What Works in Peer mentoring for people 50+?

A Comparative Study

50+

PEER TRAIN

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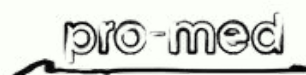Published in November 2022.

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Table of Contents

What is the PeerTrain project

Population ageing represents for European Union one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, which will irreversibly affect all spheres of society. According to the Green Paper on Ageing, in the last five decades, life expectancy at birth has increased by about 10 years for both men and women. Modernization of different services, integration into the digital world, promotion of social involvement are also timely and urging in the field of active ageing. As a result of demographic changes in the 21st century, new needs and demands have appeared, to which it is necessary to react. People remain active longer and workplaces need to adapt to these changes, and the quality of life also needs to be present as much as possible throughout the whole lifespan. For the sake of successful ageing, it is important to maintain a meaningful working activity, physical and mental activity, and nurture social interactions. However, the pandemic has recently established unprecedented, unexpected situations and caused a drastic change in lifestyle. It brought about even more challenges for people 50+.

It is necessary to specialize services, elderly people need an age-friendly approach in counselling, education services and working life, but they have easier access to their peers. Based on the needs analysis implemented in the partner countries, peer-mentors can have an extremely important role in the facilitation of active ageing, in the process of life-long learning, in maintaining employment and in the nurturing of social relationships. Although these people may be similar in terms of their age bracket, some may be better equipped with stronger coping strategies, or even professional experience, thereby they can set an example, inspire, and even help other people to live a meaningful and active life.

Objectives

Through participation in the Peer Mentor Training, based on international experience, peer-mentors can enhance their skills and being capable of mobilising and sharing their experiences in a way that is suitable for people 50+, their peers. They must take into consideration the expectations of the 21st century and use proper methods and techniques. This project is directed both to experts and people 50+ who are interested in becoming a peer mentor or a mentee. To this end, the project will produce 4 results, with this publication being a part of the first result: "What Works in the field of Mentoring Services for People 50+?".

The First Result

To create this first result and to use it as a foundation for the next results, the following was done:

- Firstly, we conducted a literature review, including the partner countries' national policies/strategic documents regarding active ageing;
- Secondly, beneficial/good practices implemented in the partner countries were collected and later critically read according to the model of competencies for active ageing (Antunes *et al.*, 2015);
- A survey by questionnaire, based on the Skills for successful mentoring of Philips-Jones (2003), was applied to establish which skills are particularly valued by stakeholders (e.g., adult educators) and potential learners (i.e., individuals 50+) and compare and contrast them, not only in general, but also according to the sample country.

Introduction

Almost every European country is dealing with population ageing (Eurostat, 2020). In fact, 41.7% of the EU27 population is 50 or older. In the partner countries, the percentage of their population that is 50 or older is (Eurostat, 2022):

- Bulgaria - 42,4%
- Germany - 44.9%
- Hungary - 39.5%
- Poland - 37.7%
- Portugal - 43.5%
- Slovakia - 36.4%

These demographic trends will impact most aspects of society and economy, from housing and healthcare to the demand for goods and services (Eurostat, 2020). Additionally, the elderly are one of the population groups that is more likely to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion partly because of healthcare expenses (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016). Old-age exclusion "leads to inequities in choice and control, resources and relationships, and power and rights in key domains of neighbourhood and community; services, amenities and mobility; material and financial resources; social relations; socio-cultural aspects of society; and civic participation" and "implicates states, societies, communities and individuals" (Walsh et al., 2016, p. 93). Notwithstanding, it is also true that the number of older people dealing with social exclusion and poverty appears to be decreasing (Eurostat, 2020). Furthermore, when it comes to the elderly, peer mentoring is quite relevant. Indeed, peer mentoring, as all forms of peer learning, prevents program dropout as well as allowing the development of relational competences (Baschiera & De Meyer, 2016). Due to the aforementioned reasons, it is particularly pertinent to identify policies regarding active ageing as well as beneficial/good practices for a broader perspective of what works for people 50+ and how these can be promoted in peer-mentoring programs for this public.

Active ageing

According to Antunes *et al.* (2015), the core competencies for active ageing are learning, civic and community, health, emotional, financial/economic, and technological. When it comes to learning, older people tend to participate more in non-formal learning rather than formal learning. Additionally, their participation in learning tends to decrease with age. Third Age Universities play a vital role on keeping older adults involved in learning. Civic and community competencies can be facilitated by "flexible retirement transitions, supporting volunteering opportunities, recognising and rewarding family care, and valuing creative activity" (Antunes *et al.*, 2015, p. 13). Health needs to be promoted but must also consider age and health status diversity. Some older people have, for instance, more mobility issues than others. These people will thus probably not be able to participate in the same activities (e.g., long walks) as others which do not have similar issues. Emotional wellbeing is impacted by changes to the family structure, independence (or lack thereof), feeling of being in control, being autonomous, and participating in other activities that reduce loneliness. This is a particularly important competency as in some countries (e.g., Slovenia) emotional and mental concerns are a frequent reason for older persons to go to their healthcare providers. Financial/economic is mostly impacted by the labour market participation in older adults. This is in turn, impacted by barriers to it such as ageism or even the person's potential health issues. Another particularly relevant negative impact is low pensions after retirement. Finally, technological, digital skills among older adults are paramount because in today's interconnected world, technology allows people to be autonomous, to be socially and even politically active, and to keep contact with loved ones (Antunes *et al.*, 2015).

Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring is distinguishable from traditional mentoring in the regard that there is no hierarchical aspect: the mentor and the learner are equals. This form of mentoring means that peers are able to learn from and aid each other (Holbeche, 1996). Indeed, this builds into Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the proximal development zone which is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). Thus, when it comes to peer mentoring and peer learning, many different proximal development zones intersect and overlap, making peer mentoring a mode of learning that allows for sharing and exchanging knowledge and facilitating skill development, whilst also allowing space for autonomy (Baschiera & De Meyer, 2016).

Furthermore, peer mentoring programs aiming at promoting active ageing do highlight the importance of the following as being core for successful mentoring: the learner's experience, the learners' empowerment, and finally, of the mentor-mentee relationship itself (Baschiera & De Meyer, 2016). Thereby, "peer to peer education becomes, thus, as a social process that sustains a lot of different relationships: cooperation, collaboration, mutual interdependence in contexts of formal learning as well as non-formal and informal learning, according to four direct principles:

- social skills education
- active citizenship education
- cultural education
- empowerment education" (Baschiera & De Meyer, 2016; p. 183).

This means that by default, peer to peer education includes at least three of the previously mentioned competencies for active ageing: learning, civic and community, and emotional. Additionally, health, financial and economic, and technological competencies, can be included when designing the specific peer to peer learning activity.

For a successful mentoring there are skills that a mentor and a mentee need to have. The Mentoring Skills Model (Phillips-Jones, 2003, pp.2) defines the following skills and splits them among (1) 'Mentor-Specific Skills', (2) 'Mentee-Specific Skills', and (3) 'Shared Core Skills' that both mentors and mentees should have (Fig.1).

Fig. 1. The Mentoring Skills Model of Philips-Jones (2003)
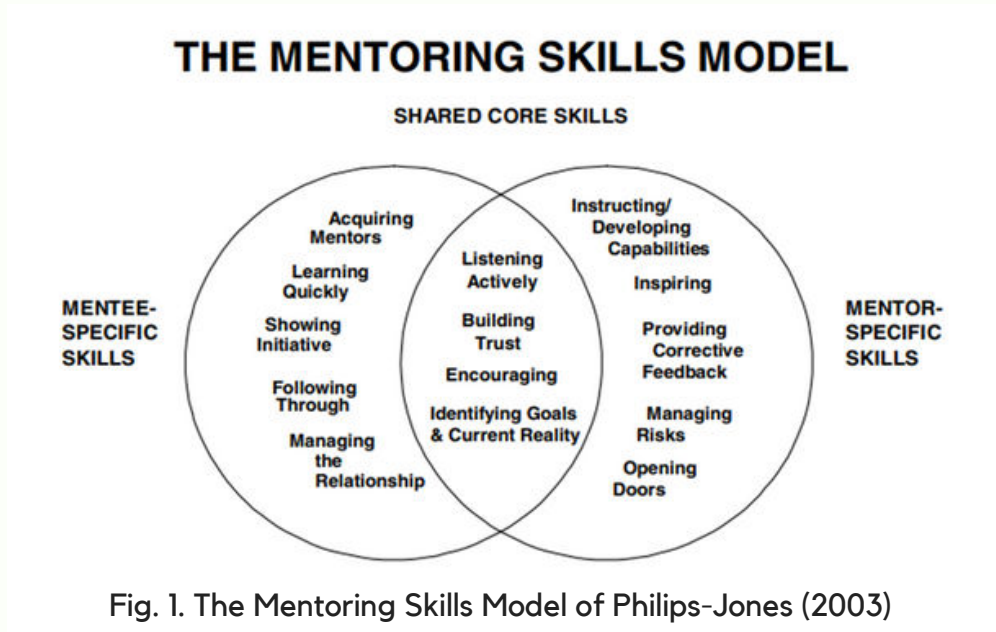
Concerning the (1) Mentor-Specific Skills — it's important to create settings and use strategies enabling capability development of mentees. To achieve this the mentor has to assist mentees in finding various sources of information (people, books, website, etc.), enable new skills and transmit knowledge, show them new perspectives, demonstrate effective behaviours, and, most importantly, facilitate their learning by living rewarding mentoring processes. Inspiring is a great part of the mentoring process, by proposing stimulating actions or arranging for thrilling experiences, mentors have the challenge "to ensure that your mentees identify and pursue their own form of greatness, not necessarily yours". (Phillips Jones, 2003, p5). Providing mentees with corrective feedback is another way to complement the mentor's list of skills and to do so, mentors should give specific feedback with non-derogatory words and provide some better ways for dealing with certain situations. Another important skill is managing risks — helping the mentees to recognise

the risks of projects/actions and help with suggestions, prevention and recovery strategies. Mentors can also open doors to the mentees, in other words, they can provide appropriate opportunities for their mentees for them to show their abilities, as well as introducing them to appropriate contacts — this, when the mentors think the mentee is ready, the mentee's readiness is fundamental for their success.

The (2) Mentee-Specific Skills — covers five skills. To become a successful mentee, it's important to choose the appropriate mentor, meaning that there must be a critical selection based on what the mentees want for themselves, what are their goals/expectations and which mentor meets them. The mentee should also try to learn quickly, be observant, study and apply their new skills. In the mentoring relationship, the mentees need to show initiative (ask appropriate questions, try to do some things by themselves, etc.), be committed (complete the task on time, be persistent with the difficulties, etc.) and manage the relationship by keeping track how the mentoring is going and making suggestions, when necessary.

The (3) Shared skills are: listening actively, building trust, encouraging and identifying goals & current reality. About the listening actively skill, mentors and mentees need to show if they have understood what was said to feel accepted and for establishing trust. That can be done for example, if they reflect back on what was said (i.e., reformulation), use body language (e.g., nodding) to show they understand, avoid interrupting others, remember and show interest in what everyone says and summarize the key elements of what everyone says. Building trust is the basis for any successful peer-mentoring. To build trust one must respect boundaries, take responsibility for mistakes and correct them, and, if someone disagrees with something, they should be honest and respectfully talk it out. Encouraging is also one of the most valued mentoring skills — giving sincere positive feedback will keep everyone focused and motivated. This can be achieved by offering sincere compliments to mentors and mentees in their accomplishments, talk about positive traits they have, and express appreciation. And for the mentoring to work, both the mentors and mentees need to talk about their current reality and identify

goals in their life. It's important to acknowledge the strengths and the flaws to know the specific assistance you would like to have. To this both of them should set one-to five-year goals and describe the reality of abilities and situations.

European and National Strategies for Active Ageing

The goal of the **European policy on active ageing** is to build a social and physical environment of participation in society, allowing the elderly to have an active, healthy and independent lifestyle. For this to be possible, it is necessary to have access to medical and financial assistance, to prevent poverty, to provide living and housing conditions and access to technologies (Council of the European Union, 2012; European Commission, 2012). The European Union highlights the right to education, training and lifelong learning so that they can continue to be an active part of society and remain present in the labour market. The main areas that the European Union expects that the EU member states pay attention to and develop policies in their countries are: economic activity (pension forms, digital upskilling, safe workplace), social participation (internet access and involvement in society), health and well-being (access to healthcare services and health prevention), long-term care (quality of services) and supportive environments (housing, transportation and financial independence). Following this policy, the partner countries have developed their own National Strategies: Bulgaria's National Strategy for Active Ageing in Bulgaria (2019 – 2030), Germany's National Continuing Education Strategy in the Area of Active Ageing, Hungary's National Strategy on Ageing, Poland's Assumptions of the Long-Term Senior Policy in Poland (2014 – 2020) , Portugal's National strategy for an active and healthy ageing (2017 – 2025), and Slovakia's National Program for Active Aging (2021 – 2030).

Bulgaria's National Strategy for Active Ageing (2019 — 2030) is based upon the following values: Independent living; Participation in society; Access to care; Dignity — to guarantee that elderly people live in a secure environment, to protect their human rights, including against age discrimination in society. Its aim is creating the necessary conditions for active and decent living of the elderly people through providing equal opportunities for their full participation in society's economic and social life. The strategic aim is developed in four priorities: (1) Promoting active ageing in the field of employment; (2) Promoting active ageing in the field of participation in society; (3) Promoting active ageing in the field of independent living; and (4) Building capacity and favourable environment for active ageing at national and regional level (Naydenova, 2019).

Germany's National Continuing Education Strategy in the area of active ageing is based on the "2nd UN World Ageing Plan" and the UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy "Challenges and Opportunities of Ageing Societies". It forms the basis for implementation of activities, programmes, and projects in this area. Several regional as well as national platforms offer opportunities for engagement and active participation of stakeholders in the area of active ageing to implement the Ageing plan and translate it into action. The focus of the Ageing plan is vocational training which intends to make a significant contribution to individuals and society. The aim is to make further training courses and funding opportunities more transparent and more easily accessible for all in order to provide targeted support for groups of people with previously below-average participation in further training or for small and medium-sized enterprises without large personnel departments.

Hungary's National Strategy on Ageing outlines the current situation of ageing and, starting out of this, sets out a vision (target state) for 2034 and presents the areas for development needed to achieve it. The Strategy provides a realistic and broad overview of the fields related to ageing in order to adjust the directions of development to the real situation, while also listing

existing and working good practices. At the core of the Strategy is the adoption and enforcement of a paradigm shift according to which one should think and act in terms of a development model (preservation of existing abilities, retrieval of dormant abilities) instead of the former deficit model (concentrating on losses; OGY Resolution 81/2009).

Poland's Assumptions of the Long-Term Senior Policy in Poland (2014 — 2020) states that there are deliberate senior policies that are implemented by the public administration bodies and other organizations or institutions, that carry out initiatives that promote good conditions for active, healthy and dignified aging. In Poland, the goal of the senior policy is to ensure the possibility of the eldery to continue an independent and self-sufficient life even if they have certain functional limitations. Overall for the purposes of this document, the senior policy is understood as a set of activities throughout a person's life, leading to the provision of conditions for the prolongation of activity, both professional and social, and also an independent, healthy, safe life of the elderly.

Portugal is implementing a national strategy for an active and healthy ageing (2017 — 2025) (Estratégia Nacional para o Envelhecimento Ativo e Saudável; ENEAS; Silva da Costa et al., 2017). Within this strategy, the vision to promote a high quality, dignified, fulfilled, healthy and active ageing of the population is established, and manifests itself in the mission to increase well-being, health, non-discrimination, safety, participation, research and inclusion, so that the life quality, capacity and autonomy of elderly people is enhanced. The ENEAS is in line with the National Health Plan as well as several other plans and programs for ageing as suggested by the WHO, the UN's Agenda 2030 and the EU.

Slovakia's National Program for Active Ageing (2021 — 2030) (NPAA 2021-2030) is a direct follow-up to NPAA 2014 — 2020. The aim of NPAA 2021 — 2030 is to support the building of a sustainable society through

supporting and enhancing the potential of people of all age categories, especially in the context of their aging process. The strategy document focuses on target groups - all persons actively preparing for aging, or persons in higher age, with special emphasis on persons who are disadvantaged in any way in some area of life and social relations and limited in access to public resources. It includes the following areas to support active ageing: (1) Promoting an active aging in a family perspective; (2) Support of human resources in the life cycle; (3) Healthccare supporting active ageing; (4) Support of economic activity in the perspective of life cycle; (5) Promoting of social participation and inclusion of older people; (6) Assurance of income in older age; (7) Promoting the dignity and quality of life of older people; (8) Active aging policies closer to the citizen and their management; and (9) Awareness raising, data and research. (NPAS, 2021).

Beneficial/Good Practices for Active ageing

To better understand the Active ageing practices in the partner countries, a set of 19 practices were collected. All partners contributed with 3 or 4 practices, building up a sample that allows us to identify the promotion of some competencies for active ageing which were used as indicators for the practices' potential success. We'd like to highlight that some of these practices included mentoring as a strategy for active ageing. However, this is not a comprehensive list, thus the results are not generalisable to partner countries' universe.

Bulgarian partners collected the VAL.oR project; the EUPIN project, and the Easy ways to transfer knowledge project.

The **VAL.oR project** includes a training curriculum for adults engaged in the organisation and management of cultural events, will be designed and implemented with local teams, to strengthen their management skills, and expose them to prospects and strategies that work toward a European vision and framework. Valorising the cultural heritage background of rural communities, the project aims to encourage adults, young and old, who are not generally engaged in lifelong learning, to participate in training, transnational exchanges and a mentoring programme which will see local teams and community leaders sharing their tacit knowledge and competencies. This intergenerational and participatory approach can contribute greatly to community development and well-being. The curriculum, targeted to strengthen the competencies in organising and managing local cultural festivals and events, acts as a 'Trojan horse' in engaging team

leaders in further training and the community, as a whole, in a transnational educational experience. The informal learning sessions will be specifically focused on the following key skills: cultural awareness and expression, digital skills, civic and entrepreneurial competencies. The exchange of these competencies are closely linked to the project's other goal; the clarification and recognition of the learners' prior learning. The recognition and valorisation of their tacit knowledge and skills will, hopefully, motivate older members of the community to engage in intergenerational dialogue and focus on the common goal of maintaining and renewing the intangible, cultural heritage of their local area.

The **EUPIN project** was a project including organisations from Bulgaria, Slovakia, Macedonia and Austria, running from 2015-2017, funded by the Erasmus program of the European Commission with the goal of creating actions involving people at risk of exclusion, i.e., elderly (among others). The project focused on problems identified in the guidelines of Europe 2020, the European anti-poverty program as well as the guidelines included in the Strategy of development of the Lodz region 2020. It included collaboration and experience exchange for educators towards sharing creative activities for people at risk of exclusion: senior citizens, disabled people, and addicts; leverage and expansion of professional qualifications of those working with the people at risk of exclusion; skill acquisition and improvement of existing psychological, interpersonal and methodological ones, necessary for the work with target group; dissemination of modern art therapy methods for staff working with people at risk of exclusion; and creation of opportunities for personal development of educators participating in the project, raising self-esteem and reduce the risk of burnout.

The **Easy ways to transfer knowledge project** aimed to develop recommendations for an easy way to transfer knowledge that could be used when working with low-skilled adults, long-term unemployed persons, including seniors, and also refugees and people with language perception difficulties. The project promoted education as teamwork where the majority

of the work is done by educators who create a purposeful, systematic and coordinated learning process in using correct training methods. The objective of the project is to enhance educators' knowledge regarding working with low skilled adults by providing support and suggestions in the Handbook — 'Easy ways to transfer knowledge', sharing good practices of creative education, and strengthening cooperation and networking between organizations.

German partners collected the "Healthy and active ageing" project; Service Point "Digitisation and Education for Older People", and KOSIS.

The **Healthy and active ageing" project** aimed for the preservation and support of physical, psychological, and cognitive skills; the preservation and support of an active, autonomous, socially integrated and self-responsible healthy lifestyle; to prolong the lifetime until need for care. It was implemented in 2012 and follows an integrated, multidisciplinary approach. It aimed to serve as an umbrella to facilitate the networking and collaboration of governmental, non-governmental, academic and private stakeholders in jointly defined key topics of healthy ageing, such as physical activity (incl. fall prevention) and healthy diet; mental health (incl. depression and dementia); substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceuticals); dissemination of information on major diseases, risk factors, prevention opportunities and early diagnosis; and integration, activation and participation of the target group, in this case being people aged 60 or more.

The **service point Digitisation and Education for Older People** supports the willingness of many older people to learn and get to grips with digital media. Getting to grips with new things and learning new things in old age can help people to remain fit and independent for a long time. This also applies to dealing with the rapidly changing digital media. The service centre provides information on all questions about education in old age and would like to make it easier for older people to access courses and meeting places. On its

website www.wissensdurstig.de, older people can find offers in their vicinity in a nationwide event database. The internet platform wissensdurstig.de also offers tips and materials on education and digitalisation in old age, useful information for education providers and good practice examples. One goal of the service centre's work is to make educational offers accessible to people who have not participated so far. Target groups are, for example, older people in care institutions and those with disabilities. With its publications, the Service Agency also addresses older people, those involved in senior education and education providers.

The **KOSIS Active Ageing Community** was founded as an association of municipalities and other public institutions with the aim of conducting standardised empirical surveys on the topic of quality of life of the 55plus generation in the participating institutions on a non-commercial basis at regular intervals, including the development of procedures and the joint development and application of methods for data evaluation, as well as setting up and operating a joint information portal for the publication of corresponding data. It sees itself in the content-related and organisational tradition of the TooLS project, which was funded by the European Union from 2009 to 2013, as a municipal network of knowledge and technology that combines the idea of municipal self-help with the content-related demands of scientifically sound municipal data collection and evaluation as well as the technical possibilities of a hardware and software infrastructure that is also under municipal sovereignty.

Hungarian partners contributed with Age-friendly Municipality Award; Senior Centrum, and Work for yourself from today!

The **Age-friendly Municipality Award** has the objective of contributing to the reinforcement of local-level policy concerning old people, it should

recognize the active responsibility of municipalities for old people, and the specific outcomes of local government activities in this field. (Civilek.hu, 2017). By awarding the prize, the founders wish to contribute the fact that the attention of local public service providers be focused as much as possible on supporting sport and nature programmes that contribute to the physical and mental health of old people and/or focus their attention on self-development and education as much as possible, and to enable the elderly people of the municipality to participate in a greater number and more regularly in various educational and training programmes, either free of charge, or at a discount. By awarding the prize, the ministers intend to recognise achievements reached so far, and to draw attention to the fact that it is local governments that can do the most to promote elderly policy at local level by creating information flow and dialogue, by presenting achievements and by promoting the development of communities.

The **Senior Centrum** is an advisory community that supports old people's lifepaths. They provide comprehensive information services on ageing, home care, nursing home care and care for people with dementia. They guide clients through the often emotionally distressing process of choosing the right services, covering personal, interpersonal, health, legal and financial aspects. The centrum includes a space for Dialogue between family members, psychological support for elderly people (led by a mediator); social and market services, choice of institution (led by an elderly care expert); yoga, exercise and lifestyle - group and individual classes (led by a yoga instructor); Insurance services (in cooperation with an independent insurance consultant); and a Senior Blog Café, elaborating on professional topics: using exercise against dementia, Alzheimer's in the family, cooperation between generations, self-determination in old age, internet use in old age, holidays and loneliness, human rights - elderly rights, nutrition, osteoporosis, physiotherapy, choice of a nursing home, learning from the elderly. Additionally, it shares on its website an extensive knowledge base, free for all, with things like the Mini Mental Tests, which are easy-to-use psychological tests.

Work for yourself from today! is an entrepreneurship programme for people over 50, which aims to increase the market presence of this generation by transferring practice-oriented business skills. We often identify the world of innovation with the younger age group, but it is worth paying attention for those masterminds, who already have enough experience due to their age, and who are more purposeful as well. There is a whole series of publications showing that the 50-plus generation has a double chance of building a successful business than the 20-year-old generation. The programme entitled Vállalkozz 50+ (Be an entrepreneur 50+) was launched for innovators over 50 who feel that the experience they have gained over the years is a competitive advantage (Design Terminal, 2022). It welcomed participants every two weeks for three months. Through in-person and online workshops and presentations, tallowing them the opportunity to expand their business and digital skills, meet executives from successful companies and investors. Thematic sessions and personalized mentoring brought them closer to the steps of business development, with a strong emphasis on practical skills. They have learned methods for a successful product or service development, expanded their professional contacts, and built their market entry strategy.

Polish partners collected the Third Age Universities (TAU) and Seniors in Action; EuBiA project; and MATURE project

The **TAU program** was initiated in 2005. It is aimed to promote educational actions that encourage older people to become more active, with emphasis placed on their social activity, and intergenerational relations in particular. The program is carried out mainly by supporting and promoting initiatives taken by seniors themselves, who use their potential, knowledge, experience, and time for the benefit of their own environment and local communities, and by supporting the operations of the Third Age Universities. The "Seniors in Action" competition offers grants and training for people over 60 who wish to carry out social initiatives based on their own ideas, individually or in

tandem with a younger person. The competition is addressed to active seniors enrolled into a Third Age University, as well as those cooperating with other organizations and institutions. So far, 398 projects have been financed in the thirteen editions of the "Seniors in Action" competition: intergenerational projects, projects that encourage older people to act for the benefit of their community, and projects promoting volunteer services by the seniors. The fourteenth edition is underway, with 21 projects being implemented.

The **EuBiA project** stands for Getting older people involved in learning. Nine organisations from seven countries discussed important issues and shared their experiences in the field of learning in later life. All EuBiA partners are convinced of the benefits of networking. Therefore one of EUBIA´s main aims was to establish a European network and to discuss relevant topics concerning networking and learning in later life. The results of discussions during the meetings on different aspects of networking — from advantages to risks - are listed. Each partner organisation presented an example of good practice to the EUBIA group. After discussing the team´s criteria for good practice, all examples that had been presented were checked against the criteria that had been worked out. Keywords in the context of lifelong learning and, indeed, for learning in later life are empowerment, advocacy and participation. These were broadly discussed alongside barriers and obstacles to participation and the means by which the obstacles could be overcome so as to benefit learning in ageing societies. The EuBiA partners developed a Guide as the product of the partnership.

The **MATURE project** stands for Making Adult Teaching Useful, Relevant and Engaging. It is a Grundtvig multilateral project co-funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning programme. The project ran from October 2012 to September 2014. It developed training for adult educators on the theme of engaging and motivating older adults who, because of disadvantage, find it difficult to participate in group learning. The MATURE team conducted research; developed and delivered units of training for face-to-face and self-study use; and created a booklet for organisations outside education who act as intermediaries between older adults and the services

they need or are entitled to. The MATURE research report is one of a number of activities that the project team has undertaken together in order to create relevant training content for its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme. In the report the MATURE consortium published information from a number of sources in partner countries and beyond about participation, disadvantage and successful practice. The information contributes to the theoretical basis for MATURE's work; provides the partnership with key messages to be transmitted through training and affords trainees insight into the provenance of their CPD.

Portuguese partners collected 4 good practices: PEER - Dare to be wise, ICTskills4all; FAITh; and Sol Poente.

The **PEER project** was designed to provide elderly learners with new online learning tools by creating an online learning platform for people 50+ to learn new skills. This platform was available in five languages and included some Web 2.0 tools that enable users to share and communicate on the platform. Thereby, older people gained access to a collaborative learning environment that was customized to their needs. This approach helped to overcome the digital divide, enhance technological knowledge and promote social inclusion. Its objectives were empowering people aged 50+ to train their mental abilities and cognitive self-fulfillment, exchange experience and knowledge, participate and interact in social settings; applying participatory methods that allows user involvement to assess and pinpoint older person's usability needs; accommodating freely accessible Web 2.0 tools for 50+ people; creating didactical guidelines in all EU languages, providing guidance on peer-to-peer learning in social platforms; and initiating a network of 50+ platform operators through networking events as well as the mapping of already existing 50+ platforms.

The **ICTskills4all project** aimed to explore and test innovative and efficient practices and methods for the design and delivery of educational programs supporting the acquisition of digital skills in citizens 55+ with limited/no digital knowledge. The ultimate goal is to benefit future attempts and types of training for seniors by improving the digital literacy of seniors. One the one hand, the project promotes 55+ aged people's independence, capability of keeping up with the digitization and life quality through new, high quality offers, while on the other hand contributing and impacting the education sectors, existing offer and the quality of learning opportunities. The project development includes various factors related to the technology and the users, as well as a diversified project consortium and various learning approaches. Training modules as well as a comprehensive tool is implemented and supported through personalized learning ways that are peer-to-peer and intergenerational.

The **FAITh project** aims to enhance digital capacities and confidence in online technologies of adults older than 55 to decrease their digital marginalisation. This will be done through developing a network engaging peers, family, community and the local market to promote older adults to use ICT in their everyday life. To this end it will do a needs assessment of needs and barriers using the internet/online transaction; train 55+ adults to become digital mentors for peers through a peer-to-peer programme (face-to-face and game-based online course); implement capacity building and training for all target groups involved; and raise awareness towards engaging and sensitizing various groups to promote digital inclusion of elderly.

The **Sol Poente project** depicts a health education program that uses peer-to-peer training and group dynamics as methodologies. It is directed to adults 65+ and intends to make a diagnostic and screening approach to health problems in the elderly, resolving the problems identified and manage health/disease processes. The program includes presentation and ice-breaking exercises, brainstorming activities, group discussions, role plays, interactive games, and Q&A sessions, all of which developed based on the perceptions of the participants. Its objectives were to identify the health

care needs of the elderly population of the Municipality of Oliveira do Bairro; promote the health and life quality of elderly; prevent diseases, dependence and inability of self-care; demystify the role of elderly people in society; promote intergenerational experiences; and stimulate cognitive abilities of seniors. It measured its impact on the health of the elderly, using several scales: Barthel Index, Lawton-Brody Index, GDS-15, WHOQOL-BREF, MMSE, Rosenberg. The improvement on these scale results showed that it had a positive impact on autonomy, self-care, self-esteem and cognitive performance.

Slovak partners collected the good practices "Take your chance" project; the Educational programme - Age management counsellor; and the Learning of Seniors in the Digital Society project.

The **"Take your chance" project** was launched on the 1st October 2021, its implementation is with the participation of 46 Offices of labour, social affairs and family, to which applicants can submit their applications for a provision of financial contribution. The project focuses on 3 measures and intends to increase the employment of disadvantaged job seekers, including elderly job seekers. The 3 measures that the project is promoting and supporting are (1) Support for beginning self-employed persons; (2) Financial contributions for training mentors; and (3) Promoting the employment of disadvantaged candidates. The first is aimed at those who wish to start their own business. They can receive a one-time financial contribution of € 5,600. This activity will then need to last at least 2 years or they will have to return part of this financial contribution. The second supports the training of a new employee from the ranks of disadvantaged job seekers, including citizens over 50 years of age, under the guidance of another employee, the so-called mentor. The last covers part of the wages paid by employers if they hire disadvantaged candidates.

The **Educational programme - Age management counsellor** was created within the international project Erasmus+ "Age Management Uptake", which aims to inform participants with the basic principles of age management, its objectives, tools, implementation opportunities and measuring the ability of employees using the Work Ability Index (WAI). At the same time, it prepares participants for activities in the environment of employers' organizations. Through lectures, practical exercises, group work and their own experience, participants will obtain the basic knowledge, competencies and skills necessary for the activities of an age management counsellor. Emphasis is placed on the ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations, work independently and solve problems. (Comenius University, AIVD, 2019).

The Learning of Seniors in the Digital Society project provides information on education opportunities for people over the age of 50, programme innovation and training for adults with a lack of digital skills. The project's priorities are focused on open education and innovative practices in the digital field, focusing on the development of educational opportunities and skills in the use of digital (DT) and information communication technologies (ICT) and equipment to meet the needs of older adults. The project focuses on the education and training of basic ICT skills and on the acquisition and development of key digital competences of older people. Its results will lead to the development of digital literacy and skills of older people who need special courses and training for the flexible use of ICT in daily life for various purposes with the fulfillment of personal needs for active daily life and active citizenship.

Qualitative analysis of the beneficial/good practices

To conduct the qualitative analysis of the good practices, the first step was to identify which of the core competencies for active ageing were being promoted in these good practices. These competencies are Learning, Civic

and Community, Health, Emotional, Financial/Economic, and Technological (Antunes et al., 2015). Once again we would like to highlight that as the practices are not comprehensive, the results are not necessarily indicatory of the countries' universe.

On a **first look**, we can see that in one way or another all the practices promoted active ageing. Additionally, we could immediately identify that, even if it wasn't their main focus, nearly all of the good practices (18), directly or indirectly, promoted the Civic and community competencies necessary for active ageing as well as Emotional competencies (17), and Learning (15). Around half the collected good practices promoted Technological competencies (10). The Financial/economic competencies (4) and Health (4) competencies were found less often (Fig.2).
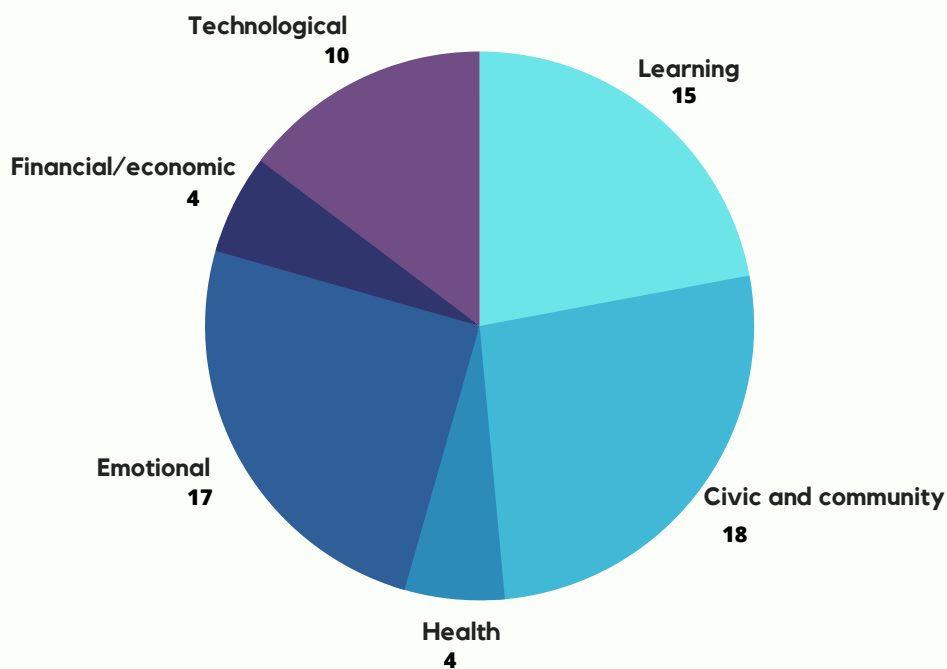

Fig. 2. Promotion of competencies of active ageing in the good practices

	BG	DE	HU	PL	PT	SK	Total
Learning	3	2	2	3	3	2	15
Civic & Community	3	3	3	3	4	2	18
Health	0	1	2	0	1	0	4
Emotional	3	2	3	2	4	3	17
Financial/ economic	0	0	3	0	0	1	4
Technological	1	2	1	1	3	2	10

Table 1. Table of competencies being promoted in the practices collected

When looking at the **practices collected by the partners** (see Table 1), we can underline that all of them promoted more than one of the core competencies for active ageing. Furthermore, the practices respect the adult education principles, and have developed a diversified set of approaches from experience sharing, creative activities (e.g., theatre), and some of them have implemented mentoring approaches, as we illustrate below:

- **VAL.oR** – a mentoring program was used towards encouraging adults, including older adults, to participate in training and international exchanges. This practice thus promoted the following competencies for active ageing: Learning, Civic and community, and Emotional.
- **Work for yourself from today!** – personalised mentoring sessions were used towards promoting entrepreneurship among people over 50. This practice promoted the following competencies of active ageing: Learning, Civic and community, Emotional, Financial/economic, and Technological.

- **PEER** - used peer-to-peer learning in its online learning platform and enabled collaborative learning, thereby promoting Learning, Civic & community, Emotional, and Technological.
- **ICTskills4all** - used intergenerational and peer-to-peer educational programs to improve digital skills in older adults. It promoted Learning, Civic and community, Emotional, and Technological.
- **FAITh** - trained older adult with high digital skills to become peer mentors, therefore promoting Learning, Civic and community, Emotional, and Technological competencies.
- **Sol Poente** - uses peer-to-peer training and group dynamics as methodologies within a health education program, thus promoting Learning, Civic and community, Emotional, and Health competencies for active ageing.
- **"Take your chance"** - supports organisations in the training of a new disadvantaged employee (e.g., an older unemployed person), under a mentoring training. It promoted Learning and Civic and community competencies for active ageing.

We can conclude that many different methodologies can be used and combined towards promoting active ageing competencies. Whilst our sample is not comprehensive and thus not representative, we can, nevertheless, highlight that, the presence of 7 references to mentoring practices in our sample, which was mostly focused on collecting practices for active ageing, highlight the utility and relevance of this project and that mentoring is indeed a good approach to promote active ageing, be it on a more traditional mentoring approach with an older mentor (Aresi & Weaver, 2020), or when the mentor is a more experienced peer (Active Ageing Project, 2018, Baschiera, & De Meyer, 2016).

Survey of skills for successful mentoring

In total, 246 people participated in the survey, half being mentors and half being people aged 50 or more. The average age of the experts was around 55 years (M= 54.73, SD=9.95) and of the people aged 50 or more was around 63 (M=62.8, SD=9.25). On average stakeholders had 17 years of experience in working with adults (M=17.49; SD=10.24). Each partner collected 20 to 23 surveys per group (i.e., stakeholders and people 50+). In these surveys the participants had to rate the skills for successful mentoring (Philips-Jones, 2003) on a Likert scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Completely). All the samples collected were of convenience and thus might not be representative.

Results of the Stakeholder survey

Regarding the answers related to the skills of mentors and mentees, from the survey of the stakeholders working with individuals aged 50 or plus, we obtained the following results.

In general, all results received quite good ratings, as most of the obtained results rounded 4 or above (Fig.3). Concerning the skills specific to mentors (i.e., Providing corrective feedback, Instructing/Developing capabilities, Inspiring, Managing risks, and Opening doors) the participants unanimously considered all of the skills as completely necessary, giving them more than 4.5. In the skills specific to mentees (i.e., Acquiring mentors, Showing initiative,   Learning quickly,   Following   through,   and   Managing   the

relationship), two of them were perceived as very important: Acquiring mentors (M=4.37, SD=0.84) and Learning quickly (M=3.69, SD=1.04). Finally, concerning the 4 skills that were in common to both mentors and mentees (i.e., Active listening, Building trust, Encouraging, and Identifying goals and current realities) every single one was considered completely necessary in the joint results, obtaining and average close to 5 (M>4.5). It's worth noting, however, that the skill Encouraging for the mentees was only evaluated as very important (M=4.36, SD=0.87). As a way to keep mentees motivated, participants often mentioned frequent feedback, perceived success, visible progress, and perceiving the program as valuable to them.
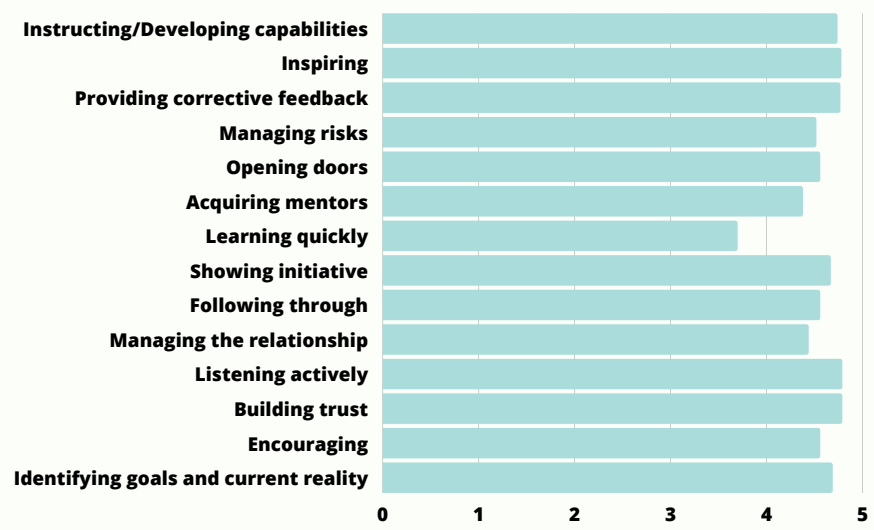
Fig. 3. Likert scale results of the skills for successful mentoring in the stakeholder sample

The Bulgarian sample considered all skills to be completely necessary for successful peer-mentoring (M>4.5). Furthermore, they referred that for mentees to remain motivated, they need to perceive the program as useful for them.

The German sample evaluated the five mentor-specific skills as completely necessary (M>4.5). For the mentee-specific skills four of the five were rated as very important: Acquiring mentors (M=3.84, SD=1.26), Learning quickly (M=4.05, SD=1.32), Following through (M=4.32, SD=0.75), and Managing the relationship (M=4.15, SD=0.81). The fifth mentee-specific skill, Showing initiative was evaluated as completely necessary (M=4.8, SD=0.41). For the shared skills, all were rated as completely necessary (M>4.5) with the

exception of Encouraging which was perceived as very important (M=4.44, SD= 0.91). This was due to its perception as less important as a mentee skill (M=4.35, SD=1.37). Participants also highlighted that to keep mentees motivated in a peer-mentoring program, feedback needs to be provided often, and the program must be interesting and/or pertinent for the mentees.

The Hungarian sample generally rated the skills highly. The Hungarian participants rated all skills as completely necessary (M>4.5) except the mentee-specific Learning quickly which was evaluated as somewhat necessary (M=3.25, SD=0,91). Additionally, the shared skill of Encouraging when only being evaluated for mentees is perceived as very important (M=4.37, SD=0,68), contrasting with it being considered as completely necessary as a mentor skill (M=4.7, SD=0.57). Hungarian participants highlighted that perceived success and being interested in the topics covered by the program are key to keep mentees motivated in a peer-mentoring program.

The Polish sample tended to, overall rate all skills as very important with the exception of five skills. Four skills were rated as completely necessary (M>4.5), these were two mentor-specific skills: Providing corrective feedback (M=4.74, SD=0.54) and Inspiring (M=4.57, SD=0.59), and the shared skills of Building trust (M=4.72, SD=0.50) and Listening actively (M=4.57, SD=0.72) highlighting their necessity for successful peer mentoring programs. The last skill, the mentee-specific skill of Learning quickly was evaluated as somewhat important (M=3.43, SD=0.84). Additionally, the Polish participants wrote in that perceived successes and/or progress are important to keep mentees motivated in a peer-mentoring program.

Regarding **the Portuguese sample**, skills were, once again, generally perceived as completely necessary for peer mentoring (M>4.5). When it comes to mentor-specific skills, only Opening doors was rated as very important (M=4.05, SD=0,83). For the mentee-specific skills, only Learning quickly was rated as somewhat important (M=3.1, SD=0.79), and the skills of Acquiring mentors (M=4, SD=0.73) and Managing the relationship (M=4.3, SD=0.8) were evaluated as very important. The other two mentee-specific

skills (i.e., Showing initiative and Following through) were considered completely necessary (M>4.5). As for the shared skills, Listening actively, Building trust, and Encouraging were perceived as completely necessary (M>4.5). Identifying goals and current realities was perceived as very important (M=4.46, SD=0.64). Encouraging must also be highlighted as it was evaluated as completely necessary as a mentor skill (M=4.84, SD=0.37) and very necessary for mentees (M=4.35, SD=0.75). When it comes to how to keep mentees motivated, the feedback being provided often and mentors being available were highlighted.

Lastly, the **Slovak sample** highly valued mentor-specific skills, giving them all close to the maximum notation (M>4.5). This was not the case for the mentee-specific skills, in which all the skills but one being rated as very important (3.5<M<4.5). Indeed, only Acquiring mentors was evaluated as completely necessary (M=4.5, SD=0.61). When it comes to the shared skills all but Encouraging were evaluated as completely necessary (M>4.5), and Encouraging was considered very important (M=4.44, SD=0.94). Positive reinforcement was considered relevant towards keeping mentees motivated in a peer-mentoring program.

Results of the 50+ survey

Concerning the answers to the survey for individuals aged 50 or more and regarding the importance of the mentor-specific skills, the following patterns emerged.

In general, all skills were highly valued among respondents, with nearly all obtaining an average close to 5, thus meaning they were considered as completely necessary for successful peer-mentoring. The only exceptions were three mentee-specific skills and one shared skill. Indeed, when it comes to the 5 mentor-specific skills (i.e., Providing corrective feedback, Instructing/Developing capabilities, Inspiring, Managing risks, and Opening

doors) all neared the maximum of the scale (M>4.5). For the 5 mentee-specific skills, 2 were considered completely necessary (M>4.5) which were Showing Initiative and Following through. The rest were considered to be very important: Learning quickly (M=3.79, SD=1.2), Managing the relationship (M=4.4, SD=0.89) and Acquiring mentors (M=4.4, SD=0.8). As for the shared skills, all but Encouraging were considered completely necessary and Encouraging (M=4.43, SD=0.84) was considered very important (Fig. 4). Overall participants seemed more interested in the Peer-Train topics of Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies and Safe use of digital technologies (Fig. 5).
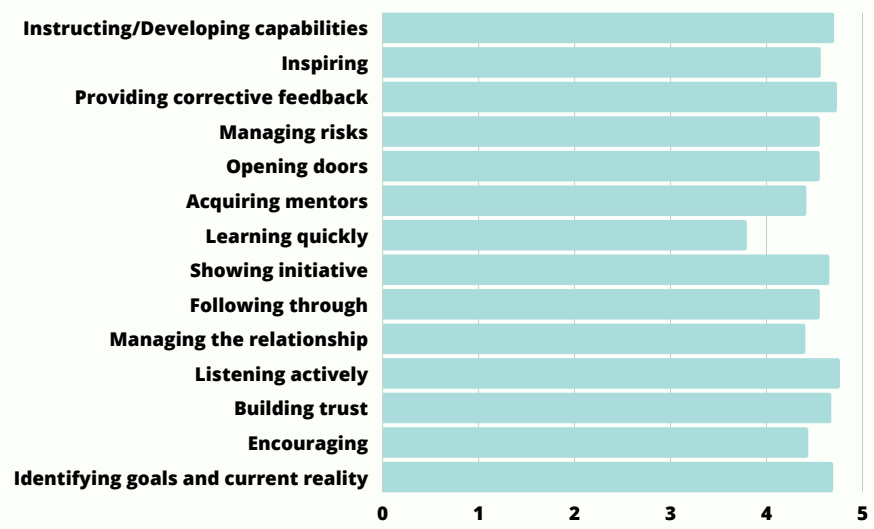
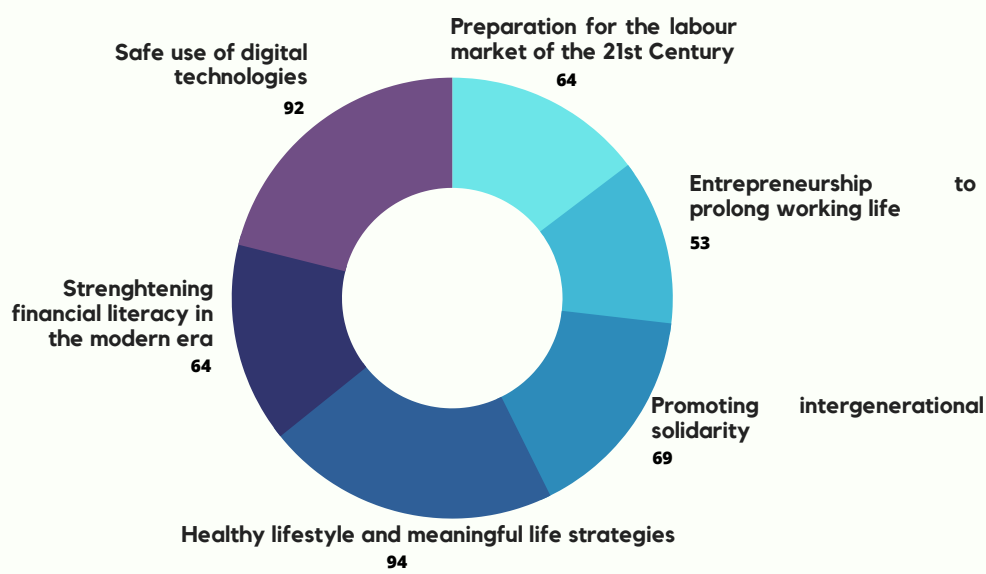Fig. 4. Likert scale results of the skills for successful mentoring in the 50+ sample

Fig. 5. Interest in the PeerTrain topics among the 50+ participants

WHAT WORKS IN PEER MENTORING FOR PEOPLE 50+?

In the **Bulgarian sample**, all skills (i.e., mentor-specific, mentee-specific, and shared skills) were evaluated as completely necessary for successful peer mentoring (M>4.5). Additionally, they highlighted that interesting activities are necessary for the mentees to remain interested in a peer-mentoring program. Finally, the Bulgarian participants were only interested in the following topics of the Peer-Train project: Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies (9 participants), Preparation for the labour market of the 21st century (4), Promoting intergenerational solidarity (4), and Entrepreneurship to prolong working life (1) (Fig.6).
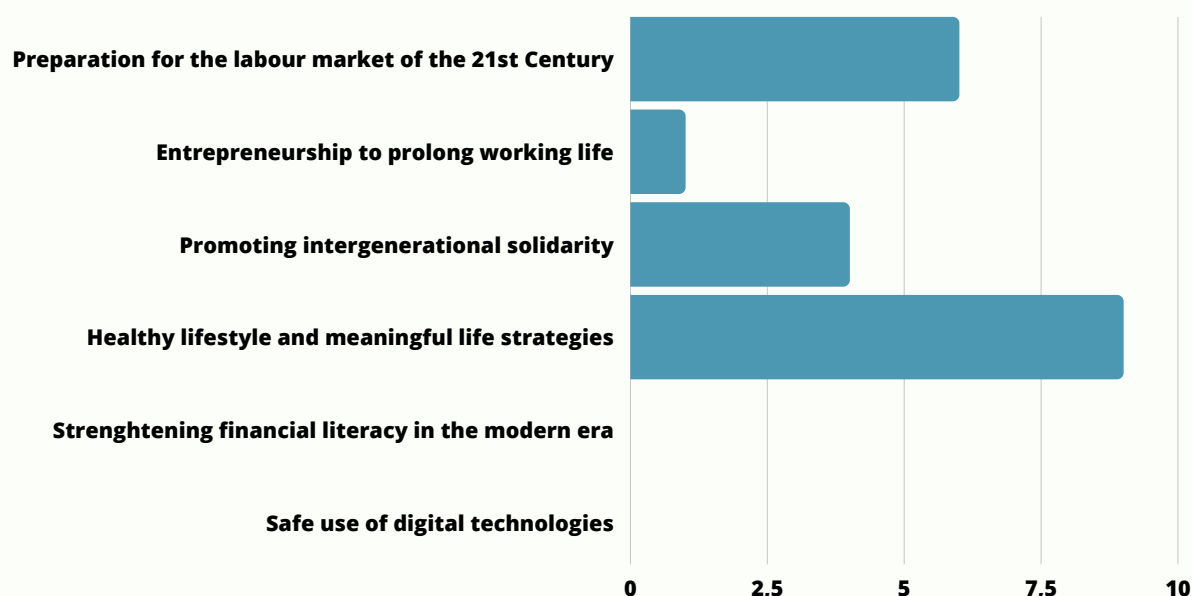

Fig. 6. Interest in the PeerTrain topics in the Bulgarian sample of people 50+

When it comes to the **German sample**, a similar pattern was observed with all skills except for two mentee-specific skills having been evaluated as completely necessary (M>4.5). The two exceptions were the mentee-specific skills of Following through (M=4.4, SD=1.05) and Managing the relationship (M=4.42, SD=1.02) which were evaluated as very necessary. German participants highlighted that for mentees to stay interested and motivated in a peer-mentoring program that they need to have a good mentor.

Furthermore, when it comes to their interest in the Peer-Train topics, over half the participants showed interest in Preparation for the labour market of the 21st century (15), Strengthening financial literacy in the modern era (14), Safe use of digital technologies (14), and Healthy lifestyle for meaningful life strategies (11). Exactly half of the participants showed interest in Entrepreneurship to prolong working life (10), and 8 participants showed interest in Promoting intergenerational solidarity (Fig. 7).
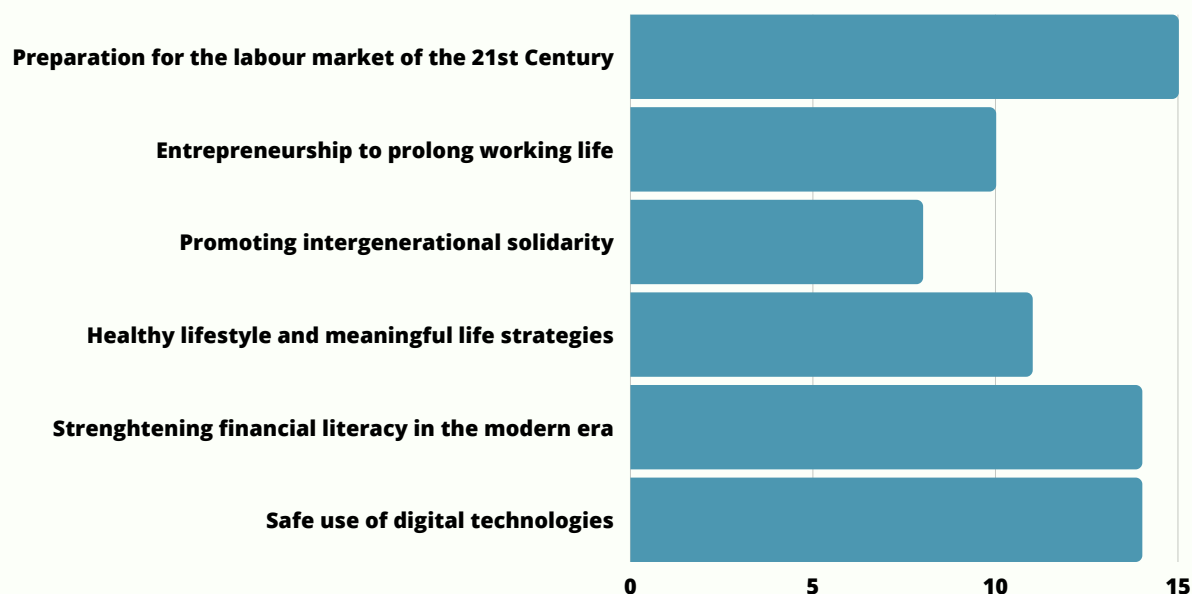

Fig. 7. Interest in the PeerTrain topics in the German sample of people 50+

Hungarian sample's results on the 50+ survey showed that seven skills were rated by all participants as completely necessary for successful mentoring (M>4.5), these were the mentor-specific skill of Providing corrective feedback and Managing risks, the mentee-specific skill of Managing the relationship, and the shared skills of Building trust and Identifying goals and current reality. The mentor-specific skill of Inspiring (M= 4.26, SD=0.65), and the shared skill of Encouraging (M=4.3, SD=0.72) were both evaluated as very important. Finally, the mentee-specific skill of Learning quickly was perceived as somewhat important (M=2.7, SD=0.92). Participants wrote in that seeing the results of one's work as important for mentees to remain motivated in a peer mentoring program. Additionally,

over half of the Hungarian participants showed interest in all the Peer-Train topics, that is Promoting intergenerational solidarity (19), Safe use of digital technologies (19), Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies (18), Strengthening Financial literacy in the modern era (15), and Entrepreneurship to prolong working life (12) (Fig.8).
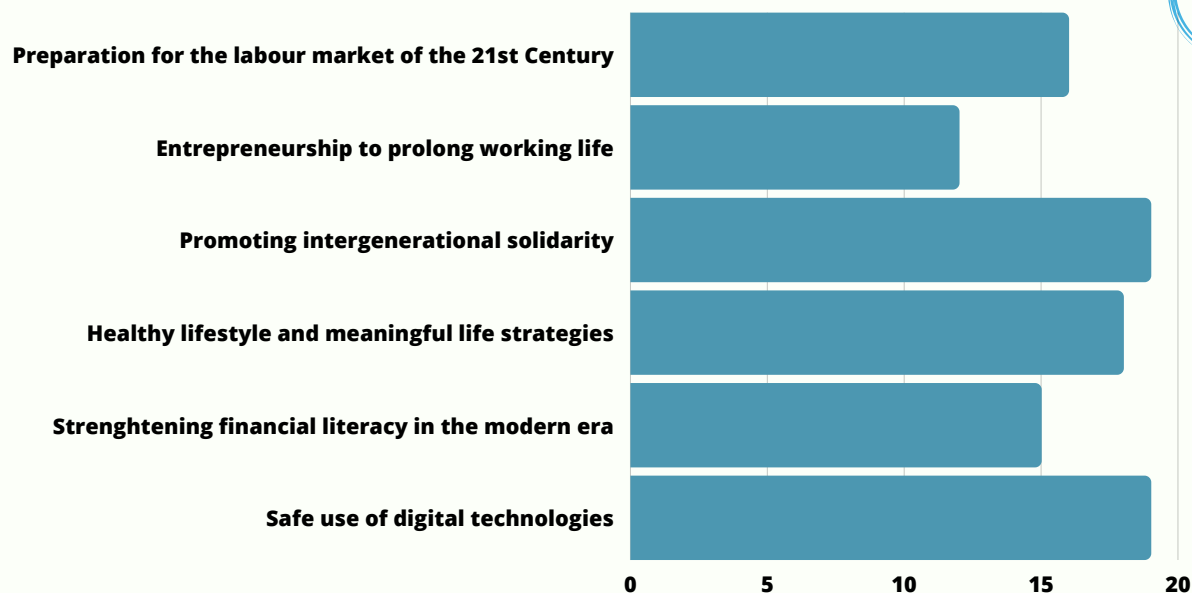

Fig. 8. Interest in the PeerTrain topics in the Hungarian sample of people 50+

The Polish sample generally obtained scores closer to 4 on the Likert scale. The exceptions which had scores closer to 5 (i.e., evaluated as completely necessary) were the mentor-specific skills of Inspiring (M=4.78, SD=0.52), Instructing/Developing capabilities (M=4.7, SD=0,47), and Providing corrective feedback (M=4.65, SD=0.57); as well as two shared skills, that of Building trust (M=4.7, SD=0.73) and Listening actively (M=4.63, SD=0.83). It is also due noting that the shared core skill of Identifying goals and current reality was considered more important for mentors (M=4.61, SD=0.5) than for mentees (M=4.3, SD=0.7). Some participants mentioned that being graded and being able to see their progress keeps mentees motivated. When it comes

to their interest in the Peer-Train topics, all the participants (22) showed interest in Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies and Safe use of digital technologies; over half the participants showed interest in Promoting intergenerational solidarity (16), and a minority of participants showed interest in Strengthening financial literacy in the modern era (8), Entrepreneurship to prolong working life (6), and Preparation for the labour market of the 21st Century (5) (Fig.9).
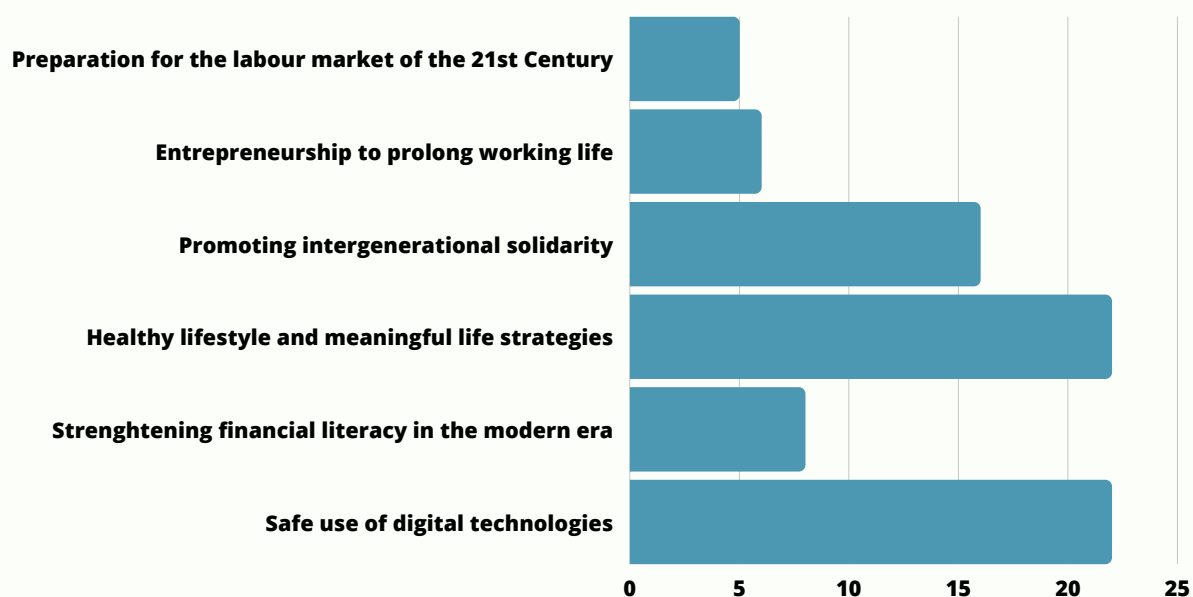

Fig. 9. Interest in the PeerTrain topics in the Polish sample of people 50+

Similarly, most of the skills averaged closer to 4 (i.e., very important) in the **Portuguese sample.** The exceptions were the mentor-specific skills of Providing corrective feedback (M=4.65, SD=0.59) and Instructing/Developing capabilities (M=4.5, SD=0.61), the mentee-specific skills of Following through (M=4.95, SD=0,22) and Showing initiative (M=4.7, SD=0.47), and the shared skills of Active listening (M=4.75, SD=0.49) and Identifying goals and current reality (M=4.63, SD=0.54) which were perceived as completely necessary. For mentees to remain motivated in peer mentoring, the participants highlighted that interesting subjects and activities. are needed. As for the PeerTrain topics, over half the

participants mentioned they were interested in Safe use of digital technologies (17), Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies (15), Entrepreneurship to prolong working life (12), Strengthening financial literacy in the modern era (12), and Preparation for the labour market of the 21st century (11). Only half the participants showed interest in Promoting intergenerational solidarity (10) (Fig.10).
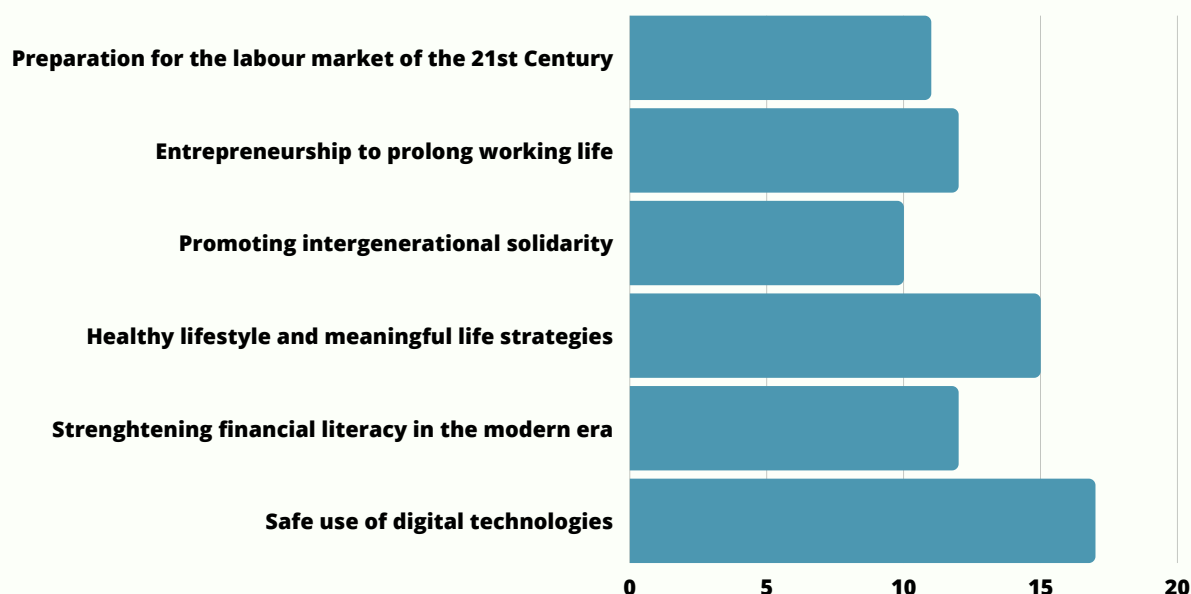

Fig. 10. Interest in the PeerTrain topics in the Portuguese sample of people 50+

Finally, when it comes to the **Slovak sample** of people 50+, it was obtained that all skills were highly valued with most being evaluated as completely necessary (M>4.5). Three mentee-specific skills were evaluated as very important: Learning quickly (M=4.25, SD=0.9), Acquiring mentors (M=4.43, SD=0.81), and Managing the relationship (M=4.44, SD=0.79). Slovak participants highlighted the need for positive feedback and interesting activities for mentees to stay motivated in peer-mentoring programs. When it comes to the Peer-Train topics, all the Slovak participants (20) showed interest in Safe use of digital technologies, and over half showed interest in all the other Peer-Train topics, that is, Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life

strategies (19), Strengthening financial literacy in the modern era (15), Entrepreneurship to prolong working life (12), Promoting intergenerational solidarity (12), and Preparation for the labour market of the 21st Century (Fig.11).
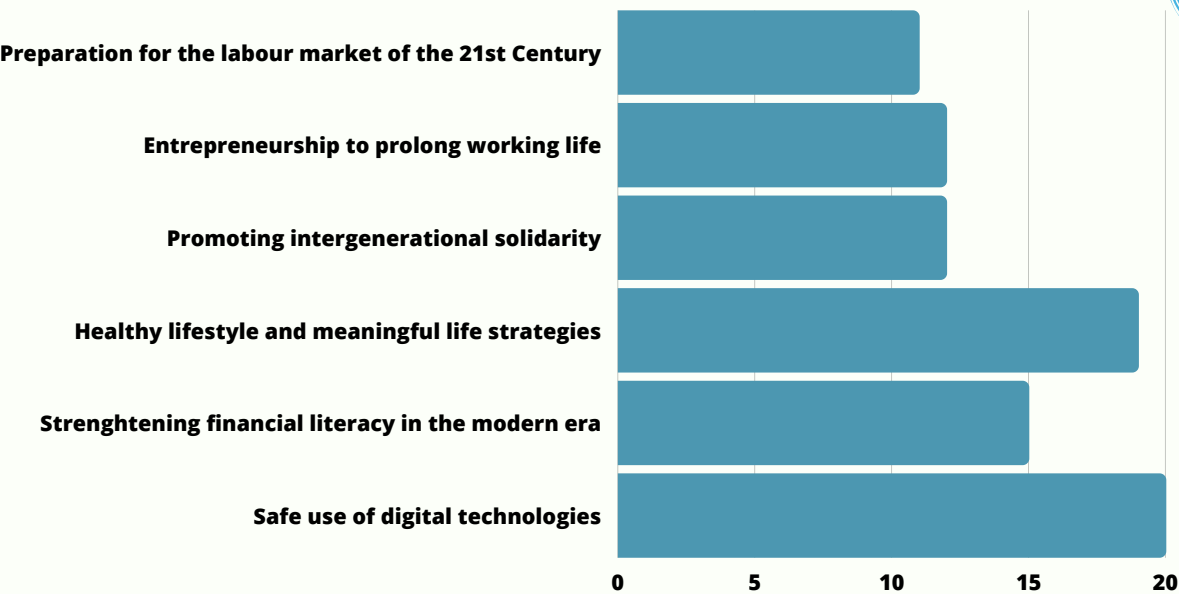
Fig. 11. Interest in the PeerTrain topics in the Slovak sample of people 50+

We can thus **conclude** that all skills were generally rated, across all samples, as being very important or completely necessary for successful peer-mentoring programs. Additionally, when it comes to the PeerTrain topics participants seemed broadly interested in them even if some topics were preferred over others (see. Table 2).

	BG	DE	HU	PL	PT	SK	Total
Preparation for the Labour Market of the 21st Century	6	15	16	5	11	11	64
Entrepreneurship to prolong working life	1	10	12	6	12	12	53
Promoting intergenerational solidarity	4	8	19	16	10	12	69
Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies	9	11	18	22	15	19	94
Strengthening financial literacy in the modern era	0	14	15	8	12	15	64
Safe use of digital technologies	0	14	19	22	17	20	92

Table 2. Interest in the PeerTrain topics across the 50+ samples

Comparison of Stakeholder and 50+

Broadly speaking, no differences in how skills were rated between stakeholders and people 50 or older (Fig.12) with the sole exception being the shared skill Encouraging which stakeholders rated as completely necessary (M=4.55, SD=0.74) and 50+ rated as very important (M=4.43, SD=0.84).
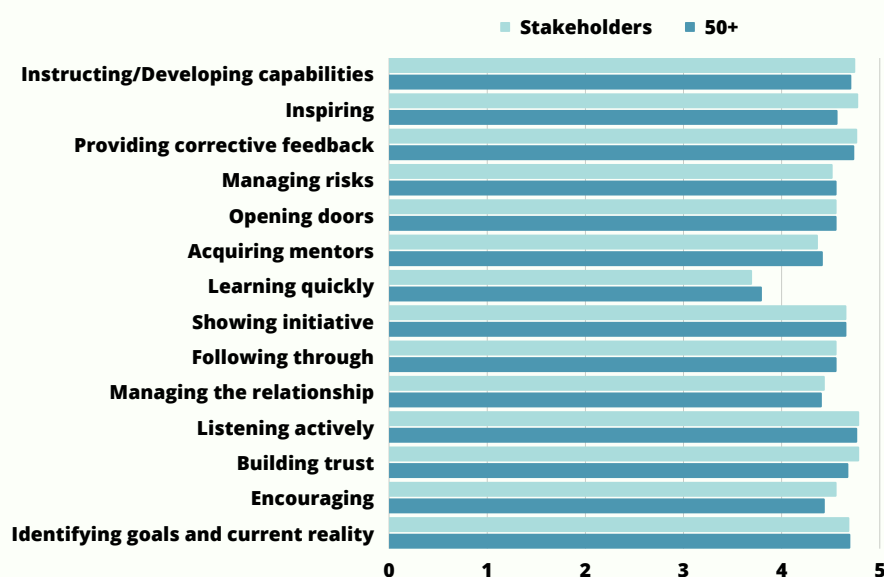

Fig. 12. Comparison of the Likert scale results of the skills for successful mentoring in the stakeholder and 50+ samples

When it comes to each of the partners' collected data. The following was found:

No differences were found between the **Bulgarian samples**.

For the **German samples,** two mentee-specific skills were a bit contentious. Stakeholders rated Acquiring mentors as very important (M=3.84, SD=1.26) whilst 50+ individuals rated it as completely necessary (M=4.55, SD=0.89). A similar pattern was observed for the, also mentee-specific skill of Learning quickly (M=4.05, SD=1.32 and M=4.55, SD=1 respectively). Furthermore, the shared skill of Encouraging when only considering it for mentees also had this slight difference in evaluation (M=4.35, SD=1.14 and M=4.75, SD=0.64 respectively).

For the **Hungarian samples,** the shared skill of Encouraging was perceived as very important by people 50+ (M=4.3, SD=0.72) and completely necessary by stakeholders (M=4.54, SD=0.64).

In the **Polish samples,** stakeholders also rated 3 skills lower than individuals 50+. Stakeholders considered Opening doors as very important whilst people 50+ considered it completely necessary (M=3.86, SD=1.04 and M=4.47, SD=0.67 respectively), the same pattern was found for the mentee-specific skill of Learning quickly (M=3.43, SD=0.84 and M=3,69, SD=1.01 respectively), and for the shared skill of Encouraging only when it is being exclusively rated as a mentee skill (M=4.43, SD=0.84 and M=4.65, SD=0.57).

For the **Portuguese samples,** the shared skills showed slight differences between stakeholders and individuals 50+. Building trust was valued as completely necessary by stakeholders (M=4.73, SD=0.45) and very important by people 50+ (M=4.05, SD=1.08). A similar pattern was found for Encouraging (M=4.6, SD=0.63 and 4.08, SD=0.94 respectively). However, for Identifying goals and current reality, it was the stakeholders considering it very important (M=4.46, SD=0.64) and people 50+ considering it completly necessary (M=4.62, SD=0.54).

Finally, for the **Slovak samples,** differences were found in the mentee-specific skills of Acquiring mentors which stakeholders evaluated as completely necessary (M=4.5, SD=0.60) and people 50+ evaluated it as very important (M=4.43, SD=0.81); Showing initiative on the other hand was rated as very important by stakeholders (M=4.1, SD=0.85) and completely necessary by people 50+ (M=4.6, SD=0.67); and Following through also had stakeholders evaluating it as very important (M=4.35, SD=0.67) and people 50+ rating it as completely necessary (M=4.53, SD=0.72). The shared skill of Encouraging was also evaluated as very important by stakeholders (M=4.36, SD=0.94) whilst 50+ individuals stated it was completely necessary (M=4.69, SD=0.7). Finally, the shared skill of Building trust also showed some differences but only when being rated specifically for mentees, with stakeholders evaluating it as very important (M=4.35, SD=0.67) and 50+ evaluating it as completely necessary (M=4.64, SD=0.62).

CONCLUSIONS

All countries have national strategies for active ageing following European policy, however this does not necessarily mean they are promoting active ageing as policy and strategic documents may not end up being applied in reality.

We proceeded to collect beneficial/good practices and, considering effectiveness taking into consideration the tried and tested model of competencies for active ageing by Antunes *et al.* (2015), we critically read them and identified which core competencies for active ageing they promoted. All the practices promoted more than one competency of active ageing. Furthermore, 7 of our practices used a mentoring approach towards promoting active ageing, which highlights its utility to this end (Active Ageing Project, 2018; Aresi & Weaver, 2020; Baschiera & De Meyer, 2016).

Additionally, the partnership collected surveys by questionnaire aimed at both stakeholders (e.g., adult educators) and people aged 50 or more in which they had to rate, in a Likert scale, the core skills for successful mentoring as per Philips-Jones (2003). The surveys corroborated that these skills are considered very important as they all obtained, overall, scores of 4 or 5, which means they are completely necessary or very necessary for successful peer mentoring.

This not only highlights the relevance of PeerTrain but the project can also learn from the practices and see how these skills were promoted and adapt and implement similar methodologies. Furthermore, it must facilitate the promotion of the aforementioned skills and competencies, which were already theoretical defined as being crucial and which our results corroborated, when developing the project's training modules.

Additionally, individuals 50+ appear to be very interested in what the project is developing. The two topics that seemed to interest people 50+ the most were Healthy lifestyle and meaningful life strategies, and Safe use of digital technologies. We would also highlight that the other topics which seemed to receive less interest from our 50+ samples should perhaps be demystified and promoted as something relevant for people 50+. For instance, it is possible that entrepreneurship is still perceived as something for young persons because of the popular image of the young entrepreneur, but actually 70% of start-ups created by older persons last 3 years or more, compared with 28% for younger entrepreneurs (Khan, 2013). In regards to the Preparation for the labour market of the 21st century it is possible that some participants didn't say they were interested on the topic due to them being retired. As for the Strengthening financial literacy in the modern era, this might be because financials are often perceived as being hard and time-consuming and, perhaps by using activities that are able to keep mentees motivated, and highlighting their pertinence, this view can be changed.

Finally, to point out that participants on both stakeholder and 50+ survey underscored that frequent feedback, perceived success, visible progress, and considering the program as being valuable, as well as having fun and interesting activities are core for keeping mentees motivated in mentoring programs. PeerTrain should keep this in consideration.

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