

SUCCESSFULLY RESPOND TO EU PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

There will be times in your EU affairs career where you will have to provide feedback on upcoming EU initiatives through the [Commission's consultations website](#). Even though this is a great tool providing everyone a chance to contribute to the EU debate, the process can seem quite intimidating and lengthy at first. Whether you choose to answer as an expert lobbyist or a regular citizen, we compiled below a few tricks that will help you every step of the way...

#1 **FIRST THINGS FIRST: MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MISS THE CONSULTATION.** Ever been in this situation where the Commission has been postponing the release of a consultation for so long that your routine now includes refreshing the dedicated website five times a day? Stop right there. The Commission made it extra easy for you to make up for its unpredictability: [subscribe to its notifications](#). This way any new publication will land straight into your inbox.

#2 **NO REST FOR THE WICKED.** Do not think you'll be spared during the holiday season. The Commission is a well-oiled machine which apparently never sleeps and is not afraid to publish important consultations in the middle of August or on 23 December... Be mentally prepared.

#3 **KEEP YOUR COOL.** The length of the questionnaire might be daunting at first but there's a silver lining: you won't have to answer each and every question. Be strategic and only choose the ones relevant to your priorities and where your contribution will make a difference. (Also – the compulsory ones are indicated with an asterisk, but that goes without saying).

#4 **BE CREATIVE.** Keep in mind that the Commission can be a fickle friend, and probably a question you're dying to answer did not make it to the final questionnaire. If that is the case, no need to worry: this is where the "Other" box comes in handy! Tick "Other" and comfortably lay down your argumentation in the comment section that magically appeared.

KEEP UP THAT PUNK ATTITUDE! The Commission might be an even more fickle friend by stating in the initial roadmap (usually announcing upcoming public consultations) that stakeholders will not be consulted. Yes, it is shocking. But no, it is not the end of the world. Luckily everyone can comment on the published roadmaps: this is your window of opportunity! Note that the deadline for feedback is extremely tight: four weeks max.

PLAN YOUR TIME CAREFULLY. The idea of a 12-week feedback period might be alluring at first, making you believe that you will have plenty of time to prepare your answers and submit your contribution. Truth is: you won't. Most likely you will have to coordinate inputs from several other colleagues who have their own schedule and priorities. Leave enough time for everyone to send their contribution and plan at least for one round of comments on the consolidated input.

BEWARE OF THE SPECIFICATIONS IN ITALICS! The Commission is definitely looking forward to reading your prose but expect less enthusiasm if it drags on for more than 10 000 characters... Comment boxes often come with character-limits, so make sure that your most compelling arguments comply. Otherwise you're in for a sweaty, last-minute cuts experience the day of the submission deadline (and no one wants that).

COME CLEAN. Avoid submitting your feedback as an anonymous contributor. The Commission will receive your answers with even higher regard if it knows who is at the other end. Being able to refer to your early public contribution is also an excellent way for you to show your commitment to this specific file/issue at a later stage. Policy-makers appreciate political goodwill and transparency.

CHECK THE RESULTS. Answering the public questionnaire is only the first step of the influencing process – you need to know how your message has been received. Keep an eye out for the results publication and accompanying summary report. That being said, open the document compiling all feedback received with caution: with often hundreds of contributions compiled in an excel table, this doesn't make for a light read.

STEP UP YOUR GAME. Be recognised as one of the expert voices in your field and get directly contacted by the Commission for 'targeted' consultations – these address only a handful of stakeholders with specific expertise and/or particularly impacted by certain legislative developments. It can be nice to have it easy sometimes...