

# **TrainCoDe - A study case of the management changes as a result of the lifelong learning**

Muguras Mocofan<sup>1</sup>, Andrei Ternauciuc<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1,2</sup>Communications Department, Faculty of Electronics and Telecommunications,  
Politehnica University Timisoara, Bd. Vasile Parvan, Nr.2, 300223, Timisoara, Romania  
<sup>1</sup> muguras.mocofan@upt.ro, <sup>2</sup>andrei.ternauciuc@upt.ro

**Abstract.** The paper presents a case study of a lifelong learning program “The TrainCoDe”, funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme, under Leonardo da Vinci action and implemented by a consortium composed of 5 internationally recognized organizations coming from 4 EU countries. The project is focused on transferring, customizing and localizing a training programme. We present the results of the implementation of the TrainCoDe Project in Romania and the impact of the courses for the involved managers.

**Keywords:** Lifelong learning, research projects

## **1 The TRAINCODE Project in Romania**

Ever since the efforts for defining the concept of smart city began, a very important component was education. This must be present in all forms and at all levels, using the most modern ICT tools [1]. The economic environment, especially big companies, believe that an employee can have very good results for long periods only if knowledge is perfected continuously during the entire life [2]. The smart people dimension in a smart city is represented by the social and human capital. These are defined by the level of qualification, social and ethnic plurality, flexibility, creativity, participation in public life and the affinity for lifelong learning [3]. Smart cities need to maximize their intellectual resources; they should be the center of attraction for talented people. In a changing environment, current job markets change rapidly and the value offered as professionals will be the willingness to learn and the ability to respond to change. Creativity and openness for learning new things is based, in the digital age, on lifelong learning [4]. Smart Education is described in [5] by investment in education systems, education of the citizens, affinity to lifelong learning, education facilities, social interactions regarding integration and public life, research and investment in innovation and creativity.

“The TrainCoDe” is a project funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme, under Leonardo da Vinci action and implemented by a consortium composed of 5 internationally recognized organizations coming from 4 EU countries. The project is focused on transferring, customizing and localizing a training programme. The transfer and adaptation of the above-mentioned training programme will allow

intermediary organizations to provide unemployed and retired managers over 45 years of age with a tailored training programme to deal with two main challenges [6]. The first concerns a change of career and change in management; managers need support in focusing how and in which new professional context their expertise could be best harnessed and whether such a career change is consistent with their expectations and personal motivations, characteristics and values. The second challenge is re-integration into a new professional domain. Managers should be equipped with the needed knowledge, skills and tools for acting their new professional role and should be assisted in transforming into practice the lessons learned in the classroom. At the same time the program enhanced the exploitation of elderly manager's experience in different contexts, thus facilitating the setting up of cross-fertilization processes among generations. It also resulted in an improvement of competitiveness.

Some of the objectives of the TrainCoDe project include: the development of competencies, skills and methodological knowledge that could complete the target group members' professional profiles, making them more consistent with training, consultancy and mentoring; the promotion of enhanced managerial skills in contexts other than the business ones; the activation of a permanent reflection and an institutional awareness-raising on the role of manager and its function, current and future, in the processes of growth and consolidation of the EU industrial and professional scenario.

The TrainCoDe is targeted at managers aged over 45, who dropped out of the labour market (either unemployed or retired), intermediaries (training organizations/business schools), companies, stakeholders supporting the organizations active in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

The developed Programme Toolkit, which was adapted to the national needs of each of the partners, is composed of: the training programme, the materials for trainee and trainer for use during the training sessions, the evaluation and monitoring tools for evaluating the training sessions, the methods and tools for training sessions.

## **2 The TrainCoDe research methodology**

### **2.1 Research problem**

Before the project development began, a series of research problems needed to be addressed [7],[8],[9]. Specifically, the level of competencies in training and consultancy for the target group – managers over 45 years of age; the scope of existing experience in adoption of training competency development programs for managers among target organizations, stakeholders and decision makers; the degree of interest in adoption of training competency development programs for target group members, as well as the degree of interest in changing profession and personal development planning among 45+ managers (unemployed, retired or threatened by unemployment); and finally, the regional (country specific) differences regarding the scope and methodology of training offered.

## **2.2 Research objectives**

The research objectives defined for the project are as follows: to determine the average level of training competencies for 45+ managers; to determine the areas of training competencies that generate the greatest development need for 45+ managers; to determine existing experiences of target group organizations, stakeholders and decision makers in adoption of training competency development programmes for 45+ managers; to determine the degree of interest in adoption of training competency development programmes for 45+ managers among target organizations, stakeholders and decision makers; to determine the degree or interest in changing profession and personal development planning among 45+ managers (unemployed, retired or threatened by unemployment); to identify country specific differences regarding the scope and methodology of training offered to 45+ managers.

## **2.3 Research questions**

Based on the problems and objectives presented, the following research questions were formulated [10], [11].

- What is the average level of training competencies of 45+ managers?
- Which areas of training competencies of 45+ managers reach the lowest scores?
- What are the conclusions from existing experience of target organizations, stakeholders and decision makers in adoption of training competency development programs for 45+ managers that may apply to the development of Project training program?
- What is the interest of target organizations, stakeholders and decision makers in broadening awareness of employment sustainability problems in aging population?
- What is the interest of organizations in the adoption and use of training services provision (coaching/mentoring) from mature managers?
- What is the degree of interest in changing profession and personal development planning among 45+ managers (unemployed, retired or threatened by unemployment)?
- What are the regional (country specific) differences regarding the scope and methodology of training offered to 45+ managers?

## **2.4 Research hypotheses**

The research was guided during the development and deployment of the project by the following hypotheses:

The average level of training competencies of 45+ managers is lower than neutral. The areas of training competencies that reach the lowest scores are “design of a learning process”, “methods to support learning process”. Target group

organizations, stakeholders and companies exhibit past experience in the adoption of competency development programs for 45+ (availability of EU funds) but mainly in the area of technical skills (IT based) and raising professional qualifications. The highest interest in broadening awareness of employment sustainability in aging population is expressed by target organizations and stakeholders. Companies exhibit moderate interest in this area.

Companies express more interest in the development or adoption of schemes based on the coaching concept (because of its focus on short term effectiveness) rather than on mentoring. Companies prefer provision of external training (coaching/mentoring) services from mature managers based on temporary contract basis.

Managers of 45+ already affected (or threatened) by unemployment express much interest in the possibility of career change and personal development. Managers of 45+ already affected (or threatened) by unemployment express much interest in the possibility to take over the role of coach and mentor. Managers of 45+ already affected (or threatened) by unemployment express moderate interest in the possibility of continuation of the professional activity in the form of self-employment. The biggest competency gap of 45+ managers (unemployed or threatened by unemployment) regarding the training proposed concerns areas of tools and methodologies for didactical design.

The resulting training needs analysis (TNA) is summarized in the following table.

**Table 1.** Scheme for the research.

Segment of TNA	Aims of TNA	Scope and methodology
Company decision Makers	Upper management and people generally charged with taking decisions within companies, owners, shareholders, etc.	Live interviews with 5 decision makers from trade companies in the public sector.
Target group organizations	Target group organizations, providing trainings, organizations active in VET system	Live interviews with 10 decision makers of institutions active in the VET system
Stakeholders	Chambers of Commerce, Employers' Associations	Phone interviews with 2 stakeholders from chamber of commerce and one from employers association
End users	Managers, over 45 years old, who dropped out from the Labour market through retirement or unemployment.	Interview with 20 managers over 45 years old, 11 male and 9 female, mostly unemployed or self-employed middle management.

### **3 Study results**

A summary of the most important practical tips resulting from the research conducted with the end users, companies' decision makers, stakeholders and target group organizations of the project, is presented below. It is believed that there is a clear lack of designing or delivering any training programs directed to groups threatened by low or lack of employability, and that this absence is visibly affecting the senior capital.

Companies are generally interested in using programs and schemes based on provision of coaching and mentoring from mature managers, however they are being impeded by a perceived lack of funds dedicated for this type of activity. They recognize problems in maintaining employability of mature and ageing workers, however do not see it as a priority and prefer to focus investments in training young human capital.

End users are excited about the prospect of re-entering the labour market. They are strongly focused on receiving validation of training however, and are sceptical about how valid and relevant the training will be in the labour market context of Romania.

Senior managers, retired as well as unemployed, are almost universally unsatisfied with retirement and desire to re-enter the labour market. Few find methods, however, and the means used usually involve classical university training or very expensive courses which are not specialized for managers over 45, and are not available without a serious financial investment. There are over 100 courses available for senior managers, however most are only available in online form and the IT capabilities of the target group are low; they also offer no accreditation or validation and are not seriously recognized on the labour market. These courses are widely seen as scams with no practical results, rather than as useful tools [12], [13], [14], [15]. VET organizations include senior human capital in their training programs through their usual programs, mainly mixed with young human capital. They agree, however, there is a possible demand of specialized training and argue that there are sufficient participants in this target group to form independent groups of trainees.

#### **3.1 Companies' decision makers**

One of the three main areas of the needs analysis was the gathering of data and insights regarding the aims and scope of the TrainCoDe project from the group of target companies' decision makers.

The selection process of the decision makers to be interviewed considered the following aspects:

Companies running their economic activity based on production, service, trade, either from the private or public sectors, should be targeted. Decision makers would most likely be the owners, top level managers or human resources managers/personnel.

In person interviews were conducted with 5 companies' decision makers using the interview checklist provided by the programme toolkit. The decision makers included top management and company owners and shareholders, while the

companies were small and medium sized (5 employees to 250 employees), active in the trade field in public sector.

Interviews were conducted during the national research period and they used as a guideline the questions provided by the corresponding project work-package. The questions and the summary of the answers can be found in Appendix A.

The major conclusions of the training needs analysis and some practical tips for the implementation of training program, based on the companies' decision makers' responses are below:

Companies' decision makers might not be aware of how much senior managers would like to take part in training and re-entering the labour market.

There are currently very few solutions for mature workers' competencies development, and existing training is mostly online, which makes access difficult for senior citizens. Many existing courses are expensive, and have a bad reputation of being scams, and not providing any validation and recognition.

Focus should be set on validation of skills gained, and on positive promotion as a "serious" method with good results, as well as on the international character which helps credibility.

Companies are not involved in development of managerial competencies for managers over 45, however show interest towards anything that is seen to be "new" and "innovative" and therefore the innovative character of the method needs to be strongly stressed.

### **3.2 Target group organizations**

The target group organizations providing trainings represented another area in need of analysis. Selecting the organizations to be interviewed considered the following.

Organizations active in the VET system were considered; they are mostly organizations providing training and advisory support.

There was also a preference for organizations whose activity was focused on support for groups important as target end users of the project (dealing with adult/mature learners and groups threatened by exclusion from the labour market). In person interviews with members of 10 target group organizations were performed using the guidelines provided by the corresponding project work-package. The questions and the summary of the answers can be found in Appendix B.

Some of the major conclusions of the training needs' analysis and some practical tips for the implementation of the training program, based on the target group organizations' responses are listed below.

Persons threatened by low or lack of employability have no specific training, instead are included in other methods. Interviewees are mostly willing to participate and use staff for this purpose.

ICT methods used should be clear and simple, as they are a delicate subject for this target group. Training methods mentioned are active learning, learning by doing and study visits as the biggest draws for this target group.

Program delivery needs to be fast and efficient, long programs fail quickly, and clear results and validation need to be stated and advertised from day 1, as the market is saturated with no-result training and potential users are sceptical.

### **3.3 Stakeholders**

The final beneficiary group consists of stakeholders. Selection for this group considered the following two targets: organizations interested in support for VET system innovation (they can include: Industrial Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Employers' Associations) and organizations whose activity is focused on support for groups important as target end users of the Project.

Phone interviews were held with 3 stakeholders, 2 from the chamber of commerce and 1 from an employers' association, using the interview questions provided by the WP leader during the national research phase. The questions and the summary of the answers can be found in Appendix B.

The main conclusions of the training needs' analysis and some practical tips for the implementation of the training program, based on the stakeholders' responses are listed in five categories.

First are the companies do not recognize the problems of ageing personnel, and those who do still focus much more energy on the problems of young employees.

In the second category, informal mentoring is frequent, but used in a negative context when the mature mentor is about to be replaced or retired, and therefore is not fully efficient. Exchanges of information do not happen before that point.

In the next category, no special program exists for this target group; they are included in other programs and can participate in regular managerial competency development courses for any age. Companies don't direct activities to this specific target group either, with very rare exceptions of expensive private courses.

In the fourth category, the major factors include cost, human resources, and they do not consider they have staff available for becoming trainers, and distrust of training methods that do not provide accreditation or validation of results.

The last category is characterised by the increased awareness and encouragement of cooperation can be as simple as providing a solution which is trusted, backed internationally, coming from good sources and with good methodology, verifiable, and offering a clear statement of results. Encouraging companies to prepare programs by themselves is unlikely, not without external support from a trainer.

### **3.4 End users**

The main objective of the end users' field research was to collect and analyse the opinion of the end users in some areas regarding managers over 45 years of age to develop teaching competencies of 45+ managers focused on coaching/mentoring/consulting skills as a remedy against early exclusion from the labour market. Moreover, as managers of 45+ are the end user group of the project, they are

to deliver their services to young managers, therefore they were interviewed to test their interest in such a possibility.

The end-users were approached in person and interviews were held using the questionnaires provided by the WP leader during the national research phase. Interviews were conducted with 20 representatives of the target group and the results can be seen below.

**Table 2.** End users' questionnaires average results (on a standard scale of 1 to 5, 1 – Strongly disagree, 5 – Strongly agree)

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Avg. score</i>
<b>Section I. New professional role</b>		
1	I feel that my past occupational experience has still high value for the organizations.	3.90
2	I want to share and transfer my past occupational experience to younger generation	3.80
3	I am interested to adopt new professional role as coach and mentor.	3.75
4	I consider returning to the labour market providing training services as self-employed	3.90
<b>Section II. Process and learning styles</b>		
5	I understand the complexity and importance of training as a process for the development of individuals and organizational learning.	3.70
6	I recognize the complexity of adult learning processes.	3.70
7	I am familiar with the concept of different ways of how individuals think and learn.	3.70
<b>Section III. Tools and methodologies for didactical design</b>		
8	I am able to recognize how training programs can meet strategic and organizational needs.	3.70
9	I can explain how different organizational factors (strategy, culture, resources, time) impact the design of the learning process.	3.60
<b>Section IV. Teaching methodologies and training</b>		
<i>Identifying learning and development needs</i>		
10	I can properly identify organization's strategic priorities.	3.60
11	I am familiar with the concept of competencies and the potential of their development.	3.60
12	I can properly breakdown competencies of a given job into learning domains (knowledge, skills, attitudes).	3.50
13	I am familiar with the techniques of analysis and gathering data to identify learning gaps between existing competencies of employees and new requirements.	3.60
14	I know how to define learning outcomes and design development plans.	3.55
<i>Learning techniques</i>		
15	I know the assumptions, advantages and disadvantages of the work-based training techniques.	3.65
16	I know the assumptions, advantages and disadvantages of the coaching and mentoring training techniques.	3.70
17	I know the assumptions, advantages and disadvantages of training techniques away from the workplace.	3.55
18	I know the assumptions, advantages and disadvantages of the distance and e-learning.	3.65
<i>Evaluating learning</i>		
19	I am familiar with individual learning evaluation methods.	
20	I am familiar with the organizational learning evaluation methods.	3.55
<b>Section V. Skills and attitudes to support coaching/mentoring role</b>		
21	I support people to develop themselves as individuals.	3.75
22	I am good in observing the work of the people and use those observations for the purpose of their development planning.	3.65

23	I more often ask questions to the people rather than offer ready solutions.	2.95
24	I encourage and help people to formulate their own action/development plans.	3.55
25	I am able to give constructive feedback on performance to people either positive or negative.	3.55
26	I admit the possibility of learning from trials and errors for the professional development.	3.50
27	I can remain calm when confronted with the problems in work.	3.70

The following table presents a summary of the training needs in key areas, for Romania.

Table 3. Training Needs Analysis – TNA (the numbers show the degree of significance by priority, 1 being the highest)

Competency area	Priority
I. New professional role	<b>7</b>
II. Process and learning styles	<b>6</b>
III. Tools and methodologies for didactical design	<b>5</b>
IV. Teaching methodologies and training	
Identifying learning and development needs	<b>3</b>
Learning techniques	<b>4</b>
Evaluating learning	<b>2</b>
V. Skills and attitudes to support coaching/mentoring role	<b>1</b>

#### 4. Results interpretation

The conclusions of the training needs analysis for the implementation of training program is based on the end users responses. A large majority of answers state that they feel that their past occupational experience still has high value for the organization. Most of these also agree that adult education and management training are very complex processes, and are aware of the difficulties therein. The answers for teaching methodologies and training are extremely mixed, and there are visible lacks in one or more areas of knowledge and competencies for all participants.

Participants are very aware of their qualities and faults, and seem easily ready to admit them for training and self-improvement.

The interview questions were focused on their experience, current and planned activities directed to groups threatened by low or lack of employability (because of age, competencies etc.) with special attention to the project end users (45+ managers), their opinions and suggestions on re-integration possibilities for project end users. The target group organisations for interviews are representatives of organisations directly involved in VET activities and organisations that design and deliver training and development programs.

Structured interview questions with stakeholders was focused mainly on the prospects of re-integration of project end users group (e.g. number of interested, their motivation, scope of competences). Interviews were carried out with representatives of organisations supporting labour market and indirectly involved in VET sector, employers' associations, chambers of commerce, professionals' associations, labour office.

Structured interviews were conducted with companies' decision makers – managers of those 45+ who are the end user group of the project to deliver their services to young managers. This set of interviews tested the interest of companies in

such possibility. Decision makers were owners/managers of top level or personnel/human development managers.

The questionnaire surveys with a selected sample of end users were focused on areas of motivation, professional and social competences (technical and those necessary to act as trainer/coach) and readiness for the labour market re-entry (based mostly on self-employment).

The project also probed the existing experience in adoption of training competency development programs for 45+ managers among target organizations, stakeholders and decision makers.

The results of interviews carried out with stakeholders and companies' decision makers showed that problems of aging personnel, how it impacts individuals, organisations and societies are not recognised and knowledge in this area is limited.

In Romania, the attention was focused on problems of young employees, costs and perceived lack of human resources available to become mentors and e-learning formula for existing programs which is not user-friendly for the target group. The degree of interest in adoption of training competency development programs for 45+ managers among target entities was also researched. The biggest interest in broadening awareness of employment sustainability in aging population was expressed by target organizations in Romania.

The best methods adopted at such program should involve high level of activity for participants. Program should be short and results oriented. In Romania the need for accreditation and qualification recognition was raised. Stakeholders generally declared their support for the development and implementation of the TrainCoDe project.

Some obstacles were described as the explanation of this situation parallel to the perception issues. Those obstacles are: time necessary to develop coaches and the willingness of mature workers to undertake new role.

Companies prefer provision of external training (coaching/mentoring) service from mature managers based on temporary contract basis was confirmed in Romania, mainly due to cost issues.

The average results of the End Users' questionnaire are ranged from 2.95 to 3.90 in Romania, "the design of a learning process" and "methods to support learning process" were among competencies that got lower results, in this case, representing the priority of training needs.

## 5 Conclusions

In the greater environment of smart learning ecosystems, the reuse of practical experience in all areas, management included, should be a goal worthy of attention. The TrainCoDe programme aims to reduce the loss of real-life experience by giving new potential directions of know-how transmission to valuable human assets, who otherwise might go into retirement.

General recommendations for the training program are as follows:

- The opportunities offered by the adoption of a new professional role as coach and mentor should be more widely shown.
- The willingness to work based on self-employment should be strengthened.
- An intrinsic motivation in the learning process should be stimulated by a strong focus on the defined learning targets and expected benefits.

- Greater involvement in the learning process should be supported using various training techniques (preferably non-formal, self-directed) based on the use of experience and engagement of emotions.
- Existing vocational experts (participating managers) should be provided with tools specific to the sphere of designing, conducting training and evaluating learning outcomes.
- Programs aimed individual countries should be adjusted, because the distribution of training needs is specific to each country.
- The element of preventative health care is worth including in the program as in the age group of prospective participant's awareness of health and mental well-being maintenance is particularly important for continuous employability.

After the implementation of TrainCoDe project in Romania we found the need for tools presentation, methods of training needs analysis and design with the consideration of various factors e.g. strategy, culture, resources or time, environment. The development of competences is related to the identification and analysis of training needs on the level of organization and individual. Also, the development of competences should consider the formulation of learning outcomes and the design of the learning process/development plan. There should be an increase of competence in the adoption of various tools for evaluation of learning on individual and organizational level and development of communication skills specific in the coaching and mentoring process. And finally, the development of facilitating techniques supporting learning process of the learner, broadening the awareness of various learning/training techniques available, is desired.

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## APPENDIX A - Interview results for companies' decision makers'

Question 1: *“Does your company recognize problems in maintaining employability of mature and ageing workers?”*

Responses revealed that companies generally recognize such problems very clearly and for a very long time (over 5 years) and yet, even though the problem is very clear, it is not a priority to be solved. General belief is that increasing awareness at this point is not as important as providing solutions.

Question 2: *“To what extent is your company interested in developing programs for mature workers helping them to improve and enhance their competencies?”*

The general consensus is that such an interest exists in the situation where it does not create any great expense associated with this effort, as competencies training programs exist for workers in general and there are no financial resources allocated for senior human capital specifically.

Question 3: *“What is your company's involvement in development of managerial competencies of workers aged over 45?”*

No companies provided positive answers or examples for this question.

Question 4: *“To what extent does your company adopt competences management strategies that are based on the use of experience of mature workers?”*

Most companies offer some kind of informal mentorship program which is not well established and does not provide validation of competencies learned. This specifically targets very young and new employees being trained by senior employees, but this does not always mean over 45 years and can be a senior member of only 30 years of age.

Question 5: *“How would you estimate the interest of your company in using programs and schemes based on provision of coaching and mentoring from mature managers?”*

Respondents stress that they are very open to new ideas, willing to learn and test anything at least once before deciding if it is a valid option for them, and would prefer to use methods in the mentoring field which is more familiar to them and would be easier to integrate.

Question 6: *“Would your company involve mature managers (threatened by unemployment) in TrainCoDe Project focused on strengthening their employment potential through the development of their coaching/mentoring skills that could be then used by companies e.g. for the development of competences of young employees?”*

All companies replied either with yes, or that they would try at least once.

Question 7: *“What are the major factors/obstacles/benefits that affect the interest of your company in the use of mature managers' experience in a form of coaching/mentoring schemes?”*

Major obstacles discussed include a lack of time, the fact that senior managers are out of touch and not very technologically aware and the idea that senior human capital are looking forward to retirement and would not want to be part of such programs.

Question 8: *“If your company is interested in adopting coaching/mentoring schemes based on the use of mature managers experience what would be the most preferred type of cooperation: full time, part-time employment or on the temporary contract basis?”*

Respondents chose mainly temporary/subcontracting, due to cost issues.

## **APPENDIX B** - Interview results for target group organizations

Question 1: *“To what extent is your organization involved in design and delivery of training programs directed to groups threatened by low or lack of employability (because of age, competencies etc.) with special attention to 45+ managers?”*

All interviewees answered yes to having training programs directed to groups threatened by low or lack of employability, however none specifically designed for 45+ managers. However, they include this target group in other categories, such as “IT skills for the elderly” and training programs for managerial skills in general.

Question 2: *“What was the nature of programs already delivered by your organization to groups threatened by low employability?”*

The programs discussed mainly focused on youth, youth counselling, career guidance, initial training for no and low skilled individuals, ICT training. There is a large market available for these programs with high interest.

Question 3: *“What is the experience of your organization in implementing forms of training support for groups threatened by unemployment, based on the implementation of coaching/mentoring concept?”*

High experience on all counts, as the target group was intentionally selected in this direction to have involvement in VET, and frequently use mentoring in this context.

Question 4: *“What is the experience of your organization in implementing programs of support for groups threatened by unemployment aiming at the change of occupation, planning career paths, professional development planning”*

Interviewed organizations claim to offer career guidance programs for the youth and initial training programs for those changing career paths at any age. Some have skill assessment programs and training recommendations based on skill assessments, targeted mostly at anyone starting a new career either after graduation from school, or upon leaving a former career.

Question 5: *“What were the outcomes of the programs already delivered to groups threatened by low employability?”*

Organizations boast a high success rate both in career guidance and in training skills and competencies for new careers, especially with young target groups and ICT skills but also with soft skills and disadvantaged groups.

Question 6: *“What were the conclusions (evaluations) regarding learning process and program delivery coming as a result of implementation of programs directed to groups threatened by low employability?”*

Conclusions are mostly that program delivery needs to be fast and efficient, long programs fail quickly, and that clear results and validation need to be stated and advertised from day 1, as the market is saturated with no-result training and potential users are sceptical.

Question 7, 8 and 9: *“What is the interest in your organization to gain more competency in using methodology based on the concept of coaching/mentoring directed to 45+ managers threatened by unemployment? What is your estimate demand for programs supporting 45+ managers through the development of their coaching/mentoring/consultancy competencies? What is the estimated number of managers who would be interested in the training program?”*

These questions are related, as there is a clear connection between the opinion that demand exists and the desire to provide an offer. Over half the interviewees consider

that there is a demand, and therefore are interested in providing the offer. Of those who believe there is a demand, the average number of potential managers is around 5 to 10 immediately available, and a possibility to find that same number again on a recurring basis.

Question 10, 11: *“What is the level of experience of the teaching staff of your organization to work with mature learners (45+)? How does your organization prepare the teaching staff to work with mature learners (45+)?”*

Answers were few as the VET organizations don't have specific programs for managers over 45 and instead just include them in regular programs, and therefore do not prepare staff especially for this target group.

Question 12: *“What is the estimate number of teaching staff that could participate in the adaptation of the training program for 45+ managers in improving their coaching/mentoring competency as an option for strengthening their (self)employment potential?”*

About half of the organizations interviewed said they would be willing to use 2 or 3 members of staff part-time for this purpose.

Question 13: *“How would you design such program in terms of the teaching methodology?”*

Interviewees insist that ICT tools used should be simple, straightforward and reminiscent of classical paper training, if they are included at all. They mentioned active learning, learning by doing and study visits as the biggest draws for this target group.

## **APPENDIX C - Interview results for stakeholders**

Question 1: *“Do companies recognize problems in maintaining employability of mature and ageing workers?”*

This was answered with no, because more focus is put on youth who have very visible problems.

Question 2: *“To what extent are companies interested in developing programs for mature workers equipping them with competences necessary to keep their employability?”*

Companies are not very interested, and prefer to get rid of mature workers quickly because they are considered to be a hazard and unreliable. If there is a little interest, it lies in the area of obtaining qualification for extremely valuable managers and helping them pass information forward to the “inheritors” of the company.

Question 3 and 4: *“What is your organization's involvement in managerial competency development targeted to adult/mature workers (45+)? How would you evaluate engagement of companies and organizations in competency development activities directed to mature workers (in particular 45+ managers)?”*

No special program for this target group, they are included in other programs and can participate in regular managerial competency development courses for any age. Companies don't direct activities to this specific target group either, with very rare exceptions of expensive private courses.

Question 5: *“To what extent companies and organizations adopt competencies management strategies that are based on the use of experience of mature workers – coaching and mentoring programs?”*

The experience of mature workers is frequently used in an informal setting through mentoring the younger, newer employees, however this happens mainly when the older generation are about to be replaced or retired, and an exchange of experiences rarely happens before then.

Question 6 and 7: *“How would you estimate interest of companies and organizations in programs for mature managers? How would you estimate interest of companies and organizations in using programs and schemes based on coaching and mentoring from mature managers?”*

Organizations would be willing to use such programs as long as the financial involvement wasn't too demanding, and the term mentoring is very familiar and trusted to them. They tend to be more open towards receiving training from external trainers rather than their own employees. The main reason to use such programs is for the training of youth and to prevent informational loss from one generation to the next.

Question 8: *“What are the major factors/obstacles/benefits that affect the interest of companies and organizations in the use of mature managers' experience in a form of coaching/mentoring schemes?”*

Major factors include cost, lack of staff available for becoming trainers and distrust of training methods that do not provide accreditation or validation of results.

Question 9: *“If company is interested in adopting coaching/mentoring scheme based on the use of mature managers experience what would be the most preferred type of cooperation: full time, part-time employment or on the temporary contract basis?”*

Subcontracting, as hiring full time is impossible and positions are blocked in many cases, and subcontracting provides a clear contract of costs/results which can be used to justify the need.

Question 10, 11: *“What can be done to increase awareness of companies and organizations about problems of employment sustainability in aging population? What can be done to encourage companies to prepare and implement programs aimed at cooperation between different age generations?”*

Increasing awareness and encouragement of cooperation can be as simple as providing a solution which is trusted, backed internationally, coming from good sources and with good methodology, verifiable, and offering a clear statement of results. Encouraging companies to prepare programs by themselves is unlikely, not without external support from a trainer.

Question 12, 13: *“Would you involve yourself as an organization to promote the «Developing senior human capital and promoting active aging through teaching and coaching» project addressed to mature workers (45+managers) and companies? What kind of support would your organization offer to promote this project?”*

Yes, once they are fully informed and secure that they are supporting a good product the stakeholders can promote it internally and through newsletters and the chamber of commerce newspaper. They can also offer advice on promotional tactics for the target group, and information on any competing offers.