

CRESTART

CRESTART -Creative rESilient leARning communiTies meeting COVID challenges
2021-1-HU01-KA220-ADU-000027016

**SOCIAL IMPACT MEASUREMENT
INTERNATIONAL REPORT**
BASED ON THE COUNTRY REPORTS OF THE PARTNER COUNTRIES

MEASURING THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION AND THE IMPACT ON SOCIETY
WITHIN THE CRESTART PROJECT

2023



Table of contents

Introduction.....	3
What is social impact measurement?	3
Change	3
Methodology of the research.....	4
Structure of the questionnaire.....	5
Results	6
Demographics.....	6
What is your gender?	6
Which category includes your age?.....	7
Does the participant live in the pilot settlements or the surroundings?	8
Location of living	8
The highest degree the participants completed	9
Living situation of participants	10
Employment situation of the participants	10
Local cultural life, activities, effect of the project on society	12
Do you miss anything in the local cultural offering?	12
Activities missing from local cultural life.....	12
Participation in local cultural activities	13
The cultural activities create social connections within my living environment.	14
Activity of the responders in organising local cultural activities.....	16
Findings and suggestions.....	19



Introduction

The pandemic brought significant changes to our social and cultural life. In this and similar crisis situations, there is an increasing need for cooperation and communities helping each other.

In the framework of the “CRESTART - Creative rESilient leARning communiTies meeting COVID challenges” Erasmus + project we collected creative solutions and good practices that allows us in times of crisis to help and support each other. Our goal is to provide tools for local residents/individuals/citizens with which local people can help each other in difficult situations within their community.

What is social impact measurement?

Social impact measurement refers to the process of evaluating and quantifying the effects of social initiatives, programs, or interventions on individuals, communities, and society. It is a critical tool for organizations and stakeholders to understand the effectiveness and outcomes of their social investments.

What do we use Social Impact Measurement for?

- Decision-Making and Strategy: Social impact measurement helps organizations make informed decisions about resource allocation, program design, and strategy development. It provides evidence-based insights to maximise positive social outcomes and improve the efficiency of interventions.
- Accountability and Transparency: Measurement enables organizations to be accountable to their stakeholders, including funders, beneficiaries, and the wider public. Transparent reporting of social impact builds trust and fosters greater collaboration and support.
- Learning and Improvement: Measuring social impact facilitates organizational learning and continuous improvement. By analysing data and outcomes, organizations can identify successful practices, areas for improvement, and refine their approaches over time.

Change

- arising in the quality of life of the people benefiting from the project
- can be connected to the project activities
- planned and unplanned
- positive and negative
- measured systematically and regularly.

During the CRESTART project all the partners agreed to use the same methodology. The chosen social impact measurement is based on the so-called (Theory of Change, TOC). The project and the SIM followed the main principles and steps of TOC.

A theory of change is a description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected. It focuses on mapping or "filling in" it, what has been described as the "missing middle ground" of a programme or change initiative (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to the desired goals and the desired outcomes. The steps to do this are to first identify the desired long-term goals and then identify the conditions (outcomes) that need to be met to be achieved for the objectives to be realised.

The outcomes then form the basis for determining the type of activities or interventions that lead to the achievement of the long-term goal as a precondition for achieving the objective. Through this approach, a better understanding of the activities and the achievement of the long-term objectives. It also leads to better evaluation, as progress towards longer-term goals becomes measurable, going beyond the definition of programme outputs.

Methodology of the research

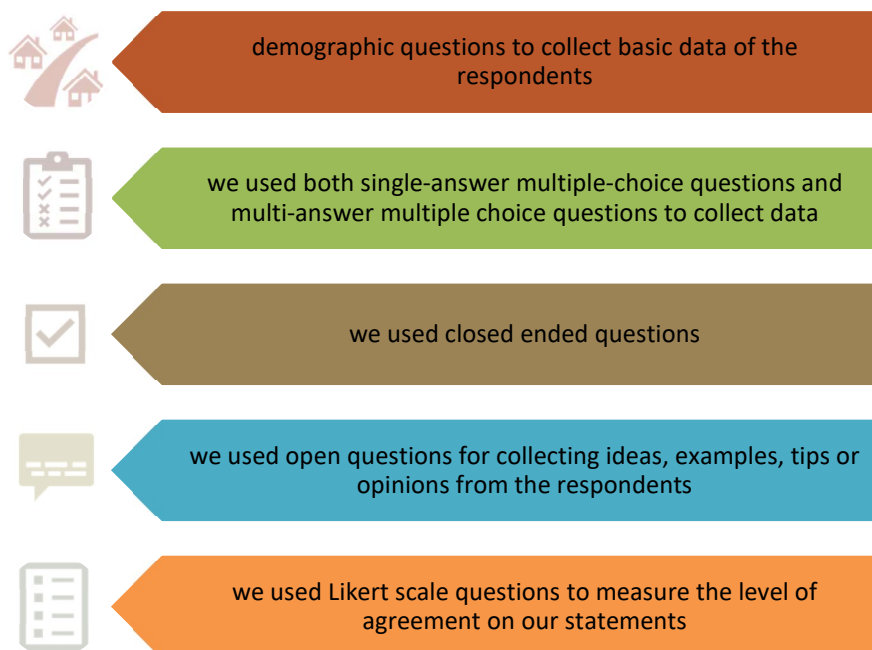
As part of the methodology, two questionnaire surveys were carried out, where the number of respondents was also an indicator within the project. The questionnaires were used to identify age groups, municipalities and by gender, it can be used to draw conclusions from the original assumptions. As the pandemic has brought major changes in our social and cultural life, the questionnaire survey tool was used to gather the best local knowledge on the practices at local level to share them and provide creative tools, to empower local citizens to support each other and their communities in times of crisis. We can also measure social impact by filling in the questionnaire.

We have concluded two studies in each partner country: one at the very beginning of the project (SIM1 research), and one at the end of the project (SIM2 research). This report summarises the conclusions of the two research.

We had separate questionnaires in each partner country. We used Google Forms for the questionnaires. Partners prepared a “country report” based on their questionnaire, and this report is the summary of all the data received in the 4 questionnaires.

The language of the research/questionnaires was English in the case of the Netherlands and Cyprus, while national languages in Bulgaria and Hungary based on prior experiences of language knowledge of the target group.

We used several question types in the questionnaires:



1. Figure - Types of questions used during the Social Impact Measurement

The research was concluded:

Country	Partner
in Bulgaria	by Public Policy Watchdog Forum
in Cyprus	by Cardet
in Hungary	by CROMO Foundation
in the Netherlands	by Changes & Chances

The following document summarises the results of the SIM research. For the SIM1 research we aimed to reach a greater number of participants, while in the case of SIM2 research we targeted a smaller sample of people considering that this research is a control.

SIM1 research targeted 250 participants/country. Originally the partners planned to gather data mainly from the pilot settlements of the project, however it was needed to extend the area to the whole country because of the low number of responses at SIM1 research. The partnership decided to reduce the target number to 100 persons/country, and meanwhile increase the number of individuals interviewed. SIM2 research targeted 25 participants/country.

SIM1 survey was distributed mainly online, however in Bulgaria it was necessary to collect answers on paper due to the lack of internet access of the target group. SIM2 survey was concluded only online.

It was a deliberate decision of the consortium not to narrow the focus and surveys only to the active community organisers, but to reach local citizens as well to try to inspire them to be more active for the local community.

To allow comparable data at SIM1 and SIM2 research at the preparatory phase of SIM2 research we contacted first the participants of the SIM1 research directly by e-mail (where it was available). The number of participants did not reach the targeted 25 people in each partner country, so we decided to open the answering for a wider public. At this step we targeted those, who participated in our programmes: multiplier event, pilot training, e-learning testing. That is why their responses are relevant in the context of measuring changes caused by our project.

Structure of the questionnaire

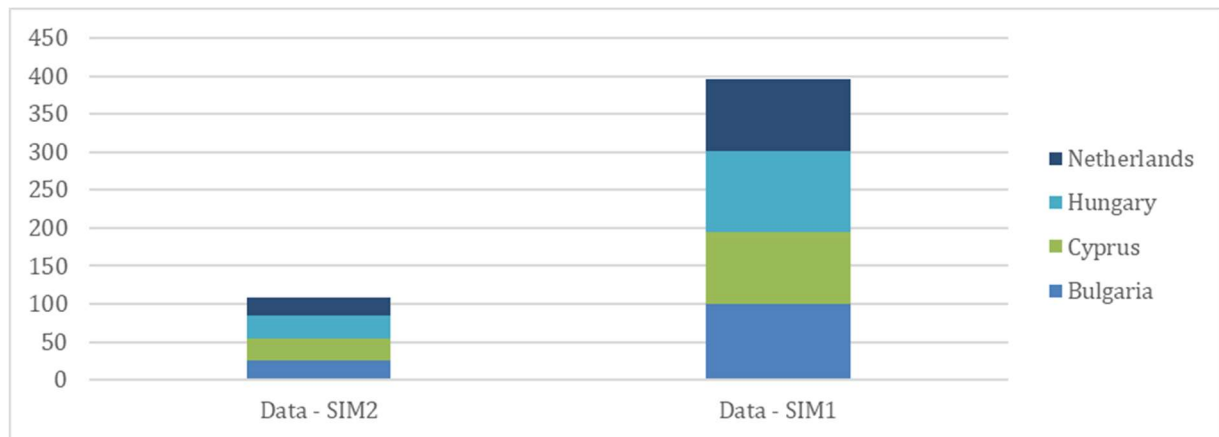


2. Figure - Structure of the questionnaire

Results

SIM1 research was concluded April 2022, meanwhile SIM2 survey was conducted in August - September 2023 in each partner country. A link to the questionnaire was available on the partner countries website, the CRESTART project website and all social media social media platforms (FB, Instagram). Several NGOs as well as in previous surveys, participants in previous surveys and workshops were invited to fill in the questionnaire directly.

The number of responses was the following:



1. Figure - Number of participants in SIM2 and SIM1 research by country

We consider that the responses are balanced among the partner countries in case of both surveys. There are minor differences, and all the partner countries reached approximately the targeted number of respondents.

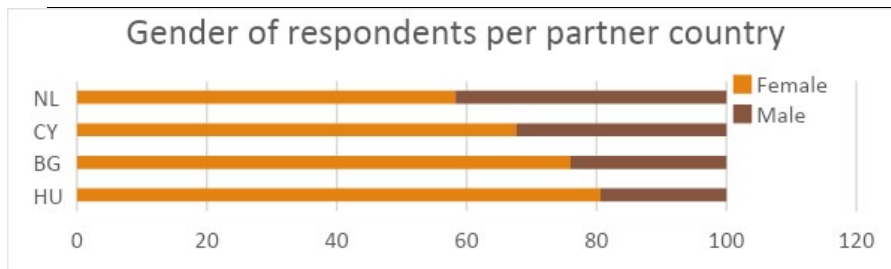
We have received 3 answers from different countries (Portugal, Poland and Slovakia), we added these data to the country data of the questionnaire they answered.

Demographics

From now on we will present the SIM2 survey by chart and compare the results with the SIM1 report in text connected to the figures.

What is your gender?

In all the partner countries most respondents (77 people - 71%) were female. This corresponds to the SIM1 research, when 72% of the respondents were women.



4. Figure - Gender of the respondents - summary of the 4 countries' data

In both researches the Dutch males were more active than in the other three countries, also, concluding the other activities during the project implementation we can consider that in the Netherlands male are more active, and more interested in community building, than in the other countries. In the other 3 countries the presence of women is overbalanced, in the case of Hungary, it is around 80%.

Which category includes your age?

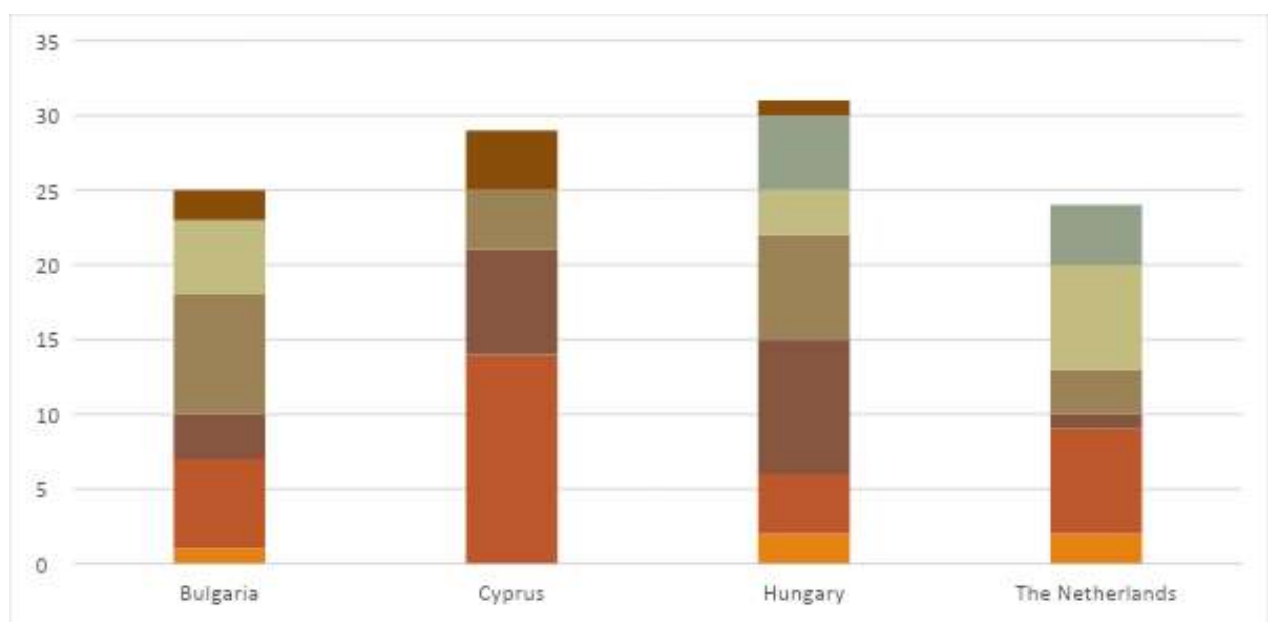
The most active participants in our survey were the 21-34 respondents, and the ratio of the other participants' age group corresponds to the data from SIM1 survey.

The age distribution of the respondents was not surprising however we were expecting a higher number from the 35-44 age group.

The high ratio of age group: 21-34 might refer to the enthusiasm of youth interested in making a change. The Netherlands is an exception where 21-34 and 55-64 age groups were almost equal, while the age groups 35-54 were less active in this research.

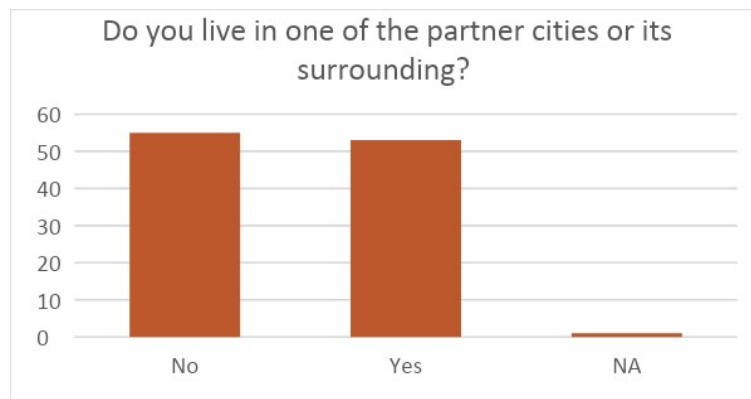
It is interesting to note that respondents older than 76 years participated in 3 countries, but the Netherlands.

Figure 4 presents us the age groups of the respondents by countries.



5. Figure - Age of the respondents by age groups and countries

Does the participant live in the pilot settlements or the surroundings?



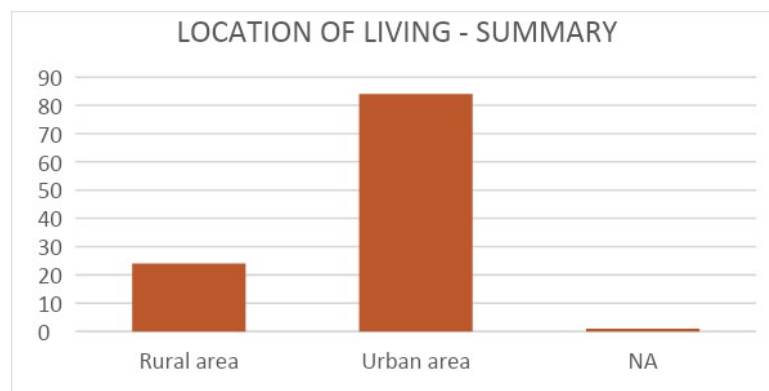
6. Figure - Respondents city, region - pilot settlement or outside?

Via our questionnaire we have reached many respondents even outside our pilot region. Half of the respondents replied from outside the pilot cities and their surroundings.

This data corresponds to the SIM1 report data, where 59% of the respondents were from outside the pilot settlements.

First, in both research it was difficult to reach community organisers at the pilot settlements. Also, the fact that the survey was carried out online opened the space from users outside the pilot cities. Meanwhile, it is a great opportunity to monitor the answers of this large geographic scope, the focus on the pilot cities is lost.

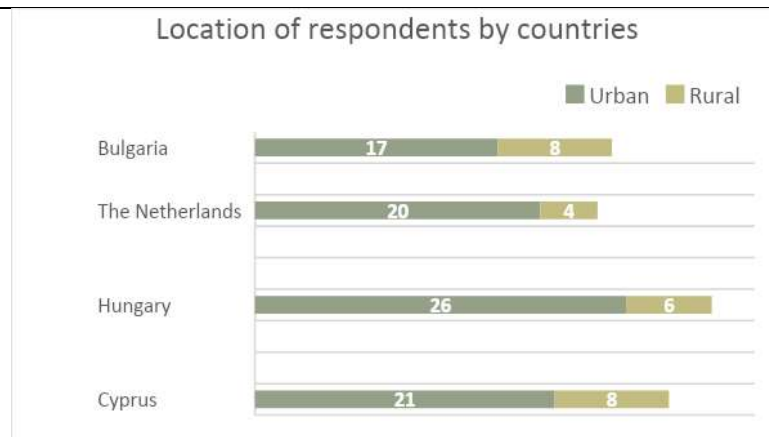
Location of living



7. Figure - Location of living - rural or urban

Most of the respondents live in urban areas, while 22% live in rural areas. This ratio is a bit higher than in case of SIM1 report, where only 12% of participants lived in rural areas.

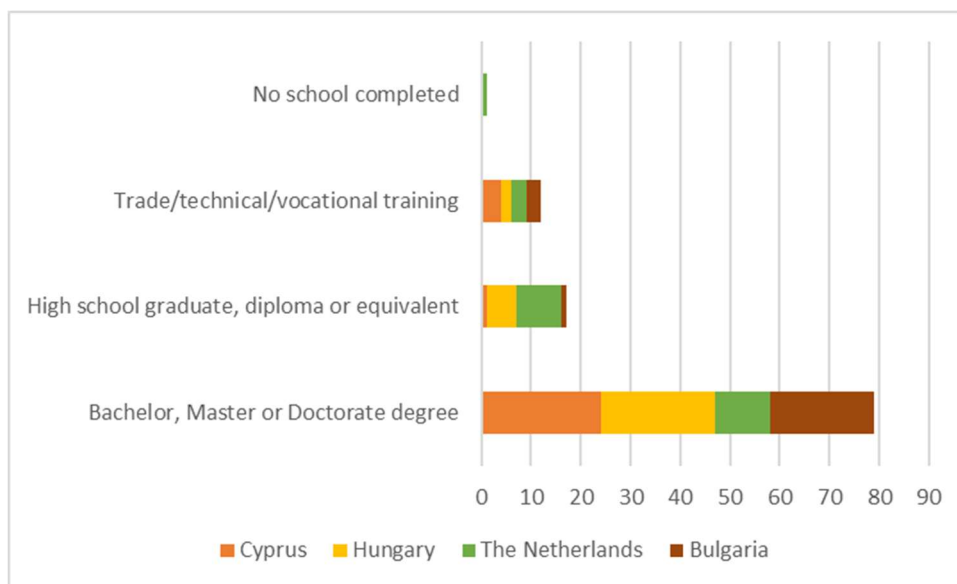
While this is a significant raise still answers from urban areas are dominating.



8. Figure - Location of living - rural or urban by countries

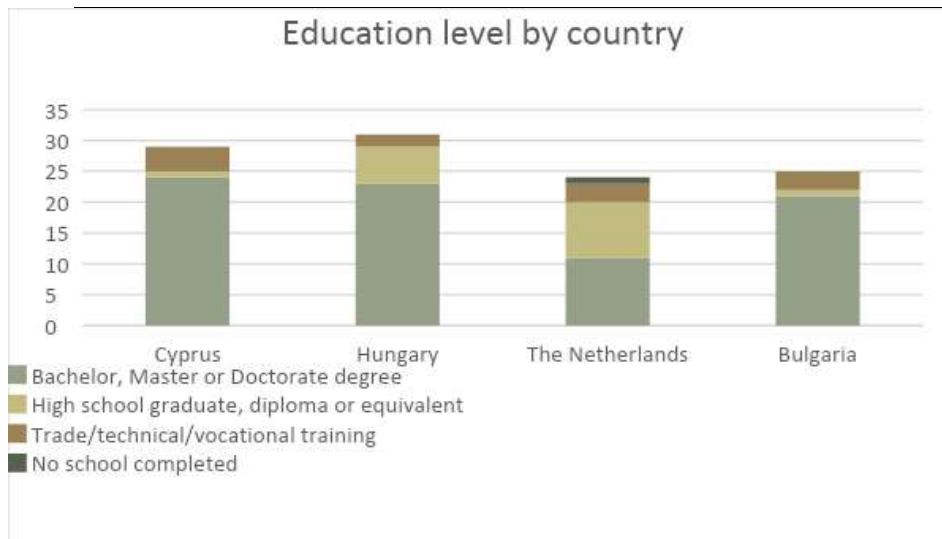
When we consider the above data by countries, we may conclude that Bulgaria is the country who could involve more people from the countryside, while Hungary is the other end, where mostly people from cities participated in the research. Bulgaria had two pilot settlements, one of which was Lovech, considered a rural area.

The highest degree the participants completed



9. Figure – Education level of participants by level of education

According to the answers of the participants, the majority of those who completed the questionnaire have Bachelor level or higher education degrees. In total it is 72% of the participants. In the Netherlands this value is remarkably low: 45,8%, but still, it is the higher part of the sample.



10. Figure - Education level of participants by level of education

Only 1 participant reported not to complete his/her studies.

The Dutch partner succeeded in involving various education levels of participants, meanwhile in the other countries mainly highly educated participants completed the questionnaire.

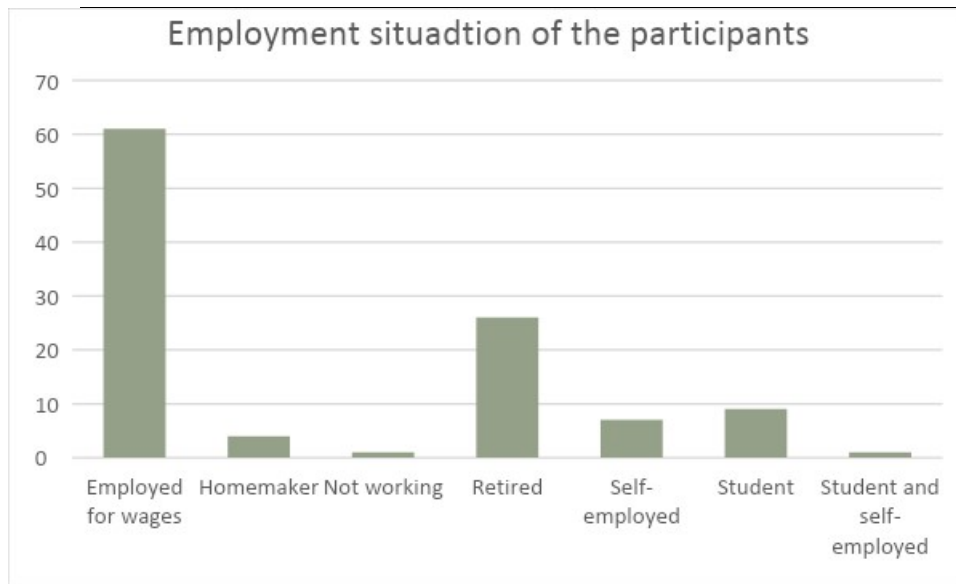
This data corresponds to the SIM1 report data. Either those with higher education are more likely to complete the research, or among our target group is highly educated, we must consider their answers accordingly.

Living situation of participants

We measured the living circumstances of the participants and concluded from the replies from the 4 partner countries that most participants lived with their partners or their families. Meanwhile only 15,6% live alone. The result is similar in both reports.

Employment situation of the participants

At this stage we made a data cleaning to make the answers comparable, resulting in the data in Figure 11. In all partner countries those who are employed are the most active in replying to our questions. While in Hungary and the Netherlands the proportion of pensioners is rather high (20%), in the two other countries it is a bit lower. Participation of retired people in this survey was remarkably higher than in SIM1 research (6%). While students were more active (25%) in SIM1 research in this survey a rather low, only 8% of respondents were students.



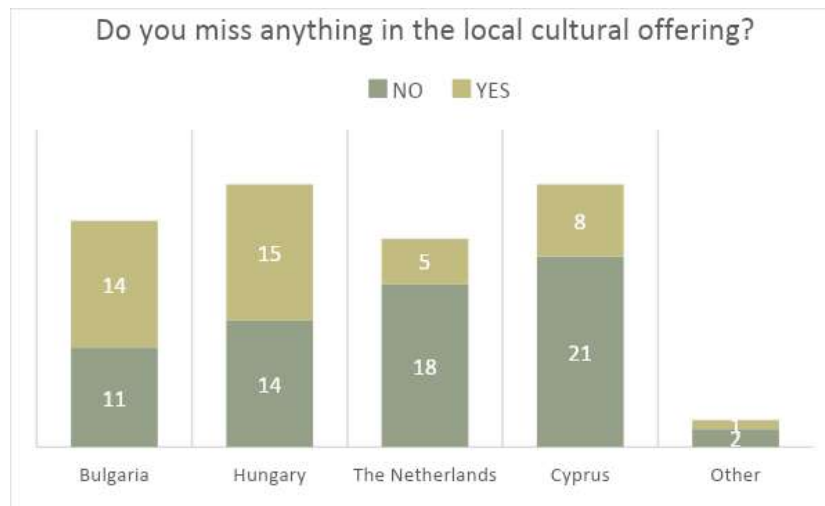
11. Figure - Employment situation of the participants

Local cultural life, activities, effect of the project on society

The next block of the questionnaire assesses the cultural offerings available in the respondents' place of residence, activities, and gaps. We also measured the satisfaction of respondents about local cultural programs, their involvement in these programs and the level of information available about these programs.

Do you miss anything in the local cultural offering?

Summarising the answers from the 4 partner countries approximately 40 % miss something from the cultural offerings while 60 % are satisfied with the local cultural offering. Remarkable differences are among the partner countries, Bulgarian respondents are the least satisfied and Cyprian respondents are the most satisfied.



12. Figure - Do participants miss something from local cultural offer?

It is important to mention that all the respondents from rural areas in Bulgaria and Hungary answered YES, they missed something, which means that local community organisers in rural areas should be more in our focus.

SIM2 research shows a remarkable difference compared to SIM1 report with this answer, in our control research participants seem to be less satisfied with the cultural offering than in case of SIM1 research, where 30% did miss something, and 70% did not miss anything in local cultural offer.

This might be the result of the different sample, but also the contribution of the project: eye opening for those who piloted our training content and read our best practice collection.

Activities missing from local cultural life.

We asked the participants to list what kind of activities they miss from local cultural life. The participants listed the activities they miss from local cultural life as follows:

- sport activities;
- cinema, theatre performances;
- exhibitions;

- concerts (indoor and outdoor), musical performances, live music, festivals;
- artistic activities;
- activities for children;
- social club (for excursions, for example);
- self-help activities;
- opportunities for local groups to perform;
- ONLINE platform to share data about local programs;

Some participants reported that local cinemas and theatres are closed, a long journey to another town is necessary when they want to visit these places. There are no alternatives for these programs.

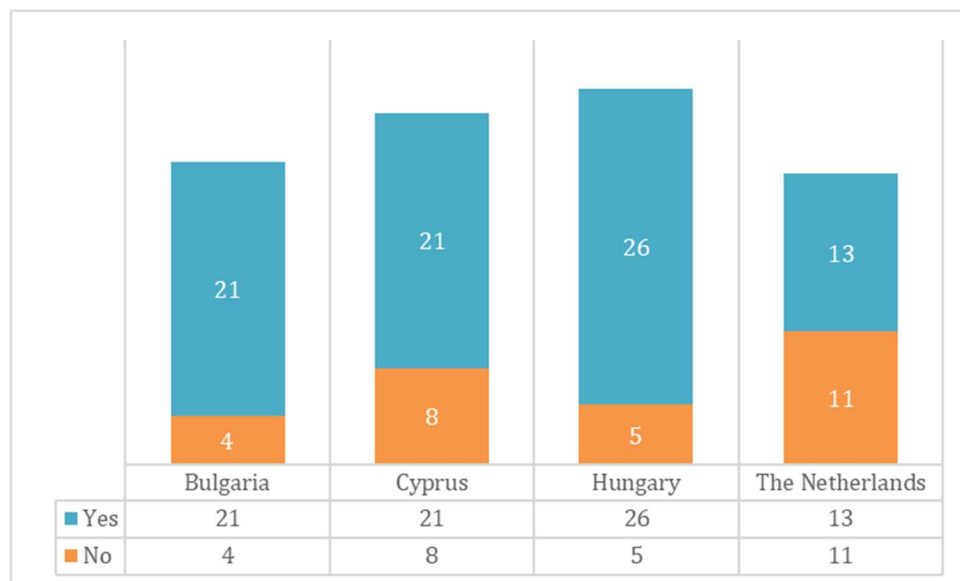
Analysing the answers of the participants we may summarise, that besides the high-cost activities missing, like cinemas and theatres, lots of activities are community-based, might be initiated by anyone from the local community.

The list is quite like what we have received at the SIM1 research, but we must add that more community-initiated activities are mentioned, like: self-help groups, social club, local group performances, community singing and dancing together.

Participation in local cultural activities

In 3 out of 4 partner countries (BG, CY and HU) the level of those not participating in local cultural activities is rather low (11 – 20%). While in the Netherlands it is relatively high (46%).

Comparing this data to the level of satisfaction of participants we can see that in those countries where more cultural activities were needed, the participation is rather high in local activities, which can be either considered as differences in the traditions of social relations, or the fact, that from Bulgaria and Hungary higher percentage of participants were present from rural areas where the organised cultural possibilities are slightly bit lower.

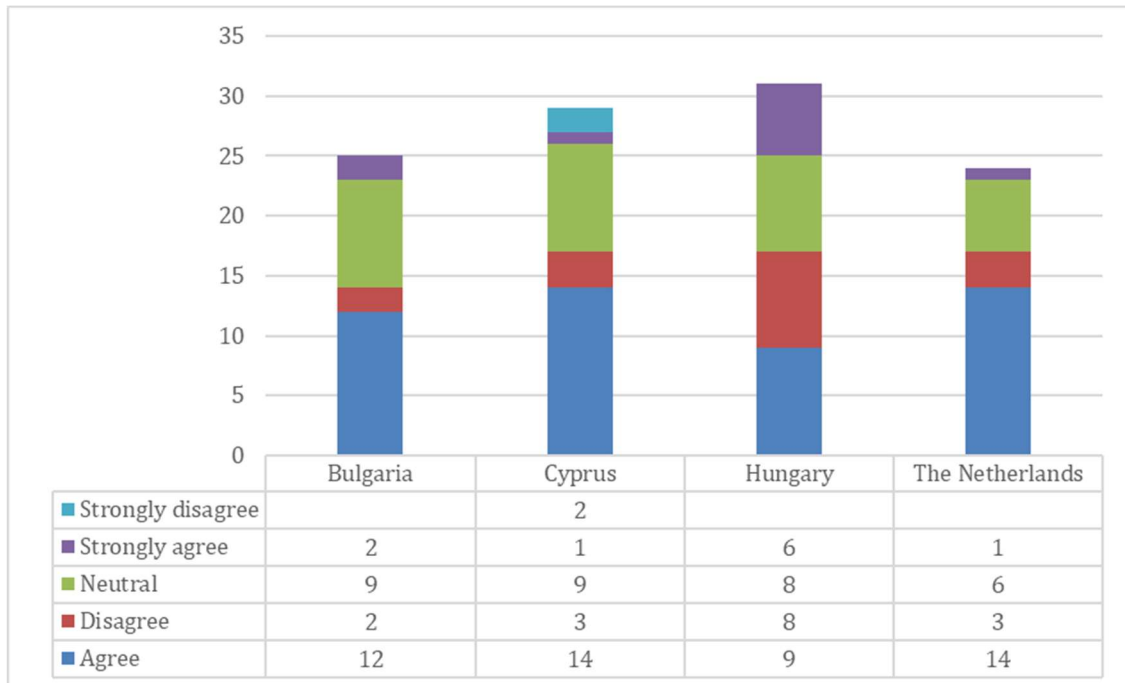


14. Figure - Participation in local cultural activities in the living environment of the participant

The majority of participants agree, strongly agree or neutral on whether the information on local cultural activities is sufficient (83,5%), we may conclude that although there are some suggestions

about the possible improvement for community program data collection on internet (web-based platform), those, who want to have information about the programs can find it.

We have to highlight that there is a significant difference in the responses of the partner countries.



15. Figure - Participants' opinion on whether the information on local activities is sufficient

While Bulgaria, Cyprus and the Netherlands have similar results, in Hungary the number of people who responded “Disagree” is remarkably higher than in the other countries. We have to add that “Strongly agree” answers are higher as well, but still, we have to conclude that communication, promotion of local cultural activities should be more active in Hungary.

This data compared to SIM1 research has improved, this corresponds to our expectations in SIM1 report, where we expected that our project will contribute to the improvement of access to information about local cultural activities.

The cultural activities create social connections within my living environment.

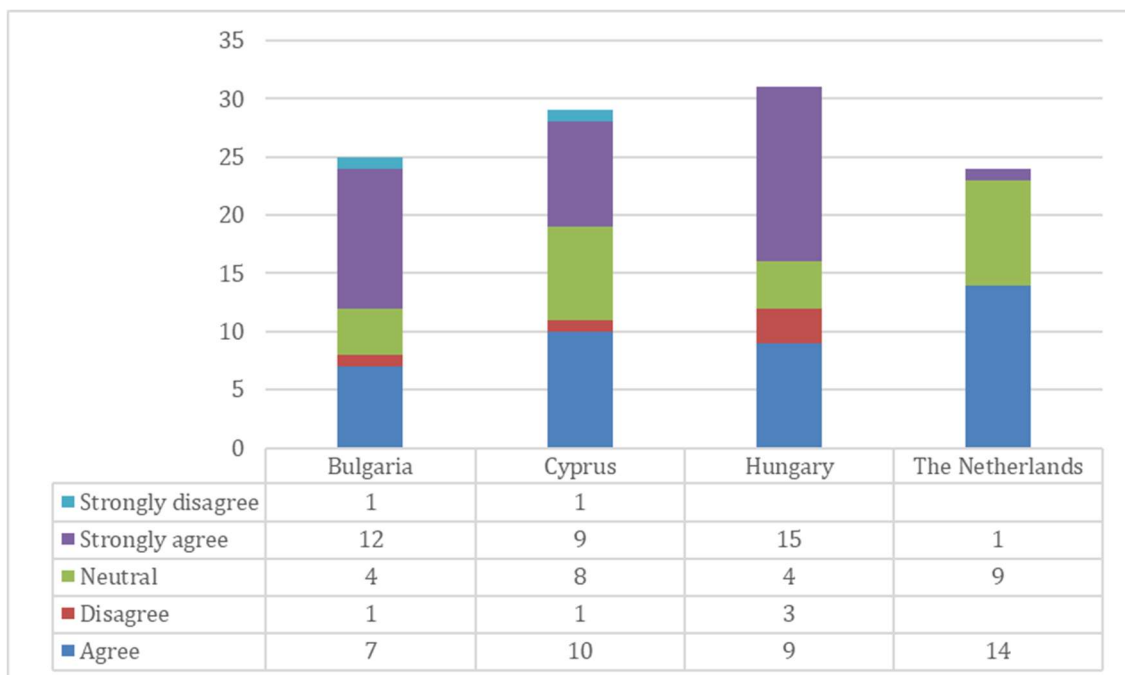
As we have described in SIM1 research report, the partnership wanted to inquire about the social connections established during cultural activities. Looking at both SIM1 and SIM2 research we may conclude that respondents agreed with the statement that cultural activities support social connections – in both research 70 % of respondents answered “Agree” or “Strongly agree” for the question.

It is agreed that social connections can be established during cultural activities through various means. Some common ways in which social connections can be fostered during cultural activities:

- Shared interests: Cultural activities bring together individuals who share similar interests, such as art, music, dance, or literature. People with common interests tend to bond more easily and establish connections.

- Conversations and interactions: Engaging in conversations and interactions during cultural activities provides opportunities for individuals to connect with each other. This can happen through discussing the cultural activity, sharing opinions, exchanging ideas, or simply getting to know each other.
- Collaborative participation: Participating in cultural activities that require cooperation or collaboration, such as group performances, workshops, or exhibitions, can facilitate the formation of social connections. Working together towards a common goal promotes teamwork and creates a sense of camaraderie.
- Networking opportunities: Cultural activities often attract diverse individuals, including artists, enthusiasts, professionals, and patrons. Such events provide networking platforms where people can meet and establish connections for personal, social, or professional purposes.
- Community engagement: Cultural activities often take place within a community context, such as festivals, local events, or cultural organizations. Engaging with the community fosters a sense of belonging and allows individuals to connect with others who share a common cultural background or geographical location.
- Socialising before or after the activity: Before and after cultural events, socialising can occur in informal settings such as receptions, gatherings, or post-event discussions. These social interactions provide opportunities for individuals to connect on a more personal level.

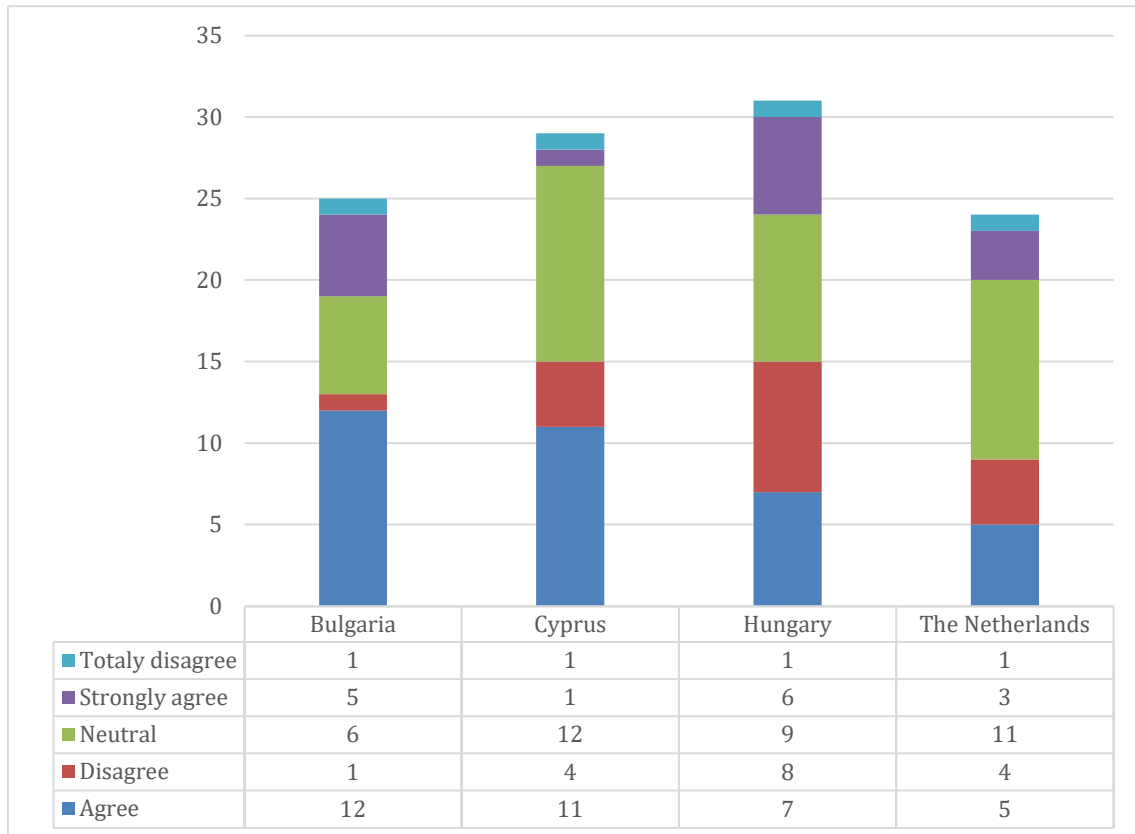
It's important to note that the establishment of social connections during cultural activities can vary depending on the specific activity, the individuals involved, and the cultural context. These are general ways in which social connections can be fostered, but the actual outcomes may vary.



16. Figure - The cultural activities create social connections within my living environment

Activity of the responders in organising local cultural activities

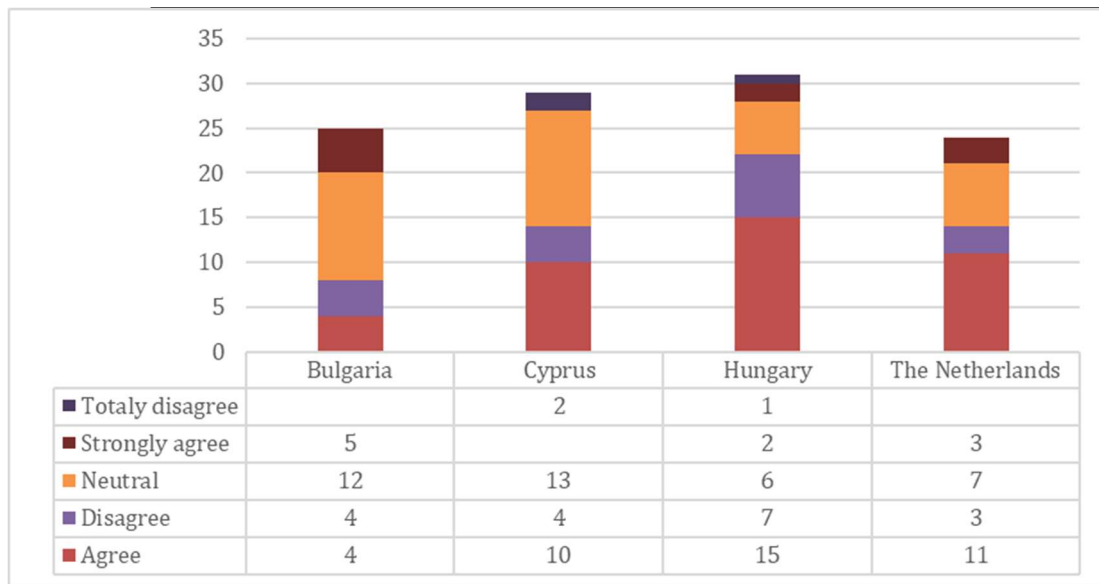
This part of the questionnaire focused on the activity of respondents in cultural activities, and studied the types of activities they are involved in. This part rather focuses on active participation, on organisation instead of being a participant.



17. Figure – Active participation in organising local cultural activities

Compared to the 32% in SIM1 research, in SIM2 research 45% answered to “Agree” or “Totally agree” to the question about their activity in organising local cultural activities. Meanwhile those who answered “Disagree” or similar decreased from 39% to 29%.

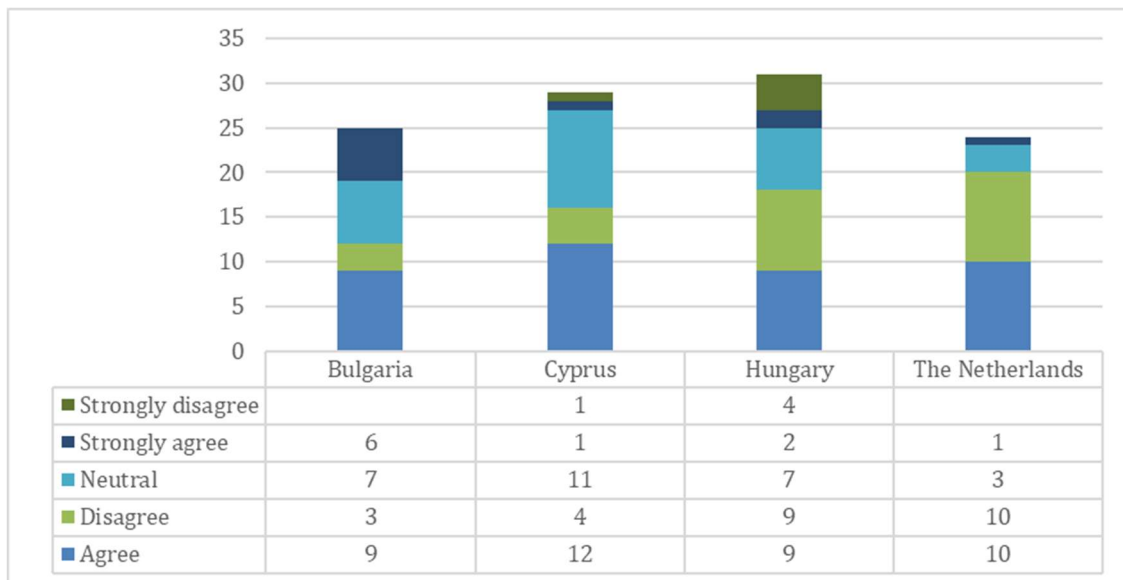
This we consider as an important improvement: the answers received for our questions will be more relevant. And, it is a success to involve a higher percentage of the target group of the project in our research.



18. Figure - Creative ideas, tools to form local cultural activities

We asked the participants about their creative ideas, tools used in forming the local cultural and social life. Almost half of the participants, 46%, answered that they have creative ideas and tools. This is a slight raise compared to SIM1 report (42%), while those who do not have such ideas are 19% (SIM1: 22%). In both surveys 35% were neutral in this question.

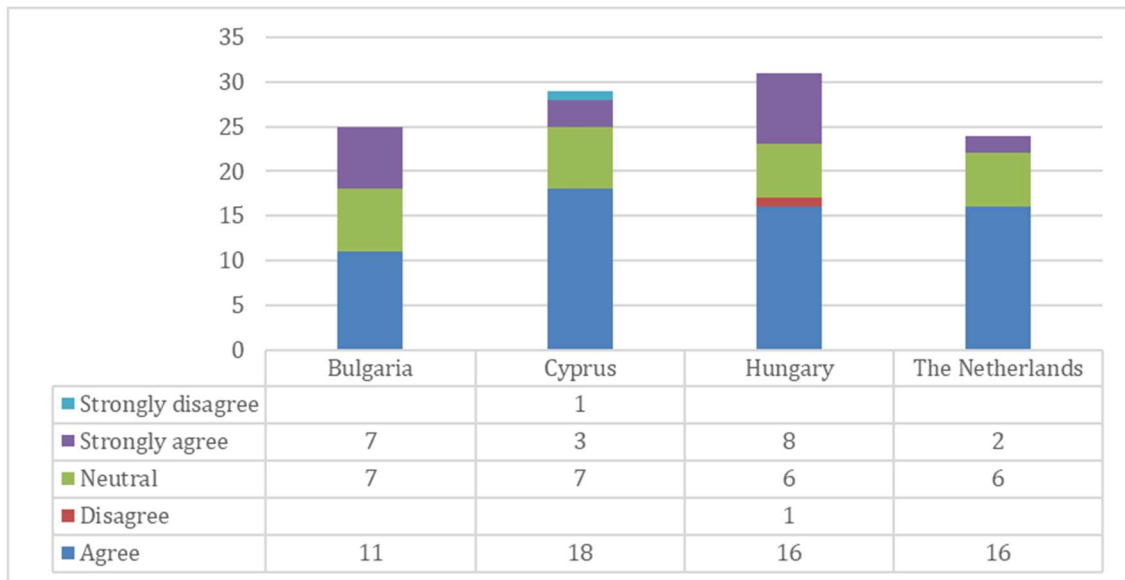
We raised a very important question to the participants: My need for cultural activities has changed during the COVID epidemic? They had to answer whether they agree with this statement. The result is as follows:



19. Figure - Change of need for cultural activities during the COVID epidemic

46% of respondents reported that their needs for cultural activities have changed during COVID, while in SIM1 report this value was 41%. The ratio of those who reported that their needs for cultural activities did not change also increased from 21% (SIM1) to 28% (SIM2).

This question was important, because the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown gathering restrictions highly impacted the access to cultural activities, not only them, but also all human relations. Many cultural activities such as concerts, theatre performances, art exhibitions, and festivals have been cancelled, postponed, or shifted to virtual formats.



20. Figure -. Willingness to support local cultural activities during a possible future crisis

The willingness of respondents to take part in local community organising is impressively high, 75%, and only 2 respondents out of 109 answered “NO” for this question.

We asked the respondents about their special skills they may use in future crisis situations. Here we listed their answers. Not all of them, but those which we have found relevant.

Skills, personal qualities	Knowledge	Concrete tasks, volunteering
digital skills	Moroccan culture to inform communities	exercise activities in the community
photography	to create a network	present news in local newspaper
dancing skills	experience in artistic films	baking
creative	digital art	online sports and dance practising
can keep overview	local history	teaching
good organisational skills	mental health qualification	support
convincing power	German, English language	language teaching
	drama teacher	drama programs
	Painting	
	yoga	
	dance, music	teaching adapted to the circumstances (even online)

This result shows that there is a potentially great number of people who have relevant skills, and are willing to do something for the society, especially at a time of crisis, and who not only want to make time for this but also want to apply their skills and knowledge.

Findings and suggestions

The partnership faced a major challenge during the Social Impact Measurement: asking enough people to respond was not easy to gather. For the 1st survey the team approached a great number of participants, while the 2nd survey was a control and change measurement.

Although the participants were not the same in the two surveys, we consider SIM2 research relevant, because participants took part in CRESTART activities that is why their answers are relevant concerning the changes caused by CRESTART.

Accessing relevant and reliable data sources can be a challenge, especially for small organizations or in under-resourced communities.

Conducting rigorous impact evaluations can be resource-intensive, requiring expertise, time, and financial investments that may not always be feasible.

Engaging stakeholders, including beneficiaries, in the impact measurement process ensures their perspectives are considered and promotes participatory approaches to evaluation.

Advancements in technology, such as data analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, offer new opportunities to enhance social impact measurement by automating data collection, analysis, and visualization.

Major findings of the research are:

Completing the questionnaire (SIM1) started a process of thinking about participation in community issues and get better prepared for a future crisis. It is important to make local people aware that they can contribute to community building with their own skills and knowledge. Considering the results of the questionnaire the proportion of people who are not involved in community life at all is very low. Collection of good practices gave a pool of great ideas community organisers may build on. The partnership received feedback from participants that this document is a great source, and a mind opening in their future work.

Meanwhile the project, and the research focused on the learnings of COVID crisis, some respondents included their experiences from the more recent crisis, like war in Ukraine and energy crisis. The training content created during the project intended to give a sound basis for future crisis situations, meanwhile crisis all around the World arose which underlines the importance of the training created.

The difference in the accessibility of cultural opportunities between town and city was clearly visible in the research. There were individual comments that the opportunities are different in the capital, whether at district level or in a small town. Metropolitan events contribute less to community retention and do not support community processes.

It was also pointed out that the questionnaire was incomplete, and that it would have been good to have looked at what barriers there were to participate in local community or cultural events.

The survey cannot be considered representative due to the small number and distribution of respondents.

Social impact measurement is a vital practice for organizations seeking to maximize their positive contributions to society. Despite challenges, advancements in technology and increasing collaboration offer new possibilities for more robust and comprehensive measurement.



COVID was an example, that by adapting to the changing landscape and embracing digital solutions, NGOs can continue to engage audiences, deliver cultural experiences, and foster social connections, even in the absence of traditional in-person activities.

The lessons learned during this crisis can also shape the future of cultural activities, leading to innovative approaches that blend digital and physical experiences for a more inclusive and resilient cultural sector.

Sharing best practices both nationally and internationally was found to be very inspiring. We experienced that a society can grow through creative connection.



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**Funded by
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