

# **Impact evaluation of the projects implemented under the ALMA initiative**

## **Final evaluation report**

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## Contents

**Key abbreviations and terms / 4**

**List of tables / 5**

**List of figures / 5**

**Introduction / 6**

**1. ALMA initiative model: from goal to achievements / 7**

**2. Theory of change / 8**

**3. Evaluation methodology / 9**

**4. Impact evaluation of projects implemented under the ALMA initiative / 10**

**4.1. Evaluation of the visibility of the ALMA initiative / 10**

4.1.1. Analysis of the effectiveness of target groups and communication channels reached / 10

4.1.2. Analysis of changes in the level of awareness of the ALMA initiative and recognition of the initiative / 11

4.1.3. Analysis of the most effective communication methods / 12

4.1.4. Analysis of changes in attitudes toward the ALMA initiative / 12

4.1.5. Conclusions / 13

**4.2. Evaluation of the benefits, sustainability, and application of sustainable development principles in the actions under ALMA projects / 14**

4.2.1. Employment or return to education after participating in projects / 14

4.2.2. Employment analysis by sending country and other parameters / 16

4.2.3. Factors determining the sustainability of project results after project completion. Resources necessary for the sustainability of results / 17

4.2.4. Contribution of partnerships to sustaining projects' long-term results / 18

4.2.5. Impact of projects on the competencies, cooperation, and sustainability of the organisations that implemented them / 19

4.2.6. Continuity and adaptation of solutions, methodologies, and tools developed during the project in other contexts / 20

4.2.7. Integration of project results into the long-term strategies of project beneficiaries and local communities / 21

4.2.8. Conclusions / 21

**4.3. Evaluation of the ALMA initiative's impact on participants' personal achievements and development / 23**

4.3.1. Impact on participants' personal growth / 23

4.3.2. Impact on participants' social competencies and cooperation skills / 25

4.3.3. The importance of mentorship / 26

4.3.4. Impact on participants' career orientation and opportunities to participate in the labour market or education system / 27

4.3.5. The importance of the ALMA initiative for participants and their willingness to recommend it to other young people / 28

4.3.6. Conclusions / 28

**4.4. Evaluation of lessons learned from the ALMA initiative's implementation and the benefits for project beneficiaries / 29**

4.4.1. Challenges in implementing the ALMA initiative and approaches to solving them / 30

4.4.2. Target groups of the project and methods and practices used to work with target groups / 30

4.4.3. Strengthening the activities of organisations, expanding the partnership network, and initiating new projects / 33

4.4.4. Change in the attitude of project beneficiaries when working with young people experiencing difficulties / 34

4.4.5. Lessons learned by project beneficiaries and recommendations for developers of future ALMA or similar initiatives / 35

4.4.6. Evaluation of the application of fixed rates: challenges and benefits / 39

4.4.7. Conclusions / 40

- 4.5. Evaluation of the ALMA initiative's relevance in EU Member States and of the elements required to ensure continuity / 41
  - 4.5.1. Analysis of the systemic continuity of the ALMA initiative / 42
  - 4.5.2. Analysis of the relevance of the ALMA initiative in the context of youth employment and inclusion / 43
  - 4.5.3. The role of leading institutions and prospects for the continuity of the ALMA initiative / 44
  - 4.5.4. Conclusions / 49
- 4.6. Evaluation of the European and transnational dimension of the ALMA initiative / 49
  - 4.6.1. Participants' mobility experience abroad / 50
  - 4.6.2. Strengthening the European identity of participants / 50
  - 4.6.3. Conclusions / 52
- 4.7. Evaluation of the economic costs associated with young people's non-participation in the labour market in EU Member States, and comparison with the costs and potential economic benefits associated with their participation in the ALMA initiative / 52
  - 4.7.1. Provisions and parameters for the ALMA initiative cost-benefit analysis / 53
  - 4.7.2. Costs and long-term losses for states and society without the ALMA: benefits of the ALMA / 57
  - 4.7.3. Comparison of costs and benefits of the ALMA initiative / 59

## 5. Recommendations / 61

### Annexes / 65

- Annex 1. Project beneficiaries list / 65
- Annex 2. Linkage between assessment questions and data sources / 66
- Annex 3. Questionnaire for interviews with representatives of the European Commission / 71
- Annex 4. Questionnaire for interviews with ALMA coordinators (ESFA) / 72
- Annex 5. Questionnaire for interviews with Managing Authorities / 73
- Annex 6. Questionnaires for interviews with project beneficiaries / 75
- Annex 7. Project participant survey questionnaire / 78
- Annex 8. CBA estimation explanations / 84

## Key abbreviations and terms

ALMA	"Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve"
Client, ESFA	European Social Fund Agency
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
Evaluation	Impact evaluation of the projects implemented under the ALMA initiative
Evaluator	Smart Continent Management Institute UAB
MA	Managing Authorities
NEET	Neither in employment nor in education or training
PB	Project beneficiaries
RL	Republic of Lithuania
TS	Technical Specification

## List of tables

Table 1. Development/Reconstruction of the ALMA initiative's Theory of Change / 8  
Table 2. Employment of project participants and return to the education system / 15  
Table 3. Methods and practices applied with target groups and their impact / 32  
Table 4. Lessons learned / 36  
Table 5. PB recommendations / 38  
Table 6. Challenges and advantages of applying fixed rates / 39  
Table 7. Elements of continuity in the ALMA initiative / 43  
Table 8. Problems with the continuity of the ALMA initiative and possible solutions / 47  
Table 9. Factors contributing to the success of the ALMA initiative / 48  
Table 10. Scenarios for integration into the labour market if the target group did not participate in ALMA initiative projects / 53  
Table 11. Weighted minimum wage assessment / 54  
Table 12. Cost-benefit analysis parameters / 56  
Table 13. Cost-benefit analysis results, EUR / 60  
Table 14. Recommendations of the Evaluation / 61  
Table 15. Project beneficiaries list / 65  
Table 16. Linkage between assessment questions and data sources / 66  
Table 17. Managing authorities / 73  
Table 18. Questionnaire for interviews with Managing Authorities / 73  
Table 19. Questionnaires for interviews with project beneficiaries / 75  
Table 20. Project participant survey questionnaire in English and Polish / 78  
Table 21. Project participant survey questionnaire in Spanish and Italian / 80  
Table 22. CBA Estimation Explanations / 84

## List of figures

Figure 1. Impact of projects on participants' personal growth, % / 24  
Figure 2. Impact of projects on participants' social competencies and cooperation skills, % / 25  
Figure 3. Evaluation of mentors' assistance during the project, % / 26  
Figure 4. Impact of projects on participants' career orientation and opportunities to participate in the labour market or education system, % / 27  
Figure 5. ALMA project participant profile / 31  
Figure 6. Participants' initial attitudes about the possibilities of living abroad and the value of international experience before the ALMA project, % / 50  
Figure 7. Percentage of participants who felt more European after participating in the ALMA initiative, % / 51  
Figure 8. Percentage of participants who understood the impact of the European Union on their lives after the ALMA experience, % / 51  
Figure 9. Cost-benefit analysis causality diagram / 55  
Figure 10. Monetised benefits of the ALMA initiative, EUR (discounted value for 2023) / 58

## Introduction

The impact evaluation of the projects implemented under the ALMA initiative (hereinafter – the “Evaluation”) is carried out by Smart Continent Management Institute UAB (hereinafter – the “Evaluator”), pursuant to Contract No. S-152 signed on 9 September 2025 with the European Social Fund Agency (hereinafter – the “Client”, “ESFA”).

The final evaluation report is presented.

**Evaluation objective** – to determine the impact of the ALMA initiative’s actions on project participants and project beneficiaries; to assess the initiative’s effect on participants’ understanding of European identity and values; to evaluate how the principles of sustainable development were applied during project implementation; to determine the relevance, sustainability, and expected continuity of the investments; to carry out an economic efficiency analysis to assess whether the chosen initiative is economically advantageous compared with other possible alternatives; and to provide recommendations and conclusions.

**Scope of the evaluation** – 28 projects under the ALMA initiative.

**In conducting the Evaluation, the following tasks are pursued:**

- Evaluate the impact of the ALMA initiative by determining the extent and ways these investments have contributed to raising **awareness** of the initiative.
- Evaluate the **benefits** of the actions carried out in ALMA projects (i.e., implemented interventions), their **sustainability**, the application of sustainable development principles, and provide detailed information on **changes in the employment status** of participants across all 28 projects.
- Evaluate the initiative’s impact on project participants’ **personal achievements and development**.
- Identify **lessons learned** from implementation of the ALMA initiative (i.e., shortcomings/challenges/failures) and the **benefits for project beneficiaries**.
- Evaluate the **relevance** of the ALMA initiative in EU Member States, identify the elements required to ensure **continuity**, and provide recommendations to Managing Authorities.
- Evaluate the **transnational dimension** of the ALMA initiative–its influence on the initiative’s success.
- Evaluate the **economic costs** associated with young people’s non–participation in the labour market in EU Member States and compare these with the costs and **potential economic benefits** associated with their participation in the ALMA initiative based on publicly available statistical data.

We are grateful to the representatives of the **European Commission**, **ESFA**, and the **project beneficiaries** for their close cooperation throughout the evaluation process. We also thank the representatives of the **Managing Authorities** for sharing their insights during the interviews, as well as the **project participants** who responded to the survey questions.

## 1. ALMA initiative model: from goal to achievements

The **ALMA initiative** is an active inclusion measure created by the European Commission for young people aged 18–29 who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). It focuses on the most vulnerable young people facing long-term unemployment, lack of qualifications, disability, or migration challenges. The primary objective of the initiative is to provide participants with opportunities to acquire practical skills, gain confidence, and experience, enabling them to successfully integrate into the labour market or education system.

ALMA is integrated into the **European Social Fund (ESF+)** programs for the period 2021–2027 and complements other EU youth initiatives such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. It also contributes to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, which aims to reduce youth unemployment and social exclusion by 2030. The initiative originated from the German project "ida – Integration durch Austausch" (Integration through Exchange), which has been successfully applying mobility and internship methods since 2008, later becoming an EU-wide measure.

Since 2022, **28 transnational projects** have been implemented in 15 EU countries, providing mobility opportunities to more than 800 young people. Participants' experiences demonstrate that the program helps build confidence, discover new directions, and acquire practical skills that lead to employment or further education. In addition, the ALMA network brings together institutions from Member States, promoting cooperation and the sharing of good practices to further develop the initiative.

The ALMA initiative stands for Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve, referring to key elements of this experience. First, young people set goals and draw up a personal plan (Aim). Then they benefit from continuous learning activities and counselling both in their own country and abroad, strengthening their skills and personal development (Learn). The 2–6-month work-related learning experience in another EU country represents a key stage, where participants gain hands-on experience (Master). Finally, upon returning home, support continues so that the skills acquired can be used to find employment or continue education (Achieve).

The main activities of the project consist of three stages: preparation, mobility, and follow-up:

- During the **preparation stage**, project beneficiaries identify young people who could benefit most from participating in the program with a view to their future integration into employment, education, or training. This group also includes those for whom the experience abroad may be challenging, but with the right support, it becomes beneficial. Since the target group often lacks formal qualifications, selection is carried out using non-traditional methods, such as online tools, open days, information meetings, etc. Once young people are selected, they undergo intensive and tailored preparation for their departure abroad. This may include language training, practical preparation for life in another country, and cultural orientation. Participants are also supported with coaching and counselling by their mentors, with whom each participant draws an individual learning and development plan, setting out the objectives, expected results, planned activities, and assessment methods.
- The **mobility stage** is one of the most important components of the ALMA initiative. Young people travel to another EU country for 2–6 months, and this experience accounts for about 30% of the entire program. Participants usually travel in groups of 8–12 people so that they can support each other. During the mobility period, they are offered cultural and social activities, opportunities to interact with residents, and accommodation. Mentoring is an integral part of mobility. Mentors help participants settle in and adapt to their new environment, provide regular feedback to project beneficiaries, and monitor the progress of young people. In this way, the mobility phase becomes a period of not only professional and learning experience but also social and cultural skills development.
- Upon returning from abroad, the **follow-up stage** begins, the aim of which is to help young people smoothly transition into education, training, or employment by utilising their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies. Participants are given help to reflect on their experience and understand how it can be used for work or learning opportunities. An individual implementation plan is drawn up for each participant, aimed at reintegration into the labour market or education system. If reintegration is not immediately successful, participants are referred to appropriate support structures to ensure continued support even after the ALMA experience.

All phases of ALMA are interrelated and interdependent. This is to ensure the continuity of the initiative so that young people experience a smooth transition from preparation to integration into education, training, or employment. The initiative considers that many participants need intensive and long-term support, so each stage is tailored to the needs of the target group.

In summary, ALMA is not just a mobility program – it is a systemic tool that combines learning, practical experience, and consistent support. It aims to ensure that every young person, regardless of their initial situation, has the opportunity to grow, participate, and build a future in Europe.

## 2. Theory of change

Reconstructing the **Theory of Change** makes it possible to systematically trace how the implemented **intervention is expected to lead to the desired changes**. The ALMA initiative projects under evaluation are pilot in nature. Therefore, **two contribution pathways** are distinguished when formulating the Theory of Change. One pathway covers changes occurring at the **level of individual projects**, the other – changes at the **level of the system level**.

**Table 1. Development/Reconstruction of the ALMA initiative's Theory of Change**

	<b>Changes at the individual project level</b>	<b>Changes at the system level</b>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants' changes in attitude and behaviour.</li> <li>Employment / better employment of participants.</li> <li>Return to education or training.</li> <li>Project beneficiaries and partners have increased capacity to address the challenges of NEETs.</li> <li>Target groups are more aware of the ALMA initiative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Member States' authorities, public and private organisations have increased capacity to address the challenges faced by NEETs.</li> <li>Target groups are more aware of the ALMA initiative.</li> </ul>
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved participants' professional skills and knowledge.</li> <li>Improved participants' personal skills.</li> <li>Improved participants' self-confidence.</li> <li>Participants who completed all three stages.</li> <li>Organisations develop skills and capacities to work with NEETs.</li> <li>Messages of communication and dissemination reached the intended audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local partnerships sustained, new activities and projects initiated.</li> <li>Transnational partnerships sustained, new activities and projects initiated.</li> <li>National/regional ALMA calls launched.</li> <li>The know-how of NEETs integration improved.</li> <li>Messages of communication and dissemination reached the intended audience.</li> </ul>
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisations involved.</li> <li>Participants in the project.</li> <li>Messages of communication and dissemination were shared.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local partnerships established.</li> <li>Transnational partnerships established.</li> <li>Tools and methodologies to work with NEETs have been upgraded.</li> <li>Reports on lessons learned are provided.</li> <li>Messages of communication and dissemination were shared.</li> </ul>
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The start-up phase (consolidating partnerships, defining roles).</li> <li>Recruitment and selection of participants, needs assessment, and self-assessment.</li> <li>Participants' preparation (learning and development of plans; intercultural, linguistic, professional, and practical preparation, mentoring).</li> <li>Participants' mobility (work-related experience, social activities, individual counselling).</li> <li>Participants follow-up (assessing and recording participants' progress, identifying employers that could offer potential employment, or identifying possible training and education pathways for the participants).</li> <li>Reporting, including a lessons learned report.</li> <li>Dissemination and communication about the initiative.</li> </ul>	
Problem	Social exclusion and the underutilised human potential of NEETs.	

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

Based on the theory of change and the evaluation questions, evaluation hypotheses are formulated for each evaluation task in the following sections.

### 3. Evaluation methodology

**The data required for the Evaluation will be collected from the following sources:**

- interviews with 28 project beneficiaries (hereinafter – PB), including written responses (a list of interviews conducted is provided in the annex 1);
- interviews with 4 ALMA coordinators;
- interviews with 3 representatives of the European Commission (hereinafter – EC);
- interviews with representatives of 4 Managing Authorities (hereinafter – MA) (see annex 5);
- articles from the ALMA communication campaign<sup>1</sup>;
- a survey of project participants (466 responses, overall survey representativeness is 74,8% of project participants who took part in all three stages<sup>2</sup>) (see Annex 7 for participant survey questionnaire);
- final project reports;
- “Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports of PBs;
- programme and project monitoring data;
- communication materials of selected PBs (case studies);
- secondary sources (studies on people not in employment, education or training – NEET);
- official statistics (e.g., unemployment insurance benefits, wages, etc.);
- voluntary evaluation reports of individual projects.

Annex 2 details the relationship between assessment questions and sources.

**The following methods will be applied in the evaluation:**

- development/reconstruction of the Theory of Change;
- semi-structured interviews;
- document analysis (primary documents and secondary sources);
- causal diagrams (causal mapping);
- questionnaire surveys of participants;
- statistical analysis (of the survey data);
- cost-benefit analysis;
- case studies.

<sup>1</sup> Social Innovation Plus Initiative. Available online: <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/news/>

<sup>2</sup> The number of responses and the degree of representativeness differ slightly between individual questions, as not all survey participants answered every question. Figures presenting the survey results indicate the number of respondents and the corresponding representativeness.

## 4. Impact evaluation of projects implemented under the ALMA initiative

This section is based on qualitative data collected during interviews with PBs. A total of 28 interviews have been conducted.

### 4.1. Evaluation of the visibility of the ALMA initiative

#### Questions addressed under Task 9.1:

- 9.1.1. Which target groups (e.g., young people, social partners, employers, etc.) were reached by information about the ALMA initiative, to what extent, and through which channels?
- 9.1.2. Compared to the start of the initiative, has the number of people involved in ALMA (e.g., young people, social partners, employers, etc.), who recognise the ALMA name and know its objectives and benefits, increased?
- 9.1.3. Which communication methods or campaigns used by project beneficiaries (e.g., social media, events, partner-led dissemination) had the greatest impact on raising awareness of the initiative?
- 9.1.4. How did the attitudes of target groups (e.g., young people, social partners, employers, etc.) toward the initiative change following the publicity and outreach activities carried out by project beneficiaries?

In addressing this task, the following hypothesis has been made:

- Hypothesis 1: Targeted communication and publicity activities successfully engaged participants and enhanced awareness of the ALMA initiative among key audiences.

#### 4.1.1. Analysis of the effectiveness of target groups and communication channels reached

Communication about the ALMA initiative was directed at three main target groups: **young people** (especially those with NEET status), **social partners** (NGOs, municipalities, educational institutions), and **employers**. Based on the respondents' experience, information about the initiative reached these groups with varying degrees of intensity, depending on the channels used and the regional context.

It is important to note that the information reached not only young people but also other key stakeholders. According to interviewees' insights, information also reached **project participants' parents**, who often play an important role in the decision-making process, especially when it comes to young people's involvement in employment or mobility programs. The group of parents was particularly interested in the activities of the ALMA initiative, its benefits, and the opportunities it offered, thus becoming an important link in the information dissemination chain. They actively participated in discussions on social networks and at local events, shared posts, and passed on information to other families, thereby strengthening trust in the project and encouraging youth participation.

**Social media** – Facebook and Instagram – was the primary and most strategically significant channel for disseminating information about the ALMA initiative. They proved to be particularly effective in reaching out to young people, who are the main target group of the initiative. The content strategy was based on visual and emotional impact, focusing on authenticity and personal experiences. Participants' stories, short videos, and interactive posts (e.g., polls, Q&A sessions) were shared, encouraging engagement and organic dissemination of information. This form of communication created a sense of trust and community, while also strengthening the initiative's image as an accessible, engaging, and impactful program.

#### Example 1. Case study – dissemination of information about the ALMA initiative on social media<sup>3</sup>

The ALMA initiative used modern communication tools to raise awareness of its activities and engage a broader audience. The main focus was on social networks, which are characterised by wide accessibility and the ability to interactively engage users. After analysing the social networking platforms where young people are most active, Instagram and Facebook were chosen.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with PB.

PB realized that official announcements and text-based information alone would not be enough to reach a young audience. Therefore, a strategy was developed in which visual and interactive content played a key role: photos, short videos, stories, and live broadcasts helped inform followers about ALMA's goals, project progress, and achievements.<sup>4</sup>

An important part of the communication process was the involvement of influencers.<sup>5</sup> The ALMA initiative team collaborated with popular Instagram and Facebook influencers, who shared information about the initiative with their audience. The influencers not only posted messages, interviewed the PB, and talked about the initiative, but also encouraged their followers to get involved. In this way, the information was not conveyed in a purely formal manner—it became intimate, personalized, and convincing.

The dissemination strategy was based on consistent content planning: every week, content was published reflecting the progress of the initiative, new projects, or community involvement. Social media tools made it possible to measure audience reactions—engagement, comments, shares. This helped PB optimize communication, respond quickly to audience questions and needs, and continuously increase ALMA's visibility.

The overall result was that ALMA became a highly visible initiative, attracted greater audience engagement, and demonstrated how effectively social media can be used to disseminate information. This strategy showed that the accessibility and credibility of information can be increased when both modern communication channels and trusted opinion leaders are used.

In addition, **events** such as information seminars, presentations, and meetings with target groups played an important role. In addition to providing an opportunity for direct contact with social partners, employers, and target groups, they also promoted interinstitutional cooperation, which, according to respondents, is essential for the long-term implementation of the ALMA initiative. Such events often became a space for networking, where new partnerships were formed, and participants gained practical knowledge about labour market opportunities and learned about the ALMA initiative and the opportunities and benefits that it offers.

**Communication within partner networks** also played an important role: disseminating information through municipalities, youth centres, local NGOs, and educational institutions made it possible to reach less informed or socially vulnerable communities. This decentralized model contributed to wider dissemination, and information about the ALMA initiative became available in smaller towns and rural areas. This is particularly important because youth unemployment rates are often higher in the regions, and access to information is limited.

Meanwhile, traditional media outlets (articles, interviews, reports, radio and television programs) helped shape positive public opinion about the ALMA initiative and increased its visibility nationwide. However, the impact of these channels was more passive, as they focused on conveying information rather than actively engaging the audience. Unlike social media, media content often did not initiate direct dialogue between the target group and the initiative, but rather served as a one-way channel for conveying information and increasing public awareness about the ALMA initiative.

Respondents emphasized that the role of the media should not be underestimated—national portals and television reports gave the ALMA initiative legitimacy and institutional credibility. This is particularly important in shaping public support for social programs, as it increases public confidence in the realism of their goals.

#### **4.1.2. Analysis of changes in the level of awareness of the ALMA initiative and recognition of the initiative**

**Awareness of the ALMA initiative among target groups has increased significantly, especially among young people**, who are the main target group of the program. In the initial implementation phase, ALMA, in general, was not widely recognized by young people, and its objectives were not sufficiently clear to them. However, after intensive publicity activities, including social networks, regional events, and partner communication channels, awareness of the initiative has grown. Based on the insights of the interviewees, compared to the start of the project, more respondents recognize the name ALMA and are able to name the main objectives of the initiative: the opportunity for international work experience, strengthening professional and personal skills, and improving employment prospects.

This result demonstrates not only an effective communication strategy but also the successful positioning of the initiative's name. ALMA has become associated with positive changes and practical benefits. This change is

4 Project No ESF-SI-2022- ALMA-01-0015 – „Fostering Integral NEETs Development“ (Spain)

5 Project No ESF-SI-2022- ALMA-01-0015 – „Fostering Integral NEETs Development“ (Spain)

particularly important for the long-term sustainability of the program, as awareness often determines trust, which in turn determines active participation.

Social partners played an increasingly important role in disseminating information. They not only shared the content of the initiative through their communication channels but also integrated ALMA activities into their projects, thus ensuring a more sustainable dissemination of knowledge. This process has strengthened ALMA's image as a reliable means for promoting social innovation, connecting the public and non-governmental sectors.

At the same time, **employers' attitudes toward the initiative changed noticeably.**<sup>6</sup> While ALMA was initially viewed with caution, an increasing number of companies began to perceive it as an opportunity to develop talent and strengthen their social responsibility profiles. This shift is reflected not only in the growing number of inquiries from employers regarding participation in the initiative, but also in the rising number of companies registering in the ALMA database. The expansion of the database can be interpreted as a positive indicator of employer engagement, signalling a transition from passive information gathering to more active and sustained involvement in the initiative. Overall, this trend suggests a structural change in employers' perceptions of ALMA, with participation increasingly seen as a valuable and purposeful contribution rather than a marginal or experimental activity.

This change shows that the **ALMA initiative is effective not only in terms of information, but also in terms of culture – a new culture of understanding is emerging, in which transnational youth mobility experience is recognized as an added value for the labour market.** In the future, it is recommended to exploit this potential by expanding long-term partnerships with employers and establishing ALMA as a permanent mechanism for youth empowerment.

#### **4.1.3. Analysis of the most effective communication methods**

Social media became the main and most efficient channel for reaching young people. Differentiated visual content was used to encourage emotional engagement and sharing. This form of communication was particularly effective because it matched young people's information consumption habits – fast, visual, and personalised content. The focus on authenticity (real stories, open emotions) created a sense of trust and community. In this way, social media became a critical channel for information transfer.

Live events reinforced the human aspect of trust, which is particularly important in social initiatives. Direct communication made it possible to answer participants' questions, dispel doubts, and show the real results of the project – participants' success stories, employer involvement, and mentoring opportunities. Such meetings provided a sense of authenticity and transparency.

Partner dissemination networks were extremely useful in regional contexts where the ALMA initiative was not yet widely known. Here, information was communicated through existing local connections–municipalities, youth centres, NGOs, local communities, and even educational institutions. This strategy was effective because it relied on trust-based channels rather than centralized information transfer. Local partners adapted messages to specific regional needs. This made it possible to reach socially less visible groups that are often left out of traditional communication campaigns.

Furthermore, based on the respondents' experiences, targeted campaigns had a particularly strong mobilizing effect. They were focused on specific goals: increasing registration, publicizing participants' stories, or involving partners. Clearly defined communication indicators (e.g., audience reach, number of responses, participation rates) made it possible not only to monitor progress but also to quickly adapt strategies based on results. The impact of these campaigns was reflected not only in quantitative indicators but also in qualitative changes – growing trust, more active content sharing, and greater youth initiative.

In summary, **the success of ALMA's communication was due to the diversity and authenticity of its information dissemination channels.** By combining different forms of communication – the emotional impact of social media, personal contact through events, and local trust-based partner networks – it was possible to create a comprehensive information ecosystem. This strategy increased awareness and together strengthened trust, which is essential for long-term participation and the sustainability of the initiative.

#### **4.1.4. Analysis of changes in attitudes toward the ALMA initiative**

Based on the insights gained from the interviews, **communication and information dissemination about the ALMA initiative had a significant impact on the target groups' attitudes regarding the ALMA.** Young people began to consider it as a real opportunity to gain international experience, strengthen their professional skills, and increase

6 Interview with PB and ALMA Network Database. Internet access: <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/network/alma/>

their employability. Initial doubts about mobility, language barriers, or the benefits of the work-related experience abroad were reduced when previous participants shared their experiences and success stories. In addition, the information gained during the intervention contributed to a broader understanding that the mobility experience is not only a short-term professional step, but also a process of personal growth, increased independence, and strengthened social skills.

Based on the positive outcomes observed, social partners such as municipalities, training centres, and employment service institutions began to more actively recommend participation in the ALMA program, integrate it into their activity planning, and propose specific solutions for youth inclusion. This positive reaction shows that the ALMA initiative was perceived as an effective tool for youth inclusion and addressing barriers to labour market integration. The group of parents also became more involved – information about the program reached them effectively, which helped to reduce concerns about youth participation in mobility activities and encouraged greater support for their decisions.

Employers, having familiarized themselves with the principles of the initiative, began to see it as a means of developing talent, strengthening social responsibility, and developing organizational culture. Some of them emphasized that the young people who participated in the program were more motivated, able to adapt to new environments, and had a practical approach to work tasks. These observations suggest that the ALMA initiative has not only contributed to increasing employment opportunities for young people but has also encouraged employers to review their attitudes towards the inclusion of socially vulnerable groups in the labour market.

**The change in attitude shows that the publicity strategy not only increased awareness but also strengthened confidence in the initiative.** In addition, a trend towards **stronger inter-institutional cooperation has emerged, with partners in both education and employment seeing ALMA as a tool that complements their own activities and strategic objectives.** This provides a basis for the further development of ALMA, the strengthening of partnerships, and a long-term impact on youth integration, ensuring that the initiative remains a sustainable and recognized model in the European context.

#### **4.1.5. Conclusions**

**Hypothesis 1: Targeted communication and publicity activities successfully engaged participants and enhanced awareness of the ALMA initiative among key audiences.**

Based on the data collected and the analysis performed, it can be stated that communication measures had a significant impact on the visibility of the ALMA initiative and the attraction of participants. The hypothesis that publicity activities contribute to the involvement of target groups has been confirmed – the initiative has become recognizable, and its objectives are clearly understood by young people, social partners, and employers alike. This shows that communication was not only informative but also strategic, building trust and strengthening the legitimacy of the initiative.

The communication system that was created was comprehensive, covering social networks, regional events, partner networks, and traditional media. The combination of these channels ensured that the information reached different audiences in different regions. Social networks proved to be a particularly effective tool for spreading the message quickly and widely, while local events and partner channels ensured the availability of information and strengthened links with communities.

The target groups experienced a change; young people began to view the program as a real opportunity for professional growth, while employers and institutions saw it as a reliable platform for social inclusion and cooperation. This shows that communication not only reached the audiences but also changed their attitudes, giving the initiative a dimension of practical value.

From a strategic point of view, the results achieved provide a solid foundation for the further development of the initiative. Investments in communication have paid off not only in terms of increasing awareness, but also in terms of building long-term trust. This suggests that communication activities are an essential element in ensuring the sustainability of the initiative and its impact on society.

The assessment of results in this section is based on interviews with the MA and monitoring data obtained from the ESFA. Other sources mentioned in the introductory report will also be used in the final draft assessment report.

## 4.2. Evaluation of the benefits, sustainability, and application of sustainable development principles in the actions under ALMA projects

The evaluation results presented in this section are based on interviews with project beneficiaries, ALMA coordinators, and representatives of the EC; documentary sources, including final project reports and "Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports; and projects' monitoring data.

### Questions addressed under Task 9.2:

- 9.2.1. What specific changes occurred in the lives of project participants (e.g., employment, return to studies, strengthened social skills) after taking part in ALMA project activities?
- 9.2.2. What percentage of participants in each of the 28 projects found employment, started studying, or enrolled in training within 6 months after the project ended?
- 9.2.3. What differences are observed across projects when assessing changes in participants' employment (e.g., sending country, mobility country, duration of mobility, or other aspects)?
- 9.2.4. Which factors (internal or external) determine (or would determine) that the results of ALMA projects are sustained after project completion?
- 9.2.5. How do (or will) partnerships created or strengthened during the project (e.g., with employers, municipal authorities, NGOs) contribute to maintaining long-term results?
- 9.2.6. How did the implementation of ALMA projects contribute to strengthening the competencies, cooperation, or continuity of activities within the implementing institutions themselves?
- 9.2.7. Are the solutions, methodologies, or tools developed during the project applicable in other contexts, and will they be continued after the project ends?
- 9.2.8. Are the results achieved during project implementation being integrated into the long-term strategies of project beneficiaries or local communities?
- 9.2.9. What resources (human, financial, and institutional support) must be ensured so that ALMA project results continue after the end of funding?

In addressing this task, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: Participants selected for ALMA projects were those most in need of the intervention, and their involvement led to (re)integration into the labour market or education system.
- Hypothesis 2: Project beneficiaries improved their competencies and experience in working with vulnerable young people, which will enhance the quality of services provided in the future.
- Hypothesis 3: Projects created sufficient preconditions for sustaining and utilizing their results beyond the implementation period.

### 4.2.1. Employment or return to education after participating in projects

Based on the projects for which the ESFA has final data on successful participants (23 projects), 326 project participants found employment or returned to the education system after participating in ALMA projects (assessed within 6 months of the end of the participants' participation in the project). **These results show that approximately half (47,4%) of project participants, or 62% of those who participated in all three phases (preparation, mobility activities abroad, and follow-up), found employment or returned to the education system.**

**Table 2. Employment of project participants and return to education or training**

Project code	PB country	Number of participants	Number of participants in all three phases	Successful participants who found employment after the project and/or returned to education or training	The percentage of successful participants from those who participated in the project <sup>7</sup>	Percentage of successful participants after 6 months of completing all three phases
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0004	Greece	30	15	10	33,3%	66,7%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006	Malta	38	17	13	34,2%	76,5%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0007	Italy	43	39	28	65,1%	71,8%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0008	Spain	26	16	9	34,6%	56,3%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0010	Portugal	22	15	15	68,2%	100,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011	Italy	19	17	8	42,1%	47,1%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0015	Spain	27	19	14	51,9%	73,7%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0016	Italy	20	19	7	35,0%	36,8%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0017	Romania	41	32	30	73,2%	93,8%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0019	Spain	33	30	30	90,9%	100,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0020	Romania	36	31	2	5,6%	6,5%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0021	Italy	33	24	15	45,5%	62,5%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0022	Spain	20	18	18	90,0%	100,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0023	Italy	28	24	20	71,4%	83,3%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0026	Portugal	47	20	15	31,9%	75,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0027	Spain	22	17	10	45,5%	58,8%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0028	Italy	42	37	5	11,9%	13,5%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0029	Lithuania	33	32	32	97,0%	100,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0030	Poland	22	20	9	40,9%	45,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0031	Spain	31	27	18	58,1%	66,7%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0032	Italy	21	20	3	14,3%	15,0%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0033	Lithuania	28	13	14	50,0%	107,7%
ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0036	Italy	26	24	1	3,8%	4,2%
<b>Total (23 projects)</b>	<b>All countries</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>47,4%</b>	<b>62%</b>

Source: Prepared by the Evaluator, based on ESFA data of 12/12/25.

<sup>7</sup> Data also includes participants who dropped out before completing the 3 phases.

## **Most projects achieved at least a 30% success rate among all participants in the project.**

The highest percentage of successful participants was recorded in one of the Lithuanian projects (ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0029<sup>8</sup>), where 100% of participants who completed all three phases and 97% of all project participants were successful. The lowest percentage of successful participants was recorded in an Italian project (ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0036<sup>9</sup>), where the percentage of successful participants according to both parameters was only about 4%.

It should be noted that some participants find employment or return to education or training later than six months after participation. In addition, in several projects, the monitoring period was effectively shorter than six months, due to activities lasting longer than originally planned. Consequently, in these cases, the number of successful participants is not final.<sup>10</sup>

The results of the assessment of the strengthening of the social skills of the project participants and changes in other skills and competences are presented in section 9.3 of the task questions.

### **4.2.2. Employment analysis by sending country and other parameters**

The **number of ALMA projects is too small for reliable statistical analysis**, even with the final data from 28 projects. At best, we can identify **some trends**. At the time of completing the evaluation, we had final data on successful participants from 23 projects, which we used to prepare the insights in this section.

The participants who were sent from the following countries were most successful in finding employment:

- Lithuania – 67% of all participants found employment (2 projects);
- Spain – 39% (6 projects).

The employment rate for participants from other countries ranged from 17% to 28%.

When assessing the percentage of those who found employment after completing all three phases, four countries stand out with higher results:

- Lithuania – 95% of those who completed all three activities found employment (2 projects);
- Malta – 53% (1 project).
- Spain – 48% (6 projects);
- Portugal – 48% (2 projects).

The employment rate in other countries ranges from 20% to 33% of those who completed all three phases.

The best employment rates calculated from all participants by receiving country (including where there are several receiving countries):

- Sweden – 58% of mobility participants found employment (1 project);
- Lithuania – 45% (1 project);
- Germany – 40% (5 projects);
- Italy – 40% (2 projects).

When evaluating countries according to the indicator of how many participants complete all three phases, the best results are recorded in the projects of the following countries (sending countries):

- Poland – 91% of participants complete all three phases (1 project);
- Italy – 89% of participants complete all three phases (8 projects);
- Romania – 82% (2 projects).
- Spain – 80% (6 projects);

**Strong individual organisations can have a significant impact on employment rates, which determine the overall statistics for countries.**

8 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0029 „Improving the competencies of young people in Lithuania and Spain” (Lithuania)

9 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0036 “AmuNEET – Mobility against youth unemployment in Sicily” (Italy)

10 For example, projects ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0028 (4 additional successful persons), ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0032 (8 additional successful persons), ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0036 (3 additional successful participants) have submitted additional information to the ESFA about successful participants, which is not included in the ALMA initiative statistics presented in Table 2.

#### 4.2.3. Factors determining the sustainability of project results after project completion. Resources necessary for the sustainability of results

Internal factors relevant to sustainability are related to participants and implementing organisations, and external factors related to the broader political and social context.

The following **internal** factors are the most important:

- **Participants' motivation and attitudes.** Participants' increased self-confidence, motivation to change their lives, and positive attitude toward learning and work are critical to the sustainability of the results achieved by project participants.
- **Skills and competencies acquired by participants.** The professional and personal skills acquired by participants, such as the ability to plan for the future or a better understanding of their strengths, help to sustain the progress made during the project.
- **Continuous support from project organisations and mentors.** Continuous support after the project is a critical factor, as it helps participants maintain their progress and motivation when they return to their environment, where progress can fade. An unfavourable social environment is one of the main negative factors that can hinder the progress of project participants. This support includes contact with mentors and organisations that accompanied participants during the project and the opportunity to contact them after mobility. Some organisations note that participants are included in their internal monitoring systems, which allows for systematic monitoring of participants' use of other services provided by the organization.
- **Financing for continued support.** In certain cases (when employment is unstable or many participants are not yet successful), additional funds may be needed to provide continued support to participants. The initiative for financing planning must come from the project implementer and may be directed both at mobilizing internal financial resources and at seeking external financing.
- **Commitment of PBs.** Sustainability requires that project implementing organisations commit to integrating ALMA results into their long-term strategies and be able to continue activities independently. PBs must be prepared to expand and continue implementing projects of this nature.
- **Partnership during the project.** Partnership during the implementation of the project is another important factor contributing to the sustainability of results. Project partners actively involved in the project support sustainability. Newly established or strengthened partnerships with other organisations that are not official project partners but are working on youth integration issues are also very important.
- **Methodologies and tools developed.** Sustainability is ensured by methodological consistency and the development of methodologies and tools that can be integrated into ongoing activities.
- **Staff retention.** It is necessary to retain coordinators, mentors, and psychologists who provide individualized assistance. It is emphasized that successful continuity requires investment in staff training and competence development.
- **Successful experience.** For continuity, it is important that the project implementer and partners take away positive experiences from the implementation of the pilot project and the results achieved. Positive experiences build trust in the ALMA model and contribute to better continuity opportunities.
- **Strengthening of the follow-up phase.** It is currently challenging to maintain sustained contact with project participants after the mobility period, which limits the ability to provide continued support and to accurately assess longer-term outcomes. For example, once participants return from the mobility period, PBs lack up-to-date contact information needed to stay in touch with them, especially when participants change their place of residence, employment status, or communication channels. As a result, opportunities for continued guidance, mentoring, or referrals to education and employment services are missed, and longer-term reintegration outcomes remain insufficiently documented.

The most important **external** factors:

- **Interinstitutional cooperation.** A sustainable support system requires close cooperation between education, social services, labour market institutions, municipal administrations, employers, and other social partners. This cooperation creates a network that can continue to function after the project has ended. In addition, cooperation helps to integrate the ALMA methodology into youth employment policy strategies.
- **Political and systemic support.** Relevant political support and backing to integrate the ALMA methodology into regional and national employment strategies.

- **Synergy with other programs.** ALMA project participants will have more opportunities to integrate into the labour market or education system and remain there if ALMA projects are part of a broader youth integration system. In this context, cooperation with the Erasmus+ program, employment services programs, NGOs, and educational institutions is particularly relevant.
- **Other external factors.** These factors, which were mentioned less frequently by respondents, include support from family and local communities, labour market stability, and ongoing publicity.

To ensure the sustainability of the project results, it is necessary to **mobilise three main resource groups**.

**Financial resources** were mentioned most frequently. The ALMA methodology, especially its mobility activities, involves significant financial costs. A stable financial basis would make it easier for organisations to commit to the continuity of the ALMA initiative. Possible sources of funding include both national funds and EU programs (e.g., the European Social Fund). In the context of continuity, emphasis was also placed on the possibility for organisations to start another project without a long break after completing one.

**Human resources** are the second most frequently mentioned category of resources. It is necessary to ensure that there are qualified specialists who are able to apply the experience gained during the project. The roles of human resources relevant to continuity include psychologists, mentors, employment consultants, educators, training program developers, mobility experts, and project managers.

Among the resources, **institutional support** is emphasised less frequently, but often enough. The continuity of ALMA results requires political will at various levels, allowing the ALMA methodology to be integrated into youth employment policy and ensuring its value is recognized in public policy. The commitment of employment agencies to incorporate the program into internal procedures and consistent inter-institutional cooperation with employment, business, and training organisations play an important role. Continuity is also ensured by the involvement of national authorities and the methodological and organizational support of the ESFA and other EU institutions.

#### 4.2.4. Contribution of partnerships to sustaining projects' long-term results

Partnerships with employers, local authorities, NGOs, employment services, and other institutions contribute to sustaining the long-term results of ALMA.

The partnerships established and strengthened during the ALMA initiative with employers, municipalities, employment services, NGOs, and foreign host organisations form an infrastructure that ensures support for participants and real opportunities after the project: continuous referral to training and work, political and institutional consolidation, and the integration of international mobility into ongoing activities. This allows the results to be sustained and expanded in the long term.

**Support system for project participants.** Partnerships help ensure that young people are not left alone after returning from mobility: they continue to receive assistance, participate in training, are offered job opportunities, and receive ongoing support. In Romania<sup>11</sup> project partners played an active role in helping young people find employment and further opportunities. Using their network of companies and NGOs, they facilitated direct contacts with employers by sending CVs to potential employers and identifying suitable jobs within their networks.

**New opportunities for all young people.** Employer networks, created and expanded through partnerships, become long-term channels for organizing work-related internships or offering jobs. Companies that have had positive experiences with ALMA participants become more open to hiring socially vulnerable young people in the future, and a broad network of stakeholders makes it possible to offer jobs or internships.

**The overall project experience and trust create the conditions for future joint activities.** For example, one project implementer indicated that the project improved the coordination of activities that had previously been fragmented and laid the foundation for a coherent system supporting the long-term integration of young people.

Another example comes from Portugal. The network created during the project facilitates similar activities in the future. For example, a new project in Portugal, Raizes com Futuro (Roots with a Future), was developed using the same ALMA program structure, and ALMA's largest partner, the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training, immediately accepted the new partnership, which is a direct result of the success of the ALMA project.<sup>12</sup>

Partnerships with regional authorities contribute to the planning of **new calls and the integration of ALMA principles into regional employment strategies**, thus ensuring the continuity of the ALMA model at the policy level. In one of the interviews, it was mentioned that the employment service plans to integrate the international component into

11 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0020 "NEETs Need Our Help" (Romania) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

12 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0010 "Step into Better Projects" (Portugal) final report

ongoing programs and activities, thus adapting the principles of the ALMA initiative to its programs. More examples of the integration of ALMA principles into regional strategies and new calls for proposals are provided in sections 4.2.6 and 4.2.7.

**Dissemination of knowledge among partners and stakeholders.** The dissemination of knowledge through established or strengthened partnerships contributes to the long-term sustainability of the ALMA model and the strengthening of knowledge on youth integration. For example,<sup>13</sup> the project results were used as examples of good practice at various events and meetings, such as the ALMADRID closing event at the European Commission representation in Madrid, the ALMA Don Bosco closing event in Seville, and a meeting organised by the Alzira City Council. At the same time, these events not only allowed for wider dissemination of the project's achievements but also created synergies and established cooperation networks with public and private institutions.

#### **4.2.5. Impact of projects on the competencies, cooperation, and sustainability of the organisations that implemented them**

The experience gained during the implementation of the projects provided the project beneficiaries with various competencies. The PBs emphasized both competencies relevant to working with vulnerable youth and cooperation and management competencies. Some project beneficiaries note the benefits to their reputation and the addition of new specialists to their teams.

**Competences for working with young people.** Competences for working with young people who have less motivation and self-confidence have been strengthened: how to communicate with them, motivate them, and involve them. Emphasis was placed on experience, which showed that working with this target group requires an individualized approach.

PB often noted an increase in mentoring competence. Some projects also highlighted the experience gained in providing psychological support to young people. For example<sup>14</sup>, the project promoter from France indicates that new internal policies and processes have been developed for working with young people with psychological and psychiatric difficulties.

Some projects mentioned<sup>15</sup> that they had gained experience in adapting youth education, focusing on the principles of non-formal learning.

**International cooperation competencies.** The implementation of projects strengthened competencies in international cooperation, intercultural communication, and the coordination of international mobility. For example, one of the project beneficiaries indicated that the organisation had implemented a three-month international mobility program for the first time, which required new coordination and logistics competencies.

**National and regional cooperation competencies.** Some projects also mentioned competencies related to cooperation with other organisations in the country. For example, one of the projects involved employment services, business associations, regional training institutions, and NGOs, which now act as strategic partners and can be involved in future projects.

Another example is the project implemented by the City Council of Gijón. Its documents indicate that the system of cooperation between public institutions and social and business entities was identified as a successful element that should be maintained and replicated in the future.<sup>16</sup>

**Reputational benefits.** Project implementing organisations have gained greater visibility and recognition at various levels, including at the EU level, which has opened up new opportunities for them. For example, one of the projects indicated that the ALMA project increased the organization's visibility, strengthened its reputation, and established it as a reliable actor in the field of youth integration.

**Quantitative expansion of teams.** Several project beneficiaries noted that the success of the project led to the expansion of their teams, for example, with the addition of a psychologist. The project in France indicates<sup>17</sup> that the team was joined by a permanent specialist responsible for monitoring and supporting the progress of all young people served by the organization in their integration into the labour market.

13 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0019 "Creating employment opportunities for youth" (Spain) final report

14 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0037 "From One (1) European Country to Another European Country" (France) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

15 E.g., Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0015 "Fostering Integral NEETs Development" (Spain) report "Lessons learned and future plans", Final report of project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0008 "Leaders of the Future: from NEETs to Real Change Makers" (Spain)

16 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0022 "The Youth Activation Agency INCORPORATES European mobility" (Spain)

17 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0037 "From One (1) European Country to Another European Country" (France) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

#### 4.2.6. Continuity and adaptation of solutions, methodologies, and tools developed during the project in other contexts

During the evaluation, numerous examples were collected showing that **the solutions, methodologies, and tools developed during the project are or will be applied in other contexts**. The directions for the application of methodologies and tools mainly include (a) launch of **ALMA calls** at national or regional levels and integrating the initiative in ESF+ programmes, (b) making the **ALMA model a permanent service** in public, private or non-governmental sectors, (c) implementing **other projects with a similar target group**.

The entire ALMA model, encompassing preparedness, mobility, and follow-up care, can be further replicated at the regional or national level. The methodology and experience gained from the ALMA pilot project provide a basis for wider application of this model.

(a) For example, in his report, the project promoter from Greece indicates that the experience gained during the pilot project<sup>18</sup> has served as a basis **to launch ALMA in their ESF+ programme**, and the lessons learned represent a useful contribution to the preparation and implementation of the extended ALMAMobil program in three target regions of the country. It will target 150 young NEETs (aged 18–29), with a particular focus on groups experiencing greater social exclusion and facing challenges in integrating into the labour market. Based on the experience gained, the results (outputs/impact) and the impact of the extended implementation in different regions, the subsequent phase will involve planning the national rollout of the ALMA program. After testing the program in different contexts, it will be possible to move towards a unified implementation structure, with the program being expanded from the regional to the national level.

In Spain, the Directorate-General for European Funds of the Valencian Community has committed to **launching a regional call** for proposals for the ALMA program next year. In addition, there are plans to present the results of ALMA to the Spanish National Youth Guarantee Service and the Spanish Employment Service with a view to launching a nationwide ALMA call.<sup>19</sup>

Also, the PB from Malta<sup>20</sup> points out that the pilot project "ALMALta" has provided essential insights that will help shape ALMA as a sustainable activation tool in the **Youth Guarantee system** after 2024. This integration into another European Programme ensures uptake under ESF programming.

(b) The case of Romania could serve as an example of how the **ALMA model is becoming a permanent service in a private company**. The ALMA model will be integrated into the services of JobDirect, a social enterprise owned by ADV Romania and specialising in the professional integration of vulnerable groups. International mobility will become a permanent part of its services, which will be developed in cooperation with companies operating in Romania.<sup>21</sup>

(c) Looking at individual elements and tools of the ALMA model, project beneficiaries noted that they plan to continue using the **mentoring model and an individualised approach** to helping. For example, it is noted that the individualised selection of internships based on participants' interests and comfort zone, rather than formal education is a solution that is suitable for other youth integration programs.

**Informal education** during mobility (e.g., training in organisation, independence, communication) was also highlighted as being very effective and will be applied in other initiatives.

Based on the interviews conducted, **methods** such as focus groups, role-playing games, reflection sessions, and solidarity actions will be continued and integrated into other projects, not only for young people but also for other target groups, as they helped to promote self-reflection and social engagement. The self-analysis questionnaires, participant video testimonials, e-learning platform, and participant storytelling methodology developed during the project can be applied in other contexts.

The methodology, training content, monitoring tools, and lessons learned were **integrated into the working practices of the local employment agency** and **disseminated to stakeholders** through dissemination events and online platforms. Specific project components – individualized pre-departure training, a mentoring and monitoring model for the mobility phase, and a cooperation system between public institutions, social and business entities – were identified as successful elements that should be preserved and replicated in the future.<sup>22</sup>

**New internal procedural** solutions have also been developed for managing work-related practices, especially when working with NEET youth, which are already being applied in other ongoing mobility projects.

18 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0004 "Move On with ALMA" (Greece)

19 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-0015 "Fostering Integral NEETs Development" (Spain) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

20 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006 "ALMALta" (Malta)

21 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0017 "JobDirect for NEETs within ALMA initiative!" (Romania) report "Lessons learned and future plans"

22 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0022 "The Youth Activation Agency INCORPORATES European mobility" (Spain) final report

The **SROI (Social Return on Investment) methodology** was used in one of the projects.<sup>23</sup> allowed for a quantitative assessment of social value and is being integrated into other projects and recommended as good practice.

#### **4.2.7. Integration of project results into the long-term strategies of project beneficiaries and local communities**

**Most project beneficiaries indicate that project results are integrated into the long-term strategies of project beneficiaries or communities (regional).** Only a few project beneficiaries indicate that there is no direct integration of results into long-term strategies. The results of one of the projects did not attract much interest from the community or other institutions, so the results remained more at the level of internal learning and competence building rather than becoming part of formal strategic documents. Another project indicates that a more detailed assessment is needed of how the ALMA model can be integrated with existing employment promotion programs.

Here are some examples of how ALMA results are integrated into the strategies of project beneficiaries or partner institutions.

In Romania, the ALMA model will be integrated into the services offered by the JobDirect agency, and international mobility will become a permanent part of its offering.<sup>24</sup>

In Spain (IDEA Alzira), the aim is to replicate the methodology developed in the ALMA project in other local services, incorporating international mobility and more individualised support.<sup>25</sup>

In Italy, Essenia UETP, the organisations and institutions participating in the project as partners, have a strong interest in youth, social integration, labour inclusion, and unemployment issues and carry out international mobility, lifelong learning, training, and career counselling on a daily basis. Considering their specific missions, core activities, and competencies, the partners will continue to apply the methodologies, strategies, and actions tested during the implementation of the ALMA project and recognized as successful following the evaluation of results and analysis of the impact achieved.<sup>26</sup>

The results of the ALMA pilot projects are often integrated into local community (regional) strategies.

For example, the Emilia-Romagna region in Italy plans to replicate the project under the ESF+ Operational Program 2021–2027, and the ALMA methodology will become mainstream in regional policy in the field of youth employment.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the positive results of ALMA and the lessons learned in the Gijón area (Spain), there are plans to expand the program at the local and regional levels by strengthening institutional coordination, improving methodology, and consolidating the proven NEET support model. This expansion is based on the cooperation between Gijón's Youth Activation Agency and key social and economic partners since 2014, which provides a solid foundation for integrating ALMA into public youth and employment strategies. The goal is to transform ALMA from a pilot initiative into a stable policy instrument that increases inclusion and opportunities for young people throughout the region.<sup>28</sup>

#### **4.2.8. Conclusions**

**Hypothesis 1: Participants selected for ALMA projects were those most in need of the intervention, and their involvement led to (re)integration into the labour market or education system.**

Appropriate participant selection is a prerequisite for the benefits and effectiveness of the ALMA initiative. This intervention, which requires considerable investment, is effective when targeted at young people who need sufficiently individualised and comprehensive support. The ALMA pilot projects provided valuable experience in selecting participants, which will be important when expanding the application of the ALMA model in countries.

According to the analysed profile of project participants (section 4.4.2.1), they often had low educational attainment, limited or no vocational qualifications, and weak links to the labour market. Most had little or no formal work experience. A significant share came from marginalised and vulnerable backgrounds, often experiencing social isolation and a lack of institutional support.

23 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0031 "ALMA Project Andalusia" (Spain) final report

24 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0017 "JobDirect for NEETs within ALMA initiative!" (Romania) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

25 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0015 "Fostering Integral NEETs Development" (Spain) final report

26 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0032 "Supporting Traineeship Opportunities for NEETs to Grow" (Italy) final report

27 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0021 "We NEET EU – Reintegrating the NEETs through mobility" (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans“ and final report

28 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0022 "The Youth Activation Agency INCORPORATES European mobility" (Spain) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

Based on the profile of the participants and monitoring data on successful participants (47.4% of all participants or 62% of those who completed all three project activities found employment or returned to the education system or training) it can be stated that the first hypothesis, that the participants selected for ALMA projects are those who need this intervention and that it has led to changes in their (re)integration into the labour or education system, has been confirmed. This is also confirmed by the interview data with PB (section 4.7.1), which indicates that about 73% of participants would not have started working for a very long time without the ALMA project, and about 20% would have started working, but in jobs requiring lower qualifications than after the project. About 7% would have started working in the same job as after the project, but later.

Most projects achieved at least a 30% success rate among all project participants. Some projects managed to achieve a success rate of over 90%.

**Hypothesis 2: Project beneficiaries improved their competencies and experience in working with vulnerable young people, which will enhance the quality of services provided in the future.**

Hypothesis 2, that PB gained more experience and competence in working with vulnerable young people, which will improve the quality of their services in the future, was confirmed. PB gained more experience and competence in working with vulnerable young people, which will improve the quality of their services in the future. During the evaluation, numerous examples were collected showing that the solutions, methodologies, and tools developed during the project are or will be applied in other contexts. The directions for the application of methodologies and tools mainly include (a) launch of ALMA calls at national or regional levels and integrating the initiative in ESF+ programmes, (b) making the ALMA model a permanent service in public, private or non-governmental sectors, (c) implementing other projects with a similar target group.

The experience gained during the implementation of the projects not only strengthened the competencies relevant to working with vulnerable young people but also contributed to the development of cooperation and management competencies. In addition, some project beneficiaries note the reputational benefits and the addition of new specialists to their teams.

**Hypothesis 3: Projects created sufficient preconditions for sustaining and utilizing their results beyond the implementation period.**

The third hypothesis, that there are sufficient grounds to believe that the results achieved during the projects will be maintained and used in the future, has been largely confirmed. However, the continuity of results will vary from country to country, as some countries are integrating the ALMA model into regional programs and planning new calls for proposals, while in others, the sustainability of results will be limited to the level of participants and project beneficiaries (and partners). At the level of project participants, their motivation, attitudes, and acquired skills and abilities create the conditions for the continuity of the progress achieved. It is also important that project beneficiaries recognize the importance of continued support. Based on the survey, project participants have a positive view of the experience gained during the projects (section 4.3), and these assessments give reason to hope that the progress achieved will be sustained. At the project implementer level, the sustainability of results depends on the organization's commitment to continuing these activities, the partnerships formed, the methodological basis created during the projects, staff retention, and the experience of success during the pilot projects. The implementation of these factors in the ALMA pilot call is sufficient to ensure the sustainability of the results achieved. In the external environment, the availability of financial resources, inter-institutional cooperation, political and systemic support, and synergies with other programs are important for sustainability.

The partnerships established contribute to the sustainability of results in several ways. They ensure continued support for young people after mobility, expand the networks of employers and organisations that offer long-term employment and internship opportunities, and lay the groundwork for future joint activities. They also pave the way for planning ALMA calls at the national or regional level, integrate ALMA into some ESF+ programmes, include ALMA principles in regional employment strategies, and ensure the dissemination of knowledge and the continuity of good practices.

In most cases, project results are integrated into the long-term strategies of project beneficiaries or regional communities. In a few cases, there is no direct integration of results into long-term strategies. In these cases, the results remained more at the level of internal learning and competence building, or a more detailed assessment is needed on how the ALMA model can be integrated with existing employment promotion programs.

## 4.3. Evaluation of the ALMA initiative's impact on participants' personal achievements and development

The evaluation results presented in this section are based on the survey of project participants; interviews with project beneficiaries and ALMA coordinators; documentary sources, including "Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports and voluntary project reports.

### Questions addressed under Task 9.3:

- 9.3.1. How/has participants' self-confidence and trust in others, motivation, independence, and ability to adapt to different situations changed after participating in the ALMA initiative?
- 9.3.2. What new skills (e.g., social, professional, personal, linguistic, teamwork, respect for differing interests, values, viewpoints) did participants acquire during the initiative, and how are these applied in practice?
- 9.3.3. How do participants themselves assess their personal growth and change after the initiative – what do they feel they achieved, what helped them most, what are they proud of, and do they regard going abroad as an important achievement in their lives and as an experience that can help them overcome future challenges and return to the labour market or education?
- 9.3.4. How did participation in the initiative affect participants' attitudes toward learning, work, or civic engagement? Did this experience give them a clearer picture of what they would like to do professionally in the future?
- 9.3.5. How did the mentors' assistance and support that participants received during the project (both at home and abroad) help them internalise the experience gained?
- 9.3.6. Is participation in the ALMA initiative an important experience for project participants? Would they recommend this experience to other young people, and why?

In addressing this task, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: As a result of ALMA projects, participants strengthened their professional skills and knowledge, increasing their employability.
- Hypothesis 2: ALMA projects improved participants' personal skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving, teamwork) and contributed to their smoother integration into society.
- Hypothesis 3: Through ALMA projects, participants gained greater self-confidence, motivating them to continue their education or enter employment.
- Hypothesis 4: Participation in an ALMA project was an important experience for the participants.

### 4.3.1. Impact on participants' personal growth

Personal empowerment is particularly important for ALMA's target group from vulnerable backgrounds. For example, in a project implemented in Romania, at least 55% of the participants selected were from vulnerable backgrounds, such as young people with disabilities, members of the Roma community, and children in care.<sup>29</sup> In a project implemented in France, around one-third of participants were people with a migrant background. Around 16% were early school leavers, and the same proportion had psychological disorders. Around 11% of participants in this project had mental health problems.<sup>30</sup>

A survey of project beneficiaries confirms the significant impact of the projects on the personal growth of participants. **As many as 94,8% of participants in all three stages of the ALMA projects agree or strongly agree that this experience has contributed to their personal growth.** This figure represents the average across the four criteria presented in the following figure.

96,7% of participants believe that going abroad was an important achievement in their lives: 70,7% of them strongly agree with this statement, while the rest agree. In addition, 95,1% of respondents believe that going abroad contributed significantly to their personal growth and will help them overcome future challenges. 60,4% strongly agree with this statement, while 34,7% agree.

29 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0017 "JobDirect for NEETs within ALMA initiative!" (Romania) voluntary evaluation report: ADV Romania, ENSIE (2025) Comparative research of the socio-professional insertion of young NEETS (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) in classic companies and in Work Integration Social Enterprises within the project "JobDirect for NEET Youth within the ALMA initiative"

30 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0037 "From One (1) European Country to Another European Country" (France) voluntary evaluation report: FRANCE – Collectif pour un-Service Civique Européen (2025) Report ALMA from one EU to EU, 2023-2025

This shows that the mobility element in ALMA projects is essential, giving participants inner strength and confidence in their own abilities.

90,4% of respondents said that the ALMA project experience had made them more confident. 96,9% of survey participants confirmed that they were better able to adapt to new circumstances and conditions after this experience.

During the interview, project beneficiaries shared their stories that illustrate the change in participants' self-confidence.

For example, one young man had very low self-esteem at the beginning of the project. He even found it difficult to look people from the project team in the eye. Now he works in a sportswear store and, according to him, is living the best life he has ever had.

Another participant wanted to drop out of the mobility program because his mom was sick. But the real reason was that he was dealing with stress that was hard to handle. Still, he managed to finish the mobility program and gained confidence, responsibility, and determination.

### Participant feedback

*„An experience that opened up new opportunities in the areas of employment, culture, and personal development. All the skills and knowledge I gained during this experience will help me in the future, both in the world of work and in everyday life,“ – project participant from Malta.<sup>31</sup>*

*„It was a transformative experience that forced me to step outside my comfort zone, introduced me to new cultures and perspectives, and helped me become a more adaptable, confident, and open-minded person“, – project participant from Malta.<sup>32</sup>*

*„Thank you for giving me this opportunity to understand how valuable I am,“ – project participant from Spain.<sup>33</sup>*

The proportion of negative responses that do not confirm positive changes accounts for only 2-4,5 % according to individual statements.

**Figure 1. Impact of projects on participants' personal growth, %**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey data (N = 447; the response rate is 71,7%)



31 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006 "ALMALta" (Malta) voluntary evaluation report: Almalta digital report

32 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006 "ALMALta" (Malta) voluntary evaluation report: Almalta digital report

33 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0015 – "Fostering Integral NEETs Development" (Spain) voluntary evaluation report: FIND / ALMA – FSE + Fostering Integral Neets Development. Results report

When comparing the results for different statements, it should be noted that **statements about going abroad as an important life achievement (96,7%) and better adaptation to new circumstances and conditions (96,9%) received the most positive ratings**. For many young people, the ALMA mobility experience has become an important personal achievement and a significant life event that boosts self-esteem and teaches them to adapt to a changing environment.

#### 4.3.2. Impact on participants' social competencies and cooperation skills

The results of the project participant survey indicate a significant impact of ALMA projects on participants' social skills. **87,3% of participants who completed all three stages of the ALMA projects agree or strongly agree that this experience strengthened their social skills**. This value is calculated as the average of the three criteria illustrated in the figure below.

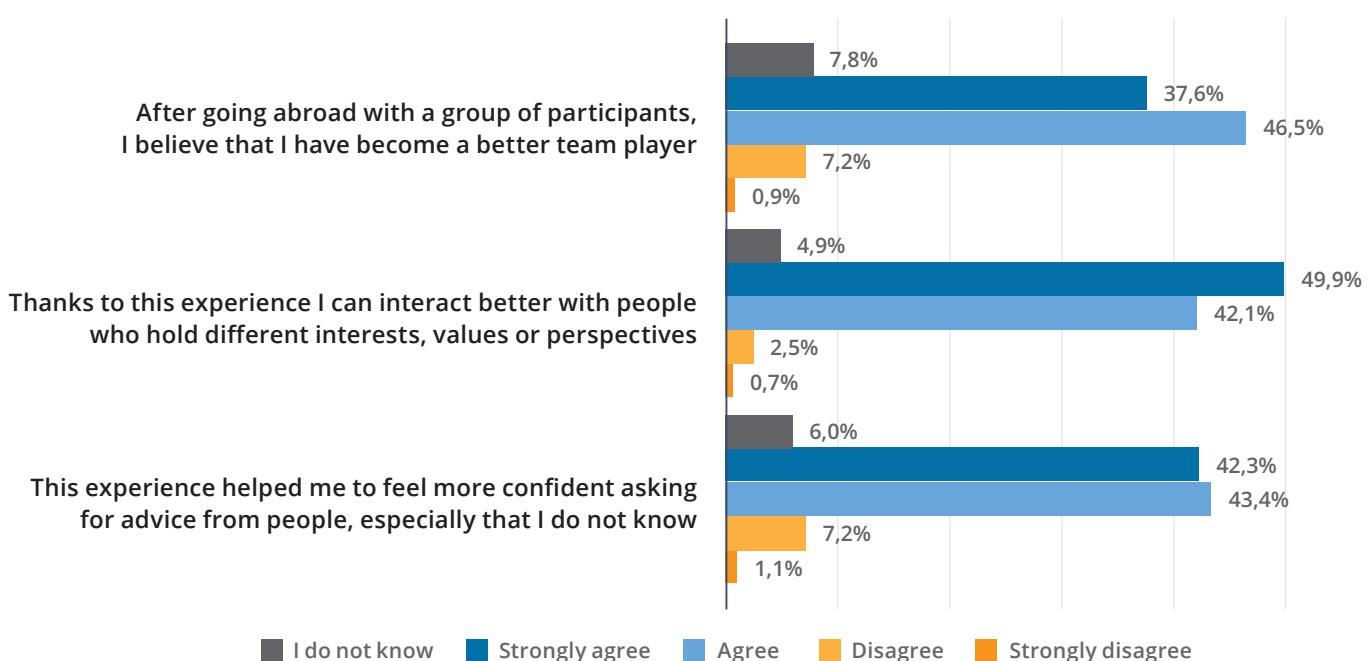
84,1% of respondents (37,6% strongly agree and 46,5% agree) that after going abroad with the group of participants, they became better team members. This shows that joint activities and the challenges of the mobility experience contribute to the ability to work in a team and cooperate.

The international mobility experience fosters cultural awareness, broadens understanding of different perspectives, and promotes tolerance. 92% of participants say that the experience gained in the project has improved their ability to communicate with people who have different interests, values, or attitudes (49,9% strongly agree and 42,1% agree).

In addition, 85,7% of respondents indicated that this experience helped them feel more confident when asking people for advice, especially strangers (42,3% strongly agree and 43,4% agree), which is important both in professional activities and in various situations in life in general.

**Figure 2. Impact of projects on participants' social competencies and cooperation skills, %**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey data (N = 447; the response rate is 71,7%)



The proportion of negative responses is small, ranging from 3,2% to 8,3% depending on the specific statement, which indicates that almost all participants experienced positive social changes.

Considering the responses of other respondents who answered negatively, it can be seen that the majority of participants generally view the ALMA experience favourably. This shows that strengthening social skills is just one of the benefits that ALMA projects provide to participants.

The qualitative responses to the participant survey show that for many participants, **stepping outside their comfort zone was the main mechanism driving social and personal change**.

These results suggest that the ALMA initiative helps young people develop competencies that reduce exclusion and increase their chances of integrating into the labour market or education system.

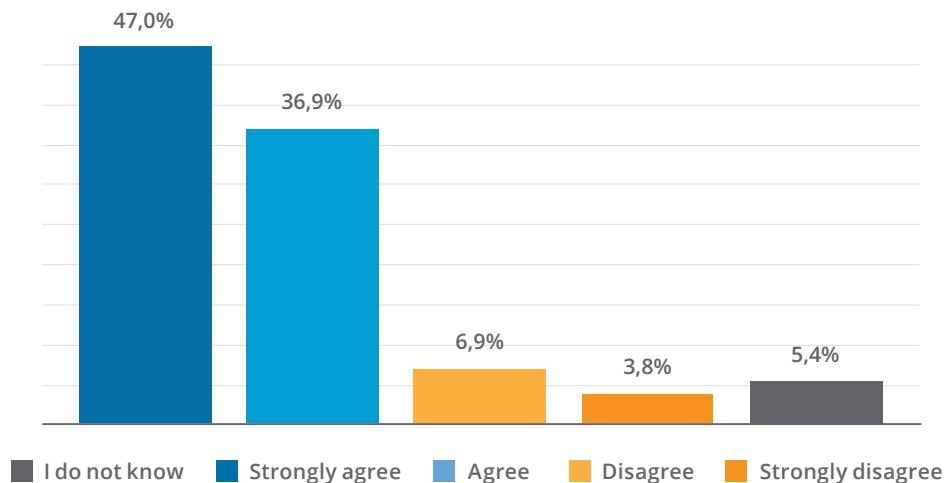
#### 4.3.3. The importance of mentorship

Given that ALMA project participants often have to step outside their comfort zone, professional mentoring support is essential in helping them manage stress and uncertainty. In addition, mentors help transform the ALMA experience into achievements in the labour market, the education system or training.

Project participants confirm the importance of mentoring. **83,9% of respondents who participated in all three stages of the ALMA project agree that the support provided by mentors both in their home country and abroad, helped them to gain experience** (47% strongly agree and 36,9% agree), which shows that most participants consider the support of mentors to be significant and useful.

**Figure 3. Evaluation of mentors' assistance during the project, %**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey data (N = 447; the response rate is 71,7%)



**Negative experiences with mentors were related to insufficient support from mentors while abroad or when looking for work.** Negative assessments were also linked to cases where participants were disappointed with the managerial skills of project beneficiaries and projected this disappointment onto their mentors. For example, some participants were dissatisfied with the accommodation provided or expressed difficulties with the people they had to live with. On several occasions, participants mentioned that emotionally sensitive individuals may find it difficult to live with other project participants and that in such situations, participants may need greater support from mentors.

The importance of mentor support after the mobility phase is also highlighted in the evaluation of the ALMA project implemented in Romania.<sup>34</sup>

Based on the results of the PB interviews, mentors played a fundamental and critically important role in the ALMA project: not only did they ensure the safety of participants throughout the mobility process, but they also facilitated sustainable, long-term personal growth by helping young people structure their experiences and address emerging challenges, understand their needs more clearly, and move purposefully toward their goals.

**It is believed that without mentors, it would have been very difficult for NEET young people to cope with this experience. Their presence was a key factor in making participants feel safe.** It was important for participants to know that they could ask for help at any time and to feel that they were being accompanied, both in their own country and abroad.

The role of mentors was an important factor in the success of the program, allowing participants to set specific and individualized goals and receive support in achieving them. The presence of mentors made it easier for participants to master the skills they had acquired, strengthened their self-esteem, and helped them reflect on their experiences and link them to long-term goals.

The role of mentors was also important in **maintaining motivation and preventing dropouts from the project**. Participants trusted their mentors and shared their personal problems with them, which helped to prevent dropouts. They helped to solve personal and practical problems and supported participants throughout the mobility period. In addition to solving practical issues, mentors provided psychological and emotional support, which was particularly important in the context of culture shock.

<sup>34</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0017 "JobDirect for NEETs within ALMA initiative!" (Romania) voluntary evaluation report: ADV Romania, ENSIE (2025) Comparative research of the socio-professional insertion of young NEETS (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) in classic companies and in Work Integration Social Enterprises within the project "JobDirect for NEET Youth within the ALMA initiative"

Mentors also worked on skills development. For example, one respondent said that the mentor was like a "mother" – teaching social skills, order, communication, etc.

#### 4.3.4. Impact on participants' career orientation and opportunities to participate in the labour market or education system

**81,4% of participants who completed all three stages of the ALMA project confirm the benefits of the experience gained for their professional career and preparation for the future.** This figure represents the average across the five statements presented in the following figure.

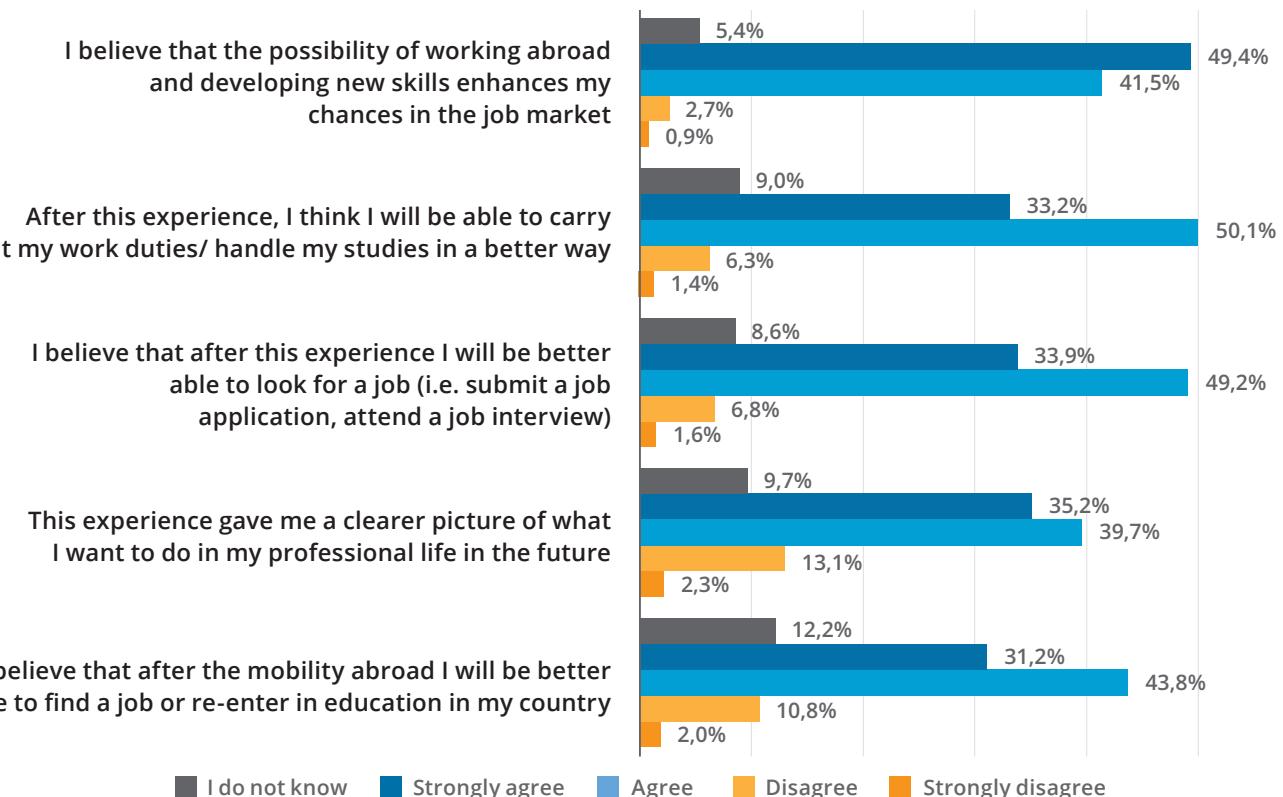
74,9% of respondents (31,2% strongly agree and 43,8% agree) believe that after mobility abroad, it will be easier for them to find a job or return to education in their country. Career clarity has also increased, with 74,9% of participants saying they have a clearer understanding of which professional field is most suitable for them (35,2% strongly agree and 39,7% agree).

Other statements related to opportunities to participate in the labour market or education system were rated even higher. 83,1% of respondents indicated that this experience would enable them to search for work more effectively (e.g., submit job application documents, participate in job interviews), while 83,3% believe that after the project, they will be able to perform work tasks better or study more successfully.

Most importantly, participants clearly see the benefits of the ALMA mobility experience for their competitiveness in the labour market: as many as 91% of respondents believe that the opportunity to work abroad and acquire new skills increases their chances in the labour market (49,4% strongly agree and 41,5% agree). This is the highest-rated statement in this group of questions, revealing the participants' belief that the project provided them with practical skills and increased their value to employers.

**Figure 4. Impact of projects on participants' career orientation and opportunities to participate in the labour market or education system, %**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey data (N = 443; the response rate is 71,1%)



Only a small proportion of young people disagree that the project had a positive impact on their opportunities to work or study. Depending on the statement, this proportion ranges from 3,6% to 15,3%. The most scepticism was recorded in response to the statement that after mobility abroad it would be easier to find a job or return to education in their own country (12,9%) and that this experience helped them to understand more clearly what they would like to do in their professional field (15,3%).

#### **4.3.5. The importance of the ALMA initiative for participants and their willingness to recommend it to other young people**

Most participants describe their experience of participating in the ALMA project as one of the most important in their lives. Its importance is emphasised through three main prisms (the results are derived from open-ended questions in the participants' survey):

- **Personal growth and independence.** This is the most frequently mentioned aspect. Participants say that the project helped them become more confident, overcome their fears, and learn to live independently. Many emphasize that it allowed them to discover their hidden potential and realize that they can do more than they previously thought. Very practical aspects of independence are also mentioned: living without parental assistance, managing household chores and finances.
- **Professional development.** The experience helped participants acquire new professional skills, understand what career path they want to follow, and find a job. For some, it was a turning point that helped them escape unemployment or a lack of motivation.
- **Cultural awareness and language learning:** Living abroad and interacting with people from other cultures helped participants become more open-minded and tolerant. Learning foreign languages is mentioned as a huge advantage.

Almost all participants would recommend ALMA to others. They would recommend it for the following reasons:

- **Stepping out of your comfort zone.** Participants often mention that the project forced them to step out of their comfort zone. This is perceived as an opportunity to test themselves, mature, and „toughen up” in reality.
- **A unique opportunity.** Participants call it a „once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” especially for those who do not have the financial means to travel or study abroad on their own.
- **Self-discovery.** The project is recommended for those who feel lost, don't know what to do in the future, or feel stuck in a routine.
- **Social connections.** An opportunity to make lifelong friends and establish new social connections.

Only a small proportion of participants indicated that the experience was not useful, or would only partially recommend it or not recommend it at all. This was most often associated with poor organisation, unsuitable internship locations, living conditions, or a lack of support from mentors. Some participants mentioned that participation in the ALMA project requires psychological strength and flexibility, so they would only recommend it to certain people.

#### **4.3.6. Conclusions**

**Hypothesis 1: As a result of ALMA projects, participants strengthened their professional skills and knowledge, increasing their employability.**

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed. 81,4% of participants who completed all three phases of ALMA projects confirm the benefits of the experience gained for their professional path and preparation for the future. The ALMA projects significantly contributed to the growth of participants' professional competencies. Participants acquired practical knowledge and skills that are directly related to their chances of successful employment. This confirms that the projects are an effective tool for reducing youth unemployment and strengthening youth readiness for the labour market.

**Hypothesis 2: ALMA projects improved participants' personal skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving, teamwork) and contributed to their smoother integration into society.**

Hypothesis 2 was confirmed. The results of the survey of project participants reveal a significant impact of ALMA projects on strengthening the participants' social skills. 87,3% of participants who participated in all three phases of the ALMA projects agree or strongly agree that this experience strengthened their social skills. Participants confirm that ALMA projects strengthened their teamwork and communication skills with different people. In addition, participants learned to feel brave when asking for advice. Such an impact of the projects reduces social exclusion and strengthens the readiness of young people to successfully integrate into the labour market or return to the education system.

**Hypothesis 3: Through ALMA projects, participants gained greater self-confidence, motivating them to continue education or enter employment.**

Hypothesis 3 was confirmed. 95,1% of respondents indicate that the ALMA projects experience contributed to their personal growth. Going abroad was an important achievement in their lives. The experience gained during the project gives participants greater self-confidence. In addition, participants confirm that they have learned to adapt better to new environments and situations. These changes are important for both the personal success of the participants and their professional lives.

Project participants confirm the importance of mentoring. 83,9% of respondents agree that the support provided by mentors, both in their home country and abroad, helped them to absorb the experience.

#### **Hypothesis 4: Participation in an ALMA project was an important experience for the participants.**

Hypothesis 4 was confirmed. Most participants identify the experience of participating in the ALMA project as one of the most important in their lives. The importance is emphasised through 3 main prisms: personal growth and independence, professional development, broadening of cultural horizons and language learning. Almost all participants would recommend ALMA to others. The emphasis is on leaving the comfort zone, a unique opportunity, self-discovery and social connections. Only a small number of participants indicated that the experience was not useful or would recommend it only partially or not at all. Most often this was associated with poor organisation, inappropriate labour-related experience location, living conditions or lack of mentor support. Some participants mentioned that participation in the ALMA project requires psychological strength and flexibility, they would recommend it only to some people.

### **4.4. Evaluation of lessons learned from the ALMA initiative's implementation and the benefits for project beneficiaries**

This section is based on qualitative data collected during interviews with PBs. A total of 28 interviews have been conducted. Additionally, information from projects' final reports, lessons learned, and plans have been analysed.

#### **Questions addressed under Task 9.4:**

- 9.4.1. What major challenges arose in implementing the ALMA projects, and how were they addressed?
- 9.4.2. What was each project's target group (education level, work experience), and what share of participants were the most socially excluded young people?
- 9.4.3. Which methods or practices proved to be the most effective when working with the target group?
- 9.4.4. How did the ALMA projects contribute to strengthening the overall operations of the implementing organisations, expanding partnership networks, or initiating new projects?
- 9.4.5. How did participation in the ALMA initiative change the projects' beneficiaries' approach to working with disadvantaged youth?
- 9.4.6. What recommendations could project beneficiaries offer to developers of future ALMA or similar initiatives?
- 9.4.7. What key lessons (i.e., shortcomings/challenges/failures) did project coordinators observe during the implementation of the ALMA initiative, and how did this initiative contribute to strengthening projects' beneficiaries' competences, organisational capabilities, or cooperation?
- 9.4.8. During implementation of the ALMA initiative, how do projects' beneficiaries assess the application of the fixed unit costs set out in the Delegated Act<sup>35</sup>? What challenges did they face, and what benefits did they experience?

In addressing this task, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: Challenges that arose during project implementation were successfully addressed.
- Hypothesis 2: Implementation experience helped identify the most effective methods and practices for integrating vulnerable young people.
- Hypothesis 3: ALMA projects contributed to strengthening the overall operations of implementing organisations, expanding partnerships' networks, and initiating new projects.
- Hypothesis 4: Participation in the ALMA initiative changed projects' beneficiaries' approach to working with young people facing difficulties.
- Hypothesis 5: Applying the fixed unit costs set out in the Delegated Act yielded more benefits than drawbacks for projects' implementation.

<sup>35</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2022/2175 of 5 August 2022 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding the definition of unit costs and establishment of amounts for financing not linked to costs for certain operations facilitating the integration of young persons into the labour market, education and society in the framework of the 'Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve' (ALMA) initiative.

#### 4.4.1. Challenges in implementing the ALMA initiative and approaches to solving them

One of the key challenges faced by the PBs was **maintaining participant motivation and stable engagement**. As most of the young people had experienced long-term social exclusion, their trust in institutions was low and participation in organised activities was unusual. Some of them had negative experiences with educational or social systems and therefore reacted cautiously or even hostilely. This challenge was addressed through flexible activity schedules, individualised plans, informal activities, and active relationship building. Some organisations used former participants, mostly from the Erasmus+ program, as mentors who shared their experiences, advice, and stories.<sup>36</sup> This, together with the activities implemented, helped to build trust and reduce the gap between the participants and the project team.

Another common challenge was the **administrative and bureaucratic burden**, particularly in relation to reporting, data collection, and financial documentation.<sup>37</sup> The PBs indicated that part of this burden was complex, especially for smaller organisations that did not have a strong administrative structure or sufficient human resources. This challenge was addressed through the optimisation of internal processes, the recruitment of additional staff, consultation with financial experts, and cooperation with other organisations to share best practices.

A **lack of financial flexibility** also became apparent, particularly when it was necessary to respond quickly to participants' needs, e.g., to allocate funds for psychological assistance, transport, or unplanned activities.<sup>38</sup> A fixed budget and strict spending limits restricted the possibility of applying innovative solutions. Some organisations addressed this challenge by tapping into additional sources of funding, such as municipal support, private sponsors, or social business models that generate revenue to ensure the continuity of activities.

Another challenge was the **lack of inter-institutional cooperation**. Although the ALMA initiative promoted partnerships, in practice, it was difficult to coordinate activities between social services, educational institutions, employment services, and non-governmental organisations.<sup>39</sup> Different institutions had different working principles, data protection requirements, and operational priorities. This challenge was addressed through formalised agreements, joint training and regular coordination meetings, allowing for the centralisation of assistance provision.

Finally, some PBs faced **human resource challenges**—employee burnout, lack of skills, or high emotional strain when dealing with complex cases.<sup>40</sup> This challenge was addressed through team training, emotional support mechanisms, and work-life balance. Organisations that invested in team well-being saw greater employee engagement and lower turnover.

In summary, the implementation of the ALMA initiative required not only methodological flexibility but also a systematic ability to address structural challenges. The PBs demonstrated a high level of adaptability, creativity, and ability to learn from practice, which allowed them not only to overcome obstacles but also to create sustainable change in both the lives of participants and the activities of organisations.

#### 4.4.2. Target groups of the project and methods and practices used to work with target groups

##### 4.4.2.1. Project participant profile

The target groups for ALMA initiative projects were formed considering the extent of social exclusion, the opportunities for young people to get involved, and their readiness to participate in activation activities. It is important to note that the composition of the target group was not homogeneous. The PBs had to work with a wide variety of young people with different needs, motivations, and opportunities. Some participants were willing to learn and work but lacked opportunities; others were unmotivated, had psychological trauma, or suffered from addiction. This required the ability to respond quickly to changes, build trust-based relationships, and apply individualised solutions. This practice not only allowed for the inclusion of the most marginalised young people but also created conditions for their long-term reintegration into society.

The projects targeted **young people aged 15–29 who were not in education, training, or employment (NEETs)**. However, some ALMA projects went even further, seeking to reach **those who were completely “invisible” to the public sector**—they had no contact with employment services, did not use social services, and in some cases did not even have valid identity documents (see figure below).

<sup>36</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with PB.

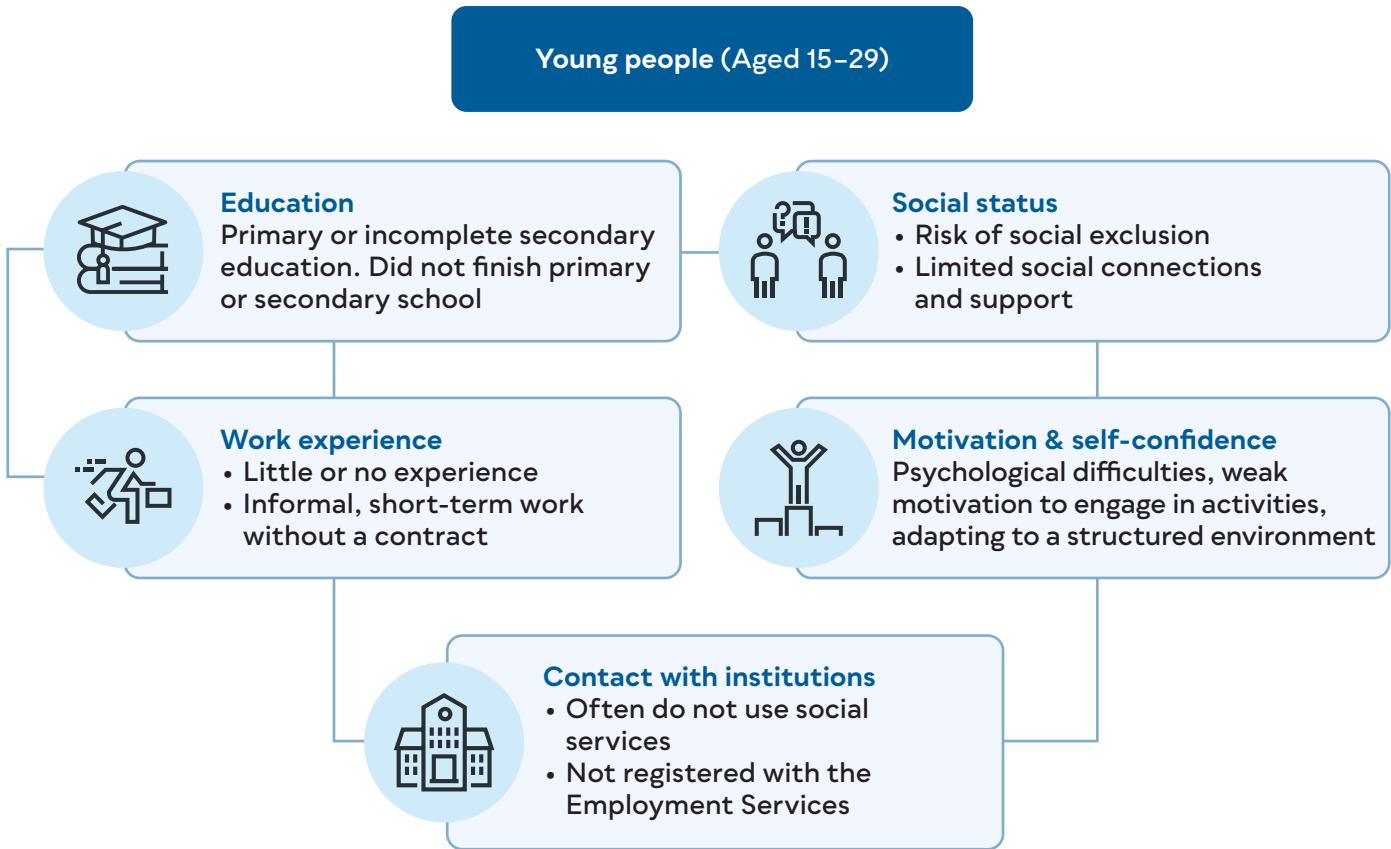
<sup>38</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with PB.

**Figure 5. ALMA project participant profile**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on interview respondents' insights



The **level of education among participants was low**. Most had only completed primary or secondary education.<sup>41</sup> Some had dropped out of primary school, and some had special needs related to learning difficulties, developmental disorders, or psychosocial challenges. Formal vocational training was rare—only a few participants had completed vocational training programs, but even then, their qualifications often did not meet the needs of the labour market.<sup>42</sup>

Their **work experience was fragmented or non-existent**. Most participants had never been officially employed, and if they had any work experience, it was short-term, informal, without a contract or social guarantees.<sup>43</sup> Some young people worked in the informal economy—in construction, trade, and the service sector—but had no documents to prove their experience. This resulted not only in a lack of professional skills, but also in low self-confidence, limited motivation, and difficulties in adapting to structured activities. In addition, some of the participants were from the most marginalised and vulnerable groups, which further complicated their integration.

The proportion of the **most marginalised young people** varied depending on the type of project, region, and selection mechanism. According to the interviewees, in some initiatives, this group accounted for about 50% of all participants involved in a project.<sup>44</sup> These young people were characterised not only by social isolation, but also by a lack of institutional support—they were not registered with employment services, did not have access to psychological assistance, and in some cases did not have a permanent place of residence. Their inclusion in the project required not only methodological flexibility, but also additional resources – psychological support, informal activities, and the development of long-term relationships.

Some organisations noted that the inclusion of the most marginalised young people was not only challenging but also transformative—both for the participants and for the organisations themselves. This prompted a rethinking of working methods, strengthening of team competencies, and the creation of new models of cooperation with municipalities, psychologists, social workers, and community leaders. This experience shows that the ALMA initiative not only reached the most marginalised young people but also created systemic conditions for their empowerment.

41 Information provided by the PB

42 Information provided by the PB.

43 Interview with PB.

44 Interview with PB.

#### 4.4.3.3. Methods and practices applied in working with target groups

When working with socially excluded young people, PBs used various methods that not only helped to engage participants but also strengthened their readiness for the labour market and social integration. These methods focused on developing practical skills, emotional stability, community spirit, and self-confidence.

An individualised approach was the cornerstone principle. A personal activity plan was created for each participant, considering their abilities, interests, emotional state, and life circumstances. This not only allowed for a better understanding of the participants' needs but also ensured their long-term involvement. The plans were flexible, constantly reviewed and adjusted, which encouraged the participants' independence and responsibility.

In addition, mentoring also had a significant impact. The horizontal relationship between the mentor and the participant helped to build trust, reduce the gap between the organisation and the young person, and encouraged self-identification with success stories. In some initiatives, mentoring was combined with psychological support, which allowed for addressing deeper issues of motivation and self-esteem.

The following are the methods and activities that were used in working with the target groups.

**Table 3. Methods and practices applied to target groups and their impact**

Description	Impact
<b>Job interview simulations</b>	
<p>One of the most effective practical methods. Young people often had no experience participating in formal interviews, did not know how to present themselves, what questions to expect, or how to behave in stressful situations.</p> <p>The simulations were organised as practical exercises in which participants could test themselves in real-life conditions—with mentors, employers, or project team members.</p> <p>After each simulation, there were reflection sessions to discuss strengths, areas for improvement, and specific advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This helped participants prepare for real conversations</li> <li>• Reduced fear and anxiety</li> </ul>
<b>Language learning</b>	
<p>Language teaching was organised informally—through games, practical situations, and interactive tasks.</p> <p>Some initiatives used blended methods, where participants learned the language together with volunteers or mentors, which promoted not only language skills but also social connection.</p> <p>Language learning was integrated into everyday activities, such as CV writing, job searching, or conversation simulations, so that skills were developed in context rather than in isolation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved foreign language skills among participants</li> <li>• Increased confidence and courage among participants to speak a foreign language</li> </ul>
<b>CV and cover letter writing workshops</b>	
<p>Most participants did not have any documents presenting their skills, and some did not even know what a CV was.</p> <p>During the workshops, participants learned how to structure their experience, even if it was informal, e.g., volunteering, helping in the family business, or participating in community activities. Emphasis was placed on how to „translate” life experience into language that is understandable to the labour market.</p> <p>Some organisations brought in professional career counsellors to help participants create individual CV templates and cover letters tailored to specific job positions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased ability to present your skills and experience</li> <li>• Increased confidence in job searches</li> <li>• Greater likelihood of successful employment</li> <li>• Long-term benefits in career planning</li> </ul>

<p><b>Informal education and practical activities</b></p> <p>Creative workshops, team projects, nature therapy, sports, and community initiatives encouraged participants to express themselves, develop communication skills, and achieve emotional stability. These activities helped to create a safe space where young people could discover their strengths and develop a positive relationship with their environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting self-expression and creativity</li> <li>• Strengthening communication and social skills</li> <li>• Strengthening emotional stability and psychological security</li> <li>• Forming a positive relationship with the environment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengthening digital skills</b></p> <p>From basic computer use to searching for jobs online, this was particularly important for participants who did not have access to technology or had not used it for learning purposes. Some organisations organised IT workshops where participants learned how to use email, create documents, register on job portals, or participate in remote interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of practical skills</li> <li>• Increased understanding of the benefits of technology in finding work and studying</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community activities and volunteering</b></p> <p>Participants were invited to contribute to local initiatives, such as organising events, assisting seniors, environmental management, or cultural projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering a sense of belonging and community</li> <li>• Developing responsibility and cooperation skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promoting mutual connections between participants</b></p> <p>The PBs actively encouraged communication, the establishment of friendly relationships, and the strengthening of a sense of community. Group activities, joint trips, discussion evenings, reflection sessions, and informal meetings were organised, where participants could share their experiences, support each other, and build long-term relationships. In some initiatives, the participants themselves initiated activities, such as sports tournaments, creative workshops, or mutual support groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening emotional bonds and security</li> <li>• Improving communication skills</li> <li>• Increasing trust in other people</li> <li>• Promoting and fostering a sense of community</li> </ul>

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on respondents' interview answers*

PBs emphasised that without trust, security, and empathy, no technical solutions would work. Therefore, organisations invested in training for both teams and participants, reflection sessions, and emotional support mechanisms so that specialists could support participants not only professionally but also personally, and so that participants would feel safer and more connected to the community.

#### **4.4.3. Strengthening the activities of organisations, expanding the partnership network, and initiating new projects**

For all project beneficiaries, participation in the ALMA initiative became a turning point in the development of their organisations. One of the most notable changes was the **strengthening of internal competencies-organisations invested in employee training, the creation of methodological materials, and reflection mechanisms**. This has not only enabled them to respond better to the complex needs of participants but also to build a professional, empathetic, and resilient team capable of working with the most vulnerable groups of young people.

**ALMA projects have stimulated methodological innovation.** Organisations have developed new working models, combining non-formal education with psychosocial support, applying case management principles, and integrating mentoring as a form of long-term support. Some projects developed hybrid methods combining vocational training, emotional education, and community activities. These methods were later transferred to other projects, became organisational standards, or were proposed as examples of good practice at the national level.

An important aspect was the **expansion of the partnership network**. ALMA projects encouraged organisations to cooperate more actively with municipalities, employment services, educational institutions, psychological support centres, business structures, and community organisations. Formal cooperation agreements, regular coordination groups, and inter-institutional action plans were established. In some municipalities, ALMA projects became the basis for the development of a long-term youth empowerment strategy. Partnerships were not limited to the local level – some organisations established links with international networks, participated in exchange programs, conferences, and joint initiatives.

ALMA's experience has encouraged the initiation of new projects based on the methodological and organisational framework that has been developed. Organisations that have strengthened their capacities have successfully attracted additional funding from EU funds, municipalities, or private sponsors. Ongoing projects were initiated, focusing on youth empowerment, social entrepreneurship, psychosocial support, digital skills development, and the creation of regional youth centres.

The **change in organisational culture** was no less important. ALMA projects encouraged organisations to pay more attention to reflection, employee well-being, participant involvement in decision-making, and impact assessment. Organisations began to apply the principles of participation–involving young people in planning activities, evaluation, and even the preparation of strategic documents. This strengthened not only the internal resilience of the organisation but also its ability to act as an agent of change in the community.

In summary, the ALMA initiative not only strengthened the organisations from a technical and methodological perspective but also promoted their strategic growth, cultural transformation, and systemic operating model. The experience gained from implementing the ALMA project was an investment in organisational resilience, community connection, and a long-term vision for youth engagement.

#### **4.4.4. Change in the attitude of project beneficiaries when working with young people experiencing difficulties**

Participation in the ALMA initiative significantly changed the approach of many project beneficiaries to working with young people experiencing difficulties. Organisations that previously worked with more prepared or motivated young people were confronted with more profound experiences of exclusion and realised that traditional methods do not always work. This prompted them to rethink not only their working principles, but also the very essence of their relationship with young people.

Firstly, the **importance of empathy and patience** became apparent. The PB emphasised that working with this group requires not quick results, but long-term involvement, trust building, and consistent support. It was recognised that young people experiencing difficulties often have complex life stories, traumas, and distrust of institutions–therefore, the most important thing is not the method, but the person who accompanies them.

Secondly, the **definition of success has changed**. Whereas success used to be measured by finding a job or starting an education, after the ALMA experience, organisations began to see value in other meaningful changes—for example, a participant's ability to hold a conversation, attend a meeting, express their opinion, or establish a friendly relationship. This has led to the creation of more flexible evaluation criteria and the recognition of individual progress.

Notably, **within the ALMA initiative, success is measured both through traditional hard outcomes and soft outcomes**, as these last better capture changes in participants' motivation, self-confidence, aspirations, and perceived opportunities, which are essential for understanding the initiative's full impact and long-term potential.

Third, **confidence in the potential of the ALMA target group** grew. Although some PBs initially doubted whether it was possible to reach the most marginalised young people, the ALMA experience showed that with the right support, a safe environment, and an individualised approach, change is possible. Organisations began to see participants not as "problematic" but as "undiscovered"—having abilities, ideas, and a desire to change, if only given the opportunity.

Fourth, the **importance of community and mutual connections** became apparent. PBs noticed that young people open up much more quickly when they feel they belong to a group, when friendships, support, and joint initiatives develop among participants. This has encouraged organisations to create not only services but also communities–spaces where young people can be themselves, learn from each other, and grow together.

Finally, **ALMA projects prompted organisational reflection**—many beneficiaries began to question their mission, values, and work culture. It was recognised that working with young people experiencing difficulties requires not only methodological knowledge, but also human sensitivity, flexibility, and the ability to accept failure as part of the learning process. This prompted the creation of support systems and mechanisms for emotional well-being and team reflection for employees.

## 4.4.5. Lessons learned by project beneficiaries and recommendations for developers of future ALMA or similar initiatives

### 4.4.5.1. Lessons learned

The implementation of the ALMA initiative revealed not only successes but also shortcomings, which became valuable lessons for organisations. One of the main lessons is that **maintaining the motivation of youth participants requires time and relationships**. Young people experiencing difficulties do not always get involved in activities right away. It is necessary to build trust, be patient, and accept slow progress as a natural process.

Furthermore, it is noticeable that participants' motivation fluctuates during the first days of mobility.<sup>45</sup> Participants experience culture shock, doubt their decision and often experience anxiety. Therefore, more intensive emotional support, clearer preparation for real-life conditions and a consistent mentoring relationship are needed. This showed that emotional support should not be episodic, but consistent and structured.

It also became clear that **traditional methods did not always work**. It was necessary to develop new, more flexible working models, combine formal and informal methods, and apply creative solutions. This encouraged organisations to become more innovative and more responsive to the real needs of participants.

For example, the sociodrama methodology<sup>46</sup> initially used method was too complex for many participants.<sup>47</sup> The organisers had to move to simpler, practical, experiential methods that better met the needs of the target group.

**Involving participants in decision-making has proven to be a key success factor.** When young people were involved in the planning and evaluation of activities, their motivation increased, and the project became more responsive to real needs. For example, in the Power UP project, where participants had the opportunity to choose their own work-related experience and participate in decisions, they demonstrated a greater sense of responsibility and a lower drop-out rate.<sup>48</sup>

**The partnership network also became a critical success factor** – cooperation with various institutions ensured comprehensive assistance and continuity. The Network project in Italy showed,<sup>49</sup> that inconsistent communication between partners can cause workload overload for the main organisation. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that all partners have clearly defined roles and dedicated resources.

Finally, **ALMA has led to strategic growth in organisations**. Many implementers have begun to rethink their mission and long-term vision. Organisations have become not only service providers, but also change leaders, able to shape policy, build partnerships, and initiate systemic solutions.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the insights provided by the project implementers, an ALMA-type initiative has also revealed deeper structural aspects that are not directly named but are critically important when working with vulnerable youth.

Participants experiencing long-term unemployment or social isolation often have low self-esteem and have experienced trauma.<sup>51</sup> The mobility experience can provoke old emotional challenges, so the **project must create** not only a package of services, but **also a psychological space in which participants feel safe, accepted and heard**.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, NEETs often drop out not for one reason, but because of so-called "tipping points" – situations where they face sudden stress, conflict or failure. This could be the first day at work, a conflict with a roommate, family pressure to return, or even a simple misunderstanding with an employer. Projects that had clear **early resolution mechanisms were able to prevent dropouts**. In the We NEET EU project, where the risk of participants dropping out was highest during the first week of mobility, intensive mentoring support helped to stabilise the situation and prevent participants from dropping out of the project.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-006 – "ALMA in Portugal: "Experience outside, change inside" (Malta) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

<sup>46</sup> Sociodrama is a participatory, action-based qualitative methodology that explores collective social issues through structured role enactment and group interaction. It may be implemented through work-oriented simulations, such as interview simulations, simulated meetings with employment service staff, or staged workplace interactions, where participants enact institutional and social roles (e.g. jobseekers, employers, caseworkers).

<sup>47</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0026 – "ALMA in Portugal: "Experience outside, change inside" (Portugal) „Lessons learned and future plans“

<sup>48</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011 – "PowerUP" (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

<sup>49</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0007 – "Neetwork (Network, NEETs, and work)" (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

<sup>50</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>51</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006 – "ALMALta" (Malta) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

<sup>52</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011 – "PowerUP" (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

<sup>53</sup> Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0021 – "We NEET EU – Reintegrating the NEETs through mobility" (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

**It is also necessary to consider the intensity of the activities.** The intense new environment, language barrier, work pace, social adaptation and constant feeling of evaluation can cause emotional fatigue.<sup>54</sup> This shows that it is necessary to plan activities for rest, reflection and psychological hygiene, not just work and learning tasks.

The mobility phase is often focused on the participant himself, but the **influence of the family can have a decisive impact** on the participant's decisions. Some families are supportive, but others, on the contrary, hinder, encourage returning home, doubt the benefits of the project or put emotional pressure on them. For example, a Power UP participant, faced with family problems, returned home twice and finally left the project. This shows that involving the family in the information process is necessary<sup>55</sup>.

The readiness of employers to work with NEETs is also very important. Not all employers understand how to work with young people with limited experience, low self-esteem or social skills deficiencies. Some expect a "fully prepared employee" rather than a young person in the learning process. The ALMADRID project found that some employers were not prepared to work with participants who were late, did not understand the work culture or had limited professional experience. This shows that **it is necessary to provide methodological support and training to employers.**<sup>56</sup>

**Table 4. Lessons learned**

Lessons learned	Description/impact
Maintaining motivation requires time and commitment	Young people experiencing difficulties do not always get involved right away. It is necessary to build trust, be patient, and accept slow progress as a natural process.
Traditional methods did not always work	It was necessary to create new, more flexible working models, combine formal and informal methods, and apply creative solutions.
Participant involvement strengthened the project	When young people were involved in planning and evaluating activities, their motivation increased, and the project became more responsive to real needs.
The partnership network has become a key factor for success	Cooperation with various institutions ensured comprehensive assistance and continuity. This strengthened the impact of the organisations' activities.
Organisations strengthened their strategic vision	ALMA encouraged organisations to rethink their mission, values, and long-term vision. They became more focused on systemic change rather than just service delivery.
It is necessary to ensure emotional safety during projects	Participants engage better when they feel safe, accepted and understood, so it is important to create an environment based on trust from the beginning and pay sufficient attention to individual connection with participants.
Management of unforeseen situations and crises must be	Early response to crises reduces the number of dropouts, as timely assistance allows problems to be solved before they become chronic and prevents participants from becoming demotivated.
Too many intense activities can contribute to emotional fatigue among participants	Relaxation and emotional hygiene activities need to be planned to ensure participants' emotional balance, reduce the risk of burnout, and maintain long-term engagement.
It is necessary to consider the participant's relationship with the family	Families can strengthen or weaken a participant's motivation, so involving and informing them is an important factor in achieving sustainable participant participation in the project.
Employers must be prepared and trained to accept NEETs	Employers need training on how to work with NEET youth to better understand the needs of this group, properly manage the work environment, and create conditions for successful integration.

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

54 Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0027 – "Implementing ALMA in Madrid" (Spain) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

55 Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011 – "PowerUP" (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

56 Project report No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0027 – "Implementing ALMA in Madrid" (Spain) report „Lessons learned and future plans“

In summary, the lessons learned show that working with young people experiencing difficulties requires not only methods but also cultural change within the organisation. Emotional resilience, flexibility, and the ability to accept failure as part of learning become essential factors. ALMA has encouraged organisations to become reflective, community-oriented, and strategically focused on long-term impact.

#### 4.4.5.2. Recommendations

Based on practical experience, the PBs provided specific recommendations that could help future initiative developers ensure greater impact, effectiveness, and sustainability. The recommendations cover both methodological and organisational aspects.

**One of the most important recommendations is to ensure financial flexibility.** A fixed budget often limits the ability to respond quickly to participants' needs, especially when it comes to transportation, psychological support, or document processing. It was noted that the daily allowances, paid by the PB, were too low, so participants were unable to meet their basic needs in a foreign country.<sup>57</sup> Flexible funding would allow for individualised solutions and maintain participant engagement.

**Another important recommendation is the integration of mentoring and psychosocial support.** Young people participating in ALMA projects often face emotional difficulties, trauma, or a lack of motivation. Therefore, they need not only career guidance but also human support. Mentors, especially those with similar life experiences, help build trust and maintain participation. Recommends introducing living simulations prior to mobility so that participants can realistically prepare for independent living abroad.<sup>58</sup>

The PBs also emphasised the **importance of cross-sectoral cooperation.** It is recommended to involve employment service specialists from the very beginning of the project so that participants' career paths can be planned consistently.<sup>59</sup> Effective work with vulnerable young people requires coordination between non-governmental organisations, municipalities, education, health, and business sectors. Formal agreements and joint activities ensure comprehensive assistance and continuity.

**An informal, safe learning environment was another recommendation highlighted by most beneficiaries.** Participants reveal themselves better in informal activities—this reduces stress, encourages self-expression, and allows learning through experience.<sup>60</sup> Such an environment is particularly important for young people who have had negative learning experiences or low self-confidence.

In addition, it is recommended to **actively involve participants in planning activities.** When young people become not only recipients of services but also creators of activities, their motivation and responsibility increase significantly. This strengthens their self-esteem and encourages long-term engagement.<sup>61</sup>

PBs encourage **investing in team well-being-emotional support, and reflection mechanisms.** Working with vulnerable young people requires emotional resilience, so it is essential to support and empower staff<sup>62</sup>. It is also important to create mechanisms for continuity after the project – mentoring programs, volunteering, or community connections help to maintain change even after the official end of the project.

In addition, PBs recommend the **use of short, professional psychological support interviews (check-ins)**, which would help identify participants with risks of emotional stability, anxiety disorders, or social adaptation difficulties.<sup>63</sup>

It is also recommended to have a **clear protocol** that defines who will respond to a crisis, within what time frame and what actions will be taken. This would reduce the risk of chaos and uncertainty. The first week of mobility is often critical and requires intensive mentoring,<sup>64</sup> so prepared plans would facilitate the crisis management process.

PBs noticed that there were employers who were not prepared to work with participants with limited professional experience.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the PBs emphasised the need to organise short **training courses for employers** on feedback, conflict management, cultural differences and the principles of working with inexperienced young people.

57 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0004 – “Move on with ALMA”(Greece) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

58 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006 – “ALMAita” (Malta) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

59 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0027 – “Implementing ALMA in Madrid” (Spain) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

60 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0033 – “Improving the competencies of young people in Lithuania, Portugal and Sweden” (Lithuania) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

61 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011 – “PowerUP” (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

62 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0036 – “AmuNEET – Mobility against youth unemployment in Sicily” (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

63 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0026 – “ALMA in Portugal: “Experience outside, change inside” (Portugal) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

64 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0021 – “We NEET EU – Reintegrating the NEETs through mobility ” (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

65 Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0027 – “Implementing ALMA in Madrid” (Spain) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

It is recommended to organise **information meetings for parents** and consultations about the benefits of mobility and psychological preparation for the family.<sup>66</sup> In this way, family members would be informed in advance about the activities carried out during the project, possible challenges and expectations, and the family itself would be better prepared to support the participant throughout the project implementation period.

Additionally, PBs see benefits in creating **alumni clubs, volunteer opportunities, mentoring programs, and periodic meetings that would help sustain change after the project ends**<sup>67</sup>. This would also allow participants to maintain the friendships created during the project.

It is recommended to **use mobile apps, remote mentoring platforms, automatic reminders and self-reflection diaries**. This will help to identify risks faster and maintain constant communication. This is relevant for all projects where participants were in different locations.<sup>68</sup>

**Table 5. PB recommendations**

Recommendation	Description/impact
Ensure financial flexibility	A fixed budget limits the ability to respond quickly to participants' needs, e.g., transportation, document processing, and psychological assistance. Flexibility allows for individualised solutions.
Maintain existing and integrate new mentoring and psychosocial support models	Young people often face emotional difficulties, trauma, or a lack of motivation. Mentors and psychologists help build trust and maintain participation.
Promote cross-sectoral cooperation	Comprehensive assistance requires coordination between NGOs, municipalities, education, health, and business sectors. This ensures continuity and effectiveness.
Create a safe, informal learning environment	Non-formal education helps participants to open up, reduces stress, and enables learning through experience. This is particularly important for young people who have had negative experiences of learning.
Involve participants in planning activities	The voice of participants strengthens motivation and responsibility and helps to create meaningful interventions. Young people become active creators rather than recipients of services.
Ensure continuity after the project	Young people need support even after the official end of the project. Follow-up mechanisms (e.g., mentoring, volunteering, international events where participants can share experiences and build relationships) help to sustain change.
Invest in the well-being of your team	Working with vulnerable young people requires emotional resilience. Training helps prevent burnout and maintain team effectiveness.
Create a crisis management mechanism during project implementation	This allows for a timely response to emerging problems, reduces the risk of participants leaving, and increases their sense of security during the project.
Prepare employers to work with NEET youth	Helps create a more favourable working environment, improves mutual understanding, and increases the likelihood of successful integration of participants and continuity of practice.
Involve families in the information process	Strengthens participants' motivation, reduces family anxiety, and promotes consistent emotional support throughout the mobility period.

<sup>66</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011 – “PowerUP” (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

<sup>67</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0021 – “We NEET EU – Reintegrating the NEETs through mobility” (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

<sup>68</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0033 – “Improving the competencies of young people in Lithuania, Portugal and Sweden” (Lithuania) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

Create a community support network after the project	Contributes to the long-term impact of the project, helps participants to integrate more easily into the labour market or education system after mobility.
Integrate digital tools for participant monitoring	Allows you to systematically track the progress of participants, identify risks promptly, and make data-based decisions.

Source: prepared by the Evaluator

In summary, successful intervention with vulnerable youth requires not only methodological preparation, but also structural flexibility, human connection, long-term support, and community action. Cross-sectoral cooperation and empowerment of participants are not additional components, but essential building blocks for creating systemic impact.

#### 4.4.6. Evaluation of the application of fixed rates: challenges and benefits

The application of fixed rates in the context of the ALMA initiative was seen as a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it simplified administrative processes, but on the other, it posed practical and operational challenges when working with vulnerable young people. Many project beneficiaries acknowledged that fixed rates simplified financial accounting: there was no longer a need to collect documentation and record each expense in detail, which is particularly important for small organisations that are not required to have a detailed accounting system. The simplified procedure allowed more attention to be paid to direct work with participants rather than bureaucratic requirements, which was considered one of the most important administrative benefits.

However, PBs encountered challenges when using fixed rates. Organisations encountered situations where participants needed additional psychological support, intensive mentoring, document processing, and even the provision of necessities.<sup>69</sup> These costs were not adequately compensated for by the fixed rates, so organisations had to seek additional sources of funding<sup>70</sup> or limit the scope of their interventions.<sup>71</sup> This revealed a systemic gap: the costs of social interventions are difficult to standardise, and organisations may deal with participants who are easier to reach, thus resulting in a creaming effect and distorting the principle of inclusion.

Another challenge was the lack of flexibility in fixed rates. In some cases, the rates were too strict and did not consider regional price differences, specific participant needs, or unforeseen situations such as sudden participant withdrawal, health crises, or legal status uncertainty. The organisation suggested that it would be useful to apply a mixed model in the future, combining fixed rates with the possibility of justifying additional costs.<sup>72</sup> Such a system would maintain administrative efficiency while ensuring social justice and contextual responsiveness.

The table below summarises how fixed rates were adopted in different countries and what challenges or advantages project beneficiaries observed.

**Table 6. Challenges and advantages of applying fixed rates**

Country	Challenges identified	Advantages identified	Comments
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Price differences between countries, compensation for additional costs</li> <li>Fixed rate too low, in reality, higher rates were needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplified financial accounting</li> <li>Reduced administrative burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility required, hybrid model preferred</li> </ul>
Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More efficient budget planning</li> <li>Reduced administrative burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The model is simple and flexible</li> </ul>

<sup>69</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>70</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0029 – “Improving the competencies of young people in Lithuania and Spain” (Lithuania) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

<sup>71</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0023 – “Y(m)ES – Youth Mobility Empowering Skills” (Italy) report „Lessons learned and future plans”

<sup>72</sup> Interview with PB.

Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High costs when working with the most difficult participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplified account management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility required, hybrid model preferred</li> </ul>
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional differences, need for additional mentoring</li> <li>Partners had different amounts of funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplified financial accounting</li> <li>Reduced administrative burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The model is suitable for the mobility part, but the budget is complex for the training and follow-up phases</li> </ul>
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fixed rate was lower than in other countries</li> <li>The fixed rates in another country were not sufficient to cover the participant's expenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative burden reduced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The application of fixed rates should be reviewed; an adjustment mechanism is desirable</li> </ul>
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient funds for additional expenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplified documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexibility options are recommended, considering price differences between countries, inflation, etc.</li> </ul>
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor challenges due to specific participant needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More efficient budget planning</li> <li>Reduced administrative burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The model is viewed positively due to its simplicity and predictability</li> </ul>
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of funds for unforeseen situations, health crises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplified administration, better planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjusted rates are desirable, considering inflation, etc</li> </ul>
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor challenges due to specific participant needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More efficient budget planning</li> <li>Reduced administrative burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjustable rates are desirable, considering inflation, etc.</li> <li>Flexibility is required; a mixed model is preferable</li> </ul>
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor challenges due to specific participant needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More efficient budget planning</li> <li>Reduced administrative burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjustable rates are desirable, considering inflation, etc.</li> <li>Flexibility is required; a mixed model is preferable</li> </ul>

Šaltinis: prepared by the Evaluator

Despite these challenges, beneficiaries acknowledged that fixed rates encouraged more effective planning and resource allocation. Organisations learned to better forecast activity costs, optimise processes, and develop clearer budget models. This strengthened their financial literacy and readiness to participate in other EU-funded programs. In addition, known rates in advance facilitated strategic planning, enabled better risk management, and ensured business continuity.

In summary, although **the system helped reduce the bureaucratic burden, it did not always allow for a flexible response to the actual needs of participants**. For future initiatives, it is recommended to consider hybrid models that combine fixed rates with contextual adjustment mechanisms, especially when working with the most vulnerable groups.

#### 4.4.7. Conclusions

**Hypothesis 1: Challenges that arose during project implementation were successfully addressed.**

Project beneficiaries faced various challenges – maintaining participants' motivation, emotional instability, uncertainty of legal status and difficulties in team formation. However, by applying reflection sessions, flexible planning of activities and strengthening interdisciplinary cooperation, these challenges were overcome. This allowed to maintain the involvement of participants and ensured the continuity and quality of the activities.

## **Hypothesis 2: Implementation experience helped identify the most effective methods and practices for integrating vulnerable young people.**

The organisations identified several methods that proved to be particularly effective – job interview simulations, CV workshops, mentoring, language training and volunteering activities. Adapting the activities to specific contexts rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions was particularly important. This ensured that the methods responded to the participants' self-esteem, responsibility and long-term engagement.

## **Hypothesis 3: ALMA projects contributed to strengthening the overall operations of implementing organisations, expanding partnership networks, and initiating new projects.**

Participation in ALMA has led to organisational changes, with new partnerships emerging with municipalities, businesses and social institutions, and some organisations initiating new projects. This shows that ALMA has acted as a catalyst for systemic change, strengthening the operational capacity and long-term sustainability of organisations.

## **Hypothesis 4: Participation in the ALMA initiative changed project beneficiaries' approach to working with young people facing difficulties.**

Project beneficiaries recognised that working with vulnerable young people requires not only methods, but also relationships – empathy, flexibility, trust. The ALMA experience prompted a rethinking of performance evaluation criteria: moving from quantitative indicators to qualitative changes, such as increased self-confidence, strengthened social ties, and emotional stability.

## **Hypothesis 5: Applying the fixed unit costs set out in the Delegated Act yielded more benefits than drawbacks for project implementation.**

Flat rates simplified administration, reduced bureaucratic burdens and encouraged financial planning. However, they did not always reflect real costs, especially when working with vulnerable participants, when additional specialist help or social support was needed. Therefore, organisations propose to apply a mixed model – combining flat rates with the possibility of justifying additional costs, in order to achieve greater flexibility and efficiency.

## **4.5. Evaluation of the ALMA initiative's relevance in EU Member States and of the elements required to ensure continuity**

This section is based on qualitative data collected during interviews with ALMA PBs. A total of 28 interviews have been conducted. The section also incorporates insights from interviews with MAs and representatives from EC.

### **Questions addressed under Task 9.5:**

- 9.5.1. What elements are needed to ensure the continuity of the ALMA initiative in the country/region?
- 9.5.2. Based on the results and lessons learned from the pilot ALMA projects, how relevant is this initiative for addressing youth employment and social inclusion challenges?
- 9.5.3. How many project beneficiaries involved Managing Authorities in the implementation of their ALMA projects? What specific actions did they take to help assess the feasibility of continuity?
- 9.5.4. How many follow-up actions did project beneficiaries take after their ALMA projects ended to present and transfer results to the relevant Managing Authorities? What specific actions did they take to support the assessment of continuity?
- 9.5.5. How many national or regional ALMA calls have been or will be announced in Member States after they gained experience with this pilot ALMA initiative?
- 9.5.6. What are the main obstacles countries face in ensuring the continuity of the ALMA initiative, and how could Managing Authorities address them?
- 9.5.7. What recommendations should be provided to Managing Authorities to encourage the expansion of the ALMA initiative?
- 9.5.8. What key factors determined the success of the ALMA initiative in different EU countries, and how can these be integrated into national youth policy strategies?
- 9.5.9. How many Managing Authorities participated in ALMA projects as beneficiaries or partners, and what was their influence on project implementation?

In addressing this task, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: The ALMA initiative is relevant for addressing youth employment and social inclusion challenges.
- Hypothesis 2: The pilot ALMA projects encourage EU Member States to continue applying this experience and to announce national and regional calls.
- Hypothesis 3: Project beneficiaries involved Managing Authorities in the implementation of the ALMA initiative.
- Hypothesis 4: Project beneficiaries took steps to present and transfer the results to the relevant Managing Authorities.
- Hypothesis 5: By participating in the ALMA initiative, EU Member States gained experience in tackling youth employment and social inclusion challenges.

#### **4.5.1. Analysis of the systemic continuity of the ALMA initiative**

The continuity of the ALMA initiative in the EU Member States depends on the ability to translate project logic into long-term systemic action. One-off projects can have a positive impact, but only when their principles become part of ongoing policy and institutional practices. This means that tailor-made measures for vulnerable youth, like mobility opportunities, youth empowerment, mentoring models, and psychosocial support, must not only be funded but also strategically integrated into the action plans of regional and national institutions and long-term youth policy measures. Continuity is impossible without clear institutional responsibility – it is necessary to define who coordinates activities, who ensures their funding, who monitors their impact, and who is responsible for the quality of activities. Only then can the ALMA principles transcend the boundaries of the project and become a permanent mechanism for inclusion, operating across different sectors – social policy, education, the labour market, and community development.

- **Political and administrative support at the municipal and regional levels.** This is one of the key factors determining the continuity of the initiative. In regions where local authorities have recognised the value of ALMA and committed to its continuation, operational stability has become easier to achieve. This means not only the allocation of budgetary resources, but also the assignment of staff, the integration of the initiative into strategic and policy plans, and active cooperation with local and international partners. Such a commitment shows that ALMA is no longer seen as a temporary social intervention but is recognised as part of a regional and national inclusion strategy. Conversely, where the project remains dependent on individual enthusiasts or short-term funding sources, continuity cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore important that local authorities take on a clear role as long-term institutions that guarantee the stability and development of the initiative.
- **Organisational capacities.** ALMA PB has often strengthened its competencies, learned to work more effectively with socially vulnerable youth, expanded partnerships, and created trust-based cooperation networks. However, maintaining these capabilities requires ongoing support – methodological, financial, and emotional. Employee motivation, knowledge transfer to new team members, and systematic professional development are essential for continuity. Reflection mechanisms and training should not be temporary project components, but an integral part of the institutional work culture. In addition, it is worth creating national or regional ALMA networks to ensure knowledge exchange and promote innovation.
- **Monitoring participants' progress and conducting impact evaluation.** Member states that invest in finding out where participants end up after mobility – whether they find employment, return to education, or become involved in community activities – can assess the impact of the program more effectively and make informed decisions about its continuation. Such data analysis allows a shift from declarative assessment to evidence-based planning based on real results rather than just success stories. This requires strengthening analytical capacities, creating data collection and feedback mechanisms, and ensuring that these processes are ongoing, not just at the end of the project.
- **Application of the mobility model in the local context.** Based on the insights of the PBs, the continuity of the ALMA initiative also depends on the ability to adapt the mobility model to the local context. This may involve community projects or intermediate employment programs that enable young people to return to the education system or the labour market step by step. Such adaptation strengthens the social impact, as mobility becomes not only a means but also a symbol – proof that every young person, regardless of their circumstances, has the right to new opportunities.

**Table 7. Elements of continuity in the ALMA initiative**

Element	Description
Institutional integration	ALMA must be embedded in regional youth policy rather than operating as a separate project. This includes incorporating activities into strategic plans, long-term goals, and budgetary programs
Commitments of regions/ municipalities	Political and administrative support – not only declarative, but also practical. A clear financial contribution, staff appointments, and coordination of activities are required
Data and impact monitoring	Analysis of participants' trajectories, feedback, and impact assessment mechanisms. This allows us to justify the value of our activities and adapt them to real needs
Maintaining team competencies	Ongoing training, methodological support, and emotional support. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the transfer of knowledge to new employees
Adaptation of the mobility model	The possibility of applying ALMA principles in a local context – e.g., in regional exchanges, community projects, or intermediate forms of the labour market

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on insights from interviews*

The true continuity of ALMA is not the repetition of the project, but the integration of its principles into the regional and national inclusion strategy. This requires not only financial solutions, but also cultural changes – an understanding of inclusion, the potential of young people, and community responsibility. ALMA can become a catalyst for broader social change if its values – solidarity, trust, and empowerment – become not a temporary initiative but a permanent approach to youth policy and social development.

#### **4.5.2. Analysis of the relevance of the ALMA initiative in the context of youth employment and inclusion**

The results of the pilot ALMA initiative projects show that this program is a relevant and meaningful tool for addressing the challenges of youth employment and social inclusion, especially when it comes to NEET youth groups. The initiative combines transnational mobility opportunities with individualised support, mentoring, and practical skills development, enabling participants not only to acquire new skills but also to rebuild their self-confidence and reconnect with the labour market, education and training.

A key aspect of ALMA's relevance is its ability to reach young people for whom traditional employment measures are often ineffective. Pilot projects have shown that the mobility experience, combined with preparatory and follow-up phases, creates a safe structure in which young people can experiment, learn, and grow without fear of failure. This model is particularly effective for those who experience social exclusion, emotional insecurity, or a systemic lack of trust.

In addition, the PBs emphasised that the ALMA initiative helps to create new formats for cooperation between the public sector, non-governmental organisations, and local communities. Such links not only enhance the quality of activities, but also enable continuity, with the mobility model becoming part of long-term youth policy measures. In some countries, ALMA activities have been integrated into municipal employment strategies or have become the basis for new forms of support.

Also, the results of the pilot **ALMA initiative projects demonstrate a strong reinforcement of the EU's youth employment and social inclusion objectives**, as set out in the Youth Guarantee,<sup>73</sup> the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and the European Pillar of Social Rights.<sup>74</sup> The initiative is a relevant and meaningful instrument for addressing persistent barriers to labour market participation, particularly among NEETs.

By combining transnational mobility with skills development, personalised support, and mentoring, ALMA effectively enhances employability while promoting social inclusion and active participation. The pilot projects show that this integrated approach supports young people in acquiring practical competences, rebuilding self-confidence, and re-

<sup>73</sup> The reinforced Youth Guarantee. Internet access: [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies/youth-employment-support/reinforced-youth-guarantee\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies/youth-employment-support/reinforced-youth-guarantee_en)

<sup>74</sup> European Pillar of Social Rights. Internet access: [https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union\\_en](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union_en)

establishing links with the labour market, education, and training systems. In this respect, ALMA complements existing Youth Guarantee measures by extending their reach to young people for whom standard activation instruments have proven insufficient.

**The ALMA initiative is seen as a relevant, innovative, and transformative tool that can complement existing youth employment strategies and reach the most vulnerable groups.** Its strength lies not only in the opportunity for mobility but also in its holistic approach to young people's growth, inclusion, and ability to shape their own future. In order to achieve a long-term impact, it is necessary to ensure stronger institutional involvement, continuity mechanisms, and consistent integration of the model into national policies.

#### **4.5.3. The role of leading institutions and prospects for the continuity of the ALMA initiative**

##### **4.5.3.1. Involvement of Managing Authorities and cooperation with projects**

The involvement and participation of leading institutions in ALMA initiative projects is a key factor determining not only the quality of project implementation, but also their sustainability and integration into national or regional policy structures. An analysis of the information provided by project beneficiaries shows that institutional cooperation took place at different levels, ranging from formal information sharing to active partnership and policymaking.

Some project beneficiaries took specific steps to involve Managing Authorities in project implementation and continuity assessment. This included:

- consultative meetings with representatives of ministries or municipalities;
- preparation of recommendation documents based on project results;
- involvement of institutional representatives in monitoring committees or expert groups;
- creation of pilot models for the transfer of activities to public services.

These strategies not only allowed for a better assessment of the initiative's impact but also enabled the long-term continuity of activities. However, not all projects achieved this level of cooperation – in some cases, the Managing Authorities were informed but did not actively participate in the implementation of the project, and the assessment of continuity remained the responsibility of the PB.

In most countries, the participation of the MA was formal in nature—the institutions were named as partners, but their actual contribution was minimal. This shows that the status of an institution in a project alone does not guarantee strategic impact.

Based on the responses to the PB, the following problems related to MA involvement can be identified.

- **Fragmented involvement of leading institutions** was identified as one of the biggest problems. Although some PBs sought active cooperation, in most cases, the institutions were not interested in expanding and promoting the ALMA initiative. This limited the potential for long-term change and integration of activities into existing public services.
- Another important insight is **the risk of formal participation**. When leading institutions are named as partners but do not actually participate in the implementation of the project, there is a risk that their contribution will be nominal. This practice weakens the credibility of the project and makes it difficult to ensure its continuity. The real impact of partnership occurs when institutions take responsibility, invest resources, and participate in decision-making.
- It has also been noted that **continuity assessment often remains in the hands of project beneficiaries**, without systematic dialogue with institutions. This hinders the transfer of activities to long-term programs due to a lack of political support and structural commitment. Furthermore, when project results are not linked to national or regional strategies, their impact remains local and short-term. This gap shows that continuity must be planned not only at the end of the project, but already at the initial stage, involving institutional partners in a common vision.

In view of these problems, **the strategic involvement of MAs must be strengthened. This means that MAs should be actively involved as early as the project planning phase, with their role, responsibilities, and expectations clearly defined.** Such a practice would not only strengthen the project structure but also facilitate the integration of activities into public services. In addition, it is necessary to develop joint action plans linked to national and regional policies so that project results can be used for systemic change.

In addition, **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be strengthened by involving representatives of institutions** in monitoring committees or expert groups. This would ensure feedback, a better understanding of the

project's progress, and an assessment of its relevance and sustainability. It is also important to use project data as a basis for policy recommendations that could be integrated into national strategies or programs.

In summary, the experience of the ALMA initiative shows that institutional involvement is not just a formal requirement – it is a strategic action that determines the depth and sustainability of a project's impact. Active, structured, and responsible cooperation with leading institutions allows projects to become not only successful interventions, but also part of long-term change.

It should be noted that the involvement of public institutions as partners was not uniform across all countries but was more active in some countries than in others, for example, in Malta, Spain, Slovakia, and Greece. When institutions acted as beneficiaries, their influence was structural – they coordinated activities, mobilised resources, and sought systemic impact. In the case of partnerships, institutions most often contributed to specific activities such as selection, training, or mentoring. The following is an example of good practice.

#### **Example 2. Example of good practice in MA engagement<sup>75</sup>**

The Slovak ALMA initiative project stood out for its constructive cooperation between a non-governmental organization and the country's Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities. Although the ministry did not formally endorse the project's objectives as part of its policy, its practical involvement had a significant impact on the quality and sustainability of the project. This case shows that even without an official political commitment, institutional involvement can strengthen the impact of a project if it is based on expert input and strategic dialogue.

The ministry delegated experts to the project monitoring committee, where they contributed to the development of participant selection criteria and the adaptation of the mentoring model to the national context.<sup>76</sup> This allowed the project to better respond to local needs and ensure that the mobility experience was not only logically feasible but also meaningful in terms of content. The participation of experts also strengthened the credibility of the project in the eyes of other institutions, promoting cross-sectoral cooperation.

An important element of this project was the organised policy forum, where ministry representatives, together with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders, discussed opportunities to integrate the principles of the ALMA initiative into long-term youth employment strategies. The discussion identified areas where the ALMA model could complement existing measures, particularly those targeting NEET youth groups. Although formal integration has not yet been implemented, this forum was an important step towards the formulation of policy recommendations.

The example of Slovakia shows that institutional involvement does not necessarily have to be formal or structurally embedded in order to have a real impact. Expert participation, open dialogue, and shared analysis platforms can create the conditions for continuity of activities and systemic change. This is particularly relevant in the context of the ALMA initiative, where mobility programs must be not only practical but also strategically sound.

In addition, in some cases of ALMA initiative implementation, municipalities or other public sector institutions played a dual role – they were both project beneficiaries and Managing Authorities. This model proved to be particularly effective: it ensured smooth coordination of activities, faster decision-making, and better integration of the project into local or national policy. The dual role strengthened the continuity of the project, as the institutions had both the administrative resources and the political mandate to transfer activities to long-term structures.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with PB and MA.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with MA.

### Example 3. Municipalities as an MA in the ALMA project<sup>77</sup>

The municipality of Gijón in Spain stood out in the context of the ALMA initiative as one of the few examples where the local authority played a dual role, acting both as the direct implementer of the project and as the Managing Authority responsible for strategic coordination and policy integration. This model not only allowed for effective management of activities at the local level but also ensured that the project results were directly linked to the municipality's long-term strategies for social inclusion and youth employment.<sup>78</sup>

As the project implementer, the municipality of Gijón coordinated all practical aspects – participant selection, organisation of the mentoring program, provision of international mobility opportunities, and creation of feedback systems. Municipality staff worked closely with local NGOs, educational institutions, and business partners to create a holistic support system for NEETs.

At the same time, as the lead authority, the municipality of Gijón ensured that the project was integrated into the broader policy context. It used its administrative resources and political weight to ensure that the activities of the ALMA initiative are included in local policy documents.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the municipality-initiated data collection and analysis processes made it possible to assess the impact of the project and justify recommendations for the continuation of activities. This strategic approach strengthened the legitimacy of the project and paved the way for the institutionalisation of activities.

This case shows that when local authorities take responsibility for both implementation and strategic coordination, it becomes possible to create sustainable, systemic change. This is particularly important in the context of the ALMA initiative, where mobility and social inclusion must be part of a coherent policy rather than a one-off intervention. The municipality of Gijón has demonstrated that local authorities can be not only technical beneficiaries but also political leaders who shape the direction of change.

#### 4.5.3.2. Project results and their transfer to institutions

The pilot ALMA projects had different views on the importance of transferring results and used different strategies to make sure the project's impact was visible and sustainable.

Some beneficiaries took active steps after the end of the project to present the results to the relevant Managing Authorities. This included structured meetings with representatives of ministries, municipalities, or regional agencies to discuss project achievements, participants' experiences, and possible directions for integrating activities.

Through concrete actions, the PB sought not only to inform but also to involve institutions in the sustainability assessment. Some prepared recommendation documents proposing how the ALMA model could be adapted to national or regional youth employment strategies. Others initiated policy forums or participated in public consultations to discuss the possibilities of transferring elements of the project into existing programs. In some cases, representatives of institutions were included in project monitoring committees, thus ensuring continuous dialogue and feedback.<sup>80</sup>

Despite these efforts, some project beneficiaries indicated that institutional involvement was limited or formal. This hampered the transfer of results and reduced the chances of establishing activities in the long-term political agenda. In such situations, the assessment of continuity remained at the initiative of the beneficiaries, without systematic support.

However, **following the implementation of pilot projects, seven Member States** – Greece, Slovakia, Portugal, Spain (Andalusia and Valencia regions), Romania, Malta, and Italy (Emilia Romagna region)<sup>81</sup> – **have launched or are planning to launch national or regional ALMA calls**. This shows that in some countries, the ALMA model has been recognised as an effective tool that is worth continuing and developing at the local level. Such calls are usually based on positive project results, participant engagement indicators, and institutional support.

However, the total number of calls remains limited, and their publication depends on the political context, funding opportunities, and institutional commitment.<sup>82</sup> In some EU Member States, despite successful projects, no follow-up calls have been announced, and the integration of the initiative into national strategies has not been implemented. This shows that the continuity of the ALMA model is not automatic – it requires active institutional involvement, clear political will, and structural decisions.

<sup>77</sup> Project No. ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0022 – “The Youth Activation Agency INCORPORATES European mobility” (Spain) final report

<sup>78</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with PB.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with PB and MA.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with MA and EC representatives.

In summary, **the transfer of project results to institutions and the publication of national and regional ALMA calls are key factors determining the continuity of the ALMA initiative**. Successful examples show that when beneficiaries invest in dialogue and strategic presentation, and institutions respond to the results, there is an opportunity to create a long-term impact. However, **this practice is not yet consistently applied in all Member States, and it is therefore recommended to strengthen mechanisms for communicating results and to encourage the development of calls at the national and regional level**.

#### 4.5.3.3. Barriers to the continuity of the ALMA initiative and possible solutions

An analysis of ALMA pilot projects revealed several key obstacles to ensuring the continuity of activities after the end of the project.

First, **many project beneficiaries encountered limited involvement from Managing Authorities**. Although the authorities were often informed about the project, their involvement in decision-making, strategic planning, or evaluation of results was insufficient. As a result, the assessment of continuity remained the initiative of the beneficiaries, without structural support or political commitment.

Another significant obstacle was the uncertainty surrounding funding. Pilot projects were implemented without clear mechanisms for continuing activities at the national or regional level. There was a lack of political will and concrete guidelines on how the ALMA model could be integrated into existing youth employment programs. Furthermore, in some countries, no follow-up calls were launched, and the integration of the initiative into national strategies remained unimplemented.

Communication gaps between project beneficiaries and institutions also became apparent. In some cases, results were not properly presented, and dialogue with policymakers remained sporadic. This limited the possibilities for transferring successful practices to public services or strategic documents.

**Table 8. Problems with the continuity of the ALMA initiative and possible solutions**

Problem	Possibility of a solution
Limited involvement of institutions	Involve institutions in project planning and monitoring committees
Uncertainty of funding	Develop national calls and long-term funding models
Communication gaps	Ensure structured presentation of results and policy dialogue
Unclear mechanism for integrating activities	Prepare guidelines for transferring activities to public services

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

Based on the experience of project beneficiaries, **the MAs should take a more active role in promoting the development of the ALMA initiative**. First of all, it is necessary to ensure that institutions are involved not only at the informational level, but also at the **strategic level**—participating in planning, evaluation, and decision-making. This would allow for better integration of the ALMA model into existing policy measures.

Secondly, **national and regional calls for proposals should be developed based on the results of pilot projects**. Such calls should be geared towards long-term impact, with clear funding mechanisms and guarantees for the continuity of activities. This would help to avoid situations where successful initiatives are interrupted due to structural gaps.

Thirdly, it is **necessary to strengthen the communication of results**. Institutions should encourage project beneficiaries to prepare recommendation documents, participate in policy forums, and provide feedback. This would not only allow for the assessment of the project's impact but also for the formation of new policy directions based on practical experience.

#### 4.5.3.4. Factors contributing to the success of the ALMA initiative and its integration into national policy

An analysis of pilot ALMA initiative projects shows that success was determined not only by the possibility of mobility but also by how the projects were implemented in the local context, which partners were involved, and the extent to which institutions contributed to strategic coordination. **The most successful projects were characterised by strong cross-sectoral cooperation, a clear logic for participant selection, flexibility in the mentoring model, and active participation by leading institutions**.

**Table 9. Factors contributing to the success of the ALMA initiative**

Factor	Description	Benefits of the factor
Institutional involvement	When ministries or municipalities participated not only formally, but also strategically. For example, in Slovakia, ministry experts contributed to the adaptation of selection criteria and the mentoring model.	+
Cross-sectoral cooperation	Projects involving NGOs, educational institutions, businesses, and the public sector created a holistic support system.	+
Adaptation of the mentoring model	Successful projects adapted mentoring to the national context, ensuring emotional safety and practical benefits.	+
Policy forums and dialogue	Following discussions with institutions, possibilities for integrating ALMA into long-term strategies were discussed.	+
Feedback and monitoring	When institutions participated in monitoring committees, projects were better evaluated and had greater potential for continuity.	+
Clear preparation phase for participants	The preparatory phase helped to manage expectations and reduce mobility risks. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups.	+

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

Successful ALMA initiative projects have shown that the mobility model can be not only a temporary intervention but also a structural measure complementing existing youth employment strategies. This requires political will, administrative support, and clear mechanisms for transferring activities to public services.

- **Integration of the mobility model into regional employment centres.** In some municipalities, some activities were transferred to local employment centres, where the mobility experience became a permanent part of the services. This shows that ALMA can be institutionalised if there is a clear administrative decision and a source of funding.
- **Structuring mentoring as a public service.** Mentoring, especially when adapted to the national context, can be integrated into youth support systems. This is particularly relevant for vulnerable groups who need emotional security and individualised support.
- **Institutionalisation of policy forums.** Policy forums involving representatives of ministries and project beneficiaries can become a permanent mechanism for the evaluation and integration of youth mobility initiatives. Such forums help to build a common language between practice and policy.
- **Use of results in strategic documents.** When project results are presented in a structured way—through recommendations, meetings, or public consultations—there is an opportunity to incorporate them into national or regional strategic plans. This reinforces the impact of the project and ensures continuity.

It should be emphasised that the success of the ALMA initiative depends on contextual adaptation. A one-size-fits-all model does not work: the mentoring structure, participant selection criteria, and mobility duration must be tailored to local needs, cultural characteristics, and institutional capacities. In Member States where this has been done, projects have achieved greater impact and participant satisfaction.

Another important insight is that the ALMA initiative acts as a bridge between social inclusion and employment policies. It combines emotional support, practical skills development, and transnational experience, making it a comprehensive tool for NEET youth. This model is particularly effective for those experiencing long-term exclusion, as mobility becomes not only a professional but also a personal turning point.

It also became clear that PBs are catalysts for change, but without strategic support from leading institutions, their efforts remain fragmented. Institutional participation must be structural rather than symbolic—only then will it be possible to transfer activities to long-term programs. When institutions participated in monitoring committees, contributed to the selection or mentoring model, projects had greater potential for continuity.

Finally, the experience of the ALMA initiative shows that communication of results is essential for integration. When project results were presented in a structured way—through recommendations, meetings, or public consultations—it became possible to incorporate them into national or regional strategic documents. This enhances the visibility of the project, helps shape policy directions, and ensures that the mobility model is not seen as a one-off intervention but becomes part of systemic change.

#### 4.5.4. Conclusions

##### **Hypothesis 1: The ALMA initiative is relevant for addressing youth employment and social inclusion challenges.**

The hypothesis was confirmed. Pilot projects showed that the ALMA model effectively reaches NEET youth, especially those for whom traditional measures are ineffective. The mobility experience, combined with mentoring and a preparatory phase, helped to strengthen participants' self-confidence, professional skills and social connections, thus contributing to their integration into the labour market and society.

##### **Hypothesis 2: The pilot ALMA projects encourage countries to continue applying this experience and to announce national and regional calls.**

The hypothesis has been partially confirmed. While seven EU Member States are planning national or regional calls, other Member States have not yet taken steps to ensure continuity. This shows that the ALMA initiative has positive potential, but its practical application at the EU level remains limited and uneven.

##### **Hypothesis 3: Project beneficiaries involved Managing Authorities in the implementation of the ALMA initiative.**

The hypothesis was partially confirmed. In some countries, Managing Authorities were actively involved, for example, in monitoring committees or in the selection process. However, in many cases, their involvement was formal or superficial, without any strategic contribution to the content or development of the initiative.

##### **Hypothesis 4: Project beneficiaries took steps to present and transfer the results to the relevant Managing Authorities.**

The hypothesis was confirmed. Most beneficiaries took concrete actions after the end of the project – organised meetings, prepared recommendations, participated in policy-making forums. This shows an active desire to ensure the visibility, continuity and influence of the project results on decision-making processes.

##### **Hypothesis 5: By participating in the ALMA initiative, countries gained experience in tackling youth employment and social inclusion challenges.**

The hypothesis was confirmed. The projects allowed countries to test different methods to reach vulnerable youth, evaluate effective forms of support and mentoring models. This experience is valuable for developing national strategies and strengthening policies for youth inclusion.

## 4.6. Evaluation of the European and transnational dimension of the ALMA initiative

This section is based on quantitative data collected during the project participant survey and qualitative data from interviews with PBs. A total of 28 interviews have been conducted.

### Questions addressed under Task 9.6:

- 9.6.1. How did participation in the ALMA initiative influence participants' perceptions of whether living abroad and interacting with people from other countries strengthened their sense of being European?
- 9.6.2. How did participation in the ALMA initiative enable participants to see and understand what impact the European Union has on their lives?
- 9.6.3. How do project coordinators assess the impact of international experience on participants, and what added value do they believe this experience created for participants, project beneficiaries, or local communities?

In addressing this task, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: Participation in the ALMA initiative helped project participants feel more European.
- Hypothesis 2: Participation in the ALMA initiative enabled participants to see and understand the impact the EU has on their lives.
- Hypothesis 3: The international experience of ALMA projects created value for participants, beneficiaries, and local communities.

#### 4.6.1. Participants' mobility experience abroad

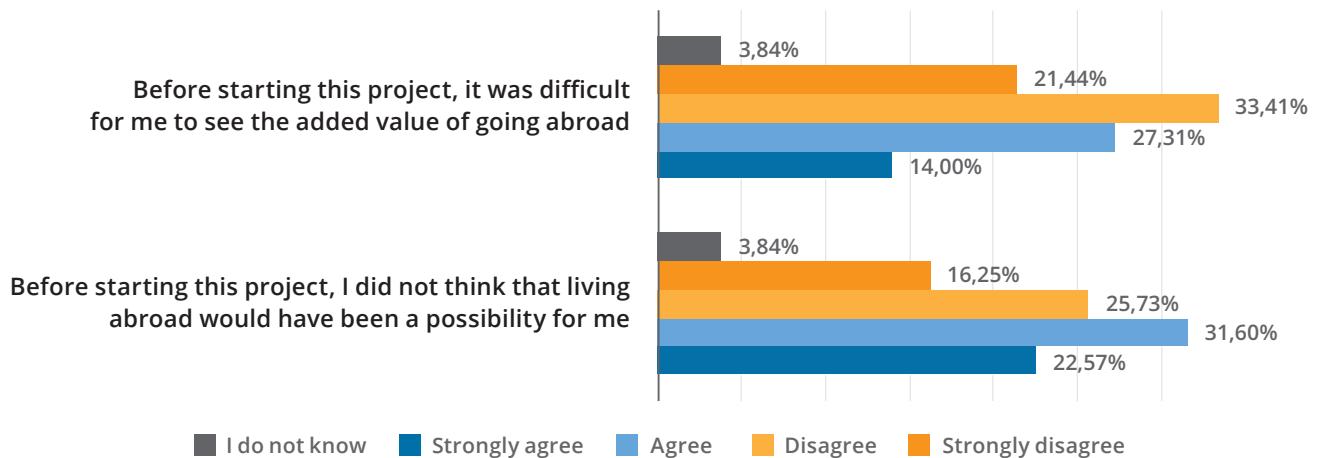
Participation in the ALMA initiative has become for many young people not only a source of professional experience, but also a profound cultural and value change that has affected their self-concept, their attitude towards Europe and their understanding of the role of the European Union in their lives. According to the results of the pilot projects and the responses of the respondents, the mobility experience acted as a transformative factor that not only helped to acquire practical skills, but also encouraged the participants to rethink their identity, belonging to the community and their relationship to the wider political and cultural context.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, 41,3% of the survey respondents perceived the benefits of international experience before participating in the ALMA project. It should be noted that 27,3% agreed, and 14% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that before participating in the ALMA project, they did not see the benefits, the added value that a trip abroad can provide. This result shows that only a part of the participants perceived the value of foreign experience before the project; **ALMA activities could have been important in changing their attitudes and increasing their understanding of the benefits of international mobility.**

According to the survey data of project participants, a significant part of the respondents – 31,6% agreed, and 22,6% strongly agreed that before participating in the ALMA project, they did not think that life abroad would be possible for them. It can be stated that **participation in the ALMA initiative fundamentally changed the participants' self-perception and self-confidence**. Such an experience broadened their worldview, strengthened their openness to other cultures and encouraged them to identify more with the European space and common European values.

**Figure 6. Participants' initial attitudes about the possibilities of living abroad and the value of international experience before the ALMA project, %**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey data (N = 443; the response rate is 71,1%)



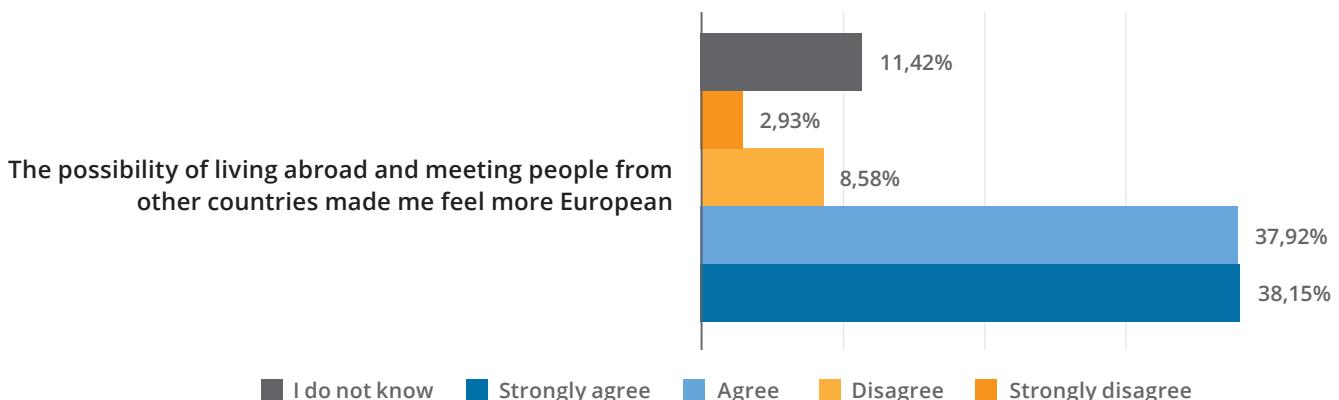
This suggests that the international environment fostered a broader perspective, tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity. Furthermore, this result shows that the project contributed to strengthening social integration and citizenship, as participants began to identify more with European values and the community.

#### 4.6.2. Strengthening the European identity of participants

**The 76% of participants agree that the opportunity to live abroad and communicate with people from other countries helped them feel more European.** Compared with previous survey results on the benefits of going abroad, these data show that participation in the ALMA project had not only a professional, but also a cultural and value-based impact.

83 Interview with PB.

**Figure 7. Percentage of participants who felt more European after participating in the ALMA initiative, %**  
 Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey data (N = 443; the response rate is 71,1%)



It is noteworthy that this change was not superficial or declarative – it emerged through everyday experiences, joint work, cultural differences and similarities, through reflections and conversations with residents and other mobility participants. **This shows that European identity became not an abstract concept for the participants, but a practical network of solidarity, shared values and opportunities.** During mobility, young people experienced that cultural diversity is not an obstacle, but an enriching experience that allows them to better understand themselves and others.

Furthermore, participation in the ALMA initiative allowed young people to see concretely how the EU influences their lives. Before participation, most respondents saw the EU as a distant political structure, but after mobility, they saw it as an opportunity creator. Young people understood that it was EU funding, the principles of free movement and common policies that allowed them to participate in such programmes.

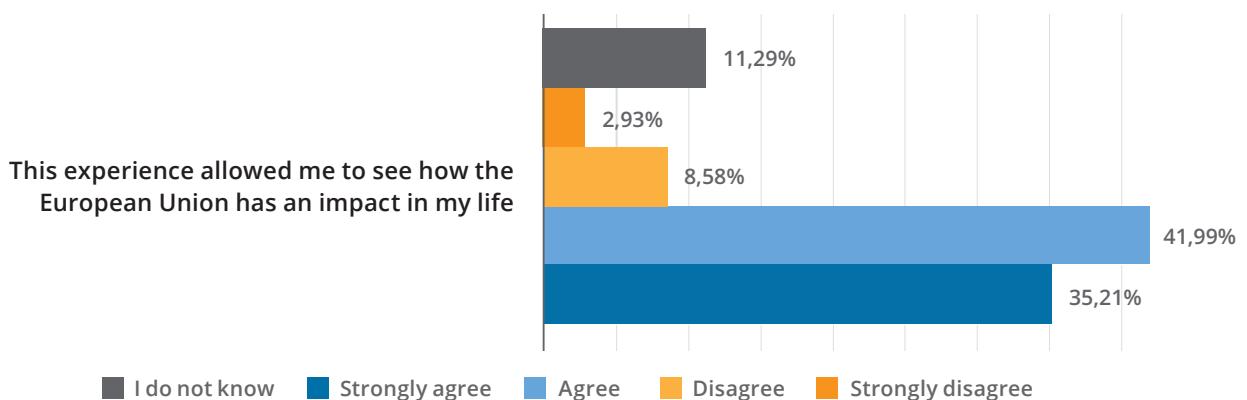
This change in perception was particularly pronounced among those who had no previous international experience. They began to see the EU not only as an economic or political union, but also as a social project aimed at reducing exclusion and promoting solidarity between Member States. Notably, some participants even expressed their desire to contribute to EU programmes in the future as volunteers or mentors.

According to the survey results, **after participating in the ALMA project, 77,2% of participants see the impact of the EU on their lives.** These results show that the ALMA project contributed to raising participants' awareness of the role of the EU. **Participants have a clearer understanding of how EU policies and initiatives can affect their daily lives and what opportunities the EU provides for young people. This suggests that the project not only provided practical experience but also strengthened participants' civic and European awareness.**

Meanwhile, since 11,5% of participants did not notice a change and 11,3% haven't expressed an opinion, there is still room for improvement in the communication of information about the EU's values and role in project activities.

**Figure 8. Percentage of participants who understood the impact of the European Union on their lives after the ALMA experience, %**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on project participant survey (N = 443; response rate 71,1%)



Accordingly, ALMA can be said to act as a “visibility mechanism” that allows EU policies and values to take on some concrete, personally experienced form. The PBs unanimously acknowledged that the international experience had

a strong impact on the participants' personal growth, autonomy and motivation. They observed that young people returning from mobility were more confident, more proactive and more likely to engage in local activities.

In addition to the impact on participants, international experience created added value for organisations as well. Most PBs stated that ALMA encouraged them to expand international connections, rethink their methods of working with youth, and strengthen internal competencies.

In addition, **some organisations, having benefited from the ALMA experience, have started to develop new projects focused on international cooperation or social innovation.** The PB also emphasised that local communities, especially in smaller cities, have become more open to cultural diversity and international cooperation. The mobility experience has stimulated discussions about inclusion, solidarity and the potential of youth, and therefore, smaller regions, municipalities and cities will be encouraged to be included in new initiatives. This shows that the impact of ALMA goes beyond the boundaries of the individual participant – it creates a systemic change that includes organisational, community and even regional levels.

**The ALMA initiative not only addresses employment and inclusion issues, but also builds European identity, strengthens civic awareness and promotes intercultural dialogue.** The mobility experience becomes not only a professional but also a value change that impacts participants, organisations and communities.

#### **4.6.3. Conclusions**

##### **Hypothesis 1: Participation in the ALMA initiative helped project participants feel more European.**

This hypothesis was confirmed. The experience of mobility, cultural contact and communication with residents of other countries strengthened the participants' sense of belonging to the European community. The participants emphasised that for the first time they really felt what it means to be European – not through theoretical narratives, but through everyday experiences abroad.

##### **Hypothesis 2: Participation in the ALMA initiative enabled participants to see and understand the impact the EU has on their lives.**

This hypothesis was confirmed. Before participating in the project, the European Union seemed to be a distant institution, but during the mobility it became "visible" – through funding, opportunities and free movement. Participants began to see the EU as a social project that directly invests in their future and provides real opportunities for professional and personal growth.

##### **Hypothesis 3: The international experience of ALMA projects created value for participants, beneficiaries, and local communities.**

This hypothesis was confirmed. Participants returned more independent, more active and more motivated, and their experience had a positive impact not only on personal growth, but also on the activities of their organisations. Project beneficiaries strengthened international relations, and local communities became more open to cultural dialogue and inclusion issues. This shows that ALMA projects create added value at various levels – individual, organizational and community.

## **4.7. Evaluation of the economic costs associated with young people's non-participation in the labour market in EU Member States, and comparison with the costs and potential economic benefits associated with their participation in the ALMA initiative**

This section draws on ALMA call-monitoring data, publicly available statistics, and insights from interviews with project beneficiaries to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the ALMA initiative.

### **Questions addressed under Task 9.7:**

- 9.7.1. What would be the costs to states and society if the target group (e.g., unemployed youth) were not included in the initiative?
- 9.7.2. What long-term economic or social losses would states incur if the target group remained inactive and did not participate in the labour market?
- 9.7.3. How does the economic benefit of the ALMA initiative compare with the overall costs borne by society when young people do not participate in the labour market?

In addressing this task, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: If the target group were not included in the ALMA initiative, the state and society would incur costs as well as long-term economic and social losses.
- Hypothesis 2: The economic benefits of the ALMA initiative exceed its implementation costs.

#### 4.7.1. Provisions and parameters for the ALMA initiative cost-benefit analysis

In order to determine the benefits of the ALMA initiative and compare them with the costs, it is first necessary to identify scenarios of how the situation of the target group in the labour market and education system would have developed if NEET youth had not participated in the ALMA initiative. **We model this baseline scenario without intervention based on data from interviews with project beneficiaries.** The difference between the actual results of the ALMA initiative and the baseline scenario without intervention is the basis for assessing the benefits of the ALMA initiative.

When analysing the costs and losses for states and society that would occur if the target group participants were not included in the ALMA initiative, unemployment benefits and losses in added value that would occur if they were not involved in the labour market are assessed. In the terminology of cost-benefit analysis, the losses in added value avoided are the benefits created by the ALMA initiative. In addition, there is another related benefit – the return to the education system or training due to the ALMA project. Although it does not immediately create added value in the labour market, it creates a prerequisite for higher wages (added value) after studies or training.

Studies have also shown that employment improves health status, as it provides opportunities that are important for health. Therefore, for example, in the United Kingdom, one of the benefits estimated in social security programs is the improvement of the health of employed persons, which is expressed in cost savings for the national health care system.<sup>84</sup> Such benefits are assessed analogously in the Lithuanian cost-benefit analysis methodology.<sup>85</sup> We will also calculate this benefit for ALMA project participants.

**We calculate the benefits of avoided value-added losses, the positive health effects of labour market participation, and the effect of lower unemployment (or social) benefits, but the latter is not considered a benefit from the cost-benefit approach.** Various taxes and subsidies are transfers that do not reflect the true economic costs or benefits to society, since they only represent the transfer of control of certain resources from one group in society to another.<sup>86</sup> Unemployment benefit savings are financial savings for the central or regional (local) government budget, but to the same extent, they are losses for the unemployed person. Therefore, from the perspective of society as a whole, no net benefit or harm arises here.

During the interviews with project beneficiaries, scenarios were discussed of what the target group's integration into the labour market would look like if they had not participated in the ALMA initiative projects. According to the project beneficiaries, the majority (73,3%) would not start working for a very long time. 20% would start working, but the ALMA initiative helped them find a job with higher qualifications. In 6,7% of cases, participants would work in the same job but got the job earlier thanks to the ALMA initiative.

**Table 10. Scenarios for integration into the labour market if the target group did not participate in the ALMA initiative projects**

Integration scenario	Scenario frequency
Would not start working for a very long time (scenario 1)	73,3%
Would start working, but in lower-skilled jobs than after the project (scenario 2)	20%
Would start working the same job as after the project, only later (scenario 3)	6,7%

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on the results of interviews with PB

<sup>84</sup> The Department for Work and Pensions (2010), "Social Cost-Benefit Analysis framework. Methodologies for estimating and incorporating the wider social and economic impacts of work in Cost-Benefit Analysis of employment programmes", Working Paper No. 86.

<sup>85</sup> Central Project Management Agency (Lithuania) (2025) Socio-economic impact (benefit/harm) assessment methodology

<sup>86</sup> European Commission (2014). Guidelines for cost-benefit analysis of investment projects. Economic appraisal tool for Cohesion Policy 2014-2020. ([https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2014/guide-to-cost-benefit-analysis-of-investment-projects-for-cohesion-policy-2014-2020](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2014/guide-to-cost-benefit-analysis-of-investment-projects-for-cohesion-policy-2014-2020))

One of the parameters used in the analysis is the minimum wage. We assume that without the ALMA initiative, the target group would be employed at the minimum wage after a certain period of time (after 12 months in the case of integration scenario 1). We use the weighted average of the minimum wages of the 4 countries that had the most participants in the ALMA projects. This weighted average is used as an estimate of the minimum wage in the cost-benefit analysis of the ALMA initiative.

**Table 11. Weighted minimum wage assessment**

Country	Weight by number of participants	Minimum wage, EUR/month (before taxes)	Source
Italy	0,48	1280	There is no national minimum wage. It is set in collective agreements. We calculate 8 EUR/hour and 160 hours per month based on these sources: <a href="https://www.playroll.com/minimum-wage/italy">https://www.playroll.com/minimum-wage/italy</a> , <a href="https://joinhorizons.com/countries/italy/hiring-employees/minimum-wage/">https://joinhorizons.com/countries/italy/hiring-employees/minimum-wage/</a>
Spain	0,23	1381	Eurostat, 2025 July
Poland	0,15	1100	Eurostat, 2025 July
Romania	0,14	797	Eurostat, 2025 July
Weighted minimum wage	1	1211	-

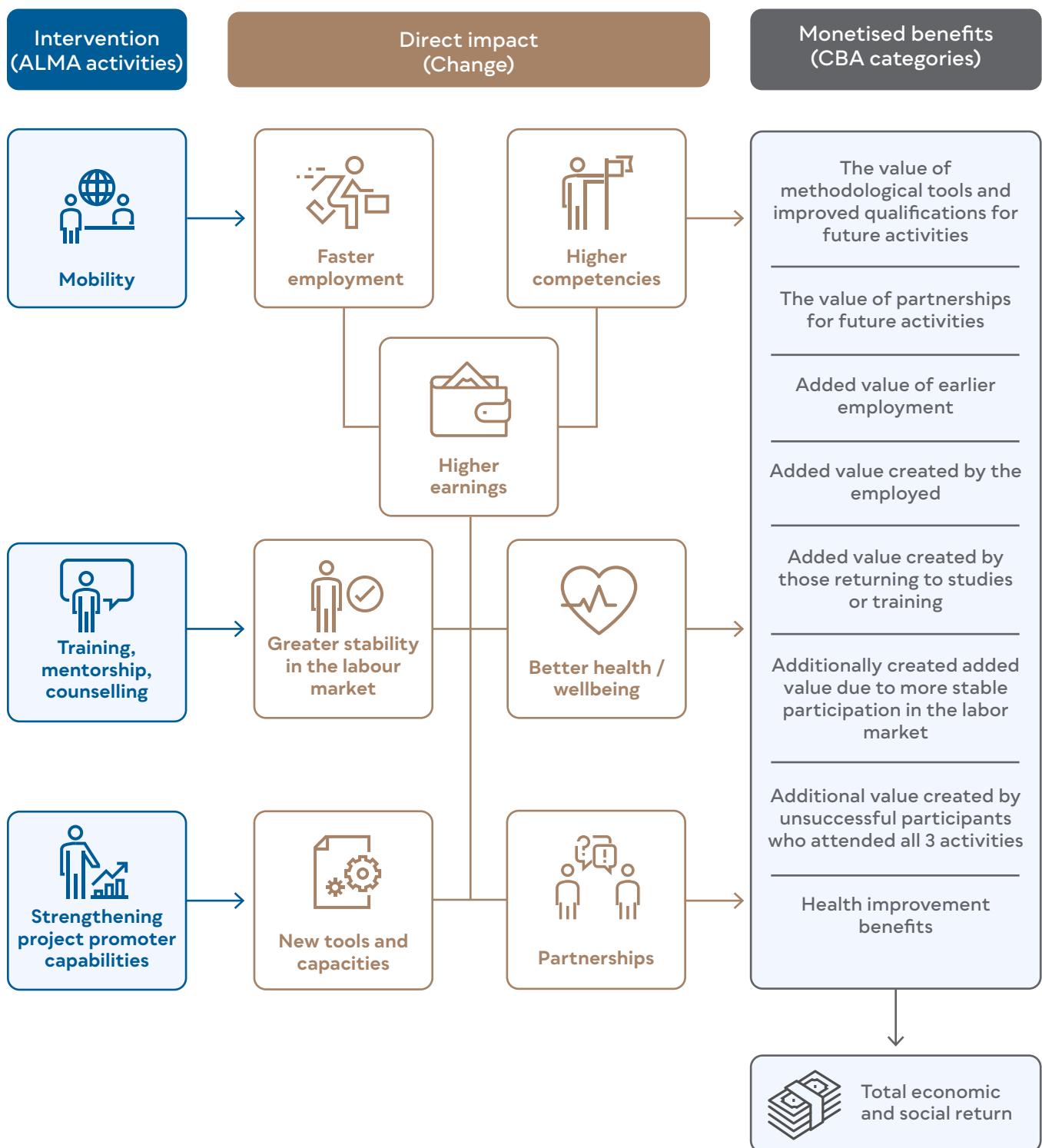
*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

In cost-benefit analysis, **various parameters** are used to monetise the impact of an initiative. These effects are evaluated in monetary terms:

- By participating in the ALMA initiative, the target group improves its competencies, which allows it to earn a **higher wage (i.e. create greater added value)** than in the scenario without intervention.
- Competences are acquired that allow for more **stable participation in the labour market**.
- **Faster employment** than in the scenario without intervention. More months worked create greater added value for society.
- **Positive health effects** are experienced due to employment.

**Figure 9. Cost-benefit analysis causality diagram**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator



However, **not all effects of the ALMA initiative can be monetised**. There are no monetary benefits for participants that are not related to the labour market. For example, there are no monetised benefits that participants receive because they have learned to adapt better in new situations, become more confident, etc. These experiences undoubtedly create value for the participants' relationship with themselves, others, and the world, and thus improve their quality of life.

**Table 12. Cost-benefit analysis parameters**

Parameter	Meaning and its justification
Reference period	The applied 12-year reference period is in line with the provisions of the EC Cost-Benefit Analysis Guidelines, <sup>87</sup> according to which projects of this type are classified in the category „Other sectors“, for which a reference period of 10–15 years is recommended.
Social discount rate	Vademecum <sup>88</sup> proposes to apply a 3% social discount rate as a reference point for EU-funded projects in 2021–2027, when national values are not applied.
Successful participants after participating in the ALMA project	Employed – 223 people; Returned to education or training – 107 people; The results of 5 projects are not final.
Additional months of work due to previous employment (would not start working for a very long time (scenario 1))	We assume that, as a result of the ALMA project, individuals entered employment 12 months earlier than in the scenario without the project.
Additional months of work due to earlier employment (would start working, but would work at a lower level of work than after the project (scenario 2))	0
Additional months of work due to previous employment (would start working the same job as after the project, only later (scenario 3))	We assume that, as a result of the ALMA project, individuals entered employment 6 months earlier than in the scenario without the project.
Monthly salary without intervention (before taxes)	It is assumed that in the scenario without intervention, the target group would find employment at the minimum wage after a certain period of time. The minimum wage is calculated as the weighted average of the minimum wages of Italy, Spain, Poland and Romania – 1211 euros per month.
Higher wages for those employed compared to the no-intervention scenario	The results of the participant survey and interviews with project managers show a significant impact of ALMA initiative projects on participants' competencies. We also have information from secondary sources that the impact of the Erasmus program on participants' wages is about 10%. <sup>89</sup> We assume that the impact of the ALMA initiative on the target group is higher than that observed for Erasmus participants, as the ALMA target group starts from a lower baseline in terms of competencies and labour market integration. Consequently, to reflect the potentially higher marginal effect of the intervention, the impact is assumed to be 15%.

<sup>87</sup> European Commission (2014). Guidelines for cost-benefit analysis of investment projects. Economic appraisal tool for Cohesion Policy 2014–2020. ([https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2014/guide-to-cost-benefit-analysis-of-investment-projects-for-cohesion-policy-2014-2020](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2014/guide-to-cost-benefit-analysis-of-investment-projects-for-cohesion-policy-2014-2020))

<sup>88</sup> European Commission (2021). Economic assessment framework 2021–2027 – General principles and sectoral application ([https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2021/economic-appraisal-vademecum-2021-2027-general-principles-and-sector-applications](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2021/economic-appraisal-vademecum-2021-2027-general-principles-and-sector-applications))

<sup>89</sup> Valentina Ferri (2019) The impact of international students mobility on wages, Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica

Higher wages for those returning to education or training compared to the no-intervention scenario	We assume that individuals who returned to education or long-term learning following participation in the ALMA initiative will experience a greater wage increase than those who immediately returned to the labour market after the project. Accordingly, a 20% wage increase upon entry into employment following the completion of education or training is assumed for this group, to capture the additional return associated with education or training.
Higher wages for successful participants who participated in all 3 activities	We assume that the ALMA projects will also have some impact on those participants who participated in all three activities, even though these individuals were not successful in terms of returning to the labour market, studies or training during the reporting period. It is assumed that in the long term their wages will be 5% higher than in the scenario without intervention.
The advantage of more stable participation in the labour market for successful participants, in months	The results of the participant survey show that participants have acquired various personal competencies and skills for participation in the labour market. As a result of the ALMA intervention, they are likely to have a more stable labour market participation than those who did not receive the intervention. We assume that over the entire CBA reporting period, ALMA project participants will gain an additional 6 months of labour market participation advantage.
Health benefits from employment, EUR per person per year	EUR 613 per year. We use the value applied in the Lithuanian national methodology. <sup>90</sup>
ALMA call costs	We use project cost information from ESFA and add 20% of the project promoters' own contribution. The ALMA initiative costs do not include the costs incurred by ESFA and the EC.
Fiscal adjustments to ALMA call costs	In the CBA methodology, it is customary to adjust costs by the amount of VAT. We do not have information on what proportion of the costs incurred by the projects was VAT. Considering that the majority of costs are related to wages, which are not subject to VAT, we make a fiscal adjustment of a small amount of 5%. In other words, the cost-volume used in the analysis is reduced by 5%. Due to the VAT factor.

Source: prepared by the Evaluator

#### 4.7.2. Costs and long-term losses for states and society without the ALMA: benefits of the ALMA

The employment of an ALMA participant allows Member States to **save on unemployment and social benefits**. When assessing the expected savings, we focused on situations where a person does not have the necessary work experience to receive unemployment benefits and could therefore only receive social benefits, ensuring a minimum standard of living.

For example, the minimum amount a person would receive in Italy under the Inclusion Benefit Scheme (IBS) is €542 per month.<sup>91</sup> In Spain, the minimum basic income for a person living alone would be €659 per month.<sup>92</sup> In Poland, the support received by an unemployed person without work experience would amount to about €237.<sup>93</sup> In Romania, the monthly unemployment benefit for a young person with no work experience is around €65<sup>94</sup>. The weighted benefit amount, considering the benefit amounts of these 4 countries and the weight of the countries according to the number of participants in the ALMA initiative, is €459 per month. We use this amount to estimate the costs to the countries if unemployed youth were not included in the ALMA initiative.

Considering the integration scenarios we developed based on interviews with project participants and assuming that "not starting work for a long time" is 12 months and "starting work later" is 6 months, we determined the impact of

90 [https://cpva.lt/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/5-6-priedai\\_su-prielaidom\\_20250306.xlsx](https://cpva.lt/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/5-6-priedai_su-prielaidom_20250306.xlsx)

91 <https://www.inps.it/it/it/inps-comunica/notizie/dettaglio-news-page.news.2025.02.assegno-di-inclusione-e-supporto-formazione-e-lavoro-le-novit-2025.html?utm>

92 <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/paginas/2024/minimum-salary-spain-imv.aspx>

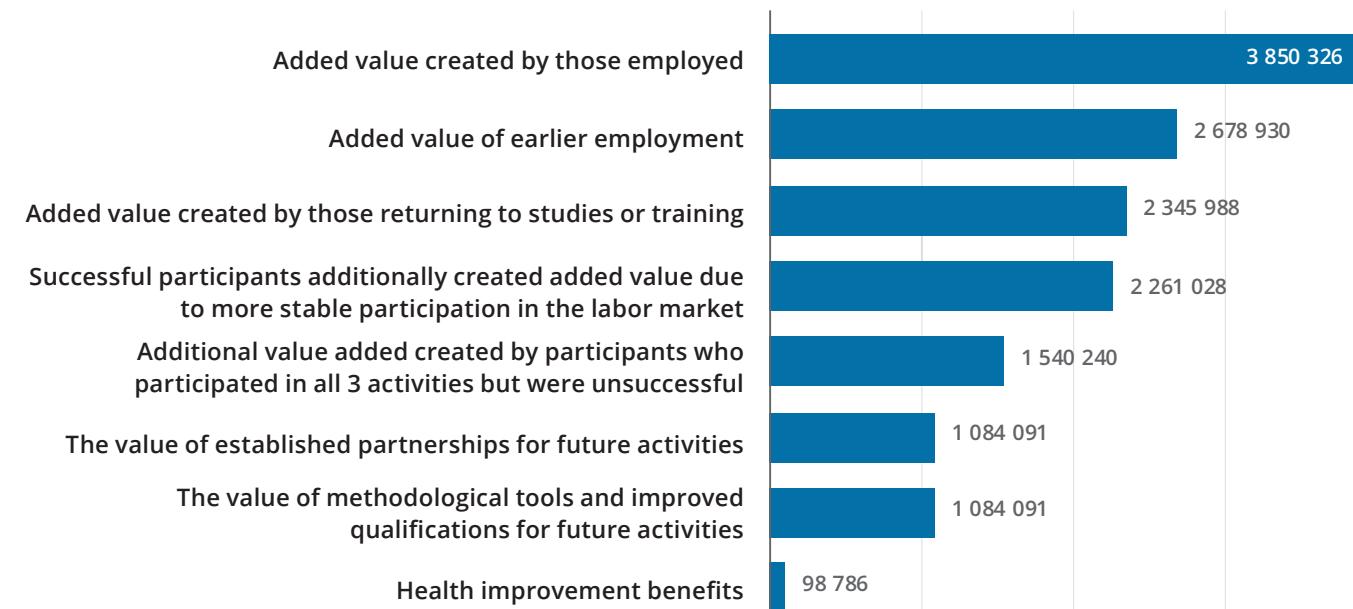
93 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13769&langId=en>

94 [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-reviews-of-labour-market-and-social-policies-romania-2025\\_f0532908-en/full-report/empowering-vulnerable-households-through-social-support\\_0e647127.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-reviews-of-labour-market-and-social-policies-romania-2025_f0532908-en/full-report/empowering-vulnerable-households-through-social-support_0e647127.html)

ALMA on social assistance savings. The total savings due to participants' earlier employment will be around **€941,684**. However, the **main losses to society in the absence of the ALMA initiative lie not in savings in social assistance, but in losses in added value**. Added value would not be created if the target group were not employed or worked in jobs that do not fully utilise the potential of the target group. It is these avoided losses that would occur in the scenario without intervention that are the benefits of the ALMA initiative.

**Figure 10. Monetised benefits of the ALMA initiative, EUR (discounted value for 2023)**

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on SNA results. Explanation of benefits estimation is provided in Annex 8.



The largest benefit is the additional value added created by those employed, which is due to the wage difference compared to the scenario without intervention (the discounted value for 2023 is equal to €3,85 million). Another benefit of the ALMA initiative, which manifests itself through employed participants, is the added value of previous employment (€2,68 million).

The added value created by those returning to studies or training (which will start to be generated after completing studies or training) amounts to €2,35 million.

All successful participants also create additional value added due to more stable participation in the labour market (an additional 6 months of work). It amounts to €2,26 million.

Some benefit to society (€1,54 million) is also reflected in those ALMA project participants who participated in all 3 activities of the initiative, but were not successful in terms of work, education or training during the observation period. Improvement in competences (likely to a lesser extent than among successful participants) will manifest upon their return to the labour market, thereby creating greater added value than in the absence of the intervention.

The health benefits of earlier return to the labour market were estimated at €98,8 thousand.

Methodological tools and partnerships for future activities amount to €1,08 million each, demonstrating the benefits of the ALMA initiative for project beneficiaries.

The structure of monetised benefits of the ALMA initiative shows that the impact is spread across different segments of the target group and is **diversified**. The impact of the intervention is spread across both those who are employed and those who return to education or training. Those who participated in all three activities but were not successful in the reporting period also benefit. In addition, the impact on labour market participation is spread across both earlier employment and the wage gap compared to the scenario without the intervention. **Such results provide analytical grounds to believe that the ALMA intervention would be cost-effective for society even if some parameters were partially worse than those applied during the analysis.**

#### 4.7.3. Comparison of costs and benefits of the ALMA initiative

The results of the CBA show that the benefits of the ALMA initiative exceed its costs. The economic benefit-cost ratio (B/C ratio) is equal to 1,33. In other words, the benefits exceed the costs by 33%. At the time of the evaluation, we had final data on employment and return to studies or learning from 23 projects, but there was no final data from 5 projects (costs were included from all projects), therefore, by supplementing the final information from 5 projects, the cost-effectiveness indicator in ENIS has the potential to increase. But the most important thing is that even with the available data, the ALMA call generates more benefits than costs and is cost-effective for society.

Benefits related to work and studies/training were assessed. However, **other benefits related to the personal growth of participants are also evident, which are not assessed in monetary terms.**

The CBA estimations are presented in the table below. The calculations apply the approach and parameters set out in the subsection "Provisions and parameters of the ALMA initiative cost benefit analysis". A detailed explanation of the calculations is provided in the Annex 8.

**Table 13. Cost-benefit analysis results, EUR**

Costs and benefits	Total (nominal value) <sup>95</sup>	Total (discounted value) <sup>96</sup>	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
ALMA call costs	10 089 995	9 851 846	5 365 920	1 211 205	3 468 495	44 375								
ALMA call costs (excluding VAT)	9 585 495	9 359 253	5 097 624	1 150 645	3 295 070	42 156								
Co-financing of project promoters	2 017 999	1 970 369	1 073 184	242 241	693 699	8 875								
Co-financing of project promoters (excluding VAT)	1 917 099	1 871 851	1 019 525	230 129	659 014	8 431								
Total costs for B/C reation calculation	<b>11 502 594</b>	<b>11 231 104</b>	6 117 149	1 380 773	3 954 084	50 588								
The value of methodological tools and improved qualifications for future activities	1 150 259	1 084 091	0	0	1 145 201	5 059								
The value of established partnerships for future activities	1 150 259	1 084 091	0	0	1 145 201	5 059								
Added value of previous employment	2 842 077	2 678 930	0	0	2 842 077									
Added value created by those employed	4 749 218	3 850 326	0	0	0	467 484	481 508	495 954	510 832	526 157	541 942	558 200	574 946	592 195
Added value created by those returning to studies or training	2 934 949	2 345 988	0	0	0	0	330 054	339 955	350 154	360 659	371 478	382 623	394 101	405 925
Successful participants additionally created added value due to more stable participation in the labour market	2 699 786	2 261 028	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 699 786					
Additional value added created by participants who participated in all 3 activities but were unsuccessful	1 926 918	1 540 240	0	0	0	0	216 694	223 195	229 891	236 788	243 891	251 208	258 744	266 507
Health improvement benefits	104 803	98 786	0	0	104 803									
All benefits for the B/C ratio calculation	17 558 269	14 943 480	0	0	5 237 281	477 601	1 028 256	1 059 104	3 790 663	1 123 603	1 157 312	1 192 031	1 227 792	1 264 626
B/C ratio		1,33												

Source: prepared by the Evaluator

<sup>95</sup> Refers to the aggregate nominal value of all costs and/or benefits without any adjustments.

<sup>96</sup> Refers to the aggregate value of all costs and/or benefits after they have been converted into present values using an appropriate discount rate. Discounting adjusts future monetary flows to reflect the time value of money, ensuring that costs and benefits occurring at different points in time are made comparable.

### **Hypothesis 1: If the target group were not included in the ALMA initiative, the state and society would incur costs as well as long-term economic and social losses.**

Hypothesis 1, which states that if the target group were not included in the ALMA initiative, the state and society would incur costs and long-term economic and social losses, was confirmed. The estimated costs and long-term losses exceed the expenditure of the ALMA call by €3,7 million (in 2023 value). The losses mainly result from the uncreated added value of NEET youth, uncreated partnerships and methodological tools and competences. The losses of the state (regional and municipal) budgets due to social benefits would additionally amount to about €0,94 million.

### **Hypothesis 2: The economic benefits of the ALMA initiative exceed its implementation costs.**

Hypothesis 2, that the economic benefits of the ALMA initiative exceed the costs of its implementation, was confirmed. The benefits of the ALMA initiative exceed the costs of its implementation by 33%. When supplemented with final information from 5 projects, this indicator has the potential to increase.

The factors that most determine the effectiveness of the ALMA intervention are the acquired competencies that lead to higher-skilled work than in the scenario without the intervention (wage gap), the number of successful participants, the number of participants in the three activities, and the long-term nature of the impact.

The structure of monetised benefits of the ALMA initiative shows that the impact is spread across different segments of the target group and is diversified. Such results provide analytical grounds to believe that the ALMA intervention would be cost-effective for society even if some parameters were partially worse than those used in the analysis.

Benefits related to work and studies/training were assessed and monetised. However, there are also other benefits related to the personal growth of the participants that are not assessed in monetary terms. For example, there are no monetised benefits that the participants gain because they have learned to adapt better in new situations, to be more confident, etc. These experiences undoubtedly create value for the participants' relationship with themselves, others and the world, and thus improve their quality of life.

## **5. Recommendations**

The following recommendations identify the key factors required to ensure that the ALMA initiative and individual projects achieve sufficient impact and are effective and sustainable. Most of these factors have already been applied in the projects assessed. In this section, they are systematised to support the planning of future projects.

**Table 14. Recommendations of the Evaluation**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Appropriate selection of participants is a prerequisite for the benefits and effectiveness of the ALMA initiative. This intervention, which requires significant investment, achieves its effect when targeting those young people who need sufficiently individualised and comprehensive support.	Maintain the ambition to apply the ALMA intervention to the most vulnerable NEETs who need sufficiently individualised and comprehensive support.
The availability of financial resources, inter-institutional cooperation, political and systemic support are important for the continuity of the results created during the ALMA pilot call.	Encourage Member States to consider applying the ALMA model when developing post-2027 programming policies.  Member States with a high proportion of NEET youth should apply this model to support the reintegration of this group.
The competencies acquired during the ALMA project are one of the main factors determining the effectiveness of the intervention, as they create the prerequisites for employment in higher-skilled jobs and higher wages compared to the scenario without the intervention. In addition, the long-term perspective is important, not short-term achievements.	When planning ALMA projects, focus on the long-term perspective of the participant and the competencies needed to get a job in a higher-skilled job and receive a higher salary compared to the scenario without intervention. Aim for a double impact on each participant – not only professional growth, but also personal.

<p>When selecting participants, it is important to cooperate with employment services or other institutions, as they have relevant data on NEET youth, their situation, needs and potential barriers. This allows us to ensure that the ALMA intervention would be applied to those participants who need it most.</p>	<p>Promote cooperation between ALMA project implementers and local employment services, social service centres, non-governmental organisations and other organisations working with young people. This will ensure that the selection is evidence-based and that those most in need of ALMA intervention are selected. It is also recommended to ensure flexibility in the selection process to respond quickly to changes in young people's needs and to include those who are often left out of traditional programmes.</p>
<p>Integrated assistance requires coordination between NGOs, municipalities, education, health, and business sectors. This ensures the effectiveness and continuity of projects.</p>	<p>Promote cooperation between NGOs, municipalities, education, health, and business sectors in projects.</p>
<p>Young people participating in ALMA projects often come with prior experiences of emotional difficulties, trauma, or prolonged demotivation. Therefore, they need not only professional guidance but also psychological support.</p>	<p>Maintain existing and implement new mentoring and psychosocial support models for project participants.</p>
<p>Informal, safe learning environments were identified as successful methodologies by most project implementers. Participants develop better in informal activities – it reduces stress, encourages self-expression and allows for learning through experience. Such environments are particularly important for young people with negative learning experiences or low self-confidence. When young people become not only recipients of services, but also creators of activities, their motivation and responsibility increase significantly.</p>	<p>The principles of non-formal education should be used during the projects. In addition, it is recommended to create opportunities for young people to be not only recipients of services, but also creators.</p>
<p>The ALMA initiative implemented flat rates, which eased the administrative and accounting burden, ensured simpler financial management and transparency. However, in practice, it turned out that such a model does not always meet real needs. Therefore, flat rates limit flexibility and may reduce the effectiveness of the intervention, especially when it comes to ensuring high-quality support for the most vulnerable youth.</p>	<p>It is recommended to consider a mixed financing model – combining fixed rates with contextual adjustment mechanisms and the possibility of substantiating actual costs in certain cases.</p>
<p>Cooperation with host institutions is a key factor in ensuring a quality mobility experience for ALMA participants.</p>	<p>In order to ensure that young people receive the right support and educational environment, it is necessary not only to formally establish partnerships, but also to actively participate in the process – to communicate regularly, visit the hosting institutions, assess their readiness, infrastructure, mentoring opportunities and working conditions. Such practice is important to ensure that the hosting organisations are ready to host vulnerable NEETs, have clear plans for their integration and can provide quality learning and work experience.</p>

In some cases, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the accommodation conditions organised by the project.	Pay more attention to the identification and pre-assessment of accommodation conditions and the alignment of participants' expectations regarding accommodation.
The intense new environment, language barrier, work pace, social adaptation, and constant feeling of evaluation can cause emotional fatigue for project participants.	Plan activities for rest, reflection, and psychological hygiene, not just work and learning tasks for participants.
Working with vulnerable young people requires emotional resilience, so it is very important to support and empower staff.	Support and strengthen the staff of organisations implementing projects so that they are emotionally resilient when working with vulnerable young people.
Various critical situations arise during the implementation of the project. Particularly, many changes occur during the first week of mobility.	Prepare plans and preliminary scenarios for responding to extreme, critical situations.
The mobility phase is often focused on the participant themselves, but family influence can have a decisive impact on the participant's decisions. Some families are supportive, while others, on the contrary, hinder, encourage returning home, question the benefits of the project, or exert emotional pressure.	Organise information meetings for parents and consultations about the benefits of the project (especially mobility) and psychological preparation for the family. In this way, family members would be informed in advance about the activities carried out during the project, possible challenges and expectations, and the family itself would be better prepared to support the participant throughout the project implementation period.
The follow-up phase is important because not all young people maintain new habits or maintain contact with institutions after the project. Some participants return to their previous social or professional situation, which raises the risk that the impact of the project will only be short-lived.	Projects should promote a mechanism that includes post-project meetings with participants, follow-up events (e.g., experience-sharing seminars, career workshops, mentoring programs), and individual support for those who encounter difficulties. It is recommended to involve local communities and employers so that young people have practical opportunities to apply the skills they have acquired. In addition, ongoing support should collect feedback to assess the long-term impact and respond according to real needs. Also, a longer follow-up phase could be considered.
Social media campaigns were the most effective communication channel, while the impact of regional events was often short-lived due to a lack of continuity. In addition, partner networks were involved in an unsystematic manner. Without a smooth, systematic development, there is a risk that the results achieved will not be sustainable and the impact of the initiative will weaken over time.	To further strengthen the results achieved, it is recommended to continue developing social media campaigns, as they have proven to be the most effective. The continuity of regional events would ensure long-term links with local communities, while the systematic involvement of partner networks would increase the accessibility and credibility of the initiative.

In the case of the exploratory transnational call, successful results were achieved thanks to targeted and consistent project and call management based on a scheme combining transnational elements. Under this scheme, project implementers were provided with comprehensive support in a coordinated manner: consultations during the preparation of applications and implementation of projects, organisation of mutual learning, and mobilisation and provision of expert services, drawing on more than a decade of experience accumulated in EU countries. Study visits were also organised, the competencies of project implementers were strengthened, and training was provided, tailored to the needs of specific project teams, the most common problems, different project implementation phases, and other relevant aspects.

Ensure the continuity of existing and proven schemes or institutions coordinating ALMA issues at the EU level. Such a structure should continue to collect, systematise, and share the experience gained by EU Member States in implementing ALMA projects to maintain and strengthen the transnational expert and institutional cooperation links that have been established over more than a decade, especially in the last four years.

Source: prepared by the Evaluator

## Annexes

### Annex 1. Project beneficiaries list

Table 15. Project beneficiaries list

No.	Project number	Project implementer name	Country
1.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0004	Special Service, Executive NSRF Structure, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Greece
2.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0006	Jobsplus	Malta
3.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0007	Tempo Libero Società Cooperativa Sociale ONLUS	Italy
4.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0008	Agencia de Desarrollo Local de Torrelavega (Local Development Agency of Torrelavega Municipality)	Spain
5.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0010	Omnis Factum Associação	Portugal
6.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0011	Vedogiovane	Italy
7.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0013	Fundacja Zobacz Mnie	Poland
8.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0014	ROZVOJOVÁ AGENTÚRA Bansko bystrického samosprávneho kraja, n.o./ Development Agency of Banská Bystrica Region	Slovakia
9.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0015	Ajuntament d'Alzira	Spain
10.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0016	Formanentis Spa	Italy
11.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0017	Alaturi de Voi Romania Foundation	Romania
12.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0019	Asociación Arrabal-AID	Spain
13.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0020	Cosvitec Est SRL	Romania
14.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0021	Istituto Formazione Operatori Aziendali	Italy
15.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0022	City Council of Gijón	Spain
16.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0023	Associazione InCo - Interculturalità & Comunicazione APS	Italy
17.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0024	CARITAS ARCHIDIECEZJI KATOWICKIEJ	Poland
18.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0026	TESE – Associação para o Desenvolvimento pela Tecnologia, Engenharia, Saúde e Educação	Portugal
19.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0027	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY OF MADRID (AGENCIA PARA EL EMPLEO DE MADRID)	Spain
20.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0028	Cosvitec Società Consortile a Responsabilità limitata	Italy
21.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0029	Baltijos technologijų institutas, UAB	Lithuania
22.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0030	Certes Sp. z o.o	Poland
23.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0031	FUNDACION DON BOSCO SALESIANOS SOCIAL	Spain
24.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0032	Essenia UETP – University and Enterprise Training Partnership s.r.l.	Italy
25.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0033	Smarter step, VŠJ	Lithuania
26.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0036	CESIE Ente del Terzo Settore	Italy
27.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0037	Collective for a European Civic Service – Collectif pour un-Service Civique Européen (CSCE)	France
28.	ESF-SI-2022-ALMA-01-0038	Informamentis Europa	Italy

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on the information provided by ESFA

## Annex 2. Linkage between assessment questions and data sources

Table 16. Linkage between assessment questions and data sources

Task	Evaluation question	Information sources
9.1	9.1.1. Which target groups (e.g., young people, social partners, employers, etc.) were reached by information about the ALMA initiative, to what extent, and through which channels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Case study: communication materials of a selected PB</li> <li>Final project reports</li> </ul>
	9.1.2. Compared to the start of the initiative, has the number of people involved in ALMA (e.g., young people, social partners, employers, etc.), who recognise the ALMA name and know its objectives and benefits, increased?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> </ul>
	9.1.3. Which communication methods or campaigns used by project beneficiaries (e.g., social media, events, partner-led dissemination) had the greatest impact on raising awareness of the initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Final project reports</li> </ul>
	9.1.4. How did the attitudes of target groups (e.g., young people, social partners, employers, etc.) toward the initiative change following the publicity and outreach activities carried out by project beneficiaries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> </ul>
9.2	9.2.1. What specific changes occurred in the lives of project participants (e.g., employment, return to studies, strengthened social skills) after taking part in ALMA project activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant survey</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Analysis of the results”)</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>
	9.2.2. What percentage of participants in each of the 28 projects found employment, started studying, or enrolled in training within 6 months after the project ended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final project reports</li> <li>Monitoring data</li> </ul>
	9.2.3. What differences are observed across projects when assessing changes in participants’ employment (e.g., sending country, mobility country, duration of mobility, or other aspects)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final project reports / Monitoring data</li> </ul>
	9.2.4. Which factors (internal or external) determine (or would determine) that the results of ALMA projects are sustained after project completion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Outlook”)</li> <li>Final project reports</li> </ul>

Task	Evaluation question	Information sources
9.2	9.2.5. How do (or will) partnerships created or strengthened during the project (e.g., with employers, municipal authorities, NGOs) contribute to maintaining long-term results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (sections “Outlook” and “Analysis of the Results”)</li> </ul>
	9.2.6. How did the implementation of ALMA projects contribute to strengthening the competencies, cooperation, or continuity of activities within the implementing institutions themselves?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Analysis of the results”)</li> </ul>
	9.2.7. Are the solutions, methodologies, or tools developed during the project applicable in other contexts, and will they be continued after the project ends?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Outlook”)</li> </ul>
	9.2.8. Are the results achieved during project implementation being integrated into the long-term strategies of project beneficiaries or local communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Outlook”)</li> <li>Final project reports</li> </ul>
	9.2.9. What resources (human, financial, and institutional support) must be ensured so that ALMA project results continue after the end of funding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Outlook”)</li> </ul>
9.3	9.3.1. How/has participants' self-confidence and trust in others, motivation, independence, and ability to adapt to different situations changed after participating in the ALMA initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Analysis of the results”)</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>
	9.3.2. What new skills (e.g., social, professional, personal, linguistic, teamwork, respect for differing interests, values, viewpoints) did participants acquire during the initiative, and how are these applied in practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Analysis of the results”)</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>
	9.3.3. How do participants themselves assess their personal growth and change after the initiative—what do they feel they achieved, what helped them most, what are they proud of, and do they regard going abroad as an important achievement in their lives and as an experience that can help them overcome future challenges and return to the labour market or education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Analysis of the results”)</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>

Task	Evaluation question	Information sources
9.3	9.3.4. How did participation in the initiative affect participants' attitudes toward learning, work, or civic engagement? Did this experience give them a clearer picture of what they would like to do professionally in the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Analysis of the results")</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>
	9.3.5. How did the mentors' assistance and support that participants received during the project (both at home and abroad) help them internalise the experience gained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>
	9.3.6. Is participation in the ALMA initiative an important experience for project participants? Would they recommend this experience to other young people, and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Articles from the ALMA communication campaign</li> </ul>
9.4	9.4.1. What major challenges arose in implementing the ALMA projects, and how were they addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Lessons learned")</li> <li>Final project reports</li> </ul>
	9.4.2. What was each project's target group (education level, work experience), and what share of participants were the most socially excluded young people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Final project reports</li> </ul>
	9.4.3. Which methods or practices proved most effective when working with the target group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Lessons learned")</li> </ul>
	9.4.4. How did the ALMA projects contribute to strengthening the overall operations of the implementing organisations, expanding partnership networks, or initiating new projects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Lessons learned")</li> </ul>
	9.4.5. How did participation in the ALMA initiative change project beneficiaries' approach to working with disadvantaged youth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (sections "Analysis of the Results" and "Lessons learned")</li> </ul>
	9.4.6. What recommendations could project beneficiaries offer to designers of future ALMA or similar initiatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Lessons learned")</li> </ul>
	9.4.7. What key lessons (i.e., shortcomings/challenges/ failures) did project coordinators observe during the implementation of the ALMA initiative, and how did this initiative contribute to strengthening project beneficiaries' competences, organisational capabilities, or cooperation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>"Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Lessons learned")</li> </ul>

Task	Evaluation question	Information sources
9.4	9.4.8. During implementation of the ALMA initiative, how do project beneficiaries assess the application of the fixed unit costs set out in the Delegated Act? What challenges did they face, and what benefits did they experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> </ul>
9.5	9.5.1. What elements are needed to ensure the continuity of the ALMA initiative in the country/region?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Outlook”)</li> <li>Final project reports</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> </ul>
	9.5.2. Based on the results and lessons learned from the pilot ALMA projects, how relevant is this initiative for addressing youth employment and social inclusion challenges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Lessons learned”)</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> </ul>
	9.5.3. How many project beneficiaries involved Managing Authorities in the implementation of their ALMA projects? What specific actions did they take to help assess the feasibility of continuity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> </ul>
	9.5.4. How many project beneficiaries took follow-up actions after their ALMA projects ended to present and transfer results to the relevant Managing Authorities? What specific actions did they take to support the assessment of continuity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> </ul>
9.5	9.5.5. How many national or regional ALMA calls have been or will be announced in Member States after they gained experience with this pilot ALMA initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Outlook”)</li> <li>Final reports</li> </ul>
	9.5.6. What are the main obstacles countries face in ensuring the continuity of the ALMA initiative, and how could Managing Authorities address them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> </ul>
	9.5.7. What recommendations should be provided to Managing Authorities to encourage the expansion of the ALMA initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (section “Lessons learned”)</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>Interviews with the EC</li> </ul>
	9.5.8. What key factors determined the success of the ALMA initiative in different EU countries, and how can these be integrated into national youth policy strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with ALMA coordinators</li> <li>“Lessons Learned and Future Plans” reports (sections “Key success factors”, “Outlook”, and “Lessons learned”)</li> <li>Interviews with MAs</li> </ul>
	9.5.9. How many Managing Authorities participated in ALMA projects as beneficiaries or partners, and what was their influence on project implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project contracts</li> <li>Interviews with PBs</li> </ul>

Task	Evaluation question	Information sources
9.6	9.6.1. How did participation in the ALMA initiative influence participants' perceptions of whether living abroad and interacting with people from other countries strengthened their sense of being European?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Interviews with PBs</li> <li>• "Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Analysis of the results")</li> </ul>
	9.6.2. How did participation in the ALMA initiative enable participants to see and understand the impact the European Union has on their lives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Interviews with PBs</li> <li>• "Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Analysis of the Results")</li> </ul>
	9.6.3. How do project coordinators assess the impact of international experience on participants, and what added value do they believe this experience created for participants, project beneficiaries, or local communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with PBs</li> <li>• "Lessons Learned and Future Plans" reports (section "Analysis of the Results")</li> </ul>
9.7	9.7.1. What would be the costs to states and society if the target group (e.g., unemployed youth) were not included in the initiative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with PBs</li> <li>• Official statistics</li> <li>• Secondary sources</li> </ul>
	9.7.2. What long-term economic or social losses would states incur if the target group remained inactive and did not participate in the labour market?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with PBs</li> <li>• Official statistics</li> <li>• Secondary sources</li> </ul>
	9.7.3. How does the economic benefit of the ALMA initiative compare with the overall costs borne by society when young people do not participate in the labour market?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with PBs</li> <li>• Official statistics</li> <li>• Secondary sources</li> </ul>

Source: prepared by the Evaluator based on evaluation questions in TS

## **Annex 3. Questionnaire for interviews with representatives of the European Commission**

### **ALMA initiative results**

1. Which results of the ALMA initiative would you identify as the main and most important? (see 2.4)

### **Sustainability of project results**

2. What key factors and resources would you single out as necessary to ensure the sustainability of the achieved project results and their further use? (2.4, 2.9)
3. Which internal and external factors help project participants maintain and use the progress they have achieved? (2.4)
4. In your view, how does the implementation of ALMA projects contribute to strengthening the capacities of beneficiaries and partners? Which factors does the European Commission consider essential to sustain these improvements in the long term? (2.6)
5. In your opinion, how can partnerships established or strengthened during the project—e.g., with employers, local authorities, or NGOs—help ensure the sustainability and continuity of project results after the project ends? (2.5)

### **Relevance of the Alma Initiative**

6. How does the relevance of the ALMA initiative manifest in the context of other interventions of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) that address youth employment and social inclusion challenges? (5.2) Which features of this initiative are most attractive to Member States? (5.2)

### **Continuity of the Alma initiative at the national/regional level**

7. What elements are necessary for Member States to continue the ALMA initiative by announcing national or regional calls? What roles do you envisage for (a) the European Commission, (b) Managing Authorities (MAs), (c) ESFA, (d) beneficiaries and partners of pilot projects, (e) Public Employment Services (PES), and (f) other institutions in continuing the implementation of ALMA? (5.1, 5.6)
8. Do you have information on how many national or regional ALMA calls have already been announced in the Member States or are planned to be announced? (5.5)
9. What would you recommend to Managing Authorities (MAs) to encourage the expansion of the ALMA initiative in their region/country? (5.7)

## **Annex 4. Questionnaire for interviews with ALMA coordinators (ESFA)**

### **Communication and dissemination**

1. What communication and dissemination activities did ESFA carry out? Which target groups did you focus on? Do you have a report or summary of the communication and dissemination you implemented? (1.1)

### **Project implementation and impact on project beneficiaries**

2. Let's talk about the role of mentors in the projects. What differences do you observe between projects, and when do mentors create the greatest value for participants and for the project overall? (3.5)
3. Which methods or practices have proven most effective for project beneficiaries when working with the target group? (4.3)
4. How can we ensure that projects include those individuals for whom this investment would be most effective—that is, that an ALMA-type intervention is the most suitable given their characteristics and experiences? (4.3)
5. How have ALMA projects contributed to strengthening the overall operations of project beneficiaries, expanding partnership networks, or initiating new projects? (4.4, 2.6) Do you observe changes in beneficiaries' approach to working with young people experiencing difficulties? If so, please provide examples. (4.5)

### **Sustainability of project results**

6. What key factors and resources would you single out as necessary to ensure the sustainability of the project results achieved and their further use? (2.4, 2.9)
7. Can you provide examples where solutions, methodologies or tools created during the project are being applied or will be applied in other contexts, or will be continued after the project ends? Are there major differences between projects whereby some solutions/tools are (or will be) more widely applied in other contexts than others? If so, what in your view explains these differences? (2.7)

### **Implementation challenges**

8. What are the most common challenges in implementing projects? How were they addressed? What would you recommend paying attention to in the future? (4.1)
9. What challenges do project beneficiaries face due to the fixed unit costs set out in the Delegated Act? In your view, does the application of fixed unit costs prove effective? (4.8)

### **Continuation of the ALMA initiative at the regional and national level**

10. Based on your experience, is the ALMA initiative relevant for the countries? Why? (5.2)
11. What elements are necessary for Member States to continue the ALMA initiative by launching national or regional calls? What roles do you recognise for your institution and for other institutions? (5.1, 5.6)
12. What would you recommend to MA to encourage the expansion of the ALMA initiative in their region/country? (5.7)

## Annex 5. Questionnaire for interviews with Managing Authorities

Interviews were conducted with 4 MAs.

**Table 17. Managing authorities**

No.	Institution	Country	ALMA implementation	ALMA network status
1.	Jobsplus	Malta	National ALMA call announced	Member of the ALMA network
2.	Public Employment Service of Andalucia	Spain (Andalucia region)	Regional ALMA call launched in November 2025	Member of the ALMA network
3.	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic	Slovakia	Plans to launch ALMA activities at the national level following the ALMA pilot project at the EU level	Member of the ALMA network
4.	Croatian Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy	Croatia	Plans to launch ALMA call for proposals at the national level in 2026	Member of the ALMA network

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

The interview was conducted based on 2 questionnaires: for countries where ALMA projects have been implemented and for countries where ALMA projects have not been implemented.

**Table 18. Questionnaire for interviews with Managing Authorities**

No.	For Member States that have ALMA projects	For Member States that do not have ALMA projects
1.	Did you have any roles in the pilot ALMA projects implemented in your country in 2023-2025? (5.3, 5.9)	Have you participated in discussions about the possibility of implementing ALMA initiative projects (if necessary, introduce the initiative a) preparation-mobility (work-related learning experience abroad)-follow-up, b) target group – NEETs) in your country/region? What actions did you take in considering the implementation of the ALMA initiative? (5.3, 5.4)
2.	What were your roles? (5.3, 5.9)	Would ALMA initiative projects be relevant and effective in addressing youth employment and social inclusion challenges in your country/region? (5.2)
3.	Based on the results and lessons learned from the pilot ALMA project(s), how do you assess the relevance of this initiative in addressing the challenges of youth employment and social inclusion? Why? (5.2)	What elements would be needed to implement ALMA initiative projects in your country/region by launching national/regional calls? (5.1)
4.	Have you participated in discussions on the possibility of implementing (continuing) ALMA-type projects in your country/region in the future by organising national or regional calls? What actions did you take in considering the continuity of the ALMA initiative? (5.3, 5.4)	What are the main obstacles you face in your country/region when planning or implementing ALMA-type projects? How can you, as the Managing Authority, address them? (5.6)
5.	What elements are needed to ensure the continuity of the ALMA initiative in your country/region? (5.1)	(If ALMA is considered relevant for their country/region) How should the ALMA-type projects be integrated into national youth policy strategies? (5.8)

No.	For Member States that have ALMA projects	For Member States that do not have ALMA projects
6.	What are the main obstacles you face in your country/region in ensuring the continuity of the ALMA initiative? How can you, as the Managing Authority, address them? (5.6)	-
7.	How many national or regional ALMA calls have been or will be launched in your country after gaining experience with this ALMA pilot project? (5.5)	-
8.	Do you consider the ALMA initiative successful in your country? Why? What were the main contributing factors? How could the positive factors be integrated into national youth policy strategies? (5.8)	-
9.	What recommendations would you give to other Managing Authorities that would like to implement ALMA-type projects? (5.7)	-

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

## Annex 6. Questionnaires for interviews with project beneficiaries

**Methodology.** To cover a wide range of topics, reduce the burden on respondents, and the duration of interviews (to 1-1,5 hours), a split questionnaire method is used. The questionnaire is divided into two parts: No. 1 and No. 2. Questions that are not distributed in the table below will be presented to all respondents. If necessary, deviations from the planned order of questions are possible, adapting to the dynamics of the interview and situations when the respondent answers other questions while answering one question.

**Table 19. Questionnaires for interviews with project beneficiaries**

No.	Questionnaire Nr. 1	Questionnaire Nr. 2
<b>Communication and dissemination</b>		
1.	Which target groups were your communication and dissemination directed to? What were the main objectives of your communication and dissemination? (1.1)	
2.	Compared to the beginning of the project, has the number of people who recognise the name ALMA, know its objectives and benefits, increased? In which groups has awareness grown the most? In which target groups is the awareness still lacking? Why? (1.2)	
3.	Which communication methods and campaigns applied by you had the greatest impact on raising ALMA awareness? Why? (1.3)	
4.	How has the attitude of the target groups towards the ALMA initiative changed due to your communication and dissemination activities? Please explain by specific groups or particular beliefs/attitudes that have changed. (1.4)	-
<b>Continuity/sustainability of the project results</b>		
5.	What are the main results achieved by your project (at the level of individual participants, your institution, and the entire system working with youth integration)? What internal and external factors determine that the results will remain after the end of the project? (2.4) What resources (human, financial, institutional support) must be ensured so that the project results are sustained (continued) after the project? (2.9)	
6.	What internal and external factors help project participants to maintain and use the progress achieved? (2.4)	-
7.	How would the partnerships created or strengthened during the project (e.g. with employers, local authorities, NGOs) contribute / will contribute to maintaining long-term results? (2.5)	-
8.	Which solutions, methodologies or tools developed during the project are applicable in other contexts, or will be continued after the end of the project? (2.7)	-
9.	Are the results achieved during project implementation integrated into the long-term strategy of your institution or the strategies of local communities? (2.8)	
<b>Participant-level changes and achievements</b>		
10.	Please, evaluate the impact of the project on participants' personal achievements and development. What has changed in their lives because of the project? (3.1) Did your project participants complete the self-assessment questionnaire before mobility and after mobility? If yes, could you share the summarised results (by email)? (3.1)	

No.	Questionnaire Nr. 1	Questionnaire Nr. 2
11.	Do you have information on your project participants' education level and work experience before the project? If yes, please provide summarised, anonymised statistical information by email. (4.2)	
12.	Please provide examples of how the skills acquired by participants are applied in practice. (3.2)	How did taking part in the project influence participants' perception of the EU's impact on their lives? Can you give specific examples? (6.2)
13.	How did participation in the project affect participants' attitudes towards learning, work, or participation in social life? Did this experience allow them to form a clearer idea of what they would like to do in their professional life in the future? (3.4)	How did the support and assistance of mentors, which participants received during the project (both at home and abroad), help them to absorb the gained experience? (3.5)
14.	How did the participation in the project affect participants' views that living abroad and meeting people from other countries helped them feel more European? Can you give specific examples? (6.1)	Which methods or practices proved to be the most effective in working with the target group? Please provide examples. (4.3) How was it ensured during the selection of participants that the project activities were necessary for the participants and would create change? How was it assessed that these individuals, without the project, would not soon find employment or start studying? (4.3, 7.1)
15.	If the target group had not participated in this project, what would their integration into the labour market look like? Which scenario is most likely for the majority of the target group: (a) they would start working in the same type of job as after the project, but later (how much later?), (b) they would start working, but in worse jobs than after the project, (c) they would not start working for a very long time, (d) other. (7.1)	
16.	-	As a result of participation in the project, will participants be able to achieve better education/training in their lives? (7.1)

#### Project beneficiary-level changes and achievements

17.	How did this project contribute to strengthening your organisation's activities, competencies and organisational capacities, development of partnership networks and initiation of new projects? (4.4, 4.7, 2.6) Which competences did you strengthen and how are they important for your future activities? How else did the project contribute to strengthening the continuity of your activities? (2.6)	
18.	Please evaluate the contribution of ESFA events for project beneficiaries to your organisation and your project, whether they were useful, how they helped, and what you would highlight? (4.4, 2.6)	
19.	-	How did participation in the ALMA initiative change your approach to working with young people experiencing difficulties? (4.5)

#### Continuity of the ALMA initiative at the country/regional level

20.	-	Which elements are necessary to ensure the continuity of the ALMA initiative in your country/region? (5.1) What would you recommend to Managing Authorities to encourage the expansion of the ALMA initiative in your region/country? (5.7)
21.	Was the Managing Authority involved in the project implementation? If yes, which one? What was its role? Did the Managing Authority help to assess the possibilities for the continuity of the initiative in your country/region? If yes, how? (5.3)	

No.	Questionnaire Nr. 1	Questionnaire Nr. 2
22.	After the end of the project, did you take further actions to present and transfer its results to the relevant Managing Authorities? What specific actions did you take to support the consideration of the initiative's continuity? (5.4)	
<b>Other</b>		
23.	-	How do you evaluate the application of fixed unit rates indicated in the Delegated Regulation? What challenges did you face, and what benefits did you experience? (4.8)
24.	-	What added value did the international experience gained during the project create for participants, your organisation, and the local community? (6.3)
25.	Please provide the three most important recommendations for future ALMA or similar initiative developers. (4.6)	
26.	Looking at your experience implementing the ALMA project, what would you highlight as the most important factors that determine the success of the initiative and how they can be integrated into national youth policy strategies? (5.8)	

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

## Annex 7. Project participant survey questionnaire

The survey questions for project participants were provided in English, Polish, Spanish, and Italian.

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) are mandatory.

**Table 20. Project participant survey questionnaire in English and Polish**

English	Polish
<b>1. Country of residence*</b>	<b>1. Kraj zamieszkania</b>
<b>2. Host country abroad*</b>	<b>2. Kraj goszczący za granicą</b>
<b>3. Project Number*</b>	<b>3. Numer projektu</b>
<b>4. After your participation to this project, what is your current status or your plan for the near future? *</b>	<b>4. Po udziale w tym projekcie, jaki jest Twój obecny status lub jakie masz plany na najbliższą przyszłość?</b>
I am working	Pracuję
I am studying	Studuję
I am following a training	Uczęszczam na szkolenie
I will start working soon	Wkrótce zacznę pracę
I will start studying soon	Wkrótce zacznę naukę
I will start attending a training soon	Wkrótce zacznę szkolenie
I am looking for a job.	Szukam pracy
I am looking for enrolling in education	Chcę zapisać się na szkolenie
I am looking for a training	Szukam szkolenia
I do not have any specific plan at the current point in time	Nie mam obecnie żadnych konkretnych planów
Other (please specify, for example "I am involved in a specific scheme", "I am involved in a group/organisation")	Inne (proszę określić, na przykład „Uczestniczę w konkretnym programie”, „Uczestniczę w grupie/organizacji”)
<b>5. How satisfied are you with your current job?</b>	<b>5. Jak bardzo jesteś zadowolony/zadowolona ze swojej obecnej pracy?</b>
Not at all satisfied	W ogóle nie jestem zadowolony/zadowolona
Slightly satisfied	Jestem trochę zadowolony/zadowolona
Very satisfied	Jestem bardzo zadowolony/zadowolona
Extremely satisfied	Jestem niezwykle zadowolony/zadowolona
I do not know	Nie wiem
I am not working	Nie pracuję
<b>6. How satisfied are you with your current studies?</b>	<b>6. Jak bardzo jesteś zadowolony/zadowolona z obecnych studiów?</b>

Not at all satisfied	W ogóle nie jestem zadowolony/zadowolona
Slightly satisfied	Jestem trochę zadowolony/zadowolona
Very satisfied	Jestem bardzo zadowolony/zadowolona
Extremely satisfied	Jestem niezwykle zadowolony/zadowolona
I do not know	Nie wiem
I am not studying	Nie pracuję
<b>7. How satisfied are you with your current training?</b>	<b>7. Jak bardzo jesteś zadowolony/zadowolona z obecnego szkolenia?</b>
Not at all satisfied	W ogóle nie jestem zadowolony/zadowolona
Slightly satisfied	Jestem trochę zadowolony/zadowolona
Very satisfied	Jestem bardzo zadowolony/zadowolona
Extremely satisfied	Jestem niezwykle zadowolony/zadowolona
I do not know	Nie wiem
I am not in training	Nie pracuję
Self-reflection questions (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, I do not know)	
<b>8. Can you tell us how much you agree with the following statements?</b>	<b>8. Prosimy wskazać, w jakim stopniu zgadzasz się z poniższymi stwierdzeniami?</b>
I believe that going abroad was an important accomplishment in my life	Uważam, że wyjazd za granicę był ważnym osiągnięciem w moim życiu
I believe that going abroad resulted in my significant personal development, which will help me overcome future challenges	Uważam, że wyjazd za granicę przyczynił się do mojego znaczącego rozwoju osobistego, który pomoże mi radzić sobie z przyszłymi wyzwaniami
Thanks to this experience I believe more in myself	Dzięki temu doświadczeniu bardziej wierzę w siebie
After this experience, I believe I can better adapt to new environments and situations	Po tym doświadczeniu uważam, że potrafię lepiej dostosować się do nowych środowisk i sytuacji
After going abroad with a group of participants, I believe that I have become a better team player	Po wyjeździe za granicę z grupą uczestników uważam, że stałem/stałem się lepszym członkiem zespołu
Thanks to this experience, I can interact better with people who hold different interests, values or perspectives	Dzięki temu doświadczeniu potrafię lepiej współpracować z osobami, które mają inne zainteresowania, wartości lub perspektywy
This experience helped me to feel more confident asking for advice from people, especially since I do not know	Dzięki temu doświadczeniu poczułam się pewniej prosiąc o radę inne osoby, zwłaszcza te, których nie znam
I believe that the support received by my mentors during this project (both at home and abroad) helped me to master this experience	Uważam, że wsparcie otrzymane od mentorów podczas tego projektu (zarówno w kraju, jak i za granicą) pomogło mi dobrze przejść przez to doświadczenie

<b>9. Can you tell us how much you agree with the following statements?</b>	<b>9. Prosimy wskazać, w jakim stopniu zgadzasz się z poniższymi stwierdzeniami?</b>
I believe that after the mobility abroad, I will be better able to find a job or re-enter in education in my country	Uważam, że po wyjazdu za granicę będę lepiej przygotowany/przygotowana do znalezienia pracy lub powrotu do edukacji w moim kraju
This experience gave me a clearer picture of what I want to do in my professional life in the future	To doświadczenie dało mi jaśniejszy obraz tego, czym chcę się zajmować w moim przyszłym życiu zawodowym
I believe that after this experience, I will be better able to look for a job (i.e. submit a job application, attend a job interview)	Uważam, że po tym doświadczeniu będę lepiej przygotowany/przygotowana do poszukiwania pracy (np. składania aplikacji, udziału w rozmowie kwalifikacyjnej)
After this experience, I think I will be able to carry out my work duties/ handle my studies in a better way	Sądzę, że po tym doświadczeniu będę potrafił/potrafiła lepiej wykonywać obowiązki zawodowe / radzić sobie ze studiami
I believe that the possibility of working abroad and developing new skills enhances my chances in the job market	Uważam, że możliwość pracy za granicą i rozwijania nowych umiejętności zwiększa moje szanse na rynku pracy
<b>10. Can you tell us how much you agree with the following statements?</b>	<b>10. Prosimy wskazać, w jakim stopniu zgadzasz się z poniższymi stwierdzeniami?</b>
Before starting this project, it was difficult for me to see the added value of going abroad	Przed rozpoczęciem tego projektu trudno mi było dostrzec wartość dodaną wyjazdu za granicę
Before starting this project, I did not think that living abroad would be a possibility for me	Przed rozpoczęciem tego projektu nie sądziłem/nie sądziłam, że życie za granicą byłoby dla mnie możliwe
The possibility of living abroad and meeting people from other countries made me feel more European	Możliwość życia za granicą i poznawania ludzi z innych krajów sprawiła, że poczułem/poczułam się bardziej Europejczykiem/Europejką
This experience allowed me to see how the European Union has an impact on my life	To doświadczenie pozwoliło mi dostrzec, jaki wpływ Unia Europejska ma na moje życie
<b>11. Do you think that this experience was important for you? Why?</b>	<b>11. Czy uważasz, że to doświadczenie było dla Ciebie ważne? Dlaczego?</b>
<b>12. Would you recommend ALMA to other young people? Why?</b>	<b>12. Czy polecił(a)byś program ALMA innym młodym ludziom? Dlaczego?</b>

Source: prepared by the Evaluator

Questionnaires in Spanish and Italian are presented below.

**Table 21. Project participant survey questionnaire in Spanish and Italian**

Spanish	Italian
<b>1. País de residencia*</b>	<b>1. Paese di residenza*</b>
<b>2. País de acogida en el extranjero*</b>	<b>2. Paese ospitante all'estero*</b>
<b>3. Número de proyecto*</b>	<b>3. Numero del progetto*</b>

<b>4. Tras su participación en este proyecto, ¿cuál es su situación actual o su plan para un futuro próximo? *</b>	<b>4. Dopo la Sua partecipazione al progetto, qual è la Sua situazione attuale o il Suo piano per il prossimo futuro? *</b>
Estoy trabajando	Sto lavorando
Estoy estudiando	Sto studiando
Estoy tomando un curso de formación	Sto seguendo un corso di formazione
Comenzaré a trabajar pronto	Inizierò a lavorare a breve
Comenzaré a estudiar pronto	Inizierò a studiare a breve
Comenzaré a tomar a un curso de formación pronto	Inizierò a frequentare un corso di formazione a breve
Estoy buscando empleo	Sto cercando lavoro
Estoy buscando matricularme en estudios	Sto cercando di iscrivermi a un percorso di studi
Estoy buscando un curso de formación	Sto cercando un corso di formazione
Actualmente no tengo ningún plan específico	Al momento non ho un piano specifico
Otro (por favor, especifique, por ejemplo: «Estoy involucrado/a en un programa específico», «Participo en un grupo/organización»)	Altro (si prega di specificare, ad esempio «Partecipo a un'iniziativa specifica», «Faccio parte di un gruppo/organizzazione»)
<b>5. Qué tan satisfecho está usted con su trabajo actual? *</b>	<b>5. Quanto è soddisfatto/a del Suo attuale lavoro? *</b>
Nada satisfecho/a	Per niente soddisfatto/a
Poco satisfecho/a	Poco soddisfatto/a
Muy satisfecho/a	Molto soddisfatto/a
Extremadamente satisfecho/a	Estremamente soddisfatto/a
No lo sé	Non so
No estoy trabajando	Non sto lavorando
<b>6. Qué grado de satisfacción tiene con sus estudios actuales? *</b>	<b>6. Quanto è soddisfatto/a dei Suoi attuali studi? *</b>
Nada satisfecho/a	Per niente soddisfatto/a
Poco satisfecho/a	Poco soddisfatto/a
Muy satisfecho/a	Molto soddisfatto/a
Extremadamente satisfecho/a	Estremamente soddisfatto/a
No lo sé	Non so
No estoy trabajando	Non sto studiando
<b>7. Qué grado de satisfacción tiene con su formación actual? *</b>	<b>7. Quanto è soddisfatto/a della Sua attuale formazione? *</b>
Nada satisfecho/a	Per niente soddisfatto/a

Poco satisfecho/a	Poco soddisfatto/a
Muy satisfecho/a	Molto soddisfatto/a
Extremadamente satisfecho/a	Estremamente soddisfatto/a
No lo sé	Non so
No estoy trabajando	Non sono in formazione
Preguntas de autorreflexión (Totalmente en desacuerdo, En desacuerdo, De acuerdo, Totalmente de acuerdo, No lo sé)	Domande di auto-riflessione (Totalmente in disaccordo, In disaccordo, D'accordo, Totalmente d'accordo, Non so)
<b>8. Podría indicarnos en qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones? *</b>	<b>8. Può indicarci quanto concorda con le seguenti affermazioni? *</b>
Creo que ir al extranjero ha sido un logro importante en mi vida	Ritengo che andare all'estero sia stato un traguardo importante nella mia vita
Creo que ir al extranjero supuso un desarrollo personal significativo que me ayudará a superar futuros retos	Ritengo che l'esperienza all'estero abbia comportato un significativo sviluppo personale, che mi aiuterà ad affrontare le sfide future
Gracias a esta experiencia tengo más confianza en mí mismo	Grazie a questa esperienza credo maggiormente in me stesso/a
Después de esta experiencia, creo que puedo adaptarme mejor a nuevos entornos y situaciones	Dopo questa esperienza, credo di sapermi adattare meglio a nuovi ambienti e situazioni
Tras ir al extranjero con un grupo de participantes, creo que me he convertido en un/a mejor trabajador/a de equipo	Dopo essere andato/a all'estero con un gruppo di partecipanti, ritengo di lavorare meglio in squadra
Gracias a esta experiencia, puedo relacionarme mejor con personas que tienen intereses, valores o perspectivas diferentes	Grazie a questa esperienza so interagire meglio con persone che hanno interessi, valori o prospettive diversi
Esta experiencia me ayudó a sentirme más seguro/a al pedir consejo en otras personas, especialmente a aquellas que no conozco	Questa esperienza mi ha aiutato a sentirmi più sicuro/a nel chiedere consigli alle persone, soprattutto a quelle che non conosco
Creo que el apoyo recibido por mis mentores durante este proyecto (tanto en mi país como en el extranjero) me ayudó a superar esta experiencia	Ritengo che il supporto ricevuto dai miei mentori durante il progetto (sia nel Paese di origine che all'estero) mi abbia aiutato a gestire al meglio questa esperienza
<b>9. Podría indicarnos en qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones? *</b>	<b>9. Può indicarci quanto concorda con le seguenti affermazioni? *</b>
Creo que, después de la movilidad en el extranjero, estaré mejor preparado/a para encontrar un empleo o reincorporarme a la educación en mi país	Ritengo che, dopo la mobilità all'estero, sarò maggiormente in grado di trovare un lavoro o di proseguire gli studi nel mio Paese
Esta experiencia me ha dado una visión más clara de lo que quiero hacer en mi vida profesional en el futuro	Questa esperienza mi ha dato un'idea più chiara di ciò che desidero fare nella mia vita professionale futura
Creo que, tras esta experiencia, estaré mejor preparado/a para buscar empleo (es decir, presentar una solicitud de trabajo, asistir a una entrevista)	Ritengo che dopo questa esperienza sarò più capace di cercare lavoro (ad es. presentare una candidatura, sostenere un colloquio)

Después de esta experiencia, creo que podré desempeñar mis funciones laborales / gestionar mis estudios de una mejor manera	Dopo questa esperienza, penso di essere in grado di svolgere meglio i miei compiti lavorativi/gestire meglio i miei studi
Creo que la posibilidad de trabajar en el extranjero y adquirir nuevas competencias aumenta mis oportunidades en el mercado laboral	Ritengo che la possibilità di lavorare all'estero e sviluppare nuove competenze accresca le mie opportunità nel mercato del lavoro
10. Podría indicarnos en qué medida está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones*	10. Può indicarci quanto concorda con le seguenti affermazioni? *
Antes de comenzar este proyecto, me resultaba difícil ver el valor añadido de ir al extranjero	Prima di iniziare questo progetto, mi era difficile vedere il valore aggiunto dell'andare all'estero
Antes de comenzar este proyecto, no pensaba que vivir en el extranjero hubiera sido una posibilidad para mí	Prima di iniziare questo progetto, non pensavo che vivere all'estero potesse essere una possibilità per me
La posibilidad de vivir en el extranjero y conocer a personas de otros países me hizo sentirme más europeo/a	La possibilità di vivere all'estero e incontrare persone di altri Paesi mi ha fatto sentire più europeo/a
Esta experiencia me permitió ver cómo la Unión Europea influye en mi vida	Questa esperienza mi ha permesso di capire in che modo l'Unione europea incide sulla mia vita
<b>11. Cree que esta experiencia ha sido importante para usted? ¿Por qué?</b>	<b>11. Ritiene che questa esperienza sia stata importante per Lei? Perché?</b>
<b>12. Recomendaría usted ALMA a otros jóvenes? ¿Por qué?</b>	<b>12. Consiglierebbe ALMA ad altri giovani? Perché?</b>

Source: prepared by the Evaluator

## Annex 8. CBA estimation explanations

Table 22. CBA Estimation Explanations

Costs and Benefits	Calculation
ALMA call costs	We use project cost information obtained from ESFA. In cases where the financial data of projects are not final, we assume that the entire planned budget will be used. The management costs of the ALMA initiative incurred by ESFA and the EC are not included in the ALMA call costs.
ALMA call costs (excluding VAT)	We do not have information on what portion of the project implementers' expenses consisted of VAT. Considering that the majority of expenses are related to wages, which are not subject to VAT, we apply a small fiscal adjustment of 5%. ALMA call costs x 95%
Co-financing of project promoters	ALMA call costs x 20%.
Co-financing of project promoters (excluding VAT)	We do not have information on what portion of the project implementers' expenses consisted of VAT. Considering that the majority of expenses are related to wages, which are not subject to VAT, we apply a small fiscal adjustment of 5%.
<b>Total costs for the B/C ratio calculation</b>	ALMA call costs (excluding VAT) + Project implementers' co-financing (excluding VAT)
The value of methodological tools and improved qualifications for future activities	(ALMA call costs (excluding VAT) + Project promoters' co-financing (excluding VAT)) x 10%. 10% is an assumption.
The value of established partnerships for future activities	(ALMA call costs (excluding VAT) + Project promoters' co-financing (excluding VAT)) x 10%. 10% is an assumption.
Added value of previous employment	Total added value = 164 previously employed (scenario 1) x 12 months x 1,211 EUR/month x 115% wage + 15 previously employed (scenario 3) x 6 months x 1,211 EUR/month.
Added value created by those employed	Added value per year = 164 employed (scenario 1) x 1,211 EUR/month x 12 months x 15% wage increase + 45 employed (scenario 3) x 1,211 EUR/month x 12 months x 15% wage increase. Each year, the benefit increases by 3% due to wage growth.
Added value created by those returning to studies or training	Added value per year = 107 returned to education or training x 1,211 EUR/month x 12 months x 20% wage increase. Each year, the benefit increases by 3% due to wage growth.
Successful participants additionally created added value due to more stable participation in the labour market	Total added value = 330 successful participants x 6 months of more stable participation in the labour market x 1,211 EUR/month x indexation coefficient due to wage growth.

Additional value added created by participants who participated in all 3 activities but were unsuccessful	Added value per year = 281 participated in all three activities but were not successful x 1,211 EUR/month x 12 months x 5% wage increase. Each year, the benefit increases by 3% due to wage growth.
Health improvement benefits	613 EUR per year / 12 months x additional number of months worked.
<b>All benefits for the B/C ratio calculation</b>	The value of methodological tools and improved qualifications for future activities + The value of established partnerships for future activities + Added value of previous employment + Added value created by those employed + Added value created by those returning to studies or training + Successful participants additionally created added value due to more stable participation in the labour market + Additional value added created by participants who participated in all 3 activities but were unsuccessful + Health improvement benefit.
<b>B/C ratio</b>	All benefits for B/C ratio calculation / Total costs for B/C ratio calculation

*Source: prepared by the Evaluator*

**Activating innovations for social change**

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