

StayOn_

A more inclusive, active
and creative world!

Strengthening Public 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 and gauge the capacity-building efforts of the Regional Government of Sicily 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 organization's 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 categories (staff skill enhancement, organizational process, challenges and setbacks, strategic shifts) orienting the data collection process. Underneath each category, we explain the themes that emerged from the data provided by one representative of the Regional Government of Sicily.

Staff skill enhancement. The responses detail how the organization's 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 informant acknowledged the acquisition of new skills related to ***collaboration and communication***. The reference to large-scale collaboration projects with various international partners, previously unexplored by this public organization, indicates a departure from traditional practices. Another staff enhancement gained during the project is a ***better understanding of the territorial needs***. Within this theme, the informant partly critiques the prevalent top-down decision-making approach of the region, particularly highlighting the oversight of youth perspectives. Through the StayOn project, the organization had an opportunity to gain a more direct understanding of the territorial problems faced by youth. Overall, this transition signals a move towards a more informed and community-centric approach.

Organizational processes. This category focuses on various processes within the organization in context of supporting rural youth. The informant highlighted one main step forward in terms of organizational process, namely the importance of ***joining international projects*** and promoting collaboration with lawmakers. Taking proactive steps in this direction was seen as crucial for organizational effectiveness.

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. Within this theme of the ***rigid structure*** of the Region's administration, the informant highlighted the current administrative framework's lack of adaptability and how it posed a significant challenge in making decisions that fully align with the project's requirements. A potential remedy lies in the establishment of a more dynamic and internationally oriented office within the government department. Another aspect is the ***outdated perspectives*** due to the administration's structure, suggesting the need for externalizing functions and reducing the elderly population in the department. The observation of an average age of 58-60 among the managers of the organization reflects a lack of alignment with contemporary demographics, hinting at potential obsolescence in technological and language capabilities.

Strategic shifts. This section explores whether the project has led to noteworthy shifts in the strategic direction of the organizations during the project. The representative of the Regional Government of Sicily has stated that there are no strategic shifts within their departments.

Figure 1 presented below illustrates the image selections made by the Regional Government of Sicily. The choice of the forest picture represents the better understanding of the territorial needs. Choosing the image gift on the right introduces

an additional dimension of interpersonal and collaborative richness emphasizing that this gift is intended as a symbol for shared experience. This underscores the importance of effective collaboration and communication in nurturing meaningful connections and exchanges.

These carefully chosen images symbolize the unique pathways and insights the Regional Government of Sicily 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 two images selected by the Regional Government of Sicily



4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the StayOn project has played a pivotal role in enhancing the capacities of the Regional Government of Sicily, as outlined in this impact assessment report. The evaluation has focused on various dimensions, including staff skill enhancement, organizational processes, challenges faced, and potential strategic shifts.

Staff skill enhancement: The project has partly contributed to the development of new skills, knowledge, and capabilities among the staff and team members over the past two years. Notably, the emphasis was on collaboration and communication skills as well as better understanding of the territorial needs of youth.

Organizational processes: Recognizing the significance of engaging in international projects for the well-being of rural youth became a guiding principle for shaping organizational processes.

Challenges and setbacks: The challenges, such as the rigidity of the administration's structure and an outdated perspective have been identified. The proposed remedies,

such as establishing a more dynamic and internationally oriented office, indicate a recognition of these challenges and a proactive approach toward overcoming them.

Strategic shifts: While the Regional Government of Sicily reported no significant strategic shifts, their active participation in the StayOn project has provided valuable insights and potential avenues for future improvements.

In essence, the StayOn project has not only facilitated skill development and organizational enhancements but has also shed light on challenges, encouraging a proactive approach to address them. The Regional Government of Sicily's involvement reflects a commitment to adapting to evolving needs and fostering positive changes within the organization for the benefit of rural youth.

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)

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 **public 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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