



Career entry support by mentoring

Individual and continuous assistance for young people facing problems with the transition from school to vocational training

GERMANY

Title of the practice (in original language)

Berufseinstiegsbegleitung

Who is/was implementing the practice?

The Federal Employment Agency

Which other organisations are/were involved in the practice?

Schools (selected through tendering process) who appoint career entry mentors and liaise with local stakeholders such as: social workers, vocational training centres, vocational counsellors, local employment agencies and employers.

What are/were the main objectives of the practice?

The programme aims at guiding young people who have difficulties to make a transition from secondary school to vocational training. Support starts two years before young people leave the school and ends about six months after the beginning of a vocational training course. If the young people cannot access vocational training immediately, their transition can be supported for up to two years. In particular, the programme supports young people in:

- attaining a school-leaving certificate,
- reaching personal maturity to enter the training,
- career guidance and orientation,
- finding a training place,
- successful start of vocational training.

When was the practice implemented?

The pilot scheme of career entry support started in 2009. The current programme includes five waves of young people entering the programme starting between 2014/2015 and 2018/2019 and completing in 2022.

Who is/was targeted by the practice?

The target group is young people who are likely to have difficulty completing general education and/or difficulty with the transition to vocational training.

Problems encountered by young people can be linked to: social and financial difficulties (e.g. unemployment of parents), separation of parents, dependent relatives who need care, placement in youth care institutions, language and integration problems.

In addition, young people who are aiming for a special school leaving certificate – if a subsequent vocational training seems possible – are also part of the target group.

What activities are/were carried out?

- Educational institutions are contracted by the Federal Employment Agency to provide the mentoring service. They employ career entry mentors who each support up to 20 young people. The mentors work closely together with schools, parents, the local employment agency, employers and other institutions that might be relevant for the young person.
- Schools actively support the work of career entry mentors by making pupils, parents and teachers aware of the support offered.
- The Federal Employment Agency also initiates information events in order to publicise the range of measures available to eligible students and their parents. Although selection of participants is coordinated between the school and responsible vocational counsellor, the participation in the mentoring activities is voluntary.
- Mentoring activities focus on accompanying the young persons in their transition to vocational training and working life. The support consists of advice on vocational training options, career guidance as well as various other forms of support (for example psychological support, skills development, motivational activities) and other activities necessary to ensure a smooth transition from school to vocational training.
- The mentor develops an individual support plan for the young person and offers a range of socio-educational support activities, for example linked to the development of different types of skills (personal, social, methodical, practical life, intercultural, media, IT).

What are/were the sources of funding?

The Federal Employment Agency devoted EUR 1 billion to the waves of young people starting from 2014/2015 until 2018/2019. The European Social Fund covers 50% of this amount.

What are/were the outputs: people reached and products?

The pilot initiative in 2009 involved around 1 000 schools. Between 2009 and 2013 in the first phase of the programme, around 55 000 pupils were mentored. Since then, the programme has been widened nationally, and approximately 113 000 pupils and 3 000 schools are expected to participate in the mentoring programme until 2022.

What are/were the outcomes: medium-term results or effects?

The evaluation of the programme showed that 30 months after finishing school 64.5% of participants were in vocational training. 24% of participants were in vocational training six months after finishing school.

The evaluation thus demonstrated positive long-term effects of the mentoring scheme. This was especially the case when participants received support both whilst still at school and after having started the vocational training. The mentoring programme has been especially successful in providing realistic ideas about professions and vocational training.

However, the vocational transition was not successful for around a third of participants, even in the long run. Very often this was associated with the presence of problems encountered by young people, which shows the need for integrated support. This proportion was higher for young women (of whom around 42% did not transit to vocational training after 30 months).

What are/were the lessons learnt and success factors?

Lessons Learnt¹

- The concept of the mentoring support is designed centrally by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, however, its implementation is taking place at the regional and local levels. This has led to different types of understanding and implementation amongst the various stakeholders. The key lesson drawn here is the need to coordinate the different needs and expectations between the stakeholders at the regional and local levels. This then also needs to be reflected in the implementation mechanisms at these levels.

¹ Evaluation of the pilot scheme (in German): <http://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/PDF-Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/fb-453.pdf>

- Schools have been the central place for the implementation of the mentoring programme. On one hand, this is a positive development as it allows to integrate the participation of different stakeholders through one central location. On the other hand, it also brings a risk that the mentoring programme is being used more strongly for academic purposes, as opposed to supporting transitions to vocational training.
- Low wages and temporary work contracts of mentors can lead to frequent changes amongst the mentoring personnel. This in turn has negative consequences for the mentoring relationships which require long-term perspective. The lack of secured and continued funding for the programme also affected negatively the planning of schools and supporting institutions and has negatively affected the continuity of mentoring. ESF resources have helped to secure the programme sustainability.

Success Factors

- The most important factor is good cooperation between the mentors, schools and other institutions. All the actors involved (coaches, students, schools, parents, employment agency etc.) need to work together constructively and in good faith.
- Mentoring support needs to be long-term and continue after the end of school into the start of the vocational training.
- Mentoring needs to cover holistically a range of support options, including support and advice on academic issues, personal advice and orientation towards vocational training.
- In addition, the evaluation of the programme found that the stability of the mentoring personnel is crucial, because the relationship between the mentor and student is very important. Frequent personnel changes have negative effects on the mentoring experience and outcomes. In this respect, ensuring the employment contracts for mentors for at least 2.5 years was crucial in ensuring their continuity.

What are key sources of information?

Booklet with further information:

<http://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/PDF-Publikationen/a804-berufseinstiegsbegleitung.pdf>

Concept:

https://www.bildungsketten.de/intern/system/upload/Materialien/Fachkonzept_fuer_die_Berufseinstiegsbegleitung.pdf

Information on the current ESF programme:

<http://www.esf.de/portal/DE/Foerderperiode-2014-2020/ESF-Programme/bmas/2014-11-17-Berufseinstiegsbegleitung.html>

Evaluation of the pilot scheme:

<http://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/PDF-Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/fb-453.pdf>