



*School Parent Involvement to Increase Student Achievement*

# *Mentoring Model for Parents' Engagement at Child Schooling Life*

(English Version)

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## 1. ABOUT THE PARENT'R'US PROJECT

The School Parent Involvement to Increase Student Achievement (PARENT'R'US) project is a 3-year project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and establishes a partnership of 8 non-profit organizations from across Europe. The PARENT'R'US project aims to use a holistic model/approach in order to connect family, school and community related factors. The main targets of the project are families and children in disadvantaged situations.

The project foresees the creation of a mentoring course targeting parents, teachers and key-community educators.

Within the PARENT'R'US model there are three main roles:

- Mentor managers (who will mainly be teachers, social workers, psychologists, etc.);
- Mentors (who will be parents more involved in their children's academic achievement and well-being at school);
- Mentees (disadvantaged parents not or less involved in their children's academic achievement and well-being at school).

The partnership developed a set of activities based on the concept of mentoring as a development-oriented relationship between a less experienced individual (mentee) and a more experienced individual – the mentor (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985; Rhodes, 2005). It is a unique, idiosyncratic relationship marked by an emotional bond between mentor and mentee, where the mentor offers guidance and new learning opportunities to the mentee (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007). A mentoring relationship is also a form of providing a safe environment for self-exploration, reflection, and self-expression to all the actors on the process.

The PARENT'R'US project goals are:

- a. developing innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to empower parental engagement building on lessons learned from the MOMIE, MEGAN and MPATH projects in the field of mentoring and the Includ-ED, FamilyEduNet and ELICIT + projects in the field of parental engagement, student participation & their active citizenship aspects;
- b. identifying a suitable profile & competences needed to support or perform mentoring programs within schools, parent organisations &/or local associations;

- c. designing a mentoring model to improve parenting skills, namely of parents less or not engaged in their children's schooling life;
- d. designing a mentoring model to improve teacher competences for parental engagement in and empowerment for it in children's school life;
- e. delivering a parenthood mentoring awareness toolkit for parents, schools,

## 2. THE PARENT'R'US MENTORING

The Evidence review developed within the PARENT'R'US project highlighted the added value of mentoring to foster parental engagement and provided specific guidelines on the strategies to promote the recruitment of mentors and mentees, their matching and connection, but specially it gave recommendations on the attitudes of mentor managers and mentors regarding the empowerment of parent mentees. Most of those have been covered by the training courses developed by project partners, as part of intellectual outputs 4 and 5, respectively for mentor managers' and mentors' training courses.

According to conclusions of the Final Report of Intellectual Output 1 (IO1), Mentor programmes have proven to be a very effective tool for engaging parents, as it can address the individual needs of each family, and tackle the fact that each of them needs help with something else, and it does it in a format in which parties are equal, working towards a common goal: the well-being of the child. The pilot implementation of the PARENT'R'US model by different European partners corroborated this main conclusion: Mentoring with parents is a strategy that should be implemented across the schools, namely among the more disadvantaged parents.

In this way, PARENT'R'Us Mentoring Programme aims to promote and reinforce parental/guardians skills on education, in order to achieve an effective parental involvement which generates a path of school success and the well-being of children and young people. PARENT'R'US aims to develop an holistic approach through a Mentoring Program.

### 2.1. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the project are:

- Empowering multi-challenged parents to be involved in their children's education;

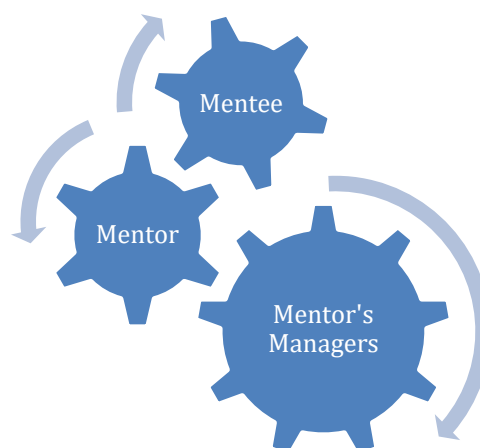
- Strengthen the dialogue between children and families and schools and other community organizations.

And the specific objectives are:

- Make parents / guardians aware of the **impact of their involvement on their children's school path;**
- Generate a school environment that promotes school success and the **well-being of children and young people;**
- Strengthen **communication and sharing** between parents / guardians with fewer opportunities, and teachers and community organizations;
- Mobilize **highly involved and committed parents / guardians** in school activities for social inclusion.

## 2.2. ACTORS AND ROLES IN MENTORING

The mentoring process is built upon **three main actors** who perform different roles and with different levels of responsibility. In the next lines, it will be presented a basic description of these roles. For better understand the profile of each role, it should be considered “Intellectual Output 2 – Self-Assessment tool for Mentor’s managers” and “Intellectual Output 3 – Self-Assessment tool for Mentors”. The roles of these actors are:



### Mentor’s Manager

The Mentor’s Manager is a teacher or an educational professional who puts him/herself at the service of the mentor: helps the mentor to acquire new knowledge and skills; discover the areas of greatest potential for the mentor and promote emotional intelligence; helps to analyze the mentor's mistakes and establish his/her goals. The responsibilities of mentor's coordinator still include to recruit, develop and retain mentors and mentees, and match appropriate mentees to mentors.

This role is essential in a mentoring model because it allows to refocus objectives and methodologies; to identify constraints during the mentoring process; to highlight good practices and share it with others; and to mobilize overcoming strategies.

### Mentor

The mentor is a parent (peer mentoring) or a teacher or other educational professional (non-peer mentoring) who should promote the collaboration and the communication between parents and school. The mentor has several important roles in the mentoring process:

- Advocate - Gives visibility to the 'cause' of the mentoring, offers a space for exposure of its individual context.
- Resource's distributor – Promotes the proximity to spaces, entities or persons that can support side issues to the mentoring process related to different kind of mentee's needs.
- Model - Acts as an example to follow in the way of interacting with young children, with the school and with all educational agents.
- Counsellor - Share its knowledge and experience about strategies to interact with the school and children and young people.
- Trainer - Helps mentees in the learning process of new skills and in putting new behaviors into practice.
- Guardian - Helps mentees find new and challenging opportunities in their role as a parent and an educator, protecting them from adverse situations.
- Supporter – Is empathetic, and recognizes the difficulties and the successes of the mentee.

The main benefits of Mentoring For Mentors are:

- collaboration,
- personal development,
- personal satisfaction.

### Mentee

The Mentees are disadvantaged parents not or less involved in their children's academic achievement and well-being at school.

The benefits of Mentoring for mentees are:

- support, encouragement and friendship
- knowledge

- debates/sharing ideas
- constructive feedback
- increase of self-confidence
- reflection.

### 3. MENTORING MODEL FOR PARENTS ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL

**PARENT'R'US** main aim is to support teachers increasing parents' engagement in children's academic achievement and well-being at school by extending their competences throughout an innovative mentoring model approach integrated in a holistic approach achievement

A mentoring model aims at structuring the intervention and support its effectiveness, comparability, and continuous improvement. The model also supports the sustainability in terms of transnational exchange - partners working in common, understandable grounds - and (trans)national replication since other adopters and implementers can approach and ask PARENT'R'US partners to get support on "walking the walk".

For this reason, as for intellectual outputs, PARENT'R'US has developed the following:

- IO1. Systematic evidence review on Mentoring Models to engage disadvantaged parents' in their children schooling
- IO2. Self-Assessment Tool for Mentor Managers
- IO3. Self-Assessment Tool for Mentors
- IO4. Mentoring for Parent Engagement: the course to train the Managers
- IO5. Mentoring for Parent Engagement: the course to train the Mentors
- IO6. Mentoring Model for parent engagement in children's schooling
- IO7. School Parent Engagement Awareness Raising Toolkit

The intellectual output 6 (IO6) focus on a mentoring model that aims to create more effective parental participation – bringing together parents, teachers and community. The main objective is to increase the cooperation between families and schools to improve the parent's active involvement, giving, at the same time, training to teachers in order to facilitate that cooperation. This model was implemented by the PARENT'R'US' partnership in 5 European countries.

The purpose of this document is to guide the schools and other organizations in the implementation process of the mentoring process, focused on improving the level of engagement of parents in their children's schooling, development, and well-being.



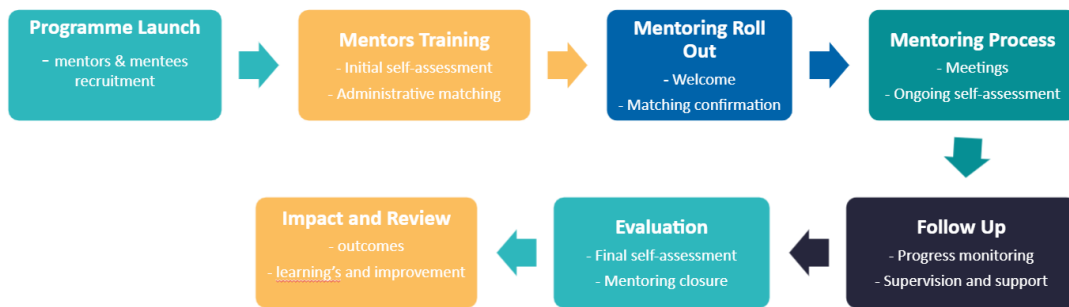
### 3.1. THE MODEL

This is a formal mentoring model, and **its scope is limited to supporting parents with children under the age of 12**. Each partner, each organization or school should adapt the model to their specifics, evaluating for example if they should implement a Peer or Non-peer typology.

	<b>Typology</b>	Peer and Non-peer	This means that mentors can either be or not be related or have common characteristics with the mentees. Each organization should evaluate the best option according to their own needs and population’s characteristics.
	<b>Relationship</b>	1-1	Each mentor can work with 1 mentee or more at a time, though 1 mentor can be paired with more than one mentee, according to the specific needs and characteristics of the persons involved and the mentor’s availability.
	<b>Focus</b>	Goal-oriented and open-ended	This means that the mentoring process has a specific goal to achieve (set by the programme and by each pair), but it can also address collateral situations that can enhance the mentees’ life (if connected with the goal). The goals should be defined by the mentee with the support of the mentor. And not only for the mentor.
	<b>Duration</b>	6 to 9 months	The ideal duration of each pilot is about 6 months. It is recommended that if the mentee would like to continue with the mentoring process, it would be better to change the mentor to avoid a different kind of relationship that could go beyond the limits of the mentoring relationship.
	<b>Format</b>	Face-to-face & Online	<p>The <u>preferred option for a mentoring process is always face-to-face</u>, but due to the restrictions that we have faced of Covid-19, it could be necessary to adjust to an online environment whenever this option is feasible for mentee and mentor. So, when implementing a mentoring process, it is important to have an alternative and to develop strategies to deal to the possibility of the need to transfer the face-to-face model to an online model.</p> <p>The <u>place for mentoring</u> shall be agreed upon by both mentor and mentee, but as a safeguard, it is better to choose an alternative place outside of the school; if this is not possible, mentors’ managers shall try to allocate spaces inside the school that are not used at the time such as the library or cafeteria, or even the open space outside – wherever it is feasible.</p>

### 3.2. PROCESS MAP

The implementation of the mentoring process can be structured into six steps as presented below. Each step covers different activities to accomplish the full structure of the mentoring.



This process map and the explanation of activities within it does not cover the specific strategies addressed to parental engagement; rather the focus of this document is to provide guidelines for the overall process and mentoring model.

### 3.3. GUIDELINES FOR EACH STEP

The following topics provide basic instructions to implement the PAREN'T'R'US mentoring model. Each school or another organization working with parents may adjust all activities into their specific context.

#### 3.3.1. PROGRAMME LAUNCH

- 
- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>WHAT TO DO</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select and train the mentor manager.</li> <li>• Connect with schools and other community organisations to identify people who can perform the role of mentors.</li> <li>• Connect with mentors’ managers and other school’s professionals to identify the potential mentees.</li> <li>• A direct communication can be launched to involve mentor volunteers and mentees into the process.</li> </ul> |
|-------------------|---|

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| SPECIFIC TOOLS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme presentation</li> <li>• Direct communication</li> <li>• Leaflets both in paper or digital version, not forget to consider people with low reading skills</li> <li>• Mentoring registration form (3.3.7. Mentoring Tools – 1.)</li> </ul> |
|----------------|---|
- 

### 3.3.2. TRAINING MENTORS

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| WHAT TO DO     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise the necessary logistics.</li> <li>• The training was prepared for face-to-face, but you may adapt the contents to an online environment, specially to synchronous sessions (if you gather a group of people digitally literate).</li> <li>• Before the training, run the initial self-assessment tool developed within the project to get the profile of your mentors and support their self-reflection.</li> <li>• After the training and based on the attitudes and behaviours of mentors during the activities and exercises, identify who will work with which mentee – this is called administrative matching.</li> </ul> |
| SPECIFIC TOOLS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project materials for mentors, including activities and group dynamics</li> <li>• Self-assessment Tool for Mentors (IO3)</li> </ul>   |
- 

### 3.3.3. MENTORING ROLL-OUT

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| WHAT TO DO     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mentors' managers shall promote the first presentation and welcome for mentors and mentees.</li> <li>• This activity can be done separately with each pair or together with all participants.</li> <li>• It is the official start of the mentoring process and the 'get-to-know' stage.</li> <li>• This lasts for a couple of weeks as there needs to be confirmation that mentor and mentee work well with each other – matching confirmation.</li> <li>• Mentors shall complete the meeting log for each meeting.</li> </ul> |
| SPECIFIC TOOLS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring meeting log (3.3.7. Mentoring Tools – 2.)</li> </ul>   |
- 

### 3.3.4. MENTORING PROCESS

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<b>WHAT TO DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentors and mentees meet regularly.</li> <li>• The frequency of meetings depends on the intensiveness of the programme, but also on the needs and availability of the mentee and the mentor.</li> <li>• The most common frequency is 1 meeting per week, though it can be less.</li> <li>• The duration of each meeting varies according to the needs of the mentee, but the average is 1 to 2 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>SPECIFIC TOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring meeting log (3.3.7. Mentoring Tools – 2.)</li> </ul>

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### 3.3.5. FOLLOW-UP & SUPPORT BY THE MENTOR'S MANAGER

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<b>WHAT TO DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the first days: set up regular calls to each mentor to check-in.</li> <li>• During the entire process: schedule a fixed meeting with the group of mentors to discuss their processes, their cases, challenges and difficulties, and the strategies to use (meetings can be monthly or fortnightly).</li> <li>• The meetings can also be used to reinforce some training contents (recycling).</li> <li>• Half-way of the process, check the progress of the process.</li> </ul>
<b>SPECIFIC TOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training materials</li> <li>• Case discussion methodology</li> <li>• Group dynamics for team building</li> <li>• Mentoring Mid-Term Report – to be completed both by mentor and mentee for 'mirror effect' (3.3.7. Mentoring Tools – 3.)</li> <li>• Mentoring meeting log (3.3.7. Mentoring Tools – 2.)</li> </ul>

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### 3.3.6. MENTORING EVALUATION

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<b>WHAT TO DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor manager, mentor and mentee need to create a moment of closure – like a group activity, a self-reflection.</li> <li>• Measure the results and outcomes of each mentoring process.</li> <li>• Build an analysis of general results of the programme implemented.</li> <li>• Identify areas for improvement for next group of mentees.</li> </ul>
<b>SPECIFIC TOOLS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessment Tool for Mentors (online Tool from IO2)</li> </ul>

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- Mentoring Final Report (3.3.7. Mentoring Tools – 4.)
- Mentoring Reporting Template (Annex 1)

### 3.3.7. MENTORING TOOLS

#### 1) Registration Form



#### Mentoring Registration Form

Name of mentee	Gender	Age	Role with the child	Age of the child
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				

1

## 2) Mentoring Meeting Log



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### Mentoring Meeting Log

Please fill out this form after each meeting you have with each of your mentees.

Mentee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:	Form of meeting (Face-to-face; Telephone; Email; Skype or another web conference tool)	Duration of the meeting - how long it last (hours, minutes)	Write a brief description of what you did during this meeting: (include where you met, activities you did, planned or unplanned, main topics of discussion)	Do you think the session went well? What are the next steps you and your mentee will work on?	Is there any challenge or dilemma you are facing? If YES, please describe it

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3) Mentoring Mid-Term Report



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**Mentoring Mid-Term Report**

Please fill out this form at the mid-term of the mentoring process.

I am a: (put a X)    Mentee     Mentor     Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For how long have you met so far? (months, weeks)			
Do you feel there was any change in the way parent supports the child? (put a X)	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
If Yes, please tell what it is:			
If No, please write the reasons:			
What was the influence of the mentor in this?			

1

For each sentence, tell us if you agree or disagree.				If you choose "Disagree" or "Could be improved", please tell us in what:
	Disagree	Agree	Could be improved	
Mentoring is useful in supporting the relationship between children-parents-school.				
Mentoring helps parents in promoting their children well-being.				
Mentoring motivates parents to keep interacting with school.				
Mentors give confidence to parents in their own assets to help their children's learning.				
Mentoring supports a closer dialogue between parents, school, and community.				



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between parents, school, and community.				
This mentoring process gives a voice of power to parents related to their children's schooling life.				
This mentoring process is an important activity for parents and children to enable school achievement and well-being.				

Please add any other comment you feel necessary:



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## 4) Mentoring Final Report



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#### Mentoring Final Report

Please fill out this form at the end of the mentoring process.

I am a: (put a X) Mentee  Mentor  Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For how long have you met? (months, weeks)		
Do you feel there has been any changes in the collaboration between the parent and the school in supporting the child? (put a X)	YES ___	NO ___
If Yes, please write what it is:		
If No, please write the reasons:		
What was the influence of the mentor in this?		

For each sentence, tell us if you agree or disagree.				If you choose "Disagree" or "Could be improved", please write in what way:
	Disagree	Agree	Could be improved	
This mentoring process is useful in supporting the relationship between children – parents – school.				
This mentoring process helps parents in promoting their children's well-being.				
This mentoring process motivates parents to keep interacting with school.				
My mentor gives me/ As a mentor I give confidence in my/ their own abilities to help my/their children's learning.				
This mentoring process supports a closer dialogue				

between parents, school, and community.				
This mentoring process gives a voice of power to parents related to their children's schooling life.				
This mentoring process is an important activity for parents and children to enable school achievement and well-being.				

Improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	YES	NO
Would you change something in the way that the programme is implemented?		
If you choose YES, please write what we can do better next time:		
What additional information should be provided to new mentors and/or to mentees to make their mentoring relationship a success?		



## School Parent Involvement to Increase Student Achievement

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### THE CHILD

For each statement, tell us if it applies to your situation:	✓	✗	Please write in what way:
	YES	NO	
My child has more confidence.			
My child has more friends.			
My child has more participation in extracurricular school activities.			
My child has a more positive view of the school.			
My child has decreased his/her disruptive behaviours.			
My child is attending school more regularly.			
My child has improved his/her academic success.			



### THE PARENT

For each statement, tell us if it applies to your situation:	✓	✗	Please write in what way:
	YES	NO	
I trust more in my parental skills.			
I feel I have a better relationship with my child.			
I have more confidence in being able to represent my child.			



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I can have a better communication with the school.			
I can collaborate with my child and the school.			
I participate more in extracurricular school activities and/or in decision making.			
I feel the school is a supportive and safe place for me and my child.			
I feel more involved and engaged in school activities.			
I have more meetings with other parents and/ or other people.			
I have learnt new skills during the mentoring process.			



### THE MENTOR

For each statement, tell us if it applies to your situation:	✓	✗	Please write in what way:
	YES	NO	
I have gained more understanding of hardships of parents and children.			
I feel I can help other families.			
I feel I can support and help other mentors.			
I have improved my self-knowledge.			
I have more confidence due to positive feedback from mentee(s).			
I have learnt new skills.			
I felt supported during the mentoring process.			



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### 3.1.8. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the Evidence Review on Mentoring Models (IO1) that was corroborated by the Pilot Implementation of the Model (in the partnership's countries) to engage disadvantaged parents in their children's schooling, the implementation of PARENT'R'US Mentoring Model should take in consideration some recommendations:

**Mentors and mentees should be treated as equals.** Both sides should be open and aim for lifelong learning. While the fact that primarily the mentee is supported by the mentor, the mentor can and should also gain knowledge, experience in the mentoring process. While the mentors and the mentees will have different skills and qualities, the skills of the mentee should be highlighted and built on. In this case mentors need to have the starting point that acknowledges parents as the people responsible for the education of their children, and successful and highly impactful educators. It is also necessary to aim at making home-school relations work better than before. Thus, the **mentoring process should focus on bridging gaps** making collaboration between parents and school smooth and supporting both sides to change practices.

A mentoring program is only going to be successful, **if the school does not expect the families to simply assimilate to the existing system, but they are willing to step out their comfort zone and change too.** The school needs to acknowledge, that practices they are used to might need to be refreshed, or in some cases completely reformed. What worked for previous generations or different students, may not work for the 28 current classes. There are no solutions that fit everyone, the school needs to stay flexible at all times. The teachers and the school staff need mentoring and support, in order to be prepared handling, the parents as partners, and be able to understand and work with the different families.

**Schools also need to understand and acknowledge education done by the parents at home and also consider children's non-formal learning** (e.g. participating at youth organization or church activities). Parents mentored in the course of the project have to be supported to realize that they are doing a good job educating their children and that they are not required to focus on schoolwork as it is not their job to cover for any lack of provision in formal education. Schools and teachers need to learn how they can rely and build on home education and adjust formal education to that.

**The school and mentors should actively reach out to parents and families labelled as 'hard-to-reach'** (or ones they have not yet found the way to reach (Goodall 2017.)), and provide a welcoming space where former and existing bad experiences of parents can be fought. It requires the school and teachers to have an 'outreach mentality', they should not wait for the families to come to them, but explore the reasons why parents might avoid the school, and work on these issues. In order to find a way to 'hard-to-reach' families, the school should be encouraged to use the help of already engaged parents, community leaders, social workers and other professionals. The **basis of the mentoring relationship should be mutual**

**trust and respect between the partners.** This should never be violated, the mentor is obliged to keep the mentormentee confidentiality. Mentees have to be sure, that all the sensitive information, their fears and hopes will not be used against them. Mentors need to be trained, that involving the authorities should be the last option, keeping in mind, that the interests of the child are above all, and in case of their safety is in any danger, the authorities need to be alerted immediately. These families from low socio-economic background may struggle with problems, that they do not dare to share with anybody, fearing that they will lose their children, or get deported. (L.Ritók, 2017).

**A mentor should give full dedication and the best possible support the mentee regardless of their religion, sexual identity, culture, citizenship, status, political views and values.** While during their conversations, different opinions may appear, a mentor should never force her beliefs on the mentee and should respect the differences.

There needs to be a **preliminary agreement on the extent mentors could be involved in home-school relations.** As it is a trustful, professional relationship, mentors should be prepared to be approached by mentees for reasons not strictly related to the mentoring process. For the majority of teachers, it is difficult to communicate with people outside of their social class, and in case of parents with low levels of education they are likely to use vocabulary that alienates these parents even more (L. Ritók 2015.) Mentors may play a facilitator's role between home and school based on this trustful relationship, but it must be agreed on beforehand if this is included in the mentoring process.

The **mentoring program should provide help and solutions, how language/vocabulary barriers can be handled, but at the same time, differences in language and culture should be celebrated and the families empowered** to be able to pass their heritage to their children. In the case of Roma families mentoring may also aim at fostering parents' learning about their own heritage (L. Ritók 2014.) Children should never be made to choose between their families' and the schools' culture or main language, but they should be helped in how to practice both, and built their identity.

The **goals of the mentoring process should be the engagement of parents in the learning of their own children for better learning outcomes, and engagement in school life as a form of active citizenship.** Mentors should not tell parents how to raise their children, shame them for their parental practices, but give them opportunities, tools and courage to participate actively and exercise their rights, as written in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, confidently. The engagement (rather than involvement) approach also means that parents as well as schools need to be empowered to demand and manage change.

In order to keep track of progress, the mentors and mentees should set up goals and measures, but these should go beyond the performance of tests, and grades of the child. The **program should be able to go further than school learning and look for more meaningful**

**home/school interactions.** The evaluation should be mutual and constructive. Mentees should be encouraged to express their doubts, or revulsion concerning the mentor and the mentoring process. Mentees should be motivated to participate actively in the mentoring process, but in case they decide to quit, the possibility should be given, and the reasons carefully examined, in order to avoid future drop-outs. (L.Ritók, 2013).

The **space of mentoring should be a place in which individuals can gain insight into each other's needs**; a place to stop, learn, reflect, connect; where relationships can be strengthened. This may often be outside of the school, to provide a safe space and 30 comfort to those parents who feel frustrated or powerless in a school building, which is often the case with parents coming from a low socio-economic background. The mentors should be willing and open to set their comfort aside, and choose a place where both mentor and mentee feel safe and empowered. It might be a good opportunity for the mentees to present their own environment to the mentor, so she has a better understanding of their way of life.

#### 4. ADDITIONAL GOOD PRACTICES AND CASE STUDIES

In this chapter, we aim to give an overview and highlight the effective contribute and additional good practices that each partner experienced during the Parent'rus Model implementation.

##### IPA – Peer Mentoring

Stichting IPA (Parents International) is established with the mission of supporting parents around the world to become game-changers by helping their children to grow up happy and healthy 21st century citizens. In this way, we believe that it is important to highlight the work done by this partner organization during the mentoring program implementation, due to its experience and expertise working with children and, mostly, parents. As described below, it is possible to understand that IPA had the opportunity to implement a peer mentoring program, showing the benefits of the implementation of a mentoring model like the one developed during Parent'rus project lifetime.

For the implementation of the pilot program, two mentor managers were chosen. One of them works in an elementary school in Salgótarján, the other in an elementary school in Tiszafüred. Both schools have a significant rate of Roma students, more than 50 % of the students are socially disadvantaged and most of the parents are unemployed.

Two teachers were chosen to play the role as mentor managers, because they have participated in another educational program, Future Memory since 2018 and IPA has excellent working relations with them. This educational program involves 12 students in both locations, so the parents of these students were considered as candidates for being mentors. Mentors and mentees were invited to participate in a playful activity in which all mentors talked to all mentees for a few minutes and after that they were asked to indicate their

choices for matching. Based on this, the mentor manager matched the mentors and the mentees and conducted short discussions to finalize the match.

Due to the COVID-restrictions supervision and mentoring of the mentor managers, reporting and discussions that included IPA representative were all done online. However, the mentor managers could meet the mentors face-to-face monthly, and mentors met the mentees face-to-face on a weekly basis or as needed. These meetings were mostly organized in the homes of the participants, as parents could not enter the school buildings due to the COVID-restrictions.

According to the online interviews conducted in May with all the participants (plus some of the children of both the mentors and the mentees) the pilot programme was very successful. The COVID-restrictions caused some strain, as parents could not enter the school building. It was lucky that the participants have known each other beforehand and live relatively close to each other, as mentoring processes could be implemented in each other's homes.

Due to the COVID-restrictions peer mentoring was especially significant, as mentors and their children could help the mentees' children during the online schooling, when most of the schoolteachers struggled to keep in touch. A special highlight of the pilot project was that the children of the mentors spontaneously assumed mentoring roles for the mentees' children, and often they participated in the discussions of the mentors and mentees, providing necessary information on school matters, or even explaining the behaviour of the children to the adults.

The mentor managers acted as go-betweens when some of the schoolteachers were not helpful or supportive enough, thus trying to widen their colleagues' perspectives. During the online schooling, teachers had to rely on the help of the parents, so this pilot programme was especially significant in creating a more respectful, mutually trusting atmosphere that serves the best interest of the children.

All the mentor and mentee participants claimed to be satisfied and felt that they have learnt new ideas about parenting, about their own roles as parents and what it means to be part of the community. They all felt that their relationship with the school improved and felt more confident that they would be able to support their children's education in the future. Three mentees felt that they would like to try to act as mentors in the future. The impact of the pilot was especially significant during the school closure, because the participants were eager to support each other. The mentor managers learnt new methods of parental engagement that they can successfully apply in their everyday jobs.

#### **APROXIMAR – Mentors' Managers' Interviews**

Regarding the covid19 pandemic, in Portugal it was impossible to pilot the whole Model. The period to implement the mentoring program match with the period in which schools were closed and people were confined at home, so it would be mandatory to adapt the mentoring process for an online environment. This situation brought several challenges to implement IO6 pilot action. In Portugal, in distance learning - the new reality of learning for students, teachers and families – many families have faced multiple difficulties regarding to the access to digital tools and also in the field of digital literacy. In line with this, the implementation of a pilot mentoring programme in an online format faced the same challenges; and when

schools reopened, they reopened with many even more pronounced problems, with very little availability for "other answers" or projects, with many issues related to the evaluation of the students, and we quickly reached the end of the school year. After many efforts, we were unable to continue the mentoring process with a mentor and a mentee; we stopped our pilot in the moment of matching.

However, in Portugal, the partner decided to interview 3 Mentors' Managers, who were available to start the mentoring process at any time; in order to understand the impact of the training, what they think about this model, if they consider it an innovative and necessary tool regarding their scholar contexts.

From the conclusions of all interviews, it was possible to understand that besides the implementation of the mentoring model itself, the training action for mentors' managers was an important step to motivate the participants who would play this role – mentors' managers.

All interviewees believe that the online format can have a positive and a less positive impact on participants. In one hand, it would allow to have participants from different parts of the country, but it could compromise the engagement and the motivation, especially for mentees, who could face challenges in participating in a mentoring program through an online format – due to lack of ICT skills, not having access to a computer or internet, etc. The online approach in the implementation of a mentoring program would be more beneficial in the mentors' managers – mentors' relationship, compared to the relationship that would be established between mentors and mentees.

It was interesting to have an interviewed who mentioned that the most vulnerable parents/families are those who the school has been working with for the last years. In recent times, she mentioned that families with more financial resources are those who are less engaged in the school education of their children, due their lack of time and responsibilities. This allows to conclude that there is still a lot of work to do related with parental engagement schools and Parent'r'Us model can be an effective resource, since it can be implemented with different target groups – different kind of families - but working always for the same goal – a better communication between families and schools and, finally, to promote the well-being and the educational success of children.

All of them mentioned that they continue motivated to implement the Parent'r'Us mentoring model in the next schools year(s), and they feel confident that it would have success since they already work with families, so they already established a trust relationship, and it would be easier to recruit mentees.

### **IGAXES – The implementation of the mentoring process**

IGAXES was one of the partner organizations who had the opportunity to implement and test the Parent'r'Us mentoring model. Once the mentoring part itself had begun, joint meetings could not be held due to lack of time for the participants and time differences. That is why it has been done individually, staying separately with coordinators, mentors and mentees.



For both the training and the pilot, the volunteer profile was selected between people who have relation with public schools in the area, in the field of primary education (both teachers and professionals from these schools, as well as families who attend them). To search for volunteers, IGAXES contacted these schools, as well as NGOs, social services and participants from our own organization; prioritizing those who had high levels of absenteeism or difficulties in relations with the school (we knew this information through our experience or that of collaborating entities). Most of the mentees were families that receive economic social aid and are in poverty conditions. There were gypsy families that were proposed above all by the school due to the difficulty that they experienced with them, but with whom it was impossible to meet or contact in order to carry out the pilot. It is important to reinforce that mentees that participated in the IO6 pilot in Spain were all woman, between 30 and 50 years old.

According to the piloting and the mentees, they started the piloting with so many doubts about the process, with no trust. Those who started the pilot were happy with their mentors and the felt understood by them. Each group stablished their meetings between them: the mentors know the recommendable frequency, but they agreed with their mentees attending to their needs.

It was very difficult to involve the mentees in the project because the piloting phase started from a covid situation and also a situation of mistrust. At first, they found it difficult to believe that another family can help them since they are used to professional help (such as social services) so they do not contemplate that another family is going to provide them. In addition, there is also a fear at times that sensitive information will come to light from their homes since they have experienced situations of vulnerability.

Despite all the issues raised due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation and its restrictions, at the mentor and coordinator level, there were many people involved and who participated, (generally people with educational background) who connected well with the mentees assigned to them. Each group stablished their meetings between them: the mentors know the recommendable frequency but they agreed with their mentees attending to their sketchual and their needs.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19, at the mentor and coordinator level, there were many people involved and who participated, (generally people with educational background) who connected well with the mentees assigned to them. As for the mentees, the number was lower than expected due to several reasons related with the pandemic situation, and the difficulty of contacting them.

### **CCF – The training for mentor's managers**

In the case of CCF, we believe that it is important to highlight their work with mentors' managers, due to the experience of this partner organization, both in delivering mentoring training actions and in implementing projects related with mentoring models (e.g. MPATH, a project that worked as a basis for the Parent'r'Us Mentoring model).

CCF together with all Romanian partners (Universitatea Tehnica Cluj-Napoca and Scoala Generala Simion Barnutiu have piloted the Mentor's Manager training course, using an online platform (Zoom) due to protective measures required by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Hence, CFF developed an online educational material for the mentoring process with media sources and various practical/ hands on experiences based on the characteristics of our target group. CCF values the relevance of the theoretical background as a foundation for practice, fostering the acquisition of various skills through exercises and experiences, is crucial for the training process in order to become a mentor manager capable of supporting and enhancing the mentoring process.

The training course was piloted with 21 teachers, who beside their role as teachers are also life skills counsellors. The rationale behind considering this target group was the commitment of these individuals, their connection to the community (children, their families, and various relevant actors), and their willingness to train mentors (teachers, counsellor, and parents) who are directly involved in the life of the community with the goal of facilitating parental engagement in their schools. In their practice as life skills counsellor the participants have already acquired various skills in the relevant areas covered by our training (communication, conflict management, group management, resilience, etc).

Considering the numerous challenges that COVID 19 pandemic created, the training was successfully completed. It provides them with various activities and the knowledge of how to deal with numerous issues that they face in their daily practice and life.

### **BAGAZS - The training for mentors**

Bagázs is a partner organization with wide experience in delivering mentoring programs in their local communities, so they have a lot of expertise in facilitating trainings for mentor's managers and mentors. In this way, we believe that it is important to highlight their experience in implementing a training action for mentors, included in the Parent'r'Us model. Taking this into consideration, Bagázs believes that the individual mentoring is really important for self-development and finding individual goals, finally achieving those. When the BAGázs had start to work with the settlement of Bag, trained more than 20 volunteers as peer-mentors from the settlement, especially mothers, who could help other mothers, who had problems with their children at the school. After that, Bagázs trained several motivated peer- and non-peer mentors over the 10 years of operation of association. In Parent'r'Us project – unfortunately - they could not train peer mentors, since roma parents are mentees. But they trained 3 volunteers, who have been working as mentors of disadvantaged parents. After that, Bagázs trained 10 volunteers, who working as mentors of children and support them in school progress. Finally, this partner organization trained 6 volunteers as mentors.

By September, Bagázs mentioned that their mentors were mentoring 16 disadvantaged parents and they were recruiting other mentees from the settlements for new mentors, who going to complete the training.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, Bagázs was working with small groups because they had less volunteers, but in their experiences, even a few mentors could work with many mentees.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions from national reports (or, at least, most of them) show that the implementation of a mentoring process/program through a digital format is a real challenge due to different reasons, but mainly because most of mentees do not have the necessary resources to be engaged and committed in online mentoring sessions.

Also, partners, and above all, mentors and mentor's managers agree that a face-to-face format gives a better opportunity to establish relationships, specially between mentors and mentees, compared with the digital format.

By implementing a mentoring model like the one that was delivered and piloted in Parent'r'Us, it is important to consider not only the mentoring program itself, but also the steps that are important to have a successful mentoring process. This means that both the partnership and participants from the mentoring pilot agree that it is important to invest in an effective training for mentors and mentor's managers, in order to make them understand their role and the objectives of the mentoring process that they will be "responsible for". Participants from all countries believe that a training with practical exercises and real situations/examples help them to be prepared, confident and, consequently, committed to play their role as mentors or mentors' managers.

The Parent'r'Us partnership agrees that it is important to continue to disseminate the Parent'r'Us mentoring model through local/national schools and other key stakeholders, in order to replicate and benefit from the innovative and useful resources developed during the project lifetime. By implementing a mentoring model with and for parents, we believe that motivation and success of children, especially those who are in a vulnerable situation, will increase and, consequently, the Parent'r'Us Mentoring Model will become a practice delivered in a broader way.

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## ANNEX – MENTORING REPORT TEMPLATE

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- Chapter 1: Organisation and structure of the pilot
  - 1.1 Pilot Mentoring Programme contextualization
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  - 2.1 Pilot Programme evaluation and Outcomes
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  - 2.3. Satisfaction with the Pilot Mentoring Programme
  - 2.4. Results Summary
- Chapter 3: Challenges and final remarks **Erro! Marcador não definido.**

### Chapter 1: Organisation and structure of the pilot

[insert introduction about who is the partner organisation and how it launched the pilot Mentoring Programme, how it is connected to its mission and services – no more than half a page]

#### 1.1. Pilot Mentoring Programme contextualization

[please explain the social context of your participants and the need to implement this pilot on that context]

#### 1.2. Organization of the Pilot Mentoring Programme

[please explain how you selected the participants/ what channels/ how did you disseminate the pilot towards mentor’s coordinators, mentors and mentees; describe when, where and how you implemented the pilot course, if you joined some local partners, if you made any adjustments to initial plans. Complete the table below]

Disclosure of programme	
Referral of candidates	

Candidates' expression of interest	
Candidates' self-assessment	
Candidates' interview (when required)	
Pre-matching	

**1.3. Profile of participants**

[describe using figures and graphics the profile of participants in terms of gender, age, background, employment status: for mentor's coordinators, mentors and mentees]

**1.4. Structure of the Pilot Mentoring Programme**

[please describe how did you structured the pilot Mentoring Programme briefly and complete the table below; explain the matching process; explain number of registration and dropouts, mention the number of participants who complete the full pilot programme]

The training pilot plan for [insert country] stands as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pilot action configuration in [insert country]

Format of the pilot (face-to-face, blended, etc)	
Format of the pilot (peer or non-peer mentoring)	
Duration of the pilot	
Total nr. of mentor's coordinators	
Total nr. of mentor's coordinators who completed the pilot	
Total nr. of mentors	
Total nr. of mentors who completed the pilot	
Total nr. of mentees	
Total nr. of mentees who completed the pilot	
Total nr. of mentoring processes	

**Chapter 2: Results and evaluation**

[Insert a summary of your results, special highlights and an overview of how the pilot Mentoring Programme has run in your country]

**2.1 Pilot Programme evaluation and Outcomes**

[insert a description based on Mentoring mid-term and final report about the mentors and the mentees perceptions towards changes in child's support; for each question, you can report about the specific report answers:]

**2.1.1. Changes in the collaboration between parents and schools in child's support**

**2.1.2. The role of the mentor in the change management**

What was the influence of the mentor in this?			

For each sentence, tell us if you agree or disagree.	Disagree	Agree	Could be improved	If you choose "Disagree" or "Could be improved", please tell us in what way:
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My mentor gives me/ As a mentor I give confidence in my/ their own abilities to help my/their children’s learning.				
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2.1.3. The role of the mentoring process in the change management

For each sentence, tell us if you agree or disagree.	Disagree	Agree	Could be improved	If you choose “Disagree” or “Could be improved”, please tell us in what way:
This mentoring process is useful in supporting the relationship between children – parents – school.				
This mentoring process helps parents in promoting their children’s well-being.				
This mentoring process motivates parents to keep interacting with school.				
This mentoring process supports a closer dialogue between parents, school, and community.				
This mentoring process gives a voice of power to parents related to their children’s schooling life.				
This mentoring process is an important activity for parents and children to enable school achievement and well-being.				

2.2. Progress of Participants’ Competences

[describe how mentees and mentors perceive the impact of the monitoring process in their lives]

2.2.1. The perception of the mentee

[describe how mentees perceive the impact of the monitoring process in their role as parents and in the child relationship with school too; use graphics from the general results to show the mentees’ perception, draw conclusions to the figures presented. Insert a description based on Mentoring final report’s questions:]

 THE CHILD

For each statement, tell us if it applies to your situation:	YES	NO	Please write in that way:
My child has more confidence.			
My child has more friends.			
My child has more participation in extracurricular school activities.			
My child has a more positive view of the school.			
My child has decreased his/her disruptive behaviours.			
My child is attending school more regularly.			
My child has improved his/her academic success.			

 THE PARENT

For each statement, tell us if it applies to your situation:	YES	NO	Please write in that way:
I trust more in my parental skills.			
I feel I have a better relationship with my child.			
I have more confidence in being able to represent my child.			
I can have a better communication with the school.			
I can collaborate with my child and the school.			
I participate more in extracurricular school activities and/or in decision making.			
I feel the school is a supportive and safe place for me and my child.			
I feel more involved and engaged in school activities.			
I have more meetings with other parents and/ or other people.			

 **THE CHILD**

I have learnt new skills during the mentoring process.			
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**2.2.2. The perception of the mentor**

[describe how mentors perceive the impact of the monitoring process in their role as mentors; use graphics from the general results of the self-assessment to show the mentors’ perception, draw conclusions to the figures presented. Insert a description based on Mentoring final report’s questions:]

 **THE MENTOR**

For each statement, tell us if it applies to your situation:	YES	NO	Please write in that way:
I have gained more understanding of hardships of parents and children.			
I feel I can help other families.			
I feel I can support and help other mentors.			
I have improved my self-knowledge.			
I have more confidence due to positive feedback from mentee(s).			
I have learnt new skills.			
I felt supported during the mentoring process.			

**2.3. Satisfaction with the Pilot Mentoring Programme**

[insert a description of the results of “Improvements” – for mentors and mentees - in the Mentoring Final Report, insert a summary of the suggestions made by participants and insert some quotes to provide examples]

Improvements	YES	NO
Would you change something in the way that the programme is implemented?		
If you choose YES, please write what we can do better next time:		
What additional information should be provided to new mentors and/or to mentees to make their mentoring relationship a success?		

**2.4. Results Summary**

[describe the main results you have achieved, according the numbers that you have presented before]

**Chapter 3: Challenges and final remarks**

[describe any constraints and challenges you have faced to implement the pilot Monitoring Programme in your country and the final remarks you may leave for future adoption; consider the main challenges to implement the Model defined at the beginning and the Process Map]



parent'r'us

