

Report of the 7th CPLOL Congress in Ljubljana May 2009

Speech-language therapy in Europe: SHARING GOOD CLINICAL PRACTICE

7th CPLOL congress - "Speech-language therapy in Europe: sharing good clinical practice" - was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 14 to 16 May 2009.

Organization

The organization of the congress was a co-operation between the Executive Committee of CPLOL, the Slovenian Association of Logopaedics, and the Cankarjev Dom Congress Centre (CD-CC).

The webmaster prepared a helpful and attractive congress website where all information was published (<http://cplol.eu> > The profession > Congress).

Programme

For the congress some improvements were realized to make the CPLOL part of the organization more efficient. For the first time in the history of CPLOL, potential presenters had to submit abstracts of free papers and posters online, in a custom-made system. In addition, there was no scientific committee to review the abstracts and decide on the programme, but 10 delegates to review online designated abstracts independently. The vice-president for congress constructed the programme based on the approved abstracts. In total, 182 abstracts were submitted of which 166 (91%) were in English. Eleven proposals were rejected or withdrawn. The final programme, except for the three invited speakers and two CPLOL workshops on education, included 6 workshops, 60 oral presentations and 105 posters. The English-French ratio was 10 : 1. The first version of the programme was available online just before the end of 2008.

All abstracts were made available online one month prior to the congress.

Proceedings

All presentations and posters that were sent by presenters are made available online (<http://cplol.eu> > Congress).

Overall evaluation

Informal comments made perfectly clear that all participants enjoyed the congress, the international networking and the warm atmosphere in Ljubljana. The congress was formally evaluated with the same items on 5-point semantic scales as the previous congress to be able to make a comparison. A total of 320 participants visited the congress, of which 91 were from Slovenia (28%) and 31 were francophone (10%). Ninety-one evaluation forms (28%) were returned. Overall the congress met the expectations similar to 2006 (mean 3.6). When a mean rate larger than 3.0 is considered acceptable, the fee (2.9), the exhibition (2.6) and the catering (2.8) were below satisfaction. The fee was indeed 50% higher than in 2006 to cover the costs and the catering was kept to a minimum for the same reason. Despite intense work by CD-CC only a few companies were prepared to come to Slovenia, probably also due to the economic crisis.

Although lower than in 2006, the keynote speakers (3.5) and the theme (4.2) had good rates. Moreover, the parallel sessions (3.6), the posters (3.8) and the venue (4.1) were rated significantly better than in 2006, so the efforts to improve the programme have paid off.

Both the organization prior to the congress and during the congress had good rates (4.2). The technical support (4.4) and translations (4.0) were similarly appreciated as previously, but the social evening (4.1) was rated higher than last congress.

Financial evaluation

The congress was visited by fewer than the 400 paying participants who were anticipated in the budget. Because of serious economizing measures by the EC and CD-CC, the deficit could be limited to 6000 euros (see the treasurer's report). A quarter of the total costs was needed for translations. The website and programme were in two languages and presentations were allowed also in both English and French. Simultaneous translation was possible in English, French and Slovene. One conclusion must be that translation into three languages is too expensive and that this regrettably cannot be sustained in the following congress in 2012. Another aspect is that this kind of international meetings cannot be realized without huge amounts of unpaid work. The congress in Ljubljana was an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues from parts of Europe where speech-language therapists are a relatively small group of professionals. Nevertheless, maybe only large scale congresses in large capital cities are potentially cost-effective.

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