

PROJECT TITLE

“Best Agers – using the knowledge and experience of professionals in their primes to foster business and skills development in the Baltic Sea Region”

**Best Agers’ Involvement into the Innovation Activities of Students and Pupils
(Activity 5.1.)**

HOW-TO GUIDE

for Best Agers to inform them about the opportunities and advantages of Best Ager involvement in innovation support activities

INTRODUCTION

This How-to Guide is a result of an extensive research which took place in a framework of Best Agers project and it is aimed at defining and formalising the opportunities for Best Agers to utilise their knowledge gained during a lifetime experience and involve them into innovation related activities in order to provide competitive advantage to innovative companies or smaller project teams in a dynamics of business world.

The How-to Guide is compiled based on a data received during an analysis of current situation in 10 countries – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden and United Kingdom.

RESULTS AND HOW-TO GUIDE

About half of young entrepreneurs (the percentage is different by each involved country) participated in the survey mentioned that they have already successfully cooperated with the professionals over 55 years old in the past (some of them still keep contacts), esteemed contribution of Best Agers into their entrepreneurial activities as very useful and expressed willingness to cooperate in the future. Most of those young entrepreneurs participated in the research who haven't had such experience nevertheless mentioned that they very likely would turn to help or advice of Best Agers for solving problems they face in entrepreneurial activities. Research results evidently demonstrate how helpful would be involvement of professionals over 55 years old into innovation related activities of young people for young entrepreneurs themselves, but also how many opportunities and advantages it would open for Best Agers.

First of all there is a wide range of roles which can be obtained by Best Agers and which are valued by young entrepreneurs. Professionals over 55 years old can chose role and form of cooperation that best meets their professional and personal interests:

- *“Mentor” or “teacher” can guide young people not only in their entrepreneurial activities, but also sharing life experience and wisdom; inspire and motivate;*
- *“Investor” can support the most interesting and perspective projects to make a profit in the future;*
- *“Expert” and “Consultant” can work with young entrepreneurs as invited professionals for honorarium;*
- *“Partner” can find and establish relationships with the companies working in the same field ;*
- *“Teacher”, “Supervisors” and “Coach” can share their theoretical and practical knowledge giving lectures, participating in trainings or supervises students as university teacher;*
- *“Team-leader or “Employee” can be directly involved into entrepreneurial activities of young people and support them with knowledge and experience in developing of the company’s strategy or share it in every day companies activities;*
- *etc.*

The same is true about forms of communication between young entrepreneurs and Best Agers. Young entrepreneurs see the best way of cooperation as face-to-face meeting for expert evaluation and counselling or mentoring programs in business incubators. Nevertheless most of them realize that it can be a problem especially for those professionals over 55 years old who are still active in the profession and probably don't have enough time. At the same young entrepreneurs are quite sceptical about communication via internet, e-mail or by phones, probably they believe that people over 55 years old are still conservative in this sense and don't follow tendencies in development of new technologies and cannot react properly or quick enough using modern devices.

Best Agers could probably break this stereotype and be more involved into communication with younger generations using modern information communication technologies and support young entrepreneurs participating in webinars, on line conferences or simply by e-mail or social networks. Or become more aware with modern devices if there is still lack of knowledge and skills.

Finally, Best Agers also are in advantage position in terms of fields of their professional competence. As research results show professional experience from very broad range of fields is required by young entrepreneurs' innovative companies, starting with publishing business and education and finishing with military/defence industry.

No doubt expertise of Best Agers as successful and experienced professionals from every field will be valued by young entrepreneurs and contribute to the development of innovative business in case such cooperation be established.