Feedback on the 3IN Alliance cooperation and the EUI-project preparation

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3IN Alliance: On a mission to a world, where no one is left behind.

This report presents results of a feedback survey on experiences of the cooperation concerning the 3IN Alliance and the EUI-project proposal preparation, starting from the end of 2018 till May 2020. In general, construction of the 3IN Alliance partnerships and the EUI-project proposal has involved tens of people from different universities, varying from rectors and directors to researchers, teachers, specialists and students. Some of the contributors did not necessarily even known, that they were involved in "the 3IN Alliance" or in "the EUI-project process", but have still given their valuable input into the future cooperation through idea generation or content production eg. in meetings, workshops, enquiries or staff or student exchange periods. Then again, some of you have been involved in the cooperation almost full time for some months. In either way, all the respondents' answers are truly valuable in further development of the 3IN Alliance.

1. Background of the respondents

This feedback survey was conducted in June/July 2020 by the Diaconia University of the Applied Sciences.

Altogether 67 answers were analyzed and reported anonymously, and individual respondents or responses cannot be identified. The results of the survey will be used only for research, development and communication purposes of the 3IN Alliance, following the ethical practices of research by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

Table 1. presents respondents by institution. Almost 30% of them represented DIAK, and 19 % Transilvania University of Brasov. Only 4.5% respondent represented University Sorbonne Paris Nord, which was the last institution to join the Alliance in Fall 2019.

Table 1. Respondents by institution (N=67)

INSTITUTION	RESPONDENTS	RESPONDENTS (%)
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland	20	29,9
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania	13	19,4
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – Germany	8	11,9
University of Malaga – Spain	8	11,9
VID Specialized University – Norway	8	11,9
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal	7	10,4
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France	3	4,5
TOTAL	**67**	**100,0**

Table 2. presents respondents by their institutional roles. About one third represented support and administrative roles such as communication specialists and international coordinators; nearly 20% were teachers/researchers, and 18% were RDI-specialists.

Table 2. Respondents by institutional roles (N=67)

	RESPONDENTS	RESPONDENTS (%)
Support and administrative specialists	22	32,8
Teachers/researchers	13	19,4
RDI-specialists	12	17,9
Directors	10	14,9
Students	7	10,4
Associate partners/stakeholders	3	4,5
TOTAL	**67**	**100,0**

Table 3 depicts time spent in 3IN Alliance activities since the end of 2018 till june 2020. Over 40% of the respondents spent less than two weeks, and a little over 25% spent two to four weeks in the 3IN Alliance activities. Almost 15% ohad spend one to three months of their work for the alliance, and 16,5% of all respondents had been working with the alliance over three months (over 15% of their work time) between the end of 2018 till June 2020. And finally, over 7% had spend more than six months – 30% of their work time – for the 3IN Alliance activities.

Time total spent in 3In Alliance activities thus varies somewhere between 2007 work days – 3733 work days, which makes roughly 5,5 work years – 10 work years in total (69 respondents, 31 months, 7 partners)

Table 3. Time spent in 3IN Alliance activities between the end of 2018 – june 2020 (N=67).

TIME SPENDITURE	RESPONDETS	RESPONDETS (%)
Less than two weeks	29	43,3
Two to four weeks	17	25,4
One to three months	10	14,9
Three to six months	6	9,0
More than six months	5	7,5
Associate partners/stakeholders	3	4,5
TOTAL	**67**	**100,0**

Table 4. presents diverse activities, through which respondents have participated in the 3IN collaboration. Over half of the respondents participated in networking activities, meetings and workshops. Next common activities were the planning and design of the EUI-project proposal, and content production in the proposal. 18 respondents took part in the internal and external communication activities, and 18 provided insights in the content of the proposal.

Table 4. Activities, through which respondents have participated in the 3IN collaboration (N=67)

ACTIVITIES	MENTIONS
Networking within the alliance in meetings/workshops	38
Participating in the planning and design of the EUI-project proposal	29
Participating in the content production of the EUI-project proposal (workpackages etc.)	22
Participating in the EUI-project proposal writing	11
Providing specialist insights/content for the 3IN alliance co-operation/EUI-project proposal purposes	18
Participating in internal and external communication activities of the 3IN Alliance/EUI-project	18
Organizing the operational process activities of the alliance (meetings, workshops, visits...)	17
Participation in the operational planning and execution of the 3IN insitutional co-operation	16
Participation in the strategic planning and design of the 3IN Alliance partnerships	15

2. Results of the survey: How did we succeed in our collaboration?

Table 5 presents distribution of responses (%) to 7 key questions. In general, majority of respondents were satisfied with the strategic planning process of the 3IN Alliance: 70% agreed, that the planning had been conducted appropriately. Most critically the respondents evaluated the internal communication of the alliance; about 20% disagreed on the appropriate conduction of internal communication. Notably, open comments related to communication indicate, that some respondents referred to internal communication as their own institutions' internal com, while others referred to alliance's internal communication. Furthermore, 27% of the respondents reported, that they had also participated in communication activities themselves. However, over 50% of the respondents were satisfied with internal communication.

Most unknown areas of collaboration appeared to be external communication and conflict management and resolution. In specific, the respondents with leading roles at the institutions indicated, that the conflict management and resolution had been conducted appropriately.

Table 5. Distribution of responses (%), (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
Strategic planning of the 3IN Alliance has been conducted appropriately	9	14,9	61,2	14,9
3IN Alliance cooperation has been conducted appropriately	3	13,4	70,1	13,4
Internal communication has been conducted appropriately	19,4	11,9	53,7	14,9
External communication has been conducted appropriately	7,5	23,9	40,3	28,4
Planning and design of the EUI-proposal has been conducted appropriately	13,4	10,4	56,7	19,4
Content production of the EUI-proposal has been conducted appropriately	13,4	11,9	61,2	13,4
Conflict management and resolution has been conducted appropriately	4,5	25,4	31,3	38,8

The more time the respondent had allocated for the collaboration, the less "no opinions" there were – and the more critical the responses were. Respondents with leading roles appeared to have a bit more positive opinions than the others, whereas support and administrative specialists responded more critically than the average. Support and administrative specialists had also spent more time to collaboration activities than the others.

The following figures present the feedback more in detail, and also by institutions. Altogether 12 respondents also added open feedback in order to highlight or deepen their views on the evaluated issues. Citations under the figures provide insights into the varying views of the respondents.

2.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

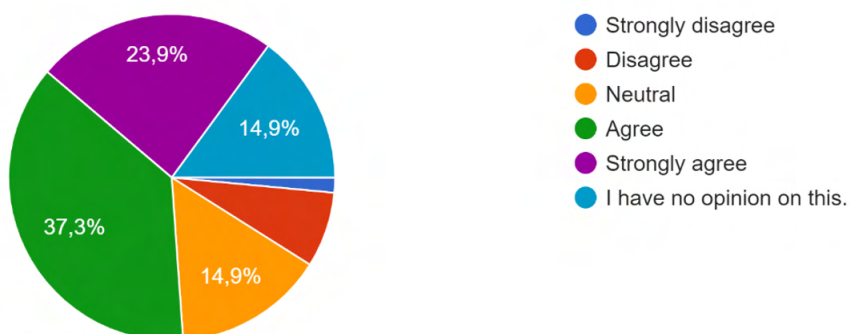*Pie Chart 1. Strategic planning of the 3IN Alliance has been conducted appropriatery (N=67)*

	Strongly disagree
	Disagree
	Neutral
	Agree
	Strongly agree
	I have no opinion on this.

Table 6. Strategig planning on the 3IN Alliance (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**9**	**14,9**	**61,2**	**14,9**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	15	25	55	5
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	7,7	-	61,5	30,8
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	12,5	12,5	62,5	12,5
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	-	87,5	12,5
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	12,5	37,5	25	25
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	14,4	85,7	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

2.2 3IN ALLIANCE COOPERATION

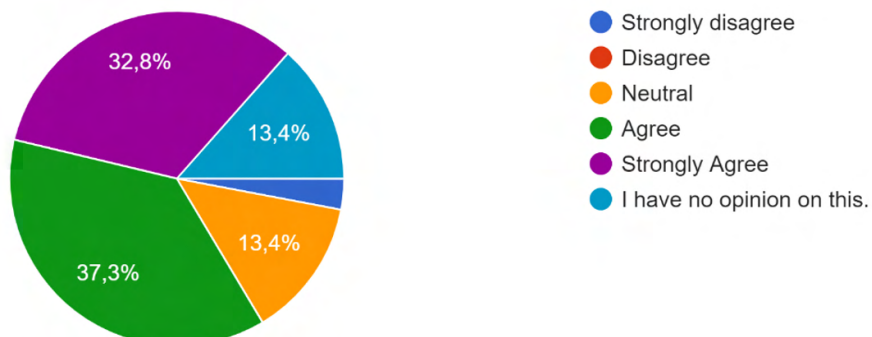*Pie Chart 2. 3IN Alliance cooperation has been conducted appropriatey (N=67)*

Table 7. 3IN Alliance cooperation has been conducted appropriately (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**3**	**13,4**	**70,1**	**13,4**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	-	20	70	10
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	7,7	7,7	69,2	15,4
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	-	25	62,6	12,5
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	-	100	-
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	12,5	25	25	37,5
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	-	100	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

2.3 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

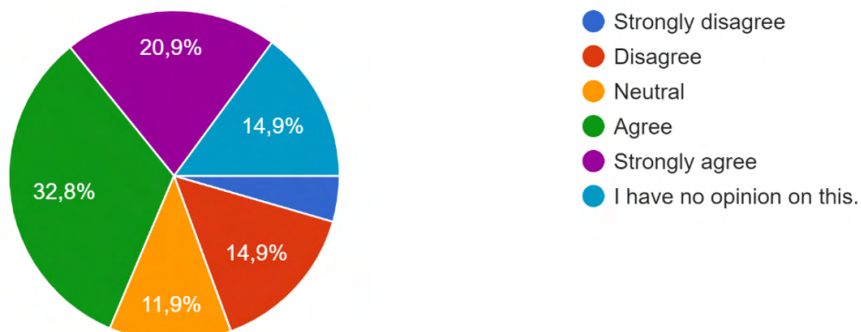*Pie Chart 3. Internal communication of the 3IN Alliance/EUI-project has been conducted appropriately. (N=67)*

Table 8. Internal communication has been conducted appropriately (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**19,4**	**11,9**	**53,7**	**14,9**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	20	15	45	20
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	15,4	-	69,2	15,5
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	25	50	12,5	12,5
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	-	100	-
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	62,5	-	12,5	25
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	14,3	85,7	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

2.4 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

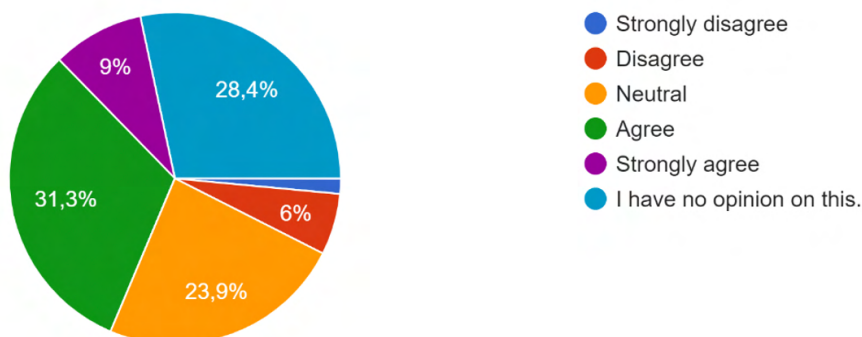*Pie Chart 4. External communication of the 3IN Alliance/EUI-project has been conducted appropriately (N=67)*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- I have no opinion on this.

Table 9. External communication has been conducted appropriately (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**7,5**	**23,9**	**40,3**	**28,4**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	10	35	35	20
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	15,4	15,4	46,2	23,1
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	12,5	25	12,5	50
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	12,5	50	37,5
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	-	12,5	37,5	50
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	14,3	85,7	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

2.5 PLANNING AND DESIGN OF THE EUI PROJECT PROPOSAL

Pie Chart 5.Planning and design of the EUI-project proposal has been conducted appropriately (N=67)
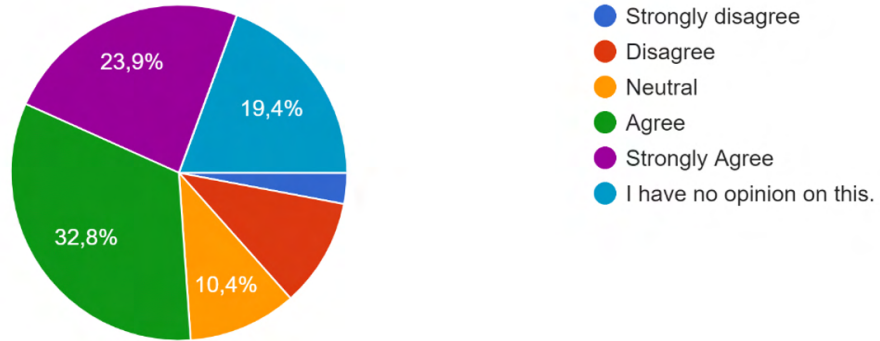

Table 10. Planning and design of the EUI proposal has been conducted (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**13,4**	**10,4**	**56,7**	**19,4**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	20	20	45	15
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	7,7	7,7	53,8	30,8
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	12,5	12,5	50	25,0
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	-	87,5	12,5
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	37,5	12,5	25	25
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	-	100	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

2.6 CONTENT PRODUCTION OF THE EUI-PROPOSAL HAS BEEN CONDUCTED APPROPRIATELY

Pie Chart 5.Content production (ideas, information, texts) of the EUI-project proposal has been conducted appropriately. (N=67)
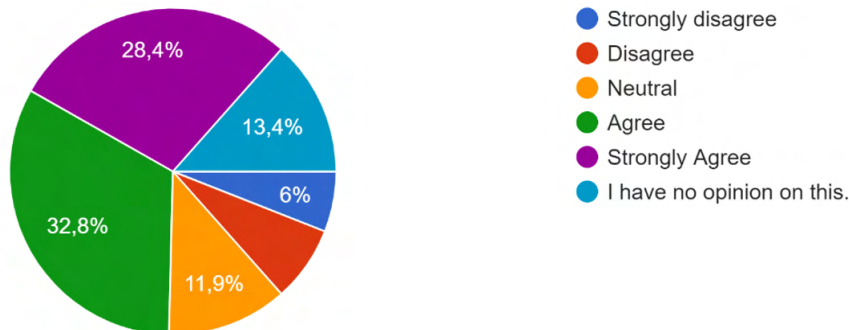

Table 11. Content production of the EUI-proposal has been conducted appropriately (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**13,4**	**11,9**	**61,2**	**13,4**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	15	15	55	15
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	7,7	7,7	69,2	15,4
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	25	12,5	50	12,5
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	25	75	-
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	37,5	12,5	25	25
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	-	100	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

2.7 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION HAS BEEN CONDUCTED APPROPRIATELY

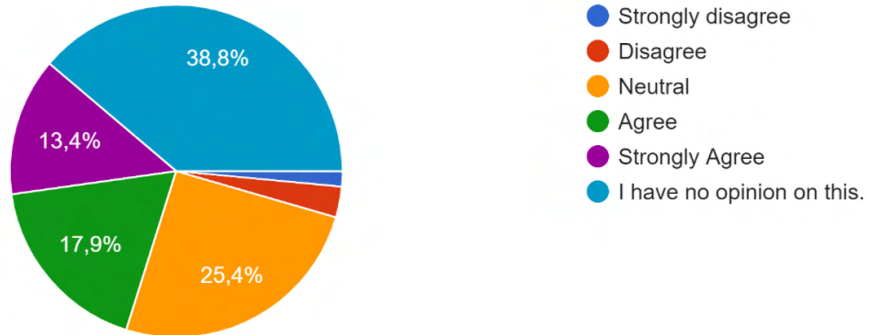*Pie Chart 6. Conflict management and resolution within the 3IN Alliance has been conducted appropriately (N=67)*

Table 12. Conflict management and resolution within the 3IN Alliance has been conducted appropriately (N=67)

	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	NO OPINION
TOTAL (N=67)	**4,5**	**25,4**	**31,3**	**38,8**
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences - Finland (N=20)	5	25	20	50
Transilvania University of Brasov – Romania (N=13)	-	7,7	46,2	46,2
University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt – German (N=8)	25	25	12,5	37,5
University of Malaga – Spain (N=8)	-	25	50	25
VID Specialized University – Norway (N=8)	-	25	25	50
ISAVE – Higher Education Institute of Health – Portugal (N=7)	-	57,1	42,9	-
University Sorbonne Paris Nord – France (N=3)				

3. 3IN Alliance as a learning journey - what to do and what not to do in the future?

In order to understand the 3IN Alliance collaboration processes more deeply, we also asked the respondents to share their thoughts on the process in general from the learning point of view. What should have we learned from the process so far? What would they suggest us do differently in the future? In the following, these answers are summarized and concluded.

3.1 TO BE STRENGTHENED AND CONTINUED

35 respondents shared with us personal examples of a good practice, positive learning experience or an idea, that they had learned during the 3IN Alliance/EUI-process, and would prefer us to continue or share within the alliance in the future.

In the following, most common themes are summarized:

Table 13. Best practices to be strengthened and continued.

BEST PRACTICES TO BE STRENGTHENED AND CONTINUED	
THEMES	**RESPONSES (35)**
Co-creation and learning from each other	15
Organization, management and coordination	6
Communication	6
Student involvement	6
Mission and vision	2

3.1.1 Co-creation and learning from each other

Most valuable learning experience for the respondents appeared to be the opportunity to share experiences and professional interests with 3IN Alliance colleagues, and to learn from each other through participation and co-creation. Following citations illustrate these aspects of the best practices and advantages of collaboration:

"By getting to learn each other better, we discover so many new opportunities and new ways of combining skills and competences. I have also realized through this process, that we will all benefit from cooperating and sharing."

"Good interdisciplinary teamwork across countries through workshops in smaller groups and brainstorming openly."

"The meetings organized by the WP leads to develop and to discuss ideas jointly. This true European cooperation was an experience I appreciated enormously, every opinion was heard, there was a will to bring different ideas together to define a common basis for the further cooperation. These workshops were true incubators for joint activities."

"I appreciated the participatory management and working style with small or large groups."

"Value through collaborative ways of working within the alliance; innovative ideas for improving teaching experiences for students; progress in collaboration between partners."

"The commitment and excitement from the partners's side was heart-warming. Big applications should be compiled by a smaller core group of grant writers, otherwise the process will be chaotic, as it was now. The discussions concerning the contents of the proposal should not be a theme for the discussions during the last two weeks of grant-writing."

"In my view, the diversity of professionals participating in the working groups - teachers, managers, developers, directors and students all working together - added value to idea generation, planning and proposal development. I hope we continue building on this strength in the future, too."

3.1.2 Organization, management and coordination

Organization, management and coordination of the 3IN Alliance and EUI-processes were also mentioned as good practices to build on in the future.

"Clear responsibilities, proactive communication from the leadership and operational management, familiarity with the common co-creation procedures and processes of the actors as well as good humour have taken and/or will take the Alliance far!"

"I think the planning of all the process has been excellent. Definitely, a good practice."

"The commitment and excitement from the partners's side was heart-warming. Big applications should be compiled by a smaller core group of grant writers, otherwise the process will be chaotic, as it was now. The discussions concerning the contents of the proposal should not be a theme for the discussions during the last two weeks of grant-writing."

"It was very positive to have designated people to write the proposal."

3.1.3 Communication

Open feedback directed straight on the communication, was mainly concerned with the internal communication and the Teams-platform. Furthermore, open and participative style of communication was mentioned, and resembled the feedback relating more broadly on the open co-creation and collaboration throughout the process.

"The collaboration on Microsoft Teams went well."

"Teams platform worked very well in practical collaboration and in EUI-proposal development."

"The MsTeams as a tool for communication and work was new for me and I found that was very good, but overall the good communication of DIAK Team in everything made all easier, thanks!"

"Open communication via Teams. The presentation of alternative perspectives and opinions had been made possible and welcome."

3.1.4 Student involvement

Some of the respondents brought up the student involvement as a best practice to keep up with.

"3IN Alliance considers that student's opinion is important and, because of the fact that all the activities are designed for students, taking into consideration what they need it's absolutely wonderful. It's felt like we are partners in our formation."

"Best practice: The foundation of the student forum and student activities to implement the 3IN vision e.g. buddy program, tutoring program; virtual education: online language classes, offering some of the regular classes in English..."

3.1.5 Unique vision and mission

Finally, the respondents summarized the importance of the shared vision and mission, and emphasized the value of our focus on "no person left behind" and the general idea of an European wide university that aims to see the whole of Europe as one home country

3.2 TO BE REDUCED AND AVOIDED

Furthermore, 30 respondents gave us a personal example of a failed practice, negative learning experience or an unsuccessfull idea, that they had learned during the 3IN Alliance/EUI-process, and would prefer us not to continue, but avoid within the alliance in the future.

In the following, most common themes are summarized:

Table 14. Worst practices to be strengthened and continued..

WORST PRACTICES TO BE REDUCED AND AVOIDED	
THEMES	**RESPONSES (35)**
Organization, management and coordination of the co-operation	19
Communication	6
Student involvement	3
Trust and conflict resolution	2

3.2.2 Organization, management and coordination of the co-operation

Most critical responses and suggestions to improve our collaboration in the future, were related to the organization, management and coordination of the co-operation. Following citations highlight the aspects, that were brought out:

"For staff members in partner universities who did not participated in writing the application I think there should have been more info materials available with somewhat more concrete ideas about the strategy and its implications in the future."

"It is very important to make transparent the way decisions are made if this is going to work well as a network and an alliance. There is therefore a need to establish a much stronger steering group."

"The role of staff in the planning process has been limited."

"The planning group should be smaller. No there was too much discussions that led to nowhere and the red thread in the planning process was very weak or nearly invisible. The guiding principles should have been decided in the beginning and not change the plans constantly during the application/writing process."

"Negative attitudes towards unfamiliar processes, innovative thinking and problem solving have hampered the cooperation at times. I hope spreading the negativity can be avoided in the future."

"Roles not well defined in some activities."

"I think we need better planning of processes (such as the whole process of writing the application) with clearer roles and more predictable timeframes. Otherview, the 3IN alliance feels like a burden and not an opportunity, which it is and should be also to us as individuals."

"Although a great experience, having large groups involved in WP development (or other activities) is extremely time consuming. Maybe decisions on specific topics may be delegated to small groups to be more effective."

3.2.2 Communication

Secondly, the respondents brought up failures or flaws related to communication.

"In addition to the answers and remarks in the earlier questions, I would like to further highlight the communication. When involving different organisations and people with very diverse backgrounds, we need to pay more attention to communication and especially ensuring the transparent and interactive communication."

"To have it short: Communication, Communication, Communication! In a more detailed description: The structure to prepare the project proposal with RDI experts on one side and WP leads and experts on the other side with an extremely dysfunctional communication. From this failed structure, all other problems derived: unclear responsibilities, opaque processes, a total lack of feedback, the disregard of expertise, the constant violation of the project/time plan, the avoidance of any problem-focused communication, the lack of empathy, the lack of agile project management."

"Lack of internal and external communication : only few people in my institution are aware of this project (even if we need them later on)."

3.2.3 Student involvement

Thirdly, the respondents identified the need to improve and increase the involvement of the students in the process.

"The inclusion of students haven't always been the greatest."

"Sometimes the specific goals and the expectations towards students are unclear. During the workshops it would be great to get right to the topics and have more time to discuss certain aspects (without losing the focus on the matter)."

"What you should have done is include us earlier. Cause when you're included to come with ideas and every single idea you come up with is met with "yes, this is exactly what we have already thought of" then we are not really being included. It's a nice try though. We also missed the chance to discuss with the "grown ups", and we had to call them that, cause they left us in different rooms to "play together" when the "grown ups" where actually "doing the work". So your biggest fail was to not recognise that we, the students actually want to participate. And we are even capable to participate."

3.2.4 Trust and conflict resolution

Finally, trust and conflict resolution were brought up as areas to improve in the future:

"Conflict resolution mechanisms could be further developed. Trust between partners could be further developed, how to ensure that the expertise of all staff members is respected?"

4. Conclusion and discussion

On the basis of this feedback survey, our 3IN Alliance learning journey 2018-2020 has definitely had its ups and downs, and we have learned a lot from our strengths and weaknesses. We seem to have succeeded relatively well in planning and conducting our strategic, operational and EUI-proposal related (planning, design, content production and writing) collaboration – taken into consideration also the respondents, who had no experience or opinion on those areas at all. Communication - as usual - divides opinions also in our 3IN community, especially concerning the internal communication. Internal communication has been evaluated either as an institutional function, or as one of the alliance's key functions. External communication on the other hand, has not been relevant/apparent to many of the respondents.

For further development, the following, most unanimously accepted and endorsed, or most diversified and even conflicting areas of our collaboration need to be paid attention – either in order to strengthen or to avoid them in the future. In the following table, key learnings and future opportunities of the 3IN Alliance are summarized.

Summary of the pros and cons of the 3IN Alliance collaboration 2018-2020.

Table 15. Key learnings from the 3IN Alliance cooperation and future opportunities.

LEVEL OF COLLA-BORATION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	DIVERSIFIED VIEWS		OPPORTUNITIES
STRATEGIC	·Top-level strategic commitment. ·3IN vision and mission. ·Long-term goals. ·High scores from the both EUI-rounds.	·Opportunities to commit in the long-term without the EUI-funding. ·Unclear commitment to the EUI goals without funding from pilot calls.	·Clear focus and short-term results.	·Too limited focus on social and health care sector, youth etc. – a broader scope is needed. ·More ambitious goals should be set.	·Strategic integration of institutions' various functions. ·Benefits of diversity for students. ·Value of strategic partnerships for global initiatives.
OPERATIVE	·Collaborative, co-creative approach. ·Clearly defined processes concerning strategic, operational and EUI-proposal related responsibilities.	·Unclear understanding and acceptance of responsibilities and roles concerning operational and EUI-proposal related activities.	·Too much time-consuming involvement. ·Too much communication. ·Excellent use of diverse knowledge and competence. ·Unclear roles. ·Communication should be more centralized and focused. ·Good communication platforms and results.	·Too little involvement. ·Too little communication. ·Too many people from different fields involved. ·Misunderstanding of the institutional roles. ·Communication should be more inclusive and participatory. ·Poor communication platforms and results.	·Joint activities and offerings over study fields. ·Structured and effective cooperation.

On the basis of the feedback and analysis of the key learnings and opportunities, there are decisions to be made and steps to be taken on both strategic and operational level. Firstly, there is a need and will to redefine the identity of the alliance: What do we want to be as alliance? This entails redefinition of strategic goals, milestones and consequent resources and commitment to the alliance. Secondly, there is a need to define the ways we want to collaborate in the future. This requires more precise definition of the governance model, processes, responsibilities and ways of communication. Figure 1. illustrates a framework for 3IN Alliance future cooperation, which according to the feedback already has a solid basis.

Figure 1. Framework for 3IN Alliance future cooperation.