

MarBEF Theme 2: Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning

MarBEF Theme 2: Questionnaire results

An evaluation of past workshops and training courses

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SINCE MarBEF BEGAN, Theme 2 has carried out a kick-off workshop in Palma de Mallorca, a workshop on invasive species in Sylt in January 2004, and a workshop in Tavira on ecosystem stability – organised back to back with the General Assembly in Portugal.

To assess how participants appreciated the organisation and scientific content of these events, we sent a questionnaire to 131 participants in total. At first glance, the response rate of 15% looks low, but in fact it proves to be correlated with time after attendance and accumulates to a response of 35% of participants attending the last workshop in Tavira.

Workshop assessment

The workshops were generally rated 'very good,' with an overall satisfaction rating not below 4 (out of 5, see Fig. 1) for Sylt and peaking at 4.4 for Tavira, followed closely by Palma (4.3). The scientific programme scored consistently between 3.9 and 4.1.

Highest marks were given for venue choices and the time provided to interact with other participants. Some of the areas that scored low (for example, one respondent said there was too little time for discussion and that some sessions lacked dynamics) can be resolved simply by allocating more time to the general discussion sessions by future workshop organisers.

Palma and Tavira as venue choices both scored high on the questionnaire, reflecting the general appreciation of participants, who remarked on the Tavira venue more than once as being 'inspiring.'

And even though a remark from the invasive species workshop in Sylt stated that winter might not be the best time to organise a workshop in such a cold place, this workshop still got a solid 4.4 (out of 5) for the chosen venue. This invasive species workshop suffered from its specialisation: while some participants highly valued this trait, others remarked that the workshop targeted topics that were too specific (mainly zoology).

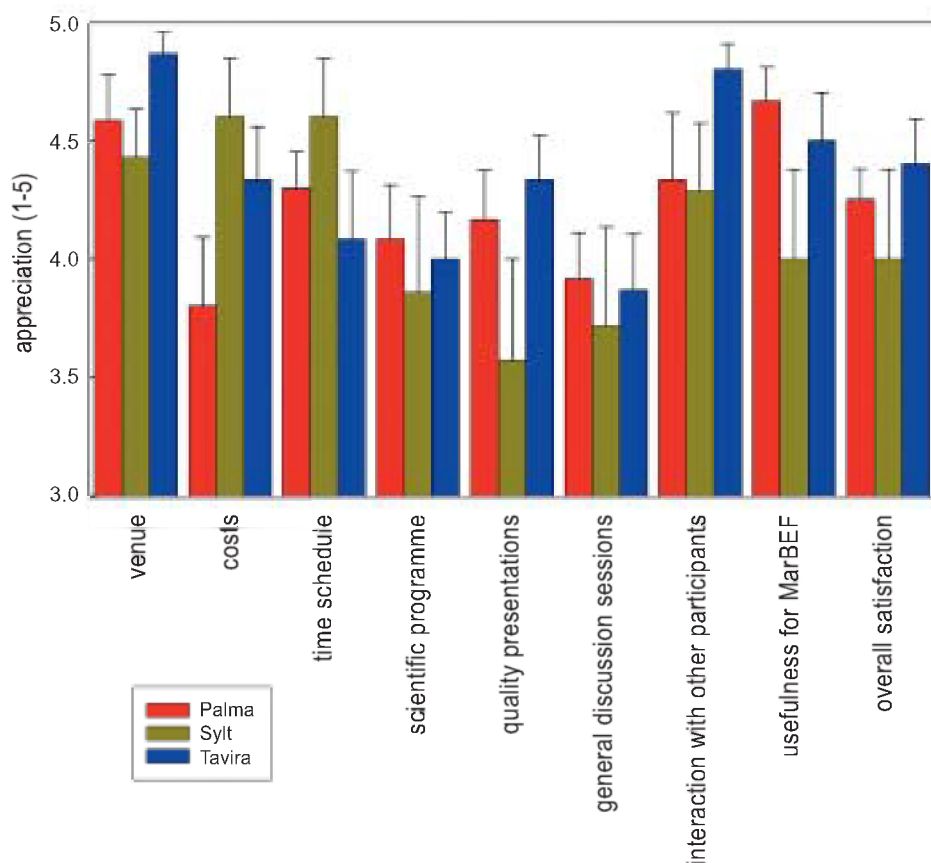


Fig 1. Appreciation of Theme 2 workshop contents (with SE), ranging from 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (very good). Red represents the kick-off workshop in Palma de Mallorca (May 2004), green the workshop on invasive species in Sylt (Jan 2005) and blue the Tavira workshop on ecosystem stability (Mar 2005).

The RMP discussion session that was added to the Tavira workshop was rated by participants as good (3.9), although some participants missed the discussion on 'their' RMP, since not all RMPs were represented equally.

Future expectations

Most respondents seem to have confidence in the Theme 2 leaders to organise suitable workshops and training courses because, although many filled in what they would expect with regard to the organisation of such events, few suggested topics. However, a recurring and valuable remark was the expectation that the workshops that follow will be organised based on ongoing RMP work.

In summary, the outcome of the assessment showed that Theme 2 workshops are highly appreciated by members of the MarBEF community. We will continue to monitor your opinions on our activities and hope many successful RMP-related workshops will follow.

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