

# The Membership Survey

## Summary report by the Network Secretary

12 January 2014

### Introduction

The Membership Survey has been carried out in order to evaluate how the existing online infrastructure of the Network is used, which is the degree of involvement and satisfaction of the members with the communication of the Network.

The data has been gathered using an online questionnaire (see annexed). The period of data gathering was 19 December 2013 – 10 January 2014. Each of the 333 members of the network has received a unique link to the questionnaire on their personal email. The link could be used only once and the responses have been registered and tabulated using the referendum module of the ElectionBuddy (<https://electionbuddy.com>) engine. Results have been transferred into a spreadsheet, coded and analysed. This report offers a brief quantitative overview of the main findings of the multiple choice questions.

Additionally there are about 70 comments (approx. 2.500 words) inserted into the questionnaires as replies to the open questions. The last section of this report offers a brief overview of these.

### The response rate, the distribution of the respondents, and representativity

157 of the 333 questionnaires have been completed so the overall response rate is 47%. This can be considered a relative high rate of response during an online survey. The distribution of the respondents according to the main demographic characteristics is the following:

- According to membership category: 60% full members and 40% associated members,
- According to the sex of the respondent: 53% females and 47% males,
- According to the country of residence: UK (15,5%), Romania (11%), Hungary (9,7%), Italy (9%), Bulgaria (8,4%), Germany (5,2%), Spain (5,2%), USA (4,5%), Belgium (3,9%), France (3,9%), Portugal (3,2%), Ukraine (3,2%), Macedonia (2,6%), Austria (1,9%), Serbia (1,9%), Slovakia (1,9%), Czech Republic (1,3%), Finland (1,3%), Belarus, Canada, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey (each 0,6%).

Compared with the distribution of the total membership according to the same variables we can conclude that *the sample is representative to the entire network*. There are slight distortions in favour of full members, and regarding some of the countries of residence (see details in Table 1.). There are no respondents from 8 countries where relatively few members live (Australia, Brazil, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico, and Russia).

	<b>Total members</b>		<b>Survey respondents</b>		<b>Difference</b>
<i>Membership category</i>		<b>%</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
full	193	57,96	94	59,87	+1,91
associated	140	42,04	63	40,13	- 1,91
Total	333		157		
<i>Sex</i>					
female	174	52,25	83	52,87	+0,61
male	159	47,75	74	47,13	-0,61
<i>Country of residence</i>					
UK	48	14,41	24	15,48	+1,07
Romania	36	10,81	17	10,97	+0,16
Hungary	35	10,51	15	9,68	-0,83
Italy	19	5,71	14	9,03	+3,32
Bulgaria	19	5,71	13	8,39	+2,68
Germany	15	4,50	8	5,16	+0,66
Spain	21	6,31	8	5,16	-1,15
USA	17	5,11	7	4,52	-0,59
Belgium	8	2,40	6	3,87	+1,47
France	20	6,01	6	3,87	-2,14
Portugal	5	1,50	5	3,23	+1,73
Ukraine	6	1,80	5	3,23	+1,43
Macedonia	4	1,20	4	2,58	+1,38
Austria	8	2,40	3	1,94	-0,46
Serbia	5	1,50	3	1,94	+0,44
Slovakia	7	2,10	3	1,94	-0,16
Czech Republic	12	3,60	2	1,29	-2,31
Netherlands	7	2,10	1	0,65	-1,45
Finland	4	1,20	2	1,29	+0,09
Belarus	1	0,30	1	0,65	+0,35
Canada	5	1,50	1	0,65	-0,85
Lithuania	2	0,60	1	0,65	+0,05
Moldova	1	0,30	1	0,65	+0,35
Norway	1	0,30	1	0,65	+0,35
Poland	5	1,50	1	0,65	-0,85
Slovenia	1	0,30	1	0,65	+0,35
Sweden	5	1,50	1	0,65	-0,85
Switzerland	1	0,30	1	0,65	+0,35
Turkey	2	0,60	1	0,65	+0,05

**Table 1.** Distribution of survey respondents compared to the structure of the total membership

## The use of different communication channels

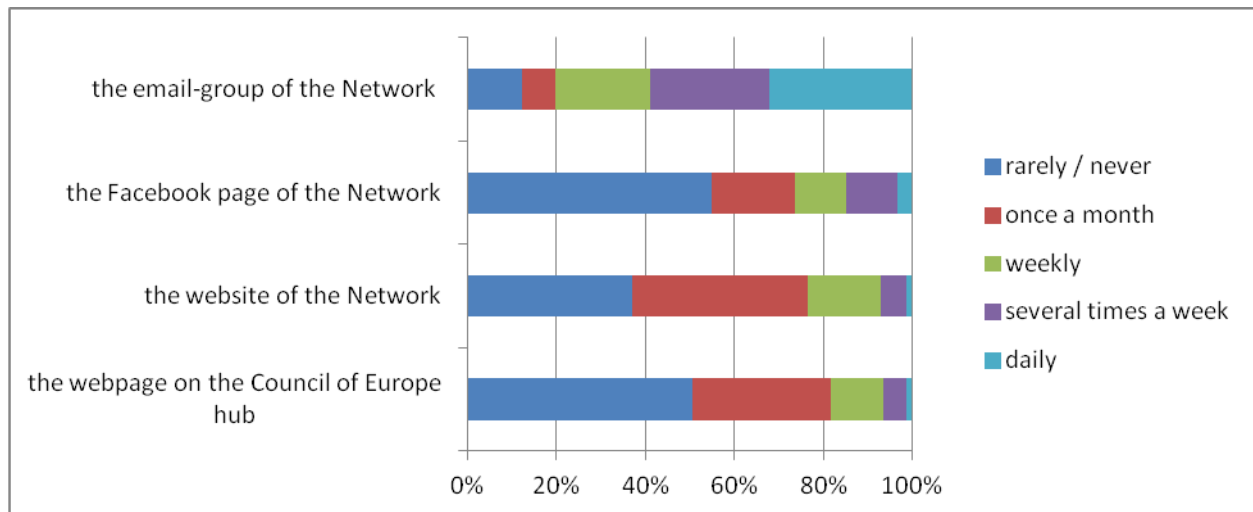
The first set of four questions has focused on the frequency members use the different communication channels of the Network. Measured on a scale of 5 grades (1–rarely / never, 2–once a month, 3–weekly, 4–several times a week, 5–daily) the average of each of the channel indicates the general tendency for the use of the channels.

	<i>How often you use this communication channel?</i>	<i>Mean (min: 1, max: 5)</i>
1	the webpage on the Council of Europe website	1.7532
2	the website of the Network	1.9481
3	the Facebook page of the Network	1.8968
4	the email-group of the Network	3.5897

**Table 2.** Means for the different channel for communication

The results show unequivocally that *the most frequently used channel is the email group of the Network*. It is followed by the Website of the Network, the Facebook page of the Network and the Network page on the Council of Europe website. This can be attributed mainly to the nature of the email-communication, as members once subscribed to the email-list receive messages regularly to their inbox (email is *push-media*) unless they unsubscribe, in contrast to the other channels where only those members will see the updates who actively visit the websites (*pull-media*) or the Facebook page (*social media*).

The following graph represents in a more detailed manner the choices of the respondents in using the four channels.



**Graph 1.** The frequency of use of the different channels for communication

It can be observed on this graph that about 80% of the respondents use at least weekly the email-group while the proportion of those who visit the websites at least once a week is between 18-26%. Worth also noting that the highest proportion of those who responded that they never or rarely use some of these

channels is the highest for the Facebook page (55%) followed by the webpage on the Council of Europe hub (51%) and the Network website (37%), and the email-group (12%).

The picture can be improved if we include those respondents who use some of the channels at least monthly; the Network website attracts more than half of the respondents (53%), followed by the webpage on the Council of Europe hub (49%), and the Facebook page (45%). 88% of the respondents check the messages from the email-group at least monthly. The gap is between those who visit the websites at least monthly (45-53%) and between those who do that on a weekly basis (18-26%). More frequent updates of the sites could attract the less frequent visitors to return more often.

The main conclusion on this section is that *the Network communication structurally is inward-oriented*, given the fact that the email-group, which is the most active channel, is closed and exchanges are restricted to the Network membership. More efforts to improve the external oriented channels are necessary in the future.

### User satisfaction with the content of the communication

The second set of questions has focused on the degree the respondents consider useful the content of the different types of messages and posts circulated through the channels. The content of the email messages, the types of the Facebook posts and the different sections of the Network website has been evaluated.

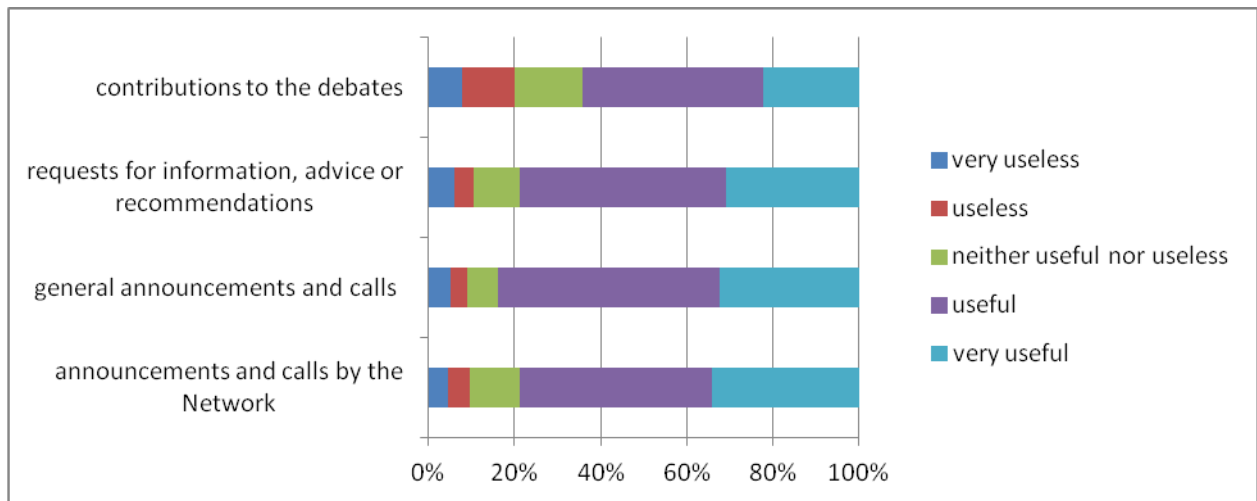
#### a) Contents of the email messages

Satisfaction with the different categories of messages on the email-group is measured by a scale of 5 where 1 stands for 'very useless' and 5 for 'very useful'. Comparing the averages for the different categories indicates the preference of the respondents for the different types of email messages.

	<i>The email group carries several types of messages. How useful you consider....?</i>	<i>Mean</i> (min: 1, max: 5)
1	the announcements and calls issued by the Network	3.9871
2	announcements and calls about general events (external to the Network)	4.0195
3	requests for information, advice or recommendations from the membership	3.9342
4	members contributions to the debates on the email group	3.5844

**Table 3.** Means for the different categories of email messages

Respondents considered announcements posted on the email-group being most useful. General announcements and calls referring to events external to the Network have the highest average (4.01) followed closely by the announcement issued by the Network (3.98). Requests for advice and information on professional issues posted by the members have also a rather high average (3.93) while contributions of members to the different debates are considered the least useful (3.58). All of these averages are rather high (over 3,5 on a scale of 5) showing a wide agreement on the usefulness of all messages circulated. The graph below offers a more detailed presentation of the data.

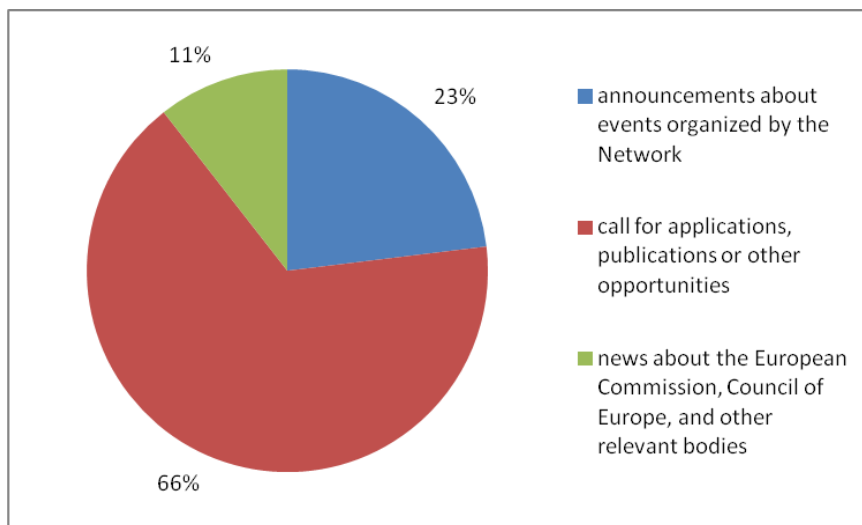


**Graph 3.** The frequency of use of the different channels for communication

If responses ‘very useful’ and ‘useful’ on the one hand, and ‘useless; and ‘very useless’ on the other hand are taken together, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (between 79% and 84%) agree on the usefulness of the announcements and requests for information, and those who consider useless these messages are about 10% (ranging from 9,7 to 10,5%). This is the most apparent similarity in the attitudes to these three categories. The pattern for the attitudes regarding the contribution to the debates is rather different: about 20% are the ‘useless; and ‘very useless’ responses, ‘very useful’ and ‘useful’ responses add up 64%, while the proportion of the undecided respondents are also significantly higher (16% versus the 7 to 10% for the three other cases). This indicates that debates are dividing the membership, potentially even polarising the attitudes of the respondents. On this issue the analysis of the comments below will reveal some more details.

b) Preference of the different posts on the Facebook page

To the question: ‘We regularly post and share messages on the Facebook page of the Network. Which category of post do you find most useful?’ The preference for the different types of posts is seen on this graph.



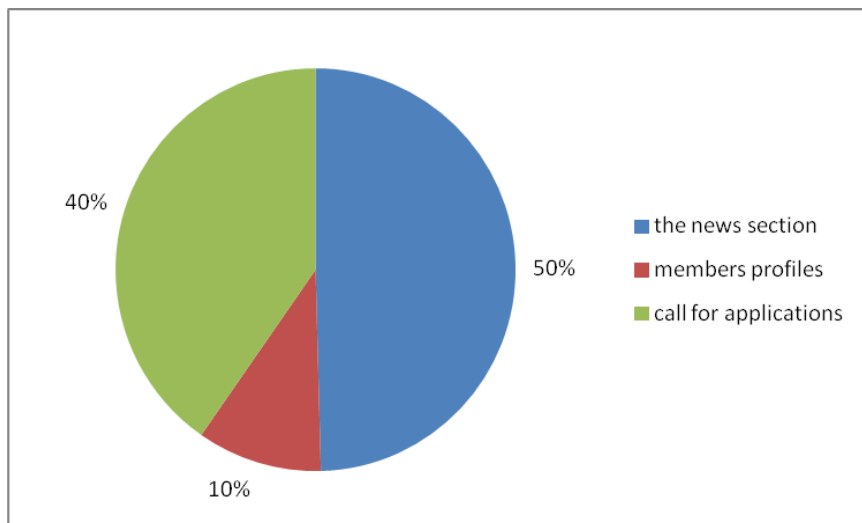
**Graph 3.** The preference of the respondents for the different types of posts on the Facebook page

Two thirds of the respondents (66%) considered most useful the call for applications, publications and announcement of opportunities posted on the Facebook, 23% of the respondents considered most useful the announcements about the activities of the Network, while 11% the news about the European Commission, Council of Europe and other relevant policy making bodies.

We need to note one limitation of this question: 53 of the respondents (33,8% of the sample) indicated that they do not use Facebook nor do they 'Like' the Facebook page therefore they have not expressed their choices. In order to have a more extended feedback on the Facebook page a different survey should be designed targeting the followers of the Facebook page, a much larger and more heterogeneous group, most of them are not Network members. Keeping this in mind we can still conclude that the role of the Facebook is typically perceived as a source of information from opportunities outside the Network. This can be complemented in the future with more intensive posting on Network related news and sharing the updates by integrating social media and the Network website.

c) Different sections of the Network Website

The graph below summarises the responses to the question: 'We would like to know which section of the Network's website you use most often.'



**Graph 4.** The usefulness of the different sections of the Network website

The news section of the website is used by half of the respondents which is not surprising as this is the opening page of the website, and contains links to the most recent content. Other 40% of the respondents referred to the call for application section as their first choice. The remaining 10% uses the members' profiles most often.

The proportions indicate that the communication of the Network on the website functions in a rather centralised manner, most users are visiting the site for getting updates on the Network activities or other news or getting the details and forms in order to submit an application under an open call. Only one in ten respondents prefers to explore the members' profiles. The increase of this group would be desirable in the future which would contribute to the intensification of the direct communication between individual members avoiding to connect through intermediaries or a central node.

## **Brief overview on the comments**

The questionnaire posed two open questions (Would you suggest changes in the policy the network uses in its communicational channels? If yes, please describe in a few words. / Use the space below to add suggestions and comments on how to improve the communication of the Network) and provided space for comments from the members. A large number and rather diverse comments have been submitted and the systematic analysis of these will require a more time to produce a synthesis.

This summary report will conclude with an overview of some of the main topics which are recurrent in the comments. These are: a) attitudes of the members to each other and values which should be promoted by the network and the b) concrete recommendations offered by the respondents.

### **a) Attitudes and Values**

I'm generally very satisfied with the policy and how it is administered as it is robust but still allows exchange of views (at times heated) to take place within a monitored forum. Announcements etc are excellent and very helpful.

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A code of conduct for communications between different members would be useful. Sometimes exchanges become personal attacks due to personal histories unknown to the majority of us. It is not the aim of this network. People may not agree on academic positions but discussions should be done in a proper, diplomatic way.

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Private arguments should be kept private. There is no need to flaunt personal dislikes in front of every single member of the group.

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Try to avoid symbolic violence, sometimes not based on academic authority, over members who disagree. Some style-guide/self-regulation should be encouraged.

### **b) Recommendations**

There needs to be more mediation/moderation of the email debates by the Network Secretary.

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Private arguments should be kept private. There is no need to flaunt personal dislikes in front of every single member of the group.

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Potentially include sub-groups for the network to sort out the communication. Limit the dominant tone of some of the scholars and provide rules for educated and objective debate, based on evidence and scholarly trajectory. Create an environment where debates can be self-moderated and will allow for a diversity of opinion, approaches and ideologies. So far, the Network has been dominated by non-Roma scholars who impose a doctrine for understanding of the Romani Studies

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I am not a Facebook user, nor do I have the time (or inclination) to visit specific websites. Consequently, general email correspondence / exchange is the one technique I find the most useful.

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The e-mail group often turns into a forum where not only scientific and policy issues are discussed, but personal struggles arise. I do not advocate for moderation, but for finding another forum where discussions can take place without overwhelming the members' personal or professional e-mails.

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A weekly/monthly newsletter would be useful summarizing the relevant website content.

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Mail communication should be used only for admin info - for example the current survey - or info related to jobs and ToRs. The book announcements have their place on the web page; the discussions must go to a forum.