



Project „BEST AGERS - USING THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF PROFESSIONALS IN THEIR PRIMES TO FOSTER BUSINESS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION”

Work package 5, Activity 6
Pilot initiative 4. Occupational orientation

EXPLORING AND EVALUATING THE POTENTIAL USE OF BEST AGERS

Siauliai, 2012



Part-financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument)

CONTENT OF THE REPORT

1. Overall aims and objectives of the research
2. Key findings and recommendations
3. Presentation of the findings
 - 3.1. Demographic characteristics
 - 3.2. How many want to start a business
 - 3.3. Reasons they want to start a business
 - 3.4. Confidence they feel in their abilities
 - 3.5. Types of support they want
 - 3.6. Characteristics of best agers to support students and pupils. Ideal profile of Best Ager
4. Methodology
5. Annexes

1. OVERALL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of this research is to identify the potential use of Best Ager in vocational training and university education. Detailing the research objective it is important to mention, that it was intended to reveal purposefulness of Professional intentions of students and pupils, to find out support needs in occupational orientation for students and pupils, to find out the potential use of Best Ager and directions. Purposefulness of professional intentions in this study covers students motivation to have their own business and their perceived entrepreneurship skills to start and develop own business. Support options are revealed by analyzing students' attitude towards senior advisers.

Another important research goal – to identify ideal Best Ager profile and develop models of integration of older professionals' expertise and experience in the fields of business and skills development of young people.

This research was conducted implementing Baltic Sea Region Programme project “Best Ager” by West Pomeranian Business School (Poland), Norwich Business School (United Kingdom) and Siauliai Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Lithuania). Time frame of the research January - July 2012.

2. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Major parts of students and pupils have plans to start a business in nearest five years. Most important motivators to start a business are possibility to achieve independence and autonomy, to get personal freedom or to have family security.
- b) Evaluating confidence in abilities to start a business it was revealed that young people in UK feel stronger in abilities to generate new ideas, persuade other people, communicate and networking. Polish respondents feel themselves stronger in business finance and administration, motivating and supervising employees, social responsibility. Lithuanian respondents feel stronger in estimating customer demand, creating environmentally friendly business.
- c) Starting one's own business more often support is expected from parents and closest friends. Less support is expected from spouse/significant other. Emotional support mostly

is expected from family, relatives and friends. Frequently also family can become a source of financial aid. Educational institutions counselors and career centers the young people primarily identify as a source of knowledge and information. Banks are identified as a source of financial support.

- d) For this research particularly important was the question, what kind of help student and pupils expect from people with business experience or Best Agers. The main purpose of participation of Best Agers in the process of occupational orientation – to assist and lead students and pupils in their practice through mentoring, coaching and advising. Establishing business respondents expect from the people business advice, knowledge and information, mentoring and coaching, practical help and help with networking.
- e) Best Agers participating in the process of occupational orientation should meet three main requirements: reliability, experience in business, skilled to share knowledge with student. It's a must for Best Agers to know how to communicate with youth, gain one's confidence and transfer his own experience. It is very important for youth that a person who provides help would be reliable, had business experience, could accept them as equal, try to understand, could give advice how to behave and teach, but would not show ones priority and wouldn't pretend that he/she knows everything.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

3.1.DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Data collection was organised filling in the internet questionnaire in three participating countries and involved 966 respondents (39.3 % male and 60.7 % female). In Lithuania the questionnaire was filled in by 673 respondents, in Poland – 195, UK – 98. According to age the major part of respondents are 15-20 years old (N=410) or belong to 21-25 years old group (N=406). Total of 16 respondents studying in secondary schools took part in the research, 262 – in vocational training schools, 435 – in higher schools (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Respondents division according educational institutions

Country	Educational institution							
	High School	Vocational school	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	PGT	PhD
UEA	0	0	0	58	103	0	0	0
LT	16	199	69	18	118	49	36	2
PL	0	63	16	76	19	18	5	0
Total	16	262	85	0	240	67	41	2

572 respondents pointed out that their family does not own or run a business. 185 were from family business environment. 37 from them pointed out that they are successors of the business.

3.2. HOW MANY WANT TO START A BUSINESS

Seeking to find out the intentions to start ones own business, respondents were asked to indicate wether they are planning to start own business in the near future. Only 12.4% (N=94) answeres were negative. 44% (N=332) were not sure about it and the rest of the respondents have intentions to start a business: 19.0% (N=142) - in more than 5 years from now, 17.6% (N=133) - in 3-5 year from now, 7.2% (N=55) - in 1-2 years from now. It shows, that major part of respondents plan and think about starting a business. It was pointed out by 44% of Lithuanian research participants, 36% of United Kingdom and 47% of Polish respondents.

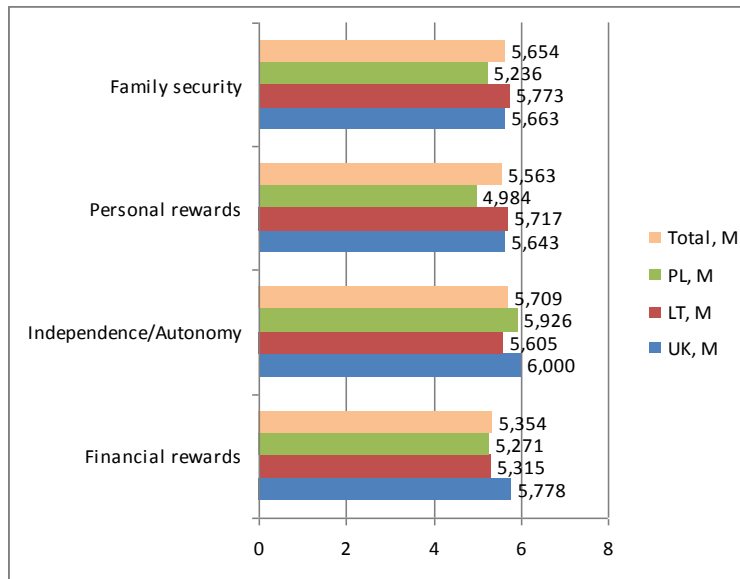
Assesing ones activeness in bussiness planning the respondents rated 7 statements on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Most respondents agreed with proposition „I intend to set up a new business in the long term future“ (M=3.41), least respondents chose – „I’m saving money to start a newbusiness“ (M=2.57) and „I spend time learning about starting a new business“ (M=2.57). We can state, that respondents have intentions to start business in the future, but they do not prepare in advance saving money or learning about starting a newbusiness.

3.3.REASONS THEY WANT TO START A BUSINESS

Subjects indicated the extent to which they would expect to achieve the following outcomes by starting their own business. Each statement was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all expect) to 7 (Very much expect). Most important reasons to start a business is possibility to achieve independence and autonomy (M=5.71). To get personal freedom, be your own boss, etc. Second important reason is family security (M=5.65). Also important and frequently chosen answers were: personal rewards: public recognition, personal growth, confidence in ones abilities and so on. (M=5.56), and financial rewards: personal wealth, increase personal income, etc. (M=5.35).

Analyzing, how the reasons starting a business are related to the respondent's country, a variance analysis was conducted (ANOWA). It was revealed, that there are significant differences in all categories. Lithuanian, Polish and UK respondents' expectations of what they can achieve starting their own business significantly differ. Especially the opinions differ for personal rewards (F=16.996, p=0.0001) and family security (F=8.938, p=0.0001). Personal rewards and family security more often expect LT respondents (M=5.72, M=5.77, p=0.0001). It is more important for Lithuanians, then other countries' respondents, to secure family members, to build a business to pass on, etc. UK respondents more often gave priority to financial rewards (M=5.78, p=0.025) and independence/autonomy (M=6, p=0.005). Polish respondents the priority more often gave to independence/autonomy (M=5.93, p=0.005) and less to personal rewards (M=4.98, p=0.0001).

Picture. 1. Differences of Expectations of Three Countries



3.4.CONFIDENCE IN ABILITIES TO START A BUSINESS

Respondents were asked to rate how confident they are in their ability to accomplish activities necessary for business management. 25 statements were rated on a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (Not confident at all) to 5 (Very confident).

Respondents found themselves more confident in: Inspiring, encouraging and motivating their colleagues and employees (M=3.68); Creating a business that is environmentally friendly (M=3.70); Promoting business solutions that are ethical (M=3.76).

Respondents found themselves less confident in these spheres: Estimating the amount of start-up funds and working capital necessary to start a new business (M=2.94); Organizing and maintaining the financial records of own business (M=3.05); Reading and interpreting financial statements (M=3.06). Evaluations of all statements are presented in Annexes, table 2.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the three countries the majority of respondents skills assessment statistically significantly different ($p < 0.05$; Annex, Table 3). Great Britain better than the other two countries respondents rated statements about the ability “to come up with a new product or service idea on ones own” (M=3.09;F=6.73, $p = 0.0001$), „Brainstorm with others to come up with new idea for a product or service“ (M=3.65; F=5.59,

p=0.004), „Identify the need for a new product or service“ (M=3.41; F=8.52, p=0.0001), „Get others to identify with and believe in my vision and plans for a new business“ (M=3.44; F=5.29, p=0.005), „Network (i. e., make contact with and exchange information with others)“ (M=3.5; F=9.68, p=0.0001). We can state, that the British respondents more favourably rate the abilities related to the generation of new ideas as well as other persuasion, communication and needs assessment.

Polish respondents more favourable, than other countries evaluate own skills „estimate the amount of start-up funds and working capital necessary to start a new business“ (M=3.18; F=4.03, p=0.018), „Design an effective marketing/advertising campaign for a new product or service“ (M=3.37; F=10.38, p=0.0001), „Supervise employees“ (M=3.94; F=9.25, p=0.0001), „Recruit and hire employees“ (M=3.97; F=25.03, p=0.0001), „Delegate tasks and responsibilities to employees in my business“ (M=3.93; F=7.22, p=0.001), „Inspire, encourage, and motivate my colleagues and employees“ (M=3.90; F=4.38, p=0.013), „Organize and maintain the financial records of my business“ (M=3.31; F=4.83, p=0.008), „Commit to a social vision“ (M=3.36; F=4.31, p=0.014) and „Promote business solutions that are ethical“ (M=4.05; F=6.65, p=0.001). As it is seen from the results, Polish respondents rated higher capacities, related to management and administrative organization of the business, employee motivation, leadership, social responsibility and ethics.

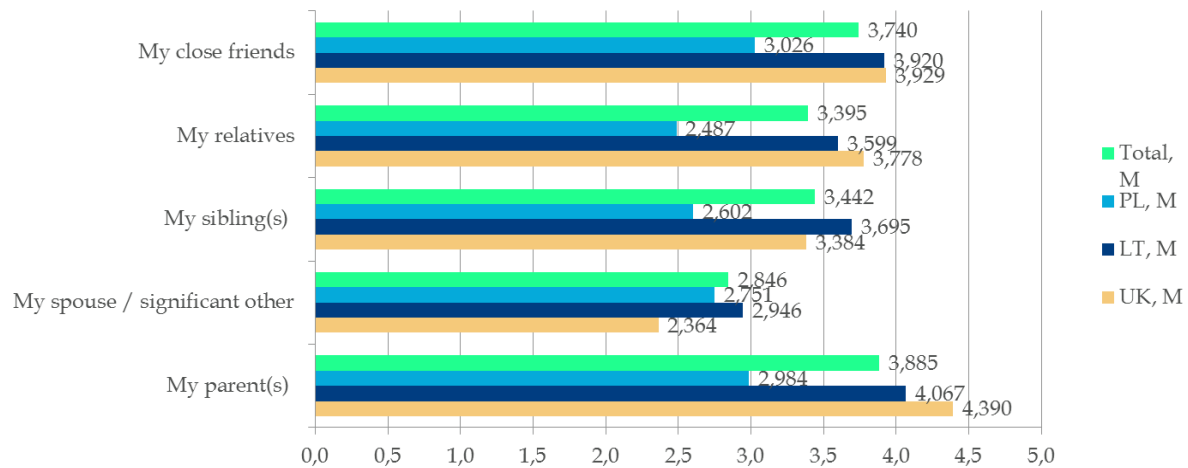
Lithuanian respondents rated higher than other countries' respondents capacities: „Estimate customer demand for a new product or service“ (M=3.28; F=3.05, p=0.048), „be an agent of social change“ (M=3.35; F=11.00, p=0.0001) and „create a business that is environmentally friendly“ (M=3.81; F=10.60, p=0.0001). We can state, that Lithuanian respondents rate higher capacities, related to consumer demand assessment, change management and creation of environmentally friendly business.

3.5.TYPES OF SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT

Developing one's business the closest surroundings can provide and ensure the social support. Respondents were asked to evaluate to what extent they would get support from closest surrounding if they start a business after graduation. Such categories as parents, spouse/significant other, sibling(s), relatives and close friends were rated on a 5-point scale

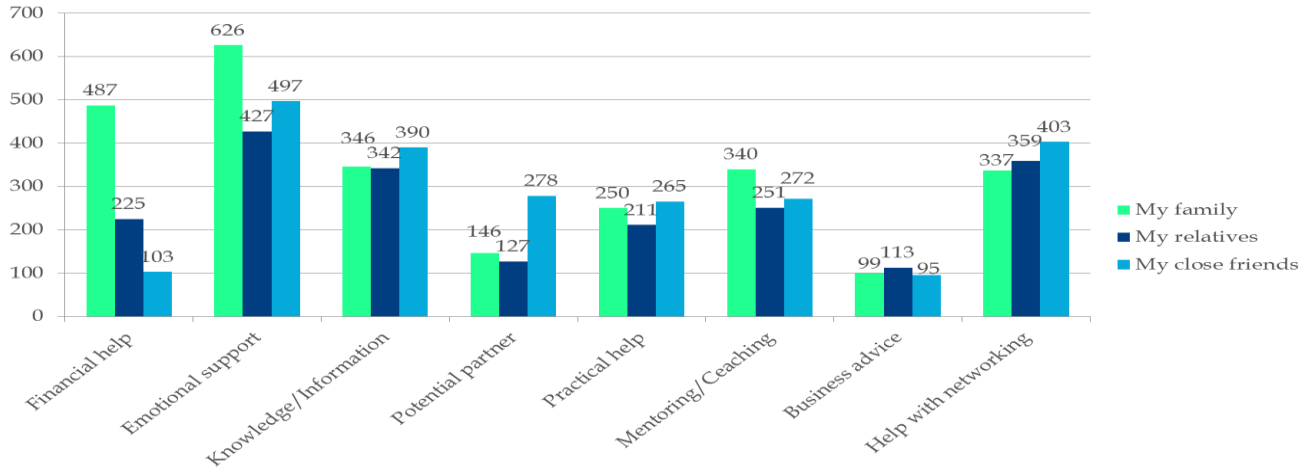
ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). Results show that more often support is expected from parents (M=3.89) and closest friends (M=3.74). Less support is expected from spouse/significant other. And at this point answers of all three countries did not differ ($p=0.310>0.05$).

Picture. 2 Social support expected from closest surroundings



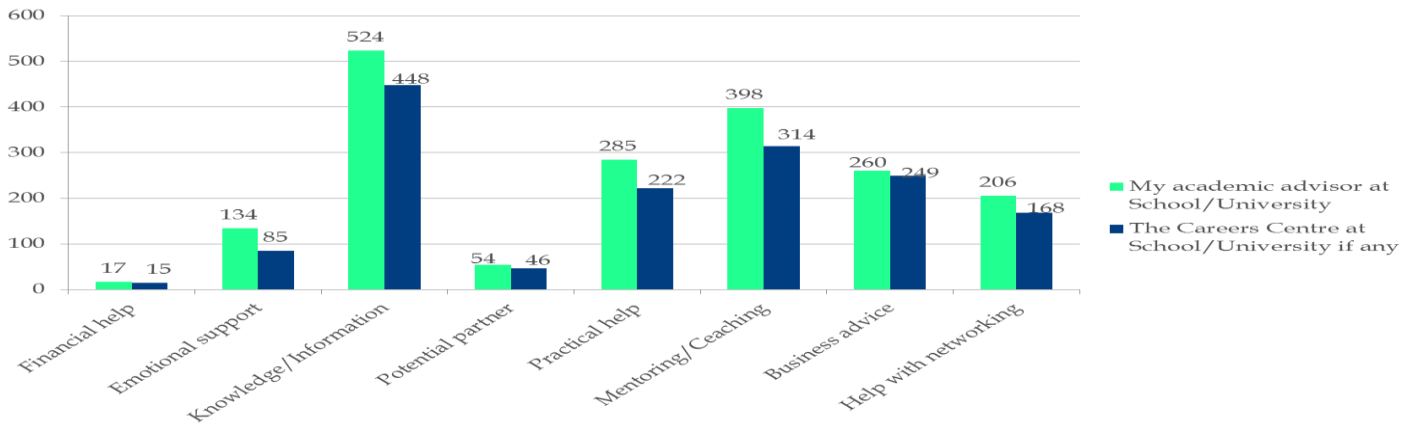
What exactly is expected from the closest social environment in developing future business or career/occupation? As it is shown in Picture 3, emotional support mostly is expected from family, relatives and friends. Frequently also family can become a source of financial aid.

Picture.3 Expectations from closest surrounding in developing future business(or career/ occupation).



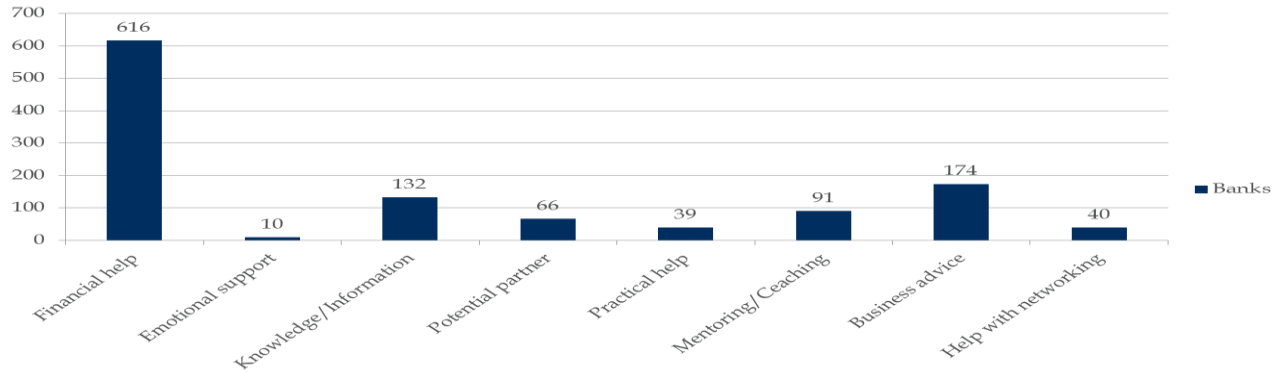
Educational institutions counselors and career centers the respondents primarily identify as a source of knowledge and information (picture 4).

Picture 4. Expectations from educational institution in developing future business (or career/ occupation).



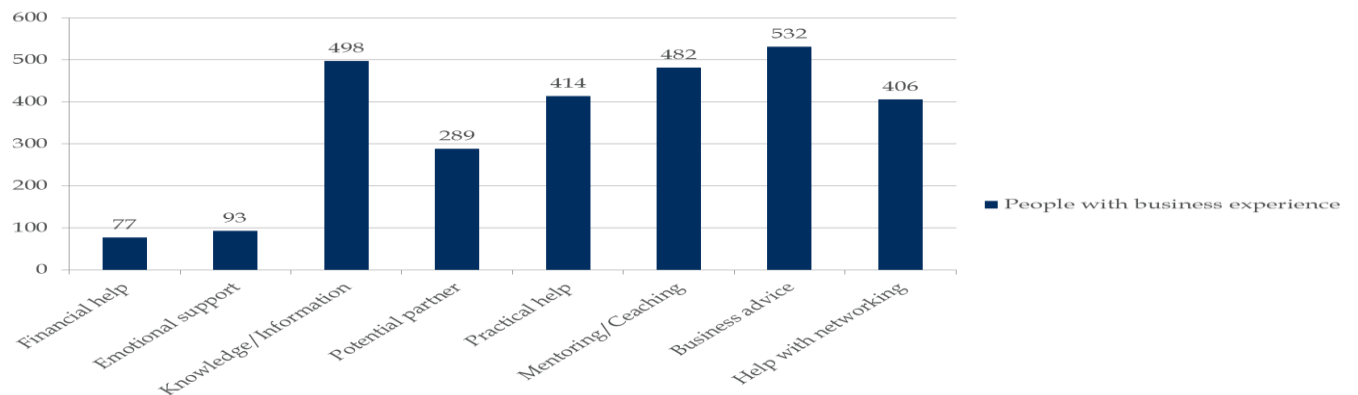
Banks are identified as a source of financial support (Picture 5). Only a very small proportion of respondents expect business advice and knowledge or information from financial institutions.

Picture 5. Expectations from banks in developing future business (or career/ occupation).



For this research particularly important was the question, what kind of help student and pupils expect from people with business experience or Best Ager. Establishing business respondents expect from the people business advice (N=532), knowledge and information (N=498), mentoring and coaching (N=482), practical help (N=414) and help with networking (N=406) (see picture. 6).

Picture 6. Expectations from people with business experience in developing future business (or career/ occupation)



It was also important question in the study, what kind of support for students and pupils would would help mostly to fullfill ones dream to build a business. Respondents were asked which of the following types of support will help them more to achieve their dreams as regards

starting their own business. Each type of support was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (will be of very little help to me) to 5 (will be of great help to me). Results show, that for respondents are important all types of support, but mostly would help „help with networking in business“ (M=4.41), “financial support” (M=4.35) and “support with practical help” (4.33). As it was mentioned, financial support is expected from banks and families. „Help with networking in business“ is expected from people with business experience and closest surrounding (friends, relatives and family). “Support with practical help” is more often expected from people with business experience.

Comparing the three countries respondents estimations, statistically significant difference was only evaluating one way of support.– „Support through Mentoring/ Coaching” (F=4.48, p=0.012). British respondents rated this kind of support more favourable if compared to the other two countries (M=4.3). Though Lithuanian and Polish respondents rated the questions similarly, but the statistically significant difference suggest, that the British respondents the support through Mentoring and Coaching evaluate as more effective way of support, helping to fulfill ones dream to start own business, then the other two countries’ respondents.

3.6.CHARACTERISTICS OF BEST AGERS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AND PUPILS. IDEAL PROFILE OF BEST AGER

Most interesting question was which and to what extend are important characteristics of best agers if they provide help in developing business. Respondents had to choose from a list of 12 features characterizing people with business experience. Each statement was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Not important at all) to 5 (Extremely important).

TABLE 1: Evaluation of characteristics of Best Agers

Statement	N	Mean
Is someone that I can trust	794	4.61
Is someone who respects me	789	4.55
Has long practical experience	793	4.55
Tries to understand me	791	4.39
Treats me as equal	793	4.28
Is someone who can tell me what to do with authority	791	4.23
Does not pretend he/she knows everything	788	4.22

Has been successful in their career	793	4.18
Is respected by his/her colleagues	793	4.03
Is willing to spend time with me	793	2.95
Behaves as a father figure to me	791	2.53
Behaves as a mother figure to me	791	2.31

Results show that for the respondents most important features are reliability (M=4.61), long practical experience (M=4.55) and ability to respect young person (M=4.55).

Comparing results of the three countries, the statistically significant differences are: British respondents rated higher these propositions: “Tries to understand me” (X=4,51, p=0,042), “Does not pretend he/she knows everything” (X=4,48, p=0,0001), “Behaves as a father figure to me” (X=2,76, p=0,003), “Treats me as equal” (X=4,51, p=0,0001) and “Is someone who can tell me what to do with authority” (X=4,41, p=0,0001). We can state, that it is very important for British respondents that their business advisor , with experience in business and advising them to start a business, would treat them as equal individuals, try to understand them, can advice on how to behave, teach, but not show their priority. Meanwhile Polish respondents rated higher then the other two countries respondents the following statements: „Is someone that I can trust” (X=4,80, p=0,020) and “Is willing to spend time with me” (X=3,70, p=0,0001). So we can say, that for Polish respondents is important that their experienced advisors are reliable and would have close informal relationship. Answers of the Lithuanian respondents in these spheres do not differ in any category (see Annex, Table 4).

Ideal profile of Best Ager: it is very important for youth that a person who provides help would be reliable, had business experience, could accept them as equal, try to understand, could give advice how to behave and teach, but would not show ones priority and wouldn't pretend that he/she knows everything.

4. METHODOLOGY

For the data collection a survey method was used, a quantitative subjective data (opinions and evaluations) analysis was made.

ANNEXES

TABLE 2: Evaluation of confidence in ability to start a business

	N	Mean
Estimate the amount of start-up funds and working capital necessary to start a new business.	829	2.9421
Organize and maintain the financial records of my business	831	3.0517
Read and interpret financial statements	831	3.0674
Design an effective marketing/advertising campaign for a new product or service	832	3.0817
Get others to identify with and believe in my vision and plans for a new business.	829	3.1375
Design a product or service that will satisfy customer needs and wants.	832	3.1635
Identify the need for a new product or service.	835	3.1880
Determine a competitive price for a new product or service.	832	3.2079
Create a clear social vision	828	3.2101
Estimate customer demand for a new product or service.	827	3.2237
Be an agent of social change	829	3.2316
Manage the financial assets of my business	832	3.2764
Identify a social need	829	3.3197
Network (i.e., make contact with and exchange information with others)	831	3.3887
Recruit and hire employees	828	3.4058
Clearly and concisely explain verbally/in writing my new business ideas in everyday terms	833	3.4178
Commit to a social vision	828	3.4312
Brainstorm with others to come up with a new idea for a product or service.	838	3.4618
Deal effectively with day-to-day problems and crises	836	3.5072
Train employees	827	3.5272
Supervise employees	833	3.6086
Delegate tasks and responsibilities to employees in my business	834	3.6523
Inspire, encourage, and motivate my colleagues and employees	827	3.6771
Create a business that is environmentally friendly	832	3.6995
Promote business solutions that are ethical	830	3.7578

TABLE 3: Assessment of the skills statistical significant differences per country

		N	Mean	Std. D.	F	Sig
Brainstorm with others to come up with a new idea for a product or service.	UK	100	3.65	0.77	5.59	0.004
	LT	584	3.49	1.05		
	PL	154	3.23	1.12		
Identify the need for a new product or service.	UK	100	3.41	1.00	8.52	0.000
	LT	581	3.23	1.05		
	PL	154	2.90	1.12		

Design a product or service that will satisfy customer needs and wants.	UK	100	3.20	0.99	1.15	0.317
	LT	579	3.19	1.13		
	PL	153	3.04	1.19		
Estimate customer demand for a new product or service.	UK	100	3.21	1.03	3.05	0.048
	LT	573	3.28	1.06		
	PL	154	3.04	1.07		
Determine a competitive price for a new product or service.	UK	100	3.34	0.97	1.78	0.169
	LT	579	3.16	1.15		
	PL	153	3.31	1.22		
Estimate amount of start-up funds and working capital to start a business.	UK	99	2.90	1.06	4.03	0.018
	LT	576	2.89	1.15		
	PL	154	3.18	1.28		
Design an effective marketing/ad campaign for a new product or service	UK	100	3.34	1.03	10.38	0.000
	LT	579	2.96	1.15		
	PL	153	3.37	1.20		
Get others to identify with and believe in my vision and plans for a business.	UK	99	3.44	0.96	5.29	0.005
	LT	576	3.13	1.13		
	PL	154	2.98	1.15		
Network (i.e., make contact with and exchange information with others)	UK	100	3.50	1.10	9.68	0.000
	LT	577	3.47	1.15		
	PL	154	3.02	1.22		
Clearly and concisely explain verbally/in writing my new business ideas	UK	99	3.29	0.97	3.02	0.050
	LT	580	3.39	1.11		
	PL	154	3.60	1.14		
Supervise employees	UK	100	3.67	0.93	9.25	0.000
	LT	579	3.51	1.13		
	PL	154	3.94	1.08		
Recruit and hire employees	UK	99	3.49	0.99	25.03	0.000
	LT	576	3.24	1.17		
	PL	153	3.97	1.10		
Delegate tasks and responsibilities to employees in my business	UK	100	3.69	0.86	7.22	0.001
	LT	580	3.57	1.06		
	PL	154	3.93	1.05		
Deal effectively with day-to-day problems and crises	UK	100	3.54	0.85	1.95	0.143
	LT	582	3.46	1.08		
	PL	154	3.65	1.08		
Inspire, encourage, and motivate my colleagues and employees	UK	100	3.68	0.84	4.38	0.013
	LT	574	3.62	1.10		
	PL	153	3.90	1.04		
Train employees	UK	100	3.33	1.05	1.95	0.143
	LT	573	3.54	1.12		
	PL	154	3.61	1.25		
Organize and maintain the financial records of my business	UK	99	3.13	1.05	4.83	0.008
	LT	578	2.97	1.21		
	PL	154	3.31	1.33		
Manage the financial assets of my business	UK	100	3.01	1.08	2.82	0.060
	LT	579	3.30	1.20		
	PL	153	3.35	1.38		
Read and interpret financial statements	UK	100	3.21	0.99	1.99	0.137

	LT	577	3.01	1.22		
	PL	154	3.18	1.29		
Commit to a social vision	UK	99	3.18	0.94	4.31	0.014
	LT	576	3.43	1.13		
	PL	153	3.60	1.12		
Identify a social need	UK	100	3.20	0.90	1.18	0.308
	LT	576	3.32	1.10		
	PL	153	3.41	1.09		
Create a clear social vision	UK	100	3.03	0.96	1.55	0.214
	LT	575	3.24	1.11		
	PL	153	3.22	1.16		
Be an agent of social change	UK	100	2.92	1.02	11.00	0.000
	LT	577	3.35	1.09		
	PL	152	2.99	1.23		
Create a business that is environmentally friendly	UK	100	3.30	1.09	10.60	0.000
	LT	579	3.81	1.13		
	PL	153	3.54	1.13		
Promote business solutions that are ethical	UK	99	3.69	0.85	6.65	0.001
	LT	579	3.69	1.14		
	PL	152	4.05	1.10		

Table 4: Evaluation of characteristics of best agers to support students and pupils and statistical significant differences per country

		Mean	N	Std. D.	F	Sig.
Is someone that I can trust	UK	4.68	91	0.97615	3.937	0.020
	LT	4.55	557	1.067579		
	PL	4.80	146	0.558568		
	Total	4.61	794	0.986861		
Tries to understand me	UK	4.51	91	0.923443	3.190	0.042
	LT	4.41	554	0.97745		
	PL	4.21	146	1.018511		
	Total	4.39	791	0.981876		
Does not pretend he/she knows everything	UK	4.48	91	0.992893	23.169	0.0001
	LT	4.33	552	1.113887		
	PL	3.63	145	1.408377		
	Total	4.22	788	1.193192		
Is someone who respects me	UK	4.71	91	0.654654	1.814	0.164
	LT	4.53	553	0.94001		
	PL	4.50	145	0.913815		
	Total	4.55	789	0.907919		
Behaves as a father figure to me	UK	2.76	91	1.688791	5.950	0.003
	LT	2.59	554	1.516838		
	PL	2.16	146	1.295554		

	Total	2.53	791	1.509114		
Is willing to spend time with me	UK	2.85	91	1.504977	26.531	0.0001
	LT	2.76	557	1.413062		
	PL	3.70	145	1.208328		
	Total	2.95	793	1.433134		
Is respected by his/her colleagues	UK	4.19	91	1.19175	1.297	0.274
	LT	4.04	556	1.205938		
	PL	3.93	146	1.124385		
	Total	4,04	793	1.190206		
Has long practical experience	UK	4.62	91	0.741908	2.151	0.117
	LT	4.51	556	0.9133		
	PL	4.66	146	0.677494		
	Total	4.55	793	0.857367		
Has been successful in their career	UK	4.20	91	1.203881	0.023	0.978
	LT	4.17	556	1.142755		
	PL	4.18	146	1.048381		
	Total	4.18	793	1.131859		
Treats me as equal	UK	4.51	91	0.958861	9.469	0.0001
	LT	4.33	556	1.022648		
	PL	3.96	146	1.202737		
	Total	4.28	793	1.62356		
Is someone who can tell me what to do with authority	UK	4.41	91	1.053861	9.960	0.0001
	LT	4.30	555	1.103936		
	PL	3.86	145	1.261727		
	Total	4.23	791	1.141691		
Behaves as a mother figure to me	UK	2.46	91	1.64862	2.797	0.620
	LT	2.35	556	1.46571		
	PL	2.06	144	1.235935		
	Total	2.31	791	1.452678		