



## NEWSLETTER No. 1, May 2020

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### F2F-Trust – a project more actual than ever

When we start to work on F2F-Trust idea we knew it is meant to prepare you for better meet the future needs based on the data provided by Eurostat or national researches from partners' countries. The reality of the last months showed us that the future becomes present time earlier than we expected, not only for the craft sector - that represents F2F-Trust core domain - but for many other sectors where the products used to

be sell mainly directly, within public events such as markets or fairs that were deeply affected by COVID -19 crisis.

In this context, F2F-Trust represents a solution at the right time especially for the women who activate or want to activate in these domains.

Our project aims to develop the digital marketing and e-commerce skills of the above mentioned persons and also the mentoring competencies of the "work & life experienced" women who have the willingness to transfer this experience to those who need the personal and professional growth.

Therefore F2F-Trust addresses, on the one hand, especially to the craft persons, particularly young craft women or would be craft women who have talents for handcrafting, both categories not being very efficient in marketing their handicrafts due to lack of knowledge or experience and, on the other hand, to experienced persons, with a major emphasis on inactive women who cannot work due to several personal life limits, although they want to work.

One of the best possible solutions for these groups is mentoring - a process that combines, in the best way, work and private life in order to transfer accumulated knowledge and experience to

the individuals who need to improve their productivity.

Taking into account all above, a comprehensive mentor/ mentee, free on-line training program will be developed. The e-training program addresses, in parallel, to:

1. Women, especially young women in rural areas, who already activate in the field of crafts or those who are not activated yet but still have talent/skills for handcrafting – potential mentees; these persons need support for understanding the real value of their work and for developing the skills for appropriate selling of their artwork. Therefore, the e-training for this target group will be focused on the development of entrepreneurial competencies, digital marketing and e-commerce skills, on the mentoring concept and how can they benefit from the mentoring process in order to



transform their handicraft products into revenue and to growth their small businesses;

2. Women with a high level of work experience & knowledge, especially inactive or unemployed – potential mentors; F2F-Trust will provide to this second target group the chance to develop the mentoring competencies in order to complete their background knowledge and experience such as marketing, management, finances, training or others and, therefore, the chance to re-activate themselves and not waste their experience/ knowledge. Potential mentors

will be trained step-by-step regarding how to conduct the mentoring process, to provide a systematical guidance to the persons belonging to the first target group, to offer them a perspective on the entrepreneurship fundamentals and to support them to gain the knowledge, skills, the way of thinking and self-confidence to overcome possible gaps in their lives. A mentor who knows the local market conditions, providing also insights about local practices and opportunities is an invaluable resource.

To sum up, F2F-Trust e-learning program will highlight the concept and process of mentoring and also the efficient usage of e-commerce technics and tools providing a win-win model for both participating target groups, who are actually final beneficiaries of the action.. The mentors and the mentees will share the same objectives and the take same business risk - destiny - or achieve to similar commercial success. Mentors will take part in the business in return for providing of their exertions and guidance. They will have the chance of financial and personal satisfaction of seeing enterprise succeed through this kind of mentoring. Moreover, it is possible that the mentor and mentee to maintain this partnership in future periods.

In final and global sense, the mentorship will conduct to the enhancement of productivity and socioeconomic conditions of both target groups.

On long term, the project will contribute to economic growth by providing alternative job creation approaches and the development of the independent economic activities.

The project is implemented during 24 months starting with 01.12.2019, by a consortium consisted by: MEU, Turkey – coordinator; AHBV University, Turkey; INCSMPS, Romania; ZARIF, Slovakia; "Probus in Bistrita-Nasaud" Association, Romania; POINT LLC, Turkey; TAKIDD, Turkey; VsI, Lithuania; Lukasiewicz-ITeE, Poland; Association DiR, Poland.

**For more information about the project, please contact:**

**the project coordinator**



## First F2F-Trust Project Meeting

**The first F2F-Trust Project meeting represented an important step to close cooperation and collaboration among ten partners from five countries in order to successfully develop a micro-entrepreneurship supportive mentoring system for women with fewer opportunities in rural areas.**

The activities carried out within the meeting hosted by Mersin University during 16/17 January 2020 in Mersin (Turkey) included:

- \* the introductory presentation of the Mersin University team and the partner organizations;
- \* a comprehensive presentation about framework and roadmap of the project;
- \* an overview on the approved project budget;
- \* the decision on the dates of the future partnership meetings;
- \* a preliminary redesign of two years project implementation;
- \* the delegation of the tasks with deadlines for each partner;
- \* the analysis of the intellectual outputs, with a major emphasizes on the first and second outputs; in this context, team decided to create a large database about both, mentees and

mentors and to develop questionnaires for both target groups in order to better identify their match to the project;

- \* the establishment of the guidelines for internal evaluation (meeting and output evaluation);

- \* the open discussion of the questions and concerns of the partners were discussed in the form of sharing good practices, models and best ideas;

- \* the research and decision on project logo.

Also, the meeting included a guided visit of Mersin University campus and social program with common dinners and lunches that created a good opportunity for the team to blend and interact.

To sum up, the first project meeting was an efficient one, all the participants being active and working in harmony for a clear understanding the objectives and intellectual outputs of the project.

The project gather together: two high education institutions, 2 women non-governmental organizations, 3 Rural micro-entrepreneurship and development organizations, 2 state social development R/D centers and 1 ICT professional e-VET business in the F2F-Trust project team and a detailed overview of partners is available at [F2F-Trust.eu](http://F2F-Trust.eu) portal.



**For more information about the project, please contact: the project coordinator**



## What's next?

**F2F-Trust will continue by launching F2F-Trust.eu portal. Also, the partners and the audience will be motivated to start disseminating the portal along with their awareness rising efforts by also using their e-mail database established so far.**

After settling down project's start up matters and necessary tools, such as: contractual activities, solidifying partnership and management, realization of kick-off meeting, preliminary desk surveys in partner countries on e-Marketing tools & launching to the e-mail campaigns, national team formations in every partner organizations and at country level, returning country reports on desk surveys and e-mail campaign results, F2F-Trust will continue by launching F2F-Trust.eu portal. Also, the partners and the audience will be motivated to start disseminating the portal along with their awareness rising efforts by also using their e-mail database established so far.

The Curriculum Development & Selection Questionnaire for Mentors and Mentees output will be started working on it in the leadership of MEU and by close guidance of AHBV University.

Second partnership meeting in Bucharest has been planned to happen during 10-11 June 2020, however it will be replaced by cyber meeting because of covid-19 phenomena.

Please stay in connection to your national organization partner in order to be up-to date with the next steps within F2F-Trust Project.

**For more information about the project, please contact: the project coordinator**

## Handicrafts field in the time of COVID-19

**As everything has been affected in the worldwide by the covid-19 outbreak and whole economical activities are shifting to e-commerce this brings a great importance to our F2F-Trust project. Therefore, we must put more and more energy for speeding up our products to be exploited by the sector which is in an absolute need for our solution.**

Everything has been affected in the world by the covid-19 outbreak, handcraft being on top of existing negativity major affected sectors, along with tourism, events or recreation industry. People are focused on their essential and vital needs and have a tendency of postponing their clothing, accessory tourism needs/shopping.

See below how the craft sector was affected particularly in partner countries (in alphabetical order) and what measures were adopted in supporting this domain:

### Lithuania

Both national heritage creators and producers have been severely affected by quarantine, which has restricted both training and sales, as well as production.

In Lithuania quarantine came at a time when creators and producers of national heritage have the opportunity to earn the most to survive all year. Most of the various celebrations and similar events are organized in the spring and summer, and it is known that all this will not happen for a



few more months. Furthermore, in the future both fairs and celebrations will be more modest. The turnover of producers who were able to trade in the markets fell by about 30 percent.

Unfortunately, the most difficult situation is currently experienced by non-food producers. For example, people usually buy handmade gifts and crafts, as well as candies and apple cheese made according to national heritage traditions for various celebrations and special occasions, and during the quarantine there were not even any personal family celebrations left.

Only those working according to individual activity certificates can expect modest support from the state, more specifically from The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania. However, for instance, farmers with additional individual activity certificates are no longer eligible for the support. In addition, most state support for national heritage is targeted at participation in events or certification for new members. For those who want to trade handicrafts or other goods, there is one clear solution left according to the Ministry of Health: trading can only continue if it takes place online.

### **Poland**

March 2020 was the month in which Polish business suffered particularly from the government's restrictions imposed in connection with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, causing COVID-19 disease. SMEs have suffered most. Citing data from the Central Register and Information on Business Activity, the Ministry of Development reports that in March, a total of almost 58,000 applications for suspension and liquidation of activities were submitted. Suspension is

currently the most frequently chosen rescue option. According to preliminary research, the following sectors have suffered the most: trade and services, hairdressing, optics, catering and hotel industry, food sector, construction, photography, automotive, fitness, manufacturing, tailoring, metal and furniture.

Companies affected by the difficult situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic may take advantage of special solutions, within the framework of the governmental "Anti-Crisis Shield". The programme concerns financial support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises affected by the pandemic. The Programme assumes that the main instrument of financial support for enterprises will be financial subsidies, the majority of which (up to 75% of the funding) will be non-refundable once the conditions set out in the Programme are met. Among the most helpful proposals of the Anti-Crisis Shield, craftsmen and entrepreneurs mentioned: exemption from the payment of contributions to the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) for 3 months; subsidies to employees' salaries in the amount of 40% of the average salary in case of reduction of working time; subsidies to employees' salaries for the time of economic downtime in the amount of 50% of the minimum salary; reduction by 90% of rents of tenants of premises and stalls in shopping malls,





as long as these facilities are prohibited from functioning normally.

### Romania

Together with tourism, events and recreation business, the handicraft sector is one of the most affected economic domains by the restrictive measures established at National level due to COVID-19 pandemic, and the short term future doesn't sound good also.

The immediate measures took by the Government in the support of the craft sector included the technical unemployment for the employees – in the case of SME's or a monthly benefit in the case independent economic activities. Both kinds of benefits are supported by the state in quantum of 75% of the average salary during state of emergency.

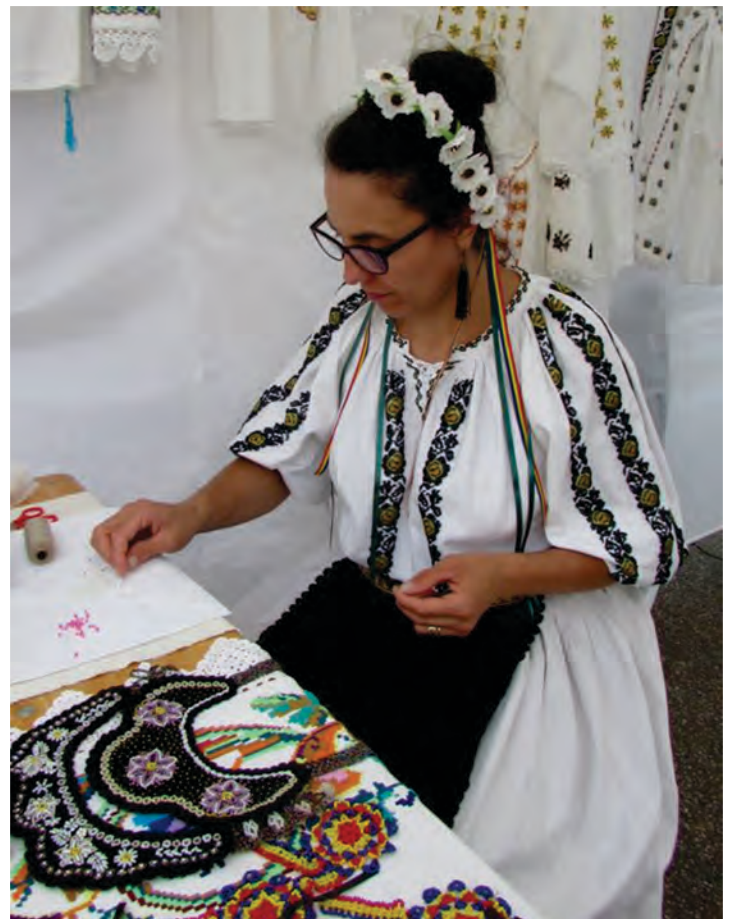
Also, the SME's INVEST credit program was launched at the beginning of May. The program allows to SME's significantly affected by COVID-19 crisis to ensure the cash for carrying out the current activity or for investments, by accessing one or more credits for making investments and / or one or more credits / credit lines for working capital. The state will guarantee up to 90% of the credit. The financing costs (pay interest, guarantee fee or other granting costs) are 100% subsidized from the state budget, until 31.12.2020, with the possibility of extension. The maximum value of loans can be up to 10,000,000 lei for investments and up to 5,000,000 lei for working capital!

Even a big part of the craft persons switched to online selling, unfortunately, most likely the handicraft sector will be affected till the end of year as the customers will continue their

consumer behaviour oriented on food and necessity goods in the context in which the health specialists warns us on the danger of a new epidemic during the fall.

### Slovakia

Lockdown caused by COVID is being felt across all crafts in Slovakia during past 2 months. Their orders have been cancelled. Since all markets have been shut, they can neither buy raw material, nor sell finished goods. They don't even have a safety net like provident fund. A lack of clarity and unpredictability characterise the situation in the craft sector facing the impact of the COVID-19 virus in Slovakia. The virus poses a number of risks - not all of them immediate. How big the challenge the Slovak economy faces in the end depends on the development in neighbouring countries, as well as the generosity of the state in providing assistance and incentives when re-opening the economy. In the countries surveyed, Slovakia is the one where the government's assistance has so far been the least generous, the most narrow in the use of instruments, and so far, the slowest. Business and industry associations and employer organisations assess the measures taken in



Slovakia as helpful, but too slowly adopted, too complicated and administratively demanding, pointing out that these are decisive for the future competitiveness of Slovakia.

### **Turkey**

Market is already down, together with the fact that many shops and shopping malls closed and events cancelled or postponed for the autumn or next year.

State is trying to support the small scale producers by subventions, however it will not be sufficient for survival in medium and long term.

The government took several decisions to

reduce the effects of the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. Some of them directly or indirectly affect women who do handicrafts from home and briefly as follows:

- Cash assistance to low income families,
- Tax payments of taxpayers who have income tax debt on commercial, agricultural and professional earnings were postponed
- Low interest loans were provided by public banks and loan payments were delayed
- Tradesmen Support Package was provided within the scope of Economic Stability Shield for Tradesmen and Craftsmen.

**For more information about the project, please contact:**

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## **“The age of digitalization” - Why digitalization is a must nowadays**

**History has shown us that technological progress leads to social evolution and a high standard of living with an increasing life expectancy. Nowadays, the digital technology is the leader in terms of technological evolution, its impact being felt in all economic and social fields.**

Even if opinions on the benefits of digitalization are different, the reality proves that new technological innovations in the field of digital technology lead to progress. The pace at which technology is evolving is ever increasing – and people are eager to embrace it. Consider this – in 2019, all over the world, there were 5.112 billion mobile users, 4.388 billion internet users and 3.484 billion active social media users (Global Digital 2019 Reports<sup>1</sup>) and, for sure, in the current context the foreseen growth for 2020 is already exceeded.

### **What is the digital age?**

One of the friendliest definitions is provided by Collins Dictionary<sup>2</sup>: “The digital age (or information age) is a time when large amounts of information are widely available to many people, largely through computer technology”.

It has a wide scope - the main 8 technologies:

· **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is an umbrella term for “smart” technologies that are aware of and can learn from their environments to assist or augment human decision making. Machine learning, recommendation engines, chatbots

and image recognition are only a few of the areas where AI is applied.

· **Augmented reality (AR)** is a data or information “overlay” on the physical world that uses contextualized digital information to augment the user's real-world view. It is used for data visualization, transportation safety, customer experience and manufacturing operations.

· **Blockchain technology** is a distributed shared ledger where transactions are recorded and confirmed without the need for a central authority. It is used for supply chain traceability, financial processes, identity verification and digital currencies.

· **Drones** are devices that fly or move without the presence of a pilot and can be used to collect a wide range of data or execute tasks remotely, i.e., remote delivery, infrastructure maintenance, security provision or video capture.

· **The Internet of things (IoT)** extends network connectivity and enables a diverse range of devices to collect, process, and send

back data. It is used in asset tracking, smart metering, fleet management and predictive maintenance.



- **Robotics** is the combination of engineering and computer science to create, design, and operate mechanical devices, i.e., robots. It is used in industrial manufacturing, medical procedures, transportation operations and product fulfilment.

- **Virtual reality** (VR) is a simulation of a 3D image or complete environment where a user can interact in a seemingly realistic way. Marketing makes use of it. It's also used for training, virtual tours, prototyping.

- **3D printing** is the process of creating a three-dimensional object by successively printing layers of materials on one another until an object is formed. It is used in practice to construct spare parts, architectural models, complex manufacturing and rapid prototyping.

Interesting facts about the EU countries that are in top of using the main 8 essential technologies can be seen here.<sup>3</sup>

### **Why digitalization is a must nowadays?**

Looking for the answer to this question, we must look to the benefits that can expect from digital transformation: versatile working,

automation, GPS and mapping, decentralized systems, big data (connected to asset management, measuring financial risk, creating marketing strategies), internet of things etc.

One of the most conclusive examples of the utility and efficiency of digitalization is in the trade and communication economic sectors.

The digital age has changed consumer behavior permanently. The online shop is no longer the only and most important sales channel, customers purchase on mobile devices, via voice assistants or within their social media feed on Instagram, Facebook or Snapchat.

The growing media landscape has a crucial influence on consumer behavior. Although each platform offers its own individual advantages for consumers, there is still a symbiotic relationship between traditional and digital technologies. Users can extend their TV experience by using their smartphone to report about it via social media, or by purchase products in connection with a radio advertisement that they are currently listening to.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, even that, for the companies and for all of us, the digital transformation implies costs, efforts and risks, it is a crucial step in order to keep up with the global landscape and remain competitive.

Investment in digitalization and digital education of staff should be a top priority of business owners, managers and the government as well. In the same time for all people should be provided resources helping them to face the digital age.

[1.https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019](https://wearesocial.com/global-digital-report-2019)

[2.https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/information-age](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/information-age)

[3.https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/entrepreneurial-and-private-companies/emea-private-business-survey/europe-2019.pdf](https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/entrepreneurial-and-private-companies/emea-private-business-survey/europe-2019.pdf)

[4.https://blog.exactag.com/en/digital-era-consumer-behavior](https://blog.exactag.com/en/digital-era-consumer-behavior)

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