least are the colours, too much blue” (female participant, aged 25-34)

They said that the brochure was informative and clear:

“Graphic appearance is simple, all the important things in history are presented in order. And succinctly” (female participant, aged 25-34)

"You can find the answers to many questions about the EU" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"It has all the most important things short and concise" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"A lot of information that many do not probably know about the EU" (female participant, aged 35-44)

In particular, participants appreciated the effort to provide information, as a necessary complement to media coverage of the topic:

"[The brochure] shows the candidate countries in a more positive light than in the regular news" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"The information is the type media rarely shows" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"It shows the things neutrally and positive. Media coverage is often negative story-telling because negative news interests people more" (female participant, aged 25-34), *"It is [necessary to complement media], and even other issues are discussed, like the natural conditions in the countries"* (male participant, aged 45-54)

The perception of the messages was more mixed. Even if participants associated positive values with the brochure such as *"humanity"* (female participant, aged 25-34), they expressed doubt as to the credibility of the messages:

"Beautiful thoughts, but hardly anything else. Experience tells that the reality is probably something else" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"I do not think it was as strict at the time Spain and Greece for instance were allowed to join" (male participant, aged 35-44), *"Turkey is not committed to western values"* (male participant, aged 25-34) or *"I wonder still what Romania and Bulgaria bring to the EU, apart from poverty, unemployment, misery. I may be a disillusioned realist, but I think that economically stronger countries will have to pay the bill of enlargement"* (female participant, aged 25-34)

The lack of credibility was mostly due to **information perceived as missing from the brochure**, while the material was compared to a commercial:

"[Informative] yes, but I feel that so much is left unsaid" (male participant, aged 35-44) and *"We want to expand, but why?"* (male participant, aged 35-44)

"It seems, however, that the negative effects of enlargement are ignored" (male participant, aged 25-34), *"I would have taken it more seriously if it were written objectively, showing also the problems created by enlargement"* (female participant, aged 25-34) or *"Undeniably [the brochure] would fit well as school learning material, as well as media literacy hours (in order to consider how one-sided media argumentation works...)"* (female participant, aged 25-34)

"It is... somehow too 'commercial-like', trying too much, I cannot explain in more detail, but it is annoying" (female participant, aged 35-44)

Participants identified a potentially wide target audience:

"[The brochure is designed to] convince EU citizens of the necessity to accept new member states" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"I think it is aimed at citizens, which have relatively little or no knowledge at all about what the purpose of the EU actually is..." (female participant, aged 25-34)

"[It targets] citizens in countries that are considering joining the EU" (male participant, aged 18-24)

They expected the brochure to be available online (citing explicitly the EU website), in public buildings such as libraries and government agencies.

In conclusion, views on the relevance and usefulness of the brochure were balanced. Some participants found that the brochure was *"pretty good"* (female participant, aged 35-44), *"work[ed] well"* (male participant, aged 35-44) and

was a “good package” (male participant, aged 35-44). In particular, the brochure could be used in “social studies class” (male participant, aged 25-34). The rest of the participants were actually sceptical as to the use of a brochure as an information channel:

I do not think very many people actually read this (male participant, aged 18-24)

The brochure as an information tool is a bit limited (male participant, aged 35-44)

Feedback on video clips

The first group was shown the Hidden Treasures clip and the celebrity ambassador clip with Ermonela Jaho. The other group watched the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik and the celebrity ambassador clip with E. Jaho.

Video clip 1: “Hidden Treasures”

Participants liked the layout of the “Hidden Treasures” video clip

“The ad was very well done” (male participant, aged 18-24)

Even if they were sensitive to the message

“The video clip showed that the applicant countries are just like any other EU member states. But why would they want to join if things are okay?” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“There are still many countries outside of the EU which are very European in spirit” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Countries are more similar than we think” (male participant, aged 25-34)

However, once again they regretted overall the lack of information provided and, following, the insufficient impact of the clip:

“It raised more questions than it gave answers” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“Not trustworthy, but that’s what advertising is always about” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“More messages should be included in the [clip]” (male participant, aged 35-44)

They concluded on the need to draw the line between an informative purpose and the generation of positive emotions, which might not be enough:

“There was no information, only generated positive images...” (male participant, aged 25-34).

Video clip 2: “Jacques Rupnik on Enlargement”

The video clip with Jacques Rupnik was very well received by participants, who appreciated the layout, the interviewee, the content and the way the interviewee conveyed the message.

Participants liked the interview format with the expert

“Good length, a pleasant person talking” (female participant, aged 35-44)

“A suitable length, and in my view convincing. Indicates that in the EU there are other sides than the negative, which media always pick up on. And that not all things can be measures in monetary terms” (female participant, aged 25-34)

A presentation and a message supported by the format, “credible because of [the expert’s] own experience in the background” (female participant, aged 35-44) “[his] age and the way he presented the case, the tone” (female participant, aged 25-34)

Participants reflected on the strong impression Rupnik had made on them, in terms of the messages they identified and food for thought provided:

On the messages stricto sensu:

“This was a really good description of why you should join the EU” (male participant, aged 45-54)

“European history in relation to the Union. Why is it beneficial to be a member of the EU” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Cohesion and its benefits” (male participant, aged 35-44), “that should not be measured in economic terms only” (male participant, aged 45-54)

“Short, clear description of positive subjects. Reminder of European history” (female participant, aged 25-34)

On the impact on participants:

“I feel really good about this clip. Much nicer to listen to that the politicians’ explanations about the EU. It gave me a lot to think about.” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“I have a positive feeling after having watched this clip. It made me think in a different way” (female participant, aged 25-34)

However, participants still emphasised the one-sided approach to the video clip, oversimplifying reality and in turn weakening the credibility of the message:

“Eastern Europeans have really benefited from the EU. Wishful thinking: how have all those years of economic chaos been forgotten??” (female participant, aged 35-44)

“A slight disbelief, it does not seem to be all that simple in reality” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“[The clip generated] positive mental images, perhaps even too positive” (female participant, aged 25-34), “It was informative, but a critical approach should remain...” (female participant, aged 35-44) and “All the information provided is based on clear facts, but all the negative facts are conveniently forgotten” (female participant, aged 35-44)

Video clip 3: “So similar, so different, so European” with Ermonela Jaho

Overall, participants proved sceptical about the video clip with Ermonela Jaho. The presentation and format did not convince, although participants noted that the clip was *“visually elegant and refined”* (female participant, aged 25-34), mostly because of its length:

“Boring and conventional. And surprise, surprise again, the interviewee is an artist. Too long...” (male participant, aged 35-44)

Participants identified relatively easily the potential messages that this clip aimed to convey as:

“Albania has something to offer to the EU and it belongs to the same group as EU member States” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Albania has something to offer to the EU and it can learn from other” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“Albania brings East and West together, as well as the EU brings the whole Europe together” (male participant, aged 35-44)

However, participants noted at the same time several limitations as to the actual messages perceived:

"I wonder what the video clip attempts to sell. To me, just anyone could cook at that woman's house and could say the same thing" (male participant, aged 25-34), *"It lacked a red thread completely"* (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Propaganda for Albania" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Soon they will ask again for more money" (male participant, aged 35-44)

Participants doubted the credibility of the clip in general, as a result of both the lack of the representativeness of the celebrity ambassador interviewed and of the content of the interview:

"...But how many in Albania live in those conditions and have received a good education?" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Again, there comes a powdered image...Opera singers hardly represent 99.9% of the population" (female participant, aged 25-34) and *"Always artists. When will we see a fisherman, a beggar..."* (male participant, aged 35-44)

"It was a pretty one-sided view" (male participant, aged 35-44)

To improve the video clip, they suggested to add different informations and to reflect on EU membership from different perspectives:

"I would have liked to hear more about the country's economy, standard of living and people's everyday life" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"If Albania is doing so well, then why do they want to join the EU?" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"I wonder what an Albanian commoner would answer when asked to give money to Greece and to welcome a few hundreds of thousands refugees" (male participant, aged 25-34).

It was the least preferred of the three video clips.

Overall, peoples' feelings on the video clips, seemed to be influenced by the format, the content of the clip and the interviewees featured. Participants preferred the "Hidden Treasures" clip to the interview with E. Jaho. They also preferred the interview with J. Rupnik to the interview with E. Jaho. In terms of Hidden Treasures, participants recognised that this was a high quality video clip, but some perceived the clip to be more of an advertising type clip with its slick production and lack of narrative. The clip concept works by alluding to a particular Member State and then showing viewers that their preconceived ideas are actually prejudices and that the candidate countries are actually more similar than we think, with similar cultural traditions.

"I do not think advertising will help. Coverage should be reliable and objective" (male participant, aged 25-34) *"A more realistic narrative, which should consist of positivity and negativity, successes and failures"* (male participant, aged 35-44) *"Let's go with the camera to remote places and ask for citizens' opinions"* (male participant, aged 25-34).

Participants preferred the interview with J. Rupnik to the interview with E. Jaho. The main reasons given included that the clips with J. Rupnik was more informative and provided a different point of view, which actually managed to get participants to think more about what Europe means. As an individual speaker, J. Rupnik was also perceived to be more credible than E. Jaho this appeared to relate to several aspects including his age, and the fact that he is presented as an expert on the topic.

Overall, participants could not identify a clear target audience for all the clips, citing that they could be directed at EU citizens in general or in particular to EU-sceptics in order to convince them of the EU membership added value, and at candidate countries alike. More provocative voices saw a use of the clips for travel agents.

Feedback on other print materials (infographics and leaflet)

Infographics

One group was shown the infographic on the EU's position in the world, while the second group was shown the infographic on fundamental rights. Both infographics were positively received – with the one on human rights proving more consensual. Participants did not provide elaborate answers during the discussion of these materials, which seemed to reflect their limited content.

On the **first infographic**, participants liked the presentation

“This type of presentation is good” (male participant, aged 35-44)

and identified easily the key message – although they sometimes expressed it in a provocative manner:

“EU dominating position in the economy” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“Show off, we have a bigger wallet than others” (male participant, aged 35-44)

Even if they found the infographic informative, participants formulated reservations on its content and its credibility, suggesting ways to improve it:

“Too positive advertising” (male participant, aged 18-24)

“[It] annoys me that the EU is identified as one area though, for instance, the situation in Romania and in Finland is very much different” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“The information provided is quite general but the infographic does contain the main key facts... However, [some information is missing as] it does not say for instance what the consequences of the population growth are” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Comparison with other countries. I do not think that the EU is stronger than the US, yet this is the idea you get when looking at the infographic” (male participant, aged 35-44)

Reflecting the criticisms on the content, participants were divided as to what was the target audience of the infographic, some suggesting that it could be used as school material while others said it would only be accepted by believers.

The **second infographic** on fundamental rights was more positively received. Its presentation, clarity and simplicity were appreciated:

“Matters clearly presented, graphically” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Simplicity” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“A picture is always more telling than words” (male participant, aged 45-54)

Participants identified a clear focus on Human Rights and equality, noting that the infographic

“... talk[ed] in a credible way for equality” (female participant, aged 25-34)

Only one participant expressed her *“doubt [equality was] being realised in many places”* (female participant, aged 25-34)

Leaflet: ‘So similar, so different, so European’

Participants liked the presentation of the leaflet, the clarity of the information presentation and in particular of the map included. With regards to content, they identified the objective of the leaflet as the provision of information on candidate countries.

“It tells which countries are candidates for membership” (male participant, aged 25-34)

They were not, however, fully convinced by the quality versus the quantity of information provided

"Not very profound, but yes I guess that the most important things can be found..." (male participant, aged 25-34)

"It provides relevant information about countries, which I do not know. Maybe even too much information..." (female participant, aged 25-34).

In addition, participants had mixed views on the informative and interesting character of the leaflet:

"It is quite interesting, because I had not seen anything similar before" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Clear information, but the facts [are] selected partly on the basis of appealing emotions" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"It contains information, but it is not very helpful" or *"No, it does not provide any useful information"* (two male participants, aged 25-34)

"Not [interesting], at least for me. I do not want to travel to those countries" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Overall, and given pre-conceived negative representations,

"Oh no, I did not know that enlargement was advancing so quickly" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"What a terrifying idea that the EU might expand" (male participant, aged 35-44)

Participants criticised the one-sidedness of the leaflet, which jeopardised the credibility of the message:

"It is a bad idea to tell only good things" (male participant, aged 35-44) and *"Clear yes, but again no mention of the cons"* (male participant, aged 18-24)

"No because it tends to sell enlargement and it is not objective" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Well, these all tend to brainwash the people to accept that, no matter if they like or not, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, etc. will join the EU sooner or later" (female participant, aged 25-34)

To improve the content of the leaflet, they suggested to present a more balanced information, more facts about enlargement, the concrete impact of enlargement for them, overall to rethink the relevance of the information presented:

"A clear list of criteria that must be fulfilled and rules in the various countries" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Explaining why (honestly) at this time and in this economic climate the EU needs new member states" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Perhaps telling also about how enlargement would affect the member countries" (male participant, aged 45-54)

"Factual information such as what you pay for other member states" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"More relevant information" (male participant, aged 18-24)

As for any other of the materials presented, participants could not clearly identify the target audience for the leaflet. They thought of (interested) EU citizens in general but also of students (acknowledging how they could in turn influence their relatives). They considered that the leaflet could be available on line, provided as a supplement to newspapers or available in public buildings.

3.2.4. Overall impressions

Overall, participants liked the materials' **presentation**, how they were structured and how messages were supported by images or graphical representations. The materials were considered to be of high quality.

In terms of the **specific content**, participants were more critical. Although they recognised that an effort had been made to appeal to their feelings,

"[It] reminded me of the time when the relations with neighbour countries were not good" (male participant, 45-54)

Participants proved critical as to the general tone of the information presented. They acknowledged that a more positive coverage of EU affairs in general and of enlargement in particular was necessary to supplement traditional media, too positive a perspective was also the main weakness of the materials:

"Europe involves quite a lot of positive image-building" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"The negative media image has made me forget about the good things" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"[What I liked the least was] that it focused only on good things" (male participant, aged 35-44)

Even if the I&C materials were informative, the one-sided approach proved to be at the expense of the **credibility** and even of the higher-level communication objective:

The materials were interesting

"Interesting, I learnt new things. Certainly others would be interested too" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Interesting because there is a lot going on within the Union" (male participant, aged 35-44)

But

"Things were presented with facts but after all, all of it was too positive" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Far too sugar-coated, no information about the existing problems or applicants' problems" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"You need to seek information from several, critical sources when doing research on enlargement" (female participant, aged 35-44)

It did not create systematically adverse reactions but, to some extent, it limited the impact of the materials considered:

"I am surprised at how little I have thought about these things, and yet how much is going on. I am also surprised at how many new potential member states the EU is considering. I am also a little surprised at my negative attitude towards these subjects" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"[It] did not change my perception about the countries, but [it did change my perception of] the benefits of the EU membership" (female participant, aged 25-34)

To improve the materials, participants suggested to include more facts – covering both pros and cons, to discuss the challenges and weaknesses as well as the benefits of EU enlargement – and to show more clearly the concrete consequences of enlargement for EU member states:

"How is the EU going to deal with its current problems, while new candidates want to join" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"The EU should tell you how enlargement will affect its member states and its citizens" (male participant, aged 25-34)

“The EU should explain why expansion is so important. What added value the new members will bring and how their accession will help the EU’s current situation” (female participant, aged 25-34)

3.3. Summary findings

The discussions held with Finnish participants suggest that people are generally interested to discuss the enlargement issues, even if they would never think of looking for information themselves. It is interesting to note some participants’ feelings that many steps have already been taken with regards to enlargement of the EU without their understanding of the process or without their really being aware of what has been going on. This was considered to be concerning and confirms a latent desire for information on the topic.

Overall, participants engaged well with the materials presented with the exception of the infographics. They acknowledged the topic of the focus group discussion and the materials circulated were interesting and to some extent informative. They acknowledged their general lack of information on – and initially of interest for – enlargement but they expressed rather critical opinions throughout the discussion, which can be reflective of their declared tendency towards holding negative feelings on the EU.

When asked about preferences for the different materials shown, participants identified the **Jacques Rupnik video clip** and the **brochure** as their favourite material. Some also noted that the **Hidden Treasures video clip** was particularly nice and well produced, but not especially useful from an information point of view. Responses to the video clips seemed to suggest that individuals first appreciated the clips positively or negatively and then went on to think about information value as prompted by the moderator. With more consideration participants then questioned the information value even if this had not been a critical element of their first appreciation of the clips.

The format and presentation of the different materials was always perceived as clear, easily accessible and well structured. Hardly any suggestion for improvement of the presentation was made.

However, participants consistently expressed their doubts as to the **credibility of the messages**. They perceived them as subjective and **one-sided to sell the idea** of enlargement and new Member States. At the same time, the discussions held suggest that these people did understand the messages that the Commission was intending to portray, which in itself can be considered as success. They emphasised that including considerations for potential risks and challenges of EU enlargement would not have systematically weakened the argument but would rather have strengthened the message the Commission wanted to put through. Aware of the influence of the media coverage they were regularly exposed to, they acknowledged the added value of the Commission communicating on the achievements of enlargement. However, they repeatedly suggested the addition of “real life experience” and of issues that had a direct and concrete impact for them was a necessity.

4. Annex 4: Focus Group Report: Netherlands

4.1. Overview

The Dutch online focus groups took place on 29 July and 6 August 2015. Each group lasted one hour and a half, and involved a mixture of male and female participants, with 10 participants in each group. The full breakdown of participants' profiles is described in the tables below.

Dates	29.07.2015	06.08.2015
Times	17h-18h30	
Number of participants	10	10

Profile of participants FG1

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
1	4	2	2	0	1
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
3			7		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in private sector	Employed in NGO	Employed in school/university	Employed in government/public sector at a local level	Employed in government/public sector at a national level
2	3	1	2	1	1
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
6		2		2	

Profile of participants FG2

How old are you?					
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
3	1	2	4	0	0
What is the highest education level you completed?					
Secondary (A-levels) or equivalent vocational education			Higher (university degree or equivalent)		
6			4		
What is your work background?					
Currently unemployed	Employed in private sector	Employed in NGO	Employed in school/university	Employed in government/public sector at a local level	Employed in government/public sector at a national level
4	3	0	1	2	0
What is your view of the EU?					
Positive		Neutral		Negative	
5		2		3	

4.2. Results from the Dutch focus groups

The following sets out the main findings from both groups.

4.2.1. Information and news habits

The discussion kicked off with participants reflecting on their use of different information and communication channels. The purpose of this first step of the discussion was to warm up the participants and to define where they were looking / would look for information, relevant when thinking about communication and information channels and their effectiveness.

They listed the different sources of information they are exposed to / consult on a regular basis. Participants mentioned television (RTL Nieuws / RTL4, NOS), radio, newspapers (e.g. Regionaal dagblad, Kranten, and the internet. Most participants have access to information on their way to work, either through the radio or their mobile phone.

When asked about where they look when they want to find something, most participants mentioned the internet and search engines such as Nu.nl, Yahoo, Google and Vinden.nl. Most of them would use the same information sources to look for information related to the EU. Only a few participants (three in the first focus group and none in the second) knew the Europa website. None of the participants knew the Europe Direct information centres.

4.2.2. Awareness and perceptions on enlargement

Not all participants had the same level of knowledge of EU enlargement. While some participants were able to list the Member States that recently joined the EU, many were not. They cited Poland, the “*Eastern bloc*”, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia but also Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Turkey (which a participant thought was “*half in, half out*”). Only a few participants were (vaguely) aware of the criteria for EU membership or the process of joining the EU. The participants’ perceptions on enlargement were diverse:

“I think peace should first return in the current situation before we can start thinking about enlargement again” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“[What I know about EU enlargement is that] too many banana republics are joining” (male participant, aged 45-54)

“For me they are all welcome, migration has existed since the beginning of humanity” (male participant, aged 35-44)

Most participants that had some knowledge about EU enlargement acquired this knowledge via general information channels such as newspapers and the television news. Some participants had learned about this in school or university.

Diagram on the enlargement process

As a follow up, we circulated the diagram included in the DG Enlargement brochure to test whether it was a good way of showing enlargement as a process.

The diagram was well received. Participants could easily understand the message. They assessed the information presented as interesting and clear:

“The layout is clear” (male participant, aged 35-44)

“The images clarify the process of joining the EU” (male participant, aged 18-24)

However, some participants felt that the diagram did not answer all of their questions:

“What is the relationship between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU? Perhaps this could be clarified in an organisation chart” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“It would be good to add an explanation of what happens if countries do not comply with the rules” (male participant, aged 35-44)

The discussion then moved on to the advantages and disadvantages of more countries joining the EU and of EU membership:

Advantages	Disadvantages
Economical <i>Promotion of trade and economic interests</i> <i>Countries which do not have enough workers can find workers more easily</i> <i>Products will become cheaper because of the absence of import duties within the EU</i> (Geo)political <i>Forming a strong power against Russia and the US</i> <i>More cooperation between different countries</i>	Economical <i>If some countries do not follow the rules, other countries pay for this</i> <i>The more countries join, the more countries we need to help out when it goes wrong, like in Greece</i> <i>Destabilisation of the economy</i> <i>Economies become more similar, which is a disadvantage for northern countries</i> <i>More [foreign] people will come to work in the Netherlands</i> Political <i>It becomes more difficult to reach agreements</i> <i>Being dependent on other members of the EU</i> <i>Losing autonomy</i> <i>The more countries join, the more instable the EU becomes</i> Other <i>Different languages</i> <i>There are sometimes rules/legislation that are difficult to comply with for some countries</i> <i>More crime</i> <i>The countries that are a member of the EU now sometimes already have problems understanding and accepting each other's culture. This will only become more difficult when other, even more diverse countries join the EU.</i>

Participants noted that their understanding and perception about the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership / enlargement are influenced by the media and conversations with their peers.

4.2.3. Feedback on EU enlargement communication materials

The rest of the discussion focused on the different communication materials that we circulated:

1. The **DG Enlargement brochure 'Enlargement of the European Union'**: participants were asked to read the Foreword, p.2, p.4 and p.7, before quickly scrolling through the whole document noticing the presentation and titles;
2. **Video clips**: Two video clips were shown to each group. All participants viewed the celebrity ambassador video clip with Ermonela Jaho. One group was shown the 'Hidden Treasures' movie and the other group was shown the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik;
3. **Infographics**: it was planned to show two infographics in the focus groups: one on fundamental rights and one on the global role of the EU. However, there was insufficient time to show both infographics. Therefore, we tested the infographic on the global role of the EU in the first focus group and thereafter we tested the infographic on fundamental rights in the second focus group;
4. Leaflet: **"So similar, so different, so European"**.

DG Enlargement brochure

The “look and feel” of the brochure triggered positive reactions. In general, participants liked the presentation, emphasising that it was simple, not too text-heavy and well-illustrated:

“What I like the most is the clean layout and the use of infographics, this always works well in informative brochures.” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“[The brochure] gives a lot and clear information and the layout is good. The figures are clear and are well supported by the text” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“I think the brochure is designed well. The information is explained in a clear and simple way. It is not too complicated for the ‘ordinary citizen’ to understand” (female participant, aged 18-24)

Regarding the content, participants thought that the brochure was informative and interesting, especially for persons who do not know the EU very well. Especially the boxes with personal stories and the bubbles with facts about the candidate countries received positive feedback:

“[The brochure] describes in an objective way the core values and conditions that are necessary to turn our Union into a strong cooperation” (male participant, aged 18-24)

“I like the examples about persons from countries that joined the EU later” (female participant, aged 25-35)

“The facts in the bubbles between the texts are interesting too” (female participant, aged 45-54)

However, several participants were critical about the perceived subjectivity of the brochure, telling only one side of the story. Many participants regretted that the brochure focused only on the advantages of EU enlargement, and did not mention the related challenges. At the same time, other participants mentioned that they did not expect to find negative information in brochures:

“[The brochure is] informative, but I have the impression that there is no attention for the negative aspects” (male participant, aged 18-24)

“[The brochure could be improved by] mentioning the disadvantages [of EU enlargement] as well, perhaps as part of a reasoning in which the arguments against enlargement are refuted” (female participant, aged 18-24)

“I think it is a very good advertising brochure... with the emphasis on advertising” (female participant, aged 45-54)

Participants also highlighted which information they felt could be added / was missing in the brochure, besides information about the challenges of EU enlargement:

“I think it is a pity that the examples only come from [countries that recently joined the EU]. Also countries that have been members for a long time could give examples of what the EU does for a country” (female participant, aged 65+)

“I would like to read that [the candidate countries] are still pioneering and learn from their mistakes, and examples of this... that would create trust” (female participant, aged 35-44)

When asked who would be the target audience of the brochure, most participants mentioned the “ordinary” EU citizen who would like to know more about the enlargement of the EU. Other participants thought the brochure was for citizens and decision makers in the candidate countries.

This is reflected in where they would expect to find the brochure. Many participants mentioned public buildings such as libraries, town halls and community centres. Some participants mentioned that the brochure should be available in digital form on e.g. the website of the EU or the Dutch government.

Some participants also suggested that the brochure could be used in schools for educational purposes. However, one of the younger participants made clear that the brochure was not very attractive for young people.

"[This brochure is] not for young people in any case" (female participant, aged 18-24)

Feedback on video clips

The first group was shown the celebrity ambassador clip with Ermonela Jaho and the "Hidden Treasures" clip. The other group watched the celebrity ambassador clip with Ermonela Jaho and the expert clip with Jacques Rupnik.

Video clip 1: "Hidden Treasures"

In general, participants enjoyed watching the "Hidden Treasures" clip:

"I think [this video clip] was nice to watch" (female participant, aged 35-44)

"I would like to spend my holidays in these countries" (male participant, aged 25-34)

and they found that the length of the clip was good.

However, the message of the video clip was not clear to all participants:

"I do not understand why some countries had a question mark and others didn't. I found it a little confusing, what is the point here?" (female participant, aged 18-24)

Most participants felt that the message of the video clip was that European countries were different, but united, and that they belonged together despite these differences. Some participants thought that the video clip was too positive:

"[The video clip] was too happy, it was too romanticized" (female participant, aged 45-54)

In general, participants thought that the video clip was not informative and regretted that it did not provide them with clearer information about the candidate countries:

"The images were nice to see, but there was almost no information" (male participant, aged 45-54)

"[The video clip could be improved by] adding more information" (female participant, aged 45-54)

In terms of the target audience of the video clip, most participants understood that the video clip was intended for citizens of the European Union, while some participants thought the video clip was intended specifically for people from Western Europe.

Video clip 2: "Jacques Rupnik on Enlargement"

The participants were unanimously positive about this video clip. They all liked the interviewee, Jacques Rupnik:

"I would like to have a longer conversation with this man [...] He gave me a good feeling about the EU" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"[He is credible because] he is a professor at one of the most prestigious universities in Europe. He knows how to bring his message" (male participant, aged 18-24)

The participants also appreciated the message the video clip brings across:

"We indeed tend to forget that peace is also a part of the EU" (female participant, aged 65+)

"[This video clip] goes to the essence" (male participant, aged 35-44)

However, even though participants mentioned that the interviewee and the message of the video clip were credible, they also outlined the lack of counterweight to the interviewee's point of view:

"One-man-show, but a clear story" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"The video clip is good, but in my view some of the disadvantages of the EU should be mentioned as well" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"Perhaps [this video clip] could be extended with personal examples from citizens" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"Maybe [this video clip] could be complemented with a woman like Neelie Kroes explaining what drives her and what are her core values" (male participant, aged 18-24)

Video clip 3: "So similar, so different, so European" with Ermonela Jaho

The clip with Ermonela Jaho evoked mixed reactions from the participants. On the one hand, participants were surprised to see a side of Albania they were not aware of:

"Albania shows that it is a modern country. Also in the field of art, who would expect that?" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"[The video clip shows] that Albania is starting to feel equal to other EU countries" (female participant, aged 65+)

"I think it was an interesting video clip. It tries to give a positive image about Albania" (female participant, aged 18-24)

On the other hand, participants had the impression that the information provided by the video clip was not complete. They regretted the fact that the only person in the video clip was from the Albanian elite:

"She had opportunities that other Albanian citizens probably don't have" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"Not everybody is talented, some people just have to work" (male participant, aged 45-54)

This affected the credibility of the message of the video clip. Participants felt like the video clip did not show the 'real' Albania:

"I think [this video clip] is a little nicer than reality" (male participant, aged 45-54)

"Well, this is not very realistic for Albania" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"It's a nice video, but clearly advertising and over the top" (female participant, aged 18-24)

In terms of the target audience, most participants thought that the video clip was intended for EU citizens, as "advertisement" for Albania, to convince the EU citizens that it would be good if Albania joined the EU. However, they did not think that the video clip achieves this objective, sometimes formulating extreme views:

"For the majority of the people [this video clip] will not be useful" (male participant, aged 25-34)

"Most people see Albanians as terrorists, I wonder whether they would change their minds if you showed them this kind of video clips" (female participant, aged 45-54)

When asked how the video clip could be improved, the participants suggested that it should not focus on just one person, but show persons from all layers of the Albanian society. In addition, they would have liked to learn more about different aspects of Albania, not only the cultural aspect.

"[The video clip] was more about her than about her country" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"She should have given some attention to Albania's past or the economic situation in the country" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"The video clip did not sufficiently give an image of the ordinary Albanian citizen" (female participant, aged 65+)

"The background of the country remains unclear" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"It is a pity that [the video clip] does not show the daily life" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Feedback on other print materials (infographics and leaflet)

Infographics

The first group was shown the infographic on the EU's position in the world, while the second group was shown the infographic on fundamental rights.

Overall, the topic of the **first infographic** proved rather abstract and more difficult for the participants to engage with. Not all participants understood the message of the infographic:

"Promotion of the EU" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"EU enlargement" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"Trade and export of the EU" (male participant, 18-24)

"The economic position of the EU" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"The growth and economic prosperity of the EU" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Regarding the layout of the infographic, some participants commented that the text was difficult to read. By contrast, other participants appreciated the layout and thought the information was clearly presented.

"Fortunately the images were clear [as opposed to the text]" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"The figures are presented well, but perhaps they should be a little larger" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"It would be clear if it was poster-sized" (female participant, aged 25-34)

Only some participants commented on the content of the infographic. The opinions were mixed.

"[The infographic] focuses on figures, less on emotions [as opposed to the previous communication materials]" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"It is interesting to see the EU compared to the others" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"A comparison is missing with what would have happened to the EU countries if they had not been part of the EU" (male participant, aged 25-34)

Participants were not clear on whom the infographic was intended for. Some participants thought it was for EU citizens, to show them the advantages of being part of the EU. Other participants thought it targeted non-EU countries, in order to convince them to join the EU.

Their suggestions of where one could find this infographic were consequently also diverse. Participants mentioned public buildings such as libraries, town halls and courts. It was also suggested that the infographic could be used in schools, and should be available on the internet as well. Finally, a participant suggested that the infographic could be distributed to businesses from the logistics sector (possibly because of the representation on the infographics of ships and containers).

On the **second infographic**, participants easily identified the message on fundamental rights. However, only one participant was able to make the connection with the conditions for EU membership.

“Very good, every person should be equal” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“[The infographic is about the fact that] countries cannot discriminate on the basis of the criteria mentioned. Countries must be tolerant and all persons are equal” (female participant, aged 18-24)

“[The infographic is about] equal rights irrespective of colour/gender etc. and countries have to respect this requirement in order to become a member of the EU and during their membership” (female participant, aged 18-24)

The participants appreciated the clarity of the infographics:

“Good, the information is presented in a clear way” (female participant, aged 18-24)

“Infographics are easy to understand for persons from all layers of society” (female participant, aged 45-54)

However, they were not convinced that it is useful to present information about fundamental rights this way.

“It’s well done, but it should be self-evident” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“People who discriminate will really not be convinced by this leaflet” (male participant, aged 25-34)

“It made me laugh, it is well-meant, but if you publish this on a leaflet or something, you must act accordingly, and just look at the Netherlands... already there it goes wrong” (female participant, aged 35-44)

The participants were also not clear about the target audience for the infographic. Some participants thought that the infographic was for all EU citizens, while others thought it was for citizens of countries willing to join the EU. One participant thought the infographic was for Ministers, *“as a reminder”* (female participant, aged 35-44).

Their suggestions of where one could find this infographic were consequently also diverse. Again, participants mentioned public buildings such as libraries and town halls. It was also suggested that the infographic could be used in schools, and should be available on the internet as well. One participant suggested that this infographic should not be distributed at all, because it is *“a waste of money”* (male participant, aged 25-34).

Leaflet: ‘So similar, so different, so European’

Participants were then presented with the leaflet ‘So similar, so different, so European’, which had been produced as part of the awareness-raising campaign.

Overall, participants thought the information presented was interesting, although some participants had difficulties reading the smaller text:

“It’s difficult to read [...] but I have seen that Syria (sic) is the biggest exporter of raspberries” (female participant, aged 45-54)

“It is definitely interesting, because it describes the process of accession to the EU” (female participant, aged 25-34)

“Some of the facts were kind of interesting” (male participant, aged 25-34)

However, many participants did not like the layout of the leaflet:

“If I received a leaflet like this, I would look at it and put it away again” (female participant, aged 35-44)

“Some of the facts are indeed interesting [...] but apart from that it’s a chaos” (male participant, aged 25-34)

In terms of target audience, some participants thought the leaflet aimed to convince EU citizens about the added value the candidate countries would bring to the EU. They criticised the leaflet for only showing positive information and leaving out the negative:

"[The leaflet is for] EU citizens to think more positively about the countries that want to join the EU" (female participant, aged 65+)

"Manipulation of the population" (male participant, aged 35-44)

"[The leaflet wants to] slowly prepare us all for the future enlargement of the EU" (male participant, aged 45-54)

Their suggestions of where one could find this infographic were similar to their suggestions for the other infographic.

4.2.4. Overall impressions

Overall, the participants enjoyed participating in the focus group. They found the materials presented interesting and liked the fact that they learned more about the EU through the discussions.

When asked about which materials were most **effective**, the first group almost unanimously mentioned the video clip with Jacques Rupnik.

"Video clips make it easier to take in information. Society has become faster and especially young people do not read much anymore" (female participant, aged 65+)

"The video clips [are most effective], because you can learn much more just by listening, when it's a leaflet you still have to want to read/understand what is written" (female participant, aged 25-34)

In the second group (which watched the "Hidden Treasures" video clip and the video clip with Ermonela Jaho), the opinions were more divided. While some participants preferred the video clips, others preferred the infographics or the leaflets, mentioning that the video clips were not effective because they were not sufficiently informative.

"I liked the leaflet and the first infographic, but I didn't like the video clips at all" (female participant, aged 45-54)

"I think the video clips [are more effective] for quick and short messages. Someone who wants more in-depth information would probably read the brochures" (male participant, aged 18-24)

"I don't think the video clips were clear enough, I would go for the leaflets" (female participant, aged 18-24)

The participants' opinions about the **credibility** of the materials were also divided. While some participants said the materials were credible, other participants disagreed and said that none of the materials covered the negative aspects or the challenges related to EU enlargement.

"I trust the information, but it is a pity that the negative side was not mentioned. Everything was pictured too rosy" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"I am a little sceptical, but the information that is provided is correct" (female participant, aged 18-24)

"I trust the information, but I realise that the negative elements are left out" (male participant, aged 25-34)

While **most participants felt more informed** at the end of the focus group, only a few of them said that their opinion on EU enlargement had changed as a result of the materials discussed. Most participants said that their opinion hadn't changed.

"[My opinion] hasn't changed, I still think it's a positive thing, only now I'm better able to substantiate why" (female participant, aged 25-34)

"I am/remains suspicious, my confidence has already been betrayed too often ..." (male participant, aged 45-54)

“No [my opinion hasn’t changed], I’m sure they are beautiful countries but I still don’t see why we would want them in the EU” (male participant, aged 18-24)

4.3. Summary findings

Overall, participants engaged well with the materials presented. They acknowledged the topic of the focus group discussion as very interesting and informative. In general, **the information value of the different materials was a key criterion** in their appreciation of what they saw.

Participants in the Dutch focus groups tended to be more positive than negative and / or neutral about the EU. Responses provided by participants with regards to advantages and disadvantages of enlargement are interesting in that they highlight current concerns and suggest that these people currently see more disadvantages and challenges than advantages. This is reflected in **the underlying theme that cut across the discussion in both groups; the desire to see the pros and cons of enlargement.**

The **brochure and the initial diagram** of the enlargement process shown seem to stand out as the tools which were particularly appreciated. The diagram may not be in the most attractive format, but the fact that it is clear is important and means that it serves its intended purpose. The brochure was highly rated by participants in the Dutch focus groups when it comes to the quality of finish, layout and presentation as well as clarity of information. Areas of dissent related to the need for the possibility of more information on the challenges of enlargement.

When asked about preferences for the other different materials shown, **opinions were mixed.** The participants of the first group preferred the video clip with Jacques Rupnik, while in the second focus group (which watched the “Hidden Treasures” video clip and the video clip with Ermonela Jaho) some participants preferred the video clips, and others preferred the infographics or the leaflets. On the video clips more specifically the clip with Jacques Rupnik appears to have been best received, in that although Hidden Treasures is appreciated as a well-made and attractive clip, it was not considered to be very informative and there were question marks as to the purpose and intended audience of the clip. Jacques Rupnik was credible and participants seemed to appreciate being brought back to the basics, including core EU values and peace.

It is interesting to note that there was a call for a well-known Dutch politician and Commissioner to speak out about her core values. This raises a question as to whether people prefer trusted voices from their country / established EU Member States as opposed to those from candidate countries, but it is not possible to answer this question through this research. Responses to the Jaho clip suggest many preconceived ideas about Albania which did not fit with the presentation of an ‘elite’ individual. This clip seemed to work least well.

The **format and presentation** of the different materials was perceived as clear, easily accessible and well structured, with the exception of the leaflet ‘So similar, so different, so European’. However, participants consistently expressed their doubts as to the credibility of the messages. They perceived them as subjective and telling only one side of the story to sell the idea of enlargement and new Member States. They emphasised that the messages could easily have been made stronger if more space was had been given to the discussion of potential risks and challenges of EU enlargement as well.

Finally, participants often had difficulties to identify **the target audiences** of the different materials. Consequently, they often did not know that these information and communication materials existed and **where to find them.** It is interesting to note that none of the participants had heard of Europe Direct and only three knew about Europa. This highlights the need to push out information to target publics, who will otherwise not come across this information in their usual information habits. Consistently participants mention libraries as places where they might expect to come across this information and believe that the materials may have some information value. However, it is interesting to note that when these participants search for information they do not turn to libraries rather the internet and other news outlets including TV, papers and radio are key sources.