ITG InTechGrowth
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THE TRAINING NEEDS OF YOUTH WORKERS IN MOLDOVA

NATIONAL RESEARCH

REPORT

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The InTechGrowth project aims to foster an enabling environment that supports young individuals in developing the skills and competencies necessary to create and scale their technology start-ups. To achieve this, the project is guided by three specific objectives:
- ✓ Strengthening organizations working with young people and developing competencies for youth workers;
- ✓ Enhancing entrepreneurial skills among youth (including aspiring and current entrepreneurs involved with anchor partners);
- ✓ Creating a supportive community composed of organizations working for and with youth, labor market institutions, and educational actors.

As part of the project's methodological approach, IDIS "Viitorul" conducted a training needs analysis to collect input for the development of a training program targeting youth workers in Moldova. The purpose of this research was to gather practical insights and field experiences related to:
- ➢ The challenges youth workers face when working with young entrepreneurs;
- ➢ The competencies needed to effectively support youth entrepreneurship;
- ➢ Training needs and preferred instructional methods.

FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

To obtain qualitative data, IDIS "Viitorul" organized two online focus groups via Zoom on May 6 and May 7, 2025 with a total of 20 participants. These sessions were facilitated by:
- - Mr. Veaceslav Ionita, Associate Professor at the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova and public policy expert at IDIS "Viitorul", with expertise in public finance, financial markets, and regulatory policy. He previously served as Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Economy, Budget and Finance (2009–2014).
- - Mrs. Ana Znaceni, Project Coordinator at IDIS "Viitorul", with solid experience in civil society engagement and project management.

Each focus group lasted approximately two hours and followed a semi-structured discussion format, guided by a pre-defined set of thematic questions. The methodology employed was an open discussion, allowing participants to share their personal experiences and perspectives.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND RECRUITMENT

The focus groups brought together a diverse group of young people involved in student organizations, start-ups (e.g., in recycling and fintech), and entrepreneurship-related initiatives. A total of 20 participants (12 women and 8 men) took part in the discussions. The group included youth workers with entrepreneurial aspirations, civil society representatives, university representatives, and young entrepreneurs already engaged in start-up projects. Participants were recruited through online invitations distributed via institutions, organizations, and networks active in the fields of youth development and entrepreneurship. (See Annex 1: Focus group screenshots; Annex 2: List of participating institutions)

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FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE

Each focus group was structured into three key segments:

A. Introduction (15 minutes)
✓ Welcome and presentation of the session objectives;
✓ Introduction of the facilitators;
✓ Participant introductions;
✓ Explanation of ground rules: confidentiality, mutual respect.

B. Main discussion (90 minutes)

The moderators guided the discussion through the following set of questions:

Context and experience working with youth:
- What are the main target groups you work with?
- What types of programs do you currently run for young people?

Key competencies required for supporting young entrepreneurs:
- In your opinion, what are the most important competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes) a youth worker should have to effectively support young entrepreneurs?
- Which competencies are currently lacking the most?
- Where do you encounter the greatest difficulties in your work?
- What skills would you like to develop in the near future?

Current gaps and challenges in youth work:
- What are the most frequent challenges you face in working with young entrepreneurs?
- Can these challenges be addressed through youth worker training?
- If yes, what challenges could be resolved through skill development and what types of skills are needed?

Training topics and preferred formats:
- Name three training topics that would be most useful for your work.
- Why are these topics currently important?
- What topics are often missing from current training sessions?
- What conditions must be met for a training to be attractive to you? (e.g., online workshops, peer exchanges, coaching; duration, language, accessibility, platforms, etc.)
- What are your expectations from a trainer or a training team?

C. Conclusion (15 minutes)
Summary of key discussion points.
Expression of gratitude and outlining next steps in the project.

The discussions revealed several common themes and insights:

1. Current challenges faced by youth workers

Participants highlighted a lack of motivation and skepticism among youth regarding entrepreneurship. Another significant challenge is providing high-quality and relevant content that captures youth interest and addresses real needs. Many participants emphasized difficulties in identifying and engaging suitable youth participants, especially among NEETs and in less active regions.

Collaboration with public institutions remains limited. Youth workers expressed the need for stronger cooperation with local and central authorities to enhance outreach and impact. The importance of practical experience in working with youth was also emphasized: youth workers must be able to offer both theoretical knowledge and real-world advice.

2. Training needs and competency gaps

Essential competencies identified for youth workers include:

- Practical entrepreneurial knowledge alongside theoretical understanding.
- Mentorship and guidance skills to help youth navigate the start-up journey and build confidence.
- Effective communication and empathy, creating a welcoming and supportive learning environment.
- Time management and adaptability, to juggle multiple responsibilities and react to new circumstances.
- Digital literacy and critical thinking, to better support youth in today's tech-driven context. In addition, youth workers should possess the ability to guide, motivate, and inspire young people. These skills are vital for encouraging young entrepreneurs to develop and pursue their ideas. Participants also noted the importance of providing up-to-date and practical information in training content. This includes legal knowledge about business registration, understanding external funding mechanisms, and available guarantees for young entrepreneurs, areas often absent in current training programs.

3. Preferred training topics

Participants identified several high-priority areas for training:

- Financial planning and accounting, to understand the financial backbone of a start-up.
- Project management, including how to access and manage funding opportunities.
- Business plan development, tailored to the Moldovan legal and economic context.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool for innovation and overcoming resource limitations.
- Non-formal education methodologies, offering interactive and engaging alternatives to traditional learning.
- Public speaking, negotiation, and advocacy, essential for pitching ideas and securing support.
- Digital marketing, risk management, trend analysis, and regulatory compliance, all cited as critical areas for upskilling.

These themes are highly relevant in today's entrepreneurial landscape and were identified as

priority areas for capacity-building among youth workers.

4. Preferred training formats and technical requirements

Participants expressed a clear preference for interactive and practical trainings. They favor formats that combine theory with real-life examples, open discussions, and group exercises. Site visits to start-ups or sessions led by experienced entrepreneurs were seen as particularly valuable.

Other important conditions for effective training include:
- Tailored and topic-specific content.
- Adequate duration to ensure real skill development.
- Use of accessible language and platforms.
- Constructive feedback mechanisms.
- Opportunities for peer exchange and experiential learning.

Non-formal education methods were favored over traditional academic approaches, as young people are often disengaged from formal education settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback received during these focus group discussions, it is clear that effective support for youth entrepreneurship requires a comprehensive approach that strengthens both the hard and soft skills of youth workers. Training programs should be grounded in the practical realities faced by youth and their mentors, provide actionable knowledge, and promote continuous engagement. Future training should be competency-based and experience-driven, with a strong emphasis on real-world application. Programs must be tailored to the Moldovan context, clearly addressing legal, financial, and institutional frameworks. A modular, thematic structure should be adopted to enable in-depth exploration of specialized areas. Additionally, training must incorporate inclusive outreach strategies, with a particular focus on youth from underrepresented and rural communities.

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