

Newsletter November 2014



An innovative way of conducting mentor training needs analysis

Consortiul International LSDGC, Romania

CILSDGC's mentor training experience was a 'first' in at least three respects: the length of the training (we usually organize longer – 15-90 hour - training), the diversity of the participants' professional background (we used to work exclusively with teachers/ educators), and the size of the group of trainees (we usually work with at least 12 people at a time).

We organized the initial training in two waves: a 4-hour introductory training in May-June 2014 in Cluj-Napoca, for three groups of mentors & mentor coordinators, each attended by 3-7 pensioners, students or NEETs. Given that they came from four different cities, we did not manage to find a good time to train them all at once, so we had to repeat the training three times. We did not sign volunteer contracts with all those trained: out of the 14 people in the first training, we signed contracts with 10. The second - 5-hour training - was in September 2014, attended only by those who had agreed to be volunteers.

In the introductory training, we focused on getting to know the potential mentors, and for this we had the participants engage in discussing their interpretation of a) who/ what is a mentor, and b)

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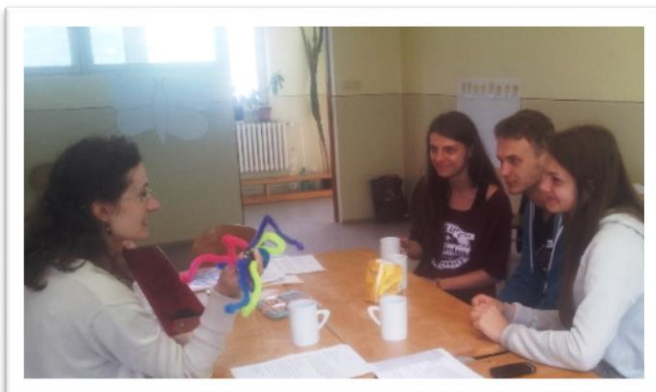
what principles underlie a successful mentoring program. The mentors had to read a short text and then share their understanding of various aspects of mentors' work, and of a mentoring programme. One of the strategies we used was 'Save the last word for me', in which each mentor had to moderate a 10-15 minute discussion on various principles of the mentoring programme. After stating the principle, the mentors had to invite the others to share their interpretation and exemplification of the principle, and in the end add their own interpretation, and conclude on what that particular principle means. This was an effective way to find out what the participants' learning needs were in a friendly manner of interaction so that the second training could be designed in response to those specific needs.



Mentoring for children's improved reading skills - targeted training for specific mentoring support

Združenie Orava pre demokraciu vo vzdelávaní, Slovakia

The mentoring program developed by the Slovak team aims to address a problem of young students' low reading literacy skills. The Slovak mentors were trained in the summer of 2014. Two trainers worked with a group of mentors, who had been recruited from among students and unemployed



young people (in cooperation with the local labour office). In total, eight mentors completed this pilot training program and received certificates. The goals of the training were to prepare mentors for their work with mentees, to provide opportunities to practice the necessary mentoring skills identified according to the needs of the mentees, and to provide opportunities to share experiences.

The 20-hour mentor training included five main topics:

- How to Become a Good Mentor (about mentoring),
- Life Skills (assisting children with developing life skills),
- Let's Read Together (assisting children with reading),
- Reading Merry-Go-Round (ways how to develop children's positive attitude to reading),
- Learning Together (ways of helping children to learn).

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What was highly useful in this training was, that the particular training sessions were scheduled in parallel with the mentor-mentee meetings, so that each training session was followed by a mentoring meeting. This gave the mentors the opportunity to immediately practice what they learnt in the training, see the effects of their work with the children, and receive useful feedback.

“I learnt that it is possible to work with children very well, if we are able to understand them.”
(Mentor)

“The learning how to help children with their learning made me think more about my own learning.”
(Mentor)

“I am very glad that we have developed a useful program. I myself also received lots of inspiration.”
(Mentor trainer)

“I learnt that if we give others our time and energy, they will appreciate it.” (Mentor)

Digital storytelling – an innovative activity to connect mentors and mentees

Grimstad kommune/Kvalifiseringstjenesten, Norway

In Norway, we have 10 mentor-mentee pairs and 3 mentor trainers. Our mentees are all immigrants aged 18 – 29. The mentors are of a similar age. They meet around two hours every week. Every month, the mentors meet for a 2-hour coaching session.

The mentors and mentees are free to choose activities for most of the time they spend together. However, the mentors must support the mentees to get to know at least two local organizations (sport, music, religious etc.), and – as specified in their contract - they should each contribute to the production of a digital story and a digital CV for the mentees.



Throughout the mentor training program, the mentors will cover the following topics:

- What is a good mentor (this included meeting with mentors from Slovakia and Romania)
- How to make a digital story;
- Multicultural understanding;
- Reflections on ethics in the mentor – mentee relationship;
- Raise awareness of traumatic experiences and their impact on individuals.

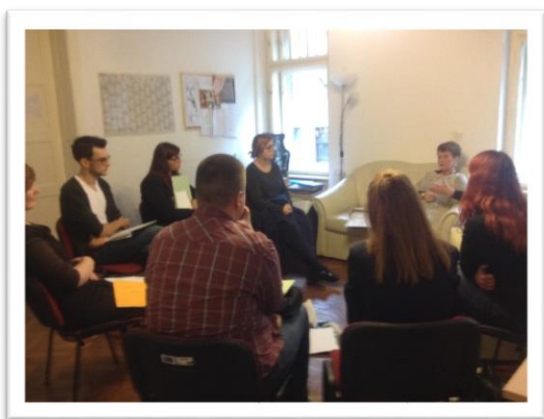
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We highly recommend creating digital stories as an attractive activity for the mentors and mentees to engage in. Our mentors use iPad and an application called Imovie. As they get to know one another, the mentors and mentees agree on a story that the mentee will tell. It is supposed to be a story that bears high personal significance. It might be positive (e.g. wedding, a pet, a good friend, etc.), or dramatic (e.g. stories about war in the mentees' home country, how they arrived in Norway, etc.). As they tell the story, items or pictures will be included in the film. Technically, the task for the mentor is rather simple. After a 1-hour instruction, they were able to film and edit the stories. Creating such a story (3-4 min) will help the pairs to produce something they can be proud of. The mentees' language skills will improve and they will learn how to use digital tools. In December, the mentors, mentees and the mentor trainers will meet to see all the films.

Shared hobbies and strengths – a leading criterion for matching mentors and mentees

Forum za slobodu odgoja, Croatia

Forum for Freedom in Education started the implementation of the mentoring programme in October 2014. Our seven highly motivated volunteer mentors are students of social and humanistic sciences and young unemployed teachers. The purpose of involving them is that during the mentoring programme they should gain experience in working with children and become aware of their relevant competences. Our mentees are gifted 6th-7th grade children from the Matko Laginja Elementary School, Zagreb.



The 2-day mentor training was held on 3-4 October, 2014. The trainers were external experts with rich experience in working with gifted children and with youth, knowledge in the Theory of choice and in mentoring programmes. The most interesting training session was the one in which the participants tried to get to know themselves: their talents, their strengths, but also

their behavior in different relationships. This session was a deeply introspective, genuine eye-opening experience.

In preparation of matching the mentors and the mentees, the mentor coordinator along with an external expert organized substantive individual meetings with each mentee and his/her parent. The goal was for the mentees and their parents to get to learn about the programme, and for the coordinator to get to know the mentees and the parents, their expectations, as well as their children's interests and hobbies.

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Starting from the information collected through various channels, the mentor coordinator and the external expert proposed the mentor-mentee matching scheme. The main criteria were common interests, knowledge and skills that the mentors would be able to impart with their mentees. The 2-hour matching meeting, held on 18 October 2014, was an opportunity for the mentors, the mentees and their parents to connect with each other especially through games (e.g. a Venn diagram to discover shared interests). The parents were each asked to write a letter to their children's mentors, which was a friendly way to state what they expected for their children during the programme.

Everybody seems pleased and enthusiastic about being a part of the mentoring programme and looks forward to their shared learning.

“Start-Aid“ - a programme by the German Child Protection Agency („Deutscher Kinderschutzbund“) in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania for volunteer mentors in the field of child and youth welfare

Deutscher Kinderschutzbund Landesverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V.,
Germany

In the context of the EU-project “Learning to be a Good Mentor – LeGMe”, in 2014, the German Child Protection Agency (DKSB) developed a new mentoring programme for youth aged 14 to 18 years, who are going to leave (or have already left) school without a certificate. Our current project focuses on the training of the soon-to-be mentors. This is planned as a series of training modules to start with a mandatory full-day induction course. In this first course, the participants are taught the basic knowledge for their future mentoring activities. Afterwards, individual feedback is given to the aspirants. Together with the Project management, they will make a preferably consensual decision whether they will actually start work as mentors. After the mentors start work, every four weeks they participate in a mandatory coaching session, which is part of their continued education. Problems and difficulties encountered during the mentoring activities are discussed in these meetings.



Four prospective mentor coaches (social workers) attend the project in cooperation with the Leuphana University in Lüneburg. The recruitment of appropriate volunteers was a challenge. There are very few unemployed teachers or social workers in Germany. Initially, it was planned to train the first round of mentors in May 2014. Unfortunately, the majority of

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prospective mentors changed their minds in the last minute. So the mentor training to be held in Rostock had to be postponed for October 2014.

A short form of practicum (“Hospitation” in German) at the local labour administration has been added to the mentor training curriculum recently. Thereby the mentors get to know better the German social system and also have the chance to establish personal contacts with the staff. In our opinion, the idea of “Hospitationen” might also be valuable for the other LeGMe partners.

Careful matching of mentors and mentees – a key to the success of the mentoring programme

Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo, Italy

In Italy the first mentor training programme took place in Palermo in June and July 2014. Our 12 mentors are unemployed people, migrants, EVS volunteers, senior volunteers, housewives, pensioners and university students. The mentor training programme was carried out in five meetings, each consisting in two 90-minute sessions. We focused on the following topics: frame of mentoring, mentoring tools, advice and suggestions for mentoring activities. The training ended with a visit to the local centers and matching the mentors with the mentees.

The training was led by a highly experienced mentor’s coach, using different working methods and tools: PowerPoint presentations, role play, group discussions, debriefing, etc. At the end of each meeting, the trainer facilitated an evaluation activity, which was really useful because it allowed adjustments to be made in the subsequent meetings according to the mentors’ learning needs. The aim of the whole training path was to help the participants understand the role of the mentors and their responsibilities towards the school-aged mentees, and providing them with theoretical and practical tools for their job.

The implementation of the mentoring programme is done with the involvement of three institutions (kindergarten and multicultural centers) which have been CESIE’s strong local partners in several projects. Each mentor is working with one or two children aged 6 to 10 with different profiles: with a migrant background, at risk of social exclusion, or with limited opportunities.



The match between mentors and mentees was the result of a carefully managed process. First, the coach and the mentors visited the local centers, where they got to know the children, the staff and the volunteers. After the visits, each mentor opted for a local center

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by filling in an evaluation questionnaire and discussing their experience in the centers. The coach and the project coordinators then analysed the situation, also keeping in mind the feedback and preferences expressed by the partner center leaders. Therefore, the match resulted from the direct involvement of key actors of our project: the coach, the project coordinator, the mentors, the mentees and the representatives of the local centers.

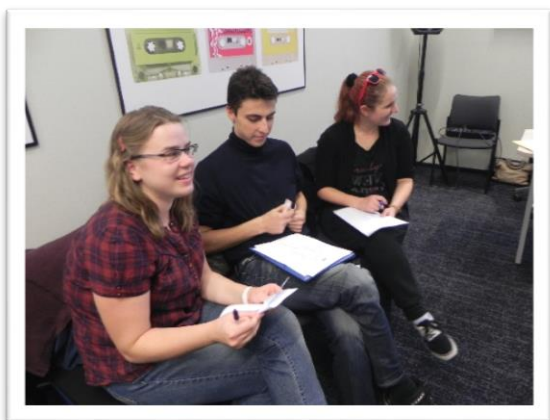
Mentors learn about children from theory and from experienced mentors

ŠIUOLAIKINIŲ DIDAKTIKŲ CENTRAS, Lithuania

In Lithuania, the mentor training started in June 2014 and took place over the course of four days. The first 6-hour training was organized on 5-6th June 2014 for 11 mentors, and the second 8-hour training on 25-26th September 2014 for 16 mentors. The training took place in the evenings, at a time that which was convenient for all volunteers - students, unemployed and employed people.

The summer training dealt with volunteering, motivation, building self-awareness, tolerance and learning how to recognize temperament type and what to do with this. The autumn training session focused on themes such as child development, recognition of a child's emotions, effective listening, conflict management, ethics, what to do in difficult situations (e.g. whom to ask for help and whom to inform if the child speaks of self-harm etc.). During the training, the participants planned and shared ideas about activities that can be done together with the child.

The mentors found the training useful; they particularly noted that discussing the topic of



temperament was highly useful as they would be able to deal with individual children in a more informed manner. They also learned about themselves and understood what to expect from and how to communicate with people with different types of temperament. Another topic which was rated as very important was the stages of children's development; this would help them to understand better their mentee's behaviour. The most important session was the one in which we had a guest: a volunteer who had participated

in other mentoring programmes. She shared her experience, talked about activities together with her mentee, which proved to be a very effective motivational factor for our mentors to start working with their mentees.

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Right after trainings, we started matching mentors and mentees: 14 couples were matched. The mentors and their mentees meet once a week and will continue meeting for 6 months.

Emerging plans for validating the MUNTERwegs mentors' learning experience

Verein MUNTERwegs, Switzerland

End of October 2014 we organised the farewell party of our mentoring group in Baar / ZG in Central



Switzerland. In the last 8 months, 10 volunteers aged 17 to 54 accompanied young kindergarten and school children.

MUNTERwegs had provided 6 coaching sessions for this group. Our vision at MUNTERwegs Mentoring is to promote ethnocultural diversity within our society's institutions. Our overall aspiration is that the mentored children are able to make marked progress both inside and outside of school. In light of the feedback from our mentees' teachers, mentors and parents, at

MUNTERwegs we are highly confident that the Baar group could reach these goals.

For the mentors, our objectives pursued during the coaching sessions were that they:

- will provide a role model in a close relationship with the child;
- will gain insight into a child's life (and family) , social life and relationships;
- will enhance their knowledge, understanding and empathy for people who lead lives completely different to their own;
- Will gain skills to empower their mentees and contribute to social inclusion in their communities;
- will have opportunities for social engagement, meaning and purpose through new links to society, strengthen their personal network;
- will reflect on new experiences, to endure confrontations, improve intercultural and intergenerational understanding;
- will communicate with foreign people, expanding their network of relationships;
- will gain orientation in different social work fields (pedagogy, social work, psychology etc.);
- will experience mental well-being through physical activity and inspirations.

Having coached so many young mentors in this program who were around 17 years old, MUNTERwegs is considering a tool of validation and recognition of their learning. It would be great to create a certificate validating and recognising the competences gained within this non-formal learning as a mentor in the MUNTERwegs mentoring program. The key competences, such as communication in mother tongue as well as in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic

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competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression are basic for lifelong learning and highly appreciated not only by the mentors themselves (CVs, personal portfolio), but also potential employers and the universities.

Next steps

October 2014 – May/ June 2015

Coaching for mentors with a focus on delivery of the mentoring programmes & use the M&E system

December 2014/ January 2015

Discussions on the findings resulting from the application of the monitoring and evaluation tools of the mentors' coaching programme

5 – 6 February 2015

Two parallel project meetings, one in Zagreb (Croatia) and one in Schwerin (Germany); in Schwerin will meet representatives of partner organisations DKSB MV, CILSDGC, MDC, CESIE and in Zagreb will meet representatives of partner organisations FFE, MUNTERwegs, Orava ADE, Grimstad commune. The main activities of the meeting will be: peer evaluation and feedback, discussions on the M&E results, guidelines for revision; share experiences among mentors.



February – March 2015

Revision of the coaching/ training mentors' programme

April – May 2015

Finalising the Guidelines for mentors and mentoring programme coordinators

21 – 22 May 2015

Final Conference in Cluj-Napoca (Romania)

June – July 2015

Local open presentations of the project results to other adult education providers/ trainers/ community representatives

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Important dates

February 2015 - Reports from partners on findings from first implementation/ testing delivery of the tailored coaching programmes

May 2015 - Final versions of the tailored mentors' coaching programmes

June 2015 - Final version of the Guidelines for mentors and mentoring programme coordinators.

Keep an eye on the project website <http://mentorineurope.wordpress.com> and/ or the project Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/LEGME-Project/542814635798645>, all the above mentioned materials will be available there.

