

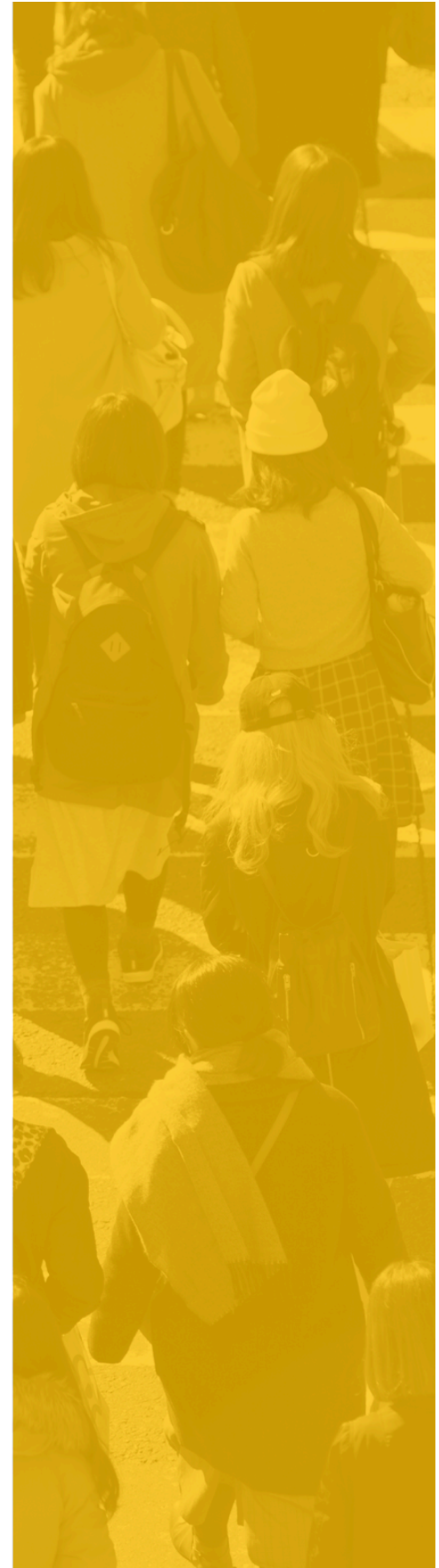
HumanityHub

Where Cultural Inclusion Meets Economic Empowerment

User Evaluation of Entrepreneurial Acceleration Course Report

Deliverable D9.3

ACT GROUP



Social
Innovation 
Initiative



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Deliverable information

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Summary of the Project

Humanity Hub is a transnational project focused on addressing the economic and social integration challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Croatia and Italy. The social innovation stems from a comprehensive understanding of the specific needs and difficulties encountered by these refugees. Humanity Hub aims to tackle these challenges through a comprehensive and holistic approach that combines multiple support mechanisms. The project focuses on enhancing economic and social integration through three primary avenues: 1) psychosocial support and cultural orientation, 2) entrepreneurial education and acceleration program, and 3) a robust peer support system for employability opportunities. This innovative model, as an individualised and tailored approach, is designed to foster resilience, self-sufficiency, and community cohesion among Ukrainian refugees by addressing their immediate and long-term needs. By combining tailored interventions for economic, social, and psychological support, the project seeks to create a sustainable model for refugee integration that can be replicated in other contexts.

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List of abbreviations

Acronym	Description
AG	ACT Group (ACT Grupa)
EU	European Union
ESF+SI+	European Social Fund Plus
HH	HumanityHub
HRT/CRT	Croatian Radio Television (Hrvatska radiotelevizija)
RCT	Rehabilitation Centre for Stress and Trauma
UA	Ukraine / Ukrainian
GA	Grant Agreement
WP	Work Package

Executive summary

This report presents the evaluation of the Entrepreneurial Acceleration Course implemented under Work Package 9 of the HumanityHub project. The evaluation assessed the course's contribution to participants' knowledge, skills, confidence, business development, and overall satisfaction, as well as its wider contribution to creating opportunities and value for Ukrainian refugee entrepreneurs and the markets in which they operate.

The evaluation combined quantitative self-assessment data with qualitative evidence, including participants' feedback, reflections, and testimonies. Participants' overall satisfaction averaged 8.89 out of 10. Qualitative evidence provided the clearest picture of the changes experienced by participants. Thus, participants themselves attributed significant changes to the programme, with feedback indicating that some of these changes would not have occurred without the programme and that they intended to apply the knowledge, skills, and tools gained in their everyday business activities after completion. Participants reported a broad range of tangible outcomes, including new business websites, communication and promotional materials, new sales tools and channels, clearer business and revenue planning, new approaches to branding and positioning, and recruitment of new employees. They also reported increased self-confidence and personal growth, a stronger entrepreneurial mindset, improved business-management capabilities, and expanded professional networks and social capital. Mentoring extended beyond technical business advice to include personalised guidance, confidence-building, practical orientation, and support for social integration. The involvement of an Integration Coach with migration experience added further value by addressing both entrepreneurial and wider integration needs. Overall, WP9 demonstrated the value of a multidimensional support model combining entrepreneurship, mentoring, networking, and social integration, contributing to both participants' development and their potential economic integration in Croatia.

Program Overview

Program Background and Objectives

The Entrepreneurial Acceleration Programme, implemented under Work Package 9, was designed to support Ukrainian refugees in Croatia who were registered businesses in Croatia. This human-centred accelerator aimed to pilot-test a **support programme addressing the lack of tailored entrepreneurial support for businesses run by Ukrainians** who fled to Croatia following the outbreak of the war, with the **broader objective of supporting their social and economic integration**. Implemented by ACT Group, the programme targeted Ukrainian entrepreneurs who had registered a business in Croatia after arriving in the country from 2022 onwards, including existing entrepreneurs and beneficiaries of WP 8 if they launched a business during or following the Early Entrepreneurial Education programme. A public call for applications was open until 12 March, with a target of supporting 10 enterprises. The four-month intensive acceleration programme was designed to strengthen participants' entrepreneurial and business management capacities and help them navigate the Croatian business environment. The programme combined several complementary forms of support, including an initial business needs analysis, an online learning programme covering several key areas such as business models, financial management, marketing, sales, business strategy, and orientation to local values, culture and context, as well as individual mentoring and practical workshops.



Photo 1. Public Call for Applications: social media campaign.

The public call for applications was promoted through a dedicated page and a social media campaign under the name **Zlet Acceleration** (zlet.hr) — a word that in Ukrainian culture evokes *takeoff*, chosen to reflect a human-centred approach to integration. The campaign ran under the Ukrainian-language tagline "Зліт для вашого підприємництва в Хорватії" ("Zlet for your entrepreneurship in Croatia").

Program Structure and Delivery

The WP9 support package comprised: (1) designing the lesson content; (2) administering a public call and directly sourcing programme beneficiaries; (3) selecting and onboarding 10 beneficiaries through an online ACT Group jury; (4) implementing capacity-building and acceleration activities for 10 beneficiaries; (5) coordinating peer-to-peer learning; (6) fostering networking; (7) providing and coordinating in-depth one-to-one mentoring; (8) coordinating the production of marketing materials for the top four participants; and (9) measuring the impact the programme created for its beneficiaries (which is presented in this report D.9.3).

The acceleration course with 10 participants ran from **10 April 2026 to 14 August 2026**, over a period of **four months**. However, the overall implementation period lasted until the end of September 2026 (M18 according to the Grant Agreement), as the AG experts used this period to prepare communication materials (professionally

developed website for their enterprise and/or promotional materials) for the selected enterprises. To help participants position themselves in the new Croatian market and promote their businesses, the programme prepared communication materials for them, such as communication content, brochures, business cards and web pages. Participants were also introduced to Croatian culture, business culture and entrepreneurial culture through dedicated group learning, peer learning, a networking event and each one-to-one mentoring session.

Over the course of the programme, mentors provided a combined total of **140 hours of one-to-one mentoring** to the 10 beneficiaries and **4 group learning workshops**, with additional peer and networking opportunities. Group learning covered local context, Croatian business culture, sales, market positioning, adapting a product or service to the Croatian market, and branding, focusing on how to create impactful businesses within the Croatian market. As a social economy support organisation, AG placed emphasis on the impact of each enterprise throughout the mentoring process. Mentoring sessions encouraged participants to reflect on their products or services.

As part of the Acceleration Program, a **one-half-day in-person networking event** was organised by AG in Zagreb on **8 June 2026**, connecting the Ukrainian accelerator participants with experts/mentors and other Croatian entrepreneurs drawn from ACT Group's business network and portfolio. The event was planned for around 15 participants (10 Ukrainian entrepreneurs, 3 Croatian entrepreneurs and 2 mentors) but attracted **27 participants overall** – exceeding the target and meaningfully expanding the social capital and professional network of the Ukrainian refugee entrepreneurs in Croatia.



Photo 2. In-person Networking Event.

A dedicated **WhatsApp Group** was set up to keep programme participants connected as peers, together with mentors and coaches.

The programme also received **national media coverage**: one participant and one mentor from the acceleration programme were featured on the **Croatian Radio Television** (HRT) show *Zona 360* on 25 August 2026, discussing the HumanityHub project, the acceleration programme Zlet, and the entrepreneurial ambitions of Ukrainians in Croatia.

Promotional support

As part of the WP9 Acceleration Programme, **four enterprises**¹, instead of the three originally planned according to the GA (see A9.7), were selected from the 10 enrolled participants based on their diligence, engagement, and progress throughout the course. The selected enterprises received professionally developed promotional and communication materials tailored to their individual business needs. **Three enterprises received professionally developed websites** to strengthen their market presence, including one of them, which received **additional promotional materials**, including professionally designed business cards and brochures. The **fourth** selected enterprise received a **professionally designed street-facing promotional business sign** for its enterprise, supporting its local visibility and communication with potential customers. Through these activities, the selected enterprises were provided with practical digital and offline promotional tools to enhance their visibility and support the promotion of their businesses and market position. This activity, together with the detailed structure of the acceleration programme and the themes covered during the course, is reported in more detail in the related **D9.2 Entrepreneurial Acceleration Course Implementation Report**.

¹ To be more precise, the first women-led enterprise received a website, brochure design and printing (200 copies), business card design and printing (100 copies), and a roll-up banner (design and printing). The second women-led enterprise received website design, development, and hosting. The third women-led enterprise received website design, development, hosting, and domain registration. An additional women-led enterprise (fourth one) received the design, production, and installation of an outdoor business sign.

Evaluation Methodology

At the end of the four-month acceleration programme, AG administered an online evaluation survey to all 10 programme beneficiaries, offered bilingually in Croatian and English. The survey combined open-ended qualitative questions on the specific changes experienced as a result of participation, and on what participants learned, achieved or gained. Besides qualitative data collection, the evaluation process involved quantitative data for self-assessment ratings to capture outcomes. The assessment survey was designed in line with the project's impact measurement framework to evaluate participants' self-reported changes in confidence and knowledge resulting from the course, as well as overall satisfaction with the programme. Thus, the evaluation was designed to assess programme effectiveness and impact across **several key dimensions**: knowledge acquisition, skill development, behavioural change, confidence enhancement, personal and professional growth, and overall satisfaction.

Lastly, **ethical considerations and GDPR rules** were given particular attention throughout the evaluation process. For this reason, the results presented in this report have been **anonymised** to protect the identities and privacy of the participants.

Evaluation Results

Outcomes and Real Change

Indicators of change reported by participants as a result of the programme:

- Improved management skills and organisational capacities
- Improved business model
- Improved networking and social capital in Croatia
- Improved knowledge of Croatian professional/ entrepreneurial culture
- Increased visibility and access to new business opportunities (such as partnerships, investment, new customers and employees)

- Improved self-confidence and motivation
- Improved personal and professional growth per participant/entrepreneur
- Visibility on national TV and addressing the position of Ukrainian refugees as entrepreneurs who want to be part of the national economy

On overall satisfaction with the programme (1–10 scale), the average rating was **8.89** out of 10. Every respondent rated the programme **7 or higher**, and **no respondent reported dissatisfaction with the programme**. That means that participants are generally **very satisfied** with the programme.

Two particularly **strong findings** demonstrate the **significant impact and lasting value of the Zlet Acceleration Programme** under WP9. Together, they point to a **strong contribution of the programme** to the changes experienced by participants, as well as a **high potential for these changes to continue beyond the programme** itself.

When participants were asked whether the changes they experienced in terms of their skills, knowledge, behaviour, self-confidence, and business improvements would have occurred without their participation in the Zlet programme and the support of its mentors, **the vast majority (78%) indicated that these changes would not have happened without the programme** (see *Figure 1*). Only two participants felt that the changes they experienced might have occurred even without the programme. This finding provides a strong indication of the programme's **contribution to participants' personal and professional development**, highlighting the importance of the learning environment, mentoring and support provided.

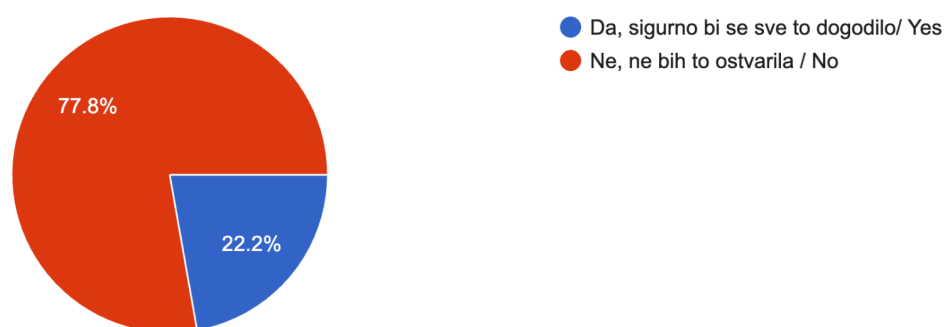


Figure 1. Contribution of the Programme.

Even more importantly, the findings point to the **durability and future relevance of the impact achieved**. When asked whether they planned to use the knowledge, contacts, materials and skills gained through the programme in their everyday lives and businesses going forward, **100% of respondents answered “yes, certainly (*da, sigurno*)”** (see *Figure 2*). This response demonstrates that the programme was not perceived simply as a short-term learning experience, but as something that provided participants with **practical knowledge, skills, resources and connections that they intend to actively carry forward and apply in real-life contexts**.



Figure 2. Durability and future relevance of the impact achieved.

This finding highlights the **strong contribution of the *Zlet Acceleration* programme and its mentoring support to the changes reported by participants**. It is also particularly relevant from a social impact measurement perspective (and the methodological framework which is used for impact measurement), as understanding **contribution and additionality** is central to assessing whether observed changes can reasonably be linked to an intervention (*acceleration programme*). In other words, an important impact assessment question is whether these changes *would have happened anyway in the absence of the intervention*.

The participants' responses therefore provide an important indication that the outcomes identified in the evaluation were not simply the result of changes that would have occurred independently, but that participation in the *Zlet Acceleration* programme and the support provided through HumanityHub played a meaningful role in enabling and strengthening these changes. Thus, this finding provides **strong qualitative evidence of the programme's contribution to the outcomes experienced by participants** and supports the assessment of its social impact.

Furthermore, **qualitative data** from the evaluation process give **the clearest picture** of what changed for the beneficiaries of this programme. Capturing participants' own perspectives on what they gained from the programme and what changed as a result of their participation represents an important component of the evaluation and impact measurement approach. By allowing beneficiaries to reflect on changes in their skills, knowledge, confidence, behaviour, and business practices in their own words, the evaluation provides a more nuanced understanding of the programme's outcomes and the ways in which the support contributed to their development.

Recurring themes include: **greater clarity about business goals, business model and strategy connected to the impact of their business idea, direction and target clients; increased self-confidence as an entrepreneur; a more structured, strategic view of the business (pricing, sales, seasonality, branding, revenue planning); new professional contacts, mentoring relationships and a sense of community;** and, for several participants, concrete **practical outputs** such as a **new business website, communication materials, new sales tools, new employees employed** during this programme or a **new client inquiry gained** during the programme.

The quotations below are translated from Croatian into English for this report; each is attributed to an anonymised participant in order to follow the ethical part of data protection and GDPR.

1. Greater clarity of vision, goals and entrepreneurial direction

One of the strongest recurring themes is the development of **greater clarity around business goals, direction, target clients, sales and future development**. Participants describe the programme as helping them step back from the immediate demands of running a business and reflect more systematically on where they are going and why.

This represents an **important form of entrepreneurial development**. Rather than simply gaining additional information, participants report developing a **clearer sense of purpose and direction**, enabling them to make more informed professional decisions and identify concrete next steps. Participants explicitly **connected this increased clarity with greater confidence in their ability to develop their businesses**. In addition to the following qualitative data, which illustrates the changes participants reported in their knowledge and skills related to business development,

participants rated their ability to assess business goals at 4 out of 5 after completing the program.

“Participating in the program helped me take a step back from day-to-day operations and look at my business from a broader, more strategic perspective. (...) The experience provided valuable clarity. It helped validate my current direction. Overall, it gave me a clearer framework for structuring my next steps” (P.T.S.)

“Thanks to the program, I gained greater confidence in my work and confirmed some of my assumptions regarding the directions in which I can develop my business. At the same time, I discovered new ways to find clients and partners and received useful advice on communication, networking, and building business relationships” (P.I.K.).

The change is particularly significant for participants establishing or developing businesses in a **new country and business environment**. Having a clearer understanding of their target groups, competitive positioning and development opportunities provides an important foundation for longer-term entrepreneurial sustainability.

As participants explained, the programme generated a shift in how they thought about themselves as an entrepreneur and the future development of their business, resulting in **clearer goals, a more concrete action plan, greater confidence and a stronger sense of not being alone on their entrepreneurial journey**.

“The program helped me view my business more clearly, define my goals, and better understand my clients' needs. I gained more confidence as an entrepreneur and began thinking not only about providing quality service but also about brand development, promotion, and long-term business strategy” (P.N.P.)

“Participating in this program brought about a major shift in my mindset—both regarding myself as an entrepreneur and the development of my business. The program helped me gain greater clarity on my goals, determine the direction in which I want to grow my business, and create a more concrete plan for the next steps” (P.K.S.).

2. Increased entrepreneurial self-confidence and agency

A second highly visible outcome is **strengthened self-confidence and entrepreneurial agency**. Participants repeatedly reported feeling more confident in making professional decisions, developing their businesses and moving forward with their ideas.

Importantly, this **confidence appears to be closely connected to knowledge and practical support** rather than representing an isolated emotional outcome. Participants describe how mentoring, expert guidance, reflection and validation helped them to **trust their own decisions, confirm assumptions and feel more capable of navigating the next stage of their entrepreneurial journey**.

“Thanks to this program, I gained much more than just information. For me, the greatest value lay in the high-quality, practical webinars, expert guidance, new connections, the exchange of experiences, and an incredibly supportive atmosphere.

I learned to view entrepreneurship more holistically – looking beyond daily tasks to consider goals, strategy, visibility, client relationships, and long-term growth. I acquired useful tools, ideas, and guidelines that I can gradually implement in my work. The program helped me recognise my own potential and gain a clearer vision of my next business steps. I particularly appreciate that the content was clear, useful, practical, and motivating, and that the mentors selflessly shared their knowledge and experience” (P.K.S.)

This is particularly meaningful in the context of participants who are simultaneously building businesses and establishing themselves within Croatian society. The programme appears to have contributed to both **entrepreneurial confidence and a stronger sense of personal agency**, supporting participants not only as business owners but as individuals navigating **a new social and professional environment**.

“Thanks to my participation in the programme, I acquired new knowledge and skills, became more confident in making professional decisions, met new people, and expanded my professional network” (P.T.V.).

The qualitative evidence therefore suggests that the programme contributed to a reinforcing cycle: **greater knowledge and clarity strengthened confidence, while greater confidence enabled participants to make decisions and take action**. Alongside the strong qualitative feedback provided by participants, their overall self-assessment of their understanding of the entrepreneurial context in Croatia after completing the programme was 4/5. Some participants rated their understanding at

the highest level of 5, while others gave ratings of 3 or 4. It is important to note that not all participants were able to fully engage with the program or make use of its full potential. In some cases, family obligations and other personal circumstances affected participants' ability to participate consistently and engage continuously throughout the program. Therefore, the overall results should also be considered in light of the different levels of participation and engagement among the participants.

3. From operational thinking to a more strategic approach to business

The feedback also demonstrates a clear shift towards **more structured and strategic business thinking**. Several participants described being able to “take a step back” from day-to-day operations and look at their businesses from a broader perspective. This follows their change in management skills, including organisation, coordination, and decision-making, where participants rated their management skills at an average of 4/5 following the program.

The areas mentioned are highly practical and directly relevant to business sustainability, including:

- pricing and revenue planning;
- sales and sales channels;
- seasonality;
- event planning;
- target-group definition;
- client segmentation;
- branding and positioning;
- promotion and communication;
- international market opportunities; and
- differentiation from competing offers.

This breadth of change is particularly important because it demonstrates that learning was not limited to a single entrepreneurial skill or knowledge area. Instead, participants describe developing a **more integrated understanding of how different elements of their businesses connect and contribute to future growth**.

One participant, for example, described moving towards a more structured approach **to sales, pricing, revenue planning and seasonality, while also beginning to consider different client groups and international market opportunities**. Participants reported **tangible business outcomes**, including **new sales, new client**

inquiries, and **new business development opportunities**, which they associated with the knowledge, guidance, and support received through the programme.

“I found the insights on building personal relationships and networking – specifically regarding LinkedIn and how to more actively seek out new business contacts and partners – to be particularly useful. I met new people and expanded my business network, and I even received a new inquiry for a collaboration in 2027 while the program was still underway. Beyond making concrete contacts, I also gained greater clarity on how to present my services to different types of clients, how to plan sales, and how to approach long-term business development” (P.I.K.).

These accounts indicate that the programme supported participants in moving **from reacting to immediate business needs towards more deliberate and forward-looking decision-making**. Besides that, participants rated their confidence in managing finances in relation to their business at an average of 4 out of 5 (4/5).

4. Stronger understanding of customers, positioning and markets

A further area of development concerns participants' ability to **better understand their target customers, the Croatian context and articulate what makes their businesses distinctive**. They gained knowledge of Croatian business culture and the market.

“While the program covered plenty of base business topics like sales, marketing, finance, etc., the most valuable takeaway was gaining firsthand insight into the local business context. Learning from mentors' practical experiences about communication, mindset, and operational culture in Croatia and regionally. Applying these insights to independently compare different business environments and evaluate pros and cons against familiar markets. Gaining a clearer perspective on market differences, which helped me identify what aligns best with my working style and growth priorities” (P.T.S.)

Participants reported greater clarity regarding who their target groups are, what their clients need and how their businesses differ from other providers. This represents an **important step in strengthening market positioning and developing more effective approaches to communication, promotion and sales**.

“I learned to more clearly define the value we offer clients, better analyse the needs of our target audience and the competition, and plan revenue, costs, and future

business development more realistically. One tangible result of participating in the program is the creation of a business website, which will enable us to present our programs and activities more professionally, increase our visibility, and make it easier for potential clients to find information and get in touch with us” (P.Y.G).

For participants operating in the Croatian market, this learning also appears to have supported their understanding of how to position their businesses within a new cultural and commercial context. The development of this market-oriented perspective can be particularly valuable for entrepreneurs who are simultaneously building customer relationships, developing visibility and establishing credibility in a new environment.

5. Strengthened professional networks and social capital in Croatia

Networking and mentoring emerged as another **major source of value for Ukrainians**. Participants consistently highlighted new professional acquaintances, exchange of experiences, expert guidance and the supportive atmosphere created through the programme.

The importance of this outcome goes beyond simply increasing the number of contacts. Participants describe developing **meaningful professional relationships, access to mentors, opportunities for knowledge exchange and a stronger sense of community**.

“A major benefit of the program was the opportunity to exchange experiences, receive feedback on my business idea, meet other female entrepreneurs, and build new contacts (...) An important outcome of the program for me is the new connections I've made, the exchange of experiences with other entrepreneurs, and the feeling that I have more knowledge, contacts, and confidence for the next phase of my company's development” (P.Y.G.)

For Ukrainian refugee entrepreneurs, this dimension is particularly relevant. The programme provided opportunities to establish connections with Croatian entrepreneurs and experts, contributing to participants' **professional integration and social capital within the Croatian entrepreneurial ecosystem**.

“I had the opportunity to meet other companies that have opened in Croatia and to learn something new and valuable for my business” (P.M.K.)

The **mentoring relationship** was also described as extending beyond technical business advice. Participants valued the **mentors' individual approach, responsiveness, and encouragement, with some explicitly describing the support as important not only for their business development and personal confidence but also for their social integration into Croatian society.** This multidimensional approach was further strengthened by the involvement of an Integration Coach with a professional migration background, who provided participants with an additional layer of support related to navigating life and integration in Croatia. This added value to the WP9 Acceleration Programme by combining entrepreneurial support and business mentoring with practical and social integration support.

"I would like to extend a special thank you to my mentor, (mentor's name). Her support has been invaluable to me, both in my professional development and on a personal level. As a mentor, she helped me gain a clearer perspective on my knowledge, potential, and professional direction, as well as identify the next steps I wish to take. Her personalised approach, attentiveness, and genuine engagement instilled in me motivation, a sense of security, and greater confidence in my own abilities. Her warmth and human support also meant a great deal to me, particularly during the process of integrating into Croatian society. Thanks to this, I felt more accepted, secure, and encouraged to continue building my life and career in Croatia. The professional and personal support complemented each other naturally, making every meeting with my mentor both useful and incredibly valuable. It is difficult to put into words just how grateful I am for this experience and for getting to know her. This program is defined not only by its high-quality content but, above all, by the exceptional people who approach it with professionalism, sincerity, openness, and heart. My heartfelt thanks to everyone (P.K.S.)

In that way, the support extended beyond business knowledge to include orientation in areas such as administrative procedures, navigating everyday life, enrolling children in school, and connecting with relevant people and networks in Croatia. At the same time, all mentors brought relevant entrepreneurial experience, ensuring that participants received practical, business-oriented guidance grounded in real-world experience. Importantly, one third of the mentors also had lived migration experience, enabling them to bring an additional perspective and understanding of the challenges faced by participants with similar backgrounds. Overall, the mentoring model

therefore functioned as a **multidimensional support** mechanism, combining entrepreneurial expertise, personalised guidance, confidence-building, practical orientation, and opportunities for social connection and integration.

6. From learning to tangible business action

One of the strongest pieces of evidence of the programme's practical impact comes from the **concrete changes and outputs that participants were able to achieve during the programme itself**.

Participants identified **several tangible results** directly connected to their participation, including:

- development of a new business website;
- new communication and promotional materials;
- development of new sales tools and channels;
- clearer business and revenue planning;
- new approaches to branding and positioning;
- expanded professional networks;
- a new international client/cooperation enquiry for next year; and
- recruitment of new employees.

These examples demonstrate that the programme generated impact **beyond knowledge acquisition or self-reported satisfaction**. Participants were able to translate learning, mentoring and reflection into practical changes in their businesses.

The development of a new website, for example, was linked to improved visibility, more professional presentation and easier access for potential clients.

These outcomes provide particularly valuable evidence of the programme's **action-oriented nature**: participants did not simply report that they had learned something; they described how they used that learning to change their businesses and pursue new opportunities.

7. Personal development, belonging and integration

Participants described gaining a stronger sense of confidence, support and belonging, with the programme providing a space in which they could exchange experiences and

feel connected to others. For some participants, the relationship with mentors provided meaningful personal support alongside professional development.

“It was a lovely time spent with the mentors; I really grew fond of (mentor's name), who helped me a great deal with my personal struggles and gave me immense support and belief in myself” (P.A.M.).

This is particularly significant in the context of Ukrainian refugee entrepreneurs who are navigating both entrepreneurial challenges and the wider process of establishing themselves in Croatian society.

The programme therefore appears to have created value not only through entrepreneurial capacity-building but also through **connection, encouragement, belonging and increased confidence in participants’ ability to move forward**.

The most valuable evidence of the programme’s impact comes from **qualitative data, including participants’ testimonies and evaluation feedback**, complemented by self-assessment data collected through a Likert scale. Participants’ average self-assessed level per topic involved scores from 2 to 5 after the programme, where 5 represents the highest level. The evidence presented in this report offers a clearer picture of **what changed and how the programme contributed to these changes**. This is particularly relevant as self-assessment of baseline levels can vary between participants and may sometimes result in a relatively high starting score, even where significant progress was subsequently achieved. Participants’ testimonies as qualitative data therefore provide essential context for interpreting the quantitative results and capturing changes that may not be fully reflected in the numerical assessment.

Entrepreneurial Acceleration “Zlet” in National Media

The **Zlet Acceleration** programme also received national **media coverage**. One of the acceleration programme's participants and one of its mentors were hosted on [Zona](#)

[360](#), a Croatian Radio Television (HRT) programme, where they discussed the **HumanityHub** project, the *Zlet Acceleration* programme, integration of the Ukrainian refugees fleeing after the war and ambitions of Ukrainian refugees in Croatia. The [broadcast](#) aired on **25 August 2026**, extending the visibility of the programme and its beneficiaries beyond the direct programme community.



Photo 3. Programme participant (right) and one of the mentors (left) from Acceleration on Croatian Radio Television

In this way, the Acceleration Programme and WP9 activities went beyond the scope initially planned under the Grant Agreement, raising awareness, and generating tangible outcomes for participating entrepreneurs.

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

No respondent reported dissatisfaction with the programme's content, delivery team or mentoring, and most respondents explicitly **stated they had not experienced any significant negative aspects**. The challenges that were raised were consistent and practical rather than related to content quality:

- **Time constraints and participants' personal circumstances affected their ability to participate actively throughout the programme:** the challenge was that the intensive programme competed with participants' existing business and personal obligations, making it difficult for some to engage as fully or as consistently as they would have liked, and to complete tasks on time during their business's peak season.
- **Depth of individual support and networking:** The programme's intensive format and focused timeframe were implemented during the summer months, a period that is particularly relevant for many participating businesses due to seasonal variations in customer demand and business activity. This context resulted in different levels of availability among participants and their depth of engagement, while the programme nevertheless provided a focused opportunity to strengthen their knowledge and skills alongside their ongoing business activities. However, participants highlighted the practical examples and networking opportunities as among the most valuable aspects of the programme. Despite the positive feedback and outcomes achieved, participants indicated a continued need for networking and establishing business connections. These findings provide useful guidance for further developing and strengthening future editions of the programme. Below, the illustrative qualitative data that demonstrate this are highlighted:

“The ZLET program was very beneficial to me and gave me greater confidence in developing my own business in Croatia. I particularly valued the mentors' practical advice and the opportunity to exchange experiences. In the future, I would like to see even more one-on-one work with mentors addressing the specific challenges faced by each entrepreneur. Thank you to the entire team for the support, knowledge, and motivation” (P.N.P.).

Consistent with these findings, all satisfaction scores remained at 7 or above (7-10), indicating that these challenges affected the intensity of participants' engagement rather than their overall assessment of the programme's value.

As a pilot testing an innovative social-innovation approach with a new target group, the Acceleration Programme generated **valuable lessons for future editions**, while also demonstrating that participants who were able to engage fully and consistently gained substantial value from the programme. This highlighted an important balance for future editions: maintaining the intensity and quality of support that enables meaningful change, while creating sufficient flexibility to accommodate the realities of participants' lives and businesses.

The implementation and evaluation process generated **several key recommendations for future programmes**. **First, participant recruitment and engagement require careful consideration of participants' different levels of technical literacy, availability, and readiness to engage**. Some participants had limited digital skills or found it difficult to maintain full engagement throughout the four-month programme due to work, family, and other life circumstances. Longer implementation periods, recorded sessions, catch-up materials, and flexible participation options could help sustain engagement. **Second, managing expectations from the outset is essential**, particularly when providing individualised business support and promotional materials. Clear communication about the scope, process, timelines, and expected outputs can help align participant expectations with available resources. **Third, localisation emerged as a particularly important element**. While registering a company is a legal act, becoming an entrepreneur is also a social and cultural process. Beyond transferring business knowledge and skills, the programme needs to make visible and explain business practices, communication patterns, positioning, wording, and tone that local entrepreneurs often acquire implicitly through their social and professional environment. These practices can differ significantly between Ukraine and Croatia and may also vary at local and regional levels within Croatia. **Finally, the evaluation**

confirmed the value of practical learning and networking. Participants consistently valued practical examples, real-life business guidance, and opportunities to build connections. Maintaining the alumni relationship, including continued access to selected recordings, materials, mentor consultations and AG expertise, provides a relatively low-cost opportunity to extend and deepen the programme's impact. Future programmes should therefore allow more time for practical application, peer exchange, and networking alongside structured business training.

Conclusion

To conclude, evaluation results present a **highly positive and multidimensional picture of programme impact.** The changes reported by participants extend across four closely connected areas: **entrepreneurial mindset and confidence; strategic and business-management capabilities;** the ability to think about their service and/or product, including their potential relevance and contribution within the Croatian entrepreneurial context; **professional networks and social capital; knowledge of Croatian business culture; and tangible business action and opportunities.**

The evidence therefore points to a programme that delivered **more than a conventional training experience.** Zlet created an environment in which participants could reflect on their businesses, receive tailored expert and mentoring support, test ideas, develop new relationships and translate learning into practical entrepreneurial action.

Overall, participants' testimonies indicate that the Acceleration Programme contributed to a meaningful strengthening of **entrepreneurial capability, confidence, strategic orientation, integration and business development.** While participants had different levels of availability and engagement, and not all were able to participate fully or make use of the programme's full potential due to other professional and personal commitments, the feedback points to tangible progress across these areas. The presence of concrete achievements already emerging during the four-month programme further suggests that the programme was beginning to translate into practical changes in participants' businesses and professional lives.

The development of websites and promotional materials contributed to increasing participants' visibility and supported their economic and social integration, both as **business owners and as Ukrainian refugees building their professional lives in Croatia**. These outputs provided participants with practical tools to present their businesses more effectively and strengthen their presence in the local market. In this way, the programme addressed some of the challenges participants faced, including limited resources for developing their business presence, limited familiarity with the Croatian market, and the need to establish relevant local business connections. **Through mentoring and peer support, participants gained greater familiarity with the Croatian business environment and opportunities to build professional connections, supporting their ongoing integration and business development.**

Lastly, all beneficiaries of this **Zlet Acceleration** Programme are now also part of the **ACT Group Alumni Network**, giving them an ongoing opportunity to stay connected, exchange experiences, and continue working with **peers and mentors** beyond the programme, further supporting the sustainability and long-term development of the impact achieved.



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