

## Educational Mentors for Young People

### 1. Project Relevance

HEAR ME provides a course package for retirees (55+) with the potential to become mentors to early school leavers (15-25). It seeks to increase and develop the skills and self-worth of both groups.

The mentoring course was held by highly educated retired people (seniors) who worked with early

school leavers (youngsters); seniors are directly involved in the activity as mentors by transmitting as volunteers their social, educational, cultural skills; thus, they remain active and have a valuable contribution to society, which *matches with the main objective of the ASLECT project, i.e. active seniors learn, educate, communicate and transmit: the target groups, the actions and the outputs are very much related.*

### 2. Background and Aims

In a Europe with a population growing old, many retirees are resourceful and wish to make a social contribution to society, but do not have the knowledge or skills to do so. At the other end of the age spectrum, one in six young adults in Europe has not completed higher secondary education and does not have the qualifications required to obtain a qualified job. Economic and social consequences are significant for them and for society. Prominent reasons for early school leaving are, for instance, the fact that systems are not adapted to their special needs, the low level of educational interest from networks, disadvantaged social background. One solution could come from the direction of voluntary services; however, adult volunteer service for the elder population has been traditionally linked with improved health and mental sharpness. Retirees receive no or very random cognitive and practical education before undertaking voluntary work. The Hear Me project seek to give a new focus to the activities of senior volunteers and to equip them with the abilities necessary to take on the responsibilities of acting as mentors for young people at risk of leaving the educational system.

### 3. Description of the Target Groups

The project tries to connect two parts of the population in Europe, and to make them benefit from each other's strengths. It is an intergenerational project connecting elders and youngsters.

Some info from the training sessions can be found (in Dutch) on

<http://www.kennispuntmentoring.nl/formulier.php?nav=327>

[http://www.mentoringwijzer.nl/uploads/Mentoringwijzer/plaatjes\\_en\\_bestanden/Verslag\\_Kenniskring\\_sept\\_2010.pdf](http://www.mentoringwijzer.nl/uploads/Mentoringwijzer/plaatjes_en_bestanden/Verslag_Kenniskring_sept_2010.pdf)

### 4. Outputs and Multiplying Outcomes

#### Mentor Course

The purpose is to educate those retirees or people approaching retirement who wish to make a social contribution to society, but do not have the necessary qualifications. Retirees learn

<p><b>Project name:</b> Highly Educated Retirees Mentoring Early School Leavers (Hear Me)</p> <p><b>Project number:</b> 504422-LLP-1-2009-1-DK-GRUNDTVIG-GMP</p> <p><b>Coordinating organisation:</b> VIA University College, Denmark</p> <p><b>Countries involved:</b> Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Spain and the UK</p> <p><b>Types of organisations involved:</b> Universities and organisations dealing with adult education, community work and volunteering</p> <p><b>Implementation level:</b> European and national levels (in all partners' countries)</p> <p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www2.viauc.com/projects/hearme/Pages/hearme.aspx">http://www2.viauc.com/projects/hearme/Pages/hearme.aspx</a></p>
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to act as mentors by providing help and guidance to early school leavers (11-25) who have special needs and who lack the networks which could support their educational goals.

### **Course for Future Providers of the Mentor Course**

A second course is meant to transfer knowledge, skills and good practice on educating senior citizens in voluntary social work. The course addresses future providers of the Mentor Course. As most universities do not have experience in teaching the elders' group, a course for the future providers is developed and piloted in order to ensure the future quality of delivery of the Mentor Course. A **didactic manual** in all the partner languages will be produced for the course; the **Manual for the Mentor Course** will also be course material. Pedagogical material for both courses will be produced in five languages matching five different national contexts: English, Danish, Spanish, Dutch and Finnish.

**Both courses will be piloted and evaluated by their end users.**

### **5. Impact and Sustainability**

**The Mentor Course** provides mentees with social capital by focusing on their professional and social skills and it will stimulate them to remain in or return to school. In this way not only are the youth assisted with their needs, but the retirees remain active, make a social contribution and feel purpose in their lives.

After the project completion, **the Course for Future Providers of the Mentor Course** will be implemented in all partners' organisations as a 1 week course (5 X 8 hours) for 20-25 students per course. Later on, the course could be turned into a Grundtvig course.

### **6. Educational Process**

**The Mentor Course** includes both theory and community-based practice. Retirees attend two different types of planned activities per week, for an interval of 2-3 hours, while mentees attend one-two activities. The course will vary from retirees' theoretical activities, one-on-one activities between mentor and mentee, coaching sessions helping the elders individually and in groups, to common activities with the whole group of mentors and mentees.

It is a 10-week course with the objective that retirees acquire qualifications in doing voluntary social work, mainly in mentoring youth who are at risk of never completing higher secondary education. The methodology of the course is a combination of cognitive learning and methods based on the "learning-by-doing" principle, which encourages the application of factual knowledge to real problems. During the course, retirees are learning how to be mentors; they get a clear understanding of the mentor role; they are introduced with the mentor's tools, e.g. conversation patterns; and, if necessary, they take up training in intercultural meetings. Mentors are guided to relevant learning and development resources, such as web pages on mentor roles. Other aspects of learning will be: communicating with youth; pedagogy; knowledge on the conditions, language, culture and problems of youth.

**The Course for Future Providers of the Mentor Course** teaches university lecturers on the theoretical and practical aspects that need to be considered when teaching the 55+, e.g. how to set up a positive training environment for elders; what are the things to be aware of in terms of elders' cognition and health; elders' insecurity towards learning in a new way and in taking up another kind of teacher role; didactics and theory on teaching elders about practical issues such as how to use PC/AV equipment, lighting, acoustic etc.