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LEARNING MATERIALS for Vocational Mentors in Creative Work

Unit 1

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TALENT MATCHING - PROFESSIONAL MENTORING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) IN EUROPEAN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES – Report

TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH STUDY - ANALYSIS OF RULES, SYSTEMS AND NEED FOR A FINAL REPORT

Talent Matching Europe (TME) is an EU-funded strategic partnership program designed to design, test and evaluate a new training program and skills network for mentors, which supports young people in disadvantaged positions, including those from multicultural societies, for easier job search, entering entrepreneurial ventures and internships in creative and cultural industries (CCI). A professional mentor is an emerging profession dedicated to providing support to young people who are not employed or have the ability to train or educate (NEET) and to access opportunities at CCI, one of Europe's fastest growing and successful employment sectors.

Partnership links VET employees with specialist experience in ways that creativity and culture can re-engage young people in learning and in career development. The project partners are Collage Arts and Rinova (UK), CEPS (Spain), MULAB (Italy), ARTERIA (Poland), EASP (BJR Macedonia) and Prostor Plus (Croatia).

Six of the seven TME partners worked together on the previous Leonardo da Vinci program, the European Cultural Education Network (ECLN), led by the Collage Art institution, which has developed certified training materials for "cultural education users" working in non-formal learning environments. Leonardo da Vinci program also stressed the need to integrate cultural education with the changing needs of the EU labor market, through the professional development of a professional figure of an expert mentor at CCI. This goal is in line with the EU policy obligations to update the competences and profile of VET mentors and teachers, as stated in the Bruges Communiqué, the 2010 Communication and the development of a coherent EU policy on cultural and creative industries.

This transnational research study: a partnership report on rules, systems and needs analysis provides basic data and knowledge to support the development of a professional profile of a mentor, training standards, and a module for modular learning. The study combines "national reports" made up of partners in the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Poland, BJR Macedonia and Croatia.



Key results

Role of expert mentor

In all six countries there is a common agreement that the role of an expert mentor has the potential of being a key person to supporting young people in employment and develop a career in CCI. The Talent Match program has caused great interest in the United Kingdom as an applicable model that adapts to different national interests.

However, currently, the role of a mentor in the CCI is not defined or recognized as a role in any partner country. There is no consistency in the context of this role, and consequently there is no commonly accepted nomenclature. The professional competences of this role are understood and practiced in many different contexts. All partners emphasize the lack of appropriate qualifications and training.

The report combines a wide range of opinions from different employers about the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience of an expert mentor, which provides the basis for developing a professional profile and training standards.

Many professionals working with young people in the role of job advisor or career development consultant, mentor or young employee are people with general competencies. They often stated that they did not understand the totally creative industry and that, unless they were in direct contact with the creative area, they were in a disadvantage position to provide the appropriate advice and guidance. This group would benefit from specialist training and education materials.

A second group of creative specialists with specific art skills and expertise work as mentors, coaches or tutors in a non-formal educational environment or within creative and VET institutions.

This group often sees their role as a support to human and creative development and learning. They would benefit from education in the skills of connecting with employers and providing support for young people to employment.

Context of creative and cultural industries

The results have shown that there is no consistent definition of creative and cultural industries in partner countries. The definition of the CCI as a coherent industrial sector was published in 2001 in the United Kingdom, and similarly similar models are not deeply rooted in other European countries. Diversity of the sub-sector within CCI has made it even more difficult to find a common definition and understanding of the role. For the complex and specific nature of CCI, the report highlights the importance of educating mentors and advisors who have a particular understanding of the sector. Some experts thought it was necessary to experience the CCI experience. However, it was considered not realistic that the mentoring role encompasses the entire range of sub-sectors in CCI.

The report compares the data from each country supporting evidence of growth and economic relevance of CCI, with a detailed overview of opportunities in various sub-sectors. It shows that innovative and entrepreneurial characteristics of the "creative economy" are recognized at policy level across European countries, with research from Italy showing that investing in creativity by companies leads to major changes.

In Macedonia, the TME project is implemented despite the backdrop of major reforms in the VET system and strategy for CCI, under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture, which aims to integrate and adapt EU practices as well as preparation for EU membership. However, most countries note that CCI policies have not been applied in a form of



efficient practice, there is a lack of market identification and specialist guidance in the CCI sector and the old paradigm remains stubbornly in place. In the United Kingdom, CCI is faced with the unstable consequences of a referendum decision to abandon the EU, including the potential impact on transnational cooperation and the mobility of artists and businesses.

Entrepreneurial issues are usually considered the largest deficit area, taking into account the high share of self-employment and freelance employees in CCI. It was widely accepted that training for a mentor should include specific elements related to entrepreneurial skills due to the nature of career and business start-ups in creative and cultural industries. In urban areas in Rome, London, Barcelona there is infrastructure for business start-up and entrepreneurship but far from formal recognition of these skills within the VET sector. The report from Poland, Croatia and BJR Macedonia points to rooted systemic barriers to entrepreneurial training in those countries.

The needs of CCI employers and the entry of young people into the labor market

This report provides a detailed insight into the labor market for young people at national and regional level. It shows a consistent pattern of high unemployment of young people in all six countries. In Macedonia, the unemployment rate of young people (aged 15-24) is 55.3%, twice as high as the adult rate. In Spain, youth unemployment (20 to 24 years) is 44%.

The National Report describes some policy responses to this situation, including the United Kingdom Employment Program, which represents the context of public policy with which the alternative Talent Match "Path Change" model compares, and the implementation and impact of the EU Youth Guarantee program in Spain and Italy.

The National Report proves that many employers within the industrial sector have a positive attitude on recruiting young creators - recognizing the benefits of innovation and competitiveness. As the growth forecast for creative employment continues, there will be high demand for creative workers who have the ability to transfer their skills to new contexts. Indeed, the national reports underline the range of barriers faced by young people, without education and employment, who are seeking entry into the CCI. Formal ways in the industry are preferable to people with a higher education degree, experience is always more recognizable than knowledge, and skills, non-formal networking and referral remain key to entry and career development. Gender inequality remains, especially for women in technical areas. CCI employees suggest that internships can be an effective employment opportunity to overcome these barriers and equal opportunities. Reports identify the need to overcome perceptions that some traditional CCI art sub sectors such as craftsmen, artists and theatre workers are often underestimated as prosperous careers and prove that creativity and art practice, the rise of new digital media, gaming, co-working and network resources, offer opportunities that benefit the strength of young people.

However, there is a recurring theme that VET application is far from relevance and applicability to the fluidity, dynamism and complexity of new CCI economies. Even in the Barcelona area, where new sub-sectors, connected with digital and new technologies, are growing, official VET associations do not cover the needs effectively. As a counterweight to this general picture, the report includes case studies from each country of the association and programs that are considered as newly-established models of good practice.

Qualifications and Professional Standards for Professional Mentors

In all six countries, the role of professional mentors in CCI has not been recognized within standard professional classifications. Formal occupations for general career consultants / public sector consultants, education and the private sector, provide a network for such a role in many countries. However, in Eastern European countries, young people



often do not believe in these systems. Each country proposes different ways of adjusting the role of the national and regional context. This represents the challenge of integrating a professional profile for professional mentors within the VET system.

There is a detailed agreement on the need for training and recognition of the role of a professional mentor who specializes in CCI. Partners could not identify existing qualifications for a mentor or similar "Talent Matching" role, supporting young people to develop a career in CCI. Generally, in executing the role of "Talent Matcher," an expert working with young people will have, for example, a degree in "Educador Social" in Spain, or in pedagogy or psychology or social work. There is an official Mentoring Association in Italy. The United Kingdom has developed CCI-specific qualifications and schemes such as the Arts Award, but none of the programs integrate specific VET mentoring with support for employment and entrepreneurial ventures.

A concise conclusion

The study confirmed the need, in all participating countries, for further professional development of the specialist role of a mentor in a way that integrates VET for young people, more efficiently and flexibly, in line with the rapidly growing needs of newly-established CCIs. The results of the study emphasize that VET specialists, who specialize in CCI, work in a fluid and fragmented environment of politics and practice. Each national report provides detailed evidence and describes how countries and regions adapt in different ways, to the relatively recent emergence of new working environments and growth opportunities in CCI. Consultations have revealed that in all countries there is a need to change the adaptation of VET to this new market environment. The education and recognition of the role of the mentor in the CCI is seen as an offer of an applicable and positive model for supporting young people to develop a career in CCI. The gap highlighted in these reports represents real challenges, but can be viewed as a multitude of opportunities. For the exploitation of such capabilities, the report provides a detailed analysis of the broad-scale perspective of stakeholders interested in the skills, knowledge and experience required for the role of an expert mentor who provide a strong foundation for developing a professional profile, standards of competence and learning programs in the next stages of the Talent Matching Europe project.

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