



Inducing VET trainers with mentoring skills to boost entrepreneurial growth

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## **Introduction**

This report includes the findings of Work Package 2-Research and Needs Analysis.

The WP included a quantitative survey with 30 VET trainers in Bulgaria and Greece and 5 qualitative interviews in each country respectively. Part A of the report describes the research process relating to the survey as well as the findings emerging from the collected data. Part B includes the interview protocol as well as the analysis of the qualitative interviews in Bulgaria and Greece. Part C is the Appendix and includes the actual survey and interview questionnaires.

The official abbreviations used in this report are:

**BG**-Bulgaria

**EL**- Greece

**EU**-other European countries

### **A. Online Survey**

In the frames of the **mENTERing** project, an **online trans-European survey** was conducted aiming to identify and define the competences and skills that VET trainers need to have in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs.

**Respondents** were VET trainers involved in general business and/or entrepreneurship training or VET trainers who wished to be involved in entrepreneurship training in the future and especially be involved in mentoring entrepreneurs.

#### **A. 1. The research process, the profile and size of the sample**

The online survey was conducted based on a quantitative questionnaire comprising 27 closed questions which was originally developed in English and then translated in Bulgarian and Greek (Appendix 1).

The questions were grouped around three themes drawn from the literature on entrepreneurship and mentoring training as well as the mentor's competences identified in the **MAITRE** project which is transferred in the **mENTERing** project:

- A. Background Information**
- B. Training entrepreneurs**
- C. Mentoring Experience**

The aim of the questionnaire was to explore the VET trainers' experience in general training, as well as in training and mentoring for entrepreneurs. Also, it aimed to identify VET trainers' perceptions of the importance of mentoring entrepreneurs and their competences in this field as well as their willingness to attend training for mentoring entrepreneurs in the future.

To safeguard the quality of the research process as well as the reliability and validity of the data, the questionnaire was circulated among partners for feedback and then it was pre-tested with VET trainers in Bulgaria and Greece. Following, updates were incorporated before the questionnaire was uploaded on *surveymonkey* (survey software) and distributed to the target group in Bulgaria, Greece and Europe.

The survey was originally targeted at 30 VET trainers in Bulgaria and 30 VET trainers in Greece, adding to a total of 60 respondents. However, the response rate was a lot higher reaching a **total of 204 respondents** not only in the two target countries but also in other European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

The survey which was delivered in three language versions- BG, EL and EN- was disseminated to VET trainers through:

- a. the mENTERing web homepage- <http://mentering.eu>;
- b. the project's and partners' social webpages (facebook, linkedin);
- c. targeted email distribution of the survey weblink to stakeholders.

The weblinks to the survey were:

Bulgarian: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6B5JN6L>

Greek: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7BB69KG>

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PLC9FBH>

Responses were received as follows:

- 35 questionnaires by Bulgarian respondents;
- 134 questionnaires by Greek respondents;
- 35 additional questionnaires were filled in English by respondents residing in other European countries.

Upon completion of the survey which lasted between 1 February 2012 and 15 March 2012, the collected data were extracted from *surveymonkey* and were analysed in order to identify the experience and key needs in mentoring competences that VET trainers have so they can effectively mentor entrepreneurs.

Following is the analysis of findings around each group of questions in the survey which is completed with a conclusion and recommendations.

## A.2. Survey Analysis

The data from each question are presented below, are visually represented in bar charts and are discussed.

### A. Background

#### Question 1

The first question was **'Which country do you currently work in?'**

Apart from Bulgaria and Greece, respondents worked in several other European countries: Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Republic of South Africa, Lithuania, Portugal Romania, Spain, Switzerland Turkey, United Kingdom.

#### Question 2

This question asked for participants' email address.

#### Question 3

The participants' average age was 42 years old.

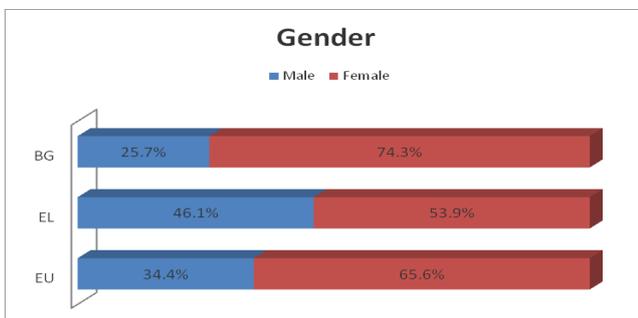
#### Question 4

##### Respondents' Gender

In terms of gender, the male respondents accounted for 25.7% in Bulgaria, 46.1% in Greece and 34.4% in other EU countries.

The female respondents accordingly reached a high level of 74.3% in Bulgaria, 53.9% in Greece and 65.6% in other EU countries.

**Figure 1**

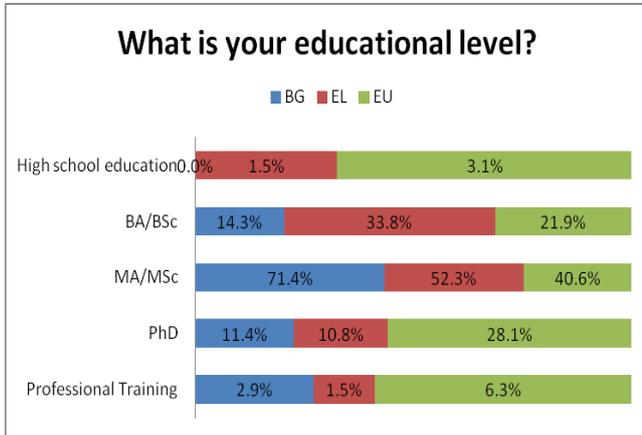


The data show a larger percentage of female respondents in Bulgaria and other European countries while a more balanced percentage was identified in Greece.

### Question 5

This question asked: **'What is your educational level?'**  
The respondents' education level is depicted below:

**Figure 2**

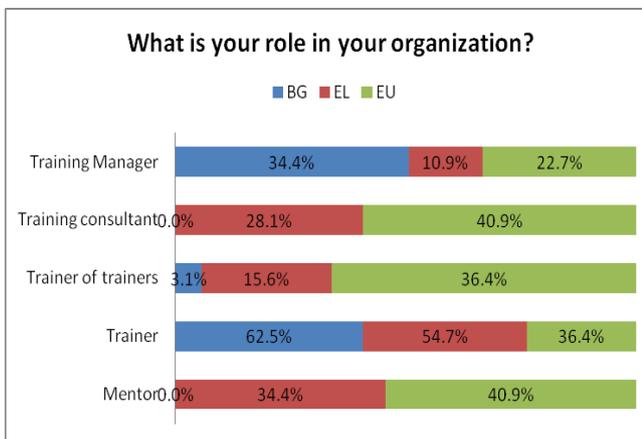


Respondents had attended Higher education to a large percentage. However, the percentage of VET trainers with high school education was also high in certain cases. Another interesting finding is that VET trainers in Bulgaria and Greece do not attend professional training which shows that vocational systems are not as advanced in these countries as in the rest of Europe.

### Question 6

In the question **'What is your role in your organization?'**, VET trainers could select multiple choices in case they had different roles. This is the reason why the findings add up to more than 100% of the sample responses.

**Figure 3**

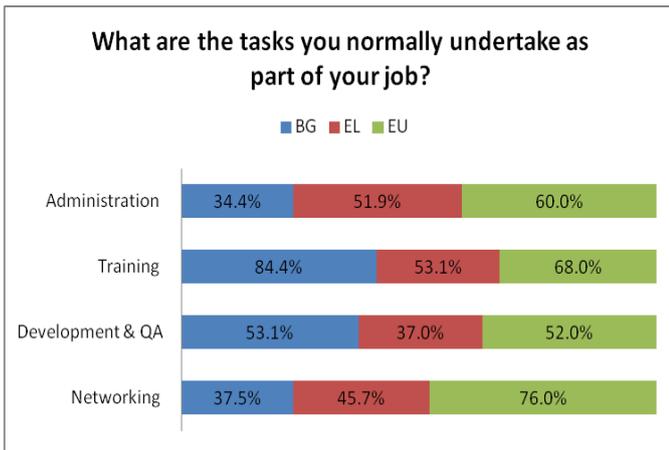


The data show that, compared to Bulgaria and Greece, other European countries have more mature structures relating to training and mentoring incorporated in their VET systems. However, it is also interesting that in Greece VET trainers perceive themselves as having the role of the mentor by a large percentage even though the Greek VET training system does not prepare VET trainers for this role.

### Question 7

In the question **'In relation to training, what are the tasks you normally undertake as part of your job?'** VET trainers could select multiple choices in case they undertook different tasks. This is the reason why the findings add up to more than 100% of the sample responses.

**Figure 4**

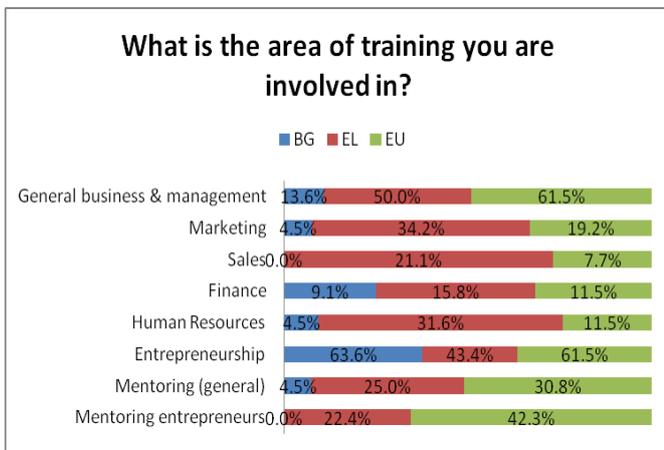


The data show VET trainers are involved in several tasks besides training in their job. Their roles span the whole cycle of the training process from Administration to Networking. Differences among countries are more obvious in Training and Networking whereas Administration and Development & QA seem more equally distributed. Networking in particular, which is so highly pursued in other European countries, is almost half in Bulgaria showing that VET trainers are mostly involved in traditional tasks in their job.

**Question 8**

In the question 'What is the area of training you are involved in?' VET trainers could select multiple choices in case they were involved in different areas of training. This is the reason why the findings add up to more than 100% of the sample responses.

**Figure 5**

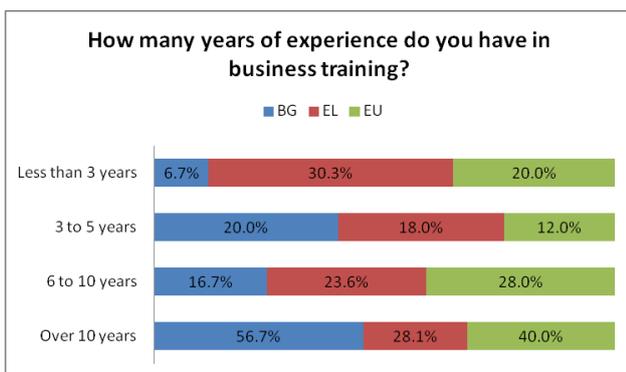


The data in this question show large contrasts between the two target countries and with the rest of Europe. However, the most striking finding is the training provided in entrepreneurship, high in all countries, the low percentage of mentoring in Bulgaria and the lack of mentoring for entrepreneurs in the same country. It is also interesting that VET trainers in Greece replied that they provide mentoring in general and mentoring for entrepreneurs despite the fact that the concept of mentoring is so new to the country compared to the rest of Europe.

**Question 9**

In the question 'How many years of experience do you have in business training?', participants' responses varied in almost all year groups as shown below.

**Figure 6**

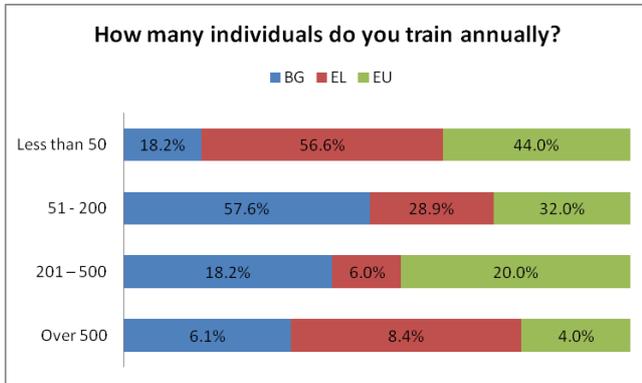


An interesting finding is the fact that in Bulgaria most trainers replied that they have experience of over 10 year whereas the percentage of trainers with less than 3 years was very low in contrast to Greece. This might imply that in Bulgaria business training is more widespread than in Greece.

### Question 10

Responses to the question 'How many individuals do you train annually?' are also shown below.

**Figure 7**



The majority of VET trainers in Bulgaria train between 51-200 compared to an almost half percentage in Greece.

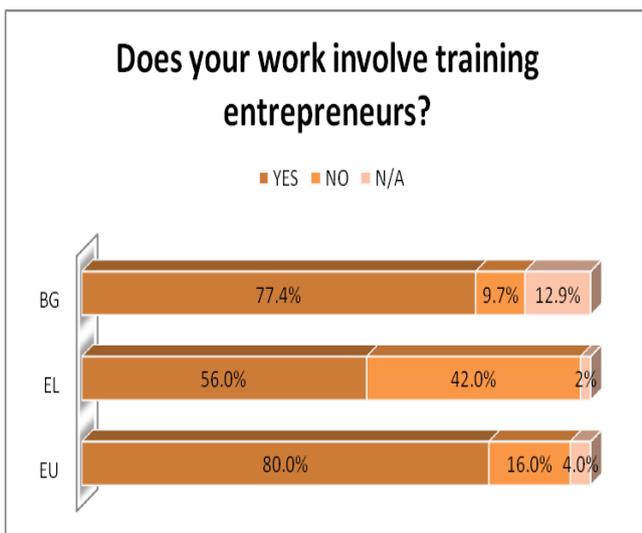
Another interesting finding is the large difference between Bulgaria and Greece in the fact that in Greece the majority of trainers train less than 50 individuals a year. This shows that VET training is not widespread in Greece.

## B. Training entrepreneurs

### Question 11

In the question 'Does your work involve training entrepreneurs?', responses produced the following information:

**Figure 8**

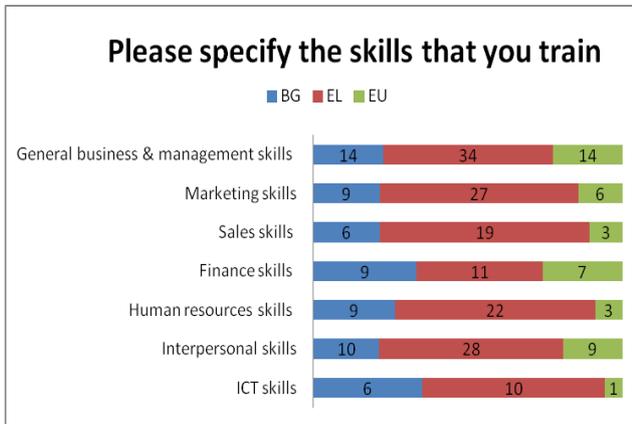


The majority of respondents in Bulgaria, 77.4% said they trained entrepreneurs; 9.7% did not have this as one of their tasks, while 12.9% responded that this did not apply to their job. In Greece, respectively, 56.0% responded that they trained entrepreneurs as part of their job, 42.0% did not train entrepreneurs while 2% responded that this was not applicable in their case. Finally, the respective percentages for other EU countries amount to 80.0%, 16.0% and 4.0%. The responses are really interesting and show the importance of training entrepreneurs in target countries and in Europe since very high percentages of VET trainers are involved in such training.

## Question 12

When asked what skills they train, VET trainers gave the following responses:

**Figure 9**



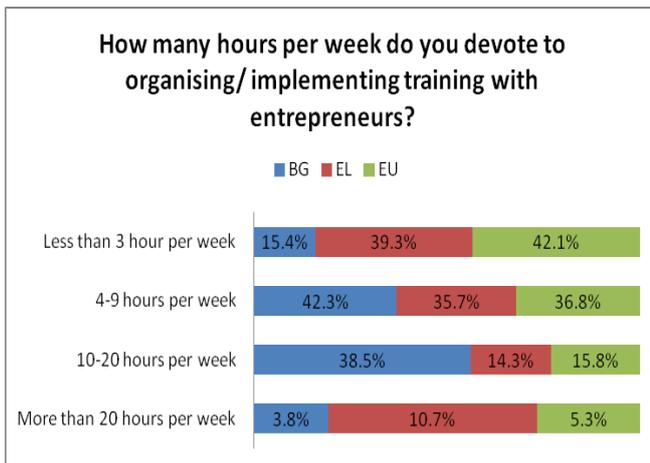
The data show that both in Bulgaria and Greece General business and management skills are the most trained followed by Interpersonal skills.

This shows a trend in training entrepreneurs focusing mostly on hard skills required to start and run the business whereas less focus is on soft skills and how entrepreneurs should feel when they undertake risk or difficult decisions.

## Question 13

Below are the data collected from the question **'How many hours week do you devote to organising/ implementing training with entrepreneurs':**

**Figure 10**



Comparing the data, in Bulgaria VET trainers responded that they dedicate most of their working time, 42.5%, in organising and implementing 4-9 hours training for entrepreneurs, while in Greece, they dedicate by 39.3% less than 3 hours a week for the same purpose.

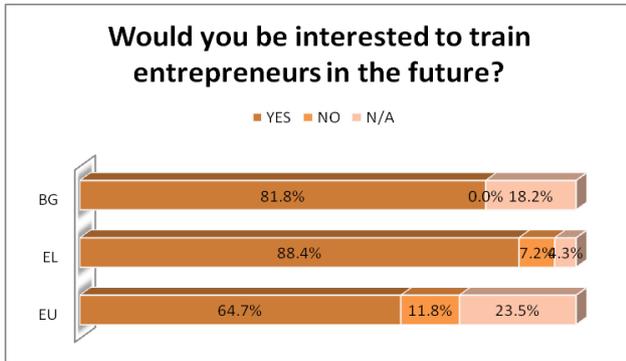
This shows that in Greece training entrepreneurs is not so widespread although respondents in this country said by 10.7% compared to 3.8% in Bulgaria that they train entrepreneurs more than 20 hours per week.

## Question 14

The next question **'Would you be interested to train entrepreneurs in the future?'** produced the following data. In Bulgaria, 81.8% responded that they would be interested. It is interesting that negative answers were at 0.0% showing VET trainers' interest to train entrepreneurs, and finally 18.2% replied that such a case is not applicable in their plans. In

Greece, responses varied as follows: 88.4% of respondents said that they are interested to train entrepreneurs in the future; 7.2% said that they are not interested and 4.3% replied that this is not applicable in their case. Finally, in other EU countries, 64.7% of respondents want to train entrepreneurs, 11.8% are not interested and 23.5% replied that it is not applicable.

**Figure 11**



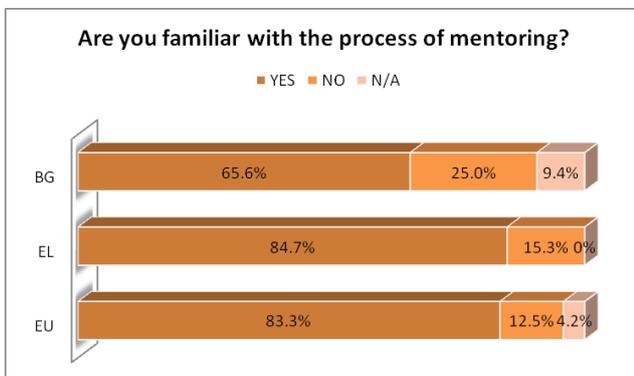
The data show that respondents from all the survey countries- Bulgaria, Greece and the rest of Europe- are very much interested to train entrepreneurs in the future. This shows a high trend across Europe of the value and role of entrepreneurship.

**C. MENTORING**

**Question 15**

To the next question asked to respondents-**'Are you familiar with the process of mentoring?'**, responses were as follows: In Bulgaria, a 65.6% replied that they are familiar with this process while 25.0% responded that they are not. For a 9.4%, this question was not applicable. In Greece, a large number of VET trainers, amounting to 84.7% responded that they are familiar, an important finding, and a 15.3% replied that they are not familiar. In other European countries, the familiarity of respondents with mentoring was also very high by 83.3%, a 12.5% were not familiar while a mere 4.2% replied that the process of mentoring is not applicable for them.

**Figure 12**



It is interesting that most of the VET trainers in all countries replied that they are familiar with the process of **mentoring**.

It is important, however, to explore the meaning that VET trainers attach to mentoring and their perception of what **mentoring** really involves so as to have successful results.

### Question 16

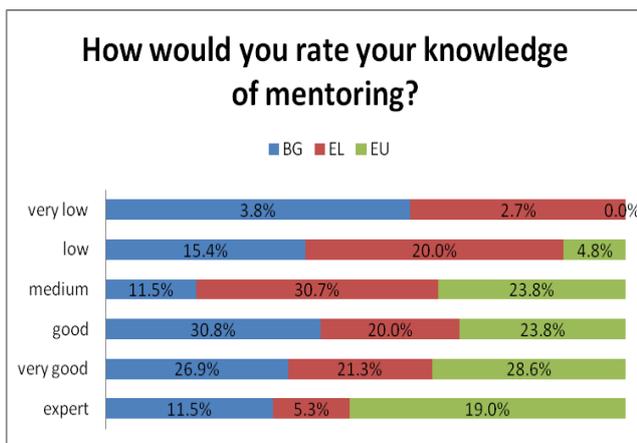
The next question was 'How would you rate your knowledge of mentoring?'

A 3.8% of VET trainers in Bulgaria replied that their knowledge is very low, 15.4% that it is low, 11.5% that it is medium, those with a good knowledge amounted to 30.8%, very good by 26.9%, and expert knowledge by 11.5%.

In Greece, a 2.7% of VET trainers rated their knowledge of mentoring as very low, 20.0% as low, 30.7% as medium, 20.0% as good, 21.3% as very good and only 5.3% as expert.

In the other European countries, very low 0.0%, low 4.8%, medium 23.8%, good 23.8%, very good 28.6%, expert 19.0%.

**Figure 13**



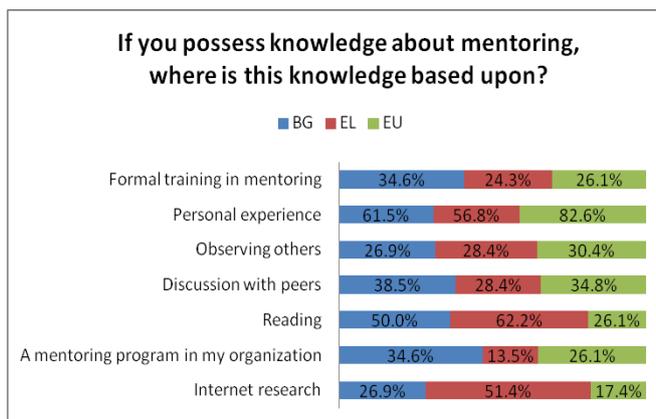
The interesting point here is that most VET trainers from all the survey countries rated their knowledge of **mentoring** as **very low** with the lowest percentages. In fact, in other European countries no VET trainer rated his/her knowledge as very low.

Respondents in Bulgaria rate their knowledge as **good** with the highest percentage while most of VET trainers in Greece rate their knowledge as medium. This point again needs to be explored so as to identify their meaning of **mentoring**.

### Question 17

The question 'If you possess knowledge about mentoring, where is this knowledge based upon?' produced the following responses:

**Figure 14**



The interesting finding from the data in this question is the fact that a comparatively large percentage in all countries replied that they have received **formal training in mentoring**.

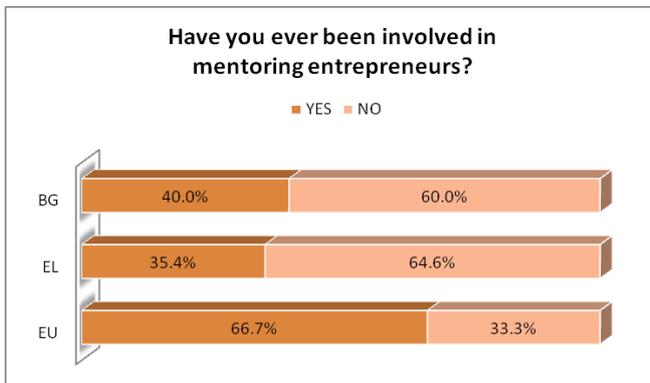
However, **personal experience** was also an important source of knowledge about mentoring in all countries.

The data point to both formal and informal sources of knowledge about mentoring and this is an important finding too.

### Question 18

In the question **'Have you ever been involved in mentoring entrepreneurs?'**, the responses were the following: in Bulgaria, 40.0% replied that they have been involved in mentoring entrepreneurs while 60.0% said that they have not mentored this target group. In Greece respectively, VET trainers said at an almost equal percentage, 35.4%, that they have mentored entrepreneurs in the past, while by 64.6% they replied that they have not. Finally, in other European countries, VET trainers who have has experience in mentoring entrepreneurs reach 66.7%, almost double than in Bulgaria and Greece, while 33.3% said they have not.

**Figure 15**



The data produce interesting findings since high percentages of responses point to the fact that the VET trainers in all countries have mentored entrepreneurs although the highest percentages are among VET trainers in other European countries.

### Question 19

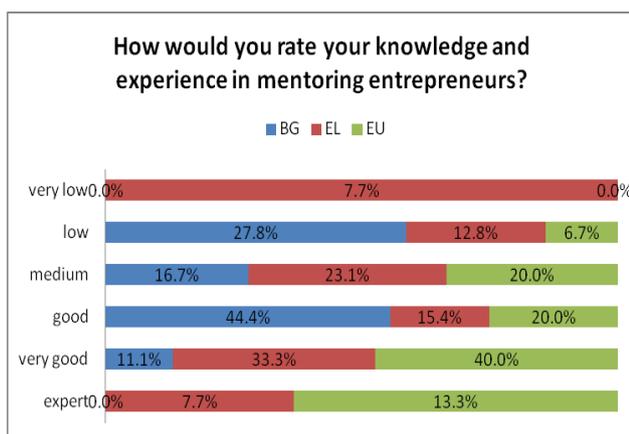
When asked **'How would you rate your knowledge and experience in mentoring entrepreneurs?'**, VET trainers gave the following responses:

In Bulgaria, very low by 0.0%, low 27.8%, medium by 16.7%, good by 44.4%, very good by 11.1%, and expert by 0.0%.

In Greece, very low by 7.7%, low 27.12.8%, medium by 23.1%, good by 15.4%, very good by 33.3%, and expert by 7.7%.

In other European countries, very low by 0.0%, low 6.7%, medium by 20.0%, good by 20.0%, very good by 40.0%, and expert by 13.3%.

**Figure 16**



This question also produced interesting findings since no VET trainers evaluated their knowledge of mentoring entrepreneurs as very low in Bulgaria and other European countries while a low percentage only in Greece replied that they knowledge/experience was **very low**.

In fact, most of the respondents in Bulgaria said that their knowledge/experience was **good** while in Greece most said it was **very good**.

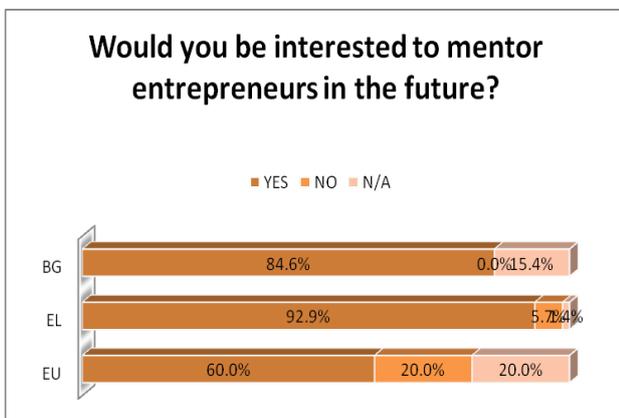
## Question 20

The question **'Would you be interested to mentor entrepreneurs in the future?'** produced the following findings: in Bulgaria, 84.6% would be interested, no VET trainer said that they do not want and 15.4% replied that this is not applicable for them.

In Greece, the percentage of VET trainers who are interested to mentor entrepreneurs in the future was higher than Bulgaria reaching 92.9%. However, 5.7% replied that they are not interested to mentor entrepreneurs and 1.4% said that this was not applicable in their case.

In other European countries, the percentage of VET trainers was lower than in Bulgaria and Greece at 60.0%, 20.0% were not interested to mentor entrepreneurs and 20.0% said this was not applicable in their case.

**Figure 17**

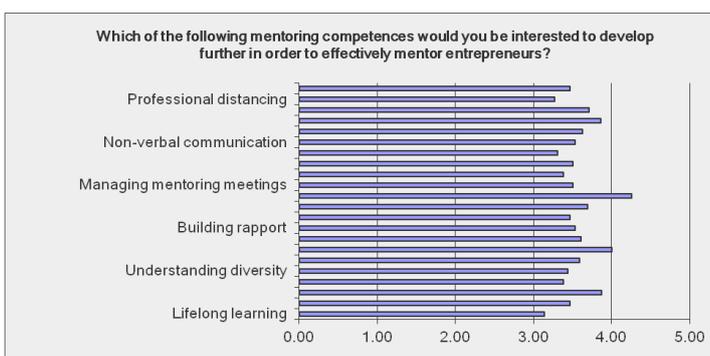


The findings in this question show a high interest on the part of VET trainers in all countries to mentor entrepreneurs in the future supporting the trend already identified.

## Question 21

To the question **'Which of the following mentoring competences would you be interested to develop further in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs?'**, VET trainers replied the following in all countries:

**Figure 18**



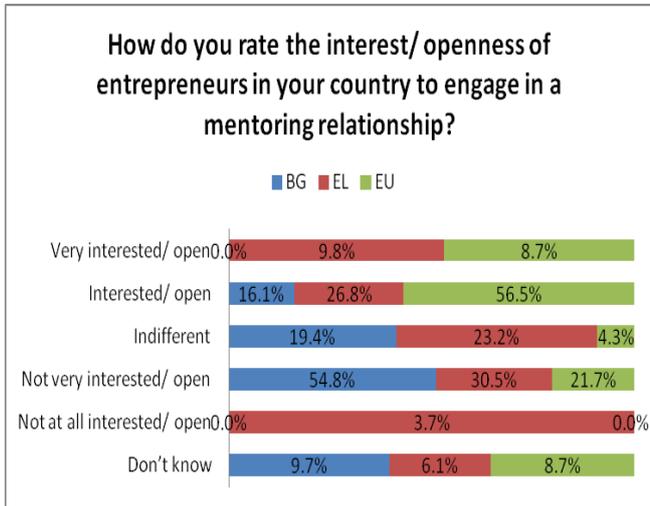
What is interesting about the responses in this question is the fact that VET trainers said they need to develop essential skills that will help them support a mentoring relationship and build effective rapport with their mentees.

Also, they are interested in lifelong learning since it is important to continuously update their knowledge and skills in this area.

## Question 22

The question ‘**How do you rate the interest/ openness of entrepreneurs in your country to engage in a mentoring relationship?**’ also produced very important findings as is shown below:

**Figure 19**



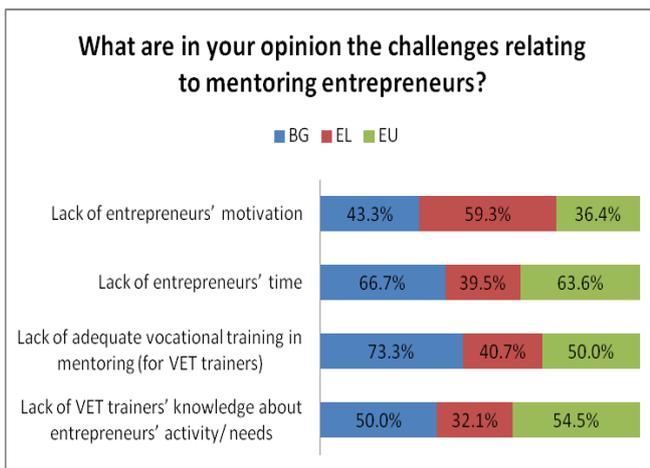
In Bulgaria, VET trainers responded that entrepreneurs **are not very interested or open to engage in such a mentoring relationship** by the highest percentage whereas in Greece also this was the highest response. This is in contrast with other European countries where VET trainers replied that entrepreneurs are **interested/open** to engage in such a relationships.

It is important, however, that percentages were very low for the ‘Not at all interested/open’ option showing that entrepreneurs need to become aware of the benefits of mentoring as motivation for the success of their business.

## Question 23

To the question ‘**What are in your opinion the challenges relating to mentoring entrepreneurs?**’

**Figure 20**



The data show that, in Bulgaria, VET trainers replied to the highest percentage that the major challenge in mentoring entrepreneurs is **the lack of adequate training for VET trainers**. This is also an important challenge in Greece.

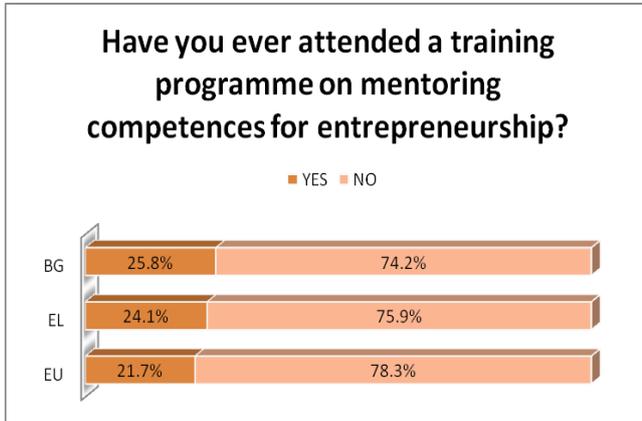
However, the major challenge in Greece is the **lack of entrepreneurs' motivation** supporting the fact that entrepreneurs need to become aware of the benefits of mentoring to be motivated.

The other important finding is the lack of VET trainers' knowledge about entrepreneurs' activities/needs stressing the need for training in entrepreneurship.

## Question 24

The question **'Have you ever attended a training programme on mentoring competences for entrepreneurship?'** produced very important findings in all the survey countries:

**Figure 21**

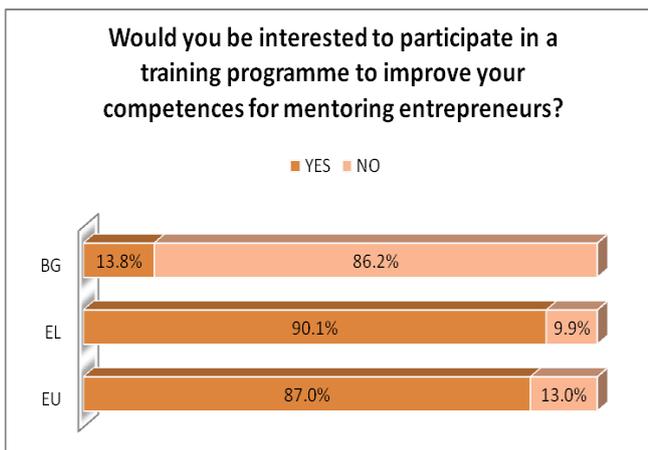


VET trainers have not attended training for mentoring entrepreneurs. This raises questions as to the quality and structure of mentoring VET trainers provide to entrepreneurs.

## Question 25

The responses to the question **'Would you be interested to participate in a training programme to improve your competences for mentoring entrepreneurs?'** produced interesting findings:

**Figure 22**



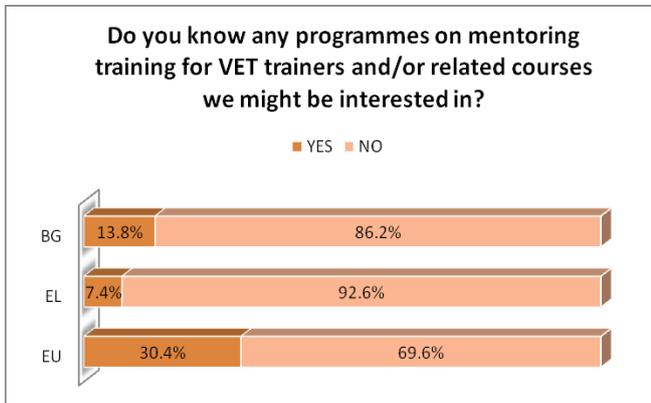
Despite the fact that VET trainers in Bulgaria are **involved in mentoring entrepreneurs** by 40%, (see Question 18) and rate their knowledge in mentoring entrepreneurs as **good** by 44.4%, they are not interested to participate in a training programme to improve their competences even though their knowledge comes mostly from Personal experience, 61.5% (see Question 17).

This comes in acute contrast with responses in Greece and in other European countries where VET trainers seem willing to attend training.

## Question 26

When asked 'Do you know any programmes on mentoring training for VET trainers and/or related courses we might be interested in?', VET trainers replied:

**Figure 23**



In Bulgaria and Greece, VET trainers are not aware to a large extent about training programmes customised for mentoring.

## Question 27

In the question, 'If YES, could you please provide us with some information?', VET trainers provided the following answers:

I am only aware of the Entre-coach project which I am involved with. It supports business people through coaching so I don't know how similar that is to mentoring. Entre-coach - this is an Leonardo funded TOI currently running Course 2, Coaching not mentoring.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Course on Developing Consultancy Skills for SMEs within Graduate Programme in Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Economics in Osijek, J.J.Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia.

Will access the respective related courses - do not have names off hand.

Endeavor Turkey has created its own mentor orientation/training program.

Equality Commission - ΤΕΙ ΣΙΝΔΟΥ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ ΣΕ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΑΣΙΑ ΜΕ ΤΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΕΡΓΑΝΗ.

## A3. Conclusions based on the analysis of survey findings

### **Role of VET trainers their organization: the trainer as mentor**

VET trainers have multiple roles in their organizations. However, the two target countries do not have mature structures relating to training and mentoring incorporated in their VET systems.

In Greece, VET trainers perceive themselves as having the role of the mentor by a large percentage even though the Greek VET training system does not prepare VET trainers for this role.

### **Area of training VET trainers are involved in: what type of mentoring training is provided?**

However, the most striking finding is the training provided in entrepreneurship, high in all countries, the low percentage of mentoring in Bulgaria and the lack of mentoring for entrepreneurs in the same country. It is also interesting that VET trainers in Greece replied that they provide mentoring in general and mentoring for entrepreneurs despite the fact that the concept of mentoring is so new to the country compared to the rest of Europe.

### **Involvement in training entrepreneurs: the need to train entrepreneurs**

The responses are really interesting and show the importance of training entrepreneurs in target countries and in Europe since very high percentages of VET trainers said they are involved in such training.

### **Skills VET trainers teach: the need for Interpersonal skills**

After General business and management skills, VET trainers trained Interpersonal skills. This shows a trend in training entrepreneurs focusing mostly on hard skills required to start and run the business whereas less focus is on soft skills and how entrepreneurs should feel when they undertake risk or difficult decisions.

### **Interest of VET trainers in training entrepreneurs in the future: The need for Customised training**

Respondents were very much interested to train entrepreneurs in the future. This shows a high trend across Europe of the value and role of entrepreneurship. However, they also need to attend customised training for entrepreneurship before they can train entrepreneurs.

### **Familiarity of VET trainers with the process of mentoring: identifying the meaning of mentoring**

It is interesting that most of the VET trainers in all countries replied that they are familiar with the process of **mentoring**. It is important, however, to explore the meaning that VET trainers attach to mentoring and their perception of what **mentoring** really involves so as to have successful results.

### **Rating of VET trainers' knowledge of mentoring: identifying the meaning of mentoring**

The interesting point here is that most VET trainers from all the survey countries rated their knowledge of **mentoring** as **very low**. In fact, in other European countries no VET trainer rated his/her knowledge as very low. Respondents in Bulgaria rate their knowledge as **good** with the highest percentage while most of VET trainers in Greece rate their knowledge as medium. This point again needs to be explored so as to identify their meaning of **mentoring**.

### **Source of VET trainers' knowledge about mentoring: the need for formal training in mentoring.**

The interesting finding from the data in this question is the fact that a comparatively large percentage in all countries replied that they have received **formal training** in **mentoring**. However, **personal experience** was also an important source of knowledge about mentoring in all countries. The data point to both formal and informal sources of knowledge about mentoring and this is an important finding too in cases where formal mentoring courses exist in target countries.

### **Involvement of VET trainers in mentoring entrepreneurs:**

The data supplied interesting findings since high percentages of responses point to the fact that the VET trainers in all countries have mentored entrepreneurs although the highest percentages are among VET trainers in other European countries.

### **Rating of VET trainers' knowledge and experience in mentoring entrepreneurs**

This question also produced interesting findings since no VET trainers evaluated their knowledge of mentoring entrepreneurs as very low in Bulgaria and other European countries while a low percentage only in Greece replied that their knowledge/experience was **very low**. In fact, most of the respondents in Bulgaria said that their knowledge/experience was **good** while in Greece most said it was **very good**.

### **Mentoring competences VET trainers are interested to develop further in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs**

What is interesting about the responses in this question is the fact that VET trainers said they need to develop essential skills that will help them support a mentoring relationship and build effective rapport with their mentees such as Professional distancing, non-verbal communication, managing mentoring meetings, building rapport, understanding diversity, lifelong learning. Also, they are interested in lifelong learning since it is important to continuously update their knowledge and skills in this area.

### **Interest/ openness of entrepreneurs in survey countries to engage in a mentoring relationship: a matter of awareness**

In Bulgaria, VET trainers responded that entrepreneurs **are not very interested or open to engage in a mentoring relationship** by the highest percentage, as it was also the case among Greek respondents. This is in contrast with other European countries where VET trainers replied that entrepreneurs are **interested/open** to engage in such relationships.

It is important, however, that percentages were very low to the not at all interested/open option showing that entrepreneurs need to become aware of the benefits of mentoring for the success of their business.

### **Challenges relating to mentoring entrepreneurs: entrepreneurs must be motivated**

In Bulgaria, VET trainers replied to the highest percentage that the major challenge in mentoring entrepreneurs is **the lack of adequate training for VET trainers**. This is also an important challenge in Greece. However, the major challenge in Greece is the **lack of entrepreneurs' motivation** supporting the fact that entrepreneurs need to become aware of the benefits of mentoring to be motivated. The other important finding is the lack of VET trainers' knowledge about entrepreneurs' activities/needs stressing the need for training in entrepreneurship.

### **Attendance of a training programme on mentoring competences for entrepreneurship: inadequate but essential for VET trainers**

VET trainers have not attended training for mentoring entrepreneurs. This raises questions as to the quality and structure of mentoring VET trainers provide to entrepreneurs and points to the fact that such training is essential.

### **Interest to participate in a training programme to improve competences for mentoring entrepreneurs**

VET trainers in Bulgaria are involved in mentoring entrepreneurs or are interested to do so in the future and rate their knowledge in mentoring entrepreneurs as good. However, they are not interested to participate in customised training as opposed to Greece and other European countries.

### **Knowledge of programmes on mentoring training for VET trainers and/or related courses**

In Bulgaria and Greece, VET trainers are not aware to a large extent about training programmes customised to mentoring or mentoring entrepreneurs.

Overall, the data produced some very interesting points that relate to the perception VET trainers have about mentoring and mentoring entrepreneurs. The most important is that although VET trainers replied that they are familiar with the process of mentoring, that they mentor entrepreneurs and rated their knowledge as good to expert, they have to a large extent not attended any customised training and a large percentage of them are not really keen to attend such training.

This points to the need that mentoring and mentoring for entrepreneurs is a process that is not clearly defined by VET trainers and for this reason, it should be defined and structured if entrepreneurs are to benefit from it. Also, VET trainers who mentor or want to mentor entrepreneurs in the future should be specifically trained to this aim.

## **B. Qualitative Interviews**

Five qualitative interviews were conducted in Bulgaria and Greece with **experts in VET, mentoring and entrepreneurship** with aim to identify and define the competences and skills that VET trainers need to acquire and develop in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs and support them in growing their business.

### **B.1. Interview design**

The interview was conducted based on a set of 17 open questions which allowed respondents to express their opinion about the issues at hand and were grouped around the following themes:

- A. Respondent background and experience in VET, mentoring and/or entrepreneurship.**
- B. The competences/skills mentors of entrepreneurs need.**
- C. Interest/ willingness of entrepreneurs in your country to engage in a mentoring relationship and their awareness of the benefits of mentoring.**
- D. The knowledge/ skills/ attitudes needed by entrepreneurs to sustain and grow their business and the role of mentoring.**
- E. Closing questions**

The questions were first generated in English and were then translated in Bulgarian and Greek. Before being used with experts, the questions were tested with two VET trainers in Bulgaria and two in Greece in order to safeguard quality and precision.

### **B.2. Interview Protocol**

An interview protocol, below, was also developed in the frames of the project and was distributed among partners so as to ensure the consistent administration in target countries.

#### **mENTERing - Expert Interviews**

The qualitative interviews to be conducted in the frames of WP2 – **Research and Interactive Needs Analysis** – are part of the primary research process which aims to identify and anticipate the skills and competences VET trainers need so as to effectively mentor entrepreneurs.

Data will be collected by experts who work closely with VET trainers and/or with entrepreneurs and have first-hand experience about real and practical needs in the process of mentoring entrepreneurs.

Experts to be interviewed:

- VET providers in general business training or entrepreneurship
- Mentors (general)
- Mentors (of entrepreneurs)

## **Interview design**

To complement the quantitative survey of this WP and collect reliable and valid data, qualitative interviews are used as part of the primary research.

The interviews have been designed in a semi-structured format (i.e. open questions grouped under specific themes in a specific order) so that they cover the different aspects of VET training, entrepreneurship and mentoring that are relevant to the aims of the project.

## **The interview themes and questions**

The themes represented in the interview questions are the following:

- A. Respondent background and experience in VET, mentoring and/or entrepreneurship.
- B. The competences/skills mentors of entrepreneurs need.
- C. Interest/ willingness of entrepreneurs in your country to engage in a mentoring relationship and their awareness of the benefits of mentoring.
- D. The knowledge/ skills/ attitudes needed by entrepreneurs to sustain and grow their business and the role of mentoring.
- E. Closing questions

## **Interview process**

A qualitative interview aims to gain a deep insight into the topics and themes under examination. In other words, it seeks to understand the respondents' opinion and their perception about their experience. In this case, the interviews to be conducted aim to investigate the situation facing VET trainers in project countries relating to the experience they have with training or mentoring entrepreneurs, the training they receive, the difficulties they have to handle.

The interviews can be conducted in the following ways:

- Face-to-face (while recording the respondents' answers)
- In written (e.g. via email in case no physical communication is possible)
- In electronic form (e.g. via skype due to geographical distance)

In any mode, the interviewees' responses have to be recorded (i.e. electronically or in written form) in order to have a complete record of the data provided to be used for transcription and thematic analysis.

## **Beginning the interview**

The interview includes 17 questions and should take around 30 minutes to conduct face-to-face or via skype. The interview should start by a short presentation of the project aims and objectives to the interviewees. Also, it is very important that you ask the respondents' permission to record the interview (if applicable) as well as reassure them about their anonymity and the confidentiality of the data they provide and their use for the purposes of the project only.

At the beginning of the interview, in order to build rapport and make the interviewees feel comfortable, use the opportunity to discuss the interviewees' background, such as their job and work experience.

**During the interview**

During the interview, you can follow the 80%-20% law (let the interviewees speak for 80% of the time while you speak for 20% when needed to clarify points or prompt the interviewee to elaborate more on a given question). After all, you conduct the interview so as to hear the interviewee's experience!

**Concluding the interview**

To conclude the interview, allow the interviewees some time for any comments, ideas, points they might want to add or elaborate more on an issue previously discussed by asking "Is there anything else you'd like to add?".

The deadline for 5 interviews in Bulgaria and Greece is the 15th of March 2012.

### **B.3. Analysis of the interviews**

#### **Bulgaria**

The experts who participated in the interviews in Bulgaria were VET trainers, entrepreneurs and consultants. They were chosen because of their professional qualification in training future entrepreneurs, consulting SMEs and entrepreneurs.

The elements that contributed to the success of the mentoring relationship are openness, competence, mentor's or trainer's experience and trust and willingness to cooperate on behalf of the mentees.

Respondents said that they had several examples in which mentoring helped mentees acquire knowledge and experience which helped them make more effective decisions. They are normally when mentees start their business or have to deal with financial institutions.

The skills and competences VET trainers need in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs include practical experience from a real working business environment, successful realization, methods for adults' training and possibility to carry out a relationship with the entrepreneur and win his trust. In this way the mentor becomes more than a trainer, while the trainee understands that he can trust the mentor's advice and help.

Respondents replied that they acquired mentoring competences through their work as entrepreneurs, by attending vocational training and through interaction with peers.

When asked if entrepreneurs in Bulgaria are willing to participate in a mentoring relationship, respondents replied that for now only few starting entrepreneurs were willing to get involved in mentoring relationships. But recently more and more (especially young people starting their own business) are willing to rely on an experienced mentor mentoring them how to start the business and run it after. Working with mentors gives them stability in their decisions and actions.

When asked if entrepreneurs know about mentoring and its benefits, respondents said that huge number of entrepreneurs have no idea about mentoring. They mainly rely on their own skills because there aren't any traditions in mentoring in Bulgaria, no good practises to be shared. Perhaps this is something we should work towards through information campaigns, projects, or sharing of good practises.

The main challenges in relation to mentoring entrepreneurs that respondents pointed were lack of awareness of the trainer's need on behalf of the mentees, our national idiosyncrasy ("I don't need advice from you, give me money") expressed in overestimated self-confidence and reluctance to take advice and help, critical (sometimes with reason) attitude towards the mentors because of mentors' incompetence and isolation from the practice.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes that entrepreneurs need in order to grow their business are professional skills and knowledge in the area of economics of the enterprise, tax and law, management skills, planning skills (some of the entrepreneurs think these skills are not relevant), skills to work and deal with people, hard working with no fix working time or breaks, openness to the new.

Asked in what way do entrepreneurs usually acquire such knowledge, skills and attitudes the respondents' answer it is through training courses (but very rare) and through the "trial-error" method.

Are these sources of learning important for the entrepreneurs? Yes, but it depends if the entrepreneur realizes how important learning really is. Most of the entrepreneurs in Bulgaria consider having finances to be enough to get a successful and running business. On the other hand mentoring is also essential so that they can learn from the mentor and his/her experience and good practises, handling of real business challenges, self development as specialists and managers.

Respondents were aware of some national initiatives relating to mentoring entrepreneurs and consider them highly effective if they are good organized and are conducted with real life examples and use methods for adults' training.

## **B.4. Analysis of interviews**

### **Greece**

The experts who participated in the interviews in Greece were VET trainers, coaches

The elements that contributed to the success of the mentoring relationship related to the careful selection of mentors and the right matching with the mentees. The right matching ensures that their personalities match, their motives as well as their background and area or work at the time of the mentoring relationship.

Respondents said that they had several examples in which mentoring helped mentees acquire knowledge and experience which helped them make more effective decisions. The mentors' experience helped them understand bad practices and avoid them in their own business.

The skills and competences VET trainers need in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs include interpersonal communication as well as patience since mentoring especially in entrepreneurship issues is difficult since the mentor and mentee do not have the same knowledge and the transfer of knowledge and experience is full of challenges.

The mentor should also have positive thinking so that he/she can transfer to the entrepreneur a positive culture that will help him/her deal with everyday issues and problem at work as well as experience in running a business.

Respondents replied that they acquired mentoring competences through continuous training as well as interaction with peers.

When asked if entrepreneurs in Greece are willing to participate in a mentoring relationship, respondents replied that most entrepreneurs would be interested since this is a process that is absent from the formal educational system. Experiential and informal learning from experienced mentors would be an effective way to support entrepreneurs to start and grow their business. However, respondents also said that mentoring is not integrated in the Greek culture and Greek entrepreneurs need to become aware of mentoring and its value and accept it. In this way, they will benefit.

When asked if entrepreneurs know about mentoring and its benefits, respondents said that entrepreneurs in Greece are only now beginning to learn about mentoring and the ways it can help them through examples of success stories (i.e. entrepreneurs who benefited from mentoring).

The main challenges in relation to mentoring entrepreneurs that respondents saw were the availability of mentors, the time entrepreneurs have to devote to mentoring and consistent meetings as well as the matching between mentor and mentee for an effective relationship.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes that entrepreneurs need in order to grow their business include prioritising important issues, active listening so they can learn from others as well as positive thinking which can help them remain calm and overcome obstacles. Entrepreneurs acquire such knowledge, skills and attitudes through informal learning, participation in conferences and peer learning.

These sources of learning are important but mentoring is also essential so that they can learn from the mentor and his/her experience and handling of real life challenges. Mentoring can help entrepreneurs develop a critical way of thinking as well as networking and extroversion so that entrepreneurs can work not only at a national but also at a European level.

Formal training and continuous education are also important for entrepreneurs.

Respondents were not aware of any national initiatives relating to mentoring entrepreneurs.

## **B5. Conclusions based on the interview analysis**

The interviews with VET trainers, entrepreneurs and consultants in Bulgaria revealed that the success of a mentoring relationship depends on openness, trust and willingness to cooperate on behalf of both mentor and mentee, as well as on the competence and experience of the mentor. Mentoring has proven to help mentees acquire knowledge and experience so they can make more effective decisions. For VET trainers to be effective mentors, they need skills and competences acquired through practical experience from a real working business environment, successful realization, methods for adults' training and possibility to develop a relationship with the entrepreneur based on trust. Further, according to the respondents, few entrepreneurs in Bulgaria were willing to participate in a mentoring relationship and most are among young people starting their own business. Also, entrepreneurs need to become aware of the benefits of mentoring since mentoring does not have a long history in the country. To this aim, information campaigns, projects, or sharing of good practises would be helpful. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that entrepreneurs need in order to grow their business are professional skills and knowledge in economics, tax and law, management skills, planning skills (some of the entrepreneurs these skills are not relevant), skills to work and deal with people, long working hours, openness to the new. Entrepreneurs usually acquire such knowledge, skills and attitudes through training (but very rare) and through the "trial-error" method. Entrepreneurs need to become aware of the value of learning since they mostly believe that having the capital is enough for a sustainable business. There were some national initiatives relating to mentoring entrepreneurs considered effective by respondents if they are well organized and include examples real life examples.

Interviews in Greece with VET trainers and coaches stressed the that the success of a mentoring relationship depended on the careful selection of mentors and the right matching with mentees ensuring as much as possible personality, motives, values, expectations match. As in Bulgaria, respondents mentioned that they knew cases in which mentoring helped mentees with their business. The skills and competences VET trainers need to effectively mentor entrepreneurs include interpersonal communication, the mentor's positive attitude as well as patience since mentoring especially in entrepreneurship issues is difficult since the mentor and mentee do not have the same knowledge and the transfer of knowledge and experience is full of challenges. Respondents replied that they acquired mentoring competences through continuous training as well as interaction with peers. Most entrepreneurs in Greece would be interested to engage in a mentoring relationship since this process is absent from the formal educational system and the Greek culture and Greek entrepreneurs need to become aware of mentoring and its value and accept it. The main

challenges in relation to mentoring entrepreneurs were the availability of mentors, the time entrepreneurs have to devote to mentoring and consistent meetings as well as the matching between mentor and mentee for an effective relationship. Entrepreneurs need skills such as prioritising important issues, active listening as well as positive thinking which can help them remain calm and overcome obstacles. Entrepreneurs acquire such knowledge, skills and attitudes through informal learning, participation in conferences and peer learning. These sources of learning are important but mentoring is also essential so that they can learn from the mentor and his/her experience and handling of real life challenges. Formal training and continuous education are also important for entrepreneurs. Respondents were not aware of any national initiatives relating to mentoring entrepreneurs.

## Annex 1- Survey Questionnaire



Inducing VET trainers with mentoring skills to boost entrepreneurial growth

Dear Participants

This is an **online trans-European survey** aiming to identify and define the competences and skills that VET trainers need to have in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs.

**Respondents** are VET trainers involved in general business and/or entrepreneurship training or VET trainers who wish to be involved in entrepreneurship training in the future and especially in mentoring entrepreneurs.

This survey forms part of the European project mENTERing which is **co-funded by the European Commission**, under the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, and is implemented by a consortium of six partners in Bulgaria, Spain, Greece and the United Kingdom.

The project will collect, analyse and use the survey data with the aim to identify the key competences and skills VET trainers need in order to effectively undertake their role as mentors of entrepreneurs and support them in growing their business.

We appreciate your support to the *mENTERing* project. By participating in this online survey, you provide us with invaluable data on the role and process of mentoring for entrepreneurs. The survey includes **27 multiple choice questions and will take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. All information will be treated confidentially and no** personal data or information will be disclosed or be otherwise used except for research purposes.

This survey, and the project as a whole, will be even more successful if you assist us in identifying more VET trainers who would like to participate by just forwarding this link which provides access to the online questionnaire.

The survey will be carried out until **15<sup>th</sup> March 2012**.

Thank you! Your contribution to making mentoring a tool with which to help entrepreneurs to grow their business is greatly appreciated.

The *mENTERing* consortium

Please provide us with demographic information that will be used for the purposes of this survey only.

1. Which country do you currently work in?
2. Please provide us with your email address:
3. Age
4. Gender

Male  Female

5. What is your educational level?

- High school education
- BA/BSc
- MA/MSc
- PhD
- Professional Training
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## A. Background Information

6. What is your role in your organization?

Please select one.

- Training Manager
- Training consultant
- Trainer of trainers
- Trainer
- Mentor
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. In relation to training, what are the tasks you normally undertake as part of your job?

Please tick any that applies

- Administration (organisation and planning-** costing & budgeting, trainee recruitment; **project management-** scheduling, coordination)
- Training (planning-** analysing learning needs, drafting individual training plans; **delivery-** organising procedures/resources, acting as a mentor, tutor, coach; **training evaluation-** assessing trainee progress, providing feedback)
- Development and quality assurance (developing yourself-** planning/ implementing long-term professional development, following trends in teaching/ learning; **developing your organization; quality assurance-** contributing to organizational quality management, controlling and monitoring training)
- Networking (networking internally-** initiating and engaging in internal networks, participating in internal meetings; **networking externally-** cooperating with local/national public organizations, other VET institutions, labour market)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**8. What is the area of training you are involved in?**

Please tick any that applies.

- General business & management
- Marketing
- Sales
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Entrepreneurship
- Mentoring (general)
- Mentoring entrepreneurs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**9. How many years of experience do you have in business training?**

- Less than 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- Over 10 years
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. How many individuals do you train annually?**

- Less than 50
- 51 - 200
- 201 – 500
- Over 500
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**11. How many individuals do you train annually?**

- Less than 50
- 51 - 200
- 201 – 500
- Over 500
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Training entrepreneurs**

**12. Does your work involve training entrepreneurs?**

- YES                       NO                       N/A

**13. *If YES, please specify the skills that you train***

Please tick any that applies

- General business & management skills (goal setting, organizing, strategic planning, delegating, problem solving, decision making etc.)
- Marketing skills (marketing planning, strategic positioning, advertising, market research etc.)
- Sales skills (planning sales, building rapport, presenting products/services to customers, negotiating contracts, influencing decision makers etc.)

- Finance skills (planning, budgeting, credit management etc.)
- Human resources skills (recruitment/ selection, training, compensation etc.)
- Interpersonal skills (e.g. active listening, effective communication, assertiveness, conflict resolution, handling difficult people, understanding diversity, emotional intelligence, managing stress etc.)
- ICT skills (data mining, decision making, forecasting etc.)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**14. How many hours per week do you devote to organising/ implementing training with entrepreneurs?**

- Less than 3 hour per week
- 4-9 hours per week
- 10-20 hours per week
- More than 20 hours per week
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**15. If NO, would you be interested to train entrepreneurs in the future?**

- YES                       NO                       N/A

### C. Mentoring Experience

**16. Are you familiar with the process of mentoring?**

- YES                                       NO                                       N/A

**17. If YES, how would you rate your knowledge of mentoring?**

- very low       low       medium       good       very good       expert

**18. If you possess knowledge about mentoring, where is this knowledge based upon?**  
Please tick any that applies

- Formal training in mentoring
- Personal experience
- Observing others
- Discussion with peers
- Reading
- A mentoring program in my organization
- Internet research
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

19. Have you ever been involved in mentoring for entrepreneurs?

- YES  NO

20. If YES, how would you rate your knowledge and experience in mentoring entrepreneurs?

- very low  low  medium  good  very good  expert

21. If NO, would you be interested to mentor entrepreneurs in the future?

- YES  NO  N/A

22. Which of the following mentoring competences would you be interested to develop further in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs?

Please select as appropriate (1 = not at all interested/ 5 = very interested)

Competences / Skills	Interest in development				
	1	2	3	4	5
Lifelong learning	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the role of the mentor	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the stages of the mentoring relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Adapting	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding boundaries and confidentiality	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
Use of technology (e-mentoring)	1	2	3	4	5
Building rapport	1	2	3	4	5
Relationship management	1	2	3	4	5
Action planning and goal setting	1	2	3	4	5
Problem-solving, trouble-shooting, and dealing with blockages	1	2	3	4	5
Managing mentoring meetings	1	2	3	4	5
Story telling	1	2	3	4	5
Listening skills	1	2	3	4	5
Information management	1	2	3	4	5
Non-verbal communication	1	2	3	4	5
Questioning skills	1	2	3	4	5
Counseling	1	2	3	4	5
Giving and receiving feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Professional distancing	1	2	3	4	5
Recognising achievement/ objectives attained	1	2	3	4	5

23. How do you rate the interest/ openness of entrepreneurs in your country to engage in a **mentoring relationship**?

- Very interested/ open
- Interested/ open
- Indifferent
- Not very interested/ open
- Not at all interested/ open
- Don't know

24. What are in your opinion the challenges relating to mentoring entrepreneurs?

Please tick up to three answers

- Lack of entrepreneurs' motivation
- Lack of entrepreneurs' time
- Lack of adequate vocational training in mentoring (for VET trainers)
- Lack of VET trainers' knowledge about entrepreneurs' activity/ needs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

25. Have you ever attended a training programme on mentoring competences for entrepreneurship?

- YES                       NO

26. Would you be interested to participate in a training programme to improve your competences and skills for mentoring entrepreneurs?

- YES                       NO                       N/A

27. Do you know any programmes on mentoring training for VET trainers and/or related courses we might be interested in?

If YES, could you please provide us with some information?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey and support the objectives of the *mENTERing* project ([www.mentering.eu](http://www.mentering.eu)).

## Annex 2- Interview Questionnaire



Inducing VET trainers with mentoring skills to boost entrepreneurial growth

Dear participants

This interview forms part of the research conducted in the frames of the European project mENTERing which is **co-funded by the European Commission**, under the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, and is implemented by a consortium of six partners in Bulgaria, Spain, Greece and the United Kingdom.

It aims to identify and define the competences and skills that VET trainers need to acquire and develop in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs and support them in growing their business by collecting data from **experts in VET, mentoring and entrepreneurship**.

We appreciate your support to the *mENTERing* project. By answering the interview questions you provide us with invaluable data on the role and process of mentoring for entrepreneurship. **The interview includes 17 open questions and will take you no more than 15 minutes to complete.** All information will be treated confidentially and no personal data or information will be disclosed or be otherwise used except for research purposes.

Thank you! Your contribution to making mentoring a tool with which to help entrepreneurs to grow their business is greatly appreciated.

The *mENTERing* consortium

[www.mentering.eu](http://www.mentering.eu)

## Questions for interviews with experts in VET, mentoring and entrepreneurship

### F. Respondent background and experience in VET, mentoring and/or entrepreneurship.

1. Which is your background in VET/mentoring and/or entrepreneurship?
2. Do you have any personal experience in mentoring entrepreneurs? (e.g. arranged or delivered mentoring training and/or train-the-trainer courses for VET trainers, arranged and supervised mentoring relationships etc.)
3. If YES, what elements, in your opinion, contributed to the success of the mentoring process?
4. Please provide concrete examples, if possible, of cases in which mentoring supported entrepreneurs to sustain and grow their business.

### G. The competences/skills mentors of entrepreneurs need.

5. In your experience, which are the most important competences/skills needed in order to effectively mentor entrepreneurs?  
For example: Adapting, Understanding diversity, Understanding boundaries and confidentiality, Emotional intelligence, Building rapport, Relationship management, Action planning and goal setting, active listening etc.
6. To what extent do you possess these competences/skills?
7. In what ways did you acquire them? (e.g. through formal education, vocational/ professional courses etc.)

### H. Interest/ willingness of entrepreneurs in your country to engage in a mentoring relationship and their awareness of the benefits of mentoring.

8. In your opinion, are entrepreneurs in your country interested (or not) to engage in a mentoring relationship when starting or growing their business? Why do you think this happens?
9. To what extent would you say that entrepreneurs are aware of the benefits of mentoring for growing their business? What could be done to raise their awareness?
10. Which are in your opinion the main challenges in mentoring entrepreneurs?

### I. The knowledge/ skills/ attitudes needed by entrepreneurs to sustain and grow their business and the role of mentoring.

11. In your experience, what knowledge, skills and attitudes do entrepreneurs need to possess in order to sustain and grow their business?
12. In what ways do entrepreneurs usually acquire such knowledge, skills and attitudes? (e.g. through formal education, vocational/ professional courses, workplace learning etc.)

13. Are these ways effective in providing entrepreneurs with the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes to sustain and grow their business?
14. In what ways can mentoring support them in acquiring/ developing such knowledge/ skills/ attitudes?

J. Closing questions

15. Do you know of any existing training courses/ programs in your country aiming at developing VET trainers' competences and skills for mentoring entrepreneurs?
16. If YES, do you think such programs are effective? In what ways?
17. Are there any issues/ topics that were not covered in the interview and you would like to mention/add them before we conclude?

Thank you for your participation!

The *mENTERing* Consortium  
[www.mentering.eu](http://www.mentering.eu)