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Editorial, by Jeannette E. Dankert-Roelse

The art of giving Feedback

Editorial

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4th Quality Round
Table and Consensus
Meeting, Prague

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“You won’t see it until you’ve got it” is a characteristic one-liner from Johan Cruyff, famous football-player when he was young, and in the Netherlands at present even more famous because of his statements. His statements are mostly a typical mixture of brilliant insight and pure logic pronounced with an Amsterdam accent and often with incorrect grammar. This statement can be interpreted in several ways. What Johan Cruyff wants to bring over is that only when you realize what you have been doing you can understand it. Only then you can improve your performance, and that’s the goal when giving feedback. In his statement Johan Cruyff sums up in one sentence the main problems for people who receive feedback as well as for trainers who wish that their trainees accept their messages. Feedback must be given in such a way that the receiver accepts the message. It sounds as something very simple, but it isn’t. In fact it is a major challenge for the one who gives feedback.

In this issue of the ECORN-CF newsletter the results of the fine scoring of the questions-answer pairs (QAs) of ECORN-CF are reported. The results were, presented and discussed during the last Quality Round Table held in Prague from 5-7 October 2009. As this is an important part of the ECORN-CF this is the only issue of this newsletter. From this report it is evident that practically all participants can improve their performance. The question is how this can be achieved and this was discussed as well during the Prague meeting. Look further in this newsletter for the results of your language zone and share your ideas with us about how we can achieve improvement.

4th Quality Round Table and Consensus Meeting, Prague, 5-7 October 2009

The program of this meeting consisted of an evaluation by means of fine-scoring of the quality of the given answers in the participating language zones, a presentation of 5 questions&answers (QAs) that led to much discussion and a final discussion of the consensus document “Travelling with CF”. In this newsletter the results of the fine scoring of the QAs are presented.

Second Fine Scoring of the Answers by Daniela D’Alquen

As described earlier in the 3rd newsletter the fine scoring system evaluates the given answers in two ways. The first is that all answers should have the required quality. Therefore the English version of all answers as edited by the expert are assessed by the coordinator of the Quality Team on content and style before they are published in the English Archive of ECORN-CF.

The second assessment is used to evaluate if the quality of the answers improves over time. Evaluations of the answers were performed as follows: A random sample taken from the questions that were extracted for the fine scoring at the respective beginning of each local expert advice was scored a second time by the same scorers and compared to a sample taken from the actual period (at the date of the scoring). Five persons scored the given answers.

During the 4th Quality Round Table Daniela D'Alquen from the group of Helge Hebestreit, Würzburg, Germany, reported about her findings of this scoring system. A few problems with respect to the design of the study became apparent.

Available questions in the 9 language zones

The table below shows the number of questions that were asked during the first year of the project (May 1, 2007-April 30, 2008) and during the second year (May 1, 2008-April 30, 2009). Furthermore, it shows the complete number of questions until November 19, 2009.

Country	Online since	No of questions (01/05/07-30/04/08)	No of questions (01/05/08-30/04/09)	Complete questions until 19/11/09
Germany	Oct 1, 2007	106	169	396
Czech	Oct 1, 2007	36	55	98
United Kingdom	Oct 1, 2007	4	31	43
Romania	Dec 19, 2007	3	16	22
Lithuania	Jan 31, 2008	4	17	32
Belgium/NL	Mar 5, 2008	0	57	83
Poland	Apr 10, 2008	0	14	15
Sweden	Oct 13, 2008	0	0	1
Greece	Mar 25, 2009	0	1	15
Archive	Oct 1, 2007	89	305	580

For most of the participating countries the number of questions in the first year was too small for a reliable evaluation. Therefore, for each country/language zone questions were selected from the starting period of the respective expert advice and from the appointed date July 13, 2009 backwards. Questions from 7 countries could be included, all countries listed in the table except Sweden and Greece. A total of 70 question/answer pairs (Q/As) from these 7 countries were mixed and blinded. Comments in the Q/As giving a hint at the original country were deleted as completely as possible. The 70 Q/As consisted of 10 Q/As from each country: 5 from the starting period, 5 from the actual period. The 5 from the starting period were "old Q/As" for some languages and were already scored by the same persons in November 2008. The scorers were asked not to look at their old data and to score the old Q/As again. Scorers were Prof. De Boeck, Belgium, Prof. Hebestreit, Germany, Prof. Vávrová, Czech Republic, Dr. Bradley, United Kingdom, Birgit Demski, Germany.

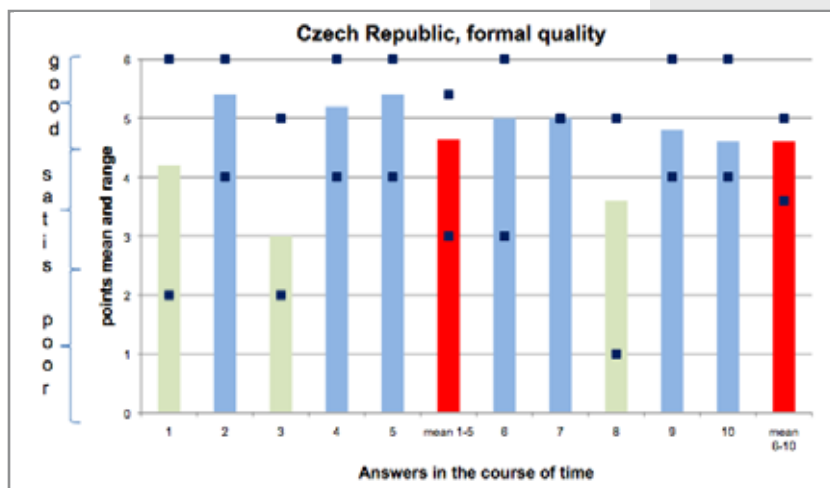
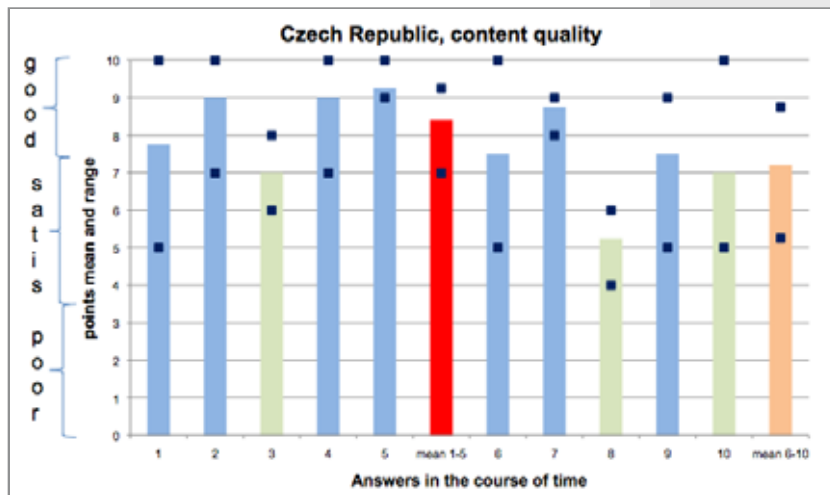
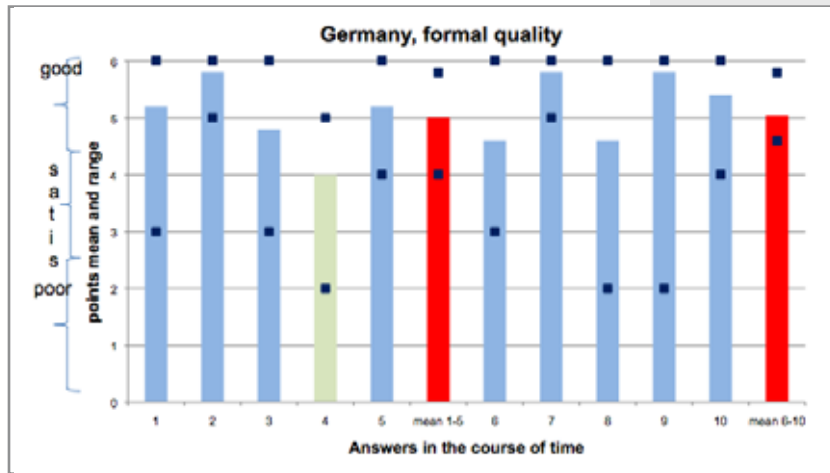
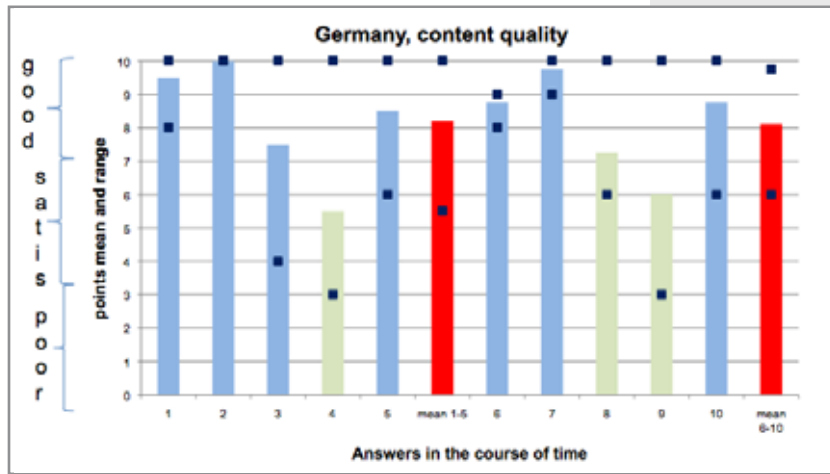
With the results of the scores it was possible to compare the scoring of the answers by the different scorers, how the quality of the answers was scored, and to determine if the scores changed over time on the level of each single country; to compare the quality of the answers between the different countries, and to make a balance for all countries together, and finally to assess the variability between the scorers and for each of the scorers themselves (intra-individual variability).

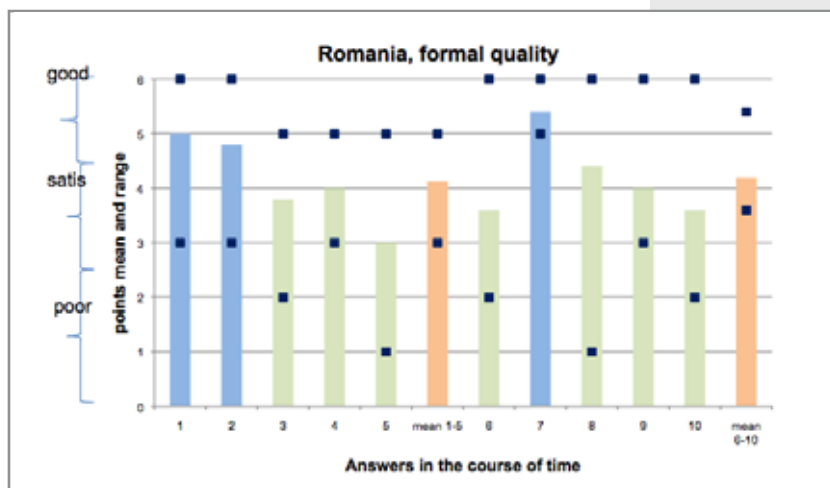
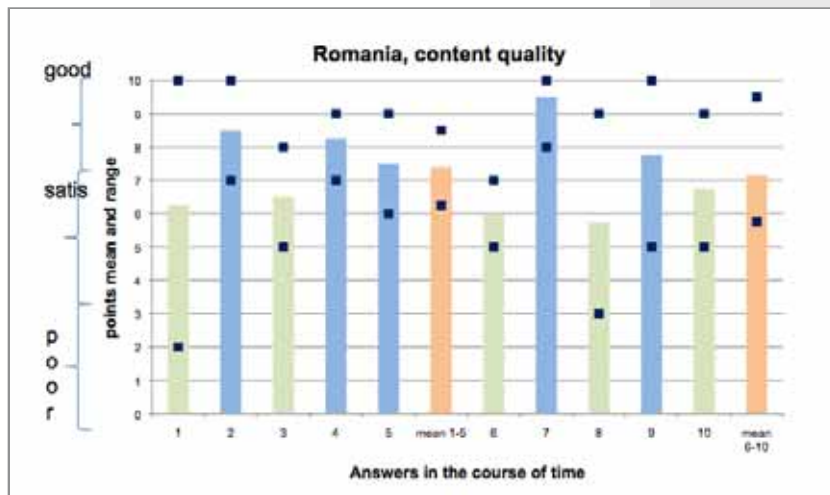
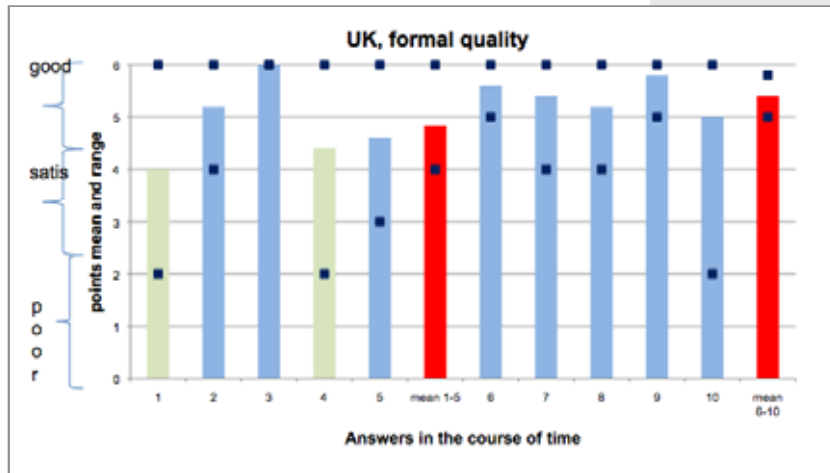
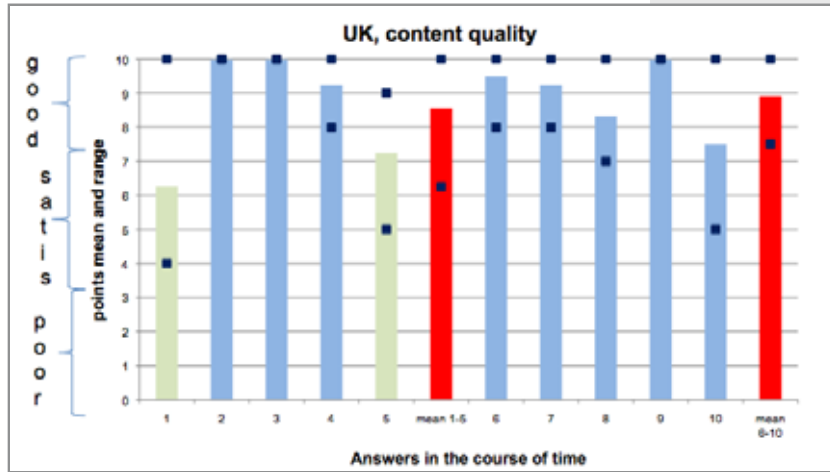
How the scores were established has been extensively described in Newsletter 3. The same procedure was used again. Answers were scored for content and for formal quality, ranging for good, satisfactory or poor.

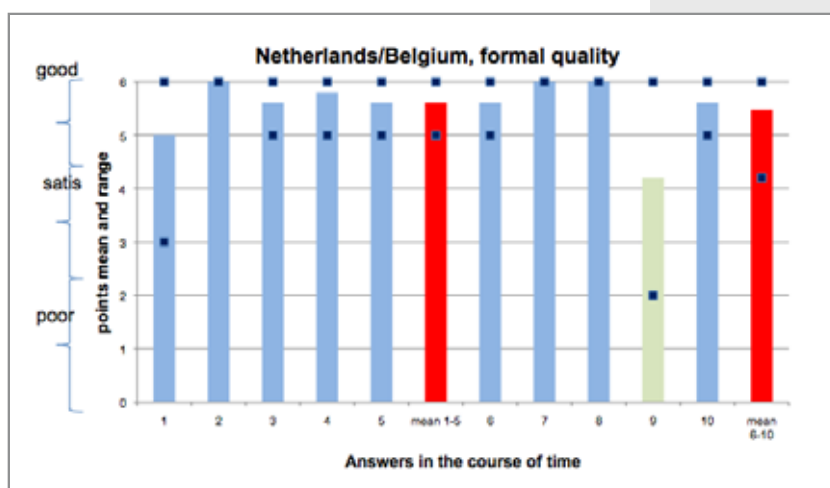
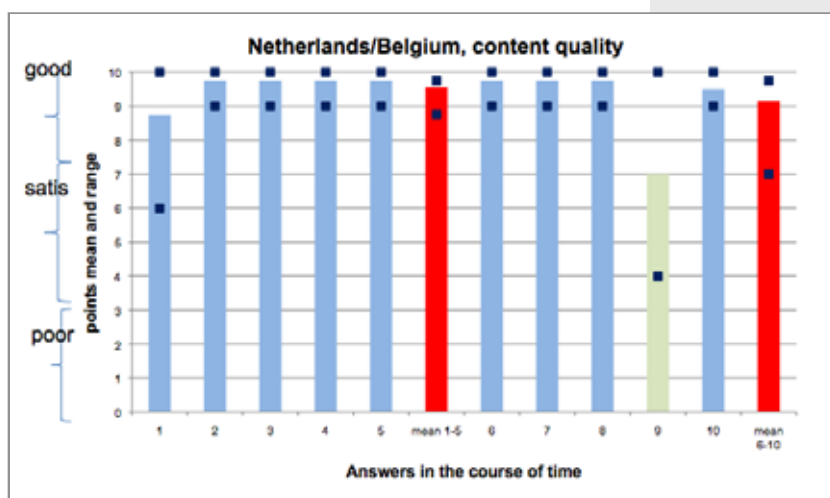
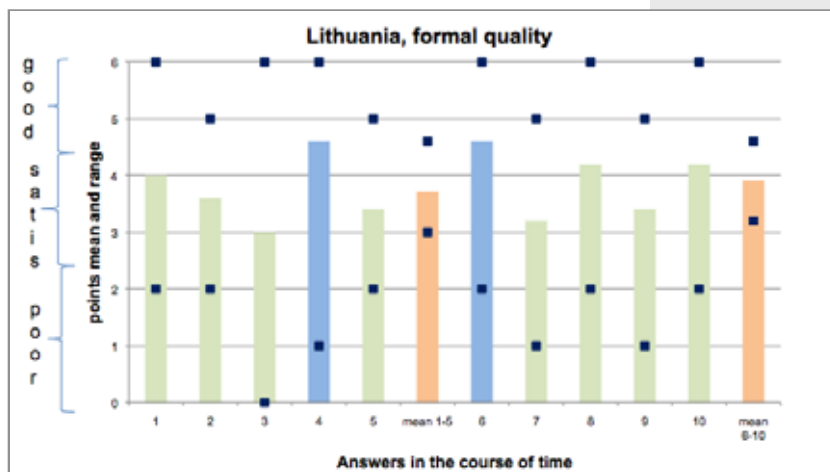
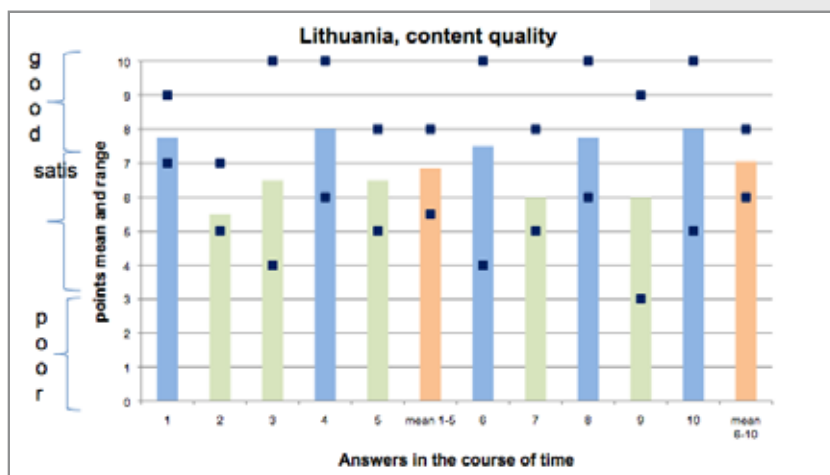
Results for the different countries

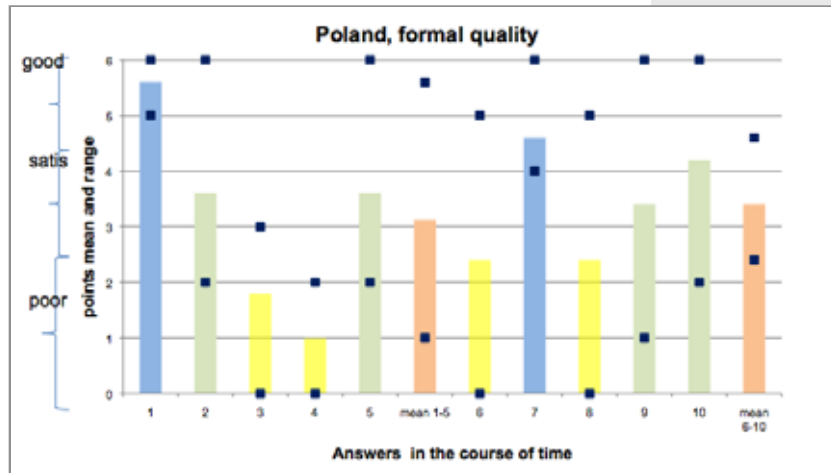
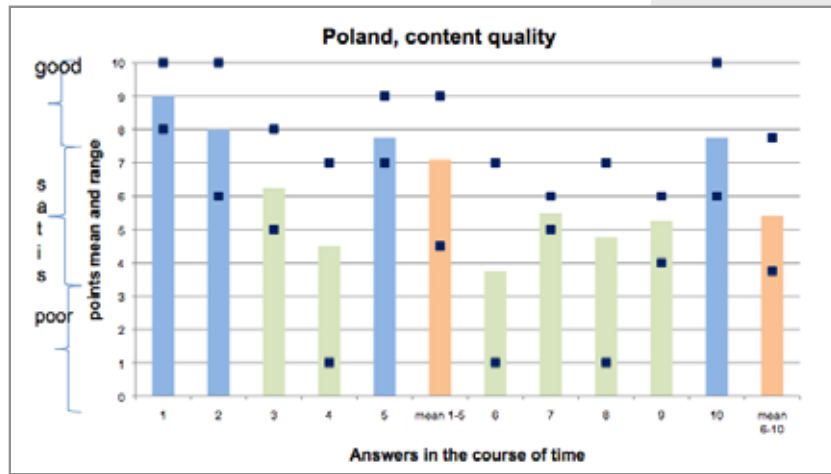
The small blue squares indicate the best and worst score for each QA pair among the five scorers.

Content quality (max. 10): 0-3 points = poor // 4-7 points = satisfactory // 8-10 points = good
Formal quality (max. 6): 0-2 points = poor // 3-4 points = satisfactory // 5-6 points = good

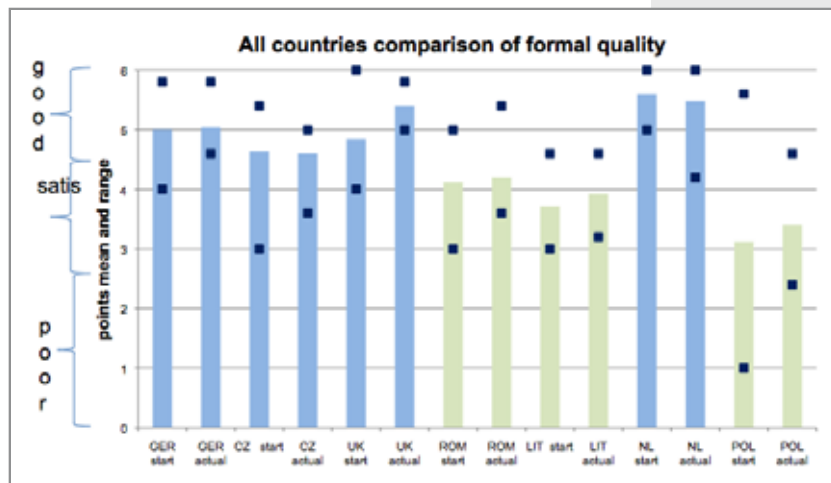
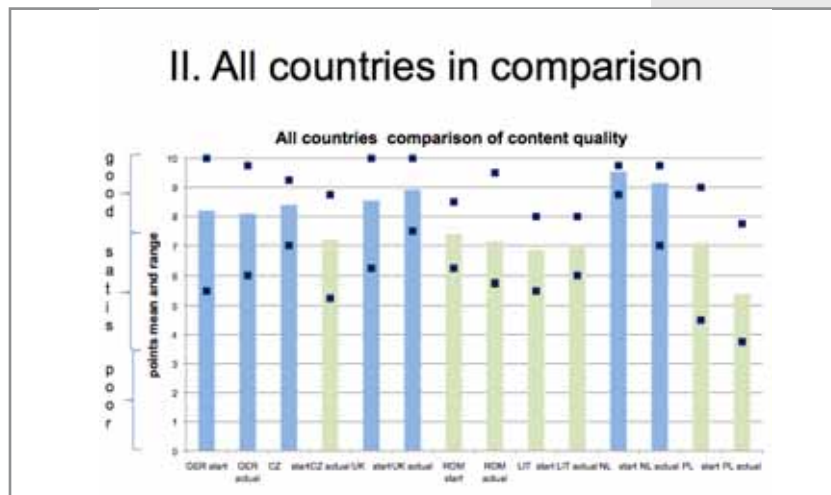








II. All countries in comparison





Participants of the 4th Quality Round Table Meeting in Prague

Quality of the answers

Although the majority of the countries showed a good quality of the answers for content as well as for formal style, there is room for improvement in some countries. An improvement in the course of time was not observed, most countries remained on the same level, and in two countries there was a decrease in the quality of the content of the answers from good to satisfactory. For all countries together the mean scores for content quality varied from satisfactory to good.

The scoring system

The range of points given for a single answer between the scorers was sometimes quite wide. This can indicate that there may be a need for discussion about some answers, because for many questions the present guidelines are not sufficient. It is also important that the answers clearly express when there is uncertainty about a correct answer. But also the intra-individual variability varied widely in some scorers, for the formal quality even more than for the content quality. This shows the subjectivity of the scoring system.

Discussion

After the presentation Daniela was cordially congratulated for her achievements. All participants of the meeting lively discussed the results.

The outstanding results of the Belgian-Dutch expert team right from the start were remarkable. Kris de Boeck explained how the Leuven CF-team works on the answers before they are published in the local expert advice: the question is assigned to one person who has to go into the literature and also has to draft a first answer. This answer is discussed in the CF-team and if necessary adapted, then the answer is distributed to everybody in the ECORN-CF expert team. Kris' secretary collects all comments during one week. Finally Kris puts together the final answer. The advantages of this procedure on the one hand are that the first part is a learning track, from finding the most recent literature, summarizing this for the CF-team, then defending the answer, to writing the draft text in a comprehensible way. On the other hand, the complete expert team has to agree with the answer or else give their comments that may contribute to the high quality as well. So everyone learns from it, and it leads to excellent results as well.

With regards to the language teams with less satisfactory results Thomas Wagner remarked that it is necessary to give a feedback to the language teams informing them about the results of the fine scoring. This may be an indicator to “train the expert” and to improve the quality.

Giving feedback is not an easy job. Jeannette Dankert suggested that using the Pendleton rules might be an option (BMJ 2005; 331:574). Pendleton's rules are recommendations that help trainers to give balanced feedback to trainees. The idea is that, when giving feedback, learners and teachers should concentrate on the positive first and then say what they thought could have been done better.

Finally the participants of the meeting discussed about the QAs where the scores of the five scorers had the highest discrepancy. These questions are often questions where no guidelines are available. The participants concluded that the list of guidelines should be updated from time to time.

A number of action-items were listed and will be carried out as soon as possible.

In the next issue of the newsletter, planned to appear in February 2010, Thomas Wagner will discuss future plans for ECORN-CF.EU.

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