



2004-2006

Report on the impact of the training courses for European Consumer Associations organised by BEUC, the European Consumers Association, over a 3 year period (2004-2006)

Statistics and results dating from March 2004 to February 2007  
Last review: May 2007

Annex letter WBA/RME/095-2007/as

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## 1. Executive summary

Please find enclosed an overview of the results from the consumer organisation training courses on

- Management
- PR and lobbying
- Consumer Law

which took place from April 2004 until December 2006 (Rounds 1-9).

Overall the programme of training courses has been very well received by participants. A total of 527 staff or volunteer members, from 128 different European consumer organisations have been trained starting from April 2004 until December 2006 coming from 26 different countries.

Now in the final year of the 'Training courses for Consumer Organisations in Europe',<sup>1</sup> BEUC has prepared the following report in order to review the impact of the training courses over the past three years (2004-2006).

This report serves as a stock taking exercise and as a launch pad for future course development. In evaluating the courses there are no better voices to listen to than those of the participants of a course itself. The content of this report is based entirely on their feedback collected through a variety of means:

- a. Follow up evaluations sent out to participants six months after the end of their course<sup>2</sup>
- b. Two survey questionnaires sent out to a cross section of 77 past participants in January 2006 and to 111 past participants in May 2007
- c. Also included are statistics from our new database (TRACE<sup>3</sup>) on the overall course attendance figures, offering a picture of the profile of the participants

The structure of the report is as follows:

- Presentation of the results and discussion
- Concluding remarks and ideas for future action

Before launching into the report it may be useful to recall the objectives of each of the courses.

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<sup>1</sup> A project fully funded by the European Commission and run under the auspices of DG Health & Consumer Protection.

<sup>2</sup> In this report we analysed the results of the follow up evaluations from March 2004 until July 2006. The return rate of these forms was 30%, which we consider a good result (in these kinds of exercises the average return of questionnaires is around 7%). Module A – Management course has a lower percentage of replies because up to February 2007 six months had not yet passed after the end of the last course (September 2006), so it was not possible to add the last round of replies for the A course.

<sup>3</sup> For more details about the TRACE database and website, please see chapter II, page 19.

## Objectives of the courses

### *Module A – Management*

To offer participants knowledge and tools for effective organisational and project management and to impart realistic guidance in relation to the securing of funds.

### *Module B - PR & Lobbying*

To enable participants to influence government policy and legislation and to contribute to European debate on consumer protection issues.

### *Module C - Consumer Law*

To increase the effectiveness of consumer organisations by providing them with expertise in EU consumer law.

## 2. Profile of the participants

### *New and old member states*

Overall, 47% of the participants have come from the newer member states, including Romania and Bulgaria<sup>4</sup>, and 53% from the older member states (see Figure 4 page 8). This small difference we believe is due to the fact that the first two courses took place before accession occurred in May 2004, only after this date could organisations from the newer member states send participants. Moreover consumer organisations from Romania and Bulgaria were only eligible to participate from the beginning of 2005. After the accession of the new countries (+BR) the percentage of new member state participation increased and as you see, at the end of 2006 the balance of participation is almost the same (47% new member states, 53% old member states, see Figure 4 page 8).

### *BEUC members / Non BEUC members*

42% of the participants came from consumer organisations within BEUC membership, and 58% of the participants came from non-BEUC members (see Figure 3 page 8). This finding suggests that non-BEUC members do not consider BEUC membership as a pre-requisite for course participation, but continued effort should be made to circulate the information on the courses in all arenas to ensure that as many independent consumer organisations as possible can participate.

### *Staff and volunteers*

62% of the participants were staff members, and 38% volunteers (see Figure 16 page 17). The high percentage of volunteers is perhaps due to the fact that the new member state organisations depend more on committed volunteers for the sustainability of their organisations. This is proven by the fact that our results also show the length of service within organisations for staff and volunteers is very close at averages of 6.8 and 5.5 years respectively.

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing Bulgaria and Romania became members of the EU, however until the end of 2006 they were still accession countries. Since we are presenting results for the period 2004-2006, Bulgaria and Romania are referred to as "+BR".

### 3. Interest in courses : Management, PR & Lobbying and Consumer law courses

#### **Management**

Organisations from the old and new member states (+BR) have had an almost equal interest in the Management course (see Figure 5 page 9).

On the basis of the participant's feedback and as result of the last advisory committee meeting (February 2007) important changes have been made in the programme of the new set of Management courses. Past participants indicated they needed more information on the variety of EU funds, how to write applications and how to manage projects. Therefore the course has been adapted into a **Project Management and Funding** course. With one of the three days of the course entirely dedicated to the topic of funding. During this day, the participants are introduced to an EU application form which contains a budget and they are trained in how to present a project at EU level. A funding expert has joined the pool of trainers. The course also takes participants through the life cycle of a project.

#### **PR & Lobbying**

There is a very clear difference of attendance between old and new member states (+BR) on the PR & Lobbying course, with almost a third less new member states taking part. The reason for this difference may be that in the more established, bigger and older member state consumer organisations, a dedicated team is likely to be dealing with PR & Lobbying and hence more people are available to attend the courses. In the new member states, organisational resources are often more limited and PR & Lobbying may not have the luxury of a specific departmental status but be included in the director/manager's remit, perhaps freeing less time for him/her to attend such courses. However in Figure 1 below, one can see from those people interested in attending this course, the gap is closing.

#### **Consumer Law**

Organisations from the old and new member states (+BR) have expressed almost equal interest for the Consumer Law course, with a little higher percentage of participants from the old member states.

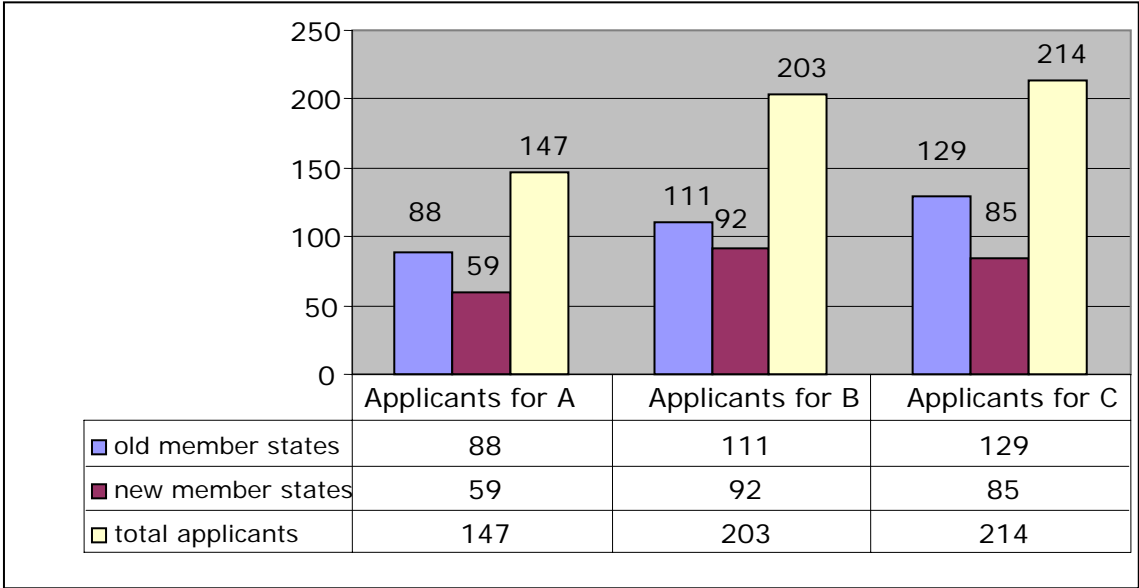
### 4. Future perspective: overview of the list of applicants

The figure below shows the number of applicants in the TRACE database<sup>5</sup> for each course. These applicants have expressed their interest in participating in the courses but have not yet attended.

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<sup>5</sup> Data updated in February 2007.

**Figure 1 - The list of applicants in TRACE database**



5. Evaluation of the courses

The enclosed report evaluates nine rounds of courses from 2004 – end 2006.

The evaluation methods used over the three years include:

- A follow up evaluation form sent back by the former participants of each course after six months
- Survey questionnaires sent in January 2006 to 77 trained people and in May 2007 to all the participants trained until May also asking their opinion about possible future courses

The results from the above evaluation methods indicate a high level of overall satisfaction.

From the evaluation forms sent out six months after each course, we conclude that participants in the majority experienced (88%, 91% and 93% respectively for Modules A, B & C) an increase in their skills or knowledge or understanding of the topic at hand (see Figure 10 page 13).

6. Recommendations for future courses

The courses have been revised on an ongoing basis based on the feedback collected (this has also included feedback collected on a daily basis during the courses, and on the last day of the course) from participants, but also on the basis of the advice of the Advisory Committees for A, B and C that meet once a year to discuss the content of each course.

Consumer organisations from 26 countries have participated in the courses, while organisations from 31 countries are eligible. Therefore at the beginning of 2007 we circulated information on the courses to consumer organisations and European Consumers Centres in the countries that have as yet not attended (Austria, Luxembourg, Iceland and Liechtenstein) or who have participated to a lesser degree (Estonia, Finland, Greece, Romania, Ireland and Denmark).

TRACE ([www.trace-beuc.org](http://www.trace-beuc.org)), the new website launched in June 2006 entirely dedicated to the training courses, has already been highly instrumental in disseminating information on the courses.

One of the aspects most valued by participants is the ability to meet and network with other European consumer organisations. Our results are positive as regards the contact kept by past participants, however in future course programmes more space should be allocated to open sessions such as Open Space Technology<sup>6</sup> which encourages participants to develop networks, which in turn can lead to multi country projects and mutual cooperation.

A general recommendation would be to adapt the courses so that participants are given the tools that will help them to disseminate what they have learned within their organisation. 80% of the cross section of participants surveyed in January 2006 reported back to us that they are already disseminating what they have learned in their daily working environment, it would however still be interesting and useful to devote some time during the courses on techniques and best practice for dissemination to support the multiplier effect of the programme.

#### 7. Future training courses (survey based info, May 2007)

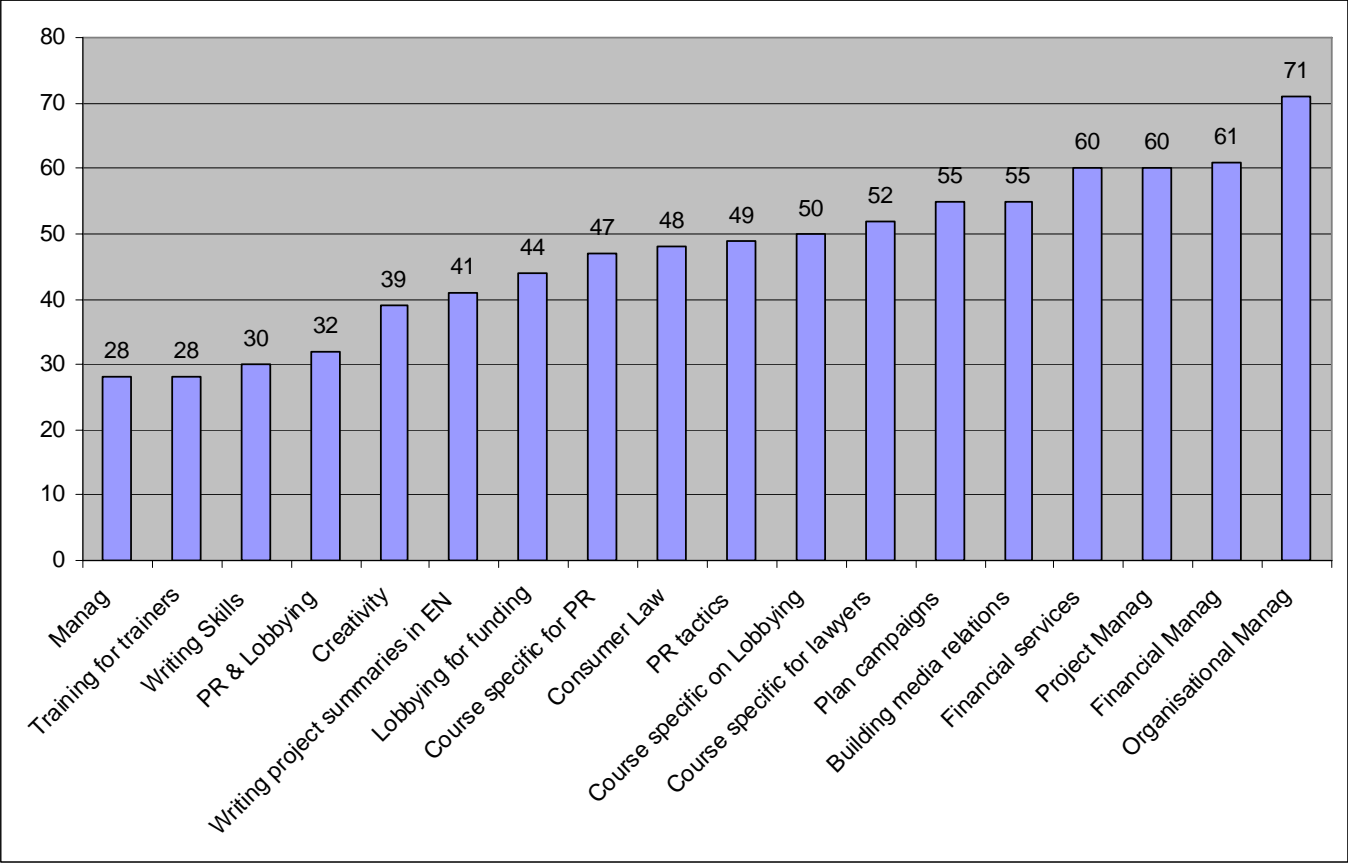
Mindful of possible future training programmes, all the former participants were asked in May 2007 in which topics they would like additional courses. We received 111 replies out of a possible 419, which corresponds to 21% of the people trained.

Participants suggested continuing to run the general courses on Management, PR & Lobbying and Consumer Law and to also offer some shorter and more specific courses on different topics such as: financial management (financial reporting, how to budget, bookkeeping, fundraising, generating sources of income for non profit consumer organisations, how to negotiate with the government for funding); specialised courses on lobbying (including one day on presentation skills), understanding the roles of national governments and other stakeholders; and specialised courses on consumer law, such as financial services (see Annex 3 - Survey feedback form - May 2007, page 33).

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<sup>6</sup> Open Space Technology (OST) is a methodology focused on networking and sharing best practice and experience. It enables groups to address issues important to them and to achieve meaningful results quickly. A facilitator explains the process and then participants on their own are invited to create and host their own discussion groups. Discussions are held in designated areas or 'breakout spaces' and participants, are free to move amongst the different discussion groups. Each group records the discussion electronically in order that their results can be distributed to the whole group.

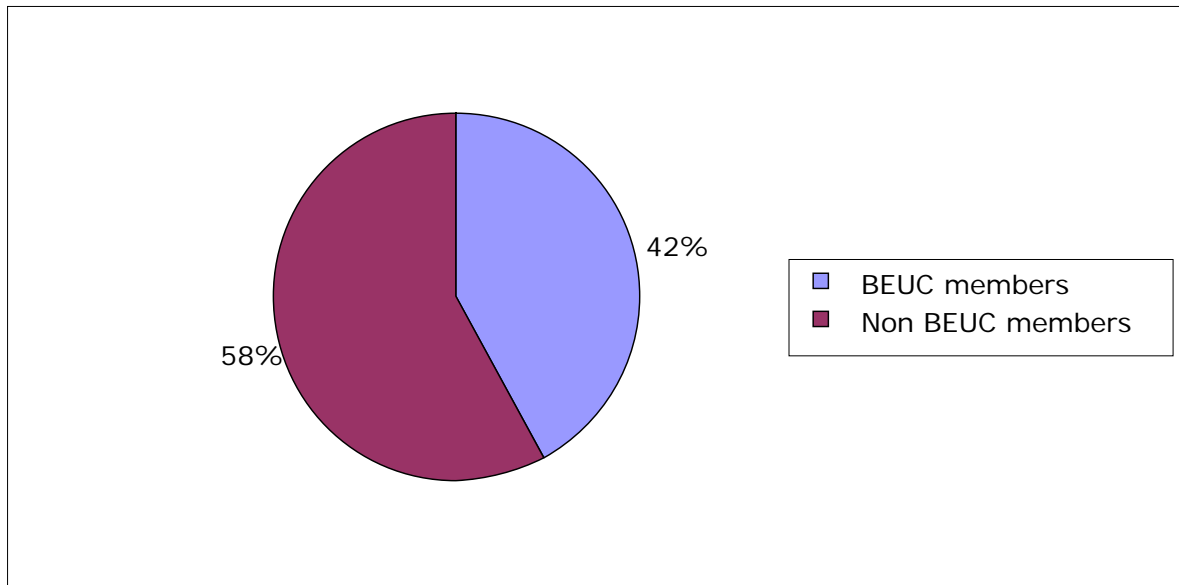
**Figure 2– Future courses: in what areas would you like to have additional courses?**



## I. The Results

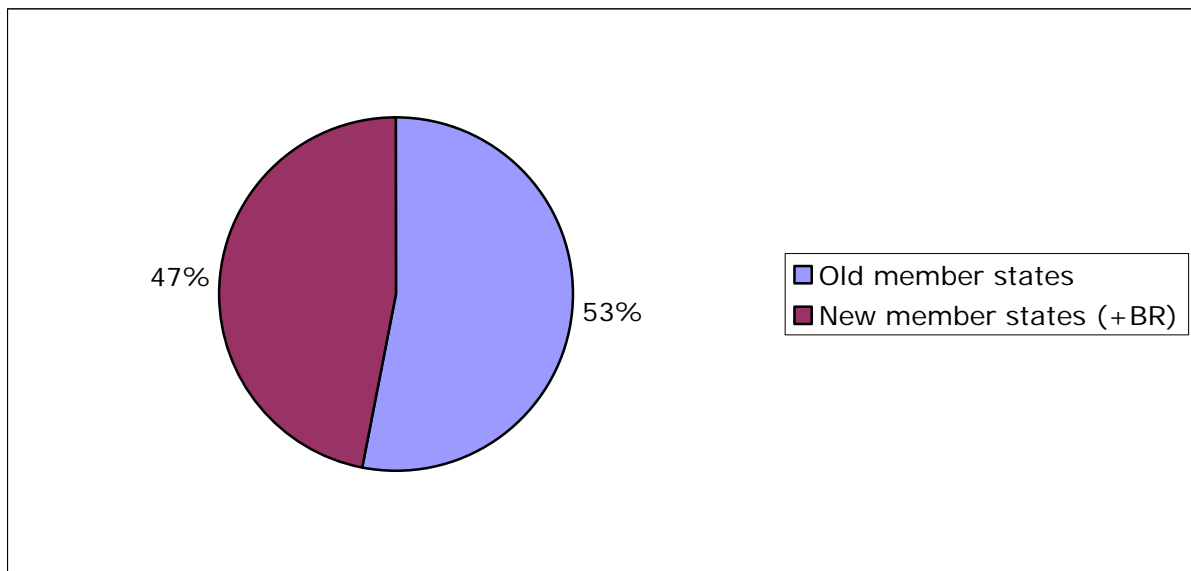
### 1. Data from the TRACE database

**Figure 3 - Former participants from Beuc's member organisations and from non member organisations**



The figure above clearly suggests that non-BEUC members do not consider BEUC membership as a pre-requisite for course participation.

**Figure 4 - Old and new member state distribution**



This figure reveals that new member state participation is less than that of the older member states but this difference can be attributed to the step by step' approach taken as to country eligibility to participate in the courses. The project started in April 2004 but the new members states were only eligible to participate as of May 2004. Romania and Bulgaria, included in the new member states statistics, were only eligible to participate as of January 2005.

**Management**

Both old and new member states (+BR) have had an almost equal interest in the Management course, with a slight preference from the new member states (this is perhaps due to the fact that their funds are more limited). From 2004 until the end of 2006 a total of 172 people were trained in Management, 89 of them from the new members states. It is interesting to underline that Round 6 of the Management course (end 2005) was run with German interpretation, which resulted in an increase in the participation of consumer organisations from the new member states.

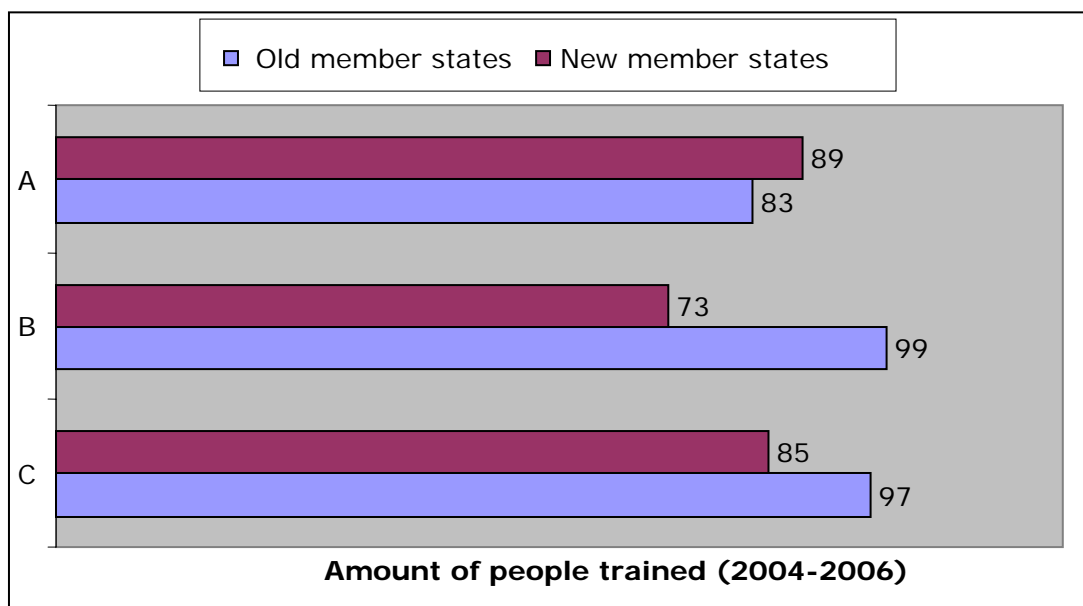
**PR & Lobbying**

There is a very clear difference of attendance between old and new member states (+BR) on the PR & Lobbying course, with almost a third less new member states taking part (73 participants from the new member states out of 172 of the total participants). Our assumption as to the reason for the difference, is that in the more established, bigger and older member state consumer organisations, more staff are available to deal with PR & Lobbying and hence more people are available to attend the course. In the new member states, organisational resources are often more limited and PR & Lobbying may not have the luxury of a specific departmental status but be included in the director/manager’s remit, perhaps freeing less time for him/her to attend such courses. PR & Lobbying are integral for the success of a consumer organisation and participation should therefore be encouraged and supported.

**Consumer Law**

For the Consumer Law course there is only a little difference in attendance between old and new member states (+BR) with 85 participants from the new member states out of 182 of the total participants.

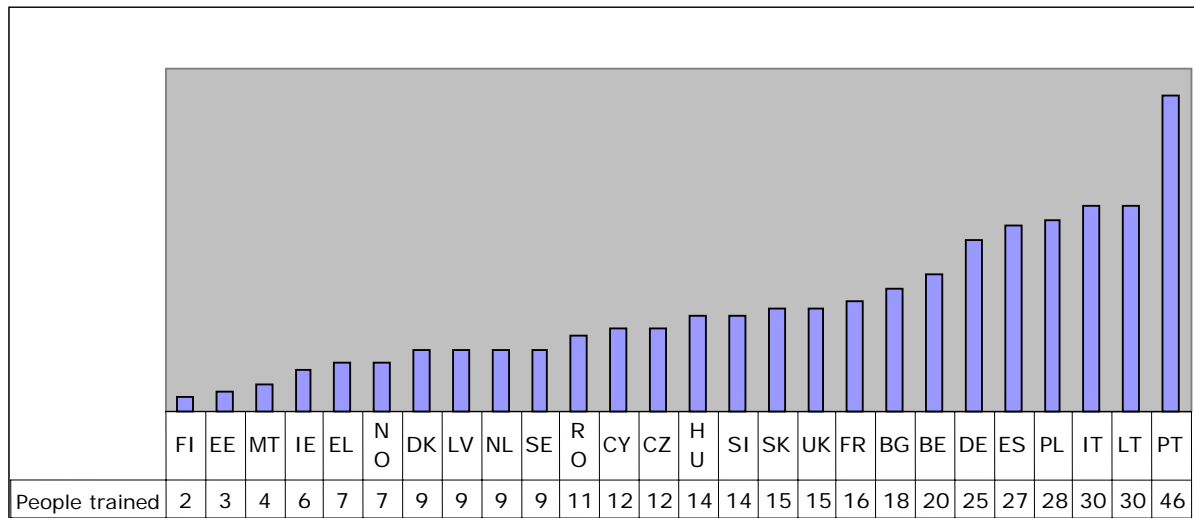
**Figure 5– How many people have been trained in each of the courses from the old and from the new member states?**



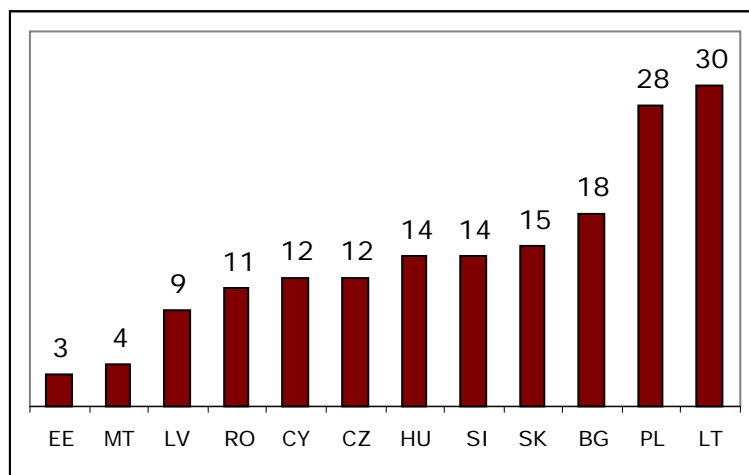
*Distribution of countries represented in the courses*

The figure below represents the spread of countries that have attended the training courses over the past three years. Out of the 31 countries eligible to take part<sup>7</sup>, 26 countries have used the opportunity. This wide range of representation has brought a rich intercultural nature to each of the courses and is helping to develop a stronger European wide network amongst consumer organisations. Efforts where appropriate should however be made to circulate information on the courses in the countries that have as yet not attended (Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Iceland and Lichtenstein) or who in Figure 6 below display a lower attendance rate (Finland, Estonia, Malta and Ireland). Their lack of attendance may also be attributed to the relative size/population of the countries.

**Figure 6 – Amount of people trained in each country<sup>8</sup>**



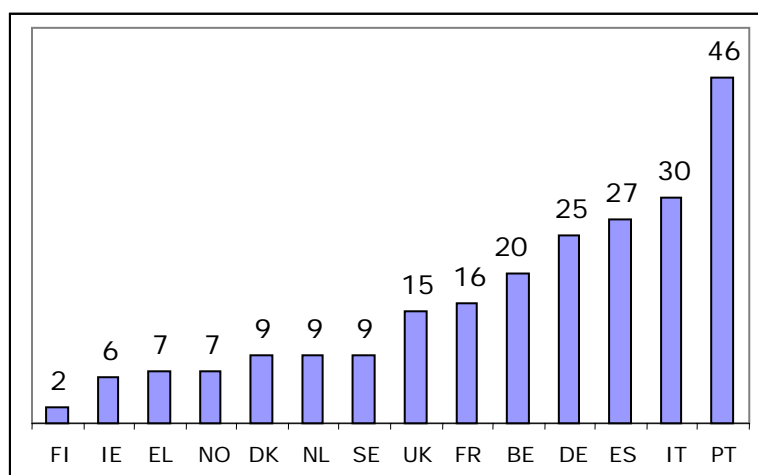
**Figure 7 – Amount of people trained in each country: the new member states**



<sup>7</sup> Countries eligible to take part in the training courses include the 27 member states plus the EEA countries - Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Iceland. Organisations from Austria, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, and Switzerland and not as yet taken part in our courses.

<sup>8</sup> Key: Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Greece (EL), Hungary (HU), Ireland (IE), Italy (IT), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), The Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovak Republic (SK), Slovenia (SI), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE) and UK.

**Figure 8 - Amount of people trained in each country: the old member states**



As also highlighted in the previous report<sup>9</sup>, Portugal is the most represented country on the courses with 46 people having taken part in one of the three courses. This large number is due to two factors. The project's first round of training courses (April 2004) was organised very quickly. At this stage the project was not widely known and we naturally did not have a bank of interested participants and therefore we took those who were interested, a significant amount of which came from Portugal. It was very difficult at this time to have a gender and geographical balance. Secondly the Portuguese consumer organisations, to their credit, effectively disseminated the information on the courses to a wide audience. They have continued to work in this manner and thus regularly nominate people to the courses. The Italian, Lithuanian and Polish Consumer organisations have a similar approach to information dissemination amongst their network, which is reflected in the number of participants who have attended the courses.

There is also a high Spanish consumer organisation attendance rate. This may also be attributed to the fact that in two rounds (3 courses) there was from Spanish interpretation. A similar argument could also be made for the participation of French organisations: 7 courses out of 27 have had French interpretation.

## 2. Data from the follow up evaluations

Participants were asked to fill in a follow up questionnaire that was sent to them six months after the end of their course. The three key questions asked were:

- if the course had had an impact in their daily work life
- if they have observed an overall improvement in their understanding due to the course
- and whether they were still in contact with their fellow participants

(See a sample copy of a follow up evaluation form for Module A, B & C in Annex 1 – Follow up questionnaires from TRACE website, page 26).

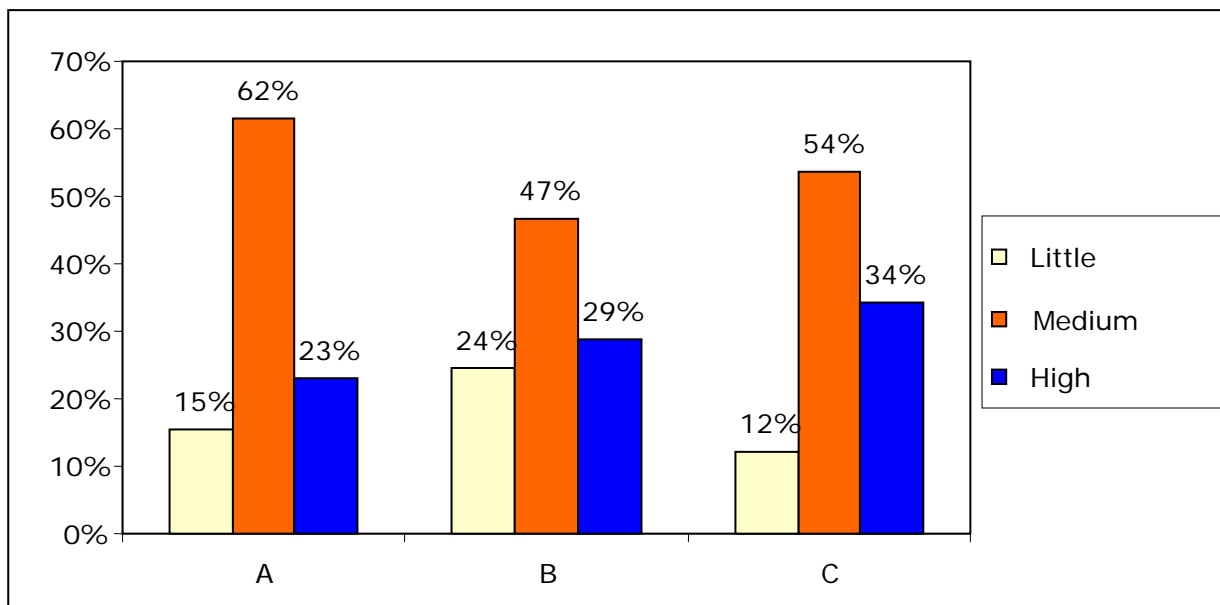
The return rate for these impact evaluation forms varies from course to course. At 30% this return rate is acceptable for this type of exercise but is not characteristically high compared to the evaluations handed out immediately at the end of the course.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. "Mid term report on the impact of the training courses for European Consumer Associations organised by BEUC, the European Consumers Association (March 2004 – December 2005). Annex letter WBA/CAM/036-2006/asi"

Return rate of the 6 months follow up evaluation form (2004-2006)	
A Management <sup>10</sup>	22% (rounds 1-8)
B PR & Lobbying	35% (rounds 1-9)
C Consumer Law	35% (rounds 1-9)

*Impact of the training courses*

**Figure 9 - What impact has the training course had on your work?**



**Mod. A**

For those attending the Management course (see Figure 9 above), the majority reported between a medium and high impact.

**Mod. B**

For the PR & Lobbying course, the majority of the participants reported a positive impact of what they learned for their daily work. Some stated that it had given them a confidence boost in dealing with authorities and the media and the impetus to follow further training in the field.

**Mod. C**

The Consumer law courses leave the participants with the highest impact (99% reported a medium to high impact).

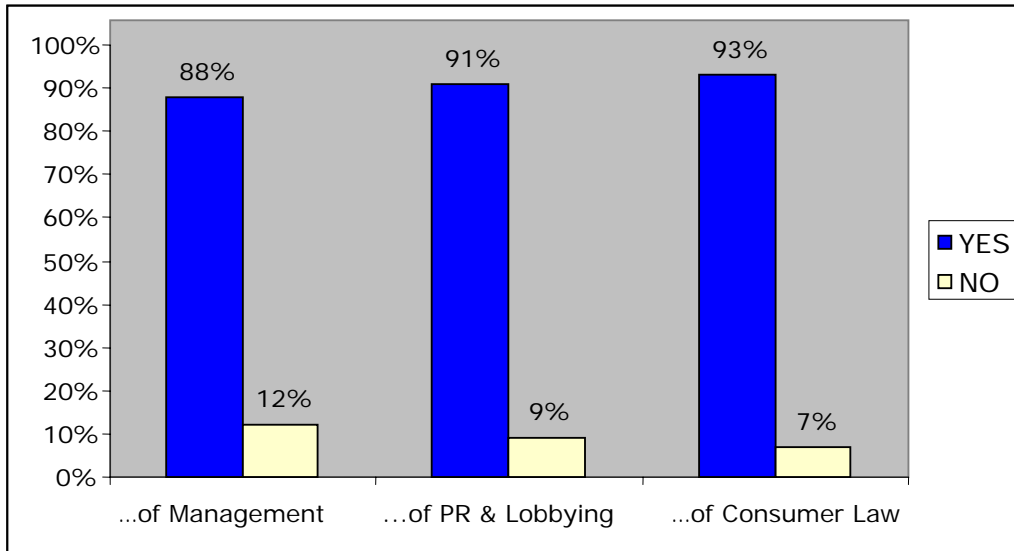
Overall the courses have clearly had a very strong impact on the daily work life of the participants, with 83% of the participants having experienced a medium and high impact.

<sup>10</sup> Module A – Management course has a lower percentage of replies because up to February 2007 six months had not yet passed after the end of the last course (September 2006), so it was not possible to add the last round of replies for the A course.

### Improving skills

Another question concerned the overall improvement in the participants' skills as a result of attending the training courses. For each of the courses, participants in the majority experienced an increase in their skills or knowledge or understanding of the topic at hand. Respectively 88%, 91% and 93% of the participants have stated that their skills have improved as a result of the training courses.

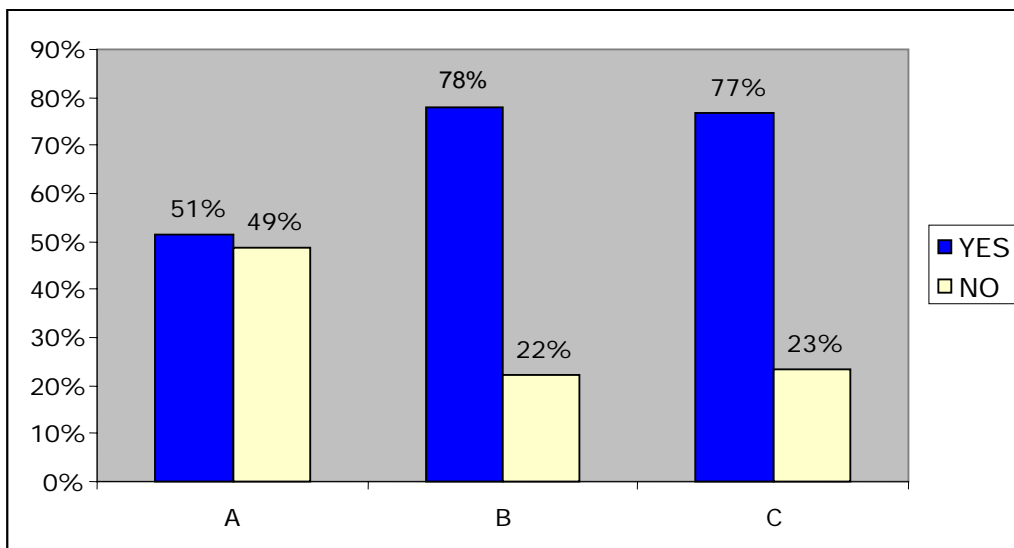
**Figure 10 - Have you observed an overall improvement in your understanding...**



### Networking

Participants were questioned regarding the effectiveness of the training courses in creating a network between European consumer organisations. The majority of the Module B - PR & Lobbying and the Module C - Consumer Law participants have remained in contact with at least some of the people they met at the training course.

**Figure 11 - Are you still in touch with the people you met at the training course?**



The rate of lasting contact is lower for the Module A - Management course participants (a bit more than half). This count may be a reflection of

- a manager's lack of time to maintain contacts
- 'managing people', one of the main focus areas of the training course, is a less obvious topic for exchanging best practices and experience by email or phone. It is perhaps easier for lawyers and for lobbyist/press staff to exchange facts or "know how" through written communication, than for a manager to exchange best practices on how to manage a national consumer organisation.

There is still room to improve the networking aspect of the Management course. During the last 2 courses we introduced a session called Open Space Technology<sup>11</sup>, which is a methodology that offers people the possibility to share experiences and good practice, we have found this an effective way to help support links between participants and their organisations after the course. The ideas generated by the participants during this session are collected, rewritten and sent by mail to the participants straight after the course. The participants have in this way the possibility to re-read what was discussed in their working group and to establish networks for future projects.

Another tool which aims to facilitate the networking after the end of a course is a record book of all the participants which is distributed to all the participants in the group. This booklet contains contact information and photos of the course attendees (you can find an extract from a Participant record book in Annex 4 – Extract from a Participant record book page 34).

In the future we plan to continue both using Open Space Technology and the participant record book.

Asked how past participants had benefited from the contacts made with consumer organisations from other EU member states during the course, the most frequent answers were:

- Through sharing ideas and experiences, exchanging information and publications on consumer issues and taking joint legal actions
- Through applying for projects in partnership
- Through strengthening relationships with the European Consumers Centres if they were a Consumer organisation and vice versa

Many participants stated in their evaluations that the ability to establish contacts was one of the most important aspects of a course. As mentioned previously, efforts should therefore be made to support such networking.

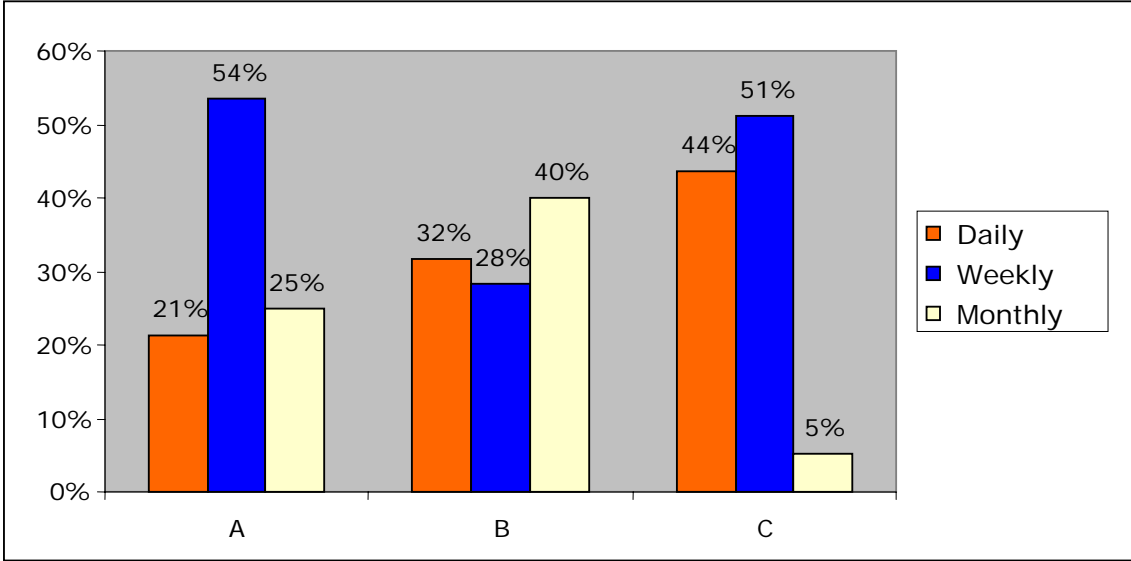
#### *How regularly did participants use the information from the course*

Participants were asked if they used what they had learned on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Asked to rate on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) how participants looked back on the course and whether it provided them with information they could use in their daily work, the average answer was positive. This would suggest that the content of the courses was relevant.

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<sup>11</sup> Cfr. note 6 page 6

**Figure 12 - How regularly have you used what you have learned?**



**Mod. A - Management course**

All participants who attended this course stated that they had used the information after the course - 75% on a daily or weekly basis and 25% on a monthly basis.

**Mod. B - PR & Lobbying course**

It appears that most of the participants regularly used the PR & Lobbying techniques, with 60% using the knowledge daily or weekly and 40% on a monthly basis.

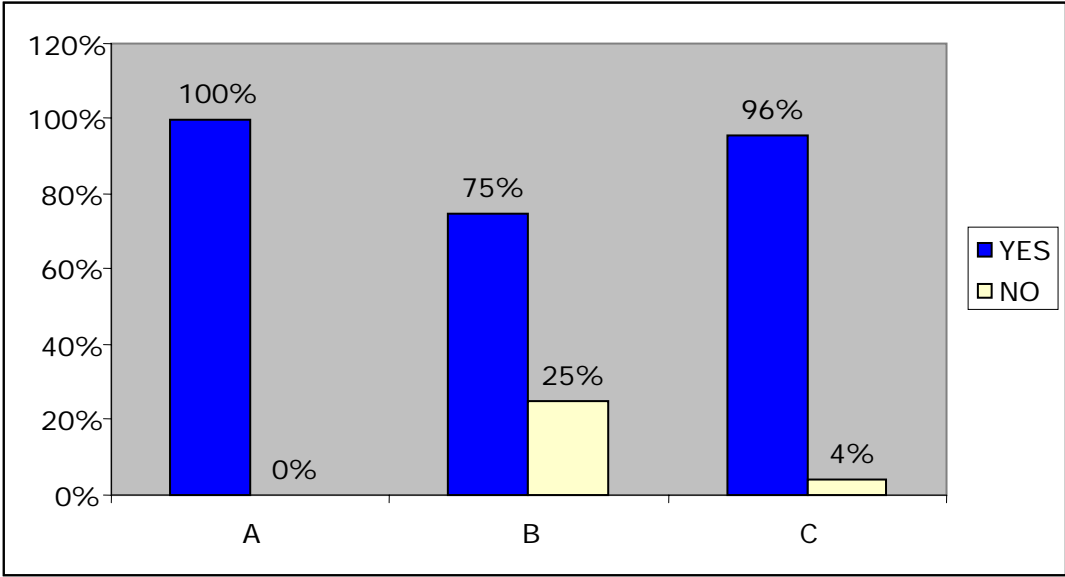
**Mod. C - Consumer law course**

95% of the participants of the Consumer Law course used what they learned on a daily or weekly basis.

*Dissemination of information*

Participants were also questioned whether they were able to disseminate the information and knowledge once back in their organisation. Due to the restricted amount of places on each course, multiplication of what is learned is a key objective of the courses.

**Figure 13 - Have you disseminated the information and knowledge obtained amongst your colleagues?**

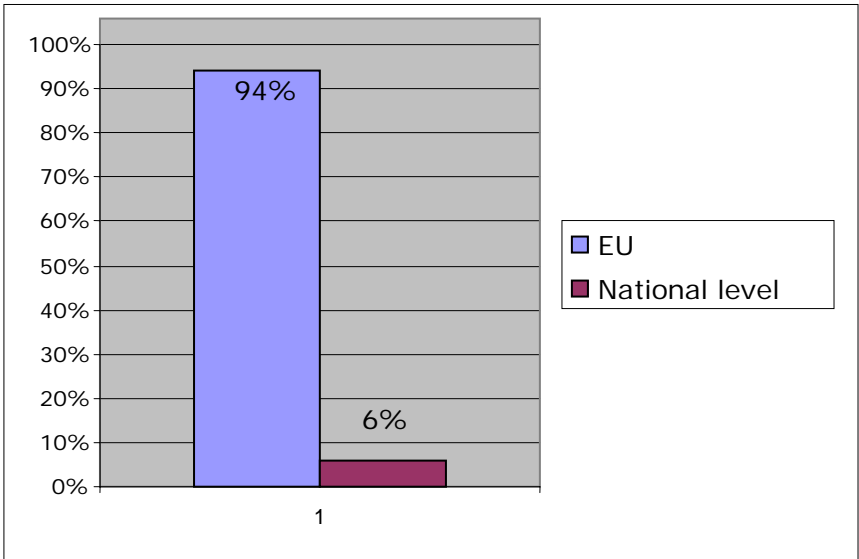


The participants who have most widely disseminated information were those from the Management and the Consumer Law course. Participants were asked to explain in which way they disseminated information. Some participants reported organising training sessions either for their staff, for other consumer organisations or in the wider community using the materials and methodologies from the training courses. Others reported promoting the course to other colleagues through informal talks or through writing articles in their newsletter about the usefulness of the courses. Those who disseminated the information did so mostly on a daily basis.

*Location of the training courses*

Asked where past participants would like the training courses to be held, 94% stated that they should continue to be run at EU level in Brussels. Only 6% wished the courses be run at national level.

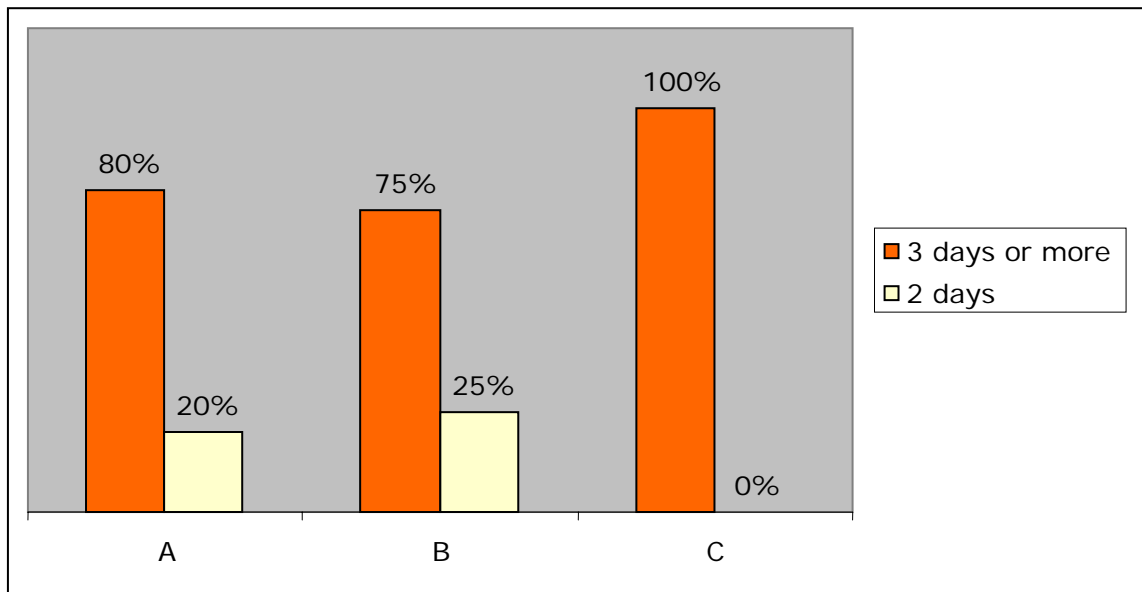
**Figure 14 - Would you like to have additional courses at EU or national level?**



### Length of course

The current arrangement of three day long courses appears still to be the preferred length, with 75% of the respondents suggesting this length for the future. 25% would also be agreeable to a course of two days. For the module C course on Consumer Law 100% of the participants preferred a three or more days length for the course. If in the future, courses organised focus more on specific topics, participants would prefer two day courses.

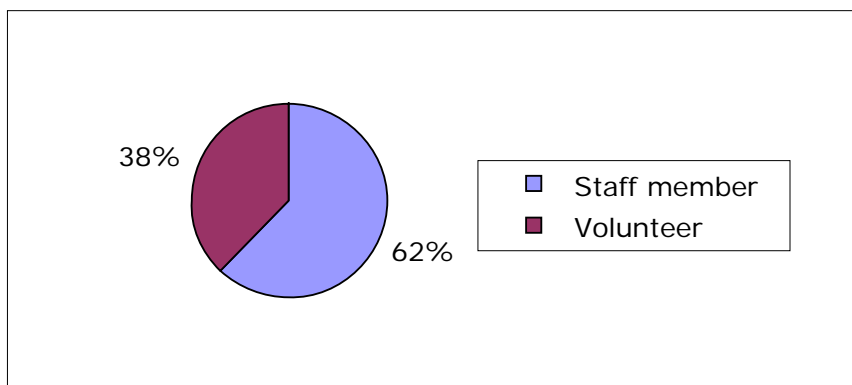
**Figure 15 - What do you think would be the ideal length of the training courses?**



### Profile of the participants

From the sample of participants taken, at 62%, the majority of the participants on the courses were staff members and 38% were volunteers. We have found that staff is more commonly represented by the old member state organisations and volunteers by the new member states. This may be due to the fact that new member states depend more than old member states on committed volunteers for the sustainability of their organisations.

**Figure 16 - What is your position in your organisation?**

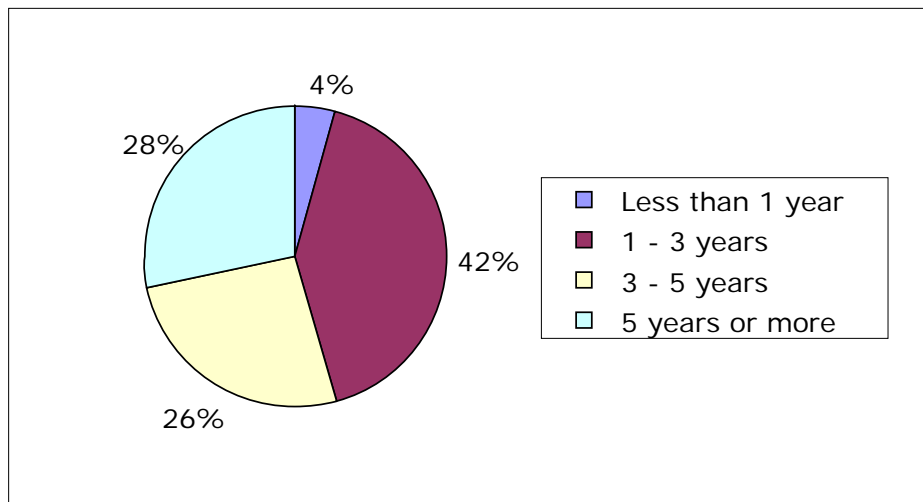


### *Length of service*

An investment per participant per course is approximately 4000 Euro, therefore participants selected should be those that have a long-term commitment to their organisation in order that they can effectively multiply what they have learned at the courses. It is encouraging to note that whether the participant is a volunteer or a member of staff, organisations are carefully selecting and sending participants that have an established role within their organisation and the potential to share what they have learned on their return home. This approach is of the utmost value to their fellow participants on the course and for the organisations themselves. Sending volunteers to the training courses who have experience and longevity in the organisation is obviously considered a valuable investment by the organisations.

Our results show that more than a quarter of the participants who took part in the courses had been involved with their organisations 5 years or more, another quarter has been involved for a period from three up to five years and a bit less than half of the former participants have been in their organisation for a period from one to three years.

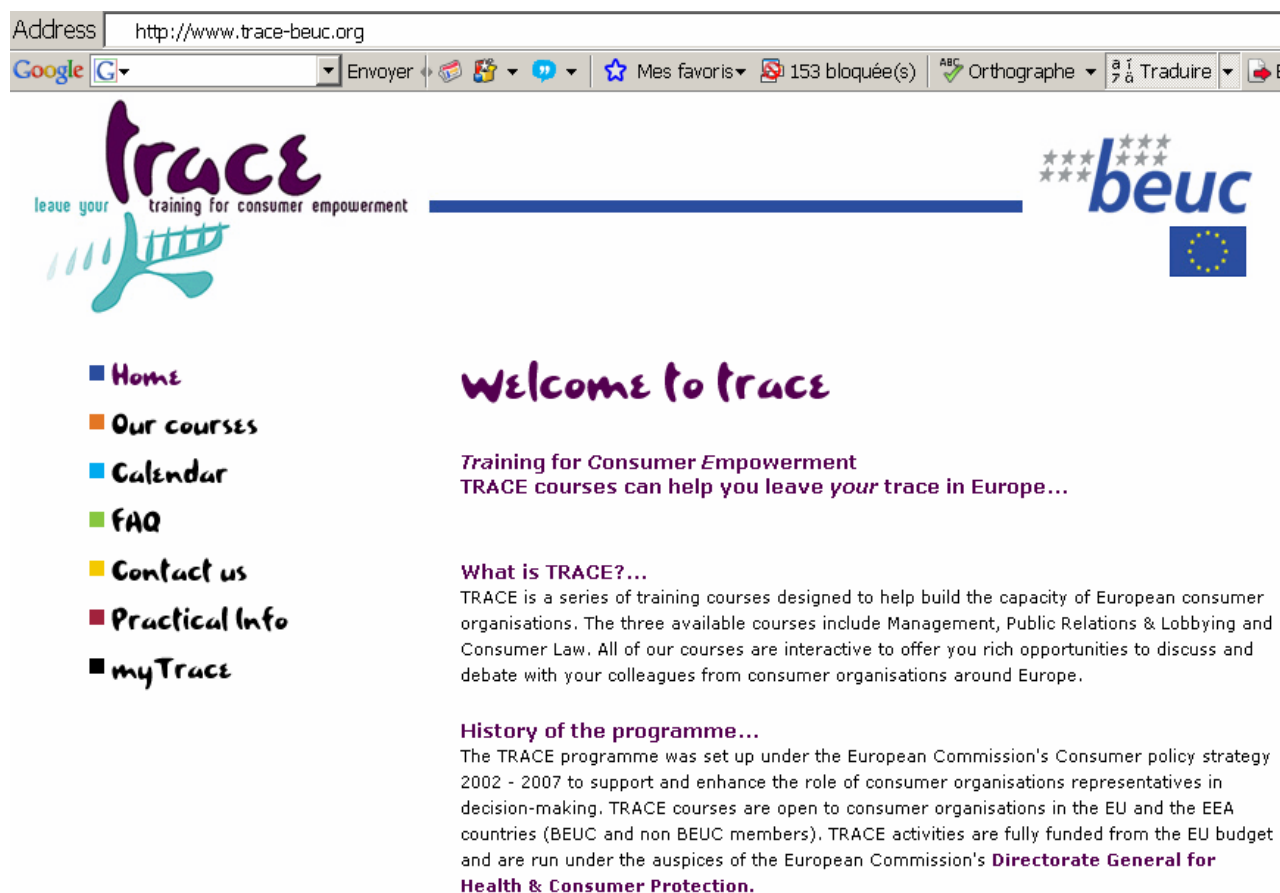
**Figure 17 - How long have you been with your organisation?**



## II. TRACE - TRAIning for Consumer Empowerment

In June 2006, BEUC launched a new website entirely dedicated to the training courses. Behind a user friendly webpage exists an elaborate database. The database collects all the names of former participants and applicants for future courses. The TRACE database facilitates both the application on line and the internal process of participant selection and the organisation of the courses.

Figure 18 - Screenshot of TRACE home page



The TRACE database has improved the quality of the organisational aspects of the training courses. It is through this newly developed tool that six months after each course we can more easily collect feedback from the participants, the results of which we have used in this report. This data is stored in the database and information can then be exported to MS Excel for further processing for course evaluation and reporting purposes.

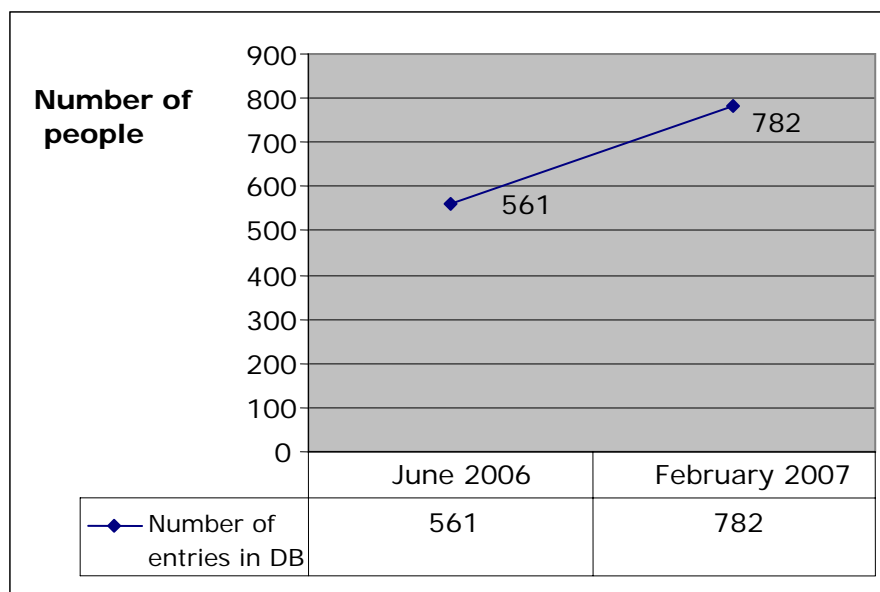
**Figure 19 – What’s behind the TRACE website? TRACE database**

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the TRACE database interface. The address bar shows the URL: http://beuc.wfdynamic.de/system/mod\_sys/index.php?. The browser's address bar and toolbar are visible at the top. Below the browser, the website header includes 'wfdynamic 4.0' and navigation options like 'Registered Users', 'New', 'Edit', 'Delete', '1 - 20 of 847', 'Extended Search', and 'Export'. The 'Export' button is circled in red. A sidebar on the left lists navigation options: Course Administration, Participants, Courses, Rounds, Mail, Trainers, Countries, Languages, and Website. The main content area displays a table titled 'Participants' with columns for ID, A, B, C, Firstname, Lastname, Gender, Organisation name, and Country. The table contains five rows of participant data.

ID	A	B	C	Firstname	Lastname	Gender	Organisation name	Country
37:1473	A8	B6	C6	Adam	Amborski	male	Federacja Konsumentów (Polish Consumer Federation)	Poland
37:2121		2006/07/27		Adam	Kraszewski	male	Federacja Konsumentow (Polish Consumer Federation National Council - FK)	Poland
37:2282			2007/01/31	ADAMANTIA	PAPANASTASIOU	female	INKA/ΓΕΝΙΚΗ ΟΜΟΣΠΟΝΔΙΑ ΚΑΤΑΝΑΛΩΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ	Greece
37:1570	A2			Adriaan	Meirsman	male	CRIOC-OIVO	Belgium

Since the birth of TRACE, the number of applications has also increased, as the table below shows.

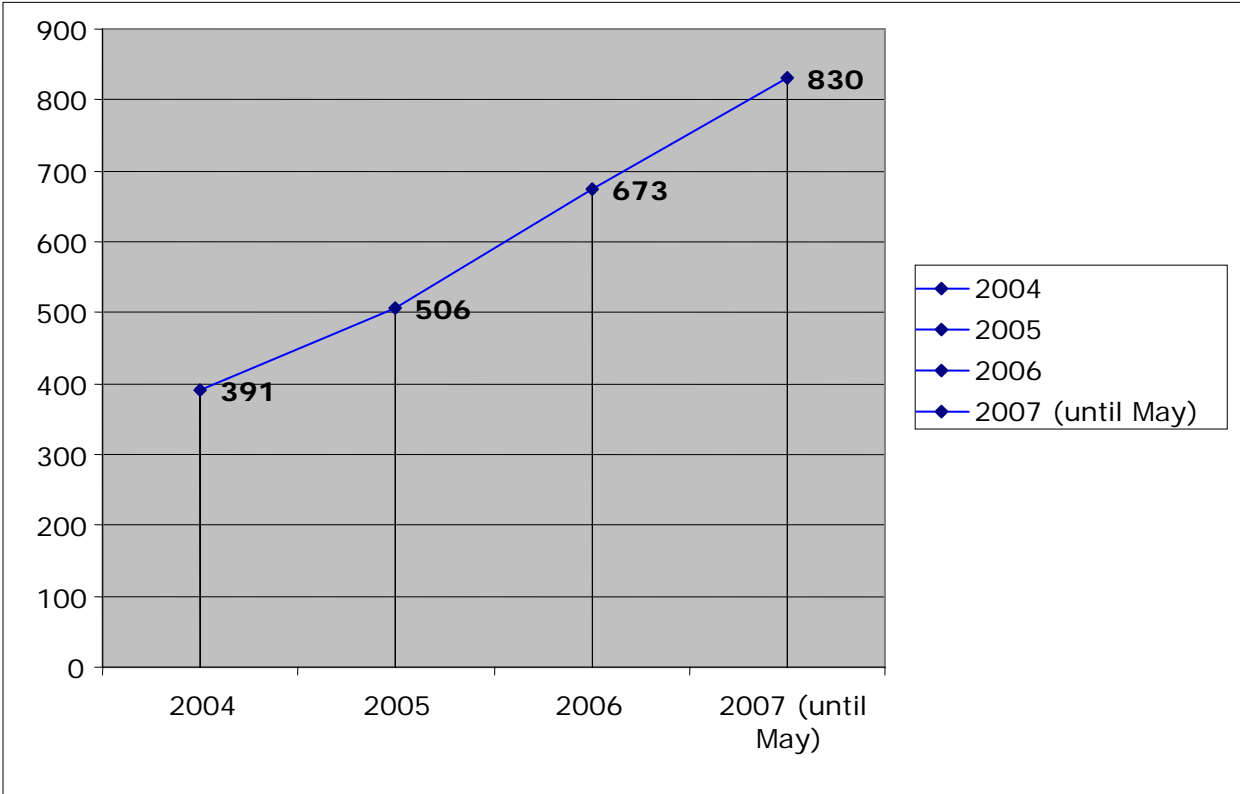
**Figure 20 - Number of entries in the database**



This increasing interest in TRACE courses may also be due to the wider dissemination of information via the website but also through other means. TRACE logo flyers in the form of bookmarks were also designed and printed to advertise TRACE courses. These flyers have been distributed during public meetings relevant for consumer organisations and at the end of each training course. As a result more and more people are being informed about the existence of these training opportunities.

Figure 21 below shows the growth in the number of registration forms since the existence of the training project (this figure includes both potential and past participants).

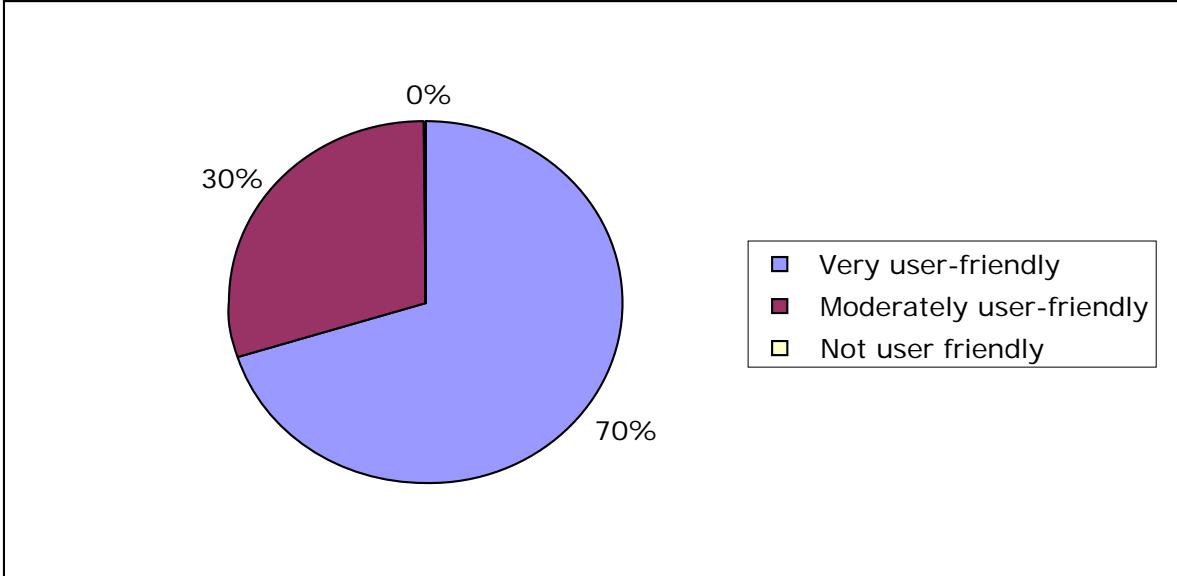
**Figure 21 - The growing scale of the database**



This figure represents the amount of registration forms logged in the TRACE database, including all past participants and the registration of future participants.

Participants who participated as of June 2006, which coincided with the launch of TRACE, were invited to express their opinion on the user friendliness of TRACE in their evaluation form. 70% of the respondents said that they found the TRACE website very user-friendly, as the figure below reveals.

**Figure 22 - How do you find the user friendliness of the TRACE website?**



### **III. Conclusions and recommendations**

#### **1. BEUC members / Non BEUC members**

42% of the participants came from consumer organisations within BEUC membership, 58% of the participants came from non-BEUC members. This finding suggests that non-BEUC members do not consider BEUC membership as a pre-requisite for course participation.

Despite this finding we recommend that continued efforts should be made to circulate the information on the courses to a wide variety of networks. Suggestions of how we can do this are as follows:

- Organise information stands at European Consumer events
- Ask participants to encourage their colleagues to register on line
- Create a multilingual intro page on the TRACE website, to attract participants who don't speak English
- Make information on the courses available at European Commission offices in the member states and EU delegations in EEA and candidate countries

#### **2. Participation of new and old member states**

Our results reveal that overall there is slightly more participation in the courses from the old member states, while there is an almost balanced participation in the Consumer Law and Management courses, less new member states have participated in the PR and Lobbying course. We therefore recommend that a concerted effort be made to increase their participation in this course. This can be achieved through further dissemination of information. This could be done in the following ways:

- Organise a specific new member state mailing, advertising the PR & Lobbying course
- Posting the information on courses in more than one language

#### **3. Participation of staff and volunteers**

Our results revealed that the amount of time spent serving an organisation is very close for volunteers and staff members, 6.8 and 5.5 respectively. We have noticed no difference in the level of participant whether they have been a volunteer or a staff member and therefore believe that volunteers should be able to participate in the training courses on an equal footing as the staff of consumer organisations. This respects the reality of many consumer organisations, which have been set up and perhaps continue to depend upon the commitment and work of volunteers.

In order to be able to assess whether a particular course is relevant and useful for a participant we will continue to contact supervisors of potential participants to ask if and why they agree that this long-term investment be made.

#### 4. Networking and dissemination

One of the aspects most valued by participants is the ability to meet and network with other European Consumer organisations. Although our results are positive as regards the contact kept by past participants post course, we recommend that further support is given to encourage these developing networks, which in turn can lead to multi country collaboration. Some ideas on how this can be achieved are as follows:

- Provide more space during the courses themselves for participants to share information on current projects and common project ideas
- BEUC organisers could send out follow up e-mails to remind participants of the networks created at intervals following the course
- Set up a virtual space for participants in which they can find solutions to problems amongst their network
- Participants could also be encouraged to create virtual groups around particular themes

The figure depicting the spread of countries represented in the courses reveals that there is an lack of representation of some countries in the programme. For this reason and in order that as many organisations as possible can benefit from this programme, we recommend that continued steps are taken to widely disseminate information on the training courses. The following ideas could be used:

- Use of past participants as advocates of the courses in their own countries through the organisation of information meetings
- Continued dissemination of the course information on all occasions e.g. multi project meetings, European consumer organisations meetings, European Consumer Centre meetings, ECCG meetings, and regional network meetings
- Continued promotion of courses at consumer events at a national (particularly in the under represented countries) or European level. Where appropriate priority for participation in the courses should be given to those under represented countries
- In order to help participants spread information on the course and what they have learned a 'train the trainer session' could be included in each course in which participants are given hints on how to disseminate information and train their colleagues.



(Open Space Technology session)

## 5. Content recommendations for Modules A, B & C

Overall, the topics covered in the current second phase of the project remain relevant and have had a positive long-term impact, however the specific content of each of the courses should constantly be revised according to the needs of the organisations.

Moreover it has been found that sending the participants a task to complete before the beginning of a course has proved useful in helping them to prepare. This practice should be continued.

### *Specific recommendation A - Management course*

The previous format of the management course focused on people management and although considered important, it was mentioned particularly by organisations from the new member states that there is a lack of understanding/knowledge of basic project management and funding sources. Therefore, also further to the Advisory Committee meeting in February 2007 the management course was adapted to become a **Project Management and Funding** course to provide more detailed training on how to manage projects and access funding. The participants are encouraged to share their experience of looking for funding and are introduced to various sources of funding opportunities. They also develop projects in groups. These changes have to be monitored in the coming months in order to ensure that we continue to meet participant's needs.

Participants would also like to have the possibility to take more specific courses on organisational management (developing business plans/strategy/marketing), leadership, and working with volunteers.



Photos from the Management training course

### *Specific recommendations B - PR & Lobbying course*

Less organisations from the new member states have participated in the PR and Lobbying course. We therefore recommend that a concerted effort should be made to increase their participation in this course.

More time should be allowed for participant discussion, to capitalise on the rare opportunity of having so many consumer organisation representatives in one place.

In addition to the general PR & Lobbying course, participants have suggested some topics for short two day courses;

- Specialised courses on PR (including crisis management)
- Specialised courses on Lobbying, Presentation skills, understanding the roles of national governments and other stakeholders (EU institutions, foundations)
- Lobbying the government for funding
- How to plan campaigns
- PR planning and tactics
- Contacts with journalists (building media relations)
- Developing creativity
- Writing skills



#### *Specific recommendation C – Consumer Law course*

More time should be allowed for participant discussion to capitalise on the rare opportunity of having so many consumer organisation representatives in one place. Therefore more space should be made in the consumer law course for discussion amongst participants. In addition to the general consumer law course, participants have suggested some topics for short 2 day courses;

- Management of Health in the EU
- Management of Public services in the EU e.g. water
- Public services and the globalisation of consumer habits
- Product liability
- Financial Services/ Payment Services, Consumer Credit & Insurance, Marketing (e.g., branding and ethics)
- Transport and travel: air passenger rights, timeshare & package travel
- E-commerce and legal guarantees
- Comparative and misleading advertising

## IV. ANNEXES

### 1. Annex 1 – Follow up questionnaires from TRACE website

This is the follow up evaluation that former participants are asked to fill in six months after their participation in the courses. The data collected are exported into excel and used for report purposes.



#### Impact questionnaire

##### MODULE A - Training course on Management

##### Round 7 from 31/05/2006 - 02/06/2006 Brussels - Belgium

We hope that you enjoyed your time in Brussels at the training course on Management. We would like to find out whether it has had any impact or not on your daily work life.

This information will be held anonymously and will not be used for any purpose other than to measure the impact of the training course and to evaluate and improve its quality.

**Required fields are labeled in bold.**

---

<b>Have you observed an overall improvement in your understanding of Management?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Yes
	<input type="radio"/> No

---

<b>Do you still lack information and understanding on certain topics which you think could be covered by a further course on Management?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Yes
	<input type="radio"/> No

---

<b>What impact has the training course had on your work?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Large
	<input type="radio"/> Medium
	<input type="radio"/> Small
	<input type="radio"/> None

---

<b>How regularly have you used what you learned?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Daily
	<input type="radio"/> Weekly
	<input type="radio"/> Monthly
	<input type="radio"/> Never

---

<b>Have you disseminated the information and knowledge obtained amongst your colleagues?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Yes
	<input type="radio"/> No

---

If so how?

**Are you still in touch with the people you met at the training course?**

- Yes  
 No

**Have you and your organisation benefited from the contacts made with other European consumer organisations?**

- Yes  
 No

If so how?

**Would you like to have additional courses at EU or national level?**

- EU  
 National

**What do you think should be the ideal length of the training courses?**

- 1 day  
 2 days  
 3 days or more

**What is your status within your organisation?**

- Volunteer  
 Staff member

**How long have you been with your organisation?**

- Less than 1 year  
 1 - 3 years  
 3 - 5 years  
 5 years or more

**How do you find the user friendliness of the TRACE website?**

- Very user-friendly  
 Moderately user-friendly  
 Not user-friendly

**Please use the box below for any further thoughts, comments.**

Comments:

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this impact evaluation.

**Save** **Cancel**



### Impact questionnaire

#### MODULE B - Training course on PR & Lobbying

#### Round 7 from 24/04/2006 - 26/04/2006 Brussels - Belgium

We hope that you enjoyed your time in Brussels at the training course on PR & Lobbying. We would like to find out whether it has had any impact or not on your daily work life.

This information will be held anonymously and will not be used for any purpose other than to measure the impact of the training course and to evaluate and improve its quality.

**Required fields are labeled in bold.**

---

<b>Have you observed an overall improvement in your understanding of PR &amp; Lobbying?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Yes
	<input type="radio"/> No

---

<b>Do you still lack information and understanding on certain topics which you think could be covered by a further course on PR &amp; Lobbying?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Yes
	<input type="radio"/> No

---

<b>What impact has the training course had on your work?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Large
	<input type="radio"/> Medium
	<input type="radio"/> Small
	<input type="radio"/> None

---

<b>How regularly have you used what you learned?</b>	<input type="radio"/> Daily
	<input type="radio"/> Weekly
	<input type="radio"/> Monthly
	<input type="radio"/> Never

---

**Have you disseminated the information and knowledge obtained amongst your colleagues?**

- Yes  
 No

If so how?

**Are you still in touch with the people you met at the training course?**

- Yes  
 No

**Have you and your organisation benefited from the contacts made with other European consumer organisations?**

- Yes  
 No

If so how?

**Would you like to have additional courses at EU or national level?**

- EU  
 National

**What do you think should be the ideal length of the training courses?**

- 1 day  
 2 days  
 3 days or more

**What is your status within your organisation?**

- Volunteer  
 Staff member

**How long have you been with your organisation?**

- Less than 1 year  
 1 - 3 years  
 3 - 5 years  
 5 years or more

**How do you find the user friendliness of the TRACE website?**

- Very user-friendly  
 Moderately user-friendly  
 Not user-friendly

**Please use the box below for any further thoughts, comments.**

Comments:

Many thanks for talking the time to complete this impact evaluation.

**Save** **Cancel**



### Impact questionnaire

#### MODULE C - Training course on Consumer Law

#### Round 7 from 21/03/2006 - 24/03/2006 Brussels - Belgium

We hope that you enjoyed your time in Brussels at the training course on Consumer Law. We would like to find out whether it has had any impact or not on your daily work life.

This information will be held anonymously and will not be used for any purpose other than to measure the impact of the training course and to evaluate and improve its quality.

**Required fields are labeled in bold.**

---

**Have you observed an overall improvement in your understanding of Consumer Law?**

- Yes  
 No

---

**Do you still lack information and understanding on certain topics which you think could be covered by a further course on Consumer Law?**

- Yes  
 No

---

**What impact has the training course had on your work?**

- Large  
 Medium  
 Small  
 None

---

**How regularly have you used what you learned?**

- Daily  
 Weekly  
 Monthly  
 Never

---

**Have you disseminated the information and knowledge obtained amongst your colleagues?**

- Yes  
 No
-

If so how?

**Are you still in touch with the people you met at the training course?**

- Yes  
 No

**Have you and your organisation benefited from the contacts made with other European consumer organisations?**

- Yes  
 No

If so how?

**Would you like to have additional courses at EU or national level?**

- EU  
 National

**What do you think should be the ideal length of the training courses?**

- 1 day  
 2 days  
 3 days or more

**What is your status within your organisation?**

- Volunteer  
 Staff member

**How long have you been with your organisation?**

- Less than 1 year  
 1 - 3 years  
 3 - 5 years  
 5 years or more

**How do you find the user friendliness of the TRACE website?**

- Very user-friendly  
 Moderately user-friendly  
 Not user-friendly

**Please use the box below for any further thoughts, comments.**

Comments:

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this impact evaluation.

**Save** **Cancel**

## 2. Annex 2 - Survey feedback form - January 2006

1. How do you look back on the course: were you provided with information that you can use in your daily work, please indicate on a scale from **1 to 5 (1 low-5 high)**
2. Do you use the consumer law on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, please indicate
3. Do you use the PR techniques on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, please indicate
4. Do you use the lobbying techniques on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, please indicate
5. Do you use the Management techniques on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, please indicate
6. Have you benefited from the contacts with consumer organisations from other EU member states that participated in your course (1 low-5 high)
7. Have you been able to disseminate the information and knowledge obtained amongst your colleagues in your organisation (1 low-5 high)
8. Did you disseminate this in the daily working environment or through a training session, please indicate. Yes / No
9. In what areas would you like to have additional courses:
  - consumer law
  - lobbying national governments
  - lobbying EU institutions
  - how to plan campaigns
  - PR planning and tactics
  - contacts with journalists
  - project management
  - funding
  - staff management
  - presentation skills
  - writing skills
10. Would you like to have additional courses at national level or at EU level?
11. Should the courses be 1 day, or 2 to 3 days, please indicate
12. Are you a volunteer or staff member?
13. How long have you been with your organisation?
14. Any additional comments?



(End of course evaluation methods)

### 3. Annex 3 - Survey feedback form - May 2007

Former participants were invited to indicate in which field should be offered future training courses. We received 111 answers out of 419 mails sent (21% return rate)

#### **In what areas would you like to have additional courses?**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>N° Replies</b>
<b>Courses on Consumer law</b>	
Consumer Law (general course for all)	48
Special course for lawyers	52
Specialised courses on specific topics (financial services)	60
<b>Courses on Lobbying</b>	
PR & Lobbying (general)	32
Specialised courses on PR (including crisis management)	47
Specialised courses on lobbying (including 1 day on presentation skills), understanding the roles of national governments and other stakeholders (EU institutions, foundations)	50
Lobbying the government for funding	44
How to plan campaigns	55
PR planning and tactics	49
Contacts with journalists (building media relations)	55
Developing creativity	39
Writing skills	30
<b>Courses on Management</b>	
Management (general)	28
Project management	60
Organisational management (developing business plans/strategy/marketing) leadership, and working with volunteers	71
<b>Courses on financial capacity building</b>	
Financial management: financial reporting, how to budget, bookkeeping, fundraising (EU and national funding, foundations), generating sources of income (revenues) for non profit consumer organisations (marketing), how to negotiate with the government for funding	61
<b>Other courses</b>	
Special course on how to train the trainers	28
Writing project summaries in English	41

4. Annex 4 – Extract from a Participant record book

**Training Course A9 on Management**  
29 November - 01 December 2006, Brussels - Belgium

**Kim Louise Brown**



Welsh Consumer Council  
Cymdeithas Cynhyrchwyr Cymru

**Country** United Kingdom

**Name of organisation** Welsh Consumer Council

**E-mail address** kim@wales-consumer.org.uk

**Phone** + 44 /2920255454

**Fax** + 44 /2920255464

**Website**

**Mobile**

**Short description of your organisation** WCC is a research & policy organisation; Our role is to represent the interests of all consumers & provide workable, informed, innovative solutions.

**What are the main topics on which your organisation works?** Areas covered are: Health, debt, food & nutrition, transport & public services.

**What is your role in your organisation?** As Corporate Services Manager my remit includes the following: Office Management Human Resources Secretary to Chair & Director Internal Audit Council secretariat Corporate matters

**You are interested in cooperation with other organisation from**

- EU-countries
- Applicant countries
- Other countries

**Specific details**

**On which kind of topics?** Any mentioned within my job remit.

**Does your organisation have any special needs for these projects?**

**Does your organisation publish a newsletter? If so please provide details on how to subscribe.** The Welsh Consumer Council produces an E-Newsletter. Email angharad@wales-consumer.org.uk for a copy.