



Evaluation of the conference

In order to improve the quality of future events to be prepared by the *European Forum for Restorative Justice* participants of the Barcelona conference were asked to fill out an evaluation form and provide feedback about the content and organisation of the conference. 47 participants out of more than 200 responded to our request and filled in the questionnaire. The data in the evaluation forms have been processed and analysed and the results were very positive.

The first part of the evaluation form dealt with the people's opinion on the *quality of the content* of the conference. More than 97% of the 47 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the themes covered by the conference were relevant and well-selected. Only a small percentage of the people (2.2%) remained indifferent concerning the selection of themes. Rarely, some comments indicated that there was not enough time for discussions during the workshops and café conferences. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants (82.2%) stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that there was enough time for developing discussions and debates during the workshops and café conferences. Concerning the informal meetings, 93.3% of the people reflected that there was enough time provided for informal discussions among the participants, whilst only 4.4% thought that there should have been more time for informal meetings.

Opinions were more diverse regarding Question 4 of the evaluation form (*"According to your experiences, which element of the conference contributed the most in acquiring new knowledge?"*). Most of the participants (48.4%) indicated that the workshops contributed the most in acquiring new knowledge. Café conferences (14.1%) and plenary sessions (13.8%) were the second most preferred type of sessions, although the distinction was not sharp between these categories.

Concerning Question 5, 76.6% of the 47 respondents found the information provided by the plenary sessions and the workshops satisfactory or very satisfactory. Some respondents commented that they had wished that the plenary time was shorter and that they would like to have had more workshop time.

Most of the respondents (72.9%) stated that the different elements of the conference (plenary sessions, workshops and café conferences) were well-balanced. 10.4% indicated that they felt a gap in the balance due to the fact that workshops concerning the same type were held all at once. 69.8% of the participants said that their experience of participating in the combined workshops/café conferences were satisfactory or very satisfactory. Only 3.7% mentioned that there was a lack of time and 7.5% said that the discussions were not structured enough.

The aim of the second section of the conference evaluation form was to provide us with some feedback concerning the quality of the organisation. From the data analysed we can see that the respondents were really positive concerning the organisation of this conference. 97.8% of the 47 respondents said that their general impression about the preparatory work (information, practicalities, registration, deadlines, administration) was satisfactory or very satisfactory. 95.7% of those who filled in the form were satisfied or very satisfied with the organisation of the conference. A very small percentage of the people (2.1%) said that the organisation was poor due to a lack of practical information. Concerning Question 11 (*"What was your experience with the team of people at the registration desk and dealing with practical questions?"*), all the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied. 88.6% of the respondents said that they did not encounter any major problem during the conference, while 11.4% said that they did. These problems were mostly linked with the grouping of the workshops, the time participants had for discussion and language problems.

Finally, the third section of the form was meant to create a picture of the participants' needs for further conferences such as the one held in Barcelona. More than 78.2% of the 47 respondents indicated that organising this type of bi-annual conferences would meet the needs of the participants whilst 21.7% said that conferences should be held at least once a year.

Concerning the topics that should be dealt with (more) at the next conferences respondents answered:

- Training
- Mediation and best practices
- Practice in detail
- Experiences with the implementation of Restorative Justice
- Restorative Justice in prisons
- Links with other mediation theories and practice
- Politics and strategies
- Victim-Offender mediation
- African and Latin-American perspectives
- Theories about Restorative Justice

Some general remarks were:

- The grouping of the workshops wasn't good. Participants suggested making some sort of "vertical streams" which would prevent that similar themes would be grouped together.
- Several participants needed more assistance with the language problems. They found it sometimes difficult to follow, since English wasn't their native language and because the speakers had different accents.
- Some participants would like to have more presentations during the plenary sessions.
- The use of the term mediation was sometimes confusing
- Because the conference was more Commonwealth and Scandinavian oriented, Latin countries weren't involved enough.
- Several remarks were made about the food that was served. Some found the conference dinner to be limited in choices of dishes or just plain awful while others enjoyed the dinner.

Besides these remarks, the most common comment was the expression of gratitude to the European Forum for being able to participate in a conference, which was well organised, interesting and dynamic.

To conclude, it is a real pleasure to see that most of the participants, who provided feedback, were happy and satisfied with the content as well as with the organisation of the conference.