

Intercultural Coaching

A Survey of Current Practice

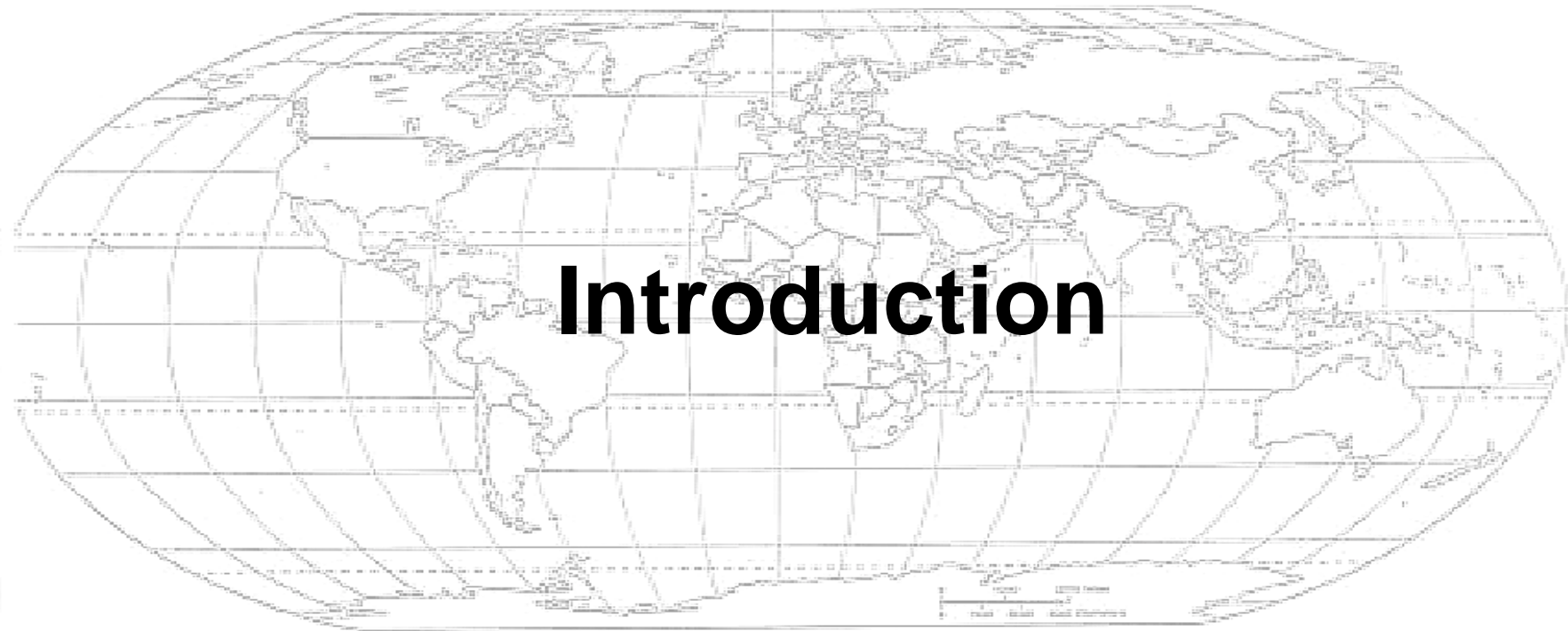
Berlin, March 2006

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World Map, Robinson (Projection)

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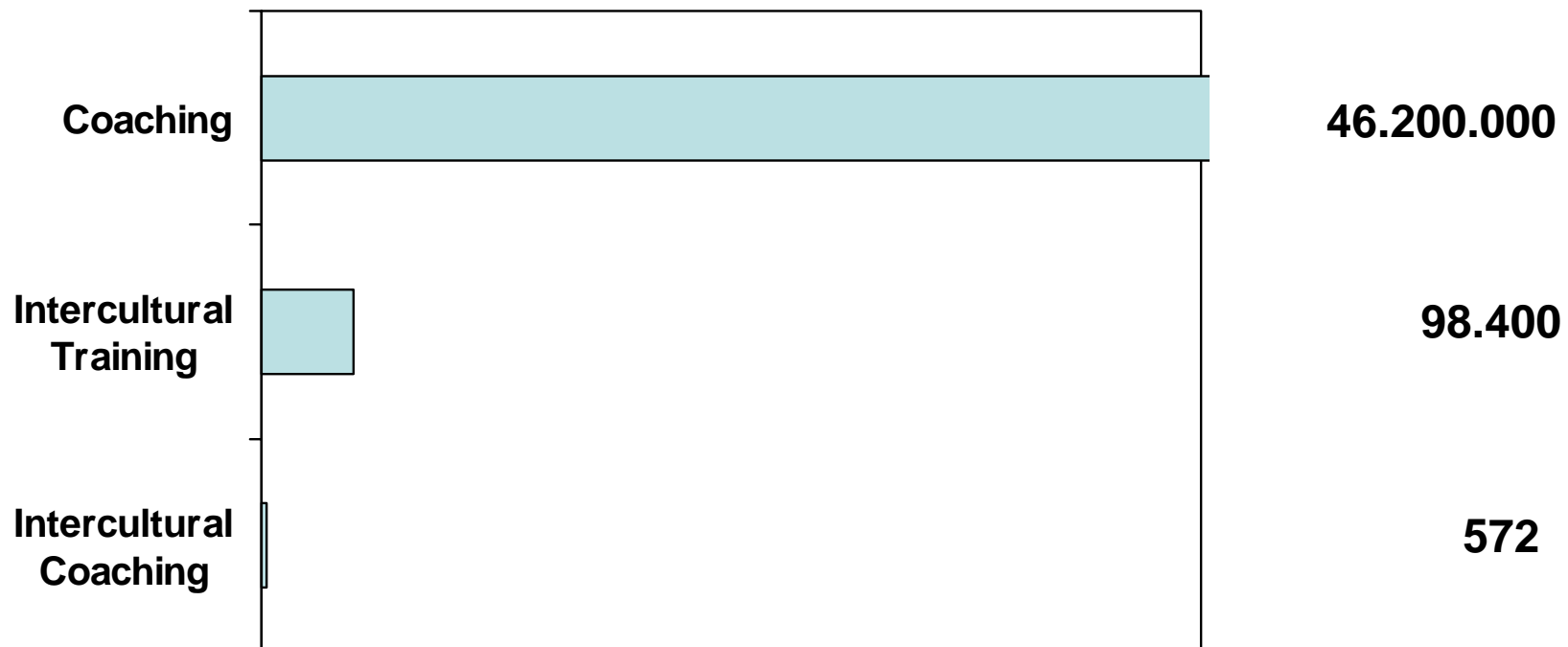
A world map in a Robinson projection, showing the continents and a grid of latitude and longitude lines. The map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean. Overlaid on the map is the text "Coaching – the intercultural aspect" in a large, bold, black font.

Coaching – the intercultural aspect

World Map, Robinson (Projection)

Intercultural coaching - breaking new ground?

Numbers of entries in Google.de:



Intercultural training versus intercultural coaching

Training

- standard format/methods
- replicable
- low cost per capita
- transparency
- short-/medium-term learning target
- learning & reproducing
- teacher/learner relationship

Coaching

- tailor-made
- untransferable
- cost-intensive
- little transparency
- medium-/long-term awareness or perception target
- cognition process
- partner relationship

Hypothesis

Given the increased level of complexity inherent in intercultural situations, there seems to be a gap between the needs of and the support being offered to expatriates

Intercultural coaching – coaching in 3 dimensions

3 „META Dimension“

The individual in his/her job role in the context of

- company culture
- industry culture
- country culture

Issues (examples): assuming a management role in the context of M&A, international teams, or international assignments

1 „INTRA-Dimension“

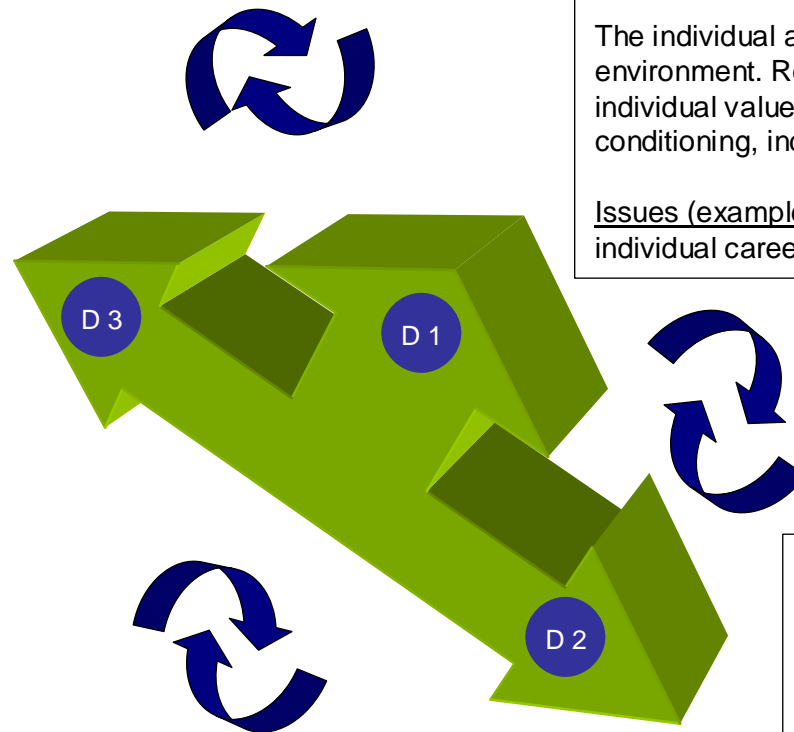
The individual as opposed to his/her environment. Relevant aspects: biography, individual values, environmental conditioning, individual perception of reality

Issues (examples): work-life balance, individual career planning

2 „EXTRA-Dimension“

The individual in the context of his or her role in the organisation (structure), its values, rules and expectations

Issues (for example): Change of management



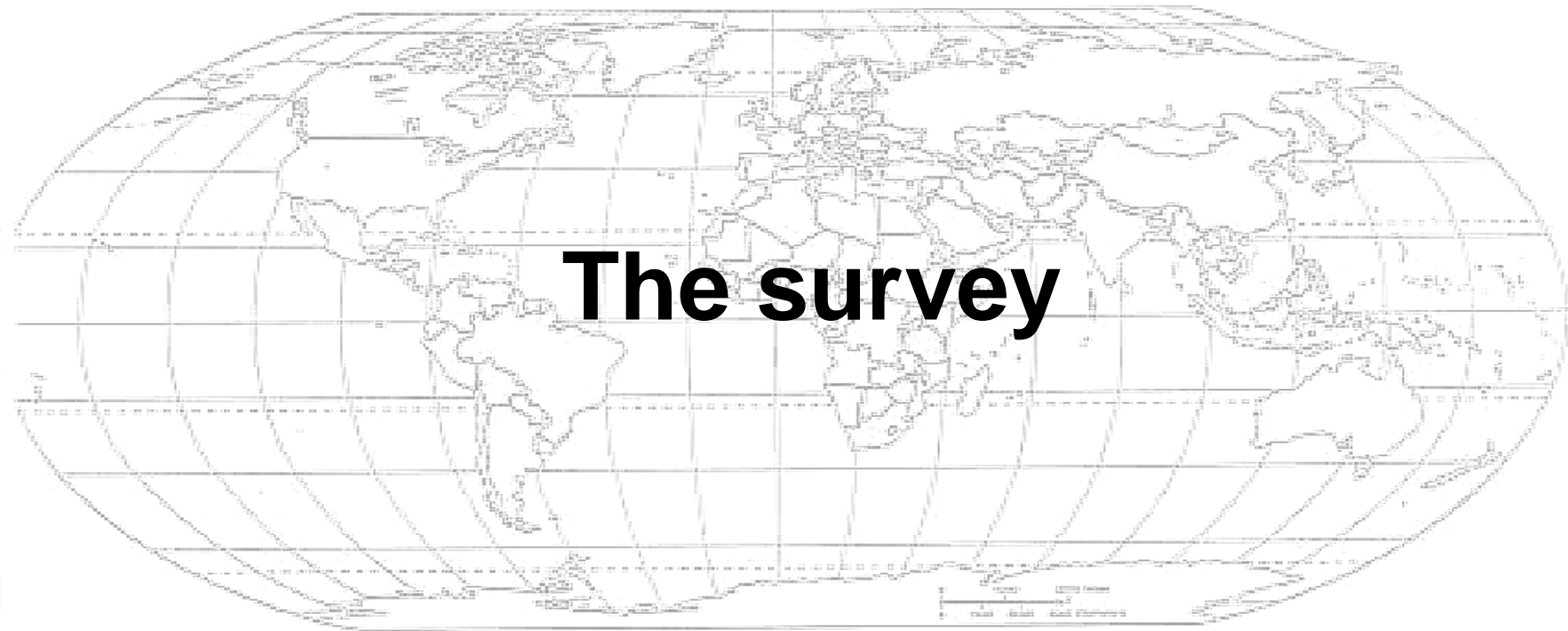
Aims of the questionnaire (1)

- To find out what is common practice in preparation and support for expatriates
- To examine what role if any coaching plays in expat preparation and support
- To find out where intercultural coaching could help

Aims of the questionnaire (2)

- To assess the level of interest in the expat community for intercultural coaching
- To test the hypothesis that there is a gap between demand and supply

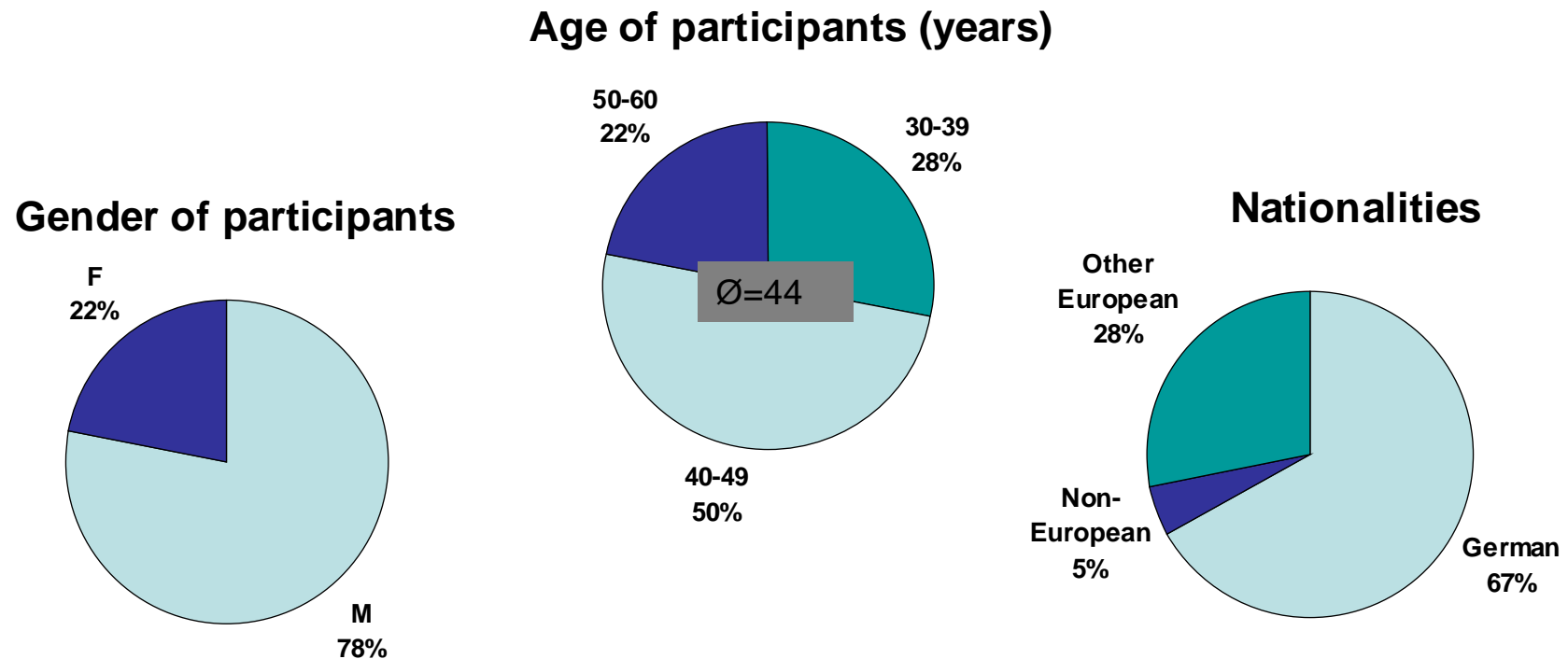
Content



World Map, Robinson Projection

Survey of 46 expatriates about their foreign assignment

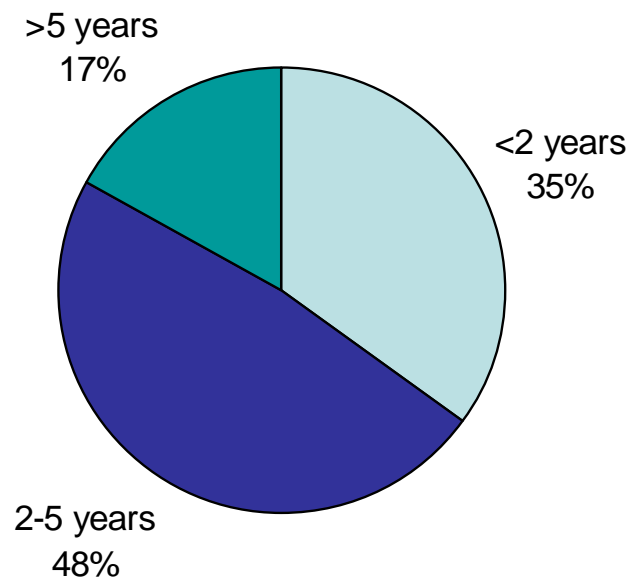
Composition of the sample (1)



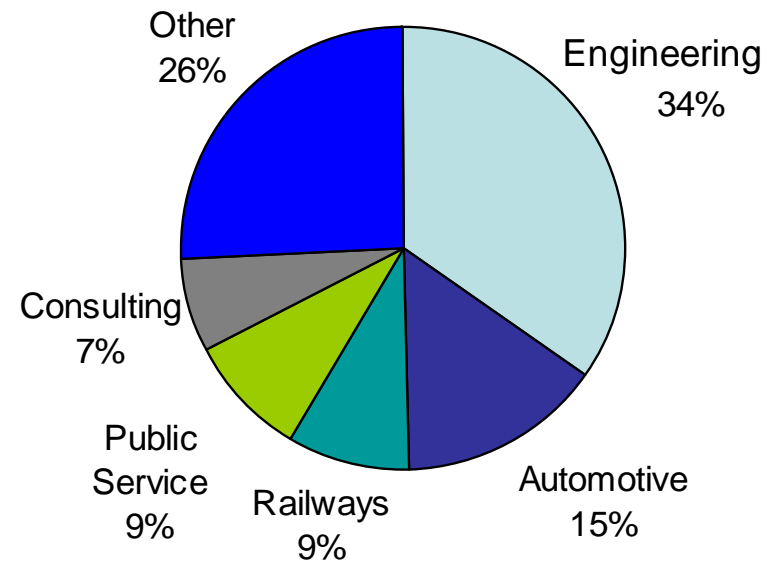
Survey of 46 expatriates about their foreign assignment

Composition of the sample (2)

Duration of stay



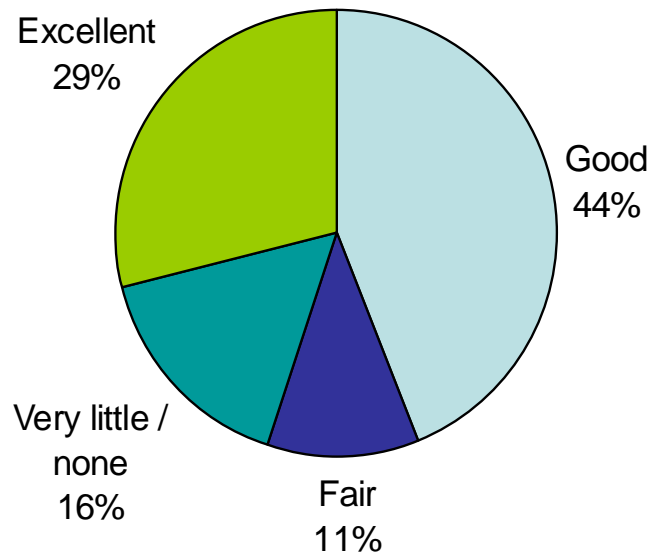
Industry



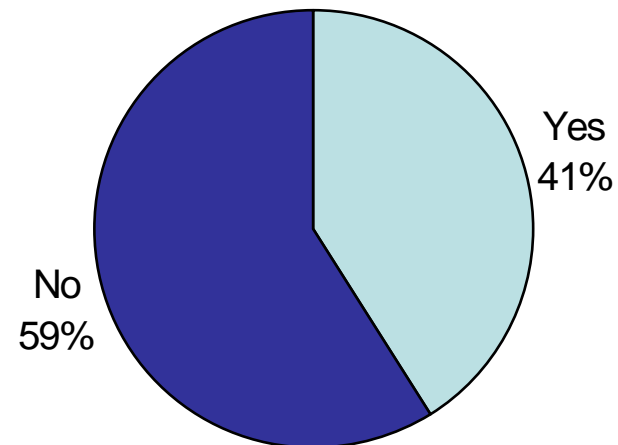
Survey of 46 expatriates about their foreign assignment

Composition of the sample (3)

Knowledge of host country language

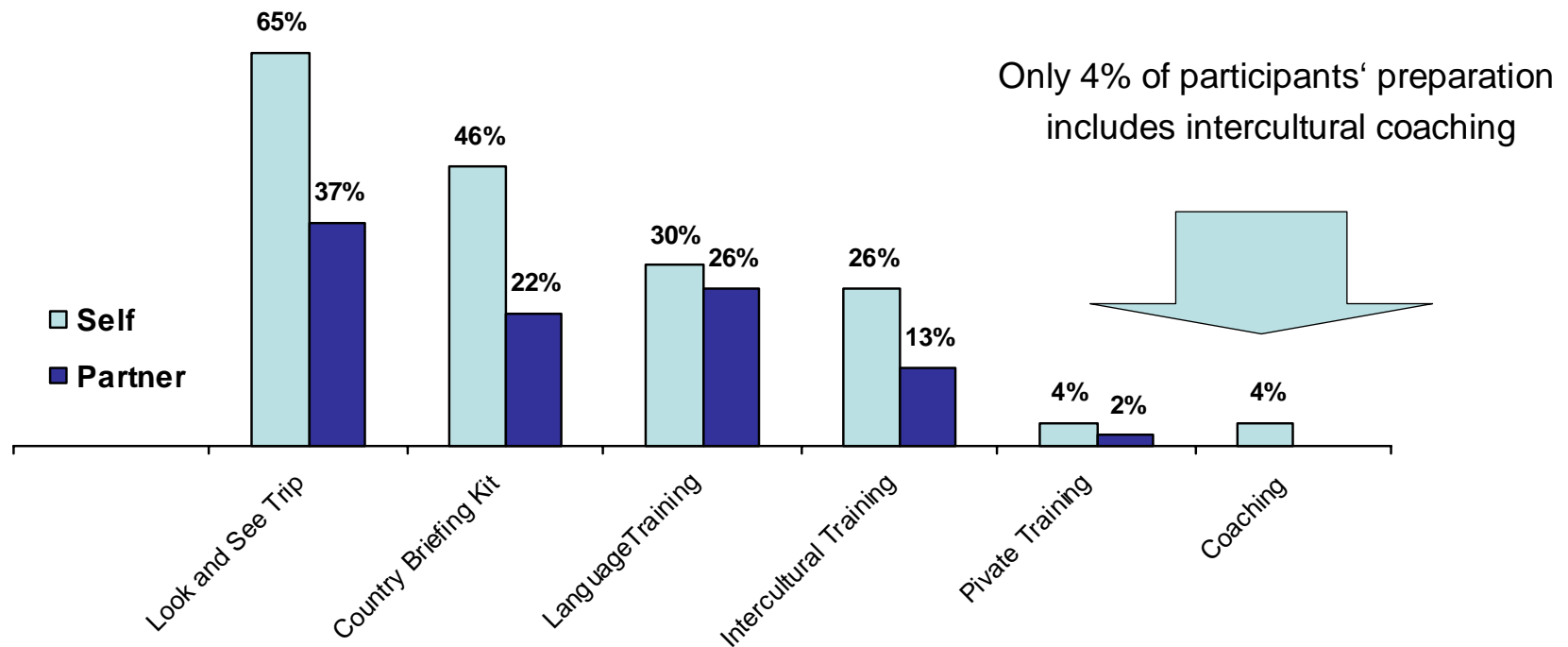


Coaching experience (other than intercultural coaching)



Type of preparation

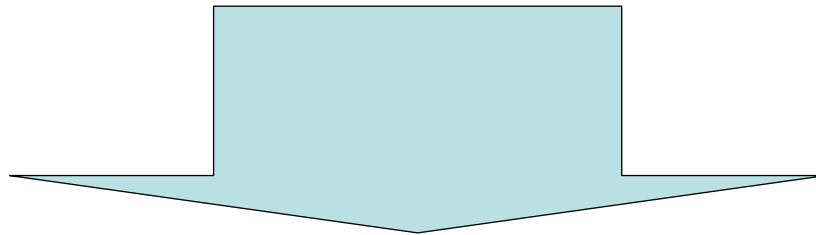
Only 36% considered company preparation to be good or excellent.



Average evaluation (1-4): **2.5**

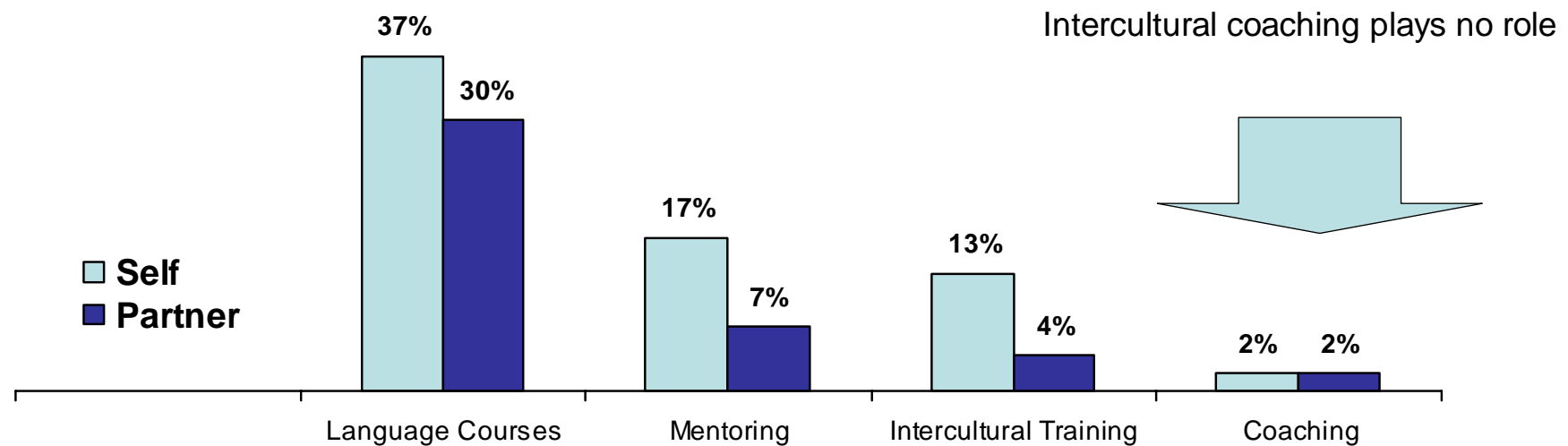
Expats' comments about preparation for the assignment

- Many wish for more upfront training, especially language training
- Previous travel, for example a „look and see trip“, is judged very useful preparation
- Help with logistics (house hunting, schools, tax advice, etc.) is important before and at the beginning of the assignment



Before the beginning of the assignment, practical concerns usually seem most important

Support of expatriates on site is significantly less than preparation



Average Evaluation (1-4): **2.4**

Intercultural issues (1)

Problems expats faced during their stay – and where coaching could help

- Family matters and logistics are judged about equally as important as issues concerning work
- The difficulty of establishing social contacts outside of work is deemed to be a serious problem, especially for spouses
- Awareness of what kind of problems could be worked on in coaching is rather low – coaching is sometimes confused with training, mentoring, or even logistics assistance through a relocation agent

Intercultural issues (2)

Examples for answers to the question when coaching would have been useful

How to handle the Mexican neighbourhood

In Albania it (coaching) was especially useful since shaking your head to indicate ,no' means ,yes'

Never underestimate the importance of dinners: a lecture about fine wines and high quality components of cooking would have been useful

Intercultural issues (3)

Intercultural coaching issues

- The range of issues varies widely, depending on a multitude of factors such as degree of development of host country, family situation of expat, etc., suggesting the need for tailormade support such as coaching
- Ways of dealing with hierarchy, mistakes or failure vary widely by culture. How to deal with them is a central theme where coaching could help

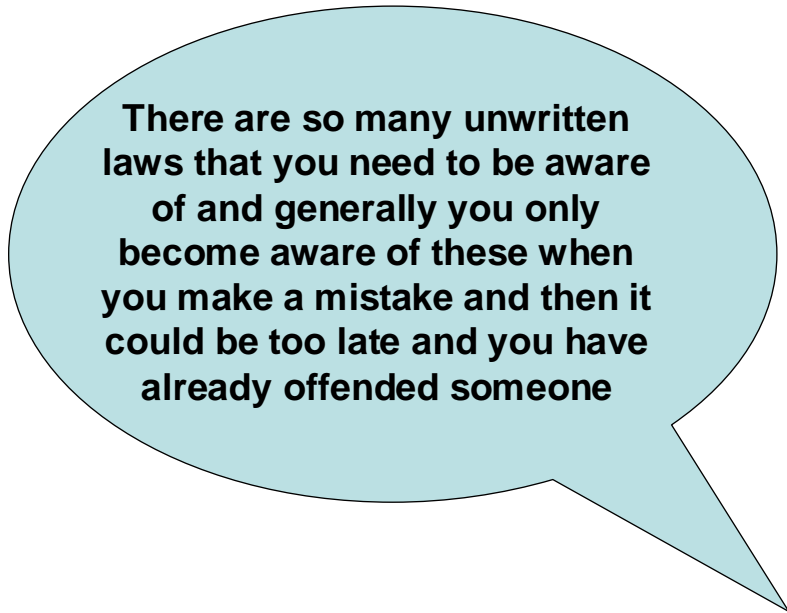
Intercultural issues (4)

Intercultural coaching issues - quotes



I have learned a lot about the right point for a decision in China and ,giving face' to my Chinese joint venture partners

(German national in China)



There are so many unwritten laws that you need to be aware of and generally you only become aware of these when you make a mistake and then it could be too late and you have already offended someone

(British national in Germany)

Intercultural issues (5)

Multiple country and/or corporate cultures make things exponentially more complicated

Communication issues especially with French since they are not very open on their mistakes and shortfalls

Spanish pride does not allow to debate failures or mistakes

German companies are working in line with their plans and it is very difficult to get them into a fire-fighting mode to find short-term fixes without doing first long-term re-evaluation on the initial planning

French and Spanish organisations are much more hierarchial than German or British organisations

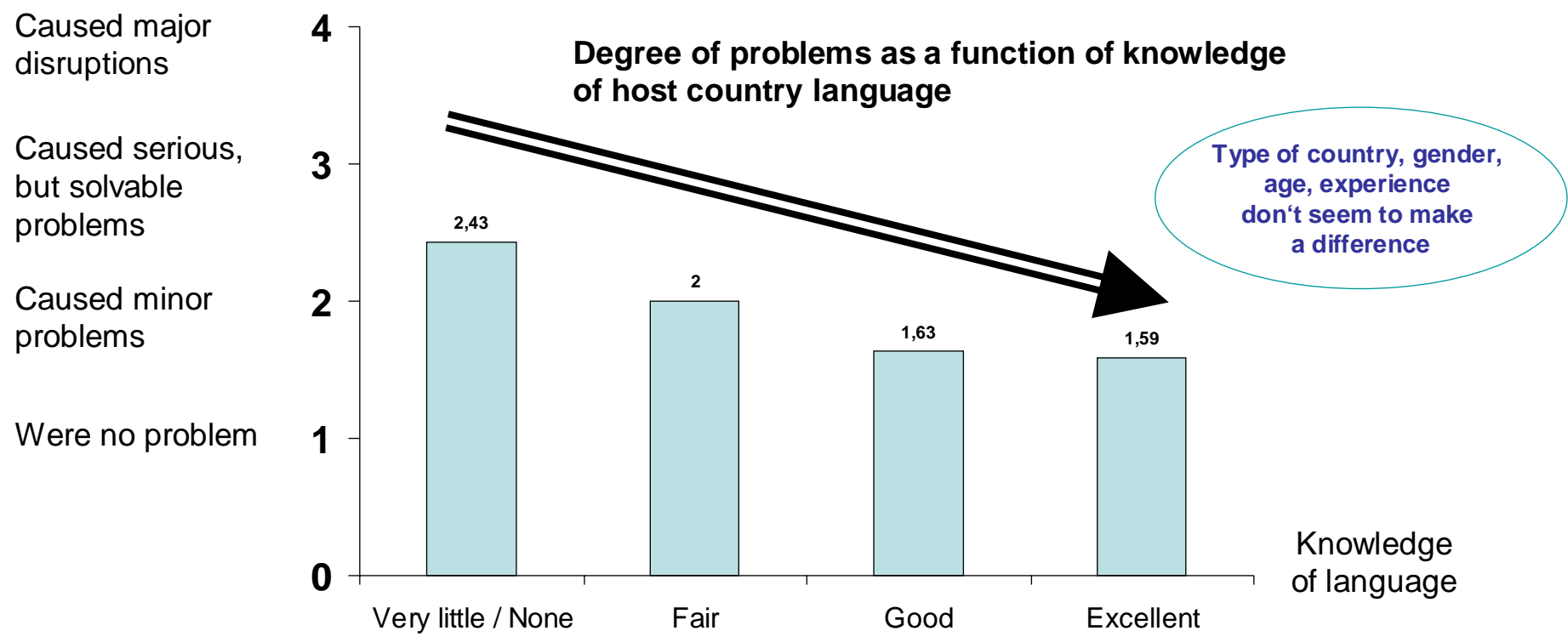


Combination of 4 different European nationalities result in long debates before a solution or a way forward can be agreed

(German National living in Spain)

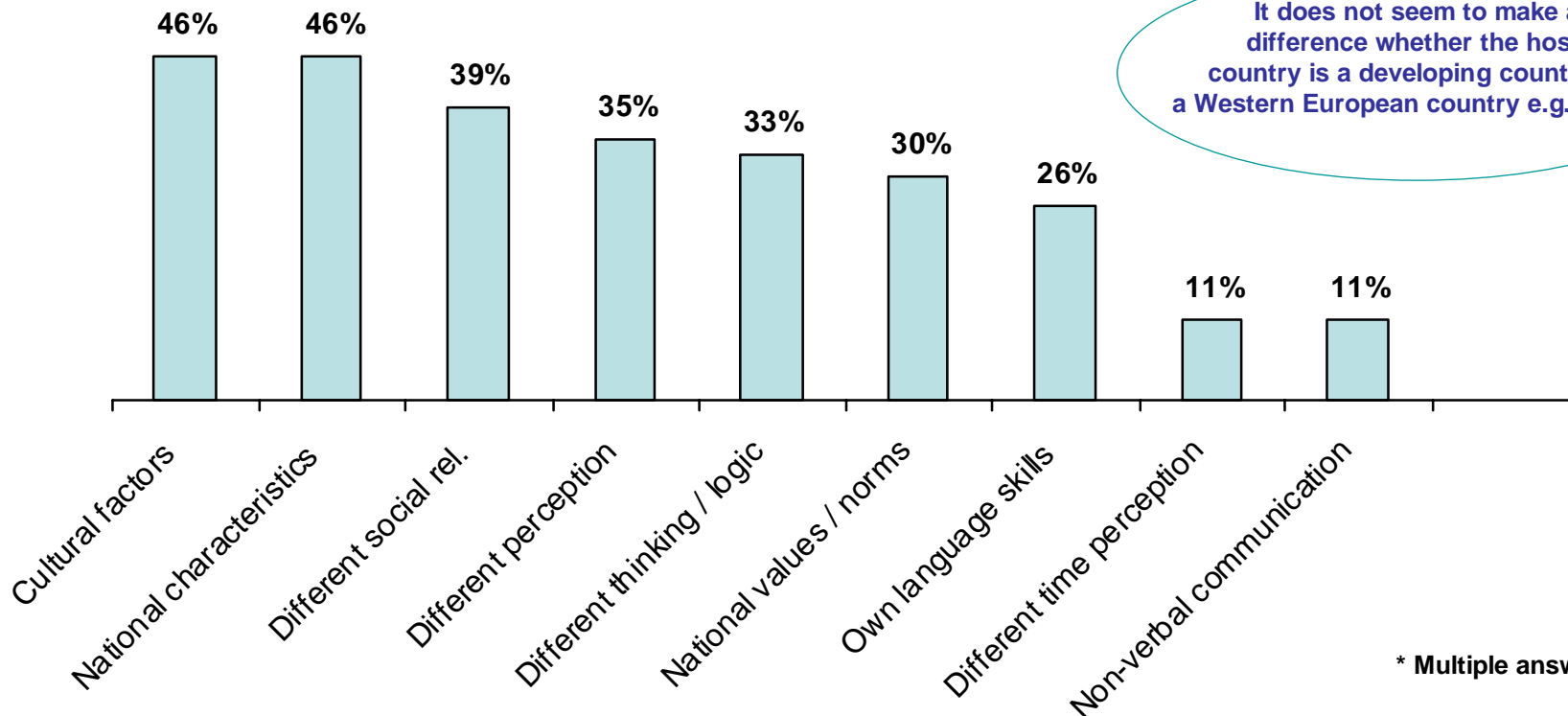
Knowledge of host country language...

... seems to be the main variable making a difference in the degree of problems faced by expatriates



Difficulties in the host country

According to participants, cultural factors and national characteristics were the most important elements contributing to difficulties in the host country*



* Multiple answers possible

Financial damage

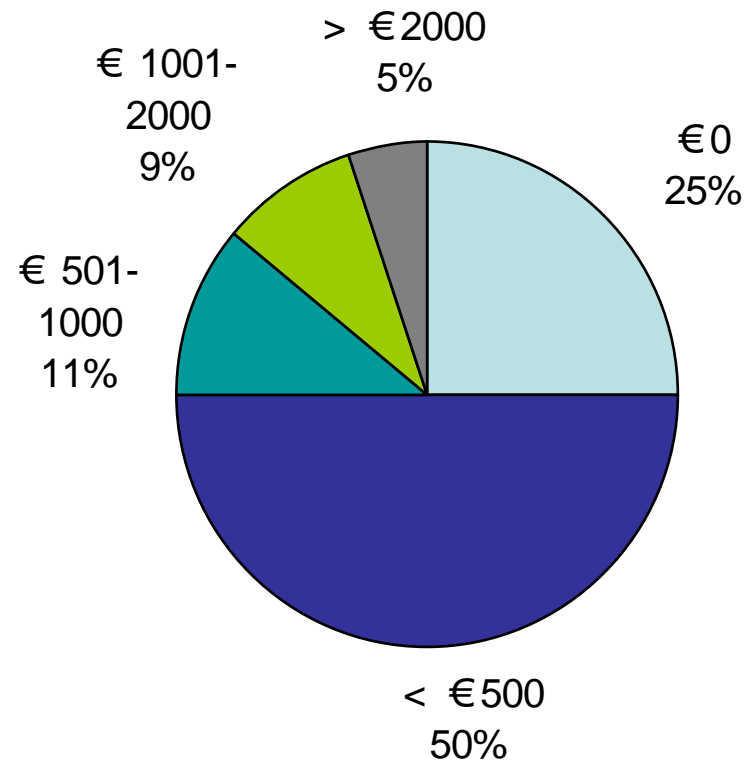
6 of 46 participants reported financial damage ranging from

€500 to €200.000.

It can be assumed that the actual amount of financial damage is greater than the one reported

Spending own money on coaching...

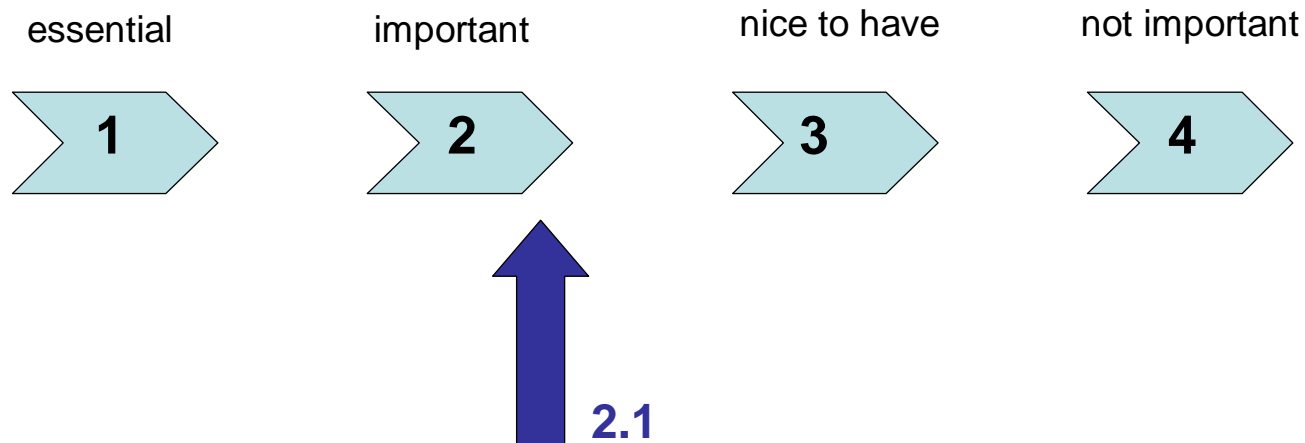
...a majority of participants is prepared to spend some of their own money on coaching, albeit rather small amount



Coaching for spouses/partners...(1)

Coaching for spouses/partners is rated higher than own coaching.

Q: *“Would you consider coaching for accompanying spouses/partners...?”*



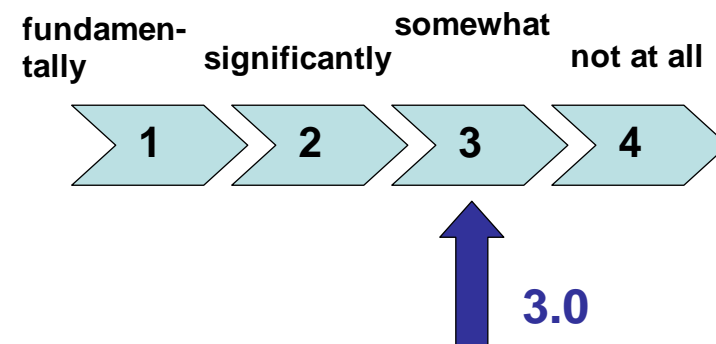
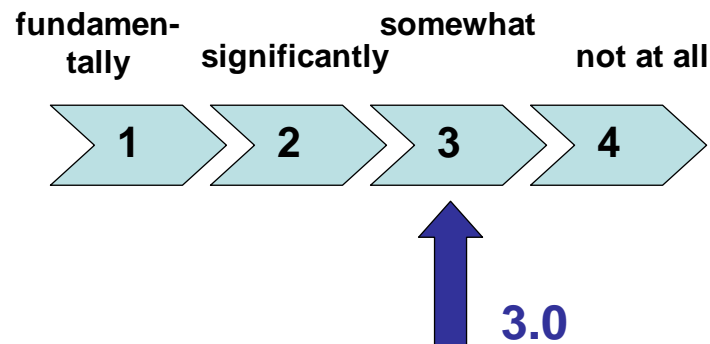
Coaching for spouses/partners...(2)

Coaching for spouses/partners is rated higher than own coaching.

Q: “How much do you think intercultural coaching could have improved...

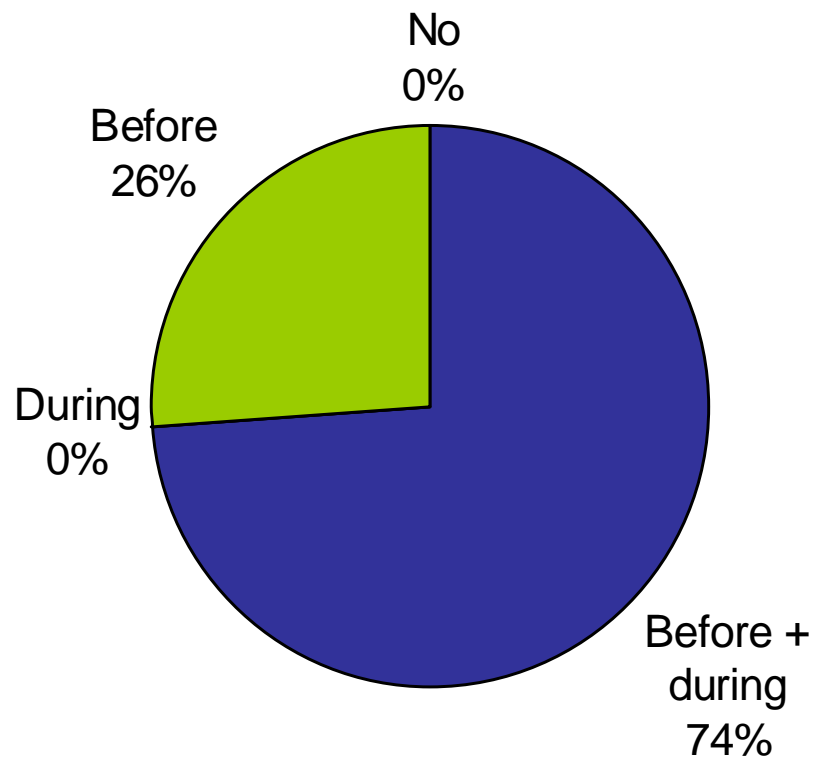
..the quality of stay for you personally?”

...your performance on the job?”



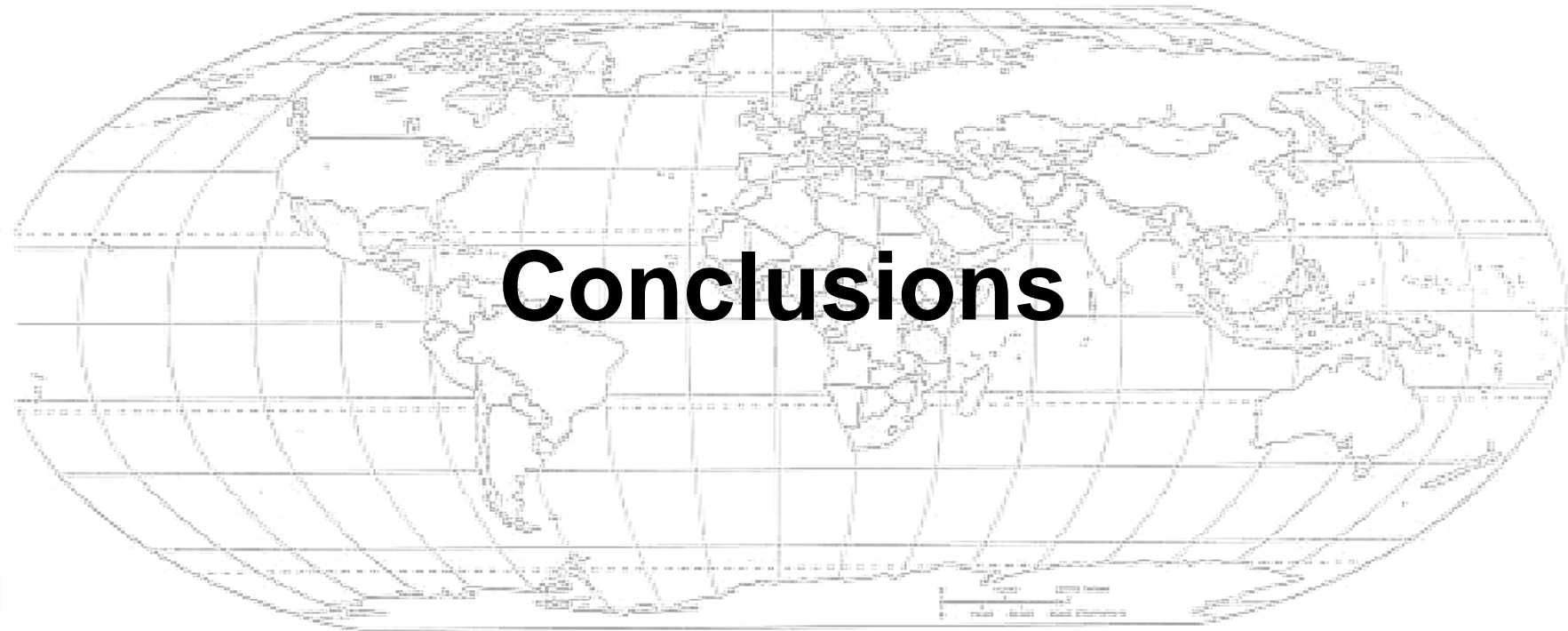
100% pro intercultural coaching

100% of participants would make use of intercultural coaching if offered by their company...



...even though
37% of
participants
reported no
problems
whatsoever

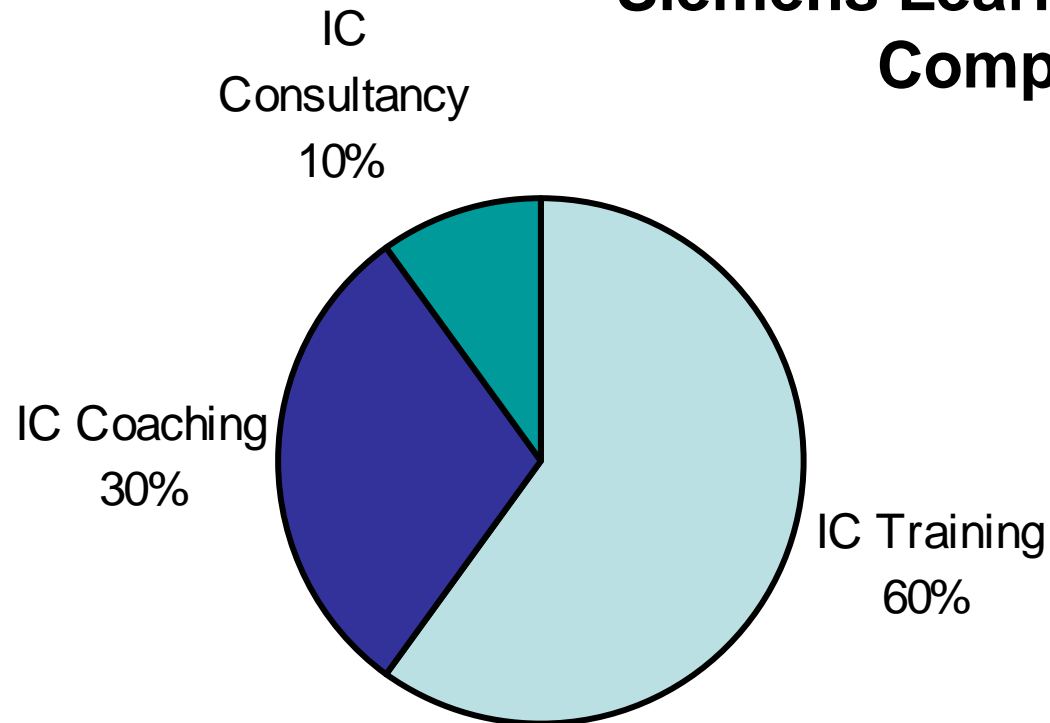
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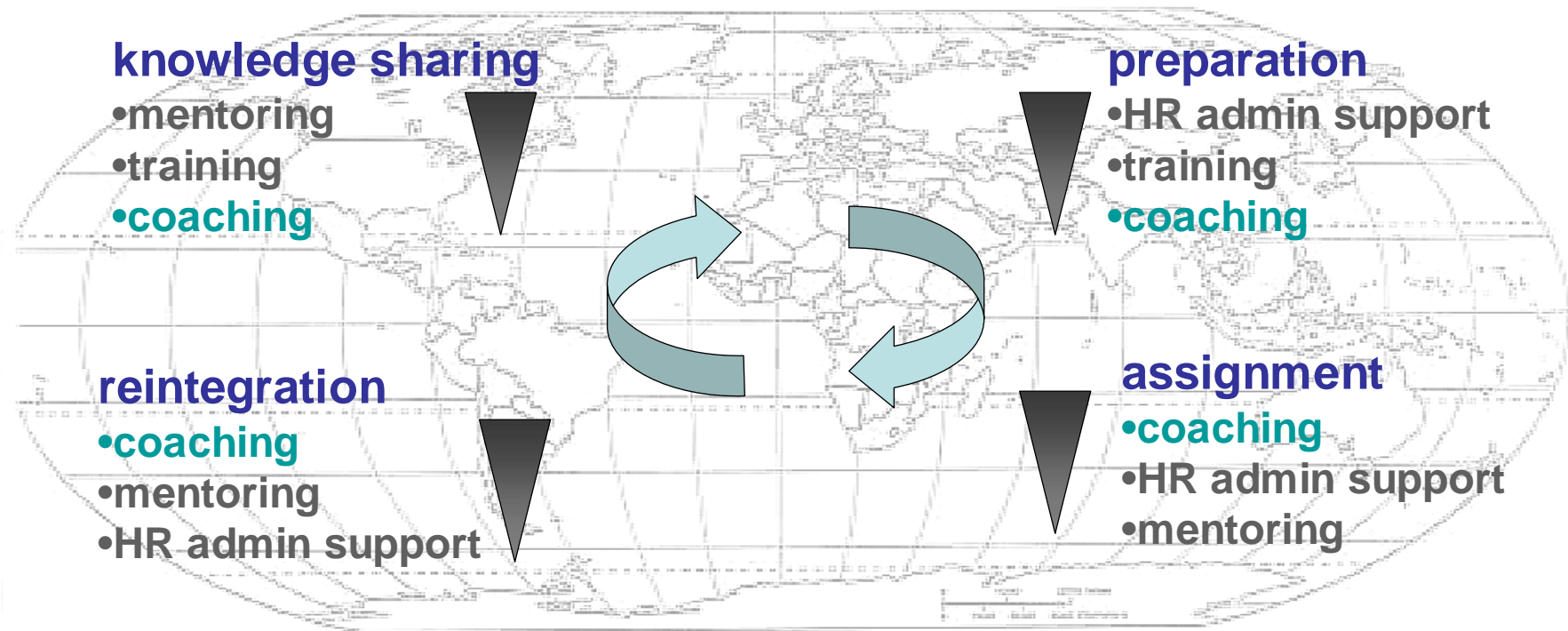
World Map, Robinson Projection

A glance at Siemens - ahead of the times?

**Overview of measures offered to expats by
Siemens Learning Campus, Munich.
Company profile worldwide
420.000 employees
in 190 countries**



Vision - Intercultural competence cycle



World Map, Robinson Projection

(According to R. Gibson/Z. Tang “Intercultural business competence”)

Conclusions

- There is a need for better information about what intercultural coaching is and where it can help
- There is an enormous gap between interest and demand for intercultural coaching by expatriates and the offer by their companies
- The need is big, both for the expats themselves and also for their spouses/partners
- Intercultural coaching, per definition tailormade, seems to be an adequate tool to address the multidimensional problems faced by expats during their stay or people working in global teams

Thank you for your attention



Appendix

