NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GREECE GONE VIRTUAL

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DEFINITION OF THE TERM

- Merging definitions by Clark, Stromquist, the NGO global network and others, we can define NGOs as *any independent, non politically affiliated, non profit organization with a distinctive legal character, characterized by its volunteer participation, which aims at providing information services, social support and knowledge for the public welfare.*

- It is important to note, that the term "non governmental" refers to all possible forms of governance and not just the state government, such as local, regional and national government but transnational (such as the EU institutions) and international through regional and international organizations.

CLASSIFICATIONS

- Michael O'Neill organized NGOs in 9 groups according to their thematic orientation:
  1. religion
  2. research
  3. pharmaceutics
  4. culture
  5. society
  6. world aid
  7. medical prevention
  8. promotion

- William Cousins organized NGOs based on their impact (from community to international NGOs and orientation:
  1. charity
  2. service providing
  3. cooperation
  4. public awareness

- A review work by Giannis resulted on 4 quantitative (geographic area, legal status, membership type, work field) and 5 qualitative criteria (impact, openness, organization & resources subject, intervention role).

AIM OF THIS RESEARCH

- Evaluate a subset of Greek NGOs that comprises organizations which are based on public awareness

  "Transformational" NGOs

- Examine whether Greek Transformational NGOs make effective use of the new media

  *Do they establish a
  web based communication
  with their members?*

TRANSFORMATIONAL NGOS

- **Tranformational NGOs** develop a wide range of initiatives and actions:
  - They aim to increase public awareness
  - They respond with greater ease and flexibility to local needs
  - They intervene in the operation of the society
  - The aim in advancing democracy, providing social justice and constituting a better world in general.
- Transformational NGOs of our sample operate in national level, are self funded, open to volunteers and mid-sized in terms of financial and human resources.

NGOS & GREECE

- NGOs in Greece comprise a dynamic and considerable part of the Civil Society.
- Nevertheless, cooperation and communication between NGOs and among members is still problematic.
- They rarely fashioned any form of civic networks and it is only recently that they began to exchange information and resources. Greek NGOs, nearly to their whole, lack in sustaining satisfactory bonding mechanisms.
- Despite the huge number of NGOs in Greece and world-wide and the great publicity of Web and Web 2.0 services, there are not currently any studies on the web presence of NGOs.

NGOS & WEB

- Grace to the advances in Information and Communication Technology, NGOs have less place and time barriers and are able to expand their activities worldwide and increase their impact on population, providing a new civil agenda.

- By going virtual, NGOs can enhance and improve their activities and formulate their networks of collaboration at local, regional and international levels.

- The collaborative nature of Web 2.0 technologies makes them a perfect solution for the dissemination of ideas and the promotion of their activities.

METHODOLOGY

AIM

Evaluate the Web presence of Greek transformational NGOs

STEPS

- Define sample: The exact number Greek NGOs is not officially known, they are estimated to be thousands.
- Criteria: Apart from the typical accessibility and usability tests we measure the effectiveness of NGOs' services and the members' satisfaction and contribution.
- Gather information: Primarily from the NGO's sites.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Their number and the publicity they enjoy have significantly increased the last decade; however the absence of a transparent institutional framework is obvious.
- We select those NGOs that are the key players and act as leaders in their specific section.

EVALUATION OF WEB PRESENCE

- The more quantitative studies undertaken by Gibson and Ward (2000) and Norris (2001) provide a method for making comparisons between NGOs and therefore have been used, with minor adaptation, in this study.

- Apart from Gibson & Ward, there are also other ways to categorize and evaluate a political site like for example the Conway & Dorner (2004) research or the seven general criteria of the Hiser Group.

- There are numerous works that evaluate web presence for educational, governmental, healthcare, non-profit or professional organizations. However, these methodologies are not sufficient to evaluate the social part of web sites, which is defined by publicity and participation

METHODOLOGY: CRITERIA

- The NGO evaluation's criteria were adapted from those used to evaluate general internet resources, in much the same way as criteria used to evaluate internet resources had been adapted from those used for print material.

- We conclude on 6 groups of criteria:
  1. Descriptive information
  2. Structure
  3. Content
  4. Navigation
  5. Morphology
  6. Participation

- To synchronize data all activities took place within the same period (01-25 January 2009).

AXIS 1: DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The first group includes the site's descriptive information, the way users communicate their issues, which is the site's purpose and if it is well served, etc.

- Is it clear who maintains the site?
- Is it clear who the site administrator is?
- Is it clear who updates the content?
- Is there any report about when the site was created?
- Is there any report about the last update?
- Is it clear who the site sponsor is?

AXIS 2: STRUCTURE

The second group of criteria targets the site's structure, the effectiveness of the site's functions and the way the information is presented.

- Can the users express their opinion and leave a comment?
- Is the information of the home page well organized?
- Is the site's information well organized?
- Are the site's functions well organized?
- Is the site's representation well organized?

AXIS 3: CONTENT

The third group is about the usefulness, adequacy, credibility and validity of the content that is used.

- Can the user read the articles of association?
- Is there a logo on the home page?
- Can the user read the organization chart and the biographies of the members of the NGO?
- Is the program of actions posted?
- Is there any description of how these actions will be achieved?

- Are the sources of information noted?
- Are there any written or audio or video speeches or interviews?
- Are there any links with Greek or non Greek sites?
- Is there a wallboard?
- Are there any pictures or graphics or videos ?
- Can you subscribe to a newsletter?

AXIS 4: NAVIGATION

The fourth group focuses on the functions and the services that define the way the user navigate through the site.

- Do the links open in the same or in a new window?
- Is there a sitemap?
- Is the menus' function effective?
- Is there a search engine?
- Can you go back to the homepage at anytime?
- Are the blind and deaf users supported?
- How many languages are available?

- Is there a forum?
- Is there a blog?
- Is there any podcast broadcasting?
- Is there a wiki?
- Is there a RSS feed?
- Is there an e-magazine?
- Is there a citizens' panel?
- Is there an e-voting?
- Is there an e-poll?
- Is there an e- petition?

AXIS 5: MORPHOLOGY - ACCESSIBILITY

The fifth group examines the technical data and prescriptions.

- Can the user communicate with the NGO in conventional ways (tel., fax, mail) ways?
- Can the user communicate with the NGO in non conventional ways (chat) ways?
- Is the transfer's speed from one page to another satisfactory?
- Is the loading time of the multimedia files satisfactory?
- How many are the broken and the dead links?
- Is there any interactivity?
- Is there the printer friendly view available?
- Are there any picture thumbnails?
- Can the user download the files in a pdf or a .doc?
- Does the site functions as a portal?
- How many are the script's errors?

AXIS 6: PUBLICITY - PARTICIPATION

Finally, the last group of criteria focuses on the website's reputation, credibility, trust and value as well as in the participation of NGOs members in the site's content.

1. How many are the posts?
2. How many are the messages?
3. How many users visit the site on a daily base?
4. How many are the Google's backlinks?
5. Is there a reference on the Greek version of the Wikipedia?
6. How many are the NGO's members?
7. Is there a profile in Facebook?
8. How many are the visitors?
9. Which is the site's traffic rank by Alexa?

RESULTS

- In order to give a clearer view on the web presence of NGOs, we decided to present partial summaries of our results for each group of criteria.

- Therefore, we decide to give 1 point for each criterion that is satisfied and 0 for not satisfied criteria. In the case of complete absence of information for a criterion we decide to punish the NGO with a negative mark (-1). In the criteria that are already quantified (e.g. number of broken links, number of script errors) several thresholds are used to define the positive or negative marks. The web site that satisfies all criteria gets the MaxScore

- Consequently, we sum up the score in each sub-group of criteria for every NGO and map scores into a 5-level scale: High is for NGOs that satisfy more than 80% of the MaxScore, good is for those NGOs that satisfy the 60-80%, average for 40-60%, low for 20-40% and very low when less than 20% of the MaxScore is achieved.
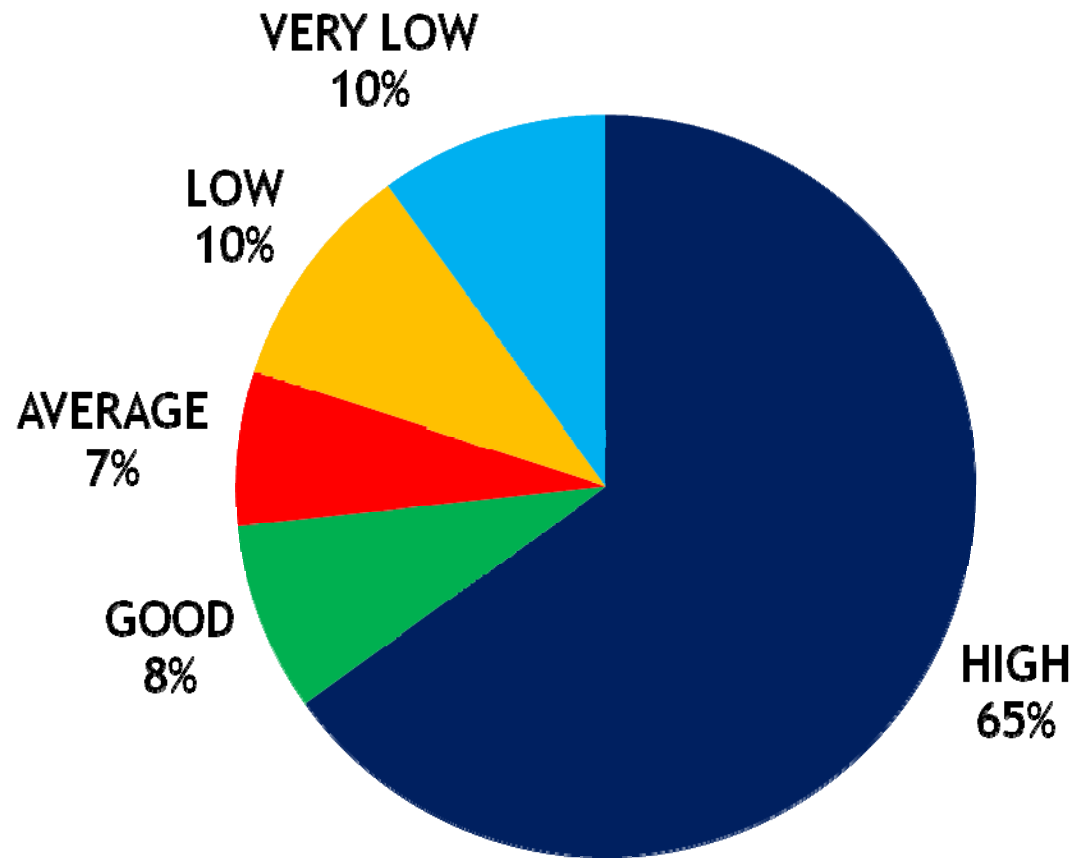
RESULTS
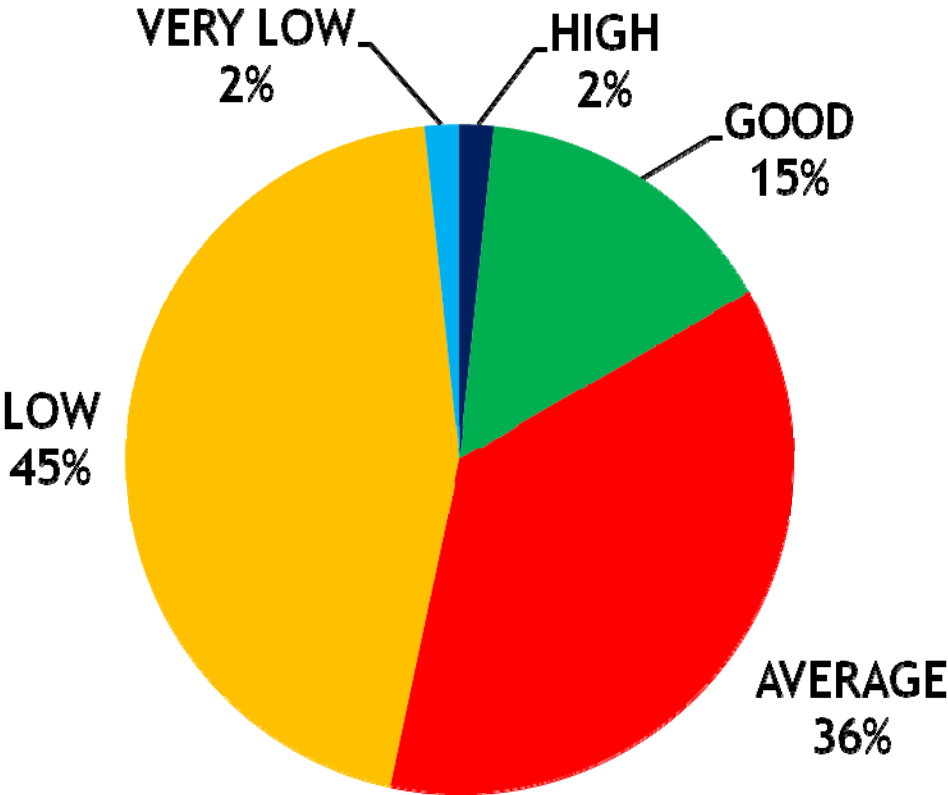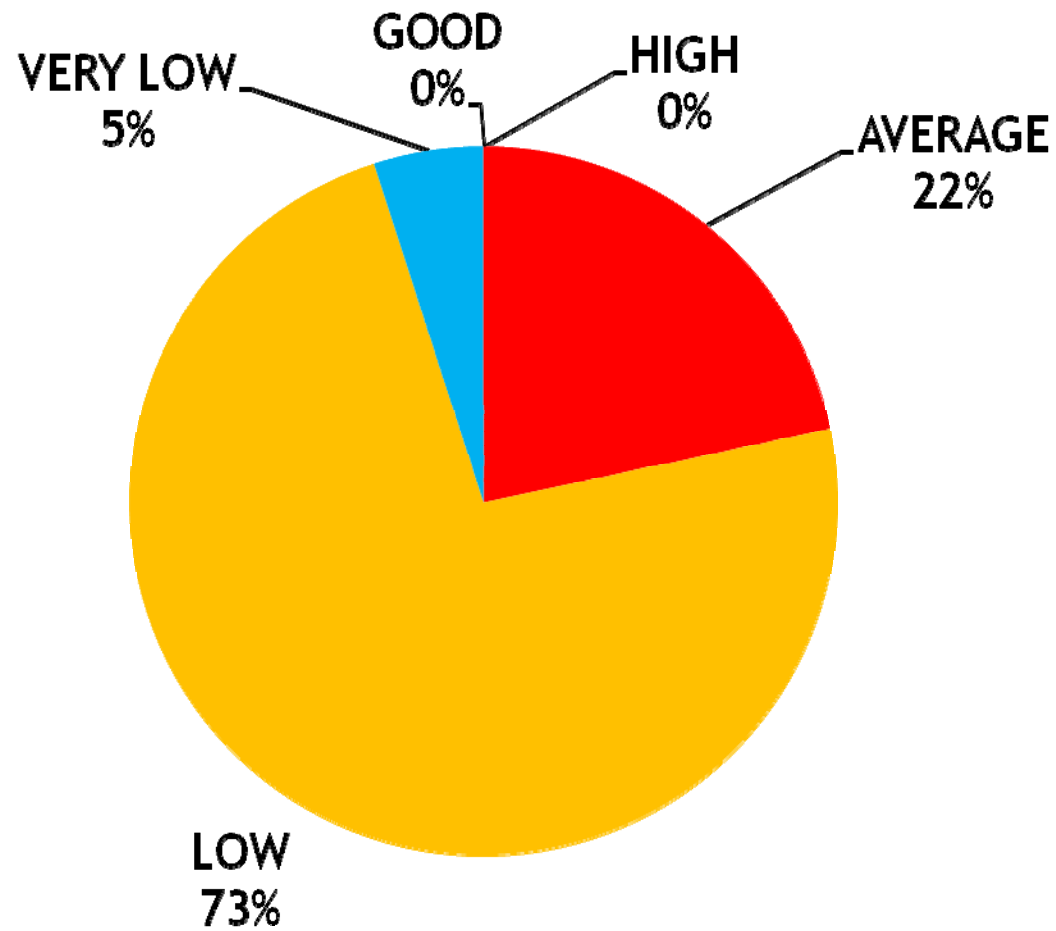## AXIS 1: DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

RESULTS
AXIS 3: CONTENT

VERY LOW 2%
HIGH 2%
GOOD 15%
LOW 45%
AVERAGE 36%
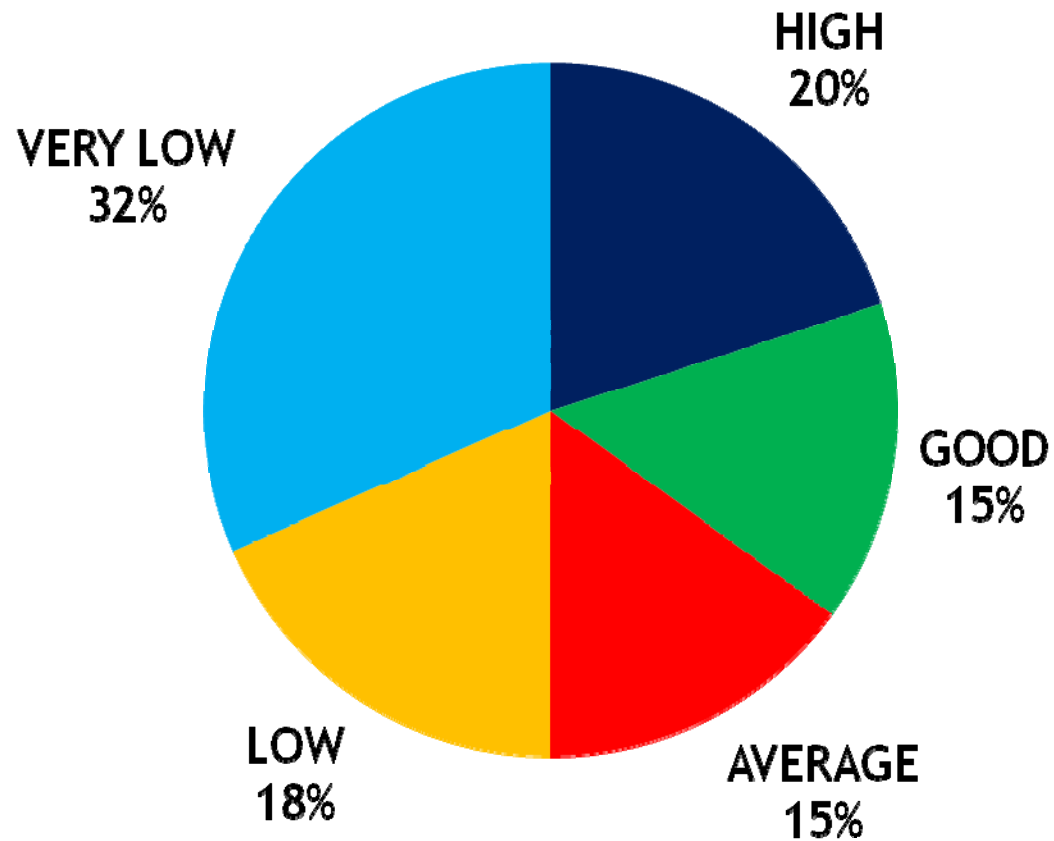
RESULTS
AXIS 4: NAVIGATION

VERY LOW
5%

GOOD
0%

HIGH
0%

AVERAGE
22%

LOW
73%

RESULTS
AXIS 5: MORPHOLOGY - ACCESSIBILITY
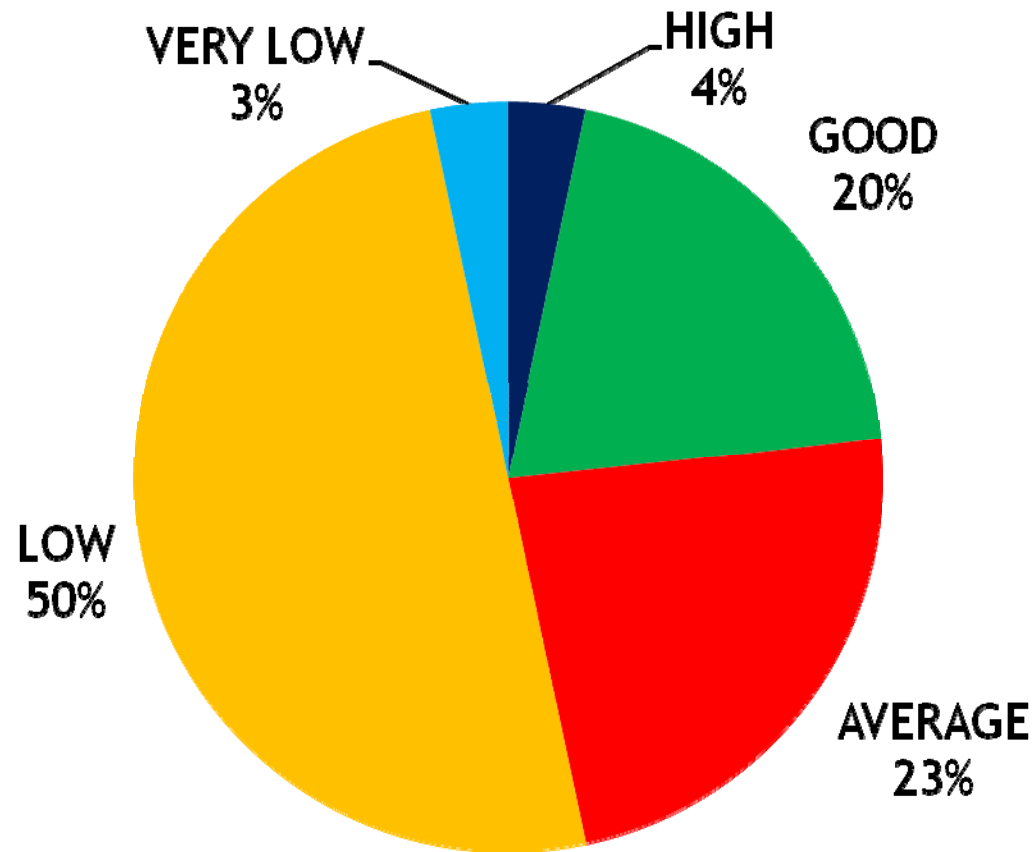
RESULTS
AXIS 6: PUBLICITY - PARTICIPATION

GOOD
0%

HIGH
0%

AVERAGE
1%

LOW
22%

VERY LOW
77%
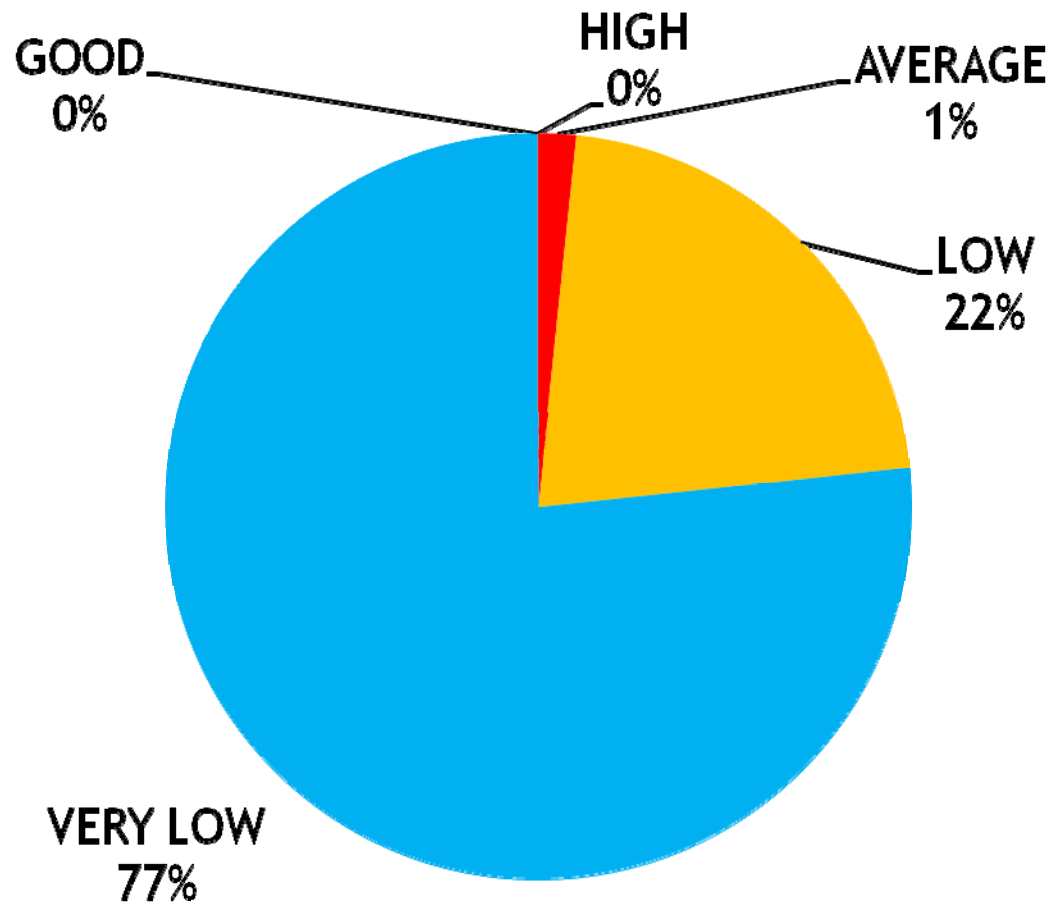
WHAT ABOUT WEB 2.0 ?

Web 2.0 service	%NGOs offering the service
Forum	10%
Blog	3%
Podcasting	0%
Wiki	0%
RSS Feed	7%
e-Magazine	7%
Citizens' Panel	0%
e-Voting	12%
e-Poll	3%
e-Petition	0%

- In a second step, we attempted to depict the response of Greek NGOs to the Web 2.0 trend by measuring the community services they offer to their members.

- Forums, RSS feeds, and E-votings are the most popular services among NGOs, but still are available in less than 10% of the sites.

SUMMARY OF GREEK NGOS PRESENCE

- The results are not very encouraging, as far as it concerns the virtualization of NGOs through the use of new media.

- Successful paradigms from politics (e.g. Obama campaign), corporate web sites (e.g. Microsoft) and international NGOs (e.g Greenpeace) show that there is still place for Greek NGOs to expand and adapt to the new technologies.

- Given the fact that the NGOs of the sample are strongly connected with public awareness and people's participation in decision making and in acting in common, the results, concerning the penetration of Web 2.0 services into NGO websites, are even more disappointing.

CONCLUSIONS

- This research attempted to assess NGOs' websites in terms of usability of design and content and in practicability of services.

- We examined the web sites' publicity and the participation of members. We focused on the use of Web 2.0 social tools in the service of NGO members.

- We defined a detailed set of criteria that cover all possible usability and sociability aspects and carefully assessed our sample.

- The same set of criteria can be applied to other types of organizations that capitalize on active virtual presence.

- It is on our next plans to expand this research to more NGOs that have different features and orientation. It would also be very interesting to re-evaluate our sample after a period of time and evaluate the comparative results.

Thank you for your time and patience

Any questions?