



“Promoting Meaningful Integration of 3rd Country National Children to Education - IntegratEd”

Project number: 776143

Deliverable D 2.3

Mentor’s Guide

04/10/2018

Version 2.0

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Versioning			
Version	Summary	Reviewing partners	Date
1.0	Development of the Draft version v01		03/09/2018
1.1	Review	KMOP, InteRed	21/09/2018
2.0	Final version following peer reviews		04/10/2018

The project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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1. Introduction

The Mentor’s guide aims at supporting mentors and schools in understanding, organizing and carrying out the mentoring program activities as part of the “IntegratEd – Promoting Meaningful Integration of Third Country National Children to Education” project.

In this guide, mentors, teachers and schools’ staff can find practical information and tips on how to run a mentoring programme for newly arrived TCN students. Throughout it, several issues will be tackled, starting from an introduction to the IntegratEd project and the mentoring programme to the role of the mentors. The guide will go on with educational and social inclusion support as well as providing tips and hints on how to build up a positive relationship with the mentee. Finally, the planning of activities and communication with parents and teachers will be addressed.

1.1. Integrated project

“IntegratED - Promoting Meaningful Integration of Third Country Nationals Children to Education” is a two-year AMIF funded project implemented by KMOP (Greece) in cooperation with CESIE (Italy), InteRed (Spain), Canary Wharf Consulting LTD - CWC (UK), KMAKEDPDE (Greece) and the European Parents Association – EPA (Belgium).

The project aims at enhancing and strengthening educational participation among Third Country National children as well as tackling discrimination towards TCNs in Greece, Italy and Spain as well as the whole EU.

The project’s aims will be achieved by:

- Strengthening TCNs participation and academic achievements rates in Greece, Italy and Spain to ultimately improve their independence and enhance active participation to society;
- Supporting TCNs academic performance in secondary school;
- Strengthening teachers and other educational staff skills to deal with increasingly intercultural and diverse classrooms;
- Promoting and supporting TCN parents’ participation in school life;
- Strengthening both TCN pupils and parents’ knowledge on school education system and its functioning in Greece, Italy and Spain;
- Valuing and supporting TCNs’ mother tongue and culture development and learning;



- Fostering exchange of good practices and experiences on TCN children integration in school education as well as promoting comprehensive educational support models;
- Raising awareness on education role in promoting inclusive societies and integration of TCNs;
- Advocating for increasing attention on inclusion, diversity and intercultural competencies in school education field policy making.

The project structure is built over five Working Packages:

WP1: Identification and Assessment of Policies and Practices regarding the Inclusion of TCN Children in Education.

WP2: Development and pilot implementation of Educational support model for TCN children.

WP3: Exchange of experiences and good practices on successful integration of TCN children in Education and promotion of education support model.

WP4: Awareness raising campaign (dissemination and communication activities).

WP5: Management and Coordination of the Action.

1.2 WP2: Development and pilot implementation of Educational support model for TCN children

The Mentor's Guide has been developed as part of the WP2 "Development and pilot implementation of Educational support model for TCN children", which aims at developing and implementing an Educational Support Model for TCN children in Greece, Italy and Spain to enhance their participation in school education and therefore fostering their integration in the host societies.

The Educational Support Model will support school staff and teachers in:

- Enhancing their capacity to address TCN students' needs;
- Strengthening academic skills of TCN students;
- Promoting participation of TCN parents in school life;
- Enhancing intercultural competences.

The Educational Support Model draws on the recommendations and suggestions provided by relevant policy papers and research at EU level as well as on the results of the research conducted by each implementing partner within WP1

It will address TCN students' needs from different perspectives, from Academic support to Parental involvement and intercultural involvement.



Academic support will be provided through two actions:

1. Mentoring program;
2. Online Educational support platform.

2. Mentoring program

The mentoring program will be implemented in 5 school per implementing country (Greece, Italy and Spain). At least 25 mentor-mentee pair will be matched in each country. The mentoring programme will be working throughout the whole school year.

The rationale behind the mentoring program is to provide support to those TCN students who have newly arrived in a European country in order to foster their smooth integration in the new school education system and community.

The mentor will therefore support the mentee both on educational aspects and on social aspects to make the inclusion process effective not only in terms of educational attainments but also in terms of social inclusion in the new school community.

2.1 Beneficiaries

Before talking about what do we mean by “mentor” and how a mentor can support inclusion at school, it is appropriate to understand who the beneficiaries of the mentoring programme are.

Newly arrived TCN students are those students who just arrived in a new country and are about to begin their educational pathway there. It is of course a highly diverse group in terms of nationality, age, cultural background, life experiences, previous schooling and language spoken. As a whole group though, they face several **barriers and challenges** once they begin their school year in the new country.

Language is one of the most relevant. If they do not speak the local language fluently enough, their learning experience is affected as well as their ability to be part of the new school community and make new friends.

Cultural norms could be challenging as well. Different cultures have different norms in terms of what is considered a respectful behaviour and what is not, sense of humour and jokes, nutritional habits and so on. Since newly arrived students are newcomers in the local culture, it is not necessarily easy for them to understand and accept the new ways of doing things. This could make them feel isolated and confused. Moreover, the cultural diversity, if not properly addressed, could lead to misunderstandings or straight



out disgraceful racist behaviours. This, putting aside that it makes new students feel unwelcomed, it also undermines their confidence and will to integrate themselves in the new community.

The differences between the new and the previous school education system and teaching methodologies could also challenge them, if not properly addressed.

In addition, some of them might have been through **stressful and/or traumatizing experiences** before their arrival to the new country. For instance, they might have come as asylum seekers or refugees from a war-torn country (e.g. Syrian refugees) or they might have faced terrible situations, for instance if they have come over through the Sahara Desert route as well as violence and criminality in their home-country.

Also, parents face similar difficulties as their children do when moving to a new country, for these reasons their level of understanding of how the new school system works and how to get involved in their kids' school community could be challenging especially if they lack in local language skills.

According to the European Union paper "Educational support models – the current policy response in Europe"¹ (2012), the support newly arrived TCN students need is enclosed in four broad areas: language support, academic support, parental involvement and intercultural education and learning environment. This strategy aims at generating an integrated response to the needs of newly arrived third country national students regarding their education. Therefore, it is important that mentors keep in mind all this information at all time, especially when they are carrying out activities with their mentees, but also while planning future activities, contact parents and teachers and so on.

2.2 Mentor's role

First thing: let's find out what a mentor is! The word mentor has a long history; it dates back to the ancient Greek Poem "the Odyssey". In the Poem, Mentor is a friend of Ulysses who received an important task and responsibility once Ithaca's king had to leave the island with his army and take part in the Trojan War. After Ulysses' departure, Mentor was in charge of the king's son Telemachus education and warfare training. Without Mentor's training, Telemachus would not have been able to help his father regain control of his island from the Suitors and live happily ever after. Since then, the

¹ European Union, 2012 "Educational support models – the current policy response in Europe".



word “mentor” refers to **someone who puts his experience and skills at the disposal of a younger person and prepare him/her to face a certain challenge on a one on one basis.**

In this context, being a mentor means to **support TCN students in their inclusion at school.** The support mentors are supposed to provide should encompass both educational and social elements. The mentor, by being an older student who has enough experience and knowledge on the local school system and local culture, will pass this knowledge on to the mentee. This means that mentors will be supporting mentees not only from an academic but also from an emotional point of view. Therefore, building a functional relationship and meeting up regularly (once every two weeks) with the mentee are the starting points in order to achieve the other objectives.

Being a mentor then requires:

- An open minded approach;
- Involvement;
- Being prone to discuss any input that the mentee would like to have a conversation about;
- A good degree of empathy.

The mentor will act as a bridge between the students and the teachers: he/she will support them in achieving a good communication and informing the school staff of particular difficulties that their mentees are facing (when appropriate/school related). Of course, the **mentee’s privacy must not be violated and any personal detail discussed with him/her must be treated as highly confidential.**

2.3 Intercultural mentoring

Cultural sensitiveness and mutual respect must be a constant element of the mentoring program. Intercultural skills such as being open-minded, prone to dialogue, respect others’ ideas and ways of living must be a key element, on which mentors build their relationship with the mentees. Avoiding stereotypes-induced ideas and presumption not only will help mentors to make feel their mentee more comfortable, but also will give them the chance to get insights of another culture. Mentors should be ready to change their own point of view and start their relationship with the mentee keeping aside any kind of pre-existing cultural assumptions.

In the following chapters, we will explore all tasks and responsibilities of the mentor. First, we will address the educational support details, then we will see how a mentor



can foster his/her mentee's social inclusion. Also, tips and hints will be provided on how to manage the relationship with the mentee as well as with his/her parents and teachers.

3. Educational Support

Mentees need to be supported on their education and learning path in the new school. The mentor should be there for his/her mentee when he/she needs to have clarification on certain assignments, needs help with school procedure and bureaucratic processes, homework or other school-related activities. Critically, mentors should assist their mentees when the mentees face emotional or psychological struggle that they feel they need to discuss and for which they desire to consult their mentors.

However, mentoring does not mean to be a babysitter or a second parent figure, therefore the support provided should be as much as possible carried out during the meetings. Of course, mentor and mentee are encouraged to see each other more than just that but it depends on each situation and on how the two get along.

Since one of the toughest barriers to TCN students' educational inclusion is the **language** in which the learning happens, one of the main tasks mentor will have to carry out will be making sure the mentee is receiving support on his hosting country's national language skills (e.g. language trainings). Another important thing related to language would be the clarification of homework and assignments, this will be especially effective if the mentor and the mentee speak the same language.

Also, **field trips and other whole class activities** are a great chance to learn something new in a fun way and bond with the classmates. To make sure the mentee will participate to those activities, mentors should make sure that their mentees have understood the requirements to be fulfilled before being able to participate to the field trip. For instance, sometimes parents must sign a consent form, or maybe money needs to be collected by participants. Mentors should make sure that their mentee understood these requirements and has fulfilled them in time.

Another key characteristic of the educational support is to find out if the mentee is struggling to **keep up the pace**, if there are problems he needs to discuss in terms of learning methodologies and or teaching. Mentors should ask regularly how is the mentee doing with his/her grades and if there is something that needs improvements. Mentee's answer must be taken seriously and written down afterwards so that it will be



easier to pass them over to mentee's teachers. For instance, a mentee could have troubles with his history homework because they are in Italian and he does not understand the most of it, for some reason he is afraid to tell that to his history teacher, Mentor task in this situation would be to listen the mentee, provide emotional support and encourage him/her to talk to his/her teacher about the problem. If this does not work, it will be the mentor to communicate this issue to the teacher.

For this reason, it is important that the mentor keeps track of each and every issue that arise with his/her mentee.

Moreover, to provide the best support possible, mentors should try to think about their own educational experience, the challenges they faced and the hard times they went through and then focus on the how they fixed these situations. This in order to provide advices and examples as well as to give the emotional support. TCNs students should not feel alone with their troubles.

Mentors and mentees should meet up regularly, at least once every two weeks. Each meeting should last long enough to allow the mentee to put forward all his/her needs and concerns as well as receive support. The venue of the meeting will be agreed upon together with the mentee, keep in mind that the perfect venue should not be too loud and allow for some privacy so that any topic could be discussed.

4. Social Inclusion Support

The mentoring program aims at fostering mentees social inclusion as well. Social inclusion in the school community is vital in order to fully **participate to school life**, **make friends** and **feel integrated** in the new country. It also allows newcomer students to learn the local language faster, participate in sport/cultural events and activities organized by the school and so on.

Aside the language barrier, also the differences between the host country culture and the cultural background of the mentee could be a strong obstacle to his/her inclusion.

In order **to foster mentees' social inclusion**, mentors should try to find out how mentees are doing, what they like, if they have passions and hobbies and use this information to **encourage them** to actively participate in extracurricular school activities (e.g. school soccer team). Also, introducing the mentee to other students who might have a common ground and helping him/her to get to know new people at school could be a huge contribution to the mentee.



Most importantly, mentors should be there, listen to their mentee's problems regarding inclusion, and try to give advice and help them think positive. In doing so, mentors should draw on their personal experiences with similar problems to give advices and make the mentee feel there is someone who understands him/her.

If mentees have troubles getting along with their classmates or they have **bad experiences in the school environment** (e.g. bullying), mentors' task would be to understand how much this is affecting their mentee and what possible **solutions** there are. Depending on the intensity of the problem, it could be the case to report it to mentee's teachers and/or parents.

Last but not least, to avoid misunderstandings and other cultural differences driven issues, it is suggested to give space to the mentee to bring out these kind of issues and discuss them with him/her in a respectful and open-minded way. Never undermine or undervalue mentee's cultural background and try not to explain behavioural differences in between cultures on a right vs wrong perspective. Mentee's understanding of the local culture is as much relevant as seeing his/her cultural background respected.

5. Tips and Hints on how to achieve a good relationship with the mentee

To build a good mentor-mentee relationship is paramount to achieve all the other objectives of the mentoring program. The mentee should feel comfortable, safe, respected, listened and understood.

Therefore, a solid mentor-mentee relationship requires:

- Commitment and Involvement;
- Trust and respect;
- Understanding and active listening.

Commitment is vital. Although being a mentor is a voluntary activity you are signing up for, this does not mean that it is something that does not require efforts and time. To show your commitment to your mentee and your **involvement** in the relationship, you should keep in touch with him/her via text regularly, organize some fun activities to get to know each other (e.g. go get an ice cream, watch a football match), communicate anytime there is a change on the planned activities/meetings and so on. Also, if the mentee reaches out to the mentor, they should get back to the mentee right away, even if not available at the moment. If this is the case, it is suggested to make sure the



mentee understands the unavailability and to schedule up a meeting or a phone call as soon as possible. It should be made clear to the mentee that if the mentor is not available, this is not personal to the mentee and has nothing to do with their relationship.

Trust and respect are also highly relevant. Without them the mentee would not share his/her concerns and fears or other personal issues with the mentor. In order to foster mentees' trust, mentors should be honest with them, value their time and avoid those situations where one might think this is not happening (e.g. setting up meetings and then do not show up), keep confidential all information mentees share, unless there is a need to share them with their teachers or parents. But if this is the case, always discuss the reasons why this is important to be shared and seek for the mentees' consent. Never make fun of them because of something they said and treat them fairly. Also, a mentor-mentee relationship should have a certain degree of balance between a close relationship and a distant one. This means being there for the mentee but not excessively present in their life, being emotionally close but not as a friend.

Understanding and active listening allow the mentor to give space to the mentee while providing emotional support and, at the same time, inputs and advice. Therefore, an empathic attitude alongside with a good degree of listening should be a constant throughout the whole mentoring process. Make sure enough space is given to the mentees to express themselves. When suggesting solutions or giving advice, accept counterarguments and always show openness and will to discuss.

6. Communication with mentee's parents

Communicating with mentee's parents is as much part of the mentoring program as much a challenge for mentors. Approaching parents and talking to them about their children is always a little frightening, especially if there is a language barrier in between them and the mentor.

Nevertheless, parents must feel involved in the mentoring program, must know what is going on with their kids and participate to the process. Let's not forget that parental involvement is one of the pillars of the IntegratEd project.

Therefore, finding the correct way to communicate with the parents will be a key responsibility of the mentor. However, as a guiding principle we can provide a list of issues to keep in mind how to manage the relationship with mentee's parents.



First of all, the **exchange of information between the mentor and the parents** does not need to be frequent and could happen on the phone both via text or voice calls. It is suggested to exchange contact details with mentee parents so that they can reach out to the mentor if needed and vice versa. Most of the exchange on the mentoring program will be carried out by the teachers involved. Therefore, most of the communication between parents and mentors will be mediated by the teachers, except for particular cases in which parents might need to be informed right away.

In those cases, mentors should:

- Be honest and kind;
- Not sound anxious or nervous;
- Give time and space to the parents to express their point;
- Be respectful;
- Be ready to explain the situation in different words;
- Take into account the fact that also parents might not know the local educational system and culture;
- Make sure parents have had all the answers they were looking for.

Another issue to keep in mind is that, although it is important to share information with mentee's parents, mentee's **privacy** must be protected at all costs and what the mentee shares with the mentor about his/her private life must be kept confidential.

7. Communication with mentee's teachers

Communication between teachers and mentors must be way more structured than the one with parents. Mentors and teachers must meet up at least **once per month** to discuss on how it is going with the mentoring, what are mentee's experiences in the new school, what problems he/she faces and so on.

In order to provide the best communication experience possible, mentors should **keep track of all issues** in which they have supported their mentee in a **written form** so that it will be easier to explain the process to the teachers. These documents, either in a digital or paper form, must not be shared with anyone else besides the teachers.

To schedule up the appointment with the teachers, mentors should allow some sort of flexibility since teachers have an impressive workload to take care of. However, it would be best to agree with the teacher beforehand a part of the month in which teachers



have more spare time and then schedule the appointment always during that period. For example always during the last week of each month.

Besides the monthly meetings with teachers, mentors should communicate with them anytime it is the sensible thing to do. This means that whenever the mentee needs a kind of support that goes beyond mentor’s ability to help, teachers should be informed of the issue so that they can take care of it from that point onwards.

When communicating with teachers, mentor’s main purpose should be to push forwards the needs of his/her mentee and try to find out solutions together with the teachers. So the dialogue between the two should be constructive and focused on the mentoring process.

8. Planning activities

The mentoring program requires a good deal of preparation and planning. The several activities that the mentor needs to plan are:

- Meetings with the mentee (at least **1 every two weeks**);
- Meetings with the teachers (at least **1 per month**);
- Educational support activities;
- Social inclusion support activities.

In this section, we will see how to plan properly the meetings with the mentee and the teachers. In the following two sections we will focus on the planning of educational support activities first and then social inclusion support ones.

To plan **meetings with the mentee**, once the pair have been set up, mentors should ask their mentees to tell them when it is best for them to schedule the first meeting. In doing so, provide them with an agenda showing clearly your availability for the following weeks.

Once the first meeting has been agreed upon, make sure you prepare a plan to decide together with the mentee a day in which to meet up every week.

The following table could help mentors and mentees in having a clear visual of what their weeks are like. You can write your free time in the days of the week cells and then mark each day as available or unavailable to set up a meeting. Here an example on how the previously mentioned table could be.



1 st week of October	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM	-	-	-	-	-	8 to 12	-
PM	3 to 5	-	4 to 5	3 to 4	-	3 to 5	-

It could be useful to mark in green the cells corresponding to your availability to schedule up a meeting, as you can see above.

A similar tool could help with the scheduling of the **meetings with the teachers**. However, since teachers are busy, it is better to be accommodating as much as possible and try to set up the meeting when it works best for them.

To prepare for each **meeting with the mentee**, especially at the beginning of the mentor-mentee relationship it would be best to prepare a little strategy to break the ice with him/her. Think about possible conversational topics, things you might have in common and so on. Moreover, in order to get the information needed to carry out the educational support you should ask your mentee to share with you his/her lessons plan.

Concerning **meetings with the teachers**, it is suggested to prepare a list of all the activities carried out during the month, the issues discussed with the mentee as well as any problem or challenge he/she is facing or has faced. This both from an educational and a social perspective.

Mentors will be also provided with a **logbook** to keep track of their mentees' progresses, issues that they face and what solutions are proposed and implemented.

8.1 Scheduling educational support activities

To schedule up all the educational support activities, first mentors should acknowledge **strengths and weaknesses of their mentees** and ask them what they find most difficult. During the weekly meetings or via text/phone calls, this information will come out and will provide the basis from which carrying out the educational support.

Mentors should devote a couple of hours per week to this kind of activities. Whenever the mentee says he/she needs help with something, the mentor should try to help him/her or if they are not available or skilled enough to help them in that particular issue, they should offer an alternative solution.



It would be best for both mentor and mentee to set up an appointment to carry out educational support activities. It could happen either the same day of the mentor-mentee meeting or another day depending on each situation.

Educational support activities could range from homework support to paperwork support (e.g. understand bureaucratic procedure, find out how to fill in forms providing the required information). Therefore, mentors should try to allocate some time to respond to the educational needs of their mentees.

8.2 Scheduling social inclusion activities

Social inclusion support is the other pillar of the mentoring program. In order to support mentees' social inclusion mentors could propose a wide range of activities. For example participate to school events, play sports (e.g. soccer or volleyball match), and go watch a movie with other students and so on. It is important that mentors try to include their mentee in this kind of social activities and devote some time to have fun with their mentee.

For this reason, the mentor should make sure that the mentee is fully informed about all social activities the school organizes and propose some activities to him/her. In doing this mentors should pay attention to what mentee like so that it would be easier to actually get their involvement in the activities.

It is highly suggested to plan at least one social activity per month, of course the best case scenario would be mentors and mentees actually becoming friends during the mentoring process and do more social activities together but if this does not happen, it is ok too as long as at least a social activity per month is carried out.



9. Video Resources

In this section, there are some videos on mentoring programmes and how they have favoured the inclusion of mentees:

- Relationship mentor – mentee:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEbad3WM-Hw>
- University of Southampton, intercultural peer mentoring scheme:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV8F0xryX-g>
- Lori Hunt, the power of mentoring, TED talks:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Atme26C0I5E>
- Patrick Bouland, failure and the importance of mentoring, TED talks:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-o-uGCPnHCw



Annex I - Mentors' Logbook Template

**The following table should be replicated after each meeting with the mentee or whenever the mentor is in need of keeping note of his/her path.*

Name, Surname:

School:

Date:

Meeting n.:

Outline topics covered during meeting:
(both on educational and social inclusion issues)

Which progresses have been achieved on the issues discussed:



Do you think that the meetings with the mentee are going well? Yes/No

Why?

My learning path

Which of my previous experiences/skills are relevant in my role as mentor?

Which skills/competencies have I gained and developed so far? What have I accomplished so far as a mentor?

How can I improve to better support my mentee?



Have I had difficulties in communicating with my mentee(s)? How can I improve that?

Do I feel supported by my teachers?

How is the mentoring programme going?



Notes



Annex II – Mentee’s Journal Template

**The following table should be replicated for each meeting or whenever the mentee is in need of keeping note of his/her path.*

Name, Surname:
School:
Mentor:

Date:

Kind of meeting:	
Distance meeting: <input type="checkbox"/> Whatsapp <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> Phone call <input type="checkbox"/> Other If Other, please specify:	Face to face: Place: Length:

Topics addressed during the meeting
--



Reflection on the meeting

What have I appreciated of this meeting?

What have I not appreciated of this meeting?

Which difficulties have emerged?

How have I dealt with these difficulties?



How my mentor has supported me in dealing with these difficulties?

What are my next objectives/steps?

How is the mentoring programme going?



Notes



Annex III - Meeting Schedule Template

Mentor:				Mentee:			
Month							
1st Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM							
PM							
2nd Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM							
PM							
3rd Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM							
PM							
4th Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM							
PM							

Mark in green your availability for meetings.

During the weekends, you can arrange leisure activities such as going to lunch or dinner together, going to watch a movie, helping with courses, etc.