



Ecsite Annual Conference 2009

Evaluation and Recommendations

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1. Introduction

The Ecsite Annual Conference 2009

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 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 2009 as seen by its delegates. The Ecsite Annual Conference 2009 was held from the 4th to 6th June 2009 in Milan, Italy and was hosted by the National Museum of Science and Technology Leonardo da Vinci. It consisted of two days of pre-conference meetings and training courses and three days of an official programme with 75 sessions. The 75 conference sessions were selected amongst an impressive number of proposals that Ecsite received in September 2008 (210 proposals).

The information below has been drawn from the 192 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 (2140 forms received). These results are analyzed and used by the Annual Conference Programme Committee and the Ecsite Executive office while speakers and convenors will receive individual emails regarding their sessions.

In 2009 the conference Focus was “Science R/Evolution.s”.

986 delegates from 49 countries in Europe and worldwide participated at the Ecsite AC2009.

2. Overview of the evaluation of the Ecsite Annual Conference 2009

	Themes	Key findings
1	Success of the conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% of the delegates found the overall conference interesting (most common words to characterize the conference: interesting, networking, well organised) - 83% of the delegates felt the conference had great networking opportunities - 72% found the conference useful to very useful for their work - Delegates commented positively the organization of the conference (quality of printed material, helpers on site, registration desk) - Business Bistro: positively rated
2	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sessions, speakers and convenors were rated very positively - The delegates enjoyed especially the interactive workshops and the sessions with new ideas (on arts, impact of field) - Negative comments : lack of relevance with the mentioned topic sometimes, level of english - Delegates would like to see sessions on exhibitions, sc communication theory, science in society - Opening Ceremony was not very popular
3	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social programme was very positively rated - Friendliness and professionalism of staff was repeatedly highlighted - Negative comments : lack of wifi connection and sound quality in some session rooms

3. Evaluation Aims

The Ecsite Annual conference is the most important yearly meeting of the network. The Ecsite Executive office together with the National Museum of Science and Technology Leonardo da Vinci – 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 important issues in our world today, 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

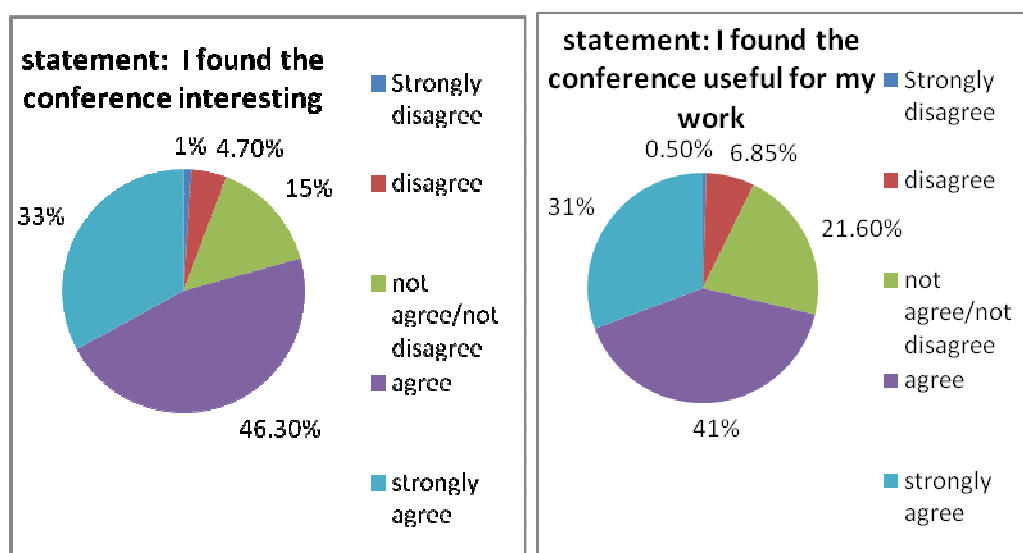
Out of the 986 participants of the conference, 192 forms were gathered (20% of the participants). Results were received from an anonymous questionnaire that was put online on the conference website once the AC2009 ended.

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.

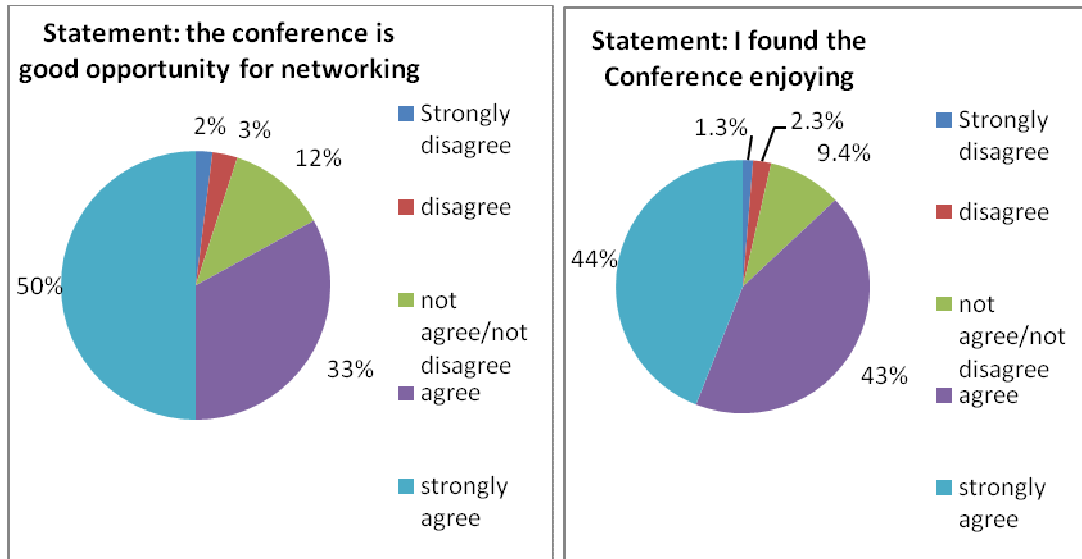
Participants had to give their opinion on the statement 'in general I found the conference interesting, 79.3% of the 192 people that answered this question agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, 5.7% of the participants gave a negative answer while 15% were indifferent to this question.

Second statement was 'I found the conference useful for my work', here again the responses were positive though less than in the first question. Therefore at the end 72% in total agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while a 7% percent of the participants replying to the survey didn't find the conference useful for their work.



Participants also gave their opinion on the statement 'The Conference was a good networking opportunity'. This was a very popular answer in the general statements since 83% answered positively. 5% of the people answering gave a negative ranking to this. Final general statement they were asked to rate was 'In general I enjoyed the Conference'. 87% answered positively to this statement too while only a 3.6% did not find the conference enjoyable.

It can be seen that the overall response to the general statements about the conference keep being very positive with networking opportunities and enjoyment remaining the most popular answers.



4.1.1 Characterize the conference with three words

People gave 380 words for characterising the conference. 92% of the words given were positive and only 8% were negative.

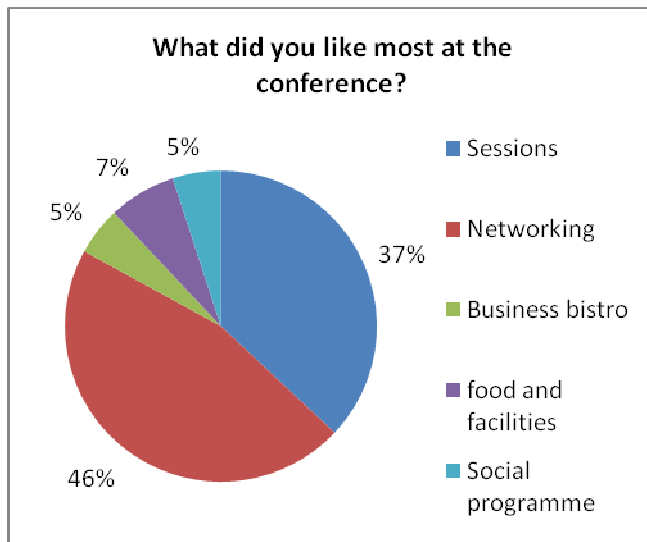
Looking at the words chosen by the delegates for characterising the conference many of them are referring to the content (interesting, stimulating, inspiring, learning, thought provoking, useful etc).

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):

26 Interesting, 23 networking, 22 well organized, 18 useful , 16 inspiring, 14 Fun, 14 friendly, 9 enjoyable, 9 New, 8 nice location, 6 exciting, 6 professional, 7 big , 7 stimulating , 6 meeting, 6 Informative, 6 new ideas, 5 variety of the content in sessions, 4 opportunities , 4 great food, 3 intense, 3 nice atmosphere , 3 excellent, 3 engaging, 3 motivating, 3 quality, 3 Exchange, 4 Experience, 3 pleasant, 3 learning, , 2 rich, 2 educative, 2 impressive, 2 career boost, 2 Tasty, 2 open minded, 3 efficient, 2 best Ecsite conference, 2 Collaboration, 2 powerful, 2 helpful , 2 Good overview, 3 diversity, 2 relevant, 2 creative, 4 Tiring, 3 boring , 2 old, 2 still hungry, 2 thirsty, 2 Repetitive

4.1.2 What did you like most at the conference?

Delegates were asked what the best aspect of the conference was. 179 people answered 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 as the year before.

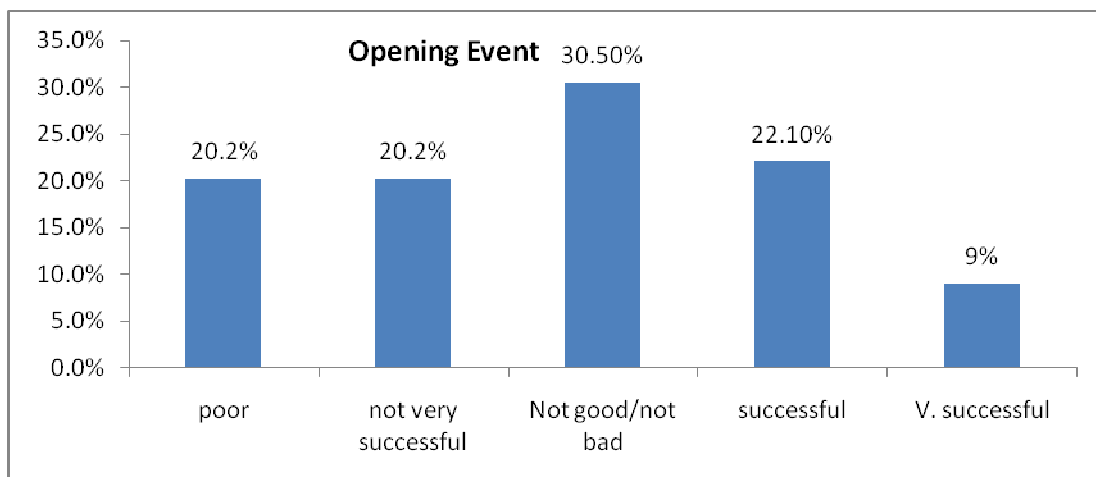


4.2 Quality of the content

4.2.1 Opening Session

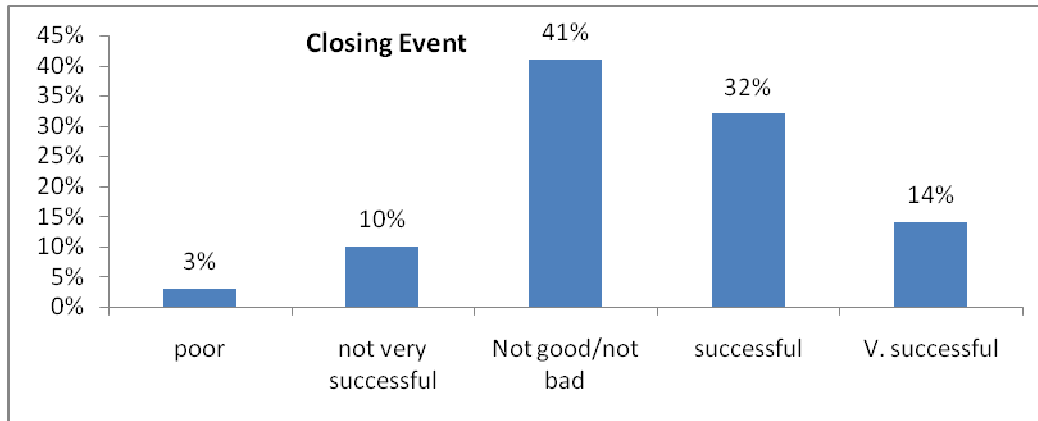
The Opening session took place in one of the Museum buildings. A stage was created and seats were available for all the delegates. The ceremony was co chaired by Mr Fiorenzo Galli and Mr Hans Gubbels and consisted of three parts. The welcoming speeches of the host and the political authorities: Mr Fiorenzo Galli, Mr Michele Perini, Mr Luigi Berlinguer, representative for Ms Letizia Moratti, Mr Roberto Formigoni, Ms Mariastella Gelmini, Mr Janez Potočnik the welcoming speeches of the Ecsite representatives: Dr Vincenzo Lipardi, Ms Catherine Franche and a keynote discussion from Mr Edoardo Boncinelli, Mr Sergio Escobar and Mr Giulio Giorello .

31% of the people answering the question whether they enjoyed the opening ceremony (157 participants) found this event successful to very successful, while 40% of the participants gave a negative rate. It looks as if the long opening ceremony was somehow tiring for many participants.



4.2.2 Closing Event

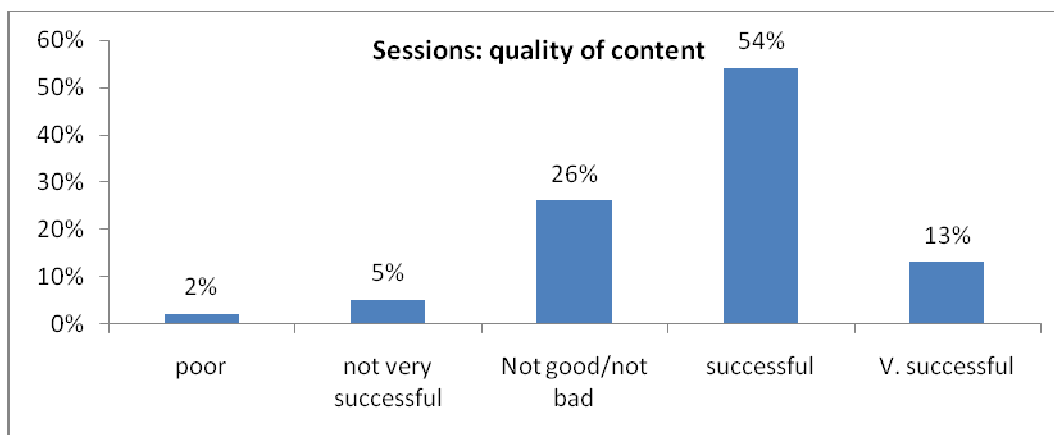
127 people answered this question. From them, 46 % found the ceremony successful – very successful, 41% thought it was neither good nor bad and 13% of people answering this question were not satisfied. The results are very similar to the 2008 rating for the event.



4.2.3 Overall quality of sessions

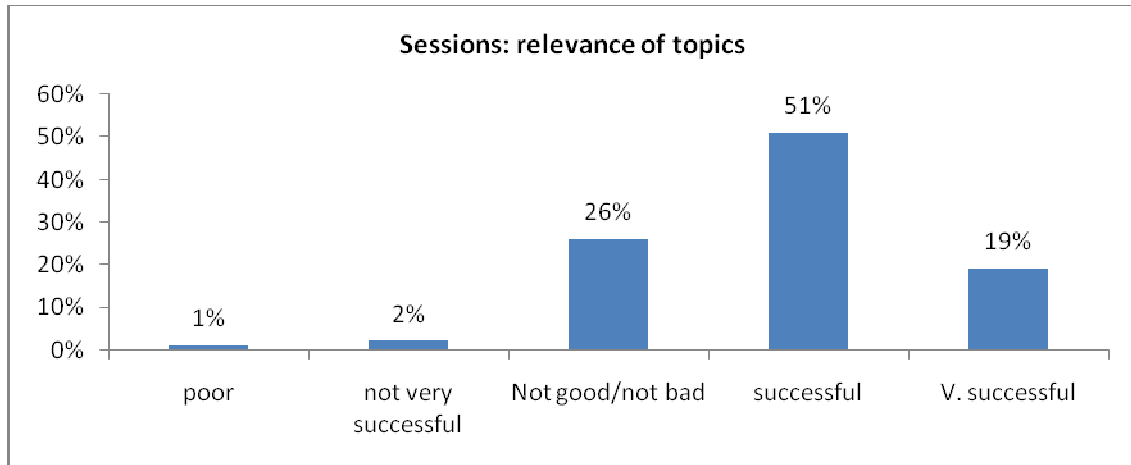
We asked the delegates to rate the sessions on the following aspects: Quality of Content, Relevance of topics, variety of topics, format, overall quality of speakers, and overall quality of convenors. Here are their views:

Quality of content:

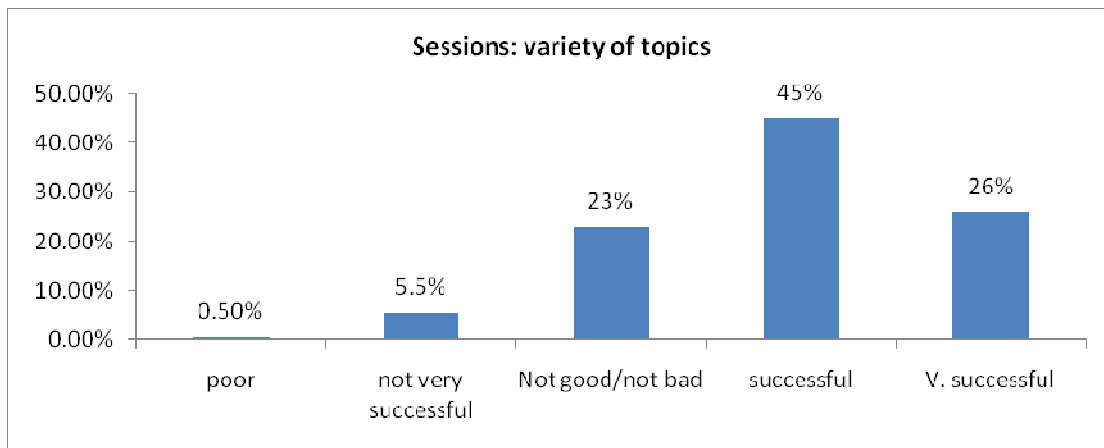


67% gave positive ranking to the content of the sessions a percentage that it improved from the 2008 ranking of the sessions.

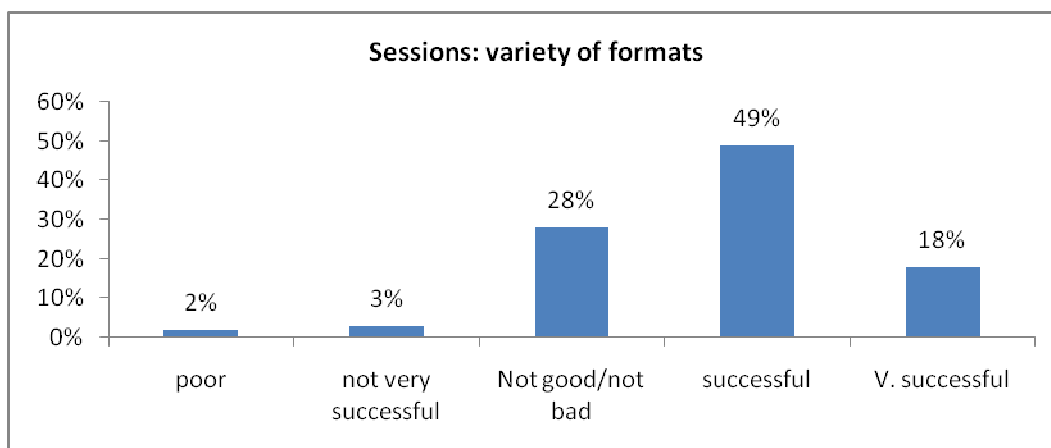
Relevance of topics:



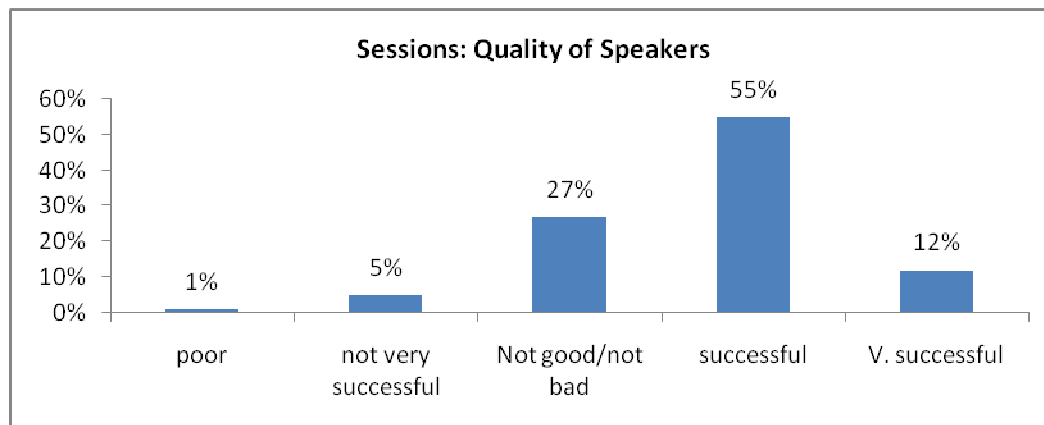
Variety of topics:



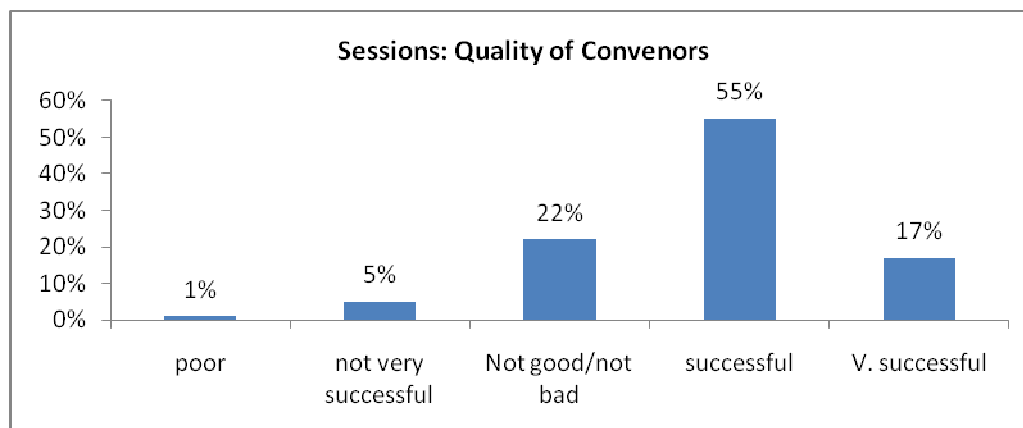
Formats of sessions:



4.2.4 Quality of speakers



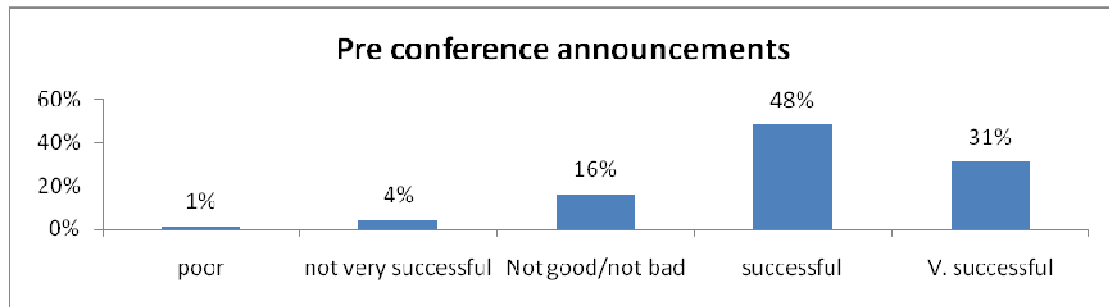
4.2.5 Quality of convenors



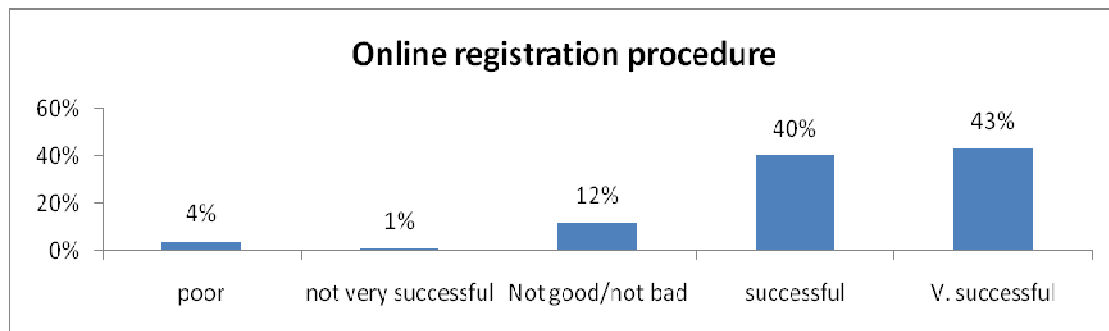
4.3 Organisation

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.

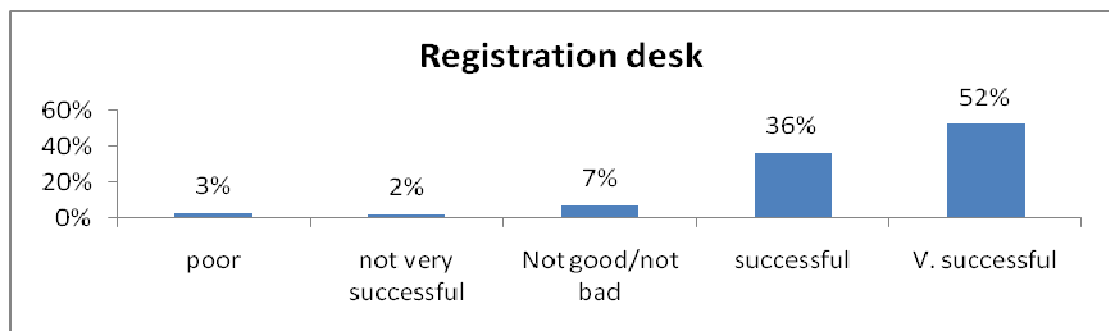
4.3.1 Pre-conference announcements



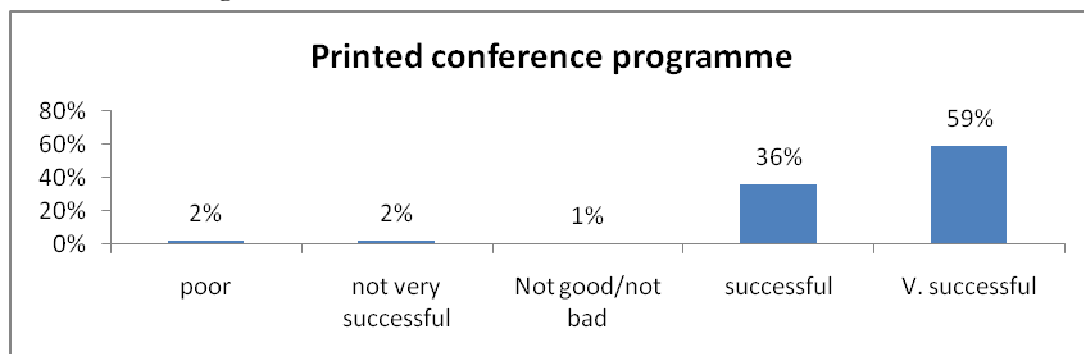
4.3.2 Online booking



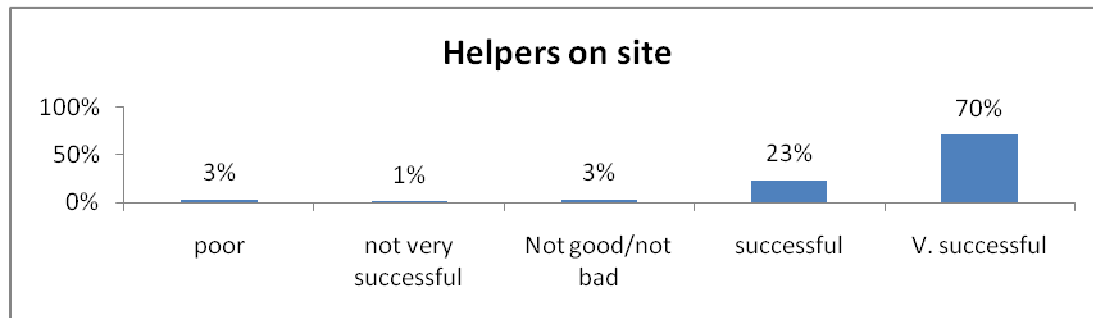
4.3.3 Registration desk



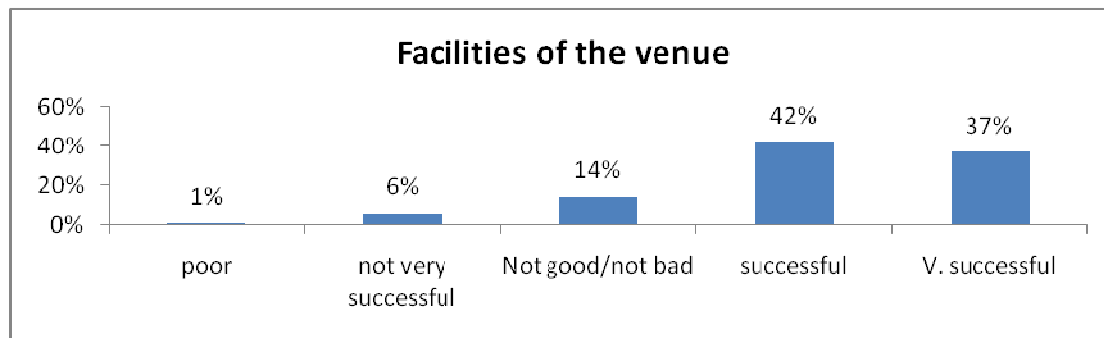
4.3.4 Printed Programme



4.3.5 Helpers



4.3.6 Facilities



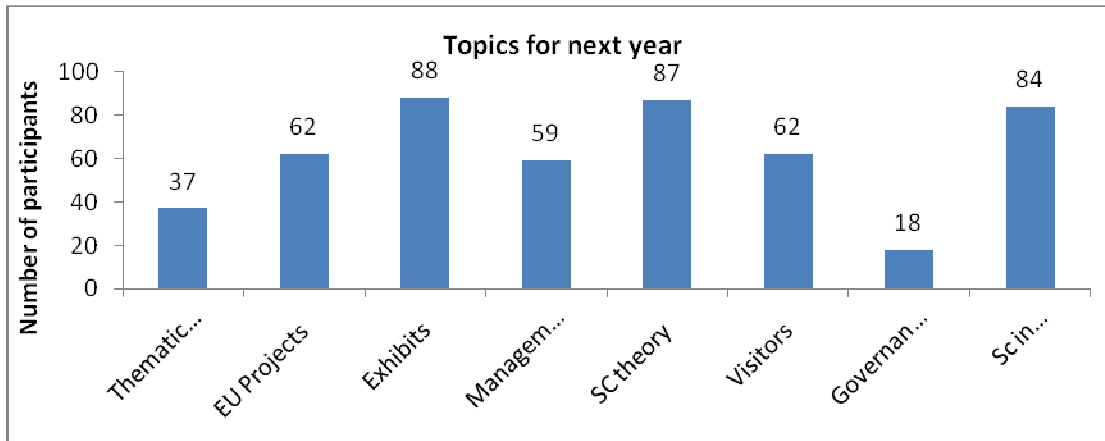
Furthermore delegates rated positively the coffee breaks (10% of the people answered this question gave a negative rate, while 65% gave a positive answer). The rating on the lunches was also positive 81% felt they were successful to very successful and only 8% felt it was not successful. 63% felt that the Business Bistro was successful to very successful. Delegates were very satisfied also with the social programme of the AC2008. 70% of the people responding the questionnaire found the Gala Dinner successful to very successful and 60% gave a positive rate to the Nocturne. 64% 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:



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.

- Exchanges between our field and other fields (5 people)
- Environment (5 people)
- Economy (6 people)
- Evaluation (6 people)
- Social issues (7 people)
- Art and science (3 people)
- Technology (5 people)
- Design – Exhibits (10 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 2009. Their answers are put into categories. Here are the most popular recommendations received for each category.

Sessions

- 16 Better quality of speakers (terms of language, relevance of topic, avoid self promotion etc)
- 8 more practical sessions, more workshops
- 5 Invite external speakers

Opening event

- 4 Less political speeches
- Bring provocative keynotes

Facilities

- 5 have wifi in the venue

- 4 take care of vegetarian food
- 4 better acoustics in the rooms
- Less crowded registration desk

Social programme

- 2 more time for the nocturne
- More time between end of sessions and gala dinner

Business Bistro

- 2 more space at the BB that gets very crowded in coffee breaks

Networking

- more areas devoted to networking
- speed datings for people interested in similar topics

5. Conclusions from the conference

The conference overall was overall rated positively by the participants in terms of content of the conference sessions, networking opportunities and organisation.

More specifically regarding the different aspects of the conference:

5.1 Sessions

- ❖ All issues that people were asked to comment on regarding 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 still on the quality of some speakers in term of the new content they bring (or not). Some comments were also made in terms of language. There was hardly any bad comment on the convenors this year comparing with last year. A few proposals were made regarding inviting new, external people in the sessions.
- ❖ Once again many participants enjoyed the interactive format of some sessions and the poster sessions too

5.2 Business Bistro

- ❖ The Business Bistro is a very successful part of the conference, was for one more year fully booked while an open space was also introduced to support 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.

5.3 Networking opportunities

- ❖ This is still the best aspect of the conference as it was in 2007 and in 2008. 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.

