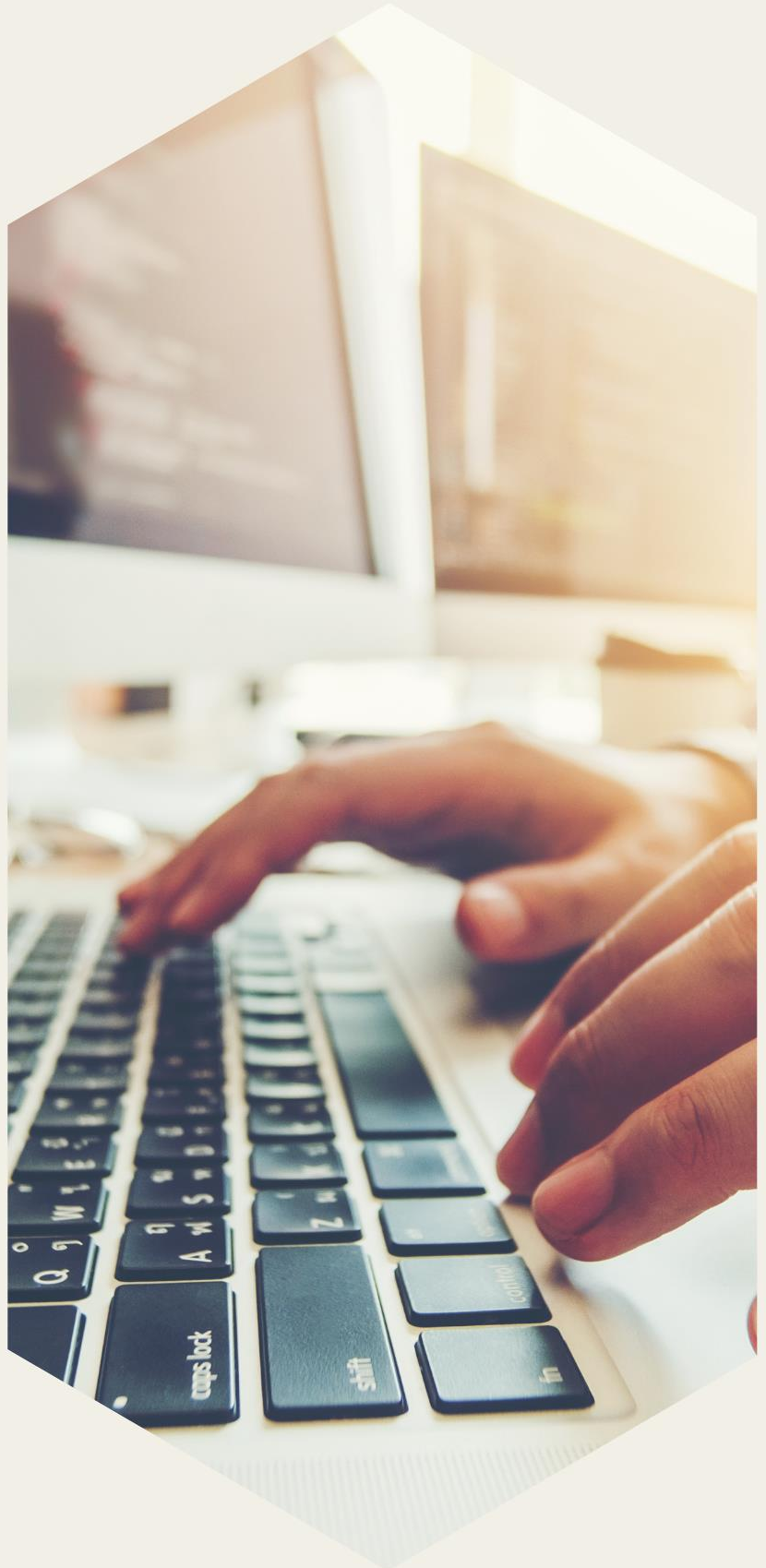code4sp
coding for social promotion

Output 2.4.2: National Analytical Reports on the Conclusions of the National Seminars and Round Tables

WP2: Knowledge Exchange and Transferability Plans

Prepared by:

Center for Social
Innovation

Project Information

Project Acronym: Code4SP

Project Title: Coding for Social Promotion

Project Reference: 621417-EPP-1-2020-1-PT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

Project website: www.code4sp.eu

Authoring Partner: CSI

Document Version: 1

Date of Preparation: 08/10/2021

Document History			
Date	Version	Author	Description
08/10/2021	1	CSI	National Analytical Reports on the Conclusions of the National Seminars and Round Tables

Table of contents

Introduction

About the Project

Summary

The project Code4SP aims at transferring the "CodeDoor Best Practice" to the partner countries in order to facilitate the transfer of computer programming (coding) skills to people from vulnerable socio-economic groups. Coding is a hard skill that is currently limited and highly paid on the labour market; the new "Coding experts" join the labour market with high success: over 90% of the CodeDoor's alumni have been able to find a job or an apprenticeship in the last four years or have set up their own start-ups, and many CodeDoor alumni act as mentors for the new generation.

Goals

The project aims at achieving the following main goals:

- Generate socio-economic promotion by providing job-market-oriented training on computer programming;
- Fostering digital skills and competencies of digitally excluded groups (including older people, migrants, and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds) through partnerships between schools, business, and the non-formal sector, including public libraries;
- Transfer currently established good practices on non-formal education, on computer programming, to the Southern European countries, that are, simultaneously, deemed more economically vulnerable and subjected to an unprecedented exposure to migratory waves, of people with a low socio-economic condition;

- Providing tailored education and training to digitally excluded groups, including migrants and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, while in parallel, taking into consideration the labour market needs;
- Enhance employers' motivation and predisposition for potential employment of individuals that belong to disadvantaged populations, thus breaking any negative stereotypes on this issue.

Work Package 2

The purpose of WP2 is to support partners in understanding, identifying, and responding to the project's needs. This stage of the project is intended to provide partners with the necessary knowledge and awareness regarding the state-of-the-art in each participating country with respect to the policies and best practices that exist regarding the provision of coding opportunities in non-formal education contexts. The resulting analysis will offer compiled information that will form a starting point for the Work Packages that will follow.

A key aim of the research conducted for WP2 is firstly to provide a thorough analysis of the CodeDoor best practice, and secondly to indicate existing good practices and, when possible, reinforce them. At the same time, however, research is also aimed towards identifying relevant policies in the partner countries related to the economic integration of disadvantaged or marginalized populations, and more specifically through coding methodology initiatives. In this context, WP2's role in the overall project is to set up the scientific foundations for the development of innovative solutions (such as the training program and educational resources that will follow), which will address and hopefully fill existing gaps.

More specifically, WP2 aims at investigating the original CodeDoor best practice by delimiting the extent to which the multiple phases of the latter will be exploited by the Code4SP methodology, considering the needs analysis, policy gaps, and peculiarities of each of the pilot testing national contexts. Concurrently, the original CodeDoor best practice will be contrasted and likened with regional best practices, which have

embraced an identical rationale as a means of the economic integration of disadvantaged or marginalized populations, whilst being referred to concrete methodologies along with their limitations and strong aspects, enabling factors/environment and engaged actors (e.g., local authorities) and impact at a policy level. As such, this activity will operate as a knowledge basis while being used for the determination of specific needs and interests by giving emphasis on detected gaps in terms of local/regional/ national policy considerations that could potentially be tackled by Code4SP. The envisaged results include, amongst others, the following.

Methodology of inviting participants and recruiting stakeholders

The Partners from Cyprus: Center for Social Innovation (CSI) – P3 and Citizens in Power (CIP) – P2 invited participants and recruited stakeholders mainly by email. For the National seminars, CIP and CSI approached mainly individuals who work in education, training and social support. In addition, the two Cyrus partners also approached IT and technology students. In regards to the Round Table Discussions, CIP and CSI disseminated the invitations and agenda through email. The target group of CSI and CIP for the Round Table Discussions was coach and trainers, Social Institution Representatives, IT experts, and career counselors.

In addition, the National Seminars and Round Table Discussions were also disseminated as events on the social media of CSI and CIP (mostly on Facebook).

Overall, CSI and CIP were successful in achieving the target number of participants in both the National Seminars and Round Table Discussions. The first National Seminar consisted of 16 participants, and the second National Seminar consisted of 14 participants. In a likewise manner, the two partners reached 6 participants in the Round Table Discussion.

Both National Seminars and the Round Table Discussions took place online via the platform ZOOM due to the epidemiological situation in Cyprus because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key findings from National Dissemination Seminars

Demographics of Participants

In general, participants in the National Seminars in Cyprus had a wide variety of backgrounds, professional and academic experience, and each participant was able to express valid feedback and recommendations based on their knowledge and expertise.

In the two National Seminars held in Cyprus on the 7th and 23rd of September 2021, CSI and CIP managed to reach 30 participants. On the first National Seminar, 16 participants took part, and 14 participants participated in the second seminar. Both seminars took place online via the platform ZOOM due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In regards to both National Seminars, the majority of participants were students (the majority of whom were Engineering students), NGO workers and representatives (for example, an NGO representative working with Refugees and another NGO representative working in Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship), and Web Developers and IT professionals. Moreover, participants also included Researchers (most notably a Machine Learning Researcher), Coaches/ Trainers, Youth workers, a Migration Officer, an Electrical Engineer, a Translator, Project Managers, a University representative, a youth worker, and a Graphic Designer.

During both National Seminars, participants were presented with an overview of Work Package 2 and with an overview of the CodeDoor Best Practice, as well as with an overview of the Initial Transferability Plan.

Findings based on discussion

Following the discussion of both National Seminars, the following findings are summarized below:

- **Target Group:** Participants in the National Seminars commented how in Cyprus, most informal trainings regarding IT and Coding skills are aimed towards refugees and migrants, while other vulnerable groups like the elderly, unemployed youth, high-school dropouts, and individuals living in villages or rural areas with limited technological reach are often excluded.

- **Duration:** Another issue discussed by the participants was the duration of the CodeDoor training. More specifically, participants stated that 12 months are too long for someone to stay committed to completing the CodeDoor Training. More specifically, one participant commented that if an unemployed individual is in an immediate need to get a jog, waiting 12 months to finish the training may be too long. Another participant also stated that 12 months is a very long time to be committed, especially for people with full-time jobs or students.

- **Income/Salary:** Moreover, attendees of the National Seminars stated that the fact that the training requires the commitment of the learners for a 12 month period without any payment or remuneration will be very discouraging for someone, especially given the fact that the learners will be doing actual work when working on projects.

- **Training Material:** Attendees also suggested that in order to have more learners access the CodeDoor platform and trainings, they should be accessible to all levels of IT knowledge. For example, someone who already knows to code should be able to work on projects to gain further experience and enhance their skills

- **Self-learning/ Online Education:** Participants in the national seminars stated that the online education and self-learning approach in Cyprus is not very popular yet, especially among older individuals. Participants pointed out that only recently, due

to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals started to move towards online learning and someone who has no technological literacy or is digitally excluded.

- **Motivation & Psychological Support:** Lastly, participants in the National Seminars stated that a key challenge that might be faced is that it might be very hard to keep learners motivated due to the long duration of the training (12 months). One participant specifically stated that learning for 12 months while being long-term unemployed may have the opposite results. Likewise, it was pointed out that learners who might be refugees or long-term unemployed individuals may already be in a difficult psychological and having to train for 12 months without a steady income may worsen their situation.

Key findings from the Round Tables

Demographics of Participants

Participants in the Round Table Discussion consisted of an IT/Web Developer, an IT NGO representative, a trainer/educator, a life coach, a career counselor, and a student.

During the Round Table Discussion, participants were presented with an overview of Work Package 2 and with an overview of the CodeDoor Best Practice, as well as with an overview of the Initial Transferability Plan.

All six participants of the Round Table Discussion in Cyprus had both professional and academic experience, and each participant was able to express valid feedback and recommendations based on their knowledge and expertise.

Findings based on discussion

Following the Round Table Discussion, the following findings can be summarized below:

- **Independent/Autonomous learning:** Similarly to the findings from the National Seminars, participants of the Round Tables stated that the target group (i.e., refugees or people with limited digital literacy) may find it very difficult to learn through autonomous and online learning platforms. They may face difficulty in self-discipline and adhere to the 12-month training.

- **Computer/ Internet Access:** Similarly, attendees of the Round Tables also stated that the target group may not have access to the internet or to Wifi or even to a computer, so they may find it very difficult to follow the trainings.

- **Language:** Another issue that was pointed out during the Round Table Discussion was the language aspect of the training. As was stated to the participants, the CodeDoor Best Practice is provided in English. However, participants stated that the target group (mainly refugees or people with limited educational backgrounds) may not know English. When participants discussed the possibility of translating the training in the National languages (in this case, Greek), participants stated that firstly refugees may not even know the national language and secondly that only the reading material can be translated since coding uses English characters/language instructions.

- **Selection process:** Lastly, during the Round Table Discussion, participants stated that it is important to focus on who would be selected to participate in the trainings. More specifically, since the number of participants is limited, the selection has to be focused on people who would not leave and adhere to the 12-month training.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Key results of National Seminars and Round Table Discussion

Overall, the results from both the National Seminars and Round Tables Discussion were in parallel with the comments made by the Initial Transferability Plan. Participants pointed out several challenges that may arise when transferring the CodeDoor best

practice in Cyprus and made several recommendations and suggestions based on their knowledge, expertise, and experiences. Most notably, participants pointed out that there is a need in Cyprus to broaden the target group, that the duration of the training may demotivate learners, especially people in urgent need of a job or of an income, and that self-learning/autonomous learning online is not widely used by the target group in Cyprus. Moreover, participants pointed out that the material should be translated into the national language (Greek) and that a training curriculum should be created in order for perspective learners to know what the 12 month training will entail. Lastly, participants also pointed out that the selection process should be very carefully undertaken to ensure that participants will not 'dropout' and that it is very important to motivate learners by providing adequate support.

Recommendations

Based on all the above, the following recommendations are made:

- **Cooperation with schools or training centers:** it is suggested that it would be preferable to have local cooperation with school and training centers where learners will be able to attend and use the computers there. This will be beneficial for adapting the CodeDoor best practice in many ways. Firstly, as mentioned both in the Initial Transferability Plan as well as in the National Seminars and Round Tables, that the majority of the target group may not have access to a computer or to the internet/wifi. Having a place with available computers and the internet will help learners participate in the training. In a likewise manner, having the learners attend a school or training center will ensure an increase in motivation, especially if they are under direct supervision from the tutors. This will also benefit learners who are not used to autonomous online learning.

- **Paid internship program:** As mentioned by several participants in the National Seminars, another key issue was the motivation for someone who is long-term unemployed and who has no income during the 12 month training. A good

recommendation would be to incorporate the possibility of a paid internship for the learners. For example, if a learner is working on a project for a specific company, the company could take them in as an intern for a limited period and pay them an amount of money with respect to the project and their capabilities. In this way, learners will stay motivated to complete the training.

- **Duration:** In a likewise manner, another recommendation based on the above would be to provide the possibility to complete the training in two 6-month periods. In this way, learners who are in need of an income could adjust their schedules, work for a bit and then complete the training.

- **Psychological support:** Lastly, a final recommendation would be to recruit a psychologist or a professional counselor who would have the expertise to motivate and reassure learners to adhere to the training. As was pointed out by one participant in the National Seminars, participants who are refugees or who have been long-term unemployed may face severe psychological and motivational issues, and having a professional who can advise them on these issues will increase their chances of completing the training.