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Project acronym: ENSEMBLES

Project title: ENSEMBLE-based Predictions of Climate Changes and their Impacts

Instrument: Integrated Project

Thematic Priority: Global Change and Ecosystems

**MM8.1 Assessment of progress and quality of Internet-based information,
implementation of suggested modifications**

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Duration: 60 Months

Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable:

National Observatory of Athens (NOA)

Project co-funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)		
Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	✓
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the Consortium (including the Commission Services)	

1. Introduction

Primary objective of Research Theme 8 is to provide efficient means of disseminating the results emerging from the ENSEMBLES project to the research community, as well as the general public, stakeholders and policymakers. Although traditional dissemination approaches, such as scientific meetings, workshops and newsletters were taken, the largest volume of the project scientific facts and research findings and data are being disseminated via the Internet. The latter can reach a global audience, which is essential for a large integrated project, and has rapid update possibilities. In addition to the main project website, <http://www.ensembles-eu.org>, there are 9 individual RT websites linked from it, each hosted by an individual partner.

For this Milestone we conducted a survey using a questionnaire to assess the usefulness of project websites. We also present information on the frequency of visits, and downloads from the main project website

2. Statistics on website use

The number of daily visits is the most commonly used measure of a website's success. Hence, graphs that show the number of visitors per day and the monthly electronic transfers over the Internet via the main project website were produced. It is important to note that the graphs aren't 100% accurate as there is one server for many sites and thus it is not easy to find out which entries in the graphs refer to which site. There are also a couple of IPCC files stored under the Ensembles folder structure but the extra hits imposed by the IPCC data, co-located on the site have been taken out.

The graph in Figure 1 shows the daily number of visits to the ENSEMBLES website from the beginning of the project to present. The website was set up in late 2004 and since then its popularity has increased gradually. During the last three years of the project, the website receives an average of 1500 hits per day. Figure 2 features the monthly bandwidth (in Gigabytes) in order to provide insight on the monthly electronic transfers over the project site.

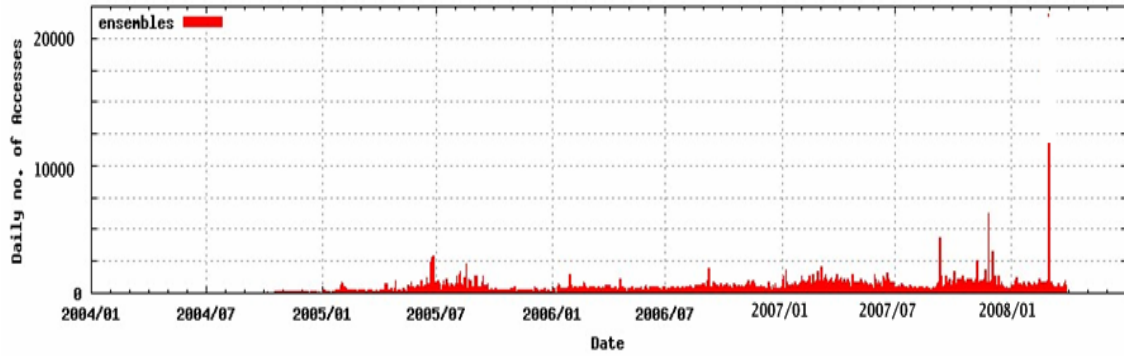


Figure 1. The daily number of visits that the ENSEMBLES website has received from the beginning of the project to present.

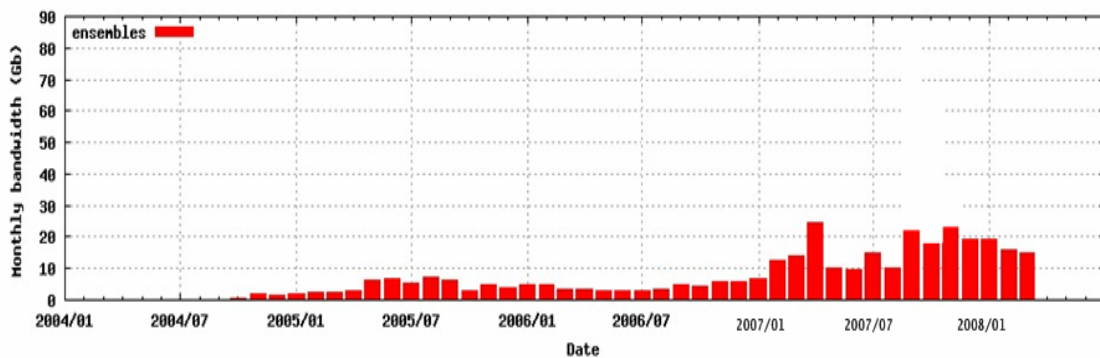


Figure 2. Monthly bandwidth (in Gigabytes) as a measure of the monthly electronic transfers over the project site from the beginning of the project to present.

3. Questionnaire

To assess the effectiveness and quality of the ENSEMBLES Internet-based information we circulated a questionnaire to selected partners from each RT. The questionnaire contained seven questions, all of them multiple choice with five different possibilities of response. The topics mainly referred to usefulness, efficiency and easiness of use of the website. Figure 3 shows the template questionnaire used to collect the information.

Assessment of Internet based information in the ENSEMBLES project

The following questionnaire aims to evaluate the usability of the ENSEMBLES RT websites. Please take the time to complete this questionnaire (one per website). Your comments and feedback will be much appreciated and will assist us to improve the website and tailor it to suit your needs.

	Poor	Moderate	Good	Very Good	Excellent
1. What do you think of the design of the website?					
2. How do you rate the usefulness of the information provided on the website?					
3. Do you think the website is easy to use?					
4. Do you find the information you were looking for?					
5. Can you effectively complete your work using the website?					
6. What is your opinion of downloading data from the website?					
7. Overall are you satisfied with the website?					

If you have any comments, or suggestions for improvements or additions to the web site, please make them here.

Figure 3. The form of questionnaire used to collect the information.

4. Survey results

In general, the questionnaire survey revealed positive feedbacks from the users towards the ENSEMBLES websites. Positive comments were received for the majority of the questions. The responses to all questions were combined to give an overall satisfaction rating, which is evident in the pie chart shown in Figure 4. Overall, the survey respondents expressed a good or a very good opinion for the usability of the ENSEMBLES website. In particular, 37% of users were “very satisfied” with the website and a further 45% were “satisfied”.

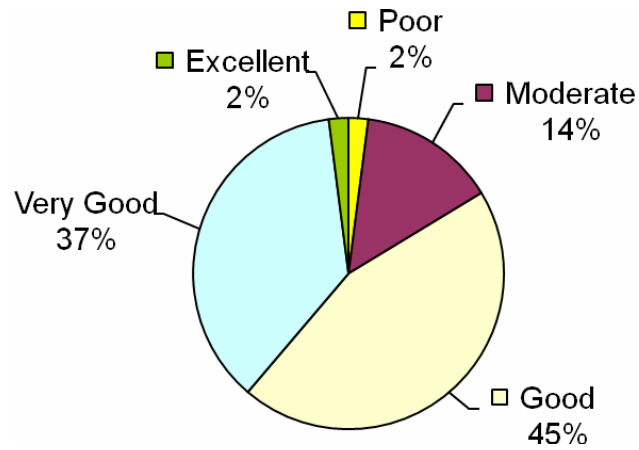


Figure 4. Pie chart indicating a general positive feedback from the partners surveyed.

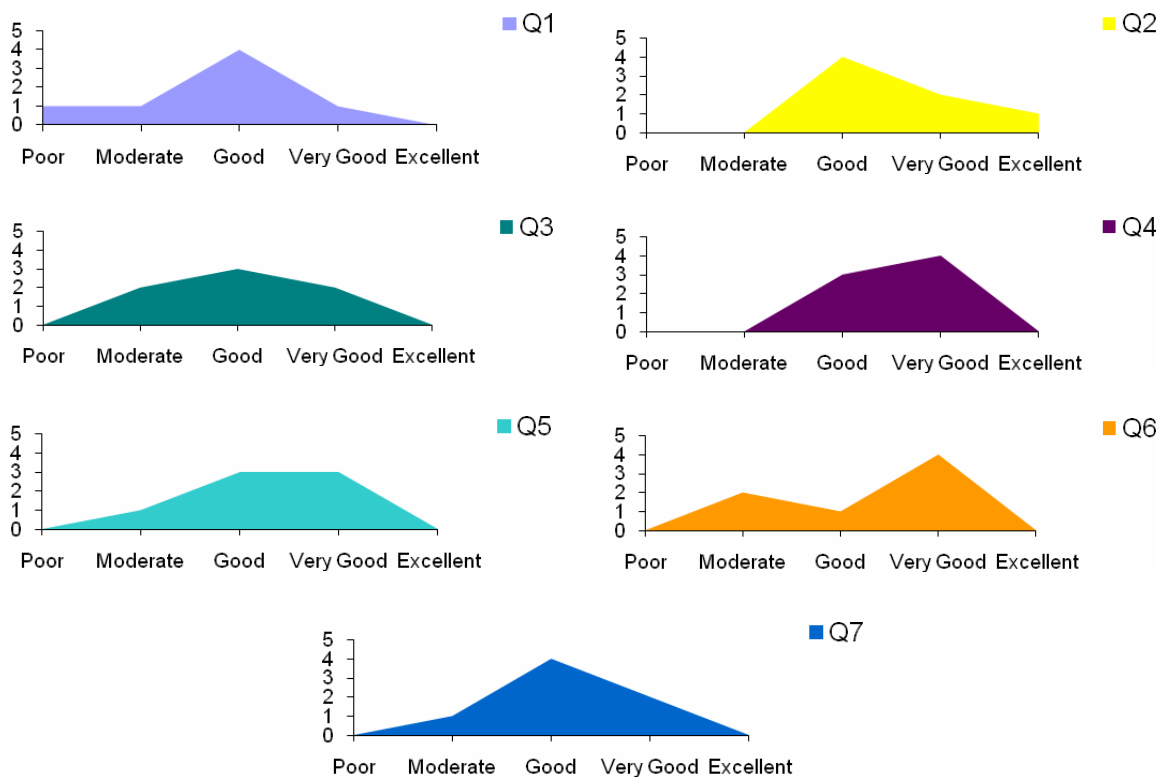


Figure 5. Area charts display the variation in responses across different questions.

The variations of results for the several questions are displayed in the charts of Figure 5. Despite some variations in responses, satisfaction ratings for all questions surveyed

were within the range we would consider “good”. In general, questions referring to the general design, easiness and the overall usefulness of the websites are rated as good. Questions addressing the information dissemination through the site, the downloading capability and the effectiveness of the site to benefit partners’ work received a rating of “very good”. However, it must be noted that individual responses gave low ratings particularly for questions three and six, which concern the usefulness of the information and the downloading service of the website.

In this report we summarised the main points of the survey and it became clear that the current website has achieved a general success in providing assistance to the project partners. However, the full results of this survey should be considered to further improve the several project websites.

5. Users’ comments and suggestions

In this section, comments and suggestions made by the individual survey respondents are listed. These comments will be fed back to the webmasters of each research theme so that they can improve the content and accessibility of their individual RTs.

COMMENT 1: I have only been able to download data with Mozilla Firefox, not Internet Explorer. Why?

COMMENT 2: The Javascript tree menu, although a useful navigational tool, remains on screen when other RT websites are accessed from the RT2A site. There’s no obvious way of removing/hiding it – could become irritating after a while if you’re moving between the RT sites.

COMMENT 3: Only two of the WPs have linked websites, it would be helpful if the remaining WPs had some information on them. Also, there are no navigational links to the other RT sites – the user would have to return to the main project site in order to access these.

COMMENT 4: There is no “date last modified” text or indication of web owner. A couple of the navigational links at the top of the page (pointing to the main project web site pages) are out of date or incorrect – but there is no indication as to who to report this to. The RT7 meetings listed (under each WP) only go up as far as 2005 but there have been one or two RT7 meetings since then. The links to partners underneath each WP heading are difficult to read against the dark blue background

and there is no link to the RT5 home page. Several of the links to the RT7 partners' homepages are either broken or out of date.

COMMENT 5: Question1: old fashion template but clear. Question3: depends on the user (people involved in impact studies could be lost). Question4 to 6: I think everything is mentioned on the website and you can find the information browsing the pages. Question7: the website site is ok for me, but it could be improved for the 'non-geek' community.