



## **Module:**

### **MENTORING IN CCI SECTOR**

#### **Unit 11: INDIVIDUAL MENTORING FOR ARTISTS**

**Partner name: ARTeria – [www.fundacja-arteria.org](http://www.fundacja-arteria.org)**

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### **INDIVIDUAL MENTORING AND COUNSELLING FOR ARTISTS**

The case study was selected as the most representative for the purpose. In Poland, there is no officially established tool for supporting young people employed in the cultural and creative sectors similar to Talent Match. The aim was to present the most typical barriers and challenges, deficit areas and needs associated with a career in the creative sector through analysing a practical example. It concentrates on a different aspect (lack of entrepreneurship education, self-acceptance problems, communication issues etc.). Some of the problems seem to be common and concern deficits of a rather horizontal nature (lack of social acceptance for working in the creative or cultural sector or a limited knowledge of legal aspects). The case study has been prepared based individual interviews.

There are a lot of factors that negatively influence the decision to start a career in the cultural and creative sectors. The most important ones (indicated by numerous studies and analyses) include: a low demand for artistic works and the weak infrastructure of the artistic job market in Poland, insecurity of employment and irregular income (resulting in problems with obtaining health insurance and joining a pension programme) and the incompatibility of artistic education with the modern job market. Nevertheless, there are a number of people who, since their childhood, have been determined to pursue this career path; others encounter problems with finding their own place in the reality so

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adverse to artistic creativity where they are subjected to pressure resulting from the conviction shared especially by small communities that a proper job means full-time employment in a traditional field of the economy.

The study below demonstrates the scope of issues a coach/counsellor has to work on with a person determined to continue self-development in the cultural and creative sectors and who is subjected to the pressure from the people around them, especially their family (for the purpose of this paper – “X”).

The mentor ran a short session devoted to defining one’s strengths for people attending an entrepreneurship course. After some time (November/December 2015) one of the participants (“X”) contacted her again. He told her his story: *“he was an artist, graduated from a music school, he loved music but had always heard at home that musician is not a proper job, he must find one and then he could play for pleasure”*. As a consequence, he works at a mine, he is unhappy and determined to change his life. He has been thinking about starting his own business in the creative sector so he decided to take part in the entrepreneurship course and met the mentor.

X’s story: he started playing the piano when he was 7 (Silesia has strong music traditions) and a year later he got a keyboard as his first communion gift (his parents also paid for private keyboard classes). It was not his passion at the time, as he did not like the instrument, but after a few years he knew that he could not imagine his life without music. When he was 13, his cousin suggested he should start playing the guitar. His parents agreed and enrolled him in a music school. Unfortunately, there were no vacancies in the guitar class (he was also too old to start learning the instrument in the system of state music education) but there were vacancies in the counter bass class so, partly by chance, he started learning that instrument. He completed two stages of music education (10 years with a two year gap for his A levels and the first year of university). Choosing the university course was a very difficult decision. „X” comes from a family with strong mining traditions and because of that he felt compelled to start a university mining course despite his dreams about studying at a Music Academy (he did not believe in himself and did not get any support from his family, which was a result of the low prestige of artistic jobs. As his family kept telling him: *“the most important thing is stability and a good job, music can be your hobby”*). He decided to follow the family tradition and treat music as his pastime. He completed his MA thesis (he was a very good student) and graduated from the secondary

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music school at the same time. Fulfilling the obligation of a contract he had signed before, after graduation he started working underground in a mine, which turned out to be one of the most emotionally difficult experiences of his life. *“In the mine you are just a cog in a wheel, there is no time for individual thinking. The working conditions were also a big surprise, I had a completely different mental profile and I had no escape that the music school used to give me.”* Fortunately, during his university studies he joined a band (they have already played dozens of concerts in Poland and abroad), which helped him endure the hardships of miner’s work and the pressure from his family. In the end, he suffered a nervous breakdown and decided to give up the job. The employer offered him a “surface job” but it quickly turned out it that was also not for him. He understood that he would not be happy until he started doing what he enjoyed. He started thinking about his own business, knowing that it would not be connected with music (which was still more of a hobby) and during an entrepreneurship course he met the mentor. As he says: that was an encounter that has changed the way he looks at the world and his ability to shape his future: *“She has helped me immensely. We are working a lot together and that is very important. The conversation with mentor gave me a lot, she was the first person I could talk to openly who understood and motivated me”*. As for some time he had been taking photos and making films for his friends, the mentor suggested he should start thinking in that direction. „X” started a photography course at the School of Photography and met a mentor-photographer.

The problems defined by X, relating to his life story:

- lack of advisor/consultant at this stage of life when one makes choices as to their professional life (secondary school, but not the final year as it is already too late then) – who would be a person one can discuss their predispositions, ideas and strengths with. *“Not everybody needs such a person, but everybody should be able to contact to them”*. It would also be good if the advisor could act as a mediator between the young person and his or her family, *“so that we would not make mistakes resulting from over-protectiveness or negative social perception of the job”*. Such a person should be able to suggest not only the commonly accepted ways of professional development but also the alternative ones that better match the young person’s interests and predispositions, which is of special importance when it comes to people with “artistic souls”.
- lack of entrepreneurial and marketing skills (*“we do not have a manager, our singer is our manager but we have come to the decision that we will not go professional as it is not a*

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*sustainable job”, “I went to the entrepreneurship course where I met my mentor because I had not had any knowledge, I found out that it was your value first, then business. So my photos and commercial films are the value I create, but I know I will need support in business).*

Issues determined by the mentor:

- problems with definitions: the first meeting is always devoted to making the client realise the difference between counselling, coaching, consulting and therapy. An important question is the proper choice of the formulas and modes of cooperation (*X chose a combination of coaching and counselling and we started working on smooth transition and further steps to take*).
- the necessity of working individually: *“it is a process, not a matter of one or two meetings. The first meeting is devoted to setting the rules such as freedom of decision, frequency and needs”*. Another important element is “homework” (find out, write, find information). The mentor has to follow their clients who choose the frequency and character of the meetings.