Interreg
EUROPEAN UNION
2 Seas Mers Zeeën
SPEED-YOU-UP
European Regional Development Fund

VISION STATEMENT

Measuring impact in a qualitative way

1. Foreword

The following document conveys a vision to measure the impact of the Speed-You-Up project in a qualitative way. The goal of this document is twofold. First, as this document has been drafted as a proposal, it might serve as a basis for further discussion on impact measurement throughout the Speed-You-Up project. Second, this document may also be of help to partners measuring impact throughout the Speed-You-Up project as it provides general guidance.

The document is structured around five basic questions, comprising the how, who, what, when, and whom of impact measurement. More specifically, this vision statement will provide an answer to each of these questions. Moreover, the answers to the questions are briefly motivated so as to allow the reader to get a grasp of why specific choices were made.

HOW WHO WHAT WHEN WHOM

We hope that this document may provide a fruitful basis for discussion and may help partners in measuring the impact of the Speed-You-Up project in a qualitative way!

2. The "big five" of impact measurement

2.1 How will impact be measured?

It is proposed to measure impact in two main ways. Firstly, we suggest to collect data via individual and group interviews (i.e., focus groups). This rather common form of qualitative data collection is especially valuable when aiming to uncover the meaning and reason behind processes, perceptions, and interactions (Fontana and Frey, 1994). As the aim of the qualitative part of the impact measurement is both to capture unexpected or unforeseen effects of the project and provide us with an understanding on how the program works, interviews seem particularly relevant.

This, however, does not answer the question as to why we propose to collect data through individual interviews as well as through focus groups. The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, both types of interviews have their strengths and weaknesses (Fontana and Frey, 1994). For instance, while focus groups provide interviewees with the opportunity to elaborate on each other responses (and as such allows for the development of unique perspectives), they may also interfere with individual expression (certainly as sensitive topics are being addressed). In contrast, whereas individual interviews may secure individual expression, they do not necessarily stimulate respondents to the extent that focus groups do. By proposing both types of interviews, it is aimed to address the weaknesses of both individual and group interviews by combining their strengths. Moreover, pushing forward individual interviews as well as focus groups, allows interviewees to choose the option they are most comfortable with.

While interviewing is a fairly traditional way of data collection, we feel it is important to make them somewhat "informal," certainly when interviewing youngsters. This might be achieved by approaching the interview as a tour (i.e., by asking youngsters to give them a tour through their pop-up and asking questions along the way).

Next to interviews, we also propose a second form of data collection. Before going into this form, it is important to note that this method is only targeted at one actor within the project, namely youngsters. More specifically, we want to encourage youngsters within Speed-You-Up to create digital stories. These "stories" serve as records of youngsters' experiences and comprise a combination of video messages, picture/memes, and/or written excerpts. Within the project, time could be reserved for such sharing activities. However, it is also possible to let youngsters decide on when to create their digital stories. Moreover, these stories may either take shape as individual or as group records.

The choice to include a second form of data is driven by two main reasons. First, it provides youngsters who are not being (or who not wish to be) interviewed with the opportunity to share their experiences after all. Second, multiple forms of data improve the validity of what is measured through a process of data triangulation (Huberman and Miles, 1994). While at first it was foreseen to include qualitative questions in the existing quantitative survey, we take the concerns of the partners regarding the length of the survey seriously. As such, it was decided to look for another option which was found in the form of digital stories. We feel digital stories are a fully-fledged alternative to survey questions and might, in fact, be more in line with the lifeworld of youngsters. On top of that, digital storytelling provides opportunities for youngsters to acquire and develop digital competencies (see DigiComp framework on the importance of digital skills in the 21st century). With regard to the latter, it might be wise to organize a workshop on how to create digital stories beforehand. Lastly, the emergence and development of *netnography* in the last two decades has opened up avenues for the qualitative analysis of digital data (cf., Kozinets, 2010).

2.2 Who will be targeted?

In the previous section, it was proposed to measure impact through interviews (both individual and in group) and digital stories. This, however, raises the question *who* will be interviewed and asked to create digital stories. In short, three actors are targeted, namely (i) youngsters, (ii) coaches (i.e., educational professionals or social workers), and (iii) members from the community (i.e., local business owners and neighborhood residents). The reason to focus on these three actors is relatively straightforward: they are the main three actors participating in the project. Consequently, if we wish to gain an understanding on how the program works, it will be necessary to take into account the experiences and perspectives of these actors. It is, however, important to note that, while all actors will be interviewed, only youngsters will be encouraged to create digital stories (see table below).

With regard to the interviews, we also had to define the total number of youngsters, coaches and community members to be questioned. In this process, we had to take into account the goal of ending up with a rich data set while at the same time not losing sight of feasibility issues. We believe that, per partner, eight to ten interviews with youngsters and two to three interviews both with coaches and community members secures both aims. However, we feel this number should be adjustable based on the saturation of data.

	Youngsters	Coaches	Community members
Interviews	X	X	X
Digital stories	X		

Furthermore, we feel it is important to ensure that there exists some amount of diversity within the selected group of interviewees so as to be able to capture unexpected or unforeseen effects of the project and really understand how the program works. This means that sampling should not happen in a random way. For instance, it is advisable to select both youngsters that have dropped out the Speed-You-Up project as well as youngsters who have successfully finished the program.

Lastly, we feel it may also be interesting to target some family members of youngsters that have participated in the project. Of course, we are well aware this might put an additional strain on the interviewers. As such, throughout the interview process it should be evaluated whether interviews with family members provide relevant data and do not result in an excessive workload.

2.3 What will be measured?

The most basic question to answer when aiming to measure impact is *what* exactly will be measured. In order to evaluate whether a specific topic would be relevant to discuss, we juxtaposed it to the aim of the qualitative part of the impact measurement, namely the wish "to capture unexpected or unforeseen effects of the project and understand how the program works". This process resulted in a series of questions which are listed below. As can be noted, these questions are divided into categories so as to provide the interviewer with some structure during the interview process. More specifically, it may help the interviewer to make interviews somewhat less formal (this by allowing interviewees to jump from one thing to another) while at the same not losing track of the interview guide (this by facilitating the process in which is assessed whether all main topics have been discussed and, if so, to what extent this has been the case). Furthermore, it may help the interviewer to focus attention fully on what interviewees are saying and, as such, react to valuable clues.

(INSERT INTERVIEW GUIDE)

With regard to the digital stories, we propose to give youngsters as much freedom as they are comfortable with. This means that it should not be defined beforehand what youngsters should discuss in the digital stories they create so as to both guarantee motivation and secure creativity. However, when youngsters feel lost, it might be wise to present them with some basic questions to facilitate the creation of a digital story (e.g., “How did you experience the analysis of the community?”, “Did creating a real pop-up change your outlook on your capabilities? “What didn’t you like about the program?”).

2.4 When will the measurement take place?

Besides the how, the who and the what, there is also the question as to *when* impact should be measured. In short, we propose to interview the coaches and community members straight after the project has ended. In contrast, we propose to interview youngsters not only straight after the project has ended but also six months after Speed-You-Up came to an end. The reason for this is that in the qualitative part of the impact measurement, we also wish to assess the impact Speed-You-Up had on participating youngsters, this not only in the short term but also over an extended period of time.

With regard to the digital stories, we again feel it might be wise give youngsters the freedom to decide when to create so as to both guarantee motivation and secure creativity. However, this does not mean that no time should be reserved for the creation of these stories. Quite to the contrary, we feel it may be a good idea to facilitate digital storytelling by youngsters by offering them with specific time slots to do so.

2.5 Whom will measure impact?

In order to decide on whom should measure impact, we had to find a balance between two conflicting interests. On the one hand, it is important to keep the number of interviewers as low as possible in order to improve the consistency between interviews. On the other hand, it is essential for an interviewer to both speak the mother tongue of interviewees fluently and have a solid knowledge of the context in which they operate when trying to obtain “rich data”. Taking both interests into account, we propose that one partner per country should be assigned to carry out the interviews of this country. In this way, the number of interviewers is kept to a minimum while interviewers will speak the mother tongue of interviewees fluently and have a solid knowledge of the context in which they operate. With regard to the group interviews, it might be wise to opt for an extra moderator that assists the main interviewer conducting the interviews. This is because focus groups are particularly challenging for the researcher as he/she "must simultaneously worry about the script of questions and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction" (Frey & Fontana *in* Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 365).

3. Impact measurement in times of COVID-19

In case of further lockdowns, it is clear that impact will have to be measured in a different way. While we hope that interviews can take place face-to-face, we believe interviews can carried out online (e.g., via skype/teams/zoom). However, in this case it will be very important to keep interviews as short as possible in order to avoid demotivation. In contrast, the strength of digital stories as a method of data collection is that there is no need for adaptation in case the project has to roll out in an online manner.