



## **3QC Evaluation Report regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quality Conference for Public Administrations in the EU**

### **Short summary**

In total, 3QC welcomed 1305 participants from 32 different countries. At the end of 3QC, 633 participants handed in their evaluation form. The overall impression of 3QC participants regarding the conference is a positive one and is therefore rated as good. The overall impression has an average score of 3.94 (scale of 1 - 5, 1=very bad, 5=very good). An overwhelming 85% of participants stated that they returned home with new ideas for present and future work. In addition, more than four in five people stated that they would keep in contact with other participants of 3QC. In addition to this, 87% percent of participants indicated they would come to 4QC and 94%(!!) indicated they would recommend 4QC to others. Participants were least satisfied with registration and hotel booking. The score for this question is 3.40 in relation to this topic and this question received the highest number of '(very) bad' scores of all of the questions asked.

Each session was evaluated separately during 3QC. Scores on the individual sessions were quite satisfactory and ranged from 2.97 to 4.86. Via the continuous programme (score 3.77) and the social events (welcome reception, score 3.69; and social dinner, score 4.25), 3QC tried to create an atmosphere where participants were free to meet, discuss and network with each other. With more than 100 sessions and over 1300 participants at 3QC, the Quality Conferences can be seen as contributors to a kind of Quality Movement in the EU.



## Introduction

To evaluate whether and how the goals set for the 3rd Quality Conference for Public Administrations (3QC) were met, participants were asked at the end of the conference to fill out the evaluation form. In addition to this general evaluation form, all sessions were evaluated via a quick-scan method of tearing a card, with a score of 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good). In this way the project team has also been able to acquire an insight in the evaluation of all individual workshops, master classes, agorae and plenary sessions.

The primary goal of the conference was to obtain a high overall satisfaction rating from the participants since this is an indicator that the conference was a success for participants.

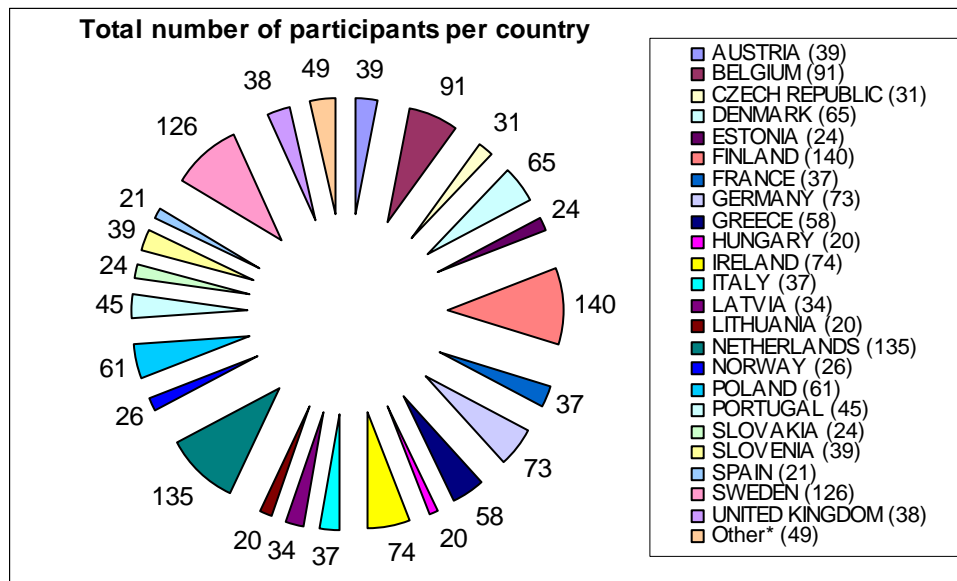
To reach this primary goal, 3QC was built around several topics, each of which was a contributor to the overall goal of the conference:

- Exchange experiences between public administrations in all EU Member states
- Discuss current trends in public sector service delivery
- Disseminate knowledge of best practices and quality management tools
- Establish and consolidate international networks between workers in the public sector
- Organise 3QC activities which stress the importance of passion for working in the public sector and which build on the 1QC and 2QC efforts in building an international Quality Movement in the public sector domain.

Both evaluation methods used for generating feedback will be reflected in this evaluation report. The first part of this report will focus on the overall evaluation, following the outline of the form. Attention will also be devoted to the evaluation of individual sessions (paragraph 8), without pinpointing each individual session since 3QC was not about who was best and who was worst, but about sharing ideas and thoughts.

## 1. Data of participants

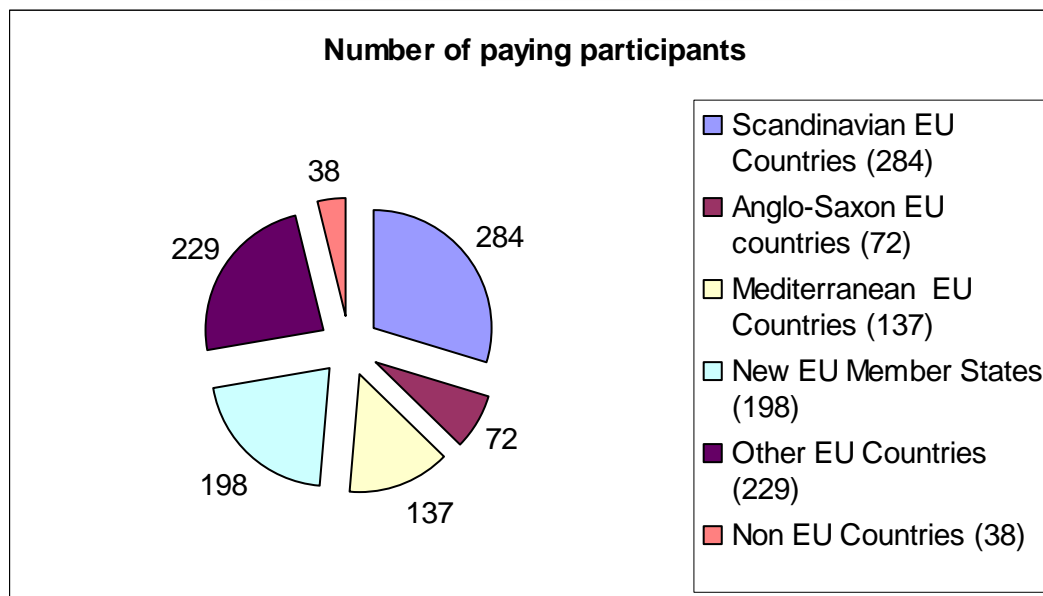
3QC welcomed over **1305** participants from **32** different countries.



\* Other includes: China (1), Cyprus (4), Iceland (6), Luxembourg (13), The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) (1), Malta (2), Romania (8), Switzerland (3), Turkey (2) and USA (9).

All EU Member states were represented in Rotterdam. We consider it a success that all ten new member states and also participants from the candidate countries found their way to 3QC. As it is all about learning from and with one another, quality conferences should not stop at certain borders, but should provide a warm home to all of those interested in improving public service delivery.

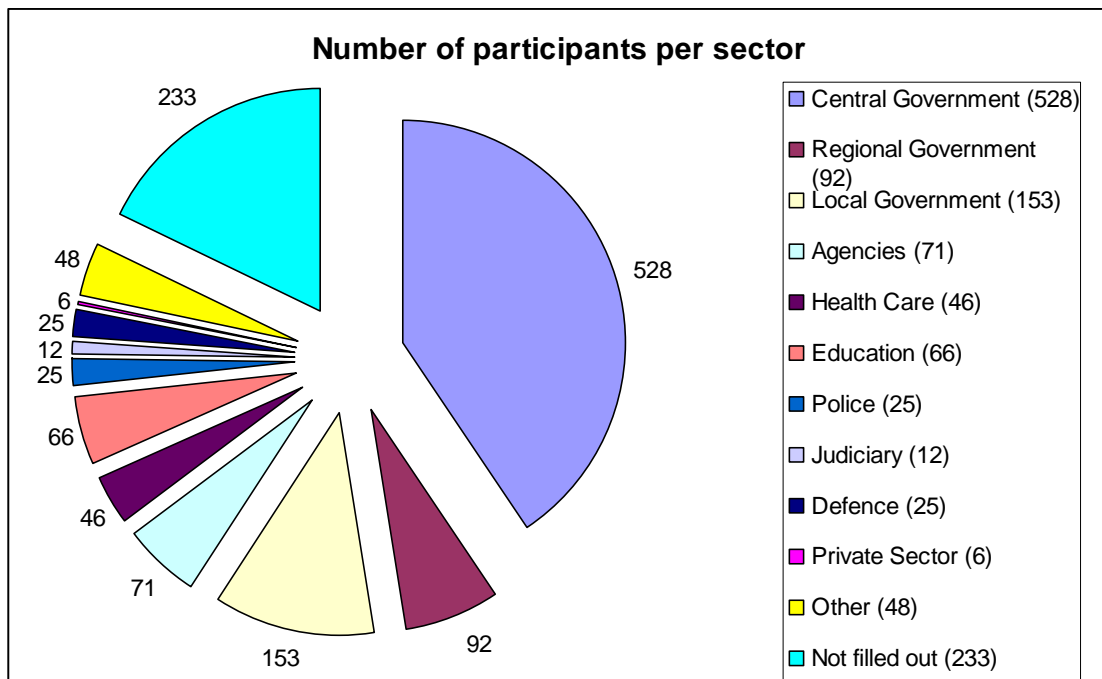
Most participants from the new member states used the special offer arranged for them. This offer consisted of a bus trip to 3QC and back, a bed & breakfast for the three conference days and entry to all 3QC activities. Busses departed from Estonia (picking up participants in Lithuania and Latvia), the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (picking up participants from Hungary and Romania). This special offer was a huge success given that 191 participants made use of it.



Group Name	Countries	Number of paying participants	% of total number of paying participants (958)
Scandinavian EU Countries	Denmark, Finland, Sweden	284	29.7%
Anglo-Saxon EU Countries	Ireland, United Kingdom	72	7.5%
Mediterranean EU Countries	France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain	137	14.3%
New EU Member States	Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia	198	20.7%
Other EU Countries	Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands	229	23.9%
Non-EU Countries	China, Iceland, FYROM, Norway, Romania, Turkey, United States	38	3.9%



During registration, participants were also asked to indicate in which sector they work. As the figure below indicates, **40.5%** of the total number of participants work in central government. The second-largest number of participants came from local government (**11.7%**). Unfortunately, 233 participants (= **17.9%**) did not fill out this part of the evaluation form.



## 2. Number of Evaluation forms

In total, the 3QC Project Team received **633** completed evaluation forms at the end of the conference. This means that almost 50% of participants filled out the form and went home with a copy of the 3QC Documentary DVD "Faces of Quality".



All questions on the overall evaluation form were closed, except for one which was an open question called 'a final cry from the heart'. The 3QC Project Team received **271** cries from the heart, both positive and negative.



### 3. Overall impression

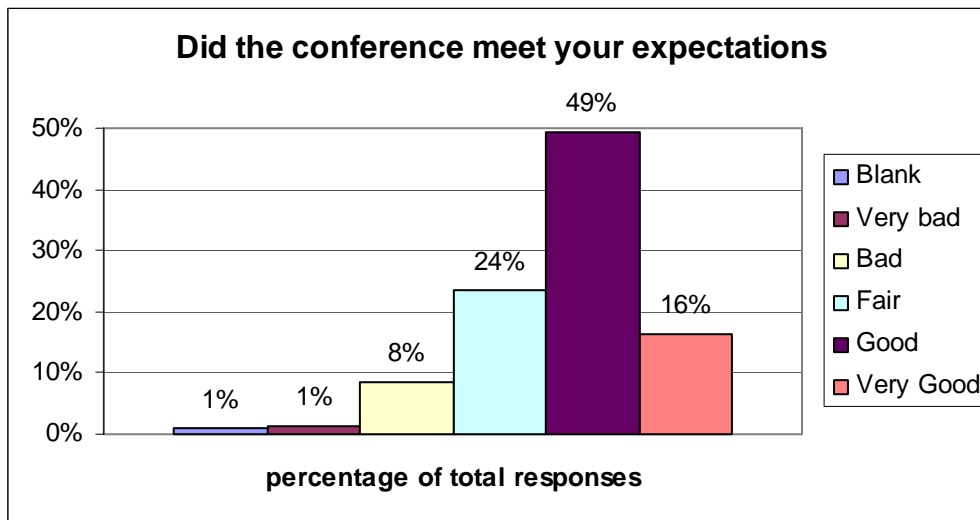
The overall impression of 3QC participants with regard to the conference is rated as good. With an average score of **3.94** (range 1 - 5, 1 very bad, 5 very good), one can say that the participants were satisfied with the conference as it was. Most satisfied with the conference were participants from Cyprus, with an average score of 4.67, while the least satisfied were our Greek participants, with an average score of 3.44.

*Table 1. Average score for general impression 3QC*

Country	Score	Country	Score
Austria	4.11	Lithuania	4.25
Belgium	3.81	Luxembourg	4.10
Cyprus	4.67	Malta	4.00
Czech Republic	4.00	The Netherlands	3.87
Denmark	3.65	Norway	3.74
Estonia	3.80	Poland	4.21
Finland	3.85	Portugal	4.16
France	4.25	Slovakia	4.24
Germany	3.97	Slovenia	3.58
Greece	3.44	Spain	4.00
Hungary	4.50	Sweden	3.69
Ireland	3.52	United Kingdom	4.22
Italy	3.82	Other*	4.71
Latvia	3.82		

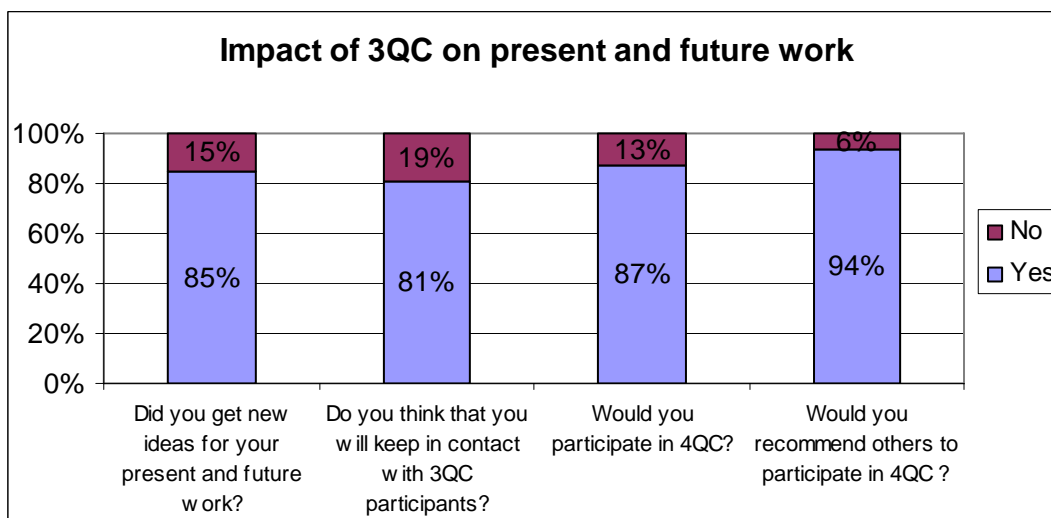
\* Other is: China, Iceland, Romania, Turkey, USA, unknown

The conference met the expectations of most participants who came to Rotterdam. The average score for this question was **3.72**. Of the 633 persons who handed in their evaluation form, 565 (= 89%) indicated the conference did meet their expectations.



**4. Impact on your present and future work**

3QC has been a source of inspiration for most of its participants. An overwhelming **85%** of participants stated that they went home with new ideas for present and future work. In addition, more than four in five persons stated that they would keep in contact with other participants of 3QC. Furthermore, **87%** percent of participants indicated that they would attend 4QC and **94%**(!) indicated that they would recommend 4QC to others. These figures indicate that the Quality Conferences for Public Administrations in the EU can be seen as a contributor to the existence of a European ‘quality movement’, the awareness that the improvement of quality in public service delivery should be a top priority in public administrations.





## 5. Towards a European Quality Movement

As said in the paragraph above, the QC conferences can be seen as a contributor to the establishment of a European Public Sector Quality Movement. The QCs should be used as a platform where participants can share ideas, learn about new ideas, establish contacts and as Christopher Pollitt said at 2QC, feel that they are “among friends”. Only in such an inspirational environment can a true Movement come about and grow. Consequently, special attention was also paid in the preparations to the continuous programme, which ran alongside the ‘normal programme’. This continuous programme was set up as an extra opportunity for participants to establish new contacts and hear about how others deal with quality management issues. But also as a space where participants could reflect on what they had seen so far at 3QC. Next to the Conference Expo stands, where countries could represent themselves, was a bookshop, a vision theatre where participants could view the 3QC Documentary “Faces of Quality”, Internet facilities and last but not least, the Interaction Café. The continuous programme received a positive evaluation, with an average score of **3.77** for the question “Were you satisfied with the continuous programme?”. The daily Conference Paper “QNote” contributed significantly to an inspirational environment and was highly appreciated.

### BOX: The Bookshop at 3QC

For the first time at a QC we introduced a bookshop. Participants could browse through dozens of interesting titles in the field of quality improvement, complemented by several human-interest topics such as architecture and Dutch painters. In total, 183 books were sold during the conference, on the basis of which it can be concluded that the bookshop was a success. Furthermore, by analysing the sales result we can determine that books about leadership and management in the public sector were the most popular.

3QC Best Sellers (number of copies sold)

Robin Gerber, *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way* (47)

Marshall Cook, *How to be a great coach* (10)

Robert Kaplan, *Manager's toolkit* (10)

Christopher Pollitt, *The essential public manager* (10)

## 6. Social events

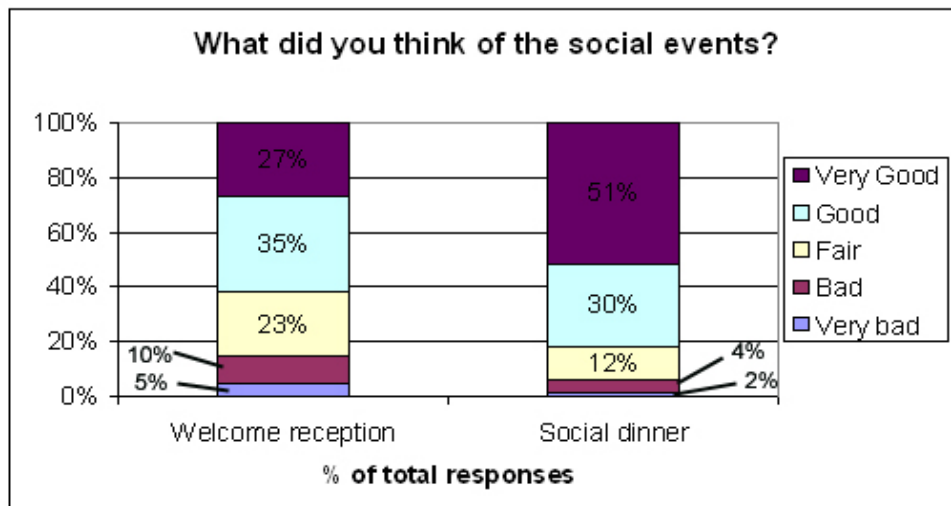
The Quality Conferences are to a certain extent about networking, which of course enhances the chances of the Quality Movement to enlarge itself. Two social events were therefore organised during 3QC, in addition to the continuous programme, to allow participants to meet each other in a different atmosphere outside the conference venue.



On Tuesday evening a welcome reception was organised in Museum Boijmans van Beuningen. The general impression of the welcome reception was good, with an average score of **3.69**.

The social dinner was definitely a hit, with an overall score of **4.25**. Not the absolute highest average score, but this question did get the most '5' (very good) scores of all of the questions asked. In fact, 243 people awarded the social dinner a 'perfect score' of 5.

However, these events are also a matter of taste! Where 70% stated they were (very) satisfied with the social events, 10% of respondents indicated they were (very) dissatisfied with the social events.

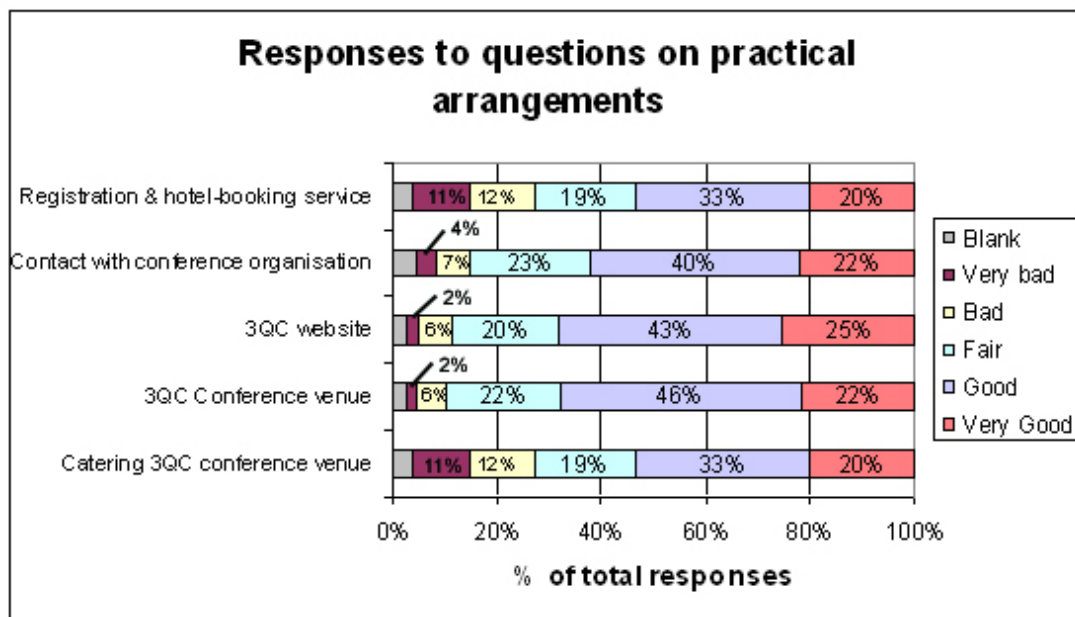


3QC also organised an 'accompanying persons' programme with a day trip to Amsterdam and a day trip in Rotterdam. The day trip to Amsterdam was evaluated with a score of **3.00**, lower than the evaluation score of **4.58** for the day trip to Rotterdam. This difference in scores may be attributed to the fact that the day trip to Amsterdam started later than scheduled due to queues at the registration desk. Owing to the later starting time, the planned schedule for this day trip got mixed up and rearrangements required more time and effort than expected.

## 7. Practical arrangements

No conference is without practical arrangements that have to be taken care of. 3QC participants were therefore asked to state their opinion on some of the practical arrangements they all had to deal with when coming to 3QC. All in all, participants were satisfied with the arrangements that were made and the information they received. The overall score for questions on practical arrangements is **3.72**.

One of the most important arrangements, of course, is registration and hotel booking. Of all practical arrangements that were questioned, participants were least satisfied with this part, awarding a score of **3.40** and the highest number of '(very) bad' scores for all of the questions that were asked. With regard to registration and hotel booking, 23% of respondents were (very) dissatisfied. It is very likely (and this is also supported by 'cries from the heart' we received) that the low average and the highest number of 'very bad' scores for this question can be explained by the waiting times several participants were faced with when registering at the conference venue. Unfortunately, the conference organiser who was hired could not deal with the flow of participants and did not realise in time that many participants would register at the last moment before the start of the conference. This together with other sorts of (registration) problems the conference organiser had to deal with at that moment made the waiting times unacceptably long.



However, the most practical arrangement questions did receive good scores overall. With an average score of **3.74**, 85% of respondents in total were satisfied with their contact with the conference organisation. With regard to the website, the average score for this part of the practical arrangements is higher, namely **3.85**. Although we received some 'cries from the heart' from participants who had difficulty finding their way around the 3QC conference venue "De Doelen", 90% found the conference venue to be satisfactory. The average score for this question was **3.83**. The final question posed on practical arrangements related to the catering services offered at the conference venue. The average score for this question was **3.79**.

## 8. Evaluation of individual 3QC Sessions

The 'exit polls' for all separate sessions of 3QC have provided an opportunity to see how participants viewed all individual sessions, which sessions received the best evaluation and whether an optimal set-up for a session exists.

### Top 3 Best-Evaluated Workshops, Master Classes, Agorae and Plenaries

Code	Title (no. of evaluations received)	Score
<i>Workshops*</i>		
565	Liverpool Council Renaissance (24)	4.71
567	Transforming learning (45)	4.69
553	Reception Desk (20)	4.65
<i>Master Classes</i>		
423	Surprise session: Teaching elephants to dance (87)	4.48
413	Charter Mark: Putting the customer first (28)	4.46
403	CAF Self-assessment and beyond; involving management and people in improvement actions	4.35
<i>Agorae</i>		
303	The public relations department; handling the media (98)	4.27
308	The leadership talk show (87)	4.11
307	How to get rid of internal red tape (70)	4.04
<i>Plenaries</i>		
001	Opening session (337) (with HRH Prince Constantijn, Minister for Governmental Reform and Kingdom Relations Mr. Thomas de Graaf, and Mr. Al Gore)	4.70
003	Miha Pogacnik (145)	4.37
007	Closing session (401) (with the scientific rapporteurs Prof. Dr. Christopher Pollitt, Dr. Elke Loeffler and Prof. Dr. Geert Bouckaert, Director General for Public Service Management Mr Rob Kuipers and Permanent Under-Secretary of State Mr. Juhani Turunen)	4.36

\* Only sessions that received more than 15 evaluation cards were used for this Top 3.



## Top 3 Most-Visited Workshops, Master Classes and Agorae

Code	Title	# participants
<i>Workshops</i>		
518	Improving performance with a Quality Charter	160
136	The bottom-up approach to simplification	136
566	Accelerating excellence	119
<i>Master Classes</i>		
404	CAF and the Balanced Scorecard: Connected and compared	192
420	Resistance to organisational change	176
403	CAF Self-assessment and beyond; involving management and people in improvement actions	168
<i>Agorae</i>		
308	The leadership talk show	423
310	Crisis! Serving organisational change	373
306	Politics and the striving for lesser bureaucracy	317

Some general notions:

- In total, 64 best practice cases presented themselves during 3QC in 3 Workshop rounds, 23 Master classes were held and 10 Agorae focused on debating certain topics.
- Scores

Type of session	Average	Range
Plenaries (7)	3.96	2.97 to 4.70
Workshops (64)	3.90	2.99 to 4.86
Master classes (23)	3.85	3.29 to 4.58
Agorae (10)	3.80	3.23 to 4.27

- Unfortunately, 3 workshops and 1 master class were not evaluated.
- On average, 76 participants were registered for a workshop, 109 participants for a master class and 243 participants for an agora.
- The smallest number of registrants for a session was 18 participants for a workshop ("Toxicological Database of Soil (BDT)"), while the largest number of registrants was 423 participants for an agora ("The leadership talk show").

## 9. Cries from the heart

Some 271 people (21%) expressed a 'final cry from the heart' on the evaluation form. These cries ranged from the on-site handling of registration to catering, and from suggestions and ideas for 4QC to time management. The Conference Newspaper "Q Note" also addressed the importance of the latter subject in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition on Wednesday:



The topic of time management has different angles of perspective. One aspect is sticking to the times mentioned in the programme. Of course participants want sessions to start and end at the times indicated in the programme booklet. Despite all preparations, however, sessions can run late sometimes. Or sessions start late due to the fact that most participants have not found their way to the main hall yet. These are all aspects that one has to deal with. Another aspect of time management involves providing enough time in-between sessions. Several participants indicated that they found the time to move from one room to another in the conference venue or to network with other participants insufficient. The question then emerges for 4QC whether more time should be allocated for sessions or for networking. A third aspect of time management is the duration of sessions. For 3QC, responses varied on whether sessions were either too short or too long. The 'cries from the heart' also emphasise the number of choices participants had to make when selecting their own programme. Some found that there were too many parallel sessions; the programme was 'overfilled'.

The 'cries from the heart' contained only four remarks about the 3QC language regime. This suggests that participants felt comfortable with the language regime that differed from previous QCs. All parallel sessions were held in English only. Only plenary sessions were interpreted from English and French into English, French and German. This language regime stimulated interactivity and discussions, which is a step forward in exchanging ideas and should be taken into account when preparing for 4QC.



## 10. Lessons learned

1. The element of “passion and inspiration” has been an important contribution to the high degree of interactivity at 3QC. This element was also the central pivot around which the documentary “Faces of Quality”, the meetings with the main characters of the documentary, the set-up of the social dinner, the Master class “Teaching elephants to dance”, the continuous programme and the conference news paper QNote were developed. Another important element in realising a high level of interactivity was the language regime used at 3QC.

2. 3QC has produced many interesting sessions. Speakers from the European Union as well as the United States of America attended 3QC and provided participants with interesting and new insights. It appears to be a good idea to keep our minds open and invite people from outside the EU to share their experiences at future QCs.

3. The quality of the workshops (where the best practice cases selected by the Member States were presented) was very diverse. Experience has shown that it takes a lot of time to select the truly *best* practice cases. It is therefore recommended that the selection of best practice cases for 4QC commences in a very early stage of the preparations for 4QC. The advantages are twofold. Firstly, countries have time to select the best practice cases, and secondly, enough time is available for the selected best practice cases to be extensively prepared. In the process for 3QC, several cases were unfortunately announced way after the deadlines.

4. Time management is a complicated phenomenon that conference organisations have to deal with. This certainly holds for 3QC where there were over 100 sessions and a continuous programme running parallel to the sessions. Firstly, it was not so easy to keep all the sessions within the specified time. Secondly, participants tended to arrive at their assigned sessions just in time, preventing sessions from starting on time. Besides this, time management is also about making choices in what to offer to participants. There is so much information you can share with participants, but they also want to network and have some time to ‘digest’ everything they have experienced. The appraisal of what is best for the participant is very difficult in this case.

5. A major challenge lies in the question on how to incorporate – in a functional way – the role of the user of public services (citizens and private sector) into the QCs. During 3QC this was done by selecting topics for several sessions and also by inviting the European Ombudsman Nikiforos Diamandouros. However, much more attention can and should be devoted to this topic.



6. Some 85% of participants stated that they returned home with new ideas for present and future work. It would be good to find out how many of them have really been able to put what they learned at 3QC into practice. And if they did, what was necessary for them to be able to do so? And if they were unable to put ideas into practice, why? This could be the start of 4QC, providing more form and content to the idea of a QC Quality Movement.