

Involving citizens as volunteer mentors for VET students

Description

Mentoring involves one-to-one support for young people on an ongoing basis. It can help to maintain a young person's motivation to learn and can prevent drop-out.

Countries

 France

 Germany

Why is this approach useful?

Mentoring involves one-to-one support for young people on an ongoing basis. It can help to maintain a young person's motivation to learn and can prevent drop-out.

Why is it a quick win?

Involving citizens as volunteer mentors keeps costs down. This means that the available funding can be focused on the organising the initiative, including the recruitment of volunteers, disseminating of the programme to VET providers, companies, and learners, and matching mentors and learners. It is also important to foresee some 'pocket money' to cover volunteers' expenses (transport, costs of activities to develop with learners).

The organisation of the initiative can be relatively quick if its scope is limited, for instance, a local initiative involving the students of one university as volunteers and learners from a small number of VET providers. Initiatives of a wider scope would require a higher budget and more time to be implemented (e.g. a national initiative involving senior citizens in the whole country).

How to make this approach successful?

A mentoring programme involving volunteers should include the following features:

- Screening of volunteers to make sure they are suited to become mentors, and to ensure the safeguarding of the young people involved.
- Short training course for volunteers on their role as mentors.
- Support to mentors and learners, if they have questions about the programme or if problems arise.
- Mechanisms to ensure a good match between the learner and the mentor. This can be done by:
 - coordinators doing a first match based on agreed criteria such as the

- distance between places of residence, and field of expertise
- the mentor and the learner having a first personal meeting after which they decide if they agree with the partnership proposed. If not, the coordinators of the initiative propose a different partner.

It is also useful to organise meetings where groups of mentors can exchange experiences.

Examples of measures using this approach

Nationwide training mentors scheme. An Example from Germany

The nationwide training mentors (VerA) scheme of the Senior Expert Service (SES) in Germany is a new mentoring scheme for apprentices, financially supported by the Federal Ministry of Education. The mentors are volunteer senior citizens who are retired trained professionals and who draw on their individual experience to support apprentices on a one-to-one basis, free of charge. The mentoring scheme offers apprentices an opportunity to discuss technical issues and practical work-related tasks with an experienced professional who is external to the company, which encourages a more open discussion. Mentors may also help apprentices practice for their exams, motivate those who are lacking enthusiasm and address any possible conflicts or misunderstandings between the employer and the apprentice.

[Read good practice factsheet](#)

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Individualised support from university students for disadvantaged youth. An example from France

Volunteer university students at the Association de la fondation étudiante pour la ville (AFEV) provide long-term individualised support to VET students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The aim is to reduce absenteeism and the risk of dropping out due to low academic achievement. Volunteers (about 7,000 university students per year) provide about two hours of individualised support per week in over 40 areas across France in different cities (e.g. Paris, Nice, Lyon, Grenoble, Marseille, etc.). Support involves methodological help for studying general courses; supporting learners in their orientation and professional projects; and accompanying learners in their personal development in order to increase autonomy and mobility.

[Read good practice factsheet](#)