

# SPECIALISTS AGED 50+ AS COACHES AND MENTORS<sup>1</sup>

*Anita Richert-Kaźmierska<sup>2</sup>*

## **Abstract**

The main aim of the article is to present how the knowledge, skills and experience of persons aged 50+ can be used in companies and other institutions. The specificity of coaching and mentoring processes has been discussed, as well as possibilities of involving persons aged 50 years and more in them.

**Keywords:** coaching, mentoring, persons aged 50+, knowledge transfer

## **Introduction**

Retiring of highly educated people, with certain professional experience, in the macro scale means definitive loss of intellectual capital. Economic rationality urges to counter such mismanagement and optimize the usage of this group's potential.

European Union needs actions which would encourage elderly people to share their knowledge and experience, both when they are fully professionally active (e.g. in the form of mentoring), as well as after formal withdrawal from professional activity (e.g. in the form of associations of retired entrepreneurs and/or specialists from various branches providing advisory services for young entrepreneurs).

The objective of the article is to find the answer for the question: are specialists in older age being involved in the processes of coaching and mentoring?

All materials presented in the article comes from the report, that author has prepared in the project *Best Agers – Using the knowledge and experience of professionals in their primes to foster business and skills development in the Baltic Sea Region*.

---

<sup>1</sup> The article is a part of report prepared by the author in the project *Best Agers – Using the knowledge and experience of professionals in their primes to foster business and skills development in the Baltic Sea Region* financed by European Found of Regional Development in the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013 (WP4.2. Identifying target groups for Best Agers coaching initiatives in the partner countries).

<sup>2</sup> Politechnika Gdańska/Gdańsk University of Technology

## Coaching is not a synonymous of mentoring

Coaching is a method of training employees focusing on learning during work. It connects the process of learning with stimulation of participants to undertaking actions. Coaching is the process in which an employee acquires new knowledge, skills and experience by cooperation with a trainer (Adamska 2004, p. 78). There are different types of coaching (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Types of coaching

Distinguishing criterion	Types of coaching
Target group and merit range of cooperation with coaching participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– business coaching: tool coaching, leadership coaching, performance coaching, expert coaching,</li> <li>– life coaching,</li> <li>– career coaching</li> </ul>
Coach person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– professional coaching,</li> <li>– manager coaching,</li> <li>– peer-to-peer coaching,</li> <li>– co-coaching</li> </ul>
Number of participants in the coaching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– individual coaching,</li> <li>– group coaching</li> </ul>

*Source:* own elaboration based on (Kołodkiewicz 2009)

Quite often coaching is defined as synonymous of instruction, training, consulting or mentoring. For sure, those are not synonymous. Even if integrated coaching is an extension of basic activity by forms of support for employees of a company, such as instructions, training, consulting or mentoring, it is not a phenomenon similar to any of them.

Coaching is distinguished by three features. Firstly, individual work with client (with exception of group coaching, where the number of participants is not larger than few people). Secondly – aiming the whole process at education and perfecting skills necessary to work on certain position. Solutions and results are generated by an employee. Role of a coach is active, motivating support. Thirdly – duration of coaching. Most often it is rather long and can take from few weeks to few months. A coach plays very important role in the coaching processes. He or she is a person responsible for preparation, realisation and estimation of the coaching process. Depending on the type of coaching, personal or business, coaches should have different skills and work with using different methods. Being a coach is about having responsibility of skills and competences development of other persons. This makes certain attitudes of the coach necessary. In the literature we can find information, that “good” coach should have an experience in coaching, understand the business environment, have certain personal features (e.g. consciousness and ability to observe, patience, concentration on solutions and objectivism) and ethical attitude.

**Table 2.** Forms of support for professional development of an employee

Form of support for professional development of an employee	Characteristics
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– most commonly used method of support for professional development of employees,</li> <li>– allows to learn new fields of knowledge and its practical use,</li> <li>– most often used forms are: lectures, case studies, educational games, presentations, discussions,</li> <li>– meetings may be single-time, cyclical, monothematic, about various subjects and realised in small or large groups,</li> <li>– a trainer may be interior or exterior specialist, the sole training may take place in company or beyond</li> </ul>
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– bases on knowledge and life experience of a mentor,</li> <li>– mentor gives advice, by which directs choices of his or her ward,</li> <li>– subjects taken into consideration or much wider than current situation of an employee,</li> <li>– used only in introduction realisation phase of certain tasks, e.g. during introducing a new employee to his or her new duties, establishing a company for the first time, etc.,</li> <li>– most often a mentor is an employee with better experience of practice in a company, knowing its realities and requirements of certain positions or a person from outside, which has already realised similar tasks in past</li> </ul>
Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– consists of receiving advices from specialists, experts in certain field,</li> <li>– person using consulting services receives proposition of a concrete solution,</li> <li>– provides support in the process of making certain decisions, does not influence development of knowledge for potential long-term use</li> <li>– provided by people from outside working space</li> </ul>

Source: own

In Polish economy coach is a new profession. About 60000 certified coaches work currently around the world, among which 1/3 in Europe. Polish Training Chamber estimates, that in 2012 there was about 3000 professional coaches in Poland (*Coachowie* 2009). Difficulties in defining precise number of coaches working in Poland are caused by multiple meanings of coach's definition.

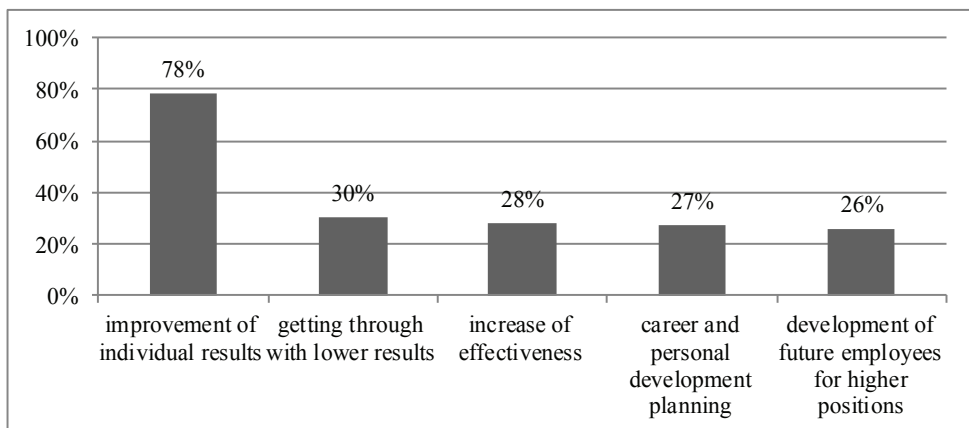
The characteristic feature of Polish coaches is age. Statistical Polish coach is really young: about 50% is under 30 years old, while 40% of total is in age range between 40 and 50 years (Kołodkiewicz 2009). In common language it is often said

that „a coach is most favourably young and experienced, which means right over thirty” (Myśliwiec 2008). In Western Europe, where the main features of a coach employed by companies is experience and reliability, his or her average age is about 50.

Rising interest of companies in introduction of coaching in recent years is caused mostly by effects, which they can achieve by it. According to studies carried out by various centres, among main benefits aroused by introduction of coaching in companies, are mentioned: (Green, Grant 2003).

- improvement of communication system inside an organisation,
- reduction in the number of conflicts,
- improvement of cooperation effectiveness of organisation members,
- development of self-awareness among employees,
- reduction of employee fluctuation,
- creating a shared vision and involvement.

In the report from studies carried out by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development<sup>3</sup> in 2005, as main reasons of companies to invest in coaching were mentioned: improvement of individual results, getting through with lower results, increase of effectiveness, career and personal development planning, development of future employees for higher positions (see Figure 1). Other reasons include maintaining a climate of continuous learning, motivating employees, acceleration of organisation changes, a way to keep good employees, lowering costs of sending employees to outer courses, help in keeping balance between family and work life.



**Figure 1.** Why do the companies invest in coaching?

*Source:* own elaboration based on Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development <http://www.cipd.co.uk> [11.12.2010]

<sup>3</sup> Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, <http://www.cipd.co.uk/> [accessed: 11.12.2011].

## Specificity of coaching market in EU and Poland

Coaching becomes increasingly often used as a method in processes of self-development and professional development. Coaching market develops most dynamically in United Kingdom and Germany, where works about 70% of all professional coaches (adequately in United Kingdom 7500, in Germany – 5000).

- Data gathered in European Coaching Survey (*Results* 2008) indicates, that:
- depending on country, the sole meaning of coaching and methods of its introduction in business are different,
  - in the countries of „old Union” coaching is commonly accepted and used as a business tool, in new member states this tool is still used sporadically,
  - in the countries of „old Union”, mostly Germany, Great Britain, Benelux and Scandinavian countries a professionalization of coaching is being observed, i.e. highly specialised, accredited training centres for coaches are functioning, institutions and organisations integrating people working as coaches are created, codices of coach work ethics are introduced etc.

According to the research of European Coaching Survey, among Baltic Sea Region countries, coaching is most developed in Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Lithuania (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Basic data on coaching market in Baltic Sea Region countries in 2007

Country	Phase of life cycle of coaching	Level of acceptance and implementation of coaching as a business tool	Number of professional coaches	Percentage of companies interested in coaching
Denmark	growth	high	50	no data
Estonia	development	low	10	22%
Lithuania	growth	no data	5–10	28%
Latvia	development	low	10	37%
Germany	growth	very high	5000	72%
Poland	introduction	low	100	15%
Sweden	growth	very high	500	no data

*Source:* author’s own elaboration based on (*Results* 2008, p. 15–17)

Coaching and coach’s role is perceived differently in “new” and “old” European Union member states (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Specificity of coaching in Baltic Sea Region countries

Country	<b>Answers on question: <i>What do you think is typical (special) about one-to-one coaching in your country when compared with coaching in other countries (that coaches from abroad should be aware of when having clients in your country)?</i></b>
Denmark	Coaching has a very good balance between company interests and personal coachee interests.
Estonia	The fact that coaching is not yet a widely developed field of activity in business requires a lot of client education.
Lithuania	Clients do not understand what coaching is and how to choose a good coach. Because of this, many consultants start to work as coach, without special coach education.
Latvia	Information on coaching in Latvia is not widely available. Also, by those who heard of it, the coaching concept is not yet completely comprehended. Therefore, many clients confuse one-to-one coaching with consulting and expect to receive concrete advice and recommendations. Other remarks: In my opinion, there is a need for a coaching association in Latvia.
Germany	Coaching in Germany is generally seen as a consulting form (in a one-to-one setting) provided mainly by external consultants. Coaching as part of leadership is regarded with reservation here (unlike in other countries).
Poland	We only have few coaches for top business people.
Sweden	Our business culture is built on an old tradition between the trade unions and the employers association. This has given our workforce a strong platform and has built good working habits. People feel secure and sometimes a bit too secure to take on new challenges and risks. We rely on other people to take on the responsibility for our own development. This, together with a strong dominance of engineering, forest and mining industry, has given our workforce the character of today. With the influence of EU, migration and the fact that a lot of our companies are partly owned by multinational companies are slowly changing the map.

Source: (Results 2008, p. 18–19)

Among the main causes of difficulties in development of coaching market in “new” European Union member states, including Poland, Latvia and Estonia, different authors point:

- lack of understanding for the essence of coaching, what are the benefits of introducing it in an organisation and what is needed to become a professional coach,
- lack of definite distinction between coaching, consulting, training, mentoring or therapy,
- weak access to information or education on the topic of coaching,
- underdeveloped institutional infrastructure of coaching, still lack of associating organisations, training and certifying professional coaches,

- difficulties in gaining clients, which would want to use coaching services – it is still a market, where shaping and encouraging needs of a client is needed,
- cultural barriers and false beliefs of the essence of coaching.

Coaching market in Poland is in its early development stage. The value of Polish market of coaching services in 2012 has been estimated by Polish Training Chamber for more than 33 mln PLN. Also, an increase in demand and supply is observed.

On the side of supply there can be put companies (institutions) providing trainings for coaches or directly providing coaching services for companies. On the side of demand – companies interested in buying such services.

About 10 professional coaching schools are operating in Poland as well as numerous group of training companies that have in their offer business coaching trainings for trainers and employees of companies – potential inner coaches. Among offers of coaching schools we can distinguish programmes allowing to gain certain professional certificate or short forms of professional education. Prices for the courses depending on the type of offer: from €500 (for short training) to €5000 PLN for participation in a programme finished by certification of qualifications and membership in one of professional coaching organisations (e.g. Polish Coaching Association, Polish Coaching and Development Association, International Coach Federation etc.).

The demand for coaching services is in Poland still relatively low. According to the *School for a Coach* (Kołodkiewicz 2009) report, only 15% of Polish companies show interest in coaching. Comparatively low is the level of consciousness on the issue of coaching too. According to the study from 2009 (*Badanie świadomości* 2009), only 6% of respondents, which haven't already used coaching services know what is the essence of coaching and 28% of those, who have already used such form of support have such a knowledge. In 2009 most of Polish companies cut down expenses for all types training. More than 70% of companies reduced spending on trainings improving skills and qualifications of their employees. In 2010 training market was slowly regrowing – mostly because of the vast support of European Social Fund (ESF) for investments in human resources. One of the fields supported by funds from ESF are coaching services.

## **Participation of 50+ persons in knowledge transfer processes (including coaching and mentoring) – opportunities and barriers**

Results of SISC (*Knowledge sharing* 2009) research shows that one of the basic problems in using knowledge and experience potential of the elderly employees is their inner resistance. What's more, elderly employed in companies, declare lack of time, because mentoring and coaching of younger employees are identified by them as another job duty. Other factors that influence elderly persons' involvement in coaching and mentoring processes are presented in table 5.

**Table 5.** Main barriers to senior participation in mentoring and coaching programmes

Personal fears	Corporate culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of self-confidence,</li> <li>– frustration (including the feeling of getting unwanted extra job to do),</li> <li>– lack in motivation from seniors: actually they cannot perceive what kind of benefits they will gain from this process,</li> <li>– fear from losing one’s “expert” position (due to the unique know-how possessed) as teaching specific know-how to younger employees,</li> <li>– worry they may say something wrong or give wrong advice,</li> <li>– fail at communication,</li> <li>– not being able to listen,</li> <li>– not respecting the younger person’s opinion,</li> <li>– not being able to take criticism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– appropriate preparation of the workers to taking up the role of mentors,</li> <li>– motivation,</li> <li>– systemic support,</li> <li>– time pressure,</li> <li>– roles which are not clearly defined</li> </ul>

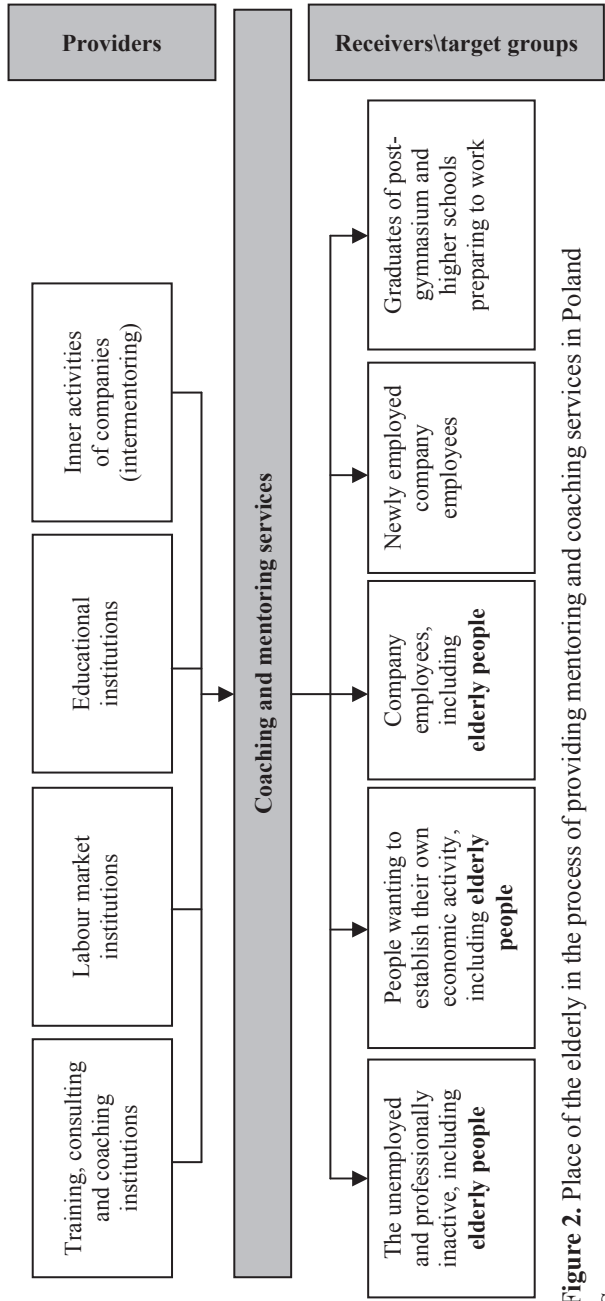
*Source:* (Knowledge sharing 2009, p. 18)

As it is mentioned in the SISC report, situation in companies, in case of older persons’ participation in coaching and mentoring initiatives is quite different in different countries. In Germany persons aged 50+ (including persons who are already retired) participate in processes of coaching and mentoring in the roles of coach or mentor as well, as the person that a coach or mentor is taking care of. In Poland it is especially difficult to find initiatives, in which elderly people would play both the role of mentor and coach. Most often they are the group supported by a coach or mentor.

### **Who can be coached and mentored by the persons aged 50+ – coaching and mentoring initiatives’ target groups**

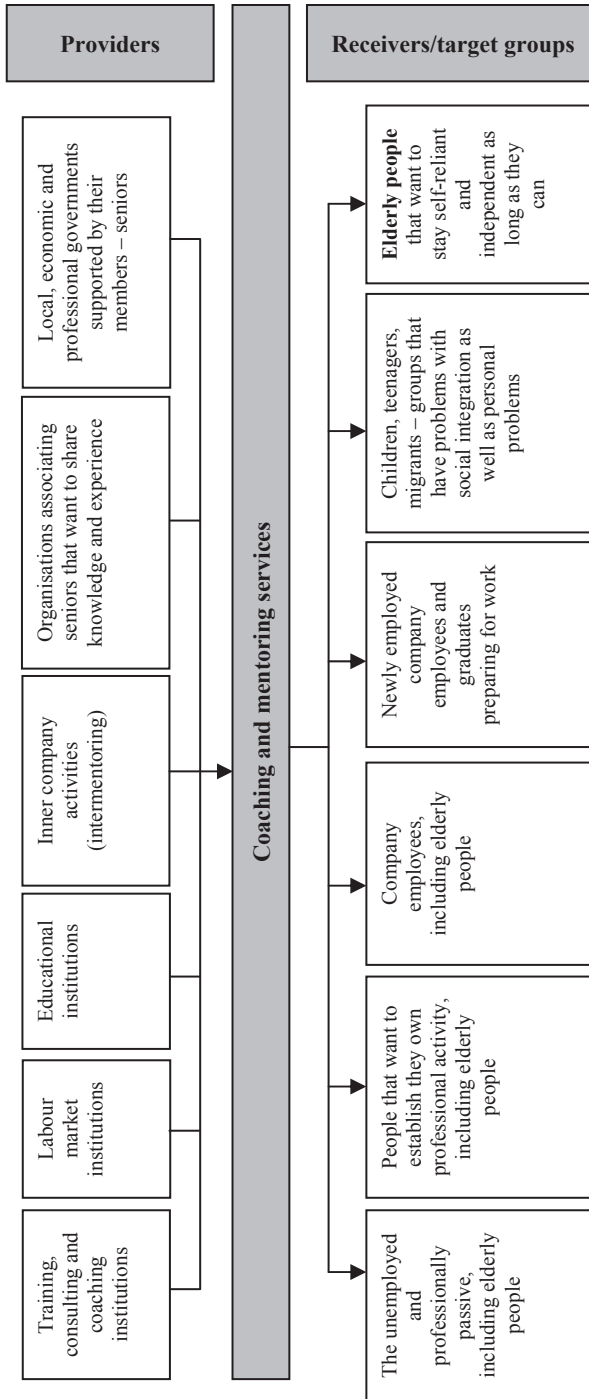
Previous overview of issues connected with coaching and mentoring as methods of professional activation of persons aged 50+ on labour market allows to define few essential differences between „new” and „old” member states of the European Union. First and foremost, the market of coaching and mentoring services in countries such as Germany is in a considerably more advanced phase of life cycle than in countries like Poland, Estonia or Latvia. Depending on the phase of development, in which coaching and mentoring service market is in various countries, different is the level of personalization of such services. What’s more, role of the elderly in coaching processes also varies. In the countries of the “old” member states elderly are both receivers and providers of coaching and mentoring services (see Figure 3). In countries like Poland, Estonia and Latvia elderly people are mostly receivers of coaching and mentoring services (see Figure 2).





**Figure 2.** Place of the elderly in the process of providing mentoring and coaching services in Poland

Source: own



**Figure 3.** Place of elderly in the process of providing mentoring and coaching services in Germany

Source: own

Mentoring and coaching services in Poland are mostly addressed for the unemployed, professionally passive, those who want to establish their own professional activity or employees oriented on professional development.

Provider of mentoring/coaching services in Poland is most often a specialised training, consulting or coaching institution, institutions of labour market or those connected with education system. In the role of mentors or coaches they employ both young and older people in age of 55+. However, it couldn't be stated, that age of a certain person is the reason why he or she is a mentor or a coach in this type of subjects.

Analysis of Polish mentoring and coaching service market leads to the conclusion that the true is the statement that currently the only solution in which elderly people are purposefully involved in playing roles of mentors or coaches are intermentoring systems realised in a larger number of companies.

Analysis of coaching and mentoring service market in Germany shows that it includes elderly persons much more than in Poland. Firstly, specialised organisations are functioning, where coach's or mentor's roles are played by employees aged 55+, retired entrepreneurs, specialists from various branches of economy. Secondly – one of the target groups are directly elderly people who want to stay active in social life (or more widely public life) as long as they can.

## Conclusions

Older persons, experienced practitioners aged 55+ , have the potential which could be used by many types of institutions and organisations (see Table 6).

**Table 6.** Participation of people 55+ in coaching and mentoring initiatives

Type of the receiver	Type of the service	Involvement of people in the age of 55+
Future entrepreneurs (start ups)	Mentoring	Knowledge, experience, contacts, objectivism of evaluation
Training, consulting and coaching companies	Training	Knowledge, experience, building trust, easiness of communication in case of trainings in which clients are elderly people
	Consulting	
	Providing highly specialised work in the form of outsourcing	Knowledge, experience, professional certificates for creating evaluations and expert's reports, objectivism, time flexibility

continued Tab. 6

Educational institutions, including schools preparing to work in certain professions	Education, trainings	Knowledge, experience, professional practice, patience,
	Providing highly specialised work in the form of outsourcing	Help in creating educational programmes including needs of economic practice, active participation in projects in the verge of science and practice
Labour market institutions	Providing highly specialised work in the form of outsourcing	Help in preparing and realisation of programmes and projects for professional activation of excluded groups, help in preparing programmes and projects encouraging entrepreneurs to participate in activation of local labour markets
	Education, trainings	Knowledge, experience, easiness to communicate and assertiveness, trust
Entrepreneurs, mainly from SME sector	Consulting	Knowledge, experience, contacts, objectiveness of evaluation, professionalization of previous activity
	Education, trainings	
	Providing highly specialised work in the form of outsourcing	Carrying out tasks that appear periodically, but need high qualifications
	Peer-to peer coaching	Trust, new perspective of old problems

Source: own

Even if now, the participation of older persons in coaching and mentoring processes is quite low, it can be changed. Using the experience from “old” EU member states there can be recommended some activities in order to intensify participation of persons aged 50+ in coaching and mentoring initiatives (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Recommendations for stimulating participation of persons aged 50+ in coaching and mentoring initiatives

Type of actions	Examples of actions
Actions of informative and promotional character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– social campaigns for inclusion of elderly people,</li> <li>– social campaigns for employment of people in the age of 55+,</li> <li>– promotion of „good practices” – examples of professional successes achieved by people in elderly age,</li> <li>– promotion of knowledge and experience of elderly people,</li> <li>– promotion of work keeping the regulations of the life cycle,</li> <li>– campaigns for voluntary work of elderly people</li> </ul>

continued Tab. 7

Actions of training and educational character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– raising qualifications of elderly people, including those in the field of mentoring and coaching services providing,</li> <li>– training entrepreneurs/employers in the field of effective use of experience and knowledge of their older employees,</li> <li>– promotion of intermentoring in companies,</li> <li>– involving elderly people in the process of teenager education,</li> <li>– promotion of multigenerational cooperation among school youngsters</li> </ul>
Actions discouraging elderly people from early withdrawal from labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– legislative solutions lengthening period of professional activity,</li> <li>– sealing the system of „sooner retirement” access,</li> <li>– financial and non-financial attractiveness of professional work</li> </ul>
Actions to make long professional activity easier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– prophylaxis and healthcare,</li> <li>– flexible forms of employment,</li> <li>– ergonomics of work places</li> </ul>
Administrative and financial actions encouraging economic subjects to use offer of elderly people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– tax relief for entrepreneurs employing elderly,</li> <li>– involvement of public funds in financing non-salary work costs in case of employing elderly people,</li> <li>– preferential system of companies using intermentoring systems and investing in development of elderly people’s qualifications</li> </ul>

Source: own

## References

1. Adamska M.: *Leksykon zarządzania*. Warszawa: Difin 2004.
2. *Badanie świadomości coachingu*. Warszawa: MasterCoach2009, [http://www.mastercoach.org.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=109%3Abadanie-wiadomosci-coachingu&catid=49%3Araporty&Itemid=76&showall=1](http://www.mastercoach.org.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=109%3Abadanie-wiadomosci-coachingu&catid=49%3Araporty&Itemid=76&showall=1) [accessed: 12.01.2011].
3. *Coachowie – Europa i Polska. Raport 2009*. Warszawa: Polish Chamber of Training Companies 2009.
4. Green J., Grant A.: *Solution-focused coaching: Managing people in a complex world*. London: Momentum 2003.
5. <http://www.cipd.co.uk> [accessed: 12.01.2010, 11.12.2011].
6. *Knowledge sharing, mentoring and e-learning within European companies. Transnational report*. Rome: SISC 2009.
7. Kołodkiewicz M.: *Raport. Szkoła dla coacha*. Warszawa: Coaching Commission at Polish Chamber of Training Companies 2009.
8. Myśliwiec G.: *Coach – biznesowa guwernantka, życiowy guru i terapeuta w jednym*, E-mentor 1/2008.

9. *Results of European Coaching Survey 2007/2008*. Cologne: Frank Bresser Consulting Report 2008.

### **SPECJALIŚCI W WIEKU 50 LAT I WIĘCEJ W ROLACH COACHA I MENTORA**

Głównym celem artykułu jest prezentacja możliwości i uwarunkowań wykorzystywania wiedzy i doświadczenia osób w wieku 50 lat i więcej w przedsiębiorstwach oraz ich otoczeniu. Zaprezentowano specyfikę procesów coachingu i mentoringu. Omówiono możliwości włączenia w takie formy transferu wiedzy specjalistów w wieku okołoemerytalnym.