

# StayOn\_

A more inclusive, active  
and creative world!

Strengthening Private Organizations:

## CAPACITY BUILDING REPORT

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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 their access to opportunities, benefits, services, and jobs. Through this impact assessment report, our aim is to evaluate the capacity-building efforts of three private organizations: BB Consulting (Slovenia), Rezos Brands (Greece), and the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center (Poland) during the StayOn project. To be more precise, this report concentrates on the acquisition of new skills, knowledge, or capabilities among staff, enhancements in critical organizational procedures, valuable insights derived from challenges faced, and potential shifts in the organizations' strategic orientation.

This report should be considered within the framework of the project's "Impact Management and Research" work package, which is overseen by the European Center for Social Finance (ECSF). This work package encompasses a range of activities, such as the development of a Theory of Change and an associated impact management framework, the implementation of regular impact assessments, and the generation of insights to guide decision-making within the participating organizations and across them. The report is structured as follows: Following a brief introduction, Section 2 provides an overview of the evaluation methodology. Section 3 presents the findings, while Section 4 offers an interpretation of these findings and concludes the report.

# 2. METHODS

## **Data collection**

Data for this report were gathered during the second part of the knowledge transfer workshop, which took place on the 25th and 26th of September in Łomża and Warsaw, Poland. To facilitate data collection, each project partner was provided with detailed instructions, available in the appendix, outlining the process. They were tasked with recording their responses to a set of questions, aided by a selection of 12 images from which they could choose. Additionally, to ensure flexibility and inclusivity, partners were given the option to prepare their recordings in their respective local languages, accommodating diverse linguistic preferences.

## **Data analysis**

The data collected included responses and recordings, which were transcribed and translated into English as required. Subsequently, the written transcripts, along with the associated images, underwent a systematic content analysis process utilizing MAXQDA software. Each transcript was initially analyzed individually to extract relevant insights, after which common themes and patterns were identified and reported, allowing for a comprehensive and structured examination of the data.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### Themes

Several themes emerged from the four core categories (staff skill enhancement, organizational processes, challenges and setbacks, strategic shifts) orienting the data collection process. Due to the relatively short length of the transcripts by the three organizations, however, common themes did not frequently emerge in the data analysis. Therefore, underneath each category, we have displayed the themes even when they were found in just one of the three transcripts. These are described in the following paragraphs. and summarized in Figure 1.

#### Staff skill enhancement

This category details how the organizations' involvement in StayOn has contributed to the growth of new skills, knowledge, and capabilities among their staff and team members over the past two years. The representatives of the three private organizations at the center of this report stated that their staff's skills gained ***depth and development*** through the project. More specifically, for BB Consulting, the process of preparing and designing the coaching game, combined with the feedback received from participants and the youth who engaged with it, contributed significantly to staff skill development in gamification. Additionally, BB Consulting reported enhancing their coaching skills through the project, deepening their understanding of effective coaching practices. This also related to an increased awareness and sensitivity to youth-related issues, particularly in diverse international contexts. The project contributed to the development of soft skills among the employees of the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center, especially those involved in training young people. The team received valuable support through project meetings and individual coaching sessions tailored by BB Consulting for trainers from Poland. In this project, the emphasis shifted toward prioritizing soft skills, even if trainers were initially highly skilled in technical areas. The assistance included individual coaching and group training sessions, particularly for trainers from Poland. Within the ***flexibility and reframing*** theme, BB Consulting highlighted the valuable exercise in adaptability and reevaluating pre-planned activities throughout the project and emphasized the need to be flexible and adjust activities, when necessary. In a similar vein, the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center stated: "We had adapted to the needs of young people". The team developed a better understanding of these needs and recognized the importance of aligning trainers with the requirements of the youth participants. With regards to reframing, Rezos Brands emphasized the introduction of new values that enhance teamwork and patience and described how the head coach guided the coaches to instill these values. The relationship between the head coach and the coaches has fostered a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork among the team members.

#### Organizational processes

This category focuses on various processes within the organization in the context of supporting rural youth. Within the ***project planning and monitoring*** theme, BB Consulting reported improvements in their project organization and management skills. This extended to enhanced planning, monitoring, and reporting processes, not only for

the StayOn project but also for their involvement in other projects. A specific example provided is the improved internal tracking of project activities, including activity status and communication with stakeholders, which reflects the main changes within their organizational processes. During the first iteration of the project, Rezos Brands focused on **digital processes** and, more specifically, the development of a new online learning platform, primarily aimed at enhancing their courses. While they already had e-learning platforms in place, this endeavor represented an evolution of their existing efforts, aligning them more closely with the objectives of the current project. Finally, the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center focused on the organizational process of **establishing and expanding communication networks with stakeholders**, the local municipality supporting young people, and employment agencies. They collaborated with local universities to engage young participants in the project. Additionally, they fostered connections with companies that provide internships and training for young individuals, facilitating internships in these organizations and creating a pool of ambassadors.

### **Challenges and setbacks**

The insights under this category provide valuable information on the difficulties encountered during the project and explain how the organizations addressed or learned from them. In the **turnover** theme, challenges related to significant team turnover are highlighted by BB Consulting. This includes unexpected changes in the coaching team, contrary to the initial project plan. To address this, a necessary shift in focus and adaptation of the coaching work package's mission was required. The process deviated from the initial expectations, prompting the need for strategic adjustments to continue effectively supporting the coaches. Within the same theme, the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center confronted the challenge of adapting trainers to focus on soft skills. It required a shift from traditional technical knowledge related to fields like agriculture and machinery. This adjustment, although new, was successfully embraced as the organization aligned these skills with project requirements. The Rezos Brand's response highlights significant challenges in **participant engagement** during the project's initial phase, marked by anxiety and strenuous efforts to meet targets. Notably, the organization's approach of addressing these issues through internal meetings reflects their adaptability and determination. Similarly, the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center initially faced challenges in recruiting participants due to their lack of familiarity with the project. The creation of project ambassadors and increased project visibility led to a subsequent rise in applications, making participant recruitment more manageable for this organization.

### **Strategic shifts**

This section explores whether the project has led to noteworthy shifts in the strategic direction of the organizations during the project. BB Consulting found substantial confidence in the importance of cultural management within projects. This realization prompted them to shift their strategic direction, emphasizing a more active pursuit of **project culture** roles in the future. What was initially considered a side product is now viewed as a defined offering that can be extended to other projects and partners. The project provided them with the confidence to engage as a project partner in various European and national initiatives, solidifying their commitment to cultural management within organizations and projects. Regarding **expansion**, the internship opportunity provided by the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center through the project led to a

significant transformation within the organization. As a direct result of this initiative, a new employee joined the team, enhancing the workforce and contributing to the project's success.

Figure 1 illustrates the image selections made by three key organizations: BB Consulting, representing the first column; the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center, in the second column; and Rezos Brands, in the third column.

The camera and stormy sea images were chosen by BB Consulting because they think these images represent the capturing of the ongoing project activities comprehensively through better project monitoring (camera) and their staff and the participants' deeper understanding (sea) and skill enhancement throughout the project.

The choice of images by the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center features a serene green forest, which signifies the project's progress in terms of participant engagement. By the halfway point of the first year, the team had successfully aligned with the young people's needs, leading to improved training sessions. The construction site, represents the project's initial phase of adapting to the youth's requirements and exploring effective techniques for knowledge transfer and coaching as well as the organization expansion.

The reason for the selection of the images by Rezos Brands has not been explained in detail in the transcript.

These carefully chosen images symbolize the unique pathways and insights each organization has acquired through their participation in the StayOn project. Each selection represents a different aspect of their journey and the valuable experiences gained.

Figure 1. Collage of the six images selected by the three informants



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The StayOn project, a collaborative effort involving eight European partners, has made a significant impact on the capacity-building efforts of private organizations—BB Consulting, Rezos Brands, and the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center. This impact assessment report focused on four distinct categories: staff skill enhancement, organizational processes, challenges and setbacks, and strategic shifts, offering the following key insights.

**Staff skill enhancement.** This project has provided a platform for the growth of new skills, knowledge, and capabilities among the staff of these private organizations. It allowed them to deepen their skills in various areas, from gamification to soft skills, flexibility, and coaching. Furthermore, it heightened their awareness of youth issues, enabling them to better involve the voices of youth and stakeholders in their work. The cultivation of teamwork and patience within the organizations and the ability to read and adapt to the needs of young people were vital aspects that emerged from their involvement.

**Organizational processes.** In terms of organizational processes, the project led to improvements in project planning and monitoring, digital processes, and the procedure of initiating and extending communication networks with stakeholders.

**Challenges and setbacks.** While there were challenges and setbacks, such as team turnover, participant engagement issues, and the need to adapt to new skills, the organizations displayed adaptability and determination. Challenges became opportunities for growth and learning.

**Strategic shifts.** The StayOn project has led to some shifts in the strategic direction of these organizations. BB Consulting, in particular, found confidence in the importance of cultural management, which is now a defined offering for other projects and partners. It has also bolstered their role as project partners in European and national initiatives. Meanwhile, for the Polish Farm Advisory and Training Center, the project led to expansion and the welcoming of new employees, thanks to an internship program initiated through the project.

In summary, the StayOn project has been a catalyst for growth, transformation, and strategic evolution within these private organizations. It has not only enhanced their skills and processes but also empowered them to tackle challenges and set new directions for their future endeavors. The lessons learned from this project will undoubtedly shape their continued commitment to creating opportunities for youth in rural areas.



## APPENDIX: Interview schedule

*Dear Partner,*

*Please, read the four questions below and look at these 12 images:*



*Then, record a voice message of ~10 minutes that answers the four questions below. This can be done in your own language, if you prefer.*

*Send the recording to me. I suggest to briefly think about your answers and note down your key messages before starting the recording.*

*Thanks!*

*Giulia Parola (ECSF GmbH)*

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1. How has your organization's involvement in StayOn over the past two years contributed to the development of new skills, knowledge, or capabilities among your staff or team members, particularly in the context of supporting young people in rural areas?

Please, explain the process by which these new skills and knowledge were acquired and select two images that symbolize this development. What inspired your choice of these two images?

2. As a **private organization**, which key organizational processes (e.g., new product/service development, stakeholder engagement, sales, target group outreach, impact management, etc.) were improved through the project's activities or collaboration with the project partners? Can you share any specific examples?

3. Conversely, were there any challenges or setbacks encountered, and how did you or your organization address or learn from them?



4. Have there been any notable shifts in your organization's strategic direction as a result of this project?

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