

52ND EPRA (virtual) Meeting: Working Group I:

Regulators & Citizens

Top-tips & best practices

from the EPRA webinar (21 October 2020)



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Garreth Lodge, [Ofcom](#) (UK)

[Presentation of webinar & speakers](#)

[Watch the webinar](#)

Consulting citizens: Top-tips (*Delib*)

Objective: Be fit for the Internet age and increased public expectations



How?



First step: catching up in terms of digital transformation

External consultation can help get the basis to ensure an effective online communication.

Consultation must be seen as dialogue between two parties exchanging: we cannot solve problems of one group without solving problems of the other group.



Most common problems/opportunities:

➤ **Problem Nr. 1: how to publish online**

Common obstacles: non-responsive web team, inefficient website, apathy to change...

Advice: setting up a **real content management system in order to centralise activities** coherently and respond to the key aspects that the users need to engage with the organisation.

Consultations should be:

easily findable

centralised on one website

provided with all the basic information (*dates, feedback...*).

Common obstacles: communication is often still based on the idea of print media with the transposition of offline process into online world (*long PDF document to read and answer provided by email*). That is not IT.

Advice: **making the experience truly digital and coherent**

It is important to always keep in mind that consultation is a live experience, a journey that should be adapted to the public targeted.

Format is key:

A webpage, also accessible on mobile

Clarity at every step (*e.g. tell the public why you are consulting at the first stage*)

Structured information: *what are the key issues and how to present them?*

Do not overwhelm people with information.

➤ **Problem Nr. 3: accessibility of the consultation**

Advice: **making consultation accessible to everyone.**

For example, with sign language and subtitles if it includes a video or in a children friendly way if the consultation targets children.

➤ **Problem Nr. 4: data reporting**

Common obstacles: the quantity of answers

Advice: **using IT tools and making the consultation transparent.**

Internet tools facilitate the analysis, filtering and exporting of data. It saves time and efforts.

NB: *Readily available basic artificial intelligence tools are more than sufficient to deal with the scale issue and provide valuable outputs. For really advanced tools, clarity around the purpose of the use of AI and a lot of money are required.*

Making the consultation transparent:

For the public, it is important to provide report and feedback on the consultation. IT tools help improve the communication format and make it easy to be transparent towards the public.



Benefits

- Time saving
- Increased quality standards (accessibility, visibility, format...)
- Increased quality of the responses (participants are better informed and have more time to answer)
- Approach consistent with general trends towards improving IT tools
- Increased accountability and trustworthiness towards the public for the organisation.

NB: Dealing with 'fake answers': if the organisation does not already have a verification infrastructure system, it is still possible to recognise fake profiles, e.g. through the IP address collected or to limit the risk by avoiding an 'anonymity by default' setting. However, it does not happen a lot in practice.

Examples of online consultations shared during the webinar (*Delib*):

The Scottish government: <https://consult.gov.scot/>

London Transport: <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/>

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency: https://consultation.sepa.org.uk/compliance-and-beyond/revised-guidance-on-enforcement-action/consult_view/

The Australian government: <https://consultation.ipaustralia.gov.au/>

The Scottish Police: <https://consult.scotland.police.uk/>

The Scottish Parliament: <https://yourviews.parliament.scot/>

The Civil Aviation Authority (UK): <https://consultations.caa.co.uk/>

Example of free, open source webtool to help host participatory meetings/pools online:

VoteIT: <https://www.voteit.se/in-english/>

Examples of NRAs' initiatives (*Agcom, IT – Ofcom, UK*)



The Cartesio project - Agcom (IT)

Presentation by Alessia Leonardi:

<https://www.epra.org/attachments/regulators-citizens-webinar-presentation-by-agcom-it>

Agcom's observations: in a context characterised by a complex media ecosystem and a shift in consumers behaviour, new forms of participation in regulatory processes could improve regulation in terms of transparency, effectiveness and efficiency.

Agcom's responses: launch of technical roundtables with stakeholders and external actors, partnerships with academic community, research projects and specific projects with citizens.

The Cartesio project:

- **Partners:** Sony CSL Paris (*technical partner*) and the Sapienza University of Rome.
- **Objective:** to study the perception of news from the user's perspective (*what are the main topics of interest? How do people understand what they are reading?*).
- **How:** online tools provided to the public to enhance participation and involvement.
- **Launch date:** May 2020



How does it work?

The user experience:

- Download the App or use the [dedicated website](#) from the online browser
- Registration
- Selection of topics of interest (health, education, sciences and technology...)
- Evaluation step (assess the credibility of various articles and answer questions about the selected topics).
- Possibility to repeat the test.

The news articles are presented **without any bias** or any potentially influencing information; no 'correct answers' are provided at the end.

The role of the NRA is **not to judge the news** and the aim is **to understand how people deal with information** that they read.



Designing the app: what to take into account?

- The right **balance between institutional spirit** and accuracy / '**gamification**' to boost citizens' participation
- A **clear explanation** of the project to citizens
- A dedicated space to **comments and feedback** (this allows to update the app if needed)
- Easy **accessibility** and **permanent communication** with citizens (*dedicated channels – special website and social profiles - and campaigns*)
- The **prominence** of the project (*continuously managing social profiles*).



The project team: a multi-profile team

- 2 data scientists from the Sony CSL
- 3 social managers from the Roma University and Agcom
- A cloud service team
- 2 people from Agcom to collaborate for the design, create the questionnaire and provide the Agcom news database.

The project will be open until spring 2021. For the moment, the participation rate is encouraging but it still too soon to assess the result of the initiative.



The Small Screen: Big Debate project - Ofcom (UK)

Presentation by Garreth Lodge: <https://www.epra.org/attachments/regulators-citizens-webinar-presentation-by-ofcom-uk>

Ofcom's observations: the ways in which people consume media have changed leading to a fragmented audience, increasing competition and multiple paths to reach audience and monetise content.

Ofcom's objective: to seek ideas and prompt discussion on how to make sure the UK has a resilient public service broadcasting system that continues to adapt to meet audience needs.

The Small screen: Big debate project:

- **Partners**: Financial Times (*students' competition*) and the London School of Economics (*Citizens' assembly research*).
- **Public targeted**: everyone - with a focus on young people.
- **Aim**: to understand what the priorities for citizens are, what they expect from the PSB
- **How**: a dedicated website, research projects and conferences.
- **Launch date**: February 2020



The design of the project: a three-step process:

- ➔ Learning about the project
- ➔ Collaborating
- ➔ Making citizens decision makers.

Towards this aim, Ofcom has set up:

- A [dedicated website](#) gathering all the information at the same place
- Presentation of the project through **online videos**
- Publication of an **interactive data portal**
- **Clear questions** asked: *what are the three most important topics? What would you do?*
- A **friendly website** where people can directly send their ideas to Ofcom
- **Various events** to engage with citizens.



Examples of events:

- The launch of a **competition for students**: participants were invited to send a blog article and a video on how PSB should be. *Award: the publication of the [video and blog entry on the dedicated website](#) as well as a small financial award.*
- **Inclusive and public facing events** (*virtual due to the pandemic*): panel sessions conference providing questions time with leaders and Chief Executives of public service broadcasters.
Format: live stream with every viewer able to ask questions.
- The launch of the [citizens' assembly](#) on public service media with the London School of Economics.



Next steps:

- Consultation outcomes will be published in December 2020
- Ofcom intends to send its recommendations to the Government over the summer 2021

So far, Ofcom has already received **15,000 contributions** from citizens.

Other initiatives from EPRA members:

The **RTÜK Communication Center** (TR): a tool developed – *a call center and a mobile application* - to receive complaints and suggestions from citizens regarding programmes broadcast on TV and radio. All notifications are sent to the relevant broadcasters and the experts of the Supreme Council simultaneously while being combined, classified and evaluated through the RTÜK Communication Center software.

- For more details: the [RTÜK's presentation](#) and the [RTÜK's brief information note](#).

Conclusion and final thoughts

There are a lot of advantages for regulators to be fit for the Internet age. IT provides a wide range of communication tools that allow NRAs to adapt their projects depending on the audience targeted and the objectives they seek for better quality results. Such processes can help improve the relationship with citizens, develop a better understanding of consumer behaviour and expectations and enhance the public's commitment. But from simply interacting with citizens, to properly engaging with the public and making them partners of regulation - how far should citizens be involved?



For further information on the autumn 2020 EPRA session on '**Regulators and citizens: Case study on Covid-19 related measures**':

- EPRA Background paper:
<https://www.epra.org/attachments/51st-epra-meeting-regulators-citizens-background-paper>
- List of NRAs' measures:
<https://www.epra.org/attachments/52nd-epra-virtual-meeting-regulators-citizens-list-of-measures-updated>