INTERFACE

Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Fragile Communities in Europe

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW
AND POLICY IMPACT REPORT

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Executive summary

The Impact assessment

In all countries the GAP Analysis revealed that the respondents to surveys and interviews find the INTERFACE-skills important, although it is a bit of variation between countries which of the skills are thought most important. However, the skills 'leadership', 'resourcefulness', 'resilience' and 'creativity' get the highest scores over all. Also, it is revealed that in all countries, respondents believe that the none of the skills are considered adequate and there are other issues than one or more of the skills that influence their abilities to have positive impact in their society. Respondents expressed interest for participating in a well-defined and planned program for developing the skills.

On the question how people in fragile communities can be approached, the experience in all countries revels that it is not a straightforward task to get enough interest in Fragile communities. There is consensus that such an effort must be carefully planned and executed by people with strong background and knowledge to the communities, be of interest to the community members and not the least to be very much adapted to the local circumstances and needs.

One of the findings of the project is that there was hardly enough reward to coaches from the communities for participation in the INTERFACE program. Following items are mentioned amongst others as input for further reward to increase interest. To have a thorough feedback process running throughout the program. To have a formal certificate of successful completion and an accreditation system in place. To inform the potential participants about the possible positive impact of the course on their own personal CV and future possibilities. To encourage businesses to support their staff members in participating, by allowing them to attend in their paid time and/or compensate for costs related to travel to business visits or to group sessions in the course.

Learnings from pilot run in all countries

In Fragile communities, active people tend to be burdened or involved in several roles due to their willingness and skills. These people thus tend to be very busy and value their time greatly. There can also be hurdles like minimum numbers of attendees due to thin population like in Iceland. The potential solutions to this mentioned by the consortium is to tailor the course and curriculum to the need of the communities in question and adapt the delivering of the program. It is mentioned as well that it might be possible to organise the training content into stand-alone modules, which will allow coaches to undertake those modules they feel most interest in.

On the question of how commitment of those participating in education could be increased, a few ways are suggested. A community of participants is suggested. Programme provisions making potential benefits. More certain and shortened time horizon of the program and/or public endorsement of the programme and Accreditation by some reputable independent body. In INTERFACE curriculum it works well to have the final assignment of a community meeting well-presented from the beginning. In addition, it is mentioned that using success stories about those that have finished such a program and benefitted from it.

There are different views and solutions mentioned regarding the question of how planning and technical solutions might make it easier and applicable for participants to attend the program. It is obvious from the suggestions from the participants that in the Fragile communities, a thorough planning and execution with regards to the relevant community is a must. In addition, it is

mentioned that where applicable, technical solutions like on-line meetings, e-mails, social media and the INTERFACE e-Learning Platform should be used in order to minimize need for spending time and cost on travel. However, it is also important for the beneficiaries to get the opportunity to meet and share experiences in group sessions when needed. Finally, it is mentioned that keeping notes of presentations and discussions and making those available to participants might be useful point of reference and especially for those who were not able to attend a certain group session on certain occasions.

Education, age and background may play a significant difference in how participants develop their skills through a program like INTERFACE and how much impact they will have in their communities. Higher education will be valuable but other form of education and diverse background is of great value too and knowledge to the community is a very important factor. In addition, the situation in the communities is a major factor in how a program folds out since for example in poor, low education level and/or scarcely populated communities it might be difficult to achieve the needed understanding of the need for to develop skills. Ensuring Community's support and Local Authorities and other local stakeholders' cooperation will be instrumental and may well make the difference for the programme's success or failure. It is worth noting that in at least some of the communities in Iceland, coaches and people with further education in general, might experience a culture of distrust and negative attitude towards people with university education.

Επιτελική σύνοψη (Executive summary – Greek)

Αξιολόγηση της επίδρασης

Σε όλες τις χώρες η Ανάλυση της Έλλειψης Ικανοτήτων έδειξε ότι οι ερωτηθέντες σε έρευνες και συνεντεύξεις, θεωρούν σημαντικές τις δεξιότητες του έργου INTERFACE, αν και από χώρα σε χώρα υπάρχουν διαφορές ως προς το ποιες θεωρούνται πιο σημαντικές. Ωστόσο, οι δεξιότητες «ηγετικές ικανότητες», «επινοητικότητα», «ανθεκτικότητα» και «δημιουργικότητα» αποτελούν τις συνηθέστερες απαντήσεις. Επίσης, φαίνεται ότι σε όλες τις χώρες, οι ερωτηθέντες πιστεύουν ότι καμία από τις δεξιότητες δεν θεωρείται επαρκής και υπάρχουν άλλοι παράγοντες που επηρεάζουν περισσότερο τη θετική επίδραση στην κοινότητα από την έλλειψη δεξιοτήτων. Οι ερωτηθέντες εξέφρασαν το ενδιαφέρον τους για συμμετοχή σε ένα καθορισμένο και καλά σχεδιασμένο πρόγραμμα για την ανάπτυξη των δεξιοτήτων.

Όσον αφορά το ερώτημα σχετικά με το πώς μπορούν να προσεγγιστούν οι άνθρωποι σε εύθραυστες κοινότητες, η εμπειρία σε όλες τις χώρες, αποδεικνύει ότι δεν είναι απλό να προσελκύσεις το ενδιαφέρον τους. Κατά κοινή ομολογία, μια τέτοια προσπάθεια πρέπει να σχεδιαστεί και να εκτελεστεί προσεκτικά από ανθρώπους με υπόβαθρο και γνώση πάνω στις κοινότητες, να παρουσιάζει ενδιαφέρον για τα μέλη της κοινότητας και να είναι ευπροσάρμοστη στις τοπικές συνθήκες και ανάγκες.

Ένα από τα συμπεράσματα του έργου είναι ότι ήταν σχεδόν ανύπαρκτη η επιβράβευση των καθοδηγητών για την συμμετοχή τους στο πρόγραμμα INTERFACE. Τα ακόλουθα στοιχεία αναφέρονται μεταξύ άλλων ως προτάσεις για επιπλέον επιβράβευση ώστε να αυξηθεί το ενδιαφέρον συμμετοχής: λεπτομερής ανατροφοδότηση καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια υλοποίησης του έργου, επίσημο πιστοποιητικό επιτυχούς ολοκλήρωσης και ύπαρξη συστήματος διαπίστευσης σε ισχύ, ενημέρωση δυνητικών συμμετεχόντων σχετικά με τον μελλοντικό θετικό αντίκτυπο της εκπαίδευσης στο βιογραφικό τους σημείωμα και τις μελλοντικές τους δυνατότητες, ενθάρρυνση

επιχειρήσεων για την υποστήριξη του προσωπικού τους για την συμμετοχή τους σε εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα, επιτρέποντάς τους να παρακολουθήσουν την εκπαίδευση κατά τη διάρκεια της εργασίας τους ή / και να αντισταθμίσουν τα έξοδα που σχετίζονται με μετακινήσεις με τη επαγγελματικές επισκέψεις και ομαδικές συνεδρίες.

Αποκτηθείσα γνώση από την πιλοτική εφαρμογή σε όλες τις χώρες

Στις εύθραυστες κοινότητες, οι ενεργοί πολίτες τείνουν να αναλαμβάνουν ή να εμπλέκονται σε διάφορους ρόλους εξαιτίας της θέλησης και των ικανοτήτων τους. Έτσι, τα άτομα αυτά συνήθως είναι πολυάσχολα και δίνουν μεγάλη αξία στο χρόνο τους. Υπάρχουν, επίσης, κωλύματα, όπως για παράδειγμα ο ελάχιστος αριθμός παρευρισκόμενων, εξαιτίας του γεγονότος ότι η Ισλανδία είναι μια αραιοκατοικημένη χώρα. Οι πιθανές λύσεις που αναφέρθηκαν από το εταιρικό σχήμα, είναι η τροποποίηση της πορείας και του εκπαιδευτικού προγράμματος, ανάλογα με τις ανάγκες των κοινοτήτων για τις οποίες πρόκειται και η προσαρμογή της υλοποίησης του προγράμματος. Αναφέρθηκε, επίσης, ότι ίσως θα ήταν δυνατό να τροποποιηθεί το εκπαιδευτικό υλικό και να οργανωθεί σε μεμονωμένες ενότητες, οι οποίες θα δίνουν τη δυνατότητα στους καθοδηγητές να ακολουθούν τις ενότητες εκείνες που τους ενδιαφέρουν περισσότερο.

Αναφορικά με το ερώτημα σχετικά με το πώς θα μπορούσε να ενισχυθεί η δέσμευση των συμμετεχόντων στο εκπαιδευτικό πρόγραμμα, υπήρχαν ορισμένες προτάσεις, όπως για παράδειγμα η δημιουργία μιας κοινότητας συμμετεχόντων, η πρόβλεψη του προγράμματος για δυνητικά οφέλη, καθώς και ένας πιο συγκεκριμένος και χρονικά περιορισμένος ορίζοντας για το πρόγραμμα ή/και την δημόσια έγκριση του προγράμματος και την επικύρωσή του από κάποιο ευυπόληπτο ανεξάρτητο φορέα. Στο εκπαιδευτικό πρόγραμμα του INTERFACE λειτουργεί θετικά το γεγονός ότι η τελική εργασία, που αφορά τη διοργάνωση ενός εργαστηρίου στην κοινότητα, παρουσιάζεται κατανοητά από την αρχή. Αναφέρεται, επιπλέον, ότι βοήθησε πολύ η αναφορά σε εμπειρίες όσων είχαν ολοκληρώσει το πρόγραμμα και επωφελήθηκαν από αυτές.

Υπάρχουν διάφορες απόψεις και λύσεις που αναφέρονται, σχετικά με το σχεδιασμό και τις τεχνικές λύσεις που θα διευκόλυναν την παρακολούθηση του προγράμματος από τους συμμετέχοντες. Είναι εμφανές, από τις προτάσεις των συμμετεχόντων, το γεγονός ότι ένας λεπτομερής σχεδιασμός και υλοποίηση με βάση τα δεδομένα που ισχύουν σε κάθε κοινότητα είναι απαραίτητος. Επιπλέον, αναφέρεται ότι, όπου δύναται να εφαρμοστούν οι τεχνικές λύσεις, όπως οι on-line συναντήσεις, τα μηνύματα ηλεκτρονικού ταχυδρομείου, τα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης και η ηλεκτρονική πλατφόρμα του προγράμματος INTERFACE, θα πρέπει να χρησιμοποιούνται, με σκοπό την ελαχιστοποίηση της ανάγκης για περικοπές στο χρόνο και το κόστος των μετακινήσεων. Αναγνωρίζεται, ωστόσο, η σημασία της ευκαιρίας για τους ωφελούμενους να βρεθούν σε συναντήσεις και να ανταλλάξουν εμπειρίες, όταν αυτό κρίνεται αναγκαίο. Αναφέρεται, τέλος, ότι οι σημειώσεις των παρουσιάσεων και των συζητήσεων και η κοινοποίησή τους στους υπολοίπους συμμετέχοντες, θα μπορούσε να αποτελέσει ένα χρήσιμο σημείο αναφοράς, ιδιαίτερα για όσους δεν μπόρεσαν να παραβρεθούν σε ορισμένες συναντήσεις.

Το εκπαιδευτικό επίπεδο, η ηλικία και ο χώρος από τον οποίο προέρχεται ο εκάστοτε συμμετέχοντας, δύναται να παίξει σημαντικό ρόλο στην ανάπτυξη των ικανοτήτων του μέσα από ένα πρόγραμμα, όπως το INTERFACE, και την επίδραση που θα έχει στις κοινότητες που εκπροσωπεί. Η ανώτερη εκπαίδευση θεωρείται εξίσου πολύτιμη με την ποικιλία στο μορφωτικό επίπεδο, καθώς επίσης και την καλή γνώση πάνω στα ζητήματα της κοινότητας. Σημαντικός παράγοντας για την εξέλιξη ενός προγράμματος θεωρείται, επίσης, η κατάσταση που επικρατεί στην εκάστοτε κοινότητα, εφόσον σε κοινότητες όπου το βιοτικό και το εκπαιδευτικό επίπεδο είναι

χαμηλό ή/και είναι αραιοκατοικημένες, ίσως είναι δύσκολο να γίνει εκεί κατανοητή η ανάγκη ανάπτυξης ικανοτήτων. Η εξασφάλιση της στήριξης της κοινότητας και των τοπικών αρχών, καθώς και άλλων τοπικών κοινωνικών φορέων θεωρείται κρίσιμη και δύναται να παίξει σημαντικό ρόλο στην επιτυχία ή την αποτυχία του προγράμματος. Αξίζει, τέλος, να αναφερθεί ότι τουλάχιστον σε ορισμένες κοινότητες στην Ισλανδία, οι καθοδηγητές και τα άτομα που διαθέτουν άλλου είδους εκπαιδευτικό επίπεδο, ίσως εμφανίσουν μια έλλειψη εμπιστοσύνης και αρνητική στάση απέναντι σε εκείνους που διαθέτουν πανεπιστημιακή εκπαίδευση.

Sintesi (Executive summary – Italian)

La valutazione dell'impatto

In tutti i paesi, l'analisi dei GAP ha rivelato che gli intervistati attraverso i questionari e le interviste ritengono importanti le abilità identificate in INTERFACE, nonostante ci siano variazioni tra i vari paesi coinvolti su quali competenze siano ritenute più importanti di altre. Tuttavia, le competenze "leadership", "intraprendenza", "resilienza" e "creatività" ottengono i punteggi più alti in assoluto più o meno ovunque. Inoltre, viene rivelato che in tutti i paesi, gli intervistati credono che nessuna delle competenze sia considerata adeguata allo stato attuale e che ci siano problemi per una o più delle abilità che influenzano le loro capacità di avere un impatto positivo nella loro società. Gli intervistati hanno espresso interesse a partecipare a un programma ben definito e pianificato per lo sviluppo delle competenze prese in esame da INTERFACE.

Sulla domanda su come affrontare le persone nelle comunità fragili, l'esperienza in tutti i paesi rivela che non è un compito semplice ottenere abbastanza interesse per le comunità fragili. Vi è consenso sul fatto che tale sforzo debba essere attentamente pianificato ed eseguito da persone con un forte background e vaste conoscenze delle comunità, oltre che ad essere di solo interesse per i membri della comunità e, non da ultimo, adattabile alle circostanze e ai bisogni locali.

Uno dei dati emersi durante l'implementazione del progetto è che non vi sono abbastanza ricompense per i coach delle comunità e per la loro partecipazione al programma INTERFACE come per altre formazioni. Come ulteriori ricompense per aumentare l'interesse, hanno avuto successo le seguenti idee:

- Avere un processo di feedback completo in esecuzione durante il programma;
- Avere un certificato formale di completamento con successo in un circuito di crediti o riconoscimenti adeguato;
- Informare i potenziali partecipanti sul possibile impatto positivo del corso sul proprio CV personale e sulle possibilità future;
- Incoraggiare le imprese a supportare i propri membri del personale nella partecipazione, consentendo loro di partecipare compensando eventuali costi relativi ai viaggi per le visite di lavoro o alle sessioni di gruppo nel corso.

Le lezioni tratte dai corsi pilota in tutti i paesi

Nelle comunità fragili, le persone attive tendono ad essere gravate o coinvolte in diversi ruoli a causa della loro disponibilità e abilità. Queste persone tendono quindi ad essere molto occupate e a stimare in modo molto alto il proprio tempo. Possono esserci anche ostacoli come per esempio un numero di partecipanti a causa della popolazione esigua in Islanda. Le potenziali soluzioni menzionate dal consorzio sono quelle di adattare il corso e il curriculum alle necessità delle comunità in questione e ad adattare l'implementazione del programma. Si menziona inoltre che potrebbe essere possibile organizzare il contenuto della formazione in moduli autonomi, il che consentirà ai coach di intraprendere i moduli che ritengono più interessanti per loro.

Sulla questione di come aumentare l'impegno di coloro che partecipano alla formazione, vengono suggeriti alcuni modi:

- Viene suggerita una comunità come partecipante;
- Organizzazione del programma in modo tale da offrire potenziali benefici;
- Orizzonte temporale definito e abbreviato del programma e/o approvazione pubblica del programma stesso e accreditamento di quest'ultimo da parte di un rispettabile organo indipendente;

Nel curriculum INTERFACE ha funzionato bene avere avuto come obiettivo di una riunione di comunità, la presentazione finale dei risultati raggiunti durante. Inoltre, si è evinto che usare storie di successo di coloro che hanno terminato una tale formazione e ne hanno tratto beneficio è sicuramente una cosa positiva ed efficace.

Резюме (Executive summary – Bulgarian)

Оценка на въздействието

Във всички страни, с помощта на анализа на несъответствията в уменията, беше установено, че участниците в анкетите и интервютата считат INTERFACE уменията за важни, въпреки че в различните държави се наблюдаваха някои различия по отношение на това, кои конкретни умения се смятат за най-значими. Независимо от това уменията „лидерство", „находчивост", „гъвкавост" и „креативност" получиха най-висока оценка като цяло. Установи се също, че във всички страни анкетираните смятат, че никое от уменията не се възприема като адекватно усвоено и, наред с липсата на умения, съществуват и други фактори, които влияят върху способностите на респондентите да окажат положително въздействие в своята общност. Анкетираните изразиха интерес да участват в добре структурирана и планирана обучителна програма за развитие на уменията.

На въпроса как може да се подходи към хората в уязвимите общности, опитът във всички страни показва, че привличането на интереса на жителите на тези общности е нелека задача. Налице е консенсус, че подобно усилие трябва да бъде внимателно планирано и изпълнено от хора със сериозен опит и знания за общностите, да представлява интерес за членовете на общността и, не на последно място, да бъде адаптирано към местните обстоятелства и нужди.

Един от изводите на проекта е, че е трудно да бъде намерен подходящият стимул за участието на менторите в уязвимите общности в обучителната програма по проект INTERFACE. Идентифицирани са някои допълнителни подходи за насърчаване на участието, а именно: въвеждане на механизъм за получаване на обратна връзка по време на цялата обучителна

програма; осигуряване на официално удостоверение за успешно завършване на обучителния курс и въвеждане на система за акредитация; информиране на потенциалните участници за възможното положително въздействие на участието в курса върху личната им автобиография и бъдещите възможности за кариерно и личностно развитие; насърчаване на фирмите да подкрепят своите служители за участие в обучителната програма, като им позволяват да посещават курса в работно време и / или възстановяват разходите, свързани с пътувания за посещавани на присъствените занятия от обучителната програма.

Натрупаният опит от пилотните обучения в партньорските страни

В уязвимите общности, активните лица обикновено са натоварени и изпълняват редица функции, вследствие на инициативността и уменията си. Така, тези лица често са много заети и високо ценят времето си. Пред посещаемостта на обучителната програма може да има и пречки, свързани с ниския брой участници, поради недостатъчния размер на населението, какъвто е случаят в Исландия. Възможните решения на тези проблеми, идентифицирани от партньорите по проекта, е адаптирането на курса и провеждането на учебната програма към нуждите на въпросните общности. Споменава се също, че е би било възможно учебното съдържание да се организира в самостоятелни модули, което ще позволи на менторите да посещават онези модули, които представляват най-сериозен интерес за тях.

На въпроса как може да се увеличи ангажираността на участващите в обучението, се предлагат различни решения: създаване на общност от ментори; обогатяване на обучителната програма така, че тя да носи конкретни ползи за участниците; по-ясен съкратен график на обучителната програма и / или официално признаване на програмата и акредитация от признат независим орган. В учебната програма по проект INTERFACE е удачно още в самото начало да се представи в подробности заданието, свързано с организиране на семинар в общността. Наред с това се споменава, че би било от полза представянето на успешни примери за лица, които са завършили подобна програма и са имали конкретни ползи от нея.

Посочени са различни гледни точки и решения на въпроса, по какъв начин планирането и техническите средства могат да улеснят участието в програмата. От предложенията на участниците е видно, че в уязвимите общности е необходимо задълбочено планиране и изпълнение, съответстващо на нуждите на конкретната общност. Наред с това се споменава, че когато е приложимо, трябва да се използват технически решения като онлайн срещи, електронна поща, социални медии и платформата за електронно обучение, разработена по проект INTERFACE, за да се сведе до минимум необходимостта от осигуряване на време и средства за пътуване. Важно е също, бенефициентите да получат възможността да се срещнат лице в лице и да споделят опит в присъствени сесии, когато е необходимо. Споменава се и че воденето на протоколи от презентациите и дискусиите и предоставянето им на разположение на участниците може да бъде полезно, особено за онези участници, които не са успели да присъстват на конкретна групова сесия.

Образованието, възрастта и опитът могат да играят съществена роля за начина, по който участниците развиват уменията си чрез програма като INTERFACE и за това, колко сериозно влияние ще имат тези лица в своите общности. Висшето образование е от съществена важност, но други степени на образование и разнообразният опит също са от голямо значение, като познаването на общността е много важен фактор. Наред с това, ситуацията в общностите е ключово обстоятелство за изпълнението на дадена програма, тъй като, например, в бедни, с ниско образователно равнище и / или слабо населени общности, може да е трудно да се

стимулира необходимият интерес към нуждите от развитие на уменията. Осигуряването на подкрепа от общността и съдействието на местните власти и други заинтересовани страни на местно равнище е от съществено значение и може да допринесе за успеха или провала на програмата. Заслужава да се отбележи, че в част от общностите в Исландия, менторите и хората с по-ниска степен на образование като цяло могат да изпитат недоверие и негативно отношение към хората с висше образование.

Samantekt (Executive summary – Icelandic)

Helstu niðurstöður

Niðurstöður gloppugreiningar í öllum löndunum eru að þeir færniþættir sem lagðir voru til grundvallar væru taldir mikilvægir þó lítilsháttar frávik kæmi fram á milli landa varðandi hverjir þeirra væru mikilvægastir. Það eru færniþættirnir „leiðtogafærni", „úrræðasemi", „þrautseigja" og „sköpunarfærni" sem skora hæst í heildina. Fram kemur einnig að engir einstakir færniþættir eða þeir í sameiningu eru taldir nægileg forsenda framfara. Það séu önnur atriði sem einnig hafa áhrif á möguleika þátttakenda í greiningunni til að hafa jákvæð áhrif í samfélaginu. Þátttakendur sýndu áhuga á að taka þátt í vel skipulögðu námskeiðahaldi/prufuþjálfun til að auka færni sína í nefndum færniþáttum.

Reynslan frá öllum þátttökulöndum sýnir að ekki er sjálfgefið að hægt sé að vekja nægilegan áhuga fólks í brothættum byggðarlögum. Þátttakendur lögðu áherslu á að slík þjálfun væri vel skipulögð og framkvæmd af leiðbeinendum með góðan bakgrunn og þekkingu á samfélögunum. Námið þarf að vera áhugavert fyrir íbúa og síðast en ekki síst þarf það að vera sniðið að staðbundnum aðstæðum og þörfum.

Eitt af þeim atriðum sem verkefnið leiddi í ljós er að þátttakendum þótti ávinningur INTERFACE námsins tæplega nægilega mikill til að réttlæta þátttöku. Nokkur atriði voru nefnd af verkefnisaðilum sem möguleg viðbót við umbun. Í fyrsta lagi að hafa meiri endurgjöf um árangur á meðan náminu stóð. Að hafa formlegt skírteini fyrir þátttöku og formlegt mat á einingum til annars náms. Að fræða mögulega þátttakendur um það hvernig námið geti gagnast þeim á eigin starfsferli og aukið framtíðarmöguleika þeirra. Að hvetja fyrirtæki til að styðja starfsfólk sitt til þátttöku með því að gera því kleift að sækja nám í vinnutíma og/eða greiða kostnað við ferðalög tengdum þjálfuninni, svo sem eins og vegna ferða í staðarlotur.

Lærdómur sem dreginn var af prufuþjálfun í þátttökulöndunum

Virkir íbúar í brothættum byggðum er gjarnan í mörgum hlutverkum vegna eigin frumkvæðis og færni. Þessir einstaklingar eru gjarnan störfum hlaðnir og þeir meta tíma sinn þar af leiðandi mikils. Einnig geta verið aðrar hindranir varðandi þátttöku í námi, svo sem eins og lágmarksfjöldi þátttakenda á námskeiðum/ í námi svo sem gjarnan er á Íslandi. Hugsanlegar lausnir á þessu sem verkefnisaðilar nefndu, eru að sníða nám og námsskrá að aðstæðum í viðkomandi samfélögum. Það var einnig nefnt að mögulega væri hægt að koma námsefninu fyrir í stökum námskeiðum þannig að þátttakendur geti raðað saman því sem þeim finnst áhugaverðast og skipta mestu máli.

Varðandi spurninguna um það hvernig mögulegt væri að auka áhuga og skuldbindingu í þjálfuninni, þá komu nokkrar ábendingar. Nefndur var möguleikinn á að koma á tengslum á milli þátttakenda í

náminu. Gera mætti ráðstafanir þannig að námið höfðaði betur til nemanda, svo sem eins og stytting námsins með niður negldri dagskrá með góðum fyrirvara og/eða formleg skráning námsins til eininga hjá viðkenndri námsstofnun.

Það kom vel út í INTERFACE námsskránni að hafa strax frá byrjun sett þjálfun á íbúafundi sem lokaviðfangsefni þátttakenda. Það var einnig nefnt að mögulega mætti nota sögur af því sem vel er gert og hvernig nemendur hafa nýtt sér námið til góðra verka.

Það eru skiptar skoðanir á því hvernig bætt skipulag og aukin og ný tækni gætu nýst þátttakendum í náminu og auðveldað þeim þátttöku. Það er greinilegt út frá svörum verkefnisaðila að í brothættum byggðum skiptir mjög miklu máli að námið og skipulagning þess taki mið af þörfum viðkomandi samfélags. Að auki er það nefnt að tækni geti nýst þegar það á við, svo sem eins og fjarfundir, tölvupóstur, samfélagsmiðlar og INTERFACE námsgrunnurinn, til að minnka þörf á að eyða tíma og peningum í ferðalög. Það er þó mikilvægt að þátttakendur í náminu geti hist í eigin persónu og skipst á hugmyndum í staðarlotum að einhverju leyti. Að síðustu var það nefnt að það gæti verið gagnlegt að halda utan um kynningar og umræður og gera þetta efni aðgengilegt þátttakendum. Ekki síst ef þeir hafa af einhverjum ástæðum ekki gæta mætt á einstakar lotur.

Nám, aldur og fyrri reynsla skiptir að líkindum miklu máli varðandi það hvernig þátttakendur þroska hæfileika sína og nýta sér þátttöku í námskeiði á borð við INTERFACE og hvaða áhrif þeir hafa í samfélögum sínum. Menntun á háskólastigi hefur gildi en þó er önnur menntun og mismunandi reynsla einnig mikilvæg ásamt þekkingu á viðkomandi samfélagi. Að auki getur það skipt miklu máli fyrir framgang námsins hverjar aðstæður eru í samfélaginu, þar sem til dæmis í samfélögum með lágt menntunarstig eða mjög fáa íbúa gæti verið erfitt að auka tiltrú á nauðsyn menntunar og aukinnar færni. Í þessu sambandi er lykilatriði að tryggja stuðning íbúa og sveitarfélags og það gæti skilið á milli feigs og ófeigs varðandi það hvort námið gagnast samfélaginu. Það er einnig vert að geta þess að í sumum brothættum byggðum á Íslandi gætu þátttakendur sem vilja auka færni sína með námi upplifað vantraust til menntunar og frekar neikvætt umtal um háskólamenntun.

The INTERFACE project

This is a two-year project, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Fragile Communities in Europe - INTERFACE 2017-1-IS01-KA204-026516. It started in September 2017 and finishes in August 2019.

The INTERFACE goal is to help improve the situation of a number of selected rural and urban communities in the project consortium partner countries, which are undergoing a persistent demographic, economic and social decline over the past years.

The project partners identified the fragile communities in the partner countries and regions, which were most relevant for the project's goal and possess potential for mitigating their state of "fragility" through project interventions addressing conditionally reversible and remediable communities' "fragility". The selection was followed by identification of the competence gaps and training needs of fragile community members and local authorities in areas, related to the creation of sustainable new jobs and services for the betterment of these communities.

The project team aimed at addressing the common needs of each fragile community, including both project activities (public needs) as well as those of individual community members (private needs) by providing training to community coaches and deliver pilot community workshops which were to help fragile communities' members acquire competences they can use for solving their practical community problems and thus empowering communities to be proactive, innovative and entrepreneurial in the efforts for improving their own situation. The competences in focus were those defined in an earlier ERASMUS+ project, FIERE. These are creativity and innovation, resilience and leadership and analytical thinking and resourcefulness. The INTERFACE project is also based on experiences in the Icelandic Regional Development Institute regarding the project "Fragile communities in Iceland" (Icelandic: Brothættar byggðir).

The consortium partners are six, in five countries, namely Bulgaria, Greece, Iceland, Ireland and Italy. More information about the consortium is found in Appendix 1 in this report.

The Impact Assessment

Based on the experience in the participating countries, the partners identified common issues to be addressed by policy makers, together with country specific recommendations. Following is a description of the responses from each country to questions relevant in the context of the project.

What skills need to be improved? I.e. what the people in fragile communities said about need for improving certain skills (a few words of main findings in IO1 GAP analysis in general and in each country.)

Iceland

The question on importance of the above-mentioned skills in Icelandic Fragile communities resulted in Resourcefulness and Resilience getting the highest scores, however all the other skill also got quite a few scores which indicates all are important.

In the interviews, in particular, the skills most mentioned as important were resilience, communication and listening skills. There was a consensus about the most critical need for fragile communities being stronger infrastructure like roads, public services, electricity, internet and mobile connections.

Most of the interviewees felt that what was needed was professional and financial support and that the Fragile community process had helped, including community funds and project managers to assist people in developing their ideas.

Greece

The "Human Resources Element", identified as an important one for capacity building and prospective improvements at the communities' level, is undoubtedly related to the types, the volume and the quality of existing skills and of skills to be developed. It is interesting to note that:

Several types of skills emerge as being more important than others. For example, "Creativity", "Innovation", "Analytical Thinking", "Resourcefulness" and "Leadership", are consistently identified as those which are mostly needed.

This, however, is combined with the admission that, despite their importance, such skills are not, at present, used as frequently as their importance would imply and their supply is – in quantitative or qualitative terms - far from being considered as adequate.

The above findings produce direct implications and clear messages for the INTERFACE project, in the sense that, as it is generally believed and already indicated in previous INTERFACE Report for Greece, "… to develop competences which are presently lacking, an efficiently designed and appropriately implemented training programme, focused on skills identified as important, would have much to offer". This, however, "... will be conditional on the initiators being able to inspire potential beneficiaries, through information and dissemination and motivate them to participate and claim the expected benefits".

Italy

During the research phase of the project, 28 people were interviewed and asked about certain skills that need to be present and developed in "fragile communities". The in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives from the four communities identified in the application of the project (Ballarò, Kalsa, Vucciria, Chiusa Sclafani) with working experience as member/director/founder of a civil society/volunteer organisation, or as professionals working in a business organisation inside the community, or as a school teacher. The variety of roles the interviewees have inside the respective community provided detailed insights into the problems and various initiatives taken to tackle the issues.

Six skills: Innovation, Creativity, Analytical Thinking, Resourcefulness, Leadership and Resilience were taken into consideration. Most of the respondents apply them in their daily life and they consider them mostly as useful for their communities, but do not think that they are adequately developed in their communities so far.

Most respondents said to be aware of similar training initiatives addressing the skills in their community, and most of them have participated themselves before in such a training.

The training programme envisaged by the INTERFACE is considered to be useful by most respondents; preference is given to face-to-face training and experience sharing, and the majority of respondents would be interested in participating themselves (either as coach or as trainee).

Among the issues affecting the urban fragile communities the interviewees mentioned a series of social, economic and educational problems, including illegal and criminal activities taking place; the interviewees in the rural community emphasised infrastructural problems and an aging population. An issue mentioned by interviewees of all urban communities was "gentrification" of their districts, and the problem of contrasts between "new" and "old" population.

A number of past and ongoing initiatives were indicated by the interviewed persons, although several times it was said that not enough was being done. Local administration sometimes played a positive role, but in other occasions slowed the progress of initiatives down and inhibited even a successful implementation of initiated projects.

In their answers various interviewees emphasised the need to connect face-to-face to the local population, also during the foreseen training activities. The skills identified by the INTERFACE project were mostly seen as useful; although some interviewees said that skills are not the main problem, but rather concrete economic support, also in form of raising funds. Nonetheless, the interviewed persons responded quite positively to the foreseen activities by the INTERFACE project in their communities, and all expressed interested in participating either as coach or as trainee.

Bulgaria

The results of the Competence GAP Analysis carried out in the framework of project's IO1 in Bulgaria, indicated that of the six pre-determined INTERFACE skills, 'resilience', 'resourcefulness' and 'leadership' were considered as relatively more important and adequately possessed. On the other hand, 'creativity', 'innovation' and 'analytical thinking' were thought of as less important and adequate, according to survey respondents. Comparing the levels of skills' considered importance and estimated adequacy, it can be inferred that the identified skill gaps are wider for 'resourcefulness', 'creativity' and 'leadership', compared to the other INTERFACE skills, namely 'analytical thinking', 'innovation' and resilience'.

The above IO1 Competence GAP Analysis findings, together with the fact that the 'human resources' domain stood out as one of the most problematic areas in the surveyed fragile communities, clearly lead to the conclusion that a training programme, packaging the INTERFACE skills, would be beneficial for these communities, provided that it is publicised, organised and delivered in a way, which would attract the interest of potential participants and allow them to filly engage in the undertaking the training course.

Ireland

In Ireland it was recognised that it is most important for the local authority to work with community members and local businesses to frame and liaise in the development of community initiatives.

Self-initiative and community engagement is already quite high in communities in Tipperary, but that there is a need for someone within these communities to co-ordinate ideas and activities.

Communities need statistics, e.g. socio-economic, deprivation, etc. (data for funding application forms) to be more ready available.

There are many great ideas and plans out there amongst communities but to get them co-ordinated and produced is hard work without adequate support. Further social enterprise is badly needed at community level.

How can people in fragile communities be approached with education-opportunities given hurdles that decrease interest? (Need for adaption to local circumstances)

Iceland

A clear majority, 97%, of respondents believed that if all the above-mentioned skills were packaged into one training program it would benefit the community. The respondents believed that face-to-face training sessions, blended learning and experience sharing were the best ways of delivering such training, which might indicate that all methods are needed in the training program. The conclusion in both interviews and questionaries' was that a mix of face to face workshops and distant learning should be applied as well as focusing on practical assignments.

Most of the interviewees felt that what was needed was professional and financial support and that the Fragile community process had helped, including community funds and project managers to assist people in developing their ideas.

It was mentioned in an interview that people need to be both passionate and patient. The tradition of the Icelandic funding system is that it expects people to work for free and grant funding for other costs, this means that people need to work on big ideas. People are often working full time elsewhere and not ready to take unpaid leaf to invest in their development projects.

It was also mentioned that the training needs to be of high quality to be worthwhile and another mentioned that timing could be difficult due to seasonal workload.

Greece

Given the general difficult economic situation in the so-called "fragile communities", offering of education-opportunities, whose initiators would argue that, at least in the medium term, will lead to improvements in community members' situation, can potentially be a high-cost / low return project. There are however several factors that, if appropriately considered, could mitigate risks and strengthen success prospects. Some of these factors are the following:

Target early stages of approach efforts towards community members, whose interest in strengthening local development potentials are greatest. These may be open-minded younger people, already working in sectors which can claim some comparative advantage. A supportive initial group (no matter how small it may be), could operate as a good basis for further steps.

Advertise that all such offers' content, delivery methodology and organisational arrangements, are adapted to local circumstances, to lower cost of participation.

Select carefully trainers and facilitators, putting emphasis of the fact that they have been selected among people that are knowledgeable of local circumstances and problems and, have successfully dealt with similar training programmes before.

Although it is generally believed that, for this type of training programmes, good practices and success stories constitute attractive and effective training tools, their effectiveness depends crucially on how carefully the material to be transferred has been selected. Relevance and Transferability should be carefully assessed, before their intended use is advertised in order to increase the programme's attractiveness.

Moreover, in designing the community members' approach strategy, one must be able to identify community groups which, for their own reasons, may be counted as supporters or as opponents of the project to be initiated and develop the right kind of relations with each of these two groups.

Finally, it should be clear that ensuring Local Authorities' support and cooperation and also support from other local stakeholder organisations, will be instrumental and may well make the difference between success and failure.

Italy

Finding interested and motivated people for educational activities can be challenging in the social context of Palermo. Usually the people who really need education-opportunities are often less able to recognize them and enrol on to such training courses. Also, it is often difficult for facilitators to demonstrate effectively the real gains in terms of soft and hard skills that can be learned, as a result therefore, people won't invest their time in attending different training events unless they can see the benefits of participating at the end of it. In most cases, you will often find people who are already interested and already active in their communities or in social activities and may not have spare time due to other commitments to take part in such opportunities. So, to summarize it is really hard to reach people who are not motivated to develop themselves as individuals and as a community or are cautious or doubts about what such training opportunities have to offer them and participants who are newcomers to community work might not have the resources or capacity to participate

However, this can be partially solved or completely solved by promoting in a very effective and interesting way the opportunities on offer to them as well as involving well-established organizations which can work actively in the communities. By reaching those ones, it is possible to ensure that the audience and the community involved in the organizations' work and activities will be also involved in the project activities.

In order to do that, the materials and the content of the project must be useful and interesting for them. By having a very well-prepared curriculum and by presenting efficiently learning outcomes, it gets easier to fight the decrease of interest amongst participants as well as reaching the full potential of the target group. CESIE involved both local community workers and local organizations in the communities identified in the project.

Bulgaria

Unfortunately, when it comes to offering any education opportunities to people, especially in communities, which experience serious difficulties in their social and economic development, it is not unusual that such opportunities are viewed with a great deal of scepticism and distrust that they possess the potential to make a difference for fragile communities and their members. In order to overcome such obstacles, which might decrease the interest in the INTREFACE (or any other) training programme, aimed at increasing the potential of the community for self-support, a number of measures can be undertaken, namely:

Overcome fragile community members' scepticism by using (at the stage of advertising the training programme and recruiting participants therein) the intermediation of individuals/groups/organisations, who are established in the communities and are convinced (and can persuade others) of the merits of the training programme offered.

Stress the fact that the trainers/facilitators who will deliver the training programme possess adequate knowledge about the community problems and a clear vision how they can be solved, whereas the course content is adapted to local circumstances and can provide living examples (incl. ones with the involvement of the trainers themselves) of how acquiring the skills targeted by the course can boost self-initiative in the communities and improve their overall situation.

While approaching fragile communities with training offers, make a reference to good practices and success stories, that people are familiar with and can help them realise, that the training programme advertised has the potential to equip them with the tools to make similar success stories happen for themselves and the communities they live in.

Ensure the support of key local stakeholders, such as the community centre and/or the local administration and clearly state that these stakeholders will be involved (directly or indirectly) in the delivery of the training programme and any follow-up activities.

Ireland

There are a number of opportunities for community activists and community groups to participate in education in both a formal (Accredited) and community context at local and national level.

However the participants in community development and community capacity training tend to be from a community background that already has social capital and ability to participate and advocate.

Participants in our masterclass series were provided with both the theory examples, e.g. participation in the community but also given a practical example from an existing operational community group.

How can participants be rewarded for increasing their skill improvement efforts to increase dedication in the studies?

Iceland

In the Icelandic team it was experienced that allocating the full responsibility of the studies to the participants did not yield the preferred results, i.e. full commitment to finish all modules and homework assignments. For this approach, there would have to be a significant rewarding involved, since all the participants have other full-time responsibilities to see to. There might be two main approaches in this. Firstly, to have a thorough follow up of homework assignments and an instant rewarding through attention and remarks/comments. Secondly, to have the studies formally accepted by a learning institution as suggested in the application for this project. Preferably, both methods should be applied. The third option is to make sure participants are rewarded through their work, i.e. that the studies would be appreciated as part of their job(s) and travel cost sponsored by their employers.

For the particular group of Fragile communities project managers and a couple of entrepreneurs participating, the group sessions were a kind of a reward themselves since this approach gave the participants an excellent opportunity to discuss the day-to-day challenges with their peers and the INTERFACE-team from Byggðastofnun (IRDI) and Bifröst University. The value of such meetings should not be underestimated in further development of courses for entrepreneurs in Fragile communities.

Greece

While there are cases in which participants in certain training programmes are reimbursed for part of the expenses incurred, their eligibility will have to be examined on a case-by-case basis. We consider non-financial rewards to be more appropriate. These may take various forms, depending on who the individual attending the programme is. For example, being awarded a Certificate of Successful Completion of a training course may be attractive to public or private sector employees that may incorporate this in their Curriculum Vitae and have it considered as additional qualification and career promotion.

Another type of reward that may be considered is for participants to be selected for subsidised travel to visit enterprises and/or organisations in other fragile communities (in the same or in other countries) and benefit from their experience.

Italy

As mentioned before, it is really important to show in an effective way to the participants of education-opportunities the final objectives and the learning outcomes. By experience, it is safe to say that the benefits and reward is needed to compensate the time spent and dedication of an individual enrolled in an educational activity. Most of the time, a course or a curriculum gets excellent participants and results by having some kind of reward. In some cases, these are credits for the professions of the participants, in other cases important certificates that can be added to a CV or support the continuing professional development needs of the participants involved.

The ideal would be to show clearly that even the methodologies they are learning are a good reward and a good outcome for their professional and personal future, but of course some other incentives it's great.

Unfortunately, the type of rewards some can give are linked to the type of educational activities and the participants. Regarding the INTERFACE curriculum, in the case of Palermo, at local and regional

level it can be hard to find an institution willing to provide ECTS for the course itself or recognize the curriculum as an important tool. However, the approach CESIE implements in the local communities is that the methodologies and tools are given, freely and openly, to all the participants and organizations who are interested. This, and the idea of future collaboration and future activities in the communities themselves are small rewards which increase dedication in the studies.

Bulgaria

Rewarding participants in the INTERFACE training programme, in order to increase their dedication in undertaking the course can be performed along three major lines:

Clearly state at the beginning of the course that those participants, who have successfully undertaken it will receive a certificate of successful completion and the opportunity to themselves contribute to improving other individuals' skills in the same or adjacent communities.

Emphasise the fact that the improved skills of participants may eventually result in a business or social undertaking(s) that they might initiate, which might present them further opportunities for career development.

Finally, participants have to be convinced that improving the level of their own skills and using these skills to encourage self-initiative within their community has the potential to create a snowball effect and eventually lead to a better life for the participants themselves, their relatives, friends and all their fellow-community members.

Ireland

Participants who engaged in our masterclass series attended weekly sessions at their own expense. TCC chose to alternate the geographical location of the weekly sessions to provide a variety of venues across the county for maximum participation. The weekly sessions also provided the opportunity to network with other community groups and agencies who participated and there was a considerable amount of knowledge exchange among the participants in practical examples of activities or events at local level in relation to queries raised.

The presentations from all speakers were made available to those who attended and in addition, contacts were made with the speakers and other participants, where additional supports and knowledge exchange occurred, which is an important element for successful co-ordination of community groups.

Learnings from pilot run in all countries

In the following text there are a few words on learnings from the project in each country.

How potential coaches value and prioritise their time and how this can be addressed regarding education opportunities

Iceland

In fragile communities, the people that are active tend to be burdened with several roles in addition to their normal work-roles. This is due to the fact that services and tasks that normally are performed by service companies or full or part time working individuals in larger communities, are in the Fragile communities in Iceland performed by individuals in spare time or overtime part jobs. This is demanding and reduces the abilities of those individuals to take part in or commit to extra work-load in for instance a learning program like the one piloted in the ITNERFACE project. The problem could be addressed by offering training that fits well with other work duties, by giving special attention to hurdles like minimum number of attendees. A mixed approach and use of technical solution like internet should be utilized, but also a dedicated financial support to people in those Fragile communities to encourage them to increase their knowledge should be looked into.

Greece

While many of those who initially expressed interest in being selected for participation in the Coaches' Training programme, clearly indicated that they, in principle, value the prospect of acquiring new skills related to their present affiliation to local organisations, it was also felt that, if they were eventually selected, their commitment to the programme would be conditioned by the amount of time and effort required. The main factor that could weaken their effectiveness in fully exploiting education opportunities being offered, is insufficiency (real or perceived) of time needed for workshops attendance and preparation of assignments. In the case of full-time public sector employees, whose daily schedules are already quite demanding, the consideration of potential benefits, in terms of skills enhancement, against additional burden on their time, may create serious dilemmas and may even neutralise such persons' genuine interest and weaken their commitment to the programme.

Italy

It is possible to divide coaches in two categories:

1. People who already work for well-established local organization involved in the communities;
2. Privates who are willing to expand their knowledge and willing to be more active.

Both categories value their time greatly, but of course everyone has different priorities and different tasks to perform during their working week. In general, people who already work in this field, value their time a lot and, for experience, is good to adapt the educational activities to their needs both considering time and effort. Also, people want immediate results, tangible outcomes and want to learn new things. Adapting and tailoring a curriculum or course in order to make it shorter, simpler and more effective is a great way to involve people deeper and make them feel like their time is well spent.

Bulgaria

The fact that coaches are supposed to be selected based on their background of awareness and dealing with the community problems means that these are active, busy people, with a lot of professional and community engagements. Nevertheless, to successfully complete the INTERFACE training programme, a serious commitment is required from community coaches undertaking the course and in order to reconcile this with all their day-to-day tasks, a careful planning of the training programme is needed, together with the introduction of a flexible approach in delivering the training course, especially when face-to-face groups sessions are concerned. This will undoubtedly encourage potential coaches to undertake such a serious commitment (in terms of time and efforts) as the INTERFAECE training programme is.

Another possible approach, addressing the issue of coaches' commitment, is related to the possibility of organising the training content into stand-alone modules, which will allow coaches to undertake those modules they feel most interested in. This is a point worth considering in future adaptations of the INTERFACE training content.

Ireland

From the communities that were initially selected to those that participated in the series of masterclasses, the participants were people who were already actively engaged within their own communities. People were affiliated to their own local and sometimes national organisations and there was a mix of participants who worked full-time/ part-time, unemployed and retired people who attended both the initial workshops and the masterclass series. It is therefore challenging in planning any community training to have only one option timewise, so where possible, whilst a fixed time for group learning must be provided, other options of delivery and participation should be explored, and in particular the use of technology should be used, so that even groups from different geographical locations can participate in group sessions from different locations.

How commitment of those participating in education could be increased (rewards)

Iceland

To increase the interest of the potential coaches a direct feedback on their studies and progress is recommended. Also, their participation in a community of coaches in Iceland would be rewarding and could most likely be linked with work of project managers in the Fragile communities program (Brothættar byggðir). A platform for international collaboration between coaches has been built and is offered by the INTERFACE project.

Greece

The dilemmas mentioned in the previous paragraph may be resolved by explicit programme provisions making potential benefits (i.e. new and/or better skills) more certain and shortening the time horizon for their realisation. Besides programme provisions, public endorsement of the training programme, may also contribute in this! Furthermore, the highlighting of the relevance of skills to be acquired/enhanced to the actual and the emerging requirements of programme participants'

present work, the programme's Accreditation by some reputable independent Body, the direct or indirect reference to how successful completion of the programme could impact on career advancement could also increase commitment of those participating. Finally, some purely organisational arrangements discussed and agreed with participants' employers, may also work in the same direction (reference to such arrangements is made in the next paragraph).

Italy

If resources are available is always better to organize the education activities in a nice environment and with nice features such as coffee breaks and so on. Of course, the main lever which push people's interest and commitment is the final reward of the curse or curriculum there are attending. As mentioned before, the best possible way to have interested people is to have a proper certification for the curse or ECTS given at the end of it. In case this is not possible, it is important to give tangible outcomes as well as learning outcomes well-explained and presented. What works very well in the INTERFACE curriculum is the final assignment. By presenting from the very first meeting the final objective (the community workshop), participant felt more involved and with a purpose. In this case, the real rewards are the new methodologies as well as new experience in the communities where the activities are implemented.

Bulgaria

Apart from the 'rewarding' actions, already discussed at the end of the 'Impact assessment' section above, training participants' commitment might be increased if they are provided with living examples of individuals/groups/communities who have benefitted from skills improvement and self-initiative increase. In the best-case scenario, this will be most effective when such success stories have taken place with the contribution of the trainers/facilitators themselves or someone the coaches know well and can share experience with.

Ireland

Within the masterclass series we provided both theoretical and practical examples. The participants involved in community planning were informed and these groups discussed how a community could identify key challenges in developing their local plan. There were practical examples of what was achieved by communities who had developed their own plan and how they went about implementing and reviewing same. The mix of theory and practice was invaluable and tangible to the participants, and the results of advance planning showed how the community was subsequently successfully developed and mobilised.

How planning and technical solutions might make it easier and applicable for participants

Iceland

Use of on-line study programs will make the studies more accessible and on-line discussion groups for coaches will partly decrease the need for travels and meetings. However, it should be planned to have face-to-face meetings with coaching students once in a while in the study program to give better opportunities to meet their peers and to discuss with the facilitators of the program.

Greece

Certain planning and technical arrangements may reduce the cost of participation in the programme and make it easier for participants. The following are indicatively mentioned:

Requirements for physical attendance should be kept at a low level. Home assignments followed by group discussions may be preferable.

Lecturing should, to a large extent, be replaced by Group Discussions Facilitation and Mentoring. Personalities from within or from outside the region could be invited to present topics and openly discuss their experience with programme participants.

Training material should be as innovative and engaging as possible (e.g. case studies, Success stories, Video recordings).

Italy

There are some technical solutions that might make participation easier for people enrolled in piloting activities as well as other arrangements to keep the attention level high.

Definitively, it would be better to have as much sessions as possible in which the participants are involved both with group discussions or group exercise. Sessions in which the facilitator speak alone for long time are not welcomed. To shorten and keep as low as possible the sessions with minimum engagement from the participant is very important.

Logistically speaking, having a nice venue close enough to all participants as well as well-arranged agenda with plenty of time dedicated for discussions and breaks is another step which will help participants enjoy the piloting.

As mentioned before, tailoring both the content and logistics of the sessions to the people enrolled in the activity is important and definitively make it easier for them to participate.

Bulgaria

To make things easier for participants, regarding their full commitment to the INTERFACE training programme, a number of steps might be taken, namely:

- A detailed timetable of the training programme delivery suiting to the highest possible degree the schedules of both trainers/facilitators and coaches, shall be in place, so that participants can plan and secure their involvement in the course well ahead.
- Delivery of the training course in face-to-face group sessions should by no means be a must, whereas online meetings might be used whenever needed and considered appropriate by the trainers.

- All distant forms of communication must be engaged in order to facilitate the communication between facilitators and coaches and among coaches themselves, such as e-mails, social media and the INTERFACE e-Learning Platform.

Finally, keeping notes (by facilitators) of presentations and discussions and making these notes available to coaches might prove quite useful as a point of reference for all participants, and especially for those who were not able to attend a certain group session on certain occasions.

Ireland

The use of online programmes should be encouraged to facilitate wider participation within communities, but this can only be run in conjunction with traditional style meeting sessions so that the group dynamic and networking can occur. The group dynamic and networking can become a strong support network, particularly in the area of knowledge exchange, and it is likely to remain in place following conclusion of the training programme.

What background of participants plays a role and how attitude in the community might have impact on participants

Iceland

In the INTERFACE project, almost all the coaches in Iceland have formal University degrees and all have several courses in University studies behind them. This must be seen as an enabling factor for the coaches to increase their skill level as much as possible. It, however, does not at all exclude individuals with other skills and background to participate and benefit from the studies. It is worth noting that in at least some of the communities, coaches and people with further education in general, might experience a culture of distrust and negative attitude towards people with university education.

Greece

Participants' background (educational, professional) may affect the programme's effectiveness. While participants should satisfy certain minimum requirements, differences in their actual background may result in beneficial synergies developing during the programme's implementation. For example, participants with social studies background working in groups with science graduates, civil servants and regional authorities' employees working with local business community representatives etc.

As previously mentioned, ensuring Community's support and Local Authorities and other local stakeholders' cooperation will be instrumental and may well make the difference for the programme's success or failure. Since such conditions are not necessarily present, they may gradually develop as the programme progress and the resulting benefits become more apparent. It should be clear that in order to achieve this, every programme should anticipate the need for continuous information dissemination and community's awareness raising activities of how skilled

personnel and innovative approaches to regional/community development problems may produce significant results and contribute to widespread socioeconomic improvements.

Italy

Educational and professional background definitively play a role in how successful the piloting is and the curriculum implementation. Young people are eager to learn new things and eager to test themselves in the community they are active, while more experienced professionals working in organizations are eager to receive more tools and more interesting methodologies, they can implement to enhance their work.

Both groups face challenges in the work they conduct every day in difficult environments both for social and economic reasons. In fact, they work in neighbourhoods very poor and in which culture and education struggle to enter, often due to a lack of stable jobs. This definitively has an impact on the selected target groups during the activities and by experience they know what works best and what is impossible to implement. It is important to keep track and listen to propositions, ideas and critics coming from both groups and adapt the content to the real needs of participants and communities in order to ensure final results are sustainable and leave a lasting impact.

Bulgaria

A key factor for achieving a tangible effect with the delivery of the INTERFACE training programme is selecting the most suitable individuals to act as community coaches. Among the most important elements of the potential coaches' background are:

- good knowledge of the community problems and how these affect certain groups within the community;
- awareness of (and preferably personal involvement) in initiatives, which were undertaken in the past to address community problems and the effects that these had on the situation of the community and its members;
- good contacts within the community and affiliation / or established relations with the key community stakeholders.

All of the above are crucial for the coaches to be able to attract the interest and encourage active involvement and positive attitude among community members towards the INTERFACE approach, incl. the community workshops and any follow-up activities.

Ireland

Each participant brings their own background to the group learning. In our masterclass series the theoretical element was provided by a lecturer from a local university. The community activist shared the experience of their own community in delivering a practical solution. The community activists had a mix of backgrounds which proved invaluable, as they were representative of their own individual communities and had the ability to be the voice of their respective communities.

In promoting best practice from our community and sharing this practice, the community activists, regardless of their background are often our best advocate, as they have a sense of agency and

social capital who can demonstrate the struggles, the challenges, but also the results that can be achieved when working in partnership within the community and the best advocate for community development and engagement.

Appendix 1 – Brief introduction of consortium partners

P1, **The Icelandic Regional Development Institute (IRDI)**, coordinator of the project, is an independent state-owned agency and comes under the ultimate authority of the Minister of Transport and Local Government. The function of IRDI is to promote rural settlement and economic activity, with special emphasis on the creation of equal opportunities for all inhabitants to employment and habitation (https://www.byggdastofnun.is/en).

P2, **Aitoliki Development Agency S.A.** in Greece is a private body with legal personality (public equivalent body), established in 1994, by local administration authorities, for the development of the region's mountainous areas and agricultural sector, through the means of management and implementation of European Programmes. Nowadays, the Agency contributes to the social, economic, cultural and environmental development of the region, by systematically investigating its needs, studying the various development possibilities and coordinating the diffusion of efforts for achieving sustainable growth for the region. It manages an area that consists of 2 Western Greece Prefectures (Aitoloakarnania and Evritania) and 5 municipalities (Nafpaktia, Messolonghi, Dorida, Karpenisi, Thermo). (http://www.aitoliki.gr).

P3, **CESIE**, Italy. CESIE is a European Centre for Studies and Initiatives based in Palermo, Sicily. It is a non-profit, apolitical, and secular non-governmental organisation with member organizations in more than eight European countries. It was established in 2001, inspired by the work and theories of the pacifist Danilo Dolci (1924-1997). CESIE links local, national and international contexts and is committed to stimulating development and change in educational, cultural and economic spheres through the creation and use of innovative tools and methods. (https://cesie.org/en/).

P4, **Tora Consult**, Bulgaria is a private consulting company established in 2011 with activities concentrated mainly in the area of regional development, social inclusion and grant funding. The company is a micro enterprise while its team of experts has a vast expertise in the above-mentioned areas and a constant strive for expanding the scope of services offered. (http://www.toraconsult.com/)

P5, **Tipperary County Council (TCC)** in Ireland, is the statutory local government authority for the whole county of Tipperary. TCC is made up of 40 Elected Members who are directly elected by the local community and employs approximately 1,000 people. The local authority is responsible for an extensive range of public services such as social housing, environmental functions (water, wastewater and waste), planning and development, libraries, arts and culture facilities, local roads and fire services. (https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/)

P6, **Bifröst University** in Iceland, BU, was first founded as an education institution in 1918 but was accredited university in 1988, first only in Business, then also offering degrees in Law since 2002 and in Social Science since 2005. The three departments at Bifröst University are: Department of Business, Department of Law and Department of Social Sciences. One of the most important basic policies of the university is close collaboration with the services sectors, not least the rapidly growing tourist industry. (https://www.bifrost.is/english/).

– GAP analysis findings summary (from syntheses report)

FRAGILE COMMUNITIES' COMPETENCE GAP ANALYSIS IN THE

INTERFACE PARTNER COUNTRIES

<u>SYNTHESIS REPORT</u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The INTERFACE partnership acknowledges that in order to achieve a substantial and long-lasting effect for "fragile" communities in partner countries through creating and piloting coaching methods and tools, training materials and establishing community coaches' network and Learning platform, a comprehensive understanding of skill gaps of fragile community members should be in place. Such an approach ensures that the project adequately addresses the training needs of communities, whose members, despite the fact that their "environment" has been deteriorating and has reached a situation characterised as "fragile", still possess the potential to responsibly and autonomously employ innovation, creativity, analytical thinking, resourcefulness, leadership and resilience (hereunder called 'INTERFACE' skills) for "reversing the trend" and work towards the betterment of their communities.

Thus, revealing fragile community members' competence gaps in the INTERFACE partner countries and exploring their preferences on how the upcoming training of community coaches could be organised and delivered most effectively were the main objectives of a Survey and In-depth interviews undertaken by project partners. The present Report presents, discusses and interprets the results of the Competence Gaps Survey and Semi-structured Interviews conducted in the consortium countries.

A total of **18 communities** in the 5 partner countries (incl. 5 in Iceland, 3 in Bulgaria, 3 in Greece, 3 in Ireland and 4 in Italy) were selected for participation in the INTERFACE project. Distribution of the standardised Survey Questionnaire and approaching potential interviewees was initiated in early February 2018, addressing fragile community members (citizens, community leaders, would-be entrepreneurs, representatives of business organisations, social enterprises, etc.) and local authorities in INTERFACE partner countries. The purpose was to obtain information regarding the need for "problem-solving" competences and training within the selected communities.

The total **survey respondents' sample** processed consists of **210 respondents** (Iceland – 42, Bulgaria – 52, Greece – 41, Ireland – 47, Italy – 28), distributed quite evenly among the selected fragile communities in each partner country.

Regarding survey respondents' **personal characteristics**, the analysis of the partner countries' survey responses reveals that:

- ➢ Approximately 53% of the survey respondents were men, with highest **male-to-female ratio** observed in Greece (68% / 32%), lowest in Ireland (26% / 74%).
- ➢ The upper **age** groups: 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ years were predominant among the respondents in most INTERFACE countries, while some of the other age groups were also

significantly represented (30-39 age range in Greece /34% of the total number/; 30-39 /46%/ and 20-29 age groups /29%/ in Italy).

➢ The majority of respondents possessed **education** below university level – either "secondary" or "vocational education and training", with the exception of Italy, where 61% of the respondents had university degree.

➢ Regarding **affiliation**, varying groups were most significantly represented in the survey respondents' sample in different countries: Iceland and Greece – business organisations; Bulgaria – community members; Ireland and Italy – non-profit (incl. voluntary and civil society) organisations.

➢ Most of the respondents have been **living/working in the respective community** for more than 20 years (most in Bulgaria: 77%, least in Ireland: 58%), with the exception of Italy, where the largest group of respondents (47%) included those, who have lived/worked in the respective community for less than 5 years.

Among the various categories, mentioned in the Survey Questionnaire, 'infrastructure facilities', 'business sector and jobs' and 'human resources' were generally considered **problematic** in all INTERFACE countries. Most survey participants indicated that they had already been **involved in one or more activities**, addressing the problematic areas above. Predominantly, the **initiative** for these activities, came from within the community, the main actors being 'local administration', 'business organisations', 'voluntary/civil society organisations', and in the case of Bulgaria and Greece – the respondents themselves. Survey participants were **generally satisfied** with their involvement in the activities above, claiming this was due to level of own competences and/or competences of people they worked with. Survey participants in all countries, were predominantly of the opinion, that the **results of the initiatives**, they have participated in, **would have been better** if the level of their 'own initiative' and the 'initiative of those they worked/lived with' were higher, and especially if the level of initiative 'within the entire community' were higher.

The survey data obtained on the **reported usage**, **considered importance** and **estimated adequacy** of the INTERFACE skills, were used to calculate the values of these skills' utilisation / significance / adequacy (SUSA) indicators. The SUSA Indicators were estimated as Weighted Averages of the "rating" indications provided by survey participants (on a 1-to-5 scale), weighted by the relative frequencies of such indications about each of the INTERFACE skills, found in the responses to the respective questions in the Survey Questionnaire. The values of SUSA Indicators for the whole survey sample indicate that '**leadership**', '**resourcefulness**' and '**resilience**' are the skills **most frequently applied** by respondents and those they worked/lived with. The same set of skills, together with '**creativity**' were considered by survey participants as **most important** for the community, while the importance of the remaining 2 skills was also considered as quite high. The **adequacy** of all INTERFACE skills was indicated as **insufficient** and definitely below (in terms of SUSA indicators' values) their importance. This is indicative of existing **skill gaps**, which were **most pronounced** for '**innovation**', '**analytical thinking**' and '**leadership**'.

Regarding the **expressed interest** and **preferred training delivery modes**, respondents were generally of the opinion that a training programme, packaging the above skills **would benefit their communities**, whereas in all INTERFACE countries, 'face-to-face training sessions', 'blended learning' (with the exception of Italy) and 'experience sharing' were most preferred by respondents as **ways**

of delivering such a training programme. The majority of respondents indicated that they would be **interested in taking part** in a training programme of that sort, mostly as **trainees**.

In addition to the survey, a total of 51 **semi-structured interviews** (incl. 10 in Iceland, 9 in Bulgaria, 10 in Greece, 12 in Ireland and 10 in Italy) with individuals in the selected fragile communities were conducted. Generally, the interviews' results confirmed most of the survey findings related to 'community problems' and 'perceived competence needs'. There were still some new insights, that the interviews offered to the partnership, which are related to: various additional skills, identified as important for the communities, such as communication and listening skills (Iceland); the need to "inspire" potential beneficiaries to participate in upcoming INTERFACE training through information dissemination (Greece); illegal and criminal activities taking place as some of the problematic areas in the communities (Italy).

Appendix 3 – Curriculum and planned execution of modules (from IO2)

For to give a brief over view of the Curriculum this Appendix contains the preface, the Table of contents and the Learning modules from the Curriculum.

The complete Curriculum developed in the INTERFACE project is to be found on the project web-site in full, https://interface-project.eu/outputs/ .

PREFACE

The INTERFACE partnership acknowledges the selected and described 3 to 5 communities in each country to participate in community coach training carried out to target groups of community groups, entrepreneurs and other creative and active people within selected communities enhancing their coaching and communication skills. The community coach training participant will learn how to use coaching methods and gain information regarding opportunities and methods related to innovation, project development and funding.

This present document presents "The community coach curriculum" that can be applied to any fragile community either within the partnership countries or elsewhere. Learning content will be posted on the project website in English.

Table of contents

Learning modules

The training can be implemented in 4-8 months depending on time frame.

Training schedule and content will be divided into 9 modules including 4 preparation modules or 6-8 hours group sessions (GS), 3 homework assignments (HW) and a final project including preparation and implementation of a community workshop and community coaching:

1. *Preparation, interviews/selection (questionnaires) with/of potential participants based upon the GAP analysis. Selected students will prepare a proposal and a CV in their local language and answer questionnaires prior to the interview (6 hours)*

2. *GS presenting training material, best practices on community and presentation of a GAP analysis of represented communities. (6 hours)*

3. *HW personal work-cycle (task/effort) and community case study, learning about available support, development models and funding. Dissemination of results to participants in different countries through the project platform (or Facebook). (10 hours)*

4. *GS focusing on coaching, presence, active listening, powerful questions and direct communication. Practical exercises based on findings from GAP analysis and homework assignments. (6 hours)*

5. *HW coaching exercises tried out, personal work-values, coaching values as well as exploring community values through conversations and observations. Creating a short CV in English including key personal values. Discussed and disseminated to other participants using the project platform (or Facebook). (10 hours)*

6. *GS focusing on coaching in facilitating learning by creating awareness, designing actions, organizing events, planning and goal setting, managing progress and accountability. (6 hours)*

7. *HW coaching exercises tried out, organization of community workshop. (10 hours)*

8. *HW/GS Community workshops implementation in cooperation with country specific facilitators (10 hours). The duration of each workshop will be(2-4) hours.*

9. *GS presentation of community workshops agendas and ideology, discussions/exercises related to coaching experiences. This process will be followed up by cc facilitators in each country. (6 hours)*

Teaching and support material is presented on the INTERFACE platform and project website.

Students are expected to provide at least 30 hours of coaching (either paid or voluntary) after the finalization of the community coach course and community workshop. Follow up evaluation and facilitation will support the coached in implementing this task.

Appendix 4 – Execution of modules in partner countries

As applicable, each partner present here in brief how the modules were actually executed, incl. the organization of the training workshops.

Iceland

In Iceland the selection of community coaches to take part in the INTERFACE project was in a way slightly easier than for the other countries as IRDI already had in their project, Fragile Communities, working community coaches in each participating community. Among the communities that were selected according to the fragility mitigating factors assessment there was variable interest in participating and those communities that didn't already have a working community coach from Fragile Communities eventually didn't fully participate in the project. Nevertheless, there were community coaches from six different fragile communities in Iceland, most were already working as community coaches in their communities but four were interested people within the communities.

The community coaches attended all of the group sessions for the modules, with the exception of two locals from north-East of Iceland due to travel distance and time attended a part of the group sessions. The group sessions were held in four different fragile communities all over Iceland; one in the east, one in the north, one in the Westfjords and one in the south. Travel distance between the locations is vast and therefore it couldn't be expected from an un-paid volunteer to attend all of the training sessions in each location, even though one volunteer certainly did.

The training took part between autumn 2018 and spring 2019 included four 8-hour group sessions in a fragile community, where the modules were covered, 4 homework and 1 final project including the preparation and implementation of a community workshop and community coaching. In the final group session, the community coaches held a presentation on their community workshop, which all of them had been able to undertake in their communities.

The community coaches all expressed great enthusiasm for the group sessions and emphasized on the importance of meeting in person and being able to discuss their communities with peers that have similar challenges.

Greece

Participants for the training were selected based on the fact that they were people either living within or working directly with the selected communities, that is individuals who either represent the partner regional development organisation or live in the fragile communities and were all willing to work for the betterment of the fragile communities and ready to put in the extra time and effort needed to actively participate and contribute to the training and coach's responsibility to selected communities.

Selected participants followed the training, both the general training in coaching methodologies and organizational skills (material centrally produced in English and translated in the national language), as well as the local training content (additional material produced by the agency in the national language, supplemented by special briefings, including local good practices, information on funding sources and procedures, National and European Programmes promoting entrepreneurship, social

entrepreneurship and extrovert local production, others addressing regional development needs etc.), which was provided by the partner's staff and appropriately prepared Facilitator.

The training schedule and content was divided into 9 modules including 4 preparation modules, 4 group sessions, 4 homework assignments and 1 final project including the preparation and implementation of a community workshop and community coaching.

Regarding the implementation of the community workshops, participants (during the implementation of Module 7), decided upon the main subject of the discussion to be held, based the locally prevailing circumstances, geographical proximity, compatibility of participants' interest and needs etc and the agency invited, through its contact networks, several fragile communities' members to participate. Actually, 2 Workshop sessions were organised, due to low participation during the first one and the duration of each community workshop was 2 and 4 hours respectively. Trained coaches along with the facilitator undertook to run these workshops following the Open Space Methodology and managed to hold a fruitful discussion, where ideas and thoughts were expressed in an overall productive procedure.

Italy

CESIE faced some challenges in finding participants that were available to take part in the piloting for the expected time due to work commitments. In response to the local needs of the participants, CESIE decided to implement the curriculum in a shorter way and with two different target groups both responding to the needs of the project:

1) Young people working actively in the local communities identified in the projects.
2) Community workers from well-established organizations which provide services in the local communities identified in the project.

The curriculum was divided in two days of activities (12 hours in total including preparations) for the first group and one day (6 hours including preparations) for the second group. By shortening the curriculum CESIE only removed the "homework" expected in the curriculum and left them as "optional" and "voluntary" for the participants. In general, the tools and methodologies present in the curriculum's modules have been implemented successfully with a great focus on the G.R.O.W model and Open Space Technology methodologies which both raised a lot of interest from the people enrolled in the activities.

The first group was composed by 8 people, the second one by 4 people (all of them registered in the INTERFACE platform). The sessions were implemented mainly alternating frontal lessons (to learn about the methodologies) and group sessions with exercises (to test the methodologies).

It is great to know that, in the future, all the people involved in the INTERFACE curriculum will be able to recognise and implement the methodologies in their daily work. This will definitely impact on their contribution to the local community in which they work or will work in the future.

As the final event of the curriculum (Module 9 – Community workshop), the event was structured around participants of the first group. The representatives of the first group lead an event (facilitated by CESIE) in which the INTERFACE methodologies as well as their experience in the communities were presented, shared and explained through presentations and open group discussions. The audience (made up of community volunteers, project managers, trainers and

educators working in the local communities) had the chance to ask the INTERFACE participants many questions and were interested in knowing more about the training and the experiences of the group.

This, was also a very good experience for the now INTERFACE coaches and gave them more confidence in their work and made a positive impact on their day-to-day activities.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria the selection of community coaches to take part in the pilot training was based on the results of the IO1 Attitudes Assessment Questionnaires, the future participants in the training being among the mini-survey respondents. Thus, a number of factors were taken into consideration, while making the final selection, namely:

- Diverse affiliation of the prospective coaches – local administration, business organization, business support organization.
- Coaches' deep awareness of the community problems and the initiatives undertaken at local level to address them.
- A history of active involvement in such initiatives.
- Demonstrated interest and willingness to participate in the upcoming INTERFACE community coaches' pilot training.

The training course delivery followed the structure, foreseen in the Fragile Community Coaches' Curriculum developed by UoB, namely 9 modules, incl. 4 preparation modules, 3 homework assignments and a final project (2 modules) including preparation and implementation of a community workshop and community coaching. A detailed course timetable was developed, taking into account the schedules and availability of both facilitators and coaches. Group sessions were organised mainly over skype. In the very few occasions, when a participant could not attend a certain group session, she was later briefed (again over skype) by one of the facilitators about the discussions, which had taken place and the decisions reached. The materials used for the training were made available to the participants via the INTERFACE e-Learning Platform and included the centrally prepared material (translated in Bulgarian) together with some country-specific resources, incl. presentation of funding opportunities and successful initiatives, addressing community problems.

One community workshop was organised, involving participants from all the three fragile communities covered by the INTERFACE project in Bulgaria. The workshop took place on 28 May 2019 in the Community centre in the town of Roman (one of the three fragile communities involved in INTERFCAE activities in Bulgaria). All community coaches were actively involved both in the preparation of the community workshop agenda and in approaching potential participants in the event, as well as in the delivery of the workshop with presenting case studies from their communities and actively participating in the discussions to follow. The workshop was attended by more than 30 representatives of different community stakeholders, incl. local administration, community centre, education and training institutions, business organisations, regional development organisations, business support organisations, etc.

Ireland

As part of its involvement in the 'INTERFACE' project, Tipperary County Council, in partnership with Tipperary Public Participation Network www.ppntipperary.org and Limerick Institute of Technology www.lit.ie, hosted a series of masterclasses running 1 night per week over a 4 week period from 12th February 2019. Each session, lasted approximately 2 hours and included a learning presentation (the "theory" presented in an engaging manner), a related case study talk from a community development perspective and an interactive question and answer discussion. Each workshop was held in a different part of the county to facilitate everyone interested in participating.

The themes/topics addressed were:

- Increasing Levels of Participation by people within the Community
- Community Resilience and Resourcefulness
- Community Coaching Methodologies (active listening; questioning techniques; goal orientation & setting)
- Developing a Community Needs & Actions Plan.

Interested persons attended this very successful event each evening from various organisations, e.g. local authority, community organisations, local development companies. Some persons attended a single session, others a number of sessions, and some the whole block of four sessions. During the event series, there was a lot of interaction and networking done by all attendees with a large degree of interest in the topics covered, with a view to building stronger, more resilient communities in County Tipperary.

Appendix 5 – The INTERFACE Open Educational Resource (OER) product left for further studies and use in the European countries and elsewhere.

As described in the INTERFACE application, the partners have produced a platform for facilitators and coaches participating in the INTERFACE program to exchange opinions and work on their pilot studies.

The platform has been opened for guest access, so all the resources created during the project are available freely. However is possible to attend the curriculum for coaches by registering in the platform at this link: https://interface-project.eu

For to make the access to all produced material in the INTERFACE program the partners have also made the material accessible at the project web-site, www.interface-project.eu

The partnership has the vision that people will continue to collaborate and use the material since the experience from this project is that enhancing skills and collaborate with peers in the countries and between the countries can be very interesting and likely to have positive impact on the individuals and their (fragile) communities.

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