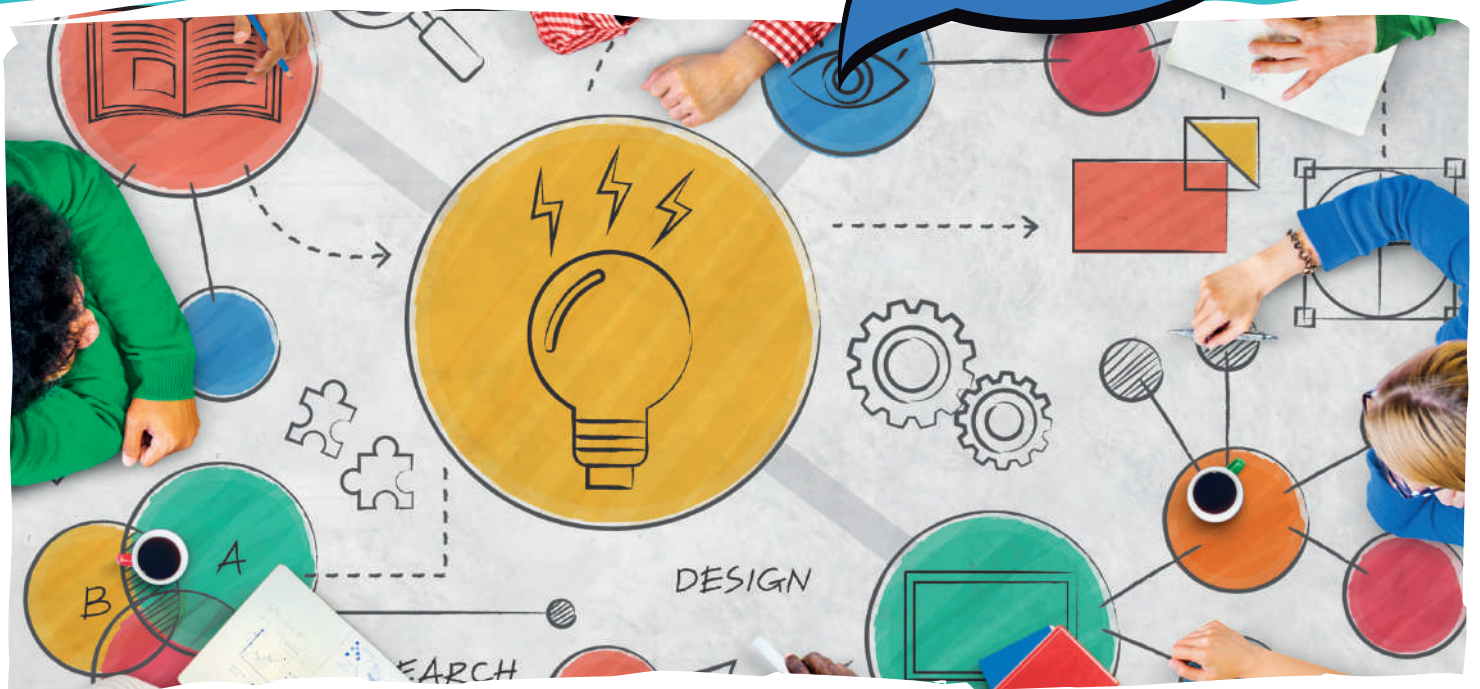


Greece



# Final Impact Assessment Report 2024

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#YoungEntrepreneursSucceed

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Final Assessment Report 2024: Greece

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## Table of Contents

<b>List of Tables</b> .....	2
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	2
<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
<b>Methodology</b> .....	6
Program theory of change .....	7
Framework for measuring Impact assessment .....	7
Evaluation design .....	9
SkillLab .....	10
Measures .....	10
Emotional capabilities .....	10
Social benefit .....	10
Economic benefit.....	11
Data collection and analysis.....	11
Quantitative data collection and analysis .....	12
Qualitative data collection and analysis .....	12
<b>Interventions</b> .....	14
Overview of the training activities .....	17
Overview of the coaching and mentoring sessions .....	17
Overview of beneficiaries that used SkillLab .....	17
Descriptive statistics .....	19
Soft outcomes: Statistical evaluation of soft outcome and impact variables.....	26
Soft impact: Statistical evaluation of soft hard impact variables .....	26
Overview of focus group participants .....	28
Analysis of focus group feedback from the participants (SkillLab and Non-SkillLab users).....	28
<b>Discussion</b> .....	39
<b>Concluding remarks</b> .....	41
<b>References</b> .....	45
<b>Appendix</b> .....	48
Focus Group Moderator Script .....	48

## List of Tables

Table 1. Overview of phase two activities .....	5
Table 2. Overview of outcome and impact variables.....	9
Table 3 Overview of training courses .....	16
Table 4. Test of significance difference between pre- and post-intervention .....	26
Table 5. Test of significance of hard impact (pre-post) variables.....	27
Table 6. Summary of focus group participants .....	28
Table 7. Summary of interviewed coaches and mentors.....	32

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Theory of change framework leading to impact generation .....	7
Figure 2 McNeil, Reeder & Rich framework for assessing outcomes and impact .....	8
Figure 3. Age distribution of respondents.....	19
Figure 4. Distribution of respondents based on gender .....	20
Figure 5. Distribution of respondents per educational status .....	20
Figure 6. Geographical distribution of respondents .....	21
Figure 7. Distribution of participants by type of intervention .....	23
Figure 8. Distribution of participants by labor status .....	23
Figure 9. Distribution by source of income .....	25
Figure 10. Distribution of participants by monthly disposable income .....	26
Figure 11. Graphical description themes and codes from the analysis of the focus groups	29
Figure 12. Graphical description themes and codes of interviews with coaches and mentors .....	33

# Introduction

## Introduction

This report presents the final results of an impact assessment designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Development Agency of Karditsa's (AN.KA) interventions within the Young Entrepreneurs Success (YES!) program. AN.KA, one of the partners implementing the YES! program is based in Karditsa Greece. The organization provides technical assistance to local authority organizations, state associations, municipalities, communities, and small and medium-sized businesses to develop productive, innovative, and entrepreneurship systems across the Karditsa region and other areas in Greece. Apart from its focus on capacity building and empowerment of the local population, a number of projects related to vulnerable social groups are also supported by the organization including ROMA communities, reintegration of refugees and asylum seekers, women entrepreneurs, and other minority groups.

The YES! program is one of the various social intervention projects funded through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The program began in the year 2018 with the aim of improving the employment situation of young people neither in employment nor education and training (NEETs) through innovative approaches offered by the transnational collaboration of the project partners<sup>1</sup> on labor market issues.

Following the successful implementation of the project during Phase I (2018 - 2021), with a total of 1,600 NEETs spread across the four implementation countries (Greece, Italy, Poland, and Spain), the program got refinanced for phase II, which currently runs from for one and half year period of implementation (April 2022 - December 2023), with additional 1020 NEETs, spread across the same region. Table 1 presents a summary of beneficiaries per country in the second phase of the intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> Partnership within the consortium involved the Implementation partners: Autooccupacio (ES), AN.KA (GR), Youth Business Poland (PL), Microfinanza (IT), and Expertise partners: Munich Business School (DE), Youth Business International (UK), Agricultural University of Athens – Lead partner (GR).

Table 1. Overview of phase two activities

Country	Beneficiaries
Spain	250
Italy	350
Poland	150
Greece	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>1020</b>

This report is to be read in the context of the project's "Impact Assessment Work Package," which represents a systematic effort to provide credible evidence on the causal impacts of the interventions meant to integrate young adults into the labor market. The Work Package encompasses a series of activities, including establishing clear project objectives, developing an impact assessment framework, producing periodic impact evaluations, and learning to inform decision-making within and among the organizations involved.

The rest of the report proceeds as follows. After a brief introduction provided in Section 1, Section 2 provides detailed explanation of the methodology for conducting the impact assessment. Section 3 describes the interventions conducted by AN.KA. Section 4 presents the results, while Section 5 interprets them by discussing the lessons learned to facilitate the translation of findings into practice for the project partners. The last section concludes and generalizes on potential implications for employment services providers outside the context of the project.

# Methodology

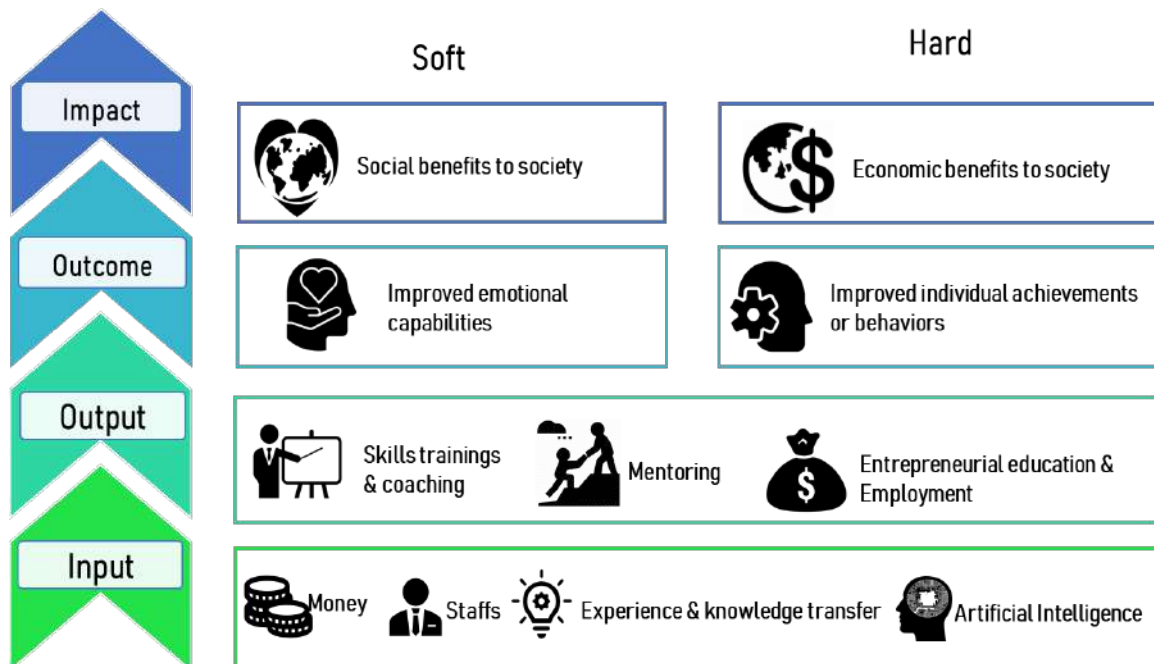


## Methodology

### Program theory of change

The Theory of Change (ToC) employed for impact assessment was based on the overarching goal of the YES! program: facilitating the transition of young individuals who are currently not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) from this status to active participation in the labor market. This is achieved through the cultivation of their emotional skills and equipping them with the necessary resources to secure employment or embark on successful entrepreneurial ventures. As described in figure 1, the program ToC included the input variables money, staff, experience, AI tool (SkillLab), and knowledge transfer among the partners are expected to support the beneficiaries emotionally, socially, and economically in getting employment or becoming entrepreneurs.

Figure 1 Theory of change framework leading to impact generation

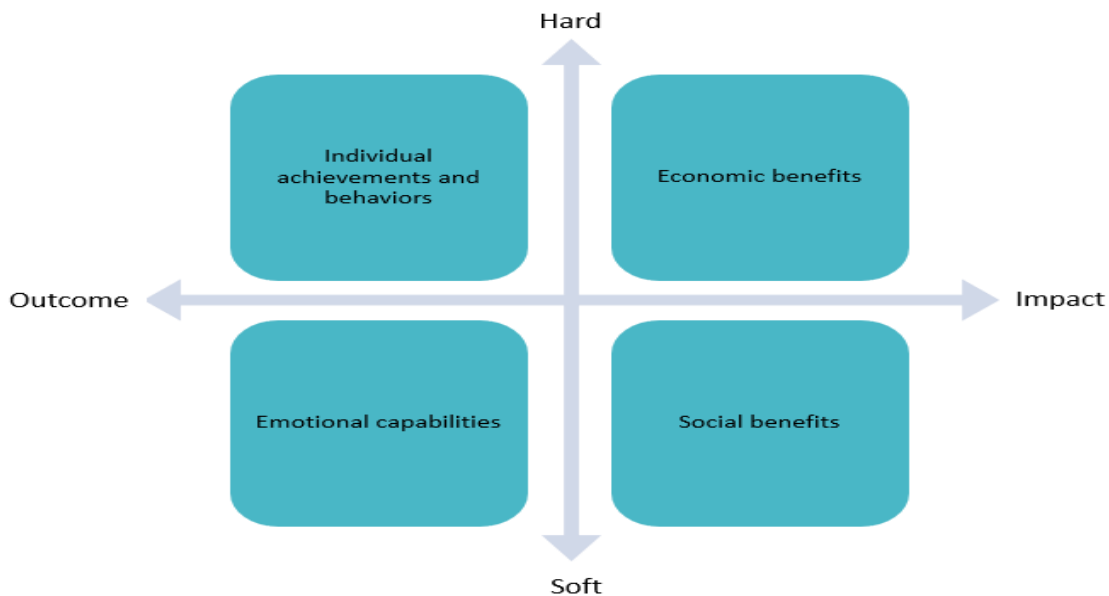


### Framework for measuring Impact assessment

The framework for assessing the projects' impact follows the conceptual framework proposed by McNeil, Reeder & Rich (2012). This was centered around four primary areas of

assessment as shown in Figure 2: soft outcomes, hard outcomes, soft impact, and hard impact.

Figure 2 McNeil, Reeder & Rich framework for assessing outcomes and impact



The two left quadrants of the above figure represent the effect of the interventions on the beneficiaries (Program Outcome), while the right quadrants represent the effects of the interventions on society (Program Impact). The left and right quadrants are further subcategorized into four variables. The soft outcome - a measure of "emotional capabilities", soft impact - a measure of "social benefits", hard outcome - a measure of "individual achievements and behaviors", and hard impact - a measure of "economic benefits".

Following the results of Phase I of the program, a review of the indicators and variables was conducted to assess the impact of the second phase of the interventions. This resulted in the modification and replacement of some of the variables adopted to assess Phase II impact. Table 2 presents an overview of the variables adopted to assess the effectiveness of the interventions.

Table 2. Overview of outcome and impact variables

Outcome		Impact
Hard	/	Labor status, Lifetime cost, Disposable income
Soft	Soft skills	Quality of life

The variable "Soft skills" which is an aggregation of the Likert responses of Self-efficacy, Resilience, and Proactivity was adopted to measure the "Emotional capabilities" of the interventions. This allows the evaluation of the beneficiaries' soft skills. To assess the "social benefits" of interventions, the "Quality of Life" variable was adopted. The QoL variable measures and assesses the life cycle of the beneficiaries based on personal, environmental, and social aspects. These include living conditions, health, and social inclusion. To assess the "Economic benefits" of the intervention on the society, labor status (transition from NEET status to education, employment, or self-employment), lifetime cost (self-reliance or self-sufficiency), and disposable income were adopted.

### Evaluation design

The evaluation of phase II interventions relies on a pre-post experimental design. This design method was adopted due to its ability to reveal the immediate impact of short-term interventions (Monsen, 2018). To further assist in measuring the effects due to the participation of the beneficiaries in the interventions, the beneficiaries are further divided into control and comparison groups. The control group included beneficiaries who participated in the interventions with access to the artificial intelligence tool (SkillLab). The comparison group included beneficiaries who participated in the interventions without access to the artificial intelligence tool (SkillLab).

Categorizing the beneficiaries into control and comparison groups would allow researchers to measure and assess the effectiveness of artificial intelligence on the beneficiaries. This further enabled the partners to gain insight into the potential of the technology (AI in particular) in facilitating the development of emotional capabilities of the beneficiaries as they transition from a NEET status to employment or entrepreneurship in the labor market.

## SkillLab

SkillLab is an artificial intelligence tool adopted in the second phase of the YES program to support inclusive labor market participation. It is a skill-based tool that facilitates the labor market transition, participation, and inclusion of users by showcasing other hidden talents, experiences, and skills possessed by users which are not captured by the typical job application resources. Apart from highlighting the qualifications of its users, the application also captures the users' skills and maps them with possible career paths which might be interesting and can be pursued by them.

The company (SkillLab) believes that no one should be deprived of dignity and livelihood based on race, gender, status, or background because they are unable to articulate their skills, therefore aims to offer equal opportunities to all jobseekers through channeled pathways to socioeconomic participation in education and employment.

## Measures

### Emotional capabilities

**Soft Skill** - This variable is derived from the aggregation of self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity. These variables were aggregated on the assumption of the Classical Test Theory. The CTT allows researchers to aggregate multiple items into a single variable (scale) for analysis on the assumption of the same underlying abilities. DeVellis, R. F. (2012), explains CTT as "a way to combine the individual items into a single score by summing the item responses. ... The sum of the item scores is considered to be an estimate of the individual's true score on the construct being measured." Soft skill is used to assess the contribution of the project in developing their emotional capabilities. It is composed of questions nine self-efficacy questions, two resilience questions, and one proactivity question. All questions were measured on a 10-point Likert scale which allows for easy aggregation.

### Social benefit

**Quality of life** - The Quality of life variable was introduced in the analysis to measure the social benefit of the intervention on the beneficiaries. The QoL covers the following dimensions: personal well-being, health, career, and social inclusion. It will allow

researchers to not only vividly capture information on the socioeconomic aspects of the participants but also incorporate aspects of their overall well-being (OECD, 2013). To measure the QoL, we deployed three questions from the European quality of life survey, and eight questions from the quality of life and social inclusion survey on a ten-point scale.

### Economic benefit

**Labor status** was measured by asking participants about their current employment situation; possible answers were:

- Enrolled in formal education
- Employed as a full time, part time or low wage employee
- Self-employed, freelancer, entrepreneurs
- unemployed and currently looking for work
- unemployed and currently not looking for work

**Disposable income** was measured by asking participants to select one answer from the following:

- Less than 600 EUR
- 600 - 1300 EUR
- 1300 - 2000 EUR
- 2000 - 2700 EUR
- More than 2700 EUR

The aggregate lifetime public finance costs (from now on **lifetime costs**) are usually estimated using three main elements: benefits, tax loss (both loss of direct and indirect taxes), and national insurance (Coles, Godfrey, Keung, Parrott, & Bradshaw, 2010). In the context of this research, an estimation of the total lifetime cost was not conducted, and this variable was assessed by measuring a change in the proportions of participants that receive unemployment benefits pre/post-intervention.

### Data collection and analysis

A mixed-method analysis is adopted for the second phase of the impact assessment. This includes the combination of quantitative and qualitative research analysis. This method of analysis gives room for complimentary and triangulation of findings of a research activity,

which also allows for the validation and integration of findings of a research study (Creswell, et al., 2003; Hsieh et al., 2005; O’Cathain et al., 2008).

### Quantitative data collection and analysis

Quantitative data was collected from the participants twice using a computer assisted data collection method (survey monkey). First was before the beneficiaries took part in the intervention (baseline information) and immediately after the conclusion of each intervention. The survey links containing the questionnaire links were distributed to partners who are responsible for the delivery of the interventions to the beneficiaries. To monitor feedback and minimize error due to incomplete or unclear data, two separate links containing entry and exit questionnaires were shared with the beneficiaries.

The entry questionnaire contained 32 questions while the exit questionnaire contained 28 (See appendix). The demographic questions were omitted from the exit questionnaire since the information was already captured in the entry questionnaire, hence the reason why it contained lesser questions in comparison with the entry questionnaire.

To analyze the quantitative responses, a paired sampled t-test was used to check if the means of the variables were reliably different from each other at baseline and post-intervention results of the soft outcome and soft impact variables. Furthermore, a McNemar test was equally conducted to assess the significance of the pre-and post-intervention differences of the hard impact variables.

### Qualitative data collection and analysis

For qualitative data collection and analysis, a combination of focus group sessions with the participants, and interviews of coaches and mentors involved in the program was conducted to generate qualitative data. This allowed researchers to understand the perspective of the implementation delivery team (coaches and mentors). Two rounds of focus group discussion were conducted with participants from Greece. The first round of FGD involved 3 randomly selected participants, without access to SkillLab, and the second round involved 4 randomly selected participants with access to SkillLab. The sessions lasted between 60 - 90 minutes and was conducted remotely via Microsoft Teams in Greek.

Following the qualitative data collection via focus groups, the interviews of coaches and mentors involved in the program were equally conducted to collect their feedback.

Overall. Four interviews, involving two coaches and two mentors were conducted. The interviews were conducted in Greek via Microsoft Teams and lasted between 40 - 60 minutes. The recorded versions of the interviews and focus group sessions were converted into transcripts and translated to English for analysis. Qualitative data analysis software (Atlas ti) was used to analyze the data for themes and excerpts to support the findings of the quantitative analysis. Copies of the focus group script and the interview guide (in English) can be found in the Appendix at the end of this report.

# Interventions



## Interventions

AN.KA continued implementing the second phase of the YES interventions which began in May 2022. As of 31.12.2023, 17 types of training courses were coordinated by AN.KA. The training amounted to 850 hours and ranges between three to sixteen hours per week. A total of 260 beneficiaries participated in the training which was conducted using both online and offline modes respectively. Table 3 summarizes the primary information for all training courses.

Table 3 Overview of training courses

Training courses	Duration	Start date	End date	Content	Delivery mode	Avg. Weekly hours	Total hours	Total participants
T36	3 weeks	16.03.2022	23.05.2022	Training on HTML/CSS 6	Online	6	50	27
T37	3 weeks	01.04.2022	13.05.2022	Training on Python 15	Online	9	50	18
T38	7 weeks	04.07.2022	21.08.2022	Training on IT skills to French speaking asylum seekers/refugees	Online	9	50	11
T39	7 weeks	3.10.2022	21.11.2022	Training on Python 16	Online	15	50	22
T40	5 weeks	26.10.2022	25.11.2022	Training on Beauty Skills to ROMA women	Offline	12	50	7
T41	6 weeks	9.11.2022	16.12.2022	Training on Barista	Offline	12	50	14
T42	6 weeks	14.11.2022	21.12.2022	Training on Javascript 7	Online	12	50	20
T43	12 weeks	15.12.2022	10.03.2023	Training on Woodcraft	Offline	3	50	5
T44	4 weeks	9.01.2023	16.02.2023	Training on Python 17	Online	15	50	19
T45	5 weeks	20.01.2023	28.02.2023	Training on Tourism and Marketing	Online	15	50	17
T46	6 weeks	20.02.2023	10.04.2023	Training on Video & Board games	Online	15	50	15
T47	3 weeks	4.04.2023	28.04.2023	Training on Sales	Online	11	50	10
T48	5 weeks	3.04.2023	16.05.2023	Training on coiffure skills to ROMA population	Offline	10	50	10
T49	6 weeks	28.04.2023	6.6.2023	Training on Touristic Marketing with a focus on the Hospitality sector	Online	10	50	25
T50	7 weeks	2.05.2023	28.06.2023	Training on HTML/CSS	Online	12	50	11
T51	4 weeks	30.05.2023	28.6.2023	Training on Social Economy and Entrepreneurship	Online	16	50	15
T52	6 weeks	7.11.2023	27.12.2023	Training on STEM Robotics	Online	10	50	14
					<b>Total</b>		<b>850</b>	<b>260</b>

## Overview of the training activities

The training courses delivered to the participants, as outlined in Table 3, comprise of both technical and non-technical contents. The technical training aspects of the training were conducted in collaboration with external organizations aiming to equip the beneficiaries with essential technical skills requisite for a successful integration into the labor market.

For the technical training, a total of 157 beneficiaries participated in the training which lasted between three to fifteen hours weekly for a total duration of 450 hours. The curriculum focuses majorly on IT skills. These involve HTML/CSS, Python, Java script, Robotics and Video games. All the training sessions were delivered online and lasted between three to six weeks.

A total of 103 beneficiaries were engaged in the non-technical training sessions which lasted between three to twelve weeks, accumulating a total duration of 400 hours. The curriculum focused on diverse contents, including Sales, Marketing, Social Economy, Entrepreneurship, Tourism, Barista, and Woodcraft. Additionally, specialization in Beauty skills and coiffure was provided to participants from the ROMA community. The training contents were delivered through a combination of online and offline mediums.

## Overview of the coaching and mentoring sessions

A total of 198 beneficiaries participated in either coaching, mentoring, or both sessions. Out of these, 132 beneficiaries participated in coaching sessions alone for a duration of 560 hours. Additionally, 66 beneficiaries participated in mentoring sessions alone for a duration of 149 hours.

## Overview of beneficiaries that used SkillLab

Between April 2022 and December 2023, 17 beneficiaries were registered on SkillLab. Out of the 17 registered beneficiaries, 3 of them have already completed their profiles on the platform. 14 remaining beneficiaries were in the process of completing their profiles, while an additional 69 beneficiaries have pending invitations to join the platform.

# Results

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics of the pre-and post-observations of beneficiaries in the intervention are presented. Figures 3 - 10 show the overall results of respondents' distribution based on age, gender, education, geographical location, current status, and type of intervention each respondent participated in.

Figure 3 below presents a chart of the beneficiaries' age distribution. It revealed slightly over half of the participants (54%) were below 25 years old, and 46% of the remaining participants were between the ages of 25 - 29 years old.

*Figure 3. Age distribution of respondents*

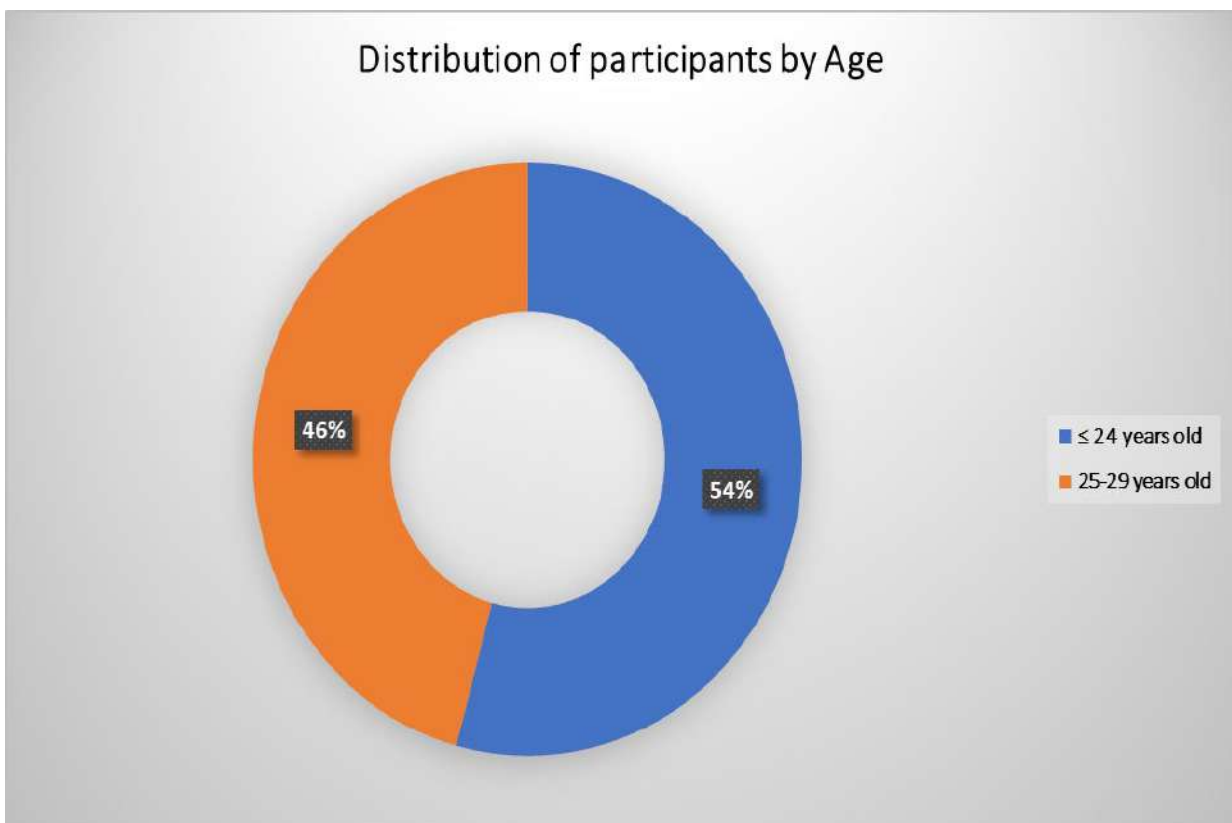
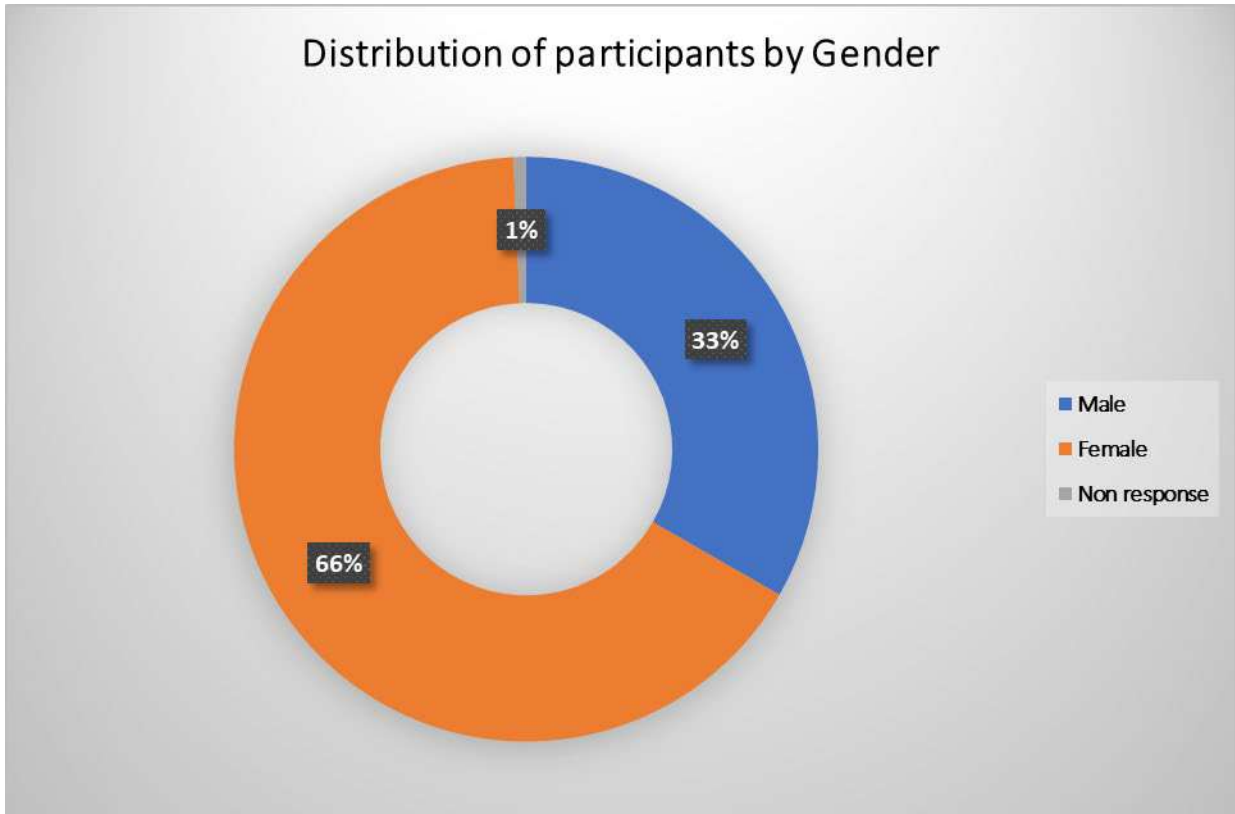


Figure 4 below presents the distribution of beneficiaries by gender. The results indicated a higher percentage of female participants (66%) benefited from the intervention compared

to 33% of male participants. 1% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their gender.

Figure 4. Distribution of respondents based on gender



Presented in figure 5 is the distribution of respondents by educational status. Result showed 50.7% of the participants completed bachelor's degree or equivalent, 23.6% completed upper secondary education, 12.5% completed master's degree or equivalent, 10.4% completed post-secondary education, 2.1% completed lower secondary education, and 0.7% completed primary education.

Figure 5. Distribution of respondents per educational status

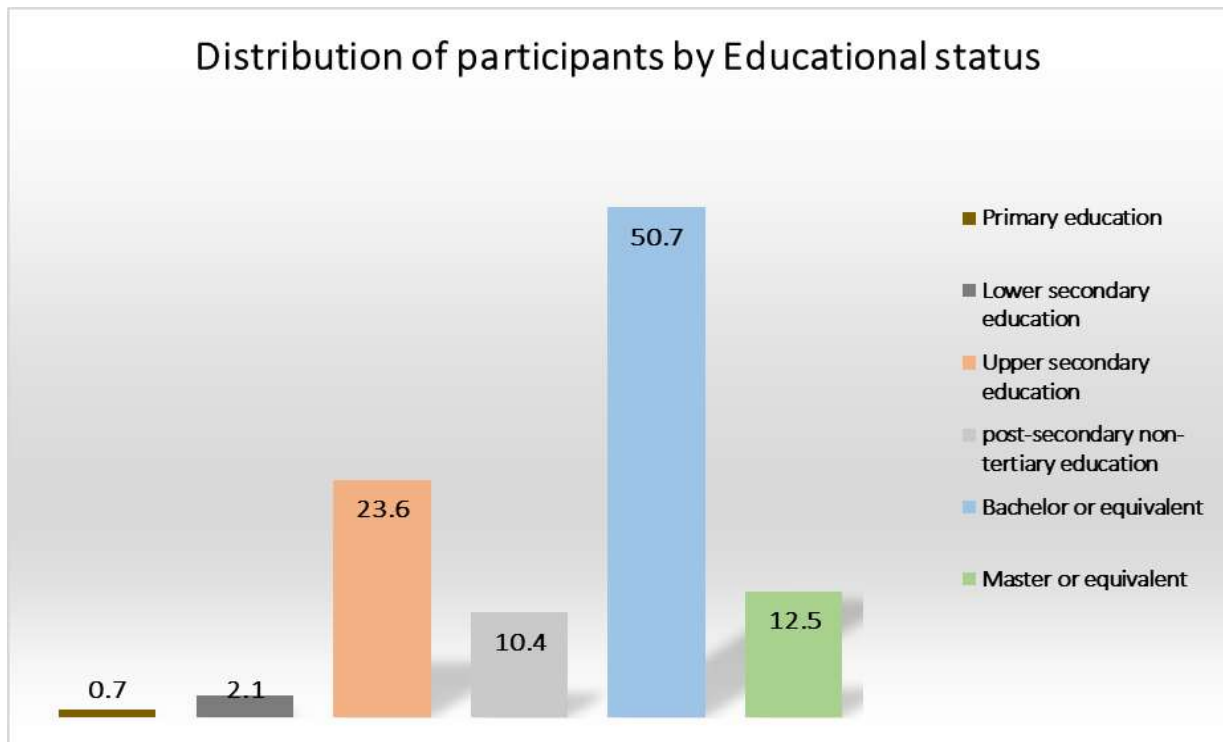
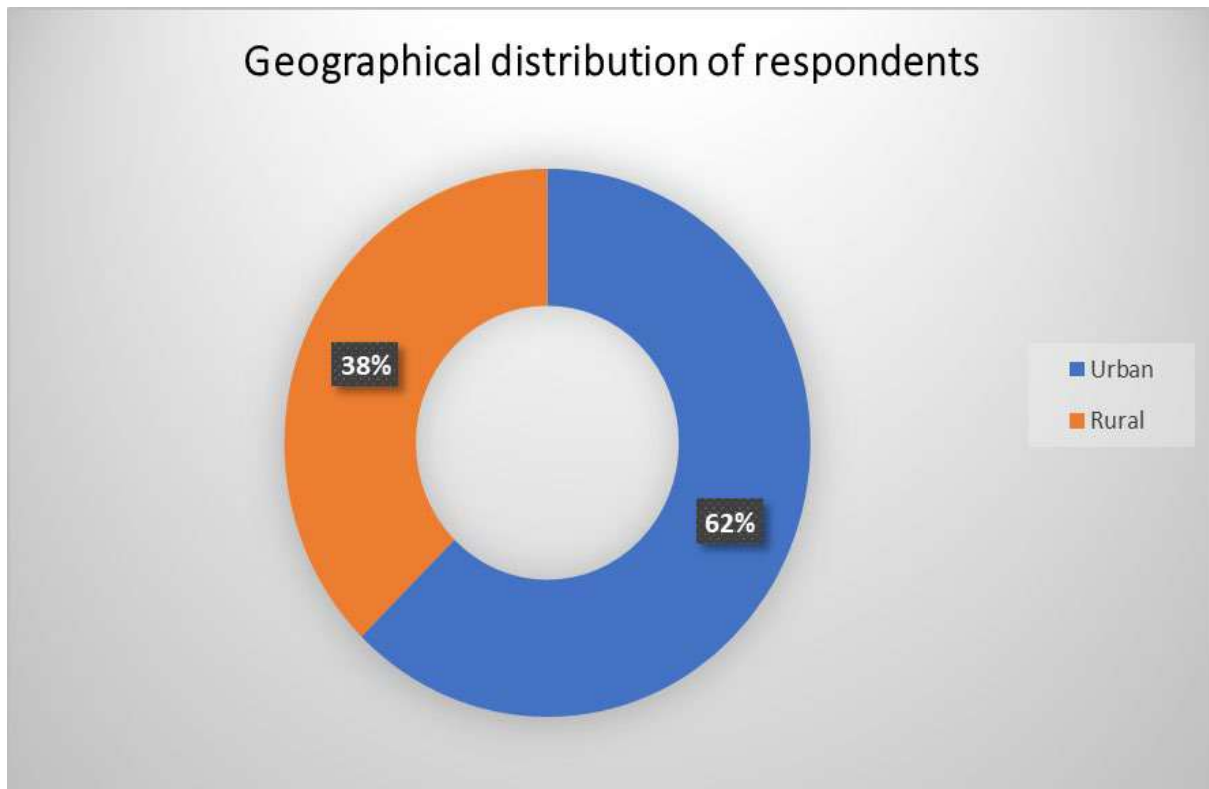


Figure 6 below shows the distribution of according to place of residence. It revealed that participants from urban areas (62%) benefited more from the intervention. 38% of the remaining participants are residents in rural areas.

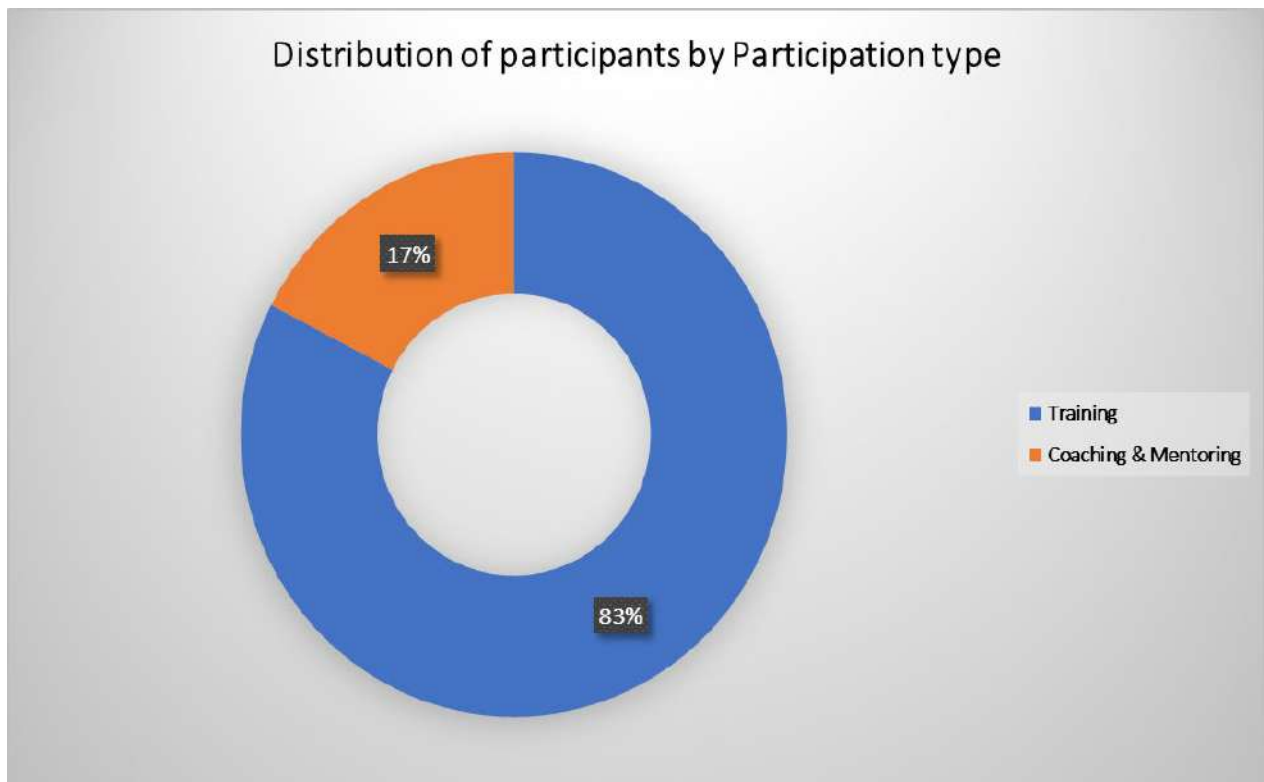
*Figure 6. Geographical distribution of respondents*



Presented in figure 7 is the distribution of beneficiaries by type of intervention activities. The result showed most of the participants, 83% took part in the training sessions alone. 17% of the remaining participants enrolled either in coaching, mentoring or both.



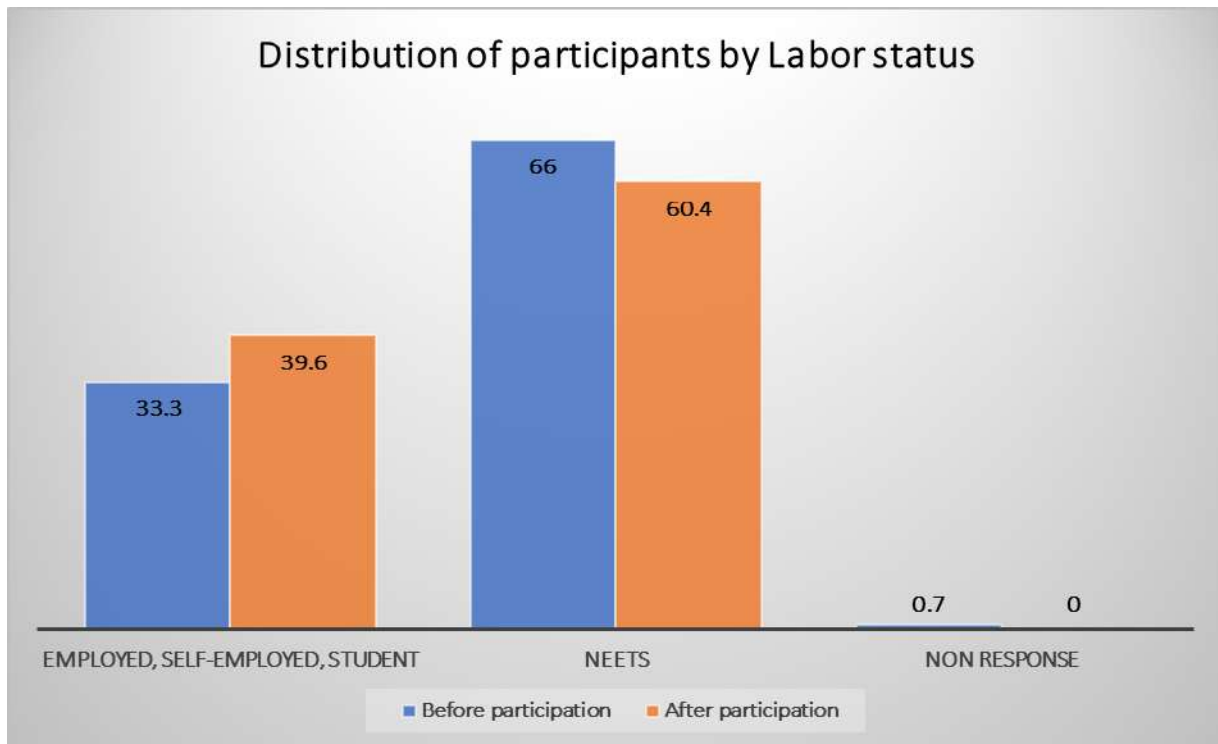
Figure 7. Distribution of participants by type of intervention



Presented in Figure 8 is the pre-post distribution of beneficiaries by labor status. The pre-intervention results indicated a high difference in the proportion of NEET participants and those with at least one form of economic activities. 66% of the participants were NEETs while 33.3% were either employed or owned businesses. 0.7% of the remaining participants did not indicate their labor status.

Post-intervention results on the other hand revealed a slight reduction in the proportion of NEET participants (60.4%), and a proportionate increase in the participants who were either employed or own businesses (39.6%).

Figure 8. Distribution of participants by labor status



Presented in Table 9 is the pre-post distribution of beneficiaries by their main source of income. Pre-intervention results revealed 34.7% of the participants rely on family support as a means of sustenance, 31.3% have paid employment, 18% depend on government support, 12.5% have no source of income at all, and 2.8% rely on income from owned businesses.

Post-intervention results on the other hand revealed 35.4% of participants rely on income from paid employment, 24.3% rely on family support as a means of sustenance, 19.4% depend on government support, 16% have no source of income at all, and 4.2% rely on income from owned businesses. 0.7% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their income.

Figure 9. Distribution by source of income

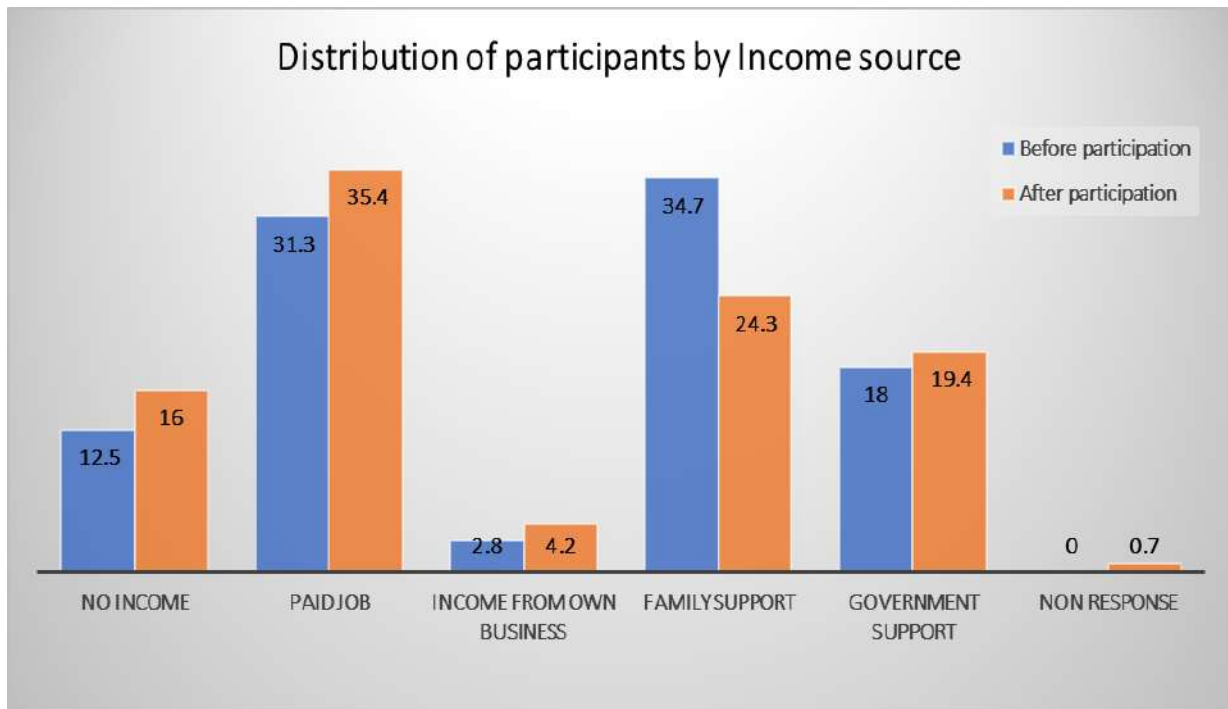
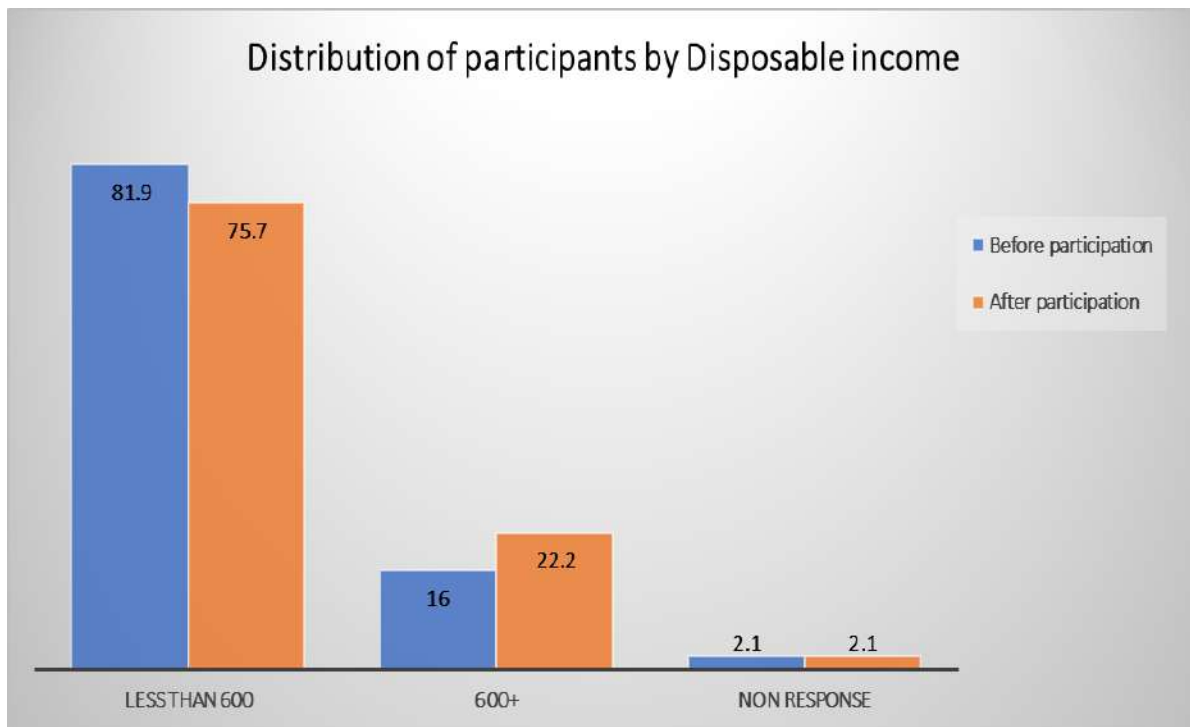


Figure 10 presents the pre-post distribution of the beneficiaries by monthly disposable income. Pre-intervention results revealed majority of the participants (81.9%) have less than 600EUR as their average monthly disposable income, and 16% of the participants average more than 600EUR monthly disposable income. 2.1% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their disposable income.

Post-intervention results showed a slight reduction in the proportion of participants that averaged less than 600EUR monthly disposable income (75.7%). Conversely, an increment was recorded in the proportion of participants that averaged more than 600EUR monthly disposable income (22.2%). 2.1% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their disposable income.

Figure 10. Distribution of participants by monthly disposable income



### Soft outcomes: Statistical evaluation of soft outcome and impact variables

Table 4 presents the results of the significance tests conducted for the soft outcome and impact variables. The paired sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.018$ ) between the pre- and post-intervention results of soft skills at a 5% significance level. However, the result recorded for the difference in the soft impact variable (quality of life), was statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.077$ ) at a 5% significance level.

Table 4. Test of significance difference between pre- and post-intervention

Variables	Mean value (Pre-intervention)	Mean Value (Post-intervention)	P-value
Soft skills	7.643	7.798	<b>0.018</b>
Quality of life	6.944	7.089	0.077

### Soft impact: Statistical evaluation of soft hard impact variables

Table 5 presents the statistical analysis of hard impact variables, specifically labor status, and disposable income. The results of the McNemar statistical test for the observed

differences in the pre-post intervention difference of labor status indicated a statistically insignificant outcome ( $p=0.23$ ) at 5% significance level. However, the pre-post intervention difference of disposable income indicated a statistically significant outcome ( $p=0.05$ ) at 5% significance level.

Table 5. Test of significance of hard impact (pre-post) variables.

	N	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Labor status	143	0.23 <sup>b</sup>
Disposable income	139	0.05 <sup>b</sup>

b. binomial distribution used

## Overview of focus group participants

Below is the overview of qualitative feedback informed by focus group discussions with program participants. The participants were divided into two separate groups. The first group involved the participants with access to SkillLab, and the other group had no access to SkillLab. For participants with SkillLab access, out of the ten people who were initially invited to join the focus group sessions, six of them confirmed their availability, and three people eventually participated in the discussion. For those without access to SkillLab, out of the ten people who were initially invited to join in the discussion, seven indicated their availability, and four people eventually participated in the discussion. Table 6 below presents a summary of the participants' background.

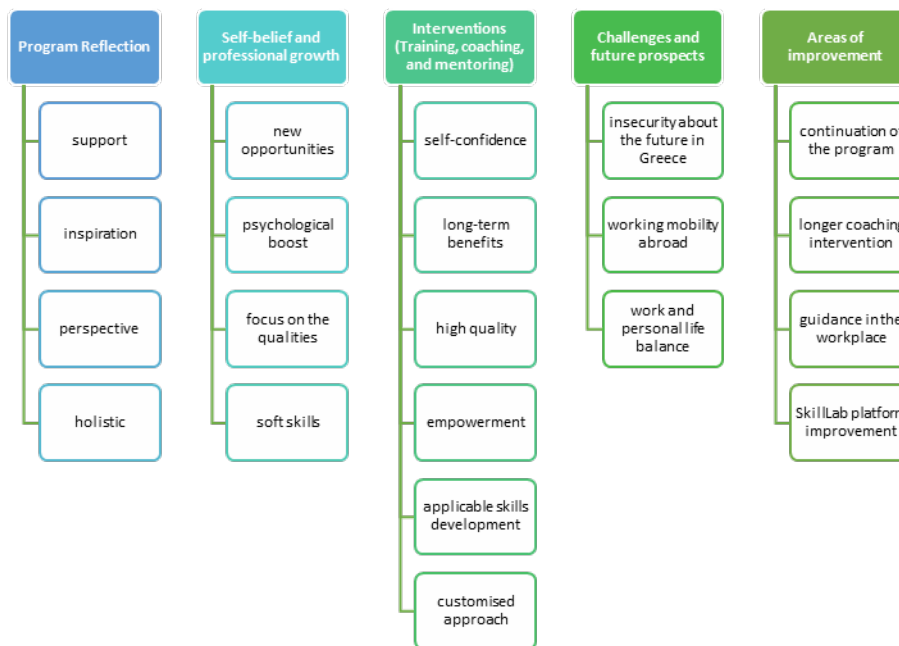
Table 6. Summary of focus group participants

Participant	Gender	Status	SkillLab usage
A	F	Employed	Yes
B	F	Unemployed	Yes
C	M	Employed	Yes
D	M	Employed	No
E	F	Employed	No
F	F	Unemployed	No
G	F	Employed	No

## Analysis of focus group feedback from the participants (SkillLab and Non-SkillLab users)

The feedback from both sets of participants in the focus groups was coded and analyzed. The codes were used to interpret overarching themes. Specifically, five themes were employed to categorize the responses from participants: Program Reflection, Self-Belief and Professional Growth, Feedback on the Intervention, Challenges and Future Prospects, and Suggestions for Areas of Improvement. However, for those with SkillLab access, the same themes were applied, including the category related to feedback on SkillLab usage. Figures 11 and 13 below present a graphic description of the themes and the explanatory codes.

Figure 11. Graphical description themes and codes from the analysis of the focus groups



**Program Reflection:** Program reflection reports how beneficiaries of the Yes! Programs have been influenced by output levels based on their engagement. The subthemes that emerged from the focus group discussion of the participants include support, inspiration, and perspective. During their discussion, all of the participants showed general satisfaction with the services they received, while, in most cases, the only remark was the need for some of the interventions to last longer. Most of the participants seemed to acknowledge the effort that was made by the program partner to provide holistic empowerment for both job-seekers and new entrepreneurs, and they believe that it was an essential packet of support for the specific needs of the participants.

**Self-belief and professional growth:** The discussion among participants regarding the impact of the program interventions on self-belief and professional growth included examples, explaining the positive results in their lives. They mentioned that through this program they cultivated their determination and their self-esteem, along with needed soft-skills, which enabled them to move on in their careers. A couple of participants admitted

that the training they received in programming enabled them to get a job in their field of interest.

*“... I needed this training. I had my degree in biology, but for every job opening I was interested, they were asking for this programming language. This training opened a window of opportunity for my, as I succeeded to get a job just after I finished my training ... and I am using this programming language in daily basis.”*

The participants stated that through the program they managed to focus on their advantages and the areas where they were really good. This provided them with the psychological support they needed and assured them that they were on the right track, feeding their self-confidence.

*“I understood that my degree wasn't rubbish. I was just looking in the wrong direction, hurting my confidence. I was feeling so bad for myself ... I was depressed.”*

A participant without a degree or any professional skills stated:

*“I didn't succeed in getting into the university; I didn't know what I liked. I only liked working with computers, but here (in that region), the only future for people like me was to work on a farm or in a menial job without a career. This program gave me the opportunity through programming to start dreaming again, as I found job positions that didn't require a degree. Just my programming portfolio...”*

**Interventions (Training, coaching, and mentoring):** The discussions about each type of intervention confirmed the high satisfaction level of the participants. Both discussions focused more on the coaching component, as this was the common activity followed by the majority of the focus groups. The participants agreed that the coaching was crucial for the development of their self-confidence, as it helped them to understand their position and themselves in general. As a participant mentioned:

*“... it was the turning point for me to start acting towards my dreams.”*

They also claimed that the coaching tools could be used at any point in their lives in various cases or challenges that may occur.

The participants who followed the training sessions believed that the trainers and duration were sufficient, and in a couple of cases, they opened windows of professional opportunity. However, some participants said that their choice to follow a training wasn't smart from their end, as they didn't have the time to give full attention from their end. Everybody agreed, though, with the high quality of the training provided.



The participants who followed mentoring sessions stated that they got a lot of support and empowerment from their mentor. The mentors offered them security for their next professional steps, and, as they knew the sector very well, they guided the mentees in a customized and “to the point” way.

*“My mentor helped me to develop my professional self-confidence ... when I had to confront my supervisor, I did it with confidence and efficiency, and I succeeded to get my promotion. I had never done this before, I was too afraid to speak up”.*

**Challenges and future prospects:** Regarding their challenges and future prospects, the majority of the participants expressed their insecurities about the future of the Greek labor market. By being employed, they faced the reality of low salaries and short-term contracts. Many of them stated their plans to try to find a job in Western European countries, where they believe they would get higher professional and financial security, better prospects, and higher levels of standards, which could influence their competencies and working practices. One participant stated:

*“I want to get satisfaction from my job, so I will have the motivation to become better and better.”*

And another:

*“... working and personal life balance, this is my goal for now. I need to reconsider some things in my life, and now I know how to do it”.*

**Areas of improvement:** The general opinion raised from both focus groups was that the program and its interventions were very helpful for the participants, who didn't see that there was a lot of room for improvement. They believe that there is a big need for the continuation of the program so more people can benefit from it. They even claimed that they promoted the program to their friends and acquaintances. The few individual remarks regarding improvement included more coaching sessions, the combination of mentoring with the use of coaching tools, and some guidance for well-being in the job and employment rights. As a participant stated:

*“I felt that the time for coaching was not enough, and if the coaching techniques were infused in mentoring, it would be the ultimate”.*

In one of the discussions, a need for more consistent involvement and monitoring of the mentoring relationship was raised, as a mentee struggled in developing a level of trust with the mentor, and finally abandoned the mentoring component.

Finally, regarding the SkillLab component, both focus groups agreed that it is more suited for people with no experience who aim for sectors with particular technical skills needed. The majority of the participants claim that this digital tool needs improvement and that its use should be accompanied by equivalent training for the users.

### Overview of interviewed coaches and mentors

Presented in Table 7 is the background information of the coaches and mentors engaged in the program. A total of four people were interviewed to collect their input and feedback regarding interventions. Two coaches and two mentors were interviewed in this regard.

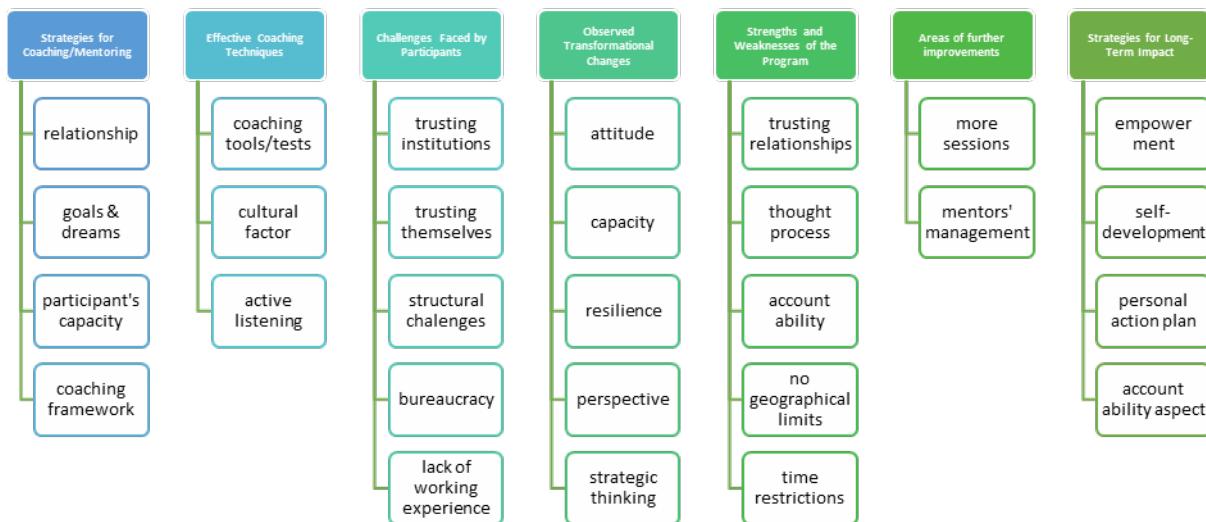
Table 7. Summary of interviewed coaches and mentors

Gender	Role	Expertise
Female	Mentor	Economist and adult educator
Female	Mentor	Management and communication
Male	Coach	Financial manager
Female	Coach	Education Specialist

### Analysis of interview feedback from coaches and mentors

The analysis of interviews with coaches and mentors is presented below. The transcriptions are analyzed using seven thematic categories. The coaching and mentoring strategies adopted in the program, feedback on the most effective coaching and mentoring techniques, challenges faced by the participants, observed transformational changes from the participants, the programs' strengths and weaknesses, suggestions for further improvements, and long - term impact strategies, as presented in the Figure 12 below.

Figure 12. Graphical description themes and codes of interviews with coaches and mentors



**Strategies for Coaching/Mentoring:** The mentors supported the adjustment of their strategies based on the status and the expectations of the participants. They invested time in cultivating the relationship and understanding the participants so that they could develop a more customized approach. They anticipate early enough the need to give space to the participants to share their status and the challenges they face, as well as their ambitions for the future. The three key points on which the mentors based their approaches were the participant's goals and dreams, the capacity and the qualities of the mentee, and the relationships they developed with the mentee. As one mentor mentioned in an interview:

*... the first thing I asked her was, 'tell me what you want,' and when she started telling me some of the things she's planning to do, I said I don't want you to tell me what you want to do, based on what the other has told you, but I want you to tell me exactly what you really want to do.*

From the part of the coaches, their strategies were more or less defined by the coaching framework in place. However, they also aimed to develop a trusting relationship with the coaches

so that the shared information would be as accurate as possible and, consequently, the effectiveness of the intervention would be high. As mentioned:

*... I wanted to see first of all what they want to do, how they want to develop...*

**Effective Coaching/Mentoring Techniques:** The coaches interviewed highlighted the importance of the tools they used in their interventions, which were considered very effective for the participants. According to their experience, the majority of the participants found very useful the personal SWOT analysis and the spider chart of competencies, as they haven't had any equivalent experience before. On top of that, the coaches mentioned the importance of considering the cultural factors and adjusting their interventions accordingly, a technique that proved to be crucial. In any case, the active listening was always their top priority. A coach mentioned:

*"Others wanted to rethink their degree and go in other directions, where they would have to learn other skills..."*

The interviewed mentors also supported the importance of active listening. According to them, the more they knew about the person, the better their support could be. They gave directions and ideas based on the personal desires of the mentees regarding their future. One mentor describing the provided support to the mentee stated:

*"I suggested to the person where to go, who to ask, which networks to approach and to see which positions are available. But I didn't do any action on their behalf. It's against my role to find the solution for the other person. I make the suggestions, but I expect them to act on what they are concerned about, on what they are interested in."*

**Challenges Faced by Participants:** The interviewees were also asked to share their opinions on the challenges faced by the participants, as they understood them from the interventions. As common challenges, both coaches and mentors highlighted the lack of trust in the institutions and also in themselves, influenced by big uncertainty for the economic future in Greece. The interviewees mentioned the educational system as a source of structural challenges for the participants in accessing the labor market. The complicated bureaucracy and the difficulties of accessing credit were also considered limitations for the participants, based on the mentors'

experience. The coaches, on the other hand, stated that a major challenge, especially for job-seekers, was the fact that they lacked working experience, which limited their employability in this competitive environment. As mentioned:

*“... internships are lacking in some professions, and in Greece, it is almost impossible to find work immediately after studies. They were trying through extra courses to develop their competencies and their employability, dragged by the demands of the labor market and not by what they want to do as a profession, creating a chaos in their heads.”*

**Observed Transformational Changes:** When asked about transformation changes in the participants, all four coaches and mentors had interesting stories to share. In these examples, transformative changes took various forms, showing the different impacts of the intervention on each individual. Other than the changes regarding the expected outcome of understanding their potential and finding a job or developing their businesses, the interviewed coaches and mentors also described changes in the attitudes, capacity, and mindset of the people who participated in the program. For example, a story of a person who had to confront the ambitions and beliefs of the family to reach her dream:

*“... felt guilty about her family people. It's too bad for a child to feel guilty about her folks without doing anything. She felt guilty for not trying to find a job position close to them, in public service, for example. After our discussions, she made the decision to move abroad to the country and the city in which she wanted to live. She struggled a bit in the beginning, but she found a job that she loves. She doesn't feel guilty anymore; she feels good about herself, and so does her family.”*

Other interviewees mentioned the development of resilience, flexibility, and strategic thinking for the participants of the program. There was also a case where a participant wanted to develop his business idea, but he had to work as an employee for a while to maintain his financial sustainability (instructed also by a mentor). This experience made him better understand the sector's working environment and the market in general, ending up being much more prepared for the development of his business, which followed shortly after a few months. There were also cases mentioned by the coaches where people came as job-seekers and, after the intervention, started to see themselves as possible entrepreneurs in the foreseeable future.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program:** The interviewees supported the development of meaningful, trusting relationships and the accountability of the participants to their own goals through the involvement of an external expert as the main strengths of the coaching and mentoring interventions. According to coaches, the strengths of the program are based on the fact that it puts the beneficiary in a thought process through specific tools to think about what he or she really wants to do within a specific time frame, with the support of a trained professional. This is considered a great advantage for the mentality and attitude of the participants, which could positively influence their insight on themselves, their true needs and goals, and how they could connect them with the labor market. Also, the use of technology in communication made the connection possible, regardless of geographical or COVID-19 limitations. From the end of mentors, the strong points include the interaction and active engagement of the participant. Also:

*“Another strong point is that individuals, especially young individuals, feel safe to open up and speak freely towards the mentor because they know that there is no power relationship between them. They are not relatives, mentors are not their parents, so they talk very openly and trustfully. I mean, you know, when I tell them something, I don't get any emotional benefit or anything else. No benefit from what they're going to do. This makes the participants safe and willing to follow the mentor's guidance.”*

On the other hand, the mentors see no weaknesses in this approach if the person who asks for the mentor's help is ready to follow guidance toward what he or she wants. If the person is determined to do something and consistent for this change in their life, there are no weaknesses. Clearly, the responsibility of the mentor is high, especially because of the lack of institutional trust mentioned above. According to the mentors, a good match could also be a matter of luck, but with good mentors' pool management and mentee screening procedures, the chances for an effective mentor-mentee match rise exponentially. The coaches see potential drawbacks of the coaching intervention lying in the gaps of communication between the coach and the participant, mainly influenced by the limited time of the coaching intervention. However, the coaches stated that there are available tools that could support the whole process, cover these communication gaps, and minimize misunderstandings.

**Areas of further improvements:** Regarding their suggestions for improvements, both mentors and coaches mentioned the restrictions of time. Also, a need was raised for techniques to be exchanged between coaching and mentoring. The coaches believed that they could use some introduction sessions to better understand the person in front of them, which would make the coaching intervention better customized and more efficient regarding the use of tools in place.

*“What I would do ... is that I would put communication and soft skills as an important part of the job ... and a few more sessions so that we could get to know these people better ...a simple report on what they've done, without going straight to the tools, and an introduction of themselves; they might want to tell me a personal story, professional, something to make a reference somewhere, which could help the whole communication process a lot..”*

On the other hand, the mentors raised the point of the need to use some of the coaching tools and techniques during the mentoring interaction with the participants so they can better understand and thus help their mentees. However, since every mentor has a different approach, the regular contact of mentors with the mentors' manager was considered crucial, according to interviewees, to ensure that any potential question or problem would be addressed as quickly and as efficiently as possible, leaving no room for doubting from the mentors' end.

**Strategies for Long-Term Impact:** The interviewed coaches and mentors shared their opinions on strategies and approaches to ensure a longer-term impact on the lives of the participants after the end of the program. The first thing that was mentioned by almost everybody was the empowerment of the person throughout the coaching and mentoring sessions, which can enable self-development and autonomy to better respond to incoming challenges of the future. Another idea was the continuation of the mentoring or coaching relationship, but on a less regular basis, following the developed personal action plan, especially for young people under various kinds of precarity, facing integration difficulties. This is also connected with the accountability aspect, which was also mentioned in the strengths of this program by all the interviewees.

# Discussion



## Discussion

This section discusses the preliminary results of the YES project, focusing on the findings derived from the second phase of interventions implemented by AN.KA. To enhance the effectiveness of the interventions and measure their impact, the implementation of artificial intelligence (SkillLab) was introduced during this phase. SkillLab aimed to facilitate the participants' transition into the Greek labor market by capturing the skill set possessed by the beneficiaries. Additionally, the data collected during this intervention stage were disaggregated based on geographical location. This approach enabled AN.KA to customize the interventions according to the specific needs and circumstances of the beneficiaries in each local context.

During this project phase, the present impact assessment report has been generated utilizing quantitative data gathered from the participants. In this final impact assessment report, qualitative feedback from the participants, coaches, and mentors has been incorporated to bolster the quantitative findings and evaluate the extent of impact resulting from the interventions.

The results indicated a higher level of participation in the training activities delivered by AN.KA compared to the proportion of participants engaged in coaching/mentoring activities. This can be attributed to the nature of the training activities provided by the organization and the collaborative agreements with other key stakeholders, which were tailored to meet the specific needs of the participants. Moreover, the organization's commitment to elaborate trust-based partnerships with specialized stakeholders facilitated the development of targeted programs in these sectors, addressing the distinct requirements and preferences of the participants.

The analyzed results of the participants' economic situation indicated improvement in the proportion of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) within the project. While no significant differences were recorded in their labor status, there was an improvement in the proportion of participants relying on family support and earning a paid income. Approximately 7% of the participants no longer depended on the government for sustenance and around 4% secured paid employment. This positive outcome emphasizes the impact of

the interventions, which offered training tailored to the participant's specific needs and the local context. This is further evidenced by the slight increase observed in the monthly disposable income of the participants.

A slight increase in the proportion of participants without any income source and those who rely on government income. The reasons for this increment could not be determined at the time of preparing this report. It is anticipated that qualitative responses in the final report will shed light on this situation and offer further insights into the factors that contributed to it.

Despite the observed improvements in the participants' economic achievements, the outcomes did not have a significant impact on their overall quality of life or soft skills development. From the analysis of the qualitative findings it became evident that the Greek job-seekers, even after finding a job, continue to struggle with low payment, short-term contracts, and limited future prospects, which could justify the outcome of the quantitative analysis.

**Concluding remarks**

## Concluding remarks

Various targeted interventions have been developed and implemented by the Greek government during the last years, through the support of EU funding, mainly addressing the skills development or new business support, aiming to respond on youth unemployment. These initiatives include program participation vouchers for the unemployed, financial incentives for the employers to hire young individuals, development of job counseling services, and partial funding and costs reductions for self-employed entrepreneurs. These interventions directly respond to the urgent need to address youth unemployment, particularly NEETs.

By acknowledging the plethora of challenges faced by NEETs, such as insufficient skills and qualifications hindering job applications, limited job prospects, diminished self-esteem and confidence, restricted access to vital social and economic support services, and mental health issues, some of these obstacles are addressed through the YES! interventions implemented by AN.KA. The initiative not only aims to enhance employment prospects for young individuals but also focuses on fostering their emotional resilience and self-esteem. The interventions encompass a multifaceted approach, combining targeted training programs in high-demand sectors of the Greek labor market with coaching and mentoring support to nurture the entrepreneurial aspirations of young individuals. By providing a holistic framework of support, the YES! interventions empowered NEETs to overcome barriers, develop vital skills, and pursue rewarding opportunities on their journey toward sustainable employment and personal growth.

Despite the significant impacts attributable to the project, some obstacles were encountered during the implementation of this phase of the interventions. The severe climate incidents that hit the Region of Thessaly the first week of September 2023 created major challenges to the organisation's planning in these final months of the project. However, as in previous occasions, ANKA showed great reflexes and building on the lessons learnt during the COVID-19 crisis, the organisation expanded its outreach and support to a more diverse group of beneficiaries.

Another obstacle faced in this phase of the implementation relates to outreach efforts. Despite Greece having one of the highest proportion of NEETs across the European Union

(EU), effectively reaching out to potential participants was often challenging. With time and effort, ANKA and AUA managed to put together strategies and initiatives which resulted to partnerships and networks which addressed effectively the initial outreach challenges.

It is worth noting that some of the challenges previously mentioned were successfully addressed through the regular adaptation of the approach to meet the specific needs of the participants. This involved offering a range of training courses ensuring a tailored and flexible system. This also helped to keep the participants engaged in the coaching and mentoring services. This experience underscores the importance of the ability to "adapt" and "customize" interventions to the unique requirements of each participant, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. It highlights the significance of flexibility and responsiveness in delivering practical support and maximizing the program's impact on the participants' development and outcomes.

In addition, it is important to ensure continued support for NEETs in Greece through post-study visits or regular check-ins. This would help ensure the sustained impact of the interventions on the improvements and progress made by the participants as they find their entry point to the labor market.

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# Appendix

## Appendix

### Focus Group Moderator Script

#### Part I: Welcome and moderator's introduction (15 minutes in total)

*Moderator:* Hi everyone, and welcome to today's mind-rubbing discussion! My name is XXX and I work at (Name of org. and what you do). The reason why we are having this discussion today is to get your feedback on the training, coaching or mentoring services that was delivered by (NAME OF PARTNER ORGANIZATION), to learn how they can be improved in the future.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group.

To facilitate today's discussion, we have established the following guidelines and rules to help us effectively coordinate our conversation:

- The focus group will last about 90 minutes and divided into 5 parts.
- I indulge everyone to participate and air their opinion on each topic of discussion. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
- There are no right or wrong answers. All experiences and opinions are important. Please speak up whether you agree or disagree on a particular subject of discussion. We want to hear a wide range of views and don't anticipate any form of consensus, just sharing. You can address each other if you like. We are only here to assist in the discussion.
- May I emphasize that what is said in this room should remain here. I will also like to ask for permission to record this session. This would allow our researchers to analyze the responses and improve our project. I assure you that ALL that we are going to discuss here today remains confidential and will be anonymized for the report. We don't identify anyone by name in our findings. Therefore, you will remain anonymous. The recording won't be shared with anyone besides YES project researchers.

Are there any questions? ...

Very well. Let's get started... [*Start recording*]

- Icebreaker and participants' introductions

*Moderator:* Could you please introduce yourselves and tell us how you first learned about the initiative and why you decided to get involved?

**Part II: Theme 1: Reflection on Self-Belief and Professional Growth (20 minutes in total)**

**Part III: Theme 2: Feedback on the training, coaching and mentoring (20 minutes in total)**

**Part IV: Theme 3: Feedback challenges and future prospects (20 minutes in total)**

**Part V: Theme 4: Ideas generation and conclusion (15 minutes in total)**

## Interview questions with coaches and mentors

1. How would you describe your role and involvement in the YES! Program?
2. Were there any collaborating opportunities with the program partners to develop/modify coaching/mentoring strategies or approaches for the participants?
  - a. If yes, what were the strategies or approaches?
  - b. If not, how you were able to engage or support the participants during their coaching/mentoring period?
3. Could you provide examples of specific coaching and/or mentoring techniques that you found particularly effective in engaging and supporting the participants?
4. In your experience, what were some of the main challenges or obstacles faced by the participants during their journey to get employed or starting their businesses? And how were you able to help them navigate the challenges?
5. From your observations, were there any changes or transformations that you witnessed in the participants as a result of their engagement in the intervention? If yes, could you share any examples of such?
6. What were the main strengths and weaknesses of the intervention, from your observed perspective?
7. In your opinion, how do you think the intervention be further strengthened or improved with regards to the coaching, or mentoring components?
8. Based on your experience and expertise, could you think of any strategies or initiatives that can be implemented to ensure the long-term impact of the intervention on the participants beyond the project?

# YES! Young Entrepreneurs Succeed

## Questionnaire

In the context of this project, we are conducting research on employment and entrepreneurship. The survey should only take 10 minutes. Thank you for agreeing to take part in it. We really appreciate your input!

Using a scale from 1 to 5 please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree 4= agree 5= strongly agree).

\* 1. Please, indicate your registration number:

2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

4. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

5. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

**6. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.**

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

**7. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.**

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

**8. I am able to adapt when changes occur.**

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

**9. I tend to bounce back after illness, injury, illness or other hardships.**

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

**10. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.**

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

**11. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.**

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

12. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

13. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

14. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

15. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

16. I excel at identifying opportunities.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

17. I am always looking for better ways to do things.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

18. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

19. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

20. I will work hard to improve my work situation.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

21. I am willing to put in effort to have a job I enjoy.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

22. Having a good job is important to my sense of well-being.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

23. It is no use worrying about current events or public affairs, I can't do anything about them anyways.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

24. Every person should give some of his time for the good of his town or country.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

25. Our country would be a lot better off if we didn't have so many elections and people didn't have to vote so often.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

26. Letting your friends down is not so bad because you can't do good all the time for everybody.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

27. It is the duty of each person to do his job the very best he can.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

28. People would be very better off if they could live far away from other people and never have to do anything for them.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

29. When I was at school, I usually volunteered for special projects.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★



30. I feel bad when I have failed to finish a job I promised I would do.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

31. Most people tell a lie when they can benefit by doing so.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

32. Those devoted to unselfish causes are often exploited by others.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

33. Some people do not cooperate because they pursue only their own short-term self-interest. Thus, things that can be done well if people cooperate often fail because of these people.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

34. Most people are basically honest.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

35. There will be more people who will not work if the social security system is developed further.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

36. Generally, our public administration operates effectively.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

37. In general, our public administration is capable of carrying out its policies.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

38. Generally, our public administration cares about citizens' well-being.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

39. In general, our public administration honors its commitments.

strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
★	★	★	★	★

40. In what year were you born?

41. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

42. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- Primary education
- Lower secondary education
- Upper secondary education (high school degree)
- Tertiary education (university degree)
- PhD

43. What is your current labour status?

- employed
- self-employed
- unemployed and currently looking for work
- unemployed and not currently looking for work
- enrolled in a formal education institution

44. Are you currently receiving unemployment benefits of other types of social benefits?

- Yes
- No

45. What was your net income last month?

- Less than 600 EUR
- 600-1300 EUR
- 1300-2000 EUR
- 2000-2700 EUR
- More than 2700 EUR

46. What is the postal code of the place where you live?

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The Scaling trust-based partnership models to recharge youth entrepreneurship: Supporting underserved communities with innovative entrepreneurship support instruments (TPM-RYE) project, benefits from €3,3M grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment. The aim of the programme is to activate unemployed youth to access the labour market and promote entrepreneurship.