

MEET

***A compendium to design
migrant mentoring programs***



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Centre for
Migrations of the
Municipality of
Fundão (CMMF)

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**A compendium to design
migrant mentoring programs**

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Introduction

Since 2017, Cesvi is implementing educational interventions to support migrant women and mothers living in territories densely populated by immigrants, with low incomes and lack of access to social services.

Cesvi works in Zingonia, an urban area in Lombardy, located between Milan and Bergamo, where the presence of foreign citizens (mostly families with children between 6-14) is constantly increasing. Here Cesvi is testing the *Migrant Mentoring* (MM) approach to strengthen the educational and relationship skills of women, encouraging relationships with other families, schools and other services. After three years of work, Cesvi feels it is time to reflect on the MM's achievements,

issues and challenges, so as to learn more about different social contexts and engage community members in the program activities. Cesvi chooses to seize the opportunity offered by EPIM through the Joint Learning Initiative program to exchange good practices, involving organizations from Hungary and Germany. These organizations have recognized MM experiences that are transferable to other regions such as Italy and Portugal.

Artemisszió has been providing a mentoring program since 2011 in Hungary. The goal of the mentoring program is to help refugees and immigrants that live in Hungary to find their place and become successful members of society.

Through the mentoring program each participant is matched with a Hungarian volunteer mentor. The mentor must help the participant with everyday issues, such as getting a doctor appointment, or registering his/her kids in a kindergarten. The mentor also helps the participant

practice the language of the country in a friendly and fun way – going out together in the city. Above all, the mentor must create a safe and friendly environment where the participant can ask questions about the culture, the differences and his/her new life.

VEREIN FÜR JUNGE AFRIKANISCHE UND ANDERE DIASPORA VJAAD e.V. (Migrafrica) is a diaspora association of refugees and migrants in Germany, founded to provide support to recently migrated refugees and help them integrate well to host communities.

MigrAfrica main goal is to enhance the social, economic and political participation and inclusion of migrants in Germany and provide them with the opportunity to integrate quicker. We use local resources to improve the lives of refugees and develop their skills. This is done mainly by sharing our life experience and knowledge

as former refugees and by using our resources and networks to empower new refugees. Another aspect of our work is empowering diaspora organisations. This is achieved by sharing our resources, knowledge and skills to support the creation of new migrant social enterprises.

The Centre for Migrations of the Municipality of Fundão (CMMF) is a residential centre created and managed by the Municipality of Fundão (Portugal) in 2018. At a national level, the CMMF works with the High Commission for Migrations of the Portuguese Government (ACM) and the Portuguese Border Force (SEF).

CMMF is launching mentoring experiments in different ways. During the meetings they shared the interesting experience promoted by Europeans for Humanity.

CMMF experimented the mentoring approach for the first time through the relationship between a refugee and an artist that created a song together.

As the MM approach is very recent in Italy, Cesvi aims to engage other three European partners currently working on their own mentoring methodologies, to exchange best practices and foster mutual learning.

The added value of this exchange is considerable for Cesvi and the partners, who are willing to learn about innovative methods to support migrant women, as well as working with mentors. Despite the peculiarities of the migratory phenomenon in each country,

the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI) was an opportunity to improve knowledge on “Migrant Mentoring” applied to different target groups (namely women and young migrants) through the mutual learning experience among European organizations working in similar contexts.

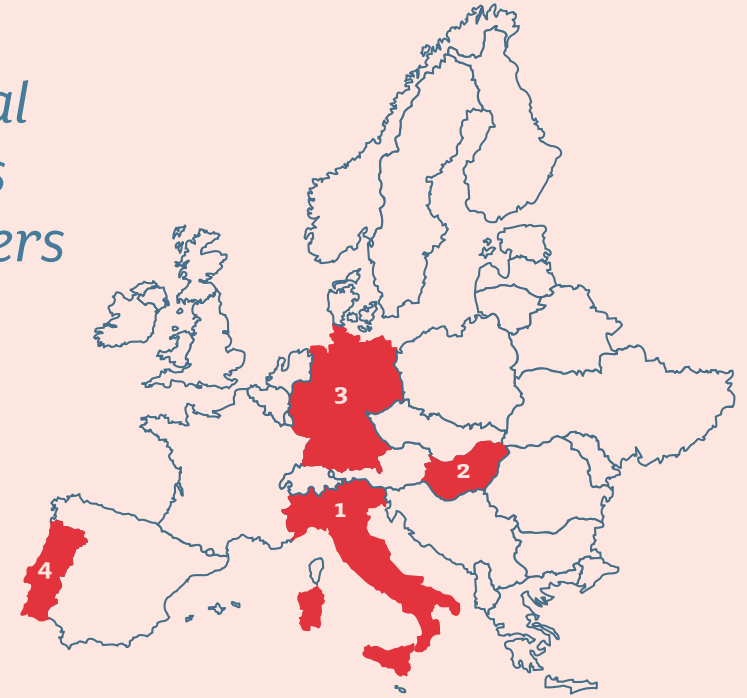
An additional challenge is represented by the Covid-19 pandemic, which temporarily interrupted the activities in the various territories: these meetings were an opportunity to support us and share useful tools for interacting.

The four organizations met during two online workshops sessions and shared their different experiences, best practices and challenges related to implementing migrant mentoring programs.

This compendium arises from the reflections made during this

initiative and briefly describes what was shared during the workshops. This work is intended not only for the partners and their territories, but also for all those who wish to read an introduction to the migrant mentoring approach.

This JLI proposal involves 4 partners



1. Cesvi Foundation (Cesvi), Italian NGO working in Italy in the field of migration and EPIM grantee. Cesvi works with migrant mentoring approach in Zingonia, an urban area in Lombardy, located between Milan and Bergamo.

2. Artemiszió Foundation, Hungarian NGO, that has been developing a mentoring program since 2011 where migrants are matched with Hungarian volunteer mentors. The mentor is the local connection that helps establish meaningful interactions and sense of belonging.

3. Verein für junge afrikanische und andere diaspora vjaad e.v. (MigrAfrica) is a German diaspora association of refugees and migrants, established to welcome recently arrived migrants in supportive host communities. MigrAfrica runs a specific program for women refugees, using the mentoring approach.

4. The Centre for Migrations of the Municipality of Fundão (CMMF) is a residential centre created and managed by the Municipality of Fundão (Portugal) in 2018. Their mentoring program is being implemented through a partnership with the University of Beira Interior (UBI), involving refugee students as mentors, but it is still an informal and in-progress program.

Part I

*Let's
meet*

the

Mentors

Who are the mentors?

A mentor is a person that has experience or knowledge and that voluntarily helps another person with less experience or knowledge in overcoming work, social, academic obstacles etc.

Mentors guide and support mentees to achieve their goals. By signing up for a social mentoring program, the mentor is assigned a person to whom he/she can offer his/her knowledge and experience. The mentor and mentee spend a few hours a week doing different activities, depending on the needs of the mentee.

After spending a few hours together, getting to know each other, how they think, how they are and verifying that the goals are gradually being achieved, the relationship that is established is enriching for both parties. In many cases, the relationship lasts beyond the months or the years of social mentoring program.

Is a mentor a friend?

Every organization has this dilemma. The shared recommendation is to evaluate case by case.

There is not a right rule, but the situation must be supervised. It is important to define boundaries in the mentoring relationships, monitor and evaluate it.

How can one involve mentors in the projects?

There are different recruitment solutions, it depends on the basis of the project:

- Publication of a specific vacancy, if mentors are involved as professionals;
- Open call for mentors as volunteers (offline and online);
- Involving specific members of the local community; authorities/social services; schools and local Civil Society Organizations.



Mentor's skills

Eligibility criteria

Personal Skills

- Personal and socio-cultural features that are similar to those of mentees (country of origin, age, being a mother, gender)
- Knowledge of the school system
- Knowledge of local services regarding families
- *Reference check* of local authorities (schools, public services; places of worship)

Communicational Skills

- Good communication skills, predisposition to listening
- A person able to communicate with different people

Relational Skills

- A person able to identify difficulties and report the needs that have emerged
- Empathy skills
- Mediation and conflict resolution skills

Which roles can mentors play in the mentoring relationships?

Cultural Inclusion

Mentors can be the *cultural translators* and guide the cultural mediation as well as support their mentee's cultural background. They represent the *bridge* between the mentee and the *community* in terms of nurturing mutual trust.

Language Acquisition

Mentors can help their mentee learn the language of the country of residence (reading and speaking skills).

Services orienteering

Mentors can help their mentee access resources to meet a variety of needs. Examples include how to use public transportation; find and use the local library; get involved in other programs.

Advice

Mentors can help the mentee on issues such as homework, job application skills, obtaining a driver's license and applying for training courses.

Role Modeling

When a mentor and a participant have the same cultural background, the mentor provides an important model for inclusion, developing a bicultural or bilingual identity, as he/she has been successful in a new context.

Three steps to train future mentors

Once you have identified the volunteers who want to be involved as mentors, it is important to prepare them to become a mentor and plan a training that can be structured in three main moments.

1st step

Getting to know each other

Ice-breaking activity.

Fears / expectations / questions related to mentoring experiences.

2nd step

Information about the background of the mentees involved in the project

Give information about the characteristics and cultural background of the possible mentees they may encounter.

3rd step

Who is the mentor, what are the tasks and what are not

What is the difference between the mentor / social worker / friend / psychologist / teacher?

Define the guidelines of the mentoring programme (duration / goals / roles, Tasks / role of the mentor).

It can be useful to give mentors a list of services and info about schools; online platforms for migrants.



Some suggestions: Which are the offline/online tools for training?



Offline

- Set of photos for activities
- Focus group about specific topics
- Self-narration activities
- Role-playing (in different contexts)
- Networking activities
(with institutions, trainers etc.)
- Socializing events to share ideas
- Group games about collaboration

Offline / Online tools

- Discussion or games about the role of the mentor
- Identity onion Game: identity onion
- Modelling situations can be done online and offline
- Watching short movies together and discussions
- Quiz: fake news about migration
refugees online and offline
- Use of comics/artistic expressions
- Living library

Online Tools

- Share international news/media
- WhatsApp/other similar
apps for group activities
- Digital tools: like creating
memes, gifs :)
- Recording videos and sounds
- Apps to practice language skills
- Social networks to promote
online social events

Part II

*Let's
meet*

the
Mentees

The first meeting

Matching mentors

The first meeting is an important moment to introduce each other. Matching mentors and mentees is a crucial step of the mentoring process. The match should be made after a period of knowledge and attendance.

There are no specific criteria to match them, it depends on the goal of the program (if the focus is on job inclusion, job skills could be more important than other aspects). Some considerations:

Same gender

Cultural differences around gender exist. Cross-gender matching (female mentors with male mentees) must be made with extreme caution. In some cases, cultural norms about the social roles of women and men may be different, especially in relation to expectations regarding education, work roles and responsibilities.

Cultural Competences

The mentor's ability to empathize and understand the experiences of a person is essential for the relationship to be successful. Mentors that are culturally competent are more likely to appreciate the norms, culture and expectations of a mentee.

A potential mentor does not have to have in-depth knowledge of the culture of the mentee. However, programs that actively recruit mentors without this background must provide additional orientation and training to help support the relationship. Caution must be used when a potential mentor has not had previous exposure to different cultures. The relationship should be overseen to make sure that the differences do not impede the creation of a close bond.

Common interests

The possible common interests might be considered, including cultural, ethnic and verified similarities. There must be compatibility between the needs of the mentee and the mentor's experience.



How to promote the relationships between mentors and mentees

Semi-structured context

- Language/conversation courses
- Specific paths (digital skills; development courses; support for parenting with animated readings and silent books...)
- *Meet up* and leisure initiatives

Informal context

- Organization of informal moments (meetings in the park; walks; shared dinners...)
- Participation in local events (parties; events; after-school activities...)



Supervising mentoring relationships

Supervising the relationship between mentor and mentee is essential to prevent any difficulties/frustration that might occur.

The monitoring process includes:

- Moments of evaluation with the mentor and mentee
- Verification/ clarification interviews/ support with the mentor
- Management of a group of mentors involved in the mentoring project
- Use of mentoring diary. Mentors can write a diary where they can record the appointments with the mentees, their own considerations, doubts, negative and positive aspects of the meetings. What is reported in the diary is then shared and discussed with the person who supervises

Some difficult scenarios regarding the mentorship relationships

1

Among many others, one of the big issues is time management. There is a big difference depending on the cultures



Solution

Training regarding the way different way different cultures manage time.

Use a mechanism to remind about meetings (for example texting)

2

Mentors-mentees with the same gender/same cultural background do not have similar interests



Solution

Share a list of common interests

3

Mentors can feel frustrated because they would like to do more for mentees



Solution

As supervisors, be present to support the mentor. Try to better define all the aspects of their role during the training

4

Social judgment and conflicts between people that come from the same countries



Solution

Supervise the relationships and try to understand the origin of the conflicts.

Involve specific professionals, such as a cultural mediator in particularly critical situations

5

When working with migrant women, the husband of the mentee could not like his wife's mentor and negatively interferes with the mentoring process



Solution

Meet the couple and share with them the intent of the mentorships program, in order to avoid prejudices

Final consideration

*“Mentoring is an option, a good option, but doesn’t work for everybody. It’s not “one size fits all”. All I can tell you is that when it works, it goes very fast and it can be so powerful”. **Beatriz Hernandez de Fuhr** has spent the past years connecting over 8,000 women through mentorship program.*



The surprising power of mentoring immigrants

– Beatriz Hernandez de Fuhr
TEDxOdenseWomen

Watch the video on youtube



MEET – Mentoring Experiences to Empower Territories

– Cesvi onlus

Watch the video on youtube

She is an information specialist working with KVINFO, the Danish Center for Information of Gender Equality and Diversity, features a Mentor Network designed by anthropologist Gunhild Riske in 2002. It started as a pilot project to enhance integration of immigrant and refugee women into Danish society. By focusing on strengthening women’s active participation in society, KVINFO’s Mentor Network helps women achieve goals such as entering the Danish job market and integrating into society.

Listening to her words, we underline two main aspects:

Mentorship is an exchange, mentors and mentees can learn from each other, empowering mentors and mentees’ skills.

This is also what emerges from the tales collected in the **blue video** of the mentors and mentees collected in the different territories and carried out in the project with the aim of giving a face to the people we talked about during the workshop sessions. The various voices tell us how important and enriching it is for both mentors and mentees.

MM approach is flexible and, as also our experiences highlight, can be designed in different ways. One of the most important pieces of designing and planning inclusive mentoring programs and relationships involves understanding the specific needs of the people involved.

This flexibility has proved even more necessary to maintain relationships during

Links

European Programme for Integration and Migration, EPIM, <https://www.epim.info/>

Cesvi, <https://www.cesvi.eu/>

Artemissziò Foundation, <https://artemisszio.eu/mira/en/rolunk/>

MigrAfrica, <https://www.migrafrica.org/2019/12/29/workkompassplus-wir-unterstuetzen-und-qualifizieren-fluechtlinge/>

Centre of the Migration of the Municipality of Fundao, <https://www.cm-fundao.pt/>
<https://www.facebook.com/MunicipiodoFundao>

National mentoring summit, <https://www.mentoring.org/national-mentoring-summit/>

a period of social distancing, such as the one we have experienced in the past months and are still experiencing.

The actions we are carrying out in this sense are still experimental and I do not think we are yet fully aware of what effect this will have on mentoring relationships.

It is certainly essential to continue to maintain a relationship through all possible virtual communication platforms. However, access to digital tools is not taken for granted and, where possible, guaranteeing devices to guarantee access

to these moments of the relationship becomes important. It is at the same time important to provide support and encourage mentors and mentees to feel mutually supported, also encouraging them to seek support in community and neighbourhood actions.

This time also reminds us of another fundamental thing: it is also important to stop and ask ourselves about what is being done, how we conceive and plan, and dedicate time to improve, share and learn. This is what we have tried to do with this experience.