

# Impact Assessment and Lessons Learned

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**SOCIALCRAFTS - HANDICRAFTS AND SOCIAL  
ECONOMY: A DRIVER FOR SOCIALLY  
INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE CB REGION**

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## KEY FINDINGS

- Experts and partners agree that the project is successful in helping the participants to change their point of view and mentality, to become more active in their professional life. Further, it introduced them to good practices and successful career paths, improved their skills and labor capacity, endorsed social entrepreneurship.

- Trainings and consultations are highly appreciated by the participants themselves. Almost all of them consider their participation in the trainings to be a positive or even very positive experience. What is more, almost all of the participants would recommend a relative or friend to join similar trainings in the future.

- Most of the participants find that the trainings are helpful for them both in terms of their economic wellbeing and their psycho-social development. Participants find most valuable the economic impact - finding a job or clients easily in the future, receiving more money. Helping participants to have a better self-esteem is as well highly appreciated.

- With regard to the features of the trainings, the participants value the most the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge, the closeness of the trainings to their place of residence and the significance and importance of the topics.

- All the opportunities provided by the project are highly appreciated by the participants. Most of them appreciate the most the opportunity to show their products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and the mobile application.

- The high impact of the project is due as well to the diversity of participants: seven types of targeted groups (craftsmen, people with disabilities, elderly people, ethnic minority, single mothers, long-term unemployed, unemployed young people); five type of trainings (marketing trainings, counseling for people with disabilities, career counseling, IT training, business and entrepreneurship trainings); activities span across five municipalities (Haskovo, Razlog, Sandanski, Blagoevgrad and Gotse Delchev). Participants vary as well in gender, age and educational level.

- There are differences in the overall assessment of the trainings and the expected impact according to the region of the trainings and participants, the types of trainings, the type of targeted group, the age and educational level of the participants. There are

statistically significant associations between those variables that are strong enough to influence the results.

- The project and the implementation of its activities have an impact also for the partners in terms of lessons learned and gained experience. Three main types of capacity building impact for the partners stand out: expertise and understanding of the problems of the target groups and of the communities, capacity building for working with target groups and communities, networking possibilities and cooperation experience.

- All partners share the opinion that it is vital to take further steps and continue the work in future projects that would bring sustainability and even upgrade the current achievements. For the people with disabilities and most of the other targeted groups, problems are structural and go far beyond the possibilities of the current project. On the bright side, despite their multitude, the problems are not impossible to solve and people themselves have many ideas on how to solve them and just need help in gaining the resources to do so.

## INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this report is to evaluate the outcomes, results, expected impact and lessons learned of the activities carried out by the Bulgarian partners in the project SOCIALCRAFTS - “Handicrafts and Social Economy: A Driver for Socially Inclusive Growth in the CB Region”.

The SOCIALCRAFTS project is funded under the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A “Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020” and aims to improve the way of living of vulnerable groups in the area by their labour inclusion, especially of those most exposed to social exclusion. Target groups of the project are creators of handmade artefacts in the CB area - artisans, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and professionally and financially challenged groups such as single mothers, unemployed youth, long-term unemployed, elderly people.

Methodologically grounded in the paradigm of the theory of change (Rogers, 2014; Morra Imas, Rist, 2009; Zall Kusek, Rist, 2004; ИПА, 2014) the report assesses and evaluates both the outcomes and the expected impact and lessons learned of the project. The outcomes are assessed via comparing the implemented activities and released products with the set objectives, and the expected impact and lessons learned are assessed via analyzing the opinions and shared assessments of the participants, partners and beneficiaries. The assessment addresses a specific set of key issues and types and levels of impact (Huddleston, 2009; Нончев, 2009; Нончев, Манчева, Тараров, 2014) and uses data from a set of specifically designed studies of quality, effectiveness and expected impact. The time frame of the report is limited to the year 2019 as imposed by the program and the schedule.

The report is structured as follows: The first part outlines briefly the basic methodological and theoretical principles underlying the analysis and lists the methods for data gathering. The second part presents the assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the project describing the objectives, activities and outcomes implemented. The next part focuses on the effect of the project and more specifically on the results and expected impact. The fourth part presents the lessons learned in the implementation of the project and makes some specific recommendations for sustainability of future interventions aimed at the same target groups and communities under the program. Finally, the last part concludes with a summary of the most important findings of the report.

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The theory of change concept (Rogers, 2014; Morra Imas, Rist, 2009; Zall Kusek, Rist, 2004; ИПА, 2014) has been adopted as a methodological frame of the analysis as it is particularly useful in several ways. As put by Rogers (2014), theory of change allows the identification of specific evaluation questions and relevant variables that should be included in data collection. Next, it can be used for the identification of aspects of implementation that should be examined and also allows for the identification of potentially relevant contextual factors that can reveal patterns and should be addressed in data collection and in analysis. Most importantly, the theory of change allows “the usage of intermediate outcomes that can be used as markers of success in situations where the impacts of interest will not occur during the time frame of the evaluation” (Rogers, 2014: 6), as is the current case.

Following the theory of change paradigm, the analysis combines assessment and evaluation: 1) of the implementations of the project - objectives, activities and products; 2) of its effect - results and expected impact and also presents 3) lessons learned and sustainability recommendations.

In addition to the varying effects and impact, the scheme of indicators designed to assess the implementation of the project also constitutes of variables describing the basic societal spheres targeted by the project - economic, social and cultural, as well as the different levels of the desired change - individual and group level (Huddleston, 2009; Нончев, 2009; Нончев, Манчева, Тараров, 2014).

Thus, indicators for the results and impact include:

- economic impact for target/participants - higher income, higher sales, job secured;
- social impact for target/participants - autonomy, job security, equal opportunities, participation and influence;
- cultural impact for target/participants diversity, cultural enrichment, work ethics;
- economic impact for community – better job market, higher income, richer community;
- social impact for community – social cohesion, more opportunities, active citizens;
- cultural impact for community – diversity, crafts and heritage;
- development of beneficiaries – capacity building, cooperation, future possibilities.

As there is an objectively imposed time limit on the analysis which prevents the gathering of data on medium/long-term impact of the project (increased employability for vulnerable groups) and the medium/ long-term development of the targeted participants, it should be noted that the impact assessment in the current report is based on the already existing short-term results (increased capacities) and on the expected impact based on opinions and assessment of the participants and partners.

The main methods used for carrying out this assessment are in line with the state of art in impact assessment (Нончев, Манчева, Тараров, 2014) and include:

- Desk study and documentary analysis of all relevant normative, strategic scientific, institutional, analytical and other documents;
  - Collection and processing of secondary information;
  - Collection and processing of primary information through the development and implementation of qualitative and quantitative research;
  - Qualitative research - in-depth interviews participants, partners and beneficiaries;
  - Quantitative survey - a survey among individuals who completed their participation in project activities.
- Statistical analysis and triangulation: descriptive analysis; association analysis; analysis of two-dimensional and three-dimensional distributions; analysis of non-typical cases (outliers); nonparametric tests; and others.

In-depth interviews with partners were conducted using a semi-structured guide and include questions on the topics of: cooperation, impact on targeted groups, work with targeted groups, impact on community, future possibilities (see Attachment for details). A total of five interviews were conducted with an average duration of 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Bulgarian. Data were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymized.

The survey with participants was conducted using a structured questionnaire on the topic of: overall assessment of the project and training, economic impact for target groups, social impact for target groups, social impact for community, economic impact for the community, assessment of the features of the trainings and seminars, assessment of the possibilities presented by the project, specific problems of targeted people or community left unaddressed (see Attachment for details). A total of 120 questionnaires were gathered covering all participants in the municipalities Razlog, Gotse Delchev, Blagoevgrad and Sandanski. Because of the specifics of the meetings and seminars in Haskovo, questionnaires

were not gathered from there. The survey was conducted in Bulgarian. Data were gathered anonymously and analyzed aggregated.

As per data used in the different parts of the report, the analysis of activities and outcomes assessment is based primarily on document analysis and in-depth interviews with partners, the assessment of results and impact is based primarily on quantitative survey research among participants and the lessons learned assessment is based primarily on in-depth interviews with partners and quantitative survey research among participants.



## ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

The main goal of the project is to create a support mechanism, similar to an incubator, based on Internet technologies, to build a sustainable network of craftsmen who will unite their efforts to build an open market in which they can sell their products. The idea of this network is to enable the representatives of vulnerable groups to create their own social enterprises. The cross-border cooperation mechanism was established as an important driver for the development of crafts based on the demand and supply of goods in the regions included in the project. In addition to the benefits of setting up this mechanism, we can mention the provision of ecological products on the labor market, the conservation of biological diversity and the effective management of the various ecosystems in cross-border regions.

Among the outcomes of the SOCIALCRAFTS we can highlight the improvement of the job access for vulnerable groups in the area, using innovative practices, based on the development of CB integrated Social Economy initiatives under development and for tackling labor inequalities. Another important outcome is the establishment of new mechanisms for coping with the poverty by promoting services of comfort, and counselling at home, including in rural and isolated areas. Worthy of mentioning is as well the improved capacity and efficiency of social enterprises and open market at large, especially in reaching and employing isolated and deprived communities, such as persons with disabilities, Roma population, etc. Last, but not least, important outcomes of the project are the promotion of self-employment and the fight against digital illiteracy.

The project is targeted at existing creators of handmade artefacts in the CB area (artisans), persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and professionally and financially challenged groups such as single mothers, unemployed youth, long-term unemployed, elderly people. As shown in the figure below (Figure 1) most of the people that participate in the trainings of the project are craftsmen (29%), followed by people with disabilities (18%) and young unemployed people (16%). 13% of the participants are single mothers, elderly people are 12%, ethnic minority – 10% and long-term unemployed – 5%. It should be noted that the sum of those ratios is more than 100% and this is due to the fact that some of the participants have specifics that place them simultaneously in two groups.

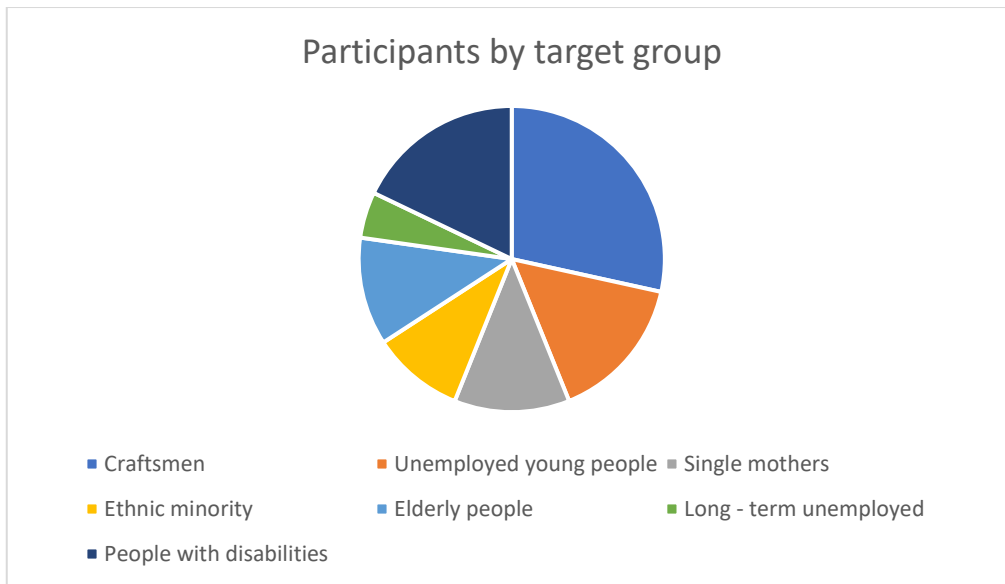


Figure 1

In order to fulfill the objectives connected with artisans, the main focus of the project is on: 1) offering them support in better branding and marketing their products, even in international markets, through the project's common e-Commerce Platform (including photo shooting, presentation, logistics and financial support services); 2) Reforming their activities and becoming social entrepreneurs and safeguards of the CB heritage; 3) Endorsing a more inclusive spirit and employing disadvantaged persons, such as persons with disabilities and other vulnerable group members, thus promoting a social profile, and helping them accommodate the needs of such workers.

Regarding the support services targeted to in-risk groups – people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, unemployed young people, single mothers, elderly people, ethnic minority representatives - the main focus is on: 1) supporting their personal development (raising awareness and confidence on their potential, providing personal development support, training, job finding); 2) facilitating their insertion to supported social enterprises (job finding/matching support, provide tutoring, mentoring, for inserting in the project's Network of Supported Enterprises; 3) helping to initiate social entrepreneurship on their own (support on self-employment and social entrepreneurship).

Specific activities that should be highlighted in the outcomes report are:

- Preparation activities, such as: preparatory studies within the CB area (focus on traditional craftsmanship, employment of disadvantaged people, social economy, etc.) and

study visits abroad on good practices. Those activities are important not only for the current project but also contribute to capacity building.

- Awareness / activation events for all parties and training activities targeted to artisans, disadvantaged people, local authorities, sponsors, and other stakeholders. Those include 4 local conferences, 6 seminars with artisans and 2 with disadvantaged people, 2 national workshops.

For example, a 4-day seminar was organized in Blagoevgrad for 50 participants from the target group in the period 18-21 June 2019 and another was organized for 30 participants from the target group in the period 24-27.06.2019. Apart from the target group, representatives of the municipalities of Blagoevgrad and Simitli, representatives of Social Services, heads of day care centers for people with disabilities, users of social services, social enterprises and representatives of local business were also present.

- A Joint Guide for new Work Integration Social Enterprises.
- A network of two CB Employment Support Centers for inclusion in traditional handicrafts that will be responsible for operating the envisioned e-Promotion activity and delivering (in house) services to traditional artisans (act as incubators) and disadvantaged persons (acting as employment and carrier centers)
  - A Pilot insertion program (offering support to 40 artisans and 100 disadvantaged persons).
  - Training workshops and seminars.

For example, consultations are held with the Lead Partner in Razlog, divided thematically into 4 days. 40 people are consulted on the topics of social economy and good practices in the field; creation of new social enterprises related to handicraft and capacity building; information and communication technologies and office applications for social business model; branding, promotion and advertising of brand products.

During the various seminars, good practices from Spain and good practices from Bulgaria and Greece are presented. Other topics covered during the seminars worth mentioning are: Social entrepreneurship, New horizons for the social economy and Career guidance in the social economy.

- Jointly operated mobile units that will be responsible for providing (on the user site) a number of the aforementioned support services to artisans and disadvantaged persons in remote areas (another 40 artisans and 100 disadvantaged persons)

- Open contest for novel business ideas in the field of traditional handicrafts, with financial prizes (3 best ideas) for the winners, plus support to prepare detailed business plans and establish their new social enterprises.

- A fully accessible ePromotion platform for handicrafts from the CB (in the form of an “online Social Mall”)

- A mobile app for members of the network (handicraft sellers)

- The production of supported Artisans Catalogue 2018

- Organization of two traditional festivals for supported structures and artisans to present their products and promote the Project, the Employment support centers and the online platform.

- Networking with international organizations, educational institutions, etc.

A study visit took place in Lorca, Spain Within 3 days the partners visited the Day Care Center for People with Disabilities APANDIS - Lorca, Spain, NGO ASDIFILOR - Lorca, which deals with improving the city Environment for the Benefit of People with Disabilities and Political-Religious Organization-ASPRODES, Lorca, Spain.

- An online Observatory for impact monitoring

The diversity in the targeted groups, which is one of the strong sides of the project, suggests diversity in the topics and subjects of the trainings and seminars. Five main topics are covered in the seminars – business and entrepreneurship, marketing, IT training, career counseling, counseling for people with disabilities.

As shown in the figure below (Figure 2) the differing in type and subject trainings and seminars are predominantly visited by the corresponding targeted group. Marketing trainings are mostly visited by craftsmen who are 76% of the participants in them, whereas the counseling seminars for people with disabilities are mostly visited by people with disabilities – 79% of the participants in them. The biggest group of participants in the career counseling trainings are unemployed young people – 50%. Unlike the first three, participants in the IT trainings and business and entrepreneurship trainings come from all groups except people with disabilities. We have to say that the group seminars for people with disabilities in Haskovo municipality that are not taken into account in the graphics and the participant analysis further in the text are as well visited predominantly by the corresponding target group, namely persons with disabilities.

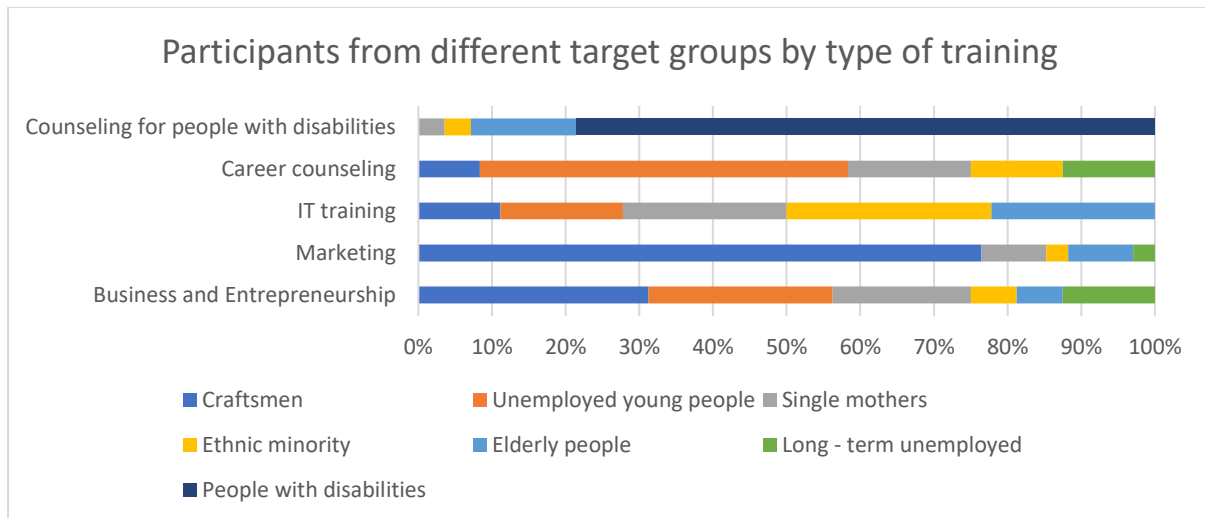


Figure 2

Regarding the participation rate (Figure 3) the trainings that are most visited are the marketing trainings – with 28% of the participant taking part in them, followed by counseling for people with disabilities – with 23% of the participants and career counseling – 20% of the participants. IT training and business and entrepreneurship trainings are visited respectively by 15% and 13% of the participants.



Figure 3

The differing targeted groups and participants are represented in trainings all over the included regions (Figure 4). However, as can be expected because of the specifics of the regions, the number of participants from different groups in the different regions, is not the same. Participants that visited the trainings and seminars from Sandanski Municipality are

36% single mothers, 18%- unemployed young people and 18% long-term unemployed, 9% ethnic minority representatives, 9%, elderly people and 9% people with disabilities. Participants that visited the trainings and seminars from Gotse Delchev Municipality are 25% people with disabilities, 19% ethnic minority representatives, 19% - single mothers, 19% unemployed young people– 9%, 13% craftsmen and elderly people – 6%. Participants that visited the trainings and seminars from Blagoevgrad Municipality are 42% people with disabilities, 19% unemployed young people, 15% representatives of ethnic minorities, 12% long-term unemployed, 8% craftsmen and 4% elderly people. Finally, participants that visited the trainings and seminars from Razlog Municipality are 46% craftsmen, 13% elderly people, 13% unemployed young people, 12% single mothers, 9% people with disabilities, 5% representatives of ethnic minorities, 2% long-term unemployed. It should be noted once again that participants in the group seminars for people with disabilities from the Haskovo municipality are not included in the graphics and the analysis.

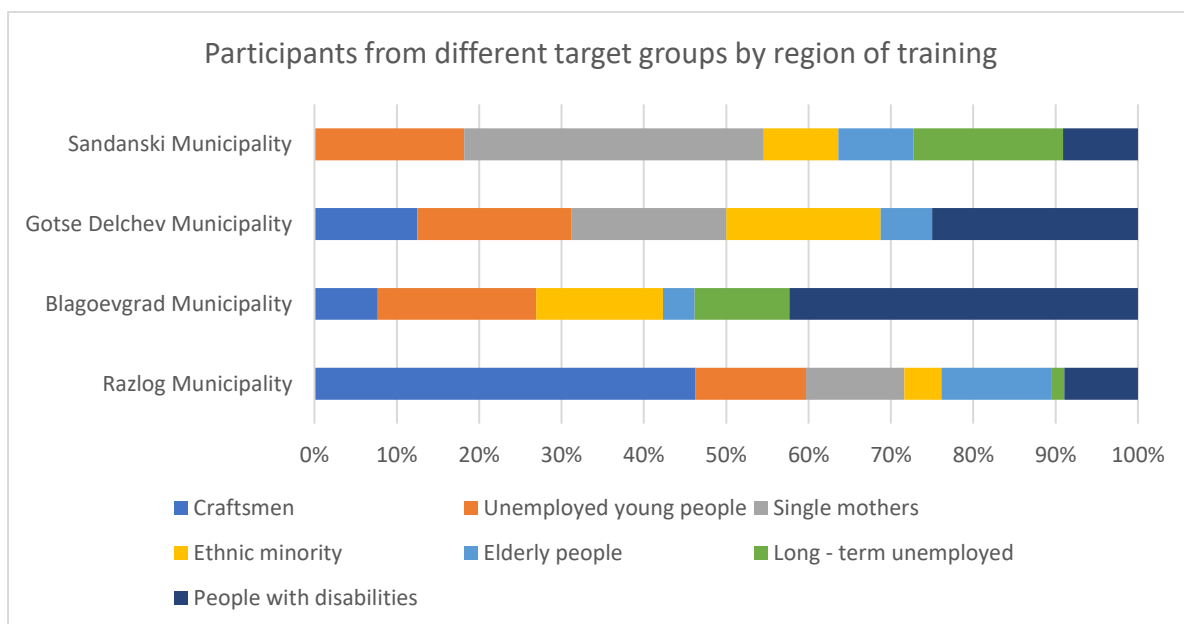


Figure 4

We have to say there is a statistically significant association between two variables and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer’s V = 0,38). This means the targeted group of the participants in the trainings and the region of the participants are interrelated, which is important for understanding the further commented specifics of the expected impact assessments.

The diversity of the participants, which is important for the impact to spread easily in the community, is further achieved by inclusion of people with varying demographic profiles.

## SOCIALCRAFTS: Impact Assessment and Lessons Learned

Thus, the project includes people from all age groups – 13% of the participants are from 18 to 29 years of age, 27% are from 30 to 39 years of age, 28% are from 40 to 49 years of age, 30% are from 50 to 59 years of age and the rest are above 60 years of age. The participants in the various seminars and trainings conducted within the project as well vary in their education - 8,3% of the participants are with primary education, 60% are with secondary and 31% are with higher education degree. As for the gender distribution of the participants, 57% are women and 43% are men.

## RESULTS AND IMPACT FOR PARTICIPANTS

The results of the Project include both short-term (increased capacities) and medium/long-term results (increased employability for vulnerable groups). As already mentioned, there is an objectively imposed time limit on the analysis which prevents the gathering of data on the medium/long-term impact of the project and the medium/ long-term development of the targeted participants. Regardless, it can be said without overstatement that the project intervenes on an innovative social economy field by bringing together artisans, persons with disability and entrepreneurs in a sustainable way.

More specifically, SOCIALCRAFTS helps participants to find jobs and/or set up their own business, support general entrepreneurship in CB area, help environment by applying ICT applications and promoting handicrafts, an intangible cultural heritage asset, considering the attempted changes as the basis for a result orientated project.

All partners agree that both in terms of economic impact and in terms of social impact the project was successful.

In the trainings and seminars, there were very interesting and fruitful discussions devoted to specific examples of good practices and successful career paths for people in risk. In regard to social impact, as experts from MIS put it, the project helped the participants to change their point of view and mentality, to be more active. Thus it “opened a window to new social worlds giving them [participants] opportunities for higher self-esteem, more contacts, perspective for development”. As for the impact on communities, the project made “first steps” which in turn is expect to lead to bigger changes in the environment: “Especially in small villages, there is a tangible effect on the community even when you succeed in changing one person. This one person after that is followed by others and this changes the whole economic and social environment. People follow the good example. Communities go to a higher societal level.”

In a similar way, trainings and consultations are highly valued by the participants. Almost all of them (except one) consider their participation in the trainings to be a positive experience as 61% assess it as very positive and 38% - rather positive (Figure 5).



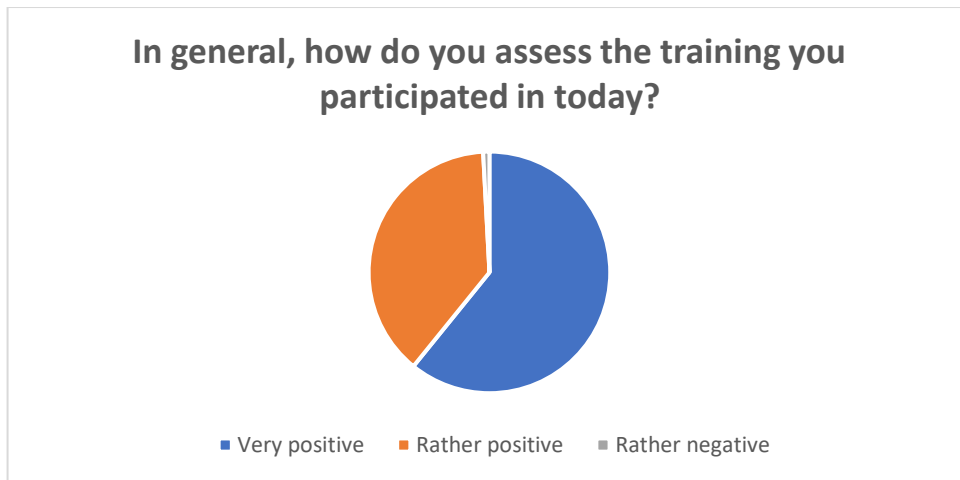


Figure 5

Even more informative for the overall assessment of the trainings is the fact that almost all of the participants would recommend a relative or friend to join similar trainings in the future. 97% of all participants would make such a recommendation (Figure 6), and 3% would not – half of them because they don't have suitable or interested relatives.



Figure 6

Most of the participants find that the trainings are helpful for them both in terms of their economic wellbeing and their psycho-social development. Very high assessed is the economic impact as more than 90% of the participants believe that the trainings will help them to find a job or clients easily in the future - 44% assess them as helpful to a great extent and 47% assess them as helpful to some extent (Figure 7). 35% of the participants think the trainings will help them a lot to receive more money and 48% think they will help them but to some extent. Similarly, 33% of the participants think the trainings will help them to a great extent to have better self-esteem and 48% think they will help them but to some extent.

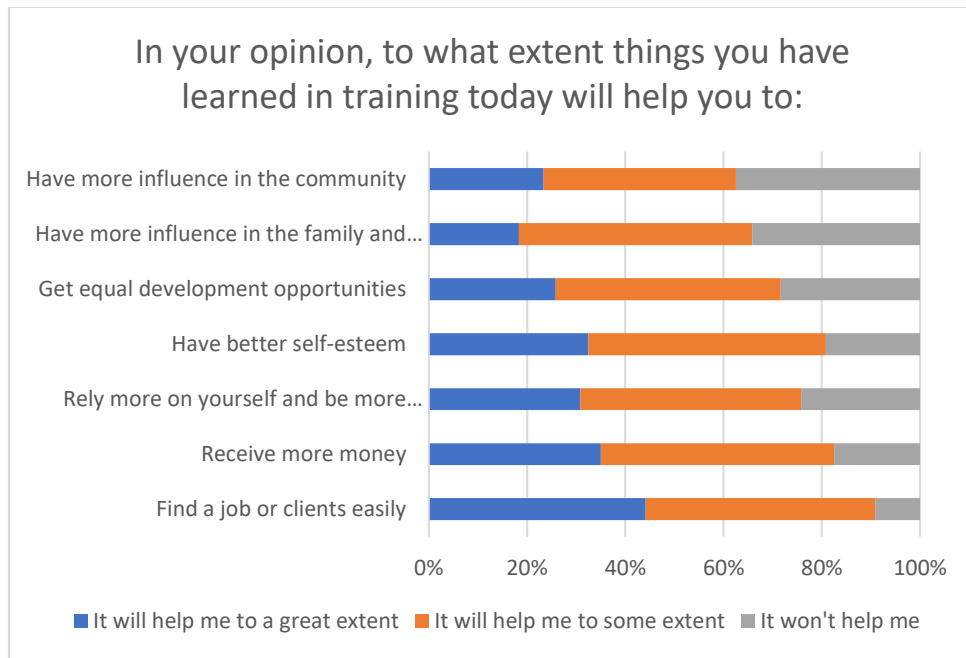


Figure 7

Regarding the self-sufficiency, 35% assess the trainings as very helpful and 45% as somewhat helpful for their independence and their ability to rely more on themselves. The provision of equal developmental opportunities is as well high assessed as 72% of the participants think that the trainings will help them get such opportunities in the future. 66% of the participants think the trainings will help them to have more influence in their family and friends and 66% think the trainings will help them to have more influence in the community.

Regarding the importance of the specific characteristics of the trainings, the participants appreciate the most the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge, the closeness of the trainings to their place of residence and the significance and importance of the topic (Figure 8). The accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge is considered important from all the participants as 83% consider it very important and 18% consider it somewhat important. The special proximity is very important for 76% of the participants and somewhat important for 20%. The significance and importance of the topic is considered as very important by 71% of the participants and as somewhat important by 26%. The individualized approach is important for 81% of the participants and the free materials and resources are important for 74% of the participants. One person thinks that all except the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge are not applicable or not true.

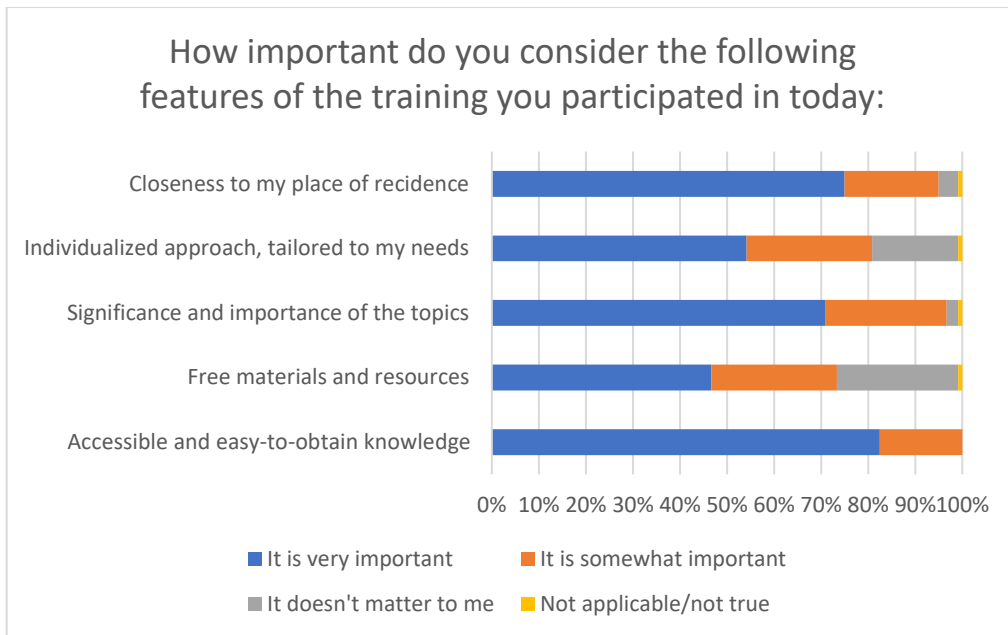


Figure 8

All the opportunities provided by the project are highly appreciated by the participants as the most useful they see the opportunity to show their products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application (Figure 9).

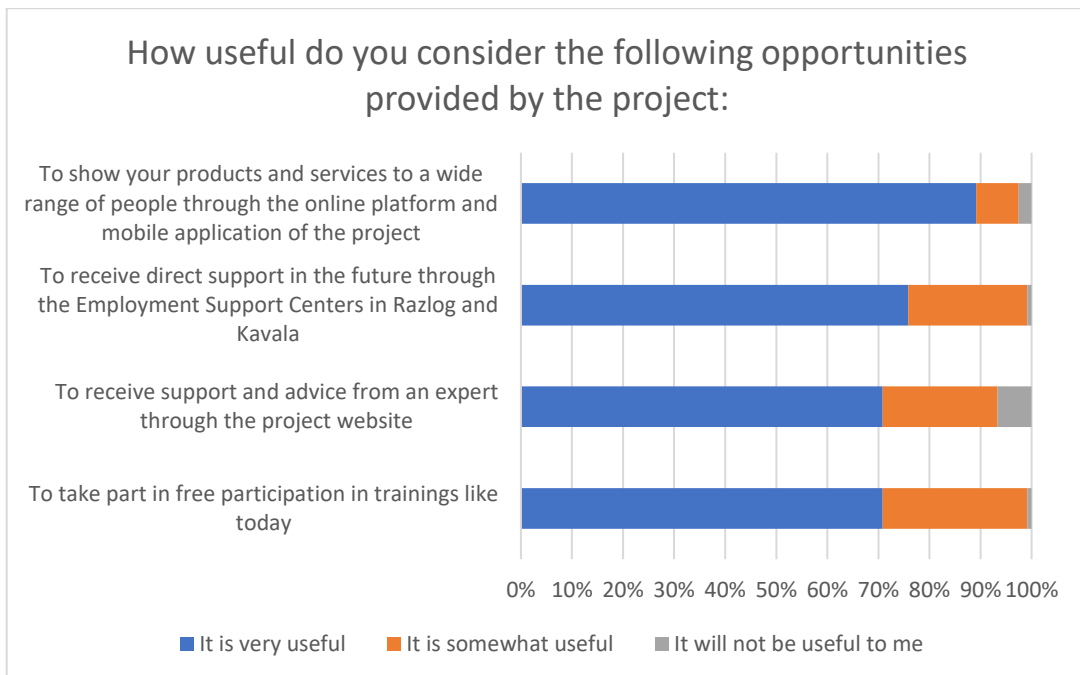


Figure 9

It is considered very useful by 89% of the participants and useful by 8%. The opportunity for receiving direct support in the future through the Employment Support Centers in Razlog and Kavala is viewed as useful by 99% of the participants, from which 76% see it as very important. 99% of the participants see as useful as well the opportunity to take

participation in such trainings as 71% rate this as very useful. The possibility to receive support from the experts through the project website is assessed as useful by 93% of the participants from which 71% say it is very useful.

### Regions

Before discussing the differences in the participants' assessments of the trainings and the impact of the project depending on the region they come from, we have to remind that there are statistically significant association between the region of the training and the type of the training (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,314) and between the region of the training and the targeted group (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,380). Those associations are strong enough to indicate an interrelation between those two sets of variables and though we cannot say which is the cause and which is the result, we expect changes in one of them to be linked with changes in the others. This means that the differences we observe might be due to the region itself but can also be due to the fact there are differences in the types of trainings and in the targeted groups in the respective region. Nevertheless, it is important and interesting to see the differences connected to the region of the trainings in detail.

Participants from the Gotse Delchev Municipality are most prone to giving very positive assessment of the training - 69%, but at the same time the one participant that gives negative opinion is as well from there. The participants from Sandanski Municipality are most reluctant to give high appraisal. All participants from Gotse Delchev and Razlog would recommend the trainings to their relatives (Figure 10).

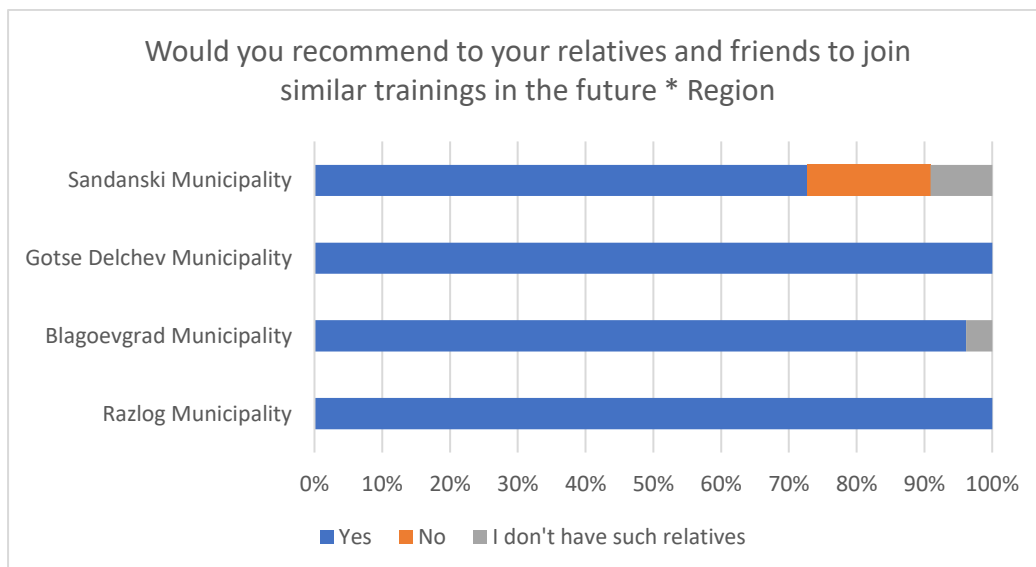


Figure 10

There is a statistically significant association between the region of the training and the willingness for recommendation and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,331), meaning that the region and the willingness for recommendation are interrelated and there is an influence. As the independent variable here is clear and it is the region of the training we can suspect the region influences the desire for recommendation.

There are differences although not very pronounced as well in the assessments of the future impact of the project trainings on the lives of the participants according to the region. In order to calculate and compare the differences we created an index calculated as the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very much = 2, to some extent = 1, won't help me = 0) and divided by the number of participants from the respective region (Figure 11). In all regions the highest score is given to the assessment that the training will help the participants in finding a job or clients more easily. In Razlog and Sandanski the second most important impact is in the aid for receiving more money, whereas in Blagoevgrad and Gotse Delchev the second most important impact is expected to be the aid for more independence. It is noteworthy that in Razlog the expected impact on the influence of the participants in their community is much higher than in other regions.

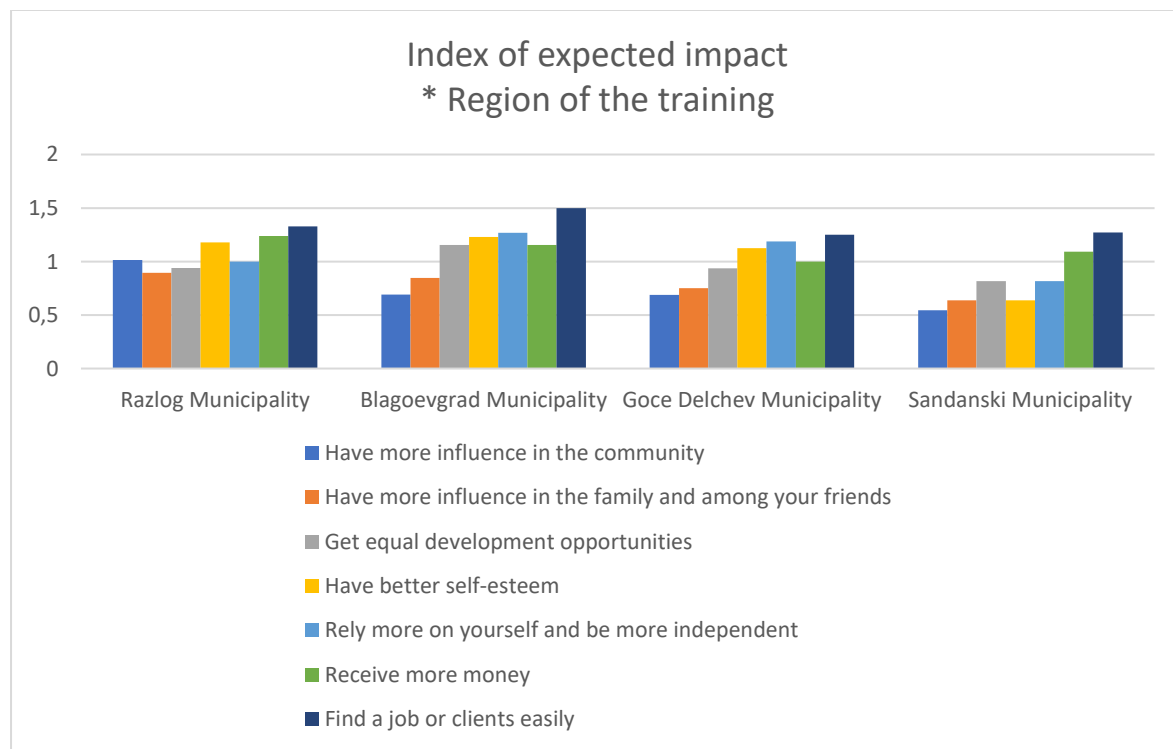


Figure 11

Regarding the usefulness of the opportunities provided by the project the differences between the regions are more pronounced. Again, we designed an index to calculate and compare the differences using the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very much = 2, to some extent = 1, not useful = 0) and divided by the number of participants from the respective region (Figure 12).

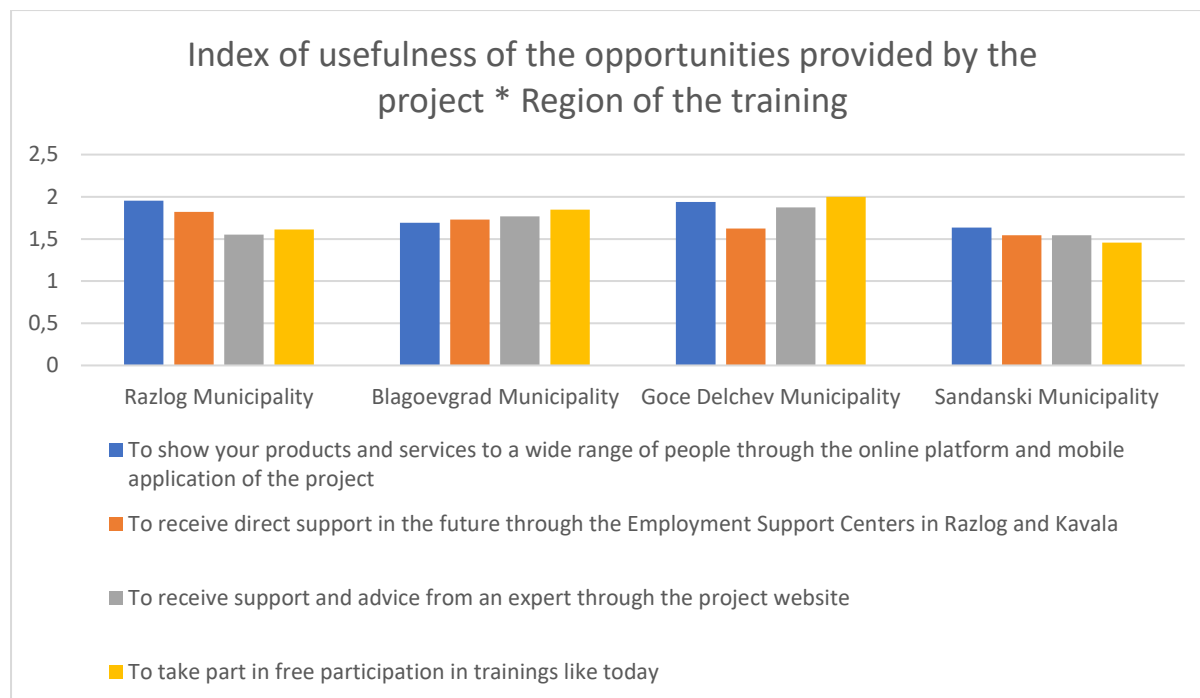


Figure 12

The arrangement of the opportunities according to their usefulness is opposite and in a mirror like constellation in Blagoevgrad and Sandanski, and in Gotse Delchev and Razlog. For example, most important in Blagoevgrad is the opportunity the project gives to participants to take participation in such trainings and least useful is the opportunity to show their products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application of the project. On the opposite, in Sandanski the opportunity to show their products and services to a wide range of people is considered most useful and the opportunity to participate in trainings – least useful. In Gotse Delchev most important is the participation in trainings and least important - the opportunity for receiving direct support in the future through the Employment Support Centers in Razlog and Kavala. Most important in Razlog is the possibility that the project gives to participants to show their products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application of the project and

least important – the possibility to receive support from the experts through the project website.

There is a statistically significant association between region of the training and the assessment of the usefulness of the opportunity that the project presents for participation in such trainings and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,001; Cramer’s V = 0,31), i.e. the two variables are interrelated and we can hypothesize that the region is the cause variable.

As visible from the index for importance of the features of the trainings (as well, calculated as the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength, very much = 2, to some extent = 1, not important = 0, not applicable/not true = 0, and divided by the number of participants from the respective region), there are no striking differences in the assessments and preferences. In all regions the accessible and easy to obtain knowledge is the most important (Figure 13). Free materials and resources are least important in Razlog, Blagoevgrad and Sandanski, whereas in Gotse Delchev individualized approach is assessed at the lowest.

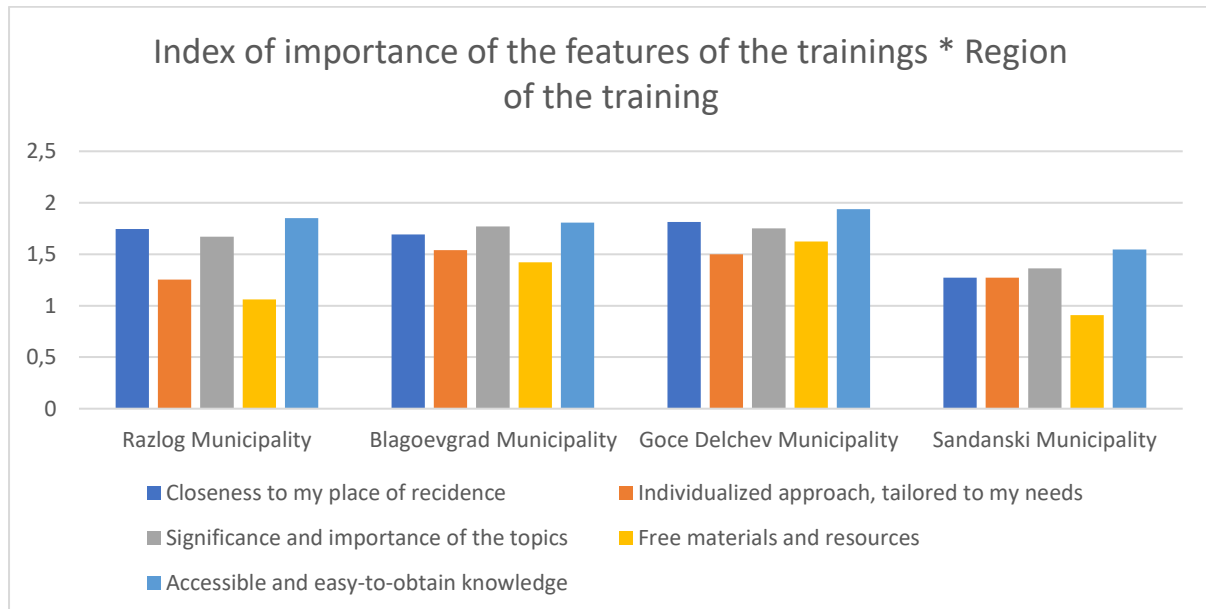


Figure 13

There is a statistically significant association between region of the training and the assessment of the importance of the significance of the topic and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,002; Cramer’s V = 0,27), i.e. the assessment of the significance of the topic of the training and the region of the participants are interrelated.

There are no statistically significant associations between the regions of the trainings and the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants – age, gender or education.

### ***Types of training***

Differences in assessment of the quality and expected impact given by the participants according to the type of training they visited are as well worth mentioning. Again, because of the statistically significant associations between the type of training and the region (Appr. Sign = 0,001; Cramer's V = 0,314) and the type of training and the targeted group (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,591), we have to keep in mind that those differences may be due to specifics of the particular trainings but may be also due to specifics of the people that participate in them – their target group or region. Especially, we have to underline the very high value of the coefficient for the association between the targeted group and the type of training that indicates a very strong interrelation between the two variables. We cannot determine the causality, i.e. to say whether the type of training causes participants to be from a particular targeted group or vice versa, but we can state that in the particular training we expect people from a specific targeted group and also expect the two variables to intertwine their effect when interrelating with other variables like result assessment and expected impact assumptions.

There is as well a statistically significant association between the type of training and the age of the participants (Appr. Sing = 0,008; Cramer's V = 0,28) which is strong enough to also influence the results. This means that the people participating in the specific trainings are mostly of a particular group.

As seen in the graphics (Figure 14) participants in the career counseling seminars are predominantly young people below 40 years of age and the biggest group is from age 18 to 29, whereas in IT trainings, marketing and business and entrepreneurship trainings most of the participants are above 40 and the biggest group is from age 50 to 59. It is important to state that those age specifics as well might influence the differences in the impact and results assessment of the participants in various training types.



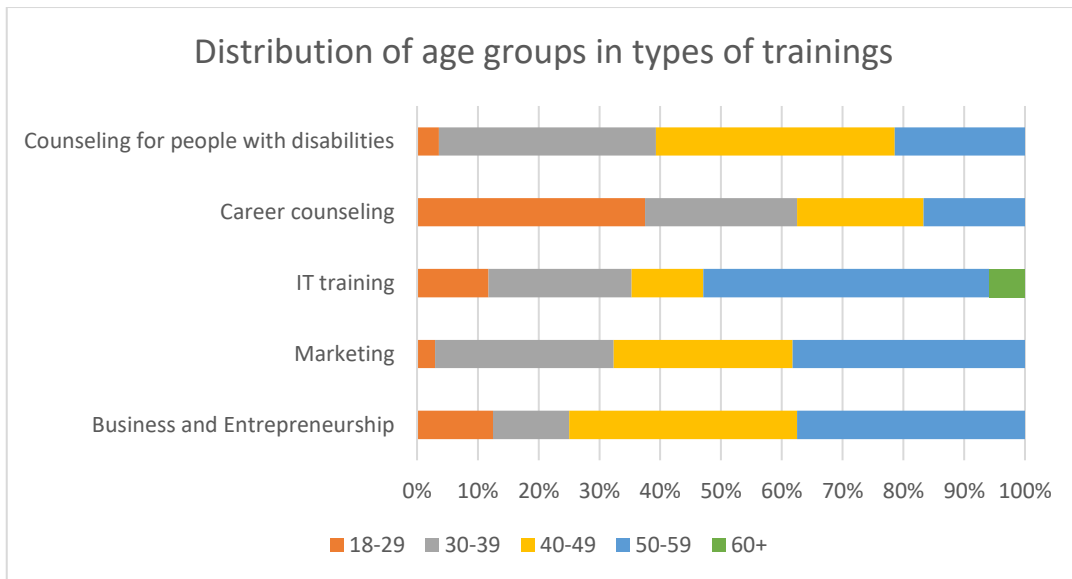


Figure 14

There is no statistical association between the type of training and gender or educational level of the participants.

Most positively assessed by the participants are the counseling seminars for people with disabilities in which the very positive evaluations are given by 82% of participants (Figure 15). Least positively assessed are the career counseling seminars in which the very positive evaluations are given by 42% of participants. The rather negative assessment is as well in the career counseling.

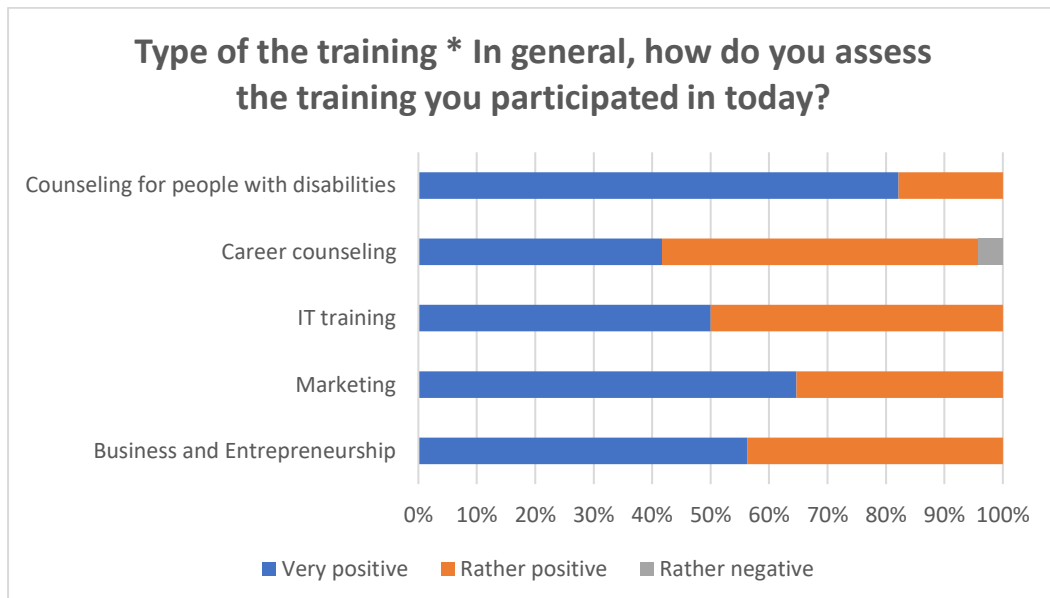


Figure 15

All the participants in the counseling seminars for people with disabilities, the marketing trainings and business and entrepreneurship trainings would recommend to their relatives

and friends to join similar trainings in the future (Figure 16). In IT trainings 94% would recommend to their friends and relative joining similar trainings and the rest do not ta have friends or relatives that would be suitable. In career counseling 88% of the participants would recommend joining similar trainings, 8% would not and 4% do not have such friends.



Figure 16

There are specific differences in the assessments of the future impact visible in the comparison of the respective index (Figure 17). To calculate the index, we use the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very much = 2, to some extent = 1, won't help me = 0) and divided by the number of participants in the respective training.

The participants in the business and entrepreneurship trainings as well as the ones in the marketing trainings appreciate mostly the impact of the trainings on their ability to find work more easily, followed by their bettered ability to earn money and the impact on their better self-esteem. This differences between those groups come mostly by the fact that the participants in the business and entrepreneurship trainings give higher assessments as a whole and that in this group participants puts the impact on having more influence in the community on the fourth place and in marketing the fourth place is for relying more on one's self and independence. Similarly, participants in career trainings assess most high the impact of the trainings on their ability to find work more easily, but on second and third place they put respectively the impact on independence and on equal development opportunities. The participants in counseling for people with disabilities, appreciate mostly the impact of the

trainings on their ability to find work more easily, followed by their bettered ability to rely more on themselves and be more independent and have better self-esteem. In addition, participants in the IT trainings consider the trainings will have biggest impact on their ability to receive more money.

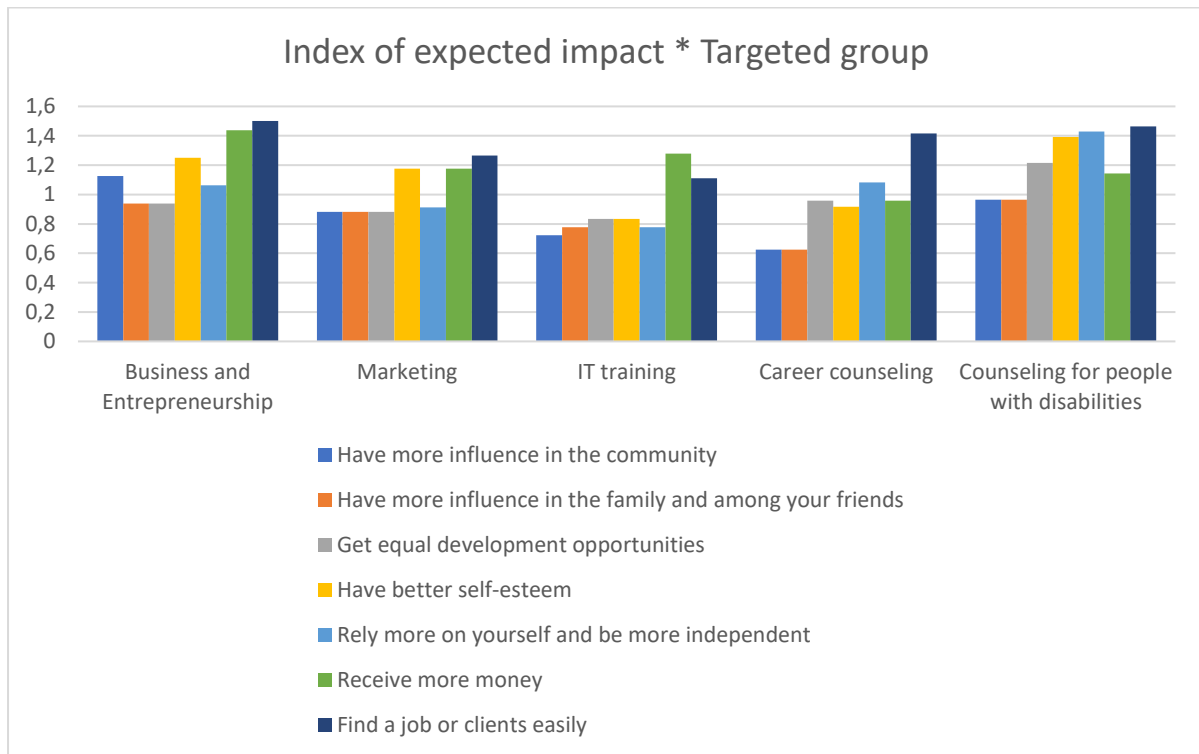


Figure 17

There is a statistically significant association between type of the training and the assessment of the impact of the training on the participants' independence and tendency to rely more on themselves and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,003; Cramer's V = 0,32), i.e. the assessment of the impact on independence and the type of the training are significantly interrelated and we can hypothesize that the type of the training is the cause variable.

It is noteworthy that the distribution of the importance of features of the trainings is very similar for the different types of trainings. To calculate those again we created an index equal to the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very important = 2, somewhat important = 1, not important = 0, not applicable/not true = 0,) and divided by the number of participants in the respective training. In all groups the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge is the one that is most appreciated (Figure 18). The closeness of the trainings to their place of residence and the significance and importance

of the topic are placed by participants either on second or on third place as the closeness is ranked second in marketing and IT training and the significance of the topic is ranked second in business and entrepreneurship, career counseling and counseling for people with disabilities. The individualized approach and the free materials are ranked fourth and fifth in all groups, however we must note that there is a difference in the distance between them and the first three in the different groups. For example, in the business and entrepreneurship trainings the index for importance of free materials and resources is 0,94, whereas in the counseling seminars for people with disabilities the respective index is 1,79 (maximum=2; minimum=0)

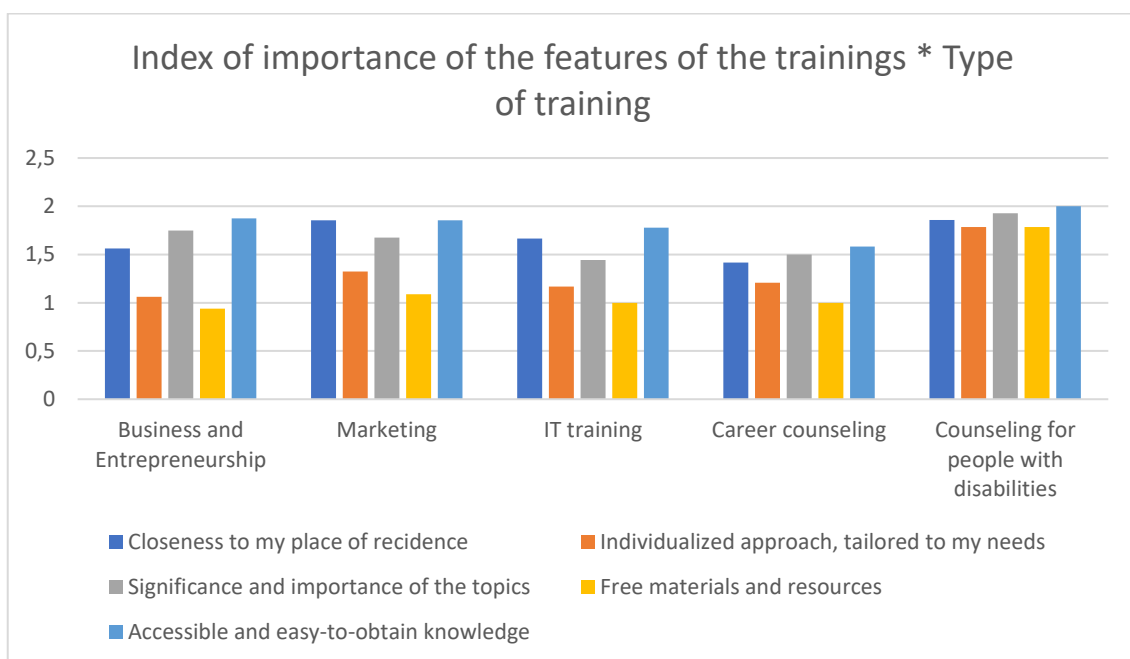


Figure 18

Despite the similarities, there is a statistically significant association between type of the training and the assessment the importance of the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge and between type of the training the importance of the free materials and recourses. The strength of the connection is medium in both cases - respectively  $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,003$ ;  $\text{Cramer's } V = 0,37$  and  $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,004$ ;  $\text{Cramer's } V = 0,28$ , i.e. the assessment of the importance of the ease of access and the free materials, on the one hand, and the type of the training, on the other, are significantly interrelated, again hypothesizing the cause variable is the type of training.

It is interesting that for the participants in the different trainings the arrangement of the usefulness of the opportunities the project presents are as well very similar (Figure 19).

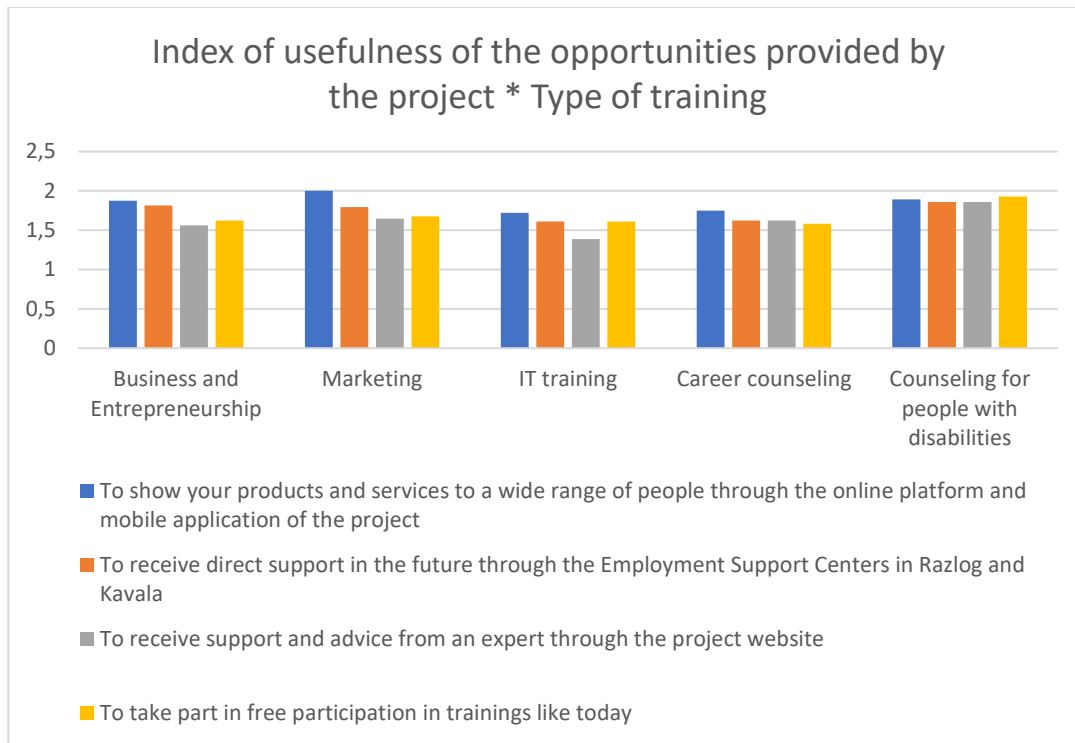


Figure 19

To calculate those, we created an index that equals to the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very useful = 2, somewhat useful = 1, not useful = 0) and divided by the number of participants in the respective training. In all groups the opportunity the participants receive to show their products and services to a wide range of interested customers through the project platform is the one that is most appreciated. There are minor variances in the arrangement of the other three listed opportunities, visible in the graphic. We will only mention the considerably higher assessment of all the opportunities given by the participants in the counseling seminars for people with disabilities and the greater distance between the importance of the presenting opportunity and all other opportunities for the participants in the marketing trainings.

Despite similarities in regard to the usefulness of receiving support and advice of an expert through the project website, there is a statistically significant association and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,001; Cramer's V = 0,32). This means there is a significant interrelation between the two variables and participants in different types of trainings do rate the usefulness differently enough.

**Targeted groups**

The distribution of the training and impact assessments according to the specific targeted group of the participants is as well very informative and worth mentioning. As evident from the multitude of statistically significant associations, this is the characteristic that has the biggest effect on the opinions of the participants and the expected impact.

As mentioned before, there are statistically significant associations between the targeted group and the region (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer’s V = 0,380) and the targeted group and the type of training (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer’s V = 0,591), which we have to keep in mind as, especially the latter, is strong enough to have a significant effect.

There are as well statistically significant associations between the targeted group and the age of the participants (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer’s V = 0,418) and the targeted group and the educational level of the participants (Appr. Sign = 0,000; Cramer’s V = 0,375).

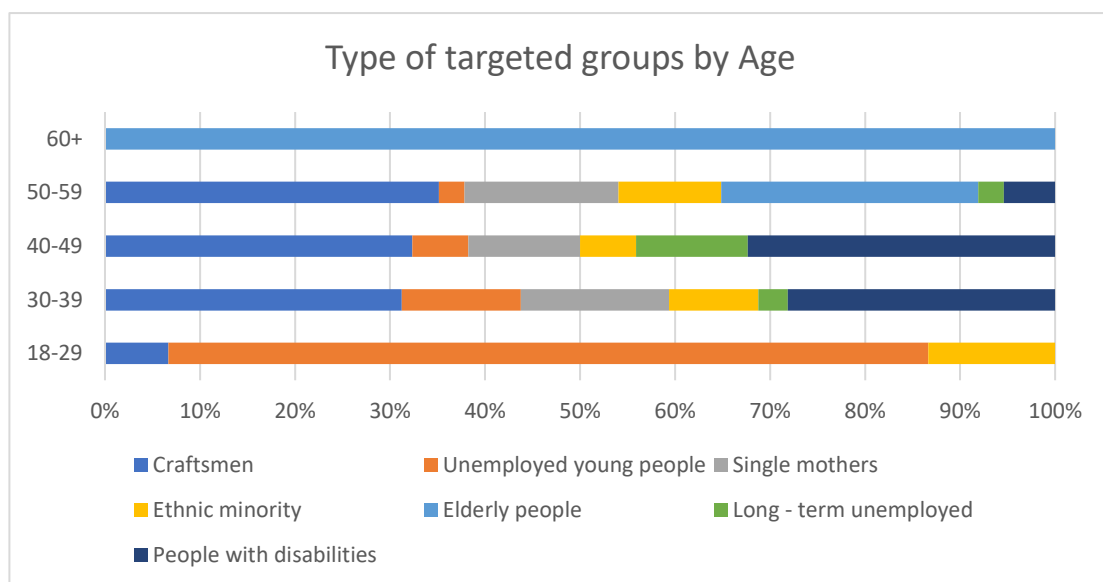


Figure 20

Such interrelation between the age ranges and the targeted group can be expected as some of the groups are defined by age – young unemployed people, elderly people. As seen in the figure above (Figure 20) those exact groups exhibit an interrelation - participants in the age range above 60 years are from the group of the elderly people and most in the age group of 18 to 29 are from the young unemployed people. Craftsmen, single mothers and people with disabilities are distributed in the middle age groups.

Regarding the education (Figure 21) among the people with primary education the two biggest groups are the ethnic minorities representatives (50%) and elderly people (30%), whereas among those with higher education the biggest group is craftsmen (41%).

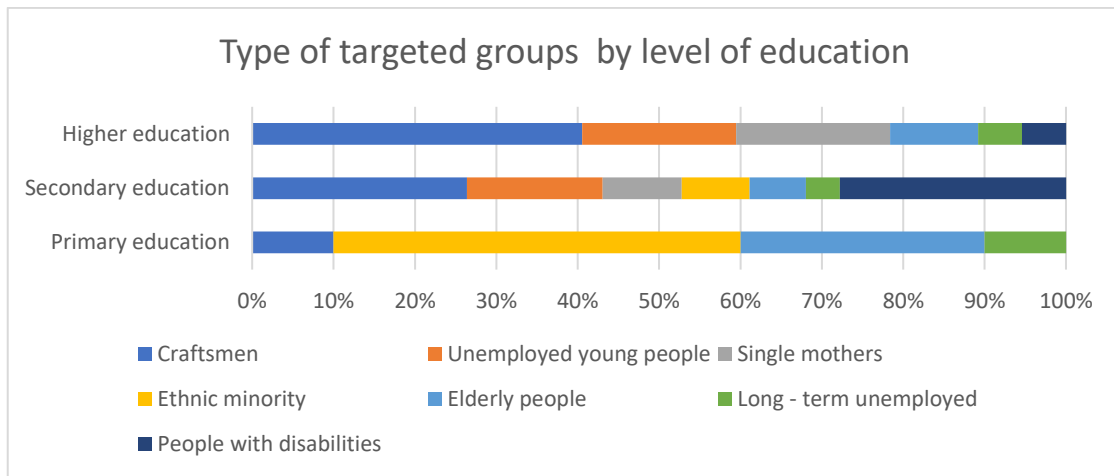


Figure 21

The differences we observe in the distribution of the assessment of the training show some groups are more prone to giving a very positive assessment to the seminar and training they participated in. For example, people with disabilities give far more favorable assessments in comparison with all other groups – 91% of them say they assess the training as very positive (Figure 22). Much fewer positive assessments give people from ethnic minorities and long - term unemployed. Single mothers as a whole are as well prone to giving higher evaluations as 67% gave a very positive answer, but the one rather negative evaluation is as well given by a single mother.

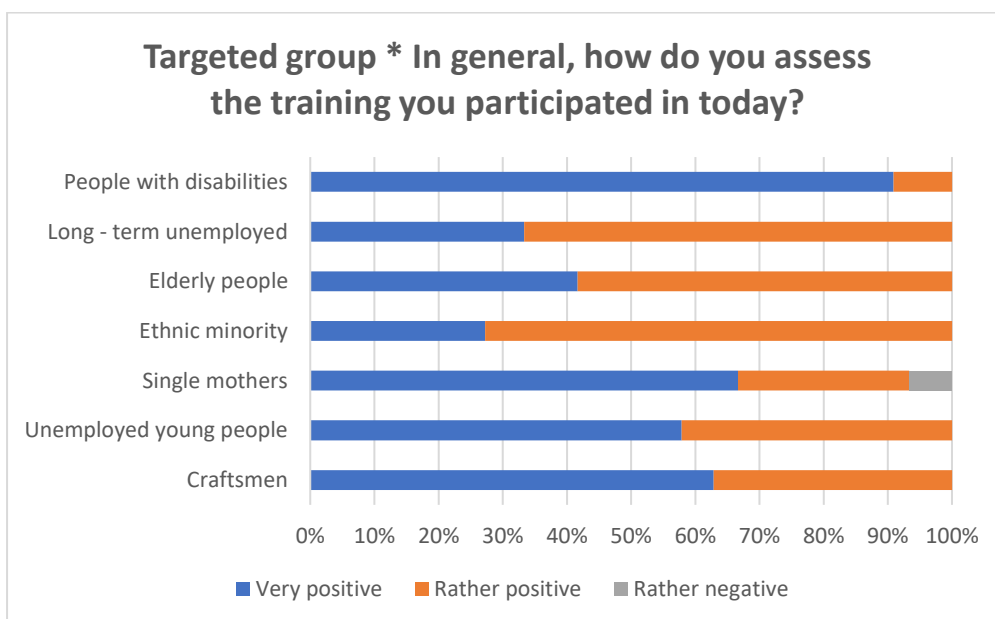


Figure 22

The distribution of the willingness of the participants to recommend to their friends and relatives to join such trainings, which is a projective question, indicative for their overall assessment confirms the observation that the long - term unemployed are most dissatisfied (Figure 23). 83% of them would recommend the training and 17% would not.

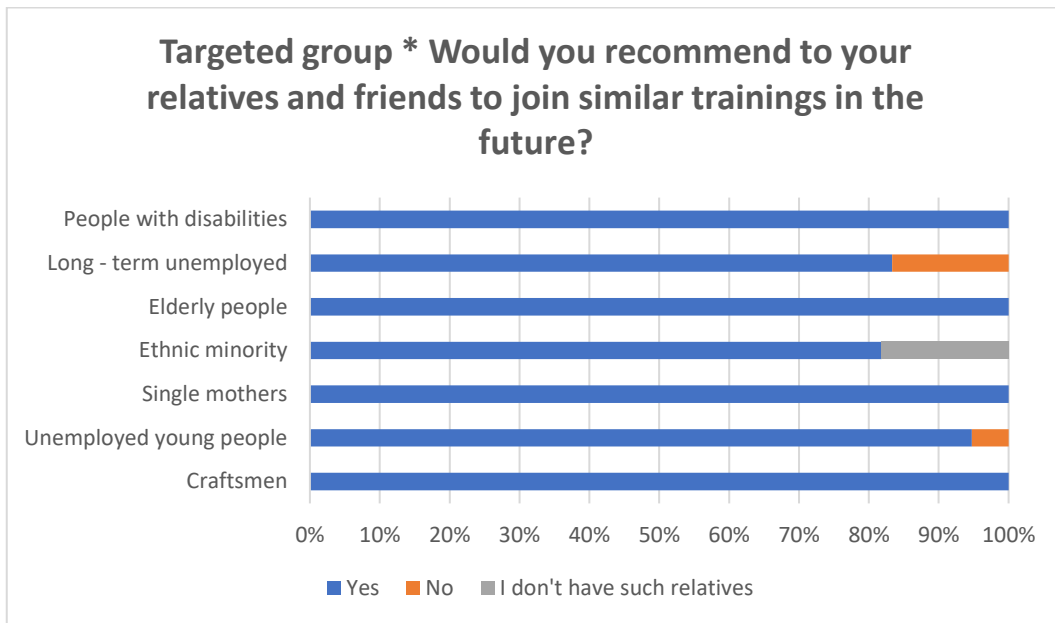


Figure 23

We have to mention here also the young unemployed people, 5% of which as well are reluctant to recommend such trainings. The share of the representatives of ethnic minorities that would recommend the training is as well lower than other groups – 82%, but this is because they do not have friends or relatives that are suited for or in need of such trainings.

There is a statistically significant association between the targeted group and the desire to recommend the trainings (Appr. Sing = 0,002; Cramer’s V = 0,36), i.e. the two variables are interrelated and there is an influence.

The expected future impact of the trainings according to the group of the participants reveals some informative and interesting differences (Figure 24). For most groups the most probably expected result is finding more easily clients or a job but there is a statistically significant association between this variable and the targeted group and the strength of the connection is medium (Appr. Sing = 0,001; Cramer’s V = 0,38). This means the targeted group of the participants in the trainings and whether or not they expect the trainings to have an impact in them finding a job or clients easily are interrelated.



There is as well a statistically significant association between the targeted group and the expected impact on the equal development (Appr. Sing = 0,007; Cramer’s V = 0,34), meaning there is a connection between the two variables.

To calculate and compare the differences in the expected impact of the trainings according to the group we created an index that equals to the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very much = 2, to some extent = 1, won’t help me = 0) and divided by the number of participants in the respective group.

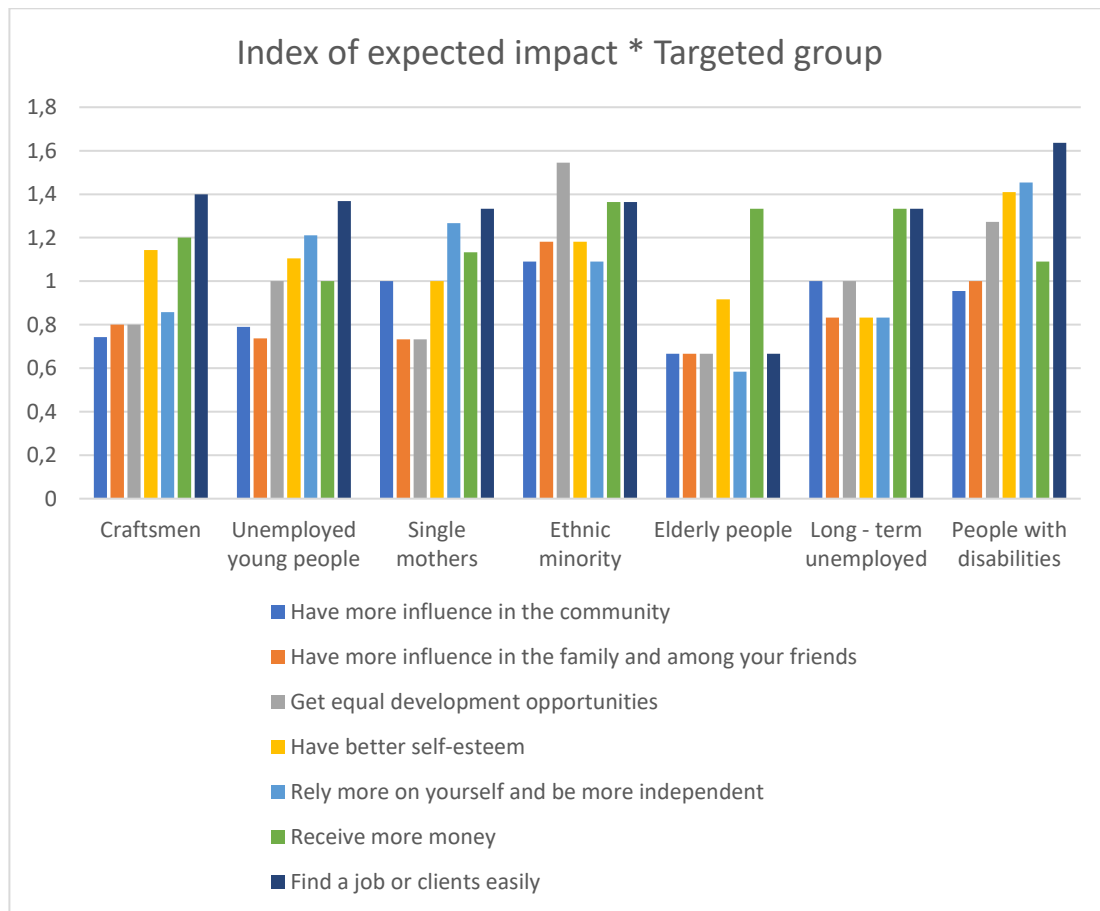


Figure 24

For the group of the craftsmen the three top expected impacts of the trainings are finding a job or clients easily, receiving more money in the future and having better self-esteem. For the unemployed young people, the top expected results are finding a job or clients easily, relying more on one’s self and being more independent and having better self-esteem. For the group of the single mothers the three expected impacts that stand out are finding a job or clients easily, relying more on one’s self and being more independent, receive more money. It is interesting that for them, though not in the top three, having more influence in the community is noticeably more expected impact. Unlike any of the other

groups, for the ethnic minority representatives the most expected results from the training are getting equal development opportunities on the first place, and only after that find a job or clients easily and receiving more money. The group of elderly people is as well very different from the other groups as for them the expected impact of receiving more money is considerably higher than the other impacts. For the long - term unemployed most probable expected results are finding a job or clients easily and receiving more money. For the people with disabilities as well finding a job or clients easily is the number one expected impact, but for them receiving more money is far less expected that relying more on one's self and being more independent, having better self-esteem and receiving equal development opportunities.

With regard to the features of the trainings there are statistically significant associations between the targeted group of the participants and their opinion regarding the importance of the free materials and resources (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,35), between the targeted group of the participants and their opinion regarding the importance of the individualized approach (Appr. Sing = 0,001; Cramer's V = 0,35) and between the targeted group of the participants and their opinion on the importance to the closeness or residence of the participants (Appr. Sing = 0,001; Cramer's V = 0,35). As the strength of the connection is medium we expect the two variables to be interrelated and to influence one another.

We created an index of importance of the features of the trainings (as well, calculated as the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength, very much = 2, to some extent = 1, not important = 0, not applicable/not true = 0, and divided by the number of participants from the respective target group). As visible from the figure below, for most groups, though with some differences in the distribution, those are the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge, the significance and importance of the topics and the closeness to the participant's place of residence (Figure 25).

This is the case for the unemployed young people, the single mothers, the elderly people and the craftsmen. For the representatives of the ethnic minorities the significance of the topic is not that important, and for the long - term unemployed is most important in comparison with all other features. The long-term unemployed as well prioritize the individualized approach, tailored to their needs. The people with disabilities consider all features of the training as very important and only free materials and recourses is slightly lower rated.

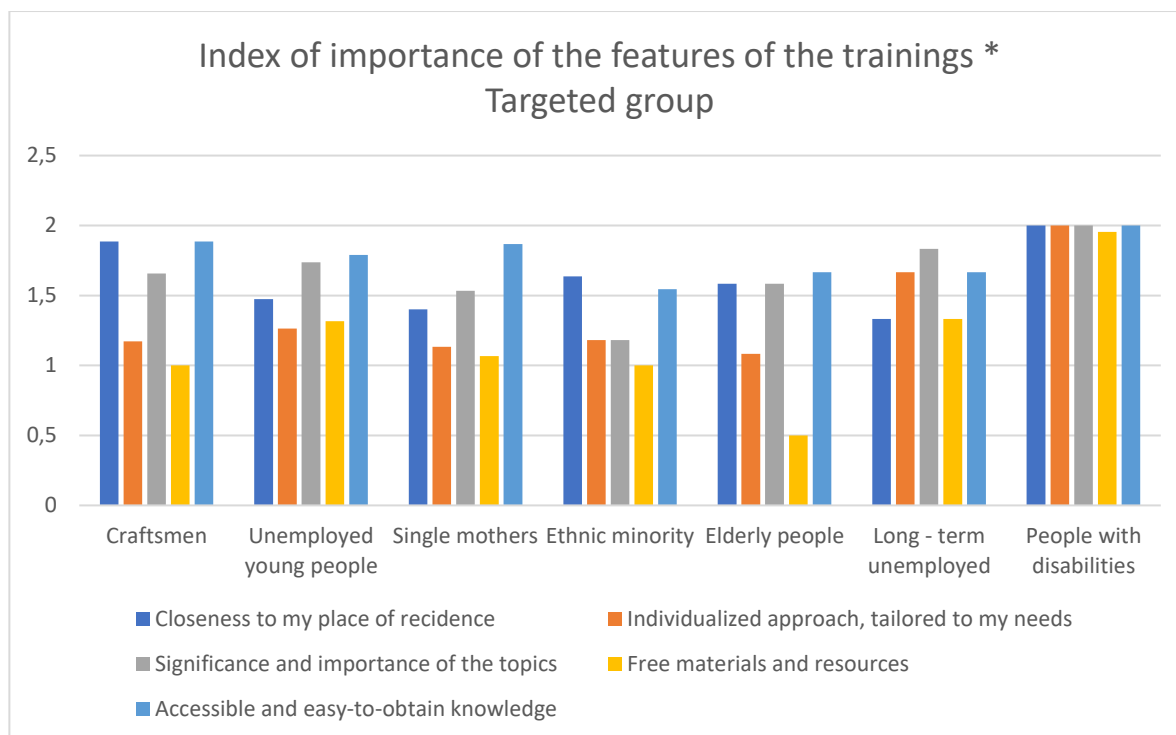


Figure 25

Regarding the most important and useful possibilities that the project provides the statistical tests show that there are statistically significant associations between the targeted group of the participants and their opinion on the usefulness of most of the presented possibilities: with the possibility to take part in free participation in trainings (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,39); with the possibility to receive support and advice from an expert through the project website (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,438); with the possibility to receive direct support in the future through the Employment Support Centers in Razlog and Kavala (Appr. Sing = 0,006; Cramer's V = 0,342). The strength of those associations is medium to high indicating that there is influence between the two, most probably with the targeted group as cause variable.

We calculated the group differences by creating an index that equals the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (very useful = 2, somewhat = 1, not useful = 0) and divided by the number of participants in the respective group (Figure 26).

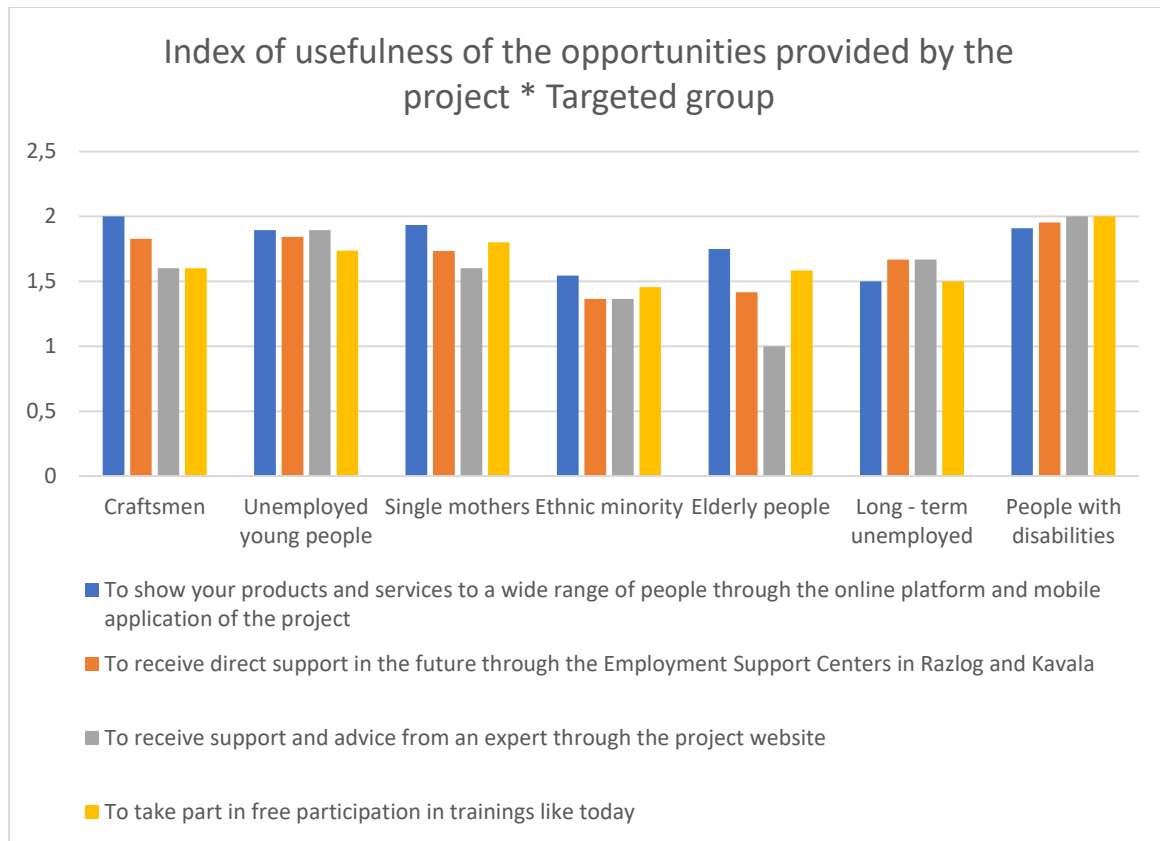


Figure 26

For most groups, and more specifically - craftsmen, single mothers, ethnic minority, elderly people and unemployed young people - consider this is the possibility to show one's products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application of the project. For the two groups other related to job deficiency - the long-term unemployed and the undeployed young people - important possibilities provided by the project are as well the support and advice from an expert through the project website and the direct support in the future through the Employment Support Centers in Razlog and Kavala. For the people with disabilities most useful are the possibilities to take part in free participation in trainings and to receive support and advice from an expert through the project website.

### ***Socio-demographic characteristics***

The statistical tests for the strength of the association show there are no significant associations between the assessment of the trainings and the expected future impact and the gender of the participants.

With regard to age, as mentioned above, there are significant associations between the age group of the participants and the type of training on the one hand, and the age group of the participants and their targeted group. Age does not influence the overall assessment or the intention to recommend future trainings to relatives and friends.

There are statistically significant associations between the age of the participants and their opinion on the usefulness of two of the presented possibilities: with the possibility to take part in free participation in such trainings (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,371); with the possibility to receive support and advice from an expert through the project website (Appr. Sing = 0,000; Cramer's V = 0,365). As seen in the illustration (Figure 27), there is a general tendency, with exception of the youngest, with the higher age participants to find the support through the website less useful.

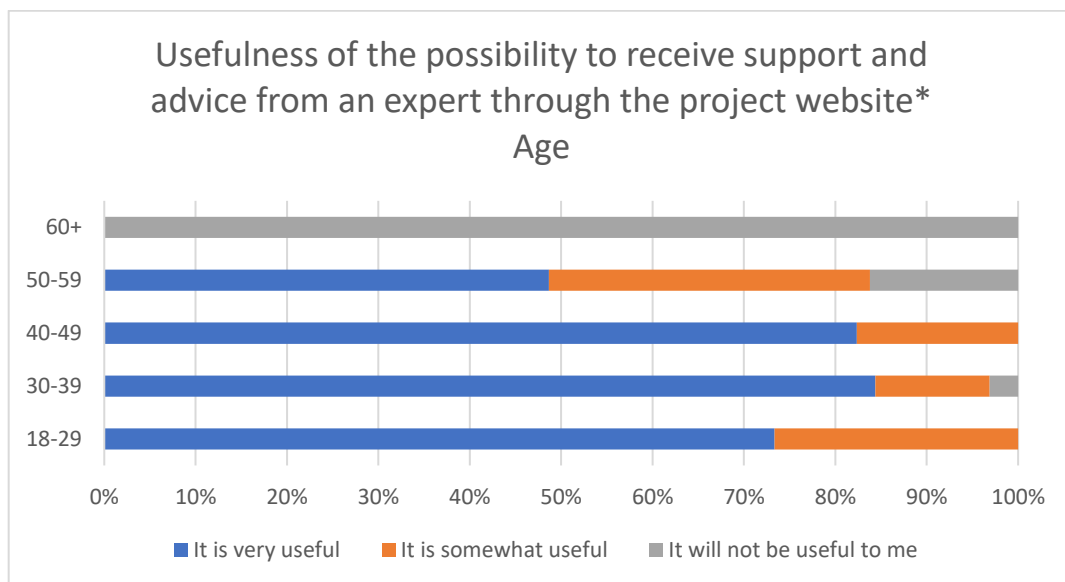


Figure 27

Regarding the educational level of the participants, as already mentioned, there are statistically significant association with the targeted group. Education does not interrelate with the assessment of the trainings and seminars or the intention to recommend future trainings.

There are statistically significant associations between the educational level of the participants and their assessment of the importance of the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge and between the educational level of the participants and their assessment of the importance of the significance and importance of the topic of the trainings. The strength of the connection is medium in both cases - respectively Appr. Sing = 0,009; Cramer's V = 0,31

and  $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,000$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0,295$ , i.e. the assessment of the importance of the topic and the easy and accessible knowledge are significantly interrelated with the educational level, most probably with the educational level being factor and not vice versa.

The statistical tests show that there are statistically significant associations between the educational level of the participants and their opinion on the usefulness of all of the presented possibilities: with the possibility to take part in free participation in trainings ( $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,006$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0,28$ ); with the possibility to receive support and advice from an expert through the project website ( $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,000$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0,322$ ); with the possibility to receive direct support in the future through the Employment Support Centers in Razlog and Kavala ( $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,000$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0,358$ ); with the opportunity to show their products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application of the project ( $\text{Appr. Sing} = 0,004$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0,281$ ). The strength of those associations is medium to high indicating that there is influence, most probably from the educational level to the assessment of usefulness.

The distribution of the assessment of usefulness according to education shows there is a clear tendency that the participants tend to find the opportunities more useful with the higher level of education. For instance, most of the people that do not consider the direct support in the Employment Support Centers to be useful are with primary education and most of the people that consider it will be very useful are with university degree (Figure 28).

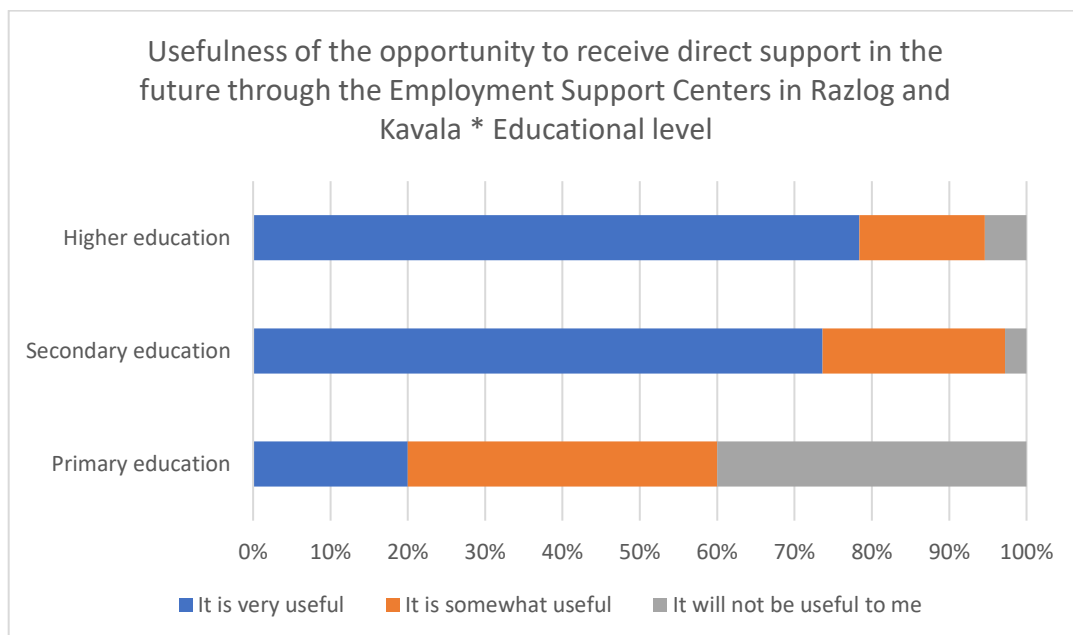


Figure 28

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPACT FOR PARTNERS**

The project and the implementation on its activities have an impact and developmental results not only for the targeted groups but also for the partners in terms of lessons learned and gained experience. As partners themselves put it, they are now very well versed into the problematic and can write and implement excellent, “custom designed” and smooth working projects that would further benefit the targeted groups of SOCIALCRAFTS.

We can differentiate three main types of capacity building impact for the partners: expertise and understanding of the problems of the target groups and of the communities, capacity building for working with target groups and communities, networking possibilities and cooperation experience.

### ***Problems of the targeted groups***

All partners agree that one of the most important assets gained from the work on the SOCIALCRAFT project is the accumulated knowledge. Because of the specifics of the project experts could work with different target groups and communities that have their specific problems and gain knowledge and understanding about their lives and problems.

For the people with disabilities, problems go far beyond the possibilities of the current project. As one of our experts put it, “not that we didn’t know there were problems, but the extent to which they harm people’s lives and the pain this brings, is devastating” (expert, Business Center “Maritza”). While the project managed to introduce new possibilities and ways for development, people with disabilities in Bulgaria are in the general case incapacitated to fulfill everyday needs because of the unsuitable and not well adapted environment – maladapted both in physical but also in social terms.

Most problems of people with disabilities are related to obstacles in their everyday lives and the need of changes that would make it easier in terms of healthcare, education, social policies. We learned that even social benefits that are specifically targeted at people with disabilities are not well adjusted to the specifics of their needs. For example, there are problems with medicine supply, prices of medicine, quality of the products for physical assistance. Some of the mechanisms for positive discrimination and preferences designed to help people with disabilities in reality are not working. Another big problem are the

limitations from the physical environment, that result in prevention of most possibilities for equal opportunities, development and economic self-sufficiency. During the wonderful and fruitful discussions, we were able to present cases of success and good practices and give examples and advices even for such day-to-day problems, yet a lot more needs to be done and on a much larger scale.

As for the craftsmen, in the practice very little is done for support of their work. Especially, in the case of the targeted in SOCIALCRAFTS communities, that are from small and distant settlements, opportunities for profit are very limited. On the one hand, this is due to the closed markets demanding low prices, on the other – on the disbalance of cost and prize and lack of cost-effective assistants. While we managed to show the craftsmen and artisans opportunities and ways of reaching bigger audience, there is still a lot that depends on further institutional support. In relation to cost-effectiveness, the most important obstacle is the fact that here is no legal definition of a social entrepreneurship and thus no benefits and tax reduction for the social entrepreneurs as in other EU countries. Hiring people from in-risk groups they could be a wonderful opportunity for them to develop their businesses and achieve sustainability, but this lack of regulation is yet another barrier for artisans.

On the bright side, despite their multitude, the problems are not impossible to solve, if there is a political will. What we understand in the meetings and lively discussions is that people have many ideas on how to solve the problems and just need the governing bodies to listen.

### ***Problems of the targeted communities***

Apart from the specific problems of the target groups there are common problems challenging all people living in the regions and communities to which the program and the project are directed. As a tool for incapacitation of the partners, data are gathered in order to assess the leading problems and their severity. Of course, since the data are gathered from a survey within the project and only with the participants, results are not representative and can hardly be extrapolated. Nevertheless, because of the great diversity in the targeted groups, the results provide good ground for further research or projects.

All participants consider in various degrees that poverty, unemployment and corruption are a problem in their place of residence and not even one person states they are not a problem at all (Figure 29). Poverty is regarded as a very serious problem by 19% of the



participants and a serious problem by 35%. Corruption is considered as a very serious problem in their place of residence by 16% of the participants, and is a serious problem by 27%. Unemployment is a very serious problem according to 14% and a serious problem according to 37%. The lack of perspective is as well among the top problems as 13% state it is a very serious problem and 33% that it is a serious problem.

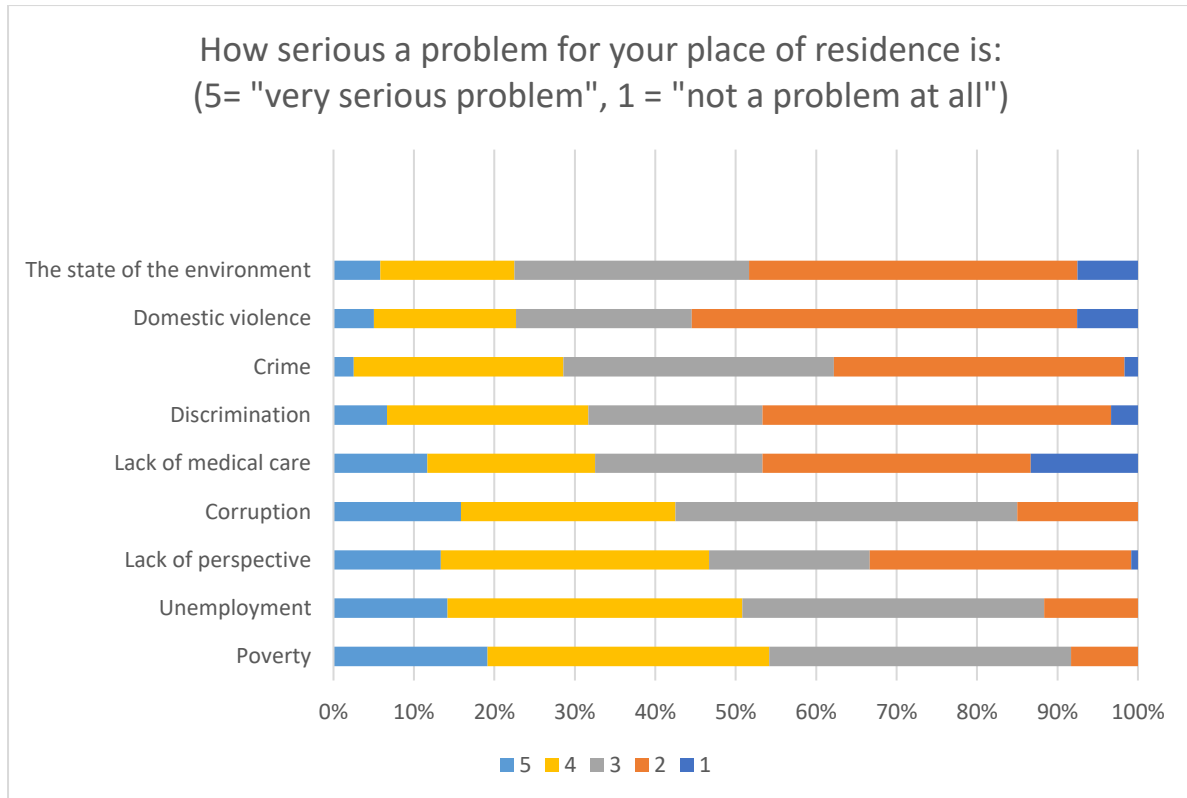


Figure 29

To compare the opinions on the seriousness of the various problems in the different regions targeted by the project we created an index calculated as the sum of all the participants sharing the respective assessment multiplied by its strength (5 = “very serious problem, 1 = “not a problem at all”) and divided by the number of participants from the respective region (Figure 30).

As we see in the graphics is that participants in Razlog, Gotse Delchev and Sandanski consider poverty to be the most serious problem while participants in Blagoevgrad consider unemployment to be the most serious. The lack of perspective is noticeably higher assessed in Sandanski than in the other regions. Crime is as well noticeably higher assessed in Sandanski than it is in any other region.

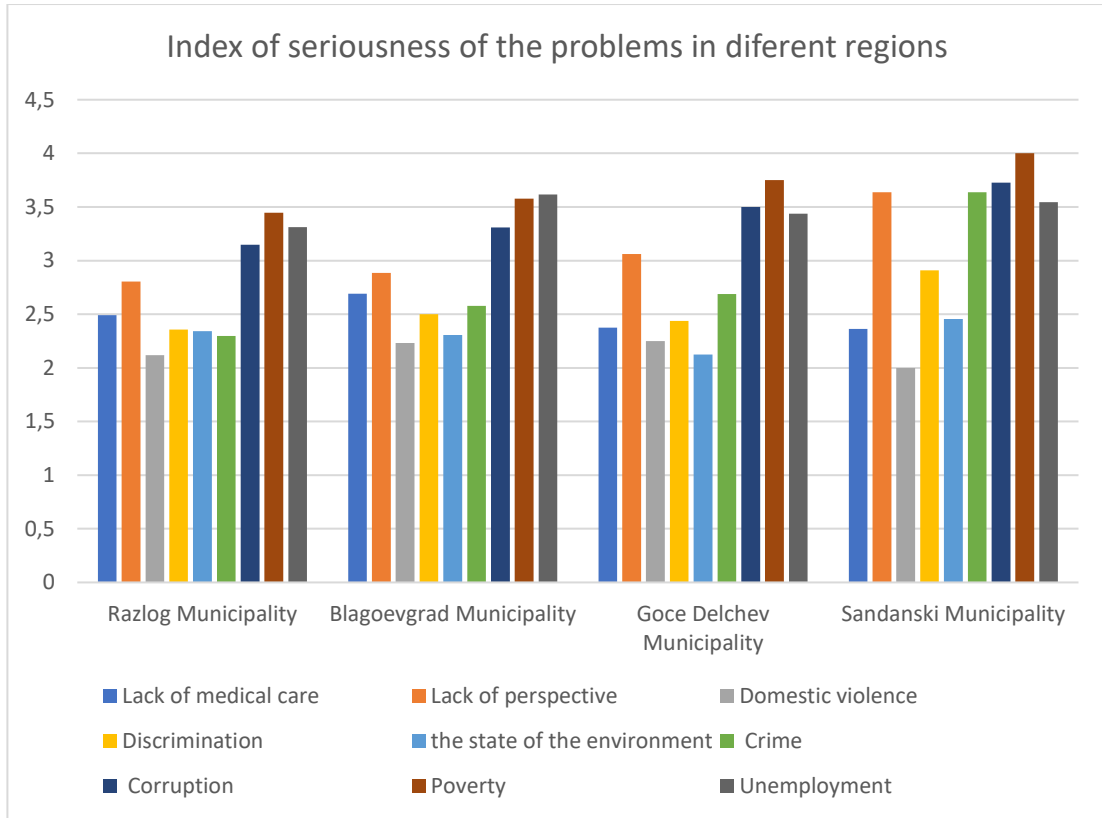


Figure 30

The comparison of the opinions on seriousness of the top problem – poverty, according to different targeted groups gives interesting results (Figure 31). Biggest shares of people considering poverty to be a very serious problem are among representatives of the ethnic minority, long-term unemployed and single mothers – respectively 55%, 50% and 40%.

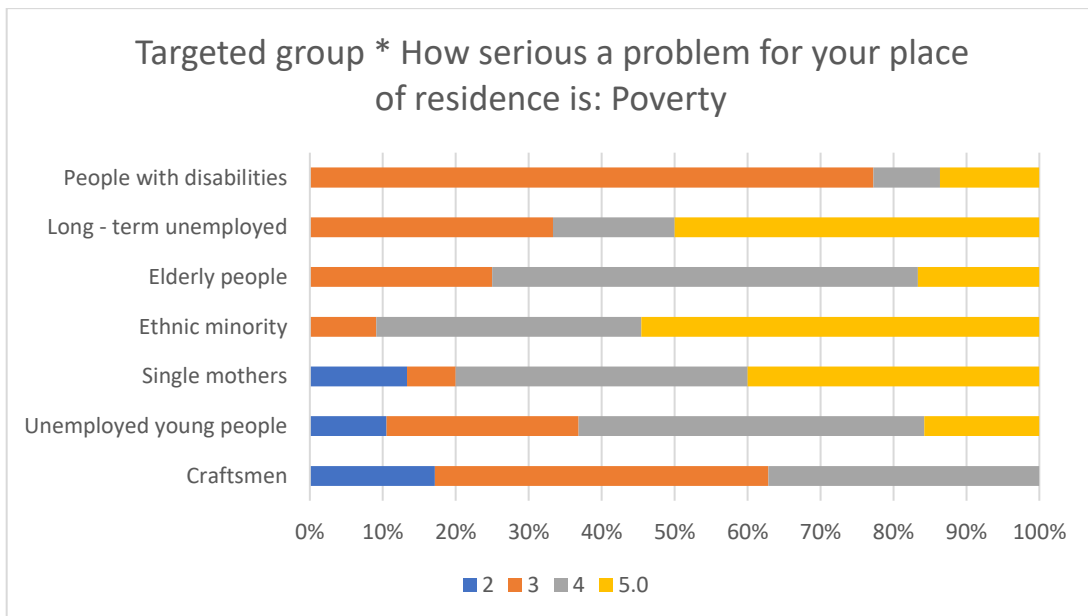


Figure 31

***Capacity building for work with targeted groups***

Undoubtedly, among the most important results of the project, along with the impact for the participants is the capacity building for the partners. Alongside with gathered knowledge and the cooperation and management experience, the opportunity to practically implement the project has given the partners and their experts invaluable experience in working with the target groups, good practices know-how and experience in solving practical challenges and problems.

One of the key benefits for the partners in the capacity building respect is the know-how on good practices seen in the visits of social enterprises in other countries. According to experts from International Initiatives for Cooperation and the Regional Center for vocational education training to CCI – Blagoevgrad, partners saw amazing things aboard and the visits were tremendously useful and eye-opening. They learned in detail about good practices and possible ways to implement them here. Another strong point both as capacity building but also as benefit in the SOCIALCRAFTS project is the transition of this experience to the participants. In this way participants were acquainted not only with good practices from Bulgaria and Greece, but also from other countries with much more experience in the matter.

An important lesson is connected to the challenges of motivating people in need to participate in the project and its events. Despite them being in need, people from all targeted groups don't want to be stigmatized as different and thus prefer not to be involved. Some of the target groups, especially elder people do not return correspondence to strangers, so it is vital to go there personally and get acquainted. Thanks to the implementation of the project partners now have a data base with such people. As one of the experts from ICC put it, they managed to "dig out" people in need of support, showed they are trustworthy and in the future can continue to help them. Because of their work on SOCIALCRAFTS participants are now acquainted with them and more importantly – trust them, because they saw their dedication.

According to the experts from Business center "Maritsa" something seemingly simple like finding a place for the meetings and seminars may turn out a huge challenge, because of the lack of suitable infrastructure. The need for taking such matters into account when planning the project events is a valuable lesson for them. Another challenge that needs to be considered is the fact that in our country there are too many organizations for people with disabilities who instead of helping each other are in conflicts and are in fact an obstacle. Local

enmities might prevent people to meet and work together and for someone out of the problematics this is again a logistical challenge.

Next, according to experts from ICC it is very hard to gather people, even if they like the idea to participate, in group seminars and trainings. Participants preferred individual or very small group meetings and consultations, as they feel more secure. Yet another challenge in this regard is connected to the fact that people cannot participate if the training is not in close proximity to their place of residence. Whether those barriers are due to physical limitations as with the targeted group of people with disabilities or to financial limitations or even mindset as with other groups, the requirements for the trainings and seminars to be organized in very small groups and in many locations is a detail which should be taken into consideration. Partners organized mobile groups and did a series of seminars “on the spot”, showed participants instruments to enable them to get beyond their midst despite their immobilization – physically or economically imposed.

All partners share the opinion that it is vital to take further steps and continue the work in future projects that would bring sustainability and even upgrade the current achievements. Seminars and trainings proved to be a mind-altering experience for some of the participants, but experts think that mobile structures should continue their work to keep the motivation in the future. Other ideas on how to continue the work of the project include making a comparison and systematization of good practices which to have a policy recommendation report as a result; finding ways to help people from in-risk groups to register and legalize their work; creating a platform to serve as a mobile employment bureau to link craftsmen and disabled people; establishing mobile marketing centers to teach participants to the new tendencies and technologies.

### ***Networking possibilities, collaboration experience***

An important impact for the partners is as well the network building and the cooperation and administration experience.

Experts from all participants share their desire to continue working with the colleagues they meet while implementing SOCIALCRAFTS. The fact that partners have different backgrounds and specialize in different types of activities and topics is a specific for the consortium and a potential strength. This diversity creates chances for a number of different and beneficial collaborations in the future.

A valuable lesson from the current project as goes to the collaboration of such diverse partners is the need in the future for a more holistic approach and a unified schedule. The INTERREG program permits independent budgets and schedules for different partners in case of a need, which is a great opportunity but can also become obstacle. Because of administrative obstacles and later COVID 19 in the current project partners from Greece and Bulgaria could not follow the initial program and this caused a mismatch in the work of different partners. A suggestion in this regard might be stricter rules in the future so that all partners participate in all joint events.

Further mismatch in the work of partners on both sides of the border comes from the funding scheme and more specifically the fact that in Greece large part of the money are transferred as pre-financing while in Bulgaria there is no such possibility. An opportunity of a larger in-advance financing would be very beneficial for NGOs and associations that are not subsidized by the budget and would allow higher participation.

Last but not least, experts share that one of the most important lessons of the SOCIALCRAFTS project – as for partners, but also for the participants - is that people on the two sides of the borders are very close as culture, mentality, way of living. The opportunities that the project created for collaboration and cooperation and for the people from the bordering regions to meet is invaluable experience and will undoubtedly have a ripple-like effect further in the future.

## SUMMARY

Grounded in the theory of change paradigm, the impact analysis combines assessment and evaluation of three interrelated outcomes of the project: the implementations of the project - objectives, activities and products; its effect - results and expected impact and also presents; lessons that partners learned while implementing the project and related sustainability recommendations.

In order to fulfill the objectives connected with artisans, the project implemented activities that would: 1) offer them support in better branding and marketing their products, even in international markets; 2) help them reform their activities and becoming social entrepreneurs and safeguards of the CB heritage; 3) endorse a more inclusive spirit and employing disadvantaged persons, thus promoting a social profile. Regarding the support services targeted to in-risk groups – people with disabilities, long-term unemployed, unemployed young people, single mothers, elderly people, ethnic minority representatives – activities are aimed to: 1) support their personal development; 2) facilitate their insertion to supported social enterprises; 3) help to initiate social entrepreneurship on their own.

Among the many valuable outcomes of the SOCIALCRAFTS project one can highlight the improvement of the job access for vulnerable groups in the area with the use of innovative practices, especially in reaching and employing isolated and deprived communities, such as persons with disabilities, Roma population, etc. Another important outcome is the establishment of new mechanisms for coping with the poverty by promoting services of comfort and counselling at home, including in rural and isolated areas. Worthy of mentioning is as well the improved capacity and more efficient marketing skills of craftsmen. Other important outcomes are the promotion of social entrepreneurship, the promotion of self-employment and the fight against digital illiteracy.

To reflect the diversity of the targeted groups and the wide spectrum of aims, various trainings and counseling seminars are conducted in the project. In regard to the topic, one can distinguish five type of trainings: marketing trainings, counseling for people with disabilities, career counseling, IT training, business and entrepreneurship trainings. The differing in type and subject trainings and seminars are predominantly visited by the corresponding targeted group, e.g. marketing trainings are mostly visited by craftsmen,

whereas the counseling seminars for people with disabilities are mostly visited by people with disabilities. In regard to the geographical perspective, activities span across five municipalities: Haskovo, Razlog, Sandanski, Blagoevgrad and Gotse Delchev. The differing targeted groups and participants are represented in trainings all over the included regions, although there are variations in the number of participants from different groups in the different regions. The diversity of the participants, which is crucial for the impact to spread easily in the community, is further achieved by inclusion of people with varying demographic profiles in terms of age, educational level and gender.

Experts and partners agree that both in terms of economic impact and in terms of social impact the project is successful. In the trainings and seminars, there were very interesting and fruitful discussions devoted to specific examples of good practices and successful career paths for people in risk. In regard to social impact, the project helped the participants to change their point of view and mentality, to be more active.

Further, trainings and consultations are highly valued by the participants. Almost all of them consider their participation in the trainings to be a positive or even very positive experience. What is more, almost all of the participants would recommend a relative or friend to join similar trainings in the future.

Most of the participants find that the trainings are helpful for them both in terms of their economic wellbeing and their psycho-social development. Participants find most valuable the economic impact - finding a job or clients easily in the future, receiving more money. Helping participants to have a better self-esteem is as well highly appreciated. Regarding the importance of the specific characteristics of the trainings, the participants value the most the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge, the closeness of the trainings to their place of residence and the significance and importance of the topics. All the opportunities provided by the project are highly appreciated by the participants. Most of them appreciate the most the opportunity to show their products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application of the project.

There are differences in the overall assessment of the trainings and the expected impact according to the region of the trainings and participants, the types of trainings, the type of targeted group, the age and educational level of the participants. There are statistically significant associations between those variables that are strong enough to influence the results.

With regard to the region, participants from the Gotse Delchev Municipality are most prone to giving very positive assessment of the training and in Razlog and Gotse Delchev all participants would recommend the trainings. There are as well pronounced and statistically significant differences in the assessment of the usefulness of the opportunities provided by the project according to the specific region. The arrangement of the opportunities according to their usefulness is opposite and in a mirror like constellation in Blagoevgrad and Sandanski, and in Gotse Delchev and Razlog.

In regard to the types of trainings, most positively assessed by the participants are the counseling seminars for people with disabilities in which the very positive evaluations are given by most of the participants. All the participants in the counseling seminars for people with disabilities, the marketing trainings and business and entrepreneurship trainings would recommend to their relatives and friends to join similar trainings in the future.

There are specific differences in the assessments of the future impact according to the type of training that are statistically significant. The participants in the IT trainings consider the trainings will have biggest impact on their ability to receive more money, while the participants in other trainings appreciate mostly the impact of the trainings on their ability to find work more easily. There are specifics also for the second and third position. For example, the participants in counseling for people with disabilities, highly appreciate as well their bettered ability to rely more on themselves and be more independent and have better self-esteem, while participants in the business and entrepreneurship trainings and in the marketing, appreciate more their bettered ability to earn money.

With regard to targeted groups, some groups are more prone to giving a very positive assessment to the seminar and training they participated in. For example, people with disabilities give far more favorable assessments in comparison with all other groups. All people with disabilities, elderly people, single mothers and craftsmen will recommend the trainings and seminars.

There are statistically significant associations between the targeted group of the participants and their opinion on the usefulness of most of the presented possibilities, meaning there is an influence. For most groups, and more specifically - craftsmen, single mothers, ethnic minority, elderly people and unemployed young people – the most useful possibility is to show one's products and services to a wide range of people through the online platform and mobile application of the project. For the two groups related to job deficiency -



the long - term unemployed and the undeployed young people - important possibilities provided by the project are as well the support and advice from an expert through the project website and the direct support in the future through the Employment Support Centers in Razlog and Kavala. For the people with disabilities most useful are the possibilities to take part in free participation in trainings and to receive support and advice from an expert through the project website.

There are no significant associations between the assessment of the trainings and the expected future impact and the gender of the participants. With regard to age, there are significant associations between the age group of the participants and the type of training, on the one hand, and the age group of the participants and their targeted group, on the other. There are statistically significant associations between the educational level of the participants and their assessment of the importance of the accessible and easy-to-obtain knowledge and between the educational level of the participants and their assessment of the importance of the topic of the trainings. Further, the statistical tests show that there are statistically significant associations between the educational level of the participants and their opinion on the usefulness of all of the presented possibilities. There is a clear tendency that the participants tend to find the opportunities more useful with the higher level of education.

The project and the implementation on its activities have an impact and developmental results not only for the targeted groups but also for the partners in terms of lessons learned and gained experience. Three main types of capacity building impact for the partners: expertise and understanding of the problems of the target groups and of the communities, capacity building for working with target groups and communities, networking possibilities and cooperation experience.

All partners agree that one of the most important assets gained from the work on the SOCIALCRAFT project is the accumulated knowledge. Because of the specifics of the project experts could work with different target groups and communities that have their specific problems and gain knowledge and understanding about their lives and problems. For the people with disabilities and many of the other targeted groups, problems are structural and go far beyond the possibilities of the current project. On the bright side, despite their multitude, the problems are not impossible to solve, if there is a political will. People have many ideas on how to solve the problems and just need the governing bodies to listen. Apart

from the specific problems of the target groups there are common problems challenging all people living in the regions and communities to which the program and the project are directed. All participants consider in various degrees that poverty, unemployment and corruption are a problem in their place of residence.

Alongside with gathered knowledge and the cooperation and management experience, the opportunity to practically implement the project has given the partners and their experts invaluable experience in working with the target groups, good practices know-how and experience in solving practical challenges and problems. In this regard, one of the key benefits for the partners in the capacity building respect is the know-how on good practices seen in the visits of social enterprises in other countries. Another important lesson is connected to the challenges of motivating people in need to participate in the project and its events.

All partners share the opinion that it is vital to take further steps and continue the work in future projects that would bring sustainability and even upgrade the current achievements. Seminars and trainings proved to be a mind-altering experience for some of the participants, but experts think that mobile structures should continue their work to keep the motivation in the future. Other ideas on how to continue the work of the project include making a comparison and systematization of good practices which to have a policy recommendation report as a result; finding ways to help people from in-risk groups to register and legalize their work; creating a platform to serve as a mobile employment bureau to link craftsmen and disabled people; establishing mobile marketing centers to teach participants to the new tendencies and technologies.

As partners themselves put it, they are now very well versed into the topic and can write and implement excellent, “custom designed” and smooth working projects that would further benefit the targeted groups of the project. What is more, they now have the network and the cooperation and administration experience. Experts from all participating organizations share their desire to continue working with the colleagues they meet while implementing SOCIALCRAFTS.

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## ATTACHMENTS

### Topics in Interviews with beneficiaries and partners

1. Cooperation:
  - possibilities that cooperation created,
  - difficulties in work with partners (e.g. legislation, language, deadlines, etc.)
  
2. Impact on targeted groups:
  - how do partners evaluate it;
  - social impact (autonomy; job security; equal opportunities; participation and influence);
  - economic impact (higher income, better sales opportunities)
  - specific problems of targeted people left unaddressed;
  
3. Work with targeted groups:
  - positive experience – what was done good;
  - negative experience – what could have been done better;
  - difficulties in the work itself – anticipated difficulties and how they were handled, emerging difficulties and how they were handled;
  
4. Impact on community:
  - how do partners evaluate it;
  - economic impact for community (better job market, higher income, richer community)
  - social impact for community (crafts and heritage; social cohesion, diversity, more opportunities, active citizens)
  - specific problems of community left unaddressed;
  
5. Future possibilities:
  - cooperation
  - targeted groups
  - community

Questionnaire for the survey with participants

8. Вашата възраст в навършени години:

- от 18 до 29 1
- от 30 до 39 2
- от 40 до 49 3
- от 50 до 59 4
- над 60 5

9. Вие сте:

- Жена 1
- Мъж 2

Не на района

Вид обучение

Вид търговия

**Анкетна карта  
за интервюта с участници в проекта**

Уважаема госпожо / Уважаеми господине,  
Обръщаме към Вас с молба да изразите мнението си за обучението, в което участвахте днес, както и за проекта и свързаните с него инициативи и възможности.  
Участието Ви в изследването е доброволно и анонимно, отговорите Ви няма да бъдат свързани с името Ви по никакъв начин.  
Молим Ви да четете внимателно въпросите и да посочите отговора, който е най-близко до личното Ви мнение.  
Благодарим Ви за отзивчивостта!

**1. Като цяло как оценявате обучението, в което участвахте днес?**

- Много положително 1
- По-скоро положително 2
- По-скоро отрицателно 3
- Много отрицателно 4

**2. Според Вас, доколко наученото в обучението днес ще Ви помогне:  
(Моля, отговорете на всеки ред)**

	В голяма степен ще ми помогне 1	В известна степен ще ми помогне 2	Няма да ми помогне 3
1. Да си намерите по-лесно работа или клиенти?	1	2	3
2. Да получавате повече пари?	1	2	3
3. Да разчитате повече на себе си и да сте по-самостоятелни?	1	2	3
4. Да имате по-добро самочувствие?	1	2	3
5. Да получите равни на останалите възможности за развитие?	1	2	3
6. Да имате повече влияние в семейството и сред приятелите си?	1	2	3
7. Да имате повече влияние в общността?	1	2	3

**БЛАГОДАРИМ ВИ ЗА ОТДЕЛНОТО ВРЕМЕ!**

**3. Доколко оценявате като важни за Вас изброените по-долу особености на обучението, в което участвахте днес:  
(Моля, отговорете на всеки ред)**

	В голяма степен е важно 1	В известна степен е важно 2	Не е важно за мен 3	Не е отнесимо/вярно 4
1. Достъпно поднесено знание	1	2	3	4
2. Безплатни материали и ресурси	1	2	3	4
3. Значимост и важност на темата и засегнатите въпроси	1	2	3	4
4. Индивидуализиран подход, съобразен с моите нужди	1	2	3	4
5. Провеждане в близост до местното населено място	1	2	3	4
6. Друго (Моля, посочете)	1	2	3	4

**4. Доколко оценявате като полезни за Вас изброените по-долу възможности, които Ви предоставя проектът:  
(Моля, отговорете на всеки ред)**

	В голяма степен е полезно 1	В известна степен е полезно 2	Няма да е полезно за мен 3
1. Да участвате безплатно в обученията като днешното	1	2	3
2. Да получите и в бъдеще подкрепа и съвет от експерт чрез сайта на проекта	1	2	3
3. Да получите и в бъдеще директна подкрепа чрез Центровете за подкрепа на заетостта в Разлог и Кавала	1	2	3
4. Да покажете продуктите и услугите си на широк кръг от хора чрез онлайн платформата и мобилното приложение на проекта	1	2	3
5. Друго (Моля, посочете)	1	2	3

**5. Бихте ли препоръчали на Ваши близки и приятели да се включат в подобни обучения в бъдеще?**

- Да 1
- Не 2
- Нямам близки, на които би било полезно 3

**6. Доколко тежък проблем за Вашето населено място е:  
(Моля, отговорете на всеки ред)**

	Изобщо не е проблем 1	2	3	4	Много тежък проблем 5
1. Безработицата	1	2	3	4	5
2. Бедността	1	2	3	4	5
3. Корупцията	1	2	3	4	5
4. Престъпността	1	2	3	4	5
5. Състоянието на околната среда	1	2	3	4	5
6. Дискриминацията	1	2	3	4	5
7. Домашното насилие	1	2	3	4	5
8. Липса на перспектива	1	2	3	4	5
9. Липса на медийно обслужване	1	2	3	4	5

**7. Какво е Вашето най-високо завършено образование?**

- Без образование 1
- Начално 2
- Основно 3
- Средно 4
- Висше/полувисше 5