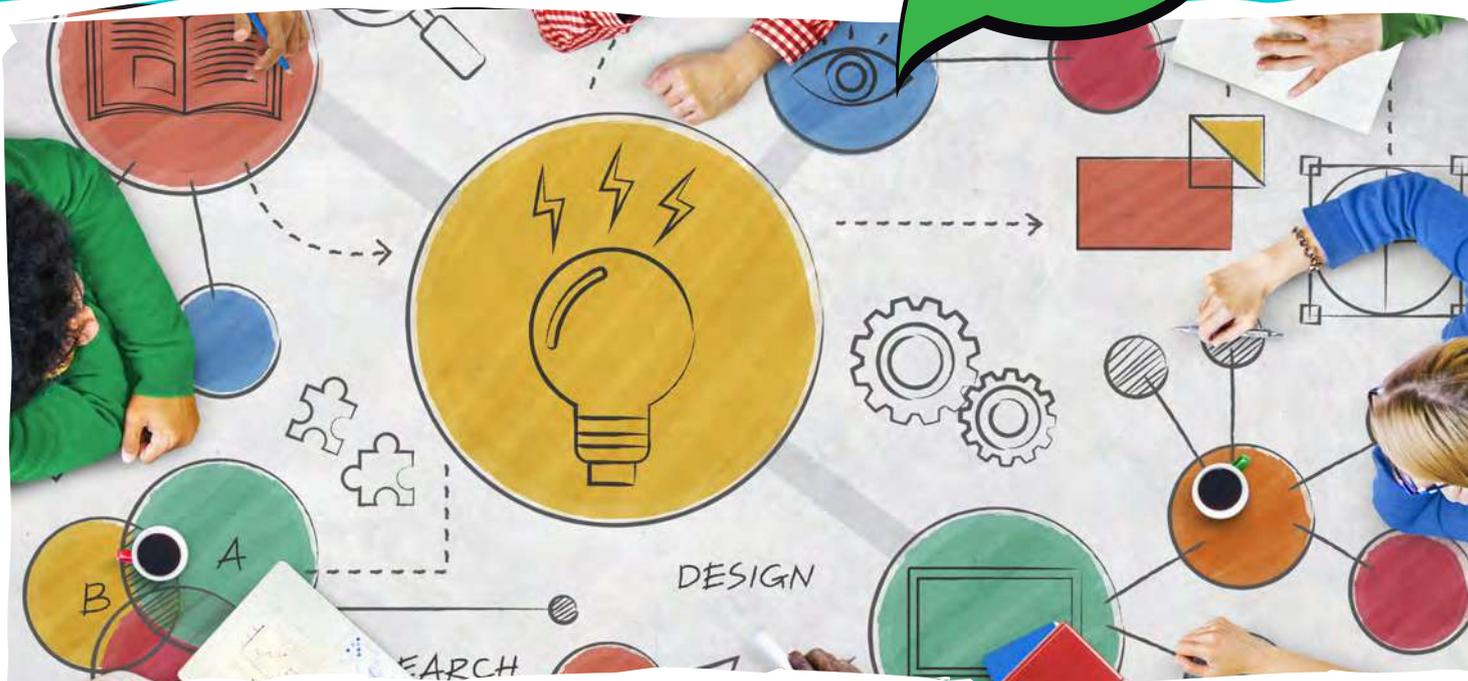Italy

Final Impact Assessment Report 2024

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Young Entrepreneurs Succeed
Final Impact Assessment Report 2024: Italy

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Introduction

Introduction

This report presents the final results of the impact assessment designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Microfinanza SRL's interventions within the Young Entrepreneurs Success (YES!) program. Microfinanza, one of the partners implementing the YES! program is based in Vicenza Italy. The organization has been implementing socioeconomic and humanitarian interventions for more than twenty years of its existence in the field of access to finance and financial inclusion across Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, the Balkan region, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

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[1] 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 year and nine months 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.

Table 1. Overview of phase two activities

Country	Beneficiaries
Spain	250
Italy	350
Poland	150
Greece	300
Total	**1020**

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[1] 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).

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 Microfinanza. 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
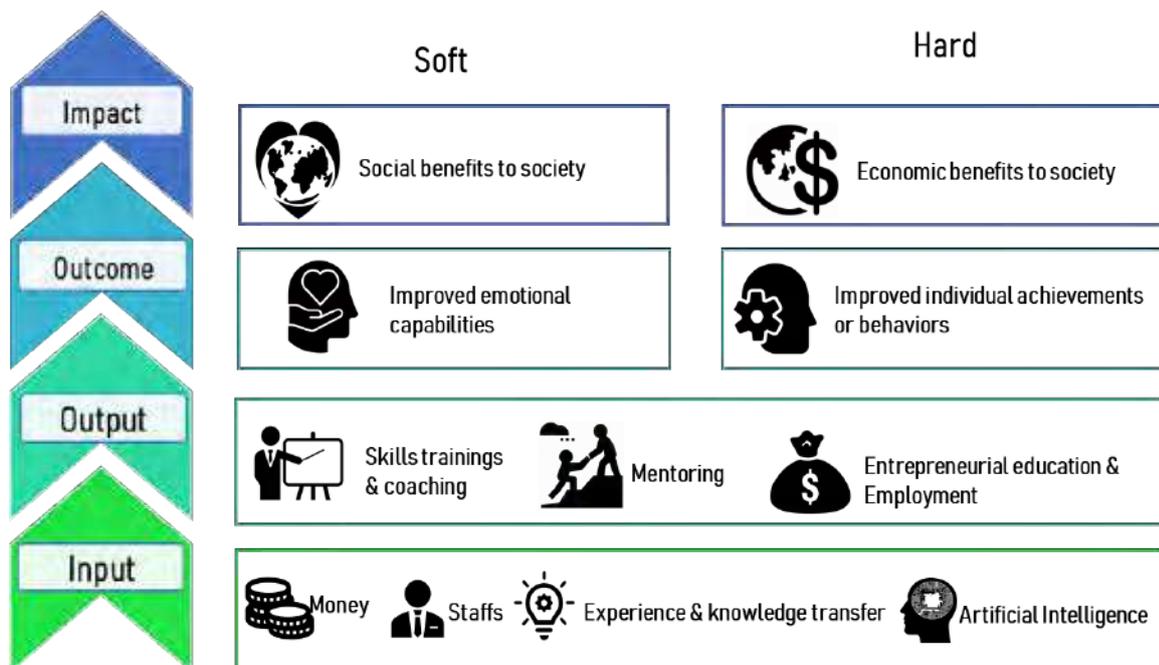
Framework for measuring Impact assessment

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
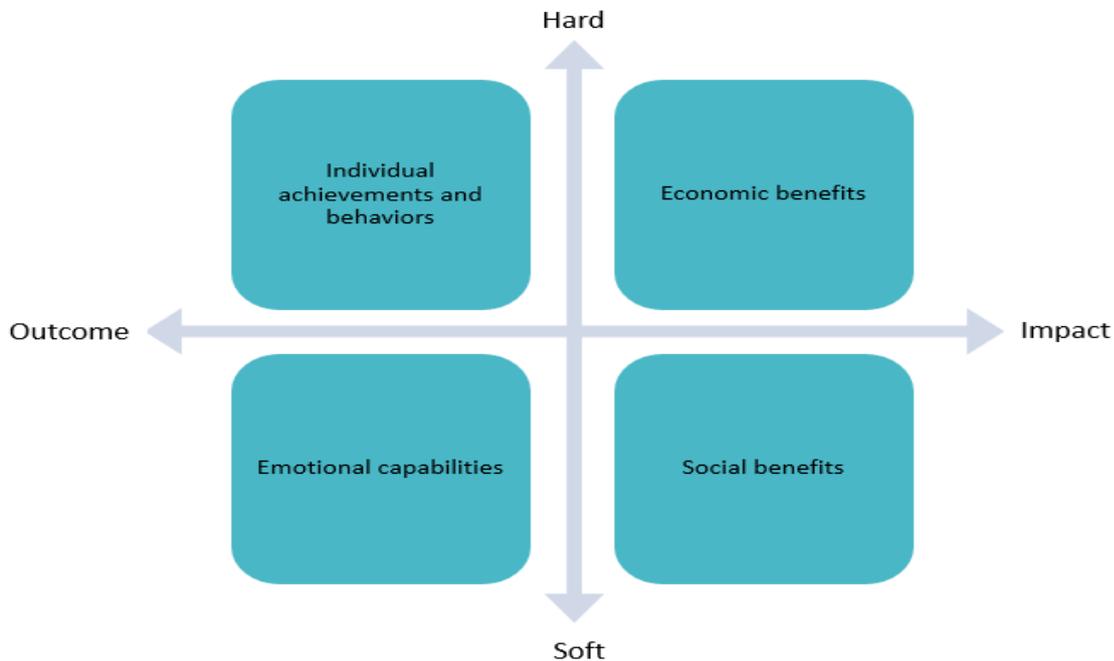
The two left quadrants of the above figure represent the effect of the interventions on the beneficiaries (Program Outcome), while the right quadrants represent the effects of the interventions on society (Program Impact). The left and right quadrants are further subcategorized into four variables. The 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". The soft outcome and soft impact relied on the self-assessment measures of the program on the participants while the hard impact relied on the reflection of the program on the society and economy.

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 allowed 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 of 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 was 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 was shared with partners who are responsible for the delivery of the interventions to the beneficiaries. In other to monitor feedbacks and minimize error due to incomplete or unclean 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 coordinated with participants from Italy. The first round of FGD involved 4 randomly selected participants, out of the 12 invited participants (participants without access to SkillLab). The second round of focus groups involved 4 randomly selected participants, out of the 20 invited participants (participants with access to SkillLab). The sessions lasted between 40 – 60 minutes and were conducted remotely via Microsoft teams in Italia.

Following the collection of qualitative feedback from the participants via focus groups, interviews of coaches and mentors involved in the program were equally conducted to collect their feedback. Two mentors and two coaches from the list of invited coaches and mentors were interviewed. The interviews lasted between 40 - 60 minutes and were conducted in Italia via Microsoft teams.

The recorded versions of the interviews and focus group sessions were translated and converted into transcripts (in English) for easy analysis. Qualitative data analysis software (Atlas ti) was used to analyze the data for themes and excerpts to support the findings of the quantitative data. A sample 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

Microfinanza continued implementing the second phase of the YES interventions which began in May 2022. As of 31.12.2022, 12 types of training courses were delivered by Microfinanza. The training amounted to 867 hours and ranged between eight and forty hours per week. A total of 397 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.

The delivery of the training was coordinated in partnership with other organizations with expertise in facilitating and delivering training to support learning and development especially in upskilling and learning new skills.

In collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental entities across Italy, Microfinanza delivered training programs aimed at assisting the beneficiaries in acquiring in-demand skills and addressing labor shortages within the Italian job market. The training covered a wide range of skills, including Digital Marketing, Online Assembly, CNC Operator, Electromechanical Assembly, Mechanical Assembly, Logistics, Entrepreneurship, Data Analysis, Soft Skills, Career Guidance, and a session on EU opportunities for youth. Some of the training contents were delivered in partnership with; a) Virtus Lab – a career development center located in Rome with the aim of supporting young people achieve progressive career in various sectors of the economy, b) Trama di Terre – a Non-governmental organization created with the purpose of supporting and empowering women especially those who are victims of violence, refugee background and in vulnerable situations, c) Ciac Social Cooperative – a corporative that specializes in the care and protection of refugees and migrants with the purpose of facilitating smooth reintegration into the multiple Italian municipalities and communities, d) Glovo Italia – the CSR department of the company offers training and skill acquisition for easy transition of young people into the labor market.

Training courses	Duration (Weeks)	Start date	End date	Content	Weekly hours	Total hours	Eligible participants
OL2	1	15/03/2023	22/03/2023	Career guidance and access to the labor market	5	5	14
OL1	2	15/11/2022	25/11/2022	Career guidance and access to the labor market	18	36	5
CNC1	6	30/05/2022	09/07/2022	CNC worker	13	8	13
EX5	3	3/10/2022	20/10/2022	Data Analysis and other competencies for the labor market	7.5	22.5	15
EX4	3	11/7/2022	27/07/2022	Data Analysis and other competencies for the labor market	11.5	28.75	14
EX7	1	15/05/2023	19/05/2023	Data Analysis and other competencies for the labor market	14	14	106
EX6	1	27/02/2023	3/3/2023	Data Analysis and other competencies for the labor market	13.5	13.5	41
DM6	5	27/06/2022	29/07/2022	Digital marketing	7	35	11
ME1	3	26/10/2022	16/11/2022	Electromechanical Assembly Officer	40	120	14
ME2	4	28/11/2022	21/12/2022	Electromechanical Assembly Officer	14	56	19
IFM1	9	5/10/2022	7/12/2022	Female migrant entrepreneurship	2	18	5
LO1	3	5/12/2022	21/12/2022	Logistics	12	36	22
MM1	3	24/10/2022	11/11/2022	Mechanical Assembly Officer	40	120	19

MM2	4	28/11/2022	21/12/2022	Mechanical Assembly Officer	9	36	24
AAM1	5	30/05/2022	1/7/2022	On-line assembly worker	32	8	13
MS1	1 full day	13/05/2023	13/05/2023	Performing arts occupations	8	8	12
MS2	1 full day	20/05/2023	20/05/2023	Performing arts occupations	8	8	10
FI3	1	4/5/2023	10/5/2023	Self-employment	10	10	6
FI2	2	8/2/2023	16/02/2023	Self-employment	5	10	20
FI1	2	9/1/2023	19/01/2023	Self-employment	9	18	3
FI4	1	17/05/2023	23/05/2023	Self-employment	10	10	6
				Total	292	867.25	397

Table 3. Presentation of training course

Overview of the training activities

As indicated in Table 3, training courses are provided in technical and non-technical formats. The technical training was delivered in partnership with other organizations to provide the beneficiaries with the technical skills needed to transition into the labor market.

For the technical training, a total of 124 beneficiaries participated, with the training duration ranging from three to six weeks, totaling 606 hours. The curriculum included skills in Online Assembly, CNC Operator, Electromechanical Assembly, Mechanical Assembly, and Logistics. All training sessions were conducted offline at the premises of the partner organizations, except for Online Assembly and CNC Operator, which were delivered using a combination of online and offline methods.

For the non-technical training, a total of 273 beneficiaries participated in the program, which lasted between one day to nine weeks, totaling 261 hours of training. The curriculum focused on advanced skills in Digital Marketing, Data Analysis, Female migrant entrepreneurship, Youth entrepreneurship, Performing arts occupations, Self-employment and Career Guidance for job seekers to access labor market.

Overview of the coaching and mentoring sessions

Between April – December 2023, 347 beneficiaries participated in coaching sessions alone, while 143 beneficiaries participated in mentoring session alone. 129 beneficiaries participated in both coaching and mentoring sessions for the same period.

Overview of SkillLab beneficiaries

Between April and December 2023, 150 beneficiaries were registered on SkillLab. Out of the 150 registered beneficiaries, 20 of them have already completed their profiles on the platform. 133 beneficiaries are in the process of completing their profiles, while an additional 61 beneficiaries have pending invitations to join the platform.

The educational qualifications of the beneficiaries who have completed profiles on the platform range from a Highschool certificate to a Master's degree. Additionally, among those who have completed profiles, six beneficiaries indicated interest in at least 3 areas from the

suggested career areas on the platform. The interested career areas include data analysis and soft skills, digital marketing and entrepreneurship skills.

Results

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics of the pre-and post-results of the overall data (Including participants with and without access to SKillLab) are presented. Figures 3 - 11 show the overall results of respondents' distribution based on age, gender, education, geographical location, current status, and type of intervention in which each respondent participated.

Presented in Figure 3 below is the chart of the beneficiaries age distribution. It revealed an equal proportion of participants in the two age categories.

Figure 3. Age distribution of participants
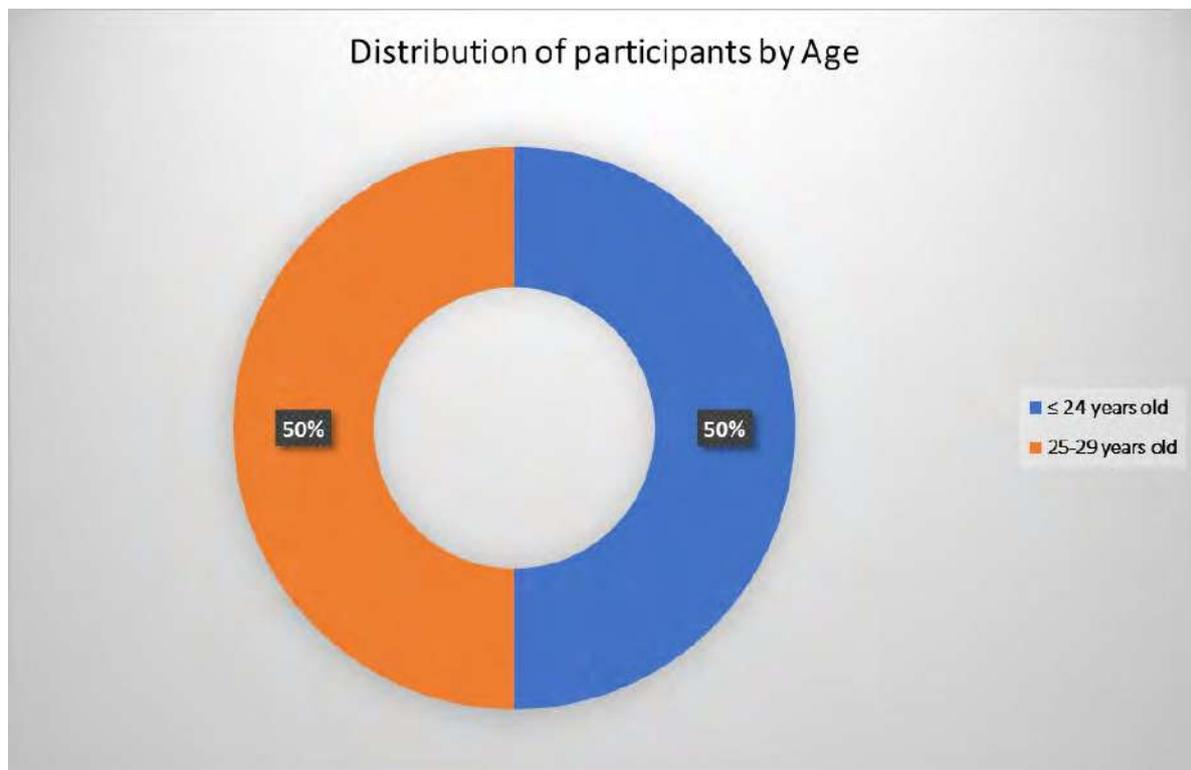
The gender distribution of beneficiaries is presented in Figure 4. It revealed male participants benefited more in this round of intervention (53%), and female participants constituted (47%) of the total participants.

Figure 4. Distribution of participants based on gender
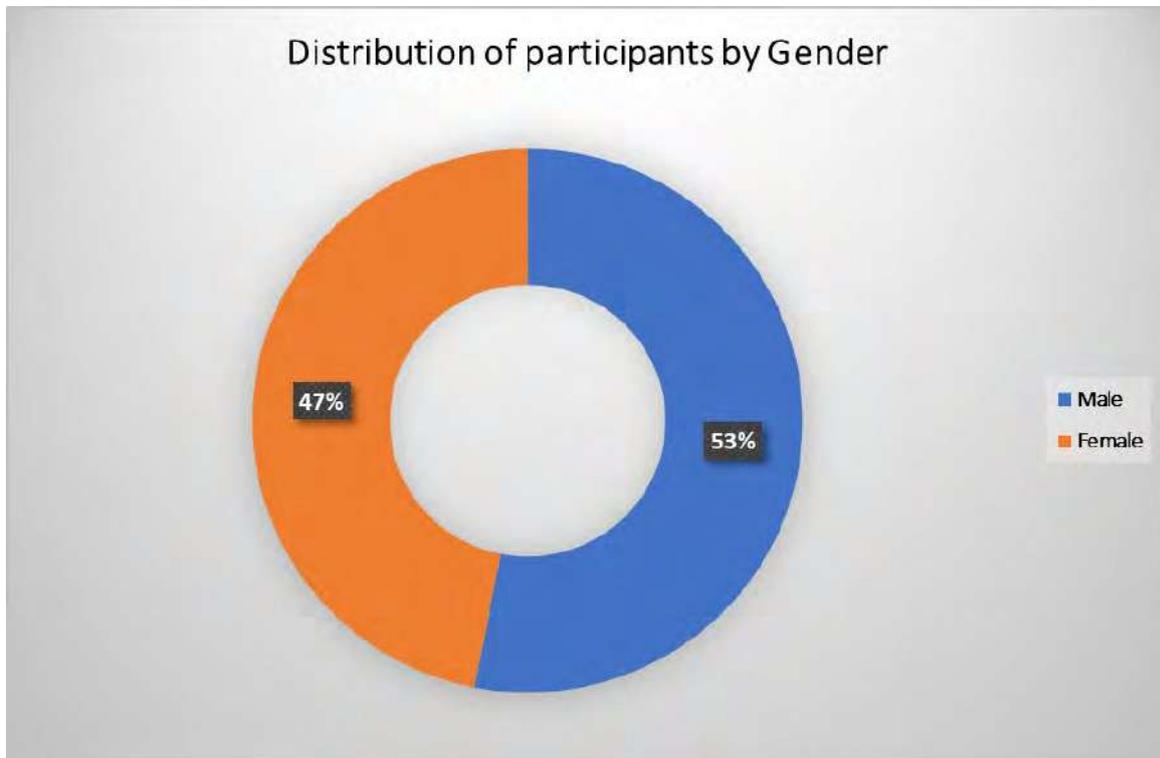
Presented in Figure 5 is the distribution of the beneficiaries by educational attainment. The result showed 50.7% of the participants completed Upper secondary education. 21.1% completed a Master's degree or equivalent, 19% of the participants completed both Bachelor's degree or equivalent, 4.8% Post-secondary education, and 4.4% completed a Lower secondary education.

Figure 5. Distribution of participants per educational attainment
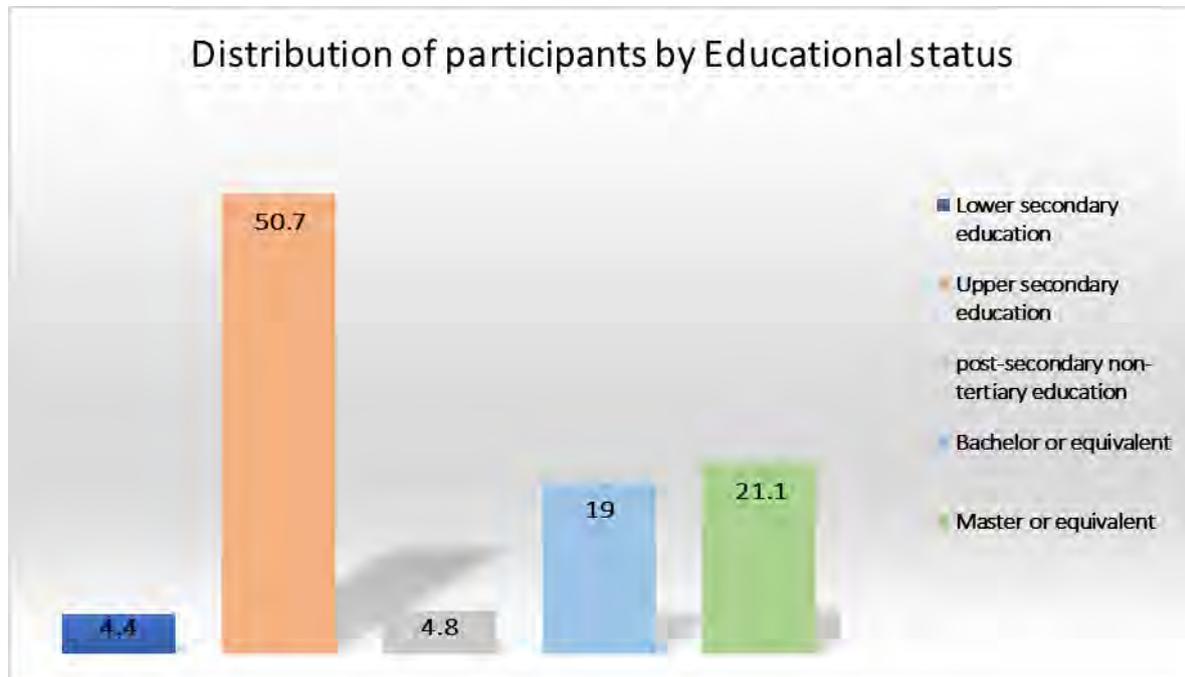
Figure 6 below shows the distribution of the beneficiaries by place of residence. It revealed that participants from urban areas (63.9%) benefited more from the intervention. 35.7% of the participants are residents of rural areas. 0.4% of the remaining participants did not disclose their place of residence.

Figure 6. Geographical distribution of participants
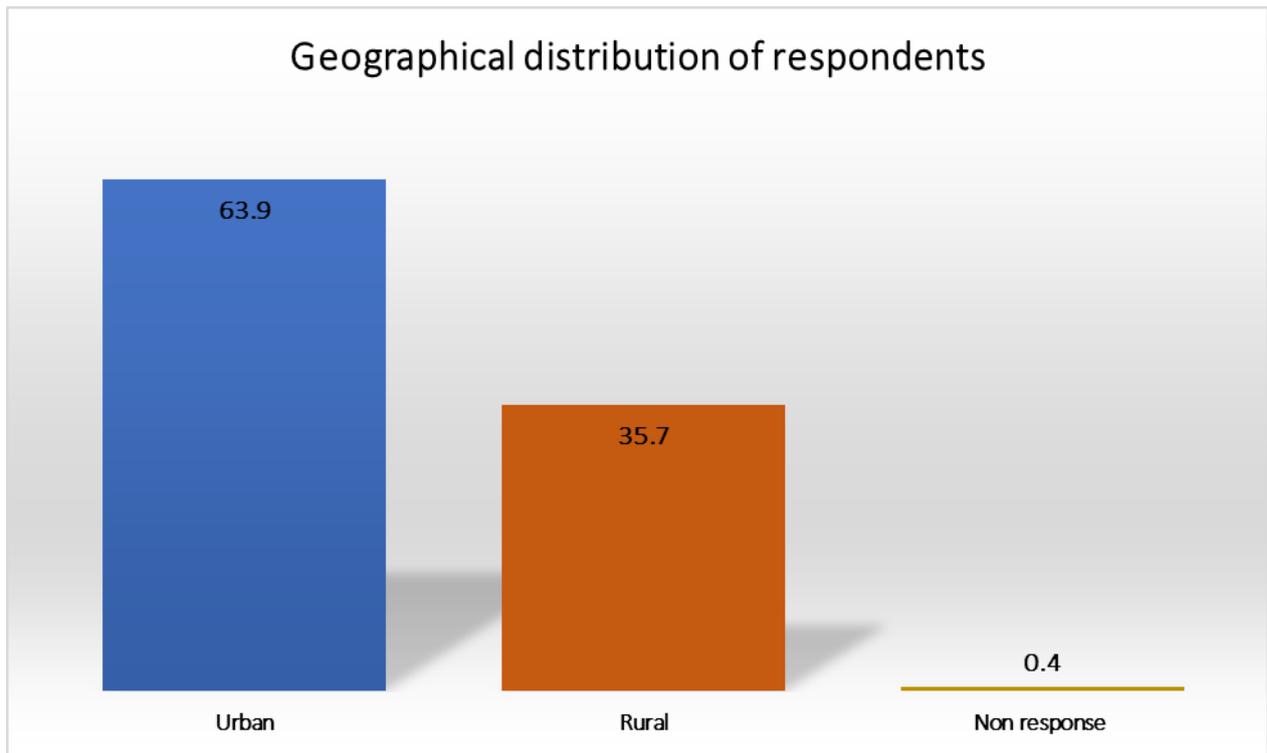
Presented in Figure 7 is the distribution of beneficiaries by type of intervention activity. The result showed 71% of participants participated only in training sessions. 29% of the remaining participants participated in either coaching, mentoring, or both.

Figure 7. Distribution of participants by type of intervention

Distribution of participants by Participation type

29%

71%

■ Training
■ Coaching & Mentoring
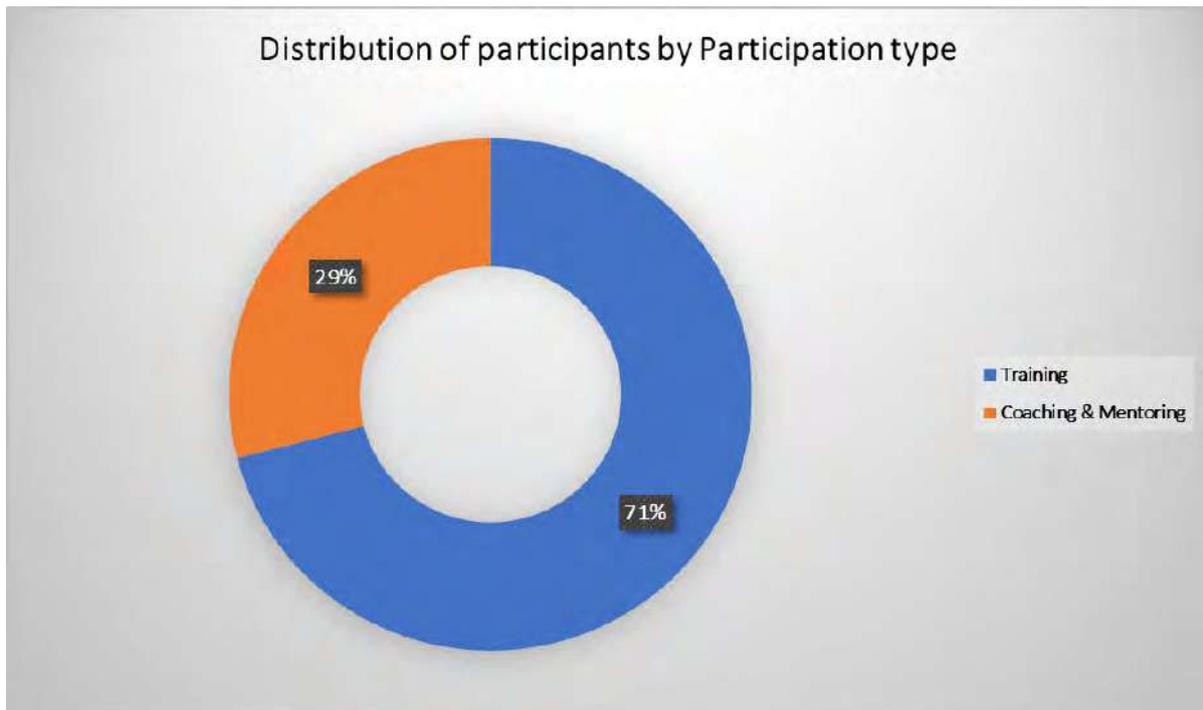
Presented in Figure 8 is the is the distribution of beneficiaries by the use of SkillLab. The result showed 74% of participants had access to SkillLab and 26% of the remaining participants had no access to SkillLab.

Figure 8. Distribution of participants by type of intervention
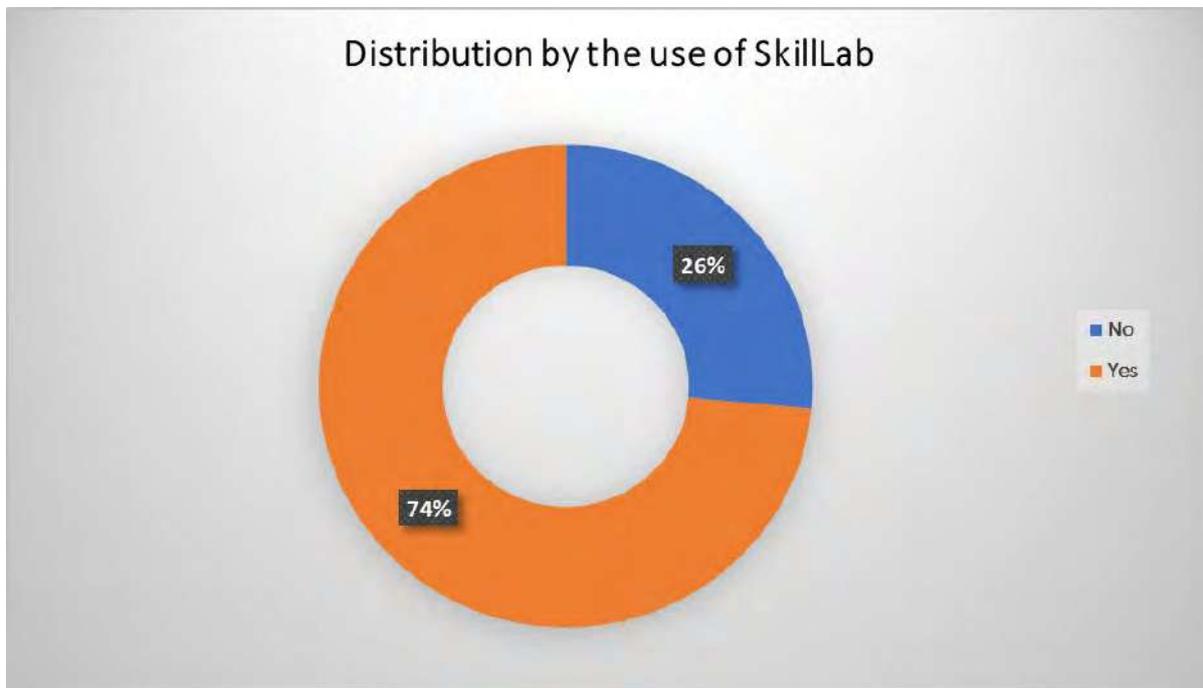
Presented in Figure 9 is the pre-post distribution of beneficiaries by labor status. Pre-intervention results revealed some differences in the proportion of participants who are in the NEET category and those who are engaged in labor activities by either being self-employed, enrolled in formal education or employed by an organization. 57.1% are NEETs while 41.5% are either employed, own a business, or are studying. 1.4% of the remaining participants did not disclose their labor status. Post-intervention results showed a reduction in the proportion of participants who are in the NEET category (53.1%) and an increment in the proportion of participants who are who are engaged in labor activities by either being self-employed, enrolled in formal education or employed by an organization (46.3%). 0.6% of the remaining participants did not disclose their labor status.

Figure 9. Distribution of participants by labor status
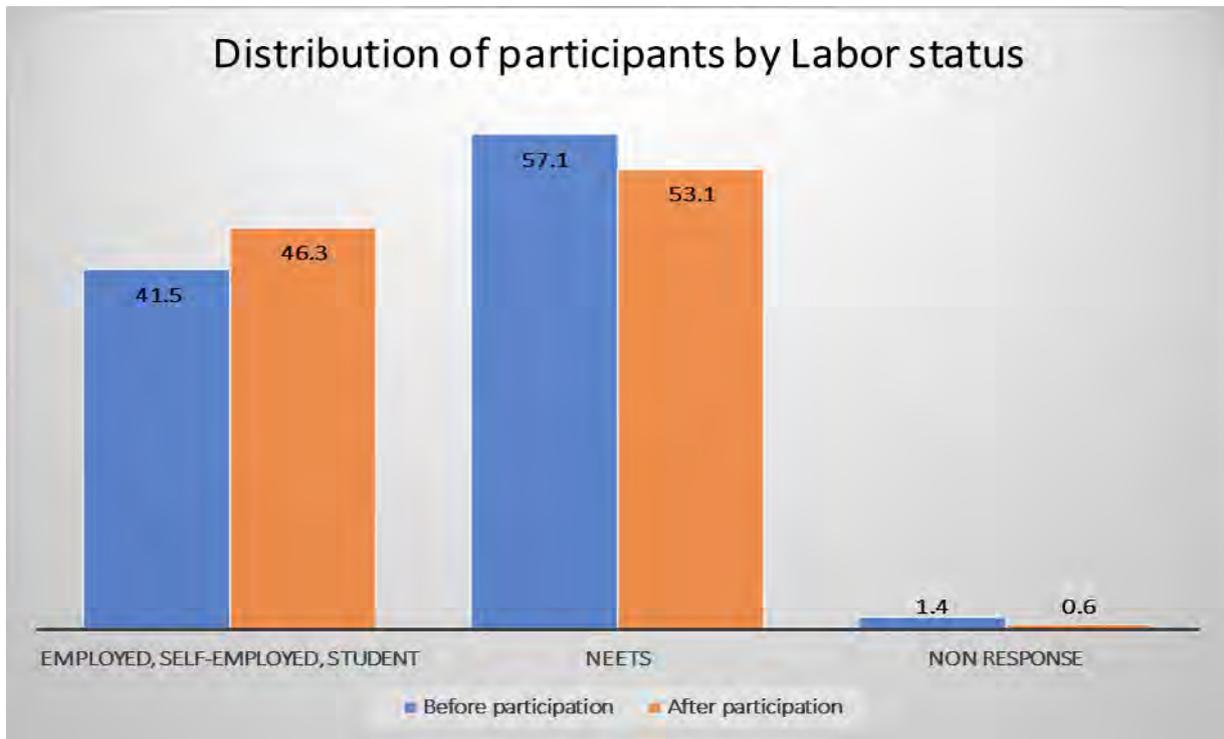
Presented in Figure 10 is the pre-post distribution of the beneficiaries by the main source of income. Pre-intervention results showed 38.4% of the participants rely on family support as a means of sustenance. 28.9% of the participants have no means of income at all, 19% have paid jobs as their main source of income, 8.8% depend on government support and 3.7% of the remaining participants rely on income from their businesses as the main source of income. 1.2% of the remaining participants did not disclose their main source of income. Post-intervention results revealed 35.4% of participants depend on family support as their main source of income, 28.9% have no means of income at all, 23.5% rely on income from paid jobs, 8.8% depend on government support, and 3.1% of the participants rely on income from their businesses as the main source of income. 0.3% of the remaining participants did not disclose their main source of income.

Figure 10. Distribution of participants by source of income
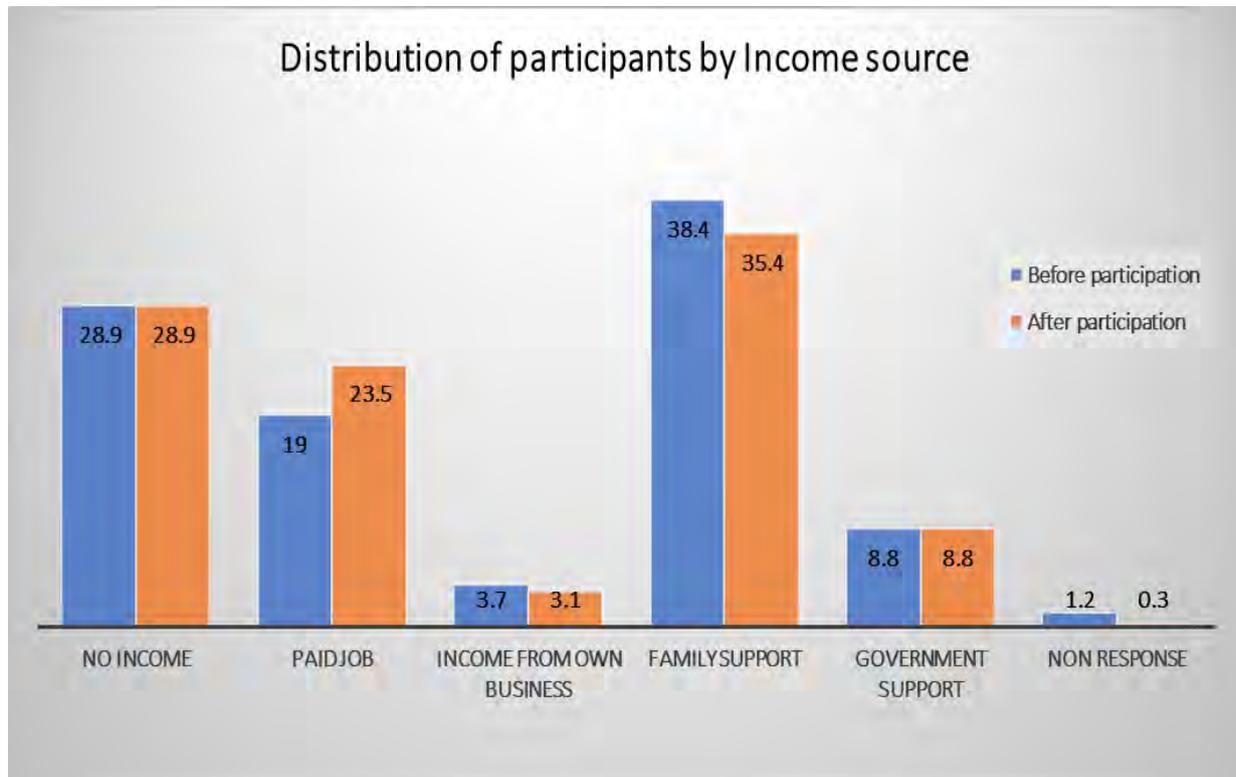
Figure 11 presents the pre-post distribution of the beneficiaries by average monthly disposable income. Pre-intervention results revealed more than half of the participants (67%) averaged less than 600 EUR as their monthly disposable income, and 29.6% of the participants averaged more than 600 EUR as their monthly disposable income. 3.4% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their disposable income. Post-intervention results showed 66.3% of the participants averaged less than 600 EUR as their monthly disposable income, and 30.3% of the remaining participants averaged more than 600 EUR as their monthly disposable income. 3.4% of the participants did not disclose information about their disposable income.

Figure 11. Distribution of participants by monthly disposable income
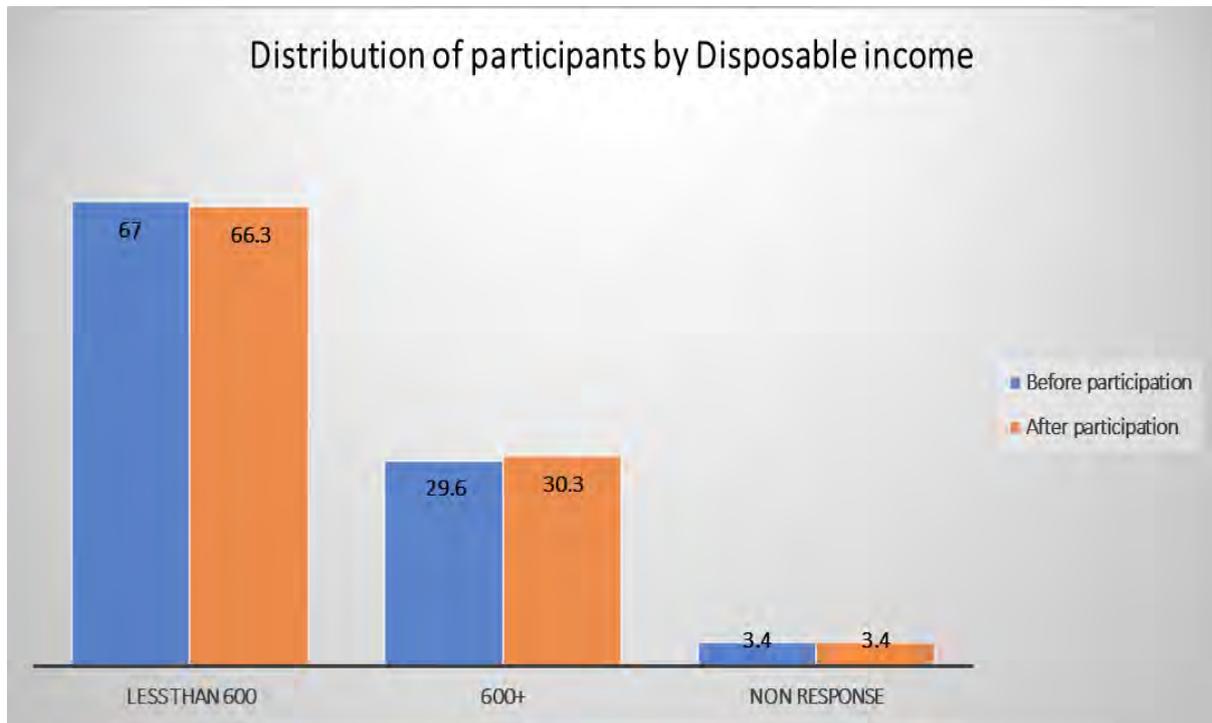
Soft outcomes: Statistical evaluation of soft outcome and impact variables

Table 4 presents the significant test results for the soft outcome and impact variables. The paired sample t-test of soft skills was statistically insignificant difference between the pre and post observation differences, with a p-value of 0.382 at 5% significance level. Quality of life variable showed a statistically significant difference at p-value of 0.000 at 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	7.621	7.667	0.382
Quality of life	6.989	7.205	0.000

Soft impact: Statistical evaluation of soft hard impact variables

Table 5 presents the statistical analysis of hard impact variables, including labor status, and disposable income. The McNemar statistical test results for the observed differences of the pre-post intervention variables revealed insignificant outcomes for the two variables considered at the 5% significance level. Labor status had a p-value of 0.086, and disposable income had a p-value of 1.000.

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

	N	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Labor status	289	0.086[b]
Disposable income	279	1.000[b]

b. binomial distribution used

Overview of focus group participants

Present below is the overview of qualitative feedback inform of focus group discussions with participants of the program. 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 twenty people that were initially invited to join the focus group sessions, seven of them confirmed their availability and four people eventually participated in the discussion. For those without access to SkillLab, out of the twelve people that were initially invited to participate in the discussion, nine of them 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

Participants' gender	Status	SkillLab usage
Male	Unemployed	Yes
Male	Employed	Yes
Female	Employed	Yes
Female	Student	Yes
Male	Employed	No
Female	Entrepreneur	No
Female	Employed	No
Female	Unemployed	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 were coded and analyzed. The codes were used to interpret overarching themes. Specifically, six themes were employed to categorize the responses from participants with access to SkillLab: Program Reflection, Self-Belief and Professional Growth, Feedback on the Intervention, Challenges and Future Prospects, and Suggestions for Areas of Improvement. Conversely, for participants without SkillLab access, the same themes were applied, excluding the category related to feedback on SkillLab usage. Figures 12 and 13 below present a graphic description of the themes and the explanatory codes.

Figure 12. Graphical description themes and codes for participants without access to SkillLab
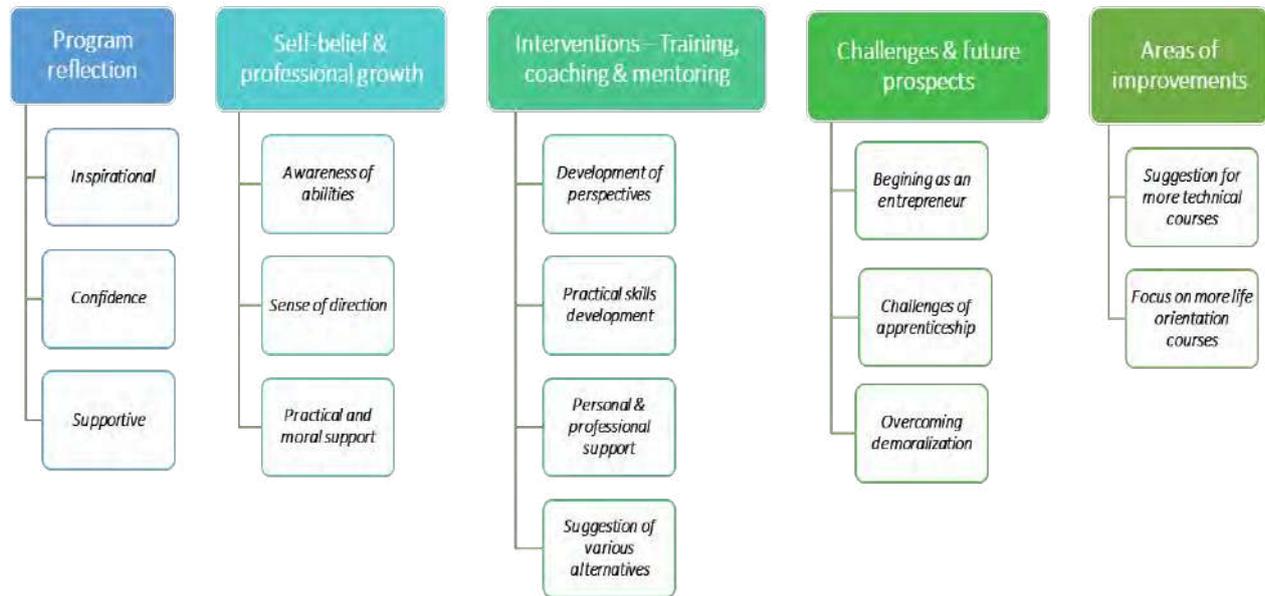
- **Program Reflection**: Program reflection reports how beneficiaries of the Yes! Program has been impacted based on the activity to output level. Subthemes generated for this include the inspiration that beneficiary's harness to either start up or sustain their innovations from the Yes! Program, another is the confidence built to fully implement the activities of the program, and how beneficiaries have received support or supported other agencies during and after the course of the program. Participants discussed subtopics on personal confidence and growth, supporting them in approaching the working world with more optimism and direction. Excerpts from the participants are presented below:

  > *"…combining work and hobby/personal path. I am now working as a yoga teacher. I have not achieved the fully operative and formal "opening" of the business yet. All this would not have been possible without the support of Microfinanza."* Participant B

  > *"After graduation we are at the mercy of ourselves, we have "carte blanche" but we have to face many difficulties, it is disorienting. The path was very supportive, and I felt supported in various situations, even in different projects."* Participant D

- **Self-belief and professional growth**: The program sees the importance of pursuing goals, taking risks and perseverance, causing a positive mindset, resilience, and willingness to embrace opportunities for learning and development. Participants explained the importance of the program in supporting their self-belief. They itemized how the program allowed them to acknowledge their abilities, sense of direction and the practical and moral support they got from the program. Excerpts from the participants are presented below:

    "The experience was very useful, also to have your feet planted on the ground. A person following you, especially in coaching and mentoring, helps to develop different alternatives, roads, to be discovered, and you avoid the more dangerous ones." Participant B

    "Definitely it was helpful, at first, I found big difficulties, I didn't know what they expected. Then with new awareness, a CV fixed, I felt able to attend a few interviews. It was a great satisfaction for me." Participant C

    "…for me it was like a window to the world, it was the link to enter the working world. The path gave a real practical support." Participant A

- **Interventions (Training, coaching, and mentoring)**: The program itemizes different interventions participants received during and after to support their overarching goal of enrolling in the program. These include training on various skills, coaching and mentoring to help actualize the overreaching goal of supporting the participants on their journey to establishing themselves in the labor market as being employed or becoming entrepreneurs. Feedback from the participants was categorized as development of perspectives, practical and skill development, personal and professional support received from the facilitators. The excerpts from the discussions are provided below:

    "The training and support gave me a broader perspective, open my mind about opportunities…We have the tools and potential inside of us but sometimes you need some push, a structure, which I didn't have at that time. Now I feel more confident, thanks to the solid, pragmatic approach, and a strong base. I was also able to develop my projects more creatively, I had a direction." Participant B

"Last months I started to work in an office, but then I changed, I was not happy, the team was not very nice. The course on Excel and data analysis was super helpful for that experience. Also, the information on CV, although you always need to update it (there is never right thing for everything, like interviews)." Participant D

"The experience was very useful, also to have your feet planted on the ground. A person following you, especially in coaching and mentoring, helps to develop different alternatives, roads, to be discovered, and you avoid the more dangerous ones. So even for me the experience was more than important, especially I think for those who want to open a VAT." Participant A

"…both the courses and then the post training support have been useful for my life in general, also for volunteering experiences." Participant C

- **Challenges and future prospects**: The challenges faced by the participants in the program are intricately tied to several key factors. Participants reported that despite the Yes! program has brought about an improvement in honing their skills to becoming successful entrepreneurs. Particularly, the issues faced by most entrepreneurs, the early-stage issues. Other challenges highlighted by the participants include apprenticeship issues, overcoming demoralization and external influences. Excerpts are presented below:

    "In terms of entrepreneurship… In the beginning especially it was complicated to be heard. There was openness to dialogue, yes, but there is need for involvement, need to be trained, need to have space. It's not easy to be given a chance, and space." Participant B

    "Demoralization, it's not easy…It's the big one. Perception of the outside, a position may seem like it's made for you, but then it doesn't work out as hoped. You have many interviews, but then there is no feedback." Participant D

    "Another difficulty is not to be influenced too much by the external world. Everyone has their own opinion, their own perception. It is not always

personal, it is not that one is more or less than another. The big thing is that you have to make some space for yourself, even supported, but you need energy, otherwise things end." Participant B

- **Areas of improvements**: Participants reflected on the program and shared the possible areas where the program design could be better improved. A sustained pathway is to allow the mentor to monitor the progress of the beneficiaries by recommending courses depending on their area or expertise. A participant explained how a course in graphic design and social media should be put out. Another suggested professional course on "hikigai" or courses on life orientation could have been more beneficial to them. Excerpts are provided below:

    "I think I'd suggest courses in graphic design, social media, maybe more verticals." Participant A

    "For a little professional distortion, I'd suggest a course on hikigai (reason for living), a course on general orientation on one's life." Participant B

Figure 13. Graphical description themes and codes for participants with SkillLab access
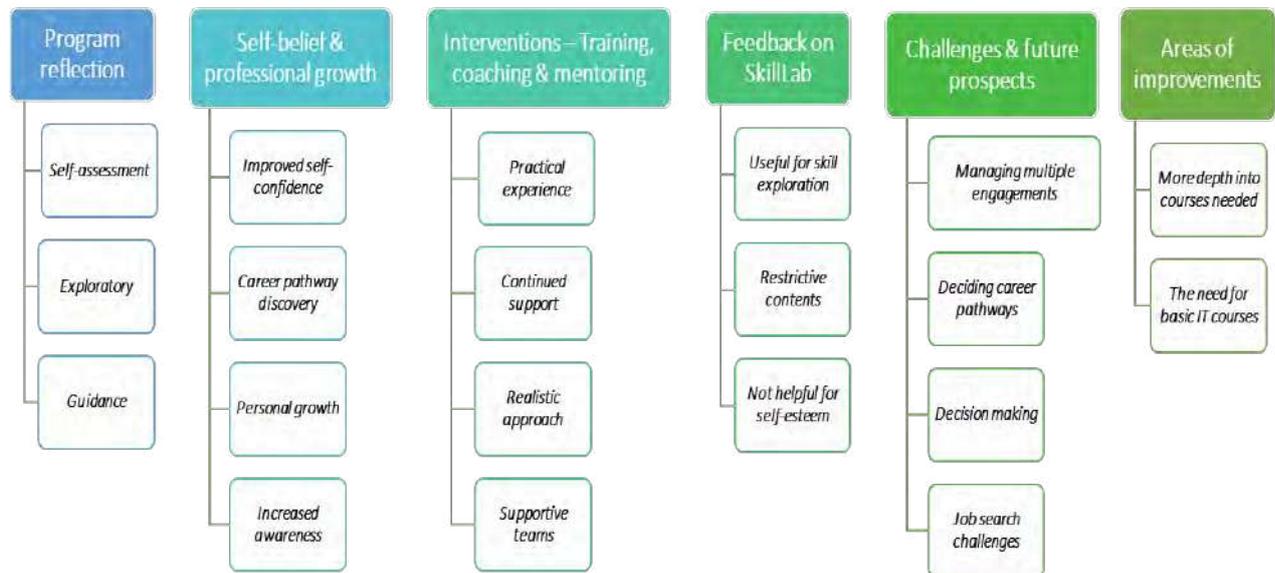
- **Program reflection**: The program played a pivotal role in augmenting personal confidence and awareness. This newfound confidence served as a crucial support system, enabling them to approach the professional realm with enhanced optimism and a clearer sense of direction. In light of this, the participants summed up their reflection of the program in one word. In their submission, some of the participants viewed their experience in the program as an opportunity to assess themselves, while others used the program as an avenue to explore other options and pathways. Lastly, some participants saw the program as a means to guide them through the world of work. Excerpts from the participants are presented below:

> *"…I wanted to compare myself with people in the field of work, to see if I was following the right path and get interesting input…. Given the opportunity, I didn't think twice, and certainly didn't regret the choice."* Participant A

> *"…I am working as a proctor, I needed a little work from home…. also considering the IT theme."* Participant B

> *"…I attended webinars and courses during COVID, I was stuck, and I didn't know what to do, I didn't have much knowledge. I did the course, I was happy, and then I decided to continue with post training, I always had problems with university."* Participant D

- **Self-belief and professional growth**: The impact of the courses on participants was notably positive, influencing their confidence levels, job search skills, and perspectives, ultimately empowering them to consider diverse professional paths. The short online course, unexpectedly meaningful, served as a robust foundation, instilling confidence, and providing valuable stimuli for broadening their outlook. Participants reported tangible improvements in their CVs, attributing this to the program's effectiveness. Furthermore, they received robust and supportive advice post-training, expressing gratitude for the consistently high-quality support provided. Notably, participants approached the program with zero expectations but found the experience remarkably helpful, with no negative aspects noted. The excerpts below were extracted from the discussion:

  "I think on the topic of confidence, something I'm very lacking on. I think there has been some progress in me, then also because I managed to get hired, and I think I didn't disfigure, even though the outcome was not positive. Now there is optimism. On the level of personal growth certainly, also just in the way I approach the world of work, and on awareness, now I am more aware that I am not alone." Participant A

  "I also see myself a lot in the things that have been shared, especially on my path, for me it has boosted confidence a lot…. I don't know if it is actually my priority now, I still decided to study, but for the future I think all the work can be important, it was very helpful." Participant D

  "As far as personal confidence is concerned, certainly it is a plus, as long as you think alone about the things you experience and how you experience them you often come up short. Instead by comparing yourself with someone who has experienced similar aspects even if not the same, you can understand something that has been learned." Participant C

  "As for confidence, the safe course gives an extra boost, but it is during the search then that confidence emerges. If you don't get called, it obviously goes down. It is up and down." Participant B

- **Interventions (Training, coaching, and mentoring)**: The participants shared their views regarding the various components of the intervention. Undoubtably, the program received commendation for its pragmatic and realistic approach, emphasizing practicality in its

methodologies. Participants specifically highlighted the program's post-training support, which included assistance in refining resumes and developing business plans, underscoring the program's comprehensive and impactful nature. Overall, the feedback from participants reinforces the program's effectiveness in instilling confidence, enhancing skills, and providing valuable support throughout and beyond the training period. Excerpts from the participants are provided below:

> *"I only took one course, a short but meaningful experience. I feel it gave me more even than expected. I said "ok, it's just an online course", I didn't expect much, but instead I found out a good course, with a solid foundation. From a work perspective it gave me confidence, also to look for more, not only related to my path of study."* Participant B

> *"For the courses, yes definitely yes, it helped me refine the CV significantly, and very practical advice, and strong support, especially on the post-training relationship. I never lacked support, at any stage, even in times of obstacles."* Participant A

> *"Sometimes we fall in love with a path, an idea, for our path, partly out of naivety, partly out of apprehension. University never lets you see the working world, does it. In this case, this YES! approach was pragmatic, realistic, it exposed me to various things, various realities, and it opens your mind. And I agree on the post training theme, I was followed very well, it was very helpful on resume improvement, even business plan, to model the condition on the job application."* Participant C

- **Feedback on SkillLab**: Opinions on the SkillLab tool exhibited a spectrum of perspectives among participants, with some acknowledging its utility in skill identification and career direction, while others did not heavily rely on it. Participants elaborated on using SkillLab to extract and articulate their skills, finding the tool interesting and beneficial in bringing clarity to their ideas, however, SkillLab did not serve as a significant confidence booster, yet they acknowledged its practicality in the realm of career exploration. Also is the need for SkillLab to delve into existing job profiles, effectively connecting the dots between their skills and interests. Although their exploration of SkillLab was minimal, they acknowledged

the tool's importance, particularly emphasizing the need for detailed technical courses. Excerpts from the participants are shared below:

> *"I used it to bring out skills, it was useful because it was automatic, it was interesting. But then I didn't use it so much anymore, I was more curious, it was useful for me to bring out competencies. It can clarify your ideas, that's it."* Participant B

> *"On the level of self-esteem, no, it didn't help me much. In fact, I had to discard a lot of skills that I don't see myself on, or that I have low level on. I didn't use it as much, but still I found it useful. It helped me realize that the area of work I would like to break into is the one I like."* Participant A

> *"I used it to learn about more existing jobs, because I have no idea what is out there. I still don't know my interests, my skills, I've been trying to use it to connect the dots, find those things that are best suited for me. It's interesting and useful."* Participant D

- **Challenges and future prospects**: Some of the challenges encountered by the participants during the course of the program were associated with academic pursuits, decision-making processes, and the complexities of managing multiple facets of their lives. The program's invaluable support in comprehending their individual situations was shared as part of the ways the challenges were mitigated. Excerpts from the discussion can be found below:

> *"For me the challenges are several. The first one was being able to figure out if I could carry on two things together. I tried, even though it didn't work out. For things to manage for the future, I would say it exceeded my expectations. On a personal level I probably should have thought better, and in some cases made more "risky" choices."* Participant A

> *"The path opened up a lot of perspectives for me, there were visualization exercises, and practicals, which I would never have done on my own, because I thought I didn't have the skills. But then put it into practice, supported, I was able to see that I could do it, and I did it. Even in the future all these accouterments, along the course, have been useful to me and will be, so many little insights."* Participant C

> *"In terms of main challenges, I meet two of them, related basically to one's course of study. In this case the support was helpful in understanding where I was, what I was embedded in. So understanding things, a big picture, which I didn't have. And then, also decision on work experience abroad, for a period this summer. I decided I could do it, that it would make me happy. Difficulties that I was able to overcome also thanks to the support."* Participant D

- **Areas of improvements**: The program in general proved to be significantly impactful to the participants. This reflected in the feedback they shared which included the potential areas where the program could be further improved. One notable point stood out in this regard, the need for more focus on IT related courses such as basic excel courses to name a few. Other submission includes more emphasis on more detailed and in-depth courses. Excerpts from the participants are shared below:

> *"I don't really remember all the offerings that were there in that period, but in general I think courses on well-rounded digital skills are important. So, the basics. Excel, Word also, email clients in a more advanced way. IT education."* Participant A

> *"I agree, also in my opinion going into detail, doing basic IT technical courses on programming, html, in my opinion could be very important. A lot of people I talk to bring it up, it's a useful topic. Otherwise, I would say no other advice. Duration was great, perfect way."* Participant C

> *"For me maybe it would be useful after an introductory course, also to go into more detail, more in-depth things."* Participant D

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 facilitators were interviewed to collect their input and feedback regarding interventions. Two coaches and four mentors were interviewed in this regard.

Table 7. **Summary of interviewed coaches and mentors**

Facilitators' gender	Input	Expertise
Male	Mentor	Technical advisor
Male	Coach	Entrepreneur
Female	Mentor	Entrepreneur
Male	Coach	Entrepreneur

Analysis of interview feedback from coaches and mentors

The analysis of interviews from the facilitators involved in the program is presented below. The feedback was coded under seven themes. 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. Figure 14 below presents a graphic description of the themes and the explanatory codes.

Figure 14. Graphical description themes and codes of interviews with coaches and mentors

Strategies for coaching/mentoring	Effective coaching techniques	Challenges participants faced	Observed transformational changes	Programs' strengths & weaknesses	Suggestions – Areas of improvements	Long-term Impact Strategies
Holistic coaching approach	Structured methodology	Access to credit	Overcoming obstacles	Holistic coaching approach	Engaging financial intermediaries	Engaging in cooperative approach
Trust building	Case-by-case approach	Covid restrictions	Changes in perception	Transnational collaborations	Emphasizing quality over quantity	Continued technical assistance
Situational assessment	Active listening	Balancing personal & societal expectations	Improved commitments	Privacy issues	Encouraging regional support services	Continued psychological support
Knowledge transfer		Improper organization	Improved self-confidence	Balancing quantity & quality		
		Lack of focus		The need for dual mentorship approach		

- **Strategies for Coaching/Mentoring**: Different strategies have been itemized based on what works in the environment. Responses have shown that mentorship covered holistic coaching approach, building trust, situational assessment, and knowledge transfer. The mentors recognize the need to help participants shape objectives and dreams. The holistic approach considers interconnectedness of different aspects of human life based on promoting overall wellbeing. This approach considers life balance, personal values and beliefs, goal setting and visioning, mindfulness, and self-awareness, etc. Presented below are excerpts from the interviews:

  "There's no single side approach or one component approach for the beneficiaries, but I think a customize so one person dedicated, custom, single approach and it has to be a holistic one which comprises the personal coaching, the access to finance." Mentor A

  "So first of all, our idea and my role was to try to understand how effectively we can transfer specific elements, for what does it mean to develop, to start an enterprise and the same time to consider what is their capabilities and their potentialities." Mentor B

"First of all, I try to transmit my personal experience because I am first of all, entrepreneur… and so I think it's very valuable to try to transfer what is your experience." Mentor A

"So if you want, training was a very important step for us to enter in contact, to build up trust with them, because that is not a problem to have this kind of direct communication." Mentor B

Effective Coaching Techniques: The use of structured methodology which involves combining skills, strategies and approaches that foster individual and professional development, with a flexible process that is tailored to unique needs and circumstances played a vital role in this program. This necessitates the need to understand relationships, foster self-discovery and empower individuals to reach their full potential by actively listening to the mentees and paying full attention to their needs. These were some of the points that emerged from the interviews as some of the most effective techniques proven to keep the participants engaged in the intervention. These techniques do not only help to establish trust between the mentor and the mentee but also are crucial to ensure the lasting impacts of the coaching and mentoring sessions remained with the mentees for a long time. Excerpts from the interviews are presented below:

"I think when using a really structured methodologies and not maybe having really free conversation with no boundaries and no patterns, methodology is really helped keeping the participant engaged during the coaching stages and I think they're better realize the value of coaching itself." Coach A

"Before trying to draw the path in the professional way. I tried to identify their dreams and their objectives, and to my surprise, I was saying that probably I had to readdress my role as a, as a mentor or as a coach." Mentor A

"…And I said I probably need to talk more and to listen more to these people and to help them shaping their own dream. They were professional and private, uh, goals, so that was the first reaction had and the second one was that those people needed to be listened to like they said." Mentor B

"So, during my courses I usually show some methodology like the Osterwalder business model or ikigai or other exercises that could be lifelong discovery and stuff like that." Coach A

Challenges Faced by Participants: The challenges and successes observed in the YES program, emphasizing the imperative for comprehensive support. It underscores the efficacy of a dual mentorship approach and advocates for the integration of both online and territorial services to ensure a sustained impact on individuals aspiring to become entrepreneurs. One notable obstacle encountered in the business startup phase was the difficulty in accessing funds due to a lack of guarantees, despite the presence of a national guarantee fund. Furthermore, is on the job-seeking participants who exhibited a lack of organizational structure and proactiveness, necessitating constant reminders to maintain engagement. A subgroup of participants, grappling with frustration and disbelief, found it challenging to recognize their own skills and potential. This underscores the need for mentors to offer guidance not only in professional but also in personal aspects. The uncertainty prevalent among participants emphasizes the importance of mentors in shaping individuals' aspirations and providing support in navigating both professional and personal dimensions of their lives. Excerpts are provided below:

"So when you go to the bank and you don't have anything to give as a guarantee to the bank, it would be really hard, despite Italy system have a guarantee fund that is a national scheme, that should somehow facilitate the credit access for those people who have no guarantee, but in reality it doesn't work like that." Coach A

"We have to keep in mind that most of the project was implemented during covid, so we added a lot of uncertainty over the needed in the situation these young people. So, they were scared about the future. They asked us a lot of suggestions on where they were supposed to go. So, according to our experience, my experience as a mentor, was not to give answers, but try to work with them to find right answer." Coach B

"Regarding the other part, barriers in finding a job. Let's say we have, 10-15% of those who were quite engaged and wanted to do the path together

with the coach, but the rest of 85% they always need you to have reminder mail to keep them engaged, because I realized they lack of organizational structure, and they are like 'Oh yeah, something happened'. " Coach A

"And the same time, one of the problems that we experienced with our Neets in the project is that this kind of passion sometimes is not so stable. So they are sort of vulnerability, they change their minds frequently, and that's maybe is one of the problems, because you can start with one idea and when you are facing some difficulties, a certain percentage of people they decide to decline, to abandon the project. " Mentor B

"I supported mainly women, I don't know if it's because maybe it's easier for me to understand them, but this situation for these young ladies is always the same. They have a lot of dreams but finally, for cultural reasons or because they have a baby is not possible to do what they want and it's clear that the society is not ready to provide what is needed for giving to this woman the ability to work. " Coach B

"She started discussing with the with us, as a migrant, saying that is not possible in this society a woman cannot work because she has to take care about the baby and yes, it is true, in Italy is not that easy. So, the welfare is not that easy. " Coach A

Observed Transformational Changes: The facilitators shared a compelling instance of a participant who, because of the coaching process, successfully secured a new job. The impact extended beyond the professional realm, significantly enhancing the individual's self-confidence. The report underscores the effectiveness of an approach that places emphasis on active listening and holds mentees accountable for their actions, thereby fostering tangible progress. Notably, individuals fully committed to the coaching process experienced successful transformations.

Participants with a business focus exhibited clear trajectories in establishing and managing their ventures. Those in pursuit of employment demonstrated heightened awareness of their skills and a sense of accomplishment. The report features interviews that delve into specific cases, spotlighting notable transformations observed in participants. One illustrative case

involves a migrant with a passion for fashion who, despite facing obstacles, was guided through training sessions and strategic business planning. Another case features a mother in Italy who, after losing her job and contending with societal limitations, actively sought financial education. The transformative experiences of participants underline that success often hinges on their capacity to build relationships, network effectively, and adapt to challenges. Presented below are excerpts from the interviews:

"When you go there because you realize that it's something that you need to do and you are committed, then it's totally different and I think it's the same for coaching." Coach A

"For example, one concrete example I think for me is a real important improvement is they succeed when they understand that: I can have a strong idea, but I need to establish a relationship with the context in which my idea would be will be implemented." Mentor B

"I've seen progress, particularly in one lady, she started a new job. Through the process, so it was extremely important. So, she went to, you know, the interview, the selection and she started to work at that point." Mentor A

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program: The report outlines the program's strengths in its holistic approach, encompassing personal coaching, access to finance, and professional coaching. A notable positive aspect is the collaboration between partners from different countries, bringing diverse expertise to the table, each contributing unique strengths to the program. Also, the successful transitioning of the intervention to remote format during the pandemic, ensuring outreach to participants located in remote areas. However, a few areas fell short and could have further supported the delivery of the interventions. As highlighted by the facilitators, the challenges of allocating sufficient time to each participant pose as a critical factor for effective coaching. Other areas as reported include the need to have a balance between maintaining quality and accommodating a larger quantity of participants, and privacy issues pose a concern for the program. Excerpts from the interviews are provided below:

"First of all, I think one of the key aspects is accessibility, because at the beginning we were just doing a frontal lesson in presence, but then to the

pandemic everybody used to get in touch with zoom and all this kind of stuff and this help us reaching a lot of people that otherwise we wouldn't." Coach A

"And I think in general that is a good experience because in reality we had the possibility to understand that, how for example our colleagues in Spain are establishing more strict relationships even with public bodies. Meanwhile, in Italy sometimes it's difficult to understand how we can have this operational level, to collaborate." Mentor B

"Other strength is I think the coaching and mentoring it's the value proposition of the project. You can have beautiful training session and a lot of beautiful stuff could last hours, could last months of training, but the one-to-one approach I think it was where the project shown." Coach A

"I think it's important to try to provide the double kind of mentorship. One is more to reinforce or to transmit elements, to create this kind of management and governance culture for enterprise and the same time you need to have specific technical skills. Because it's not the same a business in tourism or a business in agriculture or business in some specific high city sector technologies." Mentor B

"…believe me, sometimes if you start to provide the support to someone, many times they are looking for psychological support. So, if you make the mistake to give them your private phone number, they will start the writing you at every time every day. "I'm alone". "I'm sad". "I'm very sensitive". "What can I do?" And then they share a lot of documents and things." Coach B

"…but as well need to have outputs, but I feel that concerning, you know, brought to design, we are switching more into a concept of quality over quantity. So maybe sometimes you feel you have to run, you have this urge to launch a new class and you feel rushed about this huge amount of number you have to do." Coach A

"You know, I think the only concern I've got is what I mentioned before that we need to find the right amount of time dedicated to each person not working in numbers but working in the quality of the job." Mentor A

Areas of further improvements: The coaches and mentors shared a few suggestions regarding the areas where the program could be further improved. The involvement of financial intermediaries in facilitating credit access for business startups could have helped to support the aim of the program through access to credit. They also emphasized the need for a shift towards outcome-based approaches, stressing the importance of prioritizing results over rapidly achieving quantity-related indicator to check the underscored necessity of addressing fundamental skills gaps, such as digital and communication skills, to augment the efficacy of coaching. There is the need for expansion of basic training courses to specifically target and bridge these fundamental skills gaps. Mentors also highlighted the significance of engaging in regional cooperation with local authorities and support services to provide the needed support to the participants. Excerpts are provided below:

"...So, it's not possible to have a centralized service. Because if you work in a specific region or in specific territory, maybe it's easier also to define some partnership with the social cooperatives." Coach B

"I think there's a need of an enhanced cooperation between public and private local services. The youth and for the unemployed people where you know the public employment services work together with the private sector might be for profit or not for profit private sector for the benefit of people." Mentor A

"Could be interesting for a next program, next project that is similar to the Yes, if you want to keep a focus on the business startup and you know self-entrepreneurship, maybe try to engage a partner. There is a financial intermediary, so you have all the pipeline inside the program. This could be helpful." Coach A

"So yeah, I think this could be interesting, like focusing more on the outcome and what potentially you can do. Because with the training you can do some stuff, you can do some knowledge transfer, but I think with the one-to-one

coaching is where you can really bring a result that there is more long term than a training." Coach A

Strategies for Long-Term Impact: The interviewed coaches and mentors shared their opinions on the strategies needed to ensure the long-term impact of the program, even after the program ends. In their submissions, they noted strategies such as maintaining continuity in technical assistance, involving participants in additional projects, and leveraging local networks for economic development are essential to ensure sustained impact of the project. They also referenced the importance of offering continued psychological support to the participants would also ensure they continue in the trajectory that has already begun. The interview excerpts are provided below:

"For example, in some cases it's important to pave the way for other projects or relating people with other projects. So, assuring a certain continuity in the technical assistance in the follow-up, for example, in some cases our beneficiary on yes! are now beneficiary on another project managed by Microfinanza, Erasmus for young entrepreneurs." Mentor B

"I think there's a need of an enhanced cooperation between public and private local services…On one side we got the public employment services at that are providing very basic services to the people and on the other side on the competitive market we got private service provider that attracting private and public funding to provide services to the people. I think these two need to work more and Better Together." Mentor A

"Other important point is how we can involve specific networks, local networks. I'm convinced that the economic development in the local context is very important to try to support people that are entering in the labor market or entering with their enterprise." Mentor B

"Maybe it can be to create a sort of community of people with supported, because of course we work vertically, and we provide one to one or face to face mentoring or technical assistance to these youth. But there is also a community, in some areas I think that people are connected so they are helping the others, there is a sort of solidarity among them." Coach B

Discussion

Discussion

This section discusses the preliminary results of the YES project, The second phase of the program was implemented with the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (SkillLab) to complement the efforts of the project partners and the participants as they transition from NEET status into the labor market through employment or entrepreneurship.

The results indicated a higher level of participation in the training activities delivered by the organization compared to the proportion of participants engaged in coaching/mentoring activities. This may be attributed to the nature of the training activities provided by the organization and the collaborative agreements with other training institutes, which were tailored to meet the specific needs of the participants. For example, considering the higher proportion of male participants in the current period of the interventions, the training prioritized hard skills and practical sessions in areas such as production, manufacturing, plants and machinery, and logistics, which typically require technical expertise, and physical strength. Moreover, the organization's partnerships with specialized training institutes facilitated the development of targeted programs in these sectors, addressing the distinct requirements and preferences of the participants.

The overall data on the economic situation of the participants indicated a notable improvement in the proportion of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) within the project. Approximately 5% of the participants transitioned out of the NEET category by either securing gainful employment, becoming self-employed, or enrolling in formal education. This positive outcome highlights the impact of the interventions, which provided training tailored to the participants' specific needs and the labor demands in the context of Italy.

The progress made by the participants towards self-sufficiency is evident in the proportion of the participants that were able to secure jobs after the program. Approximately 5% of the participants were gainfully employed after participating in the interventions. Although no change was witnessed in the proportion of participants with no source of income and those that relied on the government, some of the participants turned to their families for a means of sustenance. This could be attributable to the number of participants that returned to school immediately after their engagement in the program.

However, there was a slight decrease in the proportion of participants that relied on income from their businesses. Part of the reason for this is because of the pandemic on small businesses. Some of the participants reported they had to put their businesses on hold. Other participants reported lack of skills to penetrate the market and access to startup funds as part of the reasons for returning to NEET status.

The intervention had a positive impact on the economic independence of the participants, as evidenced by a decrease in the proportion of beneficiaries relying on family support and the increase witnessed in the proportion of participants engaged in labor activities through paid employment. SkillLab was also reported to have played a vital role in motivating participants to actively pursue employment opportunities, leading to a slightly higher disposable income by the participants. However, it is important to note that the differences in soft skills, labor status and disposable income were statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, the interventions significantly improved the overall quality of life for participants.

Concluding remarks

Concluding remarks

Several targeted interventions have been implemented by the Italian government and various organizations with the aim of reducing youth unemployment in the country. These initiatives include the provision of financial incentives to encourage employers to hire young individuals, the establishment of job counseling services and comprehensive training programs specifically tailored for the unemployed, and the facilitation of support systems for those self-employed entrepreneurs. These interventions directly respond to the urgent need to address youth unemployment, particularly NEETs. This group makes up about 23% of Italy's unemployment rate.

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 Microfinanza. The initiative not only aims to enhance employment prospects for young individuals but also focuses on fostering their emotional resilience and improving their overall quality of life as they navigate the Italian labor market.

The interventions encompass a multifaceted approach, combining targeted training programs in high-demand sectors of the Italian market with coaching and mentoring support to nurture the entrepreneurial aspirations of young individuals. By providing a holistic framework of support, the YES interventions empower 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. One notable challenge was the utilization of AI technology, which aimed to motivate participants to present their skills in a format suitable for the job market. Considering the dual-pathway approach of the intervention, which focuses both on employment and entrepreneurship, it was observed that only participants interested in the employment route showed interest in utilizing the introduced AI tool. However, this approach also posed challenges related to operating and navigating the platform, leading to difficulties and discouragement among certain individuals. In particular, locating specific skills within the platform's directories

proved to be a struggle for some participants, further hindering their engagement with the AI system.

Another obstacle faced in this phase of the implementation relates to outreach efforts. Despite Italy having the highest proportion of NEETs across the European Union (EU), effectively reaching out to potential participants was challenging. Additionally, sustaining their engagement in the intervention presented slight difficulties. Some participants who initially signed up for the program found employment or were enrolled in educational institutions, which resulted in dropouts as the intervention progressed.

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 of varying lengths and durations, ensuring a tailored and flexible system. This also helped to keep the participants engaged in the coaching and mentoring services until they completed the program. 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 Italy 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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IA report (YES!). Previous impact assessment reports

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Tramadi Terre. https://www.tramaditerre.it

Glovo Italia. https://delivery.glovoapp.com/it

Ciac Social Cooperative. https://ciaconlus.org

Italian statistical institute. https://www.istat.it/it/cerca-nel-sito

Appendix

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 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?

#YoungEntrepreneursSucceed

https://youngentrepreneurssucceed.com/

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Auto ocupació

KIZ

microfinanza

Munich Business School
University of Applied Sciences

ybi | Youth Business International

Youth Business Poland

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.