



## Feedback on the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual EALTA Conference “Validity in Language Testing and Assessment”

May 31 – June 3, 2012  
University of Innsbruck, Austria

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**Report based on 71 completed conference feedback questionnaires**

**Return rate 33.2% of a total of 217 conference participants**

As usual EALTA collects feedback for conference attendants mainly to learn how we can improve their experience and make sure future conference meet their expectations. The feedback as you may see from the following pages was positive: delegates generally appreciated the organisation and the scientific quality of the conference.

Responses to questions 1 to 14 have been summarized in graphs. When reading the report it may be good to realize that in the charts 1.4 % represents just 1 respondent, 2.8% equals 2 respondents and 4.2% is 3 respondents.

Questions 15 to 18 cannot easily be summarized because of the rich variation in the responses. They have brought the Executive committee and conference organizers valuable ideas to take into account whenever possible.

We thank all delegates who have taken the trouble to respond for their cooperation. And we also applaud the Innsbruck organizers for their excellent experience they prepared for the conference delegates.

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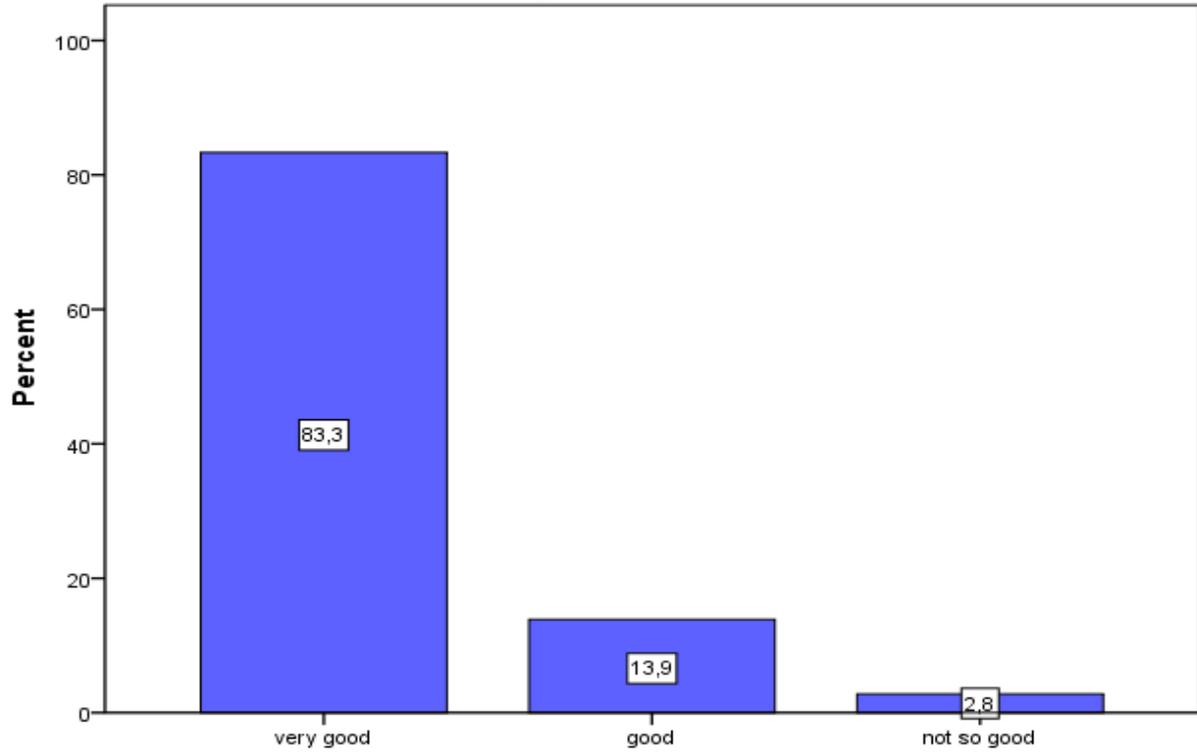
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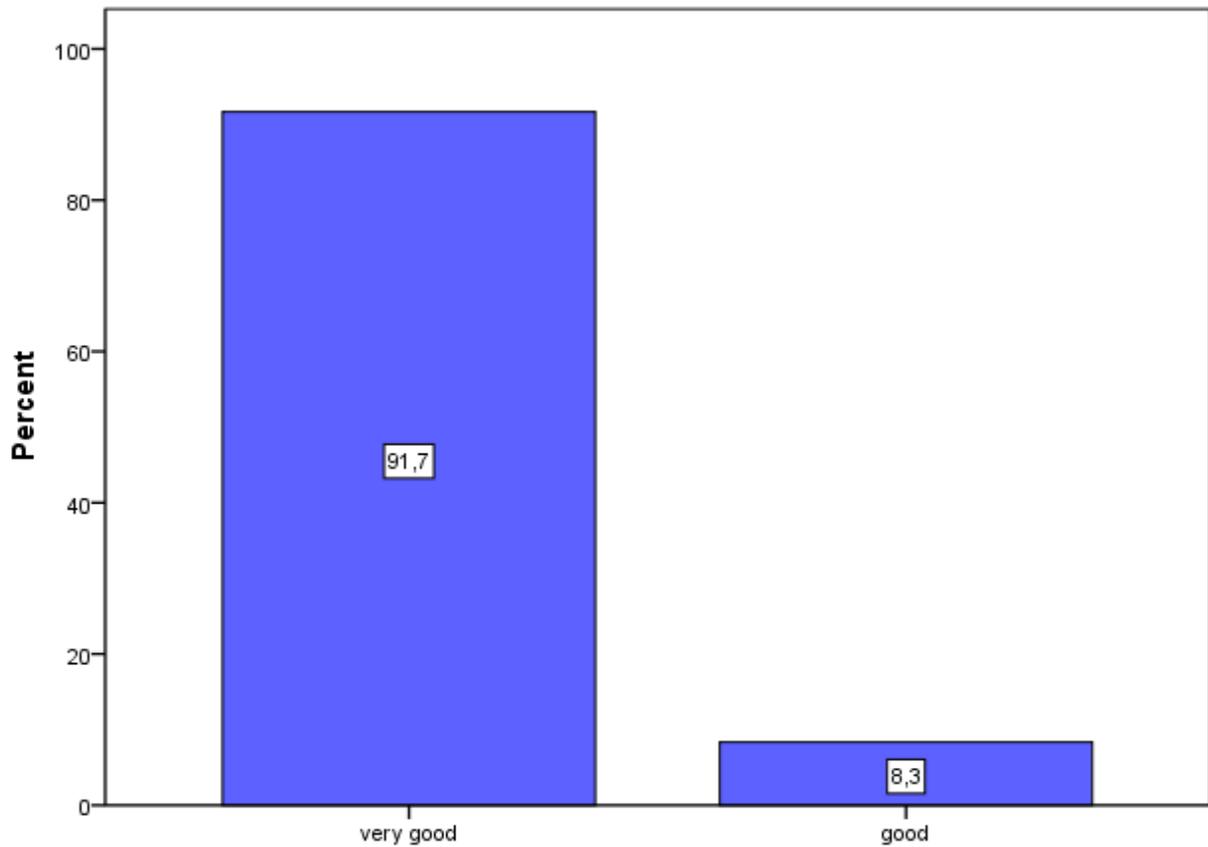
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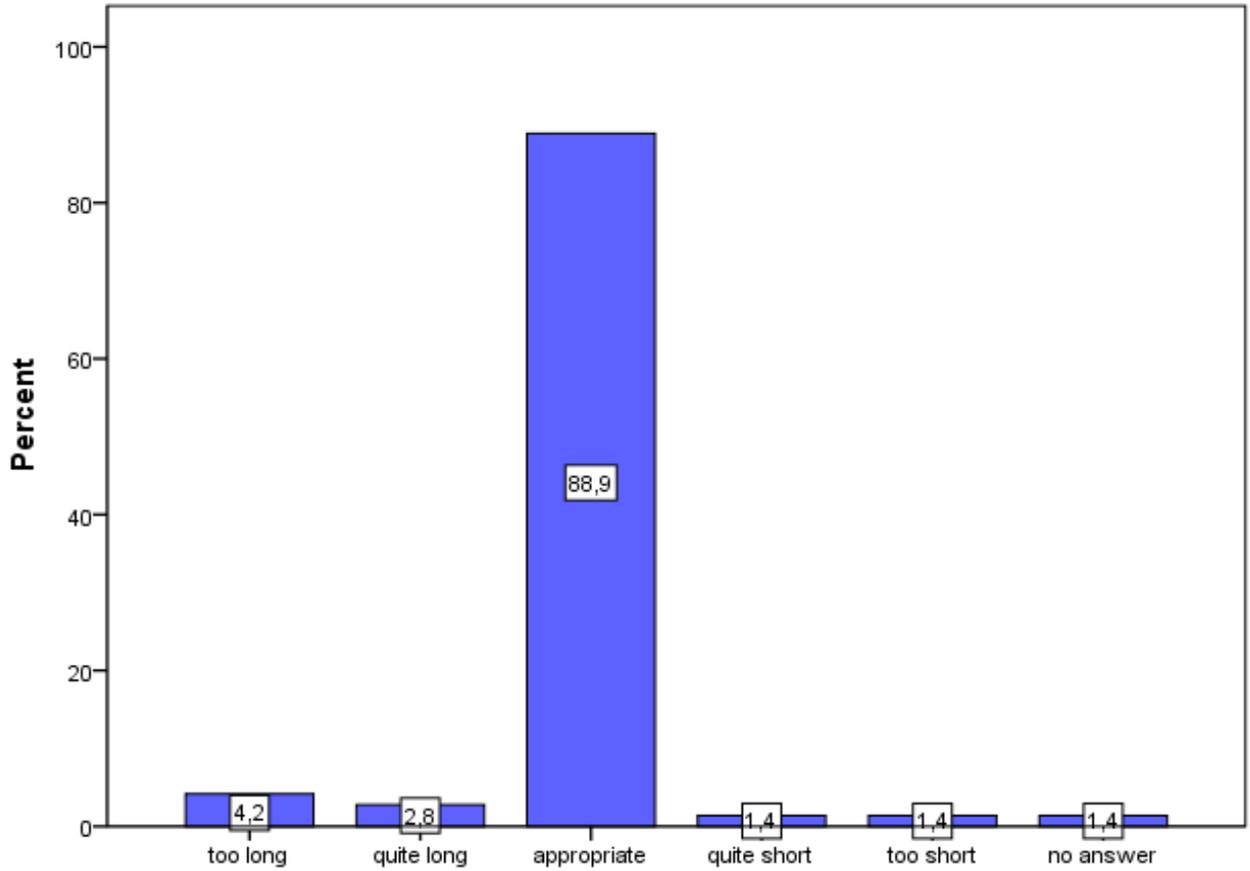
## 1 Organisation



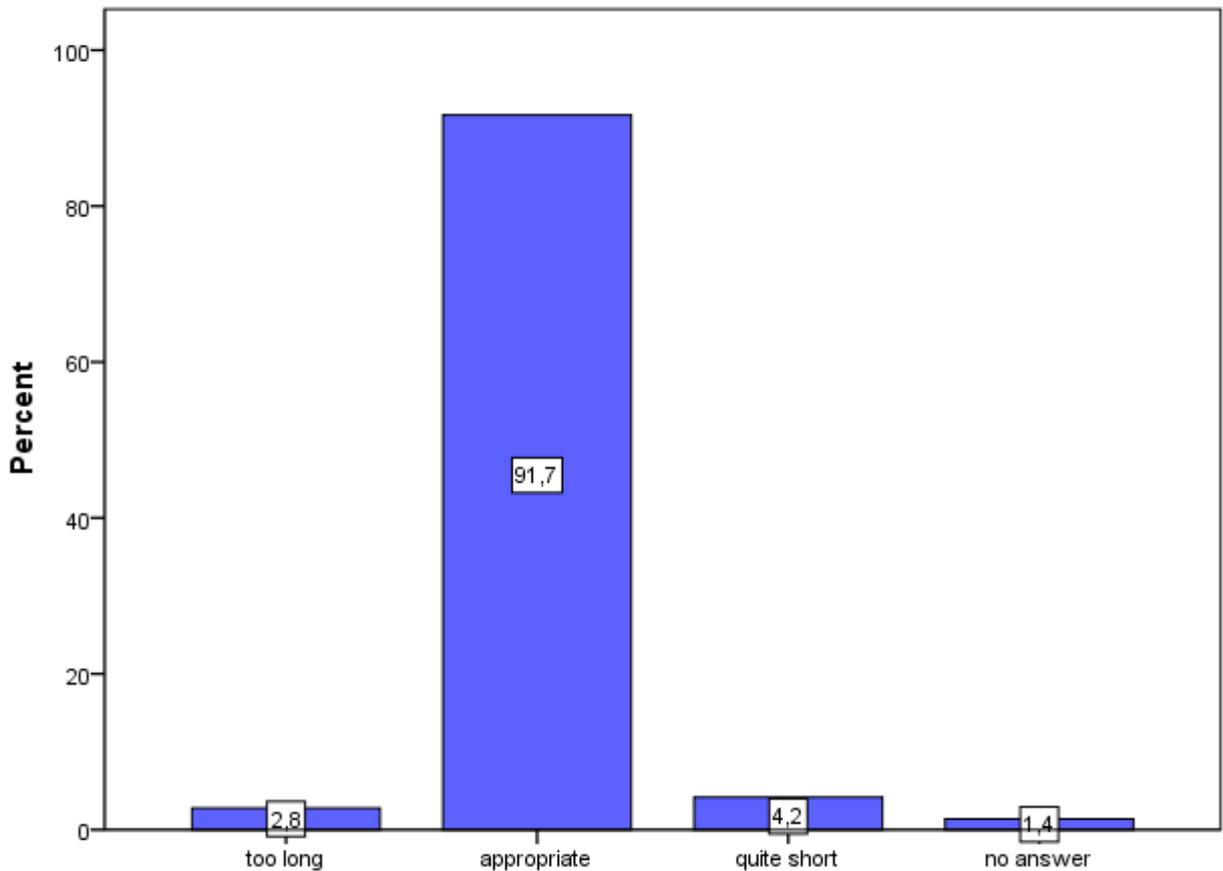
## 2 Location



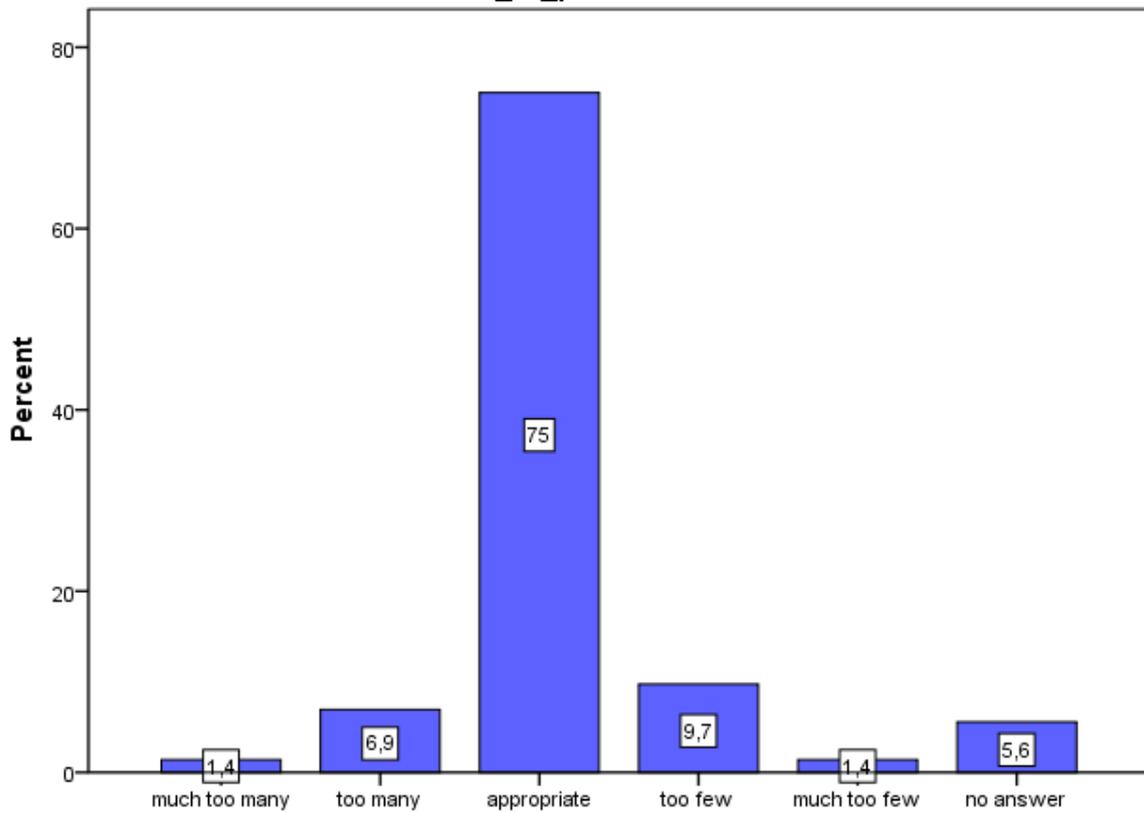
### 3 Length of conference



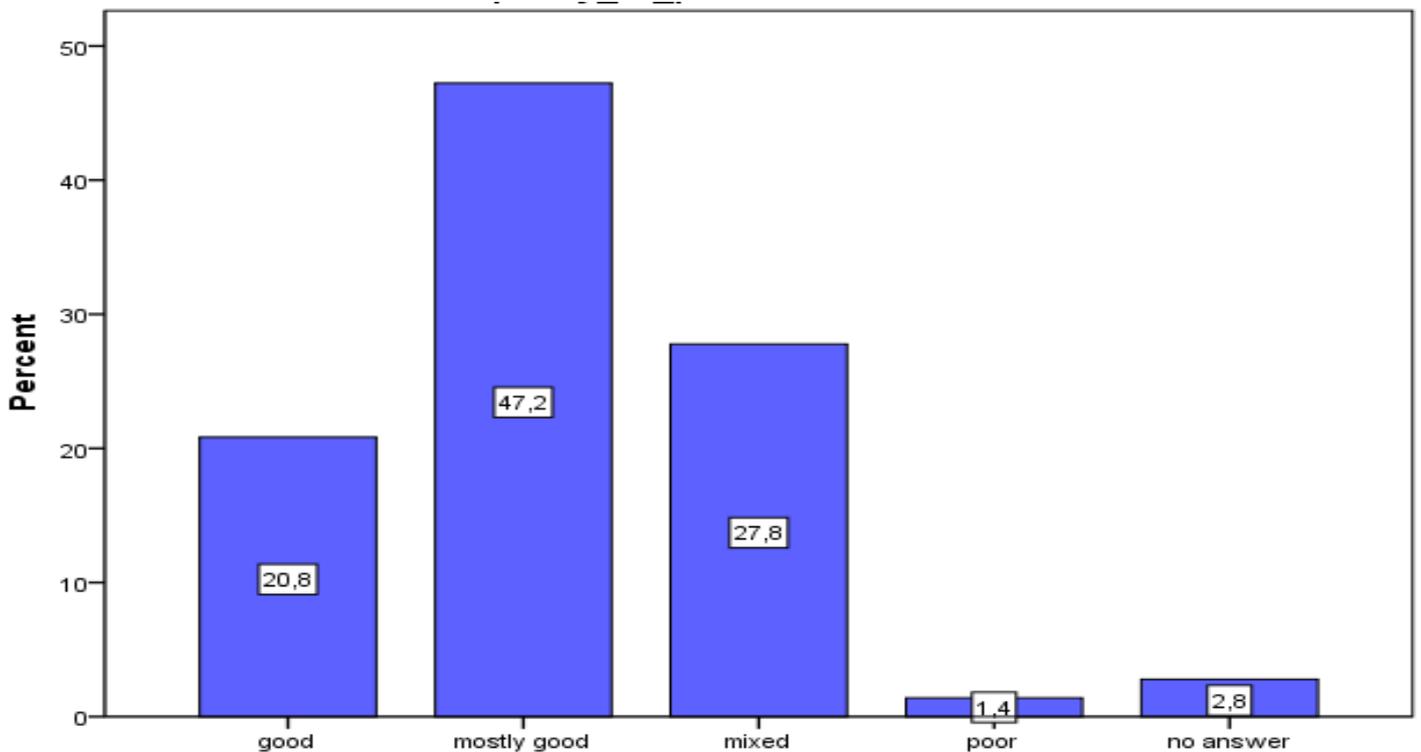
### 4 Length of presentations



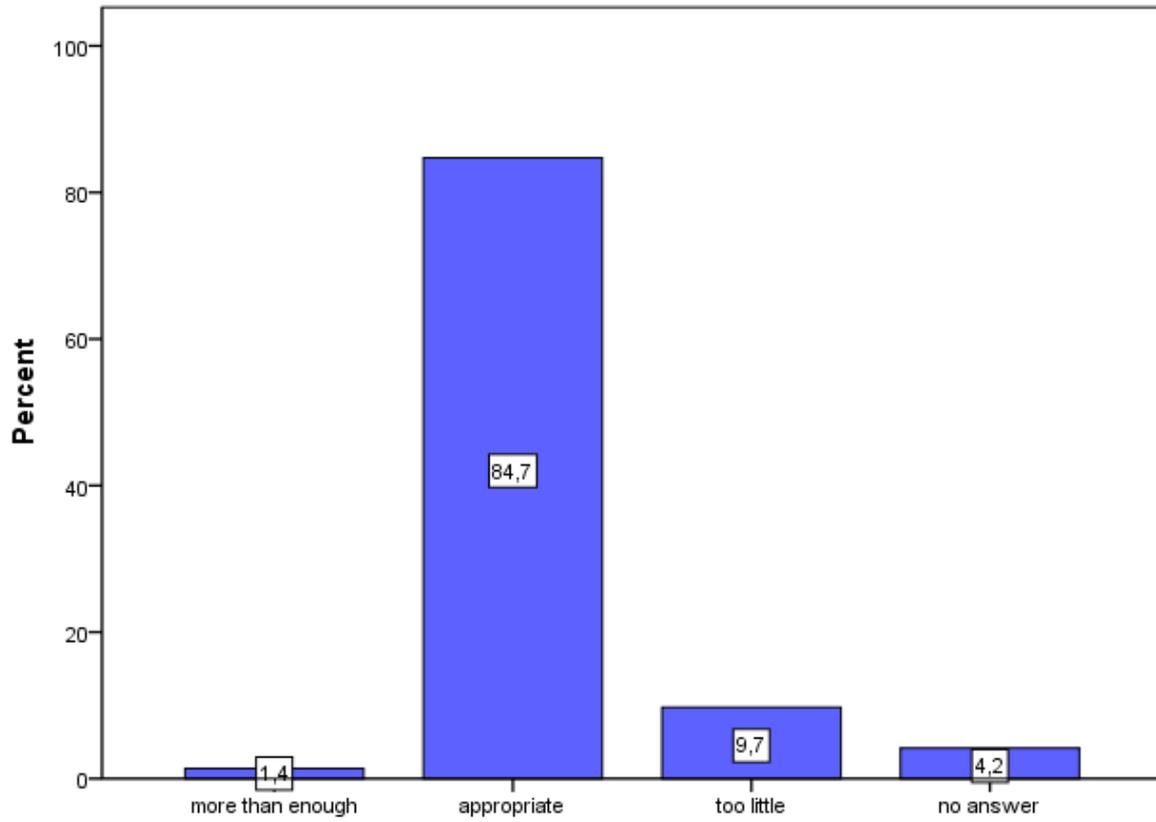
## 5 Number of presentations



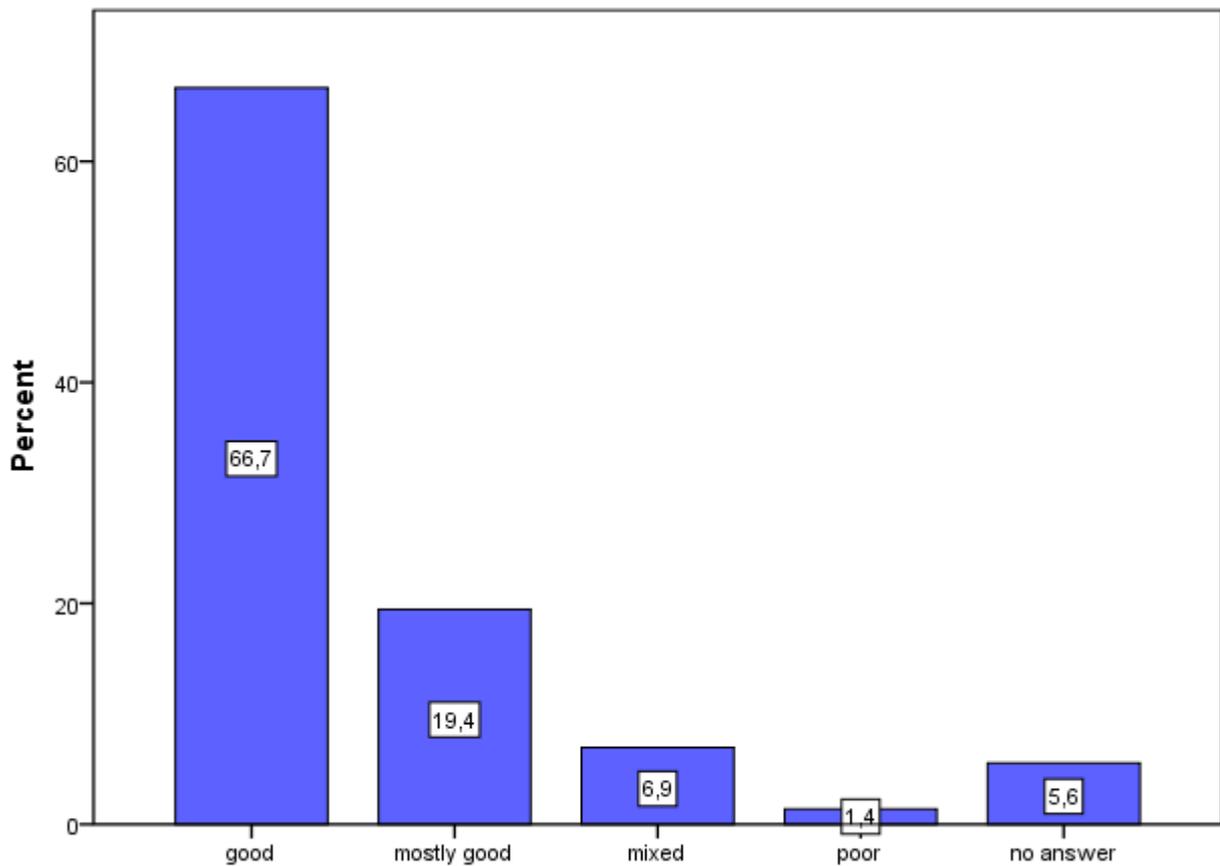
## 6 Quality of presentations



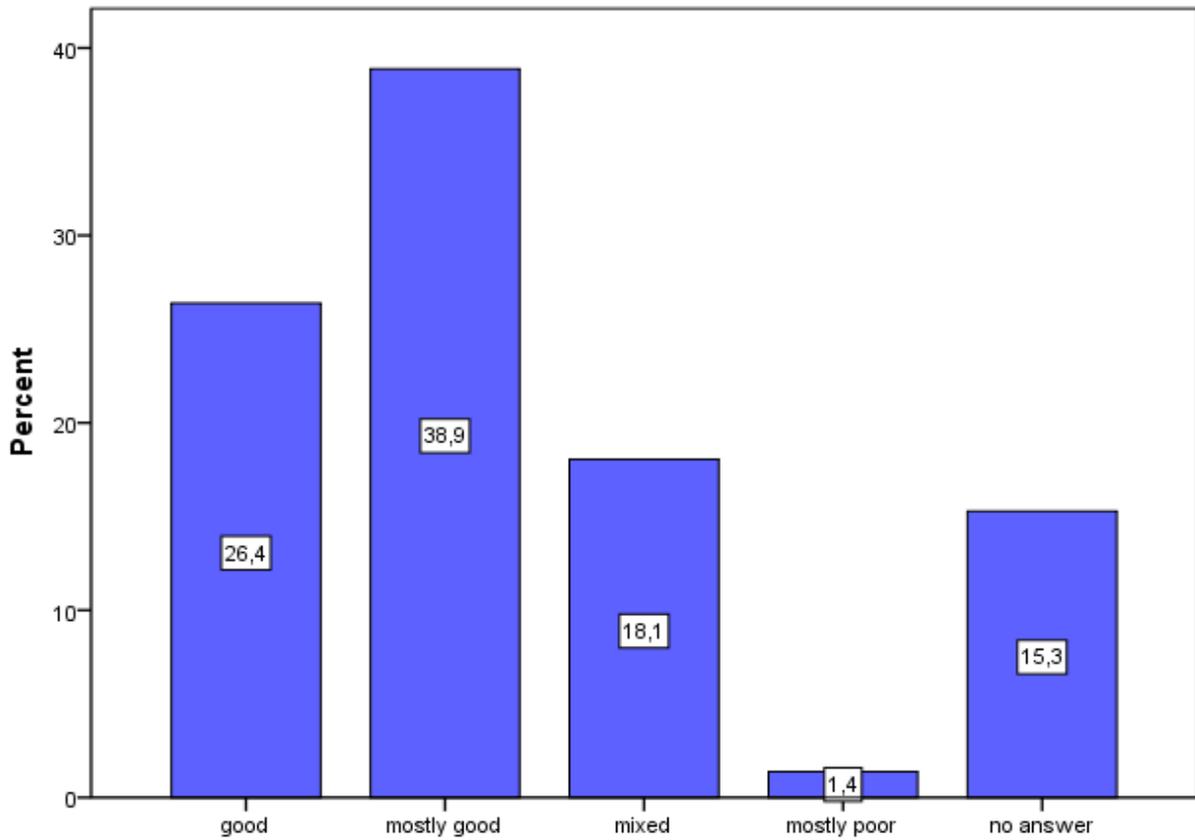
## 7 Opportunity for participation and discussion



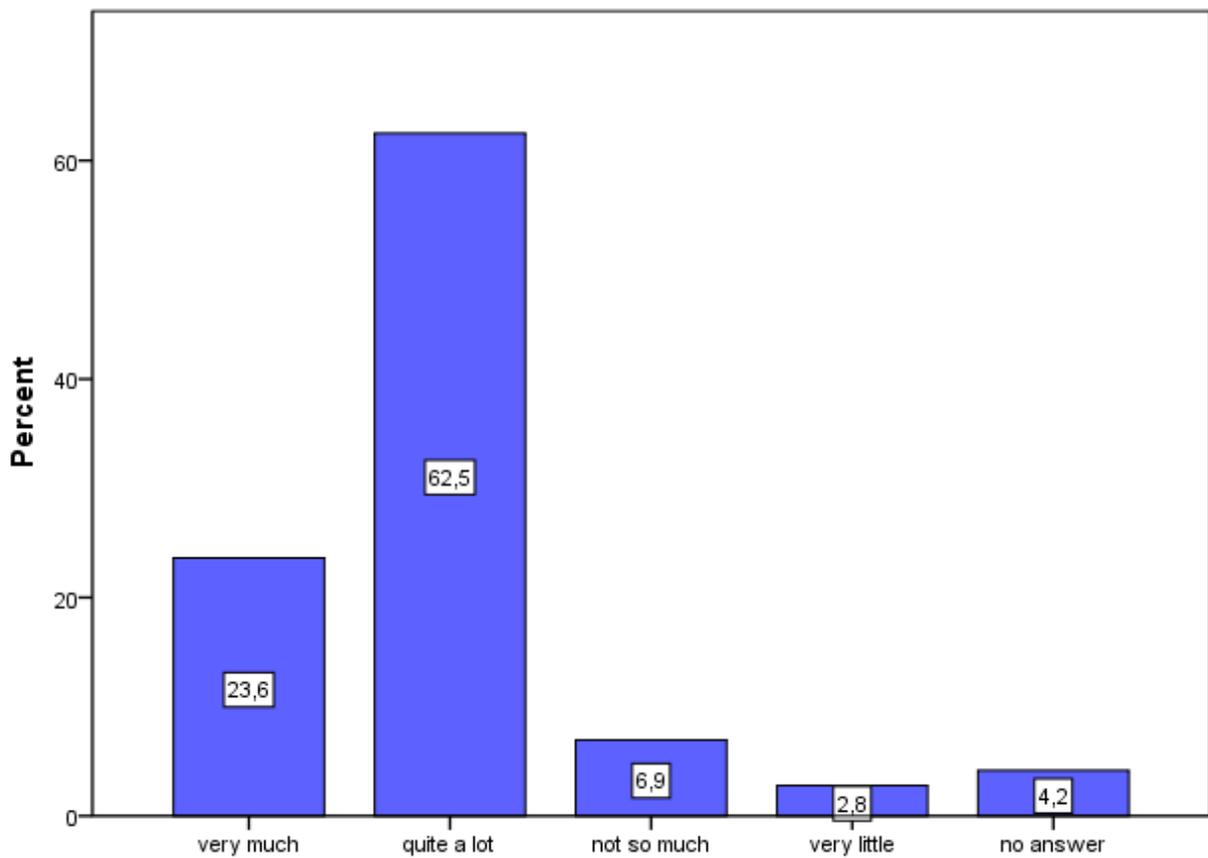
## 8 Keynote papers



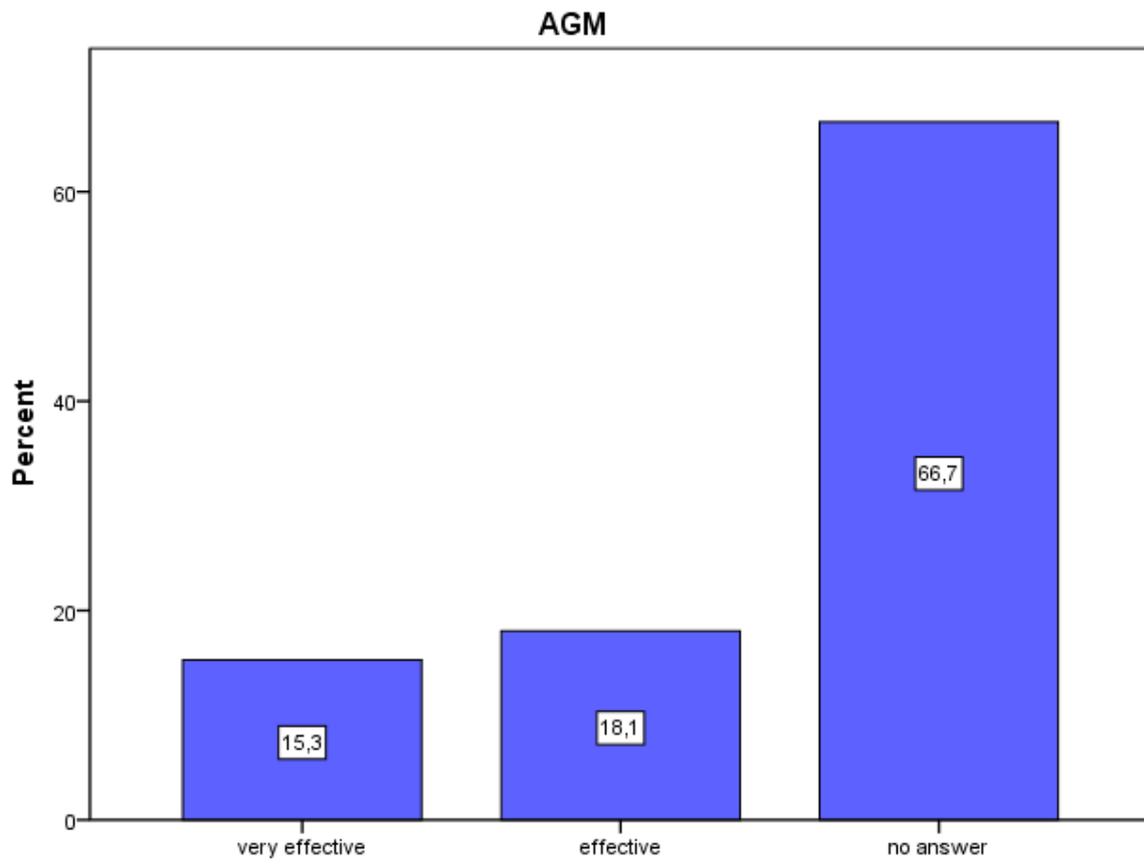
## 9 Posters



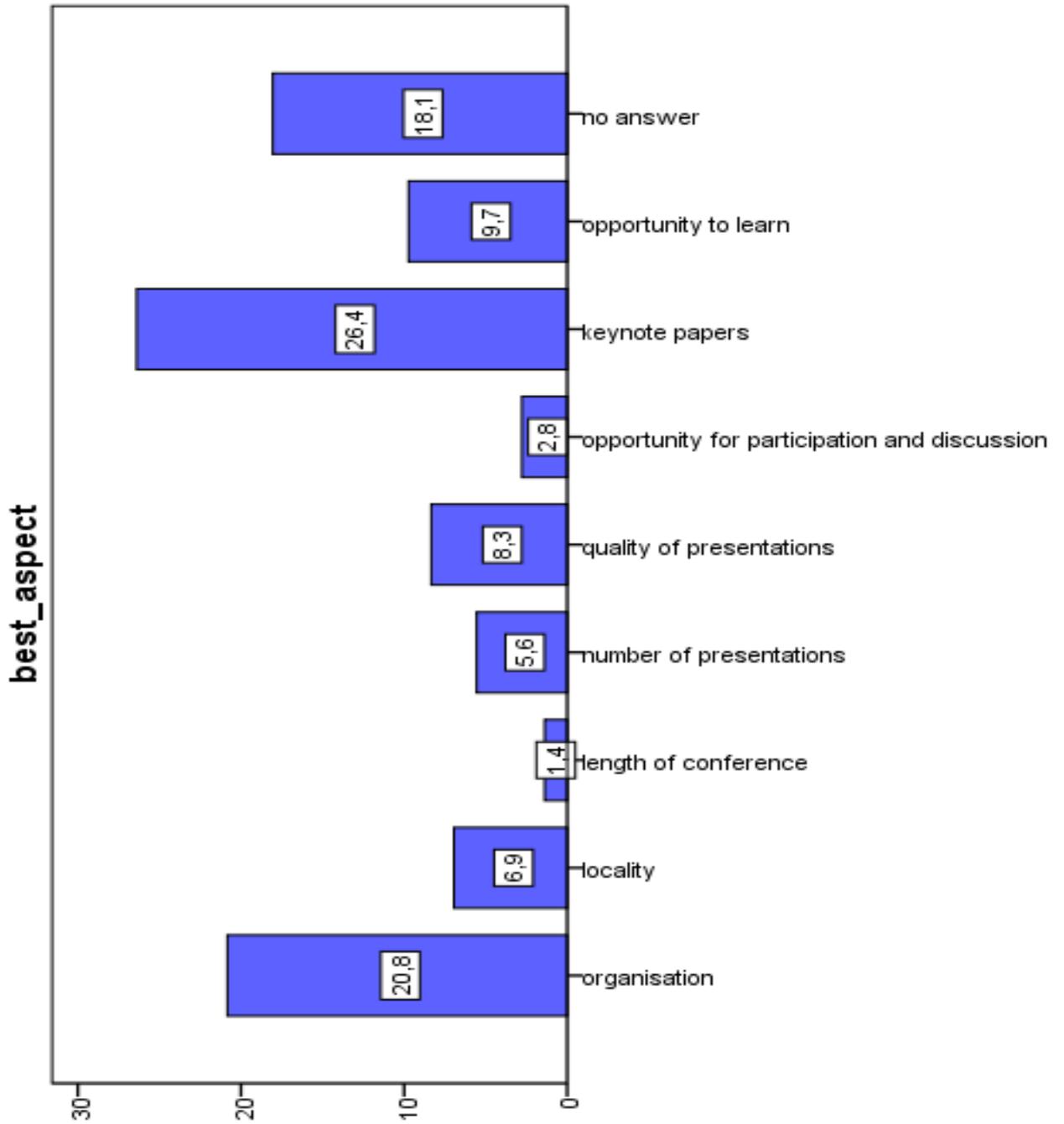
## 10 Opportunity to learn



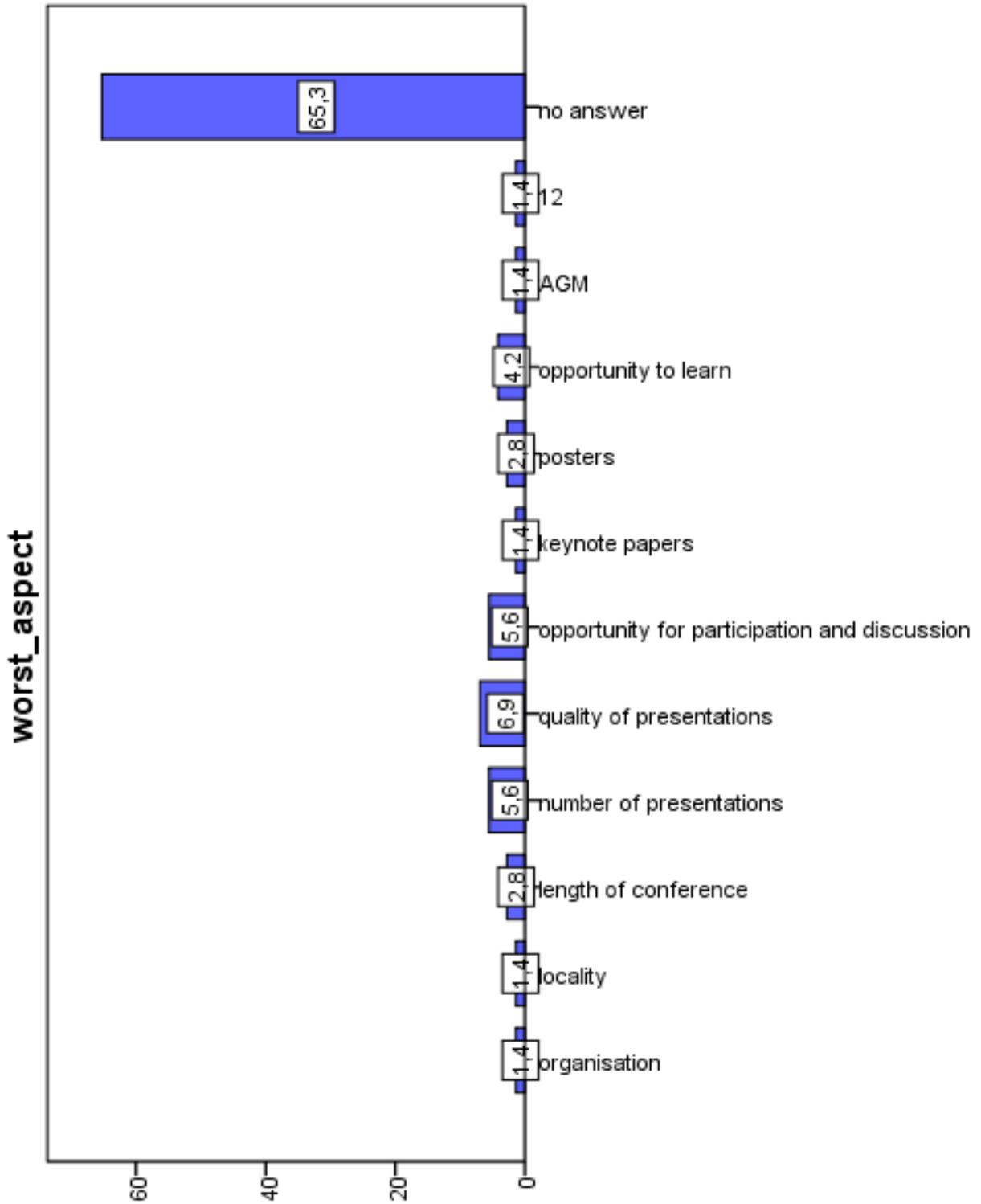
## 11 AGM



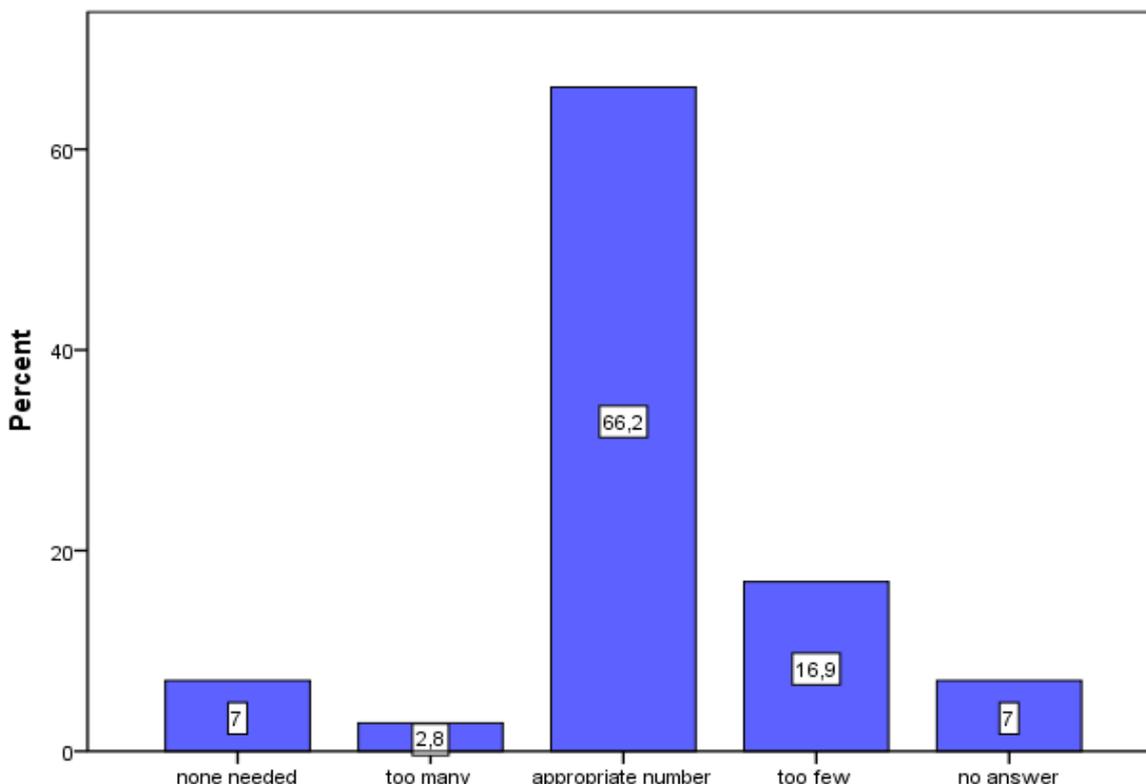
## 12 Best aspects of the conference



### 13 Worst aspects of the conference



## 14 Parallel sessions



## 15 What did you learn at this conference?

### Automated text analysis

- ✓ use of automated text analysis tools & research seems to be a new, emerging theme, so it was good to learn about research making use of them/it
- ✓ That there are also can't do statements in CEFR; about scoring machines that can analyse texts
- ✓ new insights in automatic text analysis; new ideas for own research
- ✓ lots about text analysis

### Reading

- ✓ that we need more input from "outside", i.e. other subjects like psycholinguistics, sociolinguists, etc.
- ✓ It's difficulty to pick 1 things but I probably found Dr Rouet's presentation on Reading skills in the Information Age the most eye-opening
- ✓ speaking assessment; new concepts in reading!
- ✓ about tendencies in speaking ability assessment research, about new views on reading ability measurement
- ✓ changing values in the validity discussion; changes in the reading construct
- ✓ affirmation of what I know about new types of reading behaviour; different approaches to speaking tests and scales for assessment; actually it gave me a lot of ideas what ought to be investigated in Austria

### Keynotes

- ✓ Tim McNamara's talk was very thought-provoking; it made me reflect on the whole business I'm engaged in. I've seen him talk about the same issues before, but this time his message really hit me.
- ✓ from the keynote speakers

### Automated scoring

- ✓ I got a better insight into reading-into-writing tests for academic purposes, learned about automated scoring of written texts , the relationship of CEFR with rating and a lot more
- ✓ Profile analysis (vs. DIF); automated scoring (validity, applicability, use)

### Validity

- ✓ that I need to check the validity of my tests!
- ✓ That every institution makes the validity for their tests by their own
- ✓ 1) complexified notions of validity; 2) a stronger understanding of the relationship between processes of learning/educational practices of assessment
- ✓ I learned more about validity related to the skills that are not my field of research

### Insights from other testers

- ✓ Patience, keep being optimistic even if the particular context of language testing I'm involved in isn't going on well, keep trying and focus on quality issues
- ✓ similar areas of concern and frustration across borders
- ✓ as usual, seeing how people work
- ✓ This was my first visit to the EALTA conference and I enjoyed getting to know the EALTA community.
- ✓ about testing practices in other countries
- ✓ that other people face big challenges too in their practice

### Research ideas/directions

- ✓ That my research is under-represented but perhaps, for that reason, ground-breaking
- ✓ about prosodic features and about Pearson tests...It was a bit too much of advertising Pearson tests!
- ✓ new research ideas
- ✓ aspects of testing; ideas to research
- ✓ updates on literature - articles I had missed, gaps in my reading (e.g. Bachman, 2010!); personal affirmation that the directions of our research are "right", timely and useful, through comparison with what other people are reporting on.

### General remarks

- ✓ that testing organisations/companies are seemingly given "priority" for presentations
- ✓ That EALTA is increasingly attracting the attention of the language testing assessment community by being different from traditional conferences
- ✓ language testing linked to SLA research; limitations of the CEFR to be acknowledged by language testing; insights in assessment criteria with the testing of productive competences
- ✓ native language avoiding assessment

## 16 What would you like to suggest for the next AGM or conference?

### Conference themes/focus

- ✓ the **impact of testing and assessment**; assessment impact
- ✓ **10 years of EALTA** - looking back, looking forward;
- ✓ As it is the **10th conference** some note of how EALTA was set up and how it has developed would be interesting to hear.
- ✓ More about **less taught languages testing** - when the testing population is too small for statistics; **native language testing**
- ✓ **native/first language testing** and assessment
- ✓ In addition to language testing research, more focus on **alternative forms of assessment**
- ✓ range of **spoken ability** constructs should be measured and tools to get representation (measurable) samples
- ✓ **Washback!!!**
- ✓ **assessment of language for special purposes**
- ✓ further attention to the relationship between testing/assessment and different aspects of **formal/informal learning**
- ✓ perhaps not for the next one, but a future one: testing/evaluating/assessing **multilingual competence**

### Pre-conference workshops

- ✓ Since one cannot play in two teams at the same time, it is a pity I could attend only one of the pre-conference workshops. I would gladly attend the workshop on assessing reading, if it can be given again next year (for those who missed it this year)

### Presenters/papers

- ✓ I would welcome more papers with a psychological view - like the one by Jean-Francois Rouet this year. More mixing of wide and narrow subjects.
- ✓ less contributions from English standardized test contexts: more variability of languages considered and other testing contexts; conference theme: standardization as part of the language policy of countries, institutions, educational boards, etc.; instruct presenters to stick to the main points; less contribution by young researchers presenting results of doctoral research (too detailed, but not really relevant and interesting)
- ✓ 4 parallel sessions on: testing writing, speaking, listening, reading
- ✓ More papers on a broader spectrum of testing issues
- ✓ Rules of good presentation behaviour for speakers: 1. Not to try to say too much and speak quickly. Listeners must adapt to different accents. 2. Not to fill the PowerPoint presentations with text and allow no time for listeners to read. 3. Not to use short forms like EFL, NNS when speaking. Although easy to interpret when you know them, it's difficult to follow the speakers if you're trying to figure out what they mean.
- ✓ Can the rating process for paper acceptance be transparent? Our paper was rejected but we didn't know why so don't know how to improve our next attempt. EUROSLA send the points and comments, could EALTA also do this please?
- ✓ Check if all the presenters have registered and give people on the waiting list a few hours preparation time :); would be very nice with a list of names-participants
- ✓ More sessions from people/presenters who are involved in real testing with real problems who use research to solve them. Less sessions from boards/publishers

### Venue

- ✓ enough hotels very near to the venue/locality of the conference
- ✓ opportunity to escape at conference dinner

### Format of conference/housekeeping

- ✓ no work-in-progress-sessions
- ✓ More sessions like "work in progress" where people can discuss and seek answers to their questions; "consultation sessions"?
- ✓ more keynotes (2 per day -> 5 min)
- ✓ continue with preconference workshops
- ✓ maybe include "round tables"
- ✓ more parallel sessions = more talks
- ✓ availability of slideshows so one may pay closer attention to presentations; people refrain from personal conversations - distracting and rude. Maybe a housekeeping announcement as we are many cultures assembled under one roof.
- ✓ 5 minutes break between presentations is necessary, esp. When you have to move lecture rooms. A break after each presentation is needed to collect your thoughts and finish noticing before next one starts.

### List of participants

- ✓ I missed having a list of the participants. It was great to have the presentation abstracts.
- ✓ Please can you distribute a list of registered participants

### General remarks

- ✓ No suggestion, but a compliment: I liked the grouping of presentations very much. The sessions were coherent, so that the presentations came to interact with one another.
- ✓ I appreciate the fact that this is the EALTA conference, but it may be a good idea to also consider that a lot of good work is done elsewhere in the world and people from Africa, Asia,

the Americas, etc. should be encouraged to come and share their research. Europe is not the world. \*Note that I am a European citizen.

- ✓ I'm not going to attend again, ever, so it doesn't matter.

## 17 Suggestions for topics for pre-conference workshops

- ✓ assessing **speaking**; sharing knowledge in the use of **automated approaches & programs** (e.g. Coh-Metrix, Praat, Wordsmith) in a hands-on workshop
- ✓ How to use available (free) **text analysis programmes**; demonstration of how automatic rating of speech/text is done.
- ✓ **quantitative/qualitative research**
- ✓ **Research design** - matching analysis with research aims and research questions. How to decide which analysis to do (beyond descriptive statistics), e.g. regression
- ✓ tips for **test developers** --> how to create reading comprehension MC questions, etc.
- ✓ **language testing in institutional settings**
- ✓ **diagnostic testing** (for remediating)
- ✓ Maybe **alternative forms of assessment**?
- ✓ **Reading in the 21st century** - requirements (learning/teaching/assessment)
- ✓ **mediation** as the "5th skill"
- ✓ **listening** research/testing
- ✓ Knowledge of **Psycholinguistic models** that underlie aspects of proficiency is very much needed and lacking in the LT community
- ✓ assessing **inter-cultural competence**
- ✓ assessing **translation** (written)
- ✓ **young learners SLA** and testing
- ✓ adult **immigrant L2 learners**
- ✓ Anything on different **methods of validation**
- ✓ **assessing grammar and vocab** (use of E)
- ✓ **classroom assessment** (adults)
- ✓ How to arrive in the 21st century as regards language testing; how to relate your presentation to the theme; how to escape 1950's style testing.

### Statistics

- ✓ multidimensional IRT or other statistical procedures (e.g. factorial ANOVA, etc.)
- ✓ IRT (going to summer school is expensive!)
- ✓ statistics for testing (classical & IRT), you can never get enough!
- ✓ ANOVA/FACETS/Factor analysis/Profile analysis, etc.
- ✓ FACETS - inter-rater and intra-rater consistency; ethical issues in testing, how to educate the decision makers - maybe impossible to handle in a workshop, I know

### Rater training/behaviour

- ✓ examiners'/raters' calibration techniques
- ✓ rater training
- ✓ interviewer/rater behaviour; problems related to interviewer/rater activities
- ✓ machine-rating vs. human rating

### General remarks

- ✓ The topic of this conference was excellent, it is unfortunate that many papers did not address it.

## 18 General comments

- ✓ I've attended and presented at a number of teacher training conferences, but this was by far the best organised conference I've been to.
- ✓ Everything was of high quality. Thank you very much to the organizers!
- ✓ Thank you for an excellent conference