

As mentoring organisations with expert experience from almost all European Union Member States, we would like to turn the attention of the Commission to ‘**mentorship**’ as an invaluable mechanism to emphasize in the new **Pillar of Social Rights Action plan**.

Mentoring is an essential tool for keeping people connected. It is about sharing feelings, supporting each other and cultivating ambitions for the future, all aspects based on one of the main values of the Union as set out in article 2 of the Treaty on European Union - solidarity.

We have witnessed the undoubted need and the power of mentoring in the past months during the COVID-19 outbreak.¹ There have been numerous examples that our services are needed now more than ever. In these hard times of social distancing across Europe, mentoring organizations have made great efforts to keep their programmes alive.

The achievements of mentors with their mentees have been outstanding. Despite the requirements for physical separation, thousands of mentors from all over Europe stayed connected to their mentees with the help of online tools. All people in need should know that we, mentoring practitioners and mentors, stay behind them when they feel lonely, scared and isolated. All of this brings Europe’s youth at least one step closer to a higher quality of education, training and life-long learning that improves social inclusion and counteracts social seclusion.² Which in turn, provides a better transition from education to the labour force or higher education and can, thus, bring along a high level of employment.³

Furthermore, mentoring can and should be one of the tools explicitly used to achieve results under key principles 3 (“Equal opportunities”) and 4 (“Active support to employment”) of the European Pillars of Social Rights. We believe – and have the evidence – that it will truly make a change in the lives of children, young people, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable communities.

To give you some examples of how mentoring can be a valuable instrument towards a more social Europe, consider the following:

- Various studies on the impact of mentoring prove that mentoring relationships develop soft skills of both of the mentors and mentees.⁴ A mentorship is above all else a social relation that is the best environment for advancing these skills. The importance of soft skills is

¹ The full severity of the results of the COVID-19 outbreak is yet unknown, but we share in the concerns expressed by the Commission in documents like:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0277&from=EN>
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:32c90ad7-bc3b-11ea-811c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

² Goals set in key principle 1 of the Social Rights Pillar

³ A goal set in article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

⁴ For further research into the benefits of mentoring even beyond the development of soft skills, see https://www.ecebmentoring.eu/pageid=2277/Research_Publications.html

recognized by the World Economic Forum as being in the top 10 of job skills needed,⁵ this acts as further proof that mentoring is a unique mechanism for ensuring a high level of employment by expanding work skills beyond job-specific knowledge.

- Tackling youth unemployment, early school leaving, low attractiveness of vocational education, but also contributing to excellence in study career, to the integration of migrants or to entrepreneurial behaviour are well-known long-term outcomes of strong mentoring relationships.⁶
- 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.⁷
- A long-term study (RCT) from Germany shows that one year of mentoring for elementary school children from a low socio-economic background boosts their personal development to the extent that inequality gaps towards opportunities in education and life are closed.⁸

Mentoring as a tool can already be explicitly found in the new adopted Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee, which is based, among others, on key principle 4 of Social Rights Pillar. However, we think that ‘mentoring’ should be used more often in future documents related to youth and their social rights as this will inspire the Member States to help develop and support their national mentoring programmes or new networks of mentoring programmes on Union and regional levels.

For these reasons, we believe that it will truly make a change in the lives of children, young people, migrants, refugees and other vulnerable communities. We hope that the above-described arguments properly showcased the valuable of mentoring for the European Pillar of Social Rights Action plan.

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⁵ <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020/in-full/infographics-e4e69e4de7>

Soft skills are best developed in a social/ informal setting that cannot always be achieved by strictly regulated forms of training. Mentoring provides such an environment.

⁶ <https://www.ecebmentoring.eu/websites/implementatie/mediadepot/16805e4cea8f.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.youthbusiness.org/resource/mentoring-for-migrant-entrepreneurs>

⁸ Fabian Kosse, Thomas Deckers, Pia Pinger, Hannah Schildberg-Hörisch, and Armin Falk (2020). „The Formation of Prosociality: Causal Evidence on the Role of Social Environment”, *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 128(2), pages 434-467

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