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EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF *THE URBAN GROWTH - GSIP VANTAA* PROJECT

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CONTENT

SUMMARY[1]

The *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project funded by the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) addressed the challenge of low-skilled workplaces and an under-educated workforce. The project co-created and tested new innovative solutions as well as developed a local jobs and skills ecosystem with the aim of supporting both local SMEs and their employees in employment, upskilling and digitalisation. The project included three thematic "Growth and Social Investment Pacts" ("Growth Deals") each combining elements of growth and social responsibility in varying service packages including recruitment services, training and coaching. The initial aim of the project was to test a model to provide social incentives promoting responsible growth and competence development in SMEs operating in Vantaa. Creating such a universal incentive model however proved rather challenging. Instead, the Growth Deals were developed such that they simultaneously incorporated services relating to both growth and social investment.

The project can be described as demand-driven. It has had an agile way of working and the project activities has been modified based on the improved understanding of target group needs. When the initial idea of the GSIP-model was noted to be extremely challenging to develop, the project concentrated on responding to the practical needs of its target groups. The innovativeness and novelty value of the project are linked to the adaptation of new kinds of practices, operating models and tools, such as co-creational service design and services based on coaching methods, within the local context. The project funding offered a concrete opportunity to test new ideas and tools both for the actors' providing services and the companies participating in them. Services developed during the project has offered new solutions to the local challenges, such as the "Guidance program" supporting the companies in identifying competence development needs and utilising appropriate services of vocational skill development and apprenticeship training.

The project was successful in relation to the set quantitative targets for participants (individuals and companies). In addition, the companies heard during the evaluation considered the project services very useful from several perspectives. Identified benefits and impacts are 1) a more positive and open attitude towards competence development at both management and employee level, 2) a more comprehensive, systematic and long-term approach to competence development, 3) new tools and processes for developing and managing competence and identifying competence needs and 4) increased competence level in the company. The project's demand-driven operating model and tailoring of the services provided to participating companies were key factors explaining the project's success in meeting the needs of its target groups. The account management model carried out during the project was critical both in involving the companies in the project activities and in ensuring the services offered respond to companies' needs.

The project has successfully addressed the need to better understand how companies, especially SMEs, can be motivated to carry out competence development activities. The main benefits and impacts generated for the project partners include an improved understanding of the target group as well as a more customer and demand-driven approach to the planning and marketing of services for competence development. In addition, the project has created the foundation for a more coordinated and better functioning process of cooperation between the city authorities, educational institutions and companies. The most obvious value added from working together with different organisations is the various strengths, knowledge, networks and connections that each partner has brought to the project.

The *Urban Growth – GSIP Vantaa* project has had a rather complex project framework. It both addressed several challenging themes and carried out a development process that consisted of many demanding phases (e.g., co-creation, cooperation between untypical partners, digitisation etc). In addition, the project consortium consisted of project partners with varying roles in the project and uneven project budgets. This complexity has increased expectations in terms of project management operations and the challenges encountered during the implementation are mainly related to themes of cooperation, communication and project management. Ensuring that the project partners share a common vision around the project's outcomes as well as of the project's implementation logic and practices is clearly important. Sufficient resources for project management and management models that support the cooperation between manyfold project partners have a crucial role during the implementation.

The external evaluation of the project was an ex-post evaluation. The evaluation included elements of both process evaluation and impact evaluation. The evaluation focused on four pre-defined criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impacts. The external evaluation was conducted as a qualitative evaluation and a variety of qualitative methodologies, such as interviews and document analysis, were used.

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[1] *The summary is available also in Finnish.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of the intervention

1.1.1 The Urban Growth – GSIP Vantaa project and the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative

The challenge of low-skilled workplaces and an under-educated workforce is highly relevant for the city of Vantaa. The low level of skills-based competencies also creates risks for Vantaa-based SMEs' competitiveness in the era of fast digitalisation and automation. This complex problem was directly addressed in Vantaa in the *Urban Growth- GSIP Vantaa* project funded by the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA). The UIA initiative offers urban authorities the opportunity to take a risk and experiment with innovative and creative solutions. The *Urban Growth- GSIP Vantaa* project has been co-creating and testing new innovative solutions as well as developing a local jobs and skills ecosystem with the aim of supporting both local SMEs and their employees in employment, upskilling and digitalisation.

Urban Innovative Actions is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions in the field of sustainable urban development. The initiative seeks to address urban areas facing multiple and interconnected challenges related to employment, migration, demography, water and soil pollution. It also highlights the reality that urban areas are also engines of new ideas and solutions, places where changes happen on a larger scale and at a fast pace. The UIA Initiative encourages urban authorities to go beyond traditional policies and services and to be bold and innovative in order to answer the increasingly complex challenges they face. (Urban Innovation Actions. N.d.)

The beneficiaries of the UIA Initiative are urban authorities. However, given the complexity of the urban challenges faced, the initiative calls for cooperation between the urban authorities and their key stakeholders in order to design and implement effective and innovative solutions. The initiative provides funding for projects co-financing 80% of the project's activities. The UIA initiative also encourages the projects to draw lessons, capture the knowledge and share it with other urban policy-makers and practitioners across Europe paying attention to what worked in the implementation of the project and what did not work. (Urban Innovation Actions. N.d.)

Urban Innovative Actions Initiative funds projects that are

INNOVATIVE: are bold, creative and include elements that have never been implemented anywhere else in Europe. The ideas are expected to be experimental and not part of normal activities.

PARTICIPATIVE: involve the key stakeholders that will bring expertise and knowledge to the project, both during the design and the implementation phase of a project.

OF GOOD QUALITY: define realistic ambitions, coherent activities and effective management. A logically interlinked work plan, a coherent and proportionate budget as well as effective management arrangements will make things happen.

MEASURABLE: that has reliable action plans on how to describe the change in the local situation if the project is successful, and how to measure this change. Defining clear results that can be measured and quantified is key.

TRANSFERABLE: address an urban challenge that can be relevant to other urban authorities in Europe, draw lessons on the experiment and share them with a wider audience of policy makers and practitioners.

(Urban Innovation Actions. N.d.)

1.1.2 Main objectives of the project

The aim of the *Urban Growth- GSIP Vantaa* project was to test a model to provide social incentives promoting responsible growth and competence development in SMEs operating in Vantaa. The proposed solution to the key challenges addressed by the project, as described in the project application, is to create a service model that "interconnects growth and social responsible acts together at the company level: by doing social acts […] a company earns training allowances for growth."

In short, the project has been co-creating and testing new innovative solutions as well as developing a local jobs and skills ecosystem with the aim of supporting both local SMEs and their employees in employment, upskilling and digitalisation.

According to the original project application the main objectives of the project were:
- **To promote growth and competitiveness** especially of companies which operate in routine work. Special targets include companies which are, or should be, undergoing digital transformation and the adoption of intelligent automation to ensure future competitiveness and growth and thus, **promoting an increase in local jobs.**

- **To improve the education level of the workforce** and offer better training opportunities for low-skilled employees, employees with outdated skills and unemployed persons and through this, **create new inclusive jobs and a better match between labour market needs and the demands of the workforce.**

- **To create a new, innovative and exceptional service and incentive model** (GSIP) **which combines the above objectives** at a company level with the help of services promoted by the city of Vantaa, educational institutes and other relevant partners and stakeholders.

The idea behind the "Growth and Social Investment Pacts" (GSIP) –model introduced in the project application was "to interconnect the growth and social responsibility pillars at a company level" (Project Application Form). The original idea was that the GSIPs (the project's service entities) would consist of separate services for supporting growth and responsible activities. This means that a company was to be rewarded with activities supporting growth, if it performed social acts like recruiting partially able-bodied job applicants or improving its employees' skill levels. The basic idea behind the GSIP -model was to help enhance low-educated employees´ and unemployed persons´ capabilities to engage in life-long learning and further education, thus lowering their personal risk of future unemployment.

Creating such a universal incentive model however proved rather challenging. As such, instead of creating a model that included separate services relating to responsibility and growth, the growth deals were developed such that the services simultaneously incorporated aspects relating to both growth and social investment (Lamberg et al., 2022).

The projects measurable objectives were as follows:

Growth investment goals to be achieved through vocational training processes:
- involve 60 companies in the activities in addition to the five project partner companies
- have 700 persons participating in the training activities

Social goals, to be achieved through the recruitment processes:
- create 30 apprenticeships
- create 200 new jobs. This goal was however subsequently reconsidered as the project's focus was further refined based on various project findings during the first Growth Deal.

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The project's mission was that if successful, the GSIPs would be both 1) a future tool for cities to help improve company growth, enabling the better matching of skills in terms of local needs and supply, thus creating new jobs while improving social inclusion on the labour market, and 2) a good demonstration of the possibilities around potential systemic change and reform for upper governance levels, both national and EU.

1.1.3 The implementation of the project

The project began in January 2019 and will be concluded at the end of July 2022. The remaining project time is focused on knowledge transfer and the bringing together of all the lessons learned during the project thus far as well as on disseminating the results.

The project consortium included 12 project partners:

- The main urban actor:
  - City of Vantaa
- Education providers:
  - Laurea University of Applied Sciences
  - Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
  - Vantaa Vocational College, Varia
  - Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce
- Business partners:
  - Finnair Cargo Ltd.
  - Infocare Ltd.
  - ISS Services Ltd
  - Solteq Plc.
  - Vantti Ltd.
- Research institutes:
  - Etla – The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy
  - The Labour Institute for Economic Research LABORE

The project's services were aimed at Vantaa-based SMEs employing 10-200 people in the capital region, as well as, more generally, at the Vantaa-based workforce.

The project included three thematic "Growth and Social Investment Pacts" (GSIPs, referred to as "Growth Deals" during project implementation) each combining elements of growth and social responsibility. Each Growth Deal had a different focal point, with service packages that varied accordingly, including recruitment services, training and coaching.

THE THREE GROWTH DEALS CARRIED OUT DURING THE PROJECT (Lamberg et. al., 2022).
Growth Deal 1 Labour recruitment and training brought together services supporting recruitment activities and growth-enhancing training and coaching services. The aim was to support, in particular, those companies whose growth has been hampered by labour market difficulties in finding new, sufficiently skilled, employees.
Growth Deal 2 Upgrading staff skills supported the responsible growth of companies by developing staff skills. The service package consisted of company-specific coaching entities that addressed the identified business development target. In addition, services for developing the staff's professional competence were also provided.
Growth Deal 3 Support for the process of technological change and coaching for competence development supported companies in their technological transformations. The expert services offered to the companies focused on the company's current technological change project and competence management.

In practice, the co-creation process has taken place in three consecutive cycles addressing the themes of employment, competence development and digitalisation. Each Growth Deal was created in three steps. First the context of each Growth Deal was designed with partner companies and tested in authentic cases, second the different services included in the deals were piloted with companies and finally they were supposed to be automated for permanent use and

scaling. However, during the project implementation process the original plan for digitisation was revised and it was decided to focus on digitising and automating the most promising service concepts/tools based on individual company needs.

Table 1 The project in a nutshell based on the project's presentation materials and Lamberg et. al., 2022.

	Project aim	Support local SMEs and their personnel in upskilling, employment and digitalisation
	Target groups	Vantaa-based SMEs Working adults, especially those who have low qualifications, low skill levels or outdated skills
	The process and methods	Co-creating and testing solutions in a local jobs and skills ecosystem Workplace interventions: • Engaging employers • Motivating employees and providing information on adult learning alternatives (in peer group) • Personal guidance in one-to-one discussions • Supervisory mentoring
	Growth deals	1. Labour recruitment and training 2. Upgrading staff skills 3. Support the process of technological change and coaching for competence development
	Time frame	January 2019 – July 2022
	Budget	5 million euros. 80% UIA's Jobs and Skills program, 20% implementers' own funding.

The project also included a randomised control group study of impact evaluation. The impacts of the project's activities were assessed using a randomised control trial. Vantaa-based SMEs with 10 to 200 employees were divided into two groups: the test group and the control group. Of these, only the companies in the test group were offered the project services. The aim of the impact evaluation has been to produce reliable information on and an indication of the impact of the services provided during the project. The study has utilised questionnaire data and extensive register data from both companies and individuals (Lamberg et al., 2022). The impact evaluation was however still in progress during the conducting of this external evaluation.

1.2 The external evaluation

1.2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic assessment of the design, implementation and outcomes of an intervention, here the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project. The evaluation involves understanding how the project was implemented and what effects it has had, for whom and why. It also identifies what can be improved and estimates its overall impacts. The external evaluation complements the impact evaluation conducted by Etla and Labore and the internal evaluation done by the project team during the project implementation process.

This external evaluation has been an ex-post evaluation, meaning that the evaluation was conducted at the end of the project. Typically, an ex-post evaluation examines the intervention under evaluation as a whole including the realisation of the project's objectives and outcomes. This evaluation has been a comprehensive evaluation including elements of both process evaluation and impact evaluation. Aspects typical to process evaluations include analysis of whether the intervention was implemented as intended, whether the design worked and what worked more or less well and why.

Impact evaluation on the other hand concentrates on what difference an intervention has made (see e.g., Seppänen-Järvelä, 2005; HM Treasury, 2020).

The aim of the external evaluation has been **firstly** to produce an independent evaluation using four pre-defined criteria: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impacts.** The evaluation criteria and questions were predefined by the client, but the questions were discussed and refined together with the evaluation theme and the client (representatives of the project). The evaluation criteria and questions are presented in the following table.

Secondly, the evaluation has produced recommendations for continuity, replicability and the scalability of the project's results and findings.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
RELEVANCE	**Responding to needs, synergies with other activities and corresponding changes** • How well has the project responded to the needs of the target groups? • How well has the project responded to the needs and goals of the project partners? • How has the project complemented or increased the impact of other projects / development activities? • How has the project taken into account and reacted to possible changes in the operating environment?
	Cooperation between project partners • What benefits or added value has the cooperation between the project partners generated in terms of achieving the project's objectives? • How has the cooperation between project partners worked out? • How has cooperation between project partners been supported?
	Innovativeness and novelty value • How innovative is the project and its functions? • What novelty value has been gained from the project activities? • What new approaches have been used? How have they supported the achievement of the results?
EFFECTIVENESS	**Effectiveness** • How well were the goals and achievements attained? • Which achievements have been perceived as particularly effective? • Where have there been significant challenges? • What were the main reasons why the goals were achieved, or not? • What have been the factors that have supported and facilitated the achievement of results, and on the other hand, the factors that have slowed or hindered the achievement of results?
	Continuity and scalability • What are the conditions for the continuity and scalability of project activities and results? • What are the prerequisites for operating models as a more permanent solution? In Vantaa? And elsewhere? • Is the operating model able to secure deployment in other operating environments? • How has the continuity and sustainability of results been supported?
EFFICIENCY	• How well has learning during the project and the utilisation of the lessons been realised? • How well has the project supported the learning process?

	• How has the project's operating model supported efficiency? • What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in respect of the implementation process and the co-development model? How are vulnerabilities and threats addressed?
IMPACTS	**Benefits and impacts** • What are the benefits of the project for the different actors involved? • How have companies benefited from the project's services? • What impact has the project had from the perspective of the participants (i.e., companies and their staff)? • What impact has the project had in terms of practices in the project partners' organisations? • What kinds of competences or abilities have the project partners gained during the project?
	Seeds for transformation • What has changed as a result of the project? • What has changed that would not otherwise have changed without the intervention?

The evaluation was conducted between January 2022 and March 2022 with the evaluation report being finalised in April 2022. The evaluation process consisted of steering of the work, analysis on written, relevant, documents, electronic survey for companies participating in the project's activities, interviews of relevant actors, a validation workshop and analysis and synthesis tasks. The reporting phase also included the client commenting on the draft of the evaluation report.

Steering

Throughout the project

Document analysis

January 2022

E- survey for the companies
n=11-16

February 2022

Interviews

26 interviews with 36 persons

January-February 2022

Analysis and synthesis

February 2022

Validation workshop

March 2022

Reporting and introductions

March 2022
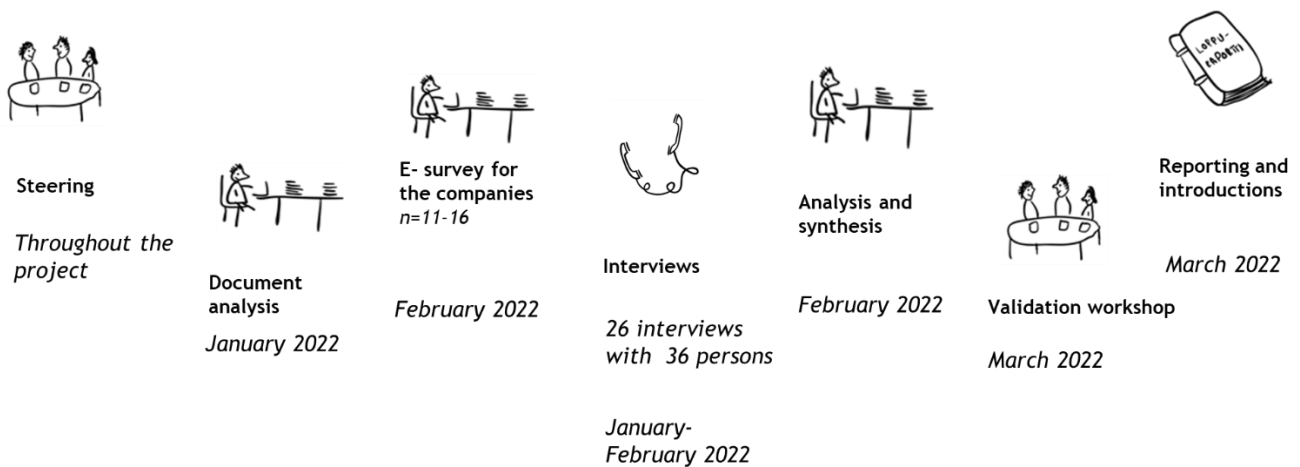
Figure 1 The process of the external evaluation.

1.2.2 Evaluation methodology and process

The external evaluation was conducted as a qualitative evaluation. Qualitative research is used in evaluation for several purposes. These include, among other things, identifying the factors that contribute to the successful or unsuccessful delivery of the evaluated intervention, identifying outcomes and how they occur and exploring the organisational aspects of delivery (see e.g., Patton, 2002).

Where quantitative evaluation is based on using numeric and statistical data in order to conduct the evaluation, qualitative evaluation is based on different kinds of information and data, usually gathered through interviews, document reviews and observation methods. Moreover, a variety of analysis methods including content analysis, discourse analysis and narrative analysis can also be used to conduct qualitative evaluation. Therefore, the evaluation information produced by qualitative and quantitative evaluation tend to be very different from each other.

The external evaluation of the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project was conducted by means of the principle of triangulation. Data triangulation means that most evaluation questions are viewed through more than one data source (e.g., documents and questionnaire). Method triangulation, in turn, means that different methods are used to collect data. Evaluator triangulation suggests that evaluation is carried out as a joint task of the evaluation team. The nature and contents of the evaluation material, however, did not enable us to utilise data triangulation for all of the evaluation questions.

In addition to the evaluation criteria and methodology presented previously the intervention (i.e., the project) is viewed through its ability to be scaled and further applied. The evaluation takes into account the reasons for and backgrounds of the results and effects. The evaluation also takes into account the connections between the project and public administration and policy instruments more generally (Milat et al. 2020).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Evaluation data was produced utilising several different methods and materials. A variety of qualitative methodologies were used to produce the necessary information on the evaluation themes and questions. Information was collected from project workers, partner and pilot companies, the UIA secretariat and experts on lifelong learning (e.g., Sitra, OECD). The evaluation has also utilised several participative methods. The collection of the evaluation materials and the findings are based on material produced by and the views and experiences of different stakeholders.

INTERVIEWS

Qualitative interviews were used as a means to elicit the views of the individuals involved in the project – these included stakeholders, the project staff and the beneficiaries of the intervention. The interviews elicited views on intentions, experiences and the self-reported impact of a programme intervention.

Semi-structed, thematic interviews were conducted in January - February 2022. In total, 26 interviews (36 interviewees) were made by telephone or via video call. Three of the interviews were group interviews: the coaches, account managers and digital tools developers were gathered together in thematic group interviews. In addition to this, some of the other project partners and companies opted for an interview with a couple of people at a time. One partner company answered via email. The interviews consisted of questions related to the evaluation criteria, though the questions were targeted according to the interviewees' role and understanding of the project. The interviewees were

- Representatives of the City of Vantaa (2 persons)
- Project workers / representatives of the project partners (24 persons, including the partner companies)
- Pilot companies (4 persons)
- UIA Initiative (2 persons)
- External experts (4 persons).

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis (analysis of written sources) refers to the analysis of the written material produced mainly by the project. The material consisted of several of the project's management documents (i.e., project plan, annual reports) and material produced during the project (articles, blog post, presentation material, summaries of the feedback gathered). (See Annex 1). The document analysis was utilised in the creation of an overall understanding of the project and in order to better address the evaluation criteria and questions.

ELECTRONIC SURVEY

An electronic survey was conducted aimed at companies that utilised the services provided by the project during the years 2019-2022. The electronic survey addressed the success and usefulness of these project services from the companies' point of view. The survey was conducted in January and February of 2022. The survey was sent to 61 people and 11-16 respondents responded to it. The number of respondents varied between questions. That makes the response rate 21.3%.

VALIDATION WORKSHOP

A validation workshop was held at the beginning of March 2022. The evaluators presented their preliminary results to the workshop with the participants then discussing them. A total of 21 persons took part in the workshop.

In addition, a member of the evaluation team followed up on the presentation of the project in a skills lab event organised by the OECD during the 'Local Skills Week' and the project's final event.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The evaluation material was analysed using qualitative methods. A key analysis method in analysing the evaluation was qualitative content analysis combined with typification and classification. Content analysis focuses on identifying what issues, topics and themes the material tells us about and brings up the similarities and differences in the material (see e.g., Tuomi ja Sarajärvi, 2002). Typification and classification of the material was used to identify and categorise the themes and topics presented in the evaluation material that were relevant to the evaluation framework.

The content analysis was steered through the evaluation framework, that is to say, through the evaluation criteria and evaluation questions. This means that the evaluation material was categorised based on the predefined categories of the evaluation framework. The contents of the interviews and documents and written answers were first categorised in accordance with the evaluation criteria and questions. Information that was irrelevant to the evaluation framework was removed from the evaluation data. Each piece of evaluation material was analysed in relation to the evaluation criteria and the evaluation questions.

After this, material categorised under each evaluation criteria and question(s) was examined in greater depth. The analysis focused on finding the key themes per each evaluation criteria appearing in the material. The material was grouped so that expressions meaning the same thing formed a sub-category. At this stage the analysis focused on identifying both the topics presented in the evaluation material and possible contradictions or differences in opinions about the topics presented.

Divergent, contradictory and atypical findings have played a role in analysing the data and drawing conclusions, especially when examining the experience of project actors in the implementation of the project. The experiences of the project partners interviewed may, of course, be different based, for example, on the role of the interviewee in the project or, on the intensity of the participation. These divergent experiences have been highlighted when it has been considered appropriate to emphasise that, although the majority of the interviewees have experienced the matter in a certain way, there have been different experiences and therefore it cannot be said, for example, that cooperation during the project has been completely straightforward and smooth, or when these contradictions might offer a fruitful aspect for learning based on the project's experiences.

Table 2 Example of classification of interview data in terms of identifying differentiating experiences of the fluency of the cooperation between the project partners.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY X.1	SUB-CATEGORY X.2	EXPRESSION FROM INTERVIEW
Relevance	Cooperation between project partners	Fluency	Has been fluent	On a general level it has worked well. Different partners are committed with different intensities. (Interview 1)
				Has worked really well. Weekly meetings for follow ups. (Interview 2)
				Supportive atmosphere. (Interview 4)
				Cooperation has been good and fruitful. (Interview 6)
				etc.
			Has not been fluent	At the beginning project partners saw each other as competitors. (Interview 3)
				We have been bystanders. (Interview 8)
				etc.

The questionnaire results were analysed via a descriptive statistical analysis (number of phenomena, their prevalence, distribution and division into categories). This provided the evaluation information on the views, attitudes and behaviour of the target group and their intensity in relation to the topic given. The descriptive analysis seeks to describe and summarise the distribution of a quantitative variable or the combined variation of several quantitative variables, without, however, seeking to generalise the results to any broader population. In other words, no inferential statistics were used in the evaluation.

1.2.3 Challenges encountered during the evaluation

The evaluators recognised the three main challenges encountered during the evaluation. Firstly, the subject of evaluation has evolved during the implementation time compared to the original project plan. This refers in particular to the original aim of the project to create and test a model in which "a company is rewarded with an economic benefit, if it undertakes social acts such as improving its employees' skill levels" (The Project Application). At an early stage of the implementation however the project team concluded that such a model was not feasible and instead of creating and testing such a model the project tested several different mechanisms that could encourage the companies involved to undertake skill development activities and rather than keeping these social and economic (growth) acts separate, these two aspects were instead combined in the same services provided by the project. Even though the initial objective of the project was not actualised as envisioned in the application phase, the implementation plan and work packages contained in the project plan were largely conducted as initially envisaged.

Although such changes are fully in line with the experimental spirit of the project, this change has nevertheless made it more difficult to follow the project's activities in relation to its initial framework and intended outcomes. As such, the evaluation has on the one hand studied the initial idea and objective of the project in its implementation, while on the other, what the project ended up doing and why in relation to the outcomes of the activities that were designed based on the project's findings. This was already partly taken into account in the evaluation framework which tried to implement the experimental nature of the project while addressing questions concerning, for example, the cooperation and learning processes. Typically, project evaluation is objective-oriented, meaning that the evaluation focuses on assessing whether the project attained its objectives and intended outcomes. The shortcoming of the objective-oriented

evaluation approach is that it often neglects the implementation process as well as outcomes and impacts that were, perhaps, unexpected (see e.g., Seppänen-Järvelä, 2005).

Secondly, a large number of activities were carried out within the context of the project by the various actors involved in the planning and production of different services. This multidimensionality originates from the complexity of the original project plan. This level of complexity has made it more difficult to create a comprehensive description of the project and its performance as a whole. It has, to some extent, been challenging to combine individual findings to specific parts of the project making the evaluation of the project and its impacts as a whole rather challenging.

Thirdly, the evaluation material was rather heterogenous and quite multifaceted and, in some parts, also incoherent and contradictory. For example, in some cases the informants' views clearly conflicted with each other. Interviewees often described the same situation or phenomenon differently or in a contradictory way from each other. This is not an atypical situation in qualitative evaluations including participatory methods such as interviews and workshops and when the evaluation examines questions that involve interviewees' subjective experiences and insights (see e.g., Seppänen-Järvelä, 2005). This was to be expected as the interviewed group was versatile representing different kinds of organisations and roles in the project. Typically, these contradictions were linked to their experiences concerning the implementation process or how well the project has met the various organisations' needs/expectations. In general, when there were contradictions, the evaluators checked whether they were single observations or presented by several informants. If there was a clear dichotomy between views A and views B, the evaluation stated that there are contradictions, but did not take a stand in terms of one view or another. The criteria in terms of the disclosure of the findings requires that the observations are, however, reported comprehensively and different conflicts are identified (see e.g., Virtanen, 2007).

The conclusions presented in this report represent a summary of the most general aspects raised from the evaluation findings. When reporting the findings, however, the most obvious contradictions that emerged during the evaluation are also included. There may however be individual observations that are not mentioned in this report. It is also worth noting that some of the evaluation questions have been addressed during the reporting process as part of a broader whole. This is because many of the themes and perspectives that emerged in the evaluation are linked to more than one question with very similar points of views. For example, observations considering the impacts of the project and changes emerging because of the project were really quite similar (e.g., deepening the cooperation between different organisations was mentioned as an impact of the project as well as a change emerging from the project).

One important aspect that emerged when considering the representativeness of the evaluation material is that the company representatives interviewed during the evaluation may not actually be entirely representative of the entire group of companies involved in the project. Typically, individuals with a more positive attitude to the phenomenon under consideration are more likely to participate in interviews and surveys than individuals with a neutral or nuanced attitude towards the subject.

2. Key Findings related to evaluation criteria

2.1 Relevance

2.1.1 Responding to needs and taking into account changes in the operating environment

THE GENERAL RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

The main objective (developing and experimenting with the GSIP model) and themes of the project are relevant internationally, nationally and locally. Low-skilled workplaces and an under-educated workforce are a major cause of holistic risks to local economies. Companies with a low- skilled workforce are more likely to face risks in terms of their competitiveness. This case is highly relevant in the city of Vantaa, where there are a large number of low-skill jobs. Simultaneously, people with higher education are using most of the opportunities afforded by access to adult education while those who are less educated tend to less often utilise such opportunities. These problems associated with educational inequities and educational polarisation are also relevant across the EU.

The *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project has also successfully addressed the need to better understand how companies, especially SMEs, can be motivated to carry out competence development activities. This observation was based on previous experiences which have proven to be quite challenging. For example, one external lifelong learning expert interviewed described their experiences from another project where competence development was clearly seen not to be in the interests of companies as an activity in itself, but rather only in the interest of the management if it helped to maximise profits. In short, competence development per se is not in the interest of the companies. If the tool can be shown to improve results however, only then do companies become interested. This seems to be the case particularly when it comes to SMEs.

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF SMES

The activities carried out in the context of the project have addressed the needs of the participating members of target groups (SMEs). The respondents to the company survey were very satisfied with the usefulness of the activities of and services provided by the project: four out of five were of the opinion that the services and activities provided by the project met the needs of their company very well, while one fifth thought that the company needs were met reasonably well.

The respondents continued to express great satisfaction with the project's services: every respondent agreed that their company would use similar services again and that they would recommend similar services to their colleagues or to other SMEs (small and medium enterprises).

All respondents agreed, four out of five strongly, that the external expert assistance provided in the context

"How well did the services and activities provided by the project meet the needs of your company?"

- Very well
- Reasonably well

18.2 %

81.8 %

Figure 2 The response distribution to the question "How well did the services and activities provided by the project meet the needs of your company?"

of the services brought clear added value to their company. Every respondent also agreed that the investment required by the services from their company was appropriate. Nine of out ten respondents thought that the project services brought benefits to their company that would not have been possible without the service. The rest neither agreed nor disagreed.
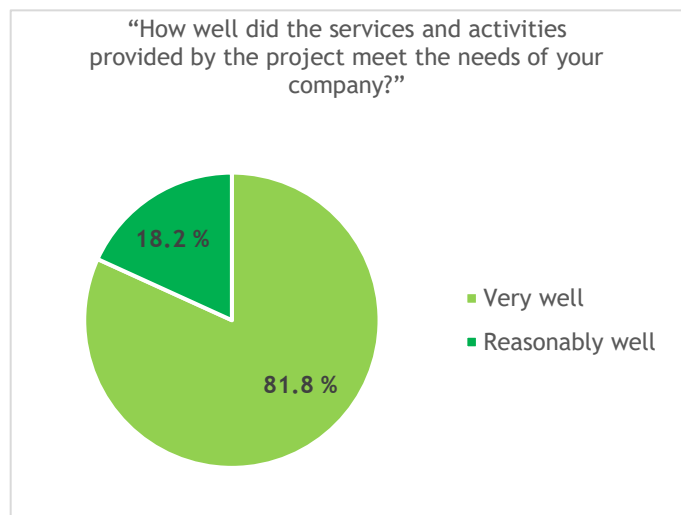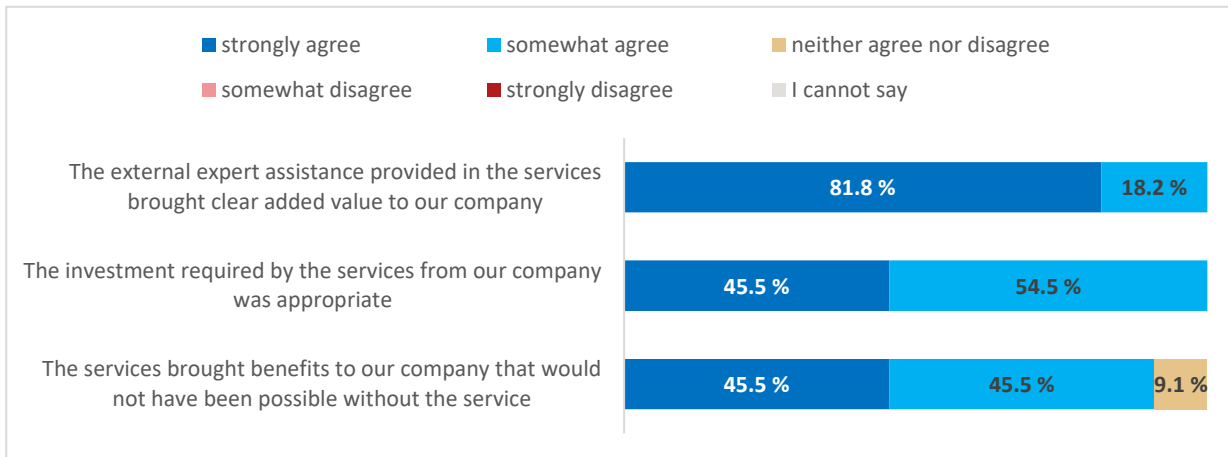
Figure 3 The respondents' positions on statements regarding the functionality and usefulness of the project's services and operating model

A key explanatory factor here is the demand-driven operating model of the project and tailoring the services provided to the companies. During the project the participating companies were asked on several occasions what kind of support they needed. Often, project activities are based on general trends, but this project listened to the ideas and needs of individual companies during the course of the project. As such, there was a genuine dialogue between the companies and the project representatives. The companies' positive feedback on project activities was particularly focused on the customisation of services both in the feedback gathered during the project and in the evaluation survey and interviews. When asked what were the good and/or most functional things in terms of the services and in the implementation of the project, several respondents answered that it was the tailoring of the services to the needs of the company, there were different training alternatives available and the training itself was concrete and of a good quality.

The project utilised an account management model as a way to make the competence development efforts as easy as possible for the companies and to ensure that the services provided by the project met the companies' needs. The idea behind the model was to offer SMEs an external partner, utilising a one-stop-shop approach. The project's account managers also acted as long-term contact points to the companies' representatives.

The account management model played a crucial role both in attracting and encouraging the companies to participate in the project's activities and in ensuring that the services offered to the companies responded to the company's specific needs. In addition, the account management model enabled the project to maintain the connections created between the project and the companies. This proved also to be an important factor in attracting a sufficient number of companies to the project.

When asked about those challenges or aspects that did not meet with the expectations of the companies, the survey's respondents brought up the issue of rigid schedules which were based on the piloting schedule presented in the project plan and that it was challenging to motivate the staff to participate in the training sessions, at least in part because they were organised online due to the COVID19 pandemic. However, according to feedback received from the project workers remote execution actually supported participation in the project's services. Moreover, the timing of the project was seen as very challenging for some SMEs due to the COVID19 pandemic. It can therefore be assumed that the companies that have joined the programme have identified the potential benefits associated with the services provided and have been highly motivated to participate.

The idea of simultaneous implementation in respect of the growth and social investment measures (GSIP-model), has been more difficult to perceive from the point of view of the participating company's interests. According to the project's own observations, it has been difficult to get companies to participate even in unpaid growth training, let alone in areas associated with corporate social responsibility issues. However, some services that combine these two pillars in a more obvious way, carried out in the context of the Growth Deals, have nevertheless functioned well. In these cases, there was a lot of tailoring in respect of the services in order to better respond to company needs. Indeed,

one of the key findings of the project was that coaching services function better when compared to more general training.

RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE PROJECT PARTNERS AND LINKS TO OTHER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The project has evident connections to the various strategies and other development objectives of the key implementing organisations. According to the interviews, the project has met particularly well the needs of the key implementing project partners, who have also played a major role in project management, planning and implementation (City of Vantaa, Laurea and Metropolia).

The project has offered these organisations a means to develop and test tools and action models to enhance and support lifelong learning activities in the SMEs as well as a way to enhance target group understanding. Supporting cooperation between the public organisations and companies has also proved to be a crucial element here in terms of its ability to reflect extremely well the project partners' own objectives. All of these aspects have, when taken together, supported the organisations' ambitions to provide better targeted services for the participating companies and helping SMEs to better identify and utilise different development tools available to them.

In addition, the project has responded to the need to examine the capability of educational institutions to meet the development needs of the participating companies. Some of the interviewees speculated during the interviews and in the validation workshop that the project has widened the service palette of the participating educational institutions in terms of the provision of competence development services for SMEs. This clearly chimes with the national level needs to develop the educational system, that is considered to be diverse and institution-centric.

Based on the OECD's (2020) evaluation, Finland's skill development system currently faces four challenges in respect of continuous learning: 1) gaps in learning provision 2) the lack of support and incentives for non-formal learning 3) the limited alignment of the existing education and training provision with labour market needs and 4) large gaps in learning participation between adults with low basic skills and those with higher skill levels. Each of these challenges have been addressed at some level during the project: the project has also focused on providing services to companies that operate in the labour market sector dominated by low-skilled jobs. Thus, the focus here was on offering non-formal learning opportunities to employees with a low level of education and the tailoring of competence development services based on the participating company's needs.

Furthermore, on a national level, the theme of lifelong learning is particularly topical. Thus, the project displays an obvious link to the ongoing national reform of continuous learning. The reform itself is designed to respond to the educational needs arising from changes in the world of work and to seek solutions to the question of finding a better way to combine work and study. The reform of continuous learning primarily examines the potential for upskilling, reskilling and developing competence over the course of people's careers (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d)

Although direct employment/recruitment measures played only a minor role as the project progressed, in the long run, the project has nevertheless supported measures to promote the skills of Vantaa's workforce. The project also sought to identify the ways in which the skills of the workforce can be raised thus reducing the risk of unemployment and improving employment opportunities in the event of unemployment. According to the employment service expert interviewed, this can be seen as a proactive employment measure.

Yet another aspect of the relevance is the ways in which the project encouraged the Vantaa based actors (the City of Vantaa, the universities of applied sciences and the companies) to cooperate and co-create. Even though some of the project partners have had previous experiences in participating in co-creation processes and in cooperation with different stakeholders, the project has undoubtedly enhanced these capabilities and connections further, thus helping to meet the objectives of the partner organisations.

Changes to the project activities were based on the experiences gained during the project's implementation and on the needs arising from the local operating environment identified during the project, as described in the project's annual reports and milestone reviews. The main changes to the original project plan were the adaption of the initial idea of the GSIP-model based on the project's findings and the changes made to work package 6, when the project team found that the original plan for the digitalisation of the GSIP-model was not feasible and did not correspond to the target

groups' needs identified during the project. Some of the project partners interviewed however felt that the amendments that were made no longer met their original expectations or that they did not recognise a clear link to their own organisation's needs while some speculated that the expectations for the digitisation process may initially have been too high the effect of which was that actual implementation of the digital tools did not meet some participants' expectations or objectives. As such, it would have been beneficial here to understand that this project was designed as the first phase of an experimental process seeking to find solutions and thus, essentially, a kick-starter for further development work. We can therefore conclude that the understanding of the project's nature as an experimental and co-creation project was not viewed as realistic by all the participants.

The most evident external factor affecting the project's implementation was, obviously, the COVID19 pandemic. The project did however successfully respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The pandemic did not halt or significantly alter project implementation. Rather, project activities were simply adapted to the changed circumstances. For some of the partner and potential pilot partners however the COVID19 pandemic proved to be really challenging. The pandemic did however affect the ability of some of the companies involved to participate in project activities as well as actually altering the needs of companies themselves.

The pandemic justifies, in part, the focus on developing the skills and competencies of current employees rather than the creation of new jobs (note that the original expected result was the creation of 200 new jobs for unemployed persons). This refocusing of emphasis also responded to the needs that the participating companies have encountered during the COVID19 pandemic. In addition, the project was able to support the companies' personnel in terms of their adaptation of vital digital skills. Some of the interviewees speculated that the pandemic also sped up the project with the development of the methodology used in approaching the companies and encouraging their participation.

As the project progressed and project implementation became more focused (particularly in respect of the digital work package), some of the project partners withdrew from specific project activities noting that the changed plans did not meet their original needs (annual project reports). Additionally, some of the project partners noted that their roles in the project changed from that originally planned, or at least from the role they initially expected during implementation. One example of a work package that seemed to experience such changes related to the impact evaluation included in the project. Firstly, the impact evaluation was not carried out as planned due to some challenges in the original evaluation design and data availability. During the implementation process, for example, the company register creation and executing the impact evaluation surveys for the companies was carried out in cooperation with several project partners that did not initially have a significant role to play in the impact evaluation process. Secondly, participating in this kind of co-creation project included more interaction with other project partners and work packages that is usual for such quantitative impact evaluation processes, meaning that the research institutes participated in activities that they perhaps did not initially expect, even though it was mentioned in the original project plan.

Moreover, it seems that the roles of some project partners and their objectives for the project were not defined clearly enough even though the project produced organisation- specific documents describing each project partner's role, responsibilities and obligations. These documents were also renewed during the project. The observation in respect of unclear roles is twofold. Firstly, some project partners noted, during the interview process, that they felt that other project partners had not understood what role the interviewee's organisation had in the project while a few project partners explained that they had not properly understood the role of other project partners in the project. Secondly, some of the interviewees also noted that they did not have a clear understanding of their own organisation's role in the project. As such, the project's ability to respond to the needs of these partners seems to have been weak or, at best, unclear. These interviewees also noted that, in principle, they recognised the connection between the project's objectives and their organisation's objectives, but it was rather more difficult to understand how well the actual outcomes and results had succeeded in meeting those objectives and needs.

Even though the connection to the organisations' strategies and other development activities (e.g., Big Flash project, My Business Hub project, the local government pilots on employment services) can be identified, in the end, many interviewees evaluated that the project have been somewhat isolated from other practical development work. Moreover, in some respects, the connection to existing activities was clearly challenging. That said, it should be noted that the project is still on-going and the knowledge transfer phase was still in progress when this external evaluation was completed. Connecting separate development projects to the 'business as usual' approach is known to be challenging and some of the interviewees recognised that the COVID19 pandemic only added to this challenge.

In particular the ability to identify synergies and the perceived potential to adapt solutions to the employment services raised doubts among the interviewees. One explanatory factor here may be that employment and recruitment measures were implemented primarily during the first Growth Deal during which a number of changes occurred both in the organisation of the City of Vantaa (organisational changes and participation in local government pilots on employment in which the tasks of the TE Office concerning certain customer groups were transferred via legislation to the municipality) and the project team.

2.1.2 Cooperation between the project partners

Nearly all of the project partners interviewed recognised the benefits of cooperation. The most obvious value added from working in a consortium of different organisations is that every organisation and every participant brings different kinds of strengths, knowledge, networks and connections to the project.

Even though, typically, multilateral cooperation has certain transaction costs such as the time spent in negotiating, the chances are that the final outcomes are better and more holistic. The complementary know-how of different organisations made it possible to build a more diversified level of know-how for the project and enabled different perspectives to be taken into account during project implementation. In addition, working with different organisations undoubtedly supported mutual learning. This close cooperation also made it possible to share good practices between the various participating organisations. Close cooperation with SMEs also helped the project to gain a better understanding of the actual needs of the participating companies by taking into account their experiences and feedback in relation to the various services and processes provided by the project.

The majority of interviewees described the cooperation experience positively, including descriptions of the cooperation being fluent, the project having a supportive atmosphere and good practices supporting the cooperation such as the weekly project meetings. However, this kind of network-based operating model represents a challenging form in respect of organising activities. Clearly there are a number of general problems related to network operations that can be highlighted in the context of the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project. The project consortium was large and included organisations with very different organisational and development cultures. In this context, it often takes time to build trust, create a culture of cooperation and create, establish and maintain common operating models and practices.

According to some of the interviewees challenges emerged, particularly in the beginning, in relation to the forming of a common understanding of the project's objectives and content. The project organised several workshops and discussions focused on clarifying objectives and forming a joint understanding. In addition, a level of ambiguity emerged around the roles of various project partners as noted previously. Building consensus and trust and agreeing on roles and responsibilities, were found to be challenging due to, among other things, differences of opinion and objectives.

The level of cooperation between the various project partners varied during project implementation while the project partners also reported varying experiences in relation to cooperation. For the rather tight group of key actors, consisting mainly of the project's management group, the collaboration process appears however to have worked rather well. The management group included the project managers from the city of Vantaa, Laurea and Metropolia. The project's management group's weekly project meetings attended by the management group and other project team members, supported collaboration between the key actors. Moreover, it seems that the different project teams (e.g., the digital team, the account managers' team) also enjoyed quite a good level of cooperation across organisational boundaries. Even though project partner cooperation experiences were generally described in positive terms, a few critical comments did emerge. For example, some of the interviewees described experiences where their views had not been taken into account or where they claimed that they were not heard and that the opinions of some project partners were emphasised more than those of others.

Other such challenges related to the leadership of the cooperation, information flow between the various project partners and staff turnover which has hampered the project throughout the implementation period. This staff turnover issue, combined with the differentiating participation activity rates, probably also affected some project partners' experiences of the cooperation process as well as the project's implementation more generally. Some of the interviewees noted that they had difficulties in obtaining information about the project's activities and progress and in simply comprehending the overall picture of the project itself. For example, a number of interviewees explained that

the turmoil around Work Package 6 (WP6) and the changes made to that work package made it hard to link the particular work package to the overall project.

Some of the interviewees pointed out that they had expected stronger leadership in relation to the cooperation and to the project in general. One key challenge in this respect was that the project had three programme managers during its lifetime and thus that there were periods during the project where there was a leadership vacuum.

The project has, however, tried to overcome the various challenges related to the need for cooperation and a number of operating models were created in order to support cooperation and the sharing of information between different project workers.

In general, co-creation as a practice has steered the project actors to engage in joint discussions and cooperation. Some of the interviewees even noted that the project has forced them or their organisation to cooperate more than they usually would. In addition, the concept of the management team, mentioned above, was generally viewed as representing a successful model in terms of cross-organisational project implementation. The project also utilised the unofficial concept of "Asiallista kivaa"- meetings [in English, Factual Fun, Business Fun, freely translated] where project partners and project workers had the chance to share their know-how and experiences with other project partners. One of the interviewees suggested that this concept has brought different actors together and created mutual respect between organisations and individual workers.

2.1.3 Innovativeness and the novelty value of the project

There are several elements of innovativeness and novelty when it comes to the original project plan. Firstly, the idea of the targeted "Growth and Social Investment Pacts" (GSIP) –model connects the growth and social responsibility pillars at a company level. Basically, this means that a company is rewarded with an economic benefit if it undertakes social acts such as improving its employees' skill levels. The integrated approach between the growth and social pillars is exceptional: it aims to improve companies´ growth and simultaneously takes care of low-educated employees or the unemployed in the same framework.

The idea behind the simultaneous implementation of the growth and social investment measures (GSIP-model) in companies, is both innovative and novel. It has not been tried before, at least not in a similar context to that of the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa project* and can, in addition, also be considered to be quite a challenging enterprise in itself. New information on the theme is needed in order to support practical development activities related to the topic. Hence the theme is ideal for an experimental project.

The plan was to create the thematic GSIPs in three steps: 1) design with partner companies and test in authentic cases, 2) pilot with SMEs and finally 3) automate the model for permanent use and scaling. After this co-creation and piloting process the aim was to describe a new innovative model which in permanent usage and widely scaled would produce more jobs, more inclusive labour markets and better skills for the workforce. The last step, however, was conducted differently based on the project's notions that the original idea was not feasible because of timeline challenges, operational challenges and observations made about the development needs during the project.

The creation of the GSIP-model was the innovative core of the original project plan. However, based on the experiences from the three thematic GSIP-phases, the project concluded that there are no single solutions to the promotion of career-long learning in a way that strengthens both growth and social investments. Instead, the project presented a growth partnership/team concept to act as a catalyst to the implementation of the GSIPs.

Secondly, the impact evaluation included in the project also contains clear elements of novelty (in the context of project activities similar to this project). As such, it is not considered typical to involve such an evaluation project from the beginning in pilot projects such as that of the *Urban Growth – GSIP Vantaa* project.

Thirdly, the national and international experts interviewed during the evaluation pointed out that targeting the themes of lifelong learning, a low-skilled work force and the challenges of digitalisation and automatisation in one project is both unique and ambitious. In addition to this, the international experts highlighted the project's practical approach, cooperation with SMEs and cooperation between city authorities and educational institutions as atypical practices.

However, the "flight altitude" of the project plan has been very high with some of the interviewees describing it as, perhaps, overly ambitious. The project team concluded quite early during the implementation phase that the abstract framework in the project plan would be extremely difficult to link to and operationalise with the practical implementation level in a way that would support reaching the target groups (i.e., SMEs) and meeting the project's numeric objectives for project group participation. Based on these notions the project plan was adjusted with the approval of the project's steering group and the UIA secretary.

All in all, the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project approached the original project plan from a practical point of view. This means that instead of trying to find a way to carry out the very visionary objectives and ambitions of the project plan's abstract framework with the risk of creating and testing infeasible solutions which would not meet expected outcomes and results and would not reach the target groups, the project was subsequently carried out using a more practical approach that aimed to ensure that the activities tested and executed were indeed feasible and that they reflect a real demand among the target groups. The project adopted a practical approach which ensured a better chance of success in regards to including companies in the project's activities and creating solutions that have the potential to produce a significant impact among the target groups.

The innovativeness described in the project plan has however been somewhat lacking in terms of the actual implementation and results. The innovativeness and novelty value of the project was linked to the unusual nature of the proposed solution (GSIP-model) and the way in which it provides "a new kind of service and incentive pact" for the companies. The original idea of the GSIP-model (i.e., on making social investments, a company then gets access to growth services) was tested during the first Growth Deal which focused on labour recruitment and training. Here however it was noticed that this kind of incentive model did not really attract companies to participate in the services. In the second and third Growth Deals the services offered combined the elements of social investment and growth in the same service. This was found to better motivate companies to participate in the services. So, even though the GSIP-model did not turn out as initially expected and while some of the expected innovativeness and novelty value of the results thus did not materialise there are, nevertheless, elements of innovativeness and novelty value that can be identified from the actual implementation and outcomes of the project. The most obvious instances of innovativeness and novelty value have then, surprisingly perhaps, emerged from different directions than initially envisaged.

These (un-expected) elements of innovativeness and novelty are primarily related to the adoption of new kinds of practices, operating models and tools within a local context, even though these adopted models and tools are not themselves innovative per se. The interviewees' thoughts on the question of innovativeness varied. For example, some of the companies interviewed stated that even though the services, tools and practices provided by the project are not perhaps innovative per se, the companies were nevertheless introduced to new and useful tools and methods during the project. Some of the interviewees reflected on whether it could have been possible to try to identify and test even more innovative solutions during the project. However, they did not proffer examples of what these 'more innovative' solutions might have been.

The services and operating models utilised in the project and individual results cannot be fully or strictly considered innovative in the sense that they have been used in various contexts previously, but utilising existing services and tools in a new context does add novelty value to the implementation. Examples given during the interviews included, among other things, the escape room experience, the account manager model and in general utilising service design and co-creation methods in service development and participating in such processes. In addition, the project has generated new knowledge and understanding of the needs of companies and employees in terms of competence development and training. Some of the project's findings are further developed and tested in follow-on projects. For example, the MUUVO- project pilots a new working life-based competence development model based on the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project's findings.

2.2 Effectiveness

2.2.1 Outcomes and results of the project

As a result, the project was supposed to create a tested GSIP model, involve 5 partner companies and 60 other companies, create 200 new jobs, create 30 apprenticeships and involve 700 persons in training activities. The core idea

of the GSIP Vantaa project was to demonstrate that combined actions in the growth and social pillars implemented at the company level are more effective than actions in separate policy silos.

The project involved 70 companies and five partner companies in terms of its service provision. 863 people participated in the training and coaching sessions. In total 96 apprenticeship agreements were made. 33 companies used the recruiting services. The project was clearly successful in relation to the set quantitative targets for participants (individuals and companies). The activities have been implemented successfully, but developing the GSIP model including separate actions for social investments and growth was not possible. However, the findings related to implementation were interesting and can be further developed.

The aim of the project was to create an operating model combining growth and social responsibility. The project has not however met its initial goal entirely, though all services in Growth Deal 2 and Growth Deal 3 did have these elements. The objectives and measures were adjusted and these changes were accepted by both the steering group and the financing instrument. Partial change in respect of the objectives and activities did however reduce the clarity of the overall objectives. The project also involved the creation and testing of digital tools. These tools helped the companies in their competence development and management processes and were specifically designed for companies, employers and experts. Work on the digital tools' work package consumed about 30% of the total project budget, but the outcomes and results did not meet the same level of coverage.

Implementation of the services under the Growth Deals has been successful. Some of the companies that had taken part in the first Growth Deal were willing to continue with the services of the following Growth Deals. The Growth Deals' structure was predefined, but the services within them could be tailored according to the customers' needs. The project aimed at fulfilling the needs of the participating companies, not just reaching them. The services created in the project were of good quality. "Guidance program for vocational skills and apprenticeship training", "Competencies for Growth!"-coaching programme and "Boosting for technological leap" were mentioned as good examples here, while the escape room simulation also attracted a lot of good feedback.

Activities related to the updating and development of staff skills were the most successful in the sense that the benefits of those activities have been clearly and widely identified. On the other hand, the effectiveness of recruitment measures and measures to support the response to technological change are less obvious. However, the level of knowledge has increased in the participating companies. For example, the project has provided these companies with coaching related to utilising technology and the adoption of new technology. Also, as noted previously, participating in competence development increases the employees' chances of keeping a job and/or of re-employment. In addition, the direct contacts to companies have increased the willingness of these companies to hire new workforce members through apprenticeship programmes. The project has done a great amount of work in contacting companies and marketing and providing services for them.

Learning has taken place both in the implementing organisations and in the target group. The project organisations have deepened their understanding of company needs, particularly in relation to competence development and the identification of competence requirements, as well as in respect of how company needs can be identified and the services that can be used to meet them. The project has shown that hiring an uneducated workforce can be a positive step for those involved. The companies that participated in the project's services also have an increased understanding of the importance of competence development for growth and business development.

An interesting finding in this project is that it has positively promoted competence development and the strengthening of the competence development culture in participating workplaces. Bringing competence development services into the workplace has made attending the training sessions easier and more flexible. The project has reported on its development and achievements in several documents e.g., Milestones reports and articles. As stated in one of the early Milestones reports, the project recognised the existence of more competence development needs in the personnel who are already at work than in new recruits. Moreover, the COVID19 pandemic shifted companies' focus from recruiting new personnel to maintaining the competence level and further developing the competences of their current personnel. In this context, the project shifted a part of its focus from meeting the needs of recruiting new personnel to meeting the competence development needs of current personnel.

The evaluation has analysed both the success factors and negative factors that explain, on the one hand, why the project has succeeded in meeting the needs of participating companies and on the other, why it has faced difficulties in achieving the desired results and in meeting the project's objectives. Below is an analysis and compilation of the positive and negative factors regarding, firstly, the whole project and thereafter regarding work packages relating to other sub-parts of the project.

One key factor supporting the project's overall achievements is the personal contact work undertaken. The project partners have learned how to motivate companies to take part in competence development. The account manager system has been used both systematically and successfully. The account managers have contacted potential customers by telephone, offered the services and analysed further needs for competence development. The services were designed to be as simple and easy to reach as possible. Tailoring the services and personal contact between customer companies and account managers was also considered important.

Several interviewees saw the project partners' and teams' expertise as one of the key factors in successfully meeting the needs of participating companies. This indicates that the project has succeeded in building a solid consortium of professional project partners.

The evaluation collected and analysed the information received from the participating companies. The majority of the interviewees mentioned that the tailoring of services had benefited their businesses and made participation more appealing. The services were tailored to the needs of the participating companies and this was clearly a positive factor in their success. These services have been developed with the partner companies, tested, further developed and then piloted in the pilot companies. The coaching services in particular were very popular and generally viewed more positively than the other training methods. The coaching services were formulated in cooperation with the participating companies. Their contents dealt with questions related to leadership and cooperation. According to the views of the interviewees and the evaluation documentation, the coaching services increased the motivation and interest of participating companies to engage in the competence development process, explaining why the coaching services were viewed as a central part of the project's success.

The challenges identified are largely connected to the project's implementation process. For example, in relation to the lack of clarity in respect of the initial objectives posed, particularly at the beginning of the project. Moreover, it took valuable time and resources to operationalise the project plan. One major challenge here was that the abstract project plan was found to be difficult to operationalise. On launching the project, operationalising the project plan more time than expected and additional resources. As such, some of the interviewees noted that this slowed the implementation process, even though the first project activities began as scheduled in the project plan. Changes in project management resulted in breakdowns in the internal communication process and to some extent in the overall commitment of the project personnel. Additionally, some of the interviewees felt that other changes in the project personnel made it somewhat challenging for them to keep up with the pace of project's progress and to orientate new people into the project activities.

Work package 6 received more critical feedback than the other work packages. This might be because it was found to be hard to implement as described in the initial plan while some parts of the initial idea were considered outdated based on the rapid pace of development which took place after the project's application phase. The project team realised that the initial plan to automatise services did not function as well as planned. From early on then, the project management team recognised that there was a risk that WP6 would use a significant amount of resources without creating a functioning platform. The objectives of Work Package 6 were too ambitious and there were also problems in recruiting project personnel because of the lack of resources for salaries and the overall unattractiveness of temporary project positions in the public sector in the field of programming and IT. The development of digital services in the project did not meet its initial objectives, but the process of co-creating the digital services and tools has functioned well and did create added value for the team. Some of the interviewees considered that the digital tools created in this work package seemed unattached to the other parts of the project and that WP6 was not to be integrated with the other services. During the project, a new strategy for introducing the digitisation services was drafted and new pilots implemented. The renewed way of working did however result in attracting companies to participate in the testing of these digital services.

In total, the ultimate goal of the project to conditionally combine social responsibility and growth proved a hard concept to understand for the participating companies. The COVID19 pandemic also proved challenging in terms of participation e.g., due to a shift in focus from employment promotion to simply surviving the pandemic in addition to the lack of resources available for development. Significant variation also exists with regard to the impact of COVID19 on the project: some interviewees considered the COVID19 pandemic to have reduced the motivation of the companies to participate in project activities while others thought that it had increased participation in project activities. In fact, the pandemic has, generally, not been seen as an obstacle but rather as a phenomenon that has forced the project to adapt to external change in order to better fit the emerging needs of its target groups.

KEY FACTORS ENABLING THE PROJECT TO REACH OR NOT REACH THE GOALS

The project was large enough to generate deep and lasting cooperation. The main partners had a comprehensive view of the project. The financial instrument enabled an agile way of working and the flexible modification of project activities when required. Cooperation between the project partners thus functioned effectively. Open discussions, commitment and co-creation have strengthened the cooperation impulse.

The *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project was not about normal (business as usual) development but rather what we can term, second level development. That is to say, development that addresses several issues and tries something new (i.e., combining social responsibility and growth). The main topic was complicated which made it difficult to impart it fully to the entire project personnel. On the one hand, the size of the project and the number of project partners created transaction costs related to networking and cooperation such as a large number of meetings and significant coordination and managing activities, but on the other hand the project size has enabled it to engage in an extensive range of activities, while involving multiple actors in the project activities supported the utilisation of different kinds of expertise, knowledge and experience during their development. The size of the project result in the wide dispersion of resources across the project partners. While at the beginning of the project, the project partners also lacked a clear common understanding both of the project's goals or how to get there. In this light, some of the interviewees felt that insufficient resources, especially in terms of human resources, for project management and coordination inevitably slowed the project launch even though the first training workshops and pilots were set up quickly after the project began. In addition to the challenges related to resources, managing and communicating project implementation process remained challenging because of the constant turnover in respect of programme managers during the early years of the project. This clearly created significant difficulties in terms of the project's information flow during the transitional periods between different programme managers. Due to these changes in project personnel (management and other project personnel) understanding 'the big picture' and efforts to 'work towards the same goal' were more time consuming than expected. The recruitment of project personnel was also more difficult than initially expected, especially in WP6.

According to the interviews, significant resources were used to stimulate a common way of working and encourage co-creation. This was seen both as a positive and a negative factor. Taking the time to create a common understanding and common work practices was viewed positively as it was necessary in order to make the abstract plan more feasible while co-creation processes are inevitably more time consuming compared to more traditional design processes. Conversely, this process was overly time consuming and undoubtedly diverted resources away from 'the actual' project implementation, particularly where a clear understanding of, or realistic expectations around, what are the prerequisites carrying out and participating in these kinds of processes is lacking. Furthermore, a few interviewees highlighted the existence of a certain level of competition between the project organisations and personnel at the beginning of the project. Indeed, one interviewee noted that project partners were, for example, very specific on the issue of external communication, particularly as it related to the highlighting of various project partners in the project advertising. Another example of this relates to the fact that some project partners were afforded a greater say in the project's contents than others. These teething problems were however subsequently addressed as the project went on and a common understanding was created.

Attracting the companies was resource intensive, but the customer management model functioned well. The recognised obstacles are generally related to different understandings of 'time' in development processes. On occasion, the timetable of project and company activities were hard to match. While services were often quickly offered, the companies expected an even a quicker process and quicker results. Similarly, some companies could not participate in

the offered services for capacity reasons where they had other business development activities ongoing at the same time.

The management team (City of Vantaa, Laurea and Metropolia Universities of Applied Sciences) was established to coordinate the project management. It functioned well in coordinating the project team as a whole and in designing and creating content and services. Some interviewees suggested however that the city of Vantaa displayed little interest in taking the project results further, even when the project was one of the city's marquee projects. Of course, one has to take into consideration that this evaluation was conducted only when the knowledge transfer phase in respect of the project's outcomes and findings is about to begin.

The project gathered together and analysed a lot of useful data. The project organisation also produced a lot of versatile external communication outputs, particularly in terms of qualitative analyses and reports. On the other hand, some of the project's activities targeting knowledge creation and dissemination, specifically in relation to quantitative impact evaluation, have not been progressed as originally planned. For example, the impact evaluation process experienced severe problems in terms of its research design and had to be re-configured during the project. The objective of the GSIP continuity and sustainability plan was to boost the continuation and scaling up of good GSIP practices, models or services. In this context, a knowledge report was compiled to summarise the project findings and lessons learned. A good example of this was the client follow-up service that ensured sustainability. The continuity and sustainability plan is, as such, viewed as an important element of project implementation. The interviewees expect that the ecosystem created in the project will continue. There are already a few follow-up projects in the pipeline: one such project has received financing while another is currently in the application phase. However, it is unclear whether the services created in the project will be improved on or continued. The project is now entering the knowledge transfer phase, planning how to manage the sharing of lessons learned beyond the project. These emerging communications outputs and outcomes suggest that the project has already left its footprint in the development of lifelong learning and knowledge development by providing a wide range of reports, analyses and podcasts on the themes, issues and tools covered. During the project the main partners have learned to understand adult learners in a new way.

2.2.2 Continuity of the development measures

PREREQUISITES FOR THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS REGARDING CONTINUITY AND SCALABILITY

The project has helped different actors to deepen and strengthen their mutual cooperation which improves the opportunities for the continuity of the emergent local (growth and) competence development ecosystem.

A large number of services have been implemented and tested in the project making it difficult to calibrate the effectiveness and scalability of individual activities. Based on the evaluation it can be concluded that the project's activities and outcomes have created an impact, but due to the great number of different activities and restrictions in respect of the evaluation material, this evaluation cannot specify the impacts on the individual activity level. The prerequisites of scaling should be considered in relation to results effectiveness and universality (how well have the results corresponded to the target group's needs, how universal are these needs i.e., is there a larger demand for the solution and is scaling the solution economically effective i.e., are the benefits higher than the costs). Regarding the question of whether the individual services/ service models created during the project can be scaled to other operating environments, the challenge here centres around the basic question> how can tailored services be scaled? Scalability requires a generic approach, but the project focused on tailoring and human-intense personal account management. One of the key outputs of this project was the development of the account management model. The account management model was found to be very useful, but it is also a very human resource-intensive. As such, it is not really possible to continue with a similar model without further project funding.

In the project application The Digitisation Work Package (WP6) had a key role to play in terms of scaling the results, but it also proved to be challenging to execute in accordance with the initial plans. The project thus made a reasoned decision to abandon the digitised tool as originally planned and to identify and test points in the service process that may be able to be digitised. The automated proof-of-concepts (POCs) were created to help test ideas and concepts with the practical implementation of ICT tools and target group users. These POCs and implementation plans also allow the tools to be further developed in other operating environments. This is a valid option from a scaling perspective.

A lot of work has been done in the project to disseminate the results and lessons learned. They were communicated in a very practical way (to be taken over at a low threshold), e.g., on the project website, using a variety of communications tools (articles, blog posts, podcasts) as well as from a more theoretical perspective (discussion papers, scientific conference papers, policy briefs). Both methods deepened the qualitative understanding of the project and contributed to the successful dissemination of its results.

In order to fully make use of the lessons learned in such a big project the results and outcomes should be described in such a way that allows the other actors to utilise them immediately. The *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project thus produced a number of valuable publications that could be used in disseminating the results. In the future, the lessons learned here can be further utilised in developing lifelong learning models. The interviewees however also suggest that the project is now in a critical phase: now is the time to ensure that the project's findings find their way onto the desks of other project organisations on a larger scale precipitating the continuation of work already begun to disseminate the project results on both the national and international levels. The UIA financing instrument has also created opportunities and mechanisms for effectively communicating the results. For example, the UIA expert has linked the project with the OECD which helped the project to widen its approach and identify the key parts to be scaled.

A critical issue for continuity and rooting is how to make the lessons learned during the project part of the knowledge capital of the project organisations and part of the current services offer. The project has actively disseminated both practices and results thus contributing to the national level discussion of lifelong learning. There is however a need for both project and budget (i.e., within the organisation) resources to help further develop services supporting lifelong learning activities in the workplace. Ideally this project provides the tools for everyday competence development for companies and workplaces currently outside project-based operations.

In spring 2021, the Finnish Government decided to continue preparations for the transfer of employment and economic development services (TE services) to the municipalities. The services will be transferred to the municipalities in 2024. The new city-based employment services could therefore usefully learn about the service planning of this project. For example, some of the services or tools could be applied in the municipalities.

Dissemination of the lessons learned in terms of organisational culture is also important. Cooperation and co-creation models can be further utilised in other cities and in similar partner organisations (e.g., universities of applied sciences). The tools, especially the digital ones, are more easily applicable than the company-specific project results which are more localised in nature. New project applications have been made to disseminate the results of the *Urban Growth – GSIP Vantaa* project. A similar team to manage the customer relations could also be built.

2.3 Efficiency

2.3.1 Learning and using the results of the project

Much work has been done in the project to ensure that the results and lessons learned are presented and utilised, where appropriate, in the subsequent phases of the project. The implemented training and coaching services have provided feedback that has been used to improve and reflect upon the following services. The project provided a platform to analyse how working adults learn and what kinds of services would support them in their competence development. For example, the Growth Deals (skilled workforce, competence development for personnel at work and company automatisation) have been designed and implemented in this manner. Their contents and implementation had undoubtedly improved by the time of the third Growth Deal.

In addition, the opportunity was taken to change the original plan when it was understood that certain actions initially planned were not viable. In this sense, project implementation has been both agile and adaptable, i.e., in line with the spirit of piloting.

The project workers have also learned a lot about co-creation (designing the services, writing together) during the project. The learning and utilisation of the lessons learned is strongly connected to the project organisation's personnel. The interviewees consider that they have learned to co-create and share the lessons of co-creation.

When it comes to the question of learning and disseminating the lessons learned it can be said that the project was very productive in terms of documenting different kinds of information and findings during the project. In this sense, the project has done well both in trying to document and create prerequisites for dissemination of the lessons learned. A trickier question is however whether the project organisations have the necessary ambition, means and plans to adopt this new knowledge and experiences gained during the project. Based on the evaluation dissemination, the organisational level might still need stronger ownership. Based on the experiences gained from other experimental and piloting projects the best results from strategic experiments can be achieved when the experiment has a clear ownership, goal and a plan for exploiting this new knowledge (See for example Aarninsalo & Kanerva, 2019.).

2.3.2 The co-creation model as a service design idea

Understanding of co-creation and how it should be led was sub-optimal at the beginning of the project. However, understanding and appreciation of co-creation strengthened as the project progressed. The experiences of different actors as regards the effectiveness of co-creation however vary.

Significant variation occurred in the nature and type of co-creation experienced in the project. Some services were genuinely co-created while others used rather more traditional design methods. In the more co- created services, the organisations involved did not think about their own interests but instead assessed which competences and resources should be used to create a service. Involving the companies has played a big role in this. The project team also consisted of partner companies. At the beginning, there were five partner companies involved. In general, the partner companies that participated in the project implementation process considered the activities to be useful for their company. However, some of the interviewees thought that the views of the companies were not fully utilised in creating the services.

The idea of gradual development, i.e., the transmission of lessons from one stage of the process to another, has worked well for the most part. However, the timetables for implementation have not really made it possible to take advantage of the lessons learned in previous phases. In addition, some of the lessons have not been directly processable in the subsequent phases of the project.

At the beginning of the project, it was important to operationalise the project plan and thus co-creating the services took more time than planned. The co-creation model can be described as a process circle that starts with ideating and testing, followed by piloting and collecting feedback. According to the interviewees and the documents highlighting the project's findings, the training services did not meet the needs of the companies as well as the coaching services did. Differentiating training and coaching services can be difficult but in general, coaching involves working methods in which the coach works on the things to be trained together with the group. Even though the coaching services were considered to be more efficient in meeting the companies' needs, the project also gathered good feedback on the training services that were specifically designed to reflect individual company's needs. In general, tailoring the competence development services brings out the benefits more clearly and the time spent on training is seen as a profitable investment, not an expense (see Lamberg et. al., 2022).

The interviewees clearly understood that managing the co-creation process is important. In this project, after the project management team was established in the summer of 2020 the project managers met regularly and planned the strategic priorities and framework to support the design and implementation of the activities at the operational level. Co-creating the services within several organisations disseminated the lessons learned across the organisations providing them with new perspectives. All in all, this could best be described as a process of creating together and sometimes making compromises.

In the table below (Table 3) a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the co-creation model is provided.

Table 3 Strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the co-creation model.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Discussing the issues and solutions together improves their quality - Co-creation commits the organisations to work together - Organisational boundaries disappear and full potential can be used - Experimenting is easier because the phased process allows the actors to improve the service in the next phase, utilising the lessons learned. - Ability to adapt: e.g., the service palette was too wide at the beginning, then it was narrowed down - The financing instrument's flexibility - The project has broadened thinking, project personnel have taken their ideas with them back to their own organisations, this profits especially smaller companies	- A wide range of organisations and their objectives, difference in operating cultures, different organisations with different roles - Commitment of the companies was not easy: companies have considered the services to be separate, and do not see the bigger picture behind them. - Partial weakness of leadership and management (seen e.g., in project personnel changes) - Lack of implementation logic: the project plan was not initially operable - It takes times to figure out the roles and responsibilities, determine the rules and create a functional discussion
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Makes the roles visible and empowers personnel to participate in the co-creation process, exchange views and listen to others - A specific planning phase and implementation phase to effectively manage the service design - Innovates new topics and co-creates with a wide range of organisations - Need for strong lead and mutual discussion of the big picture and objectives - In cases where the main partner takes the lead in facilitating the processes and the people, the project can achieve new innovations	- The co-creation process and uncertainty take too much time and hence the project would not be able to achieve its goals - Dichotomous pace: on the one hand, development is fast, but on the other, co-creation is a slow process. The companies in particular find the co-creation process to be slow. - Combining different organisations' goals can challenge the cooperation and enhance competition - Insufficient amount of cooperation can challenge the process - Too many changes in the personnel threatens the continuity of the project activities as well as disseminating the project's learning to the project organisations. - The process has been ineffective due to excessive planning. The co-creation process has taken too much time to plan and not enough time was left to implement the services.

2.4 Impacts

2.4.1 Benefits of the project and longer-term impacts for the companies

In the survey the respondent companies considered the project services very useful from several perspectives. All respondents agreed that their companies gained a significant or very significant benefit regarding competence development and adoption and application of new skills and knowledge in the company's operations from participating in the services. Half of the respondents viewed the project services as having a very significant benefit in regards to their company's competence development.

The representatives of the three companies interviewed highlighted that after participating in the project's activities they noticed a more positive and open attitude towards competence development at both management and employee level in their company. After participating in the services provided by the project, the indications are that companies' interest in developing their personnel's competencies increased. The companies recognised that motivating their

personnel is key to competence development. It is essential that that whole company knows and understands the upcoming competence development needs and how they can develop themselves in that regard.

Nine out of ten survey respondents noted that their company gained at least a significant benefit in terms of the identification of competence needs, familiarity with new types of tools or methods (related to competence development), improving the conditions for business growth and the improvement of employees' working life skills. Four out of five considered the project services to be beneficial with respect to the identification of expertise in the company, utilisation of the company's know-how, the introduction of new tools or methods (related to competence development) and competence management. Adopting new tools and processes for developing and managing competence and identifying competence needs was also mentioned consistently in the company interviews. One partner company representative described the project as providing a springboard for competence building in their company.

More than half of the companies that responded to the survey suggested that they gained at least a significant benefit from participating in the project services regarding the identification of the company's technological development needs while half of the respondents considered that they had gained at least a significant benefit in regards to the anticipation of competence needs.

The respondents to the survey considered participating in the project services as the least beneficial element in respect of getting a new skilled workforce into the company. Two out of three respondents agreed that they had gained little benefit from participating in regards to this and one in four viewed the project services as not at all useful in this respect. Only one in ten suggested that they had gained a very significant benefit with respect to getting a new skilled workforce into their company.
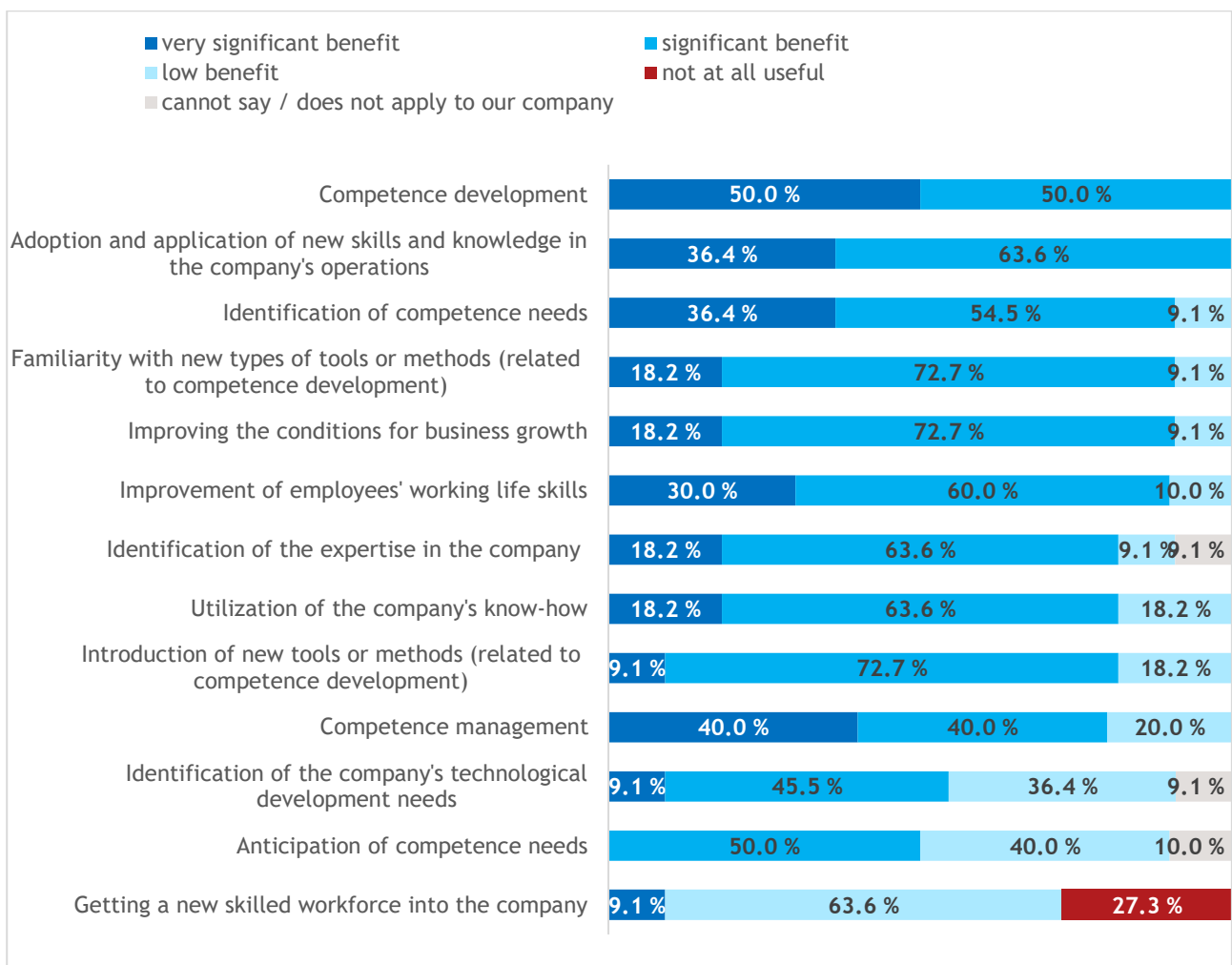

Figure 4 The respondents' positions on statements regarding how their company benefited from participating in the project service(s) from different perspectives.

The respondents saw many benefits for their companies in regards to participation in the project services. All respondents at least somewhat agreed that their company's conditions for business growth had improved due to the project. Nine out of ten agreed that the level of competence of their company's staff had improved as a result of the project, the competence development in their company had become more systematic and their company's ability to develop staff skills had improved. Four out of five respondents answered that competence development had become a stronger part of their company's development and longer-term planning of operations. A more comprehensive and long-term approach to competence development as well as a better understanding of the current competences and learning possibilities in the company were also mentioned as impacts of participation in the interviews.

Three out of four agreed with the statement that their company had implemented development measures that would not otherwise have been implemented, while one in five somewhat disagreed. One third of the respondents agreed that thanks to the project, their company is now better able to make use of technology in business development. One in four neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and the same number of respondents could not say. More than half of the companies that responded neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that thanks to the project, they are in a better position to have a skilled workforce. One in four agreed and one in five somewhat disagreed.
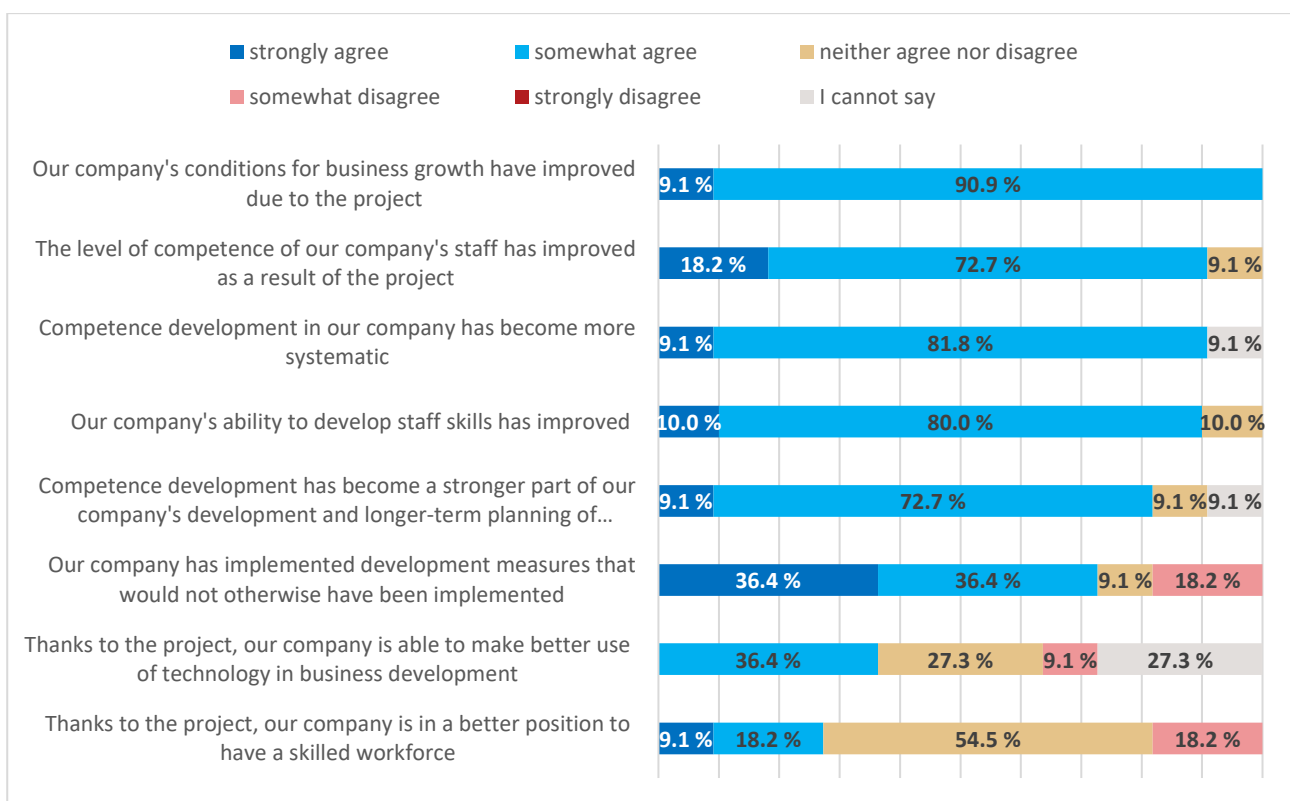

Figure 5 The respondents' positions on statements regarding the benefits of the project and the longer-term effects on the company.

2.4.2 Benefits and impacts on the project partners and emerging changes

The main benefits and impacts generated for the project partners can be grouped into five main points. These same topics were also seen as the main changes deriving from the project in the long run.

Firstly, cooperation both between the project partners and between the project partners and companies has deepened. Several interviewees described how the project has contributed to the emergence of a new local ecosystem of (growth and) competence development in the city of Vantaa. The key actors in the city are undertaking closer and deeper cooperation than before the project. Some of the project partners interviewed suggest that thanks to the project they now also know how to collaborate with different organisations and that they can also work together with competing organisations in order to enhance shared objectives. Some of the project partners also consider that they are more open to cooperate with different partners at an earlier stage than before the project. The project partners have also

gained a better understanding of their co-partners' needs and objectives which is a good prerequisite for future cooperation.

The project partners have also learned to interact with companies in a more systematic way with some of the partner companies mentioning this as a positive effect. Some of the partner companies have been extremely active project partners and there have also been some rather active pilot companies that have had positive experiences of the processes. In addition, better connections to the educational institutions were also considered to be a positive effect. The increased level of active cooperation between companies, the city and educational institutions thus represents a promising start.

Secondly, the representatives of the city of Vantaa and the educational institutions in particular feel that they now have an improved understanding of the needs of the target group i.e., SMEs. This understanding can be utilised both in future projects and in the business-as-usual functions of the organisations.

The project also strengthened customer and demand-driven thinking in these organisations. For example, the teachers/lecturers who participated in planning and executing the services have had a chance to adopt a more company- and demand-driven approach in their coaching and training.

This transition towards a more company-driven approach and the chance to find and test ways in which the educational institutions that are still strongly focused on education leading to a degree can better serve and support the need to develop competencies outside the degree system has also been found to be especially fruitful. In addition, the experiences around how to better market and bring forward the different options for apprenticeship training are encouraging.

The customer-driven approach delivered, primarily, through the account management model is mentioned repeatedly as a result that it is believed will find further use in future projects. On a more general level, the idea of being more agile and responsive to companies' needs is considered to represent a significant development step in some of the project partners' organisations. Even though some of the interviewees speculate that it is too early to talk about a concrete change in the operating cultures they nevertheless recognise the possibilities and prerequisites for change emerging from the project.

Thirdly, participation in the project has improved the project workers' methodological skills and know-how in respect of co-creation processes and piloting. Moreover, understanding around impact evaluation is now on a much better level than previously, thanks to the ambitious impact evaluation work package included in the project. The research institutions also evaluate that they are more ready to conduct evaluation processes in similar projects in the future.

Fourthly, some interviewees consider that they have now increased their knowledge and understanding of competence development and continuous learning in general. As noted previously, a significant experience and knowledge pool was created during the project. Lessons learned during planning, implementation and internal evaluation of the Growth Deals all represent valuable knowledge capital for future utilisation.

Fifthly, the project offered a concrete opportunity to test new ideas and tools both for the actors' providing services and the companies participating in them. These ideas and tools can be better utilised in the future now that they have been tested in real life circumstances.

In addition to the above-mentioned topics, the interviewees also suggested that participating in the project has developed their general know-how around project work both in their organisations and at the individual level. In some organisations new practices have been adopted in relation to project work, for example jointly writing the lessons learned in Laurea or adopting the idea of account management for projects involving SMEs as a means to increase their participation and ensure that the projects respond to the companies' needs.

As a challenge in relation to the knowledge and competencies gained during the project several interviewees highlighted the fact that many lessons learned and competencies are linked to individuals. Several project workers have already changed their employer and more are expected to do so in the near future. This does however create a serious threat when considering the embedding and dissemination of the results and lessons learned from the project.

3. Conclusions

CONCLUSION 1.
The project's demand-driven operating model and tailoring of the services provided to participating companies supported the project's ability to meet the needs of its target groups. Adopting this demand-driven approach in planning and executing services for companies creates prerequisites for better effectiveness in the long run.

The activities carried out in the project have met well the needs of the participating members of target groups (SMEs). The account management model carried out during the project has been critical both in getting the companies involved in the project activities and in ensuring that the services offered respond to companies' needs. The way the project approached the companies tailoring the services to their specific needs has been one of the key factors when considering the very successful target group participation in the project.
The demand-driven approach delivered through the account management model is mentioned repeatedly as a result that is believed will attract further use in future projects. On a more general level, being agile and more responsive to companies' needs is considered to represent a significant development step forward in some of the project partners' organisations.

In the long run, the project's impacts are based on an improved understanding of the target group and the ability to target and use (existing) tools better, more efficiently and effectively. What however remains to be seen is how many of the services and tools developed will actually find their way into the basic operations carried out by the involved organisations. The prospects for fruitful dissemination and adoption seem already to be in place but the risk is that the know-how and understanding gained during the project has not been fully absorbed into the organisations.

In terms of scalability, the account management model remains hard to scale given that it is so human-resource intensive. Key here in terms of further development and scaling is to recognise mechanisms (e.g., prerequisites, contacting the companies, identifying service needs in companies) that can be copied and easily repeated. One of the main findings in this project was the well-functioning, but resource-intensive service model. This account management model, can be seen as being of high value, though its scalability and thus its future effectiveness are less obvious. Additionally, one of the great 'take aways' from this project - relates to meeting the needs of companies - is that educational institutes ought to be incentivised to provide competence development services which are packaged into smaller entities, outside traditional degree programme structures.

CONCLUSION 2.
The project supported the project partners ability to manage, carry out and participate in challenging experimental and co-creation processes in cooperation with a diverse range of stakeholders. In addition, the project improved the understanding of the target group among the project partners.

The project responded well to the project partners' objectives to strengthen cooperation with different stakeholders, to promote and test new solutions supporting competence development in companies and to embrace the processes of co-creation and a more user-driven approach to service design. The benefits of cooperation are broadly recognised. The most obvious value added from working together with different organisations is the various strengths, knowledge, networks and connections that each partner has brought to the project.

The project has created the foundation for a more coordinated and better functioning process of cooperation between the city authorities, educational institutions and companies. The main benefits and impacts generated for the project partners include the deepening of cooperation both between the project partners and between the project partner and companies, better collaboration and co-creation skills, a better understanding of their co-partners' needs and objectives, the emergence of a new local ecosystem of (growth and) competence development in the city of Vantaa, an improved understanding of the target group i.e. SMEs as well as a more customer and demand-driven approach to the planning and marketing of services for competence development. As such, a better level of understanding in terms of the needs of companies, particularly in relation to their need to develop competence levels and to identify

competence needs, now exists. These same topics were also seen as the main long-term changes deriving from the project.

CONCLUSION 3.
The project activities have created a large amount of experiential learnings and observations that can be further utilised when creating and producing models and services for competence development.

When considering the creation of new knowledge and understanding the project has clearly been rather fruitful. For the project organisations themselves it has provided an opportunity to compose, create and test new approaches and operating models as well as producing and collating new knowledge.

One added value of the project that should be highlighted here is that it has created an experimental environment for the educational institutions, especially the universities of applied sciences, to develop their role in the field of non-formal competence development services, i.e., educational services that are not based on degrees, in order to provide services that meet the challenges recognised in the Finnish educational system (see OECD, 2020.) These findings also respond to the needs recognised in the reform of continuous learning. Education systems need to cooperate more closely with working life. One of the key questions addressed in the reform is, how non-formal and informal learning can be more efficiently exploited in competence development and the learning outcomes made more visible (Ministry of Education and Culture. N.d.).

New understandings and expertise emerged within the project partners including understandings around how to work with companies (contact, communication, etc.,) in a more impactful way and how the idea of competence development should be 'marketed' to the companies.

CONCLUSION 4.
The innovativeness and novelty value of the project are linked to the adaptation of new operating models and approaches.

The innovativeness and novelty value of the project can be examined from two perspectives. Firstly, the project idea in itself has several elements of innovativeness and novelty. The innovative core of the project's framework centred around the idea of the simultaneous implementation of both growth and social investment measures (GSIP-model) in companies. Even though the outcomes of the project have not necessarily been in line with the original idea, testing and experimenting with this ambitious and challenging topic has generated a lot of new knowledge and experiences for the organisations in addition to service models and best practices developed during the project.

Secondly, the innovativeness and novelty value can be observed in terms of the implemented actions, services and processes. From this perspective, the question of innovativeness and novelty value is one of how innovative or novel are the project's processes, outcomes and solutions in the local context.

The actual tools used when providing the services (training, coaching, etc.) do not display clear innovativeness on a general level, but the project has led to the adoption of new kinds of practices, operating models and tools within the local context. For example, the trainers and coaches have tested new kinds of ideas in their training and coaching services, the project itself has tested the account management model in a new context and some of the project partners have participated in processes (i.e., co-creation) that are new to them or they have been working in a role or environment which is new to them.

CONCLUSION 5.
The project can be described as demand-driven rather than 'plan-driven'. The financial instrument has enabled an agile way of working and the flexible modification of project activities based on the improved understanding of target group needs.

The project represented something of a balancing act between being ambitious and experimental in its desire to develop the GSIP- model where social investments are rewarded with measures supporting company growth and the meeting of the more practical expectations of the project partners and target groups (SMEs). Instead of prolonging the creation

and testing of the initial idea of the GSIP-model the project chose to concentrate on responding to the practical needs of its target groups. Thus, the project can be described as demand-driven rather than 'plan'-driven (i.e., holding onto the initial idea of the project's outcomes in terms of the GSIP-model and focusing on finding solutions in order to accomplish the outcome exactly as initially envisioned).

The project partners have also seized on the opportunity to change plans when a planned activity has not worked out. In this sense, project implementation has been agile, flexible and adaptable and thus highly suitable for innovative-type projects.

When considering the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project as an experimental project one can however legitimately question whether the project experimented enough and produced innovative solutions. One might argue that the Urban Innovation Action- instrument might have provided a chance to be more ambitious in terms of the innovativeness of the solutions tested and that the project could have utilised more ambitious ways to answer the observed challenges of the originally envisioned GSIP-model. However, taking into account the fact that the project was implemented during a very unique and challenging period, given the COVID19 pandemic, more ambitious and speculative experimentations might have encountered bigger problems in terms of getting the SMEs to participate fully in the project's activities.

As such, what kinds of objectives can be set for innovative experimental projects remains an interesting question. If the final results focus only on the results of the project activities (e.g., services created in the project), they might not legitimately reflect the meeting the project objectives. Clearly then a more nuanced classification of short- and long-term results and direct and indirect impacts should be utilised instead. It is important to plan ahead in relation to how the experiments can best be integrated into 'business as usual' and action plans on how to adapt the lessons learned to the larger knowledge capital of the implementing organisations. Furthermore, in experimental projects, follow-up projects can provide a platform to test findings and outcomes created in previous projects.

CONCLUSION 6.
The project utilised a complex framework in terms of objectives, implementation practices and its diverse project partnership. A complex project framework increases expectations in terms of project management operations and the challenges encountered during the implementation.

The project utilised a combination of activities, services and actors and used challenging cooperation practices such as co-creation processes. As such, it has been a great learning journey around the issue of project management and the challenges emerging during the different phases of the project.

It is typical that the project objectives create challenges in terms of implementation. The evaluation noted that at the beginning of the project no clear, shared understanding of the project's objectives existed. In addition, the different project partners may also have had unrealistic expectations for the project itself based on the understanding they had formed during the project's planning phase. It is unclear how well-informed different project partners and especially the project personnel were about the project's context and objectives at the beginning of the project. Ensuring that the project partners share a common vision around the project's outcomes as well as of the project's implementation logic and practices is clearly important. Each project partner is likely to have a slightly different view of these issues. The fact that the *Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa* project's consortium was so large increased the likelihood of differentiating visions and expectations emerging. The importance of efforts put into 'common sense making' is increased significantly in multi-actor projects and they should be present throughout the project. It is also important to recognise that a common level of understanding will likely not always be achieved across all project partners.

The evaluation observations highlight the importance of involving at least some key individuals both in the preparation and implementation stages of the project. Particularly when the project plan is so ambitious and includes several challenging aspects, implementation becomes more challenging if the key players who prepared the project plan do not participate in the implementation phase. The ownership and vision of the project is more likely to be found among the actors included in the preparation phase than among those joining later. Sharing the vision and transferring ownership from the preparatory phase to the implementation stage is a beneficial way to flatten the most difficult obstacles faced at the beginning of the project.

In such a large project, the most difficult challenges often emerge in relation to communication. At kick off, the project undoubtedly faced challenges in ensuring that appropriate resources for project management were available. This may have affected the experiences of some of the project partners in terms of the fluency of the cooperation and communication. Another emergent conclusion here is that when the project consortium consists of project partners with varying roles in the project and uneven project budgets, keeping them all aboard from the project management's point of view and staying abroad, from the project partner's point of view, can be more difficult than in projects with a more homogeneous group of project partners.

Managing and participating in this kind of experimental, co-creation-based, project requires accepting a significant level of risk in terms of failure. In these kinds of projects, implementation is not as straightforward as in a normal development project or programme. For a project including co-creation and significant network activities it is important to have a project leader(s) that understands the process of co-creation and is able to produce a clear plan for the co-creation element. Co-creation does not happen by itself, it needs to be facilitated and led. The project should therefore include appropriate management resources for this task. It is also important that the organisation responsible for employing the project manager(s) should have a clear understanding of the competencies required of the project manager in regards to managing multi-organisational cooperation, co-creation and experimental processes.

When dealing with extremely challenging topics the implementation process and methods used during the implementation should perhaps be made as simple as possible. Or if the process being carried out itself is complex and challenging, perhaps the question to be answered itself should be simpler. The *Urban Growth – GSIP Vantaa* project both addressed several challenging themes and carried out a development process that consisted of many demanding phases (e.g., co-creation, cooperation between untypical partners, large number of project partners, digitisation etc). This being said, one key aspect of the whole Urban Innovative Actions Initiative has been to encourage urban areas to think big and create ambitious projects. It can certainly be said that the *Urban Growth – GSIP Vantaa* project hit this mark perfectly.

4. Recommendations

The project generated a lot of practical information and lessons learned as well as more concrete results such as proof of concepts for the digital tools. At this stage it is crucial to recognise and build upon the logic for the dissemination and continuity. It is important to form a clear understanding of which findings and results are suitable for dissemination at different levels. Lot of practical lessons and good practices have already been introduced in the project's knowledge report (Lamberg et. al. 2022) in addition to other project's publications. These are crucial tools in supporting the continuity, repeatability and scalability of the project. The recommendations here aim to highlight those aspects that should be considered when further promoting the project's findings and outcomes on both a local and general level.

The logic of continuity, repeatability and scalability varies according to the findings and outcomes. The best chances for universal scalability and repeatability are found among the more general and theoretical findings related to the original challenges. National and international level prerequisites for scalability and repeatability can be found in some of the best practices and tools developed in the project. However, taking into account that operating environments and local needs vary, the most efficient way to support scalability and repeatability is to describe the different success factors and steps taken during the service creation processes. On the local

Figure 6 The logic of continuity, repeatability and scalability varies according to the findings and outcomes.

level the project organisation's responsibility to ensure continuity, scalability and repeatability is twofold. Firstly, to ensure the dissemination and embedding of the results in their own organisations and secondly, being an active advocate for the outcomes in the local ecosystem. Active ownership of the outcomes and the drive to further develop the outcomes is crucial here.
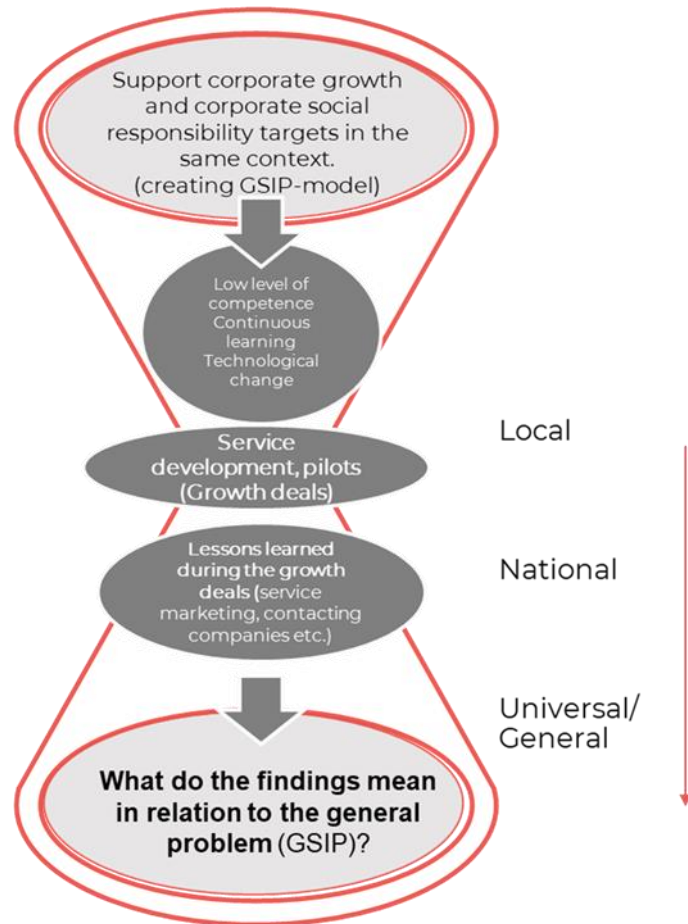
4.1 The outcomes and seeds of transformation to be cherished and supported in Vantaa

The project provided a significant boost to cooperation with companies in the field of competence development and during the project a large number of direct, (personal) contacts with companies were created. Continuing this cooperation and maintaining business contacts is one of the key ways to create continuity in competence development work even after the project has concluded. The account management model used in the project was a key driver in maintaining connections with the companies. When the project ends, it is important to ensure that the connections created and maintained through the model are not lost. Here, each organisation needs to verify and designate who will take responsibility for managing these customer relationships and for maintaining communications more generally. Action plans on how to maintain and update the connections after the project also need to be created. Importantly however, the project has already addressed the topic of closing client relationships and has sought to recognise the future needs of SMEs and guide them in terms of finding suitable follow-up services.

In addition, the emergent competence development ecosystem requires further nourishment in order to thrive. The dialogue between businesses, educational organisations (both universities of applied sciences and vocational education organisations) and the city (further developing the ecosystem) needs both unofficial and more structured official 'encouragement'. Cooperation and further co-creation need adequate resourcing in terms of people, time and facilitation. Who then will take up the role of the orchestrator of the ecosystem? Are the other organisations ready to invest in being part of the ecosystem?

Finally, one of the main concerns when thinking about dissemination on a local level is the question of organisational-level dissemination and embedding the lessons learned as a continuation of project-level learning. Build and fortify the project's connection to the basic services and every day business and identify possible arising opportunities to utilise the project's findings and make them more widely known. In the end, every project partner and team member should be advocates for the project and its outcomes. A lot of attention was paid during the project to documenting the findings and lessons learned. This is useful in disseminating the results both outside and inside the project organisations. However, a clear action plan analysing and describing what practices, solutions and findings should be utilised in the organisations immediately after the project with details of the division or persons embarking on the outcomes should be made.

4.2 Scaling up and repeating the good practices in and from Vantaa to the world

The project has implemented a large number of services and utilised a wide range of different training/ coaching methods. It is difficult to provide generalisable instructions for the scaling up of these individual services/ tools. For results to survive, they must be concretely formulated, desired, marketable and value-added. In addition, active efforts and energised actors are needed to sell the results further.

One individual example of an easily disseminated action/ service that received positive feedback in the project is the project's apprenticeship services programme which contacted companies in order to introduce the training idea with its benefits to the SME decision makers and employees simultaneously.

One lesson learned during the project was that companies are generally more eager to participate in services that are tailored to their own individual needs. However, tailoring is not easily scalable or profitable in the long run. In order to scale up service processes, the service process has to be analysed piece by piece. What parts of the process must be carried out with personal contacts and are there steps that could be, if not automatised, then at least supported with easily repeatable procedures?

For example, the account manager model was one of the key elements in the project but as such it can be rather resource-intensive without special funding. But an attempt should be made to identify the parts of the process that can be repeated or linked to other ongoing processes within your organisation.

The services developed in the project have been developed and tested locally, so the best opportunities for their continuity and repeatability can be found in the Vantaa-based operating environment. In case your organisation does not already have a clear view of the service offering made by the project, make sure that one is made known to key players in your organisation. Who are the actors in your organisation who need this information in the future?

Based on the knowledge gained from the project there should be an overall picture of the service offering describing what kinds of services were used in order to respond to the specific needs of the companies concerned. In the future this service offering should help local actors to identify the right puzzle pieces to match the local operating environment and needs.

4.3 Lessons learned to be disseminated and further studied

When aiming to disseminate different services or practices outside your own organisation nationally and internationally, particularly to operating environments different from Vantaa, focus on describing the experiences and lessons learned

so that the other actors can launch their own development processes based on your experiences. Consider questions such as:

- What were the most effective and appreciated parts of the service processes?
- What did the most successful solutions have in common, what were the success factors?
- What were the main obstacles and how did you resolve them?
- What key players were needed in order to develop the services? What about carrying them out? What roles did different players have?
- What special competencies were required?

Digitising or testing possibilities for digitising some of the project's outcomes has a crucial role to play in national and international level dissemination and in the scaling up of the services. The proof of concepts and action plans for these digital tools can be considered as good starting points for scaling up and enhancing of continuity and repeatability. Already there have been some ideas to further develop some of the digital tool concepts. In order to support this further

- Take ownership of the results and be active in finding opportunities for further testing and developing the tool.
- Be sure to find the right target groups, markets and customers to work with in order to further develop the tool.

During the test phase of different digital tools, it was noted that not all the tools worked as initially envisaged. This knowledge is also useful in the long run. Describe and document the lessons learned about the potential for digitisation in the field of competence development and continuous learning.

- What types of service needs or parts of the service process might be best suited for automatisation?
- Are there any potential user groups that might be more open to utilise digital solutions?

The project's key idea was to develop and test the so-called GSIP-model. However, during the implementation phase the project ended up developing something a little different from the original idea. One objective of an experimental project is to discover whether the original idea/ solution/ plan works and if not, analyse why that is so. From this perspective key lessons to be learned and disseminated from the project are answers to questions like

- What have we learned about integrating competence development with the employment and growth services provided to companies by the public sector, and combining growth and social responsibility?
- Why was it difficult to motivate companies to take part in the GSIP-activities?
- Were there some solutions or ideas that we did not test? Could these be tested in another context?
- There were probably a number of other questions that emerged during the project that remain unanswered. It is important to identify these questions: which topics need more information? What remains to be further studied?

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ANNEX 1

The list of documents used as evaluation material. In addition, materials published in the project's web page were studied.

THE DOCUMENT	TYPE OF DOCUMENT
Administrative documents	
Urban Growth - GSIP Vantaa Application Form_1.3.19	Application
Annual project report 1 (2019)	Report
Annual project report 2 (2020)	Report
Annual project report 3 (2021)	Report
I Milestone Review	Report
II Milestone Review	Report
III Milestone Review	Report
IV Milestone Review	Report
V Milestone Review	Report
VI Milestone Review	Report
GSIP Vantaa_WP6.4. update	Update to the project plan
GSIP WP6 adjusted strategy_9_Oct 2020 UIA	Update to the project plan
GSIP Vantaa M&E Plan	Plan for evaluation
Theoretical framework for incentive modelling (English summary (Appendix for annual project report 2)	Report
Presentations and self-evaluation material produced by the project	
Urbaania kasvua Vantaa -hankkeen kasvudiili 1:n koulutusten arvioinnin tulokset (Web article; Maunula, S., Lamberg, A. ja Suomala, J. 2021)	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Urbaania kasvua Vantaa -hankkeessa kehitetään koulutuspalveluja työssäkäyville aikuisille – kasvudiili 2:n yrityskohtaisten ryhmävalmennusten arviointia (Web article; Maunula, S., Lamberg, A. ja Suomala, J. 2021)	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Sparria teknoloikkaan - palvelu tukee yrityksiä teknologisessa murroksessa – osallistujien palaute (Web article; Maunula, S., Lamberg, A. ja Suomala, J. 2021)	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Co-learning workshop case study_GSIP Vantaa Nov 2021	Presentation material
Co-learning, 15_11_2021	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Ammatillisen osaamisen kehittämisen palvelut Opit ja kopit	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Johdon coaching, palautesummaus	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
KD2 kasvuvalmennusten palauteaineiston alustus	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
KD2 opit ja oivallukset yhteenveto_kmm	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Loppukuulosteluiden satoa 19.2.2021	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Opit Ja Oivallukset 021921	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
OSKA asiakaspalaute, yhteenveto 14.12.2021	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Sparria teknoloikkaan, yhteenveto 21.12.	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
Valmentajien palautekeskustelu, 012021	Self-evaluation; feedback summary
UIA presentation by Vantti	Presentation material
Other presentation material	
Uudella osaamisella kasvuun. Urbaania kasvua Vantaa -hankkeen ratkaisuja pk-yrityksille	Project's Knowledge report

Urban Growth GSIP Vantaa Experiences so far from the Field	Publication about project's results
Competence mapping POC	Presentation of the of the POC
PDC (Personal digital Coach) POC	Presentation of the of the POC
Dashboard POC	Presentation of the POC
Kasvudiili 1 Yleisesite	Service brochure
KD 2 palveluesite 030920	Service brochure
KD 3 Launch event palveluesittely	Service brochure
KD 3 palveluesite	Service brochure
Discussion papers and other studies	
Impact survey, midterm report 14072021	Report
Työura-aikaisen osaamisen kehittämisen yrityslähtöinen kannustinmalli (Kesä, M. 2021)	Discussion paper
Motivation and incentive model for career-long learning (English summary of the discussion paper) (Kesä, M. 2021)	Discussion paper
The Urban Growth-GSIP project Journal N° 1 (Amitsis, G. 2020)	Journal paper by the UIA expert
The Urban Growth-GSIP project Journal N° 2 (Amitsis, G. 2020)	Journal paper by the UIA expert
The GSIP Project story during 2021 - Journal 3 (Amitsis, G. 2021)	Journal paper by the UIA expert
Others	
MUUVO-project (English summary)	Summary of the project plan
Jatkohanke_Muutosvoimaa osaamisella (MUUVO-project)	Project plan