



InTechGrowth

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THE IDENTIFIED TRAINING NEEDS OF
YOUTH WORKERS IN AZERBAIJAN

NATIONAL RESEARCH

REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

This national research report presents the findings of the training needs analysis carried out in Azerbaijan within the ERASMUS+ program's InTechGrowth (ITG) project. The project's general objective is to establish an enabling environment that supports young individuals in building skills and competencies needed for the establishment and expansion of their technology-based start-up businesses.

In line with this overarching goal, the InTechGrowth initiative pursues the following specific objectives: Enhancing the technological and entrepreneurial skills of young people, including aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs; fostering collaboration between youth organisations, labour market institutions, and educational actors; and strengthening the capacity of organisations working with young people by developing the competencies of youth workers.

OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the national study carried out in Azerbaijan was to determine the training requirements, competency gaps, and real-world difficulties encountered by youth workers operating in different local organizations. To achieve this objective, an online focus group meeting was conducted, and an analysis of the training and coaching needs was carried out.

The findings of this research will form the basis for the InTechGrowth project's creation of a focused training program for young professionals.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Method

A qualitative methodological approach was used to conduct the study, based on online focus group discussions with Azerbaijani youth workers and relevant stakeholders. This approach was employed to enable in-depth exploration of shared professional experiences, challenges, and training needs among youth workers.

The focus group meetings were conducted on January 5 and 7 in an online Zoom format. Overall, two focus group meetings were conducted, each lasting approximately two hours.

The focus group followed a semi-structured format, which allowed participants to freely express their perspectives, experiences, and professional challenges working with young entrepreneurs and aspiring start-up founders. The meetings were conducted interactively and were facilitated by experienced independent consultant Chinara Guliyeva.

In order to ensure an open and participatory conversation environment, the facilitator used a predetermined set of topical questions that were in line with the InTechGrowth study methodology.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND RECRUITMENT

A total of 20 participants - 11 women and 9 men - took part in the online focus group meeting. The participants represented a wide variety of institutions and professional backgrounds engaged with youth work, education, training, and entrepreneurship support in Azerbaijan. Participants included youth workers, trainers, NGO leaders, and university lecturers, ensuring a balance between practical experience and academic expertise. They were affiliated with a range of public unions, educational institutions, civil society organisations, and specialised youth-focused associations, allowing for the inclusion of diverse professional and regional perspectives. This institutional and professional diversity enhanced the validity of the findings by taking into account various geographic and institutional viewpoints.

Participants were recruited through direct invitations sent to relevant organizations using existing professional networks. (See Annex 1: Focus group screenshots; Annex 2: List of participating institutions).

FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE

Two online focus group meetings were conducted at different times, each lasting approximately two hours. Each focus group meeting was structured as follows:

A. Introduction (15 minutes)

- Welcome and introduction of the meeting goals;
- Introduction of the facilitator;
- Introduction of participants;
- Overview of the InTechGrowth project and the research aim.
- Explanation of discussion rules and confidentiality principles.

B. Main Discussion (90 minutes)

The following theme areas were the main focus of the discussion:

Contextual Background

- Types of youth groups participants collaborate with;
- Type of existing youth entrepreneurship and skills-development programs.

Youth Workers' Competencies

- Essential skills needed to effectively assist young entrepreneurs;
- Competencies that youth workers currently lack;
- Skills and knowledge youth workers wish to develop.

Daily Work Challenges

- Practical challenges faced when assisting young entrepreneurs.
- Systemic, institutional, and motivational difficulties;

- Identification of challenges that could be resolved by targeted training.

Training Needs and Preferences

- Topics for priority training;
- Preferred methods and formats for learning;
- Expectations for technical aspects, learning materials, and trainers.

C. Conclusion (15 minutes)

- Summary of the main discussed points;
- Validation of major insights;
- Outline of next steps within the project;
- Closing remarks and expressions of gratitude.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Current Challenges Faced by Youth Workers in Azerbaijan

Participants noted several frequent challenges in their daily work with young entrepreneurs and aspiring start-up founders. One major issue is that many young workers have little real-world entrepreneurial experience, which limits their capacity to offer practical advice beyond theoretical understanding.

Participants also highlighted an inadequate understanding of the national entrepreneurial ecosystem, including legal and financial frameworks. Additional challenges included gaps in digital literacy, limited experience with coaching and mentoring methodologies, and difficulties in supporting early-stage business idea development.

Participants also pointed out emerging issues concerning the application of AI tools, highlighting the necessity for youth professionals to comprehend how to ethically and effectively incorporate AI into learning processes.

All of these challenges illustrate a gap between the conceptual knowledge and the practical skills needed for successful youth entrepreneurship support.

Competency Gaps and Training Needs

The following competency areas were determined to be crucial for Azerbaijani youth workers based on the discussions:

- Practical understanding of start-up development and entrepreneurship;
- Mentoring and Coaching skills;
- Capacity to collaborate with diverse youth groups;
- AI literacy and other digital skills;
- Pedagogical skills for experiential and non-formal learning;
- Facilitation of critical and creative thinking;

Participants stressed that youth workers should serve as role models by combining strong motivation, ethical engagement, and professional skill.

Priority Training Topics

Participants gave the top priority to the following training areas:

- Fundamentals of entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystems;
- Access to financing and fundraising;
- Mentoring and coaching methods;
- Effective teaching and non-formal instruction techniques;
- Presentation and communication skills;
- Digital literacy and skills.

Preferred Training Formats and Technical Requirements

The following were clearly preferred by the participants:

- Clear, structured training materials with practical guidance;
- Real-life examples and case studies pertinent to the Azerbaijani context;
- Training materials that are organised, clear, and offer useful advice;
- Trainers with both strong facilitation skills and expertise in the field;
- Various delivery methods, such as online and hybrid options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the focus group findings, the InTechGrowth training program for youth workers in Azerbaijan should be created as a competency-based and practice-oriented project that directly addresses identified skills shortages and other challenges and helps achieve the overall objectives of the project.

First, to enable youth workers to offer young entrepreneurs more than just theoretical education, the training should focus on strengthening entrepreneurial, mentoring, and coaching competencies. Effective communication with varied youth groups and the development of pedagogical abilities for experiential and non-formal learning should receive special attention.

Second, in response to shortages in digital skills and new artificial intelligence concerns, the program should include focused instruction on digital and AI literacy, with an emphasis on ethical and efficient use of technology in youth education and entrepreneurial assistance.

Third, experiential learning techniques, such as real-world case studies, simulations, and practical exercises pertinent to the Azerbaijani entrepreneurial setting, should be emphasised in the training.

Young people should be assisted by youth workers in identifying, developing, and presenting early-stage business ideas.

Fourth, the program should address the national entrepreneurial ecosystem, including key legal, financial, and institutional frameworks, with particular focus on access to finance and available support mechanisms for start-ups in Azerbaijan.

Finally, the training should be conducted in various kinds of formats, such as online and hybrid ones, with the assistance of experienced trainers and clear, useful training materials. To guarantee sustainability and long-term effects, the program should promote peer learning and knowledge sharing.

In order to ensure relevance, efficacy, and transferability within Azerbaijan's youth work sector, the InTechGrowth training program should be modular, flexible to various institutional and regional settings, and centred on measurable competency development.



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