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# SEA MENTORS

## SEAFARERS EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE BASED MENTORS

Project number: KA220-VET-93A876D8

# SURVEY ANALYSIS

## Questionnaire for Cadets / Interns/ Young Officers

### MENTORSHIP PERCEPTIONS

2023

The survey has been distributed through SeaMentors's project partners within various social media applications including the website ([www.seamentors.eu](http://www.seamentors.eu)), LinkedIn, facebook, adl platform (<https://marplat.eu/course/view.php?id=50>) and direct email notices. The survey had been submitted by applicants throughout a period of 6 months, during March 2023 – October 2023.

The selected participants to this survey were cadets and young officers. To be considered as valid, there was a pre-requirement for experience, consisting in a minimum of two months onboard ship serving as cadet, and a maximum of 12 months as 3<sup>rd</sup> Officer/Engineer/ETO in short or deep-sea voyages, in case of young officers.

The cadets' responses to the addressed questions were both collected, from navy and merchant fleet.

The survey consisted in 16 items and therefore, 290 questionnaires were distributed while 262 valid responses were collected with a response rate of 90 percent.

The survey was a KAP type (knowledge, attitudes and practices), the questions targeting the general frame of mentoring, which includes the barriers to, as well as the major drivers of best practice, at sea and on shore.

The following table 1 shows the respondents' profile of the survey.

**Table 1. Profile of respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Designation	Deck Cadet	92
	Engine Cadet	58
	Electrical Cadet	16
	3rd Officer	15
	3rd Engineer	22
	Electro -Technical Officer (ETO)	3
	Navy Cadet	56
Education	High School	68
	College	65
	University Graduate	93
	Post-graduate (Master)	30
	Post-graduate (PhD)	6
<i>Total respondents</i>		262

There was a total of 262 responses collected, out of which 222 (84.7%) were Cadets respondents and 40 (15.3%) were Young Officers respondents. From a total of

222 responding Cadets, 25% were navy cadets and 75% were cadets from merchant fleet.

In the Table 2 is depicted the nationality pools for the survey participants – then, 9 different nationalities were represented, were Polish and Romanian respondents were dominant.

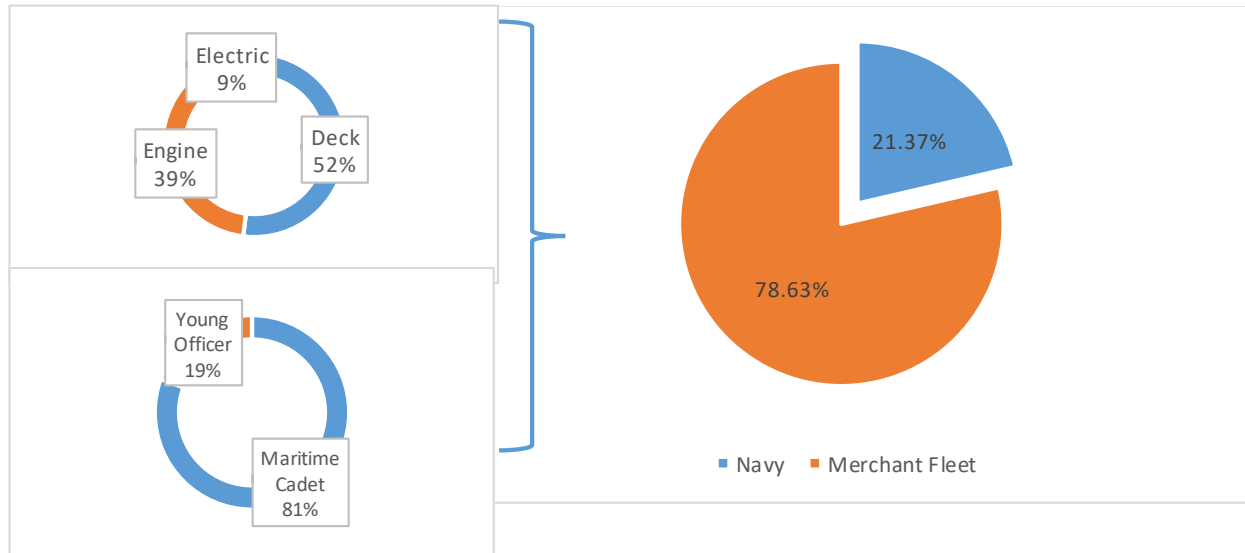
**Table 2. Respondents' nationalities**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Romania	Deck Cadet	29
	Engine Cadet	20
	Electrical Cadet	14
	3rd Officer	4
	3rd Engineer	16
	ETO	1
	Navy Cadet	3
Poland	Deck Cadet	11
	Engine Cadet	28
	3rd Officer	1
	3rd Engineer	2
	Navy Cadet	49
Bulgaria	Deck Cadet	9
	Engine Cadet	4
	Electrical Cadet	2
	3rd Officer	1
	ETO	1
	Navy Cadet	3
Turkiye	Deck Cadet	41
	Engine Cadet	5
	3rd Officer	8
	3rd Engineer	2
	ETO	1
	Navy Cadet	1
Norway	Engine Cadet	1
Uruguay	Deck Cadet	2
India	3rd Officer	1
Scotland	3rd Engineer	1
Ukraine	3rd Engineer	1

From 262 respondents, 33% were Romanians, 34% Polish, 22% Turkish and 7% Bulgarian, the pool of respondents being focused on the partners' origin countries involved in SeaMentors project implementation.

For concluding on distinctive categories with peculiar features, the respondents were grouped in Navy and merchant fleet representatives, as depicted in the Figure 1.

The data from the figure below, shows that 78.6% from respondents represents merchant fleet and 21.4% were from Navy.

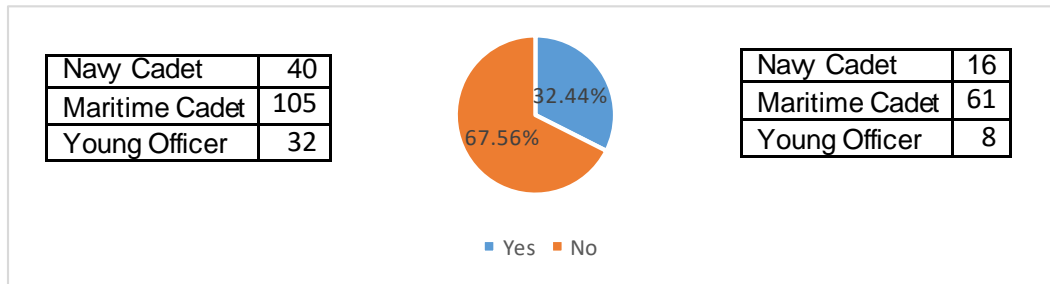


**Figure 1. The KAP respondents' distribution**

The distribution of cadets and young officers on departments/specialty is dominated by deck professionals (52%), but the engine (39%) and electric (9%) departments are represented, too.

**Question 1: Have you participated in other mentoring programs in the past?**

About 67% of respondents said that they were participated to a mentoring program, a formal one, in the past. Responses of participants can refer to an informal mentoring, too. The informal mentoring process is more organic, unstructured and 'bottom-up' with individuals developing a mentoring relationship amongst themselves to offer support from a personal and skills development perspective.



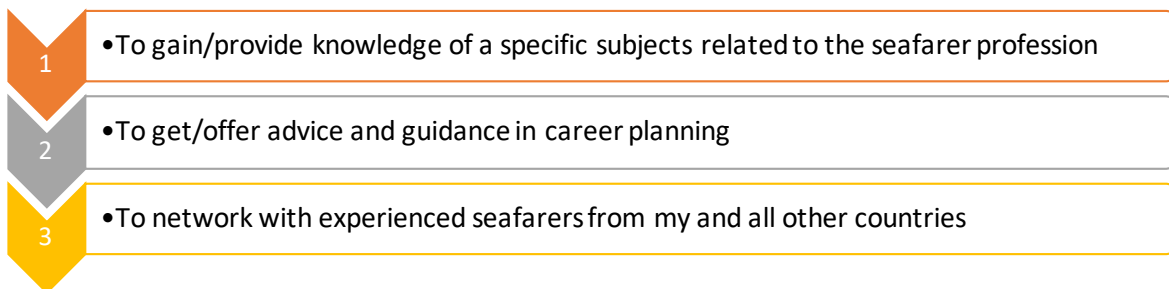
**Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' attendance to a mentoring program**

The distribution of participants responses showed that mentoring program (formal or/and informal) is used in merchant fleet and Navy. 82% of respondents that participated to a mentoring program are cadets, both Navy and merchant. But, in the same time, 91% of respondents that answer 'no' to the question are cadets, too.

In conclusion, looking at the data from above figure, it can be said that is possible that some navigation companies or onboard navy ship, when a cadet or a young officer was embarked on ship it was designated formally, one of the member of crew, as a training officer.

**Question 2: What is mentoring at sea to you?**

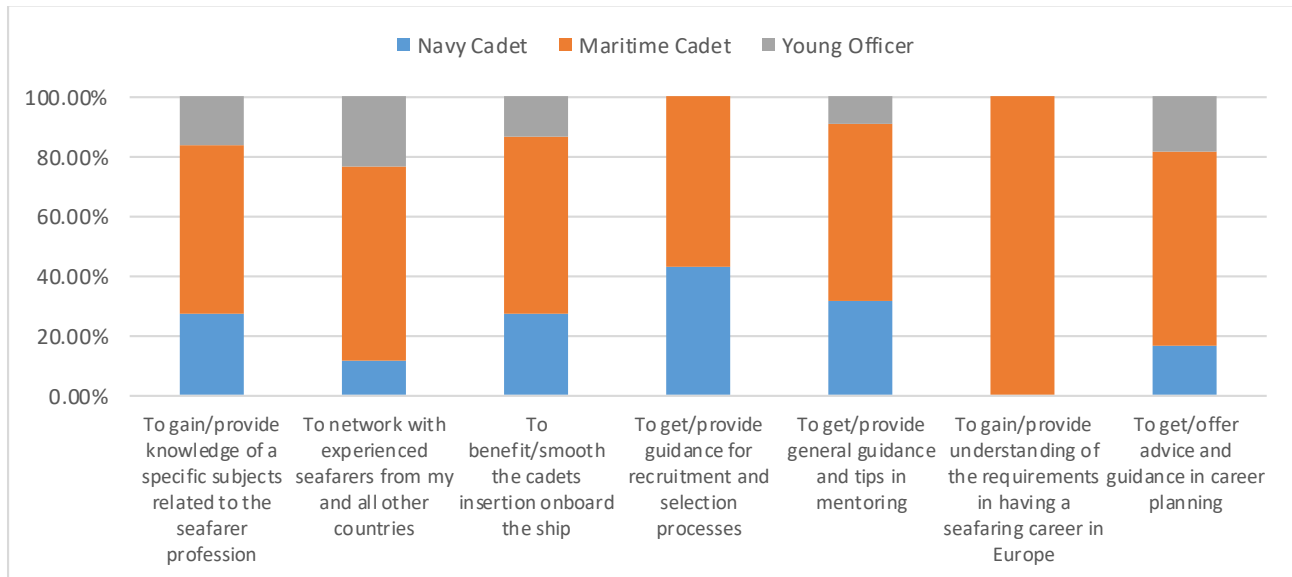
Cadets and young officers were asked what represents the mentoring at sea for them. They had to choose from 6 available answer options. Top 3 of their choices is available in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Top 3 answers of mentoring at sea definition**

On the first place of their responses with 38.17% was to "gain/provide knowledge of a specific subjects related to the seafarer profession", followed by "to get/offer advice and guidance in career planning" (18.32%) and, on third place, by "network with experienced seafarers" (16.41%). Therefore, mentoring at sea for cadets and young officers means more importance to acquaintance contents related to their next jobs onboard ship than get/provide guidance for recruitment and selection processes.

A detailed distribution of respondents' responses is showed in Figure 4.



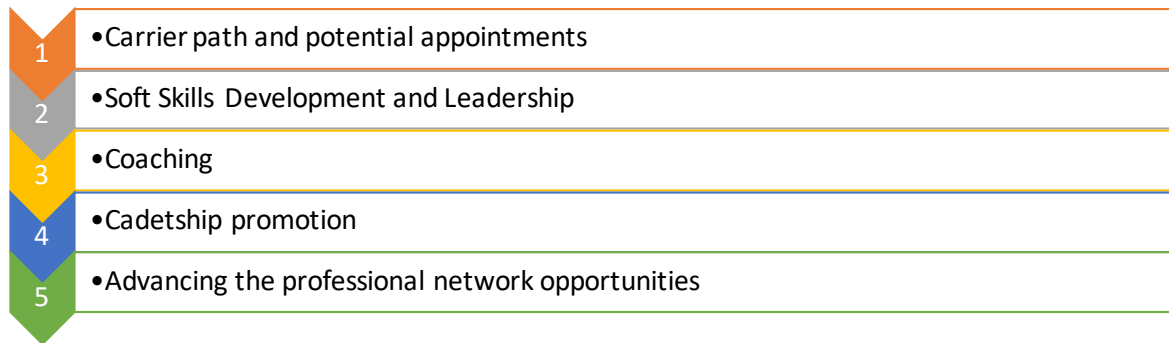
**Figure 4. Distribution of responses, by categories**

Mentoring at sea for Navy cadet are important to gain/provide knowledge of a specific subjects related to the seafarer profession, to get/offer advice and guidance in career planning and to get/provide general guidance and tips in mentoring.

Maritime cadets and young officers choices for what means mentoring at sea are: to gain/provide knowledge of a specific subjects related to the seafarer profession, to get/offer advice and guidance in career planning and network with experienced seafarers.

**Question 3: What topics are likely to be approached by your mentor during a potential mentorship program to be part in?**

Another questions asked participants about topics are likely to be approached by mentor during a potential mentorship program to be part in. The top 5 of the received responses can be found in the Figure 5.



**Figure 5. Top 5 topics likely to be approached in a mentoring program**

From respondents' responses has resulted that the carrier path and the potential appointments are the first choices in the topics likely to be approached by a mentor. Soft skills development and leadership, coaching, cadetship promotion or advancing the professional network opportunities were the following topics, considered important by cadets and young officers to be approached in a mentorship program.

**Table 3. Distribution topics likely approached in a mentoring program, by category**

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Cadetship promotion	13	28	5
Advancing the professional network opportunities	1	12	3
Carrier path and potential appointments	10	44	13
Soft Skills Development and Leadership	22	29	11
Coaching	5	40	2
Career Counselling	3	4	4
Cultural Aspects	-	1	1
Interview in job market	1	4	1
Publications and presentations	1	2	-

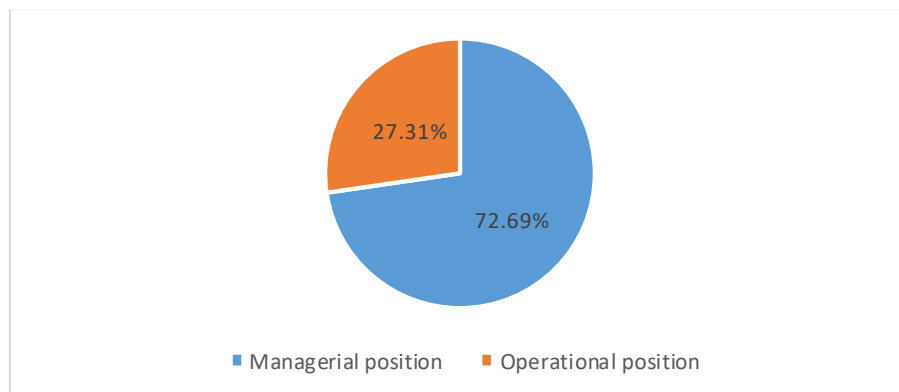
The distribution of topics likely to be approached in a mentoring program, by category, is depicted in the Table 3. Navy cadets are more interested in topics like soft skills development and leadership, cadetship promotion or carrier path and potential appointments.

Topics like carrier path and potential appointments are more important for merchant fleet respondents (27.9%), cadets and young officers. Also, maritime cadets (24.4%), would be interested in coaching while young officers (27.5%) could be engaged in topic like soft skills development and leadership.

#### **Question 4: Which positions would you prefer to be mentor?**

The survey sought to identify the range of rank positions onboard the ship or onshore, that could be more suitable to be mentor for cadets/interns or young officers, as shown in the Figure 6.

More than 72% of survey participants considered that managerial position are more competent to be a mentor, while 27% believed that operational position on board ship are better.



**Figure 6. Who is more suitable to be mentor**

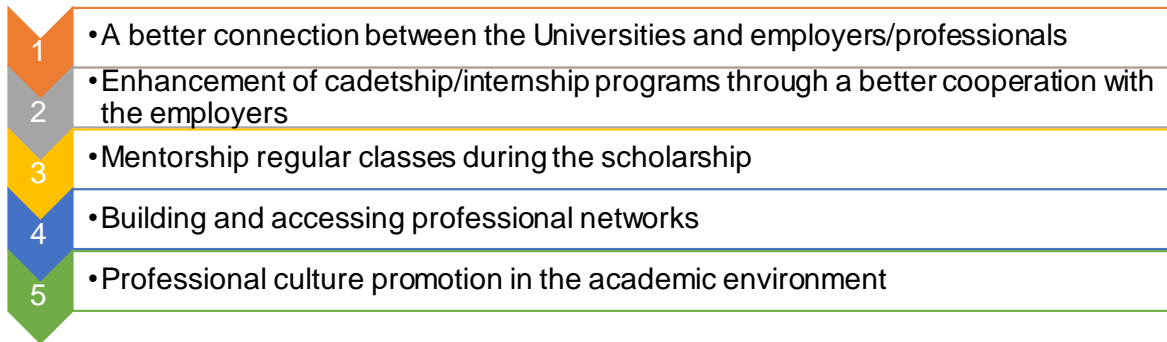
Whatever mentor's position, the time availability is the main barrier for mentoring and learning on board ship. Crew members are already stretched in their roles and therefore have no time to teach or mentor cadets or the new employees.

The respondent's options can be refer to lack of trust in the ability or experience of the above rank and therefore less expectations to learn from them.



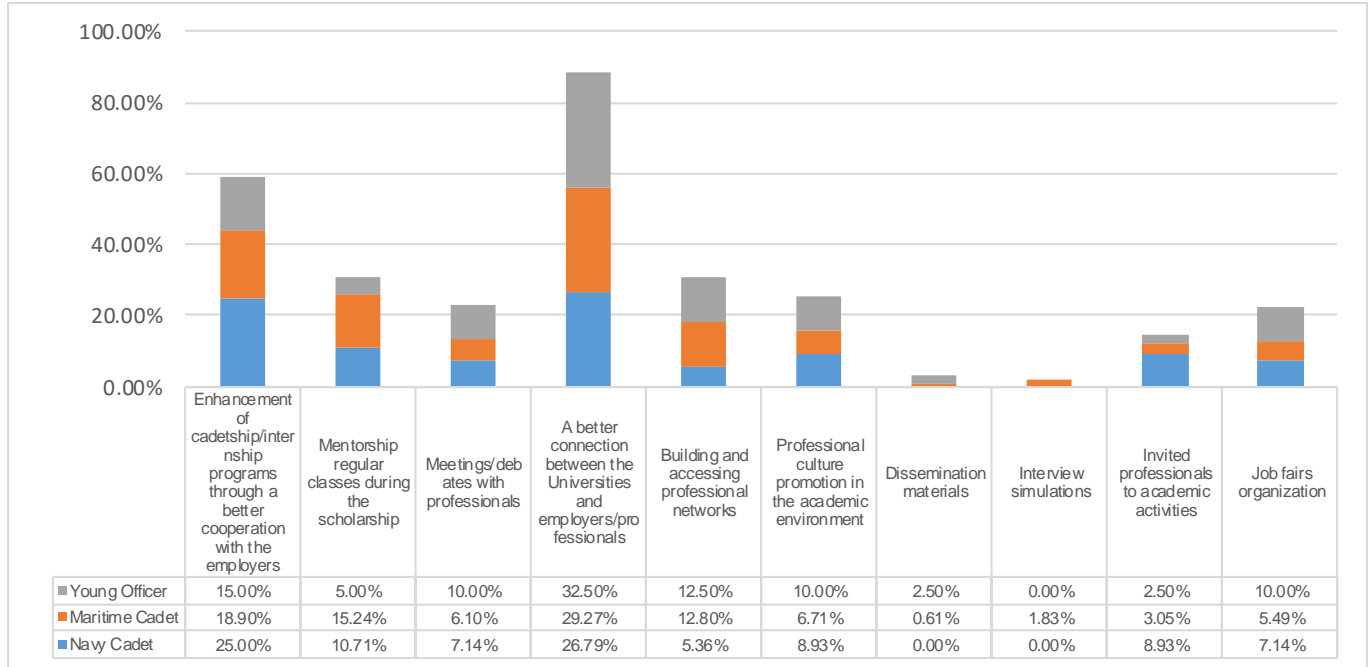
**Question 5: Which factors would effectively stimulate the mentorship understanding or mentoring program implementation?**

Cadets and young officers had to choose factors that would stimulate the mentorship understanding or enable the mentoring program implementation. The top 5 choices are available in the Figure 7.



**Figure 7. Top 5 factors likely to enable a mentoring program implementation**

On the first place, respondents consider that a better connection between the Universities and employers/professionals would be a stimulative factor for an effective implementation of mentoring program. The second and third options, enhancement of cadetship/internship programs through a better cooperation with the employers and mentorship regular classes during the scholarship, are strong related with first one and this three factors comprise 61.5% from all responses.

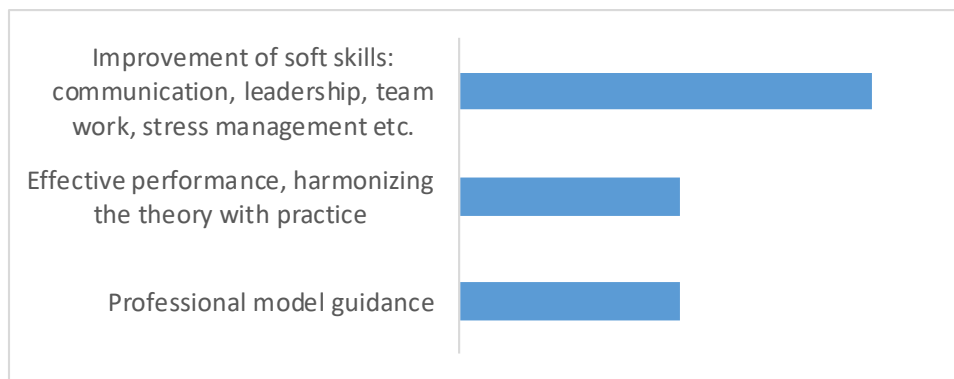


**Figure 8. Distribution of factors that would stimulate a mentoring program implementation, by category**

First two options of the respondents are the same for all categories as showed in Figure 8. Building and accessing professional networks, professional culture promotion in the academic environment or invited professionals to the academic activities are factors that showed Universities the importance of career counselling and guidance for their students. That's the perfect context for organizing activities related to maritime industry.

**Question 6: Which are the most positive outcomes that you would experience valuing the relationship with the mentor**

Positive outcomes of a mentoring program as cadets and young officer are valuing is highlight in Figure 9. More than 34% of respondents said that improvement of soft skills as communication, leadership, team work, stress management are very important outcomes of a relationship with the mentor.



**Figure 9. Top 3 most positive outcomes in a mentoring program**

Therefore, the mentor can provide support for cadets/interns or for young officers by harmonizing the theory with the practice or by providing a professional model guidance.

Distribution of most positive outcomes in a mentoring program, by category is shown below, in Table 4.

**Table 4. Distribution of most positive outcomes from a mentoring program, by category**

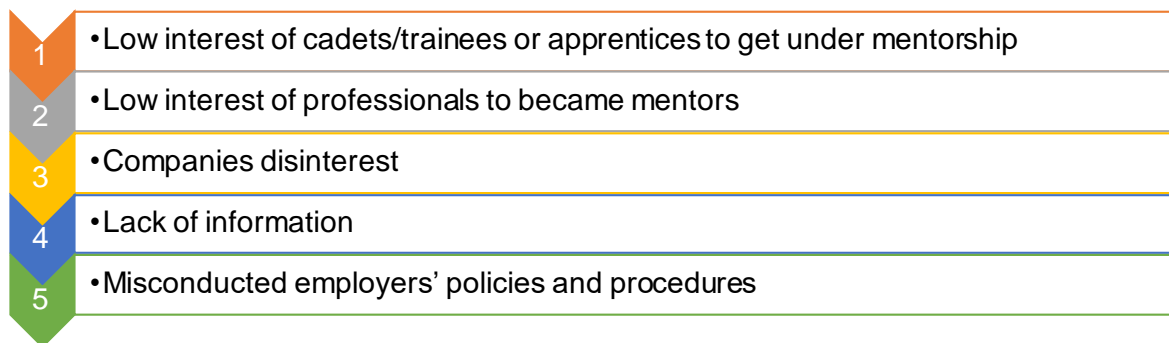
Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Improvement of soft skills: communication, leadership, team work, stress management etc.	22.92%	70.83%	6.25%
Effective performance, harmonizing the theory with practice	20.00%	57.78%	22.22%
Professional model guidance	18.75%	72.92%	8.33%
Enhancement of confidence	15.00%	67.50%	17.50%
More efficient insertion in the first job	33.33%	46.67%	20.00%
Stimulation of job resilience	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%

For Navy cadets, a mentor would help in providing a smoother and more efficient insertion in the first appointment. In other perspective, about 10% of maritime cadets consider that a positive outcome of having a mentor is significantly enhanced by trust and confidence. About 15% of young officers considered the mentorship as an opportunity for job resilience stimulation. All factors mentioned above are very important for the

company, since a positive outcome could be the loyalty assurance to mentees in relation with the employers.

**Question 7: Which factors do you consider that are actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation during the cadetship/internship programs?**

The factors considered as actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation during the cadetship/internship programs, have been explored in the survey, the participants being asked to highlights the most relevant from them. Then, the 5 most cited responses have been reflected in the Figure 10.



**Figure 10. Top 5 factors considered as actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation**

The factors as "low interest of cadets/trainees or apprentices to get under mentorship", or the "low interest of professionals to become mentors" are on the first places with more than 50% of collected responses.

Poor levels of cadets' and young officers' motivation were sometimes a concern for mentors who suggested that they were more likely to help those ones who were carrying to help themselves.

Time is a precious resource at sea and the lack of free time can restrict the mentoring effective implementation. Therefore, it can be a significant reason explaining the low interest of master/chief officer/chief engineer to become mentors.

There is an interesting distribution of responses between navy cadets and maritime cadets as showed in Table 5.

**Table 5. Distribution of factors considered actively hampering the mentorship successful implementation, by category**

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy	Maritime	Young
	Cadet	Cadet	Officer
Low interest of cadets/trainees or apprentices to get under mentorship	42.86%	19.51%	52.50%
Low interest of professionals to become mentors	0.00%	35.37%	0.00%
Companies disinterest	16.07%	18.29%	10.00%
Lack of information	17.86%	10.98%	22.50%
Misconducted employers' policies and procedures	19.64%	9.76%	12.50%

Thereby, more than 35% of maritime cadets responded that the low interest of professionals to become mentors is the main factor acting against the mentorship successful implementation during cadetship program, when 42% of Navy cadets considered the low interest of cadets/trainees or apprentices to get under mentorship as the most important factor affecting the mentorship efficiency.

**Question 8: In which professional dimensions, the mentorship could better serve and contribute to the next generation of professional development?**

Cadets and young officers were asked to identify professional dimensions that mentorship could better serve, in order to contribute to the next generation of professional development. In the table 6 the received responses were depicted, by category.

**Table 6. Distribution of professional dimensions, by category**

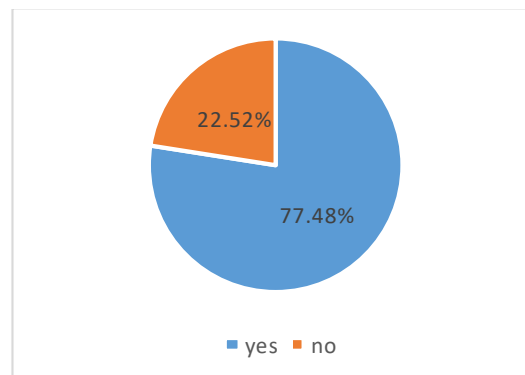
Topics	Frequency		
	Navy	Maritime	Young
	Cadet	Cadet	Officer
Technical skills improvement	51.79%	42.07%	37.50%
Quality culture and appetite for excellence	5.36%	13.41%	27.50%
Work culture	10.71%	16.46%	7.50%
Leadership culture	10.71%	13.41%	5.00%
Enhanced motivation and job satisfaction for entry level	14.29%	8.54%	7.50%
Gender management and diversity management	1.79%	4.88%	10.00%
Retention in the maritime sector	5.36%	1.22%	5.00%

Cadets' and young officers' responses showed that the respondents are acknowledge by the importance of technical skills improvement and it's a fact that a proper mentorship can lead to the achievement of professional tasks. Although, the respondents do not consider that the job retention can be seen as a result facilitated by a successfully mentoring program.

**Question 9: Would you consider to maintain contact with your mentor after the mentoring program ends?**

Another question in survey was about the option preference for maintaining the contact with the mentor, after the end of the mentoring program.

The slides in the Figure 11 shows that only 22.5% of respondents wouldn't maintain the contact with their mentors. If the responses are correlated with the conclusions from previous question, by which 32% of respondents confirmed that had participated in a mentoring program in the past, then it can be concluded that maybe some of the interviewed cadets had a bad experience with their mentor.

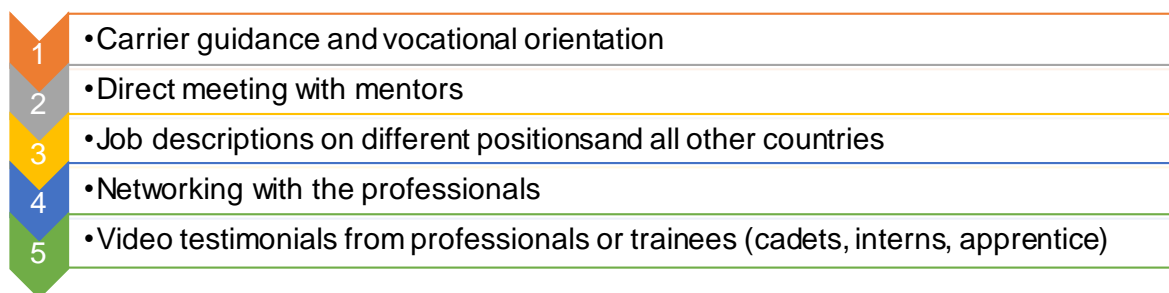


**Figure 11. The option to maintain contact with the mentor after the mentorship program ends**

Over 77% of respondents believe that mentoring can be a long-term investment even when mentorship program ends. Mentor and mentee relationships can be described as a supportive tool, which would positively affect all future stages of career development.

**Question 10: Which of the following services and options are you think that are most suitable for the SEA MENTOR platform to offer?**

One of the objectives of SeaMentors project is to develop an online training platform for cadets in direct connection to the mentorship network and tools. Therefore, participants were asked to contribute, by selecting the services and options that are most suitable for the SeaMentors platform ([www.seamentors.eu](http://www.seamentors.eu)). Top 5 of their choices are depicted below, in the Figure 12.



**Figure 12. Top 5 of most suitable services to be considered as options for SeaMentors project platform design ([www.seamentors.eu](http://www.seamentors.eu))**

Almost half of responses indicated carrier guidance and vocational orientation and direct meeting with mentors as most valuable services for a mentorship web platform. Other services as job descriptions on different positions or networking with the professionals are interesting for cadets and young officers, too.

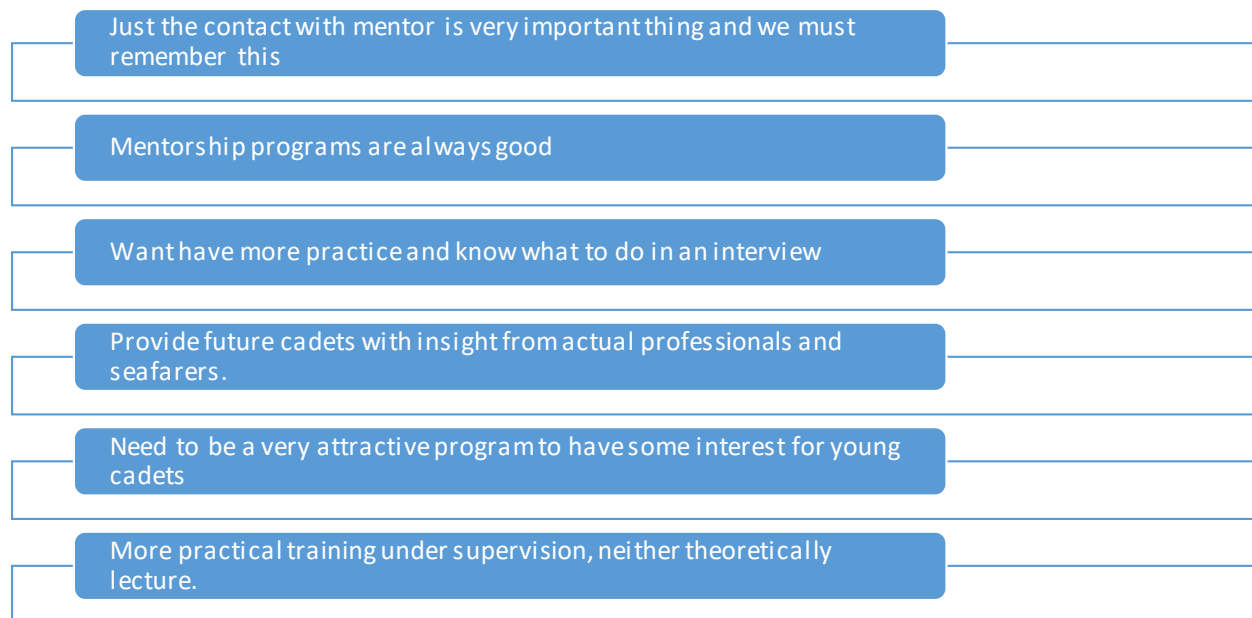
There are some differences in top 3 choices of suitable services observed, comparing the Navy cadet options versus the maritime cadets/young officers replies. Navy cadets considered that the direct contact or the online meetings with the mentors are the most efficient services to be facilitated through the mentorship platform, while the merchant cadets and young officers had dominantly opted out for carrier guidance and vocational orientation online tools.

**Table 7. Distribution of most suitable services to be considered for SeaMentors project platform development, by category**

Topics	Frequency		
	Navy Cadet	Maritime Cadet	Young Officer
Carrier guidance and vocational orientation	14.29%	26.83%	27.50%
Direct meeting with mentors	26.79%	25.61%	10.00%
Job descriptions on different positions	16.07%	9.76%	15.00%
Networking with the professionals	10.71%	11.59%	7.50%
Video testimonials from professionals or trainees (cadets, interns, apprentice)	5.36%	8.54%	10.00%
Interview – selection/recruitment methods, techniques	7.14%	7.32%	7.50%
Training course on mentorship topics	12.50%	4.88%	2.50%
Dissemination/informing materials from sector	1.79%	3.05%	15.00%
Forum for open discussion and chat	5.36%	2.44%	5.00%

**Question 11: Do you have other comments or suggestions regarding this program improvement?**

The last topic on the survey sought to collect some suggestions or comments regarding the mentorship program. The received comments and suggestions are shown in Figure 13.



**Figure 13. Received comments and suggestions**



## **Survey concluding remarks**

The survey has highlighted that some shipping companies have already invested resources into mentoring settlements, but these are only few and the progress is just incipient. In order to enhance this priority for an effective transition of the cadets toward the professional onboard life, the support for mentoring programs should be encouraged and actively driven by the shipping companies and the crewing agencies in particular. If this mentorship programs would be correlated with the academic programs, then the efficiency could find a more efficient focus on harmonizing the theory in practice. The lack of formal mentoring schemes is resulting in an enhancement of the informal mentoring as the most often type of onboard guidance for newcomers in the profession.

The survey has shown that the mentoring can provide the following positive results:

- the assurance of technical and non-technical skills and knowledge support for trainees during the first voyages as newcomers in the profession;
- offers active support to the cadets by encouragement, motivation, industry experience, career development advice and networking opportunities;
- recognizes the need for masters and officers to take charge of their teams, with an early involvement attitude, in terms of communication, leadership and professional skills development.

Seeking to valorize the cadets' and young officers' collected responses and suggestions, regarding the services and options considered as being the most suitable for an online mentorship platform (see Figure 12), the project team has designed and developed the web platform for SeaMentors project (<https://seamentors.eu>) in its structure and content.

Therefore, the website comprised a carrier guidance and vocational orientation portal, a list of mentors for direct meetings facilitation, a set of job descriptions for different appointments onboard ship, video testimonials from professionals or trainees (cadets, young officers, chief, master etc) and various dissemination materials from maritime industry sector, seeking to become an useful orientation tool for the young graduates in their transition toward the professional life in the maritime domain.