



E-COURSE “LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS MANAGEMENT-7”: RESULTS’ ANALYSIS

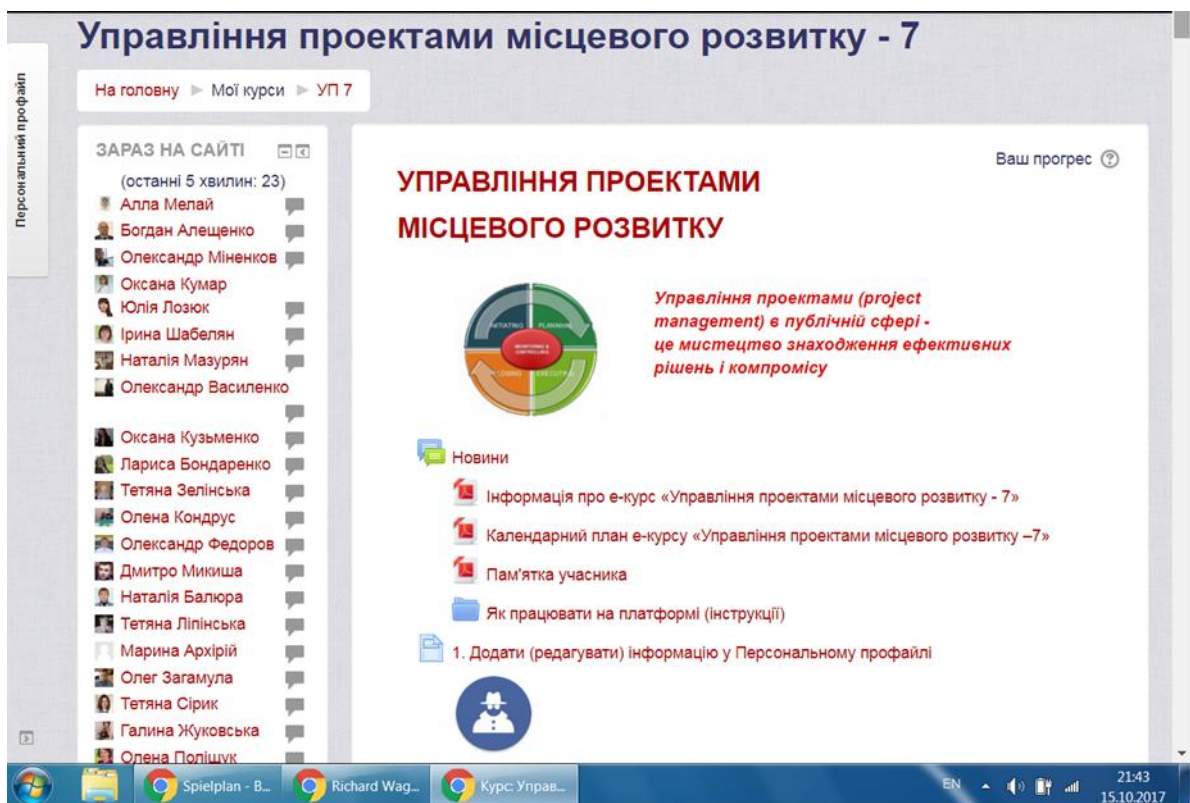


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November 2017 marked the completion of the *on-line course “Local Development Projects Management-7” (PM-7)* which is the annual, most known and awaited learning event within the Community of Practice (CoP) for Local Development at <http://udl.despro.org.ua/>. Just like all previous courses, none of which followed the trodden path, this course was not an exception. And this means that the launch of such a broad-scale and ambitious on-line learning event, which involves between 500 and 800 participants each year, was preceded by the meticulously planned work of the team of tutors, experts, facilitators and administrators, as well as a pilot testing of the entire course before the enrollment of the participants.

Each year the course is improved, instructional techniques are refined, the participants’ preferences are taken into account, and thus the educational design is approaching the needs of our target audience – those who look for an effective project solution of their community problems, who need to know what the ‘good project’ is and how to prepare it, what limitations and stages exist, and who are eager to develop a competitive project proposal in order to raise funding and to mobilize the community.

The latest course attracted 893 participants, because the topic of project management remains extremely relevant for many. After getting acquainted with the course syllabus and the learning mode 725 participants actually entered the course by completing the Admission Questionnaire.

Усі учасники:893

Ім'я:

Прізвище:

Сторінка: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 ... 45 (Далі)

Фото користувача	Ім'я / Прізвище	Населений пункт	Країна	Останній вхід на курс
	Світлана Сербін	Новомар'ївка	Україна	11 сек
	Інна Холодецька	Вишневе	Україна	12 сек
	Альона Гречишкіна	Северодонецьк	Україна	55 сек
	Наталія Озерянська	Трикрати	Україна	1 хв 1 сек
	Олег Квас	смт.Володимирець (Рівненська область)	Україна	1 хв 20 сек
	Тетяна Забейворота	Золочів	Україна	1 хв 40 сек
	Валентина Вікторівна Рачкован	Новоукраїнська міська ОТГ	Україна	2 хв 1 сек
	Нінель Криворучко	Запоріжжя	Україна	2 хв 17 сек
	Ірина Прищепа	Irshansk	Україна	2 хв 24 сек

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ЗАРАЗ НА САЙТІ
 (останні 5 хвилин: 18)

- Світлана Сербін
- Інна Холодецька
- Альона Гречишкіна
- Наталія Озерянська
- Олег Квас
- Тетяна Забейворота
- Валентина Вікторівна Рачкован
- Нінель Криворучко

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Participants typically spend 10-12 hours weekly on-line receiving timely and productive feedback from tutors, having extensive opportunities for horizontal communications, access to consultations from experts and high-quality learning materials.

216 participants (54% of which represent amalgamated communities) successfully completed the *on-line course “Local Development Projects Management-7” (PM-7)* and prepared their local development projects reviewed by peers and tutors/experts.

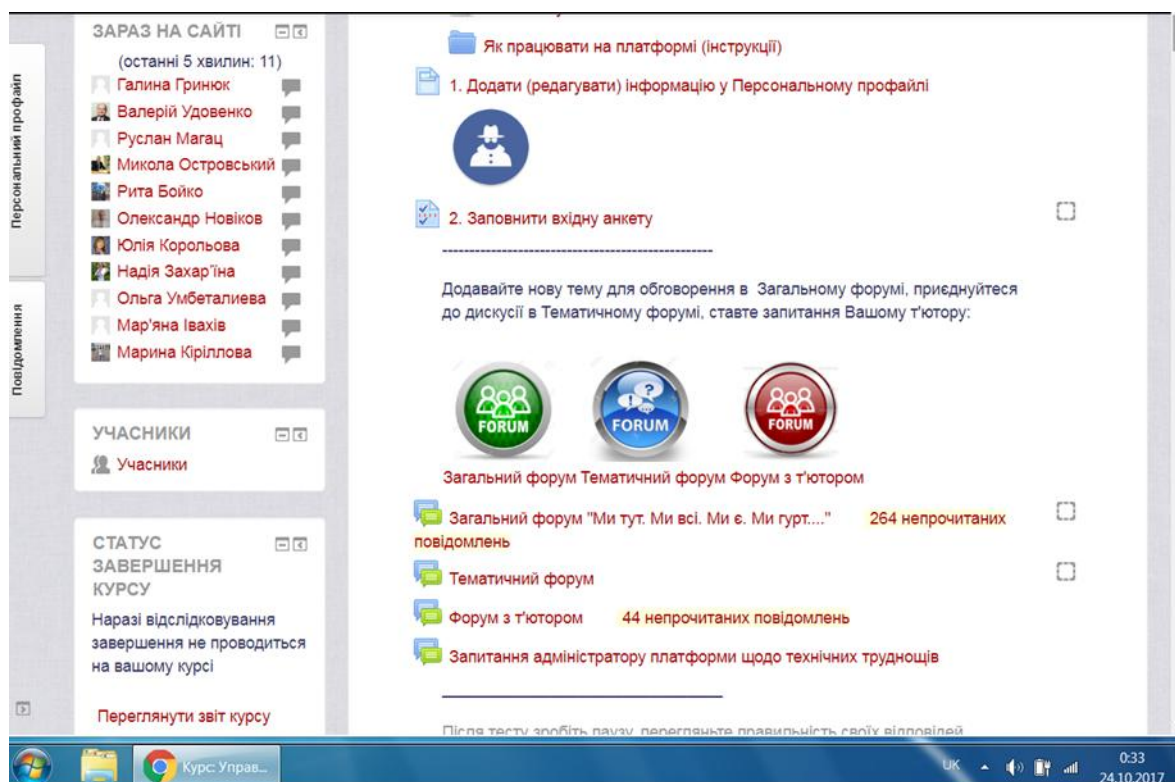
1. THE COURSE SYLLABUS

The course syllabus consisted of 5 modules, and the structure of each module included the following elements:

LEARNING MATERIALS - presentations, references, web links (basic and additional ones, for in-depth study, downloadable).

COMMUNICATION TOOLS for participants to stay in touch with each other as well as with tutors, experts, and facilitators - for obtaining information, exchanging experience and finding peers. For this purpose, the following Forums were proposed:

News Forum, Technical Forum, Tutor's Forum, which were open throughout the e-course; "Consulting Room" Forum, where preparation of project concepts was discussed;



Forum for sharing experiences on "How to Present a Project", where participants wrote about their experience of presenting projects to stakeholders and sponsors, provided their recommendations on how to make an effective presentation in order to attract new partners, to make as many people as possible loyal to their project, and to mobilize the community.

During the e-course, the participants also actively communicated in specific topic-related forums that were opened up every week:

- I. Project activity, me and my community;
- II. Resources for project implementation and their sources;
- III. Risks of project implementation: threats or opportunities;
- IV. I need a project, who can prepare it for me and how much will it cost?

Also, during the last week of training, the participants were invited to share their impressions of the e-course and the learning process.

The participants had an opportunity to easily track all new and/or unread messages in forums.

TESTING – the trainees took on-line tests on module materials (except for Module 5). Access to the next module was opened provided the participant received the passing score (not less than 5 points out of max. 10).

This year, somewhat different way of passing tests and evaluating the results was offered: the participants had an unlimited number of attempts to pass each test, but as the final result, the average score of all attempts was included in the gradebook. The tests contained 10 questions generated by the system from the base of 20 questions in a random manner, and the answers were also mixed each time. The time limit for passing the test was 30 minutes. The participants got access to take the next attempt after 30 minutes.

Another incentive for participants to take additional attempts and try to improve their score was a constant (on-line) update of the ranking of participants based on the results of each test on the main page of the e-course. After passing all the modules, the participant completed the final test, which contained 20 questions on the materials of the entire course. And when access to all tests was closed, the participants were able to see in detail the results of all their attempts and to compare their answers with the correct variant.

In the fifth module, after the theoretical part, the participants were asked to share in the forum the experience of presenting their project to the stakeholders.

The content of the e-course modules was related to the following topics and issues:

MODULE 1. Project Management in Public Sphere

What is a project? Is this what I want to do, a project? What is the difference between strategic, operational and project activities, between functional management and project management? How are the local development strategies and local development projects linked? Why should local development projects lead to system transformations? How can we identify the local development problem, and determine its relevance? How can we consider alternatives to solving the problem? How do we formulate the project goal and its name? Who are the key stakeholders of the project and how can we identify them? Where should we begin the preparation of the project concept?

MODULE 2. Target Groups, Project Idea, its Results and Product

How can we identify target groups and beneficiaries among the key stakeholders in the project, and examine their needs and requirements? How can we determine the nature of the participation, and the impact of the stakeholders? What is the project innovation? What are the project products and results? How can we determine the indicators of the expected project results? Who sets the requirements for a project? What is the "Project Management Triangle": content-time/schedule-cost/resources?

MODULE 3. Fundamentals of Project Analysis and Project Planning

What is project analysis and when should it be used for local development projects? What is project planning? How can we identify the main types of project activities (work packages)? How do they relate to the project goals and project product components? What is the difference between the project outcomes, results and implications of the project activity? How can we establish and describe the links between the types of project activities/work and their groups? How should we determine the estimated duration of the project and the main stages of the project implementation over time? What are project milestones?

MODULE 4. Project Resource Planning, Risk Identification and Project Sustainability

What types of resources are required to implement the project? How can we determine the estimated cost of the project? What the main requirements are for project budgeting? What are possible sources for project financing? How can we get financial support for implementing the development project? What should we pay attention to while looking for donors/sponsors and preparing a project proposal? How can we identify project risks? How should we ensure the sustainability of project results? How can we complete the concept preparation?

MODULE 5. Presentation of the Project Concept, its Promotion and Involvement of Key Stakeholders

To whom and how should we present our project? How can we promote the project idea? How can we engage stakeholders and establish cooperation with them? Who are the project manager and the project team leader, and what competencies do they need to develop? What is a project office?

2. PRACTICAL WORKSHOP ON PREPARING A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND PEER ASSESSMENT

The 'highlight' and the main component of the course was the **PRACTICAL exercise (Workshop) on Preparing a Local Development Project Concept**, which consisted of two phases: (1) developing the concept of a local development project by each participant and presenting it to other course participants, and (2) peer assessment of the concepts: working as an expert on evaluating project concepts prepared by other participants, and providing feedback to their authors.

The peculiarity of the peer assessment was that the participants' evaluation in the role of expert was also assessed by the tutor, and that score was a part of the overall final score in the course.

The screenshot displays a web-based course interface. On the left, there is a sidebar with navigation options: 'Керування' (Management) with sub-items 'Керування курсом', 'Відрахувати мене з УП' (7), and 'Відзнаки'; 'ОСТАННІ ВІДЗНАКИ' (Last Badges) featuring a circular logo and the text 'За успішно здані тести в навчальних модулях'; and 'ПРОФ.ІНТЕРЕСИ УЧАСНИКІВ' (Participant Interests) listing 'Адміністративно-Територіальна Реформа', 'Адміністративні Послуги', and 'Активний Туризм', with a large red text overlay: 'Активізація Громади У Вирішенні Спільних'.

The main content area is titled 'ПРАКТИКУМ: Підготовка концепції проекту розвитку' (PRACTICUM: Preparation of a development project concept). The text describes the practicum's purpose: 'ПРАКТИКУМ призначений для підготовки власного проекту місцевого розвитку, взаємооцінювання учасниками концепцій проектів, обміну рекомендаціями щодо їх вдосконалення.' It states that the practicum is considered completed if a participant submits their work by 23:00 on October 15, 2017, and receives an evaluation from the tutor as an expert. A red warning message reads: '!!! Перш ніж розпочати роботу в Практикумі, наполегливо рекомендуємо детально пропрацювати 1-4 навчальні модулі. Ще раз звертаємо увагу, що на підготовку, здачу та редагування зданої концепції проекту у Вас є час до 15 жовтня, 23:00 !!!'.

An instruction section titled 'Інструкція "Як працювати в ПРАКТИКУМІ Підготовка концепції проекту розвитку"' lists the steps: 'Щоб виконати Практикум Ви маєте зробити наступні кроки: 1. Виконайте роботу з підготовки концепції власного проекту - до 15 жовтня, 23:00. Для роботи над концепцією Вам запропоновано шаблон, який необхідно завантажити на свій комп'ютер і заповнити ВСІ складові концепції, які є в шаблоні.' A red note emphasizes: 'Звертаємо Вашу увагу на те, що концепція подається виключно ЗА ШАБЛОНОМ і виключно в НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЦІЛЯХ; відповідно, всі дані мають бути максимально заповнені, хоч достовірність їх не є обов'язковою умовою.'

A green box with a question mark icon states: 'Якщо у Вас виникнуть питання під час заповнення шаблону, Ви можете отримати допомогу т'юторів у Консультаційній кімнаті.'

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with open applications: 'Курс: Управ...', 'Microsoft Po...', and a system tray showing '22:52 14.10.2017'.

Another novelty and a pleasant surprise for the participants of this e-course was the opportunity to receive additional rewards (badges) for skills they learned online:

- Badge "For Successfully Passed Tests in Modules" was received by 274 participants;
- Badge "For Openness to Communication" was received by 102 participants, who took active part in forum discussions;
- Badge "My Story of Project Presentation" was received by 37 participants who shared their experience of presenting projects to stakeholders.

Afterwards, participants have the opportunity to add the received badges to the virtual 'Open Badges Backpack' and share them as a verifiable record of their learning and achievements, for example, in their CV or profile in LinkedIn.

The assessment in the e-course was conducted in the following way:

- the participant received max. 50 points for all tests in the course;

- for active participation in the forums, the participants could receive max. 10 points from the course facilitators;
- for participation in the Practical exercise (Workshop), the participants could receive max. 40 points: for the prepared project conception of the - up to 24 points (calculated as the average grade received from two course participants), and for work as an expert during the peer assessment - up to 16 points (received from the tutor).

In order to receive an electronic certificate for successfully completing the e-course, the participant had to receive at least 50 points. The participants who received more than 70 points have also received in-print certificates from DESPRO.

As a result of their training in the e-course, the participants gained knowledge and skills in the field of local development projects management, viz.: the ability to identify local development needs, to find a project solution for implementing the community development strategy, to formulate the main components of the project concept, in particular, define its purpose, goal, product, expected results, identify project stakeholders, main project activities and stages of the project implementation, necessary resources, risks and factors to ensure sustainability of project results. And the most valuable outcome for the participants was the opportunity to improve the concept of their community development project and to exchange experiences with other participants - based on the peer assessment of project concepts (each participant, in the role of an expert, evaluated (anonymously) and gave feedback on the concepts of two participants in the course, as well as received assessments and recommendations for his/her project concept from two peers; the feedback was given according to the predefined assessment criteria).

As a result, 216 participants successfully completed their training in the PM-7 e-course, and this means that all our team has made another step towards successful implementation of projects for the development of our communities throughout Ukraine!

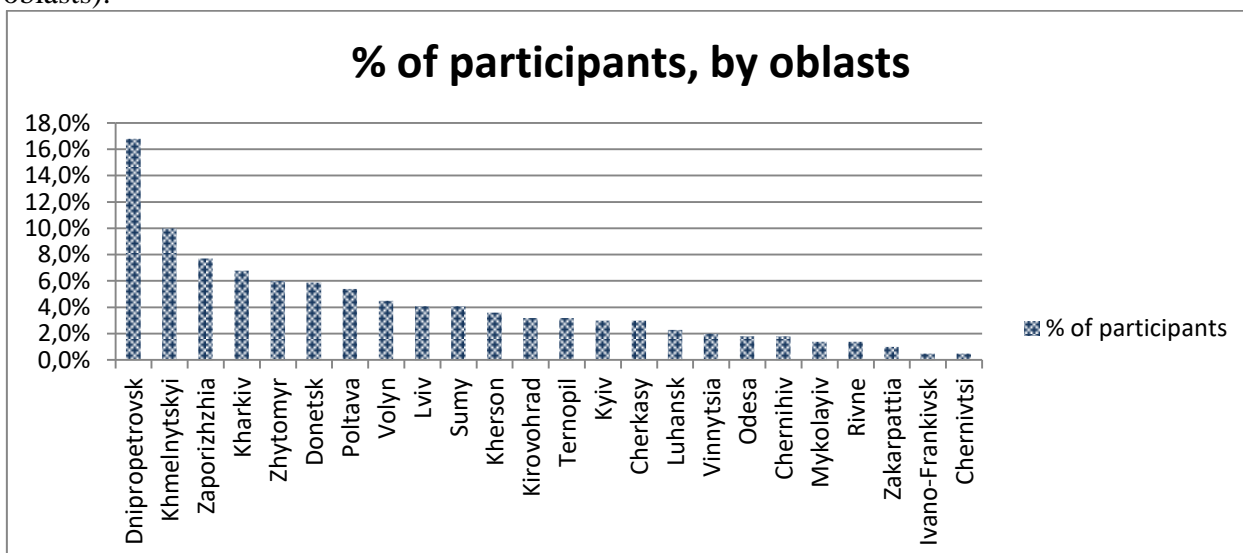
At the end of the e-course, the team of organizers thanked all participants for their active work, and invited them to fill out the Final Questionnaire and share comments in the Forum of Impressions.

It is quite symbolic that the celebration of the International Project Manager Day (November 1) closely coincided in time with the completion of the e-course.

3. INDICATORS AND DATA ANALYS

We would like to present the detailed analysis of the data on how the PM-7 e-course was taking place.

Distribution of the registered e-course participants by oblast was as follows (where Dnipropetrovsk oblast had the largest share (16.8%), followed by Khmelnytskyi (10.0%), Zaporizhzhia (7.7%), Kharkiv (6.8%), Zhytomyr (6.0%), Donetsk (5.9%), and Poltava (5.4%) oblasts):



More than half of the course participants (55%) were aged from 26 to 45.

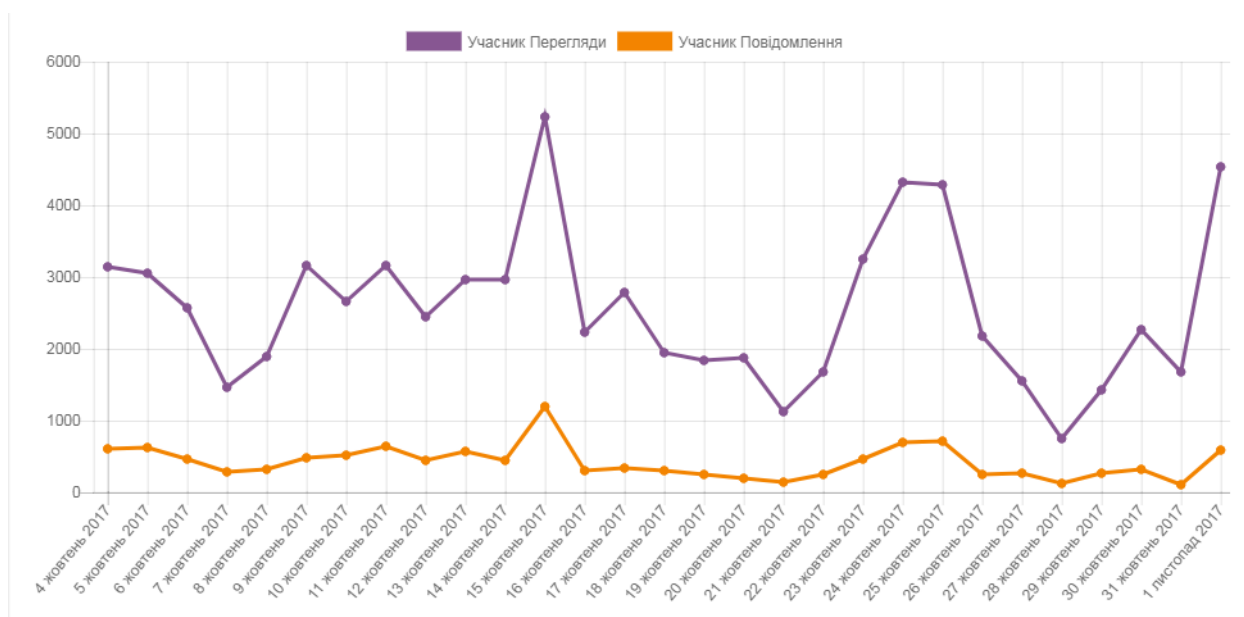
As for their place of work, most of the participants represented local self-government bodies (LSG) - the main target group of the Community of Practice and the e-course on Project Management.

For 62% of the course participants, this was the first eLearning experience on the CoP's web-platform and in the PM e-course, since they are Community members for less than a year. However, 7% of the participants are 'old-timers' who have been active in the CoP activities for more than 3 years.

70% of participants mentioned that they already had some experience in project management, namely:

as a project leader	10%
as a member of project implementation team	13%
in the working group on project development	21%
as a project initiator (author)	26%

If we have a look at the general statistics of participants' activity during the PM-7 e-course, we can see an interesting pattern: at certain points in the course there were 'perturbations' observed on the graph as peaks of activity - both by the number of views of course resources (*violet colour graph*), and by the number of posts made by the participants (*orange colour graph*):



These peaks on the graph coincide in time with the deadlines for certain tests and tasks in the Modules, the Practical exercise (Workshop), and also at the end of the course. Such behaviour of participants required special efforts on the part of the trained team of facilitators who, before each deadline, sent personal motivational messages to the participants, reminded them of deadlines, asked about possible problems etc.

Speaking about the complexity of the theoretical materials and practical tasks offered to the participants, we should look at the data obtained from the participants themselves who evaluated various elements of the e-course on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 = too complicated, and 7 = too simple:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
get a good grip on learning materials				4.6			
pass the tests				4.4			
prepare the concept			4.0				
evaluate the peers' concepts			4.2				
write recommendations for improving concepts			4.0				

This data show that the course organizers managed to reach a certain balance on the 'complicated --- simple' scale, and the average grade of various types of educational activities in the e-course was 4.24. The simplest task for the participants was to study theoretical materials of the course, and the most difficult was to prepare their own concept and write recommendations on how to improve the concepts of their peers in the course.

It is also interesting to know which elements and activities in the course, in the opinion of the participants, had the greatest practical benefit for them. As expected, the most useful were: both parts of the Practical exercise (Workshop) - preparation of project concepts and peer assessment, and learning materials prepared by tutors.

The participants equally appreciated the main motives that prompted them to work in the e-course: the desire to get an objective assessment of what they did in the course (5.9 out of max 7.0), the desire to feel part of something bigger (5.8), and the desire to do what they like to do and what they are good at (5.7).

The participants had no difficulty navigating the site; they understood the structure and logic of the e-course. In the future, organizers should pay more attention to providing quick feedback to participants so that they also always know how well they perform a task.

An important indicator of participants' absorption in the eLearning process is the time they spend in the e-course during each online session. Based on the data obtained, it is evident that most (60%) participants spent between 0.5 and 1.5 hours every time they entered the e-

course. So we can conclude that the content and proposed types of learning activities absorbed the participants, kept their attention and encouragement them to action.

While assessing the general emotional state of the e-course participants, we can observe that most of the learners felt ‘arousal’, that is, they felt ‘alert and alive’, were mobilized, and had attention concentrating. Quite often they also were able to practice the newly acquired knowledge and skills and felt that ‘everything was under control’. Besides, the course organizers can not help but enjoy the high rate of the state of the ‘flow’ among the participants who felt delighted and fully satisfied with what they were doing in the e-course, with their new skills and progress, felt freedom and joy (i.e. creativity), as well as focus and concentration on the learning activities.

The participants hardly ever felt apathy, indifference or lack of interest in learning; they were never bored, they did not consider the course content to be trivial. Another positive indication is that we observe low rates of participants’ anxiety, fear, worry, uncertainty and insecurity in the e-course.

In general, the course participants indicated the following key skills that helped them successfully complete the e-course:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • self-motivation | 10% |
| • ability to manage their own time | 9% |
| • creative thinking, generation of new ideas | 8% |
| • critical thinking | 8% |
| • positive attitude, vision of opportunities in challenges | 8% |
| • basic (user level) computer skills | 8% |
| • problem solving skills | 7% |
| • quick decision-making | 7% |
| • flexibility, ability to adapt | 6% |
| • self-mastery, ability to overcome stress | 6% |
| • active communication skills | 5% |

According to the PM-7 course participants, their training in the course contributed to the formation of the following competencies (represented below by rating, on a scale from 1 to 7):

readiness to continue training in advanced Project Management courses	6.3
ability to formulate the purpose of the project	6.2
deep understanding of the project activity, methodology, processes, methods and tools of Project Management	6.0
ability to formulate basic components of the project concept	6.0
ability to provide a description of the project product and to formulate the expected results and implications of the project	6.0
ability to improve one’s own project based on gained experience and recommendations	6.0
readiness to take on the initiative to develop a new project	6.0
ability to structure the project goals and objectives as a basis for identifying the main types of project activities (work packages) and its implementation schedule (timeline)	5.9

ability to analyze the situation	5.9
ability to formulate problems and opportunities for community development	5.9
ability to establish links between strategic priorities of community development and the purpose of the project	5.9
ability to determine the project innovation	5.9
ability to demonstrate contribution of the project to the achievement of community development goals	5.9
ability to objectively evaluate the project concept	5.9
ability to identify the main groups of stakeholders in the project, to identify their requirements for the project implementation product and processes	5.9
ability to analyze development alternatives and to justify the choice of the best one	5.8
understanding of what is the right/proper project	5.8
ability to adapt the project management methodology for use in local development projects	5.8
ability to plan a project, estimate its cost and public utility	5.8
ability to determine the amount of required project resources	5.8
ability to prepare and present the project concept	5.8
ability to think critically	5.8
readiness to implement (manage) local development projects	5.8
willingness to help others improve their projects	5.8
understanding possible ‘modernization’ of local self-government bodies through the implementation of project activity	5.7
ability to inform stakeholders and engage them	5.7
readiness to communicate with investors, sponsors, etc. on fundraising for the project	5.7
ability to adapt project management to the activities of an organization (local self-government)	5.6
understanding of the possibilities (resources, methods, tools) of local self-government for the development of territories	5.6
ability to monitor project progress and manage risks	5.6

ability to develop a project budget	5.6
readiness to lead the project management team	5.5
understanding of the formal and informal organizational structure of local self-government	5.0

4. PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

In the Final Questionnaire, the participants indicated the following *strengths* of the e-course:

- informative, thorough and consistently presented educational material, and at the same time, the course is not overburdened with information
- visibility, completeness and conciseness of information (including excellent presentations)
- reinforcement of acquired skills through tests and assignments
- the practical task gives you the opportunity to become a creator and acquire skills for writing a project concept, namely: to determine the relevance of the project and stages of its implementation, to identify risks and outline ways to eliminate them
- the opportunity to co-opt the experience of other participants of the course, try yourself as an expert and get reviews from peers
- the ability to gain practical skills in creating projects and to get practical tips in forums
- well-established communication, exchange of experience with other participants; presentations and discussions in the group
- continuous control and feedback, as well as self-examination and self-control of knowledge
- innovation, specificity, relevance, openness, consistency, gradualness (gradual passing of tasks), free-of-charge basis and affordability, simplicity, personality and efficiency, multidimensional and practical value of the e-course in which practice is closely linked with the theory, its effectiveness
- excellent interface, ability to manage blocks, design of modules on the main page
- correct and clear timeframe for the tasks to be performed
- assistance from tutors and participants in solving problems; professionalism of mentors, professional approach of the DESPRO Project team:
 - by the way, the participants highly rated the work of both tutors (3.8 points out of max 4.0) and facilitators (3.63 points out of max 4.0) in the PM-7 e-course;
 - overall work of the team that prepared and organized this course was very highly appreciated by the participants: **9.5** points (on 10-point scale)
- during the course, the facilitators supported the participants and announced deadlines
- obtaining knowledge and experience of critical thinking
- understanding new opportunities for community development
- receiving awards that prompted the participants to work even better.

Noticably, **98%** of the participants will recommend this course to their colleagues and other members of the Community of Practice.

At the same time, organizers carefully listen to the comments of the participants, who mentioned the following *drawbacks* (or rather, room for improvement), of the e-course:

- on the one hand, some participants pointed out insufficient time to process all the materials and to write a project; but on the other hand, others believed that the course lasted too long, that it was necessary to set a clear time frame for each module; and those participants who quickly mastered the educational material in theoretical modules noted that there was a big gap between the theoretical part and the the Practical exercise (Workshop)
- given the large number of participants and, consequently, messages in the forums, it is advisable to form groups of interest depending on the objectives of training

- those participants who received very contradictory assessments for their project concept from peers would like to receive an expert assessment as well
- a suggestion to add video lectures, at least one videoconference with the tutor, as well as videos of presenting the project to investors and other stakeholders
- a suggestion to add business games
- a suggestion to add intermediate practical tasks, which can be further constructed into the final task
- a suggestion to elaborate the sustainability assessment methodology, SMART, and to consider the formation of a project budget
- a suggestion to add other project templates so that course participants could adapt them to their needs
- it would be advisable to provide information about typical errors in projects
- lack of recommendations for developing projects to be submitted to specific contests (eg, SFRD, EIB, EU, etc.)
- insufficient dissemination of information about the e-course; it is worthwhile for more people to learn and improve their practical skills in this area.

These comments and suggestions from the participants lead to the idea of developing in future highly specialized e-courses on various aspects of Project Management and for different target audiences.

In conclusion, we would like to present some comments from the participants that inspire our entire team for further work on improving and popularizing the e-course on Project Management for local development:

- You can always do something better, but is it really necessary?) You have a very cool course, and a superb team. It was interesting, informative, I am glad that I met with you, I have a wonderful experience.
- Thanks to all Community members, tutors and experts for the meaningful training on the platform! The main thing is the exchange of experience gained by the participants. Thank you for sharing your materials, instructions and projects. I wish all participants to be able to realize the knowledge that we have gained and bring benefits to our community!
- Thank you all for the opportunity to get new knowledge and for communication! The course materials are very valuable to me personally. The eLearning format is very successful and allows you to combine theory with practice. I wish you success, enthusiasm, and I look forward to our new 'meeting'!
- Communication in the forums is a 'zool'! New knowledge, new information, new contacts, which we then introduce at work! During the conversations we expressed our thoughts and ideas. And then we developed them. The experience of others is interesting and informative!
- I am delighted with the fact that I received very valuable additional knowledge and competence in fundraising in order to develop my own village, formed my 'piggybank' of materials necessary for the development and implementation of future projects, received a strong motivation for the project activity. I agree that knowledge is strength!
- Thank you for your great commitment while working with us. It is very noticeable how much of your work is invested in this course. It brings out only positive emotions and a desire to work in such a way as to deliver performance in our communities.