

StayOn_

A more inclusive, active
and creative world!

2nd Impact Assessment

PORTUGAL

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Mine Tülü & Giulia Parola

European Center for Social Finance



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 CRESAÇOR'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 focus group methodology used to conduct the evaluation. Section 4 presents the findings, while Section 5 interprets them and discusses practical recommendations 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

CRESAÇOR was founded in 2000 in the form of a Social Solidarity Cooperative. It is made of 30 cooperators and non-profit organizations spread across the entire territory of the Azores archipelago in Portugal. CRESAÇOR aims at increasing access to education, and job incubation within the social employment market, supporting the creation of solidarity economy initiatives, 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. The organization promotes youth employment interventions aimed at young people at risk. By the time the focus group was conducted,

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

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

CRESAÇOR the following training courses and the coaching concept described in the next section:

- Entrepreneurial Skills – How to create your own business
- Active Job Search Techniques
- Health and Safety at Work (HSW)
- Graphic Design - Introduction
- Creativity in Digital Marketing
- Basic Life Support
- English – Work Context Conversations
- IT Validation
- Hygiene Care for the Elderly
- Computer Basics for Business
- Learning how to Write and Read
- Support for special needed children (care and social integration)
- Boat Maintenance
- Child Development and Parental Education
- Search Engine Marketing, Web Marketing, and Analytics
- Suicide and Self-Injurious Behavior
- Mental Health Literacy
- Individual Processes -PIA, PIT, PII, PICs - senior and disabled area
- Expressions in Kindergarten
- Parental Education
- Electrical Risks - Prevention and Performance

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, CRESAÇOR trained 110 people and coached 153. 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 CRESAÇOR) 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 CRESAÇOR 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

CRESAÇOR gathered ten participants who:

- share the same language at a high level (Portuguese);
- 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	28	Coaching and training	Unemployed
2	F	27	Coaching and training	Unemployed
3	F	28	Coaching and training	Unemployed
4	F	30	Coaching and training	Unemployed
5	F	26	Coaching and training	Unemployed
6	M	28	Coaching and training	Unemployed
7	F	21	Coaching and training	Unemployed
8	F	25	Coaching and training	Unemployed
9	F	27	Coaching and training	Unemployed
10	F	22	Coaching and training	Unemployed

Strategy and data analysis

In preparation for the focus group workshop, CRESAÇOR 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

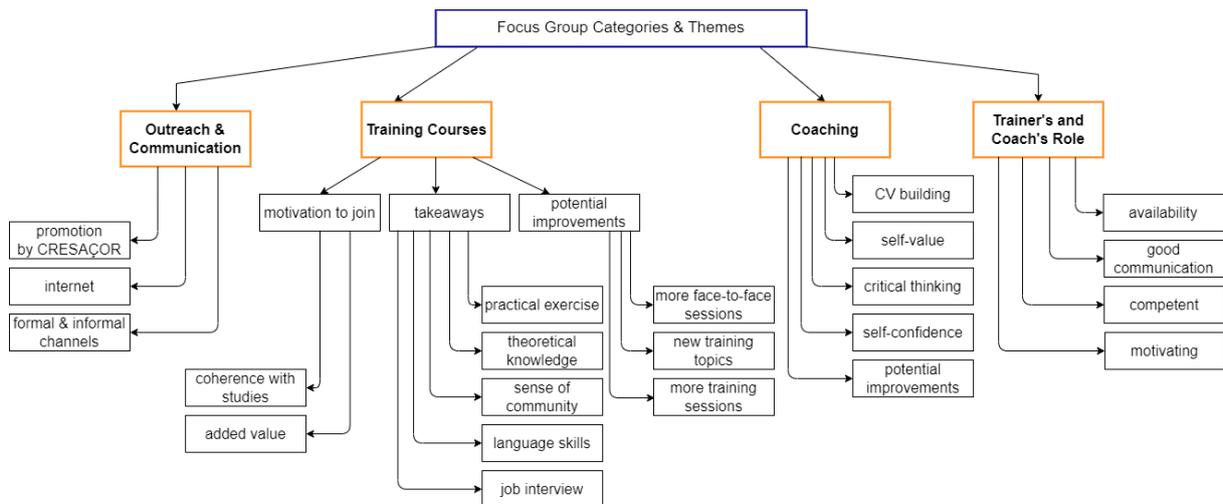
Procedure

The focus group in Portugal occurred on 16 November 2022 in an online form. It hosted six participants (four of the ten participants selected dropped out at the last moment) and lasted for about seventy-five minutes. The event was moderated in Portuguese 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 three categories (outreach and communication, training courses, coaching) 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, five participants in the focus group were recruited for the project through the *promotion by CRESAÇOR* and its representatives. More specifically, they explained that they were personally contacted by somebody who works in CRESAÇOR by phone and informed about the project StayOn. The other participant clarified that they got to know StayOn and related services through the *internet* via CRESAÇOR Facebook page. Once in the program, all participants declared that CRESAÇOR employed an adequate mix of *formal and informal communication channels* to obtain and deliver information, as Participant 4 explains: *"I have also been contacted by text messages and calls. When the time came, a face-to-face meeting was arranged with my colleagues and the two collaborators. And from then on, the information has always been face-to-face. I'm enjoying it."*

Training courses. Concerning the *motivation* to join the project, three participants emphasized the coherence of the training course chosen with their university studies. Participant 1 declared: *"Since I have a degree in Social Work, it was an area that I was interested in, and it was also an area that I would have liked to go deeper into."* Additionally, all participants highlighted the potential value added that the training course and the related certificate would bring when competing in labor market.

Participants in the focus group also discussed several *takeaways* from the training courses. First, they all highlighted the importance of getting both practical exercises and theoretical knowledge about a specific topic. The advantages of the group training were directly connected to another takeaway pointed out by one participant: increasing the social connections and sense of community established within the course. The latter allowed participants to get in touch with new people and learn from peers by sharing their experiences, such as updating their curriculum vitae. Working within a group facilitates teamwork, empathy, and respecting other opinions, Participant 6 explained. Another takeaway pointed out by Participant 4 are language skills such as Portuguese and English. Participant 4 explained that improving one's ability to talk in different languages represents *"an opportunity for the future."* The training module that the participants 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, strengthening the participants for an active job search. Participant 3

explained: *"We were doing simulations of job interviews. I was the guest and someone played the role of the recruiter. And I learned a lot about how to interact in interviews. "*

Another prominent aspect of the focus group was *potential improvements* highlighted by the participants, including more face-to-face training and attractive new training topics. Regarding the first aspect, two participants wished the training courses were organized face-to-face even though they accepted the online methods in the first place. Participant 2 explained that a live interaction between the learner and an instructor would have been more pleasant and constructive. Additionally, the participants discussed potential new topics. Participant 3 suggested that learning primary computer skills as well as knowing how to use accounting software programs, and other kinds of software programs could be extremely beneficial. Participant 3 declared: *"I had accounting training, but it was just the basics. I didn't have computer skills, or accounting programs during my training and I am missing it a lot."* Another suggestion from Participants 2 and 6 is to have a training course about mental and physical health, how to deal with work pressure, and how to deal with stress in the labor market, with the focus of also understanding social interactions, compromising, and working with colleagues.

All participants agreed that they would appreciate it if CRESAÇOR extended the duration of the courses. Regarding the number of training courses, several participants stated that they would like to have a chance to attend multiple courses. Participant 6 clarified the issue by saying: *"What I wanted to do and still want to do was an Erasmus internship. So, at the time, we talked about searching for training courses related to my professional area since I had just started a degree in that area. Or, for example, betting on English training is always an added value in linguistic terms and for doing Erasmus. But I feel that part was lacking a bit. I didn't have that opportunity."*

Coaching. The participants explained that the coaching hours had been beneficial in *writing a CV*. More specifically, the coach shared simple and practical tips to make a CV and improve it. One of the most prominent coaching outcomes shared by the participants is that after the sessions, the *self-value* of the participants increases. Participant 5 pointed out another effective conclusion of coaching sessions was *critical thinking* which led participants to know companies and how they work and question themselves about the problems that exist in their local region by examining the solutions. Another value that all the participants agreed on is that after the coaching sessions, they built *self-confidence*; they were more optimistic about the future and how they should stand facing difficulties. *Potential improvements* highlighted by the participants include coaching continuity and assistance seeking a job in the Azores. The participants expressed their interest in joining future coaching sessions since this program is an added value for them, and continuity is necessary. Participant 2 specified: *"I would also like the StayOn project to focus on helping to look for a job. Here in the Azores, it is not easy. And if they also helped in that part or helped more, it would be good. "*

Trainer's and coach's role. The participants emphasized the importance of the trainer's and coach's *availability* and how they were approachable when participants required

support. When referring to the coach, Participant 6 stated: *"She proved to be a very approachable person, a person with whom we could talk and made me super comfortable."* Several participants indicated that they felt at ease when their interest areas and their studies were explicitly and intelligibly explored as a consequence of the *good communication* with the coaches and trainers. All participants in the focus group agreed that the coaches and trainers were very *competent*. They facilitated the situation in the areas where the participants felt inadequate. Participant 5 clarified: *"One of my goals was to do an internship at a school, and I already had an idea for a project to implement at the school. So, my coach helped me design the project. And now, this week, she's going to help me prepare for a job interview that I'm going to have next week."* The motivation and engagement of trainers and coaches heavily influenced the effectiveness of training for the participants. Participants 2 and 3 notably stated the importance trainers and coaches had in *motivating*. Participant 3 referred to her coach when saying: *"She is the push we need for an active life."*

5. MAIN MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this focus group report provides a positive assessment regarding the services offered by CRESAÇOR within the context of the StayOn project. This evaluation presents the perspectives of five university students currently involved in training and/or coaching. The students 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 CRESAÇOR and are listed in the table below.

Table 2. Summary of main messages and recommendations

MESSAGE	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The promotion of the project by the CRESAÇOR has a significant effect on participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a group of "ambassadors" to promote StayOn and CRESAÇOR on different islands in the Azores.
<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"> Face-to-face training courses are more beneficial than online courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the opportunity to have in-person meetings considering participants' needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The continuity of coaching sessions during the implementation of the project is essential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a personal agenda and appointing a coach and trainer for each participant to avoid interruption of sessions and for the continuity of the project development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New training courses could be potentially very useful and relevant for participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing primary computer skills, accounting software programs, and a training topic on the physiological aspects of job search in a difficult labor market.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are clearly identified advantages of employing trainers and coaches who are able to motivate young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensifying the ways trainers and coaches are skillful and motivating (e. g., providing support to trainers, offering constructive feedback on training efforts, among other activities).

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

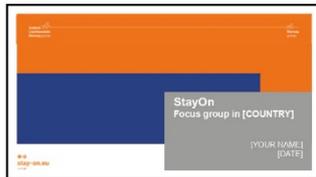
Helpful probes include:

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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