

EVALUATION OF THE VALORISATION CONFERENCE

The Socrates Valorisation Conference called “Intercultural Communication – Business & Learning Competences” was held in Graz in June 2007. This conference was part of the Socrates valorisation conference project.

Methodology

By using a short questionnaire, which was distributed at the end of each conference day, participants were asked about their conference impressions. Finally 51 completed questionnaires have been received. 21 questionnaires were filled in at day 1, 30 at day 2; what means that approximately 30-40% participants made available their impressions and provided feedback. The following paragraphs give an overview about the assessments of conference participants regarding various aspects of the questionnaire.

1. Pre-conference Management

All activities that had taken place before the holding of the conference (pre-conference management) were generally assessed as good and therefore built the fundamental basis for a successful conference organisation.

Concerning the **advertising of the conference** 73% rated at least *good*. But the conference advertising also showed some shortcomings due to the ratings of the participants as 14% assessed it as just *average* or *fair* and 13% as even *poor*. Obviously there were potentials for improvement in the process of conference advertising.

In respect to the **usefulness of the conference website** it can be stated that 89% of the participants assessed (*very*) *good* and just 11% *average*. So the website seems to be properly designed in terms of usefulness.

2. Conference Logistics

Certainly the **clarity of the location plans** is a crucial aspect for a conference organisation expecting numerous foreign participants. The organisation team was glad to state that 90% of the conference participants seemed to be satisfied (by rating *very good* or *good*) with the signage and description of the conference location. Only 3 participants felt not that clear about the location and conference signage and therefore submitted a rather negative statement ranging from *fair* to *poor*.

The **information material** at the registration/info desk was well prepared in a way that almost 98% of the participants assessed the information availability as (*very*) *good*.

3. Conference Programme

The assessment of the participants concerning the offered **conference programme** is one of the essential indicators for the success of a conference. So this bunch of questions was evaluated with great interest. The questions aiming at the programme assessment were divided into four categories for both the keynote speeches and the workshop sessions.

Following four categories were chosen to assess the conference programme:

- Choice of keynote topics/presented projects
- Quality of the presentations
- Relevance to the topic valorisation
- Discussion after the presentations

Regarding the **morning session of the first conference day** – where the keynote speeches took place – the impressions of the participants can be rated as positive due to the evaluated answers. The parameters *very good* and *good* altogether counted about 95% in respect to choice, quality and relevance of the topics and presentations. Only the subsequent discussion was assessed as just *average* (10%) and *poor* (5%) by a few more conference participants. These rather negative statements can be interpreted as a space for improvement concerning the motivation methods used by the discussion leader.

The **four workshops** were evaluated separately regarding choice and relevance of the presented projects as well as quality of the presentations and final workshop discussion. If you take a closer look at the percentages, you can find out that there were some minor differences in each of the four aspects and workshops.

Here is a summarisation of some notable results gained through comparisons among the four workshops:

The **choice of the projects** seems to be properly made for workshop (WS) 1 and 3 as more than 90% of the participants assessed it as *very good* or *good*. Whereas the choice of projects in WS 2 and WS 4 could have been more suitable as more than one fifth of the workshop participants rated *average* or *fair*. See also figure 1 for details.

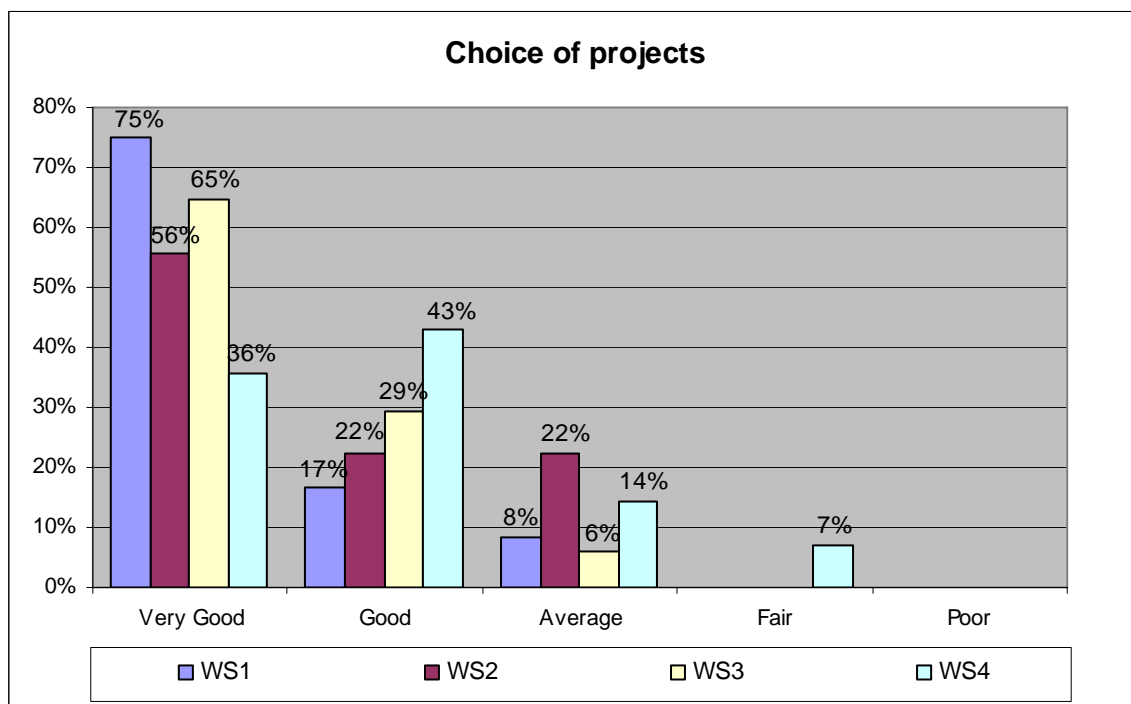


Figure 1: Choice of projects per workshop

About 90% of the participants of WS 1, 2 and 3 were satisfied with the **quality of the presentations** due to the ratings of *very good* and *good*. WS 4 showed slightly differing figures – 21% of the participants in this workshop assessed the quality of the presentations as *average* or *fair*.

Concerning the **relevance of the projects** to the overall conference issue of valorisation and dissemination especially the projects presented in WS 1 were well received. 36% rated their relevance as *very good* and 64% as *good*. Also the projects in WS 2 and WS 3 were assessed as mostly relevant as about 90% stated at least *good* in this respect. Only the results of WS 4 show more negative statements. 28% of the participants in this workshop considered the relevance as *average* and even 14% as just *fair*.

Certainly each workshop leader guided through a concluding **discussion** about the projects and their connection to the conference topic. The discussions in WS 1 and WS 2 can be assessed as interesting because a high percentage of the attendants assessed it as (*very*) *good* (82% for WS 1 and 89% for WS 2). The other two workshops had less productive discussions due to the results. An average amount of 30% of participants assessed the discussion as just *average* for WS 3 and 4.

A slightly improved preparation and realisation can be recommended concerning the **poster presentations**. This additional approach to disseminate project was not well received by altogether 23% of the participants. This part assessed the poster presentation as just *average* (15%) and *fair* (8%). But it also has to be mentioned that nevertheless 77% of the participants were satisfied with the realisation of the poster presentation.

4. Receptions

Due to the results of the category regarding the **receptions** (coffee breaks, conference lunches and evening dinner), the efforts made by the organisation team led to a great success. The results showed that the conference participants were in agreement with the breaks (90% *very good*), lunches (86% *very good*) and evening dinner (88% *very good*). The receptions were altogether assessed by 99% as at least *good*. The resulting atmosphere may have created basic conditions for pleasant conversations among participants and therefore contributed to extended networking possibilities (see section 6).

5. Conference Facilities

94% of the conference participants perceived the available **conference facilities** as *very good*. Most notably none of the participants assessed the facilities as *average*, *fair* or *poor*.

6. Networking Possibilities

The analysis of the question how participants assessed the **networking possibilities** during the conference was interesting as this was one of the core intentions of the valorisation event. The organisation tried to design the conference programme and agenda in a way, that there would be enough time and opportunities to meet other participants forcing networking conversations.

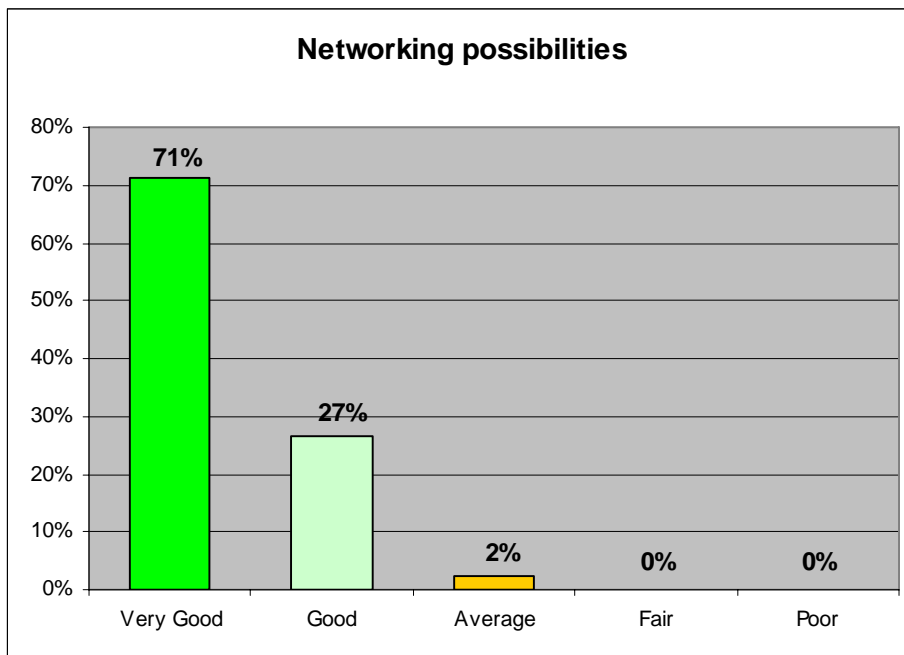


Figure 2: Results of question on networking possibilities

As you can see at the bar graph in figure 2, there are reasons for assessing the networking possibilities as positive throughout the duration of the conference. 71% of the participants determined *very good* opportunities for networking actions and 27% stated that the networking possibilities had been *good*. Only 2% of the participants rated the networking possibilities as *average* and nobody answered *fair* or *poor*.

7. Overall Satisfaction

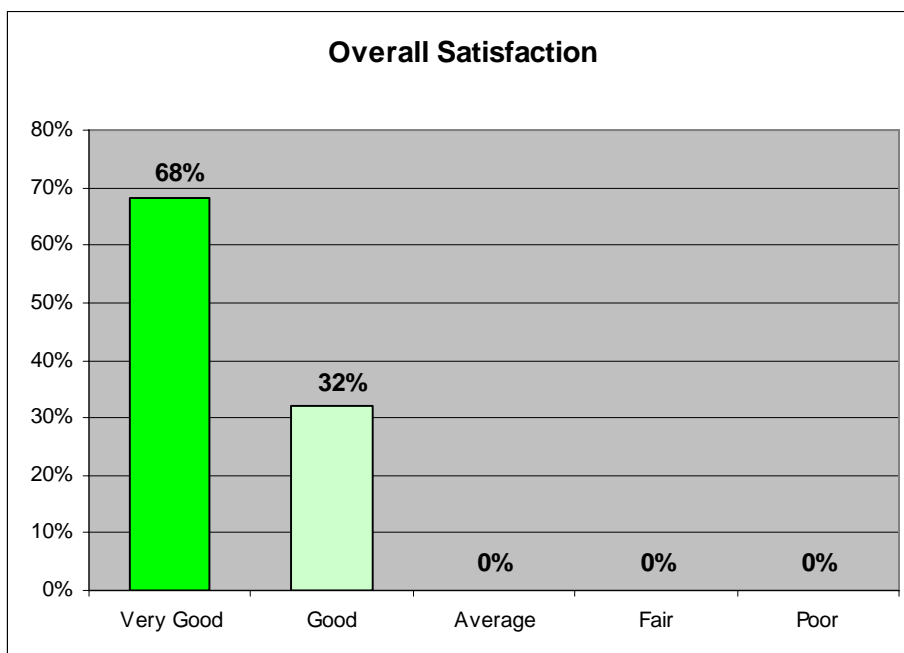


Figure 3: Results of question on overall conference satisfaction

As shown in the figure above regarding a comprehensive consideration of the conference, 100% of the participants declared their overall satisfaction with the conference as *very good* or *good*. A negative statement was made by none of the evaluated conference participants.

This comprehensive question and its results can be strongly consulted in order to assess the success of the conference considering all different aspects of the valorisation event. Therefore the organisation team had obviously done a proper job in the realisation of the conference. Every participant felt comfortable and also got satisfied with the provided conference and supporting programme on both days according to the results. Due to the results of the whole evaluation process, which directly reflects opinions and impressions of the participants, the organisation team can be proud of a succeeded conference.

8. Additional Comments

Subsequently there are some **comments** listed which were made beyond the specific questions in the additional suggestion area of the questionnaire. As you will see, praise and congratulations are expressed as well as critical statements and hints for improvement.

- ❖ *“Concerning the conference advertising: I heard about it by chance only. I am sure many more people would have been interested in this conference, if they had known about it.”*
- ❖ *“Excellent organisation!”*
- ❖ *“The workshops should start with 1-2 minutes presentation (introduction) of each participant in order to facilitate the networking and the following discussions.”*
- ❖ *“The organizers of the conference have done excellent work. Not all presenters were at the level of the overall organization. Still it was a very well organized and useful event!”*
- ❖ *“Very well done! Congratulations!”*
- ❖ *“Speakers should connect their projects more directly with the topic and not just present results. The quality varied from poor to good.”*
- ❖ *“The conference was performed on a very high level with perfect organisation! I met many new people, which brings opportunities for new projects and networks. I should recommend the next conference should be more specified in terms of topic, because otherwise the projects vary in many wide ranges and this may bring not concentration to a specific point and conclusion.”*
- ❖ *“In workshops seating structure was not conducive for discussion. Less presentation would have been good.”*
- ❖ *“The conference was very good organised and also a good chance for finding partners and gaining new contacts. Thank you very much!”*