



Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci
European Training for the UK

Leonardo Da Vinci

ME MYSELF I

Me Myself I

Final project evaluation



Paul Garvey Consultancy Ltd, July 2007

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The partnership

Lead partner: Gorseinon College, Swansea, Wales, UK

Synthesis Center for Research and Education Ltd, Larnaka, Cyprus

Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, Caerphilly, Wales, UK

FMH (Faculdade de Motricidade Humana – Faculty of Human Kinetics), Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal

City and County of Swansea Youth Offending Team, Wales, UK

CDO Noord, Antwerp, Belgium

APPACDM (Centro de Formação Profissional da Quinta dos Inglesinhos – APPACDM Lisboa – Associação Portuguesa Pais), Lisbon, Portugal

Technical support: BDF (Balear de Desarrollo y Formación), Palma de Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain



Introduction and summary

“In times of drastic change it is the learners that survive: ‘the learned’ find themselves fully equipped to live in a world that doesn’t exist.”

Eric Hoffer

Me Myself I (MMI) arose from the Peer Mentor Support (PMS) project, the two being led by Gorseinon College, Wales. The project aimed to develop and deliver personal development training to a range of beneficiaries on the ‘extreme margins’ of society who typically do not receive the level of support they require.

These groups included people with physical and learning difficulties, disaffected young people and those leaving custodial care, people with mental health difficulties, marginalised women, immigrants and others.

The project has made strenuous efforts to maintain the best of the original partnership and the momentum the partners developed together on the PMS project. New partners have arrived from Belgium, Cyprus and Portugal who have broadened the impact of this new project and brought a fresh stimulus to the existing group.

In line with the UK National Agency recommendations, the MMI project has emphasised the production of services and products that can be disseminated, valorised, exploited and commercialised. Unlike some, this project is not delivered to be archived and shelved on completion.

There is especially good evidence of effective partnership work, leadership and management in MMI. The partners have sustained a strong transnational activity. They have also maintained varied and high-impact valorisation and dissemination activities. There is evidence too of the partners’ developing confidence in their ability to make an important contribution to this area of work. This mature partnership is taking the project forward towards greater European recognition in what should be a successful exploitation phase.

The MMI programme has focused the development of the innovative work that was started in the earlier project. The beneficiaries are those who for a range of reasons require a personal development programme to fully prepare for further study or work.

The project is designed to use experienced mentors to train as peer educators to support the process through the current project. The personal development plan (PDP) has been linked to an e-resource support pack for trainers.

This series of projects have taken the partnership on a journey from the early development of models and instruments of training through to piloting teacher training and research. It is now moving into the exploitation of the work developed during the earlier phases.

The MMI project has worked closely with its sister Euromentor project, which not only shares similar and complementary aims but also some shared resources and management and a core partnership.

Significant financial savings have been made by having shared transnational meetings, website arrangements and other resources in common, and the two projects have worked closely together to ensure the maximum possible synergy.

This complementary working is not merely functional. There are a number of crossovers where, for example, mentors trained on the Euromentor project will move on to supporting groups of marginalised learners identified through the work of MMI.

There are other cost benefits to this joint form of working, which, in accordance with both applications for funding, have allowed both MMI and Euromentor to deliver enhanced outputs and deliverables. Many of these outputs would not have been possible within the resources of a single project.

The PMS project developed methodologies for the peer support of a wide range of beneficiaries, and it successfully developed training materials and accredited qualifications across the transnational partnership.

Significant and acclaimed research work was completed by FMH, the Faculty of Human Kinetics at the Technical University of Lisbon, who continue to conduct research for this project in the area of personal development planning and peer education.

This work complements research and product development in the Euromentor project. MMI is more closely linked to education and vocational training, mentoring and employment, and to overcoming barriers to inclusion.

A Valorisation Conference was funded to promote the PMS project in the spring of 2006. Over a hundred participants attended from all over Europe. The delegates included major institutions, policy-makers and a senior representative from the European Commission.

Most significantly the event featured mentors and mentees who ran workshops themselves and were engaged in a parallel event. They were extremely important participants in the event, and delegate evaluations identified their contribution as a high point of the conference.

The project has adopted an approach that puts the beneficiary and their development at the centre of its work. Beneficiaries have been included in a number of planning meetings, and mentors and mentees will be included centrally in the final evaluation event in September 2007.

The feedback from the Valorisation Conference was extremely positive and the results from it have encouraged the partnership to continue to develop their work together. That success gave the partners renewed enthusiasm and provided them with an impetus to develop this new work together.

Case study:

Peer Coaching at CDO Noord

A key responsibility for CDO Noord was the development of peer educating and peer coaching. They were most comfortable with the concept of 'peer coaching', which was easier to understand for the young people at CDO Noord. With its professional sporting connotations, it seemed to them to be a much 'cooler' role.

The coaches were involved in a range of activities. Internally they helped with problem-solving, conflict management and social skills training; they also helped when out on excursions. Often they organised sports activities during breaks, and some of them sat on the College Youth Council.

Initially there were concerns from the staff that needed to be overcome. There were complaints that peer coaches loitered in the training centre and that they were often late for lessons as a result of the peer coaching work they were doing. At the same time the coaches, together with the staff, were learning to define their limits and clarify their role with other students.

CDO Noord started modestly and, although it maintained a low profile, its programme grew during the course of the project. Most importantly, other staff started to see the benefits of the scheme in the crucial areas of retaining young mentees and their consequent achievements.



The target group

This project aims to develop and widen the work of the Peer Mentor Support project and take the benefits of that programme to a larger audience who could not be reached within the broad remit of the original scheme.

These groups include people leaving institutional care and who have had very disrupted personal and educational experiences. Often they have not been able to develop the key skills required for training and employment.

The aim was to deliver individual personal development and life skills courses to this new target group.

Ultimately the project planned to develop a 'bank' of personal development modules, which would form the foundation of a 'European Personal Development Programme'.



The purpose of the evaluation

This final evaluation, which has been written in line with direction from the European Commission and the Leonardo Evaluation Guidance Notes, is designed to provide a substantial report on the progress of the transnational Me Myself I Leonardo project.

The evaluation has been written to:

- Identify what worked well and what did not work, and examine those activities that require further development
- Examine the project process
- Assist the project team and others to plan current and future projects
- Support the project by identifying emerging issues and thus facilitate partners in taking early action when difficulties arose, in order to build on successes and avoid mistakes by developing best practice
- Assist in the monitoring of the project and help shape the dissemination and mainstreaming strategy

The interim evaluation was designed to be both a formative and a summative contribution. Any feedback from this was offered in a timely way to ensure it could be acted upon.

As with Euromentor, all transnational, management, evaluation and dissemination events plus a range of other meetings have been attended, together with a range of work package meetings. This ensured that the evaluation covered all areas of the project and was as seamless and integrated into the process as possible.

The project partners are to be thanked for including the evaluator in all meetings at all times, including management meetings. This openness to evaluation has displayed the partnership's confidence in the process, and the degree of inclusion has been very much appreciated.

The ongoing and detailed scoring and evaluation of the work, together with the readiness of the partners to make time for interviews and to facilitate meetings with beneficiaries, also provided invaluable assistance to the evaluation process.

The report, in line with recommendations from the national agency, is designed to be of interest and value to a wide audience, including the beneficiary groups themselves. The report is written for all the transnational partners, social partners including representatives of employers and employees, local regional and national partner organisations, other Leonardo projects, the national agencies and the European Commission.

It is also aimed at policy-makers and representatives from intermediary organisations in a variety of fields connected not only with training and employment but also with other key features of the project.

The general approach taken by this and the Euromentor evaluation was designed to provide the greatest benefit and feedback to the partnership during the course of the project as well as at the end of the process.

One priority has been the feedback from the beneficiaries who provided direct views on the value of the pilot activities. The report is characterised by the following emphasis:

Beneficiary views and feedback

Provision of positive suggestions and support to the project

Ongoing evaluation and a substantive interim report

An evaluation report designed to provide timely external feedback to the partnership

Ongoing advice and support for the project management

It is anticipated that there will be full beneficiary engagement in the final evaluation in September 2007, which will be organised with both the evaluator and the beneficiaries themselves.

Evaluation is integrated into the process as a standing item at transnational meetings and as an evaluation and dissemination work package, all of which ensures that evaluation stays at the very heart of the process. Workshop feedback has indicated a high level of satisfaction with the evaluation process.

“The more you lose yourself in something bigger than yourself, the more energy you will have”
Norman Vincent Peale

Key issues

The key issues were chosen in line with guidance from the UK National Agency Leonardo advice for external evaluation, together with special requests from as well as various requirements of the lead partners. These are summarised, with some comments, in this section.

Innovation

Were the products and processes genuinely innovative in practice and consistent with those defined in the application for Leonardo funding? Was innovation demonstrated by the work being delivered at local, regional, national and European levels?

Transnationality

Has the transnational work been successful? Were the partners' contributions effective? What synergies were achieved by the partnership as a whole? How innovative was the transnational work of the project, and how did the transnational nature of the work influence what was achieved? MMI activity promoted a central theme of the Leonardo project, which is to support *“the promotion of a Europe of knowledge developing European areas of co-operation in the field of education and vocational training.”*

Validity

What were the quality and relevance of the project's outputs? How did the project meet the needs of the target group, and how user-friendly were the services and materials developed? Were the needs of the beneficiaries met? Did the project meet its published goals, and how were these achieved?

The planned outcomes from MMI were very substantial and included;

- The production of a personal development plan in a range of formats
- An awareness pack for employers
- A trainers' handbook and an e-resource pack for trainers
- Adaptation of the format to a wide range of users
- A peer educators' handbook

All these outcomes have been met and are either being published or trialled with partners. Each of these outputs represents a significant piece of work in itself, and each one alone would have been a significant focus for a Leonardo project.

To achieve all of them is impressive and demonstrates not only the capacity and expertise of the partnership but also its ambitiousness and determination to succeed.

Dissemination and valorisation

Did the project reach a wider audience, and was this dissemination conducted in an effective and timely way? Did the work achieve any multiplier effects by its mainstreaming and capitalising on the programme? Were target audiences aware at an early stage in the process? What is the potential for wider impact of the project's activities, and how could this be maximised?

More than a hundred separate items of dissemination from all of the partners have been logged on the project website. A number of them involve multiple activities, and the final numbers will be significantly greater. The group derived credibility and reputation from earlier work, which encouraged the acceptance of these more recent developments. Considerable energy has been expended on all of this activity. A few examples of the variety of dissemination initiatives have included the following:

GORSEINON COLLEGE, SWANSEA

The college introduced mentoring into the Swansea Institute of Higher Education's Masters programme. In January 2007 they presented the project's work at the launch in London of the new European Lifelong Learning Programme, attended by Mr Bill Rammell, UK Minister for Lifelong Learning. They were also nominated as one of the top Leonardo projects for transferability. The college's recent ESTYN inspection was uniformly positive and awarded grade 1 scores for all areas of delivery, with peer mentoring and the activities in the MMI project being mentioned on numerous occasions as examples of best practice within the whole college. The MMI project was promoted by the college at a European conference in Slovenia and won the Award for Best Presentation.

YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM, SWANSEA

The YOT team disseminated the project's activities in a national conference attended by ministers of the Welsh Assembly Government linked to the 'Extending Entitlement' initiative. The team also formed links with the Prince's Trust Cymru, the Skills for Justice scheme and YOT South Wales.

TRINITY FIELDS SCHOOL, CAERPHILLY

The school formed a partnership with the Caerphilly Children and Young People's Framework. It secured Welsh Assembly Government funding to mainstream peer mentor training in local schools. It also attended the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation Annual Conference in 2006 and trained trainers in colleges in Roskilde, Denmark.

The school achieved a 100% satisfaction rate from its last inspection. This is a very rare event in the UK. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that this is the second partner to achieve an entirely positive result. The inspectors were again impressed with the peer mentoring activity, which was mentioned several times in the report.

CDO NOORD, ANTWERP

They have established a link with the Eurocrack project and worked with a Belgian partner, MJA, to provide long-term peer-coaching training placements in Belgium, Finland, Croatia and Corsica.

FMH, LISBON

FMH's chosen methods of dissemination have included newspapers, bulletins, magazines and journals. They also spoke at various conferences to encourage involvement by local schools, and engaged in national and international conferences linked to the field of psychology.

APPADCM, LISBON

They have produced a CD-ROM; linked the project to the Portuguese national federation of associations for the training of organisations for mental health disabilities; and recorded the project's activities on a website promoting local and related programmes.

SYNTHESIS, LARNACA

Synthesis have discussed the project in a meeting with psychologists in Athens; linked the project with the education ministry and training organisations in Cyprus; and networked effectively with policy-makers in Cyprus. They also made TV appearances to promote the partnership's work.

Together the partners were also successful in the most important dissemination of all, which was to one another to ensure that the project was as coherent and well-informed as possible.

The effectiveness of the partnership

What synergy, efficiency and energy did the partnership bring to the project? Did they develop cultural understanding and models of delivery of training and services customised to local needs?

The leadership, management and administration of the project

A crucial factor in any project is the leadership, project management and administration. How was the project led, and how effectively was the mission and overarching strategy maintained?

This was a major strength of the partnership and is dealt with later in this report. The experience, organisation and foresight brought to these areas was one of the principal reasons why MMI has been such a success.

Action research

The research being undertaken by FMH at the Technical University of Lisbon continues important research work done for the previous PMS programme. It has taken the form of an action research

study using data from the initial assessment of skills, questionnaires, feedback from employers and beneficiaries, and case studies.

Much of this work is being done under the aegis of the Euromentor project, although it also has a significant bearing on the work of MMI.

The research has progressed well and is thoroughly researched and documented. It is crucial to developing the future validity and integrity of the theory and practice underpinning the work of the partnership.

The research carried out to date has illustrated that young people from a range of marginalised groups, with support from mentors, have been able to sustain their efforts in the mainstream.

The special need for a personal development plan emerged from early research, which also demonstrated that significant numbers of young people with emotional or behavioural problems or other barriers to learning needed this extra level of preparation and support.

The project has focused its efforts on the development of this planning. It has also, as the research noted, prepared employers by using awareness-raising strategies. This helped employers to work with the new instruments and with these young people. It also helped to allay the concerns and prejudices presented by many employers.

FMH has produced comprehensive and detailed interim reports to date and is now producing a summative paper as the project draws to its close. This overarching document will be a theoretical and academic study that will provide a credible basis for the project.

Training peer educators

Experiences of training among the partners have differed significantly.

A previous peer educators training pilot delivered in Swansea had identified a number of effective strategies, as well as some that worked less well. Various problems encountered had been highlighted, and other partners had been briefed about how these issues had been addressed.

In Lisbon FMH had used a sociogram to select suitable mentors and mentees. They had found it beneficial to use older students to mentor younger students and had discovered that giving responsibility to students with behavioural problems had empowered them and improved their behaviour.

At APPACDM the experience had been different again. Their organisation was isolated and they

had encountered problems both with recruiting and transporting mentors. APPACDM had also experienced issues with mentors and mentees becoming too close and jealous about mentoring others. As a result APPACDM did not feel confident in their own environment about training mentors to become peer educators.

The website

The website, supported by BDF, Palma de Mallorca, is a crucial element of the partnership and has been set up to provide a site for the display of all the project's deliverables. It is also a source of public information, disseminating the work of the project and providing a platform for communication between the partners.

While fundamentally the website provides all the basic needs of the partnership, it has also been the subject of some critical discussion by the partners, especially by new partners, who felt it was not properly focused on the needs of the new project and was not always perceived as sufficiently user-friendly.

In particular there was a need to ensure the portal to the site differentiated effectively between both projects and that there was adequate technical support.

ECOTEC devoted a significant section of their report to commenting on the use of the website and noted its importance as a key medium for partner interaction. They concluded by saying that:

“While the intranet features of the site were being well used by partners to update information, the external public-facing website still needed to be updated to make it more user-friendly.”

European transferability

The project has built on the models of transference developed during the PMS project and has effectively demonstrated the European transferability of the model.

The evaluator has visited a number of institutions in different cultural and institutional settings where peer mentoring has been modified to work effectively in all the circumstances piloted.

It is planned that peer mentor training will ultimately be extended by the MMI project into a full European Credit framework, and all the project partners share this aspiration. The partners are working on a range of issues including the following:

Reporting on the programme and providing a comparative study of effectiveness as a means of supporting young people from a wide range of geographical and cultural locations

Mainstreaming the programme within other organisations, e.g., probation services, youth offending teams, social services departments, and training organisations who at present are unable to meet the stringent needs of their identified target groups.

Effectiveness of the partnership

This partnership, like its Euromentor sister project, is effective and high-performing, dedicated and hard-working. Also like Euromentor, the partnership has drawn increased energy and inspiration from the new partners, who have brought diverse cultural approaches to the work and have made effective contributions to the new project.

All the partners have individual responsibilities and they in turn contribute to the whole package, to which all are fully committed. Real trust and mutual respect is shown by everyone in the partnership, which has developed highly effective joint forms of working as well as a range of bilateral activities.

Cultural exchange

There is strong support for cultural exchange. The benefits of each national approach have been identified and a common way forward identified whenever this was appropriate.

A distinctive strength of this project has been its ability to adapt all the work of the partners to the local cultural environment. This cultural adaptability and the flexibility of the model have contributed strongly to the successful development of the work.

A glossary of terms has been developed, ensuring that joint documents use terminology and language incorporating the most progressive terms available within the European Union.

The project team together with the Euromentor project team have always found time for cultural activities and opportunities for national groups to meet together outside the work-plan meetings. This has facilitated both cultural and personal relationships and has enabled broader ideas and issues of policy to be examined.

Valorisation: the potential for wider impact

The extent of valorisation and dissemination records logged on the joint site was identified by the ECOTEC report, where it was described as “impressive.” The quantity and quality of the MMI logs to July 2007 now exceeds one hundred. Some of these are multiple entries.

Valorisation and dissemination have been extensive and are documented at local, regional, national

and European levels. The dissemination also carries significant weight with national, regional and local decision-makers from all the contributing partner countries. It has been backed up by television, radio and newspaper coverage.

The connections are now comprehensive and the quality of the work and credibility of the findings have impacted strongly on the willingness of key organisations to learn about and adopt the work of the group.

Examples of important valorisation activity for MMI have included linking with and informing:

Academic institutions, via FMH

Networks of specialist schools in Belgium

Support for 'Developing One', a policy paper on Vocational Education (2004–2009)

The Cypriot Human Resources Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre

The local Council of Social Action in Almada, Portugal

The European Policy via EfVET (European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training), the European Community Safety Consortium and the European Union of Supported Employment

Marketing

All the partners have used their own promotional materials to ensure the project was properly marketed and brought to the attention of beneficiaries. All the partners supplied locally targeted marketing to the evaluator. All of these materials were of good professional standard.

The partnership had a small competition to agree the MMI logo, which has subsequently been used on all the promotional materials and has demonstrated the transnational nature of the project. Shirts, sweat shirts and polo shirts were produced with the project logo for use by mentors and mentees to provide a strong visual profile for the project and further engage with beneficiaries. Project posters from A1 size to A4 flyers, which graphically represented the project's activities, were produced in Lisbon by FMH and then translated by partners into the different languages. The partners found this contribution to be useful to them all, especially for in-house dissemination and marketing.

Synergy

There is good evidence of synergy within the partnership across a wide range of areas. These have included sharing expertise in research, training with disabilities, and people with behaviour issues. National partners have drawn on the experience of other partners to develop the most informed and coherent strategy possible for dealing most effectively with these various groups.

The project partners for both MMI and Euromentor were advised by ECOTEC in its interim report to ensure that the synergy was transparent and that there was no ambiguity with regard to the joint and individual deliverables and management of either of these projects.

The benefits of these links, which are described elsewhere in this report, are significant and extend to sharing transnational meetings, management, administrative resources and research.

The project also provides a range of operational cross-over opportunities – for example, for mentors trained in Euromentor to support groups identified by the MMI project.

Innovation

The subject matter is innovative at regional, national and European levels, and the national agency has confirmed this in its interim report. The training materials and breadth of engagement with differing groups, using tested and accredited materials and services, is highly innovative and will provide the partnership with a significant lead in taking the development further.

Good examples of innovation in MMI include the provision of:

- Wholly new training programmes, delivering to new target groups in alternative formats in a wide range of countries
- Applications of a mentoring service to beneficiaries with mental health issues

Validity

All the work package outcomes are recorded on the website and are all on schedule. In the case of dissemination activity, they have significantly exceeded the expectations of ECOTEC and the partnership.

The evaluation, valorisation and dissemination plans have all been completed. These were ambitious and of a high quality. They provided links to senior policy-makers, important media connections, and national and European journals and publications, as well as a wide range of other relevant organisations.

Steering groups were established in the partner countries and work packages agreed, which were clearly delineated and have all been delivered.

Quality and relevance of training products to the needs of the target group

The training materials and products were tested with a growing range of users. The robust nature of the product has been sustained while it evolved to meet the needs of new client groups.

Beneficiaries have been uniformly positive about the training materials and approach, which has been customised to the requirements of each culture and organisation in which it was being used. Beneficiaries were polled on the instruments used. Delivery and feedback was given to providers to inform and modify the delivery mechanism and suitability of their approach.

Feedback has confirmed that the service and materials have suited the needs of the beneficiaries. The providers have continually modified the training so as to ensure that it is customised and user-friendly.

For example, the Support, Prevention and Action Programme (PSPA) developed by APPACDM in Lisbon was produced in CD-ROM format in both English and Spanish. This highly inventive and thorough training package was based on research into the training needs of post-16 young people. The purpose of the work was to contribute to a curriculum support programme designed to complement the general development of young people with learning disabilities and to be of use to all the partners within the project.

Quality management and evaluation

Both these key elements of the project have been provided with separate work plans. Reports are received via the website and full reports are presented at the transnational meetings.

Evaluation is a key aspect of this highly confident project. Much of this sense of confidence derives from robust internal evaluation, which continually informs the work of the partners. There has been continuous engagement with the external evaluation process, and an extensive and strong set of links, both formal and informal, has been established to ensure all aspects of the project are monitored and quality-assessed.

The personal development programme

The project set itself the task of producing a report on the efficacy of using a personal development programme with people with specific disadvantages across different countries as a means of re-integrating them into vocational training and employment. It also tasked itself with developing a modular personal development programme in all the partner languages to meet the needs of excluded groups across the partnership.

This programme, a joint effort by the partnership, was one of the key deliverables of the whole project. Its aims have been entirely met.

Already the impact has been significant. Swansea's YOT organisation reported 100% retention on its development programme, much higher than for any previously delivered programmes.



Beneficiary interviews

“Do something for somebody every day for which you do not get paid.”
Albert Schweitzer, *The Secret of Happiness*

Olchfa School, Swansea

A focus group of peer educators and mentees at Olchfa was visited on 30 September 2006 and interviewed without staff in attendance.

The school was recruited to the project to pilot the use of peer mentoring in a school setting and to develop the training of peer educators conducted by Gorseinon College staff. The young people, who were Year 11 students at the beginning of the training, had been identified by the school management from a wider group of volunteers as being most likely to benefit from the training and provide best value for the mentees.

The participant ‘peer educators’ had produced a number of ‘lessons’ over the training period. They had all enjoyed the experience and felt that they had benefited personally and in terms of their career prospects in joining the project.

Secondary schools are very hectic environments and day-to-day work is invariably a challenge for senior managers to organise effectively. Initially the progress of this pilot project programme at Olchfa was largely dependent on the project manager and, most importantly, on the deputy head, who was driving the work forward. (It is frequently the case that at first such developments require a champion like this. At some later stage it is hoped that institutions become more persuaded that the introduction of the scheme will make a cost-effective and valuable contribution to the success of the pupils and the school and that the necessary resources will then be found to roll out the pilots to a wider group.)

The group at Olchfa was made up of four peer educators, Sarah, Josh, Eleanor and Laurence, and three mentees, Craig, Sophie and Harriet.

The mentors, chosen from a group of volunteers, had been prepared over six days on a residential basis and trained to become accredited as peer educators. They had put together three ‘lessons’, which they had delivered to the mentees.

There had been some minor class management problems dealing with the whole group. The school deputy head felt that in some circumstances one-to-one educating might have worked better. They were continuing to mentor the younger pupils throughout the year.

In any event, mentors and peer educators were enthusiastic about the scheme. They all believed that they had learned extensively from the experience, while several felt that they had grown significantly more confident as a result of the work. They had enjoyed the training, which they felt had been fun, interactive and personally engaging.

Josh: *“I felt that I learned a lot about other people and became confident in delivering the work. It was hard and we were unsure about the lessons at first, but it went well.”*

Not for the first time, young peer educators had returned to the theme of the personal benefits of enhancing their profile and CV by engaging in peer mentoring. They referred to the interest shown by university interviewers in the scheme.

At a time when many students are obtaining high grades for university entrance, they understand that a difference can be made by being in a position to talk about experiences such as these. There is compelling evidence that peer educating and mentoring is now being picked up repeatedly by institutions when interviewing for higher education places. Citizenship and related competencies are increasingly being prioritised by national education authorities, and mentoring can make a significant contribution to that agenda. All this provides evidence of the growing ‘currency’ of peer mentoring among students.

Sarah: *“We know that this is a valuable experience and can make the difference when being interviewed for university places.”*

Craig, one of the mentees, was very positive about having worked with older pupils and had considerably enjoyed the experience: *“It’s fun and they have a sense of humour. Teachers don’t have a sense of humour. Not one we get, anyway!”*

Sophie said that the time spent was too little: *“It would be good to have a meeting twice a week, or every day. They can teach us things the teachers can’t because they understand us better.”*

Some mentees were slightly resentful that the time was taken from their own and not from the curriculum time: *“We have to do this in our time and it’s not fair.”*

The issue of potential stigmatisation of mentees made for a confusing picture. *“We are mentees because we are the thickies,”* said one. But another mentee felt left out because he had not been assigned a mentor. And yet another said: *“I felt special and other pupils were jealous.”*

It is possible that all these feelings and circumstances can prevail. It is an important lesson for the project to ensure that stigma does not attach to the beneficiaries who are most in need in institutions.

One development that would counter this problem could be the eventual introduction of mentors for all the participants within any one institution, although this might prove to be logistically challenging in large school environments.

Overall the experience was considered to have been very positive by all of the participants. The school management were following the progress of the scheme and, based on this experience, considering the possibility of widening its scope in future years.

CDO Noord

On 11 May 2007 a mixed meeting of coaches, mentees and staff occurred involving Mohammed, Adam, Belo, Sophia, Mich, Mohammed, Monica and Philippe.

The whole group felt that the coaching model was working very well and that both coaches and mentees were experiencing measurable benefits from the programme. *“My relationship with the coach is great,”* said one of the mentees. *“They understand me very well and take a genuine interest in me. I used to come late but now I know that if I do I will get a phone call from the coach, so I don’t. My relationship with the staff is not the same. I can talk to Adam and he can help me with my problems.”* *“He is gentle and respectful,”* said another mentee, *“and we like that.”*

There was no evidence of any sense of stigma about being a mentee. *“I didn’t know I would like it at first but it is helpful and I feel special to be chosen to be a mentee.”*

Adam, the coach at the centre, had been employed via the project to provide this role. According to the staff, he himself had been a challenge in the past, but he had the potential to deliver this role, and so it had turned out. The balance between taking on this role while also being one of the staff is difficult to manage.

“My job is to gain the trust of the mentees,” said Adam. *“I was a student here, so I know how things work and what they are thinking. I can help them problem-solve and will often do that for mentees who would be reluctant to speak to a member of staff.”*

Roles and boundaries were continually being tested. *“If someone came in with a knife, I would tell the staff. I have to work out with the help of the staff what are the boundaries for my job.”*

Adam was clearly having a significant impact on the mentees and the whole culture of the organisation. He himself needed careful support and nurturing; project workers were supplying this support. As one of the project workers noted: *“We are very impressed with what he is doing and what he has achieved. However, he can sometimes get too close to the mentees and needs advice on boundaries and appropriate behaviour.”*

Within the institution the work of the project was being disseminated via posters from the project. Externally dissemination took place informally and through the Youth Council.

CDO Noord were enthusiastic about the project and its potential. No fewer than 17 different nationalities can be found at the Centre, where the leadership is very experienced and European in its outlook.

Cypriot beneficiaries, interviewed in April 2007

Tomis, Thekla and Maria were working as peer educators with young mentees and were keen to share their experiences.

Thekla described this work as a “*life choice*”. Tomis and Maria talked about helping others and at the same time helping themselves to learn. They took the mentees bowling, out on walks, to the cinema and to dinner. They were learning how by using body language, as well as in other ways, they could communicate with the beneficiaries.

As young people attending college they were very busy studying while also undertaking this work, but they all agreed that the extra activity was both important and fulfilling for them. They felt they would benefit from more meetings and information so that they could do the work more effectively, but they also acknowledged that this degree of expanded commitment might be restricted by the limited free time they had available.

Thekla wanted to become a graphic designer, Thomas to train in computer design, and Maria eventually to become a nurse. All of them stated, as so many young people across the partnership have done, that the work would help them achieve these goals.

They all said that the experience had made them “*very happy*,” “*very satisfied*” and that they had “*learned how to help*.”

Strengths of the project

“One of the things that I keep learning is that the secret of being happy is doing things for other people.”

Dick Gregory

Many of the strengths and development issues are inevitably common to both this project and its Euromentor sister project . Where this is the case the same comments and recommendations are made for both projects, which share a common management, a core partnership and the same model of activities and monitoring.

The development of a customised personal development programme

The programme development now underway is designed to meet the needs of beneficiaries from a wide range of excluded groups and to develop skills to access training and employment.

The partners are sensitive to this broad range of target groups and are collaborating on developing the work, which is being published in different languages and formats and being customised to the needs of a wide variety of users.

This is highly innovative at European level and is the first time such a mentoring personal development programme has been developed so extensively and with such strong underpinning by research and accreditation. In the future there will be a range of opportunities to exploit and commercialise the work.

Cross-fertilisation of training and experience for mentors

Cross-fertilisation of mentors and mentees from different countries was piloted in Mallorca and will be developed further across the whole MMI partnership. This progressive, positive action will add considerably to the wealth of feedback received from beneficiaries, which informs best practice in the project.

The use of mentors from one project supporting beneficiaries from another is not only creative and innovative but also highly practical and effective.

Potential for further impact

MMI has the potential to make a very significant and cost-effective impact on the target population. The numbers who could benefit are considerable. In its bid documentation, the project identified

some stark statistics linked to groups who receive little or no effective personal development or mentoring:

In Belgium some 300 young people from ethnic minorities, many of them at risk of offending, are being supported by CDO Noord.

There are some 450 young people in Swansea who are responsible for 80% of youth crime in the city, and of these over 150 are not in training or employment of any kind and receive no outside support or mentoring guidance.

There are 2,613 people with learning disabilities in Caerphilly alone, of whom only 7% are in employment.

There are 478,214 people in Portugal aged 16–24 who have a disability and of whom less than 50% are in work or study.

Many of these disadvantaged groups receive little or no support, especially after they have reached the age of 16.

Therefore the potential for supporting just a fraction of these groups would have a significant effect on the localities and regions in which they are based.

This impact will be enhanced by the quality and flexibility of the instruments being developed. While existing material on the market does not entirely meet the needs of this diverse group, this project has demonstrated it can do so.

The project has already taken steps to develop modules in anger management, motivation, organisation, discrimination, communication, appropriate social behaviour and team skills, and other materials written in a form suitable for these groups.

Leadership management and administration

Both this project and Euromentor benefit from the leadership and co-ordination of a highly experienced educationalist and participant in transnational European work. She has brought to this endeavour more than ten years' experience of working in transnational European projects.

The strong leadership has provided a focus for the entire partnership. It has offered effective support for the managers, who themselves have brought skills of strategic awareness, strong and innovative management competence, and financial expertise to ensure that the work progresses effectively.

The lead partners benefit from the active and enthusiastic support of the senior managers in their institutions. It is a characteristic of the whole MMI partnership and likewise of Euromentor that the senior managers not only fully support but also actively engage in the project. They have been active in speaking at launch meetings; they have provided active logistical support; and they have often made significant personal contributions of their own to the project.

The Principal of Gorseinon College made the keynote address at the launch meeting in Swansea and attended the PMS Valorisation Conference in Mallorca to speak about the impact of mentoring in his own institution.

The Head Teacher at Trinity Fields School attends the transnational meetings and performs the role of internal evaluator.

The principal at CDO Noord attends transnational meetings and actively supports the project.

The project manager is not only supported by the senior manager within her institution but also receives effective strategic support from experienced managers from the other partners. This development has provided a major boost to the core partnership.

“Help someone who can’t return the favour.”
Unknown

Project management

There has been a robust management style focused on delivery, accountability and achievement. This rigorous approach provides reassurance to the partnership that the project is in good hands and is not liable to experience drift or loss of focus.

When on occasion partners have failed to comply with deadlines for financial claims or other reports, they have promptly been encouraged to become more proactive so that their targets can be achieved.

This is an approach that encourages partners to engage fully with the project, supporting the less experienced and providing a strategic structure to the group effort.

The partnership’s efforts have been well organised by the project manager, whose highly focused approach has ensured the minimum dissipation of effort.

In the planning meetings the various roles and forms of best practice have been identified as the work continued. There has also been continual internal evaluation of every activity: evaluation

sheets are completed in relation to every session, ensuring that even short-term activities are quality-controlled. Workshop leader reports summarise the efforts and plans for the work package they are leading.

All the activities of the transnational work groups both in and outside those events are examined and assessed to ensure that they meet the overall needs of the project and the partnership.

Project administration

The project has benefited from dedicated, effective and experienced project administrators who are confident and assured in managing every administrative aspect of the programme.

The financial support in particular has been a significant benefit to the project. The finances in transnational European projects can be complicated because it is necessary to avoid both under- and over-spending. There is a corresponding requirement to provide good financial projections and tracking methodologies. The benefits of this level of experience and confidence in financial and other administrative practices for the partnership should not be underestimated.

The finance team are able to provide these skills as part of a wider service, and the linked administration with Euromentor allows for yet stronger connections between the two projects as well as the development of synergies in the administrative support for the two partnerships.

Budgets and spending targets defined within the bid application are effectively interpreted and managed by the finance team to ensure the project always remains in full compliance. The project funds are managed so as to ensure there are no barriers to the delivery of the planned work.

The project leaders have been able to provide authoritative financial data to partners and ensure that accurate, effective tracking mechanisms are in place.

The administrators provide advice and support to project managers who then have accurate data and information to make sure that the project can fully comply with the funding agency's regulations and requirements.

Balance of partners

The partnership is well balanced, including partners with established European transnational experience and some who are new to the partnership. It includes organisations from the more affluent north of the EU as well as from the south, including new partners from Cyprus, Portugal and Belgium.

The partnership was carefully constructed to ensure that the membership would provided all the key requirements of a high-performing transnational team.

It is based on an existing core group, which is delivering the third of possibly four continuous projects related to peer mentoring development.

Experience like this has been invaluable to the partnership. It has provided continuity to allow the partners to understand how each one of them works effectively and to develop a modus operandi for the whole group. This understanding has led to an accruing sense of trust and confidence in the work of the participants.

The majority of the partners have a strong track record of working in successful European transnational partnerships. This has enabled them to bring a range of perspectives to the work.

New partners less experienced in transnational work were introduced because of the specific attributes they could offer. They have provided freshness and original thought to the work while blending well with the established partnership.

On occasion new partners to MMI have commented that some assumptions have been made based on the older collaborations. But these were issues of process rather than substance and were able to be resolved during the course of the meetings.

The partnership's track record and stability provides the bedrock of the work and has significantly assisted the project in developing a continuity of effort and offering an opportunity to 'grow' the work of the partnership.

The robustness of the partnership and its ability to be mutually supporting is a clear sign of its maturity. Also commendable is the wide range of bilateral activities initiated as a result of joint working, which have added to the quality of the relationships.

For example, the Belgian partner, CDO Noord, provided renovated computers from their work-shops and delivered them to their partner institution in Portugal, APPACDM, who required information technology training but could neither fund nor transport the equipment.

Partnership cultural links

Quite rightly, an important factor in the maturing of the partnership has been the amount of time for personal and group interaction set aside from the crucial transnational meetings. This has provided appropriate opportunities to mix informally, visit examples of local best practice, and experience the culture and environment that gave rise to locally delivered work.

One of the strengths of peer mentoring is the way it can readily be adapted to local conditions and needs. It was therefore essential that these opportunities were found.

Despite their ethic of hard work and commitment, the partners have understood the value of enhancing personal relationships and developing understanding across the whole group. This has been a key element in building up the capacity of the partnership.

Joint project working

The project, as noted elsewhere, is highly complementary to Euromentor. Both are drawn from the same root project, PMS, which itself was developed from the Peer Education Training (PET) project, in which CDO Noord had been a partner.

Mentors trained with Euromentor will be used to support the young people being assisted by the MMI project, and beneficiaries will be cross-referred as appropriate.

Euromentor is a 'transfer of innovation' project, whereas MMI is about 'development of innovation'. The development and transferability themes continue to grow in unison, with the experience of one project activity informing the behaviour of the other.

The two projects together have been able to share lessons and experiences and hold joint seminars and workshops. There have also been quantifiable cost savings and particular benefits from joint project management, shared IT support and transnational meetings.

MMI is based on a well-established partnership with strong associations developed over a number of years. However, a hallmark of the project has been the introduction of new partners, who have brought fresh ideas and suggestions for further development and improved management.

The partnership should be congratulated on the way it has maintained high levels of determination and hard work, together with a considerable degree of trust and cooperation in the joint endeavour.

The partnership has capitalised on its strengths and has been effective in sharing the workload, with each partner taking responsibility for a separate work package.

Roles and working practices

As in previous projects, the clearest possible delineation of roles has been identified for all the partners. Some specialise in delivery, others in research or the development of content. Still others have responsibility for evaluation, dissemination, information technology or project

management. This approach has been crucial, enabling the project to become democratised. It has also encouraged a sense of ownership brought about by separate and accountable responsibilities.

For example, FMH in Lisbon has been responsible for the action research Trainers' Handbook and has led workshops, co-ordinated the information drawn from the partnership, and taken responsibility for the delivery of the work in those fields. They are also responsible for all the deliverables associated with this area of work and accountable in the management meetings for ensuring that the relevant key outputs are met. This pattern has been repeated for every one of the partners.

While all the partners remain engaged with every element of the project, the unambiguous responsibility each of them has for a specific aspect of the project and work package has had the benefit of clarifying responsibilities and delivery, a process that has been to the benefit of the whole partnership. Partners with responsibility for work packages provide reports not only on progress made to date but on the success of the related workshops at transnational meetings.

As with the previous PMS project, the work is underpinned by an identifiable sense of pride and achievement in being involved in such an ongoing flagship enterprise.

High expectations

This is a project with high expectations and a high work rate. It is able to sustain strong outcomes because of its determination to maintain this level of effort. The commitment to successful and innovative activity is shared by the whole partnership.

Emphasis on the beneficiary

As with Euromentor, there is a strong focus on the experience of the end users – the ultimate beneficiaries of the service.

This approach indicates a 'customer centred' approach to the project, which in turn ensures that outcomes and deliverables are produced to meet the needs of a real audience. Throughout the project the partners have continually listened to feedback being provided by the users. Beneficiaries from all the partner countries have been interviewed and their views have provided a key part of the final evaluation.

Action research

The research being undertaken by FMH at the Technical University of Lisbon continues important research work started under the previous Peer Mentor Support programme. It has taken the form

of an action research study using data from the initial assessment of skills, questionnaires, feedback from employers, beneficiaries and case studies.

This work is being done under the aegis of Euromentor but will also have a significant bearing on the work of the MMI project.

This study has progressed well. It is thoroughly researched and documented and is crucial to the future validity and integrity of the theory and practice underpinning the work of the partnership.

MMI has produced comprehensive and detailed interim reports to date and will deliver a summative paper at the culmination of the project.

Dissemination

The dissemination strategy has followed the pattern of previous projects in ensuring consistent activity throughout the lifetime of the project. Each partner has been invited to report on their dissemination activity at each transnational meeting and to ensure that the activity is logged on to the website.

Activities to date have included radio interviews in Cyprus, publication of guides and academic papers in Belgium, and links made with the regional government and other universities in Lisbon.

For example, the last progress review from FMH identified extensive dissemination work, which included producing pamphlets in Portuguese and English for schools, universities and other organisations, and attendance at six conferences to promote the work, including the Lisbon Congress and the SPSS Congress 'Risk behaviour in adolescents'.

The project website has been extended by BDF, and partners have developed leaflets and posters printed in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Greek and Welsh.

All partners have been active in attending conferences and promoting the work of the project throughout their own regions with a view to mainstreaming it.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and the local Welsh Assembly member have all been kept abreast of developments in the UK.

This proliferation of the project's activities via training and deployment has provided an excellent mechanism for disseminating the project as widely as possible in a practical, informed way, which allows for the take-up and further development of the model by other institutions.

The dissemination activity most certainly exceeds any reasonable expectations that the funder might have had. There will be an end-of-project joint conference for both projects, which will seek to demonstrate maximum impact from the project outcomes.

This project aims to share the work in a practical way with linked and related organisations and consequently has achieved higher levels of impact than might otherwise have been possible.

Evaluation

The partnership is well aware of the benefits of rigorous evaluation and monitoring of the project's activities and outputs. It has introduced and refined a number of practices to ensure that this evaluation is genuine and thorough and that the partnership will effectively respond to all issues raised.

An internal evaluator monitors the work of the project and liaises with the external evaluator. The internal evaluator is also responsible, with the support of the external evaluator, for the evaluation workshops, which are held at every transnational event.

Each workshop and working group rigorously evaluates the work and benefits of each session, and these scores are fed back to the partnership via the evaluation group.

For all the meetings to date, the scores for the evaluation workshops have been as follows:

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
80%	15%	5%	0%	0%

Every aspect of the project's deliverables is separately evaluated and the overall progress is monitored at the evaluation work group at each meeting. Partners take an active role in this process.

For example, in a recent summary of local activities in June 2007, FMH proposed a format for evaluating the personal development plan material for all the partners, and this is being followed up.

The external evaluator attends every transnational meeting and is encouraged to participate and provide ongoing feedback to the project management and the partnership as a whole.

This comprehensive, rigorous approach to the work impacts strongly on both the quality and the performance of everyone involved and demonstrates the confidence and assurance within the project team.

Valorisation and external recognition

The project partnership group who co-wrote and developed the initial strategy were determined to ensure that valorisation and external recognition would feature strongly in its final outcomes. As a result of the success of the earlier projects, the group had already developed a Europe-wide reputation as leaders in the field of peer mentor training in a range of settings.

External recognition has followed the success of the valorisation strategy and has reflected the growing interest in the work shown by related institutions.

This project and Euromentor were launched with a high-profile event at the Guildhall in Swansea, with support from local dignitaries, ministers of the Welsh Assembly Government, and heads of institutions, local educationalists, partners, mentors and mentees.

All the partners were present and the impact both locally and regionally on policy-makers and providers was extremely strong. The project used the opportunity to support peer mentor- and mentee-led workshops, which proved highly successful and symbolised the learner-centred character of the project.

This awareness, in turn, has led to a range of invitations to attend and speak to national and Europe-wide conferences about the work of the project.

For example, the European Forum for Vocational and Educational Training Conference (EfVET) in Budapest on 25 October 2005 was attended by the project manager at Gorseinon College, who was invited to speak about the progress and success of the earlier Peer Mentor Support project. At this presentation the partnership took the opportunity to share with a much wider audience the work of the previous project together with Euromentor and MMI. Consequently the work of the project has since informed EfVET, the European Safety Consortium and the European Union of Supported Employment.

The interest shown in Budapest encouraged the partners to bid successfully to deliver a Valorisation Conference for the PMS project, which was held in Mallorca in April 2006.

The Valorisation event in turn became a powerful vehicle for promoting and broadening the impact of both MMI and Euromentor to a wider European audience.

For example, the project has been strongly promoted by a wide range of institutions including the British Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. It has been promoted in policy papers being presented to the European Commission by Manfred Polzin, adviser to the Commission, who have recently examined European Union policies in this field of education and training.

This level of awareness has been sustained, with interested organisations being able to track the work of the MMI project via the continually developing website and other dissemination-focused publications.

Equal opportunities

The precursor to this bid, the Peer Mentor Support project, was identified in the ECOTEC transnational partnership guidance notes as demonstrating best practice in finding innovative strategies for equal-opportunity employment. This project has been taken forward with similar principles and practices.

The focus of the project has been to engage with those denied equal opportunities from the widest possible range of disadvantaged and disaffected groups and bring them back into the mainstream of training and education. The plan was to provide them with individual support by way of peer mentoring customised to their particular needs. Plans were also made to offer social, emotional and cultural support, as well as practical help with study and with finding and maintaining employment.

This innovative practice ensured that equal opportunities were extended to all within the resource limits of the project, and this met with almost universal approval from the beneficiaries.

Robust and coherent application and work plan

The very comprehensive bid application from this partnership has been converted into a range of key work plans with positive characteristics, including:

- A strong focus on planning

- A strong transnational element designed to ensure that transfer to various cultural environments would be delivered effectively

- A work plan focused on realistic timelines and costs

- Effective models for responding to target groups and beneficiary needs

- Clear agreements for all partners, translated effectively into work packages with 'smart' (specific measurable achievable realistic and time-bound) objectives and working schedules agreed by all

- The whole substance of the project being designed to provide equal opportunities for all to access learning, training and work

So, for example, in Cyprus, where over 50% of women do not work and many have little idea of the skills needed to access work, the personal development planning and other project benefits have been designed to 'level the playing field' for young people such as these and ensure they have as much support as possible to maintain a training or work pathway.

Transnationality

The content of the project is highly congruent with emerging policy in the EU and with national policy across the whole Union for the support of marginalised groups.

Groups identified by the MMI project were often unable to access the support of the various national institutions. They encountered obstacles to physical access and often experienced socio-economic difficulties, poor self-esteem and feelings of low self-worth.

The work of the project delivered a genuinely flexible, robust model of peer mentor training, which has been widely and successfully trialled across a range of European countries.

Like Euromentor, this partnership ‘thought’ in a European and transnational way and made no attempt to use a European project to meet national and local needs.

The partners have made extensive efforts to ensure that the model was transferable to the member states. Issues of adaptability and transferability have been actively addressed at transnational meetings.

The partnership has ‘understood’ cultural and educational policy differences across the partnership and has made manifest its passion for diversity.

Significantly, although the early developmental work was done in Wales, there was no attempt to ‘export’ the work and require partner countries to comply with a single model.

This strong emphasis on finding local solutions and customising the work to fit local social and economic circumstances has allowed the work to proliferate. It has also ensured that the model was tested in diverse environments.

Transnational meetings were rotated. Study visits and cultural experiences figured extensively on the agendas. Partners were encouraged to share their national activity transnationally via the websites and at conferences and valorisation events. The partnership established a forum for social dialogue and a strong cultural partnership.

Areas for further development

Communication and language

Communication within the partnership has generally been very good and the main vehicle for this has been the website, which has been gradually developed over the past four years.

Relationships have been strong and a high degree of trust exists within the partnership, which encourages group and bilateral exchanges.

The agreed working language of the partnership has been English and the meetings have been conducted in English without the need for translators. This has significantly assisted the fluency of the communication. Partners have been reminded by non-native speakers that there is a fatigue and concentration factor that needs to be taken into consideration to ensure that all partners can share equally in discussions.

It became apparent in early meetings that while discussions ranged around the same key issues, there were differences in the terms used to describe different beneficiaries, medical conditions and so on.

The partnership acknowledged the need to ensure that there was an agreed set of terms that would be used and a glossary of terms and definitions that would be identified and further developed during the course of the project.

Ensuring the partnership continues to feel like 'new'

It was important to ensure that all the partners felt they were part of a new project. New partners did not want to be perceived as being new members of an extension project – a view that was sometimes voiced in the early stages of MMI.

Established relationships and working practices can sometimes have an insular impact on a group with new members, and the partners were therefore reminded to ensure that no assumptions were made about the project. They also tried to maintain the feel of a new project by introducing new working practices while retaining the benefits of well-developed links from the former group. This balance was not always easy to maintain, although partners took care to remind each other when any problems arose.

For example, the web site carried over into the project from PMS with the intention of adding value felt to some of the new partners as if it symbolised the previous project.

Joint conferences for the two projects provided good opportunities for partners from both to share their experiences. It did, however, become apparent that partners felt that separate transnational projects would allow for partners to focus better on their own work, and consequently this model will be followed in the future.

Dangers of differentiation developing in institutions

There were several comments from separate focus groups where the issue of difference and special treatment was discussed. The evidence was both anecdotal and contradictory. There was sufficient evidence for future pilot studies to consider the impact of this and be aware of any negative implications.

For example, children in two schools in Wales felt that being a mentee was like being chosen for “*being thick*”, and they felt ambivalent about being involved in the process.

One option could be to offer mentoring to everyone in an institution, or at least to all in one class. (This is the usual practice, for example, when senior managers are provided with mentoring services.) But clearly this might provide logistical problems to providers.

Protocol and process for conflict resolution

The partnership could have benefited by establishing at an early stage a fully transparent protocol of behaviours and expectations. This could have been accompanied by some consideration of how conflicts might be resolved as and when they occurred, as inevitably they do in all projects of this size and complexity.

In fact the partnership has worked well and there has been a high degree of trust. Yet paradoxically there can be even more difficulty if issues arise within a stable environment, as the ensuing difficulty is often unexpected.

In the event of any breakdown in relationships for which there is no precedent, protocol or method for conflict resolution, avoidable problems can then cause further problems. A short risk assessment could usefully have accompanied this initiative.

Website

Concerns about the website development were voiced at the start of the project, with partners, and especially new ones, feeling that the site was failing to meet their needs. Many felt that it was neither user-friendly nor properly customised. New members felt quite strongly that it appeared to be a continuation of work from a previous project in which they had not participated.

It was also felt that technical issues were not dealt with effectively. Whereas the PMS website had seen 32,055 hits by the end of the project, at the midpoint of MMI the rate of hits had slowed significantly, falling to only 500 per month, with many of these not returning. This seems to confirm the suspicion that the site is not very visitor-friendly and that it might respond to a redesign.

In passing, it is worth commenting that more than two-thirds of visits are from the USA, signalling dissemination beyond the European Union!

While the continuity of development of the site had provided some benefits, partners remained in general unhappy with the service. A number also voiced an interest in a chat room facility, which would further aid communication and provide information in different languages.

Websites are no longer merely a useful feature of transnational projects but a key necessity and a focus for all communication. Expectations of websites have risen exponentially, and the partnership was keen to have an effective tool for its work and to share ideas.

In future it might be appropriate to clarify the role of the website developer more exactly in the form of a contract detailing the expectations of the partners. In this role the relationship would become one of contractor to the partnership.

These concerns were raised at the transnational meeting in Lisbon. New staff from BDF, the responsible partner, have since made progress in ensuring the issues were being addressed.

Fatigue factor in meetings

The partnership was able to manage the meetings in English, a language in which all the partners could communicate, and this ensured good progress could be made with the work. However, over-long meetings or discussions conducted too rapidly sometimes caused some stress to non-native speakers, as they had to concentrate very hard to follow the discussion. Workshop evaluations in different workshops at various venues raised this issue.

This might have caused some to experience a sense of distance and isolation. The partnership became aware of these concerns and took action to ensure the fullest possible engagement from all the partners at meetings. Rest breaks were taken regularly and clear diction and careful enunciation were encouraged by the chair of every meeting.

A comment in one feedback sheet noted that sometimes “*the UK partners tend to take over too much.*” This was one of a number of negative comments about partner interaction during the project.

To help develop ongoing relations with other partners after the end of the project, it will be worth all first-language English-speakers ensuring that everyone has the fullest opportunity to participate in all discussions.

Promptness of partner progress reports

The marked degree of efficiency in the project management and administration relied to a large extent on active cooperation from the partners. Reports needed to be sent promptly to enable effective management, and reporting needed to be done professionally and in compliance with the funder's requirements. This did not always take place exactly as planned. Some partners made financial claims very late, with the risk that if partners failed to submit timely claims then funds could not be paid.

Clarity of terminology and language

As with all transnational projects, communication is a key issue. This project has dealt effectively with communication issues, and a high degree of satisfaction has been voiced by partners regarding this issue.

However, there is a constant need to ensure that at all times there is proper clarity of communication. It was recently agreed that the project would develop a glossary and 'umbrella' of key terms and expressions and allow time to explain new terms when they were introduced.

For example, it became apparent at the meeting in Antwerp that there was no word for 'peer mentor' in Flemish and that the term is literally untranslatable in that language.

It was agreed to use the European Organisation of Special Needs list of terms as a foundation.

Documents and training materials developed for the project could have been translated and then edited by a first-language speaker. This would have ensured that the documents would be immediately available for publication and for Europe-wide use.

Developing gender balance

It remains the case that when mentors and peer educators are recruited they are still predominantly female, with a marked shortage of males taking up a mentoring role. This sometimes causes a 'shortage' in mentors for young males who would have preferred a mentor of the same gender. This issue is shared by most of the 'caring professions' and is not in itself an acute problem. However, it may be useful to revisit and discuss possible targeting methods in future recruitment.

Proposals for future development

Commercialisation and exploitation

The partnership's work has reached an advanced stage and has already produced sophisticated learning materials and training manuals. It has developed accredited courses, a strong European network, an excellent Europe-wide reputation for high-quality research, and innovative models that have been effectively trialled.

The next step for the partnership could be the consideration of how fully to exploit and commercialise the products of the work.

Although for a product and service of this quality this might seem an attractive and inviting prospect, the partnership would need to address a wide range of issues before they could move confidently down this path. Work to be done would include:

- The development of a thorough business plan for the whole venture
- Further research and development funding
- Market research and testing
- Clarifying intellectual property rights
- Identifying appropriate and interested commercial partners
- Defining the approach of participating institutions to the business risk
- Full risk assessment
- Clear financial planning and projections etc.

Training and academic organisations are often neither inclined nor geared towards developing commercial enterprises on any scale. Much would therefore depend on strategic and senior management support from the participating organisations.

Time for development, planning and reflection

As with previous projects, the partners are urged to find some time to discuss the future of the work both now and during future collaborations.

In the course of delivering a project's target activities, it often happens that delivering the outputs and meeting the published goals of the project take precedence.

Projects therefore often move towards their conclusion before sufficient opportunity has been taken to plan for the future.

Leonardo is essentially a pilot programme, as interested in new thinking and strategic planning as it is in the delivery of the outputs. Strategic planning time should be found to plan the future and the mainstreaming of the project work to enable the partners to move on if they wish to a new successful phase of work.

The lead partners have been very active towards the end of this project in ensuring that further projects have been submitted to further develop this work. In future activities it would be very useful to build in strategic discussions throughout the lifetime of the project.

In-house dissemination and valorisation

One area of project work that sometimes gets overlooked is dissemination to a partner's own institutions. This strategy allows for those who are interested or are keen to be involved to become more active. It also ensures that the whole organisation is aware of the project's progress and can see its benefits. European work sometimes seems distant from others within the organisation who cannot always understand its relevance.

In-house promotion and transparency can help to ensure that the work is being well received closer to home.

"We cannot build our own future without helping others to build theirs."

Bill Clinton

Conclusions

“The concept of peer education remains innovative at local, national and transnational level.”
(ECOTEC, Oct 2006)

This partnership project has proved to be a worthy successor to the previous Peer Mentor Support project from which the core partnership was drawn.

PMS, the project that gave birth to MMI, has won a number of accolades for the effectiveness and innovatory aspects of its work, including the delivery of an important Valorisation Conference in Mallorca in 2006.

The key aim of the MMI project has been to broaden and deepen the work of the original project by working more closely with more marginalised young people who lack the social, emotional and behavioural skills to engage with mainstream activities. This aim has been achieved with commendable determination and conviction.

One vehicle for this work has been the personal development programme, which was designed to be flexible enough to support the above groups in a range of cultural and national settings, providing new resources and rolling out the work to new agencies such as the Probation Service, Youth Offending Teams and corresponding teams in the partner countries.

The project has the benefit of champions throughout the consortium of partners. This championing of the work is initially essential to ensure that the project is driven through and will be successful. Embedding the work so that it does not rely on champions is a key subsequent stage. It has already started with many partners and should continue until the work becomes an accepted part of the provision in the partner institutions.

The project has fully succeeded in its overall aims, and this work will make a real and lasting impact on peer mentoring, coaching, training and development across the European Union.



Sources of information

Leonardo grant application
ECOTEC Visit Activity Form, September 2006
ECOTEC Visit Forms (interim ECOTEC visit, October 2006)
Attendance at all transnational meetings and all management and work package meetings possible during that time
Assessment of transnational workshop scores, records and evaluations
In-depth meetings with beneficiaries in focus groups, informal gatherings and in one-to-one interviews and a range of other settings
Beneficiary three-day extended visit to Lisbon to interview and meet mentors and mentees in institutions working with the university to support the activities of mentors
Beneficiary visit to Swansea, Wales, UK
Analysis of record-keeping
All other analysable data
Participant observation
A sample of self-administered questionnaires
Beneficiary one-to-one questionnaires/group discussions and focus groups, including mixed mentor and mentee groups (with and without supporting tutors and translators)
In-depth one-to-one meetings and interviews with project national leaders
Interviews with tutors and training managers
Interview with the lead lecturer for developing peer mentor training materials and course development
Interview with the Senior Manager, Youth Offending Team, Swansea
All external evaluation workshops at transnational events
All project management workshops and meetings
Attendance at selected other workshops at transnational events
Discussion with partners and progress reports from lead partners
Observation of partner interaction
The external evaluator speaking and participating at the final event for the Peer Mentor Support project and the project launch event for Me Myself I in Swansea during July 2005
Review of internal evaluations
Project website data including reports, marketing, information and the dissemination by partners of local activities and information
Discussions with the lead partner for internal evaluation
Presentations to evaluation workshop meetings and subsequent discussions with the partners
UK National Agency ECOTEC visit feedback, October 2006
UK National Agency Leonardo Dissemination Notes

UK National Agency Leonardo Transnational Partnership Guidance Notes
UK National Agency Leonardo Evaluation Guidance Notes
Minutes of steering group meetings
Workshop leader reports
Beneficiary personal development logs
Project budgets and financial data and reports
Project output reports
Internal evaluations and workshop transnational evaluation reports
Intensive one to-one interviews with beneficiaries of all the key partner groups
Participant observation in peer mentor sessions
Review of products
Sample mentor files
Mentoring training pack
Project research documents
Partner marketing and promotional information
Samples of lesson plans
Website
PSPA Support Prevention and Action Programme
Training manuals
The Copenhagen Declaration, November 2002
European Mentoring and Coaching Council Reports
Transnational minutes and progress reports
Visits and notes from interviews
Marketing materials
Records of all the transnational meetings of the partnership to date in Swansea, Prague, Cyprus, Lisbon and the Valorisation Conference in Mallorca
Transnational minutes and progress report

Paul Garvey and Associates Ltd, July 2007



