



European Week of Regions and Cities  
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# Evaluation



Between 13 and 30 October 2009, the more than 6,000 OPEN DAYS 2009 participants – including event partners, speakers and journalists – were invited to complete an on-line questionnaire and comment on what they thought of the event. By the deadline, a total of 1,126 questionnaires had been filled in by the various target groups, constituting a relatively high average response rate of 16% (compared to 17% in 2008). The highest response rate came from journalists (23%), followed by speakers (18%), participants (15%) and event partners (7%).

These response rates seem to confirm a relatively high level of identification with and interest in the event and its evolution among its visitors.

The most important findings:

- Most target groups thought the event a success, with significant improvement in the case of journalists. More than 95 % of the respondents gave a rating of either excellent or good.
- All groups had their expectations fully answered in areas of interest such as best practice and networking – the latter being significantly better rated than last year.
- Concerning the event's organisation, most of the feed-back indicated a good level of overall satisfaction with services, including the website, printed material and registration.

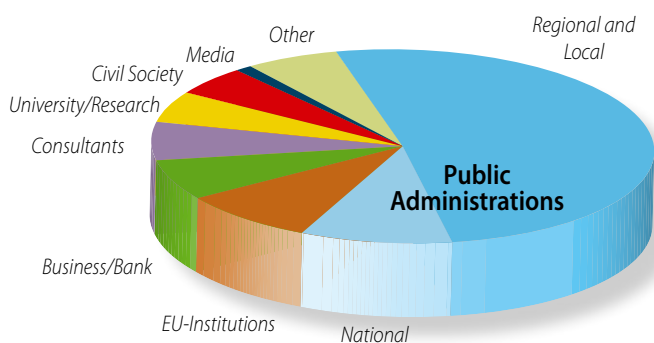


## Assessment by participants

Between 13 and 30 October 2009 all participants, speakers, event partners and journalists were invited to complete an on-line survey and say what they thought of OPEN DAYS 2009. A relatively high number of participants – 917 – responded.

The survey revealed a particular increase this year over last in the number of participants from public administrations – notably from regional and local administrations, which went from 31.8 % to 51.4 %. Below is a full break-down of the occupational background of the OPEN DAYS 2009 participants:

- 51.4 % of the participants worked in regional and local administrations;
- 9.7 % came from national administrations;
- 6.7 % came from business organisations (5.5 %) and banks (1.2%);
- 6.2 % were consultants;
- 5.5 % were from university/research institutes;
- 5 % civil society organisations;
- 8.6 % represented EU institutions;
- 1.1 % were media representatives.
- 5.9 % classified themselves as “other”.



As was found to be the case in the past, OPEN DAYS attracts a relatively young audience: more than 60 % of those who completed the survey were in the 26 to 45 age bracket. For half of the survey respondents (56.3 %), this was their first OPEN DAYS event.

The countries with the largest representation in the survey were Italy (9.8 %), Germany (8.9 %), the United Kingdom (8.6 %) and Belgium (7.2 %), closely followed by Poland (6.8 %). France, Spain, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden were also well represented. Two out of three participants (66.7 %) had travelled to Brussels for the event.

In terms of seminar participation, 28 % of participants said they attended 1-2 seminars, 36.6 % between 3 and 4, and 22.5 % said that they went to 5-6 seminars.

A vast majority felt that OPEN DAYS met their expectations when it came to providing good facilities for networking, with 84.2 % expressing satisfaction, while the remaining 15.8 % were less convinced.

Some other findings:

Regarding their expectations prior to OPEN DAYS, the opportunity to learn about best practice in regional development was ranked highest in importance, followed closely by the chance to gather information on EU cohesion policy from the European Commission/ other practitioners. A good environment for networking with other regional representatives was also regarded as important, as was the possibility of disseminating information about the participant's own region/city/organisation. Participants felt that the event met these most important expectations quite well in most cases: 85 % were on the whole satisfied with the actual possibilities for learning about best practice; 83 % were satisfied with the chances to gather information on EU cohesion policy; 77 % were satisfied with opportunities to network with other regional representatives, and 66 % were satisfied when it came to the opportunities for presenting their own region/city/organisation.

When assessing the seminars, 92% rated them as good (71.4 %) or excellent (21 %). The quality of presentations was judged good by 70.3 % and excellent by 16.1 %, while the rating of chair persons/moderators was 59.4 % at good and 33 % at excellent. These figures demonstrate a high level of satisfaction similar to last year. When rating the debates following on from seminars, 72 % found them good or excellent, but 25 % poor. The debate part of the seminars was ranked lowest, which has also been the case in the previous years.

On organisational aspects, the overall assessment from about four out of five participants was either good or excellent. The registration process and handling of badges received most approval with a very good rating, as did the experience of the welcome at the conference venues. The hostesses also left an overall good impression, and the OPEN DAYS web site, plus the printed material and documentation, was well received. A majority also felt the Meeting Place was well organised.

About half of the participants had visited the Meeting Place, and out of those around 85 % judged the concept either good (56.3 %) or even excellent (28.6 %). Two thirds of the visitors felt they had made good contacts at the Meeting Place, while it has to be said that one third found the number of contacts unsatisfactory.



This year's event saw the introduction of the OPEN DAYS University, in which 17.9 % of the participants responding to the survey had participated. It received an overall good rating: 95 % found the seminars good or excellent; they were also pleased with the quality of both the presentations (93 % at good/excellent) and speakers (96 % at good/excellent); and the debates following the seminars were also well rated (78 % found them good/excellent).

90.1 % said they would participate again in next year's OPEN DAYS.

Some selected comments and recommendations from participants:

- Many requested more time in the workshops for debate among the audience;
- Re-think the programme, as the schedule of the workshops causes time pressure and other practical issues when moving between venues;
- Organise fewer workshops and focus more on content;
- More facilities and time for formal/informal networking;
- Improve the printed programme and the web, with more accurate descriptions of the workshops;
- Strengthen the concept and organisation of the Meeting Place. Many saw it as a venue with great potential to do some real networking (the idea of some form of 'speed dating' was mentioned by several participants);
- Distribute a participants list;
- (Re)introduce an exhibition area where regions can present themselves and demonstrate innovative ideas and best practice.

Some suggestions from participants for OPEN DAYS 2010 themes:

- Green Economy
- Social cohesion
- Innovation
- Lisbon
- International cooperation
- Defining regions of excellence / Best Practice
- Renewable energy
- Tourism
- Poverty (as 2010 has a focus on this subject)
- Climate Change
- Healthcare
- Transport

Some comments on organisational issues:

While most participants appreciated the on-site registration process, they found the on-line registration system for the workshops somewhat cumbersome. It took too long to receive a confirmation for a workshop and participants were left not

knowing whether to look for alternative possibilities. This way it was difficult to plan a reasonable time in advance. Another remark was that when registering and being accepted for workshops, participants were sent multiple e-mails, which most found unnecessary and confusing.

The scale of OPEN DAYS requires a lot of venues at a distance from one another. As could be expected, this has resulted in a large quantity of complaints about time and transport issues.

A recommendation repeated by a lot of participants was that the organisation should allow more time, and create more facilities, for networking.

## Assessment by event partners

There were 213 regions and cities in partnerships. All partners were invited to contribute to the on-line survey. Only a small number of them completed the questionnaire, but their feedback is nevertheless useful. In addition to the survey, the organising team received a lot of constructive and positive feedback from the partners throughout the preparation and running of the event.

The partners were asked in the survey about their expectations and how they rated the event and organisational aspects, including cooperation within the partnership. They were also invited to submit their recommendations and ideas.

When it comes to the partners' expectations prior to the event, the most important concerned opportunities to network and to disseminate information about their particular region or organisation. Learning about best practice was also high on the agenda, while partners attached relatively little importance to possibilities for meeting representatives from business. The survey indicated that the majority of the partners felt their most important expectations had been met reasonably well in practice.

Concerning the seminars, close to 95 % were satisfied with the quality of presentations, and the quality of the moderators also received 95 % positive responses. Most of the respondents found the quality of the debate with the audience satisfactory.

Organisational issues such as registration, attendance, venues and interpretation received all-round good/very good scores at the level of about 90 %.

Regarding the event's preparation, 55 % assessed it as good and 33 % said it was excellent. The OPEN DAYS website received a positive feedback, with 50 % finding it excellent and 44 % good.



Impressions of the Meeting Place were mixed. Most agreed that the underlying concept was good, and a slight majority had a good experience. Compared to the other events during OPEN DAYS, however, there were more respondents who marked the facilities and networking success at the Meeting Place as bad or poor.

As already mentioned, this year's event saw the introduction of the OPEN DAYS University, in which 27 % of the partners responding to the survey had participated. Among those, 80 % found the seminars excellent and 20 % rated them as good. There was 100 % satisfaction with the quality of both presentations and speakers (60 % excellent and 40 % good for both).

Some selected recommendations from the partners:

- 2010 themes: Information society strategy (post i2010); Innovation policy and its impact on local governments; Regional innovation; Empowering the citizens; Cohesion policy.
- Comments to the organisation: Provide better facilities for networking; (re)introduce an exhibition area with stands.

## Feedback from speakers and chairpersons

Like the other groups attending OPEN DAYS 2009, the speakers and chairpersons were also given the opportunity to state their views and ideas in the on-line survey. 118 people with the following organisational background completed the questionnaire:

- 45 % represented national, regional or local authorities;
- 14 % were from universities and research institutes;
- 13 % represented European institutions;
- 12 % came from private companies, banks and other bodies;
- 4 % from civil society organisations;
- 4 % were consultants;
- 8 % characterised themselves as 'other'.

Looking at the countries of the speakers participating in the survey, most came from the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Belgium and Germany, closely followed by Spain and Poland.

In the survey, the speakers and chairpersons were asked to assess the quality of the workshops, organisational aspects and networking and were invited to give recommendations and ideas.

Some key results:

- 96% found the overall quality of the event either good (63 %) or excellent (33 %);
- 97 % found the quality of the presentations either good (71 %) or excellent (26 %), and the moderators received a good assessment (55 % good and 39 % excellent);
- About a quarter of speakers and chairpersons wished the debates with the audience had been better, while the rest still found them good or excellent;
- For 96 % of the speakers and chairpersons, the services offered by the organisers, such as general guidance, web site and help by the conference secretariat, were either good or excellent;
- 95 % of the speakers and chairpersons said they would participate in next year's OPEN DAYS.

Some selected recommendations from speakers and chairpersons:

- More time immediately after workshops for further networking and discussion (as most participants had to rush to the next workshop);
- Create some sort of on-line forum where the speakers could have discussions with one another before the event;
- Put the presentations on the OPEN DAYS web site;
- Avoid overlap in the seminars; stricter guidelines for speakers.
- 2010 themes: Climate change; Green energy; Best practice; Research and industry united for innovation on a regional level; Multilevel governance in practice; Experiences in financing urban transformation; Integration between rural policy and cohesion policy; Social inclusion and the fight against poverty.

## Impact of the local events

Since 2006, the OPEN DAYS have been rolled out to the local level under the banner 'Europe in my region/city'. In October over 230 local events were organised in 33 countries. The highest numbers of local events were held in Italy (28), Spain (21), the UK (20) and France (18). The feedback report on these events will be made available on the OPEN DAYS website: [www.opendays.europa.eu](http://www.opendays.europa.eu).