

CercleS survey: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Language Teaching in Higher Education

Webinar 30 June 2021



Working Group



Dr Sabina
Schaffner
(Coordinator)

Universität
Zürich
(Cercles
Executive C.)



Dr Nebojša
Radić

University of
Cambridge
(AULC)



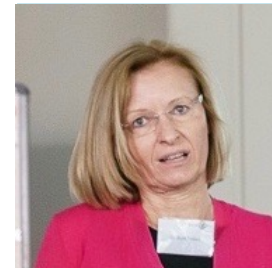
M.A. Isabella
Stefanutti

University
of Bath
(AULC)



Dr Katarína
Zamborova

Ekonomická
Univerzita v
Bratislave
(CASALC)



Dr Ruth
Tobias

Freie
Universität
Berlin (AKS)





Cercles

WEBINAR

30 June, 16:00-17:30 CET

- Presentation of selected main outcomes
- Comparison of teachers' and managers' perspectives
- Presentation of first identified challenges for future language teaching and learning in HE



Why another survey about the pandemic?

Topic with a large impact on the future of Language Education

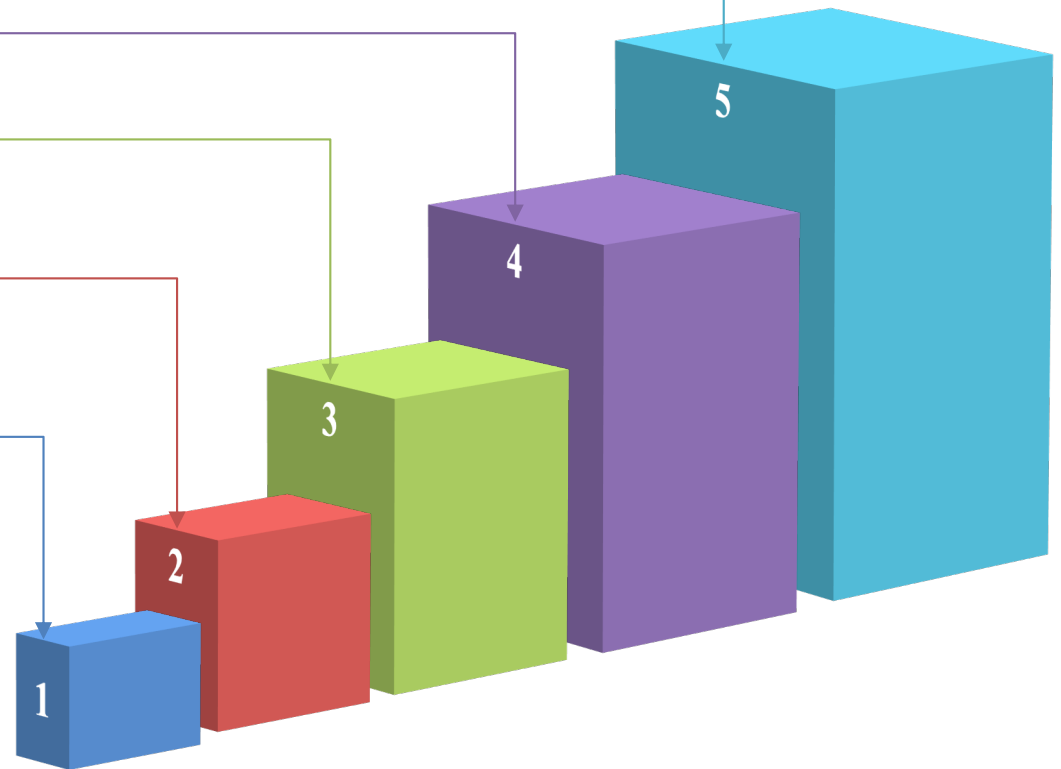
Many open-text questions (25%/40%)

Focus on teaching in Higher Education

Responses from teachers and managers

Europe-wide range

CercleS survey: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Language Teaching in HE



Webinar Content



Survey overview

Sabina Schaffner



Changes in professional practice

Nebojša Radić



Lessons learnt

Isabella Stefanutti



Future of language teaching and learning

Ruth Tobias



Challenges

Katarína Zamborova



Further action

Sabina Schaffner

Main questions (after background information)

Change in professional practice (14 q.)



- Defining support by (University) management and peers
- Rating challenging aspects of the pandemic
- Useful resources
- Changes in teaching practice and regulations

Lessons learnt during the pandemic (7 q.)

- Impact of social distancing on f2f teaching
- Remote synchronous teaching in comparison to f2f teaching
- Favourite teaching pattern
- Impact of new mode of delivery on development of language skills and assessment

The future of language learning and teaching in Higher Education (5 q.)

- Overall perception
- Changes planned and support needed

Change in professional practice (12 q.)



- Defining support by (University) management and peers
- Rating challenging aspects of the pandemic
- Useful resources
- Changes in regulations

Lessons learnt during the pandemic (7 q.)

- Suitable working tools
- Changes observed in team(s)
- Remote Leadership (communication, team cohesion)
- Well-being of staff

The future of language learning and teaching in Higher Education (5 q.)

- Overall perception
- Changes planned and support needed





OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY





OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Survey open: 30 March – 5 May 2021

Sent to 365 institutional members and 23 associate members for further dissemination among teaching and management staff

Response rate

- Teachers' survey: 725; Managers' survey: 183
- All data anonymised, no data excluded
- Responses from all institutional members and almost all associate members, well distributed range of respondents
- In both surveys, some of the institutional members are overrepresented, others underrepresented
- Top respondents on descending order by country:
Teachers' survey: UK, Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland
Managers' survey: UK, Germany, Spain, Italy



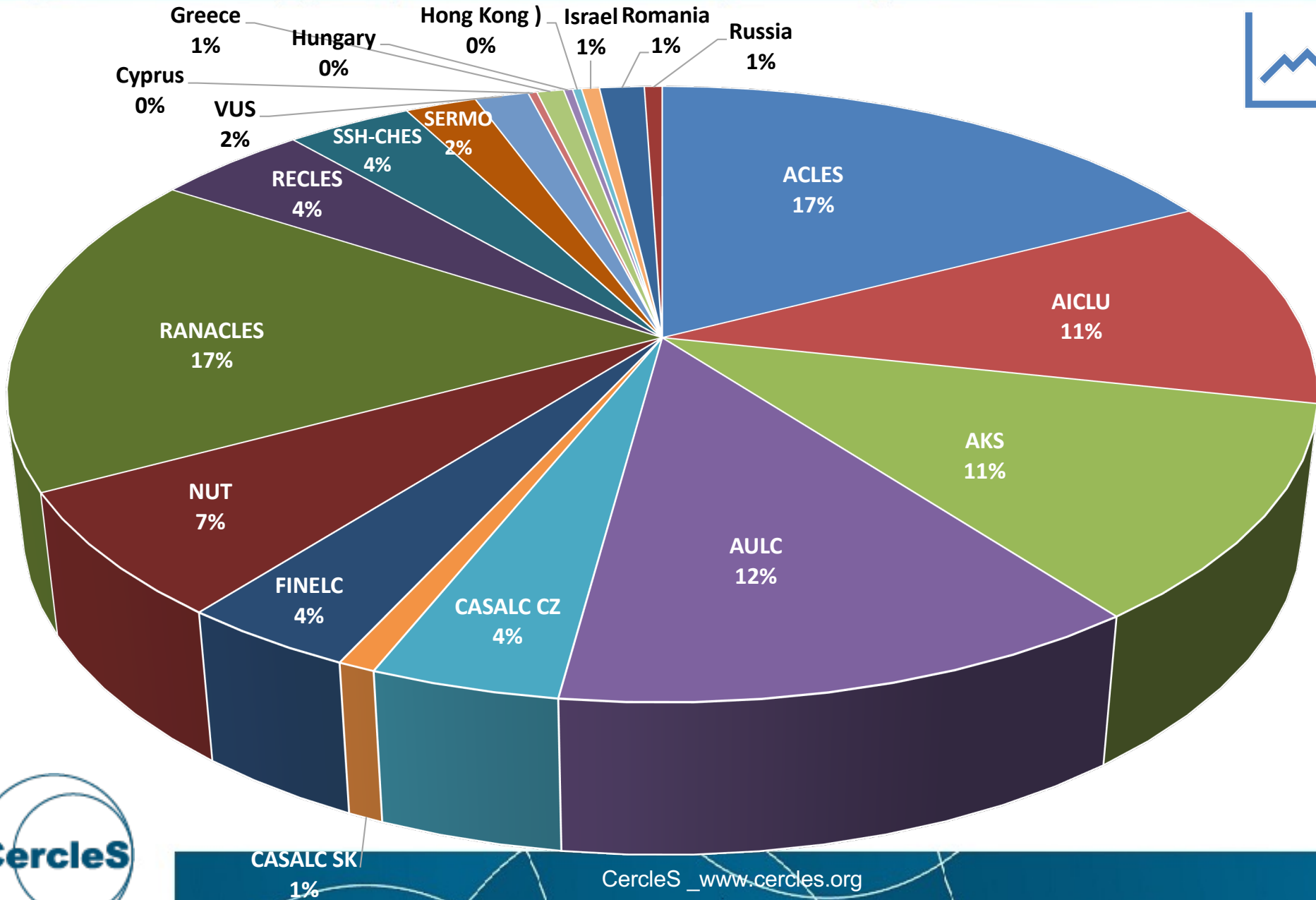


OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Statistics

Teachers Survey	Managers Survey
Confidence level	
99%	90%
Z-value	
The Z-value based on the confidence level is constant and represents the usual mean or denotes the number of standard deviations that lie between the chosen value and the population average.	
2.58	1.65
Standard deviation (p)	
This value is usually set to = 0.5. It indicates how densely the data cluster around the mean. A value of 50% (worse case) ensures that the sample size is large enough.	
0.5	0.5
Population size (N)	
6000-17'000 (16 – 45 teachers per institution) Chosen Population size 6'000 (to be on the safe side)	400-700 (1-2 managers per institution) Chosen Population size 400 (to be on the safe side)
Sample size	
Sample size must be smaller than the number of responses.	
599	162
Margin of error (confidence interval) e	
For questions with many answer options, the percentages are small; therefore a small margin of error makes sense; 5% is appropriate.	
With a probability of 99% (confidence level), this result of the survey is true with a margin of error (confidence interval = accuracy) of +/-5% for the entire population.	With a probability of 90% (confidence level), this result of the survey is true with a margin of error (confidence interval = accuracy) of +/-5% for the entire population.

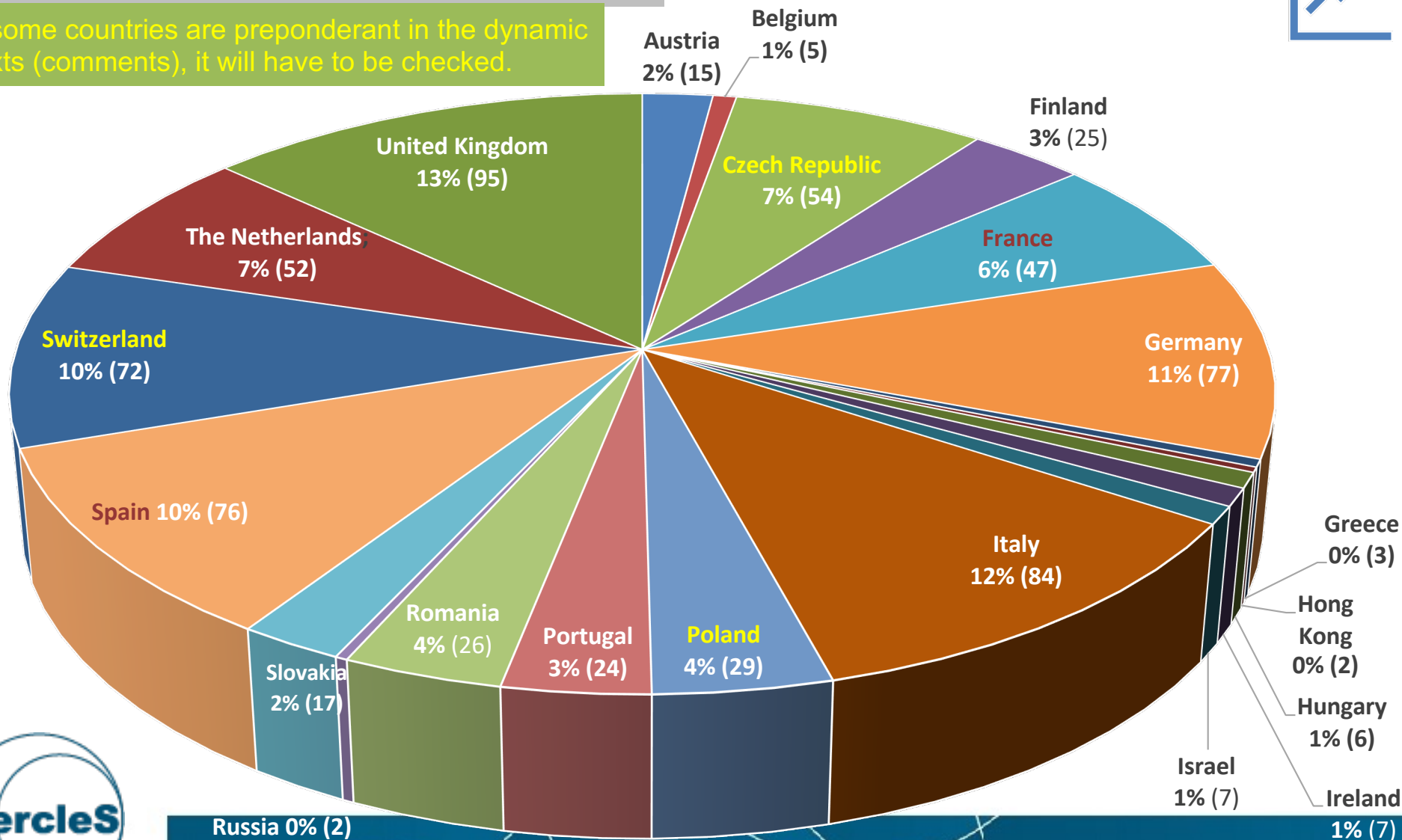
CercleS Members numbers



Survey overview – Teachers response rate

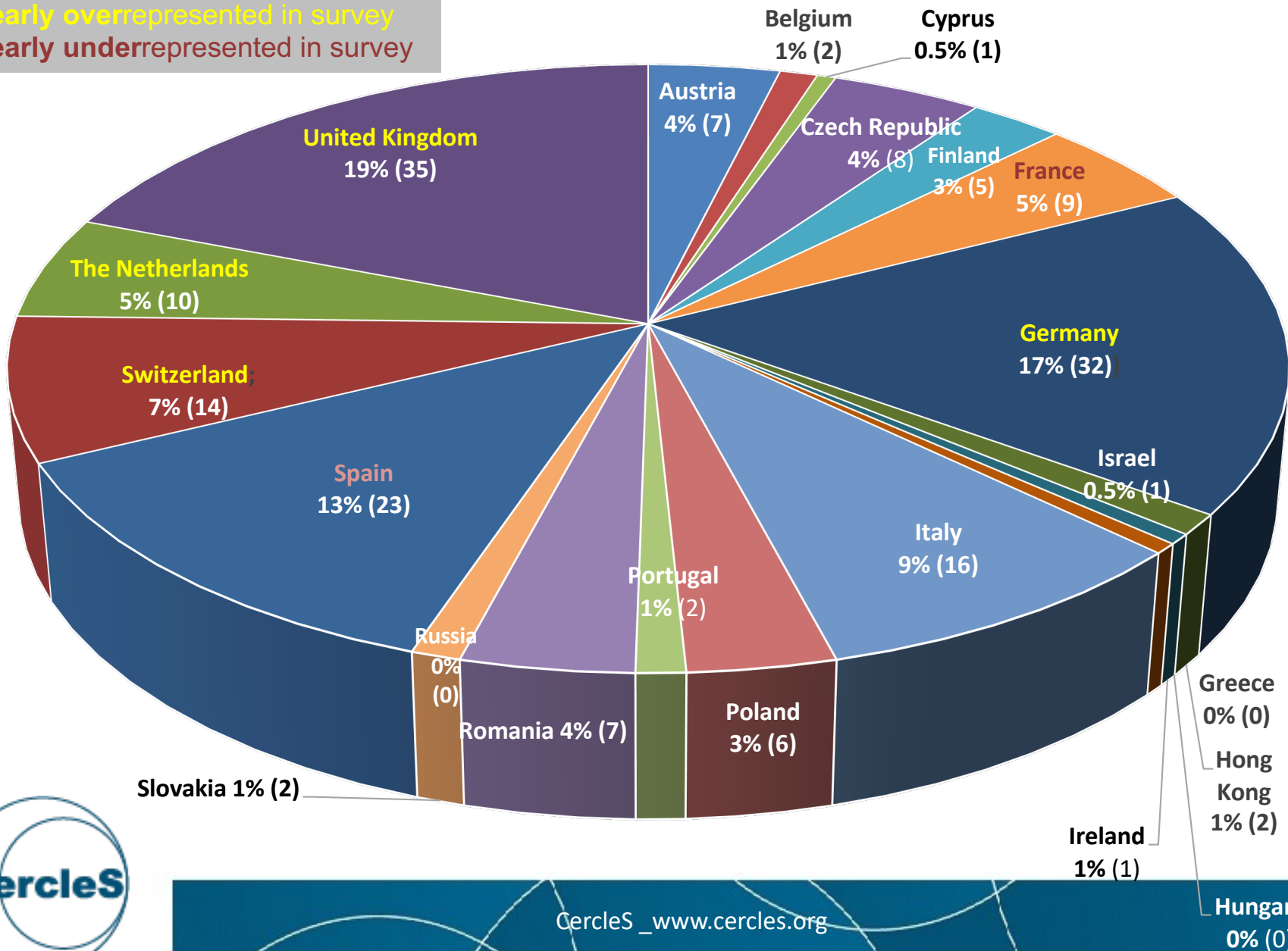
Clearly overrepresented in survey
Clearly underrepresented in survey

If some countries are preponderant in the dynamic texts (comments), it will have to be checked.



Survey overview – Managers response rate

Clearly overrepresented in survey
Clearly underrepresented in survey



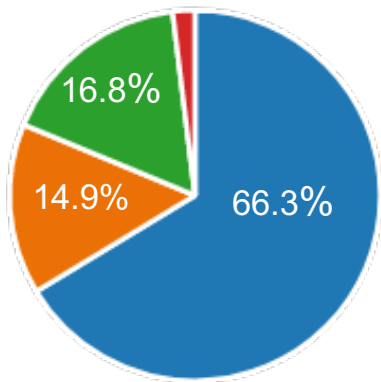
Survey overview



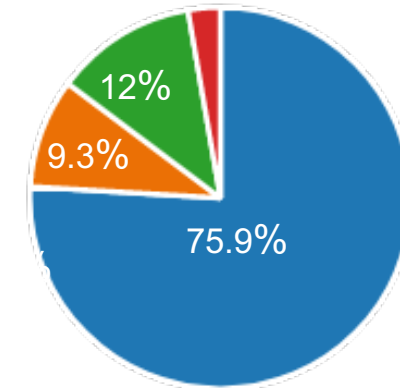
Teachers

Managers

Place of work



Place of work	Teachers	Managers
Language Centre	481	139
Department with a degree pro...	108	17
Both	122	22
Other	14	5

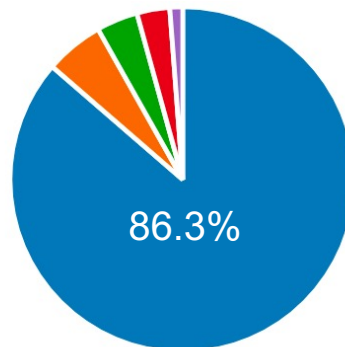


Role in institution

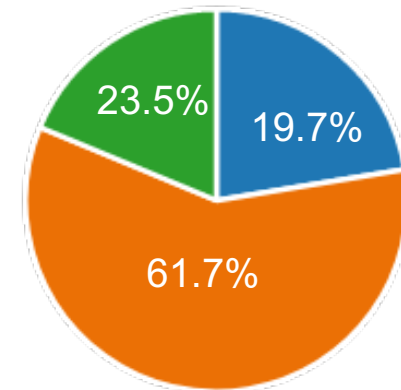
Total responses: 747

Total responses: 192

Role in institution	Count
Language Teacher/Lecturer/Te...	645
Assistant Professor	41
Associate Professor	29
Professor	23
Consultant in Self-Access Cent...	9



Role in institution	Count
Professor with managerial duti...	43
Manager/Director	113
Programme Coordinator	36

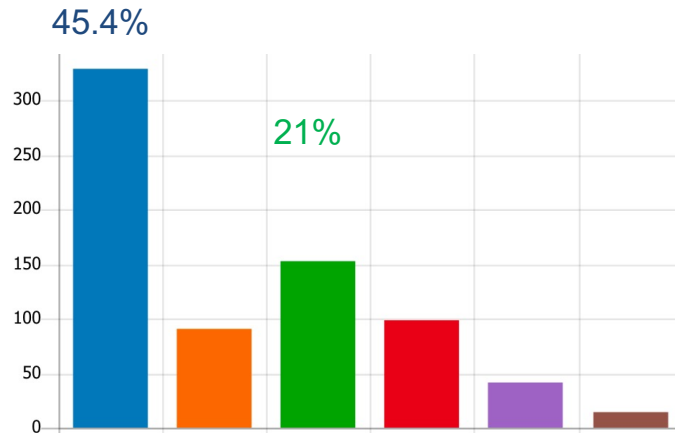


Survey overview

Contract

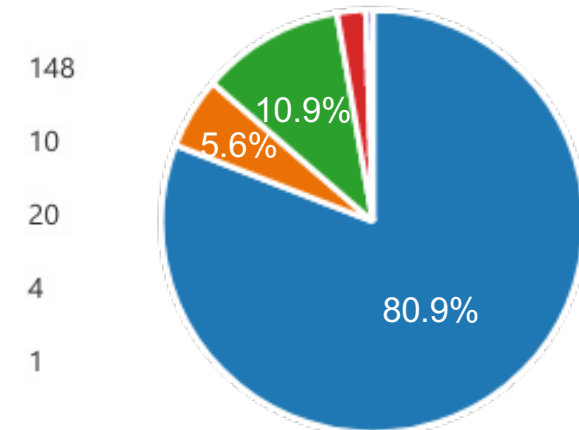


Teachers

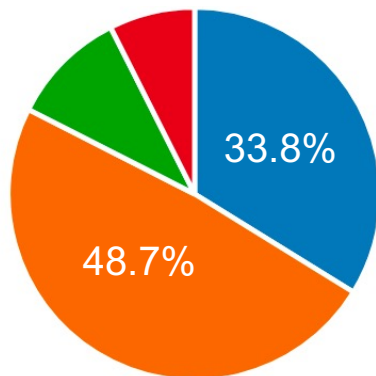


Full-time permanent contract	329
Full-time fixed-term contract	90
Part-time permanent contract	152
Part-time fixed-term contract	98
I am only employed on an ho...	42
Sonstiges	14

Managers

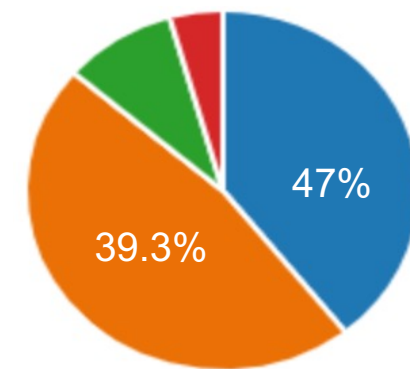


Start of working differently



In early March 2020	245
In mid-March 2020	353
In late March 2020	73
After March 2020	54

72
86
17
8





CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

(Questions 6-19)





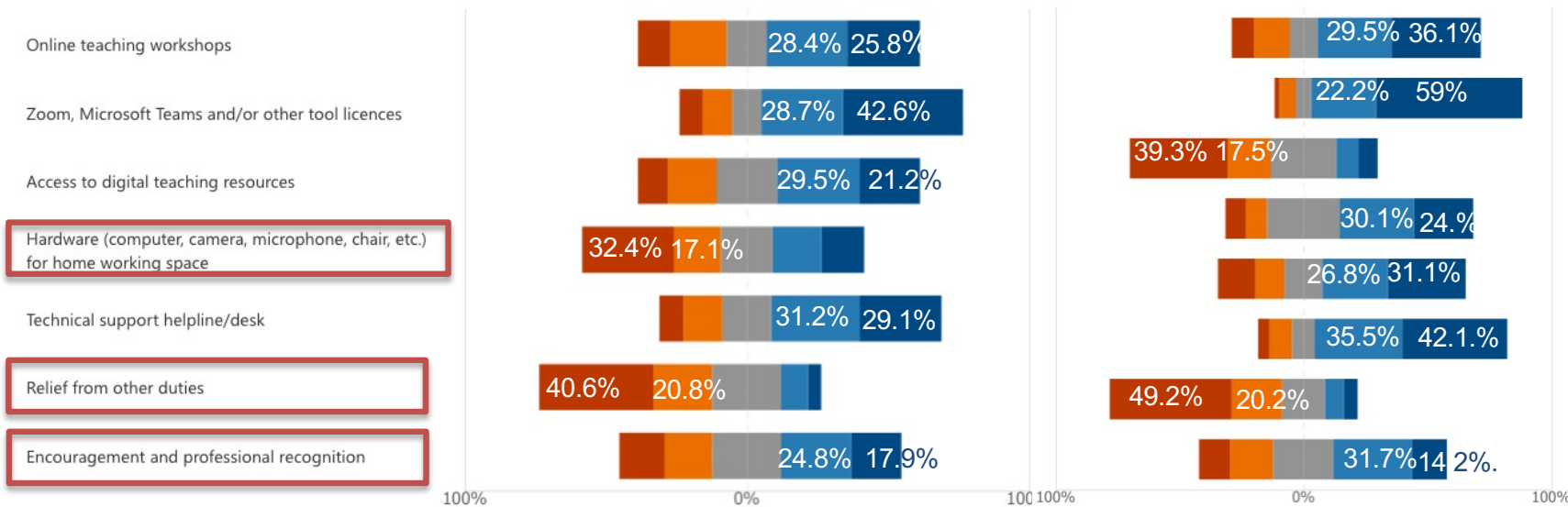
CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Q 09 / Q 10: At this critical time, in which way did you feel that your university and/or your management provided you with adequate training and ongoing support?

Definitely disagree Mostly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Mostly agree Definitely agree

TEACHERS

MANAGERS



In general, teachers and managers rated the support in a similar way.
 Managers felt better equipped with hardware than teachers.
And both teachers and managers felt that there was not much relief from other duties.
Less than half of both groups' respondents said they experienced encouragement and recognition.





CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

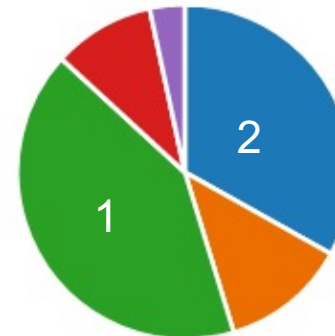
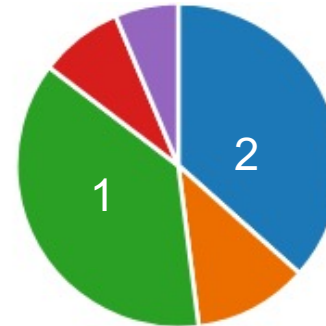
Q 11: What support did you receive from your immediate team (e.g. from your colleagues and management)? You can choose more than one answer.

TEACHERS

Peer training	416
Expert coaching	130
Support meetings	425
I received no support	95
Sonstiges	72

MANAGERS

Peer training	98
Expert coaching	36
Support meetings	123
I received no support	29
Sonstiges	10



Support meetings followed by **Peer training** were mentioned as the default forms of team support for **both teachers and management**

In some cases, no support was offered.





CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

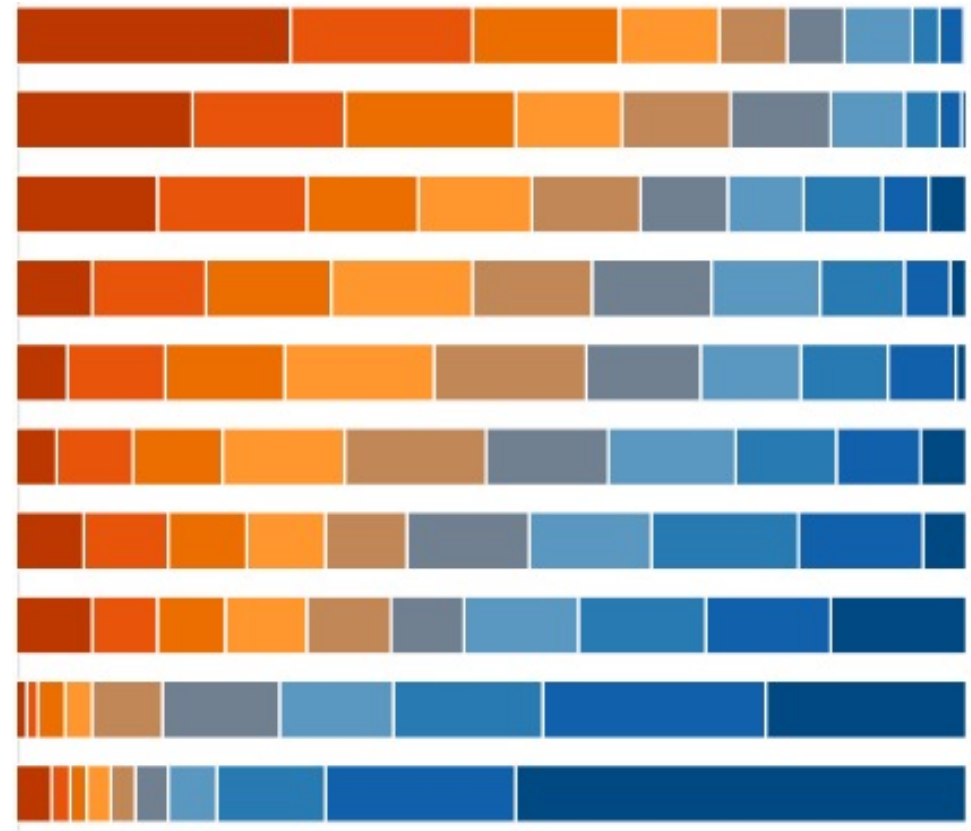
Q 13: Could you please rate, starting from the most difficult, how challenging it was for you to deal with the following aspects of the pandemic? **TEACHERS**

Rank Options

1. Coping with an increased workload
2. Coping with stress and uncertainties ...
3. Lack of knowledge about online teaching
4. Lack of support in the change of teaching practice
5. Change in rapport with students needing more support
6. Lack of technology required to work from home effectively
7. Coping with loneliness/with home schooling/home caring
8. Not knowing when I could visit my loved ones abroad
9. Difficulty in being led remotely
10. Fear of losing my job

First choice

Last choice





CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

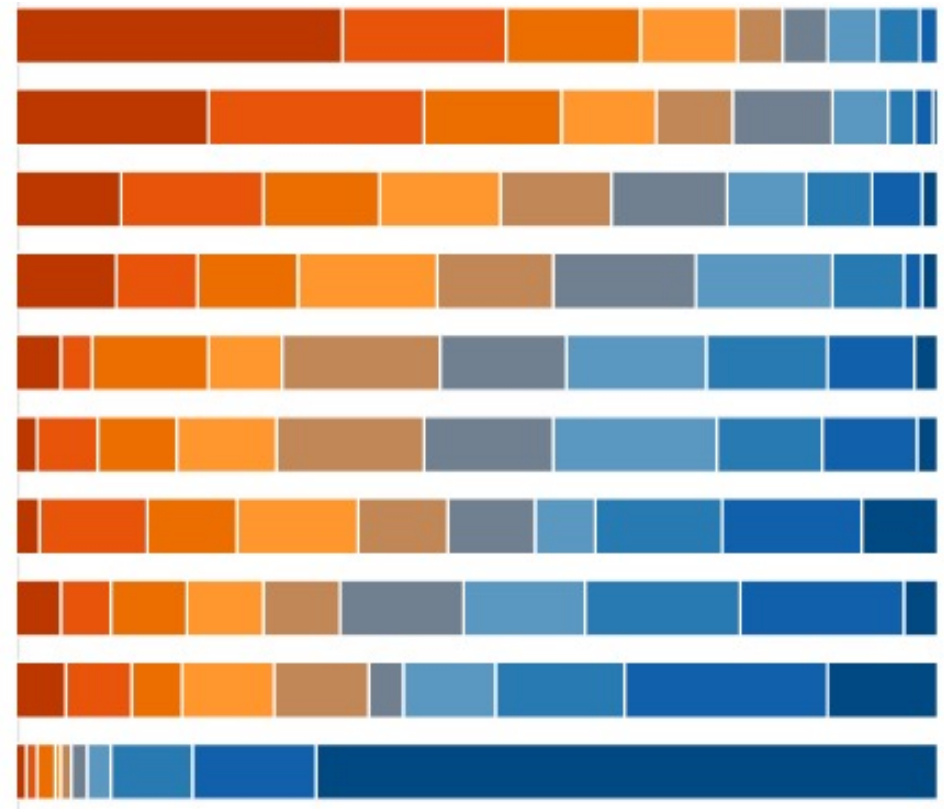
Q 14: Could you please rate, starting from the most difficult, how challenging it was for you to deal with the following aspects of the pandemic? **MANAGERS**

Rank Options

1. Coping with an increased workload
2. Coping with stress and uncertainties ...
3. Lack of knowledge about online teaching
4. Lack of support in the change of teaching practice
5. Change in rapport with students needing more support
6. Lack of technology required to work from home effectively
7. Coping with loneliness/with home schooling/home caring
8. Not knowing when I could visit my loved ones abroad
9. Difficulty in being led remotely
10. Fear of losing my job

First choice

Last choice



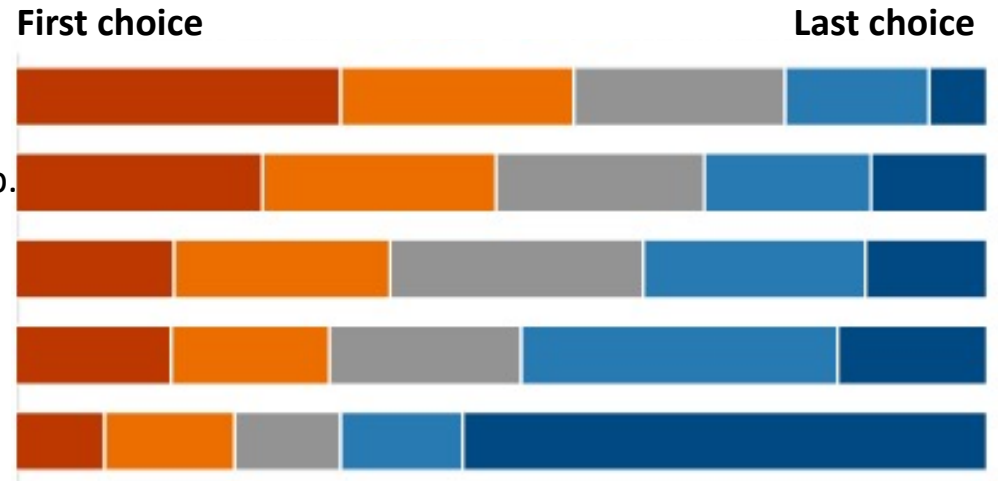


CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Q 14: Starting from the most useful, what resource did you find most useful? **TEACHERS**

Rank Options

1. The online support organised spontaneously by my peers
2. The online support about remote teaching org. by my dep.
3. The IT support organised centrally by my university
4. Webinars and online courses accessible generally
5. Health and well-being practices (for instance exercise, mindfulness)



Support by peers best aligned to specific needs
testimony of culture of exchange ! ?



Managers ranked the resources identically!

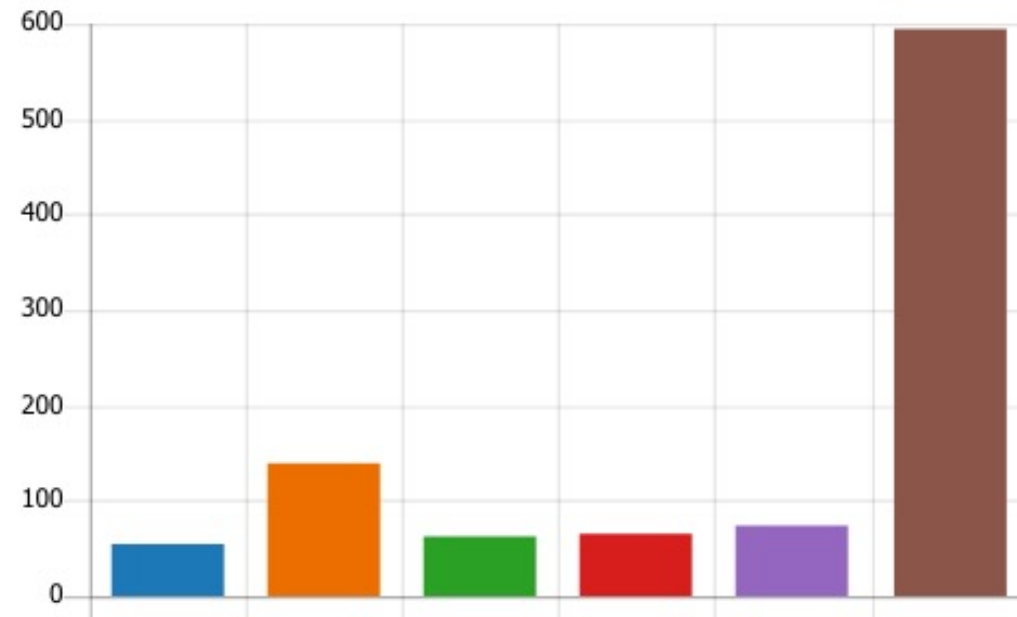




CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Q 15: How would you describe your teaching practice in spring/summer 2020? You can choose more than one answer. **TEACHERS**

● Face-to-face (F2F) classes	54
● Web-enhanced (F2F and VLE, ...	138
● Blended learning (50% + of co...	63
● Hybrid synchronous (F2F class...	65
● Hybrid asynchronous (F2F cl...	73
● Online remote	594

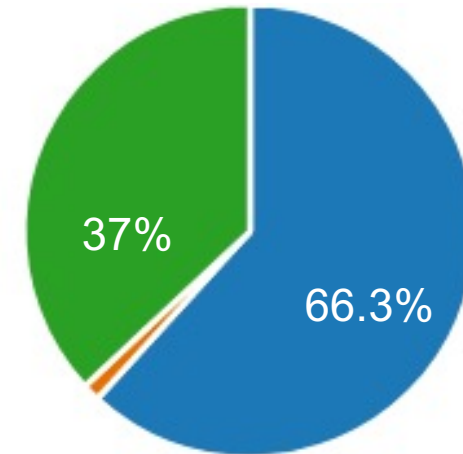




CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Q 16: Were the learning outcomes of your courses achieved? **TEACHERS**

● Yes	448
● No	9
● Partially	268



Interestingly enough, the majority was confident and chose „yes“.
“Partially” is tricky as it can be interpreted as “NO”.
⇒ The outcomes will be aligned with results about the “learning outcomes” in the next section.





CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Q 17: Please give us more details about your answer to question 16. **TEACHERS**

The learning outcomes were achieved.

I've changed the pedagogical idea of my course so the goals could be met

...yes

Since most of my courses have been organised around blended learning and autonomous self-study activities, the lockdown and pandemic has not really changed my teaching.

I moved all my materials to Moodle. I created some extra materials to make it possible for students to do online remote classes. I assessed the process and the products. We had no problems achieving outcomes.

...partially

Weaker students would need definitely more face-to-face communication, the online form was not efficient enough.

...no

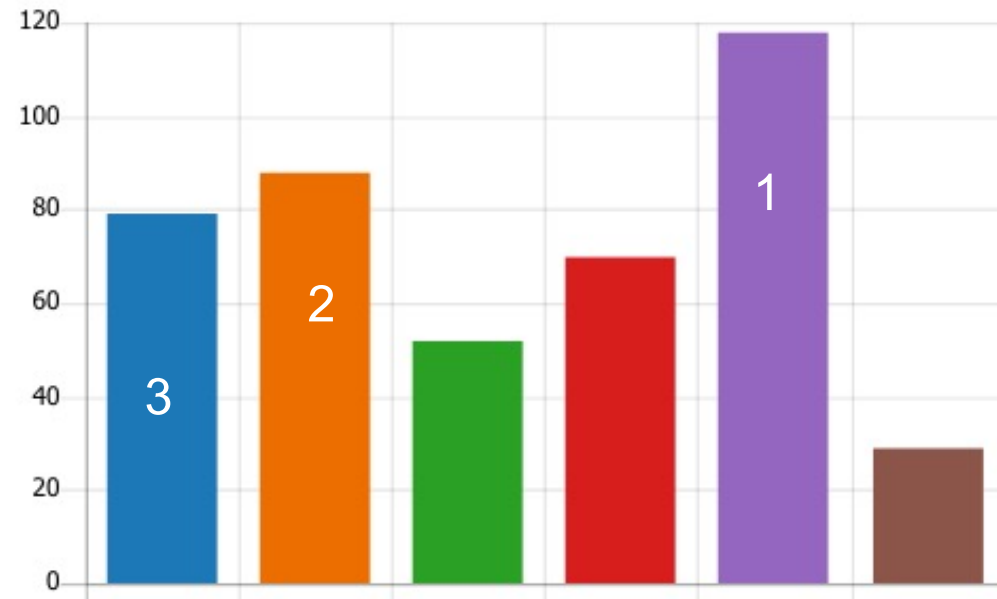




CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Q 16: What relevant rules and regulations, if any, were modified during this period? You can choose more than one answer. **MANAGERS**

● Number of students per class	79
● Attendance requirements	88
● Teaching duties	52
● Overall workload	70
● Work conditions	118
● Accessibility and diversity	29



Comments confirm data. There are no other, additional issues emerging.

Accessibility and diversity came low possibly because

- a number of colleagues did not understand the question and/or
- either the issue is called something different in different institutions/countries
- or it is not a salient point.



LESSONS LEARNT

Q 17: Please comment on your answer to question 16. **MANAGERS**



Leadership

- **High number of online meetings**
- Introduction of flexible working hours
- Leadership became observable.



Management

- **Key decision** often being taken by steering groups and cascaded down to staff.
- Universities set up central COVID committees and technical support units (dissemination of information; communication and networking patterns)
- More administration processes moved to a digital and online format.



No complaints about top down management





LESSONS LEARNT

(Questions 20-26)

→ Teachers

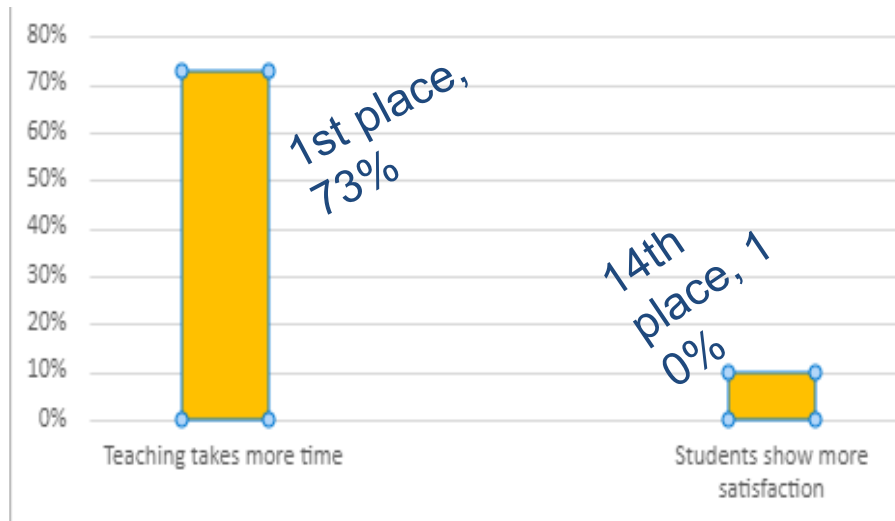




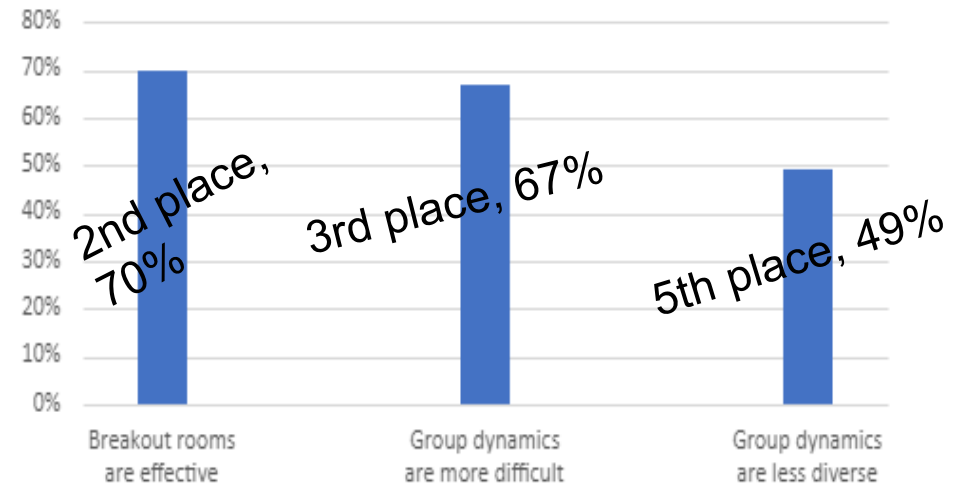
LESSONS LEARNT

Q 21: Thinking about online remote synchronous teaching in comparison to F2F teaching, with which of the following statements do you agree? You can choose more than one answer.

The most and the least chosen answers



Working in groups

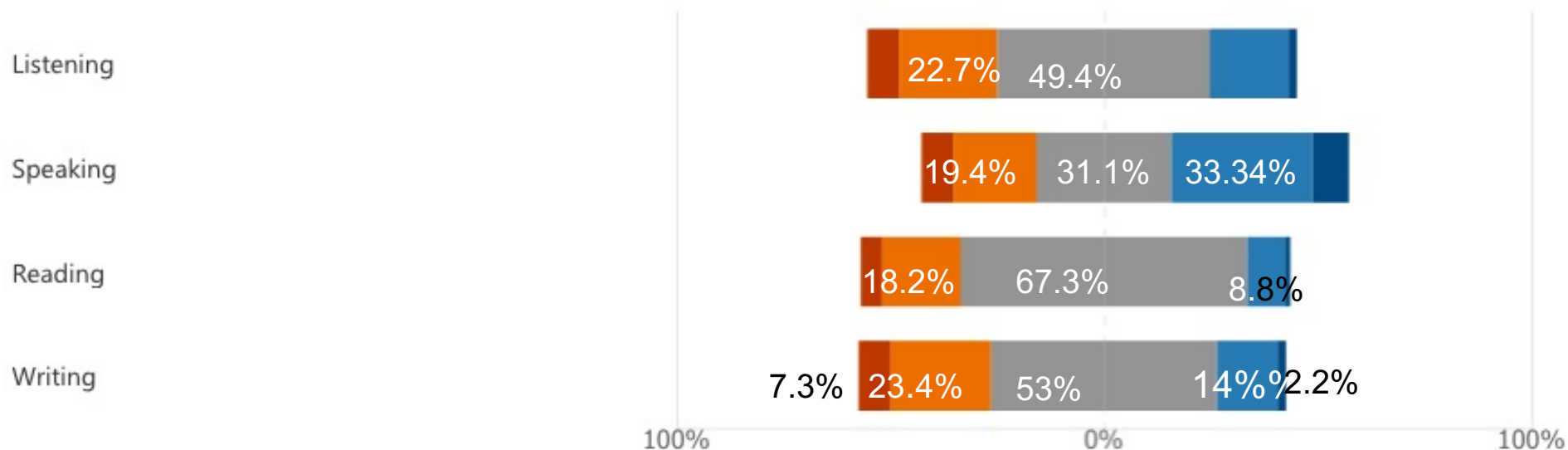




LESSONS LEARNT

Q 22: How has the development of language skills been impacted by your newly acquired mode of delivery?

■ In a very positive way ■ In a positive way ■ Neither positively nor negatively ■ In a negative way
■ In a very negative way



Speaking was most affected in a negative way.
The answers in grey would need more investigation.

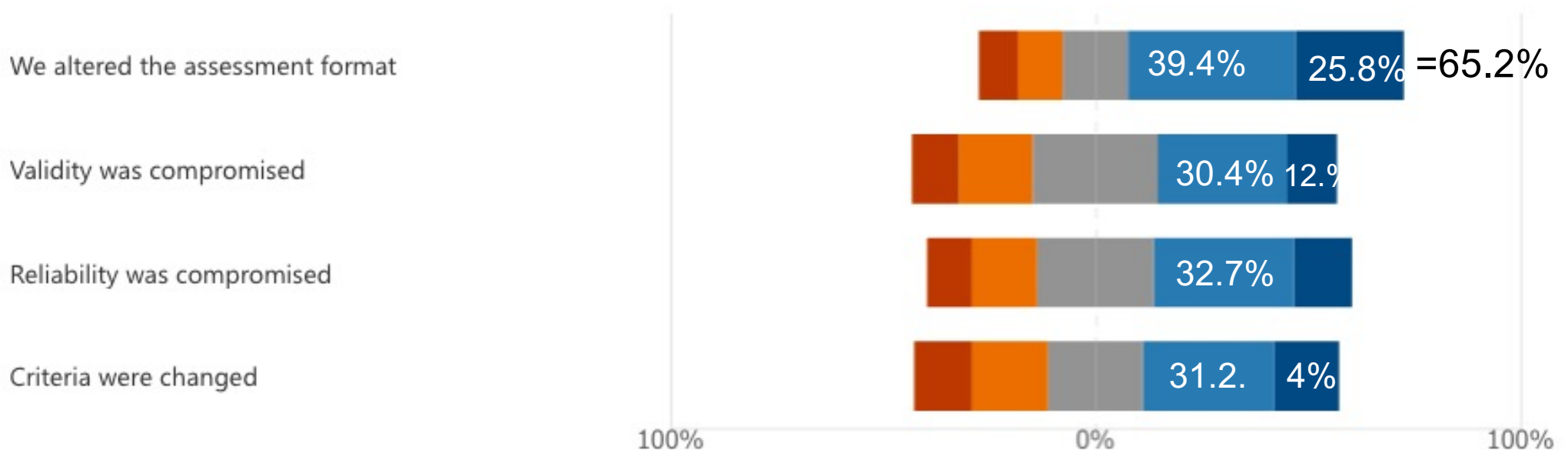




LESSONS LEARNT

Q 25: Please indicate if you agree/disagree with the following statements about assessment:

Definitely disagree Mostly disagree Neither agree nor disagree Mostly agree Definitely agree



65.2% of respondents indicated that assessments had to be modified. However, less than 50% of respondents indicate this was a problem. The answers in grey would need more investigation.



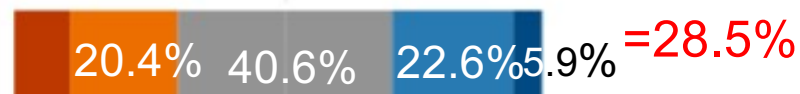


LESSONS LEARNT

Q 26: Please indicate if you agree/disagree with the following statements about the learning outcomes:

■ Definitely disagree ■ Mostly disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Mostly agree ■ Definitely agree

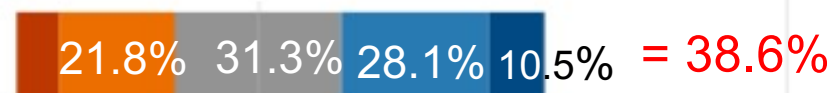
Students showed more commitment in class than before the pandemic.



Students showed more commitment in their self-study tasks than before the pandemic.



The learning outcomes were as high as before the pandemic.



100%

0%

100%

The motivation of students does not seem dependent on the mode of delivery.

However, the answers in grey (neither agree nor disagree) would need more investigation.





LESSONS LEARNT

(Questions 20-26)

→ Managers





LESSONS LEARNT

Q 20: Have there been any changes to your team as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
You can choose more than one answer.

- The number of language teachers decreased.
- The number of language teachers increased.
- The number of language courses offered increased.
- The number of language courses offered decreased.

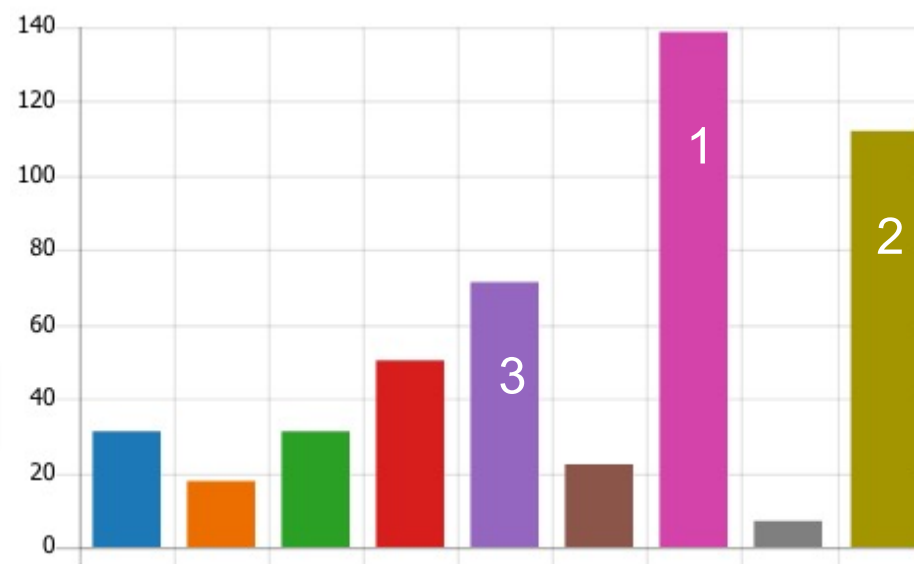
It has been more difficult to supervise the quality of teaching.

It has been easier to supervise the quality of teaching..

Staff are more stressed.

Staff are more satisfied.

Staff show mutual solidarity and support.



No major changes to the composition of the teams, but slight changes on the programmes were identified:

27% of programmes have less courses available and 16% of programmes have more courses available.





LESSONS LEARNT

Q 21: Thinking about leading your team(s), would you say that ...

- 85% of respondents thought that all important messages were communicated to staff, even if they worked remotely
- with 89% of respondents thinking videoconferencing is a suitable way to communicate with remote teams (and only 61% of respondents thinking the same of phone calls)

However:

- 81% recognise that working remotely has had an impact on communication with staff and
- 77% recognise that social distancing has also had an impact.

When asked about ways to contribute to team spirit,

- 50.7% of respondents do not agree or do not know if virtual social events are an effective way to contribute to team spirit.

⇒ Since in q. 20, stress was identified as the major change affecting staff, it would be interesting to follow up which alternatives managers tried out to approach that.





LESSONS LEARNT

Q 22: Please comment on your answer to question 21.



Videoconferencing for remote meetings

- overall experience of **videoconferencing** positive (and much preferred to phone calls)
- For some managers, **videoconferencing has improved communication**: a) more staff can be present at the meetings, b) meetings are more focused and c) recordings can be an additional benefit.



Virtual socialising team meetings

- Many respondents also say **they did not organise social virtual team meetings**.
- Some respondents have **quite negative views** about virtual social meetings for two main reasons: 1) after spending a lot of time online, virtual social events are not attractive 2) for some virtual social events are a chore rather than fun.
- The **lack of informal meetings**, common coffee breaks and “‘water-cooler’ chats were **lamented** by many respondents.





Q 23: Some staff have family duties. Have you been able to support them and, if so, how?

Most of the respondents answered that they **could offer support to parents** by allowing **more flexibility** by:

- Adjusting the timetable
- Offering the option of home office (when this was not the default way of working)
- Offering options as for the format of delivery
- Showing flexibility in deadlines and requirements



In some cases, **additional support** was mentioned, such as

- Hiring extra support staff
- Organising childcare
- Reducing workload
- Help from peers

Several respondents mentioned the **importance of offering moral support** by:

- Showing understanding for delays
- Continuous communication



LESSONS LEARNT

Q 24: How has your department or your university looked after the well-being of staff?

Several respondents answered that their **university** offered **services**, such as

- Seminars on well-being / mindfulness
- Online sports classes
- Psychological support
- Health and safety support

In some cases, **additional support was mentioned, such as**

- Regular information by the president
- Provision of Covid tests, Staff vaccination
- Packages of small gifts



Several respondents mentioned that their **language centre** took care of staff by

- Providing additional equipment
- Offering regular and effective communication / coordinators looking after teams
- Continuous communication nurturing a climate of support
- Organising virtual coffee breaks
- Organising a virtual Christmas Party or one on campus
- Sending out postcards and small gifts like chocolate





FUTURE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

(Questions 27-31)





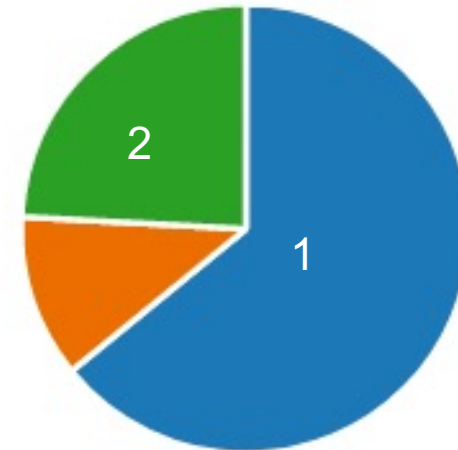
Q 27 / 26: Thinking about yourself and your job, how do you see the future of language learning and teaching in HE?

TEACHERS

- Mainly positive
- Mainly negative
- I do not know

465
85
175

Comments **confirm** mainly positive image of the future.

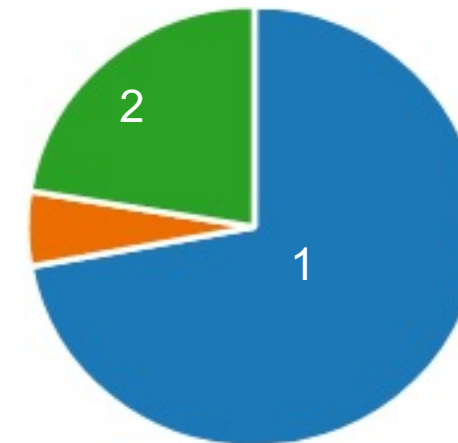


MANAGERS

- Mainly positive
- Mainly negative
- I do not know

132
10
41

Comments **do NOT confirm** mainly positive image of the future.





Q 28: Please elaborate on your answer in question **TEACHERS**

Total of 685 comments on the following topics (ranked by frequency)

- **Future of language teaching and learning**
 - Language skills will be important in the future too!
 - LC being positively challenged to diversify their services and adapt to new realities and students needs
 - some sceptical responses
- **New teaching skills**
 - positively assessed, helpful to cope with future challenges , also on f2f settings
- **Blended learning / Hybrid learning**
 - positively assessed, helpful to cope with future challenges (inclusion, motivation of students)
- **Online learning versus F2F learning**
 - mainly expecting combination of forms of delivery, positively assessed
- **Working conditions (job security, workload)**
 - extra amount of workload with little support; fear of losing job
- **Financial aspects**
 - fear of cuts and closing down of institutions (mainly issued by r. from France and the UK)



Q 27: Please elaborate on your answer in question **MANAGERS**

Total of 172 comments on the following topics (most from the UK, followed by Germany and Spain) ⇒ *issues partially brought up again in q. 30*

- **Support for language centres**
 - Language centres may not get (more) (financial) support.
- **Financial aspects**
 - Language centres may have to generate even more income.
 - Language centres will have to cope with challenges the University is confronted with.
- **Recognition**
 - Recognition / Rewards by University authorities for the LCs effort and innovative coping with the challenges of the pandemic can't be expected.
 - LC management have to make themselves heard at University level.
- **Potential for development**
 - use opportunities: showcase best practice
 - use new opportunities (blended learning; virtual exchanges)
- **Team skills and development**
 - quick peer learning as an encouraging experience





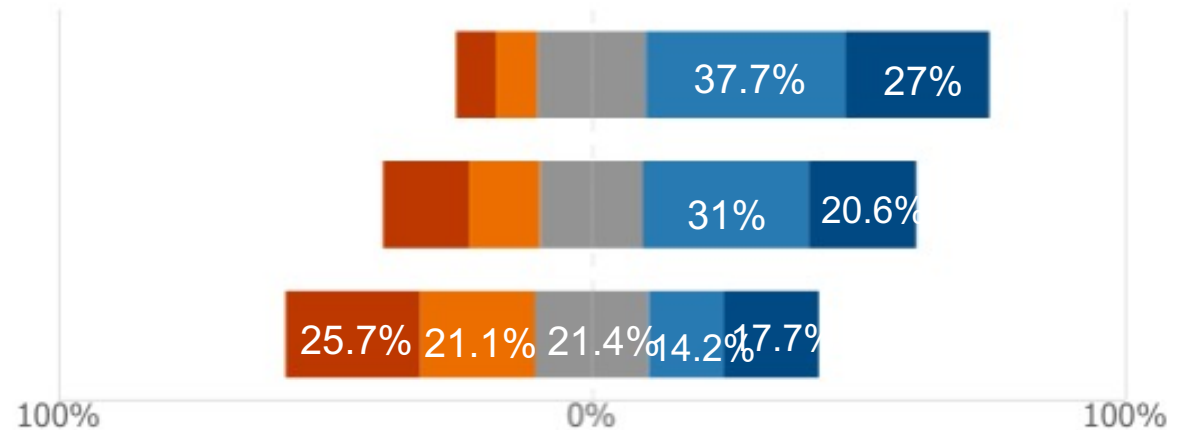
Q 30: What changes would you like to see in your department? **TEACHERS**

■ Definitely disagree ■ Mostly disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Mostly agree ■ Definitely agree

Offer remote synchronous teaching formats and F2F courses depending on the nature or content of the...

Offer courses in hybrid mode

No changes please: just a return to pre-COVID-19 teaching



More than half of the respondents are in favour of changes in the form of delivery. (statements 1 and 2) **BUT** One third of the respondents would prefer to go back to pre-Covid-19 teaching. (statement 3)





Q 31: Please add any further comments you might have: **TEACHERS**

Offer remote synchronous teaching and F2F teaching depending on nature/content of course

Some courses would benefit from a hybrid format, if the content necessitates that (e.g. inviting special guest speakers from abroad; having multiple speakers in a class, communicating with students from further afield...). (France)

for speaking skills and presentations skills, remote synchronous teaching is less stressful for shy students and easier to organize. (France)

Synchronous remote learning, why not but mostly for lectures and/or to send information, answer questions. Maybe for listening and reading practice.
Speaking practice F2F ideally. (France)

Some courses could be taught online (lectures).
If interaction is needed, f2f teaching is better. (Italy)





Q 31: Please add any further comments you might have: **TEACHERS**

Offer courses in hybrid mode

What a waste of time, energy and expertise it would be to go back to how teaching was done pre-covid! Teaching offer should be more diverse, flexible and build on all the tremendous efforts and digital resources made the past year. (GB)

Les cours de langues ne sont pas que des cours de langues. Il est peu préférable de s'engager trop précipitamment dans la voie online car les échanges sociaux sont primordiaux pour les étudiants ainsi que les enseignants. Un juste milieu serait idéal avec 80% sur place et 20% cours online synchrone (cours avancé) (Switzerland)

I think that hybrid lessons take so much away from the educational experience, leaving far less time for teaching. The teacher becomes a technician and secretary as well as teacher, and too much time is spent juggling students in class, students online and the actual technology obviously leaving less time for teaching and risking compromising the general quality. (Italy)

Although I would welcome the idea of introducing hybrid courses, I think **enough time needs to be allowed to prepare for this**. I can imagine that it would involve almost as much work as it did to transform our classroom teaching into the digital format. (Germany)





Q 31: Please add any further comments you might have: **TEACHERS**

No changes please: just a return to pre-Covid teaching

I look forward to going back to f2f classroom teaching safely.
(GB)

ein Präsenzunterricht erscheint mir im Sprachunterricht unerlässlich
(Berücksichtigung nonverbaler Signale, Einbeziehung des gesamten
Kurses, Möglichkeiten differenzierten, stärker abgestuften Feedbacks,
Möglichkeit zum Schaffen einer "echten" Gruppe... (Germany)

El formato presencial desde luego SIEMPRE será el mejor, ese contacto
visual (ahora mismo muy relevante), y la gesticulación de toda la
expresión de la cara son muy importantes para el desarrollo y mejor
percepción de lo que contamos y comunicamos, sin ello ...falta algo
MUY IMPORTANTE. (Spain)





Q 31: Please add any further comments you might have: **TEACHERS**

... and moreover...

COVID-19 has shown 3 things:

- 1.) There are many new teaching formats possible that we used, even with current technology.
- 2.) There are even more approaches imaginable - both online and F2F - if we had the technology, the framework and the courage to try them. The pandemic, for all its sad effects, gave us a chance to take a step back and realize this.
- 3.) Nothing beats physical encounters. With all the new opportunities that we may have discovered, we should never ever hope for remote teaching or remote collaboration to become the rule. (Germany)

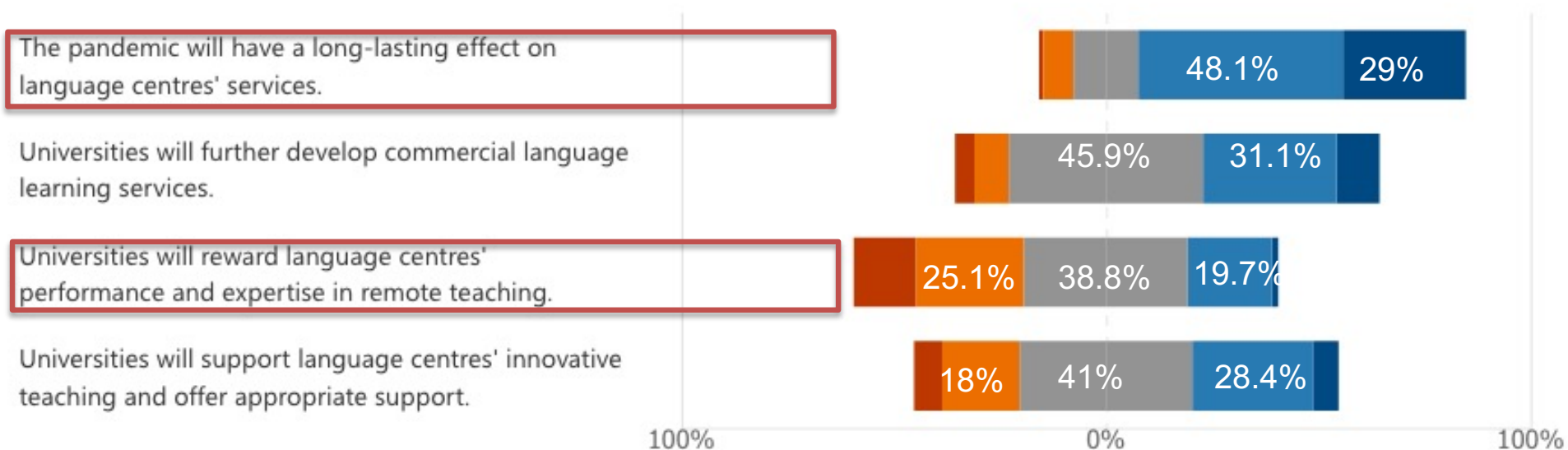




FUTURE OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Q 29: Please indicate if you agree/disagree with the following statements: **MANAGERS**

■ Definitely disagree ■ Mostly disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Mostly agree ■ Definitely agree





Q 30: Please add any other comments you might have: **MANAGERS**

Total of 39 comments on the following topics (16 from the UK!) ⇒ *issues partially brought up in q. 27*

- Achievements and value of language education (not recognised by universities)
→ LC not to expect specific support or reward for effort and achievements
- Further action
→ LC to rely on own potential for innovation

ACHIEVEMENTS

I do not believe our University is particularly interested in supporting what we do explicitly, or in rewarding us for what we do. They just expect us to get on with it! It will be up to us to capitalise on the changes that have taken place for our own sake and that of our learners. (UK)

FURTHER ACTION

It is important that LC in HE raise their voice and develop initiatives and a new practice without expecting support from their universities in the first place. (Switzerland)
Our Language Centre success and further innovation will be up to us, not the university. (UK)





CHALLENGES

FURTHER ACTION

Our Language Centre success and further innovation will be up to us, not the university. (UK)

- Develop guidelines defining criteria for different formats of delivery in language education
- Negotiate with the university executive boards good conditions needed to carry out efficient and sustainable language teaching (strategic and personnel planning, technical support)
- Offer training for sustainable online and hybrid teaching
- Maintain and develop international collaboration between LCs in HE (e.g. virtual exchange, staff exchange, virtual international classroom)





FURTHER ACTION

- Next steps of analysis (correlations, deeper analysis of dynamic texts)
- Report
- Article on LLHE
- Workshop for teachers: future challenges
- Workshop for managers: policy paper



Thank you
for your attention!

Questions and comments?

