



FROM DREAMS TO ACTIONS

TOGETHER FOR A PEACEFUL FUTURE



“From Dreams to Actions” Online Training Course

by Service Civil International

15 September – 3 October 2021

Was it worth the effort?

OUR IMPACT ON THE TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

Preface

In 2021, SCI ran “**From Dreams to Actions – together for a peaceful future**” project, supported by the Erasmus+ programme and the Council of Europe through the European Youth Foundation. This report summarises **the change** which our *From Dreams to Actions* Online Training Course, organised between 15.09.2021 and 3.10.2021, brought **to its participants**.

The course gathered **29 persons from 13 European countries** who were volunteers, activists of NGOs working for peace, youth workers, and even two university lecturers. We held **over 40 training hours** of Zoom meetings, plus additional conversations via email and dedicated online channels.

Originally, the training course was designed as a standard in-person training course, to take place in Belgium in September 2020. The event was postponed and moved to new dates several times, but the never-ending anti-COVID restrictions forced the preparatory team **to move the course to an online space**. Therefore, we were very interested to learn how the course changed (or not) the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes of our course participants in this unexpected, online format.

We consider **evaluation and impact measurement** an important part of every project. It helps to understand the outcomes, check the value for money, and benchmark with other similar activities. That is why, even though we lacked funds to hire an external evaluator/researcher, we used the expertise within the project team, and best practices from the field, and designed the impact measurement process whose results we describe below.

The report consists of the following parts:

- 1) Note on the research methodology
- 2) Graphs with the results of the research
- 3) Summary of the key findings
- 4) Discussion points
- 5) Conclusions

The research and report were prepared by the project coordinators Goška Tur and Natalie Jivkova. You can contact us for more information at training@sci.ngo.

Research methodology

Our impact surveys intended to **measure the change of knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant for the course** (i.e. around the topic of peace and various ways of working for it, e.g. through advocacy, peace education, campaigns, street actions, daily peace activism, etc.).

We used the method of **ex-ante and ex-post questionnaires** for our purpose.

All participants received two surveys:

- ex-ante survey on Day 1 of the training course (straight after the Opening Session);
- ex-post survey (after the Closing Session).

We waited 48 hours with the ex-post survey as we wanted the participants to cool down their emotions after a touching farewell session, and to get some distance before assessing the level of their knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Both questionnaires were **identical**, and both were **anonymous**: participants chose nicknames so that we could identify which pre- and post-survey belonged to which individual. The surveys consisted of **13 self-assessment questions** – all of them presented below:

1. *How much do you know about peace?*
2. *How confident do you feel about promoting peace?*
3. *How much do you feel you live in peace in your everyday life?*
4. *How much do you know about campaigning for peace?*
5. *How much do you know about organising street actions?*
6. *How do you rate your advocacy and lobbying skills?*
7. *How do you rate your skills with regard to leading online awareness-raising activities?*
8. *Do you think you have enough knowledge and skills to lead a 2-hour peace education workshop, e.g. for a group of students or volunteers?*
9. *How much do you consider yourself a change-maker?*
10. *How much do you consider yourself a peacebuilder / peace activist / peace educator?*
11. *Do you have a clear vision of how you want to be active and work for peace?*
12. *How much are you willing and motivated to organize a follow-up activity after the training course?*
13. *How confident are you to organize a follow-up activity after the training course?*

The questions touched upon the subjects most essential for the trainers' team and were phrased based on the standard methodologies used in sociology. Participants answered using a Numeric Rating Scale (from 1 to 7) used in psychometry, 1 being the lowest/worst score.

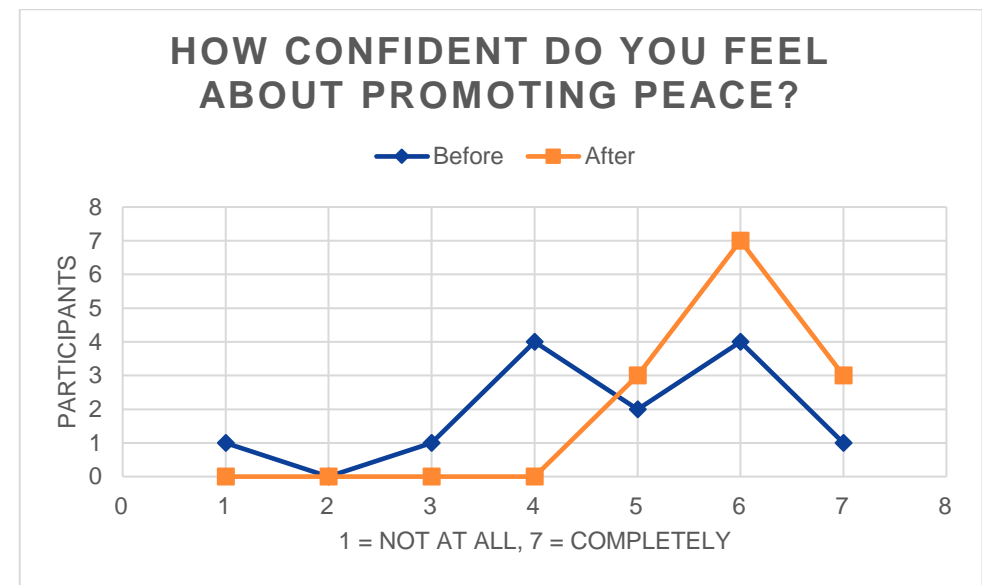
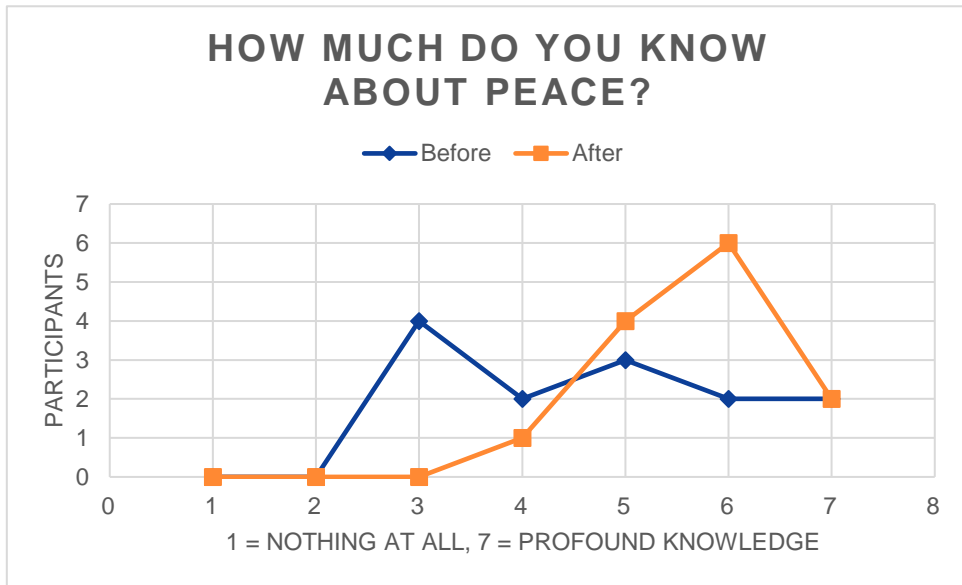
25 persons took part in the ex-ante survey, which is **86% of the group** – a percentage we were very satisfied with. However, only 45% of the group (13 persons) filled in the ex-post survey, which was lower than expected and much lower than the evaluation survey. We can only speculate on the reasons, the most probable one being **the survey fatigue** as the participants received at least 3 questionnaires to complete: our internal evaluation survey, the donor's evaluation, and the impact survey. As the impact survey was sent as the last one, part of the group might have simply had enough. Another reason could be the fact that participants needed to move on with their life, catch up with piled-up tasks and commitments, and it was easier for them to ignore the survey link.

In the end, we decided to compare results only of the part of the group that filled in both surveys. We saw it as the most accurate solution and considered the 45% sample as big enough for a basic study.

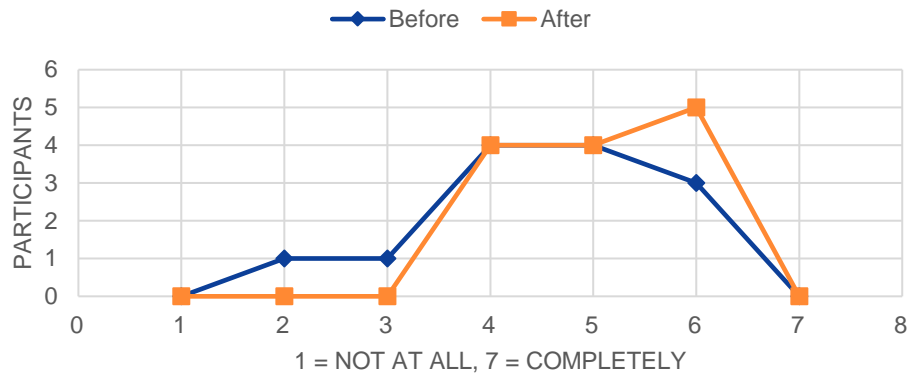
Results of the research

The below compilation of graphs demonstrates the course impact on the participants.

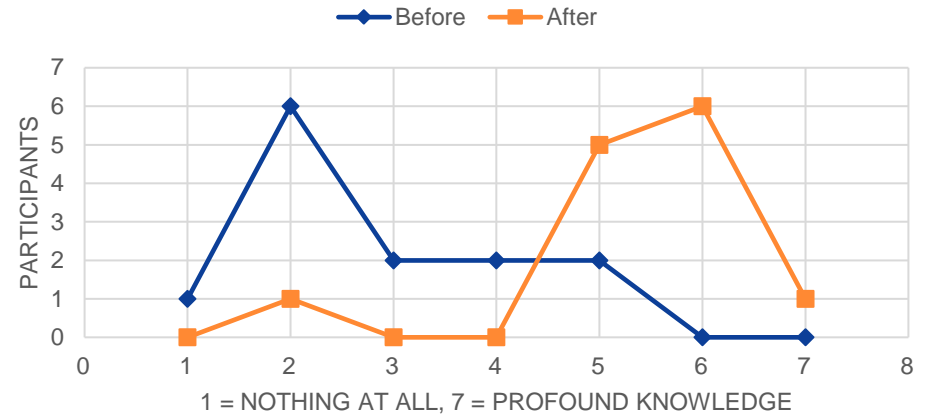
All 13 questions are included below. The **dark blue** line presents the situation **before the course**, and the **orange** one – **after** it. The vertical axis presents the number of participants who answered in the same way, and the horizontal one – their numerical answer (between 1 and 7).



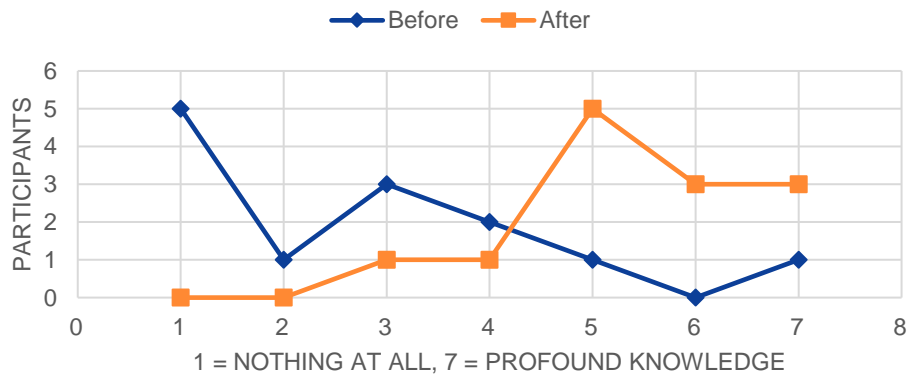
HOW MUCH DO YOU FEEL YOU LIVE IN PEACE IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE?



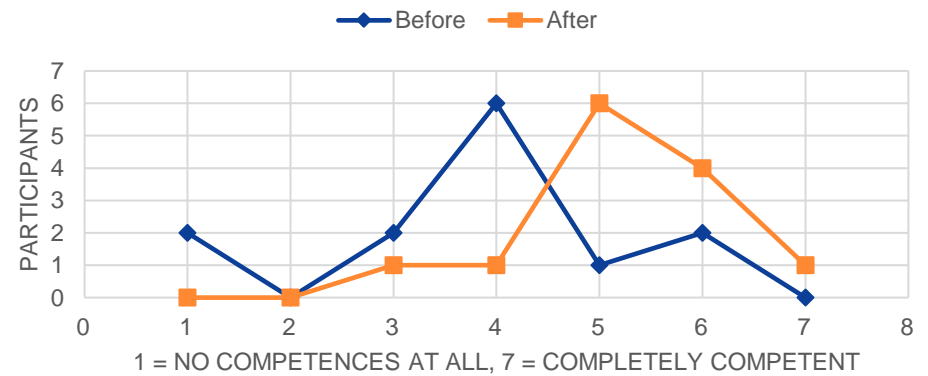
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CAMPAIGNING FOR PEACE?



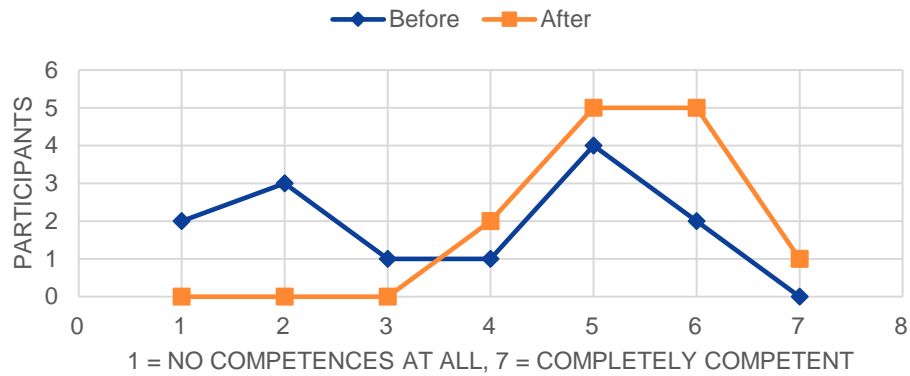
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ORGANISING STREET ACTIONS?



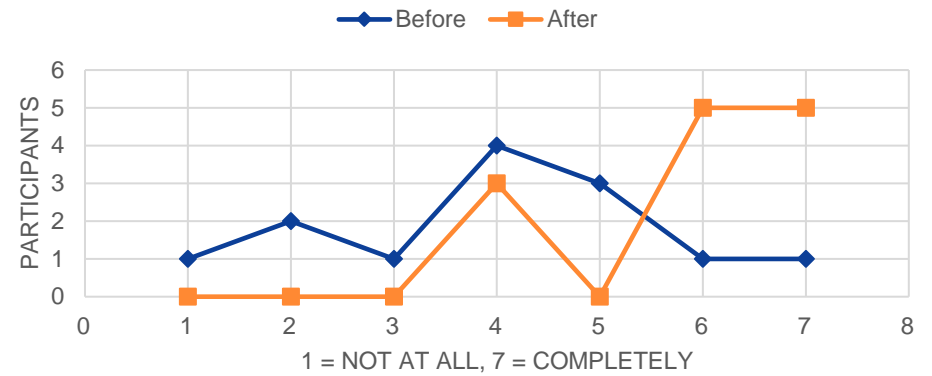
HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING SKILLS?



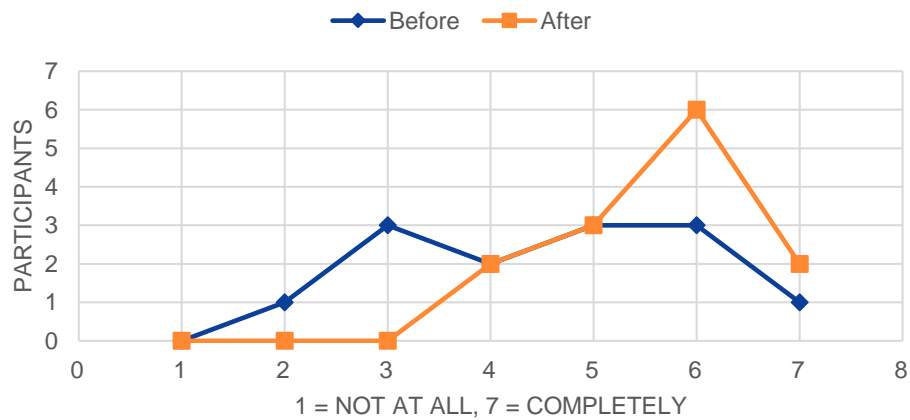
HOW DO YOU RATE YOUR SKILLS WITH REGARD TO LEADING ONLINE AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES?



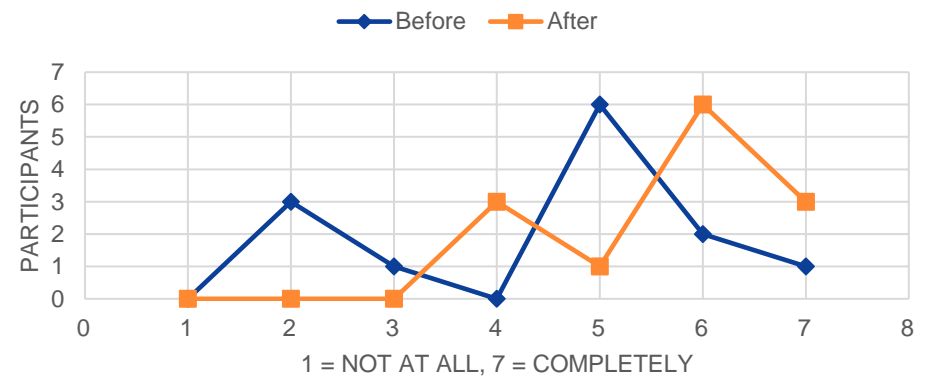
DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE ENOUGH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO RUN A 2-HOUR PEACE ED. WORKSHOP?



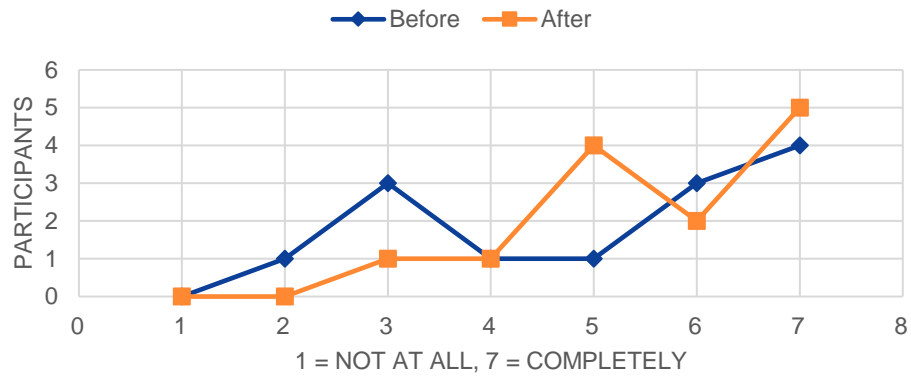
HOW MUCH DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A CHANGEMAKER?



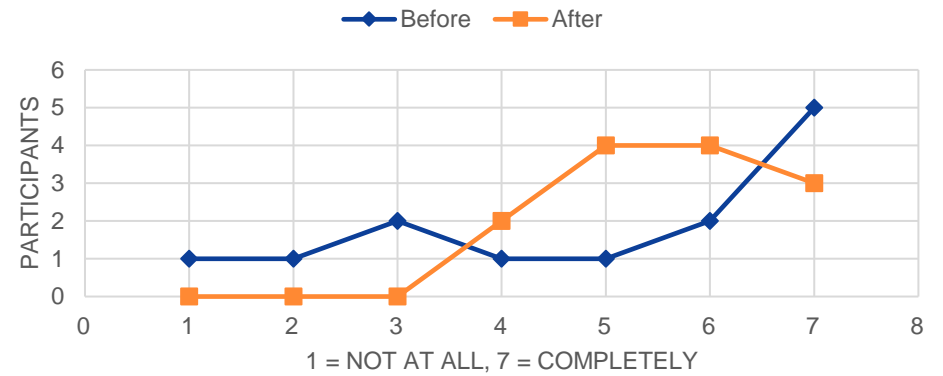
HOW MUCH DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PEACEBUILDER, PEACE ACTIVIST/EDUCATOR?



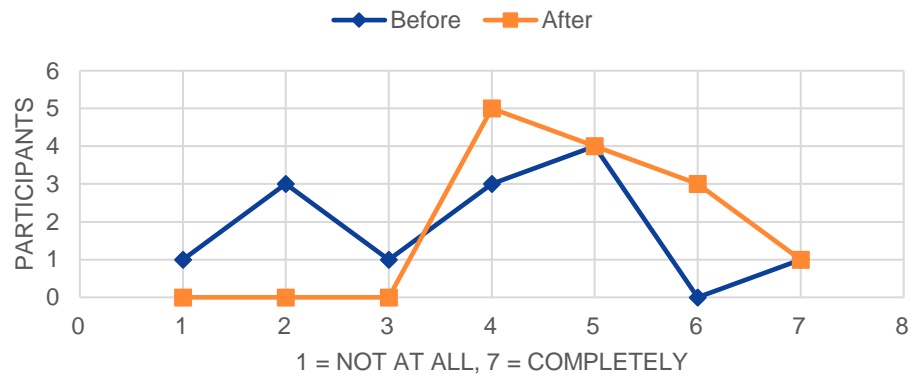
HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING AND MOTIVATED TO ORGANISE A FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY?



HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU TO ORGANISE A FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY?



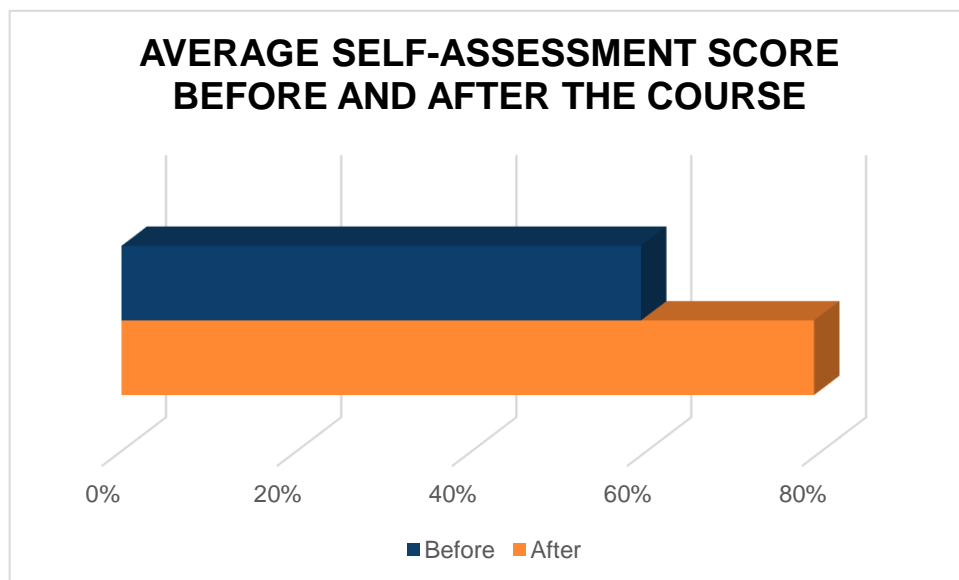
DO YOU HAVE A CLEAR VISION OF HOW YOU WANT TO BE ACTIVE AND WORK FOR PEACE?



In addition to the above graphs, we checked **the average self-assessment score before and after the course.**

The (imaginary?) **ideal peacebuilder** with profound knowledge about peace and peacebuilding, fully competent in all types of skills related to peace work, and with a model attitude toward his/her work, would score here altogether **91 points (13x7)**. This constitutes 100%.

Our course participants rated themselves **54 points** before the course, and **72 points** after, which means respectively 59% and 79% - **an improvement by 20 percentage points (pp)**.



Not every participant experienced the same level of improvement, and it ranged from -2 to +39 points (to remind: 91 points representing the maximum: the imaginary omnipotent peacebuilder).

It is interesting to notice the negative change (-2) in one persons' answer. An in-depth analysis made us conclude that the level of motivation of this person stayed the same; what changed was a slight decrease of some knowledge points, which can be attributed either to a human mistake... or be a manifestation of a deep philosophical reflection after the course, following the words of Socrates: "I know that I know nothing".

For the rest of the persons, we observed a **general trend that the smaller knowledge at the beginning of the course, the bigger improvement at its end.**

E.g. 3 persons with one of the highest self-assessment at the start of the course (63-71 points /91) reported the least significant change (7-10 points) – nevertheless, it was still a **positive increase by 10-15%**.

Looking from the other end, for the 3 persons with the lowest self-assessment at the beginning of the course (26-33 points /91), the change after was an increase between 33 and 39 points, and an **incredible increase by 200-207%**!

Summary of the key findings

- The *From Dreams to Actions* Training Course (15.09-3.10.2021) by Service Civil International brought **positive results** to both knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the participants.
- The analysis of ex-ante and ex-post surveys shows an **average improvement by 20 percentage points** (from 59% to 79%) on the way to the imaginary “ideal, perfect, omnipotent peace-builder”.
- The course brought an **increase to the knowledge of participants** especially in the below aspects:
 - Organising street actions – increase by 97%;
 - Campaigning for peace – increase by 89%;
 - General knowledge about peace – increase by 21%.
- The course also brought the participants’ **knowledge** of various aspects of peace to a **similar, more even level**:
 - At the beginning of the course, the average score on the scale of 1-7 on the three above-mentioned aspects of peace was between 2.8 and 4.7.
 - At the end of the course, the average score was between 5.4 and 5.7.
- When it comes to the **increase in the self-perception of skills and implementation of the knowledge**, the biggest improvement was noticed in the following areas:
 - Leading online awareness-raising activities – increase by 49%;
 - Peace education skills – increase by 48%;
 - Advocacy and lobbying skills – increase by 39%;
 - Living peace in everyday life – increase by 12%.
- The group demonstrated **high motivation and commitment** to the follow-up activity already at the beginning of the course, therefore, a less spectacular impact was observed here:
 - Motivation to organise a follow-up activity – increase by 12% (from 5.1 to 5.7);
 - Perceiving oneself as a changemaker – increase by 24% (from 4.5 to 5.6);
 - Perceiving oneself as a peacebuilder / peace activist / peace educator – increase by 28% (from 4.5 to 5.7).
- The participants graduated from the course:
 - **much more confident** about promoting peace (an increase of 28%, from 4.7 to 6.0) ;
 - **more confident** about organising a follow-up activity after the course (an increase of 12%, from 5.0 to 5.6);
 - with a **much clearer vision** of how they want to be active and work for peace (an increase of 33%, from 3.8 to 5.0).

Discussion points

- The majority of FDTA participants were already committed and motivated to work for peace (who else would sign up for over 40 hours of Zoom meetings in a span of 2.5 weeks?!). We don't want to speculate what type of change would be observed if the participants joining the course were **less motivated**.
- An interesting comparison would be to organise a **similar stationary course**, with the participants living and learning together e.g. 1 week. Would this traditional, offline learning bring even better results and in which aspects?
- We remind that the above results derive from a self-assessment score. An ideal way to scientifically measure the progress would be to combine self-assessment with an **observational study** – following the participants through their day and checking how they apply the new knowledge and skills in practice. This type of study is however difficult and costly to implement even within one company/department. Obviously, with our group living in 13 countries and zero evaluation budget, it was not possible.
- We will complement this research with a **long-term impact analysis** that will take place in February 2022, 5 months after the course launch. This will allow us to look for the project impact in the long term and see also what impact it made beyond the core project participants' group.

Conclusions

From Dreams to Actions Training Course, organised by Service Civil International, brought a positive change to its participants at the levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant for the course, and regarding various forms of peacebuilding, including campaigns, street actions, online awareness-building, advocacy, peace education, and daily peace activism.

The form of an online course – transformed from what was supposed to be stationary training – still allowed for achieving the course objectives.

The positive results could be achieved not only thanks to the work of the course organisers, trainers, and experts, but also thanks to the motivated and self-disciplined group who managed to dedicate time to online sessions and deeply engage in the learning processes.

The motivation to engage in peace work – quite high from the beginning – grew even higher, and the participants developed a clear vision of themselves as changemakers and peacebuilders.

To sum up, we conclude that even though the training organisation required a lot of time and resources to deliver the high-quality programme, this non-formal learning project was definitely worth the effort!