

GIVE



*Guidance In Vocational Education
for students in rural areas*

GIVE - Guidance in Vocational Education for students in rural areas

2011-1-PL1-LEO05-19885

Common report from testing



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I. Methodology of testing

The testing process consisted of three stages: testing by partners, testing by EAG group and testing by target group. All of the stages were strictly and successfully implemented, but the most important phase was testing by target group. The platform is intended to be used by VET professionals (professional advisors, vocational Teachers and Trainers, and Teachers from general schools teaching "entrepreneurship" subject) so their suggestions and feedback must be considered in detail when developing the final LMS platform solutions.

Testing by partners

The aim of this phase of the testing was to discover mistakes and technical problems in the platform. One person from each partner organization tested the LMS platform. All the partners did their tasks successfully and discovered technical errors, which were eliminated. This was important in order to make the platform ready for the following stages of testing, especially by target group.

Testing by EAG experts

At least one EAG expert from each organization filled the questionnaire in and gave their recommendations. Experts in various fields (ICT, non-formal training, vocational education, projects' evaluation) tested the platform. The results of this phase of testing helped to gain an external expert advice on the LMS.

Testing by target groups

A questionnaire for the target group's feedback was made by Know and Can and contained detailed questions about the platform. It served as a tool for measurement of the testing process and aimed at researching the technical, structural and other aspects of the LMS platform. It measured VET professionals' opinions on the usefulness and functionality of the LMS platform.

When the recruitment of participants for testing was over, each partner held a kick-off testing meeting, which was attended by the concrete VET professionals who have taken part in the testing in each country. During it the essence and aims of GIVE project as well as the platform were introduced to them. The participants received detailed instructions how to log in, navigate through and use the platform. Also the LMS platform Guide, which was translated into all languages of the partnership, and platform evaluation questionnaires were distributed amongst them. The testers were explained how to work with their students in the Practice module and create digital profiles and set learning goals for them. In order to prove the conduction of the meetings all partners took pictures and participants were asked to sign the prepared attendance lists.

Based on the responses from the completed by testers questionnaires each partner prepared a National report from testing. It was done according to the Standard template of national reports prepared by Know and Can. It contained an analysis of the testing phase in each country with the discovered technical and structural malfunctions in the platform as well as recommendations for its improvement. The present common report is a result of the summary of all national report.

II. Characteristics of the target group

32 VET professionals from Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Poland and the United Kingdom have taken part in the testing of the LMS platform. 6 of them were from Bulgaria, 5 from Spain, 5 from Italy, 10 from Poland and 6 from the United Kingdom.

All of the testers are coming from very rural areas in their countries. These were the city of A Coruna and Mazaricos parish in Spain, the Smolyan region in Bulgaria, the Podkarpackie region in Poland, Alia, a small village 90 km far from Palermo, in Italy and the region of Devon in the United Kingdom.

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All of them are responsible and motivated individuals with a significant teaching experience. They are coming from different ages in order to address the digital gap. In some of the countries (Bulgaria, the United Kingdom and Poland) the testers are teaching at different schools and in Italy they are all working at the same school- a professional institute for Tourism and Hospitality.

Each of the VET professionals has worked together with 5 of their students, which makes a total number of 160 students involved in testing. It is important to say that students' testing is visible only in the Practice module of the platform.

During the recruitment of participants for testing the partners used their contacts with VET schools and other educational institutions working in the VET field. The Bulgarian partner was supported by the Regional educational inspectorate in Smolyan in the selection of testers. The Italian testers were from the same school that took part in the research phase of GIVE project and were already aware of the project. The Spanish partner used its contacts with Neria Asociacion (<http://www.neria.es/en/>), which is working in rural areas. When selecting VET professionals for testing all the partners were complying with the recruitment criteria set in the Testing plan. People who possess some knowledge of Web 2.0 tools and social media, but do not often use it for professional purposes, were selected. Also the partners were looking for people who believe that modern technologies and social media can be used successfully in vocational education and are not reluctant to use them.

Most of the participants after the testing process were well acquainted with the possibilities, which Web 2.0 offer. They possessed the basic IT skills necessary for using the platform and easily navigating through it. They were aware of the most popular social media and their functionalities. Yet most of the testers haven't applied this knowledge in their professional work. For instance, in Spain the educational system doesn't allow teachers to use Web 2.0 tools in the classroom so teachers use them mainly as a source of information (not as a teaching tool). They use them to collect and generate knowledge and information, which is

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later developed in their lessons. And in the United Kingdom the VET specialists who have tested the platform think that they and the students could benefit from using the platform in their day-to-day work if there was a major change in the attitudes of the schools and colleges towards using modern Web 2.0 tools in education.

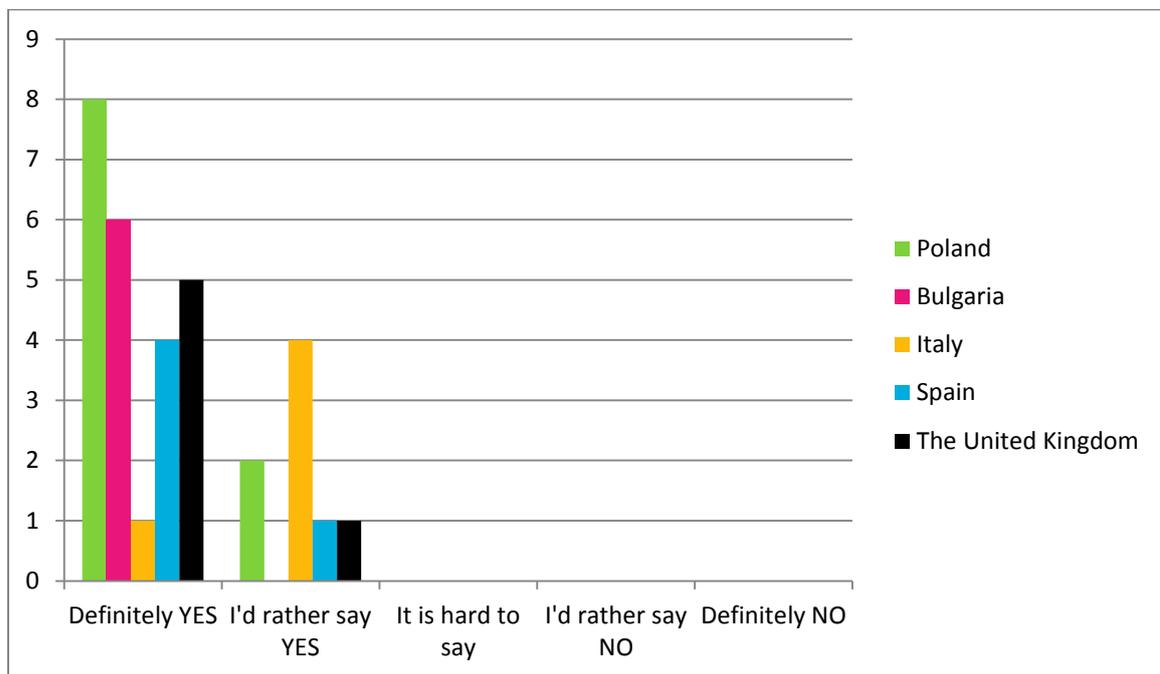
In the UK there was a hesitancy of teachers and VET professional to remain involved during the testing stage of the project due to a number of external and unforeseen circumstances that the project team could not control. However, a sufficient number of testers were recruited and they managed to test the LMS platform successfully.

The VET specialists from all countries that have tested the platform really think that they can benefit from using the platform in their teaching. Some of them have pointed that the discovered in the process of testing malfunctions should be eliminated in order to make the platform more easy and useful to work with. The Bulgarian VET professionals have especially stated that the screencasts in the Sensitization module are great examples how to incorporate social media in the learning process. In Spain the testers have indicated that they are going to use the platform in the future in order to adjust themselves to the rapid development of Web 2.0 tools.

III. Technical aspects of testing

In this part we would like to display all issues regarding technical dimensions of the platform. Firstly, the results of testing by target groups in each different country are shown and below it you can see the total results for all countries.

Is it easy to access to the platform?



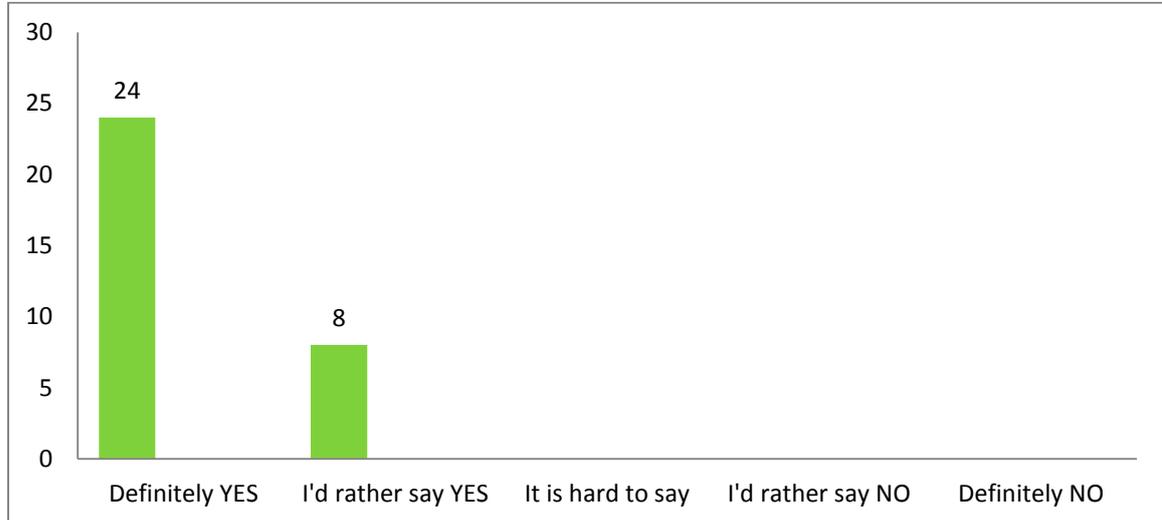
Source: Own study

The testers did not have problems with access to the platform. All of them used the credentials provided by the administrator and none of them had difficulties with logging in and access to all modules of the platform.

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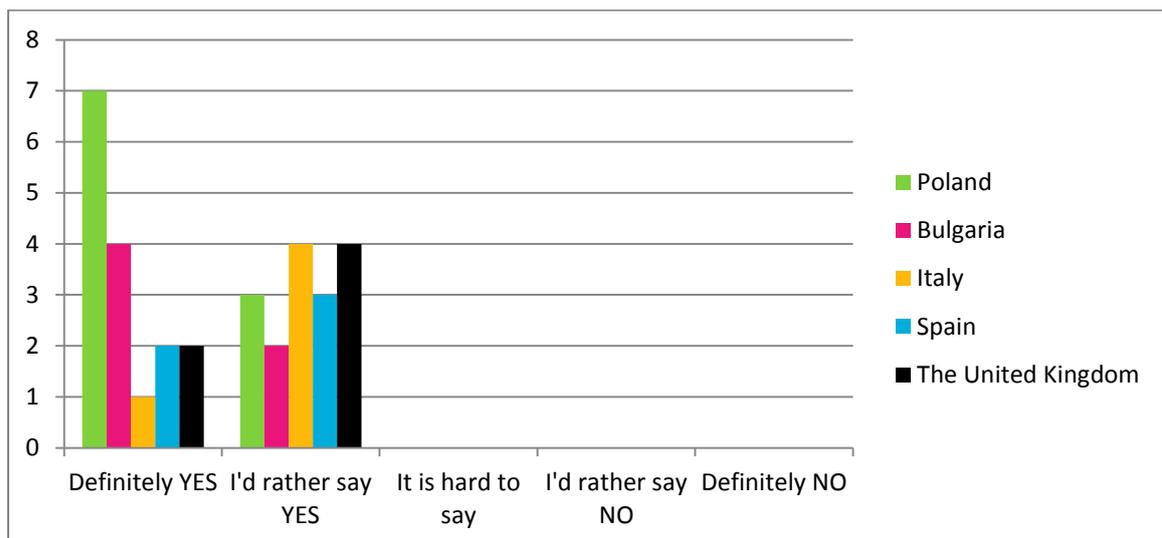
Total results



Source: Own study

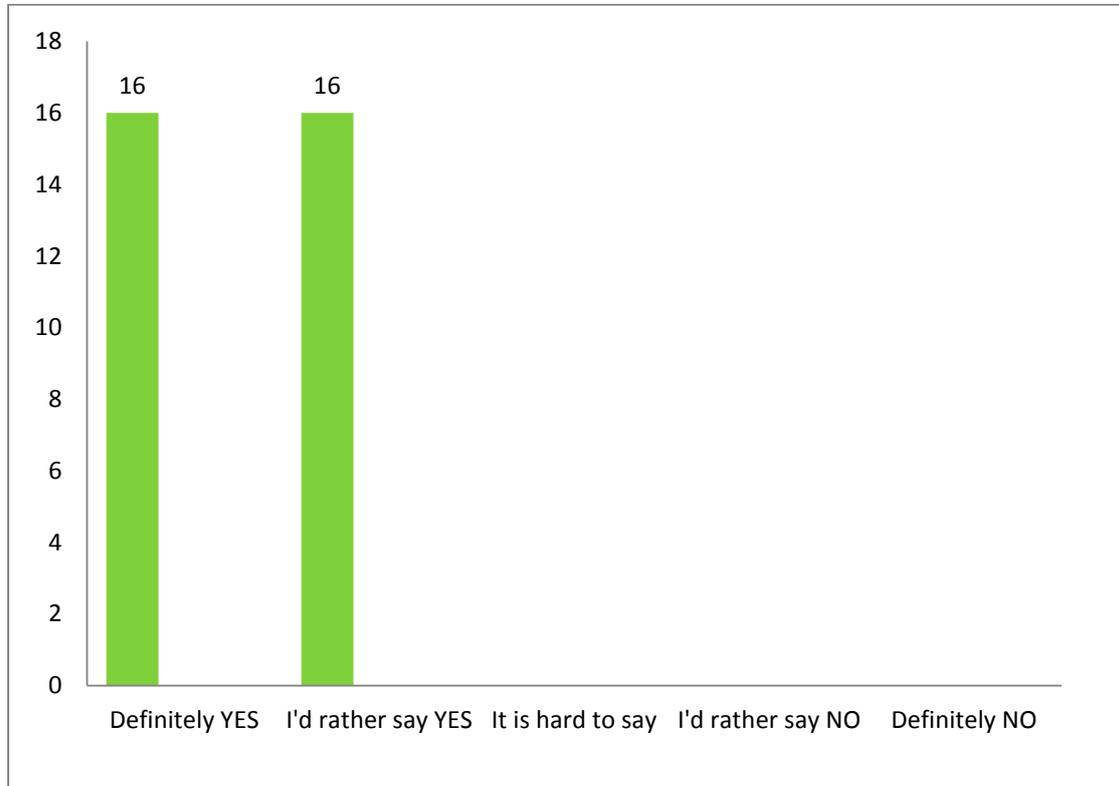
100 % of the VET professionals who have tested the platform in all countries stated that they find the access to the platform easy.

Does the initial introductory information make it clear about the essence of the platform, its objectives and structure?



Source: Own study

Total results



Source: Own study

100 % of the respondents in all partner countries positively assess the value of the information contained in the introduction. Clear explanation of the principles of functioning of the platform increases its efficiency and facilitates user to navigate through.

The partners asked respondents to indicate any technical problems noticed during the platform testing. The vast majority of opinions have been positive, dominated by statements like this: *“During testing I have not encountered any problems. Platform works just like most of LMS platforms. Interesting layout and clarity also conducive to navigate and use.”*

There were just small shortcomings related to:

- mistakes in words (spelling),
- some mistakes in the translation of materials,

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- Some slides have a bad dubbed voice,
- wrong LLP logo,
- Sometimes the text does not fit on the screen.
- Some IT terms are not enough clear
- Small navigation errors

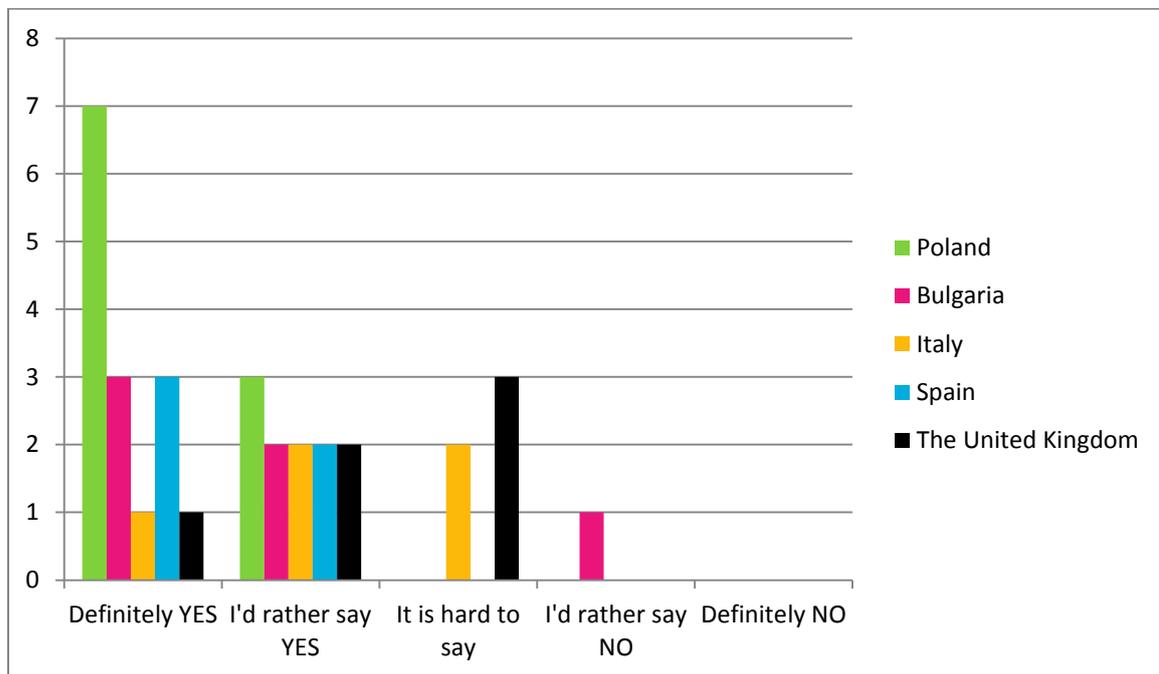
Details are reported to the developers of the platform.

IV. Structural aspects of testing

The testers in all countries were asked to evaluate each of the modules after going through all the courses and materials on the platform.

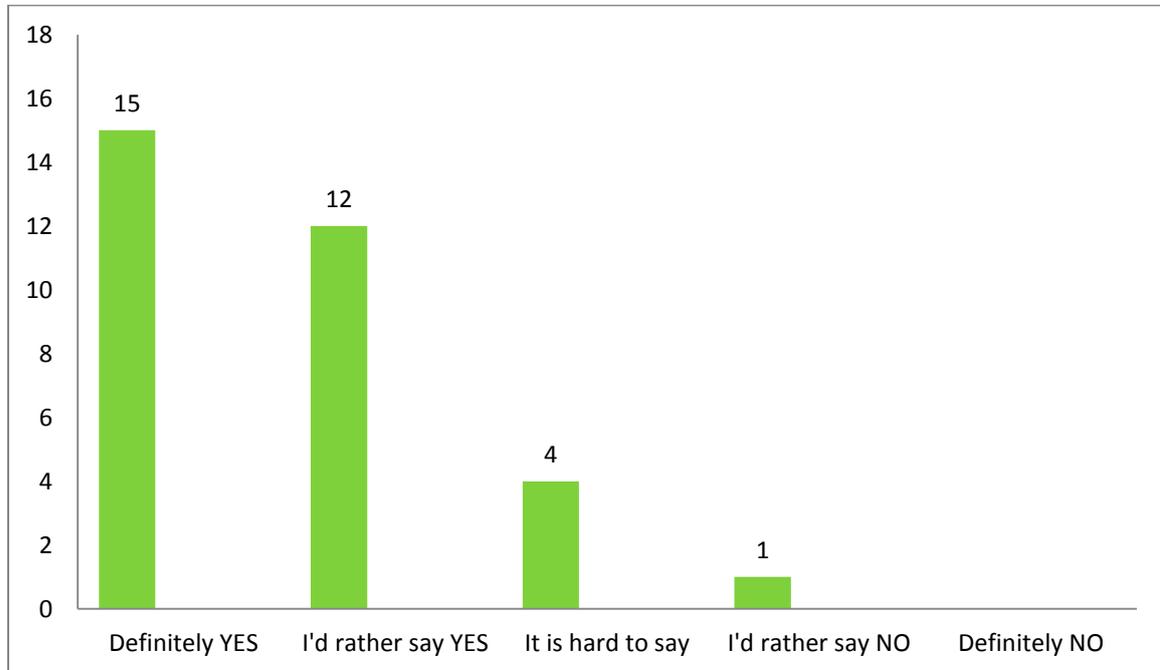
TRAINING MODULE

Are presentations structured in a proper way?



Source: Own study

Total results



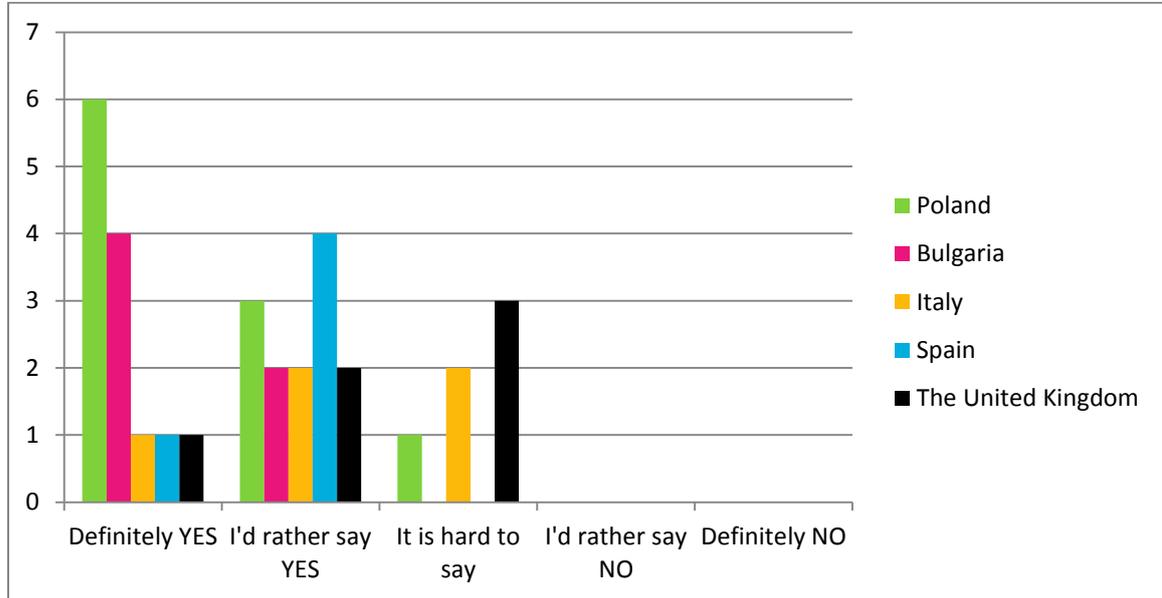
Source: Own study

About 85 % of the testers in all countries are of the opinion that presentations in the Training module are structured in a proper way.

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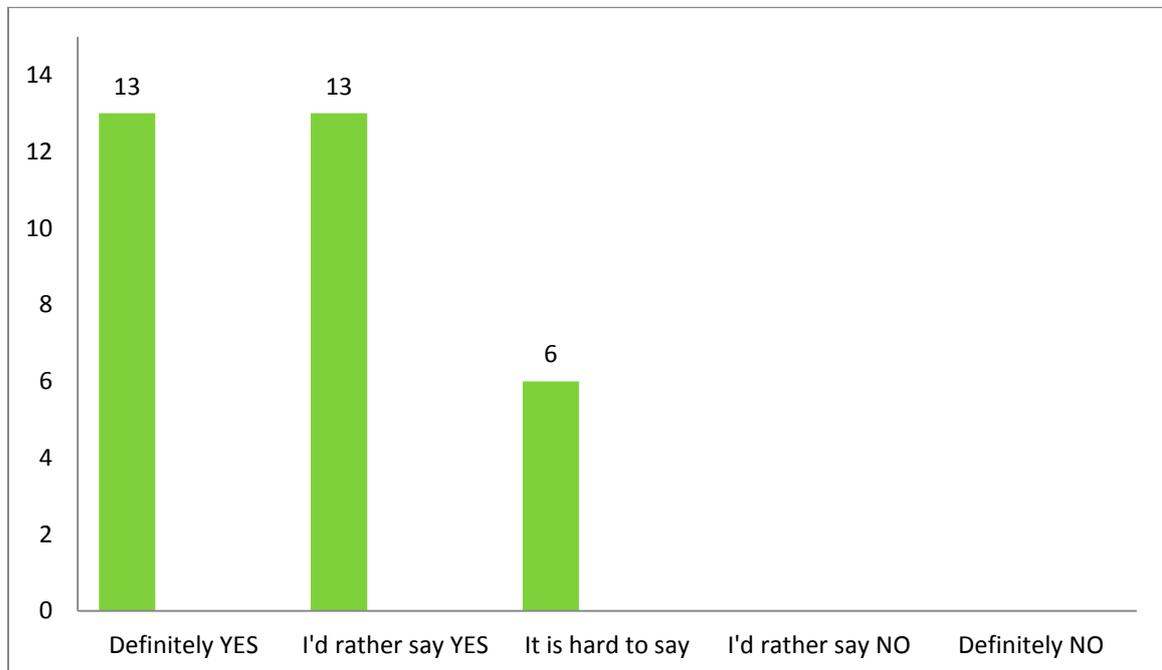
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Can users understand the information easily?



Source: Own study

Total results



Source: Own study

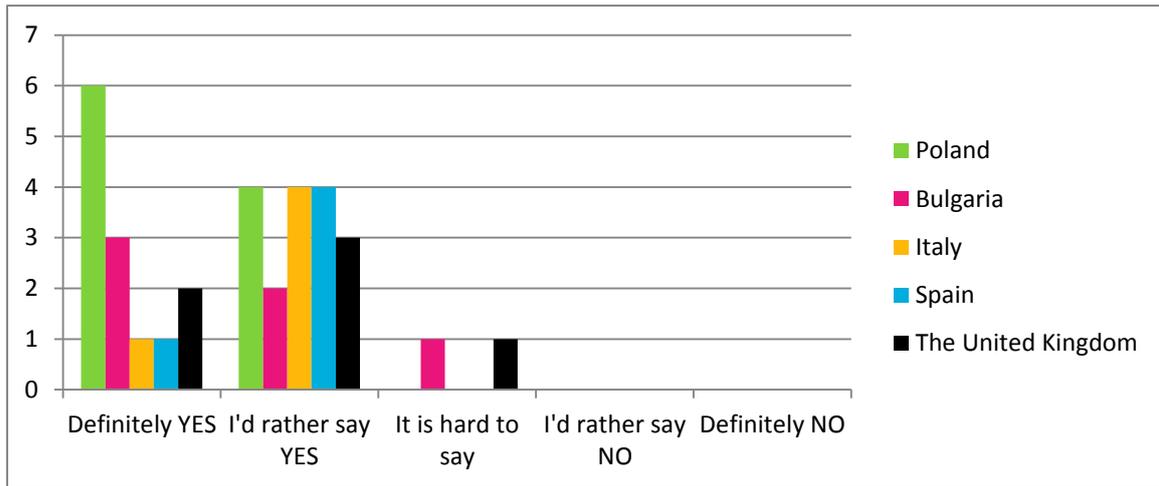
Around 81 % of the VET professionals, who have participated in testing considered that

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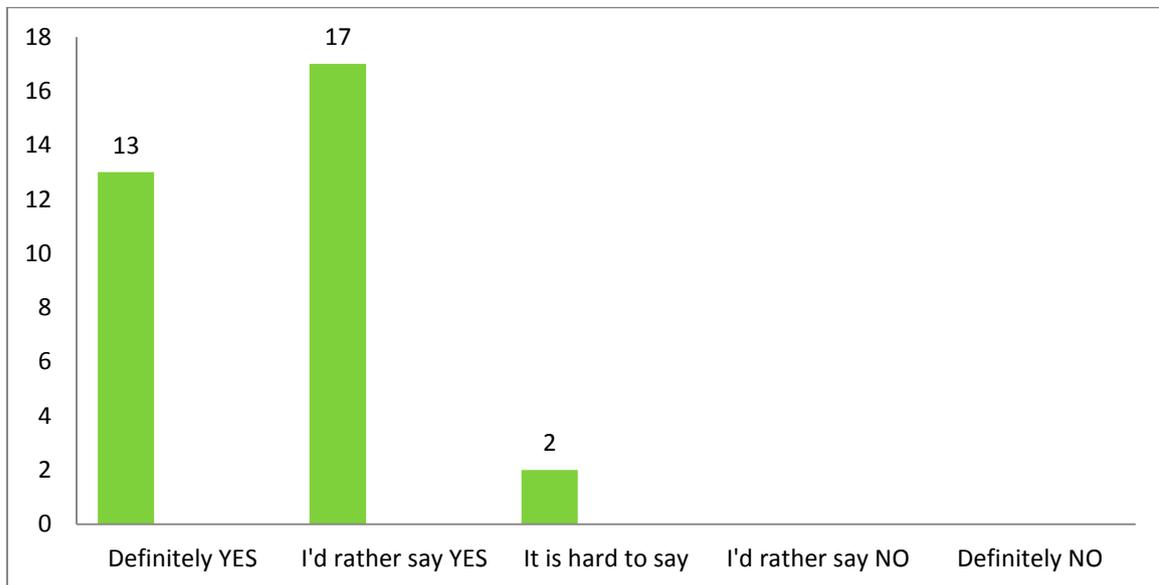
users can easily understand the information.

Are the learning materials useful for the users?



Source: Own study

Total results



Source: Own study

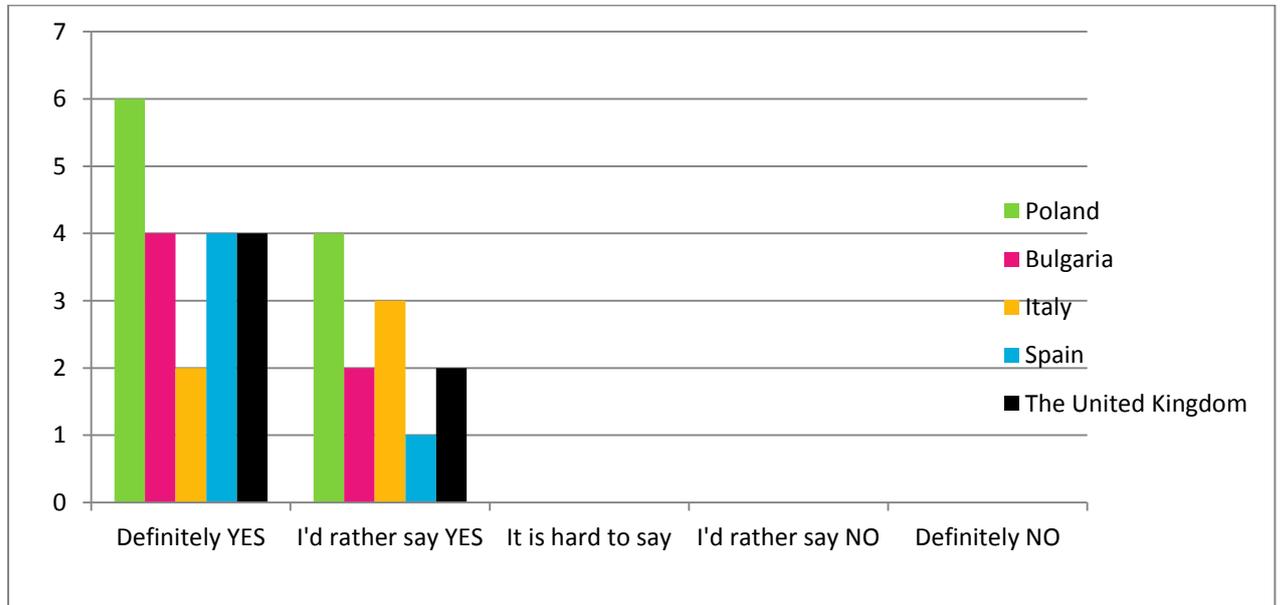
The vast majority of testers (94 %) reckoned that the learning materials are useful for the users.

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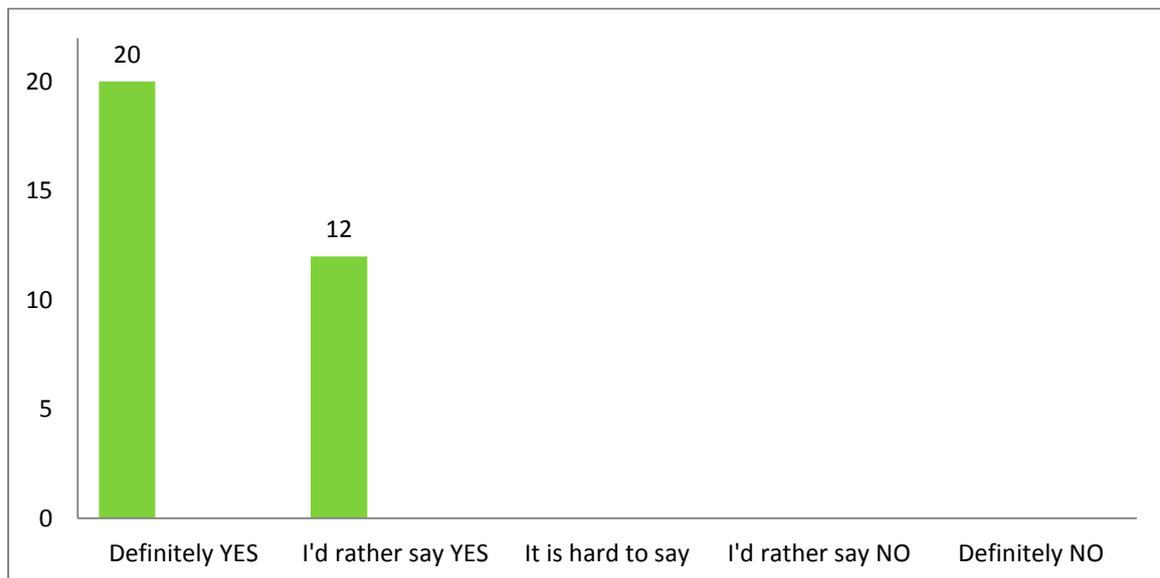
SENSITIZATION MODULE

Are the general descriptions of the described media clear and easy to understand?



Source: Own study

Total results



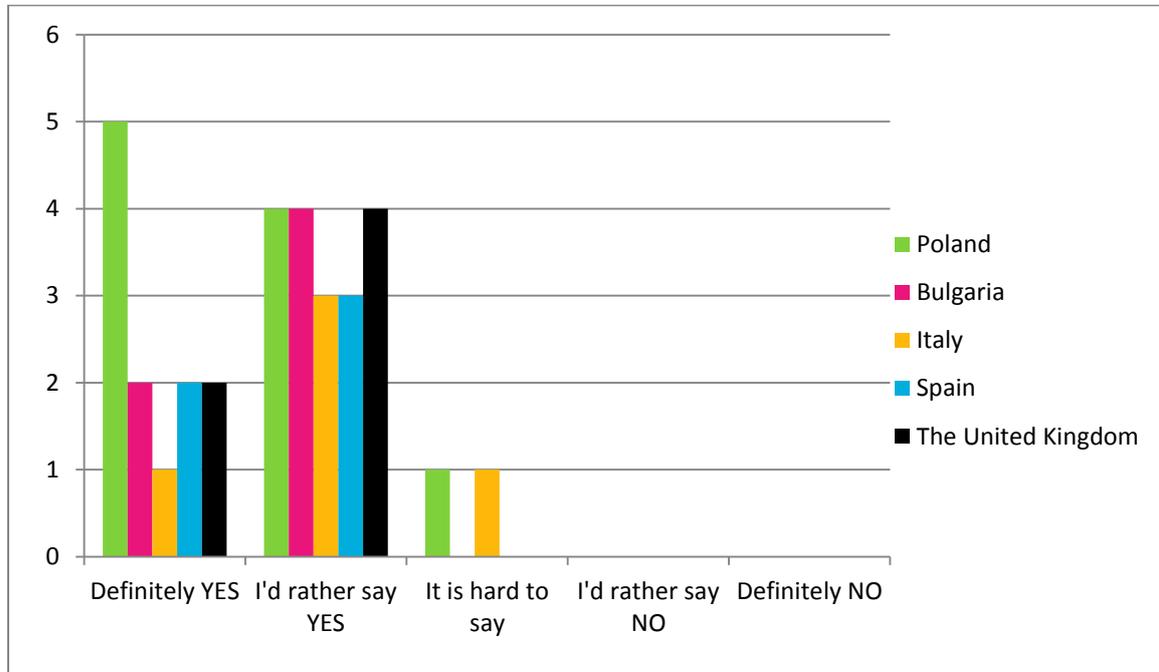
Source: Own study

100 % of the testers stated that the general descriptions of the described media are clear and easy to understand.

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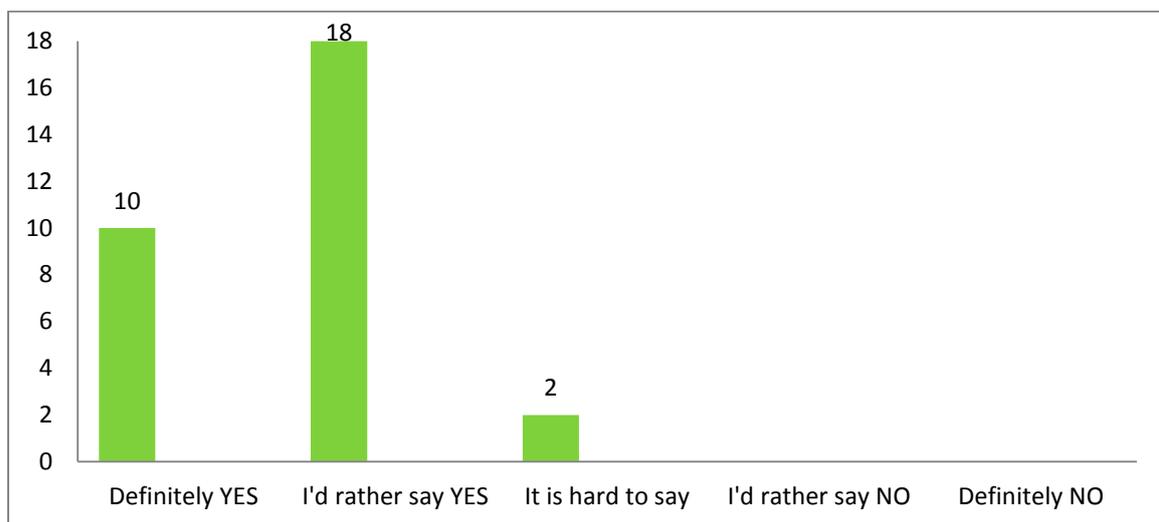
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Are the instructions/ steps for using the social media plain enough?



Source: Own study

Total results



Source: Own study

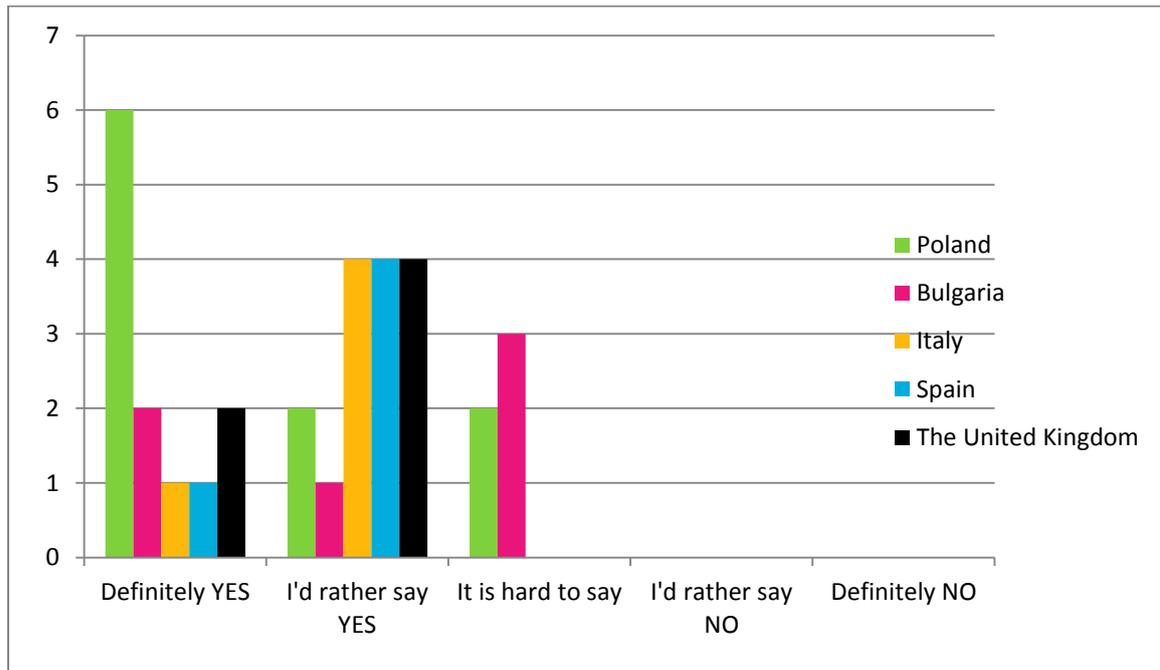
Approximately 88 % of the VET professionals, who have tested the LMS platform, are of the opinion that the instructions/steps for using the social media are plain enough.

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PRACTICE MODULE

Does it include practical advice, which will help you to use the acquired knowledge and skills?

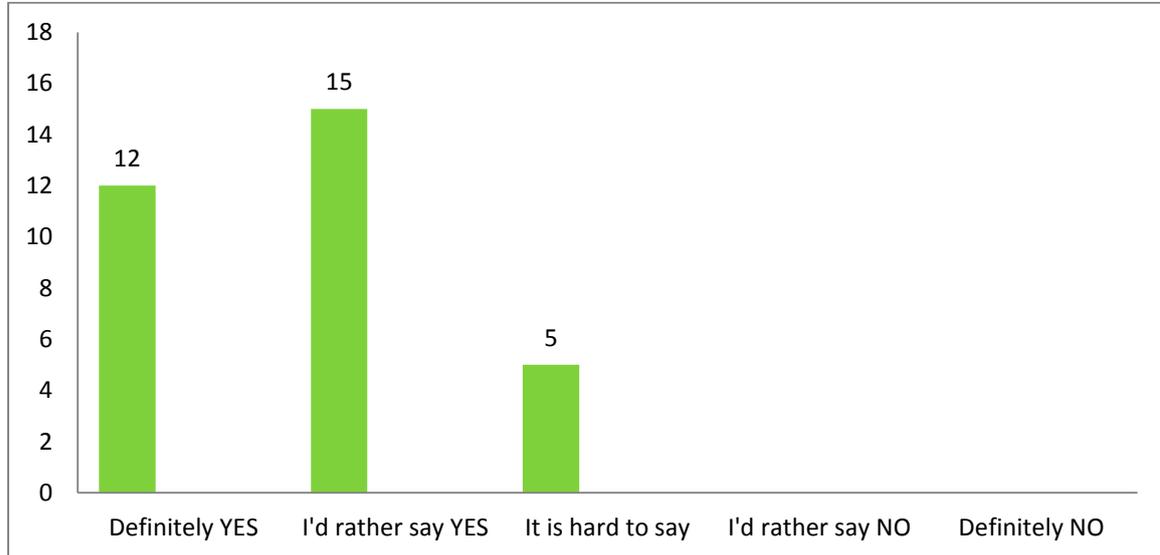


Source: Own study

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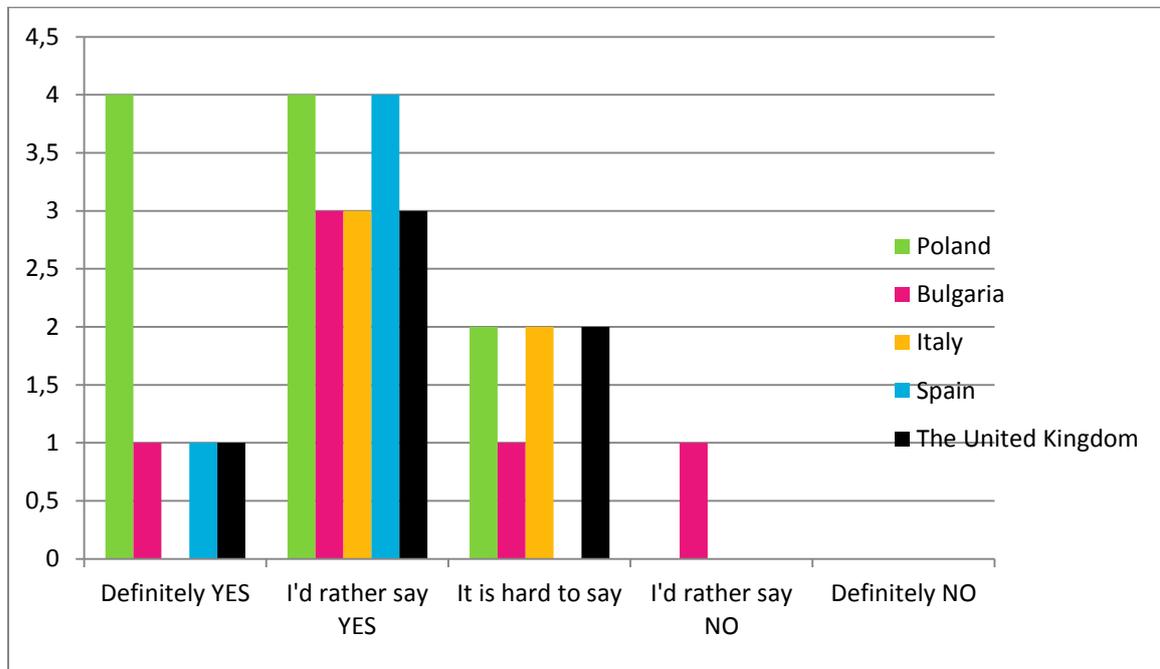
Total results



Source: Own study

85 % of the testers reckoned that the Practice module contain practical advice, which will help users to apply the acquired knowledge and skills.

Are these advices enough?

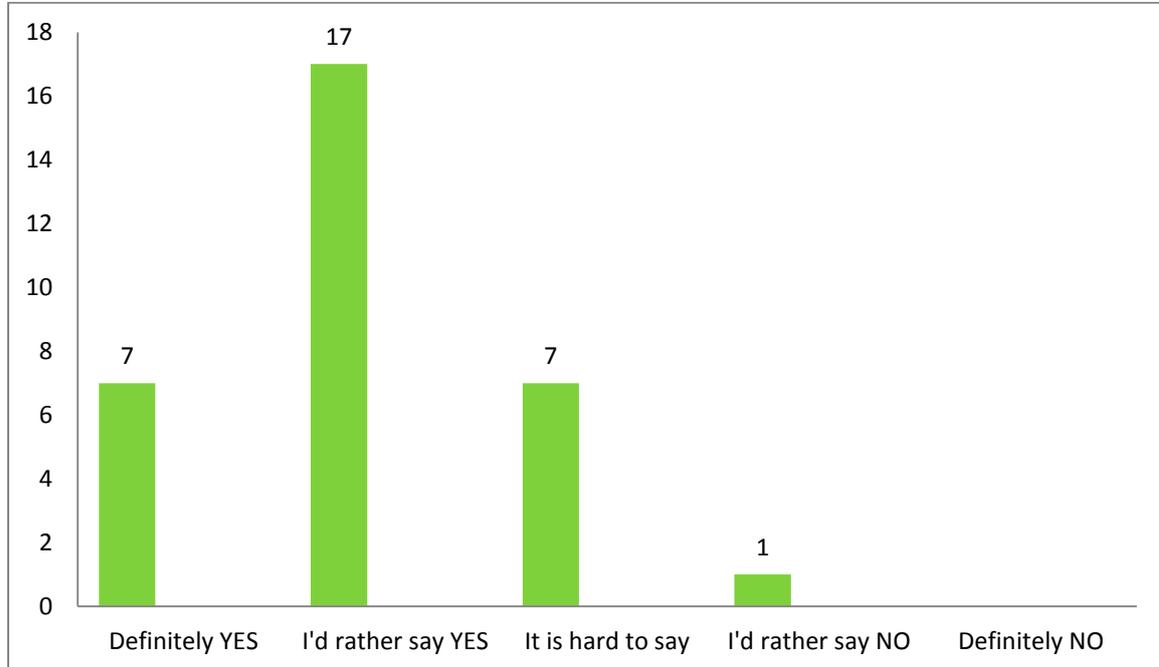


Source: Own study

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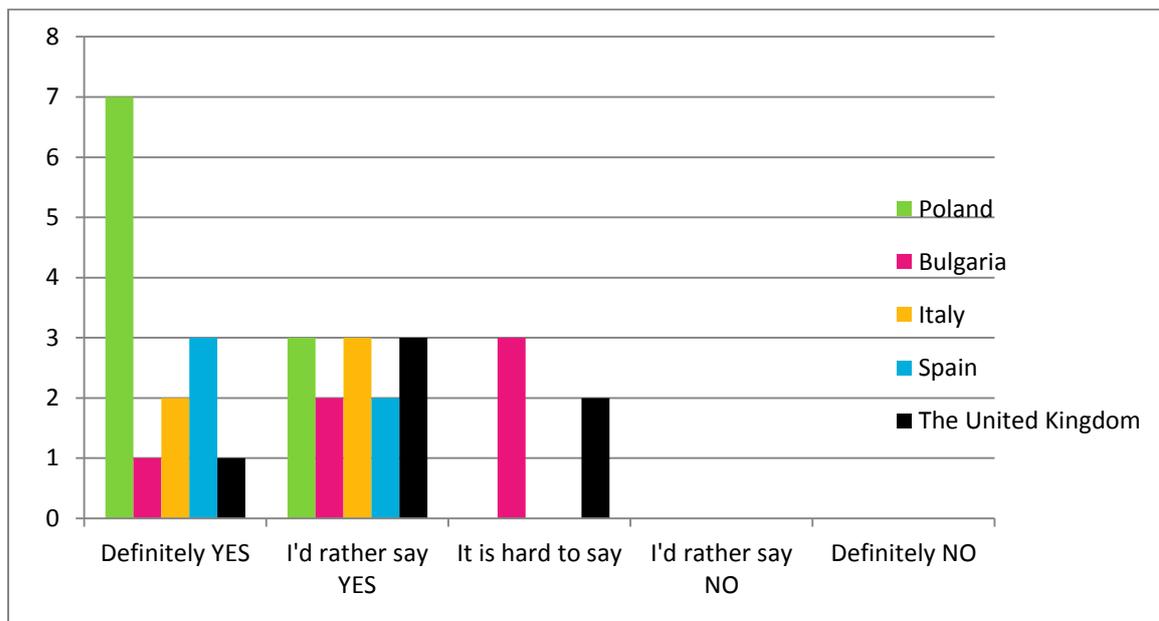
Total results



Source: Own study

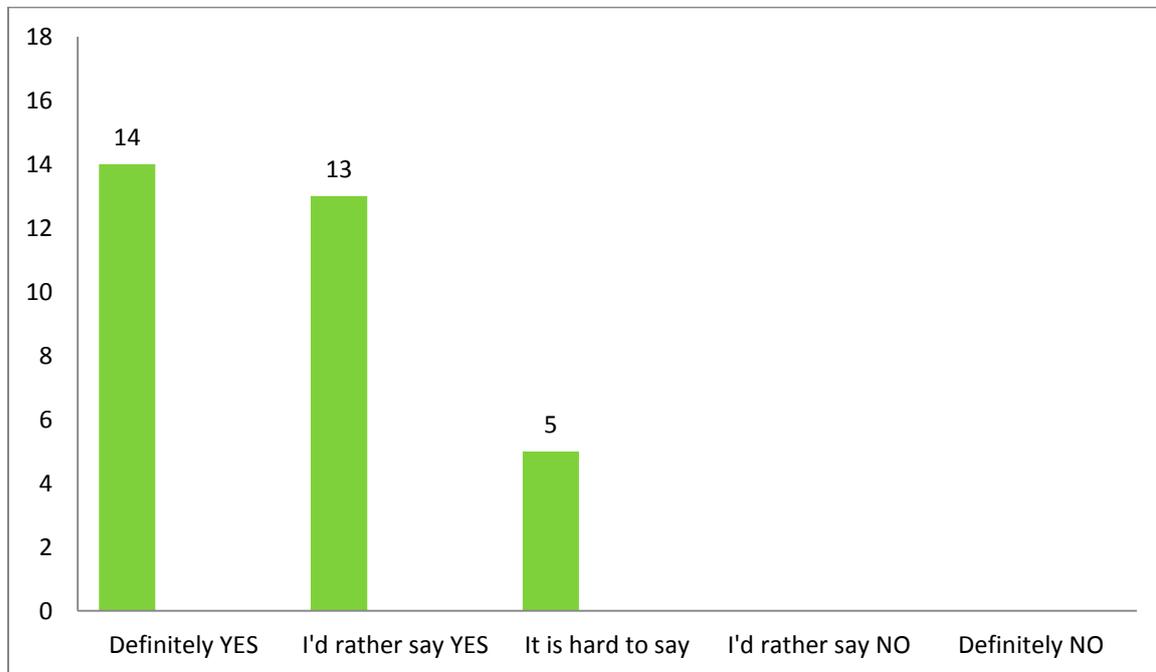
About 75 % of the respondents considered that these advices are enough.

Is it a good idea to include Career Monitoring in this module?



Source: Own study

Total results



Source: Own study

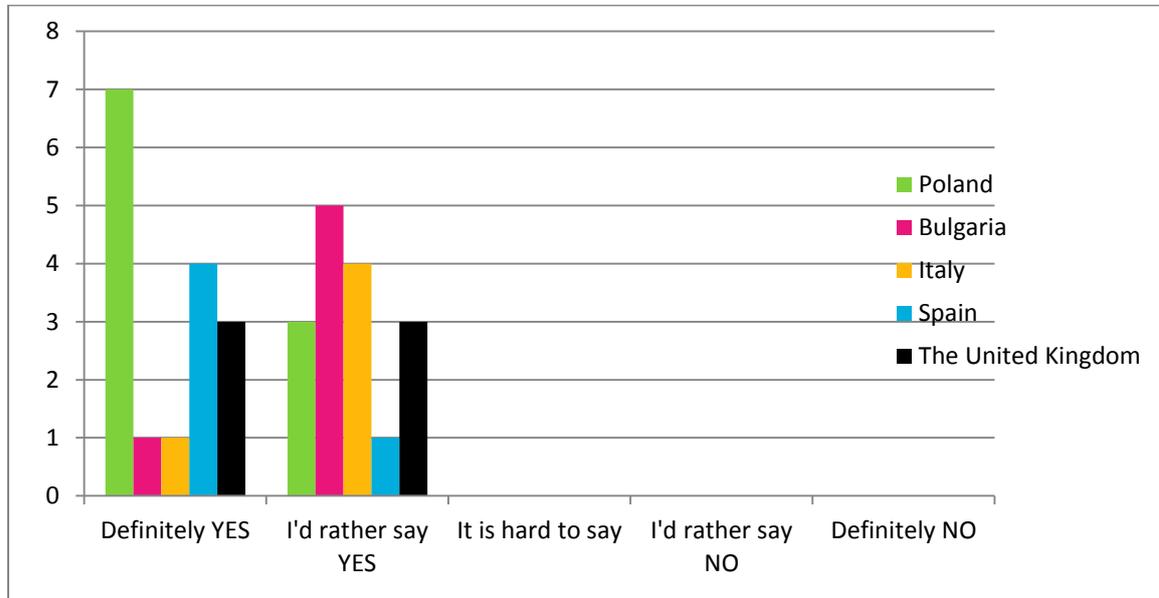
Approximately 85 % of the VET professionals involved in testing think that it is a good idea to include Career Monitoring in this module.

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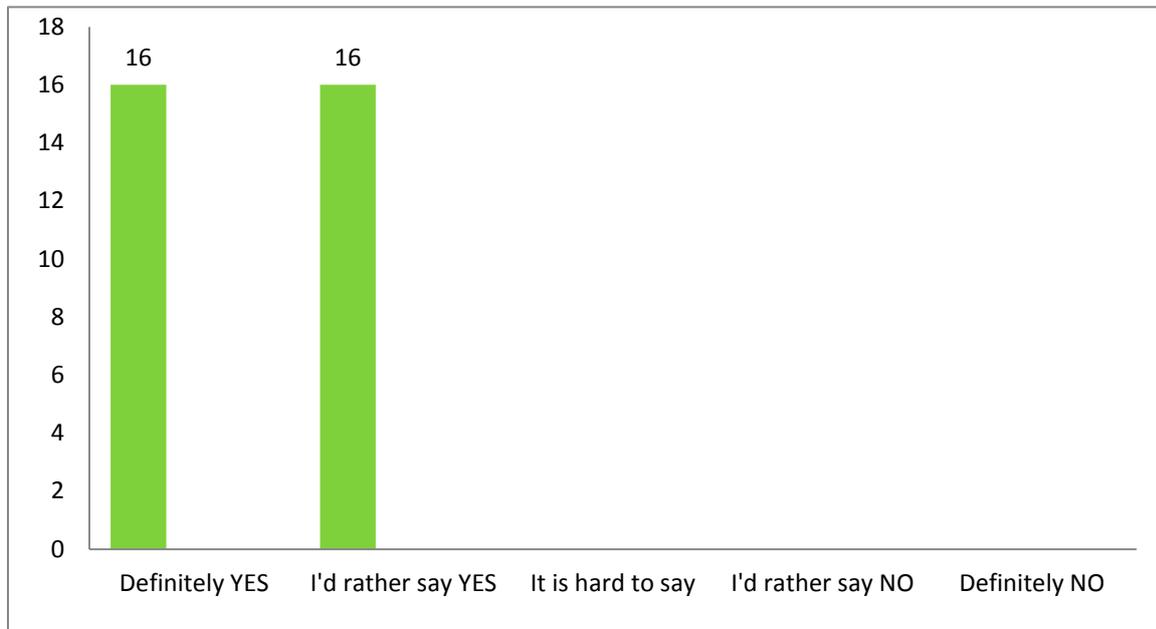
EVALUATION MODULE

Is the information structured properly?



Source: Own study

Total results



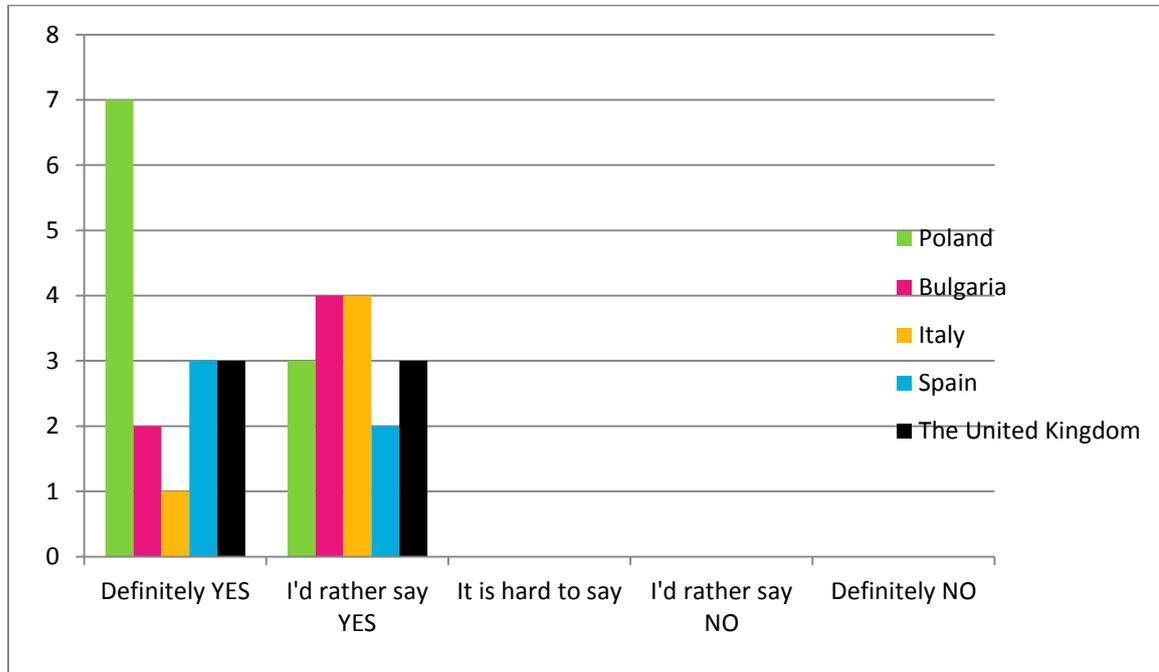
Source: Own study

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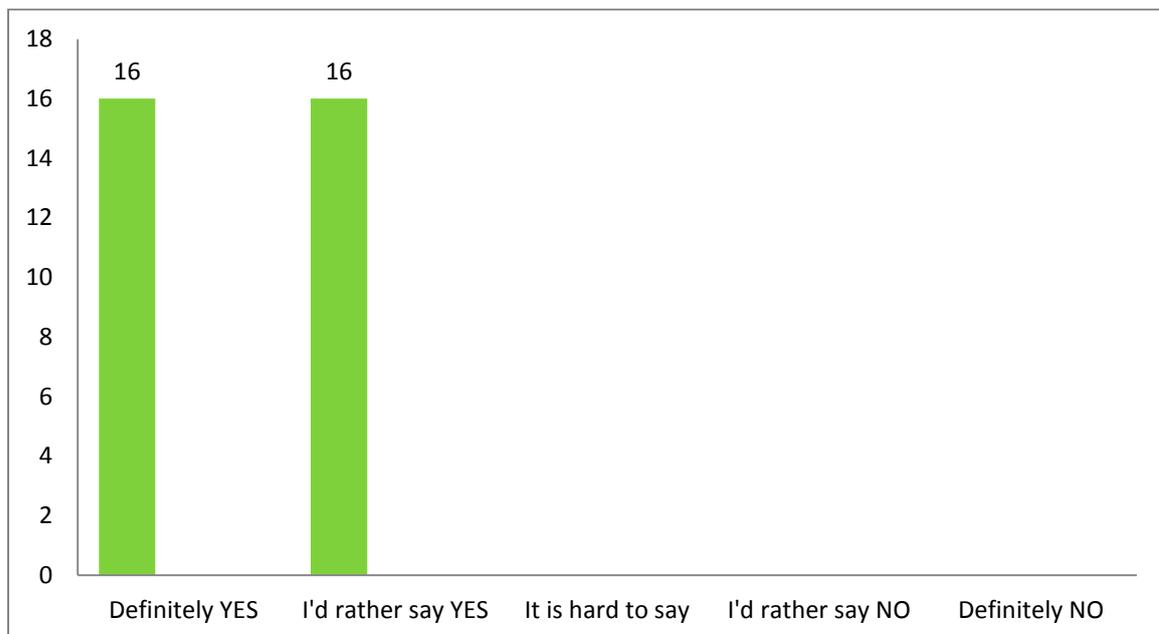
All of the testers (100 %) stated that the information is structured properly.

Are the tools and methods of application of this module clear?



Source: Own study

Total results



Source: Own study

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All of the respondents (100%) are of the opinion that the tools and methods of application of this module are clear.

As a conclusion of the testing of the structural aspects of the platform it can be said that the vast majority of testers declared that they were able to navigate through the platform quite easily. Just one Italian tester and some of the VET professionals from the United Kingdom had problems with the navigation in the Training module. Moreover, all the respondents stated that the information and instructions in the platform are put in a very clear way and users can easily understand what is behind each button or icon. Also all of the testers affirmed that the training materials in the platform are relevant to their work with the students and stated that they will apply the acquired knowledge and skills in practice. They especially highlighted that the screencasts in the Sensitization module are great examples how to incorporate social media in the learning process. Some of the testers from the UK stated this module could be very useful in their work if the educational system permits this type of activity as students and teachers cannot access social media within the schools/colleges sites.

V. Specific assessment indicators

The platform was also assessed by at least one independent expert from each country. Most of the EAG experts concluded that the main result of the project (the LMS platform) is suitable for the VET professionals working with young people. All of them, except the Italian expert Alessandro Leto, reckon that the support given to the target group using the LMS platform is effective. During the testing by target groups all testers stayed in a permanent contact with partners in each country and partners were helping them if they had some difficulties testing the platform.

The vast majority of experts agreed that the implementation of training on GIVE platform will increase the professional competence of the target group and the distribution of elements on the platform and method of navigation is appropriate for this target group.

Experts reckon that the structure of the course is in accordance with the CREIN model transferred. They think that the LMS platform is easy to use and it goes along with the ideas behind LLP.

Most of the experts didn't find any problems using the platform. There are some technical errors but in the experts' opinion they can be easily fixed by IT specialists. For instance there were some problems with the running of screencasts, but they are already fixed by the developers of the platform. The platform is very plain, so people in various ages and with different level of computer skills will be able to browse it. The Training module contains elementary information how to safely and effectively work with computer and Internet. In the Sensitization module are described the most popular Web 2.0 services, which VET professionals may find useful in their work with students. The "Questions and Answers" section presents many examples how to successfully interpose social media in work with young people. The content in the platform is clear, the terms are explained in an accessible language, and the quizzes in the end of the presentations are very useful for the assessment of the acquired knowledge. The LMS platform is a sustainable result of the project and can

be used in the future. Moreover, the fact that it is available in several European languages makes it very beneficial for the VET professionals working with students from rural areas.

Yet, the experts reckon that although the discovered technical errors are not so significant, they should be eliminated in order to fully meet the needs of the target group.

VI. Recommendations and general conclusion

The following details could be indicated as recommendations for improvement of the platform:

- Improving overall platform functionality by improving database connectivity
- Correcting loading mechanisms in Training Module
- Correction of the small clerical and translation-related mistakes in Training module
- Improving navigation paths on the platform
- Changing the format of the text
- Uploading a message that the smooth running of the platform requires a Flash plug in
- Enhancing overall functionality of Practice Module
- Changing the way that “Back” button works in Practice module
- Adding date picker, instead of typing dates from keyboard in Practice module
- Translating “Log in with Facebook” term on platform homepage
- Adding rounded border to the imageslider
- Adding information about the project in the picture with blackboard on platform homepage
- Uploading Platform User Guide to the project website
- Several slides titles in Training module don’t fit the screen size
- Improving streaming from external sources in Sensitisation Module

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- Improving data storage mechanisms in Evaluation Module
- Synchronizing the volume and quality of speaking voice in the different modules
- The quizzes in the Training module should be better clarified

The platform has been positively evaluated by both the target group as well as external experts. All suggestions for its improvement have been reported to the platform developers. In order to make the platform more applicable to the needs of VET professionals, these suggestions should be taken into account when developing the final version of the LMS platform.

As a whole the testers agreed that the LMS platform is responding to the needs and expectations of VET professionals working with students from rural areas. The content in the platform will improve the knowledge and professional skills of the VET specialists and will allow them to achieve better results in their work with the students.