



Háskólinn  
á Akureyri  
University  
of Akureyri

# WorkMentor

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## External Evaluation Report

Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation project -

2011-1-IS1-LEO05-01263

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**Contents**

Background..... 2

Objective ..... 3

External evaluation..... 3

    The progress ..... 4

    The partnership ..... 5

    Product and outcomes ..... 6

    Dissemination and publicity ..... 6

    Conclusion ..... 7

Appendix..... 8

## Introduction

This report outlines the progress of the Workmentor project from the perspective of an external evaluator. The Centre of School Development at the [University of Akureyri](#) (MSHA) is in charge of external evaluation and consultant from MSHA has monitored the project from beginning. The report is an overview of the external evaluation process and effective working relationship with the project.

## Background

Workmentor is a project within the *Transfer of Innovation section of the Leonardo da Vinci programme for Vocational Training*. The Leonardo da Vinci programme is a part of the *European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme*. The Akureyri Comprehensive College (VMA) in northern Iceland is in charge of the implementation of the project and the project coordinator is Jóhannes Árnason teacher at VMA.

The project extended two years, started in the beginning of October 2011 and finished at the end of September 2013, with an extension of two months to the end of November 2013. The project was divided into eight workpackages. The first two workpackages extend over the whole project and include the functions of project management and quality management lead by VMA, Iceland, then one workpackage for each partner meeting in Wales, Norway, France, Finland and Iceland and the last workpackage containing dissemination and valorisation.

The project partners of *Workmentor* are seven schools and institutions involved in vocational education from England, Finland, France, Netherlands, Norway, Iceland and Wales.

The partners participating in the project were as follows:

Finland	Axxell Utbildning Ab	Tanja Halttunen
France	CFPPA Jules Rieffel, Agricultural College of Ministrère d Agriculture	Mireille Rioual Nicolas Bizeul
Iceland	VMA, Akureyri Comprehensive College	Jóhannes Árnason Ketill Sigurðarson Kristín Petra Guðmundsdóttir
Netherlands	IFSAT Foundation	Bas Timmers
Norway	Skjetlein Ressursenter,	Ingivild Espelien

	Leinstrand	Bente Ryen
UK (England)	Riverside Training	Philip Broomhead
UK (Wales)	Gower College, Gorseinon, Swansea	Caroline Townsend Jones Don Hawkins

## Objective

The Workmentor project builds on the relationship between learner, teacher and employer by providing an innovative mentoring skills course for work supervisors. The project is based on former Leonardo da Vinci mentoring projects the *ProVoTrain*, *POÈTE* and *Implementor* ([www.peermentor.org](http://www.peermentor.org)).

The main objective of the Workmentor project is to transfer mentoring methods into the relationship between a member of staff and a student in a workplace and provide work supervisors with greater understanding of vocational learning and mentoring skills to support young people in vocational education and training. And doing that by designing a mentoring course to be delivered to supervisors of apprentices in the workplace. The intention of the project is to construct a successful vocational education and workplacement that is dependent on three partners being responsible for the workplace education: the workplace, the provider or school and the student.

## External evaluation

In May 2011 the project coordinator requested MSHA to carry out the monitoring of the Workmentor project. After meeting with the coordinator and reviewing the workplan the evaluation process was designed. There are three stages in innovative projects about which judgements may be made: intentions, implementation and outcomes. The match between the outcomes and intentions provides a measure of the success of the innovation. A good design increases probability of accurate and reliable results and tells whether the project actually have an effect, and why, it help identify strong and weak points of the project and can give a clues how they can be further strengthened or changed for better. The evaluation relies on three stages: Information gathering, analysis and interpretation. It is not possible to evaluate everything about the project so the focus is on five selected areas.

*The main areas evaluated:*

- The progress (implementation) made towards the contractual outcomes (innovation) and respect of the contractual work-plan (intentions).

- Project management and delivery mechanism.
- The partnership as a transnational collaboration: cross-cultural understanding, sharing of activities, effectiveness of communication, meetings.
- The dissemination of the project and publicity.

*The information gathering and evaluation was performed in following ways:*

- Data review.
- Field notes at meeting, events and conference.
- Interviews with participants.
- Interviews with the coordinator.
- SWOT analysis to combine participants perceptions to identify issues of given area in the evaluation process (acronym stands for strength, weakness, opportunity and threats). The result of SWOT analysis is to see the reality of the project and give a list of action points which you should follow or in some cases thing you should avoid.
- Visit to the coordinating organisation (on the spot check).
- Evaluating the work carried out and reported by the project (gnatt card, website, Workmentor course and course material, agendas for partners meetings, partners meeting in France and Iceland).

## **The progress**

Project timetable was mainly respected and activities took place according to work plan and timing. Sufficient information was sent before meetings and communication was efficient. The final products are ready and approved. The project selected and developed materials to use in training sessions and workshops for Workmentors. The partners piloted the workshop and translated the manual to be ready to use in all partner countries. Partners usually contributed as stated in the work plan but interviews with partners revealed doubts about the goals of the Partners meeting (PM3) were fully achieved because they did not evaluate the material as stated in the agenda before the PM3 or speak about the interim report as was announced in the agenda as well.

### *Strength*

- Realistic work plan and well managed.
- Partners meetings overall well prepared and organized.
- Workmentor (workshop) and manual ready to use in all partners countries.
- Well motivated and active participants.
- Part of the group has worked together before in similar projects.

- Informative, good and useful project-website.

### *Opportunity to do better*

- Part of the group had worked together before in similar projects and created certain work culture and role. This is generally good but it needs to take care of the original group does not become too dominant in the process.
- Give participant time to talk about themselves and their expectations and role in the project, this is especially important for new participants that have not worked together before the project.
- A little training in the beginning of the project about specific concepts and words that is to be used in the project to avoid difficulties of understanding and to help new participants.
- Coordinator needs to advise participants to make an itinerary that fits on a pre-determined agenda to avoid unnecessary changes to the logical structure of the agenda due to inaccurate travel plans.

## **The partnership**

This evaluation takes into account partnership as a transnational collaboration and factors such as cross-cultural understanding, sharing of activities, effectiveness of communication and meetings. The partnership was collaborated effectively throughout the project. There was a clear work plan and timetable available, a clear division of tasks between the partners, partners knew the main goals and results being aimed at, there was a clear distribution of responsibilities among the partners. Those in the group who had no difficulty in expressing themselves in English had a stronger voice in the partnership than the others. Partners tried honestly to take into account all voices and views and contributions made by the partners were valued. Communication was good and efficient when excluding language difficulties and partners said the project was efficient because a large part of the group had worked together in former projects. The meeting venue (France and Iceland), social aspects and atmosphere were positive, well organized and inspiring.

### *Strength*

- The project gives individuals an opportunity to share experience and collaborate with people of different cultures.
- Everyone was of the project plan and willing to take an active part in the implementation process.
- Trust within the group to enable progress to be made according to the project plan.

### *Opportunity to do better*

- Create more flexibility within meetings to enable all concerns to be voiced and discussed appropriately.

## Product and outcomes

The final products of the project is mentoring workshops materials to use in training sessions and workshops for workmentors. The package include manual, training course/modules for workmentors. The partners piloted the workshops and translated the course manual to be ready to use in all partners countries. The course material is available in English and Icelandic on the project website and there are also materials related to each phase of the project such as inventory of needs report, outcome form the piloting phase, dissemination etc. The knowledge and experience partners gain from being part of the implementation process and collaborating in a creative and successful way can be seen as positive product of the project as well as experience partners gain from management and undertaking of transnational partnerships. And finally partners created appropriate and illustrative logo for the project.

### *Strength*

- Clear focus the entire process on the final outcome.
- The main objectives of the project achieved.
- The innovative product of the project and implementation process.
- Great value for vocational education.

### *Opportunity to improve*

- Have course material from all countries available on project-website.

## Dissemination and publicity

The approach in Workmentor to dissemination has been effective and exceeded what was planned in the beginning. It has successfully used a combination of means to achieve real impact. The project website has been enhanced from the start of the project and is now a good resource for the progress and outcomes of the project. From the beginning the coordinator have used every opportunity to present the project. The project was presented at a conference on education at the University of Akureyri held on 13th of April 2013. Also at *European Monitoring Conference on Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships* held 11–12 of February 2014. The project was presented at a large conference on education in Akureyri held by [SIMEY](#), over 1000 people attended the conference held 4th of October 2013. At the conference the project was presented in two seminars *Calling foster child project Workmentor* and *Seminar of Evidence*. Most of the project material is presented in the website project (workmentor course-manual in Icelandic and France, brochure, powerpoint

presentations, news, presentations at conferences, pictures, narratives from partners meetings, Gantt-chart, etc.).

### *Strength*

- Emphasis placed on presenting the project as widely as possible.
- The project ideology and the value of it for vocational presented at conferences.
- Rich emphasis placed on democratic, professional and open practices.

### *Opportunity to improve*

- Workmentor team keep up the good work!

## **Conclusion**

The project was relatively effective, performed excellently overall and every partner deserve credit for their work individually and collectively. The main objective was achieved and no significant delays or problem occurred in the project. The project was managed effectively and professionally. Partners relationship manifest friendship, equality, efficiency, responsibility, motivation and commitment. Partners were positive on both the leadership and commitment of partners and they believed in what they were doing and that it matters for vocational education and best practice. The project is innovative and the project results can be used to improve and strengthen educational relationship between workplace, provider or school and student.

## Appendix

Product of the WorkMentor

[http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/index.php/Resources - Products](http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/index.php/Resources_-_Products)

[The SWOT – analysis](#)

[http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/images/9/92/External\\_evaluation\\_workmentor\\_Nantes.pdf](http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/images/9/92/External_evaluation_workmentor_Nantes.pdf)

The WorkMentor main page

[http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/index.php/Work Mentor](http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/index.php/Work_Mentor)

2011-I-ISI-LEO05-01263 Leonardo da Vinci Tol project Work Mentor. Mentoring in the workplace.  
Revised Gantt sheet October 2011. GANTT blueprint

[http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/images/0/0a/Work Mentor Gantt revised sept 2011.pdf](http://workmentor.vma.is/wiki/images/0/0a/Work_Mentor_Gantt_revised_sept_2011.pdf)

## Reflection and discussion (external evaluation form)

The aim is to

- give participants the opportunity to evaluate their experience of the project/course/meeting (three different scenarios: one to one, group and on-line programme)
- get information about what went well and what did not work well,
- analyze systematically factors that need improvement.

### Step 1

(15 min Individual evaluation)

Reflect (on your own) on the course (Workmentor) and use the following questions to guide your reflection.

- In what way did the module went well and why? What clues would someone looking at the module from the outside (fx. external evaluator) have observe?
- When reflecting please keep in mind: the beginning, aim, preparation, ignition (inspiration), presentation materials, tasks, functions, etc.

### Step 2

(15 min Individual evaluation)

Reflect (on your own) on the course (Workmentor) and use the following questions to guide your reflection.

- In what way did the module not went well and why? What clues would someone outside the course (fx. external evaluator) have seen?
- Keep in mind: the beginning, goals, preparation, ignition (inspiration), presentation materials, tasks, functions, etc.

### Step 3

(15-20 min share experience and discussion in pairs)

Form pairs and share the experience and reflection in step 1 and 2. Discuss what is similar and what is different. Discuss factors that made the course work well or not so well and how to prevent such situation. Discuss and list also what factors make the course work well.

### Step 4

(15-20 min discussion in pairs)

Work in the same pairs as in previous step. Discuss whether your reflection points out some aspects of the module that needs to be improved in particular way. If so, come to a suggestion for improvement

Thank you for your participation