

ESMERALD Consolidated Pilot Study: Final Report

Consolidated by: South-East European Research Centre (SEERC)

This report acts as a summary of the ESMERALD pilot studies undertaken by:

Institut de Haute Formation aux Politiques Communautaires (IHF) & IDP
University of Dubrovnik (UNIDU)
Cracow University of Economics (CUE)
South-East European Research Centre (SEERC)
Mercatus et Civis
Internet Web Solutions (IWS)

Each of the individual reports provided by partners are provided in the appendices to this document and form an integral and inseparable part of this report.

Overview:

A total of 6 (six) Pilot Studies (validations) were conducted in Poland (two), Greece, Croatia, Italy, and Spain with a pool of participants from across Europe. Of the 165 participants, 124 held senior leadership / ownership roles in SMEs (75%) and 41 (25%) were university students. All of the SME categories were well represented by pilot participants (current micro, small, medium enterprises and future owners and leaders of such companies).

Pilot participants provided both quantitative feedback (through online questionnaires) as well as through informal (verbal) feedback during the piloting process itself. Given the continuing issues surrounding the pandemic, although the majority of piloting took place in face-to-face



environments with participants, flexibility was given to provide a similar piloting experience in an online mode (synchronous). This duo approach was an important addition to our piloting as future learners would only be applying the ESMERALD platform in a virtual space without direct conveyor contact; thus, collecting information from this group was deemed to assist in ensuring that this mode of learning was effectively covered and such views were captured.

Sectors of the Economy Covered:

The categories sought for in the pilot represented more likely forms of SMEs oriented businesses. Our pilot participants represented the following general areas:

- Finance
- Catering and Hospitality
- Tourism
- Commerce (including e-commerce)
- Beauty Services (e.g., cosmetics, hairdressing)
- Other

Although there were differences in the percentages within each category at the national level, (e.g., more Tourism in the Greek sample; more Finance orientation in Poland), all categories were represented within the final sampling. Within the student sample, the majority (91%) were studying business (management, marketing, economics) which represents from where most likely the majority of future SME businesses will be created.

Acquaintance With the ESMERALD Toolkit / Clarity of the Website

As part of, or prior to, the pilot testing, participants were made aware of the toolkit and its focus – including the focus of the ESMERALD project as a whole. In all of the pilot testing locations,



95% (plus) indicating having read the website with nearly 100% indicating that it contained clear and legible information about the project and the training offer¹. This is credited to the careful and methodical design of the website taking into account specific partner expertise in designing learning websites. It should also be noted that careful pilot testing of the website also helped to ensure this positive feedback.

Useful Training Topics:

All of the trainings provided through ESMERALD were available to be evaluated by pilot participants. They were provided with the opportunity to evaluate those that they believed would be most valuable for an entrepreneur in a post-pandemic world. Respondents were able to choose up to 6 of what they believed were the most valuable trainings offered. In Table 1, we have summarised the choices made by participants where at least 25% indicated the value of a particular training.

¹ The only piloting where the numbers were less clear was in Poland (Mercatus) where 50% of the respondents did not answer the question but also did not reply negatively (overall 50% indicated positive impressions). We are taking this to mean that the participants simply did not answer the question (answers to each question were not mandatory).

Table 1: Most Valuable Entrepreneurial Trainings in Post-Pandemic Europe

Accessible public assistance for entrepreneurs-tailored solutions + where to find them	Poland (M) Greece
Flexible working time solutions	Italy Poland (U) Croatia
Focusing on listening to customers	Greece
Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitalization strategy	Italy Poland (M) Greece Croatia
Netiquette in business	Poland (U)
Enhancing the level of security of online transactions	Poland (M) Greece Poland (U) Spain
State aid and co-financing of jobs	Italy Poland (M) Greece
Processes and quality of work organization	Greece Poland (U) Croatia Spain
Psychological needs and psychological well-being - Keeping relationships	Greece Croatia
Psychological needs and psychological well-being - empathy in the workplace	Poland (U)
Remote work regulations and the practice of using it	Italy Poland (U)
Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: innovative approach to marketing	Greece
Work-life balance in a telecommuting environment	Italy Greece
Developing new e-commerce / m-commerce channels	Poland (M) Spain
Ways of building of strong relationships with customers and meeting their various needs	Italy Poland (M) Greece Poland (U) Croatia
EU cybersecurity framework and resources for SMEs	Italy
Maintaining new online clientele & adapting to digital/non-digital generations	Spain
Implementing omnichannel model and enhancing user's experience	Spain
The use of cloud computing solutions	Greece Spain
Using non-cash solutions	Italy Greece
Life-work balance disorders - work-life balance	Croatia
Life-work balance disorders- self-leadership and self-awareness	Croatia
Suspension of employers' social duties	Greece
Increasing the level of customer service.	Italy Poland (M) Greece

Poland (M) – Mercatus

Poland (U) -- CUE



As can be seen from Table 1, strong validation of the value of the trainings offered in ESMERALD were found from the pilot validation. All of the training areas were identified by at least one of the pilot locations (25% or more included it in up to 6) as being of value. The training areas with multiple agreements by pilot locations were primarily related to digitalisation of businesses (e-commerce, cyber etc.) as well as customer service orientations. It is interesting to note that for the two offerings related to Life-Work Balance (LWB) only the student pilot participants met the thresholds set suggesting that future generations of entrepreneurs believed that such trainings were more valuable in a post-pandemic world.

Meeting of Expectations:

Pilot participants were asked if the training provision met their expectations. Nearly all participants across all of the pilots responded positively. A small percentage responded “maybe” but none indicated that what they evaluated did not meet their expectations. This gave us confidence that the materials put together represented the needs to entrepreneurs (current and future).

Recommendation of the Website:

The website represents the critical link between the offerings developed in ESMERALD and the entrepreneurial trainees. Recommendations through social media and word-of-mouth will be critical to the long-term success of the project. As such, pilot participants were asked if they would recommend the website. Nearly all participants across all of the pilots responded that they

would recommend the website. A small percentage indicated they “might” recommend it and none indicated they would not.

Conclusions:

The overall conclusions to the pilot study indicates the following:

- the ESMERALD offering has been well positioned in relation to the overall needs of entrepreneurs in a post-Covid world
- the upfront work undertaken by the consortia (discussions with SMEs across Europe; integration of leading-edge educational thinking in this area in developing the training; previous expertise in the development of training websites) appears to have paid off in terms of the development of the training modules put forward
- the website (training portal) as designed has been well designed to meet the needs of learners and is easy to navigate
- The ESMERALD offering is something that would be recommended to entrepreneurs (and potential entrepreneurs) going forward

One of the issues brought forward during the pilot is in relation to issues related to localisation (e.g., state aid). This is a much more challenging issue as each EU member state controls this and these can change

What would appear necessary, that has not been as effectively developed based on responses, is the localisation of issues such as state aid. This is more challenging to develop as each member state controls this to a great extent plus it is a moving target (access and rules related to state aid change month-to-month, industry to industry). The consortia have sought to integrate such information at the EU level.



Appendices:

Individual Country level pilot reports ordered as:

Partner: IHF Europe and IDP

Partner: The Mercatus et Civis Foundation

Partner: South-East European Research Centre

Partner: Cracow University of Economics (UEK)

Partner: University of Dubrovnik (UNIDU)

Partner: Internet Web Solutions

Report on the Evaluation of Training Proposals for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Connection with the ESMERALD Project

International Research Grant 2020-1-PL01-KA226-VET-0956ERASMUS plus KA2 *Enhancing SMEs Resilience After Lock Down* [ESMERALD]

Partners: IHF Europe and IDP

Introduction:

The ESMERALD project aims to provide training and support to entrepreneurs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In January 2023, IHF Europe and IDP conducted a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the training materials developed for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as part of the ESMERALD project. The survey aimed to gather feedback from participants and assess the level of interest among MSME entrepreneurs in the training proposals offered by the ESMERALD project.

Information on SME Entrepreneurs Participating in the Study:

A total of 10 participants took part in the training session provided by the ESMERALD project. Among them, 30% were from the catering and hospitality sector, 40% from the tourism sector, and 30% from commerce (including e-commerce). These numbers indicate a diverse range of participants from different sectors of the economy, highlighting the broad reach of the ESMERALD project's training program (figure 1).

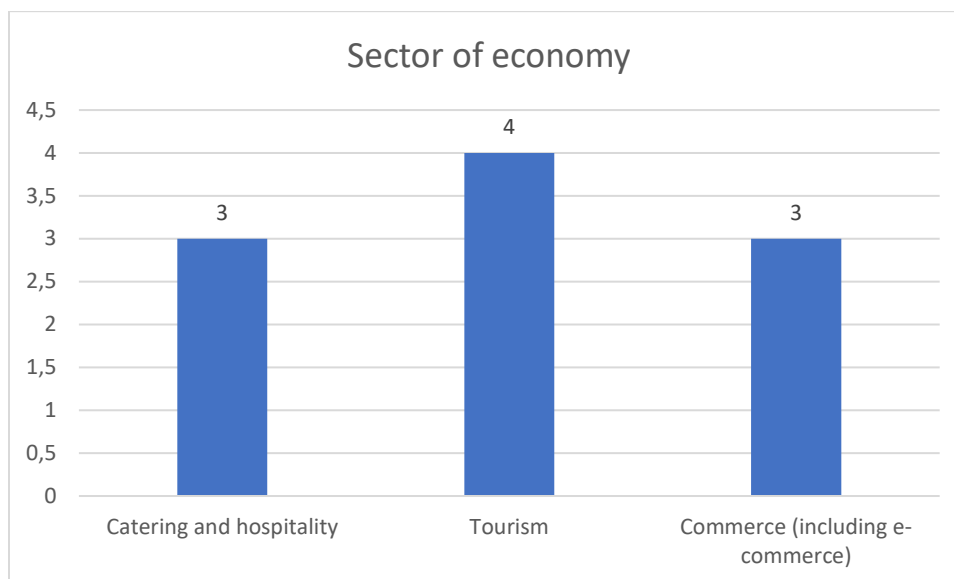


Figure 1 Sector of Economy

The participants in the ESMERALD project training session were also divided based on the size of their enterprise. The majority of the participants, 40%, represented small enterprises, while 30% represented micro-enterprises and 30% represented medium-sized enterprises. This data shows that the ESMERALD project's training program was primarily aimed at micro-enterprises, but also included a significant number of small and medium-sized enterprises (figure 2).

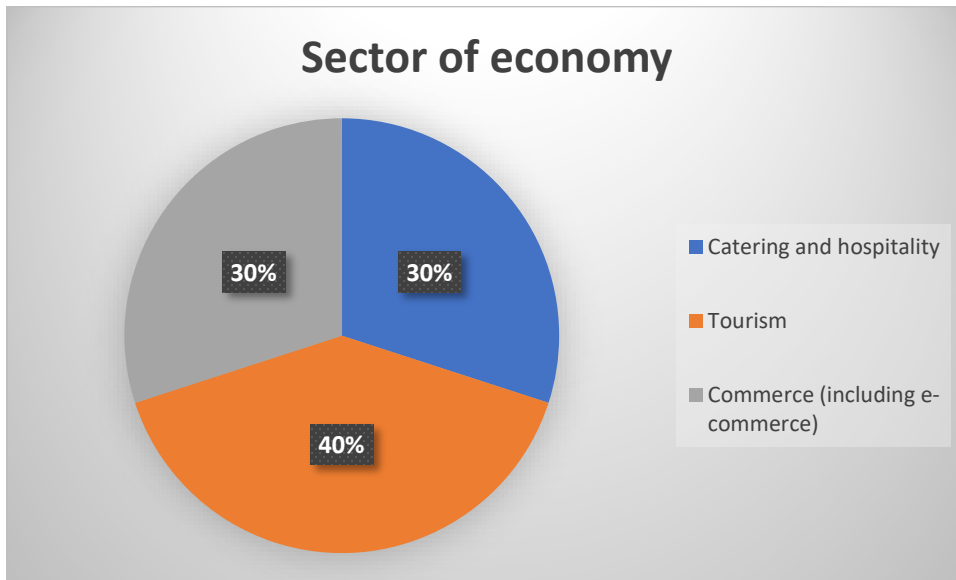


Figure 2 Type of entrepreneur

Website Awareness All participants have acquainted themselves with the ESMERALD project website at <https://esmerald.eu/toolkit.php>, indicating good awareness of the project's objectives. This suggests that the website has been successful in reaching its intended audience.

Have you acquainted yourself with the website at <https://esmerald.eu/toolkit.php> concerning the ESMERALD project?

10 responses

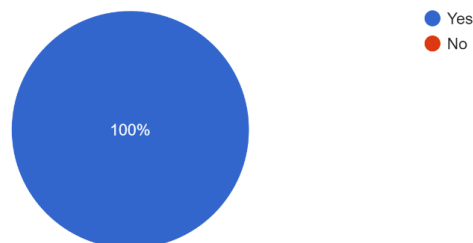


Figure 3 Website Awareness among ESMERALD Project Training Participants

Training Topics

Participants were asked to select three to six training topics that they believe would be most useful for entrepreneurs after the COVID-19 pandemic. The most popular topics among the respondents were the use of cashless solutions (70%), work-life balance in tele-working settings (60%), ways of building strong relationships with clients and meeting their various needs (60%), increasing the level of customer service (50%), business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitization strategy (40%), and the EU Framework and Resources for Cybersecurity of SMEs (40%). These results indicate that the project's training provided valuable information on topics that are relevant to entrepreneurs (figure 4).

Please select 3 to 6 training topics that you think would be most useful for an entrepreneur after the Covid-19 pandemic:

10 responses

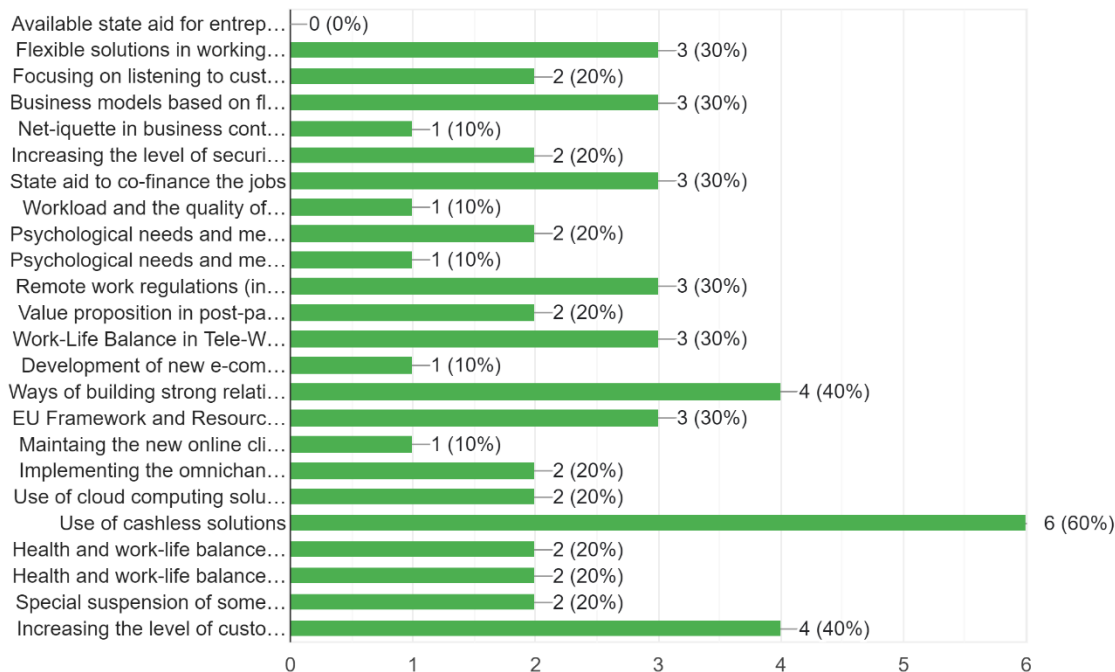


Figure 4 Most Recommended Training Topics for Entrepreneurs after the Covid-19 Pandemic

Expectations Met

All participants indicated that the proposed training topics met their expectations, indicating that the ESMERALD project training was relevant and useful. This suggests that the project's training was successful in meeting the expectations of the participants and providing them with the knowledge and skills they needed (figure 5).

Do the proposed training topics meet the expectations of the entrepreneur:

10 responses



Figure 5 Entrepreneur's Evaluation of Proposed Training Topics in the ESMERALD Project

Recommendation of Website

All participants indicated that they would recommend the ESMERALD project website at https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL&id_ficha=52 concerning the ESMERALD project to other entrepreneurs. This indicates a high level of satisfaction with the website's content and usefulness. The website has been successful in providing entrepreneurs with valuable information and resources that can help them navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (figure 6).

Would you recommend the website https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL...ng the ESMERALD project to other entrepreneurs?
10 responses



Figure 6 Participants' Likelihood to Recommend the ESMERALD Project Website to Other Entrepreneurs

Conclusion

The survey results indicate that the ESMERALD project training provided relevant and useful information to entrepreneurs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The topics that were most useful to the respondents were related to digitization, cybersecurity, and customer service, with 70%, 60%, and 60% of respondents indicating their usefulness, respectively. Overall, the project seems to have met the expectations of the entrepreneurs who participated in the training, and they would recommend the website to other entrepreneurs.

Report on the Evaluation of Training Proposals for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Connection with the ESMERALD Project

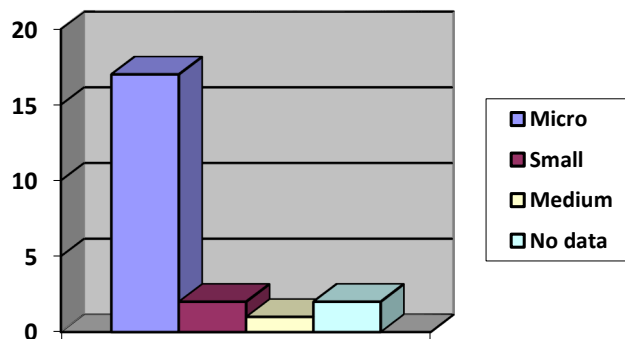
International Research Grant 2020-1-PL01-KA226-VET-0956ERASMUS plus KA2 *Enhancing SMEs Resilience After Lock Down* [ESMERALD]

Partner: The Mercatus et Civis Foundation

In December 2022 The Foundation conducted a survey on the evaluation of training proposals prepared for micro, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in connection with the ESMERALD project, titled "Strengthening the resilience of SMEs after lockdown".

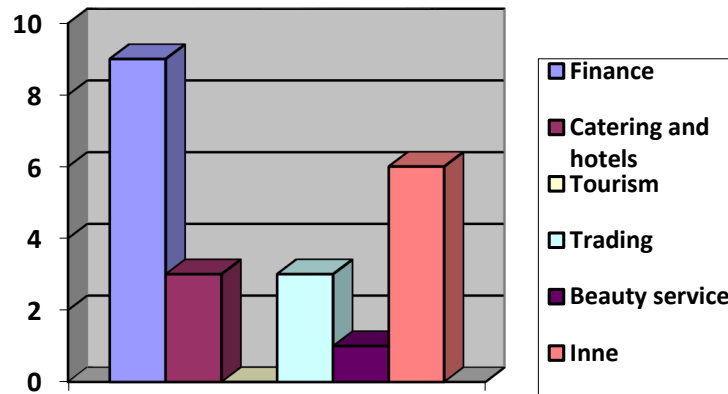
I. Information on participating SMEs entrepreneurs in the survey

22 SMEs' entrepreneurs participated in the survey in total, including: **Micro - 17**; **Small 2** and **Medium 1**. **Two (2)** respondents did not specify in the survey what type of entrepreneur they were. The chart below shows the participation of entrepreneurs in the survey by the type of enterprise.



Cross-section of SMEs in the study.

The entrepreneurs covered by the survey mostly represented the financial sector. The chart below shows the classification of respondents by the economic sector they represent.



Classification of respondents by the economic sector they represent.

And so:

- Finance: **9** entrepreneurs;
- Catering and hotels: **3** entrepreneurs;
- Tourism: **0** entrepreneurs;
- Trade (including e-commerce): **3** entrepreneurs;
- Beauty services (e.g., cosmetics, hairdressing, fitness): **1** entrepreneur;
- Other: **6** entrepreneurs.

II. Answers to specific questions, including those regarding the potential selection of training courses prepared for SMEs under the ESMERALD project

1. To the question: have you read the website about the ESMERALD project i.e. https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL&id_ficha=52?

Fifteen of 22 respondents answered affirmatively.

Significantly, in the case of 7 surveys, there is no doubt that the respondents had not seen the website, and in fact focused on the need to participate in specific training courses.

In one case, the respondent stated that he had not familiarized himself with the website which concerned the project, while he confirmed in the next question that it contained clear and readable information. This allows us to assume that he did so, however, get acquainted with it and the negative information is just a mistake. All the more so since he would have recommended the site in another question. For this reason, I will put this answer as an affirmative: "yes".

2. To the question: 2. Does the website contain clear and readable information about the project and training offerings?

15 out of 22 respondents answered affirmatively, in 7 surveys no answer was marked (reasons similar to point: 1)

3. The following topics were offered to entrepreneurs in the next section on selecting 3 to 6 training topics most useful to the entrepreneur after the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Accessible public assistance for entrepreneurs-tailored solutions + where to find them;
- Flexible working time solutions;
- Focusing on listening to customers;
- Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitalization strategy;
- Netiquette in business;
- Enhancing the level of security of online transactions;
- State aid and co-financing of jobs;
- Processes and quality of work organization;
- Psychological needs and psychological well-being - Keeping relationships around;
- Psychological needs and psychological well-being - empathy in the workplace;
- Remote work (including proposed regulations for Poland) and the practice of using it;
- Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: an innovative approach to marketing;
- Work-life balance in a telecommuting environment;
- Developing new e-commerce / m-commerce channels;
- Ways of building of strong relationships with customers and meeting their various needs;
- EU cybersecurity framework and resources for SMEs;
- Maintaining a new online clientele and adapting to the needs of the digital and non-digital generations;
- Implementing omnichannel model and enhancing user's experience;
- The use of cloud computing solutions;
- Using non-cash solutions;
- Life-work balance disorders - work-life balance;
- Life-work balance disorders- self-leadership and self-awareness;
- Suspension of employers' social duties;
- Increasing the level of customer service.

In response, entrepreneurs found the following most useful:

- Accessible public assistance for entrepreneurs-tailored solutions + where to find them - **21 entrepreneurs**;
- Flexible working time solutions - **2 entrepreneurs**;
- Focusing on listening to customers - **2 entrepreneurs**;
- Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitalization strategy - **5 entrepreneurs**;
- Netiquette in business - **1 entrepreneur**;
- Enhancing the level of security of online transactions - **9 entrepreneurs**;
- State aid and co-financing of jobs - **17 entrepreneurs**;
- Processes and quality of work organization - **2 entrepreneurs**;

- Psychological needs and psychological well-being – Keeping relationships around - **2 entrepreneurs;**
- Psychological needs and psychological well-being - empathy in the workplace - **3 entrepreneurs;**
- Remote work (including proposed regulations for Poland) and the practice of using it - **4 entrepreneurs;**
- Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: an innovative approach to marketing - **2 entrepreneurs;**
- Work-life balance in a telecommuting environment - **2 entrepreneurs;**
- Developing new e-commerce / m-commerce channels - **5 entrepreneurs;**
- Ways of building of strong relationships with customers and meeting their various needs - **8 entrepreneurs;**
- The EU cybersecurity framework and resources for SMEs;
- Maintaining a new online clientele and adapting to the needs of digital and non-digital generations - **3 entrepreneurs;**
- Life-work balance disorders - work-life balance - **1 entrepreneur;**
- Suspension of employers' social duties - **2 entrepreneurs;**
- Increasing the level of customer service - **6 entrepreneurs**

Analysis of the responses shows that the most useful training topic is "Accessible public assistance for entrepreneurs - tailor-made solutions + where to find them." The choice of this topic was made by **21 entrepreneurs**. The responses of entrepreneurs, it seems, should be attributed to the fact that the existence of public assistance was publicized to the maximum during the pandemic period, however, entrepreneurs have encountered problems related to the search for specific offers dedicated exclusively to them. This may also be related to the glut of information in this area. The above is also plausible that out of such a large number of trainings, the second place was occupied by "Public assistance and co-financing of jobs", which was chosen by **17 entrepreneurs**. The next choice was the topic "Ways of building of strong relationships with customers and meeting their various needs," which was chosen by **8 entrepreneurs**.

4. To the question: do the proposed training topics meet the expectations of the entrepreneur?

15 out of 22 respondents answered affirmatively, in 7 surveys no answer was marked (reasons similar to point: 1)

5. To the question: would you recommend https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL&id_ficha=52 website to other entrepreneurs regarding the ESMERALD project?

14 out of 22 respondents answered affirmatively, in 8 surveys no answer was marked (reasons similar to point: 1).

Report on the Evaluation of Training Proposals for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Connection with the ESMERALD Project

International Research Grant 2020-1-PL01-KA226-VET-0956ERASMUS plus KA2 *Enhancing SMEs Resilience After Lock Down* [ESMERALD]

Partner: South-East European Research Centre (SEERC)

A total of 42 companies and individuals responded to our research conducted in January 2023. The majority were located in Northern Greece (approximately 70%) with the balance coming from the rest of the country. Respondents were given access to both the Greek and English versions of the training but the majority chose to evaluate the English version. This is common within the Greek business environment given the high rate of English language spoken by owners / managers of SMEs.

The analysis and discussion of the various components of the standardized ESMERALD survey is as follows.

Sectors of the Economy:

As shown in Figure 1, respondents represent a good cross-section of industries from across the country. The majority are from the tourism section (31%) followed closely by commerce (21%). As such, we have achieved in ensuring that a variety of SME sectors have had the opportunity to evaluate components of the ESMERALD offering giving us a stronger level of validity.

Sector of the economy
42 responses

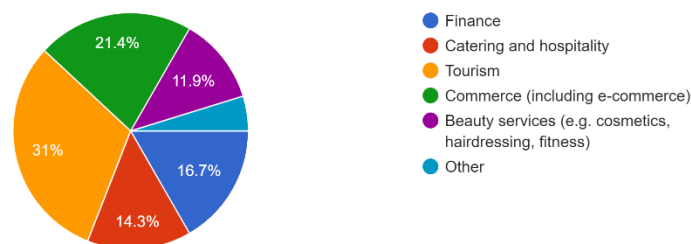


Figure 1

Type of Entrepreneur

The balance of types of entrepreneurs as shown in Figure 2. In the country there is a much higher percentage of micro SMEs than in our sample (41%). Overall, however, we do have a somewhat representative sample of micro and small enterprises (76%).

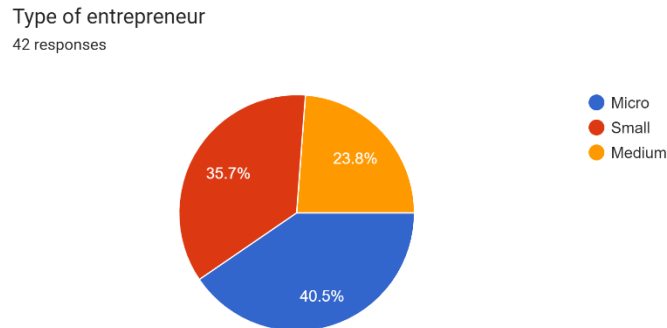


Figure 2

Acquaintance with the Toolkit

As shown in Figure 3, 100% of our sample respondents were acquainted with the website. We were diligent in ensuring that each went to the website directly and became familiar with the website but, more importantly, the ESMERALD project itself.

Have you acquainted yourself with the website at <https://esmerald.eu/toolkit.php> concerning the ESMERALD project?
41 responses

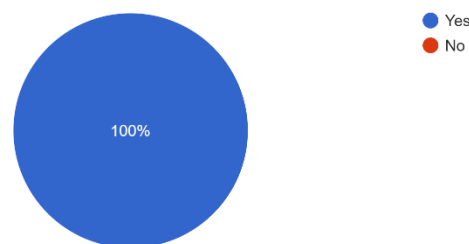


Figure 3

Clarity of the Website:

As shown in Figure 4, nearly all respondents (97%) believed that the website contained clear and readable information about ESMERALD and the training offer. This is a credit to the time and effort taken by the partners, and specifically our IT partner, to ensure that the website was as strong as it could be, and needed to be, for the project.

Does the website contain clear and readable information about the project and the training offer?

37 responses

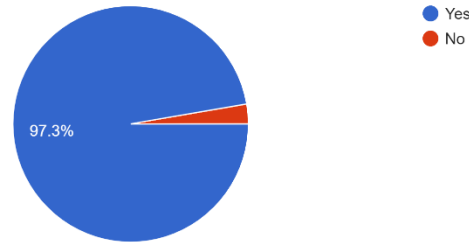


Figure 4

Useful Training Topics:

Table 1 overviews the training topics viewed as most useful for Greek respondent entrepreneurs post-pandemic. Just over half of respondents (52%) indicated training related to “state aid to co-finance jobs would be appropriate” while 45% indicated the need for training related to “use of cloud computing solutions” and “the use of cashless solutions”. What we can see from a general perspective is the need for training related to accessing financial solutions to expanding businesses as well as information related to the overall digitalization of businesses.

Please select 3 to 6 training topics that you think would be most useful for an entrepreneur after the Covid-19 pandemic:

42 responses

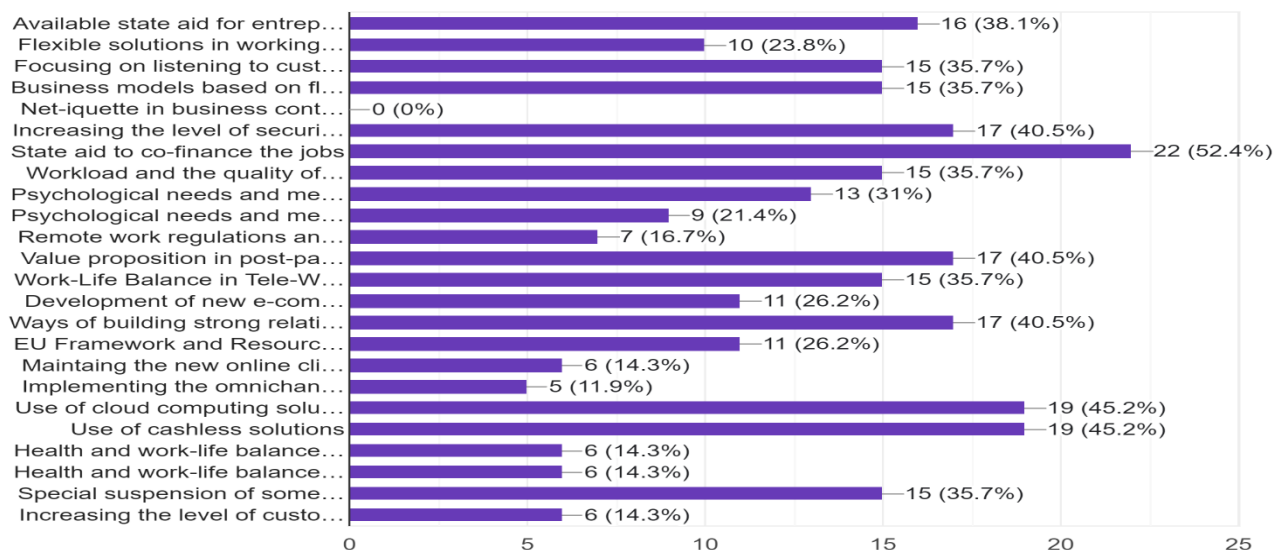


Table 1

It was somewhat surprising that issues related to work life balance and remote work were significant but less requested. During further informal discussions with SMEs it was suggested that, during the pandemic, Greek companies were able to develop this knowledge to an acceptable extent and were also working together to create some levels of collective knowledge.

Expectations Met:

As shown in Figure 5, all respondents indicated that the proposed topics met (88%) or most met (12%) their expectations. No respondent indicated the proposed topics not meeting their expectations. This is, again, a credit to the partners' due diligence and upfront efforts in building and developing a training offering related to the needs of entrepreneurs.

Do the proposed training topics meet the expectations of the entrepreneur?
42 responses

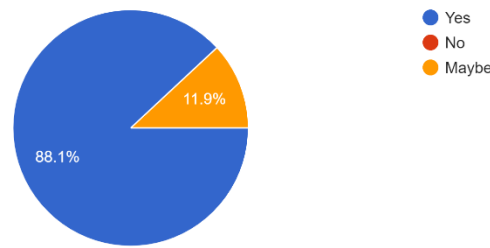


Figure 5

Recommend the Website:

As shown in Figure 6, 100% of respondents would recommend (95%) or maybe recommend (5%) the website to other entrepreneurs. Again, this demonstrates how well the project has been tailored to entrepreneurial needs and expectations.

Would you recommend the website https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=P...ng the ESMERALD project to other entrepreneurs?
42 responses

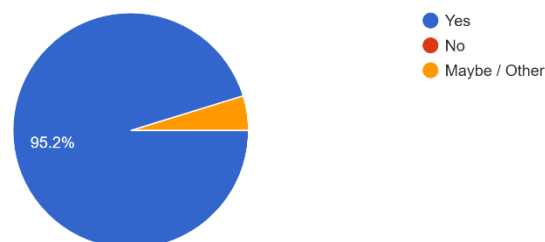


Figure 6



Conclusions:

The data collected demonstrate that, for Greek entrepreneurs, the current ESMERALD offering has been well positioned in relation to their overall needs. The upfront work done in the project (pilots, discussions with SMEs across Europe) appears to have paid off in terms of the development of the training modules put forward.

What would appear necessary, that has not been as effectively developed based on responses, is the localisation of issues such as state aid. This is more challenging to develop as each member state controls this to a great extent plus it is a moving target (access and rules related to state aid change month to month, industry to industry).

Report on the Evaluation of Training Proposals for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Connection with the ESMERALD Project

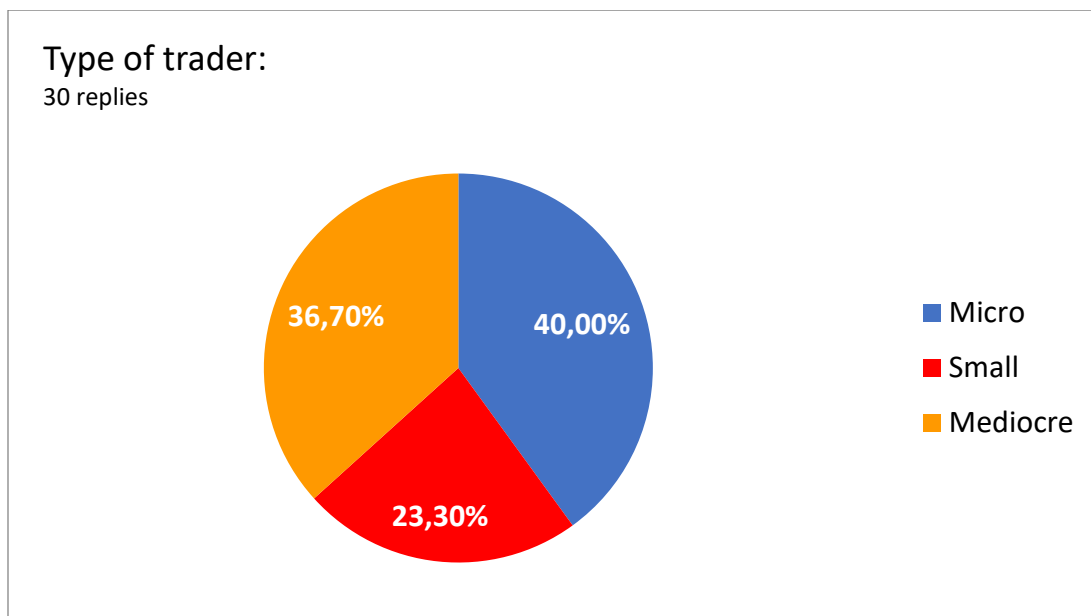
International Research Grant 2020-1-PL01-KA226-VET-0956ERASMUS plus KA2 *Enhancing SMEs Resilience After Lock Down* [ESMERALD]

Partner: Cracow University of Economics (UEK)

In December 2022, CUE conducted a survey on the evaluation of training proposals prepared for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in connection with the ESMERALD project, entitled *"Strengthening the resilience of SMEs after the lockdown"*

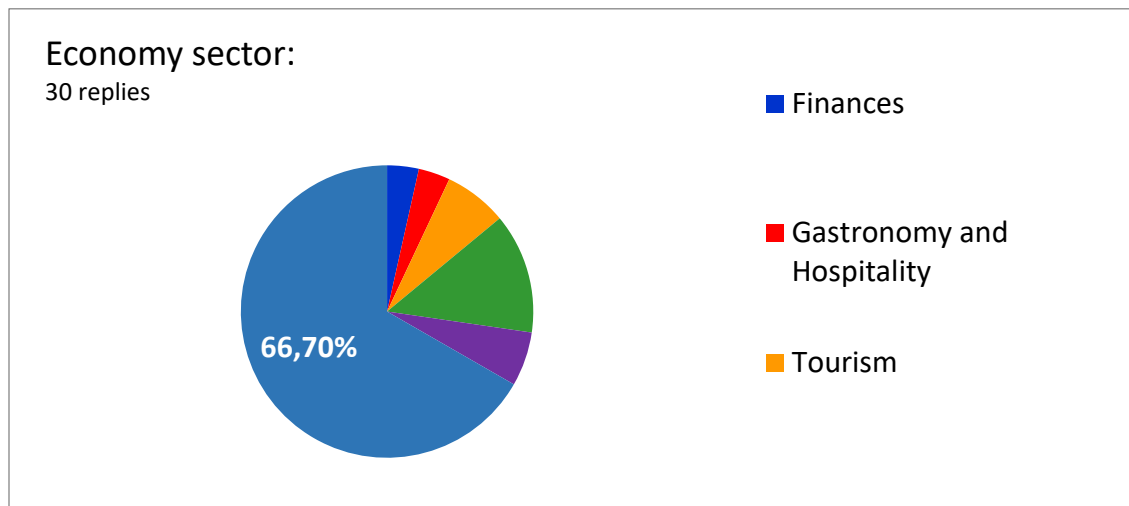
I. Information on the SME sector entrepreneurs participating in the study

A total of 30 entrepreneurs from the SME sector participated in the study. **Micro entrepreneurs accounted for 40% of the respondents; Small entrepreneurs 23.3%, Medium entrepreneurs 36.7% of the respondents.** The chart below shows the percentage share of entrepreneurs in the survey by type of enterprise.



Cross-section of SMEs in the study.

Most of the entrepreneurs covered by the survey represented the financial sector. The chart below illustrates the breakdown of the respondents by the sector of the economy they represent.



Breakdown of the respondents according to the sector of the economy they represent.

The research results:

- Finance: **66.7%** of entrepreneurs;
- Trade (including e-commerce): **13.7%** of entrepreneurs;
- The remaining **20%** is gastronomy and hotel industry, tourism, beauty services and others.

II. Answers to individual questions, including those regarding the potential selection of trainings prepared for SMEs under the ESMERALD project

1. To the question: Have you read the website https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL&id_ficha=52 regarding the ESMERALD project?

96.7% of the respondents answered positively. Only one respondent replied that he had not read the indicated page.

2. To the question: 2. Does the website contain clear and legible information about the project and the training offer?

Affirmatively answered: **100%** of respondents with 29 answers, which means that one of the respondents did not select this option.

3. In the next point regarding the selection of 3 to 6 training topics most useful for entrepreneurs after the Covid-19 pandemic, entrepreneurs were offered the following topics:

- Available public aid for entrepreneurs - tailor-made solutions + where to find them;
- Flexible working time solutions;
- Focus on listening to customers;
- Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitization strategy;
- Business etiquette;
- Increasing the level of security of online transactions;
- State aid and co-financing of jobs;
- Work organization processes and quality;
- Psychological needs and psychological well-being - Maintaining connection with those around you;

- Psychological needs and psychological well-being - empathy in the workplace;
- Remote work (including the draft regulations regarding Poland) and the practice of using it;
- Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: innovative approach to marketing;
- Work-life balance in teleworking conditions;
- Developing new e-commerce / m-commerce channels;
- Ways to build strong relationships with customers and meet their different needs;
- EU SME cybersecurity framework and resources;
- Keeping a new clientele online and adapting to the needs of digital and non-digital generations;
- Implementation of the omnichannel model and increasing the convenience of use;
- Use of cloud computing solutions;
- Using non-cash solutions;
- Work-life balance disorders - work-life balance;
- Work-life balance disorders - self-leadership and self-awareness;
- Suspension of employers' social obligations;
- Increasing the level of customer service.

In response, entrepreneurs found the following to be the most useful:

- Flexible working time solutions – over **36%** of respondents;
- Remote work (including the draft regulations regarding Poland) and the practice of using it - over **36%** of respondents;
- Ways of building strong relationships with customers and meeting their various needs – more than **36%** of respondents;
- Psychological needs and psychological well-being - empathy in the workplace - **33.3%** of respondents;
- Business etiquette - **26.7%** of respondents;
- Processes and quality of work organization – **26.7%** of respondents;
- Increasing the level of security of online transactions - **23.3%** of respondents

- Available public aid for entrepreneurs - tailor-made solutions + where to find them - **20%** of respondents;
- Work-life balance disorders - work-life balance - **20%** of respondents;
- Developing new e-commerce / m-commerce channels – **20%** of respondents;
- Focus on listening to customers – **20%** of respondents;
- State aid and co-financing of jobs – **20%** of respondents;
- Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitization strategy - **16.7%** of respondents
- Psychological needs and mental well-being - Maintaining connection with those around you - **13.3%** of respondents;
- Work-life balance in teleworking conditions – **13.3%** of respondents
- Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: innovative approach to marketing - **10%** of respondents;
- Use of cloud computing solutions – **10%** of respondents;
- Increasing the level of customer service - **10%** of respondents;

4. To the question: Do the proposed training topics meet the expectations of the entrepreneur?

96.7% of the respondents answered positively.

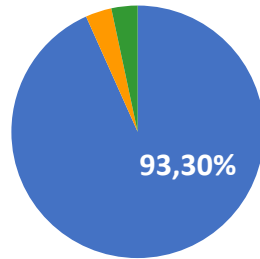
5. To the question: Would you recommend the site

https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL&id_ficha=52 regarding the ESMERALD project to other entrepreneurs?

93.35% of the respondents answered positively. The answers are shown in the chart below.

Would you recommend the ESMERALD website to other entrepreneurs?

30 replies



■ Yes

■ No (write below what needs to be corrected)

■ I don't know the site

■ I don't know

Place and date

Krakow, 31.12.2022

Partner's signature

.....

Report on the Evaluation of Training Proposals for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Connection with the ESMERALD Project

International Research Grant 2020-1-PL01-KA226-VET-0956ERASMUS plus KA2 *Enhancing SMEs Resilience After Lock Down* [ESMERALD]

Partner: University of Dubrovnik (UNIDU)

In February 2023 UNIDU conducted a survey on the evaluation of training proposals prepared for micro, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in connection with the ESMERALD project, titled "Strengthening the resilience of SMEs after lockdown".

I. Information on participating students in the survey

41 students participated in the survey. Participants are enrolled in the following study programmes: 11 in Economics, 8 in Marketing, 2 in Business and Administration, 16 in Management, 2 in Art and Restoration, 1 in Tourism, and 1 in Computer Science. The chart below shows the participation of students in the survey by the study program in which they are enrolled.

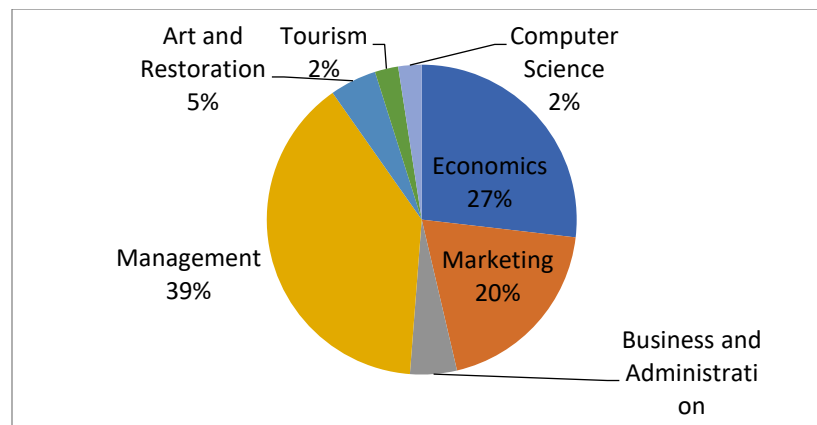


Figure 1: Students by the study program in which they are enrolled

II. Answers to specific questions, including those regarding the potential selection of training courses prepared for SMEs under the ESMERALD project

1. To the question: Have you familiarized yourself with the website at <https://esmerald.eu/toolkit.php> concerning the ESMERALD project?

- 35 of 41 respondents answered affirmatively.

2. To the question: Does the website contain clear and readable information about the project and training offer?

- 39 out of 41 respondents answered affirmatively, and just 2 answered that website doesn't contain readable and clear information about the project and training offer.

3. The students had at their disposal the list of trainings, from which they could choose between 3 and 6 training topics they consider most useful to the entrepreneur after the Covid-19 pandemic. The list of topics and answers are given in the following table (Table 1):

Table 1: List of trainings

Topic	Responses
Available state aid for entrepreneurs - tailor-made solutions + where to find them	1
Flexible solutions in working time	16
Focusing on listening to customers	7
Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitization strategy	15
Net-iquette in business contexts	1
Increasing the level of security of online transactions	5
State aid to co-finance the jobs	4
Workload and the quality of work organization	10
Psychological needs and mental well-being – maintaining connection with world around you	15
Psychological needs and mental well-being – empathy at workplace	7
Remote work regulations (including projected ones concerning Poland) and practice of using them	7
Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: innovative approaches to marketing	8
Work-Life Balance in Tele-Working Settings	7
Development of new e-commerce / m-commerce channels	4
Ways of building strong relationships with clients and meeting their various needs	13
EU Framework and Resources for Cybersecurity of SMEs	7
Maintaining the new online clientele and accommodating the needs of digital and non-digital generations	-
Implementing the omni-channel model and increasing convenience	2
Use of cloud computing solutions	3
Use of cashless solutions	5
Health and work-life balance disorders – quality work balance	14
Health and work-life balance disorders – self awareness and self leadership	13
Special suspension of some social employer's obligation	-
Increasing the level of customer service	10

- Analysis of the responses shows that the most useful training topic is "Flexible solutions in working time." The choice of this topic was made by **16 students**. 15 students have chosen following training topics as most useful "Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitization strategy" and "Psychological needs and mental well-being – maintaining connection with world around you". Trainings topics "Health and work-life balance disorders – quality work balance" was chosen by 14 students while 13 students have chosen training topics "Ways of building strong relationships with clients and meeting their various needs" "and Health and work-life balance disorders – self awareness and self leadership" as most useful.



4. To the question: do the proposed training topics meet the expectations of the entrepreneur?

- 40 out of 41 respondents answered affirmatively, and 1 didn't answer this question at all.

5. To the question: would you recommend https://esmerald.eu/ficha_pl.php?lang=PL&id_ficha=52 website to other entrepreneurs regarding the ESMERALD project?

- 38 out of 41 respondents answered affirmatively, in 1 survey no answer was marked, and 2 students answered no and indicated that the website doesn't work, it is hard to use and it is not user friendly

Report on the Evaluation of Training Proposals for Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Connection with the ESMERALD Project

International Research Grant 2020-1-PL01-KA226-VET-0956ERASMUS plus KA2 *Enhancing SMEs Resilience After Lock Down* [ESMERALD]

Partner: Internet Web Solutions

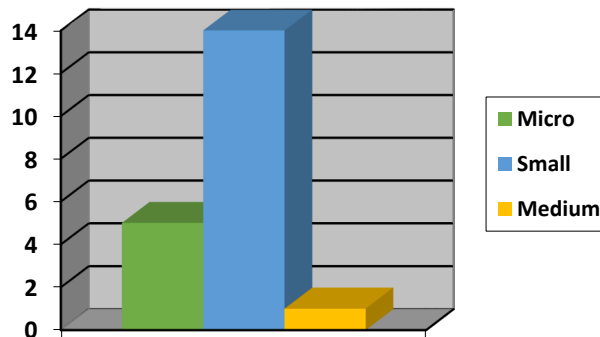
As part of the third output of the project, Internet Web Solutions conducted a survey in January 2023 in order to take stock of the project awareness and topic preference of the respondents on the main focus of the project: micro, small and medium-sized businesses.

I. Information on survey participants

The survey had 20 respondents belonging to the MSME entrepreneurship sphere, distributed in the following fashion:

I. Information on participating SMEs entrepreneurs in the survey

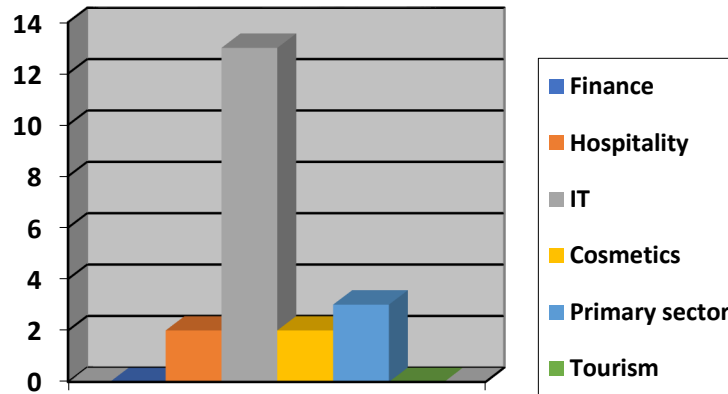
20 MSME entrepreneurs participated in the survey in total, distributed in the following manner: **5** belonging to a Micro-sized business, **14** belonging to a Small-sized one and **1** belonging to a medium-sized company. The chart below shows the participant sorted according to their size.



MSME distribution for the survey

The entrepreneurs covered by the survey mostly represented the financial sector. The chart below shows the classification of respondents by the economic sector they represent.

The majority of the respondents identified themselves with the IT sector (13), with the primary sector (3) in second place and the hospitality and cosmetics sectors (2) in third place. The other options, the tourism and the finance sectors had no representation.



Classification of respondents by the economic sector they represent.

II. Replies to specific questions, including the possible selection of training courses prepared for SMEs in the framework of the ESMERALD program

1. To the question: Did you previously know about the ESMERALD platform?

Out of the 20 respondents to the survey, three-quarters (15) responded affirmatively. Subsequently, the 5 remaining respondents that answered negatively were currently in the process of getting knowledge of the project, so they were able to choose their preferred topics later on in the survey.

2. To the follow-up question: In case you answered affirmatively: Would you say the platform contains clear and useful information about the project and MSMEs?

Out of the 15 respondents that responded affirmatively to the previous question, all of them stated their approval to the project contents.

3. To the question: Select 3 to 6 training topics that you consider very useful for entrepreneurs after the COVID-19 topic, respondents answered in the following way:

- ❖ Accessible public assistance for entrepreneurs-tailored solutions + where to find them;
- ❖ Flexible working time solutions; - **3 respondents (15%)**
- ❖ Focusing on listening to customers; - **1 respondent (5%)**
- ❖ Business models based on flexible organizational structures - implementation of new technologies, digitalization strategy; - **4 respondents (20%)**
- ❖ Netiquette in business; - **3 respondents (15%)**
- ❖ Enhancing the level of security of online transactions; - **13 respondents (65%)**
- ❖ State aid and co-financing of jobs; - **1 respondent (5%)**
- ❖ Processes and quality of work organization; - **6 respondents (30%)**
- ❖ Psychological needs and psychological well-being - Keeping relationships around; - **1 respondent (5%)**
- ❖ Psychological needs and psychological well-being - empathy in the workplace; - **3 respondents (15%)**
- ❖ Remote work (including proposed regulations for Poland) and the practice of using it;
- ❖ Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: an innovative approach to marketing;
- ❖ Work-life balance in a telecommuting environment;
- ❖ Developing new e-commerce / m-commerce channels; - **14 respondents (70%)**
- ❖ Ways of building strong relationships with customers and meeting their various needs; - **1 respondent (5%)**
- ❖ EU cybersecurity framework and resources for SMEs; - **3 respondents (15%)**
- ❖ Maintaining a new online clientele and adapting to the needs of the digital and non-digital generations; - **9 respondents (45%)**
- ❖ Implementing omnichannel model and enhancing user's experience; - **13 respondents (65%)**
- ❖ The use of cloud computing solutions; - **12 respondents (60%)**
- ❖ Using non-cash solutions;
- ❖ Life-work balance disorders - work-life balance; - **3 respondents (15%)**
- ❖ Life-work balance disorders- self-leadership and self-awareness;
- ❖ Suspension of employers' social duties;
- ❖ Increasing the level of customer service. - **2 respondents (10%)**

According to the answers, the most popular topic was 'Developing new e-commerce/m-commerce channels', which was selected by **14 respondents (70%)**. Additionally, 'Enhancing the level of security of online transactions' and 'The use of cloud computing solutions' were also close in terms of popularity, with **13 (65%)** and **12 (60%)** respondents respectively. This may be related to the respondents having a tendency towards innovation and IT topics due to the undeniable boost these underwent during the forced reliance on remote work solutions during the pandemic.

On the other hand, topics like 'Using non-cash solutions', 'Suspension of employers' social duties', 'Remote work (including proposed regulations for Poland) and the practice of using it', 'Value proposition in post-pandemic business models: an innovative approach to marketing' and 'Work-life balance in a telecommuting environment' were not selected by any respondent.

4. To the question: do the proposed training topics meet the expectations of the entrepreneur?
Being all acquainted with the platform at this stage, all 20 respondents answered affirmatively.

5. To the question: Would you recommend the platform to other entrepreneurs?
19 out of 20 (95%) respondents answered affirmatively, with just 1 (5%) not marking any choice.