

**Results of the Evaluation Questionnaire for the
First ALTER-Net Summer School
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services:
Ecological and Socio-economic Aspects
Peyresq, 27 August – 8 September 2006**

The aim of this questionnaire was to get feedback from the participants of the summer school on the overall structure, the lectures and their topics, as well as the organization, in order to improve these at the next summer school. The questionnaires were already in the folders which the participants received when checking in at the summer school and they were asked to return them on the last day after the wrap up in the plenary. Of the 35 participants 28 (80%) handed them back or sent them afterwards. Not all the questions had been answered every time so that the sum sometimes does not add up to 28. Some rated in between the given ranks in which case .5 was accorded to the two neighbouring ranks.

Expectations

The expectations were very dispersed and ranged from no expectations to precise wishes for getting new perspectives for PhD studies. Nevertheless, in most cases the summer school either met (14) or almost met (10) expectations, with only one participant recording satisfactory and one good to satisfactory.

Background material on the website <http://www.pik-potsdam.de/alter-net/>

The rating of the website was quite good: 12 rated the site as excellent and 15 as good while 1 ranked it satisfactory. One participant complained that it was sometimes difficult to log in and one wished the downloading would be easier, but this could have been due to the password requirement. The site will be opened after the summer school and as PIK is now changing to a portal the logging in might be different in future. One wished for more photos of Peyresq and this will be done after the summer school. A translation into other languages - as one participant suggested as a possible improvement - is simply not possible and English will still be the only language for the site in future as well. One suggestion will be taken up in future: to create an alumni space in order to help former participants to stay in touch with each other and thus help in networking. This is one of the major changes on the website which is already planned.

In the rating the background material was: 6 excellent, 14 good, 4 satisfactory and 2 fair. The speakers were asked before the summer school to provide background material for their talks to be put on a password-restricted part of the summer school website. Of course the provision of the material depended on the timely delivery by the speakers and the late provision was a major point for complaints by the students and probably resulted in the not too good ratings. Some complained that on some presentations there was too much material offered which made the selection of what to actually read difficult. A rating by the speaker like "essential" "if sufficient time" or the like would then be preferred by the students. Additionally it was suggested that more links could be provided to projects mentioned by the speakers. (I checked the sites and did this where possible, Sabine). The question whether they actually read any papers before the summer school was answered by 20 participants with "yes" and 6 with "no". Here the same complaint was mentioned as before, e.g. some papers were put on the website too late to have time to read everything or most of it. But the possibility to read it after the summer school was praised.

The provision of background material for the working groups on CD was considered adequate: 2 excellent ratings were given, 11 good, 8 satisfactory, 1 satisfactory-fair and 2 fair. One participant complained that there was too much material on the CDs and as a structure or legend was missing it was hard to find. Two wished for more background information on the study area itself and one even suggested providing the themes of the working groups in advance of the summer school so the participants could bring their own material. 8 participants expressively did not wish for another kind of distribution than CDs but one especially mentioned how valuable the books were we provided on the table in the plenary of Leonardo da Vinci.

There was almost unanimous approval of the pdf copies of presentations and background information on CD after the summer school: 25 considered this excellent, 2 good and 1 satisfactory. Although one would have preferred this directly after the summer school (which is simply not possible) and one mentioned that one could not rate it because one has not yet seen the CD.

A wide range of opinions prevailed in respect of the usefulness of having to submit a report on one of the presentations. 11 approved this as excellent, 7 as good but 5 rated it as satisfactory, 4 as fair but 1 as poor. It was considered as additional work when they were busy in the working groups. One considered this a good idea in case the discussions had been summarized well as these were mostly very interesting.

The last question of this section, i.e. whether one would like to see the final report of the working groups on the CD was answered with yes by 22 and 4 quite approved this as well.

Structure and organisation of the summer school

The structure of the working day was considered by 4 participants as excellent, 14 as good, 7.5 considered it as satisfactory while 2.5 rated it as fair. In general the days were considered too packed, and some would have liked more free time. One participant would have preferred more time in a row for the working groups and less aperitif talks. Especially the aperitif talks were often considered to have been too heavy and too close to dinner time.

The general quality of the lectures was rated by 11 as excellent and by 16 as good. Someone wanted to extend the question to whom to invite again next year and whom not to invite so the Conveners would get a clearer picture for future summer schools. One had expected more general lectures, one missed more practical examples given in the lectures.

The opportunity for discussing the lectures was considered mostly as excellent (19) while 7 considered this as good and 1 as satisfactory and 1 satisfactory to fair. One participant complained that the presentations should be stopped at one hour (or 40 minutes for aperitif talks) in order to leave sufficient time for long discussions after every talk. One mentioned it was superb not be restricted to the “3 minutes discussion” usually foreseen at conferences. One complained that only the students should take part in the discussion and not other speakers who were present. Maybe a better structured discussion would be preferable, was another suggestion. But it was highly approved that most lecturers stayed longer and thus opened many possibilities for later informal discussions at lunch or coffee breaks. In this respect a “presenter dinner table” was suggested for those still having many questions which they would like to discuss at dinner.

The group work of developing an assessment was rated by 8 as excellent, 15 as good and 3.5 as satisfactory and 1.5 as fair. One participant thought that this was a good idea in principle but in reality not possible as time was not sufficient. The insufficient time was mentioned by 5 participants explicitly but one participant admitted having been very sceptical about group work in the beginning but in the end became convinced that it was useful. Especially the start was considered too time consuming, this should be better prepared and more general information provided. CIPRA should be better described and area and time scales agreed on right in the beginning (or even beforehand).

Surprisingly the own group's work was rated better than the general group work: 11 considered this as excellent, 14 as good and 3 as satisfactory. 3 participants expressly mentioned the fact that the work was first chaotic and later very effective. One put on record that “we worked hard but I

wouldn't call this science" while one questioned whether this was "reality" for research projects and hoped not.

There were many answers to the question "What did you learn from your case study?": besides simply "a lot", many (11) mentioned explicitly that they now know how to do a vulnerability assessment or what adaptive capacity means. Working with scenarios was another response. The importance of integration of socio-economic aspects into nature conservation issues had been underestimated by some and they valued having learned this at the summer school. One mentioned that the case study alarmed him/her because slight changes in parameterization had sometimes huge effects in models and one should always be aware of this and therefore be more critical towards assessments. Team work itself was sometimes a new experience and getting feedback on how oneself acts in a group.

The contribution of the tutors was usually rated highly: 19 excellent, 7 good and 2 satisfactory. In general it was welcomed that the tutors assisted when required but did not interfere or take the lead. Thus the team itself had to find solutions by receiving good advice without getting answers. One mentioned that the tutor was well-willing but too chaotic.

In regard to the alternative between more presentations or more breakout time the great majority (21) voted for more breakout time while "it's fine as it is" was given as an answer by only 3 participants. What worked best was considered quite broadly: from the free day (2) to the working groups (2) to the excursion (2) or the morning lectures and some presentations were explicitly mentioned. Here one participant voiced the wish to have a presentation on how get access to financial resources for researchers.

The opposite question, i.e. what worked most poorly had a broad spectrum as well: from "I could not say any", to working groups (2), to the fact that the aperitif talks should be more "fun" after a hard working day (4). One mentioned even the folk dance group (which badly disappointed me, Sabine). One mentioned the socio-economic talks in general. Although not asked for here, the presentations running into the coffee break was apparently considered as a major fault by one participant.

The excursion was enjoyed by most (14) or found good (9.5) while few rated it only as satisfactory (3.5). Mostly (7) the long driving time was experienced as a real drawback of the trip but for some (6) the whole schedule was too packed or some would have preferred a longer hike (2) and less stops at the Canyon (1). Therefore some mentioned that they would have preferred a hike into the near surroundings of Peyresq. But some realized themselves the difficulty in providing an attractive excursion with a marvellous scenery and long times sitting in the bus. For one was the excursion not relaxing but too much but one learned a lot, and it was even noticed positively that the timing in the programme was organized so as to provide stakeholders' views in time for the case study of the working group.

The day off was much better appreciated and enjoyed: 26 rated the day as excellent and "only" 2 as good. Surprisingly the question whether the day off was needed was answered by 23 with yes, it was definitely needed, for 2 it was quite needed while for 2 it was not that important. The suggestion was made to have 2 free days or 2 free half days in order relax a bit more. The free day was needed furthermore for discovering the surroundings of Peyresq, i.e. those parts that all the other days could only be enjoyed with a nice view from the terrace. Even the excursion should be more in the nature of the free day, one participant suggested.

How well were the following topics covered by the summer school?

For the two first topics, biodiversity in Europe and monitoring and assessment, the small scale should be covered in more detail one participant noted. Another comment was that monitoring was not well covered but this was due to the cancellation of one speaker who was expected to give a presentation just on monitoring. The last remark in this respect was the issue that animals were not covered in almost all the presentations.

Do you think more / less emphasis should be put on the following topics at future summer schools:

Here the same wish was expressed to cover the small scale more closely for biodiversity and monitoring respectively. Concerning the third topic, i.e. modeling, less emphasis should be put on climate issues.

Excursion

The excursion was mostly considered as helpful in giving excellent (8) or good (13.5) examples for the lectures while 2.5 considered this as satisfactory and 3 as fair. Expressly mentioned was the regret that the visit to the local farmer had to be cancelled at the last moment and therefore this local stakeholder was lacking. The similar question in respect to the working groups e.g. whether the excursion provided useful insights was answered with excellent by 9, good by 10, satisfactory by 5, fair by 2 but by 1 with poor. Here the same regret was voiced that the local farmer's view was missing. In general some did not miss anything (4), some missed a hike (2) or simply more time outside the bus (8), or more contact with local stakeholders (2). 4 participants would not change anything and the near impossibility of combining an attractive destination with a short bus ride was realised by some while 3 participants expressly considered the drive worthwhile because of seeing the Gorge. But here again the local area around Peyresq was mentioned as a potential proper target for an excursion.

Organisation

Most were content with the organisation or even considered it as perfect. One asked whether it would not work better if the lectures were concentrated in the first week and then the second week was dedicated completely for working groups. The aperitif talks should be lighter and the schedule of the lectures more strictly observed was another (repeated) suggestion. For the working groups it was considered better to have the aims more clearly defined from the beginning in order to save time. The tutors should develop their stakeholder roles better from the start and the data provision should be improved as well.

The proposals which were given for a better effectiveness included "nil" (3) and also less lectures and more free time (2). Other ideas concentrated on the better integration of local stakeholders (3) and a very apt recommendation was to ask the local shepherd - who was visiting Peyresq a couple of times during the summer school - to stay a bit longer and discuss some local issues with working groups. It was appreciated that many speakers stayed a couple of days and thus gave the students the opportunity for informal discussions at coffee breaks or dinner time.

Most participants learned about the summer school from their respective supervisors, at their institute or through information networks. Especially the advice to inform relevant institutes or information networks will be acted on in future to advertise the summer school more widely.

Career development: How relevant do you think the course was in relation to possible careers in:

Most considered the summer school as highly relevant for future careers in many fields of possible employment which was especially acknowledged for interdisciplinary research.

Do you think the course will help your future career development? Yes / No

The majority (19) has answered with yes while 2 answered in the negative and 2 considered this as hard to predict. A representative answer was "for my PhD this won't help... However, it was very interesting to see in which 'directions' one could work after the PhD!" Nonetheless 2 got already new ideas for their current projects. Generally it was approved to have learned more about biodiversity-related issues of which they were not well informed or aware before the summer school. And the importance of networking for the future was emphasized by many.

Accommodation

The accommodation was mostly rated as excellent (15) and good (9) although some difficulties arose apparently which resulted in 3 satisfactory votes and 1 fair. The fact that not all rooms had a heater was not a great problem this year as the weather was good, although in the beginning it was rather cold but became warmer from day to day.

The cuisine was rather problematic this year as the cook did not like his job as he told us himself from the start. Especially for the vegetarians this was a hassle as he argued that the kitchen would be too small to cook two different courses at once, but even the possibility to cook more vegetables was not realized by him. The rating was accordingly: 10 considered the meals as excellent, 8.5 as good while 6.5 as satisfactory and 3 only as fair. (The same classification was visible in respect to the question about the staff below.)

The travel to Peyresq was mostly rated as excellent (13) or good (12) while only two participants classified it as satisfactory and fair respectively. Although not considered easy, some (3) voiced the opinion that it was really worth it. And one participant voiced the same opinion as the organizers have, e.g. “the remoteness of the village is an essential feature and needed for group development”. The staff was mostly rated as excellent (17) or good (8) and only by 3 as satisfactory while the cook was expressively taken out from this good rating and once additionally rated as “poor”. One participant even suggested that the students should help the girls more.

Overall rating

The overall rating was simply perfect for the summer school: 19 voted for excellent and 8 for good. Of course not all the themes of lectures were approved by all but in this respect the summer school has to continue the ALTER-Net goals, e.g. be interdisciplinary and include not only “pure” biodiversity but consider all biodiversity-relevant issues like anthropogenic influences as well.

Any additional comments?

Besides the repetition of some desires voiced earlier like more free time or a better internet connection the wish was expressed to initiate follow-up activities and some monitoring of the impacts of the summer school on the research of the participants.

Evaluation

Please answer the following questions by circling the numbers given for each of them. We also appreciate any additional comments you make, either directly in relation to each question or on the back of the last page.

Excellent/Easy/Yes - Poor/Difficult/No

Expectations

Did the summer school meet your expectations? 1 2 3 4 5
14 10.5 1.5

What did you expect from the summer school: **all; not much; new insights, talking with others; networking; more practical less theory; open discussions; learn for my PhD; too much natural science; expected more practical biodiversity research; too much socio-economics;**

Background material on the website <http://www.pik-potsdam.de/alter-net/>

How would you rate the ALTER-Net summer school website ? 1 2 3 4 5
12 15 1

What could be improved at the ALTER-Net summer school website? **it is good as it is; difficult to login at times; additional pictures of Peyresq; an alumni-site to help to stay in touch; force presenters to submit background material earlier!**

How would you rate the background material on the website? 1 2 3 4 5
6 14 4 2

What other background material would have helped? **More material for the working groups; information on the Alps; case study material; more links to mentioned projects;**
 Explanation or additional comments: **too much, pre-selection important; a few key papers would be better;**

Did you read anything from the background material of the internal website in advance? yes / no
20 6

Which material? **Working group papers; most of it; printed a lot but had no time to read all; abstracts of most papers;**
 Explanation or additional comments: **now I know what I will read after the summer school!**

Was the provision of background material on CD-ROM 1 2 3 4 5
 for the working groups adequate? 2 11 8.5 2.5

Would you have preferred a different type of distribution? **No: 8**
 Explanation or additional comments: **more detailed data would have been helpful (no library and internet too slow); papers hard to read on PC; more background information on the study area; one should know in advance and bring own material; on some CDs too much so it took too long to find the relevant information; books and papers provided in da Vinci very helpful;**

Are you satisfied with receiving pdf copies of the presentations 1 2 3 4 5
 and additional background information after the summer course? 25 2 1

Explanation or additional comments: **Would have preferred a pdf directly after the summer school; thank you for that; good service!**

Do you find it useful that participants were asked to prepare 1 2 3 4 5
 a report of each lecture and the discussions? 11 7 5 4 1

Explanation or additional comments: **additional work for the students but very helpful later; probably not needed; depends on their quality – haven't seen them yet; some presentations had already an abstract so this was redundant; especially the summary of the discussions as they were very interesting and informative;**

Would you like to see the final report, including each group's sectoral assessment and the synthesis to be distributed on the final CD-ROM?	1	2	3	4	5
	22	4			

Structure and organisation of the summer school

How do you rate the structure of the working days?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	4	14	7.5	2.5	

More free time preferred; exhausting – shorten aperitif talks; please no work after dinner;

How do you rate the general quality of the lectures?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	11	16			

Too many slides; expected more general lectures; too global, too climatic; more examples would have been helpful; aperitif talks too heavy sometimes; would have been better to ask the students to rate the speakers so the organizers would have a help in the decision whom to invite and whom not to invite again;

How do you rate the opportunity for discussing the lectures?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	19	7	1.5	0.5	

The session chair should keep the time so after 60 (aperitif talk 40) minutes the presentation should be stopped; more structured discussion; some speakers left too early; nice, when speakers staid several days;

How do you rate the group work of developing a sectoral assessment (or a synthesis of all sectors)?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	8	15	3.5	1.5	

in principle a good idea but in reality not possible – more time needed (5); in the beginning more info should have been provided; a CIPRA brief in the beginning missed; area and scale maybe agreed earlier/before (2); difficult to start when nobody knew scenarios very well; too little science; would be more efficient if more relevant material is provided; have always been sceptical about group work now I saw that it is useful;

How do you rate your own group's work?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	11	14	3		

First chaotic later effective (3); worked hard but wouldn't call this science; fun!

What did you learn from your case study?

How to do a vulnerability assessment (11); to be critical towards such assessments; what adaptive capacity is; how important socio-economic aspects is in nature conservation (2); how I act within a group;

How do you rate the contribution of your tutor?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	19	7	2		

Freedom given but help in critical moments; too chaotic although well-willing; not leading but supporting; assisted when required but did not interfere; good advices without giving answers;

Would you have preferred more presentations or more breakout activity time?

More breakout time: 21; no: 3;

What activities/presentations worked best in the summer school?

Free day (2); group work (2); excursion (2); some morning lectures; presentations that enlarge our views e.g. policy-science interface; speakers ran into the coffee break;

What activities/presentations worked most poorly?

Socio-economics; none; I couldn't say any; aperitif talks should be shorter and more punchy (2);

Did you enjoy the excursion on Friday 1 September?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	14	9.5	3.5		
	Too packed (6); too long drive (7); gave good examples; missed hike (2); learned a lot; timing good for working groups – stakeholder's view; would have preferred an excursion near Peyresq;				
Did you enjoy the day-off on Tuesday 5 September?	1	2	3	4	5
	26	2			
Was the day-off needed to obtain, for example, some rest?	1	2	3	4	5
Explanation or additional comments:	23	2	2		
	Absolutely necessary; did some hiking; got to know the surroundings; nobody can work properly for 13 days straight; nice to hike which on all the other days would be enjoyed by viewing only; the lack of rest did not make me feel interest in some lectures; more free time; maybe two free days or two half days;				

How well were the following topics covered by the summer school?

	Very well - Very poorly				
	1	2	3	4	5
Biodiversity in Europe - state of the art_____	9	10	8	1	
Monitoring and assessment_____	8	9	5	4	
Modelling and scale issues_____	10	13	4	1	
Critical ecosystem properties to sustain ecosystem services_____	6	12	6	1	
Socio-economic aspects of ecosystem services_____	8	9	9		
Indicators of ecosystem services_____	9	14	4		
Linking biodiversity research with policy and the public_____	11	9.5	5.5	1	

Do you think more / less emphasis should be put on the following topics at future summer schools:

	More emphasis - same - less emphasis		
	1	2	3
Biodiversity in Europe - state of the art_____	12	9	4
Monitoring and assessment_____	6	17	2
Modelling and scale issues_____	7	15	3
Critical ecosystem properties to sustain ecosystem services_____	8	16	1
Socio-economic aspects of ecosystem services_____	8	14	4
Indicators of ecosystem services_____	6	17	2
Linking biodiversity research with policy and the public_____	9.5	13.5	3

Excursion

Did the excursion provide good examples for the lectures? 1 2 3 4 5
8 13.5 2.5 3

Explanation or additional comments: **farmers' view was missing**

Did the excursion provide useful insights for the working groups and your sectoral assessment? 1 2 3 4 5
9 10 5 2 1

Explanation or additional comments: **the visit to the farmer which was cancelled was missing (5);**

What did you miss? **Nil (4); farmers view (5); more time outside the bus (8); talk with a policy maker (2); hiking (2);**

What would you like to have changed? **Nil (4); skip one programme point? Less social more technical; shorten village presentation;**

Organisation

What suggestions do you have for the organizers for how they could be more effective?

Nil (2); very effective (7); perfect (2); separate lectures from working groups; aperitif talks should be "lighter"; working group aims better defined; less overlapping (climate change or land-use change); maybe 1 week course 1 week working groups better;

What other ideas do you have for how the summer school could have been more effective?

Nil (3); less lectures more free time (2); less heavy aperitif talks; strict schedule of lectures; guided walk in the surroundings; local biodiversity tour; more free time; more real stakeholders integration (3); ask shepherd as a local stakeholder to come to the working groups; nice for discussions that speakers stayed longer;

How and when did you learn about the summer school? Any suggestion how to improve the advertisement?

From my supervisor (5); from an ALTER-Net partner institute (3); on the internet (2); from a former participant/colleague/project partner; UFZ (2); e-mail message (3); distribution networks; START; For better advertising: inform relevant universities; contact professors working in this field; distribution networks; provide more posters at institutes;

Career development: How relevant do you think the course was in relation to possible careers in:

	High relevance - Low relevance		
Inter-disciplinary research _____	26		
Biodiversity / ecosystem management _____	13	1	10
Biodiversity / science communications _____	20		4
Biodiversity policy _____	16	5	4
Biodiversity NGOs _____	6	3	14
Local or regional government _____	7	3	14
Consultancy work (e.g. impact assessments) _____	19	2	3
Other (please specify) conventional economics _____	1		

Do you think the course will help your future career development? Yes/No

19 2

hard to predict (2):

Please explain your answer: **we learned what others are doing; I am more sensitive to other biodiversity-related issues; future collaboration is very likely; got new insights of state-of-the-art biodiversity research; very good help to know in which area I want to work; scale was too global;**

Accommodation

How would you rate the accommodation of Peyresq?

1	2	3	4	5
15	9	3	1	

Explanation or additional comments: **could not sleep; difficult to share with 6 people for 2 weeks; internet availability for looking-up data not sufficient; “toilet paper crisis”; no heater;**

How would you rate the cuisine at Peyresq?

1	2	3	4	5
10	8.5	6.5	3	

Explanation **breakfast and lunch fine, dinner too meat-oriented even for non-vegetarians (5); vegetarians suffered ! (3); lunch was best (3);**

How would you rate travelling to Peyresq?

1	2	3	4	5
13	12	1	1	

Explanation or additional comments: **no problem; good organised – good info (3); I like the train de Pigne; not the easiest but worth it (3);**

How would you rate the staff at Peyresq?

1	2	3	4	5
17	8	3		1

Explanation or additional comments: **the girls “1” the cook “5”; except the “chef” (5);**

Overall rating

What is your overall rating of the summer school?

1	2	3	4	5
19	8			

Explanation or additional comments:

Would have been a “1” with less socio-economics; more practical ecology/biodiversity; sometimes I was too tired to enjoy the lectures; the school has done a lot to clarify the rest of my PhD studies: thank you; invite students from developing countries;

Any open questions?

Thank you (6)

Any additional comments?

Too much was expected in too little time in respect to the working groups; shorten the questionnaire; beautiful location, great people; plenary too small; lectures should not be too detailed; enthused presentations worked best; missed a mid-term evaluation whether the summer school was up to the expectations of participants (more free time needed!); more controversy of speakers which would start better discussions;

If you like to sign this form it is fine but if you prefer to give it back anonymously this is fine with us as well. Please give this form to anyone of the organisers before leaving Peyresq. Thank you!