Digital Innovations for Growth Academy (DIGA) Evaluation Report

Note:

This paper is an output of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project Digital Innovations for Growth Academy (DIGA) [2014-1-UK01-KA202-001780]. It presents research and analysis to inform the development of the DIGA training programme to enhance the digital competencies of enterprise educators and trainers. Digital Innovations for Growth Academy operates as a Strategic Partnership from seven-member states. The partners are from the social, private and public sectors.

Disclaimer:

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Executive Summary

The Digital Innovations for Growth Academy Project is a Strategic Partnership from seven-member states (UK, Ireland, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Norway and Spain) involved in the enhancement of digital competencies of entrepreneurs and owner-manager through the provision of appropriate small firm digital training programmes. The DIGA programme(http://digaproject.eu/learning-programme/) is designed to support entrepreneurship trainers and educators (ETEs) in the development of their digital competencies and skills to enable them to train, advise and mentor entrepreneurs to become more digitally-literate.

DIGA evaluation clearly demonstrates that the project objectives were achieved resulting in an increased level of digital awareness, greater understanding of digital policy, new knowledge and experience in relevant digital practices and guidelines on how to develop a digital strategy for the small firm. The combination of in class knowledge dissemination mingled with action learning delivery mechanisms such as individual and team exercises, case studies, videos, templets and guidelines were deemed impactful in presenting an integrated understanding the principles of digital within and across enterprise functions. The importance of peer learning with and from other participants was noted and this generated a stronger network of professional contacts for participants relevant post completion of DIGA.

As a result of completing DIGA, entrepreneur trainers and educators (ETEs) are more engaged with, confident about and willing to incorporate digital across their entrepreneurial training and mentoring roles. Their pre DIGA perceptron of digital and the perceived barriers to its use and implementation in the small firm were removed.

The Personal Development Plan was viewed as an important self-reflection learning tool which engaged participants, many for the first time, in examining their level and depth of digital knowledge and thus their digital competency needs. Indeed, this Personal Development Plan was regarded as an instrument which would add value to other entrepreneur development programmes they offer and thus has transferability of application beyond DIGA. Further the PDP can be used to track and build portfolio of training competencies and programmes completed.

This report provides a comprehensive insight into the results of the evaluation which is based on feedback from a number of sources incorporating a quantitative survey of facilitator and the ETC participants; one to one feedback sessions with facilitators and a series of case study stories of the experiences of facilitators and participants with DIGA.

The report provides respondent experiences of DIGA from an operational perspective of selecting and recruiting candidates and organising the programme to the delivery and assessment of learning obtained and the type of professional and personal benefits obtained from participation in DIGA. Suggestions were also elicited on how DIGA might be advanced and made more accessible to a greater number of ETE's.

The evaluation report is presented as follows, the first section provides an overview of the key learnings from the programme and the second section presents the level of satisfaction with the various modules, the third section presents a summary of the findings from the analysis of case study stories of facilitators and participants. The report concludes with a

synthesis of the primary learnings and suggestions for policy and practice and the transferability of DIGA.

1.0 Introduction – Context of the DIGA project

The Digital Innovations for Growth Academy (DIGA) operates as a Strategic Partnership from seven-member states involved in the enhancement of digital competencies of entrepreneurs and owner-managers through the provision of appropriate digital competency training to Entrepreneur Trainers and Educators (ETEs). The content of the DIGA programme was informed by feedback from multiple sources including;

- Assessment of partner country digital competency best practices
- Review of contemporary literature (academic and industry sector published reports) on digital skills and competencies in small firms
- An evaluation of contemporary European and National policies on digital and ESkills
- The completion of an empirical quantitative cross-country study
- The experience and collective learning of the partnership members

The empirical study obtained direct feedback from a tripod of interconnected stakeholders, entrepreneurial learners (early stage and established), entrepreneurship educators, and Entrepreneur Trainers and Educators (ETEs) across the partner countries of the United Kingdom; Ireland; Slovenia; Spain; Lithuania; Bulgaria and Norway. The survey yielded a total of 482 responses comprising of 141 entrepreneur trainers and educators (ETEs); 239 established entrepreneurs and 102 entrepreneurial learners.

The purpose of the evaluation exercise is to reflect firstly, partner experiences on the development of DIGA programme, to obtain the reaction from participants on their experience of DIGA and an understanding of the nature of personal and professional (digital knowledge and skills) accrued from participating in the DIGA Learning Programme. The assessment was undertaken at the programme and module levels and incorporated the duality of views from the trainer/facilitator (ETEs) and trainee (entrepreneurial learner).

The report is structured as follows. Initially, the DIGA Learning Programme is presented to include its objectives; the anticipated learning outcomes, detail on various modules, assignments and the support material provided. Subsequently, the evaluation methodology section details the process applied to obtain feedback from ETEs and participants. The results of the evaluation provide insights into the partners experiences in the recruitment and selection of candidates for DIGA, the nature and level of personal and professional learning development, examples of how this learning was and will be applied in their respective roles and suggestions on how DIGA model of digital competency development can be enhanced. Finally, the report provides recommendations for digital policy and practice.

2.0 Programme Overview

2.1 DIGA Programme Objectives

The aim of the DIGA programme is to support entrepreneurship trainers and educators (ETEs) in the development of their digital competencies and skills to enable them to train, advise and mentor entrepreneurs to become more digitally-literate. The DIGA programme promotes an integrated perspective of the role and benefits of digital technologies as they apply to the specific characteristics of the start-up and established small enterprise. The programme content was shaped by the five core digital competencies identified in policy and practice reports as follows:

1. Enhancing Digital Awareness and Knowledge
2. The role and use of Digital Technologies and their benefits to Business
3. Making Digital Deliver for the start-up and small business
4. Enabling and Supporting the Development of an Entrepreneurial Digital Strategy
5. Designing Integrated (Digital Competence) Entrepreneur Support/Programmes

Appendix 1 contains a description of the various modules, their objectives, supporting delivery material, assessments and learning outcomes.

2.2 DIGA Programme Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes of the DIGA programme focus on:

- Understanding why entrepreneurs need to adopt a strategic long-term perspective to the application of digital technologies to progress the enterprise to its next stage of business growth.
- Explaining digital competencies and identifying their benefits to support sustained business success/growth.
- Categorising and evaluating the internal and external drivers of digital and an understanding the ever-changing digital technology landscape (online, social, mobile, e-commerce, e-marketplace, business and multi-channel).
- Reviewing the array of digital tools and techniques available to apply in an entrepreneurial context and how to devise a digital strategy that is aligned with overall business objectives.
- The importance of linking digital to business performance metrics (setting targets, monitoring and evaluation of digital).
- Developing skills to reflect on and diagnose their own or an entrepreneurs level of digital knowledge, skills and confidence as a foundation on which to develop a suitable digital competency development programme.
- Provision of guidelines and templates to guide ETEs in the design, implementation, delivery and assessment of an effective digital training programme.

2.3 DIGA Participant Profile

The participants on the DIGA programme consisted of entrepreneurship trainers and educators (ETEs) directly and indirectly engaged in training, advising and mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs or those engaged in an early start up or established small enterprise.   The

programme was delivered by a sample of ETE from the UK, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Spain and Lithuania. These ETEs worked for both private and public sector organisations and were experienced in working with entrepreneurs across the spectrum of start up to established small and medium enterprise. Further they all had cross sectoral experience which ensured that they could accommodate the heterogeneous mix of entrepreneurial learners.

2.4 DIGA Pedagogy and Delivery Characteristics

A blended delivery approach was deployed encompassing knowledge sharing complemented by linked practice based experiential learning via online assignments and supporting exercises and case studies. The learning environment was designed to encourage and enable peer and supported group learning in an informal interactive manner. This creation of a community of learners generated a network of professional contacts for ongoing collaboration between the participants once the programme was completed.

At the onset of the programme participants completed a Personal Development Plan (PDP) to capture their existing levels of digital knowledge, familiarity with digital language and the use of digital tools in their roles. This information ensured that programme content and the practical learning assessments addressed the varied entry needs of participants and enabled customisation of content and assignments by partner institution. Engaging in the completion of the PDP was a useful personal self-reflection and self-learning exercise for participants as it identified in a more explicit manner their individual level of digital knowledge and further it provided a useful means of tracking digital learning as they completed DIGA.

DIGA modules were designed along a common template agreed by project partners and contained clear instructions on the objectives of the module, its content and topics to cover and a range of assessments consisting of in class exercises, cases, team exercises and assessments. Partner country cultural, digital infrastructure and usage variations were accommodated through the provision of additional practice based learning assignments, country specific best practice cases, and local and national policy information by the partner institutions. The practical exercises and assessments were applied throughout the programme as a means of tracking and tracing participant learning. As well as identifying topics that required more attention and highlighted how overall DIGA programme learning outcomes were being achieved.

3.0 Evaluation Methodology – Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

The evaluation comprised programme and module evaluations:
1. DIGA Learning Programme evaluation determined if the overall objectives of the DIGA programme were accomplished, what worked well, not so well and the learnings from this that would inform the transferability of the programme into other contexts.
2. Module evaluation. Post module evaluation captured the level of satisfaction of the experience of the participant with each module in areas such as the organisational aspects of the programme; the variety and depth of the content and assessments of the modules and the learning obtained. This evaluation took place on the completion of each module.

The results of the quantitative evaluations (57 responses) are augmented by the inclusion of narratives from 14 case study stories from facilitators and participants as a means of capturing a more comprehensive and personalised insight into their experiences of participating in the DIGA programme.

The results of the quantitative and qualitative evaluation approaches are summarised in the subsequent sections.

4.0 Recruitment Process Evaluation

4.1 Sourcing, Recruitment and Selection of DIGA participants

The partner countries adopted a similar process in sourcing, recruitment and selection of candidates for the DIGA programme incorporating some adaptation to accommodate country specific requirements. The DIGA programme was advertised through a combination of online and offline methods, primarily exploiting existing professional and entrepreneurial networks, referrals and databases and mailing lists. Online promotional methods included advertising on local partner institution web pages and social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, google+), the use of blogs posted on strategic locations which were disseminated to networks and professional organisations who then recommended DIGA. The use of online methods allowed for customisation of the content to different target audiences, leveraging of the promotions of credible partner media and enabled speedy response to queries.

In the vast majority of cases online methods were followed up with personal contact to discuss questions of interested candidates, which focussed on the time commitment and the format of the programme. In addition to one to one follow up, presentations or information workshops were used where groups of interested candidates would convene as a means of promoting to similar groups.

Consensus emerged as to the importance of the personal word of mouth and referral approach as a means of creating awareness and generating interest in the programme. This personal interactive mode allowed the potential participant to ask questions on the programme and ascertain how it would add value to their roles.

Evaluation of the recruitment process highlighted the importance of personal contact and personal recommendations for interested parties to engage with providers to address questions they had. Given the importance of personal recommendations the participants who have completed DIGA will be important advocates for the promotions of future DIGA programmes.

The review also provided some useful learning points on selection and sourcing of participants. The comments in Table 1.0 highlight what worked well and less well with the selection and recruitment of participants.

Table 1.0 Comments on the Recruitment and Selection process

Recruitment Process
'In order to recruit the participants for the training programme, we sent invitations and description of the training programme through our mailing list, published the information on our web page and social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, google+)' *'The recruitment process was fairly straightforward as we are currently the lead organisation managing the Liverpool City Regions Enterprise Start Up programme. There are around 30 business advisers currently working on the programme and we have regular contact with all partner organisations. We devised an email promoting the benefits of attending and that this workshop would be free of charge for this time only and available to partners on the programme'*

What worked well and not so well in the recruitment process
'The most effective way was personal informing of potential participants through our personal networks' *'The main obstacle while acquiring the participants was the duration of the programme and the density of planned sessions – we delivered it in two weeks (5 modules – 5 sessions). For most participants it was too much time to take out of their daily obligations. Perhaps the better way would be to stretch the programme through a whole month and have a session/module once a week'* *'The promotion email went out to the managers at each programme as they would need to give permission to their team to attend, so it relied on the buy in of the managers. Next time I would send the email to all the business advisers as well, so that all are made aware of the opportunity'*

Selection Process
'We selected the potential participants based on their activities and contacted the ones that were either business consultants or were teaching at business schools. Personal contacts with the persons we knew from before proved to be most effective' *'The was no need for a selection process as the partners on the enterprise programme have already been through a rigorous selection process as part of the programme and all advisers work with clients is being monitored regularly'*

The primary issue experienced in organising the first DIGA programme was to do with the time required to promote, source and select candidates for the programme. The learnings obtained from the first roll out will guide and inform project and time management of the next DIGA programme. The DIGA brand will be endorsed and strengthened with the inclusion of case study stories as testimonials to highlight the marked pre and post-digital knowledge and skills acquisition to entrepreneurial decision making. Thus, these testimonials can be used to promote the next DIGA programme and will assist in fast tracking marketing and promotions and reduce the time commitment of programme coordinators.

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There was full participation on all the sessions and thus reinforces the interest in and eagerness to learn about digital technologies.

5.0 Programme Evaluation

5.1 Programme Level Learning Evaluation

The Entrepreneur Educator Trainers (ETEs) evaluated the nature of the personal and professional learning accrued from completion of DIGA and provided examples of how they have, or will apply this learning in their role as an Enterprise Trainer and Educator (ETEs). This learning was captured by using pre and post learning acquisition scales which ranged on a spectrum of 1 to 5, where 1 represented 'no understanding' and 5 'full understanding'.

5.1.1 Development of Digital Competencies

Aspects of the broader area of digital competencies were assessed to include awareness of the concept of digital competencies, understanding the various EU and National digital policies their relevance and impact on the practices of digital in an entrepreneurial context using the scale of 1 to 5 as mentioned above. The first question addressed participants understanding of digital competences and the results are presented below in Table 2.0:

Table 2.0: The level of understanding of digital competencies pre and post DIGA

Q1. Overall, how would you rate your level of the areas digital competence, before and after the DIGA learning programme?
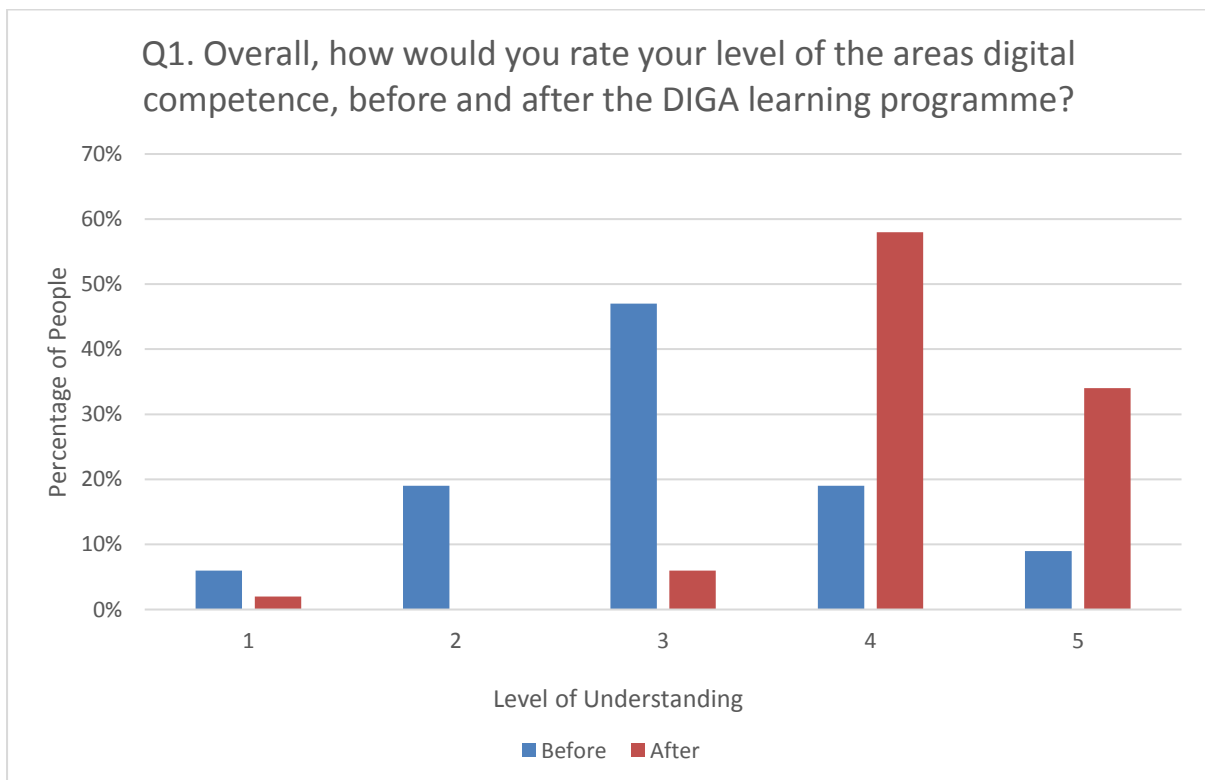
Overwhelmingly, respondents endorsed a significant increase in the level of new understanding on digital competencies, what they entail and why it is important for ETEs to

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comprehend how digital competencies can add real tangible benefits to the performance of the small enterprise. The comments received from respondents on pre and post knowledge of digital competencies are presented in Table 3.0

Table 3.0 Comments on Level of Understanding of Digital competencies pre DIGA

'At least for me personally everything got from 0 understanding to 10 points, as for self – evaluation that is' *'I was thinking in between 1 and 2 before, but surely it went to 5 after'* *'Gained more knowledge, still lots of room to learn and improve and put into practise'* *'Much better understanding of the concept'* *'This was a great session so informative and a real eye opener'* *'Life changes very fast and we have to adapt to the changes, understanding digital competences for some of us was something totally new, but useful as we need to know it.* *'I think I was not sure at the beginning if I have an idea about digital competence, but during the programme I understood that I know at least something. I learned'.*

In addition to advancing the knowledge of digital competencies, participants were definite in the knowledge they obtained on the National and EU digital landscapes which provided insights into the need for and drivers of digital in business, social and educational situations and how this would impact on entrepreneurial business practices. This learning alerted participants of the importance of being aware of and the necessity to keep up to date with the policies and regulations governing entrepreneurial practices – introducing the notion of ongoing learning as expressed in the following comment ''*I understood that I do need constantly update my knowledge's and skills on ICT. The ICT develops very fast and its correlations with business is very huge. As a trainer, I should take into account'.*

Similarly, pre DIGA, common across the respondents was a lack of understanding of the elements of the broader EU Digital landscape and its implications for their role of ETE with the clear majority of respondents returning a score of 2.0, with majority in that group, citing 1 as their level of knowledge of digital policies.

Table 4.0 Comments of the Level of Understanding of the National and EU digital landscape

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Q2. Overall, how would you rate your level of understanding of the national and EU digital landscape (for example, trends and policies) before and after the DIGA learning programme?
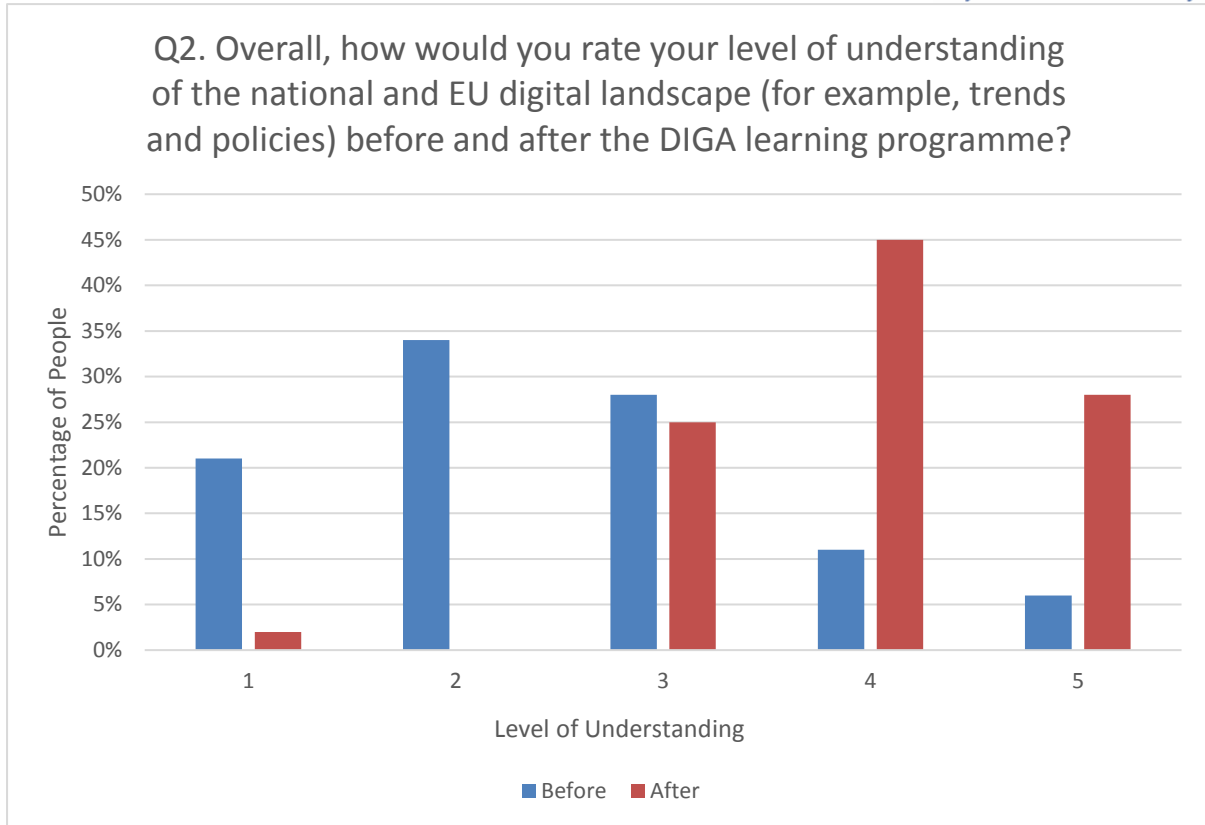
On completion of DIGA there was compelling evidence to demonstrate an enhanced comprehension of the emerging trends of digital and its connectedness with the everyday operations of the small enterprise, rating it as a '5' in the vast majority of responses and no one scored the learning less than '4'.   Respondents commented on the importance for them as an ETE to have knowledge on the EU landscape and impending National and EU digital policies as it enables them to be better positioned and capable of addressing the needs of the entrepreneur operating in an increasingly digitalised marketplace. Further a strong working knowledge in digital will be ever more important for ETEs as aspiring entrepreneurs are younger and more digitally knowledgeable and focussed on international expansion and will expect advisors to be more advanced in digital as commented below: *'In our role, it is important to have a wide spectre of understanding in various fields'* and *'I learned new tools and got information about the broader digital landscape and digitalization can have an impact on business'.*

Following on from an assessment of the broader contextual digital infrastructure, detail was obtained on the learning gained on the ever-expanding array of digital tools for use in an entrepreneurial context and how they would benefit the entrepreneur are described in Table 5.0

5.1.2 Knowledge of Digital Tools

Respondents provided a broad range of examples of the digital tools, which for the sake of analysis are themed into common areas of usage and relevance to a particular business task and function as exhibited in Table 5.0.

Table 5.0 Digital tools knowledge acquisition and the benefits of this learning

Digital Tools learnt about:	Benefits to entrepreneur- cross functional use:
Enterprise/Business level digital tools • *We learned about tools in the main business activities.* • *The different tools for HR/Staffing, Finance, Process and Operations and Strategy* • *Crowdfunding platforms* • *More generally thinking about other areas of digital e.g. financial management* • *Tools for counting and making predictions, forecasting sales* • *We transfer - cloud-based computer file transfer service* • *Digital Competence Framework* • *components that would make up a digital strategy - not just marketing* • *Virtual classroom Canvas* • *Producteev for project management* • *Various tools for counting and making predictions* **Marketing and Communications digital tools** • *Social networks that are gaining more attention* • *Communication tools for online assistance.* • *Social media in general and all its functions* • *Google Alert, Glogster and Podcast* • *business road map* • *google analytics* • *Xeor* • *Communication tools by online assistance* **Measurement and Evaluation tools** • *Google analytics,* • *Hootsuite.*	• *Makes it easier for everyday activities* • *Makes possible greater opportunities to expand business.* • *Saves his money and time.* • *Helps to attract best talents.* • *Faster job, it takes less time* • *Greater opportunities to expand* • *It makes it more possible to launch a business.* • *Looking at what is happening on the webpage; schedule of posts on different social networks.* • *Increase sales and better visibility of the company.* • *Can analyse website visitors, keeping company's webpage higher in the Google search results, Effective SEO management.* • *Advertising of products and services.* • *Management and planning of posts on social media; Online planning of tasks and cooperation.* • *Establishment of online classroom with materials for participants or employees in company;* • *Organisation of work within a team.* • *Online sales: access to customers regardless of space and time (24/7), customer databases; Social networks: quite cheap promotion, cheaper advertising, faster spreading of information; Digital tool for educational support: Free tool, easy to use.* • *Possibility to learn online.* • *Management of teams. Management of several social network accounts* • *New methods and tools for better work* • *Business plan on one page - good visual example*

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• *Google adWords,* • *Facebook,* • *Instagram,* • *Yoast,* • *Websites - online sales, social networks, digital tool for supporting education - canvas instructors.* • *Business Model Canvas* • *Mindmeister/ museum box* • *Digital tools*	• *Easy to understand format for helping SME to understand their strategic approach* • *Understanding skill levels,* • *Cost reduction, increased brand awareness, leaner internal process, market leader opportunities rather than follower, better customer s* • *Helping with marketing, communication, sharing, collaboration and creation a great planning tool Knowledge about their business sector* • *Book-keeping time saving and efficiency* • *To find out who are your customers?* • *Can form basic diagnostic to support digital strategy*

As is evident from the sample of comments identified there is a very broad range of digital tools mentioned and correspondingly the cross functional, people, process and business performance benefits these tools can bring to an entrepreneurial context and further the importance of, and insights into how to measure the return or benefits of digital use.

The DIGA programme emphasised combined personal and professional competency development for ETEs. The provision of new DIGA knowledge coupled with relevant skills to apply this knowledge in an entrepreneurial context resulted in more confidence in delivering and sharing this knowledge with their clients.

5.3 Development of Digital Confidence

The vast majority of respondents indicated that on completion of DIGA they were personally and professionally more component and confident to deliver digital training to entrepreneurs. The responses reflected a change in the level of confidence relating to supporting entrepreneurs and small business owners to develop digital strategies and digitalise their businesses. The findings are presented below:

Table 6: Confidence in Digital technologies

Q5. Overall, how would you rate your level of confidence in supporting entrepreneurs/small business owners to develop an entrepreneurial digital strategy before and after undertaking the DIGA learning?
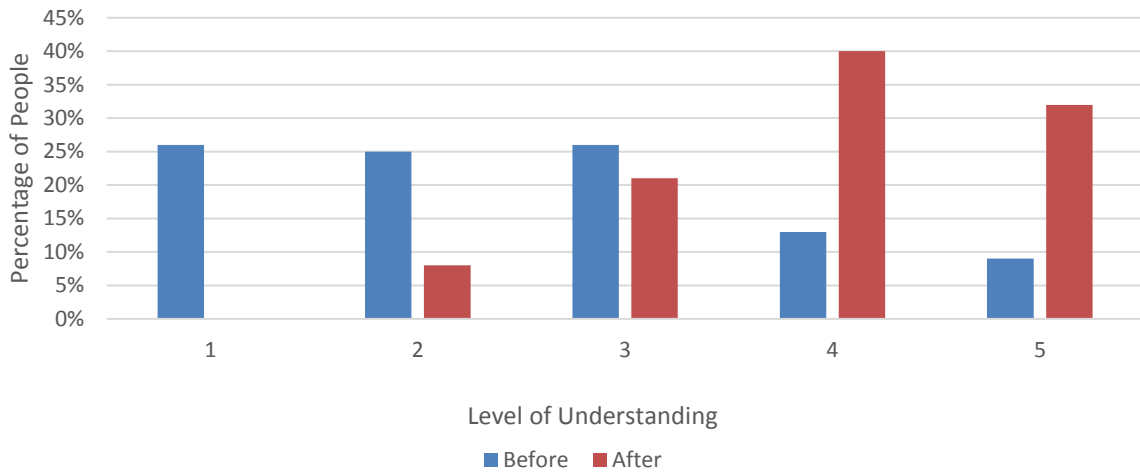
Q6. Overall, how would you rate your level of confidence in designing a learning activity or programme to support entrepreneurs and small business owners in developing capacity to digitalise their business before and after undertaking the DIGA learning?
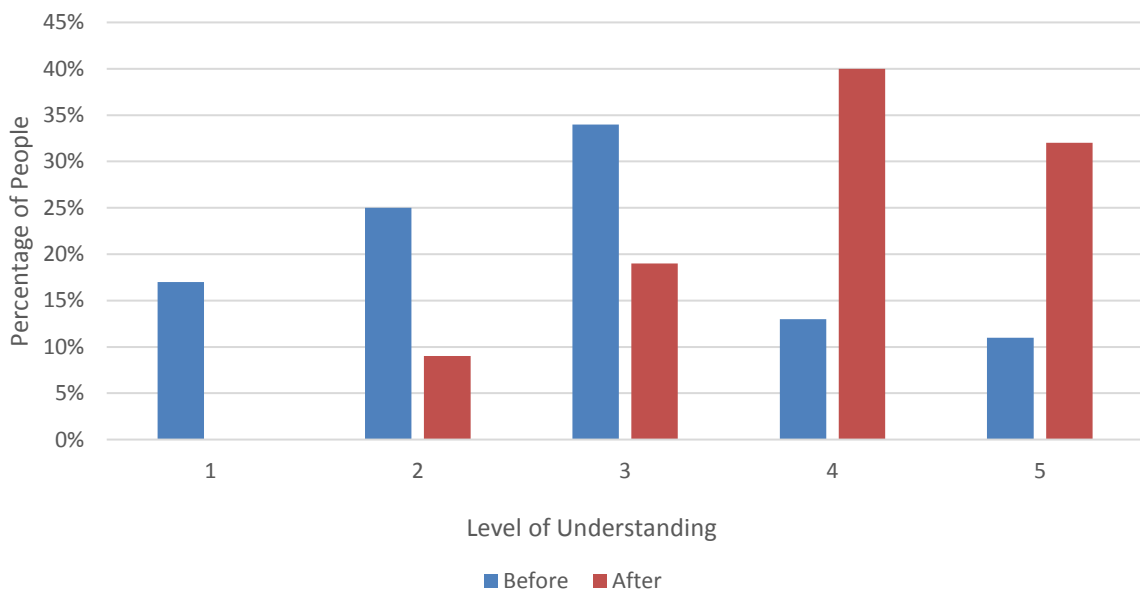

Knowledge builds confidence and confidence generates more interest in learning about digital, adopting a more '*digitally proactive mind-set*'. Respondents commented on the fact

that having access to trainers or organisations who had digital expertise and armed with supporting reading lists, guidebooks, cases and online exercises provided them with opportunities to learn more post DIGA and were confident in using the material from DIGA with their clients – introducing the need for self-directed ongoing learning.

A few respondents indicated that increased confidence and reassurance was developed by *'knowing where I can go to if I need more information on digital' as they were then able to revert back to their entrepreneur in a more credible and confident manner'.*

Overall an encouraging and recurring theme amongst the comments is the eagerness and openness to learning about DIGA and the frequent mention of *'learning new things'* and *'Keep researching useful digital tools '*reinforce the importance of and need for competency development in this area.

5.4 The Role of the Personal Development Plan

At the onset of DIGA participants completed a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which captured their current levels of digital knowledge, familiarity with digital terminologies and the use of digital tools in their role. There was strong support of the benefits of the Personal Development Plan as reinforced by the remarks in Table 8.0.

Table 8.0 Feedback on the role of the Personal Development Plan

'I hadn't thought at all about my level of knowledge until this PDP. So it helped clarify where I was at' *'Everything was useful, but personal development plan was something new and interesting for me. I think most important is that thing I learned and understood will help me in my everyday life'.* *'It helps to organize yourself'* *'It makes clear how is it going for you and makes you think about it, I think it is useful'* *It was my first time I did such thing*

Participation in DIGA has enforced the notion that digital for enterprise is ever changing from policy and practice perspectives and thus ongoing learning mind-set in this space is important as it ensures both ETEs and entrepreneurial learners are competent to leverage digital for business efficiencies.

5.5 Application of DIGA learnings in the role as an Entrepreneur Trainer and Educator

Participants were encouraged to describe how the increased knowledge of digital would assist them in their role of ETE which generated a variety of responses as summarised in Table 9.0 below.

Table 9.0 Learnings used in role of ETE

Digital learning used in role of ETE
• *Have used the business model canvas*
• *Used business planning tool for my own business*

- *Digital marketing plan*
- *Business model canvas as overall view of business as it stands currently prior to growth*
- *support using digital only for marketing Started to explore tools I hadn't used before*
- *Used as more integral across business functions not just marketing*
- *Use case studies.*
- *Show the importance of digital innovations, digital competences.*
- *Provide examples that I learned during programme.*
- *Explain why innovations make it easier for enterprise to expand.*
- *Various tools for counting and making predictions.*
- *Communication tools by online assistance.*
- *Yoast - website optimization.*
- *I created a Hootsuite account where I've linked different social media accounts and started posting.*
- *Hootsuite as a tool for SME's that I work with.*
- *While implementing certain improvements it is very useful to know background as well.*
- *Encouragement of companies to think about possible digital solutions for challenges they are facing.*
- *Canvas virtual classroom;*
- *Written materials at my lectures*

Digital tools intending to use in role of ETE

- *Education and Counselling: awareness raising and explanation about importance of digital competence, using of digital tools in different business functions, Importance of digital strategy for company*
- *Business model canvas*
- *Digitally enhance the way that I work*
- *Use curriculum materials to educate businesses I work with*
- *Include digital strategy conversation with clients*
- *look to include sessions in enterprise offering at UOL*
- *Digital strategies embedded in the business plan build a digital strategy with client*
- *Cross check digital tools to business functions as a digital tools skills analysis*
- *Carry out more research into other tools and gain more of an understanding about wider digital strategy that doesn't just focus on*
- *Marketing and Sales tools may use it more in the future*
- *Prompt and encourage clients to consider digital solutions in their business planning*
- *I will feel like expert in more fields, so I will be able to give advice.*
- *We will use more tools, not only for creativity.*
- *I will know how to explain importance of digital competences in different business activities.*
- *Using social media for marketing; Tools for organisation of business; Raising awareness in companies about the fact those digital technologies are important in all business functions.*
- *Using ICT tools in order to increase revenue.*
- *Google analytics, Keyword planner, Google AdWords*

- *I understood that case studies are one of the best ways how to teach and explain.*
- *I think I will create a virtual classroom. I also intend to use the Canvas model to support preparation of strategies for companies.*
- *Establishment of virtual online classroom with materials.*
- *Using of social media for marketing; Producteev tool; I'm thinking about creating the virtual classroom in order to make certain content available*

Comments cited above present very tangible outcomes which relate to new content and knowledge that ETEs can use with their clients plus insights to new delivery mechanisms that they will use in programme delivery (case studies etc.)

The functional digital knowledge acquired and the practical application and transferability of this knowledge to their role directly addresses the objective of DIGA project.

Overall DIGA provided a strong fusion of digital knowledge, tools and the opportunity to practice and apply learning in an entrepreneurial context. This enabled the ETE to evaluate how effective they were in their own ability to deliver digital as a precursor to delivering digital as part of their portfolio of services to their clients. To inform the development of DIGA as a transferable digital competency model respondent were encouraged to indicate what aspects of the programme were less useful and which could be improved upon for the next stage of advancement of DIGA.

5.6 Most and least useful aspects of DIGA

The majority of the responses related to how the overall their experience on DIGA was positive which reinforced previous strengths of obtaining a more holistic perspective of digital, learning how to develop digital strategy and knowledge of the 5 key digital skills areas entrepreneurs and ETE need to know about. Within the responses the vast majority of comments reverted to the positive elements of DIGA.

The results are presented in Table 10.0 below

Table 10.0: Most and least useful aspects of the DIGA programme

Useful aspects of DIGA
'Practical part of programme was most useful' *'For me most of the things were new and I hope it will be useful'.* *'Most useful is general understanding and thinking that is now changed to another direction'.* *'Mostly value practical part of programme.* *'Most of things I will use later, so it was useful'* *'Content, practical examples and participation'* *'Examining what other agencies are doing and identifying our position in the market'* *'Video case studies'* *'Understanding where digital knowledge sits in a modern business '*

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'Application of Business Model canvas to digital strategy'
'explanation of the terminology and importance of a digital strategy'
'Develop digital skills and confidence to use it'
'The importance of having a digital strategy'
'Business model canvas'
'How to apply digital strategy in every aspect of the business'
'Expanding digital beyond the usual 'marketing' topic'
'Encouraged me to think about digital tools for other business functions outside of marketing'
'I found the information and resources that were given for us to take away and look at very useful as well as the way that the programme was structured so there was a mixture of activities and discussion'
'Live examples of how digital has helped SME's'
'learning the scope and application of tools and solutions available to business'
Tools; Thinking about digital solutions for ''old'' challenges; Exchange of experience and knowledge between participants.
'Detailed overview of digital competence'.
'Learning of new concepts. I knew the tools already more or less, but I found it useful to put them in some context'.
'The statement that digital strategy has to be included in all business functions. Preparation of digital strategy - Canvas model, practical examples'.
'Systematically approach towards using of digital technologies in companies'

Least useful aspects of DIGA

I am not sure.
'Maybe some cases were not so useful for me, but I understand that for others they are useful'
'Nothing, it was useful in general'
'I would go for it again'
None.
Maybe presentations.
None.
'Hard to answer, for me it was a great balance of everything.
some of the EU speak '
'Lots and lots of handouts - could have been digital'
'Felt like we could have spent more time on each of the modules. And the business model canvas is a great tool that I now feel confident to use, but I don't feel that this provides a digital strategy. This used as a diagnostic tool could then be used to generate a digital strategy. Some of the module content needs fine tuning but the concept, content and objectives are great for ETE's'
'I found some of the work, worksheets and information quite wordy and overly complex which at first glance can be quite overwhelming'

The less attractive aspects of DIGA related to the timing of the programme and the initial perception of DIGA and in particular in relation to the level of work required for readings etc. Of note in reviewing the responses for the least useful aspects of DIGA were the

numerous comments as 'N/A'; 'none'; 'Unsure' or' cannot think of any' – thus reinforcing the positive personal and professional learning outcomes.

The positive experience is further heighted in the responses to the question on how DIGA met participant's expectations.

5.7 How DIGA meet ETE's expectations?

The responses reinforced the positive feedback received to date as the overwhelmingly positive response to this question with majority indicating a 4 or 5 exceeding expectations as summarised in Table 11.

Table 11.0 DIGA – Meeting ETE expectations

'It was a great experience'
'Great people, great learning material, new ideas for me'
'Excellent opportunity, expanded my way of thinking to consider digitisation holistically within business conversations'
'So much information which is fantastic - Lots to digest and think about moving forward Very relevant to businesses in current and for future times'
'It was an excellent curriculum and the trainers were very engaging'
'Introduced much more holistic approach to digitalisation in business'
'More aware about digital marketing and strategies for small business. this module has been very informative and has opened my mind to the importance of a digital strategy '
'Although my understanding of digital marketing is very high, therefore increasing my starting level of confidence, this has made me realise that I needed to expand my knowledge in other digital competencies and started to equip me with the tools to do that'
'I would like to thank for opportunity to join'.
'For me it was a great time, I learned new things'
'Everyone after the programme will have new ideas how to do their work, have new ideas where to go; at least my head is full of new ideas'
'I understood what I don't know and then learned these things that I don't know.
'Sometimes I asked myself why I haven't done it before'
'It might be a longer experience, because now it seems we learned new things and will implement them, but it would be great to later get a look how really it changed and do we use our gained knowledge'.
'I really liked it; it was something new for me'.
'Experiencing something new is always beneficial'.
gained new knowledge; I strengthen my knowledge about using technologies for different business functions -benefits of using digital tools, important of digital strategy for companies
'It was super'

Finally, the central endorsement of any programme is the participant's willingness to recommend the programme to their clients or other ETEs and a resounding 100% of

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respondents indicated that they would indeed recommend DIGA to colleagues and relevant contacts. Comments contained in Table 12.0 reinforce this positivity.

Table 12.0 Overall comments on DIGA

> '*This training has made me realise that I need to expand my knowledge in digital competencies and start to equip myself with tools to do that*'
> '*Excellent opportunity, expanded my way of thinking to consider digitisation holistically within business conversations*'
> '*So much information which is fantastic - Lots to digest and think about moving forward*'
> '*If I have been asked this question before the programme I wouldn't even understand it, but now I know that it is useful*'
> '*In our role, it is important to have a wide spectre of understanding in various fields*'
> '*It is important as long as we know where and how to use it, of course it gives benefits, but we need not to forget the knowledge we got*'.
> '*Very relevant to businesses in current and for future times*'.
> '*This training has made me realise that I need to expand my knowledge in digital competencies and start to equip myself with tools to do that*'
> '*It was very useful; I'm convinced that I will be able to use the gained knowledge at my work*'.
> *I learned many useful things which will help me a lot at work with companies and individuals*'
> '*Digital tools are getting more and more important in business and customer behaviour*'.
> *Overall the course is very interesting to help the entrepreneur aware of the importance of new technologies in its sales and help you use it. I liked the course because someday I want to be an entrepreneur and because if I am working in a company is very important to know the importance of ICT to sell*'
> '*Although it has been just a 20-hour course, it has given me some good ideas of how I could run my business from now on*'
> '*Gained knowledge because I will be able to use it well in my work*'.

Consistently feedback from ETEs demonstrate that DIGA provided a very positive digital learning journey (professional and personal) incorporating the broader policy and contextualised comprehension of EU and National policies to the operational tools, techniques and digital strategy spectrum. Complementing the knowledge were practical and applied experiences of using digital in an entrepreneurial context. A summary of the commonly cited words used in the comments from respondents highlight the following; '*innovative', 'fresh', 'usable', 'new', 'novel'. 'integrated', 'relevant', 'applicable'.*

Greater detail on the operational or digital topic specific learning is identified in the module evaluations findings.

6.0 Module Evaluation

Respondents were asked to provide feedback on their experiences of the module materials and supporting documentation and the practical elements of the modules.

6.1 Satisfaction with Content and Support Materials

Comments indicated that the material was user friendly, easy to navigate, had a logical sequence and the content was at the appropriate level to address the learning outcomes and objectives for the DIGA programme. The DIGA design team, representing individuals from the various partner countries ensured that the modules were presented in a standardised format, had clarity and consistency of digital terminology, incorporated experiential and action learning exercises, included national and local policy and best practice examples and adhered to programme and module learning outcomes. This ensured that the DIGA programme material and DIGA programme offered was standalone format and easy to deliver for a new ETE – transferability and usability beyond the formal DIGA project. Further this allowed for adaptation by partners to accommodate their participant needs and requirements. Suggestions were sought from respondents on their experiences of the format and content as delivered and these are contained in Table 13.0 below.

Table 13.0 Feedback on the content and support materials of DIGA

'There are more materials than required for delivery. This is useful for facilitators to have background information from which to adapt and develop the session – so more than enough but not too much – from facilitator's point of view.'
Beginning modules, a bit complex for average business consultant. Stream line a bit with an emphasis on the concrete tools and links to improved practice /profits'.
'Feedback from participants and trainers is that there is too much reliance on paper and too many handouts'.
'The materials were adapted for the pilot – the slides in particular were modified by facilitators to ensure country and learner fit '
'Range and number of exercises are satisfying; we can see it from timing that it took for various modules and from positive feedback of participants'
'Overall, good number activities and exercises. Participants enjoyed being able to discuss / share experiences / come up with new ideas'.
'Mix of whole group discussion, small group and individual work '
'Development of this programme should look at how to integrate the materials digitally into delivery'
Most of all I liked practical examples, but in general presentations also needed.
Maybe a little bit more activities, I am not used to presentations any more, but it was a balance and useful ones.
'A lot of practical work and the theory is also important although the group work is more interesting'
'The work was very dynamic, there were many discussions, the participants had the opportunity to participate actively'
'The theory was very well accompanied with practical examples and group activities'.
'Very good practical examples and exercises, interesting discussions and exchange of

These suggestions will be helpful for future trainers on what to watch out for in the delivery of future DIGA programmes. For instance, it will be important that those delivering the programme are aware that the DIGA programme materials can and should be adapted to suit participant needs and their preferred delivery mode and timing. Further it is critical that the ETE delivering the programme signals to the participants what is core material to each module, what is supplementary and complementary and that there is a need to undertake 'independent learning' on the topic of digital as it is constantly changing.

In relation to the individual modules some common responses emerged as to what worked well and issues worthy of consideration in the next version of DIGA which are presented in Table 14.0

Table 14.0 Comments on training and support materials

Module title	Summary of key Comments
Enhancing Digital Awareness and Knowledge	This module was new to all and was central in establishing the broader external context of digital and why it is necessary to have knowledge of this to ensure appropriate and relevant digital skills are developed by entrepreneurs as echoed in the following comments: *'good foundation for rest of the programme'* *'definition of digital competence; digital technologies was good'* *'showed the need to integrate digital tools, skills and processes into business start-up and growth'* *'highlighted the role of ETE to facilitate client knowledge understanding, confidence and capability'* *'opened my mind to a lot of new thinking about digital'*
The role and use of Digital Technologies and their benefits to Business	This module was beneficial in introducing and evaluating the use of the most appropriate range of digital tools beyond the marketing function which was effective as remarked: *'Liked video on Socialnomics and influence of Social Medias on modern business as well as development of it'* *'Amazing combination of business and ICT knowledge'* *'Will use key business functions and the activities & tools list in with clients on 1-2-1 basis? Use as an audit tool to go through with client'* *'Different tools for different functions in business'* *'The discussions, made me realise how much more there is to learn & keep up with'* *'The discussion around the different digital tools as we were able to share knowledge'*

Making Digital Deliver for the start-up and small business	Comments on this module suggested that its content linked together the use of digital with targets and how it should deliver to the bottom line of the enterprise. Further it provided an understanding of the role of digital across from a strategic perspective as comments show: *'Seeing how digital can improve across all the business functions'* *'The case studies - how there are endless possibilities for businesses to grow'*
Enabling and Supporting the Development of an Entrepreneurial Digital Strategy	This module was consistently regarded in a positive manner and in particular learning about and from the Business Model Canvas, which was a new and novel learning for the majority of respondents. The positivity was lined with how the questions with the BMC motivated participants to think in a new way and identify ways these tools could be used in their own and their client's businesses. Additionally, it was highlighted that this module connected the other topics and reinforced the use of digital beyond marketing - *'BMC and how to use it'* *'Introduced to BMC as it is a useful addition to our working tools'* *'Using canvas to look at our own organisation.*
Designing Integrated (Digital Competence) Entrepreneur Support/Programmes	This capstone module linked the learning in the various modules and provided the participant with the opportunity to connect the topics required to devise a digital training programme. This module provided participant ETEs with a very tangible and a means of adding a new service offering to their portfolio of services to their clients. Comments also referred to the benefits of the having the linkages between Modules 4 and 5 and important to have lining exercise between both as they ingrate all the learnings from the other modules. Comments supporting this are as follows: *'Probably the idea around designing new modules using new modules using DIL model'* *'Will use the idea of Design inquiry learning to develop new ideas for our entrepreneurs'* *'The skills assessment - the VAK & DIGCOMP to recognise self & finding gaps'* *'As a visual learner I would have liked hard copies of the slides as a handout'* *'Triangle and Evaluation form of digital to complex Mind Map; Practical examples; Bloom Taxonomy -*

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	new and very interesting techniques' *'Will use Pyramid of Digital solutions* *'Will use this module learning again We organise* *lectures and consultations for entrepreneurs; At* *preparation of programmes'*

Other comments relating to the overall sequencing and presentation of modules referred to:

- The benefit and usefulness of providing an introduction or overview to the content of each module and a link back to where it built on from the previous module as this set the context more specifically for the learning in that session.
- The material was well prepared and organised, but in some cases, had too much to read on the overheads – too crowded in content
- Worksheets are very useful tools to enable independent practices and to accommodate learning to local cases. It was noted that facilitators should alert participants to these workbooks and ensure they know how and when to complete them check that answer sheets are included for all exercises.
- Practical exercises and assignments - whilst the overwhelming strong support for and learning obtained from team work a number of respondents indicated the positive benefits of the individual worksheets as a means of personalised learning. Respondents indicated that they moderated the use of the practical exercises, case studies, videos, worksheets to accommodate what was relevant to their participant group and their needs and included exercises and cases which were more localized and familiar to the participants
- Business Model Canvas - BMC and the digital strategy exercise and guiding template were deemed very transferable to their work practices '*That was really good idea by course developers to correlate BMC and assign ICT tools to it'*, '*Very practical session giving real life tool – BMC'*
- Policy Context**:** This was viewed as an important component and perhaps place a stronger focus on national and regional digital policy considerations as this is the regulatory and compliance context within which entrepreneurs need to plan for.

Feedback indicated that as the programme progressed participants became much more engaged and motivated and were better able to see and practice digital in a more linked manner. Furthermore, respondents provided suggestions on how aspects of the module content and delivery could be enhanced. The majority of these issues relate to the presentation of slides and support material and the allocation of time to the practical experiential learning component of the programme as detailed below.

- **Provide flexibility to move content between and within modules** to accommodate participant digital needs and entrepreneurial needs and practices and the preferred learning styles of the ETE.
- **Time management**- this refers to both time management of sessions and managing delivery within and between modules. While overall the time frame for the delivery of modules and their sequencing was satisfactory, in some instances it was mentioned that there was a need to be flexible on the time allocated to various modules. Thus it is

important that ETE have flexibility and ability to accommodate participant needs whist, ensuring that the learning outcomes of the various modules are achieved. Beneficial to build in time for personal and small group reflection to enable ETEs to consider how they could apply information and learning in their work as this was deemed a very positive learning aspect of DIGA.

- **Theory and Practice balance** - manage the theory and practice provision. Emphasise the focus on experiential learning and practical application, open discussions, sharing opinions, incorporating 'design inquiry to learning'. Ensure there is a linkage and integration of activities and exercises and offer guidance on how ETEs can manage digital advice and digital problem-solving scenarios which could arise with their clients.

- **Personal Development Plan -** overall viewed as very positive for themselves personally and on how it can and will be used with their clients. A few comments indicated that some introductory notes could be added to this to provide a deeper insight for participants in order to prepare their Personal Development Plans.

- **Learning review and reflection space -** check that time is allocated for personal learning review and reflection as a means of tracking learning and generates promotional opportunities for informal and peer learning

- **Support Material and Readings -** opportunities exist in future developments of DIGA to determine how to integrate the materials digitally into delivery. The person delivering the programme should be in a position to signal to the participant which material is critical, where the support documentation fits with the learning outcomes of the various modules and the nature of the learning that they will obtain from the readings. Further it must be emphasised that the materials will be relevant beyond DIGA learning and thus link with the ongoing learning philosophy of digital learning.

- **Presentation of material** - as with the reading materials and activities, partners modified the number and context of the slides to accommodate participant needs and reduced the number of slides, removed duplicate or overlapping slides which allowed for more effective management to the times allocated to the various modules.

In addition to and related to the content reflections are linked to the delivery of the modules. For instance, reference was made to the need to provide guidance for facilitators who might be new to the area of digital and thus would benefit from teaching notes to ensure that the ethos of DIGA are delivered upon in an entrepreneur lead context.

As regards the format of delivery the decision on whether DIGA should be delivered over consecutive days, block release, evening is best decided upon by each partner country to ensure local custom and practice in this area to accommodates the preferred and most effective timing for participants

Feedback on the experiences of respondents on overall programme and module specific learnings were consistently positive and reported a definite improvement of digital competencies, knowledge of national and EU digital polices, increased engagement with and application of new digital tools in an integrated manner. Through this, participants become proficient in the knowledge of how to design a holistic entrepreneurial digital competency initiative and broaden the range of services they can offer to their entrepreneur clients.

Qualitative methods were used to expand on the primary themes emerging from the quantitative study. To this end a series of case studies were conducted with a sample of facilitators and participants.

7.0 Case Study Stories – Facilitator and Participant Perspectives

The case studies provide individual personalised insights and commentary from the facilitators (6) and participants (8) about the personal and professional impact of the learning from DIGA. Both groups were encouraged to provide feedback and examples where possible on the nature of the digital skills and knowledge acquired and how they can be applied. Respondents were also encouraged to provide suggestions on how DIGA could be advanced or applied in different entrepreneurial contexts.

A summary of the findings from the 14 case studies are presented in subsequent sections.

7.1 Perception and understanding of Digital technology prior to DIGA

Overall respondent's perception of digital largely resonated around the marketing, promotional and selling areas as depicted in the comments obtained which aligned with the findings of the quantitative study.

Table 15.0: Perception of Digital pre DIGA

Facilitators
'I had a good idea what digital meant, however my main focus was on digital marketing and not thought much about digital across all business functions'
'Digital with the marketing function i.e. social media marketing etc. as opposed to all business functions including HR, Finance, Operations etc.'
'My understanding basically was "the application of ICT tools for solving problems in business life'
'As I am young and involved in digital era I thought that most of the things are well known to me'
'Current lifestyle nowadays is everybody digital, organizations or individuals are using digital tools every day'
Participants
'Very limited in terms connecting all the various methods and modes and with regards to their strategic use as business support'.
'Not aware of Digital Competencies. Digital technology was often an '' add on '' to my business support instead of a key part of the overall strategy and planning'.
'Prior to the workshops I had a good knowledge of digital technology as I would consider myself as having good basic knowledge and confidence with digital technology and have worked in a digital marketing role in The Women's Organisation.
'I would have really only thought of digital technologies as part of marketing functions and the training really opened up my eyes to think about digital tools across the wider business functions which is very useful'.

The comments indicate that both ETEs and participants had a good working knowledge of digital but it was linked predominantly to the marketing function and lacked evidence of applying digital in a strategic business wide context with business performance outcomes in mind.

All respondents demonstrated a keen interest in learning additional digital tools and building their knowledge of how the ones they are familiar with can be used in different contexts or '*how knowledge and tools can be 'transferred to others'*.

7.2 Aspects of the DIGA programme that worked well

This question allowed case study participants to discuss what aspects of the overall DIGA programme worked well for them. There was a consensus in responses amongst case participants on the interest in and benefits of the overarching modules (modules 1 and 2) which provided a strategic understanding into the policy context of digital and its importance in terms of the regulations, revealing trends on how digital is and impact on individuals and business activities. These modules generated discussion and demonstrated to respondents the critical need to know and be able to advise about digital as it will be an issue of increasing importance for both the ETE and the entrepreneur. The novelty of BMC was very positively received as a new tool that the participants could apply and use across a variety of enterprises irrespective of sector. The comments contained in Table 16.0 expand on these findings.

Table 16.0 Aspects of the programme that worked well

Facilitators
'The video case studies worked really well and we had really good feedback on these'
'The BMC was well received as a new tool to use with clients instead of a traditional business plan'
'Participants really liked module 1 learning about the EU and local context of digital strategy, how this training fitted into overall strategies and set the scene for the following modules'
'Module 1 - The EU Digital Strategy; 6 Business Functions; Business Model Canvas; Video Case Studies'
'Module 2: Presentation of digital Tools – the participants was also invited to present the tools that they use in their work, so a lively discussion and exchange of experience took place there. The tools that got most positive feedback were Productive and virtual classrooms (different examples of them).'
'Module 3: Video Case Studies – Jodo's Chop Shop. It was a good example of how digital can transform a "traditional" business, not only for marketing purposes but also for logistics, organization, and management of stock'…
'Module 4: Digital Canvass – the participants liked the fact that it enabled them to put the entire business model on a sheet of paper and combine it with the digital dimension. They thought it was a very good tool for working with their clients/entrepreneurs.

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> *'I think one of the best examples could be the practical exercises, when thanks to initiated discussion one participant shared experience of digital tools use that helps in everyday life and other participant understood that she could also easily use such tool and it would lead to saving time and even money'*

Participants
'Practical tips and tools to integrate digital strategy in work
Business Model Canvas as a planning tool'
'Broadened ability to recognise digital across business functionalities'
'Knowledge of Digital Competencies and their links to entrepreneurial development
learning what competencies are'
'Understanding their building blocks of domains, tools, competencies, mode and purpose
Connection between competencies and profit'
'Broadened knowledge on use of ICT tools in business development and planning
Awareness of how to process consumer, and market information, test ideas
and support creative thinking'
'Understanding and empathy with regards to customer barriers and fears'
'Segmenting the different business functions was a really useful exercise as it encouraged me
to think about applying digital tools and technologies across functions other than just
marketing'
'The Case Studies were very useful as a way of using real examples to highlight the benefits
of digital tools'
'it was useful to do an exercise where we all shared different tools that we had heard of for
the different functions as this provided an opportunity to then come back and research and
pass on to clients'.
'Awareness raised of importance of digital competencies for businesses
New knowledge with regards to what is digital competency'

The positive aspects of the programme highlighted the multiple benefits of the programme and incorporated both the theory modules which provided knowledge of the broader topic of digital, they simplified the jargon of digital and moreover provided participants with a more business wide holistic comprehension as to what digital means for strategic business cross functional decisions beyond marketing and social media. This knowledge was supported by a heavy inclusion of practical and action learning exercises.

The need to learn more about the strategic uses of digital were reinforced by facilitators and participants and the use of the Business Model Canvas as a practical guiding framework was regarded as new and versatile tool to achieve this.   The acquisition of knowledge on the Business Model Canvas was new for many participants and comments on this novel approach indicate its potential for development as part of any digital competency training programme.

Finally, complementing the knowledge based modules there was consistency of positive endorsements for the variety of practical exercise, assessments, videos etc. used throughout the programme. These allowed participants to test and apply their digital learning in a much

personalised manner generating targeted context relevant learning and also resulted in peer learning.

The comments obtained in the case studies echoed those obtained in the quantitative survey and are consistent to both the ETE and participant, strengthening the relevance, benefits of and the need for a digital competency model such as DIGA.

The practical action learning components of DIGA had impact as they directly engaged the learner in the practice of digital and it also afforded the ETE to gauge and monitor the digital learning (knowledge and skills) being acquired as they progressed the modules. The following are comments obtained from the case study participants.

Table 17.0 Practical Learning Evaluation

Facilitators
'Video Case studies: Hearing real life examples of how businesses had integrated digital which resulted in business growth, demonstrated all the learning in short films' *'BMC : very relevant to business advisers and could immediately see how to use them in work'* *'Module one set the context to understand the research and policies that this training had come from'* *'Module 1 - The EU Digital Strategy set the scene, justification, importance and buys in for the participants for the rest of the forthcoming modules'.* *'6 Key Business Functions Exercise (Module 2) Worksheet 2.1 - Worked well with the participants as the exercise got them to identify some of the typical activities relating to a small business owner within the 6 business functions, followed by identifying what digital tools could be used for such activities in each function. I.e. Business Function (Finance) activities would include (Book Keeping) of which the digital tool Quick Books could be utilised to enhance performance/ improve time efficiencies'*

The sample of comments obtained resonate with a good balance of knowledge provision and application of same in a practical applied and personalised context which allows for self-assessment of own digital competency development. and support the findings of the quantitative study and the benefits of learning by doing in order to be able to transfer this learning in a relevant entrepreneurial context.

7.3 Personal development from DIGA

Enhanced digital knowledge generates confidence in the use of digital and its language thus this provides ETEs with greater confidence to proactively engage and discuss digital with their clients. The following comments describe the personal benefits obtained by DIGA participants.

Table 18.0 Personal Development from DIGA

Facilitators
'Understanding how important it is to introduce digital to all clients at all levels as their business will grow quicker, be more efficient and cost effective. Especially looking at other

business functions and not just marketing'

'It allowed them to identify the importance of digital technologies and tools for business growth and development'

'It reinforced that digital is not primarily associated with the marketing function; all business functions need to be considered for an overall cohesive digital strategy'.

'It enabled the participants to build up their knowledge and tool kit of a wide variety of digital tools that can be used for a wide range of business activities across the 6 business functions'

'I think the main benefit was to try and think about digital in a broader sense (during the training programme, it often showed that internet and social media are primarily perceived as marketing tools) – not just for marketing, but also for organisation, collaboration and other functions. Other than that the participants learned about some new tools which were specifically mentioned during the programme'

'I think it worked so well because of great atmosphere that was in DIGA Programme, everyone felt open for discussions and sharing their experience and it lead to success'

Participants

'Increased confidence and knowledge of digital strategies, awareness raising of what I already (surprisingly!) knew. Use of some of the tools for my own business, such as the business canvas'.

'In the sense that we were encouraged as a team to have the time/resource to research new tools as part of our workload'.

'Yes, it certainly has given me the opportunity for building digital knowledge for myself and my clients'.

The programme provided opportunities for personal development – it informed me with this latest findings

I have an opportunity to learn new tools and my personal development – it informed me with these latest findings in DIGA.

Supplementary personal learning occurred through teamwork providing a new learning opportunity for many participants learning how they performed as part of a team and they obtained ideas on how to manage teamwork for use in their delivery of entrepreneurial programmes. There was frequent mention of the benefits of peer learning and the informal exchange of knowledge and experiences that took place outside the allocated in class time. as expanded upon in Table 19.0.

Table 19.0 Learnings from DIGA

Facilitators
'Having gone through the course fully from start to finish I now appreciate how absolutely essential this training is for business advisers. This course could also be adapted for businesses to attend themselves'
'The most useful aspect was to change my own thinking of digital strategy to a holistic way as opposed to primarily relating it to the marketing function and to also realise the limitations of encouraging and enabling entrepreneurs to adopt digital tools in relation to their own digital competence'.
'I learned new things from materials that other partners developed and during our Partner's meetings. Also, I learned useful things from the participants as they were experts in their field of work. From the perspective of delivery of the training programme and the topic "digital" in general, think that there should be a constant emphasis on broad thinking in order to really achieve awareness among participants that digital tools don't only have to be used for marketing purposes'.

Participants
'DIGA program enhanced my competences: now I feel more confidence while I work with students. The digital technologies are developing very fast and it is impossible to know all the tools suitable for business. The DIGA program was useful – as it allowed analysing the new digital tools in more structural way: Mobility and Mobile Apps; Cloud computing, Big data analytics, Social media technologies, Internet of Things.
'Better understanding of ICT across business functionalities (it's everywhere and it impacts all aspects of business!'
'I now know more about what I don't know! (I.e. cannot be expert at everything…. google analytics!'
'The DIGA training was very useful. It was a great opportunity to have designated time with other ETE's to share knowledge and info. Day one was really useful and built up real momentum. There's an element of 'keeping momentum' following the sessions but by being allowed to have the time to do research and work with colleagues I feel we are enabled to do this'.
'I am aware of the importance of enhancing digital awareness and knowledge'
'I now understand the role and the use of digital technologies and their benefits to business'

The comments obtained from the case study participants (both facilitators and participants, align with those from the quantitative evaluations and reflect a change not only in knowledge but an attitudinal and mind-set change as to what digital is about and why it is important to understand and practice. This change in mind set will result in behavioural change in digital which is key indicator of the direct and long-term impact of DIGA.

Table 20.0 Changes to the role as an (ETEs) as a result of DIGA

Facilitators
'Previously prior to the workshop I responded to client's questions about digital tools etc. I only ever really talked about digital in terms of digital marketing'
'As an ETE I mainly discussed digital strategy in solely in terms of the marketing function.'
'I was also not that confident to introduce digital tools across other business functions with

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colleagues and clients before DIGA'
'Until now I haven't done any other training for enterprises, but in general I think I'll try to incorporate the digital dimension into other business functions as well'
'Learning that the same tools I used are already transferred online and that it is much easier working in such way. Also, I understood that sometimes even if you think that you know a lot it doesn't mean that you are right and constant learning is important because things change.'
For me it was a great experience and I am not happy to say that I got cold shower, realising that "wait a minute, this is something new, and I should keep attention and use it later'.
'Interacting with trainers from different fields who are on the job all the time and are executing more technical trainings gave me the chance to get familiar with their own perspective and their needs as trainers. They have a practical view and require specific materials to conduct effective trainings. Less theory and more practice is a must have'.
'Discuss digital tools with clients in a more structured way and include in the business planning process. I now use the BMC with some clients and we also use it in training for established businesses'

Participants
'I will be better able to assist clients in understanding the key role that ICT plays in today's business world and thus be able to better advise them on development, including when to buy in extra ICT knowledge or capacity'. *'I will encourage clients to think about embracing digital tools from the outset when planning their enterprises and consider all business functions'.* *'I have and will use the BMC as a tool when looking at business planning with clients'.* *'The Workshop has certainly broadened my knowledge of variety of digital tools for every aspect of business. I was more confident in explaining those tools and their benefits to businesses and design integrated digital strategy competence* *'I will use the knowledge and information about IT in my lectures'*

Consistently across all respondents was their enhanced knowledge and complementary skills/competencies in applying digital across functions in an integrated strategic manner for the enterprise. All respondents indicated that participation in DIGA resulted in them making changes to the content of digital and the methods of delivery that they have and will use with their clients and in training programmes. The spin off benefits to the entrepreneurial learner are described in Table 21.0.

Table 21.0 How the entrepreneurial learner will benefit from ETE participation in DIGA

Facilitators
'Entrepreneurs are encouraged and supported in integrating digital into their business plans and within their business functions' *'the learner has benefited by realising that digital strategy needs to be taken into account across all business functions and not just the marketing function, in order to enable business growth and sustainability'* *'Broader thinking about using digital technology to carry out tasks from different business functions and Knowledge about new digital tools'* *'Now they learn more about digital tools that were new even for me, (I use CANVAS digital*

model'
'In the training programme, some data were mentioned that show a clear link between going digital and growth of the company'

Remarks strongly suggest and show how entrepreneurial learners will benefit from the ETE being more digitally competent and confident and more digital savvy capable of assisting a very heterogeneous digitally aware and enabled entrepreneurial population.

7.4 Post DIGA engagement with digital and ICT

Broadening the research into the ICT usage and if digital knowledge and skills acquired resulted in a more integrated perspective and application in their role as ETE.   Overall the results suggest more frequent use and with a greater variety of tools as summarised in Table 22.0.

Table 22.0 Post DIGA engagement with digital and ICT

Use of digital and ICT post DIGA	If applicable please provide examples on how so
Increased your computer usage or digital tools in your work	The majority of respondents (11) indicated an increased use in digital tools and most pronounced beyond social media applications
Integrated ICT /Digital into your enterprise training and education activities?	A key learning was about the need for and how to integrate digital across the business functions. A number of respondents cited that they had used and will continue to incorporate the Business Model Canvas into their programmes and some suggestions were made on the opportunity to use the BMC in a virtual classroom to create standalone training programmes or to supplement "classical" training programmes.
Been more open to and interested in learning more about DIGA	All respondents are more open to and less risk adverse in including digital and discussing it with entrepreneurial clients
More confident in discussing digital tools with colleagues and clients	Yes for all respondents
Participated in more virtual meetings and / or networking activities	Just two respondents indicated that they had tried out and explored further the possible use of virtual classroom for training. This low number presents an area for development and for inclusion in the next version of DIGA.
Tried out and use new digital tools and ideas	The majority (9) indicated that they were more ambitious and open to trying out new tools and less risk adverse. This emerges with increased confidence and knowledge.

In addition to and perhaps as a consequence of, respondents indicated unanimously that they have gained an increased confidence in both the use and discussing or introducing digital with their clients and applying learning to add to their range of services to clients. Importantly respondents indicated that they had 'tried out' new and more digital tools post DIGA which demonstrates a less risk adverse approach to digital and an openness to ongoing learning in this area. With this approach digital will become more embedded as a natural business tool.

7.5 Narratives to describe the programme

In addition to and perhaps as a consequence of, respondents indicated unanimously that they have gained an increased confidence in the use of and introducing digital to their clients and applying DIGA learning to add to their range of services to clients.

The evaluation survey requested respondents to indicate how on completion of DIGA they would describe DIGA to another person. It was considered that these narratives would be helpful in future promotions of DIGA and could also be used as testimonials for future versions of DIGA.

Table 23.0 How ETEs describe DIGA

Facilitators
It's an important programme as businesses that embrace and integrate digital into their business will grow a lot quicker and create jobs quicker. It also emphasises that digital is not just about digital marketing, but digital tools can be used across all business functions.' *'It enables the businesses to grow at a faster rate when they embrace digital technologies'* *'It will increase your knowledge of the vast arrange of digital tools and technologies available that will enhance business performance'* *'It will enable you to identify the benefits of an integrated digital strategy across all business functions in enhancing business performance, business growth and sustainability'* *'The Programme will enable you to gain awareness about the importance of digital technologies for development and growth of your business and give you some tips in order to find out about digital tools which are appropriate for your business.'* *'It is worth to participate in programme. It brings benefits that you even might not think about'.*
Participants
'It is an essential part of business planning and competency. DIGA will raise your awareness, increase your knowledge and improve your ability to help your clients succeed. It is an essential part of enterprise educator training' *'I am really interested in learning more about digital technology in an entrepreneurial context as it is so powerful and effective tool to start and grow the businesses.* *'It will help you to understand and use digital technologies in an entrepreneurial context'* *'DIGA programme will help you to understand and use digital technologies in an entrepreneurial and learning context'* *'The DIGA program is clear, useful. If you attend it you will get maximum transfer of competences in the short time. Having completed DIGA you will be ready to integrate ICT in*

8.0 Suggestions on DIGA could be developed

All respondents were positive about the need to make the DIGA programme available to more ETEs and to this end they were asked for suggestions on how this could be achieved. These suggestions are presented in Table 24.

Table 24.0 Suggestions for the development of DIGA

Facilitators
'Opportunity to segment modules to provide – have a la crate where participants could choose to do one or one that is most applicable to them without having to undertake all the modules – issue of not diminishing the overall benefits of DIGA'   'This programme could easily be developed to be delivered direct to entrepreneurs. It would then also be useful for any SMEs, for CEOs, managers etc.'   'I think it would be useful to "break up" the entire programme into smaller sections (even smaller than the five modules) and the participants could pick and choose the parts that are most relevant to them'.   'It should be promoted for as much as possible to wider community because there are still people who do not imagine the possibilities that digital word could bring'.   'Digitally marketed online not only by the organizations that have been participants in the project, but proactively marketed to centres and other places that have such courses in place. Organizing events for dissemination are not the most cost-effective ones. Paid Facebook ads for example being targeted very well would have a better reach than organizing a dissemination event'
Participants
'I really enjoyed the workshop. Claire and Fran presented the workshop in a very professional way. The workshop combines the theory and practical example very well. I will continue develop my knowledge in building a digital confidence both for myself and my clients'.   'It would be good to organize an advanced workshop DIGA advanced programme for companies'   'The DIGA program could be integrated into other programs as a whole program. It also is possibility to use only one of few modules. It is very good that program is comprehensive: for each module the training plan, theory, PowerPoint presentations and case studies are prepared'.   'The program could be developed as OERs and available online'.   'The program could be used as well for NGOs. Some of these organizations are led for social disadvantaged or elderly people, who have pot enough knowledge on ICT and digital tools usage for the in the organization development'

The suggestions for the advancement of the DIGA programme demonstrate the flexibility of the programme and how an 'al a carte menu' approach can be applied to allow for customisation of the programme to accommodate the needs of entrepreneurial learners at

different stages of enterprise development and further presents the ETE with an additional service offering to their portfolio of services.

9.0 Synthesis of Evaluation Findings and Key Learnings from DIGA

The following is a summary of the key learnings emerging from DIGA evaluations.

Pre DIGA assessment:

- Practices of digital by ETEs were on a fragmented and piecemeal basis – where digital was viewed as a periphery business function.
- The language typically used with the explanation of Digital was technically or tool focussed as opposed to their uses, application and benefits for an entrepreneurial context. Thus, language was often a barrier to engagement about digital with their entrepreneurial clients.
- A narrow perspective of digital – frequently mentioned that digital uses are marketing and promotional focussed. DIGA extends knowledge and application beyond marketing to cross and within functional applications
- There was an absence of a clear set of objectives for digital and confusion as to the potential benefits (financial and no financial) that digital can bring to a small enterprise.
- ETE's are not fully capitalising on the functionalities or the potential of digital in learning and delivery of entrepreneurship programmes. Linked to this is the evidence of a lack of a strategic perspective of integrating digital technology as part of the broader strategy or business plan for their enterprise
- Deficiency of knowledge and the practice of digital measurement or monitoring tools, which is perhaps linked to the lack of detailed understanding of the array of digital tools available for the entrepreneurial context.
- ETEs communicated a lack of confidence and skills in the use and trialling of new digital technologies across functions and in using digital language with their clients and thus resulting in a reactive response to the digital needs of their entrepreneurial clients.

There is an interest in and eagerness by ETE to develop digital competencies but they were not always clear on what digital competencies they needed to develop and why so. The inclusion of the Personal Development Plan was instrumental in clarifying the digital needs competencies of the participants.

Post DIGA assessment:

- Participation in the programme distilled the myths and preconceived ideas of digital generating a more engaged audience of learners on the topic.
- The DIGA blended delivery approach of face to face personal interactions and online delivery with enterprise specific applications engaged the ETE in personal and professional learning about digital in an integrated manner.
- Participants have a more embedded digital mind-set and behaviour and ability to link the '*what*' and the '*how*' of digital as it applies in an entrepreneurial context.
- There is a heightened awareness of and an ability to extend digital beyond a marketing and promotions application to take account of its potential benefits across all business functions

- An Increased level of knowledge, confidence and available templates and guiding tools to supporting entrepreneurs to develop an entrepreneurial digital strategy
- More proactive engagement with and introducing digital to clients rather than waiting for clients to ask about it – making digital part of the business narratives and their deliberations between ETEs and their clients.
- Participants developed skills and understanding of methods to monitor the return (financial and non-financial) and the benefits of digital tools to save time and money.
- Better understanding of the relationship or impact digital can have on enterprise performance, growth and the '*bottom line'*.
- Developed new contacts and sources of ongoing learning the teamwork and peer learning and networking opportunities.
- The Personal Development Plan provides an important self-reflection and self-learning tool with transferability of application. The has use for ETE personal and for client application – useful to track their own ongoing learning and provides a tool for training needs analysis for more general entrepreneurial programmes.
- Participants acknowledge and appreciate that digital technology is an evolving and ever advancing domain and thus digital learning is ongoing and through DIGA have developed a set of skills and resources and 'go to contacts' to do so.
- DIGA is very much needed and in demand by ETE as it generates positive personal and professional expertise provides augmented level digital competencies to support entrepreneurs/small business owners to develop an entrepreneurial digital strategy.
- Successful digital adoption is not just about tools and technology but about developing a digital strategy and the latter was an important learning from the DIGA programme.
- DIGA provides a flexible digital learning model whose content and delivery could be adopted to accommodate country cultural, entrepreneurial learning preferences and national digital policies and practices.

The results of the qualitative and quantitative evaluation were positive and consistent across partner countries strongly endorsing DIGA as a model to develop and build digital competencies and capabilities for integrated application in an entrepreneurial context. The results provide some important messages which can be used in the progression of DIGA as a 'good practice model' of digital competency enhancement.

9.1 Primary Outcomes from DIGA

DIGA produced a number of tangible benefits for Entrepreneurial Trainers and Educators (ETEs) working across partner countries and by extension will enhance the digital competencies of the entrepreneur at all stages of entrepreneurial journey from start up to growth and internationalisation. The primary outcomes and impact from the DIGA project are presented under a number of themes as follows:

- **Digital Engagement and upskilling of Entrepreneur Trainers and Educators (ETEs)**
- **Digital Knowledge and Competency Development (Professional Development)**
- **Learning and Delivery Approaches**

- **Entrepreneur Trainer Educators Personal Development**
- **DIGA Partnership outcomes**

9.1.1 Digital Engagement and upskilling of Entrepreneur Trainers and Educators (ETEs**)**

✓ The empirical fact-finding study consulted with over 482 enterprise trainers and educators (ETEs), learners and entrepreneurs to ascertain their perception of, use and application of digital and their interest in developing digital competencies.

✓ The design and piloting of a 5-module DIGA Learning Programme combing experiential and action learning approaches.

✓ Over 93 Entrepreneur, Trainers and Educators (ETEs) completed the DIGA programme in UK, Slovenia, Spain, Lithuania and Bulgaria.

✓ Comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evaluation engaged with 57 ETEs to provide feedback on their DIGA personal and professional learning experiences.

✓ A DIGA website was developed and contains information on; the DIGA initiative, partner institutions; DIGA programme modules; EU and country specific policy documents; blogs and informational pieces and programme material which is made available on request.

✓ Design of a Personal Development Plan template which can be adapted for use as a training needs analysis for another entrepreneurial competency development programmes.

9.1.2 Digital Knowledge and Competency Development (Professional Development)

✓ A demystification of the language and jargon of digital in an applied entrepreneurial context and as a result participant are better equipped to incorporate digital as part of the business narrative – moving digital from the peripheral to a core business function.

✓ ETE's acquired new learning on the overarching digital EU policy which provided context and an insight into its impact on digital practices in the entrepreneurial context – ETE now see the reason why digital is so important and that it will be a critical entrepreneurial function.

✓ DIGA produced a more informed viewpoint of what digital competencies are and their characteristics for an entrepreneurial context.

✓ An Increased awareness of and knowledge about the opportunities to apply digital in an integrated cross functional manner to an entrepreneurial context.

✓ Comprehension of the components of a digital strategy, the provision of tools and techniques for the development of digital strategy and its implementation.

✓ The Business Model Canvas as a novel tool that can be used across a variety of enterprises irrespective of sector and also used in other business development programmes for small businesses beyond digital training.

✓ The ability to adapt digital content and practical examples to country and learner fit is important for greater immediate transferability of the learning accrued.

✓ The acquisition of digital enabling skills and an understanding of *how, when and where* to apply them in an appropriate manner to an entrepreneurial context.

✓ Better understanding of the relationship and impact that digital has on the 'bottom line' i.e. enterprise performance and growth targets.

✓ DIGA provides ETEs with the ability to provide and additional or new digital training initiative to their professional portfolio of services.

9.1.3 Personal Development of the Entrepreneur Trainer Educator (ETEs)

- ✓ Greater confidence and ease in proactively discussing digital tools across business functions – making digital part of the discussions between ETE and their clients.
- ✓ Extended ETE to move beyond their 'digital comfort' zone to test newly acquired digital knowledge and tools.
- ✓ Personal Development Plan is an added value instrument for their use as it can be applied to track and build their portfolio of training competencies and presents an important self-reflection tool on areas for personal and professional development.
- ✓ Teamwork and peer learning activities facilitated sharing and exchanging of experiences in an honest and constructive manner generating confidence and less cautious testing and trialling of new digital tools.
- ✓ Participation in DIGA resulted in an expanded range of contacts and business networks for new business or 'go to people' for ongoing digital learning.
- ✓ Obtained knowledge on and experience of new delivery mechanisms that the ETE will use in the delivery of entrepreneurial related training programmes (

Overall participants experienced combined personal and professional development from a linked theoretical and practical experiential learning perspective.

9.1.4 DIGA Delivery- blended approach

- ✓ The interactive and practical learning (video cases studies, Business Model Canvas,) provided participants with a better understanding of how to design and deliver a digital competency training programme.
- ✓ The mix of knowledge transmission, peer learning and practical experiential learning activities achieved the simultaneous acquisition of digital knowledge and its application in applied entrepreneurial context.
- ✓ The application of practical applied tips and tools to integrate digital within and across business functions is important enabler's in future digital learning interventions.
- ✓ Peer and team learning scenarios of experiences and good practices are fundamental components to allow participant to personalise learning to their client and user base.
- ✓ The material and content are adaptable and transferable and respondents reporting that they have integrated material and exercises into advice sessions, action plans and workbooks with clients.
- ✓ To enable new ETE participate in the delivery of DIGA tutor guidance booklet was devised by the partnership. This booklet provides an introduction and overview to the DIGA Project, comprehensive information on the modules, the approach to programme delivery and the use of practical exercises, references to broad range of digital learning supports for digital learning.

9.1.5 DIGA Partnership

✓ Successful cross-cultural partnership consisting of public and private sector organisations in UK; Ireland; Slovenia: Lithuania; Spain; Bulgaria and Norway - 7 partner organisations from 7 European countries working together
✓ Partnership learning and expansion of networks across public and private institutions and learnings of best practice digital competency models from different countries
✓ Brand and image of the various partner institutions is heightened locally and internationally
✓ Development of tacit knowledge which can be shared with partner colleagues and thus instilling shared digital learning within and across partner institutions

Based on the above the DIGA presents an effective digital competency model. The outcomes provide a number of transferable and useful learnings to guide the next stage of the DIGA programme and can also feed into the ongoing development of digital policies. The following are recommendations on both areas.

10.0   Practice and Policy Implications

10.1 Practice Implications – transferability and progression of DIGA

There is a definite need for and interest by ETEs to enhance their digital sills and competencies relevant to an entrepreneurial user context.   Suggestions are offered on how the DIGA model can be leveraged as a digital competency upskilling initiative for ETEs in public and private organisations which include the following:

Planning, recruitment and selection process
- *Programme Planning and Administration* - there is a need to apportion time and administrative support for the organisational and logistical preparation of the programme. The pilot DIGA heightened the importance of personal recommendation, endorsements and interaction with potential candidates during programme promotional phase.
- *Administrative support*- important to have dedicated contact person as the key contact for applicants and to undertake administrative duties linked with the administrative aspects of the running the programme, updating of material and for ongoing contact between module session for the participants.
- *Sourcing and Recruitment of applicants* - the recruitment process is time consuming as it requires incorporating a degree of customisation. Be able to leverage personal networks and contacts as primary source of participants and a means of promoting the programme.
- *Programme Promotions* a combination of online and off-line promotions (of presentations or information workshops and more individual targeted follow up). The use of testimonials from the programme invaluable for future promotions of DIGA.

Programme Content:

- *Module and Topics:* Feedback suggests that the current suite of modules which address the broad spectrum of digital topics (policy to practice and implementation) are addressed in an integrated manner and thus are relevant for inclusion in a digital competency programme.

- *Advanced DIGA programme-* opportunities were mentioned by respondents to build on the existing modules to raise their level of advancements in digital and introduce more challenging exercises for a follow up programme or DIGA level 2. This programme could be shorter in duration and run through intensive workshop sessions. Due to the variety of digital needs by ETE there is potential to offer DIGA as a la carte menu of modules where participants could choose to do one or number of modules most applicable to them or complete the full suite of modules.

- *Customisation* -realise that not all material will be relevant to all participants or for the different levels of digital experience of participants so the programme provider must have the insight to segment and re alter the number and sequencing of modules and level of activities offered to each group. Balance standardisation and customisation.

- *Leveraging the use of the Business Model Canvas (BMC*) - this tool obtained very positive feedback as a source of digital learning. The BMC has the potential to enable online or use in a virtual classroom to provide a basis of modified digital competency programmes.

- *New Users or broader application of DIGA -* the variety and nature of the content of the DIGA programme allows for the inclusion of some of modules into business planning and marketing programmes
    - For government agencies who deal with entrepreneurs and
    - Individual in workplace or working with entrepreneurs
    - Broader community agencies and groups

Delivery

- Investigate alternative delivery options to manage the time constraints of participants and extend the reach of digital training to a broader geographic base. This will vary by partner country and consideration should be afforded to options such as block release format over a longer period of time; delivery on an evening or weekend basis; more advanced online format with options for participants to virtually engage, network and collaborate and realise peer learning.

- Keep updating the suite of practical activities -the use of videos, case studies, 'how to tips' are important experiential tools to incorporate into all modules.

- Incorporate peer learning and sharing of experiences - learning with and from each other, peer learning ongoing learning.

- Evaluate the demand for an online digital competency development programme by modifying module content and practical assessments accordingly.

- The tutor guidance notes will provide a roadmap and instructions to assist individuals and organisations who wish to deliver of DIGA programme for the first time. The guidelines are aligned with the key objectives of DIGA and provide suggestions on how to approach the delivery of the content and the role as a trainer/facilitator in the delivery of the programme.

With an increased roll, out of DIGA a greater number of individuals at the different stages of their entrepreneurial journey will become more digitally competent and efficient and thus better able to engage with and perform in an evolving intensified digital economy. Further the existence of this programme will heighten the importance of digital as a competency that necessities on going learning and thus reduce its perception as an add on or periphery function.

The programme clearly addresses calls echoed in digital EU and national policies and the following suggestions will guide policy developments and create alignment between digital policy and practice.

10.2 Policy implications – transferability and progression of DIGA

The following contributions can inform the development of digital policy initiatives to advance the practices of digital in entrepreneurial contexts:

- ✓ The language and narratives in digital policy - must contain practical, shared and user-friendly terminology to engage ETEs and entrepreneurs in the discussion on digital. Further digital discussions and descriptors should take cognizance of the varied audiences beyond other policy makers and in the perceptual context of the user of digital.
- ✓ Promote digital beyond marketing - digital strategy needs to be taken into account across all business functions and not just the marketing function, in order to enable business growth and sustainability – the Business Model Canvas can be applied to achieve this.
- ✓ Heighten the awareness and importance of digital by promoting it as a key entrepreneurial strategic competency and mirror its development and resource allocation as would be the case with other human capital resources.
- ✓ View DIGA as a proven entrepreneurial digital competency model which should be made available beyond the partnership. The DIGA programme is standalone transferable model due to the addition of the Personal Development Plan template, the Tutor Guidance notes and the accompanying range of experiential and action based exercises.
- ✓ Extend the reach and scope of digital – new uses and users through the following:
  - **new uses:** The nature of the content and DIGA programme structure allow for modification and the separation of modules to include as part of other entrepreneurial competency programmes such as business planning or marketing strategy programmes. Additionally, options include - the a la carte menu where participants could choose to do one or number of modules most applicable to them.
  - **new users** DIGA is a blueprint or template that is flexible and can be used by government agencies who deal with entrepreneurs and the broader local community groups, professional agencies and commercial institutions who work with entrepreneurs and owner-managers
- ✓ Engage and secure ongoing feedback from ETE and entrepreneur's s to their needs to ensure digital programmes are in pace with ever changing digital needs.

11.0 Some Final Reflections

Overall, a definite message premating the literature is the imperative that digital is here to stay and entrepreneurs and ETEs need to embrace it in a cross functional perspective.

The DIGA programme responds to this need and has the potential to deliver measurable digital knowledge, skills and competency development - moving digital from the peripheral to a core business function – perceptual and operationally. Digital needs to become a natural part of the business narrative for ETEs when engaging with entrepreneurs.

The importance of digital can be heightened by associating it with a competence and due to the ever-changing nature of digital it requires investment in ongoing learning and enhancement. It is important that ETEs and entrepreneurs understand that digital is not all about the technology and to understand that a digital strategy should drive and inform decisions on digital tactics and tools. When entrepreneurs possess relevant digital knowledge and skills then subsequent decisions on the most appropriate use of digital tools and the required digital infrastructure will be more focussed to the needs of the firm and its market requirements. the DIGA programme content, tutor guidance notes, Personal Development Plan and the stock of available module content material, supporting practical and action based learning exercises is a useful and proven module to provide relevant entrepreneurial digital knowledge and skills across cultures.

Appendices

Appendix 1: DIGA Programme Module Description

Module 1: Enhancing Digital Awareness and Knowledge
Overview: This module seeks to introduce the programme philosophy and approach, detailing the course requirements as well as developing the community of learners that underpins the DIGA programme. By first exploring the components of digital competence, this module will establish both the internal (firm) and external (international/national) context of digital innovation in order to provide stakeholder viewpoints and an appreciation of the impact of a digital strategy on the overall strategic vision of an enterprise.
Objectives: This module will explain why entrepreneurs need to adopt a strategic long-term perspective on the role and contribution of digital technologies to the next stage of business growth and development. On completion of this module, successful students will be able to: Explain the importance, and individual components, of the 7 EU areas of Digital Competence Describe their national context (trends within the digital landscape) Indicate the range and variety of ICT (trends and innovations relevant to the entrepreneur and established small firm) Explain the internal context of the firm (stages of development) in relation to the potential impact of an integrated digital strategy Outline how digital has changed consumer behaviour and purchasing habits and how these impact on the requirements of the entrepreneurial business
Curriculum/ Indicative Programme Content will include Overview of the DIGA programme, its approach and requirements Explanation of the importance, and components, of 7 EU areas of Digital competence Establishing the context (external: such as trends and stakeholder views) in relation to Digital innovations Establishing the content (internal: strategic vision/stage of development of the enterprise) in relation to benefits of integrating a digital strategy Overview of the range and variety of ICT (including trends and innovations relevant to the entrepreneur and growing SME) Personal Development Planning: Self-Assessment/ Needs Analysis Exploration of personal motivation to undertake DIGA (impact on professional development) Understanding need for, and identifying needs, for continuing professional development (post DIGA)
Pedagogical Approach: This module will establish the community of learning that underpins the whole programme.

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Typically, this will establish the programme group through group work and networking before blended learning strategies are developed later in the programme.

Exposure to digital tools will be critical illustrating key learning points, in particular in exploring the 7 areas of Digital Competence that underpin the programme.

Assessment Strategy:

This module initially focuses upon the completion of a self-assessment needs-analysis, designed to support the personal development planning that underpins DIGA. This will shape the personal development plan, which is developed throughout the programme and reviewed at the end, to determine shifts in confidence and knowledge.

The learning outcomes will be assessed through on-line review questions.

Module 2: The Role and Use of Digital Technologies and their benefits to Business

Overview:

This module seeks to clearly identify the benefits to business in establishing an integrated digital strategy. By exploring the potential of particular tools through scenarios that explore good practice, this module will introduce the range and variety of digital solutions and explore how they support business growth and development.

Objectives:

This module will introduce and familiarise students with the vast array of digital technologies and tools that exist and will clearly articulate the potential and benefit of using enhanced ICT/digital competence and or tools to support sustained business success/growth.

On completion of this module, successful students (as ETE professionals) will be able to:

Illustrate knowledge of a range of tools and their potential benefits to business, within an integrated strategy

Demonstrate the functionality of the (various) tools in order to how they can benefit the entrepreneur increasing sales, business efficiencies and being more competitive

Determine the advantages and disadvantages of the various online media options and platforms for inclusion in a suitable digital media strategy

Empathise with the learner and their context of ICT (barriers; fears; lack of understanding) through clear understanding of functionality of (various) tools

Articulate the potential and benefit of a strategic use of (various) digital tools

Demonstrate a practical understanding of the issues inherent with 7 areas of Digital Competence.

Curriculum/ Indicative Programme Content will include:

This module will establish the context of, and benefits of using a variety of tools, underpinned by a clear understanding and application of the 7 areas of Digital Competence. Students will be expected to explore and test the functionality of the (various) tools and how they can benefit the entrepreneur increasing sales, business efficiencies and being more competitive.

These benefits will be explored through a clear appreciation of business functions, which will allow the benefits to be recognised within the context of the enterprise. This module will use evidence, within integrated case studies or scenarios, to illustrate how benefits can

be achieved across the 6 key business functions of HR / Staffing; Finance (cash flow); Marketing and Sales (Customer Focus); Process and Operations; Support/Network and Strategy and Development. This module, together with module 3, will build familiarity of (relevant) tools in practice through consideration of the benefits they can bring to each business function, and across the business as a whole.

Pedagogical Approach:

By exploring case examples and scenarios, this module seeks to identify good practice through an understanding of the individual tools and consideration of the benefit to business.

By addressing business problems/scenarios, suites of (relevant) tools can be explored (a la carte) to build confidence and knowledge in the tool itself, as well the impact it can provide when integrated into a digital strategy.

Assessment Strategy:

The learning outcomes of this module will be assessed on-line through multiple choice/review questions.

(In addition, learning points for the development of a DIGA personal development plan will be identified by the learner for inclusion in their final plan).

Module 3: Making Digital Deliver for the Start-Up and Small Business

Overview:

This module will focus upon the functionality and use of ICT/digital tools in order to develop skills, knowledge and confidence, as well as empathy for the entrepreneur as they integrate digital solutions.

Objectives:

This module will demonstrate how digital tools and competence can deliver improved business success/growth

On completion of this module, successful students (as ETE professionals) will be able to:

Identify the appropriate ICT tools which support improved performance within the 6 business functions

Outline how (relevant ICT) skills developed

Articulate how (relevant) skills/tools support can deliver for business

Demonstrate a clear understanding of 7 areas of Digital Competence in determining appropriate solutions for business.

Curriculum/ Indicative Programme Content will include:

Through the exploration of business functions / growth scenarios, learners will be exploring digital solutions "a la carte" in order to build knowledge, confidence and skills in relevant ICT solutions/tools.

Students will be expected to understand how ICT can support collaboration; managing information and content; communication and sharing; and acquire the technical skills required. This practical module seeks to build confidence and experience within use of ICT/tools, underpinned by the application of the 7 areas of Digital Competence.

Pedagogical Approach:

By exploring case examples and scenarios, this module will practically illustrate how a digital strategy and the tools within, can deliver for business. Good practice, through practical exposure to specific/ individual tools will identify.

| **Assessment Strategy:** |
| The learning outcomes of this module will be assessed on-line through multiple choice/review questions. |
| (In addition, learning points for the development of a DIGA personal development plan will be identified by the learner for inclusion in their final plan). |

Module 4: Enabling and Supporting the Development of an Entrepreneurial Digital Strategy
Overview:
This module seeks to bring together the practical learning to focus upon the creation of a digital strategy. By considering data handing, as well as performance management, this module will focus upon the need for a digital strategy and how to develop it.
Objectives:
This module will analyse the benefits of an integrated digital strategy in enhancing business performance. It will provide students with clear and coherent framework for producing a digital marketing strategy that supports enterprise objectives and stage of business development.
On completion of this module, successful students (ETE professionals) will be able to:
Outline the benefits of an integrated digital strategy in enhancing business performance
Explain how ICT tools can be used to process consumer, competitor and market information, building concepts and rules, and generating and testing hypothesis and thinking creatively
*Articulate the need to develop a digital platform in business and across business (consistent branding) *is this clear?*
Formulate integrated digital strategies that support entrepreneurs and deliver business benefits
Identify their own personal learning and development needs in relation to strategy design and evaluation.
Curriculum/ Indicative Programme Content will include:
This module will draw upon the practical work of modules 2 and 3 in order to create and test hypotheses and approaches to ICT business support/advice. By working together to explore scenarios, learners will be able to explore solutions, within the EU framework of Digital Competence. Learners will be asked to process and handle data, as well as manage and measure the benefits of an integrated digital strategy. Learners will explore case materials in order to understand the objectives that the organisation wants to achieve through digital campaigns (such as increase sales, increase brand awareness, demand generation, lead generation etc. and how digital solutions to deliver).
Pedagogical Approach:
This module seeks to build upon the community of learners, by encouraging students to work together to test hypotheses and coach each other in order to solve business problems. Students will be invited to use role play and scenarios in order to build their confidence in integrating
Assessment Strategy:
The learning outcomes of this module will be assessed on-line through multiple choice/review questions.

(In addition, learning points for the development of a DIGA personal development plan will be identified by the learner for inclusion in their final plan).

Module 5: Designing Integrated Digital Competence Support/ Programmes for Entrepreneurs
Overview: This module seeks to explore how best to deploy ICT skills/knowledge within the business advice and support process. This module will focus upon programme design, recognizing how entrepreneurs learn and build their entrepreneurial capacity.
Objectives: This module will demonstrate how to design, plan, implement and deliver appropriate and effective digital ICT training courses. On completion of this module, successful students (ETE professionals) will be able to: Articulate how entrepreneurs learn and build their entrepreneurial capacity Propose solutions (programmes; course; interventions) to address business need Design strategic ICT responses that are appropriate interventions for clients Design interventions that are underpinned by the 7 areas of Digital Competence Identify future learning needs within a DIGA personal development plan
Curriculum/ Indicative Programme Content will include: By first considering the needs and fears of entrepreneurs, this module will explore how entrepreneurs learn and seek to develop their entrepreneurial capacity. Through exploration of a range of programme design options, learners will coach and support each other in order to evaluate the potential approaches to creating an integrated digital solution for entrepreneurs.
Pedagogical Approach: This practical module seeks to focus upon approaches currently used by ETE professionals and review and refine them. In order to do this, students will be invited to use role play and scenarios in order to build their confidence in integrating digital solutions into their current practice. Coaching and observing practice will form a key part of this module as learners develop personal confidence and capability.
Assessment Strategy: A final multiple choice/online question assessment will be provided, which together with the completion of a DIGA personal development plan will complete all the course work. The final personal development plan will be submitted as an individual action plan of future planned learning.

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Appendix 2 Module Training Evaluation Form for participants DIGA programme

Date: _____   **Location of training:**

Module Title: _____

Dear participant,
We thank you for your participation at the training programme and are kindly asking you to evaluate the training with this questionnaire. Your opinion and suggestions will contribute to the improvement of training programme for future participants.

Organisational issues

1. How did you find the organisation of the **training session** -?
   Please mark (5 – very good, 1 – poor)   5   4   3   2   1

   Comments/messages:

   Training Content and knowledge acquisition
   Did the training session match your expectations in the following

   The range of topics covered   5   4   3   2 1

   The practical application of the topics   5   4   3   2   1
                                                   5   4   3   2   1
   Provision of new information and knowledge on the topics

                                                   5   4   3   2   1

Working methods, training material and trainers

2. The selected training methods were appropriate.
   Please mark (5 – agree strongly, 1 – disagree strongly)   5   4   3   2   1

   Comments/messages:

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4. **There was a good mixture of practical examples and activities to guide your learning of**

   The topics

   Please mark (5 – agree strongly, 1 – disagree strongly)

   Comments/messages: 5   4   3   2   1

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5. - Trainers were very helpful in addressing questions

Please mark (5 – very good, 1 – poor)

Comments/messages: **5   4   3   2   1**

6   Trainers were knowledgeable about the module content
   Please mark (5 – very good, 1 – poor)

Comments/messages: **5   4   3   2   1**

7. Will you be able to use the materials and activities undertaken in the delivery of digital training in the future? Please comment on your response

Yes, _____   No _____

8 What topics were most interesting and enjoyable and why?

_____
_____

9 What topics were least interesting?

_____
_____

10 Would you suggest other contents / subjects to be included and if please indicate what topics

_____
_____

11 What was your overall level of satisfaction with the module (5 very satisfied and I is very dissatisfied)

5   4   3   2   1

Further information on the DIGA Project is available here: http://digaproject.eu/

_____

Note:

This paper is an output of the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project Digital Innovations for Growth Academy (DIGA) [2014-1-UK01-KA202-001780]. It presents research and analysis to inform the development of the DIGA training programme to enhance the digital competencies of enterprise educators and trainers. Digital Innovations for Growth Academy operates as a Strategic Partnership from seven-member states. The partners are from the social, private and public sectors.

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