

Focus group guidelines

Deliverable 3.1

EnTrust: Enlightened Trust: An Examination of Trust and Distrust in Governance – Conditions, Effects and Remedies

WP3: The role of democratic social movements in the formation of trust and distrust

Work package leader: IFDT

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WP3 Guidelines for the Moderation of Focus groups with Social movements

General aim

The general aim of the focus groups is to explore whether, and to what extent, social grassroots movements are **capable of mobilising citizens' distrust in institutions, of making productive use of it, and transforming it into new practices of 'trust' building.**

We also aim to understand emerging social movements' alternative visions of Europe and democracy on all levels. We seek to investigate alternative ways of (re)building trust in its institutions and what subsequent actions need to be taken to achieve this. We will also explore the re-articulation of trust within expert knowledge in society and social movements, given their recurrent use of expert knowledge and science for persuasion and legitimation of demands and actions.

Finally, we aim to gather insights into the way these grassroots movements interrelate with more established mainstream civil society organisations (CSOs), political parties and other organizations and institutions, looking for positive and negative sides of such cooperation for trust relations.

Comments for the moderator

Words in brackets and italics are meant to guide moderators if more explication is necessary for the specific questions. Do not read all the questions at once, but carefully listen to what participants speak about, and try to guide them smoothly through the focus group (FG).

Read the questions **one by one and do not ask those that have already been answered** through discussion.

If they cannot answer the main question, ask the supporting one. If a concept, or a question asked is not clear to them, ask them what their understanding of it is. You have an instruction in brackets before each set of questions that should tell you what the aim of each section is. Keep the discussion within this theme.

DO NOT READ THE TITLES OF THE QUESTION GROUPS

Questions with different priorities are positioned in the following way:

Key questions (*always asked*)

Supporting questions (*for follow up, if it was not touched upon in the conversation*)

At the end of each section, **please briefly summarise and emphasise if everybody agrees, or if there is disagreement among participants.** This is important for the analysis.

Focus group guidelines (with introduction) (approx. 115 min)

Hello, I am _____ (name) from _____ (institution). We are working on comparative research in seven countries about trust of citizens in public institutions and modes of governance. It is very important to us to hear more from members and supporters of social movements, as they tend to channel citizens' dissatisfaction and demands.

Data obtained through this research will be used solely for scientific and educational purposes. In order to be able to analyse your answers carefully and in detail, we will record the discussion and then transcribe it. All personal data mentioned here will be strictly anonymised.

We have planned the discussion to last for two hours. I will be asking you to give me more details on situations you have faced or to elaborate on your attitudes and opinions. We are interested in your personal experiences and attitudes emerging from your engagement in a social movement. Please bear in mind that we want to know your personal perspective, so there are no right or wrong answers. It is perfectly fine if there is disagreement on some issues.

If everything is clear and there are no questions, we are going to start now with a short round of introductions. Please tell me your names.

Perception of the movement and its horizontal/hierarchical relations

(NOTE: Through this segment, we want to investigate how hierarchical the internal structure of the movement is and how internal decision-making functions. Key findings should tell us WHO decides within the movement and HOW - approx. 15 minutes).

How would you describe the structure of your movement?

Would you say that your movement is horizontal or hierarchical, centralised or decentralised?

Can anyone join the movement, or are there some preconditions?

When you think about the actions organised by the movement, how are they usually initiated and decided upon? You can focus on an example if it is easier that way.

What happens when there is disagreement among the movement members about actions?

Trust relations

(NOTE: This segment focuses on the core issues of this research. We are exploring trust in relation to different objects. First, we want to know the general attitude towards trust and distrust in society. This is followed by questions about trust in different actors in society, citizens' trust in social movements, and finally the pathways towards restoring trust in institutions, specifically requested at the local, national and European level. Key findings should tell us WHO a trustful actor in society is and WHY; HOW institutions can become MORE trustful on three levels, and what the ROLE of the movements in this process is. - approx. 45 minutes).

Do you think that trust plays an important role in society? What about distrust? Could distrust be useful in some way?

Which social or political actors do **you** personally trust the most? (NOTE: *It is fine if they name people, organisations or institutions. A moderator should know what category a person belongs to – politician, intellectuals, etc. If not, please ask for clarification*).

Which social or political actors do **citizens** in this country trust the most and the least, in your opinion? Why?

We are also interested in the effects of **cooperation** with different actors **on the trust citizens have in your movement**. If you cooperate with these actors I am about to name, please let us know if that enhances or undermines the trust citizens have in your movement.

First, we are interested in **governmental institutions**. Do you cooperate with some of them and if so, what are the effects of that cooperation on the trust citizens have in your movement?

Second, we would like to know about **formal non-governmental organisations**, citizens associations, etc. and the effect of cooperation with them on the trust citizens have in your movement.

Finally, what is the impact of cooperation with **political parties**?

Now, there is a lot of discussion in the public sphere on the crisis of trust, especially in **governmental institutions**. What could these institutions specifically do on the local level to increase citizens' trust? Does that also apply to the **national** level? And what about the **EU** level? (NOTE: *the same question for all three levels, one by one*).

Generally speaking, can social movements help increase citizens' trust in governmental institutions?

Can you give us an example of how social movements can help increase citizens' trust in governmental institutions?

Attitudes towards expertise

(NOTE: *Through this segment, we want to investigate the perception of experts and their role in society, and in social movements. The focus is on understanding whether experts are seen as trustworthy actors and how social movements benefit from their expertise. Key findings should tell us what is the specific role of experts in building trust in society. - approx. 15 minutes).*

There is a heated debate on the importance and the role of expertise and scientific knowledge, especially when it comes to trust building in society.

What do you think should be the role of expertise and scientific knowledge in decision-making processes in society?

Does your movement trust in and rely on scientific expertise? Please explain.

Do you have any experts in the movement?

Do they have a different role compared to other members?

Democracy, engagement and change

(NOTE: Through this segment, we aim to find out more on the preferred models of democracy and how the participants perceive the need for change; we investigate the conditions for greater democratic participation of citizens. Key finding should tell us WHAT institutions, movements and citizens can do to increase participation in decision-making processes. - approx. 40 minutes).

There is a lot of criticism aimed at representative democracy and how it functions today. Do you think that voting is the most important form of political participation in democratic societies?

Is there any other form of participation that is critical to the functioning of democracy other than voting? Please explain.

In your opinion, to what degree are citizens **capable** of making democratic political decisions? *(NOTE: Investigate the trust in citizens' capacities to act in an informed, competent, democratic and empowered way. If **nobody** understands the question, ask: Are they competent to make democratic decisions?)*

What would **empower** citizens to become more involved in the decision-making processes?

Does this count for all levels of governance - local, national, European?

What should governmental institutions do to involve citizens more in decision-making processes?

Would you say that social movements are successful at bringing more citizens' voices to the institutions? Why do you think so?

Closing the focus group

(NOTE: At the end of the discussion, summarise of the key points of the conversation, especially regarding trust. Ask each of the participants to give final reflection. Thank them all for taking part in the discussion. - approx. 10 minutes).