

Social-Emotional Competences

Training Needs of Career Practitioners

Johannes Katsarov

Social-Emotional Competences: Training Needs of Career Practitioners

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NICE Foundation

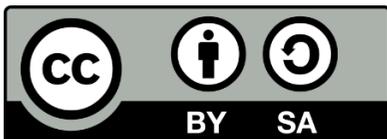
Aerdenhout, The Netherlands



Katsarov, Johannes (2020). Social-Emotional Competences: Training Needs of Career Practitioners. Aerdenhout: NICE Foundation.

This publication of the STRENGTH Project (2019-1-RO01-KA202-063198) has been funded with support from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Published by
NICE Foundation
Burg Bas Backerhof 20
2111TD Aerdenhout
The Netherlands

Layout: Johannes Katsarov
Front Picture: Sven Lachmann (Seaq68), Pixabay, CC0

Ethical Review: Approved by the Ethics Committee of the NICE Foundation

ISBN: 9789083174105

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Acknowledgements

Following STRENGTH project colleagues supported the research design, conducted focus-group interviews in their countries to identify critical incidents, translated the survey into their languages, and supported the data collection: Lea Ferrari (NICE Foundation), Marcela Claudia Călineci, Ana Maria Oancea, & Luminita Mitrofan (CMBRAE), Speranța Țibu, Angela Andrei, & Alina Crăciunescu (Centrul National de Politici si Evaluare in Educatie), Soili Rinne, & Antti Viiman (Häme University of Applied Sciences), Mary Tountopoulou, Varvara Pantidou, Dimitrios Adam, & Fotini Vlachaki (ISON Psychometrica), Teresa Maltese, Monica Miglionico, & Maria Santarcangelo (Studio Risorse), João Constâncio, Catarina Madureira, & Sofia Rego (União das Freguesias de Gondomar Valbom e Jovim), Peter C. Weber, Rebeca Garcia Murias, & Gundula-Gwenn Hiller (University of Applied Labor Studies, Mannheim). The STRENGTH Survey would not have been possible without this excellent partnership. Although the Covid-19 pandemic only allowed us to have one physical meeting before this research was conducted, and we had to change our plans for live interviews to online interviews on short notice, the cooperation always ran smoothly and professionally. As the principal investigator of the STRENGTH survey, I would like to thank all of my colleagues very much—I hope that we will be able to meet again non-virtually soon and that our cooperation will continue to thrive.

On behalf of the consortium, I would also like to thank the 68 career professionals for their participation in our focus-group interviews: Riitta Ahokas, Magda Anghel, Diana Aprodu, Anastasios Asvestas, Nicola Barbaro, Paraskevi Basioti, Petra Bedda, Diamanta Bulai, Elena Buneru, Andreea Ioana Ciocâlțeu, Catarina Cunha, Rino Finamore, Arnaldo Fernandes, Valentina Gafița, Marirosa Gioia, Raffaele Gioioso, Cristina Iuliana Harap, Camelia Ion, Celina Ivan, Claudia Ana Jarnea, Marjo Juutinen, Angeliki Kakaroglou, Marko Kallionpää, Olga Kapernarakou, Athanasia Karagiannaki, Anna-Maria Kieferle, Heiner Kottmann, Stella Koutri, Seija Leppänen, Eugenia Maria, Luminița Doina Mitrofan, Angela Molinari, Violeta-Luminita Musunoiu-Hoton, Marika Nieminen, Florina Opincariu, Geanina Oprea-Postolache, Maria Pavelescu, Fani Passia, Andre Pinto, Elena Pop, Marlene Ribeiro, Ana Patricia Rocha, María Roústa, Maria Rossi, Ioana Sandru, Vasiliki Sarantopoulou, Sarah Schneiderlein, Zelia Silva, Jolanda Silvestro, Sabine Simon, Maria Annunziata Simonetti, Ionela Stan, Irina Subredu, Alina Mihaela Suci, Susanna Syld, Sofia Tampouri, Vania Teixeira, Goreti Teixeira, Ana Torres, Alina Minodora Toth, Ismo Turve, Lauri Värri, Ruxandra Vasilescu, Cristina Vasiloiu, Maria Rosaria Viggiano, Eleni Vlachogianni, Minna Yliniemi, and Valeria Zampagni.

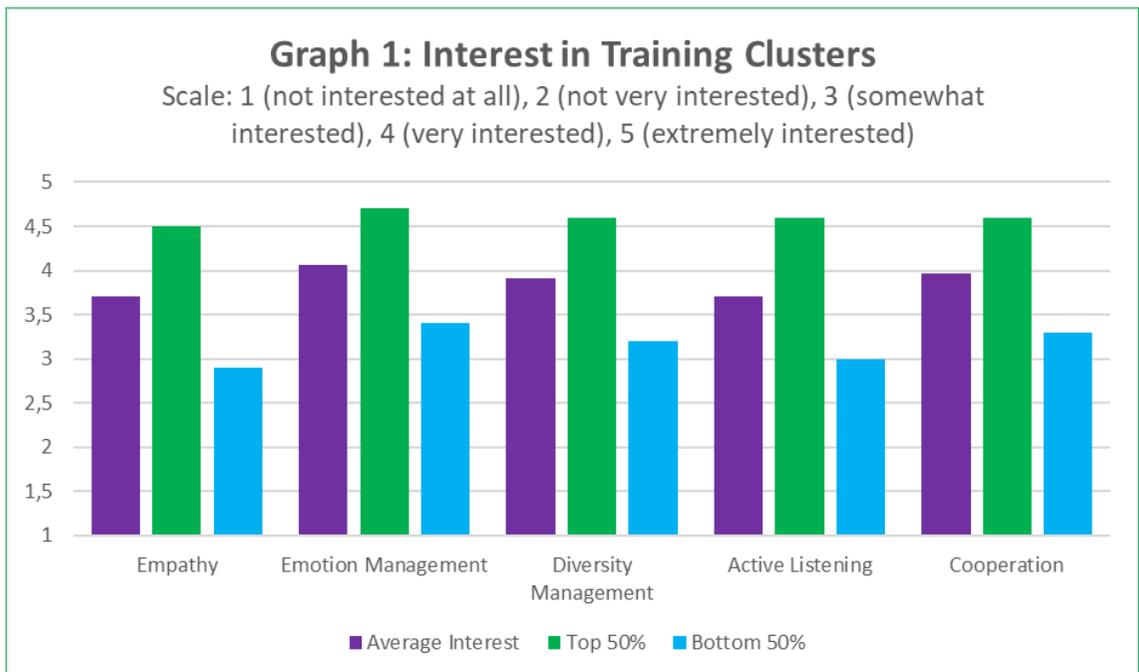
Moreover, we would like to thank several organizations and individuals that promoted our survey beyond the membership of our project: The Euroguidance network, Cynthia Harrison Villalba from the CEDEFOP CareersNet, Barbara Knickrehm and Rainer Thiel from the German guidance counsellor association dvb, the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC), Paolo Cardoso, Jonas Masdonati and Guðbjörg Vilhjálmsdóttir from the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC), the GIZ Career Guidance Community of Practice, the IAAP Counseling Division, Paul King from the Irish National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), Barbara Lampe and Karen Schober from the German national guidance forum nfb, Isabelle Zuppiger, Monika Wenk, and Sandra Thüring from profunda suisse, Scott Solberg, Lea Ferrari, and Chong Park from the international Social Emotional Learning & Career Development Project, Åsa Sundelin (Stockholm University), Emma Bolger (University of West Scotland), and Georgia Kelly-Bakker (Career Development Association of Australia).

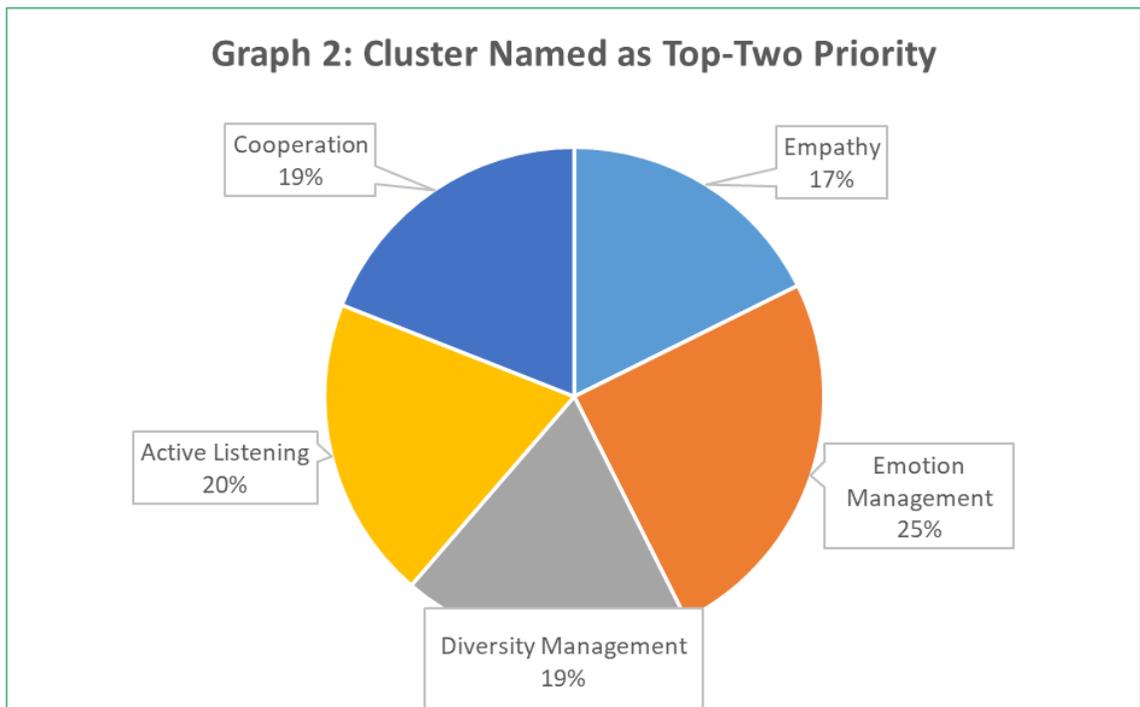
Finally, we thank the National Agency of Romania, which funded the STRENGTH Project through the Erasmus+ framework, for its continued support in finalizing this project in times of Covid-19. Thus far, most of the originally planned meetings needed to be cancelled and we have performed most of work through fruitful online collaboration. The Agency was always proactive in supporting us in dealing with the pandemic and recently also allowed us to extend the project's duration by one year so that we will be able to make the best of the results and provide live trainings to practitioners.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of a mixed-method investigation on career practitioners' needs for social-emotional competences conducted as part of the STRENGTH project. The investigation was conducted throughout the year 2020 with a primary focus on the six partner countries of the STRENGTH project, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Romania.

In the first phase of the investigation, online focus-group interviews with career professionals were conducted in each of the partner countries. The participants shared 50 socially and emotionally challenging situations (critical incidents) from their personal practice. Fifteen critical incidents were explored in detail as part of the focus-group interviews. Each of the critical incidents was regarded as relatively challenging and common by the focus-group participants, and it was challenging to come up with recommendations on how to deal with relevant situations professionally. The critical incidents can be used for purposes of reflection, training, and assessment regarding the social and emotional competences needed by career practitioners.





In the second phase of the investigation, we conducted an international survey on the social-emotional competences needed by career practitioners. The survey was simultaneously conducted in English, Finnish, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian. The survey included several measures to reduce the risk of biased answering behaviours. Overall, 477 career practitioners from 27 countries participated in the survey, with sufficient numbers of participants to draw some general conclusions for partner countries. Despite the large number of participants, the survey cannot claim to be representative of all career practitioners in partner countries though, so the findings should not be generalized.

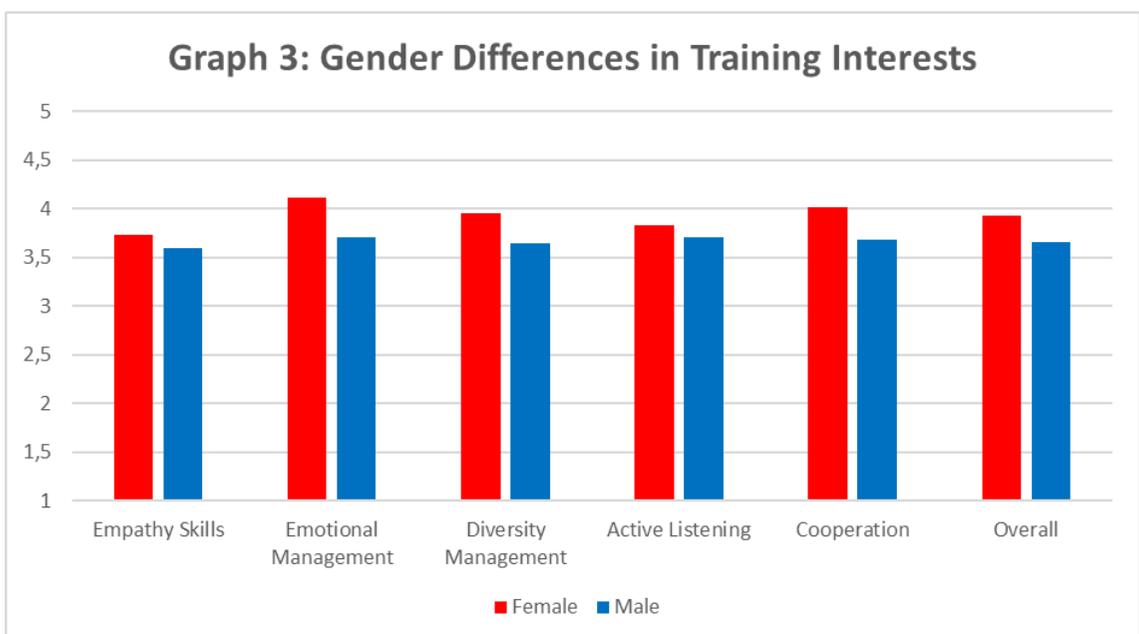
The most important finding from our survey is surely that our respondents were – on average – “very interested” in all five clusters of social-emotional competence training ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.8$). The most interested respondents (top 50%) were even “extremely interested” on average, while even the mean value of the people less interested (bottom 50%) was “somewhat interested” on average (Graph 1). Overall, the largest interest was voiced in emotion-management and cooperation training. However, interest in the other three clusters was not significantly smaller.

Moreover, when asked to identify the two most important training needs for fellow practitioners (from the five competence clusters), all five clusters were identified relatively often (Graph 2). Only one cluster, emotion management, was named somewhat more frequently than the others.

Based on these findings, we can confidently say that it makes sense for the STRENGTH project to develop and disseminate innovative training modules for all five clusters of social-emotional competences. A special focus should be given to emotion management, but the other clusters appear to be important as well.

An unexpected finding was that female career practitioners voiced a larger interest in social-emotional competence training than male practitioners (Graph 3). This difference in interest mainly pertained to three of five competence clusters, namely emotion management, diversity management, and cooperation. This finding probably implies that female practitioners sometimes face a lack of respect in their practice, e.g., through chauvinistic clients – a lack of respect to which male practitioners are not subjected. Given that the majority of the career workforce is composed of female practitioners, social-emotional competence training should therefore focus explicitly on constructive ways of establishing one's authority as a female professional.

Finally, we observed diverse country-specific differences in view of training interests and needs, as well as in view of how six critical incidents were perceived. In general, it appears that existing training programs across Europe address (different) social-emotional competences to a greater or lesser extent already. Therefore, we recommend that the use of the innovative training modules, which shall be developed as part of the STRENGTH project be adapted to local training interests and needs.



1. Introduction

1.1. Goal

In this report, we summarize the findings of a mixed-method investigation on the training needs of career practitioners concerning social-emotional competences. This investigation was conducted throughout the year 2020 with a primary focus on the six partner countries of the STRENGTH project, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Romania.

What we hoped to find out through our investigation was how important career practitioners find social-emotional competences, and how they relate to the requirements of daily practice. Moreover, we hoped to assess whether there is a systematic lack of certain social-emotional competences among practitioners, and for which social-emotional competences there is a national and international demand.

Within the framework of the STRENGTH project, this report (IO2) aims to inform the development of innovative training modules for career practitioners who want to improve their social-emotional competences (IO3). These training modules will be developed during the year 2021. It builds on a previous investigation on frameworks of social-emotional competences (IO1).

1.2. Focus on Social-Emotional Competences

Following Berg, Osher, Same, Nolan, Benson, and Jacobs (2017), who systematically reviewed 136 social-emotional competence frameworks, social-emotional competences include...

"emotional processes such as regulating emotions and displaying empathy; interpersonal skills such as social competence and perspective taking; and cognitive regulation, including cognitive and mental flexibility. But [they] also can include intercultural competence and understanding, connectedness to others, and social responsibility." (p. 16)

For the purpose of our project, we are interested in practitioners' need for 13 social-emotional competences, which are listed in Exhibit 1. The identification of these social-emotional competences is a result of our prior project report Desk Research and Compendium of Methods on Social-Emotional Competence (Weber & García, 2020). To arrive at this list, our colleagues analysed different theories of social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and social-

emotional learning, and identified distinct abilities and attitudes. The final selection concentrated on competences that can be characterized as relational, i.e., as abilities and attitudes that facilitate good relationships between oneself and others. For this reason, we decided to exclude intellectual abilities, e.g., critical thinking, creativity, or problem-solving abilities from our analysis in the project team.

Similarly, we also decided to exclude moral/ethical competences. While moral/ethical competences, e.g., the abilities to notice and solve ethical problems, bear a relational component, they are not typically implied when speaking of social-emotional competences. The moral/ethical competences of practitioners are certainly of general interest: However, we believe that they should be addressed in another project.

For strategic purposes, we combined the 13 social-emotional competences of interest in our study in five clusters (Exhibit 1). One of the main goals of our project is to develop innovative training modules on social-emotional competences of career practitioners. Each of our clusters ideally represents one training module, which will focus on the development of several competences that can be combined.

1.3. Challenge

The main methodological challenge in arriving at the desired insights is based on the inherent knowledge biases that influence our beliefs about what social-emotional competences are important in the practice of career guidance and counselling, and how relevant competences might best be shaped. In a nutshell, four problems are connected to the research questions:

First, people do not tend to value what they do not understand. Especially when concepts or educational practices seem foreign to people, they may be overly sceptical regarding their potential and relevance. **Second**, people may overestimate the value of the competences and knowledge that they have acquired – at least when they are aware of them, e.g., due to formal training, reflective practice, or because they draw on explicit theories (books, etc.). On the other hand, others may discount the relevance of explicit knowledge for practice and rely on their intuition (including their implicit beliefs, their ability to empathize with others at an emotional level, etc.). **Third**, people may underestimate or overestimate the value of implicit knowledge and competences that they have developed through experience and adaptation. People tend to expect that their implicit assumptions are shared by others as “common sense”. However, what appears to be “common sense” to an experienced practitioner may resemble expert knowledge that is not commonly found in novices. **Fourth**, people tend to imagine highly different

Exhibit 1: Five Clusters of Social-Emotional Competences

1. Empathy Skills

The goal is to increase participants' affective empathy and perspective-taking skills. **Affective empathy** is a person's ability to perceive and correctly express other people's emotions, drawing on verbal and non-verbal cues and an ability to understand and imagine the feelings and intentions of others (including in the past and future). **Perspective taking** (cognitive empathy) is a person's ability to take the perspective of others, e.g., by imagining what their roles and circumstances may require from them, being able to imagine how others will be affected.

2. Emotional Management Skills

The goal is to increase participants' understanding and awareness of their emotions and other people's emotions, and to help them manage their own emotions better. On the one hand, participants will be trained in **understanding emotions**, their value and nature. Also, the training will promote **emotional self-awareness**, i.e., one's ability to perceive and correctly express one's own emotions, to know what one is feeling at any given time, and how one's emotions can affect other people. Finally, the training aims at promoting **emotional self-control**: Regulating and influencing one's own emotions to motivate oneself, achieve goals, and deal with stress, control or redirect one's emotions and impulses, and how to persevere in the face of obstacles and setbacks.

3. Diversity Management Skills

The goal is to increase participants' **concern for all kinds of people**, their tolerance of different values, and their ability to cooperate with diverse people. One goal will be to increase participants' **tolerance**, i.e., their ability to understand and accept the diverse perspectives, values, and lifestyles of others. Another goal will be to increase participants' **diversity and intercultural competence** so that they can understand the influence of culture, age, gender, religion, and social class on identity, needs, and emotions, and work together with diverse people better. Overall, the course shall enable professionals to feel a commitment and concern towards all kinds of citizens.

4. Active Listening Skills

The goal is to increase participants' abilities to attend to other people. On the one hand, it shall increase participants' **attentiveness**, i.e., their capacity to direct their attention to the needs, feelings, and cognitions of others and to remain attentive even when they feel distressed personally. On the other hand, the training shall equip participants with skills to listen and focus on people in a sympathetic, non-judgmental manner that **allows others to reflect ideas and feelings openly**.

5. Cooperation Skills

The goal is to increase participants' abilities for managing relationships effectively. **Collaboration** training shall promote learners' ability to build and manage relationships, to give and accept help, and to form agreements for cooperation. **Conflict resolution and negotiation** training shall support participants in addressing misunderstandings, value, and resource conflicts constructively. Influence training shall promote learners understanding of their own strengths and values and support them in **convincing/persuading** other people.

professional situations when evaluating, rating, or ranking the importance of generically described competences or training approaches. Depending on what they have in mind, they may evaluate certain competences as important or irrelevant. Therefore, generic descriptions of social-emotional competences are ambiguous when they lack context. In a similar manner, the evaluation of the relevance of training methods necessitates the context of the desired learning outcomes. Considering these challenges, many approaches to evaluate the relevance of competences for a certain practice or the adequacy of training methods are inadequate. People will mainly convey information about what they already believe – whether it is correct or not – and mainly try to confirm their beliefs by a selective interpretation of empirical evidence.

These challenges are also important at the political and institutional level when considering the question, whether social-emotional competences are relevant at all, or at least for career practitioners. In the STRENGTH Group, we were already convinced of the importance of social-emotional competences for the practice of career guidance and counselling from the beginning, although we possibly disagreed about the importance of particular competences or approaches. On the other hand, some policy makers, faculty leaders, public agency representatives, guidance managers, etc., may be sceptical about the relevance of socio-emotional competences. When their own beliefs suggest that social-emotional competences are overrated, why should they change their opinion based on what other people tend to think?

Based on this rationale, we can summarize the main challenge in terms of two critical questions: How can we demonstrate the importance of different social-emotional competences to sceptics, who doubt their importance? How can we demonstrate that certain social-emotional competences are of lesser value to people who value them highly?

1.4. General Approach

To overcome the knowledge biases and subjectivity outlined above, we needed to take a research approach that strives for relatively objective knowledge. A helpful strategy is to demonstrate the relevance of social-emotional competences for the practice of career guidance and counselling based on the **actual challenges** faced in practice.

The practical challenges we were interested in, needed to fulfil two criteria. First, they had to be relatively **common** and widespread in the practice. There had to be a certain likelihood that these challenges could occur in one's practice of career support, in order to justify the high relevance of certain social-emotional competences. Secondly, the practical challenges needed to

be perceived as **challenging** by practitioners themselves. Only in looking at situations that practitioners perceive as challenging themselves, would we be finding out, what sorts of social-emotional competences are in high demand.

Based on these considerations, we decided to work with **critical incidents** in assessing practitioners' need for social-emotional competences. We began by exploring the relevance of different social-emotional competences through **focus-group interviews** where practitioners shared and discussed critical incidents. On this basis, we then conducted an **international survey**.

1.5. Target Group

In line with our research questions, we defined career practitioners as professionals who actively work together with other people (clients) regarding their career development. Following the typology introduced by NICE (2016), our investigation focused on the experiences, needs, and interests of Career Advisors and Career Professionals (Figure 1).

"**Career Advisors** are important sources of basic information and support for people facing career-related challenges. Career Advisors are teachers, placement managers, psychologists, social workers or public administrators (among others). They are not Career Professionals, but professionals in another field, who offer some career support in addition to their primary roles and tasks. Often, they are the first persons to whom people come for advice." (NICE, 2016, p. 41)



Figure 1: Interrelations of the three types of career professionals (NICE, 2016, p. 42)

“**Career Professionals** are dedicated to career guidance and counselling and see it as their vocation to support people in dealing with complex career-related challenges. They included career counsellors, employment counsellors, career coaches, school counsellors, personnel developers, educational or guidance counsellors (among others).” (NICE, 2016, p. 41)

1.6. Focus-Group Interviews

We began our research with focus-group interviews in the partner countries. The goal was to gain thick descriptions of common social-emotional challenges experienced in practitioners’ practice, i.e., critical incidents that necessitate social-emotional maturity.

Originally, we had also planned to conduct individual interviews with career professionals in each partner country. However, our funding agency asked us to complete the needs analysis more quickly, and with only half of the foreseen budget. Therefore, we decided to concentrate on the focus-group interviews, which would also address questions from another work package with a reduced budget (IO1). Focus groups usually involve six to twelve people who discuss a certain topic in an artificial environment (Littig & Wallace, 1997). Our plan was to conduct half-day focus group interviews with about 12 practitioners in each country.

At the NICE Academy in Split (October 2019), Johannes Katsarov conducted a **pilot workshop** to test a concept for the focus-group interviews. 35 career practitioners and specialists from approximately 15 European countries participated at this workshop. After a PowerPoint presentation on the goals of the STRENGTH project, participants were invited to share socially and emotionally challenging situations (critical incidents), which could be discussed in small groups. As an example for a critical incident, the following sentence was presented: “A career counsellor gets pulled into a conflict between a teenage girl and her parents regarding her choice of a vocation.” Each critical incident was given a title by the person sharing it, whereby the title was supposed to be short (max. 8 words), give a fictional name to the main person of concern (e.g., the client), and highlight the main problem. For example, one of the titles was “Laura’s disclosure of domestic violence”. Critical incidents were collected until there were enough to form groups of 3-5 people. Eight groups then systematically analysed the critical incidents with the following questions:

- ◆ **What is it that makes this situation challenging?** (Develop a description of the main features of the situation. Think of individual and contextual aspects, the role of motivations, beliefs, incentives...)

- ◆ **What shouldn't you do in this kind of a situation?** (Try to formulate 2-3 "Don't..." statements)
- ◆ **What could work / be helpful in a situation like this?** (Try to formulate 2-3 "Do..." statements)

After about twenty minutes of small-group work, each group summarized its findings in an elevator presentation of two minutes. These presentations were followed by a short discussion on the relevance of different social-emotional competences in the practice of career guidance and counselling. All workshop participants suggested that this workshop was valuable for their professional development. Moreover, they agreed that it highlighted the centrality of social-emotional competences for the practice, and that analysing critical incidents had been very insightful. A shortcoming of the workshop was that there was little time to talk about individual competences.

Since this workshop concept had been extraordinarily successful (it was rated the best learning activity at the Split Academy in an anonymous survey), we decided to reproduce it in focus groups at the national level. Detailed instructions were prepared for all project partners so that the focus-group interviews could be conducted in the same fashion in all countries (Appendices 1-3).

In February 2020, we were just about to organize all the focus-group interviews when it became clear that the Covid-19 pandemic would not allow us to go forward with our plan: The situation was already bad in several European countries, and it was clear that physical distancing would become a priority for several months to come. Hence, we immediately reconceived our concept. The new goal was to conduct 2-3 online focus groups with smaller number of participants in each country. We pretested this concept with a group of four practitioners in Germany. Then, we tested it "on ourselves" in an online meeting, so that all of us would be able to moderate these sessions in a common way. From March to May 2020, we conducted 15 focus-group interviews with a total number of 68 participants (see Acknowledgements).

At the beginning of each online focus-group interview, we informed the participants about the STRENGTH project and our intentions. Oral and written consent for the recording of the interviews and the anonymous processing of its contents was collected from all participants. In line with the previously explained concept, each participant then shared one example of a critical incident from their practice, giving the critical incident a title. In the next step, the group decided which critical incident to focus on for detailed analysis. The moderators of the discussion used PowerPoint to document the main discussion points from the group. Concretely, they filled out a form that was visible to all participants, which described the aspects that made the

situation challenging, as well as do's and don'ts when confronted with this kind of a situation. The project partners then translated the titles of all critical incidents and the protocol of the detailed discussions into English so that they could be analysed by the principal investigator. An overview of all critical incidents, as well as more detailed descriptions of the discussed incidents are presented in Section 2 of this report.

After the critical incidents had been described, the focus-group interviews concerned the question, which social-emotional competences were particularly important in order to deal with this particular situation, and how these competences ought to be trained. Participants evaluated the importance of thirteen competences on a scale expressing how elaborate one's competence (e.g., one's empathy) ought to be to deal with such an incident, e.g., whether a person with a lower-than-average degree of empathy would be able to cope with this kind of situation. The findings from this discussion are presented in the STRENGTH IO1 report Desk Research and Compendium of Methods on Social-Emotional Competence (Weber & García, 2020).

1.7. International Survey

The goal of the study was to gain insights into career practitioners' need for social-emotional competences. Our main interest in running the survey was to gain an understanding of the general European and specific national needs for social-emotional competences in career guidance and counselling.

Gaining a relatively objective understanding of the demand for social-emotional competences in career guidance and counselling is nearly impossible due to various sources of bias (see 1.2). To overcome these potential sources of bias, we designed our survey to:

- ◆ Ask for reactions to a standardized set of social-emotional competences,
- ◆ Control whether participants' judgments were based on reductionist ideas about the challenges of career guidance and counselling,
- ◆ Separate practitioners' personal training interests from the training needs they see for the profession,
- ◆ Control for the potential impact of practitioners' competence in dealing with the relevant situations,
- ◆ Compare the need for different social-emotional competences across partner countries, and
- ◆ Reduce the potential impact of social desirability bias.

The survey was composed of three sections (Appendix 4). In the first section, we asked respondents for their consent to participate in our research and asked for some **demographic information** concerning their professional and gender identities, their guidance qualifications, and the countries where they practice/live. Respondents were then randomly directed to the second or third section. In the second section, respondents evaluated six **critical incidents** in the role of experts. The critical incidents were presented in the form of vignettes. Respondents were asked to evaluate, how well career professionals nowadays are prepared to deal with situations like this. This question, which was asked after each vignette, aimed at estimating potential training gaps. It was formulated in such a way that novice practitioners could indirectly admit that they would feel overwhelmed by a situation like this. And it allowed expert practitioners to offer a differentiated statement that also considered, how well they believed their peers were prepared to deal with relevant situations. Also, respondents were asked, how frequently career professionals have to deal with similar challenges and whether all career professionals ought to be able to deal with similar situations effectively after reading each vignette. The purpose of these questions was to determine how important it is to train career professionals to deal with relevant situations. The high degree of generalization invited practitioners to think beyond their own practice and include the stories that they have heard from peers in their assessment.

In the third section, respondents were asked how big their interest is in taking a course or workshop on different topics, which reflected clusters of social-emotional competences (Exhibit 1). Also, they were asked to suggest two **priorities for a training program** for practitioners in their country concerning these clusters of social and emotional competences. We differentiated between these dimensions because only asking respondents which competences were needed most strongly in their country may have been influenced by their personal training interests. Moreover, we limited the choice of training needs for colleagues in one's country to two priorities because all social-emotional competences are generally viewed as important by practitioners, in our experience. By enforcing a prioritization, we challenged respondents to reflect critically, which competences may be needed most strongly.

Survey Development

The survey's development underwent several steps. In the **first step**, we selected six critical incidents for the survey internally. We evaluated each of fifteen critical incidents by six dimensions, including the frequency of relevant situations. Based on this internal pre-test, we selected six vignettes that appeared to be relatively relevant across project countries, and which

represented the different six types of situations that we categorized based on all challenging situations shared with us:

- ◆ Anxious Clients
- ◆ Clients Whose Parents / Relatives Will Not Let Them Have Their Choice
- ◆ Clients Facing Hopelessness (Severe Integration Hindrances)
- ◆ Frustrated and Aggressive Clients
- ◆ Clients who Suffer from Abuse or Neglect
- ◆ Clients Who Are Uninterested or Who Reject Support

All of us also commented on the questions and vignettes critically at this step, so that we could improve the selected vignettes, e.g., to ensure that the cases made sense in all of our countries. We also conducted factor and reliability analyses across the six evaluation questions for each vignette. This allowed us to select the best three vignette-evaluation questions for the survey. The questions that we rejected mainly suffered from small variance, meaning that there was very little disagreement on how to answer them in our team – which suggests that answers to these questions may not be helpful in understanding what people think about the depicted situations.

In the **second step**, we conducted a pre-test of the survey with 40 practitioners, most of whom were from our own organisations. In addition to the items and questions from the final survey, respondents were asked, how well they understood the instructions, and we collected written feedback on problems, etc. The pre-test results were in line with our expectations: All questions and instructions were viewed as understandable. The six vignettes were viewed as relatively relevant, frequent, and challenging. Only for the third vignette, which deals with a migrant, did practitioners from Romania suggest that this kind of situation would hardly occur in their country.

Additionally, the pre-test suggested that our questions on training interests and priorities would lead to the kind of information we were interested in. As Table 1 shows, we saw significant differences between personal training interests and priority training needs identified for one's colleagues. For example, while pre-test respondents articulated an interest in active-listening competences that hardly differed from the mean interest in most other competence domains, only 23% of respondents listed active listening as a top priority for fellow practitioners.

In the **third step**, we finalized the survey and translated it into all partner languages, i.e., into German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Suomi (Finnish), including the use of local names in the vignettes. In each partner country, a team of three translators was established. Using an Excel-template,

Table 1

Competence Cluster	Personal Preference (Mean)	Personal Preference: very or extremely interested	First or second priority for a training program for peers
1. Empathy	3.9	28 (70%)	10 (25.6%)
2. Emotion Management	4.3	36 (90%)	23 (59.0%)
3. Diversity Management	3.9	30 (75%)	16 (41.0%)
4. Active Listening	3.8	30 (75%)	9 (23.1%)
5. Cooperation	4.0	28 (70%)	20 (51.3%)

each survey item was first translated into the local language by one team member (forward translation), then translated back into English by a second team member (back translation), before a third team member used the back translation to create a second translation into the local language (backward-forward translation). At this point, all members of the translation team compared the forward and the backward-forward versions of the translation and agreed on a final translation consensually. All translations were then imputed by the principal investigator using the online-survey solution Questback (Unipark). At this stage, each partner team reviewed the performance of their questionnaire in the online-survey system and final corrections were conducted.

In the **fourth step**, data was collected from September to October 2020. Each national partner organisation contacted at least 100 practitioners in their local country. Additionally, the NICE Foundation contacted diverse international organizations to widen the scope of the survey. Results are presented in Section 3.

2. Outcomes

In this section, we present the main outcomes of our focus-group interviews and the survey. We begin by presenting 50 critical incidents shared by our 68 participants, which were not discussed in detail. In Section 2.2, we present 15 critical incidents that were explored in detail during the focus-group interviews. Subsequently, we present the outcomes of the international survey, looking at the sample, the general answers, and country-specific answering behaviours.

2.1. Overview of Unexplored Critical Incidents

The cases that were not discussed in the focus groups are informative because they give us a broader overview of critical incidents that practitioners find challenging. A content analysis of the short description unveiled eight types of critical incidents. In the following, we present the short descriptions of these cases by category, beginning with the most frequent type of incidents, dealing with *undecided and anxious clients*. The least frequent type of incidents concern career professionals who have become overinvolved in their cases, i.e., they are failing to maintain a professional distance.

A. Undecided and anxious clients

- ◆ Akis (25) does not know what kind of a career to pursue. He also thinks that no one can help him or cares for him.
- ◆ John is an excellent student. His teachers have recommended him to pursue all kinds of studies, each of them focusing on their field of expertise. John does not know what to study and feels very confused.
- ◆ Robert is a high school student who struggles to find his sexual identity. questions related to his sexuality interfere with his learning.
- ◆ Miruna (14) suffers from panic attacks due to social isolation amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and lack of clarity regarding her career choice. She is anxious about passing her exams.
- ◆ Laura the Eternal Student finished high school and several psychology degrees with excellent results. Instead of entering the world of work, she has completed several other degrees, as well, and is now embarking on a professional training in human resource management. She says that there is no work and that she cannot get any job without a recommendation.

- ◆ Mihaela does not know what to study.
- ◆ Ina has difficulties with her relationships to others and in accepting herself.
- ◆ Emi wants to quit studying because he is at the “wrong” faculty.
- ◆ Arnold, the job-switcher, gives up every job wish quickly.
- ◆ Dragan, unemployed, has lost all hope, after applying for numerous jobs without success.
- ◆ Andreas has inherited a family business but wants to pursue another career.

B. Clients Whose Caregivers Stand in Their Way

- ◆ Lea’s parents get her to give up her preferred vocational training as an interior designer and have her apply for commercial training.
- ◆ Manuel’s parents do not accept his wish to become a physical therapist because they want him to study like themselves.
- ◆ George’s parents disagree with their son’s career choice.
- ◆ John suffers from Tourette Syndrome and learning difficulties. He wants to join general school with his friends, but his mother insists that he visit a vocational school due to his difficulties.
- ◆ Evana is a Syrian refugee. She has learned the local language and is a good student. She wants to visit a vocational school to become a hairdresser, but her brother will not allow her to do so.
- ◆ Maria is talented at singing, but her parents do not accept her choice of career and will not let her choose for herself.
- ◆ Andrei (9th grade) has joined a high school in line with his family’s tradition – however, he does not fit in and considers changing to another school.
- ◆ Fabio is faced with the choice of which studies to undertake after the middle school. He is a shy, introverted boy, with poor results especially in scientific subjects and he is studying violin. In an orientation counselling session with Maria, he admits that he did not commit himself much during the school year, but that he knows he can do better. His parents want him to continue with the music and go to the Conservatory. Suddenly he breaks out in tears, because he wants to enrol in the Industrial Institute, like his older brother, and does not want to go on with the music at all.

C. Clients with severe integration hindrances

- ◆ George (28) is a former substance abuser who has just completed the process of detoxification and wants to find a job.
- ◆ Adriana is an immigrant lady in need of professional integration but without any entitlement to subsidies or financial support, who has troubles with language barriers and with a validation of her educational certificates.
- ◆ Dan, a special needs student, cannot participate in class due to his disability. His parents don't request career support, so he has no access to career counselling.
- ◆ Costi has autism and is not able to interact with teachers and peers.
- ◆ Dima is an immigrant from Moldavia who needs to find work but also has to take care of his smaller brothers.
- ◆ Bob, the racist, has extremely prejudiced attitudes towards people from other ethnicities, which he voices during a career counselling session.
- ◆ Whether Said can stay in the country as a migrant depends on the outcome of your conversation with him.
- ◆ Mihai frequently disturbs school classes and is rejected by his classmates. He was transferred to a school for children with intellectual disabilities.

D. Frustrated and aggressive clients

- ◆ George was recently fired after 15 years at a radio station. He and his family now face severe financial difficulties. He is extremely angry at the state and the way his former employer dealt with him and projects his negativity on the career counsellor.
- ◆ José (drunk) disturbs an information session on job search techniques with more than 100 participants through rude behavior and remarks.
- ◆ Paolo, an unemployed jobseeker who receives social support has just returned from medical leave. When questioned about this job searching attempts before his illness, he says that he was sick and attacks the counsellor, suggesting that she is being aggressive and that she is threatening his social security.
- ◆ Federico does not apply for jobs, because he believes they do not exist in the first place. Instead, he uses every opportunity to vent his anger about the system.

- ◆ Gabriela interrupts a session with 30 unemployed people, when the counsellor talks about temporary jobs. She shouts at the counsellor that she has bad experiences with short-term employment, when she is interrupted by another participant, who says that he succeeded in finding a longer job contract. A third individual enters the debate complaining that people do not want to seek short-term employment...
- ◆ A man needs proof that he is registered at the employment center so that he can receive social benefits. However, his citizen card is out of date, so the counsellor cannot issue such a declaration to him. He resorts to verbal aggression and attempts to attack the counsellor physically and finally has to be escorted out of the employment center by a security guard.
- ◆ Ari, a teacher, and Seija, a student, have a severe conflict.

E. Situations of abuse and neglect

- ◆ Leonora is suffering from extreme pressure during her traineeship and asks a counsellor to help her by speaking with her supervisor.
- ◆ Adrian suffers from parental indifference. He has developed addictions and is going to fail his exams.
- ◆ Bogdan, a student at school, is smart. However, he has drug problems and avoids his family.
- ◆ Antonia (46) lives from social welfare together with her unemployed husband and two children (8 and 10). During an orientation session to promote her social inclusion, she appears uncomfortable and nervous. She is a victim of domestic violence (physical and psychological).
- ◆ Laura discloses that her husband has beaten her up.

F. Family members will not accept clients' difficulties

- ◆ Ilie (13) has been diagnosed with learning difficulties. However, his parents deny the diagnosis.
- ◆ Eric's father can't accept his child's health problems. Eric is a primary school student and needs constant help due to locomotion difficulties, mental disorders etc. His father has high expectations and refuses to accept the problems.
- ◆ Gabriela is a highly sensitive person whose feelings are very intense. Her family rejects her emotionality as shallow and will not support her in dealing with her anxieties etc.

G. Clients with motivational and self-awareness issues

- ◆ Dimitris (17) is a weak student who does not like to study, has lost a school year due to learning difficulties – at the same time, he believes he can succeed in highly demanding studies, like medicine.
- ◆ Rodrigo (30) comes to the counsellor's office with this mother who does all the talking. She says that her son needs a good job because he is already unemployed for 2 years and is at home doing nothing.
- ◆ Chris, the rationalist, suppresses his emotions.
- ◆ Lucia, almost graduated, appears to have no interest in her studies or a career.
- ◆ Miky (18) is a successful YouTube performer with a good income from advertising. He is bound to fail his final exams and has no interest in university. In Maria Annunziata's career orientation group, he becomes a disturbing factor, talking about his success and questioning the value of career guidance.
- ◆ Francesca, a graduate of economics, is strongly attracted to entrepreneurship. However, she lacks confidence and self-esteem and believes that she, as a woman, is naturally inferior to male entrepreneurs.

H. Overinvolvement of professionals

- ◆ Magda, a school counsellor, finds herself overly emotionally involved in a conflict between a teacher and a parent. She feels that she cannot mediate between the two anymore.
- ◆ Ornella, a career professional herself, cannot keep herself from projecting career-related expectations on her son and trying to influence his career development.

This typology was presented to all project partners by the principal investigator in March 2020, and was supported by the project partnership, i.e., all partners agreed with the categories and the categorizations of the critical incidents.

2.2. Vignette Collection

Fifteen of the collected critical incidents were explored in detail during the focus-group interviews. As presented in our IO1 report (Weber & Garcia, 2020), the participating practitioners unanimously agreed on the importance of diverse social-emotional competences to address situations like these. In the following, we present them in the style of vignettes. We developed these vignettes for three purposes: First, to analyse the critical incidents in a common style. Secondly, as a basis for our survey. Third, to employ the vignettes for teaching and reflection purposes in working with career practitioners. Below, we present the vignettes in the order of the categories presented above.

A. Anxious Clients

Giulia's Thousand Odd Jobs

Giulia (37) is constantly looking for a stable job. She graduated from the Scientific High School and then enrolled in the Faculty of Physics. Due to problems in passing exams, she abandoned her studies three exams away from graduation. Since then she has always been busy, lending herself to any job, even of little importance, because she wanted to become independent. During an orientation counselling session with Maria Dolores, Giulia admits that she always has a sense of inadequacy and incompleteness. She cannot identify her professional life plan. She also confesses that many of her jobs have ended because of her rebellious and aggressive character.

Rossella Suffers from Panic Attacks

Rossella, an 18-year-old girl in the last year of high school, stands out at school and has excellent marks in all subjects. With the final exams coming up, she is very anxious now. In fear of the oral exams, she suffers from panic attacks and nightmares. During an orientation interview on her choice of a university, Rossella tells Marirosa that she cannot decide about her future, because all she can think about is how she needs to complete the final exams with the best possible grade.

B. Clients Whose Caregivers Stand in Their Way

Laura and Sports – Passion or Career?

Monica, a school counsellor, welcomes Laura (14, 8th grade) and her parent. Laura would like to become a professional volleyball player. She wants to continue her studies at the Sports High School and passed an aptitude test. Her parents, who initially supported the idea, now think that Laura should visit one of the best high schools in the city to take foreign language classes,

instead. Laura is good at foreign languages, and her parents fear that the Sports High School will not promote Laura's academic learning. The decision what school Laura will attend needs to be made immediately. Laura and her parents vehemently oppose each other.

Maria the Quarrelsome Mother

Helen, a student, attends a career counselling program together with her mother, Maria. Maria is a financial analyst who owns her own company. She wants Helen to study economics so that Helen will be able to take over the company in the future. When Robert, the counsellor announces that Helen expressed her interest in becoming a teacher in a career interest questionnaire, Maria gets upset and starts yelling at Robert. She claims that career questionnaire is invalid because she knows her daughter better than anyone else and she knows best what suits her daughter.

Olga Is Not Permitted to Pursue Her Dream

Olga's parents are famous doctors. She wants to become an artist, but her parents do not accept this career pathway for her. There are many conflicts in the family for this reason. In a career counselling session, both Olga and her parents try to win Roman for their side of the conflict. They try to interpret everything that Roman says as proof that the other side is wrong and attack each other verbally.

C. Clients Facing Hopelessness (Severe Hindrances)

Haldi the Asylum Seeker

Haldi needs to find a job in the host country to convince local authorities to grant him asylum. He had tried to get a job repeatedly but has failed so far, which is why he is becoming increasingly desperate. In Despina's counselling session, he expresses anger, disappointment, and lack of trust towards employers who do not want to employ migrants in their businesses. He feels that everyone in the country is hostile and prejudiced against him as a migrant.

Jani Will Only Accept One Option

Jani has only one career choice: He wants to become a commercial airplane pilot. He has been studying in the field but has dropped out of school twice. Before meeting with Jukka, he consulted several other guidance professionals. When Jukka offers him to get acquainted with a new private school, Jani is happy at first, but then cancels several visits to the school in the last minute.

D. Frustrated and Aggressive Clients

Alberto Loses His Temper

Alberto is an unemployed job seeker attending a personal meeting with José showing signs of alcoholism. Alberto and José, the career counsellor, know each other from various contexts and occasions. When José asks Alberto for his identity card, Alberto feels offended and loses his temper. He yells at José and suggests that it is José's fault that he does not have a job yet.

Filipe the Agitator

Christina is facilitating a session on job search practices for more than 100 people from different educational and professional backgrounds. Throughout the session, Christina is frequently interrupted by Filipe who appears to have an opinion on every topic and always ends up blaming either the government, the political system, or the big capitalist companies. Filipe's seemingly innocent remarks provoke approving and disapproving responses from the rest of the group, leading to chatter among people and additional public remarks. For Christina, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the focus of the session and cover all contents in time.

Louis Is Attacked Personally

Louis, a career counsellor, regularly organizes forums where employers present their professional field. Louis first interviews the employers. Later, participants can ask questions. At the start of a forum with 20 participants, Louis has just started interviewing the managing director of a large company from the region. The guest likes to talk and starts to digress from the topic, so that Louis interrupts him after a minute with a question that leads back to employment opportunities. At this moment, one of the participants of the forum suddenly shouts at Louis, telling him to "shut up" and let the guest speak.

E. Clients who Suffer from Abuse or Neglect

Augusta's Mother Realizes the Abuse

In a career counselling session with Augusta (a teenage girl), her 40-year-old mother suddenly realizes that her high standards concerning the learning and perfect behaviour of her daughter were emotionally abusive. The mother was always unhappy with the results of the girl and with her behaviours, relationships, spare time activities, and hobbies. Augusta also complains that her mother's boyfriend behaved inappropriately by groping Augusta and making jokes with sexual content.

Bill the Angry Teenager

Bill, a 16-year-old boy, is an excellent student. Despite his hard efforts, he never receives any approval from his parents, especially not from his mother. He feels that they are never satisfied with his work and achievements, while they show great admiration for his little brother. Now, in Olivia's career counselling session, Bill is not interested in discussing his personal career-related needs and interests. His primary interest is to make a choice that will hurt and upset his parents and make them feel powerless.

Emma the Runaway Teenager

Emma (13 years old, adopted) visits the 7th grade. Emma is very introverted and shows symptoms of a possible depression. Lately, she has been absent from school regularly and has run away from home several times. She has gained a lot of weight and lacks a motivation to learn. Her adoptive mother does not accept Emma's growing need for freedom and tries to control her daughter. In a career counselling session, Emma's mother interrupts the session repeatedly and will not collaborate with Georgina, the counsellor.

G. Clients Who Are Uninterested or Who Reject Support***Pekka is Like Teflon***

Pekka is having some problems with the progress of his studies, which is why he comes to see Jaana, a school counsellor, several times. Jaana perceives Pekka as being somewhat arrogant towards the school world and lacking motivation. He appears to be a social and open person, but it is difficult to get a hold of him in terms of discussing the reasons behind the issues with his studies. He tends to cover up his problems and is not willing to give Jaana any answers to why-questions. Instead, he states that he can handle the issue himself, but eventually does nothing about it.

Tiina Does Not Get Interested in Anything

Tiina is a student in need of special support. In a study planning discussion involving Ari (the counsellor), Tiina, and her parents, Tiina shows no interest in any sort of education or vocation. Nothing seems to motivate her. It is also extremely hard to identify any of her strengths. At the same time, her parents expect Ari to solve the problem.

2.3 Sample of the Survey

Out of 1.664 people who opened the survey, 518 persons completed it by October 31, 2020. 20 responses were omitted due to eight or more missing values or because 80% or more of the responses to the vignettes were equal, suggesting nonserious answering behavior. Another 21 respondents indicated that they do not practice career guidance and counselling at all, so we also omitted them from the analysis, leading to a final sample of 477 responses.

Table 2

Sample Characteristics

	<i>n</i> (%)
Practice of career guidance and counselling	
Full professional	317 (66.5%)
Not main profession	160 (33.5%)
Gender	
Female	396 (83.0%)
Male	78 (16.4%)
Other gender	3 (0.6%)
Training in career guidance and counselling	
Bachelor's degree	89 (18.7%)
Master's degree	163 (34.2%)
Postgraduate diploma	127 (26.6%)
Training though a professional association	71 (14.9%)
Training through a private institute	64 (13.4%)
No training	35 (7.3%)
Country of practice	
Finland	39 (8.2%)
Greece	41 (8.6%)
Germany	101 (21.2%)
Italy	32 (6.7%)
Ireland	31 (6.5%)
Portugal	44 (9.2%)
Romania	91 (19.1%)
Switzerland	28 (5.9%)
Order of survey completion	
Randomly subjected to vignettes first	238 (49.9%)
Randomly subjected to training interests/priorities first	239 (50.1%)

Note. Some respondents practice in several countries or have obtained several degrees in career guidance and counselling.

Basic information about the sample is presented in Table 2. Overall, people from 27 countries participated in the survey. In Table 2, we only present numbers for countries where more than 20 career practitioners participated. Countries with fewer than 20 respondents were Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, the Faroe Islands, France, Hungary, Iceland, Jordan, Kosovo, Latvia, Malaysia, Poland, Sweden, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

2.4 Personal Interest in Social-Emotional Training

Table 3 presents the average training interests of respondents on a scale from 1 (not interested) to 5 (extremely interested). Statistical tests found no significant difference between the average interest in the five training clusters when looking at the answers of all respondents. Moreover, there was no significant difference between the interests of respondents who viewed the critical incidents first (primed: yes) in comparison to the respondents who only evaluated the critical incidents after expressing their interests. This is an important finding, because it indicates that respondents' judgments about their training interests were not susceptible to the portrayal of challenging situations. This probably indicates that practitioners have these kinds of practical challenges in mind when evaluating the relevance of social-emotional

Table 3

Training Interests

Cluster	All	Primed		Country							
		Yes	No	FI	EL	DE	IE	IT	PT	RO	CH
1. Empathy	3.7 (1.1)	3.7 (1.1)	3.7 (1.1)	3.7 (0.9)	4.2* (0.8)	3.2** (1.0)	4.1 (1.0)	4.2* (0.8)	4.1 (1.0)	3.9 (1.0)	3.0** (1.1)
2. Emotion Management	4.1 (0.9)	4.1 (0.9)	4.1 (0.9)	3.8 (0.9)	4.2 (0.9)	3.7** (0.9)	4.4 (0.9)	4.3 (0.7)	4.5* (0.8)	4.3* (0.7)	3.6* (1.0)
3. Diversity Management	3.9 (0.9)	3.9 (0.9)	3.9 (0.9)	3.9 (0.8)	4.1 (0.8)	3.5** (1.0)	4.3 (0.9)	4.3 (1.0)	4.3* (0.7)	3.9 (1.0)	3.5 (0.7)
4. Active Listening	3.8 (1.0)	3.9 (1.0)	3.8 (1.0)	4.1 (0.9)	3.9 (0.9)	3.5** (1.0)	3.8 (1.1)	4.2 (0.8)	4.1 (1.0)	4.0 (1.0)	3.3 (1.2)
5. Cooperation	4.0 (0.9)	4.0 (0.9)	4.0 (0.9)	3.9 (0.8)	4.0 (0.9)	3.8 (1.0)	4.3 (0.8)	4.2 (0.8)	4.3* (0.8)	4.3* (0.8)	3.3** (1.2)
Overall	3.9 (0.8)	3.9 (0.7)	3.9 (0.8)	3.9 (0.6)	4.1 (0.6)	3.5** (0.8)	4.2 (0.7)	4.2* (0.5)	4.2* (0.7)	4.1* (0.7)	3.3** (0.8)

Note. Significance levels for T-test (2-tailed): * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

FI=Finland; EL=Greece; DE=Germany; IE=Ireland; IT=Italy; PT=Portugal; RO=Romania;

competence training for themselves. Statistically significant differences between countries are highlighted. For example, Greek respondents expressed an above-average interest in empathy training and Swiss respondents expressed a lower interest in social-emotional competence training overall.

2.5 Training Needs of Fellow Practitioners

When asked, which two training priorities they would set for fellow practitioners from their country, all five clusters were named frequently (Table 4). Emotion management was named significantly more often than 40% of the time, signifying a larger perceived need. Empathy was named significantly less often than 40% of the time. Overall, all training clusters were prioritized quite frequently though, indicating that career practitioners believe that all five domains of social-emotional competence are important for the practice and that training is required. This suggests that relevant training ought to be included in basic qualification programs and offered in the form of further education. Whether people evaluated the vignettes before answering this question or not (primed: yes/no) had no significant effect on their priorities. As for the training interests, this signifies that training priorities were not influenced by biased representations of the practice.

Statistically significant differences between countries are highlighted. For example, Irish and Romanian respondents expressed a high need for emotion -management training, while Swiss respondents rarely named empathy as a training priority but expressed a high demand for diversity-management

Table 4

Clusters named as one of two training priorities (% respondents)

Cluster	All	Primed		Country							
		Yes	No	FI	EL	DE	IE	IT	PT	RO	CH
1. Empathy	35*	32	38	39	46	45*	45	34	36	20**	14*
2. Emotion Mgmt	50**	49	50	31*	42	41*	71*	56	57	70**	36
3. Diversity Mgmt	37	40	35	46	37	31	32	41	34	25**	64**
4. Active Listening	39	41	38	46	37	46	16**	41	34	30*	46
5. Cooperation	38	37	39	39	39	38	36	28	39	54**	36
<i>n</i>	477	238	239	39	41	101	31	32	44	91	28

Note. Significance levels for Pearson Chi-Square test (2-sided): * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Mgmt=Management.

competences. Regarding the heightened need for emotional management competences overall, it is worth mentioning that Finnish, German, Greek, and Swiss practitioners did not signify an overproportionate need for this type of training. This signifies that training priorities ought to be set at the national, or even at the local/organizational level. We discuss country differences in Section 4.

Thirty-eight respondents (8%) commented on their choice of priorities for the training needs of fellow practitioners. In 15 cases, they argued for the priorities that they gave. For example, a Finnish practitioner suggested that listening skills were most important, pointing to the difficulty of giving people space and tolerating silence, instead of lecturing them. A German practitioner suggested that diversity management ought to have the highest priority because of a high influx of migrants and a high number of intercultural misunderstandings in practice. A Greek respondent remarked that “many professionals have a lack of empathy and active listening skills” and suggested that these competences were needed as a basis for subsequent training in the other areas. An Italian respondent chose to prioritize emotion management and diversity management because she felt that most counsellors were empathic and capable of active listening, whereas some were intolerant and too emotional. A Romanian practitioner, who prioritized diversity management and cooperation training, remarked that “theory and practice were becoming more and more distant.”

In 11 cases, respondents argued that training in all five clusters of social-emotional competence was important. For example, a Portuguese practitioner stated that all topics presented were “fundamental” and that it was difficult to choose among them. A Swiss respondent remarked that all five clusters were already part of basic training in Switzerland. In another 11 cases, respondents expressed other training needs, e.g., being aware of one’s own limits, labour-market knowledge, or group moderation.

A recurring theme was that the empathy cluster was viewed as basic requirement for the practice. Perceptions were remarkably different here, though. Whereas some respondents suggested that all of the practitioners they knew were already empathic and good listeners, and that people only entered the profession because they were already equipped with empathy (and other social-emotional competences), others suggested that more needed to be done to keep un-empathic people from entering the practice, or that there was a great need for empathy training. In two cases, doubts were raised at the possibility of training an un-empathic person to become empathic within only two days of training. In another three cases,

2.6 Relevance and Frequency of the Critical Incidents

All critical incidents were generally viewed as relevant for the practice of career guidance and counselling across European countries, i.e., the average relevance ratings were above a value of 5 (agree to some extent) for all six vignettes. Table 5 presents the mean relevance that was attributed to the critical incidents. Mean ratings significantly below 5 were only found for the Irish respondents, e.g., in view of a client who does not appear to be interested in any career. However, even in this case, respondents tended to agree that all practitioners ought to be ready to deal with this sort of situation.

Our question concerning the rareness of the scenarios concerns the question, how likely it is for a career practitioner to be confronted with a certain situation. Arguably, it hardly makes sense to train professionals to deal with situations that will probably never occur – unless it is absolutely vital that they will be able to respond to such a situation correctly (e.g., schoolteachers should immediately know what to do in the event of a fire, although a fire will hopefully never occur). None of the critical incidents we presented to our respondents were life-threatening though, so we expected respondents to disagree to some extent (average rating below 3) that these kinds of incidents were rare. As Table 6 shows, this was the case for only one of the vignettes, suggesting that critical incidents were less frequent than we had expected. However, all ratings were significantly below a score of 4 (neither agree nor disagree), suggesting that none of the vignettes portrayed a situation that was considered to be unlikely.

Table 5

Relevance of the Critical Incidents (Means)

Cluster	All	Country							
		FI	EL	DE	IE	IT	PT	RO	CH
Phillip the Agitator	5.4** (1.4)	5.2 (1.3)	5.9 (1.1)	5.3 (1.5)	4.9 (1.4)	6.4** (1.0)	5.5 (1.4)	5.7 (1.3)	5.7 (1.6)
Emma the Runaway Teenager	5.4** (1.4)	5.6 (1.1)	5.3 (1.7)	5.4 (1.6)	4.8 (1.2)	5.8 (1.2)	5.2 (1.6)	5.5 (1.4)	6.1 (0.9)
Haldi the Desperate Migrant	5.5** (1.3)	5.8 (1.2)	5.7 (1.3)	5.7 (1.5)	5.0 (1.2)	6.1 (0.9)	5.4 (1.6)	5.3 (1.4)	5.9 (0.9)
Rosie Suffers from Panic Attacks	5.8** (1.3)	6.0 (1.3)	5.8 (1.2)	6.0 (1.1)	5.4 (1.4)	6.1 (1.4)	5.3* (1.3)	5.9 (1.2)	6.0 (1.3)
Tim Does Not Get Interested in Anything	5.5** (1.5)	5.7 (1.1)	5.8 (1.5)	5.6 (1.6)	4.7* (1.5)	5.9 (1.2)	5.2 (1.5)	5.5 (1.5)	6.3* (0.8)
Mary the Quarrelsome Mother	5.9** (1.2)	6.2 (0.8)	6.3 (0.9)	6.0 (1.3)	5.4 (1.3)	6.4 (0.8)	5.1** (1.4)	5.9 (1.3)	6.3 (0.9)

Note. Significance levels for T-test (2-sided): * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

Table 6**Rareness of the Critical Incidents (Means)**

Cluster	All		Country						
		FI	EL	DE	IE	IT	PT	RO	CH
Phillip the Agitator	3.3* (1.7)	4.4** (1.6)	2.8 (1.4)	3.6 (1.8)	2.9 (1.5)	2.2** (1.1)	2.0** (1.3)	3.1 (1.4)	4.9** (1.7)
Emma the Runaway	3.3** (1.6)	3.6 (1.4)	2.9 (1.5)	3.4 (1.6)	3.2 (1.4)	3.0 (1.5)	2.5** (1.4)	3.2 (1.4)	4.2* (1.8)
Haldi the Desperate Migrant	3.2 (1.6)	3.7 (1.5)	2.7 (1.4)	2.8* (1.6)	2.7 (1.2)	2.6 (1.5)	2.6 (1.4)	4.0** (1.6)	3.3 (1.7)
Rosie Suffers from Panic	2.7** (1.6)	2.5 (1.2)	2.2 (1.0)	2.8 (1.5)	1.9* (1.3)	2.7 (1.6)	2.7 (1.6)	2.7 (1.5)	3.4 (1.7)
Tim Does Not Get	3.1 (1.6)	3.9 (1.6)	2.5 (1.2)	3.0 (1.8)	3.0 (1.4)	2.7 (1.4)	2.3* (1.2)	3.1 (1.5)	3.2 (1.8)
Mary the Quarrelsome	3.2* (1.8)	4.4** (1.7)	2.2** (1.4)	3.5 (1.8)	2.8 (1.4)	2.8 (1.6)	2.4* (1.3)	2.8 (1.6)	4.8** (1.6)

Note. Significance levels for T-test (2-sided): * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

The frequency of the depicted challenges seems to vary between the countries though – at least when looking at the experiences of our respondents: A situation, where a large-group activity is interrupted by a participant (“Phillip”) was found to be quite regular in Portugal and Italy but relatively rare in Finland and Switzerland. Finnish and Swiss colleagues were rarely confronted with situations, where a parent (“Mary”) cannot accept her offspring’s career choice, while this situation appeared to be more frequent in Greece and Portugal.

A question of interest for us was to see, whether the perceived relevance and frequency of the different scenarios had an impact on practitioners’ training interests. To analyze this connection, we checked for correlations between the relevance and frequency ascribed to single critical incidents and individual training interests. We only report results here, where the correlations were significant at the .01 level:

First, the more frequently participants’ experienced situations similar to “Phillip the Agitator”, the greater their interests were in emotional-management and empathy training. At the same time, they placed a higher priority on diversity-management training for fellow practitioners, the more frequently they dealt with clients like “Phillip”. The more relevant practitioners found situations like “Phillip the Agitator” for the practice of career guidance and counselling, the greater their interest was in all social-emotional competence clusters. To us, this suggest that career professionals dealing with the moderation of large groups may experience a greater need for social-emotional competences, especially emotional management, than others.

Secondly, the more frequently respondents dealt with situations like “Tim Does Not Get Interested in Anything” and “Mary the Quarrelsome Mother”, the greater their interest in emotional-management competences were. The more often respondents experienced situations like “Mary the Quarrelsome Mother”, the more frequently they also suggested emotional-management training as a key need of fellow practitioners. In both scenarios, clients’ parents complicate career counselling sessions, which could be the common denominator here – suggesting that practitioners who deal with junior clients may be subjected to greater stress. The more frequently respondents dealt with clients like “Emma the Runaway Teenager”, the greater the emphasis that they put on the need of fellow practitioners for active-listening competences.

2.7 Perceived Challenge of the Critical Incidents

Overall, the different critical incidents were viewed as moderately challenging by the respondents, with few significant differences between countries (Table 7). We found few significant differences between countries, other than that Swiss respondents tended to be more confident. An interesting finding was that respondents with post-graduate certificates felt less challenged than respondents with other/no qualifications ($t = 3.2, p = .001$). We had respondents with post-graduate certificates from many countries, so this effect is probably not based on training in a certain country. Postgraduate training in career guidance and counselling is often combines a practical orientation (including internships, reflection on practice, etc.) with a strong theoretical and empirical knowledge foundation. Therefore, we believe that this finding may be due to a higher quality of learning.

Table 7

Perceived Challenge of the Critical Incidents (Means)

Cluster	All	Primed		Country							
		Yes	No	FI	EL	DE	IE	IT	PT	RO	CH
Phillip	4.5 (1.6)	4.3 (1.6)	4.6 (1.5)	4.4 (1.5)	4.5 (1.4)	4.8 (1.5)	4.3 (1.5)	4.2 (1.8)	4.8 (1.7)	4.0* (1.6)	4.4 (1.8)
Emma	4.4 (1.5)	4.3 (1.6)	4.4 (1.5)	4.2 (1.5)	4.5 (1.4)	4.6 (1.5)	3.9 (1.4)	4.9 (1.6)	4.8 (1.6)	4.1 (1.7)	3.8 (1.6)
Haldi	4.3 (1.5)	4.2 (1.5)	4.4 (1.5)	4.0 (1.8)	4.6 (1.3)	4.3 (1.6)	4.0 (1.5)	4.5 (1.6)	4.7 (1.5)	4.1 (1.4)	3.9 (1.1)
Rosie	3.8 (1.7)	3.9 (1.7)	3.8 (1.6)	3.9 (1.8)	4.3 (1.7)	3.9 (1.6)	3.0* (1.4)	3.8 (1.8)	4.4 (1.6)	3.7 (1.7)	2.6** (1.2)
Tim	4.4 (1.6)	4.3 (1.6)	4.4 (1.5)	4.3 (1.6)	4.5 (1.3)	4.4 (1.6)	3.7 (1.5)	4.6 (1.7)	4.8 (1.5)	4.3 (1.8)	3.4* (1.6)
Mary	4.1 (1.6)	4.1 (1.5)	4.1 (1.6)	3.8 (1.6)	4.2 (1.5)	4.0 (1.6)	3.7 (1.3)	4.4 (1.5)	4.7 (1.5)	4.0 (1.7)	3.5 (1.5)
Overall	4.2 (1.1)	4.1 (1.1)	4.3 (1.1)	4.1 (1.3)	4.4 (0.9)	4.3 (1.1)	3.8 (0.8)	4.4 (1.4)	4.6 (1.1)	4.0 (1.2)	3.5* (0.9)

Note. Significance levels (2-tailed): * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

This being said, we only found a small correlation between the perceived difficulty of the critical incidents and respondents' training interests. Respondents who evaluated the vignettes before indicating their training interests only had a minor tendency to express larger training interests, if they found the situations relatively challenging ($r = .14$, $p = .035$). A closer look suggested that only interests in two sets of competences were heightened among "primed" respondents: empathy and active listening.

This minor influence also explains why we did not find a significant difference between the training interests and the expressed training needs between the respondents, depending on whether they viewed the vignettes before being asked about their interests or not. A likely explanation is that the perceived challenge of the vignettes is not a good indicator of respondents' actual social-emotional competence. We expect that studies that employ more objective tests of practitioners' social-emotional competences would find a stronger correlation between competence and expressed training interests (and needs).

3. Training Needs

3.1. Limitations

The sample of practitioners in our study represents a convenience sample. Most of this sample was collected through email-based invitations at the national level. Project partners were often able to draw on pre-existing mailing lists of practitioners, e.g., in the case of Romania, where one partner organisation also acts as the national Euroguidance coordinator. In Germany, we gained the support of the national guidance forum *nfb* and the German guidance association *dvb*, who promoted the survey through their newsletters and mailing lists. Additionally, several partners used social media like EPAL, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to advertise the survey. The NICE Foundation also tried to gain support from national associations in other English- and German-speaking countries, where no project partners were active. These efforts were successful in the cases of Ireland, where both Euroguidance and the National Centre for Guidance in Education supported the survey, as well as in Switzerland, where the guidance association *profunda suisse* promoted our efforts. At the European and international level, the survey was promoted through the CEDEFOP CareersNet, the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC), the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC), the GIZ Career Guidance Community of Practice, the IAAP Counseling Division, the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling (NICE), and the international Social Emotional Learning & Career Development Project.

As these efforts show, we tried to recruit respondents in numerous ways, whereby our ambition was to recruit at least 40 respondents from each partner country (80 in Germany and Romania) and at least 350 respondents overall. We met these numbers in absolute terms, i.e., before excluding non-practitioners in Italy and Finland, which provided the statistical power for us to conduct inferential statistical tests. However, it must be noted, our sample is far from representative. Members of certain sub-domains of career guidance and counselling will certainly be over-/under-represented in our samples, e.g., school guidance counsellors, public employment counsellors, etc. Therefore, we do not speak of findings for German, Greek, Italian career practitioners per se, but only of findings for the people in our sample. We also urge anybody working with this data to refrain from generalizing our findings.

3.2. General Observations

This being said, we believe that a couple of general findings can be deduced from the outcomes of our survey. ***The most important finding from our survey is surely that our respondents were – on average – “very interested” in all five clusters of social-emotional competence training ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.8$) and named all five of them as training needs for fellow practitioners relatively often.*** Thinking of the large emphasis that the humanistic tradition of counselling places on *empathy* (e.g., Rogers, 1959) and the prominence that coaching places on *active listening*, we were somewhat surprised that practitioners would be very interested in these two training clusters. We had expected that most practitioners would have received extensive training on empathy and active listening. Overall, we do not find a lower demand for these competences than for the other clusters, though. This suggests that most training programs still do not include empathy and active-listening training to the degree that satisfies practitioner needs. A closer look at respondents’ qualifications showed that respondents with *no qualifications* in career guidance and counselling expressed a larger training interest in social-emotional training ($M = 4.2$) than respondents with some sort of qualification ($M = 3.9$, $t = -3.2$, $p = .003$). This suggests that targeted qualification programs satisfy this interest to some extent – yet only to a small degree, since we see a strong interest overall.

Of course, people with an interest in social-emotional competences may be over-represented in our sample, since we advertised the survey with reference to social-emotional competences. However, with a high level of agreement among 477 respondents, we can expect that relevant courses will attract an acceptable number of participants. Therefore, we can confidently say that it makes sense for the STRENGTH project to develop and disseminate innovative training modules for all five clusters of social-emotional competences (IO3). Since no type of qualification reduced respondents’ general interests, we recommend that these modules ought to also be integrated in existing degree programs (initial qualifications).

A look at personal characteristics of respondents produced another important finding concerning possible influences on people’s training interests. Male respondents indicated a smaller interest in social-emotional competence training ($M = 3.7$) than female respondents ($M = 3.9$, $t = 2.8$, $p = .007$). The smaller interest of male respondents in relevant training deserves further scrutiny. A closer look shows that male respondents were *not* less interested in empathy skills and active-listening skills than female colleagues. Instead, males expressed smaller interests in emotional management skills, diversity management skills, and cooperation skills. Empathy skills are known to be a domain where gender stereotypes typically lead to different self-assessments

(Baez et al., 2017). That we do not find a discrepancy here, suggests that we are dealing with another type of gender effect: female colleagues' larger demand for emotional management, diversity management, and cooperation skills may be based on being exposed to less respectful behavior in practice, on clients who question their reasoning because they are women, etc. For comparison, a study found that female physicians' competence was frequently questioned in Switzerland, if they did not communicate in a patient-centered way, whereas male physicians were accepted as authority figures even if their communication was not patient-centered (Schmid Mast et al., 2004). Since the majority of the career workforce is composed of women, the possible existence of increased pressures on female practitioners signposts a further need for relevant training offers: ***Social-emotional competence training for career practitioners may need to focus explicitly on constructive ways of establishing one's authority as a female professional.***

3.3. Country-Specific Observations

In this section, we look at specific findings for the partner countries of the STRENGTH project: Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Romania. We do not discuss the specific findings for Ireland and Switzerland, because no partners from these countries were involved on our team.

Finland: Finnish respondents expressed a significantly lower need for emotion management training than respondents from other countries – while their personal interest in this competence domain was not significantly lower than for colleagues from other countries. A possible explanation is that peer mentoring and intervision have been established in Finland for more than a decade. Additionally, teamwork, e.g., in pairs, is common in the career practice. For these reasons, practitioners are used to share information with each other, including the disclosure of emotional situations. Moreover, emotional management is explicitly included in the curricula of relevant training programs. Finnish respondents also tended to find two of the critical incidents rather uncommon, i.e., “Phillip the Agitator” and “Mary the Quarrelsome Mother”. In Finland, career professionals rarely work with large groups as in the Phillip scenario, and focus on working with individuals or in small or medium-sized groups.

Germany: In Germany, we find a relatively weak interest in social-emotional training overall. This could indicate that some practitioners in our sample are already satisfied with the training that they have received. On the other hand, it could also indicate a weaker belief in the relevance of social-emotional competences for practice. A look at the findings from another recent survey among German practitioners (Kleeberg, 2020) may help to interpret our

results. Kleeberg (2020) looked at competences, skills, and knowledge that were in relatively high demand, but where practitioners felt somewhat insecure. Among the top-5 developmental needs that were expressed in this way (regarding client relationships and communication), were *mindfulness*, *intercultural competence*, and *being able to deal with critical counselling situations*. Each of these competence needs was expressed by about 30% of respondents. Mindfulness corresponds with our emotional-management cluster, intercultural competence is part of our diversity-management cluster and being able to deal with critical counselling situations can easily be associated with the need for conflict-management competences (cooperation cluster) and emotional management. In view of Kleeberg's findings, there appears to be a sufficiently large need for social-emotional competence training in Germany – even if some practitioners may not be interested (for whatever reason). On another note, the scenario “Haldi the Desperate Migrant” was found to be more frequent in Germany than in many other countries: this is probably due to the recent acceptance of relatively many migrants from countries like Afghanistan and Syria and due to relatively high work-related migration to Germany from other European countries in the past years.

Greece: Our Greek respondents expressed an interest and need for empathy training that was comparatively higher than in other countries. Additionally, the Mary-scenario was perceived to be more frequent than in other countries and this can be explained due to the traditional role of Greek family. The role of the family in children's decisions has always been important in Greece (Πρεσβέλου & Ρήγα, 2013). Of course, especially in the last years of the crisis, we see that important family values, such as family relationships and children's obligations to family and relatives, still apply even to the younger generation. Greek parents are in many cases overprotective and tend to interfere in important decisions of children, such as choosing a profession, as they believe that they will protect them from wrong choices.

Italy: Our Italian respondents expressed one of the largest interests in social-emotional competence training. Like in the case of Greece, we found a comparatively large interest in empathy training (unlike in many other countries). In terms of needs, emotional-management training was the first choice. Dealing with the scenario “Phillip the Agitator” was considered more relevant and frequent than in other countries.

Portugal: Our Portuguese respondents expressed one of the largest interests in social-emotional competence training overall. In terms of needs, emotional-management training was the first choice. Dealing with the scenarios “Rosie suffers from panic attacks” and “Mary the quarrelsome mother” were viewed as relatively less relevant. At the same time, all six of the professional challenges were viewed as quite frequent in practice.

Romania: Among our Romanian respondents, we found a heightened interest and need for emotional-management and cooperation training. Usually, emotional management abilities are part of a psychological initial training of school counsellors in Romania, but there is not enough emphasis on the practical exercise of emotional-management skills and on the use of learning methods based on cooperation. Cooperation is a hot issue as Romanian practitioners and services in the career guidance area are focused on their own beneficiaries, somewhat disconnected and not covering transitions from an educational level to another or from education to the labour market. Regarding the need of training on cooperation skills, an aspect underlined by David (2015) is a lack of trust in other people, who are viewed as potential competitors. This lack of openness is probably a remnant of Romania's history as a former communist country (1945-1989) and the way this has affected thinking and behaviour in the Romanian society.

Needs for empathy training, active-listening training, and diversity management were relatively low. Related to empathy and active listening, we assume that this may be due to previous projects that place a strong emphasis on these skills in Romania. Moreover, training courses have been replicated at the local level, so a large number of practitioners have been involved, and some of them also participated in the STRENGTH Survey. Active listening and communication abilities are addressed in initial and continuous preparation of Romanian school counsellors/career guidance practitioners which could explain the relatively low interest in their development.

The low rating of the needs in diversity management might be explained by the fact that Romania is not a country with many incoming migrants. Romania is a country that primarily "sends" people abroad (for study, work, or living), so that the beneficiaries of career guidance and counselling services are rarely immigrants. Unfortunately, the diversity and intercultural management cluster's description did not make an explicit reference to working with people from subcultures, minority groups, and vulnerable populations, which is why many respondents may have inferred that this cluster mainly referred to work with people from other countries.

Interestingly, the "Phillip the Agitator" scenario was viewed as least challenging in Romania. Qualitative studies should explore the reasons why this scenario was perceived in this way. Some assumptions can be made related to the relatively authoritarian culture of Romanian, which implies that people are socialized to avoid disturbing others and asking questions (which is perceived as rude). This culture also allows practitioners to make use of authority when dealing with difficult situations. This does not necessarily constitute a good practice but is an effective way of handling difficult situations and restoring peace for the sake of running a big event smoothly.

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Appendix 1: Guidelines for Focus-Group Interviews

1. Preparation

The workshop should take about 3 to 3.5 hours (90 min for IO2 + 90 min for IO1). Recruit participants to participate for one-half day (morning or afternoon). Plan to have a break in the middle of the workshop, so that participants can refresh themselves. Please provide some drinks and carbohydrates (fruit, chocolates, etc.) to ensure that participants' concentration will remain strong. Ideally, the workshop will take place in a room with some natural light (as much as the season allows).

In terms of materials, please translate and print consent forms (one per participant). Also, please translate the PowerPoint presentations, so the workshops can be offered in your local language. For the identification of critical incidents, you will need a flipchart, a whiteboard or something similar. For the group work, you can either print and distribute small paper forms for participants, or you can ask them to work on larger flipchart papers. The room should be set up in a 'creative' way, ideally. Ideally, there will be 'islands' of tables with chairs around them, which allow for work in small groups.

2. Introduction

Please use the PowerPoint presentation (translated into your local language) to inform the participants on the purpose of the STRENGTH project and the goals of the workshop. Stress that we are welcoming them as experts on the practice of career guidance and counselling and that we greatly value their practical experience and want to learn from them.

To be clear about what is included when we speak about career guidance and counselling, you can shortly present the NICE Professionals Roles. The basic message is that career support includes several roles and tasks and is not confined to "counselling only", for example. Give everybody an opportunity to present themselves to the others *shortly*, if people don't know each other yet. A helpful method to get short self-presentations is to lead by good example and only say 1-2 sentences about oneself and one's work before handing over to the next person.

Share the information from the consent form with participants and ask them to sign the consent form. Please clarify all relevant points and collect the signed consent forms before proceeding with the workshop.

3. Collection of Critical Incidents

Inform the participants about the timeline for Part 1 (the introduction and part 1 of the workshop should take about 90 minutes in total). Explain the complete process before beginning to identify critical incidents.

In the first step, you invite participants to share critical incidents (interesting cases for discussion), which the group can then work on in the next step. For instance, ask the question: "If you look back to your recent practice, do you have a situation or an incident or case in mind, where you have faced a socio-emotional challenge?" You should collect at least one case per four participants (better: one case per three participants).

What is a Critical Incident?

The critical incidents we are interested in, concern socio-emotionally challenging situations faced while offering career support. We are looking for situations that are difficult to deal with socially and/or emotionally. Example:

"A career counsellor gets pulled into a conflict between a teenage girl and her parents regarding her choice of a vocation."

Note the title of each critical incident on a whiteboard or flipchart, so that all participants are able to see what incidents have been collected so far. Behind the title, note the name of the incident provider, so that you can address them personally, and so that the other participants will know with whom they may want to talk / which group they might want to join.

Begin by asking the experts to shortly present the critical incident they want to share. Avoid going into detail: this will be the work of the groups in the next step. What you want to arrive at, is a relatively general problem statement, which is somewhat dissociated from the very concrete situation that the person experienced (the focus is not on helping them to deal with this particular situation).

Take time to identify a good name for each critical incident in cooperation with the providers. Good titles are short (max. 8 words) and sound like the title of a story. To engage the participants' imagination and compassion, challenge the incident providers to give the main characters of their critical incidents a name. To focus the discussion on concrete problems, challenge the case providers to name the problem in the title of each case. For reference, four exemplary titles from the Split Workshop were:

- ◆ Arnold, the job-switcher (shared by Viktoria)
- ◆ Laura's disclosure of domestic violence (shared by Emma)
- ◆ Ari's and Seija's conflict (shared by Ari)
- ◆ Dragan has lost all hope (shared by Milica)

In finding a good title for the critical incident, you might need to clarify what the concrete challenge is about. If your contributor is struggling, you can also engage other participants and see, if they have something similar, they would like to share. A comparison of two critical incidents can either lead to the identification of a common problem or help to disambiguate what each challenge is *really* about. It is important that participants have a relatively clear idea about the type of problem they will be discussing, so it is fine if you take a couple of minutes to give each case a good title together with the group.

What do I do if there are too many critical incidents?

The situation could arise that more than every third person wants to contribute a critical incident. A plausible explanation is that some people may not feel that socio-emotional challenges, which are relevant for them, are “on the table” yet. Another possibility is that they are not interested in discussing one of the critical incidents that have already been suggested. In general, it is certainly better for us to collect more incidents than necessary than to give participants the feeling that we are not interested. At the same time, participants should know that the method will only work if they work together. It will possibly be necessary for the group to “give up” certain incidents, if there are too many.

If this happens, you can use the following approach. Once all incidents have been collected, each person gets to distribute 3 points among all of the cases (max. 1 per incident). The incidents that received most points are kept. Incidents that received only 1 or less points, are given up.

Do not ~~eross~~ cross through people’s names when doing this: people could experience shame if you do so. It is better to underline or circle the critical incidents that have been selected. Additionally, it may be helpful to stress that concentrating on certain incidents does not imply that the other incidents are not relevant or interesting per se.

What do I do if there are too few critical incidents?

There are never too few critical incidents. If people are reluctant to share incidents, there may be diverse reasons why they are holding back. One possibility is that they are censoring their incidents themselves, e.g., because they do not want to look weak in front of the others. To avoid this from happening, it is important to stress that all participants are experts and that we are also interested in incidents that they once found difficult or challenging in the past, even if they know how to deal with these kinds of situations nowadays.

Another possibility is that there is a person in the room who is shaming people, e.g., by laughing at the incidents they share. This happens rarely, but it can be very detrimental. If this happens, you need to intervene immediately, e.g., by focusing the group's attention on the problematic behavior.

What is more likely, is that people are a bit timid. For this purpose, it is important that you try to appreciate every incident that is brought forward. Show real interest. Try to understand the challenge yourself. If somebody in your group thinks that a situation is challenging which you do not find it difficult at all, do not mention your reservations. Focus on understanding what the challenge is without evaluating how "big" it is. We want people to feel comfortable in sharing and discussing the problems that they face regularly, after all.

Finally, a good strategy is to tell the group from the beginning, how many critical incidents you want to have. If you have 8 participants, you might say that you want at least 3 incidents. You will get them because people want to move on.

4. Joint Analysis of Critical Incidents in Groups

In the next step, we set up groups of 2-5 people, who will work on individual incidents. A good way to get people to start working, is to ask everybody, if they already know which group they will join. If people are undecided, they may need some additional information on the topics of some groups.

Let people decide autonomously, which group they would like to join. It is better to have 2 groups of 2 people and one group of 5 people, if everybody is happy, instead of asking some people to join groups that they do not want to be in.

Set a time, by when the groups need to be ready to make their elevator presentations. 30 minutes should be enough, but participants will probably also appreciate 40-45 minutes, if you have enough time on your schedule.

For the group work, formulate the following task and make sure that participants can see it all the time (e.g., on a flipchart or by using a slide):

- ◆ **What is it that makes this situation challenging?** (Develop a description of the main features of the situation. Think of individual and contextual aspects, the role of motivations, beliefs, incentives...)
- ◆ **What shouldn't you do in this kind of a situation?** (Try to formulate 2-3 "Don't..." statements)
- ◆ **What could work / be helpful in a situation like this?** (Try to formulate 2-3 "Do..." statements)

Make sure that participants understand that the description of what makes this situation challenging can include all kinds of different aspects, e.g., misunderstandings, lack of knowledge, strong emotions, economic, institutional, or political pressures, etc. Give them an example of a Do and a Don't statement, if you haven't done so yet.

Then make sure that the participants have all the materials they need to work on their cases. This may include flipchart paper or protocols for the description and analysis of their critical incidents, but also writing materials.

In the next step, there is not much for you to do. Just be present in an active way, e.g., by walking around the room and observing the participants in a curious way. Be ready to answer questions for clarification. If you notice people, who aren't engaged in their groups, you might want to check and see, if everything is okay.

5. Elevator Presentations

In their presentations, each group shall share its main points with the others, i.e., "What is it that makes this situation challenging?", "What shouldn't you do in this kind of a situation?", and "What could work / be helpful in a situation like this?"

Three minutes per group are fully sufficient. At the Split Academy, each group only had 2 minutes. As for the analysis in groups, having only a limited amount of time focuses attention and motivates people to concentrate on their task instead of procrastinating or talking about other topics.

A good method to manage the time for elevator presentations is to set one's smartphone timer to 3 minutes per presentation and make sure that it beeps loudly when the time is up. This way you will not have to interrupt participants yourself, if they take too long, and the procedure will be viewed as fair by everyone.

Thank the groups after their presentations and move on to the next presentation without a discussion. This way, the presentations will be completed quickly, before you can move onto the next step.

Appendix 2: Consent Form

First Name(s): _____ Surname(s): _____

Thank you for your participation in this focus-group workshop of the EU-project STRENGTH, which aims to strengthen the social-emotional competences of career practitioners across Europe. We are very happy to welcome you here as experts regarding the socio-emotional challenges of career guidance and counselling. Your contributions at this workshop will help us to decide, which socio-emotional competences are most needed in the practice of career guidance and counselling and how to design our training program.

This workshop will be composed of two main parts. In the first part, we will work together to identify challenging situations from the practice of career guidance and counselling. In small groups, you will jointly analyze these situations. You will develop a description of what makes situations like these particularly challenging and what professionals should do and should not do in situations like these (Do's and Don'ts).

In the second part of the workshop, you will discuss what kinds of social-emotional competences professionals need in order to deal with challenging situations like the ones you have described. Additionally, you will discuss, how relevant competences can be trained.

The documentation and audio recordings from the workshop will not be published and will be stored safely. They will only be shared with the partners of the STRENGTH project, who will analyze them anonymously. No personal information will be collected. Your name and personal information will not be mentioned in any publications that emerge this workshop. Any published information will only be statistical, e.g., the number, nationality, and gender of participants.

<input type="checkbox"/>	I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the information presented above. I am participating at this workshop voluntarily as an adult. I know that I can leave the workshop at any time. I allow the partners of the STRENGTH project to conduct research and prepare publications based on all materials produced at this workshop. I yield the right to be named as an author of any publications that draw on the developed materials.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to be named as an expert who contributed to the STRENGTH project on relevant publications of the STRENGTH project.

Date & Place: _____ Signature: _____

Appendix 3: CI Template

Title of the Critical Incident

- ◆ Max. 8 words; give names to main characters; focus on main problem
- ◆ For example, "High-Stakes Counselling with Said"

Description

- ◆ What is it that makes this situation challenging? Develop a description of the main features of the situation (short text). Think of individual and contextual aspects, the role of motivations, beliefs, incentives...)
- ◆ For example, "Said (client) is a refugee. Whether he can stay in the country, depends on the outcome of YOUR conversation with him."

Recommendations

- ◆ Formulate the do's and don'ts shortly and concisely, for example:
- ◆ (Do) Empathize with Said's stress and despair
- ◆ (Don't) Clarify that you are not responsible for the outcome of the conversation

What shouldn't you do in this kind of a situation? (DON'T)

- ◆
- ◆

What could work / be helpful in a situation like this? (DO)

- ◆
- ◆

Appendix 4: Survey

1. Cover Page

Welcome to the STRENGTH Survey!

With the STRENGTH project, we aim to find out what kinds of social and emotional competences professionals of career guidance and counselling in Europe need. Thank you very much for contributing to this project!

This survey is anonymous. We will not ask you for your name or for any information through which you could be identified. We will only ask you for some basic demographic information. For example, your gender and work experience. Otherwise, we are interested in your opinions on several scenarios and professional skills.

Taking this survey will take you 15-20 minutes. If you cannot finish the survey, you can continue filling it out at a later point in time by reopening the same link.

By giving your consent to the processing of your anonymous information, you can begin to take the survey. You can abort the survey at any time by closing the window. We will only process completed surveys.

Best wishes from the STRENGTH Team

2. Consent Form (Please Read Carefully)

Study Coordination: NICE Foundation (www.nice-network.eu)

Contact: Johannes Katsarov (coordinator@nice-network.eu)

If you would like to obtain more information about the processing of your personal data, please click... (Box 1 opens, see below)

- ◆ I agree to the processing of my personal data in accordance with the information provided herein
- ◆ I don't want to participate
 - ◆ Are you sure you don't want to participate in this survey?
 - ◆ Once you confirm, you will not be able to participate in this survey anymore.
 - ◆ Cancel
 - ◆ Confirm

3. Demographic Questions

Before the actual survey begins, we would like to start with a few short questions about yourself.

First, we would like to know whether you practice career guidance and counselling.

Please select the option that fits you best.

- ◆ Yes, I offer career guidance and counselling to clients seeking career-related support. This is my main profession.
- ◆ Yes, I offer some career-related support to people. However, this is not my main profession.
- ◆ No, I personally do not offer career guidance and counselling - at least not professionally.

How do you define your gender?

- ◆ Female
- ◆ Male
- ◆ Other

Have you received specialized training in career guidance and counselling?

Please check all that apply.

- ◆ Master degree or equivalent
- ◆ Postgraduate certificate or equivalent
- ◆ Training through a professional association
- ◆ Bachelor degree or equivalent
- ◆ Training from a private institute
- ◆ Other (please explain)
- ◆ No

In which country or countries do you work and live?

Please name all, ideally by spelling them in English (e.g., "Romania"). If you live and/or work in several countries, please separate them with a comma, e.g., "Portugal, Spain".

4. Critical Incident Section (Randomized)

In the next section of our survey, we would like you to have a look at six challenging situations in the practice of career guidance and counselling. Please read the descriptions of these situations carefully before you answer the following questions.

This is not a test. We are only interested in your personal opinion.

Some of the situations may be untypical for your area of practice, e.g., if they deal with children but you only work with adults. If this is the case, please imagine a similar scenario in your working context. We are mainly interested in your opinion on similar situations, not on the exact scenario that is described."

After each vignette, respondents were asked to make the following assessments:

Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements on a scale from (1) "totally disagree" to (7) "totally agree":

- ◆ Every career professional should be capable of dealing with a situation like this.
- ◆ Situations like this are rare in career guidance and counselling.
- ◆ Many career professionals would struggle in dealing with this situation effectively.

Vignette 1: Phillip the Agitator

Audrey is facilitating a session on job search practices for more than 100 people from different educational and professional backgrounds at an employment center. Throughout the session, Audrey is frequently interrupted by Phillip. Phillip appears to have an opinion on every topic and always ends up blaming either the government, the political system, or the big capitalist companies. Phillip's seemingly innocent remarks provoke approving and disapproving responses from the rest of the group, leading to chatter among people and additional public remarks. For Audrey, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the focus of the session and cover all contents in time.

Vignette 2: Emma the Runaway Teenager

Emma (13 years old, adopted) visits the 7th grade. Emma is very introverted and shows symptoms of a possible depression. Lately, she has been absent from school regularly and has run away from home several times. She has gained a lot of weight and lacks a motivation to learn. Her adoptive mother does not accept Emma's growing need for freedom and tries to control her daughter. In a career counselling session, Emma's mother interrupts the session repeatedly and will not collaborate with Maya, the counsellor.

Vignette 3: Haldi the Desperate Migrant

Haldi, a young engineer, needs to find a job. If he cannot find a job soon, the authorities will force him to leave the country. Haldi has tried to find a job for two months but has failed so far, which is why he is becoming increasingly desperate. In Ruth's counselling session, he expresses anger, disappointment, and lack of trust towards employers who do not want to employ migrants in their businesses. He feels that everyone in the country is hostile and prejudiced against him as a migrant.

Vignette 4: Rosie Suffers from Panic Attacks

Rosie, an 18-year-old girl in the last year of high school, stands out at school and has excellent marks in all subjects. With the final exams coming up, she is very anxious though. In fear of the oral exams, she suffers from panic attacks and nightmares. During an orientation interview on her choice of a university, Rosie tells Keith that she cannot decide about her future, because all she can think about now is how she needs to complete the final exams with the best possible grade.

Vignette 5: Tim Does Not Get Interested in Anything

Tim is a student in need of special support. In a study planning discussion involving Tony (the counsellor), Tim, and his parents, Tim shows no interest in any sort of education or vocation. Nothing seems to motivate him. It is also extremely hard to identify any of Tim's strengths. Tim's parents are upset. They begin to display their anger and impatience more and more openly. Towards the end of the session, the father interrupts Tony angrily and tells him to finally solve the problem.

Vignette 6: Mary the Quarrelsome Mother

Helen, a student, attends a career counselling program together with her mother, Mary. Mary is a financial analyst who owns her own company. She wants Helen to study economics so that Helen will be able to take over the company in the future. When Robert, the counselor announces that Helen expressed her interest in becoming a teacher in a career interest questionnaire, Mary gets upset and starts yelling at Robert. She claims that career questionnaire is invalid because she knows her daughter better than anyone else and she knows best what suits her daughter.

5. Training Interests and Priorities

In the next section, we are interested in your opinion about different training opportunities.

Priorities for the Training of Socio-Emotional Competences

In the STRENGTH project, we will design courses to promote career professionals' socio-emotional competences. We would now like to learn, which kinds of courses would be most important for you, personally, and for career professionals in your country, more generally."

Please begin by thinking of yourself. In which of the following areas would you be interested in improving your skills?

à Here, each of the clusters from Exhibit 1 (Section 1.2) was presented separately.

Please indicate your interest in the following five course topic on a scale from (1) "not interested at all" to (5) "extremely interested".

Now, please think about career professionals in your country. Which training priorities would suggest for them?

Imagine the following situation. A government agency has asked you to set up a special training programme of 2 days for career professionals in your field of work. The goal is to promote social and emotional competences that allow career counsellors to deal with challenging situations.

Which priorities would you select for the programme, if you had to choose from the five topics presented above? Please select the 2 topics that would be most important in your opinion:"

Please select the 2 most important topics by moving them to the right. You can find the detailed descriptions of the different options above. If you change your mind, you can move topics back to the left. Please select no more than 2 priorities. We will ignore answers, if more than 2 priorities are selected.

- ◆ 1. Empathy Skills
- ◆ 2. Emotional Management Skills
- ◆ 3. Diversity Management Skills
- ◆ 4. Active Listening Skills
- ◆ 5. Cooperation Skills

If you have any comments on training priorities, you are welcome to share them with us. (text box)

6. Final Page

Thank you very much for participating in the STRENGTH Survey!

You have now completed all questions.

To assure the anonymity of this survey, we will not ask you for your contact information here. However, if you have been invited to this survey by a partner from the STRENGTH project, they will surely inform you once the results of the survey are available.

With best wishes,

The STRENGTH Team

Abstract

The practice of career guidance and counselling supports people in dealing with a wide variety of challenges related to their education and training, their vocational development and employment. Career professionals support their clients in diverse ways, through counselling, education, assessment, and information, but also through interventions in social systems, e.g., through talks with clients' parents or employers. Little empirical research has focused on the question thus far, which role social and emotional competences like the management of one's emotions play for career guidance and counselling.

With this study, the STRENGTH project, aimed at gaining some first insights into career professionals' needs for social-emotional competences in Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, and beyond. Focus-group interviews with practitioners in all project countries demonstrated that career professionals face a wide array of social and emotional challenges in their practice. The international survey with more than 400 participants that followed, showed that the demand for social-emotional competence training is large while training interests and needs differ between countries.

In consideration of the findings, we suggest that initial and further training programs for career professionals should pay more attention to social and emotional competences in the future. Practice-oriented, empirically founded training of competences for diverse social and emotional challenges is needed to equip practitioners adequately. The cases presented in this report can provide educators with a good starting point for the design of teaching materials and self-assessment exercises.