FINAL MENTORING PROGRAMME

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Disclaimer Information:

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A. GENERAL INFORMATION

ORIENT8 is a smart social mentoring programme supported by smart digital tools (Welcome Application[1] and Smart Matching Tool[2]) and tailored activities[3]. It smartly pairs newly arrived third country nationals (TCNs) with the volunteer members of the local community in order to support them dealing with their daily life difficulties at the early stages of their social orientation process. This personal relationship will empower newcomers to find their way in social orientation.

The Aim of the Mentoring Programme

To improve the social orientation of newcomers as well as to promote exchanges between newcomers and the host society.

The Objective of the ORIENT8 Project

To develop a smart social mentoring programme supported by a Welcome Application and Smart Matching Tool in line with the guidelines/frame and localise this program with relevant content for each partnering city.

ORIENT8 Consortium

- **Beyond the Horizon** International Strategic Studies Group (BtH) is an independent, non-profit think-and-do tank specialised (among others) in social inclusion and integration. BtH has also training expertise with its inhouse Horizon Global Academy, and expertise on Artificial Intelligence Powered Trusted Applications.

- **HIVA** Research Institute for Work and Society, KU Leuven, is a policy-oriented interdisciplinary research centre into social problems of relevance to workers, underprivileged groups and social organisations.

- **Mechelen** (Stad Mechelen) is a Belgium city with a clear vision on diversity and an open & positive attitude towards diversity.

- **Nikaia-Agios Ioannis Rentis** (Greece) has a long history in managing refugee communities. The compounded Municipality of Nikea - Agios Ioannis Rentis can be considered as the biggest refugees' Municipality of Attica, and the second biggest in Greece.

- **Sala** is a municipality in Sweden and a member of a network set up by the Governor working with topics related to the integration process.

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[1] A mobile welcome application will be developed to serve as a one-stop-shop to bring all useful information, links, places for the newcomers. For more information on welcome application, please refer Annex A.

[2] The smart matching tool (using artificial intelligence) will bring the volunteer mentors and newcomers in need of information and support together and make a smart matching based on academically developed criteria. For more information on smart matching tool, please refer Annex B.

[3] Events such as city walks, dialogue sessions or workshops which are planned and carried out by the municipalities in line with their needs.

Since January 2021, partners co-created this mentoring programme through weekly Steering Committee meetings and two workshops[4] benefitting from the Initial Guidelines developed by HIVA KU LEUVEN and based on field work from existing mentoring programmes and other research.

Target Audience

There are three primary and one secondary target groups of this mentoring programme:

1. **Newly arrived third country nationals (TCNs).** Throughout the programme, newly arrived or newcomers refers to TCNs (whether an immigrant or a refugee) who are residents for less than 5 years. Motivated and selected TCNs will be the mentees of the programme.

2. **Residents of the local communities (municipalities).** They are expected to interact with newcomers. Selected volunteer residents will be employed as the mentors.

3. **Practitioners.** They will make use of the mentoring programmes and tools. These people are directly dealing with the managerial and administrative tasks of the ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme and will be tasked as the coordinators.

4. **Other Beneficiaries (secondary target group).** Practitioners of other mentoring programmes, partner organisations and stakeholders will also benefit from the project results.

Mentoring Duration

Many mentoring programmes has a predetermined duration for mentoring. However, ORIENT8 offers two durations for mentoring: 4 and 6 months. As 6 month is generally accepted as an ideal duration for many mentoring programmes, it is kept as an option. The rationale behind 4 month is:

- The duration of the implementation phase for mentoring is 8 months, between February and September 2022. Fixing the duration to 6 months would make it difficult to achieve the benchmarks (300 mentees) which were set at the project proposal.

- Social mentoring programmes aim to empower the newcomers to find their way in social orientation and to support them in dealing with their daily life difficulties. In this regard, should the duos voluntarily commit to meet more frequent, it is expected that they can reach the desired end in a shorter period of time.

Intensity

In line with the selected duration of mentoring, intensity of the meetings will change as follows:

- If the duos choose a 4-month mentoring programme, they will be expected to meet minimum 3 times a month,

- If they choose 6 months, they will be expected to meet fortnightly (or minimum 2 times a month).

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[4] Mentoring Programme Co-Creation Workshop held in Belgium between 14-15 September 2021 and Mentor Training Workshop held in Greece between 15-16 November 2021.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Programme will focus on supporting mentees' integration to the host community and empowering them to deal with their daily life problems. In this regard, ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme expects to:

- Reach out, inform and support a wider number of newcomers and local community by a mobile Welcome Application[5] which will be developed to serve as a one-stop-shop to bring all useful information, links and places. During the project duration ORIENT8 aims 3.000 newcomers to make use of the application.

- Provide direct support to at least 1.000 newcomers in 3 municipalities through mentoring and tailored activities.

- Match at least 300 newcomers (mentees) with volunteer mentors from 3 municipalities to provide first-hand information, make links and increase their network within the host community.

- Build meaningful social networks through 3 tailored events/activities per municipality such as civic integration parties, city walks, workshops, intercultural dialogue sessions etc.

Partners & Stakeholders

Partners and Stakeholders are the professionals or organisations which have interest in socialisation of TCNs. In this regard, they can assist and support the programme in reaching out the target group and disseminate the programme. The municipalities should seek for partners & stakeholders to spread the word and find assistance in recruiting mentors and mentees. These include the municipalities, employment agencies or professionals such as social assistants, language teachers, etc.

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[5] This mobile application can also sustainably be used after the project as well.

B. METHODOLOGY

ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Programme follows the traditional phases of a mentoring programme: Recruitment, Selection, Matching, Mentoring, Closure.
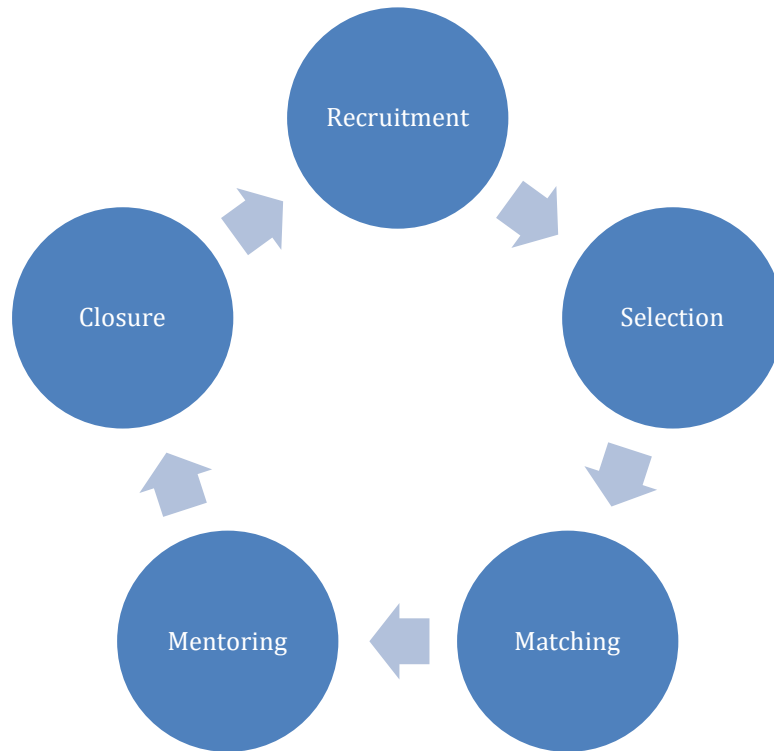

Figure-1: ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme Phases

Municipalities will plan and implement iterative mentoring programmes to reach the KPIs. These iterations may vary among municipalities, while some launch another mentoring programme with selected duos every other month, others can opt to conclude one cycle and launch the other afterwards.

A complete workflow, manifesting all processes the mentors and mentees go through from recruitment to closure, can be found in Annex D.

1. Recruitment

This is the first phase of the mentoring programme. Though attracting more mentors and mentees to the programme is of utmost importance, it should be driven by quality over quantity. Otherwise, reaching the expected outcomes will be impossible.

a. The timeframe for the recruitment phase is 8 months (from October 2021 to May 2022). The mentor recruitment phase is 4 months for mentors (from October 2021 to January 2022) while mentee recruitment phase is 8 months (from October 2021 to May 2022).

b. However, municipalities should take into account that long wait time might demotivate volunteers as the digital tools (for the survey) will be ready from January 2022 on and the programme will start on February 2022).

c. It is important for the mentors to know what is expected from them in order to make an informed decision on participating in the programme or not. Depending on the

needs of the mentees, the mentors are expected to assist them in some of the following areas:

i. Facilitating and accelerating their orientation on the knowledge of the new local environment,

ii. Integrating mentees to the host community and improve their network in the municipality,

iii. 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,

iv. Practicing the local language,

v. Sharing the "ways, customs and habits" of the new society (without patronising).

d. Similarly, mentees would like to know their benefits in participating in the programme. ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Programme is searching for newcomers who are motivated to:

i. Integrate in their host community,

ii. Enlarge their network,

iii. Learn the history, landscape, culture and popular tendencies of its people,

iv. Learn how to handle their daily life problems in their new community.

e. It is of utmost importance that the mentees' expectations should be thoroughly framed and openly conveyed to them. Otherwise, mentees might have false expectations (to be directly employed, shortened process to housing or social assistance, a mentor acting as an assistant), which hinder the success of the programme.

f. Reaching out to the target group requires immense effort and implementing several methods. Coordinators should use a variety of recruitment channels to attract a diverse group of candidates and improve the sustainability of the programme. In this regard, a mix of general and targeted strategies can be implemented in line with the needs of the programme.

i. The municipalities can implement the below mentioned methods separately or in combination to reach more people.

(1) Traditional methods of mass communication (leaflets/pamphlets, posters, media advertisements),

(2) Digital communication methods (mails, social media, web pages, audio-visual content),

(3) Direct communication (info sessions/desks, volunteer fairs, word-of-mouth),

(4) Targeted methods (e.g. contacting with the retiring school teachers of the city),

(5) Innovative methods (e.g. promotion through screens in concerts, theatres & public places),

(6) Referrals.

ii. Partnering with professionals (e.g. social assistants & language teachers) and stakeholder organisations is another method for recruitment.

(1) These organisations might differ considerably for target groups. For instance, community associations, special interest groups, local sports clubs, local business community are some of the organisations to recruit mentors, whereas cooperating with faith-based institutions (e.g. churches, mosques, synagogues), employment and training centres, local language courses, foreigners and social services of the municipalities may help to recruit mentees.

(2) Through partnering with other mentoring programmes.

(3) To avoid the challenges of partnering[6] in recruitment, stakeholders have to be thoroughly informed and direct communication should be built. Otherwise, the programme might end up with less motivated and less relevant mentors & mentees.

2. Selection

This phase includes screening (interview and survey), selection and training activities of the already recruited mentors & mentees who qualify for the programme.

a. The timeframe for the selection phase is 5 months (from January 2022 to May 2022)

b. Screening: Following the recruitment of mentors and mentees, the programme envisions an interview[7] with each mentor & mentee, and a survey with the selected ones.

i. This phase starts with an interview in which coordinators provide short and concise information on the programme (first part) and try to get to know the volunteers better (second part).

(1) The first part of the interview can be made through info sessions should enough volunteers gather. One of the main challenges in this part is adequately informing the mentee about the purpose of the program and the role of the mentor. Defining and informing what the mentors and mentees *should* expect[8] – and importantly, what *should not* expect – is another crucial part of this first meeting. If the expectations of mentors and mentees do not align with the objectives of the programme, they should be directed to more relevant mentoring programmes.

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[6] Initial Guidelines for Social Mentoring Programs (IG) p.8.

[7] For benefits of interviews see Initial Guidelines for Social Mentoring Programs (IG) p.8.

[8] Ibid p.13, 21.

> (2) On the other hand, it is desirable that the second part of the interviews[9] are made in a private and face-to-face environment. Because interviews are very powerful tools to get to know the mentors and mentees. Coordinators may ask (indirect) sensitive questions which might irritate them if asked otherwise. This information will be beneficial to cross check afterwards whether the smart matching tool produces favourable results.
>
> (3) If the conditions do not permit (continuing COVID restrictions, time or venue limitations), other communication methods (online interviews) or innovative ways (an open air walking interview[10]) may be implemented.

ii. Following the interview, not all but motivated and promising candidates will be informed that they will be subject to a survey. The survey can be done in paper if there is no other means (lack of internet or mobile devices). In this case, data has to be uploaded by the coordinator.

iii. The information acquired from the interview will also be incorporated into the relevant database of the candidate by the coordinators. The complete data will be used for smart matching. In this regard, an enhanced algorithm will provide a match offer for duos.

iv. Other candidates who do not seem to be motivated for this programme or those who do not meet the required criteria should be redirected to other mentoring programmes, if they also wish so.

v. While some mentoring programmes implement reference checks for mentors, this is not required nor feasible in this programme.

vi. GDPR is an essential part of the programme and no irrelevant information would be stored in databases, no sensitive information will be shared with third parties, all required activity will be done to ensure that the registered data is secure.

c. Selection: This includes subjective and objective criteria for mentors and mentees. Coordinators will take into account the quantitative benchmarks for objective criteria whereas assess subjective criteria (qualitative qualifications) based on their expertise and intuition.

i. Mentor Selection Criteria

(1) To be an adult (18 years old),

(2) Being a long-time resident,

(3) Temporal Commitments:

(a) Following the programme in its entirety (4 or 6 months),

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[9] The intake form can be found in
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Fn2_P6xvEX8rNTijaNL9j2ahs5lSMgy_pzsbxrl_IzA/edit#gid=1772166919

[10] Ibid p.20

(b)   Allocating at least 1 hour for the meetings (2 or 3 times a month based on the duration of the programme),

(4)   Activity Commitments:

    (a)   Participating the mentor training programme,

    (b)   Attending the city specific tailored activities with her/his mentee,

(5)   Having the motivation to assist TCNs in integrating her/his community and empowering them to tackle their daily problems,

(6)   Holding sufficient soft skills such as being patient, discreet, tolerant, good listener, reliable, committed, non-judgemental,

(7)   Preferably holding a wide social network to which her/his mentee can be introduced (optional criterion).

ii.   Mentee Selection Criteria

(1)   To be an adult (18 years old),

(2)   Being a newcomer, i.e. resident for less than 5 years

(3)   Temporal Commitment:

    (a)   Following the programme in its entirety (4 or 6 months),

    (b)   Allocating at least 1 hour for the meetings (2 or 3 times a month based on the duration of the programme),

(4)   Activity Commitments:

    (a)   Participating the mentee training programme,

    (b)   Attending the city specific tailored activities with her/his mentor,

(5)   Having the motivation to be part of the community in which she/he lives,

(6)   Language skills[11] which enables proper communication with the mentor. ORIENT8 does not require an official proof of language level. Yet, mentee's communication skills will be evaluated during the interview. Mentees' language skills or lack thereof should never be used to exclude them from the programme. If a suitable mentor is not immediately available, the coordinator will do his/her best to actively recruit a mentor based on their knowledge of the mentee's language. English, the local language and mentees' mother tongue will be taken into account to match with the mentors.

d.   Pre-Matching Training: Divided into 2 parts, the first part comprises general topics for both mentors and mentees whereas the second part includes city specific content aimed for mentors.

i.   General Training[12] (mentor/mentee)

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[11] IG p.10-12.

[12] General training content can be found in Annex C.

(1) Information on the mentoring programme. General information on the aim, target audience, intensity, durations, phases and practices.

(2) What is mentoring? The description, explanation and basics of mentoring.

(3) What is a mentor? The expectations, responsibilities and benefits of a mentor.

(4) What is a mentee? The expectations, responsibilities and benefits of a mentee.

(5) What is a coordinator? What are the responsibilities?

(6) Presentation of the Welcome Application.

ii. City specific content (mentor): This is an incomplete list of sub-topics which will be explained by the mentors. However, the mentors are not all-knowing nor desired so. They should know where mentees can get professional assistance or information in these sub-topics, in conjunction with the Welcome Application.

(1) Administrative Issues: Public services, IDs, driving licence, travel documents, procedures for birth/marriage/death, social services.

(2) Education & training: Basic & secondary education, university & scholarship, vocational training, integration courses, language courses/practicing opportunities.

(3) Children: Extra school courses, rights & responsibilities.

(4) Employment: Vacancies, entrepreneurship, public employment service.

(5) Finance: Taxes, support & allowances, banking, household economy, contracts/subscriptions, bills, debts.

(6) Housing: Renting, social housing, housing services, maintenance, moving.

(7) Health: Health system, general doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, dental care.

(8) Living: Emergency services, waste management, pets.

(9) Transportation: Public transport, vehicle, bike.

(10) Leisure & Civil Society: Diversity, religion, gender, history & culture, racism/discrimination.

3. Matching

ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Programme has an innovative method to match the duos. The traditional matching method will be supported by an enhanced algorithm which will offer duos to the coordinators.

a. The timeframe for the matching phase is 4 months (from February to May 2022).

b.	All registered volunteers will make an interview with the coordinator and selected candidates will fill a survey both of which will foster to map the candidates' characteristics and needs.

c.	In the interview, the coordinator will try to understand the expectations and the motivation of the volunteers as well as gather more personal information and evaluate the soft skills of the candidates.

d.	All information gathered from the interview and the survey will be transformed into the relevant database of the candidates for the smart matching tool (SMT). SMT[13] will process this data, compare it with already existing training data and take into account matching criteria (Annex E; Deliverable 2.2) to propose a match.

e.	As the enhanced algorithm computes and assesses the relevant data and matching criteria, SMT will propose a match for duos. The coordinator will evaluate the match in line with his/her experience & intuition as well as taking into account the matching criteria (Deliverable 2.2). The coordinator may eventually accept the SMT's offer or change it accordingly[14].

f.	The coordinators should inform the duos on the matching and provide general information of the pair (e.g. a middle-aged Maths teacher married with one kid or a single Afghan guy who wants to continue his university education). This will help the coordinators to reveal whether the duos have any concerns on the matching in its entirety. The pairs may not be very keen on matching, for instance, with the other gender, having so much age gap or vice versa. 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.

g.	Coordinator should inform the candidates if there is no (immediate) match available and let them decide if they want to accept an alternative match that does not fit their preferences or wait for a better match.

h.	Once the matching is accepted by the parties, the first meeting of the duos will be made with the coordinator in a neutral location, preferably in the office of the coordinator. Here, the coordinator will:

	i.	Introduce them to each other,

	ii.	Remind the roles and expectations,

	iii.	Encourage duos to exchange contact info (address exchange is not recommended in the first instance),

	iv.	Inform that gift exchange is discouraged by the programme,

	v.	Co-sign the mentoring agreement with all the parties involved[15] (Annex F),

	vi.	Assure that they decide when and where the next meeting will be.

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[13] If developed and produce efficient results, this modular smart tool can be used in other mentoring projects.

[14] Even if the coordinator changes the duos, the final duos will be another training input for the algorithm which will eventually find more relevant duos through the end of the programme or for the prospective programmes.

[15] This contract puts down the fundamentals of the mentoring programme such as temporal and activity commitments, roles and tasks, what to do in case of a disagreement etc.

i. 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. These might include:

    i. Making acquaintance,

    ii. Discussing the exact needs of the mentee,

    iii. Setting the means of contact (mobile, mail or else) and the availability of the duos during the day or week,

    iv. Deciding (general) meeting time, duration and venue.

j. If a candidate is not matched for a certain period of time, she/he should be redirected to other volunteering programmes, if they also wish so.

k. External Post-Matching Training can be offered to the mentors if they desire to improve their competences and soft skills.

    i. This is a voluntary training which can be offered following the matching and executed before or right after the launch of the mentoring phase.

    ii. The training can be done in partnership with other organisations, initiatives and programmes such as integration courses and other mentoring or mentor training programmes (e.g. SuperMentor).

    iii. The coordinators should take into account the mentors' needs before planning a training. Samples might include: communication skills and intercultural skills.

4. Mentoring

This is the core of the programme where mentors and mentees meet regularly to reach the desired end. Besides mentoring, support, feedback and follow up activities are also part of this phase.

a. Mentoring phase is planned between February and September 2022 (8 months).

b. Most mentoring programmes with a predetermined duration are set at 6 months. However, considering the timeframe for the mentoring period (8 months) and the availability of the duos, an optional setting might work better. In this regard, the mentoring duration can be either 4 or 6 months:

    i. If the duos choose 4 months, they will be expected to meet minimum 3 times a month,

    ii. If they choose 6 months, they will be expected to meet minimum fortnightly (or 2 times a month).

c. Some municipalities can launch monthly iterative programmes as duos matched in order to reach the KPIs, whereas others can opt to conclude one cycle and launch the other afterwards.

d. To get the most out of the meetings, duos should meet face-to-face, yet in exceptional circumstances, online meetings can take place.

e. The duos are encouraged to participate in several social activities throughout the mentoring phase. Yet, they are at least expected to follow the city specific tailored events/activities planned by the respective municipalities.

f. The relationship between a mentor and mentee is prone to asymmetry and paternalism. Coordinators should emphasise the importance of equity and the benefits of such an environment.

g. Municipalities will assign one fixed coordinator for each duo.

h. The coordinators should be approachable and accessible[16]. Though the mentor is the primary contact of the mentee, duos should feel comfortable contacting and talking to the coordinator, especially if any issues arise between the mentor and the mentee. The coordinator should be easy to reach and readily available for help and advice.

i. 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 programme provides a possibility to end the mentoring relationship and makes a rematch. This feedback is expected at the end of the first month.

j. The coordinators should follow-up the duos that fall short of the minimum expectations during the mentoring phase. These can be in several forms, such as meetings, mail or phone correspondence with duos.

k. Peer learning[17] sessions and intervisions will be planned by the coordinators should the mentors encounter similar issues during monitoring, feedback and follow-up activities.

l. The coordinators may think of creating a networking and experience sharing environment for mentors in digital space (Facebook or WhatsApp groups).

m. Providing monitoring and support for mentoring relationships is one of the primary responsibilities of coordinators and crucial to the success of a mentoring program[18].

n. The programme 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. Organising gatherings for experience exchange to help duos address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

o. 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.

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[16] Ibid p.49

[17] Ibid p.60.

[18] Ibid p.47

5. **Closure**

This phase is the formal closure phase of the programme.

a. The mentoring process might end up prematurely for some reasons. In this case, the coordinator should interview with the duos (preferably one-by-one) to clarify the reason behind the early termination. If there is no other way to continue the mentoring relationship of the duos, the coordinator should figure out whether the motivation of the pairs still exist and rematch those who have the desire to continue in the programme. For the others, the coordinators shall redirect them to other volunteering programmes.

b. After mentoring phase (4 or 6 months), the mentoring relationship will officially be closed. Should some duos want to continue their relationship, they can do it outside the context of the programme.[19]

c. A collective closing event should be organised by the municipalities and a kind of recognition should be provided for the duos, such as a certificate of participation or a thank you card. These will stimulate commitment and retention.

d. The coordinators should make a closing interview to collect information on the programme (e.g. the feeling about the termination, the reason for termination, positive experiences and challenges within the mentoring relationship).

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[19] Ibid p.39

WELCOME APPLICATION

General

One of the major deliverables of ORIENT8 project is a **mobile welcome application** that serves as a **one-stop-shop** to bring all useful information, links about public and places for the newcomers in the defined scope which will be accessed and used easier on mobile iOS and Android smartphones.

Aim

Welcome Application aims to enhance newcomers' awareness about the new local environment.

Content

Logical design of the data stored in the Welcome Application is defined by **a framework document**. According to the framework document, there are 12 main categories that newcomers need information;

- **Emergency numbers:** Emergency main category aims to put together commonly used nationwide emergency numbers and regional/communal equivalence, if applicable.

- **Housing[20]:** Housing is one of the main sectoral areas identified in the **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.** Access to adequate and affordable housing is a key determinant of successful integration. Housing main category aims to support newcomers to find decent housing.

- **Education and training20:** Schools have the potential to be real hubs of integration for children and their families. Learning the language of the host country is crucial in order to successfully integrate. Finally, gaining an understanding of the laws, culture and values of the receiving society as early as possible, for example through civic orientation courses, is crucial for migrants to fully participate in the receiving society.

- **Employment20:** Migrants make up a significant part of the EU's workforce. Many migrants arrive with skills that are highly needed in our labour markets but they often face difficulties in having them valued and finding jobs that reflect their skills level. Migrant women are at particularly high risk of being overqualified for their job, which may lead to depreciation of their skills. They tend to face greater obstacles and more limited access to support. Good quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) with a strong work-based learning dimension can be a particularly powerful tool to help migrants enter the labour market.

- **Health20:** Insufficient access to healthcare services can be a major obstacle to integration and inclusion, affecting virtually all areas of life, including employment and education.

- **Children:** Children main category aims to provide information about services that children may benefit within the municipality's area of responsibility.

- **Social Services:** This main category aims to give information about social services provided.

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[20] These main categories are identified in the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 presented by the European Commission.

- **Leisure:** This main category aims to give information about leisure activities within the boundaries of the municipality.

- **Transportation:** This main category aims to give information about transportation services given within the boundaries of the municipality.

- **Financial Services:** This main category aims to give information regarding essential financial services.

- **Important Procedures:** This main category aims to give general information and necessary links for important procedures that might be relevant for newcomers.

- **Online Services:** Information about online services accessible in the local/national context.

Welcome Application has also two dynamic categories;

- **Event Calendar:** Event Calendar main category aims to put together all relevant events (time, space and information) occurring within Municipalities' boundaries or areas of interest that might have an impact on newcomers' life or social orientation.

- **Notifications:** Notifications main category aims to establish a one-way broadcast system for developing emergencies within municipalities' boundaries or areas of interest.

Some Features

- Compatible with **Apple** and **Android** platforms,

- Stores information, links and geospatial information about physical **points of interest (POI)** within a municipalities,

- Fully complies with **GDPR** regulations (no personal data gathered or stored at the server side),

- Works in tandem with **navigation apps** that are installed in user's platform (Google Maps, Waze etc),

- Provides information in **English** and in **local language** (possibility to expand supported languages),

- Ability to **read embedded text** in operating language,

- Provides **basic expressions** in local language that could be used in a given situation in a given POI,

- Powered by a **Glossary of Terms**,

- Ability to work **offline** (with limited functionality),

- Mass data updating with **REST API** support (for backend users).

Development

Welcome application is being developed in 6 phases.

- **Defining Requirements:** Taking into account specific needs and constraints of both the newcomers and the municipalities, requirements, specifications and expectations related to the Welcome Application were identified by a series of focus meetings by the participation of representatives from all partners and stakeholders. All defined

requirements were documented in Software Requirement Specification (SRS) Document and handed over to the software development team by June 2021.

- **Software Design:** The requirements gathered in the SRS document were used as an input and **logical designing** of the system was converted into **physical designing**. UI/UX (User Interface/User Experience) design of the application was made concurrently during the requirement development phase.

- **Build/Development:** In this phase (currently we are here) developers are building the entire system module by module. Regional differences (such as language, administrative burden-sharing, governance etc.) are being reflected in the application.

- **Testing:** The Apps are being tested in accordance with a test plan that includes all types of essential testing such as integration testing, unit testing, acceptance testing, and system testing.

- **Deployment/Delivering:** Initial version of the application (beta version) is completed for IOS and Android smartphones and can be found at Apple Store/Google Play Store[21]. Fully functional welcome applications are expected to be on air by 01 January 2021.

- **Maintenance and post-deployment:** Immediately after the release of the welcome application, actual problems will start to show up. End users are kindly requested to provide feedback about the welcome application so that the software development team can improve the application.

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[21] App links (beta versions) are as follows:

IOS **Mechelen** Beta Version : https://testflight.apple.com/join/VUDSsT1x

ANDROID **Mechelen** Beta Version : https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.claruswayde.welcomeapp.mechelen

IOS **Nikaia-Rentis** Beta Version : https://testflight.apple.com/join/tb6N0Faw

ANDROID **Nikaia-Rentis** Beta Version: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.claruswayde.welcomeapp.nikaia

IOS **Sala** Beta Version : https://testflight.apple.com/join/SWqAVJeK

ANDROID **Sala** Beta Version : https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.claruswayde.welcomeapp.sala

SMART MATCHING TOOL IN A NUTSHELL

General

Matching is considered as "one of the most important success indicators of an effective buddy project". The **smart matching tool** makes a smart matching between mentors (members of the host community) and mentees (newcomers) using machine learning algorithms based on developed criteria.

Aim

The aim of the smart matching tool is to p**rovide decision support** to the mentoring program coordinators by **proposing the best possible match** between mentors (members of the host community) and mentees (newcomers) taking into account developed criteria and available data.

Content

Smart matching tool is a **machine learning** application.

The first step in developing the smart matching tool is to define the **matching criteria** to be used in social mentoring. According to HIVA, following criteria might be used;

- newcomer's needs and goals,
- mentor's offer and expectations of mentoring,
- mentor's skills and professional background,
- mentor's knowledge,
- interests and hobbies,
- language,
- availability and time commitment,
- geographical location,
- age,
- gender,
- marital status/family,
- personality.

Three different questionnaires were developed in order to collect data in line with the matching criteria. These questionnaires are applied to the mentor/mentee candidates by the coordinators during the intake. Criteria are also prioritized.

Three layers of matching are identified while developing the smart matching tool;

- AI layer,
- rule engine layer,
- manual matching layer.

Among the criteria, interest and hobbies of mentor/mentee candidates is being captured by a separate questionnaire.

Cosine similarity algorithm is being used with the data that has been collected from questions of the questionnaire.

To **train the algorithms**, publicly available open research data is being used.

Some other criteria feed the **rule engine layer**. For example, a woman mentor would like to be matched with a woman mentee. This request is satisfied with the rule engine.

Third layer is the **manual matching**. No matter what the smart matching tool proposes, the coordinator is always in the loop and has the final word (**human in the loop** concept). This is also useful in cases where limited data exists.

Personal data is required for match-making with the smart matching tool. This personal data is not being shared for any purpose. No data subject profiling or filing system is foreseen. Furthermore, identity information of the subjects is being decoupled with the rest of the data and stored in some other secure environment. The objective and the consequence of the interview is being clearly communicated to the project subjects involved. Thus, these interviews are being made under informed consent of the participant. An Interview Consent Form is being given to the interviewees which is being explained in local language and ask them to sign it before the interviews will take place.

Some Features

- smart matching tool is designed for mentoring program coordinators' use,

- works on the cloud environment,

- anonymises data,

- complies with GDPR.

Development

Smart matching tool is being developed in 8 steps.

- **Defining Problem Statement:** A scenario – based description of the problem statement was developed and given to the software developers by BtH together with matching criteria developed by the HIVA.

- **Gathering Data:** All available and relevant data meeting matching criteria requirements is reviewed. Real data used for training purposes is being anonymized.

- **Preparing Data:** This step transforms the raw sourced data into a format that enables successful model training via exploratory data analysis, data cleaning and data normalisation (including removing duplicate entries, discarding incorrect readings etc).

- **Model Implementation:** Most suitable models for the smart matching tool are chosen taking into account prediction results.

- **Training:** The training data delivered from the previous data stages are utilized within the training stage. Part of the data retrieved from various sources in previous steps will be used in training.

- **Evaluation:** After training, the model is tested.

- **Parameter Tuning:** Parameter tuning is the process of model refinement that is conducted by making modifications to hyperparameter values.

- **Model Deployment:** Once we train, evaluate and fine tune our ML model, it will be integrated to a server (whether local or on cloud, depending on GDPR constraints and municipality needs).

General Training Content for Mentors & Mentees

1. ORIENT8 Smart and Social Mentoring Programme

ORIENT8 is a social mentoring program pairing newcomers with the volunteers of the local community in order to support them to deal with their daily life difficulties at the early stages of their social orientation process. This personal relationship (mentoring) will facilitate, speed up and empower newcomers to find their way in social orientation.

ORIENT8 is designed to be supported by two smart digital tools (welcome application and smart matching tool) and tailored activities:

- Welcome application is a mobile application to reach a great deal of practical information, links and venues for the newcomers. The application is developed for both iOS and android systems and can be downloaded via AppStore or Google Play. It will support the programme and will facilitate mentors' efforts.

- The smart matching tool uses a machine learning model to make a smart match based on the academically developed criteria and processes data collected during interviews and surveys. It is a decision support system and the final decision on matching rests on the project coordinators in each municipality.

- Tailored activities are events such as city walks, dialogue sessions or workshops. These events are mandatory and mentors and mentees will be informed in due time.

The aim of the mentoring programme is to improve the social orientation of newcomers as well as to promote exchanges between newcomers and the host society.

There are three primary and one secondary target groups of this mentoring programme:

1. Newcomers (whether an immigrant or a refugee) who are residents for less than 5 years. Motivated and selected newcomers will be the mentees of the programme.

2. Residents of the local communities (municipalities). They are expected to interact with newcomers. Selected volunteer residents will be employed as the mentors.

3. Practitioners. They will make use of the mentoring programmes and tools. These people are directly dealing with the managerial and administrative tasks of the ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme and will be tasked as the coordinators.

4. Other Beneficiaries (secondary target group). Practitioners of other mentoring programmes, partner organisations and stakeholders will also benefit from the project results.

ORIENT8 Social Mentoring Programme duration and intensity varies based on the commitment of the duos (matched mentor and mentee):

- 4 months if they meet minimum 3 times a month
- 6 months if they meet 2 times a month (preferably fortnightly)

Methodology

ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Programme follows the traditional phases of a mentoring programme: Recruitment, Selection, Matching, Mentoring, Closure.
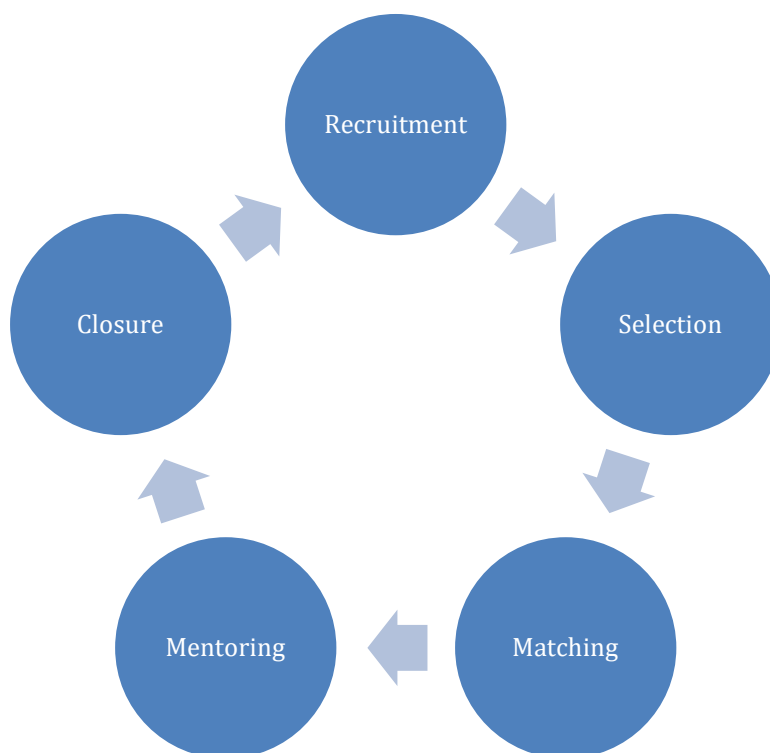
Figure-1: ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme Phases

Recruitment is the first phase of the mentoring programme. Though attracting more mentors and mentees to the programme is of utmost importance, it should be driven by quality over quantity. Otherwise, reaching the expected outcomes will be impossible.

Selection phase includes screening (interview and survey), selection and training activities of the already recruited mentors & mentees who qualify for the programme.

Screening: Following the recruitment of mentors and mentees, the programme envisions an interview with each mentor and mentee and a survey with the selected ones. This phase starts with an interview in which coordinators provide short and concise information on the programme (first part) and try to get to know the volunteers better (second part).

Following the interview, not all, but motivated and promising candidates will be informed that they will be subject to a survey. The information acquired from the interview will also be incorporated into the relevant database of the candidate by the coordinators. The complete data will be used for smart matching. In this regard, an enhanced algorithm will provide a match offer for duos.

GDPR is an essential part of the programme and no irrelevant information would be stored in databases, no sensitive information will be shared with third parties, all required activity will be done to ensure that the registered data is secure.

Selection: This includes subjective and objective criteria for mentors and mentees.

Matching is executed in an innovative way in ORIENT8 Smart Social Mentoring Programme. The traditional matching method will be supported by an enhanced algorithm which will offer duos to the coordinators.

In this context, all information gathered from the interview and the survey will be transformed into the relevant database of the candidates for the smart matching tool (SMT). SMT will

process this data, compare it with already existing training data and take into account matching criteria to propose a match.

As the enhanced algorithm computes and assesses the relevant data and matching criteria, SMT will propose a match for duos. The coordinator will evaluate the match in line with his/her experience & intuition as well as taking into account the matching criteria. The coordinator may eventually accept the SMT's offer or change it accordingly.

The coordinators should inform the duos on the matching and provide general information of the pair (e.g. a middle-aged Maths teacher married with one kid or a single Afghan guy who wants to continue his university education). This will help the coordinators to reveal whether the duos have any concerns on the matching in its entirety. The pairs may not be very keen on matching, for instance, with the other gender, having so much age gap or vice versa. 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.

Coordinator should inform the candidates if there is no (immediate) match available and let them decide if they want to accept an alternative match that does not fit their preferences or wait for a better match.

Once the matching is accepted by the parties, the first meeting of the duos will be made with the coordinator and in a neutral location, preferably in the office of the coordinator.

- Introduce them to each other,
- Remind the roles and expectations,
- Encourage duos to exchange contact info (address exchange is not recommended in the first instance),
- Inform that gift exchange is discouraged by the programme,
- Co-sign the mentoring agreement with all the parties involved,
- Assure that they decide when and where the next meeting will be.

The coordinators will look for relevant trainings for mentors to improve their competences and soft skills following the matching (post-matching training) externally.

Mentoring is the core of the programme where mentors and mentees meet regularly to reach the desired end. Besides mentoring, support, feedback and follow up activities are also part of this phase.

The mentoring duration can be either 4 or 6 months:

- If the duos choose 4 months, they will be expected to meet minimum 3 times a month,
- If they choose 6 months, they will be expected to meet minimum fortnightly (2 times a month).

To get the most out of the meetings, duos should meet face-to-face, yet in exceptional circumstances, online meetings can take place.

The duos can participate in several social activities throughout the mentoring phase. Yet, they are at least expected to follow the city specific tailored events/activities planned by the respective municipalities.

The relationship between a mentor and mentee is prone to asymmetry and paternalism. Coordinators should emphasise the importance of equity and the benefits of such an environment.

The duos will have one fixed coordinator who will be approachable and accessible. Though the mentor is the primary contact of the mentee, duos should feel comfortable contacting and talking to the coordinator, especially if any issues arise between the mentor and the mentee. The coordinator should be easy to reach and readily available for help and advice.

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.

Closure phase is the formal closure of the programme. After mentoring phase (4 or 6 months), the mentoring relationship will officially be closed. Should some duos want to continue their relationship, they can do it outside the context of the programme.

2.   What is mentoring?

Etymology

The origin of mentoring can be traced back to ancient Greece after the character Mentor, a major figure in the Homeric legend of Odyssey. In the Odyssey, King of Ithaca Odysseus leaves his young son Telemachus in the care of his friend Mentor while going off to war with the Trojans. Over two decades that follow, Mentor takes on the role of a teacher, role-model and counsellor of Telemachus.

Definition and Types of Mentoring

Mentoring has many different definitions, still, it essentially involves a process in which an experienced person (the mentor) guides and supports a less experienced or more disadvantaged person (the mentee) in pursuit of a specific goal, retrieved from a mentoring programme set by an organisation.

There are various types of mentoring based on the objective. Some most common include:

- Youth Mentoring: Adult mentors develop an emotional bond with the mentee and provide support, guidance, and opportunities to help youth succeed in life and meet their goals.

- Mentoring-at-Work: An effective way of supporting junior employees to receive guidance and knowledge by experienced and well-trained employees in their career development.

- Mentoring-to-Work: A recent type mainly adopted in Europe and Canada whereby "a person with more experience (mentor) provides guidance to a less experienced person (mentee), with the aim of supporting the mentee to make sustainable progress on his/her way to the labour market.

- Social Mentoring[22]: In recent years, mentoring for newcomers has become a more widespread practice, particularly in the EU where active participation and integration of newcomers are high on the (political) agenda. Thus, social mentoring embraces reception and integration of foreign-speaking newcomers and fostering new peer relationships with the aim of influencing the social inclusion of those who are at risk of social exclusion.

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[22] In local context, municipalities may use other terms such as "buddying" or 'buddyproject" for social mentoring, "participants" or "anderstalige buddy's" for mentees, "Nederlandstalige buddy's" for mentors and "beneficiaries" for duos. Likewise, mentor is a very powerful word in Greece, and thus other terms are used extensively instead of mentor.

In the case of ORIENT8, social mentoring means; an organisation (municipalities) pairs newly arrived third country nationals-TCNs (mentees) with the volunteers of the local community (mentors) in order to support them dealing with their daily life difficulties at the early stages of their social orientation process.
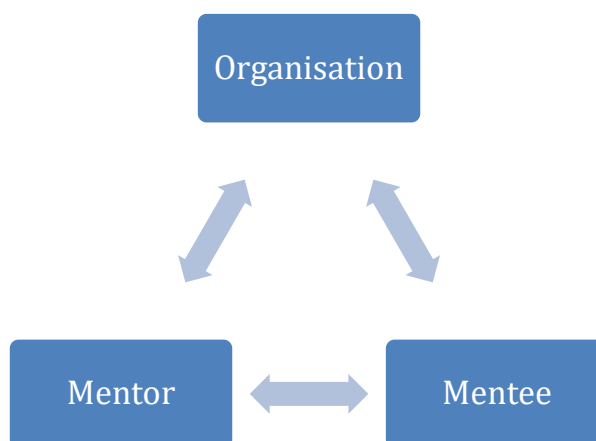
Figure-2: Mentoring is a three-way relationship

What is mentoring?

- Sharing experiences & transferring tacit knowledge
- Developing psychological, social and professional skills
- Identifying strengths, goals and resources
- Understanding and being present
- Listening

What is not mentoring?

- Coaching or teaching
- Criticising
- Judging
- Therapy
- Monologue
- One-directional
- Giving ready-made answers

Important

Mentoring is always based on the mentee's goals and needs.

A successful mentoring process requires active participation and engagement from the mentor and mentee.

At best, the mentoring process is an interactive two-way relationship which benefits both the mentor and the mentee.

3. What is a mentor?

In ORIENT8 context, a mentor is a volunteer to help newcomers to his/her community. He/she supports them in dealing with their daily life difficulties and fosters their social orientation process.

Expectations[23]

- Facilitating and accelerating their orientation on the knowledge of the new local environment
- Integrating mentees to the host community and improve their network in the municipality
- 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
- Practicing the local language
- Sharing the "ways, customs and habits" of the new society (without patronising)

Responsibilities

- Committing for 4 months (3 meeting/month) or 6 months (2 meeting/month) in its entirety
- Participating in the mentor training programme
- Attending the city specific tailored activities with her/his mentee
- Having willingness to share his/her knowledge of the community and their habits
- Encouraging the self-sufficiency and independence of the mentee
- Facilitating networking and sharing network
- Listening actively and empathically
- Being open minded and creative
- Encouraging the use of the local language and providing the opportunity to practise
- Being respectful and sensitive to the mentee's privacy

Benefits

- Enlarging the network
- Having the opportunity for self-reflection
- Developing interpersonal and communication skills
- Increased personal satisfaction and self-confidence

Attention

Demarcation the lines between the tasks of a mentor and a professional is of utmost importance. Mentors can support mentees to deal with their daily life problems such as administrative procedures and education, health, housing, employment issues by providing general information. However, certain assistance can be given by only professionals (such as social assistant) and they have to direct mentees for such functions.

4. What is a mentee?

In ORIENT8 context, a mentee is a newly arrived third country national (whether a migrant or a refugee) who is eager to accelerate his/her orientation to its new surroundings.

Expectations

Having the motivation to:

- Get to know and orientate the new local environment
- Learn how to deal with daily life issues in the local context
- Integrate to the host community and enlarge the network
- Have a willingness to learn the local language (preferably)

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[23] These expectations are retrieved from the ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme. The real expectations will depend on the needs of the mentees and the consent between duos.

Responsibilities

- Committing for 4 months (3 meeting/month) or 6 months (2 meeting/month) in its entirety
- Participating in the mentee training programme
- Attending the city specific tailored activities with his/her mentor
- Having the motivation to integrate the local community and orientate the new environment
- Clarifying his/her goals and expectations to the mentor
- Being respectful and sensitive to the mentor's privacy
- Implementing agreed actions and update the mentor on progress
- Being receptive to constructive feedback
- Taking responsibility and an active role
- Showing mutual respect, appreciation and gratitude

Benefits

- Integrating in the host community,
- Enlarging the network,
- Learning the history, landscape, culture and popular tendencies of local people,
- Learning how to handle their daily life problems in their new community
- Making use of and practising the local language
- Increasing self-confidence

Attention

It is of utmost importance that the mentees' expectations should be thoroughly framed and openly conveyed. Otherwise, mentees might have false expectations (to be directly employed, shortened process to housing or social assistance, a mentor acting as an assistant), which would hinder programme success.

5. What is a coordinator?

The coordinator is mostly an experienced mentor who manages the mentoring programme, acts as the main point of contact for all stakeholders within and associated with the programme as well as develops support mechanisms and troubleshoots mentoring relationships.

Responsibilities

- Overall management of the mentoring programme

- Recruiting, selecting and maintaining a register of mentors

- Recruiting and selecting mentees

- Providing or facilitating training and development opportunities for mentors & mentees

- Matching mentors & mentees

- Monitoring and supervising mentoring relationships, contexts and outcomes

- Encouraging and supporting mentoring relationships

- Ensuring mentoring relationships are brought to a successful close

- Undertaking or facilitating periodic evaluations of the mentoring programme, and updating the programme accordingly

Attention

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.

Likewise, when a participant/mentee crosses the boundaries of the mentoring relationship, the coordinator should intervene.

6. Welcome Application

Refer Annex A

ORIENT8 Social Mentoring Programme Workflow
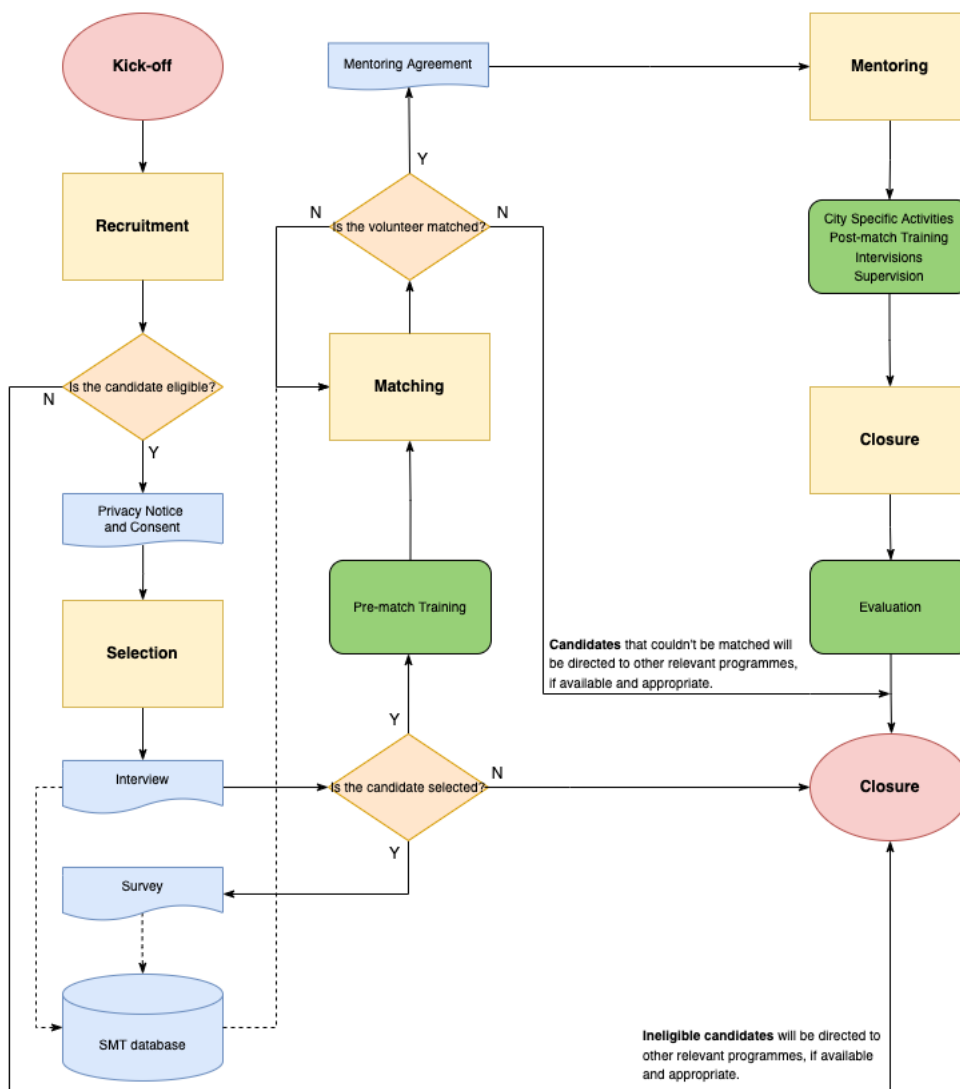
ORIENT8 matching criteria

1. Newcomer's needs and goals,

2. Mentor's offer and expectations of mentoring,

3. Mentor's skills and professional background,

4. Mentor's knowledge,

5. Interests and hobbies,

6. Language Skills,

7. Availability and time commitment,

8. Geographical location,

9. Age,

10. Gender,

11. Marital Status/Family,

12. Personality,

13. Attitudes/Preferences (age, gender).

ORIENT8 Mentoring Programme Agreement

We are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship that we expect to benefit both of us. We want this to be a mutually rewarding experience with most of our time together spent to the goals & expectations drawn by the programme[24] (please check relevant and/or add more):

- ☐ Orientation to the new local environment
- ☐ Integration to the host community and expanding the network in the municipality
- ☐ Supporting in dealing with the daily life problems or directing to professionals
- ☐ Practicing local language
- ☐ Conveying the "ways, customs and habits" of the new society
- ☐ ....
- ☐ ....

Commitment (duration and intensity):

- ☐ 4 months (3 meeting/month)   ☐ 6 months (2 meeting/month)

The First Meeting:

Day : ....Time : ....Venue : ....

Main Communication Channel : ....

Confidentiality: We agree to the confidential nature of this relationship and to be respectful and sensitive to each other's privacy & safety.

Troubleshooting: We will first try to solve any issue ourselves. If this is not possible, we will contact the coordinator, meet separately or together, depending on the situation.

No-fault Conclusion: We agree to a no-fault conclusion of this relationship. Either party has the option of discontinuing the relationship for any reason and he or she will discuss this decision with the coordinator before terminating the relationship.

I, as a mentee, agree to be sincerely committed to take responsibility and an active role and to be receptive to constructive feedback.	I, as a mentor, agree to be sincerely committed to support you through your journey and share my knowledge and network.

Mentee	Mentor

Date & Signature	Date & Signature

I, as a coordinator, agree to be sincerely committed to foster & facilitate the mentoring relationship and to be ready when I am needed.

Coordinator	Date & Signature

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[24] Concerning the rules, limitations, expectations and responsibilities of each role in this project, it is agreed that we will work on the basis of what was described and discussed during the pre-matching training.

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ORIENT8 Partners

Beyond the Horizon International Strategic Studies Group (vzw) is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit think & do tank.

HIVA - Research Institute for Work and Society is a multidisciplinary research institution at KU Leuven. HIVA carries out scientific policy-oriented research.

Municipality of Mechelen (Stad Mechelen) is a city with a clear vision on diversity. Mechelen has an open and positive attitude towards diversity.

Municipality of Nikaia-Agios Ioannis Rentis has a long history in managing refugee communities.

Municipality of Sala is member of a network set up by the Governor working with topics related to the integration process.