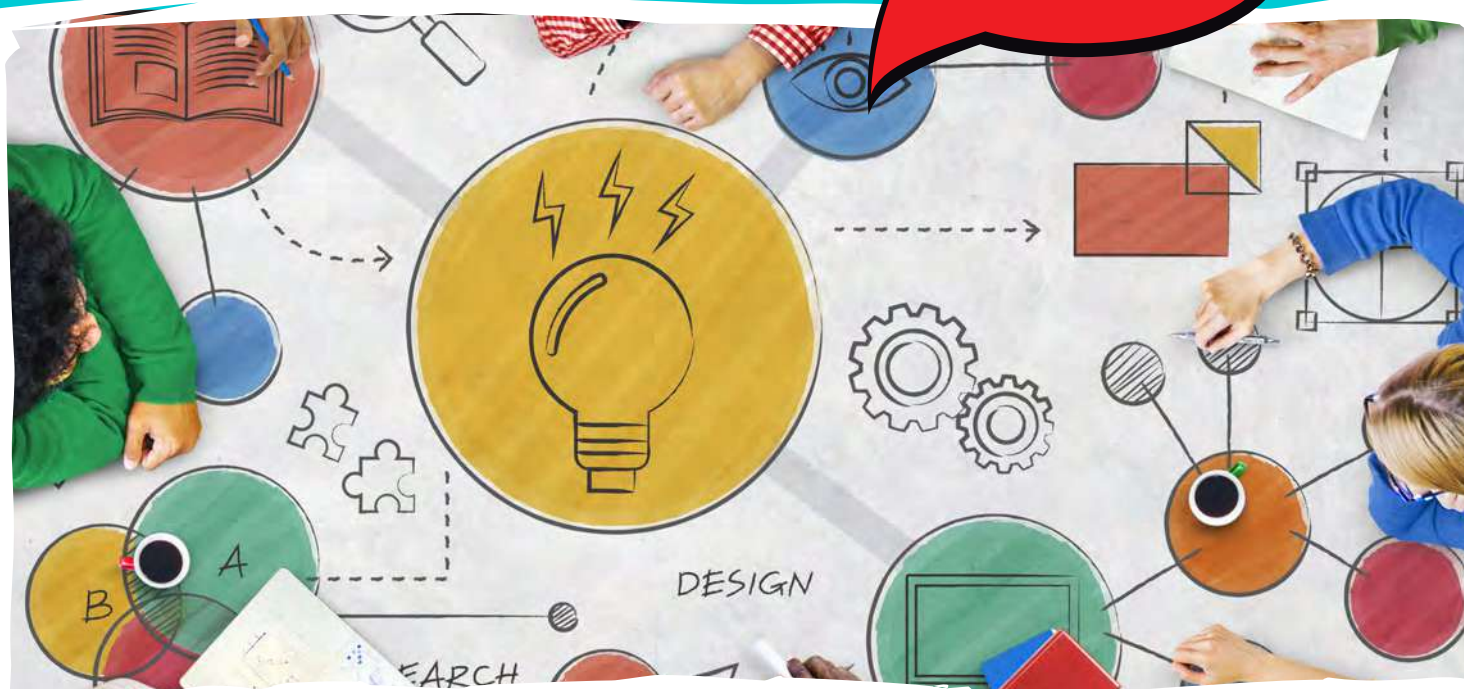


Poland



# Final Impact Assessment Report 2024

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#YoungEntrepreneursSucceed

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Final Impact Assessment Report 2024: Poland

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## Table of contents

List of tables .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Methodology .....	8
Program theory of change .....	8
Framework for measuring Impact assessment .....	9
Evaluation design .....	10
SkillLab .....	11
Measures .....	11
Emotional capabilities .....	11
Social benefit .....	12
Economic benefit .....	12
Data collection and analysis .....	13
Quantitative data collection and analysis .....	13
Qualitative data collection and analysis .....	14
Interventions .....	16
Overview of the coaching and mentoring sessions .....	20
Overview of beneficiaries that used SkillLab .....	20
Descriptive statistics .....	22
Soft outcomes: Statistical evaluation of soft outcome and impact variables .....	30
Soft impact: Statistical evaluation of soft hard impact variables .....	30
Discussion .....	55
Concluding remarks .....	58
References .....	61
Appendix .....	¡Error! Marcador no definido.

## List of tables

Table 1. Overview of phase two activities .....	5
Table 2. Overview of outcome and impact variables .....	10
Table 3. Presentation of training courses .....	18
Table 4. Test of significance difference between pre- and post-intervention .....	30
Table 5. Test of significance of hard impact (pre-post) variables .....	30
Table 6. Summary of focus group participants .....	31
Table 7. Summary of interviewed coaches and mentors .....	44

## List of figures

Figure 1 Theory of change framework leading to impact generation .....	8
Figure 2. McNeil, Reeder & Rich framework for assessing outcomes and impact .....	9
Figure 3. Age distribution of participants .....	22
Figure 4. Distribution of participants based on gender .....	23
Figure 5. Distribution of participants per educational attainment .....	24
Figure 6. Geographical distribution of participants .....	25
Figure 7. Distribution of participants by type of intervention .....	26
Figure 8. Distribution of participants by labor status .....	27
Figure 9. Distribution of participants by source of income .....	28
Figure 10. Distribution of participants by monthly disposable income .....	29
Figure 11. Emergent themes and sub-themes from the focus group discussion from SkillLab users .....	32
Figure 12. Emergent themes and sub-themes from the focus group discussion from non-SkillLab users .....	38
Figure 13. Emergent themes and sub-themes from the interviews of coaches and mentors	45

# Introduction

## Introduction

This report presents the final impact assessment results conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of Youth Business Poland (YBP) interventions within the Young Entrepreneurs Success (YES!) program. YBP, one of the partners implementing the YES! program is based in Warsaw and supports provides entrepreneurship support to young people across Poland and beyond.

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 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
<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

<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).

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 YBP. 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

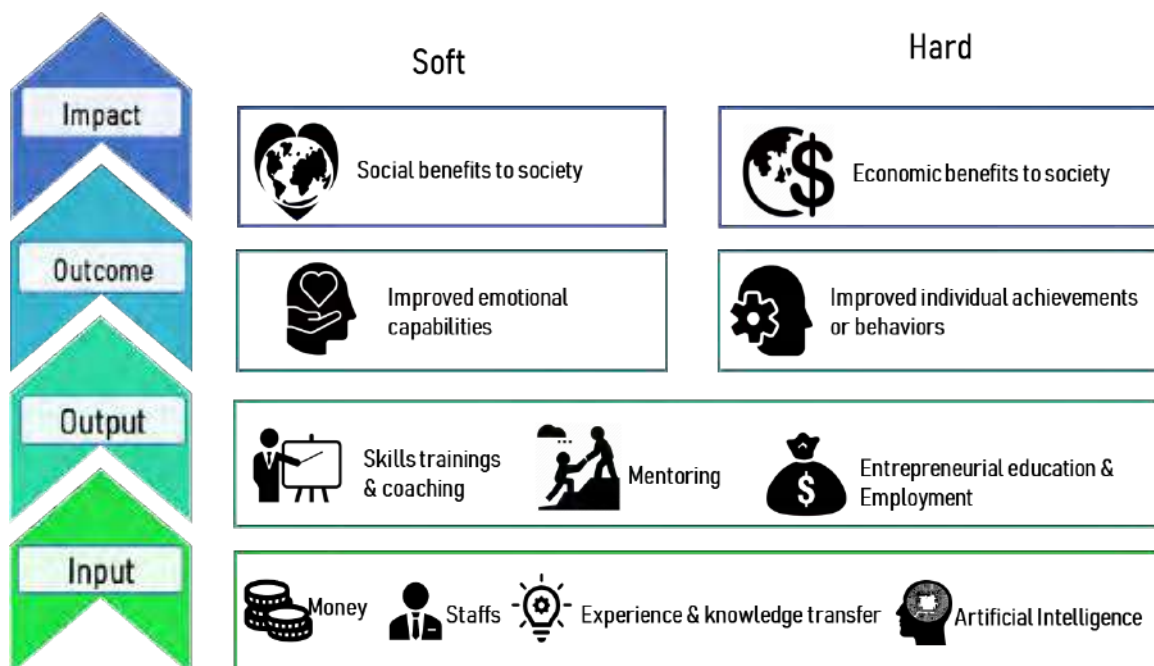


## Methodology

### 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.

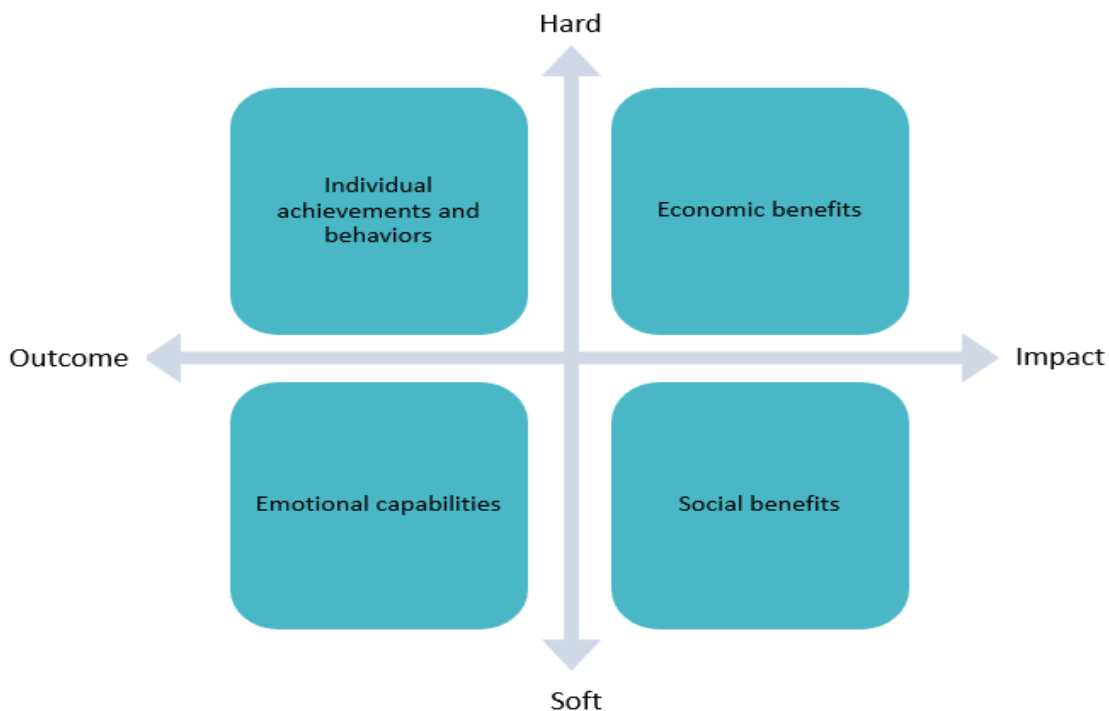
Figure 1 Theory of change framework leading to impact generation



## 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 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 Poland. The first round of FGD involved four randomly selected participants with a focus on entrepreneurship (participants without access to SkillLab), and the second round involved three randomly selected participants from the jobseekers' group (participants with access to SkillLab). The sessions lasted between 60 - 90 minutes and was conducted remotely via Microsoft teams in Polish.

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. Four interviews, involving two coaches and two mentors were conducted. The interviews were conducted in Polish via Microsoft teams and lasted between 40 - 60 minutes in total.

The recorded versions of the interviews and focus group sessions were 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 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

Youth Business Poland (YBP) continued implementing the YES! interventions. As of 31st of December 2023, 14 training sessions were coordinated by YBP's in this regard. A total of 683 hours of training was provided, ranging between five to nine week period. At the end of the sessions, a total of 358 beneficiaries participated in the training programs, facilitated through an online delivery mode. Provided in Table 3 below is an overview of the training courses.

Ten of the fourteen training courses were intensive monthly entrepreneurship development courses filled with the practical knowledge needed to develop a company. The four remaining courses were centered on career guidance and digital marketing. These courses aim to provide comprehensive support to young people aged 18-29 that are unemployed and not in education, and who would like to develop their business idea. The courses help the participants to acquire basic business skills and understand business management strategies.

The practical workshop approach allowed the participants the opportunity to build their business idea, create a vision for themselves, and their company, choosing the right career and the goals they want to achieve. Additionally, they learn how to undertake marketing activities and how to sell effectively. The courses are also designed to provide participants with knowledge about planning the company's budget and expertise in raising funds or acquiring loans for its operations.

The ten training courses on Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance contained the following modules:

- Specify your idea and create a business model
- Customer Development - customer orientation
- Lean startup
- Effective sales in the company
- Digital marketing
- Co-financing and subsidies - funds to start a company

- Planning of the company's budget
- How to promote your company on Facebook and Instagram

The four training courses on Career guidance and development of digital marketing skills contained the following training modules:

- The role of marketing in business
- Review of specialization and career development path
- Value Proposition Design for a marketer
- Digital marketing law
- Marketing plan - in the service of sales
- Copywriting part 1 & 2
- Creating advertising on Facebook and Instagram
- Creating an Effective Landing Page

Table 3. Presentation of training courses

Training courses	Duration	Start date	End date	Content	Mode of delivery	Hours in total	Number of participants
YES! I	6 weeks	23.04.2020	28.05.2020	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	48	17
YES! II	7 weeks	17.09.2020	09.11.2020	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	20
YES! III	5 weeks	17.11.2020	14.12.2020	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	17
YES! IV	6 weeks	15.01.2021	24.02.2021	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	19
YES! V	6 weeks	04.03.2021	08.04.2021	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	21
YES! VI	7 weeks	16.04.2021	03.06.2021	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	11
YES! VII	5 weeks	17.11.2021	14.12.2021	Career guidance, development of digital marketing skills	Online	46	24
YES! VIII	7 weeks	12.10.2021	30.11.2021	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	11
YES! IX	5 weeks	22.11.2021	22.12.2021	Career guidance, development of digital marketing skills	Online	41	89

YES! X	6 weeks	15.02.2022	22.03.2022	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	20
YES! XI	8 weeks	07.05.2022	02.06.2022	Career guidance, development of digital marketing skills	Online	40	29
YES! XII	8 weeks	08.06.2022	04.07.2022	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	9
YES! XIII	8 weeks	27.09.2022	08.11.2022	Entrepreneurship, fundraising, and career guidance	Online	52	22
YES! XIV	9 weeks	28.03.2023	30.05.2023	Career guidance, development of digital marketing skills	Online	40	49
					Total	683	358

## Overview of the coaching and mentoring sessions

At the end of the interventions, a total of 183 beneficiaries participated in the coaching and mentoring sessions. Out of these, 101 beneficiaries participated in coaching sessions alone, while the remaining 82 participants took part in the mentoring sessions.

## Overview of beneficiaries that used SkillLab

Regarding SkillLab, a total of 64 beneficiaries were invited to register on SkillLab. Out of the 64 invited beneficiaries, 32 completed their registration on the platform and are in the process of completing their profiles, leaving 26 beneficiaries with a pending registration status. 8 beneficiaries have a completed profile status on the platform. This is the number of participants that have registered at least 60 skills on the platform.

# Results

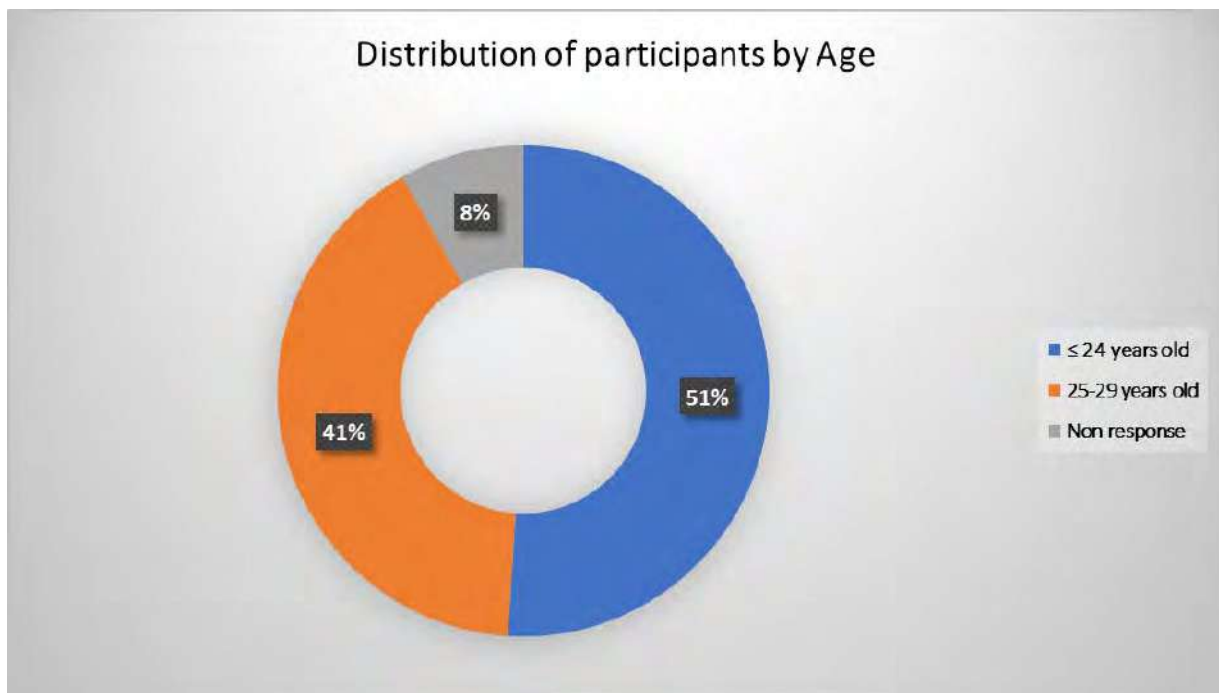
## Results

### 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, educational, geographical location, current status, and type of intervention each respondent participated in.

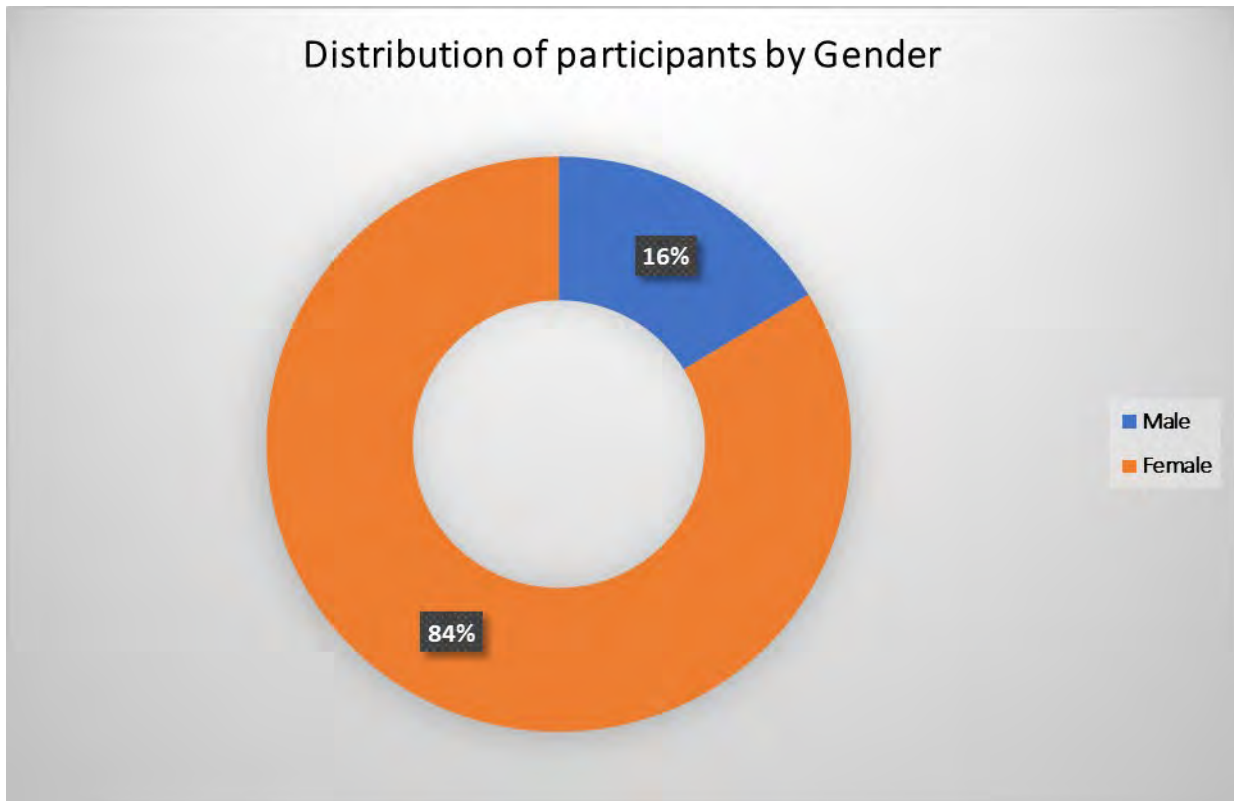
Presented in Figure 3 below is the chart of respondents' age distribution. It shows that slightly more than half of the participants (51%) were below 25 years old, and 41% were between the ages of 25 - 29 years old. 8% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their age.

*Figure 3. Age distribution of participants*



Gender distribution of respondent is presented in Figure 4 below. It revealed female participants benefited more in this round of intervention (84%), and male participants constituted the remainder (16%).

Figure 4. Distribution of participants based on gender



Presented in Figure 5 is the distribution of respondents by educational attainment. Results showed 34.7% of the participants completed master's degree. The same proportion of participants (28.6%) both completed bachelor's degree or equivalent and upper secondary school education. 4.1% completed post-secondary or non-tertiary education, and 2% completed lower secondary education. 2% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their educational attainment.



Figure 5. Distribution of participants per educational attainment

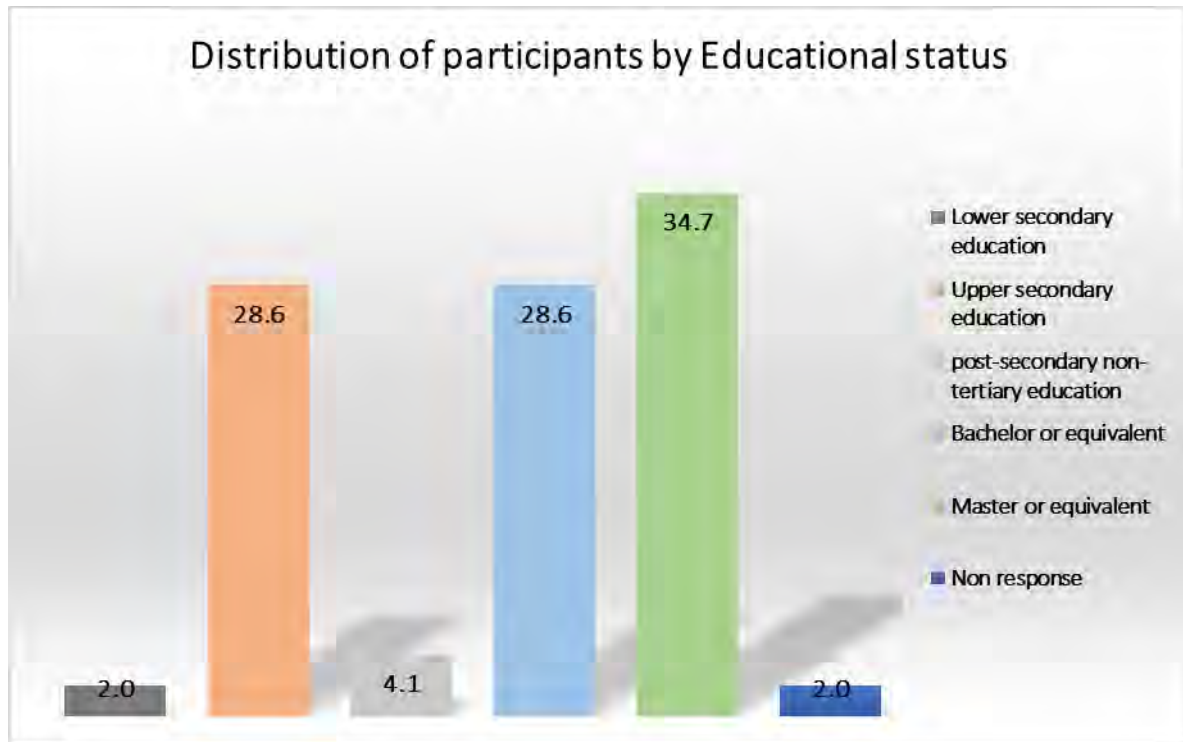
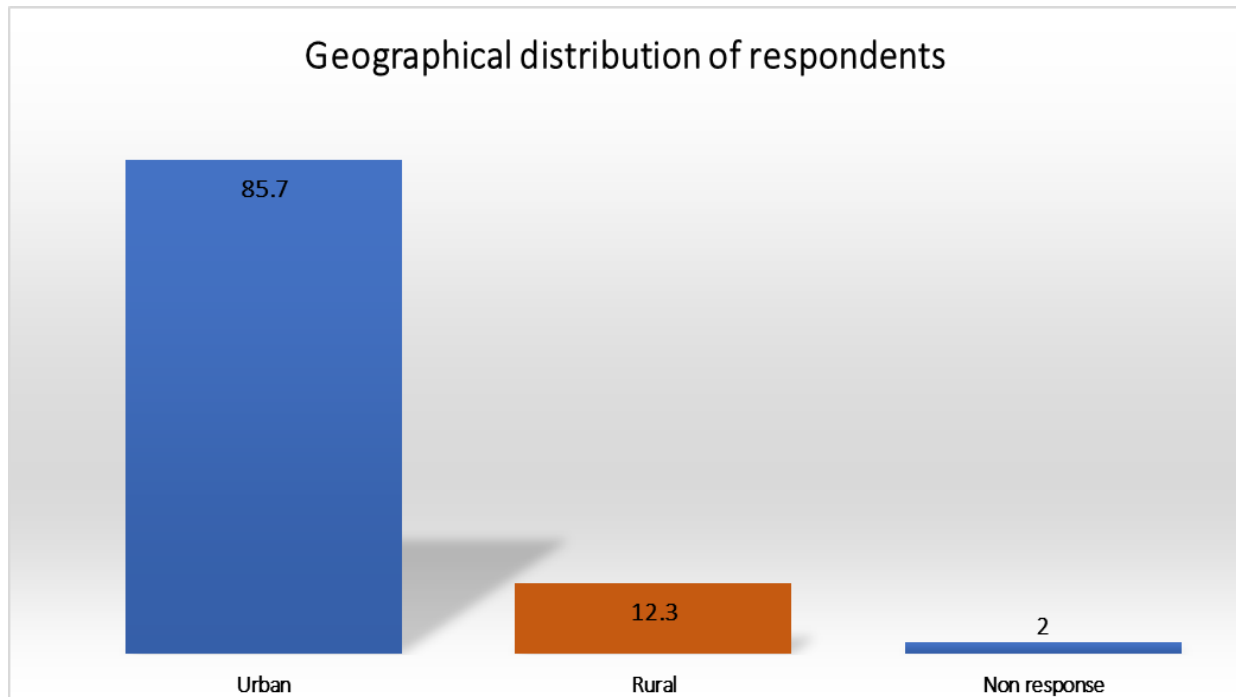


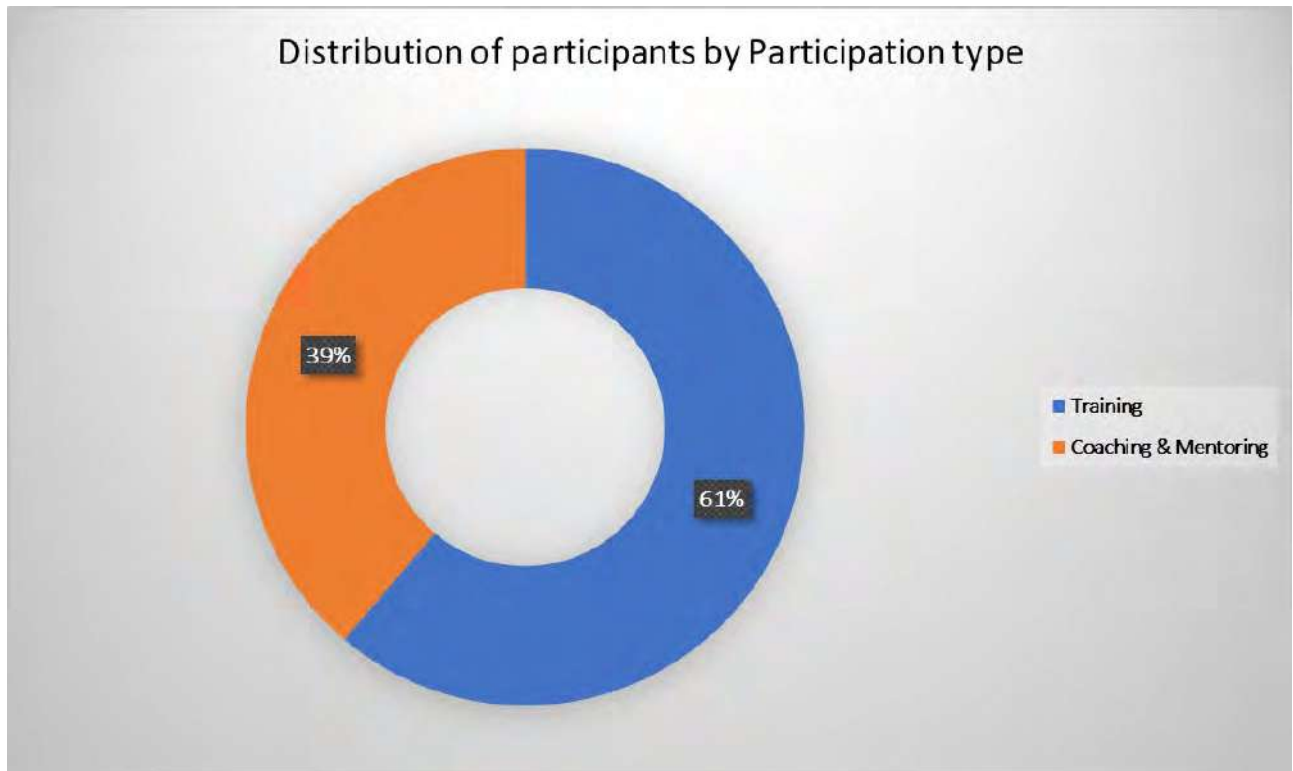
Figure 6 below shows the distribution of according to place of residence. It revealed that participants from urban areas (85.7%) benefited more from the intervention. 12.3% of the remaining participants are residents in rural areas. 2% of the participants did not disclose information about their place of residence.

Figure 6. Geographical distribution of participants



Presented in Figure 7 is the distribution of beneficiaries by type of intervention activities. The result showed 61% of beneficiaries participated only in the training sessions. 39% of the remaining beneficiaries participated in either coaching, mentoring or both.

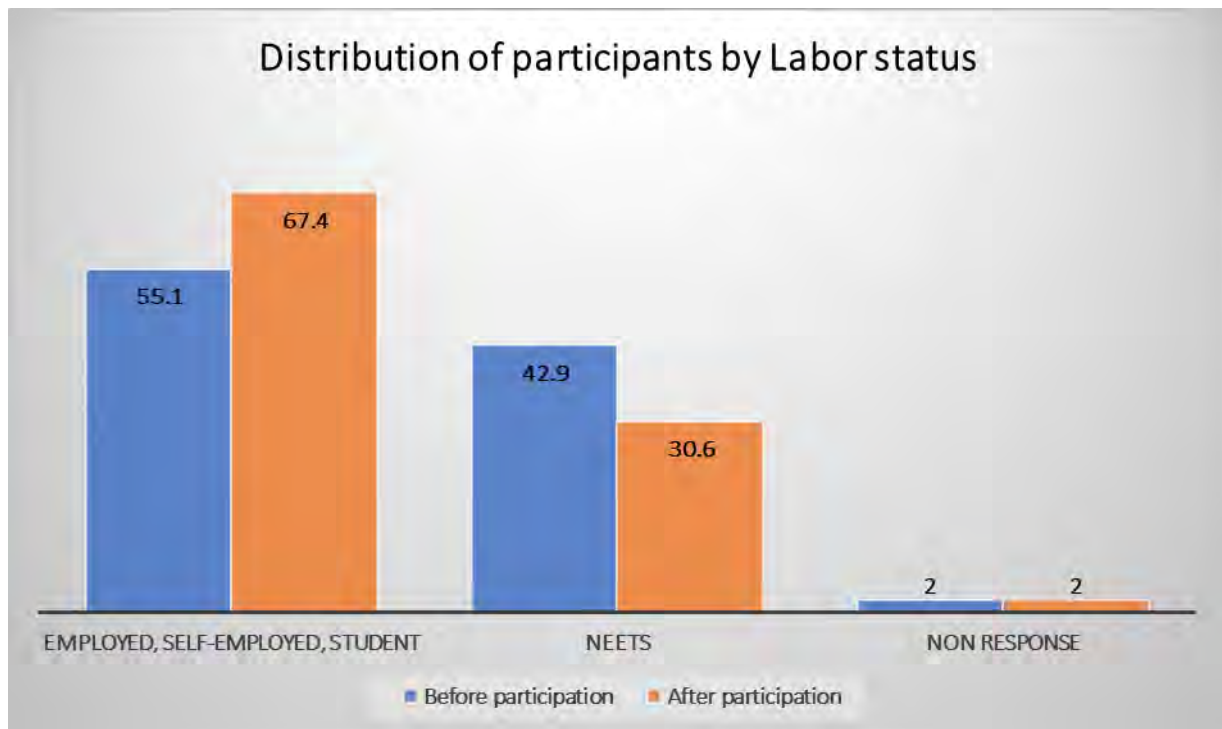
Figure 7. Distribution of participants by type of intervention



Presented in Figure 8 is the pre-post distribution of beneficiaries by labor status. Pre-intervention results revealed slight differences between 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. 42.9% are NEETs while 55.1% are employed or students.

Post-intervention results showed a reduction in the proportion of participants who are in the NEET category (30.6%) 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 (67.4%). 2% of the remaining participants did not disclose their labor status for both pre and post intervention results.

Figure 8. Distribution of participants by labor status



Presented in Figure 9 is the pre-post distribution of the participants by main source of income. Pre-intervention results revealed the same proportion of participants (24.5%) were in the category of participants that had no means of income at all and those that relied on income from their own businesses. Similarly, 22.5% of the participants relied on paid job and family support as their means of subsistence. 2% relied on government support. 4.2% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their source of income.

Post-intervention results on the other hand revealed 40.8% of participants relied on income from paid job, 24.5% relied on income from family support, 18.4% relied on income from own business and 14.3% had no income at all, and 2% relied on income from government for their means of sustenance.

Figure 9. Distribution of participants by source of income

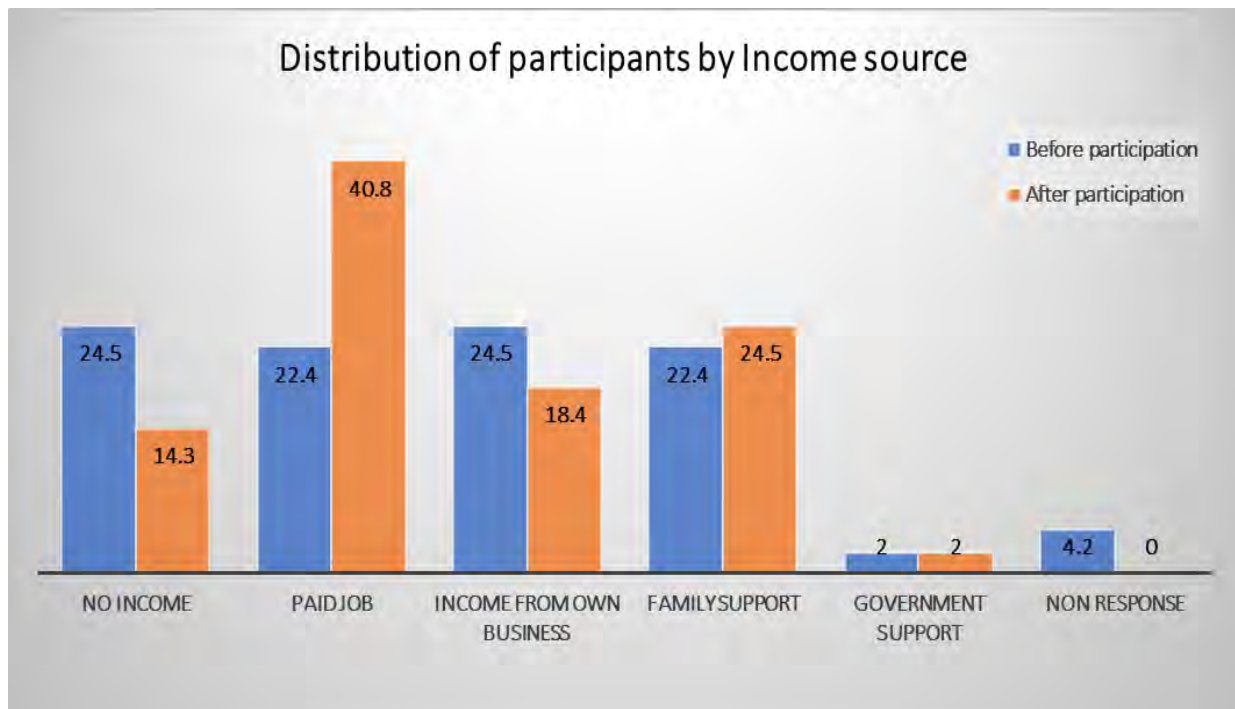
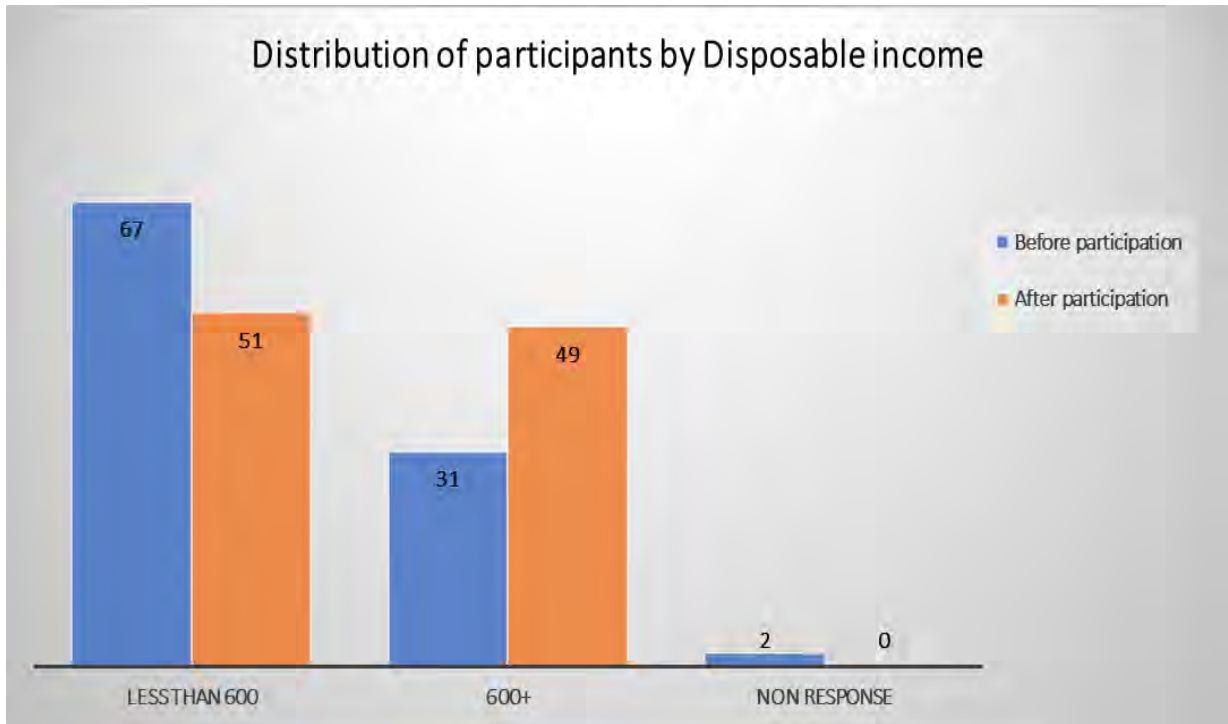


Figure 10 presents the pre-post distribution of the participants by monthly disposable income. Pre-intervention results revealed a higher proportion of the participants (67%) have less than 600EUR as their average monthly disposable income, and 31% of the participants have more than 600EUR as their average monthly disposable income. 2% of the remaining participants did not disclose information about their disposable income.

Post-intervention results showed a reduction in the proportion of participants with less than 600EUR as their average monthly disposable income (51%). Conversely, an increment was recorded in the proportion of participants with more than 600EUR as their monthly average disposable income (49%).

Figure 10. 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 and quality of life variables showed a statistically significant difference ( $p=0.042$ ) and ( $0.015$ ) respectively 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	7.289	7.603	<b>0.042</b>
Quality of life	6.369	6.874	<b>0.015</b>

### 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 variable of labor status revealed a statistically insignificant outcome ( $p=0.070$ ) at 5% significance level. However, the pre-post intervention variable of disposable income revealed a statistically significant outcome ( $p=0.039$ ) at 5% significance level.

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

	N	Exact Sig. (2-tailed)
Labor status	47	0.070 <sup>b</sup>
Disposable income	48	<b>0.039<sup>b</sup></b>

b. binomial distribution used

## Overview of focus group participants

Presented in table 6 below is a summary of qualitative feedback in the form from the focus group discussions held with the participants of the program. The participants were divided into two separate groups. The first group involved three participants who participated in the employment track of the program and had access to SkillLab. The second group of participants involved four participants who participated in the entrepreneurship route of the program and had no access to SkillLab.

Table 6. Summary of focus group participants

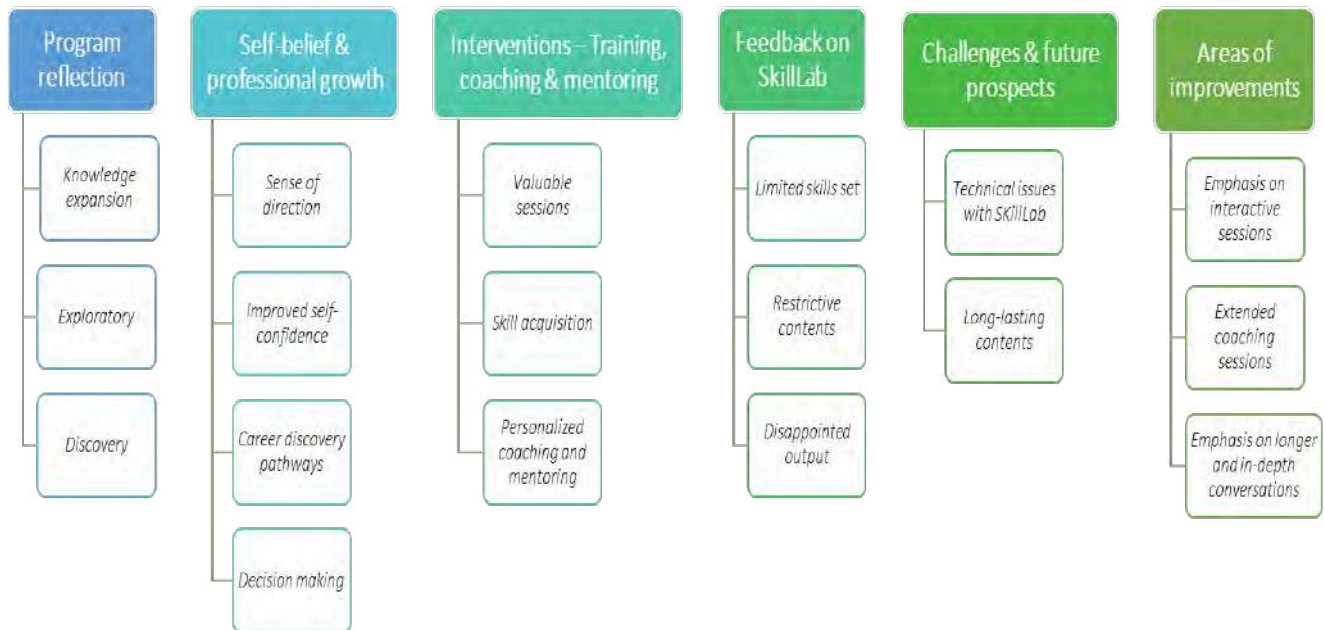
Participants' gender	Program track	SkillLab usage
Female	Job seeking	Yes
Female	Job seeking	Yes
Male	Job seeking	Yes
Female	Entrepreneurship	No
Female	Entrepreneurship	No
Male	Entrepreneurship	No
Male	Entrepreneurship	No

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

Analysis of the focus group feedback of the participants with SkillLab access were purposefully coded under six key themes. The themes encompassed Program reflection, Self-belief and professional growth, feedback on the Interventions (training, coaching, and mentoring), feedback on SkillLabs usage, insights into Challenges and prospects, and identified Areas for improvement. Figure 11 below presents a graphic description of the themes and the explanatory codes.



Figure 11. Emergent themes and sub-themes from the focus group discussion from SkillLab users



**Program reflection:** Participants were able to summarize their program reflection on sub themes that hinged on knowledge expansion, exploratory, and discovery. By knowledge expansion, participant’s understanding and awareness were tailored to better ways to secure job and not just seek job. For instance, a participant explained how learning the program had made him get new understanding and tricks to broaden his knowledge.

*“...Already working in sales, marketing, and data analysis, I wanted to delve into current marketing trends. Those were my main reasons for joining this program. I wanted to understand the tools marketers use, and the common tricks, and overall broaden my knowledge in this area.”* Participant A

Participants also reflected on how they use the program as a discovery option for themselves on their next steps. However, other participants still saw the impact of attending programs for opportunities. A participant had mentioned:

*“I found myself in a position where I didn't really know which direction to go after completing my studies. So, I thought, why not use this time to figure out my next move.”* Participant B

Regarding discovery, the participants shared how the program helped them discover new career options through participating in one or more components of the program.

*"...offers an opportunity to explore new directions, potentially uncovering possibilities we hadn't considered before."* Participant C

*"...That session nudged me toward this field, revealing new possibilities. It prompted me to make a career change and pursue this field."* Participant B

**Self-belief and professional growth:** Self-belief addresses the confidence in personal abilities based on achieving goals and overcoming challenges. Personal growth maintains a position where individuals are constantly enhancing their skills, knowledge, and abilities in a profession. Some of the participants expressed they did not struggle with confidence before joining the program, hence it does not constitute their area of focus.

*"...Confidence wasn't something I struggled with, and it wasn't my focus in this program."* Participant A

Additionally, other participants further expressed their views on how the program had helped them to focus on their career.

*"Absolutely. After the lecture, I decided to continue my studies and focus my career on marketing."* Participant B

Also is how the program had been an initiative for personal growth. A participant explained how it had helped even in switching careers. He noted that,

*"...developing my skills was my main goal in this course. Although I switched industries, the knowledge I gained is still valuable in my life, even if not directly applied to my current work."* Participant A

Another participant further expressed how participating in the program helped them discover how job after a period of job loss.

*"I lost my job, and thanks to this program, I found a new one, making the switch from e-commerce to marketing."* Participant C

**Interventions (Training, coaching, and mentoring):** This theme explores its relevance by harnessing its importance through valuable sessions, skill acquisition and personalized

coaching and mentoring. Participants reported its relevance on their personal growth through the sub themes listed above. For valuable sessions, participants reflected on the training sessions they attended, and how it did not only improve their professional life, but its impact also manifested in their personal lives. In an excerpt:

*“Marketing approaches and learning certain tricks have been beneficial, not just professionally, but in my personal life. I've gained insights into what to look for in marketing and advertising, especially in face-to-face conversations. My knowledge has broadened, and I find myself using it often.”*

Participant A

*“The course made a significant impact on my work in marketing. My skills improved, and the workload feels easier now. Business model and general marketing knowledge were key takeaways.”*

*“I was job hunting when I joined the program, and it played a crucial role in choosing a marketing career. So, yes, it significantly helped in my job search, guiding my career direction.”*

Participant C

Participants itemized in specifics the sessions that stood out during the program. A participant reported that:

*“...definitely, the ones mentioned by others were remarkable. I enjoyed the diversity of the sessions and the opportunity to explore various topics. One session that comes to mind is copywriting, which I found particularly interesting.”*

Participant A

On skill acquisition, participants explained how they were able to harness proper skill through the learning process. A participant had mentioned that:

*“The program helped me discover my interest in marketing and provided the basic knowledge needed for my career. Through coaching and mentoring, it strengthened my confidence to make a change. Basic marketing skills like the business model canvas have been particularly useful.”*

Participant C

Regarding the coaching and mentoring sessions, the participants reflected how the sessions proved beneficial to their job search endeavors. In excerpts:

*“Those sessions helped me evaluate my options and boosted my confidence in choosing marketing as the right path. Coaching mainly convinced me to make the career change, while mentoring solidified my confidence in the decision. Empowering, to say the least.”* Participant C

**Feedback on Skill lab:** SkillLab was introduced into the program as an Artificial Intelligence tool with the objective of facilitating the transition of the beneficiaries into labor market. Despite the potential of the tool, the participants were unsatisfying experiences with the tool, indicating the unavailability of wide range of skills possessed by them in the tool, restrictive contents and having the outcome of disappointed output. For instance, a respondent explained how it is quite limiting for him to expand. He reported that:

*“One thing stood out. The CV-building tool we were asked to use, was a miss for me. It looked great but lacked customization options, and the skills were limited.”* Participant A

*“My experience with the tool, similar to Participant A, wasn't the best. I found it to be quite limited. The variety of skills available for CV building was lacking, and even the skills acquired during the program weren't included. This made it challenging to create a comprehensive CV.”* Participant B

On the account of SkillLab contributing to boosting the self-belief or self-confidence of the participants', disappointing feedback was received. The participants expressed their dissatisfaction on the subject. A respondent reported that:

*“Frankly, I would be ashamed to send the CV generated by this tool to a potential employer. It failed to showcase the majority of my experience, so I opted to use my own updated CV instead.”* Participant A

*“I share the same sentiment. It didn't instil confidence in me.”* Participant B

*“The skills offered were very basic and limited, not up to modern job market standards.”* Participant C

Regarding SkillLab providing new opportunities and platforms for networking and connecting with potential buyers, participants expressed their displeasure despite trying to explore various aligning opportunities, but still did not match the interests. A respondent reported

that *"I briefly explored the companies on the platform, but the limited choice didn't align with my interests."*

**Challenges and future prospects:** The theme delves into the varied hurdles encountered by participants in the programs they enrolled in and the actions taken to overcome them. Subthemes emerged, including technical issues encountered with the SkillLab platform and the desire for more enduring content. The excerpts for SkillLab had been previously highlighted in the previous theme.

On the account of future prospects, the participants mentioned the aspects of the intervention that will remain beneficial to them even beyond the scope of the project. This reflects the long-term impact of the project on participants. In the words of the participants:

*"I can speak primarily about the training. ... I had the chance to delve into marketing strategies and refine my questioning approach. It was a stimulating and informative experience that I frequently revisit mentally. The interactive sessions, different from traditional lectures, were especially valuable."*

Participant A

**Areas of improvements:** Respondents itemized different areas to consider for improvement which were broken down to emphasis on interactive contents, to help in specific student guidance, also is having extended coaching sessions, and emphasis on longer and in-depth conversations with intending job seekers.

*"As I mentioned earlier, I would appreciate more sessions. The two hours allocated weren't enough. More sessions with experienced individuals would be valuable. If I had any influence on future projects, I'd recommend increasing the session duration."* Participant C

Participants also reported a need to build follow-up strategies on progress and guidance.

*"Implementing follow-up sessions post-program would help us track progress and receive continued guidance."* Participant B

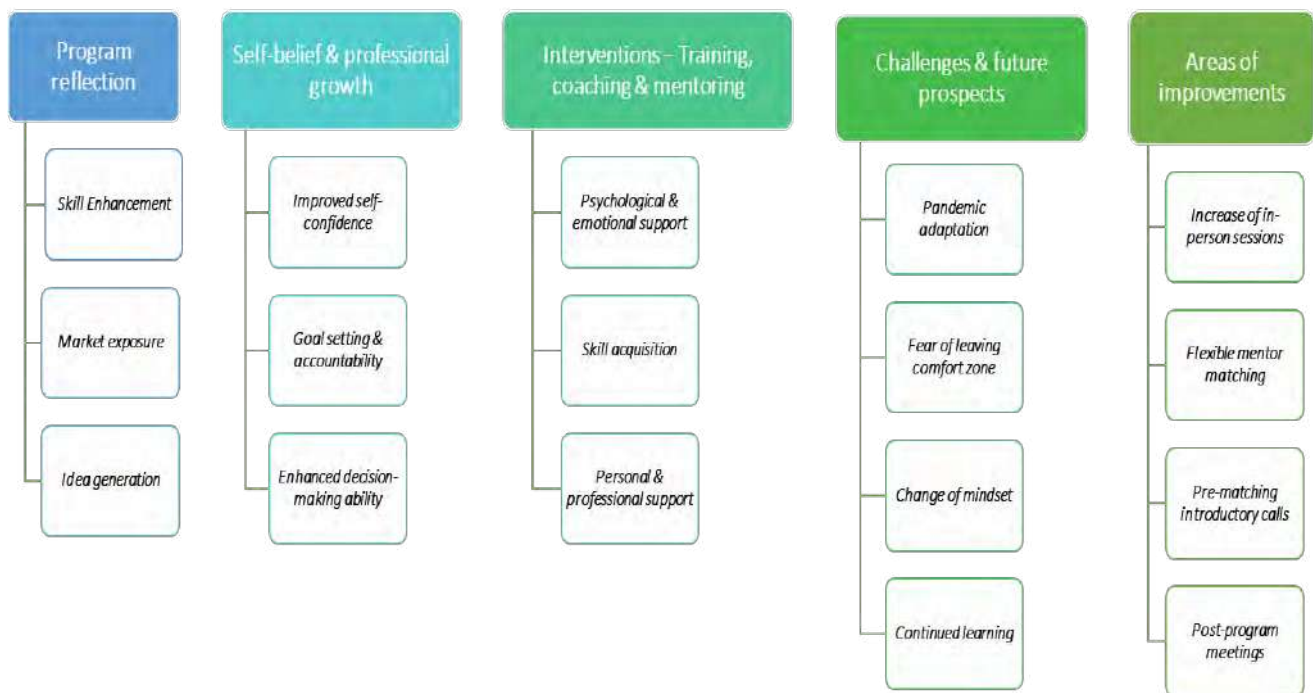
Also, is the need to maintain consistent connection with mentors for sustained growth. A participant had corroborated the need that

*“As I mentioned earlier, I would appreciate more sessions. The two hours allocated weren't enough. More sessions with experienced individuals would be valuable. If I had any influence on future projects, I'd recommend increasing the session duration.”* Participant C

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

Presented below is the analysis of the focus group feedback of the participants without SkillLab access which was purposefully coded under five key themes. The themes encompassed Program reflection, feedback on Self-belief and professional growth, feedback on the Interventions (training, coaching, and mentoring), insights into Challenges and prospects, and identified Areas for improvement. Figure 12 below presents a graphical description of the themes and the emergent codes.

Figure 12. Emergent themes and sub-themes from the focus group discussion from non-SkillLab users



**Program Reflection:** Program reflection explores participant’s experiences during and after their participation in the YES! program. This feedback sums up their overall experiences, feelings, and expectations of the program. The feedback given by the participants ranges from skill enhancements, market exposure and idea generation. The sessions offered to the participants contain varying tools and skills needed to penetrate the labor market. No doubt the participants were able to reflect on this. Excerpts for the participants are included below:

*"The skill I acquired during the program was the ability to speak about myself, my business, my ideas." Participant A*

Also is the need to create ideas and improve market exposure by gaining support for their business idea, thereby navigating through the existing business and market scape. Respondents clarified in a quote that:

*"I decided to participate because I had an idea for a business, but my business knowledge at the time wasn't very extensive, so I wanted to get some support." Participant B*

*"I had just moved back from Denmark and wanted to open my own business but wasn't yet very familiar with Polish reality." Participant C*

The free opportunity the program offers was pointed out as a major takeaway for joining the program.

**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. Respondents highlighted the coordinators' influence in positively impacting their confidence and intentionality in business growth. They believed that there is improvement in the viability of their business idea based on the mentorship and support received during the program. A respondent reported that:

*"I feel that the biggest impact on my self-belief and growth as a whole had (program coordinators). Their attitude was always extremely friendly, supportive, and kind. I think that going through the training itself, I wasn't very focused on the outcome of increasing my self-belief; however, the contact with the people in charge of the program had a huge impact. They always made me feel like I can do a great job." Participant A*

*"I feel that just the fact that I participated in such an initiative gave me a confidence boost with the idea that I'm taking action. I will spoil now that it's been a year since the course, and I still haven't fully started my operations, but I am slowly going towards this goal." Participant D*



*"I personally think my self-belief was always at quite a high level. I don't want to sound like I'm full of myself, but that's how I feel. However, I think that the program increased my belief that my business idea is sensible and doable."* Participant B

In terms of goal setting, accountability and decision making, respondents saw a need to improve on already known organizational planning and skill development and making improved decisions to take actions and to overcome fears or skepticisms. The excerpts from the respondents are as follows:

*"...I could see big progress when it comes to breaking down the processes into smaller tasks. I've always struggled with approaching the process from the top of the funnel towards the bottom. With the support of my mentor and coach, my process became much clearer and faster. It helped me optimize my workload a lot."* Participant D

*"...as I mentioned before, I was standing in front of a hard decision, and the program helped me a lot."* Participant B

**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. Participants had first highlighted the positive influence of their program coordinators to influence their confidence. Also is the importance of coaching to support their goal achievement through one-on-one sessions; improved skill development based on defined strength and weaknesses and best way to refine the skills. Participants also mentioned how mentoring has improved psychological and emotional support on their goal achievement. Excerpts from the participants can be found below:

*"My mentor had, I would say, a psychological approach. Sometimes I felt more like I was in therapy than in coaching, and that was great. I also had a situation when two members of my family passed away, and the mentor knowing my situation wasn't pushing the business aspects but wanted to help me with the emotions that this situation caused. She definitely helped me process my grief even though it wasn't the idea behind this program, so I really appreciate it."* Participant D

*"...The mentor definitely helped me make the decision. He didn't push me to start the business, but he gave me great arguments behind that choice. The way he articulated it was extremely helpful when making my choice."*  
Participant B

The need for personal and professional support could not be overemphasized as the training and coaching session gave a need for participants to improve skills and acquire new ideologies in carrying out their stated activities to outcomes. Excerpt reported are stated below:

*"I think that the skill I acquired during the program was the ability to speak about myself, my business, my ideas. In the beginning, it was very difficult for me because, with the first start-up idea I already mentioned, it was quite challenging for me to talk about those kinds of things. I was also able to verbalize my goals."* Participant A

*"When it comes to the skills, for me, the ability to plan was a big thing. I was always living in chaos, never making any notes and so on. Participation in the program pushed me to have my calendar, plan for the future, and be more organized."* Participant D

*"For me, it was definitely a matter of finances. Writing everything down. Checking if all costs are what they are supposed to be and planning for the future. In the past, I used to push it to the back of my head and tried not to think about it much, but I learned how to properly plan."* Participant C

**Challenges and future prospects:** These challenges are intricately tied to several key factors. The global pandemic abruptly the regular ways of doing things, forcing people to adjust and change strategies and processes to adjust to the new normal. Excerpts from the respondents are presented below:

*"In my case, the pandemic was definitely a challenge. Completely changing the way we operate, socialize, and conduct business was quite difficult. I think that the Program really helped me through this time. It definitely wasn't easy to start a business at that time either, but the group we created within the program was a great support. Besides that, there were a lot of*

*small challenges, but the program helped me solve them as they came."*

Participant C

Also is the fear of leaving comfort zone based on the need of uncertainties and allure of familiarity and indecision issues due to pressure from family and their environment. Overcoming this fear is crucial for personal and professional growth. A noteworthy aspect is the shift in mindset, with an increasing recognition of the importance of agility and resilience. Participants expressed their grief about the thought of going to places and putting themselves out can be uncomfortable. Excerpts are presented below:

*"For me, definitely the biggest problem was the choice I mentioned before. The pressure from my parents was quite significant to continue my studies because I got a scholarship, and I had to decide if that's what I wanted to do or if should I pick a different path. After an in-depth analysis of the pros and cons of each choice, I decided on the business."* Participant B

*"I remember one situation where during coaching we came up with a plan for me to print flyers and go to a few shops where products similar to mine are being sold and to propose a collaboration there. The thought of going to places like this and putting myself out there was very uncomfortable for me, even though I was the one who came up with the idea. After I printed the flyers, it took me a while to push myself to actually do it as it was totally out of my comfort zone."* Participant D

Embracing a changed mindset geared towards adaptability also emerged as a critical factor in overcoming challenges and thriving in the future. In the words of the participants:

*"I think that my biggest challenge was to change the mindset that sales are okay. I always felt like Participant D, as if I was pushing something onto someone. Now I know that I have a certain value and knowledge that I can and should monetize."* Participant A

The participants also shared some of their post-intervention plans. The overreaching topic in this regard is central to continuous learning. Looking back into the acquired skills and the personalized coaching and mentoring support they benefited from the intervention, the

participants shared how the program will continue to remain beneficial to them. Excerpts from the participants are shared below:

*“If I could, I would still use all of the interventions again, to be honest. After today’s meeting, I would even give mentoring another try. I’m also more assertive now, so I feel like I would be able to better communicate my needs.”*

Participant A

*“I feel the same as Participant A when it comes to social media knowledge. I still keep in mind a lot of ideas I took from mentoring when it comes to my Instagram account.”* Participant D

**Areas of improvements:** Identifying key areas for improvement in the design of future programs involves a strategic focus on enhancing participant experience and overall effectiveness. There is a notable opportunity for improvement through an increase in in-person sessions. While virtual interactions have become commonplace, the value of face-to-face engagement cannot be overstated, fostering stronger connections and a more immersive learning experience. One of the participants shared their view:

*“Yes, thank you. I also wanted to add to what Participant B said that she started the program just because of the pandemic, and the meetings were originally supposed to be in person. I think it would be cool if at least a few sessions could be in fact in person. Coaching sessions with the group especially would be great. We only had one session like this, and it was great, so I think it would be even better if there were more meetings like this.”*

Participant D

Another critical aspect is the introduction of flexible mentor matching, allowing participants to align with mentors based on their specific goals and needs. This personalized approach can significantly enhance the mentorship experience, leading to more meaningful and impactful relationships. Additionally, incorporating pre-matching introductory calls can serve as a valuable tool in ensuring a smooth and purposeful mentor-mentee pairing process. These calls allow participants to establish rapport, discuss expectations, and set the foundation for a successful mentoring relationship. Lastly, post-program meetings can provide a structured platform for reflection, feedback, and goal assessment, ensuring that the benefits of the program extend beyond its duration. Focusing on these areas of

improvement has the potential to elevate the program's overall quality and participant satisfaction.

### 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 two mentors were interviewed in this regard.

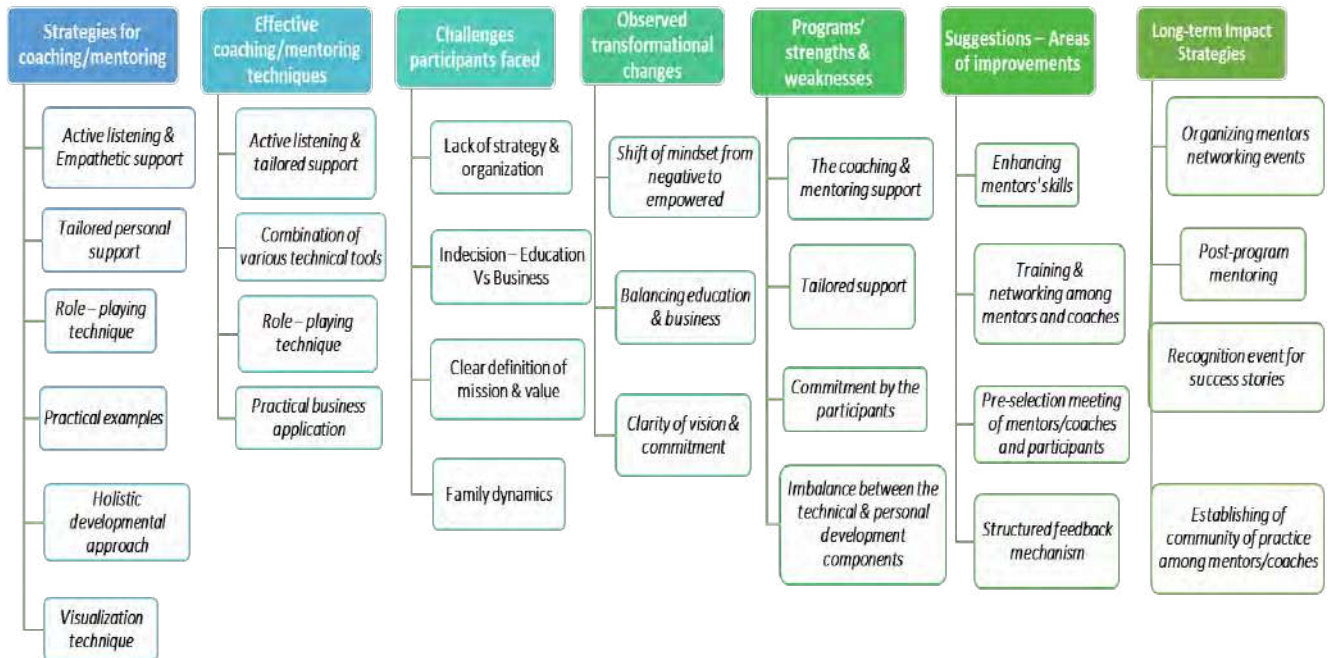
Table 7. Summary of interviewed coaches and mentors

Facilitators' gender	Input	Expertise
Female	Mentor	Business expert
Male	Coach	Agile Coach
Female	Mentor	Entrepreneur
Male	Mentor	Business advisor

### Analysis of interview feedback from coaches and mentors

The analysis of interviews from the coaches and mentors 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 13 below presents a graphic description of the themes and the explanatory codes.

Figure 13. Emergent themes and sub-themes from the interviews of coaches and mentors



**Strategies for coaching and mentoring:** Different strategies have been itemized by the mentors and coaches based on their experience with the participants. Their responses show that the coaching and mentorship covered mental, psychological, and strategic aspects, which were explained by the following codes: active listening and empathetic support, tailored personal support, role playing technique, using practical examples, holistic developmental approach and visualization technique.

Undoubtedly, these techniques have proven to help boost the self-confidence of the participants, particularly when engaging NEETs, there is need to first establish a relationship between the coach or mentor and the participant. In this case supporting the participants empathetically and actively listening to their needs proved to be a useful tool in this regard. One of the mentors reported:

*"My primary techniques involve active listening, empathetic responses, and asking questions that help mentees identify the root causes of their challenges."* Mentor A

The coaches and mentors also mentioned the use of case-by-case support to the participants' needs instead of using a "one size fit all" approach. This emphasizes the dynamics of the

various methods combined to support the participants. Also is the use of practical examples and role playing. In the words of the coaches:

*“My philosophy is to tailor the sessions to the specific needs of the participants. Some participants required technical support, while others sought a more holistic approach. I consistently ensured that participants left our sessions feeling satisfied and empowered” Coach A*

*“I shared my real-life work examples to help her comprehend these principles.” Coach B*

Beyond the approaches listed above, the coaches and mentors mentioned using some technical tools to support the participants. These include using visualization techniques, SWAMP technique and GROW approach to businesses and adopting holistic developmental techniques. In the words of the coaches and mentors:

*“...Our focus was primarily on developing an action plan. I didn't utilize any specific coaching tools, apart from the GROW model, which we used initially to clarify our goals. We concentrated on discussing timelines and the necessary steps for each phase to progress seamlessly.” Coach B*

*“In mentoring, I employ what I refer to as “swamp techniques,” which are particularly effective due to the deeper connections and trust formed during mentoring sessions.” Mentor B*

*“Our work centered on defining entrepreneurial characteristics and mindset, building self-esteem, and exploring the “Why” behind their business. It was a holistic approach, addressing both business and personal aspects.” Mentor A*

**Effective Coaching Techniques:** The coaches and mentors highlighted the coaching and mentoring techniques that were most effective in engaging with the participants. While some of them mentioned the importance of some of the techniques and tools shared by the program coaches during the training workshops for coaches and mentors in the program, others see no need to engage the participants using the tools. Some views are noted as follows:

*“These sessions covered various strategies related to development, collaboration with clients, scaling, and innovations. While these topics were interesting, I didn't find them significantly helpful because I primarily relied on my extensive business experience and my personal coaching and mentoring practices.”* Coach B

*“Having the opportunity to learn about different approaches and perspectives can be valuable, even for someone with experience. The international nature of these sessions enriches the perspectives further. In summary, I think such programs are important, and the more opportunities for learning and collaboration, the better.”* Mentor B

Among the most effective techniques as highlighted in figure xxx above is active listening and tailored support. This not only helps to build trust and establish a long-lasting relationship between the mentors and the participants, even beyond the program. The use of various technical tools and techniques was also found to be effective in engaging the participants. Some of the techniques include emotional exploration technique, the 5 minutes technique, visualization technique, and case analysis. The coaches and mentors' expressions as captured below:

*“[I've also used visualization exercises to help individuals gain a deeper understanding of their businesses] [...also introduced a “5 minutes for the inner complainer” tool to help participants express their fears and challenges each morning, ensuring they don't let subconscious negativity rule their actions].* Mentor A

*“One of the most effective techniques I employed focused on exploring participants' emotions and perceptions”* Mentor B

*“Participants described specific challenges they faced and proposed solutions. We examined these solutions together, allowing them to view problems from various angles.”* Coach B

Role playing is also one of the techniques found to be particularly effective in engaging the participants. This helps the participants in preparation for dealing with real-life



administrative hurdles. This also includes the use of practical examples and scenarios. In one of the coaches' expressions:

*"I asked them how they would handle situations such as dealing with a tax office. We conducted role-play scenarios, with me assuming the role of an office worker, while participants pursued their objectives. This exercise helped build confidence for real-life situations."* Coach B

Lastly, the practical business application approach also proved effective in engaging participants in the program. This entails the use of profound business approaches such as Agile methodologies and Scrum techniques were particularly embraced to set goals and to have clear objectives of the mentorship journey. One of the mentors reported it as:

*"...Apart from the GROW model, which we used initially to clarify our goals... We covered topics like the agile method and SCRUM, as she wanted to understand how these concepts could benefit her business."* Coach B

**Challenges Faced by Participants:** The coaches and mentors shared the challenges faced by participant, such as a lack of strategy, organizational issues, complex family dynamics, parental dominance over decisions, lack of intrinsic motivation, limited broader perspective, and limiting beliefs about money. Excerpts from a respondent report that:

*"[Participants often struggle with a lack of strategy and organization, causing stress and hindering productivity.] [...Establishing daily routines and rituals is another common challenge.]"* Coach B

*"[Her main challenge revolved around managing a rather large group of volunteers. Without a clear vision or strategy, she began to lose their commitment.] [...Her main challenge was how to organize the team effectively and motivate individuals to fulfil their responsibilities, even though they were volunteers.]"* Mentor A

*"...there was one individual who faced a crucial decision between starting their own business immediately or pursuing further education at a university."*

*She had valuable business experience and supportive mentors, but her family advocated for continuing her education.” Mentor B*

*“Another example involves a participant with great products, strategies, and a strong online presence. However, this individual struggled to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and consider themselves a true entrepreneur. Our work focused on defining entrepreneurial characteristics and mindset, building self-esteem, and discussing the “Why” behind their business.” Mentor B*

*“I vividly recall one challenging case involving a married couple and the wife’s sister. Their family dynamics and conflicting visions for their business created considerable difficulties. Role definitions within the family remained ambiguous, further complicating the situation. Resolving family dynamics became a prerequisite before addressing their business-related issues.” Coach A*

**Observed Transformational Changes:** Respondents itemized several observed transformational changes in the program demonstrating the program’s impact, noting shifts from negative to empowered states, how best participants can confront negativity and viewing challenges as growth opportunities. An excerpt reported that:

*“I’ve seen participants shift from a negative, despondent state to a positive, empowered one after a few meetings. Also, many have realized that the challenges in their businesses are growth opportunities and not insurmountable hurdles. This transformation is remarkable to witness, as participants learn to confront negativity and uncover their potential.” Mentor A*

Other notable transformational changes as reported by the mentors and coaches included the participants’ ability to make clearer decisions, vision, and commitments. Also, their ability to balance studying and initiating businesses. The following excerpts were extracted from the transcripts:

*"...I met her at an event, and she updated me on her journey. She had decided to attend a business school while actively participating in various business projects within the university. In the end, she managed to combine the two paths effectively." Mentor B*

*"Many have realized that the challenges in their businesses are growth opportunities and not insurmountable hurdles." Mentor A*

*"I noticed that with each meeting, Zosia became increasingly enthusiastic about the progress because her team began to see positive changes. She developed a clearer vision herself." Coach B*

**Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program:** The coaches and mentors highlighted the importance of the programs' structure, which lies in individual support from the coaching and mentoring components of the program, the tailored support the participants received from the coordinators, and the flexibility to adjust the interventions to the needs of the participants. Excerpts from the feedback is given below:

*"The strengths of the program undoubtedly lie in the coaching and mentoring aspects. Providing participants with someone to listen to them and offer guidance is incredibly valuable. I often use the analogy of a "railing" for those learning to walk. Having a mentor or coach can serve as a crucial support system, helping participants take their first steps." Mentor B*

*"...the program's structure and organization have worked well for me." Mentor A*

The coaches and mentors also mentioned some points that they feel were noted as part of the weaknesses of the program. Among these is the need to have a balanced sessions between the technical and the personal development components of the program. The coaches and mentors further highlighted the need for more commitment from the participants and the coaches and mentors themselves. Some suggested more direct meetings with program organizers, while others acknowledged the need to improve notetaking but highlighted strengths such as a deep understanding of mentees' problems and a focus on individual growth. The following excerpts were extracted from the feedback:

*"...a potential weakness I've noticed is that many similar programs tend to heavily focus on the technical and business aspects, such as business models and strategies, sometimes neglecting the development of soft skills and personal growth. I believe it's essential to incorporate more elements that focus on personal development, self-esteem, and understanding the "Why" behind participants' entrepreneurial goals. This well-rounded approach can provide participants with a more solid foundation for their entrepreneurial journeys."* Mentor B

*"It would be great if the program maintained a sense of community where mentors could connect with others in their field, share their experiences, and ask questions."* Coach B

*"...However, I would appreciate more direct meetings with program organizers in addition to regular meetings with mentors. On my part, I could improve by taking more detailed notes during meetings to ensure I remember what we discussed."* Mentor A

**Areas of further improvements:** Suggestions for improving the program interventions as indicated by the mentors and coaches included enhancing mentor skills through meetings and workshops. They believe an avenue to discuss related topics and challenges among mentors could prove helpful in the mentoring and coaching sessions. Excerpts from the feedback are highlighted below:

*"I believe there could be more opportunities for mentors and coaches to meet, share experiences, and discuss program-related topics. A monthly meeting where we could ask questions about specific cases or seek advice from our peers would be beneficial."* Coach B

*"I'd like to emphasize the value of mentor meetings and workshops. By enhancing our skills, we can better support mentees. Additionally, holding online presentations by mentees at the end of the program can create a comprehensive learning experience. These meetings could also foster networking and collaboration among participants and mentors."* Mentor A

Furthermore, the coaches and mentors also stressed the need to have a pre-selection meeting between the mentors/coaches and the participants engaged in the program. This would serve as an “Icebreaker” to understand each other’s needs and ways to best support the participants. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of incorporating feedback mechanism into the design of the program as this would help track the progress made by the participants.

*“I also think it's essential to ensure a proper match between coaches/mentors and participants. Participants come to the program with diverse needs, and finding the right fit based solely on a short description can be challenging. Implementing a brief initial meeting with an evaluator to assess their needs and find the best match could be beneficial.”* Mentor B

*“Regular check-ins or reminders, along with more structured feedback, would be helpful.”* Coach B

**Strategies for Long-Term Impact:** To ensure a lasting impact, the coaches and mentors recommended organizing small group networking or mentor meetings and events that bring mentors, coaches and participants together to discuss strategies and often celebrate success stories. Excerpts from the feedback are given below:

*“To create a lasting impact, I suggest organizing networking or mastermind meetings in small groups. Initiatives like charity campaigns involving participants, mentors, and coaches could also promote a sense of community.”* Mentor B

*“Having a big kickoff meeting with all participants to set goals and a continuous strategy could significantly contribute to long-term impact.”*  
Mentor A

*“Organizing “success stories sharing” sessions and empowering the participants through recognition sessions, where both mentors and participants are acknowledged, could have a profound and lasting impact. This would be a great way to conclude the program.”* Coach B

Another suggestion shared by the coaches and mentors involved the inclusion of post-program mentoring follow-up sessions with the participants a few months after their participation in the program to monitor their progress. Excerpts are provided below:

*“One potential strategy could involve conducting mandatory check-ins or follow-up sessions at 3 and 6 months after completing the program. These follow-up sessions would help participants maintain their progress and prevent them from reverting to old practices.”* Coach B

*“Keeping in touch with participants to monitor their progress has been useful for me. Officially organizing long-term monitoring by the program, itself could be beneficial to track how participants are faring after the program. It's often seen that participants do well for the first 2-3 years, but they may encounter new challenges later on. Some form of soft monitoring that offers additional support when needed in the future could be helpful.”* Mentor B

# Discussion

## Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the analyzed 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 revealed a higher level of engagements by the participants in training workshops delivered by YBP when compared to the proportion of participants involved in coaching/mentoring activities. This notable difference could be attributable to the organization's extensive experience and expertise in the Polish market in delivering quality training to support employment endeavors of young people. Although a lower proportion of the participants were engaged in the coaching and mentoring component of the interventions, this had no negative effect on the impact it had on the participants regarding the soft skills and their quality of life. In fact, results showed a significant impact of both variables on the participants. This reflects the design of the intervention coordinated by YBP in focusing on the much needed tools required not only to start up businesses but to sustain it as well.

Regarding the general economic situation of the participants, results indicated a notable improvement in the proportion of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) within the project. Approximately 36% 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 tailored coaching and mentoring, and vital training that addresses participants' specific needs. This personalized approach played a crucial role in emphasizing the impact of the interventions in supporting and empowering individuals in their market entry endeavors.

Progress was equally recorded by the participants towards self-sufficiency as evident in the proportion of the participants that have no income and those that job paid employment. Around 10.2% reduction was recorded in this regard. Equally, 18.4% of the participants gainfully secured employment after taking part in the interventions. Despite these positive results, a slight reduction in the proportion of participants that started their businesses was recorded. This could be attributable to some of the participants' decision to explore other



options, knowing that they would still find the knowledge acquired during the program useful whenever they decided to begin their entrepreneurial endeavors.

An increment was also observed regarding the proportion of participants that relied on family support (2.1%). This could be attributable to several factors. For instance, while some of the participants that decided to return to school to complete their studies after participating in the program, others were in-between jobs and some decided to take some retraining activities or career shifts, thereby necessitating some level of supports. Although the increment recorded in the proportion of participants that rely on their families for support, the average household income of participants saw a considerable amount of increment (18%). This demonstrates the importance of the interventions in gearing the participants towards more sustainable and economic activities in the labor markets as well as having a good quality of life.

**Concluding remarks**

## Concluding remarks

A collaborative approach involving multiple initiatives and efforts from the Polish government and local actors has been instrumental in addressing NEETs and unemployment challenges in the country. NEETs in Poland are characterized by people who were prone to vulnerabilities and labor exclusion. They are often engaged in precarious employment in the gastronomy, tourism, and event sector, which were greatly affected by the Covid pandemic, thereby plunging more youths into poverty, social and economic exclusion, and more vulnerable situations.

Recognizing 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 were addressed through the YES! interventions implemented by YBP. 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 Polish labor market.

The interventions encompass a multifaceted approach, combining targeted training programs in high-demand sectors of the Polish 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.

In some of the feedback provided by the participants, coaches, and mentors, towards the design and the implementation of the intervention, they noted it would have been more insightful to have a longer engaging time with the coaches and mentors. This could have a lasting impact on the mentoring components of the program. This was also validated by the submission of the coaches and mentors. They noted the schedule of meetings of mentors and coaches engaged in the program could have facilitated engagements and encouraged shared learning among the facilitators.

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# 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 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?



# #YoungEntrepreneursSucceed

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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.