

A strategy for future knowledge intensive transport SMEs

KNOW-IN. Knowledge-Intensive Freight Transport SMEs.

**For a new generation of smart, sustainable and inclusive oriented Road
transport managers**

PROJECT NUMBER - 517589-LLP-1-2011-1-ES-LEONARDO-LMP

Co-funded by

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME (2007-2013)



This is one of the actions of KNOW IN project which has been funded with support from the European Commission. This document reflects the views only of the project partners, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This deliverable presents the profile of the new Road manager defined according to the summarized results of the field research in comparison the findings of the desk. The analysis is intended to reveal both the opportunities and constraints characterising the EU freight road transport sector.

The document is an attempt to illustrate the basic competencies needed by Road managers to adapt to changing environments; face recruitment and retention shortage; reduce the harmful emissions and become more environmentally friendly. It describes the main barriers/incentives met by companies in introducing innovative learning methods within the transport sector; main evidence based advantages of managing SMEs in a knowledge intensive way; possible benefits that could motivate companies to invest in training activities for improving knowledge and skills of the staff.

Based on the questionnaire developed especially to identify the main needs of the sectoral SMEs, the partners presented the results obtained during the field research (survey) at national level. This transnational report is an attempt to summarise the findings in order to outline a strategy for knowledge intensive road transport SMEs.

The contents of this document will be made available for the benefit of sectoral VET associations, consultants, project stakeholders and other interested parties.

Summary of the report

The objective of WP 2 was to outline the knowledge, skills and competences needed by road managers to implement a strategy for future knowledge intensive transport SMEs. The Know-In partners used two different approaches to find out the main barriers/incentives met by companies in introducing innovative learning methods within the transport sector; main evidence based advantages of managing SMEs in a knowledge intensive way; possible benefits that could motivate companies to invest in training activities for improving knowledge and skills of the staff.

The desk research summarised the new requirements to the road transport sector according to the EU standards and directives. Further more it accumulated facts showing the benefits of knowledge-intensive management of SMEs in general as well as the effects of the new ICT-based decentralised and independent learning on work place.

This overview on the road transport sector was complemented with an “inside” study through the survey carried out during the task of field research. The “theoretically-built” concept was checked in the practice of a number of respondents (sufficient and representative enough for the needs of the project) from companies/associations that differ in size, activities, level of operation (national and international), etc.

It turned out that the model of knowledge-intensive management in road transport sector is applied by only a few companies and that there are a lot of barriers for innovative learning. However, there are good practices as well as good ideas how to improve knowledge, skills and competences of road transport managers. It is a challenge for the KNOW-IN partners who based on the summarised results of research and the EQF specified for road managers should develop Info-training toolkit that will contribute to achieving the main goal of the project.

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1. FIELD RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

1.1. Motivation

The field research was aimed to explore the state-of-arts in the road transport related to the level of staff education and the existing experience of lifelong learning for managers. The expected result was to find out how the SMEs in the sector have been implementing or are going to implement a strategy to knowledge intensive management.

The project included as an important task information collection through a questionnaire especially developed for that purpose. The questions included were aimed to explore the state-of-the-arts related to the current demands of lifelong learning in order to create “ideal road transport managers” capable to apply European requirements and implement successful strategies for competitiveness of their companies on the transport market.

Another purpose of the field research was to reveal the attitude of road transport companies to staff training on the working place and the degree to which they have promoted lifelong learning as well as how they will encourage the use innovative learning tools.

1.2. Objectives

The survey was intended to investigate staff training demands within the whole range of players in the road transport sector aiming:

- to map the existing practices in terms of training of professionals;
- to identify the necessary knowledge, skills and competences;
- to examine which main social and technical skills are needed to perform one’s job as a knowledge-intensive “road transport manager”.

The main objectives of this task were to determine and to evaluate:

- Administrative / compliance
- Business management
- Planning activities
- Dealing with customers
- Dealing with staff and drivers
- Vehicles maintenance
- Communication
- Personal skills
- Coordination

As a result, the information collected should assist to determine the basic needs of the managers employed by road transport companies/associations in life-long learning to improve their knowledge, skills and competences.

1.3. Methodology

The methodology of data collection included the following stages:

1.3.1. Determining the aims of data collection as a base for development

The results of the field research on national levels reported by the KNOW-IN partners were planned to serve as a basis for development the third deliverable included in WP2, namely D.2.3 entitled “A strategy for future knowledge intensive transport SMEs”.

The document should illustrate the main tasks/competencies needed by Road managers to adapt to changing environments; face recruitment and retention shortage; reduce the harmful emissions and become more environmentally friendly. It should describe the main barriers/incentives met by companies in introducing innovative learning methods within the transport sector; main evidence based advantages of managing SMEs in a knowledge intensive way; possible benefits that could motivate companies to invest in training activities for improving knowledge and skills of the staff.

1.3.2. Development of the questionnaire

This task was assigned to the VTU but the CORTE team contributed a lot to producing the final version. While compiling the set of questions, they considered different types of respondents (logistics companies, transportation companies, etc.).

The remarks of other partners had been also considered before the questionnaire was tested in a number of companies by interviews accomplished by the VTU and CORTE teams. As a result, the Belgian partners suggested small changes in the questionnaire contents.

After the questionnaire was approved by all KNOW-IN teams, it was translated into the national/official languages in the partner countries:

- *Bulgarian*
- *French*
- *Italian*
- *Norwegian*
- *Spanish*

1.3.3. Conducting of the survey as a feasibility activity

It was decided that each partner should send about 15 questionnaires filled in by appropriate respondents. The main way of surveying should be e-mailing or/and using telephone/SKYPE conversations. The partners also agreed that where possible, they would arrange few face-to-face interviews to profoundly reveal the state-of-the art and collect suggestions how to improve knowledge, skills and competences of road transport managers.

The questionnaire was sent by e-mails to different companies/associations including the 33 establishments, which had been registered as observatories in the project during the desk research. However, the number of the respondents is much less than expected. Due to the lack of enough time and the period of summer holidays, some companies did not reply to the e-mails received. Some managerial bodies neglected the request and refused to participate in the survey. Another reason not to answer the questions was most often formulated as “nothing remarkable to show” that could contribute to the purpose of the survey.

The respondents can be classified in two groups:

- managers who filled in the questionnaire and sent it back to KNOW-IN partners by e-mail (ordinary post);
- SMEs that were visited particularly by representatives of the KNOW-IN team and on-site interviewed.

The face-to-face interviews conducted gave a possibility to interviewers to get more profoundly acquainted with the specific problems and difficulties met by the SMEs related to improving the knowledge and skills of the staff.

Besides the questionnaires translated in national languages, the English text was used by international companies and associations and if preferred by respondents.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENTS

The questionnaire is divided into 11 sections. Nine of them were designed according to the information expected to acquire, so they form the core of questionnaire contents. The other two sections create its framework by opening (introduction) and closing (conclusion) the questionnaires.

The last section 11 called “Additional comments” gives a possibility for the respondents to express their opinions, recommendations and suggestions.

The main nine sections follow the classification of the knowledge, skills and competences covering the main working tasks of a KIRM (knowledge-intensive road manager):

- Administrative/compliance
- Planning activities
- Dealing with customers
- Dealing with staff and drivers
- Vehicles maintenance
- Communication
- Personal skills
- Coordination
- Business management

Each of these sections contains a number of questions that reveal the main knowledge and skills necessary for knowledge-intensive management of SMEs operation in road transport sector. Besides standard questions with multiple choice and yes-no answers, the questionnaire includes also the so-called “open answers”. It is an advantage for the interviewer who is able to get detailed opinions and suggestions related to the problems being a subject of the field research.

2.1. Identification

The first section is to collect general information about the company (name, size, main field of business, geographical area of operation) and the people interviewed (their position and the department they work at).

The information requested concerned the type of the respondents both as intuitions and employees.

The survey was not anonymous as it required writing the name of establishment. Also it was necessary to define:

- the size of the company (according to a table upgraded in the questionnaire);

- main field of business (Road transport company, Freight forwarding company, Logistics company, Company with large private transport, Other);
- geographical area of operation of your company (Home country, Europe outside the EU, European Union, Asia, Africa, Russia, Middle East, Other).

As for the personal respondents, the requested information related only to their position (Owner, Senior manager, Manager on intermediate level) and the department where they work:

- Human resources department
- Domestic transport department
- International transport department
- Other

2.2. Administrative/Compliance

The questions in this section were aimed to reveal the basic knowledge and skills necessary for the manager working in a road transport company. They related to:

- fiscal issues;
- foreign languages.

The language knowledge should have been specified to the basic ones spoken in Europe – English, French, German but the respondents could specify other languages they needed for their job.

The final question in this section was defined by the aim of the questionnaire – the training of the personnel to increase their knowledge in fiscal issues and languages. The yes/no answer prevented from further specification on the type of training.

2.3. Planning Activities

The information requested in this part concerned the employees' knowledge and skills necessary for planning activities:

- knowledge of technology and computers (specified to Microsoft Office programs, Internet, Emails, Basic software/applications);
- knowledge of the relevant legislation applicable in road transport sector (specified to Social legislation, Access to profession, Market regulation, Transport industry, Health and Safety).

2.4. Dealing with customers

To evaluate the performance of road transport managers related to customers, the survey included the following questions:

- Are customer service skills necessary across road transport managers/workers?
- What are the most important personal competences a road transport worker needs for dealing with customers?
- Does your company provide customer service training to staff?
- What personal skills do you believe will become more important for a Road transport worker in the next five years?

The rating of qualities necessary to establish and maintain good relations with customers should have been done by choosing 5 of 17 (Friendly, Determined, Reliable, Calm, Diplomatic, Inspiring, Direct, Observant, Patient, Courageous, Optimistic, Language proficient, Flexible, Uses initiative for problem solving. Unbiased, Honest, Knowledgeable).

2.5. Dealing with Staff and Drivers

To identify the skills necessary to keep healthy working climate, the questions concerned the abilities to handle stressful situations and take criticism, knowledge of the legislation on alcohol and recognition of drug usage in practice. The evaluation had to be done in four-degree rating scale.

2.6. Vehicle Maintenance

This section contains questions related to knowledge of common technical problems appearing in vehicles as well as of specific systems such as:

- Vehicle and trailer tracking system
- Onboard communication systems
- Computerised vehicles routeing and scheduling
- Satellite navigation systems
- Track and trace systems
- Paperless documentation
- Customs clearance

2.7. Communication

The demand to evaluate the communication skills by a four-degree scaled is followed by a question if the respective company measures the communication skills of new recruits. If the answer is “yes”, the respondents are asked to specify how it is done. Finally, the respondents have to determine if a road manager needs to learn the techniques of conflict management.

2.8. Personal Skills

The information requested in this section is of more general nature. It has to present the educational background of road transport managers in the company subjected to that survey in terms of the following levels:

- Master degree (5-7 years of higher education)
- Bachelor degree (3-5 years of higher education)
- Other higher level education
- Vocational education
- Other secondary education
- Other

The same scale is used further to ask what the ideal background of a road transport manager is in terms of minimum education. In terms of minimum work experience the possible answers are only four:

- More than 10 years
- More than 5 years
- More than 2 years
- Irrelevant

Special accent is put on the international work experience or other equivalent experience from foreign countries, which is important because of the international nature of road transport. Also, there is a question if the practical experience as a driver within the company or another firm could be considered as an additional asset.

2.9. Coordination

This section contains questions:

- if the company provided training for your road transport managers by Seminars, Workshops, Training at another department, Other;
- what the percentage of road transport managers in the company who have attended any training in the last five years is;
- if there are currently available training programmes for freight road transport and logistics adequate in addressing the needs of road transport managers;
- if in the near future it will be necessary to provide additional training to the staff in order to increase their competence in freight road transport;
- to describe the form of training;

- which areas staff/managers will require further training in (selection is made among Organisational skills, Management, New technologies, Staff Management, Traffic safety, Transport engineering, Dangerous goods, Routing of vehicles, Logistics);
- what type of training would be appropriate to road transport managers in the respective company (selection is made among External courses/workshops, Distance learning, Hybrid distance training: face-to-face exam; Evening classes; Weekend training; Other – the latter should be specified)
- which areas of knowledge are important given the specifics of the business (selection is made among Law carriage contracts and in particular the responsibility of the carrier; Professional competence for international road transport; Professional competence for national road transport; Business and financial management of the enterprise; Market access and carriage contracts; Traffic Safety; International regulatory regime; Health and safety conditions of labour /workforce; Transportation of dangerous goods by road; Transport of dangerous goods in tanks; Transport of explosive substances and articles; Transportation of radioactive materials; Working with digital tachograph and appliance with the requirements of Regulation 561/2006/EU (Driving & Resting Times for commercial drivers); Knowledge and compliance of the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence EU Directive 2003/59; Logistics; Methods and models for optimizing the routing of vehicles: theory of traffic flows, GIS; Warehouse processes management; Supply chain management; Distribution (Physical distribution);

The respondents were asked to make assessment on how staff training benefits the company through the following results (from 1=not important to 5=very important):

- Employee satisfaction increases.
- Company reputation improves.
- Untrained employees benefit by working alongside trained workers.
- Staff training signals that the company values its workforce.
- Staff retention increases.
- Productivity gains are greater than wage increases.
- Innovation increases.
- Employees are trained to the exact purposes of the company.

Special questions were included to find out if the company/association offers internship for students in the companies (describing the form) and for the number of university graduates expected to employ within 3 periods (a year, 3 years and 5 years).

2.10. Business management

A four-degree rating should be given to the question if Road transport worker should acquire knowledge of market relations and business management. The descriptive part (open answer question) is related the requirements to a Road transport manager in terms of business management.

2.11. Additional comments

The last section 11 called “Additional comments” gives a possibility for the respondents to express their opinions, recommendations and suggestions.

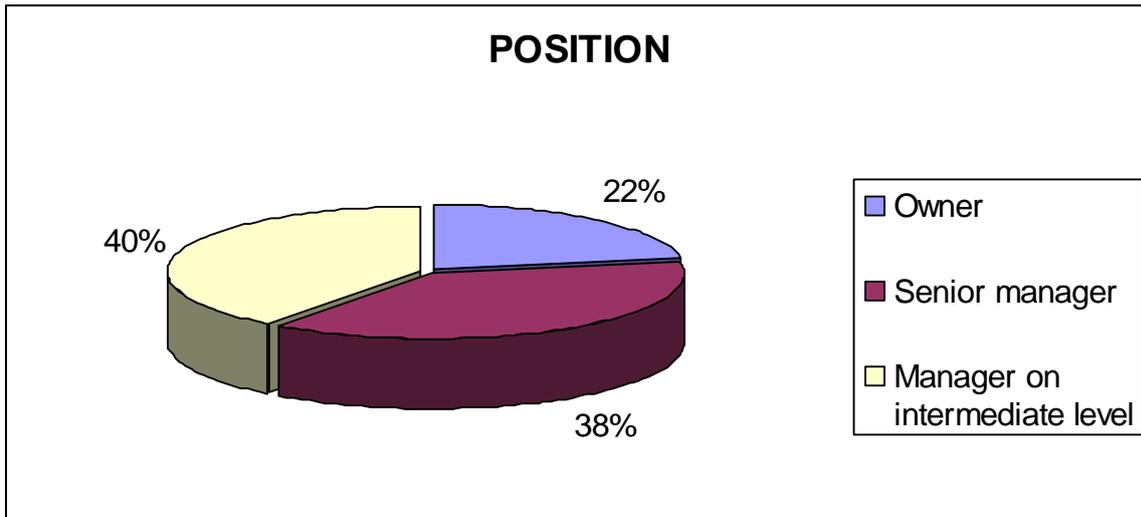
Besides this closing part, other sections also contain a number of questions that are not of the multiple choice and yes-no types but of the so-called “open answers”. It gives a possibility to get detailed opinions and suggestions related to the problems being researched.

3. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

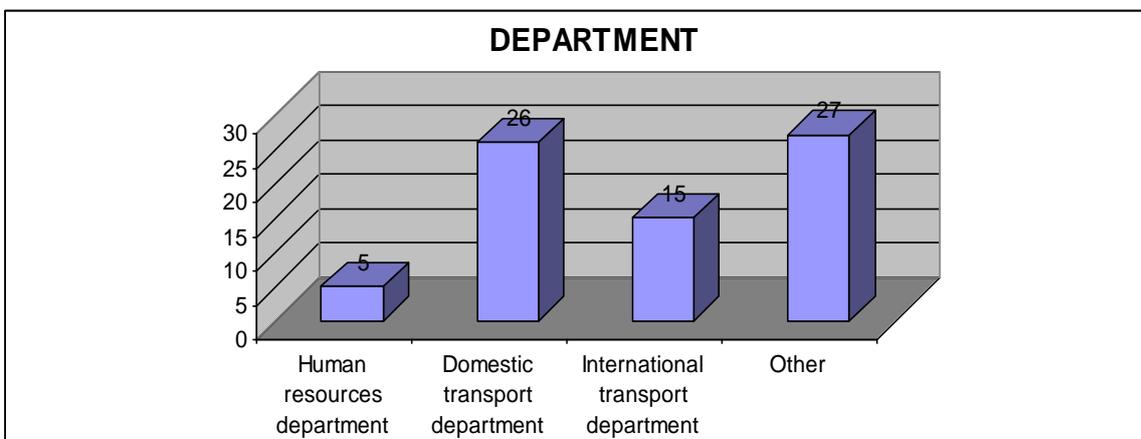
3.1. Identification

The number of respondents is 74 (UK-26, IT-18, BG-17, ES-13).

Most of participants in the survey work as managers, half being senior managers. The owners are twice less in comparison to each group of managers but it should be emphasized that in the micro enterprises they perform the tasks of an executive manager (CEO).

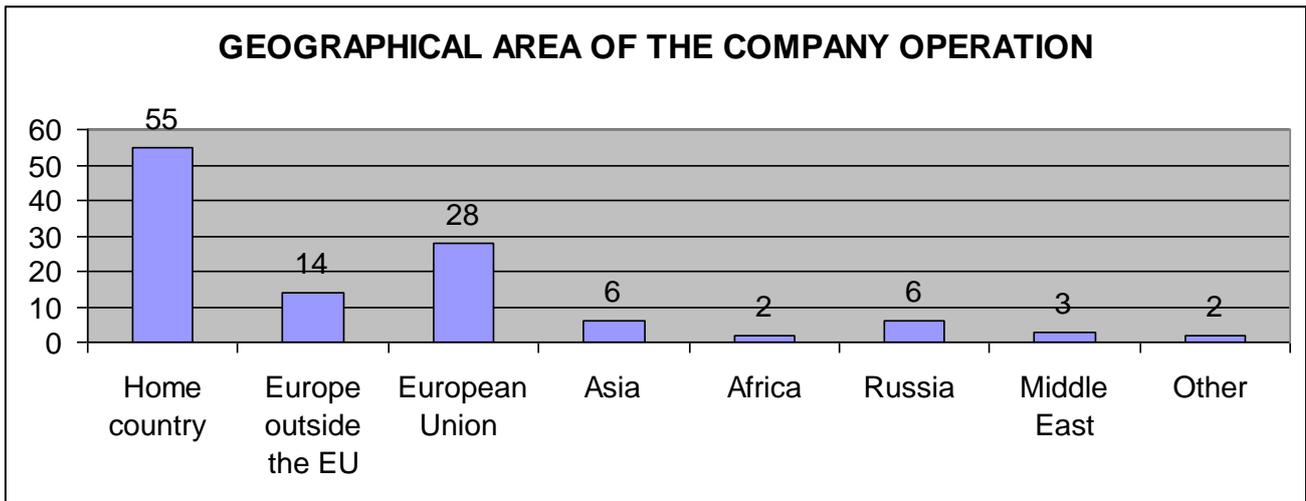
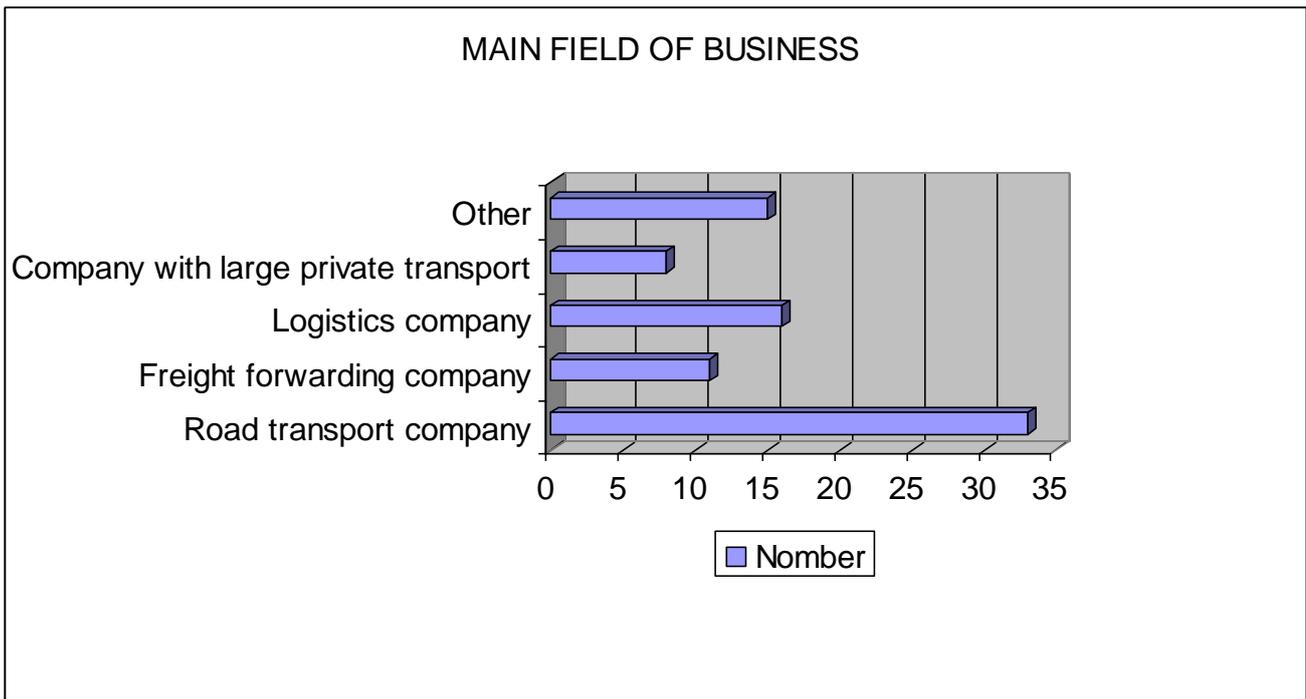


The analysis has shown that the participants in the survey work mainly in departments for domestic and international transports. The data collected by this questionnaire would have been more representative if more respondents had been from HR departments. The percentage of people who are responsible for staff qualification and promotion in companies is quite low – only 5 %.

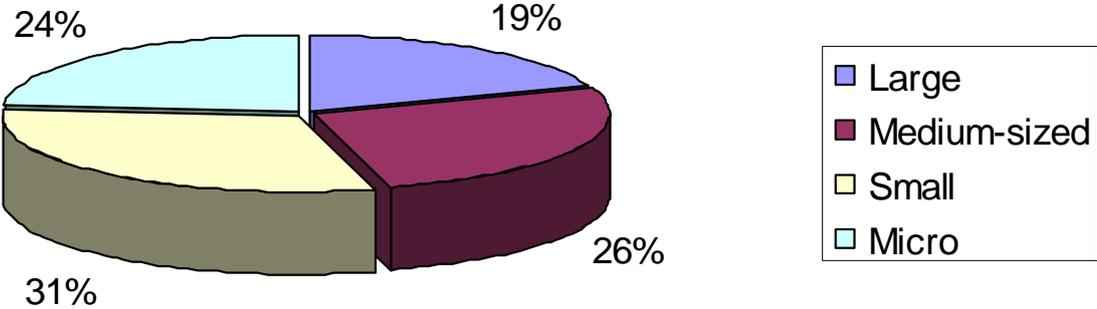


As for the main features of companies/associations presented through the questionnaire, they can be summarized as follows:

- according to the main field of business, one third of the total number are road transport companies and 15% are logistics companies;
- according to the geographical area, more than half of the total number of companies operate within their home country, 28 % in the EU and 14% in other European regions, so only a few are world-wide players in the road transport market;
- according to the size, SMEs including micro companies are 81%, which coincides with the aim to outline a strategy for this group leading to knowledge intensive management.

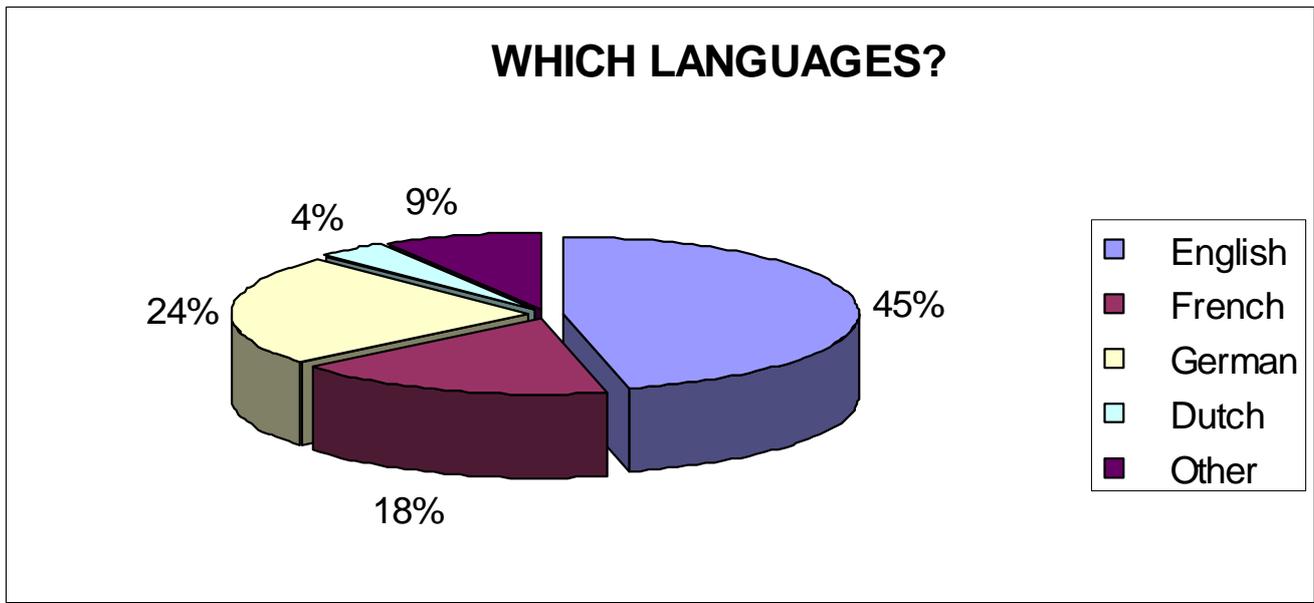


SIZE OF THE COMPANY



3.2. Administrative/Compliance

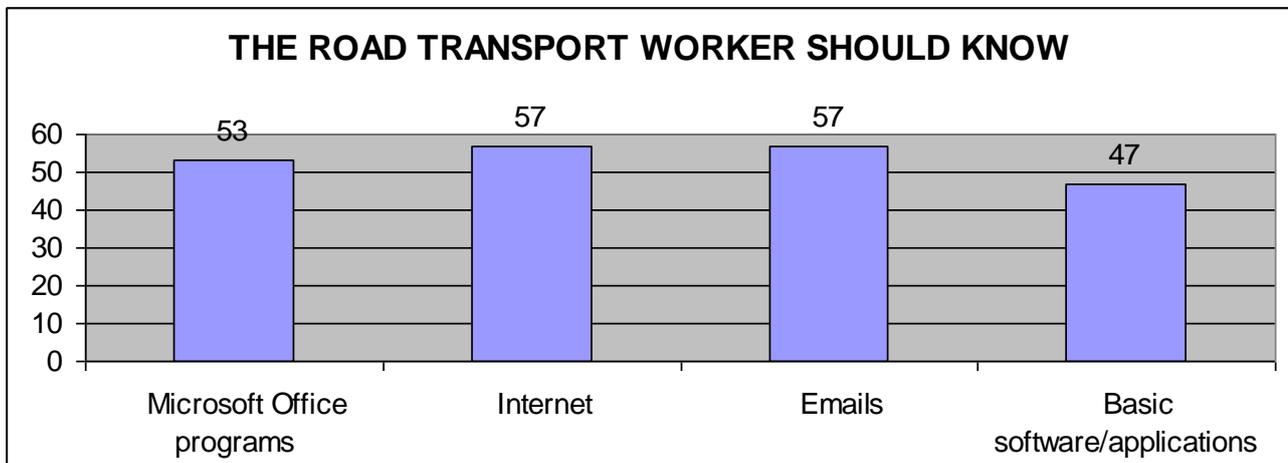
Most respondents (62) think that a road manager should have knowledge on fiscal issues 62, while those who recognize the necessity to communicate in other language than the working language of the company are much less – 42. The latter have put English at the top rating followed by German and French. Among the others, the specified language is Spanish.



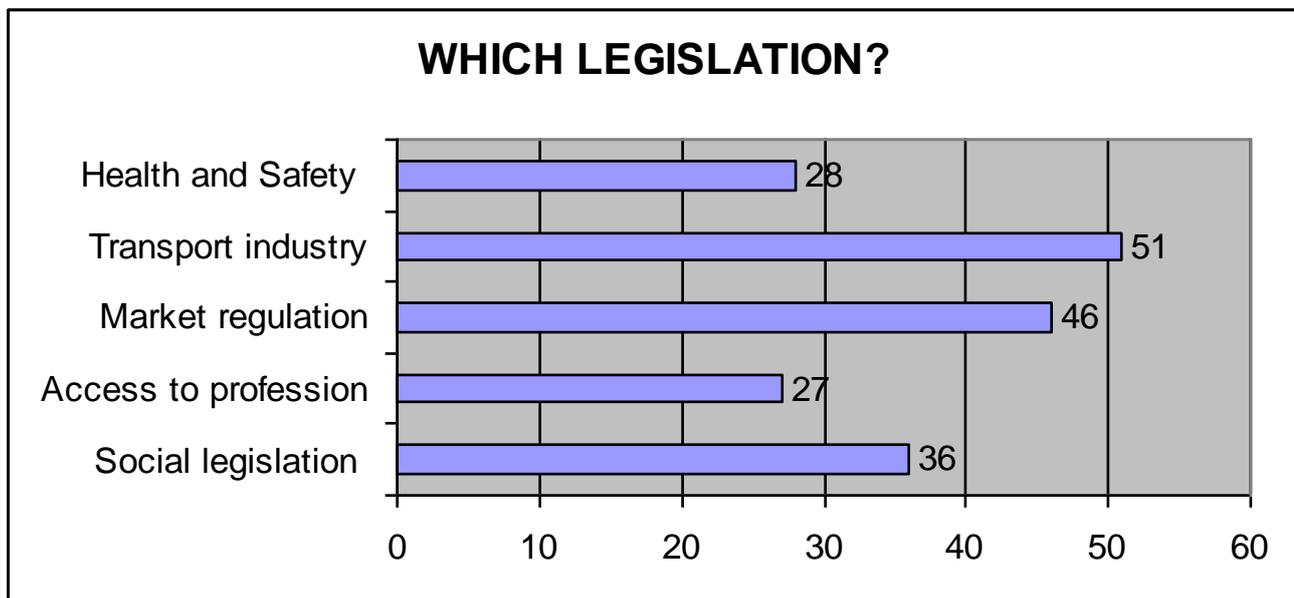
However, the question if the company supports the training in this regard has received nearly twice less positive answers (24) than the number of “NOs” – 41.

3.3. Planning Activities

More than half of the respondents are convinced that computer knowledge is necessary including the ability to use Internet, e-mails, Microsoft Office and other applications.

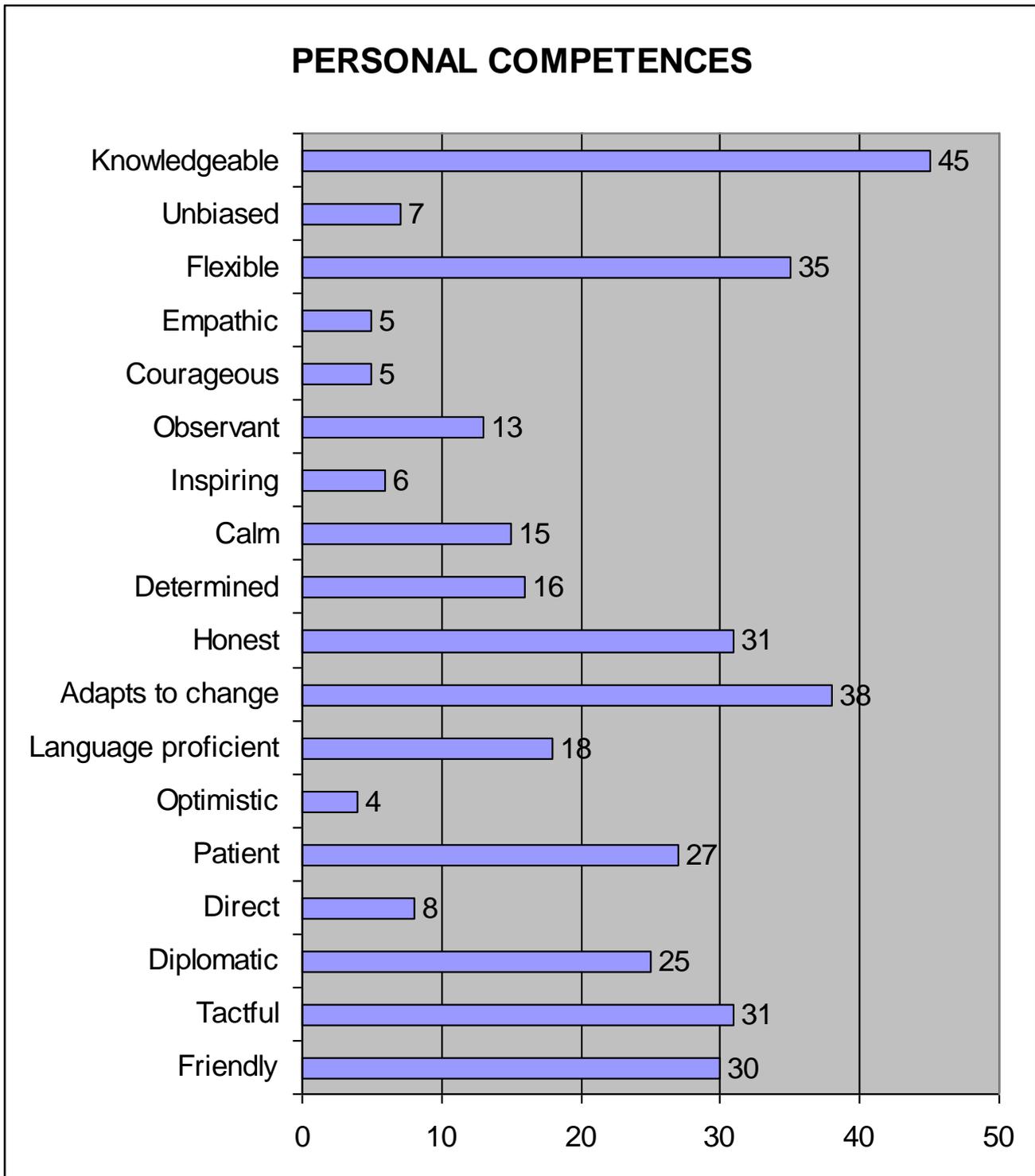


To know legislation applicable in road transport sector was pointed as necessary by 63 of the respondents who put first the regulations on transport industry followed by market regulations.



3. 4. Dealing with customers

The skills necessary for customer service are assessed as necessary by 62 respondents, which make more than 80%. The most important personal competences, which a road transport worker needs (5 chosen among 17) are to be knowledgeable, able to adapt and flexible. It is also highly appreciated to be honest, tactful and friendly.



Unlike the language training, the bigger part of companies that participated in the survey reported that they provided customer service training to they staff (Yes - 44; No -24).

The skills anticipated to become more important for a road transport worker in the next five years, are described with such key words as activity, expertise, flexibility, communication skills, problem solving, “thinking outside the box”, innovative. The main skills pointed in the survey by countries are:

Bulgaria – *communication*, activity, *expertise* in logistics, ability to define specific needs;

Spain – computers and languages *communication*; patient, initiative and training; flexible; legislation overall in work contracts; social; training and experience; availability;

UK – common sense approach, understanding of the job and a commitment to getting the job done as trained, good *communication* skills, *flexibility*, ability to adapt to and embrace changes and challenges;

Italy – skills focused on customer: “*Be Polite and Courteous. Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself. Remember you are my Ambassador so far as my Customer is concerned*”.

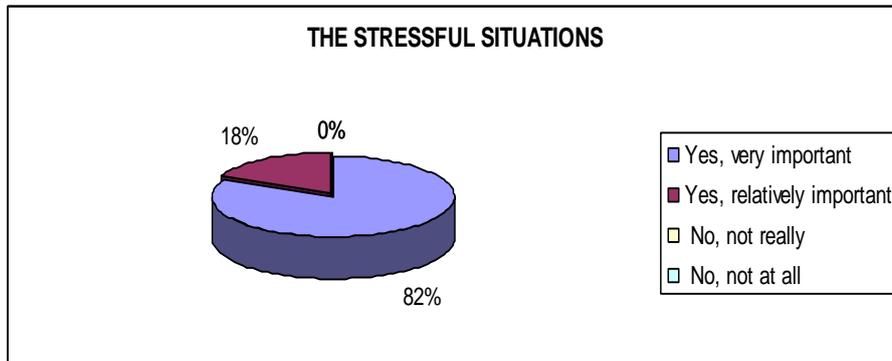
The personal skills necessary for road managers in future can be summarised as follows:

1. To be ready for change - adaptability
2. To be adaptable/flexible towards staff
3. Keeping abreast of currant legislation
4. Better financial understanding and impacts individuals can make on the bottom line
5. Entrepreneurial and able to motivate people at all levels.
6. Keeping customers happy, reliability.

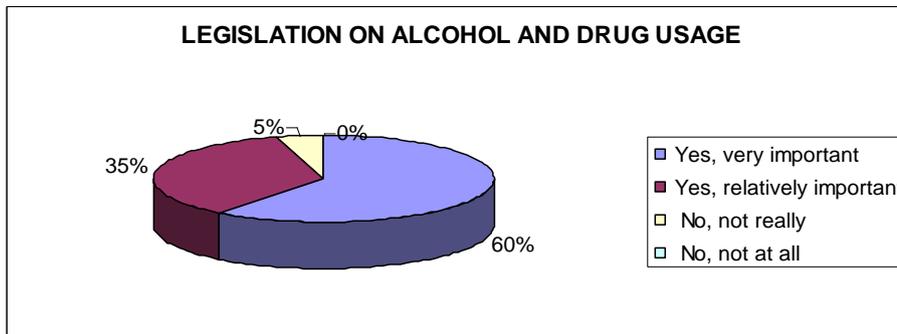
Some of the Italian companies emphasized also on learning foreign languages and sector legislation, which as mentioned above, are areas of training underestimated by employees.

3. 5. Dealing with staff and drivers

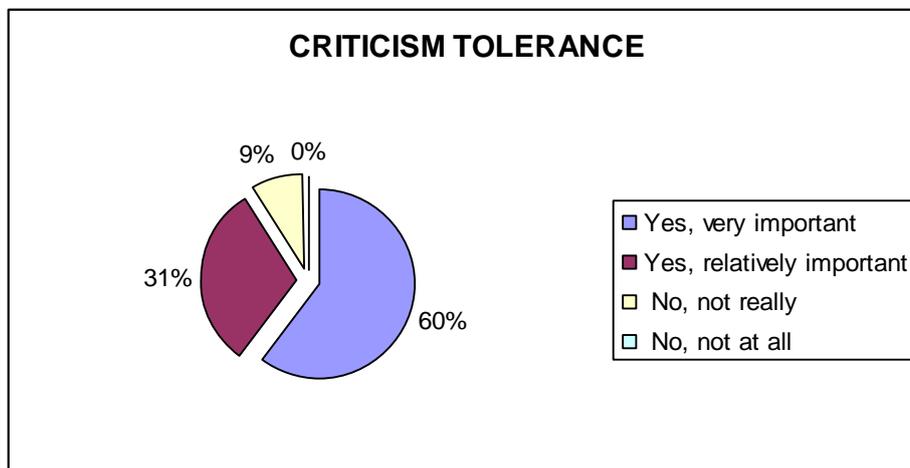
What is the most important for the road manager is to be able to cope with stressful situation. This answer was expected having in mind the dynamic work conditions in the road transport sector.



The participants in the survey are convinced that the road transport manager should know the legislation on alcohol and drug usage and recognise such usage in practice.

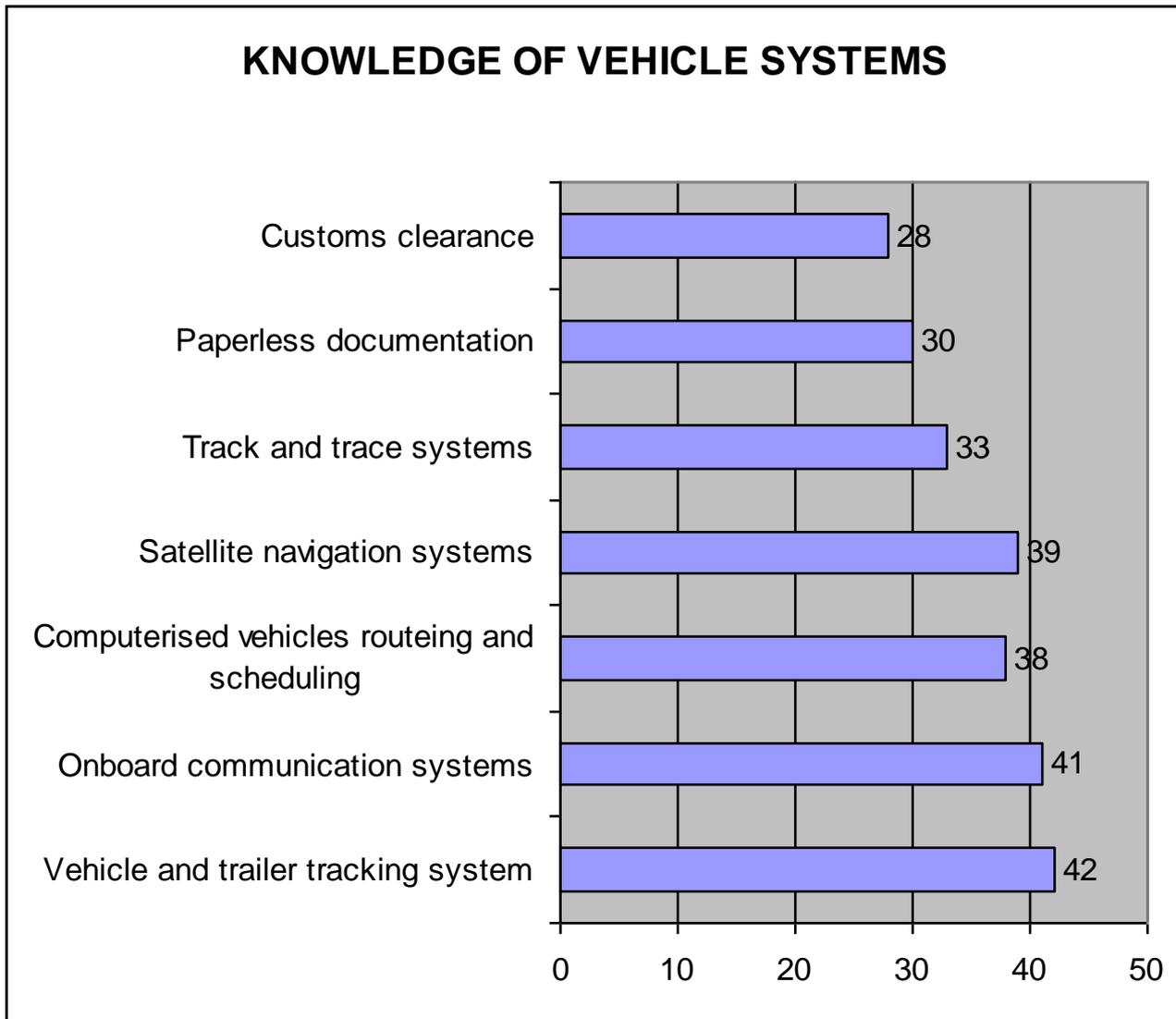


The results summarized for the ability to take criticism are almost the same:



3.6. Vehicle Maintenance

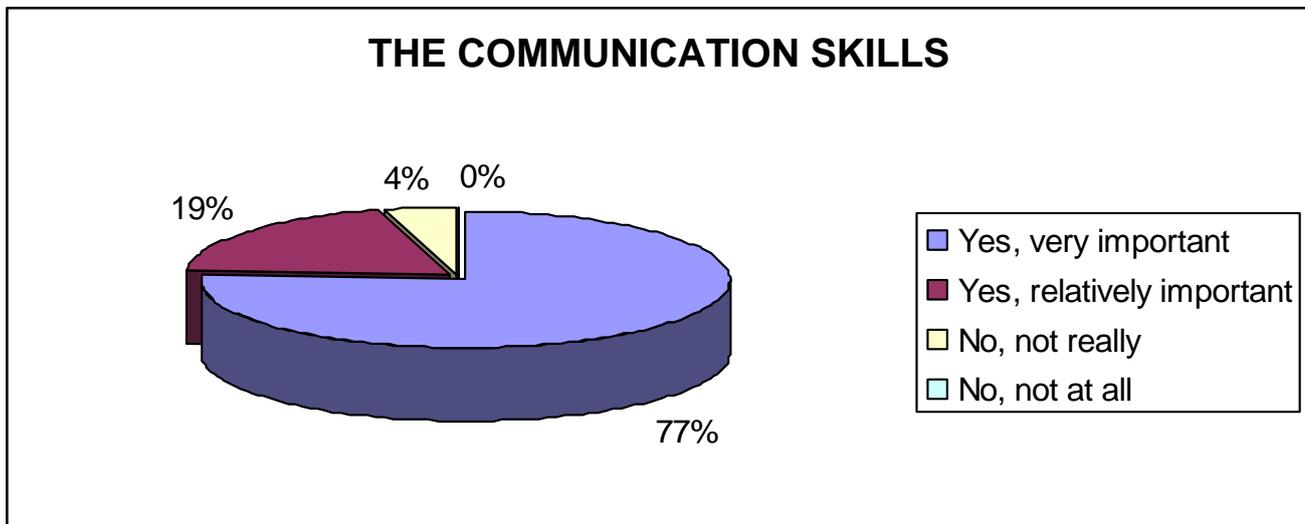
More than 75 % of respondents confirmed that a road transport manager has to have good knowledge of the common technical problems appearing in vehicles. The distribution of opinions on which systems are the most important to be especially acquainted with is as follows:



It is evident that the respondents highly estimated the devices based on ICT technologies such as vehicle and trailer tracking systems, onboard communication systems, computerized vehicle routing and scheduling, satellite navigation systems, etc. So, they should increase the knowledge in that area, which has already become a feature of the modern road transport.

3.7. Communication

The communication skills are considered very important to a road transport manager by more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents. However, only half of the companies that filled the questionnaire measure the communication skills of new recruits.

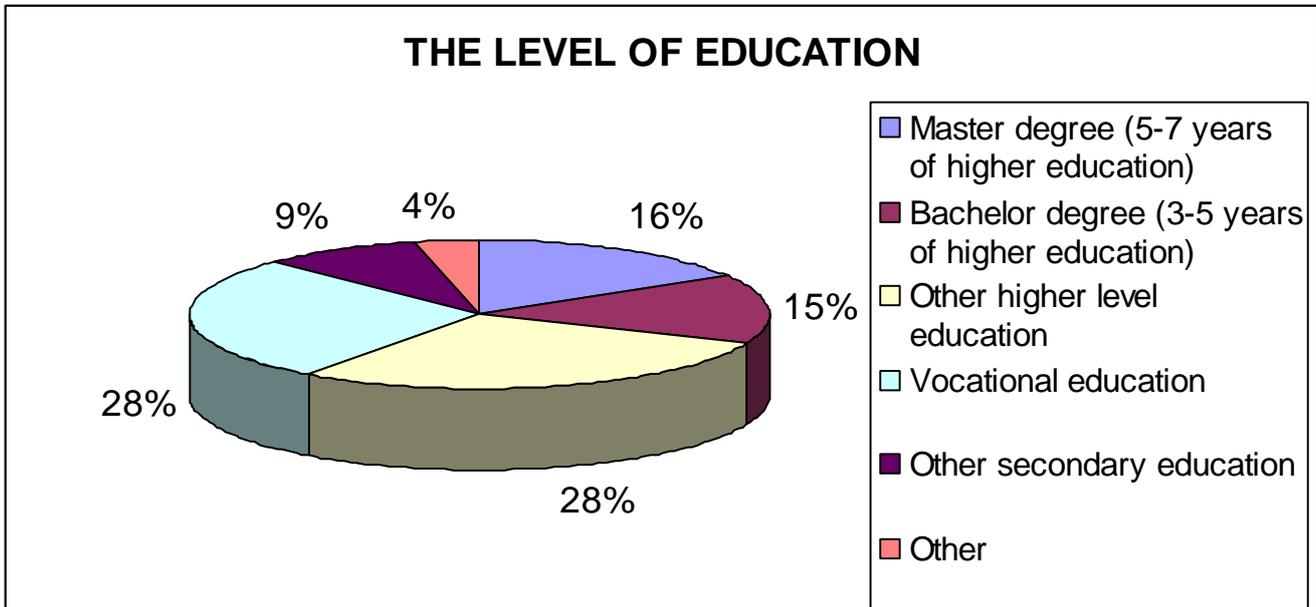


Being asked to specify how to do that, the respondents suggested to use appraisal procedures and pre-employment assessments, job interviews and conversations with the candidate, to conduct interactive meetings, observation and communication with clients and colleagues; Q&A session at interview, reasoning tests, feedback from customers, psychometric tests as part of the recruitment process, on line aptitude tests during initial interviews.

The analysis of the questionnaire result showed that 70% of the respondents are convinced in the necessity to know the techniques of conflict management (Yes - 53; No -15). This answer was not a surprise as well due to the nature of the job of road transport manager who has to work with people with different interests: staff and drivers on the one hand, and on the other customers.

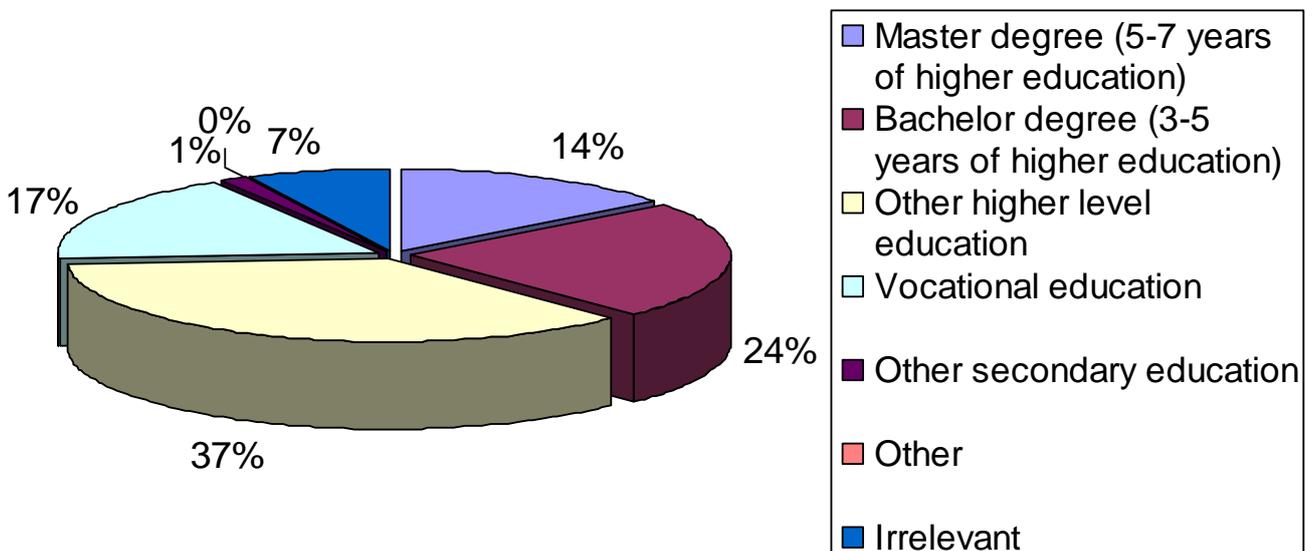
3. 8. Personal Skills

The level of education of the managers in the road transport companies is quite high – 59% of them are holders of university degree, 28% have appropriate vocational training.

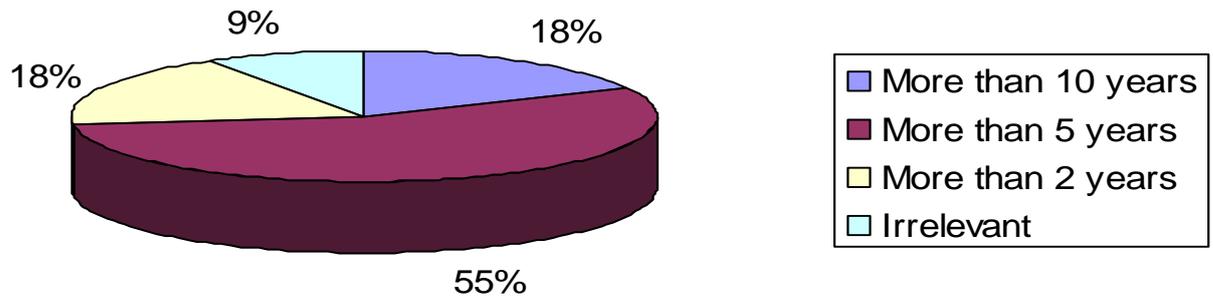


The ideal road transport manager described according to the survey results is a holder of a Diploma of higher education and with experience of at least 5 years. However, this experience is not necessarily to be international work experience or other equivalent experience from foreign countries (Yes- 29; No-37).

NECESSARY EDUCATION



NECESSARY WORK EXPERIENCE



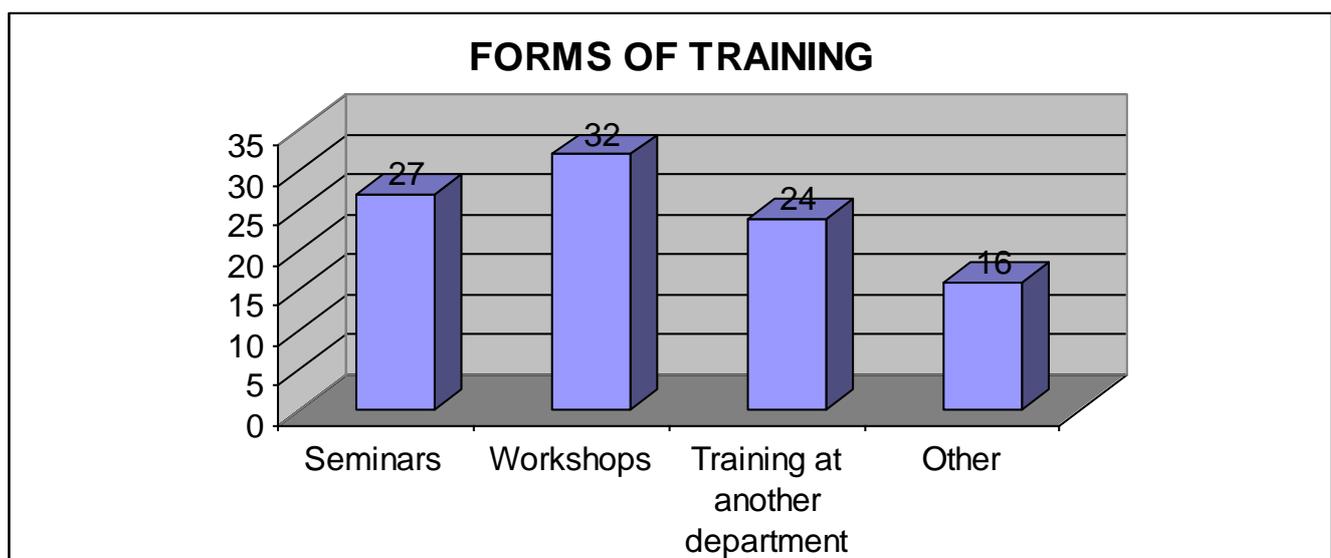
Opposite to this opinion, the practical experience as a driver within the company or another firm is considered as an additional asset for a road transport manager (Yes- 54; No -13).

3.9. Coordination

The forms of training that companies provide are most often of traditional type with a prevailing share of workshops. The percentage of “others” is relatively small but the forms specified by the companies from the UK are namely those that should be used preferably in future. They include:

- *using ICT technologies, which are the bases of modern flexible training,*
- *e-learning and m-learning,*
- *CPC training for drivers,*
- *email shots/posters/newsletters,*
- *driver CPC,*
- *SAFED.*

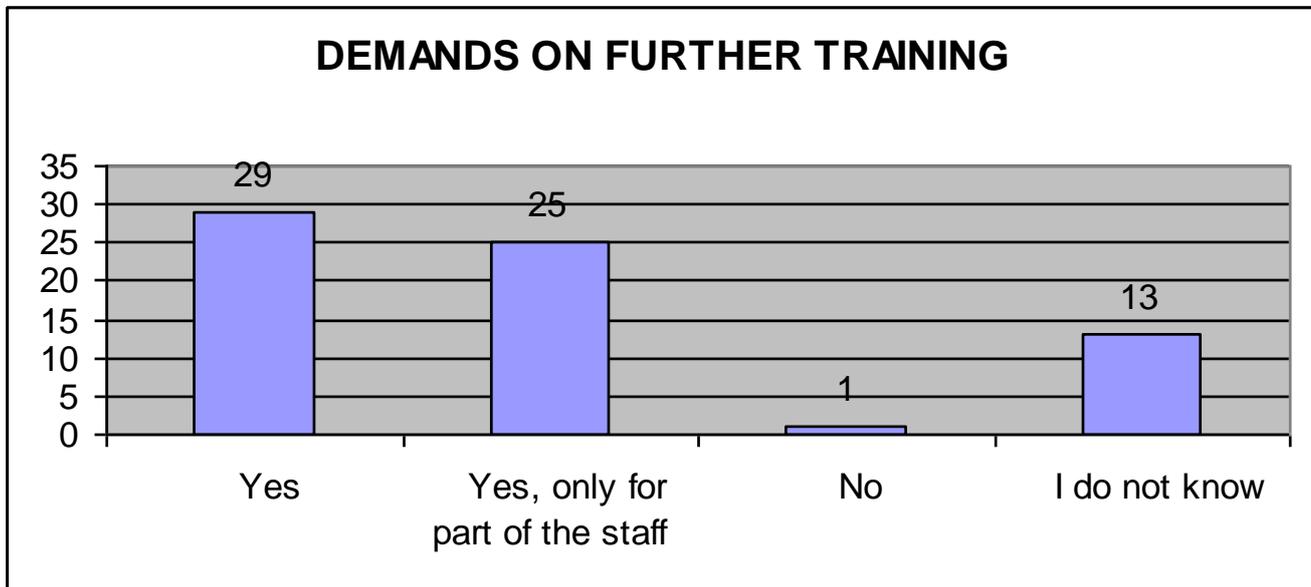
Some companies apply *on-the-job training*, practical time and monetary investment towards diploma, which is a stimulus for independent individual learning.



The percentage of road transport managers who have attended any training in the last five years varies per countries: from 5% to 100% for Bulgaria and Spain, from any to 100% in Italy. The highest percentage of people included in training was reported by the respondents from the UK where half of the interviewed companies have stated 100 % training for the staff, 1 – 95%, 1 – 80% and 5 – 50%, which outlined a steady policy towards knowledge-intensive management.

The question about assessment of the currently available training programmes for freight road transport and logistics is the only one that split the answers in a way that unsatisfactory opinions – 20 and answers “I do not know” – 28 are prevailing. The logical conclusion is that

the current training programs do not address the needs of road transport managers. So, the message sent to the companies sounds even more urgent while compared with the answers to the next question. Half of the respondents think that it will be necessary to provide additional training to all the staff or part of them in the nearest future.



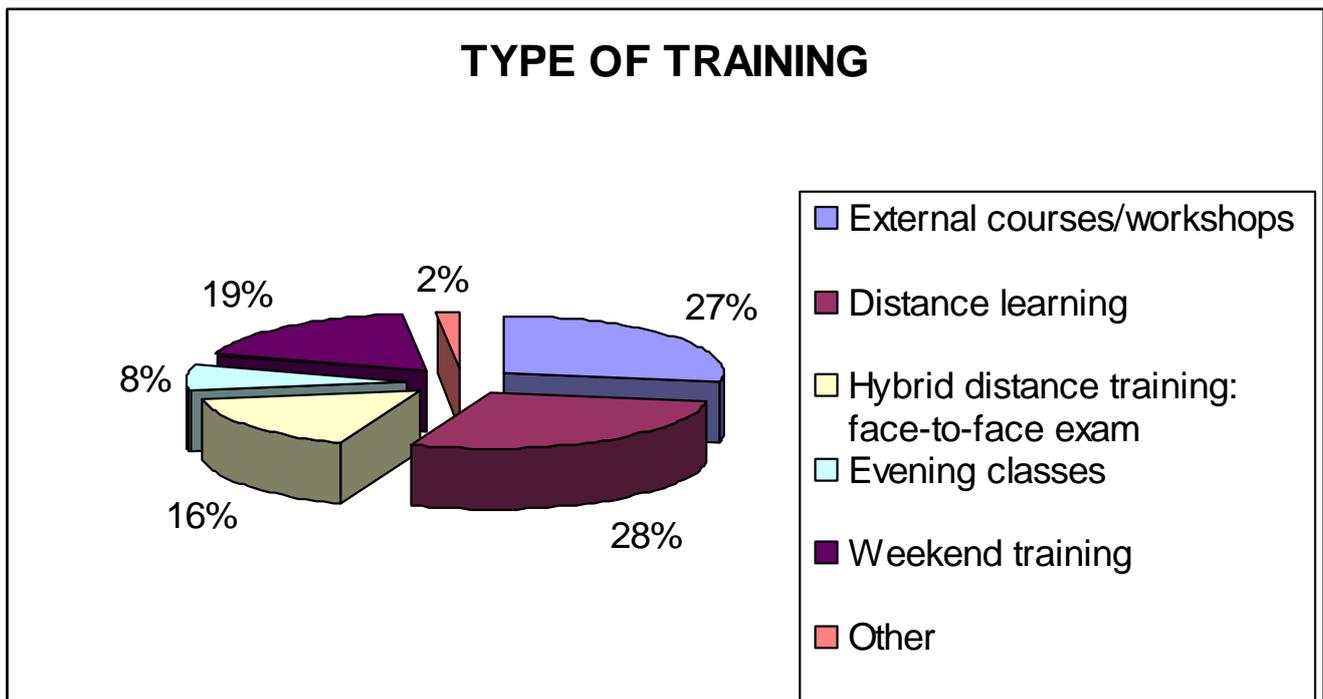
Concerning the form of training, some of the participants confused topics and forms. What they mentioned most often is e-learning, vocational training, academy/QCF quals, training for certificates of competence, licence acquisition, computer skills (SAGE).



The answers related to the areas of further staff/managers training give a possibility to outline a suitable curriculum that will meet their demands of road transport managers on knowledge and skills improvement. Nearly half of respondents confirmed that the most important areas are the new technologies, management and organizational skills.

The preferences to the type of training are quite balanced. Both traditional (classroom) education and flexible training are accepted as appropriate for road transport managers. However, contact learning is still more popular, which is evident if we sum up the percentages of external courses, evening and weekend classes (totally 54%).

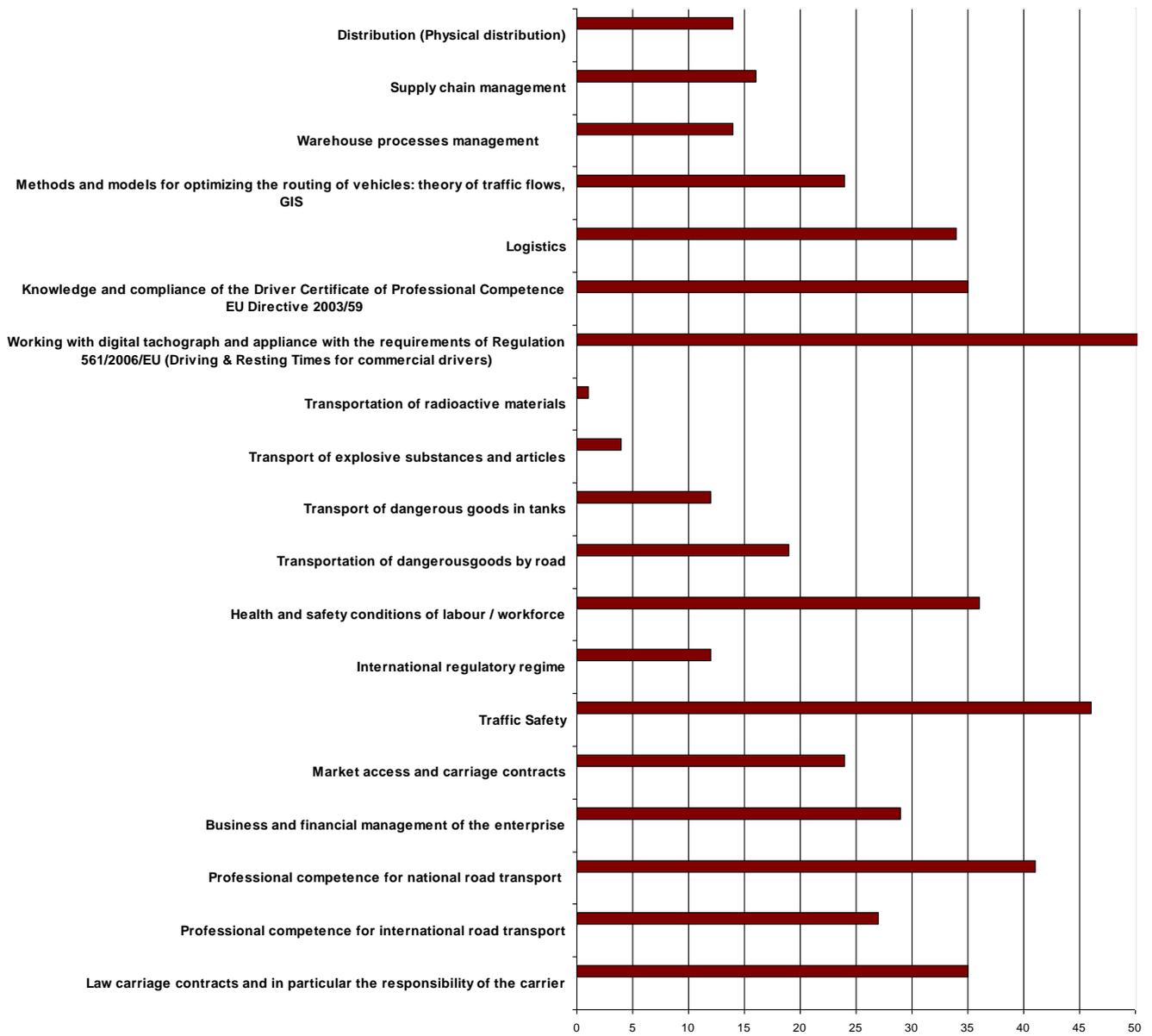
The share of distance learning in its pure form is just twice less (27%) but the tendency seems more optimistic in combination with hybrid training. This conclusion is important for further project activities including the development of teaching materials (handbook), which should suit to both classroom and flexible training.



Those who chose “Other” specified it in two ways: practical training (respondents from Bulgaria) and QCF – Qualifications and Credit Framework, the national credit transfer system for education qualification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (respondents from the UK).

The rating of areas of knowledge was made according to the company specificity but it has a general significance as well.

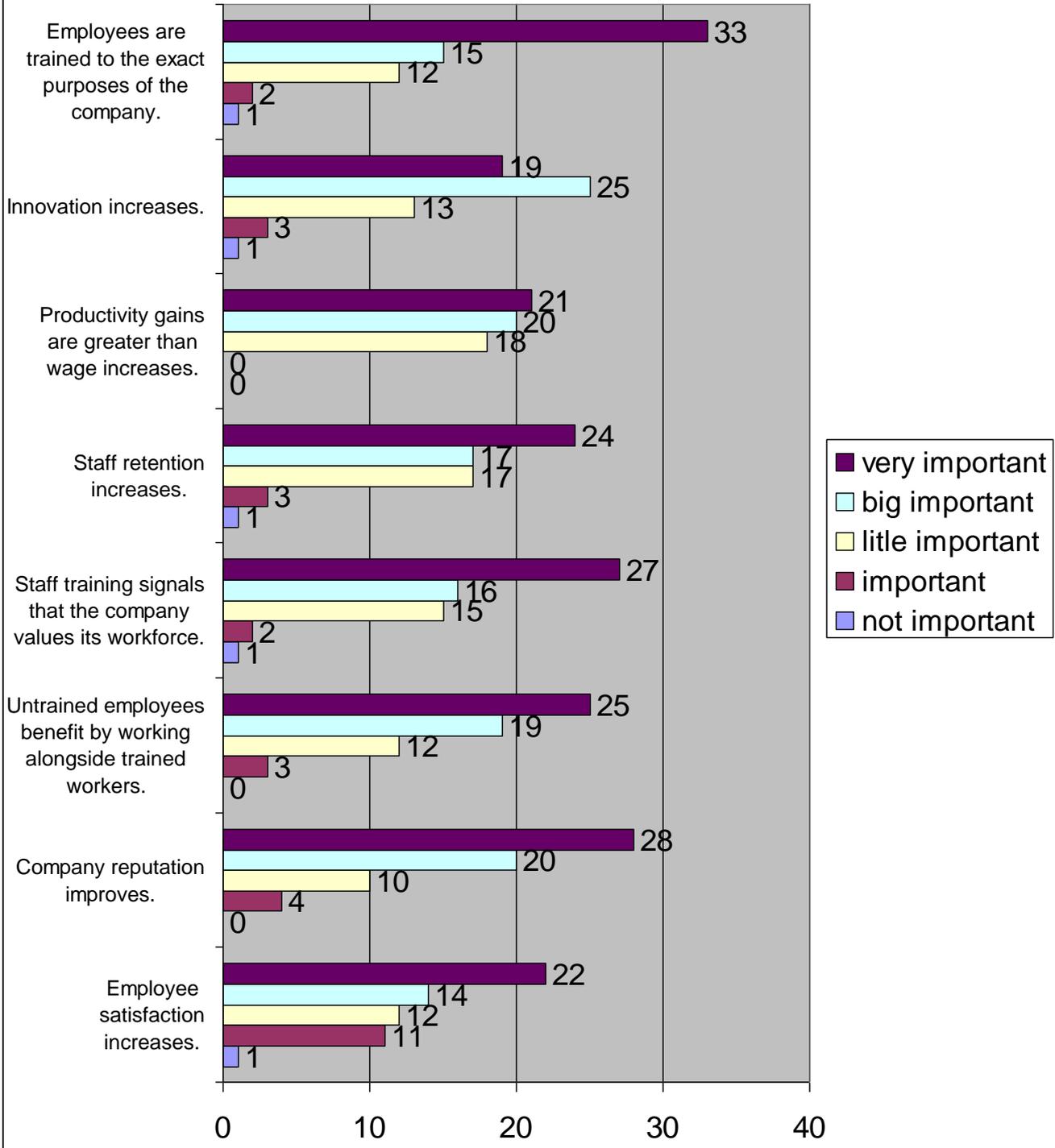
AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE



The greatest demand on training is related to digital tachographs and EU regulations, road safety, professional competence for national road systems, legal issues, healthy and safety conditions, logistics, business and financial management. The least interest is to transportation of radioactive materials (it happens rarely) and transportation of dangerous goods, which are a specific matter and a priority of training provided by national administrations.

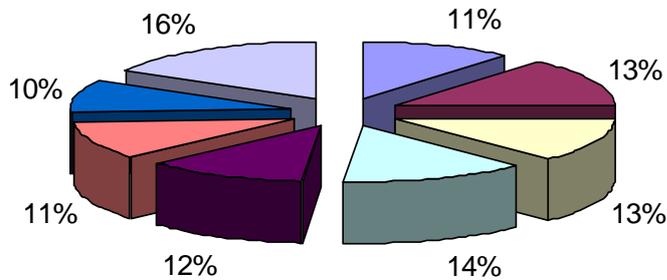
It is clear that training is in interest of employees but staff training is also of certain benefit to road transport companies. Only few did not evaluate the efforts in that aspect while most appreciate the use of training to increase effectiveness, innovations, staff retention, reputation.

BENEFITS OF TRAINING



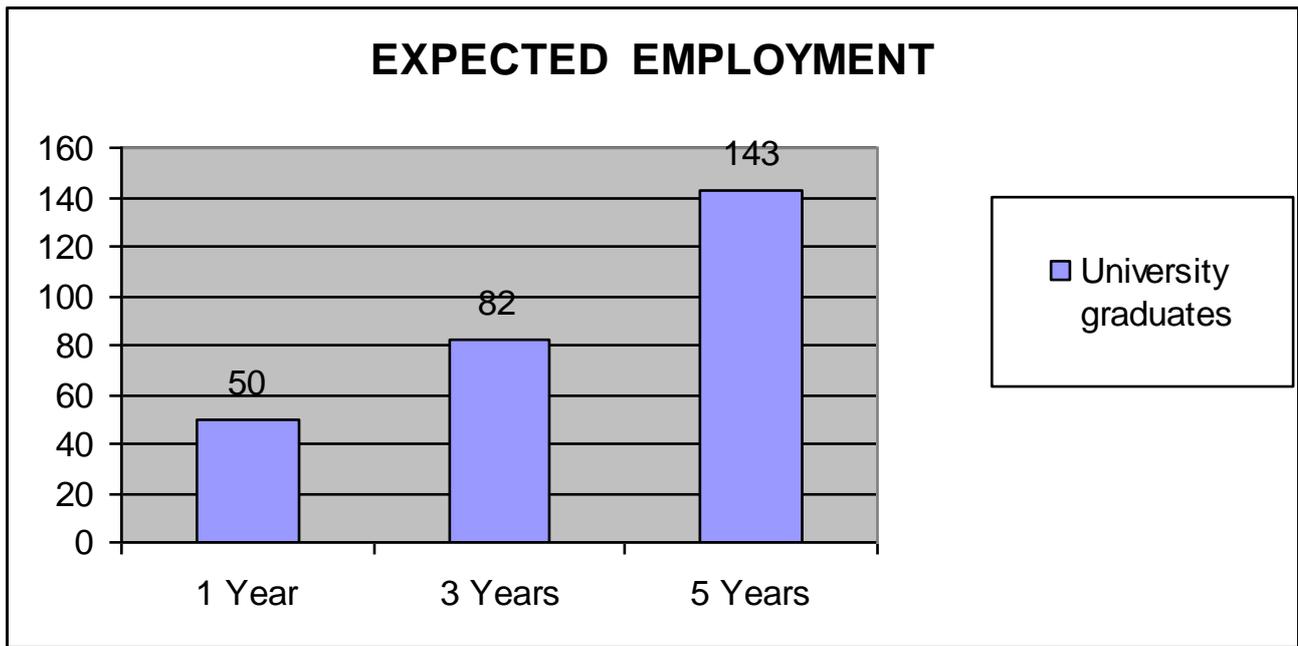
If the assessments with “very important” are analyzed separately, it can be seen that the respondents who evaluated the training for the purpose of the company higher than the employees’ satisfaction.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?



- Employee satisfaction increases.
- Company reputation improves.
- Untrained employees benefit by working alongside trained workers.
- Staff training signals that the company values its workforce.
- Staff retention increases.
- Productivity gains are greater than wage increases.
- Innovation increases.
- Employees are trained to the exact purposes of the company.

It should be also emphasized that the exchange of experience by working with trained workers is considered as much beneficial as the increase of company's reputation. Despite of that opinion, only a few companies provide internship possibilities for students (Yes-19; No-53). It seems discouraging for the young people who have chosen the career of the road transport manager as it is difficult to find a placement in the road transport sector.



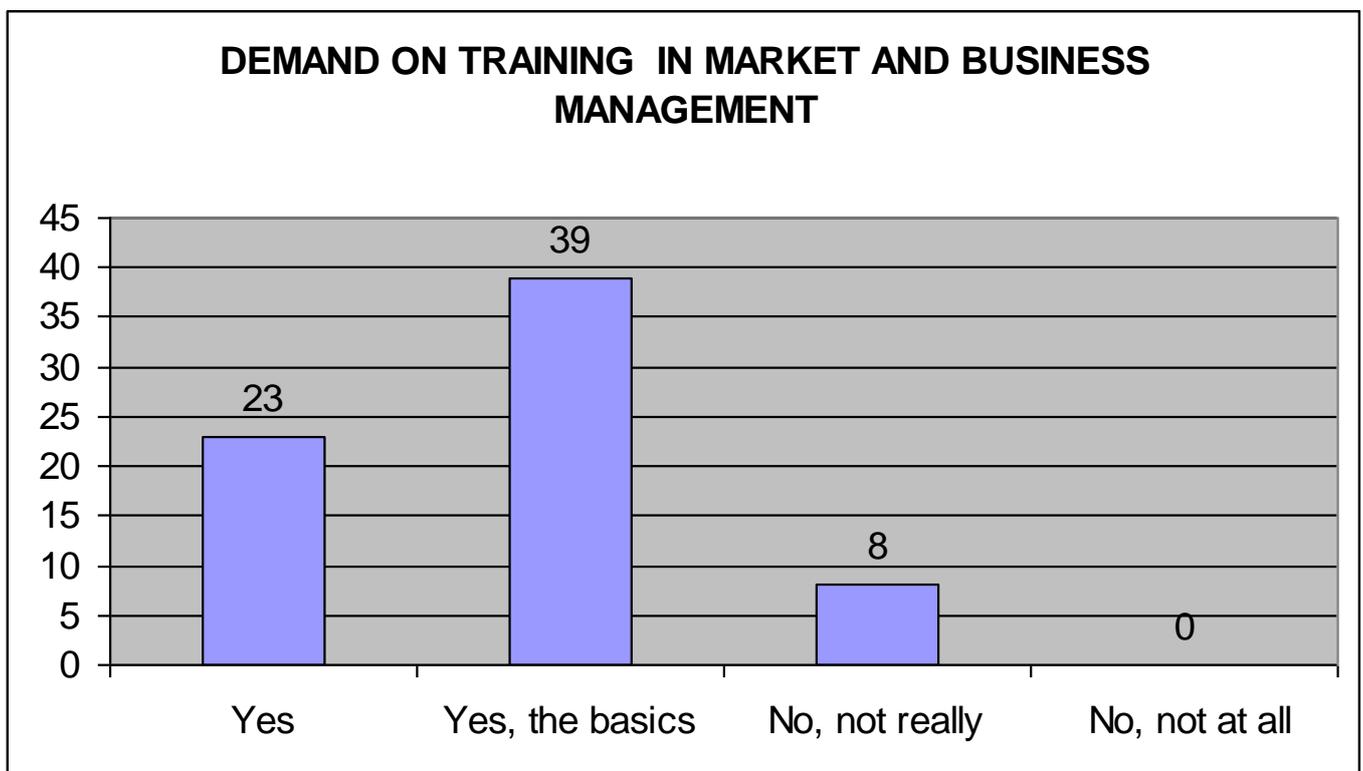
As for the companies that offer internship, they usually do that under certain programs such as 18mth graduate programme, graduate scheme of Royal Mail Traffic Planners in the UK and Job shadowing, stages and stages for foreign students in Italy. In Norway, trainees and apprentices are part of the Norwegian VET system and are promoted by the social partners as a significant module in VET and as a recruitment instrument for the sector.

Although internships are not often available, the number of university graduates expected to be employed within the next year and in 3 and 5 years respectively is satisfactory for the interviewed establishments. Average 2 students will be recruited in each company/association, which seems good considering that most of them are SMEs.

3. 10. Business Management

The majority of the participants in the survey answered that the road transport worker needs to acquire *only basic knowledge* of market relations and business management. This number is by 70% higher than those who chose simply “Yes”. That should be not evaluated as a lack of ambitions but as a sound realism.

What is most often understood under “basic” knowledge is “applied science”, which is enough for the needs of practice.



This conclusion sounds reasonable because it matches the visions on what is required from a Road transport manager in terms of business management.

Bulgaria: *competence, adaptability, flexibility, job stress, vision - diplomacy, language, fairness; “The manager must motivate staff to achieve optimal results and to organize effective commercial relationships with clients and to regulate teamwork”.*

Italy: *knowledge about work safety legislation, road safety, fiscal and contributory knowledge; cooperation - adaptation to company rules; optimization of distribution processes - warehouse management; knowledge about market opportunities; organizational and trade*

competencies; coordination aimed at improving company productivity - clients fidelisation; general management.

Norway: *knowledge of market relations and business management will be central in a Road Transport Manager's future skill profile; some elements were underlined as being central to the sustainability of the sector and its reputation: focus on legislative aspects targeting taxation, VAT regimes, market regulation, health, environment and safety, as well as the basic principles of profitable and responsible operational management.*

Spain: *organization in main areas; experience, management, traffic knowledge, logistics, communication, commercial skills, diplomacy; management skills and a knowledge in transport sector.*

UK: *staff motivation, understanding costs, basic understanding that their actions affect the business as a whole knowledge; understanding of rates and costs and their impact on P&L; the cost effective and profitable operation of the road distribution section including managing maintenance and damage costs; understanding the current economic climate; understanding of drivers and the contract, customers needs and rules and regulations; total knowledge of the whole operation (start to finish); to be financially aware; to know what the business side of things involve; Financial/Vacancies/Legislation; to be able to treat the business that he or she works for as their own; effective use of budget available; being able to remain competitive.*

3. 11. Additional comments

- The initiative (KNOW-IN) is great and we will be happy to participate in it.
- To pay more attention to intermodal and combined transport.
- The role of a Good Tpt Manager involves a very wide range of skills, inc but not limited to:

- 1. Costing, Pricing and Evaluation.*
- 2. Routing to minimise costs and maximise Revenues.*
- 3. Mechanical Knowledge of Trucks and Trailers.*
- 4. Financial skills of how to read balance sheets and P and L accounts.*
- 5. Ability to do the Job himself.*

For all of the above skills make-up a competent Tpt Manager.

- Transport Manager CPC is outdated and not relevant as many have passed it too many years ago for it to remain of value;
- The Transport manager job will not become any easier, and could be subject to a skills shortage in the coming years;
- To work within a transport operation an employee has to be dedicated to the type of work undertaken and has to be able to keep up with all the legislation changes that take place within the industry.
- ***Overall the current transport industry lacks job specific training and development.***

1. 4. TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR FUTURE KNOWLEDGE INTENSIVE TRANSPORT SMEs

The EU legislation, in particular road transport social legislation, is complex and requires road transport managers to navigate with very difficult rules. Most of new regulations are enforced differently adding stress and pressure on managers. To work within a transport operation needs to be dedicated to the type of work and be able to keep up with all the changes that take place within the industry.

An ideal background of a road transport manager is believed to have obtained a Bachelor degree (3-5 years of higher education) with more than 5 years of working experience. The most important aspects concerning his profile could be synthesized as follows:

- **Language skills:** very appreciated, especially English language;
- **Computer skills:** Microsoft office programs and Internet surfing skills;
- **Legislation knowledge:** applicable aspects;
- **Customer service skills** (it is provided very rarely);
- **Technical knowledge:** vehicles, vehicle and trailer tracking and track and trace systems.
- **Conflict management and criticism tolerance.**

Although some companies have been applying different forms of lifelong learning, the survey showed that the current transport system lacks job specific training and development. That is why many respondents, especially from micro and small enterprises, got interested in the project outcomes and expect that they will help them improve the knowledge and skills of the staff and use tools of flexible training.

The areas in which staff/managers require further training are:

- New technologies;
- Staff Management;
- Company Management and Organisational issues;
- Carriage contracts and in particular the responsibility of the carrier;
- Working with digital tachograph and appliance with the Regulation 561/2006/EU;
- Traffic Safety.

Among the most important fields that should be included in training sessions for road transport managers, the following should be included as priorities:

- traffic knowledge;
- logistics;

- commercial skills;
- communication;
- diplomacy.

The strategy for future knowledge intensive transport SMEs should include not only the learning contents, but also propose innovative forms based on ICT. However, the novelties have to be introduced step by step. Considering the traditions in vocational education, the most appropriate training type seems to be *Hybrid distance training* with face-to-face exams. That method has already been successfully applied in practice by some Bulgarian and other associations and vocational training centres. Also, the so-called apprenticeship could be of great use as untrained employees benefit by working alongside with trained workers.

The necessity of strategy development for increasing the knowledge, skills and competences of road transport managers is not only a requirement imposed from “outside” or “up down” by the EU standards and directives. It is a demand that the companies and associations in the sector have become aware of. The number of those that have reported benefits obtained by implemented staff training has been increasing. Among the benefits, the most valuable one is the reputation that the workforce is valued. Also, the improved knowledge and skills often result in development and implementation of innovations.

However, the establishments in the road transport sector have signalled that they do not need a general type of learning. What will be of great effect is *to train employees for the exact purpose of the company*. It should be taken into consideration while developing a strategy for future knowledge intensive transport SMEs. In any case the training concepts should be flexible enough to meet the challenges imposed by the changes of transport market and new technologies both in industry and education.

5. CONCLUSION

The main task of the field research was to collect a sufficient number of questionnaires filled in by representatives of road transport enterprises. Many companies got interested in the project initiative, but because of the summer period did not send their questionnaires. All participants in the survey declared their willingness to be involved in further project phases.

Most questionnaires were sent by email, followed by contacts with the companies by phone or online providing help in filling in the questionnaire if necessary. Only a few face-to-face interviews were conducted but they turned to be very useful for more profound understanding of the state-of-the art in the road transport SMEs and their intentions to provide appropriate training for staff and especially for road transport managers.

The field research has clearly outlined the benefits of staff lifelong learning: the company reputation improves; the employees are trained to the exact purposes of the company and innovation potential increases.

The transport manager job will not become any easier, and could be subject to a skills shortage in the coming years. That imposes the necessity of creation a system of permanent staff training, which will be set as a main goal of the strategy for future knowledge intensive transport SMEs.