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INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS

WP3 / A5

GREECE
CASE STUDY

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INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS

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FOSTERING INCLUSION IN WBL THROUGH EFFECTIVE TRAINING OF VET MENTORS AND APPRENTICES INTEGRATION

CASE STUDY

GREECE

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Introduction

National Context

Vocational education and training (VET) in Greece are mostly centrally regulated – a state-run system that combines school-based and work-based learning, and it is offered at both upper secondary and post-secondary education levels. The main responsibility lies primarily with the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, while the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) plays a central part in quality assurance and qualifications. [1]

Over the past 10 years, Greece has embarked on substantial reforms in the Agenda of VET and lifelong learning, framed by the Law 4763/2020 and followed by a national strategic plan for VET and lifelong learning (2022-2024)[2], with an emphasis on quality, inclusion and flexibility. These reforms aim to improve responsiveness to labor-market needs, modernize WBL programmes and infrastructure, and promote a culture of lifelong learning.[3]

According to the EC's Education & Training Monitor of 2023[4], around one out of three secondary students in Greece (33,8% in 2021) are enrolled in vocational programmes. However, the employment rate of recent upper-secondary VET graduates remains comparatively low: 59,8 % in 2022, versus an EU average of 79,7%, which highlights persistent challenges in aligning the outcomes of VET learning with labor-market needs and opportunities, making it even more difficult for young adults to smoothly transition and enter employment.

More analytically, regarding initiatives and infrastructure, the Greek VET landscape includes both school-based VET in upper-secondary schools (Vocational Lyceums, also known as EPAL) and apprenticeship-type schemes. The post-secondary apprenticeship year/class in these schools (*Μαθητεία*) combines in-company training with complementary laboratory and classroom learning over one school year, acting as a bridge between school and employment. In parallel, the Public Employment Service (DYPA) operates a long-standing framework of Apprenticeship Vocational Schools, currently numbering around 50 schools with roughly 7.000-8.000 apprentices

[1] Cedefop. 2020. *Vocational Education and Training in Greece: Short Description.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4147

[2] EOPPEP (National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance). 2023. *National Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training and Lifelong Learning 2022–2024.* Athens: EOPPEP.
https://eoppep.gr

[3] Cedefop. 2022. *Greece: VET System Description – Overview and Reforms.* Thessaloniki: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-data/greece

[4] European Commission. 2023. *Education and Training Monitor 2023 – Country Analysis: Greece.* Brussels: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.
https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/education-and-training-monitor-2023-greece

nationwide.[5] These are central to expanding work-based learning opportunities.

However, despite these structures and strategic interventions, equity and inclusion remain key challenges. Analyses of Greek VET students show that learners in vocational upper secondary schools tend, on average, to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, than their peers in general education, with parents having lower educational attainment and occupational status.[6] This implies that VET in Greece already serves a relatively high proportion of students with fewer opportunities, making inclusive practices in apprenticeships particularly critical.

OECD evidence on Greece further highlights performance gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students, including those with immigrant backgrounds, which are broadly in line with OECD averages but raise concerns about equity in learning outcomes and support systems.[7] Within this broader context, Greek VET providers and companies are under pressure to tackle youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and social exclusion, while also making apprenticeships more attractive and relevant.

Against this policy and socioeconomic backdrop, the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS project directly addresses a crucial, identified gap: the lack of systematic, practical training for mentors and HR professionals on how to support apprentices from disadvantaged and underrepresented background within real workplaces.

The INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS approach

The INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS project, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (Ref. N.: 2023-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000158142) aims to promote social inclusion within vocational education and training (VET), enhance the attractiveness of VET, and foster innovation. It does so by strengthening the capacity and engagement of businesses involved in work-based learning (WBL) to support apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds and with fewer opportunities.

The project's **main objectives** are to:

• Design and implement an innovative, multilingual, free, and open-access training programme for VET company mentors across Europe, focused on

[5] Public Employment Service (DYPA). 2023. *Annual Report on Apprenticeship Vocational Schools (EPAS).* Athens: DYPA. https://www.dypa.gov.gr

[6] IOBE (Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research). 2021. *Vocational Education and Training in Greece: Challenges and Perspectives.* Athens: IOBE. https://iobe.gr/research_dtl_en.asp?RID=168

[7] OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2022. *Education Policy Outlook: Greece.* Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/6b70b9e2-en

how to effectively work with apprentices from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds;
• Support the professional development of 120 VET company mentors from Romania, Austria, and Bulgaria, equipping them with practical skills and inclusive mentoring techniques that are expected to directly benefit at least 240 apprentices from vulnerable groups;
• Establish evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the *Inclusive Apprenticeships* approach in making VET more relevant and appealing to society as a whole.

In pursuit of validating the *INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS* model, a comprehensive piloting process was implemented and subsequently documented through national-wise piloting phases.

Training Programme & E-learning Platform

One of the core outputs of the project was the design and implementation of a tailored, innovative training programme for company and VET mentors engaged in work-based learning (WBL). The developed programme focuses on equipping mentors with knowledge and skills needed to address specific needs faced by apprentices from underrepresented backgrounds. In total, 120 mentors from Romania, Bulgaria, Austria participated in the training, delivered through the project's online, e-learning platform (https://inclusive-apprenticeships.eu/inclusive-courses/).

The Training Programme

The Training Programme is organised in 12 distinct modules, covering specific areas of training for VET and company mentors, and they are listed below:
• **Module 1:** General principles of social inclusion and what the various forms of disadvantage and fewer opportunities are
• **Module 2:** Benefits and challenges of supporting apprentices with fewer opportunities or from disadvantaged background
• **Module 3:** Methods and techniques to establish that an apprentice is with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage
• **Module 4:** How to develop and deliver induction programme that is tailored to apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage
• **Module 5:** How to plan the necessary resources to support apprentices with fewer opportunities or experiencing some form of disadvantage
• **Module 6:** How to establish the strengths and nurture the talents of apprentices with fewer opportunities and disadvantaged apprentices
• **Module 7:** How to assess fewer opportunities and disadvantaged apprentices' progress and results (learning outcomes) in a relevant to their background manner (taking into account the applicable standards for all but also through the perspective of their specific needs and capacity implied by their background)

• **Module 8:** On-the job support depending on the forms of disadvantage
• **Module 9:** Additional support to develop work-appropriate behaviour and life skills
• **Module 10:** Measures and support to directly boost fewer opportunities and disadvantaged apprentices' employability
• **Module 11:** Social enrichment activities
• **Module 12:** Advocacy (promoting success stories, sharing experience with peers)

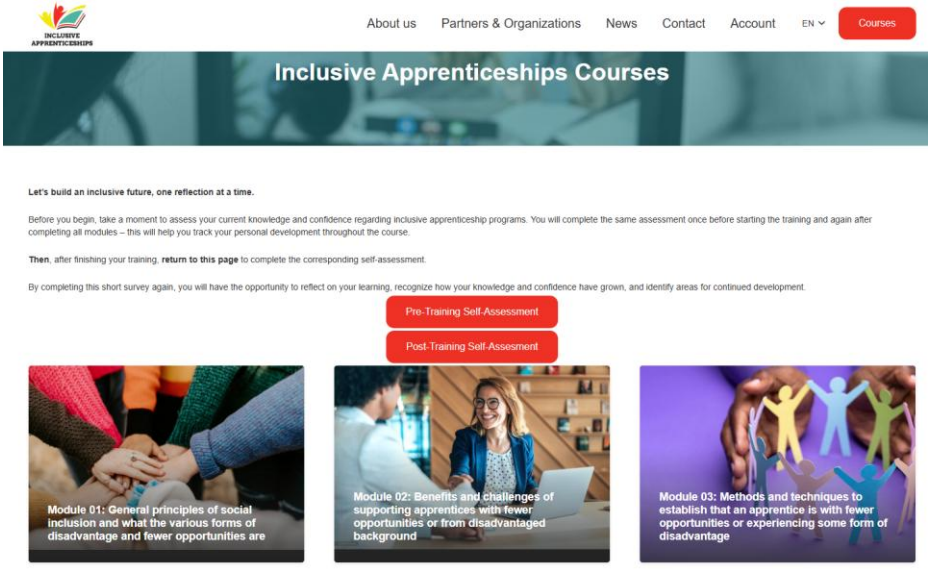
The E-Learning Platform

The project created a specialised training programme designed for company mentors engaged in work-based learning (WBL), focusing on effective strategies for supporting apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds or with fewer opportunities. The course was developed as a fully self-paced distance learning module, freely available to all users through the project's dedicated online platform: https://inclusive-apprenticeships.eu/inclusive-courses/.

Some of the platform's main functionalities include:

- Registration process
- Progress monitoring
- Redirection to tests and automatic certification
- Activities
- Additional resources

The platform contained all above-listed modules in digitized format, where users can freely access and navigate themselves into the training contents, check their knowledge before and after completing the course, while, upon completion, the platform automatically generates a certificate to support the learners' professional portfolios.



Overview of the Piloting Process

Although Greece was not initially included – based on the approved workplan – in the activities referring to the piloting phase and conduct of case studies, the decision for Greece to participate with a Greek cohort of participants had a two-fold purpose: firstly, to further test the impact and transferability of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS approach in a broader European context, and secondly, to ensure that the English version of the training platform and materials was equally functional and comprehensible compared to the other, officially translated version of the platform, before final dissemination. Thus, the Greek piloting aimed to contribute approximately 20% of the overall Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the project, thus serving as a complementary validation exercise.

A total of approximately 25 participants took part in the piloting. All were professionals active in the VET sector – either mentors, HR or company representatives, involved in the recruitment, training, or integration of apprentices in their organizations.

The piloting process was conducted entirely **online**, through written communication and asynchronous participation. Each participant:
1. Received an invitation & introduction to the project and the platform;
2. Was requested to complete the pre-training self-assessment questionnaire, prior to enrolling in the courses, to establish a baseline of their competences and perceptions regarding inclusion in apprenticeships;
3. Undertook the online training courses in English (based on preference), in a fully self-paced format;
4. Was asked to complete the post-training self-assessment questionnaire upon completion of the courses.

The collected data aimed to measure the progression of participants' self-assessed knowledge and competence levels before and after training, as well as to document their qualitative reflections on the content and platform.

How the piloting was conducted

The Greek piloting was conducted entirely through the English version of the E-Learning platform, since the Greek translation of the materials was not foreseen in the original project plan. This approach was aligned with one of the main objectives of the Greek participation, as well: to contribute to the platform's overall testing, validating whether the English version of the platform was equally usable and pedagogically effective compared to the translated versions in Bulgarian, Romanian and Deutch – the versions that were actually used for the piloting in Bulgaria, Romania and Austria.

Throughout the piloting period, user engagement was monitored via the platform's built-in analytics system, which tracked both enrollments (users formally registering for the modules) and views (page visits and interactions within the modules' descriptions). These indicators provide useful insights

into user behavior and overall interest in the project's online courses, especially the enrollments, because they represent more accurately the formal participation and learning engagement, being a more reliable indicator of active engagement with the platform.

The table below summarizes the number of enrollments and views recorded across the twelve modules of the platform:

Module	Enrollments	Views
Module 1	92	271
Module 2	77	170
Module 3	78	172
Module 4	80	221
Module 5	79	192
Module 6	80	182
Module 7	75	117
Module 8	77	162
Module 9	78	174
Module 10	79	162
Module 11	78	150
Module 12	80	162

Table 1. Platform analytics – enrollments and views per module (Greek piloting, English version)

The analytics demonstrate a consistently high level of interaction across all twelve modules, with enrollments ranging between 75 and 92 participants, and total views between 117 and 271.

However, it should be noted that these data also include exploratory users who accessed the open-access platform independently of the official Greek pilot. As such, while these numbers illustrate the strong visibility and appeal of the platform, **the validated pilot participation is more accurately reflected through the self-assessment questionnaires.**

Validated Pilot Participation

To obtain a precise measure of participation, engagement was cross-checked using the pre- and post-training self-assessment questionnaires completed by the officially invited Greek participants. More analytically:

- **22 participants** completed the *pre-training self-assessment questionnaire,* confirming active enrollment and engagement with the course;
- **12 participants** completed the *post-training questionnaire,* indicating that roughly half of the original group successfully completed all modules and assessed their learning outcomes upon completion.

While the completion rate reflects the typical attrition pattern observed in self-paced e-learning environments, the responses provide sufficient data for evaluating learning progress, attitude change, and overall user satisfaction. Furthermore, they confirm that the platform and the English-language materials were accessible, understandable, and pedagogically effective for Greek

professionals in the VET field.

Key Success Indicators & Impact

During the piloting in Greece, the participants were invited to complete the *pre-training self-assessment questionnaire* prior to them taking the courses, and the *post-training self-assessment questionnaire* after completing. The purpose was to measure how their knowledge, skills, overall awareness and confidence to support apprentices with fewer opportunities evolved after completing the course.

Each of the 12 questions corresponded to one of the core competence areas of the courses. Respondents were then requested to evaluate their confidence on a **five-point** Likert scale, where the rating points meant:

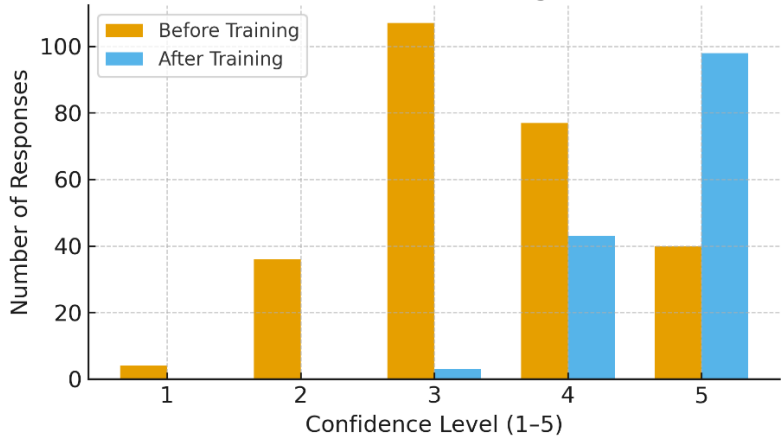
1 = Not confident at all
2 = Somehow confident
3 = Confident
4 = More confident
5 = Fully confident

In total, **22 respondents** completed the **pre-training** questionnaire, and **12 respondents** completed the **post-training** questionnaire. Although this reflects some attrition typical of self-paced online courses, the responses provide a sufficient basis to analyze the changes of their perceived confidence.

Overall, with all questions and answers combined, the pilot shows a strong and positive shift. More specifically:

• **Pre-training:** About 15% of all responses fall into the low confidence range, 41% into the medium confidence, and 44% into the high confidence.

Figure 1. Overall Distribution of Confidence Levels Before and After Training (Greece)



• **Post-training:** 98% of all responses were in the high confidence range, with only around 2% remaining at medium confidence and 0% at low confidence.

These numbers indicate progression and dramatic shift in the knowledge of the participants who actually enrolled but also completed the course. The results are also indicated in the relevant chart (Figure 1).

Summary of Average Scores per Question

Table 2 below summarizes the average score before and after the training of each of the 12 questions, together with the percentage of respondents who rated themselves in the high confidence range:

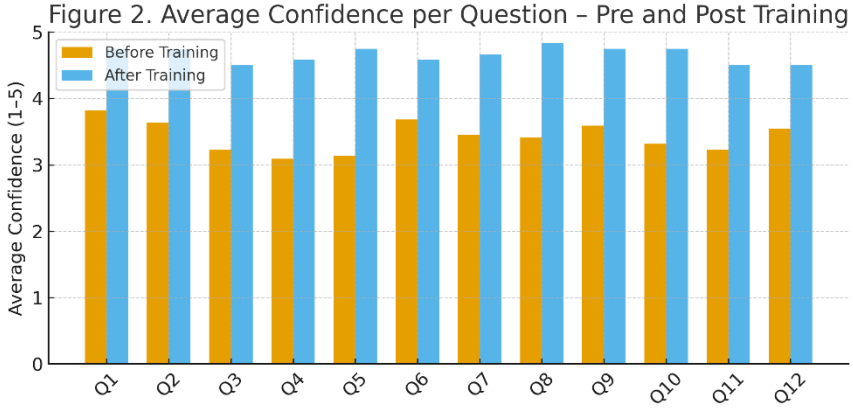
Question	Pre- mean	Post- mean	Δ (pre- & post-)	% high confidence in pre-	% high confidence in post-
Q1	3,82	4,75	+0,93	64%	100%
Q2	3,64	4,75	+1,11	50%	100%
Q3	3,23	4,5	+1,27	41%	100%
Q4	3,09	4,58	+1,49	27%	92%
Q5	3,14	4,75	+,161	32%	100%
Q6	3,68	4,58	+0,90	59%	100%
Q7	3,45	4,67	+1,21	36%	100%
Q8	3,41	4,83	+1,42	41%	100%
Q9	3,59	4,75	+1,16	55%	100%
Q10	3,32	4,75	+1,43	36%	100%
Q11	3,23	4,5	+1,27	36%	92%
Q12	3,55	4,5	+0,95	55%	92%

Table 2. Average confidence scores and percentage of high-confidence responses (Greece piloting)

On average, the mean score across all 12 items increased from 3.43 (between "confident" and "somehow confident") before the training to 4.66 (between "more confident" and "fully confident") after the training: an overall improvement of +1.23 points on a 5-point scale.

These results are also depicted in the clustered bar chart (Figure 2), which is provided here:

Figure 2. Average Confidence per Question – Pre and Post Training



Results per Competence Area

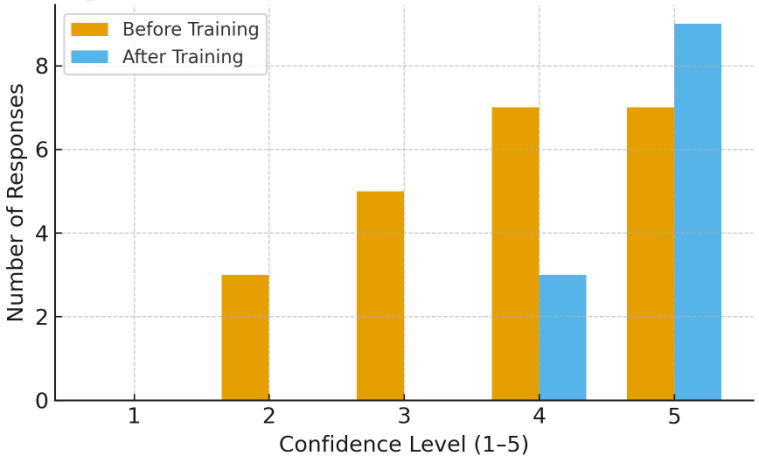
In this sub-section, we provide a narrative summary of the main changes for each of the 12 analyzed competence areas.

1. Understanding principles of social inclusion and barriers in the workplace

For the statement *"I understand the key principles of social inclusion and can identify various barriers to equal participation in the workplace"*, the majority of participants already rated themselves relatively positively before the training: around 64% were in the high-confidence range. However, there was still a significant share (around 14% of the respondents) with low confidence, and

23% in the medium-confidence range.
After the training, though, confidence increased: all respondents rated themselves in the high-confidence range (either 4 or 5 rating points), and no one selected the lower confidence categories.
Those results are also illustrated in Figure 3:

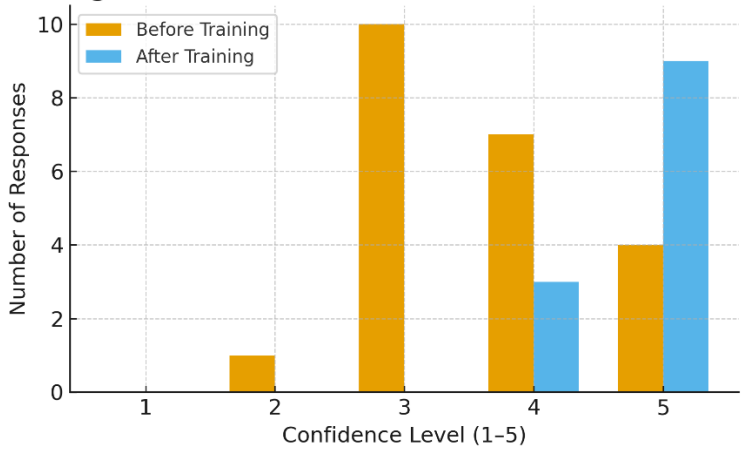
Figure 3. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q1



2. Explaining benefits and anticipating challenges of integrating apprentices with fewer opportunities

In relation to the statement "I can explain the benefits of integrating apprentices with fewer opportunities and anticipate potential challenges that may arise during their support", pre-training responses showed a more cautious profile: 50% of the respondents rated themselves in the high confidence scale, while around 45% at medium confidence scale and a small percentage of 5% in low confidence.

Figure 4. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q2

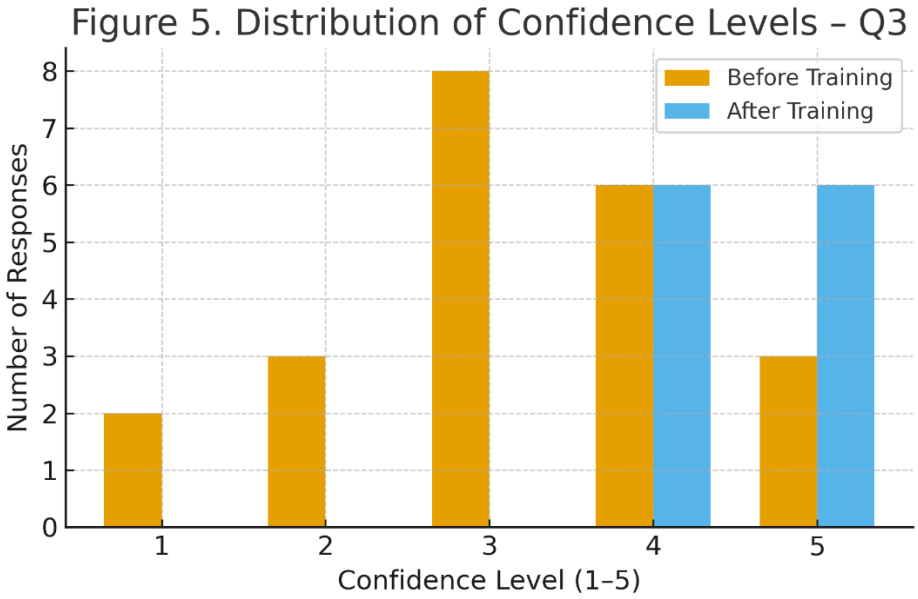


Following the course, the picture is completely different, with 100% reporting high confidence, out of which 75% selected the maximum value (5), as depicted in Figure 4:

3. Identifying disadvantage and fewer opportunities

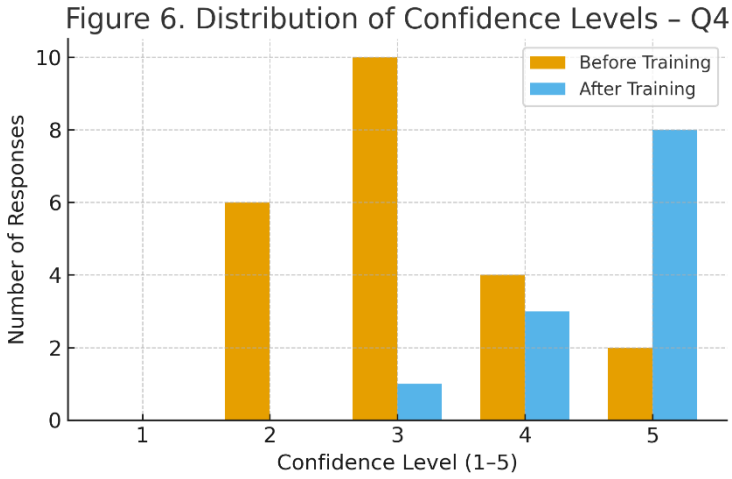
For *"I know how to apply practical tools and approaches to determine when an apprentice is experiencing disadvantage or has fewer opportunities"*, pre-training ratings showed that 41% felt highly confident, while 23% were in low confidence levels and 36% at medium levels.

After the training, all respondents reported high confidence levels, with the courses proving effectiveness, as depicted in Figure 5 below:



4. Designing and delivering tailored induction programmes

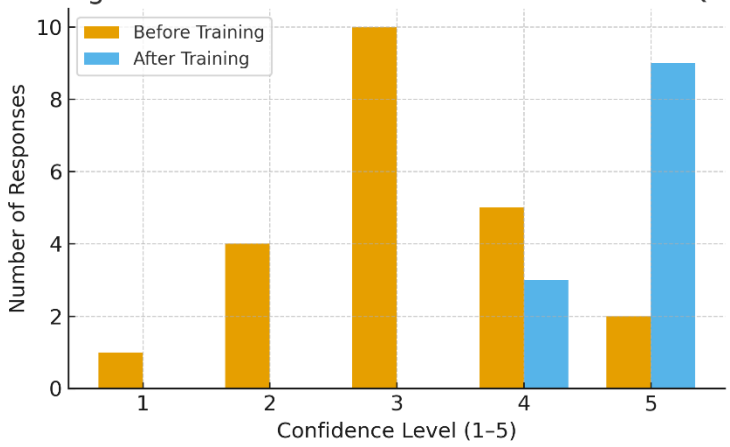
Regarding *"I am able to design and deliver an effective induction programme tailored to the individual needs of apprentices with fewer opportunities"*, the pre-training situation showed more uncertainty: 27% of the participants reported high confidence, while another 27% reported low confidence and most of the participants (46%) were uncertain. Post-training, their confidence levels improved, with 92% reporting high confidence and the small fraction of 8% reporting medium confidence. The results are illustrated in Figure 6:



5. Planning resources to support disadvantaged apprentices

For the statement *"I am aware of the types of (human, material, and time-related) resources required to adequately support disadvantaged apprentices"*, pre-training ratings were as follows: 32% reported high confidence, 46% medium and 23% low. Post-training assessment showed that all respondents (100%) placed themselves in the high-confidence range, validating the

Figure 7. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q5

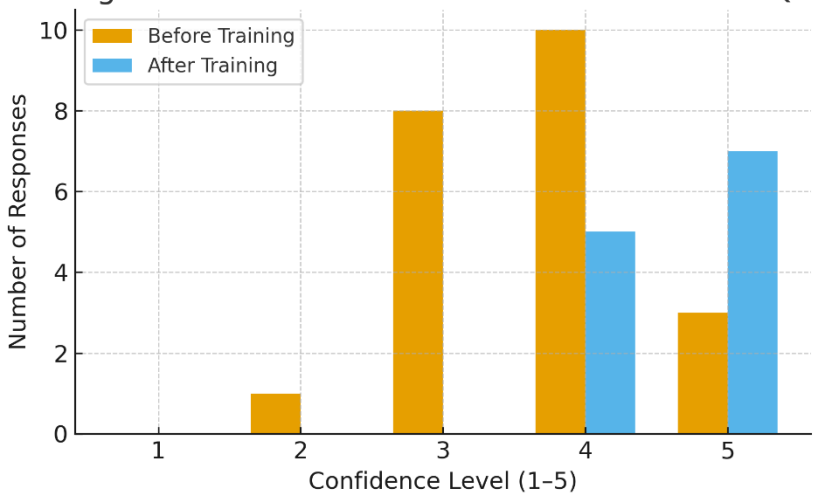


course's effectiveness, as indicated by Figure 7:

6. Identifying and nurturing strengths and talents

On the competence *"I can identify individual strengths and talents of apprentices with fewer opportunities and know how to build on them through mentoring and support"*, pre-training levels were already comparatively positive, with 59% in high confidence and only 5% in low confidence. After the training, the entire group reported being 100% confident in the competence area concerned. The results are depicted in Figure 8:

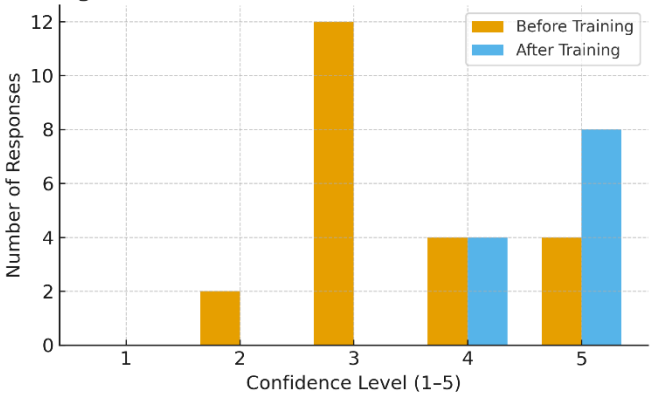
Figure 8. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q6



7. Monitoring progress and assessing outcomes fairly and inclusively

For *"I understand how to monitor progress and assess outcomes in a way that is fair, inclusive, and adapted to each apprentice's situation"*, the initial distribution was centered on medium confidence, since 55% reported being at level 3 of confidence, while 36% reported high confidence and 9% low confidence. Post-training evaluation reported high confidence for 100% of the participants, rating their confidence levels in the range of 4 to 5 rating points, as depicted in Figure 9:

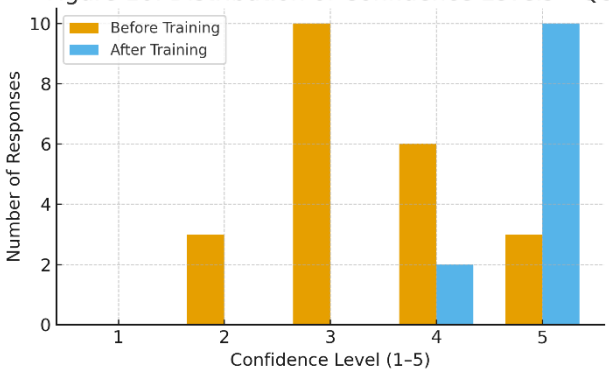
Figure 9. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q7



8. Implementing effective on-the-job support strategies

For the statement *"I can implement effective on-the-job support strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of apprentices with different types of disadvantage",* pre-training responses were split between medium (46%) and high confidence (41%), while only 14% reported low confidence. Improvement was again achieved, as per the post-training self-assessments, since 100% of the respondents reported high confidence, with 83% of them rating their confidence with a maximum of 5 rating points. The answers are illustrated in Figure 10:

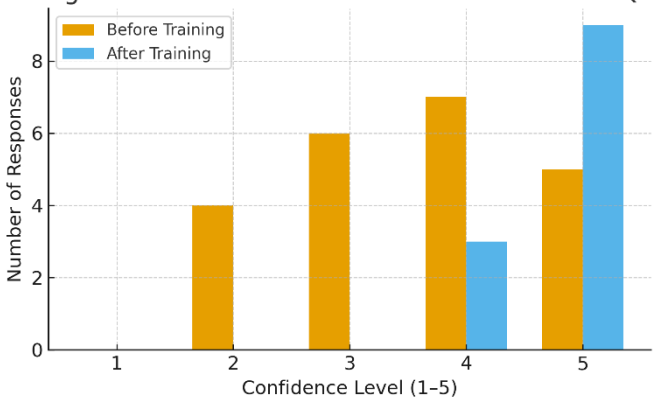
Figure 10. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q8



9. Supporting soft skills and professional behavior

Regarding *"I am equipped to support the development of soft skills and professional behaviour in apprentices",* pre-training results showed 55% high confidence, 27% medium (3 points) and 18% low confidence (2 points). After the courses, all respondents were moved to high confidence, as illustrated in Figure 11:

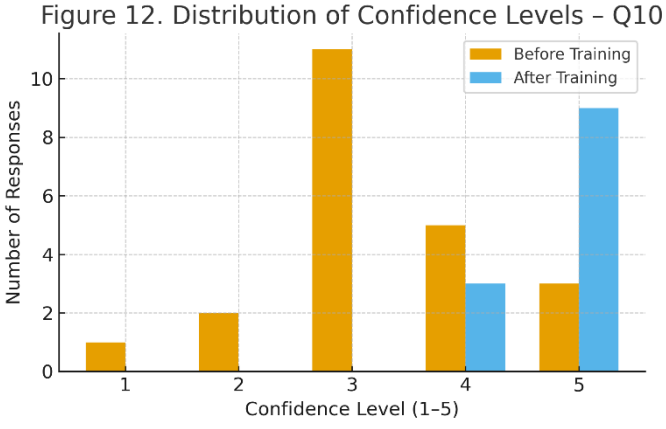
Figure 11. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q9



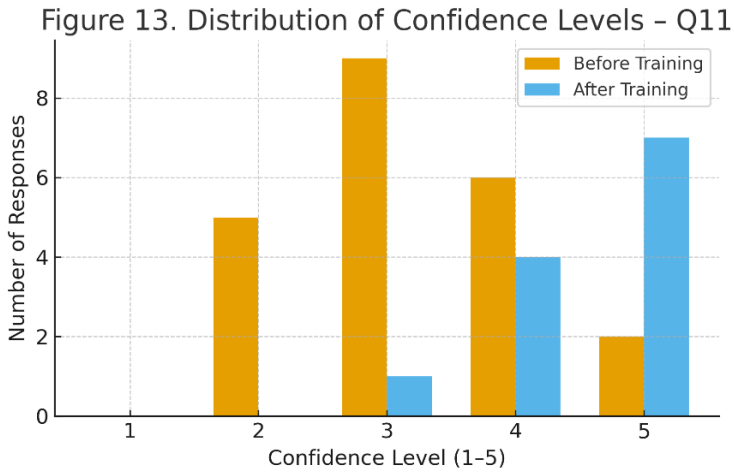
10. Enhancing employability of apprentices with fewer opportunities

For *"I am familiar with strategies and measures that directly enhance the employability of apprentices with fewer opportunities",* initial confidence was reported as follows: 36% high confidence, 50% in medium, and 14% in low confidence. After the courses, all respondents (100%) reported high level of confidence, with 75% of them choosing the highest level, as depicted in Figure 12:

Figure 12. Distribution of Confidence Levels – Q10



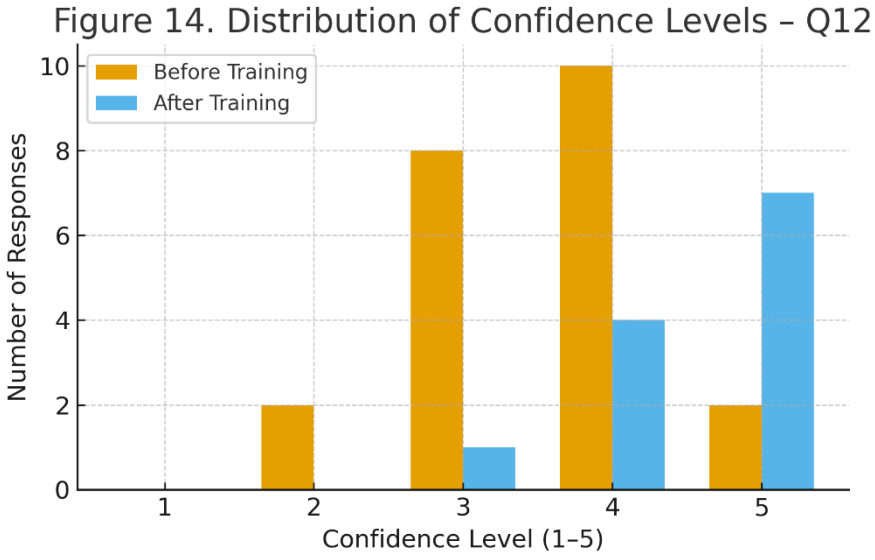
11. Planning and facilitating social enrichment activities



In relation to *"I can plan and facilitate social enrichment activities that foster inclusion, peer engagement, and apprentices' sense of belonging in the workplace"*, pre-training responses showed 36% in high confidence, 41% in medium, and 23% in low confidence. After the training, around 92% of the participants rated themselves on a high-confidence scale, with only 8% remaining at medium level. None was, however, in the low levels, indicating success in improving mentors' capacities to design social enrichment activities to support inclusion for apprentices. The results are illustrated in Figure 13:

12. Advocating for inclusive practices and sharing experiences

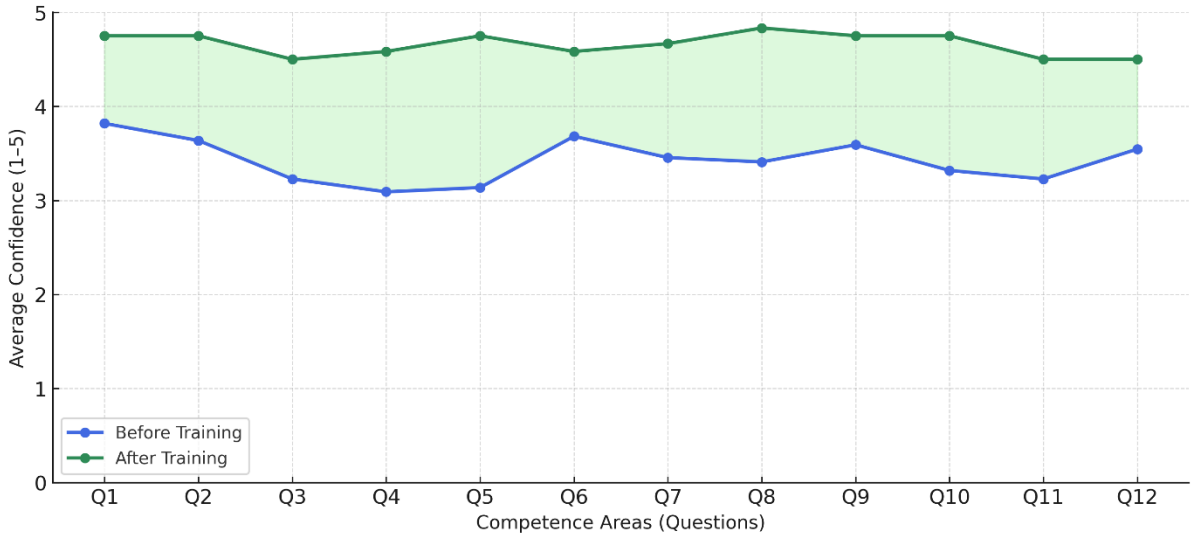
Finally, for *"I know how to advocate for inclusive practices by promoting success stories and exchanging experiences with colleagues and stakeholders"*, pre-training responses were somewhat more positive, with 55% of the respondents reporting high confidence, 36% of them medium, and only 9% reporting low confidence for the subject matter. After the training, again, 92% of the respondents reported high confidence, and only 8% remained at medium level of confidence (see Figure 14).



Lessons Learners & Final Reflections

In conclusion, taken together, the results of the Greek pilot show that the training programme of the INCLUSIVE APPRENTICESHIPS project significantly *enhanced mentors' self-perceived knowledge and competences* across all the 12 competence areas. Analytically, the results of the self-assessment before and after taking the course can be visualized as in the following chart, which indicated significant rise of the skills and confidence on behalf of the mentors, in each competence area concerned:

Figure 15. Overall Average Improvement in Confidence per Competence Area



The shift from a mixed profile of low, medium and high confidence before the training to an almost entirely high-confidence perception after the course demonstrates the following confirmations regarding the online course:

1. The online course was **relevant** to the real needs and responsibilities of VET and company mentors in Greece;
2. The online course proved to be **effective** in providing practical tools, frameworks, and examples that can be applied in everyday practices with apprenticeships of underrepresented backgrounds and less opportunities; and
3. The online course was **impactful** in empowering participants not only to support individual apprentices but also to contribute to wider organizational changes towards inclusion within the Greek VET landscape.

Accordingly, these positive results confirm that the project and its online training courses are valuable resources for the Greek VET ecosystem and that the approach is transferable and effective beyond the original piloting within the workplan's envisaged partner countries.

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