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# REPORT ON APP USAGE AMONG UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The „**Report on App Usage Among Unemployed Adults**“ focuses on the development of the Motivation and Empowerment App (ME-App), designed to support unemployed adults facing psycho-social obstacles that hinder their ability to find and retain employment. The aim of the report is to identify the specific needs, barriers and desired features that unemployed adults expect from such an app, which will inform the development of its functionalities. The ME-App will offer continuous support to unemployed individuals, particularly after they have left Active Labour Market Policy Programmes (ALMP-Ps), by providing motivational tools and monitoring psycho-social challenges.

The ME-App project aims to fill a gap in existing support systems by offering a digital tool that track progress, monitor mental health and well-being, and provide motivational content to help users manage psycho-social obstacles. The report, based on research conducted in Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovenia, highlights the importance of the app in improving users' quality of life by offering features tailored to their specific psycho-social needs.

The findings from the research identify the three most prevalent psycho-social obstacles faced by unemployed adults:

1. **Mood, Self-Esteem, and Mental Well-Being:** Many respondents reported poor mood, low self-esteem and a need for positive thoughts as major challenges affecting their daily lives. These psychological barriers undermine motivation and self-confidence, making it harder for individuals to engage in job-seeking or personal development. The ME-App should include features like mood tracking, motivational messages, and personalised tools such as daily journaling to help users boost their mental well-being and maintain a positive mindset.

2. **Sleep and Health:** Poor sleep quality and overall health were closely related issues, with many respondents indicating that these factors significantly affect their physical and mental well-being. The app should provide tools to monitor sleep patterns and track health behaviours, such as diet and exercise, while offering personalised feedback to improve users' health. By focusing on these aspects, the app can help users enhance their general well-being, which is crucial for overcoming psycho-social obstacles.

3. **Stress and Daily Routine Management:** Managing stress and maintaining a structured daily routine were identified as essential for respondents. Without stability in these areas, unemployed adults often feel overwhelmed and lose control of their daily lives. The ME-App should include features to help users organise their day, set reminders and manage stress. These tools can help users regain a sense of stability, which directly impacts their mental and physical health.



The report further offers several recommendations for the ME-App's development. First, the app should focus on personalised, user-friendly design features, such as customisable goal setting, adaptive reminders and engaging content like motivational messages. To address the identified obstacles, the app should include functionalities like mood and health tracking, stress management tools and daily routine organisers. Furthermore, motivational content tailored to users' progress and psychological needs is essential for maintaining engagement and encouraging personal development. By integrating these features, the ME-App will be a comprehensive tool that addresses the most significant psycho-social obstacles facing unemployed adults, helping them (re-)enter the labour market with improved mental and physical well-being.



## PART I.

# INTRODUCTION

The ME-App project aims to develop an app to assist unemployed adults facing psycho-social obstacles that hinder their ability to engage in professional activities and re-enter the labour market. In today's digital era, apps have become essential tools for monitoring and supporting individuals in overcoming these challenges. The ME-App will **empower** users by providing insights into their habits, tracking their progress, and **motivate** them by delivering regular motivational messages. Current studies highlight a gap in the market for an app tailored to the needs of unemployed adults—one that not only monitors psycho-social obstacles but also provides consistent motivational support.

The research conducted as part of the ME-App project focused on identifying the circumstances under which unemployed adults would use such an app, the features they desire, and the specific psycho-social obstacles they wish to monitor. The findings, compiled in the "Report on App Usage Among Unemployed Adults," are crucial for developing the beta version of the ME-App, with a particular emphasis on the most mentioned psycho-social obstacles.

This research explored how unemployed adults perceive their obstacles, the types of support they expect and what would motivate them to use the app. The study aimed to complement existing, real-life support systems, which are often insufficient due to limited services and high demand. Once unemployed adults leave Active Labour Market Participation Programmes (ALMP-Ps), they frequently lack external assistance, which can lead to a relapse into old habits. The ME-App seeks to fill this gap by providing continuous support.

The report offers valuable insights into the psycho-social obstacles faced by unemployed adults, allowing for the design and implementation of a more effective digital tool. The ME-App will incorporate functionalities aimed at improving the quality of life for those experiencing psycho-social obstacles.

The findings from this study are invaluable for the ME-App creators and also beneficial for psychologists, therapists, educators, labour market institutions and social welfare organisations. The research, conducted among ME-App consortium partners in Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovenia, revealed that, regardless of the country, unemployed adults experience psycho-social obstacles, though their expectations and needs may vary.



The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the type and prevalence of psycho-social obstacles, ensuring the ME-App effectively monitors the most significant issues. The data collected will inform the development of specific functionalities, tailored to meet the actual needs of its users, encouraging broader adoption and providing targeted support.

The research process included desk research, Focus Group Interviews (FGI), and Paper and Pencil Interviews (PAPI). Findings indicate a clear need for an app like the ME-App, which has the potential to be an ideal solution for unemployed adults and those struggling to maintain employment. By monitoring psycho-social obstacles and providing access to appropriate support tools, the ME-App could significantly improve the quality of life for these individuals, helping them re-engage with the professional world.

This report also seeks to serve as a valuable resource for project implementers and offers practical insights that contribute to developing an effective digital solution like the ME-App. It also provides essential information for decision-makers, educators, psychologists, therapists, social workers, career counsellors and labour market institutions, highlighting the underlying psycho-social health issues contributing to unemployment and the challenges of maintaining employment.

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## ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH

The research was conducted between March and May 2024 across four countries: Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovenia. The aim was to map the barriers, needs and expectations of unemployed adults, with a specific focus on those facing psycho-social obstacles. The research methodology was developed by the ADN Institute in collaboration with project partners: DATEY Eyrich GmbH (Germany) – Consortium Leader, ADN Institute (Poland), ipcenter.at GmbH (Austria), OZARA STORITVENO IN INVALIDSKO PODJETJE DOO (Slovenia), ANONIMI ETAIREIA EREUNAS KAI ANAPTIKSIS SISTIMATON KAI IPIRESION (Greece), and Lidi Smart Solutions (Netherlands).

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## RESEARCH METHODS

The research employed three primary methods:

**Desk Research:** This involved the analysis of existing data, gathering information and examining secondary data to understand the current state of psycho-social obstacles among unemployed adults. The findings of this research were included in the reports of the FGIs.

**PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interviews):** A quantitative method was used to identify the three most significant psycho-social obstacles and related needs among various groups of unemployed adults. This standardised face-to-face interview involved an interviewer reading questions from a paper questionnaire and recording the respondent's answers. PAPI surveys were chosen because they are effective due to their ability to elicit reliable responses in a direct, face-to-face setting.



FGI (Focus Group Interviews): A qualitative method aimed at recognising the psycho-social obstacles faced by unemployed adults and identifying their needs related to the ME-App. These interviews were conducted in groups of 6-12 participants, including specific groups such as those with disabilities in Slovenia. The discussions, lasting 1.5 to 2 hours, were led by a moderator who encouraged free expression while focusing on key topics such as overall experiences, psycho-social obstacles, motivation and support. The discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

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## PARTICIPANTS

PAPI: At least 100 unemployed individuals participated in the PAPI surveys, with at least 30 participants from Germany, Austria and Poland each, and at least 10 from Slovenia. A total of 106 people took part in the PAPI studies, 46 women and 57 men, 3 people did not respond. In the division by country, in Austria the PAPI studies were attended by 16 women and 12 men, 1 person did not respond, in Germany 15 women and 15 men, 1 person did not respond, in Poland 10 women and 24 men, 1 person did not respond, in Slovenia 5 women and 6 men. 11 people with from Slovenia participated in the study: 5 women and 6 men. Survey focused on individuals over 25 years old, particularly those in special labour market situations, such as long-term unemployed, individuals with disabilities, and those with low or outdated qualifications. The study ensured a balanced representation of age and gender across all countries.

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FGI: The focus group interviews included at least 24 unemployed individuals, with 6-12 participants from each country. A total of 26 people, 13 women and 13 men, participated in the FGI interviews. In terms of country breakdown, in Austria 4 women and 2 men, in Germany 5 women and 3 men, in Poland 1 woman and 5 men, in Slovenia 3 women and 3 men. Participants from Slovenia (6 people) had the status of persons with disabilities. The groups were composed of people over 25 years old, with a focus on those currently enrolled in ALMP-Ps and facing significant psycho-social obstacles. The interviews explored a range of topics, including the challenges of unemployment, psycho-social obstacles and the potential role of a digital tool like the ME-App in providing support.





## PART II.

### PAPI FINDINGS

#### PART 1: INDIVIDUAL PSYCHO-SOCIAL OBSTACLES

(Q1) The responses to whether or not unemployed adults face obstacles that make it difficult to perform their daily and life duties showed that in Austria, 72.4% of respondents answered "Yes," indicating they face obstacles, while 27.6% said "No." Germany and Poland both show 100% of respondents indicating they face obstacles, with no one selecting "No." For Slovenia the situation is slightly different, with 97.2% of respondents acknowledging obstacles while a very small percentage (2.8%) indicated they do not face barriers. The main trend across these replies is a strong acknowledgment of obstacles in performing daily and life duties, with the majority of respondents from all countries indicating they face such challenges.

(Q2) To obtain a better picture of which obstacles respondents think they face, they were asked to select up to three psycho-social obstacles from a provided list. The possible answers include challenges such as poor health, low self-esteem, low education or qualifications, poor sleeping habits, bad time management habits, lack of motivation, lack of support from family, friends, or institutions, addictions, changes in life situation and family issues, with an option to specify any other obstacles.

In the following we will present the replies to questions focusing on individual psycho-social obstacles per country and then sum up the key findings.

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#### AUSTRIA

The top three most named obstacles in Austria where:

- Poor Health: This was selected by 7 respondents, accounting for 35% of the total.
- Poor Sleeping Habits: Also chosen by 7 respondents (35%).
- Family Situation: Selected by 5 respondents, representing 25% of the total.

Several other challenges also emerged from the data. A portion of the respondents, representing 15%, identified a low level of education or qualifications as a significant barrier. Similarly, another 15% pointed to bad habits related to spending or other financial behaviors as an obstacle, indicating that problematic financial management is a concern for some. The same percentage of



respondents, 15%, cited a lack of motivation as a barrier, highlighting issues with drive or enthusiasm that may be hindering their progress.

Institutional support was also noted as a concern, with 15% of respondents feeling that the lack of support and assistance from institutions is a significant obstacle. Addictions, whether behavioural or substance-related, were identified by 20% of respondents as a major issue, suggesting that addiction is affecting their ability to manage their lives effectively. Also, 15% of respondents mentioned that recent or ongoing life changes are contributing to their difficulties, indicating that adapting to new circumstances is a challenge for some. Low self-esteem was highlighted by 10% of respondents as a barrier, pointing to issues with self-worth or confidence that may be impacting their overall well-being. Similarly, another 10% felt that a lack of support and help from family and close relatives is a significant obstacle in their lives.

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## GERMANY

The top three most named obstacles in Germany were:

- **Poor Sleeping Habits:** This was the most frequently cited obstacle, selected by 17 respondents, which accounts for 54.8% of the total. This suggests that sleep-related issues are a major concern for over half of the participants.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** The second most common obstacle, chosen by 16 respondents (51.6%).
- **Change of Life Situation:** This obstacle was selected by 12 respondents, representing 38.7% of the total.

Other significant barriers respondents cited include poor health, family situation and lack of motivation. Additionally, concerns about education, financial habits, support from family and institutions and addiction also emerged, albeit with less frequency. These results underscore the diverse range of challenges that participants are navigating. Other notable results show that poor health was a significant concern, with 14 respondents (45.2%) identifying it as a barrier. Although health issues were not as commonly cited as poor sleeping habits or low self-esteem, they remain a considerable challenge and might often be interlinked. The family situation was another obstacle, mentioned by 11 respondents (35.5%). Lack of motivation was selected by 8 respondents (25.8%), suggesting that around a quarter of the respondents struggle with maintaining motivation, which impacts their overall well-being. Lack of support and help from family and close relatives was highlighted by 7 respondents (22.6%).

Some respondents, specifically 4 (12.9%), identified low levels of education or qualifications, bad habits related to spending or financial behaviours and addictions (whether behavioural or substance-related) as significant barriers. Although these factors were less frequently cited, they still represent important challenges for a smaller segment of the respondents. In addition, a lack of support and assistance from institutions was noted by 10 respondents (32.3%).



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## SLOVENIA

The top three most named obstacles in Slovenia were:

- **Problems with the Duration and Quality of Sleep:** This was the most frequently cited habit that respondents wish to address, selected by 4 participants, representing 36.4% of the total.
- **Too Little Attention to Yourself:** This habit was also selected by 4 respondents (36.4%), suggesting that self-care and personal attention are areas of concern that many participants are eager to improve.
- **Too Much Time Spent on Learning or Work:** Tied with the other two top concerns, 4 respondents (36.4%) identified this habit as something they would like to manage better in the near future, reflecting a desire to balance work or learning with other aspects of life.

Several other habits were also highlighted as areas for improvement. Lack of Rest or Relaxation were selected by 3 respondents (27.3%). Too Much Time Spent on Social Media was identified by 2 respondents (18.2%) as a habit they would like to address, reflecting concerns about overuse of social platforms. Similarly, Too Much Time Spent on the Internet was also chosen by 2 respondents (18.2%), indicating that digital habits are a point of concern for some.

Problems with the Duration and Quality of Physical Activity was selected by 2 respondents (18.2%), and Unhealthy Diet, Low Number of Contacts/Meetings with Others, and Irregular Medication Intake were each selected by 1 respondent (9.1%), suggesting that these habits are less common concerns but still relevant for a few participants.

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## POLAND

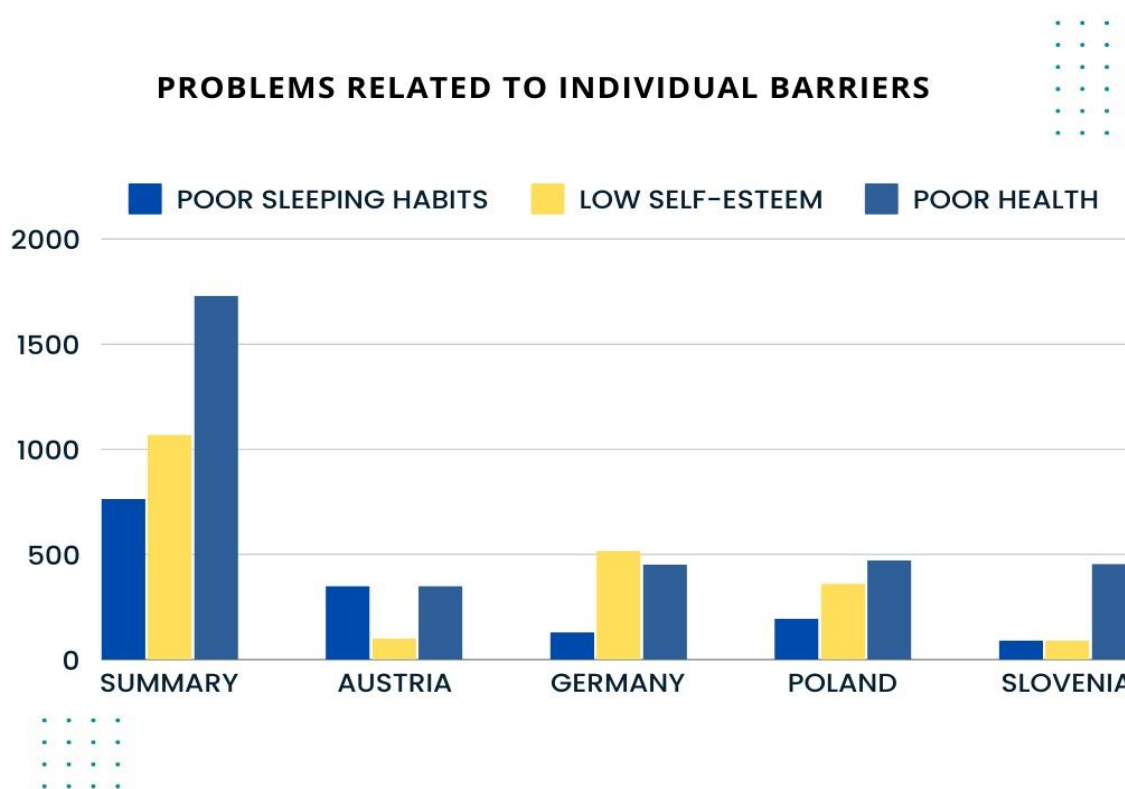
The top three most named obstacles in Poland were:

- **Poor Health and Lack of Motivation:** These were the most frequently cited obstacles, each selected by 17 respondents, which accounts for 47.2% of the total. This suggests that both health-related issues and lack of motivation are major concerns for nearly half of the participants.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** The second most common obstacle, chosen by 16 respondents (44.4%), indicating that self-esteem issues are a significant psycho-social barrier for a large portion of the respondents.
- **Lack of Support and Help from Family and Close Relatives:** This obstacle was selected by 13 respondents, representing 36.1% of the total. It highlights that the absence of family support is a substantial challenge for many participants.



Other results showed that Bad Habits Related to Spending Time, Such as Overuse of Digital Devices was also a notable concern, with 13 respondents (36.1%) identifying it as a barrier. Addictions were identified by 8 respondents (22.2%) as an obstacle, and Change of Life Situation was highlighted by 4 respondents (11.1%).

Across all countries, the three most frequently mentioned psycho-social obstacles are **poor sleeping habits, low self-esteem** and **poor health**. Poor sleeping habits were consistently identified as a significant barrier, particularly in Germany and Austria, where it was one of the top concerns. Low self-esteem was another major obstacle, especially highlighted in Germany and Poland, indicating widespread issues with self-worth, confidence and motivation among respondents. Poor health was a common concern in both Austria and Poland, reflecting ongoing challenges related to physical well-being. These findings underscore the importance of addressing sleep quality, self-esteem and health in any interventions or support systems designed to help individuals overcome psycho-social obstacles.



(Q3) In order to see whether habits that unemployed adults have and would like to address correlate to the psycho-social obstacles they chose, respondents were asked to select 3 to 6 habits they would like to address in the near future from a provided list. The possible answers include issues such as an unhealthy diet, drinking alcohol or using psychoactive substances, sleep problems, low physical activity, few social interactions, irregular or missed medication intake, lack of rest, excessive time on digital devices or social media, lack of positive thoughts, insufficient

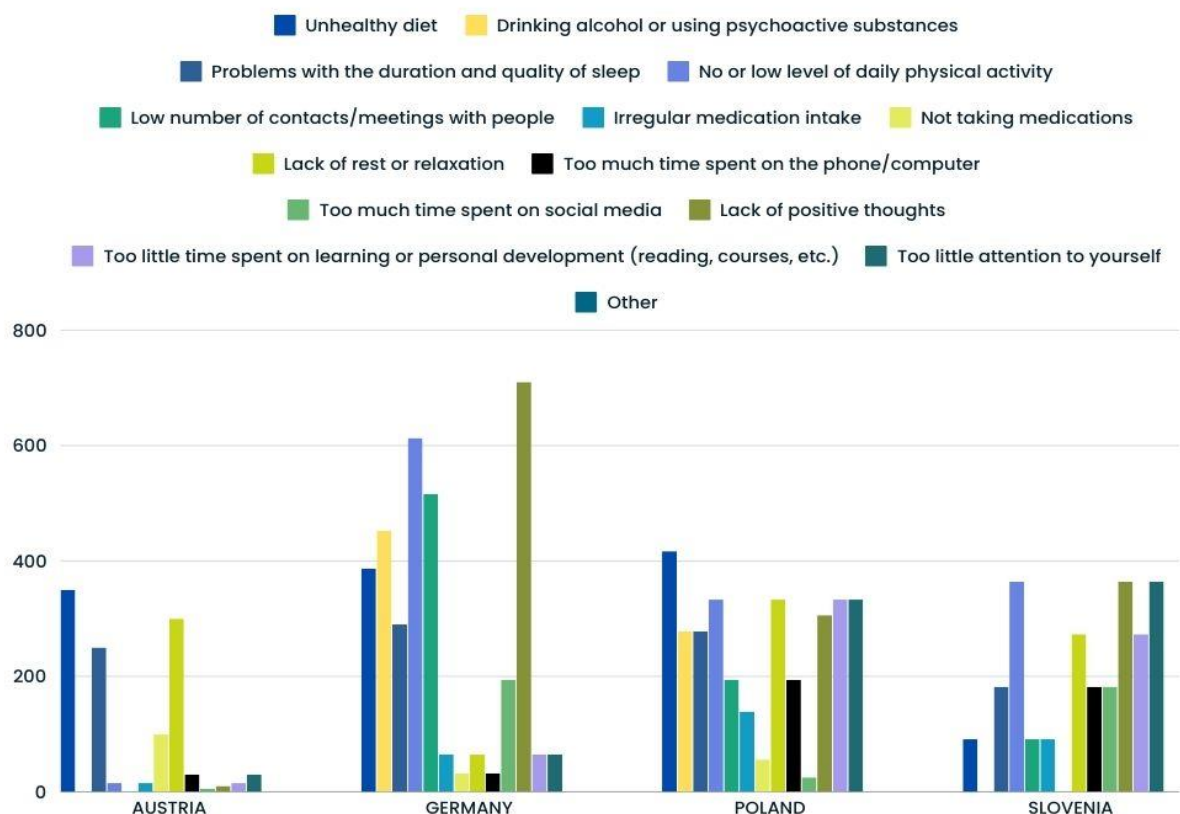


personal development and neglect of self-care, with an option to specify any other habits. A comparative analysis of the replies by the 4 training partners shows the following:

Unhealthy diet was the most mentioned habit; it was consistently a top concern across all replies. Drinking Alcohol or Using Psychoactive Substances was a habit that showed variability: It was notably a significant concern in the reply from Germany (38.7% with 12 responses) but was of no concern in other countries. Problems with Sleep Duration/Quality was another significant concern across all replies. Low Level of Physical Activity was a concern that was most prominent in Germany (61.3% with 19 responses), indicating it as a major issue, whereas it is of minimal concern in Poland (9.1% with 1 response). Lack of Positive Thoughts was highly significant in the reply from Germany (71% with 22 responses) but was of no concern in Slovenia.

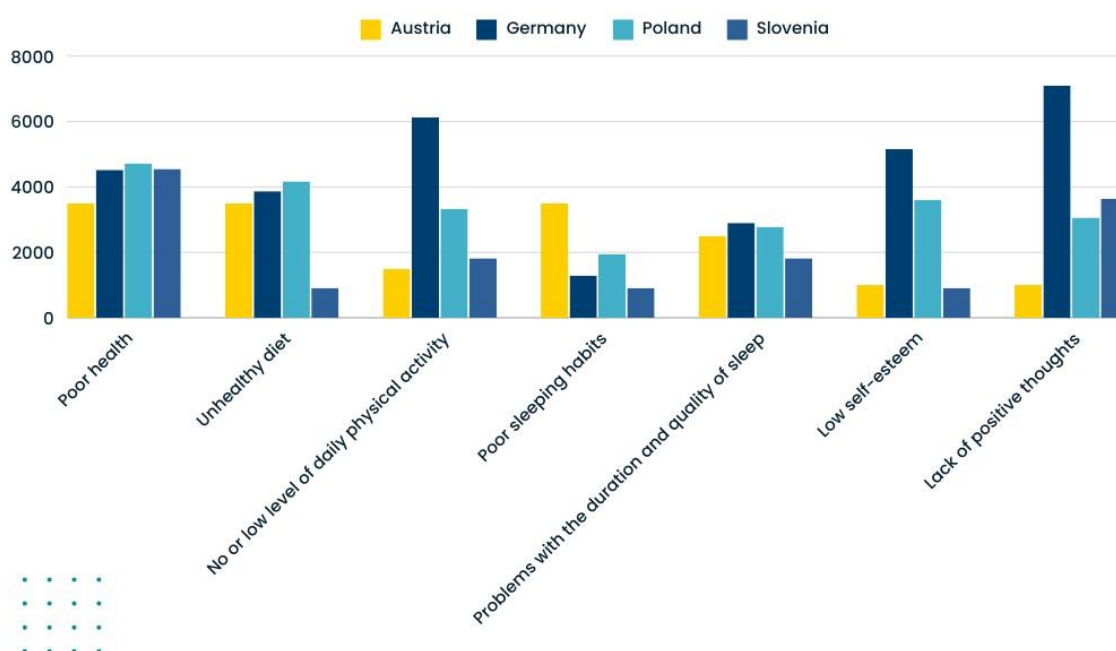
While each country shows different priorities and concerns, some habits like an unhealthy diet and lack of positive thoughts being consistently high across most groups, while others like drinking alcohol or using psychoactive substances varied significantly. The replies from Germany and Slovenia show more marked concerns across a broader range of habits, indicating these countries may have broader lifestyle issues they wish to address. The most dominant habits across the graphs were an unhealthy diet, which was a significant concern in all groups, and a lack of positive thoughts, particularly in Germany, where it was the top concern for 71% of respondents. Additionally, problems with sleep duration/quality and low levels of physical activity were consistently highlighted as key issues that respondents wished to address.

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



Correlating the results from question 2 on the most prevalent psycho-social obstacles respondents identified and question 3 on the most frequently identified habits they would like to address is significant. Poor **sleeping habits**, highlighted as a major obstacle across countries, directly correlate with the consistent concern for addressing sleep problems in the habit-related responses, particularly in Germany and Austria. **Low self-esteem**, which encompasses issues like lack of confidence and motivation, aligns with the habit of addressing a lack of positive thoughts, which was notably a top concern in Germany. Similarly, **poor health**, a prevalent obstacle in Austria and Poland, correlates with the widespread desire to tackle an unhealthy diet and low physical activity, both of which are crucial components of physical well-being. These correlations indicate that the psycho-social obstacles respondents face are closely tied to the habits they recognise as needing improvement, suggesting that addressing these habits could be a key strategy in overcoming the associated obstacles.

## COMPARISON RESPONSES TO Q2 AND Q3 OF THE TOP 3 ISSUES (SLEEP, LOW SELF-ESTEEM, POOR HEALTH) BY COUNTRY



## PART 2 – APP USAGE

### GENERAL APP USAGE

The majority of respondents in all countries use a smartphone at least once a day, so there is a high probability that a well-designed app could support everyday users in coping with psycho-social obstacles. Respondents use different apps, interestingly most often for entertainment or everyday purposes such as shopping or banking and less often for health purposes.

### USE OF MONITORING AND PLANNING APPS

Regarding the use of action planning apps, the trend shows a higher rate of non-usage across respondents, with privacy concerns and unfamiliarity being common reasons. In Austria, 50% of respondents said they do not use such apps, with 37.5% indicating they do, and a small percentage expressing concerns about costs or privacy. Similarly, in Germany, 61.3% of respondents do not use these apps, with 12.9% acknowledging their use and 12.9% also indicating unfamiliarity with such tools. In Poland, the majority (27.8%) do not use these apps, but there is a more even distribution among those who do (13.9%) and those who express concerns about costs or data privacy. In Slovenia, 45.5% of respondents do not use planning apps, with 18.2% indicating they do, while a significant portion (27.3%) are concerned about privacy issues.

Regarding the willingness to use phone apps to help plan and undertake daily duties and activities if someone such as an educator assisted them, the analysis of replies reveals that the majority of respondents in Austria (81.8%), Germany (83.9%) and Poland (61.1%) would be willing to use such apps with assistance, indicating a strong openness to using technology for daily planning with proper support. In Slovenia, the response was split more evenly, with 60.9% saying "Yes" and 39.1% saying "No." This trend suggests that educators and professionals working with unemployed individuals can play a significant role in encouraging the adoption of planning apps, particularly where there is a slight hesitation or less enthusiasm, as seen in Slovenia. The overall positive response across countries underscores the potential for these apps to be effectively integrated into daily routines with adequate guidance and support.

### USE OF APPS TO MONITOR PSYCHO-SOCIAL OBSTACLES

Concerning the usefulness of mobile apps in addressing psycho-social obstacles, replies by unemployed adults reveal divided opinions across the four countries. Respondents were asked to select from 3 to 6 ways in which a phone app could help them address their psycho-social



obstacles from options such as maintaining the rhythm of the day, improving sleep, increasing motivation, improving mood, changing habits, observing emotions, monitoring health, observing relationships with others and observing ways of coping with stress, with an option to specify any other ways the app could help.

In Slovenia, 63.6% of respondents believe that a phone app could help them, while 36.4% are skeptical. Germany shows the highest confidence in the potential of apps, with 70% of respondents agreeing they could be helpful, while 30% disagree. In contrast, opinions in Poland are evenly split, with 50% believing an app could help and 50% doubting its effectiveness. Austria has the most negative outlook, with 69.6% of respondents expressing doubt that an app would be useful, compared to 30.4% who believe it could help. These results highlight varying levels of trust in technology as a tool for overcoming psycho-social obstacles, with Austria and Poland being more skeptical compared to Germany and Slovenia. This might indicate that educators can play a crucial role in improving the adoption and effectiveness of such apps by providing guidance, training and support to help their students understand how these tools can be used to overcome psycho-social obstacles, thereby increasing confidence in their utility.

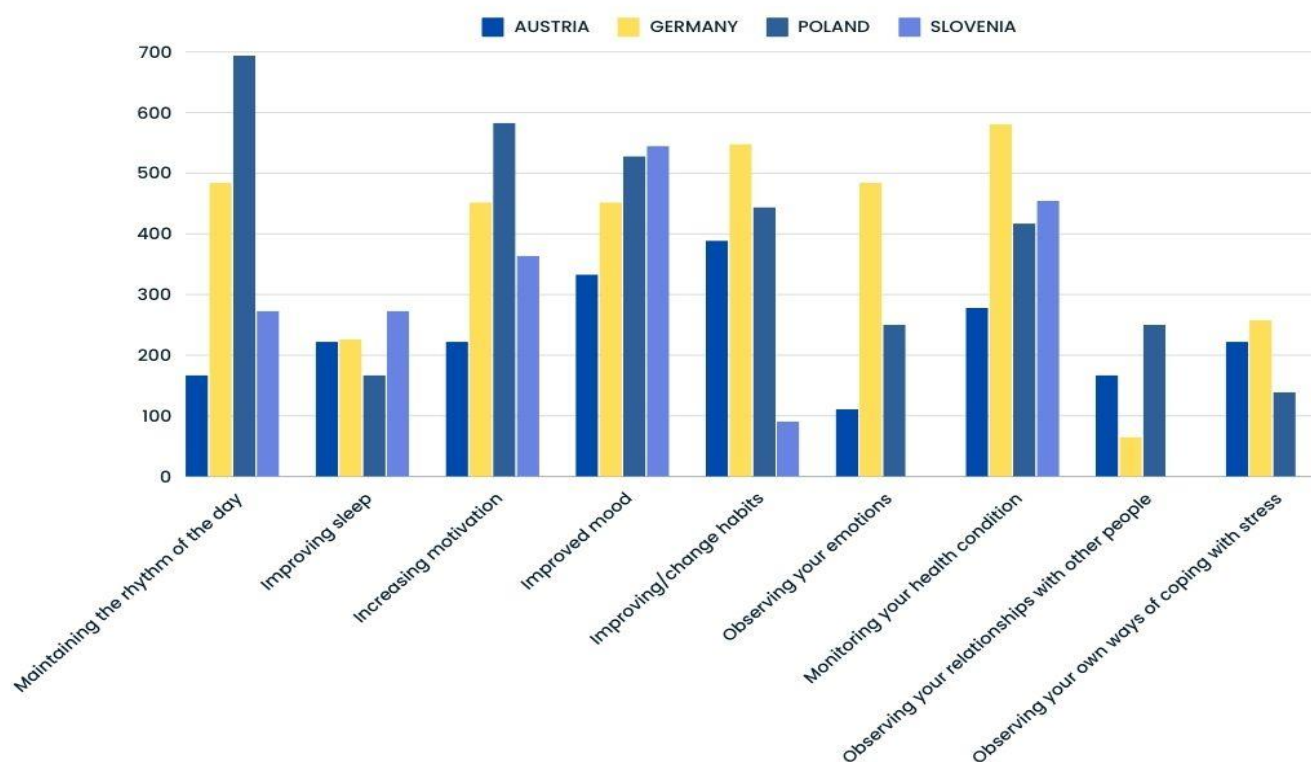
(Q10) This is particularly important because respondents nonetheless showed an interest in using such apps to in the future by clearly indicating how a mobile app could help them address specific psycho-social obstacles. Respondents could choose which obstacles they would like to address with the help of an app. In Austria, the most selected options were "Improved mood" (54.5%) and "Monitoring your health condition" along with "Observing your relationships with others" (both at 45.5%). In Germany, respondents highlighted "Maintaining the rhythm of the day" (69.4%) and "Increasing motivation" (58.3%) as the key ways an app could help, with a strong emphasis also on mood improvement and habit changes. In Poland, the top responses were "Monitoring your health condition" (58.1%), "Improving/changing habits" (54.8%), and "Maintaining the rhythm of the day" (48.4%). Finally, in Slovenia, the leading expectations were "Improving/changing habits" (38.9%) and "Monitoring your health condition" (27.8%).

Across these countries, there is thus a consistent interest in using apps to enhance health management, mood, daily routines and habits, reflecting a shared recognition of these areas as vital for overcoming psycho-social obstacles. Given this, a monitoring app should prioritise features that focus on improving mood, monitoring health conditions, maintaining daily routines and facilitating habit changes, as these are the most consistently mentioned obstacles that respondents would like to address via an app across all four countries.





## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES BY COUNTRY



(Q16) Respondents were also asked about the potential barriers that might prevent them from using a phone app designed to help them regularly track progress in addressing their psycho-social obstacles. The possible answers included "Lack of time," "Too many tasks," "Too difficult tasks," and "Too many notifications." The replies show that the most prevalent barrier mentioned across all respondents was the issue of "Too many notifications," with a significant number of participants expressing concern about being overwhelmed by frequent app alerts. "Too many tasks" and "Too difficult tasks" were also commonly mentioned as barriers, indicating that respondents might find an app less appealing if it adds to their workload or presents challenges they feel unprepared to tackle. "Lack of time" also emerged as a notable concern, particularly highlighting that respondents might struggle to integrate app usage into their daily routines if they already feel time-constrained.

(Cross referencing Q 2+3 with Q 10) The findings regarding the general psycho-social obstacles respondents face (Q2) and the habits they wish to change (Q3), clearly align with the psycho-social obstacles which respondents also hope to address through the use of apps (Q10). Poor sleeping habits, low self-esteem and poor health—identified as key obstacles—directly correlate with the respondents' desire to improve sleep quality, boost positive thoughts and enhance physical well-being. There is a strong interest in using apps to monitor and improve these areas, particularly in maintaining daily routines, enhancing mood and managing health conditions. This correlation suggests that digital tools, particularly apps, should focus on these specific areas—**sleep, mood,**



**health and daily routine management**—to effectively help users overcome the psycho-social obstacles they face, as these are the very aspects they seek to improve.

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## PSYCHO-SOCIAL OBSTACLES REFERRING TO MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

(Q11) Where identifying psycho-social obstacles referring specifically to mental and physical health that unemployed adults wished to address via apps was concerned, replies reveal some interesting differences and commonalities across the four countries. In Austria, respondents were particularly focused on monitoring well-being and mood (54.5%) and feelings of usefulness and being valued (36.4%), showing a clear preference for tracking specific aspects of mental health. Germany had a broader range of interests, with high importance placed on factors influencing mood (50%) and well-being, as well as the motivation to achieve goals (43.3%). Polish respondents, similar to those in Germany, expressed interest in monitoring a wide array of factors, particularly well-being and mood, and stress levels, both at 50%. Slovenia's respondents showed more decisiveness, with stress levels and well-being/mood as the primary areas of interest (both 26.1%). Across all countries, monitoring mood, well-being and stress stood out as common priorities.

(Cross referencing Q2 and 3 with Q11) Text Box: There is a strong correlation between the most prevalent psycho-social obstacles that respondents wish to monitor or address via apps and their selection of psycho-social obstacles referring *specifically* to mental and physical health. Concretely, poor sleeping habits, low self-esteem and poor health, identified as significant obstacles, directly align with the emphasis on monitoring well-being, mood and stress. In Austria and Germany, where poor sleeping habits and low self-esteem are major concerns, there is a notable interest in tracking mood and well-being, reflecting a desire to address these mental health challenges. Similarly, in Poland and Slovenia, where poor health and stress are prevalent obstacles, respondents expressed a clear preference for using apps to monitor these specific issues. Across all countries, the focus on **mood, well-being (sleep), low self-esteem** and **stress management** reinforces the need to address the mental and physical health related psycho-social obstacles highlighted.

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## PSYCHO-SOCIAL OBSTACLES CONCERNING TIME STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES

(Q12) In terms of the psycho-social obstacles related specifically to time structure and activities that respondents would like to monitor or track using an app, the most consistently mentioned areas include "Social interactions" and "Daily reflections of positive events," both of which are highly prioritised in Germany, Poland and Slovenia. "Social interactions" was the most frequently mentioned obstacle across the countries. Specifically, "Social interactions" was the top choice in Slovenia (54.5%) and Poland (60%), and it was also significant in Germany (31.8%) and Austria (20%). "Daily reflections of positive events" were particularly important in Germany (53.3%) and Poland (45.5%), and this can be seen as highly important, especially considering that previous analyses of the graphs indicated a strong interest in areas like motivation and self-confidence.



Reflecting on positive events regularly through an app could directly support and enhance these aspects, helping users build and maintain a more positive self-perception and motivation over time. "Duration and quality of sleep" and "Physical exercise routines and activities" are also frequently highlighted.

Cross-referencing Q2+3 with Q12: There is a strong correlation between the most prevalent overall psycho-social obstacles respondents wish to monitor or address via apps and the obstacles they are identifying as relating specifically to time structure and activities. Poor sleeping habits, low self-esteem and poor health, identified as significant general obstacles align closely with the desire to monitor areas like "Duration and quality of sleep" and "Physical exercise routines". Also, the emphasis on "Social interactions" and "Daily reflections of positive events" directly correlates with the need to address low self-esteem and a lack of positive thoughts. These areas are crucial for improving self-confidence and motivation, which are underlying components of the general psycho-social obstacles previously identified. This highlights the importance of addressing **mental well-being (low self-esteem)** and **sleep quality** as key areas for improvement.

(Q13) Respondents were also asked which elements of an app would help them monitor or track their progress, with options to select from 3 to 6 answers. The possible answers included assigning tasks daily or every few days, receiving motivational quotes of the day, having a calendar with marked progress, getting task reminder notifications and tasks aimed at developing habits. The replies reveal that the most prevalent trends include a strong preference for having a **calendar with marked progress**, which was highly selected across all responses. Receiving **motivational quotes of the day** and **assigning tasks** regularly were consistently mentioned as useful features. Task reminder notifications and tasks aimed at developing habits also received considerable attention, although to a slightly lesser extent. The findings suggest that respondents prioritise structured progress tracking, regular motivation and actionable task assignments in the app features that would best support their personal development.

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## MOTIVATIONAL MESSAGES

(Q14) Regarding how often they would like to receive motivational messages, respondents were able to choose several times a day, once a day, once a week, several times a week, once a month or several times a month. The replies reveal that the most prevalent trend is a strong preference for receiving motivational messages once a day, with a significant portion of respondents also opting for several times a day. Receiving messages once a week or several times a week were options that were less popular. The data thus indicates a clear interest in frequent motivational reinforcement, particularly on a daily basis. (Q15) In this context, respondents were asked in what form they would like to receive support and information about their motivation activity messages, with possible answers including SMS, email, app notifications and other options. The replies show that the most prevalent trend is a strong preference for receiving support through SMS, which was consistently the top choice across the responses. App notifications were also a popular choice, particularly in Slovenia, where it was as favoured as SMS. Email was less popular but still selected



by a significant number of respondents, indicating that multiple channels of communication may be necessary to meet different preferences.

(Q18) When respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely they are to use a phone app that delivers motivational messages, with possible responses ranging from "Unlikely" (1) to "Likely" (10), replies showed that most respondents rated their likelihood of using such an app at 5 or above, with significant clusters around 7, 8, and 9. This indicates a generally positive reception, suggesting that a well-designed app could indeed find a substantial user base among the unemployed, particularly if it effectively meets their needs for motivation and support. This optimism is bolstered by the fact that a considerable proportion of respondents are open to using a motivational app, with higher ratings indicating a readiness to engage with digital tools for personal empowerment. Therefore, the development of the Motivation and Empowerment App seems promising, with a clear potential audience who are likely to benefit from its features.

### Part 3 – Summary of Findings

#### Summary of PAPI findings regarding the 3 most-mentioned obstacles, ranked by prevalence:

1. **Mood, Self-Esteem and Mental Well-Being:** This overarching category includes poor mood, low self-esteem and the need for positive thoughts, reflecting the importance of mental health, self-confidence and motivation. This obstacle is thematically clustered as it addresses the internal, psychological aspects that affect respondents' daily lives and overall well-being.
2. **Sleep and Health:** This category encompasses poor health and poor sleeping habits, which are closely related as both significantly impact physical and mental well-being. The desire to improve health and sleep quality is a recurring theme, indicating the importance of these factors in respondents' efforts to enhance their overall quality of life.
3. **Stress and Daily Routine Management:** Stress management and maintaining a structured daily routine are crucial for respondents. This obstacle highlights the need for stability and control in daily life, which directly affects their ability to manage stress and maintain overall mental and physical health

These categories reflect the primary psycho-social obstacles that respondents face and are eager to address, particularly through the use of digital tools like apps.



## PART III

# FGI RESULTS

### FGI RESULTS BY COUNTRY

#### AUSTRIA

The FGI participants shared their experiences and challenges related to unemployment, openly discussing their frustrations and the structural barriers they faced. A common theme was the embarrassment they felt about being unemployed, often preferring to say they were on a training course. Many expressed difficulties in coping with the lack of structure during unemployment, highlighting the absence of a daily routine as a major problem. Setting daily, monthly and yearly goals was crucial for finding the inner motivation to continue. Despite their diverse backgrounds, participants shared a dislike for state structures, particularly the delays in accessing desired training, which prolonged their unemployment. Maintaining focus on their goals, supported by outlets such as meditation, sports and family, was particularly important during this time.

Participants emphasised that goal setting was the most important factor in their motivation. Their mental state greatly impacted their drive, making it essential to find counterbalances to the rejections they faced during their job search. These included activities like sports, healthy eating, faith and family interactions. They also valued exchanging ideas with other unemployed people, finding comfort in shared experiences. There was interest in an app that could provide daily structure and motivating messages, though some were concerned about its ability to cater to their diverse personal lives. The app should prioritise enabling users to set clear, achievable goals, with gentle reminders that are subtle enough to avoid adding pressure. Personalisation was seen as crucial, with features like customised goal setting, reminders and adaptive content enhancing the user experience. Participants also suggested that integrating tools like to-do lists, calendars and habit trackers would increase the app's usability, making it a one-stop solution for daily management.

Participants expressed interest in accessing a range of informative content, including tips on recreation and wellness, to enrich their knowledge and promote mental and physical health. The inclusion of mindfulness and meditation exercises was also recommended to help manage stress, improve focus and cultivate a positive attitude. Daily challenges, ranging from small acts of kindness to self-care practices, could engage users and keep them motivated. The app should also include a "vacation mode" to allow breaks without guilt, balancing challenge and relaxation to support long-term engagement.



Participants identified various situations where intervention could be beneficial, such as when they risked falling into a negative spiral due to repeated rejections. They expressed a desire for messages tailored to their situation, as well as the ability to exchange ideas with other users through a monitored chat feature. Concerns were raised about the potential for app fatigue, given the numerous notifications users already receive. However, they saw value in having input into the app's design, believing this could result in a more user-friendly tool tailored to their needs.

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## **GERMANY**

Participants discussed a range of experiences and challenges related to unemployment, with a common theme being the significant impact on their psycho-social health, including mood swings, depression and anxiety about the future. Difficulty sleeping, exacerbating mood problems, was frequently mentioned, along with the lack of a structured daily routine, which led to feelings of purposelessness and isolation. These factors weakened their motivation to engage in daily activities or job searches. Mood swings, isolation, loneliness, low self-esteem and low motivation were identified as key psycho-social obstacles to employment. Participants used various strategies to stay motivated, such as setting goals and seeking professional help, but reported mixed success, partly due to a lack of sufficient therapists. They emphasised the need for ongoing support, suggesting that an app providing daily reminders, motivating messages and goal-setting tools could be beneficial.

There were mixed feelings about the potential app. While some were enthusiastic about its ability to provide structure and support, others were sceptical, fearing it could be time-wasting or pose data privacy risks. However, a mood diary, daily reminders, motivating messages and personalised tips were well-received ideas. The app should include a mood tracker, sleep and health tracking, goal setting and reminders, motivational messages and strong privacy and data security measures. Social interaction features, such as moderated chats or community support forums, were suggested to provide much-needed social contact. Participants also discussed the negative impact of poor health habits, like poor diet and excessive drinking, and felt that the app could offer health advice and track these behaviours. However, they cautioned that goal setting, while motivating, could lead to stress if goals were not met, potentially exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.

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## **POLAND**

The Polish FGI group consisted of unemployed people from the Podlaskie province, a poorly urbanised region with relatively higher unemployment rates. Participants, mostly under 50 years old, expressed feelings of irreversible damage from prolonged unemployment, leading to social marginalisation. A lack of money was cited as one of the biggest problems. Many participants had become accustomed to being unemployed and lacked the motivation to change. They often did not receive support from their families, with relationships often broken due to previous work abroad or alcohol addiction. They believed that acquaintances played a crucial role in finding good jobs with decent pay.



Participants identified addiction to unemployment benefits as a major problem, contributing to their lack of motivation and development. They also cited health problems, alcohol addiction, and a general lack of activity as reasons for their low motivation. They expressed interest in an app that could help monitor mood, health and sobriety, as these were seen as critical barriers to employment. Money was a significant motivator, along with the desire to provide for family members. However, they stressed that motivation must be tailored to individual personalities, as different things affect different people. The app should offer personalised motivational content and practical tools for daily life, such as budget management and examples of success stories.

Participants were interested in the app but had concerns about its honesty, legality and data security. They believed the app's success would depend on how well it could help users address psycho-social obstacles and find employment. Consistency in delivering engaging, non-irritating content was seen as crucial to maintaining user engagement. They suggested that personalised and psychologically sound features could make the app a valuable tool for improving habits and motivating change.

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## **SLOVENIA**

All Slovenian FGI participants were adults with disabilities, unemployed for at least two years and involved in a social integration programme aimed at professional activation. Their main obstacle to returning to the labour market was the nature of their disability and the limited work capacity assessed, which did not meet the requirements for even sheltered employment. External challenges included the inflexibility of the labour market and the limited availability of jobs adapted to their abilities. Participants also faced challenges related to health conditions, medication management, cultural background and functional literacy.

Motivational factors included leisure activities, creative workshops and peer support, which helped maintain a structured daily schedule. Communication skills and navigating complex information from external institutions remained challenging, particularly due to public transport difficulties in reaching prescribed services. While participants actively used mobile apps like Facebook, TikTok and YouTube, they were unaware of any app available in Slovenian that could monitor and support psycho-social obstacles. They suggested that such an app should include motivational quotes, daily activity management and support for personal development. Concerns were raised about notifications and data privacy, and participants emphasised the importance of simple, understandable language. They also highlighted the potential value of information on psycho-social support services, household management and skills development.

## **SUMMARY OF MOST IMPORTANT FGI FINDINGS ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES**

The FGIs conducted across Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovenia revealed common themes among unemployed adults facing psycho-social obstacles, despite differences in cultural and



economic contexts. Across all countries, the lack of a structured daily routine, low motivation and poor mental health were significant challenges. The most frequently mentioned psycho-social obstacles included mood swings, isolation, low self-esteem and sleep disturbances, which were seen as major barriers to re-entering the labour market. Participants expressed a strong interest in an app that could help them address and manage these issues, with key features including goal setting, mood tracking, motivational messages and personalised content. However, there were concerns about data privacy and the potential for app fatigue, highlighting the need for a simple, intuitive design that offers flexibility in notifications and reminders. In Slovenia, where participants had disabilities, additional support for navigating daily life and accessing mental health services was emphasised. The findings suggest that a well-designed app tailored to individual needs and providing practical, motivational support could be a valuable tool in helping unemployed adults overcome psycho-social obstacles and re-enter the labour market.





# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ME-APP DEVELOPMENT

## General Observations

Research conducted across Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovenia highlights the significant psycho-social obstacles that unemployed adults face, which hinder their ability to (re-)enter the labour market. Despite varying cultural and economic contexts, common challenges emerged, such as poor mood, low self-esteem, poor health, sleep disturbances and stress. These issues are compounded by differences in access to technology, with many unemployed individuals in Germany, Austria and Slovenia having greater access to smartphones and paid apps, unlike those in Poland, where basic mobile phones and free apps are more common. There is a clear need for a digital solution that is user-friendly, supportive, personalised and tailored to address these specific psycho-social obstacles.

## Recommendations for App Features Related to Monitoring the 3 Most Prevalent Psycho-Social Obstacles

The ME-App should focus on the three most prevalent psycho-social obstacles identified:

- 1. Mood, Self-Esteem, and Mental Well-Being:** This category encompasses poor mood, low self-esteem and the need for positive thoughts, reflecting the importance of mental health, self-confidence and motivation. These internal, psychological factors significantly impact respondents' daily lives and overall well-being. The app should include features such as mood tracking, motivational messages and personalised content such as for example daily journaling to help users improve their mental state, boost self-confidence and maintain a positive outlook.
- 2. Sleep and Health:** This category combines poor health and poor sleeping habits, as both are closely linked and significantly affect physical and mental well-being. The app should offer tools to monitor sleep patterns, track health behaviours like diet and exercise, and provide personalised feedback to help users improve their overall health and sleep quality. By addressing these areas together, the app can support users in enhancing their overall quality of life.
- 3. Stress and Daily Routine Management:** Managing stress and maintaining a structured daily routine are crucial for the respondents. The app should include features that help users organise their day, set reminders, and manage stress through tools like guided meditation and breathing exercises. These features will help users maintain stability and control in their daily lives, directly impacting their mental and physical health.

These categories reflect the primary psycho-social obstacles that respondents are eager to address, particularly through the use of digital tools like apps.

## Motivational Features and Personalised Messages



To be effective, the ME-App must integrate strong motivational features tailored to individual needs:

**Motivational Messages:** The app should include a comprehensive library of motivational messages that can be personalised based on the user's goal-settings, monitoring of obstacles, current mood and progress. These messages should be designed to encourage users during challenging times and reinforce positive behaviours, helping them stay focused on their goals.

**Goal Setting and Reminders:** Goal setting should be a core feature, allowing users to set clear, achievable goals with customisable reminders. These reminders should support users without adding stress, helping them stay motivated and engaged in their personal development.

## **Other Recommendations**

### **User-Friendly Design**

The app must be intuitive and easy to navigate, particularly for users with limited experience with technology. A simple and clear interface will ensure accessibility for all users.

### **Personalisation**

Personalisation is essential for the app's success. It should offer tailored goal setting, reminders, and adaptive content that aligns with users' interests and needs. Integrating tools like to-do lists, calendars and habit trackers will enhance usability and encourage long-term engagement.

### **Informative Content**

The app could also provide a wide range of informative content beyond job searching, including topics like lifestyle, wellness and general knowledge. This mix of practical information and engaging content will promote mental well-being and encourage regular use.

### **Mindfulness and Meditation**

Incorporating mindfulness exercises, guided meditation sessions and breathing exercises can help users manage stress, improve focus and cultivate a positive attitude. These features should be accessible and easy to use, even for beginners.

### **Daily Challenges and Routine Management**

The ME-App could include daily challenges designed to motivate users, ranging from self-care practices to small acts of kindness. A "vacation mode" should allow users to take breaks without guilt, providing flexibility in their engagement with the app.

### **Social Interaction and Support Networks**

While some users may hesitate, others may find value in a moderated chat or community support forum within the app. This feature could offer a platform for users to connect, share experiences, and support each other, fostering a sense of community.



### **Data Privacy and Security**

Strong data protection measures are crucial for building user trust. The app should be transparent about data usage, offering users control over their personal information to ensure their privacy and security.

### **Engagement Features**

To keep the ME-App engaging, it could incorporate gamification elements, such as earning points for completing tasks, which could be exchanged for virtual rewards. Interactive quizzes and challenges related to health and wellness could add an element of fun while educating users.

### **Integration with Existing Resources**

The app could integrate with existing mental health and employment resources, offering links to local support groups, therapy services and educational content about mental health and well-being.

By implementing these recommendations, the ME-App can become a comprehensive tool that not only monitors and addresses the most prevalent psycho-social obstacles but also provides the motivation and support necessary for unemployed adults to improve their lives and re-enter the labour market.



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