

EVALUATION REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL PARLIAMENT MEETING

EDINBURGH 23-26 SEPTEMBER 2013.

The report is based on the return of 36 evaluation forms and comments taken from email correspondence after the event.

The first part is a summary and the second part contains more detailed comment.

This is the first formal Evaluation that the ECP has conducted and we envisage that Evaluation will become more important to our supporters.

Summary

The ECP welcomes feedback, which we have received over many years. However, this is the first formal evaluation of our annual ECP session. Thirty six individuals returned our forms and sent us comments as we think this will become increasingly important for everyone associated with us.

The information highlighted a number of key points and recurring issues. Where these required a response, the response is detailed in the Actions Table and, in our efforts for continuous improvement the ECP will ensure that all the suggested actions are implemented. Some items, as expected, are the subject of on-going discussion and those that are recurring are captured so that we can keep them under review.

The findings indicate that 92% of the 13 individual sessions were rated good or very good. With only 8% rated satisfactory. No sessions were rated unsatisfactory or poor. 3 sessions stood out as being very good to excellent, these were, "A Reflection on Kenya's Journey with regard to the Arts and Culture and Freedom of Expression"; "Who Am I? Identity in a Globalised World"; and "To Be or Not To Be a Minister of Culture?" Interestingly, all these sessions were quite different in their format. The main issue with the session that was rated as satisfactory, "Freedom of Expression and Art in the Public Space," was that there may have been flaws in the basis of the research and/or the research basis was not explained sufficiently.

The evaluation captured key comments, most of which it has to be said were very positive. These were categorised into three areas; the content; the organisation and the logistics. In terms of content the perennial issue of the balance in the programme between, lecture, debate and networking was raised. Also there were a range of different views about whether or not to include an element of showcasing work?



Everyone welcomed the contribution from Commonwealth participants, noticing that it brought a stimulating and different perspective. There were comments about conduct, and even though we encourage robust discussion we always expect people to treat others with respect. There were some good ideas for themes for future discussion, as follows: Freedom of Expression and Social Media (it was generally thought there was not enough time for this subject); Gender issues in Cultural Models; Privatisation of the Public Space – is this our democratic right? Should any ECP member have an opportunity to pick up on these themes in other forums please inform the ECP, but the ECP will also seek other opportunities to include these ideas.

In terms of organisation, there were some good ideas about future ‘buddying’ opportunities particularly for new members. There were also some practical ideas for information capture which we will implement if our hosts are able to supply the relevant technology. There was praise for the ECP as a networking opportunity, with several participants reporting future leads for collaboration, invitations or contacts and information relevant to their international development activity. There is always discussion about how much free time there should be in the host City this is balanced with getting the best value from the funds invested in putting people together for either the formal sessions or networking. We will keep this under review.

Most of the logistical items were small but important but, as ever, we will note points relevant to travel arrangements, accommodation and session information and communicate those that relate to the venue and speakers directly to the relevant partners and individuals and do our best to take actions to correct them. These mainly related to the change of venue and the subsequent effect on the activity.

There was strongly positive testimony from participants (including our guests and speakers) with regard to the programme, networking, logistics and organisation. A few examples are:

“It was wonderful to be there and in Edinburgh. Congratulations on the program!”

“All the sessions were passionate, thought-provoking and lively. The addition of participants from the Commonwealth added a very welcome additional depth and interest to the discussions.”

“Thank you so much for everything the team did for the successful session of ECP in Edinburgh! I enjoyed the quality of discussions, the invited participants of other continents, and the beautiful city of Edinburgh, a great discovery for me!”

“I have made great contacts and have at least 8-10 concrete leads to follow up – a great network, thanks.”

Perfect organisation...fabulous hotel...thanks so much for making it all go smoothly.

Thank you to all of you who returned the evaluation forms and made specific suggestions for improvement. Please know that your feedback will ensure our next sessions are even better.

Actions

1.1	Can we get a small biography of all participants then it makes networking easier.	This information can be made available on our web-site
1.2	Can we have more options to see a cultural event in the City where the ECP is staged – maybe one in each art form? Or to a museum – these could be discussed the following day. I want to get away from festivals and showcasing, this meeting is about ideas, please do not have showcasing of local product.....	The feedback we receive indicates there is always discussion between whether there should be a cultural visit / showcase or whether our meetings should concentrate on overall themes or ideas. Many members go to cultural festivals in their own field and value this as an opportunity for genuine discussion of ideas in an interdisciplinary forum. It is not affordable for the ECP to provide funds for a showcase or cultural options. We can only raise it with our hosts and see what it is possible for them to provide. However, if any ECP member has already financed material that they can bring with them then the ECP will do all it can to assist with organising it.
1.3	If research is being presented then maybe it should be reviewed first by an expert in the field.	In future we can ask those with the intention of presenting research results to ask someone with equivalent or greater experience to review it in advance of it being presented to the ECP.
1.4	Discussions sometimes got stuck on one theme and this needs more active Chairing.	We should acknowledge that some people have better Chairing skills than others, we need to play to these strengths rather than expect the same people to chair or facilitate due to their role within the ECP. This can be addressed at the next meeting.
1.5	Freedom and social media is such important issue. Can we have it as a theme for a future session as it was not addressed adequately?	We can bear this in mind for future meetings along-side the other ideas that were suggested.
1.6	It should not be acceptable for people to be rude or dismissive of other people's ideas – people should engage with each other politely.	Robust debate is acceptable but we hope that members will always make their points in a respectful manner even if there are disagreements. We will ensure that this is emphasised at the start of all meetings in future.

2.1	<p>It would be good to have more free-flowing discussions and debates – let's do away with lectures alone, but lectures with debates are OK.</p> <p>It would be good if discussions were slightly more structured/planned.</p>	<p>The ECP does its best to provide the right balance of lecture, discussion, debate and networking. It is usually difficult to get this right, some people want structured debates others want free-flowing discussion. It is probably a no win situation, but we always keep this under review.</p>
2.2	<p>Could there be more web-based interaction between meetings? This could raise the impact a lot.</p>	<p>This is a great idea. If anyone would like to volunteer to co-ordinate this please contact Karl-Erik Norrman.</p>
2.3	<p>People should not have to stand for any part of the ECP</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
2.4	<p>We could have less themes and more time – maybe only one workshop per day.</p>	<p>It is always difficult to get the balance right between stimulating ideas and leaving enough time for debate and discussion. Of course this time there were two themes which added pressure. We will bear this in mind when we are planning the next session.</p>
2.5	<p>Members of the ECP should have to commit to coming to the whole meeting.</p>	<p>Sometimes ECP Members can not commit to attending the whole meeting as they have work commitments. However, we should consider covering the travel and accommodation costs only of those members who can attend the whole meeting. Otherwise we may make only a contribution to costs.</p>
2.6	<p>The way the exhibition was tucked away meant that it was missed by many.</p>	<p>Agreed. If there is an exhibition in the future it needs to be assembled in advance of the meeting and signposted well.</p>
2.7	<p>Every year the process of drafting the final statements is done in a hurry. It sometimes feels like it is imposed. It was good to have time to comment via email this time.</p>	<p>It was unfortunate that the drafting had to take place in a different space and it did not work well. It was therefore necessary to allow comment by email. The ECP should consider extending the opportunity to comment by email by a deadline to future declarations.</p>

3.1	Could people have a buddy for the whole meeting so that you can meet up and review and discuss content?	Individuals should organise this themselves if they are existing members. If new members are attending for the first time we can offer them a 'buddy', so please be aware that you may be asked in future.
3.2	Would like to have had everyone's contact details.	Not everyone likes their contact details passed around. If you look on the website and would like the contact details of any particular member you can always contact the ECP in advance.
3.3	Could notes be captured in real time and placed on a board for everyone to see?	This will be considered if future hosts can make facilities available to us for this to happen. We will add it to the planning checklist.
3.4	Please tell us where all the sessions will take place in advance – as we may miss announcements.	Announcements were made several times. However, it was not acceptable to the ECP for the afternoon session on the second day to be moved. Our hosts considered it unavoidable. This will be avoided in the future.
3.5	If people are getting their travel and hotel paid then they should be at all the ECP sessions and must return evaluations.	The Senate of the ECP always keeps the payment of travel and accommodation expenses under review and will consider this. This was the first time we have had a formal evaluation and 36 evaluations were returned. We should all do all we can to return them in the future. Maybe we can particularly target those who have had their expenses covered and if an evaluation is not returned we can review whether expenses should be covered again. It is worth reporting that all IFACCA members who had expenses covered are obliged to return an evaluation report.
3.6	Having to move to another space on the second day was disrupting and uncomfortable.	Agreed. This will be communicated to Creative Scotland. This will be avoided wherever possible in the future as we do not want to lose participants along the way.
3.7	Come on Creative Scotland the opening reception – not enough food.	Agreed. This will be communicated to Creative Scotland. ECP will consider providing guidance for future hosts.