

EVALUATION REPORT

Cordoba Forum, 15-17 May 2019

At the close of the Cordoba Forum, an Evaluation Questionnaire was circulated to obtain direct feedback from the participants on the event's content, implementation, and efficacy, as well as their personal overall satisfaction at having attended.

Out of the circa 100 participants who took part in the event's sessions and activities on 15-17 May 2019, 40 evaluation forms were filled out and submitted (amounting to a 40% response rate). On the basis of the responses, the following analysis has been developed.

Overall, the participants evaluated the event positively, with 86% rating it as either "good" or "excellent", which is a highly encouraging result for the organizers. The choice of venue received a particularly high rating, with 82.5% deeming it to be "excellent", the remaining – "good". Moreover, for all other aspects of the event, the spread of answers also indicated a positive evaluation: the majority of ratings were either "excellent" or "good" in each case. Comments such as *"More forums like this"* and *"I'm really grateful for the encounter with people in the Forum and the opportunity to learn what other organizations/individuals are doing"* should be encouraging and show that many of the Forum's aims were met in the eyes of the participants (75% of respondents felt the Forum had achieved its stated aims to a 'good' or 'great' extent).

Given this result, organizers may nonetheless wish to give attention to items on which there were more differences of opinion in order to optimize the event next time. For example, 33% of the submissions rated the interpretation "average" or "below average" suggesting this might be a resource which could be improved upon, whilst others singled out the facilitation which they felt could have been more "openminded" and "not hierarchical" and was at times misused to air the moderator's own views. Nonetheless, 65% said facilitation was 'good' or 'excellent', indicating that the performance was varied and still generally of a good quality.

Looking at the different results and comments delivered during the evaluation process, the following aspects of the Forum have been analysed in more detail:

Location:

The location of the Forum was the feature of the event which received the highest approval in the evaluations (95% thought it was either good or excellent). It is not completely clear whether this result should be attributed to the hall or to the city, but feedback from participants indicates that they enjoyed being in Cordoba, which is significant as it is relatively difficult to reach the city in the absence of an airport. The location may therefore be an aspect of this event which future organizers seek to preserve. Comments on logistical issues included calls for more seated meals, as most of the receptions were standing only, requests for alternatives or more recycling for the plastic bottles offered, and the plea for the break-out groups' sizes to be managed more carefully as the English group became too large for a good discussion.

Participants were *not* questioned about the date of the Forum, which the organizers have independently determined to review, as the fact that the dates coincided with Ramadan, Spanish elections and a local festival put pressure on different aspects of the event organization.

Youth Seminar and the Intergenerational Aspect:

There was a strong positive response to the youths' presence during the Forum. Ninety-five percent of respondents to the evaluation agreed or strongly agreed that *"the presence of youth participants and the inter-generational aspect contributed positively to the event"*. In the comments, some people called for even more youth involvement, particularly of young people from Cordoba (*"I want to see more local youths as well. [Please] include more youths!"*) and for young people to have more active roles, e.g., as facilitators.

From the perspective of the youth participants, the Youth Seminar was positively reviewed in a separate evaluation (in which 86%-96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that each aspect, from the venue to the quality of learning, had been satisfactory). However, some youth participants at the Cordoba Forum felt that they were not equally included or that facilitators did not know how to engage them. Two quotes from evaluation forms:

Perhaps there was a disconnect between the youth seminar and the forum. The youth had great momentum during their time together [at the Youth Seminar] and then some of them felt a little lost during the forum itself.

In next forum, if there will be better "dialogue" facilitated between "different generations" [it] will be fantastic. Will need to conduct "dialogue" training for older generation too, before coming together for "intergenerational dialogue".

To ensure that the involvement and encounter with youth is positive for all sides, it may be useful to establish close contact between the organizers and facilitators of the Seminar and Forum, and to ensure that Forum facilitators are either professionals, or are trained on how to adapt an event to be more intergenerationally inclusive. If resources permit it, the Forum could moreover consider holding a preparatory event for the adult participants running concurrently with the Youth Seminar, training them on intergenerational communication skills and the benefits of incorporating young people's perspectives.

Diversity, Languages and Funding:

Seventy-eight percent of respondents found the diversity of the Forum either excellent or good. However, diversity was also the subject of at least six comments from people who would have liked to have seen it widened, either to include more youth, more of the local public, more religious representatives or greater geographic diversity.

"I would suggest to invite also more participants from Asia, US and South America to speak at the general sessions. [] I really appreciated the inclusion of participants, youth and speakers into the discussions during the forum. The direct and open involvement of everyone was really special and unique for such a kind of event.

The diversity of the participants at the Cordoba Forum reflected the networks of the organizers and the history of the region's history of Euro-Mediterranean Abrahamic conflict and coexistence. Some 82% of participants came from the Middle East and Europe. As a result, the interpretation offered was in English, Spanish and French (the Organizing and Fundraising Committee had agreed that Arabic would be unnecessary). If the Cordoba Forum aims to be an event focusing on convivence and diversity in the Euro-Mediterranean area, then it may wish to tailor the themes, criteria and invitation lists of both the Forum and Seminar to explicitly reflect that regional focus. However, if the Forum wishes to become a globally relevant event, then it may benefit from diversifying participation and themes and facilitating international access. The choice might depend on the resources available: the global option would be likely to require an increase of funding to cover costs such interpretation into more languages and support for travel expenses of those joining the event from further afield.

Visibility and Technology

No questions on the evaluation form addressed visibility or prior knowledge of the Forum, but the subject was raised a number of times among the recommendations given concerning how the Cordoba Forum could become more effective. Suggestions were made to invite “*more journalists, [and] press representatives to achieve a bigger impact*”, to “*us[e] the networks of the organizations that attend the forum or are linked to it [to] generate impact on the audience*” and “*Live streaming on internet (low cost/no cost: Facebook, YouTube etc.)*”. One participant offered to help write the Forum’s communications strategy and another wished for a platform on which participants could keep in touch. Such low-cost technological approaches might easily enrich a future event and make it more relevant to a young audience.

In terms of media coverage, the media consultant for the Forum worked with a number of partners including the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) to produce and disseminate articles and photography and source participants for interviews. KAICIID additionally produced and shared a video celebrating convivence on May 16th which was viewed over a thousand times during the week of the event. The result was quite extensive media coverage (over 60 articles and an interview in the prominent Spanish premier radio network SER) and lively interactions under the hashtag #forodecordoba encouraged by youth participants.

Themes and Outputs

Seventy-five percent of participants at the Cordoba Forum believed that the Forum had achieved its stated aims and 85% felt that they would take away something useful (e.g. contacts, ideas, partnerships). This result shows that the Forum, which explicitly did not aim to produce resolutions or recommendations, was considered successful and applicable to participants’ professional spheres (85% of respondents confirmed it was relevant to their work). However, some participants requested that pressing themes such as climate change should be addressed more precisely, for example in the context of themed break-out groups, and several others looked for concrete outcomes, suggesting commitments by participants or the opportunity for young and more experienced actors to form partnerships.

A Second Cordoba Forum

Regarding a potential Second Cordoba Forum, 95% of responses were positive, whilst 80% said they would be likely to attend another event, which is an encouraging sign for the

organizers. The participants were divided on the desired frequency of the event; whereas a slight majority expressed their preference for an annual gathering (45% of answers), the bi-annual option and not-regular options also received support (35% and 16% respectively-though we note some respondents marked multiple options).

Despite this enthusiasm, the evaluations showed a more moderate response when asked about their interest in supporting future Forums. None of the respondents' indicated that their organization would be interested in funding a future event, though seven said they would support the cost of their own participation, three offered in-kind support such as assistance with communications and 13 would be keen to join an organizing committee. With the majority (17 respondents) indicating they 'don't know' what sort of support they or their organizations might be able to provide, there is still clearly room for exploration to gain support for the endeavour which many apparently enjoyed and found successful.