# DigiFunCollab

Erasmus +, KA220-HED - Cooperation partnerships in higher education

**DigiFUnCollab - Developing Digital-Self-Learning Courses in Social Entrepreneurship for the future of collaboration between Universities and Community**

Project Number: 2023-1-IT02-KA220-HED-00015873

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Digital-Self-Learning Courses in Social Entrepreneurship for the future of collaboration between Universities and Community

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# Lesson: General introduction to mentoring

## Module: Teaching Social Entrepreneurship & Mentoring Student Projects

**SOWIBEFO, GERMANY**

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# 1 Definition of Mentoring

## 1.1 Introduction

There are many definitions of mentoring. This guided activity is a powerful tool that supports individual, educational and professional development. A simple explanation presents the mentoring process as:

"a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated protégé—a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé" (Rhodes, 2002, p.3).[1]

Mentoring is an instrument with a broad variety of implementations. It is a form of coaching and networking, contributing to the growth of an individual. Mentoring provides recognition, role modelling, encouragement and personal attention to participants – also called mentees. They realise their ambitions with the support of someone more experienced, who has travelled a similar path before. Due to the mentoring relationship, mentees recognise their opportunities and learn not to give up, set goals and pursue them. The strength of mentoring lies in the fact that all parties benefit from it. The mentee gains confidence and has the feeling of not standing alone. The mentor develops skills as a leader, trainer and coach.[2] The mentor also learns mechanisms to inspire on a personal level, and to give back to the community and peers.

This understanding of mentoring focuses on the characteristics of the mentor and his/her relationship with the person involved (mentee). However, mentoring can be conceptualized and defined with focus on different aspects and at different levels, as follows:[3]

- Relationship between mentor and mentee: refers to ongoing significant interpersonal ties in which mentoring activity takes place regularly. The relationship can be formal, when it is part of a structured programme, or informal, when it evolves organically, like a friendship.[4]
- Activity on which the mentoring focuses: For example, mentoring can refer to social interactions in which nonparental adults or older peers without advanced professional training provide guidance and other forms of support to youth that is intended to benefit one or more areas of their development. Regarding the types of activities involved, the mentoring process can be instrumental (goal-oriented, for example aiming at developing an entrepreneurship project) or developmental (relationship-based, with focus on the

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[1]   Karcher, Michael J.: The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE).
[2]   Simon, Szilvia, Troiano, Mattia, et. al. (2022): Mentoring in Europe. Towards an inclusive society, connecting cultures and generations. Position paper, p. 2.
[3]   DuBois, David; Karcher, Michael (2013): Youth Mentoring in contemporary perspective, in: DuBois, Karcher (2013): Handbook of youth mentoring, p. 3f.
[4]   https://guider-ai.com/blog/types-of-mentoring/

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mentee).[5] A recent study shows that there is a gender-related difference between the type of activities carried out by mentors: men tend to focus more on instrumental activities (such as getting the home work done) while women tend to focus more on the developmental aspects (the development of new skills, mentoring the process).[6]

- The intervention level for the mentoring process: the focus is on organizational and programmatic efforts to support mentoring for youth within particular groups or communities. This level points out to a mentoring process implemented within a school, a particular social group, a whole community, or at a national level. It can also refer to the size and complexity of the mentoring programme.
- The policy level for mentoring: This level refers to the role of governmental and other institutions in offering support for mentoring activity, relationships, and interventions. Support might be offered through funding programmes, creating the infrastructure, offering learning material and training, etc.
- The societal level for mentoring: This level can refer to the broader impact of the mentoring processes on the society as a whole and the degree of knowledge and acceptance of mentoring processes by the society. Here, one key concern is with public perceptions of mentoring.

Our module dedicated to mentoring focuses on the activity and relationship level.

## 1.2 Impact of mentoring relationships

The impact of mentoring relationships is multifold. It can go in a broad range of directions, but the most relevant results of a mentoring process are shown in figure 1 below. The image shows the most targeted goals of mentoring activities, according to relevant reports. These are: support for a more successful integration on the labour market; helping to improve educational pathways of youth; assistance with developing more entrepreneurial and innovative regions; life-long learning; increasing inter-generational solidarity; achieving more civic engagement and citizenship education; the development of soft skills – both for the mentor and the mentee.

For example, mentoring can offer major impact on individuals to tackle barriers in accessing the labour market, for persons at risk like youth from lower income families or migrants that enter the EU and have to integrate, including second and third generation migrants. Mentoring can be one of the keys to conquer the inequity in career opportunities.

Mentoring is a preventive and cost-effective tool for national and local governments to create future contributors to a healthy European economy. A unique, long-time social return assessment[8] from Germany shows that each euro invested in a mentoring programme yields 8 euro back to

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5    Karcher, Michael J.: The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE).
6    Karcher, Michael J.: The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE).

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society. The positive effects are on educational outcomes and job market prospects for the mentees as well as increased civic engagement on behalf of the mentors.

From the many mentoring programmes available, an example of mentoring for a better integration on the labour market is presented below.
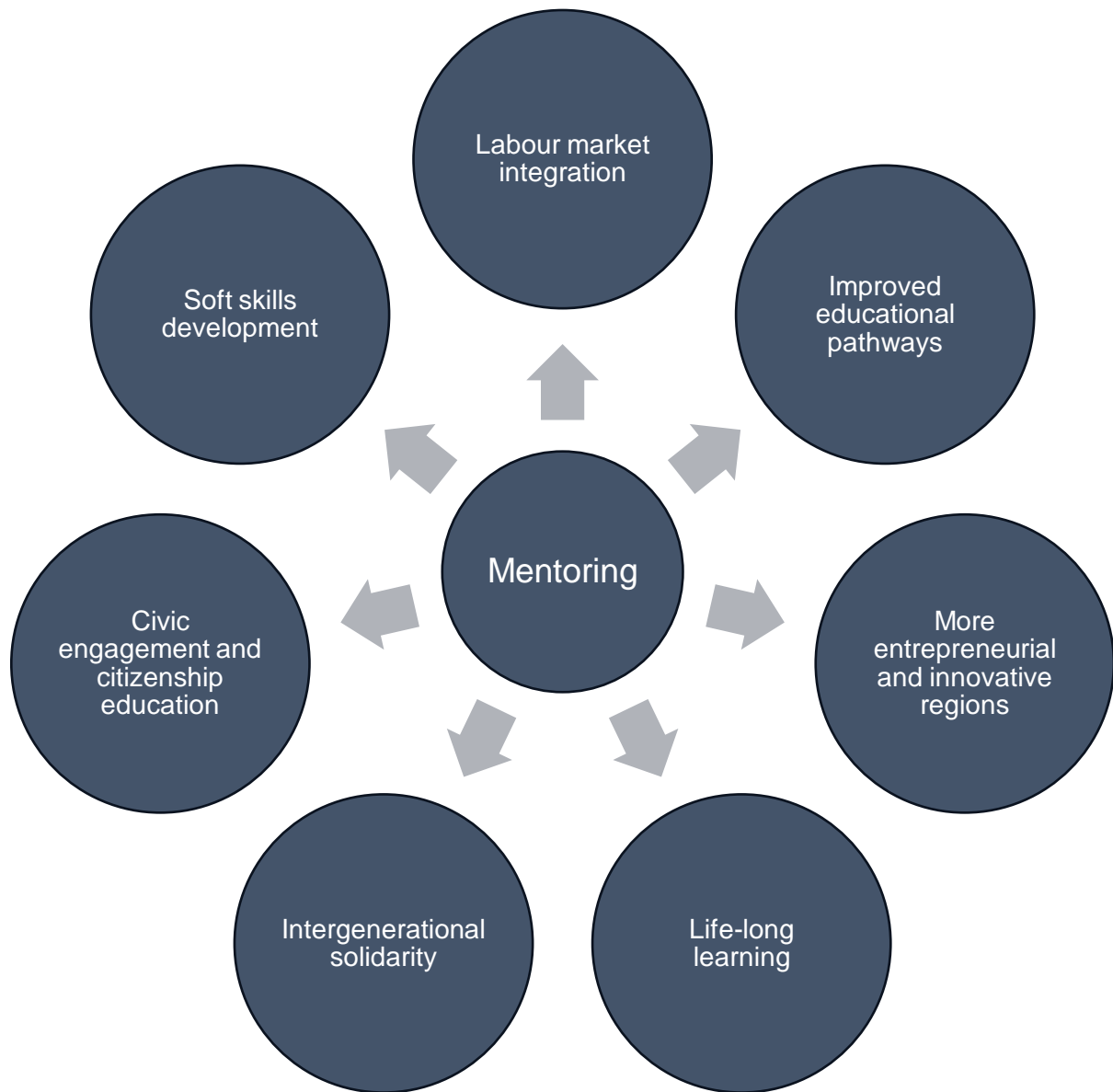


Fig. 1: The impact of mentoring relationships[7]

The German association South East Europe Society (Südosteuropa Gesellschaft, SOG) offers a mentoring programme for students and young professionals. The mentoring programme serves to promote networking within the membership of the SOG.[8]

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[7] Simon, Szilvia, Troiano, Mattia, et. al. (2022): Mentoring in Europe. Towards an inclusive society, connecting cultures and generations. Position paper, p. 5.

[8] https://www.sogde.org/site/assets/files/29291/infoblatt_mentoring-programm.pdf.

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The programme objective is to assist mentees in choosing a career, to give mentees an insight into a specific professional field related to South East Europe (SEE), and to give mentors the opportunity to pass on their experience. The requirements for enrolling in the programme are that mentees have finished their studies or are close to finishing them (ideally about the subject area of South East Europe), membership in SOG, and critical abilities. Mentors should have the capacity to pass on their experience and the time capacity to supervise a mentee.

Moreover, mentoring for a better integration on the labour market is also very effective for boosting entrepreneurial activities. The latest studies on the impact of mentoring on migrants prove that it is a key factor for supporting their entrepreneur skills. The mentoring support not only helps with business knowledge and performance, it also enables the entrepreneur to integrate into their host country through fostering relationships, developing cultural and social understanding and insights, and building social capital.

## 1.3  Key types of mentoring

There are different mentoring practices that can be implemented in different ways for different objectives of the mentoring process. Some types of mentoring may be better than others for achieving certain objectives. For example, a university graduate might benefit more from 1:1 mentoring when choosing a career path. But a student from a vulnerable group might gain more from the shared experience of group mentorship when aiming to better integrate into the university community. Of course, a mentoring programme can combine different types of mentoring practices, such as 1:1 mentoring and group mentorship.

Below are listed 7 key types of mentoring.[9]

1. One-on-One Mentoring

One-on-one mentoring is the traditional model of mentoring, where one mentor and one mentee agree to enter a mentorship to help the mentee develop, improve and achieve their goals. The mentor has more experience in the area that mentee is interested in and can act as advisor and guide. A possible area for one-on-one mentoring is career development. The focus is primarily on the mentee, but the mentor will also benefit through improving leadership and communication skills. They might also feel a sense of satisfaction frm supporting someone in their career. A benefit of one-on-one mentoring is that a long-term relationship is built and nurtured over time. This can have a profound impact on confidence, mental health and other development areas for both mentor and mentee.

2. Peer Mentoring

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9   https://guider-ai.com/blog/types-of-mentoring/

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Similar to one-on-one mentoring, peer mentoring happens when two people come together in a mentorship and they are both from a similar job level or age range. In this type of mentoring relationship, both parties may take turns acting as mentor and mentee or arrange sessions more fluidly. The aim is to share experience and expertise, learn together and hold each other accountable. Peer mentoring is useful within a programme aiming to support new parents coming back to work. It can also help colleagues to develop their leadership and communication skills.

### 3. Group mentoring

This type of mentoring involves one mentor working with a group of mentees.The mentor will lead the group sessions while the mentees bring in their own knowledge and experience.
Group mentoring helps to reach and impact more mentees in a shorter amount of time than traditional mentoring. It is an effective way of up-skilling groups, retaining knowledge and fostering a culture of sharing knowledge in the participating institution. At the same time, it improves the participants teamwork skills.

### 4. Reverse mentoring

Within this type of mentoring a more junior person mentors a more senior person in an organisation. This is traditional mentoring in reverse. Reverse mentoring recognizes that there are skill gaps and learning opportunities on both sides of a mentoring relationship. It can be used for up-skilling senior employees on topics such as digital technology. All one-on-one mentoring relationships can use reverse mentoring as both parties have the opportunity to learn from one another. However, a reverse mentoring programme is more formal and makes the process more accesible.

### 5. Flash mentoring

Flash mentoring refers to quick on-off mentoring sessions with the goal to learn a key piece of information or skill. Flash mentoring is useful for creating the opportunity for impactful knowledge sharing, without the pressure to develop a long term relationship. To make the most of this, it can be used with other types of mentoring such as group mentoring. Additionally, a flash mentoring session can act as a trial for a new mentoring relationship and help individuals to broaden their networks before commiting to a longer-term mentorship.

### 6. Team Mentoring

Team mentoring involves a group of mentors and a group of mentees who carry out mentoring sessions as a team. The key difference between group mentoring and team mentoring is that team mentorship involves multiple mentors working with a group. Team mentoring can be used for a group of mentees working on a shared goal or project. Mentees will have developmental goals that they can work on together with the guidance of a number of mentors. This type of mentoring can

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help to promote diversity and inclusion as it creates space for different people with different opinions and perspectives to come together and learn from one another.

This type of mentoring is good for teamwork and eliminates any potential of favouritism that might be associated with one-on-one mentoring practices.

### 7. Online mentoring

Online mentoring refers to a mentoring process that is run remotely using a variety of apps and software for online communication. This concept refers to the method of mentoring online, but also to offering mentoring and developing a mentoring relationship exclusively as an online process. This opens up mentoring to include people from different cities and even countries. Online mentoring can make the mentoring programme more inclusive of employees that are unable to travel to in-person meetings or that prefer to connect virtually. This method is unrestricted by location and more time-efficient. A multitude of online mentoring methods are available.

This type of mentoring will be discussed in Module 10, Lesson 3.

## 1.4 Building a successful mentoring relationship

There are several key ingredients for building a successful mentor-mentee relationship. The aspects discussed below focus on mentors as a primary target group of this module.

An essential aspect is that the mentor makes the mentee feel valued. The psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner defined this important aspect of a successful mentor-mentee relationship as: "Someone's gotta be crazy about the kid."[10]

Below is a list with very important aspects for building a successful mentoring relationship.[11]

- Promote the welfare and safety of the mentee: There are moments in mentoring relationships when constraints (e.g., time, skills, life circumstances) make it challenging for a mentor to consistently promote the welfare of the mentee and avoid actions that may cause harm. It may sound obvious, but mentors are human and they will make mistakes. Similarly, there can be constraints (e.g., staffing, resources) that make it difficult for programs to adequately support mentors in putting the needs of the mentee first. But the intention is what matters here.

- Be trustworthy and responsible: Mentors need to take their obligations to the mentee and the program seriously. They should take care to honor their commitments and assume responsibility for the quality and duration of their mentoring relationship, even when facing challenges.

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[10] Karcher, Michael J.: The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE).

[11] Garringer, Michael; Dr. Janis Kupersmidt et al. (2015): Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring. 4th edition, p. 83ff.

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- Act with integrity: Mentors and program staff have an obligation to communicate with mentees (and their families respectively) in ways that are honest, transparent, and respectful. Mentors must especially be attentive to honoring their time commitments and meeting schedules, while always carrying themselves in a way that reflects positively on the program and the work of mentors more globally.

- Promote justice for mentees and young people: This principle starts with the notion that mentors must be aware of their own personal biases and histories and be mindful about not bringing their prejudices and prior experiences into the mentoring relationship in a way that harms the mentee. Cultural competence and intercultural empathy and understanding are critical to a successful mentoring experience. Mentors can also use the mentoring experience to go beyond just helping the mentee—they can use their relationship as a springboard to other work that more broadly advocates for the disadvantaged or seeks to address social ills.

- Respect the mentee's rights and dignity: This principle is rooted in notions of self-determination and empowerment. The mentor's job is not to "fix" the challenges that confront the mentee, but to empower them to take the lead in the direction of their own lives while respecting the choices they make. Mentors must do this in a way that is free of judgment and respectful of the confidentiality of the mentee (except for cases where the mentee is in imminent danger of harm).

- Honor youth and family voice in designing and delivering the mentorship intervention: Mentoring programs must incorporate the values, ideals, and preferences of their participants and the ways in which participants experience the program. This not only empowers mentees, it honors them as partners in this work. A mentee who has a say in the purpose and activities of their mentoring relationship is more likely to be engaged and reach their goals, and support the work of the mentor, and programs that embraces the individuals they serve as equal partners rather than passive recipients are more likely to have a strong impact.

- Strive for equity, cultural responsiveness, and positive social change: This principle recognizes that mentoring does not happen in a vacuum; it takes place in communities, and a nation, that increasingly seek to address issues of class, race, and systems of oppression. Mentoring programs should be responsive to the racial and cultural perspectives of its participants and stakeholders. Program staff should be aware of their own cultural biases and experiences and understand how this impacts their work with mentees, and mentors respectively.

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