Joint Research Centre

e²FocusGroup
Extending electronic public participation

Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen
24th October 2006

http://alba.jrc.it/eFG/

ipsc

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
Joint Research Centre

Contents

- Motivations

- Description

- Features

- Main Advantages

- Main Challenges

- The (on-going) Future

- Trustnet-in-Action and CDHS EHIB Meetings

- More Information

Motivations

- There has been a growing concern in creating the conditions for citizens to get involved in decision-making processes;

- The perspectives and knowledge of the publics are relevant for public policies formulation;

- Information and Communication Tools (ICTs) are becoming a familiar part of peoples lives, both for individual and collective usage;

- New ICTs may be seen as a platform through which public rights to participation are extended $\rightarrow$ potential means to implement participatory processes;

Description

Joint Research Centre

• The e²FocusGroup is a multimedia platform that allows a small group of people to meet, through internet connection, in a virtual room and discuss a pre-defined subject or topic.
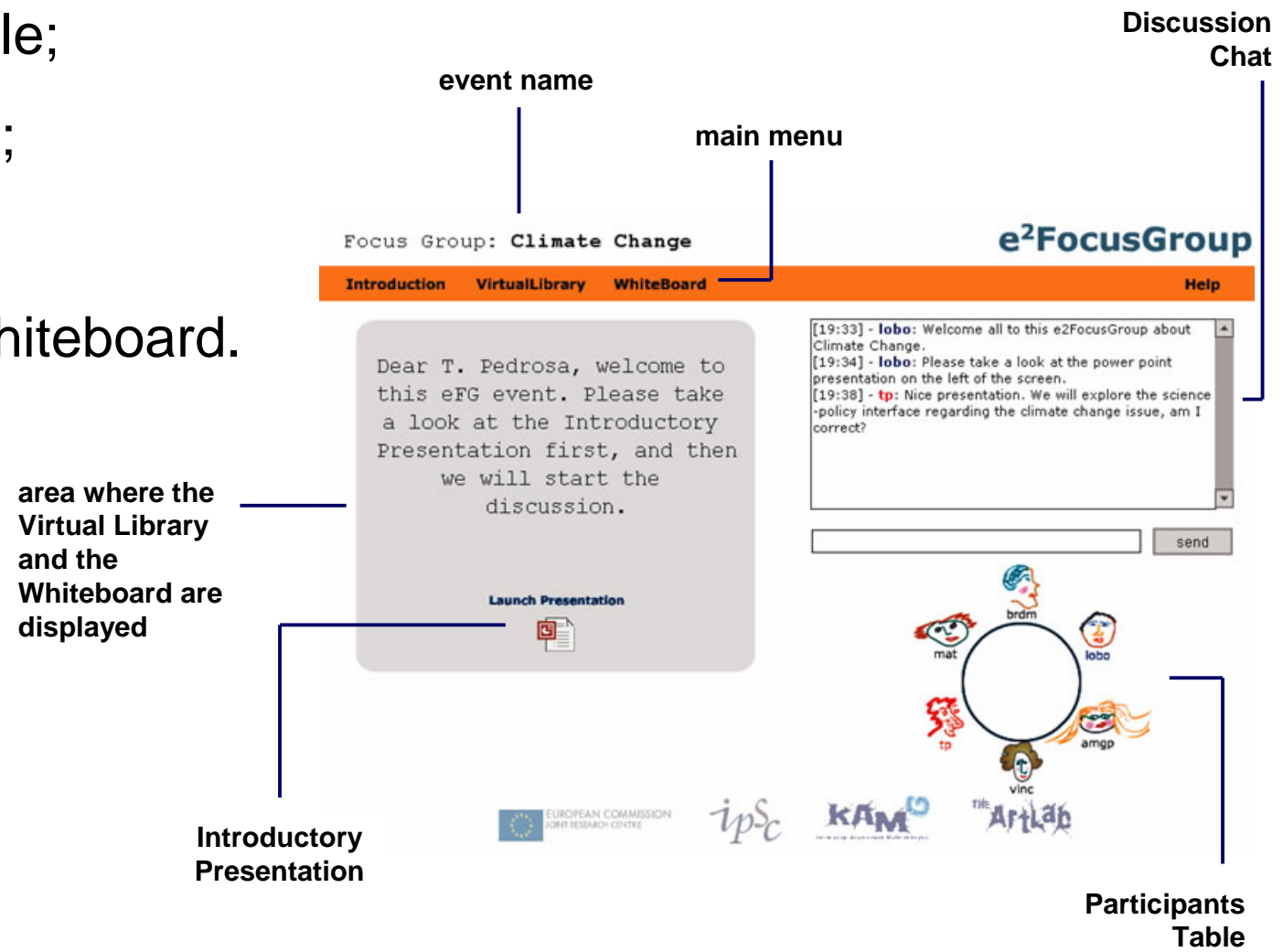
e²FocusGroup
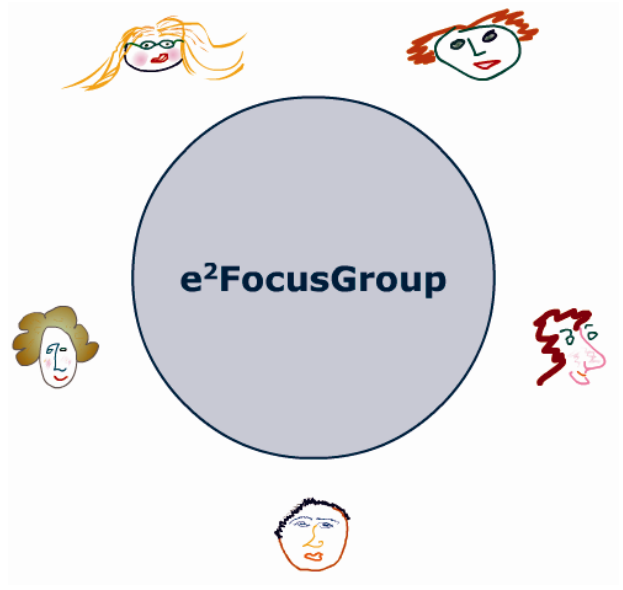
• Each discussion group is composed at least by one moderator and by several participants (ideally not more then twelve).

Features

- Area for Introductory Presentation;

- Participants Table;

- Discussion Chat;

- Virtual Library;

- Collaborative Whiteboard.

Discussion Chat

event name

main menu

Focus Group: **Climate Change**

e²FocusGroup

Introduction   VirtualLibrary   WhiteBoard   Help

Dear T. Pedrosa, welcome to this eFG event. Please take a look at the Introductory Presentation first, and then we will start the discussion.

[19:33] - **lobo**: Welcome all to this e2FocusGroup about Climate Change.
[19:34] - **lobo**: Please take a look at the power point presentation on the left of the screen.
[19:38] - **tp**: Nice presentation. We will explore the science -policy interface regarding the climate change issue, am I correct?

send

area where the Virtual Library and the Whiteboard are displayed

Launch Presentation

brdm

mat   lobo

tp   amgp

vinc

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE

ipSc   KAM   ArtLab

Introductory Presentation
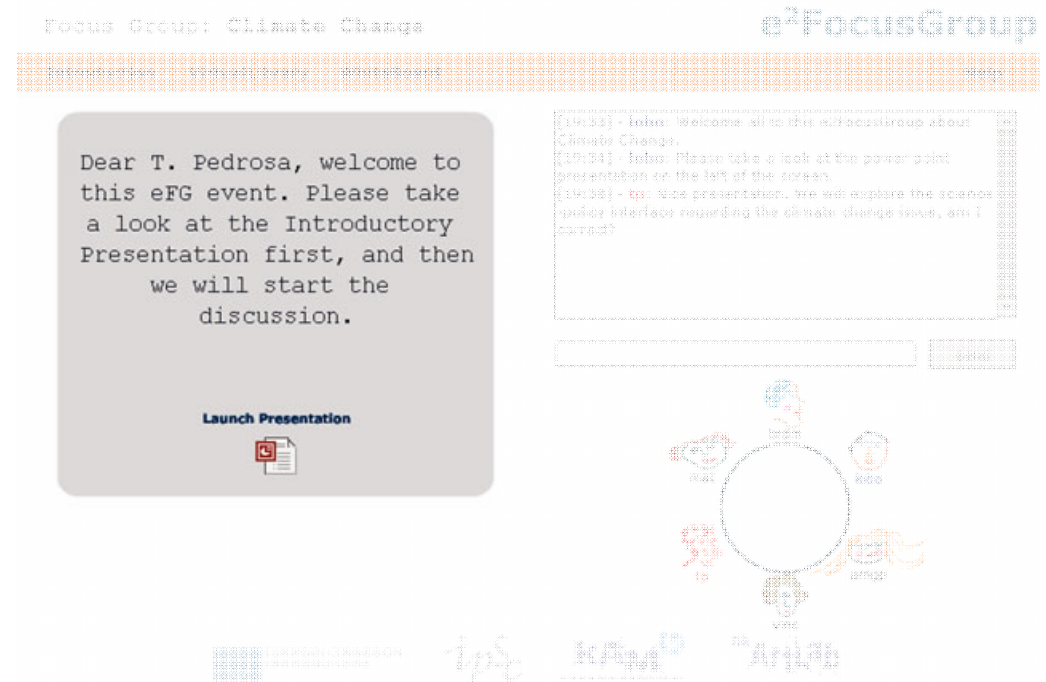
Participants Table

Features

Area for Introductory Presentation

- The place where you can view a presentation about the issue of concern.

- The presentation should be short and simple;

- The Organizer/Moderator of the focus group is responsible for creating this presentation;

- The presentation can be a .ppt or .swf file.

Features

Joint Research Centre

Participants Table

● Graphical representation of the people participating in the event.

- Each person (participant or moderator) is represented by an icon and a login name;

- The highlighted icons represent the people online

- Moderators' logins are displayed in blue, and the participants' in black;

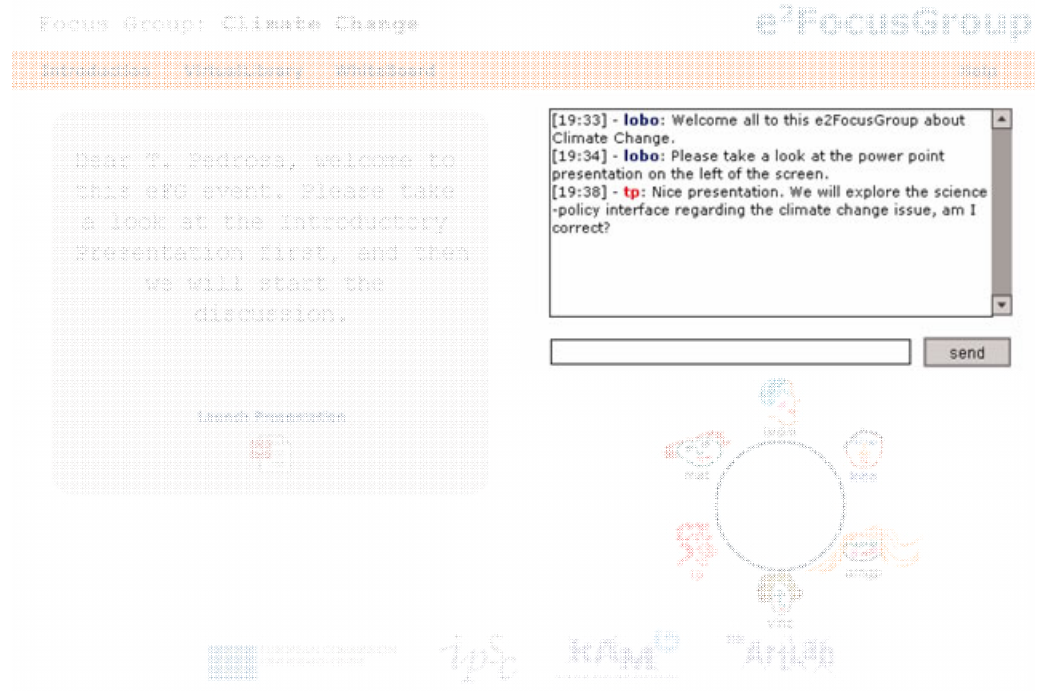- If you are a Participant, your own login is displayed in red.
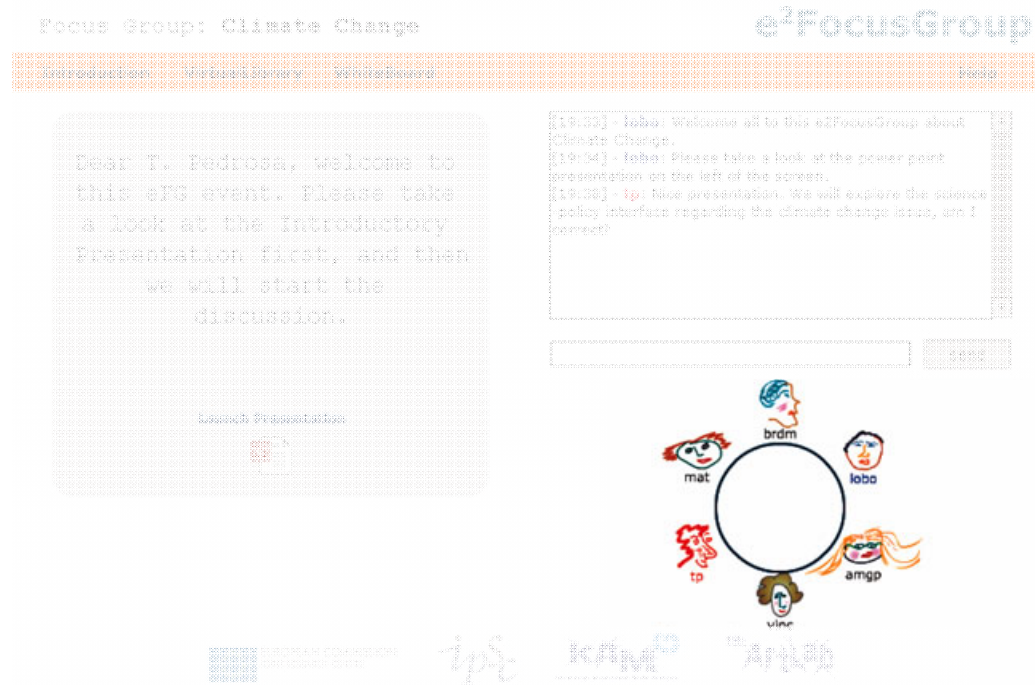
Features

Discussion Chat

- Area where the main discussion takes place.

- Persons are able to write their opinions about the issues in discussion;

- The Moderators should facilitate the discussion;

- The Participants should take in full account the Moderator's instructions;

- The discussion is stored in a database.

Focus Group: Climate Change   e²FocusGroup

[19:33] - **lobo**: Welcome all to this e2FocusGroup about Climate Change.
[19:34] - **lobo**: Please take a look at the power point presentation on the left of the screen.
[19:38] - **tp**: Nice presentation. We will explore the science -policy interface regarding the climate change issue, am I correct?

send

Features

Virtual Library

• Shared space where everybody can view and send different types of material and links relevant to the discussion.

- Each time a new material or link is sent, an automatic message is displayed in the discussion chat;

-The Moderators have the possibility to alter and delete any material or link sent;

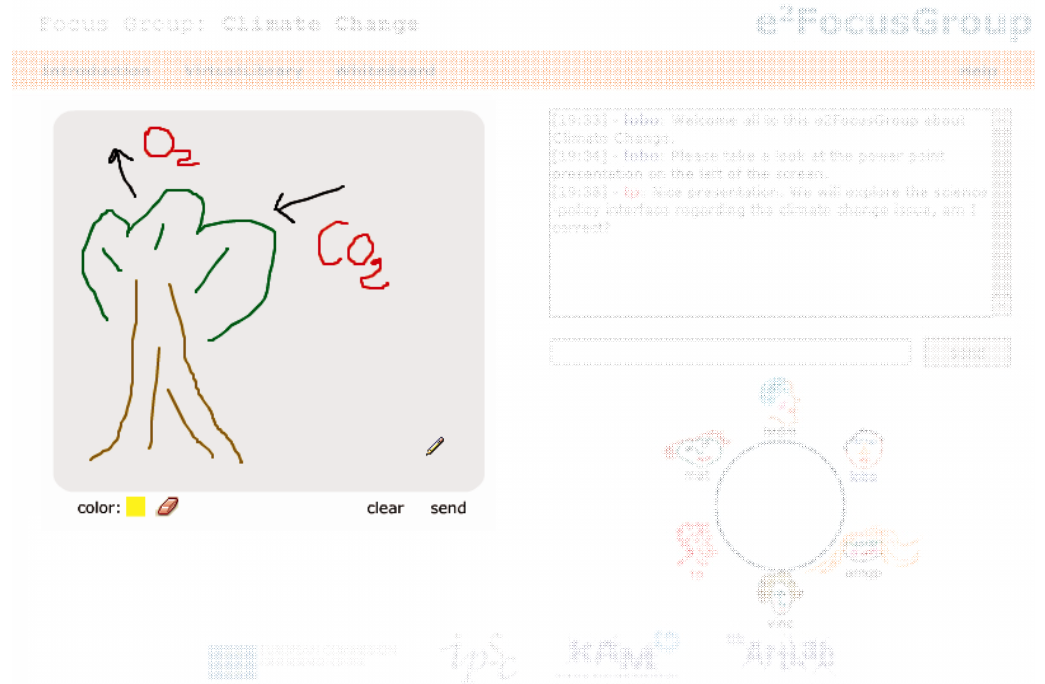- Files accepted: txt, pdf, doc, xls, ppt, pps, gif and jpg.
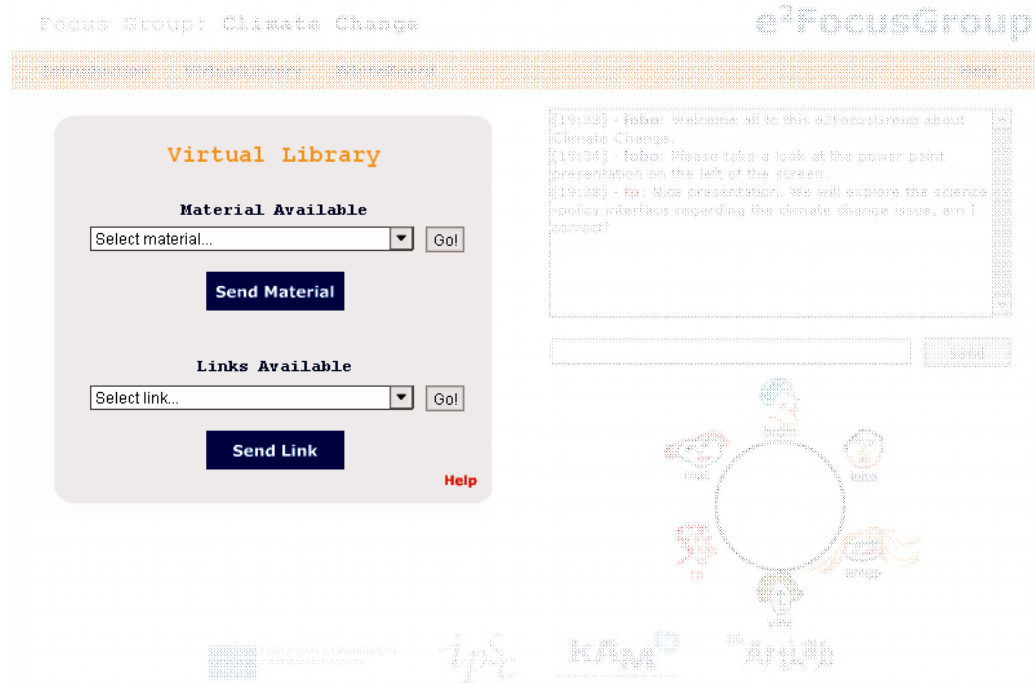
Features

Collaborative Whiteboard

- Place where the Participants can contribute with real time drawings.

- You can start a new drawing from scratch or contributing to an existing one;

- Several people can provide inputs to the same drawing in a collaborative environment.

Main Advantages

- Allows remote and distributed focus group sessions or other group based participatory processes;

- It is more difficult for one of the participants to dominate the group discussion

- The discussion is automatically stored in a database and can be saved, printed and analysed later on by the Moderator;

- There's no need to install any specific software. You just need to have an internet connection;

- Low cost.

Main Challenges

- **Access:** Requires an internet connection;

- **Skills**: one needs to be skilled to write with computers;

- **Accessibility:** Audio or video feature;

- **Person presence** is lost: body language, tone of voice and other visual signals are simply not picked up;

- **Group dynamics** as we know it, does change;

- **Moderation tools**.

- Integration of evaluation tools, such as multi-criteria evaluation and participatory scenarios building;

- Integration of mind-mapping tools;

- Addition of audio and video;

- Shared text feature;

- Inclusion of pre-made phrases;

- Participants statistics;

- Enhancement of moderation management tools (e.g. participants actual contributions, private chats between moderators).

Trustnet-in-Action Meeting

- 2 events took place:
    - 20th December 2004 (5 persons, 1h15min);
    - 19th January 2005 (8 persons, 2h30min).

- Aspects to take into consideration:
    - Larger chat window;
    - Message flooding VS empty times;
    - Elaborated comments not suitable;
    - Moderator's role crucial with larger groups;
    - Whiteboard and Virtual Library not used very often → People focus on the discussion chat.

CDHS EHIB Meeting

Joint Research Centre

- 1 events took place:
  - 21st July 2006 (7 persons, 1h15min).

- Aspects to take into consideration:
  - Participants reflect more on their comments
  - Participants have different comfort level and experiences with computers and virtual discussion programs;
  - Virtual Library: some participants were confused by the button "Send Material" and "Go" ;
  - Blind participants

More Information

- e^{2}FocusGroup website
http://alba.jrc.it/eFG/

- e^{2}FocusGroup Hands-On

http://alba.jrc.it/eFG/e2fg_hands_on.html

- Authors e-mails

Paulo Rosa: paulo.rosa@jrc.it

Gonçalo Lobo: ggl@fct.unl.pt

Ângela Guimarães Pereira: angela.pereira@jrc.it