

Factual Summary Report on the Open Public Consultation for the Evaluation of the 7th Environment Action Programme

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTATION

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU-added value of the EU's 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP). The evaluation is integral to the programme.¹

The Open Public Consultation forms one of several strands of consultation activities for the evaluation, which additionally includes interviews with selected stakeholders (both Member State and non-Member State), and two workshops.² This consultation is aimed at collecting views and opinions from stakeholders to feed into the evaluation procedure.

This document provides a breakdown of the responses to the Open Public Consultation. A full analysis of the results will be included in the final report of the study in support of the evaluation.

2. APPROACH TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The questionnaire was developed for any interested party, including private citizens, companies, organisations, public authorities etc. It was structured into three parts: background information about the respondent, general questions, and in-depth questions about the programme. The last section allowed stakeholders to provide open answers on their opinions on the programme and any additional statements in the form of upload documents to supplement the consultation procedure.

It was made available in all EU languages (except Irish) and uploaded to the EU consultations website.³ The consultation period lasted from the 3rd of May 2018 until the 26th of July 2018.

To maximise the response rate, a link to the questionnaire was placed on the 7th EAP page on the EUROPA website,⁴ and a number of organisations were directly contacted and asked to help disseminate the link.

3. RESPONSES TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

In total 153 respondents completed the questionnaires during the consultation period. Almost all the respondents knew of the programme to some degree. 37 participants (24%) were very familiar with the programme, 61 participants (40%) were familiar with the main aspects of the programme, and 35 (23%) had generally heard of the programme. Only 20 respondents (13%) did not know the 7th EAP.

The stakeholder type distribution is presented in the graph below. Respondents were asked to describe themselves as either a private individual, business or business representative, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), public authority, academic/research institute, association of citizens, EU Institution/Agency or they could respond with 'other'.

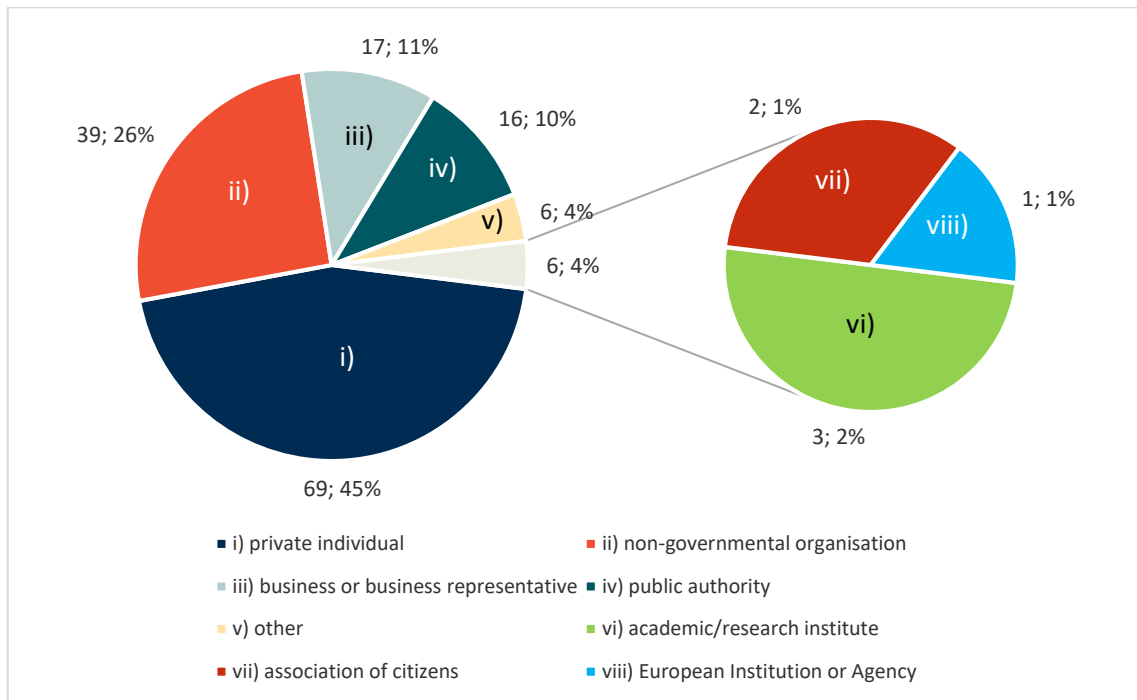
¹ Decision No 1386/2013/EU, Article 4.

² See the Consultation Strategy at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/pdf/180109_7th_eap_evaluation_consultation_strategy_final_clean.pdf

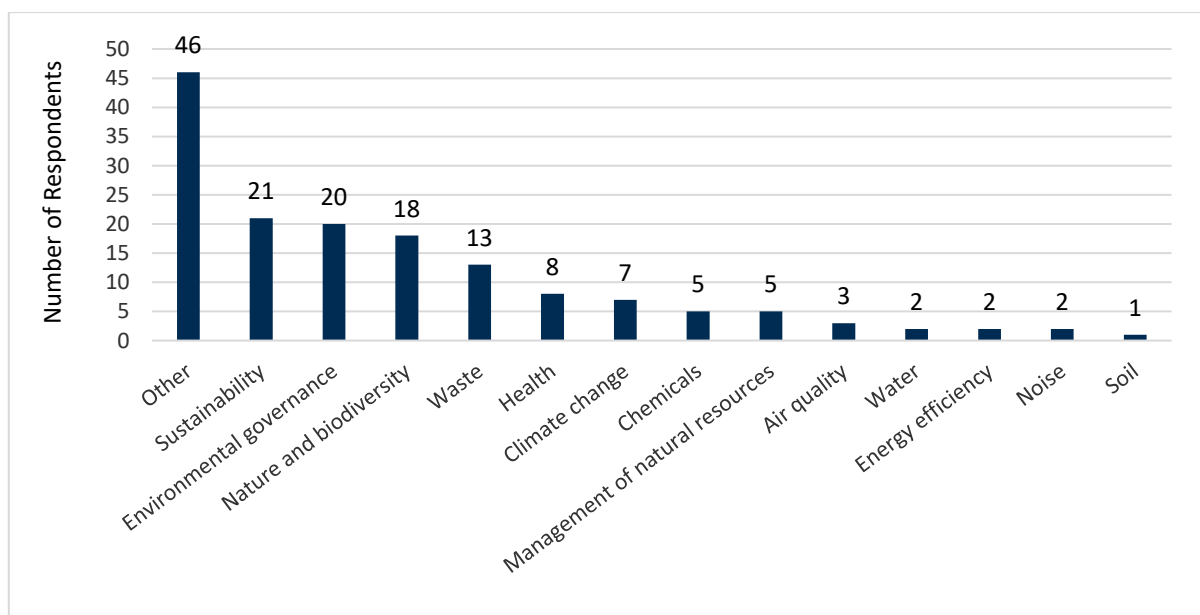
³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-evaluation-7th-environment-action-programme_en

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/evaluation.htm>

Most respondents were private individuals (69 in total, or 45% of the 153). 39 respondents (26%) were from NGOs, 17 (11%) were business representatives, and 16 (10%) were from public authorities. There were also two academics, a citizen association and an EU institution that responded.



The respondents were further asked about their realm of work in correspondence with areas relating to the 7th EAP. The answers are represented in a graph below. The highest response rate of the 153 respondents was ‘other’ at (30%). Following from this the three most common subjects of work were: sustainability (14%), environmental governance (13%), and nature and biodiversity (12%). Frequently mentioned sectors of work by those that responded ‘other’ were: education, transport, heat and electricity, food and agriculture, and development.

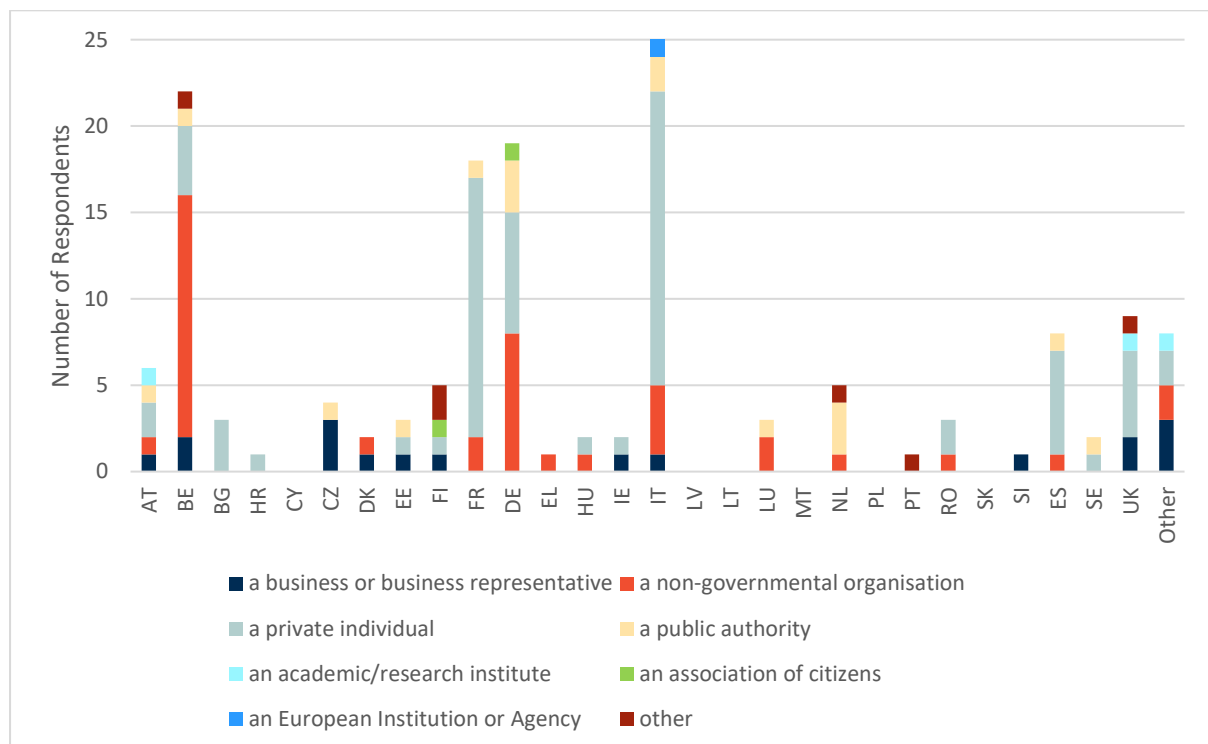


Concerning the origin of the responses, 95% of the respondents were based within the EU. Overall the respondents covered 22 of the 28 EU Member States. The majority of respondents were from Italy (16%), Belgium (14%), Germany (12%), and France (12%).

It is assumed that the fact that many of the participants are based in Belgium is due to the fact that Brussels hosts many of the organisations representing different groups of interest before the EU Institutions. This is clear from the number of NGOs responding from Belgium.

Of the 8 non-EU respondents one was based in Morocco (a private individual), one in the USA (a private individual), one in Serbia (an academic), and one in Switzerland (an NGO). In addition, there was one UN representative. The last three stakeholders noted they were part of international businesses with offices in multiple Member State and non-Member State countries.

The distribution according to the countries and stakeholder distribution can be seen in the graph below.



The respondents overwhelmingly displayed their favour for the programme, with 88% agreeing to some degree that the 7th EAP’s vision had the right focus. Furthermore, 84% strongly agreed that a long-term vision to steer environmental and climate policy is crucial. It was noted that the programme was one of the few instances where the environment is the sole focus, and therefore contributes to more ambitious environmental policy-making. Furthermore, it was largely agreed that the 7th EAP was an effective tool for allowing predictable and coordinated EU environmental and climate policy. Beyond this, respondents agreed that the programme was coherent with the EU’s international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement (40% and 42% agreed respectively).

However, a key concern for the respondents was that the programme now, in the end of its timespan, has less of a clear outreach to the broad range of stakeholders it aims to connect with.⁵ This is clear from the response that stakeholders most engaged by the programme were NGOs and public authorities, whereas private citizens seemed least engaged. A recommended solution was for a possible future EAP to have a stronger communication strategy throughout its lifespan. Finally, implementation (Objective 4 of the 7th EAP) was regarded as a key area for improvement. This was particularly the case for chemical, natural capital, and sustainable product policy, to name a few. Nevertheless, even within these fields, stakeholders had perceived some level of progress as a result of the 7th EAP.

⁵ Paragraph 15 states: “the 7th EAP is to create common ownership of shared goals and objectives... Clear goals and objectives also provide policy-makers and other stakeholders, including regions and cities, businesses and social partners, and individual citizens, with a sense of direction and a predictable framework for action.”