Mentoring Competence Framework for the European Solidarity Corps

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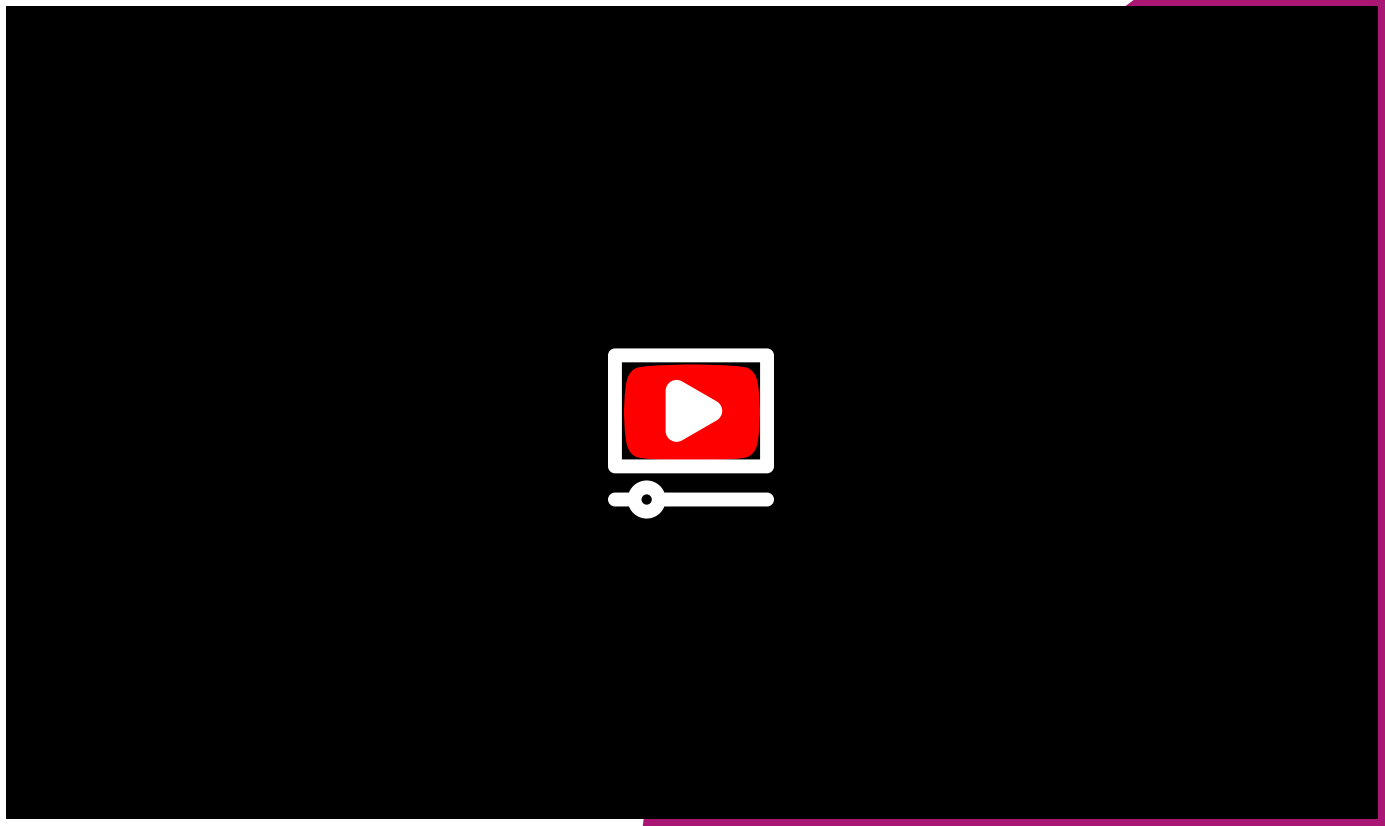
A few words of introduction



Miguel Tabera, SALTO ESC

Dear friends,

Introducing a result of great work is always a pleasure, but introducing a possible milestone in the history of mentoring the volunteering programmes of the European Union is sincerely an honor. The Mentoring in European Solidarity Corps (ESC) Framework is the result of the hard work and commitment of the members of the Mentoring under Construction (MuC) community.

The community facilitator and the community manager, together with a taskforce of mentors in ESC, members of the community, and the coordination of our resource center (SALTO ESC RC), were able to produce a framework from the mentors in the ESC to the mentors in the ESC. It took over a year of meetings, discussions, compromises, and conscious work.

An essential document, the framework defines the role and responsibilities of ESC mentors and reveals their growth and potential. The framework provides guidance and perspectives to both new and experienced mentors. To do this, it defines ESC mentors' starting point and opens up a valley of opportunities for them.

By improving the quality of mentoring, we are directly enhancing the learning experience for volunteers and making the deepest possible impact on the lives of programme participants and the communities where these young volunteers are active.

This framework will inspire and guide you through the wonderful experience of mentoring in the European Solidarity Corps!

1 Seek Clarity! The Mentoring Competence Framework for the ESC Programme

Mentoring is one of the main support measures of the European Solidarity Corps Programme: it contributes both to the value of the volunteering project and the well-being of the volunteer.

The ***Mentoring Competence Framework*** provides clear and effective guidance for mentoring practitioners in the ESC Programme. The framework is for mentors who would like to develop their mentoring competence and improve their mentoring practice; project coordinators who would like to set up and offer a quality mentoring programme within their organisation; facilitators and trainers who would like to design and carry out workshops and training courses on mentoring; as well as National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres that would like to support mentoring initiatives within the ESC Programme.

The Mentoring Competence Framework was developed by mentoring practitioners of the ***Mentoring under Construction Community***, an initiative that supports learning and developing mentoring and coaching competences and helps improve the quality of mentoring and coaching practices within and outside the European Solidarity Corps Programme. This initiative was launched by the Romanian National Agency and the SALTO ESC Resource Centre, and supported by the French National Agency and SALTO EuroMed, as well as other National Agencies.

The main purpose of the Mentoring Competence Framework is to improve the quality of mentoring support within European Solidarity Corps projects by offering clear and effective guidance to mentoring practitioners.

2 Building the Mentoring Competence Framework

2020

Spotlight on mentoring!

The ***Mentoring under Construction (MuC)*** initiative took off in 2019 and brought together practitioners sharing a passion for mentoring and coaching. Initiated by the National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training (Romania) and the SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, Mentoring under Construction aims to raise the quality of mentoring and coaching both within and outside the European Solidarity Corps Programme. Since 2020, Mentoring under Construction has been developing quality content to support the development of mentoring and coaching competences and refine practices in this area.

MENTORING AND COACHING WITHIN THE EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS

2022

The state of mentoring within the ESC Programme

Mentoring and Coaching under Research (MCUR) explored and documented mentoring and coaching practices within the European Solidarity Corps Programme. One of the main insights from this research was the necessity to clarify the tasks of a mentor, to specify the competences and ethical practices required to fulfil the role of a mentor in ESC projects.

2023

Seek Clarity! Building the Mentoring Competence Framework

The MCuR research served as a starting point for building the Mentoring Competence Framework, with its insights and recommendations providing a clear direction. The search for clarity became the key driver for a new initiative - a group of experts from the Mentoring under Construction Community formed a Task Force to kick-start the development of a competence framework for mentoring. The framework aims to clarify the tasks of a mentor, define the mentoring competences needed to perform these tasks and provide a set of ethical principles for mentoring.

The Mentoring Competence Framework contributes to the European Solidarity Corps Programme and provides clarity for the many actors in the field: mentors, project managers and project coordinators, trainers, authors and researchers.

3 Understanding the Mentoring Competence Framework

What are the benefits of the Mentoring Competence Framework?

The Mentoring Competence Framework encourages the enhancement of the quality of mentoring support in European Solidarity Corps projects. The framework provides clear and effective guidance for mentoring practitioners while balancing the need for clarity with the flexibility required to adapt mentoring to the organisational and local context.

On a **practical level**, the Mentoring Competence Framework

- provides an architecture that aligns tasks, competences and ethical guidelines for mentoring,
- clarifies the tasks of a mentor, defines competences needed to carry out mentoring and offers ethical guidelines for mentoring,
- encourages mentors to continuously develop their mentoring competence,
- strengthens mentoring support and mentoring programmes within the organisation,
- provides guidelines for designing training courses for mentors and organisations.

In addition, the Mentoring Competence Framework

- recognises mentoring as a significant professional support measure,
- emphasises the importance and value of mentoring and the recognition of mentors,
- creates a common language for mentoring practitioners, encourages reflection, rethinking and adjustment of mentoring support,
- allows for the alignment of activities that enhance the quality of mentoring support

3 Understanding the Mentoring Competence Framework (cont.)

A Mentor or a Mentoring System?

A Mentoring support can be organised in various ways. One organisation may define and delegate certain tasks to one or several mentors, while others may establish a mentoring system in which tasks and responsibilities are shared among mentors and other staff members, depending on the needs and available resources.

What matters most is to ensure that the various mentoring focus areas are covered and that the division of roles and tasks is clear for everyone involved in supporting the volunteer.

From here, we are going to clarify how we understand “competence” and “competence framework”.

3 Understanding the Mentoring Competence Framework (cont.)

How do we understand competence and competence framework?

Competence is the ability to do something well (Cambridge Dictionary). Competences refer to specific tasks within a specific working context and are often described as a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Competences can be trained and developed.

Generally, a ***competence framework*** is a structure that defines competence and behaviours expected of individuals within an organisation. Ideally, it aligns necessary tasks with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that individuals need to effectively perform their roles and responsibilities.

Modern competence frameworks go beyond merely listing knowledge, skills and attitudes. They conceptualise competences to ensure and support not only the effective execution of specific tasks (“doing something well”), but also the demonstration of specific behaviours (“how to do something well”) that are required, valued, recognised and rewarded in a specific field. Additionally, a modern competence framework encompasses values, mindset and ethical practices as needed.

The Mentoring Competence Framework includes focus areas of mentoring (mentoring tasks), mentoring competences (described as knowledge, skills and attitudes) and guidelines for mentoring (values, mindset and code of conduct).

4 Introducing the Mentoring Competence Framework

What is the structure of the Mentoring Competence Framework?

In line with the recommendations of the Mentoring and Coaching under Research report, a competence framework includes the following three components: the tasks of a mentor, the competences needed to fulfil these tasks and guidelines for mentoring.

The Mentoring Competence Framework consists of three parts:

PART A: Focus Areas of Mentoring

The different domains of mentoring, each with a list of specific mentoring tasks

PART B: Mentoring Competence

Competences identified for each focus area, describing specific behaviours along with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to demonstrate them effectively

PART C: Guidelines for Mentoring

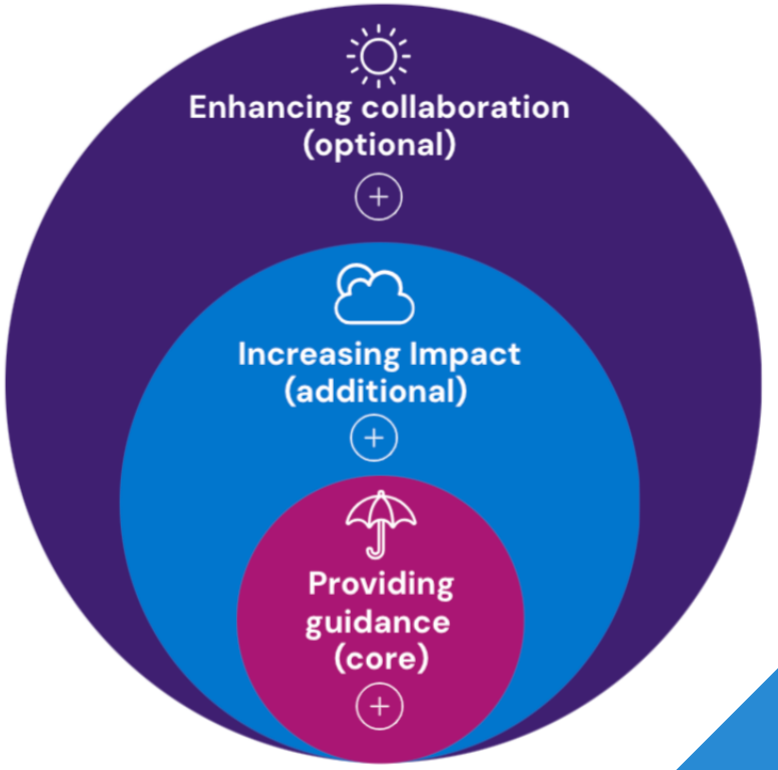
Important values and mindsets that underpin mentoring support, along with ethical guidelines for mentoring

PART A: 9 Focus Areas of Mentoring

The Mentoring Competence Framework is a flexible guide that can be scaled up as mentors and organisations gain more experience or resources.

Mentoring activities within the framework are summarised and divided into **9 focus areas**, each detailing specific mentoring tasks. The areas that are identified as essential based on the MCuR results as well as the experience of many mentoring practitioners are summarised in one core category: **providing guidance**.

Other focus areas are considered **additional (increasing impact)** or **optional (enhancing collaboration)**. This provides mentors and organisations with a clear orientation highlighting where to start and what to focus on.



Let's explore these categories!

The mentor's role is to encourage and empower volunteers to integrate and collaborate with others, enabling them to make meaningful contributions to the organisation. This may include providing ongoing training and regular feedback to the volunteer. Mentors also plan and document their mentoring activities and give feedback to the organisation to improve the volunteer's experience and project outcomes.

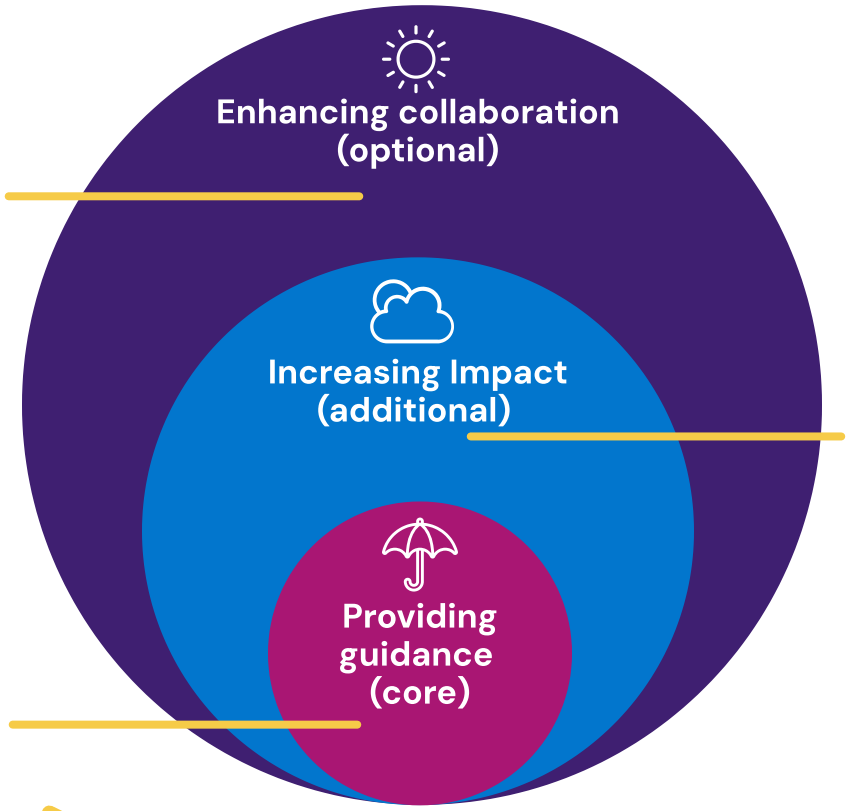
Enhancing collaboration includes optional focus areas such as:

- Facilitating orientation and integration with the organisation
- Managing groups and teams
- Planning, documenting and reporting

The role of a mentor in providing guidance to volunteers is holistic, encompassing not only the specific tasks but also the personal and cultural aspects of the volunteer experience. As a support person, the mentor offers orientation, helps navigate challenges and ensures a positive, enriching experience for the volunteer.

The core focus areas in providing guidance include:

- Assisting the volunteer in local and cultural integration
- Supporting the volunteer's well-being
- Assisting the volunteer in dealing with difficult situations and conflicts



The mentor's role in increasing impact involves fostering a culture of continuous learning and development, promoting the values of the ESC Programme and helping to create an inclusive and safe environment for the volunteer.

The focus areas of increasing impact are additional and include:

- Facilitating learning and development
- Raising awareness of the ESC Programme's values
- Ensuring inclusion

An effective approach to implementing and improving mentoring support is to start by providing guidance, which encompasses the core focus areas of mentoring. From there, additional focus areas can be introduced to increase the impact of mentoring, while optional focus areas further enhance collaboration.

PART B: 22 Mentoring Competences

For each of the nine focus areas of mentoring, 2-3 mentoring competences have been identified and described in terms of specific behaviours that mentors demonstrate in this area, along with a set of supporting knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The behaviours and competences are organised around the three main categories:

- **providing guidance** (core),
- **increasing impact** (additional) and
- **enhancing collaboration** (optional).

This structure offers mentors and organisations a clear orientation on where to begin and what to prioritise.

Let's see the mentoring competences related to the focus areas

Optional

Enhacing collaboration

- Facilitating orientation and integration with the organization
- Managing groups and teams
- Planning, documenting and reporting

Additional

Increasing impact

- Facilitating learning and development
- Raising awareness of the ESC Programme’s values
- Ensuring inclusion

Core

Providing guidance

- Assisting the volunteer in the local and cultural integration
- Supporting the volunteer's well-being
- Assiting the volunteer in dealing with difficult situations and conflicts

PART B: 22 Mentoring Competences (cont.)

Mentors embarking on their journey, along with mentoring organisations with less experience and fewer resources, can use these three categories as a ***step-by-step approach to implementation***. These stages allow mentors and organisations to first focus on core areas of interest and mentoring competences, then gradually expand their mentoring capabilities as they develop.

Finally, in the ***third stage***, mentors can further expand their competences to include managing groups and teams as well as planning, documenting and reporting, as their capacity and experience increase.

In the ***second stage***, mentors can build on the core competences and move on to competences like facilitating learning and development or raising awareness of the values of the ESC Programme. This may require more training and organisational support, but it does enhance the overall volunteer experience.

In the ***first stage*** mentors focus on critical competences for mentoring, such as building trust and supporting local and cultural integration. These skills are vital for ensuring the well-being of the volunteer and are often manageable for small organisations with limited resources.

Now, we are ready to explore the third part of the framework, the ethical guidelines...

Core focus areas

Providing guidance

Click on each focus area to discover the competences

Additional focus areas

Increasing impact

Optional focus areas

Enhacing collaboration

Assisting the volunteer in the local and cultural integration

- Facilitating cultural navigation and awareness
- Fostering intercultural learning and reflection
- Building trusting relationships

Supporting the volunteer's well-being

- Raising awareness of well-being
- Supporting well-being practices

Assiting the volunteer in dealing with difficult situations and conflicts

- Providing support in managing difficult situations
- Providing support in managing conflicts
- Supporting self-regulation of emotions

Facilitating learning and development

- Raising awareness of learning and development
- Supporting planning and implementation of learning and development
- Supporting reflection and assessment of learning and development

Raising awareness of the ESC Programme's values

- Raising awareness of the Programme's values
- Supporting alignment of activities with the Programme's values

Ensuring inclusion

- Creating an accessible and safe environment for volunteers
- Providing reinforced mentorship

Facilitating orientation and integration with the organization

- Supporting the onboarding process
- Supporting volunteers' integration within the organisation

Managing groups and teams

- Supporting team-integration process
- Supporting team cooperation

Planning, documenting and reporting

- Planning mentoring support
- Documenting mentoring activities
- Reporting to the organisation

PART C: 3x4 Guidelines for Mentoring

The third part of the framework is a compilation of guidelines for mentoring. In line with the holistic approach to non-formal learning - recognising that we all learn with our ***hearts***, ***minds*** and ***hands*** - we have developed a set of 12 mentoring guidelines based on this principle.

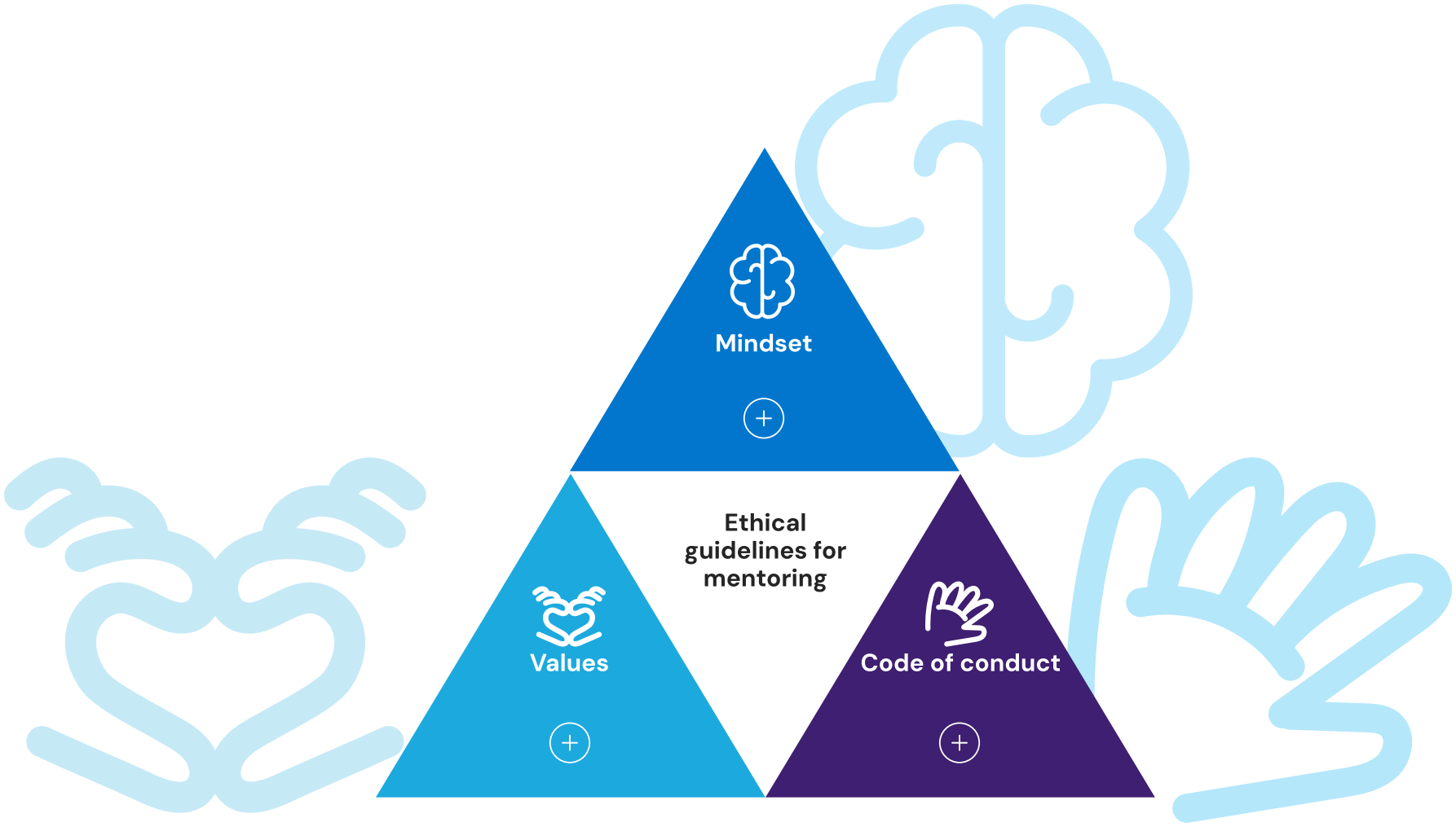
Values - Mindset - Ethical practice

Values (heart) represent a set of principles and standards that guide our behaviours and actions.

Mindset (mind) refers to the intentions and beliefs that help us navigate our decisions and actions.

Ethical practice (Hand), or the code of conduct, encompasses a set of (written) rules and guidelines that ensure quality mentoring.

The four values that we consider the most important in guiding mentoring support are **integrity**, **self-agency**, **dignity** and **togetherness**. These four values serve as the first four guiding principles for the “heart”. In addition, four principles are formulated for the “mind” and another four for the “hand”. Together, these principles constitute the guidelines for mentoring.


Mindset
Ethical guidelines for mentoring
Values
Code of conduct

We uphold high-quality standards in mentoring. We maintain confidentiality, and set and respect boundaries for ourselves and others, with safeguarding being at the heart of our practice, ensuring the safety and well-being of all volunteers.

We support volunteers in becoming more (self-)aware of themselves and their volunteering journey. We encourage them to take responsibility for and ownership of their choices and actions.

We engage with volunteers and others in an ethical manner. We strive for transparency, mutual respect and accountability.

We approach every interaction with kindness, empathy and compassion. We keep an open mind, respecting and including various perspectives and diverse backgrounds and help create a safe, supportive and empowering environment.

Integrity

We value honesty and trustworthiness. We commit to high standards and strive for authenticity.

Self-agency

We value that volunteers are willing and able to shape their own path in life through their choices and actions.

Dignity

We value equality and equity, mutual respect and fairness in interactions with others, with respect for human rights being a fundamental aspect of our approach.

Togetherness

We value cooperation, acts of solidarity based on empathy and compassion, and empowering mutual support.

We intend to provide volunteers with support and guidance that help improve their well-being, learning and development. With our behaviour and actions we are setting a positive example for our volunteers.

We believe that volunteers seek a meaningful and fulfilling voluntary service and are ready to engage in new situations and overcome challenges. We support them in setting healthy boundaries in relationships and standing up for themselves and others.

We believe in the ability of volunteers to learn, change and grow, to take on challenges with courage and to see their journey as an ongoing opportunity for learning and development.

We believe in the power of community and the power of united actions based on a spirit of solidarity founded on diversity and inclusion.

5 Exploring the Mentoring Competence Framework

The current introduction of the framework guides you one-by-one through the focus area and allows you to explore specific tasks, behavours and competences related to those focus aras.

In 2025, we will create various self-assessments for mentors and organisations to work with those three parts of the framework independent from one another. This will allow you to dive into a certain part of the Framework or to pick a certain aspect you would like to focus on.

6 Applying the Mentoring Competence Framework

The Mentoring Competence Framework can be used by anyone wishing to enhance the quality of mentoring support within the ESC Programme, for example mentors, project coordinators, facilitators and trainers, as well as National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres.

Possible practical applications

...for mentors

- Clarifying and agreeing with their project coordinators the tasks they should focus on
- Self-assessing mentoring focus areas already covered and improving and/or extending mentoring support in particular areas
- Self-assessing mentoring behaviours and identifying knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop mentoring competences

...for organisations

- Reviewing mentoring focus areas and clarifying essential areas that should be covered by mentoring support
- Creating a mentoring profile based on the focus areas and mentoring tasks
- Agreeing with mentors on focus areas and specific mentoring tasks
- Supporting mentors in developing their mentoring competences and practices

...for TEC-trainers and NAs/SALTO

- Designing workshops and training courses for mentors and organisations based on the Mentoring Competence Framework
- Creating and disseminating guidelines that enhance the quality of mentoring supportInvestigating the quality and impact of mentoring support in ESC projects

Mentoring under Construction is committed to continuously creating and developing new mentoring content that matches the focus areas of mentoring, mentoring competences and guidelines for mentoring. This content is published in the form of newsletters, articles, podcast episodes and micro-learning sessions and is available on our MuC Learning HUB on Howspace and on the HOP Online Learning Platform.

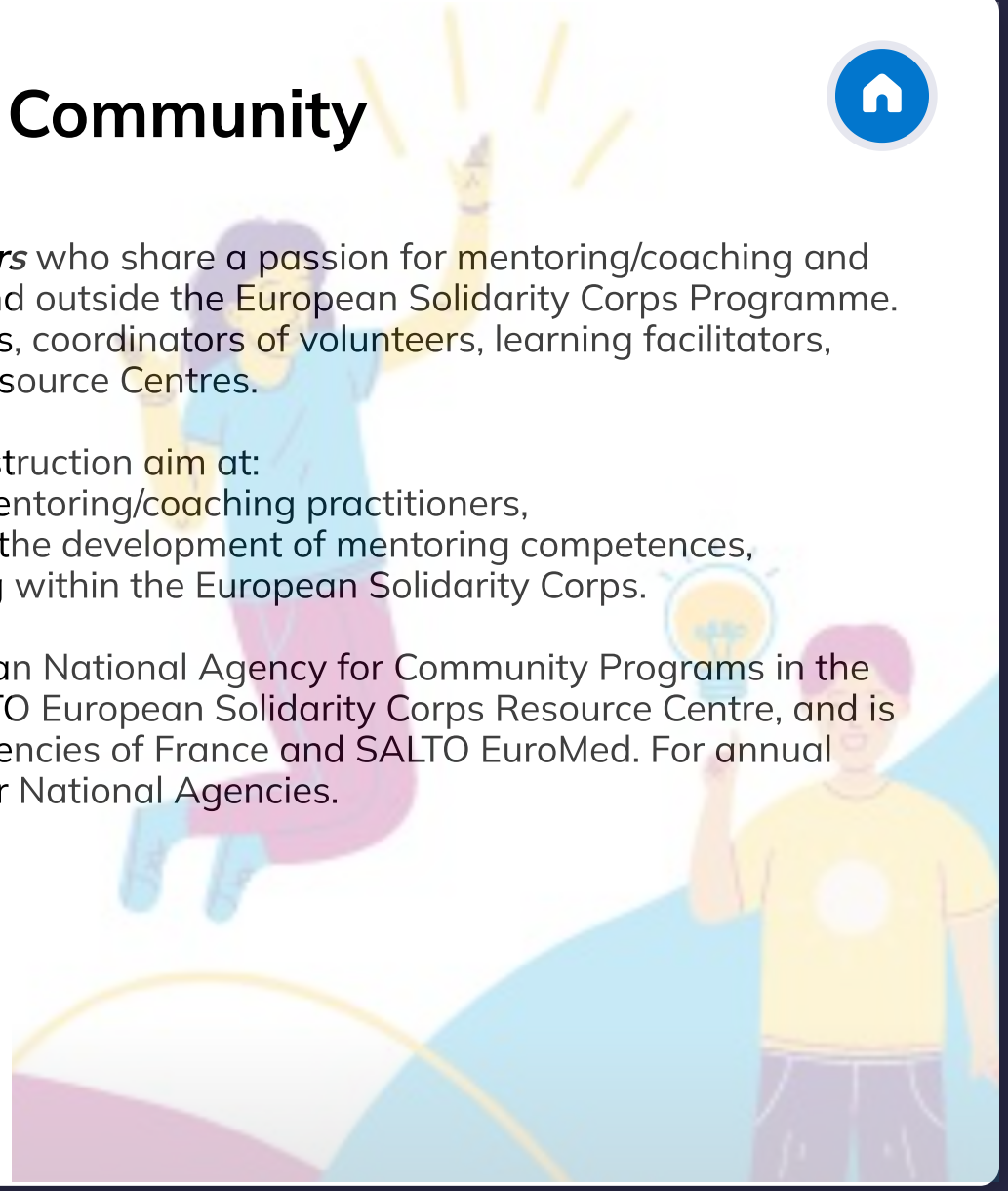
7 The Mentoring under Construction Community

Mentoring under Construction (MuC) is a ***community of practitioners*** who share a passion for mentoring/coaching and are interested in raising the quality of mentoring/coaching within and outside the European Solidarity Corps Programme. The MuC Community includes mentors, project managers/organisers, coordinators of volunteers, learning facilitators, authors, trainers and members of National Agencies and SALTO Resource Centres.

The main ***activities, events and initiatives*** of Mentoring under Construction aim at:

- building a vibrant, resourceful and sustainable community of mentoring/coaching practitioners,
- developing high quality mentoring/coaching content to support the development of mentoring competences,
- and contributing to improving the quality of mentoring/coaching within the European Solidarity Corps.

Mentoring under Construction was founded in 2019 by the Romanian National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training with the support of SALTO European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre, and is supported by the Youth and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies of France and SALTO EuroMed. For annual events, Mentoring under Construction cooperates with various other National Agencies.



Here is how you can find us and join the community:

Mentoring under Construction on SALTO

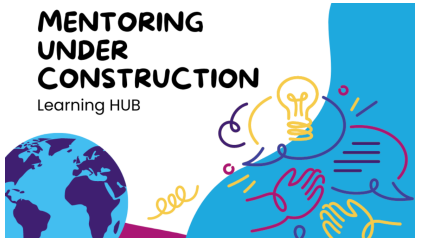
Click

Mentoring under Construction Community on Facebook

Click

Join our Learning HUB on Howspace

Click



Editorial

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