

MORI

The EU - Perceptions of the BBC's Reporting

Research Study Conducted for theBBC

BBC

October - November 2004



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Introduction

This report presents the key findings of research from a programme of qualitative research carried out by MORI on behalf of the BBC.

Background and Objectives

This research is an exploration of how licence fee payers perceive the BBC's coverage of Europe and the EU.

There are three key components to the research:

- To what extent is the BBC's coverage of the EU perceived as impartial
- How accessible is the BBC's coverage of the EU
- How do these points differ across the BBC's news and current affairs output and across the BBC's broadcasting platforms, specifically television and radio.

The key questions that were addressed as part of this research are:

- Are there any gaps in the coverage, and how does this impact on knowledge and understanding?
- Does the BBC give sufficient background information to give a story meaning?
- Does the BBC reflect a wide range of political opinion on the key issues surrounding the EU?
- Is the format of EU coverage what the audience requires (interviews, debate, expert opinion)?
- What image of the EU does the BBC convey to its audience? and
- What could the BBC do to improve its coverage?

During the groups, representative clips from BBC radio and TV coverage of the EU (taken from between April and October 2004) were played. The topic guide and details of the clips used in each group is appended.

Methodology

Ten discussion groups were conducted with members of the general public in all four nations and regions of the UK. Each discussion group lasted an hour and a half. Members of the public were recruited to represent different education levels, a range of engagement levels with current affairs and the EU in general, and their overall attitude towards the EU. The table below details the composition of the groups, as well as when and where they were conducted. **It is important to note that all the people interviewed watch BBC news.**

Group Composition			
Group	General Composition	Date	Location
1	High Education. Follow & understand current affairs and affairs of the EU at least a little bit. Positive towards the EU.	26 October 2004	London
2	Low awareness of the EU. A mixture of attitudes towards the EU.	26 October 2004	London
3	Low awareness of the EU. A mixture of attitudes towards the EU.	2 November 2004	Leicester
4	Negative attitude towards the EU.	2 November 2004	Leicester
5	Low awareness of the EU. A mixture of attitudes towards the EU.	4 November 2004	Aberystwyth
6	Have low education levels. Don't follow & understand current affairs and affairs of the EU at all or don't know. Negative attitude towards the EU.	4 November 2004	Aberystwyth
7	Have high education levels. Follow & understand current affairs and affairs of the EU at least a little bit. A mixture of attitudes towards the EU.	28 October 2004	Belfast
8	Have low education levels. Don't follow & understand current affairs and affairs of the EU at all or don't know. Positive attitude towards the EU.	28 October 2004	Belfast
9	Have high education levels. Follow & understand current affairs and affairs of the EU at least a little bit. Negative attitude towards the EU.	3 November 2004	Aberdeen
10	Low awareness of the EU. A mixture of attitudes towards the EU.	3 November 2004	Aberdeen

Source: MORI

Interpretation of the Data

Qualitative research involves an interactive process between the moderators carrying out the research and those being researched. It provides a way of probing the underlying attitudes of participants, and obtaining an understanding of the issues of importance. The real value of qualitative research is that it allows insight into attitudes, and the reasons for these, which could not be probed in as much depth with a structured questionnaire.

However, it must be remembered that qualitative research is designed to be illustrative rather than statistically representative. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with perceptions rather than facts, though these perceptions *are* facts to those who hold them.

Throughout the report, use is made of verbatim comments from participants. These have been selected to exemplify a particular view of a body of participants, although it is important to remember that the views expressed do not always represent the views of the participants as a whole. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, these comments are anonymous.

Publication of the Data

As the BBC has engaged MORI to undertake an objective programme of research, it is important to protect the BBC's interests by ensuring that it is accurately reflected in any press release or publication of findings. As part of our standard terms and conditions of contract, the publication of the findings of this research is therefore subject to the advance approval of MORI and the BBC. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

Executive Summary

The BBC has commissioned MORI to explore audience perceptions of BBC news coverage of the European Union.

The three core areas of the research are the impartiality, the perceived quality and the accessibility of the BBC's coverage of the EU. However, we discovered that, in the majority of cases, people's knowledge and understanding of the EU is so low that it severely limits their ability to make a judgement on the impartiality of the BBC's coverage. Lack of understanding tends to translate into low interest and limited consumption. This in turn severely limits the majority's ability to compare the relative qualities of the BBC's EU coverage across its three platforms (television, radio and online), or to judge the BBC's coverage against that of other broadcasters.

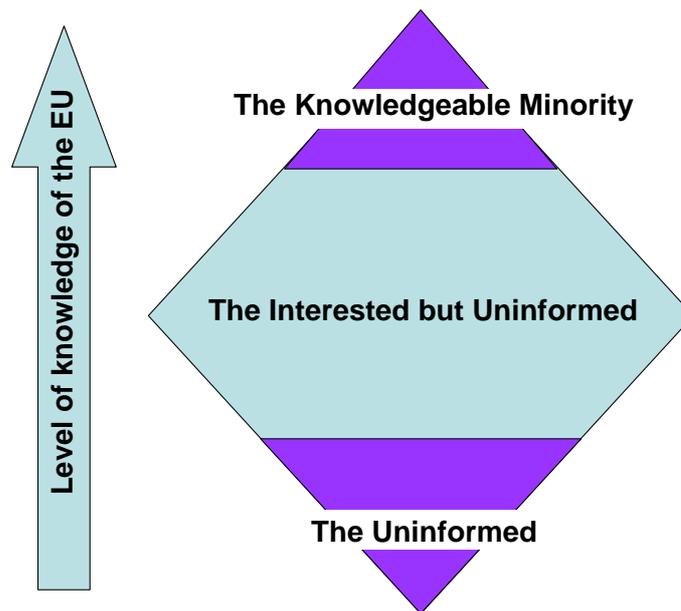
We therefore view the issue of accessibility to be the cornerstone of this report. Because only the *knowledgeable minority* are able to make informed judgements on BBC reporting of the EU, to present their views as typical of our groups as a whole would be unfair.

We have adopted a stratified approach to the analysis of this research, represented by the diagram below. The research points to three main 'types' of audience in relation to EU output. These are:

- the *knowledgeable minority*, who tend to be more aware and informed about the EU and information given about the EU. They also tend to be more critical of both the EU and the BBC's coverage of the EU
- the *interested but uninformed majority*, representing a large element of the population who absorb some information about EU policies through the media. However, they are also likely to be confused and hold misperceptions due to a lack of understanding of the fundamentals of the EU
- the *uninformed* are those who know very little, if anything, about the EU. Some of this group do not think it is worth knowing about the EU which they see as irrelevant to them and to the UK.

It is also worth highlighting our assumption that beyond the *uninformed* there is another large section of the British public who do not watch the news or take any interest in current affairs, and as such are even less informed and less interested in knowing about it.

The diamond hierarchy



Each ‘type’ presents a different challenge if the BBC is to help make information about the EU accessible, and keep the public informed of important political decisions. Therefore, this report is structured to discuss each of the three types in turn. Below is a summary of the key findings within each.

The knowledgeable minority

The *knowledgeable minority* tend to hold strong views and distrust the media and the establishment. They often focus on perceived corruption and deception within the EU and British politics as a whole. They express the view that the BBC is both pro Labour and pro EU. Indeed, they tend to feel that the BBC is in the government’s pocket, and relate this to the perception that this is linked with the licence fee and funding.

This group tend to have a high engagement with news and current affairs, and have a high level of education. They tend to consume the BBC’s news and current affairs coverage. That said, they feel there often is not enough depth, detail and balance in their coverage. They feel that television is least able to offer in-depth coverage, which they perceive as more the remit of radio and the internet.

This group perceive themselves as politically sophisticated. They can easily interpret concise and simple coverage as Government spin, or as a ‘dumbed down’ approach. They do not feel this approach is congruent with their self-image as educated people, both generally and in respect of the EU, who can make informed decisions. This group welcome the idea of discussion and debate,

but in practice they can be negative about programmes such as Question Time and Newsnight which they say can be superficial.

This audience segment feel that the BBC is pro EU. This is related to their perception that the BBC's output is "controlled" by the government.

It is not clear if this perception of a lack of impartiality reflects an inherent problem with BBC coverage, or this group's pre-existing antipathy to the EU. However, it is clearly a problem for the BBC that it has not succeeded in convincing the most knowledgeable section of its audience for EU coverage that the BBC is impartial in this area.

That said, this group do feel that the BBC, along with Channel 4, is better than 'dumbed down' ITV.

The interested but uninformed majority

Most people sit in the middle of our model. They can recall information – albeit sketchily - on current EU issues. Despite being interested, they find the information confusing. This tends to reflect a lack of basic knowledge.

There is also an anti EU feeling among this group. They refer to the EU as "bureaucratic", offering "jobs for the boys" and offering the UK a poor financial deal. They recognise its importance, and feel they should know more about it, but find it hard to play "catch up".

This group hold the BBC in high regard, and trust it. However, they do not find the EU coverage accessible. This is exacerbated by the media assuming the audience has a better understanding of the issues, the language used, and short summaries than it actually has. Many of the clips resulted in confused debate. They are not sure enough about the issues around the EU to pass comment on the partiality of its EU coverage. They tend to believe that, given it's the BBC, it "must" be balanced.

The *interested but uninformed majority* hold a wide array of opinions, with differing levels of conviction ranging from the apathetic to the vigorous. However, the main characteristic is that despite knowing and following some of the stories emerging from the EU, a lack of understanding about the fundamental workings of the EU often translates into misinterpretation and misperceptions.

This is compounded since this group often feels that they should know more than they actually do about the EU, but feel too embarrassed to seek clarification. They would like to know and understand more about the EU and how it relates to them, but they are unclear how to get this information. There is also a recognition that it is not always feasible to portray all the facts within a news story. On the other hand their current lack of engagement means they are unlikely to seek out further information on the BBC website.

The *interested but uninformed majority* recognise their lack of knowledge, and want more information about the EU. They suggested dedicating regular slots within existing news programmes (at times when respondents knew they would be on) to increase familiarity with issues of the EU and allow stories to be tracked and monitored through to their conclusion. The research also points to a desire for programmes on the history and workings of the EU.

The uninformed

Within the *uninformed* there are two distinct sub-groups: those who feel that the EU is neither relevant, nor connected, to them; and those who recognise that it may be important to them, if not now, then in the future.

Both sub-groups have very poor levels of knowledge about current issues and stories relating to the EU, awareness of its workings or sphere of influence. On the other hand, this audience has a low level of engagement generally with politics and current affairs, although they do watch the news “every now and then”.

They find the coverage of the EU, and complex nature of the workings and policies of the EU, complicated in themselves, perhaps too ‘political’ and a “turn off”. Basic contextual information is needed if they are to gain an understanding of the EU.

They also need programmes that engage them. A sense of how the EU affects their locality or “the man on the street” might help them feel that the EU is more relevant to them personally. This might make it seem less like “politics” and less remote. Suggestions were that this could be done by using real life examples and by focusing on the impact of the EU on everyday life and people, particularly financially. In this way the BBC might help to engage and inform this group and generate some level of interest.

Less jargon, fewer acronyms and more use of everyday language is important in to the engagement process.

Moreover, because the uninformed tend not to be regular viewers of news and current affairs they may need to be engaged through other programming, such as docu-dramas. For the *uninformed*, the issue of impartiality is irrelevant. Rather, the key issues are accessibility, understanding, education, and engagement.

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Annabelle Phillips

Suzanne Hall

Nathan Burrough

Dan Young

The 'Knowledgeable Minority'

This group tends to be highly engaged with news and current affairs, and have a high level of education. High consumption of EU content is restricted to this segment of the audience. They tend to hold strong views, often of a cynical nature. Indeed, their interest in the EU is often driven by their disagreement with its philosophy and policies. They are highly likely to think of the BBC as biased. They are aware of the large and complex range of views and arguments which can be aired on the subject of the EU and sometimes see the BBC as over-simplifying complex arguments.

The research found that many of this group tend towards a distrust of the media and government in general. In many cases, people from the *knowledgeable minority* have professional reasons for their interest in politics generally and the EU. They often work in industries or professions directly affected by EU legislation such as farming, fishing or engineering, or have lived in Europe in the past.

Despite being the most cynical towards the media, this group have the highest media consumption.

Attitudes towards Politics and the BBC

This group's distrust of government appears to affect their perceptions of the BBC. This group are suspicious of the relationship between the current Labour Government and the BBC. Some tell anecdotes which suggest the BBC was used during the 1997 election to provide positive coverage of the Labour party. Because this group perceive a symbiotic relationship between the BBC and the Labour government, they assume that the BBC has a pro Labour, and hence a pro EU, stance. This leads to a perception of a 'circular' relationship - whereby the EU itself, the government, the BBC and its coverage are all seen to be connected in some way and to be 'spinning' stories.

Is the BBC being vetoed by someone else as to what they air to the public?

Male, High education, London

The BBC is very left wing, the Chairman is a big Labour supporter, obviously it's not up to the presenter

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

I think Campbell started it and Mandelson, they have manipulated [the media] ruthlessly and they have behaved shamelessly. They're not independent. They're not independently reporting things, they're doing the will of the government

Male, High education, Aberdeen

BBC gives the views of the government I think. They are the British Broadcasting Corporation. Maybe more recently they have started to give other views but they are not held as accountable as the other independent channels – they are held for standards. Generally I think they give the government's view

Female, High education, Belfast

Some of this group fear that the government has some control over the stance of the BBC, and ultimately of its output. This has a knock-on effect for coverage of the EU. Some argue that the relationship between the government and the BBC prevents the public being able to make an informed decision on the United Kingdom's membership of the EU.

I think the BBC runs the risk of being subservient, when the Tories were in there was a lot of pressure on the BBC to balance things up towards them and politically there is always going to be that factor because Parliament regulates the licence fee

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

You're obviously going to be more biased to the person that's paying are you not?

Female, High education, Aberdeen

Essentially the television tax or the television fee is a tax on the people of this country purely so that the government has control and can maintain control over its own media. And that's a tax we are paying directly to the government for it to control our thoughts.

Male, High education, Aberdeen

Those in Northern Ireland are particularly likely to feel that the BBC in general has a bias towards Britishness.

I think the BBC do get a wide range of views but the BBC has a moral high ground of the media almost to me, its institutionalised as a set of values that represent Britain and no matter what they report or who's view they report you've got that central thread kind of throwing back in towards it – through all of their news. British, conservative, very Christian point of view – I think that reflects on everything they report. I am not saying they deliberately stick to that they do go outside of that a little bit but that is constantly there

Female, High education, Belfast

However, despite these, initially negative, views, this audience segment are high consumers of the BBC and its news and current affairs output. Indeed, this is often over and above, and in preference to, other channels.

Personally I don't watch the news on other channels

Male, High education, London

I find that the BBC news is quite good to listen to and quite informative

Female, High education, Aberdeen

I listen to Radio 4 in the morning, I watch BBC evening news when I get a chance and BBC World ... for corporate issues and things

Male, High education, London

There are some elements of BBC's news and current affairs programmes that they particularly like, especially their factual content.

I really do like politics, especially European things. I've noticed a lot of people don't like them and I like to be really informed about whatever I like and the BBC, well the only sort of place that I can go, I think. You know like Radio Five Live, Newsnight. That will give you the facts... that's what you just need to know.

Male, High education, London

That said, this group also levels some criticism of the BBC's news and current affairs coverage in general.

I think they're softer than Channel 4. I find Channel 4's got more hard edge. BBC 1's news I have found lately they're just soft edge and a bit fuzzy. They no longer have that biting edge that the BBC used to have. And Panorama's gradually moved up to it's practically in the middle of the night now

Female, High education, Leicester

You take something to a point where it loses its meaning because they have to hurry through everybody so quickly they don't get to the nub of the thing [Question Time]

Male, High education, Aberdeen

But on the whole, they feel that the BBC's coverage is aimed at intelligent people, unlike ITV which they perceive to be 'dumbing down' the issues. Channel 4 also receives some positive comments.

I watch it sometimes [Channel Four News]. I think you get good journalism. They do a lot of special reports and investigations that you don't get. And I think the worst news I consider is ITV, it's just a joke ITV News, it's like they're talking down to you, you're little kids

Female, High education, Aberdeen

This group is very aware of the prominence that has been given to the coverage of the US elections. However, they do not necessarily feel this was appropriate in relation to other news.

I've just read tonight in fact that the BBC sent 188 reporters to America to cover the American elections. I couldn't imagine any circumstances at all where the BBC would send that many reporters to cover anything in Europe which is a lot more important to us than America. It's a true fact that when America sneezes the rest of the world gets a cold but that is absolute nonsense

Male, High education, Aberdeen

Just like at present the way they are doing with the Presidency in America they are showing you at present because it is the big thing. If there were big things happening in Europe they would probably show you

Male, High education, Belfast

They do call for more coverage of the EU. That said, BBC appears to show more coverage of the EU than other broadcasters.

Well the BBC news 24 has a programme called Hard Talk on it. They talk about the EU a few times. But you would never see any documentary programmes or Insight or Spotlight or anything like that

Female, High education, Belfast

BBC news do a thing in the morning where they have been taking a bit of the new Constitution and changes to it and breaking it down.

Female, High education, Belfast

When I watch Newsnight I find that better in that they quite often do have a European story and they quite often interview someone who's got something interesting to say on the subject. So I think this isn't just about Europe I think it's about news generally but quite often an awful lot of it is someone in the studio interviewing another BBC or ITV journalist telling us what they think about it

Female, High education, London

Access Across Different Platforms

The *knowledgeable minority*, while considerable consumers of the BBC's news outputs recognise the restrictions inherent in this form of broadcasting: it needs to cover a large amount of information in a short amount of time for the majority of the population. They therefore feel it often does not meet their sophisticated knowledge needs.

I think it's difficult as you are hearing politicians speaking and they are going to use that jargon. It's not the BBC's fault [they can't] stop everyone and explain what GDP means

Male, High education, Belfast

If more people in the country understand much more about Europe and what it intends then simply the fact that they've gone out of their way to learn that would galvanise them into perhaps getting together in groups first of all and then bigger masses, and that's what changes things

Male, High education, Aberdeen

The news is sometimes a “signpost” – i.e. it alerts them of the nub of the issue, and they can then seek further information via the internet. This informed audience are the only group to use the BBC's other news channels.

If I wanted to find something in particular I would go online. If you go online you can look back at stuff, whereas with News on TV you have to take what's on that day.

Male, High education, Belfast

But for some, the perceived breadth of coverage offered via the Internet (not necessarily just the BBC website) or newspapers is their primary source of news.

I look at BBC website everyday and it's identical to the reports on their channels.

Female, High education, Belfast

If I wanted to find something in particular I would go online. If you go online you can look back at stuff, whereas with News on TV you have to take what's on that day

Male, High education, Belfast

I would go onto the Guardian (website). They have their archives and their talks sections and discussions so if you wanted to get different sides to the story or comments on it it's good

Female, High education, Belfast

There was some debate over the pros and cons of television versus radio, and some of this is down to personal preference. Again, however, some see them having very different roles.

I think radio's better [than TV], I listen to the radio in the mornings and because they haven't got the raazzmatazz that you see on the telly.

Female, Aware of current affairs, Leicester

No, I couldn't go home and sit and listen for like half an hour or something to a radio because I would have so much other stuff to do. I can sit and watch the television but then you're focusing on something whereas I couldn't sit and listen to them telling you the facts for that, a long time or anything

Female, High education, Aberdeen

Attitudes towards the EU

A negative stance towards the EU appears to be driven by two key elements: negative media coverage and a cynical attitudes towards politics generally. Many say they see the EU as just another layer of bureaucracy.

This audience are more likely to remember negative coverage: stories of perceived corruption and deception tend to be mentioned spontaneously.

I remember seeing about Peter Mandelson being appointed. You see about Patten being taken out and getting a peerage, and the other fellow, whatever his name was. You see them putting vast amounts of money into countries for growing things. Then they decide they're not growing the things they paid them the money for

Male, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

There's a thing that I've really got a bee in my bonnet about and that is the European Commissioner that had to resign because it was corrupt, right? Neil Kinnock was appointed to sort out the corruption within the Commission. He has done absolutely nothing about it. There's a French woman called Marta Andreasen who was responsible for the accounts of the Commission. For three or four years she refused to sign the accounts because they were wrong and nobody has done a thing about it. And the poor woman was sacked eventually and they touted round in Europe for somebody to sign the accounts of the Commission. And Kinnock who was an anti European, 12 years ago you'd have heard him ranting and raving about being anti-Europe. Now him and his wife, she's an MP, they're raking in about half a million pounds each now, they're

loving the gravy train and been offered a huge pension and he's come out of that job having failed miserably

Male, High education, Aberdeen

They tend to hold a fatalistic view that, although they might not want the EU, it is becoming more powerful and is here to stay. This drives their desire to keep informed.

They're gaining more and more power weekly because that's what they intend to do and there's nobody to stop them

Male, High education, Aberdeen

I think it will be like decimalisation, it creeps up on you. But I think unfortunately there's such a lot of apathy now that, particularly amongst the young people, they don't care. They really don't care but it's their future

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

That for me is the thing that makes me quite worried. The fact that people aren't aware because there's a lot of things sneaking up on us

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

Impartiality of the BBC's EU Coverage

As might be expected, this group tend to project their attitudes towards the BBC's political coverage generally onto their views of the BBC's EU coverage.

BBC has quite a biased attitude towards the EU

Female, High education, Belfast

They demand 'balance' in all programming and are quick to pick up on any hint of perceived bias, usually represented by length of time spent on different viewpoints, or programmes that they perceive as suggesting that one view is more 'correct'.

I would say it was 75% sort of pro Europe and the last 25% was trying to make an argument against it

Male, High education, Aberdeen

Boris Johnson was the only anti, we saw him for about a sound bite. They're not accountable and that's all we heard from the anti. The rest were all presuming it's going to go ahead anyway so, you know, it's very, very pro

Male, High education, Leicester

[Euro sceptics] are not portrayed very often on the BBC. You take the United Kingdom Independence Party, now that never got a mention virtually until Kilroy-Silk got involved and it's been in existence quite some time

Male, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

This group say that BBC journalists do not provide enough depth or detail in their coverage. They want increased rigour and a stop to MPs and MEPs being given what they see as 'an easy ride' by reporters and interviewers. It is suggested that interviewers, and ultimately the BBC, have 'gone soft'. People such as Sir David Frost are cited as being too 'chummy' with his interviewees and less willing to ask (and follow up) difficult or awkward questions. Jeremy Paxman and John Humphrys are cited as the exception to this rule, although to some of the *knowledgeable minority* their position is weakened as they are perceived to be reined in by their superiors within the corporation.

And nobody's been brave enough to stand up to Campbell. He came onto Channel 4 news and Jon Snow who I admire as a broadcaster and I think Channel 4 news is the best news programme but for once he backed off Campbell and he allowed Campbell to come on there rant and rave at the BBC who had actually helped them get into power all those years ago and then Jeremy Paxman he backed off Campbell. Two of the toughest interviewers and they gave him the easiest ride possible. I think it's absolutely appalling what that man can do.

Male, High education, Aberdeen

Especially from the BBC because of course it is the national programmes. Jeremy Paxman who was mentioned earlier and I can't remember who by, he's probably the most scathing interviewer that's left within the country, but the government is not going to allow him to have his way under any circumstances especially from the embarrassment he used to get from Robin Day who was the last person who was anything like it

Male, High education, Aberdeen

That said, when played certain clips of BBC's coverage a different picture starts to emerge, as they give positive feedback on some of them. This group tend to be more positive towards radio as a format. They feel that the BBC can dedicate more time to EU issues on the radio, reflecting its niche audience, while television is more restrictive as it has a wider following. The following couple of comments represent views expressed after hearing a John Humphrys interview with Neil Kinnock on Radio 4.

I thought it was fantastic, I loved it! They need to explain everything and try to explain constantly why he would account for everything, really argue with him

Female, High education, Belfast

He was challenging everything that man said because that man was telling a pack of lies. And that's, to me that is exciting broadcasting because I'm sick and tired of being fed this diet of dumbed down government propaganda all the time

Male, High education, Aberdeen

They are trying to look at the spin that is coming out and trying to pull it apart and trying to find the truth.

Male, High education, Belfast

What this Audience Wants

The *knowledgeable minority* are demanding of their news coverage. They want sophisticated arguments to be presented, and say that coverage should be explicitly signaled as impartial - as well as balanced in terms of the amount of time spent on different points of view. They feel that they have the skills and knowledge to be able to reach informed decisions. They are very sensitive to any hint of journalistic judgement presented as fact, and say that this is an attempt to 'spoon feed' or 'bias' the public.

My view is that the BBC is there to present the news and not to have opinions about it. The opinions should be actually made by the listener

Male, Negative attitude towards the EU, London

In their response to the stimulus material shown, stories that were perceived to be skating over the issues and providing little detail were criticised by this group.

For me it glosses over what they are talking about. A series of headings with no explanation

Female, High education, Belfast

The presenters are aiming for maximum effect, the hit effect. What's going to grab anybody's attention most whether it be by horror or frustration or whatever. They're not really interested in putting across a really balanced news view

Male, High education, Aberdeen

We're getting nothing

Female, High education, London

This audience segment craves the finer points of debate. The *knowledgeable minority* respond favourably when they feel an intelligent argument or discussion is taking place. In most instances, this group cited the radio broadcasts from breakfast programmes – Breakfast (Radio Five Live) and the Today programme as examples of this. Programmes that feature a range of experts, who represent a variety of political stances or opinions were popular. For this group, the

mainstream discussion programmes, such as Newsnight, were not perceived to go far enough into the subtleties of debate.

The Today programme was seen as the leading exponent of this style of journalism, and the majority of the *knowledgeable minority* already regularly listen to this programme.

To me, that's real broadcasting because that's a guy trying to put a plug on the verbal diarrhoea coming out of Neil Kinnock

Male, High education, Aberdeen

John Humphrys is my hero

Female, High education, London

Some of the clips from Newsnight were praised for bringing issues to the fore, though one clip was criticised for lack of depth. This illustrates the subtle line this group draw between what they see as 'debate' and what they see as 'raising key issues'. Despite this, the group are very much able to acknowledge the limitations and conventions of television news.

It at least gave you enough information to go away and look elsewhere and find out more information from the Internet.... Given the small amount of time, there is only so much you could do

Male, High education, Belfast

I think the new interactive TV, press the red button and find out more information, then I would be happy to perhaps hear the short abridged version and if I wanted to know more on that then I'd perhaps press the red button and have a look

Female, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

If I wanted to find something in particular I would go online. If you go online you can look back at stuff, whereas with News on TV you have to take what's on that day

Male, High education, Belfast

The 'Interested but Uninformed'

It would seem that a large proportion of the public have very little understanding of the structure, workings and purpose of the EU and the issues that surround it. The knowledge that is held is often confused and jumbled and, in practice, does not stand up to rigorous interrogation. Therefore, this group find it difficult to make judgements on the impartiality of the BBC's reporting – not only because of their lack of knowledge, but also their emotional and physical distance from the issues under discussion.

Although the *interested but uninformed* have little knowledge of the EU, they do have a rounded knowledge of other news and current affairs stories and are able to recall details of stories concerning the US election and Iraq. This may reflect the perceived relevance of those stories and/or the perceived weight (airtime and column inches) given to them by the media.

Awareness and Understanding

Even among those who claim to have high knowledge levels of current affairs and affairs of the EU, specific knowledge about the structure, workings and purpose is often muddled and incomplete. Presented with contradictory but often equally inaccurate views by other members of the groups, conversations quickly become confused and respondents often backtracked from their original stance. In most cases, members of the *interested but uninformed* did not have sufficient confidence and conviction in their knowledge of the EU, to describe it, or to justify/defend it when questioned or challenged.

F *Well they're appointed rather than elected are not they...*

M *But they have to vote it, they have to vote it.*

M *All the countries have to vote.*

M *No, I just thought they were appointed, like Kinnock.*

M *He wasn't a commissioner.*

M *He wasn't the EEC commissioner*

High education, London

Generally, the *interested but uninformed* receive their information from a variety of sources. Many are able to recall coverage from news programmes on both television and radio and, in addition to this, headlines from both national and local newspapers serve to increase their knowledge.

Many in this group perceive that the EU is a complex and intimidating structure and this, in turn, results in a lack of engagement. While many do have a basic level of knowledge, there is a keen sense among this group that they should know more than they actually do about the EU. As such, they often feel too embarrassed to seek clarification when in conversation. In practice, this means

that EU coverage often goes over their heads, and they lose patience with it which consequently hampers their ability to explore the issues at stake in more detail.

I can't remember how many states are in it but it's about to take on 10 new ones wasn't it?

Female, High education, Belfast

Yeah it's definitely something to do with the EU I'm not quite sure what

Female, High education, London

This applies to the EU in a way that it does not to other major news stories such as the war in Iraq. Many perceive the Iraq war to be more relevant to their daily lives than EU affairs. Perhaps this is because some in the groups had relatives in the armed forces themselves, or at least have friends that do, and this is an issue that impacts personally on them. On the other hand, this may also reflect the differing amounts of prominence and coverage Iraq and the EU receive in the media.

But Iraq, there's so many people got relatives, I've got a nephew out there and you do want to know. Even though you do not agree with the war and that you still want to know what's going on

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

Attitudes towards the EU

For many, top-of-mind associations with the EU centre on perceptions of remoteness, both geographically and conceptually. In England, it is seen as having little relevance to everyday life: people do not feel 'European'. Furthermore, for many in other parts of the UK, London and central government are seen as remote, and Brussels even more so.

I think it feels quite remote from us... you do not hear much about it and understand much about ... It doesn't seem to affect your daily life

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

We have no attitude at the moment to be European. We do not want to be called European. You go to France and you're called European. And you come here and you're anti European

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

I'm not a European, I'm a Welshman

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

However, for a few in Scotland and Wales, the perceived distance from Westminster might prompt them to choose to adopt the term ‘European’ rather than ‘British’. While this could reflect an anti-English stance rather than a conscious pro-European position, it does demonstrate a potential here to engage these people.

I would rather consider myself as a European because what's going on down in London half the time has got absolutely nothing to do with me at all

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

Indeed, across the board, this sense of emotional and physical distance from the EU certainly goes some way to explaining this group’s lack of engagement with the issues. This remoteness leads them to believe that they are powerless to affect change and, as such, they demonstrate a great deal of apathy towards engagement with the EU on the most basic levels: many are unaware who their local MEP is and low turnouts at European elections are cited as being indicative of this.

There's still a huge amount of young people out there that are completely turned off, completely turned off

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

The turnout was so low for the European elections as well. It shows that a lot of people don't care about it or don't understand it

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

Aside from this issue of feeling cut-off from the EU, many perceive the EU to be bureaucratic and often equate this with corruption. When describing the EU phrases such as ‘gravy train’ and ‘jobs for the boys’ are commonplace. The arrival in Brussels of Peter Mandelson, who they associate with political ‘sleaze’ exacerbates this.

It's a huge bureaucratic monster

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

It's a vast bureaucracy isn't it, people lining their own pockets. It's totally corrupt

Male, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

The only thing I remember was about Mandelson

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

They're loving the gravy train and being offered a huge pension

Male, High education, London

A sense that the UK loses out financially as a result of its membership with the EU further aggravates an anti EU feeling.

I do not see how it's fair that a country like Britain puts, I think, £15bn a year into Europe and gets back nine whereas a place like Greece puts seven in and gets 11 back. Do not add up to me, it's wrong, the economics are wrong

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

Well, it seems like we're giving too much away to other countries and stuff. That annoys me to a certain extent because I just think what about us? What about us?

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

I should imagine because we pay more tax we're probably paying more in and do not seem to be getting anything out of it

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

Only a handful attempt to defend the redistributive aspects of the EU.

It's a bit like the National Health [Service], you might go all your life and never be ill, but the people next door might have a child who needs medicine and costs 10,000 a year and couldn't afford it if we didn't all put in, so the Euro works a bit like that, poor areas get developed and the richer ones do not see much

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

Aligned to perceptions regarding the financial implications of the EU are questions about the possible adoption of the euro in the UK. Some of this group are obviously aware of its significance and are able to recall news stories about price increases following the introduction of the EU in other member states.

Well the most important thing that people are working for is money and if you were maybe working for euro that would be a different ball game you know. When they joined the euro it was worth £1.60 or 1.60 euro to a pound. Now it is 1.41 so now it dropping

Male, Low education, Belfast

However, many remain unclear about future policy and implementation: some assume that it will result in the price of cigarettes and alcohol dropping to the same prices as mainland Europe.

I was in Dublin when they changed from the Irish Punt to the euro and that was two or three years ago. And then I went back again this year and they said across there it's the best thing that's happened

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

However, despite the fact that currently there is much confusion about the financial ramifications of belonging to the EU and the possible introduction of the euro, this is one of the key areas that can engage this group. As stated previously, on the whole this group struggles to see how the EU is relevant to them. One area in which they express an interest is in its financial implications for the UK, particularly how EU policies might impact on their personal finances.

When do we get to know what joining really means to us all as individuals? Are we going to be paying more tax or less tax? Is food going to be more expensive or less expensive? And if we can see that there's going to be a benefit then we'll be all for it. But if it's not going to be a benefit then they'll probably vote not to join.

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

How is it going to affect people's pensions?

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

I think if the European Union got the power to lower and raise our taxes I think we'd be more interested if they'd got the power to do things like that

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

What happens here maybe will affect us in ten years' time ... you do not feel like it's something like taxes, it's not going to change your life tomorrow. It seems it's very slow moving or whatever

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

Attitudes towards Coverage of the EU

A large number of the *interested but uninformed* do feel drawn towards the BBC and its coverage. Many speak of a position of trust that the BBC holds. This partly reflects the history of the BBC, and a relationship between broadcaster and audience which has been there since childhood. This means that the BBC is largely seen as a trusted organisation by this group.

I'm a BBC man because there are reporters on the BBC that I like and I trust. Those are the people that I want to listen to and that I believe

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

Tradition, because we only used to have BBC, we never had anything else. So I think it's a thing that stems from. Got to watch the news... could only be BBC news.

Female, Low education levels, Aberystwyth

I think I've just grown up with the BBC..... It's so well respected throughout the world

Female, Negative attitudes towards the EU, Leicester

While their trust of the BBC undoubtedly comes from a historical connection with the organisation, it is in some ways perpetuated today by the 'trustworthy' nature and appearance of the presenters themselves.

I think the BBC presenters...they're pleasing to the eye, they're well spoken, educated

Female, Mixed education, Leicester

Well, if Huw Edwards is doing it it's bound to be right

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

I think the [BBC] presenters are far better than anybody else's

Male, Aware of current affairs, Aberystwyth

However, this group find the issue of impartiality of the BBC's coverage of the EU too abstract a concept. Their grasp of the issues is not sufficient for them to be able to pass comment. Even upon probing, the majority of this group are insufficiently informed (or perhaps unconcerned, or perhaps both) to be able to judge the impartiality of the BBC's coverage.

I think they usually try to give both points of view. They are as good as it gets I think

Male, High education, Belfast

A key area to be addressed is the language that is used in reporting. Many state that they have lost patience with the language used by both the media and politicians, which they perceive as jargon designed to exclude them.

I find it difficult to understand it or to follow it

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

He's voting on our behalf, well, what's he voting for? Or is he voting on our behalf? Who's telling him to vote? And what is he supposed to be voting for?

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

On subjects where respondents particularly lack knowledge, for example on the fundamentals of the European Constitution, there is clearly some confusion about what they are actually being told. Underlying this there appears to be a sense that people feel that they *should* understand the issues, but are too embarrassed or reticent to ask. There is also a sense that some of the issues are too complex to be covered in a news slot.

What's the right to life policy talking about, I don't know. You think this is the little things, all these policies, there's a lot more of them but I don't know what they are

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

I don't know if there is a bit more background, but it gave me a few facts

Male, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

They just cannot cover all these things in a 30 minute news bulletin

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

Where people do display some knowledge, such as on their medical rights abroad or on the UK's financial contribution to the EU, they tend to favour short and snappy summations of the main points.

I thought it was excellent. As an overview, you've got to look further but it was clear as a bell what the main issues were

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

He told us straight didn't he, that we're not getting as much money back as we should and the reason we're not getting it is because we're helping poorer states

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

It was quite short and sharp, to the point

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

While debate formats worked well with this group, they were more resistant to the two-ways with correspondents or interviews with a politician.

I think it's just that a lot more with a radio show as you say you do get more chance to have a debate. They're not going to have a debate on the news, you just want the pinpoints, what's going on in the day... So I think radio is able to portray a better picture than television

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

I think just one person in a monotonous tone going on then I wouldn't really be interested. If it was a discussion kind of like Jeremy Vine, I quite listening to him, but Radio 4 I don't really listen to

Female, Negative attitude towards the EU, Leicester

I think it's more entertaining because there were questions interjected into the discussion

Female, Negative attitude towards the EU, Leicester

They argue amongst each other but you do get information from it

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

The debate format, however, may be taken too far for some, particularly if the debate is perceived as developing into an argument between politicians and journalists rather than an informed discussion.

The interviewer, obviously he wanted a different answer, or he was not arguing, it was a good interview technique but when they start talking over one another I tend to switch off

Female, Negative attitude towards the EU, Leicester

Impartiality of the BBC's Coverage

Many of this group are currently floundering when it comes to understanding stories about the EU, and this leads them to 'turn off'. Increasing engagement, and therefore awareness and understanding, through helping people see the relevance of it and its policies on them personally will help to raise awareness and understanding. For example, there are communities, most notably where there is a strong farming or fishing industry, who recognise that the impact EU policies have on their way of life. In these cases they do not perceive that the EU is either irrelevant or remote, rather that current coverage is not tailored to their needs and fails to reflect local concerns. It is people in these communities who most want to increase their understanding of the EU in the future.

I think there are things in the European Union which are relevant to us, but like you say it's not reported

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

It is important. Look at the Turkish thing, I wish there was something about Wales in any of those clips that you've showed there I'd be more involved and I'd watch it perhaps a bit more. But the Turkish thing was the closest thing you got to it

Male, Low education level, Aberystwyth

I think the factual information is important because I think we all need to know the facts

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

It is important. It's very important if it affects our lives in the future. As a young person I do want to know what's going to be happening in the future

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

Their lack of information leads to a sense that the BBC's coverage must be fair, simply because it is being covered. This comes from the trust this group have in the BBC.

They do try give both sides. If there's ever any sort of argument against Europe's or ... nine or European Commission and all that, I would want to let everyone know. The BBC will at least mention it. Sometimes it's right at the very end and it's just a quick one liner

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

What this Audience Wants

The central issue for the BBC is how to make the material engaging for this audience which has a low tolerance for items that do not feel immediately relevant.

There's nothing in there that made me prick up my ears and think, "Oh, this would be worth listening to"

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

The research shows that there is clearly an information gap. The media appears to presume viewers' have a certain level of information, which is in fact lacking. Indeed, people are aware that they are not as knowledgeable as they might like. There are therefore calls for more detail. For example, many are unaware of the implications of the European Constitution, but recognise that it could affect them. As such they would appreciate an explanation of the issues at stake here.

I don't know if BBC journalists think that we'll all just switch off and think fuh ... and don't even listen to it, but it does seem to me, oh give the masses what they want to hear cos they don't really understand it anyway

Female, High education, London

I don't know if that was part of the script, why she didn't go into any of the sub headings in detail because those are the new issues

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

I don't think they gave enough background as to what was being changed... They don't break it down

Female, High education, London

There is a real need for reporting expressed in down-to-earth terms they can understand and relate to. Personal stories are also seen as being valuable and interesting, as well as more engaging.

Well that's the thing you see, in Germany the shopping bill is about 20% to 30% cheaper for the exact same ... that was shown clearly on BBC the other night

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

I personally feel the BBC do great documentaries and you know that they are good at looking at the human angle. I think if they were trying to do that a wee bit or more often in respect of their news programmes in relation to the EU it might just draw people in a wee bit more

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

If you can show somebody from everyday life that you perhaps associate with and they've got a story to tell you are going to probably listen

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

The 'Uninformed'

There are a number of people who have very little or no knowledge of the EU. Some state that they would like to know more as they feel that the EU will exert a greater influence on their lives in the future. However, others do not feel the EU is relevant to them and, as such, have no desire to learn more about it. This group tend to base their information according to what they have read in the tabloids. As such, there are a number of negative perceptions about the EU – stories about straight bananas and the erosion of British sovereignty being commonplace. Due to their lack of knowledge and, for some, lack of interest in the EU this group of people are not in a position to judge the impartiality of BBC coverage.

The *uninformed* form the base of our model and possess the least knowledge about the EU.

Awareness and Understanding

This lack of interest and understanding results in many not possessing even the most basic knowledge about the EU. For example, some are unsure as to whether Britain is a member or not.

It is because we are not in it

Male, Low education, Belfast

Unless it comes that we actually join it we wouldn't take much interest in it really

Female, Low education, Belfast

Aligned to this, there is a great deal of confusion with regards to the differences between the EU and the euro.

All I know is that they've all got the same currency

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

Is the euro a good thing or a bad thing?

Male, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

However, for some, it would appear that this lack of knowledge is not a result of a lack of available information.

It is there if you want to look for it

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

If you wanted to know more go on the internet and look it up and go 'oh that is what they were trying to say on the news there tonight'. But then how many people would actually do that after the news is over?

Female, Low education, Belfast

If you wanted more in depth you would have to look somewhere else

Female, Low education, Belfast

Moreover, it seems that some members of this group are simply unaware and/or unconcerned of the importance and influence of the EU and have made a conscious decision not to engage with any coverage broadcast. They cannot comprehend how what they perceive to be a remote organisation like the EU could impact on their lives and consequently fail to see the relevance of any coverage to them. Furthermore, this lack of engagement results in the fact that many see no reason why this situation should change – they are not concerned about their lack of knowledge.

Unless it really affects me and my way of life and my living or whatever I'm really not bothered about it to be honest with you

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

Well, I understood what was going on, yeah. But it doesn't affect me

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

I know very little about the EU. I do not really follow it at all

Male, Low education, Belfast

Yeah, it's not going to affect me really, so I do not really care. I'm not going to fret about it and worry

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

However there are others who, in spite of their current lack of knowledge, realise that the impact of the EU may increase in the future. These respondents are open to learning more about it and want more people generally to be 'taught' about the EU.

It's got a big impact but I couldn't tell you what

Male, High education, Aberdeen

But I think unfortunately there's such a lot of apathy now that, particularly amongst the young people, they don't care. They really don't care but it's their future. But it's such a, it's a nightmare, it's so complex

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

It's going to affect us in the near future, yeah, definitely

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

Attitudes to BBC Coverage

The uninformed group do watch the BBC. However, in some cases this is purely because they feel they have paid for it and therefore should watch it.

I would watch the BBC over ITV but purely because I pay for it

Female, Mixed education, Leicester

Despite occasional negativity, the overall view of the BBC among this group is mainly favourable.

I find to be fair that the BBC is about the best

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

The majority of the *uninformed* find the BBC's news programmes hard to digest and so turn to more accessible output from Channel 5, ITV and Sky, particularly those broadcasters that offer short, sharp summaries of the news.

Channel 5 they do a one-minute news which is actually quite interesting

Female, Mixed education, Leicester

Channel 5 I think they tell you the news and they've got like a bar going along the bottom with other items so they can get more in, but I think sometimes half an hour of news it can be a bit too much

Female, Mixed education, Leicester

I prefer to watch ITV news myself than BBC. I think it's far better. It's more modern, it doesn't get too heavy, it gives you the news but it doesn't go into it too much in-depth unless there's a major breaking story then I think they cover it really well. I don't like the BBC news. You watch BBC world news and nod off

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

I watch a lot of Sky, just press the button and you can watch basically whatever

Male, Low education, Aberystwyth

I want to watch Naked News at half past ten on Sky

Male, Mixed education, Leicester

Furthermore, some members of this segment find that they could not even separate the BBC from other broadcasters in terms of their output. However, this comes down to a dismissive attitude to all news and current affairs issues rather than considered opinion based on experience.

I don't have to be biased by BBC or ITV, I think the coverage on both sides is quite fair and equal

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

Their lack of information and engagement means they are unable to comment on the partiality of the BBC's coverage.

The thing is you don't know because you are not interested in what is happening there so you don't know if it is biased or not. If you knew more about it then you could say if you knew it was wrong

Male, Low educational level, Belfast

What this Audience Wants

As discussed above, there are two distinct groups within the *uninformed*. Those who, in spite of their lack of knowledge, demonstrate the potential to be engaged and informed in the future and those who fail to see the relevance of the EU and have no desire to increase their knowledge. We would suggest that the key to engaging both groups lies in presenting information that they can relate to and is expressed in language that is easily understandable.

I found that quite difficult to understand to be honest. I was trying to look, trying to sink it in

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

Material which does not meet this criteria is dismissed out of hand. For example, anything that fails to explain the issues and terminology does little to persuade this group that this subject ought to be something that they take an active interest in.

I don't understand about the vote part. So if someone wants to join the European Commission right and you want a referendum right? So say for Britain... like for Ireland, like Spain or wherever the country it is. If you want to vote for your own currency you should be allowed to do it if you want to.

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

More information in simple terms that I can understand

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Leicester

However, as the comments below show, there is a fine line to tread between offering an explanation and patronising this group. Many are fully aware that they do not know much about the EU – not as much as they should. Thus media coverage which assumes knowledge about the EU is viewed as being dismissive of their needs - as it only serves to highlight the gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

It was only for these high falutin business people living in big cities who understand jargon

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

I would just go and make a cup of tea while it was on

Female, Low education, Belfast

They are not grasping the audience's interest, to make them think, 'we might learn something from this'.

Female, High education, Belfast

However, there are other ways and means of engaging this group. For example, stories that used real-life examples worked well with this group.

If you can show somebody from everyday life that you perhaps associate with and they've got a story to tell you are going to probably listen

Female, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

Well as I've said before, I think the BBC don't do a lot to project the individual person that's here in this room, how it affects you, how it affects them they'll all be individual

Male, Low awareness of the EU, London

I personally feel the BBC do great documentaries and you know that they are good at looking at the human angle. I think if they were trying to do that a wee bit or more often in respect of their news programmes in relation to the EU it might just draw people in a wee bit more

Female, Low awareness of the EU, Aberdeen

They were more stories about ordinary people, news items about ordinary people and... how the government's laws etc that can affect ordinary people

Male, Low education levels, Aberystwyth

The man having his car impounded, we took a little bit more notice because it was somebody you could relate to

Female, Negative towards the EU, Leicester

This group also responded well to celebrity presenters.

If any one of those were Huw Edwards I'd be listening to him... Kate Adie, people like that, you believe in them because they're such good presenters

Female, Low education, Aberystwyth

People perceive politics as being boring and bland and men in grey suits, but he (Andrew Marr) can make it quite funny

Low awareness of the EU, Aberystwyth

Conclusions

Attitudes to the BBC's Coverage of the EU

The majority of the audience do not feel able to judge the BBC on its coverage of the EU – particularly in terms of impartiality – because EU coverage does not interest or engage them. The difficulty many have in discussing the EU and BBC's coverage stems from a lack of basic knowledge and understanding of the EU as an organisation and a lack of interest in the 'political' issues that surround it. The one drives the other – respondents' lack of knowledge and understanding acts as a barrier to generating their interest in the EU, while their lack of interest in the EU (and 'politics' generally) acts as a barrier to their being receptive to current affairs programmes that feature the EU.

The challenge for the BBC is to break this vicious circle. It needs to provide accessible, comprehensible information to enable the majority to get 'up-to-speed' with the issues at stake. Moreover, it needs to provide this in a way that is perceived to be relevant and meaningful to the 'man in the street'.

The minority who do absorb EU coverage tend to see the BBC as pro-government and therefore pro-EU – and not impartial. It is not clear if this reflects an inherent problem with the BBC coverage, or this group's pre-existing antipathy to the EU. However, it is clearly a problem for the BBC that it has not succeeded in convincing the most knowledgeable section of its audience for EU coverage that the BBC is impartial in this area.

The majority of the audience has a strong emotional tie to the BBC. They see it almost as part of their heritage, and as such they have high levels of trust. That said, those with higher levels of education and a keen interest in politics are distrustful of the BBC. It appears that a general distrust of government has projected itself to the BBC through a perceived association.

However, when shown the clips, many of the criticisms levelled at the BBC itself, such as 'being in the government's pocket', were not projected at the individual clips themselves to such a great extent. This suggests that actual coverage is perceived as less biased than expected.

Filling the Information Gap

As discussed, the research reveals considerable knowledge gaps across most of the BBC's audience. This suggests that there are gaps in coverage across all media, not just the BBC. Indeed, there appears to be quite a considerable distance between the media's assumption of audience awareness and the reality.

Lack of information is a key factor in the public's apathy towards the EU. People say they need more background information to help them understand the EU and current issues. Two key areas of interest for people are the way the EU is relevant to them, and its history and workings. Currently people appear to be labouring under misapprehensions. Helping to fill these gaps in information will in turn allow the audience to put news stories and policies into context. This in turn will address some of the apathy people feel.

Since there is little or no association with the EU, and no sense of heritage or geographical affiliation, the BBC may need to go 'back to basics' for the majority of the audience. In particular, people would be interested to know:

- How and why the EU evolved. What its role is, and how the UK became part of it.
- The relationship between the UK and the EU, and in particular the influence the EU has on the UK, and how the EU's policies affect their everyday lives. Currently they are unclear of the implications of EU membership and tend to see it as 'another layer of bureaucracy'
- Financial implications of the EU, both for the country and for individuals. There is a particular call for financial information to be made accessible in a format they can relate to rather than national figures.
- A greater understanding of the financial implications of joining the Euro.

Format of Information Needed

This report has discussed each audience segment's preferences in detail. The research suggests that the following are the priorities:

- The need for different programmes designed to suit different audiences. Respondents do not feel that a blanket approach will work. The research also reaches this conclusion, particularly given the differing levels of knowledge and engagement.
- A series of documentaries charting the history of the EU, its development, workings and relationship with the UK. This will not only help to generate interest in the EU, but also help the BBC fulfil its role as a public information broadcaster. This type of programme should be prominently scheduled and advertised, as this would help to generate awareness and interest.
- It is important to 'drip feed' information. Most respondents feel by building up a momentum of information will help to form the bigger picture over time, and help the audience feel more familiar with the EU. However, it is important to note that they still need the information suggested above.

- Human interest stories are often an effective way of engaging those who, in particular, have little understanding or even interest in these issues. By using real-life examples, they would be able to empathise with the story and thus are more likely to be open to learning about similar related items in the future. It then translates something which is seen as political, and sometimes quite intimidating, into real life.
- Those who are more aware of, and interested in, current affairs also say that programmes on the EU in the style of Question Time would be useful and interesting. Debate formats help the audience feel they are getting an impartial view as different perspectives are argued.
- Most agree that experts often bring a valuable perspective. Across the board, however, people felt that the experts should not be politicians.
- Presenters are also vital in securing both engagement and understanding of the issues. For those who already possess a high degree of EU knowledge, presenters such as Jeremy Paxman or John Humphrys are felt to challenge and interrogate well - and tease out the finer points of an argument. The informed also feel that radio (Today and Radio Five Live) is perhaps the more appropriate platform for achieving the necessary detail and depth of reporting and debate.
- However, for those who are less informed, the importance of ‘celebrity’ presenters, such as Huw Edwards, cannot be underestimated. These popular figures act as a link to the issues: they are trusted and well-liked and, consequently, open up stories to those who otherwise may have turned off or over.

Appendices

Extracts from BBC News

1. Six O'Clock News, 17 June 2004

European leaders are in Brussels trying to reach an agreement on a new constitution.

Dur: 00'53

2. Six O'Clock News, 14 July 2004

Correspondent two way on the threat of Britain losing its EU rebate

Dur: 01.03

3. Today, Radio 4, 4 October 2004

Trade Commissioner designate Peter Mandelson is about to be questioned by MEPs in Brussels.

Dur:01.10

4. Daily Politics, 4 May 2004

What does an MEP do?

Dur:01:40

5. Ten O'Clock News, 4 October 2004

What the European Commission does

Dur:01:35

6. Breakfast, Radio Five Live, 17 June 2004

Interview on the latest from the European summit (Heather Grabbe, Centre for European Reform)

Dur:01:13

7. Today, Radio 4, 19 June 2004

The thoughts of BBC Political Editor Andrew Marr on the Brussels summit

Dur:01:18

8. Six O'Clock News, 6 October 2004

The EU is threatening legal action against British customs for impounding too many cars belonging to shoppers stocking up on cheap alcohol and cigarettes.

Dur:01:30

9. Newsnight, 16 June 2004

The effect on Britain of the Charter of Fundamental Rights
Dur:01:15

10. Newsnight, 6 October 2004

The view from France of the agreement of talks on Turkey
Dur:01:10

11. Ten O'Clock News, 6 October 2004

Issues associated with agreed talks on Turkish membership of the EU
Dur:01:33

12. Breakfast, Radio Five Live, 17 June 2004

Two students investigate the debate surrounding the EU constitution.
Dur:01:36

13. Breakfast, Radio Five Live, 20 April 2004

Five Live spends a day in Strasbourg broadcasting from the European Parliament.
Dur:01:14

14. Today, Radio 4, 19 June 2004

John Humphrys interviews vice-president of the European Commission, Neil Kinnock after Tony Blair's decision to hold a referendum.
Dur: 02:07

Reaction to BBC News Video & Audio Clips – EU COVERAGE 2004

Explaining the story

Title	Clip #1 - Six O'Clock News, 17 June
Description / Issues	News story about the new constitution as European leaders are in Brussels trying to reach an agreement. It includes bullet point style visual.
Summary of reactions	Most feel the clip does not provide enough detail on the content, i.e. expanding upon the bullet points However, the format is liked.
1: London, high education, follow EU and positive	<i>It reminded me of the BBC... Rather than sitting at the desk. They sort of stand up and... [talk] plain English, what's happening, and I've always found that really helpful.</i> <i>The lady that was reporting it. I don't know if that was part of the script, why didn't she go into any of the sub headings in detail? Because those are the new issues.</i>
2: London, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>Surprisingly informative really, surprisingly informative.</i> <i>I don't think they gave enough background as to what was being changed.... They don't break it down.</i>
3: Leicester, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>What's the Right to Life Policy talking about? I don't know. You think this is the little things, all these policies, there's a lot of them, but I don't know what they are</i>
4: Leicester, mixed education, mixed knowledge of current affairs & EU, negative towards EU	<i>I don't know whether it just told us what they wanted to tell us. I don't know if there is a bit more background, but it gave me a few facts.</i>
5: Aberystwyth, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>As an overview of it was very good.</i> <i>They just cannot cover all these things in a 30-minute news bulletin</i> <i>The bullet points were brilliant</i>
6: Aberystwyth, low education, don't follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<i>Too much information in too short a time.</i> <i>It was only for these high falutin business people living in big cities who understand jargon.</i> <i>It's very patronising.</i>
7: Belfast, high education, follow current affairs, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>For me it glosses over what they are talking about. A series of headings but no explanations.</i>
8: Belfast, low education, don't follow current affairs, positive towards EU	<i>Well I thought the content was good you know. It gave you an outline and if you were interested then you would listen. Maybe there is more to come.</i> <i>I would just go and make a cup of tea while it was on.</i>

9: Aberdeen, high education, follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<p><i>Tony Blair has Britain's red line position. It's all become very ... for the media hasn't it?</i></p> <p><i>The presenters are aiming for maximum effect, the bit effect. What's going to grab anybody's attention most whether it be by horror or frustration or whatever. They're not really interested in putting across a really balanced news view.</i></p> <p><i>It doesn't actually explain a great deal about what the Constitution's about.</i></p>
10: Aberdeen, aware of current affairs, mixture of education, low EU awareness, mixed attitudes to EU	<p><i>I think the information was there but to get it out was very difficult.</i></p> <p><i>There's nothing there that made me prick up my ears and think oh, this would be worth listening to.</i></p>

Title	Clip #2 - Six O'Clock News, 14 July
Description / Issues	Correspondent two way on the threat of Britain losing its EU rebate
Summary of reactions	Like the 'straight talk' and the financial implications of the story bring it to life
1: London, high education, follow EU and positive	<i>It was better (than clip #1) because there wasn't so many subtitles between the script. The first one had too many subtitles for me to remember everything. So this was much better explained.</i>
3: Leicester, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>He told us straight didn't be that we're not getting as much money back as we should and the reason we're not getting it is because we're helping the poorer states.</i>

Title	Clip #3 - Today, Radio 4, 4 October
Description / Issues	Trade Commissioner designate Peter Mandelson is about to be questioned by MEPs in Brussels
Summary of reactions	Did not engage the audience, who found the voice monotonous
4: Leicester, mixed education, mixed knowledge of current affairs & EU, negative towards EU	<i>I think just one person in a monotonous tone going on then I wouldn't really be interested. If it was a discussion kind of like the Jeremy Vine thing, I quite like listening to him, but I don't really listen to Radio 4.</i>
5: Aberystwyth, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<p><i>It was a load of waffle that, wasn't it?</i></p> <p><i>His voice seemed to be less decisive let's say than a news type.</i></p>
7: Belfast, high education, follow current affairs, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>I don't think he sounded very confident that he would be able to do his job. I do think that it was informative but there was a kind of jagged edge to it.</i>

Title	Clip #4 – Daily Politics, 4 May
Description / Issues	Clip showing what an MEP does though a ‘A day in the life of...’ format. It was broadcast just before the local and European elections in June 2004
Summary of reactions	Many found this clip quite patronising, and not very informative. Indeed in some cases it served to confuse the audience further.
1: London, high education, follow EU and positive	<i>That’s my MEP that one is, there. I did find that hard to believe. Probably understand it more. But we’re getting nothing.</i>
2: London, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>It was a bit like a schools information project, in a way I think that’s what they need... I don’t know who any of the MEPs are, if you list them I might recognise some names. They didn’t say what they do when they’re there, which is the major part of the work. He spent more time telling us about the colour of the chairs.</i>
6: Aberystwyth, low education, don’t follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<i>Absolutely nothing. He showed a metal box, he walked around. He showed 640 seats and he named the colour, blue, and he says they vote and they argue on the few times that I’ve seen and drink loads of water. And again another person going on about voting, what’s he voting for? He’s voting on our behalf, well, what’s he voting for? Or if he’s voting on our behalf? Who’s telling him to vote? And what way is he supposed to be voting for?</i>
8: Belfast, low education, don’t follow current affairs, positive towards EU	<i>It did to me feel like he was selling it as a good new era of parliament. Like ‘look at me in my little snug’ that it could have been in the Skye bar in Belfast. You know what I mean. It was like ‘look at our discussion rooms you know it is not like the House of Commons, it is not like the House of Lords. It is new. I mean you watch the House of Commons and you be fed up looking at it and you grew up with it and this is a different thing.</i>
10: Aberdeen, aware of current affairs, mixture of education, low EU awareness, mixed attitudes to EU	<i>For me as well it wasn’t just the fact that it sounds boring but they all looked boring. One woman was with her hands behind her head. I think he had a good point though when he said that people in this country are aware of the House of Parliament and the House of Lords because you see it on TV all the time. Because you see it on the TV from the time that you’re a youngster... We know nothing about it (the European Parliament), absolutely nothing.</i>

Analysis of the issues

Title	Clip #5 - Ten O'Clock News, 4 October
Description / Issues	Package explaining what the European Commission does.
Summary of reactions	Positive towards the anti-European stance of Boris Johnson providing balance but, overall, the piece is felt to be pro-Europe
3: Leicester, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>A prime example of Neil Kinnock's political waffle.</i> <i>Boris Johnson was the only anti, we saw him for about a sound bite, they're not accountable and that's all we heard from the anti. The rest were all presuming it's going to go ahead anyway so you know, it's very, very pro.</i>
8: Belfast, low education, don't follow current affairs, positive towards EU	<i>It focused really on what the general thoughts on the EU are from the people in the UK. That we perhaps don't feel that these people deserve the job that they have. I mean sort of challenging; I would agree with that a lot.</i>
9: Aberdeen, high education, follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<i>They're gaining more and more power weekly because that's what they intend to do and there's nobody to stop them.</i> <i>At least the interviewer with Neil Kinnock was trying to do something to embarrass him, but Neil Kinnock won't be embarrassed I am sure.</i> <i>I would say it was 75% sort of pro Europe and the last 25% was trying to make an argument against it.</i>

Title	Clip #6 – Breakfast, Radio Five Live, 17 June
Description / Issues	Interview on the latest from the European summit (Heather Grabbe, Centre for European Reform)
Summary of reactions	Male and female tones plus debate format create an appealing piece
1: London, high education, follow EU and positive	<i>They never seem to have anyone who claims to be an expert and turns out to be a right, you know, plonker or whatever, the BBC normally</i>
4: Leicester, mixed education, mixed knowledge of current affairs & EU, negative towards EU	<i>I think it's more entertaining because there were questions interjected into the discussion.</i> <i>It was male and female so it was different tones. I think that's more appealing.</i>
7: Belfast, high education, follow current affairs, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>They were certainly knowledgeable. The person who Nicky Campbell was talking to knew what he was talking about and the questions he was asking was devils advocate. He was trying to make a point and he made it fairly well.</i>

Title	Clip #7 – Today, Radio 4, 19 June
Description / Issues	Andrew Marr essay on the Brussels summit
Summary of reactions	Mixed views towards Andrew Marr’s style – some love the dry wit, while others feel too much opinion has no place in the news based programmes
2: London, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>It was very mocking, it wasn't just negative it was mocking it</i> <i>I don't think it's necessarily inappropriate, the news doesn't have to be deadly serious all the time but as long as there is some news being provided, I don't think there's anything wrong with having some comments as well</i>
5: Aberystwyth, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>He's very good Andrew Marr. His voice grabs your attention.</i> <i>I just don't feel he's following the party line. I don't feel that he's giving over what maybe the government wants him to say. He's being honest.</i> <i>People perceive politics as being boring and bland and men in grey suits, but he can make it quite funny.</i> <i>But I certainly don't think he should give a political bias to it all.</i>
7: Belfast, high education, follow current affairs, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>I suppose it realises a certain view which is good but it's very hard to stick to factual information when you are trying to talk about something like that. They have to say other things about their views and what they think.</i>

'Did you know...?' Stories

Title	Clip #8 - Six O'Clock News, 6 October
Description / Issues	The EU is threatening legal action against British customs for impounding too many cars belonging to shoppers stocking up on cheap alcohol and cigarettes. Personal interest story.
Summary of reactions	The most positively received clip – it is felt to be relevant and engaging with a real life example – but did want to know how many cigarettes!
1: London, high education, follow EU and positive	<i>This car confiscation... (They) tell the story and they won't pre judge in any situation.</i>
2: London, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>The coverage was good, they should give us more of it.</i> <i>It's clearly a story that was actually based on us as people and not been set by the politicians who obviously have their objective to get through a quicker day or whatever. Whether you are pro/against the EU or pro/against smoking it explained it quite well, there's this issue and this is what the EU thinks and this is what it's doing about it.</i>
4: Leicester, mixed education, mixed knowledge of current affairs & EU, negative towards EU	<i>If you can show somebody from everyday life that you perhaps associate with and they've got a story to tell you are going to probably listen.</i>

5: Aberystwyth, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<p><i>It was quite a nice report. But the one thing I'd really like to know is exactly how many fags.</i></p> <p><i>I saw it as being informative in that we are breaking European rules.</i></p> <p><i>If you go to Gran Canaria and buy 200 fags for a tenner, theoretically you should be able to buy them in England, 200 fags for a tenner.</i></p>
6: Aberystwyth, low education, don't follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<p><i>I'd like to know how many bottles or how many cigarettes he had ... just for his own consumption. Perhaps he doesn't smoke or doesn't drink, you never know do you?</i></p>
8: Belfast, low education, don't follow current affairs, positive towards EU	<p><i>I actually listened to that and didn't realise that it was anything to do with the EU.</i></p> <p><i>It explained it the reason because it was Joe Public... The guy there could have been your next door neighbour that it happened to. So you were more likely to listen because it looked like a real person in front of you.</i></p>
10: Aberdeen, aware of current affairs, mixture of education, low EU awareness, mixed attitudes to EU	<p><i>That was more interesting. That was a real person and there was alcohol and cigarettes as well.</i></p>

Title	Clip #9 - Newsnight, 16 June
Description / Issues	The effect on Britain of the Charter of Fundamental Rights
Summary of reactions	Low education find clip too complicated but it is well received by the more educated for providing the detail often lacking in EU coverage
6: Aberystwyth, low education, don't follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<p><i>I think the little bits that I grasped of it I think it is important, but there was a lot of it there I couldn't understand.</i></p> <p><i>I just think most of it is well over my head.</i></p>
7: Belfast, high education, follow current affairs, mixed attitudes towards EU	<p><i>Pretty informative, I mean that most people wouldn't have heard of the Fundamental Rights Charter or whatever. Unless it was on the news no one would know about it.</i></p> <p><i>It at least gave you enough information to go away and look elsewhere and find out more information from the internet if you wanted to. Made it an issue. Given the small amount of time, there is only so much you could do.</i></p>

On location... Bringing the story alive

Title	Clip #10 - Newsnight, 6 October
Description / Issues	The view from France of the agreement of talks on Turkey
Summary of reactions	Story provides stimulus for further debate i.e. mixing religion and politics
3: Leicester, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<p><i>Islam and Christianity ... politics and religion, nasty.</i></p> <p><i>I think if you're going to get using the EU as a bridge betwixt Islam and Christianity, I think it's just an explosive situation. I don't think there's a British person considering how close Tony Blair is to America and 9/11, you put them together and bang, and I think it's totally different.</i></p>

Title	Clip #11 - Ten O'Clock News, 6 October
Description / Issues	Package from Turkey on life there. The EU has agreed talks can begin on Turkey joining the EU. Stephen Sackur on what life is like now in the country.
Summary of reactions	Everyday language and real life story favoured but many ask for a follow up to find out how the situation was resolved
4: Leicester, mixed education, mixed knowledge of current affairs & EU, negative towards EU	<p><i>I didn't really find it interesting. I think what it said to me is the European Union, they've just, they've got so much work to do.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to have found out why he was actually in prison, there might be a very good reason.</i></p>
6: Aberystwyth, low education, don't follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<p><i>Even Iraq is joining the EU now isn't it?</i></p> <p><i>He (Stephen Sackur) spoke in our language. You could understand what was happening.</i></p>
8: Belfast, low education, don't follow current affairs, positive towards EU	<p><i>To me it was nothing to do with the EU really.</i></p> <p><i>It was interesting to know what happened in that country because we just know it as a tourist resort.</i></p>

Accessibility/using real people/trying to engage

Title	Clip #12 – Breakfast, Radio Five Live, 17 June
Description / Issues	Two students investigate the debate surrounding the EU constitution.
Summary of reactions	Mixed reactions – some welcome engaging the young in politics while others think the students unqualified to give their views
5: Aberystwyth, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<p><i>It just seemed to be general, uneducated, opinionated people trying to describe something which apparently is very, very serious and they haven't a clue, the woman and the man who were, were they students or something?</i></p> <p><i>I was pleased that it was students on it because I think youngsters are our future and they're the ones we should be listening to because this country is run by a lot of old fuddy duddies.</i></p>
8: Belfast, low education, don't follow current affairs, positive towards EU	<p><i>How are they going to straighten the bananas?</i></p> <p><i>I thought that they guy that came on at the start that said that the reason that people don't support it is because they don't understand it. Which is pretty obviously what is happening here.</i></p>
9: Aberdeen, high education, follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<i>I'll come back to the point that [he] has made, it's the youngsters that need to be made more aware.... Really, all the broadcasts ought to be slanting it towards youngsters and making sure that they are grabbing their attention because those are the ones it's really important to.</i>

Title	Clip #12 – Breakfast, Radio Five Live, 20 April
Description / Issues	Five Live spent a day in Strasbourg broadcasting from the European Parliament. This programme has been asking one of the biggest names in European politics just what the European Parliament is doing for us. Example of a medical card is given.
Summary of reactions	Seen as interesting and relevant to 'them'
1: London, high education, follow EU and positive	<i>Well geared to us. Well it is to me anyway. Understandable, went into detail. Directly affecting (me).</i>
3: Leicester, mixed education, aware current affairs but not EU, mixed attitudes towards EU	<i>She was very good. She said exactly what, it's like the E111 except you just phone, give your credit card number and the NHS will sort it all out and that sounded lovely.</i>
10: Aberdeen, aware of current affairs, mixture of education, low EU awareness, mixed attitudes to EU	<i>I thought it was quite interesting. It was quite short and sharp, to the point.</i>

Interviewing Politicians

Title	Clip #14 – Today, Radio 4, 19 June
Description / Issues	John Humphrys interviews vice-president of the European Commission, Neil Kinnock after Tony Blair's decision to hold a referendum
Summary of reactions	Humphrys praised for challenging interview technique and not allowing political 'lies'
4: Leicester, mixed education, mixed knowledge of current affairs & EU, negative towards EU	<i>The interviewer, obviously he wanted a different answer, or he was not arguing, it was a good interview technique but when they start talking over one another I tend to switch off.</i>
7: Belfast, high education, follow current affairs, mixed attitudes towards EU	<p><i>The presenter trying to ask him questions and it would just drive me mad and would turn it off.</i></p> <p><i>I thought it was fantastic, I loved it. They need to explain everything and try to explain constantly why he would account for everything, really argue with him.</i></p> <p><i>They are trying to look at the spin that is coming out and trying to pull it apart and trying to find the truth.</i></p>
9: Aberdeen, high education, follow current affairs, negative towards EU	<p><i>Well, I think you can ridicule Neil Kinnock's argument by simply saying that the countries that aren't in the European Union are doing extremely well. Countries like Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland are doing extremely well. And it's not because they purely produce for their own markets, they're selling outside.</i></p> <p><i>To me that's real broadcasting because that's a guy trying to put a plug on the verbal diarrhoea coming out of Neil Kinnock.</i></p> <p><i>He was challenging everything that man said because that man was telling a pack of lies. And that's, to me that is exciting broadcasting because I'm sick and tired of being fed this diet of dumbed down government propaganda all the time.</i></p>

**BBC's Coverage of The EU
TOPIC GUIDE – FINAL
14/10/04**

Introduction (5 mins)

To set the scene.

Introduce self, MORI, qualitative research and confidentiality

Purpose of research – keep as broad as possible i.e. attitudes towards the European Union (EU) and the way it is portrayed in the media

Permission to tape record (will be anonymised, all totally confidential)

Ground rules – one person talking at time, but want to hear from everyone, your honest opinion, even if it's controversial (not what you think we want to hear, not just sticking to the politically correct), – no right or wrong answers. May be necessary to interrupt occasionally as a lot to cover, etc.

Participants introduce themselves – first name, viewing/media habits and preferences.

PROBE FOR MEDIA CONSUMPTION: What kind of things do you watch on TV/listen to on the radio? What is good or bad? What have you seen on the news recently? PROBE TO SEE WHETHER EU TOP OF MIND

Public Perception of the EU (10 mins)

To warm up the group, set the tone and prime the group as to the subject of discussion for the evening. Assess knowledge base. Context for rest of discussion.

NOTE FOR MODERATOR: Make sure the group discusses the EU. Do **not** stray into discussions on European politics generally, or governments in individual European countries.

- Can you tell me what you know about the European Union/EU?
 - How would you describe it to someone who has not heard of it before?
 - Where is it based?
 - Describe its structure, organisation, how it operates?
 - What does it do? How are people elected?
 - What are the differences between the parliament and the commission? Describe the role of commissioners
 - How important is it to you as an issue?
- IF LOW LEVEL AWARENESS: What do you think it is? What *relevance* does it have to you? What words/phrases do you think other people would use to *describe* the EU?

- IF HIGH LEVEL AWARENESS: What words/phrases do you think other people would use to *describe* the EU? What are your views? How *confident* are you in your knowledge? Where did you get your information from? What are the *main issues* facing the EU *now*? And in the *future*?
- How important is it that people know about the EU?
- Where *could* they hear about it from? Where *should* they hear about it?

Media Coverage of EU (20 mins)

***To elicit general views of how the media portrays the EU.
And to understand how this might vary by media and channel.***

NOTE FOR MODERATOR: This should not include newspapers. Please steer away from the press

- Now I would like us to talk about the media, thinking specifically about TV, Radio and websites, how much do you think is reported on the EU?
 - What can you remember?
 - Where did you see/hear it?
- How do you think the media represents the EU? What is good? What should be different? Why?
- How does it vary by channel? How?
- How does it vary by media?
PROBE: TV versus Radio? Versus website?
- How does coverage of the EU compare to coverage of other political issues e.g. International news such as Iraq war, events in the US, events in other parts of the world, etc. Which do you think they perform best at? And where are they weakest? Where does their coverage of the EU sit?
- What do you think about the information about the EU that you have seen on television/radio/internet generally?
 - How accurately do you think they represent what is happening in the EU?
 - How easy or not are they to understand?
 - How fair or biased do you think they are?/To what extent do they give a fair view of the EU?
 - EXPLORE BY: BBC, ITV, C4, SKY, RADIO, ONLINE
- What programmes or news items do you remember covering EU issues? What did you think of it/them?

- If you are looking for information about the EU what programmes do you watch/listen to/what websites do you visit?
PROBE: How often? Why? What do you like about them?
IF DON'T WATCH ANY: Why not? What don't you like about them?

EU Programmes – Video & Audio Clips (10 min clips, 40 mins discussion)

*To understand which EU content consumed.
To elicit views of specific BBC EU content.*

MODERATOR: We are now going to watch and listen to some examples of BBC programmes relating to the EU. It should last around 10 minutes, and when it is finished we will be discussing what you thought of them.

When you are watching/listening the clips the kind of things I would like you to be thinking about the content – are they interesting, informative, what you need to know, what you want to watch? How do they portray the EU? Are they fair? What do you think of the presenter/contributors? Do they help explain the issues?

PLAY CLIPS RADIO CLIPS FIRST THEN TV. READ OUT INTRODUCTION TO EACH CLIP. PLAY CLIPS ONE BY ONE AND GET IMMEDIATE REACTION TO EACH.

MODERATOR NOTE REACTIONS TO VIDEO AND AUDIO CLIPS

AT THE END OF THE CLIPS PROBE IN MORE DETAIL WITH QUESTIONS BELOW. ASK RESPONDENTS TO THINK ABOUT CLIPS GENERALLY.

- **Content** – How interesting were they? How accurate? How informative? Do you think you should know this?
- **Jargon** – How understandable is the coverage? How meaningful? How relevant?
- **Representation** – what view of the EU do they give? Why/why not?
- **Fairness** – To what extent are they biased/impartial. In what way? How well does the BBC reflect a wide range of political opinion on the key issues?
- **Sensitivity** – Do you think the way the EU is portrayed shown/presented is accurate? Why/Why not?
- **Presenters/Contributors** – How would you describe the presenters/contributors? Are they believable? Accessible? Knowledgeable? What kind of impression/message do they give? What do you think about the range of interviewees?
- **Image** – What image of the EU do you think the BBC portrays?

- **Distinctiveness** – How does the BBC cover the EU compared to other broadcasters? Is there anything about their coverage that makes it distinctive?
- How has watching these clips changed your opinions?
 - Of the EU
 - Of the way the BBC reports on the EU
- Generally, how would you describe the way the BBC portrays the EU?
- What gaps are there in the BBC's coverage of the EU?
- How well does the BBC cover significant developments in the key stories?
- Is there enough background and information? Does the BBC explain and analyse the key issues clearly?
- What kind of information or programmes would you like to see?
- How would you like to be presented with information about the EU?

Conclusion (5 mins)

- Thinking about everything we have talked about, what do you think is the most important message for me to take away from this discussion about the way the EU is reported in the media?
- If you were head of programming for politics and the EU at the BBC what would you improve?
 - PROBE: a special dedicated EU correspondent, more background, more explanation, more understanding of how fits into 'my life'
- What other comments?

THANK RESPONDENTS AND GIVE OUT INCENTIVES