

StayOn_

A more inclusive, active
and creative world!

1st Impact Assessment

IRELAND

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stay-on.eu



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1. INTRODUCTION

StayOn is a transnational project coordinated through the cooperation of eight European partners whose ultimate objective is to create conditions that enable young people to "stay on" rural areas by ensuring access to opportunities, benefits, services, and jobs. With this impact assessment report, we intend to measure and assess Meath Partnership's impact to improve it. This report is to be read as part of the project's "Impact management and research" work package, representing a systematic effort to provide credible evidence on the causal impact of interventions meant to integrate young adults, and NEETs¹ especially in the labor market.

The work package is managed by the European Center for Social Finance (ECSF). It encompasses a series of activities, including developing a Theory of Change and related impact management framework, creating periodic impact evaluations, and learning to inform decision-making within and among the organizations involved. This report proceeds as follows. This report proceeds as follows. After a brief introduction, Section 2 describes the interventions. In Section 3, the report focuses on detailing the methodology used to conduct the evaluation. Section 4 presents the results, while Section 5 interprets them and discusses the lessons learned to facilitate the translation of findings into practice for the project's partners.

2. INTERVENTIONS

The project StayOn foresees the implementation of a four-stage community-based development approach (CBD) in five European countries. The first stage is called "community involvement" and includes the implementation of continuous life/career individual coaching support and a series of training courses on digital and environmental topics according to the local needs² aimed at developing soft and hard skills that are useful for personal development and facilitate entry to the labor market. This step includes creating a group of young local NEETs, the "community shapers", who are interested in the social and economic development of their community and will continue their StayOn path through the three following phases: "community catalysis", "community co-innovation labs", and "community entrustment".

Training courses

As of 30.06.2022, six types of training courses were delivered and coordinated through Meath Partnership, a dynamic partnership company established in 2006 to implement a range of rural, social, and economic programs at the local level across County Meath in Ireland. Meath Partnership aims to provide support and assistance to private individuals and community groups active at the local level through capital grant aid, technical assistance, guidance and mentoring, information and support, training opportunities, and development initiatives. Table 1 summarizes the primary information for all training courses.

¹ Young persons not engaged in education, employment or training.

² See the potentials assessment report for Ireland available at: <https://www.stay-on.eu/impact-compass/>

Table 1. Summary of training courses

#	Training course title	Number of iterations	Number of hours	Objectives	Modules
1	Construction Safety Skills Workshop	1	40	To provide a range of necessary skills and knowledge needed for employment in the rural construction industry	Manual Handling, Safe Pass Training, Teamwork and Problem Solving, Communications, General Health and Safety in the Workplace
2	Hospitality Skills Workshop	1	40	To provide a range of necessary skills and knowledge needed for employment in the rural hospitality industry	Basic Food Safety, HACCP Systems, Allergen Awareness, Knife Handling, Customer Care, Manual Handling, General Health and Safety in the Workplace
3	Social Media Skills	2	60	To provide a range of necessary skills and knowledge needed for employment (and self-employment) in media marketing and promotion, which can provide rural employment as this type of work can be office/home based	Creating Your Mission, Vision and Messaging for Your Business, Setting up a Facebook Page, How often to Post and What to Post, Creating Images Using Canva for Social Media, Posting and Scheduling Using Creator Studio, How to Go Live Privately on Facebook, How to do Stories and Posts, How to share others Stories and Posts
4	Community Development Workshop	2	60	To provide a range of necessary skills and knowledge needed for community development-based employment in rural areas	Social Analysis, Environmental Sustainability, Welfare to Work, Active Citizenship, Teamwork, Communications
5	Conversational English (ESOL) workshop	3	110	To equip foreign nationals with knowledge of the English language and the skills needed to integrate into Irish society and to assist them in finding employment in their respective fields.	Intercultural Skills & Global Awareness, Teamwork and Problem Solving, Leadership and Management Styles, Organization and Planning, Accessing the Irish job market, CV writing and Interview Preparation, Green Skills Jobs
6	Business Options	1	30	To provide our budding young entrepreneurs with a range of necessary	The Business Environment,

			skills and knowledge needed for self-employment, which will help them to establish their own businesses in rural locations, and potentially create employment opportunities for other young people in these rural areas	Planning and Decision Making, Managing Compliance, Sales and Marketing, Financial planning, Developing the Business Plan
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Coaching

The main goal of the coaching in the context of StayOn is to support participants on their journey through the whole StayOn process:

- training, where they gain new skills and knowledge to improve their future career options; and also
- community shaping process, where they further explore their ideas for developing opportunities for youth in their communities.

The StayOn coaching process is aimed at developing a goal-oriented mindset with participants. The suggested methods to be used by coaches range from SMART goal methodology to dialogue groups. All sessions have a suggested outline to follow. However, these guidelines can be adjusted according to the coach's judgment to best use the process for the participants. The coach's role is to support the participants to make a change, learn something new and/or achieve their goals. The essence of coaching is not giving answers to participants but instead guiding them with curiosity and empathy to help them find answers on their own. Coaches in the StayOn project lead participants through the process of training & community involvement, help them identify their potential, and support them in overcoming obstacles to their empowerment.

Through the StayOn project, participants receive, on average, four individual coaching hours, mainly over a series of four sessions with the coach. Coaching sessions are divided into three main categories: I) introductory / starting session; II) implementation support / intermediate session; and III) follow-up/closing session. The coaches and coachees meet preferably in person, but some meetings also take place online. In order to create a relationship and create a more substantial impact, the coachees are encouraged to meet regularly and with a defined development goal, which also supports their training in the context of the StayOn project (or further). Coaches in the StayOn project participate in individual and group supervisions to help them better address the obstacles and opportunities of the coaching process. They help them be more flexible and open to opportunities in the process.

Implementation figures

As of 30.06.2022, Meath partnership has trained 103 young people and coached 114. Table 2 summarizes the number of participants in the training courses and coaching by month.

Table 2. Summary of implementation figures

Type	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	Total
Trainees	36	32	21	14	103

Coachees	43	34	21	16	114
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3. METHODS

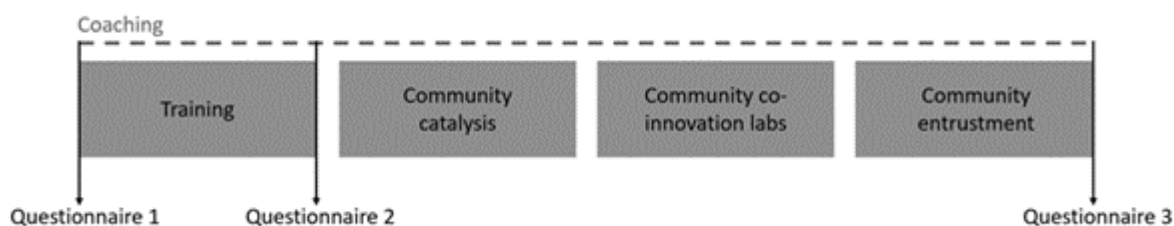
Data collection

StayOn’s impact management system is made of three impact layers which, in turn, include six clusters (derived from StayOn Theory of Change).³

- Layer I Management of StayOn’s impact on the participants (CLUSTERS 1, 3, and 4)
- Layer II Management of StayOn’s impact on the project partner organizations in terms of capacity building (CLUSTERS 2 and 5)
- Layer III Management of StayOn’s impact on society (CLUSTER 6)

This report covers clusters 1, 3, and 6. The output data presented in the previous sections make up Cluster 2. While data related to StayOn’s outcomes and impact, clusters 3 and 6, respectively, were collected through a survey administered at the beginning and end of the training courses, as Figure 1 shows. All participants in the training courses were asked to fill out the same questionnaire on the day the intervention started and the day it ended.

Figure 1. Data collection timeline



We administered the survey to participants through an online questionnaire, which is available in full in the Appendix to this report. The questionnaire included the following groups of variables:

Demographics (*labor status, income, age, gender, belonging to a minority background*) were measured through multiple choice, checkboxes, and open-ended options (see questions 15-19).⁴

Social inclusion was measured by looking at:

- *access* to knowledge of resources in the community, see question 2;
- *support* from social networks, see questions 11-14 (Bernal et al., 2003);
- *participation* in labor markets, see questions 15-16.

Social benefits to rural areas were measured by looking at:

- *common good*, see questions 3-8 (Looman, 2006);
- participants’ *willingness to migrate*, see questions 9-10.

³ See pages 3-4 of the Impact Management Toolkit available at: <https://www.stay-on.eu/impact-compass/>

⁴ The questions inquiring about income and belonging to a minority background were optional.

Data analysis

103 beneficiaries completed pre/post-intervention questionnaires, and the data they provided was used for subsequent analysis. We first examined the distribution of differences between two sets of scores to analyze the pre-and post-test comparison. For the variables *access* to knowledge of resources in the community and *common good*, the data of differences between pre and post-test is skewed distributed. A non-parametric test (Wilcoxon signed-rank test) was used to compare the two sets of scores from the same participants for those two variables. For the variables *willingness to migrate* and *support* from social networks, the data of differences between pre and post-test are normally distributed; hence, paired samples t-test was used to compare the two sets of scores. Because we could not collect income data, it has not been possible to analyse *participation* in labor markets.

4. FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics: demographic variables

Descriptive statistics of the pre- post-observations related to the sample of 103 participants are presented in Table 3. 65 people in the sample analyzed were women (63,11%), while 38 (36.89%) were men. Most participants (85 people, 82.55%) were between 25 and 29 years old. 17 participants (16.50%) were between 18 and 24 years old, while one person (0.98%) constituted the remaining sample. Only two people (1.94%) were self/employed or students at the start of the intervention. None of the participants in the sample analyzed completed the questions inquiring about income and minority background.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Gender	n	%
Female	65	63.11
Male	38	36.89
Other	0	0.00
Total	103	100.00
Age		
	n	%
25-29	85	82.55
18-24	17	16.50
Other	1	0.98
Total	103	100.00
Labor status		
	n	%
Employed, self-employed, enrolled in high school or university	2	1.94
Other	101	98.06
Total	103	100.00

Outcomes: evaluation of social inclusion

As already pointed out, an analysis of the results indicated a non-normal distribution of scores for some of the variables under study. Therefore, the results are presented using both the mean and the median for each variable in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Percentage change, pre/post mean and median for outcome variables

Variables	Mean (Pre)	Mean (Post)	Mean % change	Median (Pre)	Median (Post)	Median % change
Access to knowledge of resources in the community	3.46	5.55	60.41% increase	4.00	6.00	50.00% increase
Support from social networks	4.11	5.48	33.33% increase	4.00	5.50	37.50% increase

Regarding *access* to knowledge of resources in the community, a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed a significant positive difference ($Z = -8.070$, $p < 0.01$) between post- and pre-observation, as shown in Table 5. This means that participants were more likely to know where to get the career development resources they needed in their community after the interventions.

Table 5. Wilcoxon test statistics table for the variable access to knowledge of resources in the community

Access to knowledge of resources in the community pre-test – Access to knowledge of resources in the community post-test	
Z	-8.070 ^b
p	<.001
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	
c. Based on positive ranks.	

Regarding *support* from social networks, a paired-samples t-test revealed that pre/post means of the variable were statistically significant, as shown in Table 6. This means that, after the interventions, participants felt they have been receiving more emotional, interpersonal and material support than before joining the project StayOn.

Table 6. T-test statistics table for the variable support from social networks

	Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
				Lower	Upper				
Social networks support pre-test – Social networks support post-test	-1.36893	.87437	.08615	-1.53982	1.19805	-15.889	102	<.001	<.001

Impact: evaluation of social benefits to rural areas

Table 7 below shows the mean and median for pre- and post-observations, together with the related percentage change.

Table 7. Percentage change, pre/post mean and median for impact variables

Variables	Mean (Pre)	Mean (Post)	Mean % change	Median (Pre)	Median (Post)	Median % change
Common good	3.89	4.89	25.71% increase	3.67	4.67	27.25% increase
Willingness to migrate	4.62	3.70	19.91% decrease	4.50	4.00	11.11% decrease

Regarding the variable *common good*, a Wilcoxon signed rank test showed a significant positive difference ($Z = -8.393$, $p < 0.01$) between post- and pre-observation, as shown in Table 8. This means that after the interventions, participants had increased their contributions to the common good by bringing more benefits to their community than before they joined the project StayOn.

Table 8. Wilcoxon test statistics table for the variable common good

Common good pre-test – Common good post-test	
Z	-8.393 ^b
p	<.001
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	
c. Based on positive ranks.	

Regarding participants' *willingness to migrate*, a paired-samples t-test revealed that pre/post means of the variable were statistically significant, as shown in Table 9. This means that, after the interventions, participants were less inclined to move elsewhere in Ireland or abroad for employment reasons.

Table 9. T-test statistics table for the variable willingness to migrate

	Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
				Lower	Upper				
Willingness to migrate pre-test – Willingness to migrate post-test	.91748	.87475	.08619	.74652	1.08844	10.645	102	<.001	<.001

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This report leaves a very positive overall impression on the work that Meath Partnership and the participants in their interventions are doing in this first implementation phase. Regarding demographic variables, the participants' age and labor status align with the EEA & Norway Fund for Youth Employment's conditions and the specific objectives of the call for proposal. Additionally, the high share of female trainees and coachees

(63.11%) gives evidence that the threshold required (50%) to assure the project's target values are met is far surpassed. Finally, the differences between post- and pre-intervention for all variables analyzed are statistically significant.

Regarding outcomes, this impact assessment evaluation reveals that young adults living in the towns of Athboy and Kells and their rural hinterlands in County Meath who have benefited from Meath Partnership's training and/or coaching services from March to June 2022 were more likely to know where to get the career development resources they needed in their community after the interventions (+60.41 mean % change). Additionally, the data show they have been receiving more emotional, interpersonal, and material support than before joining the project StayOn (+33.33 mean % change). Overall, it can be deduced that participants have been experiencing more social inclusion. Since none of the participants in the sample analyzed filled out income information, it is necessary to consider other ways to measure participants' participation in the labor market for future evaluations.

Regarding impact, this report shows that participants have increased their contributions to the common good by bringing more benefits to their community than before they joined the project StayOn (+25.71 mean % change). Also, after the training courses, participants were less inclined to move elsewhere in Ireland or abroad for employment reasons (-19.91 mean % change). This extends the project's impact beyond the mere effect of StayOn on the participants and brings social benefits to rural areas by equipping them with young adults who feel socially included and want to contribute to the common good.

The evaluation conducted has a few limitations. Firstly, the pre-test/post-test design impedes drawing rigorous causal inference between the project's activities and its results. Secondly, the lack of control groups also restricted the researchers' ability to control for other influential events. Although this type of design is often criticized for weakness in establishing a causal link between project activities and outcomes, the pre-test/post-test design is the most useful in demonstrating the immediate impact of short-term interventions (Monsen, 2018). This design might prove less valid for long-term interventions because a higher amount of circumstances outside the project may arise and interfere with the effects of the project's activities over a more extended period of time. Finally, it would be helpful to collect and integrate qualitative data (such as interviews and focus groups) to validate and explore further the quantitative findings of this evaluation.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

In the context of the StayOn project, we are conducting research on the effectiveness of our services. The survey should only take 5 minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in it. We really appreciate your input!

***Required**

1. Please, include the first 3 letters of your first and last name, and the day of birth (in English * letters) to allow for initial and final evaluations during the project. For example, the identifier for Mary Smith born on 03.11.1995 would be MARSMI03. Thank you.

Please, rate each of the following statements on a rating scale of 1-7, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 7 is 'strongly agree'.

2. I am aware where to get the career development resources I need in my community. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

3. I talk to others about ways to improve the community. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

4. I work with others in the community to make it a good place to live. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

5. As a young person, I am contributing to the community's well-being. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

6. I work with other people like me to help the community understand our needs. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

7. Young people are important to this community. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

8. There are many things I can do to help others in the community. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Please, answer each of the following questions on a rating scale of 1-7, where 1 is 'extremely unlikely' and 7 is 'extremely likely'.

9. How likely is it that you will move elsewhere in your country for employment reasons? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
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Extremely unlikely Extremely likely

10. How likely is it that you will move abroad for employment reasons? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Extremely unlikely Extremely likely

Please, answer each of the following questions on a rating scale of 1-7, where 1 is 'much less than expected' and 7 is 'much more than expected'.

11. How much advice did you receive in the last month? (e.g., professionals, family, friends, * religious leaders, other groups, etc.)

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Much less than expected Much more than expected

12. How much companionship from other persons did you receive in the last month? (e.g., * professionals, family, friends, religious leaders, other groups, etc.)

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Much less than expected Much more than expected

13. How much material support did you receive in the last month? (e.g., professionals, family, * friends, religious leaders, other groups, etc.)

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Much more than expected

Much less than expected

14. How satisfied are you with the support received? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Much less than expected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Much more than expected

Please answer the following questions:

15. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status? *

Mark only one oval.

- Employed, self-employed, enrolled in high-school or university
- Other

16. What was your income last month?

Mark only one oval.

- Less than or equal to €832.00 (Jobseeker's Allowance/Benefit)
- More than €832.00 (Jobseeker's Allowance/Benefit)

17. How old are you? *

18. To which gender identity do you most identify? *

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female
- Other

19. Do you belong to or identify with any of these minority groups?

Tick all that apply.

- Racial, ethnical and linguistic minority group
- Religious minority
- Sexual minority group
- People with disabilities

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