

# SCOPE: Skills Recognition, Capacity Building, and Professional Development for the Third Sector

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 4  
SCOPE PROJECT STUDY



PROJECT NUMBER: 2018-1-IE01-KA202-038806

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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

***“The third sector, consisting of civil society associations, foundations, volunteers, and other citizen organisations and activities, offers unique renewable and sustainable resources for social and economic problem-solving, democracy and civic engagement in Europe. In times of social and economic distress and enormous pressures on governmental budgets this sector is even more important than usual – not as an alternative to government but as a fully-fledged partner in the effort to promote economic development, active citizenship and social cohesion in Europe<sup>1</sup>.”***

- Third Sector Impact Project

It is widely acknowledged that a healthy, thriving, transparent and informed third sector is the vehicle for achieving common European goals, and particularly the Europe 2020 goals, including:

- *Driving engaged and ethical research and development, particularly those addressing key societal challenges*
- *Awareness, education, and community action around climate change, conservation, and natural heritage*
- *Promoting education and providing services that support school completion and advancement*
- *Ending poverty and social exclusion*

From small local action groups fighting social exclusion to the largest organisations addressing international issues, the third sector is imperative in putting high-level policy into practice at community level. It is the invisible infrastructure of our society that is often overlooked and misunderstood.

***Community level is where real change happens and where high-level policy set at EU or national level takes effect.***

The partners involved in this project are all organisations whose purpose is to support and serve the third sector in our respective countries. It is our job to provide the training, support, advice and advocacy they need so that they can do what they do best – create positive change in communities. We have the network and expertise to reach this invisible infrastructure that plays such a vital role in cultivating a better future for Europe. However we are often met with challenges in achieving our mission. The following are the five key challenges identified specifically around the provision of training that this project aimed to address:

- 1. Geographical** – *although we do as much regional work as possible for our rural members, we are urban-based organisations.*
- 2. Financial** – *we, like the charities we represent, are reliant on funding to provide training, which makes it a challenge to offer nationwide training opportunities.*
- 3. Accessibility** – *although we are diligent in making sure our training venues are accessible, it can still be challenging for those with disabilities or other barriers to travel for training.*

**4. Voluntary nature of the sector** – many of the people we support are volunteers who do not necessarily have the time or resources to attend training.

**5. Validation** – our sector is rich with staff and volunteers who possess invaluable skills and expertise that support thriving communities in our respective partner countries. However communicating those skills, which are often gained through informal and non-formal learning, can be a challenge that impedes job mobility and employability in our sector.

*SCOPE: Skills Recognition, Capacity Building, and Professional Development for the Third Sector* allowed us to move a suite of introductory learning content online so that we can reach more of our members in an easily accessible, time and location flexible way. An online platform housed the learning content and will be a sustainable tool for each partner to continue to develop and update through further EU and national funding. This addressed challenges 1 – 4 outlined above.

A validation system developed by experts in the field now serves as a means of recognising and communicating the non-formal learning that takes place using the online platform. This addressed challenge 5 outlined above.

Finally, the modules, platform and validation system went through a rigorous piloting process to valorise the project outputs. The result is this project study, which provides a guide to the approach, methodology, pilot, and results of this project. It serves as a model for other organisations to share and as a foundation for further online and blended learning projects in each partner country and the wider EU.

This project is just one step in the ongoing journey of providing our sector with a variety of online training so that we can support more participants with traditionally fewer opportunities to access free, high quality, validated learning at a time and location that suits them.



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# SCOPE PROJECT OVERVIEW

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## SCOPE PROJECT OVERVIEW

The fundamental innovation in the *SCOPE: Skills Recognition, Capacity Building, and Professional Development for the Third Sector* project was straightforward: a need was identified (more accessible training resources and skills recognition for the third sector) and then an idea was born to address that gap (move learning online to increase accessibility and create a non-formal skills validation system).

The idea, however, is not enough on its own. To realise our objective, we took existing innovation—online learning and digital badges—and adapted them for our sector. We assembled a consortium of third sector representative bodies to shape further innovation and utilise their expertise and networks to help increase project reach and impact across Europe. Through this, we were able to achieve ambitious targets of short-term impact within the project lifetime, as outlined below in the ‘Pilot Results’ section.

Establishing the long-term impact of the SCOPE project is now vital in providing a foundation for the sustainability of the project beyond the funding period. To maximise the impact of SCOPE and to provide opportunities for further development of the materials, this project study has been produced to serve as a best practice model for the project partners and the wider third sector.

### Partners

#### **The Wheel (Ireland) – Coordinator and leader of IO1 SCOPE Modules**

The Wheel is Ireland’s national association for community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises. It has been a third sector leader for over 20 years, providing a series of support programmes including public policy and advocacy, networking, training and development, and information. With over 1800 members, it is connected through membership to the third sector and the communities they represent throughout Ireland and play a vital role in supporting them to achieve social impact.

#### **An Cosán (Ireland) – Partner and leader of IO2 SCOPE Platform**

An Cosán Virtual Community College (VCC) is a social enterprise set up to scale the work of An Cosán, a community education centre that has served the community of Tallaght West for over thirty years. An Cosán provides a wide variety of educational programmes for all age groups, including early years education and care, and community education, to empower through education and support social transformation. An Cosán has blended learning specialists who combine face-to-face workshops with online lectures and assignments.

#### **The Sivis Study Centre (Finland) – Partner and leader of IO3 SCOPE Validation System**

The Sivis Study Centre, with 75 NGO members, specialises in training both volunteers and third sector employees. The Centre’s goal is to be a leading expert in supporting learning and education in the voluntary sector in order to build a thriving society. Mainly funded and monitored by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, it provides training in the fields of active citizenship, NGO management, training skills, ICT skills and various other areas, and provide educational support and guidance, study circle activities, projects, R&D activities, publications, and arts event management services, as well as continuing professional education to third sector organisations.

### **The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (Scotland) - Partner and leader of IO4 SCOPE Project Study**

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national body for charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises in Scotland. It supports and represents various types of organisations operating across the third sector, from small volunteer-led local community groups, to large internationally renowned organisations. With over 2,000 members, SCVO has a layered approach to providing information, resources, support and training for members and other individuals working or volunteering in the third sector, including trustees who have a particular need for easy-to-access, good quality governance support.

### **AKÜ: Estonian Roundtable for Sustainable Development (Estonia) - Partner and leader of joint staff training event**

Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation (AKÜ) is an independent not-for-profit coalition of non-governmental organisations that work in the field of development cooperation, global citizenship education, advocacy, and sustainable development. AKÜ is a strategic partner for the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a consultant for the state in the field of development cooperation, global citizenship education, and sustainable development. It also provides workshops and consultancy for private sector companies as well as for the wider public on the Sustainable Development Goals and other global issues.

### **CAL: Civic Alliance Latvia (Latvia) - Partner and leader of dissemination activities**

As the main NGO umbrella organisation in Latvia, Civic Alliance Latvia (CAL) systematically works on issues strengthening the financial sustainability of the Latvian third sector. In the Baltic states, there is no academic education in NGO management and therefore a need to provide the third sector with management skills to ensure professional NGO management and ensure that third sector groups are equipped to meet their strategic objectives and fulfil their social mission. Through this project and others, Civic Alliance Latvia has accumulated a comprehensive set of methods and models for NGO management.

## **Primary Target Group**

The primary target group for the SCOPE project was staff of small (one to five staff) third sector organisations in need of capacity building, skills development and recognition of non-formal learning, particularly those who are socially excluded in such a way that it is difficult for them to access training opportunities. Although these individuals are the bedrock of our sector and are the most in need of our support, they are also the most challenging to reach and, fundamentally, this project is about addressing this imbalance.

In addition to achieving significant impact for our primary target group mentioned above, we also aimed to bring about the following impact in the wider third sector, and in the partner organisations and project stakeholders:

- *Third sector organisations are adequately resourced, supported and appropriately recognised and valued for the contribution they make in achieving a more just and equal society and have the capacity and capability to effect positive social change.*
- *The partners have a valuable, sustainable and valorised resource to continue to drive accessible professional development and skills recognition in the sector through eLearning*
- *The partners are part of an enduring European network of organisations working for third sector organisations to continue to collaborate and exchange best practice and innovation.*

## Intellectual Outputs

This project was built around four key intellectual outputs (IOs). An intellectual output is “an activity that results in tangible and meaningful outcomes such as publications and course materials”<sup>2</sup>. The outputs produced were all key steps to realising our project objective. Each IO had a project leader (see ‘Partners’ section above) but all partners fed into each one, sharing insight and learning from their own experience and their national context and providing feedback on quality and usability, while also providing content and translation where necessary.

### IO1 SCOPE Modules

The courses chosen to launch this eLearning offer was based on the training and advice demands of the partners’ membership, such as the most common training needs of our specific target group and which areas consume the majority of our own staff time in terms of training and helpdesk services that we provide for the third sector and, therefore, will have the greatest impact for our organisations.

The learning content - five basic modules covering Governance, Finance, Fundraising, Communications and Risk - were designed to address these needs so that we could better serve our members and increase the capacity of the third sector to run efficiently and effectively. We utilised the learning outcome approach promoted by [Cedefop](#) throughout module development.

### IO2 SCOPE Platform

A successful eLearning model was identified in An Cosán’s Virtual Community College that would work for our sector. An Cosán is a community organisation and understands the needs and challenges inherent to the third sector. Their vision is to bring about social equality and an end to poverty through education using online and mobile technology. The eLearning platform’s potential was shared with partners and all partners contributed to its development at all stages to ensure its usability in relation to navigation, accessibility and readability of text.

### IO3 SCOPE Validation System

The SCOPE programme developed a framework for validating informally (learning by doing) and non-formally (learning through coursework) acquired organisational skills and competences among third sector staff. The competences are directly related to the learning content.

The framework included descriptions of relevant skills related to the learning content and the criteria outlining the extent to which individuals need to be able to demonstrate these competences to be validated, as well as tools for describing and displaying the skills, e.g. to future employers.

The certification tool used is [Open Badges](#), which are digital badges displaying data about the aforementioned criteria and where the learner can also include evidence of their skills. Individuals can include their validated skills in the profiles of well recognised European tools such as the Europass CV tools and social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

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## IO4 SCOPE Project Study

The tangible output from this IO is this project study. It is intended to be a replicable, best practice model that provides a guide to the future sustainability and exploitation of the platform for the partners and for the wider third sector. To achieve this, we present here our project, its methodology, its approach and the results of a thorough pilot, which took place in two phases over the last year of the project. For analysis of these processes and results, we offer strategies for further development, our strategies for sustainability and exploitation, and our key learnings from the project.

The project study will be disseminated widely in each partner's national third sector and in the European third sector overall to ultimately increase engagement in the final outputs, share learning, and encourage other stakeholders to use this valorised project approach for their own projects.

## Staff Training Event

At the end of the first year of the project, we had produced versions of IOs 1 – 3 that were ready for the first pilot. After an intensive year of development, we held a staff training event in Estonia to ensure that partners were up to date on all aspects of the outputs and ready to implement the pilot in their country. Additional staff beyond the project managers and content developers were brought in and trained in using the IOs so that in each partner organisation there was sufficient staff capacity to deliver the pilot in full and sustain the project beyond its lifetime, even in the event of staff changes.

The staff training event gave staff from each organisation the option to meet their counterparts from the partner organisations, exchange best practice, build networks, and discuss the exploitation of the pilot and the project outputs.

## Dissemination

To maximise the impact of the SCOPE project and reach our primary target group, dissemination of the project—including its approach, methodology and results via this project study—was crucial. The project partners recognised that multipliers who were key to maximising impact included:

- *Other third sector organisations who can also utilise the training materials, platform, and validation system and benefit from increased capacity, skills, skills recognition, job mobility, and employability as a result.*
- *Higher Education Institute and eLearning organisations that work with third sector staff who can integrate the platform and approach into their curricula.*
- *Other third sector representative bodies and stakeholders who can recommend the resource to their members with similar needs.*

Our main dissemination event of the entire project are the multiplier events. Originally these were planned to be full-day national conferences, with a main European conference taking place in Dublin. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to change these plans and are now holding shorter, online sessions on 15 September 2020. Adjusted agendas were circulated and plans were put in place to prevent loss of impact of the multiplier events when it became clear that face-to-face events were not going to be possible within the project lifetime. The partners agreed to the change of plans and set about promoting their multipliers. As with all dissemination activities, our key target group are 'multipliers' — stakeholders who have the potential to increase project impact through promoting the project in their own networks. Partners will collect feedback from their multiplier events to track quality and impact.



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# METHODOLOGY

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## METHODOLOGY

This SCOPE project was the first time that all partners worked together. The partners involved were chosen for the specific strengths and expertise they were uniquely placed to bring to the project as well as their investment in the project goals for their own country's third sector. Prior to commencement of the project, The Wheel, as the coordinating partner, met with each partner organisation to ensure:

- *The consortium was comprised of experienced project managers with good English to facilitate easy communication*
- *Full understanding among the partners of individual roles and responsibilities had been established before agreeing to the project*
- *The outputs, schedule, and budget had been properly and realistically planned and agreed upon by the partners.*

Building on this groundwork, it was important to prioritise strong project management and quality control throughout the SCOPE project. The coordinator, with the support of each partner, focused on five key principles to ensure the successful implementation and delivery of the project:

1. Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities
2. Achievable and agreed deadlines for each Intellectual Output (IO)
3. Regular reporting and monitoring
4. Open and honest internal communications
5. Flexible and adaptive partnership.

### 1. Clear understanding of roles and responsibilities

As this project was the first time for all partners to work together, and the first time for some partners to collaborate in an Erasmus+ project, the initial meeting in Dublin was extremely important for building relationships and developing workable structures for the consortium. The agenda for the first meeting focused on getting to know one another, exploring the Intellectual Outputs and the role of each partner, communications and conflict resolution, quality assurance, reporting and the project management process. The basis of our work was understanding and agreement; this was established from day one of the project and carried on for the duration and is evident through the collaboration that took place to ensure that this project met the needs of the target audience in all partner countries.

It was important that we maximised our transnational meetings and joint training event as the group met in person only three\* times over two years. The coordinator monitored project activity and reviewed it with the partnership during each meeting. The coordinator allocated time at each meeting to review project management processes, risks, upcoming deadlines and goal setting. The consortium drafted a risk register and this was adapted as new risks were identified throughout the project.

Internal risks can include staff changes and unforeseen costs and delays. Staff changes cannot be prevented but can be accommodated for by thorough project management processes that have already been described — i.e. work plans, timelines and the Project Management Handbook - which should allow for easy handover in the event of staff change. There were a number of staff changes over the course of the project

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\*Partners should have met in person four times, but the final partner meeting was moved online due to the Coronavirus.

but new project members were easily inducted as the coordinator had the tools like the Handbook in place to support new members. New project members could also refer to the quarterly reports submitted by their predecessors to familiarise themselves with the project and the role that their organisation played to date.

## **2. Achievable and agreed deadlines for each Intellectual Output (IO)**

Year One of the SCOPE project focused heavily on developing the learning content (IO1), user platform and website (IO2) and validation system (IO3). We developed five eLearning modules and digital badges, and these were adapted and translated into four languages; Latvian, Estonian, Finnish and two English versions to suit the Irish target audience and the Scottish target audience. Planning and close monitoring were key to achieving our ambitious workload. Year Two of the project focused on piloting the training programme and the project study (IO4). The group devised a timeline of activities and worked to meet the agreed deadlines, with all partners clear on the input required of them. The coordinator supported the partnership with regular check-ins and reminders ahead of deadlines and we utilised Trello and Google docs to share documents and feedback. The leader of each IO took responsibility for establishing a work plan in order to reach our goals. Each IO leader suggested timelines that were approved by the partnership.

## **3. Regular reporting and monitoring**

Partners submitted quarterly activity reports and timesheets to the coordinator. This allowed the coordinator to monitor activity and financial matters on a regular basis. These quarterly reports ensured partners were on track with their workload and their financial reporting. They also contributed greatly to the interim and final report of the project. Partners also submitted bi-annual dissemination reports, with activities tracked against the goals set out in the proposal.

Partners completed and submitted an anonymous survey following each transnational meeting and the joint training event. These surveys allowed the coordinator to monitor the level of satisfaction among partners in terms of their experience of the project management processes and provide clarity on goals going forward.

## **4. Open and honest internal communications**

Our aim was to create a supportive but well-structured atmosphere in which to realise our project. If an issue arose, the goal was always to de-escalate a situation and resolve it before moving on to the next step. A flagging system was put in place for this project as part of our risk prevention strategy. If a partner was struggling with a particular project task, there was an open-door policy of “flagging” these challenges with the appropriate person so that we could prevent risks before they happen. This system promoted and supported open and honest communications with early warning of potential threats to project activity, such as staff or organisational changes. Because of it, along with the cooperation of partners, the group worked extremely well together, and issues were largely resolved between partners, with minimal intervention needed from the coordinator.

Daily communications took place through email and a file sharing system, Zoom meetings took place monthly once the project was underway, and the consortium met every six months to discuss and plan project activities.

## 5. Flexible and adaptive partnership

The greatest unforeseen risk to affect the SCOPE project was COVID-19. The pandemic disrupted plans for our final partner meeting and multiplier events. The partnership adapted quickly and moved the final partner meeting online; we met over two days on Zoom. We also agreed a date to host a virtual multiplier event in line with the original timeline.

Alongside regular email and telephone communications, and in person partner meetings, the consortium identified the need for more active and meaningful communications across the partnership. In response to this need, we decided to meet monthly over Zoom. These monthly meetings created a space to further monitor project activity, build relationships and exchange ideas and best practice between partners. They were a great addition to the project.

As mentioned at the outset, this was the first time that this consortium had the opportunity to collaborate and through our approach outlined above we were able to exploit the skills, experience and innovation that already existed among the partners. Furthermore, the staff involved in this project have been able to increase their professional development and understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and practices of third sector organisations throughout Europe and of how Erasmus+ can facilitate exchange of best practice and development of innovation across the sector.

We aim to build on this partnership to support further opportunities for continued exchange of best practice and innovation and an enduring European network of partners working towards common goals.



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# PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

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# PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

The following section outlines the pedagogical approach taken in the project, the development of which was led by The Wheel, who were leaders on IO1 SCOPE Module, and An Cosán, who were leaders of IO2 SCOPE Platform. For all partners, it was a learning experience of how to effectively bring together traditional face-to-face learning with the latest digital learning innovation.

In developing our pedagogical approach, we identified two main pillars on which to develop our work, specifically:

1. Learner outcomes
2. Best practice in technology enhanced learning

## 1. Learning Outcomes

A “learning outcomes” approach was adopted as the pedagogical basis for the programme. Not only is this the preeminent approach for a learner-focused educational intervention, but it also allows alignment, should it be required, with both the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and individual national qualifications frameworks, thus allowing more mobility for learners in utilising their lifelong learning.

The 2008 EQF recommendation defines learning outcomes as ‘...statements of what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process’. This focus places the learner and their needs at the heart of the intervention.

The learning outcomes for the SCOPE programme were initially defined based on a learning needs analysis of the target group, carried out by the partners. This identified the five key areas of focus for the training programme and the context in which the target group would be accessing the learning. In this analysis an eLearning approach was identified as the most appropriate medium in order to allow maximum engagement of the target learner group.

For each of the five identified topics (Governance, Risk, Fundraising, Finance and Communications) a set of learning outcomes was developed.

<b>MODULE</b>	<b>Learning Outcomes, i.e. “by the end of this module, participants will be able to...”</b>
Module 1: <b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Understand the role and legal duties of the charity trustee</i></li> <li>• <i>Understand the transparency obligation for public benefit organisations</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify strategies for improving governance</i></li> </ul>
Module 2: <b>Risk Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify the principles of effective risk management</i></li> <li>• <i>Outline the elements of a basic risk management strategy</i></li> <li>• <i>Use a simple risk management tool</i></li> </ul>

Module 3:  
**Financial  
Management**

- Outline the role of the finance function in an organisation
- Define key accounting terminology
- Identify key compliance requirements for charity finances

Module 4:  
**Communications**

- Understand the concept of “impact”
- Identify a range of effective communications tools for charities
- Outline the key aspects of effective storytelling for communication

Module 5:  
**Fundraising**

- Understand the role of a fundraising strategy
- Identify key steps in creating a fundraising strategy
- Use a simple tool to assess current financial sustainability of the organisation

These learning outcomes became the cornerstone of the scoping and development of the curriculum materials, eLearning platform development, validation of learning through digital badges, and quality assurance in the pilot. Other principles of the pedagogical approach employed, included recognition of prior learning, respect for learner styles, and reflective practice.

## 2. Best Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning

The aim of the SCOPE online learning platform was to allow partners to move the required curriculum content online so that partners can reach more of their target group in an easily accessible, time and location flexible way. An integrated approach was taken to curriculum and eLearning design, founded on best practice pedagogical principles, with eLearning specialists working closely with subject matter experts.

An instructional design model was developed based on the **ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation)** approach which began with an analysis phase of the learners and their needs. Design templates were developed to support the learning design and provide a framework for developing the content, acting as a communication tool between subject matter experts and educational technologists.

Project structures and processes ensured that technology was always in the service of pedagogy. The educational technologists worked alongside subject matter experts to develop assessment strategies with opportunities for learners to engage in formative assessment activities to check and reinforce learning progressively.

Our technology partner’s quality assurance protocols are appropriate to online and blended learning, adhering to the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for Blended Learning (Version 2) by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), Ireland’s independent state agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services.

Platform design, structure, course content, materials, and activities were designed to best practice **Design for Learning** principles allowing ease of access to people with varying abilities. The conscientious design and development of a flexible learning

environment to accommodate diverse learner needs using a range of solutions provided equity of access to knowledge. This included:

- *Presenting information in a variety of forms including, written, images etc.*
- *Providing descriptions for all visual imagery*
- *Information is progressively released and delivered in small elements.*
- *Clearly signposting all course information including guides, learning outcomes, assessment methods etc.*

## **Effectiveness of pedagogical approach**

Regarding the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach from the learners' point of view, we can refer to two sources of data which has assisted us in our evaluation: pilot surveys and digital badges issued. In the evaluation surveys amongst the pilot groups, 98% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the content of the programme. 77% of respondents reported an increased capacity in all five topics and 92% reported increased confidence in all five module areas.

In order to be issued with a digital badge, the pilot participants had to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes through interactive quizzes at the end of each module, therefore we can make some deductions regarding the effectiveness of the modules through the number of badges issued by Open Badge Factory to SCOPE participants. Over the course of Pilots 1 and 2, 1100 badges were issued across all five modules, including the "bumper badge" (issued when participants achieved the complete set of five modules). We can therefore report that on 1100 occasions during the pilot, a learner successfully reached the learning outcomes for the module and demonstrated this in the end-of-module quiz.

## **Effectiveness of the project as an eLearning approach**

Across Pilots 1 and 2, 95% of survey respondents expressed that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the learning platform overall.

Participants were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the usability of the platform in relation to navigation, accessibility, and readability of text. Based on 199 responses to these questions, 88%, 94% and 91% respondents respectively were very satisfied or satisfied with the platform's usability.

93% of survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of activity, indicating the interactivity levels and activity types were well chosen for the cohort and topics.

The survey results are discussed in more detail in the following section.



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# PILOT RESULTS

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## PILOT RESULTS

The testing of the SCOPE project consisted of two pilot phases and involved 209 learners from the primary target group across the five partner countries. Participants in the pilots were provided with support and instruction from SCOPE eLearning specialists in each partner country. The aim of the pilots was to test the:

- *Clarity, quality and impact of the content*
- *Accessibility of the learning platform*
- *Use of validation system*

The goal across all areas of our pilot was to reach a target of 80% satisfaction rate among users.

In order to ensure that the data gathered via the pilots would verify that valid results within the project were based on the objectives specified in its initial plan, and thus cover the needs of the end users, the partners took part in a workshop at our second partner meeting in Riga to define the evaluation framework by:

- *Setting the goals, outcomes and outputs*
- *Indicators for each*
- *Data/evidence collection methods*

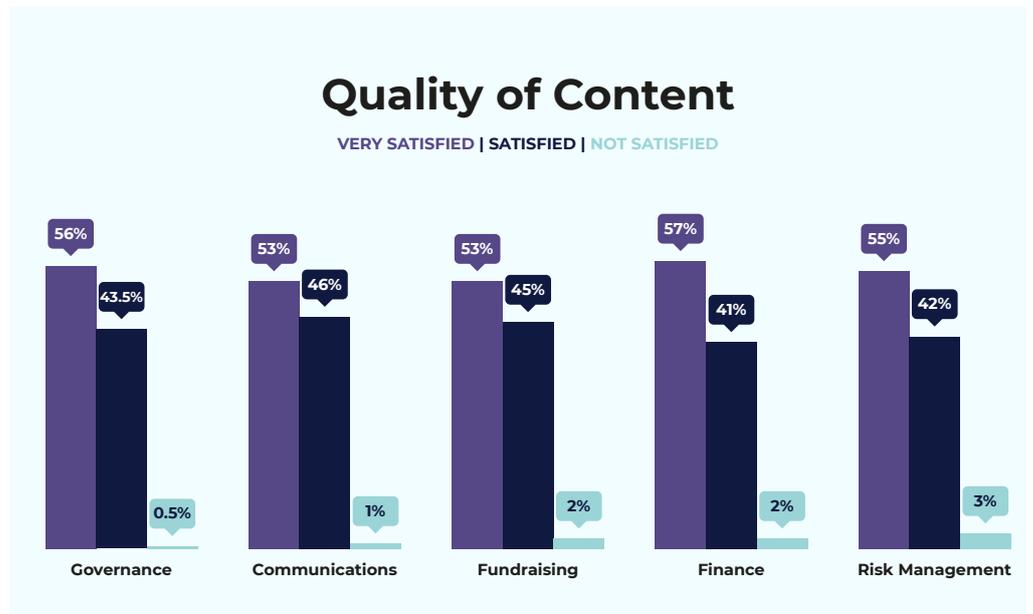
Each pilot took place within a specified period. Pilot 1 took place between 11 November 2019 and 30 January 2020. Pilot 2 took place between 30 February 2020 and 18 May 2020. The partners used their established networks and relationships to publicise the opportunity to participate in this new development. The Pilots were delivered and managed by staff in each partner organisation who had undergone intensive training in SCOPE at our joint training event in Estonia and were thereby equipped to provide participants with support and guidance throughout, as well as quickly resolve any minor technical or operational issues. Pilot participants provided feedback via exit questionnaires using Microsoft Forms and in focus groups held face to face and remotely using Zoom and Skype at the conclusion of each pilot.

Following the evaluation of the first pilot, any bugs, design flaws or quality issues that emerged were resolved before the second pilot commenced. Again, at the conclusion of the second pilot and following another final evaluation, any issues that emerged were resolved before final sign off. In the following sections, we present the results of our testing related to the aims stated above.



### IO1 SCOPE Module Pilot Results

Participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the quality of each SCOPE module and 98% of respondents stated they were very satisfied or satisfied with all five modules. The satisfaction levels were collected for each module.



As can be seen from the chart above, the satisfaction levels were similar in each partner country. This indicates that the collaborative approach we adopted in this project ensured that the content produced was relevant to our primary target audience in all partner countries. Connected to the content satisfaction levels, we asked participants to give their views on the activities that were used within the

modules to support and reinforce learning. For example, quizzes, multiple choice questions, yes/no answers, case studies etc. and 93% of survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the choice and variety of activities.

These areas were further explored in the focus groups where we asked participants to tell us what their most and least favourite modules were. However, no clear 'favourite' or 'least favourite' module emerged with the overall view being that each module was interesting and relevant, and everyone took something out of each module. This is a reflection on the fact that participants held various roles within their organisations and these positions were held for various lengths of time and as such this influenced their perception of the modules and their takeaways from it. Below is a sample of the comments we received from participants in relation to the content:

*"The risk management module was very good and I loved the examples"*

*"Helpful to see what needs to be organised before starting Fundraising and be aware of the thought that needs putting into it. It will help with fundraising for future projects"*

*"The terminology in the Finance module was challenging, there were no practical tools for the beginners and for more experienced testers it was not profound enough"*

*"It was good to know what the roles and responsibilities were in the Governance module"*

*"The Communications module offered participants a fresh perspective; focus on target groups worked well and the module brought new insight to issues even for people who were familiar with communication practices"*

In relation to the level of interactivity some comments included:

*"Images are not always helpful – sometimes a distraction."*

*"The examples are set at just the right level."*

*"Less pop-up boxes and popup boxes without real answer are not needed."*

*"Enjoyed the quizzes, good balance between single and multiple questions and broke up monotony of just reading text."*

*"Fill in the blanks – not useful."*

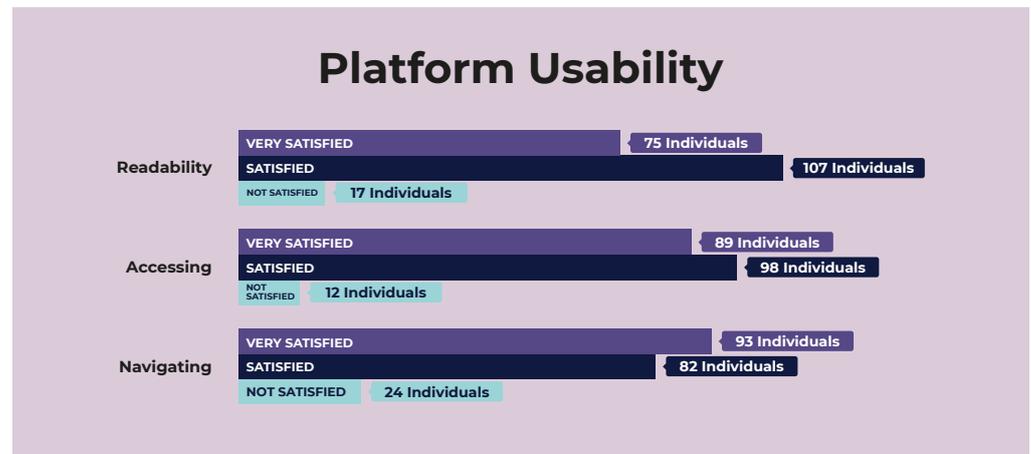
*"Use of the case study throughout was helpful."*

Our response to feedback collected throughout both pilots is outlined in the section below, 'Responding to Feedback'.

## **IO2 SCOPE Platform Results**

We asked participants 'How satisfied were you with the overall quality of the Platform?' 95% of all respondents reported that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of the platform. Taking this further, participants were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the usability of the platform in relation to

navigation, accessibility, and readability of text. Based on 199 responses to these questions, 88%, 94% and 91% respondents respectively were very satisfied or satisfied with the platform’s usability.



Testers accessed the platform using PCs or laptops (82%), mobile phone (11%) and tablet (7%) and most of them (74%) completed the SCOPE programme at home rather than in their place of work or a place of learning. This clearly demonstrates the accessibility of this programme, particularly given that during the period of the second pilot some partner countries were in lockdown due to COVID-19.

Comments from focus group participants who were less than satisfied with the platform’s usability included:

- *Not being able to save is a problem.*
- *Some pop-up windows did not show all text.*
- *Accessibility of the material was diminished because the background images sometimes overshadowed the text.*
- *A user guide would be helpful.*

Our response to feedback collected throughout both pilots is outlined in the section below, “Responding to Feedback”.

### **I03 SCOPE Validation System Pilot Results**

Learners demonstrated their achievement of the learning outcomes through interactive quizzes at the end of each module. Upon successful completion of the quiz, they were prompted to click a link to apply for their ‘digital badge’, recognising their achievement. This prompted an email from the Open Badge Factory awarding them their badge and required their acceptance of this badge via email. On completion of all five modules, an email awarding a ‘bumper’ badge was automatically generated and sent to the learner.

Also included in the badge process was the opportunity to reflect on learning through several reflective questions. Users were encouraged to consider how their learning developed through their completion of the module and to describe their understanding of the subject matter. This process of learner reflection served two purposes. Firstly, it means that if an employer or other concerned party wanted to check a learner’s badge, they will be able to read about the individual’s understanding of the subject matter and make an assessment of their level. Secondly it encourages the learner to practice communicating their own competencies so that at work, in job applications, and in interviews they are adequately able to describe their capacities.

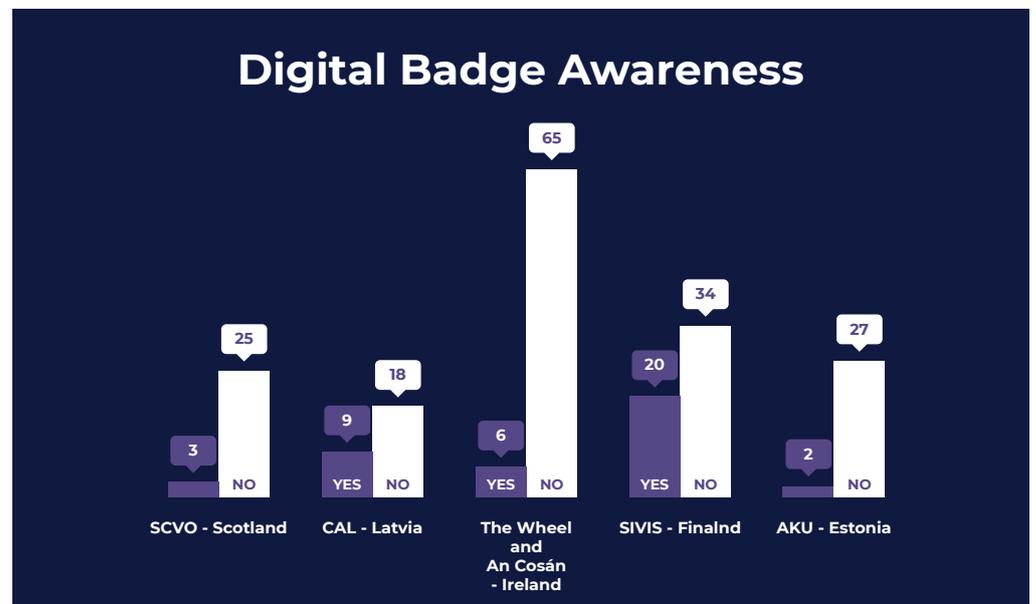
These badges can be displayed on social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

We wanted to get feedback from our testers on their levels of satisfaction using this system to recognise their skills and knowledge. **88%** of respondents stated they were very satisfied or satisfied in using this system of validation. This was very pleasing given that **81%** of respondents were not familiar with Open Badges prior to taking part in SCOPE.

From the data available from the Open Badge Factory we can report that over the course of both pilots, Pilots 1 and 2, 1100 badges were issued across all five modules, including the “bumper badge”, issued when participants achieved the complete set of five modules.

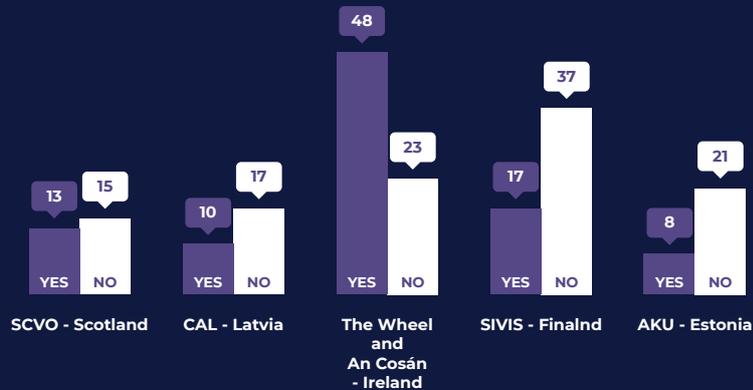


This demonstrates that on 1100 occasions during the pilot, learners successfully reached the learning outcomes for the module, demonstrated this in the end-of-module quiz and were happy to have this achievement recognised via a digital badge.



Participants were also asked if getting their badges had improved their ability to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. The response to this question was less positive with less than half (46%) of respondents saying yes, getting their badges had improved their ability to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

## Improved ability to demonstrate skills and knowledge



This could have been influenced by the fact that 81% of participants were not familiar with this form of validation before taking part in the pilots. Despite partners providing information on the benefits of this method of skills recognition before and during the pilots, there is still progress to be made in embedding this skills system into our national sectors. There is a lack of awareness of the badge system in the European third sector overall, which the partners will continue to address long after the lifetime of the project as we mainstream its outputs. Other factors that may have influenced this result include how length of service might influence perceptions of job mobility and skills demonstration with longer serving staff being less likely to embrace new ways of communicating skills, and a perceived lack of coherence to formal qualification frameworks. Feedback from the focus groups did include very positive responses regarding badges:

*“They are recognition of commitment to your organisation: it provides evidence to put on a CV if applying for a new role.”*

*“It is a good way to track your progress and validate your online learning”*

Less positive feedback included:

*“Visual recognition is good but not an incentive”*

*“They give recognition but their value is only good if there is universal acceptance and awareness of them”*

*“It’s more important to gain knowledge and skill more than a badge”*

Our response to feedback collected throughout both pilots is outlined in the section below, ‘Responding to Feedback’.

## Impact

What difference has participating in the SCOPE project made to those individuals involved in the two pilots? With this question, we sought to establish if the SCOPE project aims had been met.

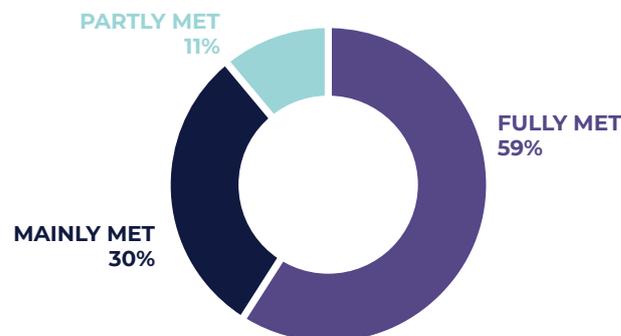
These aims are:

- *Participants have increased capacity/knowledge in the five areas covered by the modules.*
- *Participants have improved confidence in the five areas covered by the modules.*
- *Participants have learning recognised.*

The participants in the testing of the SCOPE project held varied positions within their small third sector organisations. In such organisations, it is not unusual for one person to fulfil multiple roles or to take on vital tasks that they may not necessarily have formal training in, e.g. basic finance, communications, etc. With this range of individuals, the level of familiarity with the module content varied.

From the focus group feedback, some reported having no knowledge of the areas covered, some reported basic knowledge, and others were familiar with the areas covered but acquired that knowledge through a combination of informal and non-formal learning. However, as can be seen from the diagram below, 89% of respondents stated that the aims of the programme had been fully or mainly met. On further analysis, there was no clear correlation between the position held in an organisation and learner assessment of aim fulfilment.

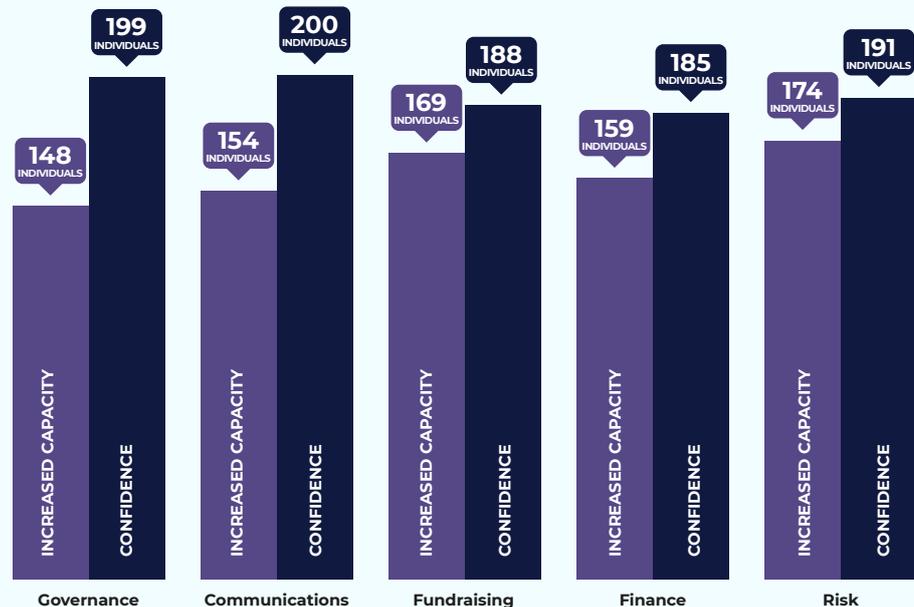
## Programme Aims - All Partners



When asked if there has been an increase in capacity/knowledge of the areas covered in the SCOPE modules, 77% said yes there had been an increase in their capacity/knowledge in all five subject areas.

Participants were also asked how confident they felt about putting into practice what they had learned from the areas covered in the SCOPE modules and 92% reported that they felt extremely confident or fairly confident about applying the knowledge gained in all five subject areas.

## Capacity and Confidence



88% of respondents stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied in using this system of validation. From the data available through the Open Badge Factory we can report that over the course of Pilots 1 and 2, 1100 badges were issued across all five modules including the “bumper badge” indicating participants were happy to have their learning, achieved via SCOPE, recognised via a digital badge.

Further evidence of the positive impact of the SCOPE project can be measured by the fact that of the 209 individuals who participated in the pilots:

- 95% (199 individuals) would recommend SCOPE to a friend/colleague
- 92% (192 individuals) of respondents rated SCOPE very good or good

### Responding to Feedback

An Cosán made significant changes to the learning material via Adapt following the completion of Pilot 1 with the overarching objective of improving the end user experience. Aside from fixing some minor technical glitches, the primary focus was to improve the accessibility features of the resource. The following changes were made:

- All “fill in the blanks” activity types were replaced with multiple choice questions, as this question format did not meet AAA accessibility standards.
- Improvements were made to the colour scheme and contrast ratios to improve legibility.
- An extensive and detailed [user guide](#) was added to the website and each individual learning module as an external resource.
- A variety of minor edits and proofreading changes.

The survey feedback results from Pilot 2 noted an increase in user satisfaction with the resource as follows:

- **Interactivity** – satisfaction levels increased from 91% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied in Pilot 1, to 93% in Pilot 2.
- **Platform overall** – satisfaction levels increased from 91% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied in Pilot 1, to 97% in Pilot 2.
- **Information on platform** – satisfaction levels increased from 94% of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied in Pilot 1, to 98% in Pilot 2.

Following feedback from Pilot 2, and prior to launching SCOPE, An Cosán made a series of minor edits to the resource. These edits included:

- An update of the financial tables to increase legibility.
- A final round of extensive proofreading.
- Some minor changes to website text and content.

The only areas in which we did not meet our 80% satisfaction rating was in whether badges had improved their ability to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. We achieved only just over half of our target at 46%. We believe that this result needed to be more comprehensively analysed and that a strategy needed to be put in place to improve this result beyond the lifetime of the project. We therefore developed the ‘SCOPE Validation System Recognition Strategy’ (see below) to address this.

## SCOPE Validation System Recognition Strategy

The only area of our pilot in which we came in under target was around the perceived value by participants of the SCOPE Validation System for communicating learning. This is relatively unsurprising due to the fact that publicly the badges have only existed for a year, since the piloting began. They are not yet embedded into the landscape of the sector in each partner country and we are not yet at a point where learners can expect to reference their achievement of a badge in a job application or interview and for this to be understood by the employer.

However just because recognition of these badges was not achieved within the lifetime of the project, it does not mean it cannot be achieved. In retrospect, it was overly ambitious to set ourselves the goal of achieving this recognition within just a year and during what was a very targeted pilot. The first step is to create a quality product, which we did, but mainstreaming can take years to achieve. It is the result of careful strategizing and embedding of the tool in question over time and through multiple stakeholders.

What we can do to address this target in this project study is propose a strategy for embedding recognition of the SCOPE Validation System in each partner country. The following strategy was developed by project coordinators The Wheel in collaboration with partners and SCOPE Validation System leaders Sivis Study Centre. It has been agreed on by all partners and will be adapted for each national context.

## Internal Recognition

The first step to widespread external recognition is to achieve full internal recognition of the SCOPE Validation System. This has already been happening throughout the project as project managers in each partner country regularly updated their teams on the progress of the project and present results. However, until the end of the last pilot, the validation system was being understood as something that was a work in progress. Now, the system is complete and will be launched at a national level in each country at the multiplier events. It is now essential that not only does each staff member in each partner organisation know of the badges, but

that they understand them and how they work, and start their own journey of earning their SCOPE badges. This will help to set up the next phase of external recognition for success and ensure that each partner is being consistent with their messaging about the SCOPE Validation System, what it does, how it works, and how valuable it is.

Internal recognition will be promoted through internal workshops with staff and boards.

## External Recognition

External recognition is an ongoing process that should be a permanent feature in each organisation's communications strategy going forward. Key methods for achieving external recognition are as follows:

### Multiplier event

Our first initiative beyond ongoing project dissemination and the pilot to officially launch the SCOPE Validation System will be our multiplier event, which will take place in mid-September 2020, in the final two weeks of the project. Due to COVID-19, these events will now take place online, however, our target groups will remain the same, specifically organisations that have the potential to not just use the project outputs, but spread them further within their networks. This includes the SCOPE Validation System. A key feature of the day will be explaining the system, how it works, and its value to the sector. In doing so, we will embed the first seeds of understanding about the system within the sector, which we can grow through our continued communications.

### Stakeholders

Engaging high-potential stakeholders that will act as multipliers and influencers is key to mainstreaming the SCOPE Validation System. With their understanding and support, we can make the system a recognised and valued resource for the third sector in each partner country. Below are some broad categories through which partners can brainstorm and identify stakeholders:

- **Other third sector umbrella and representative bodies** – All partners (except for tech partner An Cosán) represent the third sector in their respective countries, but within each country there are also other bodies representing specific groups or causes. In Ireland, this would include several members of The Wheel that represent specific types of organisations within the sector, for example, organisations dedicated to people with disabilities, equality, youth, children, and anti-poverty organisations. By winning their support through their understanding of the SCOPE Validation System, we can also influence their members.
- **HEIs** – Many higher education institutes offer courses that will lead many students to roles in the third sector. Courses such as community development and youth work are obvious examples but there are also many others including courses related social care, policy, the arts and culture, and health and wellbeing. We can promote the SCOPE Modules and Validation System to these HEIs as a means for increasing practical sector skills and employability for students who will be entering the third sector.
- **HR leaders in the sector** – The Wheel provides specialised training and support services to those working in HR in the Irish third sector and other partners can use their networks to reach the same groups. Informing and engaging these individuals will be key to achieving recognition of the Validation System to increase communication of skills and job mobility.

- **Adult learning and learning recognition stakeholders** – there are several national bodies throughout the partnership that are dedicated to adult education or vocational education and training who could benefit from the use of the SCOPE Modules and Validation System, but also help increase recognition of it as a way to capture and communicate learning. Partners will engage with these organisations to help embed SCOPE within training and learning in their respective countries.

### Events and Training

All partners regularly conduct training and hold sector events. These events will be an opportunity to communicate the availability and value of the SCOPE project outputs, including the Validation System. At trainings, SCOPE can be used as a recommended resource for further learning and validation of learning, or even a prerequisite. Ideally, we would eventually be able to run courses where students are required to complete the relevant SCOPE module and earn their badge to establish baseline knowledge before they proceed with further training. At sector events, topics to do with job mobility and learning recognition can be presented and discussed as a means of communicating SCOPE and specifically the value of its Validation System.

### Website and communications

Now that SCOPE has been piloted and finalised, it is being added as a free, public resource on each partner's website. However, additional messaging around the SCOPE Validation System and the importance of skills recognition within the sector can be featured prominently on the partners' website to encourage engagement and increase awareness of the System.

### Continued development

A key way that we will develop and maintain the sector's awareness of the SCOPE Validation System is to continually develop and add to the modules, the platform and the system itself. The sustainability section of this project study goes into more detail about how we plan to sustain and further exploit the project beyond its current funding, but even aside from that, each partner now has the capacity to develop their own digital badges as a result of this project. This learning will help them use digital badges in other areas of their work and increase overall recognition of digital badges as a means of recognising and communicating learning.

Through a combination of the above and other tactics that will emerge as we continue project exploitation, we aim to address and correct pilot results in relation the SCOPE Validation System and achieve our initial targets of establishing the system as an effective means of communicating learning.

## Conclusion

The aim of the pilots was to test the:

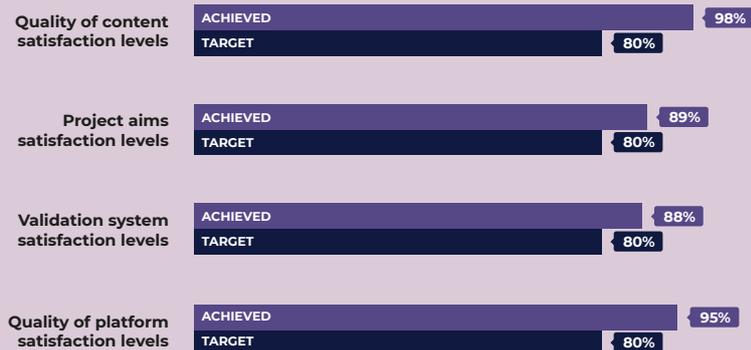
- *Clarity, quality and impact of the content*
- *Accessibility of the learning platform*
- *Use of validation system*

To do this, we set ourselves targets (see charts below) to measure the degree to which SCOPE met its aims. The data we gathered via the pilots clearly shows that in most areas, we exceeded the targets set.

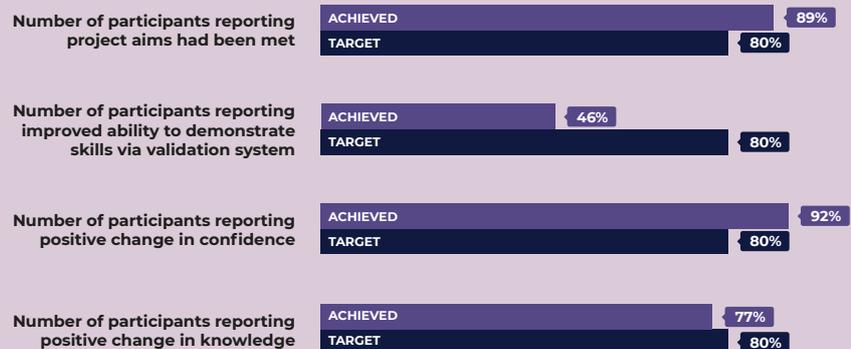
Of the areas where targets were not met there are learnings to be drawn for the future development of the project. For the aim “positive change in capacity/knowledge and improved ability to demonstrate skills gained via the validation system”, we have discussed above the various factors that could have influenced this result and believe that with further mainstreaming and reinforcing of the validation system, beyond the lifetime of the project and across the training programmes of the partner organisations, will eventually achieve the widespread sector recognition necessary for the validation system to meet initial targets. The feedback on our aim “positive change in capacity/knowledge” (77%) was only 3% less than our targeted result of 80%, meaning the impact was still significant.

We saw the effect of lack of widespread recognition of the validation system again in response to the question about “improved ability to demonstrate skills gained via the validation system”. Again, we believe that this can be corrected with time. Now that the validation system has been created, tested, and finalised, the partnership can focus on the process of embedding it within their national sector and the wider European third sector. This may prove to be a slow process, but it is also a worthwhile process and a priority for the partners, all of whom are engaged in the provision of non-formal, unaccredited learning and so have an incentive to promote a validation system for such learning.

## Satisfaction Levels



## Impact



In conclusion, the results detailed in this section demonstrate that the SCOPE project provided a very positive learning experience for our testers. With their valuable feedback and input we are able to launch SCOPE with the confidence that it can support the staff of small third organisations to access free, high-quality online validated learning at a time and location that suits them.



***SCOPE: Skills  
Recognition,  
Capacity Building,  
and Professional  
Development for the  
Third Sector***

PROJECT NUMBER:  
2018-1-IE01-KA202-038806

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# SUSTAINABILITY & EXPLOITATION

A large, abstract graphic in the bottom right corner of the page, consisting of several overlapping, concentric circular bands in a lighter shade of purple, creating a sense of depth and movement.

## SUSTAINABILITY & EXPLOITATION

Sustainability is key to ensuring that the outputs of the SCOPE project remain widely used and available to all stakeholders after the completion of the project’s work. As previously stated, this project is the first step for all partners to work together to gradually build upon online training offers so that we can support more participants with traditionally fewer opportunities to access the training they need to effect positive change in their communities and with their target groups. The partners are therefore committed to maximising the reach and impact of the SCOPE project resource and looking at ways that it can be further exploited to extend its use, implementation and development.

In addition to the actions set out below for each partner, dissemination of the SCOPE project model plays a vital role in providing a foundation for the sustainability of the project beyond the funding period. In addition to the ongoing dissemination activities of the project, plans are in place for virtual multiplier events in each partner country to comply with COVID-19 restrictions. These events will provide the opportunity for each partner to launch the SCOPE project and share its approach, effectiveness and findings with key stakeholders within the third sector and beyond. These stakeholders or ‘multipliers’ have the potential to take this free and open resource and multiply its impact through dissemination within their own networks and mainstreaming in their own services. Examples of these stakeholders who will be targeted at our multiplier events include:

- *Other third sector organisations who can also utilise the training materials, platform and validation system and benefit from increased capacity, skills, skills recognition, job mobility and employability as a result.*
- *Higher education institutes and eLearning organisations that work with third sector staff who can integrate the platform and approach into their curricula.*
- *Other third sector representative bodies and stakeholders who can recommend the resource to their members with similar needs.*

In the following sections, each partner was asked to elaborate on their strategy to sustain the current project outputs long term within their own organisations and at national level. They also explored how they would exploit the project further, build on its results, and increase its impact through continued funding, synergies with other projects, or stakeholder partnership. In addition to national exploitation plans, we also analysed opportunities for exploitation through continued European funding.

### Sustainability Strategies

PARTNER	INDIVIDUAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY
<p><b>The Wheel</b></p>	<p>For The Wheel, SCOPE was developed for the purpose of filling a vital gap in our operational work. The majority of our members are smaller organisations in need of basic supports and as such, addressing the same set of queries from each of them consumes a great deal of time from our training and advice team. The goal of SCOPE was to provide comprehensive, easily accessible support for these smaller organisations, and to serve as a resource to which our team can signpost members who need capacity building in the module areas. The five topics chosen for modules represented the bulk of these kind of queries that we answer on a day-to-day basis.</p>

It can also be used as a “gateway” to more in-depth training that we carry out throughout Ireland and will allow us to establish an equal foundation of knowledge among learners. Training learners who have a huge variance in their capacity can be challenging, but SCOPE provides an opportunity for learners to build the core knowledge they need to get the most out of our face-to-face training. Ultimately, we would aim to gradually combine our online learning and face-to-face learning so that overtime, we can introduce a more blended-learning approach across our whole training programme.

SCOPE is also our first foray into recognition of non-formal learning through digital badges. As an organisation that primarily provides non-formal training, this has been hugely valuable. As sector representatives, we have the opportunity to mainstream the use and recognition of these badges across the Irish third sector, which will increase skills recognition and job mobility, but also elevate the profile of our training and recognition of its impact.

SCOPE is a valuable addition to our training portfolio, and it is a priority for us to sustain and further exploit it. The Wheel receives enough funding for sector skills through the national training programmes in Ireland to sustain the project outputs as they are now. Our spring/summer and autumn/winter training calendars can feature SCOPE and we will continue to feature access to the platform prominently in the training section of our website. Our real goal now is to focus on further exploiting this valuable resource.

### **An Cosán**

An Cosán will contribute to the overall sustainability of the SCOPE project by continuing to monitor and preserve the official SCOPE site. This work will include regular checks to ensure the site has adequate updates to its plugins, theme, and learning content. An Cosán has also put in place an automated backup process whereby all the site’s content is regularly backed up, ensuring the viability of the resource in the unlikely event of a crash. This backup process will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is working to capacity.

In terms of promoting the resource, An Cosán is committed to showcasing the tool to new and existing community partners as well as staff members. An Cosán also sees a promotional opportunity for students in our Social Enterprise and Technology Enhanced Learning programmes who would benefit from such a resource. Finally, An Cosán values the resource as part of its growing technology toolbelt and will look to present the resource as part of an eLearning “package” when its new website comes live in late 2020 -early 2021.

### **Sivis Study Centre**

At Sivis, we will add a specific SCOPE page to our website that links directly to the learning content in Adapt. SCOPE learning content will be linked to all other relevant learning content, for example, into the reading material of an online course about developing association activities. SCOPE will be marketed as an important component of our existing course selection; we will actively promote this resource to our main stakeholder group who represent our 75 nationwide member organizations.

These member organizations are responsible for the education and professional development of their organisations' volunteers and staff and can therefore best help to spread the word and reach the target group.

In line with our Intellectual Output, Sivis will update and maintain the Open Badge Factory account until the end of 2021 to allow partners to take this time to decide how they want to proceed with maintaining the learning validation system at each national level.

**The Scottish  
Council for  
Voluntary  
Organisations  
(SCVO)**

Our training programme and our information service have been running for over 20 years, providing training, advice and capacity building support in response to sector needs.

SCOPE allows us to provide, for the first time, a new eLearning offer that will overcome barriers of finance, geography, etc., that prevent engagement in our current face-to-face training offerings. It will also enable us to provide a resource for use by third sector organisations as an induction tool for new volunteers, staff and trustees joining the sector. We also aim to use SCOPE as a method of informing future validated eLearning developments and blended learning opportunities that we can offer the third sector in Scotland.

SCOPE will be integrated into our core support and learning services and links to the resource will be publicised on this section of our website. It will be managed by our information service staff, who will provide learner support and respond to questions and enquiries from learners.

We will promote SCOPE via our extensive Membership Network (via fortnightly e-bulletins); our Trustee Network; our Policy Officer Network; our Intermediary Network; as well as our Third Force News e-bulletins, news site and social media platforms.

**Estonian  
Roundtable  
for  
Sustainable  
Development  
(AKÜ)**

AKÜ has decided to work in collaboration with the National Foundation of Civil Society (NFCS) on the continued sustainability and exploitation of SCOPE in Estonia. Since winter 2019, we recognised their potential as collaborative partners in SCOPE's future given their role as a training body for Estonia's third sector. We already work closely with them and the transition towards partnering in SCOPE's sustainability has been a smooth and fruitful effort. In doing so, we have also hugely multiplied the project's impact through the exploitation of their networks and national profile within the third sector.

The National Foundation of Civil Society (NFCS) is a state financed civil society fund in Estonia. They support non-governmental organisations in developing their different capacities, so that they can pursue their objectives consciously and purposefully. As an efficient assistance, development and support centre, they strive for a strong and viable civil society in Estonia.

They are deeply connected within the sector as a funding body providing grants to support sector services and development; a trusted project partner delivering hundreds of projects, and nationwide support service. They believe that SCOPE will be an invaluable addition to their portfolio of supports, particularly for smaller organisations and those just being established.

In combination with AKÜ's network and presence as a leader development cooperation, this partnership will allow SCOPE to reach the full breadth of the Estonian third sector.

**Civic Alliance  
Latvia**

Throughout both phases of the pilot, we found that participants were very excited about the modules and were looking forward to being able to share this eLearning resource with their volunteers and those who use their services. Our multiplier event will ensure that we share the platform with the NGO sector in Latvia, including our membership of 129 organisations and 70,000 individual members, to reach more people who can benefit from the materials developed. As part of our everyday work, we are consult with NGO's about the sector and through this work we will also encourage individuals who are thinking about the establishing organisations, to complete the modules to understand the responsibilities and framework of effective NGO management. This will be a great tool to show what is involved in an NGO for those who do not know the sector. Another priority will be to identify opportunities for SCOPE to complement our existing face-to-face training.

We will add the SCOPE platform to our existing training resource and a designated CAL staff member will be responsible for the SCOPE homepage on our website, responding to questions from the users, and content development.

**Exploitation Strategies**

PARTNER	INDIVIDUAL EXPLOITATION STRATEGY
<p><b>The Wheel</b></p>	<p>There are multiple ways we build on SCOPE here in Ireland that can be roughly divided by independent funding and Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent funding</b> – philanthropic or corporate foundations often issue calls for proposals to fund projects that build third sector strength and capacity. We are already researching and pursuing opportunities to add new modules and badges to SCOPE through these funding opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>National funding</b> – the Irish Government already invest in sector skills through the National Training Fund. However, there is still much to be done to build sector capacity to a point where organisations are fully able to fulfil their social issue, and in a constantly changing environment, training needs to be continually reviewed and updated. Combined with the Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025, which lists "the effective use of technology to support talent and skills provision, to grow enterprise, and to</li> </ul>

*enhance the lives of all within society” as a core part of its vision, there is a strong case that The Wheel can make to Government that investment in digital learning for the sector is essential and will yield great impact.*

SCOPE represents a huge step forward for The Wheel in what is still an ongoing journey towards online learning, learning recognition, and European development.

### **An Cosán**

An Cosán will work with The Wheel to realise a joint exploitation strategy for Ireland.

An Cosán are members of The Wheel and are trusted collaborators who have advised The Wheel on their eLearning strategy when it was still in the initial stages of ideas development. The Wheel will aim to bring An Cosán into any further funding and exploitation plans for SCOPE whenever possible

### **Sivis Study Centre**

- *An online course for developing association activities has been built to complement the SCOPE outputs.*
- *The SCOPE outputs could be complemented with further modules on different topics, for example, dealing with the strategic development of volunteer work and its best structures and practices*
- *Another relevant topic identified for further development is how associations themselves can develop their skills and capacities as specialists and educators*
- *We are also interested in creating content related to the different tasks within the governing body, such as the treasurer, secretary and so on, and developing learning material around this.*

### **The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)**

We are currently reviewing our training and information offer for our members and the wider third sector and while we had been planning to do this anyway, the need has been heightened by COVID-19 where we have seen all of our face-to-face training cancelled. Our digital team have been providing invaluable access to a range of resources via Zoom and webinars to support organisations to respond to new digital ways of working. SCVO will be looking increasingly towards build on our response to training and learning needs as a result of COVID-19 and the further development of SCOPE will be a big part of that. SCOPE is our first eLearning resource and we see it has having potential to be further developed to meet the sector needs, whether this be by enhancing the existing content, adding new content, or incorporating it into a blended learning offering. We are keen to develop a ‘Learning Hub’ and will explore funding sources to support this at national level e.g. the Scottish Government or the National Lottery.

### **Estonian Roundtable for Sustainable Development (AKÜ)**

In Estonia there are currently no other online programme like SCOPE. The pilot and specially the current situation brought about by COVID-19 has shown us that there is not just potential but a real need for quality and accessible online training. There is a real interest in developing more modules on other topics, e.g. sustainable development, and in adding Russian as a language option to increase its accessibility for minority groups. We have Russian minorities living here in border regions and it would be a lot easier to reach them and educate them via the SCOPE platform. Consultants working with them and representatives from our integration programme in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have shown interest in engaging them by adding Russian as one of the languages to provide better support for all NGOs working in Estonia.

### **Civic Alliance Latvia**

We are actively seeking opportunities to fund a “SCOPE 2” project that will allow us to finance the outputs’ future development. Following this project, we will look at ways to integrate SCOPE into other programmes and national level and will seek ways to fund this through, for example, the programme for social integration funded through Riga’s Council. We will also explore opportunities to source funding for translating SCOPE into Russian so that we can reach more minority citizens in Latvia.

At an international level, CAL will explore options to develop SCOPE or parts of SCOPE through various programmes, for example, the next phase of the Europe for Citizens programme (yet to be announced), the Anna Lindh Foundation, or the Swedish Institute. Funding through these sources would allow us to widen SCOPEs capacity to reach new countries and audiences.

## **Potential for continued EU development**

Given the success of the project, the adaptability of the platform and the valorisation of the model used, there is potential for the partnership to pursue additional European funding to continue to develop the platform, expand our partnership, and bring in new insights, skills and opportunities.

The next Erasmus+ programme is set to significantly increase its budget according to a decision announced on 19 December 2019. There will be an increased emphasis on more young people, and especially those with fewer opportunities, taking part in the programme with the ultimate goal that these young people will eventually be ready to measure and lift economic, social and cultural barriers. In a Europe that will be increasingly diverse due to ongoing migration, this is essential skills development to ensure that all EU citizens, regardless of culture or background, are included, valued, enjoy equal opportunities, and can contribute towards a strong European economy.

A great deal of the third sector is dedicated to serving and representing groups such as young people, people with fewer opportunities, migrants, refugees, and other marginalised peoples. There is a strong case to be made that by building third sector capacity throughout Europe, we can strengthen the communities and groups they serve, while also communicating the value of European participation and increasing engagement. SCOPE therefore has potential for continued exploitation under the new Erasmus+ programme, which the partnership is eager to explore.

eLearning will also remain a priority going forward and has been made even more important by the impact of Coronavirus, which has demonstrated just how essential digital access, skills, and learning opportunities are. SCOPE has the potential to become an EU wide eLearning resource for a sector that is at the forefront of promoting EU values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and human rights. This bodes well for SCOPE's continued development through European funding.

In future and with much further development of the platform, there is potential under larger research and innovation funds, such as Horizon Europe, to collaborate with scientists and researchers to explore how third sector skills development and capacity building can help to tackle major societal challenges, such as demographic changes, health, and climate change. The new Horizon Europe emphasises the importance of this collaborative approach between science and this sector/civil society organisations: "Engaging and involving citizens, civil society organisations and end-users in co-design and co-creation processes and promoting responsible research and innovation will improve trust between science and society, as well as the uptake of scientific evidence-based public policies and innovative solutions<sup>4</sup>".

In conclusion, this project is just the first step in our journey to realise the potential of SCOPE, and indeed the potential of our sector. The third sector already has a transformative effect on European society and is an essential component in making the EU a more equal, fair, and compassionate place. With improved quality, access, and recognition of professional education and capacity building in the sector, we can do so much more.



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# LEARNINGS & CONCLUSIONS

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## LEARNINGS & CONCLUSIONS

SCOPE was a challenging but immensely rewarding project for all involved. Within two years, we fast-tracked eLearning for third sector organisations in our countries and across Europe, and we produced a system that can begin to recognise and promote the valuable nonformal learning of sector staff.

In our final months of the project, we have reflected on the project and our learnings from it as a consortium. Insights shared were gathered by the coordinating partner and largely fell within two categories:

1. Organisational and staff development
2. Sector development

### 1. Organisational and staff development

#### Value of European collaboration

For most partners, this was their first experience as organisations of an Erasmus+ funded project. Some had carried out projects under different European programmes or had staff who had experience of running EU project, but Erasmus+ was new to all but the Finnish partners, Sivis Study Centre. This project has opened the partners to the possibilities that European projects offer, and the value of European collaboration. It was a lesson in how, through collaboration, we can become greater than the sum of our parts. Each partner brought unique skills, knowledge and perspectives to this project and, in doing so, strengthened the project results. Together we have achieved in two years what would have taken any one of us alone much longer. Having now seen the impact of exchange of best practice and innovation across Europe and grown our respective European networks and project portfolios, the partners are eager to continue on this journey and find new ways to collaborate, learn and realise goals at an EU level.

#### Capacity Building

An additional takeaway from SCOPE was an increased capacity for both individual staff and the partner organisations themselves to deliver complex and demanding international projects. Project management of this scale can be challenging, and there are many unpredictable factors that can put successful delivery of a project at risk. To counteract that we developed the Project Methodology outlined above and have essentially further developed and piloted this along with the project outputs over the last two years. In doing so, we have created a methodology that works, and it is one we can transfer to many other areas of our work going forward, at national or European level. Staff involved have learned numerous new skills, built networks, and had opportunities to learn and exchange best practice with their counterparts throughout Europe. This is especially important given that digital learning is becoming an essential part of education and training. It is not just good to know about it, it is vital that we as sector representatives know about it and build the relevant skills to keep up with the pace of innovation. This has been made even more apparent with the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which has demonstrated the importance of online learning, and forced many individuals and organisations who were resistant to it to finally engage and realise the possibilities. All partners are invested in capitalising on this new understanding of online learning, and motivated to continue to provide quality online training as the pandemic continues. The capacity built through this project will be essential to that.

## Learnings for managing future projects

Although our overall methodology proved sound, there were practicalities in project delivery that the partnership will take as learnings for future projects. Translation and adaptation were extremely time-consuming for partners from the non-English speaking countries. In retrospect, our schedule was very tight to allow for both development of materials and the translation and adaptation of those materials and, if we were to plan the project again, we would allow more time for this.

The modules that dealt with legislation and regulation— specifically Governance and Finance—were definitely worth doing, given that they are such essential skills within the sector, however, they were also challenging to adapt to so many different national contexts. In future, now that we have these topics covered and will keep them up to date, we will focus more on modules that are principles based and do not vary so much by country, e.g. communications.

We discussed a log in system for the SCOPE Platform in the initial partner meeting but ultimately decided that such a system can be complicated to create and maintain and may be a barrier for people engaging in the modules. So, instead we made the modules freely available without registration or log in on the platform. While this worked well for the project and end user, it would have been much easier to collect data had users been obliged to create an account, and we also could have collected a much richer set of data. In future iterations of the project, we would introduce such a system.

## 2. Sector development

### The value of investing in sector skills

As representative bodies for the third sector, the consortium was already aware of the value in investing in the third sector and the resulting social impact that happens when third sector organisations are well-trained and resourced. However, this project was an exercise in how eLearning can facilitate this.

Since SCOPE began, The Wheel has carried out research in Ireland with Indecon Economic Consultants on “Investment Appraisal of Upskilling of Employees in the Non-Profit Sector”, the results of which have not yet been published. Some key findings demonstrate the importance of investment in sector skills:

- 71.7% of research participants stated that they need further training to be able to cope with their present duties
- 43.9% said that there had been learning activities they wanted to participate in in the last 12 months but they did not (compared to 30.4% in the private sector and 36% in the public sector).
- When asked why they did not participate in the training, the main responses were:
  - I did not have the time available to participate in training/learning activities (67.7%)
  - My organisation was willing to support me, but did not have the funding to do so (19.4%)
  - My organisation was not willing to facilitate training/learning and/or pay for this (12.9%)
- The key areas identified as needing more skills development included Governance (57.8%), Finance (52%), Communications (75.9%), Fundraising (80.5%).

- Participants reported that skills shortages were impacting negatively on certain areas within their organisation, including:
  - Hindering introduction of new working practices (74%)
  - Reducing quality of services (60%)
  - Causing lower productivity (57%)
  - Causing higher operating costs (45%)
  - Causing failure to meet donor requirements / targets being missed (40%)
  - Leading to lower staff retention (39%)
- In contrast, participants reported what they perceived to be the benefits of investment in training:
  - Enhancement of quality of services (84%)
  - Facilitation of introduction of new work practices (85%)
  - Improvement in productivity (76%)
  - Lower operational costs (48%)

Overall results indicated that there is a critical needs gap in the third sector, at least in Ireland, and that levels of training are “very low”. The results of a cost-benefit analysis found a Benefit-Cost Ratio of 2.86:1, suggesting that investment in training in the non-profit sector is likely to have a significant positive net economic benefit.

What all of this tells us is that:

- There is a critical need for more training in our sector
- Time and cost are significant barriers to accessing training
- Lack of training is preventing third sector organisations from achieving maximum impact in their work and is therefore negatively affecting the vulnerable people and communities they represent and serve
- Key areas that need skills development include those covered by SCOPE modules
- Access to training would help to increase the impact of their work and would positively affect the vulnerable people and communities they represent and serve

By creating a location and time flexible, free and accessible training resource for the third sector in key areas identified as being in need of skills development, we have met many of the needs identified above. The SCOPE project is helping to fill a vital gap, and we now know that this gap will not just support third sector organisations to deliver essential services across the partner countries, it will also yield a significant positive net economic benefit.

### **The potential of the outputs beyond the target group**

We have learned through the project that, while our initial target group was small third sector organisations, there is potential to expand SCOPE to several other target groups within the sector. Other groups or uses that were identified as potential SCOPE users include:

- Volunteers and trustees
- Larger organisations for whom SCOPE can be a staff induction tool
- An additional course for HEIs to offer students planning on joining the sector

### **The importance of eLearning**

As discussed above in the section on “The value of investing in sector skills”, eLearning has the potential to help overcome time and location barriers to accessing training for sector staff, both of which are major impediments to capacity building.

Therefore, there is a real need for each partner as sector representatives to invest in eLearning and find new time and location flexible solutions to providing and recognising nonformal learning in the sector.

However, an unforeseeable event that has really highlighted the importance of eLearning is the COVID-19 pandemic. Within a very short space of time, our organisations and organisations throughout the third sector had to transform to work and deliver services digitally. This was a significant challenge for a sector that traditionally lags behind others in terms of digital capacity. Staff who would have been resistant to technology and online work and learning are now being forced to embrace it and are finally seeing the benefits of it.

The online nature of SCOPE has therefore had two main advantages that have been thrown into sharp relief by the pandemic:

1. It has meant that there was minimal disruption to delivering the project even as the pandemic hit at a pivotal time as the second pilot launched, which demonstrates that delivering as much training and services online may be the way forward
2. There is now, more than ever, an appetite and appreciation for online learning that the partnership must capitalise upon.



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# FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SCOPE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SCOPE

SCOPE has been a huge learning curve, but a very rewarding experience for all partners. What we have built through this project has already yielded an overwhelmingly positive impact and has enormous potential for future development. As a consortium, we are committed to sharing, promoting, sustaining and exploiting the outputs of this project.

Get in touch with us to find out more about how you or your organisation could benefit from SCOPE.

### Contact

Contact coordinators The Wheel for more information about SCOPE or to be directed to your local SCOPE partner.

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Or fill out the [contact form on the SCOPE website](#) to be directed to your local SCOPE partner.

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