EVALUATION OF PILOT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

SoftSkills4EU:

Promote your Soft Skills with Open Badges

REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

OUTPUT:

IO4 IMPLEMANTATION OF PILOT TRAINING

ACTIVITY:

IO4O3: EVALUATION OF PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

OUTPUT LEADER:

RIC NOVO MESTO

PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT:

SoftSkills4EU: Promote your Soft Skills with Open Badges

PROJECT TITLE:

Promote your soft skills with open badges

ACRONYM:

SoftSkills4eu

PROJECT WEBSITE:

https://softskills4.eu/

PROJECT E-ACADAMY:

https://academy-softskills4.eu/

PROJECT NO.:

2018-1-SI01-KA204-047088

PROJECT COORDINATOR:

Development and Education Centre Novo mesto (RIC Novo mesto), Slovenia

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DESCRIPTION OF IO4- PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Pilots were implemented in all partner countries with the main aim to improve created modules and procedures of gaining OB. In this output we focused on the pilot implementation of the developed results. The developed system and e-learning materials were tested through an on-line course (focused on the testing of the procedure), therefore the Guidelines for implementing pilots were developed. Plan was to involve in the pilot implementation 20 job seekers per partner country. However, in regards with CIOVID situation, some minor modification were made.

The main purpose of this activity is to test the developed process from the begging of enrolling participants (who want to get the badge) in learning validation process to the awarding the badges. Mentors who have gained "mentor badges" during JSTE will guide and monitor "job seekers" form the beginning of the process to gaining the badges (including mentoring for passing theoretical and practical assessment).

Before pilot implementation we already implemented several activities to ensure high quality of developed interactive teaching material and assessment procedures:
- C1 activity,
- implemented peer review of 5 modules (partners reviewed modules between each other),
- advisory board (external experts).

We decided that each partner will test their own module, because peer review was already done.

After pilot implementation each partner send evaluation questionnaire to pilot participants to get feedback for needed alignment of main project output. These suggestions were discussed within partnership and with the help of advisory board we made some modification of modules and assessment procedure. However, main proposals were connected with technical improvement (transparency of platform), minor mistakes regarding translation of material, but not the content.

Based on these feedback (described in last two point of this report) we improved modules and OB procedures. WE prepared also video tutorial, to facilitate the use of project results.

Because we will include into the pilots our target group (job seekers: vulnerable groups, migrants ...) we ensured greater visibility of the project, as the information about the project will spread from mouth to mouth.

Transferability potential of this output:

methodology (guidelines) for implementation of pilots will be of high quality and freely accessible on project platform, so it can be usable for other similar pilots implementation for other project.

Duration of IO4: 1.1.2020 – 30.9.2020

DESCRIPTION OF TARGET GROUP INVOLVED IN TRAINING AND ANIMATION OF TARGET GROUP

SLOVENIA

At the RIC organisation we asked many people to help us with the pilot testing of the Softskills4EU platform, bellow there are more exact numbers:

- To 12 migrants (who attended the Slovene course in our organisation) we send an email regarding the instructions on how to complete the pilot testing and then telephoned each and every one of them because unfortunately we did not receive any feedback from them. We suppose this is due to a huge language obstacle, since the migrants do not have a sufficient English knowledge neither the Slovene language knowledge, there were quite many of them that issued the same thing by themselves quite honestly.
- Organisations: we send an email and to The Rog Social Center in Ljubljana which is primarily intended for socializing and political organisation of socially endangered and marginalized social groups and individuals but unfortunately had no reply from them.
- We asked our colleagues in the RIC organisation to go through the pilots as well,
- We contact our colleagues at the Ljubljana Public Education Centre Cene Štupar, which is one of the biggest organisations in the field of adult education in Slovenia asking them to help us do the pilot testing of our newly developed platform.
- We did the same thing with the Zavod Znanje Postojna.
- We approached a network of career counsellors from various adult education organizations (career counselling) for doing and helping us to get more feedbacks to the pilot testing.
- We asked Mrs Mandelj which runs the Invita agency for the development of personal and employment potential in Šmartno pri Litiji to spread the word about the pilot testing amongst her clients – she assured us our e-mail concerning the pilot testing was sent to approximately 40 e-mail addresses.
- We turned to Mrs Bernarda Bevc Bukovec to spread the word about the pilot testing at the Adria Mobil company which is located in Novo mesto,
- We published the projects news and its pilot testing on the EPALE website, as well as on the SoftSkills4Eu Facebook page and the RIC website aiming to get more participants to enroll the pilot testing.
- The news about the project testing was also shared on the EPALE Slovenia Facebook page and on the CMEPIUS Facebook page aiming to get more participants to enroll the pilot testing.

We estimate that due to the Covid19 virus crisis and our organisation shutting down organizations from March14th until May 18th it was nearly impossible for us to hold an alternative class/workshops with other possible candidates or participants of the testing, except making telephone calls and sending e-mails to those who promised being part of the pilot testing before.

CYPRUS

The main aim of the pilot implementation was to test the developed material and the whole process from the beginning of enrolling participants to the platform to go through the material and assessments to obtain the open badges. For the pilots, mentors who have gained the 'Mentor Badge' during the JSTE supported participants to register into the platform and monitored their progress.

For the pilot testing in Cyprus, 3 mentors took part who supported the 22 participants during the whole process. Below you can find some background information regarding the 22 participants of the pilot testing. In terms of the gender 12 participants were identified as females and 10 as males (Figure 1), the majority of them fall in the age group of 25-49 – only two participants stated that they were under 24. Regarding their nationality, half of the participants chose the option 'Other', whereas the other half stated that they were Cypriots (Figure 2). However, all of them were residents of Cyprus.

Regarding their educational background and professional status, 8 of them attended high school but received no diploma, 1 was high school graduate, with diploma or other equivalent, 3 of them received some college education and 10 of them received higher education in the form of a Bachelor or a Master Degree. In terms of their professional status, half of them stated that they were unemployed (11), whereas the other half (11) stated that they are employed.

CROATIA

The main goal of the pilot implementation was to test the developed module "Creative thinking skills" by enrolling the suited participants to the online platform who then had to study the presented learning materials and take the online quiz to test their knowledge upon which they could earn the Badge.

The pilot testing was done at the C1 training event in Nicosia, Cyprus. Two participants from Croatia went through all the materials and assessments, under the mentorship from a university college professor who was also the project leader.

As the learning materials were found suitable for graduates and high school seniors, we decided to administer the pilots at the higher education institution, under the guidance from the same professor (project leader). However, due to the said mentor's prolonged sick leave and the corona virus outbreak, we were forced to change the original plans.

Instead of the on-site pilot implementation, the new project leader (who is also a member of the International office team at the same higher education institution) invited 30 individuals to participate in the online training course "Creative Thinking Skills", mostly recent graduates and young people from our wide professional network who are at the starting point in their careers or temporarily without jobs / between jobs. Some of them are migrants or expatriates.

ITALY

At the C1 training event in Nicosia, November 2019 two Italian participants were present. An expert in occupational psychology and an expert in human resources management.

Altough the learning materials we have developed are much more suited for "middle to high end" learners, EQF 4, 5 and 6, we decided to involve in the pilot activity an audience as wider as possible, asking the organizations of our professional network to support us in recruiting participants.

All the pilot activities have been implemented online due to the restrictions imposed in Italy to any kind of meeting in public or private spaces.

20 Participants have been involved in training course:

NEDERLAND

At the C1 training event in Nicosia, November 2019 two Dutch experts were present. One from a social in novation project, working with low skilled youngsters, the other a teacher from Higher Educational institution.

As was concluded during the C1 training event, the learning materials we have developed are much more suited for "middle to high end" students, let us say, EQF 4, 5, 6. This was the reason to decide to conduct the pilot at the Higher Educational institution, guided by this teacher within one or more of her classes.

But then the plans had to be changed, first I received the message that there would be a little delay because of illness of the teacher, not much later followed by the message that she would not return to work in due time. Together with the Corona crisis hitting in with totally stressed educational institutions, we suddenly had no possibility to arrange an alternative class at that or another institution.

We found a way to do the pilot anyway, by emailing about 30 persons, all "young professionals" in our personal network, most of them in the start of their careers, with a fresh job or a temporary job. The majority of participants hold a Bachelor degree. Part of them being migrants or expats.

DESCRIPTION OF PILOT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

SLOVENIA

The group of people who enrolled to the "Co-operative skills" testing was mainly reached as mentioned above, through e-mails and telephone in the beginning of June. We explained the projects itself and its aim, the importance of testing the platform and gaining their results, the open badges system and we described in detail what are they supposed to do:

- to enroll for at least one Soft Skills module at academy-softskills4.eu, preferably the module that was developed by ourselves: Organisational Skills
- to read carefully through the learning materials of that module
- to do the accompanying assessment
- to fill in the survey afterwards

We offered our assistance and help by giving the opportunity to email and phone whenever something was unclear, misunderstandings or questions would arise.
Some statistical data:

- 15 participants enrolled to the Slovenian version of our module ("Cooperative skills"), while 14 participants enrolled to the English version of our module ("Co-operative skills"). All together we managed to get 29 participants.
- Amongst 29 people, 8 of them managed to earn a badge.
- 5 people earned the badge: Co-operative Skills Advanced Level (2 English version, 3 Slovenian version),
- 2 people earned the badge: Co-operative skills Intermediate Level (both Slovenian version of the module)
- 1 person earned the badge: Co-operative skills Basic Level (also Slovenian version of the module).

- We did not manage to get any participants with migrant background (we are being certain, language was a key barrier as mentioned above)
- Of the 29 people / participants, approximately 50 % enrolled to the module within a week, the rest of participants received a reminder (email) after a period of 2 weeks, and another reminder (phone call) after that.

We estimate the participants had some problem finding time not to enroll to our module but finding enough time to study the teaching material and then filling in the tests since the module content is extensive. We estimate it as a good sign because consequently not everyone can get a badge effortlessly, but it takes some energy to gain it.

CYPRUS

Participants were invited to test the material and platform through different means – participants who attended to the online Multiplier Event organised as part of the project were informed about the pilots. Also, key stakeholders were contacted such as the Cyprus Refugee Council to promote the pilot implementation to the target group. Mentors provided initial support to the participants to register into the platform and to the Social Skills Module and provided information about the general procedure of gaining a badge. Mentors were constantly monitor the progress of the participants, and offered support when required. From the 22 participants who took part at the pilot phase, 20 of them gained the 'Advance Level' on the Social Skills module, and 2 of them the 'Intermediate Level'. Both mentors and participants expressed that they have not faced any difficulties with the procedure, and participants felt supported when they needed any help.

ITALY

In May, this group of people was reached through email, sms, ecc., describing the aim of the project, the importance of testing of our products, what open badges are, asking them:

- to enroll for at least one Soft Skills module at academy-softskills4.eu, preferably the module Personal Skills developed by Promimpresa srl
- to read carefully through the learning materials of that module
- to do the accompanying assessment
- to fill in the survey on quality afterwards

Help was offered beforehand, by giving the opportunity to email or phone or Skype whenever something was unclear, or questions would arise

Some statistics
- Of the twenty people, around half of them enrolled pretty quick, the other half received reminders
- Together with the invite a link to the survey form was issued.
- 20 persons enrolled for the module Personal Skills
- 7 of these are migrants (5 non-western)
- 16 people have done at least one topic the assessment
- 11 people have done all the assessments
- 1 person earned the badge: Personal Skills Intermediate Knowledge
- 10 people earned the badge: Personal Skills Advanced Knowledge

CROATIA

The new project leader provided technical support, controlled the number of participants who enrolled and monitored their progress. The same person also explained the main objectives of the project, all the benefits of enrolment and taking the quiz, what open badges are and their importance career-wise. More specifically, the e-mail that was sent in June to 30 individuals contained the following:

- Name of the project,
- Main aims of the project,
- The nature of participants' engagement,

The participants' engagement was explained in details. They were kindly asked to:

- to enroll for our module "Creative thinking skills", and if possibly to other modules of interest at academy-softskills4.eu,
- to study carefully all the learning materials,
- to take to online quiz / test / self-assessment,
- to fill out the evaluation survey afterwards in order to express their satisfaction with the given module(s).

Help was offered beforehand for all phases of the pilot implementation process.

Statistical data regarding the engagement and the success of the pilot participants:

- After the initial e-mail in early June, a second e-mail / reminder was sent after two weeks,
- No reminder was sent for the evaluation questionnaire as we do not have access to the survey results,
- 19 persons enrolled for the module "Creative thinking skills",
- 18 persons have done the assessment,
- 4 persons earned the badge: Creative thinking skills Intermediate Knowledge,
- 5 persons earned the badge: Creative thinking skills Advanced Knowledge.

NEDERLAND

In May, this group of people was reached through email, describing the aim of the project, the importance of testing of our products, what open badges are and a description of what was asked from them:

- to enroll for at least one Soft Skills module at academy-softskills4.eu, preferrably the module that was developed by ourselves: Organisational Skills
- to read carefully through the learning materials of that module
- to do the accompanying assessment
- to fill in the survey afterwards

Help was offered beforehand, by giving the opportunity to email or phone or Skype whenever something was unclear, or questions would arise (only three needed to do that)

Some statistics

- Of the thirty people, around half of them enrolled pretty quick, the other half received a reminder after two weeks

- After one week a link to the survey form was issued, (I have sent no reminders for the survey, as I did not know who filled it in, and who not)
- 22 persons enrolled for the module Organisational Skills
- at least 5 of these are migrants (2 non-western)
- 17 persons have done the assessment
- 6 persons earned the badge: Organisational Skills Intermediate Knowledge
- 6 persons earned the badge: Organisational Skills Advanced Knowledge

EVALUATION FEEDBACK

SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

At the end of the pilot testing, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form for the overall training and their experience with the material produced.

We have received feedback form 79 participants included in pilots mainly from all partner organizations (see Chart 1. Each module was testes by at least of 18 participants (see Chart 2).
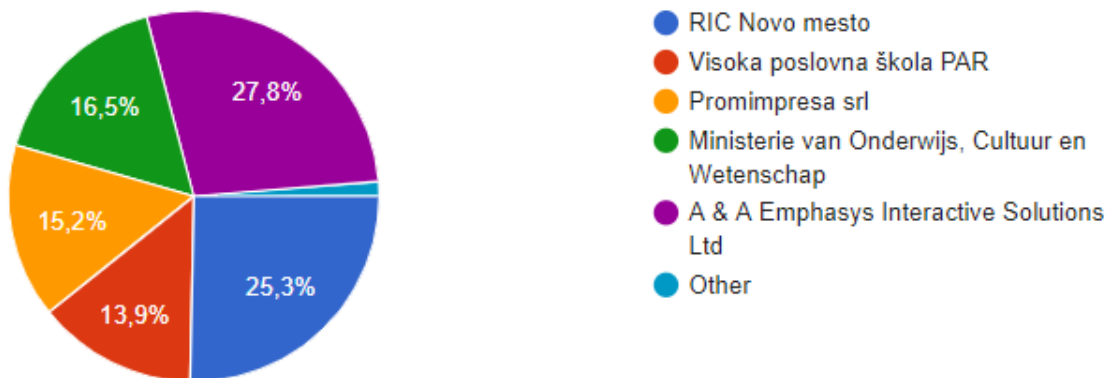
Chart 1: Organization who included participant into pilots
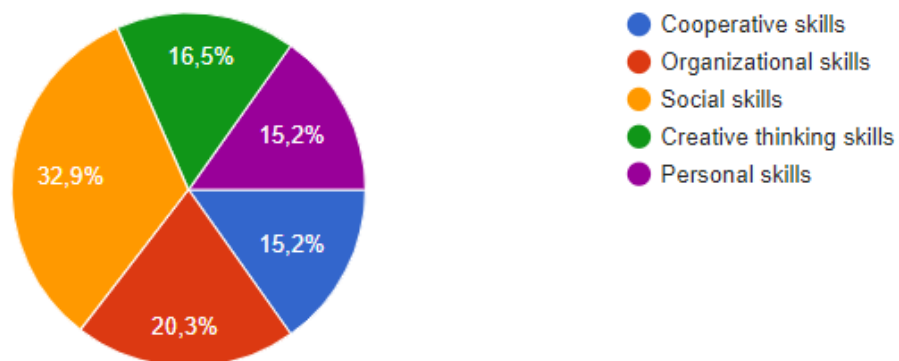
Chart 2: Module in which participants were enrolled in within pilots

Most of participants are within age period from 25 to 49, 53% male and 46,8% female (see Chart 3 and Chart 4), most of them with tertiary education background (See Chart 5). More then a half of them are employed (Chart 6).
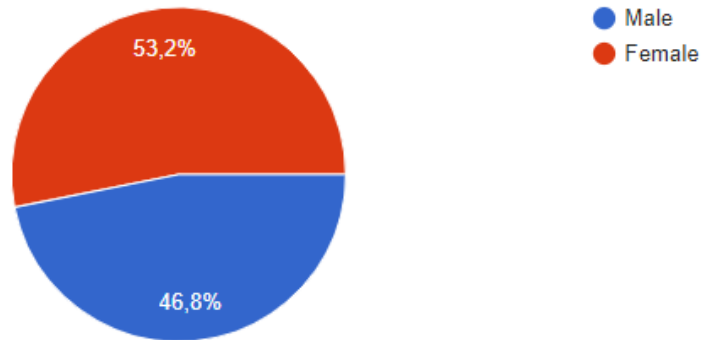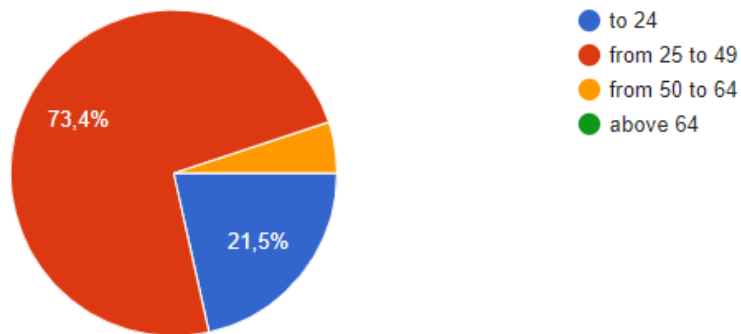

Chart 3: Gender of participants of pilots
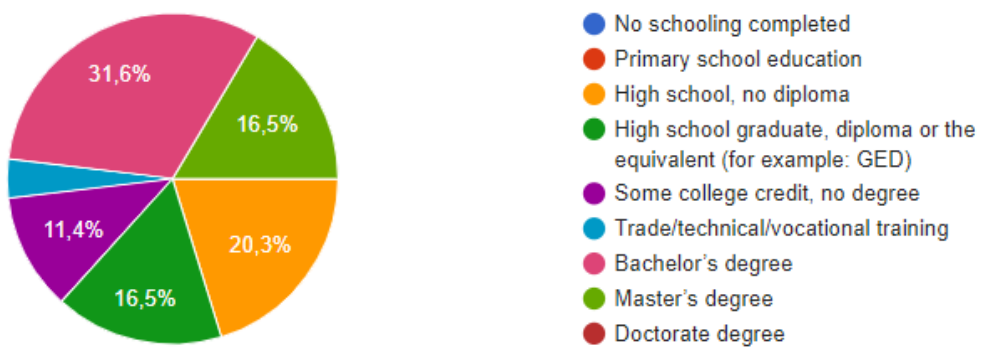

Chart 4: Age of participants of pilots
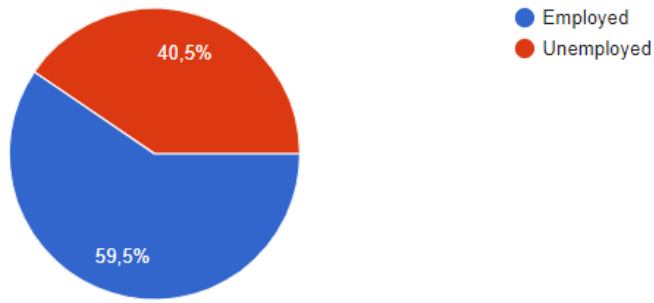

Chart 5: Education background of participants of pilots
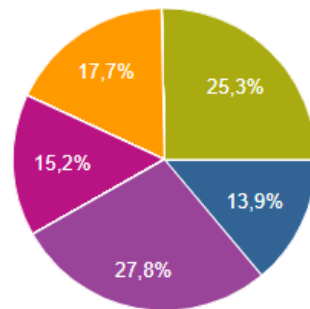
Chart 6: Work status of participants of pilots

Legend:
- Employed
- Unemployed

Chart 7: Country of residence

Chart 8: Country of origin

Legend:
- Slovenia
- Nederland's
- Italy
- Cyprus
- Croatia
  other colors: Other
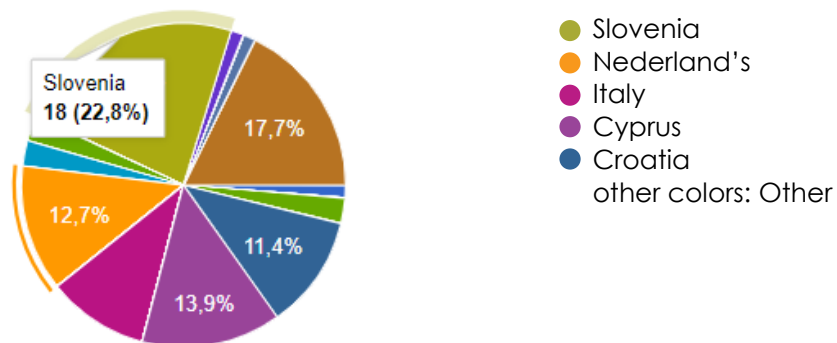
If we compare data country of origin of participants and country of residence, we can conclude, that more than 27% of them were participants with status of foreign (Chart 7 and 8).

Majority of the participants indicated that the pilot training met successfully their expectations and their learning goals (Chart 9 and 10). A large number of the participants commented that they learned something new during the pilot testing and that they found the material and the module interesting, helpful and educational.
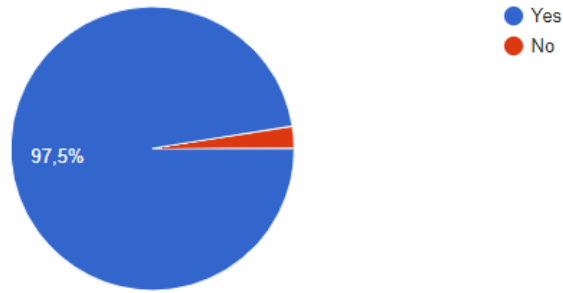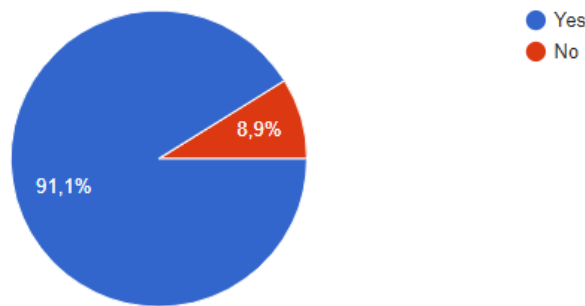
Chart 9: Expectation

Chart 10: Goals

From a scale 1 (being the least) to 5 (being the most), majority of participants rated whether the given module was interesting with 4 or 5, whether the content was appropriate and suitable for them with 4 or 5 and also the usefulness of the module with a 4 or 5 (Chart 11).
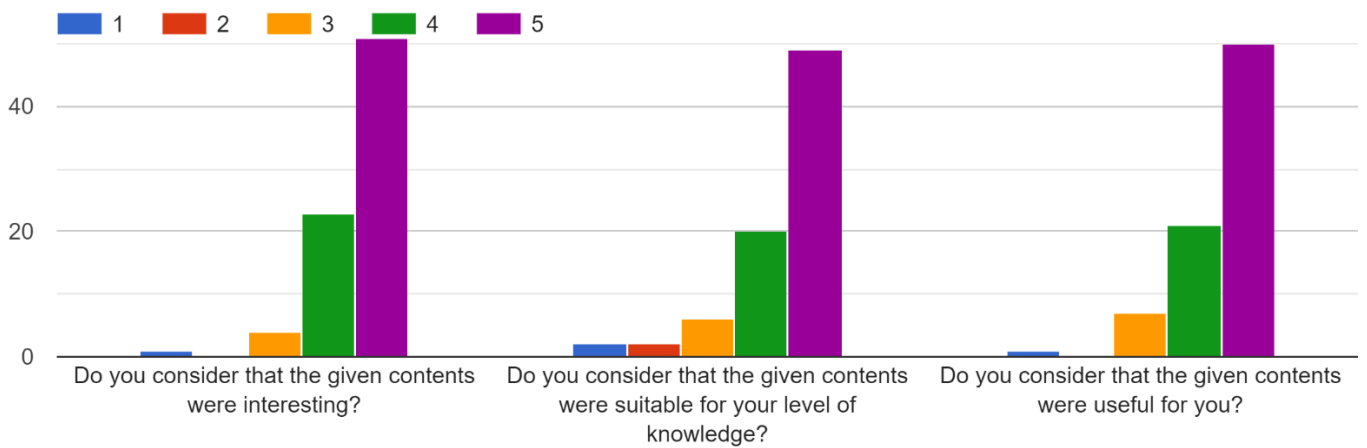

Chart 11: General impression of the module

Similarly, participants rated the quality and diversity of the teaching aids used and the support received from the mentors of the programme with 4 or 5 (Chart 12).
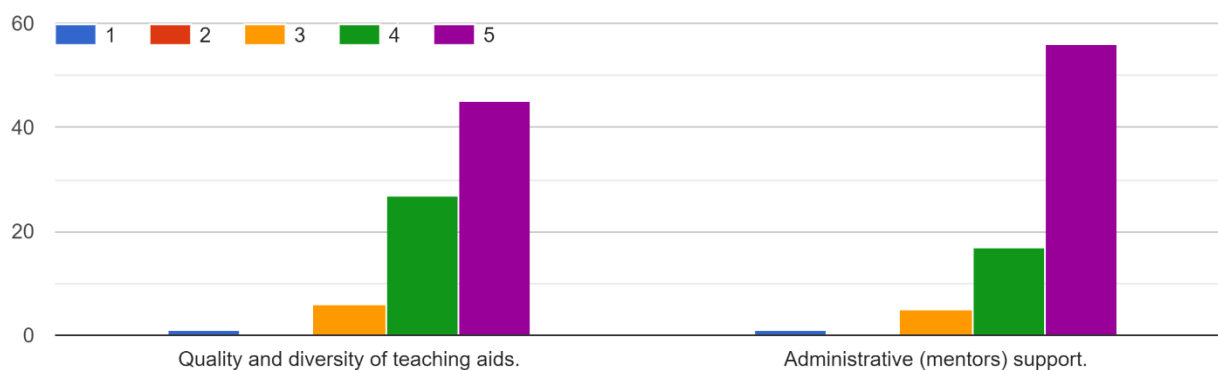

Chart 12: Teaching resources

In terms of the content, all the participants suggested that they had the necessary background and knowledge to get the most out of this course. The topics of Strategic planning, time management, critical thinking, management and working styles, flexibility, logical reasoning, team roles, team building, constant improvement, creative thinking, Self awareness and self management, emotional intelligence, intercultural Skills and conflict management appeared to be the most useful for those who took part at the pilot testing, followed by the topic of communication skills. One answer was that the most useful were tests, because you can monitor your own progress.

The least useful for some of the participants appeared to be the topic form the field that are not connected with their work or ambitions or their future goals (such as leadership) or they already know a lot about the specific topics (e.g. customer service orientation, presentation skills, …). One answer is also that the least interesting was "stress management« because it is too easy to define it under a theory perspective but in the real life it's quite hard.

Feedback from some of them regarding importance of this course for them was really interesting. Here are some of the statements:

"We see that a lot of the topics many of us take for granted are very often not so logical for others. That's why we should always make sure we are on the same page. This course offers a quick and simple way to understanding good and bad practices in the branch of professional relationships. That is why I think this course should have a great importance role in a professional world."

"Yes, it is important. Because it's always good to improve your knowledge and learn new things."

"It's nice addition to get more knowledge about myself and its helps me to get better at my private life and at job."

"It's important and useful in my job position."

"Keep improving in a competitive market."

"It will help me for my cv."

"To work with unemployed."

Finally, the overall feedback for the course was positive and most of the participants stressed the importance of developing your soft skills in order to improve both the quality of your daily life and also your professional status in the job market.

PROPOSAL FOR IMPOVEMENTS

To sum up, the pilot training provided us with a good opportunity to receive direct feedback from the target group of the project on the developed material and also the process of receiving an open badge. Overall, the feedback received was positive and participants found the material appropriate, interesting, and useful for them.

In terms of suggestions for improvement, some of the participants mentioned that they would like to see less questions when it comes to the assessment in order to receive the badge and one participant also mentioned that the levels for the OB could be avoided and have only one OB for each module. Another participant also mentioned that face to face training might be a better option to pilot test the material, instead of doing it online with a mentor supervision.

There were also some suggestions referring to mistakes made while translation phase and some minor technical issues and lacking guidelines for users of platform and visibility of the procedures of gaining OB and how can OB can be used.