Report on the activities of the Community of Practice (CoP) I

SAILS

Strategies for Assessment of Inquiry Learning in Science

D5.4 Report on the activities of the Community of Practice (CoP) I

D5.4: Report on the Activities of the Community of Practice (COP) I

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1. Introduction

This report describes the activities of the Communities of Practice (COP) since their launch.

It follows on from *D5.2 Report on the organisation of the Community of Practice in each participating country*, which described the infrastructure and organisation put in place to promote and facilitate the Community of Practice (COP) in each participating country and at a European level for the duration of the project.

1.1 Overall Objectives of the COP

The overall objectives for the COP are as follows:

1. **Participation**: Ensure that a significant number of the teachers trained through the SAILS project become active COP participants; Promote active membership of the COP to teachers not directly involved in the SAILS project.

2. **Promotion**: Drive IBSE and IBSE-related assessment frameworks into as many schools as possible;

3. **Sustainability**: Ensure the viability of the COP beyond the lifetime of the SAILS project.

1.2 COP Overview

The COP operates on two levels:

1. National COPs for each of the countries participating in the SAILS project:

   o Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom.

2. An International COP providing support and a common central forum.

1.3 COP Benefits

COP members avail of the following benefits:

- **Publications** Access to publications and other material output from the SAILS project;

- **Forums** The facility to discuss and comment on Inquiry-based Science Education (IBSE) issues with other likeminded contributors, both nationally and internationally;

- **Events** Access to information on upcoming events as well as the opportunity to promote them.

From the COP members' perspective, the overall objective of the COP is to maintain and grow teacher interest in and use of IBSE and IBSE-related assessment frameworks. The COP presents an opportunity for teachers and educationalists trained through the SAILS project, to deepen their knowledge through active participation in their national (and international) COP.

2. Membership

2.1 Performance to Date
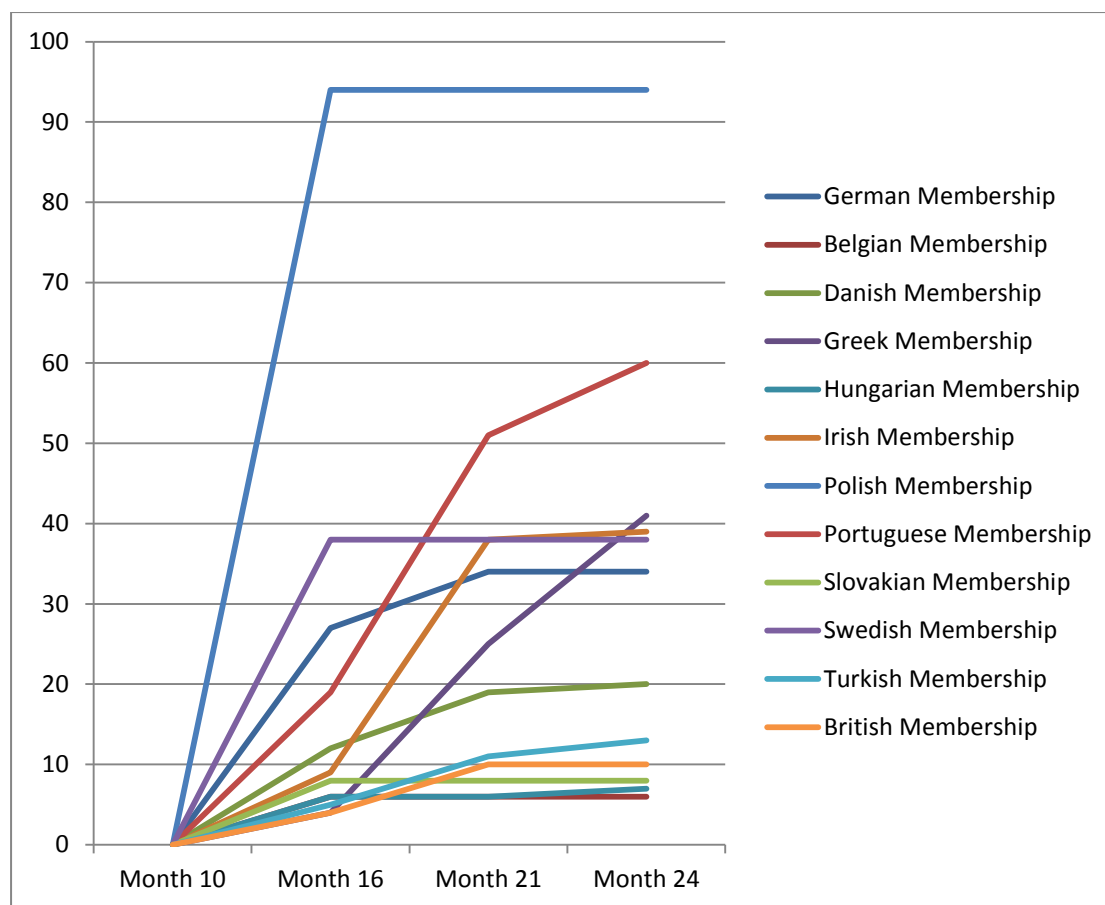
Table 2.1: Membership of SAILS COPs

Teachers participating in SAILS training workshops are automatically being registered as members of their national COP. There is a wide variation in membership across the COPs with higher memberships in Poland (94), Portugal (60), Greece (41), Ireland (39), Sweden (38) and Germany (34); and lower memberships in Denmark (20), Turkey (13), United Kingdom (10), Slovakia (8), Hungary (7) and Belgium (6).

The rate of growth of membership is slow, with only Greece and Portugal showing any appreciable growth over the last quarter in 2013.

3.   Discussions

3.1   Performance to Date
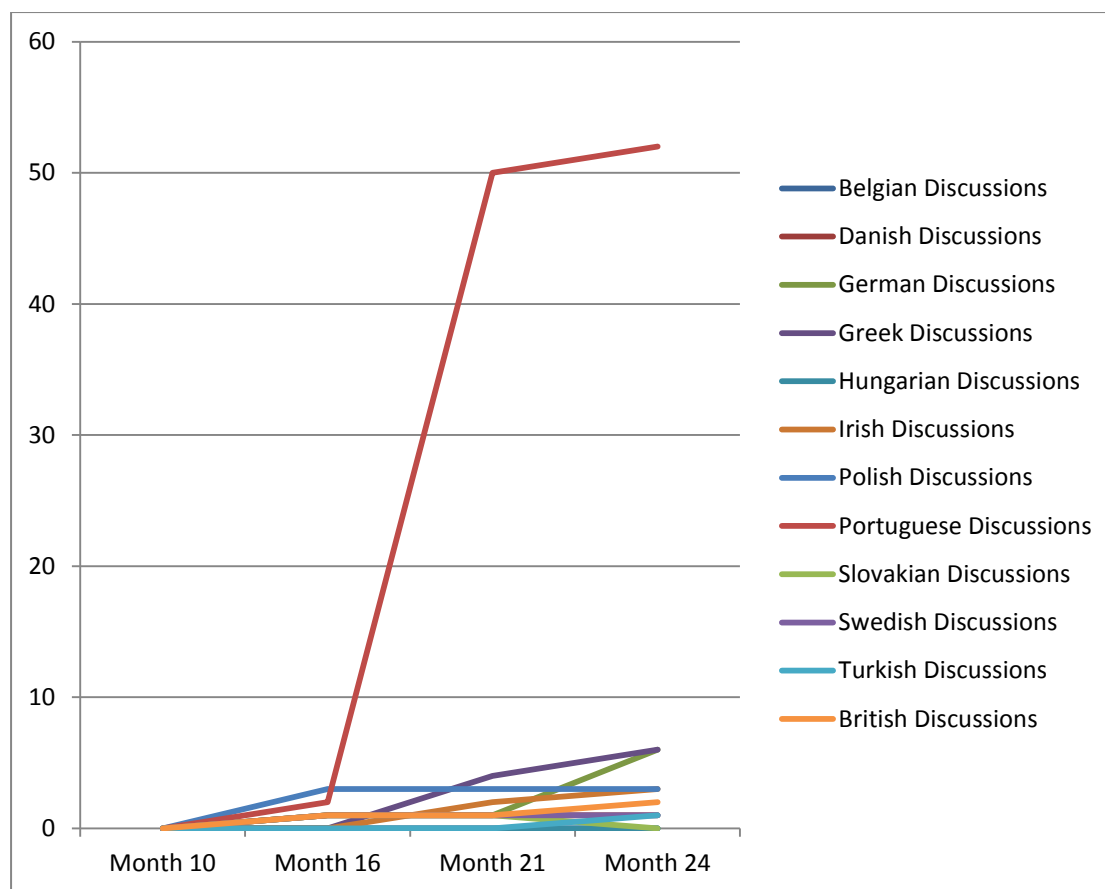
Table 3.1: Discussions among SAILS COPs

COP members can create discussions on topics of interest. Members have the facility to add a new discussion and notify some or all COP members that the discussion is being added. Clicking on a discussion shows the contributions of the members who are part of the discussion. It also enables the viewer to post a new comment to the discussion.

The amount of discussions is a good indicator of the level of activity within the COP. To date there have been few discussions within any of the COPs, with the obvious exception of the Portuguese COP. However even here, the increase in discussions over the last three months has been limited.

This points to limited engagement by COP members, across all COPs.

Intel and ATiT are working to redesign the platform in order to make the CoP more attractive to teachers. The platform will be re-launched in March 2014 and it is expected that this will aid in teacher engagement.

4.   Resources

4.1   Performance to Date
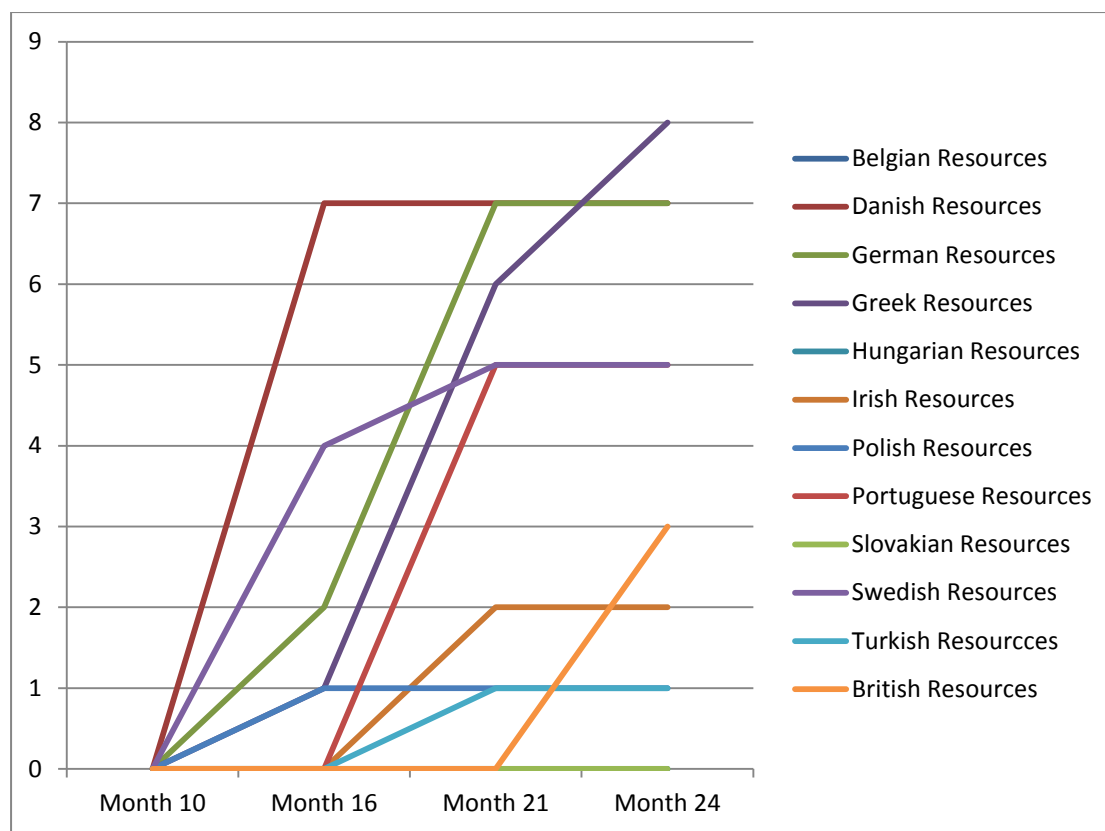
Table 3.1: Resources in SAILS COPs

The resources section contains material (e.g. documents, images, videos, web links, etc.) that members have uploaded to the COP.

Members have the facility to add a new resource and notify some or all COP members that the resource is being added. Members can also search for resources under a keyword search or a guided search.

In addition, there is also a Folders section for materials. This has been included for users who prefer a folder structure for documentation, rather than the searchable Resources function.

All members of the COP have access to the resource and folders sections.

The quantity (and quality) of resources is an important factor in making each COP relevant and interesting to its current and future membership.

The amount of resources at the end of 2013 was low, ranging from eight in Greece to zero in Belgium, Hungary and Slovakia.

There has been very little change in the final quarter of 2013. Without an appreciable increase in resources in each COP in the medium-term, there is a risk that the COPs will not be used by their membership.

Teacher interest in the COP is likely to increase as more SAILS assessment material is uploaded to the CoP. Assessment units are currently being piloted in the SAILS partner countries and the next series of assessment units will be finalised by June 2014.

5.   Conclusions

A COP has been established in each participating country in the SAILS project since month 10 (October 2012).

The use of the COPs so far has been limited, underlined by the following observations:

- **Membership**. The rate of growth of membership is slow, with only Greece and Portugal showing any appreciable growth over the last quarter in 2013;

- **Discussions**. To date there have been few discussions within any of the COPs, with the exception of the Portuguese COP.

- **Resources**. The amount of resources at the end of 2013 was low, ranging from eight in Greece to zero in Belgium, Hungary and Slovakia. There was little change in the final quarter of 2013.

There needs to be a considerable increase in the use of the COPs, which will require a concerted effort by all members of the SAILS project.

Month 26 (February 2014) will see the delivery of the first action plan for the promotion, growth and the development of the Community of Practice. This action plan will need agreement by the consortium partners, followed by commitment by all partners to deliver the plan.