

STARTCRAFT National Report Research

Intellectual output O1

Research about crafts entrepreneurship teaching and crafts entrepreneurial skills demand according to representatives from the sector.

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs are the engine of economic growth in Europe. It is a well-known fact that SMEs are the most important form of business organization in Europe, representing 99.8% of all enterprises. What is much less known is that most SME are in fact micro enterprises: more than 19 million employ less than 10 people. Many of these enterprises, mainly from the crafts and artisan sector, are run by the owner and together employ around 1/3 of the European workforce.

Therefore, the craft company plays a fundamental role in people's quality of life and dignity and it is an indispensable part of the future since it can have an impact on the stability and cohesion of society; However, in a highly competitive economy, a good know-how is not always enough to develop a successful business project.

The main objective of STARTCRAFTS is to address the training needs of crafts entrepreneurs in key transversal skills based on newly updated research and strengthen their business activities. STARTCRAFTS is an EU partnership designed to develop core and innovative learning methods that best encourage success in business activities, fulfilling the need for education and training thanks to an innovative proposal based on participation and ICTs.

This final report is the reference document for the implementation of the final report research, including all national reports, within Intellectual Output 1 - Mobile report about crafts entrepreneurship teaching and crafts entrepreneurial skills demand according to representatives from the sector. All partners have participated in the research in their respective countries.

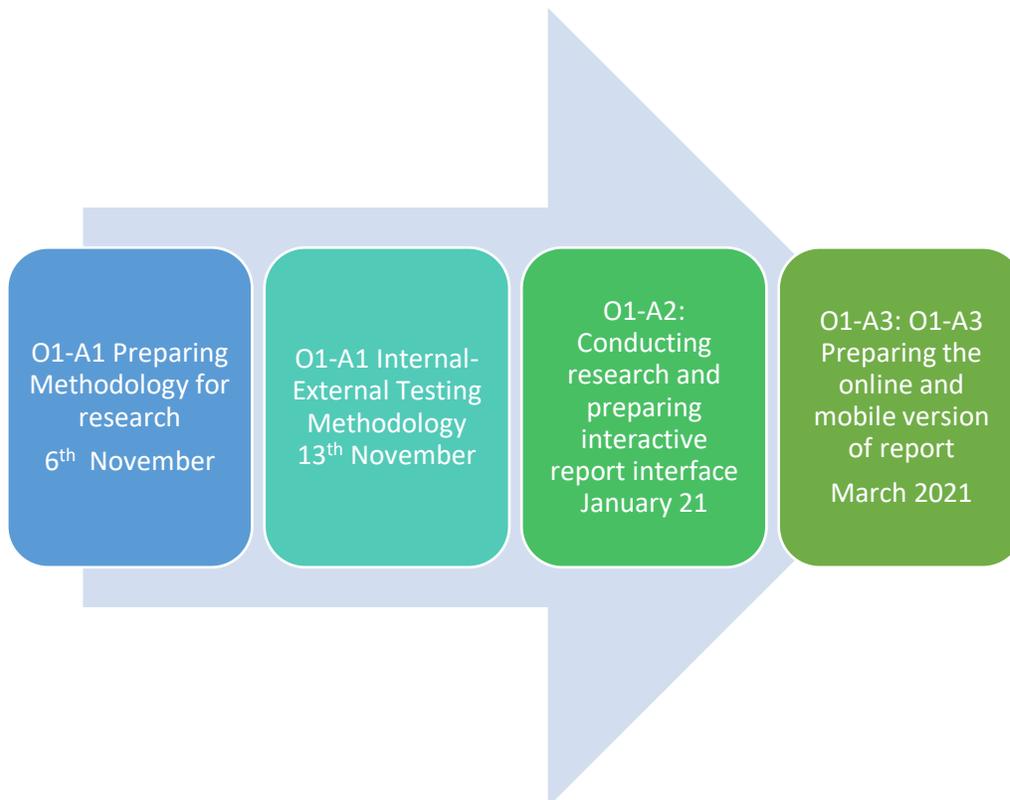
The research consists of two parallel studies, to be performed among two groups: VET and C-VET educators, especially those specialised in the crafts and business fields of teaching, and among entrepreneurs that successfully run their businesses in the craft sector.

STARTCRAFTS is a project involving 7 partners from 6 European countries, all linked to education, crafts sector, and business support.



2. Research phase details

The research phase took place between November 1st, 2020 and February 12st, 2021. During this time partners collected 50 responses per country from VET (Vocational Education and Training) and C-VET (Continuous vocational education and learning) educators each and organised 2 focus groups with 5 participants in each one. Additionally, 10 deep interviews per country were organised. Then, based on the research they prepared the national report. Finally, MEUS created a final report at the end of February, which will be turned into an online tool by CWEP within March 2021.



MEUS was in charge of developing a methodology to guide the partners on how to develop the research phase. The methodology was given for feedback to experts from the craft sector and after the evaluation, each partner translated the questionnaire to each national language. Based on the methodology prepared, the research phase took place in all countries of the partnership.

3 main needs were identified that justify the launch of STARTCRAFT project:

- Need of competences to anchor crafts activities on market and customer demands.
- Need of open and easy access training programmes adapted to crafts-type companies.
- Need of interaction among the target groups.

A. RESEARCH AMONG EDUCATORS

The aim of the research among VET and C-VET educators is to find out the current teaching methods and approaches as well as the main skills being taught and developed regarding entrepreneurship for (future) crafts professionals, both in initial and continuous training contexts. The results of this research will enable our partnership to develop a specific training course that will answer craft sector expectations while filling eventual training gaps observed.

Questionnaire research was held online via AdminProject platform. Each partner filled in online or on paper, depending on the context/possibilities of each partner and distributed the questionnaire among at least 50 educators per country from VET (Vocational Education and Training) and C-VET (Continuous vocational education and learning).

B. PROFILE OF EDUCATORS ENGAGED IN THIS ACTIVITY

- VET (Initial vocational education and training) and C-VET educators.
- From formal, non-formal and informal educational contexts.
- Teaching in the field of crafts and/or entrepreneurship and business-related topics.

Craftsmanship is to be understood in this project as a wide sector engaging diverse specialities such as construction, woodwork, stonework, furniture, textile, fashion, ceramics, jewellery, food, and beverages (bakeries, etc), among many others.

From the above, the following examples were considered as eligible profiles to be engaged in the research activity:

- Formal teachers from a VET school specialized in teaching technical drawing/design for furniture.
- Informal educator from a textile design private academy.
- Hairdresser instructor.
- Trainers providing individual assessment in business development for career orientation.
- Etc.

STARTCRAFT has a vocational purpose. It was not considered as eligible, for example, the profiles of monitors work in a sewing club or propose cooking courses as hobbies.

C. RESEARCH AMONG BUSINESSES

The aim of the research among businesses is to identify what skills and attitudes are needed to be a successful craft entrepreneur today and to provide tips for business development education for VET educators and for (future) crafts entrepreneurs. The results of this research, as for the research done among the educators, will enable our partnership to develop a specific training course that answers craft sector expectations while filling eventual training gaps observed.

Each country has organised 2 focus groups with the participation of at least 5 participants in each, representing crafts business world and conduct with them 10 in-depth interviews.

The focus group could be organised online or in-person, depending on the COVID-19 restrictions that apply in each country. In the case of online focus groups, each partner was free to use the most convenient tool for him, Skype, Zoom, Teams or any other web application. It was not mandatory to record the session, but partners were free to do so if they wished to transcribe the discussions. In this case, they should make sure to inform adequately the participants about the recording and confidentiality rules, as well as the use of data. In any case, partners made screenshots as proof that the event took place.

D. PROFILE OF CRAFT ENTREPRENEURS TO BE ENGAGED IN THIS ACTIVITY

For the purposes of the research phase of the IO1 each country organised two focus groups, consisting of a minimum of 5 people per group coming from the crafts business world. Participants could remain the same for the 10 interviews or could be different entrepreneurs.

The project application form details, that the project in general and the training modules to be further developed, will target craft entrepreneurs:

- who have not yet been running their business for 60 months but are already established.
- with a crafts business idea, but who have not started yet to implement it or are at an early stage of implementation.
- who are looking to develop specific management and entrepreneurial skills as well as improve their key competences.

However, for the research work, the proposal was to open the consultation with both experienced entrepreneurs and new entrepreneurs, so also collecting perceptions from entrepreneurs that have already experienced the training need and who can testify from the education received / obstacles faced, estimated needs, etc.

Also, from the above list, the focus group was extended to:

- Entrepreneurs from any crafts subsector with more than 60 months of experience
- Working in micro or small size independent companies
- In addition to entrepreneurs, the possibility to extend the panel to managers and craftsmen and women that have been holding head managing positions in crafts companies.

Again, craftsmanship is to be understood in this project as a wide sector engaging diverse specialities such as construction, woodwork, stonework, furniture, textile, fashion, ceramics, jewellery, food, and beverages (bakeries, etc), among many others.

For the representativity of the panel, it was considered inviting several profiles that represent diverse crafts subsectors, levels of experience and position in the activity.

3. Research among educators

The aim of the research among VET and C-VET educators is to find out the current teaching methods and approaches as well as the main skills being taught and developed regarding entrepreneurship for (future) crafts professionals, both in initial and continuous training contexts. The results of this research will enable our partnership to develop a specific training course that answers the craft sector expectations while filling eventual training gaps observed.

3.1 GREECE

3.1.1. Research phase details

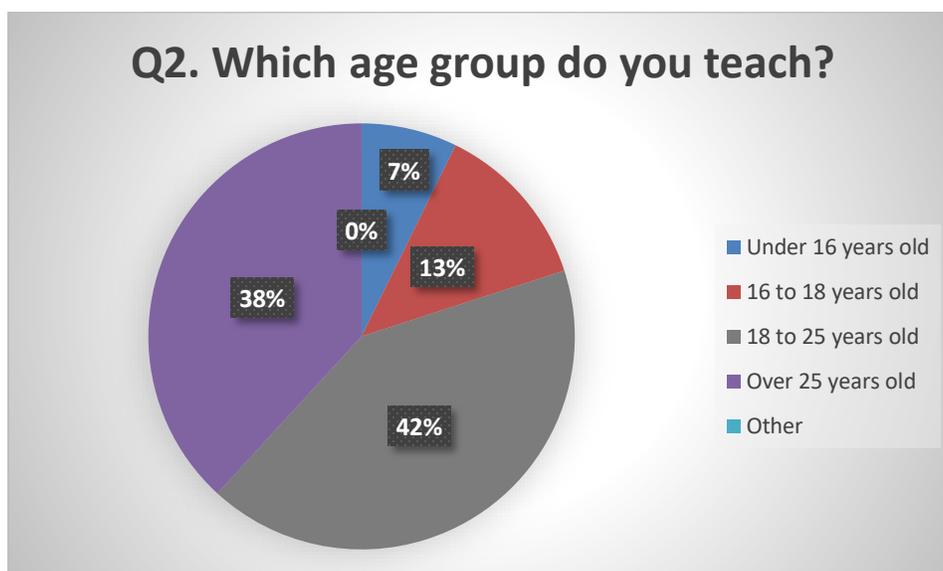
Ongoing process from 28th of December 2020 till 12th of January 2021 conducted in Grece by KAINOTOMIA.

Number of participants and their profile: 50 participants, some of them representatives of VET sector and other specialized on providing training in the VET craft sector.

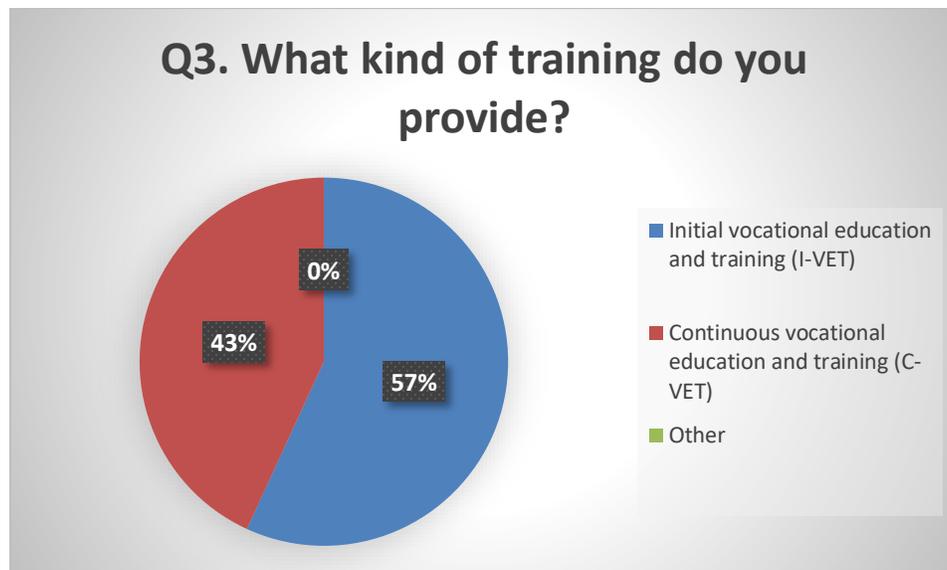
3.1.2. Graphic representation of results obtained and conclusions.

Q1. The questionnaire generated for the survey among VET educators and trainers and VET trainers of the craft sector was distributed through any educational and networking channels of KAINOTOMIA in the general region of Larisa, but also through online distribution across Greece. 50 responses were received from representatives of the Greek VET field both in the business and in the craft sector, as agreed by the consortium of STARTCRAFT project.

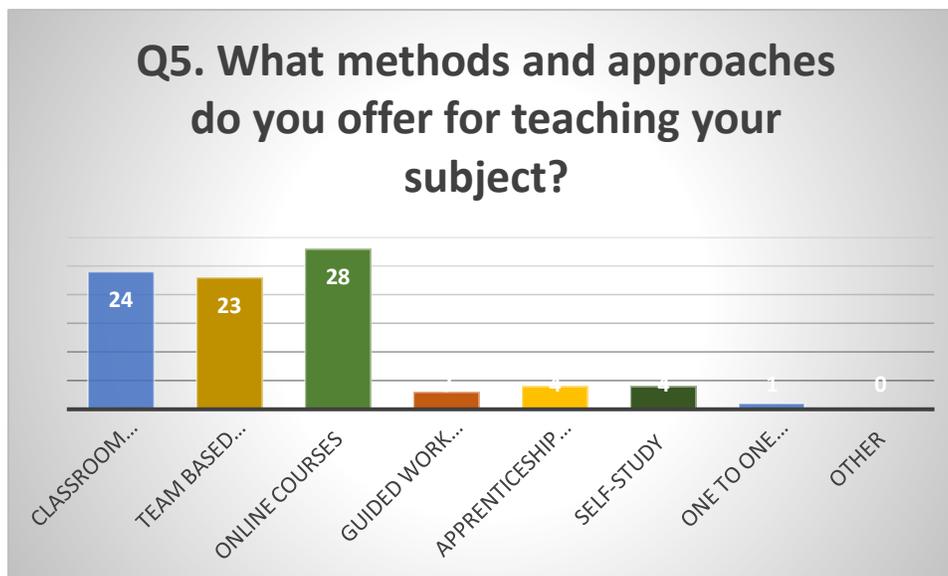
Q2. Many of the respondents teach to the age group of 18 to 25 years old (42%) and the age group over 25 years old (38%).



Q3., Q4. In the questions “What training do you provide” and “What kind of training organization are you teaching at”, the results are presented in the following diagram:



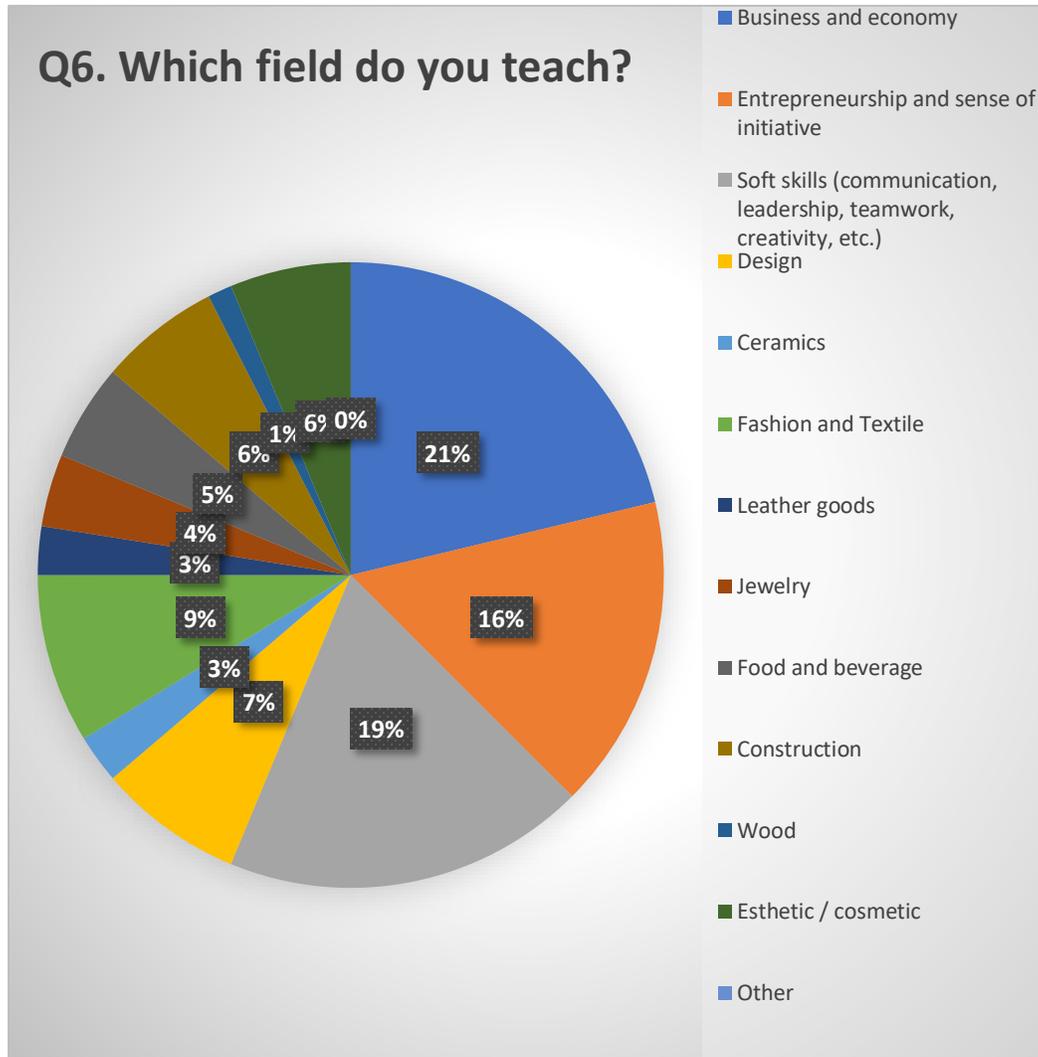
Q5. What methods and approaches do you offer for teaching your subject?



As can be seen from the graphic illustration above, most trainers and teachers are offering classroom-based (24 respondents), team-based (23 respondents), and online courses (28 respondents (mostly due to national lockdown)), while the other teaching methods marked importantly fewer answers.

Q6. In the question “Which field do you teach?” a wide range of craft fields was registered, mainly due to the wide distribution and dissemination of the questionnaire through VET centres, technological institutes, and private bodies. However, most trainers and educators belong in the field of Business and economy (21% of the respondents), Soft skills (19% of the respondents) and Entrepreneurship and a sense of initiative (16% of the respondents).

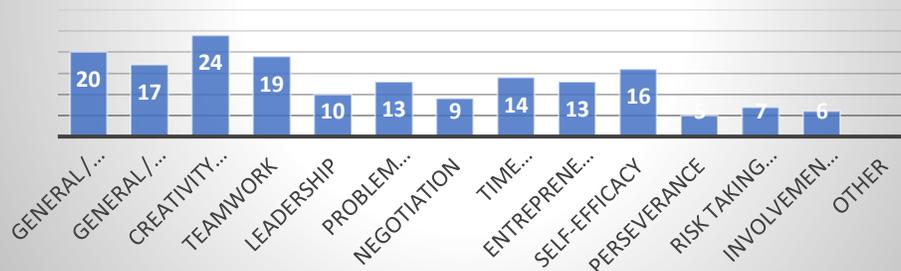
The fields are illustrated below:



Part 2: Questions on skills addressed and method.

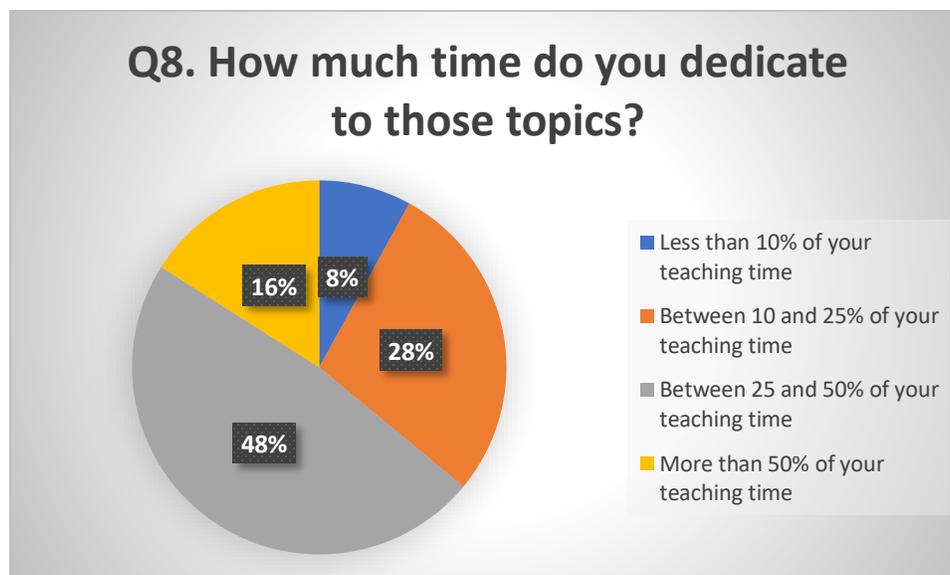
Q7. Do you address, directly or transversally, one of the following aspects during the courses that you deliver?

Q7. Do you address, directly or transversally, one of the following aspects during the courses that you deliver?



As presented in the diagram above, VET teachers and trainers address more than one skill during their learning processes. Most of them orient their methods towards creativity and creative thinking (24 respondents), general and basic entrepreneurial skills (20 respondents), teamwork (19 respondents), general managerial skills (17 respondents), self-efficacy (16 respondents), time management (14 respondents) and problem-solving (13 respondents).

Q8. How much time do you dedicate to those topics?



The 48% of the respondents dedicate approximately between 25% and 50% of their teaching time to the skills while the 28% dedicates slightly less time (between 10 and 25% of their time).

Q9. What importance do you attribute to the instilling of those skills in your courses? (1 being the lowest importance, and 5 the highest)

	1 (Lowest importance)	2	3	4	5 (Highest importance)
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	8 %	18%	6%	18%	50%
General / basic managerial skills	2%	14%	12%	32%	40%
Creativity and creative thinking	6%	12%	12%	8%	62*
Teamwork	4%	18%	8%	20%	50%
Leadership	4%	16%	14%	32%	34%
Problem Solving	2%	18%	8%	22%	50%
Negotiation	6%	12%	16%	34%	32%
Time Management	4%	8%	14%	32%	42%
Entrepreneurial passion	8%	4%	18%	14%	56%
Self-efficacy	4%	8%	8%	22%	58%
Perseverance	6%	10%	14%	18%	52%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	2%	20%	18%	30%	30%
Involvement and Commitment	4%	12%	12%	20%	52%

The table presented above shows that all skills presented are of major importance for trainers and teachers both in the craft and business sector in general. The highest percentages were noted for creativity (62%), self-efficacy (58%), entrepreneurial passion (56%) and commitment, with all the other skills noting equally high percentages.

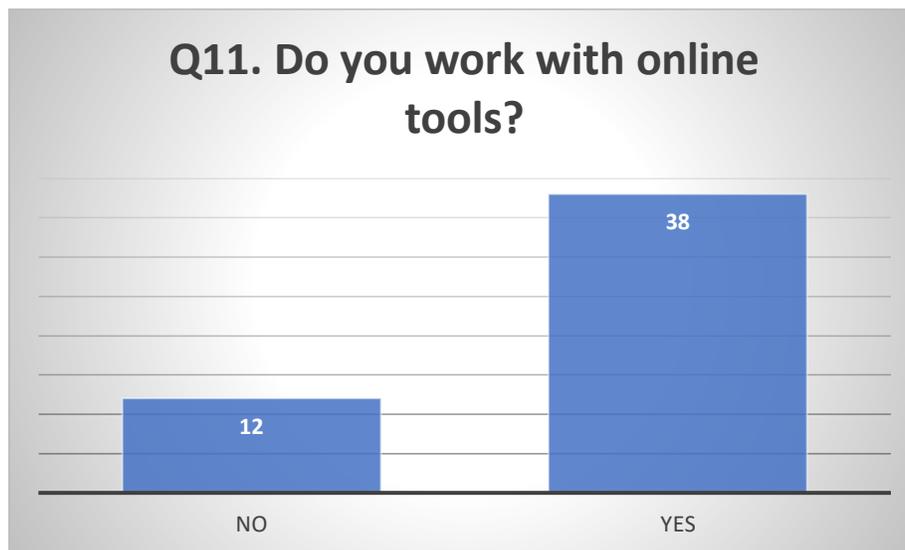
Q10. How do you address these different skills?

Classroom based	Team based learning	Online courses	Guided work	Apprenticeship or other work-based	Self-study	One to one	Other
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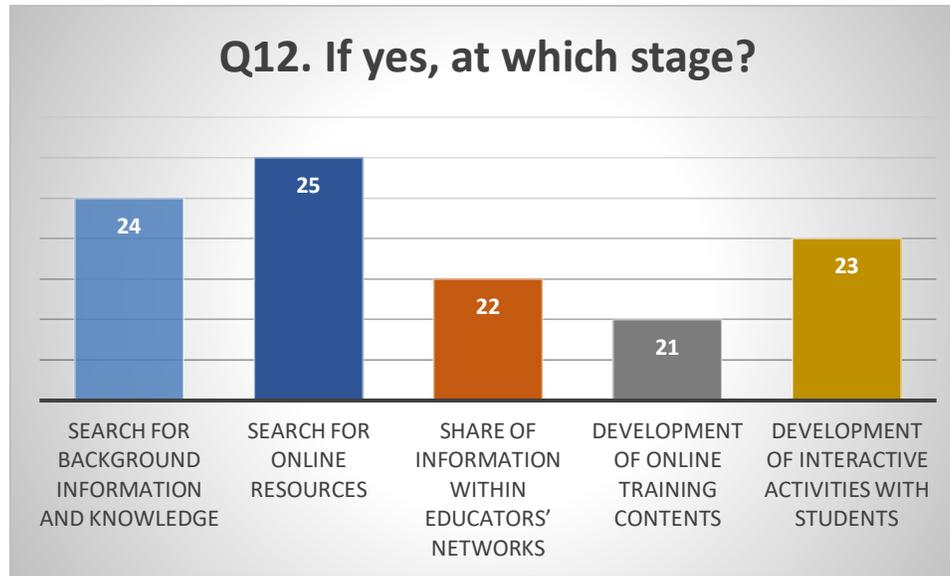
	teaching	ng	es	experien ce	method	y	tuitio n	
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	38%	28%	24%	0%	2%	2%	0%	6%
General / basic managerial skills	30%	36%	28%	2%	0%	2%	0%	2%
Creativity and creative thinking	22%	34%	28%	2%	0%	4%	0%	10%
Teamwork	22%	34%	22%	8%	2%	4%	0%	8%
Leadership	28%	26%	28%	2%	2%	4%	2%	8%
Problem Solving	26%	22%	32%	6%	4%	2%	0%	8%
Negotiation	20%	28%	32%	4%	4%	2%	0%	10%
Time Management	22%	26%	32%	10%	2%	2%	0%	6%
Entrepreneurial passion	28%	22%	28%	8%	0%	6%	2%	6%
Self-efficacy	22%	22%	32%	4%	4%	6%	0%	10%
Perseverance	18%	28%	32%	8%	0%	2%	0%	12%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	24%	28%	26%	6%	4%	0%	2%	10%
Involvement and Commitment	22%	24%	34%	4%	4%	0%	0%	12%

For all skills presented in the table above, it can be seen an equal distribution of responses among 3 of the ways that those different skills are addressed by the learners. These 3 ways are classroom-based teaching, team-based, and online teaching. the method of guided work experience is coming on the hills, marking importantly lower percentages.

Q11. In the question of whether they work with online tools or not, the vast majority (38 respondents) stated that they use online tools in their training and lessons offered, while only 12 out of the 50 respondents do not include online methods and tools in their training.



Q12. Out of the participants that answered positively on the previous question, the use of online tools corresponds to the searching of online tools (25 respondents), the research for background information and knowledge (24 respondents), the development of interactive activities with students (23), the share of information within educators' networks (22) and the development of online training contents (21 respondents).



Q13. When trainers and teachers were asked about tips for self-development, some of the answers that were given the most were:

- "Hard practice and work and constant learning and searching of new and innovative things".
- "Keeping goals, you want to achieve and never stop learning".
- "Courage and faith in yourself".
- "Patience".
- "Only likewise he can develop effectively".
- "Love and commitment".
- "Creativity and optimism".
- "Putting yourself in challenging and risky conditions".
- "High motivation".
- "Team spirit and Perseverance".
- "Not being afraid to fail".

One of the respondents wrote down the following advice: "I try to teach students through team learning, the importance of continuous self-development and self-learning for both their professional and personal development. While I am teaching in a public school and we must follow the national curriculum decided by the ministry, my tip would be to implement activities with students that combine formal and non-formal education methods. Non-formal education methods tend to increase soft skills for self-development and self-improvement."

Part 3: Perception of crafts (future) professionals training needs in the entrepreneurial and managerial field.

Q14. According to your perspective, what are the most demanded skills on the craft market? Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.

	1 (most important)	2	3	4	5 (less important)
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	28%	34%	10%	2%	26%
General / basic managerial skills	28%	30%	12%	22%	8%
Creativity and creative thinking	54%	10%	10%	14%	12%
Teamwork	22%	34%	20%	14%	10%
Leadership	22%	32%	14%	18%	14%
Problem Solving	50%	10%	12%	12%	16%
Negotiation	30%	18%	26%	14%	12%
Time Management	42%	20%	14%	12%	12%
Entrepreneurial passion	52%	14%	8%	12%	14%
Self-efficacy	48%	16%	12%	22%	2%
Perseverance	50%	14%	10%	18%	8%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	20%	34%	20%	12%	14%
Involvement and Commitment	54%	12%	8%	14%	12%

Talking specifically for craft's field and skills demanded in this sector, the table above highlights as most demanded and important ones, Creativity and Creative thinking (54% as most important), Involvement and Commitment (54% as most important) and Entrepreneurial passion (52% as most important).

Q15. According to your perspective, which ones are the most needed skills by (future) craft entrepreneurs. Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.

	1 (most important)	2	3	4	5 (less important)
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	32%	28%	10%	10%	20%
General / basic managerial skills	28%	32%	14%	16%	10%
Creativity and creative thinking	54%	14%	6%	14%	12%
Teamwork	28%	28%	16%	22%	6%
Leadership	26%	24%	22%	14%	14%
Problem Solving	50%	14%	8%	18%	10%
Negotiation	38%	20%	16%	18%	8%
Time Management	40%	26%	12%	8%	14%
Entrepreneurial passion	58%	8%	10%	18%	6%
Self-efficacy	46%	18%	10%	16%	10%
Perseverance	50%	14%	8%	18%	10%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	26%	34%	12%	18%	10%
Involvement and Commitment	60%	4%	6%	16%	14%

The results arose from the questionnaire survey regarding the most needed skills by (future) craft entrepreneurs are almost identical to the ones regarding the most demanded skills on the crafts market (question 14).

Q16. What is the minimum level that students should achieve in those fields to become successful craft entrepreneurs?

Basic level	Medium level	Medium to high level	Expert level
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General / basic entrepreneurship skills	14%	22%	42%	22%
General / basic managerial skills	4%	26%	48%	22%
Creativity and creative thinking	6%	24%	30%	40%
Teamwork	10%	30%	40%	20%
Leadership	10%	34%	34%	22%
Problem Solving	10%	22%	30%	38%
Negotiation	12%	20%	42%	26%
Time Management	12%	12%	40%	36%
Entrepreneurial passion	12%	16%	34%	38%
Self-efficacy	8%	26%	28%	38%
Perseverance	4%	28%	26%	42%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	10%	24%	44%	22%
Involvement and Commitment	8%	22%	26%	44%

According to the table presented above, the survey highlighted that all the skills should be acquired at least at a medium to a high level. For some of the skills such as creativity and creative thinking, problem-solving, entrepreneurial passion, perseverance, and commitment, many of the VET trainers and teachers that participated in the questionnaire survey believe that they should be acquired at an expert level to succeed in the field of craft entrepreneurship.

Q17. What are the changes that COVID-19 situation might introduce, according to your opinion, regarding the soft skills needed by the craft professionals and the training practices?

The majority of the 50 respondents stated that Covid19 introduced great difficulties in implementing the distant and online training activities, especially from the craft sector. For some of them (according to their field of expertise) the teaching is more or less impossible since it demands tools and face to face interaction with the learners, as well as equipment and tools that learners

cannot afford to buy or find so easily. "Craft teaching is not that efficient without any physical attendance", some of them stated. Covid19 has changed all the working systems and some of the soft skills like creativity, problem-solving and teamwork are left behind. According to the participants, it is difficult to work without inspiration and creativity, and those soft skills can be enhanced mostly through teamwork and social interaction. Social distancing increases the challenge for the development of several soft skills. Moreover, the pandemic has influenced the methods of learning and teaching, as well as social skills and people' behaviour of people, since everything has to do with digital skills (digital marketing, cybersecurity etc.), thus the trainers need to answer in this multifield challenge and adapt their teaching techniques.

As it concerns the craft entrepreneurs Covid-19 has created greater competition and more demanding clients and buyers. Due to the pandemic, all craft entrepreneurs should be more capable to have a social life and be adaptable to the new digital era. Furthermore, craft professionals need to find new ways to stay in the market due to Covid-19, for example, click away or online shopping. So, they need to develop digital skills. There is a crucial need for craft professionals to develop their digital and online marketing, sales skills, and focus on these training opportunities. Moreover, they should develop skills such as "Adapting to change" and "Emotional control" to deal with the general uncertainty and cultivate a strong and agile mindset. Local and national lockdowns decrease the activity of several businesses and entrepreneurial sectors; thus, craft professionals cannot be trained since their profession demands more physical than virtual training.

Q18. Some piece of advice, as last remarks from the VET educators that have participated in the survey, is the need for more digital opportunities in the craft and business sector in this challenging era. The existing and aspiring entrepreneurs should be patient and agile in a new situation. The role of the trainers, teachers or mentors is to enlighten the spirit of creativity and motivation in young people and encourage them to follow career path according to their passion and talents. "It is important to love what you do to do it well and receive personal satisfaction more than financial".

3.2 SPAIN

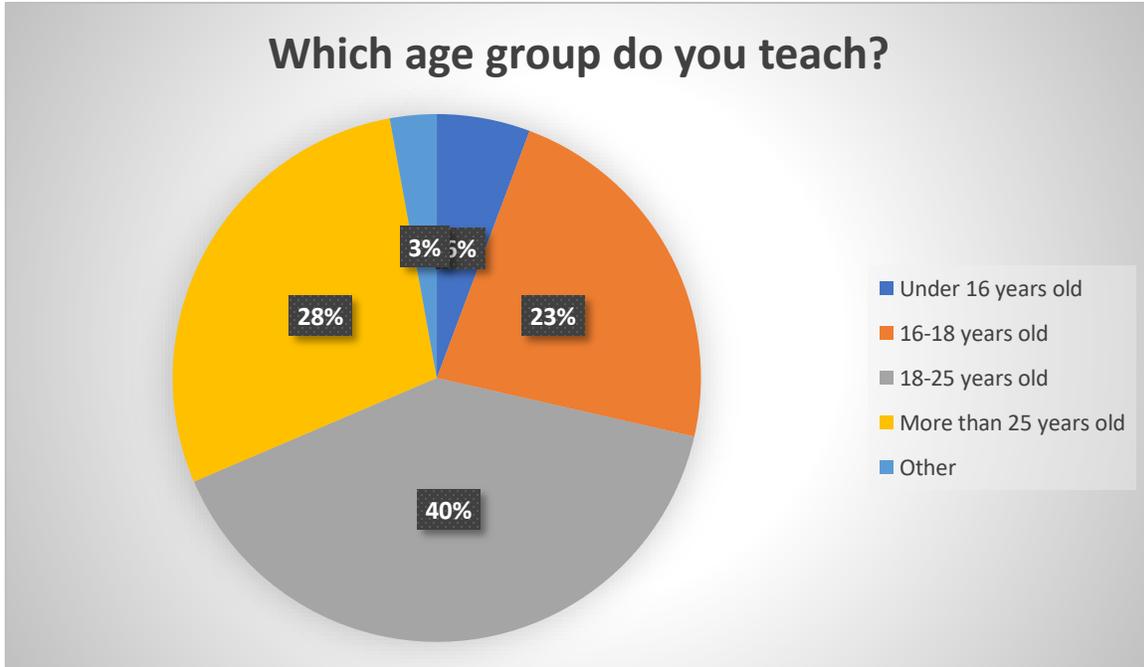
3.2.1 Research phase details

Ongoing process from the 22nd of December 2020 to the 12th of February 2021 conducted in Spain by MEUS and InnoHub.

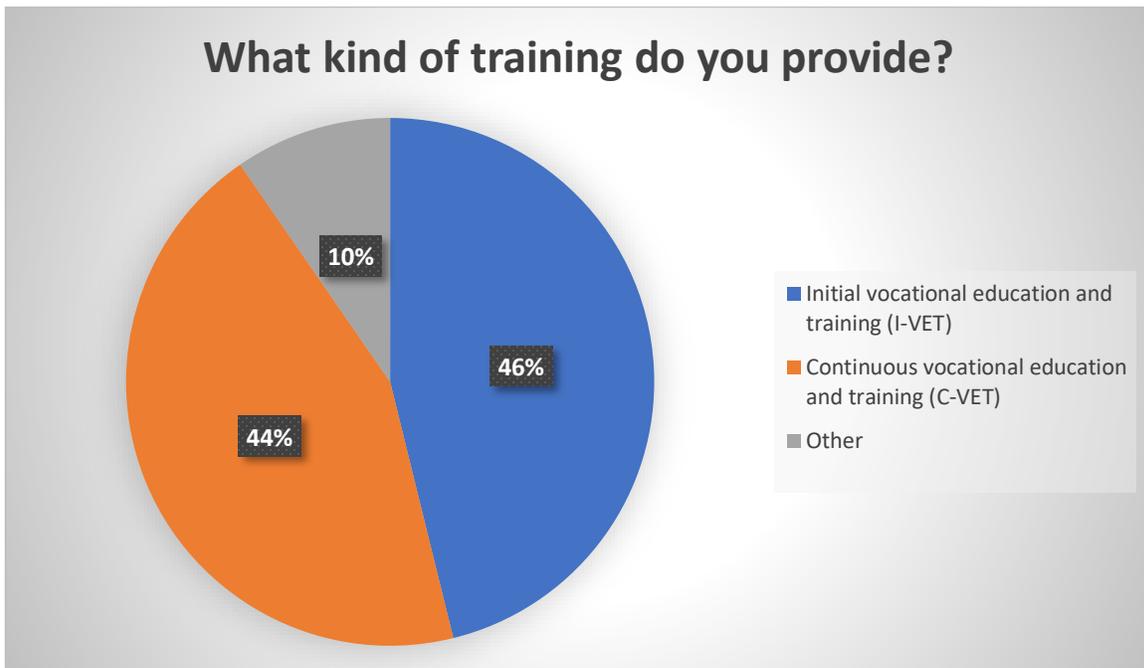
Number of participants and their profile: 50 participants. VET teachers / teachers in fields related with crafting and/or entrepreneurship.

3.2.2. Graphic representation of results obtained.

Q2. Which age group do you teach?

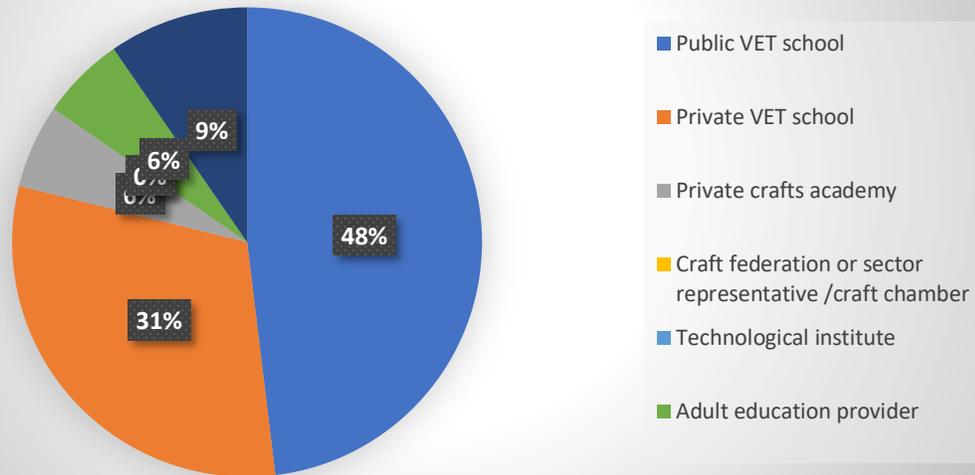


Q3. What kind of training do you provide?



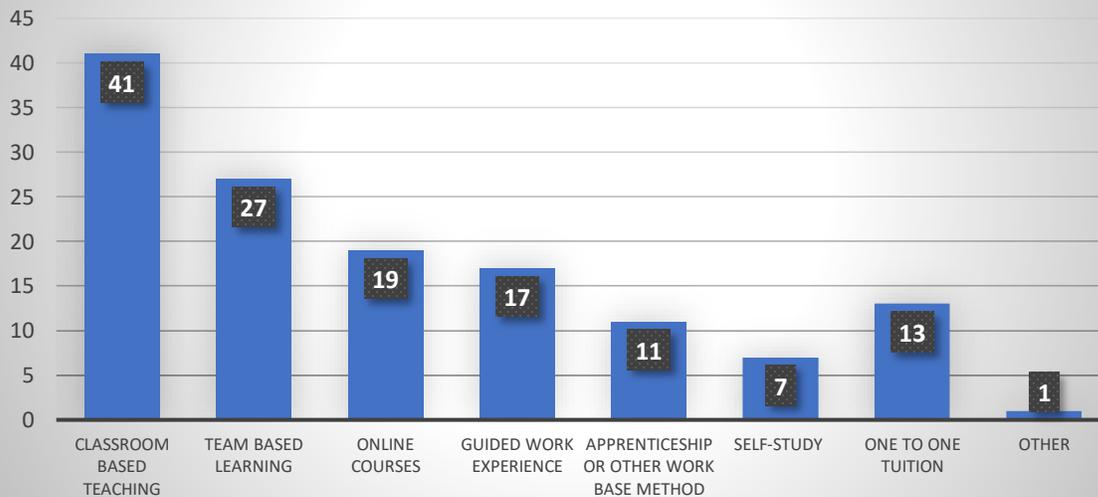
Q4. What type of training organization are you teaching at?

What kind of organisation are you teaching at?

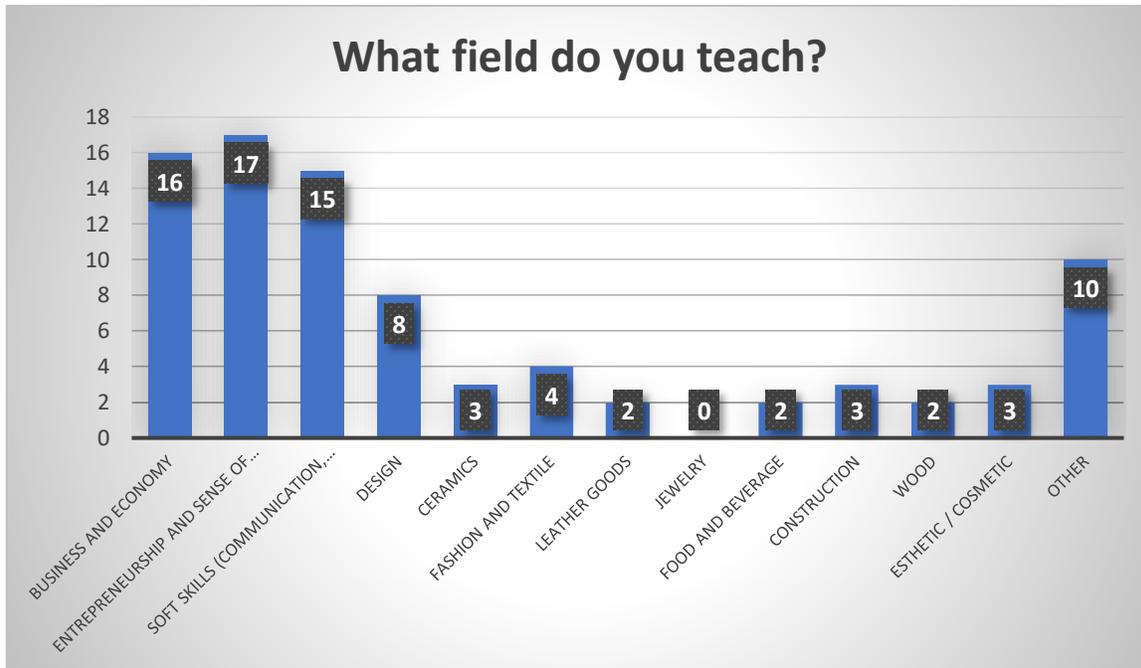


Q5. What methods and approaches do you offer for teaching your subject?

What methods and approaches do you offer for teaching your subject?

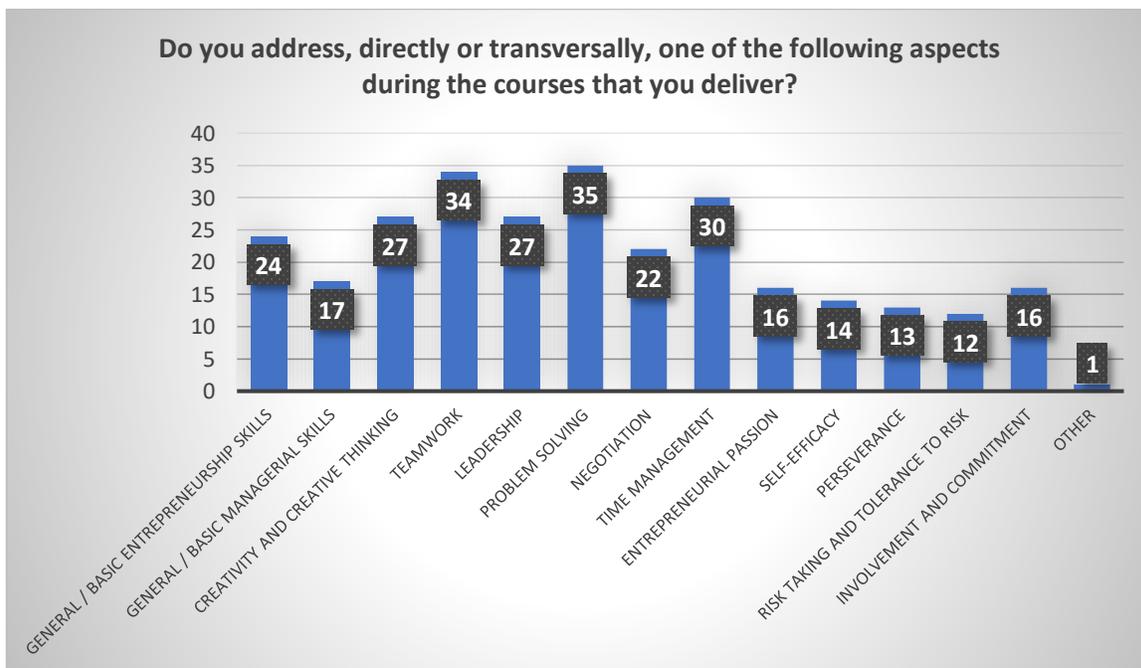


Q6. Which field do you teach?



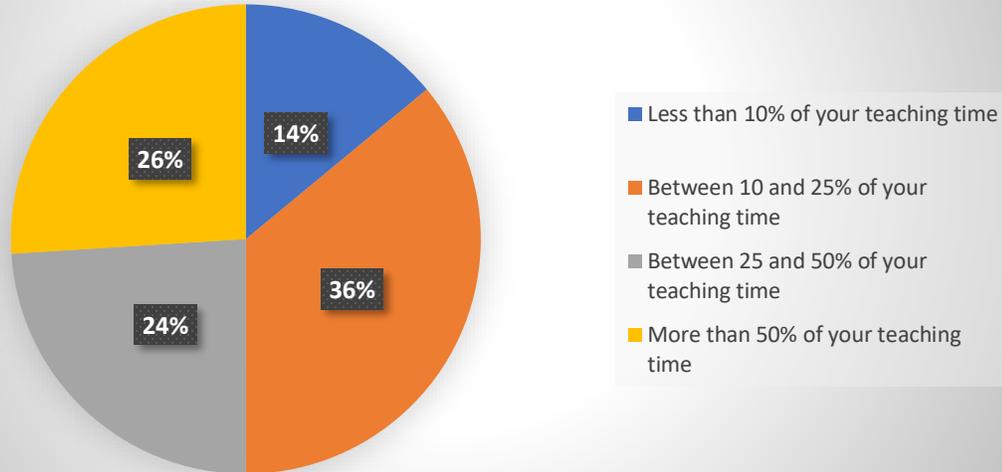
Part 2. Questions on skills addressed and method.

Q7. Do you address, directly or transversally, one of the following aspects during the courses that you deliver?

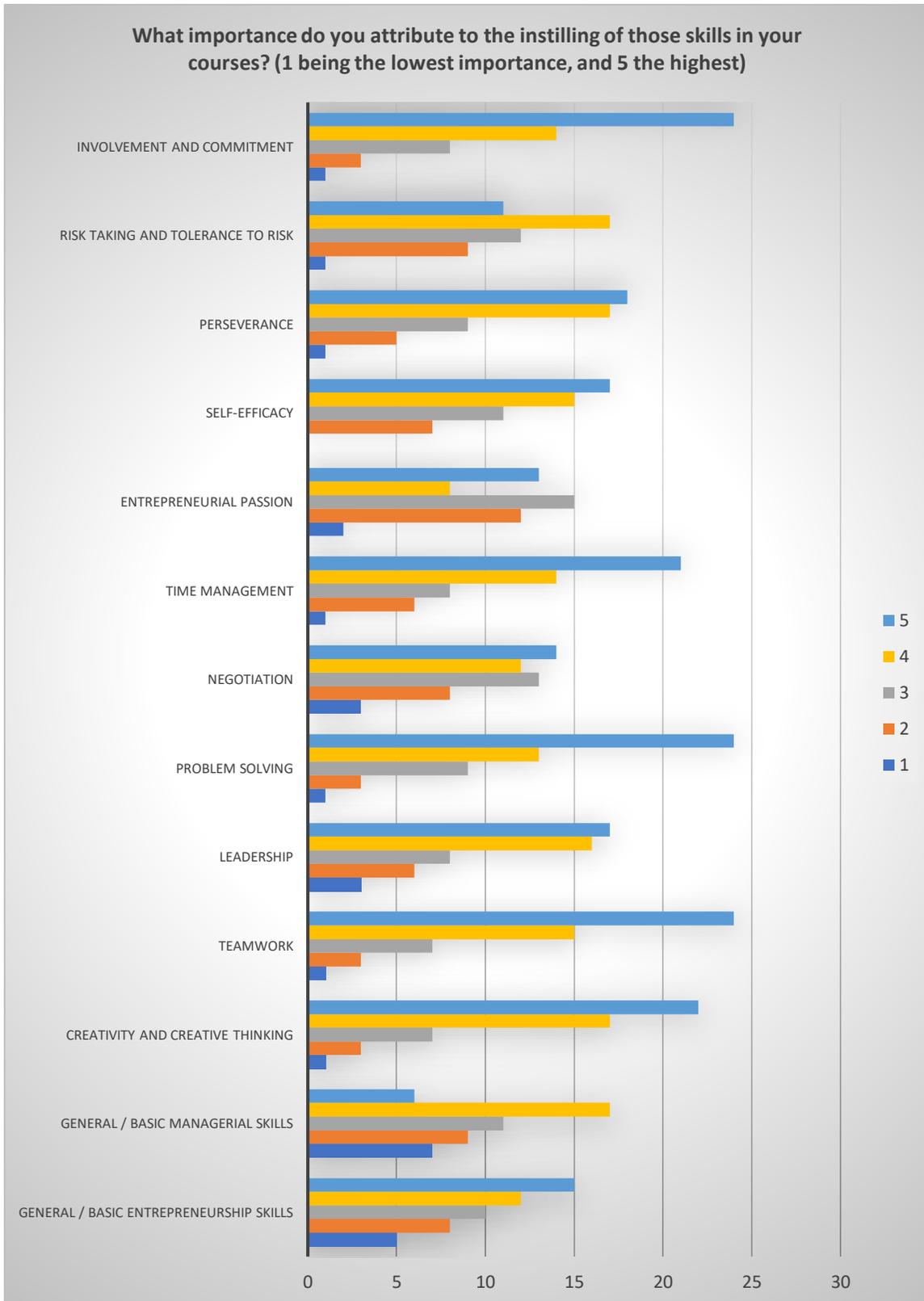


Q8. How much time do you dedicate to those topics?

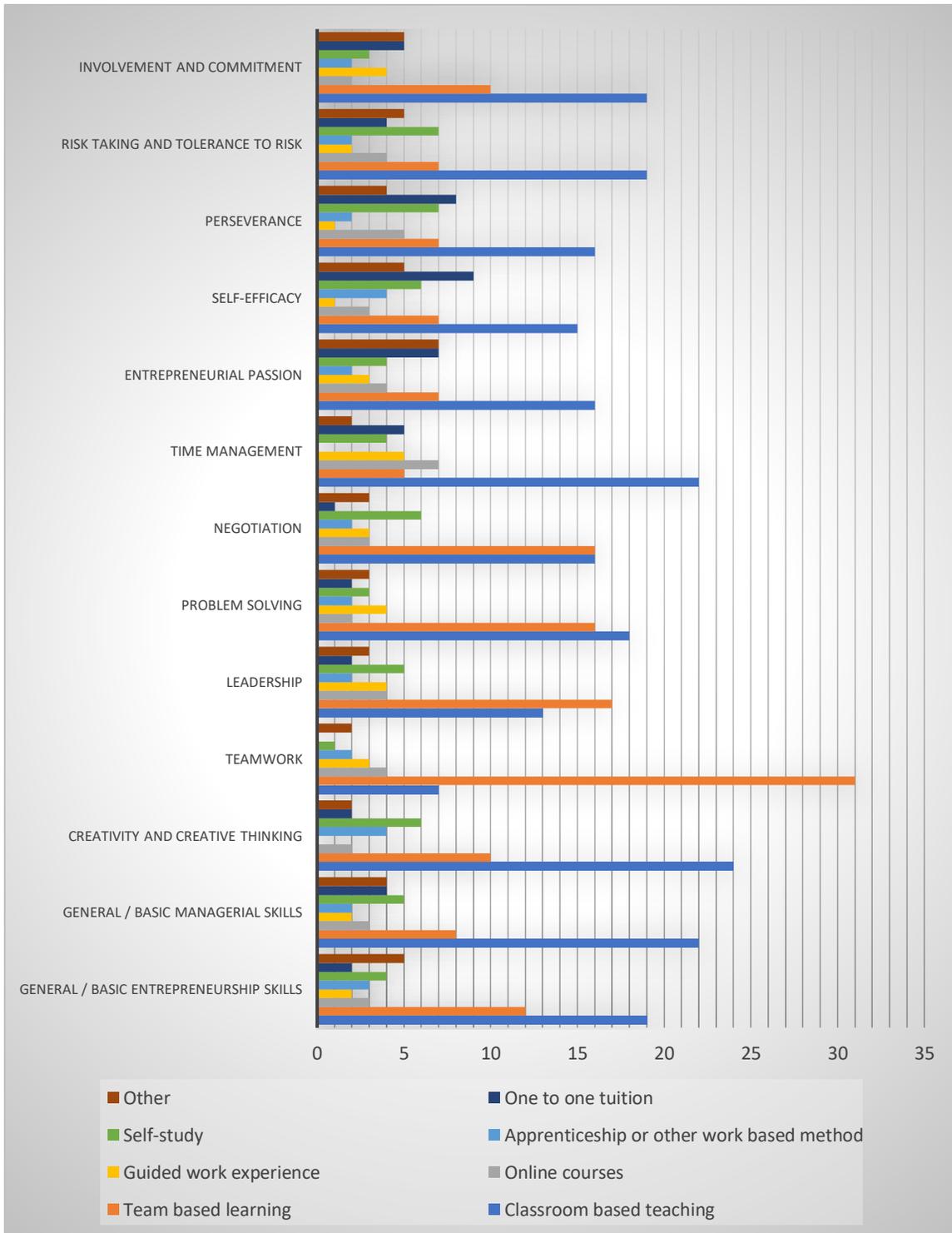
How much time do you dedicate to those topics?



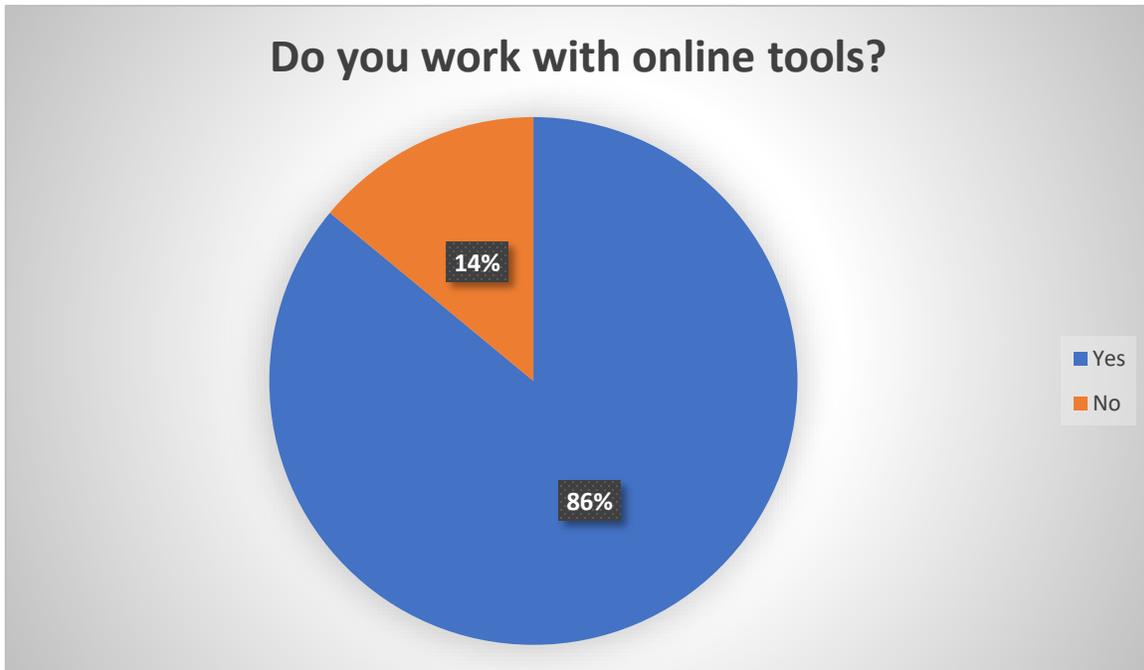
Q9. What importance do you attribute to the instilling of those skills in your courses? (1 being the lowest importance, and 5 the highest)



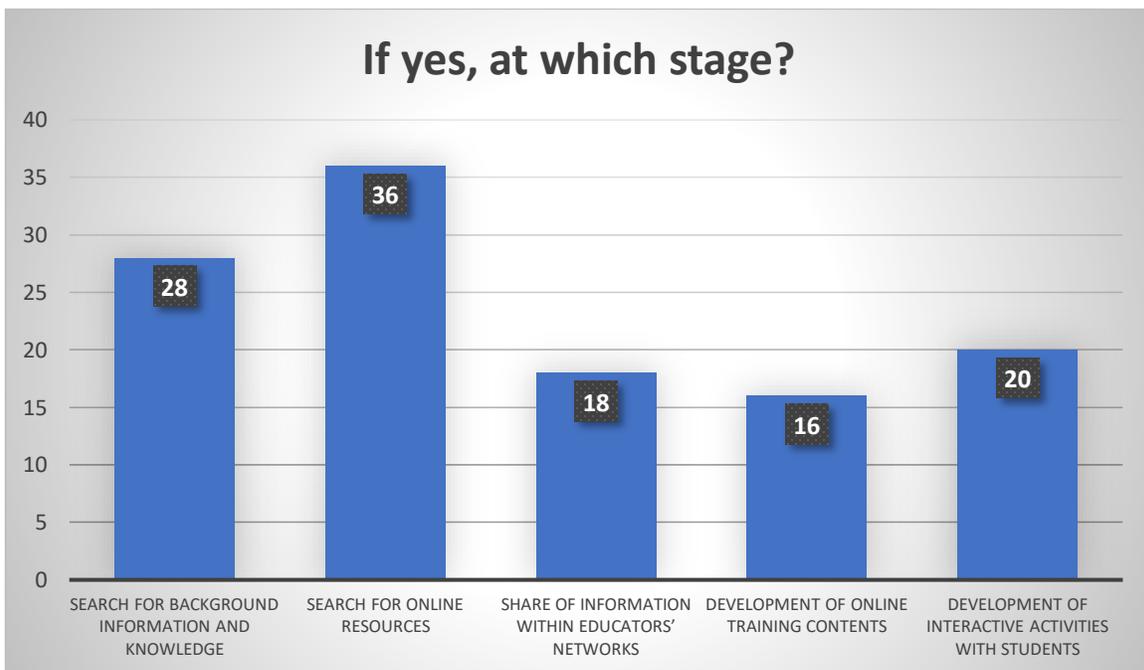
Q10. How do you address these different skills?



Q11. Do you work with online tools?



Q12. If yes, at which stage?



Q13. Trainers were asked about their tips for self-development. The following answers were provided:

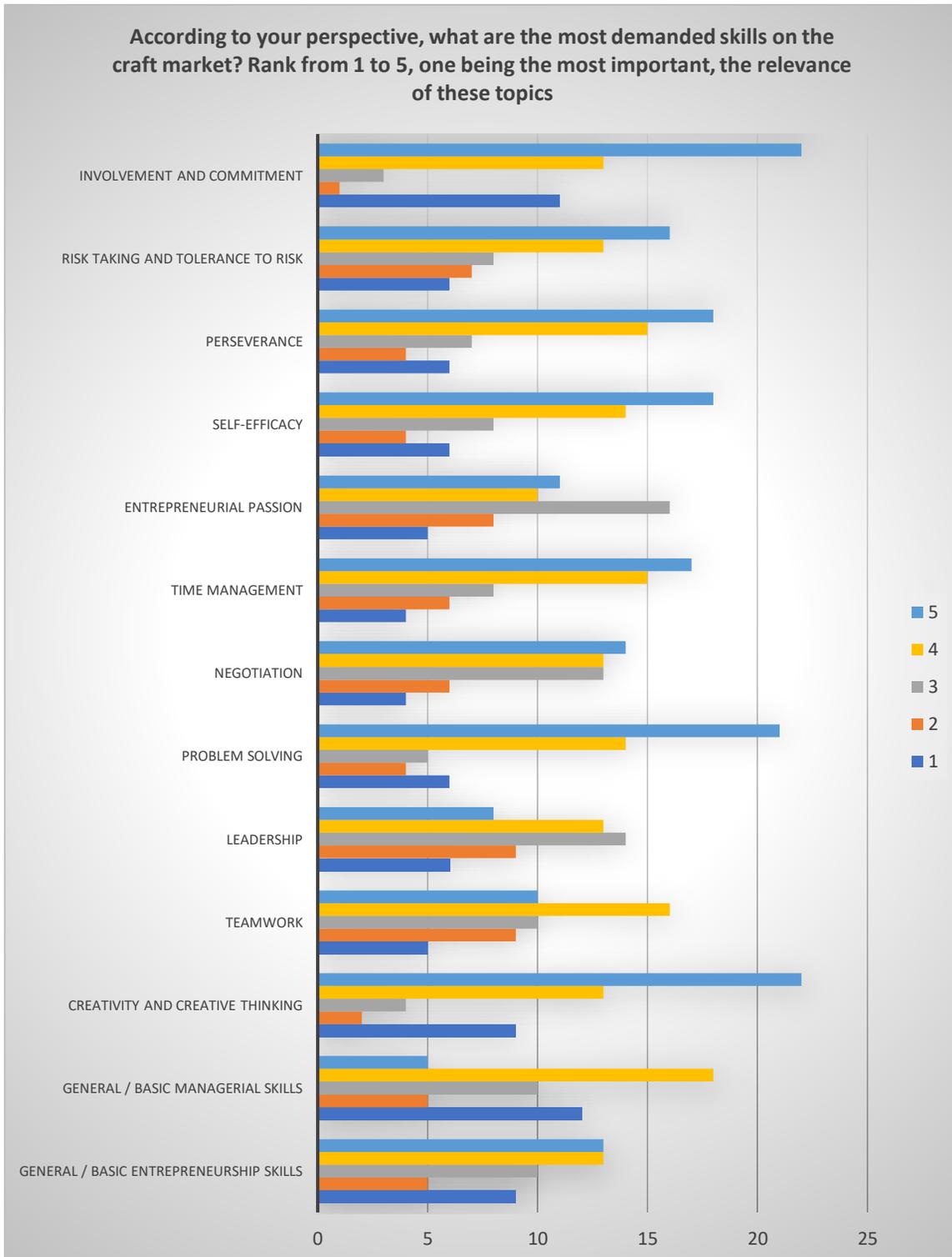
- "Be aware of your skills and enhance those points that are less developed or look for partner-workers to cover your shortcomings".
- "Curiosity and passion".

- "Self-awareness of your skills and abilities. Develop a training and professional pathway".
- "Seek more autonomy in the students with a teaching that involves the discovery of problem solving based on reflection, not solving problems as if the students were the teachers' labour force".
- "Humility".
- "Continuous learning and improvement of work processes with new techniques in the market".
- "Continuous learning".
- "The implication is personal, to want is to be able to do it, the moments of training are unique moments to develop as people and to be a competent professional with future projection".
- "To be constantly in training, to read to study about subjects related to the company and one's own specialisation".
- "Do not fall into a routine. Look for different resources to contribute to personal improvement by seeking continuous training, either through online courses or personal self-development".
- "Keep learning and enjoy your passion".
- "For me, the student must know how to see the contexts and be able to make the right connections and know how to research in order to arrive at the information that this vision of the context will provide and thus be able to act wisely".
- "I suggest recommended reading, involvement in projects outside the classroom and online courses".
- "Work on self-esteem, personal and professional development. Doing what motivates them and what they can offer a useful contribution to society. Develop personal skills and interest".
- "Focusing careers on areas that offer high levels of satisfaction/motivation".
- "Keep an open mind, search and ask questions, focus on what you like, try everything and keep the best or most useful".
- "My advice is to find continuous learning tools that are adapted to the real needs of students and teachers".
- "To always be eager to learn new things, to be restless and non-conformist people".
- "In a global world, it is necessary not to stagnate, it is necessary to be flexible and to be able to adapt to changing environments, and this requires an attitude of continuous improvement that depends on each individual".
- "Self-learning.
- "Starting from SELF-ADVOCACY by identifying strengths and weaknesses through a SWOT analysis and complementing it with a SWOT analysis; identifying MISSION, PURPOSE and VALUES; drawing up lists of objectives, prioritising them and establishing an action plan. Accept MISTAKE as something necessary to learn: an opportunity to do things better".
- "We are not self-sufficient, we learn from everything and everyone, the important thing is to want to learn the attitude, and always think positively".
- "Always be up to date with learning methods".
- "Never think that you know everything, look for things to improve, look for ways to get out of your comfort zone".
- "It is very important to have emotional intelligence, capacity for continuous training and humanity".

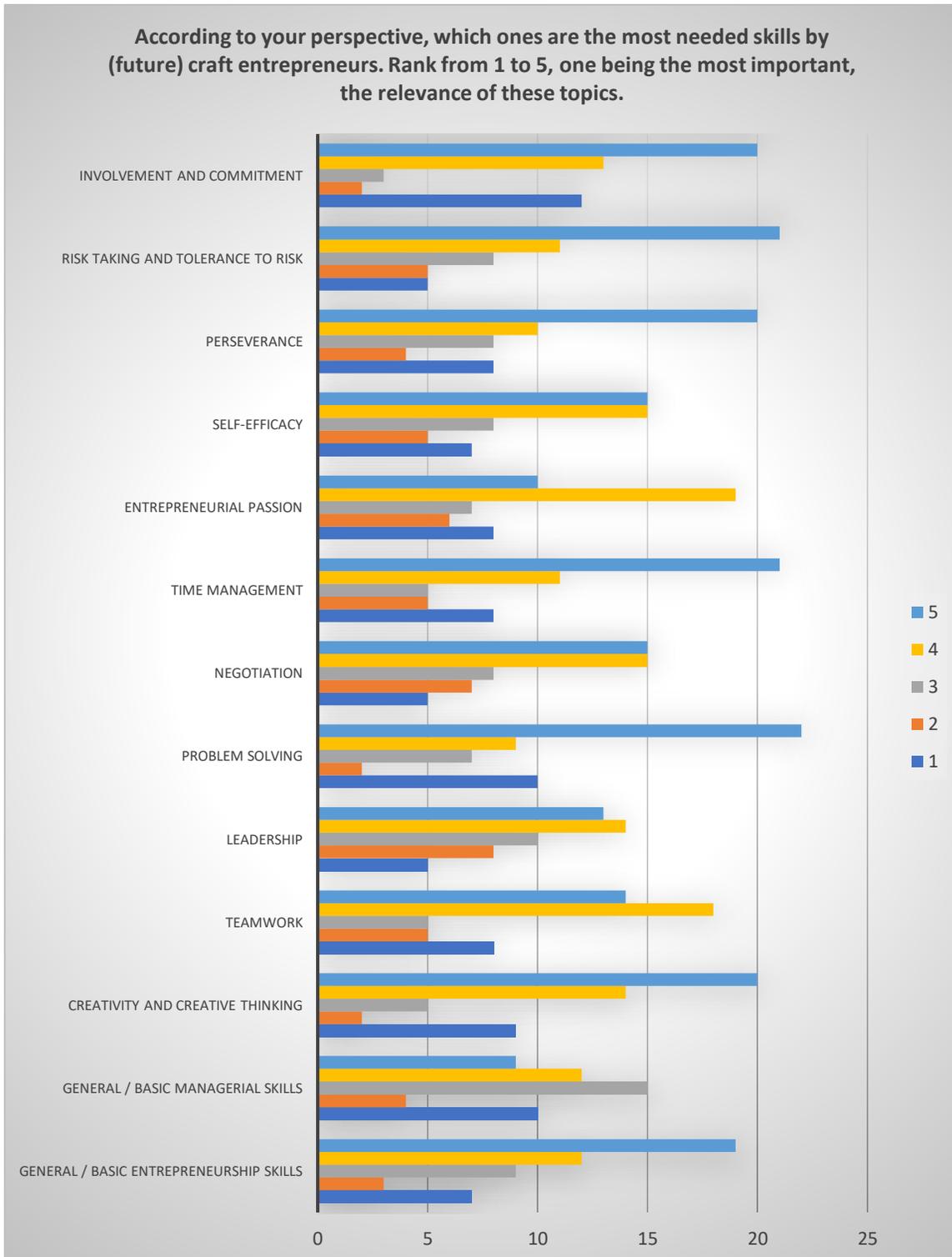
- "Find a motivation, keep training and teaching for vocation".
- "Curiosity to continue learning".
- "Involvement and continuous training, as well as the ability to adapt to different situations that may arise".
- "Continuous training".
- "Keeping up to date with new content and new ways of teaching".
- "To look for courses that allow you the level of flexibility you need, to be realistic with your time".
- "Be efficient and consistent".
- "Remember that the work you do at home is just as important as the work you do in the classroom".
- "Attend courses regularly".
- "Perseverance".
- "Always be up to date with new technologies".
- "Time management and planning are very important".
- "Continuing to train in new methodologies and other resources, doing new courses and always trying to provide the best training for our students".
- "Doing courses to keep myself up to date is very important".
- "To train oneself it is very important to focus on what the learner needs".
- "It is very important to be involved and autonomous, i.e., to be able to get involved".
- "To keep learning day by day in order to improve our profession".
- "To be up to date with the latest technologies".
- "To be interested in the different skills of the students".
- "Be fluent in English and therefore have access to many more resources".
- "Use the latest technologies and not be afraid of them!".
- "Be up to date with the latest technologies".
- "Detect the needs of your students and get to know them a little bit better every day".
- "Be an expert in new technologies, understand the needs of young people and try to give them a complete and useful training for their professional future".

Part 3: Perception of crafts (future) professionals training needs in the entrepreneurial and managerial field.

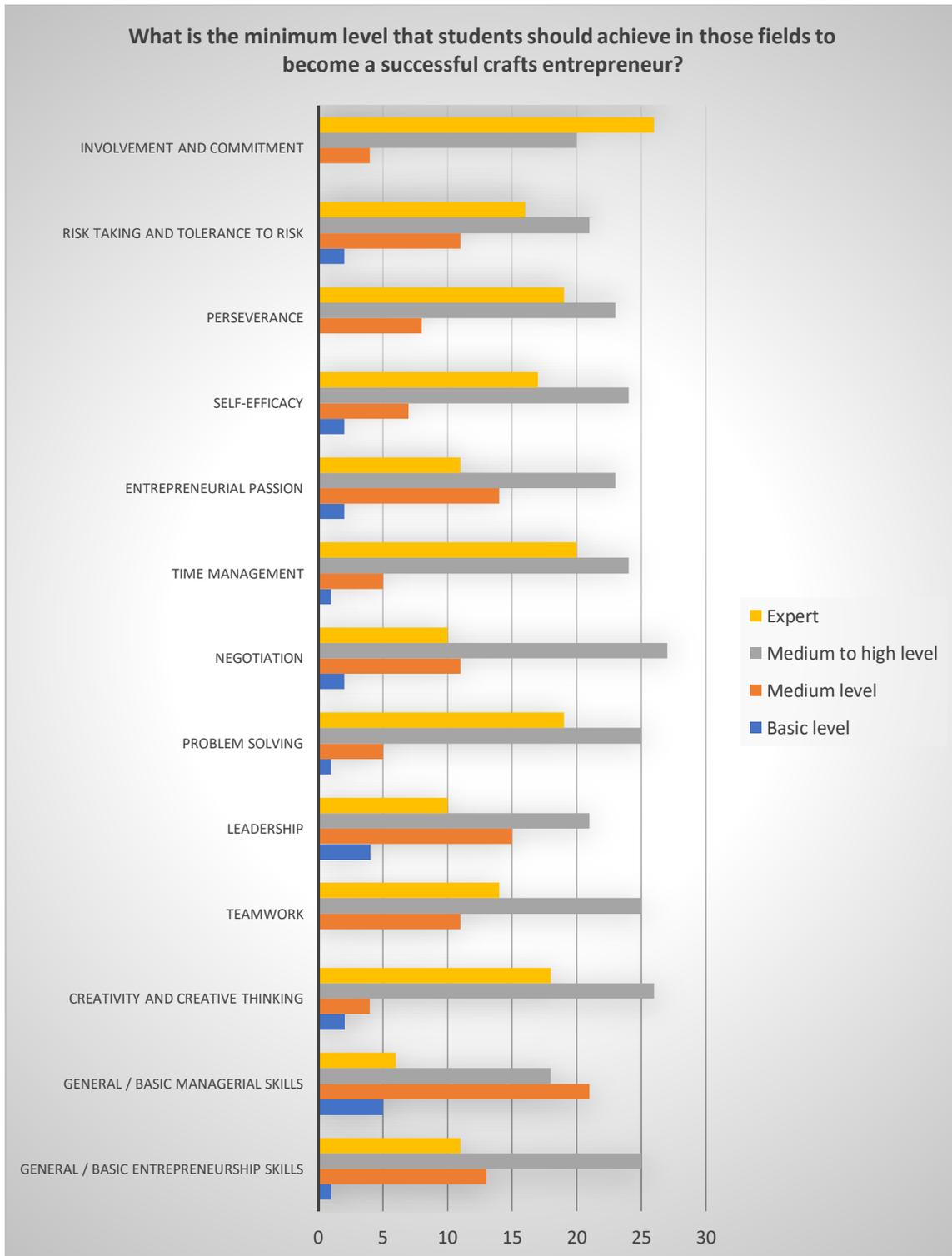
Q14. According to your perspective, what are the most demanded skills on the craft market? Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.



Q15. According to your perspective, which ones are the most needed skills by (future) craft entrepreneurs. Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.



Q16. What is the minimum level that students should achieve in those fields to become a successful crafts entrepreneur?



Q17. Trainers were asked about which changes the COVID-19 situation might introduce, according to their opinion, regarding the soft skills needed by the craft professionals and the training practices. Responses were as following:

- "Creativity should be promoted to stand out from the rest, as well as the digitalisation and globalisation of the sector".
- "Greater appreciation of soft skills, I hope".
- "Adaptation to change. Overcoming frustration".
- "Lack of direct communication, lack of closer teaching which causes a loss of time that is precious for a complete and efficient teaching".
- "Use of technology".
- "The situation still needs to evolve a lot to find an improvement".
- "Improvement of creative and digital skills will be necessary".
- "It will be a complicated period".
- "The ability to adapt quickly to change, to be agile to adapt to the needs of the moment, the ability to reinvent oneself, to live in the present moment".
- "It is increasingly valued that a handmade product is well made and is made with quality and sustainable products".
- "COVID-19 has produced professional instability and uncertainty which, as for teachers, can block students and stop them a little because of the fear it causes. Not knowing what is going to happen can perhaps influence them to fall a little behind in the struggle to advance and progress".
- "From my point of view, it is an important challenge and an opportunity to work on the communication of your work at local, regional, national and global level".
- "We are all going to learn to work as a team remotely".
- "Online marketing. Digital marketing development. Distribution. Teleworking".
- "Ability to adapt to new environments constantly and use digital communication strategies to reach the public".
- "I am not positive about the changes that COVID-19 will bring about. Soft skills have been talked about for a long time, but they are not given the necessary importance for a change of mentality in any sector".
- "A greater capacity to adapt to change will be required. Resilience".
- "Resilience is basically knowing how to be resolute and creative in the face of adversity and situations that are beyond their control".
- "Communication and teamwork. These two skills will be affected by teleworking and less interpersonal relationships".
- "Greater flexibility, adaptability to change, telematic teamwork, empathy, autonomy and leadership will be required".
- "A change is in the way we work, in some activities teleworking, flexibility, and new ways of dealing with work (online)".
- "More adaptation to changes and to the online world will be necessary".
- "Learning digital skills, entering e-commerce, taking advantage of apps like ETSY".
- "It will be especially important to have adaptability, flexibility, and most importantly active listening and negotiation skills, to be able to understand what consumers are looking for and to be able to adapt to changes efficiently and quickly".
- "Soft skills will always be important. I think the coronavirus has taught us how important it is to be able to handle situations of uncertainty, stress and to develop resilience. In the

beauty sector, for example, I think hygiene measures and promoting online commerce will be very important”.

- “Less direct contact”.
- “The skills of listening, understanding the customer and adapting”.
- “Knowing how to reach the customer, adapting to the online world”.
- “Increased need to adapt to changes and online reality”.
- “The ability to reinvent oneself will need to increase”.
- “Being able to take risks will be essential and knowing how to manage financial capabilities”.
- “Adapting to change, very necessary to know how to manage finances to avoid bankruptcy”.
- “More creativity is needed”.
- “Will make it very difficult”.
- “Much more understanding of the state of mind and state of mind of the people you are working with, relaxing timings and ensuring that everyone is comfortable working”.
- “It will be very important to develop adaptability and creativity, in order to be able to move forward and not stagnate or fall behind”.
- “Covid is going to have a very negative impact on the sector... we do not yet know exactly what the consequences will be, but better preparation and a greater initial economic boost to the activity will be necessary to be able to develop it properly”.
- “Students will have to be better prepared for a changing and constantly evolving environment”.
- “COVID requires everyone in the world of work to be prepared for sudden changes and a lot of uncertainty. I try to explain this in my classes”.
- “Vision and listening skills. Understanding what the potential client needs”.
- “Much more attention to mental health”.
- “COVID has done a lot of damage to crafts in Spain a state plan will be necessary to rescue the sector”.
- “A lot more patience and positive encouragement in the work environment”
- “Safety measures, distance... many shops have suffered a lot”.
- “Increased attention to teamwork and joint problem solving”.
- “Increased commitment and ability to work remotely”.
- “COVID has brought many challenges, creating a new professional environment. Teleworking is a reality and adapting to it is essential to achieve our professional goals. On the other hand, the organisation of time that teleworking brings is something to be taken into account, without the direct control of superiors in any company. Giving students the tools to be able to take these bills into account will undoubtedly help them to achieve professional success”.

Q18. Some trainers wanted to add some comments at the end of the survey:

- “Thank you for investing time and effort in this”.
- “Adapting to change is the key to success.”
- “Thank you for this survey, any help is needed in the craft sector”.
- “It is essential that they have the capacity to take entrepreneurial risks and develop continuous creativity to adapt to change”.
- “Self-knowledge is also especially important. I think that at present the problem in moving forward is perhaps not knowing where to go. For this, knowledge of character and

temperament are very important to know what my limitations are and what are my strengths and thus be able to grow”.

- “I love initiative”.
- “Career guidance needs to be strengthened”.
- “Question 10 should allow you to select several options in each section”.
- “Much success with the project!”.
- “Today, all of us in the world of work have found that we must be willing to evolve and learn from the circumstances that come our way and that we do not control”.
- “In general, the COVID-19 situation is going to introduce changes in all ways of working”.
- “It is important for university and VET teachers to update themselves in order to recycle themselves in these matters, as many of them have not been in direct contact with the current labour market for years”.
- “In Spain, one of the weaknesses of vocational training is that it is not directly related to and based on the business fabric. Furthermore, it should start from ESO, encouraging the culture of effort, for which the policy that is applied is disastrous, the less you do, the better, and so we fail”.
- “The project is very interesting”.
- “More interpersonal skills need to be applied in the classroom”.
- “This project gives a voice to an essential part of teaching”.

3.2.3 Conclusions on the main aspects of the survey:

- The most used approach to training and teaching is presential.
- Online courses and resources are slowly gaining importance, and most of the trainers asked to use them regularly.
- Involvement, problem-solving, and teamwork are the most valued competencies by trainers in Spain.
- Creativity is also a very demanded competence in the craft market nowadays.
- Finally, time management and perseverance are highly demanded for new entrepreneurs.

3.3 BELGIUM AND LUXEMBURG

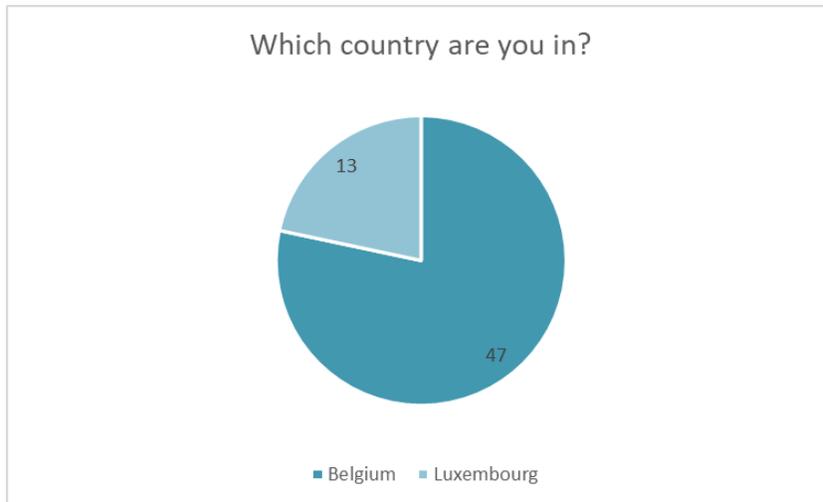
3.3.1 Research phase details

Ongoing process from the 28th of December 2020 until 10th of February 2021 conducted in BeLux by CAMARABELUX'.

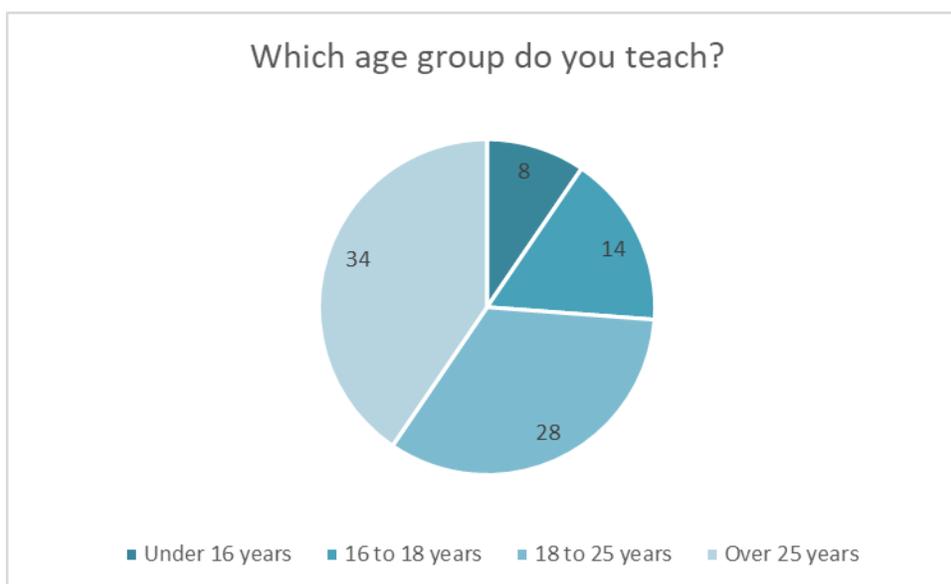
Number of participants and their profile: 60 representatives of VET sector participated.

3.3.2. Graphic representation of results obtained and conclusions.

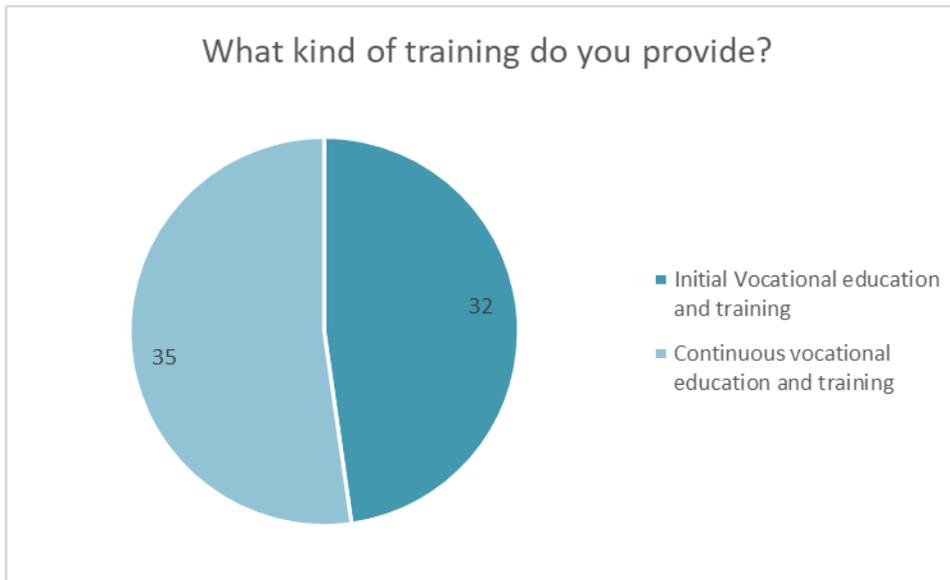
Q1. 47 Of the participants were from Belgium and 13 were from Luxembourg.



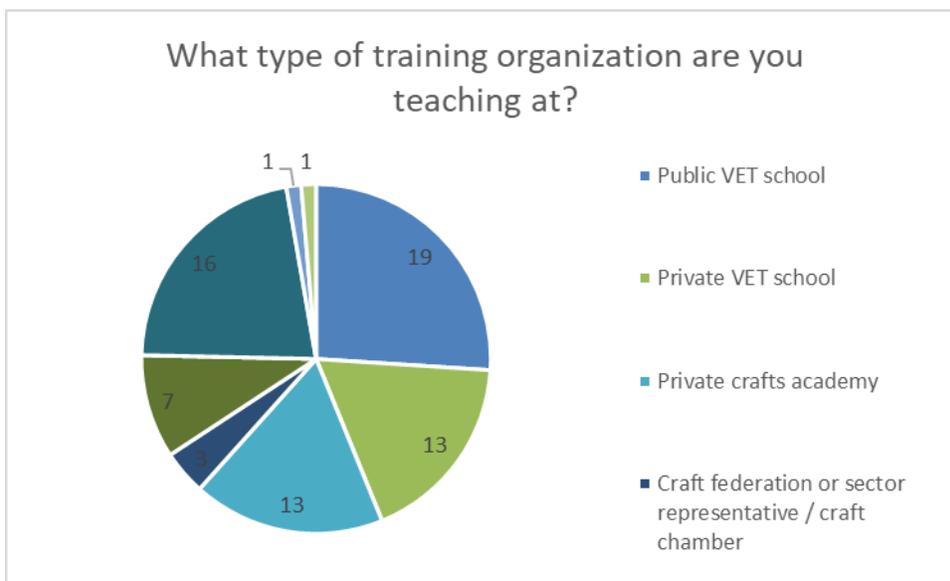
Q2. Most of the participants teach at people over 25 (40%), this group is followed closely by the number of participants who teach to the age group 18 to 25 years (33%). Only 10% of the participants teach to children under 16 years (10%). However, 27% of them teach at more than one level.



Q3. This results causally relate with the training they provide, as 53% of them provide initial vocational education and training, while 58% provide continuous vocational education and training.

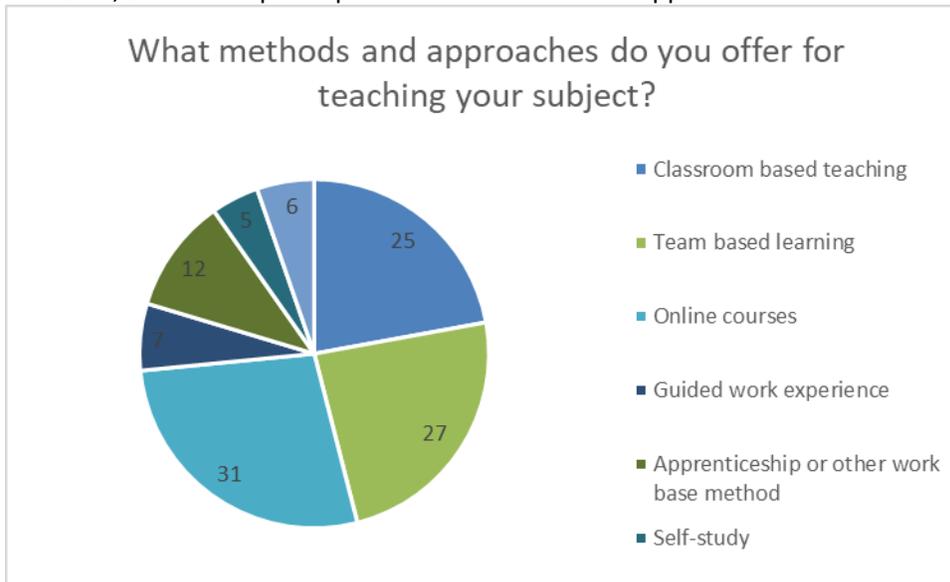


Q4. It is linked with the kind of training organization they work for, as 32% of the participants work for public VET schools and 27% of them teach at adult education centres. An important part of the participants works at private centres (22% at private VET schools and 22% at private crafts academies). It is important to remark that most of them work for two different types of organization (83%) and 17% work for three or more organisations.

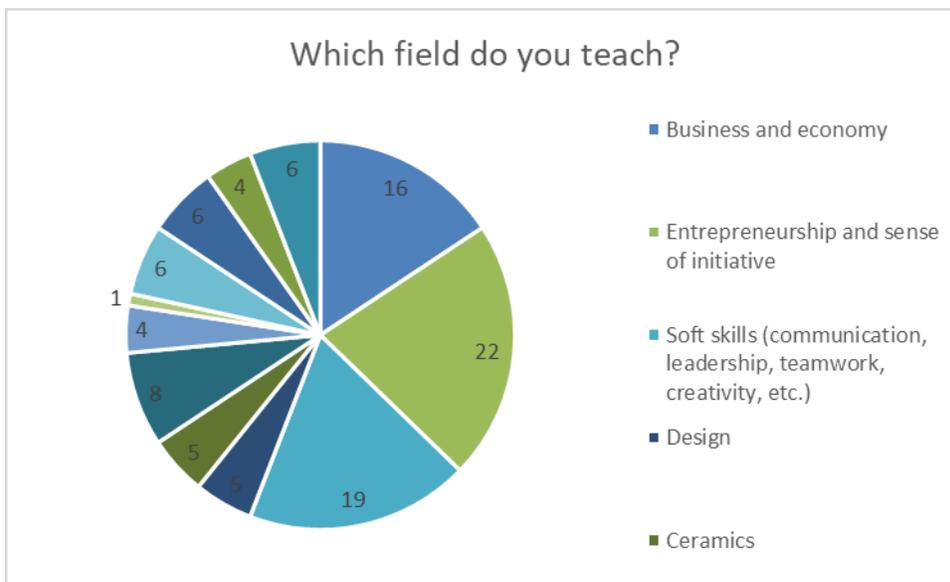


Q5. Regarding the methods and approaches that they offer for their subject, 27% opt for online courses, 24% for team-based learning and 22% for classroom-based teaching.

However, 50% of the participants use more than one approach.

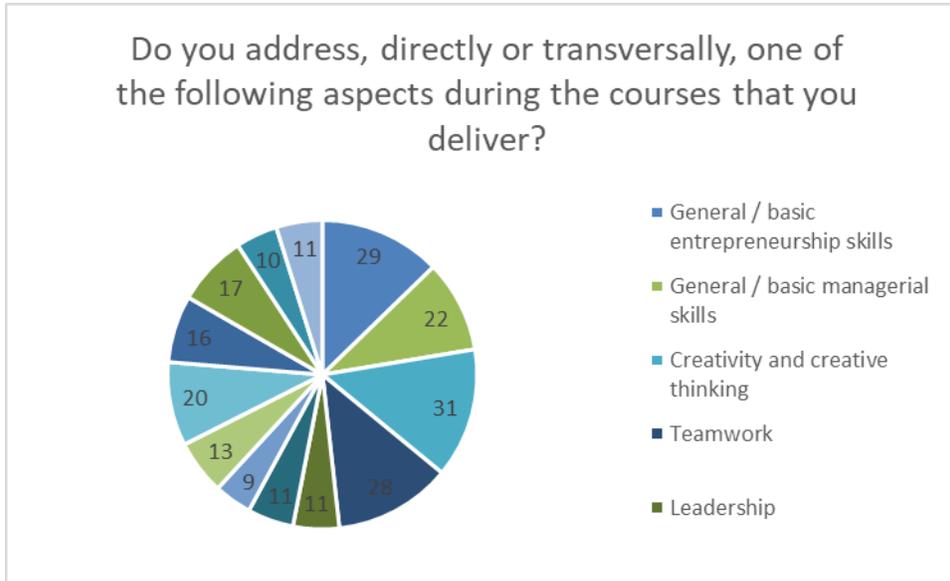


Q6. As most of the participants contacted worked in entrepreneurship promotion departments, the results of the survey show that most of the participants teach entrepreneurship and sense of initiative (22%) and business and economy (16%). It is also interesting to highlight that 37% of them teach more than one subject.

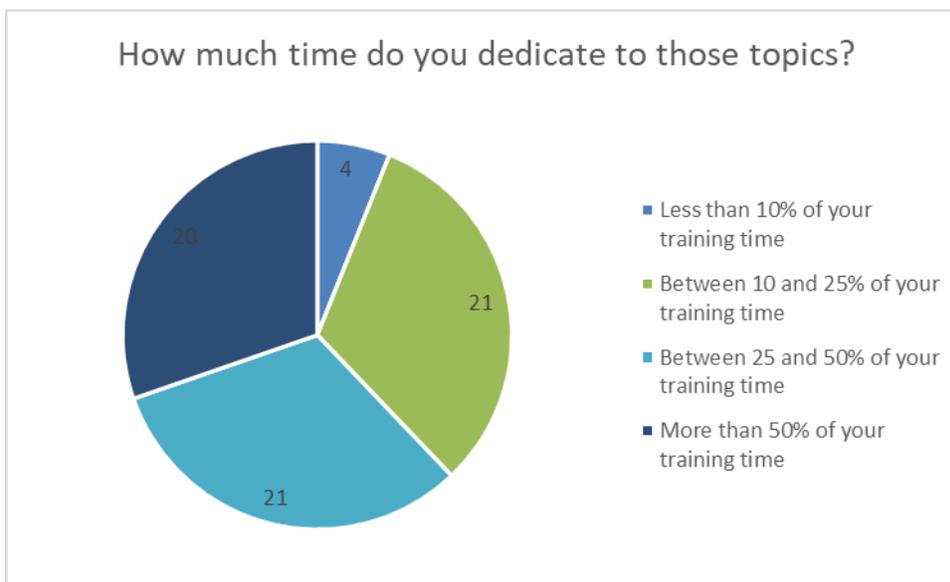


Part 2: Questions on skills addressed and method.

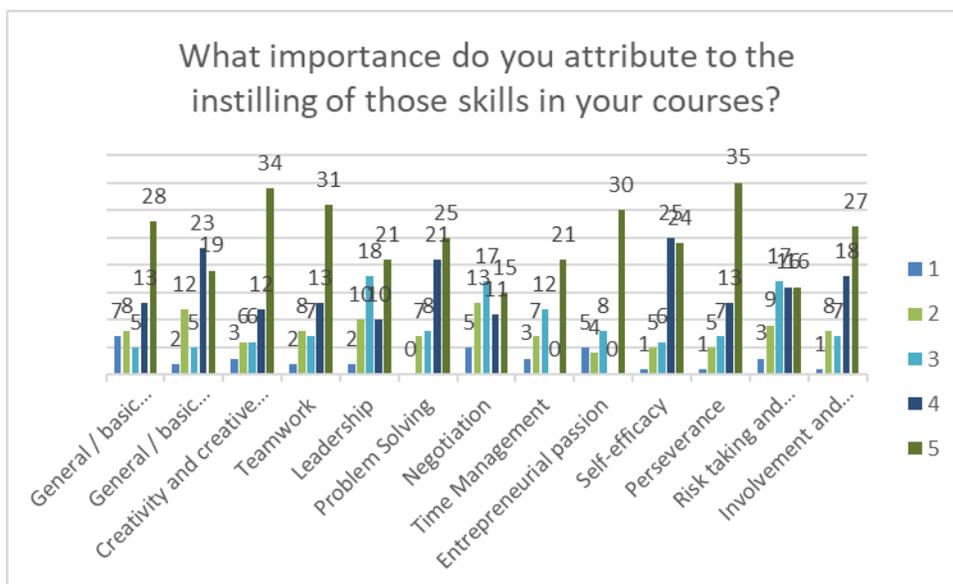
Q7. The participants address directly or transversally during the courses general / basic entrepreneurship skills (13%), general / basic managerial skills (10%), creativity and creative thinking (14%) and teamwork (12%).



Q8. Regarding the time they dedicate, most of them dedicate more over 10% of their training time to these topics, as 32% dedicate between 10 and 25 percent of their training time, 32% dedicate between 25 and 50 percent of their training time, 30% dedicate more than 50 percent of their training time, and only 6% dedicate less than 10 percent of their training time.



Q9. For most of the participants all the skills are similarly important (8% each) except for negotiation (6%) and leadership (6%), that they rank it less important for the craft sector.

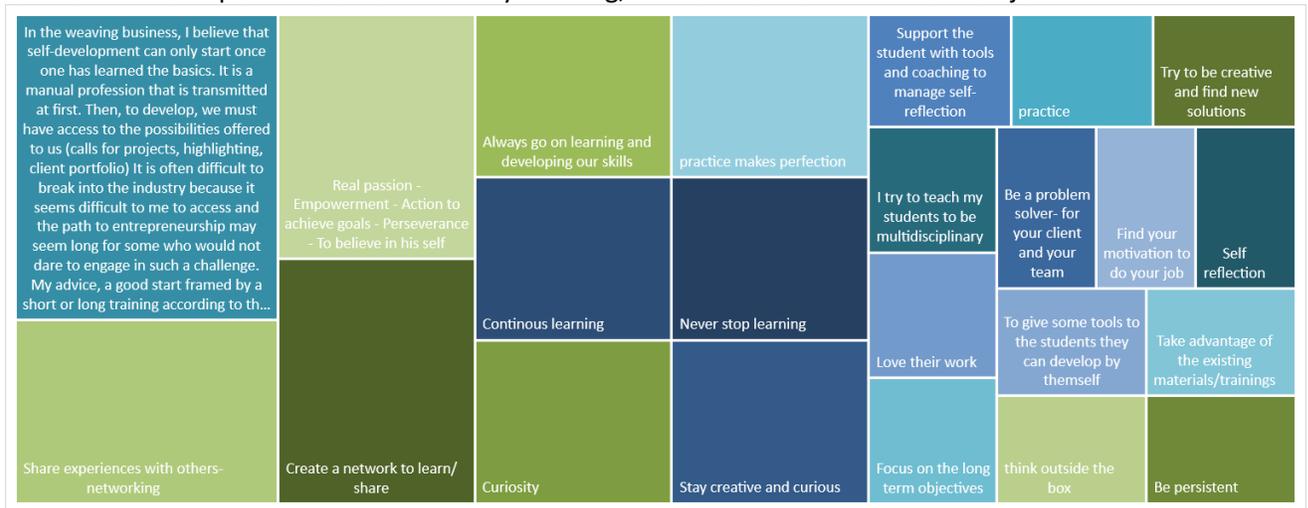


Q10. Regarding the way they approach to those skills, most of them have chosen to go toward online courses and classroom-based teaching to help students develop these skills.

	Classroom based teaching	Team based learning	Online courses	Guided work experience	Apprenticeship or other work-based method	One to one tuition
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	49%	33%	38%	0%	26%	3%
Entrepreneurial passion	18%	33%	32%	2%	5%	5%
Leadership	23%	31%	27%	2%	8%	8%
Time Management	19%	37%	21%	10%	21%	2%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	27%	27%	27%	4%	10%	6%
Creativity and creative thinking	24%	24%	35%	6%	8%	8%
Problem Solving	17%	32%	30%	8%	6%	4%
Self-efficacy	25%	21%	33%	8%	8%	6%
Involvement and Commitment	28%	24%	39%	2%	11%	2%
General / basic managerial skills	22%	19%	30%	4%	17%	6%
Teamwork	18%	19%	28%	7%	21%	4%
Perseverance	24%	18%	24%	7%	15%	5%
Negotiation	22%	20%	33%	6%	22%	4%

Q11. Most of the participants use online tools in their trainings and lessons (80%), mainly at the stage of searching for background information and knowledge (22%) and searching for online resources (22%), some of them also use it for sharing information within educators' networks (19%) and for the development of interactive activities with students (19%) and few of them use it for the development of online training contents (18%).

Q13. Participants were also asked which tips for self-development they would give, most of them focused on the importance of continuously learning, create a network and love their job.



Part 3: Perception of crafts (future) professionals training needs in the entrepreneurial and managerial field.

Q14. According to participants the most demanded skills on the craft market are, creativity and creative thinking, teamwork, problem solving, time management, entrepreneurial passion, self-efficacy, involvement, and commitment.

Followed by general / basic entrepreneurship skills, general / basic managerial skills, and perseverance. Finally, leadership, negotiation and risk taking and tolerance to risk are ranked 3 on the list of most demanded skills on the craft market.

	1	2	3	4	5
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	21%	5%	7%	30%	38%
General / basic managerial skills	10%	18%	10%	41%	21%
Creativity and creative thinking	10%	25%	10%	8%	48%
Teamwork	8%	15%	26%	23%	28%
Leadership	16%	13%	30%	21%	20%
Problem Solving	15%	15%	16%	5%	49%
Negotiation	10%	11%	41%	15%	23%
Time Management	10%	15%	16%	26%	33%
Entrepreneurial passion	15%	11%	13%	15%	47%
Self-efficacy	6%	26%	15%	0%	53%

Perseverance	14%	18%	25%	30%	14%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	11%	11%	37%	30%	11%
Involvement and Commitment	11%	15%	11%	21%	41%

Q15. However, according to the participants, all skills are very needed except for general / basic managerial skills, that ranks 4 in their list and teamwork that ranks 3.

	1	2	3	4	5
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	11%	10%	11%	31%	36%
General / basic managerial skills	8%	10%	16%	43%	23%
Creativity and creative thinking	21%	8%	8%	20%	43%
Teamwork	15%	20%	25%	20%	21%
Leadership	23%	11%	23%	18%	25%
Problem Solving	11%	23%	10%	11%	44%
Negotiation	16%	11%	23%	16%	33%
Time Management	21%	3%	16%	21%	38%
Entrepreneurial passion	20%	13%	10%	7%	51%
Self-efficacy	18%	15%	11%	15%	41%
Perseverance	13%	13%	18%	11%	44%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	18%	15%	15%	23%	30%
Involvement and Commitment	25%	11%	7%	5%	52%

Q16. Finally, participants were asked what was the minimum level that students should achieve in those fields to become successful craft entrepreneurs.

In their opinion, students should achieve an expert level in creativity and creative thinking, problem solving, time management, self-efficacy, perseverance, and involvement and commitment.

Additionally, they should achieve a medium to high level in general / basic entrepreneurship skills, general / basic managerial skills, negotiation, entrepreneurial passion, and risk taking and tolerance to risk. And finally, a medium level in teamwork and leadership.

	Basic level	Medium level	Medium to high level	Expert
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	11%	26%	48%	15%
General / basic managerial skills	3%	31%	52%	13%
Creativity and creative thinking	7%	33%	26%	34%
Teamwork	10%	38%	31%	21%
Leadership	10%	39%	34%	16%
Problem Solving	7%	26%	33%	34%
Negotiation	8%	25%	54%	13%
Time Management	8%	18%	33%	41%
Entrepreneurial passion	11%	20%	39%	30%

Self-efficacy	5%	31%	31%	33%
Perseverance	3%	34%	18%	44%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	8%	25%	48%	20%
Involvement and Commitment	7%	31%	30%	33%

Q17. On the last part of the survey, participants were asked, what are the changes that COVID-19 situation might introduce, regarding the soft skills needed by the craft professionals. Most of them focused on the digital skills, but also in the adaptability and the importance of good social/mental health.

<p>The COVID situation and the lack of overseas travel, gives a new boost to the local economy. Demand grew but the craftsman had not foreseen this change of situation. He must therefore quickly find a new strategy, but it is not always easy. Communication is for me the main skill, finding your client is ensuring the survival of your profession. Of course, if communication is better, you also need to have good management training to be able to meet demand in a professional manner. This confinement has also made many people reflect on their situation, the desire to change professional orientation (sometimes non-existent research training in weaving) to be independent and flourish in a new quest for meaning in his life. To want to change jobs, you have to be able to "take the risk" and this is not always possible because there is not always the possibility of trying before starting. This is why it is...</p>	focus on clients	All visual technics are so important now: taking good photos, making videos that better show our craftworks, learning to write good and interesting articles. The communication virtual methods have become essential! And now, I a...	Adapt to digital	home working, shops are closing	Problems to implement the different activities	Be flexible and adapt quickly to changes	Be able to adapt and learn from the challenges		
	online selling	Take advantage of the many online learning opportunities	Digital skills	Work on the digital skills	More perseverance - Innovation - Créativité - to be resilient	Flexibility	find innovative solutions		
	Sell and have visibility online	Keep a social life online	How to teach craft skills online (potterie, sewing...)	Learn how to create a network online	Be flexible to adapt to new situation	There is no direct impact in regard to the soft skills needed,...	Is important to stay positive and adapt our practices and...	soft skills	Time managem... and balance between work/life
					Innovation and ability to adapt	They have to work more together and be creative to find ways to...	Time management	New ways of networki...	Nothing
						It is important not only to have practical skills but als...	Creativity and creative thinking - Perseverance - Self-efficacy -...	To be more problem solving	

3.4 POLAND

3.4.1. Research phase details

Ongoing process from 28th of December 2020 until 12th of February 2021 conducted in Poland by the Association for the Promotion of Old Crafts and Culture “WICI”.

Number of participants and their profile: 50 participants, some of them representatives of the VET sector and others specialized in providing training in the craft sector in various CVET forms.

3.4.2. Graphic representation of results obtained and conclusions.

Note: In all multiple-choice questions the percentage exceeds 100% as respondents could choose more than one option.

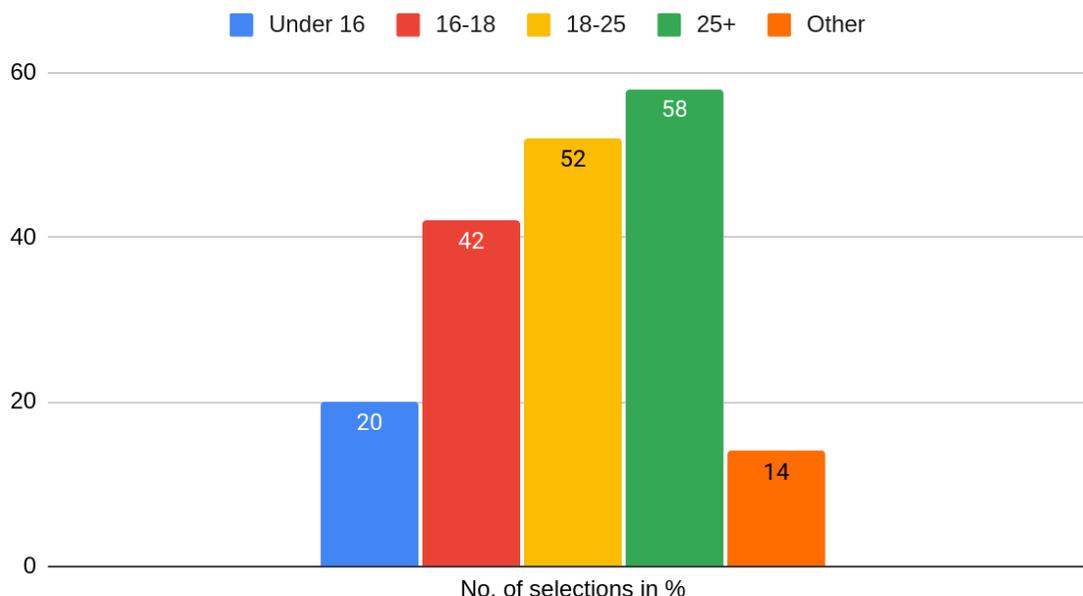
Q1. In which country do you live?

50 persons participated in the survey. All carry out their activity in Poland. The survey was distributed among VET teachers, course trainers, and independent educators across Poland, using email, relevant Facebook groups and direct contact through the network of the WICI Association. All surveys were filled in online.

Q2. Which age group do you teach?

58% of respondents teach adults over 25 years old. This group is followed closely by the number of participants who teach to the age group 18 to 25 years (52%) and to 16 to 18 years (42%). 20% of educators teach children under 16, 14% chose ‘other’ and specified the age group: 30+, 50+ and 65+. 46% of respondents chose only one answer, 54% chose more than one.

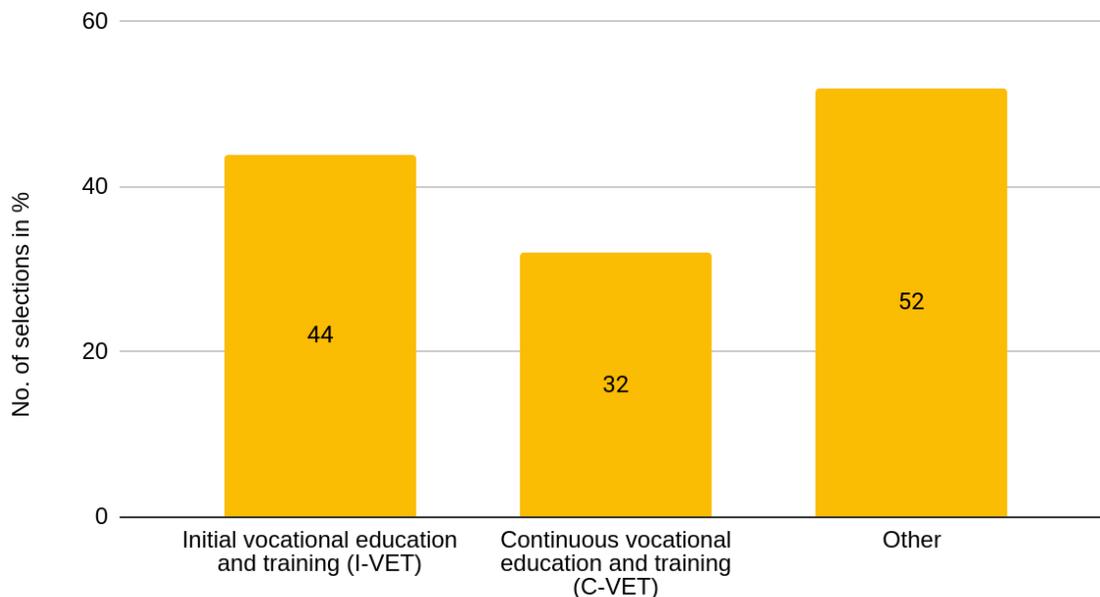
Q2. Which age group do you teach?



Q3. What kind of training do you provide?

Almost half of respondents (44%) works in initial vocational education and training, 32% in continuous VET, while 52% provides their services in other forms, such as extracurricular classes, hobby courses for adults, weekend courses, individual and group courses, classes at the arts academy, occasional workshops, vocational/professional qualifying courses. 16% of respondents chose more than one answer.

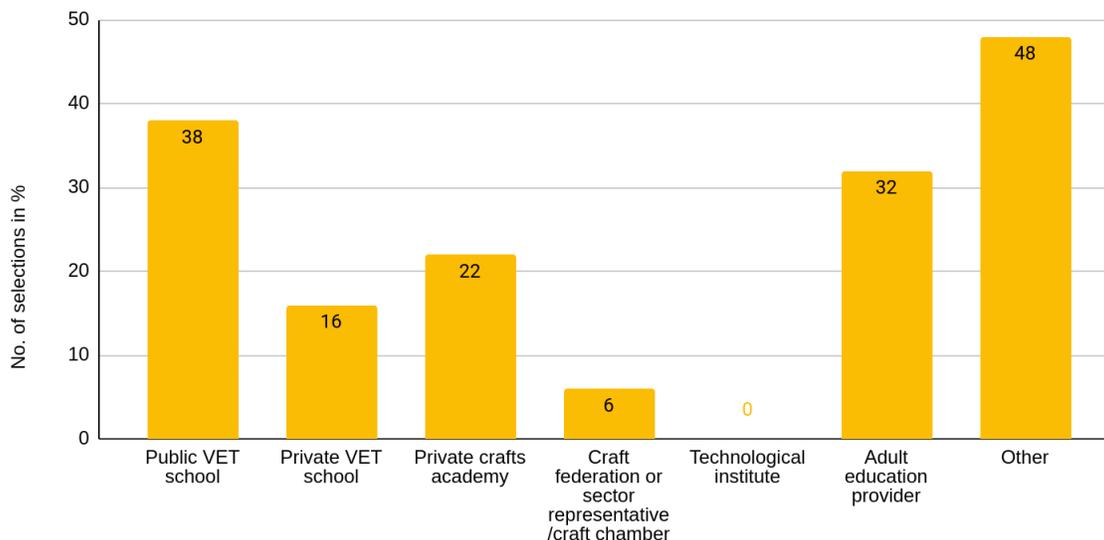
Q3. What kind of training do you provide?



Q4. What kind of training organization are you teaching at?

38% of respondents teach at public vocational schools and 32% in institutions which provide adult education. Interestingly, there is a large group who works in private craft academies (22%). Only 16% work in private vocational schools. The 'other' category was selected by a high number of participants – as much as 48% of respondents. Most frequent answers in this category include non-governmental organization, university of the third age, city culture house, their own company, university post-graduate programme. 60% of respondents chose more than one answer.

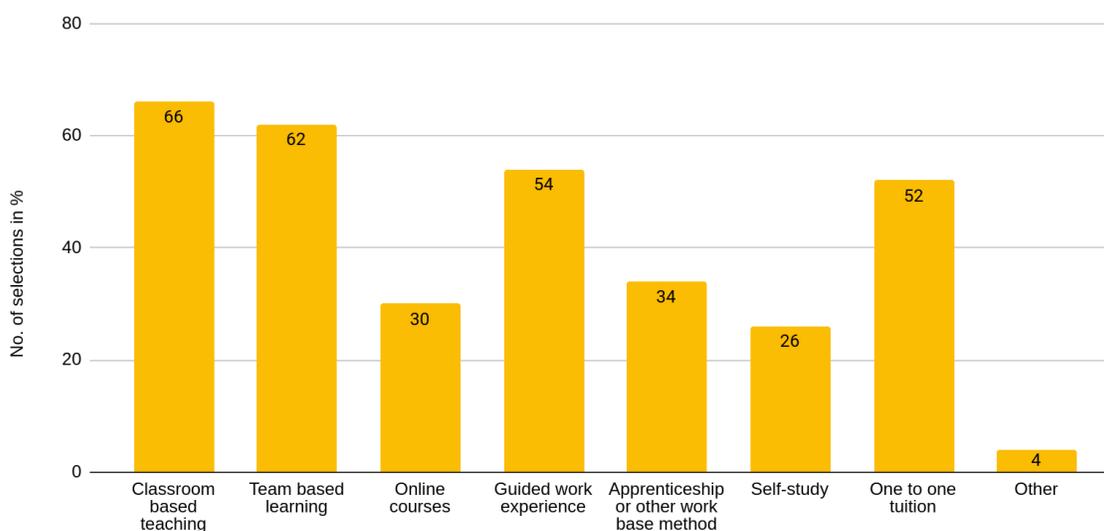
Q4. What kind of training organization are you teaching at?



Q5. What methods and approaches do you offer for teaching your subject?

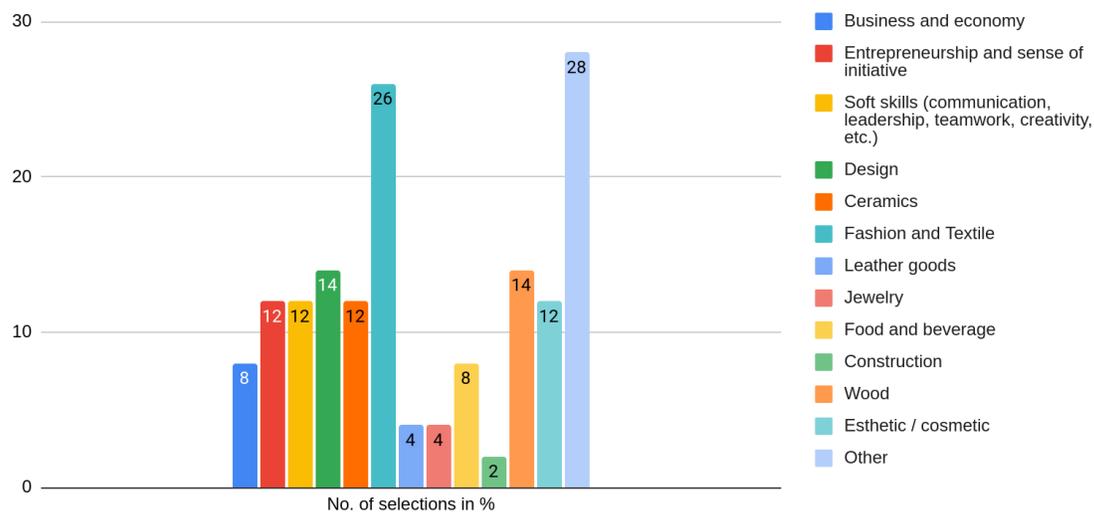
The most popular teaching method is classroom-based teaching (66%), closely followed by team-based learning (62%). Guided work experience and one-to-one tuition are practiced by respectively, 54% and 52% of respondents. One third offers apprenticeship. Only 30% reported using online courses, while the least popular is self-study (26%). 90% of respondents chose more than one answer.

Q 5. What methods and approaches do you offer for teaching your subject?



As many as 26% survey participants teach in the fashion and textile field. This can be related to the fact that the survey was sent to educators in the Lodz county which has traditionally been a textile production region. There is a similar number of participants who teach entrepreneurship and initiative, soft skills, design, ceramics, wood and cosmetic. 8% teaches business and economy, as well as in the food and beverage field. Only 2% of survey participants represent the construction sector. The ‘other’ category, chosen by 28%, is composed of educators active in crafts and arts fields such as weaving, handicrafts, basketry, glassworks, fine arts, photography, blacksmithing, hairdressing, and floristics; and soft skills teachers – public speaking, acting, and performing, advertisement, hospitality, self-confidence. 56% of respondents chose one answer and 44% selected more than one.

Q6. Which field do you teach?

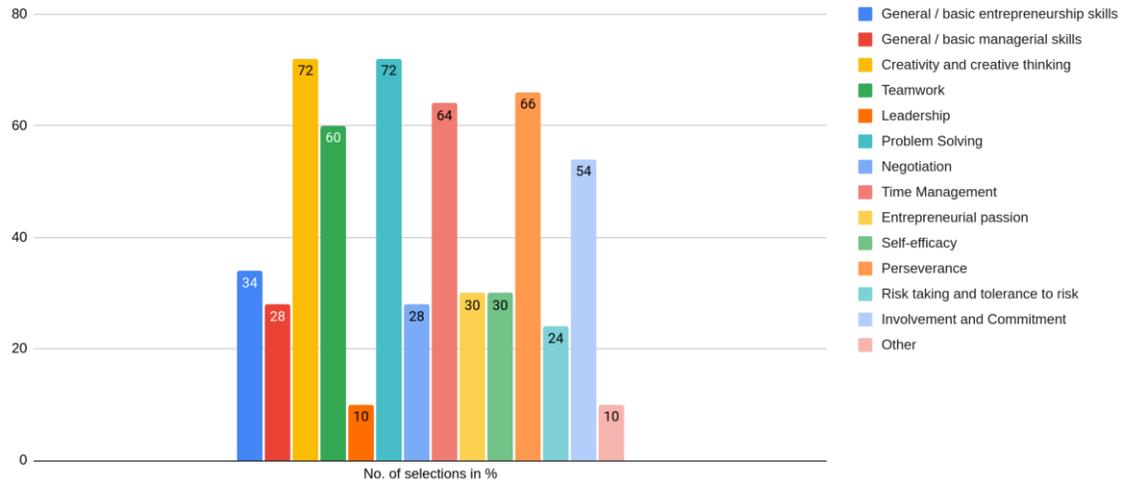


Part 2: Questions on skills addressed and method.

Q7. Do you address, directly or transversally, one of the following aspects during the courses that you deliver?

Creativity and problem solving are the two most frequently addressed skills, as many as 72% of respondents selected them. Teamwork, time management, perseverance and risk taking was addressed by over half of the respondents. Only about one third of educators addresses general / basic entrepreneurial and managerial skills, negotiation, entrepreneurial passion, and self-efficacy. 10% of respondents teach leadership. 1 in 10 teach none of the listed skills or teach yet different skills: graphic software, stress resistance, motivation and satisfaction, and public speaking.

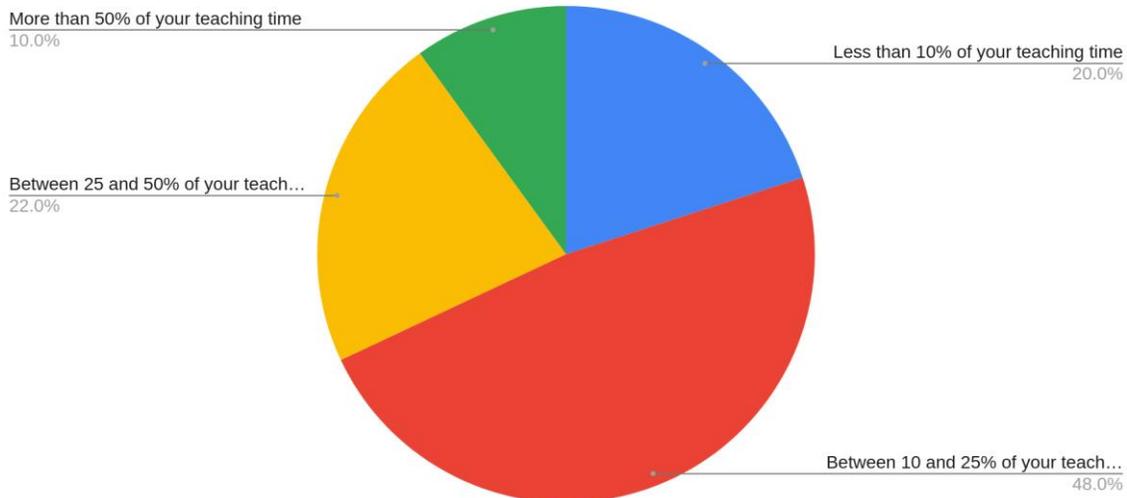
Q7. Do you address, directly or transversally, one of the following aspects during the courses that you deliver?



Q8. How much time do you dedicate to those topics?

Almost half of the participants spend from 10 to 25% of their teaching time on the above-mentioned topics. 22% declared between 25 and 50%, and 10% as much as 50% and more. 20% reported to spend less than 10% of their teaching time on these skills.

Q 8. How much time do you dedicate to those topics?



Q9. What importance do you attribute to the instilling of those skills in your courses? (1 being the lowest importance, and 5 the highest)

The three most important skills to be taught were creativity and creative thinking, perseverance and involvement and commitment. They were closely followed by time management, problem solving and self-efficacy. Least important skills, according to survey participants, were leadership, managerial skills and entrepreneurship. Participants were undecided about negotiation skills.

	1	2	3	4	5
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	26%	22%	20%	10%	22%
General / basic managerial skills	34%	14%	26%	6%	20%
Creativity and creative thinking	0%	0%	18%	20%	62%
Teamwork	12%	12%	18%	24%	34%
Leadership	32%	20%	18%	20%	10%
Problem Solving	6%	4%	22%	28%	40%
Negotiation	16%	12%	38%	16%	18%
Time Management	10%	0%	20%	22%	48%
Entrepreneurial passion	12%	10%	22%	28%	28%
Self-efficacy	2%	2%	28%	40%	28%
Perseverance	2%	4%	12%	32%	50%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	10%	16%	24%	26%	24%
Involvement and Commitment	8%	4%	14%	30%	44%

Q10. How do you address these different skills?

For every skill the option 'other' was very often selected, which might mean that the participants either do not teach the skill or choose yet another teaching method. Regarding all the skills listed, the most frequently selected method was classroom-based teaching, while the least chosen was online courses.

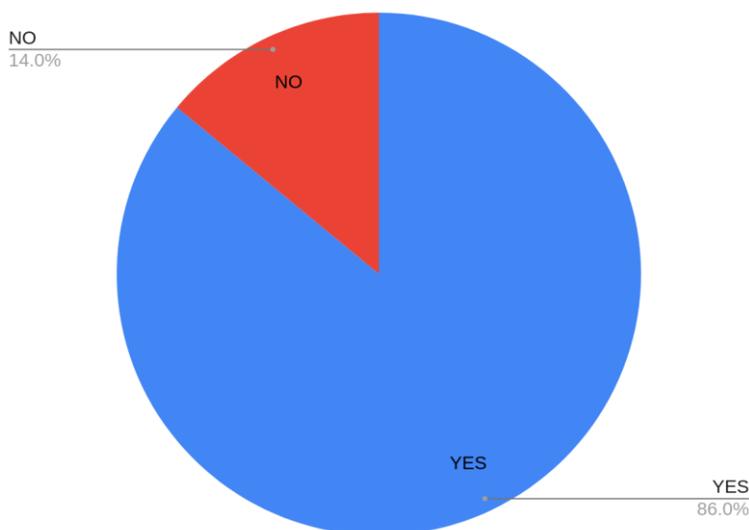
	Classroom based teaching	Team based learning	Online courses	Guided work experience	Apprenticeship or other work-based method	Self-study	One to one tuition	Other
General/ basic entrepreneurship skills	26%	10%	2%	10%	2%	4%	6%	40%
General/ basic managerial skills	18%	10%	2%	12%	4%	0%	8%	46%
Creativity and creative thinking	30%	22%	2%	14%	8%	2%	14%	8%
Teamwork	10%	46%	0%	8%	8%	2%	6%	20%
Leadership	12%	16%	0%	10%	4%	2%	6%	50%

Problem Solving	30%	18%	2%	12%	14%	2%	12%	10%
Negotiation	18%	22%	0%	8%	12%	0%	6%	34%
Time Management	24%	12%	2%	12%	20%	6%	8%	16%
Entrepreneurial passion	22%	2%	2%	6%	6%	8%	16%	38%
Self-efficacy	22%	6%	2%	8%	14%	8%	10%	30%
Perseverance	20%	8%	2%	12%	18%	6%	16%	18%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	22%	6%	2%	8%	18%	2%	10%	32%
Involvement and Commitment	24%	12%	2%	10%	20%	4%	8%	20%

Q11. Do you work with online tools?

As many as 86% of respondents declared using online tools.

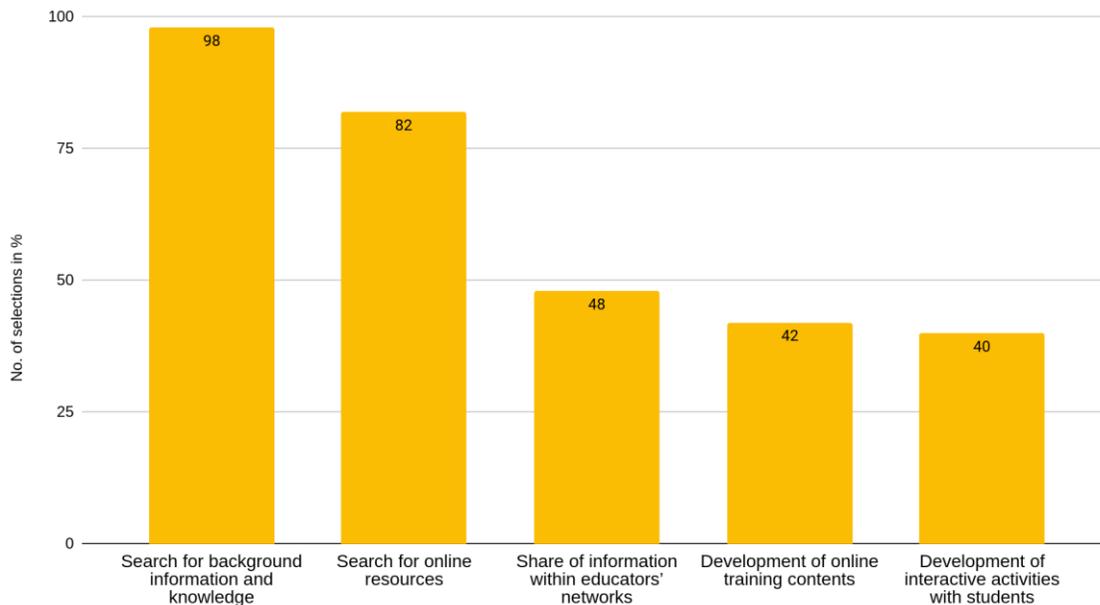
Q 11. Do you work with online tools?



Q12. If yes, at which stage?

Almost all participants (98%) who use online tools, search the Internet for background information and knowledge. 82% search for online resources. Much smaller number reported sharing information within educators' networks (48%), 42% develop online training courses, while 40% use the web to develop interactive activities with students. 84% of respondents chose more than one answer.

Q12. If yes, at which stage?



Q13. As a teacher, what are your tips for self-development?

Survey participants provided a great variety of self-development ideas. Most common include:

- “self-teaching – books, online materials (including social media like YouTube) and platforms such as EPALE”.
- “formal education – certified courses, post-graduate studies”.
- “peer learning: knowledge exchange with other educators online (Facebook groups, forums) and offline (specialised courses)”.
- “observing more experienced educators, mentoring”.
- “feedback from students”.
- “self-development courses to maintain commitment and passion”.
- “soft skill courses”.
- “informal talks with people of the same field”.
- “visiting museums and travelling”.

One respondent reported self-development as a response to new teaching requirements at school.

Part 3: Perception of crafts (future) professionals training needs in the entrepreneurial and managerial field.

Q14. According to your perspective, what are the most demanded skills on the craft market? Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.

According to the respondents, the most demanded skills on the craft market are general / basic entrepreneurship and managerial skills, time management and involvement and commitment – all

received more than 64% of positive answers (score 1 and 2 combined). Least demanded skills (score 4 and 5 combined) were teamwork, problem solving, entrepreneurial passion and self-efficacy.

	1	2	3	4	5
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	48%	16%	14%	6%	16%
General / basic managerial skills	38%	26%	14%	10%	12%
Creativity and creative thinking	36%	18%	18%	14%	14%
Teamwork	20%	30%	16%	22%	12%
Leadership	36%	12%	30%	12%	10%
Problem Solving	40%	18%	8%	24%	10%
Negotiation	24%	24%	22%	16%	14%
Time Management	58%	8%	8%	14%	12%
Entrepreneurial passion	32%	12%	22%	16%	18%
Self-efficacy	30%	24%	6%	26%	14%
Perseverance	42%	20%	10%	16%	12%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	40%	22%	14%	8%	16%
Involvement and Commitment	50%	18%	8%	10%	14%

Q15. According to your perspective, which ones are the most needed skills by (future) craft entrepreneurs. Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.

When asked about the most needed skills in craft entrepreneurship, participants pointed to perseverance and general / basic entrepreneurial skills – 70% of positive answers (score 1 and 2 combined). However, all other skills, except for leadership, received between 54 and 68% of positive answers, which shows that the participants consider them all necessary. Entrepreneurial passion, problem solving, and creativity received the lowest score (score 4 and 5 combined), but again, the differences in percentage for all skills (score 4 and 5 combined) were small.

	1	2	3	4	5
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	44%	26%	12%	4%	14%
General / basic managerial skills	36%	30%	16%	4%	14%
Creativity and creative thinking	54%	14%	6%	10%	16%
Teamwork	30%	24%	24%	14%	8%
Leadership	20%	22%	34%	10%	14%
Problem Solving	60%	6%	8%	12%	14%
Negotiation	44%	16%	20%	8%	12%
Time Management	60%	8%	10%	6%	16%
Entrepreneurial passion	48%	10%	14%	12%	16%
Self-efficacy	42%	24%	10%	10%	14%
Perseverance	58%	12%	8%	4%	18%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	40%	28%	8%	12%	12%
Involvement and Commitment	50%	16%	10%	8%	16%

Q16. What is the minimum level that students should achieve in those fields to become a successful crafts entrepreneur?

The respondents were asked about the level of expertise that beginner entrepreneurs should achieve to increase their chances for success. A group of skills which received high scores – between 70 and 80% ('medium to high level' and 'expert' combined) were: creativity and creative thinking, problem solving, time management, self-efficacy, perseverance, risk taking and tolerance to risk, as well as involvement and commitment. Basic level should suffice in skills such as leadership and teamwork. The respondents estimated that their students should have a medium level of entrepreneurial and managerial skills to succeed as craft entrepreneurs.

	Basic level	Medium level	Medium to high level	Expert
General / basic entrepreneurship skills	18%	42%	28%	12%
General / basic managerial skills	22%	46%	24%	8%
Creativity and creative thinking	8%	14%	32%	46%
Teamwork	26%	34%	38%	2%
Leadership	30%	28%	38%	4%
Problem Solving	16%	12%	28%	44%
Negotiation	18%	26%	36%	20%
Time Management	10%	10%	32%	48%
Entrepreneurial passion	16%	22%	18%	44%
Self-efficacy	8%	16%	46%	30%
Perseverance	6%	14%	34%	46%
Risk taking and tolerance to risk	12%	18%	26%	44%
Involvement and Commitment	6%	14%	38%	42%

Q17. What are the changes that COVID-19 situation might introduce, according to your opinion, regarding the soft skills needed by the craft professionals and the training practices?

Most respondents pointed out the role of the internet in gaining new skills. They reported that the pandemic of COVID-19 may force but also inspire craftsmen's development. The most needed soft skills reported are:

- "risk taking",
- "restructuring the company's profile",
- "Internet sales and marketing",
- "flexibility",
- "creative problem solving",
- "online communication with teams and clients",
- "seeking new target groups",
- "market research tools",
- "online advertising and marketing",
- "brand building",
- "running craft workshops online",

- “product design and development”.

Q18. Additional comments

The respondents pointed out that the scale questions were confusing, especially no 9, sometimes 1 meant highest importance and sometimes lowest importance. In question no 10 ‘none’ answer was missing – the question implied that educators need to address all the listed skills in one way or another. The language of the survey differs from the professional language and vocabulary used in the vocational education sector in Poland. Questions tended to repeat, especially no 15 and 16 were too similar.

3.5 ITALY

3.5.1. Research phase details

Ongoing process from 4th January 2021 till 15th February 2021 conducted in Italy by Smooland di Dell'Osso Marco.

Number of participants and their profile: 50 entrepreneurship and craft educators

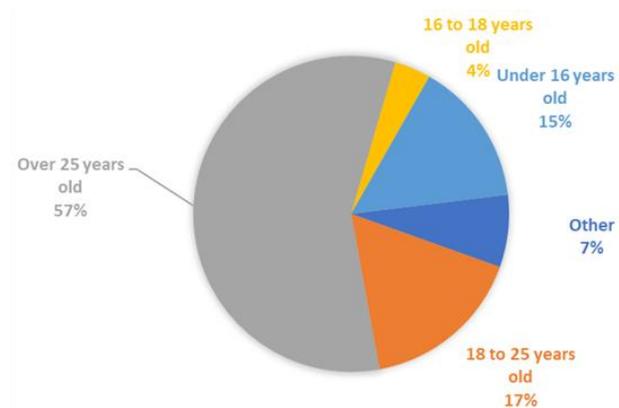
3.5.2. Graphic representation of results obtained and conclusions.

Note: At first the research process was carried out in English, however due to language issues it was decided to translate it into Italian to make the research more accessible to the bigger audience.

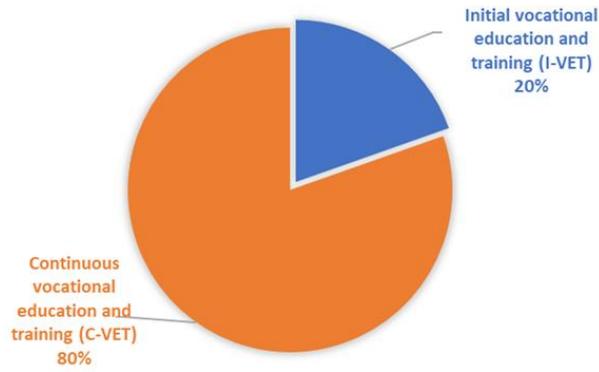
Q1. Which country are you based?

Italy

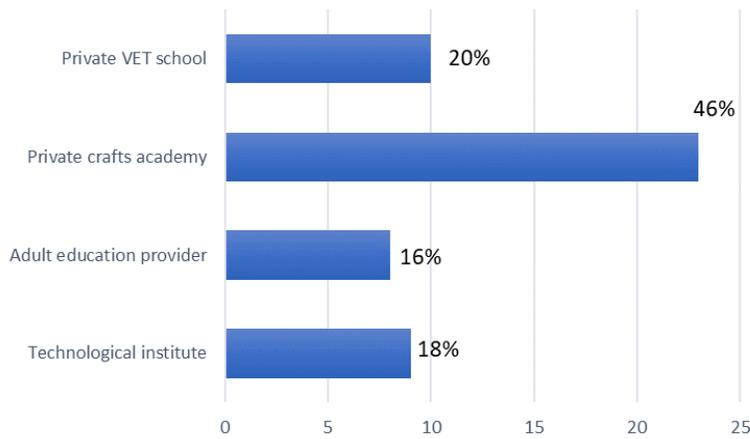
Q2. Which age group do you teach?



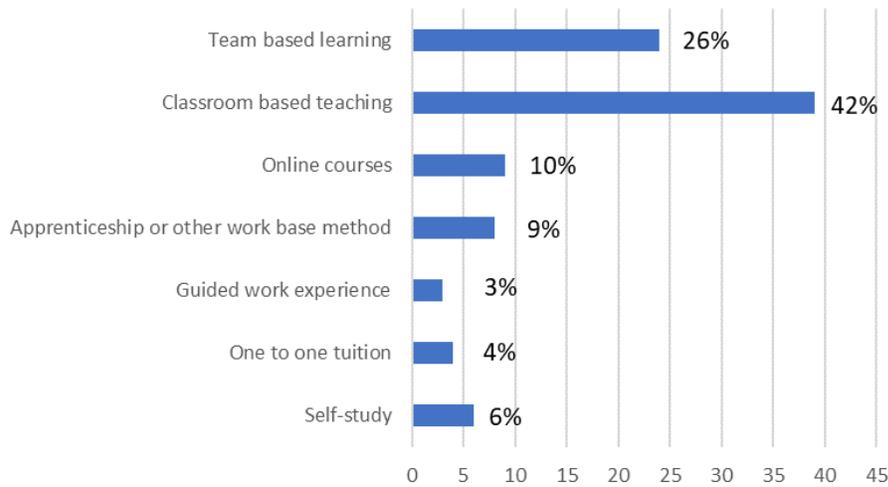
Q3. What kind of training do you provide?



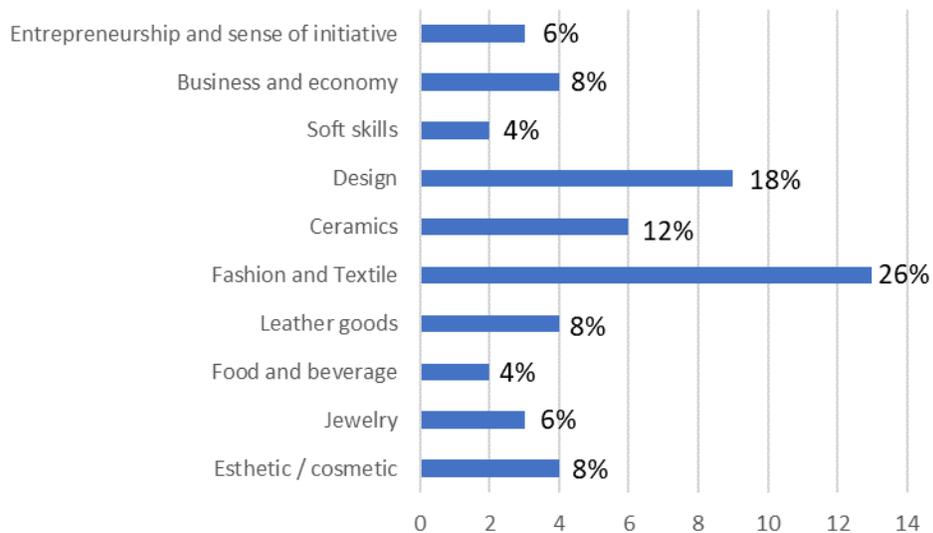
Q4. What kind of training organization are you teaching at?



Q5. What methods and approaches do you offer for teaching your subject?

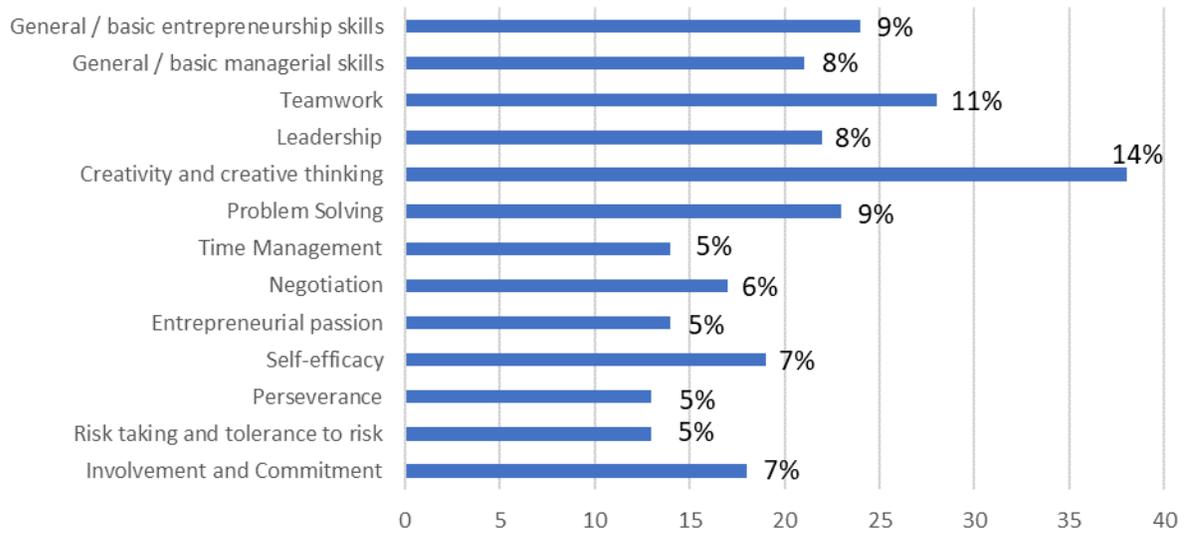


Q6. Which field do you teach?

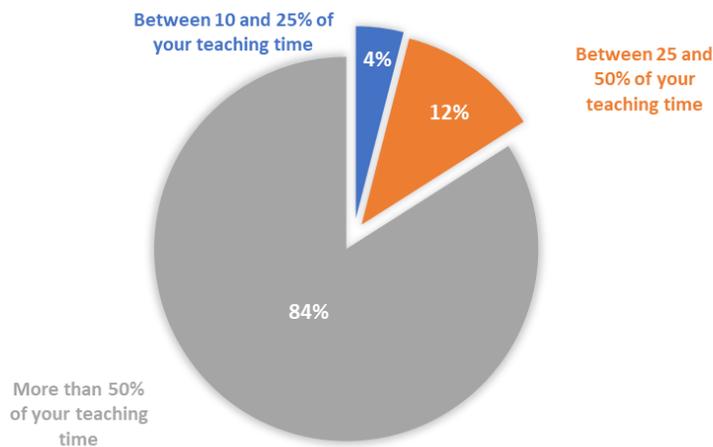


Part 2: Questions on skills addressed and method.

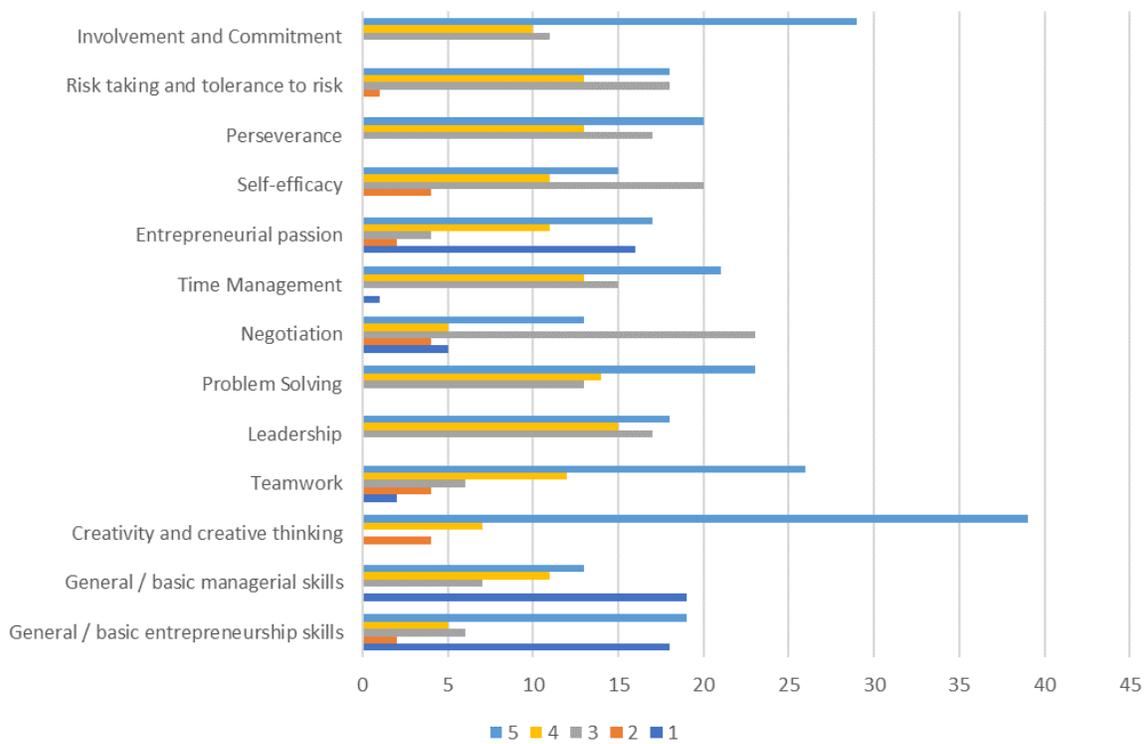
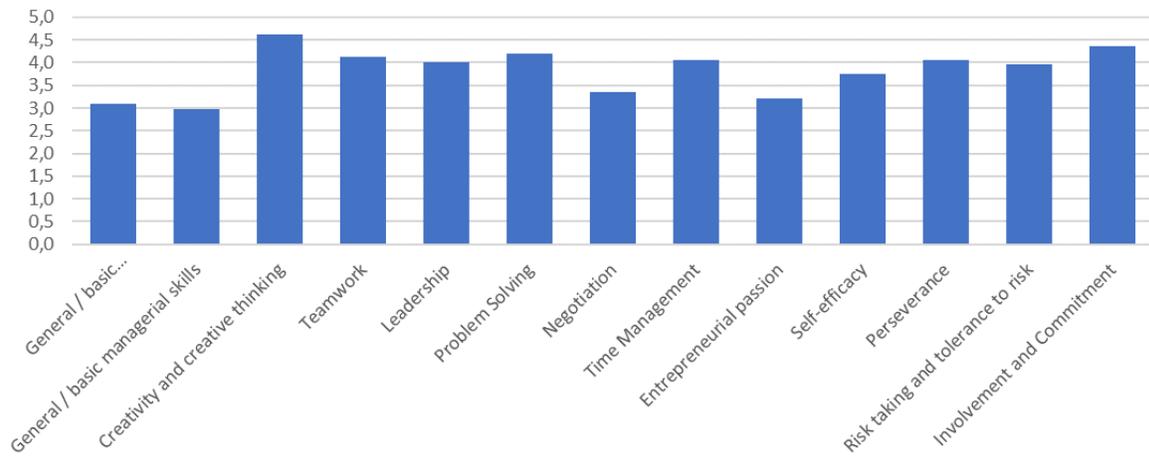
Q7. Do you address, directly or transversally, one of the following aspects during the courses that you deliver?



Q8. How much time do you dedicate to those topics?

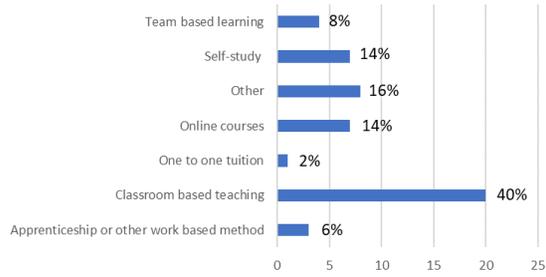


Q9. What importance do you attribute to the instilling of those skills in your courses? (1 being the lowest importance, and 5 the highest)

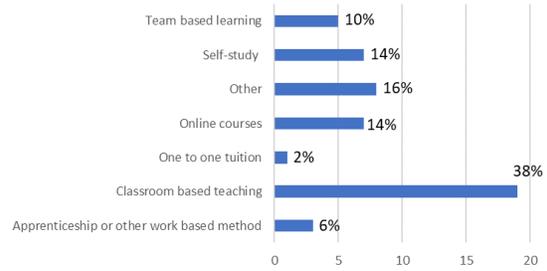


Q10. How do you address these different skills?

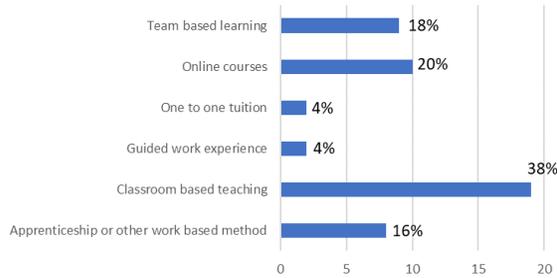
General / basic entrepreneurship skills



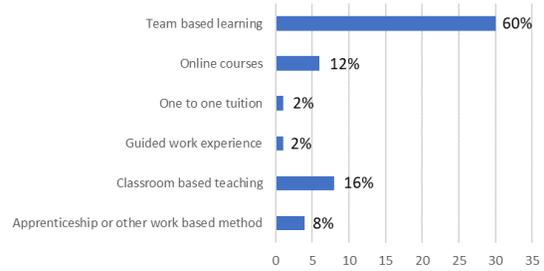
General / basic managerial skills



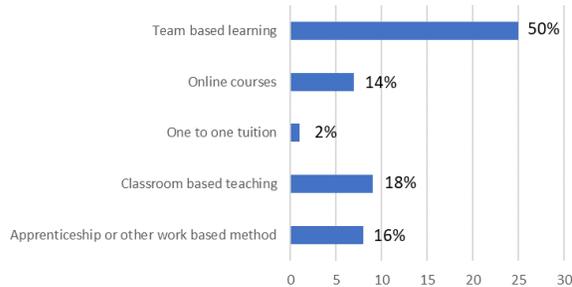
Creativity and creative thinking



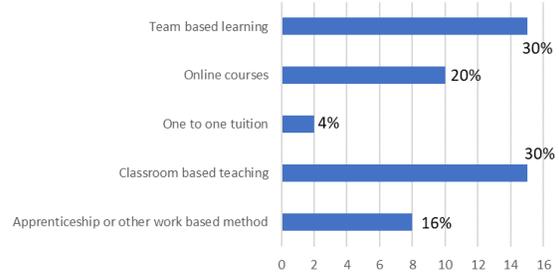
Teamwork



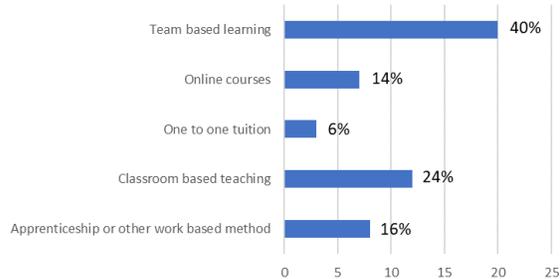
Leadership



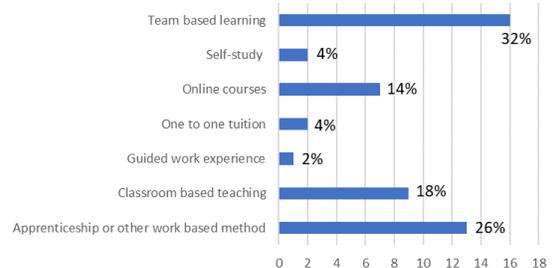
Problem Solving



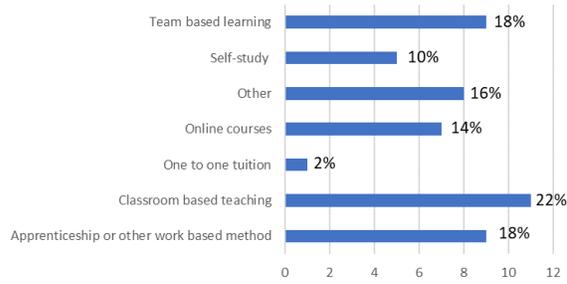
Negotiation



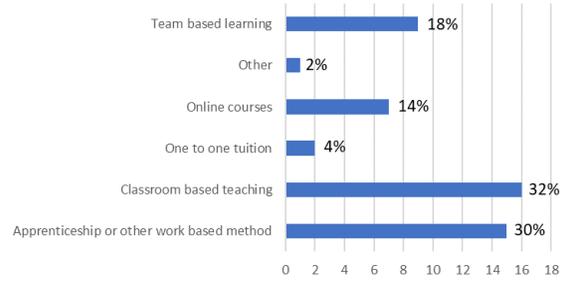
Time Management



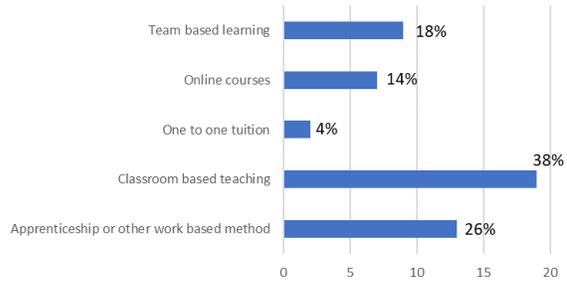
Entrepreneurial passion



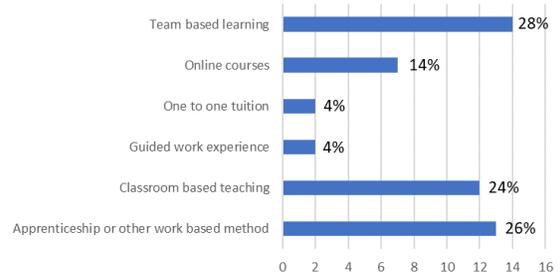
Self-efficacy



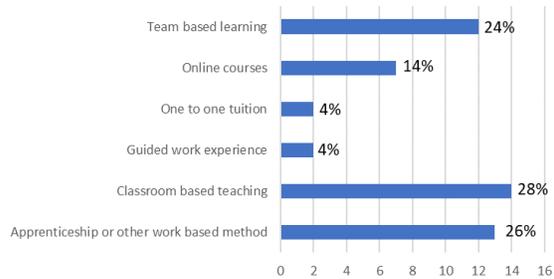
Perseverance



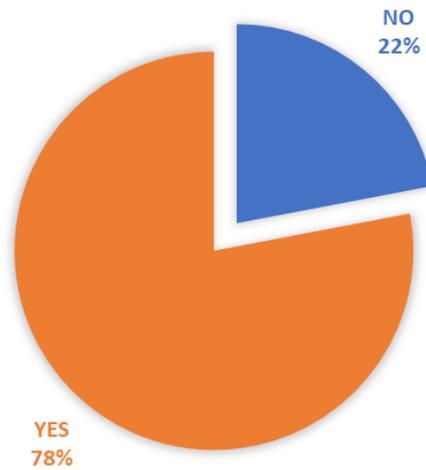
Risk taking and tolerance to risk



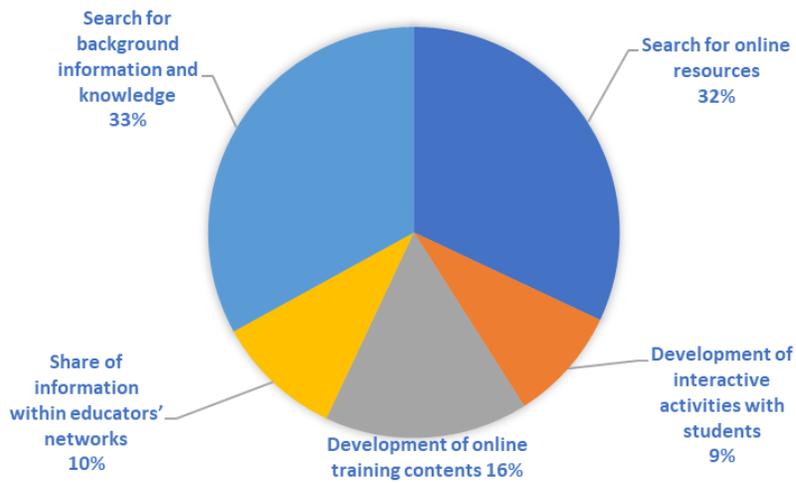
Involvement and Commitment



Q11. Do you work with online tools?



Q12. If yes, at which stage?

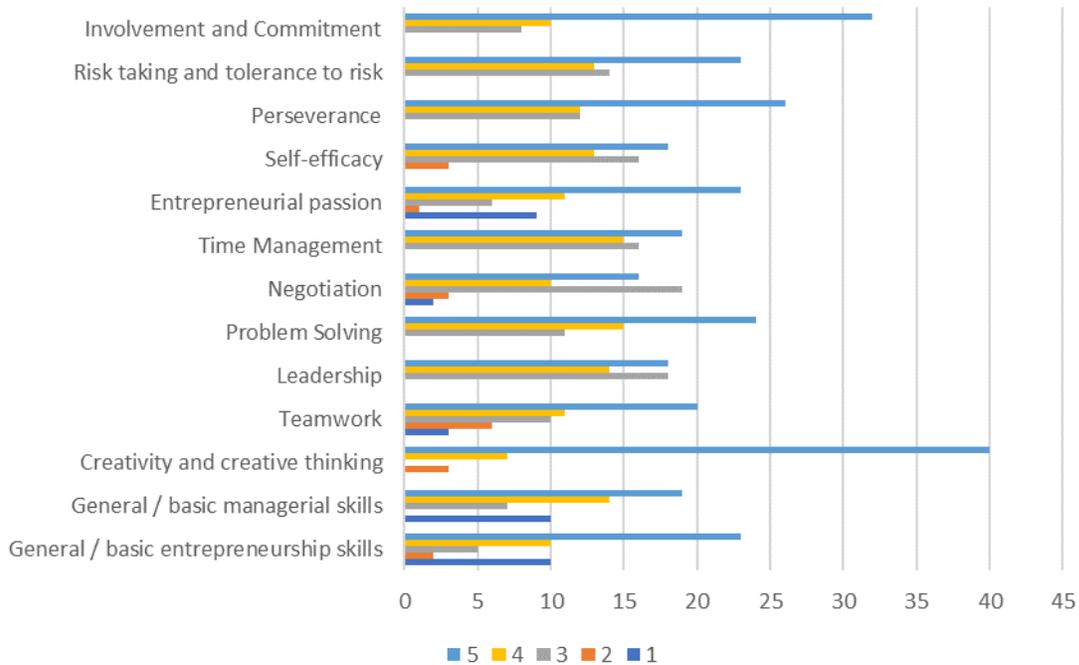


Q13. As teacher, what are your tips for self-development?

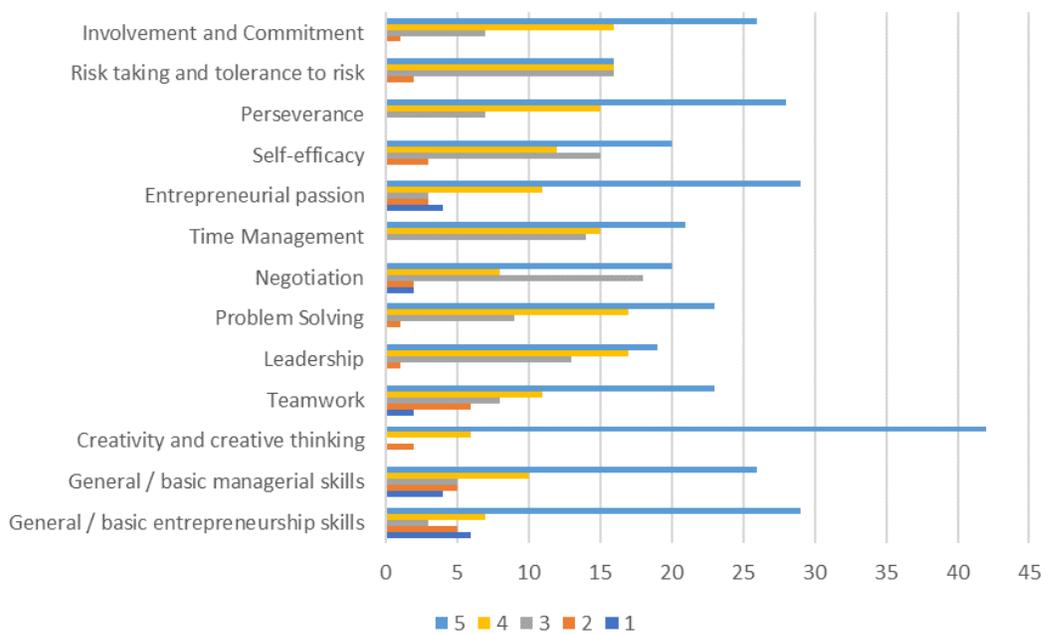


Part 3: Perception of crafts (future) professionals training needs in the entrepreneurial and managerial field.

Q14. According to your perspective, what are the most demanded skills on the craft market? Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.

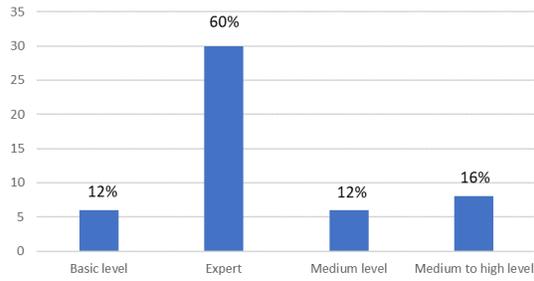


Q15. According to your perspective, which ones are the most needed skills by (future) craft entrepreneurs. Rank from 1 to 5, one being the most important, the relevance of these topics.

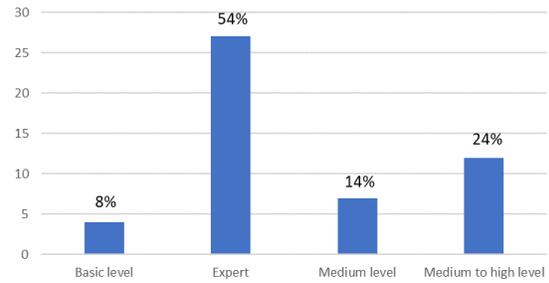


Q16. What is the minimum level that students should achieve in those fields to become a successful crafts entrepreneur?

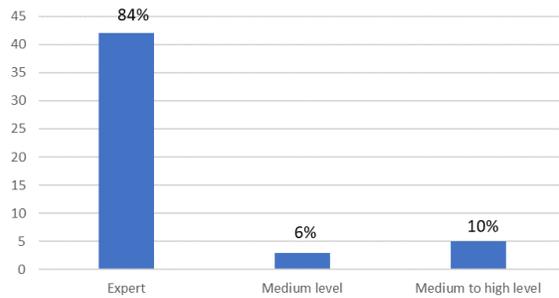
General / basic entrepreneurship skills



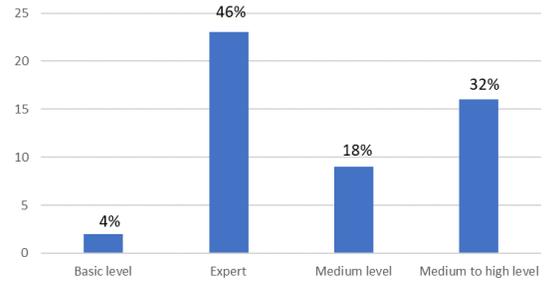
General / basic managerial skills



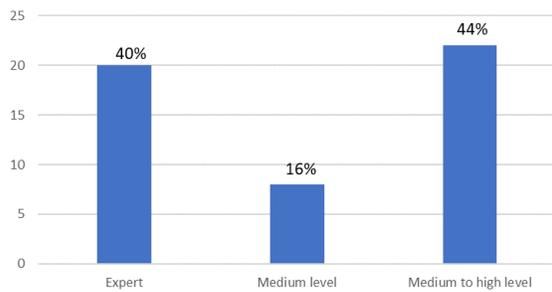
Creativity and creative thinking



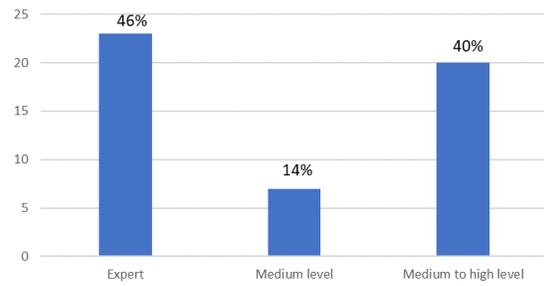
Teamwork



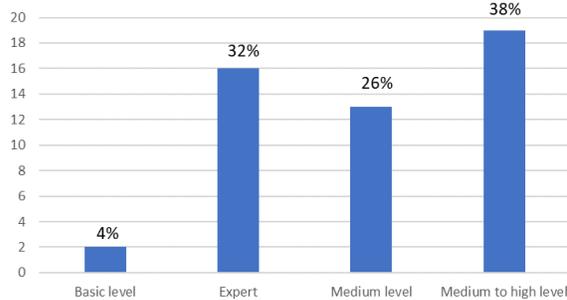
Leadership



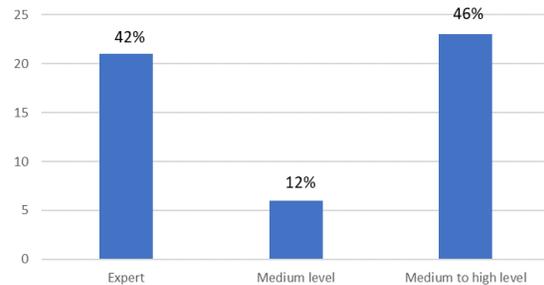
Problem Solving

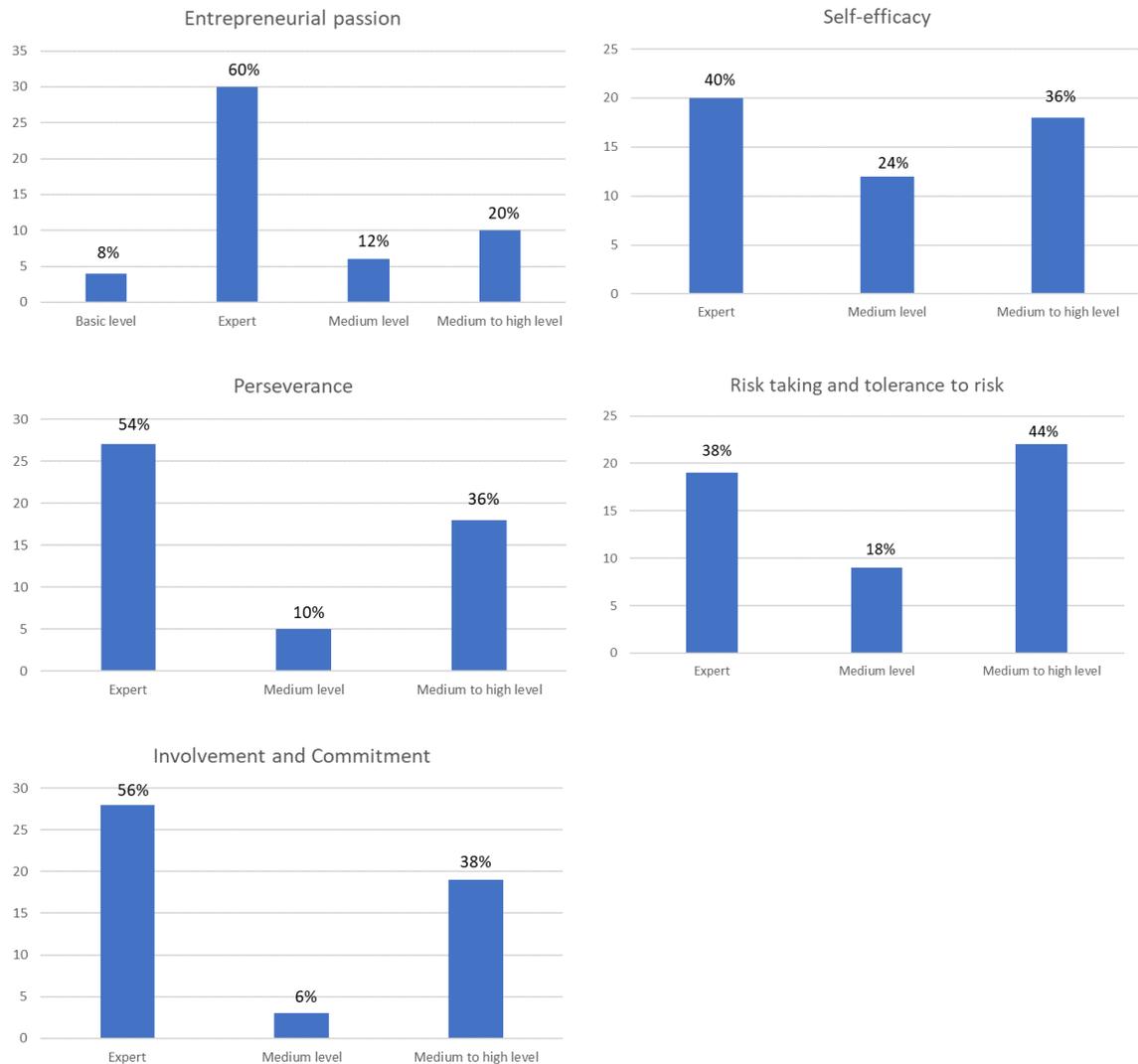


Negotiation



Time Management





Q17. What are the changes that COVID-19 situation might introduce, according to your opinion, regarding the soft skills needed by the craft professionals and the training practices?

- "COVID-19 has left a big impact on the educators. Some of our classes has been ceased temporary. Being a ceramic educator, it is difficult for us to handle the classes on online platforms".
- "Covid-19 forced us to change our teaching methods, we became more active on online platforms, improved tech skills".
- "During Covid-19 the world has become a more digitalized and the education has also transferred on online platforms. Students and teachers have developed tech and remote management skills".
- "Covid-19 has taught us to be tech friendly and savvy".
- "Covid-19 taught us to be more flexible and creative".
- "The traditional craft courses will be taught also on online platforms".

- “There is more demand of online courses during the Covid-19. People become more aware of online open resources”.
- “Covid-19 increased the remote work and study possibilities”.
- “organize in remote work”.
- “probably teamwork will be handled in different way”.
- “we need to activate our emotions also in online approach”.
- “work alone and self-develop skills”.
- “Online courses have become more accessible”.
- “Covid-19 has helped us to be more flexible and creative while teaching”.
- “people will learn more online”.
- “teamwork will be noy so use in the future”.
- “soft skills like intuition or emotion will be lost”.
- “listening will be a penalized skill”.
- “Traditional course will have a natural modification”.
- “Teamwork will be difficult to implement”.
- “The new leaders will be the moderators”.
- “Inspiration from other will be penalized”.
- “Different way to communicate”.
- “Parameters for evaluation will be different in any sectors”.
- “Different involvement for anyone”.
- “Difficult development for some activities”.
- “Current educators should modify the approach, probably with different results”.
- “Remote and online work will be the future”.
- “New soft skill will be implemented in this new scenario”.
- “Online school will introduce new business ideas”.
- “Integration will be different”.
- “The exchange of experience will be reduced”.
- “Self-improvement will be fundamental”.
- “Communication will be pass only vocally and not by body message”.
- “Increase of the risk and its perception”.
- “the soft skills will be different in the future”.
- “Introduction of new competencies”.

3.5.3. Survey conclusions

The interviewed group were VET teachers and educators from Italy. The survey highlighted that their target students have an average age of over 25 years (57%) and between 18 and 25 years old (17%). In Italy private and public class academies mainly implement traditional teaching methods, namely classroom-based teaching.

Design and fashion, probably also linked to the history of Italy, are the activities that have a big reputation and there is a high training demand. There are fashion houses in Italy that have internally dedicated academies to luxury and fashion. The business and research of entrepreneurship is also a rapidly growing field in Italy.

Creativity and teamwork are the activities mainly taught, but to date, it remains clear that involvement and commitment are also elements that trainers consider essential in the growth path of artisans.

From the analyses, the trainers have identified core activities that their students must learn and master. 84% of trainers use more than 50% of their teaching time in these activities.

On question 9 "What importance do you attribute to the instilling of those skills in your courses?" it is shown that all the activities taught in a transversal way. This reflects that it is considered important that the craftsmen have more and more entrepreneurial skills, and that it is the only way to survive in a global market.

Question 10, on teaching methods, highlights the teaching method for the various activities. What turns out is that team or classroom teaching are mostly used in Italy. The classic team or classroom methods are traditional methods and difficult to replace with online courses and that the interaction between multiple students is a teaching method that supports activities.

From the educators' advice for self-development, it's clear that the goal of educators' personal development is to never stop, learn to be curious, get informed and understand the market and the thinking of tomorrow. The educator feels like an entrepreneur for the artisans they educate.

Most educators use online tools primarily to stay informed and not lose touch with the global world.

Finally, as previously answered, educators find all aspects of the business important so that artisans can remain competitive in an increasingly global and complicated market. Answer 15 confirms everything previously said and analysed.

The answer to the question "What is the minimum level that students should achieve in those fields to become a successful crafts entrepreneur" shows that it is necessary to have high-level skills to compete on the market. Mainly being an expert in managerial and business skills is decisive for them. The attention of educators is also on the passion, perseverance, and involvement that one must have to do business and be an entrepreneur. Being craftsmen is a mission and as such, it takes a lot of spirit of sacrifice and passion for what is done.

The current pandemic has in fact changed our habits; educators, as well as artisans, are aware that there will be more activities done online and less personal interaction. A new way to transfer emotion, passion and creativity through the web world should be analysed.

4. Research among business

The aim of the research among businesses is to identify what skills and attitudes are needed to be successful craft entrepreneur today and to provide the tips for business development education for VET educators and for (future) crafts entrepreneurs. The results of this research, as for the research done among the educators, will enable our partnership developing a specific training course that answer craft sector expectations while filling eventual training gaps observed.

Each country has organised 2 focus groups with participation of at least 5 participants each, representing crafts business world and conduct with them 10 in-depth interviews.

The focus group could be organised online or in-person, depending on the COVID-19 restrictions that apply in each country. In case of online focus group, each partner was free to use the most convenient tool for him, Skype, Zoom, Teams or any other web application. It is not mandatory to record the session, but partners were free to do so if they wished to transcript the discussions. In this case, they should make sure to inform adequately the participants about the recording and confidentiality rules, as well as the use of data. In any case, partners made screen shots as proof that the event took place.

4.1 GREECE

On the framework of the StartCraft program, two focus groups were organized by ZOOM and Messenger App with the partner organization KAINOTOMIA.

The duration of the meetings was about two hours. In these meetings, the representatives of KAINOTOMIA took notes on the different discussions and topics, in order to develop this document.

Note: A questionnaire was distributed to a craftsman who was unable to participate in the focus groups due to his workload.

4.1.1. Focus group 1.

1. Please introduce yourself:

C.G. is a craft entrepreneur who is working on handmade pastry sheets and pies and has 25 years of experience in that craft field. His goal is to produce products of high quality and satisfy his clients. You can learn more about his business here: <http://www.pigitoufyllou.gr/>.

G.G. is an experienced craft entrepreneur, who is working on wood constructions and he admitted to us that his field faces some difficulties due to the pandemic.

E.T. is a woman craft entrepreneur on products related to kids' needs, such as clothing, accessories, or products for their room. She has been doing crafts for the last 10 years, but in the last 6, she has been working on a more official and professional level. The website of her business is: <https://fromscratchstore.gr/>

M.R. is an entrepreneur in food crafting. She has been active for almost 30 years in the production of handmade puff pastries.

A.L. is an experienced cheese producer and he is running his business since 2000.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from:

C.G. told us that his activity with the production of pastry sheets and pies accrued accidentally and crafting did not have any relevance to his previous profession. Similarly, M.R. admitted that the business she is running was created by her father. After his death, she continued the management of his business, but as time was passing, she started loving the job. G.G. and A.L. told us that their fathers have started running their businesses and they are the continuators of the work.

Finally, Ms Eygenia Triantafillou studied Greek philology, but she was always interested in crafting. Her entrepreneurial need accrued since the moment she became a mother. She felt that she had to create unique products for kids with the best materials.

3. Please tell us about your business history:

M.R. and C.G. did not have previous experience in their field. As a result, they had to explore the world of craft entrepreneurship. In particular, C.G. was involved in the crafts field quite accidentally. But as he began to have some experience, he created not only his business but also won three patents for his products. M.R. did not have any experience and neither a business plan, so she faced a lot of difficulties when she started, not only internal difficulties, regarding the management of the business, but also external, as she could not find suitable partners to collaborate with. G.G. and A.L. told us that they knew already the basics to start working on wood constructions and cheese production since it was a family business and family tradition that they were called to follow and develop.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business? Tell us about eventual previous failure. Please list the main obstacle faced. How could have some of those be avoided? Could a better training have helped you?

Many participants agreed that the lack of experience was the main difficulty that they faced in their first steps. Lack of experience created obstacles in internal and external procedures. Another difficulty they faced was related to paperwork that Greek agencies require in order to operate legally your business. However, all participants agreed that despite the difficulties that arose, their love for crafting was the best motivation to find persevere and seek answers and solutions. According to C.G. "Failure can make you better! One of the main skills that an entrepreneur should definitely have is risk tolerance and management!" He narrated a story that took place years ago regarding the establishment of one business in a central area of Thessaloniki. Despite the central and bustling position of his business, his sales were telling a different story. He stated: "It is not only about the strategic position; is about knowing the audience you are targeting and examining every possible factor that may affect your business efficiency and performance."

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

In this question, M.R. and C.G. said that they did not have any skills or knowledge about their profession. Besides the lack of knowledge they had, they tried, and they quickly learn the process of creating food products. All participants agreed that they did not have the skills or knowledge they have today, but with time they have been getting more and more professional. C.G. when asked regarding mistakes he made at the start of his career he said: “I made a lot of mistakes. I did not have the experience to choose the correct city to open my business. After some failures, I started noticing how the labour market works”.

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why? Examples: General / basic entrepreneurship skills, General / basic managerial skills, Creativity and creative thinking, Teamwork, Leadership, Problem Solving, Negotiation, Time Management, Business model development, Financial literacy, Marketing, Intellectual Property Rights...Any other?

E.T. stated: “In our job you have to be the thinker, the designer, the promoter, the manager. Basically, you must cover every possible position that is required to a craft business”. After her intervention, all entrepreneurs agreed that being a craft entrepreneur demands multiple roles and a wide range of skills if someone wants to be a successful craft entrepreneur. A combination of soft and hard skills is required in the case of crafting. All the above-mentioned soft skills are required for a craft entrepreneur, according to our participants.

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields? Think about your own case and the education that you received, but also at your colleagues and other experiences that you might have seen.

All participants agreed that there is not enough entrepreneurial education in Greece. As a result, our participants did not have the adequate knowledge to face entrepreneurial challenges that accrued. Instead, they tried to learn by themselves and explore the entrepreneurial world step by step. During the discussion, E.T. made a clear comparison between Greek entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial education abroad, emphasizing the great lack of entrepreneurial education in Greece. Moreover, C.G. told us that he was taught by an experienced pastry sheet producer and afterwards, he was self-taught. None of our participants had studied something relevant to their current profession. M.R. stated that “Parents in Greece are afraid to promote crafting and arts. They rather promote other professions as they believe that the other professions have a greater economic stability.”

8. Do you do anything to update your skills? If yes, with which tools, which format, formal or non-formal...? Do you use online training offers? How and for what kind of contents? What is your degree of familiarity with e-learning methods?

Our participants agreed that they follow non-formal educational training to update their skills and stay in touch with the labour's flow. C.G. said that he attends food exhibitions in order to be informed and exchange ideas with other professionals in the food production sector. Similarly, G.G. told us that he is constantly watching over the release of new machines that will help his work. E.T. stated that she uses social networks as a way of inspiration. Internet in general and platforms such as Youtube, provide her inspiration and keep her in touch with new releases. Finally, M.R. underlined the importance of constant learning and said that for her the best way to update her skills is by travelling to exhibitions abroad.

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

This question started a long discussion, as all participants in the craft sector felt the negative impact of the pandemic on their businesses. C.G. referred to the sudden closure of the labour market due to COVID-19, the fact that has affected in a negative way business, as he was ready to export his products to other European countries. Besides the apparent difficulties, C.G. stated clearly "If you can create innovative products and have unique ideas, you will recover from the crisis. The psychological impact of this situation is significant, but I feel happy in my job. We have to be adaptable to new challenges and patient, as we are small scale entrepreneurs". G.G. had a different point of view and told us that his business covers the needs of other bigger wood construction businesses and thus, they must be quick and consistent towards their partners. E.T. has emphasized that in this context of the pandemic, she, as a craft entrepreneur for kid products, can easily find material in order to create products. The big difference is that she cannot see and feel the materials. She said: "Photos cannot display in a realistic texture and colour of a fabric." The last two participants, M.R. and A.L. told us that the pandemic has not affected their businesses, as food needs do not stop, even in this context.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

The answers to that question had a common base. All participants said that willingness to be better and to develop new skills is the key to success. "Crafting", as A.L. said, "is a way to express your thoughts. Patience and persistence are two significant merits that a craft entrepreneur should have". "Love for creating new products that make you and your clients happy, is the goal of craft entrepreneurship", claimed M.R.

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you? In terms of format (online, classroom), dedication, allocated time...In terms of competences addressed: what specific skills should it include?

Regarding this question, our participants answered from a different point of view. More analytically, C.G., G.G. and A.L. agreed that evaluation from an early age to discover talents and interests is tremendously important. Moreover, all interviewees agreed that a lesson regarding vocational guidance is to consider it as essential so students will be aware of their career options. Moreover, all participants said that it would be helpful for young people to be trained on entrepreneurial skills,

both on a theoretical and practical basis. We completed our question with a unanimous agreement on the importance of similar discussions among entrepreneurs from different fields, in which they could exchange ideas and be informed about the situation in other craft fields. Finally, M.R. said that it is important to be provided opportunities of learning from experienced entrepreneurs who can transfer all their knowledge to young people. She also said that seminars and open days of art and crafts would be essential to cultivate the entrepreneurial passion of young people.

4.1.2. Deep interviews.

1. If you had a final piece of advice to someone just starting out, what would it be?

C.G.: “Be a hard worker, do not stop to try, overcome and learn from your failures and you will succeed”.

E.T.: “You need eternal love for crafting if you want to succeed”.

M.R.: “Be patient, because success takes time”.

G.G.: “Be creative and make your dreams a reality”.

A.L.: “Set a goal, create your path, work hard and you will succeed”.

4.1.3. Focus group 2.

1. Please introduce yourself:

Ms S.M. is a young Craft entrepreneur who is creating natural products such as handmade soaps and cosmetics with natural ingredients. She started 4 years ago at an amateur level, but now she is ready to open her own crafts business.

Ms C.P. is a woman Craft entrepreneur who is working on handmade jewellery and oil painting on wood. Crafting was an escape from her disability, makes her feel complete and happy.

Ms E.T. is a young aspiring entrepreneur who is currently studying and working on fashion design and textiles processing in London. She has also designed her own bag collection.

Ms I.C. is a woman Craft entrepreneur who is creating handmade jewellery. From an early age, she loved crafts and drawing. She has also created handmade jewellery from clay. (<https://www.facebook.com/Jofairytales.gr>, <https://jofairytales.gr/>)

Ms D.T. is a young aspiring craft entrepreneur who is working as an amateur photographer. Photography is her passion and started from an early age to take photos with her Polaroid.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from (Was it passion for the technical aspects of your crafts field, for the business aspect...? Did you learn it from school, family, friends...?)

Most participants said that crafting was an internal passion from an early age. They wanted to put into practice their creativity skills by testing several forms of arts and most of the participants started

their occupation in crafts as a hobby. Their initial idea was to create something new. This idea was transformed at a later stage to the willingness to be a craft entrepreneur. Ms C.P. started doing crafts to relax and take her mind off her disability. She stated: “While I am designing and giving figure to my jewellery, it is the best feeling in the world. I am not feeling disabled anymore, on the contrary, it gives me superpowers!”

3. Please tell us about your business history.

Ms C.P. has studied their craft field in public and institution and gained both theoretical and practical knowledge. Currently, she is working in a semi-professional condition mostly through her Facebook page. Ms E.T. is currently studying in London in the field of leather and textile design. She has designed her own collection of bags under the framework of her university, and she is looking forward to launching her own business as a professional fashion designer. Ms S.M. has studied Biology and gained only theoretical knowledge in university regarding ingredients used in natural cosmetics, but her true passion overcame her lack of practical knowledge and thus, she started experimenting on her own and we are talking today about the forthcoming launch of her own business. Ms I.C. gained all the useful knowledge and techniques of the art of craft jewellery during her job in a store with handmade jewellery and beads. She worked there for almost 20 years and when she saved the necessary money, she started with her own business which is still in an online state (e-shop). D.T. is totally self-taught and was constantly searching for ways to expand her capacities in crafts. All participants, except D.T., who is an amateur photographer, told us that it is necessary to have at least a small funding to start a business.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

All the participants answered that the main problem they faced as they tried to start their craft business was the enormous and never-ending paperwork that they had to follow in order to operate officially their businesses. This procedure cost them time and their psychological balance, as they felt anxious and had to wait for a long time to proceed. Moreover, some of the participants had to face some other obstacles apart from the bureaucratic ones. According to Ms S.M., physical difficulties put some time ago a comma to her craft inner passion, but luckily, she came back stronger and even more passionate waiting for the formal functioning of her business. According to Ms C.P., her disability was a significant obstacle due to her mobility issues.

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

Most participants were self-taught, except for two participants (Ms C.P. and Ms E.T.), who studied or are studying in the crafts field. Moreover, two of the participants (Ms S.M. and Ms D.T.) have joined seminars regarding entrepreneurship and basic steps to become an entrepreneur. The majority of participants do not have an institutional education relevant to entrepreneurship, but they tried to learn by themselves everything needed in their field. Ms I.C. stated: “Of course, it is important to have theoretical knowledge, however in my field, everything is about practising, being creative and open-minded. It is also important to be open to new methods and techniques, and with this easy access to the internet there are several opportunities out there for further training and new ideas!”

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed in order for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why?_Examples: General / basic entrepreneurship skills, General / basic managerial skills, Creativity and creative thinking, Teamwork, Leadership, Problem Solving, Negotiation, Time Management, Business model development, Financial literacy, Marketing, Intellectual Property Rights...Any other?

All participants agreed that the skills are important to someone who wants to be a craft entrepreneur. Furthermore, they added that love and passion for the subject of interest is the best motivation to start your own business. Interviewees made clear that having targets and setting self-goals for their businesses, being social, open to people, patient, being creative, being absorbed by their craft field, and inspired by every little thing, are some of the most important motivations in order to meet success.

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

All participants agreed that Greece lacks entrepreneurial education and only students who are determined to be entrepreneurs follow this educational path and gain entrepreneurial knowledge. The lack of entrepreneurial training from an early age and relatively little education on entrepreneurship in schools are the most common referred problems that the Greek educational system faces. These lacks affect young people, as they are not aware of the options they have in entrepreneurship, as it appears as a pretty much distant, difficult, and unachievable future career choice.

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

The majority of participants told us that they try to participate in seminars. Ms S.M. has participated in a seminar regarding entrepreneurship, Ms D.T. joined a seminar on creative photography and Ms E.T. is visiting several galleries and fashion studios in order to get inspired, expand her horizons and create innovative and way-out collections.

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

In this question, the answers were divided, as two of the participants told us that the pandemic has affected in a positive way their field. Ms S.M. and Ms E.T. noticed an increase in the number of selling products in their fields. On the other hand, the other three participants concluded that COVID-19 has a great negative impact on their craft field as they have been affected both economically and psychologically.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

All participants when asked this question said to result-oriented, persistent, patience, love for crafting and continuous inspiration that can come from little things in life. One of them has stated:

“It is important to love what you do and do it with passion, doing so, you will never have to “work” not a single day in your life!”

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you? In terms of format (online, classroom), dedication, allocated time...In terms of competences addressed: what specific skills should it include?

The five interviewed craft entrepreneurs agreed that theoretical and practical education would be a perfect combination to get familiar with a specific craft sector. According to what they said, they would prefer face to face training instead of online classes since some craft sectors are demanding in-person attendance to have access to equipment material, textiles etc. As they highlight, it is also important to devote some time to exercise and develop some soft skills such as creativity, thinking outside the box, creative problem solving, but the most important is the everyday practice and tests. According to Ms C.P.: “There is no way to fail in your field if you are devoting at least one hour of your day to practice and try new things!”

4.1.4. Deep interviews.

1. What are some of the mistakes you wished you could have avoided when you started your business?

The lack of experience has sometimes led participants to mistakes, especially during their first steps. Wrong decisions regarding economic issues and rush moves had both economic and psychological impact on them.

2. If you had a final piece of advice to someone just starting out, what would it be?

Ms S.M.: “Love what you do with all your heart and be consistent towards yourself and your clients!”

Ms C.P.: “Love for your job, have faith, be persistent and patient and you will meet success!”

Ms E.T.: “Be true, be you! Express yourself and stand out!”

Ms I.C.: “Believe in yourself and expand your capacities in every way!”

Ms D.T.: “Capture moments and get inspired from them! Never stop dreaming and following your dreams!”

4.1.5. Summary of the focus groups.

To sum up, for most of the participants craft sector started out as a hobby, for others it came to their life inevitable, as a combination of luck and timing. For some, it was a family affair that they were somehow “obligated” to follow to continue the family tradition and to reassure a certain income and their general economic stability. But all these different circumstances and aspects were met under a common and unanimous conclusion. All participants are extremely passionate and in love with their craft sector. Even the ones that followed their family tradition, as the time was passing by, they embraced it, developed it and continue doing so till today!

There have been many difficulties faced by many of the craft entrepreneurs that participated in our focus groups. The Greek bureaucracy, the increased competition, the lack of sufficient funds, are among the main obstacles that they had to surpass to make their passion and dream, their profession. All focus group participants believe that it is important to be persistent and focused on your goal and for most of them it is crucial that you always seek for new methods, new techniques, and new inspirations in order to enhance your creativity and be enriched with new knowledge and perspectives. Craft sector is about creativity and thinking outside the box.

The interviews highlighted the lack of sufficient entrepreneurial training and awareness especially at school. Young people are not aware of the entrepreneurial possibilities that exist and often perceive entrepreneurship as an unapproachable and infeasible career choice. The entrepreneurial teaching as well as trainings based on first-hand experience and work-based learning processes along with the reinforcement of entrepreneurial collaboration between youth and experienced entrepreneurs, should be encouraged and supported by all relevant educational and governmental actors.

4.2 SPAIN

On the framework of the StartCraft program, two discussion groups were organized. The first was organized on January 28, 2021, via the ZOOM platform with the partner organization MEUS. The event started at 1:00 p.m. and ended around 2:30 p.m. MEUS hosted the event with the help of two European project managers, Clara Brotons (main host) and Pilar Aguado (co-host).

The second took place on January 29, 2021, via the ZOOM platform with the partner organization InnoHub. The event started at 11:00 a.m. and ended around 1:30 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 12:15 p.m. Valencia InnoHub hosted the event with the help of two European project managers, Ruben Laguna (main host) and Carolina Sorribes (co-host).

In order to make the most of the participants' time, focus groups and more in-depth interviews were conducted at the same time. The focus group were recorded with the approval of all participants, and the event co-hosts took notes on the various discussions and topics during the event, to develop this document.

4.2.1. Focus group 1.

1. Please introduce yourself:

M.A. Craft accessories. Owner of “Maró Handmade”, specialised in handmade accessories created by M.A. 23 years old, she studied Economics at the University of Valencia, and she did an entrepreneurship course at the university.

R.M. Craft shoes. Owner of “Timpers”, craft sneakers produced by blind people. 26 years old. He studied 3-year civil engineering but then changed his studies to Business Management.

A.B. Homemade desserts. Owner of “En el Bote”, a shop specialised in cookies and pastries, 26 years old, she studied Public relations and loves cooking desserts.

A.S. 31 years old, she studied fashion design at EASE (Valencia) Owner of “Aleste Atelier”, a personal craft bride sewing workshop.

L.F. Upcycling clothes. Owner of “Deleiteware”, sewing upcycling clothes workshop. 24 years old, she studied fashion design at the Polytechnic University of Madrid, is now doing a master's degree at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia on textile engineering.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from.

Each participant explained a little bit of her/his story with crafts.

L.F. started the conversation by saying that her interest in becoming an entrepreneur comes from her family, her grandmother was a tailoring teacher, so sewing and creativity comes from her home. Like seeing her mother and grandmother sew different dresses and garments, and entrepreneurship she always liked it. Additionally, as she has collaborated with social actions, she brought that in her company. All the workshops are for social inclusion.

A.B. started the business 2 years and a half ago when she saw the opportunity to create a business based on her hobby: cooking desserts. She discovered it when she was studying abroad.

M.A.'s parents have a clothing repair workshop, and she has always spent time there and create her own things as a hobby, and she started the company to make a living of her hobby.

R.M. has always had an entrepreneurial group and move a lot in the social entrepreneurship environment. His interest begun because Alicante is the cradle of footwear, we knew someone who could help him create his own shoe with letters for the blind people.

A.S., from an early age, she knew what she wanted to do. She started making guest dresses among family and friends, and little by little it increased. She rented a small place, with the idea of making guest dresses by size but then she changed her business idea and started to make all dresses tailored and personalized for each client. Her interest in entrepreneurship comes out of need because although she studied design and knew that she wanted to be a dress maker, she also has several children and she needed to work on her own to be able to combine her work and family life. She has not only focused on the tailormade business, but she has also succeeded to adapt both her professional and personal lives.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

Most of the participants agreed that they were looking for an opportunity to create a little business where they could apply their knowledge and techniques, loving what they do in their businesses.

L.F. Deleitewear is a brand of clothes that do not consume new fabrics but reuse second-hand fabrics to avoid textile waste and its derived contamination. The company began during the lockdown for COVID-19. During the quarantine, all the opportunities came together for her: having time and the opportunity to create her own brand. With upcycling, she saw that she could contribute to change and up circular solutions. She started with the lean canvas method and with tests. The first sales channels have been the web and Instagram.

A.B. She started the business "En el Bote" 2 years and a half ago when she saw the opportunity to create a business based on her hobby: cooking desserts. She created an online website, but it was difficult at the beginning because clients did not trust on the quality of the product. Once she opened the shop and started participating in the different fairs, the sales on the online shop increased. During quarantine, her business worked very well because people bought numerous jars of prepared cookies.

M.A. Maró Handmade: costume jewellery, clothes, accessories. She combines this activity with her work. Her parents have a clothing repair workshop where she used to spend time there and used to make her own things as a hobby. Then she set up the company to make her hobby her make of living.

R.M. Timbers is a footwear company with Valencian production made by blind people. They started with the idea in 2017. The first production started in 2018, with a collaboration with ONCE (National Organization of Spanish blind people), while working and studying Then they were accepted at the accelerator Lanzadera in May 2019. There was a "before and after" accelerator for the team of Timbers at the business knowledge level, increasing sales considerably reaching 1500 pairs of shoes sold. In his case, COVID has affected sales, but not as much as it was expected.

A.S. started 6 years ago. For 3 years she has specialized in wedding dresses thanks to her own experience creating her own wedding dress. She offers her clients the personalized haute couture experience at more affordable prices. Her sales channel is face-to-face, and her advertising channel has been Instagram and a communication agency that has helped her sharing her work with companies and magazines.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

All participants found some difficulties to launch their business when they were starting: no business experience, time, focus etc.

L.F.'s main obstacles were lack of time because at the same time she was studying to improve the skills that she had not developed yet. And the other obstacle was that her partner is her mother, but she always had a lack of human resources and time. The funding for the moment has been on its own.

The main problem for A.B. was to improve trust in online clients. "That people trust on you at fairs was easy, but online it was overly complicated, and nothing worked" because they do not know she and her product. When she opened her store is when online sales improved a lot. Another difficulty was found once she opened the shop: calculating how many cookies to prepare per day and finding clients.

M.A. considers that her main problem to create her own production line, as her product does not use specific fabrics. She does not have a single supplier; she uses a lot of materials that she recycles from her parents' workshop.

The initial problems for R.M. were in terms of production. "So that we want good quality on the product the suppliers didn't meet the quality levels that we wanted". Another obstacle was the initial investment, for that reason they have spent 2 years reinvesting everything they earned to avoid external funding.

The problems that A.S. had been finding dressmakers, as there are many old people specialized in clothing in Valencia. The biggest obstacle was creating a team because they were searching for dressmakers with a lot of experience and there are few specialized in bridal wear. Another obstacle the raw materials to make sustainable wedding dresses and textile recycling were hard to find. When they created a sustainable collection with recycled fabrics and organic fabrics, they realized the lack of organic and recycled raw material, as they didn't find it in Spain they had to search for suppliers in France.

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

Most of the participants hold training education related to their business.

L.F., studied fashion design at the Polytechnic University of Madrid, now she is following a master's degree at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in textile engineering to improve her knowledge

related to this part of the business. She developed and learned about her creativity and fashion in her bachelors but not about engineering and how to produce her clothes.

A.B. studied public relations degree, but when she was on her year abroad, she had to follow some courses related to cooking, and there she started to prepare cookies.

M.A. studied Economics at the University of Valencia, and she also followed an entrepreneurship course at the university.

R.M. studied business administration but he considers when he started his studies at the Lanzadera Accelerator, is when he really learned about business.

A.S. studied fashion design in EASE. She had didn't receive any entrepreneurial training before starting her business. She has grown and learned through trial and error, due to her lack of business training. She had to learn the hard way, learning by doing. "You waste more time doing the other way around, it would have been necessary to have trained before, but it turned out that way".

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why?

After discussing this point, participants agreed that there is a common skill to develop in every business, as business model development, financial literacy, management etc. But others are also needed, soft skills like creativity, creative thinking, teamwork etc...They highlighted creativity as the basis of a craft business.

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

All participants highlighted that there is no entrepreneurial and business training within the creative academic training: as in fashion. Even those who followed business administration studies, consider that what they studied was not especially useful.

They need to practice; they need to go to visit companies. In the education system, there should be much more practice. Everyone is involved in the circularity and sustainability of their businesses.

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

Most of the participants tried to update their skills in one way or another, master's degrees, MBA, learning by doing, etc... Usually, via online training to combine their business with training. In the case of R.M., he is learning directly in the accelerator process in Lanzadera. He said that it was as to start a new business with a high level of impact on knowledge.

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

The COVID 19 affected participants in different ways, for some of them it was an opportunity to grow as in the case of A.B. For others, with the lockdown the sales went down.

R.M. said “I think digitization will have to be promoted. Today it is essential to be on social networks and sell online. The way you reach the customer has changed.”

M.A. replied “I think that it is not about skills, just the way of doing things. Obviously, skills are going to influence the way of reaching the consumer; but the craft skills needed, I think, will be the same. It is true that now it is essential to know the online sales channel very well, etc. but not only because of COVID but because the needs of the population changed due to digitalization.”

A.S. agreed with R.M. “Digitization is crucial, the need to be online, web etc. no matter how good artisan you are and how good in the product, if they don't know that you exist it is useless”.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

The discussion started with the fact that there is no business training in the different creative degrees and courses. Most of the participants have learned on their own, by doing. In the case of R.M., he is learning a lot during his accelerator phase in Lanzadera.

They agreed that you must be constantly self-developing, learning different business skills like the ones mentioned in the question. You, your creative product, new materials, etc. Circularity and sustainability in this sector are crucial, and of course.

R.M. likes to attend lectures and training by other entrepreneurs and read books related to business. M.A. likes to follow conferences on marketing, commerce, etc. because she believes that training should be constantly updated. "The world is in motion and if you are not, you are left behind. You never know enough about something and you are never too good not to learn more". She signs up for online workshops and training for the chair of business culture at the University of Valencia, the Chamber of Commerce, some online webinars, etc. "I always try to improve languages in my spare time since it is something fundamental".

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

Participants agreed that at the current stage of their projects, any training that allows them to continue working and directly applying the knowledge acquired in their business may be interesting. Generally, online training allows that.

R.M. said “For me, the ideal training should be very practical and focused on the experiences of entrepreneurs who have gone through the same problems that you are facing. I think the theory is important but seeing yourself reflected in the person in front of you is more important.”

However, for M.A. “the ideal training would be face-to-face but that could be combined with work, since I personally cannot afford to spend time training without working. The skills to be included could be all those discussed in point one but with practical cases that allow the student the possibility of applying it in their business.”

4.2.2. Deep interviews.

1.- In your experience, what social skills are needed for someone to start running their own business? Why?

R.M. said “I think it takes a lot of commitment and a lot of perseverance. Entrepreneurship is a long-distance race, not a 100-meter sprint. It is also vital to know how to work as a team, be decisive and be aware of the great responsibility you have”.

L.F. considers that “Above all, soft skills are important although those are not specific. Additionally, attitude is important too, being able to solve problems, being decisive, having social skills to create

collaborations and partnership. Then it is also important concrete knowledge of how to register a trademark, the roles in a company. When the company is growing, leadership is necessary, because you are working with more people and the whole organization. This last skill is crucial even if you are alone.”

Under M.A. criteria “I consider the personal initiative very important, wanting to learn more about “what it takes”, having ambition and opening up new horizons for yourself. I would say that it is essential to participate in projects external to what your career is. Leadership skills, teamwork, knowing how to delegate, take advantage of the resources one has ... and mainly identify problems and seek solutions to them, is essential. Also, to be decisive. Other concepts such as the ability to negotiate, development of business models, property rights, etc. can be acquired later or delegated to another person with who you can associate. I see it as something important but minor.”

2.- What are, in your opinion, the strengths and weaknesses in the training you give about business in careers or vocational training modules (FP) related to crafts?

M.A. said that she didn't know much about the knowledge that is taught in VET courses, but she said that “the strength of VET is that the training tends to be technical and abstract, but it never becomes useful and should be more in the daily management of a company, or things much more applicable on the day-to-day management. The weakness is that they do not prepare you to go directly to the market. We all think that before we need to go through an employee job to really learn how things are managed in the real world.”

R.M. considers “Current training is very theoretical and not very practical. Most of what I know today is because I have launched my own project and I was hanging out with people who know more than I do. During my studies, we hardly analysed practical cases and we did not have the opportunity to visit the companies in the province. I also believe that education should be updated to the technology we have today. During my studies, I took four accounting subjects, we were collecting accounting information on paper. To this day, after three years as an entrepreneur, I have never seen accounting management on paper”.

In the case of L.F. studies “In my case, I followed a bachelor’s degree in fashion design - but it can also apply to any artistic career- I see that the biggest failure is that those studies are very focused on developing a single more creative profile, and they only teach you creation”.

3.- How would you describe the teaching of skills / attitudes provided by the Spanish educational system regarding the preparation of young people who specialize in entrepreneurship?

From M.A.'s point of view “You learn about entrepreneurship by experiencing yourself, or you sell (with a profit that allows you to grow) or you have problems. The skills that entrepreneurs need are many: resilience, nonconformity, ambition, perfection for all areas of a business, knowing how to put yourself in the mind of the consumer ...”

R.M. considers that the Spanish educational system is not good, “If you can afford a good business school, you can receive a good education. But with limited resources, you have to strive to receive a particularly good education, you have to choose different areas, as it is difficult to receive it in one only place. Personally, I also consider that education is important but that you learn much more by

practice, and that there are skills that cannot be taught in a classroom. So, it is essential to do internships, to contact with other entrepreneurs, networking, attend congresses ...”

L.F. during her studies she had a marketing and business model subject. “But above all, it would have been good to have support in business training. Although it is true, that creative students' mentality is not interested in it. They only wanted to know about the creative sector and not about entrepreneurship. There should be a distinction within these profiles to further support the training of those who want to develop their business idea in the future”.

4.- Suppose you have had a conversation with an educator who works in the field of teaching entrepreneurship for future artisan entrepreneurs, what would you advise him to teach considering the skills and knowledge required to be an entrepreneur? Suppose you had a conversation with an educator who works in the field of teaching entrepreneurship for future artisan entrepreneurs, what would you advise him to teach considering the skills and knowledge that are required to be an entrepreneur?

At this point, M.A. said, “I would advise you to include a lot of practical activities and get very involved in the projects your students have in mind. Because when they believe in you and tell you how much you could do, everything is easier.”

R.M. would advise “Have a passion for what you do and invite people who have experience in entrepreneurship to your training. I would also like the educators to advise readings related entrepreneurship”.

5.- If you had one last tip for someone starting their business, what would it be?

L.F. advice is “know how to think with a different perspective, take care of yourself and be organized, setting limits to avoid burning yourself.”

R.M. said “You learn by falling and getting up, and you have to dedicate many extra hours to what you are really passionate about to make it work. As you have seen on my website, I always say that the best you can do is do what you like and even more if it makes others enjoy it. There is also a sentence from the founder of Facebook that I really like that says: “When I started, I was 19 years old and I didn't know much about business at that time, but I started...” It is something that motivates me because you can start and learn little by little. But starting is the key, it will never be easy, nor you will have everything under control, but it pays off, it's worth it.”

4.2.3. Focus group 2.

1. Please introduce yourself:

V.P.: Craft entrepreneur. Specialised mainly in two sectors: traditional Valencian costumes (“Fallas”) and furniture restoration, as well as providing workshops and training. Valencian Community recently awarded her as “Dona ArtesA.B. 2030” for her professional career.

C.M.: Craft entrepreneur. Macrame confection and fashion designer. Currently finishing her studies on fine arts.

A.N.: Craft entrepreneur. Over 6 years of experience making craft clothes and other accessories by hand. Industrial dressmaking degree.

M.A.: Fine arts student, with a special interest in becoming an entrepreneur.

M.J.: Fine arts student, with a special interest in becoming an entrepreneur.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from.

Each participant explained a little bit about her/his story with crafts. M.J. started the conversation, explaining that since he was a kid, he loved drawing and creating little pieces of wood together with his grandfather, who runs a small furniture restoration workshop where he used to repair not only furniture but other pieces. He started helping him professionally when he was 17 years old, and he is planning to keep running his grandfather workshop when he finishes his studies on fine arts.

C.M. explained that she was studying fine arts at the Technical University of Valencia and started with macrame as a hobby. However, personal contacts, relatives and friends started to appreciate her work and ordered several pieces. In the beginning, she only asked for the money spent on the raw materials, but then she increased the price to 10€ for each piece. She keeps doing it nowadays.

M.A. is also finishing her studies in fine arts at the Technical University of Valencia. She is specialised in paintings and restoration. She restores old photos and paintings for relatives and friends for free. She sometimes helps her uncle, who paints houses and buildings to earn some money from it. She is planning to begin an entrepreneurial adventure in this sector when she finishes her studies.

V.P. has an interesting professional path. She is a well-known Valencian “fallera” artist and restores furniture. However, nowadays she is focused on providing workshops, training, and promotion of this crafts sector. She was awarded as “Dona Artes A.B. 2030” by the Valencian Community, recognising her fruitful career.

Finally, A.N. has been working for the past 6 years in the clothing and accessories industry as a self-employee. She is also specialised in “Fallera” regional costumes.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

Most of the participants agreed that they were looking for an opportunity to create a small business where they could apply their knowledge and techniques. They love what they do, each one in his/her respective field, and making a living from it, is like a dream come true. A.N. stated that a great push to start was her personal network and “word-to-mouth”, reaching people who appreciated her work.

V.P. said that she was lucky enough to find a very specific product that did not exist, although it was difficult, it was developed during an economic expansion time. Then she passed from the production of costumes to the promotion and diffusion. Nowadays her main product is to organise training and/or workshops.

Other participants stated that currently, they are not able of conducting their activity professionally and make a living from it, but that is their future objective.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

Participants agreed that nowadays there is a big amount of offer and competition, therefore the initial push that you must make in order to launch your career is bigger. “Lack of sales outlets. There are no strong associative networks... Search for products that combine technical and artistic excellence as well as something functional. To enter 100% into the sustainability to attract loyal customers... those were the most difficult obstacles” stated V.P.

All participants agreed that our country has expensive costs and taxes for self-employers (the most expensive ones in the EU), which is a big obstacle for aspiring entrepreneurs to begin their activity. “There are costs associated with your activity: you have to pay a rent for the premises, raw materials, electricity, water, a huge amount of taxes... it is a nightmare, honestly” stated M.J.

“Once you overcome that barrier, it is true that you can start to enjoy your activity a little bit more. However, it is completely true that our country is hell regarding taxes (laughs) (...) For most handcrafts it is necessary to make a large financial expenditure for materials and not everyone has that kind of solvency”. Stated A.N.

“Well, the key is not to simply start, but to find an added value to your product or to make it stand out from what already exists. I advise analysing the sales channels before investing in production” advised V.P. to the younger ones.

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

While M.A., C.M. and M.J. are in the university yet (Fine Arts), V.P. studied geography, history, and archaeology; A.N., on the other hand, studied a fashion design degree and a higher degree in industrial pattern making and dressmaking. All of them are still acquiring knowledge and joining training courses and events concerning a wide variety of topics. “Online courses are a great choice for this”, stated A.N., while V.P. is more focused on new materials and group dynamics.

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why?

After some discussion and several examples given by the hosts, participants agreed that the key skills for any new entrepreneur in this sector are creativity, patience, time management and knowledge. “You have to find the right balance between the practical/commercial part and the artistic part of your work”, stated V.P.

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

Participants presented several questions about this topic. They were critical of the educational system of our country. “I would say that we have never been had a single subject related to entrepreneurship at university or high school. It is true that in high school you can study economics, business... but nothing related to entrepreneurship or managing a business or starting an economic activity on your own”, stated M.J. “And that’s the problem”, added V.P. “We don't even have to

focus to our sector, entrepreneurship is generally forgotten by the education system”, concluded M.A.

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

As they stated before, all of them keep on studying today. Online courses are the best option for this, and all of them agree that it is crucial to keep learning continuously.

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

All participants agreed that the pandemic has had terrible consequences to this sector. Handicrafts are mostly non-essential products and tend to be more expensive because of the time spend making them. With the pandemic, people's priorities and economic level have changed. Additionally, the closing of markets and the impossibility to hold exhibitions and fairs has led many craft businesses to disappear. For crafts, it is essential to exhibit, present new collections and have visibility in exhibitions.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

“The key in my opinion is to never stop learning. Every workshop, activity, course... that you can follow is welcome. You have to be constantly updated”, stated V.P.

A discussion started regarding the differences between university and the contents and topics that you can learn there and in the “outside” world. Participants agreed that outside of university there is a world of knowledge to discover. “It is up to you to specialise a little bit more on a certain topic, taking benefit of online courses and other stuff”, concluded A.N.

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

Participants agreed that a practical approach is always better. Topics related to entrepreneurship can be considered quite distant from the most common topics of the crafts sector.

“The problem is that at university they will teach you how to restore a piece of wood, but they will not teach you how to withhold VAT on this service to the client. Nor will they explain how to manage the taxes associated with this activity. And this is something that, although it is considered distant from our sector, should also be taught, or at least give certain resources so that we can slightly understand how it works”, stated M.A.

“And I can assure you that VAT is not really a complicated task. You just have to dedicate time to it and learn how it works slightly to avoid mistakes”, added V.P., based on her experience.

4.2.4 Deep interviews.

1. Do you work alone or with other colleagues / employees?

A.N. and C.M. stated that they work completely alone. Only A.N. considers that her approach is professional, as he makes a living from it. While C.M. approaches it like a secondary activity. On the

other hand, V.P. stated that she is a self-employee but sometimes works with apprentices in her atelier, teaching by doing. M.J. works with his grandfather.

2. What would you say is what you are most passionate about in your craft?

A.N. stated that her favourite part is the process of creating something from zero and arrive at a complete piece, while V.P. said that the attention to details and technique, as well as personalisation and direct contact with the final client. The other participants agreed.

3. Do you promote your work through social media? Or do you think that those not properly fit our needs?

Participants discuss this topic for some minutes. “Right now, I think social networks are the best way you have to show your work and reach a lot of people, although I think that word of mouth always works because when someone recommends something is because they are happy with the product or service”, states A.N. V.P. replies stating that “It depends on the product. Many colleagues work well or very well in social networks. They even survive thanks to online sales. It is remarkably interesting to enter institutional networks”.

4. What are some of the mistakes you wished you could have avoided when you started your business?

V.P. said “Maybe none(laughs). As mentioned before, it is important to know how a small business works to be able to start one. If you do not know about it, you will have a lot of headaches at the beginning and even some problems with taxes and so on”. A.N. agreed with her and recommended to the younger ones to learn a few concepts on business and taxation before starting an activity.

5. If you had a final piece of advice to someone just starting out, what would it be?

“Well, I will address directly to the young people here... do it without fear. The important thing is to properly manage your resources and time, but apart from that go ahead. It's a beautiful path and you'll meet great people along the way” stated V.P.

4.2.5. Summary of the focus groups.

- All participants strongly agree that our education system does not provide the proper tools and resources needed to help young people in their entrepreneurial paths.
- Normally, crafting entrepreneurs work as self-employees individually, without creating associations or companies.
- Crafting sector is really wide, therefore fulfilling all its needs can be quite challenging, especially taking into account the huge differences between different techniques of the sector.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has heavily affected the crafts sector in Spain. Even with preventive measures and initiatives to keep the sector alive, the damage is yet unmeasurable.
- Crafts professionals of the future are highly skilled individuals with university degrees related to arts and related to crafts since they were young. They have started their activity as a hobby before switching to a professional approach.
- Taxes for entrepreneurs and self-employees in Spain are considered high and an obstacle to starting any activity.

4.3 BELGIUM AND LUXEMBURG

On the framework of the StartCraft program, three focus groups were organized by ZOOM on the 18, 20 and 25 of January 2021 with the partner organization CámaraBelux.

In those meetings 13 artisans participated, 10 of them were from Belgium and 3 from Luxembourg.

54% of them were women and 46% were men. The participants were representatives from different levels of business development and different sectors. 15% of them were future craft entrepreneur, 46% of them had between 1 and 5 years of experience, 15% of them have between 6 and 20 years of experience, and 23% of them had more than 20 years of experience.

Below is show a table with their sector of expertise.

Sector	Nº participants
Craft beer	1
Wood	2
Carpentry and cabinetmaking	1
Painting	2
Pottery	3
Textile	4

The duration of the meetings was about 1 hour. In these meetings, the representatives of CámaraBelux took notes on the different discussions and topics, in order to develop this document.

4.3.1. Focus group 1.

1. Please introduce yourself:

A.M: She is 54 years old. She started as a full time independent on 1 January 2020, but before she was a part-time freelancer for 15 years.

Spanish ceramist living in Belgium for more than 30 years. Studied fine arts in Spain. She had quite different activities while she continued to follow the training of ceramic at the Fine Arts Academy in Liege. The sculpture has been a great part of her life during that time. She also followed training in specialization in ceramics at the academy and so she became a ceramist while having another job on the side.

C.P.: Artisan in ceramics. 49 years old. Gives workshops in ceramics to adults. "Because it gives me the opportunity to share with others and gives me so many things".

E.W.: Dutch. 49 years old. Living in Luxembourg. Ceramist. Sell in galleries and through expositions. Working for more than 20 years.

N.H.: 30 years old. Weaves and embroiders different materials. Slow creation, slow fashion. She finished her training 10 years ago, but she started her own production only 2 years ago.

P.M.: He is 50 and he continues to teach young people. A cabinetmaker by training and specialized in heritage restoration.

Y.W.: He is responsible for the centre of crafts, Spirale, composed of 57 artists and artisans from all disciplines.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from.

Most of the participants followed a crafts training. Most of them started because they had a passion for the material and the profession.

A.M.: Studied fine arts in Spain.

C.P.: “I started with ceramics 15 years ago. Because my education was not linked to it. I accidentally started with ceramics, but I loved it. I studied ceramics and sculpture in Namur, and I am a part-time freelancer. For me what is important is the fact of sharing and meeting other artisans, because I find that we all have something to share with the others.”

E.W.: She studied Law, but she always loved ceramics and painting. After finishing her studies, she decided to make ceramics her way of living.

N.H.: “I studied thread at the Haute École Francisco Ferrer (Brussels), including stitching, technical textile printing, embroidery, lace. My favourite technique during my studies was sewing, and so I specialised in that.”

P.M.: “It is a work where we are training young people on a precious profession, the heritage restoration”.

Y.W.: He is responsible for the centre of crafts.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

Only a few participants followed entrepreneurial courses, mainly offered by regional authorities that promote entrepreneurship. In those cases, they highlighted the training was too general and not adapted to the craft entrepreneur reality, needs and the added value of their pieces.

Some of the participants had a business plan before starting their projects. The ones that had it, stated that it was not very useful or only to apply for loans.

On the other hand, many participants saw business plans as a very difficult thing, and in many cases, they stated that they had the feeling that it was not adapted for craft entrepreneurs.

They repeatedly said that they started little by little without the need for a business plan.

A.M.:

When she started, she didn't have a business plan, and ceramics were not her main income. She had a full-time job.

She started very slowly and gradually bought tools and materials.

Then she became a teacher in the art school in Marche-en-Famenne. She was the art director at the ceramic department until December 2019.

She continues to teach, not in an academy but at her own studio, which is in Wallonia, close to Marche-en-Famenne.

The different full-time jobs and different pieces of training that she followed gave her the opportunity to complete her professional profile. Thanks to that she had the opportunity to become pedagogical headmaster of an arts academy.

Now ceramics is her main job. She has an online shop; she creates her products that she sells in her online shop. She also teaches about ceramic on her Youtube channel, she is active in the social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube).

She started her channel during the first lockdown because she was sad to have the possibility to see their students and share her knowledge. She thought it was a good moment to create this channel, that was in her mind for a long time.

C.P.:

“When I started, I also had another job. I was a social assistant, which was my main income. But when I decided to start, and I started to participate in expositions. I first started with Smart. It was good because they not only give advice on how to start but they also help me identify a regional grant to start. It was not huge, but it really helped me to start with the studio and gave me the opportunity to start with the workshops. Sadly, the grant that I received at that moment does not exist anymore. After that, I pass to a part-time freelancer”.

She was a part-time ceramist for 3 years, and then she became a full-time freelancer 6 years ago.

Her background is in marketing and then as a social assistant, so for her, it is more important to learn the technical part of the craft than the business management side.

For that reason, her management skills are not much developed, but for her is more important to be able to transmit her passion for ceramics, than the commercial side.

“What really helped me when I finish at the academy of fine arts, was to join a group to help me develop my network. When we are part of a group it helps. I give you the opportunity to develop a network which is important and give you the opportunity to be in contact with other artists and artisans.”

E.W.:

“When I started it was also difficult, and I had to save some money to buy the first oven. Four years ago, I bought a bigger one. Regarding the business plan, I did not have one, and it went well”.

“In Luxembourg, we have an association that is called Main de Maîtres, which not only helps us the artisans to give visibility to our work inside and outside Luxembourg but also to approach our profession to young people.

They really helped me when I started. They helped me to create a marketing strategy for my pieces and they gave me the possibility to participate in international fairs to give visibility to my work. Thanks to that I started soon to sell my pieces”.

“Of course, they also provide me a good professional network”.

N.H.:

So far, she has not been able to make a living from her craftwork and has had side jobs in the hospitality sector and as a part-time weaving teacher at the same school where she studied (Haute École Francisco Ferrer). Now she finally has the possibility to create her own weaving. She accepts orders and collaborates with stylists and interior designers (i.e., she is asked to embroider certain cushions, blankets, belts, accessories, etc.) for other professionals to sell the final product.

She focuses on keeping costs as low as possible, as her work requires time and that is her biggest investment. She has networks that allow her to access recycling and unsold stock in Belgium or from factories that shut down due to the Covid-19 crisis.

She prefers to work on demand, together with each individual client and customising the product to their demands accordingly. Additionally, she wishes to focus on making carpets, but that requires investment in time, machinery, and of course finding the potential market.

P.M.:

“I work since I was 16. When I was 30, I decided to become a freelancer and teacher in cabinetmaking in a cabinetmaking studio. And then 4 years later I had the possibility to restore a cabinet in Art Nouveau style. After that, I linked it with my previous training. Since then, I dedicated myself to heritage restoration. Because it is a really nice thing and ancestral. These are interesting gestures that we transmit, it is also a passion for conservation and for creation”.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

All the participants expressed they all find difficult to find time to successfully comply with all the different task that the business requires (creation, administration, marketing, and sales).

Some of the participants declared that the main challenges when starting their business were visibility, communication, marketing, and network creation.

Another challenge for craft artisan was pricing their pieces.

Additionally, a country-specific problem was identified as many of the participants expressed that the administrative procedures to become self-employed and to have the official artisan certificate in Belgium are difficult.

A.B.: “The workshops that I organise, and the sale of my pieces (online, in galleries, or markets) are my main income sources. Effectively 2020 was hard. But additionally, I also would like to have the opportunity to meet and share with other artisans, because our profession is very lonely. One as a creative finds itself alone most of the time, and finding others is essential to find the balance.

I also tried to create an association for plastic arts artisans, so I agree with the people in the group that it also helps to have a network not only to support each other but also to give visibility and show the importance of our profession.

What we also want is to give visibility is to the fact that there is an “Artist” status in Belgium. It matches very well for the people of the theatre and performing arts and works less well for plastic arts artisans.

It is the same obstacle that we have when we join Smart. It does not exist a solution that can be useful for all the artisans and artist, because we are different. The incomes are not similar, and the frequency is different in both cases.

In the case of artists, the commercial side is frequently delegated to a gallery. Sometimes they can sell directly to the clients, but it is less frequent.

In the case of the artisan, we sell directly to our clients and it makes a big difference. It is a completely different approach in the attitude, and in the training. The artist may not need to not about accounting, management, and business plans, while we the artisans we need to know it".

C.P.: The main obstacle for her was the price of the raw materials, which is high. Almost all the benefits from the sale of the pieces are invested again to buy more raw materials.

What really helped her is the regional grant that she got, it was thanks to Smart that she identified that grant and could apply and get the grant. Sadly, that grant does not exist anymore.

"So indeed, the financial part was an obstacle, it is difficult when you start, and it affects a lot of artisans. It is difficult to get the materials and a space to work, and I know that now there are initiatives to share spaces and materials, so young creators can benefit from it".

"Now I'm able to work from my own studio, and I own a piece of land where I get raw materials from, and it has really helped me to have the possibility to create more pieces."

"A need I identified when I started was the need to join a network because the share of experiences is really enriching, additionally through that network I found materials at good price and spaces to work with other artisans."

"I don't consider I had many obstacles or did mistakes when I started. My main rule is always following my instincts and only my instincts. Not because there is a trend, I will follow that trend. That has helped me to avoid the obstacles and mistakes".

N.H.: An issue for her is time management, she does not find enough time for training and self-development. She has identified interesting training, but it tends to be very time consuming, and she is currently not prepared to invest so much time in management and courses.

Another issue to develop is the lack of means to network, collaborate, associations, etc., as well as training in social media, marketing, communication, etc. She knows she could reach many people via social media, but she is currently focused on Instagram. However, she has not enough time to process all requests.

"I cannot dedicate much time to coaching and those things because that is time that I do not dedicate to my work. Is true that also I do not have that much information about training offers, because sometimes that information is also hard to find".

"I do not follow at all any online training. I am focused on launching my business right now and in producing my work".

She wishes to launch her own website and not only be present via Instagram, but it is, again, very time-consuming and she cannot currently handle so many open fronts.

P.M.: “A cabinetmaker also demands a big space and a lot of tools and machinery, for that reason when I started, I had to ask for funding to launch the company, but I did not have a business plan.”

He normally works alone, but now he has an intern that goes four days a week.

Thanks to the good references of his clients, he started to be well known in his area of expertise and to have more jobs.

He started step by step. “It was years ago, I started in a garage and then I had the possibility to buy a piece of land and have my own working space”.

“I would highlight that this is a real profession, many people see us and think: they are in love with their profession, but it is a real profession, and we also need incomes.”

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

Some participants have followed a crafts education path. Two of the participants started through continuous learning programmes, as they had different backgrounds.

A.M.: Studied fine arts in Spain. She had different activities while she continued to follow the training of ceramic at the Fine Arts Academy in Liege. She also followed training in specialization in ceramics.

E.W.: She studied Law, but she always loved ceramics and painting and after finishing her studies she decided to make ceramics.

N.H.: “I studied thread at the Haute École Francisco Ferrer (Brussels). My favourite technique during my studies was sewing, and so I specialised in that.”

P.M.: Cabinetmaker by training and specialized in heritage restoration.

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed in order for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why? General / basic entrepreneurship skills, general/basic managerial skills, creativity, and creative thinking, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, negotiation, time management, business model, development, financial literacy, marketing, intellectual property rights...

All the participants find important the described skills, especially time management, problem solving and creativity. Additionally, they have added network creation.

A.B.-Belen Montero Martin:

“All the skills are important; however, leadership I must think twice about it. Because it depends on one’s personality. I think that a bossy leader is not necessary, but a person that knows how to inspire others is important to have.

I am not able to manage children and adults, and I do not like to manage groups. That is something I learned with time.

Additionally, we work alone most of the time, so that is not a basic skill.”

“And this is continuously changing, so we have to be continuously educating ourselves on new skills not only at the technical level of our sector but also in new management skills.

An example is that the management of a website is different now compared with how it was 5 years ago.

For that reason, I continuously follow conferences, webinars, and workshops online because it is very handy”.

“Of course, there are good and bad things about the fact of being online, but it also makes easier the training. For me, these online trainings are much better now”.

C.P.: “All are important but especially time management, as you will need to divide your time between the creation, the marketing activities, the networking activities, and more.

Problem-solving skills are also important, as you will need to address your client’s needs.

Basic knowledge of accountancy is also important, we cannot replace an accountant but just knowing what he needs to do his reports helps.”

E.W.: “All are important but especially, time management, artisans have to be able to do many things at the same time”.

P.M.: “Each artisan is different, and their needs are different. There is not a global training that can be useful for everyone and we do not want that either.

Additionally, we adapt our product to each client, every client is a new adventure and that allows you to learn differently”.

“I think they are all important. I find especially important the work with others, for example in a coworking space, because it allows you to not only find synergies with others but also so identify clients and providers”.

“When I work with interns and apprenticeships, I talk with them about entrepreneurship”.

Y.W.: “They are all important, but I would also say that be able to create a good network is essential.”

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

For most of the participants, academies/ schools’ approach to management and entrepreneurial skills does not prepare the students to create their own companies.

A.M.: “At the academies/ schools, they do not teach you how to launch your business at a professional level and make a living of your art. You finish with a lot of artistic skills but no other kind of skills. If you follow on the side training on management and entrepreneurship, you can learn a bit more, that was my case. The entrepreneurial training was somehow useful, because it was mainly theoretical, and it did not include any practice exercises.

I find that one of the main difficulties is marketing. It was difficult for me when I finish my studies and when I become a full time independent on 1 January 2020. I have seen some friends be successful artisans, only because they had a background in sales or marketing, so they had the possibility to use their previous knowledge into their craft project and it went well for them.

If today's craft students could have that practical knowledge, on how to communicate, that could help them.

Is true that for certain things you can hire a company or an employee, but I also find that is important to know about marketing, communication, at least to know what your providers or employees can offer or do.”

E.W.: “I know that communication is important but sometimes I just do not have the time to do that. Only to take nice photos of my work takes me a lot of time, and I don’t know the right techniques. It is expensive to hire a professional photographer for the photos, so you need to do it yourselves- It’s a pity that I cannot spend more time in my studio working, because there are other things (related to the management) that I have to do”.

N.H.: “The management courses that we received at the academy did not help, and it continues to be a training that does not help the students. It is sad, but it is like that.

So, when I finished, I tried to participate in contests, to get grants. Also is a pity but when we apply for grants and subsidies, we must have a business plan, we already have to say what we will do and how we are going to do it. And have all that information is not always possible, and therefore the applications have not always enough information to get the grants”.

P.M.: “Today I find that the main challenge is the administrative side, on the one hand, being a freelancer, you need to pay taxes and you are not protected, and you do not have unemployed benefits. On the other hand, the fact that we do not have a professional “artisan” status recognised by the Belgian labour authorities, as the artists have with the official artist status. That is a problem and we have already informed the authorities about that.”

Y.W.: “From my experience, I know that there are entrepreneurial training opportunities in Wallonia, that offers training for crafts managers. But is also true that artisans are in their studios and they have very little time to dedicate to their further training. And going to those training has a price, not only financial but also in time. The time that they dedicate to those training is time that they do not spend working. For that reason, I think that training for artisans is a difficult topic”.

“We also offer training in our association, but most of our attendants are looking for very initial training, they are more interested in discovering the technique. Sadly, we do not have many young people. And that is one of the problems of our sector.”

“One of the main problems is the very formal transmission of the knowledge. In Belgium, there are schools and academies that continue to teach crafts like jewellery, but there are others like the work of copper that have been forgotten”.

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

Only one participant has informed that she follows different training to update her skills. Most of them stated they do not have enough time to do it.

A.M: She follows MOOCs online, mainly about art through platforms like Edx, Coursera, Digital Garage Google, or Udemy. Those training help her to learn new skills, but also to find new approaches to teach her students and attract clients. She has followed courses on IT skills such as video edition, or photo edition, and marketing or e-commerce.

Regarding the dedicated time for training, is between 3 and 4 hours on average.

E.W.: "I'm not actively searching any training opportunity, but if I identify any training in communication and sales I would be interested." "I prefer classroom-based training because you not only learn but also have the space for networking".

N.H.: "I do not follow at all any online training. I am focused on launching my business right now".

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

According to many of the participant's opinion, the main challenge that artisans will have to face after COVID-19 is to be able to create a network online.

A.M.: "We as teachers, we transmit what we have discovered, what we have learned, our mistakes, hoping that it can help others to continue their path. Since the 1st lockdown, I have focused my activities on art projects at school because the adult's training has been cancelled.

So, I am working a lot in schools because I have both profiles of artist and artisan. I am not in a single product, single material, or whatever. I am curious, and I like to share with others".

C.P.: "For me what it is difficult now, that there are no more exhibitions, and it is not possible to organise workshops for adults. What I miss is having the possibility to have exchanges with the public and colleagues artisans. I continue to work from home, from my atelier but I work all alone. I value the possibility to have feedback on what I do.

I use online tools, and I have a Facebook page. I do not like to spend much time there, but we must be because it is an essential tool".

N.H.: "What they tell me is that what I do is complicated, takes a lot of time, that is more in the actuality of things given that it takes time. What we hate to do is call people attention to what we do. We are in slow fashion creation".

P.M.: "I normally train small groups, I prefer to have physical meetings, of course, due to the Covid I will have to adapt my classes. Regarding the duration, it is normally a one/2 day's training, but very practical and focused on the techniques. I do not speak about entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship skills, but I try to adapt my training to the different group's needs".

Y.W.: "Regarding Covid, what our artisans miss is the opportunities to meet other artisans and the public".

10. What are your tips for self-development?

A.M.: "The artisan has to be an expert on all the steps of the craft value chain: design, realization, conceptualization, commercialization. And that is not easy. We are frequently particularly good at one of the steps, or some of them but not all. And there is the main lack of education, most of the schools and academies offer training on the design, realization, and conceptualization, but I see there is a lack of education on the daily management of a company, commercialization, communication... Those are skills that we learn during our professional careers.

There are many tools, and it is good that we all know it, but then each one should adapt those tools to their needs.

I have to admit that I spend half of my time in my studio, the rest of the time I follow the training, I manage orders from my online shop, and I manage my communication tools.”

C.P.: “My advice is to always follow your own instinct and be true to yourself and your abilities”.

E.W.: “To love what you do and find the correct network, in my case Main de Maîtres”.

N.H.: “Little by little is the best way to start the management of a company”.

P.M.: “To love his job and learn the know-how”.

Y.W.: “The main need is to create networks”.

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

The participants have stated that they would be interested in an online flexible training focused on the practical side of business management.

A.M.: She follows MOOCs online, mainly about art through platforms like Edx, Coursera, Digital Garage Google, or Udemy. Those training help her to learn new skills, but also to find new approaches to teach her students and attract clients. She has followed courses on IT skills such as video edition, or photo edition, and marketing or e-commerce.

Regarding the dedicated time for training, is between 3 and 4 hours on average.

“Because I live in a small town, and it takes me 2 hours to go to Brussels. It does not make sense to do all that for a 1-hour training. I waste my day commuting.

And the fact of having access to those tools online, allows me to be better trained on certain skills that I need at a practical level”.

C.P.: She is not much interested in online training; she has always followed classroom-based training activities. She would be interested in ceramics techniques courses mores than management training.

N.H.: She followed a management course; the problems were basically that the professor was extremely theoretical and not practical at all. She wishes for StartCraft to develop very practical, schematic, step-by-step training, guidance and orientation on business management, things to look out for, guidelines on for instance, how to price your products, how to find your own market niche and clients, etc.

Business plans requested by financing institutions request a lot of information that starting entrepreneurs do not always have or have not explored fully. Maybe adding information on how to reach certain conclusions, what to think about when filling in a business plan. Not only for attaining the aid or grant, but one that is useful for the entrepreneur and helps as a baseline.

P.M.: “Focused on the practical side”.

4.3.2. Focus group 2.

1. Please introduce yourself

D.L.: Craft beers, other alcoholised drinks.

D.V.: Handbags maker from Bruges.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from

For one on the participants the interest came from participating in handbag making courses, and for the other the reason why he started because he was already working on the sector.

D.L.: He used to work in the HORECA sector. He used to be an employee, but he was really interested in the craft beers sector. He decided to take start his own company because he wanted to be able to work independently and chose the products to offer.

D.V.: She worked for 20 years as an architect; the job changed from being creative to work mainly routinely.

She wanted to go back to creativity, so she started having many hobbies. One of those hobbies was making handbags, and she loved it so much that she decided to put her whole life aside, quit her job, and make handbags.

She makes unique pieces following the traditional way of making handbags. She does not sell them in shops, people come and tell her what their “dream bag” is, and then she makes it.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

Both entrepreneurs have recently started.

D.L.: He started in 2017 in Clausen and 4 months ago he has moved to the city centre in Luxembourg.

He prepared a business plan to ask for a loan at a bank because he needed to rent a working space and he also wanted to develop a web, and to buy the first stock to be able to sell products.

After that he had to adapt and develop his business, so he had to learn by doing, for example, how to apply for a license to sell alcohol and consume on the spot, or to buy new machines and stock.

“Additionally, I had to buy products from other countries, so I had to learn how to do a customs declaration, but step by step I succeed to put in place everything.

Regarding the initial investment, I had my own savings, and then I had to lend some money.

I already had knowledge of the market because I was coming from the HORECA sector, and I know people from the business, which helped me with the B2B. For the individual clients, that is something that I continue to do step by step.

Because the business plan is more useful to present to the bank, that for the daily or practical management of the business.”

D.V.: Started 5 years ago, she does not have a web shop, in her website people cannot see her products but she has a lot of work. She has a long waiting list.

She did have a business plan because she was supported by a regional programme for entrepreneurs. She followed a basic course on entrepreneurship, but it was not addressed to “makers” it was a general one.

She asked for a loan and for that the business plan was useful, and she bought machines. At first, the idea was to make bags and sell them at shops, but bags on demand are really demanded, so she does not really need to sell at shops.

She can do 6 bags per month. Her on-demand system is very intense, so she cannot do more for shops.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

For one of the participants, the main challenge was to find clients and give visibility to his business. For the other one, the main challenges were pricing and finding providers that accept small orders.

D.L.: “When I started the most difficult thing was to have visibility. Additionally, before I had my shop in a small village. Now that I moved to the city centre is going better.

My website has been especially useful for that too. I made a great effort to learn a lot about SEO and how to make my website more attractive, and now I can see the results of that.

Another obstacle when I started was, as I said the financial side, because in my case I needed to rent a space, and prices are high.

So, in summary, I would say the challenge is to be profitable with a niche product, and with the location prices in Luxembourg”.

D.V.: “When I started, I found it difficult to put a price on my products. I was selling cheap. If counted the hours and the materials, I was selling too cheap”.

“Another obstacle was to find the right materials. 80% of the producers on professional fairs did not want to sell me because I was buying in few quantities. I just wanted materials for a few pieces. On the other hand, finding clients was not hard, I do not spend much time with the communication of my business, because I cannot make handbags for everyone. A few years ago, I did an interview on television and a lot of people wanted to buy my products.”

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

One of the participants came from the sector and did not follow any training. The other followed continuous training education.

D.L.: He did not follow any training in management.

D.V.: architecture and followed a continuous training education to become a handbags artisan.

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why? General / basic entrepreneurship skills, general/basic managerial skills, creativity, and creative thinking, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, negotiation, time management, business model, development, financial literacy, marketing, intellectual property rights...

All the described skills are found important for both participants. Additionally, for one of the participants is important the adaptability, and for the other one the financial side.

D.L.: “I think in general is important to have the ability to adapt. It is the most important skill. And be able to find the right people to work with”.

D.V.: “All are important. From my experience, I think is also important to know about pricing”.

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

One of the participants stated that he did not follow any craft training. The other one thinks that the entrepreneurial courses are not adapted to the artisan needs, which is to make unique pieces.

D.L.: He did not follow any craft training.

D.V.: I am always eager to learn. When I started to learn how to do handbags, I followed different pieces of training and sometimes even the same course but with a different teacher. So, I am always interested in improving my technique.

On the entrepreneurship side, I also took some courses, but most of them were focused on making more products for cheaper prices. And I am focused on making better products.

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

None of the participants is currently following any training, but they have stated that they would be interested.

D.L.: “Currently I am not following any training; I feel that it is more important to focus on my business as I’m starting. But I would be interested. I’m always interested in improving”.

D.V.: “I’m always eager to learn. When I started to learn how to do handbags, I followed different pieces of training and sometimes even the same course but with a different teacher. So, I am always interested in improving my technique”.

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

In the participant's opinion, due to the pandemic, the skills needed have changed, especially online communication.

D.L.: He says that the first lockdown affected positively to his business, the people were locked and ordered a lot through the website, but also, he had the possibility to keep his shop open for taking away.

“For the second lockdown, as my shop is still open, the people can continue to come to my shop, but online orders have decreased”.

D.V.: “Regarding the sanitary crisis, it was a coincidence that in March last year I was renovating my house to have my handbag making atelier at home. Normally those renovations were going to last three months. But as I and my family got COVID, the workers could not come, and finally, the renovation took seven months. That period was difficult because I didn’t have any income for several months, but once I reopen, clients come back immediately.”

During the second lockdown, I had to close but I had already many orders, so it was not a big problem”.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

D.L.: “As when I started the craft beer was a kind of niche concept, I had to work a lot in the visibility of my product. So, it is important to be patient, and change the stereotype or idea that people have about beer. But when they try the product, I win, the product speaks for itself and they are instantly convinced”.

“In my case, I don’t have problems with providers, I try to buy in big quantities, so I optimise the transport price.”

“My advice is to love what we do and try to share that passion with our clients, we work with quality products nothing like fast food”.

D.V.: “I would say learn what your product is and learn to say no. There are many people coming to me telling me if I can do different things on leather for them, but I want to focus on my handbags. So, I have to say no, I don’t do this anymore”.

“Be realistic with the number of pieces that you can do, and to put a price for your products.”

If you have a dream just follow it and believe in it. Because I see that my clients keep coming because they like what I do”.

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

None of the participants is currently following any training, but they have stated that they would be interested. One of them has informed that she would be interested in communication skills training.

D.L.: “Currently I am not following any training; I feel that it is more important to focus on my business as I’m starting. But I would be interested. I’m always interested in improving”.

D.V.: “I do have an Instagram and Facebook account, but do not spend much time in that”. “Here in Bruges, I know many people like me, that spend most of their time in their atelier and not doing the communication of their products. Of course, I think we can improve that”. “As I’m a bit older, that is also another fact, I’m not that good with the communication on the social network as young people can be”.

4.3.3. Focus group 3.

1. Please introduce yourself

C.K.: 37 years old. She is a freelance costume designer for the past 10 years.

G.Z.: 20 years old student of crafts. She had not decided yet which is the product she wants to focus on, but she is studying weaving. Since she was a kid, she wanted to learn about crafts and the crafting process that is why she decided to start studying it.

J.T.: 20 years old student of crafts weaving.

L.D.: Craft artisan since 1998 from Herenthout (Flanders), an expert in pen making with wood and ebonite. Accredited craftsman and official supplier to the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, nobility, state security, and other public institutions.

M.R.: Studied arts and after several years working in a different sector, she has decided to launch her business this year. She will start with the help of an incubator for artists. She is an expert in painting with wine and embroidery.

P.V.: 34 years old. Leather bags maker.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from.

C.K.: She studied screen costumes design in the UK and has technical skills.

G.Z.: She is studying weaving.

L.D.: In his case he started soon with his profession, since he was young, he was interested in pen making. "I would like to get in touch with other craft entrepreneurs, not only pen makers because I'm sure that we can share and learn from others and their processes."

M.R.: Her studies.

P.V.: When he was 14, he started to work with leather. He studied design and pattern making in a design and fashion school.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

For most of the participants, the crafts were a side job for a long time before becoming a craft entrepreneur full time. Most of the participants have recently started the business project.

C.K.: She has worked on and off in theatre and film productions as a costume designer and manager. She does workshops and teaching about her technical expertise in regional open spaces, schools, and with minorities with problematic backgrounds or in social exclusion. These courses are more oriented to keeping these people busy and occupied, than teaching them a craft for them to make a living of it. She also teaches seamstress courses at l'École des Artists.

She does not yet sell her own items; she is working on a new project called Huddelafatz consisting of reinventing the classical blue worker-overalls into fashionable vests and jackets. The main challenge is to keep it as local and sustainable as possible.

G.Z.: She does not feel that she can become an entrepreneur directly after finishing her studies. "I would like to learn first from another craft entrepreneur. Many of my classmates have the same idea, of first learning in practice the profession and then create something on our own."

L.D.: When he first started, he worked for a big company. Then he decided to launch his own company, but he did not prepare a business plan. He started very slowly with this own savings. He did not ask for a loan or a grant.

He also gives workshops about penmaking in other European countries, especially in UK and Germany.

M.R.: She has not started yet.

She believes that the most important is to adapt to each client and give them a unique output, for that is important to listen to the client, his ideas, and input.

P.V.: When he was 14, he started to work with leather, but for 5 years he has worked as a leather bags maker. For 10 years he also has taught bag making in educational centres.

“For a long time, the crafts were my side business. In my sector, there is a lot of competition and very well-known brands, so it was hard to start.

“I think I had the technical skills to start my business but not the administrative knowledge when I first started.”

“You need to have time to dedicate to social networks, and a story to tell. If you don’t have that is hard to use social networks to promote your work”.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

The main difficulties that craft entrepreneurs have faced are finding funds, finding clients, pricing and administrative processes.

C.K.: She does not yet sell her own items. She has had a grant from l'Œuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte but is still in need of funds and financing (requesting from Chambre des Métiers and from the Ministry of Culture). She is required to make a business plan for her project.

She is currently contacting museums, vegan and ecologic restaurants, and shops for workers/waiters to wear her vests, or sell them, etc. She currently needs more time to focus on the project but also needs to hire seamstresses that will help her with the volume of work. She wishes there were more collaborations/networks and ways to communicate between craftworkers, even from different sectors.

L.D.: “One of the main obstacles, when I started, was to find clients. But I was lucky that I found good clients who gave good references about me, and that helped me to find more clients. Having clients like the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have helped me to have other big clients.”

M.R.: She has not started yet, but she finds that the bigger issue to start is the administrative and bureaucratic work.

Until now she used to have her crafts business as a side job. When she moved to Belgium, she kind of lost the network she had already build in Spain. There she had contact with wineries and wine producers, and the good references of those first clients helped her to find new ones.

P.V.: "One of the challenges, when I started, was that I could not buy material in big quantities, it didn't worth it for the providers to sell me. So, it was hard to find a provider”.

“One “problem” when I started, was that I didn’t know much about the documents that I have to do or how to fulfil them. So, I decided to work with Securex, a payroll company and they fulfil the official document for me. So, when I tried to apply for the official recognition as an artisan, I discover that I could not do it because Securex had included a different NACE code for my activity.

Including a wrong NACE code can affect very much, for official certifications, for subsidies for the COVID-19... Of course, knowing how that works could avoid me a problem. But I think those are things that you learn with experience. Knowing about labour rights would help, of course, but the specific ones to our sector. Here we have an “artist status” but is wide and it cannot be applied in the same way to me, and to my wife who works in the films sector, or to the plastic artists.

It was also difficult to learn how to put the price on my products. I have used high-quality materials, and that was increasing the price of my bags, but I could not find clients to pay for that. For that price, I had to compete with well-known brands, and I was starting. So that was hard.

My bags are not sold in shops, neither online. My clients must contact me. But I feel there is too much competition in this sector.”

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

Several of the participants received Initial VET training in their area of expertise, only one of them received continuous VET training.

C.K.: No courses or training on entrepreneurship or management. The Luxembourgish association Chambre des Métiers has helped her with preliminary management skills, legal and bureaucratic paperwork, as well as with her website and graphic design.

She needs training in management and entrepreneurship but does not have enough time to focus on it. It is not a priority now, as she cannot afford to attend courses and not spend her time on her work. She learns daily and asking around to other craftspeople about how they manage or how to solve certain situations.

G.Z.: Initial VET training.

L.D.: Continuous VET training.

M.R.: She has not a business plan, but she will follow training from the region about how to create one.

On the technical side of her business, at first, she had to study a lot of chemistry to know how to combine paint and wine. Now she is mixing embroidery and paints.

P.V.: He studied design and pattern making in a design and fashion school.

“I took a business management course in Antwerp, but it was very basic and the other people taking that course had very different business ideas than me. In my opinion was too general and the level was too low”.

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed in order for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why? General / basic entrepreneurship skills, general/basic managerial skills, creativity, and creative thinking, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, negotiation, time management, business model, development, financial literacy, marketing, intellectual property rights...

According to the participants, in addition to these skills, it is important to have good communication skills, networking skills, have knowledge of the market, and financial skills and sceptical thinking skills.

G.Z.: “I think all are important. But I have not followed courses about those skills. On the other hand, we do have small training in marketing”.

L.D.: “I think the most important one is to be able to communicate well. In my case, for example, I collaborate with someone that corrects my texts.”

“Also is important to create a good network. In my case, it has been helpful to find more clients”.

M.R.: “All are important but knowing how bureaucracy works is essential. It is different in each country and it makes it harder to start”.

“I think a good network is essential. Not only to help you find new clients but also to launch your company. For me is especially important to find the correct providers and collaborators to find the textiles, to create my website... and to help me with many things that I’m not an expert on. I know about very well the technical side, but I need people to complete my skills.”

P.V.: “I think the most important ones are general/basic entrepreneurship skills, creativity, and creative thinking, and problem-solving.

I would also add that you need to have knowledge of the market, and financial skills. It is also important to have sceptical thinking skills, and before starting your business to check the pros and cons of starting alone.”

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

For two of the participants, the curricula of educational institutions should approach entrepreneurial and management skills from learning by doing angle.

G.Z.: She will have to learn more about the management of a crafts company, business management, and entrepreneurship in her academy next year, however, she said “Other students told me that those courses are really general and not very useful. At the academy, most of her courses are about the technical side of the weaving”. She will only have some courses about business management and entrepreneurship in her last year of studies. She is not sure about the content of that course. “I think it is more about making a business plan than about the formalities of creating a company, such as taxes, legal forms, or things like that”.

She has studied for three years already. “For example, we have classes on 3D printing, design, different weaving techniques, we really learn how to do things” For that reason, she is always looking for opportunities outside the academy to complete her training.

P.V.: “I think that the crafts education hasn’t changed since the ’90s. It must update to attract more students and young people. Most of the young people interested in creative professions have to choose between an art school and a technical academy and the second one is didactically obsolete.”

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

Most of the participants continuously update their skills, but they opt for flexible training that adapts to the needs that they have in each moment and to the time they have available.

C.K.: She currently needs more time to focus on the project.

G.Z.: She is always looking for opportunities outside the academy to complete her training.

L.D.: He is an autodidact; he created his own website. “I try to improve my website and how to showcase my products”.

He not only gives workshops but also attends to different pieces of training. Mainly presential ones. He has just come back from following a course in the UK. The training that he attends is focused on the technique and improving the pen making process.

M.R.: She follows online courses, mainly MOOCs about art and art techniques. “Depends on the weeks, sometimes I have more time, so I spend 4 or 5 hours following online courses, but there are other weeks that I don’t have much time, or I have to work so I don’t dedicate much time”.

P.V.: “To update my skills, I use Youtube and Reedit. I have learned a lot about AutoCAD, excel, illustrator, Italian... because I found that the training in the adult education centres was too general and not especially useful. For example, I use to follow an Italian course, and they were teaching us how to order a coffee. What I need to learn is business Italian so when I go to identify providers, I can communicate with them.”

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

The pandemic has forced all the participants to adapt some parts of their business to digital, for this reason, digital skills will be needed.

C.K.: Due to Covid-19 she had to postpone the first phases of the project and instead worked on sewing face masks with the same fabric as the vests and jackets.

L.D.: “I write a blog about the pen making process, the different ideas that I have developed, or technical things about my business. During the lockdown, I had the possibility to dedicate more time to write and publish more frequently in the blog. However, as I do not feel completely sure about the grammatical side of my post, I work with a corrector. He helps me to make my posts more professional”.

“I also have a newsletter that I send frequently with the news about Luxpen.”

M.R.: She wants to give her business an eco-side, and for that reason, the pandemic was a problem. Because she could not meet providers in person and see and touch the textiles to work with. “During the pandemic was easier to buy online from anywhere, but not to visit a local manufacturer to buy local fabric”.

She would rather buy materials personally than online because she needs to test the quality of materials.

However, the pandemic also helped her to focus on her work and in her online presence, but an important part of her work is the texture of art and to reflect that into online photos is complicated.

P.V.: Due to Covid he was forced to change his group tuition to one-on-one tuition and likes it better this way. He had to buy also more and more machinery because he could not go to his studio.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

G.Z.: “I really thank the other participants for their advice, in my case I think the important thing is to be always looking for new ways to improve and share, as this meeting”.

L.D.: “Be an active learner”.

M.R.: “The thing that I said before, to know well your client, what you can offer them is important too, and always work your network. Now as for a while I was not in the art environment I have to start again. For that reason, I have decided to participate in local and national contests. For example, the Luxembourg price, the important thing in that contest is not only the price but also the visibility that it will give to my work”.

P.V.: “Think of deadlines, aims, and not only the romantic side of creating”.

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

The participants would be interested in flexible training opportunities that adapt to their needs and time availability, covering especially marketing and communication skills.

C.K.: She needs and would value receiving training and insights on how to sell her items and push the selling. She has clear definitions of her marketing identity, design, etc. but the issue is distributing to a wide range of clients and finding the right targets. Also, she would appreciate courses on the use of social media for business purposes, and how to give them a profitable use.

“I have a personal battle with social media: it is so time-consuming I need a proper course and training to teach me to find the utility of it and how to channel the potential it has to focus it on my work. I need to see a professional twist on social media in order to find its utility to my business and consider implementing it.”

Additionally, there should be clear training on how to deal with the administrative part of starting a business, step by step, or access to a good consultant or agent; as well as proper time management skills when carrying out your own business because it tends to be overwhelming due to all the different departments or sections to take care of (suppliers, clients, advertising and marketing, producing the actual items, legal/administrative paperwork including financing, etc.), networking with other professionals.

She also suggests we add to the StartCraft website a tab with a pool of job opportunities for craftworkers, advertisements, collaborations, job offers, job requests, networking, etc.

G.Z.: For her is also important to collaborate with other artisans first to learn, and then to have providers. She wants to take advantage of the local products, not only because are cheaper but because it will also help the local economy. Her idea is also to start working for a small company rather than depending on big companies, that sell artisan products like those were any other product. “In crafts the pieces are unique pieces, not to be sell in big shops, like manufactured objects”.

For this reason, the learning by doing approach would be appropriate.

L.D.: Mainly presential ones. The training that he attends is focused on the technique and improving the pen making process.

M.R.: Flexible to adapt to her needs and time availability.

P.V.: Flexible to adapt to his needs and time availability.

4.3.4. Deep interviews

After the focus groups take place, the craft entrepreneurs were contacted to complete the information that they provided during the focus groups. All the information provided was included in the “Research among business” point.

Additionally, two craft artisans who had not the possibility to attend to the focus groups offered themselves to have one to one interview. Only the result of those interviews in included in this point.

G.C.

1. Please introduce yourself

Craft lamps « L'Alchimiste du Bien-Etre ». Started as an artisan in 2016.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from.

He started to create his artisan lamps after following chromotherapy training. After that, he also followed different pieces of training on glass, metal, gold leaf, and even patina.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

In his case, he started as part-time self-employed after his retirement. He did not prepare a business plan, and he considers that he does not need one, because due to the uniqueness of his work, mass selling is impossible. Additionally, he highlights that for him is important to have a personal approach and offer a customised product to each of his clients.

He started with his own funds, and for him, it was important to start as a part-time self-employed because this allowed him to have another source of income.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

In his case, he highlights that he is an autodidact. He created his own website, and social networks to give visibility to his work. He followed training on SMEs management and in SMEs accounting.

Before launching his own business, he served in the military. There he learned about management but not about communication or marketing. He continues to learn about other aspects of management but at his own pace and not following specific training (searching on google).

He considers that when he started, he had the necessary skills for the size and type of his business he wanted to create.

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

He served in the military.

6. Do you do anything to update your skills?

He is happy with the size and type of his business. He is not interested in updating his skills.

7. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

Covid has not really affected his business, because his clients still can visit his studio following security measures.

8. What are your tips for self-development?

Based on his experience, to run a craft business is important to be an autodidact and highlight the uniqueness of the products offered. He adds that is important to offer products that connect with the client.

9. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

One of the main challenges for him has been the accounts of the company. He recommends having the support of an accountant.

P.M.

1. Please introduce yourself

Floral creations and interior decorations « La Bulle en Soi». Started as an artisan in 2017. Has no employees.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from.

She followed training in interior decoration in the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Liège, and after that, she started teaching floral creation. She worked as a teacher for more than 20 years.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

Three years ago, she decided to launch her own business. At that moment she followed training on business management at an association for entrepreneurs, UCM. But she did not have a business plan. She decided, to give herself 4 years to try to develop a sustainable business.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

In her opinion she lacks management and marketing skills, she would like to develop those skills to be able to develop a marketable product, but also adapted for each client.

She also finds that she has a lack of technical training, and she is following training on that aspect.

She would like to do her website more commercial, and for that, she would like to collaborate and share best practices with other artisans.

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

She received initial VET training.

6. Do you do anything to update your skills?

She is autodidact on the technic she has to learn about the wood framework, electricity, online sales.

7. What are your tips for self-development?

To share her knowledge and skills with other artisans. She already collaborates with artisans from Valencia and out of Belgium, has given workshops in France. She would like to share her knowledge and skills with other artisans and have exchanges with other artisans.

8. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

Management and marketing skills, to be able to develop a marketable product but also adapted for each client.

She also finds that she has a lack of technical training, and she is following training on that aspect.

4.3.5. Summary of the focus groups.

- Entrepreneurship education received by participants.

All the participants agreed that entrepreneurship education helps to the success of a craft business. Some of them put as an example the fact that people that had previous knowledge of sales or marketing, once they became craft entrepreneurs, they are more successful, than the ones with pure crafts background.

Only a few participants followed entrepreneurial courses, mainly offered by regional authorities that promote entrepreneurship. In those cases, they highlighted the training was too general and not adapted to the craft entrepreneur reality, needs and the added value of their pieces.

Some of the participants had a business plan before starting their projects. The ones that had it, stated that it was not very useful or only to apply for loans.

On the other hand, many participants saw business plans as a very difficult thing, and in many cases, they stated that they had the feeling that it was not adapted for craft entrepreneurs.

They repeatedly said that they started little by little without the need for a business plan.

- Format and competencies addressed.

Most of the participants declared that they didn't have enough time dedicated to training.

Only a few of the participants indicated that they follow online courses and that they dedicate few hours per week (between two and four)

Most of the craft entrepreneurs that participated, stated that they follow courses to improve their technical specific skills. A few of them follow other courses, most of them addressed to improve the communication and marketing of their business.

- Major needs of competencies expressed.

All the participants expressed they all find difficult to find time to successfully comply with all the different task that the business requires (creation, administration, marketing, and sales).

Some of the participants declared that the main challenges when starting their business were visibility, communication, marketing, and network creation.

Another challenge for some craft artisans was pricing their pieces.

Additionally, a country-specific need was identified as many of the participants expressed that the administrative procedures to become independent and to have the official artisan certificate in Belgium are very difficult.

- Eventual lack from educational existing offer.

Some of the participants, who were also teachers of their area of expertise, stated that in most of the institutions the curricula of the craft studies should be updated. Many schools and academies include entrepreneurial courses and soft skills training, but with a theoretical approach.

One of the participants, a student, indicated that in her case, in the curricula of her studies the dedicated amount of time for entrepreneurial and soft skills was low.

- Preferred format and competencies for entrepreneurship training.

Many of the participants indicated that they continuously update their skills but mainly the ones connected with the technical side of their craft business.

Regarding entrepreneurial skills, few participants stated that they were following courses to improve those skills. However, many of the participants declared they would be interested in training adapted to the artisan's needs.

As indicated before, the average dedicated time for training is between two and four hours per week.

- Further demands expressed.

Many of them expressed their interest in connecting with other artisans to find potential synergies and give visibility to the work. For many of them, network creation was very important.

4.4 POLAND

On the framework of the StartCraft program, two focus groups were organized via Jitsi on the 8th of February and the 11th of February 2021 with the partner organizations WICI.

In these meetings, the representatives of WICI took notes on the different discussions and topics, in order to develop this document.

To protect the personal data and anonymity of the interviewees (as agreed with them during the interviews), initials instead of full names will be used.

4.4.1 Focus group 1.

1. Please introduce yourself:

LC – man, blacksmith, lives in Warsaw. He makes replicas of historical weapons, such as shields, knives, before that he ran different companies in services.

EP – woman, weaver, lives in Gdańsk. She has been running a company in Estonia since 2017. She creates woven belts modelled on archaeological finds and runs an e-shop on the Etsy platform, where she sells handicrafts in the field of weaving and knitting, made by her and other women.

AR – woman, sculptor by education, currently in ceramics / textiles. Since 2020 she runs Hap Hap studio, which promotes sensory education and produces cushions and ceramic objects.

AW – woman, ceramics. She has been running the company since 2004. At the beginning it was a dance school. She has been working with ceramics for 6 years. She has employees in charge of marketing.

MM – man, maker in ceramics, shoemaking, and other crafts related to historical re-enactment. He complements the offer of his wife's company and works at the university as a history lecturer.

MO – woman, basket weaver, educator. She runs an educational company since 2015 where she offers workshops of old crafts.

MO and MM are married. During summer months, MM and MO work together in historical education centres in Norway.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from

The participants have built their knowledge on running a company primarily on the observation of other entrepreneurs and friends, as well as on their own research.

LC during his career has meet few mentors and people who were active in various fields.

Some participants mention that they followed formal education (high school, studies), but find it ineffective. For example:

LC: "During my studies I had the opportunity to study management, so I remember there were conferences on small business management. But that was a long time ago and I hardly remember anything".

MM and MO emphasize that when they started it was simple because they already had their product - original workshops that they had created and tested within local government institutions, and they also had a stable target audience.

The participants underlined that at the beginning, they had to make a substantial investment in equipment because it was necessary to run a craft business. Starting a business depended a lot on the finances available. LC gave an example of a forge, he said: "To equip a forge you need PLN 40,000".

Makers in ceramics confirmed, AW: "without an oven, you can't do anything".

3. Please tell us about your business history.

MM: "I crashed at the first meeting. I was thinking of creating a village workshop, pottery, and then the question of what innovation I will use appears (the interviewer asked) ... I answered, but madam, I'll be making pots".

LC said it was difficult to find the opportunity to fund his ideas. "Hitting a specific door with your idea is really difficult because the old crafts are not compatible with what we are doing now".

Most participants operate on the historical reconstruction site. They make products from historical sources such as archaeology and ethnography, which results in a very narrow customer base and has different consequences for the management of their businesses.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

MO drew attention to the fact that highest level officials who take decisions do not know the needs of the craft sector and do not support its professionalization.

LC: "People rely on reputation. When you enter the market, you rarely have an entirely new product, because what can be new in historical reconstruction? Unless I dig something up, everyone does it and everyone will get this product."

"Now, acting in re-enactment, it is so strange, such an unusual form of work, such a strange market. This market is not affected by certain rules common to other markets. It is not about running a pizzeria."

Participants are familiar with various support programs, for example: hiring an employee for a work practice, the cost of which could be, at least partially, financed by the Unemployment Office. What prevents them from using it is the complicated system and unclear rules. The problem is very beautifully illustrated by the situation presented by AW. She was looking for employees, had found a suitable unemployed person, but could not employ him with public subsidies because the funds were reserved for people living only in certain places. She explained that she had a person who was registered as unemployed but who lived in Warsaw, she lives in Radzimir near Warsaw. So, she consulted the Warsaw employment office - "Can I hire this person?" "Yes of course" was the answer. "But I am not from Warsaw". "Well, then you are not entitled to anything".

Participants are aware that their clients constitute a small and specific group. They do not care so much about the number of customers but want to know their needs and preferences better and have lasting relationships.

AW: "It was more important for my clients that I could visit many museums to make better reconstructions of ceramic objects. Now I have a lot of new customers who buy contemporary dishes, classic cups, but also hairdressing bowls". "For example, for someone in the reconstitution of ceramic made in an open fire, it's cool and pretty, but it smells like fire. For us this is an advantage, but it might not be useful for a hairdresser". "It's very specific with craftsmanship. My method of selling is to find a customer who will buy from me. For example, I am looking for a specific client". "Another important topic was the people who make a lot of handicrafts and sell them very cheaply, and "damage" the handicraft market".

Participants shared a similar experience, such as:

LC: "And then you find a student who, for the shield which should cost 600 PLN, will take 300 PLN, and what can you do?"

AW replied: "But he doesn't have to pay taxes or electricity bills for the locals, he doesn't have dependent children. What we do is not commodities."

They also expressed irritation at the lack of respect for their work and their prices, and they compared themselves to other professional groups.

MM: "Why nobody discusses the price, for example, a plumber who doesn't bring the material, will work a little and charge a lot. Nobody complains about it, people are thankful that he even came."

Other reasons for the low prices of handicrafts have also been reported. Participants emphasized that customers are unaware of the complexity and time involved in the manufacturing process.

MO said: "In our experience, it's about education, we're not talking about a workshop where kids first see what they have to do, then comes awareness, "oh my god, how much effort it takes!". When we do adult classes, pottery, and wickerwork classes, even though the women (who participate) create things, they still buy crafts from big manufacturers. It's like teaching kids, only when they start to enjoy the craft it's like "oh my god, now I know why it costs so much" and then the orders multiply."

5. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

Based on the experience and opinion of LC and MO, business incubators are not an effective form to support for new entrepreneurs. They provide a place, an accountant, but not ongoing support in the process or practical knowledge of how to start and run a business. Therefore, after the incubation period, many entrepreneurs give up the idea of running a business on their own.

Participants sought support in various forms but expressed disappointment with the support system. For example, MM mentioned LAGs - local action groups (in Polish: Lokalne Grupy Działania) - he moved to the countryside because their range of activities there is much wider. However, from the first studio co-funding meeting, he encountered a problem - his idea for a ceramic studio was not innovative enough and did not meet the program's metrics.

MO: "But it is even higher, in the ministries, at the level of strategy development. I will tell you about an example of a Łowicz course. There is a school there that runs weekend classes once a month. The

courses are very intensive but free, subsidized by the ministry. It has been working for 7 years already, the school has already trained many graduates who, according to them, then had to take advanced courses at a higher level. The ministry found out and said “sorry, but there will be no money for this”. She pointed out that the dominant opinion came “from above” and that it is they who believe that artisans should have another profession and make crafts as a hobby.

LC underlines that paradoxically, the recommendation is sometimes more important than the quality of the product. This is a problem common to “ordinary” business, like online marketing, while the form already achieved is different, much more here depends on customer recommendations, “word of mouth”, cooperation between people.

Participants also highlighted the problem of the lack of conversations about money during studies or among craftspeople. They encountered a problem of sharing knowledge on product pricing. Educators in the craft and entrepreneurship sectors, as well as experienced artisans, were reluctant to talk about prices and finances.

AR: “I had five years of studies at the Academy of Arts, I had entrepreneurship as a subject in high school and various courses on starting your own business. Even now, before starting the business, I was in the program where we had 40 hours of training on how to sell and more. In my context I learned little e.g., the price of the things I produce is a taboo subject, I haven't learned anything about it that would have practical implications”.

LC laughed and said, “I know that.”

The common problem with mastering the skills of old crafts, and therefore improving the product, is the reluctance of old masters to share knowledge. According to focus group participants, they see new artisans as competition in the market.

MM: “I had talks where I was in pottery class - this is the paradox of the so-called 'endangered professions' - some potters asked the one I had studied with why he gave lessons. He replied to them that “why do you tell others that these are dying professions, that no one wants to do them, and at the same time you are not sharing knowledge”.

Others confirmed that they also had difficulty obtaining technological knowledge from more experienced artisans. AR speaking about the Academy of Arts where she studied, said: “After three years I did not know some technology, some technology that I only encountered on YouTube, YouTube is a very nice teacher”.

LC spoke of the disrespect for people who want to learn the old crafts and gave the example of a friend who learned blacksmithing “For years he apprenticed in a smithy making less money than what I did in a month at home”. MM replied sarcastically, “apparently he was not yet worthy.”

MM: “Or, as in some projects, they force the student to work in such a way that the student decides to leave. LC confirmed that they treat you like you mean nothing to them.”

MM dispels the fears of the old masters in the face of competition from the new wave of manufacturers: “the objections that students take bread from the old masters are completely false as there are two wicker schools where you can learn to weave baskets for free and get state certifications and Somehow the old wicker centres didn't go bankrupt.”

MO underlined the instability of cooperation with local authorities who often take arbitrary and unjustified decisions.

MO: “My husband and I were doing arts and crafts classes for schools and suddenly it turns out that something that works well just stops working because the authorities have changed. Maybe it's specific to Poland - there hasn't been a major change, the rules haven't changed, only people have changed.”

6. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

Most entrepreneurs said they need to move their business online e.g., broadcast live from the studio or workshop.

Two opposing attitudes towards running an online craft workshop emerged during the interview:

MO cannot imagine running an online basketry course. She said, “I can't imagine that clients would like to pay for such courses, I can't imagine that logistically, how can we offer weaving workshops in schools? Are the children at home?”

AW with her entrepreneurial way, she found a way to lead small group ceramic classes. AW: “I practiced this model in a private school. I prepared clay bundles, two clay beads and a piece of fishing line and it was a bundle. I gave 15 such packs to school, then recorded a video and uploaded it to YouTube.”

On the contrary, MM underlined the nature of cooperation with public schools, the lack of logistical support from the side of institutions. MM: No teacher would, would have craft e-lessons.

The customer profile has changed. This required flexibility and rapid adaptation on the part of the artisans.

An important element of the sale of craftsmen of entrepreneurs is participation in fairs, fairs, historical events, since they lost this place of sale, which forced them to look for new outlets.

AW: “From what I learned from the ceramic forums a lot of people couldn't deal with it, sticking to their trail, they struggled to do anything else (...) I just managed to do it, but of course it wasn't stress free.”

Entrepreneurs had to come up with new products.

AW: “I make historic ceramics, even though the last few years have shown me that it is necessary to have a second, slightly different product. It is still ceramic but for contemporary use. She continued, I had to learn about a new group of clients, for example. I am on the traditional hairstyle forum. I showed the barber bowls I made there, in the spring they saved me, they sold very well.”

Temporary change of profession

MM: “Last year I had to work as a construction worker.”

7. What are your tips for self-development?

Participants simply recommend having a great product and presentation, as well as staying motivated and creative to explore and master old patterns, crafting techniques, and resources.

LC: “You can make a product cheaper; you can make it better and be better and fresher for people to recommend you.”

AW: “nobody will teach you, there is nothing like having role models and nobody is preparing me for this”.

8. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

During the interview, participants expressed the following knowledge and skills gaps that they would like to address through training:

- How to price your works?
- How to create a brand based on craftsmanship?

The AW has highlighted the interest in this topic in her professional community: a ceramist from Wroclaw offers training on ceramic pricing, people take her despite the fact that the training is not cheap.

- How to effectively communicate the value of artisanal products?

EP: “I know my company's values, but I can't express it well enough when I sell. (...) I would like to be able to describe my product in such a way that my customers understand it and I would like to do it systematically.”

- How to create visual aids presenting your work?

Participants would be interested in a training that would give a picture of how to process photos quickly, but also prepare an interesting “landscape” and props for the photo shoot.

The group offered the following forms of adapted training:

- Knowledge exchange, a kind of two-way study visit - one craftsman goes to another and learns, observes the technologies, then the situation is reversed.
- Participants emphasized the value of meetings in small groups or in individual classes. They enjoy conversations with people from the same industry.

AW: “For example, four ceramic artists meet, and each does something different in the next class. They all learn from each other. We could get rid of the attitude: “I will not show you this technique because you will copy it and sell it”.

- The need for comprehensive training was also emphasized - product photography, as well as social media marketing - researching effective hashtags for a given category, learning the rules by which Facebook promotes posts.

4.4.2. Focus group 2.

1. Please introduce yourself:

SJ – 28 years old, woman, graduate of graphic arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lodz. She works with broadly understood graphics, in recent years she worked for the fashion industry. She creates unique prints, such as lunar calendars, which she sells via social media. Recently she is fascinated with braiding and basketry and takes part in a master class in this field in Łowicz. She has not yet started a business.

KD – 32 years old, woman, designer in Lodz, psychologist by education. She cooperates with the Women's Association, where she implements projects of a social nature. Interested in handicrafts, especially making jewellery, which so far, she has been selling at fairs. She creates natural cosmetics. At the time of the interview, she was in the process of registering her own “Art Deca” company in which she will create soy candles.

AK – 33 years old, woman, professional photographer in Gdynia / Bełchatów. In 2020 she founded the mobile photo studio “Dzika Kępa”. He also works with old crafts like single needle knitting. She knits gloves, hats and mittens and sells them online.

MC – 32 years old, man, graphic designer in Lodz. His company called “Studio Warto” which he has been running for 4 years, offers services such as graphic branding. He cooperates with cultural institutions in the field of visual identification of events or places. He also designs posters printed by hand with the screen-printing technique. He graduated from photography, but meanwhile he got interested in graphics and this field has remained with him to this day.

KN – 27 years old, woman, basket and macrame weaver in Lodz. In September 2020, she founded a company that produces things from wicker. An actress by profession, but currently a full-time craftswoman. She is in the middle of a wicker master class.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from

Participants indicated three motivations for starting their business:

- They must be independent and implement their own ideas.

MC: “I felt it was time. That I couldn't find the perfect employer, I wanted to be an employer myself.”

- Encouragement and feedback from potential customers or relatives (family, friends) indicating that their product might be of interest to a larger group.

- Availability of a financial support or mentoring program, e.g., KD and AK have participated in programs where they got a grant from EU funds to start a business and cover its monthly running costs. SC used the “Business in Women ‘s Hands” support program which offered meetings with experts and dedicated training to sixty women starting their businesses.

3. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

The mental state of a new entrepreneur in Poland was summed up by MC: “Imagine you are going into a big field, you don't know what to do, if you have to be a craftsman, if you have to be a marketer, whether you should be a sales rep, or take care of the bookkeeping, and that's where the internal panic begins.”

As a challenge, the participants indicated the first contacts with the customer. MC: “We would like to do our handcraft and have the customer satisfied in the end. We want to focus on posters, that's why we started this activity. But if we do not provide good service to the customer, he will not recommend us. The first customers are usually friends, but then you have to serve totally unknown people, you don't know what to interest them, how to convince them.”

Another challenge in the market is that customers don't understand the craft. They don't understand the process of creating unique items and therefore demand low prices.”

KN: "This industry, basketry, has been woefully underestimated for years. I meet a customer and he asked me why my product doesn't cost PLN 10 like it did 15 years ago.

The reason that craftsmanship is underestimated in society is related to the lack of craft progression and access to old masters. The economic factor - low incomes in traditional crafts means the next generation does not want to learn the crafts and preserve the skills of their predecessors."

KN: "Handicrafts are disappearing. In my area, the people who sell their products are eighty or ninety years old and they have not passed on the tradition to their children, because their children are now in Germany, where they went to Warsaw to work in a business because it's more profitable. If we don't enjoy the craft, it will die out."

Another challenge for entrepreneurs is related to the perceived value of crafts in society is the pricing policy. KN: "Consumers are used to the fact that the cost of a product is the cost of the product, but in fact it is the cost of the material, the time of the person who produced it, the cost of storage, plus marketing support. My problem is, I don't know how to price my products good enough to avoid a situation where I have to shut down my business."

Participants stressed that they are fighting competition in the form of chain stores, like Ikea and in the case of basketry - products imported from Asia. KN said: "you can guess that someone is not weaving them in decent conditions". KN: "There was a bag woven with macrame, and there was a promotion, this bag cost 30 PLN. Because I also weave macrame bags, I know that it's not even possible to buy a string for a bag for that money. I think something is wrong here."

The issue of consumer education was highlighted, in particular the lack of awareness among customers of what constitutes price.

Many interviewees said they were very stressed about the documentation relating to running the business. If one does not have, as MC said, a starting point for his education, one does not really know what he is going to face.

The participants pointed out that to run a business in Poland, it takes a lot of time and effort to understand and create documentation. They wanted to be able to spend the same time designing and implementing new products.

AK: "I would like to take pictures, but for 4 months I have been processing grant applications and filling out excel sheets."

MC: "I would like to design and print on a screen in the morning and read in the afternoon how to tag something on Facebook."

Angrily, he adds, then this thought occurs to me: "What I want is to sell products and meet people, NOT deal with paperwork.

Another problem reported was the unclear and complex language of the law governing business activities in Poland."

MC: “When you visit an official website, the official language is inaccessible to an ordinary person, to someone who wants to start a business. And it is impossible to overcome it. I still don't know; I have to contact the accountant because I don't understand even the simplest things. It creates a barrier in my head.”

All participants were aware of the grants but indicated their limitations regarding, for example, age group, origin of a particular region, disability or some other type of social exclusion. In their view, many subsidy programs were far too restrictive.

MC: “There were no programs for men under 30, who are doing well. The lady in the office said to me: “if you are a healthy man before 30, you will not get any additional funding”.”

On a personal level, some interviewees find it difficult to find the right attitude to the works they create and their value. Participants pointed out that apart from formal issues, there is also a personal level issue that affects the price of their product or their behaviour towards customers.

KN brought up the issue of the mental relationship with money.

KN: “You shouldn't earn too much, because it's not good for the person buying it. When it comes to money, she often feels “I don't deserve it”. “I would distribute my work for free because I feel honoured that someone liked my work at all.”

4. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

Two sources of training are clearly visible. One is formal education: certified studies and courses, the other is done through own research, independent learning and observations from other experts in the field.

MC on his skills in graphic design and screen printing: “I was developing it on my own - I do a lot of tutorials, I see a lot of videos on YouTube, a lot of watching, learning my own graphics programs. I also learned it from a friend who runs a printing house, looking at how screen printing is used and what the tools are. This started to interest me so much that I found a screen-printing workshop and then gained experience assembling my own sieve up to the workshop. ... without a teacher, without a guide.”

SJ: “My background is completely different because I graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, my specialization is graphic arts, that is to say artistic graphic design. I had courses related to design, allowing me to explore various techniques. I was at “risk workshops” in Warsaw.

DN spoke of the lack of vocational training in the field of ancient crafts, in his case - wickerwork and jewellery - which in the past had maintained the craft market.

DN: “As a wicker, it is a difficult situation in Poland, because education in this field has collapsed. (...) There is no school that teaches jewellery making. In fact, they teach in Warsaw, but it does not pay off, because no one knows that you can make such jewellery. People prefer to go to Apart (chain of jewellery stores).”

Participants saw more learning opportunities in vocational or technical schools, many of which had been closed as a result of education reform in Poland.

AK, MC and KD highlighted the influence of new networks - they are a source of knowledge because new skills can be learned by watching online courses, craftsman YouTube channels and videos on technology, or by watching. 'inspiring Instagram.

5. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

Talking about the preparations for running your own business, the topic of entrepreneurship knowledge and the basic principles or obligations of a future entrepreneur came up first. Most of the participants had the topic "Entrepreneurship" in middle or high school, but the curriculum and teaching methods did not provide any practical information they could use when starting a business.

KD: "Economic education, education in general is not life; If my dad hadn't told me how to complete a tax return, if I hadn't brought it from home to school, they wouldn't have taught me at all."

KD on the topic of entrepreneurship: "It was pointless. I don't remember anything from the three years I spent in school".

A very important problem at the university level was pointed out by MC - "Five years of studying photography, which is a very specific profession, was supposed to prepare us for something. However, there were no specialization courses related to what would come after our graduation. No one was interested in what was to come, they only cared that the students brought in pictures to pass the studies. Likewise."

SJ, who graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Lodz, said her studies did not provide her with any practical sales skills, it was only about creating works and learning technologies. Participants agreed that students, despite their well-developed craft skills, end their studies without sufficient and reliable knowledge about entrepreneurship. They only know the basics like how to start a business and what are the obligations of an entrepreneur, but they often give up on this career path.

The lack of knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship has its unpleasant consequences for young entrepreneurs. DN says: "There was the topic of entrepreneurship in college, but it really didn't prepare me. I have such a feeling that I must have experienced it on my own and must have made a bad declaration to the social insurance institution and lost 1500 PLN when I started. The tax subsidy you get when you start is a different box than another tax rebate that is also out there, I checked the wrong box - checking the wrong box caused me huge losses."

The participants underlined the inefficiency of the education system in Poland. There was a visible nervousness - they all pointed out the lack of preparation for running their own businesses, pointing out that it was a must-have that they had to supplement with classes or their own research as adults.

6. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

Respondents would like to acquire the following skills:

- Structure and prioritize work within the company, manage individual tasks.

MC recalls the beginnings of his activity and the doubts he had: “what should I do first, design, shipping or contact, promotion and how to do it, which direction to choose.”

- Effective use of promotional tools, their selection, creation of an action plan for the company in the field of marketing. Survey participants use and know social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, but do not know how to use them effectively to promote a business, which ones and when to choose.

SJ says irritably, “What is Instagram? Is it that complicated? what content should I post there?”

- Reach out to customers. Participants who have been running their businesses longer emphasize that they are not limited by the lack of product ideas, but by the time it takes to reach the right customer groups. This was also emphasized by those interviewed who are at the start of their career as self-employed, e.g., SJ already has product ideas and how to create them, but first she wants to know more about the distribution channels and how to communicate with her target group.

- Define the character of a brand. Some participants did not know what role to play: an entrepreneur, a brand or a person and how to conduct this communication in social networks.

- Delegation of tasks and responsibilities. Independent entrepreneurs would like to know how to manage the development of the business, in order to reach a stage where some important tasks can be delegated to other people. MC and KN consider this fact to be a worthwhile investment because they save time in designing and preparing the product.

- Search for additional financing for an operating company. Although participants are aware that there are support programs e.g., European programs. They don't know how or where to look for reliable information about themselves.

Everyone agrees that the best form of support for their company would be individual, regular meetings (for example once a month) with an expert or a mentor, adapted to the specificity of their commercial activity. General group training does not provide information that could be effectively implemented in their businesses. There is a great need for experts who offer advice in individual cases and inquiries.

4.4.3. Deep interviews

10 in-depth interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs of the crafts and creative sector. Interviews lasted from 45 to 80 minutes, all were recorded and transcribed upon the consent of the interviewees. To protect the personal data and anonymity of the interviewees (as agreed with them during the interviews), initials instead of full names will be used. 3 interviewees participated also in the focus groups, while 7 were interviewed individually as this form suited them better. All interviewees except one operate in cities larger than 200.000 inhabitants.

	Initials	Gender	Age	Place of operation	Sector	Role
1.	AR	F	34	Lodz	Design, non-formal education, art	Entrepreneur, educator
2.	EP	F	34	Gdańsk	Textile production	Entrepreneur

3.	AB	F	41	Warszawa	Photography	Entrepreneur
4.	AK	F	33	Gdynia, Lodz	Photography	Entrepreneur
5.	WS	M	34	Warszawa	Industrial design	Entrepreneur
6.	MMB	F	33	Wroclaw	Industrial design (bags)	Entrepreneur
7.	EL	F	64	Pabianice, Lodz	Ceramics, non-formal education	Entrepreneur, educator
8.	JJ	M	26	Lodz	Textile, design, fibre art	Aspiring entrepreneur
9.	AL	F	43	Lodz	Artistic jewellery	Entrepreneur
10.	KK	F	40	Lodz	Ceramics, non-formal education	Entrepreneur, educator

1. Please introduce yourself:

- AR: graduate of the Academy of Arts in Sculpture. She is the sole owner of her business which opened in 2020, provides sensory education products and services. She is an artist, designer, educator, cultural activist with 10 years of experience in the culture and craft sector.

- EP: graduate in sociology, researcher, never received formal training in crafts or entrepreneurship. She registered her craft business in 2017. She weaves textiles and operates an online store with her own products as well as items made by other artisans.

- AB: trained photographer, entrepreneur with 3 years of experience.

- AK: photographer and anthropologist by training. She opened her mobile photo studio in 2020. She gained management experience while working in a company in the UK.

- WS: brand owner and creator, self-taught industrial designer, lawyer, 15 years of experience in running a business.

- MMB: designer of bags with 5 years of experience in the management of a craft company, independent entrepreneur.

- EL: ceramist, her husband and she have owned a ceramics workshop from time to time since the 1980s; She sells her handcrafted ceramic tableware to restaurants and cafes.

- JJ: final year student at the Academy of Arts (fibre art - textile and paper) who wants to combine traditional craftsmanship with modern design ideas and create his own business with artistic decoration.

- AL: jewellery designer and designer, graduate in artistic jewellery from the Académie des Arts, independent entrepreneur since 2016.

- KK: independent entrepreneur, since 2019 has opened a company called "Céramiques Manufacture" thanks to a public subsidy program.

2. Please tell us where your desire to become a Handicraft Entrepreneur has come from.

The main motivations for engaging in craft entrepreneurship mentioned by interviewees include a passion for the craft itself, sometimes developed into skills certified through formal education; values such as independence and the freedom to create with a minimum of bureaucracy; artistic and creative skills and talents; necessity - learned a crafts to be able to make necessary things or things that one cannot afford; artisan heritage in the family; reluctance to follow the company's career model;

MMB: "What drove me? I was prompted by the fact that I was going to my friend's wedding and didn't have the financial means to go crazy with a dress. So, I thought I'd get myself a purse. I made a handbag and liked it, and a lot of women at this wedding liked it, and I actually thought I could try making such accessories after work hours. "

AK: "Taking pictures makes me very happy, especially when I think about shapes and colours and how light is placed on objects or how it changes the colours in which they appear. I have noticed that it resonates very deeply with my sense of aesthetics and gives me a lot of happiness.

These motivations are different from the motivation to register a business. None of the interviewees expressed the ambition to start and run a business as a goal. The company appears as an instrument to be able to sell its handicrafts legally and to live from its passion and its skills. Having an official company makes it easier to buy materials (companies are entitled to wholesale prices), products and sub-services from other companies. It is also easier to work with business partners and clients as companies prefer to work on a B2B basis rather than employing artisans or artists."

Two people interviewed felt that they would not have started their business without the subsidy of a public business support program.

3. Tell us about the history of your company:

Three interviewees participated in public entrepreneurship support programs for job seekers. All used EU funding for micro-entrepreneurship, managed locally by an agency in their region.

The program AK (33, photographer) signed up for was designed to support entrepreneurship in neighbourhoods undergoing revitalization. She was inspired by a friend who also applied for a similar program. She qualified for the program based on an initial business plan that she then developed with a mentor. During the program, she obtained financial assistance to cover monthly operational expenses and some one-time costs such as electronic equipment. It helped her a lot, she could not buy all the expensive photographic equipment using only her own funds. She also had to participate in some courses which allowed her to acquire basic knowledge about running a business in Poland. The lessons were useful but too short and quick to be able to master all the skills and information.

AR, who also used EU funds to start a business, agreed that the classes given were too intense and too general. In addition, she complained that during the program she had to stay as a job seeker for 5 months and that was a problem because she could not make a living.

Some interviewees expressed a sceptical attitude towards state and EU business support programs and funds, they said they do not provide enough money, or training, and that they create false

expectations among their beneficiaries. They encourage the opening of a business, especially by young and inexperienced people, but do not support entrepreneurs in the long term.

WS: "If I wanted to get funding with more money, I would ask my relatives, my family for money. Then I would try to be successful. If I got something for free, I wouldn't try to do it for real. Statistics show that 99% of businesses started by unprepared job seekers fail because the preparation at the employment office is poor, zero, the only thing they'll teach you is to write a business plan that doesn't. no Sens. For example, you get 20,000 PLN (around 5,000 euros). For 20,000 PLN you can, I don't know, buy a wardrobe for your bedroom, two desks and a computer, that's it, right? It is not a budget that can be included in a rationally and realistically written business plan. Unfortunately, the tax office says that is enough. This is completely wrong."

4. How difficult was it to start your own craft business?

Problems of the craft market

- Poland is a small market and a small clientele for certain types of crafts, such as industrial design. This results in a limited number of businesses that one can take as an example or model when opening their own business.
- Competition, those who sell the same products or services but do not have a registered company. Since they have no trading fees, they can offer lower rates.
- Quality products or services are not enough in the craft sector. Entrepreneurs need to engage in sales, marketing, and branding. They are often focused on their private image (personal brand). Many of them don't want it, perceive it as something that goes against their values. Most of them would prefer to focus only on the craft.
- It takes a lot of marketing and communication effort to find customers, as most of the manufactured items are considered luxury goods and not commodities.

Systemic problems endemic to the Polish bureaucratic context of running a business.

- Complicated bureaucracy and many unclear obligations associated with starting a business, lack of online services would make obligations easier to meet.
- Non-transparent rules, often changing, e.g., accounting, etc. The follow-up is exhausting and time consuming, leaving little time to focus on making the products, a craft that the majority of respondents appreciate the most.
- Difficulties in contact with the public administration, for example, the National Tax Office or the social insurance institution (in Polish: ZUS). The majority of respondents describe that both institutions operate on the basis of control and punishment, rather than providing support and advice. Some were very surprised when an official helped them solve a problem. They avoid contacting these institutions and expect that if they do contact, they will be questioned, audited, vetted, etc. Only one interviewee - WS, said this could be avoided by showing a respectful and non-demanding attitude towards public administration.
- All of this turns into low confidence and fear of making a mistake, especially the informal aspects of running a business.

Limited funds

- High costs of running a business. Respondents complained about social security and mandatory taxes which double after two years of running a business. The system is moving in a positive direction, but respondents perceive the change as slow and insufficient.
- Most of the respondents would like to take specialized courses and mentoring, but do not have the extra money to invest in it.

Skills and knowledge gap

- Lack of skills in management, business, law; insufficient knowledge of accounting rules.
- Poor entrepreneurship training in Poland in general.
- Entrepreneurs are not fully informed about national and European support programs and investment opportunities. They don't know that they can get microloans or reimbursement for training, courses and postgraduate studies.

Time deficit and organizational challenges

- The independent entrepreneur should know a bit of everything from legal, accounting, marketing, sales, social media. It takes a long time to engage in all of these activities.
- The independent entrepreneur has a lot of responsibilities and must oversee all aspects of the business.

Stereotypes

- The women interviewed pointed out that craftsmanship is generally associated with strength and manual labour and is therefore considered a male profession in which women will have difficulty succeeding.
- Vocational education is not considered prestigious. It is believed that vocational schools are aimed at pupils, especially boys, who perform poorly and "would not succeed" in general secondary schools and universities.
- "Artists are poor" - There is a prevailing idea in society that making articles and crafts is not profitable and that you will not earn a decent living from it.
- Handicrafts, especially crafts and yarn crafts, are often seen as old - a grandmother's night-time activity. This is directly related to the fact that consumers are little aware of the amount of work and expertise required by such a craft. Many consumers expect these items to be inexpensive. This perception is only starting to change in Poland.

AK had previously applied for funds to start a business but did not get it. At the time, she was not aware of the formalities and administrative and accounting procedures that she is obliged to follow, as a sole proprietorship.

Unlike the majority of those surveyed who feel overburdened with accounting, WS asserted that an entrepreneur should be proficient in this as it can bring financial benefits, improve business management, and expand possibilities.

WS: "I can see that it is a huge mistake of most entrepreneurs not to be interested in how to handle taxes and what can be called a cost to a business, and how to run a business from the side of the business. accountability."

He also added that many new entrepreneurs make the mistake of not reading the laws and laws that relate directly to their business.

The same interviewee, based on his 15 years of experience, mentioned that the main mistakes he made were:

- To engage in a business partnership with someone he did not know too well, and that this person was not as passionate about the job as himself.
- Lower prices and compete with mass-produced items in China.
- An erroneous price calculation that did not include the cost of packaging, taxes, operating costs, etc.

The interviewee said his main lesson was that he didn't appreciate his job enough and set it way too low. He pointed out that he came from a working-class background, he had wrongly assumed that the purchasing power of his clients was similar to his. When he was a beginner, he did not understand that some customers would buy his designs because of the high price and not in spite of him. He is also said to have invested time and money in personalized, practical and one-on-one courses on legal regulations relating to running a business.

5. Regarding training, what type of education do you have?

Most of the people interviewed learned their crafts on their own, in courses or during internships. Those who grew up in small towns pointed out that there were very few opportunities to learn crafts and the arts in formal education. Most of the interviewees mastered their skills through practical work. Two of the interviewees received formal vocational training - in photography and photographic technique.

Some interviewees, especially those who received training in art academies, complained that business-related courses are often seen as less important or completely unnecessary for artists. The dominant concept of an artist is that he creates works of art, participates in exhibitions and events, while the company behind, the search for clients, the legal forms of sale of art or products. based on art, remains a taboo subject. Because of this, many Academy of the Arts graduates have low skills and face a lot of stress related to the financial side of their activities.

AR (33, artist, educator): “During my studies, I didn't know how to evaluate my work - whether on time, by materials or otherwise. We had marketing lessons and we did graphics, but we did not receive practical information. I would have liked an experienced sculptor to come and say, “I'm asking so much money for this, and that's what you have to consider when setting a price”. We haven't learned that.”

7. What are, in your opinion, the main strengths and weaknesses of entrepreneurship education in the fields of crafts?

Lack of entrepreneurship education during school years. Although entrepreneurship is taught as a subject in the Polish education system (2nd year) and in universities, it is often very theoretical, general and definition oriented. This training is not suitable for adult life because the students do not understand the practical aspects of running a business.

This lack of entrepreneurship training (in particular the law) can result in situations where people, encouraged by the ease of regulations for micro-enterprises, spontaneously create businesses without realizing the obligations they assume. Soon they find they lack knowledge and skills, become confused, and fail.

The same lack of entrepreneurship training in vocational education was also highlighted.

AK: “No one at the end of our photography studies felt strong enough to start a business, except maybe for those who already had family businesses, where the parents were already working.”

WS learned business skills, time management, and realized the importance of knowing accounting rules by observing the companies and experienced businesspeople he had worked for as a web designer.

AR acquired general skills such as communication, negotiation, teamwork while working for non-governmental organizations where she organized festivals, cultural and artistic events.

8. Are you doing something to update your skills?

Most, but not all, take the initiative in finding specialized online and offline courses that would help them run their business. Being creative people, they love to learn and find new inspiration. Some of them had done this before registering their business. Short-term or one-day courses in marketing, branding, and advertising seem popular.

AR said she attended an Erasmus training on building a regional brand. She appreciated the international and broad perspective she gained through it. Still, she was sceptical of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs program, which offers mentorship to entrepreneurs wondering if this experience in another country can be useful and comparable to her experience in Poland.

Many participants use online platforms with free lessons, watch YouTube channels with tips on entrepreneurship and crafts, and follow FB thematic groups where they often see information and advertisements on educational opportunities. E-books and PDF files are also popular.

AK: “I prefer to learn from experience. I do free and paid online specialist courses. She is also a member of a local professional association where she can discuss her craft and engage through the peer learning methodology. She often chooses paid online courses to learn entrepreneurship and dedicated to craft professionals. In these trainings, experienced professionals present their marketing strategies. This is interesting but sometimes still too general because some of the marketing strategies presented will only work for a small group of customers.”

AB paid for professional classes in mediation and assertiveness, while MMB, with similar needs, found free classes on these topics. Additionally, MMB uses Etsy Assistant - this is a paid tool prepared by Etsy (an e-commerce website focused on handmade or vintage items and craft supplies) where she has her shop. This tool helps her understand current trends and gives her tips to increase sales. For 3 months, she used the services of a marketing agency that helped her create public relations and reach out to influencers. She gave up because it required too much extra work.

The participants showed little interest in the master’s in art studies which is considered too theoretical and taking too much time and commitment. Some interviewees expressed interest in postgraduate (2-3 semester) university studies which in Poland are perceived to be more market-oriented and more practical than full cycle university programs. An exception is WS who decided to finish studying law in order to better understand the legal aspect of Polish business.

9. Do you think the COVID-19 situation will change anything in terms of skills needs for the craft sector?

The covid-19 pandemic has caused the cancellation of some typical craft sales channels such as design and art festivals and fairs. In addition, entrepreneurs who offer services based on face-to-face meetings have been blocked almost completely. This has led to the obligation to modify the profiles of certain companies. Entrepreneurs, especially in the field of photography, have had to build a new offering, reach out to new potential clients and, in general, reorganize themselves.

When it comes to sales, everyone interviewed agreed that the only choice was to go completely into online sales. As the competition grows, to be successful requires creativity and effort.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

AK: “Your passion for the profession is your strength. In times of difficulty, it will help you remember why you are doing this and give you the strength to keep going. Get advice from specialists (lawyer, accountant, mentor) right from the start. Consider getting a grant for your business - check with your accountant about it.

WS: “An important lesson for all these artisans is that if they want to make money with what they create: they should sell it to people who can pay for it. Don't start by registering your brand and business. Start with good know-how and acquire your audience: first the customer, then the business. Don't be afraid of math, especially percentages and proportions. Do not be afraid to read, because reading does not hurt and costs little, and do not be afraid to make your dreams come true. Never believe those who say dreams come true in six months. Take care of your health because working with your hands is tiring and painful; mental work causes insomnia, so take vitamins and

eat well. Get as much sleep as possible. Last but not least, for generally creative people: every moment is good.”

AR: “Do a case study of your business before you record it. Try the product, learn how to price it, try to find your customers. Acquire practical knowledge and not just theoretical.”

EP: “Before you start your business, create a pilot product and test your ideas. Don't be afraid to show people your product. If you sell jewellery - go to Facebook and post on craft groups - they not only make, but also buy handicrafts. Ask questions, analyze the comments. Show your things online and offline. The most important thing is your product - if it is of good quality, well made, well designed, unique and besides, you will present it sincerely, it will sell. Maybe you won't have a large group of customers because the Craft doesn't have a large number of customers anyway, but you will find yours. ”

AB: “Don't rush to register your business. Explore your options carefully - there is a lot you can do as a natural person without a business. You may find that you can do more than you think.”

JJ: “First of all, everyone who makes products, handicrafts, must have a passion for it. All of these emotions stay in these elements. Products made only to earn money, without the pleasure of the creative process, without love, without respect for materials and resources, have an even worse quality.”

AL: “If you have the time and the strength, fight to change the rules.”

MMB: “Take action, don't give up, persevere and stay determined.”

JJ (artist, 26): “Well, it will definitely be more focused on bringing everything online, so every business and my future business will focus primarily on the aesthetics and functionality of the website. It has to be very intuitive; it has to be very functional, very practical, not enigmatic so that a potential buyer can clearly search and find a product. The positioning of the website will be very important, so my website is the first one that buyers see.”

Some interviewees mentioned that their profit had decreased. Their response was very diverse. One person, although seeing a 20% drop in sales, decided to increase the price of their products in order to reach customers whose financial situation was not worse due to the pandemics. It has also focused on improving the design of its products in a way that better matches the needs of its customers. Finally, he invested his free time in self-learning and building his image as an expert in his field.

AB whose business depended on events and meetings experienced a lot of financial difficulties due to the instability of its business. She decided to give it a ride with personal development like wellness, therapy, language learning activities. She also started to think about how to rebuild her business and helped other people with that. She received funds from the government, but these only cover basic costs, so she temporarily worked in a restaurant.

AL, which makes artistic jewellery, said 2020 was not as bad as expected as customers still had resources to spend.

AL: “In the spring of 2020, everyone said we were going to be poor. But in fact, May has been very good to me. Maybe people were just sitting at home, bored, so they were shopping online. Now I can really see that people have started saving and I think it was planned.” She continues that unlike 2020, 2021 could be a real challenge as people's economies have shrunk dramatically. She hopes the government will provide more financial assistance to businesses now.

EP pointed out that the main challenge for its online store is the disruption of the international postal system caused by COVID-19 in 2020. It said it has fundamentally lost access to US customers who make up the largest share of customers. from his shop. Likewise, MMB was unable to purchase its usual materials and had to start importing from another country. This forced her to learn a lot about customs and international import-export laws. After that, she learned that it is good to always have local supplies of materials. She was motivated because in March 2020, her profit had increased enormously, she had daily more than 10 orders of bags, mainly personalized.

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

Interviewees reported the need to develop the following skills:

- Marketing and sales: sales channels, prices of products and services; product photography and video making; market research skills - what services and products like mine are worth in the market and who buys them; product design; Online marketing; customer journey; Internet sales; SEO Marketing; website management.
- Communication: write national and European grant applications for entrepreneurs
- Personal creativity and creative thinking; well-being and work-life balance; insurance
- Time management; establish priorities; risk taking; creative problem-solving management skills
- Law and finance: copyright; drafting of contracts; accounting; billing

Some interviewees indicated that the courses they attended were too generic and too basic. The information they obtained was not sufficiently precise. There are a lot of entry courses while there are very few advanced, specialized and tailor-made courses. They would prefer to have classes with people in the exact same industry, for example, an owner of a ceramic studio would like to participate in a class with other ceramic contractors.

Some training methods were frequently suggested during the interviews:

- Training at a slow pace, for example, a few hours a day over a few weeks or months rather than intensive 2-day courses. The second option does not leave enough time to “digest” and reflect on the new information.
- Many people questioned perceive their activity as very specific. They express the need for individual mentoring and a case study adapted to the needs, profile and environment of their company. Mentoring can take place online, over the phone, or in face-to-face meetings. Optimally

once a month according to the diagram: diagnosis of the problem, proposal for a solution, implementation and evaluation.

- Online course with possibility to ask questions (downloaded videos, live sessions).
- Good quality self-study, updated books and online materials.
- Practical learning, observation at the workstation, observation of more experienced companies in the same field.
- Face-to-face interactive courses and training.

Conclusions

The first group interview showed the complexity of problems faced by a craft entrepreneur. The LC's summary that an entrepreneur must be like an octopus reflects well the condition of a craftsman on the market. The challenge of relations with clients is described by MO: "A craftsman must be a showman, a celebrity. Not only does he do his craft well but needs to attract the customer's attention with his performance. What does the client really want to buy – handicrafts or my performances? We have stopped talking about craftsmanship, we need to do some stand-up because of which the client finally says – ok, I will buy it".

Public programmes supporting enterprises seem to prefer innovation over sustainable development. This is very unfortunate as craftsmanship in the face of the global ecological disaster and climate change, is an innovation, in contrast to the mass production system. Market conditions have changed. In the past a revolution or innovation was the introduction of mechanization. Now, we need mechanisms to decrease production numbers and make fewer, but unique, good-quality goods which can last longer.

Crafts can help mitigate the negative effect of mass production. If the process of creation could be included in how a craft good is presented, the customers would develop a deeper understanding of the production process and consequently, would prefer a local, handmade product over an alternative from a chain store. On a larger scale such a phenomenon could have a positive impact on ecology and inspire society to make more conscious consumer choices.

What is striking is the inconsistent attitude towards the so-called "dyeing professions". On one hand, there is a growing concern that some of the old craft professions will soon disappear, on the other hand, the craftsmen themselves, by withholding the knowledge from younger generations, contribute to this process. A substantial change needs to happen regarding the prevailing attitude towards skills and knowledge sharing. Moreover, if craftsmanship was more valued on the market and there was a larger clientele for crafted products, experienced craft masters would not live-in fear that a younger maker sells a jug with a similar glaze.

The participants of Focus Group 2 proposed a support group as a form of helping entrepreneurs in the craft sector. Meetings would take place in small groups of entrepreneurs at various stages of business development – at the beginning, and with many years of experience.

MC confirmed that if he had not been sent to Business Incubator, not to the institution as such, but to a group of 19 entities like him, he might not have had the strength to continue running the company. MC: I don't know if I would mentally withstand running a business all alone.

KN added that such a support group, based on sharing information to help each other, rather than withholding it for oneself, empowers and builds a shared strength.

A major limitation for entrepreneurs is the lack of financial resources to invest in the beginning or later, to accelerate company development. MC remarks that: I would not make the mistake of starting a business without funding. The participants also said that it is common to wait for appropriate funding, e.g., to the beginning of next year.

Entrepreneurs indicated that the high cost of the obligatory Social Insurance Institution taxes (ZUS) and other fixed costs resulting from the tax system in Poland negatively affect the price of the product.

Moreover, participants are overwhelmed by documentation, formalities, and Poland's complicated tax system. They give examples of other entrepreneurs who drop out because of these factors. An atmosphere of discouragement and helplessness appeared in the group as soon as the topic of the system and formalities was raised.

Clearly, the entrepreneurs express a desire to create new products, creativity, willingness to learn new skills, and share their experiences, but they are limited because they need to devote so much time to formalities. Craftsmen's earnings do not allow them to invest in development, thus limiting their huge potential.

The regret expressed towards the educational system is also clear. All of the interviewees pointed to the huge, systemic gap in entrepreneurship education in Poland.

Most of the craft entrepreneurs who participated in the deep interviews received no or little vocational training. They mostly learn by themselves or on specialised courses given by experienced craftsmen and women in their field. regarding managerial and entrepreneurship skills, all of them expressed great disappointment towards the education system in Poland. Even if most of them finished some business courses, they highlight that this is not sufficient as the major problem is systemic – there is too little education in entrepreneurship, as well as legal and financial aspects of running a company in the Polish public education system. Future crafters receive good training in technology but lack a general knowledge and picture of how to economize their crafts. They are prepared to craft but not to run a company.

Lack of education combined with the unclear and complicated financial and legal rules translate in low confidence and frustration. 9 out of 10 interviewees reported that they are overwhelmed by the amount of time and effort they need to put to understand the basic logic of accounting and reporting. They are also afraid of fines and controls from the public administration. All of the entrepreneurs said that they would prefer to focus on product design and craft over administrative obligations as their ambition is not to run a business as such but to express their creativity through craft and art. Company is instrumental to be able to follow their passion for craft and sell it legally.

All entrepreneurs reported the need for further training. They need a variety of skills from management, law and accounting, communication, marketing and sales, as well as well-being and

personal skills. Preferred forms of education include mentoring and case studies, as well as slow-paced courses and peer-learning amongst entrepreneurs in the same sector. Such a diversity of demanded skills stems from the fact that a modern craftsman needs to excel in technique but also in communication. In the contemporary competitive market, it is not enough to make a good quality product. In words of one interviewee, makers need to be showmen who can attract attention by showing the process and engaging the customer. It is not the product that sells but also the skill, process, values, lifestyles and identities it implies.

Overall, a sense of deep commitment and passion towards craft was clear in all the research participants. They highlighted the potential of the craft market to mitigate the negative effects of mass production, provided the necessary change in customers' attitude towards craft and growth in awareness of what constitutes the cost of it.

4.5 ITALY

On the framework of the StartCraft program, two focus groups were organized on 23rd and 26th January by Google Meet with the partner organization Smooland.

In these meetings, the representatives of Smooland took notes on the different discussions and topics, in order to develop this document.

The participants of the 1st focus group were 4 and on the 2nd focus group were 6. 50% of participants were male and 50% were women. Most of them were craft makers with more than 5 years of experience.

4.5.1. Focus group 1 and 2.

1. Please introduce yourself:

A.I. started her small handmade business in 2017 alone. She has a big passion for everything handmade and she loves to spend her time making handmade creations. Her small collection includes scarves, hats, gloves, handmade items for new-borns and holiday-related creations. She sells her creations at local markets.

L.B. is an artisan in textile and leather. 59 years old.

G.I.: Italian. 64 years old. Living in Lucca. Textile and leather artisan for more than 20 years of experience.

L.T. is a 54-year-old painter based in Lucca.

F.D. is an Italian engineering student at the University of Pisa that has started his own crafts business in origami. He is 26 years old.

A.S. has started her wooden craft business dedicated to telephone stands. Her small business is called Wabi. She is 25 years old.

M.A. is a 42-year-old Italian lighting design maker.

K.C. is originally from the Gambia. He started his own African style fashion collection two years ago with the support of the ARCI, cultural and social promotion association from Italy.

D.V. is 32 years old from Croatia. In the last years, she has worked at the ARCI association as an educator, supporting workshops in arts and crafts.

M.O. is a 42-year-old Italian crafts businessman.

2. Please tell us where your willingness to become a crafts entrepreneur come from:

Most of the participants do not have a crafts background, however, they started activities in crafts following their hobby and passion.

A.I. started her small handmade activity because it was her passion.

L.B. and G.I. inherited their textile and leather bags business from their father. They don't have a crafts training background.

L.T. studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and she has developed her painting and business skills at the university.

F.D. loves making origami objects. He has a big passion for Japanese culture and his willingness is to make his own origami objects.

A.S. is an industrial designer and she dreamed to create something on her own. That is why she has started her wooden Wabi collection.

M.A. has developed his passion for making lighting objects in the last 5 years. Everything started when at his workplace he discovered the material Corian. He had many ideas objects made of Corian, that is why he has launched his business, Mauino.

K.C. loves making clothes. His educators at ARCI saw his passion for creations with African motives and that is why they supported him to start his own African fashion business.

D.V. is an economist, however, she prefers the creative sector and running creative workshops. "Is more as a hobby than a real job".

M.O. is a big fan of crafts creations.

3. Please tell us about your business history.

As mentioned previously, most of the participants of the focus group do not have a crafts training background, however, they all started their crafts path following their passion and hobby.

Another thing that most of them have in common is the business size, they are mostly family business or small business. None of the participants has confirmed to have a business plan.

4. How difficult was it to launch your own craft business?

All the participants have shared the challenges they faced when they launched their crafts business. Neither of them had previously created or run a business on their own before, for that reason they had no previous experience in the management of a crafts business. They all run micro-businesses.

A.S.: "Being a solopreneur was hard, to do everything on my own. It was difficult to create a customer database. My first customers were my friends and family".

K.C.: "For me, the most difficult part was the language to integrate myself into the Italian community. Without language and interpersonal skills, is almost impossible to do business in a foreign country. I had the luck to meet amazing people at ARCI who helped me with everything to start my own business".

M.O.: "In Italy, there is a lot of bureaucracy and high tax rate, I think that for entrepreneurs, this is one of the major challenges, a barrier in setting up a business.

L.T.: "I am a solopreneur painter. For me, the most difficult thing was to create an audience".

5. Talking about training, what kind of education do you have?

A.I.'s background is in social sciences. She did not follow any crafts training.

L.B.'s background is in business studies and she has followed several short courses in crafts.

G.I. has followed a leather and textile making crafts training path.

L.T. studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and she developed her painting and business skills at the university.

F.D. is an engineering student at the University of Pisa.

A.S. is an industrial designer and she follows online MOOCs to improve her crafts and entrepreneurial skills for a micro-business.

M.A. is an engineer, and he has not followed any crafts training path. She is self-taught in crafts.

K.C.'s biggest hobby is making clothes, he is self-taught. In the last year, he has followed workshops in textile making to improve his skills.

D.V. is an economist.

M.O. is an aerospace engineer, he has developed technical craft skills thanks to his engineering background. He started his own crafts business with other engineers that share with him crafts making hobby.

6. Based on your experience which soft skills are needed in order for someone to start running his/her own crafts business? Why? General / basic entrepreneurship skills, general/basic managerial skills, creativity, and creative thinking, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, negotiation, time management, business model, development, financial literacy, marketing, intellectual property rights...

During the discussion, participants shared their vision of what are the important soft skills for an artisan to launch their own business.

M.A.: "Nowadays it is not enough to have crafts skills to launch an artisan business. In order to make it visible, you should have digital and good storytelling skills".

A.S.: "Everything is so competitive now; the world is full of lots of staff and if one wants to start a craft business. You should be very creative to make a difference".

M.O.: "In my case, teamwork has played a very important role to make it. Alone you may arrive at first but with the team, you will arrive at your objective. Another very important skill is negotiation and interpersonal skills. Even if you are not a big business representative, it's always important to create a network and make use of that network".

K.C.: "It's very important not to give up. Leadership and consistency are the most important soft skills to start a new business activity. People should believe in what you do".

7. What are, in your opinion, the major assets and lacks entrepreneurial education in the crafts fields?

It was a difficult question to answer for most of the participants because most of them did not follow any entrepreneurial education in the crafts sector. However, they know the techniques of the craft most of them lack knowledge of marketing, negotiation skills, and the skills to launch a product in the market professionally. Most of them lack business planning skills.

8. Do you do anything to update your skills?

A.S., K.C. and F.D. follow regional and online courses to improve their crafts and entrepreneurial skills. However, the rest of the participants admitted that they don't follow any course because they are focused on their ongoing work.

9. Do you think that COVID-19 situation will change something at level of skills needs for the crafts sector?

All the participants believe that Covid-19 has already changed the perception and demand of skills necessary in the crafts sector. If before Covid-19 an artisan may present his/her work in local markets, small stores, nowadays it is impossible. And if a craft maker does not have the flexibility to change his/her approach then his business will die. In their opinion, Covid-19 has proved that digital skills are important for a business to grow and become visible.

10. What are your tips for self-development?

A.I.: "Read as much as you can and put your knowledge in practice".

M.O.: "Focus on networking and building your network".

A.S.: "Be active in international projects, there are lots of ongoing projects for artists, craft makers and creative people".

F.D.: "Try to travel and immerse yourself in different cultures".

D.V.: "There are lots of formal and non-formal training available for free, find them and participate and don't forget to create a network".

G.I.: "Be creative and flexible, observe your surrounding and you'll definitely learn something new".

11. What would be the ideal entrepreneurial training for you?

Participants shared their ideal training package to become a successful entrepreneur. The competencies that they mentioned are all practical. Below the list of competencies, they find necessary for a perfect training package:

- Business plan
- Digital and offline marketing
- Fundraising
- Storytelling
- Basic management skills

4.5.2 Deep interviews

1. Background.

A.S: Craftsman in the wood industry.

A.I.: Handmade maker.

L.B.: Leather bags and textile entrepreneur.

G.I.: Leather bags and textile entrepreneur.

L.T.: Painter.

F.O: Craft Maker.

M.A.: Designer of objects and entrepreneur.

K.C.: Textile entrepreneur.

M.O.: Crafts Entrepreneur.

M.M.: Furniture maker.

2. What prompted you to create your company?

A.S: "I've always wanted to create my own business. Being an industrial designer allowed me to practice my skills and create my own creations in wood. I collaborate with my relatives who have a furniture manufacturing business. They support me with the wood cutting process. I take care of all the operations of my business alone: design, digital marketing, legal and administrative aspects, logistics, etc."

A.I.: "My desire is to create unique and handmade objects, in order to give an exclusive value to the single object and to each customer."

L.B.: "My husband founded the company, mine was an acquired passion. Now I like to create new objects that make people happy. I can express my creativity".

G.I.: "The company is a family tradition, I never wanted to work in another sector. My father taught me this profession and I am passing it on to my children."

L.T.: "Every day I get up to do this job I am happy. While I am painting, I manage to be in a parallel world and live a second life".

F.O: "I have just started working as a "craft maker". My desire is to make an idea or a thought realistic".

M.A.: "The idea of becoming an entrepreneur prompted me to create my own company. The environment in which I work is not really a passion, the real passion is being an entrepreneur".

K.C.: "Being an entrepreneur meant life for me, being independent and being able to discover my strength".

M.O.: "I always wanted to create something on my own. Having crafts and business skills, I decided that I could run my small handmade shop".

M.M.: "My brother and I had been working at a furniture company for several years. We gained all the necessary skills and insights to make furniture. Later on, we decided to set up our own company and run it as a business. It's been more than 15 years that we own our company".

3. What is more important in your opinion for a craft entrepreneur: the technical or the transversal skills?

A.S: "I believe that both skills are very important and cannot replace each other."

A.I.: "Technical skills are the only ones I have developed over time. If the business is small, that's enough."

L.B.: "I think both, even if doing your job technically well helps a lot".

L.T.: "In my sector, what matter most are technical and creative skills. Word of mouth then does the rest".

F.O: "Both for me. Being well organized and planned helps a lot in the work".

M.A.: "Transversal skills are very important, perhaps more than technical ones. Having communication skills helps you to better see and understand your products and ideas".

K.C.: "I think both even though my main skills are technical. I started developing those, I wanted to be good at something".

M.O.: "Both of them are important and interconnected".

M.M.: "It's important to have very good crafts skills but also business skills to run the operation of the company".

4. What would be your message for those interested in entrepreneurship?

A.S: "Create a business plan and study well what your goal is, what added value it brings to the market".

A.I.: "Having a lot of passion and a lot of patience".

L.B.: "We must jump and fight on every occasion".

G.I.: "Don't get bothered by problems but always try to figure out the best solution".

L.T.: "I would say it is a beautiful world made of satisfactions".

F.O: "Thinking of working hard and having a lot of passion".

M.A.: "Autonomy and making choices are freedom. You have to make your job as an entrepreneur a lifestyle".

K.C.: "Never give up and always keep going".

M.O.: "Do master classes and improve yourself, you should compete with the world market".

M.M.: "Networking is the key to promote what you do".

5. Which were the main challenges and obstacles that you faced when you created your company?

A.S.: "Create an audience. I still have to face this challenge."

A.I.: "Manage all the stakeholders of your business (suppliers, customers ...)".

L.B.: "Understanding which was the best product for the market of the future".

G.I.: "Bureaucracy and all the time wasted on documentation".

L.T.: "Look for someone who gives you the opportunity to express yourselves and work".

F.O.: "Find someone who appreciates my work".

M.A.: "Create a solid and consistent business plan with your business and your dreams".

K.C.: "Being able to understand the textile sector and learn as soon as possible".

M.O.: "Lack of human and financial resources".

M.M.: "At first we had difficulties to compete with larger industries due to lack of the best instruments".

6. What are some of the mistakes you wished you could have avoided when you started your business?

A.S.: "(Doubts) I'm learning by making a lot of mistakes. However, I think it is very important to start with a team with different skills."

A.I.: "Thinking that knowing how to do the job is the only thing that matters."

L.B.: "To think that it was easy to sell the created product".

G.I.: "Do not continue on the path of family products but create something innovative".

L.T.: "Do it all by yourself initially, it would be better to be a team"

F.O.: "The biggest mistake is not looking for someone who could fill my gaps".

M.A.: "The biggest mistake is not having believed enough in me but having wasted time looking for certainties in others".

K.C.: "Not having created a team that had the same goals as me".

M.O.: "Not having a reliable business partner with who I could share responsibilities".

M.M.: "Initially we had to invest more money in our instruments and set up. Before setting up everything we needed some time".

7. Did you experience failures? If so, what did you learn from them?

A.S.: "Yes, when I started, I wasn't sure how to handle the logistics while placing orders. So, during one of my first orders, I was misled by a customer, as I sent the item but did not receive any payment."

A.I.: "Yes, at first I wasn't selling because of the price. My perception of the value of my products was not the same as that of others".

L.B.: "Yes, wanting to follow everybody's path: opening a shop. But it didn't work. Now I am specialized in the online world".

G.I.: "The failure was not having created quality products. When the big industries came it was difficult to compete".

L.T.: "Not value me enough, thinking that painting was something extra for people".

F.O.: "I didn't sell anything at first. I have learned that you must never give up".

M.A.: "Yes, that of not being able to concretely carry out an activity. We must learn to be consistent and persevering in one's craft".

K.C.: "The first failure occurred because I didn't have a clear idea of what to do. Building a good action plan is key".

M.O.: "I did not have failures".

M.M.: "Sure, the first phase of our business was disappointing, however, we did not give up and let's see it worked".

8. If you had a final piece of advice to someone just starting out, what would it be?

A.S.: "Put all your heart and you will arrive!"

A.I.: "The important thing is to have fun with what you do".

L.B.: "Never put limits on your life".

G.I.: "You have to be tough even in adversity. There will always be ups and downs in work".

L.T.: "Live work like a dream".

F.O.: "Study hard and initially learn from the best ones".

M.A.: "If you do what you love in life, you will never feel the burden of work".

K.C.: "In the beginning, you have to earn everything, don't think it's simple"

M.O.: "Plan everything, test your idea then set up your business"

M.M.: "Invest your money and resources".

5. CONCLUSIONS

Entrepreneurship education received by participants.

Most of the focus group participants have not followed an entrepreneurial education and they claimed the importance and the lack of skills they have while carrying out their business activities. They all share a passion for crafts making, as they have creative and technical skills, however, they lack solid entrepreneurial skills to make a business grow further.

Most of the younger crafts entrepreneurs are highly skilled individuals with university degrees related to arts or business, more of them started their activity as a hobby before jumping into a professional approach. However, they miss that, despite having university studies, the training they have received has not helped them when it comes to entrepreneurship. They claim that at the university, they received theoretical knowledge, but not the necessary practical knowledge to carry out their own business.

To sum up, crafts entrepreneurs said that they lack notions of entrepreneurship, all participants strongly agree that our education system does not provide properly the tools and resources needed to help young people in their entrepreneurial paths.

Format and competencies addressed.

Although some of the participants follow extra courses to improve their entrepreneurial skills and competencies, most of them have learnt by doing. Most of the participants focus on their daily work, said that they don't have enough time and money to spend on further training.

Major needs of competencies expressed.

All the participants shared the need for practical skills that may improve their daily business operations skills and competencies.

They mostly lack of:

- Marketing and business developments skills.
- Competencies to fundraise and further grow their current businesses.
- Legal and tax issues.
- Communication and know how to attract attention to this product by showing the process and engaging the customer.
- Know where to look for funding sources, how to apply for grants, how to get financial resources to invest in the beginning or later, to accelerate company development.

Eventual lack from educational existing offer.

As we indicated before, the participants stated that formal education is very theoretical, and they all lack practical knowledge. Additionally, they pointed out the real need for entrepreneurship training in formal and informal education.

They appreciate the initiative of the STARCRAFT project and confirm that the target group to whom the project is addressed needs easy to access entrepreneurship training.

Preferred format and competencies for entrepreneurship training.

There is no unambiguous answer regarding the preference for the training to be online or face-to-face. Some prefer online and others in person. Most of them agree that the ideal training package must allow them to continue working and should be quite practical and applicable to their ongoing crafts businesses.

Preferred forms of education include mentoring and case studies, as well as slow-paced courses and peer-learning amongst entrepreneurs in the same sector.

Further demands expressed.

STARCRAFT project has raised an interest between the participants. They would like to receive updates on the project and possible events and initiatives where they can participate as artisans.