

Dear 7th EUCASS Conference participant,

Thank you for joining us in Milan last July. In total, you were 600+ delegates including 160 students. To us, this was extremely gratifying and it appears you appreciated the event quite a lot!

Special thanks to the 254 of you who took time to answer our “feedback questionnaire”. You were 43%, quite a nice score! Your comments are very detailed and will undoubtedly help us to prepare an even better congress in 2019. The following chapters summarize the main findings. Please contact us if you wish to read the complete feedback document.

First the raw statistics.

	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Poor
General evaluation of the EUCASS 2017	35%	57%	7%	1%
Plenary sessions	29%	59%	12%	1%
Quality of the presentations	18%	69%	12%	1%
Exchanges between speakers and participants	27%	59%	12%	1%
Overall organization	37%	47%	13%	3%
On-site welcome and registration	63%	31%	5%	1%
Conference website	36%	53%	10%	1%
Abstract submission website	34%	55%	9%	1%
Access to the venue, city	36%	53%	10%	2%
Conference venue	37%	46%	13%	3%
Conference IT services	36%	50%	13%	1%
Lunches and coffee breaks	28%	37%	26%	8%
Gala dinner	33%	35%	17%	15%

These evaluations are good, as the sum of “excellent” and “good” is generally in the range of 70 to 80%. The weak points are the lunches and the gala dinner, which can be improved.

Second, the positive comments.

Most of you insist on the rich and eclectic character of the program which includes a very broad range of topics in science and R&T domains. You mention the good coverage of all new topics in the domain, with the latest achievements and findings on each subject. You liked the size of the conference, with more than 600 participants presenting 500+ papers and posters during 104 sessions and plenaries. This is important for us, as it really reflects the character we want to give to this conference, with a wide coverage of all scientific and research topics in the domain of Aeronautics and Space.

You insist upon the quality of networking, ability to exchange among participants even outside your domain and coming from all over the world, enabling one to enhance cross-fertilization and stimulate innovation. You mention that the conference helps you connect with other people, and identify new business opportunities; you also say you appreciate the mix of researchers, players from Industry, Academia, students... These remarks are important, and we will try to improve even further this networking possibility by including a 15 minutes break in the middle of the morning and of the afternoon to give you the possibility to relax a bit and to chat with the participants in your session.

The location of the congress was appreciated, near a very nice city, with easy access from downtown even if indications could have been better (noted for next time). We were unfortunately not aware of the strike in the public transport the last day and did our best to save the Friday afternoon. The environment of the conference was considered as relaxed and comfortable.

A lot of you mention the plenary lectures, including the opening speeches, as highlights of the conference; the high level of the lecturers was appreciated. Since you liked these, we could try to have some more plenary sessions as requested by some of you. However, with a tight planning over 4 days and emphasis on the technical sessions, it is difficult to find more slots than the 8 we had in Milan. We also have to do a better work balancing the Space and Aeronautics domains. The Technical visits were also appreciated, but not publicized enough, as many of you did not realize that visits had been planned.

The general organization of the congress is mentioned as perfect by plenty of you; thank you (even if on our side we identified some room for improvement[]).

In other words, we feel proud to have reached our goal which is to foster exchange and networking among specialists based on good presentations and articles, covering all the scientific and technical fields of Aeronautics and Space, from a wide number of countries and in a friendly environment.

On the other side, criticisms are important for us to understand how to improve the quality of the conference.

Some of you complain about the fact that a few papers were of low quality. Unfortunately, we have no means to prevent this as thoroughly as we would like, since the selection is based on the abstracts which were submitted and can differ substantially from the final paper. The selection process was very professional, with 4 or 5 experts per symposia evaluating each abstract, but that may not have been enough and the full manuscripts themselves are not evaluated before the conference. Some of you suggest requiring two-page abstracts; this is an excellent proposal that we will implement for the next edition.

You complain about the lack of precise timing for the papers. Globally, 88% of the papers identified in the program have been presented, which is a very good score, but when a paper was missing we just moved forward the following ones, preventing the delegates from having a precise schedule enabling them to go from one room to another. You are right, this is not good, and we need to correct it for 2019, giving the precise time for each paper and sticking with it. We plan to have a conference app to help you build and better manage your daily planning.

Globally, we had 61 “no shows” out of 538 presentations and posters scheduled in the program where presenters did not inform us in advance that they would not be coming. This is a relatively low number, compared to similar conferences, but in a few cases it led to having very short sessions when several authors failed to show up. It is difficult to avoid, and we have not yet identified the proper way to reduce that number, considering that a lot of these presenters come from very distant countries, subject to late problems arising with visas or travel budget cancellations.

We have several remarks concerning the absence of session breaks. This is questionable, as there are numerous congresses with 3 hours sessions without breaks, but then the idea of including a 10-15-minute break in the middle of a session can help relaxing a bit and exchanging among participants, as some of you suggested. We will discuss this possibility during a Board meeting, as of course it impacts the complete schedule of the congress, meaning either fewer or shorter presentations, or more sessions in parallel.

The overall program is globally very rich, but it is somehow not balanced between Space and Aeronautics, as well as between Academia and Industry. We are aware of this bias and try to correct it.

We have several remarks concerning the registration fees, considered as too high. EUCASS is of course a non-profit Association, and our budgets are prepared considering no benefit other than the money needed for the life of the Association and some margin for bad surprises. This year the fees, without VAT, which are country-dependent and that we have to refund, were 140€ for a student and 700€ for a professional (we always made the choice to favor the students in order to help them in the beginning of their career). Please note that these costs include four lunches, two cocktails and the coffee breaks. We considered options where we could have two categories of registration, with or without meals, but it quickly turned out to be an organizational nightmare and abandoned the idea. We can therefore just promise to define the registration fees for the 2019 Conference in the same spirit as we did so far, keeping the cost as low as practically possible.

One of the frequent criticisms is related to the space available during the lunches and the lack of chairs and tables. The meals themselves were much appreciated (even if you ask for more vegetarian food), but it is true that the lunch zone was overly cramped. One of the reasons is the success of the conference, where we had the pleasure of welcoming some 100 participants more than we planned. But then, there were globally not enough tables and no means to sit anywhere. This is a point that we will consider with high priority for the upcoming conferences, as it is really important to have enough space to circulate between colleagues and discuss with them while having lunch.

The gala dinner was globally fine. The venue was highly appreciated, including the cocktail under the submarine; the museum was interesting, the room was nice, and the orchestra was appreciated also. But the food was clearly not up to our expectations, as many of you complained. We realize that and were indeed disappointed by the meal. We will exert more care next time to guarantee an unforgettable evening!

Last, some open points

In your remarks, you have a lot of interesting suggestions which have to be considered and weighed before EUCASS 2019.

You suggest plenty of nice potential destinations for the upcoming conference, extending over the four compass points up to Novosibirsk. The choice of the venue of 2019 is not made yet, but we do have some constraints: we want to select a city within Greater Europe, including Russia, so we will not yet go to Korea or China as some of you suggested. We wish to visit countries where EUCASS has not yet been held, we think it is better to have a strong Academic background, with some significant

air & space activities and offering interesting technical visits. Then we need a large place, with a big auditorium for the plenaries and some 15 breakout rooms with 50+ seats. Some countries are overly expensive. Then the place has to be attractive, with interesting sightseeing, museums, restaurants, etc. Quite difficult to find! We are currently visiting the potential sites, and will let you know the decision as soon as possible.

Should the conference be held in a “traditional” congress center or a University, as was done in Milan and Brussels? The impact on the registration fees is of course not the same. But besides that, we feel that a University is more logical for such a scientific conference. Normally, first week of July, only very few students remain on campus, so the whole space is for us. Furthermore, you must have appreciated that in every room, you had a table and an electric plug at your disposal, a much better convenience than a simple conference bench with your laptop in equilibrium on your knees...

You suggest adding some highlight lectures given by key experts in specific domains, as well as organizing some special courses on advanced topics. These are good ideas, initially planned for Milan but cancelled when considering practical planning. We will re-discuss these ideas and try to have them implemented in 2019.

And we need of course to have an app helping all the participants to read about the latest modifications of the program, navigate between the session rooms, fix appointments, etc. The work on it has already begun for 2019!

As a synthesis

Thank you for all your feedback. We are glad to see that EUCASS, your conference, is globally very appreciated and perceived as a useful tool to progress in the domain of Science and Research & Technology in the Air and Space fields. We do value a lot your comments which enable us to prepare the next conference which in 2019 will be even better than in Milan.

Now please consider that EUCASS does exist only to help you! **Please come and join the Technical Committees**; there you will be able to network with your colleagues and partners from all over the World, discuss hot topics, and last but not least help us prepare the next conference by taking a role in the organization of the sessions.

See you all at the 8th EUCASS in 2019!