



meant to be a

MENTOR

*Discover and develop yourself
as an EVS Mentor*

**Final report of the Polish-Lithuanian
Blended Training Course 2014-2015**



meant to be a **MENTOR**

The Polish-Lithuanian Blended Training Course for EVS mentors was organised by the Polish and Lithuanian National Agencies from October 2014 till May 2015. This pilot project was carried out with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme.



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A few words beforehand...

This is the report of a long term blended learning project „**Meant to be a Mentor**“, which was carried out by the partnership of National Agencies of Erasmus+: Youth in Action programma in Lithuania and Poland from October 2014 to May 2015.

This report serves not only as a retrospective presentation on what were the elements carried out through out the project, but also looks at what impact it has created on participants as well as presents a model to be considered for long term support for EVS mentors in the future.

Monika Kėžaitė-Jakniūniene

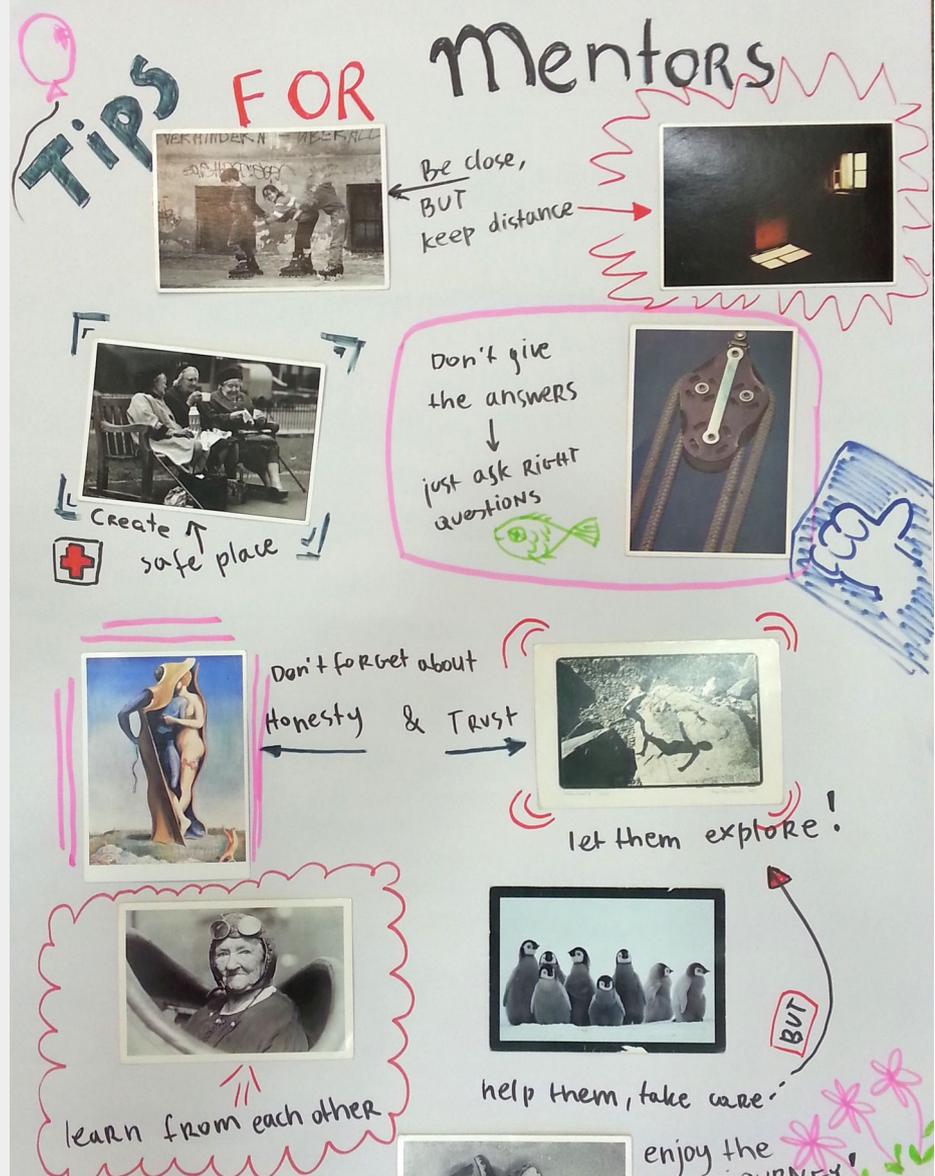
Michael Kimmig

1. Idea and concept

Mentors are playing a significant role in guiding volunteers through their EVS experience and supporting their earning process. It demands a high motivation and commitment, as well as a broad set of competences to fulfil their roles. Quite opposite stands the support mentors get to face these challenge.

This was our starting point for creating **an innovative long-term support model for EVS mentors** that encompasses raising their awareness of the importance of the mentors role as well as developing competences necessary for carrying out the job as a mentor.

With this, the Meant to be a Mentor project aimed at raising the quality of mentoring within the EVS support structure and serves as **a Pilot-project** for other National Agencies who would like to set up a long-term support that combines online consultations, an ongoing online support with a classic training course.



1.1 Expected outcomes: What outcomes did we expect?

We expected that at the end of the project EVS mentors will have gained **awareness about the learning process of a volunteer and a mentor:**

- be conscious about the learning processes volunteers and mentors are involved in;
- be able to identify key moments in volunteer's and their own development,
- understand better how learning, development and personal change happens.

Additionally mentors will have developed **knowledge and skills of a mentor:**

- see EVS mentoring as a long-term process and know their various roles and tasks as a mentor within this process;
- be able to define their role in the entire EVS volunteer support structure within the new

Erasmus+ Programme and understand better their valuable contribution,

- develop skills and to apply different tools and methods to support EVS volunteers,
- extend own reflection skills and be able to better facilitate the reflection of learning process and outcomes of another person.

And on top, mentors will have collected **experience in working in an intercultural setting:**

- be experienced in acting in an intercultural setting,
- be able to facilitate volunteers and support their learning reflections taking into account cultural influences,
- know good practices of mentoring.

2.2 Participants profile: Who could take part in this project?

The M2beaM BTC was designed *for EVS mentors, who...*

- had experience as EVS mentor,
- were at the time of the project starting or in process of being a mentor in at least one long term EVS,
- valued the subject of personal change, learning and are curious to explore more of it,
- were ready to commit themselves for a long-term involvement both in this project and in their organization
- were at least 18 years old residents of Lithuania or Poland.

We invited altogether 30 participants, 15 from Poland and 15 from Lithuania. We started the project with 24 participants (12 PL and 12 LT) and finished with 9 (PL) and 12 (LT) participants.

1.3 Team: Who coordinated the project?

National Agencies	Trainers
Aistė Natkevičiūtė-Čiplinskienė, Lithuanian National Agency	Monika Kėžaitė-Jakniūnienė, Trainer, Consultant, Supervisor, Partner in organization "Kitokie projektai"
Viktorija Malinauskienė, Lithuanian National Agency	Michael Kimmig, Intercultural Trainer and Coach, Online instructor
Urszula Buchowicz, Polish National Agency	



1.4 Course structure: How does the project look like?

The project offered a long-term support, starting from mid October 2014 until the end of May 2015. The project combined various ways of support and learning methods:

- individual support during **One-to-one consultations** (via Skype),

- activities, reflections and discussions (via an **online learning** platform) and
- a common **training event** with both Polish and Lithuanian mentors.

Meant to be a Mentor consisted of 5 major stages:

Meant to be a Mentor Blended Training Course 2014/2015

1. Stage	<i>15th - 27th October 2014</i>	One-to-one consultations (Skype)
2. Stage	<i>1st October 2014 – 27th of January 2015</i>	E-learning 1st phase (moodle)
3. Stage	<i>27th-31st January, 2014</i>	Training course in Vilnius, Lithuania
4. Stage	<i>1st of February - 31st of May, 2015</i>	E-learning 2nd phase (moodle, facebook)
5. Stage	<i>15th – 20th of April 2015</i>	One-to-one consultations (Skype)

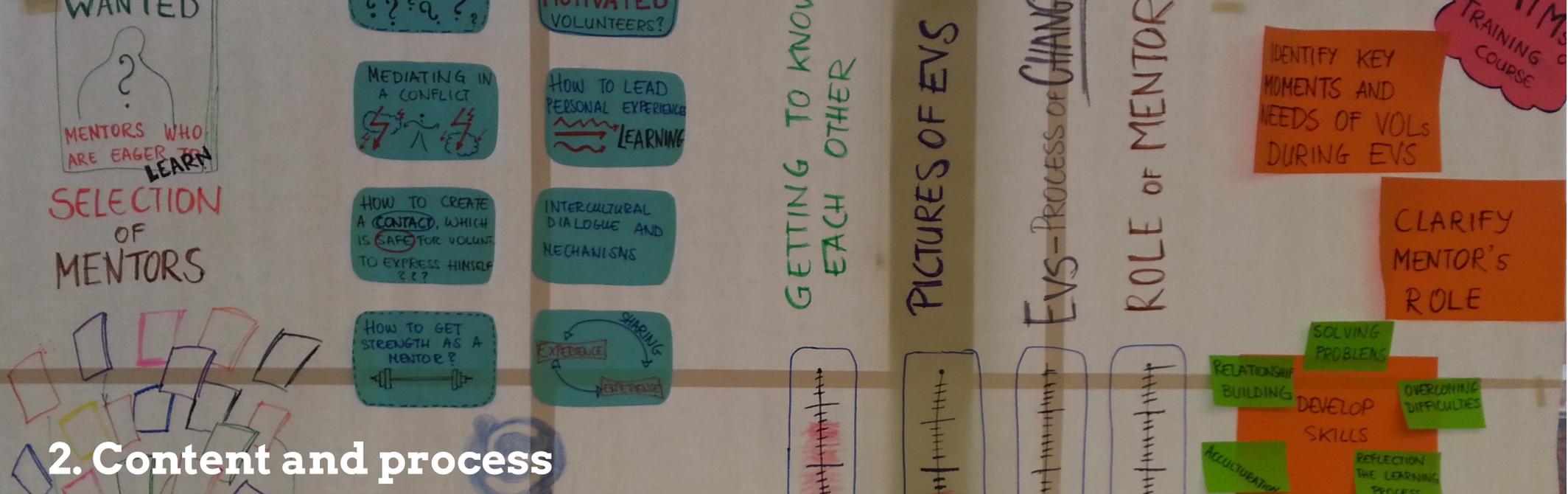
2. Content and process

Overall picture of the entire process and headlines of the content is shown in the next page. Below there is a more detailed presentation of the content of the project. We would like to underline several aspects, how the content has been created:

- Content was mainly based on the **needs and expectations of participants**, so there was a lot of ongoing planning. We found this approach rewarding, because pilot project needs more touch

to grass root needs of participants. As a consequence to ongoing planning there were lots of adaptations in the process.

- A more elaborate content will be available as a **workbook**.
- Content report of **Training course**: A detailed content and methodological report was prepared after the course itself and stands as a separate document.



Content overview



3. Evaluation

What type of evaluation did we use?

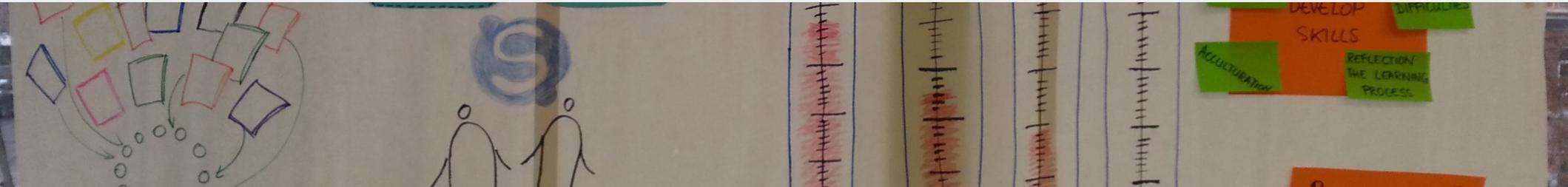
The M2beaM project consisted of *formative* and *summative* evaluation:

- **Formative evaluation** is very helpful for pilot projects and new programs. In this type of evaluation, the project is typically assessed during its development and implementation. Formative evaluation provides information about how best to revise and modify for improvement and can be used for progress monitoring of ongoing programs.
- **Summative evaluation** is an assessment of programs or projects at the end. The findings typically are used to help decide whether a program should be adopted, continued, or modified for improvement.

When and how did we evaluate?

Evaluation was an ongoing process, a mixture of formative and summative evaluation:

- **Exploring needs and expectations** before each main stage of the process, in the application form, during the first one-to-one consultations, at the end of the first e-learning stage, at the end of the training course.
- **Process (mid-project) evaluation** at the beginning and end of the training course
- **Final evaluation** at the end of the M2beaM project: One-to-one consultations, Learning impact questionnaire (online), group discussions (on moodle and facebook), team evaluation (via skype).



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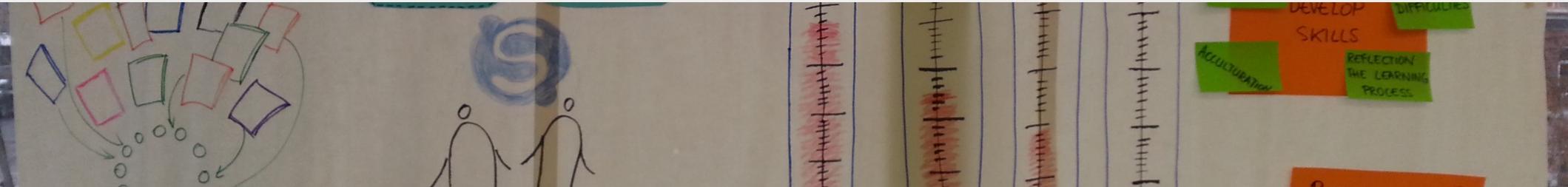
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Learning outcomes: Main „Take aways“

The main take aways and biggest changes mentors described during the one-to-one consultations and in the online questionnaires on learning impact are:

- seeing the process of a volunteer with different eyes:

„... most of all i was somewhat in a place of a volunteer in this process, that helped me to see EVS through volunteers eyes.“

„... I thought it i salso not easy for them, volunteers. Before I was looking at their experience as a funny adventure“

- seeing one's own role as a mentor differently, e.g. seeing the full range of various possible roles and task of a mentor:

„I clearly understood mentor's roles, responsibilities and tasks. It also helped me to clarify qualities of a good mentor.“

“I understood I have to learn about mentoring more, no mater how many years I'm doing that... everytime I learn some new things and get more experience.“

“I am more aware that there are no golden rules how to work with volunteers, it's rather individualistic approach every time.“

“...I can clearly identify the limits of my role a mentor“

- moving from a friend to a more sytematic and professional approach towards mentoring

„I have a picture in my mind. Now I have a plan, how to start the mentoring process, which sequence to follow. With this I can move in direction of a more professional relationship.“

„the contracting approach, which was introduced during the project allowed me to reset relationship with my volunteers“

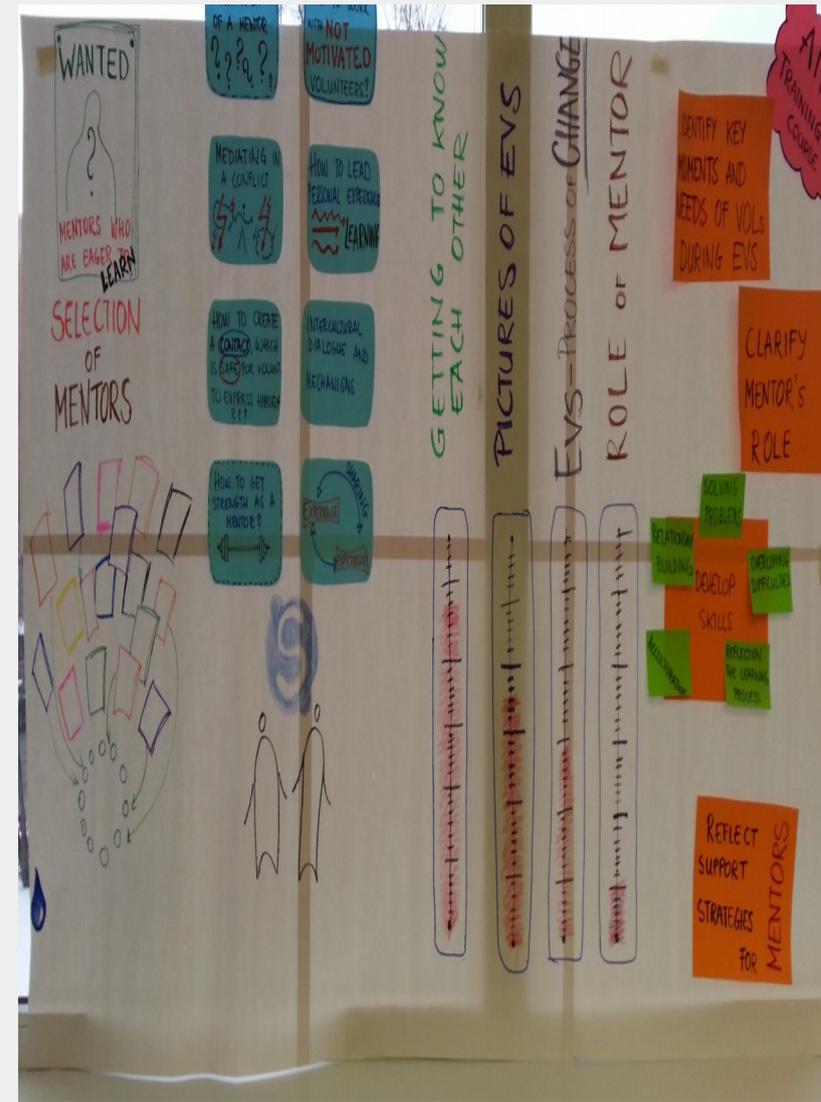
- a different quality of the relationship to the volunteer

„I took deeper understanding about mentorship. I notice that it could be different perceptions about how to work with the EVS volunteer, you can apply different methods, but the main goal of mentor should be to guide the volunteer. Sometimes it could be some special way (based by theory), but sometimes you can trust your intuition. More you are able to reflect about yourself more you will be able to help for the volunteer to recognize his competencies and learning process.“

- being connected with other mentors,

„I used to be solo, now I know a community of mentors that are doing the same things like me.“

For more detailed results about learning outcomes, competences developed and course evaluation please see the full report.



4. Recommendations

1. The idea

The M2beaM BTC proved to be a valuable experience for the participating mentors. We recommend to keep, spread and repeat this practice of ***a innovative, long-term support for mentors*** in order to raise the quality of mentoring within the EVS support structure.

2. The project structure

There are many ways to alter the design of the M2beaM project. The concept we present here is a good compromise between establishing a long-term support and limiting the overall costs (which

normally occur when you organise international events). We recommend to keep this structure. However, we suggest to consider some adjustments:

- **One-to-one consultations:** The one-to-one consultations on Skype are a good starting point (to break the ice and start building relationships, especially if you don't have a training course to start with). Additional one-to-one consultations should be offered and promoted to work on issues mentors are challenged with during the process. This would also give a living example for mentor-volunteer conversations.



- **Online learning:** the first e-learning phase could be a bit shorter (more focussing on exchanging experience, basic information about EVS and first reflections about the mentors role), while the second e-learning phase could be longer (more focussing on practical activities mentors can carry out with their volunteers, and building up a support network among mentors).

- **Training course:** Three days have been quite a rush through different mentor's skills. One more day for the training course would give the chance to do more on group building (in order to raise the engagement in the second part of the e-learning phase), develop some digital competence (to overcome barriers) as well as establishing and starting a mutual support among mentors.

3. Learners support and participants engagement

Participants engagement

Ensure volunteer participation in this project. Motivation is a crucial factor. One-to-one

consultations is a helpful element to build the relationship and explore the various previous experience, current needs and expectations towards the project.

Some other things we recommend to support the participants engagement are:

- initiate and facilitate group building (online and during the training course),
- supporting participants to overcome challenges and develop English language competence and digital competence,
- offer an online learning space (or better spaces) that motivate and inspire participants to learn, connect and exchange with one another,
- suggest practical tasks that allow participants to engage deeper with the course content,
- offer additional one-to-one consultations during the overall process,
- ensure active online facilitation/moderation of online discussions.

Online learning platform

Taking into account the individual approaches towards web 2.0 technologies, the ideal solution might not be an all-inclusive platform, but to offer various technologies to create, present and share content. We as well have to make it easier to communicate and interact with others. We think it would be worth going in direction of a bundle of web technologies as an open education approach, e.g. content that would be open available on a website, a course forum within a closed Facebook group, google+ community or google/yahoo group, discussions/chats on twitter, creating and sharing content on blogs, etc.

Web 2.0 technologies

Additionally we recommend to experiment with other forms of ITC or web 2.0 technologies, e.g. live events (via skype conferences, handouts, webinars), group chat (via tweed chat), etc.





4. Pedagogical approaches

Ongoing planning

In our pilot project we tried to be as close to mentors needs and expectations. Most of the content was created „on demand” and from scratch. Next editions of M2beaM can already take advantage of pre-prepared content which would lead to less ongoing planning (and would reduce a bit of the workload).

Mentoring mentors

In many ways one role of the trainers is being mentors for the participating mentors. We recommend to pay more attention on this role in order to give mentors an orientation or example how mentoring could look like through their one-to-one process. They experience at the same time someone else in a mentors role and being „the client” in a mentoring process. Especially the one-to-one consultations can serve as a very good learning opportunity.

5. Challenges

Language competence

English is a challenge in every international project. Following and understanding communication, expressing your thoughts verbally, interacting with others are several competence levels you reach. If it comes to online learning and sharing and discussion something in forum groups, the additional challenge is to interact with other in written English. Be aware that participants might not engage in discussions, because they are afraid to make mistakes and don't feel confident enough to do so. Try to offer support, give permission to make mistakes, allow them to post in their mother tongue, let them record an audio file, etc.

Digital competence

A blended training course demands a certain level of digital competence from both, mentors and trainers. Internet technology can be very useful and enhance learning and exchange, at the same time simple things like opening an account, login, navigating through the content or commenting on a post can become a huge barrier. Not to mention creating and

sharing digital products (like images and videos) and working together in virtual teams. We highly recommend to reserve time, energy and patience for this to support participants in overcoming any barriers and developing these skills.

Asynchronous realities

A third challenge is about the different „timing“ of e-learning process and mentor-volunteer process. The way the content is structured and the time when it is delivered (e.g. in our case in a two-week rhythm) and the mentoring process are not synchronised. For example: Just because the topic motivation is introduced online, does not mean, that all mentors need this knowledge right now, are able to carry out the practical activity right now and feed back their experience within the two week time frame. Some mentors would have needed this knowledge weeks before, others later. This leads to the fact, that not everyone is sharing his/her experience immediately, but over a longer period of time. Be aware, that this effects the sharing and discussions on course content.

6. Project coordination

Long-term projects like the M2beaM BTC require ongoing planning, monitoring, adjusting and fine-tuning. Content has to be created, activities invented, meetings arranged etc. To keep the project together we recommend to have regular skype meetings. For us a regular contact between trainers (every two weeks) and one common skype conference with all team members (once per month) worked quite well. We recommend to take some time to figure out the technology needed (skype, hangouts, internet connection, microphone, headsets, etc.) as well how it best works.

Keep track of your time-line. Choose one person or more persons to keep the general overview. And think of how to document your discussions, decisions and todos. We took notes of all meetings (in real-time on titanpad.com), that could be accessed any time by all team members.

Vilnius/Poznań, July 2015

Monika Kėžaitė-Jakniūnienė

Michael Kimmig



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Authors: Monika Kėžaitė-Jakniūnienė and Michael Kimmig

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