

StayOn_

A more inclusive, active
and creative world!

2nd Impact Assessment

POLAND

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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 The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre'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. After a brief introduction, Section 2 briefly describes the two types of interventions implemented. 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 into 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

The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre is a private, not-for-profit company that aims at providing advisory services to farmers, fostering rural development, and promoting the entrepreneurial spirit among youth in rural areas. The organization is located in the village of Miastkowo in Łomża County, Podlaskie Voivodeship, in north-eastern Poland. The organization promotes youth employment interventions aimed at young people at risk. By the time the focus group was conducted, The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre offered coaching services coupled with the training course "Identification of professional needs; career motivation; CV preparation; soft skills and stress management", which was composed of the following training modules:

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

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

1. Unemployment in Poland/My dream job - Practical exercise
- 2 Soft skills - theory, examples/Herzberg test.
3. CV - discussion of the structure and content of the CV/Suggestions for writing the CV/writing your own CV
- 4 Discussing the structure and content of a letter of motivation/Suggestions for writing a letter of motivation/Practical exercise
5. Job interview
6. Vocational courses and training - local initiatives/My needs and dreams - group discussion/ Let's share the experience - practical exercise
- 7 Mentoring - introduction, advantages and disadvantages/Become a mentor - practical exercise
8. My own business - introduction/Becoming an owner - practical exercise
9. Social media in business - introduction, examples and tips/My business, my image - practical exercise
- Stress at work - practical exercise (role play), dealing with stress
11. Summary of the discussed contents
 - Soft skills, Herzberg test
 - CV, motivation letter, job interview
 - Social Media in business, brand visualization/Impressions after the training - group discussion
 - Q&A session and post-training reflections

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.

As of November 2022, The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre trained 125 people and coached 125. A selected group thereof will be involved in the focus group discussion at the center of this report.

3. METHODS

Focus group design

A focus group collects qualitative data by gathering individuals together to discuss a specific topic in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. The purpose is to understand better how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product, or service. Questions are open-ended to stimulate an informal discussion with participants to understand their perceptions, beliefs, fears, questions, and information needs. Participants are selected because they have specific characteristics in common (here: participants to training and/or coaching services offered by The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre) that relate to the focus group topic. The moderator creates a permissive environment that encourages participants to share perceptions and points of view. The aim is to generate a maximum number of different ideas and opinions. The group discussion is conducted in a semi-structured manner so that researchers can identify trends and patterns in perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Based on the “Focus Group Content Form” (Appendix A) received by The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre and other project partners, researchers at the ECSF created the focus group implementation concept that covers 90 minutes and is divided into five parts, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Focus group implementation concept

PARTS	AIM AND CONTENT	METHOD AND TOOLS	TIME (in min.)
Part I	Setting the stage: Introductions and creation of a welcoming, safe and open space	Zoom/Microsoft Teams	20 in total
Participants arrive	- Moderator and local representative allow participants to arrive and settle in the virtual room	/	~5
Welcome and moderator’s introduction	- Moderator introduces him/herself (briefly) - Moderator explains the purpose of the focus group and the process, including the agenda and the “rules” - Moderator starts the recording	Optional slide n. 2 (Appendix D)	~5
Icebreaker and participants’ introductions	- Getting a sense of who is in the room and getting feedback on recruitment, the moderator asks: "Could you please introduce yourself and tell us how you	Optional slide n. 3 (Appendix D)	~10

	learned about the project StayOn in the first place?" - Participants' introductions		
Part II	Getting feedback on minor activities	Zoom/Microsoft Teams	20 in total
Getting feedback on minor activities (including day-to-day communication and use of technology in communication, awarding of certificates)	- What do you think of StayOn's channels of communication? - Was information communicated clearly at all times? - Did you get a StayOn certificate? How important is it to you? How do you plan to use it?	Optional slides n. 4 and 5 (Appendix D)	~20
Part III	Getting feedback on core activities: training courses	Zoom/Microsoft Teams	20 in total
Getting feedback on core activities: training courses	- What training contents do you think were the most relevant and why? - What training methodologies do you think were the most effective and why? - What aspects of the training courses could be improved and why?	Optional slide n. 6 (Appendix D)	~20
Part IV	Getting feedback on core activities: coaching	Zoom/Microsoft Teams	20 in total
Getting feedback on core activities: coaching	- Did coaching help you in setting goals/overcoming obstacles and why? - Would you continue with coaching if you had the opportunity and why? - What is one defining moment you remember from your coaching sessions? - How can you be supported further after the coaching ends? - What aspects of the coaching could be improved and why?	Optional slide n. 7 (Appendix D)	~20
Part V	Ideas generation and conclusion	Zoom/Microsoft Teams	10 in total
Generating ideas for new services and concluding the focus group	- What new services would you recommend and why? - Closing comments and overall impression - Time for questions - Moderator stops the recording	Optional slide n. 8 (Appendix D)	~10

Participants

The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre gathered seven participants who:

- share the same language at a high level (Polish);
- are available at the agreed date and time of the focus group workshop;
- have heterogeneous demographic characteristics;
- are willing to openly communicate pain points as well as ready to question the status quo critically;
- possess a PC with a stable internet connection.

We provide a summary of information regarding the seven participants selected in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Summary of participants selected for the focus group

PARTICIPANT #	GENDER (F/M/Other)	AGE	SERVICES USED	LABOR STATUS
1	F	21	Coaching and training	Unemployed
2	M	20	Coaching and training	Unemployed
3	F	24	Coaching and training	Unemployed
4	F	22	Coaching and training	Unemployed
5	F	26	Coaching and training	Unemployed
6	F	22	Coaching and training	Unemployed
7	F	29	Coaching and training	Unemployed
8	F	20	Coaching and training	Unemployed

Strategy and data analysis

In preparation for the focus group workshop, The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre filled out the “Focus Group Registration Form” (Appendix B). The moderator was provided with optional materials, including the “Focus group Moderator Script” (Appendix C) and the “Focus Group Slides for Moderation” (Appendix D). The latter is a PowerPoint presentation template where slides 3 to 8 are representative of the feedback elicited (outreach and communication, including the awarding of certificates, training courses, and coaching) to stimulate discussion about the participants’ opinions in the specific category. Analysis of the data collected co-occurred with data collection. Researchers at the ECSF were responsible for analyzing the data further using a combination of approaches but roughly orienting themselves on Krueger's (1994) five key stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping, and interpretation. The last two steps required active participation by the project partners.

4. FINDINGS

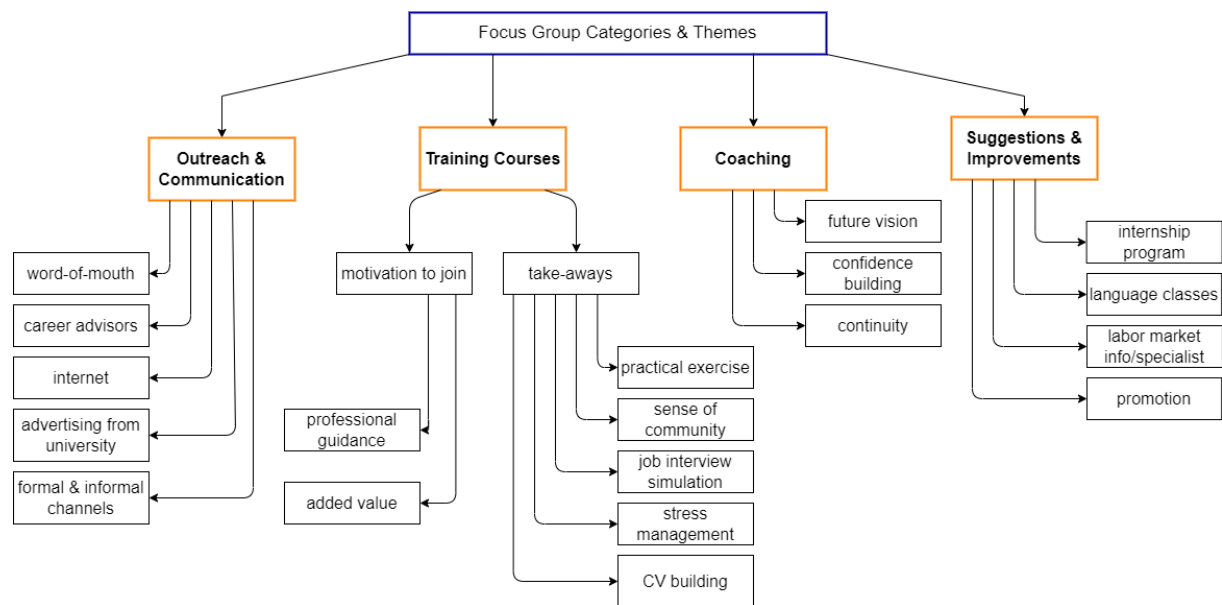
Procedure

The focus group in Poland occurred on 4 November 2022 in an online form. It hosted seven participants (one of the eight participants selected dropped out due to health conditions) and lasted for about one hour. The event was moderated in Polish via Zoom, recorded, and transcribed to use the data best for the evaluation (the participants have been informed about the recording in advance). All information collected has been anonymized for the report. It has been ensured and conveyed to the participants that the focus groups, despite the recording, remained a safe space to express their opinions openly.

Themes

Several themes emerged from the four categories (outreach and communication, training courses, coaching, suggestions and improvements) orienting the focus group discussion. These are described in the following paragraphs and summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Concept map of focus group categories and themes



Outreach and communication. Regarding outreach, two participants in the focus group were recruited for the project on a *word-of-mouth* basis. More specifically, they explained that they personally knew another participant who mentioned the project. While one of the participants indicated that she received information about the project from her *career advisor* in high school, another participant declared that she came across the project's website on the *internet*. The other three participants clarified that they got to know StayOn and related services through *advertising from the university* via ads and flyers at the university career center. Once in the program, all participants said that The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre employed an adequate mix of *formal and informal communication channels* to obtain and deliver information, as Participant 1 explains: “*Mainly the communication was through the phone. It was very fast and effective. For example when we agreed on a phone call, it always happened on time. Also, the phone calls clarified everything I needed to know without being too long. The information was clear and direct.*”. When inquired about the best way to follow up on their employment journey after their involvement with StayOn staff is over, participants emphasized that they would like to be contacted via both formal and informal channels, such as Facebook groups, online meetings on Microsoft Teams, or a quick phone call.

Training courses. Concerning the *motivation to join* the project, professional guidance to navigate the job market encouraged participants to join. Additionally, all participants highlighted the potential value added that the training course and the related certificate would bring when competing with other candidates for a job in the labor market. For example, Participant 7 explains: “*For sure, potential employers will see us differently*”

knowing we have this certificate. It's important because it's also my first certificate of this type".

Participants in the focus group also discussed several *takeaways* from the training courses. First, they all highlighted the importance of practical exercises during the training sessions about a specific topic or occasion. The advantages of a more practical approach within groups were directly connected to another takeaway pointed out by several participants: the sense of community established within the course. The latter allowed participants to get in touch with new people. The practical exercises, often implemented in groups, let the trainees bond when delivering group tasks, as Participant 5 highlighted, *"I liked the group exercises the most because I like working with people and connecting with others."*

The training module that the participants especially emphasized included job interview simulations which lead to success in a job interview and reduce stress by providing different scenarios of a real-time job interview. Participant 4 explained, *"Thanks to job interview simulations, you're not that stressed out during the real job interview. The thought in the back of your head that you've already practiced this scenario really helps"*. Furthermore, another participant in the focus group stated that the training module about stress management helped her significantly, and it was the most featured topic in the training.

Most participants explained that the training hours had been beneficial in writing a CV. More specifically, trainers guided the participants on how to write a CV and how to make their CV stand out when applying for a job. Participant 4 stated that CV building *"under the eye of the trainers"* immensely helped her.

Suggestions and Improvements. The participants shared different kinds of suggestions and improvements in the focus group. The most prominent recommendation was an *internship program* to be provided by The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre right after the training was completed. Participant 1 expressed her concern about forgetting what she learned in the training and coaching if she could not find employment in the short term. Participant 5 stated that *"an internship right after the training to implement the knowledge we gained while it's still fresh would be extremely beneficial."* Additionally, the participants discussed several *language classes* to be added to the training courses. Participant 1 emphasized the prominence of language skills in their CVs for employers. Language lessons related to specific job searches, careers, and fields were recommended as new topics for upcoming training courses. Participant 1 also added, *"It is extremely important in the job market, and for sure, the employer would really appreciate it if a candidate could introduce her or himself properly in English and present one's skills. I think it would add a lot to the course"*. While all the participants supported the additional language classes, especially English, Participant 2 also mentioned that German can benefit them in the job market, therefore, this language could be part of new services.

Another suggestion put forward by the participants was to have a training course on up-to-date *job market information* or to have a class delivered by several *job market specialists* dedicated to specific fields. This class could include content on the

professions in demand, a guide to professional and personal growth, and regulations on fair compensation. Participant 1 stated these insights might be an *"extra motivation boost"* for the participants. Participant 4 clarified, *"Everyone wants something different, so it'd be hard to organize something that would suit everyone. It's like 20 different career paths, so it would be challenging, but it might be nice to learn about some on-demand professions, such as from someone from the law field, medical, or administrative ones. I can see it done this way."* The participants agreed that getting the information *"straight from the source"* is always beneficial.

Regarding the project's *promotion* to more young people, participants in the focus group shared the high value of social media for the growth of the project and outreach to people. Additionally, physical, offline promotion options were also discussed, such as ads in schools by career advisors and meetings with the students in the school's assembly halls.

Coaching. All participants in the focus group have benefited from The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre coaching services. The participants agreed that the coaching sessions' outcomes were establishing *future vision* and goals and extending their perspectives. Participant 5 declared, *"Before joining the project, my perspectives seemed very narrow, but through coaching, I found out about many different professions I didn't know and they now seem very interesting to me."* Additionally, Participant 1 pointed out that the coaching helped *build confidence* which was later a significant asset during the training sessions. The participants expressed their interest in joining future coaching sessions once every two weeks to gain *continuity* in learning something new. Participant 1 specified, *"Maybe even more than once every two weeks because it's very helpful."* One participant stated that continuing coaching might be challenging while working in a full-time job.

5. MAIN MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this focus group report provides a positive assessment regarding the services offered by The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre within the context of the StayOn project. This evaluation presents the perspectives of seven participants currently involved in training and/or coaching. The participants are facing similar experiences and the responses did not differ among sub-groups of participants (e.g., by gender, age). The main messages expressed by the focus group's participants and related recommendations have been discussed with one representative within The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre and are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Summary of main messages and recommendations

MESSAGE	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal networks are crucial for enabling recruiting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a group of “ambassadors” to promote StayOn and The Polish Farm Advisory and Training Centre’s in the students’ community such as high schools and universities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both formal and informal communication channels seem adequate, depending on the type of message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal and informal communication channels should be used for follow-up after the end of training and/or coaching.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenario-based learning has clearly identified advantages such as building confidence and reducing stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying real-life situations related to the labor market needs to create a problem-solving environment for the participants.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice opportunities after completing the training and coaching are beneficial to gain experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing an internship program to allow participants to improve their skills in the labor market, possibly linking them to social occasions (group tasks, activities, exercises, and projects).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New training topics could be potentially very useful and relevant for learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing language classes such as English and German and job market information/specialist courses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affording participants the opportunity to stay in their local regions is one of the main motivations of the participants and the implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying skills and demands of local labor markets and providing related training courses to participants.

REFERENCES

Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. SAGE Publications.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th Edition). SAGE Publications.

APPENDIX A: Focus Group Content Form

1. Project partner: Insert the organization's name and country

3. Name, surname, and e-mail address of the person filling this form:

2. Focus group main purpose: What is the overall objective of the focus group? Are you interested in improving your services, changing them or generating ideas for potential new services?

3. Organizational services or practices: Are there specific services or practices you would like feedback on? (e. g., recruiting, service delivery, certificates awarding, communication, training, coaching)

4. List of questions: If you could choose anything, what questions would you like the independent moderator to ask?

5. Additional information: Do you have further comments, remarks or ideas?

APPENDIX B: Focus Group Registration Form

1. Project partner (*insert the organization's name and country*):

2. Focus group scheduled on (*insert the date and time*):

3. Local representative's contact³ (*insert name, surname, and e-mail address*):

4. Modality (*fully online or hybrid, add the name of the platform you participants would prefer*):

5. Participants (*insert name/s, surname/s, gender, age, and all services used within the StayOn project, e.g., coaching*):

Name and surname	Gender (M/F/Other)	Age	Service/s used
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

³ This refers to the local person responsible for the organization of the focus group.

APPENDIX C: Focus Group Moderator Script

Part I: Welcome and moderator's introduction

Moderator: Hi everybody, and welcome! My name is [NAME] and I work at / collaborate with the European Center for Social Finance. We're a competence center of Munich Business School in Germany, and we help several organizations in Europe evaluate their services and make them better. So, this is precisely why we're here today. I'd like to get your feedback on [NAME OF THE PROJECT PARTNER]'s services to learn how they can be improved in the future. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group. I have a few guidelines and rules to facilitate our discussion:

- The focus group will last about one and a half hours and will be roughly divided into 5 parts.
- I want you to do the talking and we'd like everyone to participate. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Every person's experiences and opinions are important. Speak up whether you agree or disagree. We expect and want to hear a wide range of views and don't anticipate consensus, just sharing. You can address each other if you like. We are only here to assist in the discussion.
- I emphasize that what is said in this room should remain here. I will record this session. However, it remains confidential and all information collected will be anonymized for the report. We don't identify anyone by name in our findings. Therefore, you will remain anonymous. The recording won't be shared with anyone besides researchers at the European Center for Social Finance.

Are there any questions? Very well. Let's get started... [*Start recording.*]

Part I: Icebreaker and participants' introductions

Moderator: Could you please introduce yourself and tell us how you learned about the project StayOn in the first place?

Parts III-V: General recommendations

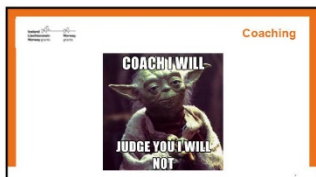
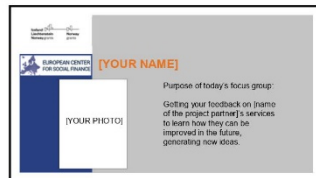
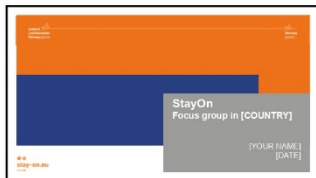
Helpful probes include:

Can you talk about that more?, Could you help me understand what you mean?, Can you give an example?

Strategies to facilitate the discussion include:

- Summarize the main idea of the feedback at the end of each question.
- Reflect the main idea back to the group "Just so I understand, what you are saying is...?"
- Self-appointed experts: "Thank you. What do other people think?" Or "Does anybody else have a different thought/strategy?"
- The dominator: "Let's have some other comments." Stand behind the dominator while addressing the group to elicit participation from others.
- The shy participant: Make eye contact; call on them; smile at them.
- The participant who talks very quietly: Ask them to repeat their response more loudly.
- If the conversation gets off-topic, restate the purpose of the research.

APPENDIX D: Focus Group Slides for Moderation



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