Transferability Manual

THE MISSING ~~ENTREPRENEURS~~

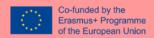**Project reference number: 2020-1-FR01-KA204-080632**

Project title: The Missing Entrepreneurs: Promoting capacity building of Missing Entrepreneurs for inclusive digital entrepreneurship and digital transformation of businesses

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1. Introduction

The Missing Entrepreneur has been integrated in the existing programmes of entrepreneurship following a policy recommendation of the OECD report "The Missing Entrepreneurs 2019"[1]. International surveys show that women, immigrants, youth, and seniors are significantly underrepresented among digital entrepreneurs in the EU (Eurostat, Labor Force Survey, 2019). The reasons vary, including a lack of digital entrepreneurship role models and a lack of digital skills. The purpose of this project is to create an inclusive culture for digital startups and support the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills among underrepresented groups such as women, migrants, youth, and seniors.
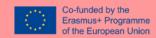
This transferability manual has been developed by following a strategy plan, supporting the transference of the results of this project into other countries. It will be a vehicle to disseminate the materials and conclusions of the project and to promote their horizontal transfer at an international level. The following document highlights the main factors, which need consideration when transferring the results of this project into other countries.

In order to provide a comprehensive path for international and/or transnational adoption, each partner region and their individual needs have been described and analysed. Additionally, all partners allowed for an overview of all necessary provisions and challenges within their implementation process. Furthermore, stakeholders in countries not represented by this partnership were consulted and asked to address the main fields of this project – i.e. 'Entrepreneurship', 'Adult Education', and 'Social Support'.

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[1] OECD/European Commission (2021), The Missing Entrepreneurs 2021: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment, OECD Publishing, Paris.

2. Regional Conditions

The project has been run by each partner through different channels and dissemination networks. All partners had either local and national stakeholders who also engaged with the project or in some cases were able to use their own resources and networks to create significant momentum.
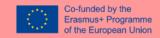
The consortium has been using its' partners and stakeholders on local and national levels to promote the platform. This is done via periodical newsletters and special invitations, and updates as well as multiplier events. Some partners also expect to also attract interest outside the educational and training framework of the consortium. The piloting and the multiplier event for the project were especially successful in Cyprus, with 76 participants attending both events.

The partners with an accredited training and educational program also use their internal resources to also attract attention to the project. Thus, also providing possibilities for young learners within their programmes to engage with the platform. Furthermore, the platform has already been disseminated to adult education centres, and local and national schools with existing collaborations. Also, SMEs with senior-owners have shown some interest for digital entrepreneurship.

The following pages give an overview of the regional analysis of the project. By focusing on engagement and the individual demands in each region three clear factors could be determined.

1. Though causes and motivations vary, all partner regions show similarities in demands and needs.

2. The Covid-pandemic has been a major factor in rising e-commerce demand and has also incentivised older business owners to get more involved.

3. In almost every region business planning and analytics are amongst the top three demanded skills.

Austria

The platform received a great amount of interest. However, for some target groups a language barrier remained. In particular, within migrant communities, which have difficulties with German and English. Furthermore, it is also hard to maintain an easy-language-approach since the platform also deals with specific topics requiring a specialised terminology.

Basic digital skills are a requirement for the platform and while many participants already had these, some participants, especially seniors, were not confident in using the platform. Independent users were thus mostly younger adults while seniors showed the need for workshops, introducing them to the medium. The various tools, which are free of charge, have shown a very high usability. Some of the well-established tools, like Wordpress, Canva, Trello, Google Workspace additionally show a high engagement and popularity. Participants are thus not only interested in gaining new skills but also use the platform to deepen their knowledge in already existing fields.

The Covid-Pandemic had also a dual effect on senior-engagement with the platform and the topic of entrepreneurship. While it motivated some to engage with topics of digitalisation and technology, it also obstructed greatly needed in-person workshops.

By translating the learning platform into German it has grown accessible to all German speaking countries thus creating a much greater potential audience. Keeping in, mind that Austria has a large group of inter european migrant-communities a translation into other (mostly eastern European languages) would have a dual effect of both addressing language speakers within and outside of a country. For the most requested tools, there are also video tutorials in almost any language, as well as assistance and support. Though English still remains dominant and can be a barrier for some users.

The following aspects are ranked by their potential impact and use in Austria:
1. Communication and marketing (branding)
2. Project management
3. Product launching/MVP
4. Ideation
5. Business plan and analytics

Cyprus

The platform received much interest from the start on – even the English-only version attracted much engagement, which allowed for a solid analysis of needs and interest within the participating groups.

The major needs localised were:

- How to start a business
- How to write a business plan
- How to find funding

Another target group attracted were migrant women, who also showed great interest in the English platform, but lacked the necessary digital skills to navigate it in full. A high amount of engagement with the platform was during the open piloting, when registration was not necessary. After putting up a registration barrier, engagement either dropped or could not be traced back to the initial users but rather shifted to a different user group.

In general, SMEs in Cyprus face the difficulty on how to start their businesses as well as problems in managing income, expenses and the distribution of salaries.

Many employers and employees also lack skills in organising their everyday work and using practical techniques and software. They are faced with a small market which requires a good network and high marketing skills, yet cannot confidently navigate it.

The Cypriot market has been changing over the last years and many companies have turned to providing their services online (also due to the Covid-pandemic). Skills to navigate the increase of e-commerce are thus greatly valued.

The following aspects are ranked by their potential regarding impact and usage in Cyprus:

1. Business Plan & Analytics
2. Project Management
3. Communication & Marketing
4. E-Commerce
5. Invoicing, Accounting and Payroll

France

Localising French needs, showed how most people were familiar with entrepreneurship, the majority of them however, had financial and time management problems, as well as a lack of knowledge on how to run/adjust a business.

Furthermore, there was a lack of general knowledge in digital entrepreneurship. Most of the participants either did not consider the possibility of engaging in digital entrepreneurship, or had not enough technical knowledge to carry out such an initiative. Additionally, web development has proven to be a highly neglected, yet crucial aspect for digital businesses.

Of those starting their own businesses a significant few have shown to have problems in developing solid business plans and taking full advantage of data analysis. Training these skills remains important for the growth and sustainability of new businesses.

Thus the following aspects were ranked by their potential regarding impact and usage in France

1. Communication and marketing (branding, logistics, distribution)
2. Business plan and analytics
3. Product launching / MVP (web development)
4. Invoicing, Accounting and Payroll (Finances)

Italy

The focus region is mainly characterised by small and family run businesses, which run on traditional business models and therefore have not yet ventured into the digital space. This configuration makes the younger generations to be the first ones to be interested in expanding their existing family businesses digitally. Being online has become increasingly determinant to stand out from competitors. The platform has thus been most interesting for young professionals and students while seniors are largely cut off from this sector. However digital skills are generally low in Italy, which is ranked among the last in Europe.

In addition to seniors the platform also showed low engagement among immigrant communities who also expressed difficulties in using the platform due to language barriers.

The number of start-ups in Italy has been increasing steadily and thus generating a great need for skills about starting and planning a business, and staying competitive. Additionally, demands for organisational skills have soared as well. The platform thus offers tools which can be used in all types of businesses.

In conclusion, the following aspects were ranked by their potential regarding impact and usage:

1. Communication and marketing, e-commerce
2. Business plan and analytics
3. Project management

Portugal

The Portuguese market shows a lack of people working in digital enterprises or as digital entrepreneurs. People usually own physical businesses and only use social media for advertising their work/products – thus, the full potential of the digital space remains unused.

Throughout the process it proved to be especially difficult to engage with professionals and digital entrepreneurs, particularly from migrant groups. The participants in the pilot testing were thus mostly students and young adults, though most of them were not interested in the entrepreneurship area. Creating engagement and accounting for registrations proved to be exceedingly hard to accomplish – also owing to a lack of entrepreneurial culture among target groups.

There are a lot of SMEs in Portugal (99.3% of the Portuguese enterprises are of small and medium dimension) and one of the biggest challenges for these entrepreneurs is to know how to start/plan a business, how to keep it successful and unique. A significant number of SME owners also lack financial expertise to run their businesses proficiently. These business owners often have major difficulties in standing out against competitors – or even keeping up with them.

A great majority of local entrepreneurs only use social media (like Facebook and Instagram) to promote their businesses. For some this might be enough however, web development and coding are added value and key for further business development. Numbers also show that a great number of companies work without the proper management skills – reflecting in low employee attitudes

The aspects of the platform that have the greatest potential for use in Portugal are ranked:

1. Business plan and Analytics
2. Invoicing, Accounting and Payroll (Finance)
3. Communication and marketing (Branding)
4. Product launching/MVP (web development)
5. Project Management

Spain

The main barriers entrepreneurship in Spain faces when starting digital businesses is lack of time, economic problems and occasionally the amount of bureaucracy that involves starting a business. One of the main needs that have been identified is the interest of entrepreneurs to become digital, most of the people involved in the piloting or who attend the multiplier event agreed that nowadays it is fundamental to be online. Small Businesses are looking to improve their efficiency by having online shops and promoting their services and products through social networks.

Additionally, the Covid pandemic made many Spanish entrepreneurs realise the potential and necessity to have an online shop. This led to a major shift in attitude and entrepreneurs are seeking to promote their services and products online.

Entrepreneurs who are starting their small business find fundamental Project management tools since it helps to organise and have an overview of the projects and activities. Spanish entrepreneurs after the COVID19 crisis have realised the potential and necessity to have an online shop. That's why most of the entrepreneurs no matter the service or product they sell, they all want to be online.

However, a lack of information and difficulties in a is the difficulties that are facing.

1. Communication & Marketing
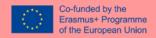2. Project Management
3. E-Commerce

3. Results – Piloting

Between October and January, The Missing Entrepreneurs consortium prepared and presented the work developed throughout the project, specifically, the training platform. The aim was to pilot test the areas and tools created by each partner with the target/groups of the project: students, young people, migrants, women and seniors.

In total, the final number of participants involved was achieved, however, the major difficulty of this Intellectual Output was actually finding the necessary people for the pilot testing, especially the seniors. Some partners were not able to engage some of the needed participants, nonetheless, that difficulty was tackled with extra numbers from other partners who were able to engage more senior participants then the minimum required. Another difficulty found was to comply with this number of participants with the registrations into the platform. Some partners noticed that some participants didn't join the activities with a computer or didn't want to register at the time, which made it hard to achieve a good amount of registrations into the platform.

One of the main objectives of these pilot tests was to collect heterogeneous feedback from the participants based on their different perspectives and, thus, note what are the platform's strengths, weaknesses and threats, as well as suggestions. With this value feedback, the partnership will not only be able to be aware of their work and the relevance of the platform, but also be able to make the project sustainable. With the feedback collected from the non-national roundtables, the pilot tests and the virtual roundtables (between the project partners), the training platform will be improved in the meantime and throughout the future. The intention is to upgrade the platform within every three to six months, in order to keep it updated (for example, by changing outdated resources) and to engage participants in a constant way. This also means that this piloting could be useful to be implemented in other countries and regions outside of the partnership.

Therefore, the evaluation questionnaires, from which feedback was collected, provided some important ideas of what kind of improvements need to be done into the training platform. Those suggestions were already mentioned in the previous section and will dictate the refinement of the materials and content of the training platform and the project itself. The majority of the participants believe in the continuity and sustainability of the project. Hence, the partners' job is to make it happen.

4.Recommendation for transfer

In order to allow for a comprehensive understanding of an international and/or transnational adoption, each partner within the project consulted stakeholders in countries not represented by this partnership on 'Entrepreneurship', 'Adult Education', and on 'Social Support'.

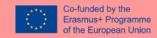These virtual roundtables were composed of two parts:

Part 1 – Presentation of the project and of its' results – these have been summarised under '2. Regional conditions' and '3. Results – Piloting'

Part 2 – Roundtables on the transferability of the project results to countries not represented in the consortium

Throughout the roundtable process results showed that the project-platform is well received for the intuitive and thought through design as well as the clear and accessible content. The concept showed to be flexible and adaptable for an easy transfer into different systems. A crucial part of transferability showed to be addressing participant's personal involvement. By addressing global skills and competences and using a comprehensive approach, the platform showed to be adaptable for any individual use within the partner countries and very promising for others as well.

The comprehensive approach was especially useful to individuals wanting to scale their skills in certain areas but also for use in educational settings. This however, also showed a divergence in national structures as well as the strength of the skills- and competence focused approach. By providing the freedom for any user to curate their specific learning plan according to their needs, both individual and collective learning situations were addressed. The necessary entrepreneurial skills provided were therefore equally fitting for any partner country and region.

The main outcomes of the above-mentioned round tables are summarised in the following. The participating countries were Bulgaria, Germany, Malta North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey.

The participants had high praises for the platform, especially regarding the layout/design of the platform and the choice of content. They feedbacked that both the chosen areas and tools are very relevant for digital entrepreneurship and for the target groups involved.
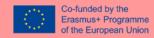
Participants believed the forum on the platform to have great potential and should be used to widen the project reach and impact, creating a network of entrepreneurs/people interested in the topic/people wanting to start operating in this field. A majority of the roundtables also agreed that the platform has potential to be exploited in non-entrepreneurship related fields as well, such as general graphic and web design.

These participants mentioned that the platform would be very useful and helpful for new entrepreneurs in their countries of residence and also be used in their classes (some of whom were teachers). However, participants also noted that it might be more difficult to reach the elderly – which has also been already experienced during the piloting. Though in general the digital setting will favour people with already existing digital skills much more than others. They would also do much better in the self-learning phase than those who do not have enough knowledge and experience.

Much potential was also given to the ability of upskilling communication & marketing and E-Commerce areas. Especially for rural areas the platform provides much potential in enhancing digital entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector.

A major factor for all stakeholders were language barriers. All participants agreed that in order to have a meaningful impact the platform needs to be available in at least the national languages. A translation into further languages to also accompany migrant communities would additionally be of immense value. Thus, plug-in translators – even though not always the best option – can at least make users' lives easier. However, the English version also

provides the opportunity to also familiarise with specific English terminology and improve a businesses' international profile.

Many participants also agreed that further information on how to start a business in the country of residence would also be of added value. This would also include region-specific information about finances, taxes, invoices, accounting, 'how to do it', 'who to talk to', 'how to deal with all the barriers related to starting a business', contact persons and institutions, social security issues, etc. To keep this manageable and avoid information from becoming outdated referrals and links to official websites would be an advisable first step.

The round tables also estimated that the platform required rudimentary digital skills to be successfully used and would thus be advised to be accompanied with recurring workshops and more guidance for users. It was also mentioned that these workshops could also be widened to cover issues such as legal requirements for setting up businesses as well as privacy and copyright matters. These could be implemented in partnership with the respective local institutions and organisations.

SWOT Analysis of the possible impact and potential of the project

S

STRENGTHS

Visually appealing and intuitive
Simple / clear user interface
Compactly collected and curated information
Comprehensive approach
Structure and content
Use of explanatory videos
Badges as motivation for learning
Contents are free to access

W

WEAKNESSES

Outreach to elderly people
Outreach to persons with low digital skills
Language barrier for migrants
Lack of introduction to digital literacy

O

OPPORTUNITIES

Including relevant regional information
Variety of the course – more groups of people can be addressed
Add more information on how to help future entrepreneurs to start their own business depending on the country of residence
The scope of the course is very broad, participants can engage all areas and tools and choose only the ones which they prefer
Include the platform as part of schools' curriculum or as a training course for training centres or even senior universities.

T

THREATS

Translations of the platform into different languages
Not offering the target groups additional training on non-technical skills, such as soft skills
Keeping the resources updated
Offering the target groups additional training on how to use the platform or on other skills
Missing further languages
Materials that are no longer accessible
Not regular updates of the platform
Lack of self-motivation for self-study
Materials that are no longer available online

Conclusion

In conclusion the has been received an overwhelming response from partners, stakeholder and participants. It has been greatly credited for the curation and adoption of its' content as well as the design, interface and usability

The tools introduced for each section have been carefully selected and fit greatly to the needs addressed. The variety of the chosen tools also add to the different needs and skill levels of the users. Additionally, the gamification of the learning process through the use of badges has been received tremendously. It has also been suggested to include the platform in school curriculums in order to prepare students for the labour market and professional career.

Moreover, specific sections for under-represented target groups (e.g., personalised feedback for women/immigrants) could be added to the training content. For example, seniors would receive a tutorial on how to start training gradually if they have no technical knowledge. Furthermore, target groups could also receive additional training on non-technical skills, such as soft skills.

The platform is expected to be advertised and shared and through other projects related to entrepreneurship, since the materials have shown to be very helpful for potential entrepreneurs.