

EXAMINATION OF SELECTED INITIATIVES OF HEI ENGAGEMENT IN MENTORING: LIMITATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

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Ment4EU Research Report

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INDEX

1.	Introduction	4
2.	External threats to the social mentoring programs.....	6
2.1	Financing of social mentoring projects.....	6
2.2	Social mentoring impact assessment	6
2.3	Limitations of the projects regarding the people involved	7
3.	Internal weaknesses of social mentoring programs.....	8
4.	Good practices and opportunities for social mentoring projects.....	9
4.1	Follow-up of the couples participating in the social mentoring project.	9
4.2	Dissemination of social mentoring projects	10
4.3	Networking among the agents involved in the social mentoring project.	11
4.4	Training of mentors	12
4.5	Quality accreditation of social mentoring projects	12
5.	Involvement and role of universities in mentoring projects	13
6.	Conclusions	15
	ANNEX 1. Explanation table of the projects interviewed	17

1. Introduction

The research project *Mentoring for Social Inclusion in Europe: Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity* (Ment4EU) is promoted by a consortium of European universities: Bertha von Suttner Private University of Applied Sciences St. Pölten (Austria), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands), the National University of Ireland, Galway (Ireland), and the University of Girona (Spain). Funded by the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2023–2026, the project seeks to contribute to higher education by responding to the growing relevance of social mentoring in public policy and professional practice across Europe as a tool for fostering inclusion and diversity.

The primary objective of Ment4EU is to strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to address social challenges through mentoring. More specifically, the project aims to build institutional capacity, share knowledge, and promote meaningful community engagement. To this end, it will produce a digital handbook on social mentoring in Europe, a searchable database of relevant research, a proposed curriculum on social mentoring, and an innovation manual outlining how universities can design mentoring schemes for social inclusion and engage more responsibly with their surrounding communities.

A central aim of Ment4EU is to promote community engagement by higher education institutions (HEIs) through social mentoring. As an initial step, social mentoring projects either developed by HEIs or implemented in collaboration with civil society organisations in the consortium countries were identified. In total, 34 projects were included in the sample and subsequently classified into three categories:

- **HEI-LED SOCIAL MENTORING:** HEI **uses** mentoring to attend students with vulnerabilities: disabilities, socioeconomic disadvantage background, immigrant people, refugee people, etc. This mentoring is developed (by HEI) when people from disadvantaged backgrounds are students at the university and are in need of support. Mentoring is organized **within** the university
- **HEI-SUPPORTED SOCIAL MENTORING FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Third sector organisations are developing the project, and the HEI are collaborating with them. Universities **support** mentoring programmes. Mentoring is organized **outside** the university.

- **HEI-LED SOCIAL MENTORING FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** HEIs develop in collaboration with external partners (public administrations, civil society organisations, and NGOs, mentoring projects that contribute to both the institution (by engaging students and faculty) with the wider society needs (with mentees, communities and stakeholders). Universities **manage** mentoring programmes. Mentoring is organized **in partnership** between universities and local stakeholders.

Of these three types, the two most relevant for the present study are HEI-supported and HEI-led social mentoring for community engagement, as they align most closely with the research objectives. Each consortium partner selected between one and three projects and conducted semi-structured interviews using a shared interview guide. The interviews aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of project organisation and implementation, identified good practices, perceived threats and opportunities, and relationships with universities.

Interviews were conducted in the respective national languages, anonymised where requested, transcribed, and translated for analysis. All interviewees authorised the audio recording of the conversations and signed informed consent forms, which were securely stored by the coordinating institution. The final sample consisted of interviews from 13 projects.

This report presents the main limitations and good practices identified in social mentoring projects developed in collaboration with universities, while also highlighting opportunities for improvement in order to promote a fairer and more inclusive society. It is structured around four core areas: external threats affecting social mentoring projects; internal weaknesses identified by the initiatives themselves; good practices that support sustainability and effectiveness; and challenges faced by social organisations when collaborating with universities.

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all the professionals who participated in this study for their time, commitment, and valuable contributions.

2. External threats to the social mentoring programs

The analysis of the interview data made it possible to identify a range of weaknesses, challenges, and constraints faced by professionals responsible for implementing social mentoring projects. While the specific context of each programme and country varies, a number of common challenges were identified across the initiatives analysed. This section outlines the main external obstacles perceived by practitioners and coordinators in the development of their mentoring activities.

2.1 Financing of social mentoring projects

The challenge most frequently highlighted concerns the **financing of social mentoring**. The majority of programmes lack stable, long-term funding and remain highly dependent on public subsidies. Consequently, a significant share of the already limited technical staff time must be devoted—often during specific periods of the year—to identifying funding opportunities, submitting applications, and justifying public grants. In some cases, mentoring initiatives launched through temporary external funding face uncertainty once the funding period comes to an end, raising concerns about their continuity beyond a given project cycle.

This generalised lack of funding directly compromises the **stability and sustainability of projects** in the short, medium, and long term. It also limits opportunities for expansion, making it difficult to increase the number of mentoring pairs in response to existing social needs. Moreover, precarious funding conditions negatively affect **working conditions**, contributing to high staff turnover and organisational instability. In several initiatives, project management is largely carried out by university professors who assume these responsibilities on a voluntary basis, without formal recognition, which further jeopardises long-term continuity.

At a broader level, prevailing **political currents** also shape the development of social mentoring initiatives, as shifts in political priorities may reduce or, conversely, increase funding depending on the level of commitment to social inclusion and community engagement.

2.2 Social mentoring impact assessment

A further shared challenge relates to the **difficulty of assessing the impact of social mentoring**. Many projects report that it is not easy to objectify outcomes or to translate qualitative changes into measurable indicators. While some initiatives have developed internal tools—such as

participation thresholds or minimum meeting requirements—to identify levels of commitment or early warning signs, formal evaluation frameworks are often lacking.

In several cases, evaluation primarily takes the form of ongoing, informal assessments embedded in daily practice. Although these approaches provide valuable insights, concerns are expressed about their adequacy in demonstrating effectiveness, particularly at a time when external funders increasingly require clearly defined KPIs. While many projects have successfully operated without formal indicators, such evidence is now widely regarded as essential for accessing public or foundation funding. At the same time, interviewees emphasise the importance of balancing accountability requirements with ethical considerations, acknowledging that overly rigid measurement tools may undermine trust, especially when working with minors and their families.

2.3 Limitations of the projects regarding the people involved

Several initiatives identify the **lack of coordination between similar projects** as an important limitation. Time constraints, limited human resources, and a strong focus on collaboration with immediate partners often result in **limited networking** with peer organisations. As a consequence, opportunities for cooperation, mutual support, and referral pathways between projects remain underdeveloped. Strengthening coordination across initiatives working in the same field is therefore considered essential to fostering greater cooperation and shared learning.

With regard to mentors, many programmes report **difficulties in recruitment**, particularly when participation is voluntary and not financially compensated. Willingness to engage in volunteering tends to fluctuate depending on the broader socio-political context, with periods of crisis often associated with higher levels of participation, and more stable periods with lower engagement. In addition, adult participants—who frequently constitute a key target group for mentoring roles—often face work and personal commitments that are **difficult to reconcile with the demands of mentoring**. Similarly, university students, another common group of mentors, often combine academic responsibilities with paid employment, which further limits their availability. As a result, only a small proportion of potential mentors may have sufficient flexibility, creating challenges for scheduling meetings and managing the practical aspects of mentoring relationships. These constraints therefore need to be carefully considered during the matching process, which increasingly requires accommodating diverse schedules. Overall, such

factors can negatively affect participation rates and sustained engagement in mentoring activities.

With regard to mentees, the projects interviewed indicate that vulnerabilities—particularly those related to mental health, such as social anxiety or agoraphobia—often make it **difficult to establish and maintain regular contact**. Difficulties in arranging meetings, avoiding cancellations, or ensuring continuity of participation can hinder progress within the mentoring relationship. This situation can be challenging for mentors and highlights the crucial role of the technical team, whose support is key to maintaining motivation, managing emerging difficulties, and, where necessary, reconsidering or redefining the mentoring partnership.

3. Internal weaknesses of social mentoring programs

At the internal level of the programmes, projects have also identified a number of weaknesses that hinder their work while simultaneously highlighting opportunities for continued improvement and development. Although the elements discussed below are intrinsic to the projects themselves, they cannot be considered in isolation from the external factors outlined above.

In several initiatives, it has been observed that there is a **need for closer follow-up** throughout the duration of the project, both for mentoring pairs that function effectively and for those experiencing greater difficulties. Depending on the number of participants involved, this task is often challenging, as it requires a substantial time commitment that is frequently not available. In this regard, and in connection with previously mentioned issues, some projects note that this challenge could be partially addressed through the recruitment of an additional member of the technical team. Such reinforcement would also make it possible to deepen project evaluation, both in terms of **qualitative assessment**, which is already being carried out, and **quantitative evaluation**, which many programmes find more difficult to develop for similar capacity-related reasons.

Evaluation becomes even more complex when **mentees are minors**, as the use of formal or impersonal assessment tools is often considered inappropriate. Instead, priority is given to establishing strong, trust-based relationships with the minors involved and their families before introducing any evaluative processes. Analysis of project experiences also shows that small or less consolidated programmes encounter multiple obstacles when implementing mentoring-

related tasks, such as engaging with other institutions—an activity that can be particularly **time-consuming from an organisational perspective**. Participant recruitment further represents an internal challenge, as certain programme-specific characteristics generate additional limitations in project implementation.

In some initiatives, the target group of mentees is highly specific, consisting of individuals with severe and persistent psychiatric disorders, multiple psychoses requiring extensive medication, or pronounced addiction problems with neurophysiological impacts. In such cases, the primary difficulty lies less in recruiting mentees than in **finding suitable mentors**. Moreover, given the limited size of technical teams and the need to distribute tasks according to staff availability, the matching phase is often described as especially stressful and demanding, requiring substantial coordination among all actors involved. During this process, numerous factors must be considered that may generate additional challenges, including **geographical distance between mentors and mentees**, the need to align schedules, and the importance of ensuring sufficient proximity to minimise frustration and participant dropout.

Finally, some initiatives report further challenges related to matching processes when participants join at later stages of the project, resulting in shorter mentoring relationships that may limit the full achievement of intended outcomes. Time constraints are identified as a significant issue, particularly where matching processes are closely linked to fixed institutional or academic calendars, often concentrated at the beginning of the school or academic year. At the same time, requests for participation may arise continuously throughout the year, revealing ongoing demand that does not align with these predefined timelines.

4. Good practices and opportunities for social mentoring projects

In addition to the difficulties and challenges that social mentoring programs face, we have also identified the elements that promote their good performance and that are good practices that can be replicated in other initiatives.

4.1 Follow-up of the couples participating in the social mentoring project.

One of the practices most frequently highlighted by the interviewed projects is the appropriate and continuous follow-up provided by professionals to project participants, both mentors and mentees. This support is particularly important in cases where mentees face heightened levels

of vulnerability, as mentors may require close and sustained **accompaniment** to support the progression of the mentoring relationship and to prevent frustration or the breakdown of the mentoring pair. In this context, encouraging mentors to reflect on challenges and to draw meaningful lessons from the obstacles encountered can significantly contribute to successful matching outcomes.

Follow-up can be carried out through various tools, such as systematic feedback forms or reflective diaries. As projects become more established and consolidated over time, the quality of these diaries or monitoring systems generally improves, as technical teams are able to provide clearer guidance and examples that foster deeper reflection and more structured ways of thinking. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that **both mentors and mentees align with the project's profile** and with the nature of the partnership envisaged. In some cases, participants' needs may exceed what social mentoring can adequately address, making it necessary to refer them to more specialised services capable of providing interventions better suited to their situation.

4.2 Dissemination of social mentoring projects

To avoid the inclusion of unsuitable profiles, another practice highlighted by several programmes is the thorough **explanation of the project**, its specific characteristics, and its mode of operation. Projects emphasise the importance of clearly defining what the initiative entails in order to establish realistic expectations among all parties involved. This clarity helps participants understand the requirements from the outset and reduces the risk of discouragement, particularly among mentors in vulnerable situations.

Such clarification is also essential for the effective **dissemination of the project** and the promotion of its activities, both to attract participants and to identify potential partners and funding sources. To support implementation, initiatives may develop **dissemination materials in multiple languages** in order to avoid misunderstandings, produce informational leaflets, collaborate with educators who support mentoring activities, or deliver presentations directly to students—an approach widely recognised as an effective outreach strategy. It is equally important that the **promotion of mentoring initiatives is carried out on an ongoing basis**, rather than being confined to one-off training sessions or isolated informational events. In this regard, some experiences underline the value of embedding mentoring within broader institutional, or policy frameworks aimed at promoting equity in access, participation, and success in higher

education over sustained, multi-year periods. In other words, recognising mentoring as a relevant social intervention tool and integrating it into strategic planning processes can enhance its visibility and long-term consolidation.

Closely related to this dissemination dimension, many programmes highlight the importance of a **physical presence within university spaces** as a key factor in ensuring the visibility and legitimacy of social mentoring initiatives. Having professionals working on site—either on a permanent or periodic basis—allows for more continuous follow-up, closer attention to participants' needs and demands, and the possibility of intervening both individually and in group settings. Moreover, it provides mentors and mentees with a safe and familiar space where they can meet a known reference person and address any questions or difficulties directly, thereby reducing situations of isolation and uncertainty.

4.3 Networking among the agents involved in the social mentoring project.

The organisations interviewed noted that working in partnership with other actors involved in the project is essential for its effective functioning. In some cases, they place particular value on their **connection to the local community network** in which they operate, as this network can provide support during periods with fewer volunteers, offer access to physical spaces when needed, or supply free resources and activities that mentoring pairs can benefit from.

In other contexts, collaborating actors may include local administrations, civil society organisations, or higher education institutions. Across all cases, strong emphasis is placed on the importance of effective coordination, the clear distribution of tasks in accordance with the capacities of each stakeholder, and sustained communication in order to maintain a shared direction. Some experiences highlight that the successful implementation of mentoring initiatives depends on the alignment of multiple actors, including institutional commitment at the local level, the involvement of educational centres, continuous support for participants and their families through intermediary roles, and the engagement of university structures. Similarly, when higher education institutions act as the main promoters of such initiatives, the continuity of **institutional commitment over time**—across different leadership teams—emerges as a key enabling factor and may be considered a good practice in terms of governance and strategic support.

4.4 Training of mentors

The training of mentors, both initial and ongoing, is another element highlighted by the projects analysed as crucial to ensuring the effective functioning of mentoring programmes. In most initiatives, **initial training** is mandatory, as it helps establish a shared understanding of the programme's objectives among participants and fosters a sense of **collective responsibility**. While the specific content of this training varies across projects, it generally focuses on the type of support mentoring can provide, as well as on key issues that may arise in the lives of mentored children and young people.

Initial training also gives careful attention to defining the role of the mentor as a volunteer, clarifying boundaries within the mentoring relationship, and developing essential **accompanying skills**, along with other strategies that may prove useful in supporting the mentoring pair. Depending on the needs of each programme, once the mentoring relationship has progressed over several months, initiatives often reintroduce ongoing training on more specialised topics. These may be selected by mentors based on the needs they identify among their mentees or delivered through rotating in-depth modules addressing areas such as well-being, crisis intervention, or racism.

In some cases, training activities also include dedicated spaces for **sharing experiences**, either by involving mentors from previous editions of the programme or by facilitating exchanges among mentors currently participating. This practice is widely regarded as beneficial, as it encourages mutual support among participants and enables the sharing of practical resources and strategies that can strengthen mentors' confidence and enhance the quality of the mentoring relationship.

4.5 Quality accreditation of social mentoring projects

Finally, some additional good practices identified by the initiatives relate to quality assurance mechanisms. In several cases, mentoring programmes adhere to externally defined **quality standards** established by coordinating bodies in the field of social mentoring, such as umbrella organisations, and have obtained formal accreditation seals that certify compliance with these criteria. These certifications indicate that the interventions are based on systematised processes that prioritise quality and methodological rigour, rather than focusing exclusively on the quantitative expansion of activities.

5. Involvement and role of universities in mentoring projects

As mentioned above, the aim of this research is to examine the involvement of higher education institutions in social and community interventions, bearing in mind that the production of academic knowledge is closely connected to social realities. Moreover, as public institutions, universities hold a social responsibility that they cannot disregard, and which they generally fulfil through their participation in volunteering and international cooperation programmes. In this context, however, the involvement of universities in social mentoring initiatives remains limited. This section therefore presents the perspectives of third-sector organisations that collaborate with universities, as well as the main difficulties they identify in these interactions. Doing so allows the Ment4EU project to identify opportunities to strengthen and expand university engagement in social mentoring initiatives.

Some of the programmes analysed in this research are developed by third-sector or civil society organisations in collaboration with universities. While such partnerships are necessary for the development and proper functioning of social mentoring projects, challenges often arise due to the organisational characteristics of academic institutions. The following sections outline the main obstacles encountered by the projects in their collaboration with universities and the consequences of these limitations, with the aim of informing the development of strategies to improve cooperation and reinforce links between the actors involved in social mentoring.

Firstly, social intervention organisations frequently perceive universities as **bureaucratic, rigid, and difficult to access institutions**, largely due to their **hierarchy-based structures** and an **apparent disconnection between academic theory and professional practice**. Universities are often described as highly **compartmentalised organisations**, where each campus, faculty, or degree programme operates according to its own internal logic, which is not always transparent to external actors. This makes it challenging for civil society organisations to gain access, communicate effectively, or intervene collaboratively, requiring significant time and effort to identify appropriate contact points and establish joint initiatives. In addition, given the large student populations within universities, it is often difficult for information about social mentoring projects—and about available support and accompaniment mechanisms more broadly—to **reach potential participants effectively**.

A further characteristic that directly affects coordination with third-sector organisations is the divergence between the **institutional and operational rhythms** of the two sectors. Universities tend to operate through vertical structures and lengthy bureaucratic procedures, which contrast sharply with the more flexible, practice-oriented dynamics of social organisations. As a result, establishing collaboration can be slow and discouraging, and from the perspective of social organisations, it can be difficult to observe concrete outcomes, as agreements often only translate into practical action in subsequent academic years. Frequent **changes in key university contact personnel** further complicate collaboration, as relationships and shared understanding must often be rebuilt from the outset. Consequently, university engagement in social mentoring projects is perceived to depend more on the individual commitment of specific staff members than on sustained institutional support. According to several third-sector organisations, addressing this limitation would require scaling up collaboration frameworks so that decisions are embedded at an institutional and political level, rather than relying solely on technical staff, thereby increasing the likelihood that partnerships can be maintained over time.

At the same time, **universities are perceived to prioritise internal processes and interventions**, paying comparatively less attention to community-based engagement with tangible social impact. This orientation can hinder the establishment of close collaborations and, in some cases, prevents effective use of existing mechanisms, such as institutional communication channels or systems for recognising elective or free-choice credits linked to community engagement.

In contrast, other educational institutions that also provide post-compulsory education—such as secondary schools or vocational centres—are often considered more accessible and more willing to establish collaborative relationships than universities. From the perspective of several associations, universities devote **limited attention to volunteering** in general, and to sustained engagement with third-sector organisations in particular. Furthermore, the **wide range of extracurricular volunteering options available** within universities can dilute attention to social mentoring, reducing commitment to this specific approach.

For these reasons, interviewees emphasise the need to foster greater openness within academic institutions by recognising and valuing the expertise of organisations that work on a daily basis with mentors and mentees. Strengthening collaboration and mutual learning would require jointly reflecting on strategies to attract volunteers, as well as formally recognising both the time invested in mentoring projects and the competencies acquired through community engagement within professional training pathways. In addition, stakeholders highlight the opportunity to

improve the presentation of social mentoring as an attractive and meaningful intervention option for university students.

6. Conclusions

Mapping projects and conducting interviews have enabled a deeper understanding of universities' involvement in social mentoring initiatives—an area that had not previously been systematically explored. This process has made it possible to identify the key elements that European social mentoring projects recognise as external threats and internal weaknesses, as well as the good practices that support their effective functioning and long-term continuity.

Despite being implemented in diverse national contexts, the projects analysed reveal several common trends across the three dimensions examined. Many social mentoring programmes identify the lack of stable financial resources as a major barrier to implementation, human resource management, and overall sustainability. This situation has a direct impact on the quality and continuity of mentoring interventions. Similarly, difficulties in assessing the impact of social mentoring constitute a shared challenge, as the absence of well-defined evaluation indicators limits access to funding and hinders the ability to demonstrate outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, inconsistent levels of participant engagement and, at times, limited commitment or interest among mentors and mentees further constrain the effective development of mentoring initiatives.

Despite these challenges, the projects interviewed also identified a range of good practices that support the effective functioning of mentoring pairs and organisational structures. Most professionals highlighted the importance of close and continuous monitoring of participants, along with comprehensive and tailored support adapted to each case, in order to ensure the healthy development of mentoring relationships. They also stressed the value of effective project dissemination, including the clear communication of participation requirements, to avoid misunderstandings or unmet expectations and to attract appropriate funding. Furthermore, adequate mentor training was consistently recognised as a key factor in ensuring both the quality of mentoring relationships and the overall success of the projects. In some national contexts, these elements are formal prerequisites for obtaining quality labels, making participation in external evaluations or quality audits a recognised good practice in itself.

Another essential component for organisations implementing social mentoring is effective networking with relevant stakeholders in order to foster cooperation and promote progress. However, many of the interviewed projects reported significant difficulties in developing such networks, particularly in relation to universities. Interviewees noted that each academic institution tends to operate according to its own internal logic, which can complicate access and communication and, in turn, limit meaningful involvement. Moreover, the pace, bureaucratic procedures, and organisational hierarchies of universities often diverge from those of social organisations, slowing down collaborative work. Finally, mentoring projects frequently highlighted the challenge of maintaining stable points of contact within universities, noting that institutional engagement in mentoring initiatives often depends more on the individual commitment of specific staff members than on sustained political or institutional support. These dynamics ultimately reduce the potential for mutual engagement between universities and social organisations and constrain the broader development of social mentoring initiatives.

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations can be formulated to improve the current situation:

- Ensure stable and diversified funding sources for social mentoring programmes in order to guarantee their sustainability and continuity.
- Recognise social mentoring initiatives, their coordinating organisations, and the individuals involved, both within universities—through teaching load reductions or other forms of academic and professional recognition—and externally, particularly by promoting stable employment conditions.
- Strengthen research on social mentoring to develop robust quantitative and qualitative indicators that allow for meaningful impact evaluation.
- Scale up university involvement in social mentoring projects so that engagement with communities becomes a sustained institutional commitment rather than an individual initiative.

ANNEX 1. Explanation table of the projects interviewed

Project name	Mentors	Mentees	Objectives of the project
Projecte Rossinyol (UdG) - Spain	University students of any of the degrees that exist at the UdG. Also masters and doctorate students. Seniors. Availability, commitment, absence of sexual offenses.	Children between 8 and 16 years old, (4th of primary school up to 4th of ESO), enrolled in the educational centers of the localities where Rossinyol takes place. They have just arrived in the territory or are of second generation, with reclaimed families (there are few activities), lack of mastery of the Catalan language. Few extracurricular activities, interest and motivation for studies.	To promote the process of social, cultural and linguistic inclusion. Strengthen the bond with the new context and promote a sense of belonging. Accompany them (social support) to promote their emotional well-being. From November to May (6 months). Once a week, three hours.
Unimentor (AFEV) - Spain	University students (without vulnerability), involved/committed to the university, who are studying a university degree (from 2nd year onwards) or have recently finished it. Also doctoral or post-doctoral students.	University students, freshmen, seniors, without previous university references, who wish to participate in the project.	University mentoring (as part of the Prometheus program, which aims to democratize university studies). To create an imaginary that contemplates that they can also go to university: to have university referents. Support in the unknown or possible limitations that the mentor may encounter during the course of the degree: academic and personal support (self-knowledge, knowledge of the environment, etc.). Once every fifteen days. From 2019. First year of university. Starts between the end of October and January.
enTàndem (AFEV) - Spain	Adults (university students, people who are working, students in higher education centers, etc.)	Children or adolescents between 5th of primary school and 4th of ESO.	Broad educational objectives: both of openness and knowledge of the environment: language learning, etc., or habits, self-esteem, etc. (ask what the child or adolescent wants to work on). Once a week. (It has been done in Catalonia since 6 years ago, but individual accompaniment in France since 35 years ago). A school year.
Social Mentoring (University of Cantabria) - Spain	University students	Minors from the child protection system who are living in residential centers (serious protection). Between 16 and 19 years old, who are interested and motivated to attend university.	To orient children living in residential care to university studies and also to make them aware of the resources available at the university. Facilitate the transition process from high school to college, favoring having a referent who has gone through the same thing/is going through the same thing. The project started two years ago. One semester.
Nightingale Mentoring - Austria	Future teachers. They also have part-time students: in that case part-time students, and for these students we do not offer a child in the city area where they are studying, but a child near their hometown.	Children between 6 and 14 years old, although they are intended to be between 8 and 12 years old. Disadvantage children who need support and guidance. If they have a migrant background, they need support in learning the	Expand the world of mentors. Make free time meaningful (everyday life meaningful). Provide Language support. Increase the mentor's self-confidence. Regularity of meetings and continuity. A school year.

	find out from the students where they live. Then we look for schools nearby.	language of the host society. (Schools in the city area and schools in the federal State). A mentee is a child with little self-confidence" and all these things are given to the teachers in writing. And that was a very important step that we took in the development: we require the teachers to write down WHY this child is really the RIGHT child for the Nightingale project.	
NextGenBuddies Austria	University students, mostly from our university, but it's not exclusively so. Also, other students can apply → open to all the students. friends from students from our university, and some who are not, especially for the music buddies. We also are in contact with the Music University in Vienna, and they forward information to their students. About the levels, students can apply from all levels. Bachelor, masters and PhD. And for the mentors, we welcome everyone. Basically, they have to apply. And we have in some programs assessment interviews. So, we have like a basic check. But basically, everyone is welcome. And in some cases, we try to see if we can have, like more experienced students when we know they're more challenging or older mentees.	Children and teenagers from, how you say, deprived social groups, disadvantaged children and teenagers who live or are cared for in the participating institutions from Caritas, Vienna, or from the Austrian Red Cross. The kids are in the age of from 6 to 18, and they either live, for example, in houses for refugees, in mother and child houses, or they are visiting institutions for learning support in the afternoon, or other kinds of counseling services. they are nominated by the Caritas's institutions. So, they assess which kids do have needs and they tell us each semester what kids are looking for buddies, and we try then to match them. The responsibility for the needs of the mentees is with the Caritas or the Red Cross institutions.	students with this program to get a brighter perspective on the world. Widen their own horizon, get like into society, realize societal problems, and also the complexity of the societal problems. And bring in their own competencies. And we want to support them and supervise them to train their intercultural, teamwork, and pedagogical competences. we have 3 different body tracks. So, there's a learning buddy track, a music buddy track, and a sports buddy track. The basis for all three is the same. It's about relationship building, spending time weekly together, and supporting children- the students have the task to support the kids in their development. But they can set like, the focus on either, like working for school or music or sports. Once a week. Not marked: there are relationships that have been in the program for more than 10 years (long-lasting relationships). The people can stay in the program. There is no predefined ending from our side. Usually students apply for one semester, but we really encourage them to see the advantage of staying longer. And you know, we tried to really tell them to be aware of what relationship needs to build up.
Cranmore Education Project – Ireland	Mentor education is the technical person. → I'm the education mentor and then you'd have Student support, financial support. You'd have the head of access. Maybe there's less maybe there's five of us. The only selection criteria is if they fully want to do the course and if they're doing it for the right reasons. Community program.	ONE IN ONE MENTORING: people in East Sligo who may have left school or may have not completed school who are looking who are interested in maybe getting back into some form of education. So that would be maybe Seeing what, you know, making individualized plan. So kind of going through where they are now and where they want to go so if it's if they have a level three you know you're looking at level four courses before a kind of progression plan might go into the ATU. So you're looking at further education training and stuff like that or MSL ETB courses. Mentoring with mentoring 60 year olds with all the different kind of age groups: interested in return into education or progressing through education. Community mentoring and advocacy	to get more people from dash schools and stuff that may not that they may be from underrepresented kind of socioeconomically disadvantaged areas thinking about college. it was originally aimed at just increasing the kind of, I suppose social responsibility the ATUs and other colleges in the country just to kind of increase participation rates. one day a week for it's about 10 to 12 weeks Yeah, so it started in 2019. It was part of the National Access plan And it was set up in East Sligo and specifically kind of the Cranmore area but it encompasses all of East Sligo.
Path Mentoring Programme - Ireland	So while it's predominantly undergraduates from the cluster of universities I mentioned, it's	would pair two mentors and ideally you'd pair two mentors from different colleges. So that way the students they're	it was a program for access to higher education.

	also expanded to include maybe local business people and also maybe alumni from schools or FEC colleges. we prioritize both being from the groups set out in the National Access Plan So, you know, ideally we'd want to recruit mentors who are mentors of the traveling and Roma community. We'd want to recruit mature student mentors, lone parent mentors, students from areas of socioeconomic disadvantage and then so students who've entered college through the HERE scheme... And students with a disability as well.	mentoring get different perspectives and they kind of see all the options available to them. So for example, you could have a mentor from Trinity paired with a mentor from NCAD. And then those mentors would ideally they'd be assigned a host organization, but the host organizations where possible, were assigned based on the manager's preference, but usually the aim of it and even the name community mentoring is the the aim of the program is that the mentor goes back to their community. mentees are typically secondary school students, but they also are adult learners as well. So where possible, we collaborate with adult education organizations so that they might be adults who are doing short courses and are thinking about returning to education.	the aim of it really at the highest level what community mentoring aimed to do was increase the levels of diversity in the student population and higher education. So mentoring based on research has been shown to give students confidence in attending college and mentoring kind of creates positive student well-being, which then translates into college application efficacy. So more likely to be able to apply to college because they have the knowledge and supports to do that. So that was kind of get students who might not have and the resources or the knowledge around creative arts an opportunity to practice kind of creative arts through workshops at universities. So that was their example. But my understanding would be that since the HEA's objectives in line with the National Access Plan. Is to get people from priority groups to increase the numbers. So for example, mature students, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds into college. I imagine the reason these universities were clustered together was because And there's certain areas around Dublin where progression to higher education is lower than others. So it would make sense for universities that were closer to certain areas to actively be doing outreach activities→ col-laboració entre universitats per poder abastar les necessitats de les persones si alguna institució hi arriba i la resta no. . So the hope is, like I said previously, that schools and organizations and aspiring mentors can continue to do these sessions without a coordinator being there. it's a really important kind of build on ,like, meet the student where they're at so what those a lot of adult ed organizations are doing is they're even giving confidence to people who've been out of formal education for years. years How about a negative experience with education to even do a short course to build their confidence but then where mentoring can come in is to show them the different kind of stepping stones they can take following on from that short course that could ultimately lead to a college or career that's right for them. Divulgació: I think a lot of outreach activities take place which are brilliant, like things like open days and You know, Q&A sessions, application clinics, but I think we've forgotten that it's actually very important for people just to be able to have a kind of informal one-on-one conversation. And like trying to especially include that in um educational settings like in schools and organizations to kind of yeah a more kind of informal sharing of knowledge because it is very effective and we've even seen it and we've had feedback from organizations. We've even had one session with mentors and they've said that you know I suppose their learners have said that it's inspired them to look at getting back into education.
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E-mentoring – Ireland	Adult founder: once you're over the age of 18, you can apply to become a mentor with Foroige's mentoring program. From 20-25 years old and up to 50-60 years old, but generally there are more participants between 30 and 40 years old.	Young people who are part of CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) They can be referred to the program for many different reasons. They could be from like a separated family where their parents are separated 10:08:31 Have mental health difficulties maybe their sibling has additional needs and they're just not getting as more supportive as they want. In terms of for myself like i've certainly noticed that like a high percentage of young people would really struggle with making friends. They'd be very socially isolated in school and have like poor peer supports um Especially young people coming from CAMHS. 10:08:57 A lot of the times the young people are in the process of being evaluated for ADHD or autism and so that adds like another level of kind of stress under our lives and uncertainty about just who they are as individuals or people. You would have some young people who would have suicidal ideations, would have depression and stuff like that as well but the the the social isolation seems to be the biggest piece for me that I notice anyway.	to roll out or pilot a digital kind of mentoring that will be online and the purpose being to open up the mentoring opportunities to young people that are maybe harder to reach like in rural isolated areas. also enabling matches where you're not necessarily waiting on a volunteer in that young person's immediate community so like a volunteer wouldn't have to travel along, you know, every week, it's a bit easier to kind of make that match online The goal really is to Provide a supportive adult for a young person who needs someone additional to their family um or their guardians that they already have. Enabling them to have a mentor to kind of just bring them out of themselves and talk to on a weekly basis is really like the primary goal. , I just wanted to chat to my mentor. I just want to actually have somebody to talk to like they're not necessarily into the activities as such like that's not the main focus... the main focus is just building that relationship and helping them set goals for themselves whether that's Around making friends, school attendance, a lot of young people would have um School refusal. So a lot of our mentors have just helped with encouraging young people to go back to school even on short term timetables. the goals might be that they're very socially isolated and it's to increase their social experiences and just build a positive adult into their life So then you have kind of like Your pool of volunteers, your pool of young people and just kind of look at who you think would match well together based on hobbies and interests or their needs sometimes sometimes sometimes you might make a match because the young person's needs, you know, that the volunteers experience would be really beneficial but they might not necessarily have that many obvious hobbies. The goals are generally always like what might seem really small to some people but they're huge to them like the going into coffee shops and ordering their own coffee or Making friends in school or staying in school you know which you know just some real people might be like oh that's not very big goals for them to achieve with their mentor. Meet in person so it's really based on the young person's needs and the availability of them. So they kind of decide themselves what works best for them So for example, I would have some matches that maybe they might meet Every

			second week and they'd have that routine that they'd meet every second week online and every other week in person or we'd have some that only meet once a month in person. It just really depends on the needs of the young people as well there and what works for them And it can also change like you might have young people that at the beginning to meet and more online but then the more confident and comfortable they get with their mentor online they'll slowly start meeting them in person a bit more 49 So with that then you know a lot of the needs of those young people would they be like socially isolated, have social anxiety and another kind of mental health difficulties so sometimes it can just be very overwhelming to meet in person all the time as well so that online element has Supported them to build a relationship with them and help them become comfortable in order to meet in person with a mentor as well then you know um So it's definitely worked quite well that way. meet weekly for one to two hours using the blended approach of online and in-person meetings, some of them meeting more online. Frequency of meetings: It's completely up to them you know in the beginning when we piloted the program we were kind of looking at a okay maybe we'll have to meet every six weeks in person for most of the matches prefer meeting a bit more frequently than every six weeks. So we just kind of leave it up to what works for them like when we make a match you'd support them and in making that decision initially based on the needs of the young person. So you could have a young person who's. You know like really bad social anxiety doesn't really leave the home So maybe meeting and might at the beginning look like Definitely meet every three weeks in person but then six months on that young person might be like, actually, I'll start meeting every second week. So it kind of changes as well and it goes with the needs of the young person at all times.
Lotus Project - Belgium	This project focuses on second-year students of remedial education. These are students who have already been introduced to theory, but have no practical experience yet, nor have they had any contact with clients. The programme coordinator then matches the students and clients. The first criterion is interests. After that, they are matched by place of residence.	The target group is, on the one hand, people with severe persistent psychiatric disorders . These are chronic problems. It is a target group that is strongly stigmatized in/by society, but also within the social services. They are, for instance, people with multiple psychoses who have to take a lot of medication and are scarred by it, people with pronounced addiction problems and are neurophysiologically affected by it.	The aim is to pair student and client based on a common leisure interest. The aim is for the pair to undertake something together, it does not matter what this is. No guidelines are provided for this, it is about being present. Presence is a theoretical concept that does not emphasise problem-solving thinking and acting on the part of the counsellor, but on being present and together. Having fun together is essential in this. The pair should do things together in leisure time (e.g. go to the cinema together, have a drink, eat a pizza,...). What they will do together will gradually grow and emerge as mutual trust grows. It's about reciprocity and doing things together. They seem like small things, but they are often big steps for the client. On an individual level, the objective is to introduce the student to the power of presence and break the stigma around this target group (These might seem nothing special, but it are big steps for these people to get back into society).

			They will be brought together in a short-term buddy project starting in late September and ending in mid-December. Ideally, ten encounters are envisaged. Last year was the second time the project ran. September 2026 will mark the third year of the project. Once a week, more or less.
Buddy@home Belgium	- Teacher students training the project is a compulsory part of a teacher training program. It is conceived as an internship	young people with social vulnerability. Specifically, these are mainly ex-okan pupils (PDC=reception class for non-native newcomers), pupils of foreign origin. In terms of age, the buddy@home project focuses on students aged between 12 and 18. This is because the students who act as buddies/mentors are going to teach students up to and including the third grade of secondary education.→ if a pupil is, for example, struggling with mathematics, a student with a scientific background may be proposed as a buddy (i.e., matching based on school subjects).	The objectives for the student/mentee are: to strengthen self-regulatory skills in the student (e.g. learning to learn, how to learn French words,...), to become more choice-minded when orienting between first, second and third grade secondary education, to develop a growth mindset (e.g. to stimulate self-confidence in students), to master the language of teaching and instruction, to develop digital skills such as e.g. AI, learning the characteristics of a quiet learning environment, expanding learners' social capital by helping bridge the gap to a leisure activity (e.g. introducing them to a community work). From the students perspective: the aim is to introduce students/mentors to "social vulnerability". That they gain experiences of this and take them into their "being a teacher". In total, students and pupils are expected to meet for 20 hours. They may decide for themselves how and when these meetings take place, though a minimum of 15 sessions is requested. In practice, students may finalize the project after 15 sessions and 20 hours, but most continue their commitment until the end of the pupil's school year, due to the bond that has been built. This is the fifth or sixth year of the buddy@home project. The full program lasts one year. It starts at the beginning of the academic year, when the student is matched with a pupil, and continues until the student is assessed.
Mentoring newcomers Netherlands	- Mentors are university or college students, many of whom have a background as refugees. They offer practical tips, a listening ear, and conversations in the mentees' native languages.	newcomers, including refugees and immigrants. Mentees are newcomers, including refugees and immigrants, who need study advice and guidance. The mentees range in age and background but share the common goal of integrating into their new community and advancing their education and careers.	to support their transition into higher education and the workforce. The program consists of one-on-one mentoring, workshops, and career advice. Mentors provide practical tips, emotional support, and career guidance to help mentees successfully integrate into their new environment. The programme started in 2018, driven by the increasing need to support the growing number of newcomers in the region.

			The initiative began to address the challenges faced by newcomers in adapting to a new educational and professional environment. Recognizing the unique hurdles that refugees and immigrants face, the program was initiated to provide personalized support and guidance, helping newcomers navigate their new surroundings and achieve their ambitions. The idea was born out of community feedback and the observed need for a structured support system. The programme started in 2018, driven by the increasing need to support the growing number of newcomers in the region.
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