In front of you are the results of the small-scale impact study about COVID-19 on entrepreneurs, traders, catering, liberal professions and service providers in 5 European countries.

1. **Introduction – A small-scale impact research**

Some local European organisations were given the opportunity to register for the small-scale impact study of COVID-19 on local entrepreneurs, traders, catering, liberal professions and service providers. For ease of readability, we refer to “the entrepreneurs” further in this report, thus encompassing the entire target group.

The research arose through the ERAMUS+ partnership BUCOLICO as a part of the Intellectual Output 3 of the partnership.

A general questionnaire was drawn up that gauged the impact of COVID-19 on local businesses and evaluated how the efforts and support measures of the governments were perceived by these entrepreneurs.

The focus of the research is therefore “local”. How have local entrepreneurs been impacted by COVID-19? How are the companies in doing on this moment? How do entrepreneurs see the future? What do they think of the support and communication provided by their own municipality?

The general questionnaire was compiled in collaboration with all partners. The partner could translate this questionnaire for each country.

The survey was contucted in june 2021 so that the evolution can be measured as COVID-19 evolves further in our society.

No fewer than 26 organisations confirmed their participation in the survey.

1. **Methodology – How to get responses**

Entrepreneurs are traditionally a very difficult target group to reach, not only in market research. This is experienced by many cities and municipalities in their day-to-day operations: communication and interaction with local entrepreneurs is always a challenge.

Entrepreneurs have little time and are traditionally more than full-time working on their business. In these COVID-19 times, the challenge promised to become even greater to reach this target group and also to ask for a time investment on their part. Nevertheless, it was just now the time to question them and capture their crucial feedback and insights.

The partners of the BUCOLICO project initially communicated to local entrepreneurs themselves, with the necessary support from the research team. Direct e-mails and social media were used, local networks and associations were involved, and so on. The local networks will also called upon to help disseminate the survey among the entrepreneurs.

A good response has been achieved in almost all regions of the partners. It was striking that the Corona crisis had already given rise to a lot of extra efforts in many European regions to involve entrepreneurs (even) more closely in policy. This made communication a lot easier.

In total, the 5 partners together reached no fewer than 26 entrepreneurs, who have made time available during this hectic period to give their valued and valuable feedback.

Finally, we would like to state that the results you will read are what they are: the representation of a measurement at a certain moment in time. It is now important to carefully read the results presented below and interpret them within the local context.

1. **Results**
	1. **COMPANy PROFILE**

The first fice questions provide more insight into the profile of the companies represented in the survey. You can read which sectors (and subsectors) are represented and where the companies are located. We show how long the companies have been active and how many employees they count. Physical and online presence is also surveyed.

Question 5 of the profiling of the companies focuses on the sector in which they belong. The table gives an overview of the sectors involved.

* 1. **IMPACT CORONA ON THE ENTREPRENEUR LANDSCAPE**

Now that it has been outlined which type of companies are represented in the survey, we will proceed to the analysis of the impact of the Corona crisis on these companies.

At the time of writing this report (August 20210), Corona is still present in almost all European countries. The summer period gave many companies some breathing space, but the predictions for the evolution of Corona in autumn 2020 do not promise a “back to normal” situation. Therefore, we emphasize that the results in this chapter describe the impact of Corona, from the start (June 2021) to today (August 2021).

To question 6 44% of the respondents stated that the budget for training and development remained unaffected.

Also the results of question 7 show that approximately 65+ of respondents surveyed answerd that the learning and training needs of the enterprice remained unchanged.

As the results of question 8 show, the share of enterprises using online learning programmes or face-to-face courses to deliver staff development and training during the pandemic was 70%. There was a variety of courses which were followd during the pandemic as the results of question 9 show.

To question 10 almost 55% of the respondents stated that it would be a relevant to orginase a training on the application of labour and employments laws during the pandemic. Also 40% answered that a traning on benefits and compensation would be useful.

The results of question 11 on occupational safety show that 70% of the respondents think that a training on working safely during the COVID-19 pandemic would be relevant in the next 3-6 months.

As the results of question 12 on human resources and staff management show, in the next 3-6 months 55% of the the respondents think that it would be relevant to have a training on workplace HR policies in response to COVID-19.

The results of question 13 on business competitiveness and management skills show that 55% of the respondents think that a training on maintaining businsess competitiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic would be relevant in the next 3-6 months.

As the results of question 14 show, before the COVID-19 pandemic, printed materials were common for staff development and training. However, now more than 55% of the respondents are in favor of mentoring. Also 50% suggest an combination of face-to-face classroomù instruction and more than 35% prefere online webinar presentations.

1. **Conclusions - Measures to continue staff development and training**
	1. **Measures taken to continue staff training**

● Guidelines on teleworking, as well as safety and health;

● Implementation of preventative measures, including social-distancing measures, temperature checks and the wearing of face masks at the workplace;

● Access to accurate and up-to-date information regarding the COVID-19 crisis, including government recommendations and regulations;

● Sharing of industry best practice through newsletters, online portals and webinars;

● Increased flexibility and adaptation of work schedule and rhythm;

● Arranging for online assessments;

● Agreements established through social dialogue.

* 1. **Desirable measures that are currently unavailable or require improvement**

● Extension of the time frame for programme implementation;

● Online platforms for exchange of lessons learned and resources at the regional level;

● Timely notification of COVID-related arrangements and measures to allow sufficient time for implementation;

● Crisis response plan enabling enterprises and educational institutions to effectively develop measures, strategies and resources in response to the crisis;

* 1. **Technical**

● Improved access to ICT infrastructure, including free or affordable internet connection;

● Enhanced provision and access to online educational platforms and tools, including online communication and video conferencing tools, as well as training software and applications;

● Free online training courses, videos, webinars and live workshops;

● Development of online platforms, portals and tools for staff training, including simulation tools for delivering practical, hands-on training;

● Staff capacity building in online training delivery, teleworking and basic IT skills;

● Education and training on safety and health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic;

● Guidelines on using digital platforms and tools for online learning and teaching, including video conferencing tools.

● High-speed and reliable internet connection, particularly in remote and rural areas;

● More affordable or free access to the internet, particularly for vulnerable groups;

● Development of an integrated online platform for staff training;

● Online training of trainers in e-learning course design methods;

● Online courses on mental health and safety measures at the workplace.

**4.4. Material**

● Development and provision of online educational materials and resources, including those relating to safety and health;

● Provision of digital devices for teleworking, including computers.

● More online learning content and resources that is tailored and fitted to the local context, including online courses in local languages, using multimedia media and podcast;

● Adapting of on-site, face-to-face training materials into online content;

● Provision of digital equipment and tools for training and teleworking, for example, computers and virtual reality simulators;

● Provision of hygiene and disinfectant products at the workplace.

**4.5. Financial**

● Reduction of internet service costs by providers;

● Financial support for wages from the government, in the form of subsidies and loans, and so on;

● Subsidies for participating in online distance learning;

● Employee tax relief

● Additional financial support for digital infrastructure, such as internet, electricity, phone bills and so on, while teleworking;