



Resilience in Action

A Good Practice Guide to
Mentoring Companies in Distress



Written in the framework of the project: EASME/2021/OP/0001 - Improving the Availability and the Scope of Services for Companies in Financial Difficulties - EWE Mentor Academy
October– 2024

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)
Unit I.02 – SMP/SME Pillar, Internal Market and Support to Standardization

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Manuscript completed in October 2024.

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PDF

ISBN 978-92-9469-939-8

doi: 10.2826/5196100

EA-01-24-021-EN-N

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide has been elaborated as part of the project “Early Warning Europe Mentor Academy” (EWEMA) in the framework of the contract *Improving the Availability and the Scope of Services for Companies in Financial Difficulties*, EASME/2021/OP/0001. The research focused on mapping training courses that could form the basis for developing modules to be included in the learning programme designed and developed by the EWEMA project for mentors providing services to companies in distress, and on identifying best practices in the field.

The research started with a literature review on the topics of businesses in distress, business resilience and the role of mentoring. The research team collected information on training programmes related to mentoring and business resilience through a combination of research methodologies. It performed an online search in ten business-friendly and three other countries (as ranked in the World Bank’s Doing Business report), interviewed 13 European Early Warning service providers, reviewed ten relevant European projects, gathered information from 12 EU and non-EU education/training providers, contacted chambers of commerce and business associations in 36 EU and non-EU countries. The combination of these methodologies allowed the collection of information about 78 training programmes that were related to mentoring/advising and business resilience. Also, the research team interviewed an expert on Expansive Learning and an expert from the European Training Foundation, in order to discuss the educational methodologies that can be used in future trainings.

The retrieved training programmes were analysed in the following dimensions: topics, content, educational methodologies, and educational material. According to the results of the analysis, the training programmes were then divided into four categories, based on their focus: A. Mentoring, B. Business Aspects, C. Resilience building, and D. Insolvency and Exit Strategy, and the best practices were recorded as a basis for the educational materials produced for the learning programme in the EWEMA project. In parallel, 49 different training methodologies were recorded and many of them used in the peer-learning workshops and masterclasses delivered during the EWEMA project.

Finally, the report provides information about additional resources on the topics of business mentoring and business resilience. These resources include articles, reports, project descriptions and outputs, references to educational material, programmes, good practices, initiatives, tools, and links to webpages from across the globe. The resources are presented in two main categories: a) European projects and b) Other National initiatives. For each one of them, there is a short description and a link to further information.

The research concludes that SMEs are facing a variety of problems and crises that may undermine their viability and financial health; there is a link between business resilience and entrepreneurs’ personal traits; equally important is an adequate training and support in building business resilience; establishing relationships with a network of experienced mentors can help SMEs to overcome their problems, survive, and grow. Mentors also benefit from this process by offering a valuable social service and by an increased opportunity for networking.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Objectives

The main objectives of the research were the following:

- To retrieve, map, and assess information on existing training courses in areas that are relevant for enhancing knowledge and expertise of mentors providing services to companies in financial difficulties, including on how to i) approach an entrepreneur facing psychological/emotional distress; ii) build companies that would be more resilient to crises; and iii) share knowledge (training others/adult learning).
- To identify best practices that can be used in building training courses for mentors working with companies in distress.
- To record any free educational material that can be used in future trainings.

1.2. Methodological approach

For these three main goals to be achieved, a broad spectrum of existing training programmes, topics and educational methodologies, from countries within and outside of Europe had to be reviewed. The first step of the research process was to perform a short literature review on the topics of a) business in distress, b) business resilience, and c) mentoring.

Using the knowledge gained from the literature review, along with the experience of the consortium members in providing services for businesses in distress, the general research parameters have been defined.

These were the following:

- *Topics, content, and goals*: the research team would focus on training programmes that were related to mentoring/advising/coaching and business resilience. Another part of the research was to track and assess innovative training methodologies that can be used in developing the project learning programme.
- *Providers*: search for training programmes developed by both private and public training providers, such as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Government agencies, Non-Government Organizations, Chambers of commerce, Business Associations, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, etc.
- *Characteristics*: search for online and in-person training programmes, free or not, offering certification or not, funded or not.
- *Countries*: include the EU and non-EU countries.

Based on these research parameters and with a goal to retrieve and assess multiple training programmes, a mix of different methods and approaches was applied, combining the following:

- Online search for training programmes in at least 10 business-friendly countries.
- Contact with the Early Warning providers in at least 13 European countries.
- Review of past and existing European projects in related fields.

- Contact with business associations and chambers of commerce in at least 15 European and 10 non-European countries.
- Contact with at least 10 education/training institutions and any other organisations working in the field.
- Collect insights from the participants representing at least 10 countries, taking part in the peer-learning workshops organised by the EWEMA project, through an online questionnaire, about their knowledge of such programmes.
- Organise interviews with experts on Expansive Learning and ask their opinion about the possible design of the learning programme.
- Organise an interview with the European Training Foundation (ETF).

After a significant number of training programmes was identified and all the necessary information about them was collected, the research team reviewed their characteristics, topics, content, providers, delivery methods, target groups, duration, educational methodologies and educational material, in order to identify the best practices for the design of a learning programme for mentors.

The literature review is available in Chapter 2 of the current guide, the findings from the research are available in Chapter 3, the best practices in Chapter 4, mappings of the training programmes in Chapter 5, and the conclusions in Chapter 6.

2. Literature Review – Theoretical Background of the Research

2.1. Businesses in Distress

In 2023, there were over 25 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the EU27, out of which 93,6% were micro-enterprises. SMEs accounted for 99.8% of all enterprises in the EU-27 non-financial business sector (NFBS), generating 53.1% of value added and 65.2% of employment (Annual Report on European SMEs 2023/2024¹). SMEs are crucial engines for growth and job creation in the European economy and they play a central role in reaching the objectives of the SME Relief Package. To deliver on these objectives, they need a business environment that is conducive to growth, innovation, and job creation. One of the important elements of such environment is a well-functioning insolvency framework containing preventive measures and practical tools to help viable companies in financial difficulties avoid insolvency and recover, as well as to guide non-viable businesses into closure, before it is too late.

The number of companies disappearing each year in the EU remains high. For instance, the survival rate of companies which were created in 2011 and remained active in 2016 shows that less than half of them survived the five-year period. It is estimated that each year more than 200.000 EU businesses face insolvency, leading to a loss of 1,7 million

¹Annual Report on European SMEs 2023/2024, https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2bef0eda-2f75-497d-982e-c0d1cea57c0e_en?filename=Annual%20Report%20on%20European%20SMEs%202024.pdf

jobs². Moreover, bankruptcy is what Europeans fear most when thinking about setting up a new business: 43% of Europeans would not start a business if it might fail compared to just 19% in the United States (EWE, 2020).

The main reasons that lead European SMEs to insolvency have been investigated by various Early Warning service providers. One of the earliest Early Warning mechanisms in Europe, established in Denmark, provided a categorization and analysis of the main types of problems that undermine SME viability, and recorded the following most common distress factors until 2020 (Table 1).

Table 1: Common distress factors in Danish SMEs

Common distress situations	Characteristics
Financial problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk of closing • Decreases in turnover and employment • Inadequate or expensive funding • Value generation per employee is average • Largest group among Early Warning companies
Marketing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have problems with lack of sales effort and adequate outreach • Are often older (manufacturing) companies with good networks, but have difficulty with gaining new customers • Manage to keep employment, but have low turnover/value added per co-worker • Relatively low proportion of closed businesses
Insufficient organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of focus on accounting, administration and management • Are often young companies in the field of trade/services • Manage to hold significant share of employment but lose revenue • Relatively high proportion of closed businesses
Dead end in the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not aware of changes in the market and do not adapt • Large proportion of them closes • Typically, older companies that do not see/respond to change • Frequent in the construction industry and knowledge-based services • Significant loss of turnover • Survivors have the highest value added per employee
Owner in personal crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner/manager has personal problems that affect the company • Many closures, but also to some extent retention of employment and turnover • Average value generated per employee

Source: *Erhvervshus Midtjylland*

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/a-new-eu-approach-to-handling-business-failure-and-insolvency.html>

From the above table, it is obvious that not all distress factors are related to finance. There are other factors such as managerial, marketing, personal etc that can affect business performance and survival. The table is indicative and should not be considered as a complete list. In addition, it is worth noticing the emergence of two new, external factors since 2020, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the knock-on effects of the war in Ukraine on supply chains, energy costs, interest rates and inflation. The new market situation caused by these two external factors have led healthy, well-managed companies into distress.

Another source of information on the types of problems faced by European SMEs comes from the Early Warning Europe (EWE) project³ that was implemented in Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain. The total number of SMEs served in each country is presented in Table 2, and the main types of problems faced by 3,505 SMEs are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Number of SMEs served by the EWE project per country

Greece 	Italy 	Poland 	Spain 	Total
1,069	673	895	868	3,505

³ EWE was funded by the EU COSME Programme for a period of 36 months (2016-2019).

Table 3: Main types of problems faced by SMEs

Main Type of Problem vs Partner							
	Greece, EEA	Greece, IMEGSE..	Italy, UIT	Poland, PARP & ..	Spain, ATA	Spain, Madrid	Grand Total
Marketing or visibility issues	51.90%	29.04%	22.88%	18.21%	25.15%	34.67%	28.93%
Unmanageable debt	15.69%	7.77%	0.45%	20.89%	10.95%	13.07%	12.04%
Deficient or non-existent accounting, trouble with tax aut..	8.45%	0.20%	18.57%	7.15%	12.58%	5.60%	9.19%
Lack of structure for HR, division of tasks and/or time ma..	6.55%	4.91%	3.42%	9.50%	3.45%	4.53%	5.82%
Bad or no business model	6.55%	42.33%	13.67%	24.25%	5.07%	23.73%	19.06%
Mixture of personal and business economy	5.34%	3.27%	15.45%	10.73%	17.44%	5.07%	10.04%
Personal problems	2.76%	2.86%	19.91%	2.79%	10.14%	3.47%	7.19%
Sector decline	1.21%	5.52%	3.57%	0.78%	5.68%	5.07%	3.20%
Transfer of business	1.03%	2.45%	0.89%	1.68%	6.49%	4.00%	2.45%
Lack of experience in the sector	0.52%	1.64%	1.19%	4.02%	3.04%	0.80%	2.08%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/social.analytics.gr/viz/EARLYWARNINGEUROPE/EWEUROPE>

Even though there are differences from country to country, such as the lingering impact on local SMEs of the financial crisis in Greece, or the sector-specific problems affecting the high proportion of industry companies in the north of Italy, overall, the main types of problems faced by SMEs in these countries, that increased the risk of insolvency and closure, were related with marketing (28,9%), problematic business model (19%), debt management (12%), mixture of personal and business finances (10%), accounting and taxation (9,1%) and personal problems (7%). In addition to the obstacles mentioned above, SMEs are currently faced with the economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis and the general economic downturn which has worsened the situation. Some analysts claimed that the worst may yet be ahead, when governments will eventually end their COVID support measures (Accountancy Europe, 2020). Others warned about a potential “tsunami” of corporate insolvencies once governments’ crisis era support is withdrawn and called for a shift to more targeted policies that help otherwise viable companies which are struggling with too much debt (Financial Times, 2021).

In the past, the European Commission has taken various legislative and policy initiatives and funded projects that were aimed at assisting companies to avoid failure and bankruptcy, such as:

- The 2014 Commission Recommendation on a New Approach to Business Failure and Insolvency⁴ and the evaluation study launched by the Commission in 2015 on the implementation of the Recommendation, and the provisions on second chance for individual entrepreneurs throughout the EU.
- The 2015 Capital Markets Union Action Plan⁵ and 2016 Communication on Capital Markets Union: Accelerating Reform⁶ which announced a legislative initiative on business insolvency, including early restructuring and second chance.
- The 2015 Single Market Strategy⁷ also reconfirmed the need to support viable companies in financial difficulties and honest bankrupt entrepreneurs.
- The 2016 Commission Directive on Restructuring and Insolvency⁸ which was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in June 2019 and was transposed by the Member States by July 2021. It includes provisions for early warning tools, preventive restructuring frameworks, facilitating negotiations, stay of individual enforcement actions and discharge of debt.
- The 2020 SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe⁹ contains provisions on preventive restructuring and second chance.

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014H0135&qid=1685457843878>

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52015DC0468>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0601>

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0550>

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52016SC0357>

⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A103%3AFIN>

- The 2023 SME Relief Package¹⁰ highlighting the need for improving access to mentoring services for companies in distress.
- The Pre-SOLVE project launched in 2016 for a period of 2 years.
- The Early Warning Europe project launched in 2016 for a period of 3 years.
- The ResC-EWE project launched in 2020 for a period of 2 years.
- The Early Warning Europe Mentor Academy (EWEMA) project launched in 2021 for a period of 3 years.

All of these projects and initiatives are also closely aligned with the goal of building more resilient European SMEs and securing their valuable economic and social contributions. The term business resilience and its parameters are analysed in the next part of this guide.

2.2. Business Resilience

Walker et al. (2004) mention that from a general socio–ecological perspective, resilience can be defined as “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks” (p. 4). Based on the same concept, the term resilience is increasingly present in entrepreneurship and business literature. Sutcliffe and Vogus (2003) noted that the concept of resilience, whether used in the context of individuals or organisations, is generally founded on the notion of performing well, combined with the idea of difficult circumstances threatening to jeopardize such performance. They refer to the ability to “preserve functioning” despite the presence of internal or external adversities and recover from untoward events (p. 96). Ortiz de Mandojana and Bansal (2015, p. 1615) refer to business resilience as having the ability to “anticipate, avoid, and adjust to shocks in their environment”.

Much of resilience literature reflects on the above-mentioned ideas. Burnard & Bhamra (2011), as well as Sheffi (2007), place emphasis on the detection and activation of appropriate organisational responses to significant external events. Lengnick-Hall et al. (2011) mention that organisational resilience has two differing perspectives: one related to the ability of surviving from adversities and the other related to the development of new capabilities and the exploration of new opportunities. Hiles (2014) links the terms business recovery, continuity and resilience, by mentioning that “the concept of business recovery – having a failure and recovering from it – has been succeeded by business continuity (BC) – being able to continue operations without hiatus in the event of disruption to any part of the operation. From there, it is a short step to inbuilt resiliency” (p.14). Beech et al (2019), as well as Wishart (2018), provide analytical reviews of the different approaches, perspectives, and interpretations of resilience that have been adopted by various authors. Linnenluecke (2017) also offers an extensive review of influential publications on the topic.

¹⁰ https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/sme-relief-package_en

Business resilience can be challenged by several, both internal and external, risk factors. Internal factors are related to core business aspects, such as the business model and value proposition, marketing, management aspects, relationships between owners, employees' safety, access to resources, etc. External risk factors may be related to natural risks (e.g. floods, wildfires, and pandemics), geopolitical risks (e.g. wars and acts of terrorism), economic risks (e.g. recessions and crises), technological risks (e.g. system breakdowns and cyberattacks), corporate risks (e.g. fraud and legal claims) and miscellaneous risks (e.g. oil spills and plane crashes) (Hiles, 2014).

Having examined definitions of business resilience and some types of risks that new and existing businesses may face; it is important to mention the factors that can enhance business resilience. These factors can be divided at micro and macro level: micro level factors are related to entrepreneurs' behaviour and their businesses, while macro level factors are related to governments and the general economic and social environment.

Korber & McNaughton (2017), in their research point out the fact that a large part of entrepreneurial resilience literature supports the view that inherent characteristics like psychological traits and organisational characteristics of individuals or firms can increase resilience, which in turn enhances the ability of businesses to overcome disruptions. Many publications conceptualize entrepreneurial resilience as an amalgam of individual traits or qualities like flexibility, motivation, perseverance, optimism, self-efficacy, and hope (De Vries and Shields, 2006; Hmieleski et al., 2015). However, seeing resilience only as a result of personal attribute is risky, as it may limit our understanding of the related processes and willingness to provide adequate training and support. Davidsson, Low and Wright (2001) argued that in today's research on entrepreneurship, the focus is shifting more towards the behavioural and cognitive aspects of the field, rather than the personality characteristics. Branicki et al (2017) found a strong relationship between individual, entrepreneurial and SME resilience, noting that these concepts in many cases complement one another. Other papers stress the role of social capital (e.g. trust-based networks and support from family or friends) in assisting entrepreneurs to face crises situations (e.g. Bowey and Easton, 2007; Chrisman et al, 2011; Danes, 2013; Torres et al, 2019). Hedner et al (2011) mention that the concept of resilience is closely related to relationships that provide care and support, create trust and offer encouragement, both within and outside the family.

For Teixeira and Werther (2013), resilience is evident in the way that organisations respond to changes – firms that anticipate events and changes and act to mitigate them in advance, and that do so repeatedly, are truly resilient. In this way, resilience is seen as closely related to competitive advantage, and building a resilient organisation is presented as a strategic imperative. Beech et al (2019) supported the view that a key element of resilience is the coherent and rigorous nature of an organisation's strategic thinking and decision-making capability within its leadership team. Sheffi and Rice (2005) highlighted the relationship between resilience and organisational flexibility, mentioning that: "as companies move to build flexibility in order to respond to demand and supply volatility, they are also building in resilience and vice versa" (p.48). Smallborne et al (2012), in their research on UK and New Zealand SMEs, confirmed the importance of flexibility and adaptability in business resilience. Sabatino (2016) found that the most resilient enterprises are those that simplify their business structure and focus on their core competences. Granig and Hilgarter (2020) identified as key drivers for resilience organisational values and characteristics such as commitment, trust, empowerment, communication, leadership that provides a clear strategic direction and effective, proactive risk management techniques.

Buliga et al (2016) in their study highlighted the role of business model innovation, considering it as an integral part of organisational response and a constitutive element of resilience. Sitkin (1992) highlighted the value of organisational learning from failure as an integral part of resilience. Moreover, Sincorá et al (2017) highlighted the contribution of business analytics leveraging resilience in organisational processes. Hirt et al (2019) also supported that digital and analytics-driven productivity improvements may be an important alternative to conventional cost cuts, and that accelerating digitization has widened the gap in capabilities and performance between digital leaders and laggards – a gap that is likely to grow during any downturn.

However, the extent of entrepreneurial resilience may not only be dependent on personal characteristics, or organisational strategies and social capital, but also on structural, external factors that affect entrepreneurship and business survival in total. Korber & McNaughton (2017), in their research explored various macro-level factors that can enhance entrepreneurial resilience at the organisational or individual level. Examples include a competitive business environment (Biswas and Baptista, 2012), financial support through microfinance institutions (Ngoasong and Kimbu, 2016), training and mentoring programmes for entrepreneurs (St-Jean and Audet, 2012; Ghosh and Rajaram, 2015) and better institutional structures (Sobel, 2008). Hedner et al (2011) supported the view that the social attitude towards business failure also plays a role. For example, the acceptance of failure is higher in the United States and considered as an experience for future success, while in Japan and Europe entrepreneurial failure may create a social stigma (Vaillant & Lafuente, 2007). Bishop and Shilcof (2017, p. 215) in their research emphasized the role of entrepreneurial culture, flexibility, innovation, favourable industrial structures and diverse knowledge bases that assist some regions in fostering more resilient enterprises than others. On the contrary, factors that may prohibit resilient and productive entrepreneurship may be related to corruption (Barkhatova 2000; Aidis and Mickiewicz, 2006) and burdensome business regulations (Djankov et al., 2002).

A final aspect of the business resilience literature is highlighted by Wishart (2018), who points out the limited focus that has been placed on the specific context of SMEs. Even though the contribution of SMEs in national economies is very important (for example in the EU they account for 99% of total enterprises, two thirds of employment and 57% of value added), most of the focus to date has been on large enterprises. Ates and Bititci (2011) point out the fact that there are significant differences in the way that SME owners run their businesses and a different approach for resiliency is required. Sustainability and resilience in SMEs can be enhanced by (1) the ability to embrace organisational and people dimensions as well as operational aspects of change management, and (2) paying attention to long-term planning and external communication to drive change proactively.

In conclusion, business resilience refers to the ability of a business or organisation to absorb, adjust, and continue its operations through time, and especially after the occurrence of impactful events. The events may be of a natural, economic, political, legal, technological or interorganisational origin, and if not addressed accordingly, may seriously undermine the sustainability of a business. In this context, business research is placing increased emphasis on the factors that determine business resilience and ability to maintain operations. These factors may be related, to a certain extent, to entrepreneurs' personal characteristics that enable them to endure and face crises, and to another extent they are related to skills that can be developed through education and training. Other factors are related to the competitive strategies that businesses develop, as well as social capital and general support from friends and family. Moreover, there also macro factors that affect business resilience, and they have

to do to with the general support from the business environment in terms of financing and mentoring, the business culture in an area and the attitudes towards failure. Especially for mentoring, it is widely recognised that it can play a crucial role in fostering SMEs survival and growth.

2.3. Mentoring

The word mentoring has its origins in Homer's famous book *Odyssey*. Mentor was the person to whom Odysseus entrusted his young son Telemachus and his entire estate, before leaving to fight in the Trojan War. However, in the Greek mythology, on many occasions, the goddess Athena has also been pictured as the one taking the role of a mentor. The French writer, François Fénelon, in his work *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699) presents the Mentor-Athena accompanying Telemachus on his journey, providing him with guidance, and finally bringing him back close to his father, Odysseus. In this way, the word "mentor" in French and in modern Greek as well as in other European languages, means the counsellor and friend who acts as a spiritual guide.

Nowadays, mentoring in a business context refers to a relationship between an experienced businessperson (the mentor) and a business owner or employee (the mentee) (Kram, 1985). It can be used at all stages of the business life cycle, and it offers benefits to both mentors and mentees. Mentoring can help individuals understand themselves, their competences, their identities, how to relate to others, how to establish commitments and extend social and business networks (Day, 2000). Also, it can help identify new opportunities, generate ideas, and find innovative solutions to existing problems. Deakins et al. (1998) highlight the benefits that entrepreneurs receive by working with mentors: they mention an increase in the ability to manage, to achieve goals, to learn, as well as transform a business itself (increases in turnover, jobs, and profits).

Moreover, while business training programmes may be general in nature and lack the personalisation that is needed in order to satisfy specific needs (Morrison and Bergin-Seers, 2002), mentoring is sufficiently personalised to help entrepreneurs develop new business management and leadership skills (Bisk 2002; Sullivan 2000). Especially in situations where business owners do not have enough time for training, an interaction with a mentor is usually much more flexible, and can facilitate a quick and efficient transfer of experience and knowledge (St-Jean & Audet, 2009).

Mentorships are based on mutual expectations, where the mentee and mentor contribute to meeting each other's goals for the relationship (Young and Perrewé, 2004). The relationship between mentor and mentee can be established either as a paid service or provided on a voluntary basis (*pro bono*), as it was the case under the Early Warning Europe (EWE) project. Countries like Denmark, Poland, Spain, Greece and Italy have established well-functioning early warning mechanisms, gained experience in setting up a specialised, nationwide mentor network, in diagnosing problems that businesses and business owners are facing, and in assigning suitable mentors to assist them. Apart from having business experience and the relevant hard skills to assist business owners, mentors need also to be familiar and trained in mentoring techniques and approaches to provide better services. Such mentoring training is usually focused on the process itself and on different aspects of mentoring, as well as other topics related to business management and insolvency.

In this context, the current research aimed to retrieve existing training programmes for mentors/advisors, analyse their content, educational methodologies and educational material, identify best practices and use this knowledge for the design of a modular learning programme for mentors providing services to companies in distress.

3. Research for Mentor Training Programmes

3.1. Information Collection from the Online Search

The first method used for the retrieval of mentor/advisor training programmes was an online search in a sample of countries that were likely to provide such trainings. The selection of countries was based on the ranking of the World Bank's Doing Business Reports, which assess countries' business environment "friendliness". The assumption was that the countries that are high in this ranking are more likely to have active business support programmes, new ideas and approaches for the building up of resilient companies. The ranking for year 2020¹¹ is presented in the Table below.

Table 4: World Bank Doing Business 2020 Ranking

No	Country	Score
1.	New Zealand	86.8
2.	Singapore	86.2
3.	Hong Kong SAR, China	85.3
4.	Denmark	85.3
5.	Korea, Rep.	84.0
6.	United States	84.0
7.	Georgia	83.7
8.	United Kingdom	83.5
9.	Norway	82.6
10.	Sweden	82.0

¹¹ Data available at the time of initiating the research.

The online search was executed through a keyword search in popular online search engines, with keywords such as:

- Business mentor training programme.
- Business Advisor training programme.
- Training programmes for mentors.
- Mentor training programmes.
- Early Warning mentor training.
- Mentoring training.
- Business Resilience training.

The search engine results were assessed in terms of relevance and trustworthiness. For the results that fulfilled these basic criteria, there was a detailed, in depth, research and analysis of their characteristics, with the use of standardised Training Programme Record Form, that had the following fields:

Table 5: Training Programme Record Form

No.	Field
1.	Topic
2.	General Description
3.	Content
4.	Goals
5.	Delivery methods
6.	Target audience
7.	Free or not
8.	Cost
9.	Duration
10.	Certification
11.	Educational methodologies

12.	Public or private provider
13.	Higher education, VET or professional
14.	Funding source
15.	Country
16.	City
17.	Link
18.	Educational material

The main part of the online research was executed from the 15th of January until the 15th of March 2022, while updates were undertaken from July 2023 to September 2024. The numerical results of the research are presented in the table below:

Table 6: Results of the Online Research

No	Country	Number of programmes on mentor training	Number of programmes on business resilience
1.	New Zealand	2	4
2.	Singapore	7	1
3.	Hong Kong, China	0	0
4.	Denmark	2	0
5.	Korea, Rep.	1	1
6.	United States	9	1
7.	Georgia	1	0
8.	United Kingdom	6	2
9.	Norway	1	0
10.	Sweden	0	0

Some information on mentor training programmes were also retrieved from three other countries: Greece (2), Hungary (1) and Australia (1).

The most interesting findings of the research in terms of a) Topics of training programmes and goals, b) Content, c) Educational Methodologies and d) Educational material, are presented below.

A. *Topics*

- In **New Zealand**, there is a free training programme “Effective Mentoring Workshop” provided by the Business Mentors - the only independent national business mentoring service provider to the small business sector in New Zealand. There is also a training programme for mentors specialised in financial matters organised by the NGO Fincap. For business resilience there are training programmes by various private providers. The main public provider of resilience training is the NZ National Emergency Management Agency which offers a training course in Business Continuity Management.
- In **Singapore**, a variety of mentor training programmes were retrieved, mostly from private VET providers, and they focused on developing mentoring and coaching skills. There was also one training programme on “Building Organisational Resiliency through Business Continuity and Crisis Management”, provided by the Singapore Management University.
- In **the United States**, there is a large variety of training programmes available via the Business Advisor Learning Center, an online training portal created for business advisors and mentors from the Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), SCORE, Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs), and Women’s Business Centers (WBCs). Various associations and private providers also offer training programmes for mentors/advisors on topics like the SEMP Approach (Simplified Examination to Maximise Profit), Financial Advising, Small Business Advising, Coaching and Business Continuity Resilience Management.¹²
- In **the United Kingdom**, there are various mentor/advisor training programmes offered by private providers, on topics such as business advice and support, mentoring skills and franchising. On the topic of resilience, there are training programmes on developing resilience strategies and risk management.
- In **Norway**, in 2021 there was a summit of Nordic countries on the topic of mentoring.
- In **Greece**, some private providers offer training courses that lead to certification in coaching and mentoring.
- In **Australia**, mentors that provide free services for the Victorian Government’s Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS) are offered training courses to improve their skills.

¹² Given the predominant role of communitarian NGOs in the United States focusing on target groups such as the ones mentioned above, it seems logical that the funding, outreach, mentor training activities, etc. of these initiatives follow the same logic of community-specific focus. The size of the American economy also allows these organisations to build economy of scale to professionalise, lobby and fundraise. In Europe, these preconditions are not in place, and it can be observed that municipal, regional, state and EU funding dominate. In turn, this also means that the European initiatives tend to be less focused on narrow target groups.

B. *Content of the Trainings*

- In **New Zealand**, Business Mentors are organising a series of (2 hour long) online Mentor Trainings and Meetups on the following topics: Mentoring Foundations, Effective Mentoring, Mentor Meetup and Māori Business World View. The second training programme, focused on financial mentoring, does not include any information about the content. On the topic of business resilience, the private providers cover topics such as: Resilience Diagnostic assessment, building personal resilience (mental health, stress management, wellbeing, emotion, positivity, focus and flow), risk management, decision-making under uncertainty, building crisis response and recovery capabilities, team development and action plans.
- In **Singapore**, the content of the various mentor/advisor training programmes included mentoring benefits, mentoring stages, responsibilities, boundaries and pitfalls, understanding personality, the G.R.O.W. model, goal setting using the S.M.A.R.T. technique, drafting a mentoring action plan, trust building, providing feedback, how to recognise and overcome obstacles, option development, mentoring session structure, styles of mentoring. The business resilience training programme included training on the concepts of Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery, Crisis Management and Risk Management, risk identification, impact analysis, prioritisation of critical business functions, scenario building, strategy formation and implementation, communication system, response plans and exercises.
- In **the United States**, the US Small Business Administration Learning platform offers training videos and courses on topics such as What is a Mentor-Protégé Agreement? SBA Mentor-Protégé Program Tutorial (course), Finding and Attracting Customers, Employee Recruitment and Retention, How to Write A Business Plan, Marketing 101: A Guide to Winning Customers, Loans etc. There is also a series of guides on how to Plan a business, how to Launch a business, how to Manage a business and how to Grow a business. In 2014, SCORE teamed up with Deluxe Corporation to develop the Mentoring Methodology Training programme to help onboard SCORE volunteers. The Mentoring Methodology Training programme is based on 5 key components represented by the acronym SLATE: Stop and Suspend Judgment, Listen and Learn, Assess and Analyze, Test Ideas and Teach with Tools, Expectation Setting and Encouraging the Dream.
- In **the United Kingdom**, the mentor/advisor training programmes are focused on mentoring definitions, mentoring skills, market targeting, digitisation, partnership agreements, marketing and sales, franchising, relationship building, providing support, mentoring rules and contracting, structuring and managing mentoring sessions, mentoring models, active listening, learning and engagement styles, goal setting, action planning, dealing with challenges of mentoring, such as time pressures, lack of engagement or personality clashes, evaluating mentoring relationships, bringing mentoring relationships to an end. On the topic of resilience, the retrieved trainings focused on risks, impact assessment, emergency management, risk management, leadership, succession, accountability, recovery management, communication, safety and security management.
- In **Norway**, the topics of the 3-day mentoring summit covered reverse mentoring, mentoring for entrepreneurship, and how digital tools can enhance the mentoring experience.

- In **Greece**, the trainings' content is focused on defining coaching and mentoring, ethics, legal issues, skills and techniques of building trust, active listening, observation, change, goal setting, the GROW model and evaluation.
- In **Australia**, SBMS requires all new mentors to undergo training and briefing in procedures and mentoring skills.

C. *Educational Methodologies*

- In **New Zealand**, available information on mentor training programmes covers online trainings and meetings between mentors. For business resilience, a private provider has developed an application for assessing business resilience, and also uses videos, an AI chatbot coach, keynote speakers and face-to-face sessions. The NZ National Emergency Management Agency offers guides, action plan templates and practical exercises.
- In **Singapore**, mentor training programmes by private providers use role plays, case studies, simulations, short lectures, presentations, group and individual discussions, self-discovery activities, intelligent adult games, short video clips, energisers and mini-quizzes.
- In **South Korea**, a private provider of a 2-day training course on Business Risk and Resilience uses real case studies and interactive multimedia.
- In **the United States**, there is a learning platform that includes multiple guides and trainings, videos and extensive training material. Private providers also use access to exclusive resources and development tools, checklists and practice aides, custom monthly newsletters, member community forums, PowerPoint presentations, private study, pre-recorded teachings, reading, journaling, calculators, archived business articles, tax forms, special business reports, case studies, real-time experiences, practice, and exercises.
- In **the United Kingdom**, the training courses use presentations, case studies, activities, workshops, assessment, observation, on-line learning, practical activities, discussions, interactive exercises, role playing, team problem solving challenges, manuals, checklists.
- In **Australia**, there are regular mentor Information sessions with guest speakers to help all mentors keep up to date with current trends.

D. *Educational Material*

- The Business Mentors **New Zealand** organisation offers a Mentor e-book available online. The NZ National Emergency Management Agency offers a template for Business Continuity Plan, a Business Continuity Guide, information on Business Continuity Management, a Business Continuity Management Tabletop Exercise, a guide for Reporting on business continuity in Situation Reports, and an emergency checklist. The University of Auckland also offers a 44-page Guide to Mentoring online.

- A private provider in **Singapore** has a detailed outline of the contents of the mentor training programmes. Also, the Monetary Authority of Singapore has published the “Guidelines on Business Continuity Management”.
- For **South Korea**, there is a study by the OECD on how digitisation enhanced SME resilience during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In **the United States**, free training material is offered on the website of SBA (<https://www.sba.gov/>). The Alabama Small Business Development Center published in September 2008 a 236-page free Business Advisor Manual. In 2020, the SBA in cooperation with SBDC published a 30-page Small Business Resilience Guide, a 16-page Emergency Procedures Guide and a 6-page guide to Marketing. The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation has published a free 66-page guide with the title Business Resilience 101 Workbook. Finally, the outline of the International Training Guide for Small Business and SME consultants, published by the Association of Accredited Small Business Consultants (AASBC), mentions the contents of the guide which is focused on preparing them for the SEMP certification.
- In **the United Kingdom**, there are the following resources: The GROW Model: A way to structure sessions with mentees, GROW Model is the most common questioning framework used by coaches and mentors, The Global Code of Ethics for Coaches and Mentors: A set of best practice standards endorsed by the Association for Coaching and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, Mind Tools: Online resources for management, leadership and professional development including many videos and introductions to key mentoring concepts. Also, the UK government has published online a guide on Managing Risk, Business Continuity.
- In **Australia**, SBMS provides free resources for business owners and mentors on the link: <https://www.sbms.org.au/>.

3.2. Interviews with Early Warning Service Providers

The second stage of the research included the collection of information about mentor/advisor training topics and training courses through interviews with Early Warning (EW) providers and experts from 13 countries. The Early Warning service providers were suggested by the Early Warning Europe Network, and were the following:

Table 7: Interviews with Early Warning Service Providers

No	Country	Organisation	Contacted (Y/N)	Interviewed (Y/N) and Date
1	Denmark	BusinessDevelopment Centre Central Denmark	Yes	Yes - (22/02/2022)
2	Greece	Small Enterprises' Institute of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen, and Merchants (IME GSEVEE)	Yes	Yes - 03/02/2022 &17/02/2022

3	Greece	Athens Chamber of Tradesmen	Yes	Yes 22/02/2022	-
4	Netherlands	The Royal Association MKB-Netherlands	Yes	Yes 15/03/2022	-
5	Spain	CECOT Spain	Yes	Yes 23/02/2022	-
6	Spain	Comunidad de Madrid	Yes	No	
7	Spain	National Federation of Self-Employed Workers Associations (ATA)	Yes	Yes 22/02/2022	-
8	France	60.000 Rebonds	Yes	Yes – 20/02/2022	
9	Hungary	IFKA Public Benefit Non-profit Limited Company for the Development of the Industry, Hungarian Business Mentors' association	Yes	Yes 17/03/2022	-
10	Italy	100.000 Ripartenze, Unione Industriale di Torino	Yes	No	
11	Italy	GE:CO	Yes	Yes 17/02/2022	-
12	Finland	Federation of Finnish Enterprises (Suomen Yrittäjät)	Yes	Yes 1/03/2022	-
13	Lithuania	Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (ALCCIC)	Yes	No	
14	Lithuania	Enterprise Lithuania	Yes	No	
15	Luxembourg	House of Entrepreneurship of Luxembourg	Yes	Yes 29/07/2022	
16	Slovenia	SPIRIT	Yes	Yes 16/03/2022	–
17	Belgium	DYZO	Yes	Yes 16/02/2022	-
18	Latvia	Latvian Technology Centre	Yes	Yes 23/02/2022	–

19	Poland	FFR - Fundacja Firmy Rodzinne (Family Businesses Foundation)	Yes	Yes (09/02/2022)	-
20	Germany	Team U	Yes	Yes (09/03/2022)	-

The most important findings in terms of Topics, Content, Educational methodologies, and educational material are presented below.

A. *Topics*

- **In Denmark**, the Early Warning (EW) service organises two conferences per year, with a purpose to outline the key points of the Early Warning Mechanism for volunteer mentors. It also runs two Capacity Building schemes as a continuous skill boost for new and experienced mentors and consultants. The first Capacity Building training is linked to the EW Handbook.
- **In Greece**, the first provider (IME GSEVEE) has organised two types of training courses for mentors: the first one was focused on Educational Counselling – Mentoring, and the second one was addressed to mentors that would work on the project “Development of a Consulting, Strengthening and Support System for Small Businesses’ Entrepreneurship”. The second provider (EEA / Athens Chamber of Tradesmen), organised mentor trainings and certification for EW mentors.
- In the **Netherlands**, MKB follows the Early Warning Europe training scheme, but does not provide ongoing training for mentors as a service.
- In **Spain**, the EW Provider (CECOT) offers initial and on-going training to mentors based on EW and ResC-EWE tools, whereas the second organisation interviewed (ATA) provides training on the latest knowledge on Early Warning Signals of business crisis.
- The training of the **Hungarian** EW Provider places emphasis on the second chance coaching/mentoring guidelines.
- The **Italian** provider offers an advanced training course on Law Decree no. 118/2021 and its conversion into Italian law.
- The **Belgian** provider holds trainings for mentors on EW diagnosis and other related topics.
- The **Polish** EW provider runs an initial training programme for volunteers and consultants on the topic of the Early Warning Mechanism in four regions of Poland.
- The **Slovenian** provider does not offer formal or systematic training yet, however there are discussions to introduce topics such as risk and strategic management, sustainability, mentoring and coaching skills.

- The **Latvian** provider has not established a mentor training scheme yet.
- In **Finland**, the Yrittäjän talousapu Counselling Service's (YTCS) training aims to familiarise mentors with the basics of an entrepreneur's financial and payment difficulties, the available services and on how to communicate and assist entrepreneurs in distress. YTCS also organises meetings for regional coordinators and events for mentors on various topics.
- In **Germany**, The Handbook developed for the EW is used as the main training tool.
- The provider in **Luxembourg** does not provide any systematic training for mentors yet.

B. *Content of Trainings*

- In **Denmark**, the two EW conferences outline the key points of Early Warning Mechanism for volunteer mentors but also offer a forward-looking insight on the EW project status and activities, work cultures, societies and new markets. Other points include crisis management and handling of difficult conversations. The two Capacity Building training schemes cover the above topics in more depth and also include the topics of 'Becoming a good partner' and 'Market development and futureproofing'.
- In **Greece**, the "Guide for Educational Counselling – Mentoring" used by IME GSEVEE, includes information about mentoring (definition, process, meetings, benefits, framework, relationship building, active listening, meeting structure etc) and adult training. The second training covers the definition, principles and characteristics of successful mentoring, code of ethics as well as discussion and meeting techniques.
- The **Polish** training scheme includes two workshops (four days in total) which cover the familiarisation with the mentoring process, developing communication adjustment skills according to the DiscClassic 2.0, the GROWTH methodology, communication skills in practice and Andy Hudson's dealing with loss and grief work model. Following the workshops, mentors attend six monthly e-classroom sessions on topics such as difficult situations in mentoring, the 'helping trap', the psychology of failure. FFR also holds quarterly, regional networking meetings covering organisational issues, new skills and knowledge, and solutions to case studies.
- In **Spain**, the scheme run by ATA includes eight modules of the Startup Project screening for business health system (business crisis, scanning for early warning signs, the strategic side of restructuring, risk management, predicting financial distress and crisis indicators, leadership in crisis, crisis resilience and business continuity).
- In **Italy**, UNIFI's training scheme aims to equip the relevant professionals with the adequate knowledge regarding the Law Decree no. 118/2021 and its conversion into Italian law by including content such as negotiation settlement, the role of the judge, the documentation in the new Platform, debt sustainability as the test for verification of reasonable practicability of the remediation,

Drafting of a recovery plan, How to conduct the composition negotiation: the indications of the protocol, Entrepreneur, expert, and creditors in the proceedings before the court, Negotiations with interested parties aimed at the composition consensual: the role of the expert facilitator, Labor relations and consultations of the social partners, Bank exposures in the negotiation settlement procedure, The estimated liquidation of the assets, The outcome of the expert's intervention and the content of the final report: solutions of Article 11.

- MKB in the **Netherlands** follows the EWE training content.
- In **Belgium**, DYZO holds a two-day introduction to the EW mechanism, on company diagnosis, procedures required for mentors to join the programme, and provides reporting, relevant laws and social security regulations. DYZO intends to add a third training day to cover social and ICT skills. Follow-up training takes place quarterly to examine real examples and practical cases.
- In **Hungary**, the training includes the GROW Model, OSCAR, CLEAR Model and SMART, as tools for performing the mentoring sessions. A special approach has been developed, with an online platform, for the diagnosis of different areas of business.
- The EW **Finland** training scheme offers start-up training for mentors to receive a comprehensive information package on how to help entrepreneurs in financial difficulties. The Provider (YTCS) acquires the training from a business school, the Finnish Institute for Enterprise Management (<https://www.syo.fi/en/>). The training is split in five parts and lasts a total of 15 hours. After the training, mentors are familiar with the basics of the entrepreneur's financial and payment difficulties, the services available, techniques of communication with entrepreneurs and supporting tools. The specific topics of the scheme are: 1. How to face an entrepreneur in crisis, 2. Assessing the company's situation and profitability and the Business Plan in Relation to projections, 3. Assessing the Company's Situation and Profitability - Company Taxation, Tax Planning and Cash Flow Statement, 4. Drafting a Solution - Business Recovery and Development, 5. Drafting a solution - corporate reorganisation, bankruptcy and winding-up. YTCS also organizes monthly regional coordinator meetings of circa 20 people and online events for all other mentors on variety of topics.
- In **Germany**, mentors qualify through the TEAM U - Academy to work as consultants or on the hotline, or to lead self-help groups. The Team U Manual for EWE is a comprehensive guide to mentoring. Its content includes the following topics: An introduction to systemic attitude; Team U's approach to consulting and the steps of the consulting process; Analysing the situation of the company; Guidelines for consultant liability in cases of imminent insolvency; Discerning the business & personal situation. The Manual covers the variety of service packages offered to businesses. These are as follows:
 - Profit and loss (or income) statement (annual).
 - Revenue and liquidity planning (monthly).
 - Financing and collateral analysis.

- Management of receivables.
- Financial statement analysis and credit standing.
- Accounting and costing.
- Order backlog and delivery times.
- Capacity and investment planning.
- Personnel planning and development.
- Customer ranking list.
- Distribution of sales by business division.
- Core competencies and weaknesses.
- Marketability of the products.
- Competitive situation.
- Supplier situation.
- Infrastructure.
- Business planning and future forecast.

Resources available to entrepreneurs are the Hotline, self-help groups (Insolvency Anonymous) and the Early Warning App. Trainees/Consultants are also provided with a selection of worksheets as a supervision aid and as a tool for reflection for the persons concerned. Some examples of worksheet topics are:

- The drama triangle model.
- The concept of the change curve and its application as an internal support, measure for consulting and Self-Help-Groups.
- The force field analysis.

Further training tools included in the manual are:

- Addressing Problems I Systemic questions.
- Interview Techniques I Paraphrasing.
- 4 Aids to comprehension.
- 3 steps of conversation.
- Points in describing behaviour.
- Appreciative inquiry.
- 4 Room Model.

- Tool on Communication.

c. *Educational Methodologies*

- In **Denmark**, both EW Conferences include participatory workshops (peer-to-peer/mentor to mentor) on a motivational basis, short presentations and real case studies from the last decade, future trends and a lot of interactions. The Capacity Building Training Schemes use a varied toolkit: presentations, case studies (real, fictional, past and current), videos, links to resources, roadmaps. The training format is highly interactive, with participants working initially “as themselves” and then immersing into different cultural positions. There is also continuous alternation between short introductory plenary speeches, solo work, and group reflections. Another activity is related to the analysis of legal texts and case-based exercises for solving problems of a legal/regulatory nature.
- In **Greece**, all existing training schemes are face-to-face lectures with PowerPoint presentations, accompanied by educational guides.
- The **Polish** scheme uses peer-to-peer sessions with an interactive and experience-based format, where various methods are employed: presentations, tools (Growth Methodology, DiscClassic 2.0., etc.), moderated discussion, case studies, supervised sessions, webinars.
- In **Spain**, the Startup scheme also uses peer-to-peer sessions with an interactive and experience-based format (presentation, moderated discussion, case studies).
- The **Italian** scheme is based exclusively on webinars.
- The **Hungarian** provider uses the toolkit developed by the EU project DanubeChance 2.0, with some modifications and adaptations. The emphasis is put on the hard skills and the recruited mentors are expected to be experts in their fields.
- The **Finnish scheme** follows a hands-on training approach, with online training sessions in groups, meetings for region’s leaders, and other online events. All these have been conducted through videoconferencing, mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In all session types, the training material (presentations, case studies) is sent to participants in advance and is accessible online.
- The **German** scheme’s philosophy is that the training should be based on combination of psychological and technical approaches (soft and hard skills). The mentor should be able to empower and coach the entrepreneurs so that they can find the solution on their own. Team U’s methodology is based on the U-Principle which consists of three stages: Prevention, Support in crisis, Restart.

d. *Educational Material*

- In **Denmark**, the Capacity Building Schemes use the “Handbook for volunteers” (Early Warning Håndbog, available in Danish) and an interactive case film, “Strategic choices in the guidance of a business – owner” (available in ppt in Danish). There are also legal texts and case-based exercises for solving problems of a legal / regulatory nature.
- In **Greece**, the IME GSEVEE schemes have a dedicated educational material (available in Greek language).
- In **Poland, Italy, Slovenia** and **Latvia** there is educational material for the training of the mentors available in their respective national languages.
- In **Spain**, an adaptation of the Early-stage business failure intervention framework developed in the framework of SMARTUP Project is used (<https://www.smartupproject.eu/>).
- In the **Netherlands** and **Belgium**, the providers adapt the material developed by EWE.
- In **Finland**, information about the training programmes and their contents are available on the link: <https://kehaemail.sst.fi>.
- In **Hungary**, the provider mostly adapts methodologies and materials from the EU project DanubeChance 2.0 (which is analysed later in the guide).
- **Germany** uses the TEAM U handbook as the basic training material (available only for internal use).

3.3. Collection of Information from Education and Training Providers

The third methodological approach was focused on collecting information about mentoring training programmes from education/training institutions and other organisations with experience in the field of business mentoring. The goal was to approach (by telephone and email) at least 10 education institutions/organisations in EU and non-EU countries, with the main focus on providers at university (tertiary) level.

The internet has proved to be a consistent source of data for training providers at university level. Their websites are updated and usually provide a plethora of information about the training programmes they offer. The research results included many academic programmes focusing on the development of mentor practice, although in most of the cases, they were not directly related to business mentoring but primarily focused on students’ education achieved by matching alumni with students in mentoring relations. Overall, 12 institutions have been selected from various EU and non-EU countries, such as Sweden, France, Hungary, France and Italy as well as New Zealand, Singapore, United States, United Kingdom and Australia. The sample consists of university programmes focusing on initial training for business mentors/advisors and on ongoing support for professional development.

A second round of research consisted of the collection of qualitative information, and was focused on approaching programme managers in order to collect more detailed information

about their training programmes for mentors (e.g. organisational aspects, training material, duration, etc.). The contact with these institutions has been made by telephone and email. A high variation of response rates was observed among the researchers across the countries approached, partly due to the restricted phone access.

The most interesting findings of the research in terms of Topics, Content, Educational methodologies and educational material are presented below.

A. *Topics*

- In **New Zealand**, the University of Canterbury offers a course on “Distributing Leadership Through Coaching and Mentoring” and the Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology in Rotorua offers a course in “Mentoring and Professional Leadership in the workplace”.
- In **Singapore**, the Singapore University of Technology offers a course on Corporate Coaching and Mentoring.
- In the **United States**, the Innovation Academy at the University of Notre Dame offers a Certified Innovation Mentor Programme. Furthermore, the Kent State University offers a training programme and certification for advisors/mentors that provide services through the Small Business Development Centres (SBDCs).
- In the **United Kingdom**, the University of Cumbria via the Business Growth Hub offers the one semester course “Become a Mentor” while the University of York is offering a 5-day training programme in “Advanced Coaching and Mentoring”. The Bangor University offers a Coaching and Mentoring Qualification, and the University of South Wales offers a short course in Coaching and Mentoring while the Saïd Business School of the University of Oxford has in its portfolio a training course on “Developing organizational and resilience skills”.
- In **Australia**, the AIM Business School offers a short training course in Coaching and mentoring.
- In **Italy**, the University of Florence offers a 55-hours training course for accountants and lawyers that want to work as facilitators in business crises.
- In **Hungary**, the Central European University’s Innovations Lab is offering a training programme for Start-up Mentors, applying best practices from the USA.
- In **France**, the HEC Paris Business School offers a training course on Coaching tools for business.

B. *Content of Trainings*

- In **New Zealand**, there are two training courses, first one explores and applies the theoretical and practical bases of supporting others in developing their professional roles, responsibilities and expertise, and includes topics such as personal learning and development, scholarly research and literature review

on how to form a trusting relationship which respects and extends colleagues' practices, responsibilities, questioning and listening, and observation. The second course includes topics such as Critical Reflective Practice, Professional Leadership, Legislative Environment for Professional Leaders, Building Professional Relationships for Mentoring, and Mentoring and Supervision.

- In **Singapore**, the training programme includes Solution Focused Coaching, corporate values, Applied Learning model, GROW model and effective communication methods.
- In the **United States**, one of training programmes is focused mostly on developing mentor's innovation skills and knowledge, and includes themes such as team building, dealing with failure, creativity tools, ethical rules, idea generation, identifying barriers and culture building. The other one covers topics such as Marketing, Accounting/Finance, and Human Resource Management.
- In the **United Kingdom**, the University of Cumbria training programme includes topics such as behavioural change models, self-assessment of personal coaching and mentoring skills, coaching and mentoring theory, models and approaches, contracting and ethical issues related to coaching and mentoring; facilitation skills, problem-solving techniques, reflective practice, the coaching cycle and developing self-awareness. In the case of other programmes, their content is not clearly defined, and they place more emphasis on developing personal skills. The Saïd Business School training programme includes topics such as Advancing resilient leadership, Developing strategic resilience, Building operational resilience, Reinforcing social resilience, Strengthening supply chain resilience and Maximising systems-wide resilience.
- In **Australia**, the training course covers topics such as the difference between coaching and mentoring, the legal context of coaching/mentoring in the workplace, encouraging a culture of learning, the different types of coaching/mentoring models, important skills for coaches/mentors, how to effectively pair people with coaches/mentors, developing learning pathways connection tools, the features of effective communication, how to give and receive feedback and how to evaluate success.
- In **Italy**, the training programme is focused on analysing the regulatory framework for negotiated, out-of-court, solutions for businesses in crisis.
- In **Hungary**, the training programme includes the challenges of working with start-ups, best practices related to start-up mentoring from the USA, creating opportunities for start-ups to build powerful businesses, behavioural aspects of entrepreneurship and disciplined entrepreneurship.
- In **France**, the training programme includes the approaches and fundamental aspects of coaching, identifying resources, self-awareness and understanding other people, key methods and tools of coaching, mastering the specific cultural, sociological and managerial aspects of international coaching, exploring team and organisation coaching, professionalisation and certification.

c. *Educational Methodologies*

- In **New Zealand**, the methodological approach used in the first course is based on lectures, forums of discussion, assignments, reading, observation, and videos. The second course also uses lectures, problem solving, examples, projects, self-evaluation and assignments.
- In **Singapore**, the training programme uses learning material, online resources, sharing of best practices, case studies, interviews, articles and videos.
- In the **United States**, the educational methodology includes online and physical lectures, projects, study groups, case studies, publications and examination.
- In the **United Kingdom**, the educational methodologies include theoretical presentations and presentations by industry experts (Saïd Business School), theory, practice, supervision and record keeping (University of York), input and demonstration by the facilitators, discussion, individual reflective exercises, group exercise and activities (Bangor University), supervision, peer coaching and networking (University of South Wales).
- In **Australia**, the short course uses presentations of hypothetical and real-life case studies, and includes practical tasks for both individuals and teams.
- In **Italy**, the training programme uses theory presentations, open debates and exchange of practical experiences.
- In **Hungary**, the training programme uses lectures, workshops, case studies, framework analysis, best practices and manifesto building.
- In **France**, the training programme has an interactive, experiential and modular structure that includes lectures, practical coaching of a company or NGO, tailored support by experts and supervision of facilitators.

d. *Educational Material*

- In **Singapore**, the Singapore University of Technology offers training material (videos, articles and case studies). More information: <https://www.singaporetech.edu.sg/innovate/nace/resources>

3.4. Collection of Information from European Projects

Several European projects have been reviewed, with a goal to identify training programmes for business mentors, and to record any open access to educational material and tools. The collection of information was done partly through the websites of the projects, as well as customised emails and interviews with project partners.

The main findings in terms of trainings programmes and educational material are presented below.

Early Warning Europe (EWE) Project

Provider: Co-funded by the EU COSME Programme, **Duration:** 2016-2019, **Partners:** 15 European partners from 7 countries (ErhvervsShus Midtjylland (Denmark); Team-U (Germany); DYZO (Belgium); FFR, PARP (Poland); UIT (Italy); EEA, IME GSEVEE (Greece); ATA, Comunidad de Madrid, CECOT (Spain); Eurochambres, SMEUnited, ESBA. **Total budget:** €4.8 million, COSME contribution up to €3.6 million.

Description: The objective of the Early Warning Europe project was to establish the Early Warning mechanisms in Poland, Spain, Italy and Greece by rolling out the existing schemes from countries that have already developed services for companies in distress. The project provided support to over 3,500 companies in distress between 2016-2019. As part of the second and third wave, six new countries got involved in the building and launching the national Early Warning mechanisms (Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovenia).

The overall objective of the EWE was to:

- Promote policy development in the area of insolvency prevention and early warning.
- Develop and test an innovative, data-driven method of identifying companies in distress by using machine learning tool and big data.
- Help companies in distress by setting up the Early Warning mechanisms in first, second and third wave countries.

As a result, the EWE has created a European Network of experts, authorities, researchers, business associations and chambers of commerce focused on improving framework conditions for SMEs and entrepreneurs in distress across Europe. The network provided its members with opportunities for networking, exchange of good practices, cooperation and access to cutting-edge knowledge. A community of 1,000 volunteer mentors offering support to entrepreneurs in distress was created by the EWE project.

Training Content: The content of the trainings for volunteer mentors included the U-Principle, Attitude in consulting, Iceberg-Modell, Systemic Loop, Learning Loop, Our Approach, First Contact, Matchmaking, Second Contact – Consultant & Volunteer, Looking at the personal situation and the business, Basic Analysis Checklist, Guideline for consultant liability in cases of imminent insolvency, Discerning the business & personal situation, Hotline, Self-Help Groups, Drama Triangle, Change Curve, Force Field Analysis, App, Training Tools, Addressing Problems, Systemic questions, Interview Techniques, Paraphrasing, 4 Aids to comprehension, 3 steps of conversation, points in describing behaviour, Appreciative inquiry, 4 Room Model and Tool on Communication.

Educational methodologies: The mentors were trained during the workshops organised by local trainers and mentor organisations such as Team U and DYZO. The educational methodologies involved lectures, video presentations, group discussions, working in pairs, testimonials, discussion panels and case studies.

Motivation methods: EWE project has motivated mentors to take part in its activities by demonstrating the social and economic impact of rescuing companies in distress, by highlighting the experience and knowledge gained through interacting with business

owners and networking with other mentors and the partner organisations. In some countries, the volunteer mentors were also provided with the attendance Certificate and/or the EWE Mentor certificate.

Networking methods: networking and training events for mentors resulted in a tight integration of the mentor community.

Educational material: Team U – Tools as well as training and educational material for EWE project partners presented during the site workshop. The educational material is available on the following links.

- <https://www.earlywarningeurope.eu/>
- <https://www.earlywarningeurope.eu/manual/5-building-maintaining-and-use-of-a-well-tuned-corps-of-volunteer-advisors>

PRE-SOLVE Project

Provider: Justice Programme of the European Union, **Duration:** 2016-2018, **Partners:** Eurochambres (lead partner); Cambra Barcelona (Spain); Beci (Belgium); CCI (Bulgaria); Camara de Santiago (Spain); Covasna CCI (Romania); CCI (Cyprus); CC (Czechia); C.C.I.A.A di Frosinone (Italy); CCI Grand Lille (France); CCI Neamt (Romania); CCI Auvergne Rhone Alpes (France); C.C.I.A.A di Riety (Italy); COCI Sabadell (Spain); Vaslui CCI (Romania); C.C.I.A.A di Viterbo (Italy); **Budget:** €963.101,42.

Topic: Preventing Business Failure and Insolvency

Description: PRE-SOLVE was a large-scale project implemented by chambers of commerce from eight European countries (15 Chambers of Commerce & Industry), coordinated by Eurochambres. It aimed to provide business intermediaries with practical tools to support companies (natural or legal persons) in difficulties where there was likelihood of insolvency; where insolvency proceedings were pending; or after insolvency proceedings were completed (‘Second Chance’).

Results: Tools for business intermediaries (in paper and in web format), namely, diagnostic tool with a follow-up dashboard, psychological mapping tool and assistance methodology; administration monitoring platform, and a cost-analysis tool; dispute resolution management tool, and second-chance business plan model. These tools were tailored-made and co-created to match the national requirements. The project has also provided trainings for business intermediaries on how to use the tools developed by the project. The training focused on the six tools listed above, as well as the current EU insolvency regulatory framework.

Educational methodologies: Thematic peer-learning workshops, tailored guidance and user guides, based on the set of six tools that are available in ten European languages:

- Tool 1 - Preventive diagnosis.
- Tool 2 – Psychological support.

- Tool 3 - Management platform.
- Tool 4 – Cost analysis.
- Tool 5 - Conflict resolution options.
- Tool 6 - Second chance business plan¹³.

Under the project, one 3-day training session for 15 chambers of commerce & Industry was offered. It was divided into 6 sessions (3,5 hours for each tool). During each session, the following steps were implemented:

- Presentation of the tool to the trainees.
- Explanation of the methodology.
- Practical exercise to apply the tool to concrete cases.
- Collecting the evaluation.

There was also one online training session offered, with the video presentation of the tools, individual homework and exercises, followed up by the group discussion of all participants. The project methodology relied on peer learning between 15 European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, where the Chambers experienced in providing support to entrepreneurs in distress have trained the Chambers which were not providing this type of services yet. The Chambers of Commerce & Industry supported entrepreneurs facing difficulties using the toolkit developed by the project.

Networking methods: Networking done via the business intermediaries and workshops among the businesses in need of second chance.

RESTART BSR (Baltic Sea Region) Project

Provider: EU Interreg Programme, **Duration:** 2014-2020, **Partners:** Lower Silesia region (Poland); Design School Kolding (Denmark); Harju County Entrepreneurship and Development Consultancy (Estonia); Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Lithuania); Latvian Technological Center Foundation (Latvia); Ministry of Economics of Republic of Latvia (Latvia), **Budget:** €1,6 million.

Topic: Policy dialogue to support innovation and growth of companies facing stagnation and bankruptcy.

Description: The purpose of the Restart BSR project was to build the institutional potential of innovative entities to support companies in a difficult financial situation and ReStarters. ReStarter capacity-building activities were aimed at reducing the number of bankruptcies and increasing the number of start-ups. The assumption is that by providing crisis management skills and innovative support to companies in financial distress, innovation actors can help reduce bankruptcies, and help enterprises to launch innovation. By offering support to advisors that provide services to entities starting up in the field of innovation, they will be able to help owners of companies that have gone bankrupt to obtain a second

¹³ There is no access to tools for entrepreneurs or mentors/advisors who are not affiliated to the above-mentioned chambers.

chance and increase the growth potential of the company established under the ReStarter.

Training Content: Policymaking strategies, Restart BSR Manual 2021, guidelines for policy makers how to build and strengthen the institutional ecosystem to support companies in financial difficulties in the Baltic States and Poland, road maps & policy manual.

Educational methodologies: On-site and online peer-learning workshops with the use of design thinking methodology, on-site and on-line innovation labs with the presence of partners, scientists, EWE mentors, business advisors, experts and entrepreneurs. Zoom platform and MIRO enabled to combine the lectures with active participation, group work, individual commitment to provide feedback from all participants. Training methods like discussion, lectures, problem solving were also used. Design-driven innovation – concept and tools – was created by the Kolding Design School in Denmark. The toolkit consisted of:

- Ethical codex.
- Growth Journey - the progress of the change is visualised by “growth journey”, which describes the journey of the business owner together with the mentor. The “growth journey” is divided into three overall phases: 1. Onboarding, 2. Sparring, 3. Innovation.
- Personal Journey - to visualise personal focus and underline the importance of being aware of the owner’s state of mind during the different phases of the crisis, ‘The Cycle of Renewal’ from the Hudson Institute.
- Facilitation Tips described in categories such as: Co-create (who should be involved), Mindset, Revisit, Stage, Supporting tools, Move, Visualize.

The list of tools was the following: Active listening, Financial Self Check, Value Session, Cycle of Renewal, Past and Future Ruler, Uniqueness, DMAIC, Why/Golden Circle, Persona, Business Model Canvas, Lotus Blossom, Future Vision.

Restart BSR applied the widely used concept of the “triple bottom line”, which was developed by John Elkington in 1994. Then, as well as now, this approach intends to highlight a focus shift from one bottom line – profit – to three equally important bottom lines: people, planet and profit.

Networking methods: Exchange the experience with the partners and experts from other EU projects focused on providing support for entrepreneurs in difficulties such as the Early Warning Europe and Danube Chance 2.0.

Educational Material: All the project deliverables are available at the project website <https://interreg-baltic.eu/>

Toolkit with the templates and Video guides

http://restart-bsr.eu/images/P_results/RESTART_BSR_Report_final.pdf

The toolkit is also available on the EWE learning platform.

REBORN Project

Provider: EU Interreg Programme, **Duration:** 2017-2020, **Partners:** 6 partners from the EU: Liguria (Italy); FILSE, Murcia (Spain); CEEIM, Budapest (Hungary); IFKA (Macedonia)

Greece RDF/RWM); Marshall Office of Lubelskie Voivodeship Lublin (Poland). **Budget:** €785 733,00.

Topic: SME Competitiveness

Description: REBORN aimed to offer the EU regions the opportunity for policy learning and good practices exchanges in the area of second chance entrepreneurship. The REBORN tool was designed to support restarters through better use of European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) or other funds supporting the common goals and objectives.

Trainings and Content: The project included dissemination events and international workshops. It was mostly focused on policy development, not on direct provision of services to entrepreneurs. The local regional partners did organise workshop-like events for entrepreneurs – business breakfasts for entrepreneurs, but these were not derived from the project directly. The main content of a 25-hour course “Failure Management Course” offered by the affiliated partner organisation – University of Murcia – included the following:

- Failure concept.
- Emotional self-control in light of frustration.
- Reactive and proactive management.
- Enhance positive energies: coaching, positive psychology, intelligent optimism.
- Falling to learn to walk: pedagogy of failure.
- Management of options in threatening environments.
- Blocking emotions and limiting beliefs: insecurity, fear of ridicule, fear of rejection, etc.
- Resilience as self-protection in childhood and the duty of adults as tutors of resilience during early childhood education.
- Resources to improve creative visualization, resilience, focusing, adherence breakdown, meditation, etc.
- Case studies.
- Cinema-forum: “Searching for Sugar Man: story of Sixto Rodriguez”.
- Practices and work in subgroups for elaboration of a document with conclusions.

Educational methodologies: workshops, presentations, cases studies, book, website content.

Networking methods: Dissemination events

Educational material: A book “*Failure Management: a practical handbook*” was written on REBORN framework by Dr. Rafael Rabadán & Dr. Pedro-Juan Martín, Universidad de Murcia. More info:

- <https://www.interregeurope.eu/>

Provider: EU Interreg Programme, **Duration:** 2018-2021, **Partners:** 12 partners from 11 countries – IFKA, Steinbeis 2i GmbH, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Centre for Social Innovation, Union of Slovak Clusters, Centre for Entrepreneurship Osijek, Pannon Business Network Association, Pomurje Technology Park, Republic Agency for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprise, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, Organization for Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development, Institute of Market Problems and Economic-Ecological Researches of NAS Ukraine, Ministry for Industry, Energy and Mining of Republic of Srpska, EURADA - European Association of Development Agencies, Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts of the Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Economy, Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat, **Budget:** €1.822.550,00.

Description: DanubeChance2.0 aimed to facilitate and improve the policy development between policymakers and government agencies; research institutes and universities; financially distressed enterprises currently involved in insolvency procedures, or entrepreneurs who have already gone bankrupt and are ready for a re-start; business accelerators; and the public. Specific goals were the following:

- Promoting restructuring measures.
- Awareness raising on the second chance opportunities.
- Enabling a friendly business environment for those seeking second chance.

Training Content: The project provided a path for legitimate entrepreneurs whose first businesses have failed, to re-enter the market. It has been done through delivering 130 hours of “blended” learning experiences at the ‘Trial and Error’ Re-Design Transnational Academy, and the launch of the first “Business Re-Structuring Initiative”, which provided business acceleration support for approximately 60 legitimate entrepreneurs whose first business projects failed.

The training of mentors, experts and supporting institutions included the second-chance ecosystem, crisis and change management, process management, psychology, use and analysis of the screening & diagnostic tools. The partners also developed a financial tool for the entrepreneurs’ assessment, which was based on the analysis of selected financial indicators.

Educational methodologies: Online survey “Training needs assessment”, Workshops based on experience exchange, three transnational policy learning dialogue workshops, local dialogue events (in the form of “business breakfasts” and “local policy focus groups”), expert interviews with business experts and re-starters (conducted within the screening process of second chance entrepreneurship landscape, creation of guides with recommendations for training both mentors and entrepreneurs in crisis, personal action plans. The trainings relied heavily on Participative Training Techniques (PTTs) and the concept of “action learning”.

Testimonials from mentors and mentees that took part in the mentoring programmes highlighted the importance of the credibility of the mentor as well as trust, chemistry and communication as key factors for a fruitful cooperation between mentors and entrepreneurs (mentees).

Educational material: <https://interreg-danube.eu/>

Provider: Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, within the priority: Forward Looking projects, **Duration:** 2020-2022, **Partners:** Erhvervshus Midtjylland Business Development Centre Central (Denmark); Cecot (Spain); Fundacja Firmy Rodzinne FFR (Family Businesses Foundation) (Poland); Small Enterprises' Institute of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen, and Merchants (IME GSEVEE), Athens Chamber of Tradesmen (Greece); JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland), **Budget:** €665.000,00.

Topic: Preventing Business Failure and Insolvency.

Description: The ResC-EWE project aimed to redesign entrepreneurship training and counselling in the European education and training system through changing paradigms and mindsets that failing is not a shame, but can be an asset towards more sustainably growing economies. This was achieved through the integration of risk awareness skills, key risk identification and mitigation strategies as well as knowledge to seek advice in the Early Warning Europe network and the wide European network of enterprise consultancies.

Training Content: The Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) was designed on the basis of a research performed by the Project Partners on a group of 400 entrepreneurs across Europe who indicated the competences which are crucial for creating business resilience. The testing of the educational material was done through thematic online workshops organised in each partner country, with potential users like entrepreneurs, start-ups, students and EWE mentors. The contents of the MOOC (videos) were the following:

- Introduction – Orientation to the MOOC and to the ResC-EWE project, the Early Warning Europe Network, methodology, the Business Model Canvas.
- Resilience and skills development: Meaning of resilience, resilience of an entrepreneur, work- life balance.
- Customer understanding through the Business Infrastructure.
- Financials Cost structure and revenue streams, pricing structure, the revenue model.
- Management.
- Resilience in Action.
- Key learning points of the ResC-EWE MOOC.

Additionally, an annex was developed for family businesses that included tools such as: Story telling related to family heritage, the family aspect in the value proposition, succession check list, family business valuation.

Educational methodologies: Toolkit, guides, videos, workshops, group discussions, case studies, exercises, data analysis, action plans.

Educational material: The toolbox contains a total of 28 tools that take into account not only the condition and efficiency of the company's operation, but also the leader himself. There are tools related to managing oneself, priorities, and working on deficit areas. The second group of tools were those related to the soft aspects of business such as customer relations and communication. The third group of tools was composed of exercises related to the hard aspects of running a business such as: production, finance and sales. The

fourth group of tools relates to the environment and external circumstances: competition analysis and risk.

The tools are available on the EWE platform - free of charge in four language versions: English, Polish, Greek, Danish and Spanish.

More information: <https://www.earlywarningeurope.eu/rescewe>

EU Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP)

Provider: European Commission. **Duration:** 2017-2020 and onwards

Content: Technical Support Instrument (TSI)

Description: Coordination and provision of technical support to the EU member states for empowerment of reforms. As such, this programme does not directly refer to the building of mentor training. However, the contribution that the TSI makes towards resilience-enhancement could be indirectly used for the sake of establishment of mentor training, as a part of the reform-driven efforts of a member state that would indicate such a need. The project has been crucial in the Estonian effort to establish the country's early warning measures.

Goals: The goal is to support EU member states' efforts to design and implement resilience-enhancing reforms, thereby contributing to the EU's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, improving the quality of public services and getting back on the path of sustainable and inclusive growth.

More information: https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/technical-support-instrument/technical-support-instrument-tsi_en

Trust Me Project

Provider: Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, **Duration:** 2016-2017, **Partners:** Budapest Business School - University of Applied Sciences, Budapest (Hungary); Lahti University of Applied Sciences (Finland); Babes-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca (Romania); Business Hungary - Confederation of Employers and Industrialists (Hungary); CDM Consulting Foundation Center of development Manageriala (Cluj-Napoca (Romania).

Topic: Skills and Techniques for Mentoring

Description: This project aimed to offer training for new mentors that would assist SME owners. It included the construction of a Competency Framework and skill card for mentors, the development of a training programme, pilot testing and the issuance of guidelines for the establishment of Entrepreneurship Centres.

Training Content: The training programme was addressed to graduate students with at least 2 years of relevant economic background and business experiences. The course aimed at developing both the hard and the soft skills of the future business mentors. The objective of hard skill training was to develop business-related competencies, while the

soft skill training focused on the improvement of those skills and competencies that are necessary to create and maintain a mentoring relationship.

In regard to soft skills, the course included the following categories:

- Self-awareness and behavioural awareness (understanding others).
- Business/professional savvy and sense of proportion.
- Communication and conceptual modelling.
- Commitment to self-learning and interest in helping others to learn.
- Relationship management and goal clarity.

For the development of hard skills, it included:

- Market conditions and demand (Economics).
- Production and Cost.
- Investment.
- R&D.
- Marketing.
- Logistics
- Finance and Budget.
- Value chain management and Strategy.
- HR and business ethics per learning elements.
- Mentoring process.

Educational methodologies: combination of face-to-face training sessions and e-learning methods which included: problem solving, experience-based learning, case studies, role plays, training exercises, frontal teaching, simulation game, group decision making e-learning material.

Educational material: Not available.

MENTEE Project

Provider: Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, **Duration:** 2015-2016, **Partners:** Knowl Social Enterprise for Education & Lifelong Learning, INnCREASE Sp z o.o. (Poland); Quality Programme (Italy); Mentortec Servicos De Apoio A Projectos Tecnologicos SA (Portugal); Inova Consultancy ltd (United Kingdom).

Topic: Mentoring, Networking and Training for European Entrepreneurs

Description: MENTEE aimed to support aspiring and new entrepreneurs across Europe,

providing them with practical entrepreneurial experiences and know-how, together with entrepreneurial models to follow, inspiration and informal competences that could be provided by the constant connection with mentors/experienced entrepreneurs. The project aimed at creating a network where new entrepreneurs could find, from similar experiences, reliable partners for their businesses to grow stronger, together with the up-to-date information and opportunities for start-ups around Europe and further learning experiences.

Training Content: The Consortium of the MENTEE project developed a “Competence Framework for key mentoring competences” based on qualitative and quantitative research in the partner countries.

Educational methodologies: The project implemented a series of Mentoring Circles, which were structured in three main sessions focused on self-reflection, self-evaluation and sharing of challenges and experiences between entrepreneurs.

Educational material: The “Competence Framework for key mentoring competences” available at https://www.mentee-project.eu/docs/MENTEE_IO2_Report_Public.pdf

There was also a learning platform available but is now inactive.

SmartUp Project

Provider: Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. **Duration:** 2020-2021, **Partners:** European E-Learning Institute (Denmark); National Enterprise Network (UK); Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands); TVW (Germany); NACEC (Ireland); Momentum (Ireland), ATA (Spain).

Topic: Screening for Business Health

Description: The project aimed to facilitate early-stage entrepreneurs and already established SME owner-managers with the knowledge and skills needed to spot and interpret early warning signals of business crisis, and to take timely, corrective actions, thereby facilitating growth, and/or survival in unpredictable or adverse situations. It produced the following tools:

- An early-stage intervention framework: A comprehensive digital document with up-to-date knowledge on financial and non-financial Early Warning Signals of business crisis, presenting detection and intervention opportunities.
- A smart up curriculum and Open Educational Resources (OERs): Including a curriculum, learning objectives, lesson plans, assessment guides, and access to a variety of original teaching content in digital format.
- A smart up online course: Based on the OERs; this training course was optimized for computers, tablets and smartphones.

The main participants were early-stage entrepreneurs and established SME owner-managers. They were provided with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and interpret early warning signals of business crisis, and to take timely, corrective actions to keep their business afloat.

Training Content:

Module 1: Introduction to Business Crisis.

Module 2: Detecting crises at an early stage.

Module 3: Predicting Financial Distress & Indicators of Crisis.

Module 4: Risk Management and Root Cause Analysis.

Module 5: Strategic Options in the Phases of Crisis.

Module 6: Critical Area of Leadership in Crisis.

Module 7: Learning from Crisis.

Module 8: Crisis Resilience.

Module 9: SmartUp Business Health Check.

Educational methodologies: Online course

Educational material: <https://www.smartupproject.eu/>

EEN Expert Group on Resilience (Action)

In June 2022, the European Commission and EISMEA published a call for expressions of interest addressed to Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) experts to participate in an Expert Group on Resilience whose task would be to come up with recommendations for a more systematic approach to resilience and supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Nineteen experts from various host organisations from eleven member states were selected and they formed three different discussion sub-groups.

At the beginning, a survey was carried out among Network co-ordinators to determine what are the SME related challenges at regional level and what are the ecosystems that were affected the most. Based on the opinions of EEN coordinators, the ecosystems hit hardest by the COVID-19 crisis were Tourism (88%), Cultural and Creative industries (51%), Mobility/Transport/Automotive (43%) and Retail (37%). The ecosystems hit hardest by the war on Ukraine were Energy-Intensive Industries (75%), Agrifood (71%) and Mobility/Transport/Automotive (45%).

The Expert Group suggested that in order to become more resilient, SMEs needed to start using methodologies, frameworks and tools to estimate future developments and make conscious decisions based on specific information and scenarios. After careful consideration, the experts suggested the use of the Business Future Proofing tool, which focuses on the current operational structure of a company or organisation and highlights the areas that need to be redesigned, using a pre-selected set of megatrends, drivers of change and critical uncertainties.

Furthermore, the expert group evaluated existing EEN Single Market services in view of the various crises. The Network services were found to be of significant value (e.g. the Supply Chain Resilience platform and The EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes Business Matchmaking Platform), but in order to deal with the continuously changing environment, it was suggested that the needs assessment should be developed into a modular assessment including a set of questions assessing the readiness of an SME to deal with long-term vulnerabilities and short-term disruptions.

More information: <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>

Resilience (Project)

The project was funded with support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU, and was implemented by a consortium of 8 partners from 6 European countries. The main objective of the project was to establish “resilience” as a horizontal theme in adult education. The partners considered the pursuit of resilience as a key competence enabling individuals to adapt to a changing society and labour market requirements, and to strengthen self-confidence and personal fulfilment. The partners investigated how this perspective can contribute to adult education and to the skills development of the European workforce. The consortium members considered teachers and trainers as the main target groups of the project, and they developed for them the following tools:

- **Guidelines for introducing resilience into adult education and counselling** that demonstrate how to insert aspects of resilience into existing teaching frameworks in relation to the specific needs of individuals, specific learning cultures and the requirements of vocational training providers.
- **Selection Box** that contains exercises, methods and/or didactic learning approaches where resilience can be included e.g. in language courses, personal development, integration of immigrants, and guidance measures focusing on personal competence development.
- **Interview Scheme** for teachers and trainers to assess resilience and ensure that the needs of their target groups are addressed effectively.

The following products are freely available on this website: <http://www.resilience-project.eu/>

Business Continuity (Project)

This EU project was implemented by a consortium of 5 partners from 5 different countries (GR, IT, ES, PT, TR). The aim of the project was to train managers on how to react to unexpected events. It was triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for companies to avoid the interruption of supply of goods and services, especially in times of crisis. The consortium created a **training program on Business Continuity**, horizontal to all sectors and independent from geographical and political context. The main objective of the project were the following:

- Promote cooperation between EU organizations and training providers within the Business Continuity environment.
- Develop Business Continuity management programmes focused on the acquisition of new professional skills and competences.
- Develop new and innovative approaches to improve the quality and relevance of training provision.
- Promote the provision of transversal skills (project management, European funding programmes) for those responsible for Business Continuity measures.

The programme is delivered through an **online platform** that provides materials on 5 learning themes, addressed mostly to business managers, but also unit managers (mid-management level). The topics covered by the learning platform are:

- Organizational Resilience.
- Business Continuity.
- Crisis Management.
- Supply Chain Resilience.
- Cyber Resilience.

More information: <https://business-continuity-project.eu/>

SECure (Project)

The project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union was implemented by a consortium of 6 partners from 5 different countries (Germany, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Spain). The project objectives were:

- to enable SME owners/managers to identify and analyse Early-Warning-Indicators for business crisis and to develop individual suitable measures to prevent / overcome the crisis.
- to professionalise VET and other support structures and increase the impact of their services.
- to increase the crisis resilience of start-ups by raising awareness about early-warning signals.
- to provide policy makers with in up-to-date in-depth knowledge of early crisis indicators suitable to be adapted to future policies.

The four outputs of the project were:

- **INTERNATIONAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FRAMEWORK** – comprising an international study on early warning signals and systems as well as countermeasures for business crisis of SMEs, and analysing their specific success factors.
- **I-EAS-IT CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES**: Including a curriculum, learning objectives, lesson plans, assessment guides, and access to a variety of original teaching content in digital format. These free resources provide business advisors with a complete toolkit for teaching early-stage intervention skills as part of business development programmes, in the classroom or in blended (digital) learning formats. The resources are also published as OERs for self-learning on the knowledge platform.
- **I-EAS-IT INTERACTIVE CRISIS ANALYSIS AND SOLUTION TOOLKIT**: Based on the

framework from Output 1, they have produced a tool for the in-depth analysis of specific corporate crises of SMEs. Based on this analysis, individual information/learning resources and solution approaches to overcome the corporate crisis are proposed.

- I-EAS-IT KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM and OERs adapting the three previous outputs and supplemented with additional learning materials and relevant information, they have developed a fully self-directed learning course for SME owners to access directly.

More information: <https://www.smecrisistoolkit.eu/>

Business resilience in the pandemic and beyond (Report by the EIB)

The report *Business resilience in the pandemic and beyond: Adaptation, innovation, financing and climate action from Eastern Europe to Central Asia* was published in June 2022 by the European Investment Bank. This report examined the COVID-19 pandemic's business impact, trade and innovation, green economy and the financial gaps in this region. The report's analysis was based on the EBRD-EIB-WBG Enterprise Survey 2019, covering over 28.000 registered firms, and the first round of the COVID-19 Follow-up Enterprise Surveys, with over 16.000 firms.

According to the report, to strengthen future resilience, firms will need to keep improving productivity and innovativeness, as well as adapting to longer-term changes, such as global warming and shifting global value chains (GVCs). Supportive government policies, regulations, investments in key sectors, such as green and digital infrastructure, and continued development of the financial sector could all play important complementary roles.

More information:

https://www.eib.org/attachments/publications/business_resilience_in_the_pandemic_and_beyond_en.pdf

EU Funding opportunities for small businesses (Webpage)

The European Commission's funding opportunities for SMEs can be found in the webpage:

https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/how-apply/eligibility-who-can-get-funding/funding-opportunities-small-businesses_en

EC - Annual Report on European SMEs

The European Commission is publishing the *Annual Report on European SMEs*. The report provides an overview of the SME performance and characteristics in terms of size, structure

and importance of SMEs to the European economy, and an overview of the past and forecasted performance of SMEs as from 2008.

More information:

https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-strategy-and-sme-friendly-business-conditions/sme-performance-review_en

MESS4GE - Increasing consultants' capabilities to report on SME's ESG

MESS4GE was an Erasmus+ funded project implemented by a consortium of 6 European partners from Cyprus, Greece Italy, Ireland and Spain. The central objective of the project was to increase the capacity of SMEs in Europe to effectively establish the process of analysis and reporting of sustainability performance according to ESG criteria.

Its main area of expertise concerns environment and fight against climate change as well as contributing to innovation in vocational education and training. The project aims to create a new framework for the reporting of ESG performance in European SMEs, by developing a capacity-building package for professionals such as consultants and auditors. This package contains a training methodology for the development of self-reporting competencies for SMEs' employees and an online web-tool designed to support SME employees to assess and report on their companies' ESG performances.

More information: <https://mess4ge-project.eu/>

ENTREMWB - Mental Wellbeing for Entrepreneurs

ENTREMWB was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of three universities, two SMEs, two associations and two social enterprises from 6 countries (United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Portugal) . The overall goal of the project was to contribute to the mental well-being of entrepreneurs by providing unique self-help and self-supportive training materials for start-ups and would-be entrepreneurs, business and enterprise undergraduates and alumni. The project team has developed a series of short courses or 'toolkits' on the following topics:

- a) Resilience.
- b) Reflection.
- c) Reading the Signs.
- d) Networking.
- e) Mental Health and Well-Being.
- f) Time Management.

More information: <https://www.nordicedtechforum.org/project/entre-mwb-erasmus/>

Flash Eurobarometer on skills shortages, recruitment and retention strategies in SMEs

In September 2023, the European Commission (EC) has published a new Flash Eurobarometer on Skills shortages, recruitment, and retention strategies in SMEs. The results of the Eurobarometer confirm that skilled workers are key to the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe. The main findings are the following:

- According to the survey, 95% of all SMEs say that it is very (82%) or moderately (13%) important for their business model to have workers with the right skills.
- Three quarters (74%) of SMEs in Europe say they concretely face skills shortages for at least one job role in their company at the moment.
- Nearly 4 in 5 companies say that it is generally difficult for them to find workers with the right skills, and more than half of them (53%) find it difficult to retain skill.
- This situation holds nearly two thirds (63%) of companies back in their general business activities. Nearly half of them (45%) also say it hinders their efforts to adopt or use digital technologies, and four in ten (39%) see difficulties to green their business activities.
- SMEs already apply a broad set of measures to find and retain workers. This includes efforts to make better use of talent within the company (e.g. staff mobility or job rotation), more investment in training, or increasing the attractiveness of jobs in terms of (non-) financial benefits.
- To make it easier to recruit staff with the required skills, SMEs say they need better collaboration with public employment services (58%), better tools for assessing the skills of applicants (49%), better tools for assessing the company's skills needs (46%), and easier procedures for recognition of foreign qualifications (38%).

More information:

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2961>

IT Business Continuity Plan for SMEs - ENISA

The European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) is an EU agency that aims to promote network and information security by giving advice and recommendations and acting as a switchboard of information for good practices between member states and EU agencies. In 2010, ENISA published a set of guidelines that aimed to facilitate knowledge transfer of IT Business Continuity issues to Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Their deliverables included a main report (127 pages) with various annexes, and an example Business Continuity Plan:

- Full report ENISA Business Continuity for SMEs
- Assessment Templates

- Example Business Continuity Plan Template
- Example Asset Identification Cards.

More information:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/381450533/ENISA-IT-Business-Continuity-Management>

SIMPLE – Social Impact Measurement Plan, Learning and Empowerment

SIMPLE was an Erasmus+ funded project, implemented by a consortium of 6 European partners from Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Greece and Slovenia. It was completed in May 2023. The central objective of the project was to identify sustainability paths, business models and impact measurement methodologies for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The project results included:

- An open access Training Programme for sustainability and social innovation.
- Open Educational Resources, in the form of interactive video pills.
- A SIM-Game (Social Impact Measurements Game).
- A social impact measurement plan.

More information: https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/topics-focus/measuring-social-impact-new-era-social-economy_en

CSS – Circular SME Scan

CSS was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of four European partners from Greece, Hungary, Netherlands and Spain. It was concluded in June 2023. The key objective of the project was to develop SME circular economy skills and competences. The project results included:

- A report on SMEs circularity - Desk and Field research results.
- A Self-scan tool.
- Learning material, including books, articles, best practices, videos etc.
- A network of connections.

More information: <https://circularsmescan.eu/en/sme-scan>

Small and Medium Enterprises Overview - EIB

In November 2022, the European Investment Bank (EIB) published the *Small and Medium Enterprises Overview*. According to the report, Europe's 23 million smaller firms represent 99.8% of non-financial businesses and provide around two-thirds of all jobs. As they are more flexible than bigger companies, they are also key drivers of innovation. According to the EIB Investment Survey, the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a new era of digitalisation, and European firms have been racing to catch up. At the same time, firms are concerned about the effects of climate change on their operations and on future opportunities. The facts, figures and highlights in this report overview illustrate the European Investment Bank's activities and key projects in the SME sector.

More information: <https://www.eib.org/en/publications/smes-overview-2022>

Cyber MSME - Cybersecurity for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises

Cyber MSME was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of 5 European partners from Italy, Spain, Poland, Belgium and Romania, and was concluded in October 2022.

Cybercrime is the fastest-growing form of criminal activity, with a cost to businesses estimated at \$5.2 trillion worldwide by 2025 (Accenture, 2019). Europol (2018) reports that "58% of victims are small businesses" and only 14% of Micro/Small & Medium Enterprises are prepared to tackle cyber threats (Keeper, 2018). The central objective of the project was to equip micro and small businesses with competences and tools to tackle cyber threats and become more resilient in case of cyber-attacks. The project results included:

- Training resources and materials for MSMEs to empower their staff with skills and competences on cybersecurity.
- A toolbox with operational tools to implement cybersecurity at enterprise level.
- Validated and relevant training resources for the professional profile of "Cybersecurity Expert for MSME".

More Information: <https://www.cybermsme.eu/>

BEGIN BLOCKCHAIN – Enabling New Growth for SMEs

BEGIN BLOCKCHAIN was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of five European partners from Estonia, Spain, Netherlands, Ireland, and Denmark. It was concluded in January 2023. The key objective of the project was to improve the capacity of entrepreneurship education providers to teach SMEs and entrepreneurs blockchain

technology. The project results included:

- Blockchain Competencies Guide & Success Stories - a publication that introduces the importance of blockchain training for SMEs with high growth potential.
- “BEGIN Problem-based Learning Resources” (PBL Resources) with detailed curriculum and trainer guide.
- “BEGIN Online Course”, a multilingual, interactive learning course in which SME managers and entrepreneurs can access training directly.

More information: <https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/scaleup/news/news-article/12756/how-can-blockchain-help-smes/>

4ArtPreneur – Innovative thinking competences for Creative Art entrepreneurship

4ArtPreneur was an Erasmus+ project executed by a consortium of five European partners from Cyprus, Germany, Portugal, and Spain, and it was concluded in the end of December 2023. The 4ArtPreneur Project created an innovative, open access online course on entrepreneurship, addressed to faculties in cultural and creative industries, aiming to strengthen their skills and promote collaboration between arts and culture, business and technology. Its results included:

- An innovative methodology supported by system dynamics, the study and analysis of dynamic feedback systems using computer simulation.
- A modular Entrepreneurship Curriculum in 4 languages. The curriculum’s teaching & learning materials were embedded into the system dynamics models that simulate the business cases/topics.
- A Methodological Guide in 4 languages with a practical overview of the course and recommendations for the assessment.
- An adapted EPORTFOLIO so that creative arts students can collect and show evidence of their entrepreneurial skills, based on the EntreComp Framework of the European Union.
- 3 scientific publications about the methodology and results of the project.

More information: <https://4artpreneur.eu/>

ECCP – European Cluster Collaboration Platform

The mission of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform is to be the European online hub

for cluster stakeholders (cluster organisations, policymakers and other related stakeholders from the cluster ecosystem), and the reference one-stop-shop for stakeholders in third countries aiming to set up partnerships with European counterparts. Since 2015, the ECCP has acted as a platform for industrial clusters to come together and to strengthen the European economy through collaboration. The platform seeks to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of Europe's economy and industry, particularly SMEs, improving their performance in terms of productivity, innovation, internationalisation and resource efficiency.

More information: <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/>

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform published in December 2021 the *European Cluster Panorama 2021: Leveraging clusters for resilient, green and digital regional economies* report. The focus of this Panorama report is the presence of clusters in Europe and the roles they play in fostering resilient, green and digital industrial ecosystems. It is based on comprehensive new data that can be navigated through the ECCP's [mapping tool](#). A key novelty is that it brings together, for the first time, statistical data on the regional clustering of economic activity in 88 standard sectors from Eurostat and 14 industrial ecosystems as indicated in the updating of EU industrial strategy with detailed data on the presence and key characteristics of cluster organisations. Key features of the European cluster panorama are the following:

- Clustering is a key feature of the European economy.
- Clusters with a significant share of EU employment are concentrated in fewer regions.
- Cluster organisations are widespread in the EU-27.
- European cluster organisations provide a wide range of services to their members.
- European regions tend not to be highly specialised in specific industrial ecosystems.
- European cluster organisations are most prevalent in the digital, agri-food, health and renewable energies industrial ecosystems.
- The green and digital transitions are transversal issues that cut across clusters in all sectors and industrial ecosystems.

More information: https://clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/2021-12/European_Cluster_Panorama_Report_0.pdf

P3.express - The minimalist project management system

P3.express was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of 6 European partners from Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, and Slovenia, and was completed in November 2022. The objectives of the project were threefold:

- To develop a simple and effective project management framework that SMEs can use to manage their projects.

- To educate professionals who are involved in leading project management in SMEs about this new framework.
- To facilitate and empower professionals to implement the project management framework.

The project results included:

- **The P3X elementary guide:** a reference manual and an educational source for the P3.express framework, a basic project management methodology for professionals involved in managing small to medium-sized projects in SMEs (available in 21 different languages).
- **Interactive work-based manual:** an online platform for on-the-job learning that facilitates the implementation of the framework in the learner's workplace. This tool contains a step-by-step interactive guide that can be used to implement the framework in real-life projects while learning the framework on the job (available in 6 languages).
- **The P3X MOOC:** a well-structured, easy-to-follow eLearning course that prepares anyone for using the framework in real-life settings and is easily accessible. It is designed as an interactive game that allows the learner to take on the role of a project manager and manage a fictional project. As the learner makes decisions in the project, the eLearning provides immediate and personalized feedback on their actions (available in 6 languages).

More information: <https://p3.express/>

Internationalisation Service Officer - new WBL profession in duty of SME internationalisation

Internationalisation Service Officer - new WBL profession in duty of SME internationalisation was an Erasmus+ project executed by a consortium of 6 European partners from Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain. It was concluded in March 2022. The objective of the project was to provide Chambers of Commerce, employees, VET providers and VET teachers with tools and materials which would prepare them to help SMEs in their first international steps. The project results included:

- **Internationalisation Service Officer profession manual:** The manual developed for chamber of commerce employees with practical knowledge about the internationalisation of SMEs and advice.
- **Videocasts for SMEs concerning internationalisation processes:** Videocasts were prepared for SMEs representatives by every partner of the consortium. In the preparation of videos participated chamber experts, business experts and entrepreneurs who was successful on at least one of the international markets.
- **ISO mobile application for startups:** The mobile application developed by the consortium was dedicated mostly to startups, who want to start their international expansion. The application ensured personalised training pathways by initially testing the knowledge and awareness of internationalisation processes among startups.

More information: <https://iso.erasmus.site/>

Satisf'Action – Small Companies Care about Employee Satisfaction

Satisf'Action was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of 6 European partners from Czechia, France, Greece, Malta, Poland and Spain. It was completed in September 2022. The objectives of the project were related to equipping small companies' owners and managers with an easy-to-use online tool for employee satisfaction research. The project results included:

- **Whitepaper** - describing the state of knowledge and practice on employee satisfaction management and tools used in 18 European countries. The whitepaper was created on the basis of desk research, questionnaire and interviews.
- **On-line tool** for analysing small and medium-sized enterprises in terms of employee satisfaction. The tool is simple and intuitive. It has the functionality and dimensions of a satisfaction survey based and developed on the basis of expert knowledge.
- **A set of didactic tools** facilitating the use of the on-line tool. These are **video guides and a series of podcasts** describing the various dimensions of the satisfaction survey and justifying the need for employee satisfaction surveys in small companies.

Both the online tool (research platform) and the teaching toolkit (video guide and podcast series) are available in the national languages of the project partners as well as in English.

More information: <https://www.smartumbrella.eu/en/satisfaction-smes-care-about-employee-satisfaction-en/>

Coping with the Crisis Report - International Energy Agency

The International Energy Agency published in October 2022 the report "*Coping with the Crisis: Increasing Resilience in Small Businesses in Europe through Energy Efficiency*". This report discusses the effects of the global energy crisis for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are some of the most exposed economic players in this crisis. SMEs lack the margins, economies of scale and support staff that allow larger companies to mitigate the impact of the crisis. At the same time, SMEs are the backbone of economies around the world, making their survival essential.

With an aim to help smaller businesses overcome these perilous challenges and to sustain European economies, the European Commission and the International Energy Agency teamed up to raise the awareness of governments, businesses and related stakeholders about the available options on the topic of energy cost for SMEs. These include EU support measures currently available to SMEs that can be tailored to meet their specific needs. They also include

steps that businesses can take themselves to use energy more efficiently and wisely, making them more resilient and secure – both in the short and in the long term.

More information: <https://www.iea.org/reports/coping-with-the-crisis-increasing-resilience-in-small-businesses-in-europe-through-energy-efficiency>

Supply Chain Resilience Platform - EEN

The Supply Chain Resilience (SCR) platform is organised by the Enterprise Europe Network, the European Cluster Collaboration Platform and the Lithuanian Innovation Centre. The general aims of the platform are related with enhancing the ability of European entrepreneurs, businesses and societies to bounce back and recover from crises and mitigate the vulnerabilities in international supply chains. In this context, the platform provides a quick and easy way to meet potential cooperation partners and providers of goods and services in face-2-face talks. The specific goals of the platform are the following:

- Publish offers for raw materials, parts, components and/or (semi-)finished goods or services.
- Promote requests from European companies to sustain their supply chains.
- Match international suppliers with buyers of goods and services.
- Establish cross-border contacts between businesses, industries, support organisations academia, important stakeholders and key decision-makers.

More information: <https://supply-chain-resilience-platform.b2match.io/>

THENOVA - Theatre-based training for supporting innovations in enterprises

THENOVA was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of 4 European partners from Austria, Germany, Greece and Poland. It was concluded in March 2023. According to the project description, many statistics revealed that EU SMEs are not investing enough in staff training. The main reasons for this include the lack of awareness about the benefits of training and a mismatch between traditional training formats and the real needs of SMEs staff.

A CEDEFOP survey (2015) on the needs of company trainers reported about the missing competences of SME trainers and claimed the lack of innovative professional development services for them. Based on the identified needs of both, SME trainers and SME staff and companies, THENOVA project aimed at modernising the company training. This was achieved through leveraging potentials of creative industry and their integration into professional development of companies' trainers as well as into the training services for SMEs staff.

The techniques and methods practiced by professional artists, such as (scripted) role playing,

improvisation, storytelling, movement and nonverbal performance, invisible theatre, ensemble exercises were considered as a powerful tool for creating thought-provoking and inspiring training for SMEs staff. The specific projects objectives were:

- To boost skills and competences of SMEs trainers towards designing and delivering theatre-based training;
- To raise awareness of SMEs employees and managerial staff for theatre-based training;
- To diversify access to training services for SMEs trainers and Europe's SMEs;
- To promote an innovative cooperation model between SMEs, training providers, and creative industries.

The project results included:

- **Theatre-based training program for SMEs trainers:** the training program entitled "*Feeling, experiencing, and acting: Theatre-based training program for trainers in small and medium-sized enterprises*" aimed at enabling SMEs trainers to use theatre-based techniques when designing and delivering their training sessions to companies' employees. The core of the program, available in EN, DE, EL and PL, was formed of the detailed descriptions of 25 theatre-based methods and exercises that were also tested by 11 pilot trainers.
- **Theatre-based training courses for SMEs staff:** 25 training sessions were designed by the THENOVA trained trainers by applying theatre-based methods, delivered to 220 SMEs' employees from THENOVA countries, evaluated and made available in the scope of the corresponding course descriptions (syllabi) in THENOVA national languages (German, Polish, Greek).
- **Sample of theatre-based OER:** 30 theatre-based self-contained training units were performed by trained trainers in front of camera, recorded, edited, and made freely accessible to wider audience via YouTube in terms of OERs.

More Information: <http://thenova.eu>

REGROW - Recruiting the Young Generation Workforce: Innovative HR Management

REGROW was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of 4 European partners from Denmark, Estonia, Germany and Poland. It was concluded in February 2023. The project pursued the overall goal of implementing modern human resource management in SMEs and making them more strategic and future-oriented with regard to the needs of Millennials and Generation Z. At the same time, SME promoters should be enabled to strongly support SMEs in meeting these challenges. In this regard, the following objectives were pursued:

- Provision of best practice examples for modern human resource management;
- Developing and providing customized digital models and a toolbox to identify and

match the individual needs of jobseekers with the conditions of companies;

- Improving the knowledge and relevant competences of HR managers and mentors in SMEs;
- To improve the skills and competences of teachers and counsellors of SME promoters as well as of VET institutions so that they can provide high quality support to SMEs.

The project results included:

- **Digitalisation concept to support human resource management:** Holistic personnel management concept, especially for SMEs with analyses, strategies, personnel management approaches, digital solutions and best practice examples.
- **Toolbox to identify personal competences and life expectations** and to compare them with corporate goals: Four-stage procedure for determining the applicant's competences and wishes (stage 1), the company's demand for competences and conditions (stage 2), analyses and matching (stage 3) and counselling interviews (stage 4).
- **Training programme competence identification:** Curriculum and teaching materials for the qualification of trainers and counsellors.
- **Training programme for SME managers:** Curriculum, teaching materials and examination regulations with international recognition of the qualification for the comprehensive further training of personnel managers of SMEs.
- **Training programme for mentors:** Curriculum and teaching materials for the qualification of (older) employees.
- **User manual:** Manual with all results including implementation and evaluation results, instructions for use as well as an SME finding system.

More information: <https://re-grow.eu/>

EPIC - Educational package for SMEs to increase their innovation capabilities and productivity

EPIC was an Erasmus+ project executed by a consortium of 7 European partners from Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom. It was concluded in September 2022. The project pursued the overall goal of improving the capacity of European SMEs to implement effective innovation initiatives. It started with research on the competences, skills and knowledge related with innovation management, and then developed a complex educational package for the use of middle-, top-, and innovation managers as well as employees. The project results included:

- Study of innovation management skills/competencies/knowledge.

- Online self-assessment tools in six languages (EN, PT, HU, GR, SK, RO).
- 5 online Facilitator Guides in six languages (EN, PT, HU, GR, SK, RO).
- Training material: 216 pages Guide with 14 best practices, 19 practical group exercises in six languages (EN, HU, GR, SK, PT, RO).
- Offline interactive training kit (Innovation Wizard card game) (EN, HU, GR, SK, PT, RO).

More information: <https://epic-project.net/en/trebag/>.

SMS Green Skills Hub - Supporting the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs through VET

Supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in small and medium sized enterprises through VET (SME Green Skills HUB) was an ERASMUS+ project that was executed by a consortium of 5 European partners from Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Türkiye and was concluded in August 2023. The goal was to create a multi-stakeholder partnership and a learning network between SMEs, sectorial clusters, regional governments, HEI, and VET providers, in order to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in SMEs through VET. The intellectual outputs of the project included:

- A European Framework of Competencies on implementing the SDGs in SMEs, based on EU standards and methods.
- A Virtual Campus, that included:
 - An instructional Guide on Digital Competencies for Virtual Learning.
 - Training Modules set of innovative training contents and practical activities.
 - 18 Vocational Open Online Courses (VOOC) on the project topic
 - Gamification Handbook to implement the SDGs in SMEs.
- Mobile Assessment App to evaluate competences on the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs through VET, providing training recommendations and a plan for improvement.
- Guidelines to promote transparency and recognition of skills to implement SDGs in SMEs.

Other results included:

- Innovative practices implementing SDGs in SMEs strategies in different sectors, carried out through pilot activities.
- VET teachers, trainers and mentors extending their competences as educators and improving their teaching methods and accessing tools and methods for professional development.

- Managers and staff from SMEs gained access to quality training opportunities tailor made to their needs.
- Stakeholders have established a network and a community of practice to promote the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs through VET.

More information: <https://smegreenskillshub.eu/>

FIT - Financial literacy and new business models to boost women entrepreneurship possibilities

Financial literacy and new business models to boost women entrepreneurship possibilities (FIT) was an Erasmus+ project executed by a consortium of 6 European partners from Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Spain. It was concluded in August 2022. The main goal was to develop and test an improvement learning programme specifically created to support women business owners while beginning or reorganizing their companies, using circular economy business models and sound financial structures. The project also aimed to change company ethics and balance profit and social responsibility, as women who are financially knowledgeable have the resources to increase their income and utilise it to support issues they care about. This involves being able to contribute financially to humanitarian causes as well as having a larger interest in political and social movements. The intellectual outputs of the project included:

- **The FIT program syllabus**, targeted at partners, practitioners, trainers, and future woman entrepreneurs.
- **The modular e-course**, targeted at future women entrepreneurs.
- **The FIT thematic sessions guidebook**, targeted at future women entrepreneurs.
- **The trainer's manual**, targeted at trainers, coaches, business consultants, but also VET providers and HEI institutions.

All the above were developed with the support of multi mentoring and professional coaching by experienced entrepreneurs, SME managers, trainers, and other professionals. Additionally, all outputs are available at the e-learning portal:

<https://academy.ied.eu/course/fit-modular-e-course>

Other results included:

- support women in starting or reshaping their business using circular economy business models with solid financial structure, and increased possibility on how to overcome the methodological shortcomings identified in the actual systems.
- increased key competences, finance literacy, knowledge on circular economy, new business models in 100 women participating in the 6 local testing of the FIT program.

- led more balanced and healthy lives for the female participants.
- improved knowledge and expertise for the partners and local experts thanks to sharing good practice from own work and having the opportunity to test ideas in collaboration, and in different environments.

More information: <https://the-fitproject.eu/>

CISMES - Digital methods, toolbox and trainings for increasing customer innovation in SMEs

Digital methods, toolbox and trainings for increasing customer innovation in SMEs (CISMES) was an Erasmus+ project executed by a consortium of 4 European partners from Denmark, Germany, Hungary and Poland. It was concluded in August 2023. The rationale for launching the project was that, on average, SMEs are less innovative than large companies, as they are constrained by limited internal resources. This is particularly difficult for SMEs in the field of customer innovation, as they do not have the time and resources to obtain feedback and ideas from their customers, process them and turn them into valuable solutions. Digitalisation however opens up far-reaching opportunities to comprehensively utilise customer-centred innovations in SMEs, and therefore distinctly promote innovative strength and competitiveness. The following outputs were achieved:

- Best practice customer-centric innovations & digitalisation: Tools for the realisation of customer innovations and digital technologies as well as trainings for the qualification of SMEs.
- Digital skills training programme: curriculum, teaching materials and examination regulations as well as concepts and reports for implementation and evaluation.
- Training programme on counselling & qualification in digitalisation: Curriculum & teaching materials for training SME counsellors/teachers in digital competences.
- Training programme Realisation of customer-centred innovations: Curriculum, teaching materials & examination regulations as well as concepts and reports for implementation & evaluation.
- Training programme Guidance & Qualification of Customer-Centred Innovations: Curriculum & teaching materials for a training of SME advisors/teachers to impart competences for the realisation of customer innovations.
- For all outputs, further results with teaching materials, further research etc. were developed. Further outputs also include a manual with all project results, 9 result videos as well as concepts and reports for quality assurance and dissemination activities.

More information:

<https://ci-smes.eu/>

<https://european-digital-innovation-hubs.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/inline->

[files/Digitalisation_Toolbox.pdf](#)

https://ci-smes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Other-Results-Work-Package-5-Teaching-Material-7_Modul-14-Digitalization.pdf

ESMERALD – Enhancing SMEs' Resilience After Lock Down

ESMERALD was an Erasmus+ project implemented by a consortium of 6 European partners from Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain. It was concluded in May 2023. The goal of the project was to provide support and guidance to MSMEs grappling with the significant changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The outputs of the project were the following:

- ESMERALD Open Educational Resources (OER) Platform. Available in six languages - English, Polish, Spanish, Italian, Croatian and Greek – at: <https://esmerald.eu/index.php>
- Comprehensive reports on the impact of COVID-19 on MSMEs: the consortium conducted in-depth analyses in: Poland, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Belgium and the European Union. These reports provide a detailed analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the financial and competitive stability of SMEs. All of the country-specific findings were consolidated into: a "Comparative Report on the Impact of COVID-19 on Micro and SMEs."
- COVID Micro and SME Response Toolkit: a comprehensive toolkit consisting of 24 training modules designed to equip SMEs with the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt in a business environment transformed by the pandemic.
- ESMERALD Manifesto and Guidelines: a document designed to influence decision-making for enhancing the resilience of SMEs in the face of external shocks. It is accompanied by a set of practical Guidelines to promote the application of the project findings.

More information: <https://www.esmerald.eu/>

Inclusive Business Launch Pad - An Accelerator Programme for Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs in Microbusinesses

Inclusive Business Launch Pad - An Accelerator Programme for Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs in Microbusinesses (SME Green Skills HUB) was an Erasmus+ project executed by a consortium of 4 European partners from Austria, Cyprus, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. It was completed in July 2023. The goal was to support disadvantaged entrepreneurs, such as migrants, lone parents, older people, disabled etc. through the provision of an Accelerator Programme which would help them innovate and expand their business. The results of the project included:

- **Policy Framework Report (IO1).**
- **Accelerator Business Launchpad Training**, including Facilitator and Learner Guides and multimedia resources (IO2). 5 modules were developed by partners and training materials developed into a final face-to-face training package with supporting resources available for trainers and learners.
- **Business Launchpad Circles**, including Facilitator and Learner Guides and multimedia resources (IO3).
- **Online Business Launchpad Platform (IO4).**

The project has developed an effective and innovative training programme for disadvantaged entrepreneurs who run microbusinesses across Europe and may face challenges in trying to grow their business due to their status.

More information: <http://iblaunchpad.eu/>

3.5. Other National Initiatives

The research also identified and analysed relevant initiatives from non-EU countries as well as multilateral / multinational organisations.

Business Mentor NY – United States

Business Mentor NY is the New York state's first large scale, web-based, hands-on mentoring programme geared to help entrepreneurs and established small businesses overcome challenges to grow their business. Business mentor volunteers act as pro-bono advisors and sounding boards for small business owners that are looking for guidance. Small business mentoring provides a potential solution to accessing needed information and expertise through a streamlined process, enabled by technology.

More information: <https://esd.ny.gov/business-mentor-ny-program>

SCORE The Startup Roadmap – United States

The national US mentoring organization SCORE offers a new step-by-step guide for the process of starting a business which is called *The Startup Roadmap*. It outlines each step in starting a business with information and resources on the most difficult tasks. It also contains tips for working with a mentor on each topic.

More information: <https://www.score.org/startup-roadmap>

Business Health Check Tool – United States

SCORE offers an online Business Health Check Tool that can help entrepreneurs identify the key business drivers for their businesses. The user can choose 10 key business improvement topics and the platform provides tips, tactics and templates to implement in his/her business.

More information: <https://www.score.org/resource/tool/business-health-check-tool>

Chamber of Commerce (Article) – United States

The US Chamber of Commerce in February 2023 has published the article *5 Steps to Developing a Successful Business Mentoring Program*, which is addressed to business owners that want to set up a mentorship program that works for their business and employees.

More information: <https://www.uschamber.com/co/run/human-resources/how-to-build-small-business-mentoring-programs>

Business Queensland – Australia

The government of the state of Queensland in Australia has a business mentoring scheme, offering four different types of mentoring programmes:

- **Mentoring for Growth (M4G):** The M4G programme gives eligible businesses free access to volunteer business experts, and includes: Mentoring for Growth sessions, Mentoring for Investment, Mentoring for Pitch, Mentoring for Export, Mentoring for Recovery.
- **Small Business Solutions - TAFE Queensland:** The Small Business Solutions programme provides training, advice and partnerships to help business owners develop and grow their business. Mentors provide one-on-one mentoring sessions and workshops.
- **Industry associations:** Becoming a member of an industry association may give business owners access to industry-specific mentors.
- **Women in business support programmes:** Various tailored mentoring programmes are available to women starting a business.

Their webpage also mentions the Benefits of mentoring, description of mentoring programmes and the procedure to become a business mentor.

More information: <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/growing-business/business-mentoring/mentoring>

Business Health Check Questionnaire – New Zealand

Business Mentors, the New Zealand independent organisation that provides business support services through 17 agencies across the country, has set up an online Business Health Check questionnaire that can help business owners identify the key areas in their business that need the most attention.

More information: <https://www.businessmentors.org.nz/>

Business Mentors also offers a list of case studies about NZ businesses that have benefited from connecting with a mentor.

More information: <https://blog.businessmentors.org.nz/tag/case-studies>

Baker and McKenzie (Law Firm) – Global Restructuring & Insolvency Guide

In October 2021, the private law firm Baker and McKenzie published the 8th edition of the *Global Restructuring & Insolvency Guide*. The 346-page guide was compiled by Baker McKenzie lawyers experienced in practical aspects of restructuring and insolvency. It provides business mentors with a helpful reference tool to understand the numerous insolvency and restructuring regimes that may affect SMEs. The guide is free for download in pdf format and it covers 39 countries.

More information: <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/insight/publications/guides/global-restructuring-and-insolvency-guide>

Business Mentors New Zealand (BMNZ) – Choose a Mentor – New Zealand

Business Mentors New Zealand (BMNZ), the New Zealand independent organisation that provides business support services through 17 agencies across the country, has set up a *Choose a Mentor* feature in its website. *Choose a Mentor* enables registered business owners to create a wish list of Mentors based on their experience and expertise. The platform has over 1,800 mentors around NZ, and many of them are available for virtual mentoring.

More information: <https://www.businessmentors.org.nz/>

House of Mentoring - KMP+ – Denmark

KMP+ is a private firm based in Virum, Denmark, and specialising in mentoring. Their services include the design of mentoring programmes, online mentoring, mentoring the mentors, mentoring tools and the Mentor+Game.

The Mentor+Game™ is an educational tool based on the theory of experiential learning, which facilitates sharing reflections and experiences, having constructive discussions, and achieving a deeper understanding and the learning opportunities related to mentoring. It is based on 10 situational mentor roles, also called Mentor's Many Roles, all of which aim to strengthen the mentor/mentee relationship and increase the outcome of their collaboration. In every conversation, the mentor must choose which role(s) to adopt, based on their mentee's current situation, readiness to learn, challenges and so on. Additionally, with the Mentor's Many Roles, the mentee can ask the mentor to use a specific role and provide the mentor with feedback on mentor's use of the roles.

KMP+ also offers the Mentor+Universe™, a state-of-the-art online mentoring platform and toolbox for mentors and mentees, as well as a physical Workbook which includes a compact extract from the online toolbox. It provides mentors and mentees with a structured approach to prepare for their meetings and document their learnings.

More information: <https://kmpplus.com/en/>

Furthermore, the KMP+ firm offers a specialized tool for the evaluation of a mentoring relationship. The Mentor+Survey™ tool evaluates the mentoring process, the results of the mentoring process, the programme design as well as stakeholder engagement, as perceived by the mentors and mentees. The survey also measures the satisfaction of mentors and mentees with specific aspects of the mentoring programme and their individual results. This tool can help the following aspects:

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the specific programme.
- Discuss how the specific mentoring programme can become more effective through adjusting and developing certain areas of the programmes.
- Explore where we need to achieve more knowledge and learning to increase the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of mentoring.
- Ensure that the results are documented and communicated to all relevant parties.

More information: <https://kmpplus.com/en/measuring-and-evaluating-your-mentoring-programme/>

SME digitalisation for resilience and sustainability – OECD

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) organised throughout 2021 a series of webinars on the topic *SME digitalisation for resilience and sustainability*. The topics of the trainings were the following:

- SME digitalisation and sustainability: the Twin Transition.
- Frontiers of digital learning: bridging the digital skills gap for SME&E.
- D4SME-CSMEE Policy Dialogue on SME Digitalisation.
- SME Digitalisation to Build Back Better.
- Digital upskilling, reskilling & finding talent: the role of HEI in SME ecosystems.
- SMEs & Hybrid retail: adapting to the new normal.
- SMEs in the data economy: from cloud computing to digital security.
- SME resilience and digital transformation.

The key highlights for each topic are described in the report at the link below.

More information: <https://web-archive.oecd.org/2023-03-21/580238-D4SME%20PoW%202023-24.pdf>

APA – Defining Resilience – United States

The American Psychological Association (APA) provides the following definition of resilience: *“Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. A number of factors contribute to how well people adapt to adversities, predominant among them:*

- *the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world,*
- *the availability and quality of social resources,*
- *specific coping strategies”.*

They also note that: *“Psychological research demonstrates that the resources and skills associated with more positive adaptation can be cultivated and practiced.”*

More information: <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>

Early warning mechanism – OECD Insolvency Indicator

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), systems that neither inhibit corporate restructuring of viable firms encountering temporary financial distress, nor excessively penalise business failure, can facilitate the reallocation of resources towards more productive uses and entrepreneurial risk-taking.

As insolvency frameworks vary widely across OECD and European Union countries, in 2016 the OECD introduced an Insolvency Indicator to summarise the most relevant features of

insolvency frameworks. The indicator was updated in 2022 and now includes 45 countries, including all OECD and EU member states.

One of the variables measured for the calculation of the indicator is the existence of an Early Warning Mechanism in each country. The data for 2022 and 2016 are available at the link below and in particular in the excel file “Data: 2022 and 2016”

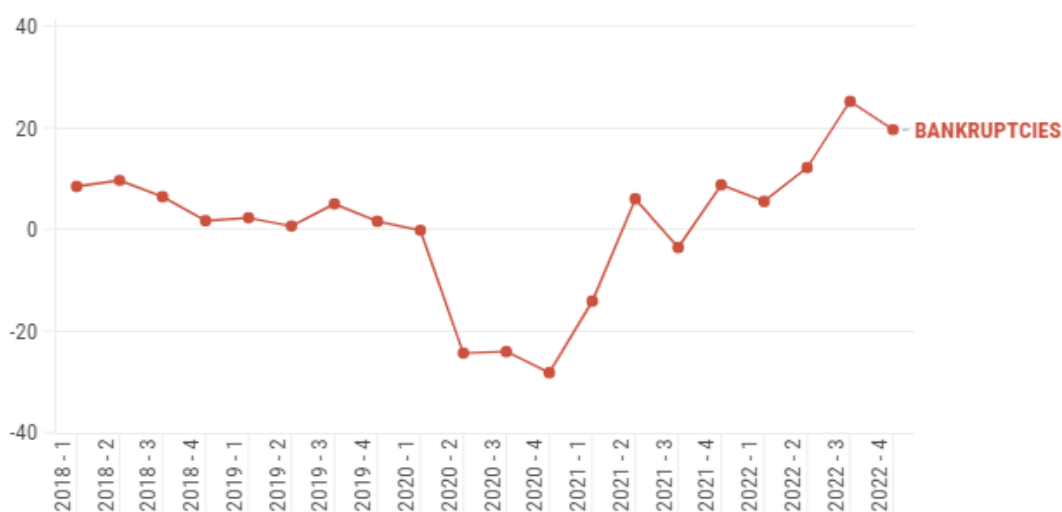
More information: <https://web-archive.oecd.org/2023-04-06/654630-oecd-insolvency-indicator.htm>

The OECD also provides data about the number of firm bankruptcies for 14 countries in the database *Timely Indicators of Entrepreneurship (ISIC4): Bankruptcies of enterprises*. As seen in the graph below, the number of bankruptcies had fallen substantially during the initial COVID period (2020) and kept rising after that, above 2018 levels.

More information: <https://prosperitydata360.worldbank.org/en/dataset/OECD+TIE>

Firm bankruptcies

Year-on-year growth rate, average across countries



Source: [OECD Timely Indicators of Entrepreneurship Database](#). • Note: average of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States.

PushFar - Mentoring software – United Kingdom

PushFar is a UK based company which offers a mentoring platform with the following services:

- **Mentor Matching:** the software proposes the right mentor for each individual, based on data, insights and machine learning.

- **Mentor Management:** the platform assists in staying on top of mentoring goals, meetings, objectives and feedback with intelligent reminders, tools and mobile apps.
- **Mentor Reporting:** mentoring reports track activity and engagement, whilst maintaining mentoring confidentiality.
- **Career Progression:** the platform also offers additional career progression tools, such as event recommendations and organisational conversation feeds.

The software has the following features:

- Fully-Responsive Web App iOS® and Android® Mobile Apps.
- Customisable Mentor Matching Options.
- Customisable Data Capture Fields.
- Goal Setting & Mentor Meeting Scheduling.
- Direct Private Messaging.
- Outlook® & Google® Calendar Integration.
- Built-in Video Calling.
- Customisable Email Trigger Notifications.
- Forums, Profile Pages & Community Building.
- 24-Part Mentor Training Video Series.
- In-Depth Program and Gradual Reporting.

More information: <https://www.pushfar.com/article/mentoring-software-the-ultimate-guide/>

Small Business Mentoring Service (SBMS) – Australia

SBMS is an incorporated not-for-profit Australian association that was established in 1986 with 14 members, and today has around 200 small business mentors across Australia. Interested business owners can select a mentor based on the following options/stages of an enterprise:

- Starting your business.
- Getting more customers.
- Growing your business.
- Running your business.
- Working with people.
- Finance and money.
- Exiting your business.

- Everything.

In each field, they offer a series of Masterclasses.

More information: <https://www.sbms.org.au/>

Resilient Industries in Japan – World Bank

In October 2020, the World Bank published the report *Resilient Industries in Japan: Lessons Learned in Japan on Enhancing Competitive Industries in the Face of Disasters Caused by Natural Hazards*. The objective of the report was to share lessons drawing upon Japan's experience of industrial development in the face of diverse disaster risks. Disasters, including earthquakes and extreme weather events, can disrupt industrial activities and, as a result, undermine sustainable economic development around the world. Their effects reveal the fundamentally interconnected nature of our global supply chain: even distant disasters can bring local industrial production to a halt. For example, the Great East Japan Earthquake affected more than 5,000 of the 30,000 parts used in the Detroit-based General Motors production of vehicles (Sheffi, 2018). The report focuses on the manufacturing sector, given its importance to Japan's economic development, and interconnection with extensive global value chains.

More information:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/757291604041567018/pdf/Resilient-Industries-in-Japan-Lessons-Learned-in-Japan-on-Enhancing-Competitive-Industries-in-the-Face-of-Disasters-Caused-by-Natural-Hazards.pdf>

Sustainable and resilient enterprises (SURE) Project – ILO ITC

The Sustainable and Resilient Enterprises (SURE) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was developed in 2022 for SMEs who seek to strengthen their resilience to face complex and compound natural, bio-environmental, techno-industrial and socio-political hazards. It combines elements of classical business continuity planning with business adaptation strategies. SURE training consists of six core modules teaching business leaders nine resilience practices that can be customized for their needs. Developed through a partnership by the ILO and GIZ, and with the support of a global advisory group, these modules are taught through a blended approach, using a combination of webinars, self-guided eLearning, and individual coaching. In the end of the training, the participants created an actual business resilience strategy.

More information: <https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/sustainable-and-resilient-enterprises-training-programme>

Certification Program for Business Resilience Trainers (Botswana) – ILO ITC

The International Training Centre (ITC) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is running a Certification Programme for Business Resilience Trainers in Botswana. This certification is organised in the context of the Sustainable and Resilient Enterprises (SURE) training programme, which seeks to strengthen the capacities of SMEs to prepare, respond, and adapt to the impact of hazards such as disasters, conflict, pandemics and others. With its focus on business resilience, the SURE methodology goes a step beyond classical business continuity planning and introduces aspects of business adaptation, digital transformation and staff development to help SMEs become agile, shore up vulnerabilities and build the necessary human elements that are key to business resilience.

More information: <https://www.ilo.org/courses/certification-programme-business-resilience-trainers>

A Conceptual Framework for Measuring Business Resilience – ILO

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) published in July 2023 the report *A conceptual framework for measuring business resilience*. In the era of unforeseeable shocks and disruptions, resilience is a crucial attribute for businesses of all sizes. It is in this context that the study serves as a tool to systematically measure business resilience. The COVID-19 outbreak, an extreme and widespread economic shock, underscored the urgency of comprehending the dynamics of business survival, particularly for start-ups and smaller firms that operate with limited resources. The **Business Resilience Index (BRI)** proposed in this report is an attempt to offer a comprehensive measure of resilience, which they believe is critical to informing policy decisions and interventions.

The report encompasses a detailed process of building the BRI, beginning from identifying the components of business resilience, outlining the challenges of data acquisition, to the application of various methods to synthesize a composite index. It is also acknowledged that this version of the BRI signifies the capacity for resilience rather than the outcome, making this study an essential building block for future research.

The findings elucidate how different methods can impact the relative positions of countries in the BRI, the importance of tailored policy measures, and the relevance of business environment alongside organisational and managerial capabilities in influencing business resilience. At last, the research aims to guide governments, workers' and employers' organisations in developing policies that can enhance the resilience capacity of businesses, particularly in the critical areas of finance and technology.

More information: <https://researchrepository.ilo.org/esploro/outputs/report/A-conceptual-framework-for-measuring-business/995321108802676>

Determinants of Productivity, Recovery, and Business Resilience – ILO

In June 2023, the ILO published the report *Determinants of Productivity Recovery and Business Resilience*. This study aimed to identify and analyse the main determinants of

enterprise resilience and productivity recovery. The report undertakes a literature review and data analysis to provide insights into how businesses can boost their productivity and resilience. Some of the main findings of the study are mentioned below:

- To achieve resilience, businesses need to adopt digital technologies and undertake profound strategic changes in business models.
- Firms' ability to do these is linked to firm-level characteristics, such as age and size, structure and managerial practices.
- Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are less prepared to manage shocks, as they have fewer resources at their disposal.
- Organisational structure also affects a firm's ability to survive a shock and the speed and extent of its recovery.
- Firms with decentralised (or less hierarchical) management structures showed more resilience to shocks than their centralized rivals.
- The financial health of a firm also matters. In addition, a firm's ability to access finance depended on its own financial position as well as the profiles of its creditors.

More information: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/determinants-productivity-recovery-and-business-resilience>

Resilient Industries – World Bank

In October 2020, the World Bank published the report *Resilient Industries: Competitiveness in the Face of Disasters*. According to the report “as climate changes, and disasters intensify, so too does the risk environment for industry activity. More recently, a viral pandemic has threatened industries and national economies, and the imperative to secure business continuity and competitiveness in the midst of growing instability has thrust resilience into the spotlight”. The report defines industry resilience as “the ability of firms, industrial parks, and manufacturing sectors to increase competitiveness by minimising losses and damages, and by achieving continuity and growth in the face of more frequent and intensifying disasters”.

- **Types of sectors** that are covered by the report include: manufacturing and other sectors critical to manufacturing sector competitiveness, including energy, water, transport, trade, industry, construction and finance.
- **Types of natural hazards:** Geological - earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis, Hydrometeorological - floods, including flash floods; tropical cyclones (also known as typhoons and hurricanes); droughts, heatwaves, and coastal storm surges.
- **Types of solutions:** *Policy measures* including national strategies, policies, regulations, and institutional arrangements that mainstream industry resilience in advance of disasters; *Infrastructure solutions* that minimize physical damage and disruption of services critical to industries; *Financial mechanisms* available before, during and after disasters to secure financial protection of firms and channel investment in resilient infrastructure; *Gender-aware approaches* addressing challenges women in manufacturing sectors face during and after disasters; and *Technology measures* that

harness digital technologies to improve data quality, offer predictive analytics, enhance monitoring and communication, and provide real-time information.

More information:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/682501604040773738/pdf/Resilient-Industries-Competitiveness-in-the-Face-of-Disasters.pdf>

Bouncing back: Two Japanese corporations' road to resilience – PWC

In 2013, PWC published the report *Bouncing back: Two Japanese corporations' road to resilience*. Japan has experienced severe catastrophes including earthquakes, typhoons and the Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown. These natural and man-made disasters have occurred in a country that is also grappling with a struggling economy and a shrinking workforce. The objective of the report was to examine how two Japanese companies – **Hitachi and Lawson**, a convenience store group – have developed the resilience needed to cope with both dramatic events and gradual, but inevitable, long-term changes that threaten their existence. Their experience shows that a resilient organisation embraces bold leadership, is open to fresh and diverse perspectives, monitors mega-trends and is flexible. They also underline the importance of helping people to believe change is needed, unleashing innovation, building agility, fostering the right alliances and creating the appropriate culture.

More information: https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/governance-risk-compliance-consulting-services/resilience/publications/pdfs/issue3/bouncing_back_two_japanese_corporations.pdf

Entrepreneurship as a Second Chance – UCEDC – United States

The Entrepreneurship as a Second Chance (ESC) is an initiative developed by UCEDC (non-profit organization in New Jersey - US) with funding from Impact 100 Garden State, that offers formerly incarcerated, or court-involved individuals the opportunity to explore re-entry into society through business ownership. In addition to intensive entrepreneurial training, two years of one-on-one mentoring, and business plan development, ESC provides participants with the necessary tools for success. The ESC program starts with a 7-week course, which includes classroom training and one-on-one counselling each week. Participants create a viable business plan and have two years of additional mentoring while they start their new businesses. ESC provides the tools each business needs to be successful, including computers, business software, and the potential for start-up financing. The topics covered in the training course include:

- Self-Assessment – Personal Readiness.
- Business Assessment – The Idea and Understanding Your Market.
- Developing the Business Plan.
- Organization Structure and Financing the Business.

- The Marketing Plan.
- Basic Financial Statements.
- Management and Operations Plan.
- Projecting Financial Results.

More information: <https://ucedc.com/entrepreneurship-as-a-second-chance/>

America's SBDC – Cybersecurity Program – United States

SBDCs are USA's nationwide network of Small Business Development Centres. They are hosted by universities, colleges, state economic development agencies and private sector organisations. One of their most recent actions is the cybersecurity program. Small businesses face an escalating threat from cyberattacks and data breaches, particularly in today's challenging environment. These attacks occur daily and can significantly impact SME finances and business operations. To equip small businesses with the essential knowledge and tools needed for protection, America's SBDC have built and offer the North Star cybersecurity program. North Star developed a comprehensive set of resources tailored to small businesses, simplifying the often-complex world of cyber and data protection. These resources cover a wide range of topics, ensuring that a small business can confidently navigate the cybersecurity landscape.

More information: <https://americassbdc.org/cybersecurity-old/resources/>

Building a resilient tomorrow: Concrete actions for global leaders – World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum along with McKinsey and Company published in January 2024 the report *Building a Resilient Tomorrow: Concrete Actions for Global Leaders*. The goal of the report was to showcase examples of organisations that have shown resilience, as they can serve as a source of inspiration for those looking to embark on or progress further along their path towards resilience. The report provides an in-depth analysis of nine case studies across three resilience themes:

- Climate, energy and food.
- Supply chain.
- Organizational readiness.

These case studies cover the public and private sectors, impacting four continents. The case studies represent a spectrum of initiatives that showcase the diverse approaches organisations are taking to enhance resilience and adapt to global challenges. The insights derived from them, along with the dialogues the consortium has engaged in over the last two years, have enabled the identification of seven priority actions across three pillars:

- building the 'resilience muscle' with new leadership and organisational capabilities.
- understanding, measuring and monitoring your organisation along its entire resilience journey.
- developing public-private partnerships to address challenges no one party can tackle alone.

These actions are intended to serve as guiding principles for senior leaders as they strive to strengthen their ability to thrive in a risk-prone world.

More information: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/building-a-resilient-tomorrow-concrete-actions-for-global-leaders/>

Data-Driven Resilience Report – Dan & Bradstreet

The data consulting firm Dan & Bradstreet published in October 2023 the report *Data-Driven Resilience Report: Powering Growth in Uncertain Times*. The authors researched how business leaders managed to survive and thrive during a global energy crisis, surging inflation, and post-pandemic economic turmoil. The report focuses on 'business resilience' – looking at the readiness and capacity of businesses to not just weather the current environment, but to identify and capitalise on growth opportunities to secure future success.

They surveyed over 3,200 global business leaders and unearthed a shift in concerns: escalating wider business costs have overtaken energy costs as the highest rated threat. What remains unchanged, however, is a reliance on data for remaining 'resilient'. Over three-quarters (77%) of those surveyed firmly believe that data play a crucial role in helping businesses navigate the turbulent times ahead.

More information: <https://www.dnb.co.uk/content/dam/english/business-trends/data-driven-resilience-report-dnb-2023.pdf>

One size doesn't fit all: Four postures toward resilience – Deloitte

In 2023, the consulting firm Deloitte published the report *One size doesn't fit all: Four postures toward resilience*. The authors conducted 20 interviews with global executives, in order to understand how leaders are activating resilience within their business. Each interviewee held a c-suite or executive VP position at a multi-billion-dollar company (minimum US\$4 billion in annual revenues), with representation from business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) offerings. Specifically, executives were in the following regions: North America (7), the United Kingdom/European Union (6), or Asia-Pacific (7), and spanned a broad range of industries (including consumer products, telecommunications, technology, automotive, retail, manufacturing, life sciences and health care, and financial services).

According to the report's findings, the goal of resilience is clear: Rapidly and successfully cycle through three phases - Respond, Recover, and Thrive - for any disruption. Yet, how to

accomplish that goal can vary considerably depending on the nature of the disruption and the context that each business operates. The four resilience postures are the following:

- **Operational Defence** focuses on more immediate and isolated disruptions. The goal is to help the at-risk portion of the business to quickly address the concern to “survive another day” (35% of executives described this as their business’ primary posture).
- **Organisational Defence** makes resilience an enterprise-wide, coordinated strategy to help ensure the business can quickly recover from a variety of disruptions (25% of executives described this as their business’ primary posture).
- **Operational Offense** takes a more proactive approach to resilience but limits the focus to a subset of the business - usually the area most at risk of disruption. These businesses go beyond simply trying to survive a disruption, but instead view the disruption as an opportunity for entering new markets, growing the business, and/or increasing performance (10% of executives described this as their business’ primary posture).
- **Organisational Offense** turns resilience into the enterprise-wide strategic priority that proactively transforms the business in anticipation of disruption. These businesses, over a longer-term horizon, turn disruptions into opportunity (30% of executives described this as their business’ primary posture).

More information: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/gx-Four-postures-toward-resilience_FINAL.pdf

FoundersHK – Hong Kong

The goal of 港創人 FoundersHK in Hong Kong is to bridge and connect founders and tech leaders in both Silicon Valley and Hong Kong with the mission to build Hong Kong as the next tech hub of the world. It provides a pool of world-class mentors who are dedicated to helping them grow their companies and providing long-term guidance on vision and strategy.

More Information: <https://www.foundershk.com/>

Alibaba Hong Kong Entrepreneurs Fund Mentoring Program – Hong Kong

Alibaba Hong Kong Entrepreneurs Fund (AEF) is a not-for-profit initiative launched by Alibaba Group in 2015. Its mission is to help Hong Kong-based entrepreneurs and young people realise their dreams and visions for their startup businesses and communities. They have a diversified pool of mentors that come across different sectors and have expertise to provide strategic guidance and networking opportunities.

More Information: <https://www.ent-fund.org/en/mentorship/hk>

Futurpreneur: Youth Startup Resources, Mentoring, and Financing – Canada

Futurpreneur is the national Canadian non-profit organization that has been fuelling the entrepreneurial passions of Canada's young enterprise for over two decades. It provides financing, mentoring and support tools to aspiring business owners aged 18-39. Their internationally recognised mentoring programme matches young entrepreneurs with business experts, from a network of more than 2,600 volunteer mentors. Their informational resources for mentors include:

- Overview.
- The value of having a mentor.
- Become a Mentor.
- Mentor resources.
- The best of mentoring.
- Mentor Learning & Professional Development.

More information: <https://futurpreneur.ca/en/resource/mentoring-guide-for-entrepreneurs/>

Finding a mentor: 7 qualities entrepreneurs should look for (Article) – BDC– Canada

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) supports small and medium-sized businesses in all industries and at every stage of growth with funding and advice. They have published an interesting article about mentoring, where it is stated: *“Finding the right mentor can mean the difference between success and failure in your business. A good mentor acts as a sounding board for your ideas and concerns, holds you accountable for your commitments and provides you with encouragement and wise advice when you need it.”*

More information: <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/business-strategy-planning/manage-business/how-find-business-mentor-tips-young-entrepreneurs>

3.6. Interviews with Experts on Expansive Learning

Interviews were carried out with the following experts on Expansive Learning, in order to discuss how innovative training methodologies can be used in building the training courses.

- a) **Prof. Daniele Morselli** from the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (Italy). Prof. Morselli is the author of the influential book *The Change Laboratory for Teacher Training in Entrepreneurship Education - A New Skills Agenda for Europe* (2019).

- b) **Valerie Isabel Elss** from the University of Bielefeld (Germany). Ms Elss is a lecturer in Social Psychology, Organizational Psychology, Scientific Work and Pedagogical Psychology, and she is working on projects related to participative learning and digital training of seniors.

The general structure of the interview was the following:

- Introduction.
- General description of the project.
- Description of the trainings and their goals.
- Gather information about Expansive Learning and Change Laboratories methodologies.
- Discuss how they can be used in building trainings.

The following key messages resulted from the interview with Prof. Daniele Morselli:

- Expansive learning should be primarily considered as a research methodology that can be used for the discovery of new knowledge through creative group discussions.
- This methodology is divided into the following phases: Start with evidencing the problem by using data and case studies; then focus on discussing the presented problems (dialectic discussion); then propose solutions and develop new ideas. After that proposed solutions should be applied and put into practice; and finally, a round of feedback should take place.
- The aim of this methodology is to create knowledge and to welcome change.
- Change laboratories are a most appropriate technique. This concept is explained in more details in the following article: *The change laboratory as a tool for transforming work* by Yrjö Engeström, Jaakko Virkkunen, Merja Helle, Juha Pihlaja and Ritva Poikela (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, University of Helsinki). The article describes Change laboratories as a method for developing work practices by practitioners.
- To successfully apply this methodology, a facilitator is needed.
- The method is time consuming and expensive.

The key points from the discussion with Valerie Isabel Elss were the following:

- It is useful to employ specific methods to activate the participants from the beginning of the training sessions (break the ice).
- Goal setting should take place in the beginning of the session.
- Case studies and presentation of best practices are good training methods.

The goal is to engage participants in discussions and problem solving.

- Participants could be asked to reflect about the competences that they think they are missing.
- The role of facilitators is crucial.
- The application of an Expansive learning technique involves the generation of knowledge by small teams, testing of the produced knowledge and evaluation by the team, along with an analysis of weaknesses and impediments. This requires multiple meetings.
- Senior mentors may need to be trained on the use of basic digital communication technologies (e.g. Zoom).
- Senior experienced mentors may be ashamed to admit their weaknesses in digital communications, so they need to feel that they are in a safe environment. Interactive tasks in the beginning are useful.
- The use of Miro (AI-powered collaboration platform) for the online training was suggested.

3.7. Interview with the European Training Foundation

An interview with representative of the European Training Foundation (ETF), **Mr Anthony Gribben**, took place with the aim to collect information about innovative training methodologies, and to get feedback on the selection of educational methodologies. Mr Gribben was pleased with the collection of multiple educational methodologies and highlighted the following points:

- It is very important for mentors to be trained on how to assess the impact of their mentoring.
- In the design of the trainings programme that is addressed to international group of mentors, the differences that exist between countries (in terms of culture, communication patterns, legislation etc) should be taken into account.
- It is useful to benefit from the existing expertise when developing a training programme, therefore results of the evaluation reports from other EU projects should be reviewed to identify which methodologies have proved most effective.
- Continuous learning of mentors is important, as well as creating an international community of mentors. The use of incentives for participating in the community should be a subject of reflection.
- The training tools that have been developed by the EC for economies in transition should be examined.
- Case studies, simulations, role plays, individual and group discussions are effective training methodologies.

4. Best Practices

4.1. Topics

Overall, the topics of different training programmes that have been identified, can be divided into four categories, even though in some cases there is an overlap from one category to the other. These categories are the following:

A. *Mentoring*

In the first category there are trainings related mostly to Mentoring, Mentoring skills, Coaching, Advising and Support, Small Business Advising, and to a few more specialized topics such as Diagnosis, Financial Advising, Start-up Mentoring, Franchising Mentoring and Innovation Mentoring.

B. *Business Aspects*

In the second category are included mentor training programmes that have a strong focus on developing business management skills such as Business Planning, Management, Marketing, Sales, Supply Chain, Finance, Cost Analysis, Funding etc.

C. *Resilience building*

In the third category there are training programmes related to Business Continuity, Management, Building Organisational Resiliency, Resilience Skills, Business Restructuring, Crisis Management and Risk Management.

D. *Insolvency and Exit Strategy*

The fourth category of the training programmes includes those that focus on Business Closure, Insolvency procedures, Failure Management and Second Chance schemes.

4.2. Content

The most interesting contents of training programmes are presented below, in line with the four categories:

A. *Mentoring*

Contents of the mentoring related trainings programmes included mentoring foundations, mentoring benefits, mentoring skills, mentoring stages, mentoring styles, mentoring responsibilities, boundaries and obstacles, relationship building, communication methods, partnership agreements, ethical issues, legal issues, mentoring rules, match making, contracting, expectation setting, observation, interview techniques, understanding personality, mentoring session structure, digital skills, active listening, G.R.O.W. model, goal setting, S.M.A.R.T. technique, option development, behavioural change models, action planning, providing feedback, time pressure, lack of engagement or personality clashes, empathic approach, drama triangle, working with internal convictions, evaluating

mentoring relationships, bringing mentoring relationships to an end, success evaluation. More specialised mentoring training contents include a) developing mentor's innovation skills and knowledge, and covers themes such as team building, dealing with failure, creativity tools, ethical rules, idea generation, barriers and culture building (United States), b) international coaching (France) and c) financial mentoring (New Zealand), d) digital tools to enhance the mentoring experience (Norway).

B. *Business Aspects*

Contents of the mentoring programmes with a business management focus include:

- Finding and attracting Customers, Employee Recruitment and Retention, How to Write a Business Plan, Marketing 101: A Guide to Winning Customers, Loans, How to Plan a business, How to Launch a business, How to Manage a business and How to Grow a business (**United States**).
- Profit and loss (or income) statement, Revenue and liquidity planning (monthly), Financing and collateral analysis, Management of receivables, Financial statement analysis and credit standing, Accounting and costing, Order backlog and delivery times, Capacity and investment planning, Personnel planning and development, Customer ranking list, Distribution of sales by business division, Core competencies and weaknesses, Marketability of the products, Competitive situation, Supplier situation, Infrastructure, Business planning and future forecast (**Germany**).
- Preventive diagnosis, Psychological support, Management platform, Cost analysis, Conflict resolution options, Second chance business plan (**PRE-SOLVE**).
- Storytelling related to family heritage, the family aspect in the value proposition, succession check list, family business valuation (**ResC-EWE**).
- How to face an entrepreneur in crisis? Assessing the Company's Situation and Profitability - Assessing the Business Plan in Relation to Projections, Assessing the Company's Situation and Profitability - Company Taxation, Tax Planning and Cash Flow Statement, Drafting a solution - Business Recovery and Development, Drafting a solution - corporate reorganization, bankruptcy and winding-up, Digital Communication (**Finland**).
- The shift of focus from one bottom line – profit – to three equally important bottom lines: people, planet and profit (**RESTART BSR**).

C. *Resilience building*

Contents of training programmes for mentors with an emphasis on resilience:

- Resilience Diagnostic assessment, building personal resilience (mental health, stress management, wellbeing, emotion, positivity, focus and flow), risk management, decision-making under uncertainty, building crisis response and recovery capabilities, team development and action plans (**New Zealand**).

- Business Continuity, Disaster Recovery, Crisis Management and Risk Management, risk identification, impact analysis, prioritization of critical business functions, scenario building, strategy formation and implementation, communication system, response plans and exercises (**Singapore**).
- Advancing resilient leadership, Developing strategic resilience, Building operational resilience, Reinforcing social resilience, Strengthening supply chain resilience and Maximising systems-wide resilience (**United Kingdom**).
- Risks, impact assessment, emergency management, risk management, leadership, succession, accountability, recovery management, communication, safety and security management (**United Kingdom**).
- Business Model Canvas, Resilience and skills development: Meaning of resilience, resilience of an entrepreneur, work-life balance, Customer understanding through the Business, Infrastructure, Financials: Cost structure and revenue streams, pricing structure, the revenue model, Management, Resilience in Action (**ResC-EWE**).
- Business Resilience, Protect people (Relationships, brand and communication), protect Data, protect operations, protect inventory, protect equipment, protect buildings, disaster response, Business continuity plan, annual vigilance (**United States**).
- How to face an entrepreneur in crisis; Assessing the company's situation and profitability and the Business Plan in Relation to projections; Assessing the Company's Situation and Profitability - Company Taxation, Tax Planning and Cash Flow Statement; Drafting a Solution - Business Recovery and Development; Drafting a solution - corporate reorganization, bankruptcy and winding-up (**Finland**).
- Early-Stage Crisis identification and Management (**SMARTUP**).

D. *Insolvency and exit strategy*

The training programmes for mentors that are related to business closure and second chance include the following:

- Regulatory framework for negotiated, out-of-court, solutions for businesses in crisis, Insolvency and second chance legislation (**Italy**).
- Analysis of Bankruptcy law, Reconstruction, Bankruptcy, Debt settlement, Legal/Regulatory exercises (**Denmark**).
- Roadmap for Insolvency (**Greece**).
- Insolvency and Psychology of Failure (**Poland**).
- Bankruptcy legal frameworks, Main features of bankruptcy proceedings - Alternative methods of termination (**Finland**).
- Failure concept, Emotional self-control in light of frustration, Reactive and proactive management, Enhance positive energies: coaching, positive

psychology, intelligent optimism, Falling to learn to walk: pedagogy of failure as learning, Management of options in threatening environments, Blocking emotions and limiting beliefs: insecurity, fear of ridicule, fear of rejection, etc. Resilience as self-protection in childhood and the duty of adults as tutors of resilience during early childhood education, Resources to improve creative visualisation, resilience, focusing, adherence breakdown, meditation, etc. (**REBORN**).

4.3. Educational Methodologies

The following methodologies/methodological approaches were used in the training programmes identified during the research:

1. Presentations
2. Lectures
3. Invited speakers
4. Guides
5. Books
6. Checklists and practice aides
7. Archived business articles
8. Videos
9. Case studies
10. Exercises
11. Action plans
12. Role plays
13. Simulations
14. Financial calculators
15. Group and individual discussions
16. Self-discovery activities
17. Intelligent adult games
18. AI Chatbot coach
19. Energisers and mini-quizzes
20. Tax form analysis
21. Special business reports
22. Real-time experiences
23. Activities

24. Workshops
25. Team problem solving challenges
26. Observation
27. Practical activities
28. Examples
29. Projects
30. Interviews
31. Online resources
32. Private study
33. Pre-recorded teachings
34. Journaling
35. Sharing of best practices
36. Study groups
37. Practice
38. Supervision
39. Record keeping
40. Demonstration
41. Open debates
42. Tailored support
43. Peer coaching
44. Assessments
45. Assignments
46. Self-evaluation
47. Networking
48. Forums
49. Newsletters
50. Applications
51. Speed dating.

Educational methodologies that can be applied more easily in an online environment include presentations, studies, individual and group discussions, videos, financial calculators, examples, problem solving exercises and newsletters.

5. Conclusions

This Best Practice Guide is a result of a continuous research performed between 2021 and 2024, in the framework of the European Commission's project *Improving the Availability and the Scope of Services for Companies in Financial Difficulties*, EASME/2021/OP/0001.

It established that the business mentoring is an efficient method, used in the EU Member States, in several third COSME countries and beyond, to help owners of small companies to identify and overcome their problems and putting them back on track towards survival and growth.

The research identified 78 training programmes linked to mentoring/advising. It showed that SMEs which are grappling with a range of challenges and crises that could threaten their long-term viability and financial stability, reach out to mentoring and business advising services. It highlighted a connection between business resilience and the personal traits of entrepreneurs.

Additionally, the Guide emphasizes the importance of proper training and support in fostering business resilience. Building relationships with a network of experienced mentors can also help SMEs navigate challenges, survive, and expand. Mentors gain from this process as well, by providing a valuable social service and enhancing their own networking opportunities.

Finally, the Guide also contains a good selection of the related educational material offered by various providers across the globe and presents the most important training content for business mentors and effective methodologies to deliver it.

