

Ecsite Annual Conference 2008

Evaluation and Recommendations

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1. Introduction

The Ecsite Annual Conference 2008

Dear Ecsite Annual Conference participants,

Ecsite would like to thank all of you for your contribution to the success of this event and especially the ones of you who took some time to give us their valuable feedback and recommendations for its improvement. The percentage of the people giving their feedback from the conference has increased by 7% and we would like to thank very much the participants for their effort into sending us their comments.

The Ecsite Annual Programme Conference Committee, the Executive Office, the Ecsite Board and the next Host will carefully look at their comments and aim to improve the most significant annual gathering of the network.

This document gives an overview of the Ecsite Annual conference 2008 as seen by its delegates. The information below has been drawn from the 166 conference feedback forms gathered from the delegates after the conference ended via an online form that was posted on the Ecsite conference website. This is a summary report of the full evaluation report that includes the individual comments that made all the participants in the conference feedback forms and all the information they gave via the session feedback forms (1582 forms received) . These results are analysed and used by the Annual Conference Programme Committee and the Ecsite Executive office while speakers and convenors will receive individual emails regarding their sessions.

The Ecsite Annual Conference 2008 was held from the 29th May to the 31st May in Budapest, Hungary. The Conference was hosted by the Hungarian Natural History Museum. The conference consisted of two days of pre-conference meetings and training courses and three days of an official programme with 73 sessions

In 2008 the conference Focus was “Science centres and museums’ commitment for a sustainable society”. Alongside the main focus the sessions in the programme covered the three areas of: Science and technology, management and finance, science in society.

797 delegates from 49 countries in Europe and worldwide participated at the Ecsite AC2008.

2. Overview of the evaluation of the Ecsite Annual Conference 2008

	Themes	Key findings
1	Success of the conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% of the delegates found the overall conference interesting to very interesting - 88% of the delegates felt the conference had great networking opportunities (most common word to characterize the conference: networking) - 74% found the conference useful to very useful for their work - Delegates gave negative feedback on some organizational aspects (facilities of session rooms) and quality of some presentations - Business Bistro: positively rated but splitting in two areas negatively commented
2	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the quality of sessions, speakers and convenors were rated in their majority positively - The delegates enjoyed especially the poster sessions, the interactive workshops and the hot discussions at the end of the sessions - negative comments :quality of some speakers and convenors, lack of relevance with the mentioned topic sometimes - people would like to see sessions on science in society, exhibitions, sc communication theory , evaluation
3	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social programme was positively rated (gala dinner and nocturne in particular) - friendliness and professionalism of staff was repeatedly highlighted - negative comments : room facilities - Opening Ceremony was the least popular event from the ones organised

3. Evaluation Aims

The Ecsite Annual conference is the most important yearly meeting of the network. The Ecsite Executive office together with Hungarian Natural History Museum – the host organisation, and the Annual Conference Programme Committee (ACPC) worked into creating a conference that would reflect the needs of our field, will tackle an important global issue (sustainability), would provide useful information to the numerous delegates and give opportunities to network and of course to enjoy the host city.

This evaluation gives an overview of the different aspects of the conference as seen by its delegates, starting from the overview of the conference and looking more specifically to its content and its organisation. The information gathered is valuable tool for Ecsite, the host organizations and for the ACPC in order to improve this most significant event of the year for the network.

4. Results

Out of the 797 participants of the conference, 166 forms were gathered (21% of the participants compared to 14% in 2007). Results were received from an anonymous questionnaire that was put online on the conference website once the AC2008 ended.

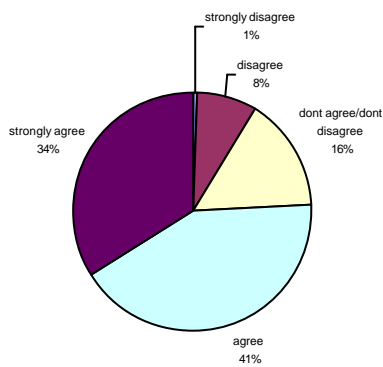
4.1 Success of the conference

Conference participants were asked to rate some statements regarding different aspects of the conference: how interesting, useful, good for networking, enjoyable they found it. In average the opinions gathered were very positive.

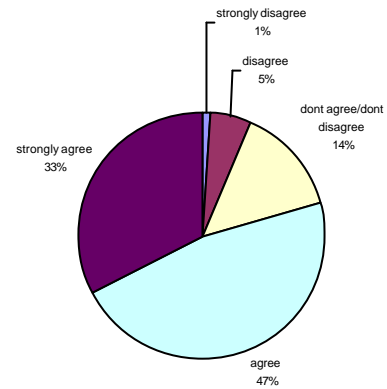
Participants had to give their opinion on the statement 'in general I found the conference useful for my work', 77% of the people answered they strongly agreed with the statement while 9% answered they didn't.

On the statement 'in general I found the conference interesting 80% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, while only 6% gave a negative answer.

Statement: i found the Conference useful for my work

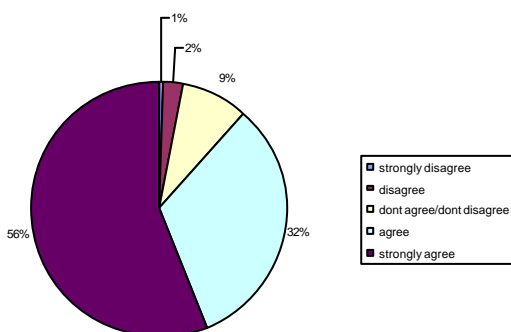


Statement: i found the Conference interesting

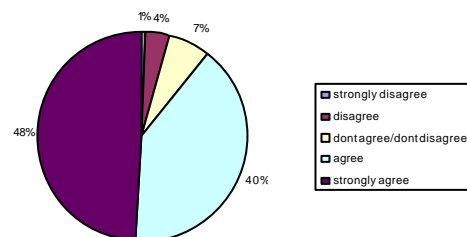


Participants also gave their opinion on the statement 'The Conference was a good networking opportunity'. 88% answered positively in this answer. Final general statement they were asked to rate was 'In general I enjoyed the Conference'. 88% answered positively to this statement too.

Statement: the Conference was good opportunity for networking



In general I enjoyed the Conference



4.1.1 Characterize the conference with three words

People gave 324 words for characterising the conference. From these 286 (almost 89%) were positive and 38 (11%) negative.

Looking at the words chosen by the delegates for characterising the conference many of them are referring to the content (interesting, stimulating, inspiring, learning, thought provoking, useful etc).

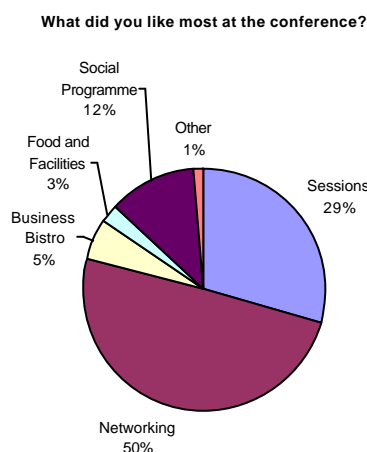
Some of the words used can be seen below (the number in front of the words corresponds to the number of people who gave this word as an answer):

43 good for networking, 19 interesting (talks, topics, sessions, discussions) , 18 enjoyable-fun, 18 friendly, 17 Useful, 13 exciting , 12 inspiring, 11 too hot and tight in sessions, 9 Tiring, 10 Warm and sunny, 9 great organization, 8 learning experience, 7 new ideas/topics, 7 Sharing, 5 thought-provoking, 5 Stimulating, 5 Multicultural/international, 5 Beautiful Budapest, 4 worthwhile, 4 up-to-date, 3 Professional, 3 familiar, 3 good sessions, 3 social, 3 opening mind, 2 communicative, 2 Great Business, 2 Productive, 2 encouraging, 2 informative, 2 cooperation, 2 engaging, 2 Knowledge, 2 diverse, 2 science in society , 2 Meaningful, 2 Evaluation, etc...

4.1.2 What did you like most at the conference?

Delegates were asked what the best aspect of the conference was.

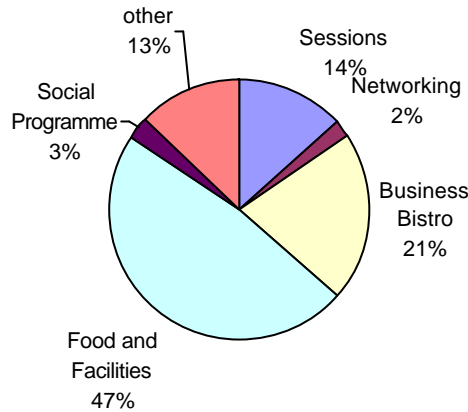
161 people filled in this question. When people were asked what did they like most from the conference, the sessions took the second place in their choice of favourite aspect of the conference with the networking opportunities first.



4.1.3 What did you like least at the conference?

Delegates were asked: what was the worst part of the conference according to their opinion. Only 89 out of the 166 people who filled in the forms answered this question. These are their opinions categorised according to the following: sessions- networking- the Business Bistro- the food and facilities – the social programme- other

What did you like least at the conference?



At the comments space of this question some people gave a more detailed feedback on the aspect they liked least.

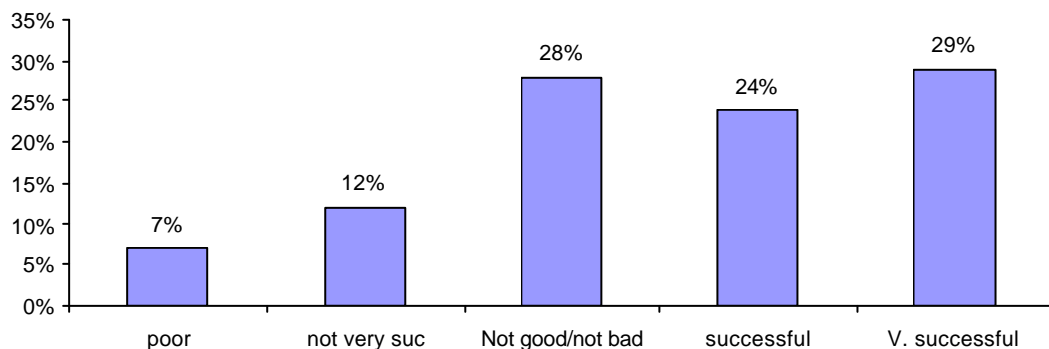
4.2 Quality of the content

4.2.1 Opening Session

The Opening session took place in the National Hungarian Museum. The ceremony consisted of two parts. The welcoming speeches of Mr Istvan Matskasi, Dr Lajos Olah, Dr Vincenzo Lipardi, Mr Jean-Michel Baer, Ms Catherine Franche and three keynote speeches from Professor Gyorgy Vajda, Professor Brian Wynne and Mr Charlie Trautmann. 53% of the people found it successful to very successful, while 19% gave a negative rate.

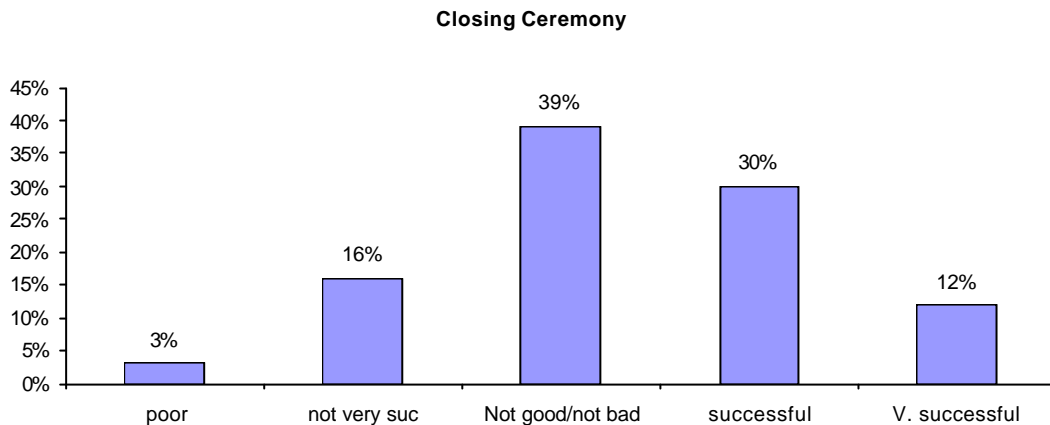
It has to be mentioned that in 2008 like in 2007 a great number of participants took part in the opening session (around 400 people) even though in 2008 the session was taking part in a different location than the main conference.

Opening Ceremony



4.2.2 Closing Ceremony

42 % found the ceremony successful – very successful 39% thought it was neither good nor bad and 19% of people answering this question were not satisfied.

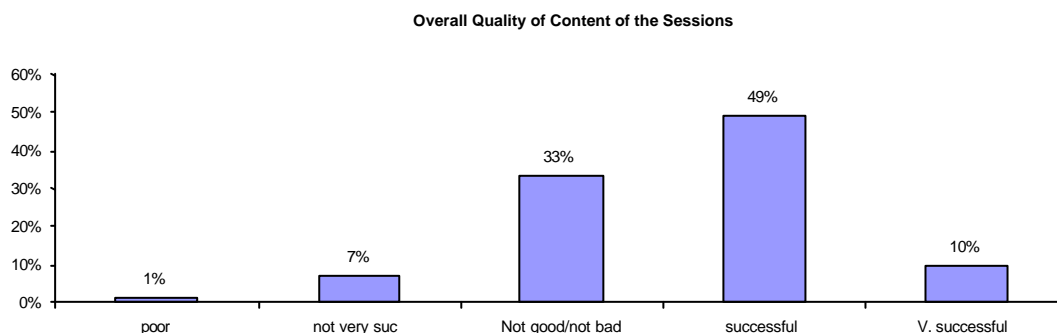


The closing ceremony took part in the Business Bistro of the conference while at the end of the ceremony wine was offered to the participants. It consisted of short speeches from Mr Istvan Matskasi, Catherine Franche, Vincenzo Lipardi, and Fiorenzo Galli.

4.2.3 Overall quality of sessions

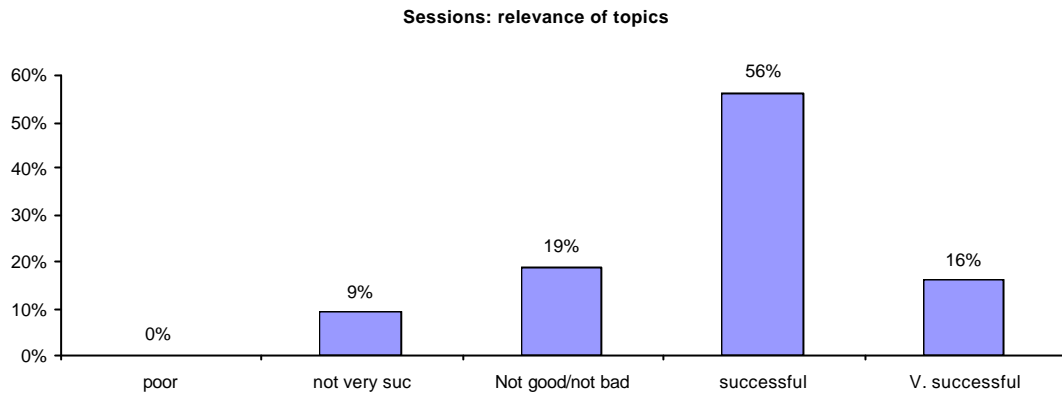
We asked the delegates to rate the sessions on the following aspects: Quality of Content, Relevance of topics, variety of topics, format, overall quality of speakers, and overall quality of convenors. Here are their views:

Quality of content:



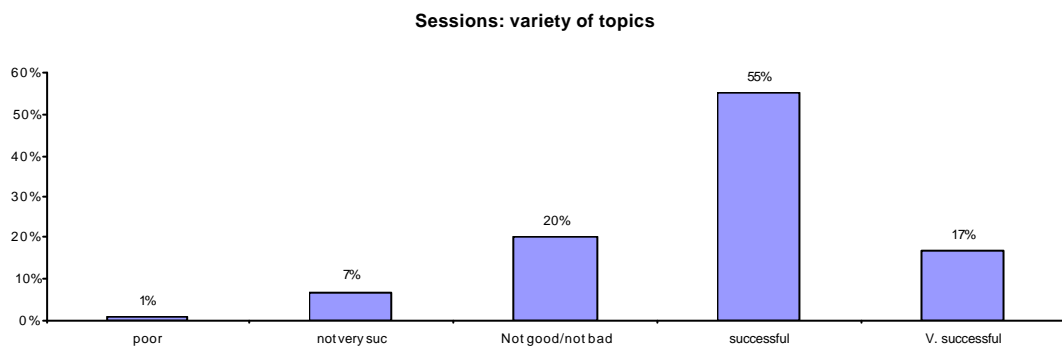
As seen above only 1% of the people filling in the forms found the sessions poor in content. 7% felt they were not very successful while 33% felt there was a mix of good and bad sessions. 59% gave positive ranking to the content of the sessions.

Relevance of topics:



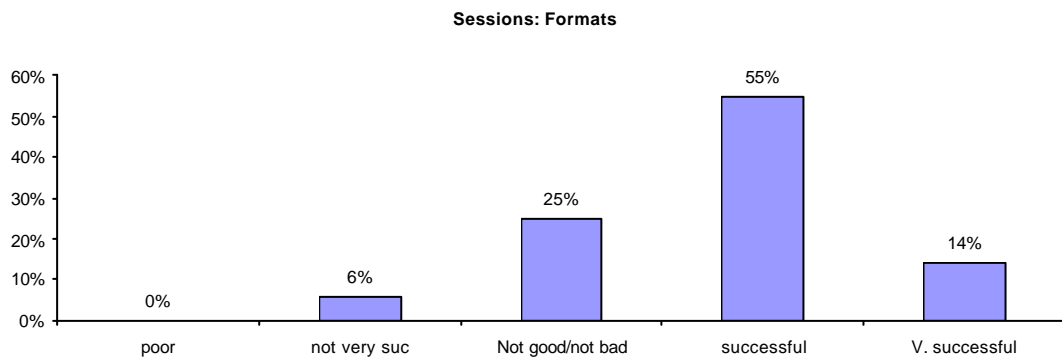
There was no participant that found the topics of the sessions no relevant. 72% found them very relevant.

Variety of topics:



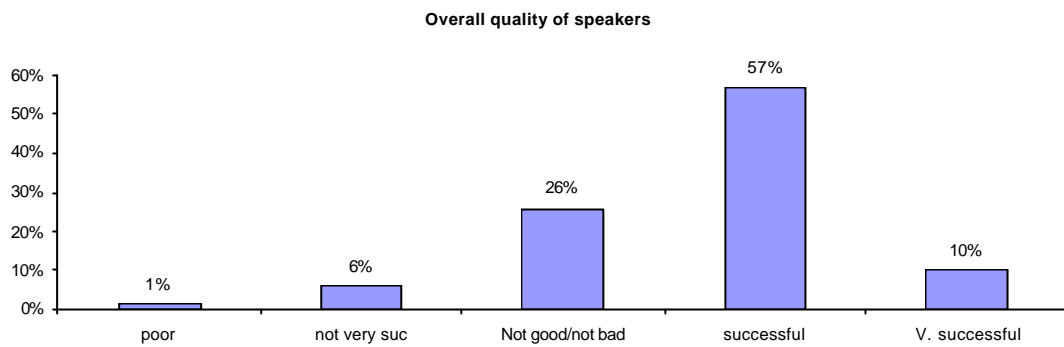
72% of the participants filling in the forms thought the variety of topics was very successful.

Formats of sessions:



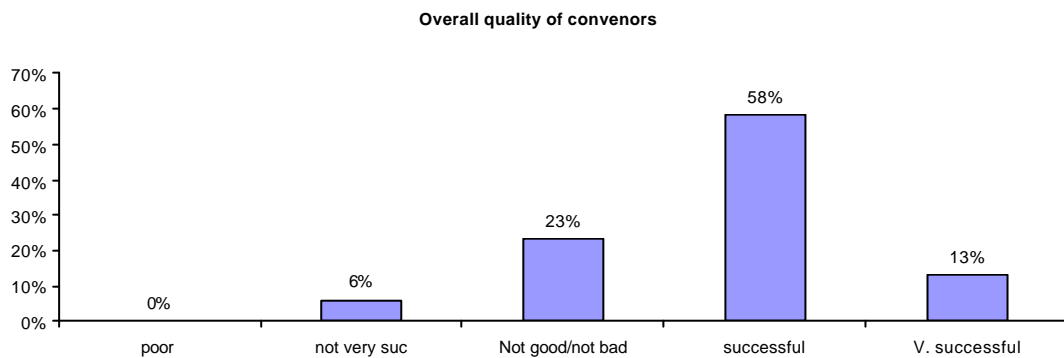
In general we can see that 69% of the participants find the diversity of formats successful, 25% find it not good/not bad while a 6% still feels not satisfied with the formats of the conference sessions.

4.2.4 Quality of speakers



67% of the participants answering this question felt that the overall quality of speakers was successful to very successful. Only a 7% of the participants answered negatively.

4.2.5 Quality of convenors

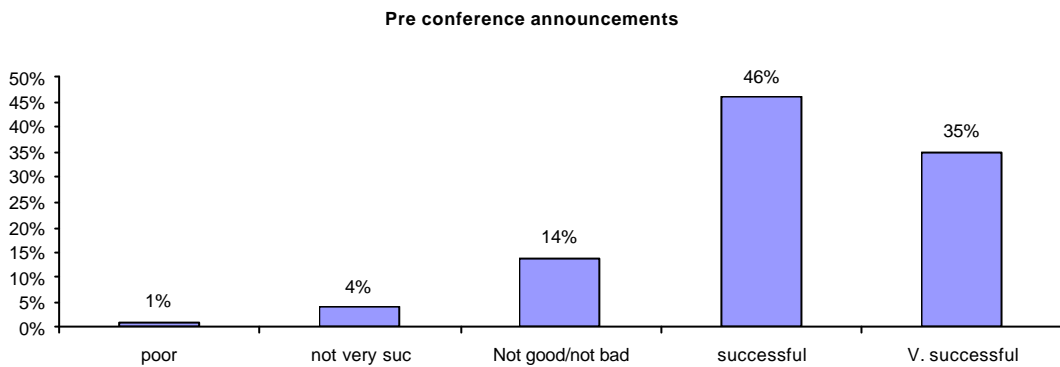


71% of the participants answering this question gave a positive opinion for the convenors

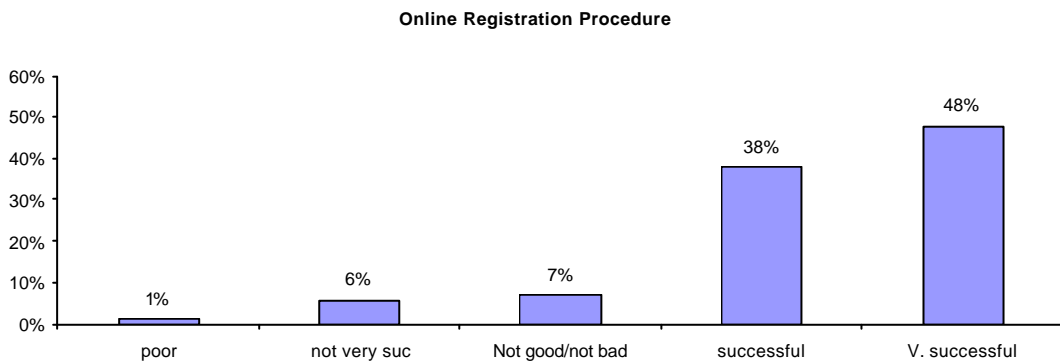
4.3 Organisation

Participants were asked to rate the different services of Ecsite during the preparation of the conference and while the conference was running. Aspects rated were: the pre - conference announcements, the conference booking, the registration desk, the helpers, the printed programme, the facilities of the venue, the coffee breaks, the lunches, the preview room. The overall feedback was very positive with the majority of responses waving always on the positive part of the scale for each question. Here are the delegates' answers in more detail.

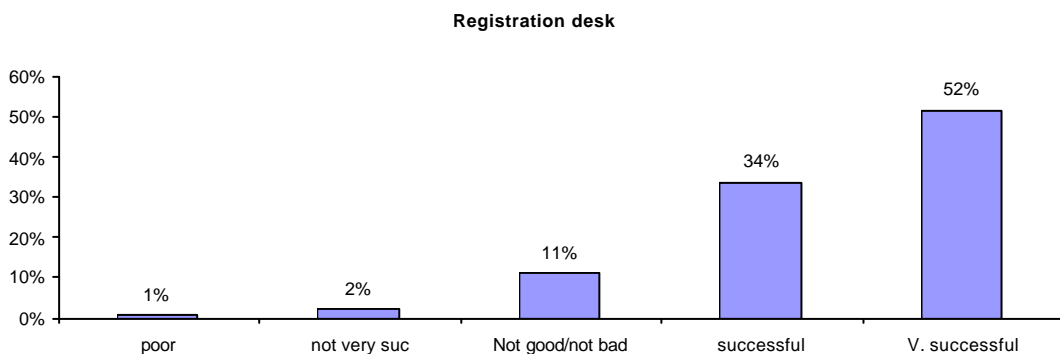
4.3.1 Pre-conference announcements



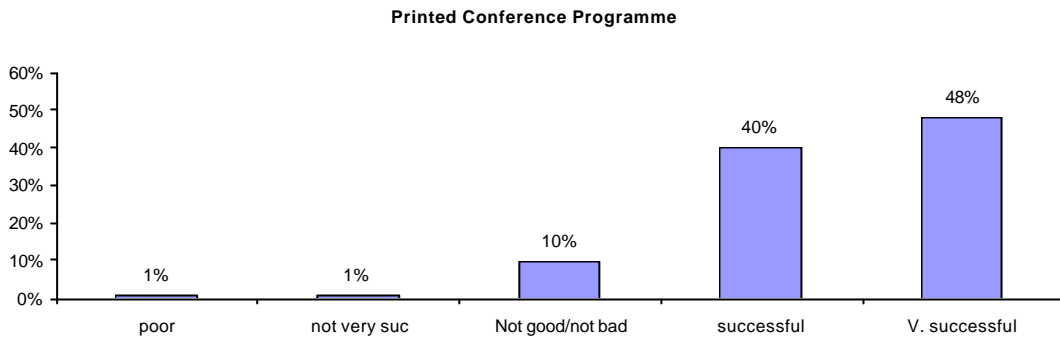
4.3.2 Conference booking



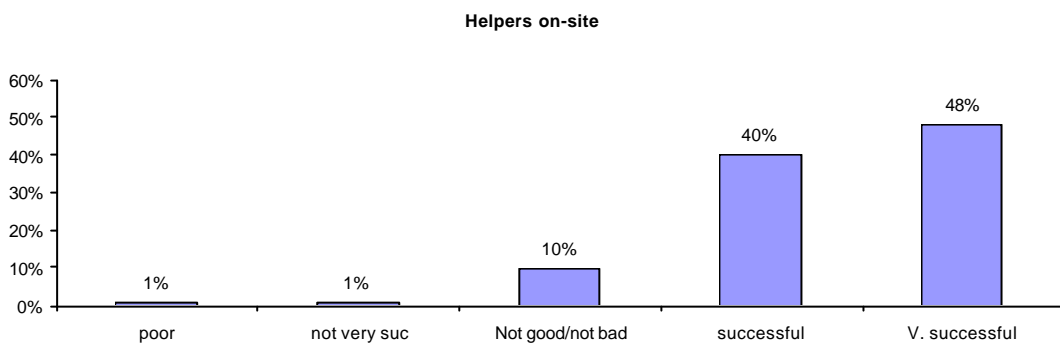
4.3.3 Registration desk



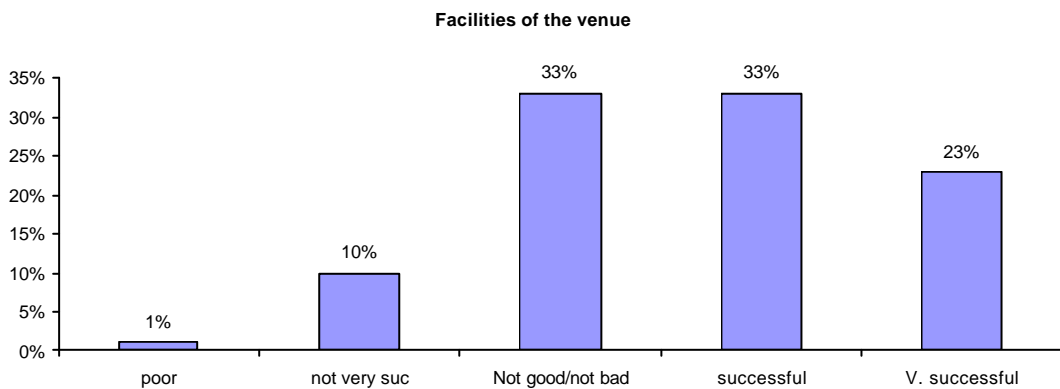
4.3.4 Printed Programme



4.3.5 Helpers



4.3.6 Facilities



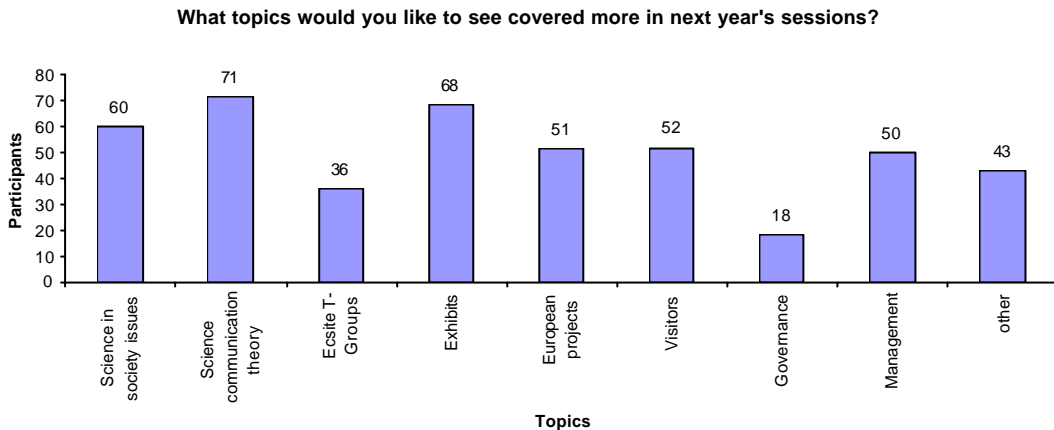
Furthermore delegates rated positively the coffee breaks (13% of the people answered this question gave a negative rate, while 57% gave a positive answer). The rating on the lunches was also positive 65% felt they were successful to very successful and 16% felt it was not successful. 66% felt that the Business Bistro was successful to very successful. Delegates were very satisfied also with the social programme of the AC2008. Almost all delegates attending the Gala Dinner gave a positive feedback from the event, 91% and 77% gave a positive rate to the Nocturne. 67% of the participants attending the Farewell Party also rated it positively.

4.4 Recommendations for next year's conference from the participants

At the feedback forms participants were given some possible topics and they had to choose which topics they would like to see in next year's conference. Here are the most popular topics.

4.4.1 Proposed Topics for next year's conference.

Delegates were given some possible topics and they had to choose which topics they would like to see in next year's conference. Their answers were the following:



Most popular answer is the science communication theory followed by sessions on Exhibits and then science in society issues. More proposals were given by the participants like: (7 people) formal education/teachers, (6 people) evaluation, (4 people) Small centres / issues and how to resolve, (4 people) learning/impact, etc

4.4.2 Proposed theme for next year's conference

Besides the suggestions on topics that should be covered in the following Ecsite annual conferences participants were asked to give their opinion on potential main themes for the conferences. Here are the most popular areas of interest we received.

- Link with the society (14 people)
- Exhibitions(9 people)
- Impact- Evaluation (8 people)
- Small science centres (6 people)
- Science centres and environment (6 people)
- Collaborations(5 people)
- Links with formal education(5 people)
- Marketing (4 people)

4.4.3 Recommendations for different aspects of the conference by the delegates

The delegates also gave their recommendations for the different aspects they felt they could be improved at the conference in 2008. Their answers are put into categories. Here are the most popular recommendations received for each category.

Sessions

- 7 More interactive formats
- 6 more in depth sessions
- 4 Make posters available outside poster sessions or provide copies of all posters
- 4 Do not put such many parallel session at the same time.
- 3 check the quality of the contributions
- 3 Training/instruction of convenors

- 2 Better facilities and in the conference rooms
- 2 Better quality of English
- 2 I would like to be able to download PowerPoint presentations from the conference site

Facilities

- 4 make sure the lecture rooms are big enough so people that are late can easily find a seat
- 4 healthier food
- 3 Air conditioning in the rooms;
- 2 better vegetarian food
- 2 sessions rooms close to each other
- 2 better technicians and technical facilities

Social programme

- 2 Some conference tours with a stronger cultural focus
- Sightseeing of the city at the last afternoon
- Dance party at the farewell.
- Great organization! Especially for the Gala dinner and the Nocturne - the last was a great experience indeed.
- There is usually a short time from the last session to the evening event. Although this year there was slightly more time, the events started late as a consequence?
- give option to people to return earlier to the hotels from evening events - since the programme is so full (certainly when you have to give a presentation next morning)

Business Bistro

- 3 Business bistro all in one area
- Conference was excellent in so many respects, but here are some suggestions: Maximum effort to get people into the Business Bistro
- A double exhibition booth or defined space in the coffee area for a small science centres drop-in zone and meeting point.
- ECSITE participant LISTING classified by countries (more workable for exhibitor to know which country/museum is represented, and who represents it.
- Make opening hours of BB shorter

Networking

- Maybe leave more room for exchange between people. Why not try the method ""Open Space"" to give more people possibilities to share experiences and to rise new questions that are important to address in the field of our work
- Happy hour at the end of the session in order to meet and networking at the end of each day.
- Don't know how, but I would prefer still more opportunities of getting to know people - the conference is just so big!
- offer tools for networking, setting up meeting

5. Conclusions from the conference

The conference overall was rated highly in terms of content, networking opportunities and organisation from the Ecsite delegates.

More specifically regarding the different aspects of the conference:

5.1 Sessions

- ❖ The great majority of the conference sessions were rated very positively from the participants, in terms of content, usefulness, relevance, entertainment, quality of speakers and convenors
- ❖ The main complains of the participants are (Low quality of communication skills and sometimes knowledge of English of some speakers, self promotion of some speakers for their institutions, no relevance to the promised topic of the session on the presentations of some speakers, lack of control on the session by some convenors)
- ❖ Many participants enjoyed the interactive format of some sessions, the opportunity to share ideas and views through the workshops, the one to one communication that the poster sessions offered
- ❖ A great variety of themes and issues have been proposed by the participants, science in society , small science centres, collaborations between institutions are topics that came across in many areas of the evaluation
- ❖ Long (2 hours) sessions were not appreciated as they were too tiring
- ❖ Several participants expressed their wish to have the posters from the poster sessions hang in a location for the whole duration of the conference

5.2 Business Bistro

- ❖ The Business Bistro is a very successful part of the conference, was for one more year fully booked while several requests were made from more companies that wanted to join the conference with bigger installations. The BB provides a wide perspective of the market in our field, it gives space to private companies, to science centres and museums who want to promote their activities, to the European Commission and European agencies and networks.
- ❖ A general negative comment on the Business Bistro of 2008 was the fact that the area was split in half between two neighboring parts of the venue.

5.3 Networking opportunities

- ❖ This is still the best aspect of the conference as it was in 2007. The networking opportunities, the informal atmosphere of the conference, the rich social activities are highly appreciated by the delegates and remain a strong asset of the success of the Ecsite annual conference

ANNEX 1- The Conference Feedback Form

Ecsite Annual Conference 2008
Budapest 29th - 31st May

Conference feedback form



Please take a few minutes to tell us your opinion about our conference and help us make it better for next year.

The information you will provide will be treated confidentially and reported anonymously.

1. Please give us your opinion on the Ecsite Annual Conference 2008 regarding the following aspects

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "Strongly disagree" and 5 is "Strongly agree."

a) In general, I found the Conference interesting.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
b) In general, I found the Conference useful for my work.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
c) The Conference was a good opportunity for networking.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
d) In general, I enjoyed the Conference.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please rate the following aspects of the conference on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent

Announcements of the conference	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Online registration procedure and follow-up	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Registration desk	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Printed conference programme	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Helpers on-site	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities of the conference venue	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Coffee breaks	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Lunches	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Opening ceremony	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Closing session	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Business Bistro	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Gala Dinner	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Nocturne	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Farewell Party	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sessions: quality of content	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sessions: relevance of topics	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sessions: variety of topics	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Sessions: format of sessions	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Overall quality of speakers	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Overall quality of convenors	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

3. What did you like most in the Conference this year?

Please enter a number 1,2,3,4,5 or 6 in order of most liking (1=I liked it most of all;2=I liked it, but not as much as rank 1; etc.)

Sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business Bistro	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social programme (Gala Dinner, Nocturne, Farewell Party)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Please specify : <input type="text"/>
Comments	<input type="text"/>

4. What did you like least in the Conference this year?

Please enter a number 1,2,3,4,5 or 6 in order of least liking (1=I liked it least of all;2=I didn't liked it so much, but not as badly as rank 1; etc.)

Sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business Bistro	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food and facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social programme (Gala Dinner, Nocturne, Farewell Party)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Please specify : <input type="text"/>
Comments	<input type="text"/>

5. What three words would you use to sum up your experience at the Conference this year?

6. What topics would you like to see covered more in next year's sessions?

Please tick one or more.

<input type="checkbox"/> Science communication theory	<input type="checkbox"/> Science in society issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitors
<input type="checkbox"/> Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Governance
<input type="checkbox"/> Ecsite T-Groups (Special Interest Groups)	<input type="checkbox"/> European projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify <input type="text"/>	

7. Do you have any suggestions on themes for the focus of future Conferences?

8. Do you have any suggestions or improvements that we could make in any area?

9. Will you attend the Conference next year?

Yes

No

I don't know

Deadline for submitting this form : 11th June 2008

Thank you for your time

We hope to see you in Milan next year for the 20th Ecsite Annual Conference!

Ecsite Annual Conference 2009, 4th - 6th June, Milan, Italy
