

## SECTION 12

### EVALUATION

Evaluation is increasingly becoming an integral part of associations' work. The benefits of regular surveys are uncontested, as they are often the easiest way for the associations to gather information on the needs and desires of their members and to determine whether the association's work is headed in the right direction.

The aim of an evaluation is to find out how the participants assess an event, their impressions, criticisms, suggestions and possible requests for change or for further events. The evaluation is used to determine whether the stated objective has been achieved and to see what works and what does not. The results can be applied in different ways.

Which procedures and criteria do the associations use to assess the success of their events? Do they use formal surveys such as questionnaires, or informal conversations and spontaneous reports from participants? Are they used during the event or after, in printed versions or online? Do online surveys with links and follow-up increase the response rates or not?

Case studies from four association countries will be used to demonstrate how organizations evaluate their events. The first one (Case study 12.1) concerns the use of mandatory surveys in Iceland, as the bigger events receive public assistance. The second one from APFM Malta (Case study 12.2) reports on how they gather and use feedback from participants. The third one from Italy (Case study 12.3) tells us how AIG organizes an event and how they determine its success. The fourth one, from IDV, shows how externally funded events need to be carefully evaluated.

#### 1. Questionnaires in general and their advantages

For the most part the participants are asked to fill in a questionnaire at the end of an event. It's usually short, consisting of one or no more than two A4 pages and therefore fairly clear. Most questions are multiple choice questions so that participants can respond relatively quickly and hand in the questionnaire before leaving, which increases the response rate. Most organizations evaluate similar criteria.

„Wir führen Evaluationen durch, die Aufschluss über bestimmte Kriterien geben (Kursleiter, Inhalt, Raum, Zeitl. Umfang)“. (**Arbeitskreis Deutsch als Fremdsprache in der Schweiz, Switzerland**)

„Durch Fragebögen, auf denen die Teilnehmer ihre Meinung auch ausformulieren können. Es werden Fragen gestellt zu Organisation der Veranstaltung, Auswahl der Vortragenden/Workshopleiter, die Vermittlung der Themen, der Aktualität, Vorschläge werden gesammelt für die folgende Veranstaltung usw.“ (**SDUNJ, Slowenischer Deutschlehrerverband, Slovenia**).

The questionnaire can often be answered online as well for a certain period after the event.

„Die IDTs werden normalerweise von den teilnehmenden LehrerInnen selbst evaluiert, indem diese vor Ort oder (per Mail) nach der Rückkehr einen Fragebogen dazu ausfüllen“. (**IDV, Internationaler Deutschlehrerverband**)

Replies to closed questions are easily evaluated for statistical purposes. They give initial feedback on the success of an event. The results can also serve as suitable promotional material to illustrate the value of the association events for members and interested parties.

Participation is easiest to measure and most frequently mentioned as a criterion in the answers from different associations. Therefore, detailed records of attendance are quite important.

„Ein erstes Kriterium ist die Teilnehmerzahl: wenn sie bei dem selben Tagungstyp jedes Mal ansteigt, ist das eine erste, wenngleich teilweise noch oberflächliche Erfolgsanzeige“. (**IDV, Internationaler Deutschlehrerverband**)

« Toute initiative de formation des enseignants se termine, par exemple, par un questionnaire d'évaluation et la participation quantitative n'est pas à négliger... » (**LEND, Italy**)

„Numbers of participants in sessions (conferences); numbers of readers of newsletters/communications“. (**British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages, Canada**)

## 2. Questionnaire: disadvantages

There are certain drawbacks/disadvantages to the evaluation of events based on questionnaires.

The assessment is mostly done at the end of the event, giving the participants little time to digest the new information, impressions etc. The questionnaire is in writing, which may result in very short answers to open questions. Associations often end up with enough quantitative data, but may lack the qualitative data. In this case, other additional methods are necessary to close the gap.

“Allgemein gehaltene Fragen in Evaluationen ergeben meist diverse Ansatzpunkte für Veränderungen und lassen Handlungsspielräume offen; spezifische Fragen hingegen beschränken die Bandbreite der Interpretationen. Sollen aus den Ergebnissen einer Evaluation Konsequenzen für das zukünftige Handeln gezogen werden, sollte sich dieser Wunsch also in spezifischen Fragen niederschlagen. Mit Frage 8, baten wir die Teilnehmenden direkt, ihre Veränderungsvorschläge vorzulegen, um so konkrete Hinweise auf die zukünftige Durchführung des Seminars zu erhalten.” (**IDV, eine Evaluation des DACH-Workshops 2009. See Case study 12.4**)

Associations, that either place the questionnaires online or on a mailing list often complain about the low response rates:

“We send out questionnaires quite often but have a very low response rate. We do get feedback during various activities but they are specifically related to the activity but we could try to find out more about what they want and need during the next upcoming conference. There is always a session on just this question during our conferences ...” (**TEA, Teachers of English in Austria**)

### 3. Other methods of evaluation

Other possible ways of evaluating during the events include short-feedback groups, round tables, posters at various locations for written suggestions and comments, mailboxes and blogs for ongoing discussions.

- **Discussions during the event**

“Evaluation is performed using face to face, questionnaires, motivation system. An event is measured by a number of participants, quality of presentations, feedback from the members, number of sponsors and supporters interested in participating. If the information about the event is published by the media, it is being evaluated objectively as well.” (**Lietuvos kalbų pedagogų asociacija, LKPA, Lithuania**)

“Teilnehmerzahl, Anzahl und Lebhaftigkeit der Diskussionsbeiträge. Teilnahme am angebotenen Kultur- und Sozialprogramm.” (**Associazione Italiana di Germanistica, AIG, Italy**)

Discussions, questions and requests for more information to be presented during the event, provide useful information about the interests of the participants and shed light on possible topics for future events. Discussion with participants, whether formal or informal, is also an effective means to get feedback.

“Souvent pendant les stages pédagogiques nous posons des questions aux professeurs pour essayer de mieux comprendre ce qu’ils souhaitent obtenir de l’association. Parfois ils indiquent des sujets pour les stages futurs qu’ils retiennent utiles pour leurs classes.” (**Association des Professeurs de Français de Malte, APFM, Malta**)

“Das einzige Kriterium: Dankworte der Deutschlehrer, Zufriedenheit damit, was wir zusammen gemacht haben.” (**DLV Kasachstan, Russia**)

- **Interviews by phone after the event**

Some associations ask the participants to indicate on the questionnaire whether they would be willing to be contacted for follow-up evaluation by email or by phone sometime after the

event. In some associations evaluation by phone is a standard procedure, often in addition to the questionnaire.

“Evaluation de chaque activité avec questionnaire; Conversation téléphonique avec tous les membres inscrits (on se partage la liste entre les membres du bureau) pour savoir leurs souhaits.” (**AEFS association des enseignants de français en Suède; LMS lärare i moderna språk – section française, Sweden**)

#### 4. **Different methods to obtain more reliable data**

Associations that evaluate their events regularly and systematically use various combined methods.

“We always ask ELTA members to give feedback at the end of a conference or workshop via questionnaires, interviews and evaluation sheets”. (**ELTA – English Language Teachers of Albania**)

“We evaluate the success of our conferences from the number of participants, satisfaction levels expressed either personally or in reports, the quality of the programme and the geographical spread of conference venues (Japan, Benin, Poland, Cuba, Denmark, China 2007-12). We evaluate our symposia by the prestige of the inviting university and the level of the non-esperantists participants and speakers. [...] We require and receive annual reports from our sections. We would like to be able to contact and survey our members individually”. (**International League of Esperantist Teachers, ILET / Internacia Ligo de Esperantistaj Instruistoj ILEI. Den Haag, the Netherlands**)

#### 5. **Evaluation of publicly supported events**

Events that are supported by public funds must be evaluated in a very formal way. (See Case study 12.1 from Iceland and 12.4 from IDV.) Events receiving approval (and often funding) from a Ministry, for example, must be formally evaluated.

“The projects, festivals etc that are ministry-approved need to be very-well organized and reported on in order to be further approved. So far, all the events that we have organized have been re-approved, which means that they have been successful”. (**RATE, Romanian Association of Teachers of English, Romania**)

#### 6. **Evaluation of events that receive support from the association**

Associations providing their members with financial support for regional events use similar methods.

“We review the reports and meeting minutes which they must submit at least once a year. All professional development and chapter projects are evaluated before funding

is awarded. The annual meeting is evaluated through a survey of all attendees and used to develop the upcoming meeting.” (**American Association of Teachers of German, USA**)

## **CASE STUDY 12.1**

### **EVALUATION OF OFFICIALLY SUPPORTED EVENTS**

#### **A CASE STUDY FROM ICELAND**

##### **Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, President of the German Teachers' Association of Iceland**

According to the collective agreement, teachers in Iceland are required to attend further education of a certain amount of hours, but outside the regular school year. In return the Ministry of Education contributes each year for this purpose, a certain sum from its budget to a training fund.

The associations commit to holding training courses on behalf of the Ministry and can apply for scholarships once a year thereby partly or completely financing the event. In the application the theme and contents of the training course must be explained in some detail, together with the estimated number of participants, length of the event, who will be invited to give lectures or conduct workshop, the form of training (courses, lectures or workshops, etc.), the location and time, educational material and the administrator from the association. A cost estimate forms a part of the application.

At the end of the event participants are requested to fill in a questionnaire (see below) for evaluation purposes. Of the eight questions six are multiple choice questions. If not enough time for answering the questionnaire is planned in beforehand, most often very little has been written in reply to the two open questions. All questionnaires are assessed by staff from the training fund. The associations receive the complete evaluation.

If the associations want additional or fuller information, they need to refer to other resources. Most use unofficial conversations, comments received via e-mail etc. The associations in Iceland are small and the members get to know each other quickly. Therefore, it is not surprising that the participants state their satisfaction or dissatisfaction during the event.

Increased activity and participation of the members says a lot about the quality and relevance of the events. At least once a year, many associations also carry out an online survey about member's wishes for continuing education and other events. The results are compared with those of the official questionnaire, and quite often the comments are similar. Smaller events have been assessed in a very informal way, for example in informal discussions at the expert leader meetings, held once a year. The Board of the DLV plans in future to conduct very short online surveys on the home page to make events even more targeted and involve more members in the process of participatory democracy.



# Evaluation

CONTINUING EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

Please evaluate the workshop by answering the following questions, where 5 is the highest and 1 is lowest.

- |   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Structure of the workshop .....          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Handouts .....                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Teaching .....                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A. ....                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B. ....                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C. ....                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D. ....                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| E. ....                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F. ....                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Service .....                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Class room / Setting .....               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Overall evaluation on the workshop ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. What other topics would you like workshops on?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Other comments or remarks  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation

## CASE STUDY 12.2

### FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

#### ASSOCIATION DES PROFESSEURS DE FRANÇAIS DE MALTE (APFM)

**Angèle Vella Lauwers, Présidente de l'APFM**

**Website: [www.apfmalte.com](http://www.apfmalte.com)**

**Email address: [apfmalte@gmail.com](mailto:apfmalte@gmail.com)**

#### **Introduction**

The APFM is a small association of teachers of French as a foreign language (FLE) founded in 2008 and contains about one hundred members. It should be noted that there are about one hundred and twenty total FLE teachers in Malta (secondary and tertiary levels) and that most teachers are women between thirty and forty-five years.

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When APFM organizes activities, it tries to choose activities that may be of interest to teachers. From previous experience we realized that the teachers like it when the APFM organizes session speakers from abroad to talk about practical subjects related to teaching, activities related to French culture and presentations of educational books and materials.

It is always a challenge to decide the date and time that works best for our members because the choice of the date or time are very important for the success of the business. The APFM tries not to organize activities during the school examinations period, or public festivals, etc. Thursday afternoon is often a good day to organize an event because a lot of teachers teaching in high school meet (October to January) to prepare all tests so they are already at the Centre Franco-Maltais, where the APFM organizes most of its activities.

The APFM also realized that when the activity is recognized by local and foreign institutions such as the Ministry of Education of Malta, the Embassy of France in Malta and the French Alliance of Malta-Mediterranean more teachers participate. I can cite here the two courses that we organized last year (in February / March and July) to sensitize teachers to the DELF examination. These two courses were a huge success even though the one in February / March was held on Monday and Wednesday for three consecutive weeks. The course was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the French Alliance and the Embassy of France. Each teacher received a certificate of participation and the speaker in question was from overseas and a specialist in the field.

On the day of each activity the Secretary General makes a list with participants' names and which school they represent or simply keeps track of the number of participants. After the activity, committee members often have the opportunity to talk with a few members present to

judge the success but not the value of the activity. Sometimes they even ask individuals who participated to write an article that can be downloaded from the site of the APFM to encourage other members to participate.

During the week of activity, we consult the electronic mail as some members like to give us their feedback in this way, and we take note of their suggestions. This is useful, because talking with teachers we take stock of these activities but it also gives us an indication of what activities the teachers prefer.

We always ask our members to confirm their attendance in advance in order to have some idea of the success of the business. We have already had to cancel some activities because there was insufficient participation. For example, the Committee decided not to organize social evenings (dinner) because experience has shown that our members are not interested.

We try to use revision courses at the end of the school year to distribute questionnaires. We do not inform members of the results of these questionnaires because we use the information only to prepare the agenda of activities for the following year. Feedback from teachers is used for the annual activity report (which may be read on the day of the General Assembly), in the newsletters that we send to our members but also when we write articles to promote the association.

The feedback also helps us to show the funding agencies that the voluntary work of the Committee is useful and essential, and to support the association. It is also important to have representatives on the Committee who can speak for minorities such as student-teachers, retired teachers, teachers who work on our sister island Gozo, etc., because often it is the Committee members that transmit the feedback from their constituencies.

### **CASE STUDY 12.3**

#### **THE NUMBER AND LIVELINESS OF DISCUSSIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

##### **MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN ASSOCIATION OF GERMANISTS IN ROME, 24.-25. JUNE 2011**

**Prof.Dr. Marina Foschi Albert, Vice-president of AIG**

The Italian Germanist Association (Associazione Italiana di Germanistica AIG) was founded in 1996, with one of the objectives being to organize scientific meetings. In this regard, every three years, AIG organizes, at the end of each board meeting, a scientific conference, both of interest for literary scholars as well as for linguists. AIG also organizes an annual membership meeting, usually at the place of each Board. To make the event for members nationwide attractive and worthy of participation, the meetings offer suitable opportunities to organize panel discussions, in which university policy, and professional and methodological issues which are relevant for all members are discussed. The five board members select the topics, after taking into account the related needs and suggestions of all association members.

To evaluate the success of a conference, our association has so far not collected statistical data. Since AIG is financed by membership fees and receives no further funding, the Association owes no institution an evaluation. Of course, for the Board, the views of all members are very important. Explicit indicators of the success of a meeting can be any unsolicited feedback from various colleagues to board members. The members in most cases only get in touch if they wish to express congratulations and gratitude for the organization of a successful meeting. A relatively reliable implicit indicator of the success of a meeting is the number of participants at the conference itself and in the individual events, participation in the social programme, and the lively involvement of the audience in the discussion.

In general, the annual AIG member meetings are attended on average by one third to half of all association members, i.e. from about 80 to about 100 participants. The scientific meetings that take place every three years can expect a slightly higher number (100-120) of participants.

The social programme is usually attended by all conference participants. Since the association was founded, lunch and dinners have been part of the programme providing important opportunities to socialise. As part of a social programme AIG often offers a cultural programme e.g. readings, concerts and exhibitions in the field of German culture. Although there is no formal evaluation of the social and cultural programme, the Executive Board has sometimes been informed that a programme without shared meals is undesirable in Italy. Dinners and other similar offers seem to AIG members to represent an indispensable opportunity to build and to deepen social and professional relationships in an informal atmosphere.

At our last meeting in Rome (91 participants) no cultural programme was organized due to the tight scheduled programme and lack of time. The outdoor dinner was offered at the invitation of the DAAD. The vast majority of conference participants (about 80 persons) attended. The food was served around 8.30 in the evening and the guests enjoyed lively conversation until well past midnight, which can be interpreted as a positive sign of collegiality and social networking.

Apart from this year's General Assembly meeting there were four panel discussions on the following topics:

- German in Italy: the role of institutions.
- The role of German in European language policy.
- The future of the humanities.
- Germanistik in the universities of the future.

Each discussion was scheduled for 90 minutes with 4-8 participants. The time for discussion in the plenary had to be reduced to about 20 minutes, which in most cases seemed to be too short. After the first panel discussion, there was only one contribution to the public discussion. After the second there were four contributions, five were made after the third, and four after the fourth, four contributions were made. In the last three debates, relatively many remarks were made, which led to a very lively discussion. The time available was always too short, so that the discussion could not fully develop in a satisfactory manner.

## **Conclusion**

The number of discussion contributions is not an absolute criterion to measure the success of a conference. A small number of them are not a distinctive sign of lack of interest regarding the topic for discussion. When a topic is covered fully and in detail, it may well be possible that the audience has no questions. Vice versa, it must be taken into account that burning questions really require time if they are to be debated in plenary in any detail.

## CASE STUDY 12.4

### THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN TEACHERS (IDV)

Whenever an association event is subsidised - as for example the International Conference of German Teachers (IDT) is subsidised by the German Foreign Ministry via the Goethe Institut – then a full official evaluation must take place.

The IDV carries out two evaluations in regular succession:

- 1) evaluations of the IDT (every 4 years)**
- 2) evaluations of the Seminars for Regional Studies in the German Speaking Countries (every 2 years)**

The evaluation of the IDT is usually carried out by the specially commissioned expert committee contracted to manage the conference.

The results are published online in two prominent locations:

- On the website of the conference hosts (eg in 2009 the University of Jena)
- On the homepage of the IDV - see <http://www.idvnetz.org/> (at the very bottom of the page) or [http://www.conventus.de/nmtemp/media/6273/evaluation-kurzbericht\\_idt\\_2009\\_23sep09.pdf](http://www.conventus.de/nmtemp/media/6273/evaluation-kurzbericht_idt_2009_23sep09.pdf)

The evaluation criteria cover the conference venue, the theme of the conference, an overall assessment of particularly successful elements of the conference, and suggestions for improvements. These results are brought together to highlight strengths and areas of potential development, with a final summary at the end:

“The 14<sup>th</sup> International German Teacher Conference held in Jena-Weimar from August 3-8 2009 was from the point of view of its participants a very successful event. Aside from small criticisms that focus on specific aspects, and in spite of (or perhaps because of) the vast numbers of participants, the organisers have managed to host an international gathering of German teachers without any hitches or difficulties. The evaluation has produced a few recommendations for the staging of further events, which are:

(1) To expand the range of training and professional development activities at the conference in view of visitors’ interest in acquiring relevant practical inputs that they can apply to their day-to-day work; (2) to further develop the use of group work as one of the key organisational principles at the conference, and in particular to enhance the practical/didactic elements of the conference as well as to promote targeted networking among certain groups (eg young teachers); (3) to introduce more varied thematic focus points (eg interculturalism, the use of multimedia and internet in the classroom); (4) to further help individuals organise their visit to the conference by

providing clear, timely and easily understandable information on the content of the various conference activities.”

(Conference evaluation of the 14<sup>th</sup> IDT, 2009 Jena-Weimar)

The Regional Studies Seminars are evaluated in writing by the participants responsible for organising the events (see questionnaire below). These evaluations are also uploaded on the IDV website.

“In addition to this an objective report on the seminar is submitted at the next IDV members’ meeting for the benefit of the representatives of the Association who are present. In the case of smaller events we receive comments from participants through the post, along with reports for our online publication *IDV-Magazin*.” (IDV, **Internationaler Deutschlehrerverband**)

Für welches Land gilt die Evaluation?  D  A  CH

DACH-Workshop 2009

**Bitte beantworten Sie uns einige Fragen zum aktuellen Seminarteil.**

1. Haben Sie in diesem Teil des DACH-Workshops Dinge kennengelernt oder Verhaltensweisen erlebt, die Sie als *typisch deutsch, schweizerisch, österreichisch* betrachten? Bitte nennen Sie Beispiele:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. „Reisen bildet!“, heisst es. Inwiefern hat sich **Ihr Bild** von *Land und Leuten* in den letzten Tagen verändert?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Würden Sie uns **Ihr wichtigstes Erlebnis** mitteilen?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Welche 3 Adjektive charakterisieren die **Menschen** hier Ihrer Meinung nach am zutreffendsten?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Welche 3 Adjektive charakterisieren das **Land** für Sie am zutreffendsten?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Sie lernen in jedem Land, das Sie im DACH-Workshop besuchen, **lokale Wörter** kennen. Geben Sie bitte 5 solcher Wörter an:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_  
d. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_ ☺ \_\_\_\_\_

7. Was werden Sie aus diesem Seminarabschnitt vermutlich in den eigenen **Unterricht übernehmen**?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Was sollten **wir** beim nächsten DACH-Seminar **anders machen**?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Bitte geben Sie auf einer Skala von 1 – 5 an, wie **zufrieden** Sie mit dem DACH-Seminar sind (1 = „sehr zufrieden“ ... 5 = „sehr enttäuscht“).

1	2	3	4	5
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*Sie können auch gerne noch auf der Rückseite schreiben: „Vielen Dank!“*

14

The questionnaire on the 2009 Regional Studies Seminar

In contrast to the Icelandic questionnaire only one of the nine questions is quantitative.