

Ecsite Annual Conference 2007

Evaluation and Recommendations

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1. Introduction

The Ecsite Annual Conference 2007

This document gives an overview of the Ecsite Annual conference 2007 as seen by its delegates. The information below has been drawn from the 123 conference feedback forms gathered from the delegates during and after the conference ended.

Ecsite would like to thank all the delegates that participated at this conference and would like to give special thanks to the people who filled in the feedback forms and gave their valuable feedback to help Ecsite make a better conference in the future.

The Ecsite Annual Conference 2007 was held from the 29th May to the 2nd June in Lisbon, Portugal. The Conference was hosted by the Pavilion of Knowledge –Ciencia Viva. The conference consisted of two days of pre-conference meetings and three days of an official programme with 75 sessions and a variety of social events. An exhibition area was also part of the conference with 51 booths and 4 installations.

In 2007 the conference theme was the role of science centres and museums as compared with other players in science communication. There were four main topics: Science centres/museums and the others, finance and management, science, science in society.

886 delegates from 55 countries in Europe and worldwide participated at the Ecsite AC2007.

2. Overview of the evaluation of the Ecsite Annual Conference 2007

	Themes	Key findings	Actions/recommendations
1	Success of the conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 88% of the delegates found the overall conference successful to very successful - Most popular aspects of the conference were the sessions and the networking opportunities - The diversity of the delegates and the variety of the sessions were highlighted - Delegates gave negative feedback on some organizational aspects of the conference (shuttles, food, venue facilities) - Business Bistro (positive comments except the demo area that was not well attended) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the efficient communication built between the host and ecsite should be kept in the following years - ecsite should focus on the quality of sessions and find new ways for enhancing the networking opportunities for the delegates - the promotion of the conference should keep reaching a wide target audience, new paths should be built with the European countries less represented in the conference and countries outside Europe - BB cancel the demo area, reinforce the activities organized during the Happy Hour
2	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the quality of sessions, speakers and convenors were rated in their majority positively - participants enjoyed the content of the sessions, the interactive sessions, the diversity of the speakers from Europe and worldwide and the presence of outside of the field invited speakers - negative comments :quality of some speakers and convenors - people would like to see sessions on science in society and sc communication theory - more interactive sessions was a popular request by many delegates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more clear guidelines for the submission of proposals will be made by Ecsite - a forum will be built on the conference website for potential speakers and convenors to communicate - more explicit guidelines will be given to convenors and guidelines before the conference - the potential of an informal 'communication skills' event will be explored for the future - Ecsite should make sure that key people are invited to the future conferences from the fields that the delegates would like to know more about
3	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social programme was positively rated (farewell party particularly mentioned) - services in majority were satisfying - negative comments : on timing of events vegetarian food, shuttle services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keep a varied social programme and an informal farewell party - provide 'vegetarian lunch vouchers'

3. Evaluation Aims

The Ecsite Annual conference is the most important yearly meeting of the network. The Ecsite Executive office together with Pavilion of Knowledge Ciencia Viva – the host organisation, and the Annual Conference Programme Committee (ACPC) aimed in creating a conference that would not only represent the variety of our members and the new trends in science communication but would also provide time for networking, for doing business and for entertainment to all the delegates.

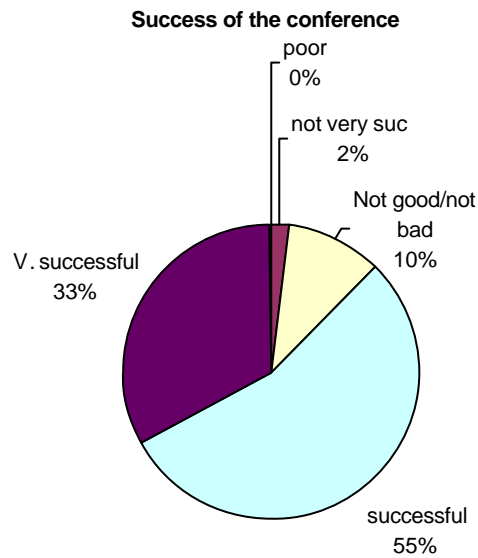
This evaluation gives an overview of the different aspects of the conference as seen by its delegates, starting from the overview of the conference and looking more specifically to its content and its organisation. The information gathered is valuable tool for Ecsite, the host organizations and for the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

4. Results

123 forms were gathered out of the 886 participants of the conference (14% of the participants). Questionnaires were given to delegates during the conference with their delegates' package upon their arrival at the venue and were also sent by email from the executive office after the conference.

4.1 Success of the conference

The participants were asked how successful they thought the conference was. These are the rates from 97 people that answered this question.



As we can see from above 88% of the delegates rated the conference as very successful to successful while no one rated the conference as poor.

4.1.1 Characterize the conference with three words

People gave 259 words for characterising the conference. From these 245 (almost 95%) were positive and 14 (5%) negative.

Looking at the words chosen by the delegates for characterising the conference many of them are referring to the content (interesting, useful, stimulating, informative, educational etc) and the networking opportunities that the conference offered to its delegates.

Most popular words were:

Interesting (24) - Networking (15)- Inspiring (13)- Useful (10)- friendly (11) - fun (7)- Professional (6)- Enjoyable (6)- Stimulating (6)- pleasant (5)- contacts (5) - Informative (4) - Educational (4)- Communicative (5) - Well organized (4) - Beautiful city (4)- Exciting 3 - new ideas (3) - Excellent 3- Positive 3- Waiting 3 - Tiring 3- Productive 2- Engaging 2 cosmopolitan 2- international 2 - interactive 2 - learning 2- eye-opening 2- interactive 2 - Updating 2- reinvigorating 2- Exchange 2- rewarding 2- Good wine 2- Share with world 2-- Motivating 2- Best- Good quality leads 2- Busy 2- intense 2-

4.1.2 The best aspect of the conference

Delegates were asked what the best aspect of the conference was. 121 answers were received. Their opinions were gathered according to the following categories: sessions- services- the social programme- the networking opportunities- the Business Bistro-atmosphere – other. Here are the most popular responses.

The impression that these comments give is that the sessions of the conference and the networking opportunities were the strongest parts of the conference in 2007.

SESSIONS (total number of comments-69)

- A very good selection of sessions, with interesting content (23)
- Open & varied program (9)
- Great see worldwide input from Mexico, Columbia and the states/why not actively invite contributions from centres in Africa and Asia too (3)
- Participate in debates and workshops. (3)
- Due to the small groups in the sessions and the relaxed atmosphere in general, discussions (in and between sessions) could easily be started (3)
- Sessions were very well organized, guided by professional speakers (3)
- Some poster session had really dedicated speakers, and it is always good to talk to people and have the possibility to directly pose questions. (2)
- Pre-conference session "THE" group. It was wonderful, like the project is. (2)
- Having outside the field speakers such as Anna Stetsenko and Brenda Hutchinson (2)
- That some issues (explainers, EU funding) can find more space during pre- conference days. 2

NETWORKING (total number of comments -44)

- Opportunities to network and lots of events to do so (26)
- Meeting colleagues in other countries, exchanging experience and learning from their experience (6)
- Attendees from outside the EU (5)
- It was really interesting to here about their museums and the projects being carried out there, the problems they encounter and solutions provide It really helped me look at our museum in relation to other museums and worldwide(4)
- First time I attended Ecsite conference and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, learnt lots and met many interesting people, impressed that people were willing to share so much of their knowledge and experiences. (3)

SERVICES (total number of comments - 30)

- The overall organization was excellent_ no last minute stress, calm of the organization team_ smooth and very peaceful flow of events and activities (9)
- great facilities (6)
- Very friendly staff (5)
- great food /great coffee and cakes (6)
- technical help (2)

SOCIAL PROGRAMME (total number of comments 29)

- The street party in Alfama (13)
- Gala dinner (5)
- The social events were also really well done and really useful for meeting people (5)
- Going to the Pavilion of Knowledge was good (delicious wines) (3)
- Opening session, it was really cool, full of important information and the right spirit. (2)

BUSINESS BISTRO (total number of comments 17)

- The Business Bistro was a great success (9)
- Business bistro : having very concrete business contacts (3)
- The idea to host coffee breaks in the Business Bistro meant many of the delegates spent some time there (2)

ATMOSPHERE (total number of comments 16)

- The relaxed, fun and inspiring atmosphere (9)
- A tremendous community feeling! (4)

OTHER (total number of comments 21)

- Great venue (9), The highlighting of explainers (2), charming city (3), the conference handbook was innovative (2), Gruntvig is a great idea and I hope next year it will be the same (2)

4.1.3 The worst aspect of the conference

Looking at the overall success of the conference here are some aspects of the conference that the delegates did not like. The question they answered was "what was the worst aspect of the conference?" The most frequent answers can be seen below:

121 questionnaires were received. These are their opinions categorised according to the following categories: sessions- services- the social programme- the Business Bistro- - the location of the venue - the facilities – other- food

SESSIONS (total number of comments 53)

- The fact that many of the sessions I would like to attend were parallel sessions(7)
- In some sessions English of the speakers was very poor. Perfect English is of course not needed, but speakers must at least be able to understand the questions (6)
- Too much "talk" and not enough dialogue. We need more interactive sessions that model the type of learning that our institutions are about. (6)
- Several non good speakers. Not regarding the language abilities, but more with the ability to speak in public and the content of the presentations. (3)
- Within a session, sometimes the contributions varied pretty much, not only in quality of the contribution, but also in their relationship to the overall-topic of the session (2)
- Some of the speakers were there just to promote their project/exhibit in the sense that they were for sale lack of innovation(3)
- Some poor sessions/no sharp theme (3)

- Sometimes the titles of the sessions promised to be more than they really were. Some presentations seemed not to fit in the sessions or were rather cursory (3)
- English-speaking native presenters do not realize that not everybody is at their level of language and therefore make no effort to speak slowly(3)

SERVICES (total number of comments 32)

- Shuttle service (25)

LOCATION –FACILITIES (total number of comments 21)

- Place not easy access (9)
- Too cold venue 5
- Too much waiting time 3
- The conference centre wasn't the best place for people to stop and have a chat as crowds built up in some areas 2

SOCIAL PROGRAMME (total number of comments 21)

- Gala Dinner, food, place ok. (Complains: on structure of night, lack of music, not enough show on the preparation of the food, not specific seats, taking too long to serve (9)
- Nocturne, no programme, poor food, missing structure 5
- More structure to the formal events 5

FOOD (total number of comments 19)

- Although asked when booking about dietary requirements at the conference lunches were not provided for vegetarians, vegans (9)
- Repetition of food at lunch for vegetarians (5)
- Lunches on the first day were not well organized and there was not enough room for all the people in the City Room which meant we had to eat in the lobby with no facilities or drinks (3)

BUSINESS BISTRO (total number of comments 10)

- Presentation area with screen in exhibition area did not work well (3)
- too few computers in the BB for so many people (2)

OTHER (total number of comments 6)

- The photographer was intrusive and distracting. 2

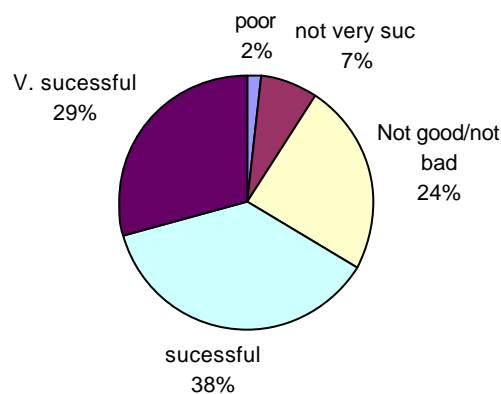
4.2 Quality of the content

The different aspects of the programme were rated by the delegates. Results on these aspects can be seen below.

4.2.1 Opening Session

The Opening session gathered positive rates from the 99 participants that answered this question. 67% marked it as very successful- successful.

Opening Ceremony

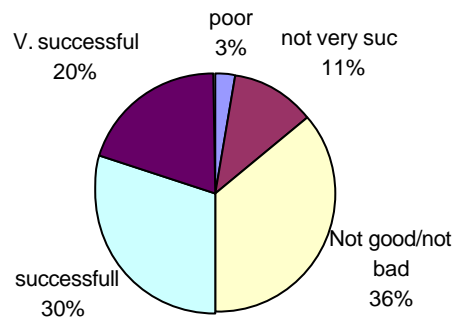


It has to be mentioned that in 2007 a great number of participants took part in the opening session (around 400 people)

4.2.2 Closing Ceremony

64 participants answered the question regarding the closing ceremony. 50% found the ceremony successful – very successful while 36% thought it was neither good nor bad.

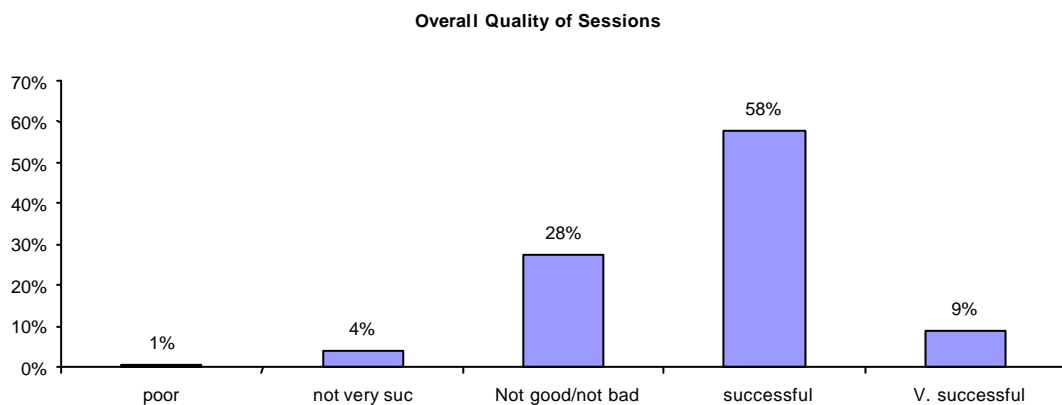
Closing Ceremony



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 ms Rosalia Vargas, Catherine Franche, Asger Høeg, Vincenzo Lipardi, Lesley Lewis, Istvan Matskasi.

4.2.3 Overall quality of sessions

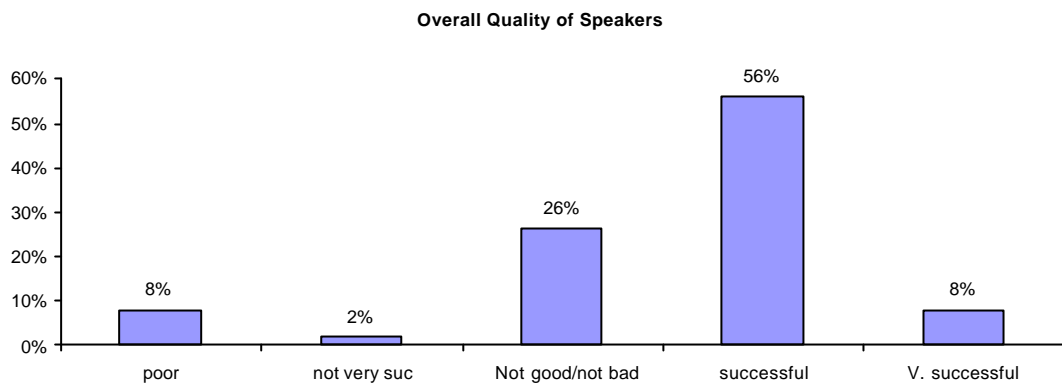
113 delegates answered this question. Here are their views.



As seen above only 5% of the people answering this question found the overall quality of the sessions not successful while 67 % gave positive rating.

4.2.4 Quality of speakers

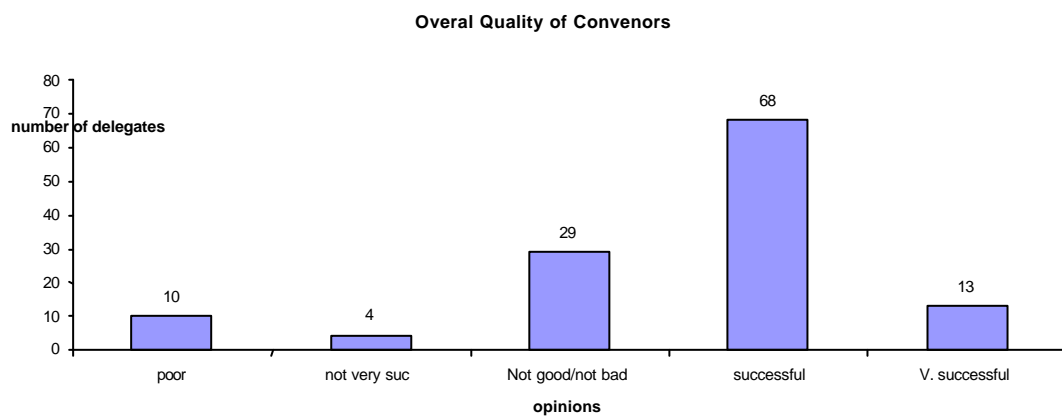
121 delegates answered this question



Most delegates gave positive feedback on the quality of the sessions

4.2.5 Quality of convenors

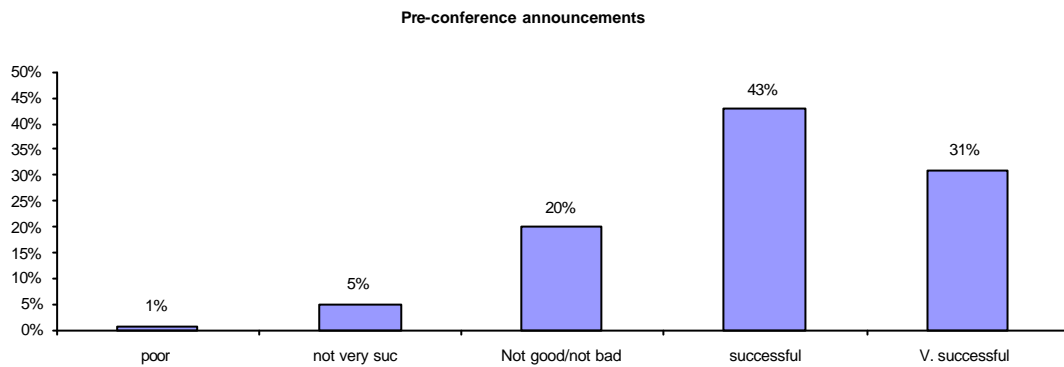
124 delegates answered this question



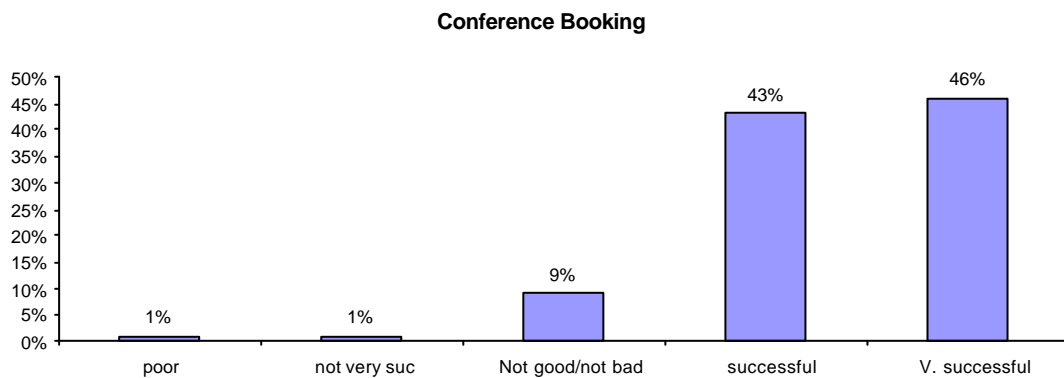
4.3 Organisation

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.

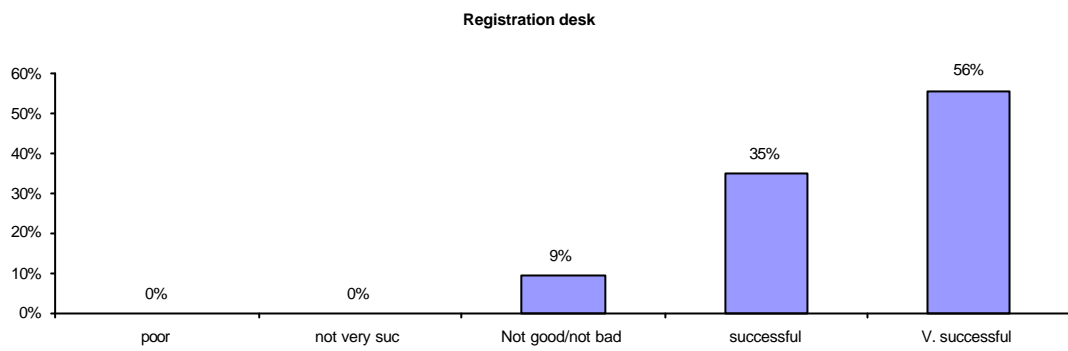
4.3.1 Pre-conference announcements



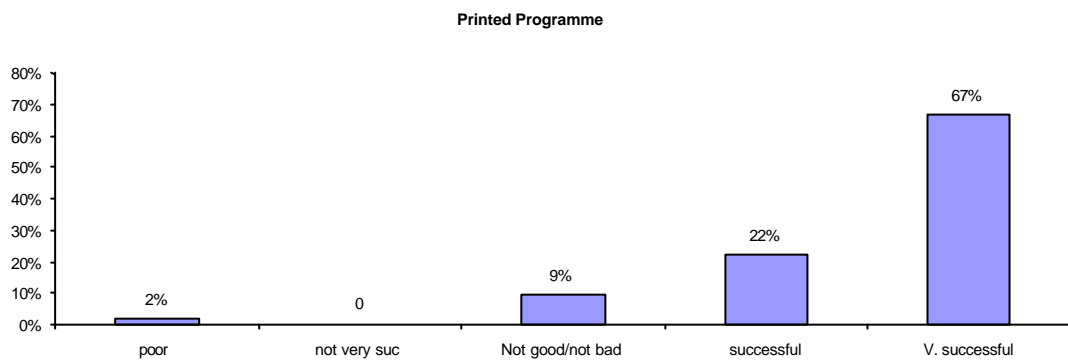
4.3.2 Conference booking



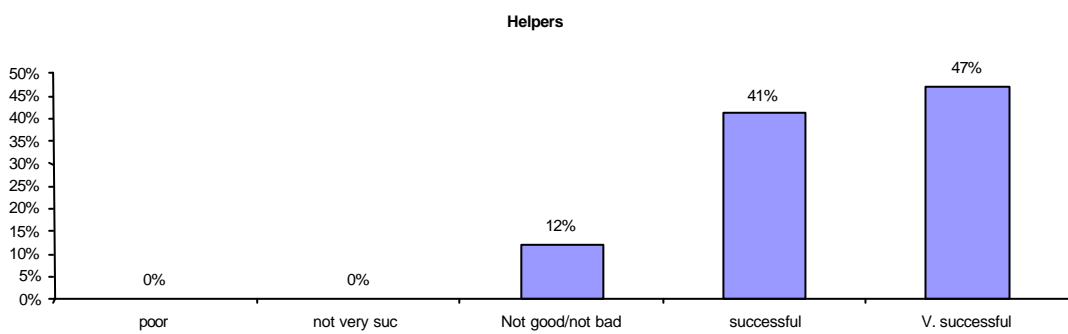
4.3.3 Registration desk



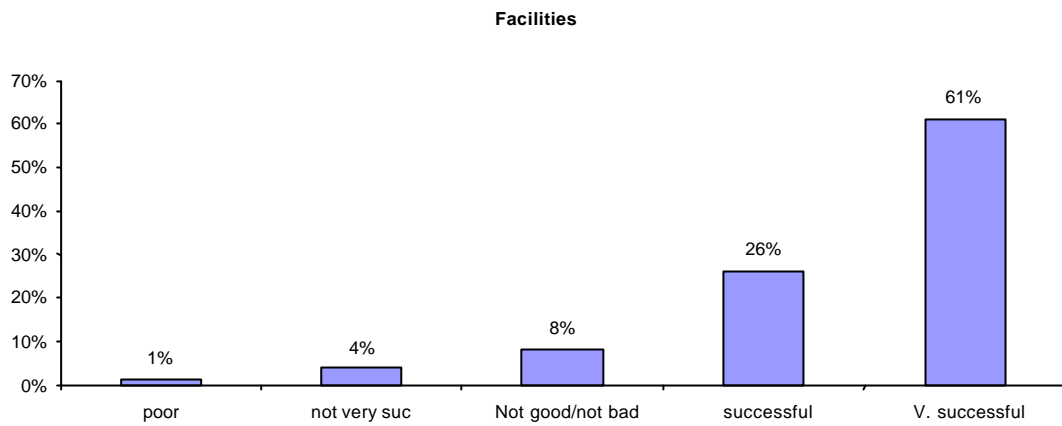
4.3.4 Printed Programme



4.3.5 Helpers



4.3.6 Facilities

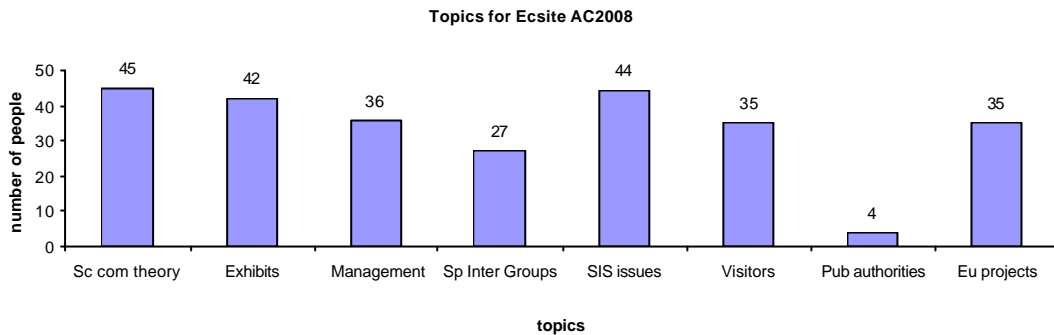


Furthermore delegates rated positively the coffee breaks (only 8% of the people answered this question gave a negative rate). The rating on the lunches was less positive (still 61% of the people gave a positive rate to the lunches, but 25% felt food was neither good or bad, while 13% was not happy with the food at the lunches).

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.



Other topics proposed where: Planetariums, arts and science, Access diversity and inclusion, Small travel-exhibitions 2, science shows 3, workshops, Retail, science contents, Outreach and activity workshops, working with teachers and schools, More scientific content, Education 2, future technology, Commercial activity, co-operation with research institutes, education teaching institutes and industry, explainers 4, exhibit architecture, shop, Visitor research, Graphic, 3d-Design and scenography, Marketing.

4.4.2 Recommendations for different aspect 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

- More opportunities for workshops and other formats where we can tap on the knowledge of other participant-like open space and other participative methods 8
- Reduce the number of sessions 6
- No more than four speaker per session, leave enough time for Q&A 5
- more actual performances of things like drama or science performances rather than just hear people talking about the project second hand. 3
- Emphasize the need of a good presentation. The speaker should be able to give a presentation without just reading papers. 3
- All speakers came from the same background (being part or dealing with a science center) same over specialist could have been invited too! Artist, designer, specialist of each field, in order to cross vision with over specialty in a more global approach 2
- have a thread of show and tell panel kind of sessions and a separate thread of discussion and issue based sessions that were roundtables, posters, keynotes with discussion as well as provocative panels 2
- More varied programme 2
- have more comprehensive community discussions-summaries about future steps in supporting our community- A clear communication of challenges and steps done would certainly strengthen our community 2
- less established people in the field to be able to propose a talk rather than a whole session

Business Bistro

- The sessions in the Business Bistro did not work as there was no audience. Perhaps only host these over coffee breaks, or do better promotion 2

Other

- more frequent shuttle bus 2

- Organise so that evening events work to timetable 2
- provide proper vegetarian food

5. Conclusions - Recommendations on the content of the conference

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

- the efficient communication built between the host and Ecsite should be kept in the following years

More specifically regarding the different aspects of the conference:

5.1 Sessions

- The majority of the participants when asked on the best aspect of the conference gave comments on the sessions. They were the most popular aspect of the conference.
- The most interesting aspects for the participants were the content of the sessions, the variety of the programme, the worldwide input from speakers from different countries and the discussions following up the sessions.
- The downfalls of the sessions as seen by the delegates were the big number of parallel sessions (still this mentioned only by 7 out of the 123 people who took part in the evaluation) , the fact that still the conference programme does not have many interactive sessions and the quality of some speakers.
- Mostly the negative comments for the sessions were concentrated on some speakers whether their language abilities were not good, or because they were using the session for self promotion, or because their communication skills were not good.
- Science communication theory and science in society issues were the most popular topics selected as potential topics for 2008

Recommendations

- Reinforce the interactive sessions in the programme, more session on interactive formats should be part of the programme
- keep the balance on the European and worldwide input in the sessions
- Ecsite needs to give more clear guidelines for speakers and convenors at the time of the session proposals (on the number of speakers on each session, on the presentations, on the contact before the conference, on the reinforcement of interactive sessions, on the maximum number of sessions each delegate can participate) and before the conference while preparing their sessions
- Ecsite should keep aiming and targeting the introduction of a number of 'outside' speakers that will bring valuable input to the conference.
- A forum will be built on the conference website for potential speakers and convenors to communicate
- The potential of an informal 'communication skills' event will be explored for the future

5.2 Business Bistro

- The Business Bistro is a successful part of the conference, was fully booked 2 months before the conference and more requests were made from companies. The BB provides a wide perspective of the market in our field and it is a growing interest not only of private companies but also of science centres and museums building exhibitions and partnerships
- One part of the BB that didn't work well was the Demo area , a new service introduced in 2007

Recommendations

- Keep the increased number of booths
- Give more publicity and reinforce the organisation of ' special activities' during the happy hour on the second day of the conference
- Cancel the demo area, reinforce the activities organized during the Happy Hour

5.3 Networking opportunities

- The conference gives an important platform for people to communicate and exchange experience with their colleagues from different countries. This is seen by the great number of participants in 2007 (886) , the variety of the countries (55), the comments of the delegates .

Recommendations

- The conference should keep up having a strong social programme where people have many opportunities to network on a relaxed atmosphere while also should keep allowing enough time for coffee breaks and lunches during the day.
- New services could be introduced to reinforce these networking opportunities during the conference.

Organisation

- Overall the comments on the different aspects of the organisation of the conference were very positive. Delegates enjoyed the social programme, the comments on the material provided and the different services were in their majority positive. Complains were made mainly for the food(mainly from vegetarian delegates) and for the shuttle services

Recommendations

- Provide 'vegetarian tickets' for the delegates that prefer vegetarian food so there is no confusion with the lunches with the other delegates

Ecsite Annual Conference 2007

Lisbon 31 May - 2 June

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 In your opinion how successful do you think the conference was this year?

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all successful and 5 very successful

Not at all successful	1	2	3	4	5	Very successful
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2 Please rate the following aspects of the conference on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent

Pre-conference announcements	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Conference booking	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Registration desk	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Printed conference programme	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Helpers	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Facilities	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Coffee breaks	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Hotel facilities	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Lunches	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Conference dinner	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Opening ceremony	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Closing session	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Overall quality of sessions	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Quality of speakers	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Quality of convenors	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Business bistro	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Preview room	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent

3 What did you like most in the conference this year and why?

4 What did you like least in the conference this year and why?

5 Could you sum up your experience at the conference this year in three words?

6 Next year you would like to see more sessions for: (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"/> | Public authorities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Special Interest Groups | <input type="checkbox"/> | European projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | other (please specify) _____ | | |

7 Do you have any suggestions of improvements that we could make in any area?

8 Will you visit the conference next year?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't know |

Thank you for your time

We hope to see you in Budapest for the Ecsite conference next year!

**Ecsite Annual Conference 2008 – Budapest May 29th - May 31st
Hungarian Natural History Museum**