An evaluation of the ORIENT8 social mentoring program

Marije Reidsma & Peter De Cuyper

Orient8

KU LEUVEN HIVA

RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR WORK AND SOCIETY

AN EVALUATION OF THE ORIENT8 SOCIAL MENTORING PROGRAM

Marije Reidsma & Peter De Cuyper
Project management: Peter De Cuyper

The content of this report represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

1 | Introduction

ORIENT8 is a social mentoring program supported by smart digital tools and tailored activities. The project ran from January 2021 to December 2022. By connecting third-country nationals with volunteers of the local community, it aimed to improve the social orientation of newcomers, promote exchanges between newcomers and the host society, and improve transnational cooperation and knowledge among practitioners. Funded by the European Union's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the program was implemented in three European municipalities: Mechelen (Belgium), Nikaia-Agios Ioannis Rentis (Greece), and Sala (Sweden). Other partners were Beyond the Horizon ISSG vzw (project manager) and HIVA-KU Leuven (scientific partner).

At the onset of the project, HIVA-KU Leuven had developed guidelines to implement a social mentoring program for newcomers. During the course of the project, these guidelines have been tested by the three participating municipalities. The present document contains an evaluation of the guidelines: what worked and what did not work. These insights were integrated into the final version of the guidelines.[1] The report further contains an evaluation of the impact the program had on various involved actors, such as the mentor and mentee. While the project's main output also consisted of a Welcome Application and a Smart Matching Tool, we will focus only on the social mentoring program itself.

This evaluation report consists of the following elements: first, the theoretical framework for the evaluation will be discussed. Chapter 3 contains the evaluation of the *efficiency* of the program, referring to the guidelines mentioned above. The next chapter evaluates the program in terms of its *effectivity*, referring to the changes/impact it had on the mentors, mentees, the organization that ran the program, and other actors who were directly or indirectly involved. Finally, the most important findings are summarized in the conclusion.

---

1   Crijns & De Cuyper (2023). *Towards effective social mentoring practices for migrant newcomers: a research-informed and practitioner-approved good practice guide*. HIVA-KU Leuven.

2 | Evaluation approach

2.1 Evaluation framework

An evaluation is a normative analysis of a certain social fact, policy process, or process of a particular program.[2] It contains certain criteria or standards to evaluate. A (minimal) evaluation framework is the deconstruction of the policy process in elements that can be evaluated. It also defines the criteria to evaluate the program. The policy process with evaluation criteria is described in figure 2.1. Every policy or program stems from certain needs or problems, which form the starting point of the policy process. For example, applied to the ORIENT8 project, newcomers are isolated in our city or society. While the program is being developed, certain goals are defined: we want newcomers to be less isolated in our society. Starting from these goals, an intervention is developed. This intervention consists of inputs (mentoring program, funding, mentees, mentors who carry out the mentoring program, etc.) that lead to outputs (matches, finished trajectories). The intervention needs to have an effect or in other words make a difference in outcomes (e.g. newcomers know more people than they did before the intervention).

We can relate the evaluation criteria to these different stages in the process. If we want to evaluate the relationship between needs, problems and goals, this is called the evaluation of relevance (i.e. does the program that we developed answer to the needs of the target group [newcomers]?). If we want to evaluate the relationship between the intervention itself and the goals, this is called the evaluation of coherence (i.e. can the goals be reached with the designed intervention?). If we want to evaluate the relation between the mentoring program and its outputs, this is called the evaluation of technical efficiency. If we want to evaluate the relation between the goals and the effects of the program, this is called the evaluation of effectiveness (i.e. does ORIENT8 lead to less isolation, a better orientation, etc.?).

---

2   Gonzalez Garibay, M. & De Cuyper, P. (2013). *An evaluation framework for the Flemish integration policies.* Antwerp: Steunpunt Inburgering en Integratie.

Figure 2.1   Policy process with evaluation criteria
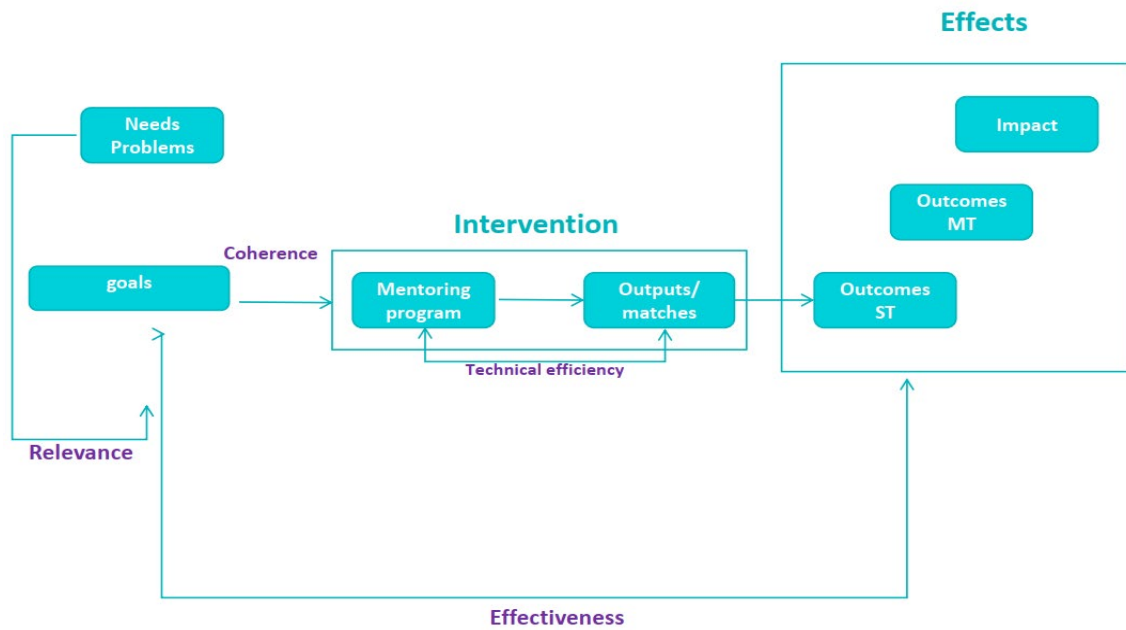
Source Gonzalez Garibay & De Cuyper (2013)

Within the ORIENT8 project framework, we will focus on the evaluation of the **efficiency[3]** and **effectiveness[4]** of the mentoring program. As for efficiency, we can discern two types:
- **cost-effectiveness** is the relationship between policy inputs (the monetary cost of the mentoring program) and the effects. In other words, an evaluation of the efficiency asks the question: how much does it cost to make a match, to fund a finalized trajectory, ..., and judges whether the cost is reasonable with regard to the policy outcomes;
- **technical efficiency** is the best possible ratio between inputs and outputs or, in other words, the maximization of outputs for a given level of inputs. This is about the mentoring process itself. For instance, there may be multiple ways of recruiting mentors and mentees and in the evaluation phase, you may look at which one is the best.

We mainly focused on technical efficiency within the remits of ORIENT8. Concretely, we bring the initial guidelines for social mentoring programs for newcomers - a key deliverable of the program - into practice and we will learn what works and what does not work. When it comes to effectiveness, we did not have substantial data that can offer insights in terms of effectivity, since few mentoring relationships had already concluded by the end of the ORIENT8 project.

2.2   Methodology
In order to reflect on the guidelines and whether they 'worked' or not, several online 'reflection meetings' and a two-day evaluation workshop with the program coordinators were held to discuss and evaluate the efficiency of the social mentoring program. Topics included (1) the recruitment, screening and selection of mentors and mentees, (2) the matching process, (3) the mentoring relationship, follow-up and closure, (4) training and group activities, and (5) the governance of the program.

---

3   Efficiency refers to the way in which inputs are combined in order to produce outputs (matches, mentoring trajectories, etc.). It can refer either to the relationship between inputs and outputs (cost-effectiveness) or to the way in which inputs are combined during the policy process in order to obtain a certain output (technical efficiency).

4   Effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention realizes the goals for which it was created.

As for the effectivity of the program, HIVA-KU Leuven identified various domains of expected change/effects associated with social mentoring projects,[5] two of which are in accordance with the goals of ORIENT8:

- **social networking; bonding and bridging:** social mentoring projects can add to the fact that newcomers meet new people and build social relationships within and between various social groups;
- **societal participation (and orientation):** newcomers get to know the city and make more use of its opportunities (places, organizations, activities, services, etc.).

In order to evaluate the effectivity of the social mentoring program, the evaluation focused on the effects on mentees in the domains mentioned above. Two questionnaires have been developed in order to measure the effects: one would be asked to the mentees at the very beginning of the program, and the other after the mentoring relationship had ended. However, the number of matches made within the program laid far behind the initial target, and as a consequence, the response to the survey was very low. Therefore, the effectivity of the program could not be assessed. To get an idea of the impact nonetheless, we included an exercise in the evaluation workshop where the coordinators could map the effects/impact of the social mentoring program on various stakeholders.

---

5   For an overview of all domains of expected change, see De Cuyper, P., Vandermeerschen, H., Van Ongevalle, J., & Briones Alonso, E. (2021). *Hoe kan het sociaal netwerk en participatietraject de integratie van nieuwkomers ondersteunen? Een monitoring- en evaluatiekader voor de vierde pijler inburgering.* Leuven: HIVA-KU Leuven.

3 | The efficiency of the ORIENT8 social mentoring program

The evaluation will first focus on the efficiency of the social mentoring program implemented in the three municipalities, by screening the program's *process*. In order to do so, the initial version of the guidelines for social mentoring programs for newcomers[6] and its implementation into a concrete mentoring program within ORIENT8 have been used as the starting point. In ongoing reflection meetings, the three municipalities were asked how the guidelines were exactly implemented and whether they worked well. In the final evaluation workshop, a concluding exercise was conducted by asking the municipalities whether they fully implemented the guideline (green in the tables below), partly implemented the guideline (orange), or did not implement the guideline (red). In case they did not fully implement the guideline, additional questions were asked on why they chose not to do so and whether they used any alternative to the guideline.

3.1 Recruitment, screening and selection of mentors and mentees

Table 3.1 Guidelines concerning recruitment strategies

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should use recruitment channels that are most suitable for their target group and context. It is recommended that programs use a variety of recruitment channels to attract a diverse group of candidates and improve the sustainability of the program. A mix of passive/active, internal/external, and general/targeted strategies is recommended. Programs should refrain from relying solely on word-of-mouth recruitment.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs should develop a variety of promotional materials that are made readily available to the target group and referrers, online and/or via physical materials such as posters, flyers, and brochures. Promotional materials should be updated and redistributed when needed.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ If programs (want to) use referrals as one of their recruitment strategies, they should:			
➢ Maintain (informal) partnerships with other organizations and services who are in contact with the target group(s) of the program.	🟩	🟩	🟩
➢ Ask referrers to inform potential candidates about the program, show them promotional materials, and obtain their permission to initiate the application process.	🟩	🟩	🟩
➢ Keep referrers informed about the program and communicate any changes to its participation or selecting criteria or other key aspects of the program in a timely manner.	🟧	🟩	🟧

---

6 Crijns & De Cuyper (2022). *Towards effective mentoring practices for migrant newcomers. Guidelines for social mentoring programs for newcomers* (first edition). HIVA-KU Leuven.

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
➢ Provide referrers with promotional materials to attract the target group and help them to explain the program to interested candidates before referring them to the program.	Orange	Green	Orange
➢ Supplement referrals with other recruitment strategies to effectively reach the intended target group.	Red	Orange	Orange
❖ Programs should use simple, visual tools, clear language, and translation tools to explain the purpose of social mentoring, the specificities of the program, and the role of mentor and mentee to ensure participants enter the program with appropriate expectations.	Green	Green	Green
❖ Depending on the needs of the mentees, the mentors are expected to assist them in some of the following areas:			
➢ Facilitating and accelerating their orientation on the knowledge of the new local environment.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Integrating mentees to the host community and improve their network in the municipality.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Supporting to deal with their daily life problems such as administrative procedures and education, health, housing, employment issues by providing general information or directing to professionals.	Green/Orange	Green	Green/Orange
➢ Practicing the local language.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Sharing the 'ways, customs and habits' of the new society (without patronizing).	Green	Green	Green
❖ ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Program is searching for newcomers who are motivated to:			
➢ Integrate in their host community.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Enlarge their network.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Learn the history, landscape, culture and popular tendencies of its people.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Learn how to handle their daily life problems in their new community.	Green/Orange	Green	Green

Regarding the **recruitment of mentors and mentees**, the guidelines were followed to a large extent. Only when it comes to referrals, not all (sub)guidelines have been implemented. The guideline of distributing promotional materials to partners, for example, has only partially been followed by the projects in Mechelen and Nikaia-Rentis. In Mechelen, the reasoning behind not entirely following this guideline is that early in the project it turned out that specifically for potential mentees a flyer does not work that well to inform them about the project. What worked best to recruit **mentees** was to actively reach out to them, e.g. through the Dutch course or through organizations that work with newcomers. In Nikaia-Rentis best practices for recruiting mentees were similar, namely visiting organizations and shelters that work with refugees. They also launched a more focused call toward the Ukrainian community through an intermediary. It remained a challenge, however, to convince newcomers to participate in the program. Potential explanations are changing legislation and uncertainty about the newcomers' duration of stay in Greece. The project team in Sala relied mostly on attending Swedish language classes and events in order to recruit mentees, also using a face-to-face approach. In this municipality as well it was a challenge to recruit mentees.

The most successful recruiting strategy for **mentors** in Mechelen and Sala turned out to be similar: in Mechelen information about the program was published in their city magazine, and in Sala the program was advertised in local newspapers as well. However, in Sala it proved very difficult to retain

mentors, as potential candidates tended to drop out after finding out what it entails to be a mentor. It thus seems that the advertisements for the program gave rise to differing expectations in this respect. They also approached volunteer organizations and distributed flyers and folders, but those strategies did not yield the desired results as well. In Nikaia-Rentis, then, it proved to be rather easy to recruit mentors. Best practices consisted of utilizing networks with universities and colleges and calling out to the community on behalf of the municipality.

Table 3.2   **Guidelines concerning the participation criteria and the intake procedure of mentors and mentees**

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should have clear participation criteria that align with the objectives of the program.			
➢ For mentors: expectations, personality, motivation, age, language skills, place of residence, and availability and ability to commit to the program.			
➢ For mentees: language skills, age, place of residence, immigration status, motivation, expectations, availability, and ability to commit to the program, and absence of more immediate needs that require professional assistance.			
❖ Programs should schedule one-on-one intake interviews with potential candidates and document their information on a standardized intake form.			
❖ Programs should ensure that candidates are properly informed about the program during the screening and selection phase. This includes setting the right expectations and explaining their role in a mentoring relationship, the steps and goals of a mentoring relationship and the program, and the assistance they can expect from the organization. This can be done during the one-on-one intakes or during information sessions in group-format.			

The **participation criteria** have partly been followed by the three municipalities. All programs used participation criteria, but some criteria were higher ranked than others and this ranking could differ between participants as well. Important criteria for both the mentor and mentee are motivation and expectations, while the ability to commit to the program for the full duration was seen as less important as long as the participants were motivated to participate. Mechelen added that particularly for Ukrainian mentees language skills were also an important participation criterion.

Nikaia-Rentis stated that they followed the guidelines on **one-on-one intake interviews** only in part. While they did conduct individual intake interviews with the candidates, it was not that much standardized as stipulated in the guideline.

The last guideline in the table above refers to **information and expectation management**. While all three municipalities followed the guideline, only Nikaia-Rentis felt that they effectively succeeded in managing the participants' expectations. Their approach was to explain the program using concrete 'everyday' examples of what the program could and could not do, such as that the organization could help mentees to find Greek lessons, but that the mentor him- or herself is not a teacher or someone who can offer Greek lessons. For the potential mentees, this explanation was given during the recruitment presentations, and for the mentors during the training course. Nikaia-Rentis also set up a written contract that both parties have to sign, which helps to be clear toward potential candidates on what to expect from the program and the other part of the duo. It also helps in setting boundaries. The contract stipulates, for example, the hours that the mentee may contact the mentor and that it is

not allowed to exchange money or gifts. As a result, potential candidates were already well-informed before deciding to join the program and could make a well-informed decision on whether or not to participate. Sala, on the other hand, experienced a rather large dropout of both mentors and mentees. Mentors, as mentioned above, were deterred by the expectations set by the program organizer. Mentees, on the other hand, had (too) high expectations themselves. One concrete example is that one mentee expected the mentor to find the mentee a job, an expectation the mentor could not fulfill. Mechelen also experienced some issues concerning expectation management. While they followed the same approach as Nikaia-Rentis, i.e. giving concrete examples of what a mentor is and which activities could be done together based on other mentors' and mentees' experiences (for example: a mentor is not someone to assist the mentee with homework or help to find a house, but rather to make walks together in the city), mentees still sometimes crossed the mentors' boundaries. As such, while the guideline helps programs to actively focus on the topic of expectation management and include it in their recruiting process, the implementation does not always yield the desired results.

Table 3.3   Guidelines concerning the participation criteria for mentors and mentees

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Mentor selection criteria:			
➢ To be an adult (18 years old).	Green	Green	Green
➢ Being a long-time resident.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Following the program in its entirety (4 or 6 months).	Green/Orange	Green	Green
➢ Allocating at least 1 hour for the meetings (2 or 3 times a month based on the duration of the program).	Green	Green	Green
➢ Participating in the mentor training program.	Green/Orange	Green	Green
➢ Attending the city specific tailored activities with her/his mentee.	Green/Orange	Green	Orange
➢ Having the motivation to assist TCNs in integrating her/his community and empowering them to tackle their daily problems.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Holding sufficient soft skills such as being patient, discreet, tolerant, good listener, reliable, committed, non-judgmental.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Preferably holding a wide social network to which her/his mentee can be introduced (*optional criterion*).	Green	Orange	Orange
❖ Mentee selection criteria:			
➢ To be an adult (18 years old).	Green	Green	Green
➢ Being a newcomer, i.e. resident for less than 5 years.	Green	Orange	Orange
Following the program in its entirety (4 or 6 months).	Green/Orange	Orange	Orange
➢ Allocating at least 1 hour for the meetings (2 or 3 times a month based on the duration of the program).	Green	Orange	Green
➢ Participating in the mentee training program.	Green/Orange	Green	Green
➢ Attending the city specific tailored activities with her/his mentee.	Green/Orange	Orange	Orange
➢ Having the motivation to be part of the community in which she/he lives.	Green	Green	Green
➢ Language skills which enables proper communication with the mentor.	Green	Green	Green

As for the **selection criteria** for mentors and mentees, the criteria within the ORIENT8 project were rather strict. Most criteria were entirely followed by the three municipalities, and many were also partly followed. In all three municipalities, a time frame for the duration of the program was chosen (either four or six months, with the exception of Ukrainian refugees in Mechelen where no initial duration was set), but they implemented some flexibility as well in case either the mentee or mentor were not able to complete those months, for example, due to a pregnancy or planned holidays. In all three municipalities, the guideline regarding the expected allocated time by mentors and mentees was followed as well - with the exception of Nikaia-Rentis which partly followed this guideline for mentees, as they let it depend on the objective of the duo -, although in Sala the frequency of meetings determined by ORIENT8 was considered too high by many mentors and mentees. In Mechelen and Nikaia-Rentis the frequency did not pose any issues. In fact, in Mechelen it was noticed that the duos were even more often in contact than twice a month.

In conclusion, the evaluation has shown the importance of face-to-face contact in order to recruit mentees. Promotional materials could be useful, but should always be supplemented with a more personal approach. While the motivation to participate is considered a very important selection criterion, this is less the case for the ability to commit to the program for the full stipulated duration: the municipalities would be flexible if participants were not able to complete the full program. Finally, the evaluation put forward the need for a clear framework regarding expectation management and the necessity of keeping this item 'active' during the entire trajectory.

3.2 Matching

Table 3.4   Guidelines concerning the matching procedure

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should use matching criteria that align with their objectives. Common criteria include: (1) the mentee's needs, goals, and expectations, (2) the mentor's offer and expectations, (3) the mentor's skills and professional background, (4) the mentor's general knowledge, (5) interests and hobbies, (6) language skills, (7) availability and time commitment, (8) geographical location, (9) age, (10) gender, (11) family, (12) attitudes and preferences, and (13) personality.	orange	green	green
❖ Programs should decide which criteria are most important for their program and/or each candidate and prioritize those when it is not possible to use all criteria.	orange	green	green
❖ Programs should ask participants about their matching preferences and take them into consideration as much as possible.	green	green	green
❖ Programs should allow the program coordinator or other staff member to do the matching between mentors and mentees.	green	green	green
❖ The coordinators should inform the duos on the matching and provide general information of the pair. The duos have a right to accept the match or not, based on the general information they have. In case one of them rejects the matching, the coordinators will make their best for another match, taking into consideration the rationale of the rejection.	green	green	green
❖ Programs should try to match candidates within a few weeks after their intake, but preferably as soon as possible to avoid losing potential participants.	green/red	orange	orange

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should inform candidates if there is no (immediate) match available and let them decide if they would like to accept an alternative match that does not entirely fit their preferences or wait for a better match.	(green)	(green)	(green)
❖ Once candidates have been matched, programs should invite them for a first meeting together with the coordinator.	(green/red)	(green)	(green)
❖ Programs should offer a rematch if a mentoring relationship ends prematurely unless the reason for termination is cause for excluding someone from the mentoring program entirely.	(green)	(green)	(orange)
❖ If a candidate is not matched for a certain period of time, she/he should be redirected to other volunteering program, if they also wish so.	(blank)	(orange)	(red)

All municipalities acknowledged the importance of **matching criteria** (and their prioritization) **and objectives**, and used them in their program. They stressed the importance of taking the mentors' and mentees' objectives into account in the matching process, as well as the mentors' and mentees' ranking of matching criteria in terms of importance. Some matching criteria turned out to be rather abstract for mentees and to a lesser extent for mentors. It was difficult for some mentees, for example, to answer what their interests are. Moreover, hobbies and interests can be quite country- and culture-dependent. The most important matching criteria differed between the municipalities and also between newcomers in general and Ukrainian refugees.

In Mechelen, two distinct matching procedures have been used that answer to the different needs of the 'general' newcomers and Ukrainian mentees, and as such, they also took different matching criteria into account. Interests/personality and age were the most important matching criteria for general newcomers, and it differed from person to person which criteria were taken into account. In the case of Ukrainian refugees, the social mentoring program was more focused on resolving practical issues, and as such, the intake interview with the mentee focused more on the mentees' needs than on their general profile. For the matching procedure, then, the criteria of language skills, proximity and expectations/motivation were mainly used. Mentors were also asked about their interests in the intake interview, but this was not considered a 'main' matching criterion.

In Nikaia-Rentis the focus lied on age, (especially in the beginning) experience in working with socially disadvantaged people, gender and personality, although it was mentioned that personality is rather difficult to use as it is not so much an objective criterion.

In Sala, then, 'general' newcomers were mainly matched based on their interests. For Ukrainian refugees, on the other hand, personality and cultural understanding were more important criteria.

Nonetheless, it is possible that the mentor and/or mentee do not agree with the match. In that case, all three municipalities allowed the candidates to reject a match and be considered for another match. It can also happen that a match looks good on paper, but does not work out well in reality. A particular problem encountered in Sala, was that motivated mentors lose their motivation to participate in the program due to mentees with a rather challenging profile (e.g. mentees with a trauma).

A quick **speed of matching** is a guideline that the municipalities agree with, but that turned out to be rather difficult to implement. In Nikaia-Rentis, for example, there was no lack of mentors that expressed their interest in participating in the program. The challenge, however, was to keep them engaged while the program was recruiting mentees.

Another guideline that the municipalities agreed with in principle, but could be challenging in reality, was the **first meeting together with the coordinator**. Sala supports this guideline, as questions can be asked and answered during this meeting. Mechelen mentioned, however, that due to agenda issues, it was not always possible to arrange a meeting with the three parties in the short term. Especially in the Ukrainian context this happened several times. In fact, the program for Ukrainian refugees differed from the 'general' program in that the matched mentor would contact the mentee directly. Some mentors also expressed criticism towards having to come to Mechelen for a face-to-face meeting. In some cases, the municipality then resorted to a telephone or online meeting. Nikaia-Rentis, then, sees the presence of the coordinator in the first meeting as an additional opportunity to remind the participants of the objectives and agreements made in the recruitment and selection phase. It would give a sense of security as well. Also in this municipality it turned out to be rather challenging, though, to arrange a meeting soon after the matching took place.

We can conclude that the main challenge regarding the matching process is to not lose momentum when no match can be made in a timely manner, due to a lack of (suitable) candidates to match a potential participant with. Currently, the guidelines offer no solution for this issue. Pathways that could be explored, are the offer of trainings or the organization of group events in order to keep the potential participants engaged. Finally, there was a consensus to adjust the guideline on the first meeting together with the coordinator by adding that this meeting could also take place online or by phone call.

3.3   Mentoring relationship, follow-up and closure

Table 3.5   Guidelines concerning the (organization of the) mentoring relationship

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should have a clearly defined mentoring duration (e.g., six months) that can be extended upon request.	🟥	🟧	🟩
❖ Programs should set expectations in terms of contact frequency (e.g., at least twice a month).	🟧	🟩	🟧
❖ Programs should schedule a first meeting with the mentor, mentee, and coordinator before the mentoring relationship starts. If the mentee was referred to the program, the referrer should also be invited to the meeting.	🟧	🟧	🟩
❖ Programs should use this first meeting to reiterate the main objectives of the program, their expectations, and the role of the mentor.	🟧	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs should have duos schedule their next meeting during this first meeting to prevent early dropout.	🟧	🟧	🟧
❖ Programs should give both participants an opportunity to decline the match after the first meeting.	🟩	🟧	🟩
❖ The coordinator should leave the duos alone for a short period of time in order to let them know each other better, keep the conversation going and come to a mutual understanding for practices.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ The coordinators collect feedback from the duos and try to verify whether the mentoring relationship is going well and if it is a good 'match'. If this is not the case, the program provides a possibility to end the mentoring relationship and makes a rematch. This feedback is expected at the end of the first month.	🟩	🟩	🟩

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Some municipalities can launch monthly iterative program as duos matched in order to reach the KPIs, whereas others can opt to conclude one cycle and launch the other afterwards.	🟩	🟧	🟧
❖ To get the most out of the meetings, duos should meet face-to-face, yet in exceptional circumstances, online meetings can take place.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ The relationship between a mentor and mentee is prone to asymmetry and paternalism. Coordinators should emphasize the importance of equity and the benefits of such an environment.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs should let participants decide what activities they want to do but set expectations at the beginning of the relationship and provide an overview of acceptable (and unacceptable) activities.	🟩/🟧	🟧	🟧
❖ Programs should provide suggestions for activities, for example via a newsletter or activity calendar.	🟩	🟧	🟧
❖ Programs may seek partnerships with local businesses and organizations to arrange free tickets or coupons for activities for their participants.	🟩	🟧	🟧
❖ Programs should inform mentors that they will be expected to take initiative, especially at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, but that, over time, decisions should be made collaboratively.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs may facilitate communication between the mentor and professional assistance when necessary to agree on a clear division of tasks and responsibilities, set boundaries, and avoid conflict during the mentoring relationship.	🟩	🟩	🟩

Regarding the **practical arrangements and take-off of the relationship**, the three municipalities displayed some level of flexibility. As mentioned before, a clearly defined duration was communicated toward the participants, but abandoned when this duration was not feasible for a duo. The same holds for the frequency of contact between the mentor and mentee, where the municipalities had different experiences. They do all agree, however, that the minimum duration for a meaningful trajectory depends on the objectives and expectations of both the program and the duo. We also already stated that in practice it was not always possible to arrange a meeting with the three (or four, if the mentee was referred to the program) parties at the beginning of the relationship. In Nikaia-Rentis, the representative of the referring organization was generally not invited to the first meeting. All three municipalities considered this first meeting useful, as it gives an additional opportunity to set expectations right. Also, the presence of the coordinator ensures that the mentee and mentor know that the person is there to help. Nonetheless, the municipalities stated that organizing such a meeting was only feasible due to the low number of matches, and that it would be challenging to maintain this moment of contact in case the number of matches would go up. As for arranging the duos' next meeting during the first meeting, the municipalities tried to follow the guideline but encountered some rather practical difficulties: one or both participants did not bring their agenda, did not know when they would return from holidays, … In Nikaia-Rentis, they therefore implemented the practice that the mentor would call the mentee within three or four days to schedule a meeting. The municipalities agree that giving such a basic timeframe would work better instead of having the duos schedule their next appointment during the first meeting.

All municipalities used to leave the duos alone for a short period of time, follow up on whether the match worked (and if not, give an opportunity to be rematched), emphasize the importance of face-to-face meetings and emphasize equity in the relationship. A specific matching pace, i.e. launching a new cycle every month or first concluding a cycle before starting another), was not chosen by the programs. Instead, they matched whenever a possibility for a match came up.

The three municipalities differ to some extent in the way they communicate about (acceptable) **activities** and the focus of those activities. In Mechelen, activities are mostly situated in the area of leisure: making a walk through the city, shopping, going for a bike ride, … Ukrainian refugees would get more practical and emotional support, depending on their needs. The municipality orally clarified the difference between a social assistant and a buddy, and also provided an oral overview of potential activities. On their website, it is stated as well what it means to be a mentor (and what not). In Nikaia-Rentis, on the other hand, the topic of acceptable activities was part of the mentors' training program. Some examples of acceptable and non-acceptable activities were given, and as such the examples were not repeated again in the first meeting with both the mentor and mentee. In Sala, the activities undertaken were more work-related.

Social mentoring programs can also start partnerships with local organizations to expand the offer of activities. This was the case in Mechelen, where partnerships with leisure organizations were set up. In Nikaia-Rentis, partnerships remained limited to providing practical assistance to the program, such as providing a room for a group meeting with mentors and mentees. In Sala, no fruitful collaborations were established. While they tried to start a partnership with sports organizations, the latter dropped out at the time of the matching or the mentees were not interested anymore. The COVID pandemic also made it more challenging to start partnerships for activities.

Recurring **expectation management** is considered very important by all three municipalities in reducing the chance of negative experiences by both the mentor and mentee. Besides giving a clear overview of suitable and acceptable activities and defining the boundaries of social mentoring - whether in individual intake interviews or in group trainings -, when applicable, the municipalities also provided the opportunity for the mentor to get in touch with the external professional who assists the mentee (e.g. a social worker) in order to align their support.

Table 3.6   Guidelines concerning the follow-up of the mentoring relationship

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should offer proactive follow-up at regular intervals to inquire about the progress of the relationship, any difficulties, and questions.			
❖ Programs should provide follow-up to both mentor and mentee (by one fixed coordinator).			
❖ Programs should have at least one in-person follow-up moment during the mentoring period.			
❖ Programs should have a monitoring mechanism in place and ask duos to share their progress and activities regularly.			
❖ Programs should be accessible and easily approachable to all participants. The coordinator should be easy to reach and talk to and readily available for help and advice.			
❖ Programs should recognize the achievements of mentors so as to strengthen mentors' commitment to the program and improve retention rates.			

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ The program should provide support for the duos in line with the results of follow-up activities. Support activities might include:			
➢ i. Expert advice from coordinators or other professionals.			
➢ ii. Providing documentation, publication, web-based resources.			
➢ iii. Directing to experienced mentors.			
➢ iv. Organizing gatherings for experience exchange to help duos address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.			
❖ The coordinators may think of creating a networking and experience sharing environment for mentors in digital space (Facebook or WhatsApp groups).			
❖ Coordinators should be ready to step in when the mentor, even with good intentions, takes on tasks which are supposed to be handled by professionals.			
❖ In case of a conflict or need that needs handling before the relationship can continue, programs should intervene and schedule a meeting with both or one of the participants of a mentoring relationship. In case of early termination, the coordinator should figure out whether the motivation of the pairs still exist and rematch those who have the desire to continue in the program. For the others, the coordinators shall redirect them to other volunteering program.			

The guidelines in the table above concern the **follow-up** of the social mentoring relationship by the organizing program. One general concern of the municipalities is that they initially underestimated the needed time investment after a match has been made: in most cases, a strict follow-up is needed. Despite this underestimation, the municipalities followed the guidelines to a large extent. In Nikaia-Rentis it was not always possible for the coordinating team to meet the mentor and mentee in person during the follow-up period, but they were constantly in touch through other communication channels (such as telephone calls). While they did not have a structured platform for monitoring the relationship, they did have a communication mechanism. Mechelen would also arrange the follow-up mostly by phone calls. Emails were mainly used to inform the duos about city-specific workshops. In this municipality, they were focused on building up a relationship of trust, but not in a fixed or structured manner. In general, the municipalities are not convinced that follow-up meetings always have to be face-to-face: online video calls or regular phone calls can also be as effective. Recognition of the mentors' achievements was part of the follow-up in all three municipalities, but in a rather informal way. They would have a follow-up phone call or meeting to let the mentors know they were doing a great job.

All municipalities also set up a **digital space** for mentors to get in touch with one another, although the success of these initiatives varied. In Mechelen, a Facebook group for mentors and mentees was created where events that took place in the city were posted regularly. Mentors in Nikaia-Rentis were given an email address specifically for the project and were part of a mailing list. They were also part of a Viber group. In Sala they tried to set up a digital space for mentors as well, but with no success. This is probably related to the low number of mentors in the project, as they could get in contact with each other in different ways.

Finally, the coordinators used to follow up on whether no boundaries were crossed in the activities the mentor would undertake and step in when the relationship was headed towards a conflict.

Table 3.7   Guidelines concerning the closing procedure

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should have a clear closing procedure that is communicated to mentors and mentees before they begin their mentoring relationship.			
❖ Programs should schedule a final talk at the end of the mentoring period or when a relationship ends prematurely.			
❖ Programs may organize a final group activity to wrap up each mentoring period.			
❖ Programs should ask participants to evaluate the program and use this input to make improvements to the program.			
❖ Programs should cease support and follow-up once a relationship ends. They may choose to keep former participants somewhat involved in the program by, for example, sending them newsletters, inviting them to group activities, or reaching out with new mentoring opportunities.			

While all municipalities had a **closing procedure**, it was characterized by different modalities. A closing date was not always communicated to the participants and whether the relationship was formally ended by a closing procedure, differed from case to case. Sometimes the mentoring relationship would continue, depending on the mentor and mentee. Generally, a final talk at the end of the relationship and the request for an evaluation by the participants were included to wrap up the mentoring period. The lack of a specific matching pace and no formal closing date meant that relationships would often end at different times, which complicated organizing a final group activity to wrap up each mentoring period. What is more, at the time of the evaluation, many trajectories were still ongoing, meaning that some of the guidelines could not have been put into practice yet. For Nikaia-Rentis, this was particularly the case for the last three guidelines.

To summarize, while the municipalities all communicated the duration of the program to the participants at the start, they agreed that the minimum duration should also be dependent on the expectations and objectives of the duo. Another adjustment is to include in the guidelines that the duos that cannot schedule their next appointment during the first meeting, are given a basic timeframe in which they need to schedule the next appointment. Another issue that came up, was the time investment needed for the follow-up: the municipalities all underestimated how much time this would take. As a result, they were not always able to provide at least one face-to-face follow-up meeting. This has not caused any issues, leading to the suggestion to drop the in-person requirement and replace it with a phone call or online meeting.

3.4 Training, peer learning and group activities

Table 3.8   Guidelines concerning pre- and post-match trainings

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should include the following topics in their general training for mentor and mentee:	Green	Green	Green
➢ Information on the mentoring program. General information on the aim, target audience, intensity, durations, phases and practices.	Green	Green	Green
➢ What is mentoring? The description, explanation and basics of mentoring.	Green	Green	Green
➢ What is a mentor? The expectations, responsibilities and benefits of a mentor.	Green	Green	Green
➢ What is a mentee? The expectations, responsibilities and benefits of a mentee.	Green	Green	Green
➢ What is a coordinator? What are the responsibilities?	Green	Green	Green
➢ Presentation of the Welcome Application.	Green	Green	Green
❖ Programs should provide training for mentors, taking into account the mentors' needs before planning a training. They can organize trainings themselves and/or seek partnerships with organizations that offer relevant mentor or volunteer training sessions.	Green	Green	Green
❖ Programs should require mentors to attend pre-match training sessions on topics that the mentor should know about before starting their mentoring relationship. They should know where mentees can get professional assistance or information in these sub-topics, in conjunction with the Welcome Application: administrative issues, education & training, children, employment, finance, housing, health, living, transportation and leisure & civil society.	Green	Green	Green
❖ Programs should provide an additional selection of voluntary post-match training sessions for topics that could benefit mentors but are not pivotal to the success of the mentoring relationship.	Green	Orange	Green
❖ Programs should communicate the available training sessions to mentors at the start of the mentoring period.	Green	Green	Green
❖ Programs should ensure that their trainings are interactive, supported by visual tools and case studies, and offer concrete advice that the mentors can use in their own mentoring relationship.	Green	Green	Green

Regarding the **pre- and post-match trainings for mentors**, the table above lets us conclude that the municipalities have followed all the guidelines. All municipalities offered pre-match trainings to mentors, although the attendance numbers differed per region. In Nikaia-Rentis, attendance was no issue. The full training consisted of three 4-hour trainings and yielded positive feedback. Included in the training were mostly participatory exercises, such as communication exercises, a drawing of the basic principles of the contract between a mentor and mentee, enhancement exercises referring to the skills of the mentor, and expected challenges and solutions. In addition, three presentations were given: on the profile of refugees in Greece, on the area of Nikaia-Rentis, and on the welcome application. The training was developed within the project framework and has been considered one of the main outputs.

The project team in Mechelen organized some trainings by themselves, as well as outsourcing others (for example on using clear language). Topics included boundaries within the mentoring relationship

and intercultural competences. The trainings were organized physically and lasted around two hours. Both mentors and mentees did not seem to be that interested in the trainings; the reason behind this observation has not been further explored. Findings from previous projects suggest that online trainings could be more successful, but that might also have been related to COVID-19. Finally, the project team found that the organization of trainings is quite time-consuming.

In Sala, the trainings did not yield the expected interest as well. The trainings were introduced as information sessions, but only six potential mentors in total attended one of the two sessions. Afterward, individual training and the registration moment were combined. The main issue in Sala seemed to be that those interested in becoming a mentor thought they already had the skills and knowledge (for example in terms of intercultural competences), and as such, the project team experienced difficulties in finding a balance between organizing a meaningful training on the one hand and the time investment requested from the potential mentors on the other.

In general, despite the trainings' varying success, the municipalities attached great importance to the inclusion of the boundaries of mentoring (and the mentor) and expectation management in the trainings.

The issue of lacking interest in training sessions in two out of the three municipalities gave rise to a discussion on what can be expected from volunteers. Being a mentor is voluntary and as such mentors are not always willing to follow trainings, but for some types of mentees it is necessary to be trained to a certain level. Another program in Belgium provides mentors with documentation instead of a physical training, but the effects still need to be evaluated. An alternative suggestion was to match mentors that already have specific skills (e.g. intercultural competences or dealing with trauma) with mentees that need such a mentor, and to keep the training more basic. In line with the guidelines, what seems to work best is to organize an obligatory training for mentors that have already engaged themselves in the program before the mentors are matched with a mentee. This training obligation should then be communicated *before* the mentor signs up for the program.

Table 3.9   Guidelines concerning peer learning sessions and group activities

Guideline	Mechelen	Nikaia-Rentis	Sala
❖ Programs should organize regular peer learning sessions for mentors to exchange tips and experiences. Participation should be voluntary.	🟧	🟧	🟧
❖ Programs should ask input from participants when organizing program-specific training and peer learning sessions so that their needs guide the agenda and discussion.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs should organize at least one voluntary group activity per mentoring period.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs should involve participants in the organization of the group activities.	🟩/🟧	🟧	🟩
❖ Programs should allow participants to bring family members to the group activities.	🟩	🟩	🟩
❖ Programs may explore opportunities for cooperation with other organizations who are better equipped to organize fun group activities.	🟩	🟧	🟩

Part of the ORIENT8 project was to organize **tailored activities** for newcomers, to where the duos were also invited. It does not come as a surprise, then, that all municipalities have followed the guidelines on organizing at least one voluntary group activity per mentoring period and the possibility of bringing family members. While in Mechelen and Sala opportunities were explored to engage in collaborations with external organizations for the organization of group activities, this was not the case in Nikaia-Rentis. As well as with the trainings, the municipalities mentioned that the tailored activities were quite time-consuming to prepare and did not gain much response. In order to overcome this obstacle, it could be advisable to make a connection with existing events.

In conclusion, the municipalities had different experiences with the trainings that have been organized for mentors. It seems advisable to require mentors when they sign up for the program to follow a general basic training on the content of the program, with a special focus on the boundaries of mentoring (and of the mentor). Post-match trainings about topics that might yield less interest, could be held on a voluntary basis. Online trainings could also be seen as an option.

3.5 Governance

Regarding the governance of social mentoring programs, no guidelines had been formulated at the time of the evaluation. Therefore, we held a discussion on the role a local government can play in setting up and organizing social mentoring programs.

In all three municipalities, the social mentoring program was implemented by the local government. The modalities differed, however, due to differences in the experience with social mentoring programs. The city of Mechelen already has ample experience with social mentoring, which made it an easy decision to keep the program in-house. One benefit according to the municipality is the ability to reach and collaborate with internal services, while as an outsider it would take considerable time and effort to reach the right person in the right place. On the other hand, the coordinator believes that often civil society organizations can be in closer contact with newcomers than local governments. Coordinators within the local government still function as the 'face of the government', and newcomers can feel distrust towards the government. Another benefit of outsourcing (parts of) the program is that it could yield another critical view toward the program. Municipalities could support civil society organizations by, for example, providing financial means and assistance to build up or enlarge networks.

Nikaia-Rentis also decided to keep the local government involved in the program, but attracted an external coordinator who would run the project. This mixed system was chosen because of a lack of experience in social mentoring, while the municipality believed that the program can be promising for both the social service department (where the program was located) and other departments, and as such the employees should be familiarized with the methodology. The coordinator was the main responsible for setting up and implementing the program, but involved the social service department employees every step of the way. At the start of the project, a meeting was held with all the municipality's social workers in order to get their feedback. The coordinator also passed on all the information and training material, while the employees were present in meetings for mentors and mentees, got to know the participants, connected with the community to pass on the message of the program, … The municipality's database was also used as a source for the project.

The municipalities formulated the following advice for local governments who are thinking of organizing and/or running a social mentoring program:

- place the project within the right department with the right resources regarding the target group (e.g. in the case of newcomers the department that has daily contact with newcomers);
- become familiar with the methodology and train the personnel within the concerned department;
- take the time to build up relationships with NGOs, newcomers and social services;
- take the time to reach out to newcomers and resort to an active communication strategy as opposed to flyers;
- search for sustainability;
- in the case of outsourcing the program, ask what the NGOs need and see how the municipality can support them.

4 | Mapping impacts of the social mentoring program on different stakeholders

This part of the evaluation will focus on the impacts of the social mentoring program. As mentioned earlier, the initial target of 300 matches within the project was not met. As a consequence, the developed survey did not yield the desired results with only five full responses from mentees. Therefore, the effectivity could not be measured. As an alternative, the program was evaluated in terms of impacts on different stakeholders. In the first paragraph, we will delve deeper into the reasons why the target of 300 matches was not met. In the second paragraph, the results of the mapping exercise are presented.

4.1   Challenges in organizing the social mentoring program

One issue encountered by the three municipalities and already discussed in the previous chapter, was the challenge to recruit and maintain mentees and mentors. What is more, the time investment needed for recruiting participants, starting a trajectory and following up the duos has been considerably underestimated both by the coordinators and their superiors. Another (and partly related) factor that can explain the low participation numbers is the difficulty to collaborate with (potential) partners. While a well-performing network is considered key in implementing an effective social mentoring program, the municipalities lacked a network or experienced difficulties in creating support among (potential) partners.

Another element that played an important role in Nikaia-Rentis and Sala, is the general lack of such organized social mentoring programs in those countries. In Greece, the main challenge was to explain what social mentoring is and how it differs from volunteering which is widespread within society and more spontaneous. In Sweden, social mentoring programs do exist, but are often more informal and less organized. As a result, both municipalities had to deal with a large dropout of mentors that believed the program was too demanding.

Nikaia-Rentis also mentioned procedural issues (e.g. GDPR) as a delaying factor in setting up the program, as well as the need to work with translators.

Finally, two important factors that changed the context considerably, were the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The pandemic created more difficulties in organizing face-to-face meetings and also limited the possibilities of setting up partnerships with external organizations. While the influx of Ukrainian refugees broadened the pool of potential mentees, it also meant reshaping the program towards this new context and finding new partners.

4.2   Discerned effects of social mentoring

In order to evaluate the impact of the social mentoring program - taking into account the low number of matches and survey responses - we created an exercise for the evaluation workshop regarding the question which changes or impact of social mentoring the partners could discern for four (types of)

actors: (1) the mentors, (2) the mentees, (3) the coordinating organization, and (4) any other actors involved. Through the use of an online whiteboard, participants could write down the effects of social mentoring they see for each of these actors. Figure 4.1 displays the exercise output.

Figure 4.1   Whiteboard output of exercise regarding changes of social mentoring
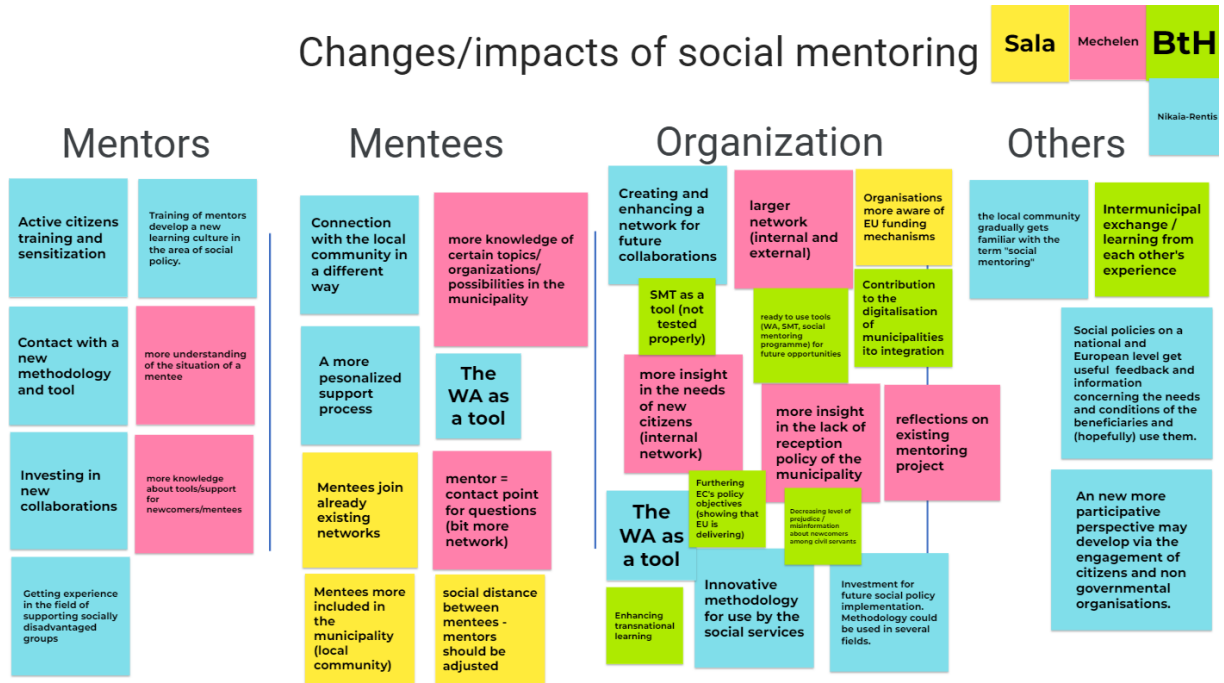
4.2.1   Mentors

Active citizens' training and sensitization
Training of mentors develops a new learning culture in the area of social policy
Contact with a new methodology and tool
More understanding of the situation of a mentee
Investing in new collaborations
More knowledge about tools/support for newcomers/mentees
Getting experience in the field of supporting socially disadvantaged groups

Two main areas of impact for mentors can be discerned: first, the coordinators mentioned that mentors would become more aware and gain more understanding of the mentee's situation by participating in the social mentoring program. Second, mentors also gained more knowledge of the tools and support that are available to newcomers. Another point of impact is particular to the Greek case: as many of their mentors are enrolled in university or college, participating in the program allowed the mentors to invest in the creation of a network and start new collaborations.

4.2.2 Mentees

Connection with the local community in a different way (i.e. through the mentoring process)
More knowledge of certain topics/organizations/possibilities in the municipality
A more personalized support process
The Welcome App as a tool
Mentees join already existing networks
Mentor as a contact point for questions (broadening network)
Mentees get more included in the municipality (local community)
Social distance between mentees and mentors should be adjusted

As for the mentees, the impact of social mentoring can be seen in the inclusion of mentees in (existing) local networks and communities. Through social mentoring, they would also gain enhanced knowledge of the local society (i.e. where to go for what). What is more, social mentoring makes the support a newcomer receives more personalized: going to the municipality as an institution for a certain service is being 'replaced' by the service being delivered through a more personal relationship.

4.2.3 Organization

Creating and enhancing a network for future collaborations
Larger network (internal and external)
Organizations become more aware of EU funding mechanisms
Smart Matching Tool as a tool (not tested properly)
Ready-to-use tools (Welcome App, Smart Matching Tool, social mentoring program) for future opportunities
Contribution to the digitalization of municipalities in terms of integration
More insight into the needs of new citizens (internal network)
More insight in the lack of a reception policy of the municipality
Reflections on existing mentoring projects
The Welcome App as a tool
Furthering the European Commission's objectives (showing that the European Union is delivering)
Decreasing level of prejudice/misinformation about newcomers among civil servants
Enhancing transnational learning
Innovative methodology for use by the social services
Investment for future social policy implementation; methodology could be used in several fields

On the level of the coordinating organization, the social mentoring program (and accompanying tools) first and foremost had an impact on the organization's own network and available tools. Organizations could expand their external network by including new partners for future collaborations and looking for possibilities within their own organization as well. The social mentoring program also contributed to municipalities extending services digitally: in Mechelen, for example, colleagues from the communication department are using insights from the project for creating a new

website. Also, more insight has been gained into what newcomers need, which questions they have and which obstacles they face. In relation to this, the project also had an impact on lowering misinformation and prejudices regarding migrants, although it was mentioned that such effects might be more visible in the long term. When the organizing actor is the municipality, another effect is that the social mentoring program could bring insight into the municipality's reception policy (or the lack thereof). Especially in Greece, where social mentoring programs are not that widespread and well-known, the creation of a new methodology – that could also be applied to other fields – was seen as one of the main and most important outcomes.

4.2.4   Other actors

The local community gradually gets familiar with the term 'social mentoring'

Intermunicipal exchange/learning from each other's experience

Social policies on a national and European level get useful feedback and information concerning the needs and conditions of the beneficiaries and (hopefully) use them

A new more participative perspective may develop via the engagement of citizens and non-governmental organizations

Social mentoring might also have an impact on actors that are not directly involved in the social mentoring program. The ORIENT8 partners, for example, also found an impact on the local community as citizens become more familiar with social mentoring and might start thinking of engaging themselves (in the current or other programs). What is more, the impact might not only limit itself to the participating municipality, but also extend to others through inter-municipal exchange of experiences. Finally, the program generated feedback and information concerning the needs and conditions of the newcomers, which could be used in social policies on a national and European level.

5 | Conclusion

In this report, the social mentoring program within the ORIENT8 project has been evaluated. The program, funded by AMIF, was set up and run in three municipalities in different European countries (Mechelen in Belgium, Nikaia-Agios Ioannis Rentis in Greece, and Sala in Sweden) and paired third-country nationals with volunteer members of the local community in order to support them with their daily life difficulties at the early stages of their social orientation process. While a Welcome Application and Smart Matching Tool were also developed within the project, the evaluation exclusively focused on the social mentoring program.

The program was evaluated by assessing its *efficiency* and *impact*. Efficiency refers to the way in which inputs are combined to produce outputs and is evaluated by critically assessing the initial guidelines for implementing social mentoring programs for newcomers. Besides being a part of the evaluation, the results will also be used in order to update the guidelines. In measuring the impact, we wanted to clarify whether the intervention (the social mentoring program) realized the goals for which it was created. Initially, we planned to focus on the mentees' side to determine the effectiveness of the program, by employing a questionnaire that the mentee would fill out at the start and the end of the mentoring trajectory. However, as the target for the number of duos per municipality was not reached and the questionnaire also yielded very limited responses, we decided to map the impact on different stakeholders instead, more in particular on mentees, mentors, the mentoring organization, and other involved actors.

5.1 Efficiency: an update to the guidelines

A first finding was that the three municipalities followed and agreed with most guidelines, whether or not partially. Thus, it seems that following the guidelines may lead to a functional social mentoring program, at least within the context of the ORIENT8 project. In this paragraph, we will give an overview of the few adjustments made to the general guidelines that are based on the evaluation findings.

Recruitment, screening and selection of mentors and mentees
1. The evaluation showed a clear difference in effective recruitment strategies for potential mentors and mentees. While recruiting potential mentors yielded good results through using written media (e.g. advertisements in local newspapers, distributing flyers and folders), this approach did not work for potential mentees. Instead, a more personal and face-to-face approach is needed. Therefore, we added a guideline to highlight this distinction.

    Additional guideline: programs should distinguish between potential mentors and mentees in their recruitment strategy. While potential mentors can be recruited using promotional materials, recruiting potential mentees requires a more active - e.g. through partnerships, referrals and active outreach - recruitment strategy.

2. The guideline on participation criteria has been slightly adjusted. As the municipalities stressed the importance of expectations and motivation for both mentors and mentees, we put these first

on the list. Additionally, it was mentioned that programs can be flexible if participants are not able to follow the program for the full stipulated duration. Therefore, we included that the availability and ability to commit to the program can also apply to a shorter time period.

Initial guideline: programs should have clear participation criteria that align with the objectives of the program.
- for mentors: expectations, personality, motivation, age, language skills, place of residence, and availability and ability to commit to the program;
- for mentees: language skills, age, place of residence, immigration status, motivation, expectations, availability, and ability to commit to the program, and absence of more immediate needs that require professional assistance.

Adjusted guideline: programs should have clear participation criteria that align with the objectives of the program.
- for mentors: <u>motivation, expectations</u>, personality, age, language skills, place of residence, and availability and ability to commit to the program <u>(whether or not for the full duration)</u>;
- for mentees: <u>motivation, expectations</u>, language skills, age, place of residence, immigration status, availability, and ability to commit to the program <u>(whether or not for the full duration)</u>, and absence of more immediate needs that require professional assistance.

Matching

3. The coordinators encountered some difficulties in arranging a first meeting with the mentor, mentee and coordinator present. While this meeting can be useful in order to give the opportunity for asking questions and/or remind the participants of the objectives and previously made agreements, it is not always necessary to have the meeting take place in person. We extended the guideline by also mentioning other forms of contact.

Initial guideline: once candidates have been matched, programs should invite them for a first meeting together with the coordinator.

Adjusted guideline: once candidates have been matched, programs should invite them for a first meeting together with the coordinator. <u>This meeting can take place in person, online or by phone call.</u>

4. An important issue over the course of the program was the lack of mentees to match with potential mentors, and to a lesser extent vice versa. With increasing waiting times in order to be matched, it is essential to keep the potential participants engaged in the program. Therefore, we added a guideline giving some suggestions to obtain this goal.

Additional guideline: in case a match cannot be made within a few weeks after a candidate's intake, programs should try to keep the candidate engaged by offering/referring to trainings or organizing group events.

Mentoring relationship, follow-up and closure

5. While the municipalities agreed with defining and communicating the duration of the mentoring trajectory to mentors and mentees at the start, they also feel that this duration should not be set in stone. The initial guideline included this flexibility by mentioning the possibility of extending the trajectory, but we adapted the guideline in order to include the shortening of trajectories as well.

Initial guideline: programs should have a clearly defined mentoring duration (e.g., six months) that can be extended upon request.

Adjusted guideline: programs should have a clearly defined mentoring duration (e.g., six months) that can be <u>adapted</u> upon request.

6. Another guideline covered the scheduling of the second meeting. In practice, it was not always feasible to have the duos schedule their next meeting during the first meeting with the coordinator. Therefore, the guideline has been extended in order to provide more possibilities.

Initial guideline: programs should have duos schedule their next meeting during this first meeting to prevent early dropout.

Adjusted guideline: during the first meeting, programs should have duos schedule their next meeting <u>or give duos a basic timeframe in which they need to schedule their next meeting</u> to prevent early dropout.

7. In line with the first meeting with the mentor, mentee, and coordinator, it was not always possible to provide at least one face-to-face follow-up meeting. Therefore, we adjusted the guideline in order to also include forms of follow-up.

Initial guideline: programs should have at least one in-person follow-up moment during the mentoring period.

Adjusted guideline: programs should <u>preferably</u> have at least one in-person follow-up moment during the mentoring period. <u>This moment can also take place online or by phone call.</u>

Training, peer learning and group activities

8. Considering the importance the municipalities attached to including the boundaries of mentoring in the pre-match training for mentors, we formulated an additional guideline in order to highlight this topic.

Additional guideline: programs should cover the topic of boundaries of mentoring and the mentor in the pre-match training sessions for mentors.

5.2   Effectivity: the impact of social mentoring

In order to assess the impact of the social mentoring program, we conducted a (limited) mapping exercise. The initial overarching goals of the ORIENT8 project - that is to improve the social orientation of newcomers, promote exchanges between newcomers and host society and improve transnational cooperation and knowledge among practitioners - were all mentioned as domains of impact by the coordinators. Regarding the improvement of the social orientation of newcomers, social mentoring has the potential to have mentees become more included in (existing) local networks and communities. What is more, they become more aware of 'where to go for what'. Social mentoring can also promote exchanges between newcomers and the host society: not only will mentors become more aware of the situation of a mentee and will they gain more knowledge of the tools and support available to newcomers, the local community will also gradually get familiar with the term 'social mentoring' and might think of engaging themselves. Finally, the program generated feedback and information concerning the needs and conditions of newcomers that may be used transnationally. Including three municipalities from three different countries with varying levels of experience in

social mentoring also stimulated the transnational exchange of knowledge and good practices during (among others) recurrent reflection meetings.

The limited scope of this exercise did not allow us to fully assess the impact and effectivity of the social mentoring program within the ORIENT8 project. More research is needed to be able to fully determine the effectivity of such social mentoring programs. In order to facilitate the evaluation of other social mentoring programs, the questionnaires developed for mentees are made available online and can be used by both mentoring organizations and researchers as a tool in determining a program's effectivity.[7]

---

7   The questionnaires can be accessed via the following link: https://orient8.eu/evaluation.html.

CHAPTER 5 | CONCLUSION