

# ENTREPRENEURIAL CONSULTING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH WITHIN RURAL AREAS - A CASE STUDY FOR DEVELOPING NORTH EAST, CENTRAL AND SOUTH EAST REGIONS

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## Abstract

*We propose to show the connection between consulting and entrepreneurial approach, emphasizing the normality of including assistance within the entrepreneurs' activity. The theoretical component deals with the elements that define the consulting activity in business and the specific approach to initiate and develop business by young rural entrepreneurs. The applicative component is represented by the presentation of the specific consulting needs for business initiating and development in the rural areas within developing regions of North East, Central and South East. The undertaken sociological research is representative for the study group and was held within the SOP HRD strategic project "Rural Manager".*

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, consulting

## Introduction

Entrepreneurial consulting and development represents an important resource for business success, especially for youth from rural areas. From the study made within the strategic project "Rural-manager" on a target group of 942 people composed of entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs from rural areas, especially young people, in developing regions of North East, Central and South East and we shall respond to a series of questions that can guide future efforts to better calibrate the offer of consulting services and entrepreneurial development. The study used a mix of methods (surveys, focus groups, brainstorming and depth interviews) to answer the following key questions:

- (1) Who needs consulting and in which areas?
- (2) What was the degree of satisfaction with these services?
- (3) Has the quality of consulting evolved in the last couple of years?
- (4) What are the needs of entrepreneurial training and consulting for the future?

## 1. Business consulting and entrepreneurial development

Business consulting consists of assisting organizations in improving performance by analyzing the existing problems, developing improvement plans and, in some cases, providing assistance in implementing those plans. Organizations turn to consultants to obtain more objective analysis and advice from outside, to have access to the specific expertise of a particular consultant,

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to obtain information on best field practices or to obtain a temporary support in situations when permanent employment of a person is not justified. Consultants may also provide assistance in leading and implementing organizational change, development of coaching skills, implementing new technologies, designing and implementing strategies or improving services or production operations. Consultants generally bring their own methods or thought frameworks that guide efforts to identify problems and provide a basis for formulating recommendations for achieving more effective and efficient the business processes.

Areas in which is given advice on business are: starting the business, finance and business financial management, business structuring and management, strategy, human resources, marketing, sales, information technology, law, accounting, export, quality, health and labour safety, technical and technological issues, personal development of entrepreneurs and managers, choices for sources of outsourcing or insourcing for various business activities.

Entrepreneurial development includes topics such as: drafting the business plan, forecast cash flow, marketing plan, business organization, human resources employment, internal financial administration, legal aspects.

Usually, entrepreneurs and managers turn to consultancy when they “feel overcome by the complexity of the situations they are faced, or at best, when they consider they can save time and effort in the process of achieving the results they want.”<sup>1</sup>

Business consulting for small and medium enterprises is an area that has developed in Romania since 1990 both with the help of some foreign assistance programs (such as *Professional Business Counsellor* Program funded by USAID - United States Agency for International Development and Washington State University), through local efforts to professionalize the job of counselling (for example, the foundation of AMCOR - Management Consultants Association in Romania) and the involvement of specialists from academic field to practice this profession. Independent consultants, consulting centres affiliated with universities, consultants affiliated to The Chambers of Commerce and Industry, business consulting companies gradually emerged. However, most of the business consulting turned to providing services to midsize and large companies that could bear the costs of consulting programs. Consultancy market (supply and demand) has grown especially in urban areas and mainly in Bucharest, Cluj and Timisoara. The consultancy offer on the Romanian market is currently relatively small (there is only one consulting company with turnover exceeding 3 million Euros, the remaining companies within this field achieving extremely modest turnovers - between 20,000 and 200,000 Euros).

During 2009-2013 for the entrepreneurial development in rural areas (especially supporting the initiatives promoted by young people and women, supporting the traditional crafts and other activities) it is possible to access funds worth 3.83 million Euros provided by the European Union and the Romanian Government. This support is available as grants, loans, guarantees, non-financial assistance in the form of programs and support services for enterprises (including business consulting and training programs). As a result, naturally, much of the consultancy supply and demand is concentrated within the area of assistance for accessing such funds. Consulting companies specialized on such services (assistance to access EU funds) that are successful actually offer a broader package of services that participate in the success of the projects (project management, financial management, business management, human resources management, marketing, training producer groups to access funds etc.).

There are many theoretical approaches that business consultancy is based on: scientific management theory<sup>2</sup>, game theory, theory of constraints<sup>3</sup>, lean production<sup>4</sup>, 6 sigma, complexity theory<sup>5</sup> etc.

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<sup>1</sup> David Philip, *Getting Started*, Kogan Page, London, 1998

<sup>2</sup> Viorel Cornescu, Paul Marinescu, Doru Curteanu, Sorin Toma, *Management – from theory to practice*, University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Mabin, Victoria J., Balderstone, Steven J., *The World of the Theory of Constraints: A Review of the International Literature*, St. Lucie Press, 1999

For our study conducted within the project “Rural Manager” we chose to focus not so much on identifying theoretical approaches that were used, but on identifying areas of intervention, but both in terms of their history (to which type of consulting services the participants in this research have turned to in the past) and future (which are the priority areas where there is a need for consulting). For the first part we chose to formulate open questions so that not to affect participants' responses and for the second aspect we made a list of areas in accordance to the priorities of the current period generated on one hand by the constraints of the economic crisis, and on the other hand by the opportunities given by the European financial consulting programs. This way, along with classical areas of business consulting such as strategic management, elaboration of business plans, general management, production management, human resources, accounting, legal, IT, communication, the following have emerged as distinct areas: certifications (required for participating in auctions), auctions, access to European funds, managing projects.

## 2. The methodology used within research

### 2.1. Background and research methods

The study was conducted within the strategic project “Rural-manager”. The project “Rural-Manager” has the financing contract SOPHRD/13/5.2/S/8 being selected within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development - SOPHRD, axis 5, DMI 5.2., which is co-financed by the European Social Fund. “Rural-manager” is implemented by the National Foundation of Young Managers FNTM ([www.fntm.ro](http://www.fntm.ro)), as leader of the consortium, in partnership with organizations Training and Development Center of Employers Associations of Bavaria - bfz GmbH ([www.bfz.de](http://www.bfz.de)), SC Siveco Romania SA ([www.siveco.ro](http://www.siveco.ro)) and the Euro <26 Association ([www.euro26.ro](http://www.euro26.ro)).

The target group of the project consists of entrepreneurs or prospective rural entrepreneurs, especially young people, who can generate local development and employment opportunities by expanding their business in developing regions of North East, Central and South East.

For the scientific measurement of the training and management consulting needs of the entrepreneurs and those wishing to start a business in rural areas a complex research has been made that is covering several aspects:

- Creating a representative poll for the target group and a comparative survey conducted among civil servants
- Conducting three focus groups (one for each region) about the motivations, expectations and entrepreneurial behaviour
- Making 3 brainstorming (one for each region) about the significance and daily meanings associated with concepts of management science
- Conducting 30 in-depth interviews (10 in each region) about entrepreneurial experiences.

The quantitative researches were combined with the qualitative researches in order to study the training needs. A questionnaire was built on entrepreneurial values, behaviour and motivations, on management knowledge and experience in consulting and the mutual perceptions of businessmen and people in government.

To elaborate the sample it was taken into account the share of the rural population of each county in all the three regions and it was agreed to ensure the greatest possible territorial

<sup>4</sup> Earl M. Murman, *Transitioning to a Lean Enterprise: A Guide for Leaders*, Volume I, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Rosenhead, John Mingers, *Rational Analysis for a Problematic World: Problem Structuring Methods for Complexity, Uncertainty and Conflict*, 2nd Edition, John Wiley and Sons, 2001

dispersion. For every rural village it was put together a list of entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs, based on information collected from the FNTM county coordinators. From that list almost 1100 individuals were selected by statistical step and they were invited to attend regional conferences of the strategic project "Rural-Manager". Among the conference participants, 942 individuals agreed to participate in sociological research. Those 942 individuals live in 493 cities - on average every two persons from a village. The sample is representative for the target group (entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs in rural areas in 18 counties in North East, Centre and South-East) with an error of + / -3.2%.

Of the 942 individuals, 23 participated in focus groups, 22 in brainstorming and 30 in-depth interviews. At the regional conferences in Alba Iulia, Iasi and Focsani one focus group, brainstorming and 10 in-depth interviews were conducted to accurately identify people's motivations, expectations and ideas about various managerial aspects. Qualitative researches were conducted in rooms specially equipped for this purpose and were moderated by experts in the field. The selection criteria for participants in focus groups and brainstorming were full - probability, random, with statistic step from the lists of participants to the meeting. Participation was voluntary. Participants were told that refusal to participate will not influence the chances of participation in the Project. Focus groups and brainstorming were held prior to the Conferences in order not alter the collected qualitative data by information provided in the Event.

In the search for similarities in a group as heterogeneous as the one that is studied, we grouped participants into three categories. In each category we specified the share of the total sample. Then we divided a category into several subcategories:

1. Non shareholder managers – 3%
2. Employers and self employed persons – 29,3%
3. Potential entrepreneurs (willing to start a business) - 67.7%, of which:
  - a. Employees in the public sector – 13,6%
  - b. Employees in the private sector – 17,8%
  - c. Self employed – 8,2%
  - d. Farmers with own farm – 10,4%
  - e. Other statute (students, unemployed) 17,7%

### *2.2. Characteristics of the analyzed sample*

Although few, we have analyzed separately the non shareholder managers because we noted that they had the highest level of economic training. They are executives at companies with large numbers of employees; they are averagely 38 years old, know foreign languages, frequently use the computer and Internet and have bank loans.

From employers, nearly half of them own production businesses (agricultural, livestock, woodworking, baking, construction, clothing), a quarter deals with services (agro-tourism, transport, notary, consulting), and the other quarter deals with trade. Most of the companies within the rural areas are micro-sized - 90% have fewer than 10 employees. They function but at a satisfactory level for three quarters of employers, which means that their satisfaction does not depends on the extent of conducted business.

Statistically 98-99% of the businesses taking place in the world, regardless of continent or country, are small-sized, having up to 10 employees. The average number of employees per enterprise is 2 for micro-enterprises, 20 for small enterprises and 103 for medium enterprises, while the average number of employees per total of SME's is 6.2, according to the National Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperatives - NASMEC (Catalin Alexe - Business Plan Professor / Department of Management, UPB).

If employers' and managers' world is dominated by men, the civil servants' world is more well-balanced divided on gender and we noticed more women from public administration willing to enter the business world. Like managers, the employees from the public sector have a higher education level (60% have graduated college), they are frequently using the computer and have a relatively good command of foreign languages. Three quarters of them are married and most of them have children.

Unlike civil servants, employees from the private sector are mostly unmarried, have an average level of education, and have lower incomes than their peers from the public sector. This should be correlated with their average age (25 years old) - less than the occupational categories listed above. Therefore, seeing businesses run by their employers, employees in the private sector immediately wish to follow their footsteps, opening their own business. They haven't begun a business from the same reasons as all the potential entrepreneurs: they did not have the capital and the equipment to start off (41%), they did not have a good idea for business (17%), they did not have the necessary connections (11%), they did not feel ready for something like this (10%).

Self employed individuals (traders, unregistered tax craftsmen) together with farmers have a slightly different social profile: they use the computer and Internet the least, they master foreign languages the least, they do not take many loans from the banks and they have a low international professional experience (only 15% of farmers say they have learned or worked abroad). Instead they have an important marketing activity: nearly half of the interviewed farmers have personally sold agricultural products or livestock at the market last year (men have sold two times more than women). In Transylvania counties selling your own products at the market is more intense than in the north-east of the country.

Almost all students and unemployed individuals that were interviewed are unmarried; they speak foreign languages and spend lot of time on the Internet. There have no loans from banks and they have the lowest income of all survey participants (about 200 Euros a month). In the potential entrepreneurs group, they have the lowest average age: 23 years.

Beyond these categories (employment, gender, age, education level, experience working with computers, working abroad, working with banks), we did not noticed other socio-demographic patterns responsible for people's desire to start a business in rural area. They were fat and thin, tall and short, silent and talkative; some of them were disabled, while others had obvious problems that required medical treatment, even during interviews. They fancied various parties from the political scene or despise them all equally. Fond of dainties or reluctant about cuisine, authoritarian or not, they all had the desire to succeed in the world of rural management. Trying to find out what urged them towards business, we asked them more questions about values and their way of thinking

### **3. Getting consultancy services when practicing an entrepreneurial and managerial activity**

Business consulting is a rare experience: only 12.4% of survey participants used consultancy services so far.

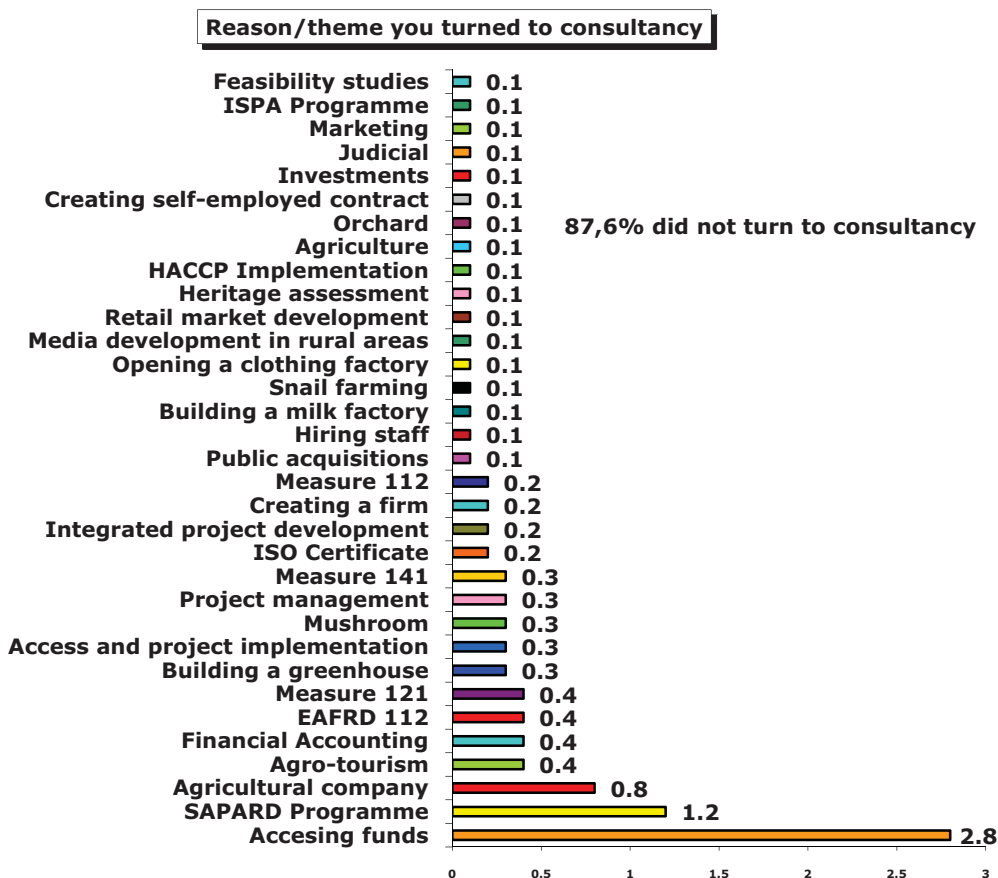
Looking at a detailed description on the target groups of the project we find significant differences between the three groups. Thus, entrepreneurs have consulting experience in a significant percentage of 28%, unlike the non shareholder managers - 18% and potential entrepreneurs with 5.5%. Although "potential entrepreneurs" is a heterogeneous group (includes employees from the public and private sector, farmers, and self-employed individuals) there are no statistically significant differences within the group. This strengthens the hypothesis of the reduced

level of entrepreneurial culture that people from this important segment have for the revitalizing of the rural: potential entrepreneurs.

**Table no. 1. Getting consulting services depending on the target groups of the project**

	Non shareholder managers	Entrepreneurs	Potential entrepreneurs	Total sample
Have turned to consulting	17.9	27.9	5.5	<b>12.4</b>
Have not turned to consulting	82.1	72.1	94.5	<b>87.6</b>
Total	100	100	100	<b>100</b>

A very important aspect of the problem of consultancy for rural areas is represented by the subject of the required assistance until the questionnaire-based sociological inquiry. The free responses without pre variants look like this:



**Access to funds**

Grouping these answers on topics show the following hierarchy:

1. access to European funds: 44.4%
2. Business Development: 24.8%
3. Other: 30,8%

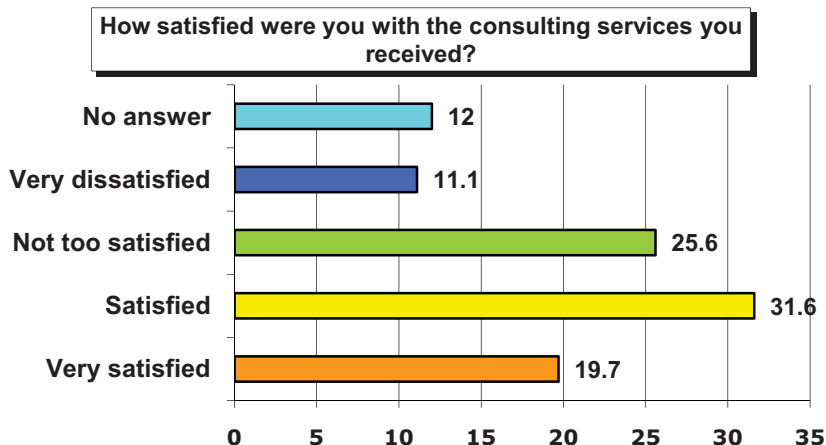
So we observe that for almost half of consultancy beneficiaries the main objective was access to grants, pre-adhesion funds and other European funds. The reason why a quarter of those who requested consulting services was the business development through technical advices. 30% of them requested consulting for certification, insurance, legal, financial, accounting aspects. The significance test shows that we have no statistically significant associations between the subject of consulting and the field in which it operates. The question regarding the years they have turned to consulting provides us with surprising answers:

**Table no. 2. Year distribution of those who turned to consulting**

Years	%
until 2004	19.7
2005	7.7
2006	11.9
2007	11.9
2008	23.9
2009	24.8
	100

One may notice that a fifth of those who went to counseling did this until 2004. In the first four months of this year they have requested consulting as throughout the whole year 2008 or 2006 and 2007 combined. Hence the boom in demand for consulting and the need for help to access EU funds.

Were they satisfied by the consulting services? It is a natural question for any evaluation approach. Most people who have turned to consulting: 51% were satisfied and very satisfied with advice received as opposed to 37% of them who were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied.



Regarding consulting topics, the highest percentage of those satisfied with the advice is recorded in the case of those who resorted to various practical problems of a company's activity: accounting, marketing, law and other. 15% of those who expected a practical advice were dissatisfied. Second place among satisfaction from consulting services are those that have asked

for help in accessing funds: 62% versus 31% that declared themselves as dissatisfied. Most dissatisfied were those who sought advice on business development: 69%, versus 31% that declared themselves as satisfied.

*Has the quality of consulting evolved in any way in the recent years?*

The only easy statistically significant association is negative and refers to those who sought advice in 2007. In the last two years an increase in satisfaction with consulting services has been observed. We believe that in the first quarter of 2009 we can speak rather of a high level of expectations from the consultancy work than actual achievements; most requested consulting is on structural funds.

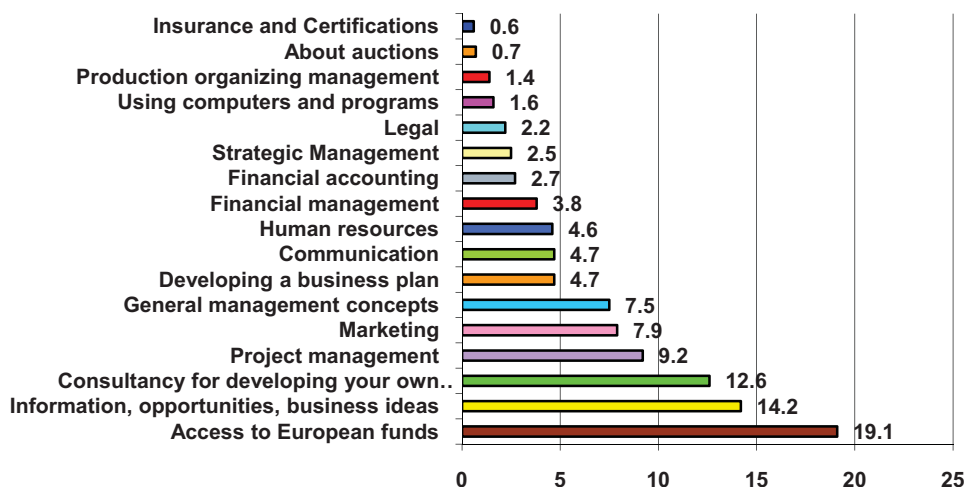
The individuals that participated in the research were asked about needs for consulting from their county. The question was open, each respondent expressing his opinion in his own words. The response rate to the questions was 48.6% of total participants, similar to the current shares from polls. Respondents indicated an average of 2.2 answers of three possible answers. Analyzed in terms of target groups of the project, 61% of managers, 58% of entrepreneurs and 44% of the potential entrepreneurs have expressed their opinion about the need for counselling. Significance tests show that entrepreneurs are more likely to express a need for advice.

From the perspective of participants' residency, those who have expressed a real need for consulting were those of the Central region: 54% of participants, then those from the North-West region: 50% and those from the South East region: 42%. Those with higher education particularly expressed their opinion to the question, followed by those who graduated high school; in another way put, the training level influences and makes aware of the support that consulting services can bring to business.

Those who have asked for consulting services have formulated with a ratio of over 68% a specific requirement to this activity. It is a significantly higher percentage than the percentage of those who have never used consulting services, but have made a requirement for consulting: 46%. Thus, we have an example of the importance of rising awareness on the importance of consulting and the possibilities offered in solving business problems.

It is interesting to emphasize the fact that the dissatisfaction with the advice received did not deter the influence on formulation of a support requirement for the business activities; those who have been dissatisfied have formulated precise needs for consultancy in an even higher percentage than those satisfied with the consulting services.

**What do you think are the main consulting needs on the level of the business environment in your county?**





It is noticed that obtaining reimbursable or not European funds is in the top of consulting needs, almost a fifth of all the requirements.

It is not by chance that the second requirement is related to providing information about business opportunities and ideas in the area. It is rather the fear that their business ideas cannot be supported by European funds and they prefer to fold business on areas supported by European money.

The analysis of target groups of the “Rural Manager” project shows significant differences when talking about the need for consulting. If the first two positions are common to all target groups, the other themes have different priority ranks. For managers to strengthen knowledge management, project management and getting business development advice represent a third priority, followed by consultancy on human resources issues and financial and accounting management.

For entrepreneurs the top of the need for consulting is made complete by business development, then the need for marketing knowledge, the way they can better fructify their products and services, the way they can better manage accounting, the financial management in general.

For the potential entrepreneurs, the support when starting and developing a business is almost as important as the information on business opportunities in the area. Thus the correlation between orientating towards a business supported by European funds and starting off the business becomes clear.

The need to learn to manage their projects, to seek retail market for the products or services of their business is organically correlating with the need to assimilate notions of management and notions of developing a business plan.

Has the type of experience regarding consulting influenced the demand/need in the future of this kind of support? Those who have experience of consultancy for obtaining financing or European funds have in a proportion of 1/3 a growing interest for this type of consulting, on the second place being business development consultancy and project management.

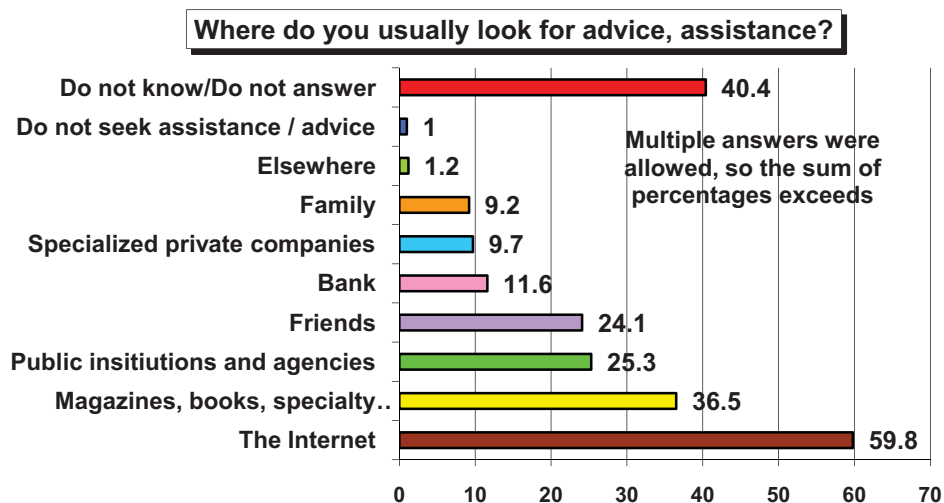
Those who are experienced in business development consulting are moving in the second plan, after the need for funds, towards the need for knowing how to manage projects and then to a lesser extent to the need for information / business development opportunities. Those that tried to resolve their specific problems within their business by turning to consulting also seek advice on accessing European funds and business opportunities. Thus they are those who developed their company on classic format and they are looking for ideas and funds for expansion.

Also analyzing the need for consulting from the perspective of subjective assessment of business operation it appears that managers and entrepreneurs, who state that their business is very profitable, rather need information and business ideas and subsequently consultancy for European funds. Those who say that their business is going well rather need advice for funds and then advice for information and ultimately advice to strengthen the business. Those who appreciate their business is going quite well would especially like consultancy to obtain funds, then information and finally advice for business development. For the entrepreneurs who believe that their business goes wrong, access to business information and European funds are equally important. Somehow the needs of this group of entrepreneurs are closer to the potential entrepreneurs’ needs. On the line it can be said the majority group of potential entrepreneurs is created around the subsistence entrepreneurship.

From the perspective of the field the business is carried on, there are no statistically significant associations found between the type of business and a specific consulting need, which reinforces the idea of homogeneity of the rural business environment. Those from services have more information about business opportunities than those in trade or production.

Asking people where they are usually seeking advice and assistance, we observed that most of them mentioned the Internet.

*Google has become our brother for advice. It provides an answer to everything you search for (male, 35 years old, employer, graduate, AB)*



The distribution of consulting sources within the main target groups of the project shows significant differences. Managers are among those seeking professionalized advice; 71% of the assistance they need is obtained from the Internet, publications and banks. Entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs are turning in almost 60% of the cases to professional sources. The informal environment is more important in terms of assistance, advice for potential entrepreneurs: 20%, compared to 16% for entrepreneurs or 9% for managers.

It is noted that together with the professionalization of business, the transition to entrepreneurship or management, the transition to other formal sources of advice or assistance also occurs.

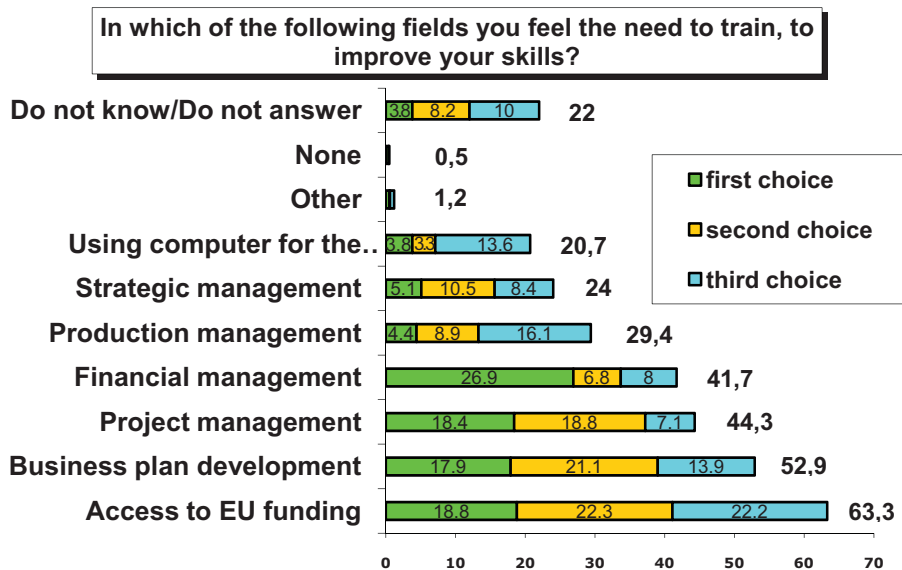
Does the source of assistance influence the business success? The data show a slight association between the source of assistance and the progress of the business, meaning that turning to professional sources of information and consulting increases the likelihood that business is more prosperous.

**Table no. 3 Correlation between source of information and progress of the business**

Category	good	so and so	bad
Internet	31.8	30.9	33
In magazines, books, specialty publications	24.6	20.6	24
Public institutions and agencies	14.9	16.5	10
Friends	10.7	13.6	17
Bank	8.0	7.0	4
Specialised private companies	6.9	6.6	5
Family	2.1	3.3	5
Elsewhere	1.0	0.0	1
Does not seek advice	0.0	1.5	1
N=330 responses			

### 4. The need for entrepreneurial training

Apart from the positive perceptions about themselves, employers and prospective employers from the rural areas felt the need for management improvements, a specialization in business management science. Asked about their training needs, their responses were:

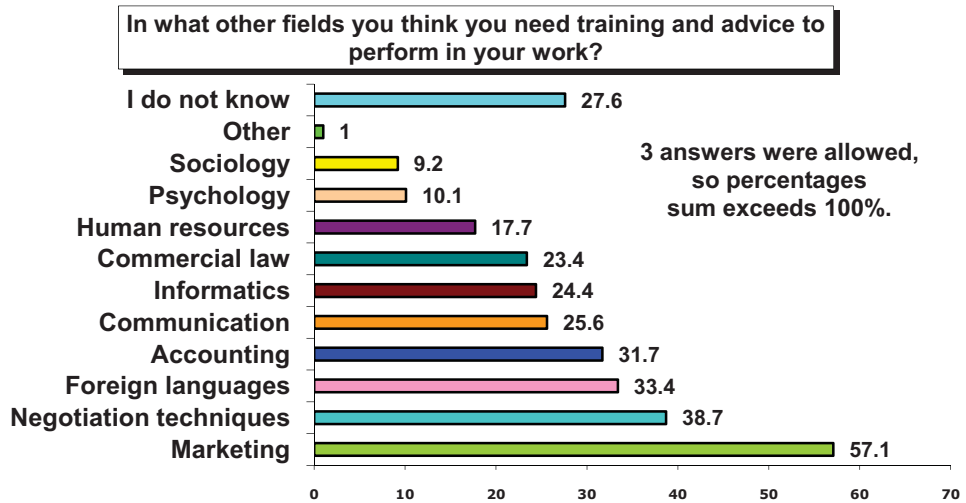


Observing the order of priorities, on the first place are seen knowledge related to financial management, followed by accessing European funds, project management and business plan development. It is interesting that the second option focuses on accessing European funding and developing business plans. For the third, production management appears in addition to accessing funds.

If we would cumulate the responses, ignoring the order of precedence, the hierarchy would be as follows: accessing European funds (63.3%), developing a business plan (52.9%), project management (44.3%), financial management (41.7%). Thus, we have an obvious clustering around the moment: access to finance and everything that would implement a structural design. In the second place are production management (29.4%), strategic management (24%) and using the computer (20.7%).

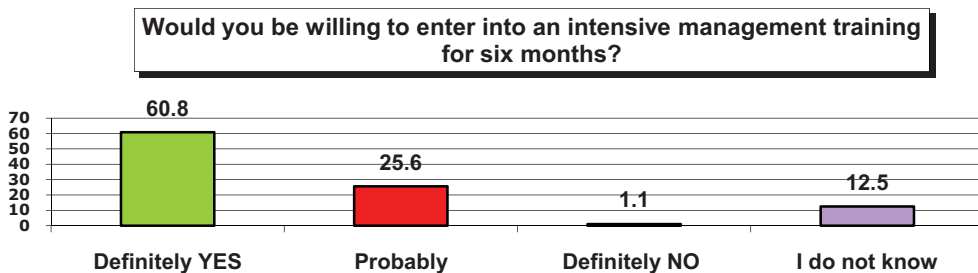
Significance tests show that managers tend to be more concerned with training for developing business plans, while potential entrepreneurs are concerned with training on project management. From the gender perspective, women tend to be rather preoccupied with business plan development and men with improving in production management.

From the perspective of studies one can notice that those that have an average education are more attracted by financial and production management classes. Those with superior studies are more likely to improve in areas such as project management, financial and strategic management. Additional specialties of the management are also desired by those that are interested to conduct business. The greatest needs are related to marketing.

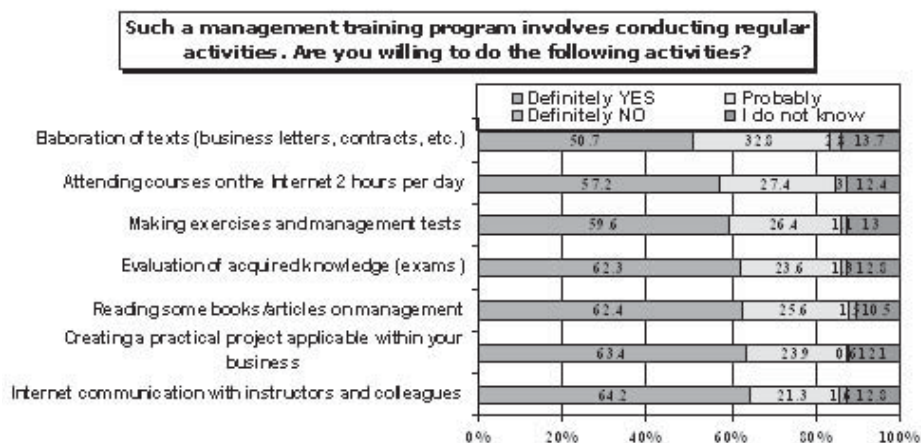


The need to improve in sales is tremendous in all the analyzed groups. For the unemployed and workers from the private sector this need is overcome by the desire to improve their knowledge of foreign languages. For the self-employed knowledge about informatics comes first. This preponderance of marketing in training needs is explained by the desire of people from the rural to understand how to find new markets and new customers for their products. As we noted earlier, they considered themselves great technically skilled in fields in which will carry on business, but they feel unsecure when it comes to selling their products. Young people focus on mastering foreign language because they wish to seek customers in other countries. The elderly rather want training in negotiation techniques, in a bid to get more profit from existing customers.

It is important that 60% of subjects would definitely be willing to undergo an entrepreneurship training program. Nin stakeholder managers would be the first to be excited by such a program, as well as women and those with higher technical education. Vocational school graduates, farmers and self-employed had the greatest hesitations and doubts about such a training program, but even in their cases we notice a high enthusiasm (50%).

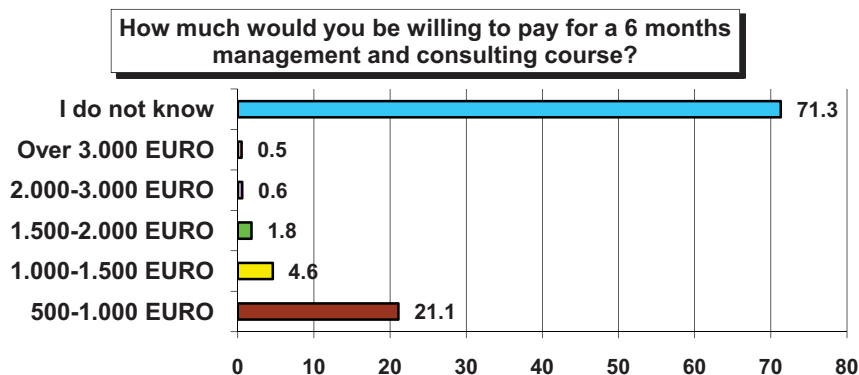


Even when they knew the effort they must submit for completion of such a management training program, people have not lost interest in it. This shows a great willingness to learn.



A surprise of this research was that people want to participate in a modern training, e-learning, where they can communicate through the Internet with teachers and colleagues. To the same extent they want their business ideas to be discussed in classes, to be transformed into practical projects. Contrary to expectations, they are not running away from exams and evaluations, but they accept them as beneficial happenings to their management career. Young people have a greater availability of taking such courses, regardless of their existing education level.

Availability is reduced when it comes to paying the training courses.



*I would like to attend business performance courses. I would not pay for them. (Man, VN, 18-35 years old, entrepreneur, high school educated)*

*In my opinion, if you want a good thing you have to pay. (Man, IS, 18-35 years old, entrepreneur, high school educated)*

*Sure, I would pay. (Man, VN, 18-35 years old, entrepreneur, high school educated)*

*Yes, maybe a small fee (male, VN, 18-35 years old, entrepreneur, high school educated)*

*Of course, nobody is teaching for free. But if only it is useful. (Man, VN, 18-35 years old, entrepreneur, high school educated)*

*For a good idea why not? It's too early to tell. (Man, VN, 36-57 years old, entrepreneur, high school educated)*

*I do not know if I could afford it. (Female, AB 0.18-35 years entrepreneur, high school educated)*

Willingness to pay for training courses is higher for non shareholder managers, public officials and employers and is lower for farmers, unemployed and self-employed. College graduates are more willing to pay than those who have graduated vocational schools, and women are more likely to pay the costs of specialization in business than men. As they age, people are more inclined to pay the costs of a management training course.

At the same time, the large amounts are factors of educational disengagement. People know they have to pay for management training courses, but prefer to pay small amounts. And often they say that they want these courses to be paid by someone else, not by themselves.

## Conclusions

Business consulting is a rare experience: only 12.4% of survey participants used consulting services so far. For almost half of the consulting beneficiaries the objective was accessing European funds. For one quarter of these individuals business development through technical advice was the reason for contacting a consultant. Another 30% of those that used consulting services have opted for certification, insurance, legal, financial and accounting aspects. A few over half (51%) of those who went to counseling were satisfied and very satisfied with the advice received, as opposed to 37% of them who said they were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied.

In the top of consulting needs, with almost a fifth of all the formulated requirements is the need for assistance to obtain European funds. The second requirement relates to providing information about business opportunities in the area and about business ideas. On the third position among the needs for consulting the following are priorities: for managers consolidating management knowledge, project management and business development, for entrepreneurs - business development, marketing and financial management skills are in third position.

Regarding the need for training the hierarchy is as follows: accessing European funds (63.3%), developing a business plan (52.9%), project management (44.3%), financial management (41.7%) production management (29.4%), strategic management (24%) and computer usage (20.7%). Over 60% of respondents would definitely be willing to undergo entrepreneurship training program, e-learning type, even for a period of six months but would prefer to pay small amounts for these training courses or to be paid by someone else, and not by themselves.

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