



ITER and COVID-19: Understanding the situation of companies involved in the project

Final report of an EU survey, December 2020



Manuscript completed in December 2020

Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use that might be made of the following information.

Luxembourg, Publication Office of the European Union, 2021

© European Atomic Energy Community, 2021

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

PDF EN ISBN 978-92-76-29354-5

doi 10.2833/33567

MJ-03-21-039-EN-N

Background

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy is willing to understand the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis on the companies involved in the ITER project, in order to assess to what extent a participation in ITER helped them in the road to recovery.

An online EU survey was published early September 2020; subsequently ENER D4 asked Fusion for Energy (F4E) and the ITER Organization (IO) to invite their European contractors to fill in the survey. The aim of this survey is to understand the current state of play and the impact of ITER for European industry and companies in times of crisis, both internally and externally. This is part of the overall efforts of promoting the project within the European Union.

The questionnaire was designed to address three aspects:

- first, the company characteristics;
- second, its role in the ITER project;
- and lastly, the impact of COVID-19 on the company's activities and recovery.

The survey closed on 30 October 2020. The present report summarizes the main results as of 1st November 2020.

Main results

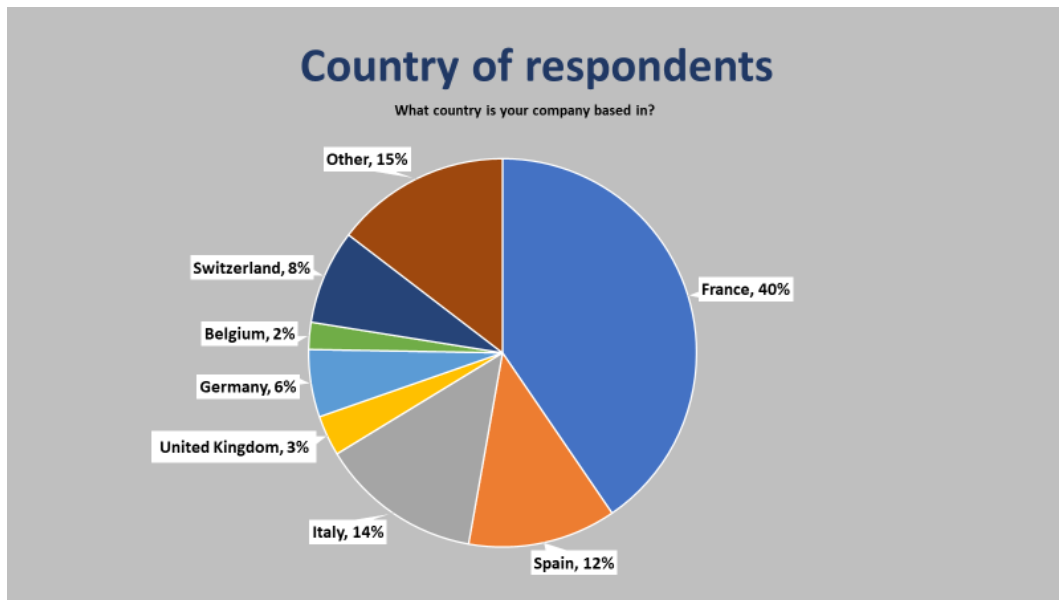
At the closing of the survey, **89 companies** filled out the questionnaire. As about 2300 European suppliers were reached out by F4E and the IO, this represents a response rate of 4%, which is quite standard for this type of consultation.

While the results were collected anonymously (and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Regulation 2018/1725), about **half of the respondents (46%)** provided their contact details.

The data shows that participating in ITER has concrete impact on the responding companies (in terms of staff and turnover). However, for **two-thirds of them**, the pandemic had a negative impact. Respondents experienced delays (70% of them), decreased demand and negative financial consequences (close to 50%). Quite interestingly, 31% of the respondents agree that the involvement in ITER makes their company more resilient to the consequences of the crisis.

Company characteristics

As shown by the figure below, two-thirds of respondents are based in France, in Italy and in Spain.



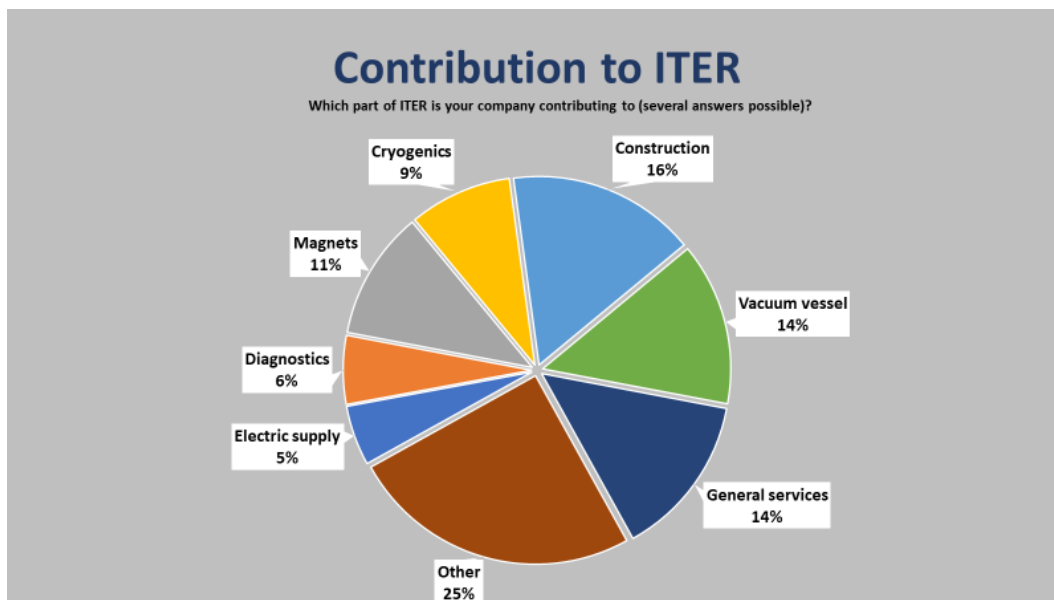
Most of the respondents work in small and medium-sized enterprises (39% having less than 50 employees and 22% having more than 1000 employees)

42% of the respondents work in the manufacturing sector, and 35% in the services.

Role in the ITER project

54% of the respondents turn out to be main contractors. As shown below, one third of respondents are involved in the manufacturing of big components and systems (magnets, vacuum vessel and cryogenics).

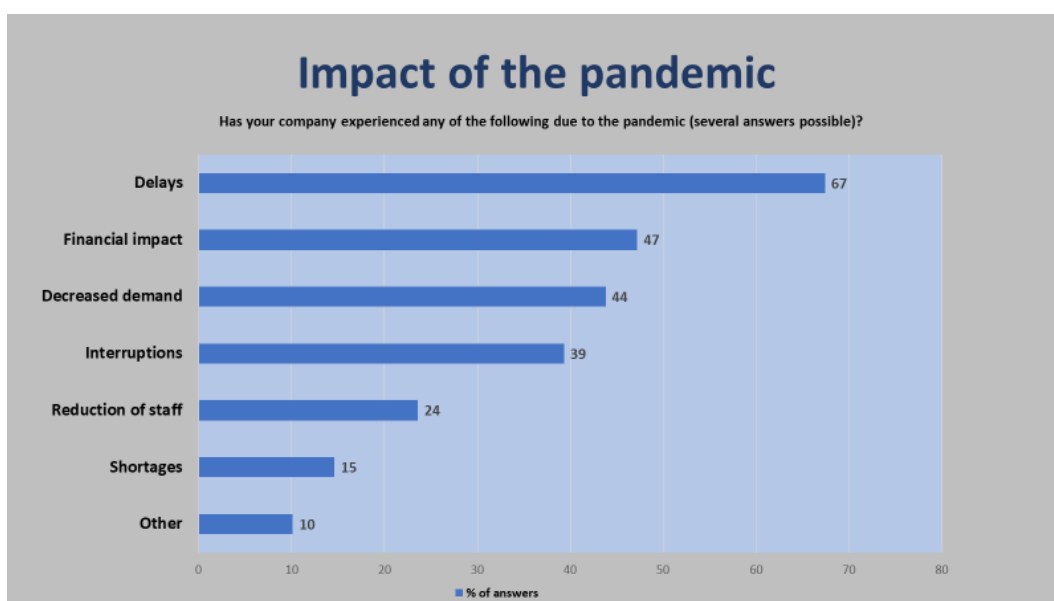
The respondents' average involvement time in ITER is 6.0 years, which means that most companies joined ITER around 2014, when construction and manufacturing were really taking off.



For the vast majority of them (83%), participating in ITER represents less than 25% of the company's activity portfolio. However, for 7% of them, ITER represents more than 75% of their activity. Close to half of the companies (46%) claim to have recruited additional staff (full- or part-time) thanks to the participation in ITER. The same proportion agrees that the participation in ITER enabled their company to increase its turnover.

Impact of COVID-19 on companies' activities and recovery

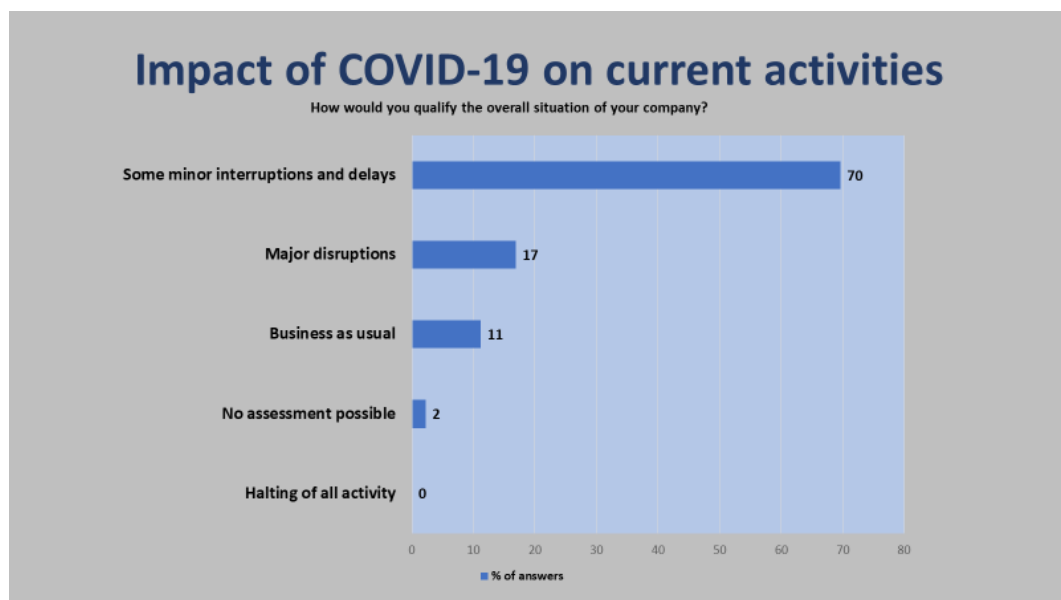
As shown by the figure below, 67% of the responding companies claim to have experienced delays (although not necessarily related to ITER), and nearly half of them had to cope with a decreased demand and financial impact. Only a few companies (four i.e. 4%) declared to have been unimpacted by COVID-19 so far.



More than 61% of the respondents declare that their financial performance has been affected by the pandemic and evaluate this impact at 5.0 on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (significantly).

Most companies have been impacted by the measures of restriction taken by most European governments. For example, 51% agree that the performance of their company's workforce has been negatively impacted by the measures taken by their national authorities.

Nevertheless, as shown by the figure below, when asked to describe the overall situation of their company, only 17% of the respondents declare to face “major disruptions”. None had to halt their activity.



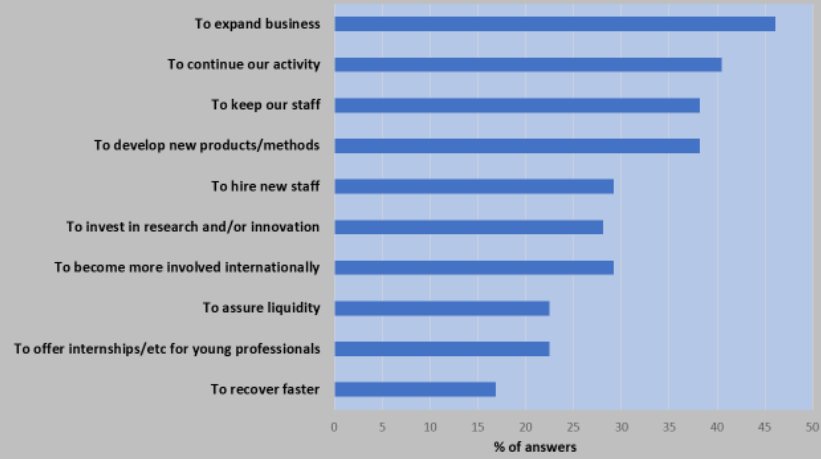
When looking to the future, respondents acknowledge some positive perspectives.

Indeed, nearly one third of respondents (32.5%) declare that their company is more resilient to the consequences of the crisis thanks to its involvement in ITER. It might be related to the fact that neither F4E nor the IO interrupted their activities during the pandemic and/or to the competitive advantage raising from their participation in ITER. This is a point which may require further investigation to better understand the reasons of this perceived resilience.

Furthermore, as illustrated below, around 40-45% of the respondents claim that the participation in the ITER project will allow their company to continue and even expand their economic activities, as well as to keep their staff.

Impact of ITER on future activities

With regards to the pandemic and the road ahead, the participation in the ITER project will allow our company ...



*

*

*