

# **Economic Commission for Europe**

## **Committee on Environmental Policy**

### **Twenty-eighth session**

Geneva, 1–3 November 2023

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

### **Follow-up to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference's main outcomes**

Information paper No. 2

31 October 2023

## **Results of survey on the preparation, organization, and conduct of the 9<sup>th</sup> Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022)**

### **Note by the secretariat<sup>1</sup>**

#### *Summary*

The Ninth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022) attracted a large number of participants from a wide range of backgrounds.

Two weeks after the Nicosia Conference, the secretariat launched a short survey to gather feedback from participants on the preparation, organization, and conduct of the Conference. The results of the survey, as well as some of the lessons learned, are summarized in this white paper.

The information presented in the document may be helpful in preparation for the next Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”.

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<sup>1</sup> This document was not edited.

# I. Introduction

1. The Ninth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" has been held in Nicosia, Cyprus, 5-7 October 2022. It was attended by 899 participants representing 63 countries.
2. According to the information provided by the delegates for the registration purposes<sup>2</sup>, the affiliation of the delegates has been as follows:
  - 259 delegates from 42 UNECE member States
  - 33 delegates from 10 UN Member States
  - 17 delegates from the European Union and its institutions
  - 179 delegates from non-governmental organizations
  - 40 delegates from intergovernmental organizations
  - 27 delegates from the UN organizations and specialized agencies
  - 3 participants from the UN non-member observer State
  - 30 participants identified their affiliation as “observers”
  - 46 participants identified their affiliation as “others - Academia”
  - 40 participants identified their affiliation as “others – Private sector”
  - 9 participants identified their affiliation as “others – Independent experts”
  - 47 participants identified their affiliation as “others – other”
  - 143 participants identified their affiliation as “Press/Media”
  - 26 participants from the UNECE secretariat (incl. 9 interpreters).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2022/09/final-list-participants-unedited-entered-participants>

## II. The survey: Questions

3. The survey was created on the third-party website specialized in polling.

4. The questions of the survey included:

- Information on the participant (Email, address, Name, Contact information);
- Closed-ended<sup>3</sup> question on participants' affiliation: "I have participated in the Nicosia Ministerial Conference as a delegate from:" with pre-defined responses;
- Closed-ended questions on the participants' opinion/assessment on particular aspects of the Conference preparation and conduct related to the:
  - Agenda
  - Content
    - Plenary sessions: speakers & content
    - Interactive sessions: speakers & content
  - Time allocation
    - Plenary sessions: time allocation
    - Interactive sessions: time allocation
  - Side events:
    - Side events: number
    - Side events: timing & access
  - Parallel high-level meetings of Education sector (October 6, not in the Conference program)
  - Registration
    - Online registration process via UN INDICO (for participation)
    - Online registration process via Host Country website (logistical support - local transportation, hotels, events)
  - Information
    - Online information available on the UNECE website
    - Online information available on the Host Country website
  - Arrival/Departure
  - Accommodation
  - Local transportation
  - Catering/food
  - Performance of the UNECE secretariat
  - Performance of the Host Country Secretariat
  - The Nicosia Conference - OVERALL impression
- Open-ended<sup>4</sup> question for final comments

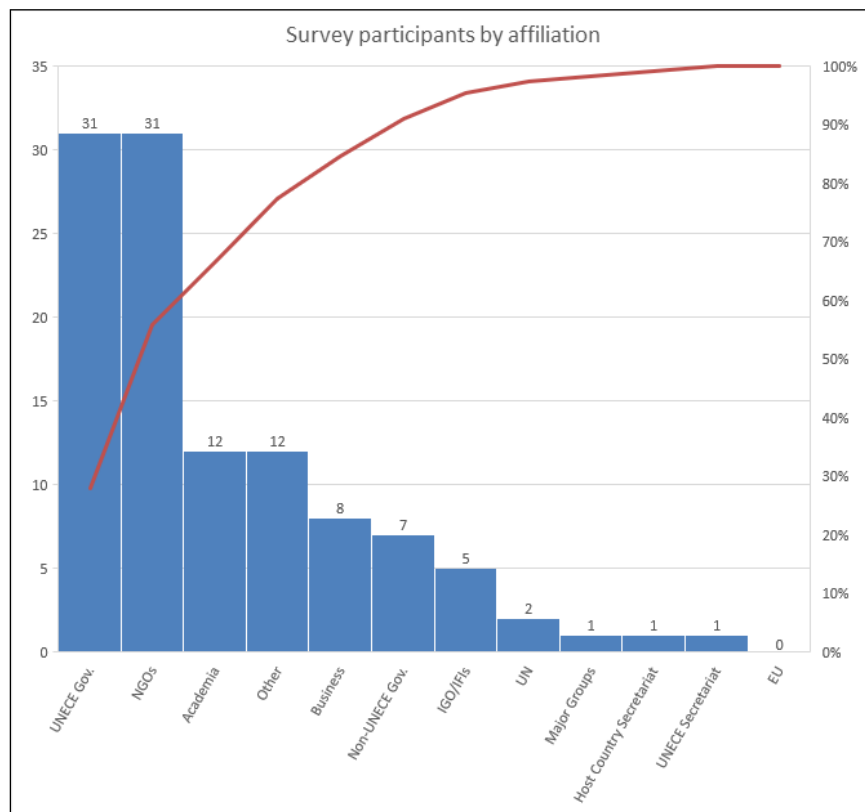
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<sup>3</sup> The question where respondents must choose from the list of pre-defined responses.

<sup>4</sup> The question for which the respondent can provide their own response.

### III. The survey: Respondents

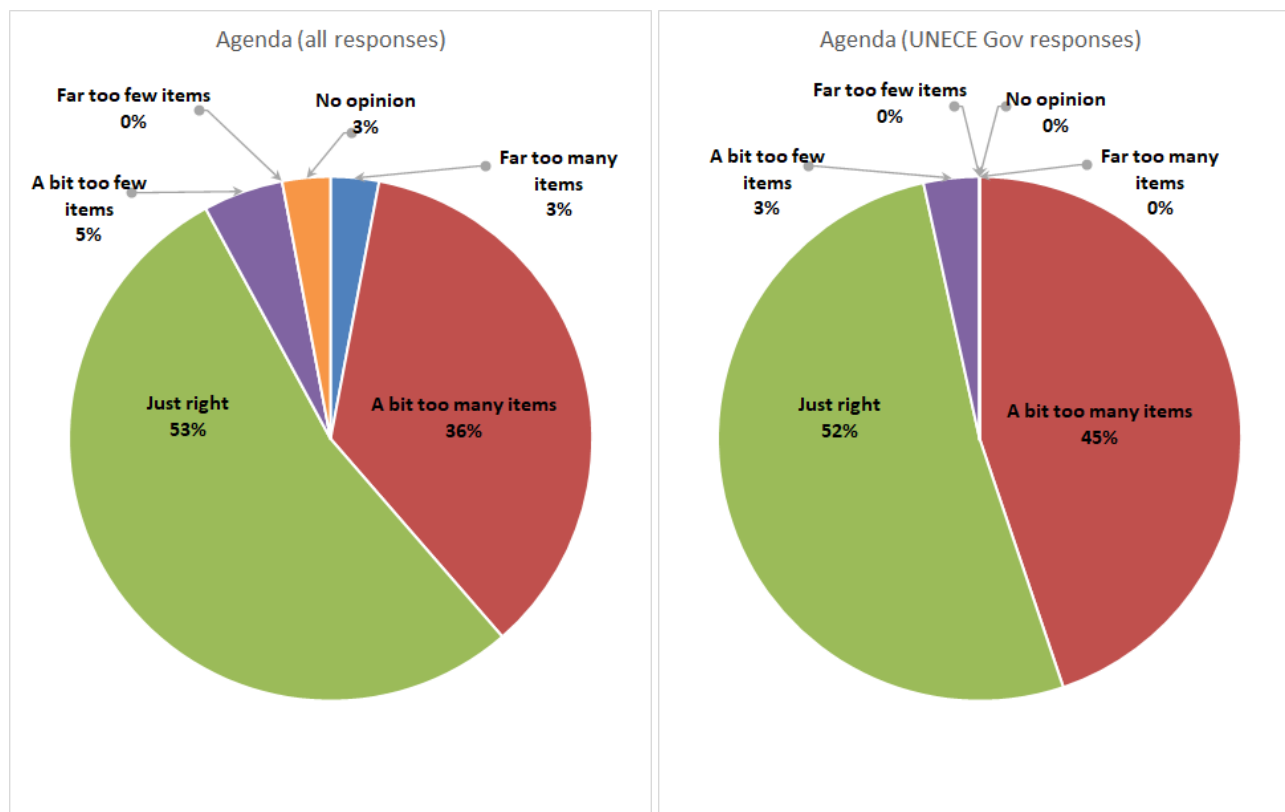
5. Invitation to fill in the survey has been circulated by email to all the participants registered for the Conference.
6. 111 responses have been eventually received, representing more than 12% of registered participants to the Nicosia Conference – in other words, 1 out of 8 participants have responded to the survey.
7. Respondents identified themselves as representing 39 countries (62% of all participating countries of the Conference) and the UN. This number includes both government and other participants.
8. 31 respondents (28% of all respondents) identified themselves as government delegates from 20 UNECE member States (48% of 42 UNECE member States that sent their government delegations to the Nicosia Conference).
9. Responses of those UNECE government delegates are analyzed separately in this document.



## IV. The survey: Analysis of responses received<sup>5</sup>

### IV.1. Agenda

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Far too many items*; *A bit too many items*; *Just right*; *A bit too few items*; *Far too few items*; *No opinion*; *Other (please specify)*)



### Comments<sup>6</sup>:

- Time Keeping was demanding
- A bit too much but all were interesting!
- Round tables did not work
- This event provided best practices and innovative ideas sharing on how to make MSMEs more resilient in face of future shocks in a rapidly changing landscape.
- Member-states statements did stretch the sessions a bit more than it should
- Round tables got to little time, too many speakers in plenary
- The agenda seemed well balanced. However, much more meticulous preparation would have helped the Conference. If there is a 15-min slot for speeches in plenary, they cannot go for an hour! If there was an indication that, e.g., 10 member states want to give a speech, only first 3-5 should have been chosen, the rest transferred to the break-out groups. The fact that we had to listen to speeches and there was no time/appetite left to have fruitful interactive break-out sessions, severely diminished the attractiveness of the deliberations. I thought emphasis on interaction would be automatic, after the very well organized Batumi Conference.
- No specific comment. There was a good balance between plenty sessions and side events
- i have attended the side event of UFM for "SME resilience"
- I thought it was a bit challenging that Side Events were at a different venue - difficult to get to, and thus not many people attending them

<sup>5</sup> For conciseness, responses to some logistical questions (on arrival/departure, accommodation, local transportation, and catering/food), although overwhelmingly positive, are not included in detail in this document.

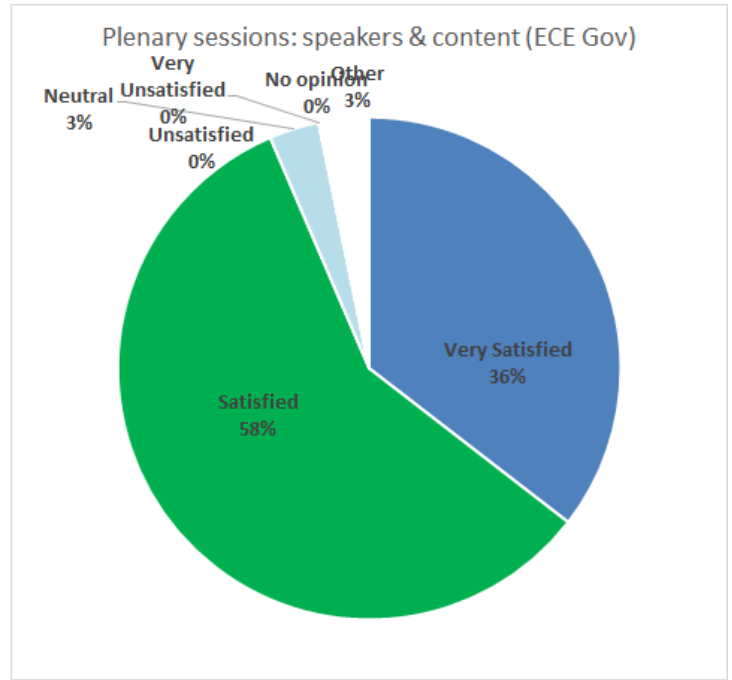
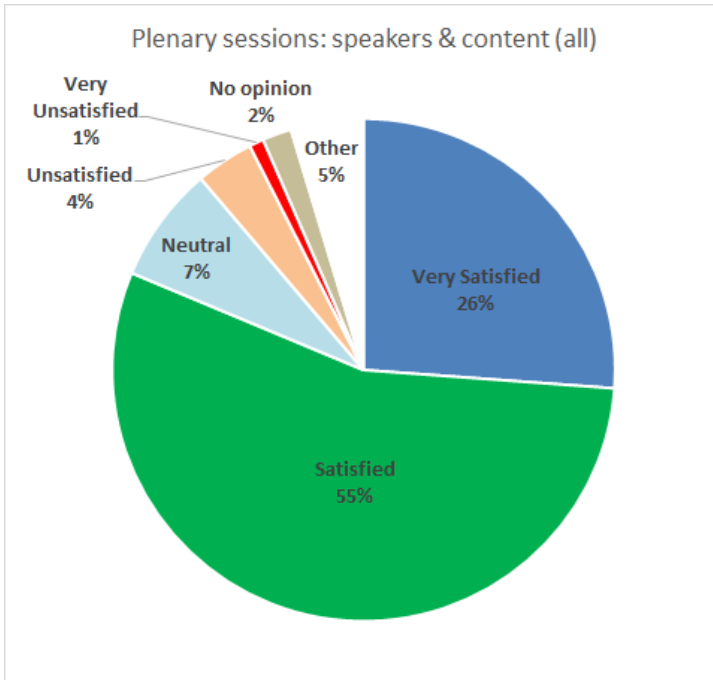
<sup>6</sup> Unedited comments from all participants (here and elsewhere in this document) are included as submitted by the respondents. Respondents could add comments in addition to selecting a closed response.

- Some events that were located in another venue were not so accessible due to the compact agenda and needed time to travel.
- The exhibition of the businesses, institutes and NGOs didn't work. It was not so visible in that room and not many people visited it.
- some redundancies among themes of the side events and some of the plenaries
- There was enough time to meet with the European project group RSP
- A lot of plenary sessions with not clear objective
- Agenda topics were OK in number but the timings were poorly scheduled, no breaks at all between plenaries that lasted three or more hours - meant no coffee breaks, and you had to miss the programme to take individual breaks, side events during lunch break or after the end of the day meant no real possibility to attend side events either.
- Events at separate locations was not good
- Positive: the location of the conference center. Well planned time management    Negative: many items, too much information within a couple of hours
- I didn't like the way of conference. It wasn't an interactive conference. Only speeches. I didn't take anything as a teacher
- It worked really well. A minor comment, was that there were times that interesting side events coincided and could not participate at both. Moreover, side events during lunchtime had less participation due to lunch at the main event premises.
- The items' number was correct, for me, but the allocation of time not always
- I would have liked to be able to participate in more side-events, but some were simultaneous and I could not be present in all
- the side events did not work what so ever, no one attended mostly because of the time, (some times way to early and during lunch break without informing that it will be lunch provided in the other venue) but also due to the fact that was in another location and the location it self was confusing. My side event looked as it was hidden in the last room

## IV.2. Content

### IV.2.1 Plenary sessions: Speakers & content

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Very Satisfied*; *Satisfied*; *Neutral*; *Unsatisfied*; *Very Unsatisfied*; *No opinion*; *Other*)

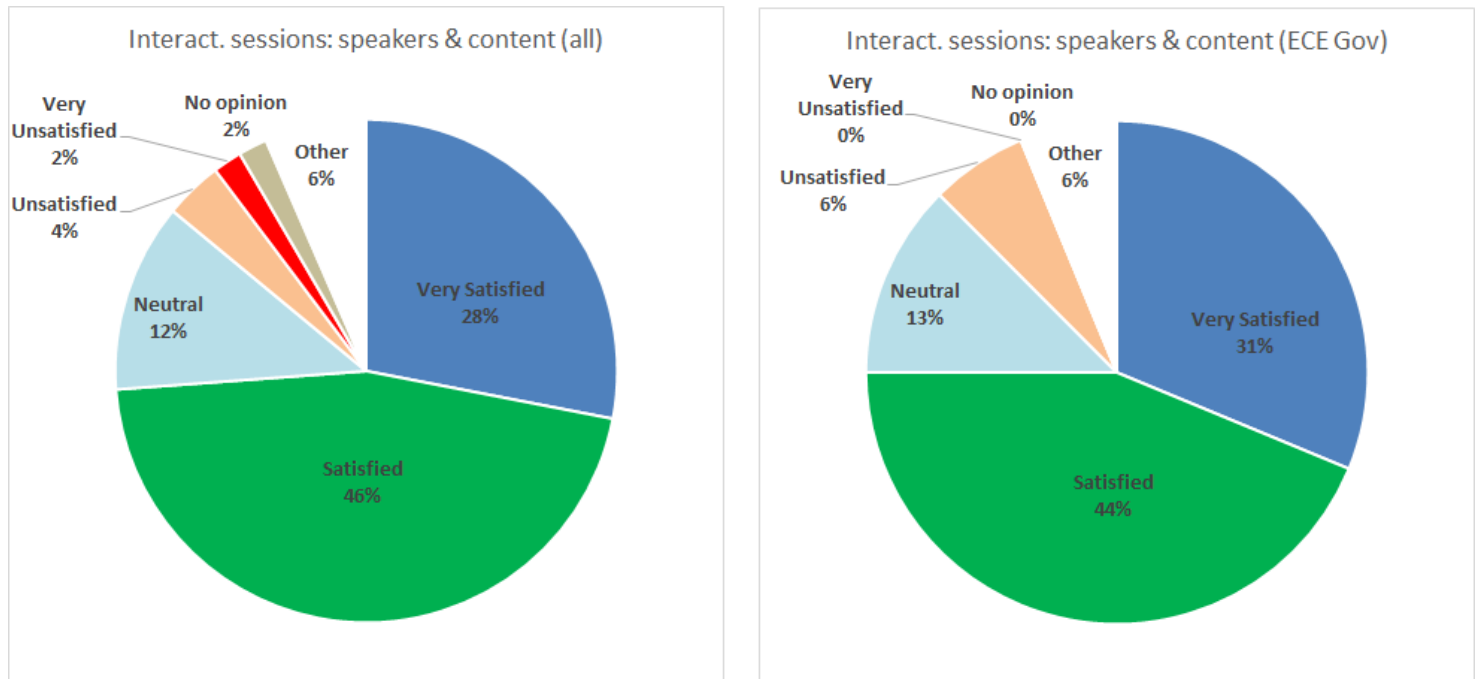


#### **Comments:**

- Both topics were extremely interesting.
- the plenary sessions I attended were very interesting.
- Not enough time for discussion
- content was repetitive, too general and generic, no substantial interventions with the exception of a few excellent speakers
- A missing emphasis on human and planetary health was noticeably in the content of most of the talks. environment and human health are intrinsically linked and such shall be treated.

#### IV.2.2 Interactive sessions: Speakers & content

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Very Satisfied*; *Satisfied*; *Neutral*; *Unsatisfied*; *Very Unsatisfied*; *No opinion*; *Other*)



#### Comments:

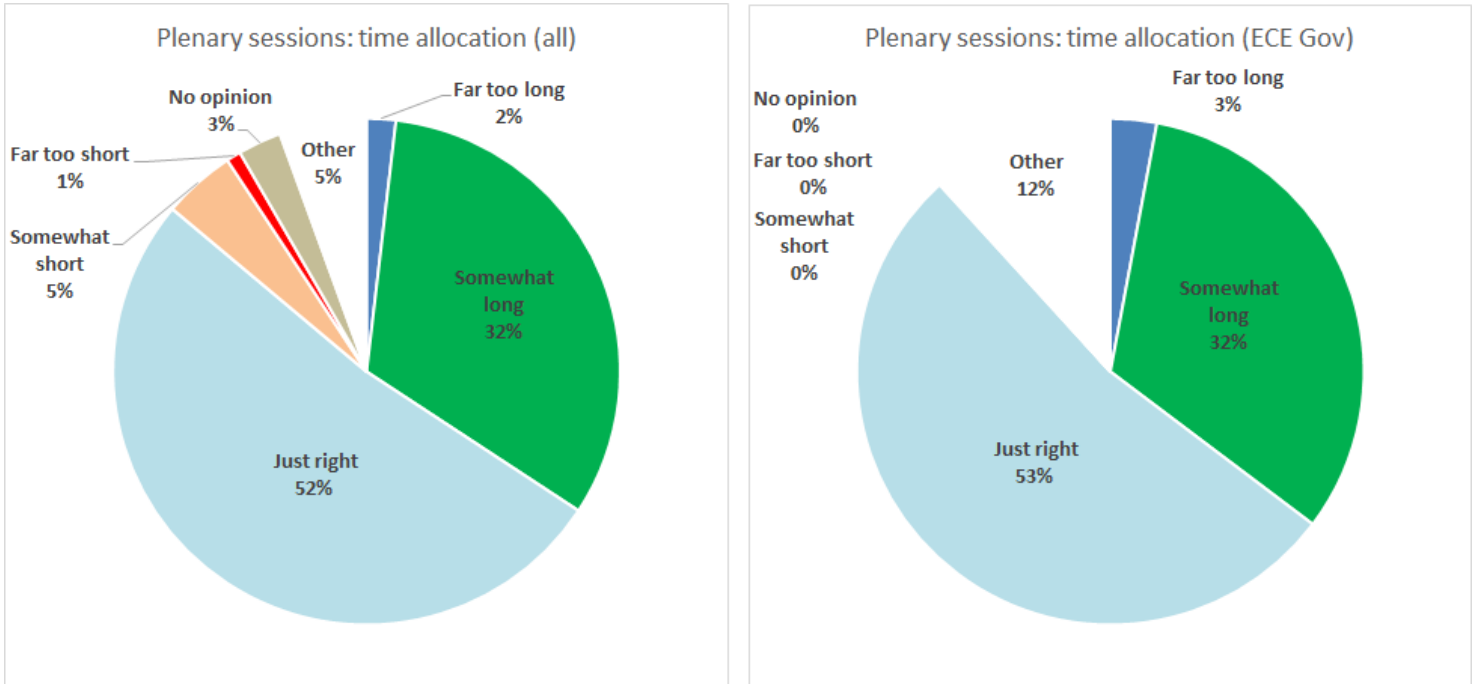
- Unfortunately, the interactive sessions suffered badly from the fact described in Nr. 3.
- Very good chairs in both interactive sessions, but the table was almost completely empty (the one in the big room). It seems the conversation was livelier in the small room.
- the interactive sessions I attended were interesting and useful
- Not so much available time for the interactive part of the sessions.
- I would have wished to see more time allocated to interactive sessions
- The panel had their say but no time allowed for the participation of the audience. The session was anything but interactive.
- I did not see one. Only the side events but again barely no one attended



### IV.3. Time allocation

#### IV.3.1 Plenary sessions: Time allocation

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Far too long*; *Somewhat long*; *Just right*; *Somewhat short*; *Far too short*; *No opinion*; *Other*)

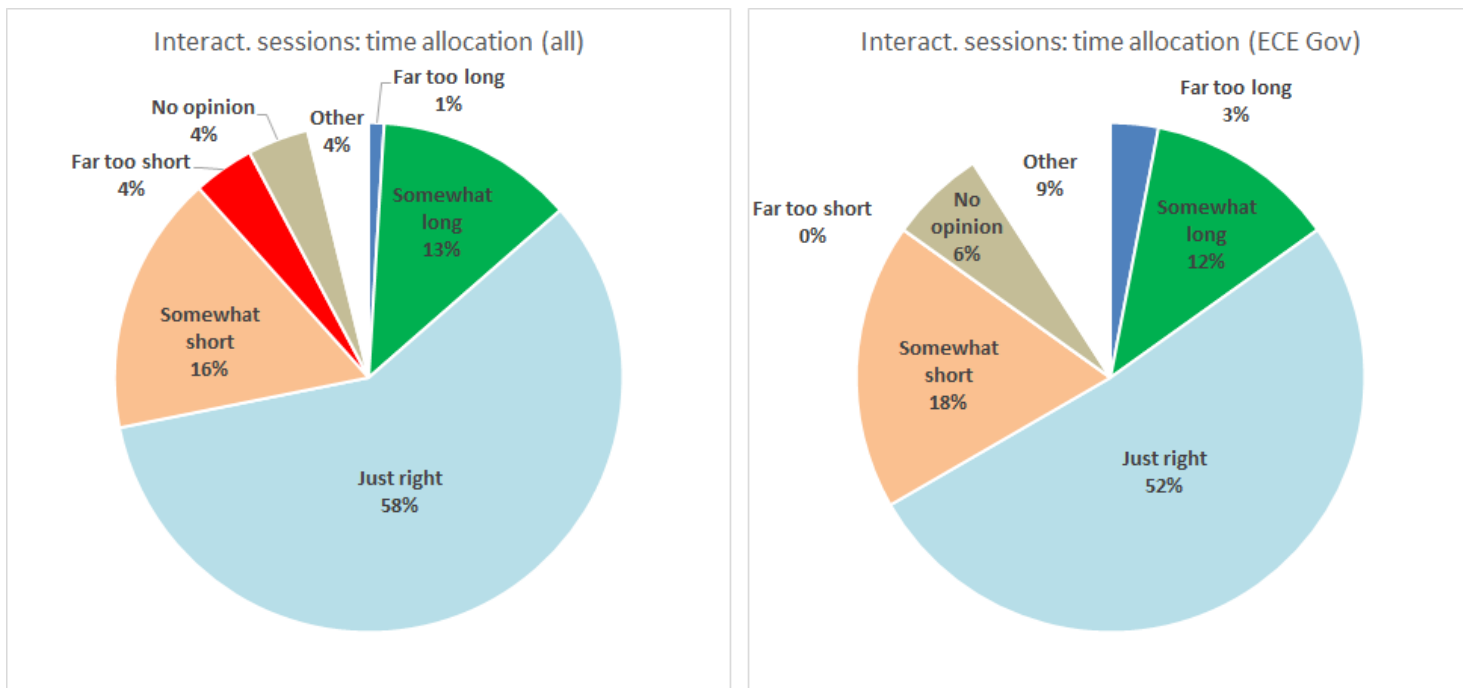


#### Comments:

- Although it could be a bit inpolite, please keep people to their timeslots
- Statements did stretch the allocated time slot.
- See 3.
- Unfortunately, statements were made in the plenary sessions that should have been delivered in the interactive sessions, especially on sustainable tourism.
- Not adequate number dedicated to the presenters
- more efficient moderators could keep plenaries shorter and more interesting

### IV.3.2 Interactive sessions: Time allocation

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Far too long*; *Somewhat long*; *Just right*; *Somewhat short*; *Far too short*; *No opinion*; *Other*)



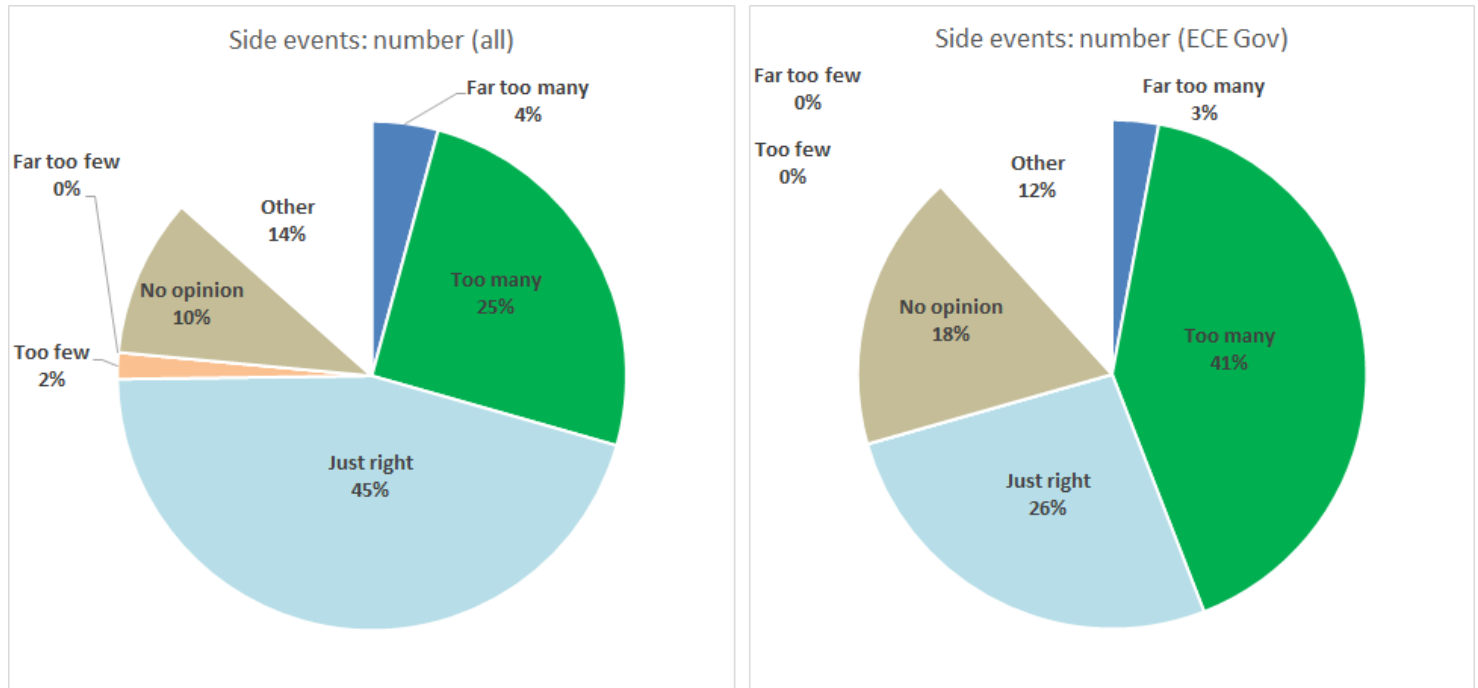
#### Comments:

- Interactive sessions suffered from the prolonging of the plenary sessions. 45 minutes to an hour proved to be too short.
- See 3
- The interactive sessions were too short because the plenary sessions were too long.
- Not so much available time for questions/clarifications during the sessions. Some presentations were not given to the audience, despite the relative promise, of the organizing panel.

## IV.4. Side events

### IV.4.1 Side events: Number

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Far too many*; *Too many*; *Just right*; *Too few*; *Far too few*; *No opinion*; *Other*)



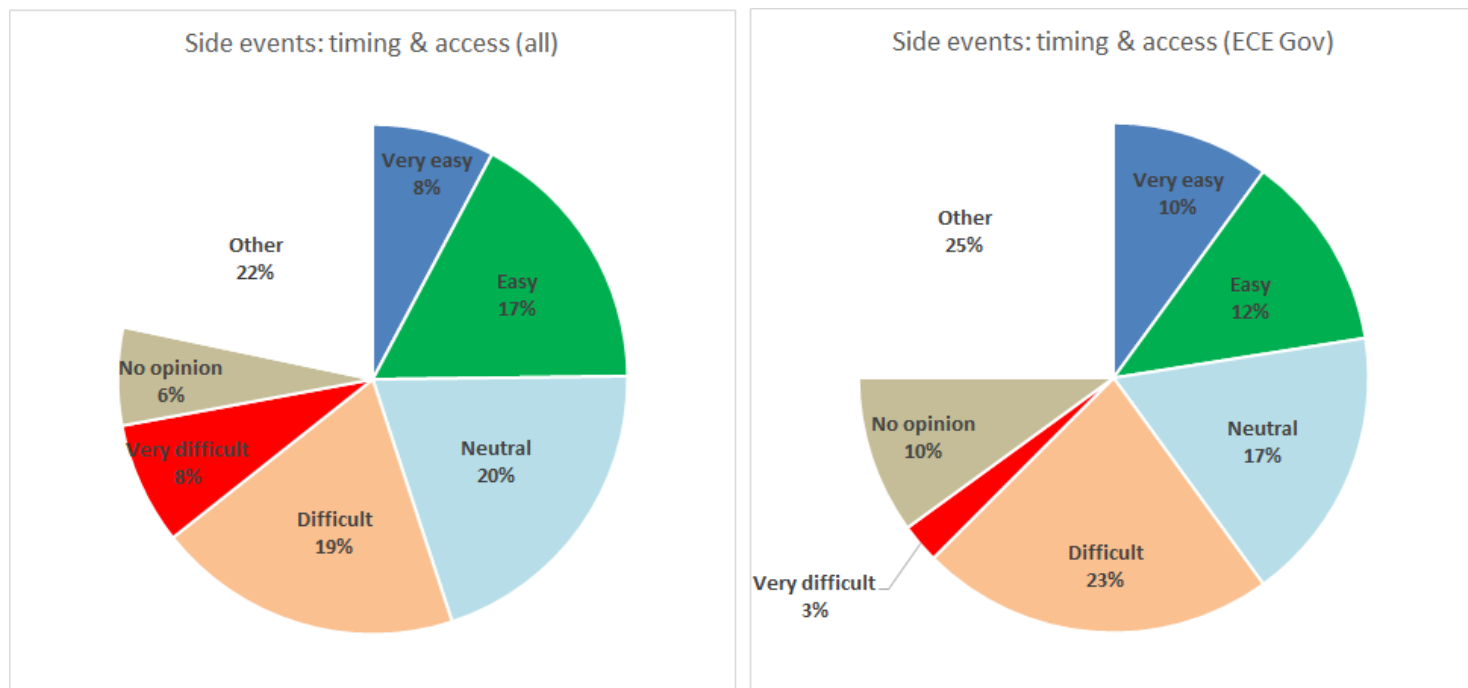
#### Comments:

- esp. the early morning sessions were too difficult to attend
- Access was not ideal.
- Location of side events did not work
- Allocation of venues for side events at the walking distance from the main conference venue would be more convenient
- I only attended one side event. always difficult when you have to use a bus to get there
- Unfortunately, the side-events, being organised in a different place, suffered from being located there: with all the travel from and to hotels, it was very tiring to go for another transportation events.
- Timing was right but the access was difficult with the bus schedules. the side-events would have gathered more delegates had they been organised at Filoxenia or at a walking distance therefrom.
- Moving back and forth has rather discouraged participation to the side events. On Thursday, 6 October, I had to go three times from from "Philoxenia" to "Cyprus Institute" and back. Apart from that, in some cases tourism related thematics coincided in time. On the positive side, transfer people were very helpful and patient, and no one was left behind.
- Some of the Side events were very late in the evening, even parallel to receptions, which is more or less a little bad signal to the engaged people.
- Some side events on ESD overlapped with plenary session on ESD, and were located in a different venue than the plenary.
- The location and busses to the side events were very inconvenient. The advertising and information about timing and locations was difficult too.
- Difficult in terms of access - would have been better to do at the same venue. Also timing was tricky - either too early (and traffic made it hard to reach place in time), or late.
- Side event that were located in another venue were difficult to attend and the number of event and time overlaps made it a bit difficult to attend more of the events.
- although shuttle buses were provided, it was not easy to change in between venues when you had many meetings scheduled.
- Our event was the same time as the gala so not a lot of people showed up
- Not a good idea to hold side events in a different place than the plenaries.
- during lunch, too early or too late. timing was poor, accessibility was OK.

- The timing was ok as side events need to be outside the main sessions. The location at a separate venue made it difficult to bring delegates. Side events were mostly visited not by national delegates but by other participants. It was not well-timed to organise side events while hosting a reception.
- the side events place was too far away
- there were a couple of issues with the side events that I observed, 1) some key side events clashed with important related debates in the main hall 2) the fact that they involved a bus journey would have proved off-putting for some who might otherwise have attended
- The different venue was a problem.
- The distance between venues prevented arriving on time for other sessions
- did not help that most were in another location.
- There were too many side events of similar/relevant topics at the same time. So, one had to choose which to attend, whereas it might have been beneficial to attend more.
- It would be better if there was no need to transfer participants from Filoxenia to the Cyprus Institute, but space limitation is acknowledged. I believe the organizers did their best given the need for parallel event hosting.
- The side events overlapping with lunch meant people often had to choose between the two, making side events slightly shorter would give people time to network and attend side events more complicated. Having a venue requiring transport by bus was complicated.
- Attracting participants to side events was very difficult. There was no announcement about side events at the end of preceding plenaries. There was no time buffer for potential participants to move to the side event venue, nor for speakers (maybe involved in side events and plenary) to move to and from the side event venue. The schedule of shuttles was not always predictable. No more side events not reachable in few minutes on foot, please!
- the side events did not work what so ever, no one attended mostly because of the time, (some times way too early and during lunch break without informing that it will be lunch provided in the other venue) but also due to the fact that was in another location and the location itself was confusing. My side event looked as if it was hidden in the last room

#### IV.4.2 Side events: Timing and access

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Very easy*; *Easy*; *Neutral*; *Difficult*; *Very difficult*; *No opinion*; *Other*)



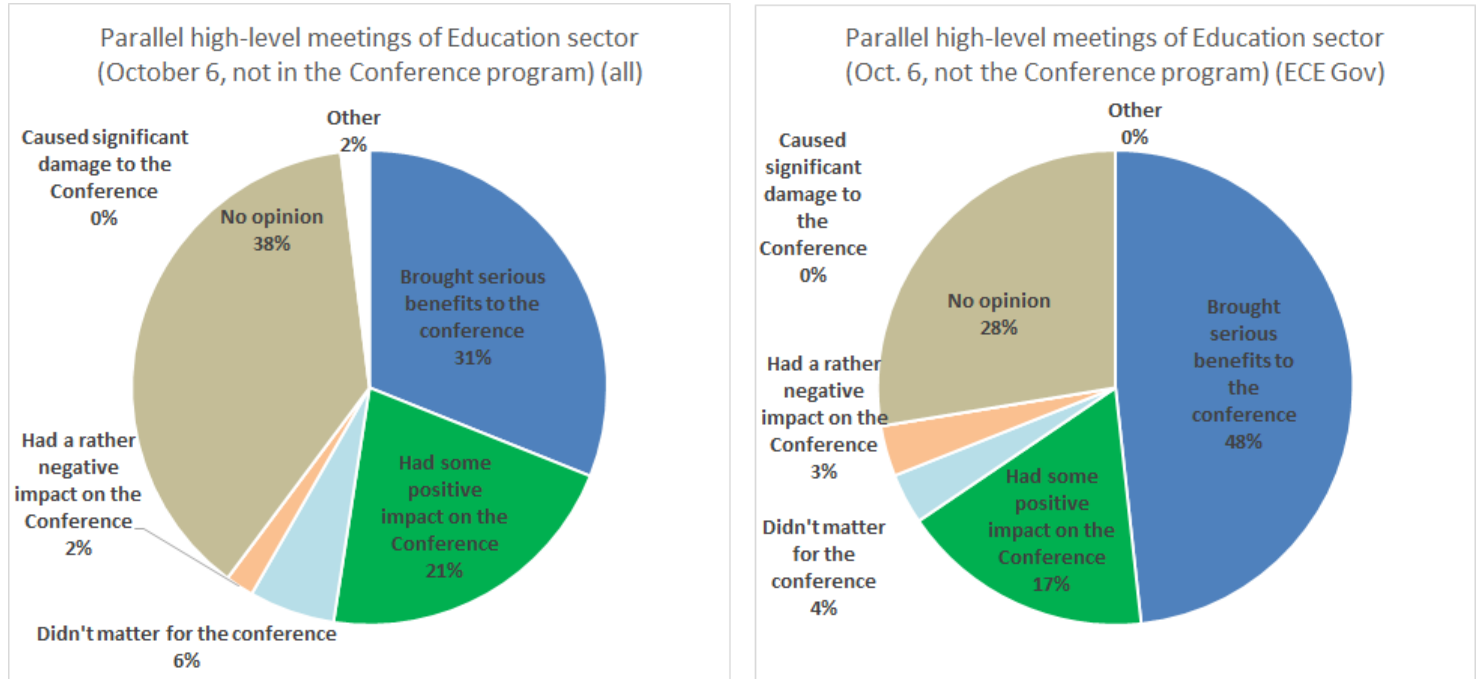
#### Comments:

- The travel to different locations was sometimes not feasible to combine agenda's
- Considering the fact the side-events took place in a different location, there were far too many organised.
- Too many side-events in parallel attracting same kind of audience.
- There was a number of thematics that could be brought together, so as to increase participation to the side events. Plus, because of their number, they spanned throughout the day (from 8:15 to 20:15, making attendance a demanding task).
- Too many side events in competing time slots causing competition for access to speakers and participants
- Good organization of events and interesting topics but not enough time to engage in more side events as the agenda was too dense.
- Too many events happening at the same time. It should be only 2 events at the same time so people will have the opportunity to participate to more and not need to choose between the different topics
- I was glad that our side event was interesting for both our audience and our project group
- As a result of the number and obscure location (below), attendance of side events was generally very low. On the other hand it probably would not have been right to radically limit their number. This is a general trend though, cf. UNFCCC COPs, and opinions differ about what is the best approach to side events.
- number of side events was good, topics as well
- Events at separate locations was not good
- There were too many and at times there was an overlap/repetition of the content explored.
- As previously said, there were times that interesting side events coincided and could not participate at both. Moreover, side events during lunchtime had less participation due to lunch at the main event premises.
- Having shorter side events but in the same quantity would have worked slightly better
- Just right the number, but the problem was the venue.
- I would have liked to be able to participate in more side-events, but some were simultaneous and I could not be present in all

## IV.5. Parallel high-level meetings of Education sector

### (October 6, not in the Conference program)

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Brought serious benefits to the conference; Had some positive impact on the Conference; Didn't matter for the conference; Had a rather negative impact on the Conference; Caused significant damage to the Conference; No opinion; Other (please specify)*)



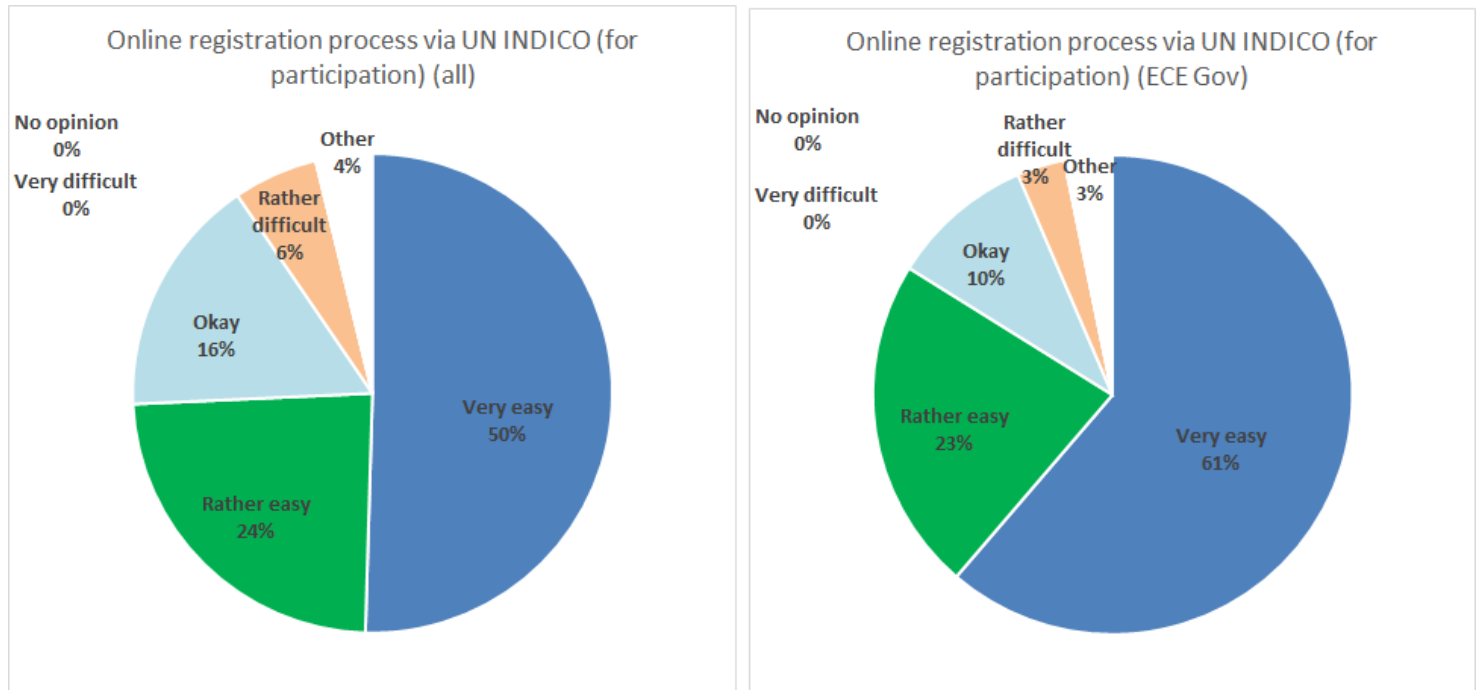
### Comments:

- It somehow led to the dispersion of participants (especially those with smaller delegations) and increased the number of competing topics for side events.
- I not even knew this was taking place

## IV.6. Registration

### IV.6.1 Online registration process via UN INDICO (for participation)

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Very easy*; *Rather easy*; *Okay*; *Rather difficult*; *Very difficult*; *No opinion*; *Other*)

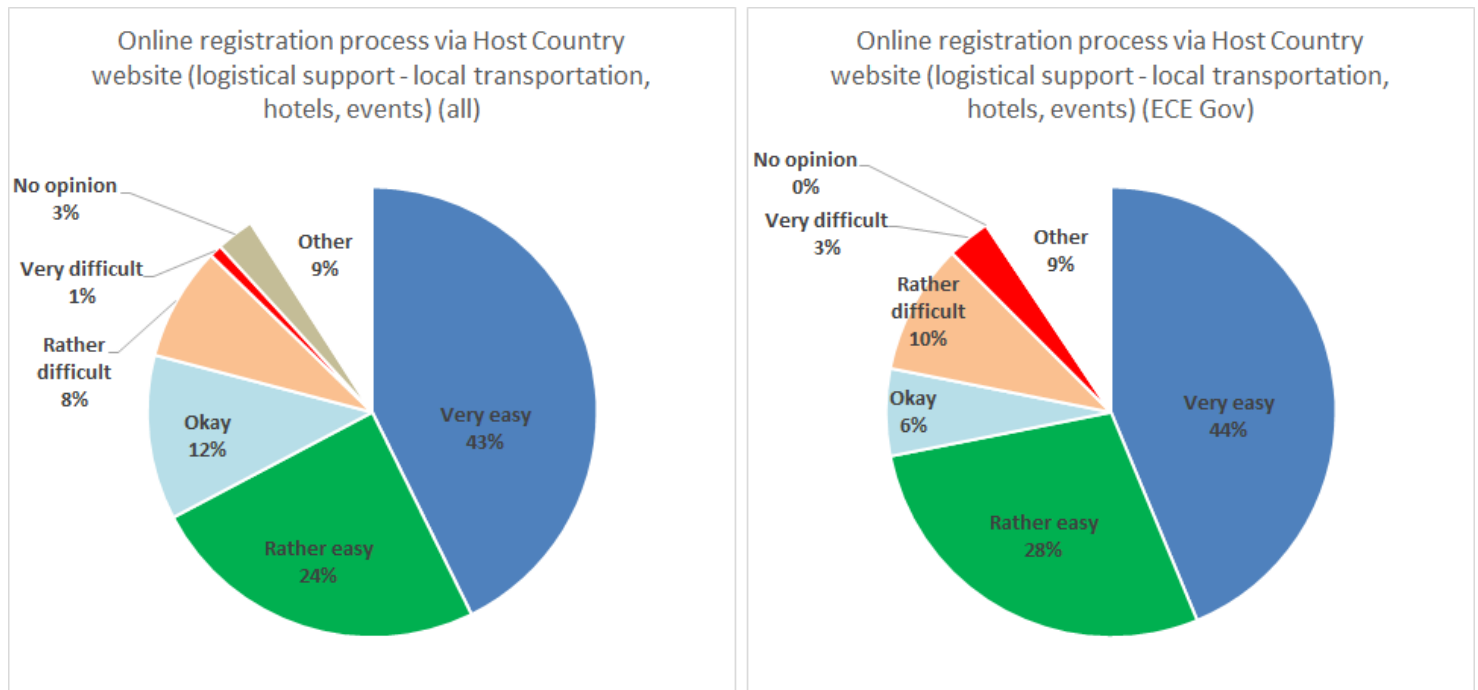


#### Comments:

- Very easy to register.
- it worked well
- Positive: Easy accessible website Negative: had to re do the procedure for uploading a selfie picture. It was a bit blurred at the beginning
- A bit complex as a registration process. We had some people who were registering so they could attend our side event, who thought that they only had to create an INDICO account and that's it. So they didn't realise they weren't registered until the participants lists were shared and we didn't see their names. Also, the fact that they had to register and then also inform us that they would be coming to our side event (as they couldn't note that during the registration) was a bit troublesome.

#### IV.6.2 Online registration process via Host Country website (for logistical support - local transportation, hotels, events)

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Very easy; Rather easy; Okay; Rather difficult; Very difficult; No opinion; Other*)



#### Comments:

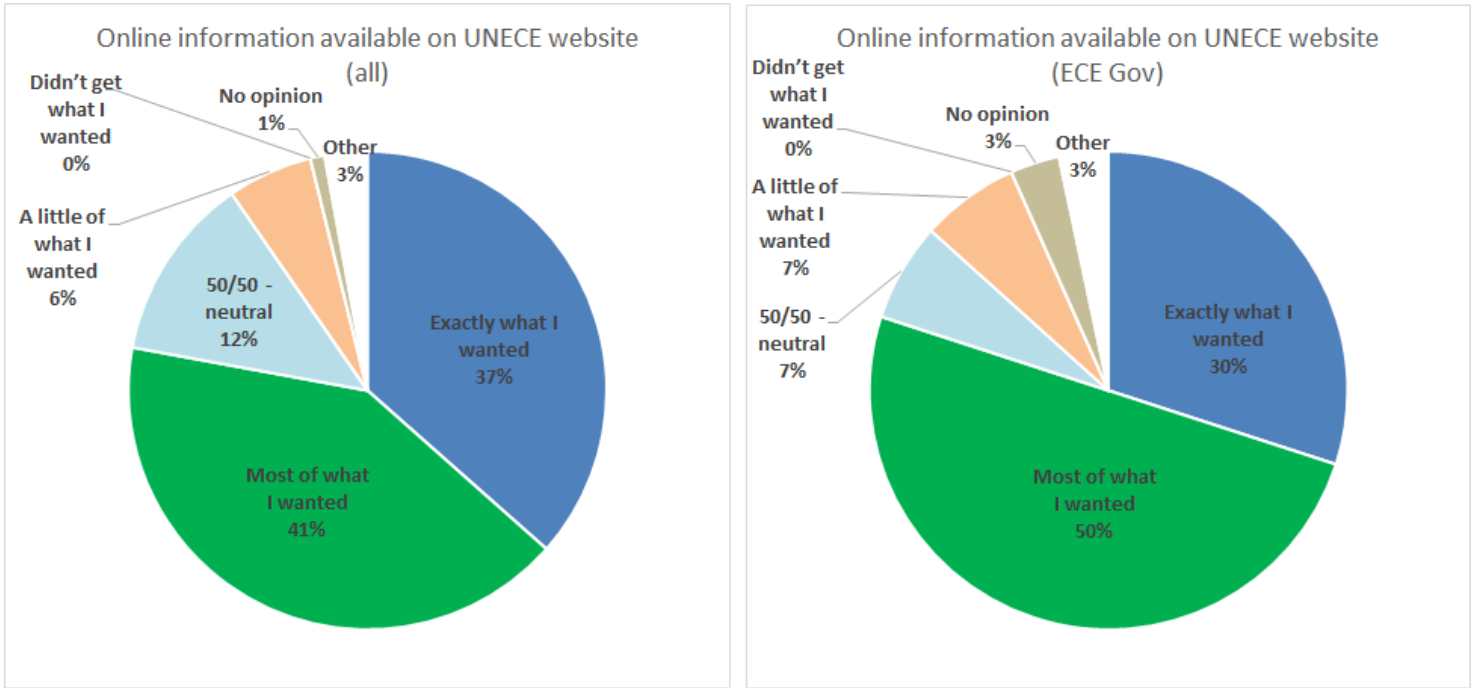
- To book the hotels (and pay directly) through the organizations made it difficult for our Ministerial Travel Agency to interfere, so payment through personal creditcards and difficult declarations afterwards
- Very well informed and the
- A bit of mix-up between registration and booking. Hard to find where on the website
- The hotel booking system was difficult.
- this worked well too
- Several parallel compulsory streams of registration did not make things very straightforward.
- Transportation was not sustainable enough , hotels selected needed to be checked in advance for their environmental practices
- I found some communications re registration and booking accommodation confusing
- The process itself was easy. But it was odd that one had to basically register twice. Once through INDICO and one through the host country's website.
- It was not easy to fill in the part on hotel booking. The description of side visits on Saturday should have included a foreseen length to allow a better choice.



## IV.7. Information

### IV.7.1 Online information available on UNECE website

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Exactly what I wanted*; *Most of what I wanted*; *50/50 – neutral*; *A little of what I wanted*; *Didn't get what I wanted*; *No opinion*; *Other*)

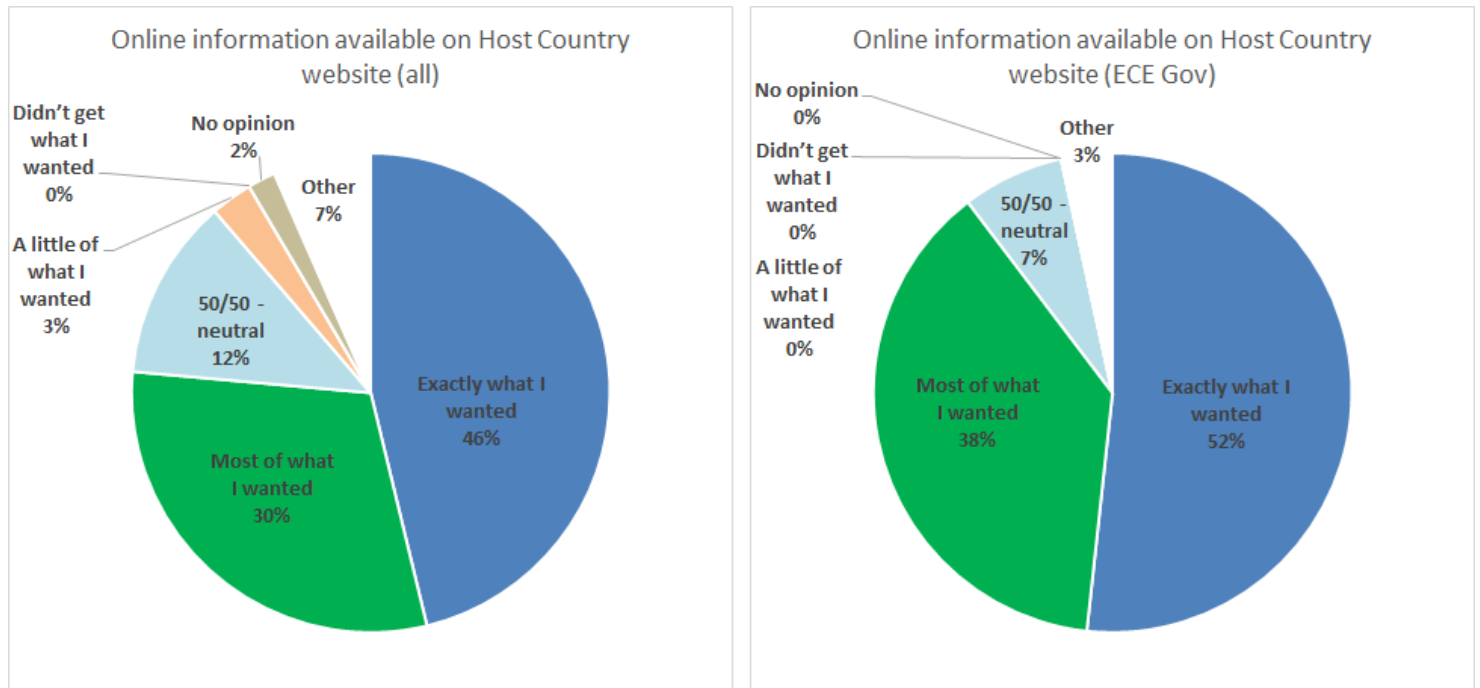


#### Comments:

- Most of the information was included
- could not get the program of the side events online
- Very bureaucratic documents sometimes

#### IV.7.2 Online information available on Host Country website

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Exactly what I wanted*; *Most of what I wanted*; *50/50 – neutral*; *A little of what I wanted*; *Didn't get what I wanted*; *No opinion*; *Other*)



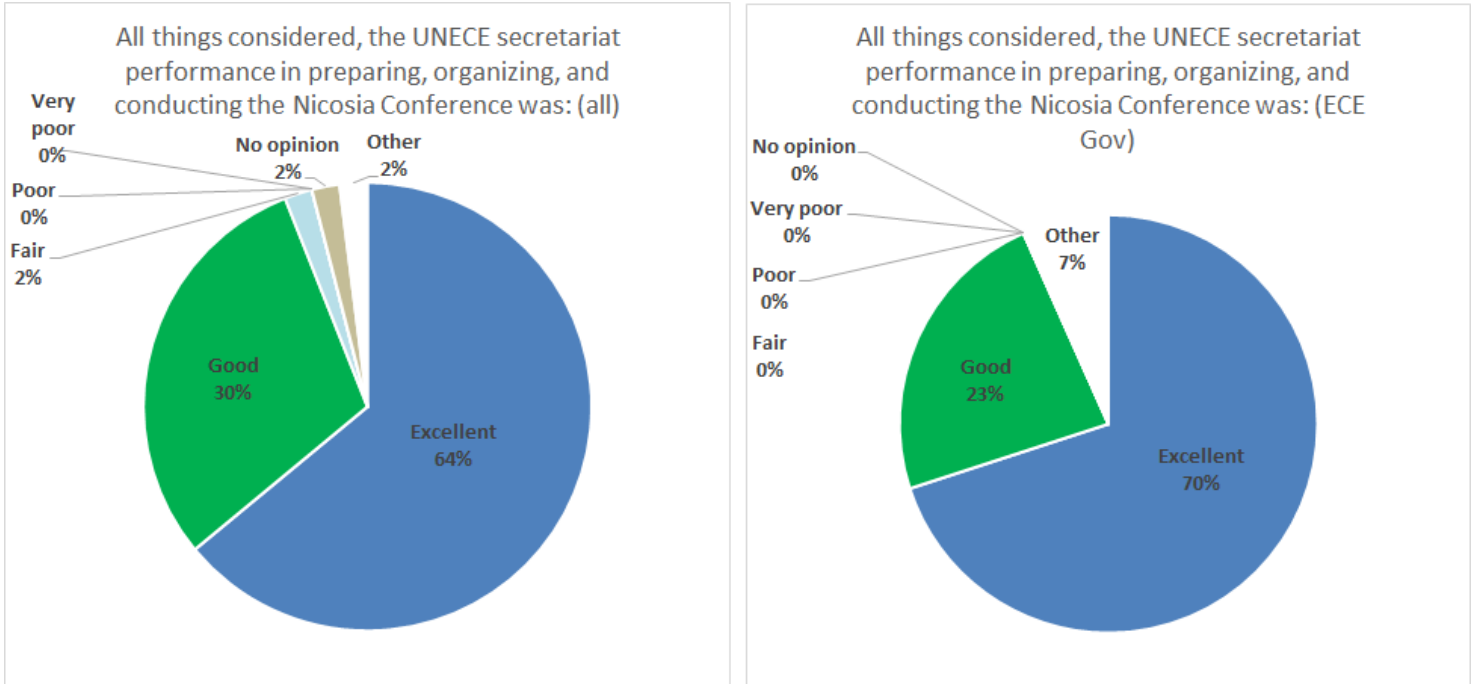
#### Comments:

- Very comprehensive.
- some information was only in Greek, that was somehow confusing.
- Overflow of information by email from the host.
- insufficient info on social events, e.g. dinner on day 1
- could not get the program of the side events online
- The app could have been a little bit more user friendly and easier to use but other than that quite satisfactory
- Information on side events schedule was not easy to find. the schedule of shuttles was changing every day with no reason

## IV.8. Performance of the two secretariats

### IV.8.1 Performance of the UNECE secretariat

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Excellent*; *Good*; *Fair*; *Poor*; *Very poor*; *No opinion*; *Other*)

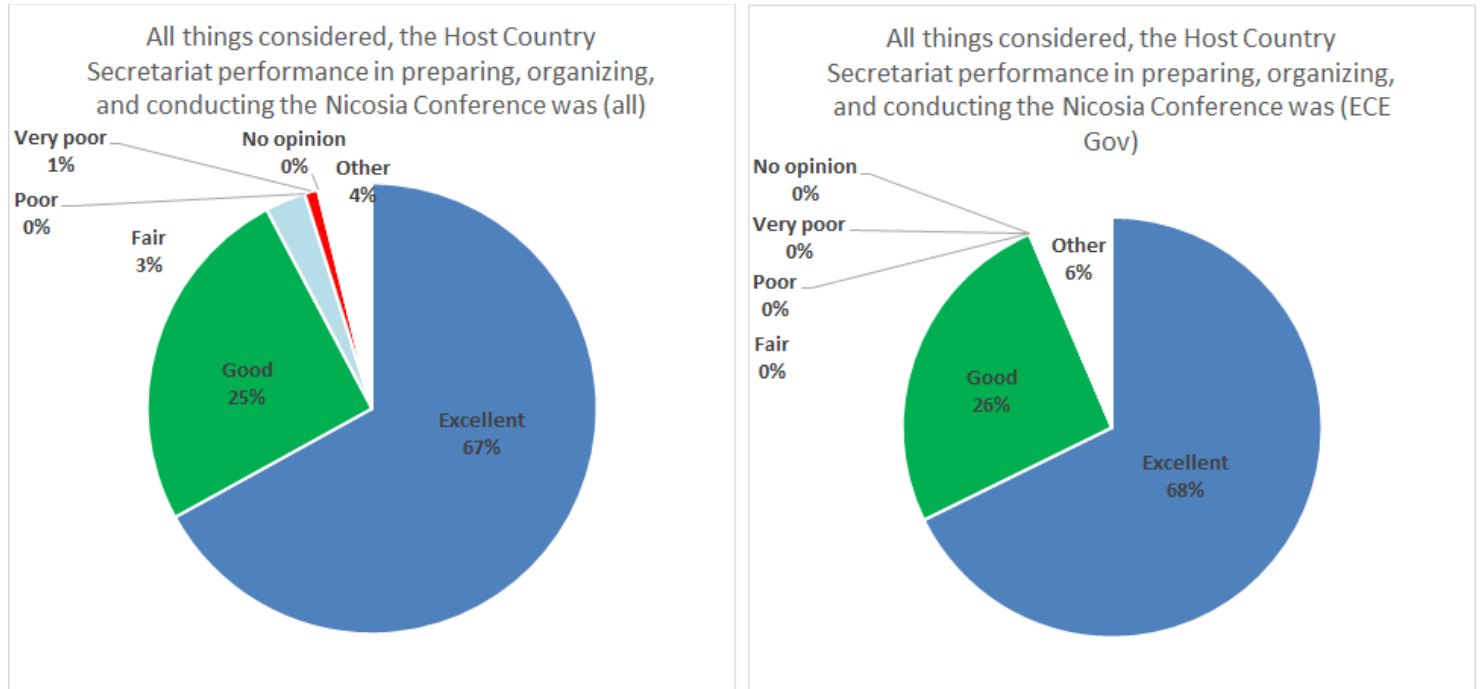


#### Comments:

- Outstanding work.
- As usual, very good organisation and work! However, more strategic/high-level guidance is needed as to the final format of the conference. There need to be someone who looks at the Conferences from a political point of view: we need to make sure that politicians can speak and do so in a corresponding manner. It's not possible anymore to be forced to listen to speeches for hours on end - there are ways to not let that happen.

#### IV.8.2 Performance of the Host Country Secretariat

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Excellent; Good; Fair; Poor; Very poor; No opinion; Other*)

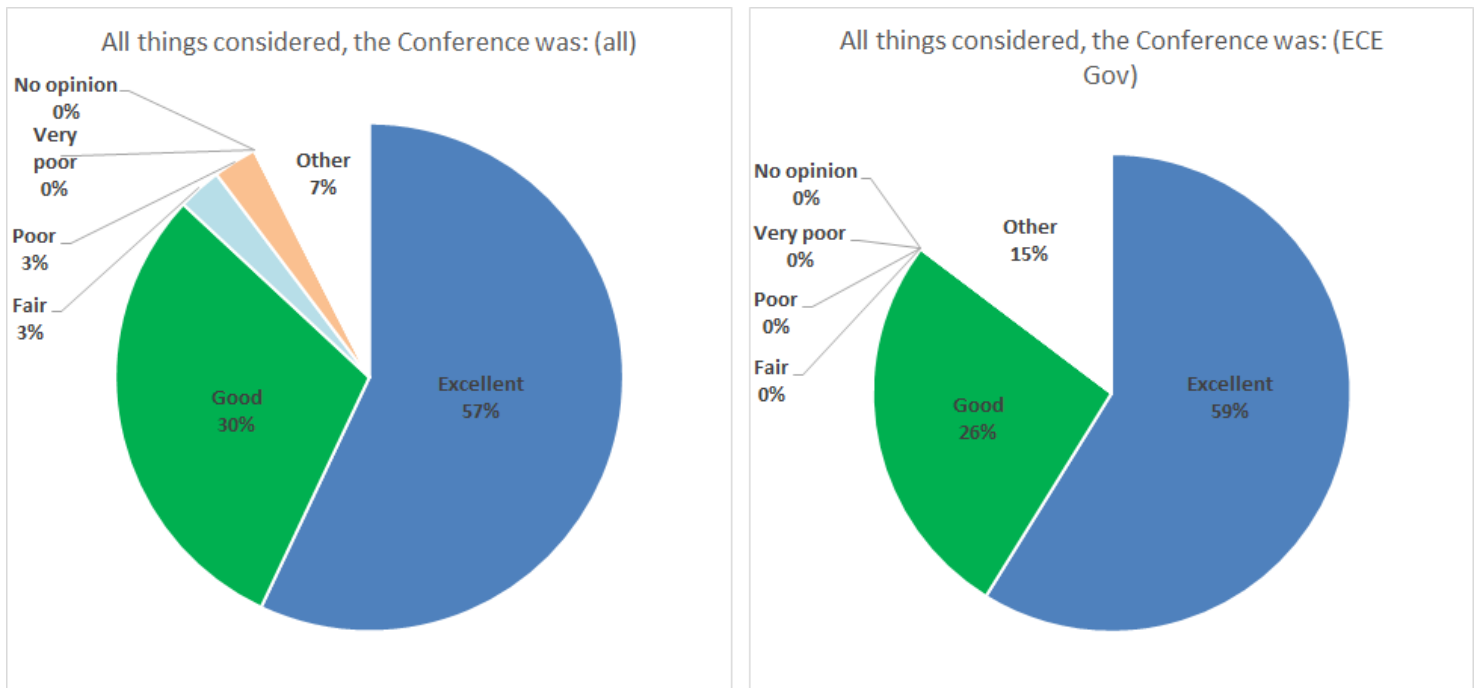


#### Comments:

- In spite of small hiccups, superb performance.
- Very helpful on all occasions and requests
- Special thanks for exhibition booth arrangements.
- Excellent for the generosity and the heart that you all put in organizing the meeting. Small mistakes are easily forgotten

## IV.9. The Nicosia Conference - OVERALL impression

(Closed-ended question with possible answers: *Excellent; Good; Fair; Poor; Very poor; No opinion; Other*)



### Comments:

- Felt very welcomed and it was visible the amount work and passion put into organising this endeavour.
- Excellent hospitality, friendliness by host country, excellent organisation and focus on cultural aspects very much appreciated, a bit too many side and parallel events made it difficult to follow everything, transfers were organised by time-consuming, more frequent transfers to and from the Cyl might have made it easier to follow side events
- This conference should be used as a "best practice" for this kind of events. A huge successful effort.
- see point 3 and 15
- It could be better organised in reference to the side events (it would be better if they also took place in Philoxenia, and if they were less in number, so that they could be arranged at better times, and attract more attendants).
- No attention paid to the sustainability of the logistics. No compensative actions mentioned. Considering the focus of the Conference, more coherence should be paid to the damages generated.
- The objectives were not clear to all participants, having a pre-conference program for young people would have been a great addition. Some actors were notably missing i.e. UNESCO. Some parts seemed a little bit forced - i.e. 200 schoolchildren waltzing into the room after youth delegates asked for equal participation in the event.
- All good, it was a very interesting conference.

## - **V. The survey: Final comments**

### *Comments under the last question “Final comments?”:*

- Had a good conference, thanks for taking care so much
- Thank you!
- Wonderful and very educative
- Cyprus, despite the occupation of 38% of its territory by the Turkish armed forces for 48 years, despite the serious immigration problems it is facing, its state infrastructure, services and above all its human capacity have not lost their love for their country and the energy to continue struggling for what is right for our world. And all of that was mirrored during this important conference.
- Thank you for all!
- Very successful Conference
- Many thanks from Georgia
- Congratulations to all!
- Excellent conference a good example for the following conferences
- thank you all!
- All in all considered I was very happy to participate to the Conference, to interact with colleagues and to exchange views, and I feel that this kind of mixed event (Environment-Education-Tourism) has real added value, and cooperation and coordination should be further pursued.
- Excellent organization, could be placed in Cyprus again. Please give the youth a chance, not only in side events, placed very late in the day, but let youth be integrated formally into discussions and the schedule.
- Congratulations for the Host Country, the staff and the volunteers!
- Thank you for your great efforts it was a useful event and I hope to join you again in I this amazing country
- I thank organizers for all the work and contribution to Europe's development agenda. It was very timely and contributing for Ukraine
- Excellent event, very well organised, planned. Great for trying to be sustainable, first time that I see serious effort at a large conference. Also wonderful to have the traditional crafts around and accessible. Very positive impression! Congratulations!
- I am very thankful to the Host Secretariat for the excellent organisation of the 9th EfE Conference, support on all the issues, nice food, eco-design and warm atmosphere of the Conference
- Maybe spreading the conference program for half a day more would have been a good way to ease the agenda a bit and assure for side events more visitors.
- I was really satisfied by this experience and the organisation of the conference
- The one thing, in my opinion, that was lacking was meaningful youth engagement. There was only 3% representation from people under 30 years old. It would be hugely beneficial for all involved to increase the number of early career professionals and young people involved in environmental NGOs (eNGOs) at future Ministerial Conferences.
- Thank you!
- The conference was organized excellent and it was fruitfully for the next years
- Thank you for organising this conference!
- No final comments.

- Thank you
- Well done, thanks!
- Some sustainable actions as a direct result of the conference
- Thank you!!!
- Each time we wonder whether the EfE process still makes sense and if we should go to yet another meeting. And each time we go and do not regret it.
- thank you for your work
- thank you and thank you Cyprus!
- The major contribution was that of bringing to the fore the importance of ESD in any discourse concerning the environment.
- We will attend future events for sure. Very useful information to apply in educational sector. Thank you!
- A big thanks to the organizers
- The Exhibition was a let down for the exhibitors. The fact that NGOs etc had exhibition stands should have become more prominent in the agenda, and perhaps even been included as an official part of the conference (allocate some time to it). The people staffing the exhibition stands were there almost all day for 3 days and received very few visitors. It was a shame!
- I wonder whether the participants will get a participation proof. Overall, an excellent event, contentwise and organization wise. Congrats to all!
- I m very excited and honored that my country contribute to raise awareness regarding in environmental sector and challenges at a global audience.
- It was a great event, very well organized, very dense, with interesting side-events, I am happy I had the chance to participate. Congratulations to all that made it happen!
- No comment

## **V. The survey: next steps**

10. The survey results show that most participants positively assessed the conference preparation, organization, and conduct.
11. However, several aspects deserve attention, especially the time allocation, the balance of plenaries and interactive sessions, the number, the location, and timing of side events, etc.
12. There is a discrepancy between the survey statistics (which are mostly positive) and the comments (which are more critical). One possible explanation is that the comments were mostly submitted by participants who encountered problems, and therefore focus on those problems.
13. Comments that address particularly challenging aspects of the organization are especially interesting, as some of them propose solutions too.
14. The survey results and proposals will be examined in more detail in preparation for the mid-term review of the Nicosia outcomes (planned for CEP-29 in 2024) and incorporated into the preparation of the next Environment for Europe Conference.