innova

RESEARCH RESULTS

Digital inclusion,
the mantra of our time

N&P
BUSINESS
CONSULTING

FRAMEWORK

The partners in the INNOVA project

N&P Business Consulting GmbH is the outcome of our holistic approach and deep understanding of the 4 pillars for business development: Business Set-Up, Recruitment, HR Management and Strategic International Development.

FRAMEWORK, an Italian association promoting lifelong learning and professional development opportunities to all citizens in need for wider and stronger employability skills, digital competences and in general better skills to achieve their professional and life plans.

JÓL-LÉT Alapítvány Free counselling service has been operating since then and provides help for job-seekers. The Foundation has participated in national and international research programs on female employment, gender equality, and atypical employment.

Document prepared by Kata KEVEHAZI, December 2022

Edited by Valeria ELIA, Amber MUMTAZ

Index

FOREWORDS

The COVID-19 pandemic was a turning point in many senses, it has accelerated the adoption of ICT tools in remote and hybrid work, and also in education and coaching.

For most of the coaches, trainers, consultants, and teachers it meant a transformation of their working environment. The usage of ICT tools transformed their life, and their work processes and brought new challenges concerning their relations with clients. To remain attractive, be effective and meet expectations while acquiring new technological skills and professional techniques, is a challenge for many.

We can say that the rapidly evolving innovations, virtual coaching and mentoring, e-learning platforms, gamification, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), and the extended usage of social media transformed educators into learners and often vice versa.

The present toolkit is prepared within the framework of the INNOVA project, and based on the research realized by the partners in 3 countries, Germany, Hungary and Italy by gathering the experiences of a variety of adult educators.

Our research aims to share an overview of the most updated solutions to help a larger professional public to develop their competencies so that they can offer the most effective learning solutions to their target audiences.

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of remote and online learning in times of the COVID pandemic, and the growing number of opportunities for personal competence development and professional knowledge transfer resulted in more and more people being present in the field of adult learning, coaching, mentoring, and training both as and users.

Universal access to knowledge with the spread of the Internet and the unthinkable development in the field of ICT technologies, mean– as one of the interviewees of the research this toolkit is based on said - that

This era ensures that (there are possibilities) for continuous learning, getting to know, trying and applying new tools, which is now part of our everyday life.

It implies new opportunities and new challenges for both sides, educators and learners.

For coaches, hybrid working gives greater flexibility in terms of where and when they work, which can also enable them to work with learners from a wider geographic area. This can increase their client base and revenue. Learners also have more options in accessing materials and interacting with coaches, mentors and trainers, working at their own pace and receiving individualized support and feedback from them.

With our program, Innova, we want to help service provider professionals to adapt new strategies and develop new skills to ensure that they can still provide high-quality sessions both in person and remotely and use their digital competencies and tools more consciously.

The present summary is based on the interviews realized with the involvement of the 3 partner organizations, JOL-LET (Well-Being) Foundation from Hungary and Framework from Italy, and desktop research about the topics raised during conversations with our interviewees. When formulating our questions (see in the Annexe), we took into account the apparent interests of the service providers, as our primary target group to support their work with their clients and customers.

The summary contains the approaches and ideas formulated or inspired by our interviewees. Their answers showed much more of their concerns rather than their knowledge, as they are also learners who need to develop themselves and cross their boundaries to update their knowledge about the constantly evolving online tools.

However, the contribution of this high-quality professional community ensures that by adding relevant explanations and examples we can finalize a toolkit for our general professional audience.
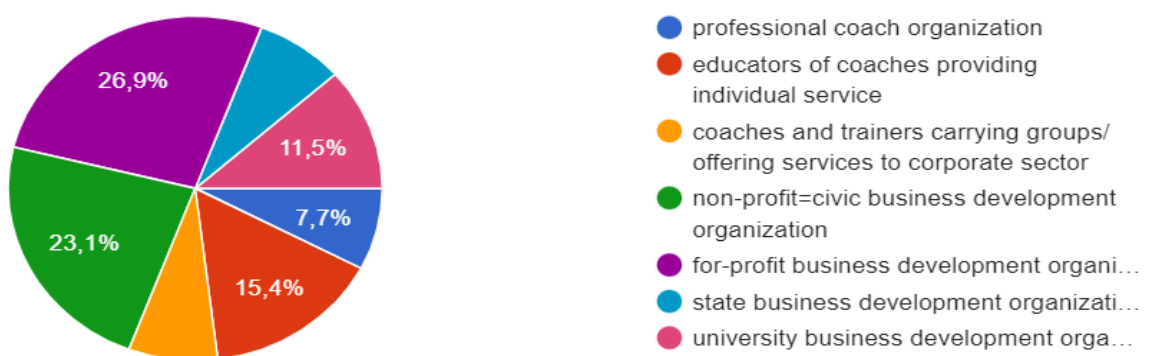
The interviews

Representatives of the project partners' organisations interviewed **33 persons** (Italy, 9 women, 4 men, Germany 6 women, 4 men; 10 women from Hungary.). Our interviewees working as owner, managers or employees of:

- professional coach organizations,
- business development organizations (state-owned, for-profit or non-profit)
- university business development centres, or as
- educators of coaches providing individual service,
- coaches and trainers carrying groups/offering services to the corporate sector

are reaching clients of different ages and professional backgrounds, in different career situations, and with different development needs and financial opportunities.

Our interviewees were coaches and educators with 1 to 25 years of experience, most of them, 25 women (75%) and 8 men. Their average age was 47 (from 30-60), 26 had accomplished at least a BA degree, and most of them have multiple educational backgrounds. 14 are CEOs, presidents or top managers within their structure and 8 are private entrepreneurs. Employees and freelancers are working mainly in multiple forms and various sectors – non-profit, corporate, and education – parallelly.

Characteristics of the working structures of the interviewees

Being a coach, or an educator is a work strongly related to its professional content, that needed to be adapted after the Covid pandemic. So were the working environments and teams themselves.

Our interviewees work as freelance – with or without subcontractors, often in project-based partnerships; in associations or SMEs – in horizontal or vertical structures, or combined upon projects; in institutions – within a given structure with rules, corporate identity and culture, with big independence concerning their professional activity.

When asking them about their activities, we can see that the ICT tools are used in all aspects of their daily work: during the development of their professional content, during the process of the service providing itself; in pricing, marketing, sales, communications, and customer relations; during the coordination, organization; administration and financial administration; as well as when they provide or use technical and technological support.

Sectors and clients

Our interviewees are working in various sectors: the nonprofit, business and corporate sectors and also in education.

Their clients are also very diverse:

- Individuals (working women, female entrepreneurs, youth, native and international students, fresh graduates and their parents)
- Individuals from disadvantaged groups migrants, ethnic minorities, early adults, Roma, disabled entrepreneurs, rural women, and older generations)
- Young entrepreneurs,
- NGOs, Civic leaders, social enterprises, Communities, children's homes
- Micro enterprises, SME's, B2B segment
- Multinational companies (leaders, managers and employees), University lecturers
- Clients learning AI
- Etc.

Recent changes in the general regulatory background about the usage of ICT tools and consequences and related questions of concern

The main regulation that the work of coaches and adult educators is related to is the **GDPR,** introduced in 2018 by the EU as an answer to the growing concern about the impact of ICT tools

on individuals' privacy and data protection, as well as on society as a whole. It is applicable to all companies that handle the personal data of EU citizens, and imposes strict rules on data processing, storage, and transfer, as well as heavy fines for non-compliance.

In addition to data privacy, regulations around the use of ICT tools also focus on cyber harassment, hate speech, and misinformation. As policymakers strive to strike a balance between protecting individuals' rights and fostering innovation in the digital economy, the regulatory background around the usage of ICT tools is constantly evolving. The laws and neither our knowledge about the legislative backgrounds do not keep pace with all these disturbing and dangerous phenomena.

There are also other **cybersecurity threats**, such as hacking, malware, or phishing attacks, that also can compromise the confidentiality and security of personal information and disrupt activities. Human errors, such as accidental disclosure or misuse of personal information can also occur.

The **spread of knowledge sharing and non-proprietary solutions** became an important trend that implies new risks.

Therefore, it is important to

- implement effective cybersecurity measures, such as firewalls, encryption, and regular software updates, to prevent these threats.
- ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to mitigate this risk.
- conduct due diligence on third-party providers, and in general prepare ourselves, our organisations, clients and customers to adopt critical and cautious behaviour in the virtual world.

If you want to check if you meet the requirements of GDPR, you can do it here: GDPR compliance checklist - GDPR.eu

If you want to learn more about how to handle cyber-harassment, hate speech or misinformation, read: https://www.unitad.un.org/content/cyber-harassment-self-protection-tips

Hate speech and violence - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (coe.int)

Fighting disinformation (europa.eu)

During our research, some of our interviewees also mentioned ethical concerns, as a self-regulatory instrument.

The national and EU-level **ethical codex**-es for coaches and therapists, now intend to guide their behaviour and ensure that they are acting in the best interest of their clients and that they provide high-quality services while maintaining professional boundaries.

For example, the International Coach Federation (ICF) Code of Ethics[1] emphasizes explicitly that coaches must ensure that the use of technology is appropriate to the client's needs and that they must be aware of the limitations and potential risks of using technology. Coaches must also take steps to protect the confidentiality and security of client information when using technology.

Covid effects – changes and challenges of the practice, difficulties and gains

The COVID pandemic had a significant impact on the adult education and coaching sector, it changed the working environment, and brought new challenges on an individual level, in the working methods and the cooperation, in working capacities, within the organizations, and in the work with clients etc.

The answers of our interviewees confirmed what we all know: our life has changed radically, and we are now living our everyday life, working, and communicating more than ever in a virtual world. During the period of the pandemic, this overwhelming and difficult situation brought many challenges but also gains.

Working environment:

There has been a never-expected **universal shift to remote work** out of necessity which after the pandemic remained with us as a completely new possibility for organizing our life. It gave us a consciousness about our freedom to select our self-identical lifestyle.

Covid gave us the digital push we needed…

Virtual service provision allowed team members from any distance, conferences, and meetings can be held in virtual spaces and customers can be reached from anywhere in the Globe, which can improve individual well-being and by that also performance.

From the technological point of view, online service delivery resulted in many cases **a complete renewal of the ICT infrastructure and equipment,** digital offices were built based on distance networks (VPN), camera and microphone systems, wide and double screens, headsets, investments were made in platforms, broadband internet connection, hardware, software and firmware.

---

[1] ICF-Code-of-Ethics-1.pdf (coachingfederation.org)

We use now a completely new Logitech system

Logitech offers a range of hardware and software products designed to enhance communication (video conferencing), collaboration, and presentation (webcams, conference cameras, microphones, speakerphones technology, presentation remotes, noise-canceling microphones, HD video, and AI-powered camera tracking) that help people work whether in the office or remote or hybrid settings.

With different options for flexible working, the new organizational forms of hybrid work appeared that no one could predict, that any previous policy recommendations or regulatory advantages would ever reach.

For telework, organizations and companies, educational institutions and service providers introduced new platforms, and they turned to using online tools (messaging tools and video conferencing) to find new ways of communicating inside their structures and outside with their clients, customers, and learners.

When COVID came I had to reorganize my working environment, now I start to work more at home and manage it to be accessible in clouds for my colleagues easily.

They changed the ways to conduct staff meetings, make recruitment or evaluation interviews, and invested time and money also in the implementation of new systems for work, performance measurement, and also for the elaboration of labour safety regulations for the home office.

On the other hand, they created new platforms, used new tools, and implemented new service-providing systems for consultations, courses and training sessions, introducing needs assessments, receiving feedback etc.

Homes became also workplaces for practically every coach, mentor, trainer and adult educator. We should point out here that the COVID pandemic had a different impact on women and men, and that concerned also our interviewees, mostly women. It created a new burden for many with care responsibilities, as unpaid caregiving work and paid work overlap. Working at home also often adversely affected their position and entrepreneurial activity. Because of gender relations within the families: if both parents work from home, the man's working circumstances is, typically,

considered more important, and to perform tasks related to care (household, nursing, emotional support, learning with kids etc.) is expected usually from a woman.

These tendencies had been fuelling tensions related to mental health and created the need also for new services and methods.

> The new forms of the organization of work and education, the hybrid work, and also the new service needed to adapt to these changes, stayed with us after the pandemic. We had never before experienced such an abundance in terms of new technological, ICT services and personal competence and skills development services.

MAKE A LIST: New equipment, purchased or needed

MAKE A LIST: New platforms, software

TEST: Your work-life balance

Challenges on an individual level

The transition to virtual service provision was a real struggle for some coaches and educators who had to face the same difficulties as their clients.

Not all of them were prepared for new work-life balance challenges related to caring, personal issues concerned them as well. From a technological or professional point of view, not all of them were prepared to work online.

In addition, the pandemic has led to an exceptionally increased demand for coaching and adult education services, as many people and organizations were seeking emotional support, to adapt, develop new strategies, learn new skills or make career changes. This has put pressure on coaches and adult educators, who often had to review their entire activity. Managing their workload, as well as the uncertainty and unpredictability of the pandemic, made difficult planning and effective service delivery.

Many of our interviewees mentioned that this period was an extraordinary test of their mental strengths and professional capabilities. They constantly had to adapt their teaching methods and parallelly learn new technologies to deliver their services virtually in-depth to be able to share this practical knowledge also with their learners. The permanent challenges in time management, learning and adaptation of skills and competencies, and the never-ending task of selecting the relevant information from the flow, more preparations needed for sessions resulted in personal difficulties related to needs in digital detox.

> There were many gains from these efforts:
> raising consciousness and awareness about skills of adaptability, and that of our organizations, about security and our responsibility for our security and each other's security in all levels and

spheres, the advanced technical knowledge of online platforms and digital tools (video conferencing software, virtual whiteboards), online learning management systems, and the development of professional competencies to deliver programs.

TEST: Your mental health

TEST: Your skills related to remote service delivery

ANALYSE: Your workload, schedules

ANALYSE: Your service provision – the type of service, effectiveness

➔ Working methods and cooperation

The COVID pandemic, the isolation, and the extensive usage of ICT tools had consequences also on how we work, even for those who had been working online previously. The usage of *platforms* intensified, new mandatory platforms were elaborated within the organizations or previous platforms were used more, for new purposes.

The new digital tools, for example, *open-source learning management systems* (LMS) such as Moodle provided a cost-effective way to deliver online courses and training programs, made it easier to access quality resources, collaborate with colleagues, customize their tools and resources, and integrate different technologies into their practice.

The introduction of new technological possibilities depended on one hand on individual learning attitudes, but also upon the corporate culture which had a critical role in how organizations responded to the crisis. The importance of individual contributions became clear, as we witnessed that the continuation of education, and service provision depended on devoted individuals within institutions.

It made necessary the acquisition of skills that brought about fundamental changes within organizations, in collaborations and the work with clients and customers.

Individual service providers and organizations also had to rethink their partnerships and the **work division** to become more efficient while working from home. On one hand, organizational and procedural **deficiencies**, less elaborated communication activities, difficulties in information and knowledge sharing, technical unpreparedness, and lack of professionals came to the surface. On the other hand, from a business point of view, with the decline of offline activities, a high degree of **creativity** was needed to renew the services and make them attractive.

To meet professional or technological challenges, organize the service, use the system in a more rewarding manner, and provide more targeted communication and quality content, to better satisfy the changed customer needs, some have formed **new long-term or project-based partnerships**,

while others have adopted hybrid service delivery models (online and face-to-face). Organizations had to discover the differences between the skills of individuals in terms of learning and adapting, coping with uncertainties, and their abilities and efficiency related to the renewal of their competencies and expertise. In many cases, the **organizational hierarchy** was transformed, and cooperation resulted in more symmetrical co-worker and **partner relationships**.

The organization of the activities necessitated **new levels of cooperation**. It required much more precise coordination, new communication tools and new skills in managing tasks, information and data processing, defining the framework of joint work, elaboration of the content and contact with the clients and customers. **Planning and timing**, the division of tasks and the **content-production** have also changed.

It also transformed the service provision, making online programs attractive and efficient, requiring new skills. Our interviewees repeatedly emphasized the greater flexibility, the more frequent communication within their organization, with their partners and also with learners, the increased focus on **personalised attention**, and issues related to stress, anxiety, and burnout.

The **security issues** that emerged were those revolving around the security and confidentiality of data processing, which are critical issues in coaching and adult learning as it involves the processing of sensitive personal information, f.e. *health information or learning outcomes*.

While using questionnaire the anonymity is a core value

To meet the criteria of high-quality service in the future **new ethics are** required: the special focus must be given to security issues, and also to knowledge sharing.

These lessons and changes remained with us after the epidemic.

ANALYSE: What lessons have you learned from COVID as a service provider?

➔ Changes concerning clients

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on people's lives that changed the needs of clients and customers of coaches and adult educators from the point of view of service content.

More than ever the increased stress, anxiety, and isolation have led to a greater focus on mental health and well-being. Flexibility in work schedules and an increased focus on work-life balance resulted, so that coaches and adult educators had to adapt their approaches to meet these needs, incorporating more mindfulness and stress management techniques, guidance on time-and energy management, and maintenance of healthy boundaries between work and personal life.

The pandemic has also given people time to reflect on their personal and professional goals and has resulted in an increased focus on personal development, and it has highlighted the importance of community and social issues, so clients became interested in new strategies to build their carriers and ways to make a positive impact in their communities and the world, to become more involved in community organizations, support social justice initiatives etc.

Working online with adult learners required a new level of professional standards, the challenges of a solid understanding of the technologies, the ability to troubleshoot technical issues and provide even technical support to learners.

The pedagogical expertise of coaches and adult educators was also challenged as they had to be able to design often completely new, effective and engaging materials, elaborate new instructional strategies, incorporate multimedia content, providing opportunities for learners to practice. They had to communicate clearly and concisely, and maintain a high level of ethical conduct, be committed to ongoing learning and improvement.

After the COVID epidemic, investments of time and money into the adaptation to virtual service provision proved to be useful, and some of the hard-learned skills and practices remained in everyday life when coaches and adult educators and learners returned to the offline world. For clients and customers living long distances, in rural areas and other countries, or simply accommodated to the virtual world the online service provision remained.

Many of our interviewees also considered that the usage of ICT tools led to the simplification of their lives and professional processes. They now find communication with their partners and clients more effective, and prefer to work at least partly online with their clients.

Their experiences in using adequate ICT tools is enriching for all of us.

Usage of ICT tools

➔ The development of technical skills

The period of isolation has highlighted the importance of digital skills. The usage of ICT tools made coaching, mentoring and adult education more accessible and convenient, enabling individuals to receive support regardless of their physical location.

But not all of the coaches, mentors and adult educators were prepared to work online.

For many this transition was difficult. COVID has forced educators to embrace technology to ensure their work continues.

The workload was five times bigger when we started online education. I needed to prepare the platform, the materials, to plan the procedures, the rest of the year, how to communicate internally, how to create online interaction, learn about zoom, the breakout rooms, use effectively the google drive, mentee.

They have had to upskill to use ICT tools effectively, and this has highlighted the need for ongoing professional development in this area:

I had to assure myself and my client how important is to stay in human touch and how creative we were in it

Our interviewees now use ICT tools in all stages of their professional activities related to assessing the needs of their customers, designing the content, coaching or educational sessions or getting feedback, and they are proud of their advancements.

On a scale of 10, I am a 9. I am constantly learning from my Erasmus students, for our salesforce I use Notion that is customizable. …New ones come in; we filter out what's good for us.

➔ The domains of usage of ICT tools

The widest use of ICT tools is for **communication, contact with clients, scheduling meetings or managing projects** within their teams and partners. Our interviewee had a wide experience in using this tools, mentioned many of the widely-known softwares:

Trello is a web-based project management tool that allows users to create boards and cards to organize and prioritize ideas and tasks.

Slack is a messaging and collaboration platform that can be used for brainstorming and idea sharing. It allows users to create channels for specific topics and discussions, share files, and collaborate in real-time.

Mural and **Miro** are online whiteboard platforms designed to help teams work together more effectively in a virtual setting that allow teams to manage projects, track tasks, assign responsibilities, collaborate and brainstorm ideas and concepts, to to facilitate design thinking workshops and exercises using virtual sticky notes, diagrams, and mind maps in real-time, regardless of their location.

We mention here some other tools such as the **MindMeister**, **Google Jamboard** or **Ideaflip**.

Notion is also a powerful web-based tool available as a mobile application as well with customizable templates for project management, meeting notes, task lists that allows users to create, manage and organize a wide range of digital content, including notes, documents, databases, wikis, etc.

Many of our interviewees made significant progress in the use of social media (**Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn,** and **Instagram**) for staying or becoming visible in the online market of coaching, mentoring and online education market exponentially growing during the times of quarantines and mobility restrictions of the COVID epidemic.

Our interviewees, as the whole sector worldwide, began to write newsletters, to create and promoted their content through blogs, podcasts, videos, introduced new customer acquisition techniques, some of started to use **Google Ads** and **Facebook Ads** to stabilize or increase their sales in a targeted way by exploiting special features of these tools to learn about specific interests or demographics of their potential customers.

> *"We provide first consultative sessions for sales purposes for free and try to find new clients on social media. We created new profiles on Linkedin and began to use Google ads. For actual clients, we use newsletters, send pools…"*

They made efforts also to be more present in online directories such as Yelp, Google My Business, and LinkedIn used to attract new clients through online reviews and referrals.

For the online service provision they use prepaid services of video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Teams Skype, or Google Meet to interact with their clients or learners face-to-face, just as they would in person. The GoToWebinar, and WebinarJam became also popular for hosting online workshops and seminars, which can be used to attract new clients and showcase expertise.

For those who are not able to join the educational session, we register the classes with the authorization of other participants.

Some of our interviewees concentrate on traditional coaching methods during the time of the sessions and the usage of ICT tools is limited to creating a space for the session in the virtual world.

Use the same coaching tools to assess the real objectives during sessions with the clients.

I use traditional methods to prepare myself for thematic works and motivate my learners to do research, search bibliographies, create extracts…

Others became advanced users of new tools and technologies and had been elaborating individual solutions for their work:

We use a business canvas and an online swot analysis template to assess the needs of our customers.

The distance from their clients and learners made it important to assess their needs and also get feedback about the effectiveness of their work displaced to the virtual world. Our interviewees used real time assessment during offline sessions, and began to use various technologies to enlarge their assessment methods. They use most frequently **Google Forms** online surveys to assess learner needs, but some of them mentioned other assessment tools as **Kahoot, Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, Flipgrid, Slido** or **Quizlet** as tools they use to evaluate program effectiveness, and gather feedback for improvement.

We organize voting about the content of sessions

17

I like to use Socrative, it is an easy tool to create tests, polls for my students

Socrative offers a variety of features that allow teachers to personalize their assessments to suit the needs of their students individually.

But as we shall see later, there are also other possibilities like assessment authoring tools providing a range of question types, scoring options, and reporting capabilities, gamification tools, mobile apps and LMS systems that provide a centralized location for learners to access assessments, receive feedback, and track progress. AI-powered tools, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) offer new possibilities to create immersive assessment experiences by enabling to simulate real-world scenarios and provide learners with hands-on learning opportunities.

The pandemic has accelerated changes in the elaboration of the professional content too. As coaches, mentors and adult educators work in various online contexts, provide virtual coaching, prepare webinars and online courses, depending on the willingness to learn and level of experience the deepened their knowledge in the usage of traditional tools, such as

- **Google Slides** they could create even on a collaborative way presentations that are easy to share or a more advanced tools as
- the **Adobe Creative Suite** that includes a range of software tools, such as Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign and that can be used to create professional graphics, illustrations, and layouts,
- **Prezi** (a cloud-based presentation software) they could create interactive and engaging presentations by using a variety of templates and animations and even the widely used
- **MS Powerpoint** for developing professional knowledge in many fields.

To get inspired and develop their professional knowledge, coaches, mentors and adult educators too began to use widely **content platforms and mobile apps** that became extremely popular during the epidemic.

- **Khan Academy** as a non-profit educational organization founded in 2008 by providing free, high-quality education includes over 10,000 instructional videos, practice exercises in several languages to learners of all ages and backgrounds.
- The online learning platform **Coursera** for example offers courses from top universities and organizations around the world.
- **TED** app provides access to thousands of videos featuring inspiring talks and presentations from experts in various fields.
- **Skillshare** is an online learning community also offers courses on a wide range of creative and entrepreneurial topics, such as graphic design, photography, and marketing,

- **LinkedIn Learning** provides courses and training on various business and professional skills, such as project management, leadership, and communication.
- **Headspace** provides guided meditation sessions and tools to help users reduce stress and improve their mental well-being.
- Coach.me provides personalized coaching and habit tracking to help users achieve their goals.
- **Duolingo** as a language learning app support learners of all levels

While developing the content they had to learn new technologies, and now they use a variety of techniques during their sessions to support their clients and learners.

We share our content registered meeting in closed FB groups

Step by step, most of our interviewees began to also use e-learning platforms, the so-called Learning Management Systems (LMS), depending on the situation.

It depends on the topic, most basic ones or professional ones

Some examples of the software platforms:

- **Moodle**, a user-friendly tools with strong community support
- **Blackboard**, a mobile-friendly, powerful tool with strong support and security features or
- **Canva**, an easy-to-use graphic design tool, created visually appealing presentations, handouts, and infographics as it offers a wide range of templates, graphics, and fonts that can be customized.

In our online classrooms we began to use Edmodo, so students can easily access learning materials and submit their work

Edmodo is a learning management system (LMS) and social media platform designed specifically for education, used by millions of teachers and students around the world. It is integrating easily with a range of third-party tools including Google Drive and Microsoft Office.

Crick Software's popular products include **Clicker, a literacy** tool that provides word prediction, speech feedback, and other features to help students write and communicate more effectively. Crick Software's products are used in a wide range of educational settings, including primary and secondary schools, special needs schools, and language schools.

These platforms provide a wide range of opportunities to create engaging and effective learning experiences, resources, online courses, webinars, and self-paced learning modules. They support learners' knowledge acquisition, retention, and application and facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among learners and trainers.

To create their e-learning material (including online courses, quizzes, interactive videos, simulations, and assessments etc.) some mentioned e-learning authoring tools, software applications used to create digital learning content. The most widely used tools are: **Articulate 360**, **Adobe Captivate** or **Camtasia** including features of screen capture, video editing, and interactivity, **iSpring Suite, Lectora Inspire, Elucidat** or **Adapt**, an open-source e-learning authoring tool including and integration with other tools, like **Storyline** and **Rise**.

"For publishing our material we use Issue"

Issue is a digital publishing platform that allows users to create and publish content such as magazines, catalogs, brochures by uploading PDF files or using Issuu's online editor to create content from scratch as digital using a range of features such as animations, videos, and links.

"We created videos kind of case studies for entrepreneurship development."

Virtual and Augmented Reality tools like Oculus, HoloLens, or Google Cardboard are also tools mainly for the future that can be used to create immersive learning experiences and simulate real-world scenarios.

The mobile apps facilitate collaborative learning (enabling learners to connect with the instructors through messaging and discussion forums), and make learning more engaging and interactive through the incorporation of gamification techniques (e.g. points systems, badges, leaderboards). The immediate feedback and assessment, tailored recommendations based on their learning behavior allow learners to monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement, and provide a flexible and accessible support.

To increase their efficiency while providing virtual services they began to use online educational techniques for deepening the understanding of the materials provided amongst their learners.

These educational tools include e.g. **screen sharing** tools to show how to use tools or software, or demonstrate concepts visually. **Digital Whiteboards** help also visually explain concepts, draw diagrams, or brainstorm ideas. **Polls and Quizzes** can be used to engage learners and check their understanding of the material. **Virtual Breakout Rooms** can be used for group discussions or to facilitate smaller group activities. **Recording Sessions** help learners to revisit sessions or refer back to them in the future. **Providing Digital Resources** like PDFs, eBooks, or audio recordings help to reinforce learning and provide additional resources for learners.

"We have streamed our educational programs"

The communication with learners is became important outside of live sessions, asynchronous tools like email, messaging, or discussion forums allow helped to keep for the communication ongoing, which was especially important during crises.

With time, they have learned to use the right combination of techniques that align with the learners' needs and preferences to ensure that the online sessions are engaging, effective, and impactful.

"Now I can think only in the language of digital"

Others developed significantly their sales by using online marketing platforms such as e.g.

- Mailchimp: a free platform for up 2000 subscribers with a range of features, including email design templates, email automation, segmentation, list management, A/B testing, analytics, and reporting, enabling users to customize emails with branding, offering integrations with social media and e-commerce platforms.

- Constant Contact provides email, social media marketing, and other advertising and e-commerce marketing, detailed e-reporting and analytics tools for small businesses, non-profits, and individuals.

- Aweber: a drag-and-drop email builder based on automation features, managing list by segmenting and based on and tagging, making it easy to create triggered professional-looking email campaigns without any coding knowledge based on subscriber behavior, such as email opens or link clicks, integrating a wide range of third-party applications and allowing businesses to track the success of their campaigns, including open rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates.

> *"We use Kajabi from the creation of the courses to selling them.*
> *We have now a growing membership."*

Kajabi is an all-in-one platform with a range of tools and features to help creators and entrepreneurs build and scale their online businesses and integrates with a range of third-party tools and platforms, popular for its user-friendly interface, extensive customization options, and comprehensive customer support.

➔ The costs of usage for ICT tools

The usage of online tools saves us a lot of costs.

> *"I attend more workshops, trainings online as I don't have to spend*
> *time and money on traveling."*

Most of our interviewees are rather cost-sensitive, and prefer to choose the free versions of the tools they use, the good news is that there are free solutions available - for most of the time.

> *"For example MaxQDA, is an expensive software program for*
> *qualitative data analysis, for interview transcripts etc. But I can use*
> *QDA Miner Lite, which is an open-source one."*

Other free options with similar features are: **RODA**, **Transana** or **Weft QDA**..

The bigger the organizations are more frequent is the payment for subscriptions. The average budget of our interviewees spent monthly on ICT tools vary from 10-1000 euros/month.

Many of our interviewees emphasized that during COVID their workload that was not remunerated, grew significantly. Within educational structures the transition to the virtual world required a lot of patience and free mentoring of the learners, and the preparations of online educational materials were not paid for either, structures and entrepreneurs considered this work as an investment.

When selecting a tool they usually calculate the return of the cost.

We invested in Kajabi for developing our online educational materials, and I calculated that we can make cheaper our services with 5-10%

Other effects of working with ICT tools

➔ Lifestyle, health and privacy

Coaches, mentors, and adult educators who work with ICT tools report that it has had a significant impact on their lifestyles.

- Working online is addictive, it gives as much as it takes. It is good that anything can be solved or arranged online, but I do not take into account other options.

- There are health implications to staring at screens and sitting in front of computers

- Relaxation becomes more valuable, visceral resistance develops in me

- I miss spontaneous discussions with colleagues, we are isolated professionally as well, socially too, for the students as well is a mental risk

- Home office is comfortable, as I should not go to the university for one meeting

- I enjoy this freedom, that I can work effectively according my schedule

- Our life changes drastically, I sit all the time in front of the computer and I am online at least 10 hours per day, often on the week-ends as well.

- With zoom meetings even in the evenings and at weekends…

- We mostly go to home office if we want to go deeper to a subject, but it affects our private life, due to constant contact it comes at the expense of private time, private time clashes more

- You have to pay more attention and not show everything. I try. On FB it was not clear who was seeing what. You have to be on your guard – in every aspect.

ICT tools have led to an invasion of privacy, as some applications on mobile phones require too many permissions.

➔ Skills and capacities

As for their **skills and capacities** they consider there were also gains and challenges from a personal, and professional point of you on individual and organisational level as well. It increased their efficiency, expanded reach to a wider audience, helped them to personalize their services, and improved their cooperations.

- It changed my vision and understanding of business and how it should be done properly

- I gained new skills and learnt to communicate differently, more concretely, shortly, precisely, interestingly. That was a huge challenge

- Rearranging our educational material for online makes preparations now more efficient, as they need only to be adjusted for the different participants.

- I often see my lack of technical knowledge, so I had to learn. I learned a lot first-hand, and it also improved our methodology.

- With a lot of free courses and information online, I have easy access to knowledge and I study mostly though the WEB

- It is much easier to hold offline training than online, as attention is much harder to maintain. Because of the online detox, we all lose attention. We solve digital detox and digital smog with breaks with our conversations, we solve the 3-hour meeting with games, with small group conversations etc.

- My work as a program manager is easier, as information and results are available

- The ICT tools increased my capacity in the sense that I can cooperate and co-create with partners from other countries. I can offer my services to the target groups outside of my base country.

The majority of our interviewees are still motivated to learn new tools or integrate their usage into the organization.

- I would like to learn AI collaboration - using boots to write codes, that is where I don't have any competence

- I would need a digital mentor

- I have a team that supports me, so I do not have to learn, but I like to be informed myself.

They mostly agree that

- having access to a wider range of educational resources (online courses, tutorials, and multimedia materials) and tools made it easier for them to stay up-to-date with the latest teaching methods and trends.

- The online and the offline are different things energetically. We all behave differently, offline we are more informal.

- Being online constantly changes the quantity and forms how we can absorb the learning materials. It is not good or bad. It's different

- My content changed by 80%

- ICT Tools are required for most day to day functions and are essential for working smart and being productive and competitive.

ICT tools might also motivate, inspire coaches in their personal development.

- The fact that we can build materials online around our concrete topics, and we can go together from one program to another, strengthened our self-confidence and team-spirit.

- I am eager to learn new things that we never thought we were good at. E.g. video creation

- Since there is a lot of professional information available online, I can also find what is necessary on professional sites, and I now belong to new professional communities, reading newsletters…

- Every day is a new day - to learn something new to make work more exciting, challenging and impactful.

- It made me more international in my field.

➡ Networks

Social media platforms especially are useful and efficient in enabling coaches, mentors and adult learners also to grow their professional network to connect with colleagues, industry experts, and also with potential clients. Online communities, such as forums, blogs, and discussion boards, occasional group discussions, events, direct messaging, all allow establishing and maintaining new connections.

- They are very helpful in inspiring a strong sense of community in my professional network

- It has become bigger and more actively supportive.

- A lot. It has allowed us to train nationwide, as now we can recruit from any part of the country. I am also broadening my partner network, there are now local ambassadors, partner companies, and guest chambers of industry. We lead the tools of online communication and recruitment in Notion.

- It gave me a more spread network, as every one can come to me or I can reach just with one online message

➔ Daily work

With ICT tools they work more efficiently by automating tasks, organizing data, and streamlining processes. This has allowed them to focus more on teaching and learning and less on administrative tasks.

- We use ICT tools practically in all tasks: quotations, office administration, financial processes, contracts, training, meetings, project tracking, knowledge sharing, keeping connections, managing customer base.

- Looking back,… a lot of work can be saved by using the tools, digitalization makes work easier and faster, but we keep the importance of personal relationships in focus

- 1. Helps in disciplining and organizing at times - e.g. project management s/w. 2. Helps in better quality of outputs - e.g. workflow diagrams tools. 3. Helps in connecting with people and get their ideas fast

- They make the creation and delivery of the content and the services much easier.

They can usually communicate better and collaborate with their peers, colleagues, and students. This has helped to build stronger relationships and foster a sense of community among learners and educators.

- The results and feedback come quickly and the involvement of students is much higher, for example we started to organize world cafés with students that changed completely our relation

- I am exposed to the advancement work of others and their are security risk too

Though we think that it is important to remember the key mission, which is support of the professional and personal development of the clients and learners.

The most important is the service itself, we should search for the convenient button for the coat and not vice-versa.

It is easier to deliver educational content in a variety of formats and settings, online, blended, and mobile learning.

This has made education more accessible to a wider range of learners and has provided more flexibility for educators in terms of scheduling and delivery.

- **better communication and more professional outcome**
- **It improved organizational capability to deliver. E.g. previously we had to engage designers to create even basic creatives. With tools like Canva, we can do it in-house in no time.**

➔ Sales and customer relations

Students are more engaged and motivated, and learning outcomes are better.

These tools are a good help to get participants active and dynamic during the interactions

---

By utilizing online platforms, such as social media, websites, and online directories coaches, mentors, and adult educators to reach a wider audience and offer more convenient services to their clients. By more personalized service through the use of online communication tools, such as email, video conferencing, and chat applications, they can communicate more efficiently with their clients, answer questions in real-time, and provide timely feedback.

On the other hand not all of the coaches, mentors, adult educators are ready for the growing challenge of visibility.

As a university professor it is not evident for me that I need to be convincing for my students every time to pay attention to my classes in this virtual noise. I needed to invent attractive methods for my entrepreneurship development program: organize hackathons, meetups. Now we function as a separate enterprise or association, like a FB channel. I need to recruit participants with advertising to promote the curriculum

---

The use of ICT tools has also led to enhanced data collection, which can help coaches, mentors, and adult educators to better understand their clients' needs and preferences.

➔ Revenues

The new era of digitalization has a huge impact on market positions and revenues in all sectors, as well as in coaching, mentoring and adult education. Amongst our interviewees, the impacts of the usage of ICT tools have not yet had a significant impact on their revenues, but opened for them new opportunities.

These are ongoing processes, so I can not see a clear increase yet.

Naturally, a wider audience can increase in demand for their services, which can result in higher revenues.

As they increase my reach, they affect the revenue stream positively.

ICT tools can also help them to improve the quality of their services, using online assessments and personalized learning paths to provide more tailored services to their clients can justify higher fees.

With using ICT tools we can better scale our services, and create content resulting in passive revenues.

Similarly, adult educators can use ICT tools to create interactive and engaging training materials, which can attract higher-paying clients.

We are now reaching new funding opportunities for digital educational programs for rural target groups.

On the negative side, the use of ICT tools can also lead to increased competition, which can drive down prices and reduce revenues. With the expansion of online coaching, mentoring, and education, there are now more providers in the market, which can make it more difficult for coaches, mentors, and adult educators to stand out and attract clients. In addition, some clients

may be more price-sensitive when it comes to online services, which can lead to a race to the bottom in terms of pricing.

➜   Effects on clients

As we saw services provided online during times of COVID especially, increased access to people who may not have been able to participate otherwise, those who live in remote areas, people with mobility issues, and those who have busy schedules that make it difficult to attend in-person sessions and they are especially helpful for those who have demanding work or family obligations. Personalized tools and platforms help to create individual learning plans and provide targeted support.

During consulting I use psychological assessment.

Interactive learning experiences (virtual whiteboards, interactive quizzes, and online discussion boards) can also improve engagement and learning outcomes.

At the same time the extensive use of ICT tools, facing new personal challenges without direct human contact might impose emotional difficulties, new sources and symptoms of stresses that would lead them to escape from these situations. Especially when they had negative experiences, such as cyberbullying or exposure to explicit or violent content.

We had clients who signaled that they could not stand it online and did not even come. Others are inactive in the groups…

Excessive use of virtual worlds can lead to addiction and withdrawal symptoms.

Virtual worlds, in well-managed, safe circumstances such as coaching sessions and training, can offer the opposite – healing and personal growth.

We always ask our clients to signal, if we can't create a safe space.
Normally for courses, we involve 2 moderators, one is responsible
for the content, the other for following emotions in the space.

Everybody is aware of the rules, so we warn assertively and kindly if someone for example might hurt someone's feelings…

Positive social connections and opportunities for self-exploration, social support can result in feelings of belongingness, good relationships with others, feelings of accomplishment, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, so better mental health outcomes and generally a positive impact on emotional well-being.

- Generally emotions and feelings can be visibly detected during the sessions and through specific questions

- Feedback is always requested about the format of the event

- Mentees and mentors are mutually evaluated, there must be chemistry. For that we use a logbook of mentors.

- They (learners) give feedback immediately in the knowledge space, they use ICT, and they can give feedback on multiple devices, which strengthens also trust and feelings of being safe

Suggestions

In this final part of our research summary I point to some general suggestions that policy makers, adult educators and learners could consider when it comes to the support of using ICT tools.

➔ To governments

Governments should ensure digital transformation is an all-encompassing, comprehensive and ongoing process in countries. They should invest in digital infrastructure to make more accessible the broadband internet in every corner of countries, and introduce structural and educational reforms for better integration of ICT tools in all areas and sectors.

- Less on tic tok, more reforms

- Abolition of roaming costs, support and facilitation of access, possibility of trainings, presentation of tools

Governments are responsible for all security issues, related to cybersecurity, ensuring data privacy and security to protect the personal information of clients and learners. Regulation and development and usage of AI in all spheres and levels, and providing related educational programs is also a governmental responsibility, and also ensuring collaboration with relevant to develop initiatives.

- More training for data controlling security!

- Don't lose your humanity and be sure about your AI - answer yourself "why am I doing this? "What will be after? How useful it is? "

- I would recommend drawing up a list of regulations to ensure privacy on the information collected (as is the case with the code of ethics drawn up by ESOMAR - the world market research association - which we use in social and market research)

They must also ensure that digital equity is promoted and there is no digital divide between different socio-economic groups when it comes to access to digital technologies, digital devices, or software platforms.

- There must be plenty of online courses, training for those who need to shake hands, the amount of information is plentiful, digital skills are still lacking…

- There should be professional consultations and trainings so that everyone can digitize their streams. Organizations must also be able to manage home office

The can also make public investments into the education of coaches, mentors, and educators to help them effectively use ICT tools and with this to support their clients and learners and support research and evaluation of the impact of ICT tools to develop new policies.

➜   To professionals and partner organizations

The choice of the most appropriate ICT tools upon accessibility, ease of use, security, and compatibility with your clients' or learners' devices is a crucial step in coaching, mentoring, or adult education.

Keep up to date with new ICT tools and train both users and educators well to use them, so to be able to provide better services

Educators must also develop their digital literacy skills to use the tools effectively and learn from each other, but the learning can not be forced and innovations should be implemented step by step.

- Just pick few tools and start slowly, but start somewhere

- Work together to reach more customers together. They create a market, they reinforce each other.

- Consensus by the co-workers on the ICT tools that will be used for online / international work and cooperation. Also, if possible, a combination of face-to-face interaction with remote work partially.

This can include also learning how to use specific software or online platforms. While integrating the use of ICT tools into existing coaching, mentoring, or education practices, and considering how they can complement and enhance existing methods and activities, it is necessary to create

new, engaging and interactive digital content, video, audio, quizzes, or gamification elements. At the same time

Do not implement tools for the sake of introducing and force employees to use the tools. Find tools that are needed and put into practice at a time.

I think partners and organisations need to understand that they need to assess the effectiveness of a tool from time to time and also be flexible to switch to newer tools that offer more functionality, ease of use and benefits to the learners.

Personalization of learning plans for clients and tracking their progress over time will be impossible without providing them with technical support, instructions or tutorials and troubleshooting common issues.

- Don't use a lot of tools for the same thing and use precise written steps if you work on something together.
- It is important to test the clients when we start to work with them, with filtering, better results can be achieved.
- Coaches need the basic skills, should not sell until they are still learners.
- It is important to choose training for the right life cycle

The service providers are also responsible for ensuring data privacy and security, and take necessary measures to protect the personal information of clients or learners.

➔   For customers

The primary conditions to be part of online learning are technical (internet connection, the necessary hardware and software (a computer, smartphone, or tablet, and specific software or online platforms), some digital literacy and understanding digital safety and privacy. If one decides to participate there is a minimum activity and engagement to complete activities or exercises, communicating any technical or other issues encountered during sessions, and providing to help improve future sessions.

Make sure you can use the tools that are used during the service, make it your priority and take responsibility for being able to use it/them

**Co-funded by
the European Union**

N&P
BUSINESS
CONSULTING

FRAMEWORK