

Strategic Management, Agility and Right
Technologies for Youth

2020-2-TR01-KA205-095914

RESEARCH
on
NEEDED
ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS
-
Business Support Organisations

January 2022

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This report has been produced by a group of experts within the scope of the Strategic Management, Agility and Right Technologies for Youth Project. The Project is funded under Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. However, European Commission and Turkish National Agency cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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1. SUMMARY

As it is known, COVID-19 has caused negative effects all over the world. This is especially so for organizations and enterprises who faced major challenges during the pandemic. Organisations were deeply affected by problems such as disruption of the supply chain, delay or stoppage of production processes, uncertainties in consumer demands, problems in payments and decrease in personnel employment, among other challenges. Organizations that want to survive during crisis situations must be distanced from the negative situations they face with an effective and agile approach, that results in minimal or zero damage. As a result, organizations in the business world are utilising their talents to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic and the associated challenges. It is known that business associations (BAs) and other entities in support of businesses (BSOs) provide support for the purpose of enabling companies to achieve success and to cope with difficult situations. In this context, BAs and BSOs have been closely monitoring companies during the pandemic.

This study examines the impact of an organization's entrepreneurial skills on crisis mitigation activities in terms of BAs and BSOs. The opinions of the BAs and BSOs on the organizations they are associated with were put forward, with a focus of "organization success status" and "digitalization and entrepreneurship skills". Considerations include the digital tools that these organizations use (due to increasing digitalization in today's world), the factors affecting the organizations and the demographic characteristics of them. The results are revealed with the participation of 22 BAs and BSOs from 4 countries.

2. INTRODUCTION

According to the data from the World Health Organization (WHO), as of the end of November 2021, there were 258 million cases of COVID-19 and approximately 5 million deaths worldwide. COVID-19 has presented a global crisis, the virus not only took lives and weakened health system structures, but also posed great risks for the global economy. The pandemic offered a modern demonstration of how the ramifications of serious public health issues can cause economic problems on a global scale. These problems significantly increased disruptions in supply chains, uncertainty in economic life & the risk of global

recession, reduced investments & consumption demands, and overall led to a significant weakening of economic activity and damage to market confidence. These factors also seriously tested the ability of many organizations to cope with crisis situations.

As stated in the "A4 - Research on Risks and Opportunities" report, prepared within the scope of the SMART Youth Project (Funded within Erasmus Plus KA205 Programme, Ref No: 2020-2-TR01-KA205-095914), crisis refers to an unexpected/unplanned situation or threat that occurs suddenly and has an impact on the day-to-day operations of a business. These types of events have the capacity to threaten the organization's stability and their ability to conduct business as usual. Crises can cause major financial, relational, and social disturbances for a business.

Organizations, together with their commercial activities, form the basis of the national economy. Given their important economical position, it is very important for organizations to have the ability to cope with the above-mentioned crises. The organizational strategies that are developed to address and manage periods of crisis have a direct impact on the organisation's ability to cope and their efficacy is put to the test when crisis is presented. Creating effective strategies for crisis management and mitigation is directly influenced by -- and linked to -- the skills and abilities possessed by entrepreneurs who will be responsible for implementing the strategies. In particular, startups who utilize technological/digital tools have the capacity to increase their organizations' ability to cope with the crisis. At this point, BAs and BSOs play an important role and support organizations in such processes. They have high experience due to the number of organizations they interact with and the services they provide to these organizations.

In this study, various participating BAs and BSOs are examined to ascertain their opinions about the importance levels of "needed entrepreneurial skills of firms in crisis situations" and "using digital tools of firms" on the success of organizations/ entrepreneurs/ firms.

3. SURVEY INFORMATION

3.1. Background and Scope

This survey has been prepared by experts working in collaboration within six project partner institutions from four countries within the scope of Strategic Management, Agility and Right Technologies for Youth (SMART youth) project. The project is funded under the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

This section describes the survey that was formed as a part of the SMART Youth Project, which aims to reveal the opinions of BAs and BSOs on the effect of entrepreneurial skills and abilities during crisis situations, the importance of digital tools utilised by organizations, and the demographic characteristics and other unique factors affecting the organizations investigated.

The first part of the survey, 'Entrepreneurial Abilities Needed in Crisis Situations', gathers a comprehensive set of information designed to measure the importance of entrepreneurial skills and abilities of companies/firms/entrepreneurs and gauge the degree of importance they should attach to these abilities.

The survey categorized questions relating to 27 unique skills under five general headings and required participants to answer on behalf of their organization. Participants were asked to rank the importance of these abilities using a Likert scale of 1-5 (1: Not important at all, 2: Slightly Important, 3: Moderately Important, 4: Important 5: Very important). The type of skill-related questions under each heading were as follows:

- Skills of entrepreneurs associated with management activities
 - Abilities such as in-house management and organization, coordination, team management, etc.
- Skills of entrepreneurs related to financial management
 - Ability to have knowledge on financial issues and to be aware of financial resources, etc.
- Skills of entrepreneurs associated with uncertainty/change situations
 - Ability to cope with chaos situations, to follow and manage the changes that occur in the internal and external environment of the enterprise, etc.
- Skills of entrepreneurs related to communication capabilities

- Ability to communicate with outside groups about both internal and business activities, etc.
- Entrepreneurial skills depending on the personality of the entrepreneurs
 - abilities such as stress management, being curious about developments, and having motivation, etc.

The second part of the survey queries the opinions of BAs and BSOs relating to the importance level of the use of the digital tools in organizations. The importance of the relevant digital tools for organizations is measured on a scale of 1-5 (1: Not important at all to 5: Very important). The usage areas of digital tools are as follows:

- Management activities
- Teamwork
- Remote work
- Coordinating
- Planning and goal setting
- Accounting processes
- Purchasing processes
- Supply processes
- Marketing activities
- Reporting activities

3.2. Sample Selection and Size

The sample selections were developed with the method of "purposeful sampling" and BAs and BSOs that have direct contact with organizations (Chambers of Commerce and industries, associations, agents, organized industrial zones, technology development zones etc.) have been selected.

Information about the BAs and BSOs included in the study is as given in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Information of Organizations Involved in the Research

The information of the selected sample group is as follows:

The total number of organizations that filled out the questionnaire is 22. The number of BSOs in the 1-5 age group of these organizations is 2. In the 6-10 age group the number of BSOs is 1, the number of BAs is 2, and the number of NGOs is 2. The number of BSOs between the ages of 11-25 is 4 and the number of BAs is 1. For the age group of 25 and above, the number of BSOs is 4, the number of BAs is 3, the number of NGOs is 1, the number of Professional Organisations With Public Institution Status is 1 and the number of Development Organisation is 1.

3.3. Research Method and Design of the Questionnaire

During the planning phase of the Erasmus+ Project (SMART Youth), it was decided to collect the necessary information from the organizations, whose conditions were determined, by using the survey method.

While preparing the survey questions, a literature review was conducted by the project experts within the project partner organizations. The results of the literature review influenced how the survey questions were prepared. The prepared questions were finalized by interviewing experts in the project team, as well as academics, who are experts in their fields. In this process, attention was paid to the intelligibility, non-directiveness, etc. of the questions used. In the pilot studies carried out by the project experts, it was agreed that the questionnaire should be conducted in 8-10 minutes on average.

3.4. Data Collection, Processing and Analysis

After the survey development phase was carried out with the contribution of the project partners, the final version of the survey was distributed to the project partners, who were going to apply it to the selected sample group and follow the application processes of the questionnaire. The data collection process was followed by meetings held between partners. The survey was prepared in an online format and was applied by the relevant experts to the organizations operating in their countries, allowing the answers to be collected instantly online. The survey and questions were prepared in English. In order to ensure the intelligibility of the questions in different countries, they were translated into their own languages by the project partners in the relevant countries.

Rating criteria in the analysis were carried out using Likert-type questions. Likert-type scaled questions allow for multiple options which are presented between the two extremes, in order to get the opinions of the respondents and to determine their level on the relevant subject. These options are ordered from "highest to lowest" or "best to worst" (Turan, Şimşek & Aslan, 2015). In the analysis phase, these options are coded by assigning a numerical value according to their degree, and thus the qualitative data is converted into quantitative data and analyzed. In this study, Likert-type data were defined and analyzed with numerical

values. Categorized data are graphed by countries surveyed in line with the purpose of the project.

4. RESULTS

At this stage of the study, the importance levels of the “Needed Entrepreneurial Skills” and “Utilization of Digital Tools” on the success of organizations/entrepreneurs/firms in crisis situations were measured by asking 22 organizations (business associations and other entities in support of businesses) participating in the survey. The findings obtained as a result of the survey are presented below and country comparisons were made utilising the averages.

As a result of the survey, the averages of the findings obtained on the basis of countries and the general average of the relevant variable are presented in figures. The obtained survey data are as follows.

4.1. Importance Levels of Needed Entrepreneurial Skills on the Success of Organizations/Entrepreneurs/Firms in Crisis Situations

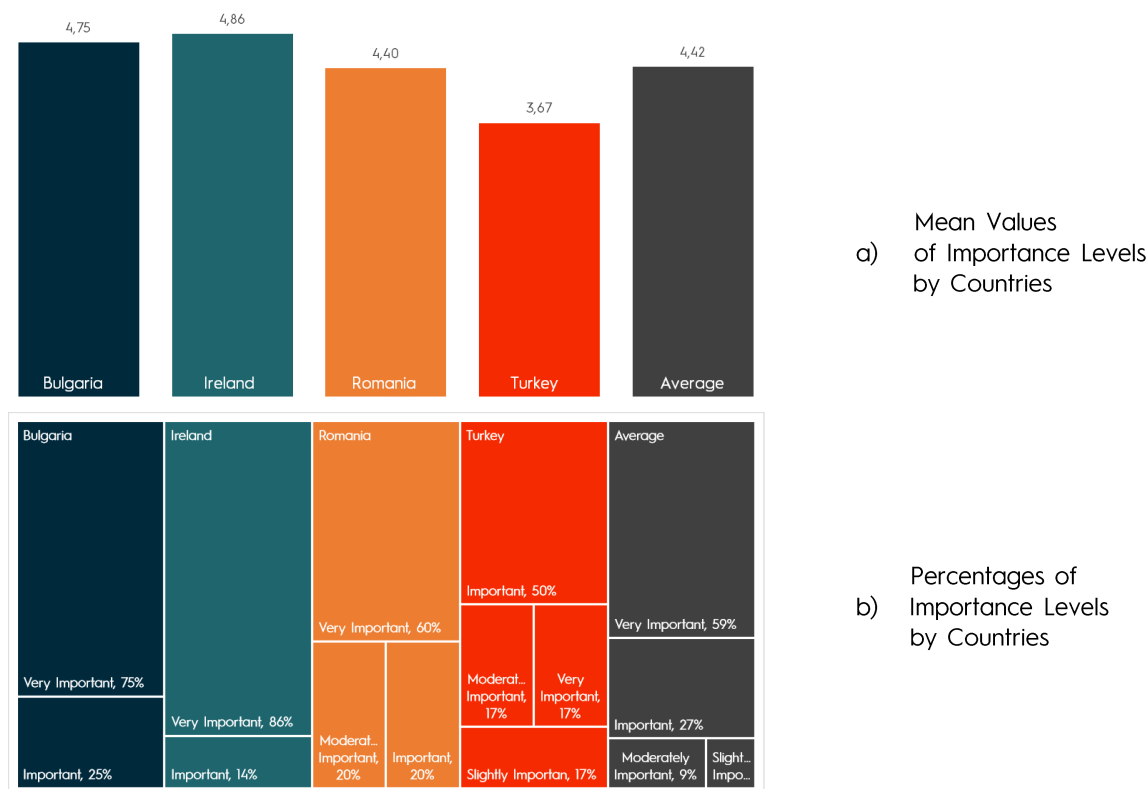


Figure 1. Ability to Manage Uncertainty

Figure 1 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to manage uncertainty during the pandemic period. The importance of the the ability to manage the uncertainties is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.42. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.86 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 3.67 for Turkey. There are not significant differences between the last three groups of respondents (Ireland, Romania and Turkey) since the values are between 4.40 and 4.86. The large majority of respondents from Ireland (86%) consider this skill to be “very important”.

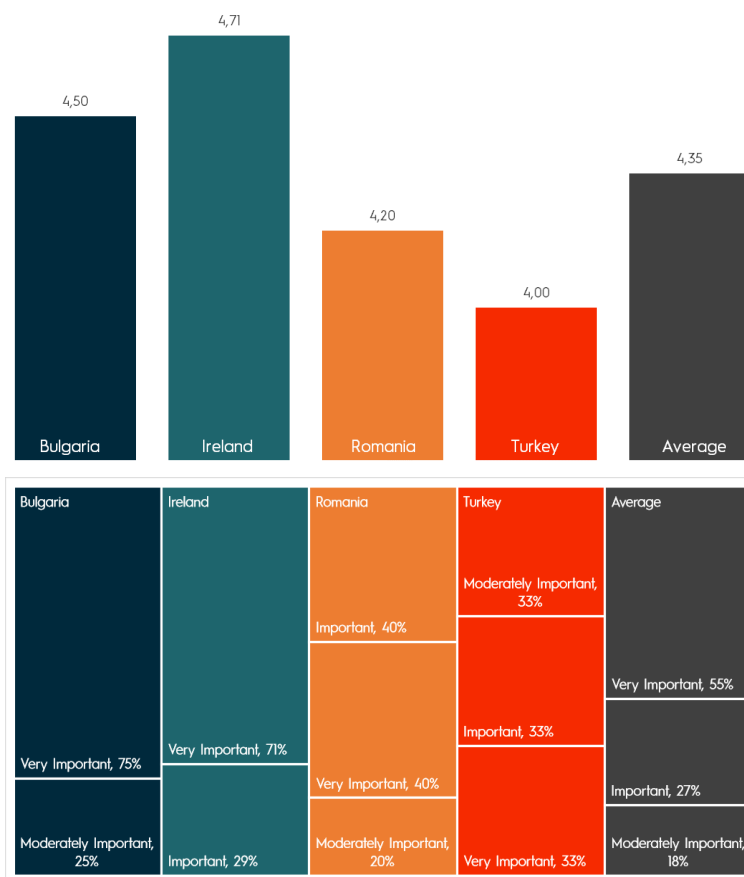


Figure 2. Ability to Deal with Unexpected Results

Concerning the importance of the ability to deal with unexpected result, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to figure 2, the general average value of the countries was 4.35. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.5 for Bulgaria, 4.71 for Ireland, 4.2 for Romania and 4.0 for Turkey. The majority of those questioned agree that this ability is “important” (27%) and “very important” (55%). The respondents from Ireland consider this skill to be “important” (29%) and “very important” (71%).

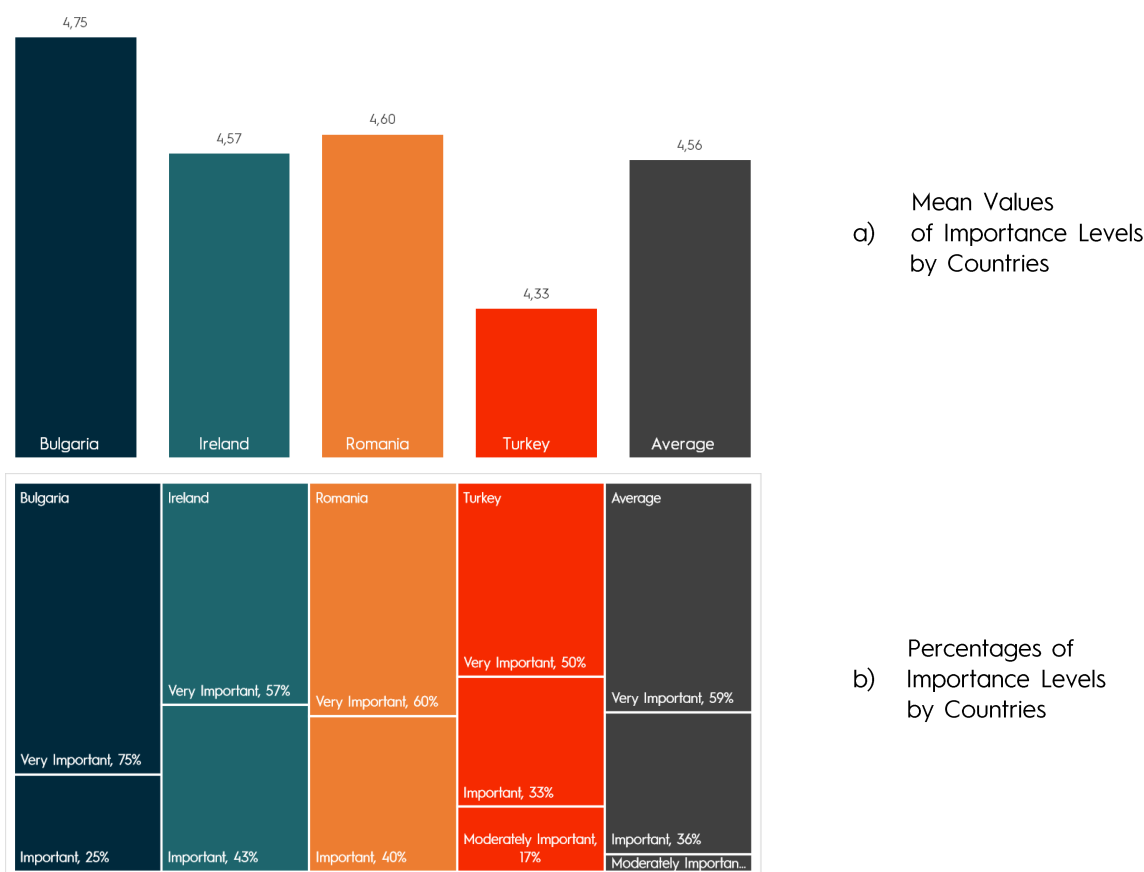


Figure 3. Ability to Adapt to Changes

Figure 3 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to adapt to changes, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 4.56. Analysing on a country basis, it has been found that this ability has average levels, 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.57 for Ireland, 4.60 for Romania and 4.33 for Turkey. The large majority of respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill to be "important" and "very important".

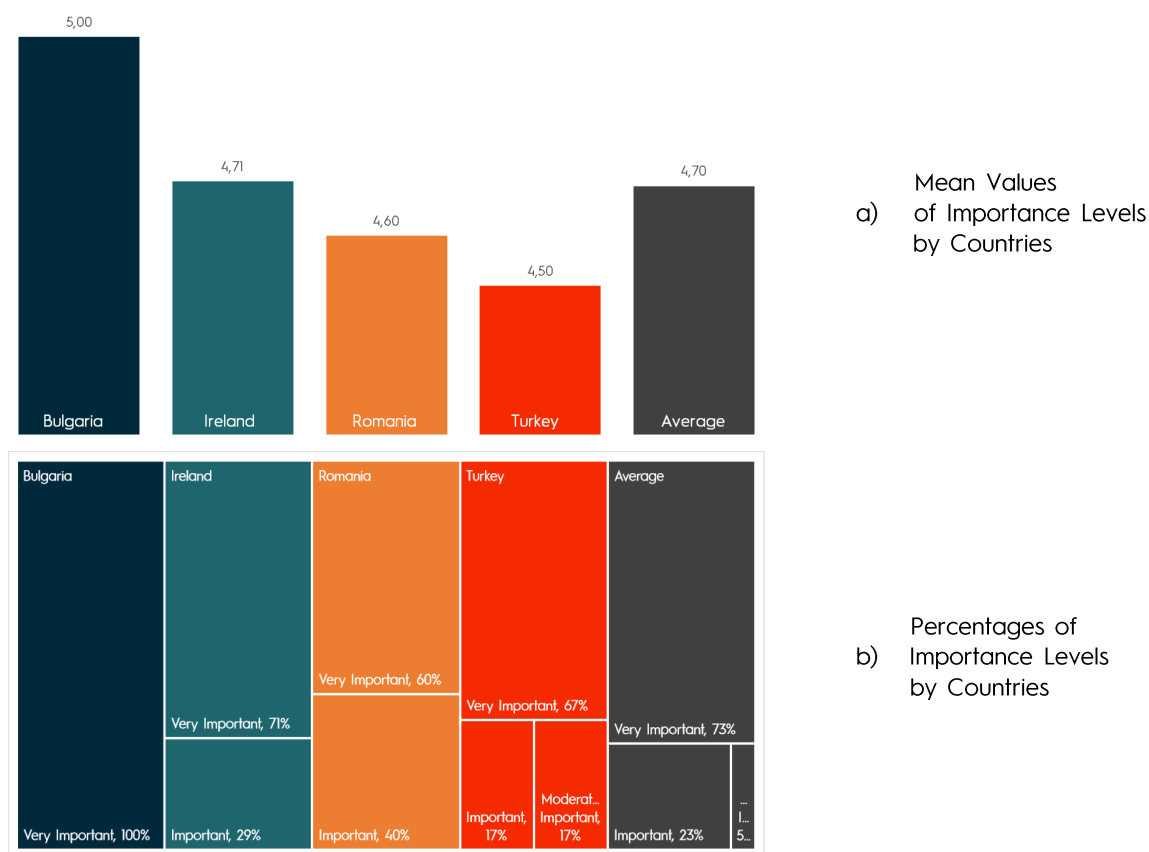


Figure 4. Ability to Make Decisions and Take Risks

Figure 4 presents the average levels of the importance of the ability to make decisions and take risks, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important), and it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.70. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.71 for Ireland, 4.60 for Romania and 4.50 for Turkey. It could be noticed that all respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill as “very important”.

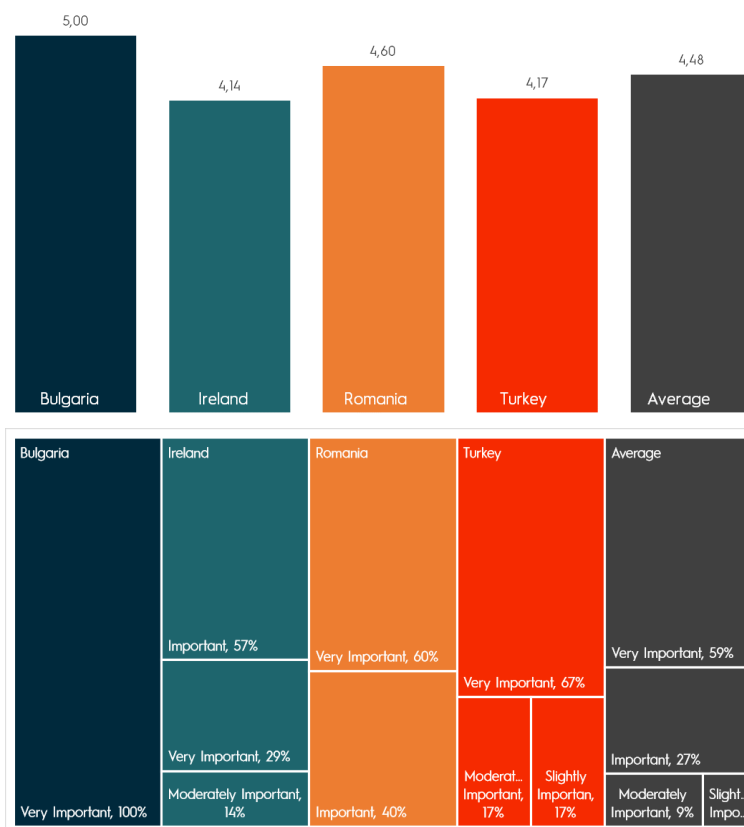


Figure 5. Ability to Plan and Set Goals

One can see, from Figure 5, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability to plan and set goals, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 4.48. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to plan and set goals were 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.14 for Ireland, 4.60 for Romania and 4.17 for Turkey. For all respondents from Bulgaria this skill is a "very important" one. The majority of respondents from Turkey and Ireland consider this ability to be just "important".

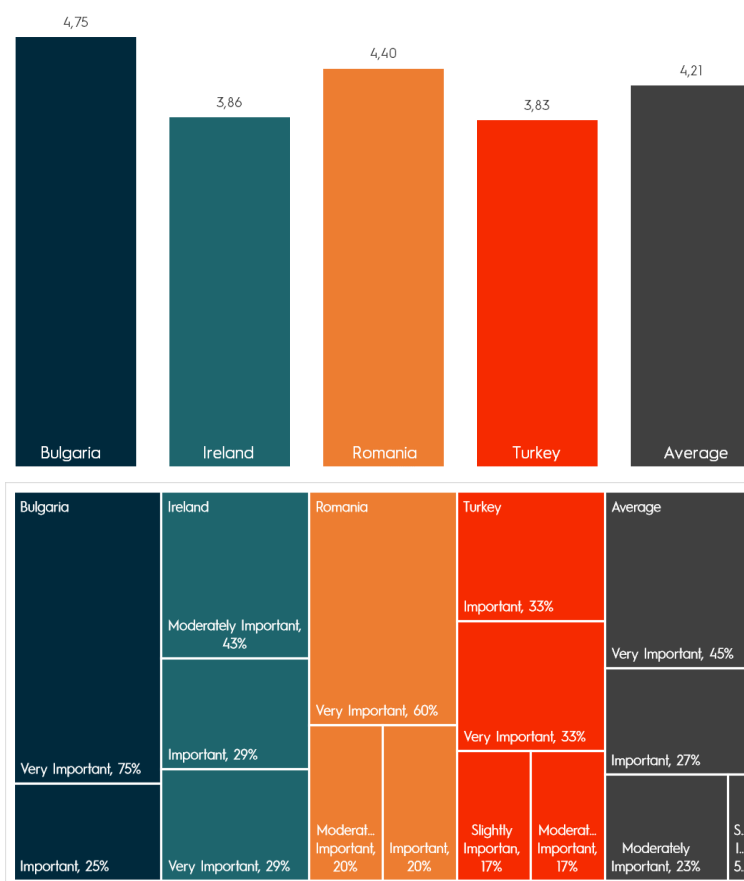


Figure 6. Ability to Provide Internal Coordination

Figure 6 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to provide internal coordination during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.21. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 3.86 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 3.83 for Turkey. The majority of respondents from Bulgaria and Romania consider this ability to be “very important”.

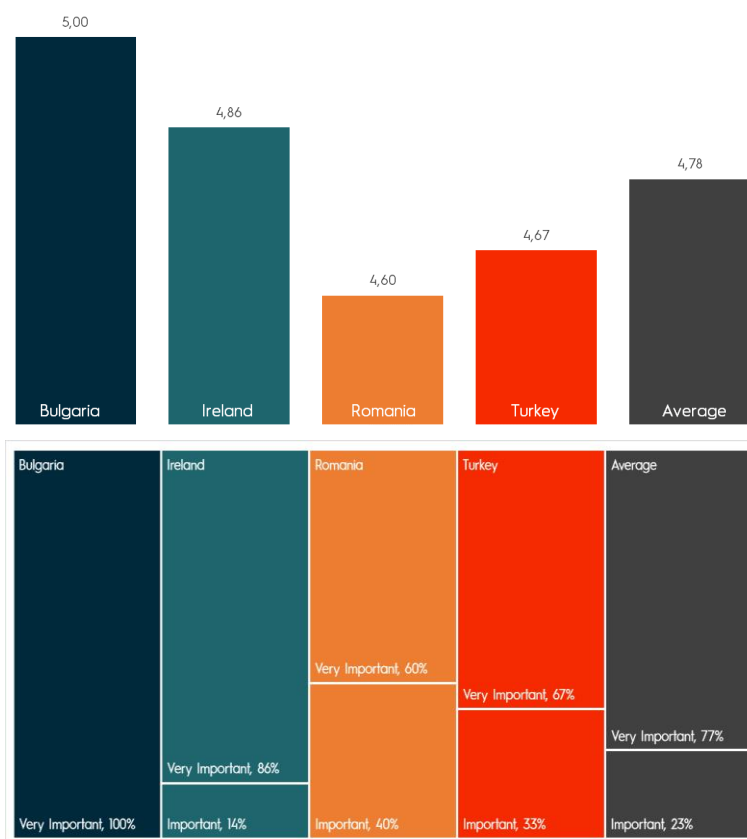


Figure 7. Ability to Communicate Effectively

Concerning the ability to communicate effectively, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to Figure 7, the general average value of the countries was 4.78. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.86 for Ireland, 4.60 for Romania and 4.67 for Turkey. There are not significant differences between groups since the values are between 4.60 and 5.00. As expected, the most respondents (77%) from all four countries agree that the ability to communicate effectively is a “very important” ability.

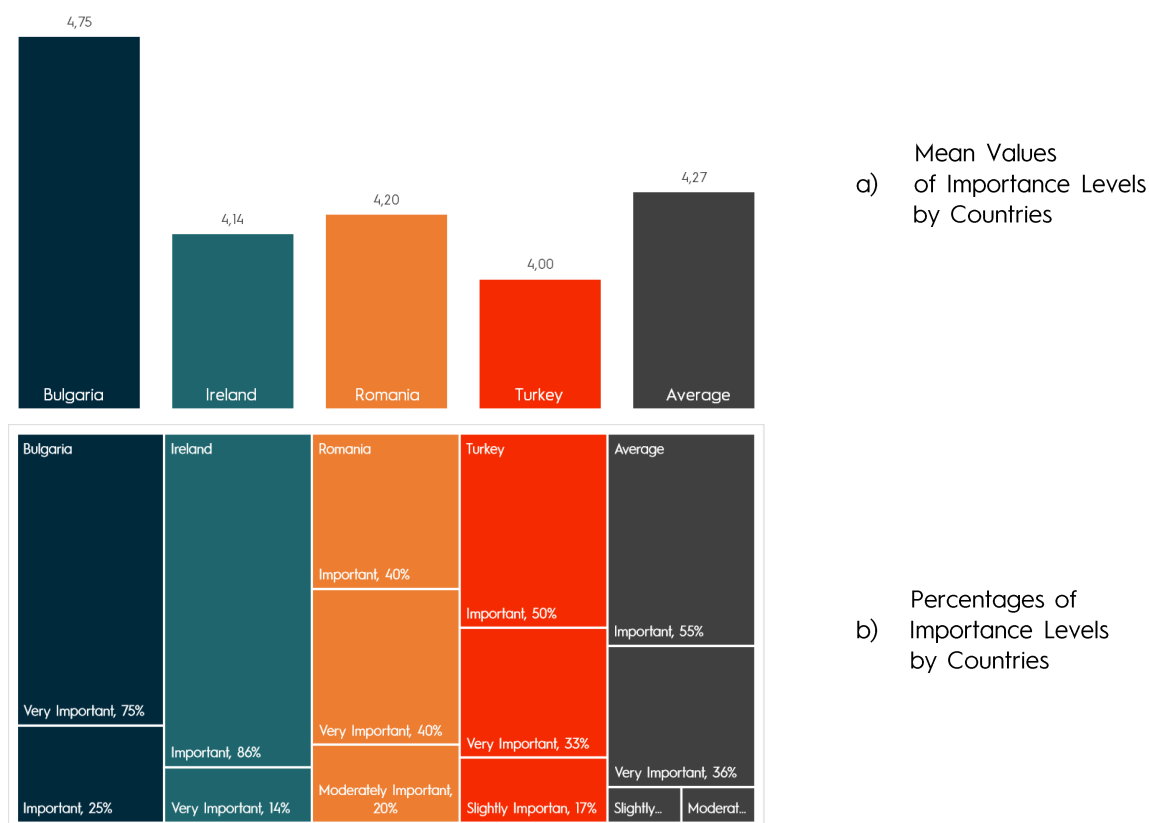


Figure 8. Ability to Negotiate and Bargain

One can see, from Figure 8, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability negotiate and bargain, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 4.27. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to negotiate and bargain were 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.14 for Ireland 4.20 for Romania and 4.00 for Turkey. The majority of respondents from Bulgaria (75%) consider this skill to be "very important".

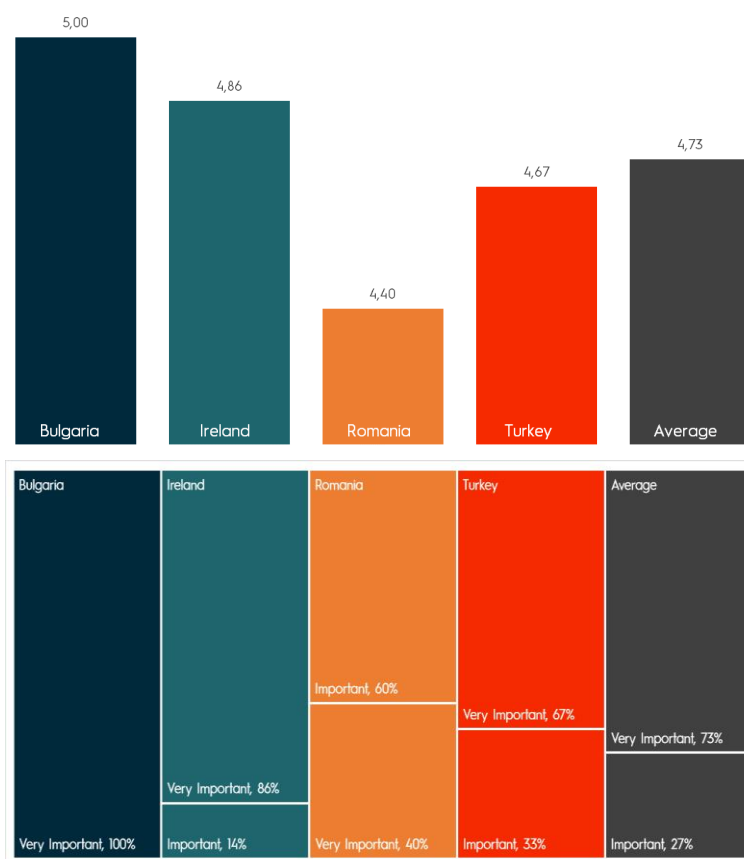


Figure 9. Ability to Motivate Yourself

Figure 9 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to motivate yourself, during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.73. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.86 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 4.67 for Turkey. All respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill as “very important”.

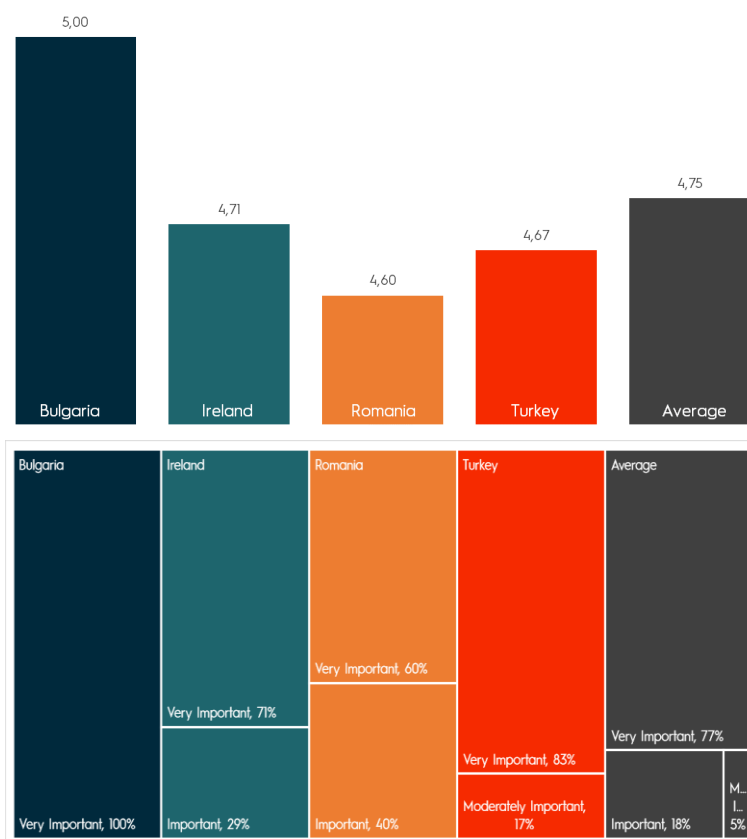
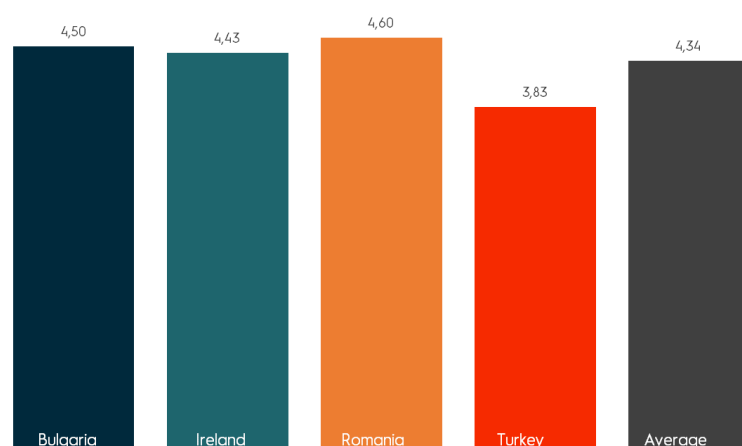
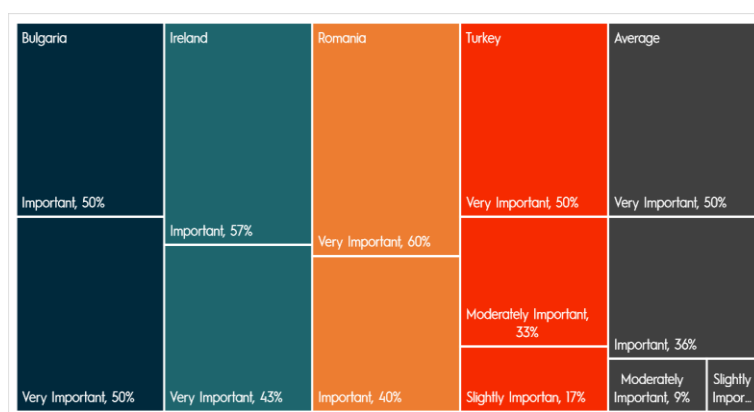


Figure 10. Ability to Motivate the Team/Staff

Concerning the ability to motivate the team/staff, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to figure 10, the general average value of the countries was 4.75. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.71 for Ireland, 4.60 for Romania and 4.67 for Turkey. Similar to the ability to communication, the ability to motivate the team/staff is considered as “very important” by the large majority of the respondents, from all four countries (77%).



a) Mean Values
of Importance Levels
by Countries



b) Percentages of
Importance Levels
by Countries

Figure 11. Ability to Provide Motivation

One can see, from Figure 11, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability to provide motivation, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 4.34. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to provide motivation were, 4.50 for Bulgaria, 4.43 for Ireland, 4.60 for Romania and 3.83 for Turkey. The largest number of respondents who consider this ability as "very important" is in the group from Romania (60%).

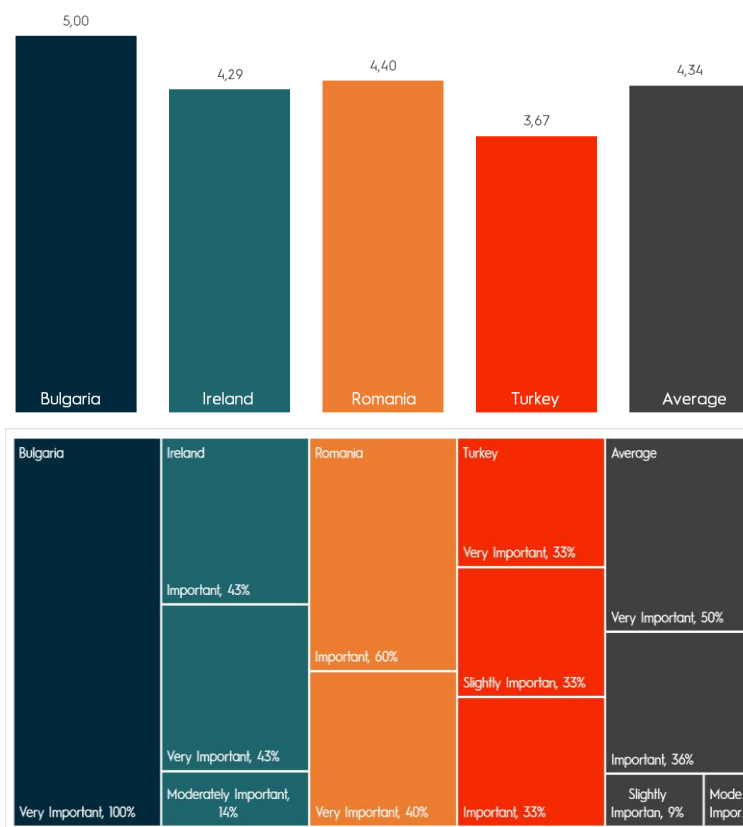


Figure 12. Ability to Build and Manage an Effective Team

Figure 12 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to build and manage an effective team during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.34. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.29 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 3.67 for Turkey. For all respondents from Bulgaria this is a “very important” ability.

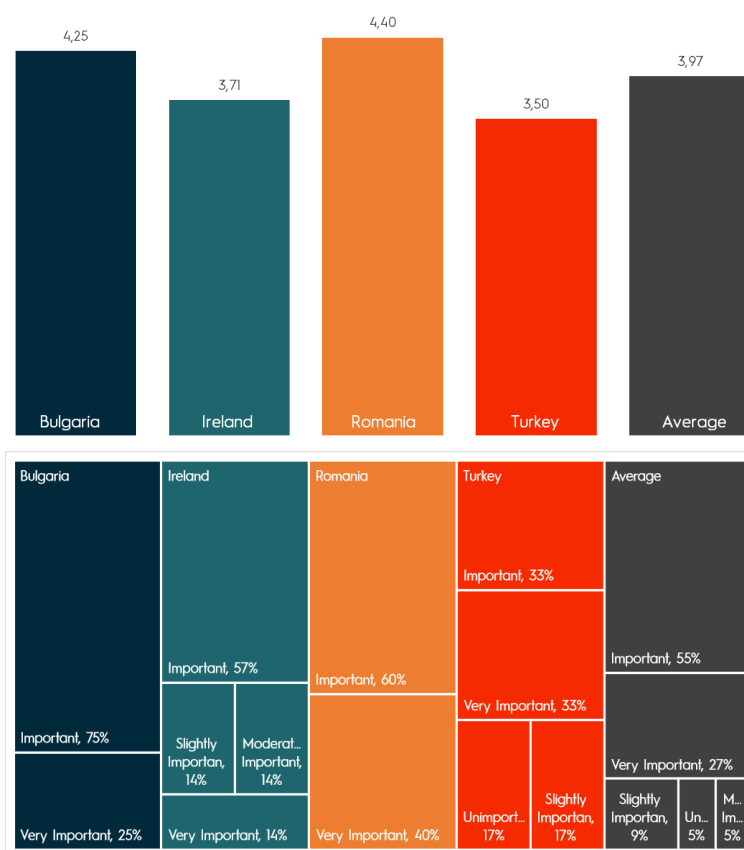


Figure 13. Ability to Receive and Evaluate Feedback

Concerning the ability to receive and evaluate feedback, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to Figure 13, the general average value of the countries was 3.97. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.25 for Bulgaria, 3.71 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 3.50 for Turkey. The average level of the importance of this ability is the highest for Romania and lowest for Turkey.

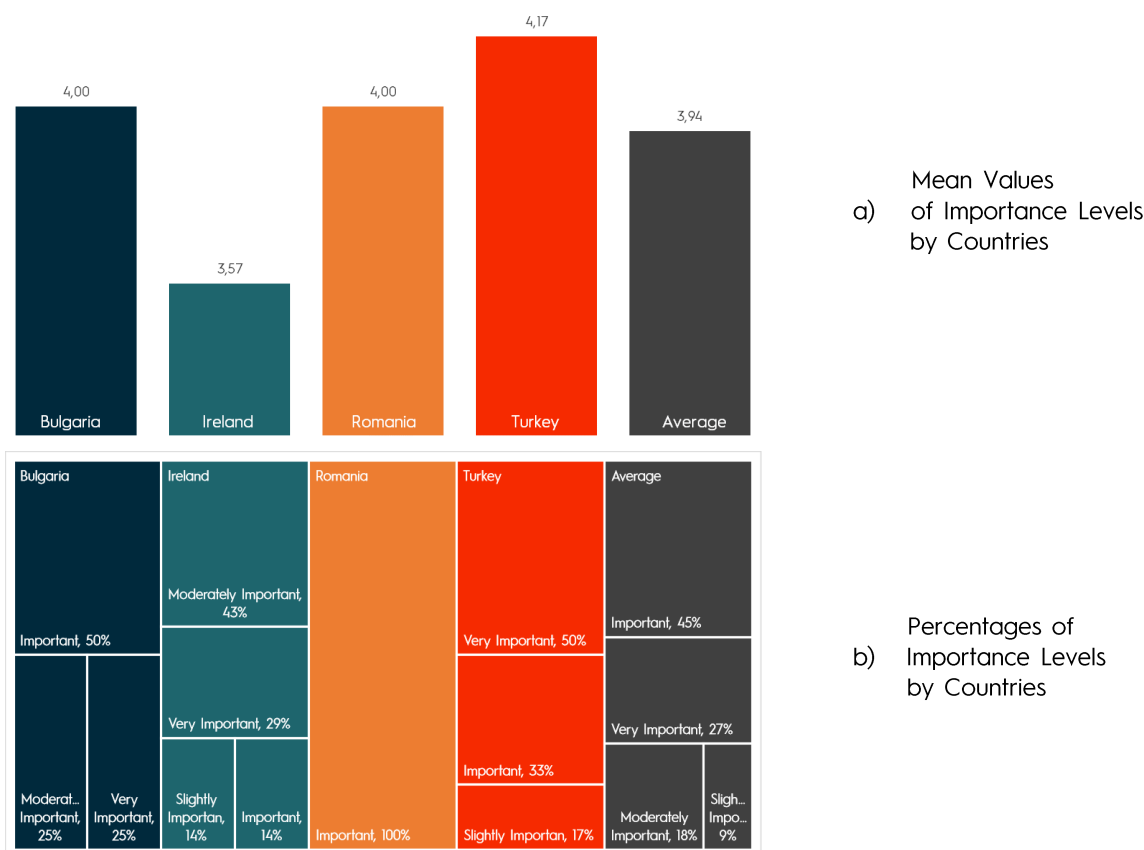


Figure 14. Ability to Have Technical (Professional) Competence in the Field of Business Ideas

One can see, from Figure 14, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability to have technical (professional) competence in the field of business ideas, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 3,94. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to have technical (professional) competence in the field of business ideas were 4.00 for Bulgaria, 3.57 for Ireland, 4.00 for Romania and 4.17 for Turkey. The average level of the importance of this ability is the highest for Turkey and lowest for Ireland.

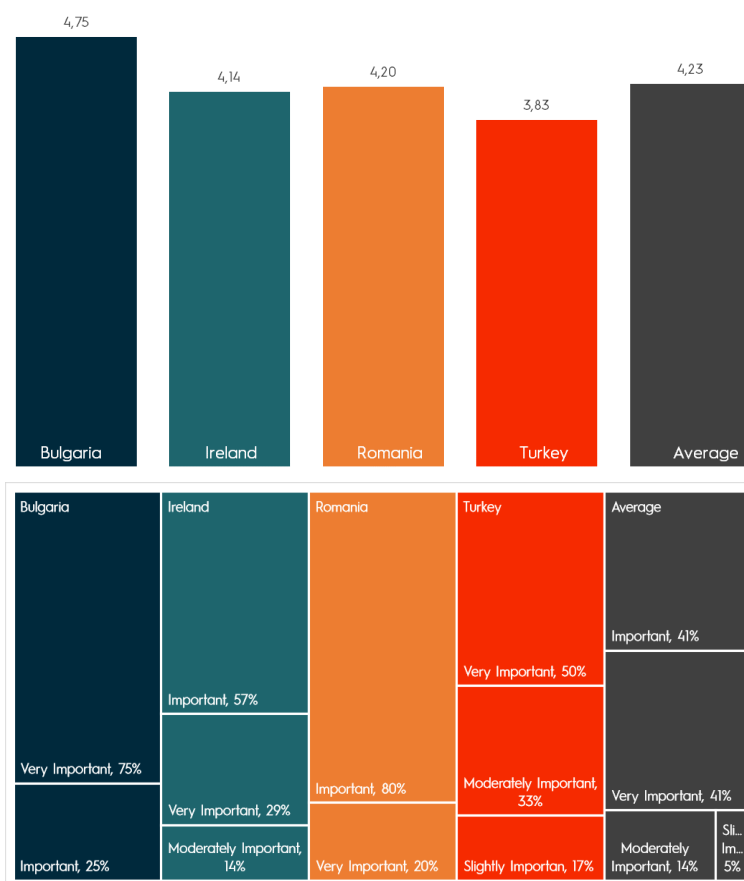


Figure 15. Ability to Be Disciplined

Figure 15 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to be disciplined during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.23. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.14 for Ireland, 4.20 for Romania and 3.83 for Turkey. All the respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill to be "important" (25%) and "very important" (75%).

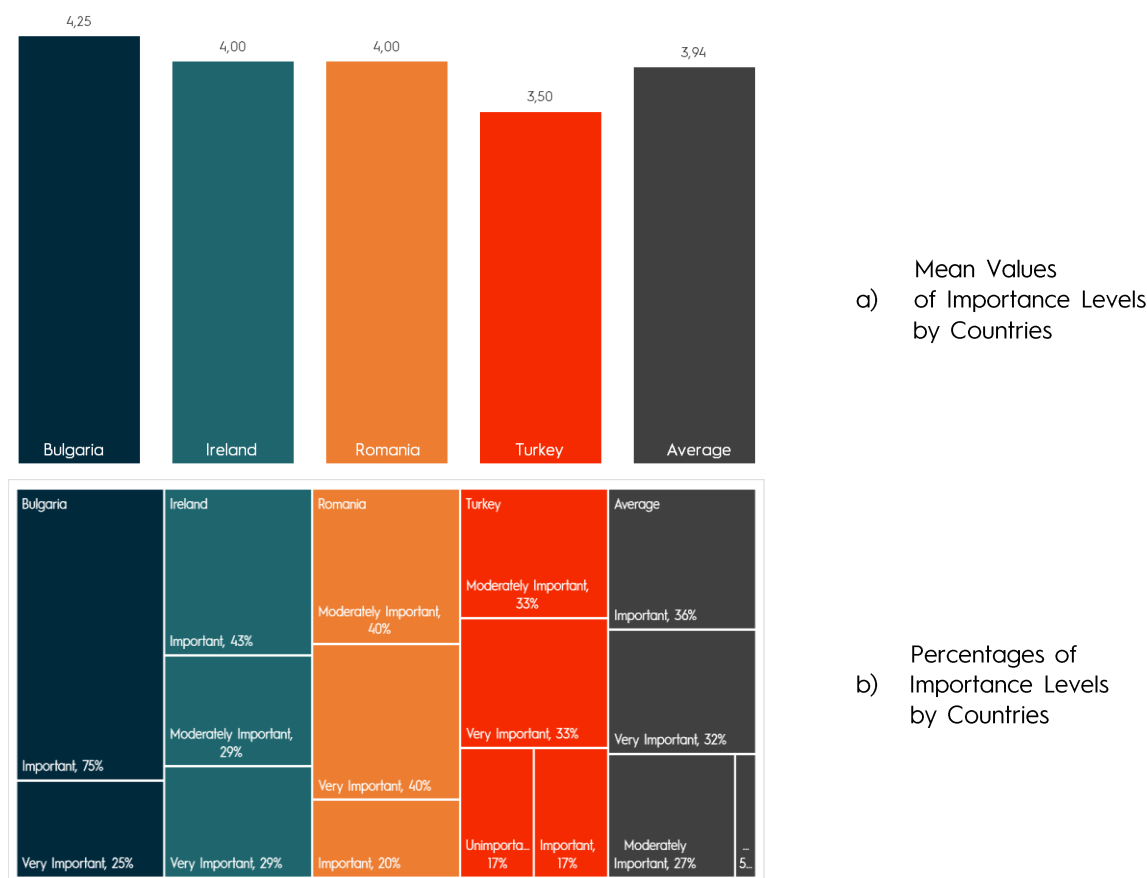


Figure 16. Ability to Develop Effective Social Relationships

Concerning the ability to develop effective social relationships, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to Figure 16, the general average value of the countries was 3.94. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.25 for Bulgaria, 4.00 for Ireland, 4.00 for Romania and 3.5 for Turkey. According to average values, 68% of all respondents consider the Develop Effective Social Relationships ability as important or very important.

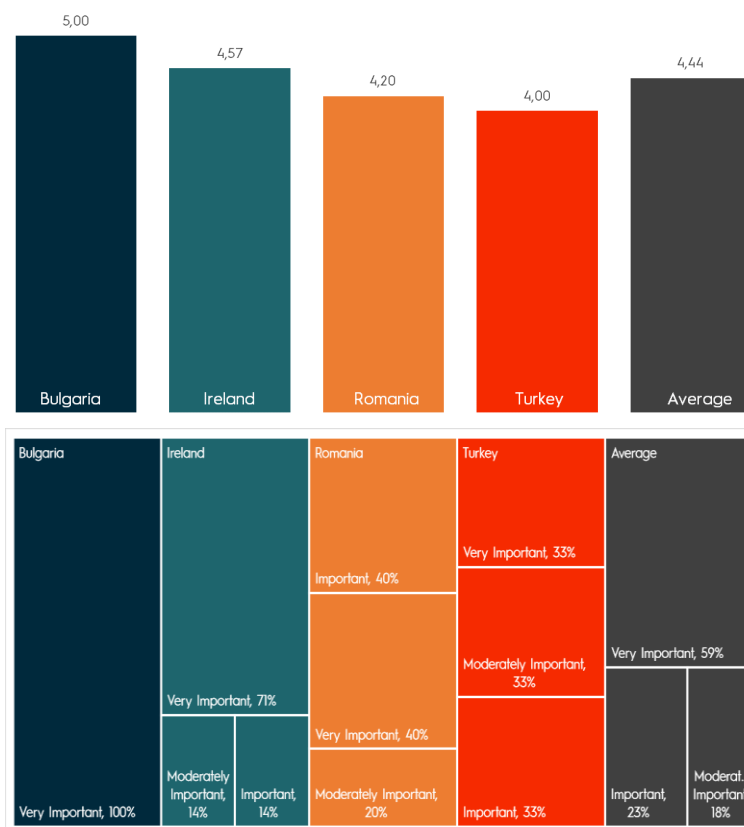


Figure 17. Ability to Solve Problems

One can see, from Figure 17, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability to solve problems, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 4.44. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to solve problems were 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.57 for Ireland, 4.20 for Romania and 4.00 for Turkey. The majority of respondents from Ireland and all respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill as "very important".

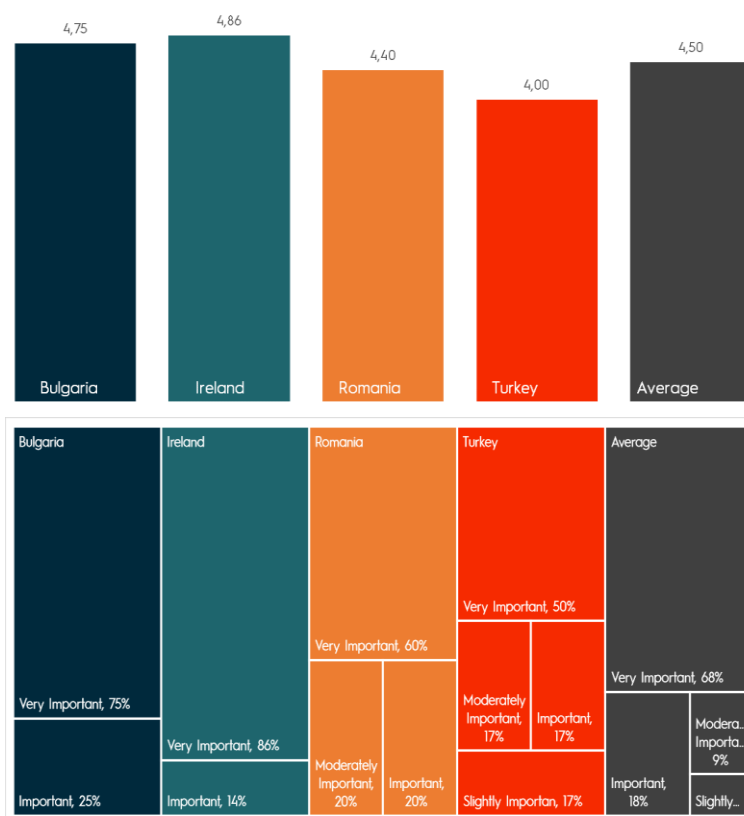


Figure 18. Ability to Work Under Pressure

Figure 18 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to work under pressure during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.5. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.86 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 4.00 for Turkey. The majority of respondents from Ireland and from Bulgaria consider this skill as “very important”.

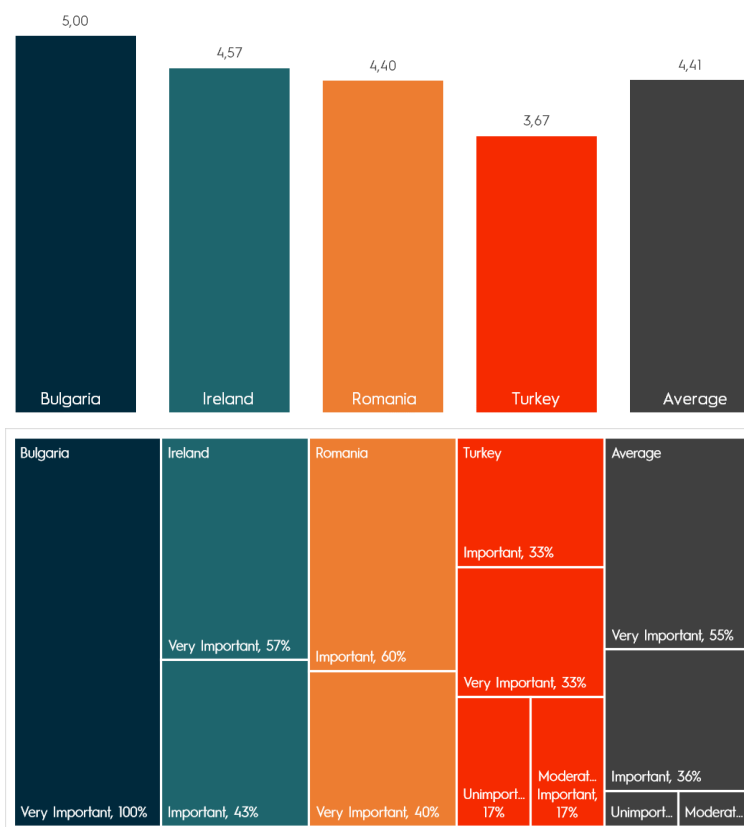


Figure 19. Ability to Innovate to Meet Emerging Opportunities and Threats

Concerning the ability to innovate to meet emerging opportunities and threats, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to Figure 19, the general average value of the countries was 4.41. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 5.00 for Bulgaria, 4.57 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 3.67 for Turkey. All respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill as “very important”.

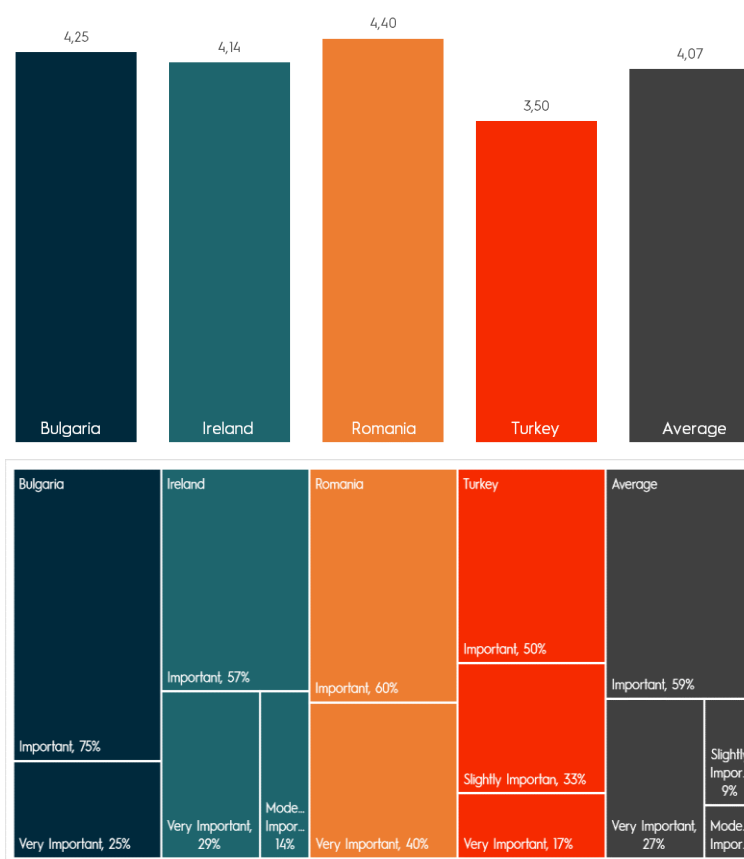


Figure 20. Ability to Predict the Direction and Nature of Market Change

One can see, from Figure 20, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability to predict the direction and nature of market change, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 4.07. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to predict the direction and nature of market change were 4.25 for Bulgaria, 4.14 for Ireland, 4.40 for Romania and 3.50 for Turkey. All the respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill to be "important" (75%) and "very important" (25%).

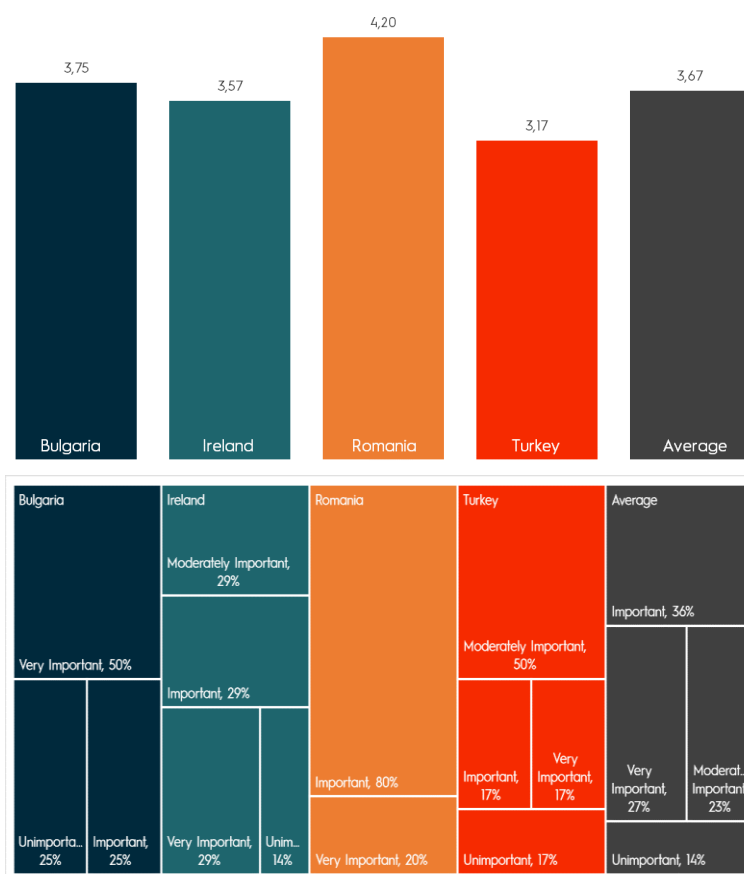


Figure 21. Being Comfortable and Prejudiced Against Change

Figure 21 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability to being comfortable and prejudiced against change during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 3.67. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 3.75 for Bulgaria, 3.57 for Ireland 4.20 for Romania and 3.17 for Turkey. This ability is considered as “important” or just “moderately important” by the respondents from Turkey, Bulgaria and Ireland.

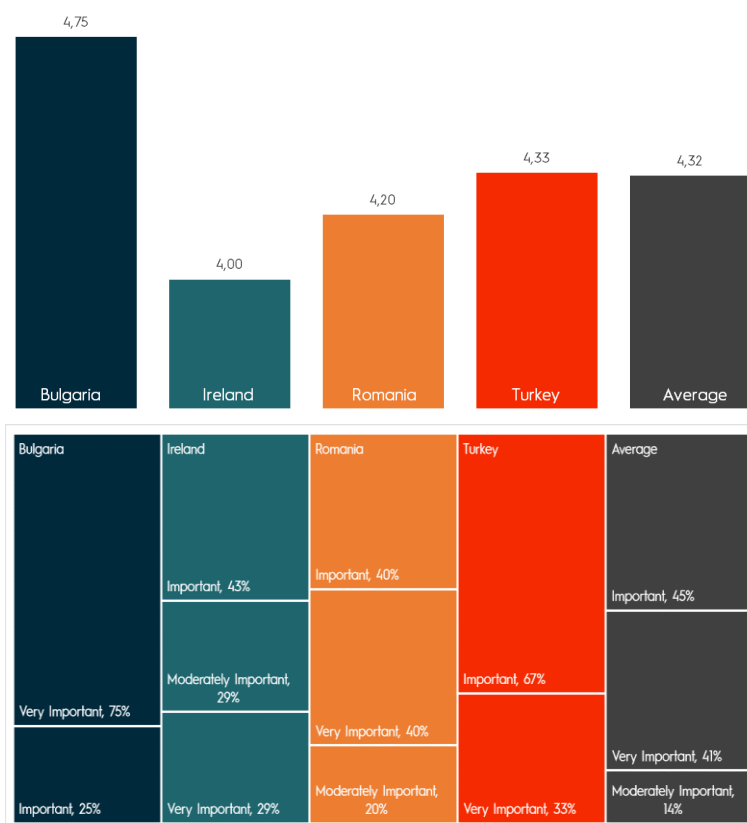


Figure 22. Ability to Learn Quickly and Being Curious

Concerning the ability to learn quickly and being curious, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to Figure 22, the general average value of the countries was 4.32. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.00 for Ireland, and 4.20 for Romania, 4.33 for Turkey. All the respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill to be “important” (25%) and “very important” (75%).

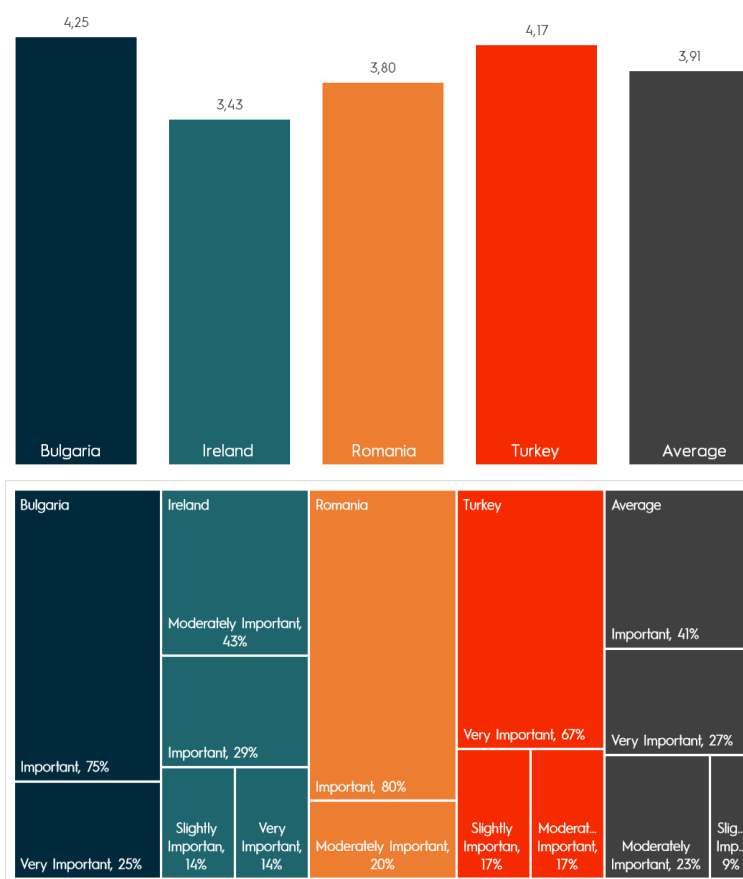


Figure 23. Ability to Manage Information Systems

One can see, from Figure 23, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of the ability to manage information systems, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 3.91. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the ability to manage information systems were 4.25 for Bulgaria, 3.43 for Ireland, 3.80 for Romania and 4.17 for Turkey. The majority of respondents from Ireland consider this ability as "moderately important" (average level 3.43).

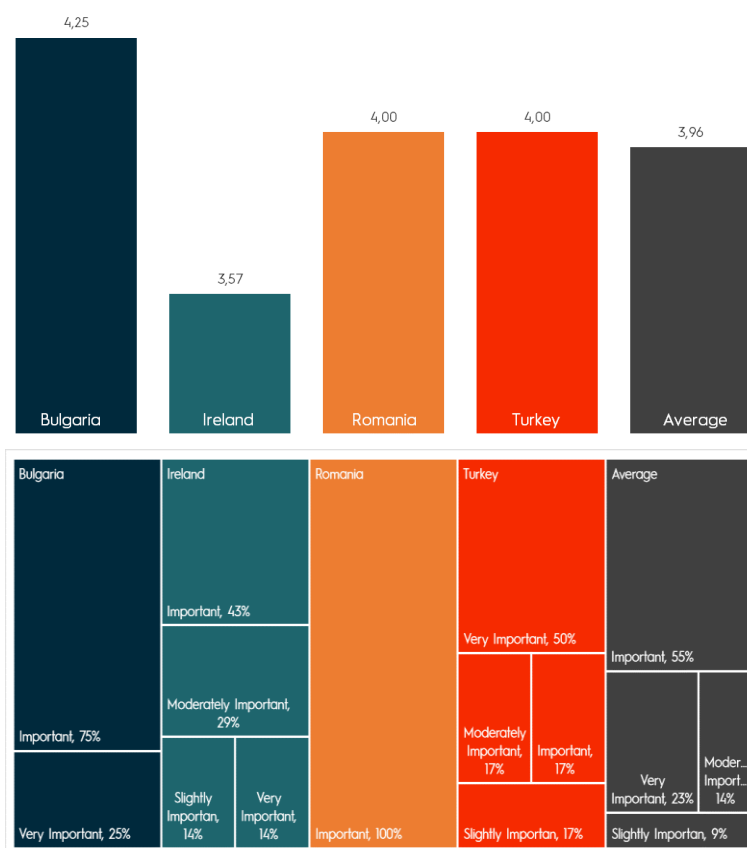


Figure 24. Confidence in Using Digital Technology

Figure 24 shows the average levels of the importance of the ability related to the confidence in using digital technology during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 3.96. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.25 for Bulgaria, 3.57 for Ireland, and 4.00 for Romania and 4.00 for Turkey.

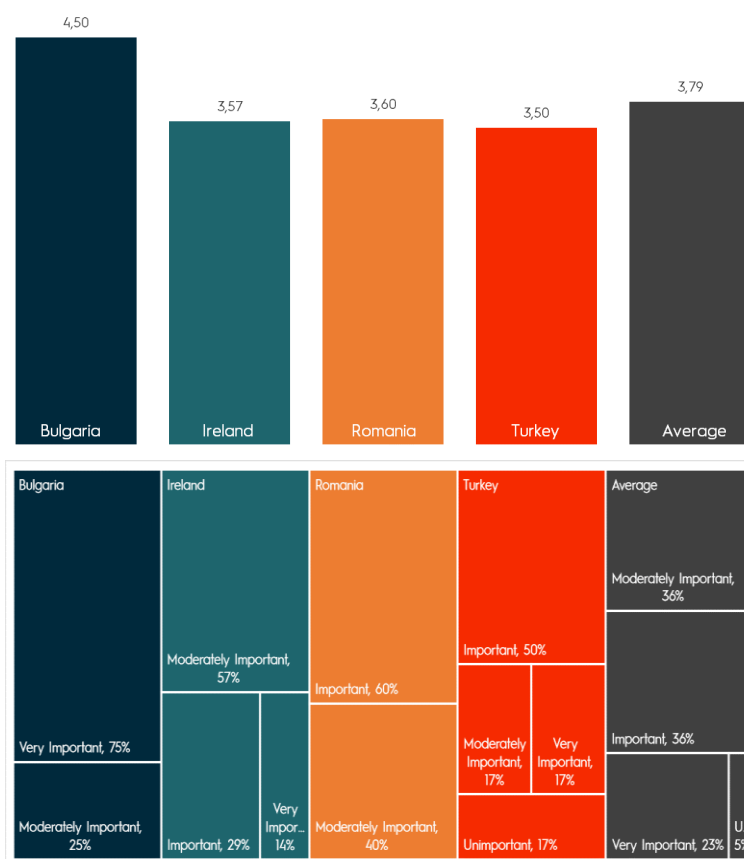
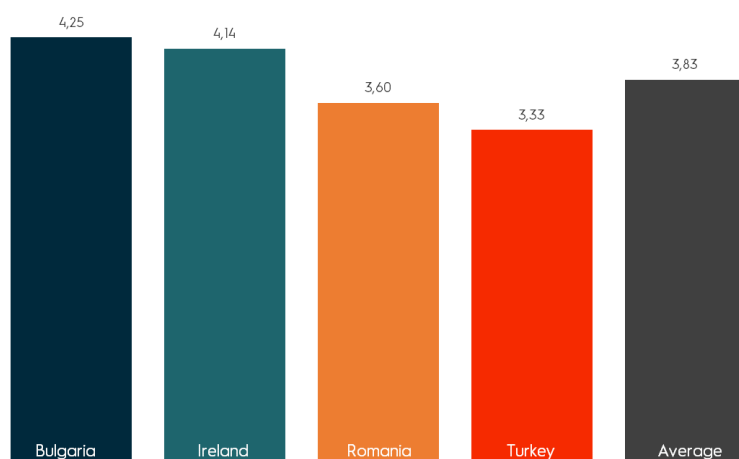
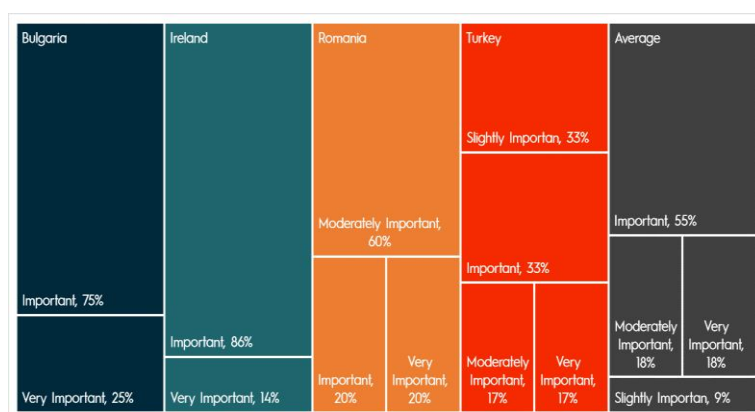


Figure 25. Ability to Use Search Engines for Purposes Such as Business Visibility and Customer Development (SEO)

Concerning the ability to use search engines for purposes such as business visibility and customer development (SEO), evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important) and according to Figure 25, the general average value of the countries was 3.79. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.5 for Bulgaria, 3.57 for Ireland, 3.60 for Romania and 3.5 for Turkey. Respondents from Ireland, Romania and Turkey consider this ability to be “important” or “moderately important”. There are not significant differences between the last three groups of respondents (Ireland, Romania and Turkey) since the values are between 3.50 and 3.60. The majority of respondents from Bulgaria (75%) consider this skill to be “very important”.



a) Mean Values of Importance Levels by Countries



b) Percentages of Importance Levels by Countries

Figure 26. Proficiency in Financial Matters

One can see, from Figure 26, the average values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance of Proficiency in financial matters, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value was 3.83. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning Proficiency in financial matters were 4.25 for Bulgaria, 4.14 for Ireland 3.60 for Romania and 3.33 for Turkey. The majority of respondents from Bulgaria and Ireland consider this skill as "important". This skill is considered "important" or just "moderately important" by the most respondents from the Turkey and Romania.

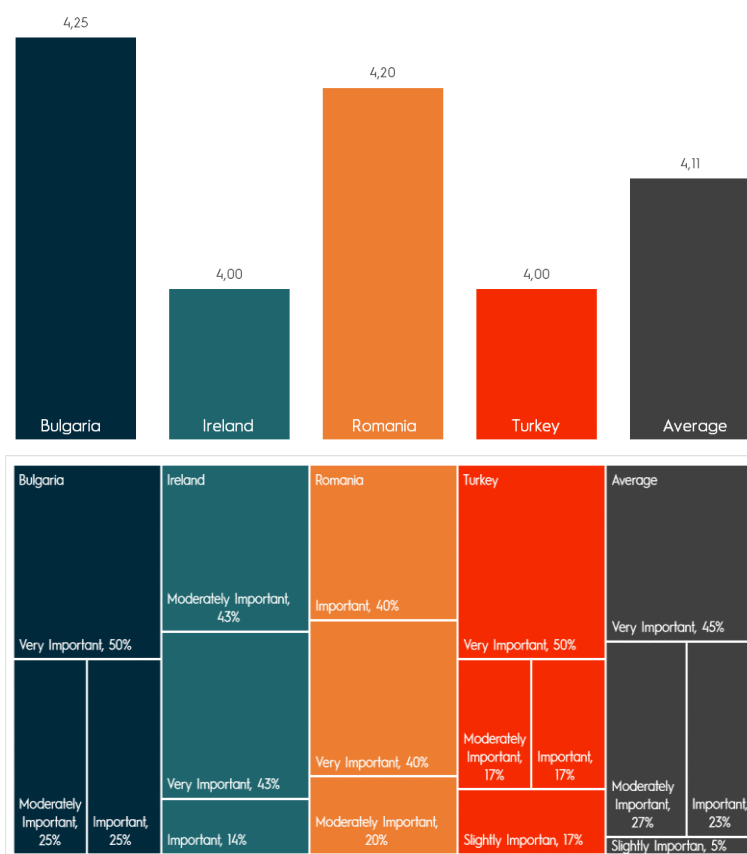


Figure 27. Having Information About External Financing Sources (Financial Markets, Banks, Government Loans, Etc.)

Figure 27 shows the average levels of the importance of Having information about external financing sources during the pandemic period. The importance of this ability is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.11. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.25 for Bulgaria, 4.00 for Ireland, 4.20 for Romania and 4.00 for Turkey. There are not significant differences between groups since the values are between 4.00 and 4.25.

4.2. Importance Levels of Using Digital Tools on the Success of organizations/ entrepreneurs/ firms

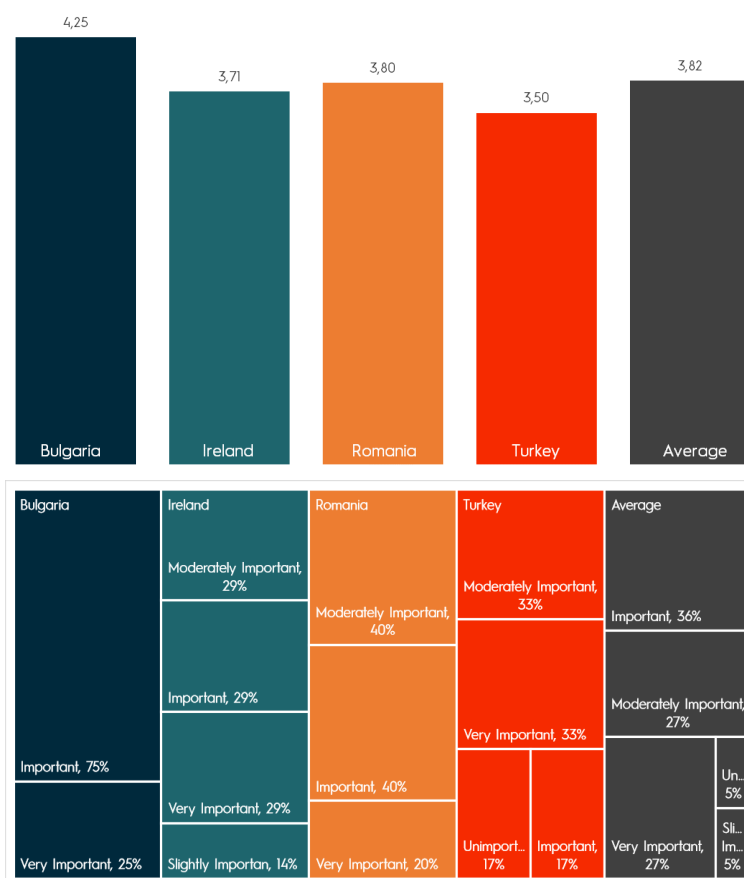


Figure 28. Use of Digital Tools in Management Activities (Planning and Goal Setting etc.)

In Figure 28, average values of the organizations' importance levels for the use of digital tools in management activities (planning and goal setting etc.) are given. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 3.82. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.25 for Bulgaria, 3.71 for Ireland, 3.80 for Romania and 3.50 for Turkey. There are not significant differences between Ireland and Romania groups since the values are between 3.71 and 3.80.

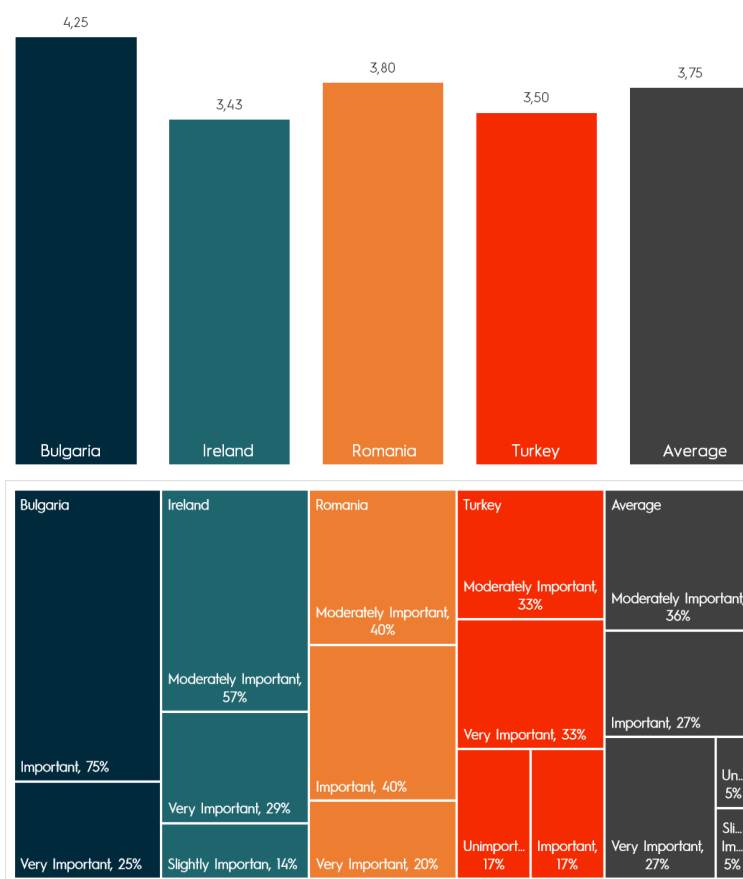
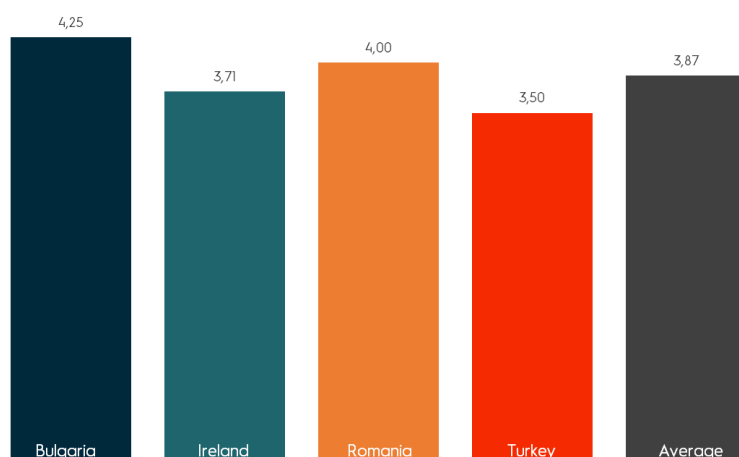
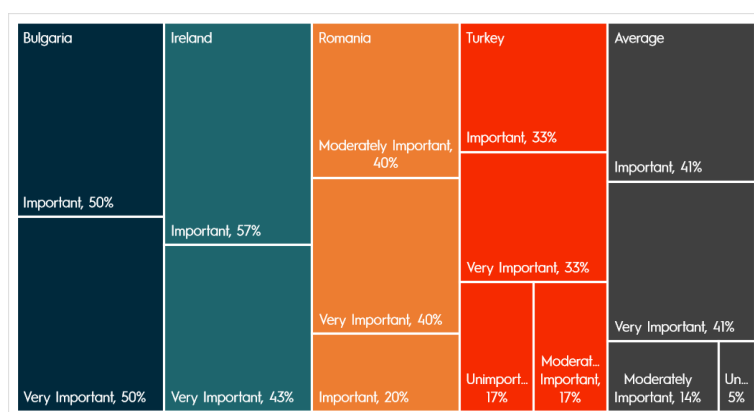


Figure 29. Use of Digital Tools in Teamwork

One can see, from Figure 29, the average of the values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance levels of the use of digital tools in teamwork, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 3.75. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the use of digital tools in teamwork were 4.25 for Bulgaria, 3.43 for Ireland, 3.80 for Romania and 3.50 for Turkey. As in the case of the previous question, there are not significant differences between Turkey, Ireland and Romania groups (values are between 3.43 and 3.80).



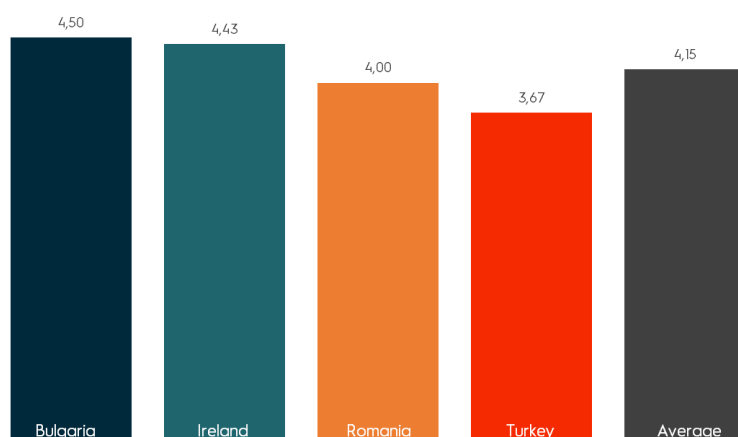
a) Mean Values
of Importance Levels
by Countries



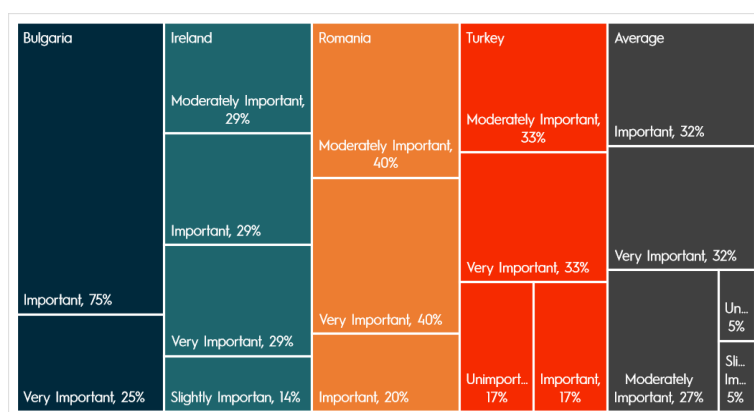
b) Percentages of
Importance Levels
by Countries

Figure 30. Use of Digital Tools to Ensure Coordination

Figure 30 shows the average values of the importance levels for the use of digital tools to ensure coordination, during the pandemic period. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 3.87. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it is found that it was 4.25 for Bulgaria, 3.71 for Ireland, 4.00 for Romania and 3.50 for Turkey. The average level of the importance of this ability is the highest for Bulgaria and lowest for Turkey.



a) Mean Values of Importance Levels by Countries



b) Percentages of Importance Levels by Countries

Figure 31. Use of Digital Tools in Remote Work

In Figure 31, average values of the organizations' importance levels for the Use of digital tools in remote work are given. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 4.15. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.50 for Bulgaria, 4.43 for Ireland, 4.00 for Romania and 3.67 for Turkey. All the respondents from Bulgaria consider this skill as "important" and "very important".

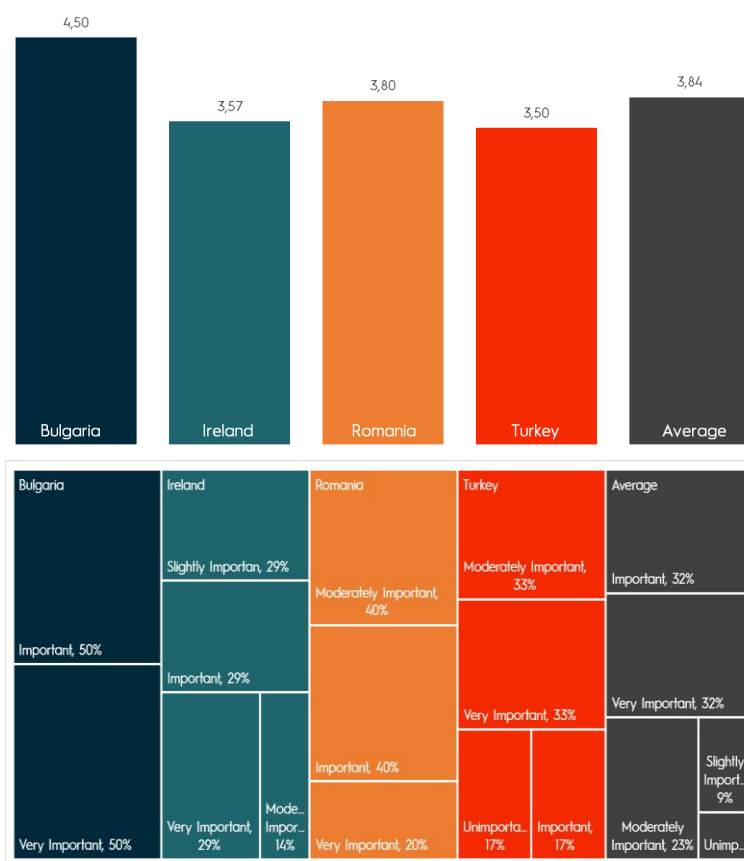


Figure 32. Use of Digital Tools in Planning and Goal Setting Processes

One can see, from Figure 32, the average of the values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance levels of the use of digital tools in planning and goal setting processes, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 3.84. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the use of digital tools in planning and goal setting processes were 4.50 for Bulgaria, 3.57 for Ireland, 3.80 for Romania and 3.50 for Turkey. In other words, average value for Bulgaria were above the general average, while average values for Ireland, Romania and Turkey were below the general average.

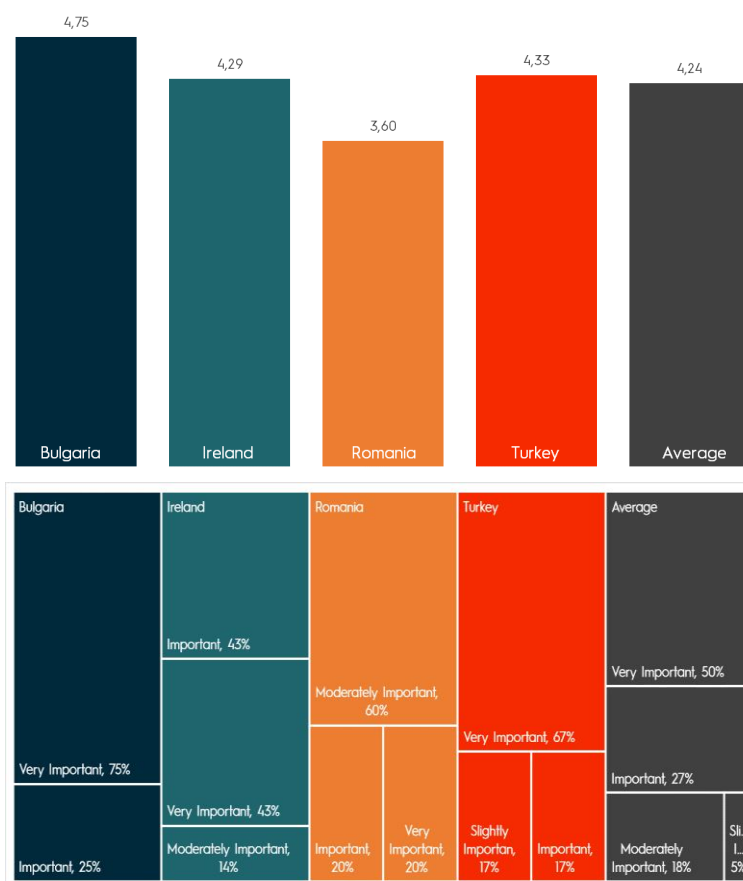


Figure 33. Use of Digital Tools in Accounting Processes

Figure 33 shows the average values of the importance levels for the use of digital tools in accounting processes, during the pandemic period. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.24. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it is found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.29 for Ireland, 3.60 for Romania and 4.33 for Turkey. The majority of the respondents from Romania (60%) consider that Use of digital tools in accounting processes is “moderately important”.

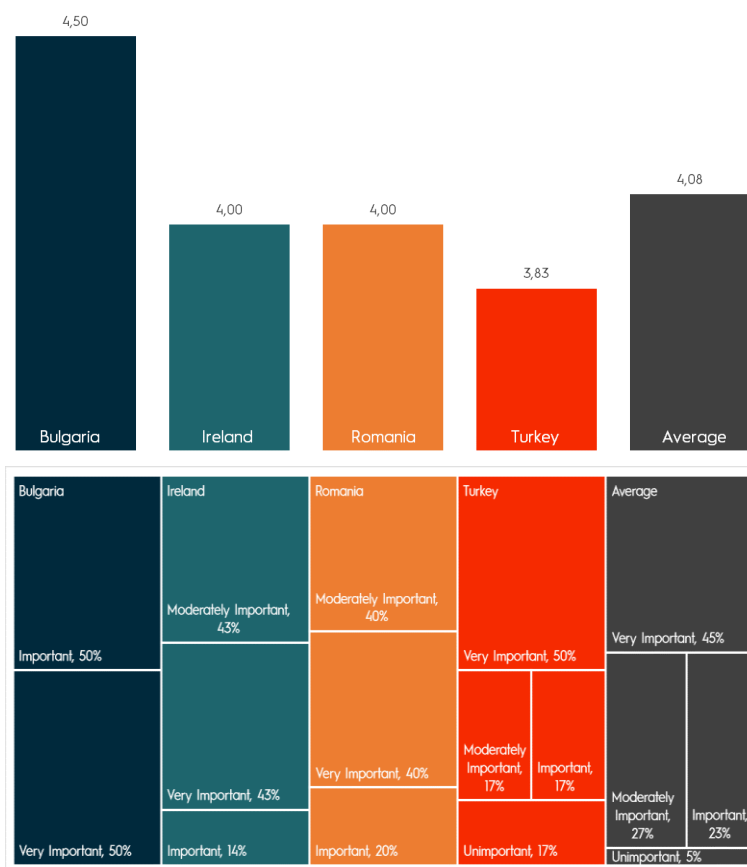


Figure 34. Use of Digital Tools in Purchasing Processes

In Figure 34, average values of the organizations' importance levels for the use of digital tools in purchasing processes are given. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 4.08. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.50 for Bulgaria, 4.00 for Ireland, 4.00 for Romania and 3.83 for Turkey. For the most respondents from Turkey and for all the respondents from Ireland and Romania this item is just "important".

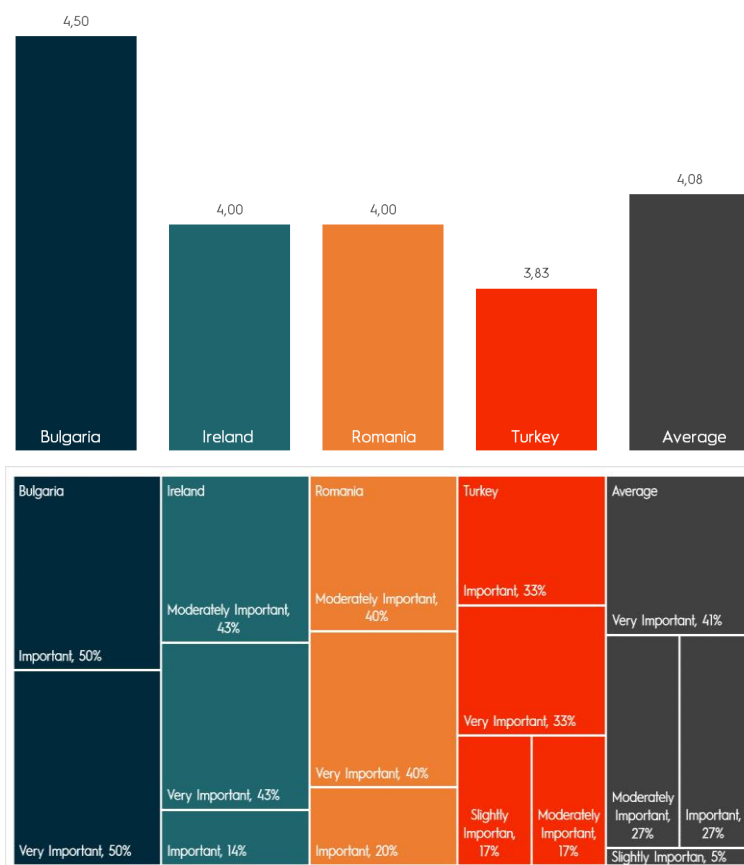


Figure 35. Use of Digital Tools in Procurement Processes

One can see, from Figure 35, the average of the values obtained from the respondents' answers related to the importance levels of the use of digital tools in procurement processes, evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 4.08. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it was found that average values concerning the use of digital tools in procurement processes were 4.50 for Bulgaria, 4.00 for Ireland, 4.00 for Romania and 3.83 for Turkey. For the most respondents from Turkey and for all the respondents from Ireland and Romania this item is just "important". In other words, average value for Bulgaria were above the general average, while average values for Ireland, Romania and Turkey were below the general average.

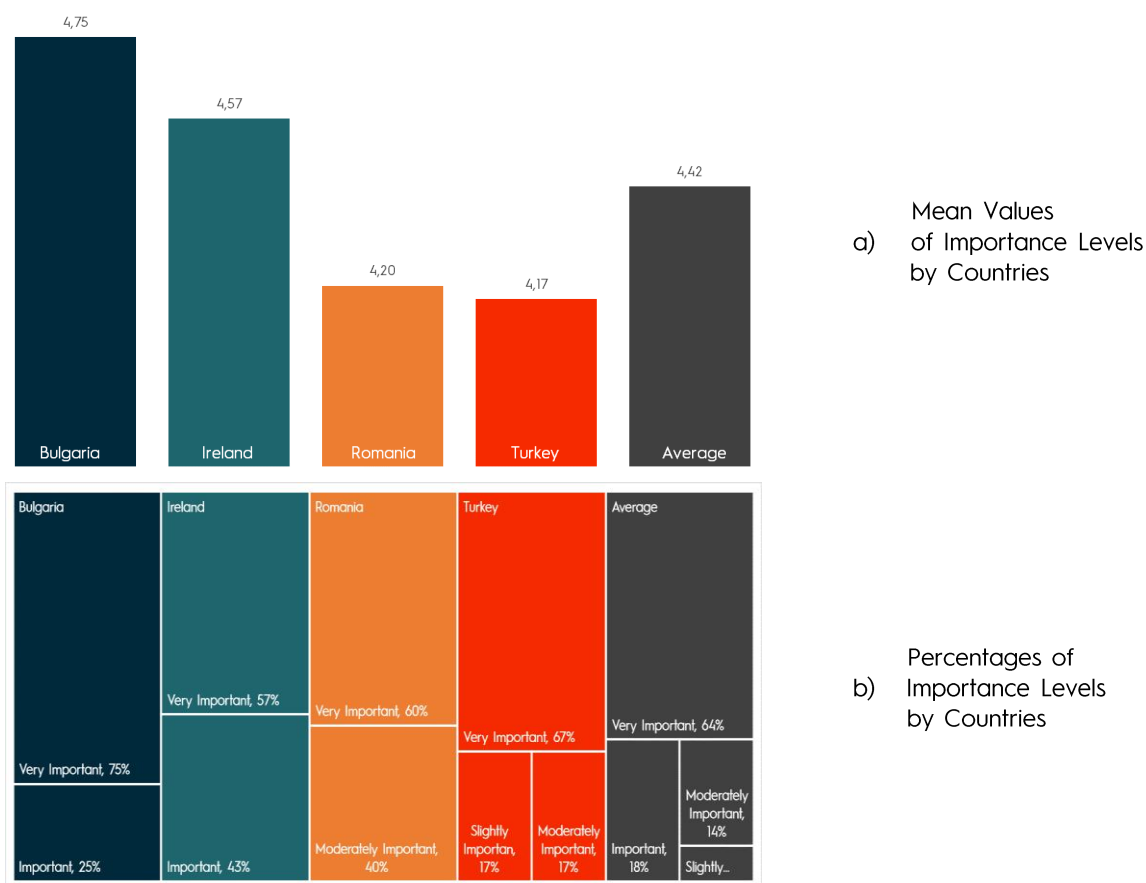
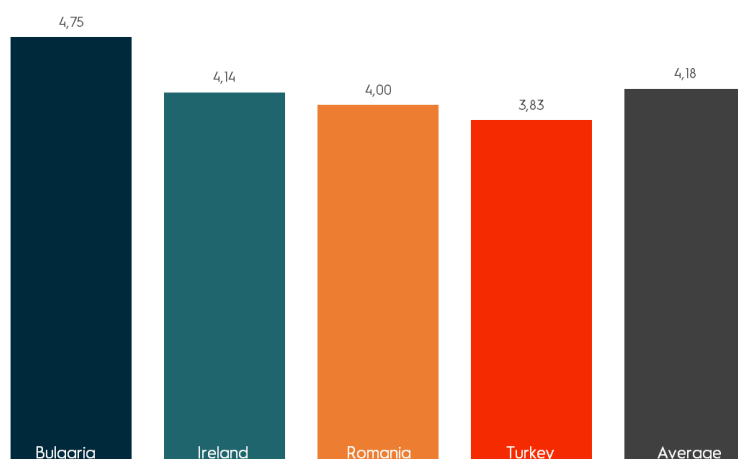
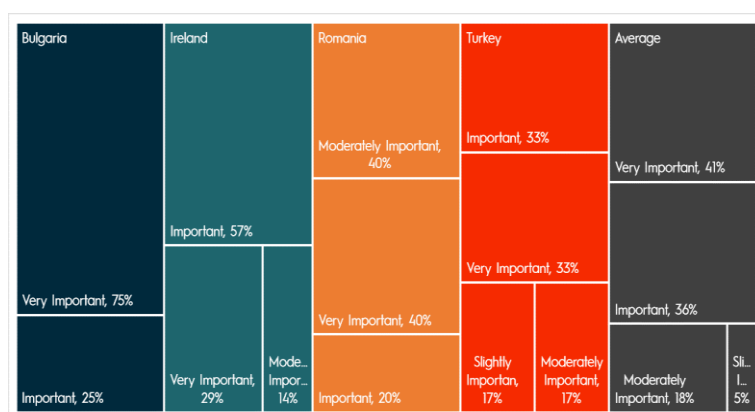


Figure 36. Use of Digital Tools in Marketing Activities

Figure 36 shows the average values of the importance levels for the Use of digital tools in marketing activities, during the pandemic period. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). According to the findings, it was seen that the general average value of the countries was 4.42. When this value is analysed on a country basis, it is found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.57 for Ireland, 4.20 for Romania and 4.17 for Turkey. As expected, the most respondents (82%) of all four countries agree that the use of digital tools in marketing activities is a “very important” or “important” item.



a) Mean Values of Importance Levels by Countries



b) Percentages of Importance Levels by Countries

Figure 37. Use of Digital Tools in Reporting Activities

In Figure 37, average values of the organizations' importance levels for the Use of digital tools in reporting activities are given. The importance level is evaluated out of 5 (1: Not important at all, 5: Very important). The general average value of the countries was 4.18. When this value is analyzed on a country basis, it was found that it was 4.75 for Bulgaria, 4.14 for Ireland, and 4.00 for Romania and 3.83 for Turkey.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A target group of 22 business associations and other entities in support of businesses answered the survey: 4 from Bulgaria, 7 from Ireland, 5 from Romania and 6 from Turkey.

The following findings were noted when the answers received were analyzed to identify what the importance levels of the basic skills needed in entrepreneurial activities were.

Concerning of the importance of the selected skills on the success of organizations/entrepreneurs/firms in crisis situations, from the 27 abilities the ones related to communication and motivation were evaluated as “very important” by the most of respondents.

1. Ability to communicate effectively – average value: 4.78; 77% of answers as “very important”;
2. Ability to motivate the Team/Staff – average value: 4.75 77% of answers as “very important”;
3. Ability to motivate yourself – average value: 4.73; 73% of answers as “very important”.

The following abilities received the lowest average values after the respondents’ answers;

1. Ability to being comfortable and prejudiced against change – average value: 3.67; 23% of answers as “moderately important”.
2. Ability to use search engines for purposes such as business visibility and customer development (SEO) – average value: 3.79; 36% of answers as “moderately important”.
3. Ability of Proficiency in Financial Matters – average value: 3.83; 18% of answers as “moderately important”.

Regarding on the importance of the use of digital tools on the success of organizations /entrepreneurs/ firms (Items group 19) one can notice the average levels of the importance of these tools, lower than those received for many other skills.

1. Use of digital tools in marketing activities – average value: 4,42; 64% of answers as “very important”;
2. Use of digital tools in accounting processes – average value: 4,24; 50% of answers as “very important”;
3. Use of digital tools in reporting activities – average value: 4,18; 41% of answers as “very important”.

The following received the lowest average values after the respondents’ answers;

1. Use of Digital Tools in Teamwork - average value: 3,75; 36% of answers as “moderately important”;
2. Use of Digital Tools in Management Activities (Planning and Goal Setting Etc.)- average value: 3,82; 27% of answers as “moderately important”;
3. Use of Digital Tools in Planning and Goal Setting Processes - average value: 3,84; 23% of answers as “moderately important”.

Quite unexpectedly, the low level of utilisation of digital tools indicated by the received answers could be explained by the relative slowness of the involvement of the organizations in the business digital transformation processes, which is incompatible with the digitalization of business models, especially for small and medium-sized companies. Comparing to companies, organizations are indirectly connected to market issues and still have a traditional perception of digitalization as a modern and global process that today's society is going through.

Business support organizations provide advice and help directly to entrepreneurs and managers keen to grow their small businesses. Supporting programmes include services such as consulting on financial and organizational management, technical advice, mentoring and coaching, training and networking.

During the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies have opted for a more digital business model, as this has been the only way for these companies to generate revenue and survive. The intention to switch to digital will become a necessity and the demand for relevant skills, including strong skills in information and communication technology will increase. As this continues into the future, the exchange of knowledge, practices and experience will also become increasingly important. In this context, the mission of the Business support organizations should be to be strongly connected to the needs of their clients and partners, even anticipating these needs.