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Title:
Assessment of teamwork and
coordination at the end of year 1
of the project

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Title: Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 of the project

Summary / Contents:

A quality assurance mechanism regarding teamwork and coordination has been in place as part of the work package Quality Assurance (WP 3) of the iPEN project (WP leader: Dr. Katerina Zourou, Web2Learn, Greece). The purpose of this mechanism is to offer an insightful look at the internal processes regarding team coordination from the project launch (in October 2017) until the end of year 1 (October 2018) and to identify issues that need to be improved or reconsidered (cf. Synthesis). It is thus a feature leading to the ongoing improvement of the project. Results of this report will be communicated to the project manager and all partners and action points (from the Synthesis) will be implemented.

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 2 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

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Table of Contents

1. SCOPE	2
2. STRUCTURE OF THE ASSESSMENT MECHANISM	3
3. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	3
4. ANALYSIS OF REPLIES	4
4.1. DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT	4
4.2. LEADERSHIP	7
4.3. DISTRIBUTION OF TASKS	7
4.4. TIMETABLE AND COORDINATION	10
4.5. PLANNING AND COORDINATION	13
5.1. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE PROJECT COORDINATOR	15
6. SYNTHESIS	18
7. ANNEX	18

1. SCOPE

A quality assurance mechanism regarding teamwork and coordination has been in place as part of the work package Quality Assurance (WP 3) of the iPEN project (WP leader: Dr. Katerina Zourou, Web2Learn, Greece). The purpose of this mechanism is to offer an insightful look at the internal processes regarding team coordination from the project launch (in October 2017) until the end of year 1 (October 2018) and to identify issues that need to be improved or reconsidered (cf. Synthesis). It is thus a feature leading to the ongoing improvement of the project. Results of this report will be communicated to the project manager and all partners and action points (from the Synthesis) will be implemented.

The same survey will be launched at end of year 2 of the project (October 2019) and at final stage as well (September 2020). A comparison of achievements throughout the three surveys will be made for the final report of the project.

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 3 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

2. STRUCTURE OF THE ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

Among other assessment mechanisms (brainstorming session, individual interviews), we opted for an online survey which has been delivered as a Google form (see annex). Partners were identified by name but their identity is kept secret as data has been anonymized by the author of this report. Full identity can be disclosed to EACEA upon request.

The assessment form contains 5 sections, each addressing a dimension related to project coordination and leadership, namely:

1. Decision-making procedures
2. Leadership
3. Distribution of tasks between partners;
4. Timetable and communication
5. Planning and coordination
6. Advantages and disadvantages of the coordinator

Each section is composed by specific questions whose replies are analyzed hereafter. A Synthesis (last part of this report) completes the analysis. For each question we offer raw data in the form of charts or tables accompanied by a short analysis produced by the author of this report. The approach of data analysis gives floor to divergent points of view in a constructive way and translates partners' comments into improvement actions (cf. Synthesis).

3. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

28 individuals replied to the questionnaire from each of the 14 partners of the iPEN consortium. Partners were asked to reply to the questionnaire with at least one representative of their institution. From some partner institutions we were able to gather more replies (Politecnico di Milano: 4; Technological Educational Institute of Crete: 4; University of Twente: 3; Bar Ilan University: 3). This distribution is extremely positive, firstly because replies cover the full partnership, therefore representativeness is high. Secondly, because all respondents are different (we were able to check this through the names in each questionnaire- they were anonymized at reporting stage), as individuals from the same institution but with different backgrounds (scholars, administrative staff) were able to express their opinion on common issues.

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 4 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

Your institution

28 responses

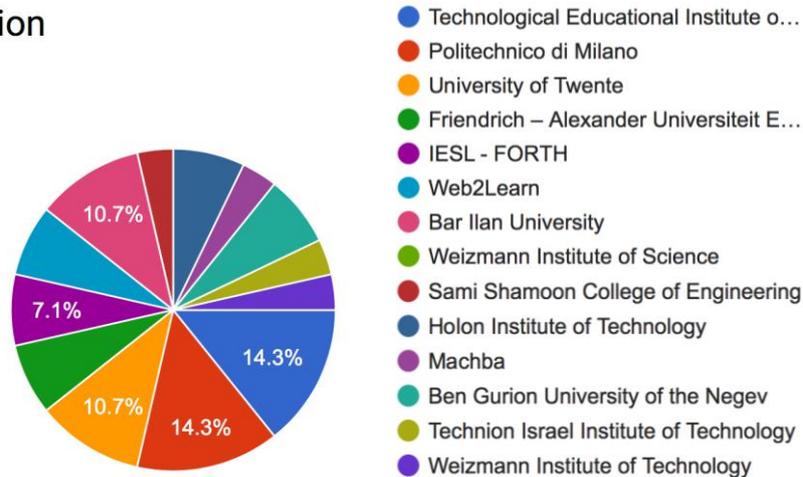


Figure 1: profile of respondents

4. ANALYSIS OF REPLIES

In this part of the report we analyze replies to the survey section by section.

4.1. DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

This section corresponds to questions (Q) 3 to 6 and aims to give a general appreciation of team coordination and project management. It is the next sections that give a more detailed and nuanced picture of internal working processes of the project team.

Replies to this section show a very satisfactory image. Partners' understanding of their contribution to the project (Q3) receives a top score. All respondents claim that they are able to contribute to the project outcomes at some extent. This element may be compared to Q10 ("are you aware of your responsibilities?") also receiving a top score (see section 4.3).

Q3 From your investment to the project so far (October 2018) do you feel you are able to contribute to the project outcomes to same extent?

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 5 of 21
		Version : 1.1 Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

27 responses



Figure 2: partners' investment

Partners also believe that all relevant information is available in due time (Q4).

Q4 Is all relevant information available in due time?

28 responses

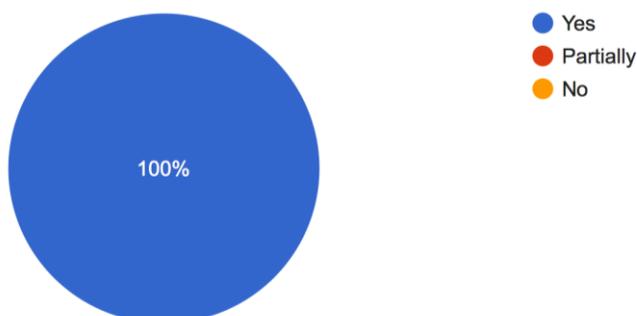


Figure 3: Availability of information

The overall quality of project management receives an outstanding score. In Q5, with 5/5 as maximum score, 1 respondent gave a 3/5 score, 5 respondents gave a 4/5 score and 22 respondents gave a 5/5 score for project management. This is a rare and outstanding score for a partnership with the originality of a Programme - Partner countries cooperation as in iPEN, plus the complexity of managing a big consortium (14 partners) composed by various profiles of partners (HEIs and SMEs) and disciplines.

Q5 Can you rate the overall quality of project coordination until now?

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 6 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

28 responses

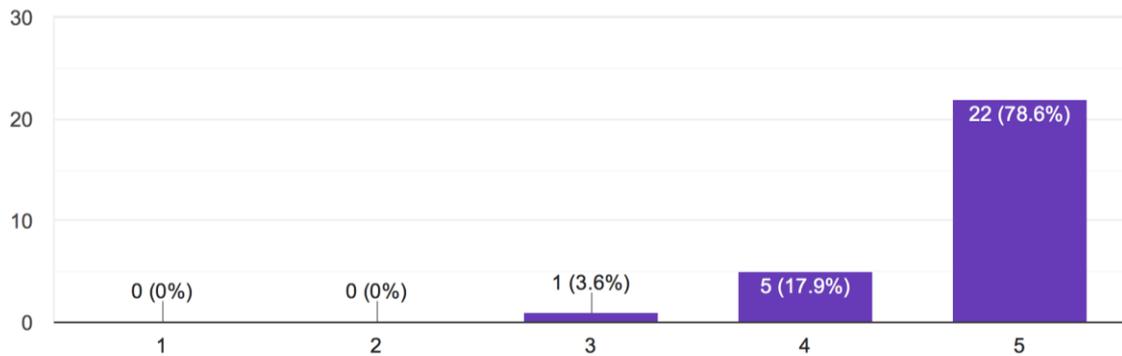


Figure 4: overall quality of project coordination

The most significant outcome of this first section of the survey is that all replies are (fully or partially) positive about project management and team coordination, and in some cases the team fully agrees on methods and procedures developed so far.

Partners were invited to express their opinions about project coordination in an open-ended question. All replies are provided below, without any interference of the author.

Q6 If you wish to make any comment regarding to the project coordination please use the box below

- I very much welcome online meetings. Exclusively email communication is not so good, because it is centralized (from the coordinator to the partners) and also because we lose contact with other partners. I am in favor of regular online meetings as a mechanism of group cohesion and smooth collaboration among us, on a more horizontal way of working.
- The coordination guidance is targeted and thus all partners contributions are complementary.
- I hope to have the same fantastic coordination till the end of the project
- So far so good :-)
- The best contribution for the coordination are regularly meetings which are organized very well
- I suggest that messages will be combined to avoid many Emails. Namely, to collect news and messages and to send not more than once a week.
- The main problems until now are (a) the not involvement of all the Work-Package Leaders to what has been assigned to them (see Bar Ilan); (b) the partners do not get the initiative to disseminate the project through their network channels; and (c) the reporting of the financial expenses has not yet started systematically

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 7 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

- I believe the leadership is excellent.
- Kostas's lead is simply outstanding.

4.2. LEADERSHIP

Question 7 focuses on the level of satisfaction that respondents feel concerning the work package leadership. The respondents were asked to rate the ongoing WP (WP1 preparation). Leader is Dr. Konstantinos Petridis, the project coordinator.

Q7 Can you rate the coordination qualities of work package 1 (Preparation) leader?

27 responses

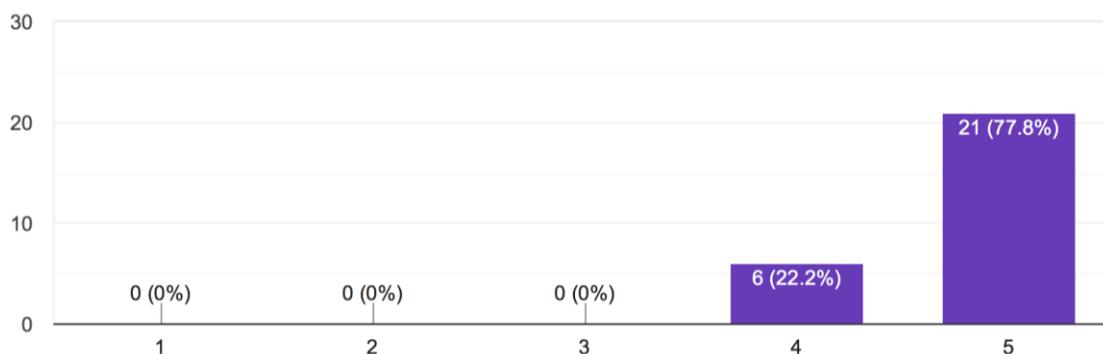


Figure 5: leadership of WP1

Work package 1 (project and financial management) is almost unanimously very highly rated. In Q7, with 5/5 as top score, 6 respondents gave a 4/5 score and 21 respondents gave a 5/5 score. This result is highlighted in the Synthesis of results of the survey.

4.3. DISTRIBUTION OF TASKS

A positive majority reigns in the set of questions regarding the distribution of tasks. Partners have a very clear understanding of the work plan and the timetable (Q8). This also echoes Q9 results, which is the degree of awareness of common project goals as well as the specific goals per institution.

Q8 Is the work plan and timetable clear for all partners?

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 8 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

28 responses

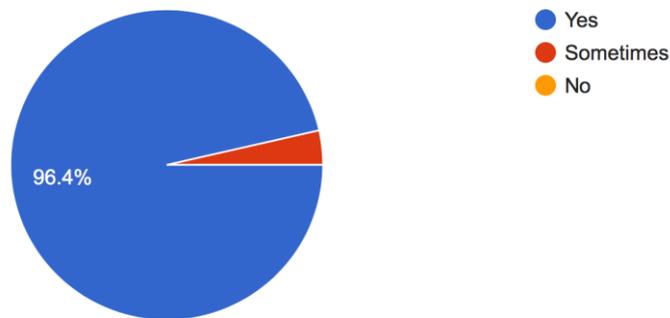


Figure 6: clarity of work plan and timetable

Q9 Are you, as partner, aware of the common project goals and the specific goals for your institution?

28 responses

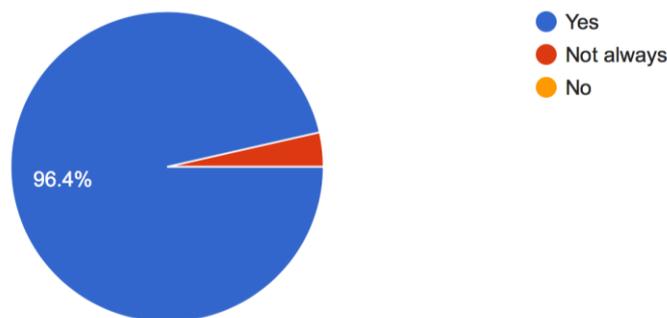


Figure 7: degree of awareness of shared project goals

This is a largely positive result, showing clear definition of scope, duties on the team level and on the partner level. It is very optimistic that respondents from different countries, backgrounds and degree of contribution largely converge in their replies. There is a high level of confidence among respondents.

A very similar result is conveyed in Q10 (degree of awareness of responsibilities) and Q11 (existence of a clear and realistic description of task of both the coordinator and each partner). Partners seem to be fully aware of their tasks, they consider that the coordinator communicates clearly his tasks, and that partners know well what is expected from them and when.

Q10 Are you as partner aware of your responsibilities?

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 9 of 21
		Version : 1.1 Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

28 responses



Figure 8: degree of awareness of partners' responsibilities

Q11 Is there a clear and realistic description of the tasks of the project coordinator and each partner?

27 responses

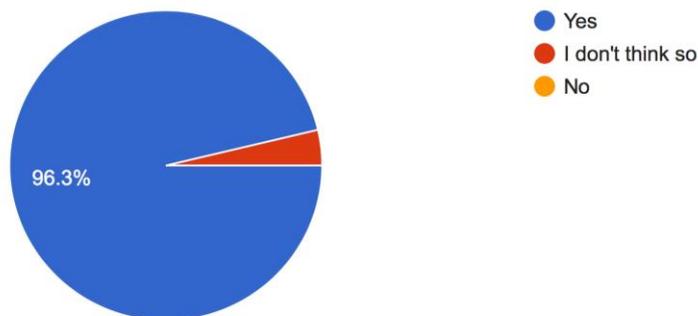


Figure 9: clarity of tasks for partners and for the project coordinator

Regarding division of tasks, partners were able to reply to an open-ended question and all replies are shown below.

Q12 If you wish to make any comment regarding to the "Division of tasks" issues, please use the box below

- Sometimes there is overlap between activities, and there are partners not so active, which results in more work on our side due to the inactivity by other partners.
- I would like to have more duties as now I have plenty of time
- In retrospect it seems that there may not be sufficient budget allocated for staff (especially management/admin). Will have to be part of the contribution of the partner institutions
- I expect suggestions for external evaluators for the modules of the FAU
- -

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 10 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

- There is no balance. Sometimes all the responsibilities are on the coordinator
- From the original plan we made changes and Kostas knew how to reorient the tasks to the various members, while accepting the consent of everyone.

Some concerns are voiced regarding ambiguity of tasks between partners (and possible overlap) and a possible consideration of budget, but both comments will be reassessed in the next iteration of the survey, in September 2019.

4.4. TIMETABLE AND COORDINATION

Overall the survey respondents answer very positively on the issue of timetable and coordination. The strict majority of respondents (25 persons) believe that the timetable with the activities divided by each partner is clear, while only 3 respondents claim this is not always the case (Q13).

Q13 Is there a clear timetable with activities for each partner?

28 responses

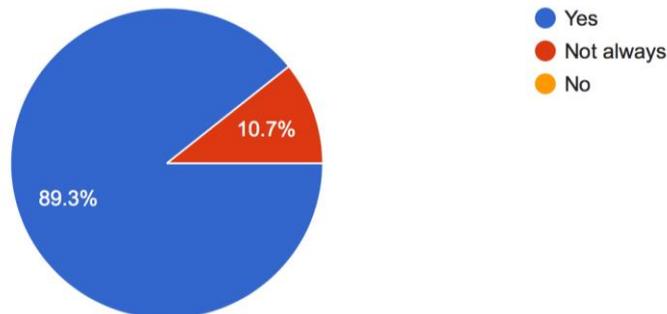


Figure 10: existence of clear timetable with activities per partner

Q14 echoes this picture, where the time schedule for communication between partners and for exchange of materials is available for 25 respondents, but “not always” for two of them and a negative answer from one respondent.

Q14 A time schedule for communication between partners and for exchange of material is available.

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 11 of 21
		Version : 1.1 Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

28 responses

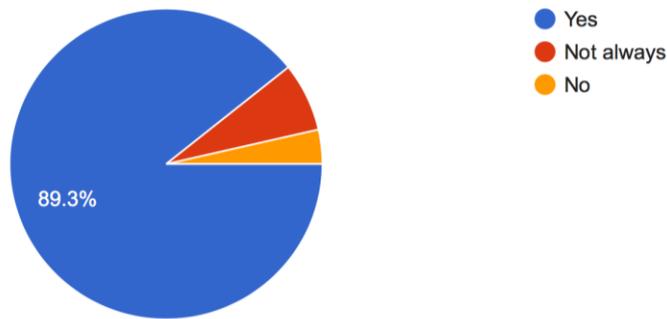


Figure 11: existence of a time schedule

As for meeting deadlines by the coordinator himself, partners believe so totally.

Q15 The coordinator respects the deadlines

27 responses

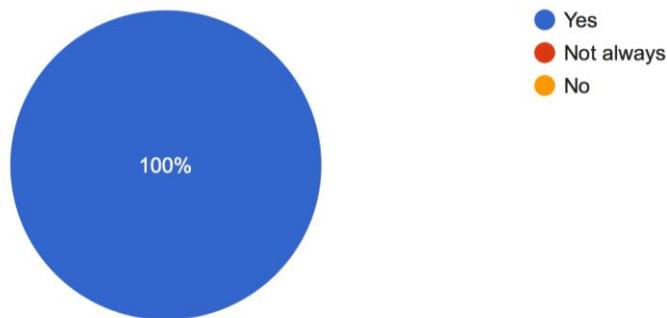


Figure 12: respect of deadlines by the coordinator

When it comes to communication means and methods, partners largely agree that the frequency of internal communication (Q16) is suitable (25 respondents) or even too frequent (3 respondents).

Q16 The frequency of internal communication is...

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 12 of 21
		Version : 1.1 Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

28 responses

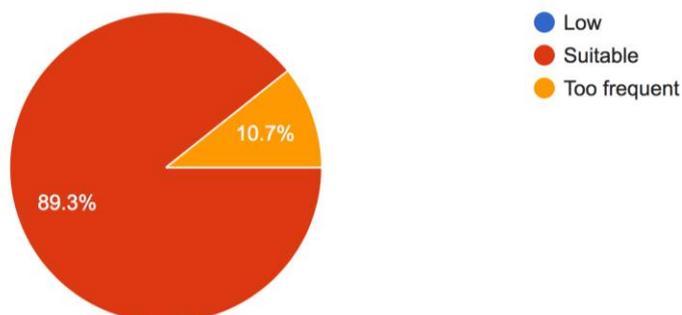


Figure 13: frequency of internal communication

All partners find means of communication appropriate (Q17), one respondent replied “Other” [means of communication possible], and he/she filled in the open-ended question Q18 below.

Q17 The means (email, platform, other types of communication) are

28 responses

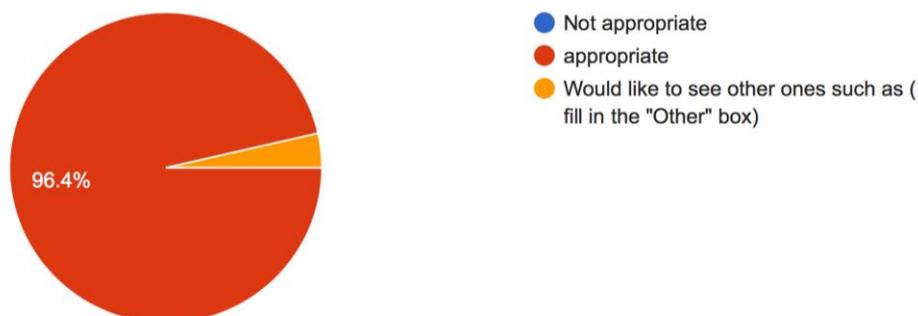


Figure 14: appropriateness of communication means

Two partners welcome more regular online discussions, for instance every two months, at regular intervals, as replies to Q18 indicate.

Q18: other (means of communication) you would like to see?

- Dropbox, Google Drive etc may be helpful too
- No
- -
- A schedule for face - to - face communications should be existed (every two months)
- Phone calls or skype calls

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 13 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

4.5. PLANNING AND COORDINATION

This section corresponds to Q19 to Q22 of the survey. Planning and coordination seen as a coordinator’s task receive very high scores, as the following charts demonstrate. For Q19, project members believe that there is a clear planning and management guidelines. 18 respondents give a 5/5 score and 10 respondents a 4/5 score, both very high in this question.

Q19 Clear planning and management guidelines in the project plan

28 responses

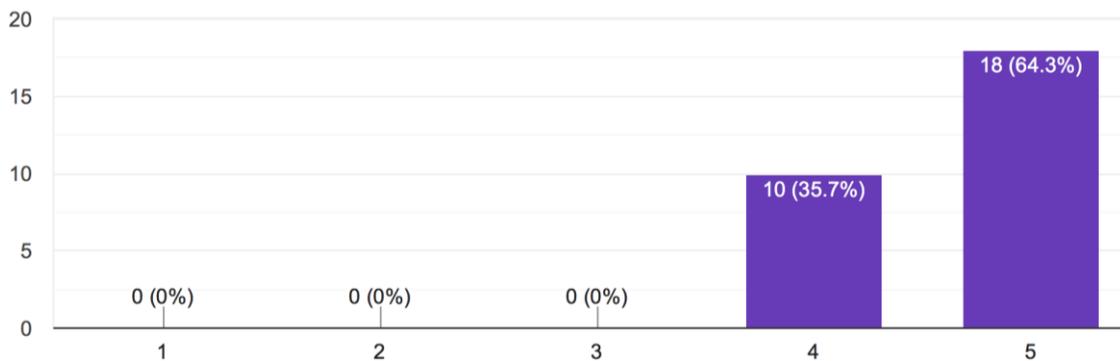


Figure 15: clear planning and management guidelines

Equity of participation (Q20) is also highly valued in the project, with 13 respondents giving a 5/5 score, and 10 respondents a 4/5 score, one participant a 3/5 score and one a 2/5 score. The strict majority thus believes that partners contribute equally.

Q20 Equality of participation

25 responses

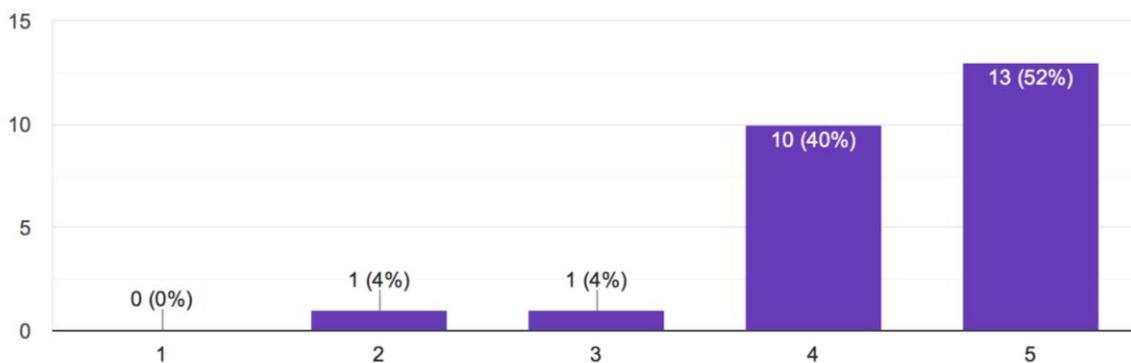


Figure 16: equality of participation

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 14 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status
		Confid : Conf. Level

Partners believe, as in section Distribution of tasks, that roles and responsibilities are well defined (19 respondents giving a 5/5 score, 8 respondents a 4/5 score, one participant a 3/5 score).

Q21 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

28 responses

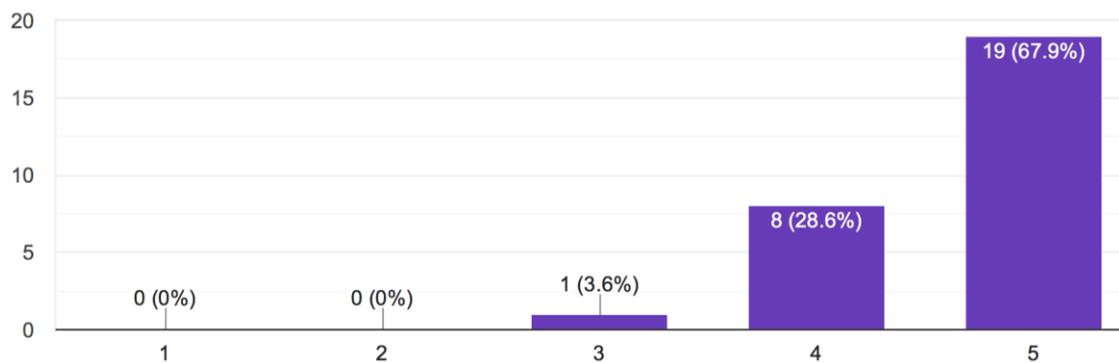


Figure 17: clarity of roles and responsibilities

As for the collaborative effort of sharing knowledge and expertise, project members largely believe that teamwork is promoted effectively (16 persons give 5/5 points, 11 give 4/5 points and 1 respondent gives 3/5 points).

Q22 Promotion of teamwork, sharing of experience and expertise

28 responses

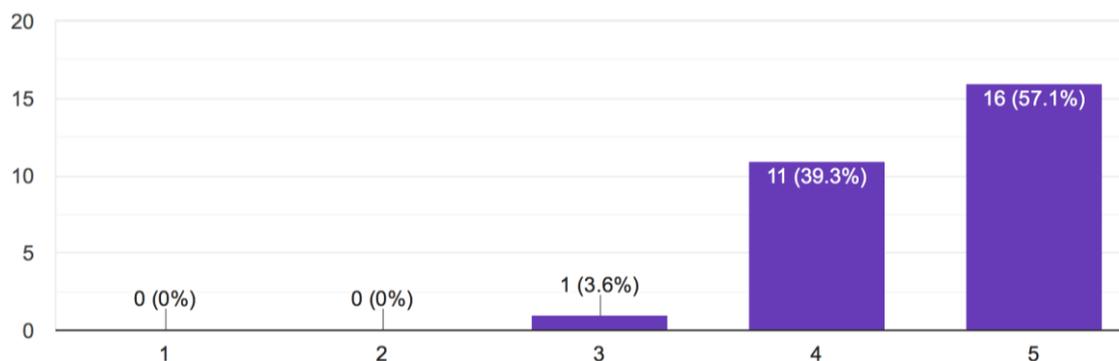


Figure 18: Promotion of teamwork, sharing of experience and expertise

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 15 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

4.6. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

Partners were asked to give their appreciation of the strongest and weakest point of the coordinator. All data are available to EACEA upon request and, by precaution, the identity of respondents has been removed for the principle of anonymity.

Regarding the coordinator's strongest points, firstly one can mention his dedication to his duties and his role ("high commitment", "dedication", "discipline and devotion to the project", "efficiency", "hard working", "leadership". Secondly, it is clear that the majority of respondents consider Dr. Petridis as a talented and skillful project manager ("excellent organizer", "diligent", "perfect management", "integrity"). Thirdly, Dr. Petridis is skillful in making individuals work as a team and contribute to the collaborative effort ("encourage the achievement of the group", "concerned with a balanced distribution of burden", "strong ability to engage and motivate people for collaboration").

Q23 What is the coordinator's strongest point?

- Organization
- High commitment; he is totally engaged in the project
- He has great administration/management skills. His guidance is highly comprehensive and helpful for achieving our project goals.
- Positive Attitude and organization
- Passion for making the Project a success!
- passion, reliability and vision
- He knows the project in depth and is very active
- Emails about requirements sent regularly
- DEDICATION! and experience
- Diligent. Constantly checking the progress of the project.
- great organization skill, leadership
- Its ability to run it in a smooth and clear way
- Excellent organiser
- Efficiency, kindness
- Perfect management
- Strong ability to engage and motivate people for collaboration
- Timely warnings
- Rapid communication, very active in following the aims and meeting the Deadlines.
- Push to achieve the goals, Industrious - works very hard, very positive
- Discipline and Devotion to the project

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 16 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

- His strong character, energy and communication ability
- to encourage the doing and the achievement of the group
- Integrity
- Enthousiasm, strong vision on the project plan
- Keeps his finger on the pulse, does not allow to do negligent work, concerned with a balanced distribution of the burden and everything done in good spirits

Regarding Dr. Petridis' weakest points, it is worth mentioning that several respondents find no weak point at all ("none", 6 occurrences, or "I am not sure", "I do not know"). Among the 28 respondents, almost 1/3 of respondents do not see any weak point at all. Regarding more clear answers on the issue, partners converge in saying that the project coordinator has a too centralized system ("he is very concentrated", "is not very good to distribute work to the rest of partners", "he has to be less concentrated and give more duties to the partners", "perhaps a high concentration of duties; it is like a one-man show sometimes"). Some minor weak points are a possible lack of temper (lack of patience, taking claims as too personal).

Q24 What is the coordinator's weakest point?

- none
- -
- Perhaps a too high concentration of duties (project management, content expert, administrative and financial contact person). It is like a one-man-show sometimes.
- He is not patient at all.
- time constraints
- nothing I can find
- He has to be less concentrated and give more duties to the partners
- Original plan is a very big document
- OVERWORKED!
- I didn't see one.
- None
- he is very concentrated
- The coordinator has not weak points
- Sometimes hectic.
- too impulsive
- Not very good to distribute work to the rest of the partners
- I am not sure
- I don't know
- takes everything personal

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 17 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

Partners were asked for advice on how the project coordination can be improved. Replies are useful in the sense that partners give positive indications on how this can be realized. As in the question above, several persons consider that there should be no change whatsoever (“coordination is good enough”, “I cannot imagine something”, “I do not think you can get a better coordination”, “I am not sure at this stage”). This is highly positive considering that all partners are experienced team members with previous experiences in trans-national cooperation projects, and they consider project coordination outstanding. This does not eliminate some few possible improvements, such as a more balanced task distribution among partners (“urge silent partners to be more active”, “more follow ups”, “a less active project coordinator and more active partners”) and within the local team of TEIoC, as the project manager seem to be all alone. A technical improvement goes into the direction of a more scholar focus at meetings, in which administrative and financial arrangements are too present.

Thirdly, more regular online meetings are welcome, a point raised with respect to Q18 as well.

Q25: please add an idea on how to make the iPEN project coordination better

- I think the project coordinator should be better assisted by his local team, e.g. have a specific person doing the administrative tasks, another for the financial ones, etc. In addition, it is useful to urge 'silent' partners to be more active. Overall a very positive image of the coordinator.
- Monthly progress reports.
- more videos from partners of what they are doing shared with group
- coordination is good enough
- I cannot imagine something
- Continue to manage the project in the same way.
- Meetings should have a larger portion dedicated to the scientific themes of this project, and not focus only on the administrative aspects and soft skills.
- Follow ups
- It's Ok but I would like to the coordinator to be less active and the partners to be more. In my opinion the coordinator had a huge work till now ant is the time to give bigger roles to all the partners (not only to the partner coordinators)
- Inputs for the coordination by participants: e.g. bilateral discussions via e-mail to certain topics
- As I suggested above, to write every month/two weeks a mail with all the info.
- Distribute roles and establish more frequent meetings with them every two months (Skype)
- I am not sure at this time...
- I do not think you can get a better coordination

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 18 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

5. SYNTHESIS

In this section we provide a synthesis of data resulting from the teamwork and coordination survey, with the aim of assisting the partnership in the two last years of the project (from October 2018 to September 2020).

The overall picture of team performance is extremely positive. Having to deal with 14 partners in a short term project, from several EU and non-EU countries, and from different disciplines, it is reasonable to claim that that the team performs extremely well, on task and on time. The project coordinator carries out an outstanding task through the very positive assessment from team members. There is room for improvement, and the recommendations that follow go into this direction.

Recommendations for further action at teamwork and coordination level.

- More involvement from partners and less from the project coordinator; less centralization from the project coordinator.
- Regular online meetings for updates.

6. ANNEX¹

iPEN Project: understanding group processes at the end of year 1

Dear iPEN project partners,
this is a short evaluation form with regards to project coordination and leadership of the iPEN Erasmus+ project. It is conducted at the end of year one of the project's lifetime (October 2018). It has been prepared by the WP3 (Quality Assurance) leader, Katerina Zourou, with the aim of collecting data and improving any ill-defined areas. Your feedback is therefore invaluable. All data provided will remain anonymous.

The form contains several sections, each addressing a dimension related to project coordination and leadership, namely: the distribution of tasks between partners • the work plan and timetable • partners' knowledge of the main goals and results being aimed at • the distribution of responsibilities among partners • the decision-making procedures • the methods of communication between partners and frequency of communication.

We ask you to kindly fill in all fields.

* Required

¹ (online form available at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe37Qolb5jUQAmWrpDxWqu4EsXjM31N3kdDifpoAmGEyLoO/pw/viewform>)

	Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1 Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1	Page : 19 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level



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Your data

Your name

(Your name will be not communicated)

Your answer

Your institution *

(Your institution will not be communicated)

Choose

Decision-making procedures and project management

From your investment in the project so far (until October 2018) do you feel you are able to contribute to the project outcomes to some extent?

Choose

Is all relevant information available in due time?

Yes

Partially

No

Can you rate the overall quality of project coordination until now?

Not suitable

1

2

3

4

5

Very suitable

If you wish to make any comments regarding the project coordination please use the box below

Your answer

Leadership

Can you rate the coordination qualities of Work Package 1 (Preparation)?

poor

1

2

3

4

5

very good

Distribution of tasks

Is the work plan and timetable clear for all partners?

Yes

Sometimes

No

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 20 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

Are you, as partner, aware of the common project goals and the specific goals for your institution?

Yes

Not always

No

Are you, as partner, aware of your responsibilities?

Yes

I don't think so

No

Is there a clear and realistic description of the tasks of the project co-ordinator and each partner?

Yes

I don't think so

No

If you wish to make any comment regarding to the "Distribution of tasks" issues, please use the box below

Your answer

Timetable and communication

There is a clear timetable with activities for each partner

Choose

A time schedule for communication between partners and for exchange of material is available. *

Choose

The co-ordinator respects the deadlines

Choose

The frequency of internal communication is...

Choose

The means (email, platform, other types of communication) are

Choose

Other (means of communication) you would like to see?

Your answer

Planning and coordination

Clear planning and management guidelines in the project plan

Poor

1

2

3

4

5

Very good

Equity of participation

Poor

1

2

3

4

5

Very good

	<p>Assessment of teamwork and coordination at the end of year 1</p> <p>Deliverable ID: D.3.1.1</p>	Page : 21 of 21
		Version : 1.1
		Date : 22/11/2018
		Status : Status Confid : Conf. Level

Clarity of roles and responsibilities

Poor

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Very good

Promotion of teamwork, sharing of experience and expertise *

Poor

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Very good

What is the coordinator's strongest point?

Your answer

What is the coordinator's weakest point?

Your answer

Please add an idea of how to make the iPEN projects' coordination better

Your answer

SUBMIT