NEWSLETTER No. 2

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F2F-Trust Project - What we have achieved so far

F2F-Trust has completed its 1st year of implementation. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic's negative effects, our partnership has managed to stick to the original timing plan and already produced:

❖ Country specific Need Analysis reports;
❖ The core Multi-language e-training content, their connected entry and self-assessment questions;
❖ Multi-language poster and leaflet;

❖ Multi-language Learning Completion Certificates;
❖ Beta level www.f2f-trust.eu;
❖ Multi-language first newsletter.

All partners have established their connections with target groups and successfully managed to keep them aware of the development of F2F-Trust.

Also the project was presented within:

❖ 2020 #Erasmusdays in Turkey and drew attention of many persons;
❖ EUVocationalSkill 2020 in Poland #EVSW2020, as an example of activities for a successful and rewarding career.
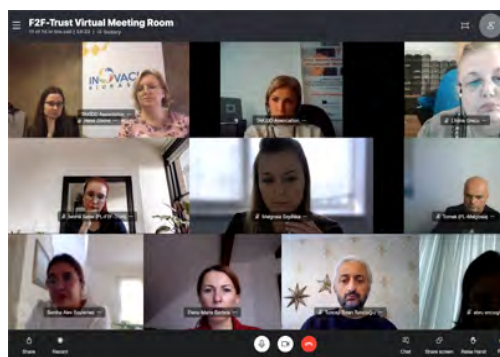
As face to face transnational meetings were not possible to be carried out, partners had the chance to discuss ongoing and future activities during the virtual partnership meeting on 20th November 2020.

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

What's next?

The partnership has already completed a massive part of the work and now it's concentrating on the completion of the communication interface with the audience, the portal and the Android App.

After having ready the multilingual training material, the project will now focus on developing their public versions and make them available through the online channels.

Therefore we plan to offer the final beta versions by the middle of February 2021 to our audience and keep the improvement of our products from localizations and testing dimensions. Feedback mechanism and supporting tools will also be integrated progressively and complete user satisfaction will be reached before the second phase of testing period.

Starting with the release of this newsletter, our partnership also launches very intensive dissemination efforts on top their former preliminary/initial valorization performances.
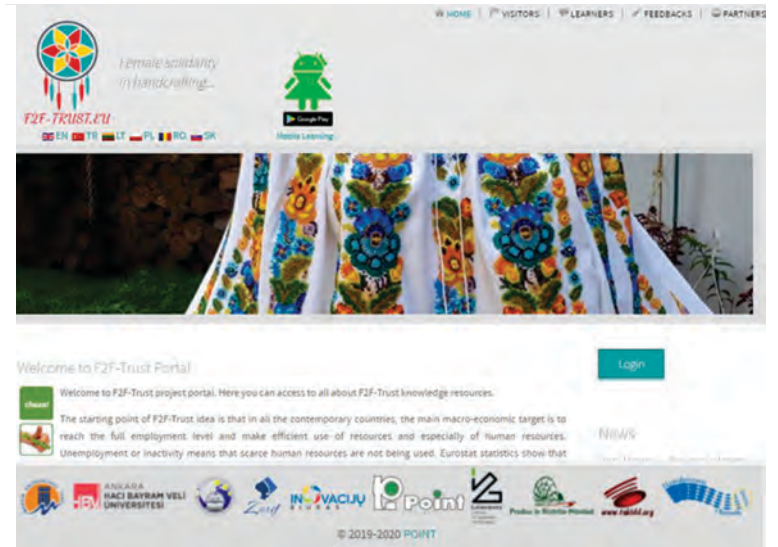
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How the craft sector adapted to COVID-19 pandemic

The coronavirus has wreaked havoc in most industries, with many entrepreneurs having to think about how to stay on the market. Small and micro-enterprises without financial reserves suffered most - for many of them, the economic lockdown meant a total lack of revenue, handcraft being on top of affected sectors, along with tourism, events or recreation industry. People were mostly focused on their essential and vital needs, the events were almost non-existent and the mobility reduced or restricted. However, the craft sector managed to survive finding solutions to adapt to the new context.

See bellow good practice examples identified in each partner country.

Lithuania

An interesting fact has happened: it is widely known, that the process of crafts making can reduce tension and stress for both children and adults therefore some people, who at the moment have more leisure time because of the quarantine started making and selling handicrafts. As a result, the competition on the Lithuanian market of handicrafts has significantly increased.

In addition, during the pandemic new online groups and online shops/ websites were created, where various Lithuanian handicrafts have been sold. This is a particularly noticeable trend, because there were not as many online handicraft shops in Lithuania before the pandemic, and the handicraft advertising was mostly carried out on specific Facebook groups. Besides, online campaign #internetekarantinonera (#no-quarantine-on-the-internet) was started by Enterprising Lithuania, offering the catalogue of Lithuanian e-shops, e-shop gift card, create e-shop yourself, e-commerce training video library, special offers by partners and the catalogue of sponsors.

Despite the tightening of quarantine before the Christmas holidays and the closure of all the country's large supermarkets, residents have the opportunity to purchase handmade gifts online and thus support local artisans.

Furthermore, there has been an increase of articles in the media about influencers, celebrities and bloggers, who during the pandemic are making handicrafts on their own, with their loved ones or children, or just supporting Lithuanian hand-made products. This way the idea of handiwork itself is gaining more and more popularity and attention in public discourse.

Likewise, the Lithuanian government didn't forget about craftspeople and their small businesses, state grants being one of the ways to support small businesses.

Poland

Already in April this year, Poland saw its biggest fall in employment in over 10 years.

Many small companies have started to support the health service by sewing masks or making helmets for hospitals. Some of the brands that designed and manufactured clothes or bags so far have adapted their offer to the current needs and have also started to sew protective masks for adults and children.

Other craft sectors have largely moved their business to the Internet. Some craft people as part of their online workshops prepared special sets of simple tools which enabled the enthusiasts of manual production to start the adventure of manual work in their own homes. The "Knee Weaving" group on Facebook was joined in just a few days by nearly 500 users. Some companies decided to introduce "future" vouchers for their services and products.

Another idea for survival was to join forces and get involved in activities supporting neighbouring businesses. An example is the "I Support Polish Brands" campaign, which for several weeks operated on Instagram, where users marked Polish designers and manufacturers, encouraging their followers to become familiar with their products.

Romania

Similar to many European countries a supportive campaign of buying local products was developed in Romania within social media by different stakeholders and influencers. Moreover, some of the artisans adapted their crafts to the actual market requests and started to produce masks and other specific products for protection.

E-commerce has boomed, some famous online shops have included craft products in their offer, new online stores dedicated to local products have appeared. Also the handicraft products were sold through numerous groups of handicrafts created on the Facebook platform or though business pages of specialized associations.

In parallel with online commerce the off line one was permitted in certain regions of Romania where the incidence of cases was low. The measures adopted regionally allowed the organization of small craft fairs, in well-defined perimeters, with strict rules. There were organizations in these regions of Romania that assumed the risk and costs of such kind of initiatives. It is the case of Produs în BN Association that organized 5 monthly small local crafts fairs during June to October and one small Christmas local craft & food Market. These events were a real breath of fresh air for the producers, especially for those who create particular handicrafts products that customers like to see/feel by themselves the products before buying them and also for both categories – seller and buyer – for the joy of face to face meeting.

However, it is obvious that the online will take the lead as the consumer behavior is more and more oriented to e-commerce.

Slovakia

The current pandemic situation has affected the lives of us all. We have seen how entrepreneurs, sole proprietors, small and medium-sized businesses experience big drop in sales and this has also been reflected in continuously increasing unemployment. They all tried to adapt with the products and services, as exemplified by the online campaign: "Rúško nie je hanba - Mask is not a shame", which was spread mainly through social networks, including famous people and influencers from Slovakia.

Slovak businesses, as well as skilled individuals, took the situation into their own hands and began to sew the face masks and produce protective face shields for hospitals and those who needed them.

Restrictions against the spread of the virus made it very difficult for the micro-enterprises, craftsmen or traders to work. Therefore, as soon as was possible, in a limited number and in compliance with the hygienic measures, they participated at various events and fairs to present their handicrafts.

Nevertheless, artisans are trying to focus more on online platforms, as it can be seen that e-commerce experiences a big boom. There are many groups on social networks, especially Facebook, such as handmade, handicrafts, etc., where there are more than 14 thousands

members and where members exchange ideas and present their handmade crafts. Various handicraft workshops have moved to the online world and those interested are learning individual crafts, such as knitting, embroidery, etc. via webcams. It is also evident that especially during the Christmas holidays, associated with restraints and lockdowns this year, families reduce their time by making their creative handmade products, which is proven to have an anti-stress effect on families, spending their time together and developing their skills.

Turkey

In Turkish, saying "every bad situation bears a good point" aims to give a positive feeling to people in negative days!

In case of COVID-19, the Internet marketing is boosting incredibly and the craft sectors, from micro to large scales, are going into the Internet for marketing their handicrafts, in parallel to the philosophy of F2F-Trust.

We expect to see a similar interest in F2F-Trust system even after getting rid of COVID-19 pandemic as habits of people are changing and shifting to more cyber marketing and cyber shopping.

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

Distance learning solution for the pandemic

The resilience of education and training systems in pandemic times was based on their ability to continue the process after the closure of on-site learning. Distance learning has become a solution for many learners, with the support of various virtual education tools.

Researchers and education professionals are called upon to support the transition to online learning, especially for vulnerable groups.

In this context, F2F Trust perfectly meets the current learning needs. The distance learning tool developed within the project is designed to help women access entrepreneurship, flexible working arrangements, to change their daily lives and to become active on the labor market.

The F2F Trust distance learning model is based on the positive role of mentoring, which is one of the most effective mechanisms in adult education and training, especially for low skilled adults like project target group: women of all ages who have craft skills and live in rural areas from their countries and / or perhaps belonging to minorities.

The learning program for mentors and mentees is presented on the F2F Portal in the friendliest way by an Avatar that transmits empathy through mimicry and vocal tone capturing students' attention and giving them confidence.

F2F Trust Portal offers free accessibility from laptops, tablets with Android operating system and mobile phones.

This innovative product has a high transferability potential. In addition to being open to transferring other e-learning topics, its usefulness is even more demonstrated in the pandemic and post-pandemic periods, when we need to find solutions to be safe and healthy, but at the same time to continue all our activities and development staff.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021

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